



in Action

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From One to Twenty: How CSafe Became a Leader in the Pharma Cold Chain

In the world of pharmaceutical logistics, maintaining the precise temperature of biologically based therapies like the Covid vaccine is mission critical. Even minor temperature fluctuations can compromise the efficacy of life-saving drugs.

CSafe, a leading provider of cold chain shipping solutions, ensures that pharmaceutical products reach their destination without deviation from required temperature set points. Its cutting-edge technology and high-quality service have made it a trusted name in the industry.

At the launch of THL's partnership in 2016, however, CSafe faced a significant challenge: it had an industry-leading product but lacked the infrastructure and go-to-market (GTM) capabilities to scale. Of the top 20 global pharmaceutical companies, only one was a customer.

THL's investment in CSafe in 2016 was about more than just capital—it was about providing operational leverage to help the company's management team build out GTM capabilities and significantly expand its customer base.

Reengineering CSafe's Go-to-Market Strategy

Ten years ago, CSafe had a small sales team and no dedicated sales operations function. Much of its business came from word-of-mouth referrals.

THL's Strategic Resource Group (SRG), an in-house team of operating experts, collaborated closely with management to build a robust GTM strategy. This partnership enabled CSafe to transition from a small but highly respected player, into an industry powerhouse serving 20 of the world's top 20 global pharmaceutical companies.



Identifying Key Accounts and Market Segmentation

THL helped CSafe segment and target its customer base, identifying the top 20 pharmaceutical companies as primary accounts. The team developed detailed account plans and assigned dedicated teams to manage relationships with these high-value customers. By focusing on a structured, data-driven approach, CSafe was able to create a targeted pipeline and prioritize key accounts with the highest potential for growth.



Enhancing the Commercial Team

To execute this new strategy, CSafe needed a more robust sales infrastructure. THL supported CSafe in expanding its leadership team, adding key roles such as a Chief Operating Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, and Head of HR. Additionally, the sales team benefited from new account managers who specialized in managing relationships with freight forwarders—the key intermediaries in CSafe's complex sales process. This dual-focus approach allowed CSafe to engage both its end customers (pharmaceutical companies) and the intermediaries responsible for logistics and delivery.



Implementing a Sales Operations Function

CSafe lacked a dedicated sales opps function, which made it difficult to track performance, measure pipeline health, and enforce best practices. Together, THL and management built this critical function. The team introduced Salesforce as a CRM tool and implemented sales enablement training, leveraging best practices from other THL portfolio companies such as Syneos Health. This structure improved visibility into sales performance and enabled CSafe's commercial team to operate more efficiently.



Aligning Incentives with Growth Strategy

Another key initiative was restructuring sales commission plans to align with CSafe's growth objectives. By designing incentives that rewarded strategic account expansion and customer penetration, THL and management ensured that the sales team was incentivized to pursue high-value deals.



Adding a New Sales Channel

One of the unique components of CSafe's business model is its partnership with freight forwarders to facilitate sales to pharmaceutical companies. Recognizing the importance of their intermediary role, CSafe created a new sales channel specifically focused on freight forwarders. They onboarded dedicated account managers to cultivate relationships with these logistics partners, which led to a significant increase in volume. By developing a new pipeline through this initiative, CSafe was able to drive substantial growth.



Results: From One to Twenty

The company's transformation yielded strong results:



Expanded customer base

CSafe grew from serving just one of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies to serving all 20 of them.



Growth

The company achieved critical revenue and EBITDA growth, demonstrating the efficacy of enhanced operational efficiency and sales effectiveness.



New product launches

In addition to expanding its customer base, CSafe introduced new solutions such as APP passive shipping solutions, further broadening its market offering.

A Culture of Collaboration

Throughout CSafe's transformation, THL played a hands-on role in supporting the company's success. The SRG team worked closely with the CSafe team, providing operational leverage at every step.

As Patrick Schafer, CEO, CSafe, put it

“The SRG team along with the investment team really were my partners from the get-go. The investments and discussions we had early on set the path for our success today.”

This collaborative approach extended beyond THL's direct involvement. By bringing industry experts onto CSafe's board and leveraging insights from THL's deep industry experience, THL ensured that CSafe had access to best-in-class resources for growth.



Lessons Learned: Scaling for Success

CSafe's journey offers valuable lessons for other companies looking to scale within complex B2B industries:



Structured Sales Processes Are Critical:

A disciplined, data-driven GTM strategy can transform a company's ability to capture market share.



Talent Drives Growth:

Supporting strong leadership teams is essential for executing high-growth strategies.



Multi-Channel Sales Strategies Work:

Engaging all key stakeholders in the sales process, including intermediaries, can dramatically increase deal volume.



Operational Excellence Fuels Expansion:

Implementing sales operations functions and CRM tools enhances efficiency and visibility into performance.

Conclusion

CSafe's transformation is a testament to the power of strategic partnerships and structured GTM execution. Working closely with THL, CSafe scaled its commercial function, optimized sales operations, and penetrated the global pharmaceutical market.

For companies looking to achieve similar success, CSafe's story serves as a compelling example of how a well-executed GTM strategy can turn a respected industry player into a global industry force.

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