

Interview: Jack Daly - Commercial Manager, IMS Health Ireland



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Jack Daly, Commercial Manager at IMS Health Ireland, discusses the strategic decision of IMS Health to diversify into the health consultancy space, the importance of developing long-term partnerships with clients instead of transactional interactions, and the most important trends he sees in the Irish market today.

To begin, could you briefly introduce yourself to our readers?

My original background is as a pharmacist, and I started my career in community pharmacy, i.e. dispensing, but I have always had an interest in the wider business setting of the pharmaceutical industry, so I moved to what was then Schering AG before it was acquired by Bayer. There, I worked first in regulatory affairs and then moved through a number of sales and market roles, before joining Grunenthal as the Marketing Manager.

In mid-2014, I was offered the chance to come to IMS in my current capacity. It was a huge change as my role now is completely different from what they used to be, but I think a bit of change is good! I am always up for new challenges. I was initially brought in to set up a new development offering for IMS, which was to engage with pharmacists to obtain a new view of the marketplace. Traditionally, IMS has focused more on the 'sell-in' perspective, of products entering the pharmacy. Now, we want to look more at the 'sell-out' view, of products leaving the pharmacy.

The great advantage of IMS is that it has what I call a 'helicopter' view: a broad understanding of industry developments. This is crucial for us to properly understand what is really going on in the industry. IMS Ireland as an organization really suited my personality as well and had a lot of what I wanted for my next professional step: new challenges, a small team in Ireland sitting within a large global organization and ample learning opportunities. My past experience, in both pharmacy and the commercial settings, also made me a good fit for the role.

What position does the Irish affiliate occupy within the global context?

Globally, IMS has diversified well beyond the conventional view of it as a data analytics company. In the past few years, we have been moving into the consulting space, with a particular focus on building long-term partnerships with pharmaceutical companies, and our office here is very much aligned with this move, with additional offerings in the areas of CRM, OneKey and Market Access, for example.

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IMS has an excellent reputation within the data and data analytics space, which is great, but there is a lot of room for it to build on those existing capabilities to increase the value of its offerings. There are a lot of opportunities within the consulting space. For instance, it is becoming more important for companies to look at market access early on in the product lifecycle, so we want to increase our market access capabilities to support them in terms of their applications to the National Center for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE), among other things. Our European hub, based in London, has a significant presence in this area and so we are also looking to bring that into Ireland. We can also support companies with their product launches or with analysis of the business impact of their upcoming patent expiries. Increasing our offerings to clients also means that they do not have to deal with multiple companies on various issues.

As someone who used to work in the pharmaceutical industry, I used IMS for its data but I would never have thought to approach it for help with specific problems. There was not much client engagement in that sense and I would say interactions were very transactional. This is what IMS is trying to move away from; we want to have partnerships, not transactions. Globally, IMS as an organization has seen that with a broader portfolio of services, we can have significant partnerships with companies, often over many years. Over the past 60 years, IMS has established a solid reputation; companies trust in our commitment and expertise, and this will help us in building these relationship networks.

While IMS Ireland is a small team, we have a lot of expertise in the domestic market and can also get support from international colleagues when needed. Partnership building is a key priority for me as commercial manager. I want to position IMS Ireland as the first port of call for companies' problems, whether they relate to market access, patent expiry or product launch.

The big news on the M&A front is the announced Quintiles merger. What is your take on this?

The merger with Quintiles has yet to go through so I cannot comment on what this will mean for the Irish affiliate, but I can certainly see the synergies between the two companies and there are huge potential benefits. Quintiles work a lot in the clinical trials space, which brings them very close to pharma companies. This will really support our efforts to work closely with pharma companies as partners from the early stages of drug development until the end of patent life and beyond. I am very excited by the opportunities that will emerge from the merger once it is finalized.

The last time we were in Ireland, it was still reeling from the global economic crisis. How has the Irish pharmaceutical market developed in the past few years?

Firstly, the market has certainly stabilized and is reentering a growth phase. In the last 12 months, the market has grown in value by 8 percent and in volume by just under 5 percent.

The other key development is the newest supply agreement between the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), which was released at the end of July. It is still too early to comment on the commercial impact it will have, but one thing is clear: the agreement delivers certainty, which is an extremely positive thing. Pharma companies now have a clear understanding of the relationship between the state and the industry for the next four years, which allows them to plan for the future. This also fosters a climate that allows for more product innovation.

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More broadly speaking, the pharma industry has restructured significantly in the past few years in response to a number of events. The economic crisis in 2009 forced many companies to rationalize and move their back office functions back to the UK. Both within Ireland and globally, we have seen a move towards specialty medicines. This is most evident within Europe as a whole. For instance, 94 percent of market growth in Europe for the next few years will come from specialty medicines. This means that companies will not require as big a sales force to launch products, which will also

change the way they operate.

This also affects the increasing debate within the European Union (EU) about the unsustainability of government healthcare budgets. What is often not mentioned is that the shift towards specialty medicines stemmed from the legislation surrounding orphan medicines that the EU introduced in 2000, which included incentives for R&D into rare diseases. Now, this initiative has been very successful. In the 2000s, only a couple of orphan drugs were launched each year. In the past couple of years, we are seeing around 14 to 16 products each year. The problem is that these drugs are often very expensive and cater only to small patient populations. This is causing difficulties not just in Ireland but across Europe as governments try to figure out how to fund these drugs.

Market access was an issue for a few months back in 2012 when there was a freeze on new product introductions - what is your perspective on Irish market access today?

There are still challenges around market access. It still takes time and that is a pressure point for companies because it adds to the development costs. It is an additional hurdle; even after companies receive their product licenses, they cannot launch their products because they need to think about market access, whether it is health technology assessment (HTA) or pricing and reimbursement. As I mentioned, the new IPHA agreement gives much-needed clarity about this so this is a positive thing for the industry. But this is not a problem unique to Ireland; market access challenges are a reality across the world.

What are your top priorities for IMS Ireland for the coming years?

I have three main priorities for IMS Ireland. Firstly, we will continue to support pharmacies and further build and enhance our relationships in this area. We also want to enhance our capabilities in market access to be able to offer our clients solutions for their market access projects. Finally, I want to position IMS to continue to engage with clients and develop the long-term, meaningful partnerships that are essential to the success of our clients and IMS Ireland.

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