

Interview: Jason Carroll, General Manager, Janssen Philippines



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Jason Carroll, General Manager of Janssen Philippines, discusses what it will take to put Janssen Philippines on the map as one of the largest, most reputable pharmaceutical companies in the country, and why the Philippines will be a force to recon with in the near future in many industries, including the pharmaceutical industry.

Janssen, a globally recognized pharmaceutical company, has had a long and successful history on an international level. How does Janssen Philippines live up to its company name?

It is hard to discuss Janssen without first talking about the company's founder, Dr Paul Janssen. In the years before his death in 2003, he filed over 100 patents, authored 700 scientific Publications and had oversight on the formulation and synthesis of 80 New Chemical Entities with the scientists at Janssen.

Dr Paul Janssen is globally recognized as one of the greatest formulation scientists in history. He built the company that would become Janssen Pharmaceutica in 1956 and Janssen has been part of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies since 1961.

Janssen, now one of the most innovative companies in the world, was first introduced into the Philippines in 1982. Janssen Philippines specializes not only in innovative medicines in oncology and immunology, but also has over the counter (OTC) and pain treatments that serve many thousands of patients. As a company, our vision is to ensure that in the eyes of our employees, our customers, and our competitors, we are seen as the most reputable pharmaceutical company in the Pharmaceutical industry.

Where does this reputation stand today?

Our vision is our path and I know that it will take time for our organization to be as well known as some of our larger peers. I do not think that many people know that much about Janssen Philippines yet, but there are millions of Filipino families that have grown up with using Johnson and Johnson products. Many also are very aware of the importance of the Credo as part of J&J's DNA.

First written in 1943, our organizational priorities are fully reflected in the Credo that is so important to the 120,000 people employed at Johnson & Johnson companies across the globe, as well as the 40,000 employees at Janssen. Every employee knows this Credo and is highly trained on our ethics and standards every year. Our team will always forego any sale if there is any risk to our reputation or conflicts with our business principles. I sincerely hope that in the very near future, the medical community in the Philippines looks at Janssen Philippines as a company they can trust, delivering quality products with balanced education through a responsible and ethical team of professionals.

Your competitors can easily claim they are the most ethical too. Is it possible to provide the hard facts for good behavior?

The best way to test our record is to assess our performance as a key company within the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), our industry body. Our record for providing balanced opinion through Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs or promotional materials is well documented. Our organization has been recognized again this year as one of the Top five companies in medicine donation to those most in need. We have also just announced a partnership with the University of the Philippines' National Institute of Health (UP-NIH) as well as the Foundation for the Advancement of Clinical Epidemiology (FACE Inc) to jointly develop the first national mental health information system in the Philippines. We would be very comfortable in arguing our record on ethical conduct. Janssen, as part of Johnson & Johnson, is a mark of trust, a leader in broadening access to life-saving medicines in developing nations, globally recognized in the area of sustainability and significant provider of local philanthropic activity.

It seems that everything is in place, but there is still work to be done on raising the awareness on the reputation and values that Janssen Philippines stands for in this market. What do you see as your tasks to enhancing this awareness level?

We have made a number of decisions in recent times to lift our visibility in the Philippines. The first was to build a new, sustainable office to provide our loyal team an enjoyable place to work as well as to attract new talent to the organization. We have also invested in the development of an industry leading training & development center to ensure our customer facing team members are highly skilled in their interactions with customers. We wish to focus on the science behind our products in order to differentiate our products within the industry. We believe that we have the current and future products to back up our confidence to do so.

Another core priority is to ensure that we have the best technology available in the industry. Just two years ago, many of our representatives did not even have access to laptops. In just 18 months, laptops, smartphones, iPads and the industry leading electronic territory management system is the norm for our team. We have come a long way to understanding the value of sales force effectiveness and interactive learning.

As well as these things, our customer facing team proudly wears a Janssen uniform, which is quite unique for the industry. We are so immensely proud of the Janssen heritage and wish to showcase the organization that we represent.

In terms of people, we search for talent with a thirst for knowledge, confidence, persistence and the ability to listen. Janssen is an equal opportunity employer. We wish to be seen as an organization that looks after its people, provides them with tremendous benefits and challenges them on a daily basis. I want our employees to be convinced that they do not want to work anywhere else—just continue to grow with Janssen. Already today, I feel that we are close to reaching this mindset with our latest internal survey suggesting that 90 percent of our people feel strongly about remaining with Janssen through the next 12 months.

From a personal point of view, how have you adjusted to managing a Filipino workforce as an Australian?

Personally, it has been a positively challenging experience. To lead a team of skilled professionals in such a dynamic country as the Philippines is truly an honor and absolutely my dream job. I am so pleased to be able to have the opportunity to lead a team in a country in which I have never worked before. This wonderful role means so much to me, I love every day I am here.

Professionally, it took me some time though to adjust my “Aussie” accent in a way that was easier to understand. I was always being told that I give the team a nosebleed whenever I was speaking at a national meeting. Even my leadership team would admit that it took them a few months to pick up my strange pronunciation. Throughout my time here, I have also come to appreciate so much the importance of the family unit to Filipinos as well as their deep faith and respect for relationships. I have come to understand that we need to be more than just an employer or just another company. As I mentioned earlier, almost everyone in a Filipino family has grown up using J&J products, and the Johnson & Johnson and Janssen names are special to them. It is something that was not clear to me at first. There is such pride to work for J&J, perhaps more in the Philippines than anywhere else on earth. It is special to be part of the Janssen family.

Do you think that the Philippines has the potential to become a major growth driver for Janssen in Southeast Asia?

With a population approaching 100 million, the Philippines has tremendous potential to be a strong growth driver for healthcare in Southeast Asia over the next two decades. That said, I believe it will still take considerable time to build momentum. The average age of the population is significantly lower when compared to typical western countries. One also needs to consider the fact that the average spend on healthcare is only USD 97 per year at the present time. Out of pocket spend is the norm and reimbursement remains rare. If GDP continues to grow in high single digits (as it has over the last few years), then the Philippines will certainly be a major economic force in many industries including healthcare in 10 – 20 years from now. The country has a young population with great ambitions. Once these younger generations reach their peak in a few years from now, the Philippines will be unstoppable.

Janssen Philippines has a number of promising new compounds approaching. These compounds will be in areas such as Oncology, Infections Diseases (HIV, Hepatitis-C, Multidrug resistant TB) and Diabetes

In 2013, Janssen Pharmaceuticals received the FDA approval for INVOKANA for type 2-diabetes. Will this be an important growth area?

Diabetes is a significant health issue in the Philippines, with eight percent of Filipinos currently diagnosed with Type-2 Diabetes and the reality is that the impacted population is expected to double within the next decade. Certainly Type-2 Diabetes is a disease in need of treatment options. We are awaiting approval of INVOKANA in the Philippines and we hope to bring this product to the Filipino population in 2015.

What is the type of legacy you want to build in the Philippines?

In the next two years, I would like to build a path toward long-term sustainable growth for our Philippine operations. I would also hope that Janssen becomes an employer of choice within the Philippines through our excellent people, outstanding products and ethical reputation.

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