

# Interview: C cile Bassereau, Managing Director, B. Braun, Chile

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*Key to improve the Chilean health care system is providing continuous training programs and sharing knowledge with healthcare professionals , explains*

*C cile Bassereau, Managing Director B Braun Chile. B. Braun has established the Aesculap Academy, which is the response to the growing need for further training in medicine in Chile and the region.*

## **Could you start by giving an introduction to B. Braun Chile?**

B. Braun is a company with a perfect mix between tradition and innovation. This year, the family-owned B. Braun Group reaches the impressive age of 175. What was once a small pharmacy in 1839, the Rosen-Apotheke, in Melsungen, Germany, has grown into a global corporation. Today B. Braun is one of the world s leading companies in international healthcare. Our product portfolio comprises pharmaceutical solutions, medical devices, equipments and instruments for dialysis, surgical procedures and infusion therapy as well as products for disinfection and hygiene. Whether provided as standard or customized products, the B. Braun portfolio spans the whole healthcare value chain and provides high quality and product safety. For our products, safety is really a crucial aspect. You can actually work with safety across our complete product portfolio.

 Sharing Expertise  is the principle guiding B. Braun Group. It is both an aspiration and a commitment for building up professional partnerships and promoting mutual transfer of knowledge and expertise between coworkers and customers as well as in all interactions in and with our company. In addition, the B. Braun brand rests on three supporting pillars: our brand values of innovation, efficiency and sustainability.

Our innovative products, services and systems are developed in partnership with healthcare professionals, hospitals, universities and other specialist bodies. Innovation is such a pillar that year after year the B. Braun Group increases investments in Research and Development, manufacturing

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sites and knowledge centers.

The second point B. Braun brand stands for is efficiency. Healthcare systems are calling more and more for a reasonable cost versus benefit ratio. It is in our own interest to help keep social security systems up and running by improving efficiency in our own company, in hospitals and in the outpatient sector. B. Braun efficiency also means flexible forms of organization. We have implemented the "lean" philosophy in accordance with the global objective of B. Braun to implement a lean company which applies the continuous improvement of its internal processes. Today a multinational of more than 5 billions euros, B. Braun remains family owned and it has been growing and insist on keeping growing from its own resources.

Lastly, as a family company, B. Braun feels responsible for its employees and the regions in which it is active. This is our understanding of "sustainability". It includes doing business in a way that is environmentally responsible, as well as with a social and cultural commitment. So, within the scope of the international program B. Braun for Children, in B. Braun Chile, we are working now with the municipality of San Bernardo to help their children: scholar campaign, winter campaign, toys campaign, Christmas with a sense, and an educational program to give the young people access to study health as well as mechanical and electrical technicians in San Bernardo, to know a company from inside and do their professional trainings with us.

***Since you arrived in 2012, what have been the major challenges and achievements you faced as the head of local operations?***

I took the helm of a German company, in Chile while being French. In such a multicultural environment I am trying to transmit that we have to be flexible and tolerant without prejudice. People should work together and work towards the same objective and share the same values. The values I built at the affiliate are courage, responsibility, respect, transparency.

I believe in the quote by Nelson Mandela, a quote that I have internalized as a part of our value system: *"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear"*.

People are our most precious asset, so we need to train them continuously in our products, our values. For this, in B. Braun Chile we focus a lot on leadership competences of our managers so that they can build strong, expert and reliable teams in commercial divisions but also in customer service, logistics, quality, etc.

Moreover Chile has been developing extremely fast, with a 5 per cent GDP growth rate in the past decade. Nevertheless public hospitals in Chile do not have access to some state of the art technology and sometimes the cost of the device looks like a barrier. But it is important to look at long term benefits. That being said, it is a challenge and our responsibility to influence decision makers to make them adopt a long term cost benefit approach to treatments with the help of our state of the art technology.

***What are the targets you set when you arrived, and to what extent have you achieved these?***

I have set a double digit growth target over the next five years. This target is ambitious but achievable. I have identified growth areas that are under explored. As an example, the Chilean government is putting a lot of emphasis in reducing chronic diseases. That being said, B. Braun has a division exclusively providing healthcare needs to address chronic diseases that affect all facets of Chilean community, including ostomy care and wound care.

For B. Braun, it is not about growing for growing, it is all about creating something new that works better and improves a patient's quality of life and long term cost of treatment.

