

Sayan Roy - Managing Director, B. Braun Thailand



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Sayan Roy, managing director of B. Braun Thailand, highlights the importance of the group's 2020 Vision "Growing Together" and how the affiliate is carrying this out locally to be a partner of Thailand's healthcare system. Sayan goes on to elaborate on B. Braun's commitment to bringing full solutions based on home care, education, and quality to the patients of the country.

Could you introduce yourself and your career with B. Braun to our global audience?

I am the managing director of B. Braun Thailand and have been with the company for 18 years. The vision of the company to protect and improve the health of people around the world inspired me to join B. Braun India in 2001. After managing various sales and marketing portfolios, I was transferred to our headquarters in Germany in 2008 to support B. Braun's Pharmaceutical business as an international sales manager and was privileged to work with great teams across the Asia Pacific and European regions before I moved to Thailand in 2014. In 2016, I assumed leadership of the B. Braun Thailand business and am grateful that the experience and exposure provided by a truly global healthcare company have enabled me to grow in Thailand.

How is the affiliate positioned within the Thai market?

B. Braun has a strong portfolio of expertise in eighteen therapy fields ranging from acute dialysis, apheresis, cardio-thoracic surgery, degenerative spine surgery, diabetes, general open surgery, hemodialysis, incontinence, infection prevention, infusion therapy, interventional vascular diagnostics & therapy, laparoscopy, neurosurgery, nutrition therapy, orthopedic joint replacement, pain therapy, stoma and wound management. Here in Thailand, we serve healthcare professionals who require our products and services. Additionally, we manage several renal care centres across Thailand serving roughly 230 patients for dialysis at the end of 2018.

We are now celebrating our 30th anniversary of being in Thailand, which is a commitment that not many medical device companies in the market have. Many players operate here through distribution partners rather than a direct presence.

How are you implementing the “Growing Together” strategy at the local level?

We identified the goal of being a system partner while developing our product portfolio. B. Braun is a holistic system provider which is a unique and difficult position for other medical device companies to achieve. We look at the entire patient pathway and work with our partners to improve efficiency. As mentioned, we are involved in 18 therapies. Rather than aiming to deliver single products, we want to have a dialogue with our customers to improve the clinical processes. We want to talk about processes and therapies, but sell products.

Thailand is a unique market because of its universal health coverage which is something not many other countries in the region have. However, because of this system, there is high pressure on the government to control costs. This is where B. Braun comes in – to offer solutions to our partners such as hospitals which can help manage efficiencies and therefore costs. For example, we have established some collaborations with Ramathibodhi Hospital to establish home chemotherapy systems. Not only does this help reduce operational costs, but it also helps create more open beds and therefore more opportunities to treat patients.

Overall, B. Braun group is growing well at nearly six percent globally and Asia Pacific is not too far behind with 5.6 percent growth for 2018. To what extent is this performance reflected within the affiliate?

The affiliate has been performing quite well, in fact, we have achieved very significant revenue growth within the last three years. Thailand’s market is very dynamic and that has been beneficial

to both our top and bottom line. Additionally, B. Braun has market leadership in some areas of our business portfolio and strong performance in the others. We are among the leading players in segments such as orthopaedics, stoma care, wound management, and others, and yet we are not going to get comfortable but rather our aim will be to continue our growth and further develop as a leader in Thailand.

What is your current strategic focus for B. Braun in Thailand?

When you look at any stage of the patient pathway in hospitals you will tend to see B. Braun products being used. Nonetheless, one area we are looking to develop our presence in Thailand would be in home care. Within the most developed markets in Europe like Germany or UK, homecare outside of the hospital is a very important part of the treatment process. Currently, Thailand's universal healthcare system is very much focused on the care happening inside of the hospital. This is a key opportunity we see in the market and want to work with the healthcare system to expand the continuum of care outside of hospitals also. If a solution could be found on how to incorporate homecare into universal health coverage this could actually help to reduce overall costs to the system.

