



Making His MARK

With a presence in more than a 130 countries globally, Markem-Imaje is looking to emerging markets to expand even further.

Images by Didier Jordan

A global manufacturer of product identification equipment, Markem-Imaje can be found in more than 130 countries worldwide. The company offers marking and coding solutions to the food, beverage, cosmetics, electrical, and pharmaceutical industries. *The CEO Magazine* spoke to CEO and President of Markem-Imaje Vincent Vanderpoel about how he has tackled the past 12 months, how the company works with suppliers globally, and what his plans are for the future of Markem-Imaje.

The CEO Magazine: What has been your focus in the past 12 months as CEO of Markem-Imaje?

Vincent: I would say in the past year there haven't been any big

surprises that I wasn't expecting. Of course, I had learned a lot in the course of last year, but in many ways we just enforced a strategic direction that we set a year into my tenure. It was late 2014 when the strategic direction really became solid, and most of what I have seen still points in the same direction. We have an opportunity for growth in new markets. I always like to avoid the term 'emerging markets'; I say markets where we are underrepresented or markets where marking and coding for a host of different reasons is becoming more important. In some of those markets, we have an opportunity to grow our market share.

What is your philosophy on growing your shares in new markets?

Global presence is essential to many of our customers. You can

"We have an opportunity for growth in new markets."

- Vincent Vanderpoel

ask the Nestlés of this world, the Unilevers, the Coca-Colas; they will have plants in the most remote places in many countries around the globe and expect us to be able to serve them everywhere in the same manner. So this is increasingly important, that we are present even more globally than we are today. I am a firm believer that to achieve an even broader global footprint, partnerships are critically important. I currently do not have any plans to increase the number of direct operations.

What we are doing is increasingly putting more people on the ground to work with our partners, to support our partners, to have the technical pre-sales capability locally. That is the strategy we have chosen. I believe it is far more cost effective for us, but also far faster. We will be able to deliver that global footprint working with our partners. >



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PERFORMANCE AND PRECISION IN INKJET

FUJIFILM Dimatix, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of FUJIFILM Corporation and the world's leading supplier of piezoelectric drop- on-demand inkjet products used for industrial applications. The company, headquartered in Santa Clara, California, maintains product development and manufacturing facilities in both Santa Clara and Lebanon, New Hampshire. The company invests heavily in inkjet technology, maintaining one of the most capable inkjet R&D groups in the world, with more than one third of its staff actively engaged in product engineering.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, what are the key areas of focus for growth?

There are a couple of areas we will be focusing on. One is expansion of support for our global partner network. This is not just something we intend to complete in a year, and I would say it is a three-year time frame and we are just at beginning. Early opportunities are in the Latin American continent, where we currently only have direct operations in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. We have a huge opportunity in the 20 or so other countries in that region working with our partners.

I see similar opportunities in Asia. We just put people on the ground in Indonesia and the Philippines, which are very important markets, but there is also Vietnam and a number of other countries in Asia where we believe we have an opportunity for growth; equally in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. I should actually say specifically the Middle East and Africa. So this is a three-year plan that we embarked on and we are just in the first year of execution.

The second area of focus—and this may be bit internal, but in every company there are opportunities for internal efficiency, improvement, and improving your back-office capability. The more efficient we are in our back-office processes, the more people we can put in the front line and the more value we can actually bring to our customers. We realise our customers don't pay for internal inefficiencies. So that is an ongoing area of focus to look for improvements in our supply chain, finance, and a lot of the back-office areas. We believe we have an opportunity to leverage more across countries.

How do you adapt to the different business cultures in other markets?

I spoke about the importance of partnering. It allows us to expand faster, but it also gives us another advantage, which is a very local face



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to the customer of a global brand. I think it can be a very powerful combination, particularly markets where cultural differences are large. I think that the Philippines is interesting because its appearance is actually very Western and very American in many ways. I spent four years of my career as country manager in the Philippines for HP quite some time ago, and I can also tell you that can also be misleading. There are some things that are fundamentally different, partly because it is simply a different business environment. Again, partnering is a key part of our strategy for these markets. We actually have signed up a new distributor in the Philippines to help us take advantage of the opportunity. It would be very difficult for us to face if we had chosen a non-partnering strategy; the country is vast, so providing support south to north in very remote places—which is often where a customer chooses to be—is a huge advantage. Again, partners can play a very big role.

How have relationships been developing on this partner and supplier front?

Well, as you can imagine, as much as our customers expect us to

improve our efficiencies and bring them more cost-effective solutions, we do the same to our supplier network. This is an ongoing effort. We have been very pleased with some of the improvements we have made.

You said last time we spoke that you were looking forward to coming from a larger company to a smaller company where you have full responsibility for the organisation. Have you enjoyed the past 12 months with Markem-Imaje?

I can give you a very short answer: yes. It does mean you have to be much more versatile. There are a lot of problems coming at me that I wasn't used to dealing with directly or in some cases not at all in my previous roles, but it has been a very rewarding experience so far. •

"Markem-Imaje has had a long-standing relationship with FUJIFILM Dimatix. Their market strength lies not only in their ability to innovate, but also in their ability to work closely with their key partners. This combination has enabled them to maintain their leadership in the global marketplace."
Jeff Horton, VP Operations, FUJIFILM Dimatix, Inc.