Interview: Neide Kawabata – President, B Braun Brazil



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Neide Kawabata, president of B Braun Brazil, shares B Braun's long track record of success and commitment to Brazil, the innovations they continue to bring to the market, and the long-term vision and community support B Braun brings to its affiliates globally, as a sixth-generation family-owned company.

Neide, could you start by sharing B Braun's track record of success and commitment to Brazil?

B Braun has always introduced innovations and new ideas to the Brazilian market. Professor Ludwig Georg Braun, former B. Braun's CEO and current president of Supervisory Board, established B Braun in Brazil in 1967 following the purchase of the company, Laboratórios Americanos. At that time, infusion therapy was delivered in fragile glass bottles. As a company, B Braun was the first to develop single-use infusion equipment made of plastic. This amazing invention was then introduced to Brazil. Subsequently, B. Braun Brazil started developing the business in Brazil.

One important step of this was the local development of our first infusion pump with our own engineers and own technicians. Nowadays it is a very important pillar of our local business.

Subsequently, we built a new pharmaceutical plant here and implemented a completely new concept, the Ecoflac®. Beforehand, the plastic bottles had to be opened in the hospitals – it was so called an open system – with risk of contamination. We were the first company to introduce the closed system in Brazil.

For sure, the spoonerism brings additional challenges. All our competitors produced open systems that were much cheaper for manufacturing, but we persisted because we believed that we were improving the delivery of healthcare in Brazil. Nowadays, it is not permitted anymore the old open system.

Over the years, we have been introducing many other innovations in different areas of health care not only to improve product quality but also to promote the safety of patients and professionals.

You have been the president of B. Braun Brazil for more than two years now, during a difficult economic period for the country. How would you characterize the past two years?

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I have been with B Braun for a long time, moving up the ranks to head the industrial facility before becoming vice-president for five years, and subsequently becoming president in 2015. It was exactly when the economic crisis occurred!

The past two years were a time to overcome the crisis but also taking into consideration the perpetuation and developing the business in a long-term perspective.

We had to stop temporarily some investments, especially in infrastructure and other areas, but we managed to turn the situation around after these two years. This year has been a great year for B Braun Brazil and we are looking to discuss potential new investments.

Furthermore, we have many innovations in the pipeline that we are hoping to bring to Brazil.

How does B Braun leverage on its international presence to bring corporate or international expertise to Brazil?

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Having worked for B. Braun for more than 30 years, I can tell you that it is really an impressive company. B. Braun is a huge international organization, but we do things in a different way with excellent results. We are not only focused on financial results but we aim to achieve results while respecting each region and the local community, which is really fantastic.

For instance, within the organization, we have the Aesculap Academia whose purpose is the development of doctors and health care professionals.

Many years ago, we implemented the Quality Management System for B. Braun in Brazil. Today we have an Integrated Management System covering not only Quality but also Environment, Safety and other different aspects of our business. Since the time of our Quality System implementation, I had the opportunity to go to several B. Braun production sites worldwide with Anvisa, the Brazilian Authority. Apart from seeing the industrial areas, I developed a better sense of our operations and also spoke with employees. This is when I truly realised what a fantastic company Braun is. I was able to see B. Braun values manifested as actions.

This applies to Brazil too. We are located in São Gonçalo, which is not a small city in size, but it is not a capital city. Nevertheless, the company has invested in the community for the future. This is what we are doing all over the world.

What distinguishes B Braun from your competitors is that it has been a family-owned company for six generations. How important is this to B Braun Brazil?

I believe that the firmness of purposes has been sustain the company for so long time. It makes the difference.

This is what is important for us: to know that we are working for the long term. We are not working for a short vision. This is B Braun's vision as a company, this is why everyone is proud to work for the company. B. Braun shares its success with the society.

I already knew some people that had their lives saved by our products and services. This kind of thing helps me to understand better our mission. I strongly believe people need more than a salary to motivate themselves.

All these things might be captured by our company slogan: 'sharing expertise'. The more we share, the more we gain as well. Our growth is proof of that.

What would you like B. Braun Brazil to be recognised for?

I believe we are recognized as a key pillar of the Brazilian healthcare ecosystem. We do not just want to be 'first', we want to introduce real change, improve the quality of healthcare provision, and carry on with good practices in sustainability, always based on our values.

What is your personal mission here?

My personal mission is to prepare this company for the next generation.

I think everybody must have a clear mission and a clear plan. You need to love what you do – and you need to love people you are with and the place you are in. If you have a clear mission, you will

achieve your results.

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