In 2005, B. Braun Thailand established Aesculap Academy, which is focused on medical education and raising awareness of innovations and new technologies in the healthcare sector. How is this initiative reflective of B. Braun's commitment to the country and what have been some of the key outcomes?

The company takes pride in playing a key role in educating and training health-care professionals, which is in keeping with its vision of improving healthcare throughout Thailand. The academy brings together the education, training, and expertise of different countries together. As education has always been at the forefront of our company, we are happy to play a role in connecting international expertise with local leaders without requiring them to travel far outside of Thailand. We have partnered with the European Society of Regional Anesthesia & Pain Therapy (ESRA) and for the third year in a row, we will lead a Cadaver workshop in cooperation with Siriraj Hospital. This workshop is the first time that ESRA organizes workshops not only in Thailand but all over the Asia Pacific region. Also, in 2019, Aesculap Academy is proud to be associated with Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) to organize the regional workshop in Thailand.

Disruption often impacts the medical technology sector quicker than the pharmaceutical industry. How else is B. Braun integrating digital technology into its product portfolio and service offering?

At the global level technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) is absolutely part of the conversation of B. Braun's development. However, at the local level, our product portfolio is more traditional and the way we incorporate digitalization varies at different levels. For example, at the sales representative level, we are using technology for promotion. On the product side, we are using smart technology and digitalized systems for devices like Infusion pumps and for surgical instrument system audits in hospitals.

One of the most important collaborations we have is a partnership with the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) which operates on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This project has been implemented with four local partners — Ramathibodhi Hospital, the Infusion Nurse Network of Thailand, Thailand Oncology Nurses Society and Healthcare Accreditation Institute (Public Organization) — on four modules; (1) the role of hand hygiene in healthcare associated infection prevention; (2) peripheral intravenous cannula insertion and management; (3) the safety of IV chemotherapy for healthcare professionals; and (4) support for the middle and top management of hospitals and focuses on "Improving Occupational Safety and Health of Healthcare Workers and Patients in Public Hospitals in Thailand". The project will enable hospitals to save costs and improve their efficiency, which can increase their reputation and competitiveness. This will incorporate digitalization through initiatives such as e-monitoring for needle stick injuries and hand washing.

Can you tell us more about the motivation of this occupational safety initiative and B. Braun's role in its execution?

Occupational safety for healthcare workers has been emphasized as one of the most important components and indicators of the quality in the national health care standard and has been identified as the main important goal by WHO and the government of Thailand to ensure the long-term sustainability of the healthcare system development of the country. However, there is still a gap in theoretical and practical knowledge on the proper implementation of occupational safety at the operational basis among the healthcare workers in Thailand, which results in the risk of developing work-related diseases, stress, and injuries. The German Ministry for Economic

Cooperation and Development is committed in helping raise international health standards in emerging markets and with B. Braun's commitment of being a local partner to health systems, we are well-positioned to act as a link between the medical diplomacy of Germany and Thailand. Again, this is yet another example of our dedication to contributing to Thailand's local health system.

B. Braun is a brand known for quality. In the middle of an emerging, middle-income country such as Thailand, is quality the value that your partners, doctors, and patients appreciate?

Yes, I do believe that the quality of products is an important value in Thailand. Thailand's Public Procurement Act which was passed in 2017 also gives value to quality and not just to price as an indicator. As B. Braun, we want to highlight to our customers that while there is a higher cost to quality, there is also a great benefit to not only patients but also cost-saving in the long run.

Thailand's Industry 4.0 which focuses on creating value-added economy through bringing more research and innovation has brought new competitors into the market, particularly in the medical device sector. What do you see as B. Braun's advantage considering your long history in the country?

Not only in Thailand but in any country the first player advantage will always be a factor. However, when a company enters a market it always brings its own marketing strategy and level of innovation. Of course, innovation can be copied which is why creating partnerships with stakeholders is essential. It is for this reason that B. Braun's Vision 2020 is focused on looking at the entire hospital value chain and exploring how we can find ways to collaborate with our customers. Our strategy is not to sell products but instead provide complete solutions.

