Ai Li Siow – Managing Director, Siemens Healthineers Singapore



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Siemens Healthineers Singapore's Ai Li Siow outlines how her affiliate has pivoted in order to continue to support its customers in what was an "unprecedented 2020."

She also explains how Singapore acts as a reference market for the entire APAC region and why the digitalisation of healthcare is here to stay post-pandemic.

Having been with Siemens Healthineers for an astounding 20 years, could you begin by introducing our international audience to your background and career trajectory up to this point?

I started my career working in the environmental sciences arena. After a few years of working as a research assistant in an analytical X-ray laboratory, I switched over to the private sector and began my incredible journey with Siemens Healthineers.

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It has been a journey where I have been privileged to work in multiple positions across different geographies and business areas, which has eventually led me to my current role as Managing Director with the responsibility of driving the business strategy and P&L for the Singapore market.

Siemens Healthineers country managers in other geographies have explained how the company has shifted from products into services, which requires more partnerships, joint ventures, and a different organisational dynamic. Where is Singapore in that journey and what is the relevance of the Singapore affiliate today?

Across the world, Siemens Healthineers is moving away from selling conventional products and services to focussing on developing Value Partnerships, which has been driven to a large extent by market demand. This is particularly true for Singapore, where there is a push for consolidation between single hospitals towards a cluster and enterprise-based hospital management systems.

For those of us working in healthcare, ‘industrialisation’ may not be a favourable word, but this is what is coming in terms of standardisation of processes, which will enable healthcare providers to control quality outcomes, to shorten turnaround times and to achieve better utilisation and optimisation of the various technologies in their healthcare institution. We have been moving towards consolidation in the healthcare industry for years now and our team has had to adapt by repositioning our offerings to meet the needs of the Singapore market.

How receptive are the authorities in Singapore to the kinds of technologically advanced solutions that Siemens Healthineers is bringing forward? And has COVID-19 had an impact on this?

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in the healthcare industry. We have seen the emergence of telemedicine and remote patient monitoring due to the various social distancing measures that have been implemented by governments across the world. This has had an impact on the procurement and adoption of new technologies by healthcare providers in Singapore and across the world.

Today, we see healthcare providers – whether from the private or public sector – are changing their consumption patterns and we have had to adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of the market. At Siemens Healthineers, we have moved from looking at individual fleets to adopting an Asset Management approach wherein we provide active performance monitoring with our latest technologies that help customers achieve best-in-class clinical outcomes and optimise the return on their technology investments.

Over the past year there have been fewer routine therapies and fewer people going into hospitals, but a much greater demand for diagnostics and testing. How did your focus shift over 2020 and what priorities have you put in place to continue meeting the demands of your stakeholders?

It has been an unprecedented year for healthcare providers in Singapore and worldwide and our team at Siemens Healthineers had to pivot and support our customers during these challenging times.

At Siemens Healthineers, our purpose remains the same, which is to drive innovation to help humans live healthier and longer. We will continue to focus on our mission to shape the future of healthcare by enabling healthcare providers to increase value through the digitalisation of healthcare.

To achieve this, our team in Singapore will continue to focus on our Value Partnerships portfolio that can support healthcare providers to develop innovative business models and thereby increase enterprise-wide value to meet their immediate and long-term goals.

Do you foresee any of the changes that have occurred in the last year being here to stay post-pandemic?

The digitalisation of healthcare is here to stay, and we can expect the use of technology-based solutions to grow in the post-pandemic era. Tele-consultation and remote patient monitoring have now become the norm in most healthcare institutions that provide home-based outpatient care. The healthcare tourism landscape will also change as there will be a greater focus on strengthening the continuity of patient management and treatment, especially in times of border closures, and healthcare providers will need to ensure that their informatics infrastructure is built-up to a mature level.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of having a diversified supply chain management (SCM) system. This has a direct impact of costs as we have thousands of fleets in hospitals that operate 24/7 which cannot be interrupted. During the Circuit-Breaker period in Singapore last year, we had almost zero incidents of spare-parts delays as our regional CSML (Customer Service Material Logistics) Hub is located here. This ensures our customers operations were not interrupted during this difficult period and patients did not have to be moved between hospitals to receive treatment, which can be quite inconvenient.

Singapore has a privileged position within Asia Pacific as a wealthy and mature market, home to an advanced healthcare system, and as a standard-setter for the rest of APAC. To what extent do you see Siemens Healthineers Singapore as a reference point for your colleagues in the wider region?

For Siemens Healthineers, Singapore is the regional headquarters for our customer services organisation, in addition to having our local and regional sales organisations located here. We have also set up our Remote Services Center (RSC) for Asia-Pacific in Singapore, which uses the “follow the sun” concept to provide 24 x 7 remote support for our customers in every time zone across the world.

Our Customer Service Material Logistics (CSML) Hub in Singapore serves as a redistribution centre for our spare parts and helps streamline our operations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Most importantly, we have been able to tap into the strong intellectual power base in Singapore through collaborative research agreements with top-notch academia and research centres; with a common mission to shape the future of healthcare in our region.

Siemens Healthineers’ Asia Reference Centre aims to act as a touch point for other regional medical facilities, facilitating the introduction of innovation into the region. What role does this project hold within your operations?

The Siemens Healthineers Asia Reference Centre is a ‘hub and spoke’ model for clinical and educational excellence. This includes exploring new protocols in certain disease treatments by collaborating with industry partners who have specific healthcare or medical expertise.

The Siemens Healthineers Asia Reference Center also serves as a hub to support the needs of other countries in our region. Our Asia Reference Center can provide remote scanning assistance wherein medical specialists are able to access our radiological systems from any location to provide support to the personnel using the system, particularly for complicated clinical examinations.

For instance, if there is the need for a specific examination to take place in a remote location, which does not have access to qualified medical professionals, our team of qualified experts can step in and provide remote access support to drive various clinical examinations in that healthcare

institution. This is now possible thanks to the digital infrastructure we have built here. The objective for setting up the Siemens Healthineers Asia Reference Centre is to combine our technological know-how with the local medical specialist expertise here to support other countries in the region.

Drawing on your long experience at Siemens Healthineers, what are your goals and ambitions for the affiliate over the next couple of years?

At Siemens Healthineers we have seven business principles, two of which guide my decisions within the organisation.

The first principle that resonates with me is “Missed opportunities are our biggest risks.” A successful organisation with a long tradition like ours, believes that reinventing from time to time is a necessity and an opportunity to remain relevant to the market. In my 20 years in the company, I have always focused on developing different business models to stay ahead of the curve.

Over the next few years, my ambition would be to continue to innovate and develop new ideas that could transform the way we deliver value to our customers in the Singapore market.

And the second principle which motivates me is “A day without passion for health care is a lost day.” We can only be successful if we are passionate about what we do. I truly believe that our passion for healthcare is what makes us unique as “One Team” at Siemens Healthineers!

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