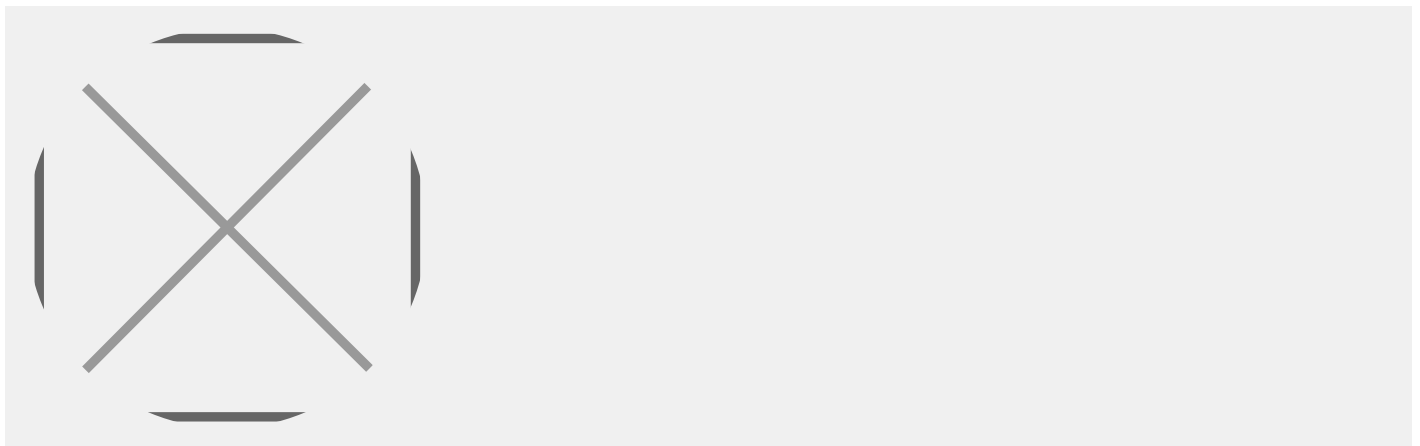


# Interview with Bednarz Bartosz, General Manager, AstraZeneca Poland

---



29.07.2012

Tags: [AstraZeneca Poland](#)

---

**You have been quite recently appointed at the head of the Polish affiliate of AstraZeneca. With which personal ambitions did you come and what was the mission you were given when you took office?**

I would not say that I have been given a mission, but that I have been given a chance to develop a vision as a leader. The mission that we have built together over the last five months is naturally to be at the top of the lists among the pharmaceutical companies in Poland in terms of growth and size of sales, but also because of the number of patients we can help by providing our medicines. The affiliate has the ambition to grow at least twice as fast as the market. One of my objectives as the head of AstraZeneca Poland is for the company to get recognized for its value. Our industry has typically struggled in the past in terms of perception. The industry has not been effective in building a reputation and explaining its value to all different stakeholders. For that purpose, it is necessary to get to the bottom to why the industry actually exists. Like any business, pharmaceutical companies would not be there if there was not a clear pronounced need. This need is very special – as it is health.

**To what extent is the company's strategy aligned today with the market requests and the regulatory environment?**

AstraZeneca is recognizing some of the complex issues healthcare stakeholders are facing in Poland. Our goal is to build bridges between them for the benefit of patients. The main challenge is patient's access to innovative medicines and this is our focus. This area has changed significantly

over the last few years. Today companies do much more to fully understand payers and regulators to respond their needs and to be able to better demonstrate the value of medicines. To improve market access for patients' benefit, the industry must act as being part of the solution.

I believe that collaboration and partnering with payers and regulators to bring health care solutions beyond just products will be critical.

We have built such mindset already and would like to use available good practices of such trusted collaboration from other countries.

**It is not only about market restrictions. Robert Dahan of AstraZeneca France, interviewed in 2009, talked about the difficulties of bringing new medications to the market as a worldwide issue where companies have been too optimistic in their belief of biotechnologies and their ability to develop new drugs. "Time and money are the only two inputs, therefore if you have a good drug, it will receive market authorization at the end of the day." How does the pipeline of AstraZeneca look like to ensure future profitability?**

Apart from what the industry thinks about its pipeline, it is interesting to observe evolution in how payers started to view innovation within healthcare. They are willing to pay for products and solutions that significantly change the course of a disease clearly improving patient outcomes and at the same time are cost effective.

It is also the case here in Poland, where payer has had access to generics faster than in other markets.

With many generics available innovative industry faces unique challenges.

AstraZeneca like many other pharmaceutical companies understands that payers would like to pay for health outcomes and focused its R&D on developing medicines more individualized, tailored to the patients. Gefitinib for instance, a product for the treatment of lung cancer is dedicated to very specific types of patients with very specific mutation. This product will work for this type of patients and not for the others.

Unlike in the past today's clinical trials are designed in a way that specific patient types are predefined upfront to achieve maximum efficacy of a product. This is also the first opportunity to obtain input from regulators and payers. This is narrowing target patient population, improving outcomes and increases probability of future reimbursement.

I believe this is the approach that will gain support from all involved stakeholders.

**However personalized medicine is often highly priced. Do you think this type of approach of medicine will match the Polish demand, even though studies show that a part of the population needs to cut down on its health expenditures?**

Yes I do.

One has to take a look at overall healthcare picture in Poland.

Current % of GDP spend on healthcare in Poland compared to other surrounding countries combined with growing economy indicate that this area will require more resources moving forward. In addition it is expected that alternative insurance system will be implemented in foreseeable future.