As the leading employer of medical technologies in Thailand, what changes do you see as necessary to achieve the Thai government's goal of establishing the country as a medical hub in the ASEAN region?

Medical tourism is a large industry in Thailand, and therefore the level of care and quality of products being used in the hospitals must be brought up to international standards. When we first

launch products in the market they take time to be reimbursed by the healthcare system, but patients coming from abroad want access to the latest and most innovative products available which becomes a challenge because of Thailand's regulatory processes. Finding a way to expedite the regulatory framework is key to attracting medical tourists, and we can see that the government is currently working on this.

Additionally, it is important that the government manage to look beyond hospital reimbursement under Universal Health Coverage since increasing chronic diseases and life expectancies associated with an ageing population tends to drive overall healthcare expenditures up and home care treatments via self Care as we see in developed markets would support in reducing healthcare costs.

I truly believe that it is important that the entire Thai population have access to a good quality of health care.

You have spent over 18 years at B. Braun and will soon be approaching the four-year mark as managing director. What is it about B. Braun that has kept you in the organization for such a long time?

The advantage of working for a family-owned company is that we are able to retain our agility and an entrepreneurial spirit, which dynamically drive our business forward. At a certain point in one's career, you want to have an opportunity to lead and create, and this flexibility is offered in B. Braun. Additionally, personal and professional growth is a key value of the company. Being in such an internationally positioned company with many opportunities to travel I have been able to accrue so many rewarding experiences during my time in B. Braun on many different levels. All these factors combined have kept me loyal to my B. Braun team.

What advice can you offer to foreign general managers arriving in a new country?

As foreign managing directors, we need to understand and adapt to the country's culture. Our role is to be the bridge between the headquarters and local operations, not to impose one rigid way of being at the affiliate. If we understand this and bring along our staff, our team will work with us successfully. A strong leader is important, but a good leader is respected by their team.

Could you highlight some of your key achievements and lessons learned during your extensive career at B. Braun?

Having the opportunity to work with hospitals such as Ramathibodi Hospital to improve the lives of patients has been incredibly inspiring. For example, implementing the homecare chemotherapy model that not only saves costs but impactfully improves the quality of life for patients battling cancer is something I am very proud of. Global best practices were used to understand and design a care model that could be replicated in Thailand. The results from the pilot project show that ambulatory care helps colorectal cancer patients live a normal life by administered treatment at patients' home, resulting in significantly improved quality of life and significant cost savings. This project can be expanded to other diseases to help support healthcare financing for the ageing society. B. Braun's vision is to bring positive impacts to patients and when I can see the results from projects like this one that is what makes me proud.

Furthermore, I am proud to be working for a healthcare company, protecting and improving the health of patients each day. This is not possible in other commercial industries. Many companies, even in healthcare, have a corporate vision but are they really living it? B. Braun is and this is what motivates me! I truly believe we are saving and changing lives; and helping patients to have a better quality of life.

What are your strategic priorities to continue B. Braun's commitment to Thailand and a leader in the medical device sector?

Our objective will be to maintain double-digit growth which we aim to accomplish with the help of a committed team. Our employees are very important to us and B. Braun strongly believes in the development of local talent. In B. Braun, talent management is an important business strategy. This provides the opportunity to attract the most talented and skilled employees available and, in turn, contributes to the improvement of business performance and results. I hope that we can attract the best talent in Thailand to achieve our strategic visions in the coming years.

Furthermore, we will continue to fulfill the group vision of system partnerships even beyond the next year as a long-term ambition.

Even beyond financial objectives, at the local level, social engagement is a top priority for B. Braun. One example of the company's contribution to Thailand society is the "B. Braun for Children" project. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of life of underprivileged children in our outreach program and exploring new ways in which we can give back to the community.

B. Braun is a 180-year-old company and our commitment to care for and serve the communities we live and work in will continue to be firmly at the core of our operations both locally and internationally.

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