Hans Peter Borger – General Manager, Spirig HealthCare



We are committed to taking calculated risks and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit that propels our organization forward

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Hans Peter Borger of Spirig HealthCare discusses the company's integration with the STADA Group and its focus on generics, consumer healthcare, and specialty markets, including Parkinson's and rare diseases. He emphasises the importance of a growth mindset and a value-driven culture in navigating Switzerland's regulatory landscape.

What has driven your continued leadership at Spirig HealthCare over the past decade?

My dedication over the past 10 years has been fueled by Spirig HealthCare's extraordinary growth within the STADA Group. This period has allowed me to transform ideas into reality, and seeing their success reflected in our business results has been immensely rewarding. A significant aspect of our strategy has been retaining the Spirig name—a brand synonymous with quality and reliability in Switzerland, particularly in consumer healthcare. With its 75-year history, Spirig, founded by a pharmacist in Olten, Switzerland, has garnered immense trust and recognition. In a country where tradition and consumer trust are deeply valued, maintaining the Spirig brand is crucial. It upholds our strong local presence and aligns seamlessly with our broader strategy under the STADA Group, ensuring Spirig remains a trusted name in the Swiss healthcare landscape.

How does Spirig HealthCare’s Swiss operation align with STADA Group’s global strategy, and the specificities of operating in the Swiss market?

Spirig HealthCare is deeply integrated into STADA Group’s global strategy through our commitment to the three-pillar approach: generics, consumer healthcare, and specialty business. This alignment has driven significant growth, particularly in the consumer healthcare segment, where strategic acquisitions of heritage brands have established us as a dominant player in the cough and cold market.

Switzerland presents unique challenges and opportunities. The market operates outside the European Union, leading to a distinct regulatory landscape. Despite these challenges, the stability and conservative nature of Swiss consumer habits create a favorable environment for well-established and trusted brands like Spirig HealthCare. Our business development efforts in Switzerland blend global alignment with local adaptation, tailoring strategies to meet specific market needs. This approach is particularly evident in our specialty business, where we’ve successfully launched innovative therapies and are expanding our portfolio with biosimilars and exploring new therapeutic areas.

Overall, our strategy in Switzerland is to outpace the market in all three key segments by combining global expertise with local insights, enabling Spirig HealthCare to contribute significantly to STADA Group’s global success and thrive in the unique Swiss market.

What current initiatives and opportunities are driving Spirig HealthCare’s momentum across its key business areas?

At Spirig HealthCare, we are capitalizing on opportunities across all three of our strategic pillars. This year, we made a significant acquisition in the consumer healthcare sector by acquiring Antistax from Sanofi—a well-established brand that strengthens our portfolio. In the generics field, we are actively rolling out extensive product launches to further solidify our market presence. In the specialty business, we are focused on expanding our footprint in Parkinson’s disease treatments while driving growth in the biosimilars market, which is gaining traction in Switzerland due to recent regulatory changes.

Can you outline the key trends in the Swiss generics market and how Spirig Healthcare is navigating them?

The Swiss generics market has a relatively low penetration compared to other European countries like Germany and France. The Swiss government has recently implemented measures to boost generic use, such as equalizing the markup for generics and original products and requiring higher copayments from those who choose brand-name drugs when a generic is available. This marks a significant shift. Previously, the markup was calculated as a percentage of the product's price, but with the new uniform markup, we anticipate positive developments in the generics market, benefiting pharmacists and the self-dispensing doctor sector. We are optimistic that this regulatory shift will foster growth in both the generics and biosimilars markets, driving further development.

However, the market remains constrained by distinct challenges. One of them, is the regulatory requirement that generics must mirror the exact specifications of the original products, including dosage forms, packaging sizes, and strengths. In a market as small as Switzerland, where demand for generics can be significantly lower than for original products, this requirement often leads to inefficiencies and higher costs. For instance, if an originator sells 100 units of a product, we are obligated to match their packaging, even if our sales volume is a fraction of that, which isn't always economically viable.

Despite these constraints, we strive to innovate where possible. In the hospital sector, for example, we've introduced ready-to-use formulations that offer practical advantages over the original products. However, the necessity to adhere strictly to the originator's portfolio, coupled with the additional complexity of multilingual packaging, further complicates our operations. These challenges underscore the delicate balance we must strike between complying with regulatory demands and finding innovative ways to add value in the Swiss market.

How has Spirig HealthCare successfully transitioned into the specialty care market, particularly with its focus on Parkinson's disease, and what challenges and innovations have shaped this journey?

