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Getting Stuck In To The Self-Care Scrum: Q&A With Kenvue's Manoj Raghunandanan

by [David Ridley](#)

HBW Insight catches up with Kenvue's Manoj Raghunandanan, who recently switched roles from global head of self care & consumer experience organization to area managing director for Northern Europe. "If I was playing tennis in my old role, I'm playing rugby in my new one. It's a new game with new rules, and there's a lot happening all around you," he explains in this exclusive interview. Having found his feet, Raghunandanan is now pushing forward regionally with the innovation and technology infrastructure that he had a hand in building.

It's been quite the 18 months for Kenvue's Manoj Raghunandanan.

As global head of consumer experience organization, Raghunandanan not only oversaw Kenvue's integration of data analytics and artificial intelligence into its marketing and innovation infrastructure, but also experienced firsthand the transformation of the business from a division of Johnson & Johnson to a standalone self-care company.

Along the way, Raghunandanan was elected to the position of chair of the Global Self-Care Federation, heading up a particularly fruitful chapter in the organization's evolution, during which it has published two groundbreaking pieces of research – the [Economic & Social Value of Self-Care Report](#) and the [Self-Care Readiness Index](#) – and united industry around two worthy causes: the [Global Charter for Environmental Sustainability](#) and the [Self-Care for Universal Health Coverage Declaration](#).

Raghunandanan has now moved from his position in Kenvue as a “functional capability head” to a role – area managing director for Northern Europe – that sees him lead a “cross functional leadership team and a large organization across six



MANOJ RAGHUNANDANAN

markets,” a change he tells HBW Insight in this exclusive interview has felt like being “knocked around in the scrum a bit.”

Gratifyingly, he says the solutions he built in his previous role, he is now “putting into execution in the market.” The laser focus on consumer experience, as well as the infrastructure Raghunandan was involved in building, is enabling Kenvue’s Northern Europe business to not only leverage investment in its 15 priority brands, but also respond nimbly to new category growth drivers like immunity and menopause.

Looking to the future, Raghunandan wants to deepen Kenvue’s integration of new technologies, which he says means “continuing to advance our e-commerce and digital-first strategies in Northern Europe, enhancing operations and consumer connections through AI and other technologies.”

“Our focus on improving consumer experiences and maintaining authenticity guides our innovations,” he explains, “ensuring that we meet evolving needs with effective, personalized solutions.”

Q You recently celebrated 100 days in your new role. What have been the highlights for you, first as global head of self care & consumer experience organization and now as area managing director for Northern Europe? How different is the new role? How will your CxO experience help?

A Well, firstly David, pleasure talking to you again. It's been a little while since we last spoke so there's a lot to cover. (Also see "[I&J's Manoj Raghunandan On Becoming A 'Digital First' Consumer Health Company](#)" - HBW Insight, 10 Oct, 2022.)

I would say that, for me, everything starts and ends with my team. That is a common thread across all my roles, my transition and where a lot of my highlights stem from. Previously, I got to work with an incredibly talented team of people, firstly as global head of self care and then the consumer experience organization. I'm so proud of what we achieved as a self-care organization in the last five years, and I know I left it

in highly capable hands to continue that momentum. The digital infrastructure we've developed for the Consumer Business Intelligence Organization (CBI), which focuses on using analytics, science and insights – all driven by data – as a competitive advantage, will lay the foundation for how we make decisions at Kenvue. And in consumer experience, whether it be data driven marketing, healthcare professional omnichannel marketing, or even the way in which we use AI to mine insights and turn them into content or solutions for consumers, we now have a structure and operating model that will allow us to accelerate our growth.

Now, as area managing director for Kenvue, Northern Europe, I get to see how some of the initiatives I drove in the consumer experience and self-care organization are playing out on the ground in the cluster. Getting to know the team and seeing the diversity across our region has been incredibly eye-opening for me. Visiting and actually spending time in each of our unique markets has been very valuable for me to truly understand how the operational side of the business executes with excellence, which is a key to our success.

In terms of how different the roles are; I would say completely! The easiest analogy I can think of is that, if I was playing tennis in my old role, I'm playing rugby in my new one. It's a new game with new rules, and there's a lot happening all around you. Transparently, you could say I got knocked around in the scrum a bit in the beginning, but I am starting to find my footing and I am absolutely learning a ton.

