John Clare – Vice President Healthcare, DKSH Thailand



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11.08.2015

Tags: Thailand, DKSH

DKSH's vice president of the healthcare business unit in Thailand shares his insights about what makes DKSH the market expansion service provider of choice, the value creation services they offer to clients and customers and their strong understanding of the Thai and regional market.

What special capacities are you bringing to your current role as VP of healthcare?

With a background in pharmaceuticals and finance I started at DKSH in 1999. I worked in various corporate roles throughout Asia. Most recently I was in Malaysia for four and a half years, working as Group Finance Director and Head of Country Management for the Malaysian operations.

My experience in management, healthcare and business helps me tremendously in my current role as Vice President of DKSH's Business Unit Healthcare in Thailand. I am now responsible for leading a team of more than 3,000 healthcare professionals in Thailand.

We help our clients and customers grow in Thailand by offering a broad range of Market Expansion Services across the entire value chain; from regulatory consulting to marketing, sales, distribution and logistics. As business partners for our clients, we help them gain a comprehensive understanding of the Thai market and work towards creating success for their products in this dynamic, yet complex market.

Which business lines does DKSH's Healthcare Business Unit cover in Thailand?

DKSH's Business Unit Healthcare is divided into three main Business Lines: Pharmaceuticals, Over-the-Counter (OTC) & Consumer Health and Medical Devices. Each of these play a vital role in the development of the organization and are strong pillars to serve our clients and customers. Our more than 200 healthcare clients include companies of any size: from multinational companies with an established presence in the region to small companies new to Asia.

What are the advantages to clients in working with DKSH?

Simply said: we have a proven track record in helping healthcare companies grow their business in Thailand and the region. DKSH has been at home in Asia for 150 years and in Thailand for almost 110 years. We have around 11,000 employees at DKSH Thailand, of which more than 3,000 work in the healthcare business. This has allowed our organization to gain an extensive network and we have deep insights to the local market to serve our client's needs.

Our extensive distribution and logistics backbone, which adheres to the highest international quality and safety standards, helps deliver our clients' products to more outlets than any other partner. Our strong sales team with more than 1,000 specialists focuses on making clients businesses grow at every stage of the product lifecycle.

As a publicly listed company in Switzerland, corporate governance and compliance standards are embedded in our culture and operations through clear policies, processes and dedicated functions.

What opportunities and challenges have you identified in the Thai market?

Anyone doing business in Thailand knows and understands that it is a vibrant market, which is complex due to the dynamic regulations and policies within the healthcare industry. The Kingdom is also fairly complex market in terms of route-to-market.

There are various market peculiarities and challenges for each specific healthcare segment. Across the board however, we see strong potential. Growth rates in pharmaceuticals – which can only be prescribed by an official healthcare professional – and OTC drugs are promising. And particularly the medical devices segment shows strong growth. This growth is mostly driven by an aging population and growing middle class in Thailand with more money to spend on their health and aesthetics.

How do you ensure your clients have a deep understanding of the complex Thai market?

Since 1906 we have built strong relationships with our 42,000 customers; from the smallest independent pharmacies, clinics to large hospitals and chain drugstores. And, through our Business Unit Consumers Goods, even into retail if required. Our marketing and sales experts have a deep understanding of our customers and are in constant communication with them and other stakeholders, which helps us list new products appropriately and understand the market dynamics with greater insight.

Consequently, we provide our clients with a deep understanding of the local market through consultancy and, for example, by hosting roundtable events for clients to come in and learn about policies affecting the industry. Our roundtables create a platform for clients to voice their opinions, share their concerns and learn in the process.

Moreover, we are members of the Pharmaceutical *Research* and Manufacturing Association (PReMA) and work regularly with the Thai FDA. We have a deep insight of the regulatory process in Thailand because we have specific teams that support market entry, help in registering new products and see the entire process through.

Do you believe Thailand can act as a regional hub in the coming years, especially in light of the opening up of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in December 2015?

Definitely, the AEC will strengthen Thailand’s position as a healthcare hub. The country is already well positioned geographically. The establishment of the AEC and harmonization of regulations may simplify how business is conducted in the region, thereby facilitating growth.

The Thai government already instituted a set of policies to incentivize multinational companies to set up their head offices in Thailand. DKSH utilizes Thailand as a hub for its regional operations. Dropping the barriers and opening up South East Asia’s market may drive more companies to do so.

We see potential with the opening up of the AEC. At the same time, each nation in South East Asia has its own specific rules and regulations and distribution challenges vary per market. This will not change in the years to come. These differences make it important to work with a growth partner that has the regional reach as well as strong local insights.

What makes DKSH the partner of choice among clients and customers in pharmaceuticals?

We are the largest pharmaceutical Market Expansion Services provider in Asia in terms of sales, number of employees, capacity and distribution reach. We are a “one-stop-shop” solution for marketing, sales, distribution, logistics and other services such as regulatory and market entry consultancy.

Our experts can help our pharmaceutical clients register new products, launch them in the market and take over marketing and sales. DKSH has also a proven track record in reinvigorating growth by taking over the sales initiatives and placing mature products under the wings of our sales teams.

Another benefit of working with DKSH is our strong IT backbone. All of our operations are connected to our global SAP platform, which is one of the largest in the region. Clients can interface their systems to DKSH and with this share valuable market data.

Based on our strong IT platform, we also offer real-time actual market performance data. We use these data to inform our clients about channels and areas that are performing well and where they can improve compared to their peers. Brand owners want this market intelligence, which is extremely valuable for creating successful growth strategies.

DKSH is dedicated to offering value-adding services, which means that we are constantly looking for new ways to grow our clients’ business in the local market by offering solutions that are efficient and cost effective. Moreover, we offer clients the comfort of dealing with the same Market Expansion Services provider when they want to grow in various markets.

What are your ambitions for the organization in the next five years?

We are focused on continuing to create a very strong service offering for our clients that builds on a strong capillary sales and distribution platform, as well as other value added services that help our clients grow in the Thai market. There are many components in order to ensure our clients reach their full potential in the local market, but it is DKSH’s job to help clients see and understand the value in contacting us.

In the coming years, we strive to continusously expand our services offerings. Our long-term commitment to Thailand is a testament to the good work DKSH is doing here for our clients. We continue to invest in our people and infrastructure to be the growth partner of choice.

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