

Rajan Kalidindi Country Manager, GE Healthcare Thailand



As Country Manager, it is my passion to wake up and do better than I did yesterday

08.10.2019

Tags:

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Rajan Kalidindi, Country Manager for GE Healthcare Thailand, elaborates on the innovative solutions which drive delivery of care and reduce operational inefficiencies and costs that the affiliate brings to Thailand as a long-term partner to the country's healthcare system and stakeholders.

You have been with GE for six years moving through different business areas and ultimately what seems to be settling down in healthcare. What it is about healthcare that has attracted you to the business unit?

I am a product of the GE leadership program. The program has given a breadth of experience across GE's different business areas, therefore, I spent time in various industries such as oil and gas, energy, and healthcare. Afterward, I decided to enter healthcare because of GE Healthcare's purpose of "Improving Lives in Moments that Matter" resonated with me. I have now been with GE for seven years, starting in a regional role managing APAC before coming to Thailand in 2017.

What have you set out as the priorities of heading the GE Healthcare affiliate in the market?

I have two priorities as Country Manager of Thailand; first, bringing our best-in-class products or services to Thailand. Second, I strategize how we help our customers beyond technology and services and provide them with holistic solutions that drive more sustainable outcomes like training, workflow planning and more. GE is in various industries and we bring many more solutions to customers which are beyond the product, however, the scale and depth is not the same in every country. In order to translate GE's capabilities to the local level, I had to ensure that the culture of the affiliate resonates with this priority.

In past years, we have done a lot in the market and I believe that it shows. Furthermore, we are bringing unique technologies to the industry in advanced areas such as neurosurgery. For example, together with our partner Insightec, we introduced the region's first MRI guided focused ultrasound system which can treat brain tumours in less than one hour without surgery. Leveraging our global connections and insights into global healthcare trends, we have also introduced new healthcare concepts such as command centres and artificial intelligence to our customers in Thailand.

Thai leaders have the dream that Thailand can be a hub for medical devices regionally. As a company which is one of the leaders in medical technology, do you think that it is possible for Thailand to claim this position?

Yes, I believe this is achievable. I am glad to see the government's focus on healthcare as one of the key pillars for innovation and productivity within Thailand's Industry 4.0 policy. There is a greater focus to support universities and research institutions and startups that will drive innovation in the healthcare space.

In ASEAN, Singapore has always been a hub for many industries, however, I do expect Thailand to be able to precede the country when it comes to being a focal point for the global industry. With challenges like an aging population, rising cost of living and higher spending power, in addition to Thailand's medical tourism industry, I believe it will continue to need effective and affordable solutions which can aid in the management of healthcare costs.

What is GE Healthcare doing to support Thailand's medical infrastructure?

The healthcare market should be segmented into three sectors; primary, secondary, and tertiary care. For government, their greatest focus should be on the support of primary care while on the other hand, the private healthcare sector is focused on secondary care. In Thailand, public hospitals have long waiting times and many patients go directly as a first line of care, so there is a large need to allocate resources create efficiencies in the space.

At GE Healthcare, we aim to provide the right technology at the right cost. Countries in the ASEAN region are typically geographically challenged so developing point-of-care products and leveraging our affordable care portfolio (ACP), for example, are crucial to enhance the delivery of care while reducing costs for the health authorities. ACP aims to reduce the typical trade-offs between quality and affordability and enables physicians to make the most informed diagnoses and deliver quality healthcare for their patients.

Furthermore, the Thai government now focuses on the Thailand 4.0 policy, aiming to create more value-added economy by focusing on research and innovation. How have you seen this ambition take shape and progress?

Developing innovation as a culture takes time and Thailand is currently in the planning mode of achieving this dream. The country is learning how to cultivate an ecosystem that is conducive to entrepreneurs and start-ups by offering incentives and unlocking resources. Working with key organizations in both the public and private sector, I can see that the appetite to achieve and grow is much greater than before. Currently, there is more emphasis on conducting research, building international recognition, and achieving global standard practices. Although there are many parties involved, the gears have already begun to turn in meeting this goal.

At GE Healthcare, we recognize that innovation cannot happen within ourselves and have actively forged global partnerships around research and education in the pursuit of solutions that will bring about the best outcomes for our customers. In Thailand for example, we have leveraged our global connections to support one of Thailand's most established medical universities with establishing a research collaboration, contributing insights on ASEAN patient demographics to the global medical research community. We are also looking into how we can partner AI start-ups and integrate their technology into GE Healthcare's digital platforms, creating win-win solutions for our customers

and helping start-ups scale their ideas.

How does GE Healthcare contribute to increasing education about medical devices in Thailand?

At GE Healthcare, we spend a lot of time and resources to educate and raise awareness about different health areas that can be complex to tackle, such as breast cancer. Cancer is a major health challenge in Thailand and breast cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer among Thai women, affecting 39 per cent of patients. The gold standard of traditional mammograms are not sufficient for women with dense breast tissue, which is a risk prevalent among Asian women^[1]; therefore, a breast ultrasound is an effective form of screening. We are currently working with hospitals in the country to develop breast screening programs for women because if breast cancer is detected early, the survival rate is greater than 90 percent compared to just over 30 per cent in late stage^[2].

As Thailand's medical device sector becomes more attractive to international companies and breeds more domestic players, what is your strategy to continue competing in the market?

Personally, I believe that competition is a constructive and necessary factor for Thailand's healthcare environment and growth. Many companies in the market have similar products, but as GE Healthcare, we believe that we have a more complete portfolio. Furthermore, looking at our opponents in the market, competing helps us to bring our best foot forward and drives us to continually improve and innovate our solutions. Each player in the country has their own responsibility to bolster the market and whoever puts the best technology forward will naturally take the lead.

As Country Manager, you are holding the reins and steering your affiliate forward. How do you cultivate a culture of "continuous learning" and dedication among your team?

In our organization, our number one priority is to ensure that patients can have access to our products and benefit from GE's contributions. Therefore, my top priority was to bring a single sense of purpose to the organization.

In GE Healthcare we are all working towards one purpose; improving lives in the moments that matter. From marketing to logistics, I took time to make sure each team member understood how their role has an impact on this mission, and I am proud to say that GE Healthcare Thailand is one of the priority markets for the ASEAN business. By bringing the team together with positivity and energy, the impact on growth and efficiency is eminent. Looking forward, I want GE Healthcare to be the industry leader in Thailand.

What motivates you each day to continue down this career path you have chosen?

During my time in the GE leadership program, I associate to three things which I always reflect upon; honesty, freedom, and family. Anything that I do, I weigh against these values before making decisions. When it comes to satisfying GE Healthcare's stakeholders, our customers, patients,

and our team, there is a synergy in what is required. It is our objective to grow as a company and the more we grow the more we reinvest in creating the best products, hiring more people, and finding fair prices.

As Country Manager, it is my passion to wake up and do better than I did yesterday. This is what drives me every day. Taking risks, learning, not being afraid of failure, and always looking forward are my key management virtues.

What final message would you like to deliver on behalf of GE Healthcare Thailand to the international pharmaceutical community?

We strive to do better for our customers. GE is a company operating in many sectors, but our purpose is clear, and we will never disappoint any customer.

[1] RW Jakes,a SW Duffy,b FC Ng,c F Gaoa,d and EH Nge, Mammographic parenchymal patterns and risk of breast cancer at and after a prevalence screen in Singaporean women, International Journal of Epidemiology, 2000;29:11-19

[2] <https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer/statistics>

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