Of course, at the same time it's been an exciting change. Being an area MD gives me the opportunity to lead a cross functional leadership team and a large organization across six markets. I've found that while it is a completely new game, there is an intersection with my previous experience as a functional capability head. For example, across most of our business here in Northern Europe, we have a big self-care portfolio, which I know quite well! I hope to bring a lot of my experience and understanding of those categories to help grow our success. Additionally, from a consumer experience perspective, the solutions I built in my previous role, I'm now putting into execution in the market, so I have a unique opportunity to connect the

dots between our global approaches and strategies to our local team execution.

Q In the recent full-year earnings briefing CEO Thibaut Mongon said that Kenvue will “strengthen plans to build attractive, consistent brand experiences for 15 priority brands” – what are the key brands for your markets, and how will Kenvue be investing in those in the coming months?

A Thibaut, our CEO, has been very consistent in his message that we will build attractive, consistent brand experiences for our 15 priority brands globally. (Also see ["Kenvue Increases Marketing Spend To Boost Consumer Loyalty, Expand Reach To More"](#) - HBW Insight, 6 Aug, 2024.) Many brands across Northern Europe are a part of that core 15, for example Benadryl, Nicorette, Listerine, Aveeno, Neutrogena and Johnson’s Baby. A few months ago, we celebrated our first year as a fully independent consumer health company and as we’ve made the transition to Kenvue, we’ve become laser focused on building winning brands in attractive categories. The key to that is creating winning experiences for our consumers and this commitment requires ongoing investment. This was covered in our recent earnings call; we have now chosen to invest approximately 20% more behind our brands this year than we did last year. That’s a significant global investment – we’re certainly going to feel it here in Northern Europe.

We will also continue to prioritize the science behind our brands. Consumers want effective, data-driven, science backed solutions. We have a legacy of developing innovations that are endorsed by healthcare professionals, and we’ve been earning consumers’ trust through science for many years. For example, our Aveeno product range harnesses the power of oats, which have been used for skin health and beauty to soothe and protect dry, or itchy, and inflamed skin since 2000 BC. Over the last 60 years, we have conducted 25 clinical studies, involving more than 2,500 participants to examine the benefits of colloidal oatmeal across a diverse range of people. The results of these studies have shown that oat-based skin care regimes significantly improve quality of life of participants, providing proven relief for chronic, dry, and itchy skin.

One of our iconic brands, Listerine has also been the focus of more in-depth clinical studies into oral hygiene than any other mouthwash on the market, with over 50 clinical trials exploring germ kill, the impact of plaque on gingivitis and numerous product developments since 1984. More than 30 of those have been long-term trials (six months plus) and each one is randomized, observer-blinded, placebo-controlled and conducted amongst a large number of participants to ensure robustness. Investing in strong clinical research like this matters. Particularly for oral health because, despite being largely preventable, over half of all adults in the World Health Organization European Region had a major oral disease in 2019, the highest prevalence worldwide. The good news is we are seeing some recognition in Northern Europe of just how important oral health is, for example in the UK where the new government has made specific commitments to ensure better access to dental care.

From a public health perspective, sun care is another area where innovating to create products that consumers trust and want to use is incredibly important. We just introduced a new Neutrogena light texture moisturizer in the UK that contains vitamins to help strengthen the skin barrier, induce collagen production, and help to prevent visible aging – while also delivering 12 hours of deep hydration and SPF50 protection. We rely on science and prioritize it as the core of how we provide care – this will never change.

Q Are there any categories/therapeutic areas that Kenvue has not already got a presence in that might be worthy of investment and innovation? For example, women's health?

A Kenvue is already playing in some of the most attractive areas globally. Take fast-growing categories like skin health as an example, where we already have strong brands that have earned consumers' trust over many years, like Neutrogena or Aveeno. We're also constantly responding to changing consumer trends and preferences by innovating and creating new solutions or formats within existing categories. While self-care tends to be a result of episodic symptom care – a solve for pain, a cough or congestion – our experts are seeing the opportunity for it to span to bigger and broader product lines. This includes the expansion of proactive, wellness

products – like those that support immunity. We recently launched Zarbee’s wellbeing products in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region. (Also see "[Kenvue Brings Zarbee’s Natural Family Self-Care Brand To The UK](#)" - HBW Insight, 14 Dec, 2023.) With more than 98% naturally derived ingredients suitable for the whole family, these include immune support food supplement products, which work to support the immune system, as well as medical device cough relief products that relieve sore throats and cough.

