DTME talks to Mr. Andrew Bennett, Business Developer for 3M Unitek, to find out his views about the Middle East Market and current economic situation

3M Unitek Orthodontist Symposium Transcription

What are the objectives of this Symposium?

The aim is to challenge the traditional core process and to put out some new ideas as to what we think the industry will be going over the next 5, 10 or 15 years. This is not something we would do every single year because the developments achieved are so far advanced that the industry doesn’t change enough to warrant 2 days here in beautiful Dubai every year.

The fact that all these orthodontics are still here and didn’t cancel their registration proves that they are all still interested in these new cutting-edge concepts from 3M Unitek.

It is quite unusual to be able to get this many orthodontics from across the world together all at the same time. Usually at dental conferences you would have a big group of general dentists so it is great to see so many specialist orthodontists, especially with the current economic climate.

How is the current economic climate impacting 3M Unitek right now?

Of course, this is an elective treatment so - ultimately its not like heart surgery or something... you have straight teeth or you don’t. I think what we are seeing to a small extent, and I literally just relocated from the US, where the economic environment is very different, we saw doctors tending to purchase products when they needed them rather than build up a large inventory.

From our perspective we have seen no slowdown at all in this region.

We acquired the Incognito brand last year which is a very high end treatment in the Lingual side of the Market. They continue to be a huge success in this region and certainly in mainland Europe this is probably the most expensive treatment you can have. It continues to be a great success and a great acquisition for us. Even as we operate on the higher end of the market everything seems to be ok – the proof of having 500 doctors being prepared to travel from 40 countries here kind of says business is good - business is very buoyant.

As I mentioned earlier, it is an elective treatment so we always know there is always a risk with any treatment which is elective – it’s not bandages and it’s not tape, but its orthodontics.

You’re new to the region, Middle East and Europe - How are you looking forward in this market?

I have been with 3M and Unitek for 15 years and was in the US before I came here. The 3M Unitek range operates from the very top of the pyramid to the very bottom in terms of price perspectives and quality perspective - our intention is to be able to cover the broadest possible range of doctors as we can and we have done that with acquisitions recently.

Incognito is proof of that. I think you will that as we go forward and expand our range will broaden considerably.

3M Unitek is a business which likes to operate directly with its customers – in 3M’s world this is quite unusual. It tends to be a distributor to channel based businesses, 3M Unitek is one of 2 businesses in 3M that is almost entirely direct. It enables us, I think, to service the customers much better. I think we have 50,000 customers, 14,000 SKU’s – which is huge for 3M – we will keep driving that model forward, because it just gives us a better relationship with our customers.

Ultimately our plan has been for many years to build and sustain the best relationships in the