Interview: Milos Davidovic – Country Manager, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia, Mylan



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Milos Davidovic, Mylan's country manager responsible for Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, reveals the made-to-measure market approach that he has been implementing in the region for the past six years while highlighting the crucial role of employing a highly educated, expert workforce.

What potential did Mylan see in Serbia, and what led to a decision being taken to establish a presence in this market?

The story of Mylan in Serbia began shortly after the acquisition of Abbott's non-US developed markets specialty and branded generics business. Our products were present in the market before the acquisition; however, the new beginning for Mylan including a fully established presence in Serbia commenced in 2015. Although this West Balkans region is not the biggest for Mylan in Europe, the area has tremendous potential, and we are continually reminded of this. Since then, every year we have achieved double-digit growth, and it is most definitely proof of a good decision to venture into these markets. We produce enough medicine that 50 percent of the entire Serbian population could be dispensed by a Mylan product, while every minute nearly ten packs of Mylan medicines are dispensed from pharmacies; we are chosen by almost every pharmacy in the country, by wholesalers, institutions and physicians and of course patients – this is a fantastic achievement!

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I believe all these four countries in the West Balkans have to have their own identity and must possess that unique spark. If you combine them and create an overly unified structure, you will lose the best of the country. I like to compare it to a barbecue: you have grills in Spain, France, Poland, Romania, but each barbecue is different. Some have more spice; some have less. If you make just one recipe for all the countries, you lose the essence, the best party of that uniqueness, and I considered this analogy when I chose the strategies for managing the countries.

What value can Mylan bring to patients in the region?

Mylan is a company with an extensive portfolio – with over 7,500 products available to patients around the globe; this variety helps us here in Serbia bring different type of solutions to the market. Therefore, we currently own in Serbia a brand portfolio of over 26 branded, generic and OTC medicines. We are present in a vast spectrum of therapeutic areas, such as pain management, cardiovascular-metabolic, anti-infectives, and gastroenterology areas. With Mylan having acquired Meda in 2016, we inherited an interesting dermatology, OTC and allergology portfolios, and those therapeutic areas were driving the growth. Looking at our own Mylan pipeline, this year we will launch the product a product in the central nervous system area, first of many products from our upcoming portfolio. Therefore, we are focused on providing a tailored product offering, to better serving patients.

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One of our primary growth drivers is the area of pain management, anti-inflammatory and antirheumatic, which see us involved to respond to people various needs for more than 20 years.

Equally, we work to develop a full spectrum of medicines in other different therapeutic areas, such as CNS – psychiatry and neurology and cardio metabolic; we are also a flu vaccine producer, with our brand being successfully commercialized in more than 35 countries around the world and being included in national immunization programs across many countries.

What are the key characteristics of the countries you are responsible for?

Macedonia has significant generic penetration, but also, we can work with well-established brands. Montenegro is the smallest of them all; nonetheless, they have a well-established regulatory field, and the government is working on providing high level regulation; spending per capita is about 100 dollars which is not small. Slovenia is a story for themselves; it is a well-structured and very regulated country, very predictable. Generic penetration is not something that is recognized yet,

but we hope things will change, aligning to western European trends. They have a market similar to Serbia; the only difference is the population is three times less. Croatia is two times fewer people, and market size is the same as the Serbian one.

What is Mylan doing regionally, to change the pharmacists' perception about new products and solutions?

The problem is that patients aren't aware enough that they have many different options when it comes to their treatments. The key mindset shifters are the Minister of Health, trade associations, the Medical Agency, together with the industry – so we contribute to this effort to enable patients to get to know their options better.

We see the willingness of the Ministry, of the national agency as well as of the healthcare fund, being ready to listen what industry needs and has to offer and to find better solutions for the country. The World Bank is on one end; the government is on the other side and the industry in a different one. Everyone has their interests and to offer the best for the county we need to find common ground.

Companies such as Mylan, with global knowledge, have a broad array of experiences and expertise that we could bring and share. Along with different associations – as for example the American Chamber of Commerce where we are a member, Mylan is working towards contributing at providing better health to our nation, in the issues such as educating patients; as Mylan alone, some of our own educational programs are intended to support HCPs.

Putting Serbia into the spotlight: can you provide us with the overview of Mylan's operations in the country as well as performance outlook regarding turnover and number of people?

Based on IMS data in October (2017), Mylan had reached approximately 16 million USD turnover. In Serbia, we now have over 50 employees, whereas six years ago I was the eighth person joining the team. Regarding the compounded growth rate, we are in the top three fastest growing companies (IMS data in October 2017), as well as regarding employees' growth rate for the past five years.

So Mylan is continuing to invest in the local operations and developing the business, providing better health to patients in Serbia. We are very proud of our achievements over such a short time.

How do you attract the best talent?

We are a fast-growing company with a very interesting portfolio and prospective employees see that. They also see internal development programs and our investment into employees' training and growth. When we have an opening for a particular position, we first take a look within the company. When hiring, we always balance the experienced candidates and the freshly graduated students so that they can learn from each other. Mylan is well recognized as a fantastic employer, offering chances to develop careers and grow within the company.

How would you describe the secret to success in Serbia in five words?

People, knowledge, trust, patience, and love. Love for the job that you do and a dosage of passion. I remember my first welcome message when I joined Abbott six years ago, was: "It will be difficult, but try to have fun as much as you can." I continue to enjoy what I do, I still come to work with a smile, and having the right team beside me makes it all possible. First and foremost, you need to be professional, and the knowledge will follow. If there is no trust, you lose your team. If you do not have patience, you might miss the opportunities that are waiting ahead. Some things need time to come; they come in a particular order. These are the five cornerstones in which I believe.

What is your outlook for the future of Mylan in the region, and particularly in Serbia?

This region has a lot of potential, and this is the reason we are not only staying here but growing and developing, aiming to offer a diversity of solutions. Serbia might just be a small country, but it has tremendous potential. Mylan will keep investing in the system as well as in working together with the healthcare professionals to increase patient access to medicine. The country itself is emerging; the market will grow, not only in value but also from an access to therapies standpoint and quality medicines, which will lead to opening more opportunities in the future – especially with the European Union awaiting at the end of this path.

Regarding my own ambitions, we will aim to continue to grow, to bring new medicines in the market, and work to head towards the top companies in Serbia. I would also like to continue to develop the local team, to be present and active in more therapeutic areas that we have now and continue to be recognized as a company providing high quality, affordable medicines to patients in Serbia as well as in West Balkans.

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