

Interview â?? Umut GÃ¶kalp, Managing Director, Sysmex Turkey



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Umut GÃ¶kalp, managing director of Japanâ??s Sysmex in Turkey â?? a company specialising in in-vitro diagnostics â?? evaluates their approach to developing business opportunities in the Turkish medical device sector. He also describes how the companyâ??s new reagent facility in Germany will help bolster it domestically and regionally.

Can you tell us a little about Sysmexâ??s presence in Turkey.

As a Japanese company, Sysmex has a very different culture from American companies, and one that I feel fits well in Turkey. All companies value their employees, but it is a deeper held value at Sysmex. Employee loyalty and long-term success are very important.

Our EMEA headquarter is in Germany. Therefore, we work in a Sysmex EMA business culture that is a fusion of Japanese and German values, which create great synergies; as both cultures strongly believe in teamwork, are very disciplined, and have strong organization and planning capabilities. It is a great experience to combine the flexibility of Turkish people with all these aspects and create a unique working culture.

There are also areas of similarity between Japanese and German culture, and given Turkeyâ??s strong ties with Germany, there is good harmony between our affiliate and the rest of the organization. Turkey has also been an interesting country for Sysmex because it is one of the few examples where Sysmex entered a country without first acquiring a local distributor; we established everything from scratch with great support from Germany.

How successful has this entry strategy been thus far?

Very successful; we have achieved aggressive growth so far and it will continue for the foreseeable future. There were some challenges in the beginning, as in every other beginning; but after the first three or four months things started working very smoothly.

What was the reasoning behind the decision to create an affiliate instead of choosing a distributor?

We wanted to become closer to our customers to better satisfy their needs.

What was your strategy for establishing Sysmex as a brand in Turkey?

Most of the relevant buyers in healthcare and in-vitro diagnostics knew about Sysmex products, and many had bought our products before from our former distributor, Roche. However, we were not able to offer our full range of products and services. We are now introducing more value-added products and services that truly differentiate our company. Therefore, we are able to better build-up our brand equity.

How does Sysmex's current footprint in Turkey compare to what you see as the potential?

We're the No. 1 company in hematology while in some countries in Western Europe, our market share is as high as 60-65 percent. Therefore, we see great potential for growth in Turkey. We have a long way to go, and this is the case for most of the countries in the region.

We also have a huge potential for our other business segments that we will keep introducing in the next 3-5 years. Every year Sysmex invests around 10% of sales to R&D, which enables it to lead innovation in specific fields. It is really exciting to have access to these products and the opportunity to be a part of this effort to improve healthcare in Turkey.

Does Sysmex's investment in a new reagent facility in Germany have a significant impact on your ability to expand in Turkey and the MENA-CIS region?

Not just in Turkey or the region. If you look at Sysmex globally, even though it has reached a considerable size, the company is still growing at a very fast rate. We needed that investment to support our growth. Sysmex is one of the fastest growing IVD companies in the world.

As an innovator, does Sysmex maintain strong contact with medical associations here in Turkey?

We have a very good relationship with KOLs in the relevant medical fields, because our approach is driven by science and evidence, as is the Sysmex global standard, and our customers appreciate that. Our goal is to bring value to the market not just through service and device management, but also scientific leadership and support. This is a responsibility to society that we have taken on.

What would you like say about Turkey in general?

I would like to say that Turkey is a great country to be operating in, which has great potential for the global healthcare sector. Turkey is also located perfectly, in the middle of several regions, and we have great relationships with countries across the CIS, North Africa, Middle East, and Eastern Europe regions. It has a very dynamic and young population with great talent potential. In short, Turkey is definitely a strategic market not only for today, but also for the future in all industries.

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