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## ***What is the role of B. Braun in improving healthcare in Chile?***

I see room for improvement in the public sector. The challenge, especially for public hospitals, is to efficiently use their resources. With our complete and innovative solutions, we aim to help hospitals to better manage their resources to enable the healthcare worker to provide the best quality of care to the patient and most cost efficient

Key to improve the Chilean health care system is providing continuous training programs and sharing knowledge with healthcare professionals. In that respect, B. Braun has established the Aesculap Academy, which is the response to the growing need for further training in medicine in Chile and the region. Our seminars and workshops of the Aesculap Academy keep medical practitioners, hospital personnel and hospital management fit for the future. I believe the Aesculap Academy is a good way forward to really make a difference and improve healthcare in Chile and in Latin America. Moreover we have established partnerships with medical societies with the objective to bring our knowledge to the more remote areas in Chile.

Additionally, I have presented a proposal to B. Braun's board to build a training center in Chile. The center will be around 3.000 m<sup>2</sup>, including an auditorium, training rooms and laboratories. Our aim is to invite doctors, nurses and all professionals working in the health sector in order for them to learn more about new technologies, more cost efficient solutions for patient treatments and practice them through hands on workshops. Important to add is that this center will also host a state of the art Technical Service to maintain and repair the equipments purchased or rented by health institutions. Indeed, if we do not provide maintenance of our equipment regularly with highly qualified and certified technicians, certified spare parts and in due time, this could cause adverse effects in patients on the one hand and premature degradation of the assets in which a health institution has invested on the other hand.

## ***Globally, B. Braun has more than 5.000 products and 120.000 references. How has your product portfolio developed in Chile?***

In Chile, medical devices do not need registration and therefore B. Braun's latest technology that is available in the US and Europe is today also available in Chile. As a result we are offering to the market state of the art technology. In fact, Chile is one of the few Latin American affiliate offering B. Braun's entire portfolio. Hence, we have established the Aesculap Academy in Chile to train healthcare professionals from the entire region.

Because there is no registration requirement for medical devices B. Braun differentiates itself by the quality and safety of its products compared to the competition. We try to show our clients the quality differences and why it makes more sense to use a B. Braun safety catheter instead of a non-safety catheter that is cheaper. We train the healthcare professionals about the differences and why our products will give them, at the end of the day, a better economy. Using products that are cheaper could be related to long run complications linked to inadequate quality, which will mean higher costs for the institution.

## ***What are the products that have been driving B. Braun Chile's growth?***

Highlights of our portfolio are our infusion pumps; the highest technology you can find in the market. B. Braun offers a system for safe infusion therapy: from the infusion to venous puncture, all components used here are designed according to an integral modular system. In combination, they create a system that ensures safe infusion therapy.

As I mentioned earlier, B. Braun has a division dedicated to chronic diseases. The range of products in wound care has been performing well. As B. Braun, we have trained professionals to clean the

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wound with special anti-bacterial solutions. We have also trained on the importance of prevention and how to prevent wounds efficiently with the right combination of products: prevention costs less than cure.

In addition, our Aesculap division has been successful. Aesculap focuses on products and services for core processes in surgery. This division is not only renowned for its quality but also for the service; surgical instruments need to be maintained properly and we have the expertise to train professionals in this way. We are also bringing to the market a 3D laparoscopic tower which provides the best quality image of the market.

Last but not least, our dialysis machines, as our infusion pumps, offer the highest technology on the market which allow for a safe dialysis.

***Being one of the few women in a managerial position within the industry, do you consider that this has been an advantage or a disadvantage for you?***

It is not an issue for me and, in fact, it never has been. Actually it has rather been an advantage. Naturally at first, people looked at me thinking: she is young, a woman, European and working in a men's world in this position but at the same time they were curious about the things I had to say. And when they see that what I say is of their interest, and that they can rely on me, I know I have won their trust, no matter the gender, age and nationality. In fact these differences bring new insights to the people I'm dealing with and have positive effects.

It is also important to understand that hierarchies and honor play an important role in Chile's business world. When people are called by a superior they immediately believe that something is wrong. Being a woman, and also European, I have introduced a lean structure. I believe it is important as a manager to be able to provide constructive feedback and discuss matters. *Active listening* skills are fundamental to effective *management*. If you want to be listened to, first learn how to listen. And no matter what, go with a positive attitude!

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