Having said that, we will always explore new areas that bring us value and deliver better experiences for our consumers. You mentioned women's health and that is a great example. We launched a new business model called Versalie in the US, it’s a comprehensive hub that provides education, a marketplace, and professional guidance and coaching to help women understand the different phases of menopause. This aligns with our mission as a company, which is to help more consumers realize the extraordinary power of everyday care. Menopause is not a one-size-fits-all experience, and solutions and support shouldn’t be either. Traditionally, there has been a real lack of openness, understanding, and support for women and their experiences through the different phases of menopause. We want to be there for them in these moments.

Q When we last spoke, you said Kenvue wants to embed digital into every aspect of its business. What progress has Kenvue made in this direction?

A As a company, we are really driven by consumer insights and the consumer experience is at the heart of everything we do. We continue to invest in digital and to advance a digital-first mindset across our organization because, increasingly, that is what our consumers expect from us. As you know, AI gained a huge amount of ground in the last several years. The advancement of generative AI models brought the technology into the public’s hands in a way that it never was before, but healthcare experts are just beginning to learn how it’s going to disrupt the industry. AI is a powerful tool and we’re implementing it across our business, whether that be in R&D, supply chain or go-to-market and marketing strategies, to accelerate growth and organizational productivity.

At Kenvue, we are mindful that AI is not a replacement, it's an addition. It's a tool by which we can take all of the things we do well and make us even better. And being better means being more efficient, closer to our consumers and testing and launching technologies faster and more effectively. Our AI journey is strategically focused on improving experiences for our consumers, retailers, HCPs, and our own employees. We also know that consumers value authenticity and need to trust the products they and their loved one's use. An example is our Imodium digital companion – the Gut2Know app – in the UK, which uses science and AI to empower diarrhea sufferers to boost their gut knowledge and track and identify triggers for their symptoms, such as stress or diet. (Also see "[Kenvue Joins Digital Gut Health Revolution With UK Imodium App](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Feb, 2024.)

Our Nicorette Quickmist SmartTrack app that allows consumers to create a tailored quit plan, track nicotine replacement therapy usage, days smoke free, and offers advice to help consumers quit smoking for good is also an example of a digital solution that offers support beyond the product, through digital personalization, that integrates seamlessly into consumers' lives. (Also see "[J&J's Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack – Getting Inside One Of 2020's Biggest UK Launches](#)" - HBW Insight, 24 Feb, 2021.)

We're committed to meeting consumers where they are. This means continuing to advance our e-commerce and digital-first strategies in Northern Europe, enhancing operations and consumer connections through AI and other technologies. Our focus on improving consumer experiences and maintaining authenticity guides our innovations, ensuring that we meet evolving needs with effective, personalized solutions.

Q Will you be continuing with GSCF now you are more Europe focused? If so, what are the priorities for the association for 2024 and beyond?

A It's been my honor to be a part of the Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF). I've been on the executive committee since 2019 and was named chair last year. At the time, I

wasn't anticipating this move to Northern Europe, but the great news is my peers on the executive committee, as well as the board, all voted for me to finish out my term through to March next year. I'm incredibly proud of the work that we've done, including the Economic & Social Value of Self-Care Study. Empowering individuals to practice everyday moments of self-care remains a largely untapped resource. One that could deliver significant benefits for our economy and healthcare systems. Across the globe, 1.8bn physician hours are saved through current self-care practices which allows HCPs to focus on more critical conditions and unburdens health systems. Our ability to translate that to governments and show the positive impact that self-care can have on health care costs, quality of living, and workplace productivity will continue to be important.

More broadly, GSCF exists to create a healthier world through better self-care and is focused on delivering key initiatives that help to support this, like the 'Self-care is Healthcare' campaign. This was launched as part of International Self-Care Month in July and celebrates the value and potential of self-care while calling for urgent action from policymakers. GSCF is urging them to embrace self-care as a vital component of healthcare by fully embedding it in national health systems and policies.

I've also worked closely with the UK's consumer healthcare industry association, PAGB, as part of my role in GSCF. I look forward to continuing to partner with them and their equivalent in Europe, AESGP, to advance the self-care agenda in our region and ensure consumers have access to the products they need every day, and in the moments that matter most.