

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND IMPROVE HEALTHCARE ACROSS A REGION

EXPORT CASE STUDY | SEPTEMBER 2019

Growing a global business with a clear vision, world-class people... and a bit of luck

For more than 16 years, Australian-born company Aspen Medical has been quietly growing its export business to have a major footprint across the world. With more than 2,500 staff across 18 countries, Aspen Medical continues to go about its mission to meet the healthcare needs of governments, communities and businesses wherever they arise.

This company's story is about its people, their professional and interpersonal capabilities. Indeed, in many parts of the world where they operate, technology is neither ubiquitous nor reliable. Aspen Medical's core value is being able to design, develop and deliver the services needed regardless of the supporting infrastructure.

Heritage of delivery in the Pacific region

In late 2018 the government of Fiji announced that Australian company Aspen Medical would be its key partner in delivering healthcare and reforming Fiji's healthcare system over the next two decades.

Under a private-public-partnership (PPP) arrangement with Fijian government, Aspen Medical will develop, finance, upgrade, operate and maintain Lautoka Hospital, Fiji's second largest hospital, and the new Ba Sub-divisional hospital. Together these hospitals service a quarter of Fiji's population.

Perhaps more importantly, Aspen Medical was selected to ensure that these hospitals become internationally verified within the terms of the contract. This will make these Fijian hospitals the first in the region to be operating at international standards.

For Aspen Medical, this PPP announcement with the Fijian government was business-as-usual in the Pacific in many ways – one more contract, one more acknowledgement of the way their services are



Image caption: Aspen Medical provides services in war-torn Mosul, Iraq (2018)

“Our people are our business - the quality and capability our personnel are fundamental. Everything else we provide simply enables them to do their jobs. Few, if any, other companies or governments have this asset.”

Glenn Keys AO, Co-founder and Executive Chairperson, Aspen Medical.

having an impact in the Pacific region. However, it was also cause for those leading the company to reflect on their success over the past 16 years – and to examine the reasons why this Australian company has come to be the preferred partner for governments and big businesses across the world.

Since their first contracts on the Solomon Islands in the early 2000s, Aspen Medical's 16-year heritage of delivery in the Pacific region has also brought a deep understanding of geo-political context and a close affinity to populations across this region. This deep connection to the region has established them at the forefront of new opportunities which they see continuing to emerge in coming years.



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission



By the end of 2019, Aspen Medical will have more than 1000 staff in the Pacific region alone.

The key(s) to success

“Wherever we’re needed” has been the driving ethos for Aspen Medical, who attribute their growth and success primarily to their extensive roster of highly skilled people that underpin the company’s ability to respond thoughtfully and effectively at short notice.

Their personnel roster spans clinical and allied health specialties as well as project management, logistics, security for example, and is detailed with languages spoken, vaccination status and anything and everything else required to respond at short notice. If you need a team to respond to an emergency Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo who speak French, have all the relevant vaccinations and the interpersonal skills to navigate the geo-political climate, Aspen Medical are your people.

At the heart of their competitive advantage is Aspen Medical’s ability to design, develop and deliver tailored and specific healthcare solutions to suit customer needs. This can mean providing a single paramedic on an oil rig off the coast of Australia, responding to an Ebola outbreak in Liberia (or the Congo), helping to clear surgery waiting lists in the UK, or setting up, accrediting and running a hospital to international standards in Fiji. Aspen Medical will bring together whatever is required to deliver a solution.

Medical and professional capabilities are not the sole focus for Aspen Medical, however. Rather, their understanding and abilities to select a team that will work together effectively and who will provide services in a compassionate and culturally appropriate way is also critical. Responding in crisis and often under high risk means finding the people who can work together and with compassion. For Aspen Medical, this is a critical part of their offer, and their success.

Knowing when to say no is also part of their success, according to Co-founder and Executive Chairperson, Glenn Keys AO. *“Being in the right place at the right time has been important for us and our success. This is sometimes responding to luck and sometimes by design. But some contracts are just too high risk for our people – you have to know when to walk away as well,”* Mr Keys said.

Partnering for export success

Austrade has supported Aspen Medical’s export aspirations since day one when it first started delivering services in the Solomon Islands.

For Aspen Medical, different markets have different challenges – and support from Austrade has taken various formats depending on the need.

Undoubtedly, on-the-ground support from Austrade’s market specialists in country has enabled Aspen Medical’s growth. From providing introductions to facilitating government engagement and advising on commercial setup and operations – Austrade has truly operated as a partner for Aspen Medical.

More recently, with support from Austrade, Aspen Medical has expanded its services in the Middle East. They were the first Australian enterprise to form a joint venture with a United Arab Emirates government – and they now deliver public ambulance services across the Emirates.

Africa is another growth area for Aspen Medical’s services. Aspen Medical has been operating in Africa for many years, for example supporting the US government and others to deliver Ebola hospitals. Support from the Australian Government helped to grow awareness and recognition of Aspen Medical’s capabilities – leading to more work in the region.

Aspen Medical’s success in delivering services has led to recognition far and wide – including at home, where they won the 2018 Australian National Exporter of the Year award. The company is now in an exciting phase of growth and impact – they will continue to capitalise on their people and their know-how to make a difference to healthcare both at home, and *wherever they’re needed*.

About Austrade

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission – Austrade – contributes to Australia’s economic prosperity by helping Australian businesses, education institutions, tourism operators, governments and citizens as they:

- › develop international markets
- › win productive foreign direct investment
- › promote international education
- › strengthen Australia’s tourism industry
- › seek consular and passport services.

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