

Interview: Alfredo Gutierrez M. - Director, Anfitriones

- Mexico



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The director general of Anfitriones talks about the success of the company these last 30 years, how with the flexibility of a family business and the infrastructure of an international company, the company has consolidated its business in an aggressive and ever-changing pharma industry.

What needs were identified in the market and more specifically, in the pharmaceutical sector, when creating the company?

Anfitriones was proud to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2015. We are a family run business created to help international companies in organizing business trips and corporate events. By 1985 with an emerging pharmaceutical industry and the lack of companies focus on organizing events, Anfitriones started operated with 3 employees. We offer to our clients all the services, attention and passion that they need in designing and executing their meetings. After three decades, Anfitriones has more than 230 direct employees and is proud to still be working with our first clients.

Anfitriones' customer base includes other industries. How important is the pharma industry to your work?

Anfitriones was created and has grown together with the pharma industry, we have become a strategic partner. However, the world economic difficulties has been affecting all the industries and in particular the pharma industry. This industry represents around 60 to 65 percent of our business.

Last year as a company we grew by 20 percent. This was achieved because Anfitriones is consolidating its work in the pharma industry, while working with other industries, including automotive, banking, energy, food and beverage companies

Why is Anfitriones the partner of choice when it comes to event organization in the pharmaceutical sector?

We provide an excellent service, performed without flaws. A company such as Anfitriones provides all the services one may require, from travel arrangements, the management of the hotels, to the coordination of ground transportation. This helps our clients as they have just one go-to person taking care of all their needs. Our slogan is “from the airplane ticket to the smell of flowers”, highlighting how within corporate events, we work on the entire value chain.

We are able to provide more affordable prices than our competitors because we work with economies of scale. We provide a guarantee to the client to look after all services, only working with partners interested in long term relationships. This helps to explain why we have been successful. Many of our competitors organize large events, attempting to make a significant short-term profit, whereas we take a longer term perspective. Roche have been our clients for more than 25 years, we have been working with AstraZeneca for almost 15 years, and with ANADIM (National Association of Distributors of Medicines) for over 20 years. These are all good examples of how we work with our clients over decades and not merely on a short term basis.

How do you attract the right people to work for your company?

There are 230 people working for our company, full time employees who all play an important role in our work. Given that we sell services, our people are our main products, acting as the pillar of our company, helping to coordinate all business needs. In other companies you have a high turnover of staff, whereas we see our strength in that our employees are considered as a part of the family of Anfitriones

We have a specific profile that we are looking for. The challenge we have is in finding people with the right background. Our industry, that of meeting planners (event-organizers), is a small one. There is no university program with a specific focus in this area. A large percentage of our employees have worked for the company for over 15 years, and so have been trained internally. We train recent graduates as well as part-time students, and many choose to stay on once they have finished their studies, allowing us to educate them in our culture, our way of working.

How does Mexico compare to other countries as a hub for medical conferences?

Mexico is a large company with a tremendous range of events, both national and international. We are located in a very strategic area of the world, neighbors of the USA, and bordering South America, with the required travel infrastructure. For Americans our country is not only very nearby but also provides better value for money when it comes to organizing conferences. We have organized important events in the past; in 2004 we hosted the International Pediatric Association (IPA) with around 15 thousand attendees and in 2009 we hosted the World Allergy Congress organized by the World Allergy Organization (WAO) both in Cancun, Mexico. This city is particularly attractive because it has excellent flight connections, infrastructure and hotels.

What are your future ambitions for the Anfitriones?

Anfitriones has continued to grow every year and our ambition is to maintain this for the future. We are constantly improving our infrastructure, in terms of financials, employees, logistics and systems and attach a great deal of importance to transparency and ethics. I am confident that within the next few years we will become an international company, with offices in other countries, offering services outside of Mexico. It is essential that we take our time when considering our future growth plans, ensuring we remain in control of the process, consolidating our position in markets where we are already strong. Otherwise we will start losing clients.

Do you have a final message for our readers?

We are a company that looks to build long term relationships, working to maximize the resources of our different clients.

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