

# Delivering a difference: life enhancing bathing

Susannah Millen met Peter Eckhardt, CEO of Gainsborough Healthcare Group, to find out more about his background, the challenges of his current role and his vision for the future of the company

## What is your background and how did it prepare you for your current role and the associated challenges?

I have a long background in various business leadership roles. I have always worked for companies with strong product and brand offerings, such as Bang & Olufsen. I regard myself as a leader in transformational growth and have learned throughout the years that a clear focus on the brand promise to the customer – delivered through a strong and consistent product offering – is what will deliver customer loyalty and long term commercial success.

## What does your current role involve?

Being CEO at Gainsborough Healthcare Group is a dream job for me. We have three strong brands, each specialising in a market segment with assisted bathing. I am both proud and humble about the fact that I now have the pleasure of holding the 'Olympic torch' on the growth trajectory and bringing all three brands forward as thought leaders within their respective fields. I am a change agent

by nature and in my current role I have found a strong heritage, pride and professionalism that allows me to move the business forward to become an even stronger market leader.

## What have been your proudest moments in your current role?

This is a very easy question to answer. I have my proudest moments when I am visiting customers (bathers) and see what a difference an assisted bath makes to the quality of life of disabled children or care home residents. In fact, it was from these important meetings that the phrase 'life enhancing bathing' came. We now use it as our overarching strapline and customer promise. I always have a combined feeling of gratefulness, humbleness and pride, when I see what an assisted bath means to people who cannot do what most people take for granted.

## What motivates you on a day to day basis?

Working with my team. The interaction with highly dedicated and motivated people around me really motivates me,



particularly when our joint efforts and focus are paying off. I am proud to say that from day one of having presented the new strategy for Gainsborough Healthcare Group, we have grown, both financially and also as an organisation. This is highly motivating for me.

## What changes have you introduced since taking on the role and how have they been implemented?

The most important change I have introduced is to establish a clear identity and the promise of being a provider of healthcare solutions. For any organisation, the sheer functional and practical piece of work that you do can



Gainsborough Healthcare Group operates a factory in Aldridge, West Midlands

easily turn into an 'inside-out' understanding of what is being offered to customers. The rebranding of the organisation to the Gainsborough Healthcare Group helps us drive and deliver a clear promise to customers, thereby establishing an 'outside-in' understanding of needs. We are not just a manufacturer of high quality, high tech, electro mechanical bathing solutions – although we are really good at that! We are in fact offering 'life enhancing bathing solutions' and we happen to have some of the industry's best experts on our team to deliver just that.

### How do you measure the success of these changes?

Growth is the keyword of success. Many years of leadership experience have taught me that if you don't grow, you will eventually start moving towards decline. This is because the world around us does not stand still. Competitors are always evolving. Technology is always offering new opportunities. Employees develop and bring new ideas and perspectives to the table. If you do not grow you will become an indifferent player. It is also clear to me that our customers also expect us to grow with better solutions, higher value, increased safety and duty of care. When delivering on this expectation, respect and loyalty are earned and with that commercial success is much more likely.

### Are there any changes that have been unsuccessfully introduced, and if so, what did you learn from them?

I am happy to say that this hasn't been the case yet. I've been here for eight months now and we have initiated and executed a large transformation plan. Nothing so far has been unsuccessfully introduced, but some of the activities in the plan have had to be adjusted and tuned to the reality or circumstances that couldn't initially be understood. I am sure that in six to 12 months from now, there will probably be one or two balls that we have dropped, but as long as it is only a few and we learn from these experiences, then this will be absolutely fine and to be expected!

### What are your personal and job related goals?

I am passionate about what I do. I transform businesses and I give myself fully to the journey of transformation. It is my job related goal to deliver the three year plan for the Gainsborough Healthcare Group. On a more personal



Peter Eckhardt, CEO of Gainsborough Healthcare

note, I have recently bought a new (old!) house here in the UK and I am really enjoying the hard work involved in doing it up myself. I am more reluctant to admit that it may also be a three year plan to get the house done up ... (at least!)

### What would your advice be to others who might wish to follow in your professional footsteps – ie what type of knowledge/qualities might it be useful for them to possess?

Thought leadership for me is being able to understand the nature of the business you interact with or are part of. It is the ability to find and identify the strengths and the DNA of the business. In my view, people who are 'inventing' strengths and identities for businesses will eventually

run out of steam as there is no substantial, underlying culture to build the business on. I always start with 'why?' and I try to stimulate my team to do the same. Always be clear about why you do what you do. If we do not understand why we do what we do, we are unable to explain it to customers, partners and so on, and we will be perceived as just another indifferent player. Indifference and not trying your best is one of the biggest threats to any organisation. Our 'why?' is expressed very well in the strapline 'life enhancing bathing'. That is why we do what we do. We help people living with restricted mobility to regain the independent pleasure of bathing – we enhance their quality of life.

### What do you like to do to wind down?

I've got a fantastic family. Henriette, my wife, is the CEO at home! Caroline, William and Adam (all teenagers) are lovely, bright and active children who keep me busy on the home front. In addition, we've got Ziggie and Winston – two English Springer Spaniels whom I love to take for a walk in the stunning Surrey Hills where we live. When travelling (which I do quite a bit) I enjoy running or the occasional visit to the gym. **TCHE**



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