

Glenmark Argentina – Carlos Grzelak, Country Manager



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Glenmark's country manager for Argentina discusses Argentina's development expertise and how companies like Glenmark can capitalize on it through partnerships and collaborations.

How did you become part of Glenmark, and what was your main objective when you took the helm in Argentina?

I joined Glenmark five years ago as a sales and marketing director in Brazil. When I joined the team in 2009, we were practically starting up the business. We had to segment our product portfolio, so we created a dermatology sales force separate from the general pharma sales force. We created a new division to work directly with the government and separated the commercial area from the demand one. This is a trend in the entire industry, to not have the same person in charge of both the demand and the commercial area. This is because demand is the generation of prescriptions and sales force management, while the commercial area deals with distributors, pharmaceutical chains, and trade marketing operation. In Brazil, for example, there are close to 60,000 points of sale, so it's recommended to separate commercial from demand to be more effective/productive in each one.

For those first four years we were continuously improving in double digits, in terms of market share and sales growth, year by year in the private channel. Then, with the government, we enhanced our business creating a small sales force to work directly with doctors in the public system, to deal with the governmental institutions and other players in this area. The government in Brazil is a very important player: it now invests more money now on medicines to fulfil the demands of the population than in the past. Since the end of the 1990s, the government has been purchasing high quality medicines, becoming a very important player in pharma area and offering advanced solutions for the population.

After four years working for Glenmark in Brazil, and with many achievements during this time, I was given the opportunity to come to Argentina last January, to help maximize the business opportunities here. My main responsibility is to develop the local sales and marketing operations and expand the portfolio to take advantage of the potential in the Argentinian market. We currently deal with oncological generic products and the project is to work also in areas where Glenmark has expertise such as Dermatology for instance.

What has been the main challenge for you coming from two big R&D multinationals like Pfizer and Lilly, joining a company more focused on generics? How have you been able to navigate this step?

Glenmark is a very fast growing company in terms of R&D production and I am very proud to be part of this organization. We have a fantastic research center where not only generics but also innovative products are being developed. Furthermore, Glenmark has the skills/expertise to develop fast innovative and improved formulations on already-existing products. We have a research center in Switzerland that is focused on the development of monoclonal antibodies where we are jointly developing two products with Sanofi that are based on these antibodies and we expect to have these products (and others) to market in the upcoming years. However, while we are waiting, we need to work with the ones the company has already developed and with generics.

What is the global role of the Glenmark Argentina office? And what is the importance of this office for the rest of the group?

Glenmark's oncology business, based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, serves as the hub for development, manufacture and distribution of injectable oncology drugs for the entire organization. Regarding local sales, we are only now starting and are focusing on oncological generics so our current sales, compared to the rest of Latin America and the potential of our full portfolio, are still small.

What is your strategy for growth?

Since February, when I arrived, we have been evaluating many possibilities. We have a big portfolio that can come from Glenmark plants as Brazil and India. We are also searching by partnerships and conducting some meetings with local and multinational companies in order to see if there are some potential synergies, for instance, a product that they are not promoting because it is not in their area of focus. Or, perhaps someone has an interesting product but need a little extra manpower, which we could provide.

Argentina is one of the few countries in the world where local companies have more weight than international companies. How has your strategy differed considering this important fact?

One alternative that we have considered as a very good one taking into consideration that Argentinian companies have a great expertise in terms of development. In our line of oncology products, we have for instance certain products that were developed by local companies. So given their power and expertise, we can propose partnerships and work collaboratively. This is a win-win game where everybody's patients included will benefit. Furthermore, this partnership could be extended to other countries where Glenmark is present such as Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico and other countries that could take advantage from these local deals.

To what countries here is your plant in Argentina currently exporting to?

Today, the plant is exporting to Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and other countries from Latin America. We also have the licence to export to Europe and once we get FDA approval, the USA. Also, many countries in Africa and the Middle East already receive products from Argentina, because we are a global hub for oncological injectables.

What are your ambitions for the OTC segment?

This is an area that one really needs to know how to work because this is a unique segment. We have possibilities in the dermatology field to work in this segment but because this is not our area of expertise, we need to evaluate first. Our main expertise is to work in the prescription market, but obviously we are always looking for something different or, in this case, a very important channel to provide some of our great solutions for the patients.

What would be the main topic of discussion you would share with the Minister of Health in Argentina to promote the company, and also the country?

If I had the Minister of Health in front of me, the discussion would be about how to find ways to make access to medications for patients easier. We know that when a disease is treated before the patient reaches a critical situation, they won't have to go to a hospital, where the level of expense is higher for the government and family suffers more. So why should we have patients going to this limit when they can be treated before reaching such critical point, with oral medicines from home, for example? If they purchase more high quality medicines and provide solutions in order to increase access to the population, everybody wins. Also, there is no doubt that is better to invest on prevention than cure and there are medicines that can be taken in advance to avoid more serious injuries.

What would be the biggest advantage that Argentina offers to Glenmark in order to potentially be in the double digits for the next ten years?

Per capita spending on healthcare in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay is very high in Latin America so we know that the governments in these countries take care of the population. When the government wants its population covered, we know that we have a possibility to offer solutions that meet both of our needs and Glenmark's needs because we have many unknown solutions that could be offered to population and there is a lot of potential to unlock. The government's needs because we are one player more in this game, which means we can bring an innovative or, at least, an additional alternative to cover the needs of the population. Furthermore, because we produce oncological injectables locally, we can manufacture products that can substitute an expensive imported product.

Where do you expect to see Glenmark in five years?

We are expanding our production and portfolio here in Argentina and there is a huge space to grow. Our expectation is to see our company among the top ones in 5 years and, mainly, being known by what is in our DNA: Innovation and high quality standards being served to an ever growing number patients who will use them to cure or treat a disease, and in doing so, improve their lives.

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