Interview: Atanas Atanasov – Country Manager, Angelini Bulgaria



"Since Angelini settled on the Bulgarian territory ten years ago, many strategies have been implemented to grow the affiliate's footprint here. As a main strategic driver, we started to improve our portfolio focus developing both Rx and OTC recent and new corporate core products."

04.10.2017

Tags: Bulgaria, Angelini, Pharma, Strategy, Market Access

Dr. Atanas Atanasov, country manager at Angelini Bulgaria, explains the affiliate's growth to become a top ten player in the Bulgarian industry and highlights the leadership position of its portfolio in each category based on a long-term promotion strategy and value-based quality.

Angelini started its internationalisation process ten years ago, focusing on more than ten small and medium size markets like Poland, Croatia and of course Bulgaria. While the growth figures of the Bulgarian market look good, the market remains very limited; why do you believe Bulgaria was chosen as one of those key markets and what is the interest of a company like Angelini to be present here?

Angelini, as a company with plentiful international experience, already had historically successful partnerships in these ten/twelve CEE countries. Therefore, Angelini investments were naturally targeted towards this region to combine international territory expansion, Angelini's solid portfolio, and its reputation as a respected producer with more than 100 years history.

Concretely, Angelini entered Bulgaria through the acquisition of ex CSC Pharmaceuticals Bulgaria back in 2007. As an employee there since 1995 I found that process a very promising step forward in guaranteeing the affiliate's development.

Angelini Bulgaria is among the top 15 pharmaceutical companies in the country. Can you give us an overview of the company's activity and its positioning today?

Since Angelini settled on the Bulgarian territory ten years ago, many strategies have been implemented to grow the affiliate's footprint here. As a main strategic driver, we started to improve our portfolio focus developing both Rx and OTC recent and new corporate core products.

It is important to highlight that our mix of revenues per division has drastically transitioned from mainly Rx to a more balanced combination between Rx and OTC. In fact, while in the past, 80 percent of our sales were from Rx, now the weight of Rx and OTC is 60 and 40 percent respectively.

The second important driver is the successful partnerships we have established with companies such as Gilead, Helsinn, Edmond, Expanscience, and Incyte for new products and new areas of operations.

In order to support this challenge, we restructured the organization by creating new departments per division – Rx, Hospital and OTC – with solid quality control systems and modern tools. Throughout the last decade, we have experienced around three major organizational changes in terms of staff, geographical location and promotion plans of our medical and sales representatives.

That was a process started as a territorial appraisal with Cegedim (during those times) and corporate IT team finalizing a CRM system implementation to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness in our operations across the entire affiliate.

As a result of the aforementioned actions, we moved from 25 professionals and EUR 6.4 million of internal sales back in 2007 to a team of 70 people and total revenues several times bigger than expected for 2017.

[Featured_in]

What have been your priorities since taking the lead of the subsidiary in 2007?

I had four important tasks. Firstly, to achieve an Rx / OTC portfolio share balance. Secondly, to focus on Rx corporate products in CNS, Pain, Gynecology areas and corporate OTC products for self-medication. Thirdly, to ensure successful partnerships with other manufacturers developing our portfolio with more products and areas of operation. Fourthly, last but not least, to develop the staff and organizations implementing all necessary systems improving assets of Angelini Bulgaria

Overall the Bulgarian pharma market remains small but challenging with very stringent price policies and a very high level of out-of-pocket expenditures. What do you feel are the key winning strategies to bring products to markets?

Bringing products to the market is the first and hardest part, especially with so many recently updated requirements from the regulatory and market access side. But if you have a good product you don’t have a problem.

Our portfolio is based on original products that have been on the market for many years with big added value. We regularly add new products concerning new areas with a very high importance for the patients dedicated to meeting unmet needs.

I am proud to confirm that we have established and consolidated the right, transparent and professional scientific promotion fully in accordance with Corporate and local codes of conduct and rules of evidenced-based medicine promotion; this has certainly been a cornerstone in our success.

In the OTC area the processes are similar – long lasting approach based on Corporate, international and local code’s requirements, evidence based medicine promotion and education to the pharmacists.

Considering that Angelini is historically an OTC-oriented company, what is the role of OTC within the out-of-the pocket market and how is Angelini positioning itself?

From a sectoral standpoint, I believe OTC will become more and more important in Bulgaria as it is a market with less regulations and authorities’ influence than it is in the Rx area. At the same time, it offers more room for development as we can include areas like food supplements and medical devices.

I am delighted to share that most of our core OTC products, are among the top few products in their respective categories.

[related_story]

Furthermore, we are not competing with extraordinary discounts and trade conditions that anyone can observe in the segment, which gives us healthier financials. We strongly rely on the quality of our solutions and the professionalism of our teams. As a result, Angelini OTC products are positioned as premium products based on high quality that has been demonstrated during all its history.

When we met Gianluigi Frozzi, global CEO of Angelini Pharma, he highlighted his ambition to expand Angelini internationally with a special focus on Europe. What are your ambitions for the contribution of the Bulgarian affiliate in this regard?

I have big ambitions for the Bulgarian affiliate. Indeed, it is a small market but we have a good and consistent strategy; so, the next steps are to keep our leadership positioning while introducing new healthcare solutions to the Bulgarian market.

Two important facts. First of all, Angelini is ranked as the fifth biggest company in Bulgaria according to the August 2017 QuintilesIMS data. And, secondly, of our top 12 company products (RX, Hospital, OTC), the first five are ranked in first place in their classes, the next four in second position in their classes, the next two in third position in their classes, and the last one in fourth position in its class> Therefore, of our top 12 products, we have 11 on the “podium”

What is the final message that you would like to share with our international audience?

Working in the pharmaceutical industry is a huge responsibility; a responsibility to meet unmet patient needs within regulatory requirements together with state institutions and to satisfy patients’ daily needs for Rx and self-medication products. Society relies on us and, consequently, we have the duty to explore our possibilities to help patients to achieve a better life.

See more interviews