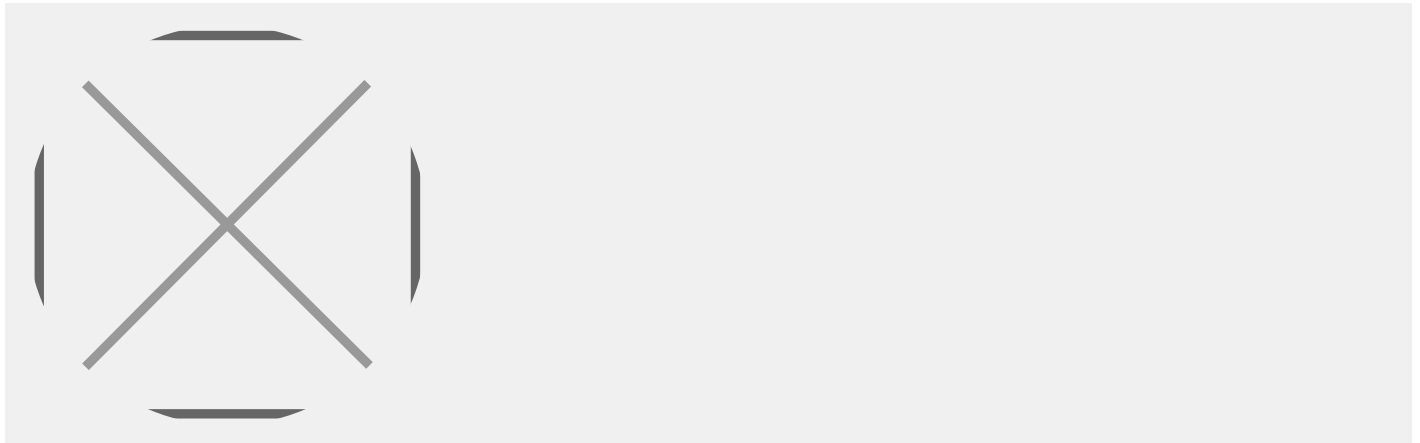


Interview with Alexander Triebnigg, President, Novartis Brazil



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The government recently released the BrasilMaior plan, whose slogan is “Innovate to compete. Compete to grow.” How would you recommend the government innovate, compete, and grow in the pharmaceutical industry here in Brazil?

I think compared to, say, 10 years ago, the new government has understood that the pharmaceutical, biotech, research, and biomedical industries are very important for both the economy as well as knowledge-development. They have passed a number of initiatives, laws, and programs in order to facilitate, stimulate, and attract investments and ensure that in the future Brazil is not only focused on a strong local generics industry, but is moving step-by-step toward a research-driven pharmaceutical industry. That is not easy. It takes time. However, I think it is widely understood now that a solid patent law is a benefit for the country.

How does Novartis stand in the MNC field?

Novartis Group is the 3rd largest healthcare company in Brazil, and Novartis Pharma is the largest global research-based pharmaceutical company in the country. The explanation for that is very simple. We've been here since 1937. We've never left the country, unlike many other companies. We've been taking care of our investments, our relationships to customers and talents, and have been actively participating in the development of Brazilian cities and states. With the acquisition of Alcon, the market leader in ophthalmology, we have now become even larger.

When we met you four years ago, Brazil was seventh on the list of global affiliates. How has the position evolved since then?

We are now #6, which is higher than the Brazilian economy ranks worldwide. Since then, Novartis Pharma has consolidated its position as the number one research-based pharmaceutical company. Novartis is also the only global company producing APIs in Brazil, which is one of the key health industrial policy objectives of the Brazilian government. We're also the only global pharmaceutical company building a new biotech factory.

Why is that? Is there something Novartis sees that others don't?

We're fast and implement more.

We're Novartis – in Switzerland, China, Brazil, North America – everywhere. We always behave in the same way. And by behaving in this way, we influence the market.

And now?

Suffice to say that Novartis has been very successful over the last 70 years. We believe Brazil is a country with an important future. We define ourselves as investors in Brazil, and we have been doing so for a long time, and we will continue to be loyal to the country, to our customers, to the development of our employees, and to making a difference by investing with responsibility. We have one of the largest corporate social responsibility programs tailor-made to address an unmet medical challenge in Brazil: the objective is to supply all the medication necessary to treat leprosy. Novartis provides all the drugs necessary, because leprosy is treatable. To accomplish this objective we invest in a moving mobile medical office on a flatbed truck, with five medical offices and one laboratory, riding around Brazil diagnosing and treating patients. I'm very excited about the fact that we found a way to cooperate with the Ministry of Health to reach, diagnose, and treat Brazilians suffering from a biblical disease.

