

Interview: Jose Augusto Pascual - CEO, PascualLab, the Philippines



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Jose Augusto Pascual, President and CEO of PascualLab, sheds light on the company's current footprint in the Philippines, as well as their ambitions to even further expand their manufacturing capabilities. He also discusses PascualLab's efforts to be the partner of choice for companies looking to expand into the Philippines.

To introduce yourself to our readers in the Philippines and across the globe, could you provide us with some insights into your professional background?

I recently celebrated my 20th year in the company. I was born and raised in the Philippines, and received my Bachelor of Science in pharmacy from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, the second oldest pharmaceutical school in the United States. In my first 2 years after graduating, I got my pharmacy license, and joined PascualLab in 1996. My first stint was a half-year spent in the manufacturing plant, after which I had the opportunity to gain experience in all divisions. I was on the line floor, so I was able to develop relationships with everyone in the company. I then moved to sales and marketing, business development, supply chain management, finance, and in 2014 I became the president and CEO.

When you stepped into your role as President and CEO, what were your main objectives?

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My main objective was to grow the company. I wanted to make sure as well that the organization was aware of the company's value. I hoped to foster a better sense of communication as well, from the top all the way until the bottom. I am trying to instill in the organization that we are One PascualLab, and that includes the manufacturing group, the support services, the sales and marketing group, and of course the people managing our farm. There is one way forward, and the best way to accomplish our shared goals is to communicate well with each other.

What is the current product portfolio of PascualLab, and which segments are driving the most growth for the company?

Currently, our focus is on wellness products, as well as OTC products. When we were reorganizing our business, we realized that we wanted to focus on the supply side, as this is an area where we believe that we can compete more, and this is the area that I believe PascualLab will be able to experience much growth and expansion in the future. We have divested from generics, and are focusing more on supply. Of course, our other business portfolio is our farm, which supplies processed raw materials for organic, herbal products.

As one of the largest pharmaceutical manufacturers in the Philippines, does the company have plans to further increase its manufacturing capabilities in the future?

Yes, this is of course an area of expansion for us in the future, and we are looking to expand into other areas as well such as the manufacturing of sterile products. Vaccines is also an area that I hope to expand to in the future, as imported vaccines tend to be expensive. Of course, depending on regulatory requirements, we may not be able to produce these products at our current facilities, and some may need to be developed in a separate facility, as the nature of these types of products is very sensitive.

And although we have divested of our generics portfolio, retaining ownership over the molecules has been beneficial for us. RiteMed, who bought our generic lines, signed on to a 5-year manufacturing agreement with us, and they indicated that they may even add some additional products for us to produce for them in the future.

Where we are currently focused on is the production of liquids. Importing liquids is more expensive than importing solids, and because of this reality, manufacturing liquids has become an area of priority in our business. This further coincides with our plan of going into sterile products and vaccines, all of which are also liquids.

How does PascualLab work to position itself as the partner of choice for companies looking to the Philippines?

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As much as possible, we try to be very innovative in terms of the products that we choose to market and the products that we choose to manufacture. Most of the generics produced by companies in India and China, are very competitively priced. The only way to combat this is to innovate, through manufacturing more specialized products, products that require more in the sense of quality assurance. Another key way that we are looking to differentiate ourselves is by acquiring PICs certification, thereby giving our customers the confidence in the quality of our products.

As a leading local player in the industry, what initiatives does the company have to help develop the Filipino population?

As a Filipino-owned company, helping to develop the health of Filipino families through various initiatives is always a priority. By way of medicine donations, we are supportive of various medical missions held throughout the country, and are a big contributor to disaster response during times of calamity. We were previously partnered with Habitat for Humanity, where we go to the communities there and provide them with medicine. As many of these communities have their own pharmacies, we try to supply them with medicines at a discounted rate. Currently, we are working with WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) to help educate Filipino families on the importance of climate change and its effects on health, through an educational module that is done in partnership with public schools and local barangays.

On a more personal note, during your tenure at the helm of PascualLab, what accomplishments are you proudest of?

Building up our management team is something that I am proud of. I am extremely pleased of this team, because despite all of the challenges that we are faced with every day, they still continue to support the organization and pursue our objectives. They are always able to cope with the challenges that we are facing and come up with solutions to move forward, and they have contributed greatly to our goal of making PascualLab an excellent place to work. During the initial years of the company, it was much more family- oriented, but now we have evolved into a more professional family. With a professional family, we are keen to focus on accountability — everybody must be accountable for their efforts and actions. And right now we have the high-quality team that we need to continue our growth in the future.

Looking forward to the next 3-5 years, what is your vision for PascualLab, where do you hope to lead the company?

By 2020 I would love to see our consumer brands within the top 20 rankings, and we have a plan to create more brand recognition for PascualLab as well. Of course, we are also looking to develop our organic farm, and further develop that brand, to be a strong food supplement supplier within the Philippines. We are looking to make our brands more recognized in the minds of the Filipino population, known for quality and efficacy.

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