

# Interview: Matthieu Grosfils – General Manager, Laboratoires Expanscience Canada

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*Matthieu Grosfils, general manager of the Canadian affiliate of Laboratoires Expanscience, a European*

*leader in dermocosmetics, discusses the significance behind the establishment of the affiliate in 2015, the strengths of the company’s flagship Mustela® line, and his strategic priorities for the future growth of the affiliate.*

**You joined Laboratoires Expanscience as general manager in March 2017. From your 20 years of experience within the healthcare industry, what were your first impressions of the company?**

Laboratoires Expanscience is the European pharmacy leader in dermocosmetics for babies and pregnant women. We have two well-known brands: Mustela® for dermocosmetics, and Piasclédine®, which is for osteoarthritis. In Canada, we are currently only present within the dermocosmetics space.

We have been established in Quebec for twenty years, but it is only recently, in September 2015, that we decided to focus more on the Canadian market and grow the affiliate here. For now, in Canada, we are still a small affiliate, with some budget constraints and only a few products from our Mustela range present on the market but we aim to be more strongly present with a bigger portfolio in the near future.

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Thanks to my professional background, which has been focused on the marketing of healthcare products as well as the creation and development of businesses in the health sector, this is an interesting and new challenge for me. My first goal is naturally to develop the affiliate here, and I expect to see positive results by the end of the year, but also to establish us in the long term while retaining the company culture, which is known for its environmentally-friendliness.

## **Why did Laboratoires Expanscience decide to enter the Canadian market first with the Mustela brand?**

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It is a strategic choice from the headquarter. In Quebec, we have many French citizens, who are already familiar with the Mustela brand. This became our bridge to penetrate all the other provinces in Canada. The Mustela products are also extremely strong and established, so it made sense for us to start with the Mustela line as a means of introducing the company to the Canadian market.

The dermo-cosmetic market in Canada is very competitive because most of the big players like Johnson & Johnson are represented here. By entering with our main brand, it gave us a strategic way to enter on the market and establish our presence within the pharmacy space.

We also have an affiliate in United States that was established before the Canadian affiliate, which is doing very well, so they act as a source of good support in terms of sharing expertise, importing products, and working with us on our marketing strategy.

We have since launched around 30 products on the Canadian market focusing mainly on **daily-use products for baby skincare. This is globally a niche for Laboratoires Expanscience; we have** innovative global research programs tailored to the specific needs of newborn babies' and children's skin, across all skin types from normal, dry or atopic skins. The full Mustela line globally contain more than fifty products, so we are keen to work towards introducing all the products here in the future.

## **As you mention, the dermocosmetics space in Canada is extremely competitive. What is your strategy for differentiating Laboratoires Expanscience?**

As a company, we have been focusing only on birth, maternity and toddler skincare for the past 60 years, so this is indisputably our specialty areas. Globally, we have a recognized and well-established knowledge that delivers high-quality, innovative solutions for our customers. This is really where our advantage lies.

Mustela® as a brand not only meets the requirements of young and expectant mothers, but also those of their babies. We have a wide range of dedicated products for baby skin, from specific cares relating to cradle cap; diaper change; and even sun care.

The Mustela brand is also widely distinctive due to its iconic scent. In Europe, this has proven to be an extremely effective marketing and branding effort as our customers easily recognize the scent, and identify it with their childhood.

In terms of supply chain, our products are also distributed via pharmacies all over Canada, where we enjoy the same positioning that we have in Europe.

## **Canada also has a strong independent pharmacy presence in addition to the corporate chain giants. How does that affect Laboratoires Expanscience's market distribution strategy?**

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In reality, independent pharmacists are more common in Quebec than in the other English provinces. Operationally, the model is not very different. For the chain pharmacies, you have to meet their business development teams to introduce your brand, your portfolio, your business model, and your objectives. It is all about business relationship building. On obtaining approval from HQ, all the franchises can then buy our products. In independent pharmacies, the process is much the same, albeit on a smaller scale. We have to make sure they understand and like our brand, and will feature it in their stores.

**Canada has a rather challenging market access environment. How does it affect Laboratoires Expanscience within the dermo-cosmetic space?**

Like other pharma companies, we need to list our products with and obtain approval from Health Canada. The process is quite easy and fast. If you have some specific claims like natural products, you have to build a file to show clinical trials data on the efficacy and safety of the products. All our products are subject to extremely rigorous requirements as we have sensitive consumer targets, so safety, quality and efficacy are checked through a battery of tests. Moreover, France is known for its high regulatory standards, and all our products are approved on the French market before anywhere else, so that is already another mark of quality.

**What are your objectives for the Canadian affiliate for the next 3 years?**

I think with the changes of our society, we have to become more digital. Digital tools have the amazing power of bringing people closer, and this applies to companies with their customers as well. One of the most important thing for a company is to know its customers and understand their needs. Digital platforms can be a way for patients to access to this. Laboratoires Expanscience is reputed for its knowledge, its creativity and innovation, and digital has to be part of it. By developing a website and a Facebook page, we can also develop better customer service support; the world is increasingly digitalized, after all, and patients increasingly look for information online.

My goal is to grow the revenue by 10 percent for the Canadian affiliate, and to expand the team here by hiring experienced people in order to continue building a strong Laboratoires Expanscience brand here in Canada.

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