What we will do is to continue investing here and to apply the same ethical standards we are applying all over the world. I believe that is how we, as global companies, can really make a difference – not only thinking of profits to be made at the end of the day or next week, but to think of profits to be generated in 10 years, and to invest and think ahead to that end, engaging in responsible long-term behaviour.

What is at the top of your priority list in terms of challenges?

Same as for everyone else: reaching our targets by month, quarter, and year. Novartis is a very target and objective driven company and since all eyes are now focused on the BRICs, there are certainly very high expectations in Basel for us to be successful. However, based on the dedicated work of all the strong talents we have here, we have been able to consistently overachieve our targets.

I'm very interested now in integrating all the six divisions into a strong cohesive group here in Brazil. We are currently developing a master plan for a new campus in São Paulo along the same lines as the Novartis Campus in Basel, inviting Brazilian architects to design each of the six buildings accommodating each around 200-250 people.

Where do you want to bring Novartis in the five to 10 year time horizon?

What I will be telling you in five years is that we will not only be the largest research-based pharmaceutical company, but also the fastest-growing one, because we have an exciting pipeline. We will have a beautiful new campus here, and a state-of-the-art biotech factory in Pernambuco, and very interesting research cooperations with Brazilian universities that we are establishing at the moment together with the government. We will also have made strategic investments in the leading Brazilian biotech companies via a dedicated Novartis Brazil Venture Fund.

You can expect a Novartis that is stronger, even more engrained, and even more than it is now the #1 company for talents – because there's no question that the company where all the young talents want to go today and will want to go in 10 years is Novartis. If you make a research study and ask people where they want to be, it's here. We are very focused on our talents, and very excited that now with our six divisions we can open up numerous career pathways in Brazil and even more by moving our Brazilian talents out of the country. Global companies can do this, because one of Brazil's biggest assets are the Brazilians! Novartis is developing international careers for finance, medical, research, marketing, and sales people – I really love doing that. It's great to know that people who start here, and have achieved the position of General Manager elsewhere, can then come home to assume a General Manager's position here in Brazil. To be able to contribute to such a career is extremely rewarding to the mentor. As a general rule, it is not easy for Brazilians to leave their country, but it is a key step in the development of a global perspective and a global career, and also of coming back into a leadership position. When I was the President of Febrapharma, the federation of pharmaceutical industries in Brazil, I always said to my colleagues on the Board leading the large national companies to think about Switzerland, a small country, yet, with Roche and Novartis, home to two of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. Novartis and Roche do not define themselves as local but global companies. So the path to a sustainable future for leading Brazilian companies in such an exciting and fast growing domestic market like Brazil is to ask: Where else can I go? Where else can I grow and invest the money I have earned here?

That's what companies from a small but very successful country like Switzerland can contribute – hey, wake up, there's a world out there! The combination of moving out, becoming regional, multi-regional, global, and investing in incrementally larger research projects, eventually thinking about owning patents "Made in Brazil" – because what can be protected by a patent here in Brazil can be protected by patents in other markets. So I hope that in 10 years Brazil will have laid the foundations of a solid research based pharmaceutical industry on the way to conquer the world.

What's your final message to Pharmaceutical Executive readers?

Novartis is a leader in Brazil, is very well established in terms of industrial presence and has the best medical, commercial, finance, and sales talents of the industry. We want to continue on our success trajectory bring our new molecules to all patients in need and maximize our in-market brands. A key strategy is our focus on patients and customers, so we want to continue contributing significantly to improving the practice of medicine in Brazil with our launches over the next years. I also look forward to working in our new campus. My final take home message to pharmaceutical executives: Move out of the mature markets and move to Brazil. Stop saying you know emerging markets when observing them from your offices in Europe or the US. Learn by working here, and learn how much fun it is to achieve objectives in an emerging market. Please remember that the only BRIC market in the world where nobody is a 'gringo' is Brazil. You can come from Japan, Africa, the Middle East, Europe or the United States and you will certainly feel at home. Another important argument in favor of Brazil is the fact that one can learn Portuguese. I was 42 years old when I began learning Portuguese, and now it's one of my working languages. So, come, work for Novartis Brazil and gain the experience of a lifetime.

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