

# Interview: Hatice Demiray â?? Managing Director, MSD Turkey

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Tags:

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*MSD Turkey has benefited in recent years from the ability to engage in local business development initiatives, and managing director Hatice Demiray has prioritized initiatives such as reducing internal bureaucracy and incentivizing CRM use to improve operational efficiencies.*

**You took over last year as managing director of MSD Turkey, after working with the company for 23 years. What was the direction you wanted to take the company in when you assumed this position, and how much progress have you made so far?**

After I took over, the management team and I built a vision, which was to become a billion lira company by 2020, and one of the most admired companies in Turkey. As part of that vision, we defined our priorities in eight areas. One of these priorities is localization, as current GMP certification requirements make approval timelines for imported products very long, save for those that are eligible for GMP category one status.

My second priority is efficiency. In Turkey, prices are very low compared every other country in Europe, yet our costs are the same: we need a sales force, we need to promote our products, and we need office space. So improving efficiencies is of key importance, and small savings add up when you find them in various areas of the business; for instance, increasing the number of doctors sales reps are seeing per day.

Our third priority, which is a key step in achieving the second, is decreasing bureaucracy as much as we can within our company, within regulatory requirements and MSDâ??s global SOPs.

Fourth is engagement. My vision is to have happy and engaged employees, because I firmly believe that happy employees will achieve better results.

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Since the beginning of the year we have been progressing very nicely in all of these areas, and I am very pleased and hopeful that we will achieve our target by 2020.

**As someone with a strong marketing background, what are some of the changes you have introduced in marketing to increase your productivity?**

One area we have taken great strides in terms of CRM tools. We launched a new CRM platform in 2011, and today we try to use it as much as possible – issuing reports rep by rep, and introducing incentives linked to CRM usage in order to improve productivity. We also always challenge our marketers, asking them not to stick to the same tactics just because they have worked in the past: any chance to innovate, we embrace. We have a yearly innovation award: we consider all the projects from the year, and then select the winner. This happens both nationally and regionally.

**Given the unique features of the Turkish market, and market access here, how is the global MSD portfolio reflected in Turkey?**

Of course, we cannot change the pipeline, and the development of our portfolio depends on it to a large extent. However, in recent years MSD has become much more flexible in terms of introducing new business development initiatives. Ten years ago, this strategy was not needed, but today, although we have a great product pipeline, there are opportunities to partner with local companies and add to it. Here, for example, we put together a deal to boost our hepatitis portfolio with products from another company. MSD has become much more flexible when it comes to fitting in with local needs, and this is a big change for the company.

**How is MSD contributing to R&D activities in Turkey?**

Our investment in clinical studies in Turkey is quite strong, and we are currently the third largest investor in clinical trials in the country. From here, we manage clinical research across the Middle East, so we bring almost all new products here for clinical studies, to make sure doctors in Turkey are able to test the product and familiarize themselves with it.

**The introduction of alternative payment and reimbursement models is sometimes attached to localization requirements. What impact could this have for MSD in Turkey?**

Currently, what I see is that the ground rules are not yet set. It depends on what kind of initiative we can have, and how receptive the SGK are to negotiation. They are also trying to understand the types of initiatives that they can introduce. The priority, as far as I see it, is to bring new innovative products to Turkey as early as possible, and I hope the SGK sees this as their priority as well: I hope it is not to bring in products at the lowest possible cost. If we have this mutual understanding, then I think new initiatives can work here. There are very few examples here, but in other countries these models are starting to be used effectively, and we are learning day by day.

**How has MSD's Mothers program been applied in Turkey?**

In one city in the east of the country, Van, there was recently an earthquake. MSD went there as part of the relief program and helped to educate local women there in women's health issues, in order to help reduce the socioeconomic divide between that part of the country and cities such as Istanbul, which are much more developed. We did this through a peer-learning program: by training a set of locals and getting them to educate the population, we achieved great results.

**How does MSD's development plan for Turkey fit in with the government's plans for the development of the industry by 2023?**

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If you go and talk to the government in Ankara about the development of the pharma industry here in Turkey, the number one topic is localization. We are preparing to address this subject very soon.

Our areas of development very closely follow the priorities of the nation, and of the government, diabetes, oncology, vaccines, and hospital products. I am trying to align our strategies and initiatives with the government's ten year development plan: although they are not very specific in their aims, from a broad perspective, you can understand where the government wants to take the country's pharma sector. We want to follow in that direction, and align our priorities with theirs, as it will bring success both to MSD and to Turkey.

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