

Executive Meeting: Pharmaceutical Company

Briefing: You are interpreting for an internal business meeting at a pharmaceutical company in Japan between an APEC region executive and a Japanese country manager. They are discussing how to launch products in Japan including marketing strategies on the existing product range.

A: OK, what's the latest update from the R&D on what is happening on the Health Ministry? So in short, is there any real progress, or has our competitor jumped a cue? Is there much happening, or are we just sitting on our hands? I'm really tired about how things are slow in Japan. I want some momentum.

J: Right. This morning, I went down to the Ministry and I got the impression that the competitor is ahead of us. The government official was asking me rather specific questions about the drops. The amount the patient should be administering and so forth. We need to move fast! I am pretty sure that the competitor has approached the Ministry.

A: Right, we need to get onto Taniguchi-san then and use his contact with the government to get them on our side.

J: Yes, well, I would like to get things moving along as well. However, the final draft we send to the APEC HQ has not been authorized as yet. They seem not to be pleased with the Japanese-style contract arrangement. The penalties are not spelled out. Actually, the last clause in the final draft clearly states that any disputes between the

parties will be settled at the local Tokyo magistrate court. I did say that! Could you please talk to them? We need to jump over this hurdle to move forward.

A: Sure, I call them right after the meeting and get things sorted out. But I could not agree with APEC HQ more! Business contracts in Japan are rather vague. No penalties are spelled out. This gives me a headache. Anyhow, we cannot miss this. You know our enemy is China. It is not about our local competitors in Japan. It is about Japan pushing for more funds from the central rather than money being allocated to China. If China gets higher budget, then they can invest into R&D and they can climb the ladder even higher. Do I make myself clear? I want some concrete results. We need to double up the sales in Japan.

J: With due respect, I honestly think that the expectation from the APEC to double-up the sales within a year is highly unrealistic! We can certainly push our small-scale clients for a top up on tooth paste and nasal spray product range. However, doubling up the sales is something unheard of in Japan. I honestly don't know why APAC is fussing so much!

A: Well, I haven't set the sales targets. I have been given the numbers. We must deliver. There is no time to whine. Basically, I need you to come up with new strategies and innovative approaches. It is not good enough to just keep repeating the same thing over and over. People get easily bored with products. What's marketing doing anyway?

J: We are working closely with the UK brand team. We came up with a new marketing strategy on toothpaste for children. Basically we are saying first time brushing with your mum and independent brushing with your dad, therefore moving away from the traditional age-based marketing approach. Both of these strategies have been

successful in the UK so we will apply these to the Japan market and beef up the sales!

A: Good! UK market is a success story. And we need to apply across the board. You, know, in Japan it always feels like I have to keep screaming until I see some proactive attitude. I like to see some momentum.

A: Well, can I ask you about the follow-up internal meetings? I have to knock-off early today as I meet some people for dinner.

J: Sure. Sales, Marketing and R & D Meetings are scheduled for next week. I will report the outcome.

A: Great work! Keep me posted. I'm meeting my industry contact over dinner tonight. I should get insight into how far our competitors have advanced. Email you later tonight.

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