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The vitamins and nutritional supplements market is experiencing rapid growth around the world. At the forefront of this dynamic sector is the American manufacturer NBTY, that owns a variety of key brands including Solgar Vitamin and Herb, Nature's Bounty and Sundown Naturals. We caught up with NBTY International's European VP Boris Auguste to talk about how the business is seeking to capitalise on the growing consumer demands for its products outside of the UK and USA.

You recently joined NBTY International. Why were you attracted to the opportunity?

NBTY International is a global leader, with sales in excess of three billion, operating in a fantastic market. The vitamins, minerals, supplements and sports nutrition categories are rapidly growing on a global scale and there are literally countless opportunities for expansion on every continent. We have an excellent supply chain in place and the people who work here are some of the best I've come across. In fact, a key factor behind me ultimately joining NBTY was the positive interaction I had with the people I met during the interview process. I really enjoyed being able to pair my classically trained skills that I obtained while working at larger organizations, with the entrepreneurial fast based culture at NBTY. Current growth strategies are creating a real sense of team spirit and mutual respect across the organisation. I believe that's what makes the company very successful.

Solgar is a premium brand but the Sports Nutrition brands in the NBTY portfolio are more mass market. Where's your focus at the moment?

My main focus, for now, is Solgar as this product range is the central pillar of our business and our growth. Solgar strives for excellence and manufactures exceptionally high quality products, whose purity and potency are consistent from bottle to bottle, around the globe. The premium quality nutritional supplements are produced in Solgar's own manufacturing facility, using natural ingredients whenever

possible, with a guarantee that purity and potency are consistent. I was previously employed in the pharmaceutical industry and know that Solgar products match the high quality standards in that sector.

With regards to selling nutritional supplements, is the approach different in the UK than it is in Europe? How is the business currently approaching overseas markets?

Solgar's top priority is the health and wellness of its customers. In the US, UK and across the globe, Solgar is sold in specialist outlets, such as fine health food stores, natural groceries, and select independent pharmacies. This specialty market offers a valuable resource — educated retailers who understand how nutritional supplements work, helping customers to make an informed decision about their wellness. As well as being sold in specialist outlets, NBTY works with committed, distributor partners that are experts in their own countries and follow the same specialist strategies of NBTY.

Are nutritional supplements like Solgar as popular in the UK and Europe now as they are in the USA or are those markets still relatively underdeveloped? What are your main target markets at the moment?

The USA certainly has a far more developed market than the rest of the world, but the UK is catching it up. Then, particularly the further East and South you go, you find more underdeveloped markets where there are more opportunities to raise the profile of our

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brands. Our main target markets at the moment are our established businesses in Western Europe and high growth markets across the globe.

What in your opinion is the key to building brand value in the nutritional market?

Understanding the different consumer needs that exist in this huge market, having a clear picture of who you're targeting and then educating the market about the benefits of your brands. As with any other sector, the development of a global positioning platform resonates with future consumers and helps to grow sales in both existing and new markets.

What nutritional trends is NBTY currently monitoring?

NBTY has recently invested heavily in its consumer insights team, offering invaluable information on global product trends. This is for both food and VMHS, supporting the development of innovations to drive the future growth of NBTY.

Carlyle Group is the biggest Private Equity Company in the world; what is your experience of working in that environment compared to the places you've worked elsewhere in your career?

I don't see any difference, because when you work for a big company, aspirationally, you need to deliver profitable growth and give the best return to the shareholder. It doesn't matter whether the shareholder is an individual or a group; it's basically the same. You need to balance the short-term return and the long-term growth of the company. Having Carlyle as the owner has actually made these objectives simpler, because, based on my previous experience, the ability to get investment for profitable projects and generally 'make things happen', is much easier than in a public company; so I enjoy it very much.

What advice would you give to other senior leaders considering moving into Private Equity backed environments?

If you're someone who likes the challenge of growth, then just do it. I've worked in private, public, semi-public and private equity companies and, for me, the latter is the best if you're looking for challenge, growth and reward.

What sort of skills are you currently seeking to introduce to the business?

Technical skills are always in demand. We're also looking for people with very strong commercial drive, who work well in teams, are accountable and can be proactive and agile. I also believe, as this company grows and becomes more successful over the next few years, that the people we introduce to the business must demonstrate humility. There are a lot of employees who have been with this organisation for many years and have worked hard to get it to where it is today. We do need to introduce new ideas and ways of thinking though, so those joining the business need to have the ability to bring new ideas to the table in a smart and respectful way.

Outside of work, how do you keep yourself busy?

I'm married and have three daughters and being surrounded by four super-women keeps me very busy!

