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Investing in childrenâ??s health education is crucial for long-term transformation

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Enrique Giraud de Haro, President & GM at Fujifilm Mexico, highlights the companyâ??s growth alongside Fujifilmâ??s expansion in the region. He discusses the importance of fostering a preventive healthcare culture, especially among younger generations, and the role of innovation in Mexicoâ??s evolving healthcare landscape.

What is the history of your family business, and how did it establish its partnership with Fujifilm in Mexico?

Our family business has been a cornerstone in Mexico for over 60 years, beginning with my grandfather, who initially focused on the distribution of motion picture products. At the outset, the company represented Ferrania, an Italian film brand known for its lower quality and challenging processing. Despite these limitations, my grandfatherâ??s exceptional marketing and sales acumen allowed the business to flourish.

The pivotal connection with Fujifilm was forged through my fatherâ??s efforts. As an amateur photographer with a strong interest in electronics, he gained valuable expertise providing training at Kodak, focusing on the electronic components of camerasâ??a rarity at the time. Fujifilm, which was concentrating its resources on research and development rather than international market expansion, relied heavily on distributors worldwide. Recognizing an opportunity, my father proposed introducing Fujifilmâ??s photo products to Mexico. However, the closed-border policies of the time,

which favored local manufacturers like Kodak, presented a significant challenge.

My father's determination led him to secure import permits for positive film, a product Kodak did not produce locally. This breakthrough marked the beginning of our partnership with Fujifilm. Over the years, the collaboration expanded into new divisions, including graphic arts, motion pictures, and medical imaging. At the time, Fujifilm's medical division was centered on x-ray films, which shared technological similarities with photographic and graphic arts films.

By the early 1980s, our company had become one of Fujifilm's most comprehensive distributors globally, managing nearly all of its product lines in Mexico. Today, while some B2B components are not part of our portfolio, we distribute an extensive range of Fujifilm's products, encompassing photography, medical imaging, and graphic arts, cementing our role as a key partner in the region.

What inspired you to continue your family's business, and how has the partnership with Fujifilm evolved over the years in Mexico?

Continuing the family business was a significant decision, and one I didn't make lightly. When I joined Fujifilm Mexico in the late 1990s, it began as a part-time role, offering training on digital technologies. At the time, I was pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer and was reluctant to step into the family enterprise. However, a period of transition within the company's operations and logistics prompted my involvement. What began as a temporary commitment soon evolved into a passion as I became increasingly immersed in Fujifilm's innovative products and services.

By 2000, I was fully committed, playing a key role in implementing our first Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, SAP, which integrated IT into our operations and elevated our business processes. Shortly after, I was tasked with leading sales and marketing for Fujifilm's electronic imaging division. It was an exciting time, as compact cameras became a major focus for us. Leveraging detailed market insights from the NPD Group, we successfully captured the number one position in retail sales for several years, establishing ourselves as a leader in this competitive space.

My brother Javier followed a similar path, though with a focus on design and IT. After completing his master's degree in Madrid, he became deeply involved in Fujifilm's healthcare division, particularly in Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS). His expertise in PACS infrastructure positioned him as a leading authority in Mexico, and today, he oversees the healthcare portfolio, including advanced offerings such as endoscopy and in vitro diagnostics (IVD). Our youngest brother, Alejandro, joined later, bringing extensive marketing experience from Procter & Gamble. His expertise proved invaluable as Fujifilm expanded into new divisions, such as Fujinon, which focuses on optical products and endoscopy. Alejandro now manages the graphics, photography, and printing systems divisions, overseeing innovations in production printing for the graphic arts industry.

Fujifilm's printing division itself has a storied history, stemming from a 1963 joint venture with Xerox called Fuji Xerox. This collaboration revolutionized office and production printing technologies, making Japan a leader in this space. Although a proposed merger between Fujifilm and Xerox was ultimately blocked by investors, Fujifilm remains a global force in digital printing, continuing to innovate with direct sales as well as an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).

What principles guide your leadership at Fujifilm Mexico, and how do you balance Fujifilm's global values with the specific needs of the Mexican market?

