Christian Malherbe – Country Lead, Pfizer Thailand & Indochina, Thailand



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Pfizer is now the number one pharmaceuticals company in Thailand. We spoke to Christian Malherbe, Country Lead for IndoChina, which includes Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, about how he is making the management structure flatter and continuing to bring new medicines to the region.

What challenging market conditions are you currently facing and how are you adapting your strategy to remain competitive?

Thailand is a large market and I firmly believe that there is room for both research based pharmaceutical companies as well as local companies. Generally, we see that the value of Pfizer's products is well recognized by our customers and patients. To maintain such position, Pfizer has focused its business into distinct business units that each focus on bringing value to the market – this gives us a competitive edge and ensures that we are in a better position to engage with customers. Currently, outlining the benefits of our innovative medicines to patients and healthcare providers is one of our main objectives and we see that we have been very successful in doing so. We continue to view Thailand is a key market for Pfizer – we believe that we will continue to play a role in helping promote positive change for patients in need of innovative and life-saving products.

What opportunities does Pfizer Thailand represent to the organization's overall business dealings?

Pfizer Thailand represents a significant role in the company's business offerings in Indochina because of its rich 55-year history. Pfizer remains an innovative company with high quality, safe and effective medicines and medical supplies that help prevent and treat disease and improve the health and wellness of Thais, as well as regional patients who come to Thailand in search of medical treatment. Pfizer Thailand is also responsible for the growth of the business in other markets in the Indochina region, such as Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, where we are focusing on growing our business. Currently, we are very enthusiastic about the future and the role we will play in the development of healthcare in Southeast Asia!

What are Pfizer's current and future growth factors?

Pfizer is number one in Thailand in terms of value – this is driven by the company's ability to adapt to the local market. We are focused on innovative pharmaceutical products and are divided into five focus areas within the organization: Pfizer Consumer Healthcare (PCH), vaccines, oncology, innovative medicines as well as established products. Jointly the units make up the uniqueness of our business dealings in Thailand because of the synergy between the different segments, which allows us to focus on meeting customer needs in the best way possible. Dividing into five areas ultimately lead to the optimization of our products in the local market and has allowed us to align our vision with our customer's needs. In the future, we see our life-changing products will add significantly to the quality of life for many patients and make a real difference to the people of Thailand.

What is Pfizer doing to remain innovative and one stop ahead of its competition?

Over the last few years Pfizer has become more focused and targeted in specific therapeutic areas. We believe our approach allows for the creation of more innovative drugs, which has led to collaborations with international and domestic biotech companies, as well as public and private organizations. Pfizer remains at the forefront of bringing innovation to the world, and in Southeast Asia we conduct a significant amount of clinical trials and studies. Moreover, Pfizer has stringent quality control measures that ensure that all our products are of the highest quality.

What role do you see Pfizer playing in Thailand's maturing healthcare industry in the coming years?

In my opinion, Thailand has the potential to remain as a key medical hub in Southeast Asia due to the amount of highly educated medical professionals and high-quality private hospitals. With that said, there are still internal challenges Thailand is working out, but business for medical tourists has picked up over the last few years and the nation is playing a more vital role in providing healthcare for neighbouring countries. In that regard, I believe Pfizer Thailand can play an influential role in helping treat both local and regional patients. Pfizer's products are fundamental to the recognition of our brand and it is my personal ambition to continue to engage with consumers to know and understand their needs and how Pfizer can engage to meet these.

What leadership skills have you brought to the organization's Thai branch and how have you adapted since becoming country lead of Thailand and Indochina in 2012?

Being of Danish origin, I have moulded the Thai branch to be run as a flat organization, or an organization that has as few levels of middle management between staff and executives as possible. This decentralized decision-making process allows for a quicker no-nonsense approach to running the organization. Thailand is a complex market, but creating a more streamlined method to decision making allows for more efficient processes.

Prior to Pfizer Thailand, I have worked in a number of different roles for Pfizer across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. This has allowed me to gain deep insight into how the organization functions globally. Morevover, my work experience led me to develop my leadership skills and has given me the aptitude to learn about the local market and develop Pfizer Thailand. Simply put: I have added value to the organization by integrating my leadership skills and by becoming more knowledgeable about the local market in order to educate myself and my employees about Thailand's market potential.

Since joining Pfizer Thailand, I have become highly involved in various leadership positions such as at the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturer's Association (PReMA) to better acquaint myself with the market. Taking an active role in these organizations has given me a better understanding of how things function on a local level, as well as giving me deep insight on how to maintain Pfizer's position as a top-notch pharmaceutical organization.

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