

Interview: Maria Bella Aranas - Country Manager, Glenmark Philippines

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Maria Bella Aranas

, Country Manager of Glenmark Philippines, discusses the affiliates growing product portfolio in the country and their plans to further expand into different therapeutic areas. She also discusses the impressive performance of the affiliate, which currently is the largest in terms of volume and sales in the Philippines.

When you stepped into your current role as Country Manager of Glenmark Philippines, what were one or two of the key priorities that you had?

Prior to joining Glenmark I was connected with Getz pharmaceutical, where I was marketing director, and obviously once I moved to Glenmark, I was heading the whole operation. This required a combination of learning new things and applying what worked during my previous pharmaceutical experience. One challenge that I faced was that the entirety of the business is the problem of the Country Manager, I am truly responsible for everything. My first priority when I took over was to make the company seen in the market, to be regarded and noticed by the doctors in the field as a serious player, as before I joined the company, many did not see Glenmark as a serious player. Now we are considered to be a very aggressive player, especially in science. I was passionate to bring what I knew what worked, and bring what doctors needed to believe in our products, and so I brought a science touch that was not so practiced in the company prior to my arrival.

As a brief introduction, could you please provide a brief overview of Glenmark's history in the Philippines?

The company has been in the Philippines for almost 12 years, and in the previous 11 years, never did the company achieved its annual objective. I joined in September 2014, the half way point in the year. When I stepped in I looked at the people, the processes and the resources. First, I worked to change people's mindset, equip them to make those changes, and provide them a vision, and the first 6 months was a somewhat of a struggle. Seeing these people, working with them with their previous methods and injecting new ones, was a challenge.

The first year that the company hit its expected targets was my first year as GM. This achievement is in no way a one man show, it was a team effort, for which we got an award for the being the best country in terms of business development. The strategy now, if you are a smaller player, you go to the doctors and you present scientific evidence. This is the strategy that we have been implementing since I started, introducing Glenmark with scientific information to back up all of our presentations. We have been in the dermatology arena for over 10 years, so really we are considered key opinion leaders (KOLs) in that field. It is important for Filipino doctors to know who you are, because of the intense competition in the Filipino market. You need to know how to differentiate yourself.

You mentioned how building relationships with doctors is a key factor to success. During this process, how does Glenmark differentiate themselves?

We have built trust within the medical community. In Glenmark, our manufacturing plants are a huge plus for us, we operate 16 globally. We are growing rapidly in highly regulated markets, so there is not concern when it comes to quality. This is how we present ourselves to the doctors, this creates trust with the doctors, which is key. If you present yourself as a credible partner within the industry and with society, then you product will be accepted by and advocated for by the KOLs.

Additionally, I also focus on empowering my team, making them capable of selling our product to KOLs, that is a priority for me. We intensified our training program, making the employees understand that we are a global company. My objective with this company is to build us into a respected brand within the Philippines, part of the reason that we moved into our new offices was to be established in a great location that speaks for itself. We started to do roundtable discussions with doctors, where we would identify a topic, utilize our existing KOLs and expand to increase our relationships with other KOLs. We increased the emphasis on scientific events. I shifted the focus to these types of scientific events rather than gifts for doctors, which I do not believe is in line with

the Mexico Principal.

We had to bring more products into the market. Everything is moving, even though we have challenges. As we have begun to emphasize scientific events more, doctors have begun to respond, gaining trust in the Glenmark name. We are seeing an increase in prescriptions as well, which shows that our strategy is helping to drive growth.

In just the first quarter of this year Glenmark has experienced 15 percent growth, which is very impressive. Out of all of the segments that you are active in, including cardio-metabolic, respiratory and dermatology, which is driving the most growth?

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We group our performance into pure prescription, a combination of OTC and prescription, and OTC. The idea is to see the most growth in the OTC market in the future. Throughout all of the therapeutic areas that we are active in we expect to see exponential growth in the coming years.

One of the main discussions we have had with various stakeholders in the industry is the need to expand access to healthcare throughout the country. What issues have you seen in this regard, and how is Glenmark working to bring their products to those who may not have access to them currently?

Doctors, societies and pharmaceutical companies are all looking into how to better help patients in the areas that are far from metro areas. However, the majority of the populations do lives relatively close to metro areas, and we need to reach those patients as well. One of the ways to do this as well is through building relationships with the doctors. Many are doing medical missions, but the objective of those medical missions is not to increase the sales, rather, they are focused on further building relationships with the Filipino society.

We at Glenmark partner with the Philippine Dermatology Society (PDS) in doing medical missions in the far north of the country. We go to these provinces, doing free consultations, giving free samples and free medicines, and we are planning to expand these efforts. We are hoping to focus on a specific area and provide these services on a regular basis.

With the Philippines, being divided by so many islands, it is impossible to have the resources as a company to reach out to all. You identify where you go, partner with a society and bring doctors there. We are still conceptualizing how to further expand and improve these CSR activities as well.

Looking more broadly at Glenmark's regional portfolio, how important of a role does the Philippines play?

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The largest growing markets in the region for Glenmark are the Philippines and Malaysia, with the Philippines being the largest driver of growth. We have to continue to drive the business, and to do so we have a 3-year plan, of which we are 2 years into, and we plan to not only continue our growth but speed it up as well. In the previous years, the Philippines was always lagging behind other countries in the region, however now we are number 1 in terms of volume and value.

We are planning on launching many more products into the country. For example, oncology is a field that we are currently launching, where we will start with a small team and steadily expand. We are also looking to expand various alliances that we have with other companies to expand our business.

Currently, we are ranked number 47 by IMS in the Philippines, minus our nutrition sector which is not included in IMS rankings in the country. My vision is to bring Glenmark into the top 25 players in the industry by 2020.

Looking back over your 2 years leading the affiliate here in the Philippines, what would you say is your proudest accomplishment?

Making these people believe in the Glenmark brand. Changing the mindset, having them believe in my vision of where to lead the business. It is challenging to manage the processes of a business, however, I believe I have been successful in doing so. Through this process I have also seen trust and confidence increase, which is something else I am quite proud of and the entire team is as well.

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