Our approach is rooted in Fujifilm's philosophy, yet it is carefully adapted to address the unique characteristics of the Mexican market. Approximately 90% of our business is centered on Fujifilm products and services, reflecting the strong alignment we share with the brand. Our relationship with Fujifilm is so integrated that, in many cases, we are perceived as a subsidiary. This perception is strengthened by our use of the Fujifilm name, our management of the brand's Latin American web portals, and the extensive support we provide to their operations. This partnership allows us to represent Fujifilm's values authentically while operating with the flexibility of an independent distributor.

Being independent offers significant advantages, particularly when it comes to decision-making. Unlike subsidiaries, which often operate under centralized corporate directives, we have the autonomy to tailor our financing, investments, and product offerings to the specific needs of our customers. This flexibility enables us to respond quickly to market demands and develop solutions that align more closely with the preferences of our clients. Additionally, some Fujifilm products have been tested and developed in Mexico, underscoring the mutual trust and collaboration between us and the brand.

One of our greatest strengths is the stability we bring to our customer relationships. In Mexico, industries such as healthcare and printing are often run by the same families or teams for generations. Similarly, our consistent leadership allows us to build long-term partnerships with our clients, fostering trust and loyalty over time. In contrast, subsidiaries frequently face management turnover, which can disrupt relationships and undermine continuity. Our clients value our reliability and view us as a steadfast partner, a quality that differentiates us in a competitive market.

We also take a long-term approach to growth. Rather than focusing solely on immediate results, we are committed to nurturing sustainable development both for our business and our customers. By working collaboratively to create solutions that deliver mutual success, we have built a strong foundation of loyalty and trust across the industries we serve, particularly in healthcare, printing, and other key sectors.

How does stability contribute to your success in Mexico, and how do you reconcile it with the need for innovation in an ever-evolving industry?

Stability has been a crucial factor in our growth, particularly in terms of consistent leadership at the investor and top management levels. This provides a reliable foundation that allows us to focus on long-term growth. However, stability does not mean stagnation. We are deeply committed to innovation and adaptability, which are essential in an industry as dynamic as ours. To maintain this balance, we actively recruit fresh talent from universities and other companies within the med-tech and technology sectors. While we prioritize developing our internal teams, bringing in new hires from outside helps us stay attuned to market trends and gain fresh perspectives that drive continuous improvement.

Fujifilm itself is a powerful catalyst for change, bringing fresh philosophies and strategies through its rotating leadership at subsidiaries. These shifts challenge us to adapt and translate global directives into local market realities, ensuring we remain both agile and aligned with Fujifilm's overarching vision. This dynamic interplay between stability and adaptability has been particularly valuable during pivotal moments in the industry. When I joined the company, the photographic sector was undergoing profound disruption, with many competitors facing financial struggles or exiting the market entirely. Fujifilm, however, successfully navigated this transformation by shifting from a reliance on consumables like photo and medical film to a focus on digital equipment and solutions.

This strategic pivot was transformative, and today, over half of our sales are driven by digital equipment, reflecting the breadth of this evolution.

The rise and fall of the digital camera market is another testament to the industry's rapid pace of change. Initially, the segment grew exponentially, but the widespread adoption of smartphones ultimately replaced compact cameras, causing a significant market contraction. Such shifts underscore the importance of innovation and adaptability. Fujifilm has thrived by consistently reinventing itself, investing in new technologies, and embracing change. Our ability to balance the solid foundation provided by stability with a forward-thinking approach to innovation has ensured not only our resilience but also our continued relevance and leadership in Mexico's dynamic market.

What role does Fujifilm play in Mexico's healthcare landscape, and how do you navigate its challenges while leveraging opportunities?

Fujifilm occupies a pivotal role in Mexico's healthcare market, offering one of the most comprehensive diagnostic portfolios in the industry. Our range encompasses traditional X-rays, advanced imaging modalities like MRI and CT, as well as 3D imaging and Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS). These systems have evolved into critical tools for managing diagnostic data across specialties. Additionally, Fujifilm's expertise in optics and chemical processes has driven advancements in endoscopy and in vitro diagnostics (IVD), enabling us to serve both public and private healthcare providers across the country.

