

Thomas Scott Birsinger – General Manager, Menarini Thailand

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As the general manager of Menarini Thailand, Thomas Scott Birsinger shares the importance of the Thai affiliate within the company's operations in the region. He also describes its efforts to work closely with both the government and industry to help ensure access to the most crucial medicines across very diverse therapeutic areas, and how Menarini Thailand is positioning itself as a partner of choice in Thailand.

Having built up a wide range of experience across the Asia-Pacific region, what were your key priorities when first coming to Thailand?

First of all, the Asian countries are all different from each other in terms of culture and market. However, they are all growing quite quickly, trying to implement some form of universal healthcare, and aiming to improve the quality of the medicines that patients have access to.

When I took the position at Menarini Thailand, one of my first goals was to get the right structure and people in place and make sure that the affiliate was running well. Then, since our portfolio is quite diverse, including aesthetic, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and consumer products, we had to identify the best areas to invest in and where we could maximize our growth. Once we identified these priorities, we could develop and implement our plans.

In 2017, Menarini Group achieved global sales of EUR 3.6 billion, and Asia represents one of the group's great success stories. How has Menarini Thailand been performing?

Menarini has been present in Asia Pacific since November 2011. Menarini global has a strong interest in Menarini Asia-Pacific being successful. The headquarters have been very supportive of the strategies we want to implement. Menarini Asia Pacific aims to achieve a revenue of more than EUR one billion in the coming years. Thailand is currently, and has been for a few years, the largest market within the region. We were elected Country of the Year within Menarini Asia-Pacific in 2018.

We are really proud of this accomplishment as it is a great reward for the Thai team. According to a recent PreMa report, we are the fastest-growing company in Thailand over the last four to five years. We are presently ranked number 11 in the market, and we are aiming to reach the top ten by the end of the year. In the affiliate, we have a strong team of 220 employees. Thailand, definitely, has strategic importance for Menarini.

What is Menarini Thailand's competitive advantage and how do you plan to increase your market share?

Our existing business across the board is growing faster than each individual therapeutic category and we can continue to maximize the business organically. Menarini Thailand has a very strong pipeline with products in areas including consumer health, aesthetics, cardiovascular disease, and oncology. This year, we are launching our newest aesthetic product and next year we will launch more dermatological product under the "ReLife" brand. Our pipeline and continued investments will allow our organization in Thailand to continue to achieve success and become a bigger player in the market.

Thailand has the characteristics of both a pharmerging and mature market, with double-digit growth rates, but a level of sophistication in its regulatory environment, for example. What are the emerging trends you are seeing in the market?

The Thai market has experienced a lot of changes around cost containment. According to PreMa data, the market has actually been in negative growth in 2019, and as a result, some multinational companies are changing their business strategies. Menarini is invested for the long haul so short term challenges are accepted as we still view Thailand as an opportunity for long term growth. The Thai FDA can be a challenge but they have made some reforms which we are optimistic will help approval timelines and improve processes. Focusing on the right products for Thailand then working to ensure access has to be the priority for all players.

How has Menarini's offering been adapted to meet the market needs of Thailand?

We are trying to be focused on market access for our products when it comes to making commercial decisions. This means we need to work with the government to ensure that pricing is correct and that the maximum number of patients can have access to the medicines they need at a fair price for all stakeholders. We have learned that not every Menarini product is a perfect fit for Thailand, so we have to ensure a product has real potential to succeed here. Looking at patient needs, for example, we plan to launch a unique oncology product to counter cancer pain. We really believe that this novel product will improve the quality of life for Thai patients.

Menarini Asia-Pacific supports various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, what kind of projects would you like to bring to Thailand and which areas, in particular, do you believe those CSR activities are needed?

Regionally Menarini Asia Pacific is a significant supporter of "Smile Asia" which provides free surgery and treatment to children and adults with facial deformities. We initially became involved in

this project as we became aware that one of our scar care products could benefit patients.

In Thailand, we are currently supporting a range of CSR projects. I just returned from a school in the countryside which we have been sponsoring for two years. We take this sponsorship as an opportunity for our staff and their family members to volunteer, which makes for a fun event for all participants. We have also worked on environmental projects here.

What does excellence mean to you and how difficult is it to find the right talent to fit the Menarini working culture in Thailand?

First and foremost, Menarini is a family-owned company, and we really take on the values of our owners. Our DNA is all about working hard to serve our customers by always exceeding their expectations. Our teams do a good job of developing strategies and then tracking the results and making changes when necessary. Productivity is one area where we insist on having a high level of excellence. It used to be difficult to hire talent, but now, since we are well-known in the sector due to our success, we are able to attract better talent who view Menarini as a great place for their own development and career. We have a low turnover within our commercial teams which helps create a stable environment to implement our plans. This has helped ensure our organization has a high level of excellence.

What strategic objectives are you aiming to accomplish within the coming five years as country manager of Menarini Thailand?

In Thailand, we will continue to focus on becoming a bigger player in the market by launching the right products for Thai people. We want to be known as a company that builds brands by developing long term strategies rather than one that just uses sales tactics to meet an annual sales target. By investing and building strong brands we believe we will benefit our own brands, create good partnership opportunities with other MNCs, and give more Thai people access to good-quality, clinically proven medicines. Following these strategies will allow us to continue the success we have had over the last several years.

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