Michio Kondo, Managing Director – Fujifilm Middle East



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Fujifilm's managing director for the Middle East, Michio Kondo, outlines the company's move from products to comprehensive healthcare solutions, and how this transformation aligns with the GCC region's view on the future of healthcare. In addition, Kondo comments on the recognition of the made-in-Japan brand, the implementation of AI in their products, and Fujifilm's ambitious mid-term investment plan.

Can you comment briefly on your career with Fujifilm, including your time leading the Canadian affiliate?

I took on the general manager role for Fujifilm Middle East in September 2019. Before coming to Dubai, where the organisation is based, I was president of Fujifilm Canada for three years. The Canadian affiliate was running all of the company's major businesses, from photography to graphic arts, but did not have the medical business. I was tasked with integrating the medical business into the country.

In 2019, I took on two positions, first as general manager for the Middle East and then as head of the Turkey organization. We have a strong focus on healthcare across the entire region, which includes more than 50 African countries, 15 Middle Eastern countries and the Turkey cluster, which includes Eastern Europe, and the subsidiaries in Dubai and South Africa. The main difficulty so far has been dealing with the effects of the pandemic, which started a few months after my arrival.

You came from a single country, Canada, to a vast region made up of multiple markets. Does Fujifilm have a unified approach across the region?

Yes, Canada is just one country, while the Middle East & Africa are regions with more than 50 countries. The needs and the healthcare infrastructure vary widely between one country and another, let alone across regions. However, Fujifilm's approach, despite the differences in each market, remains the same: prioritising the voice of customers and proposing solutions based on their different needs. Because we follow both business to consumer (B2C) and business to business (B2B) models, our customers are end users as well as companies, hospitals and governments. Therefore, we strive to generate win-win relationships for all partners, which is particularly important in such a broad region like the Middle East & Africa where in many cases we operate through distributors. In addition, our employees are encouraged to take ownership and uphold an open, fair and transparent corporate culture.

What would you say are the challenges facing the medical technology industry in the GCC region?

The healthcare industry in the GCC has evolved drastically over the past few years and our medical equipment and IT business has also changed—from quantity to quality and from products to comprehensive solutions. It used to be that countries created tenders and received offers from multiple manufacturers who complied with specifications and prices.

However, companies are required to provide various solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of healthcare facilities. For example, Fujifilm not only provides products but also provides training programs for healthcare specialists.

In Saudi Arabia, for example, the National Unified Procurement Company (NUPCO) used to coordinate tenders, and is now focusing on providing the market with a list of all products, by signing framework agreements with companies to allow hospitals to better choose the products and services they need.

Another change in the region is the proliferation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as countries move to work together with investors and companies to operate hospitals and clinics, which gives Fujifilm the opportunity to offer its comprehensive solutions. With the acquisition of Hitachi's Diagnostic Imaging business—which has brought CT, MRI, and other technologies to our portfolio—we can now leverage the strengths of both organisations and our consolidated portfolios.

We can now confidently say that Fujifilm is a one-stop solution provider to all diagnostic needs.

How important is the region you manage for the global organisation and how do you evaluate the potential for growth?

Fujifilm was established in 1934, more than 80 years ago. The medical business was started just two years after that, in 1936, with X-ray film and subsidiaries were soon established in the United States, Europe, and Brazil. The Middle East organisation, however, is quite young, having been established in 2010. Turkey and South Africa were established in 2012. As a newcomer to the region, we believe that there is a clear path to succeed, and we have enjoyed healthy growth so far, outperforming the global average.

We believe there is huge potential, especially in the GCC because countries here have very good healthcare infrastructures and healthcare professionals (HCPs) who have brought considerable knowledge to the region. For Fujifilm, we have the opportunity to bring Japanese screening programs to the region, something we are doing in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and so on, because early detection is crucial in the fight against cancer and lifestyle-related diseases.