However, the healthcare sector in Mexico presents unique challenges. Government expenditure on healthcare remains among the lowest globally, at just 4% of GDP. This underfunding reflects a cultural and systemic focus on treatment over prevention. For example, most insurance plans do not cover routine checkups, and public health systems often lack the capacity to promote preventive care effectively. This creates a cycle where insufficient diagnostic infrastructure results in higher long-term treatment costs. Nonetheless, this gap also represents an opportunity to drive change and growth, as awareness of preventive care begins to take root.

The private sector has become a key driver of this transformation, particularly diagnostic clinics, which are expanding their presence with extensive national networks. These clinics are increasingly catering to a population that is gradually embracing preventive health practices, a shift accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While this cultural change remains slow, there is growing demand for early detection and regular health checkups, offering significant potential for Fujifilm's solutions.

A standout area of focus is women's health, particularly breast cancer diagnostics. This segment has experienced significant growth, supported by heightened public awareness and targeted campaigns. Fujifilm's innovative imaging technologies have secured a strong market position, enabling us to make meaningful contributions in this space. Across all our offerings, Fujifilm remains deeply committed to its core philosophy of fostering societal well-being. Unlike industries that may inadvertently pose health risks, our products are designed to improve lives and support healthier communities. This guiding principle aligns with our mission to innovate for a healthier, more proactive future in Mexico's evolving healthcare landscape.

How does Fujifilm collaborate with other healthcare stakeholders to advance preventive care, and what initiatives are shaping the future of women's health in Mexico?

Fujifilm is increasingly engaging in collaborative efforts with pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers to promote preventive care, particularly in women's health. Breast cancer awareness and early detection have become central to these initiatives, with a strong focus on encouraging mammograms. These efforts are already making an impact, as women in Mexico are now seeking regular checkups in greater numbers than men, signaling a gradual cultural shift toward proactive healthcare. Fujifilm's involvement in such campaigns underscores the importance of leveraging collective resources to create meaningful change.

Looking ahead, we recognize that fostering a deeper cultural transformation requires engaging the younger generation. Drawing inspiration from international examples, such as Japan's school-based health programs, we see the potential for integrating routine checkups into educational settings. Simple screenings for metrics like weight, glucose levels, and vision could establish lifelong habits of health awareness. This approach not only encourages personal responsibility for well-being but also strengthens the foundation of Mexico's healthcare system, enabling it to transition toward a more prevention-focused model.

By combining immediate action with long-term strategies, Fujifilm is committed to shaping a more proactive healthcare culture in Mexico. Through partnerships and innovative initiatives, we aim to ensure that preventive care becomes a cornerstone of the nation's health system, particularly in areas where it can have the most profound impact.

How does Fujifilm support healthcare providers in Mexico, and what advancements are being made with AI in diagnostics?

Fujifilm Mexico employs a multifaceted approach to address the diverse needs of healthcare providers, ranging from small family-operated clinics to large private institutions and public hospitals. For smaller clinics, many of which struggle with limited access to credit due to informal business structures, we established a dedicated leasing company. This initiative provides these clinics with the financial flexibility to acquire advanced diagnostic equipment, enabling them to grow into more formalized operations and contribute meaningfully to the healthcare ecosystem. Larger institutions, with their greater access to external capital, benefit primarily from our innovative technologies, which are designed to elevate their diagnostic capabilities and operational efficiency.

A pressing challenge in Mexico's healthcare system is the acute shortage of radiologists and specialized medical professionals, which limits the capacity for diagnostic services even where advanced equipment is available. Fujifilm addresses this by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into diagnostic workflows, enhancing both accuracy and efficiency. While AI does not replace radiologists, it serves as a powerful tool to augment their expertise. For instance, in mammography, where detailed analysis of high-resolution images is essential, AI assists by highlighting potential areas of concern, categorizing findings, and streamlining the process. This allows radiologists to focus their attention on complex, value-added tasks, reducing errors while maintaining compliance with regulatory standards.

