



“At Cencora, we see the DSCSA as an opportunity. It will increase the quality of healthcare and demonstrates the essential nature of pharmaceutical wholesalers in the supply chain.”

Heather Zenk
President of Supply Chain & Distribution Services
Cencora

Pick-it-Easy

CENCORA X KNAPP

Shared values and an unmatched
commitment to innovation

Cencora is a worldwide leader in pharmaceutical solutions and has shared a close partnership with KNAPP for many years. Against the backdrop of changing legal frameworks and technological progress in the pharmaceutical supply chain, both companies have continued to evolve, combining their efforts to deliver top performance and medical supply centered on patients. We invited Heather Zenk, President of Supply Chain & Distribution Services at Cencora, to our headquarters, where we talked about innovation, the significance of automation and the imminent introduction of the DSCSA.

The Cencora brand has only recently been established on the market – in 2023 to be specific. Could you tell us what’s behind the brand?

Yes, that’s right. Back in 2001, Amerisource and Bergen Brunswig – two giant pharmaceutical companies in the United States – merged to become AmerisourceBergen. We have continued to grow since then, becoming a global healthcare company, which meant it was time for a new name, one that would better reflect our purpose on a global scale. And so Cencora was born. The name is closely related to the meanings of “core”, “center” and “heart”, reminding us that our endeavors always center on our customers, their patients and our team members.

You are President of Supply Chain & Distribution Services for a business that generates an annual turnover of USD 262 billion and ships an average of 6.7 million products to customers daily. What are your main tasks?

I studied pharmaceutical sciences, earned my PhD in the field and started working at Cencora in 2000. I’ve been responsible for the entire US supply chain for three years now. My team and I coordinate and manage stock at our manufacturers and operate 52 distribution centers with all the logistical challenges. We also provide logistics services and solutions for manufacturers using our internal experts.

Cencora and KNAPP have been working together for almost 25 years. How would you characterize this long-standing partnership?

For years, we have shared many common values and strategic objectives. At Cencora, we want to be innovative and create a healthier future, and this is only possible in tandem with an innovative partner who is willing to make the paradigm shift and for whom quality takes utmost priority. We trust each other because we do what we say and say what we do. If our strategic objectives change, we are honest about it and give each other the time needed to adjust to the new situation.

You’ve achieved numerous milestones with KNAPP – which one means the most to you?

Our work together concerning serialization continues to this day. Ten years ago, we decided that every single package we sell needs to be labeled with a serial number. Using serial numbers would allow us to simply push a button to find out where an item is as it moves through the supply chain, both coming in from the manufacturer and going out to our customers. This was no mean feat considering our standardized packaging for medicine consists of vials.

How important are innovation and automation in your sector?

I’m convinced that digitalizing the supply chain, creating digital processes and cybersecurity are omnipresent topics we all need to face. The things we do digitally often improve and accelerate our services, which health care facilities, caregivers and patients greatly appreciate. We pick, pack, ship and complete orders overnight – 98 % of the medicines arrive between

10 a.m. and 12 p.m. the next day. To achieve this, it is essential that orders are processed in the right quality, precisely, efficiently, and quickly. Automation makes this possible. Last night, for instance, we sold 4.8 million units. A throughput of this magnitude can only be achieved with the help of cutting-edge automation technology.

Cencora addressed serialization very early on. The DSCSA will come into full effect for the US in November 2024. How is Cencora preparing?

We have proactively prepared for it by making significant investments in different technologies and changing our operations so we can comply with the regulation. For us, it's important to work with partners and associations in the industry as well as with the FDA so that the supply chain can continue to work smoothly and patients are supplied with medicine.

At Cencora, we invested in warehouse equipment, system technologies and scanners that read 2D barcodes effectively and have implemented processes that ensure the authenticity and traceability of pharmaceutical products. Our goal is to comply with the DSCSA requirements while maintaining efficient medicine distribution and without compromising patient safety or access to medicine.

Since we have been preparing for the DSCSA for decades – also together with KNAPP – Cencora is absolutely ready for the upcoming start date in November.

Thanks for talking with us!



Heather Zenk
President of Supply Chain &
Distribution Service
Cencora



CENCORA

Pharmaceutical wholesaler and globally active healthcare company currently licensed and operating its US distribution services as AmerisourceBergen

1,300 locations worldwide in
more than **50 countries**

Annually:
USD 262 billion

More than
46,000 employees

Rank 11 on the Fortune 500