

# Damien Parisien CEO, Benta Lyon

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*Benta Lyon is reshaping its industrial footprint with unusual speed, combining a fast-growing CDMO platform, an expanding French made generics portfolio and new sterile capabilities that will anchor its next phase of international development. In this conversation, CEO Damien Parisien explains how the relaunch of the former Famar site has evolved into a fully integrated model aligned with France's ambitions for sovereignty and supply resilience, and how operational clarity and agility guide the organisation's trajectory.*

## **How would you introduce Benta Lyon and the way you structure your activities for both the French and international markets?**

Benta Lyon operates on two complementary pillars that define our presence in France. The first is our CMO/CDMO activity, through which we assume responsibility for customer processes, integrate them into our industrial site in Saint-Genis-Laval, and manufacture products for France and a wide range of export markets. Because we manage several dosage forms within a single facility, we can support diverse projects while maintaining operational coherence. The second pillar is our generics business. We develop and manufacture our own branded generics and mature products for the French market, while also opening selected export channels in the Middle East and Africa. This gives us an additional dimension that supports the growth of our internal portfolio and complements our CMO work.

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These pillars are reinforced by two core capabilities. One is our product and process development function, which is essential both for shaping our own pipeline and for adapting customer processes ahead of industrial transfer. The other is regulatory and pharmaceutical development expertise. We strengthened this area with the 2025 acquisition of Stratégie Santé, a Versailles based consultancy with more than thirty years of experience in regulatory affairs, quality assurance and product development. Its integration enables us to accelerate registrations and life cycle management and gives our CDMO partners access to a coherent regulatory framework.

Together, Benta Lyon and Stratégie Santé allow us to operate as a fully integrated organisation. We cover development, manufacturing and distribution, but we also assume the responsibilities of the "exploitant" in France, which include GMP production, logistics, market release, batch traceability, pharmacovigilance and compliance with national requirements. This structure gives us the flexibility to serve as a pure manufacturer for clients who hold their own exploitant status or as a turnkey partner for those seeking an integrated path from development through to the pharmacy shelf.

### **How did Benta Lyon take shape after the acquisition of the former Famar site, and what guided your decision to lead the project during its relaunch?**

Benta Lyon's emergence dates back to 2020, when our shareholder, Bernard Tannoury, a Lebanese investor in pharmaceutical field, acquired the former Famar Lyon plant in Saint Genis Laval. The goal was to secure a solid industrial base in Europe, preserve the site's contract manufacturing heritage and, in parallel, build a second pillar dedicated to producing essential medicines locally in response to recurring shortages in France. The site offered the scale and flexibility to pursue both aims. It already housed significant capacity across several dosage forms, from tablets and capsules to creams, ointments, syrups and suspensions, and we will complete the picture in early 2026 with the introduction of sterile injectables through a new aseptic area. Bringing this breadth of forms together under one roof is relatively rare and positions us to support both our CDMO partners and the growth of our generics.

The CDMO activity remains our largest revenue stream. When the plant restarted in 2020, we were working with a single customer. Today we support more than thirty, reflecting how quickly the activity has regained momentum. Our generics portfolio is more recent but advancing at pace. Since launching Paracetamol Benta in 2024, we have added several molecules, including amoxicillin and oxemazine, and now have around ten to twelve branded products on the market. Over the next three to four years, we expect the range to extend to more than eighty.

I joined Benta Lyon in 2022 as general manager and became CEO in 2024. At that point the site needed a clear direction. Either we committed fully to restarting and developing the activity, or we prepared for more difficult decisions. I chose to focus on the restart, and three years later the plant is moving on a stable forward-looking trajectory. Public support has been an important accelerator. Through the France 2030 programme, we were selected in 2023 for a project dedicated to developing essential generics in therapeutic areas such as anaesthesia intensive care, cardiology, infectiology and oncology. In 2025 we received a second France 2030 award for paediatric paracetamol oral suspension to help secure supply and mitigate shortages. Beyond financial support, these initiatives offer national visibility and align with our ambition to contribute to the evolving list of essential medicines. Our aim is to manufacture reliably in France, focus on priority molecules and offer pharmacists consistent, French made options so they can concentrate on patients rather than navigating supply constraints.

