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Hitting The Ground Running – Q&A With New Stada UK OTC Head Mick Cox

by [David Ridley](#)

HBW Insight speaks to new Thornton & Ross VP Mick Cox about his new role driving the sales growth of the company's current consumer health portfolio.

Joining the senior leadership team of an up-and-coming consumer health firm like [STADA Arzneimittel AG](#) that is pursuing aggressively an ambitious global growth strategy would be exciting enough.

However, to do so in the middle of a global pandemic that has ripped up every rule book and fundamentally changed the way that companies and consumers operate would be a test of anyone's mettle.

Joining Stada's Thornton & Ross business as new vice-president for consumer healthcare in the UK, Mick Cox has been tasked with driving the sales growth of the company's current consumer portfolio, which includes household names Zoflora, Covonia, Oilatum and Savlon.

NEW THORNTON & ROSS VP MICK COX

In this exclusive interview with HBW Insight, Cox talks about what attracted him to Thornton & Ross, as well as what his wealth of experience – including roles at Pfizer, Kimberly-Clark and GlaxoSmithKline, where he worked on global blockbuster brand Sensodyne – can bring to his new role.

Q What is your background in the OTC industry?



A I started off

at Warner-Lambert, who you may recall were taken over by Pfizer probably twenty years or so ago. At Pfizer I worked in various sales and marketing roles, on brands like Listerine and Halls. I left Pfizer and went to Kimberley-Clark, where I worked again in personal care categories. There I worked for a couple of years on Kotex, and then I moved across and worked on the Huggies brand, and on premium products like Little Swimmers and DryNites, which was a really interesting business to work on. I was at Kimberley-Clark for about five years before I moved to

GlaxoSmithKline, where I worked mainly, though not exclusively, in their oral health division in various global roles. Probably the most recent was Sensodyne, which is their biggest global brand – a fantastic business, a lot of growth and represented almost across the whole world. My remit there was developing the content that markets could then take and activate against, whether that was expert communications, consumer communications, innovation, anything along those lines. For the last year I worked on the integrating GSK Consumer Healthcare with the new joint venture with Pfizer, on putting together the marketing models across those two businesses and how we operated. That's where I was until early this year, and now I have moved over to Stada, to Thornton & Ross.

Q What is your new role at Thornton & Ross, and how does it fit in with Stada's ambitious growth strategy?

A My role is a new one that Roger Scarlett-Smith – Thornton & Ross CEO and Stada executive vice-president – has been covering for the last couple of years. The remit is to manage the consumer business from a sales and marketing perspective and to continue to drive the real strong growth agenda that Thornton & Ross has had over the past few years. With regards to Stada's growth strategy, it's worth saying that it was one of the fundamental reasons why I was attracted to the company. It's a company with very ambitious growth plans, and driving growth is something I have

experience of and something I can hopefully to contribute towards. But also I was attracted to the company's values of 'One Stada,' which is all about how we work together with integrity, agility and entrepreneurship. These are really powerful values, in my view, particularly agility and entrepreneurship – these sit very well with the growth agenda and it's something which I think shows the ambition of the company. And finally, I was attracted by the company's purpose of caring for people's health. I've always wanted to work for companies that really believe in making a difference to how people live their lives, and that is absolutely at the forefront of what Stada are looking to do. That fits very, very well with my personal drivers.

Q Yes, the theme of values came up a lot when I spoke to both Roger Scarlett-Smith and Chris Morrey, managing director of Stada's Natures Aid UK wellness subsidiary.

A I think I almost noticed it literally when I first walked through the door for my first interview. You feel the energy and the passion, which you don't necessarily get in all companies. It's infectious and I think it's something that you see across all the functions. The values of a company really are important and integrity, agility and entrepreneurship are things that sit very close to my heart.

Q On Thornton & Ross and Stada's growth strategy, are you bringing specifically the experience you have with growing a huge global brand like Sensodyne to this role?

A Yes, I think so. The first thing I should say is that I've only been here a few weeks but I have been hugely impressed by the people I've met and, whilst I haven't been through all of the plans on every brand yet, I've been really impressed by the quality of dedication and passion, but also their credibility and creativity. So, clearly, it's a strong team that I'm joining. What I hope I can bring is a broader perspective from some other organizations. There's a lot that we did at GSK that may well have some relevance here at Stada. There are also probably some things that won't be right but what I can hopefully bring is a good level of experience. One of the benefits of the

role at Sensodyne that I had was that we literally operated in pretty much every country around the world, which means that you have to fit the business model to the retail and consumer environment, while still keeping true to what the brand is fundamentally about. It means that you end up seeing many ways of effectively driving penetration and growth for brands. Hopefully, this is the kind of experience I can bring to the team here.

Q There seems to be a real drive in the company for creating new brands and there are these new innovation centres that are being set up across the world. Is this something that you are very keen to be a part of?

A Yes, without doubt. Innovation is a real big opportunity and an overall lever with which to drive growth. The key thing with innovation is – and it sounds obvious – that we must make sure any product we bring forward meets the needs of our trade customers and, of course, our consumers and our shoppers. I think that if we can make sure that we hit those needs, then innovation can be a great way of stimulating growth in a brand. I think that will be a hot area for us going forward over the next few years.

Q I imagine a lot of Stada's plans for innovation have been totally transformed because of COVID-19. Will all innovation be defined by that context going forward?

A Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has changed everything that all of us do, the way we live our lives, the way that we buy products, the way we use products. Some of our brands, like Zoflora, with its disinfectant properties, are ideally suited to this environment. However, I think that some of the fundamental needs that consumers have don't really change. There's still a lot of people who have problems with their skin where we have products that are ideally suited for them, for example. Indeed, it's the same with cough and cold products or with children suffering from headlice. Some of the core needs will remain the same but potentially COVID adds some incremental needs beyond, perhaps, where we would be today.

Q What is on your agenda for the upcoming weeks and months?

A On a macro level with COVID we're all just waiting and hoping that a vaccine will be found and that there will be some sort of end to this terrible situation that we're all living in. For me personally, my first job is really to understand our brands, our consumers, our trade customers. That's my first challenge over the next few weeks, and then after that hopefully we'll be able to start to put some more concrete plans in place.