

Carlos Sabrido, Country Coordinator Spain at Boston Scientific



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Boston Scientific's Spain country coordinator, Carlos Sabrido, analyses the Spanish med-tech market, comments on the transformation of Boston Scientific from a medical devices to a health solutions company and explains why the Massachusetts-based organisation has chosen Madrid to build an Institute for Advanced Sciences to elevate the training of its team and HCPs.

Carlos, can you begin by commenting on your experience during the pandemic and how Boston Scientific reacted when COVID-19 first hit Spain at the beginning of 2020?

The first thing we did when the pandemic hit Spain was to focus on the safety of our people; the business came second. The organisation wanted to ensure that its people could have peace of mind, remain engaged and live the values of Boston Scientific despite not being able to come to the office. As with most companies, we used digital tools to work remotely and implemented measures to reduce the impact of COVID from an economic perspective and on our clients and partners. It was not easy because the needs of clients had changed all of a sudden; our Solutions Department worked closely with them, from software solutions to manage their evolving schedules, to consultants that aided them with an agenda made up of permanent emergencies.

Fortunately, Boston Scientific had been working on solutions way before the pandemic through its Healthcare Solutions and Partnerships Department which tries to go beyond just selling devices. At

the end of the day, the needs of our customers go way beyond catheters, stents or artificial pacemakers; we try to go alongside them through their particular journey with patients. That journey can include planning, training on new devices and their use, and even integrating equipment from another company with Boston Scientific technology, and so on.

According to Boston Scientific's latest annual report, the company is organised globally in three different divisions: MedSurg, Cardiovascular, Rhythm and Neuro. Does the Spanish affiliate have the same structure?

Those three (MedSurg, Cardiovascular, and Rhythm and Neuro) are the "mega" divisions. But below them we have six divisions: interventional cardiology, rhythm management, peripheral interventions, endoscopy, urology and pelvic health, and neuromodulation. Within the latter, we have products that, through electrical stimulation, help treat various neurological movement disorders and manage chronic pain; this includes a deep brain stimulation (DBS) product that aids in reducing some of the symptoms of moderate to severe Parkinson's disease as well as for patients diagnosed with essential tremor.

How are those six divisions performing in Spain and what is the situation around access for your solutions and devices in the country?

The short answer is that things are going relatively well. Patients in Spain can access the latest technologies through the public healthcare system, something that should make everyone proud. I cannot think about a single Boston Scientific product that is not available here.

However, there are a few situations where some regions might not have a specific product or therapy included in the list that allows them to be part of tenders. Generally speaking, there is a reasonable access to technology in the country.

The Spanish healthcare system is known, among other things, for its decentralisation with regions like Andalusia, Madrid and Catalonia leading the way in terms of patients and infrastructure. How do the regions differ?

Each Autonomous Community works in a different way; some tend to empower hospitals to make decisions around new products. Others, on the other hand, have created institutions specifically dedicated to innovation, which does not mean that hospitals are not involved. Some regions have created institutions focused on getting European funds for innovation.

For our part, Boston Scientific has to adapt to each region and the different stakeholders, which in some cases includes hospital directors and heads of departments, and others where you must collaborate with government authorities.

What sort of presence does Boston Scientific have in Spain ?

The company has more than 400 people in Spain, an impressive number considering that, when I joined Boston Scientific six years ago, there were about 200 people. Our workforce depends on the type of clients we encounter, which in most cases are clinicians since they are leading the effort to

bring the latest innovations to patients. In order to better serve them, we have clinical specialists and account managers that work hand in hand with HCPs, providing the support needed in operating rooms. Moreover, we have commercial contracting managers, key account managers and strategic account managers that have a "solutions mindset" as opposed to thinking about devices or therapies only to deal with Autonomous Communities where regional institutions or purchasing directorates have a prominent role.

Can you tell us about your role as country coordinator? What are your main responsibilities within the organisation?

I am responsible for Spain and Portugal for the peripheral intervention division (vascular business unit), and, since January of 2022, I am the country coordinator for Spain where I lead the country's steering committee, which includes the heads of the six units I mentioned earlier plus those leading the human resources, finance, quality and regulatory departments. I am also the institutional and legal representative of Boston Scientific for Spain.

Another hot topic in life sciences is sustainability, but how, as an affiliate without a production footprint in Spain, does Boston Scientific contribute?

Indeed, without having local production the question of our contribution to sustainability might not be obvious, however, the company has been communicating the importance of contributing to any extent possible. It is not a "nice to have" thing anymore, this is a crucial topic for the company. How does Spain contribute to that sustainability? Through things such as greener office spaces, solar energy, the elimination of plastic consumables, electric and hybrid vehicles.

What other topics are being "pushed" by the global organisation?

There has been a lot of emphasis on meaningful innovation as the backbone of the company. We do not invest in innovation for the sake of it; our innovation must make sense for our clients and for patients. That meaningful innovation comes from our own R&D efforts, as well as from acquisitions.

Apart from sustainability, which I already covered, a key focus at Boston Scientific is its people. For that, we strive to create a company culture that is based on diversity and inclusion. We are working with specific KPIs that include gender balance in management roles - we have great levels of equality in the Spanish organisation -, support of young professionals, networks against racism, among others.

Moreover, as the company transitions from a medical devices company to a medical solutions company, one of our main responsibilities is the education of professionals. We sell therapies while offering health management.

Representing the company's commitment in the country, Boston Scientific Spain is currently creating one of Europe's most important medical education and training centers. Within EMEA, the company has gone from a Paris-based organisation to a multi-headquartered scheme with Madrid as one of them. We are building in Madrid an Institute for Advanced Sciences (IAS), a center that will accommodate operating room simulations, and other education setups that will allow clients and HCPs to train.

Considering your lengthy career in the medical technology industry, how do you assess the capabilities of the local Spanish industry?

The Spanish medical technology industry is gaining momentum. Although there are enough traditional distributors and agents, the country does not yet have many manufacturers. As long as companies look to produce meaningful innovation, Boston Scientific will always be a potential partner.

To conclude, can you share with our audience a little bit of your background and the career that led you to Boston Scientific?

I started in the medical technology industry with Siemens Healthiness, where I went from product manager to sales, and then I was named regional business manager for South-West Europe. After three years in that position, and having earned an MBA, a contact from the London Business Schools reached out to me about a potential position at Boston Scientific. I felt that I did not want to fall into a routine of doing the same thing over and over again, so I switched from the traditional equipment business with Siemens to the solutions business at Boston Scientific. My first role was with the Healthcare Solutions and Partnerships department and I later moved to country coordinator for Spain.

My focus today is on helping to grow the organisation in Spain, helping the affiliate live Boston Scientific's values, and attracting the best talent to the company. For the latter, we are fully aware that it does not make sense to attract the best talent only to tell them exactly what they have to do, giving them with little room to take responsibility and be accountable; Boston Scientific Spain is characterized by the empowerment of its people.

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