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## **As the organisation expands, how are you shaping Benta Lyon's strategic direction for the years ahead, both domestically and internationally?**

Our strategy for the next period builds on the foundations we have put in place and follows a coherent trajectory. In France, our focus is on expanding our portfolio of essential generics so that our presence rests on a broader and more resilient range of products. Alongside this, we intend to continue developing our CDMO activity by enlarging our customer base and making full use of the diversity of dosage forms that we can manage within a single industrial platform. Internationally, we see clear opportunities in French speaking Africa and parts of the Middle East, where our existing marketing authorisations and the reputation of French manufacturing give us a strong starting point to introduce our own products. Looking further ahead, we also want to contribute to a wider European reflection on industrial sovereignty, which may involve integrating additional capabilities into the group if they support that direction.

The introduction of sterile manufacturing is an important part of this roadmap. We are investing more than five million euros to bring injectables onto the site for the first time. Until now, our operations have covered solid forms, semi-solids and non-sterile liquids. The new sterile area, developed in partnership with Melchior Santé Animale, will allow us to produce animal health injectables and vaccines. It represents a significant technical step, requiring new equipment, new processes and a higher level of control, but it also extends the scope of our activity into a field that combines classical pharmaceutical manufacturing with biologically oriented products. By adding sterile injectables and vaccines to our existing capabilities in tablets, capsules, creams and syrups, we are building a more versatile industrial platform that can support both our clients' needs and the continued development of our own portfolio.

## **How do you want international stakeholders to perceive Benta Lyon, and how does your CDMO footprint support that positioning?**

Even though our base is in France, our activity is already international in scope. Through our CDMO work, we supply more than forty countries, either directly or through the global networks of our clients, meaning a single French partner may place one product in dozens of markets. This gives us a broader reach than most expect, and international stakeholders often emphasise the combination of French manufacturing standards with the agility of a mid-sized CDMO capable of managing several dosage forms at one site. Being able to produce tablets, syrups, creams and soon injectables in one location reduces complexity and cost while preserving a clear quality benchmark.

Operating across such varied markets requires a strong regulatory structure, which is why integrating Stratégie Santé was a strategic step. Their long-standing expertise enables us to manage development and regulatory processes within one coherent framework. We hold the French authorisations needed for medicines, medical devices and veterinary products, including the sterile and vaccine activity being set up with Melchior Santé Animale. Beyond France, we support clients navigating pathways for GCC countries, African markets and other export destinations. Some partners also recognise us as a supplier of clinical trial material for US based studies, including projects involving the NIH. These acknowledgements come through client relationships and illustrate the type of international work we handle. Having one unified quality system across the group allows us to meet diverse expectations while maintaining the agility and efficiency that define our model.

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## **In a competitive CDMO landscape, how do you define Benta Lyon's differentiation and where do you see the strongest opportunities for growth?**

Our differentiation comes from the breadth of our capabilities and the way they sit within one industrial platform. A molecule that exists both as a tablet and a syrup can be produced within the same site, which spares clients from managing multiple manufacturers and strengthens cost efficiency. The scale of our plant and the technologies we operate allow us to respond to a wide range of needs, and the fact that we manufacture in France provides an additional level of reassurance. French regulatory oversight is recognised internationally, so products made here carry a strong signal of safety and quality.

We also have substantial room to grow. Our current utilisation is around ten percent, which reflects the reality of relaunching a site from zero and the time required for each tech transfer. Over the past three years we have built momentum, and this unused capacity is now one of our main opportunities. We have already launched several new productions and invested in upgraded lines for tablets and creams, while the sterile unit will come online in 2026. This year serves as a transition period, strengthening the foundations for a broader expansion. As these investments become fully operational, 2026 should mark a step change in our industrial capabilities and set the stage for sustained growth.

## **As you work to complete Benta Lyon's integrated model, how are you approaching partnerships and potential acquisitions?**

Our core capabilities already cover solid forms, semi-solids and liquids, and the sterile unit coming online in 2026 will allow us to add injectables and vaccines. To complete the structure we have been building, two areas remain outside our current scope, high potent products and API production. Bringing these capabilities in house would give us full continuity across the value chain, from early stage manufacturing through to distribution, and it is a direction I consider important for the future of the group.

For this reason, we continue to assess external opportunities that could complement what we already have. The objective is not expansion for its own sake, but the addition of technologies that strengthen the integrated model without disrupting the momentum we have built since relaunching the site and acquiring Stratégie Santé. Some of the projects we are evaluating are not public, yet the priorities are clear. High potency and API capabilities would close the last gaps in our set up, and I view this as a short to medium term objective rather than a distant ambition. The timing will depend on finding the right opportunity and ensuring it aligns with the trajectory we are already shaping for Benta Lyon.

