

Emami Names New Healthcare CEO

Ajith B Narasimha worked as marketing director at Colgate Palmolive, spent 22 yrs at Unilever

WRITANKAR MUKHERJEE & SAGAR MALVIYA

Kolkata | Mumbai: Emami has hired Ajith Babu Narasimha, former marketing director at Colgate Palmolive India, to head its healthcare division as the chief executive officer.

The maker of Boroplus antiseptic cream and Fair and Handsome men's fairness cream is currently revamping its healthcare business with an aim to grow it eight-fold over the next five years with 'Zandu' becoming the mother brand.

Emami director Harsha V Agarwal told ET that the appointment of Narasimha is in line with the company's strategy to grow its healthcare business to ₹1,000 crore in five years from ₹125 crore last fiscal. "We plan to enter several new healthcare categories next year, both over-the-counter products and prescription-based natural products," he said. "All such forays will be undertaken under the Zandu brand." Agarwal said the new products will focus on areas such as general healthcare and digestive care.

Narasimha, an engineering graduate with an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, spent two years in Colgate

Palmolive India before which he had a 22 years stint in Unilever, handling both Indian and overseas operations.

Emami has been on a hiring spree in the last few months. Neeraj Chandra, former COO at Britannia, has joined as the CEO of consumer care division and his colleague Shridhar Panshikar as the sales president. HUL's erstwhile chief of innovation, technical and planning Mohan Panchabhai has joined as president (operations) at Emami.

Agarwal said the recruitment of so many senior talent from the industry is to expedite the growth plans at Emami, which has ambitions to become one of the largest domestic FMCG firms in India.

A recent report by brokerage Motilal Oswal said while Emami was hitherto a niche player with presence in categories with low multinational competition and high gross margin, the company is now entering mainstream segments such as face wash, deodorants and hair oils. The report said the reason for Emami's rapid entry into several new categories is due to the vulnerability to a largely seasonal portfolio and ambition to scale up the brand and portfolio footprint.