A good example of the company's strength is its IT portfolio; our Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) have the largest market share in the world with a presence in more than 5,500 sites. Our IT systems can work not only with Fujifilm equipment but with other companies' equipment as well. In addition, we recently incorporated new AI technology that allows customers to connect X-ray, MRI or ultrasound machines.

Compared to other regions where HCPs and key opinion leaders tend to develop long careers in the same place, international healthcare professionals in the GCC do not stay long, taking with them the know-how provided by companies like Fujifilm and leaving a knowledge vacuum that needs to be filled again. In light of this, how does Fujifilm contribute to the creation of a long-term high quality healthcare ecosystem in the region?

That is a very important point and the reason why we are always thinking about how the company can be more efficient in terms of fostering a better long-term healthcare ecosystem and one that is sustainable. With that in mind, our objective is to train not only our people and business partners, but also to include end users and students in our global network. To that effect, we often bring

internationally recognised doctors to the region so that they can help build local capabilities.

We acknowledge the fact that employee turnover in the region is very high, which is why we make sure to enrich and strengthen our educational division to be available to meet the needs of our partners. One of the ways we do this is through the local presence we have all over the region that is available for technical support. Additionally, our Fujifilm Technology Centre located in Dubai has become a regional and international hub for both theoretical and hands-on training. There we have visitors from across the region, and recently from Europe as well, who come for a variety of training programs that range from basic to advanced levels. In addition, our qualified trainers and applications specialists empower our business partners with the necessary skills and information needed for them to train their own customers and end users. Thus, we have succeeded in creating a network of knowledge expansion and distribution.

How do you see the recognition of Japanese quality here in the GCC market?

The made-in-Japan brand is quite strong in the GCC and they appreciate its quality. Nevertheless, our focus is on promoting Fujifilm as more than a Japanese company, but as a versatile one-stop solution for all innovative and superior-quality diagnostic needs designed and built with both healthcare providers and patients in mind.

In April 2021, Fujifilm Group formulated a new medium-term management plan, VISION2023, which is also leading towards the goals set forth in its Sustainable Value Plan 2030. How are you implementing this vision locally and what are its key components?

The company’s new mid-term plan includes the ambition of investing JPY 1.2 trillion (USD 11.02 billion) over three years to accelerate growth in healthcare and its highly functional materials business, as well as building a medical division worth JPY 700 billion by 2026.

As I mentioned, the way to accomplish these goals is by moving from offering products to comprehensive solutions. Our performance over the past 10 years in the region has been outstanding, and we have ambitions to grow even further. One important component will be the screening solutions we will provide through the incorporation of AI in our equipment and software.

With respect to sustainability, the Fujifilm Group will work to achieve net zero CO2 emissions by the fiscal year ending in March, 2041. Additionally, by the fiscal year ending in March, 2031, Fujifilm is aiming to introduce products and services based on its medical AI technology in all 196 countries and regions across the world, which will contribute to solving the social issue of access to quality healthcare services.

Fujifilm recently unveiled its new branding campaign “Never Stop”. What does the new branding mean for the Middle East affiliate?

This year, we merged the Fujifilm healthcare and Hitachi organisations in Cairo, Egypt and made structural changes for our teams to take on more and clearer responsibilities. We want to continue expanding though the territory to have our full portfolio available in all 60+ countries. In fact, we never stop expanding and growing and what drives me the most is seeing the team “never stop”. They are always enthusiastic about securing great relationships with customers and looking for new solutions, and, they want to continue learning and growing. Thus, we never stop expanding and growing – ourselves, the business, our portfolio, and most of all, the solutions and services we provide to our clients, therefore helping patients across the globe. That is “never stop” for me.

Finally, can you share what motivates you personally as the leader of the regional organisation and share a message for GCC stakeholders?

At Fujifilm, our goal for the next ten years is to increase our presence through closer collaboration with stakeholders, business partners and customers. Just like the company, I do not want to remain in my comfort zone. I am always looking to learn new things and gather new experience. That is what drives me to move ahead.

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