Transitioning into the specialty care market, especially in the realm of Parkinson's disease, has been a transformative and ambitious journey for Spirig HealthCare. Unlike our established expertise in generics and consumer healthcare, entering specialty care required us to build new capabilities from the ground up. We identified a significant opportunity within the STADA Group to address the complex and evolving needs of Parkinson's patients, which led to the launch of two critical products—one developed in-house and the other through strategic in-licensing.

This shift posed challenges, as it required a new set of skills and a distinct mindset. We assembled a specialized unit capable of navigating the intricacies of specialty care, a field that is markedly different from our other business areas. Despite these challenges, we successfully integrated our efforts across various business units, leveraging synergies that have been vital to our success. Our unified marketing approach has been particularly effective, as it allows us to maintain our core focus on delivering exceptional service and placing the patient at the heart of all we do—a principle that is essential across all our operations.

How does Spirig HealthCare balance the challenges of offering additional services in Switzerland's high-cost market?

Navigating the high costs and tight margins in Switzerland is always challenging, particularly when it comes to offering additional services. The key for us is to ensure that these services are both cost-effective and truly valuable to our clients. With recent regulatory changes, clients are now expected to pay for extra services, so it's crucial that what we offer is perceived as essential and beneficial. If our services meet their needs and add tangible value, clients are willing to invest in them; if not, it becomes much harder to justify the cost.

This reality makes client feedback indispensable. We emphasize to our team the importance of staying closely connected with our clients, listening to their needs, and ensuring that our services remain relevant and impactful. In a market where two major competitors hold substantial market shares, our strategy is not to replicate their approach but to differentiate ourselves in meaningful ways. Whether through our unique product portfolio, the tailored services we offer, or the distinctive commitment and attitude of our people, we focus on being relevant and responsive. This approach allows us to carve out our own space in the market, even in the face of larger competitors.

What is Spirig HealthCare's approach to entering the rare disease space, particularly with the emergence of orphan drugs losing patent protection?

Our approach in the rare disease space is not about developing copycat versions of existing orphan drugs as they lose patent protection. Instead, we are focused on addressing specific rare conditions by introducing truly innovative orphan drugs that meet unmet patient needs. This reflects our commitment to pioneering solutions in specialized therapeutic areas rather than simply replicating

existing treatments.

As you look ahead to 2024 and 2025, what are your growth expectations for Spirig HealthCare?

Despite Switzerland’s stable market, where growth isn’t driven by demographic shifts as in emerging economies, we have a well-defined strategy that positions us for continued success. I liken our approach to a Swiss watch—precise, coordinated, and effective, particularly in the generics sector. Here, growth opportunities lie in the introduction of new products that are crucial to the healthcare system. These efforts are aligned with broader initiatives to enhance the system’s efficiency by increasing the adoption of generics and promoting substitution through positive incentives, which is increasingly important given ongoing concerns about healthcare financing in Switzerland.

In the consumer healthcare sector, our focus is on continuous innovation—whether that means developing new formulations, introducing different strengths, or launching new product forms. For instance, we’ve recently expanded the Pulmex line with a children’s range, and we’re consistently looking for ways to innovate within established brands like Mebucaine. These innovations keep us relevant and drive growth by addressing the evolving needs of consumers.

In the specialty care space, we are committed to expanding our biosimilars portfolio and exploring further advancements in Parkinson’s disease treatments and nephrology. These areas offer substantial growth potential as we continue to leverage our expertise and explore new therapeutic avenues.

Ultimately, growth at Spirig HealthCare isn’t solely about products and markets; it’s also about our people and culture. At Spirig HealthCare we believe that culture drives performance. Ensuring that our team is aligned with our strategic objectives and empowered to execute them effectively is essential to maintaining our momentum and achieving our goals in the years to come.

Any final message that you would like to share?

I would like to highlight the significance of our purpose “Caring for People’s Health as a Trusted Partner” and value-driven approach at STADA Group and Spirig HealthCare, which is fundamental to everything we do. As I mentioned earlier, our growth journey heavily relies on having the right

people—individuals who are not only skilled but also motivated and aligned with our vision and core values. Establishing a supportive framework is crucial for nurturing this motivation and enabling us to seize various opportunities.

We are committed to taking calculated risks and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit that propels our organization forward. This mindset is essential as we explore new strategic areas and adapt to the evolving landscape of healthcare. Ultimately, it is this blend of purpose, core values, and entrepreneurial enthusiasm that will guide us in our continued efforts to make a meaningful impact in the industry.

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