

## *Scott J. Knoer, PharmD, MS, FASHP*

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### **Leading an International Pharmacy Enterprise**

Scott shares his leadership adventures from living/working in Germany, prior to attending pharmacy school in the Midwest, to building a common pharmacy practice vision across borders that required working successfully with different cultures. He discusses the challenge of developing cross-cultural communication skills such as hiring local pharmacy leadership talent and working in countries that have no wholesalers.

Scott J. Knoer is currently Chief Pharmacy Officer, Department of Pharmacy, Cleveland Clinic. Previously he was Director of Pharmacy, University, Riverside and Children's Hospitals, University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview. He received his PharmD from the University of Nebraska and his MS in Hospital Pharmacy from the University of Kansas. Scott completed a 2-year health-system pharmacy administrative residency at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

Scott advises: ***Demonstrate a bias for saying yes (and do a great job on an important project), and you will be given more opportunity when it arises. Because of the response to this opportunity, you will be viewed as a "can do," action-oriented leader.***



#### *Dear Young Pharmacist,*

Long before my career in pharmacy, I lived in Germany where I worked as a Regional Manager for the British company Wedgwood that makes fine china.

This position required extensive travel throughout Europe, exposing me for the first time to conducting business internationally.

Twenty-five years later, I find myself once again with international responsibilities. This time it is with operations in the United States, Canada, England, and Abu Dhabi. The experiences I had nearly forgotten from long ago came flooding back as

my international footprint expanded. Those competencies include understanding the local business market as well as adapting my leadership style by demonstrating flexibility in thinking while appreciating the expertise of others.

Over the years, I have found success in applying a few universal leadership principles to doing business abroad. These critical success factors include building and leveraging key relationships, hiring the right people, delegating appropriately, planning strategically, setting goals, and ensuring accountability. To be successful across borders; however, these truths must be adapted to account for cultural norms.

***Understand the local market.*** The most important lesson is that to best understand a local market, you must *physically* experience that setting. You have to go to the site and see things for yourself. Telephone and videoconference calls are fine for ongoing project management, but you need to meet people in person, listen to their concerns, and understand their realities to truly understand a local business environment.

For example, doing business in the Middle East is extremely complicated from a logistics perspective. Although these situations can be relayed over the phone, it isn't until you walk into a cavernous medication storage room that you truly understand it. There are no wholesalers in the Middle East. In the United States, we take for granted our ability to receive daily deliveries from our main supplier. We can order 90% of our medications from placing a single order in one computer system. In fact, we could have deliveries twice a day if we wanted to pay for it. In Abu Dhabi, due to local laws, wholesalers do not exist. Every drug company is required to use an agent to represent that product. It is not uncommon to receive a medication delivery 4 months after placing the order. These logistical challenges require hospitals to keep several months' supply to avoid running out of a medication. If we were to apply the U.S. just-in-time inventory principles to this region, we would fail miserably. Therefore, it is not logical to hold our Abu Dhabi pharmacy team to the same inventory-turn goals that we use in the United States. To be successful, the plan must be adapted to the environment.

***Get the right people on board.*** How do you effectively manage a team across continents? The leadership principle of hiring good people and delegating with accountability becomes even more critical when working half a world away. The first and most important key to success is getting the right leader in place. To do this, you must ensure that your organization understands the importance of this leadership position and values it accordingly. If you are not financially competitive in the local market, you will get what you pay for. If you want a mediocre leader, then it is OK to operate within financial constraints that don't allow you to hire quality. If you want a top-tier leader, then you must pay competitively.