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INTERVIEW

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Interview with Sunstar on how the company is dealing with the Covid-19

This interview is the first of a series we dedicated to great companies that could find the time, energy and resources to help others despite having to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

This month we start with Sunstar, a company we are happy to follow since the inauguration of their world headquarters in Etoy (see [issue 10 January 2010](#)).

Can you briefly introduce Sunstar and its business in Switzerland?

[Sunstar](#) is a multinational company headquartered in Switzerland and founded in 1932 in Osaka, Japan. Today, Sunstar is a leading global company in the Mouth & Body Care field - with the global oral care brand [GUM](#) - a significant presence in the Health & Beauty Care and the Environment & Amenity business fields, and a world leader in the Safety Support & High Technology field. Our products and services are distributed in more than 100 countries, and the company has 4000+ employees worldwide. Since 2009, Sunstar established its global headquarters in Etoy (Switzerland) which helped expanding GUM oral care products to multiple European countries. Under the

motto "Always strive to help people everywhere achieve better health and enhance their quality of life", we continuously engage with the communities we belong to.

The Covid-19 epidemic has been a shock for everyone, how have you reacted to it?

Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic has challenged us all and forced companies to repurpose our ways of working while ensuring the safety of the employees and the continuation of the business. At Sunstar, the health of our employees is of the utmost importance. Thus, we supported working from home, banned overseas and other unnecessary work trips, and promoted the use of video conference systems to limit the face-to-face meetings since the beginning of March 2020. We shifted activities as far as possible to virtual and online, which worked quite well since we had already tools and systems in place to do that. At the same time, we allocated more budgets/staff on digital transformation to accelerate the shift to revenue generation through new channels.

As we enter the new normal, we are adapting our offices and



Donation of Gum products in Brazil

plants to the exceptional measures of hygiene and social distancing required. However, we still encourage our employees to keep working from home whenever possible.

Can you tell us more about the help Sunstar has provided?

We have donated over 85,000 GUM oral care products to some of the most affected countries by the COVID-19. To coordinate the donations, Sunstar trusted each local team to identify which areas and hospitals needed support. As a result, each market adapted the contribution to the local needs, partnering with multiple organisations.

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INTERVIEW

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(continued from page 1)

In Italy, Spain and China, the company collaborated with hospitals in critical regions like Lombardy and Wuhan to provide healthcare professionals and COVID-19 patients with oral care products. In other regions such as France, the US, Colombia, and Brazil, Sunstar helped at-risk groups through charity organisations, as many people do not have access to oral care services. In Argentina, Sunstar has developed over 6,500 protective masks for oral care professionals and dentistry students which will help these collectives to keep on with their work in the upcoming months.

In addition to the product donations, we have also hosted multiple educational webinars for oral care professionals regarding the impact this virus will have in the dental field.

Why is oral care especially important during a crisis?

Oral health is deeply connected to our general health as gum disease (gingivitis in its mild form and periodontal disease in its severe) is a key risk factor for multiple diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory disorders. In addition, a crisis like this one increases stress levels, which, in turn, have an impact on our oral condition and immune system. Keeping up with excellent oral hygiene in times like this can help prevent oral health issues from developing and limit the burden on healthcare



Spain: Sunstar has donated oral care products to healthcare professionals

systems. Last but not least, it is recommended to change your toothbrush every three months, but, in this situation, it is even more critical to make sure our oral care products are not contaminated. We must change them if we have suffered from the virus or suspect as much, and never share our toothbrush under any circumstance.

Why was it important for you to do something?

Following our motto, "Always strive to help people everywhere achieve better health and enhance their quality of life", we have always contributed to the communities we belong to with our products and services. In parallel, we have supported research on oral and general health for over 30 years now to help our customers lead healthier lives. This international crisis has put in order our priorities and shown the community is truly essential. Being a committed company, we had to do something to support essential workers who kept our society functioning, and we thought that do-

nating basic oral care products was a good start.

What do you expect in the coming months?

In the upcoming months, we believe communication and teamwork will be crucial as we are living in very volatile times, which will demand quick reactions. For now, with the move to virtual work, it becomes obvious that we should review standard ways of working in many different areas, starting from how we run meetings to operational processes and managing performance. To achieve the transformation, we will need to further invest in developing the right digital capabilities for our organisation.

Sunstar has been around for almost 90 years, so we have lived through many complicated situations; if we learned something throughout all these years, it is to adapt to the rapidly changing world with our mission of improving the health of our customers always in mind and at the centre of all our actions.

Covid-19 in Japan and Switzerland

Both Japan and Switzerland are moving on towards normalization. In Switzerland, the government lifted most of the remaining restrictions on June 22. Events of more than 1000 people are still forbidden until the end of August. Social distance has also been reduced to 1.5 meters, which is a significant improvement for restaurants and bars. Obviously, the population is encouraged to stay vigilant and follow well-known recommendations: washing hands regularly, keeping a distance from others and paying attention to every

symptom.

