Interview: Agus Heru Darjono – President Director, Metro Drug Indonesia



"In order to succeed, pharmaceutical players have to introduce medicines that fulfill the local healthcare needs and create healthcare breakthroughs in Indonesia"

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Agus Heru Darjono, President Director at Metro Drug Indonesia, highlights the opportunities in the Indonesian Third Party Commercialization sector and emphasizes the importance of building the best team in order to successfully perform in an ever-changing market like Indonesia.

Can you briefly speak towards the history as well as the main activities of Metro Drug Indonesia (MDI)?

The history of Metro Drug Indonesia (MDI) goes back to 2008, with the foundation of Parazelsus Indonesia, a pharmaceutical distribution company. In 2015, the company was rebranded as Metro Drug Indonesia and our business has since focused on distribution as well as commercial value-added services for the pharmaceutical industry.

In 2017, we decided to fully focus our activities on value-added services – being able to offer both single as well as integral commercial solutions to our pharmaceutical clients.

We are therefore positioned as a partner of choice within the CSO (Commercial Sales Organization) arena, in which our clients maintain their business license as well as distribution activities but they completely rely on us to develop their demand in Indonesia.

In addition, we also offer an end-to-end solution that we call “Full Agency”, which consists of supporting our clients from product registration, importation to demand creation and distribution of

their products.

What was the rationale behind this strategic move?

We identified an opportunity for Metro Drug to be positioned as an expert company solely focused on marketing value-added services as we experienced a growing demand of MNCs requiring support in their commercial operations in Indonesia to successfully navigate and overcome the inherent challenges of the market. This strategic decision was a clear move towards specialization in order to capture this growing demand.

You were appointed as President Director of Metro Drug Indonesia in February of 2017. What is your main area of focus these days?

My main priority is to ensure that MDI embraces the new mindset and culture of being a company purely focused on commercialization activities. In parallel, one of my primary responsibilities is to restructure the organization to ensure that MDI will fully satisfy the current as well as the future commercialization needs of our clients. Lastly, aligned and related to the aforementioned ones, I have the duty to deliver more profit as well as growth to our shareholders.

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You have spent most of your career in Big Pharma. What are the factors that triggered you to accept this new challenge?

Indeed, I developed my professional career in different positions within the pharmaceutical industry in leading companies such as Pfizer and MSD. When I was offered this new position as head of MDI, I could not decline. Even though it is a different business in itself, it is still within the pharmaceutical industry.

It is important to mention that despite the promising growth of the national industry, there are some challenges in the Indonesian pharmaceutical sector, especially when it comes to pricing within the universal healthcare coverage program (JKN).

These challenges are particularly prominent for MNCs as their innovative medicines as well as branded generics are naturally on a different price level than that of their local competitors. Consequently, numerous MNCs have been reducing the number of their sales representatives in Indonesia. Indeed, MNCs are struggling to adapt their commercial operations to local needs in order to successfully navigate the Indonesian landscape and rely on companies like MDI to support them. Therefore, the opportunity for third party commercialization players like us is enormous.

Given my background, I understand the Indonesian market very well and therefore the challenges it bears. I am personally very interested in the contribution MDI can deliver for the entire industry, which is a challenge but also an immense opportunity.

In developing, fast-changing countries such as Indonesia, companies need reliable sources of market intelligence. What types of insights are companies mainly looking for in the environment you described?

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Clients predominantly demand our marketing insights as well as commercial actions that will create demand for their products through stronger penetration rates in different channels like clinics, hospitals, and any other healthcare institutions. MDI's network with Key Customers and Opinion Leaders is one of our key operational underpinnings since they ensure the accurateness of our commercial insights and ultimately, the success of our demand creation initiatives.

The deep understanding of the customers' needs and requirements is one of the main factors to create value within the pharmaceutical arena. How is this approach reflected in your product portfolio strategy?

In order to succeed, pharmaceutical players have to introduce medicines that fulfill the local healthcare needs and create healthcare breakthroughs in Indonesia. In this sense, MDI would like to see more in-licensing agreements that are aligned with the local healthcare needs.

Even though Indonesia is a huge country, finding the right talent is a challenge. Considering that your employees are your most valuable asset and your personal prior experience in HR management, how do you attract, develop and retain the best team?

My long experience working in different positions as well as in companies within the Indonesian pharmaceutical market puts me in a position where I know not only the majority but also the best performing pharmaceutical executives. Thus, whenever I need to fill a position, I already have potential candidates in mind that have the experience, knowledge, and network required. I am proud to confirm that our team is composed of highly competent and experienced professionals with a strong foothold in the sector.

What are the key competitive advantages that differentiate Metro Drug?

Firstly, MDI is fully capable of dealing with global quality as well as ethical standards. Secondly, our teams as well as our industry network are unique in comparison to our competitors'. They ensure

the quality of our operations as well as our high reputation and make us the preferred partner of choice in the sector.

What are your main areas of focus for 2017?

My main goal is to prepare the organization and the people to successfully support our expected growth in the coming years.

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