“Operating in Asia is completely new to us”

An interview with Neoss Chief Financial Officer Guy Leaver, UK

As one of the few manufacturers of dental implants, UK company Neoss has not operated in Asia before. With a recent financial support package of £1.5 million from Yorkshire Bank, the company intends to develop new business in countries like Japan, China and Taiwan. Dental Tribune Asia Pacific had the opportunity to speak with Chief Financial Officer Guy Leaver about the upcoming market entry and what makes Neoss stand out from its numerous competitors there.

DT Asia Pacific: Mr Leaver, how is this investment package helping you with your market entry into Asia?

The investment package will support our product launch in Asia initially. Currently, we are going through regulatory approval processes in Japan, China and Taiwan. It is difficult to say exactly when, but our expectation is that this year, probably in the second half, we will actually start to make initial sales. While we expect the growth to be significant, we need the facility for money going out before money actually comes in.

What are your initial expectations for the region?

Since we do not have any sales in these countries at the moment, operating in Asia is completely new to us. We obviously have projections and want to see this business grow consistently over time into something substantial.

Initially, we will focus on our dental implant system, as this is the product segment we are expecting approval for this year. In the future, we will expand to our full product range, including new products we are introducing that could also potentially target these markets. It is not an implant but works in conjunction with implants and is going to address the same customer base. We will be launching it at the International Dental Show in Cologne and other shows and congresses around the world in the upcoming months.

Will you sell directly in Asia or through distributors?

We have already signed up with business partners in these markets. In Japan, for example, we have an experienced distributor who has personal contact with a number of leading clinicians in the country who understand are interested in using our implant system. It always helps to have this kind of endorsement. We are also working with a major distributor in China and will see how that evolves. Potentially, we will put a person in charge of China, but this will depend on how successful we are. If we feel there are more opportunities, we can always tweak the model. There is also an experienced distributor we will be partnering with in Taiwan who has previously distributed a competitor’s product.

Generally, we try to choose people who understand what our product is all about, are familiar with the market and know what works in that marketplace.

For Western manufacturers, the market environment in Asia can be tough. Where do you see the challenges for your company there?

As with many of these markets, business in Asia is primarily relationship based, so you need to become involved with the right people and institutions. This is particularly important in China, where there are a growing number of small private dental practices offering dental care in addition to the large government-run hospitals. We aim to take advantage of this development by choosing the right contacts for this marketplace.

Where do you want to position yourself in the market?

We want to position ourselves in the same way as we do in most markets by delivering a product that is the best there is. We strongly believe that we have a good package. Our company was founded by a clinician and an engineer, so our focus is on delivering exceptional clinical performance and product quality. There is no point in introducing a product that is not as good as someone else’s. Our product has to be that good or even better.

We always want customers to understand that they are getting a value product. We do not sell cheap or offer massive discounts. It is a good quality product at good pricing. In terms of customer service, we aim for exceptional logistics and support. Take Europe, for example, it is pretty much next-day delivery, so if you buy something from us in Germany, it will probably be there at noon the following day. Few of our international competitors can achieve the same.

Thank you very much for the interview.
Google: How to get on to Page 1 in 2015

Naz Haque
UK

The holy grail for any organisation’s online marketing is to appear on Page 1 of Google search results. Imagine how many patients you would gain. How would you like to achieve this without spending thousands of pounds? This is possible if you have time on your hands and reduce online competition through local listing.

According to Google, there are over 40,000 search queries every second. This roughly amounts to 5.5 billion searches per day globally, with a significant portion of this (increasing all the time) being searches on mobile devices.

Google is always tweaking and improving the search factors to deliver search results based on the user’s intent. Therefore, it is understandable that your website should be focused on patients and easy for Google to find and read. Even without a state-of-the-art website, it is possible to appear on Page 1. Organic (natural non-paid) rankings are achieved by being relevant and having authority in the online world, and depend on online competition.

On Page 1 of Google, aside from the organic listings, there are typically three to seven map listings. The most feasible way of achieving Page 1 rankings in your location is to register for a Google My Business listing first. If it has already created a listing, you will have to claim and verify this. Choose the tags relevant to the services you provide (dental practice) and ensure that your phone number (geographical number) is displayed, as well as your address and post code. Do also brand the page with your logos and personalise it with photographs of your team and practice (not necessary for rankings but highly advised). Finally, encourage your patients to leave you a five-star review on this page. This is a very important factor.

Once you have your page set up and optimised, the next step is to establish your online authority by inserting a link to your Google Business Place on your website. Ensure that your website has your contact details displayed. Then list your address details in local and large directories (try not to get carried away) and ask local businesses to cite your details online. Ensure that the details are always consistent and accurate, as inconsistent address or telephone number details will confuse Google.

Citations are a key factor for ensuring Google recognises your presence in your location. As your address and post code. Do also brand the page with your logos and personalise it with photographs of your team and practice (not necessary for rankings but highly advised). Finally, encourage your patients to leave you a five-star review on this page. This is a very important factor.

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Citations are a key factor for ensuring Google recognises your presence in your location. It may be that local hotels, bed and breakfasts, or newspapers are recommending dentists in your town. Even if there is no link to your website, having your address will benefit your rankings.

Google reviews can only be submitted by individuals with their own Google Account. I do not recommend allowing patients to provide reviews using your practice Internet connection, as Google may identify the location and think the review may not be authentic or independent. Once you have received seven reviews, Google will place a number of stars next to your practice name on the map listings. The more five-star reviews you have, the higher your score will be. It has been documented that having five stars encourages a 25 per cent increase in click-through to your website.

That the time period of your business page has been verified and is visible is also a factor to its visibility.

These simple steps will set you in the right direction to achieving Page 1 rankings. Remember the results will be specific to your location and based on the user’s search terms. Google is focused on the user, so if there are seven other practices nearer to the user’s post code they inevitably will be higher up on the results list. Consider organic or pay-per-click campaigns if you want to have a higher chance of success.

“Citations are a key factor for ensuring Google recognises your presence in your location.”

There are no guarantees with Google, but you should always focus on building visibility where Google is looking, because your patients will be directed there. The recipe for success in any business is focus on serving the client, and it seems the same rule applies with your online marketing. Focus on the patient in using the platform is key to everything.