Interview

Bringing Health to the Community (cont.)

A leading healthcare service provider in Asia with operations in 14 countries, the Hong Kong-based Zueilig Pharma offers services related to the distribution of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and clinical trial materials, sales and marketing outsourcing, patient-centered programs, payer solutions and other retail pharmacy services.

Started in 1922 by a Swiss doctor who emigrated to the Philippines, Zueilig Pharma today is exclusively in the Asia-Pacific region and serves more than 350,000 doctors, hospitals, pharmacies and clinics.

The company entered the Korean market in 1997 when a consortium of local and multinational partners came together to help Zueilig Pharma consolidate business, improve standards for distribution and work together to address market needs. Zueilig Pharma considered Korea an attractive market with a high development rate and growth potential. They opened their doors in Seoul and started providing companies with quality service that focused on cold chain and pharmaceutical management. Today, Zueilig Pharma Korea distributes 25 percent of Korea’s drugs and has developed a number of new services that go beyond distribution.

“For some of these services, Korea has been the incubator and we have been at the source of many best practices in the group,” said Pignatol.

These include high standards in warehousing and distribution services, a system of serializing and tracking over 120 million packs of medicine Zueilig Pharma Korea handles a year, a product affordability program based on the socioeconomic background of patients and a human resources practice in which employees are evaluated and guided in terms of career development via panel reviews.

“We have a more stable population in terms of our employees than some of the other countries because the Korean work structure is a little bit more stable,” said Pignatol, of why Korea was the first country within the Zueilig Pharma group to try this human resources practice.

Taking advantage of Korea’s high-tech environment, the company has also incu- bated an e-commerce service in Korea, added not only transactional platforms, but also online education programs and order-by-web phone apps for pharmacies. These services will be offered at Zueilig Pharma’s other locations in the near future.

With 12 offices in Korea—six sales offices and six warehouses—the company’s 250-person local operation continues to grow. In 2014, Zueilig Pharma Korea added a new entity called the Specialty Solutions Korea that comprises 45 people and includes both marketing and patient care segments.

Furthermore, a major achievement in 2015 was Zueilig Pharma’s exclusive licensing agreement with Korea’s Boryung Pharmaceutical, to launch and market an anti-hypertensive drug called Ramath 13 in Southeast Asian countries.

“What you have potential for is some smart innovations coming out of Korea to be able to be exported,” said Pignatol. Two factors will significantly affect the extent to which Zueilig Pharma Korea partners with exporting local companies: Korea’s many free trade agreements, including those with the United States and European Union, and the Korean government’s Pharma 2020 Vision to develop Korea’s pharmaceutical industry as one of the world’s best through, among other measures, supporting the overseas expansion of local pharmaceutical companies.

Pignatol names top standards and excellent human resources as other rea- sons Korea is an important market for Zueilig Pharma.

“The standard of work, technology, the level of development is high, so you can help use those standards to create new best practices,” he said.

As for the people, the president cites their quality, work ethic and training to be especially impressive, saying, “The ability to execute and to execute fast is amaz- ing in Korea.”

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Zueilig Pharma Korea travels to remote areas of Korea in their trademark pink trucks to educate people about breast cancer.