Through the combination of accessible financial solutions and cutting-edge technologies like AI, Fujifilm plays a pivotal role in strengthening Mexico's healthcare infrastructure. By empowering healthcare providers to overcome resource constraints and adopt more efficient diagnostic practices, we are fostering a system that delivers higher-quality care while supporting the professional expertise of medical practitioners.

How are healthcare providers in Mexico integrating advanced technologies like AI, and what challenges arise during this process?

The adoption of advanced technologies such as AI within Mexico's healthcare system is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including investment decisions by stakeholders and the adaptability of healthcare professionals (HCPs). While financial commitment to technology is critical, the successful integration of AI also hinges on doctors' willingness to embrace tools that challenge traditional workflows. Given the extensive training required in medicine, incorporating new technologies often demands time, trust, and significant cultural adaptation.

A notable example of this journey is Fujifilm's implementation of the world's largest mammography AI program in Mexico. Initially, this program faced unexpected challenges: analysis times increased by 20-30% as doctors rigorously tested the technology, often seeking to identify its limitations. This cautious approach reflected an inherent skepticism, as medical professionals conducted their analyses manually before comparing them to AI-generated results. Over time, however, as trust in the system grew and doctors began using AI as an enhancement rather than a competitor, analysis times returned to baseline. By the program's sixth month, AI had achieved a 20-30% reduction in interpretation times, demonstrating its potential to streamline workflows when fully adopted.

AI in healthcare serves as an indispensable complement to the expertise of medical professionals, not a replacement. Much like advanced word processing tools assist writers, AI supports radiologists by automating routine tasks, improving accuracy, and enabling greater focus on high-value activities. While the interpretation of diagnostic images is a prominent use case, other applications, such as voice recognition for automated report generation, are equally transformative. These innovations are particularly impactful in developing markets like Mexico, where the ratio of doctors to patients remains critically low.

Fujifilm continues to prioritize the seamless integration of AI into healthcare, providing tools that empower professionals to overcome resource limitations while delivering more efficient and effective care. By addressing both the technological and cultural challenges of adoption, we remain committed to supporting Mexico's transition toward a more advanced and accessible healthcare system.

What contributions has Fujifilm Mexico made to the global organization, and how have these innovations shaped healthcare solutions worldwide?

Fujifilm Mexico has played a pivotal role in advancing the company's global healthcare portfolio by adapting and refining technologies to address the unique challenges of emerging markets. A prime example is the development of a lightweight mobile X-ray system, designed to overcome infrastructure constraints common in Mexican hospitals, such as narrow corridors and the absence of elevators capable of supporting heavy, motorized equipment. Fujifilm reengineered traditional mobile radiology systems, incorporating highly sensitive imaging panels that require less radiation. This breakthrough allowed the downsizing of critical components, including the tube, generator, and battery, resulting in a portable, cost-effective system that is easier to maneuver and deploy. After rigorous testing and refinement under Mexican conditions, the system has been widely adopted globally, even in developed markets, due to its affordability, enhanced image quality, and reduced radiation exposure—key benefits that resonate across healthcare systems.

Equally impactful has been Fujifilm Mexico's contributions to improving mammography workflows. Collaborating closely with leading radiologists in the country, Fujifilm developed an advanced

console tailored to address the high demand for efficiency caused by a shortage of radiologists. The console was designed to streamline the diagnostic process, enabling faster, more accessible interpretations without compromising accuracy. This user-focused innovation reflects the out-of-the-box thinking that characterizes Mexican healthcare professionals, who often challenge traditional approaches to develop practical solutions capable of addressing both resource limitations and patient needs.

Fujifilm's ability to innovate for emerging markets while simultaneously creating solutions that appeal to developed healthcare systems underscores the company's commitment to accessibility and affordability. By focusing on technologies that reduce costs, improve efficiency, and maintain high standards of care, Fujifilm ensures its innovations benefit patients and providers across diverse global markets. This approach exemplifies the company's mission to bridge healthcare disparities, delivering advanced medical technologies to all corners of the world.

What are Fujifilm Mexico's priorities for the coming years, and how do you plan to address systemic challenges in healthcare?