Likewise, in Japan most restrictions have been lifted with the end of the state of emergency on May 25th.

The recommendation to refrain from travelling to other prefectures for non-essential purposes was lifted on June 18th.

Until August 1st, the maximum number of people authorized for events will be increased if the situation permits.

The major restriction still in force is the entry ban for people coming from 110 countries and the required quarantine for Japanese citizen re-

entering the country. However, a few steps have already been made on this matter. In exceptional cases, such attending a funeral or for a medical reason, foreigners can now enter the country. Japan has also started discussions to lift entry restrictions with other Asian-Pacific countries in which the epidemic is currently under control. While restrictions have been lifted in the country, people are strongly encouraged to be extra cautious. Public authorities are now preparing for a possible second wave.

動向

TREND

Japan has the largest budget worldwide to tackle the crisis

On June 12, Prime Minister Abe held a press conference after the enactment of the second supplementary budget for this fiscal year. While Japan has been managing the Covid-19 situation well, with a few cases and deaths, the economy has been badly hit by a drop of both domestic consumption and exports. Unfortunately, with a global crisis like this one, even if the situation is under control inside national borders, the worldwide crisis will inevitably affect the export industry.

Therefore, the Prime Minister presented some of the measures, of what is now the largest crisis budget worldwide worth ¥ 230 trillion (CHF 2.03 trillion), and approximately 40% of Japan's GDP.

Trillions have been spent and there

will be different subsidy programs covering the turnover losses, rent and staff's wages of SMEs. Subsidies have increased to ¥15,000 (CHF 132) per day.

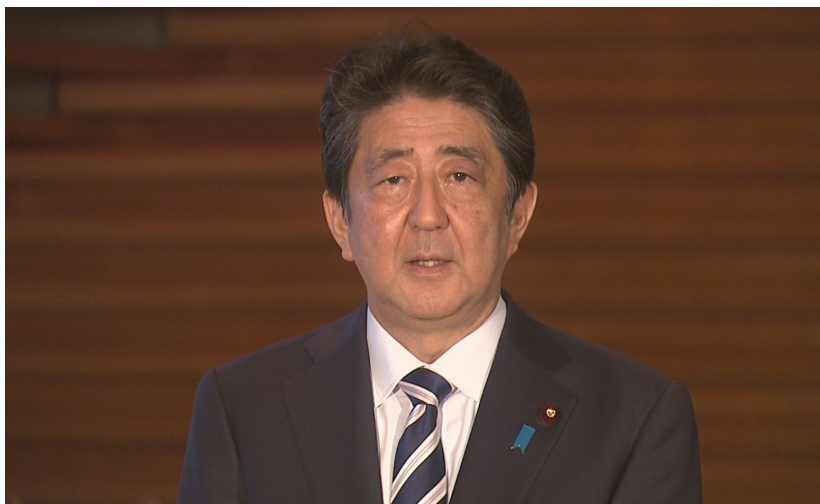
Special attention will go to the medical field. The increased budget will help the healthcare system to

be even better prepared. Healthcare professionals will also be rewarded with benefits of up to ¥200,000 for their hard work at the front line.

Source: [Prime Minister's cabinet](#)

動向

TREND



Prime Minister Abe holding a press conference

革新

INNOVATION

A Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is a technology with a huge potential but also legit concerns about the way it is used.

Japan is on the forefront of the development of this technology and the government has worked hard to put AI on the global agenda.

Last year, AI was one of the topic of the G20 summit in Japan. The outcome was a G20 guidelines for users and developers.

One year later, on June 15, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore,

Slovenia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union, have joined together to create the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI or Gee-Pay). In collabora-



G20 Ministerial meeting on trade and digital economy in Tsukuba

tion with partners and international organizations, GPAI will bring together leading experts from industry, civil society, governments, and academia to collaborate across four Working Group themes: 1) Responsible AI; 2) Data Governance; 3) The Future of Work; and 4) Innovation & Commercialization. Critically, in the short term, GPAI's experts will also investigate how AI can be leveraged to better respond to and recover from COVID-19. GPAI's secretariat will be hosted by the OECD allowing to develop synergies.

活動

ACTIVITY

JETRO's Covid-19 business support webpage is regularly updated

In the previous issue of our newsletter we introduced [JETRO's Covid-19 Business Support page](#).

This page regroups all of the essential information about Covid-19 in

Japan and the current measures regarding business.

The information on this page are regularly updated to cover the latest development. We strongly rec-

ommend companies to regularly visit it. Many tools are available and some might directly benefit your business.

活動

AGENDA

Agenda

- ✓ JETRO Webinar series: #5 Automotive industry: Transformation and COVID-19 impact with briefing on COVID-19 and Economy of Japan
July 3rd, 9am - 10am (Swiss time)
Program and Registration [here](#)

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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