

Interview: Gerardo Torres-Septien General Manager, Grupo Rasch Mexico



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The general manager explains how vision behind the setting up of Grupo Rasch was to represent companies, primarily European and high-tech ones, in the manufacturing of drugs reveals and how his relationship with his business partner, Federico Scharrer, is the bedrock of the group's success

Grupo Rasch recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, having been created in 1995. What needs were identified in the pharmaceutical market when the company was established?

Grupo Rasch is a 100 percent owned Mexican company that was founded by Federico Scharrer in 1995. I joined the company five years later, in 2000. At that time we only had 10 employees. Today we are more than 120. The vision behind the setting up of Grupo Rasch was to represent companies, primarily European and high-tech ones, in the manufacturing of drugs. When we represent a company, we act as their agents, providing a complete service. From the engineering, to the marketing and the sales, to the after-sales service. We have developed other businesses that are linked to the pharmaceutical sector, providing us with an opportunity to have a more personal relationship with our customers. Our aim is to offer solutions to our clients.

20 years ago Federico Scharrer founded the company with a small office. When I joined the company, we moved to a new building in Mexico City. Nine years ago I moved to Guadalajara, to set up our current offices in this city, while Federico remained in Mexico City. The idea behind opening this second location was to be closer to our customers. We had ambitions to export our services to the rest of Latin America. Having our headquarters in the capital, and another office in Guadalajara, made this objective easier.

Your portfolio is based around a number of divisions, offering customers integrated solutions. These include Rasch Process, Services, Metalwork and Architecture. Could you tell our readers more about the portfolio of services which you offer?

We began with machinery, Rasch Process. Gradually we developed some other business areas, so that our customers could have all their demands fulfilled by the same company. Rasch Process focuses on machinery for the pharmaceutical sector, where we commercialise around 25 brands, the majority of which are from Europe, with a focus on high-tech. We also represent companies from Canada, the USA and one from Argentina. All of them are very well established and respected companies. Our sales team approach our customers, present the technology, and if the project moves ahead, our reps fly and close the deal.

We are always looking to expand our services. With Rasch Architecture, we began our clean room practice. Today we are leaders in Mexico for this area. We have our own brand of clean room, and are promoting clean rooms throughout Latin America. Notably in Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Colombia. Our aim is to continuously develop. Whenever we see an opportunity on the market, we look to play our part.

Why do companies choose to partner with you? What is your competitive advantage?

We are constantly analysing the market, conducting research into new technologies. We are present at global trade shows to ensure the relationship with our reps, so we can fully support our customers. Having two offices in Mexico is a considerable advantage for us. We attach a great deal of importance to our after-sale service, offering our customers complete and integrated services. We want our partners to see Mexico as an opportunity, to be viewed as one of their key countries.

Why do you think it is that Mexico has been able to position itself as a hub to the rest of Latin America?

Although it may take six or seven hours to fly to the more distant countries in Latin America, In Mexico we are in the same time zone and speak the same language. Mexico is perceived as being very well developed, with good growth prospects, in part due to geographical proximity to the USA, a country which consumes ten times the amount of drugs than Mexico. Our location is a considerable advantage. Positioned on one side to Europe and on the other to Asia. On the North we border the USA, on the South Central and Latin America. All of these are big markets. Such advantages allow us to act as a hub for the region.

How helpful have been the reforms undertaken by Mike Arriola at Cofepris, trying to create international standards in terms of practices?

Cofepris is pushing the pharmaceutical industry to improve and this is having a very positive impact. Instead of Mexican companies falling behind the multinationals, what we have seen is large investments from local companies. When our customers invest in the industry, it provides Grupo Rasch with business, meaning we can continue to grow.

At the core of Grupo Rasch's success is having a group of people committed to providing quality services, where the emphasis is on teamwork and professionalism. How do you go about attracting and retaining the right sort of talent at the company?

Federico and I began this company working together on almost all aspects of the business. From selling, to assembling and installing the machines. Gradually, we started to look for people that shared our philosophy, with a focus on hard work. At the company there is no one boss, and our management team is easily approachable. We treat our people like people. This helps explain why our key staff have remained loyal to the company over a period of many years.

What is your five year vision for Grupo Rasch?

Our ambition is to continue growing in Latin America, and remain a leader in Mexico. We want to become a big name in the region.

Currently we export five percent of production. Within the next five years I would like that number to be somewhere between 30 to 50 percent. We have the required quality and people to achieve such targets.

What are you the most proud of when you look back on your 15 years with Grupo Rasch?

After all this time, I am still very close to Federico, my business partner. Our relationship, the belief we have in each other, is the bedrock of our success. This is something I am extremely proud of.

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