Interview: Antonio Cordova – General Manager, seca Latin America



"We believe collaboration with institutions serves as fundamental to building a strong presence in [Colombia]"

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Antonio Cordova, general manager of seca Latin America, shares the story of the recent establishment of the affiliate in Colombia that serves as a regional center for operations within Latin America.

You were appointed general manager for Latin America a year and half ago; what was your assigned mission when you took over the operations and what are your current responsibilities?

We decided to establish direct presence in Colombia in November 2015. Ever since, I have been in charge of the operations in Latin America, excluding Mexico and Brazil. The company was established in Colombia with a mission to grow our presence as a starting point for further expansion within the Latin American region. In the meantime, we are serving numerous countries as a multiregional office and building the business strategy for each country of seca's presence in Latin America. Nevertheless, this is not an easy task as every country has very different regulations and market trends. Therefore, my current responsibilities include adapting and creating personalized marketing, sales and business strategy that would fit to every specific market within Latin America.

You mentioned seca is a recent entrant to the Colombian market. Why was Colombia chosen as the regional center of operations?

We had a presence in Colombia for many years through distributors, however we decided to establish direct presence due to the strong relationships we developed with the medical community. I would highlight our relationship with Bienestar Familiar, one of the most important Colombian institutes for prevention and protection of childhood, adolescents and the well-being of families in conditions of threat, non-observance or violation of their rights. In line with this, we have been supporting the institute through provision of patent devices like length measuring systems for poor regions and communities of Colombia. This collaboration has been ongoing since 2012, and we believe collaboration with institutions serves as fundamental to building a strong presence in the country.

What is the significance of the Colombian affiliate in the regional portfolio today?

After one year's existence in the market, we are confident that we made the right decision of entering the market. Nevertheless, we are witnessing the skilled workforce Colombia prides in, which is a significant element of contribution to our success. Even though seca is a fresh entrant, we are already experiencing growth in Colombia and Latin America. As a result of international certification for offering high quality products, we already occupy a market share of 60 percent that we intend to grow to 80 percent by the end of this year. Nonetheless, as Colombia serves as a gateway to Latin America, our strategic imperative is to expand internationally with prime targets being Peru and Chile, where we aim to achieve equivalent market success.

seca's product portfolio can be divided into several categories from pediatric, general medicine, cardiology, among others. How is seca's product portfolio represented in Colombia?

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As Colombia has a combination of necessities and priorities, we have developed a high level, bioscience products, body composition analysers for intensive care units and dialysis centers.

Additionally, we are working hard in the field of pediatrics and providing products like scales, baby scales, statoscopes and mechanic blood pressure devices. Fortunately, seca has a vast portfolio of products to satisfy the varied market needs of Colombian population. Furthermore, we are the only company in the market offering patent software that can calibrate scales in two to three minutes, while it usually takes around 30 minutes. Our focus remains on providing differentiated and innovative solutions.

What do you identify to be your main growth drivers?

Water fluid management system is the monitor controlling the ICU and dialysis centres that retains water in the patient's body and offer them a solution that can shorten their hospital stay. Our current focus relies on helping the patients in the ICU and dialysis by providing advanced technological solutions at lower cost; this is what water fluid monitor represents.

As seca is a very recent entrant to the Colombian market, what priorities are currently at the top of your agenda?

Colombia is currently in the process of introducing an electronic medical record. seca developed a solution in this field four years ago, however, we are now bringing out a patent, a new technology that will enable fast digital integration of our products in every system. Moreover, we are putting efforts into the development of certified technical service. As Europe has had a regulation system in the metrological business for many years, they have been requiring certification that ensures the quality of products at the hospitals. Presently, Colombia is taking this direction and implementing some of the regulatory incentives influenced by European model.

Indeed, seca already has developed solutions from Germany – we are certified by PTV in Germany which is the most important institution in metrology. Our aim consists of bringing these certifications to Colombia next year to offer support for patients by being the first company offering this type of certification and ensure that the right measurement systems are provided in the hospitals.

seca has been fostering a strong internationalization strategy, particularly in Latin America. In this regard, which markets are you targeting next?

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We have been present in Chile for 60 years through distribution channels. As Chile is the most stable country within Latin America showcasing growth, our next step would be the establishment of direct presence there that will follow expansion to Peru. Additionally, we have identified an opportunity in Central American countries due the market need caused by lack of technology. We see our opportunity there to provide the population with advanced technological solutions.

Your main assets are innovation, quality and design. How can you leverage these advantages to build a strong presence in the Latin American markets?

Indeed, innovation is our competitive edge in addition to global experience that allows us to bring the same solutions to Colombia that we offer in Germany, France, Japan… In that way, we can balance advanced technology and good pricing with patent solutions that no other competitor can

offer.

As topic of access is particularly relevant for the Latin American environment, how are you ensuring to deliver innovative and affordable technology to the market?

seca is a German company with long-standing presence being a leader in the niche. We are developing products of high volume and high technology to be able to change the philosophy of offering high technology at high cost. Nevertheless, we offer high volume of products worldwide and therefore, we can offer a fair price for a high-end product.

seca is at the forefront of digitalization disrupting the medical device market. How are you translating this into your action plan to further advance the company's performance?

One of the reasons for entering the Colombian market in this specific period was to leverage our expertise and work with the stakeholders on bringing electronic medical records to the country. It was indeed the right time, as Colombia is currently moving in this direction with the intention to embrace digitalization as a part of the new era. Presently, we are working with electronic medical record companies to adapt our strategy to necessities of the market in this sense. In addition, we are partnering with Fresenius and B. Braun with whom we nurture valuable relationships and work together on advancing the intensive care unit category.

One of the essential objectives of the Colombian government is to build a sustainable healthcare system in the long-term. How can seca contribute to this fundamental goal?

seca has cultivated the product offer that features high quality. Indeed, international certification and the local service center we provide, can ensure the pledged quality that comes along with seca. To be concise, we showcase quality, service, technology and innovation at a fair price. Consequently, this leads to lower costs and contribute to financial sustainability.

What is your personal vision for seca in 2020?

I would like to open more offices in the region, with a focus on Peru, Chile and Central America to transmit the concept of satisfying the necessities of the market with superior and innovative solutions.

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