Interview: Lukasz Korybalski – Regional Manager CEE, Becton Dickinson (BD)

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Łukasz Korybalski, regional manager of Becton Dickinson (BD) Central Eastern Europe, discusses the rising significance of the region as the company continues to grow and the strategic importance of Poland, being home to BD's CEE regional commercial operations and a global shared service centre. Additionally, he highlights the steps they have taken to approach the Polish market and how they take on the company's mission of being the leading partner for all key stakeholders.

As the regional manager of Becton Dickinson BD CEE, what is your mandate?

I am responsible for two areas within BD's Central Eastern Europe (CEE) operations. Firstly, I am the General Manager of the CEE region and I'm accountable for the coordination of all activities within business groups starting from the north of Poland to countries such as Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia and even Israel. Secondly, I am the Country Business Leader within the CEE for two areas; MDS, which entails medical devices and diagnostics and other area: Infusion.

How did the Bard acquisition, made at a global level, impact the CEE operations?

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We are in a very early stage of the integration process. Nevertheless, it is a great opportunity for us to grow and respond to our customers on a bigger scale, with a broader portfolio. This will help

us to fulfil our mission of being a partner of choice, offering wide range of products throughout the respective healthcare markets in the region.

How has the region grown over the last year, and how important is CEE for the company?

The CEE is an area of growth. Already in this fiscal year, we have observed improvement of 11 percent. This is the third year in a row to have such a substantial rise. The CEE is attracting a strong focus and is an increasingly important region in Europe due to our excellent results.

Overall, there are more synergies than differences in the countries I control. I would disagree with the notion that the CEE is an emerging market, as 75 percent of the countries are part of the EU and follow EU legislation. This European support has allowed many countries' overall economies to grow rapidly, having a positive effect on their respective healthcare market and BD's footprint.

The company in 2012 opened the BD Shared Service Centre in Wroclaw. What are the operations coming out of the facility?

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The Wroclaw site is one of the company's global centres of excellence that supports not only the CEE, but also Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMA) amongst others. This is in the areas such as finance, customer service, human resources, procurement and IT.

What is the strategic importance of Poland within the CEE?

In regard to the overall size and positioning, Poland is the most important country, with an enormous potential. On top of that, Poland is the operational centre, housing regional commercial operations within our Warsaw office, as well as the aforementioned Shared Service Centre in Wroclaw.

What have been the growth drivers for the company in Poland?

The structure of BD's business in Poland is based on healthcare worker safety, oncology, woman's health and the most challenging and encouraging sector, patient safety.

Regarding the products coming to Poland, we are part of the European Union; therefore, there is no significant delay in the introduction of medical devices or implementation of business plans between Poland and other mature markets, such as France or Germany.

This is quite different to other companies, which believe Poland is behind in terms of bringing innovation to the market. What challenges have you faced to bring your products to Poland?

We should divide the market situation into two sperate aspects. Firstly, pricing, and this can be a barrier in Poland as the healthcare ecosystem is quite price sensitive. Nevertheless, this viewpoint is changing and during my extensive period in BD I have seen a major improvement and Poland is a lot less price-orientated than in the past.

Secondly, healthcare spending. This area is improving with government plans to increase public healthcare spending to six-percent of GDP, while in the meantime promoting EU and government initiatives. One of them is the Morawiecki Plan, to help stimulate the economy and in-turn increasing healthcare budgets.

Both these aspects are interconnected. When we approach the medical community with a single product, price is considered at first. Although if we come to the market with a complete full solution tailored for therapeutic areas, such as oncology and cardio-surgery, it is a completely different story. Our customers, the government or hospitals, see the value in spending more funds in one sector, and to save in another. The challenge is making these key partners understand our economic models and accept the challenge in helping design a treatment solution that takes in a holistic approach, so patients can benefit in the end.

What has been the key for BD to generate success in Poland?

The key to our success is that we always understand the situation and have a direct approach, good contacts, and are always listening to each and every partner, from top to bottom. This partner, rather than customer, relationship allows us to always work with a common understanding of how to approach each circumstance.

Furthermore, it is always about constant improvement of healthcare and how we can service out our most important partner, the patient. They are the centre-point of everything we do, and sustainability is about treating them and delivering true innovation on a continuous basis.

Poland is a country with great potential. What do you see as the future of medical devices in Poland?

The medical device market is growing, the Ministry of Health along with the European Union is continually investing in the Polish healthcare. Furthermore, as Poland’s economy continues to grow, the tax being dedicated towards healthcare increases in parallel, opening up more

opportunities. The question arises: how will these new funds be spent? I believe that if BD delivers well designed solutions that will provide a full approach to the treatment, our partners will listen and allow us to gain market access and deliver world-class, innovative products.

Being a partner of choice relates to education. How do you approach this aspect within the Polish healthcare environment?

BD is renowned across the globe as a leader in education, and we approach our partners in the market with full attention, and vice-versa; meaning, we deal with government, hospitals, medical personnel and patients amongst others.

For example, a major focus at the moment are e-learning programs directed towards nurses allowing them to learn online how to use medial devices and then share this knowledge with colleagues. From a wider perspective, we are implementing our ideas and solutions at large congresses, with key opinion leaders and associations. Additionally, we are involved in round table discussions and are very active in discussing with our partners all the issues in the market and how to solve them.

Where do you want to take BD CEE in the next four years?

The greatest challenge will be the integration with Bard after the global acquisition last year, and this is the task we are excited to take on. Furthermore, we want to implement our holistic solutions towards therapeutic areas, especially within the region’s major markets.

You have been at BD for 11 years. What has been the driving force that makes you tick everyday working here?

Throughout my career at BD, I have always gained valuable knowledge from my colleagues, and I am driven to always learn. Moreover, I believe in passing this experience onto my team, and the development of my staff is incredibly satisfying. It is very rewarding to see someone I hired years ago moving up and taking on managerial roles.

What makes me most proud is how we have grown in the region, from a company that was focused around distributors, to the leading partner of choice, speaking from a market perspective. This is due to the great work of the team, and we are excited for the future that lies ahead.

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