## **How do you view the French market today, and what role do you see Benta Lyon playing within it?**

I am convinced that France remains a strong manufacturing base. The "Made in France" label still carries weight, and the industrial ecosystem is capable, even if pricing on the French market is lower than in many other countries. There are real pressures, but there are also opportunities for organisations that can stay agile and focused. In our case, being a smaller structure gives us an advantage. It allows us to move quickly, reduce decision layers and respond with more flexibility when the market experiences tension or instability.

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Our model reinforces this position. We are not exclusively a CMO, and we are not solely a generics company. We operate both pillars across several dosage forms, which gives us a high degree of integration and enables us to keep most steps of the value chain in house. That matters in France, where securing supply has become a national priority. I see it as part of our responsibility to support that effort. With our integrated set up and the range of forms we can manage, we are well placed to contribute to a more reliable supply of essential medicines while still competing effectively in a price sensitive environment.

### **What have you learned from building your CDMO customer base, and how is that experience influencing the development of your own branded portfolio in France and abroad?**

Building our CDMO footprint in 2022 meant entering a landscape with many established players, yet the combination of scientific expertise, appropriate technologies and significant available capacity positioned us well at a moment when the industry was dealing with widespread shortages. Clients were looking for partners able to move quickly, and our ability to take on projects at pace allowed us to demonstrate reliability and expand the customer base progressively. That experience now guides the way we develop our own branded portfolio. We aim to assemble a meaningful range of products, particularly in areas exposed to recurrent shortages, so that we can be one of the actors supporting pharmacists when pressure builds on supply. The portfolio is still young, yet we are already present in more than 500 pharmacies in France, which gives us a solid platform to grow steadily and build long term trust as a French partner.

This progress is reflected in how stakeholders perceive us. Pharmacists around our site all work with our products, helped by the proximity of direct distribution from the plant but also by the idea that a local manufacturer contributes to greater resilience. That responsibility is something I feel strongly. A few years ago, during a weekend closure of pharmacies, I struggled to find an antibiotic for my daughter, and it was a striking reminder that access to care depends not only on doctors and hospitals, but on the simple fact that medicines must be available when people need them. Even if we cannot resolve every gap in the system, we can be part of the solution by reinforcing supply when tensions arise. The same philosophy shapes our international efforts. We hold several marketing authorisations in French speaking Africa, and the reassurance of French manufacturing gives us a smooth entry point as we introduce our products in those markets. It is a stepwise approach, fully aligned with the trajectory we have been shaping since the relaunch of the site and the integration of Stratégie Santé, and it completes the logic of building both a strong CDMO footprint and a growing branded presence.

### **How do you describe your leadership philosophy at Benta Lyon and the type of environment you aim to cultivate?**

I come from the production world, which has shaped the way I lead. My first roles were on the shop floor as a manufacturing engineer, then I moved step by step into broader operational and strategic responsibilities. That progression taught me to stay close to the process, to prioritise what can be executed directly and to avoid getting lost in abstract indicators. When you restart a site or scale it after a difficult period, clarity, presence and shared purpose become essential.

As we grow, recruitment and training take centre stage. Each new investment requires new skills, so we pay particular attention to integrating people, explaining the strategy and ensuring they understand the trajectory ahead. I keep the organisation lean because it helps us stay agile, efficient and connected to daily operations. These are the two values I emphasise most, as they allow us to

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move at the pace the market requires without creating layers that slow us down.

My twenty years across nine sites in France and Belgium, including Patheon, Famar, Delpharm and Galien, gave me a clear view of how CDMOs operate and what clients expect. You learn quickly that industrial life is never linear. There are bumps, and the key is to remain practical, react fast and keep momentum. This is the mindset I brought to Benta Lyon in 2022.

### **Any final thoughts for partners and stakeholders watching Benta Lyon's progress?**

France offers one of the most reliable environments for pharmaceutical manufacturing, and I say that after spending two decades across multiple plants. The regulatory authorities are solid, the infrastructure is strong and the ecosystem of suppliers, customers and pharmacists creates conditions that support quality and safety. These elements matter, because they form the foundation on which we plan to grow and contribute.

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