Catching up with developed countries Poland is seeking for the right balance in many areas including health care.

Irrespectively of the country, payers will always face challenges with optimising their spend but individualized medicines while economically improving patient outcomes will help them reduce impact on their budgets.

**AstraZeneca has a diverse pipeline, both in specialty care, with the central nervous system (CNS) and oncology as the two main areas of focus, and in primary care. Which areas have been driving the growth in 2010?**

We discover, develop, manufacture and market prescription medicines for six important areas of healthcare, which include some of the world's most serious illnesses: cancer, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, infection, neuroscience, and respiratory and inflammation.

AstraZeneca's portfolio in Poland is slightly different then AstraZeneca's in other countries especially in Western Europe. Some of the products reached maturity in those countries may be in the launch or growth phase in Poland due to late launch followed by reimbursement.

In 2010 primary care products fuelled our growth, especially products within our respiratory and cardiovascular franchises. Our specialty business is strong, however more exposed to generic competition while newer products are not yet reimbursed. This is our key challenge.

**How did you perform overall in 2010?**

According to IMS data in 2010 AstraZeneca was actually one of the fastest growing companies in Poland.

**What is the importance of Poland for the group?**

Poland is a medium-sized country, situated in our CEEMEA Region – Central Europe, Middle East and Africa, which is characterized by very dynamic growth. Within this region, Poland is one of the top markets in terms of size. The country can be considered as a 'sleeping giant', when looking at the overall population, the economic growth, and the fact it is now an European Union (EU) member.

Given its size and population, one could expect that Poland should somehow get closer to Spain in terms of the size of the pharmaceutical market. I hope that given all developments in Poland the gap between those two countries will get smaller – this will also include health care.

We did not observe such growth of pharmaceuticals in Poland like we did in the 1990s in Western Countries. Given current global and local financial circumstances – we probably should not expect to see that in the near future, because Poland, like many other countries, is aiming to implement a number of cost containment measures also within health care.

**Today it seems that Poland attracts a lot of attention from the headquarters), if we look at the investments being made in Poland. At the end of January 2011, AstraZeneca announced the building of a global clinical operational centre in Poland from which global clinical studies will be managed and delivered and which will be of strategic importance for AstraZeneca worldwide. Why was Poland chosen?**

Poland has played a leading role within the region in this area and very significant globally. I mentioned the size and the potential of the country. We (Poles) are well educated and still competitive in terms of the cost of labour. Polish patients do not have immediate access to all new technologies compared to other countries and clinical trials often represent an opportunity for them. All this combined made Poland great place to conduct clinical trials and to coordinate them globally.

**AstraZeneca has been conducted phase II and III clinical trials in Poland for 15 years already, in most areas of medicine, involving thousands of patients across the country, that have revealed the strengths of Poland in this area. Why such an investment is being made only today?**

AstraZeneca aims to operate effectively in all areas – this includes clinical trials. Global reach brings complexity, but also many opportunities to best leverage our resources in driving our strategic priorities. Poland has been chosen as one of the five global clinical operational hubs, among US, UK, Sweden and China in addition to our Japan and MedImmune operations. It is great opportunity for our country and significant investment in human potential that has been made with this initiative.

The decision is linked with country potential as well positive outlook for the future. Due to economic development and a way Poland managed financial crisis there is great deal of optimism in the country and about the country.

**Considering this is a trend in the industry, and that major pharmaceutical companies are making interesting moves in the market, are merger and acquisitions (M&A) operations going to be a way for AstraZeneca's future development in Poland and the region?**

This is certainly considered and in fact I see my role as an advocate of an expansion and growth in Poland and in the CEE region. Naturally, these things are decided at a different level, however being Polish and witnessing country's development I see many opportunities to establish a stronger presence in Poland and consider every opportunity the country has to offer.

**Most companies pride themselves as the best place to work. What are the main assets of AstraZeneca to be the employer of choice in this competitive industry?**

What impressed me at AstraZeneca is the speed and courage to try to do things differently. There are many ongoing pioneering initiatives looking at different ways of operating with stakeholders, following company principles, the most important of which is integrity. We believe that the way we operate we can help us achieve competitive distinction in the in the market.

AstraZeneca in my opinion is one of the best managed companies from financial perspective, which is proven each year with our annual reports. Stakeholders, investors and employees have much appreciation of this fact.

If one values courage, collaboration, creativity in fast moving authentic environment AZ is the right place to be.

**Are all these elements what attracted you to AstraZeneca or did you discover them afterwards?**

I am generally driven by challenge and attracted by situations that require a lot of efforts and problem solving. Courageous approach of AZ discovered later made it even more attractive to me.

**Where would you like us to see the company five years from today?**

It would be ideal if you met one of my team members facing customers in 2016, who would tell you that she/he is proud to be in this very successful company that improved health for many Polish patients. It improved financial performance through bringing innovative solutions to the market partnering with health care stakeholders. Our goal is to make AstraZeneca the most admired company for its integrity, innovative solutions and strong performance by all relevant stakeholders in Poland.

We would like to hear back from them that AZ provided unique solutions to healthcare problems, acted like an authentic and trusted partner

From physicians it would be great to hear, that AstraZeneca respected their time, providing them with information that was of value, through the channel they proffered at the time that worked for them.

For me – as a business leader with medical background – this in a nut shell would be the definition of success.

To reach this objective will aim to collaborate and build partnership with local stakeholders for the benefits of Polish patients – in the end, it is health that connects us all.

[See more interviews](#)