Fujifilm Mexico is committed to advancing the efficiency, accessibility, and interoperability of the healthcare system over the next several years. While political transitions can introduce uncertainty, recent increases in healthcare budgets and a growing focus on systemic efficiency provide reasons for cautious optimism. Nonetheless, significant challenges remain, particularly the limited availability of advanced diagnostic technologies such as MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machines, where Mexico continues to lag far behind other nations in per capita availability. Addressing this gap is a key priority, and we are actively collaborating with public institutions to provide cost-effective, high-quality diagnostic solutions that can expand the system's capacity and improve patient care.

Innovation is at the heart of Fujifilm's strategy, guided by the principle of "value from innovation," which emphasizes rethinking processes to achieve greater efficiency. One of the most pressing issues we aim to tackle is the lack of interoperability within the public healthcare system. Historically, the system has been fragmented, with minimal communication between different levels of care. For example, a patient referred from a family clinic to a secondary or tertiary care facility often has to undergo the same diagnostic tests multiple times due to the inability to share results across institutions. This redundancy not only wastes resources and increases costs but also delays treatment and exposes patients to unnecessary radiation.

To address these inefficiencies, Fujifilm is introducing advanced IT solutions that enable seamless connectivity between healthcare providers. Our technologies allow diagnostic data to be shared across institutions, regardless of the equipment manufacturer or facility, without requiring significant infrastructure investments. This innovation ensures that diagnostic results from one clinic can be accessed by specialists at another, reducing duplication and enhancing the overall patient experience. By streamlining workflows and integrating diagnostic systems, we are helping public healthcare providers achieve greater efficiency and optimize limited resources.

In parallel, we are working with government authorities to modernize regulations around data protection and digital health records. While Mexico has implemented basic data protection frameworks, the regulatory landscape for securely managing and sharing patient data remains underdeveloped. Fujifilm is advocating for stronger policies that not only protect patient privacy but also facilitate the secure interoperability necessary for a truly integrated healthcare system. Fujifilm's approach combines technological innovation, regulatory collaboration, and a commitment to resource optimization to address systemic challenges in Mexico's healthcare

system. Our vision is to enable a more accessible, efficient, and interconnected system that can better serve the population while setting a benchmark for healthcare advancements in emerging markets.

As we conclude, is there any additional message or insight you would like to share with our global readers?

Fujifilm recognizes that a lasting transformation in healthcare culture must begin with younger generations. While many healthcare programs focus on older populations, targeting children through education and preventive initiatives can create a generational shift that impacts families and communities. By collaborating with the Ministry of Health to introduce health education programs in schools, children could learn the importance of regular checkups, self-care, and healthy habits. This approach would not only instill lifelong awareness but also influence older generations, fostering a cultural shift that prioritizes prevention. Over the next 5 to 10 years, such efforts could serve as a catalyst for broader improvements in Mexico's healthcare system.

In parallel, Fujifilm is driving innovation to address infrastructure and accessibility challenges. Drawing on lessons from Japan's aging population and the rise of outpatient care, the company has developed portable, lightweight medical equipment that enables healthcare delivery in underserved areas. In Mexico, where many rural communities lack adequate healthcare facilities, these solutions are transformative. By equipping mobile clinics with advanced diagnostic tools, Fujifilm ensures that even the most remote populations can access essential services. This shift not only improves early detection and intervention but also underscores the economic advantage of investing in diagnostics over treatment.

Collaboration between public institutions and private companies is central to Fujifilm's vision for a more efficient and equitable healthcare system. Private organizations bring innovation, agility, and efficiency, while public entities provide reach and resources. Aligning these strengths through regulatory reforms and strategic partnerships could significantly expand access to diagnostics and improve overall healthcare delivery. Such collaborations have the potential to reduce inefficiencies, lower costs, and establish a more integrated and effective system.

Fujifilm remains deeply committed to supporting Mexico's healthcare evolution. Through its innovative technologies, commitment to cultural change, and advocacy for public-private collaboration, the company envisions a future where healthcare is not only more accessible but also deeply aligned with the needs of the population it serves.

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