Interview: Mercedes Cárdenas – Managing Director, Medifra Ecuador



"Our mission is to provide an integral solution in the field of occupational safety and health along with accessible and useful solutions to companies nationwide"

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A company made up of multidisciplinary and qualified professionals – this is how Mercedes Cárdenas, managing director of Medifra, describes her organization. One of the services offered by Medifra is occupational health, though it does not limit itself to carrying out medical examinations and opening medical histories, Medifra offers control plans and medical campaigns so that workers do not develop occupational diseases.

What is the mission of Medifra in Ecuador?

We are a company made up of multidisciplinary and qualified professionals, who are dedicated to consulting, training and business strengthening. We have state-of-the-art services aimed at successful companies, so they can attain important achievements in their market. Our mission is to provide an integral solution in the field of occupational safety and health along with accessible and useful solutions to companies nationwide by guaranteeing a safe, committed, productive and effective service. In addition to this, we want to raise awareness among employees about the benefits of preventive health. Our core value is to have employees that are preventive health receptive.

A good understanding of the epidemiological profile of the country is an essential pre-requisite to address health needs and to enable efficient programme planning. How does Medifra identify these needs to maximize prevention and management of health?

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Over the years, Medifra has developed an in-depth expertise, by speaking to the Ecuadorians as well as by conducting a thorough research of the epidemiological profile of the working population through clinical tests, that allows us to identify the primordial pathologies of employable adults.

How does Medifra differentiate itself in the field of occupational health from other companies providing the same services to companies?

When I founded the company in 2011, I remember health stakeholders being very suspicious about the concept of occupational health and ensuring security and safety at work, even though we have had a law since 1986. They could not come to terms with the fact that even though their employees were not sick they would need to undergo preventive health procedures not to fall ill. My mission was to raise awareness about preventive health and enable companies to pay special attention to the topic.

The Ministry of Labor is carrying out inspections to verify compliance with the legal regulations on occupational safety and health. The IESS, through the general direction of work risks every year, collects information from companies on the number of accidents and illnesses produced and reported. The fact of having more numbers and data always helps to know in which areas special attention should be paid.

With the above, it is easier for Medifra to offer its services than seven years ago.

Are there any challenges that you would like the Ministry of Health to address in Ecuador?

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If I had the chance to speak to the Minister of Health, I would like to tell her that preventive health should be an important segment and priority for their agenda, just like curative health. The role that preventive health plays to render the system as such more sustainable is critical and to this regard companies like Medifra deserve more attention and the opportunity to take part in stakeholder discussions at Ministerial level. I hope this will become a concrete option shortly.

How do you promote Medifra’s services and the importance that preventive health plays?

What Medifra is very good at is providing control plans and medical campaigns, after detection which are the predominant pathologies in a given group of employees. The companies we deal with

are small and medium enterprises in different sectors. The rationale behind choosing this niche of clients is because it is mostly organizations that do not have their own occupational health doctors.

What brand are you trying to build up for Medifra in Ecuador?

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the contribution that Medifra brings to Ecuador is phenomenal – yet the lack of visibility does not allow us to gain a premium position in the country. What I want Medifra to be associated with is security, health, great people and, more importantly, solutions.

I also want the readers of this report to know that while we do not have many economic resources, we have the willingness to make great contributions, to serve the country and the people of Ecuadorian enterprises. My treasure are my employees – the medical professionals, the psychologists, the technicians and the admin staff. We are a small family. If we did not have the same passion and the same feeling towards prevention, we would not be Medifra. I hope that a reading company that shares this same passion can support our work in order to reach more Ecuadorian companies that need our services.

Where will we see Medifra in five years' time?

I would like to set up an institute of occupational security and health in Ecuador that could serve as a reference point for all those companies and stakeholders that required occupational security and health integral solutions, including capacitation.

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