

Interview: Dario Guido – Head of Health & Medical Equipment Division, Samsung Electronics, Italy



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26.05.2016

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Samsung is focused on the total digital transformation of medical services. It offers solutions in mobile health, hospital digitalization, and integrated medical and healthcare devices. The head of the healthcare and medical equipment division in Italy Dario Guido discusses how Samsung plans to catalyze a “digital transformation” in Italian healthcare over the next few years.

You have a long career within the medtech industry, and moved to Samsung in 2013 to establish the health and medical devices division here in Italy. What has been your driving strategy so far?

When I joined Samsung in January 2013, my team and I faced a major challenge because we had to start everything from scratch – doing so was a fantastic learning experience. To start, we began by establishing and organizing all functions in the division needed to succeed, but more importantly we established a clear set of priorities and proceeded with focus. I strongly believed that the first priority was to speed up the business and the time-to-market for our portfolio; this is what we have done in Italy since the beginning and with excellent results. Now after three years, I can proudly say that our core business, ultrasound, is among the top players in Italy. Moreover, Samsung Italy is one of the most successful subsidiaries within our organization, and last year we grew 40 percent and have tripled our size over the past three years.

Samsung has worked with partners in healthcare at the global level for many years; has this partnership experience aided your entry into the Italian market?

Thus far Samsung has developed significant experience in the healthcare market through partnerships and collaborations. Every collaboration can give us and our partner an added value and is important to understand dynamics. Especially in this moment such collaborations are key because Samsung's presence in this environment is relatively new. Samsung will continue to work with our existing partners and new partners going forward, but developing our internal activities to provide a 360-degree offer is also a top priority for the organization.

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Samsung currently runs three major business lines in healthcare: mobile health, medical and healthcare devices and digital hospital. How do they interact among each other in the market?

At present, the three business lines operate separately inside our organization; the healthcare business is still a new area for Samsung and there is much room for improvement. A key challenge we face today is fostering synergy between business lines to speed market penetration, and this is where our focus is today. Looking further forward, we will certainly implement new strategies to try to create more synergies also for the customers, to show them we can offer a real value to the market. Samsung Healthcare is a rapidly evolving and strengthening organization, much can and will be accomplished.

The digital transformation is a hot topic in the healthcare community, and Samsung's product portfolio is well aligned to drive this transformation. How is this happening in Italy?

Samsung is driving this change everywhere, especially in countries facing significant health spending sustainability challenges. In Italy, we had a clear advantage due to this timing, because in any crisis you must be creative and develop new skills, and as a new market entrant our organization was at full-speed in terms of creativity and development. Compared with other divisions, we have learned to understand and survive because we have always been in a crisis environment. From the public and ministerial affairs, they are quite sensitive to this approach and this kind of solutions. This is our key point. We can save costs and offer new technology and tech solutions because Samsung possesses the complete experience and know-how, particularly in mobile health.

What is Samsung Healthcare doing to position itself as the main catalyst of this digital transformation in the Italian Healthcare System?

In a public environment it is more difficult and it takes more time because we have a lot of rules to follow and due to spending reviews and crises, digitalization is not the top priority for government funding. The main problem is how to collect money and how to invest in this area. Probably in the future, the Ministry of Health will be interested in these kinds of solutions: we are working to position our organization as the major player in this area to provide such solutions, so that when the time comes the public sector will turn to us.

Currently we are mainly working with the private sector, where we can have a lot of collaboration with big institutes to create a model to replicate in the public sector. We have such a collaboration with the Humanitas Group, the most important private health group in Italy, to digitize a hospital that will serve as a model and showpiece going forward.

How is this incipient digital transformation seen at national level and by the key stakeholders and institutions?

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There is much interest when we talk about these topics, everyone wants to know what to do going forward. People understand that these solutions will eventually change the entire healthcare sector, improve cost efficiency substantially, and more. The barrier is that most stakeholders have only a general understanding, not specific knowledge of how implementation would proceed, and what tangibly it would change.

What makes you partner of choice in comparison to the rest of the players within the Health and Medical devices industry?

In this moment every organization is trying to make a big partnership with a hospital. A partnership can give an added value both ways, for the company and the hospital. The main issue is how to build this partnership so, from this point of view, Samsung tries to provide all kind of solutions. For instance in the digitalization process, other companies could do it but they need outsourcing, they need other partners. We are able to provide an integral solution, the whole Samsung solution, and given our offerings Samsung is the only partner a hospital needs to execute a 360-degrees digital transformation integrating products, solutions and services, all to the ultimate benefit of patients. We also have an advantage to some extent as our brand is so well known; as soon as a people hear we offer solutions in healthcare, people are interested in learning more. Samsung is globally recognized as a leader in technology with high quality products, and this reputation is a clear indication of the added value we can bring in any field.

What are some of the strategic objectives that your division will be working towards over the next three years?

We are pushing to accelerate our division's growth because the company at this moment is experiencing significant internal change. Samsung is recognized mainly for other businesses and this is something understood by the company, but Samsung also has a strong vision for the future. The healthcare sector plays an important role in this vision, and this market is expected to be key driver for the business going forward. We have big projects coming up. We are in an initial stage of a big change in the company.

We have a clear strategy but we are discussing the right timing to implement it. We have passed the first three-year stage after entering the market. Now we are in the second stage, which means we have to stabilize the business and the market. Stage three, which we will hopefully reach within five or six years, will be when we begin to establish ourselves as main players in our target markets.

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