

Interview: Philippe Coudiere – General Manager, Pierre Fabre Dermo-Cosmetics Poland



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Philippe Coudiere, general manager of Pierre Fabre Dermo-cosmetics Poland, highlights the key partnerships the company has nurtured with pharmacists and dermatologists and the importance of clinical data for their products. Furthermore, he explains the need to develop a strong connection with end consumers and the dynamics of the Polish dermo-cosmetic market.

You worked at the international level for the company before taking up the general manager role a few years ago. Thus far, how has the Polish experience been for you?

For over ten years, I supported two brands to develop our business worldwide – especially within our innovative products, the PFD and Ducray® brand. During my international period I was able to gain valuable knowledge and understand various management approaches in different cultures. I was therefore aiming to contribute this knowledge and took up the exciting challenge to be responsible for Poland. Additionally, I feel personally connected to Poland due to family connections and settling here has been a pleasure. Poland is an exciting place to work and people have an excellent level of English and great overall ambition.

What was your mission in 2015 when taking up the position?

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The priority was to further develop the subsidiary. Created in 2000, the affiliate had already great dynamic and solid turnover. Nevertheless, this growth was still below the Polish market, and the

2008 global financial crisis weakened its shape even more; therefore, the affiliate began rebuilding its structure and changing the mindset.

Our philosophy is to develop our brands through our two pillars: dermatologists and pharmacists. In Poland, we are partner with large numbers of dermatologists and with fourteen-thousand pharmacists. These partnerships are part of our DNA, with the founder, Mr. Pierre Fabre, using advice from clinicians to help develop the products, which have high level of efficacy and safety.

The company is the 2nd largest dermo-cosmetic entity in Europe. What is the strategic importance of Poland for Pierre Fabre Dermo-cosmetics?

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The Polish affiliate is one of the most dynamic in Europe, with over fifteen percent growth in the last three years, compared to two percent growth on the European market. Now, our ongoing challenge is to further develop this successful portfolio.

In order to maintain this impressive growth, we are increasingly focused on interacting directly with our consumers through digital tools. Indeed, with digital communication, such as social media, as we can directly reach our consumers – not limiting ourselves to dermatologists’ prescriptions and pharmacists’ recommendations. For this new approach to be efficient, it is essential we understand customer dynamics and act quickly to interact with them.

What star products coming through the pipeline are you most excited about?

XeraCalm A.D is definitely a star product we can be proud of. The company has always believed in the potential of Avene thermal water, and we know Eau Thermale Avene®’s spring water offers incredible results on the skin and its unique composition is clinically shown by over 150 studies to calm, soothe and soften the skin.

In partnership with a microbiologist academia, we focused on developing a unique product containing such properties, and this was the beginning of XeraCalm A.D With the interesting properties of the Eau Thermale Avene®’s spring water that is a naturally soothing source for sensitive skin, the product can be used for multiple purposes – from healing to soothing inflammatory skin.

What is the landscape of the Polish dermo-cosmetic market, and how do you believe it will evolve in the future?

The country is very dynamic, with an increasing share of the Polish population having a rising disposable income to invest in dermo-cosmetic products, therefore catching up with the average European consumer.

Our role is to educate the population on the difference between a mass market cosmetic product and dermo-cosmetics helping to relieve skin concerns or hair disease. This is important as the Polish market is still quite price-oriented, and our products generally cost more than generics cosmetics.

How is Pierre Fabre looking to position themselves on the market, and how do you plan on achieving this position?

France is a pioneer in dermo-cosmetics. As a matter of fact, half of the Polish dermo-cosmetic market is covered by French brands.

The Polish dermo-cosmetic market is a promising market and offers great potential for development as it makes up less than five-percent of overall cosmetic sales. Therefore, there is room for us to educate Poles and develop consumer group who requires such innovative product. We are the pioneer in this sector and our principal objective is to become Polish market leader.

How brand conscious are Poles towards brands?

Market is quite new, and polish consumer should try different products to define which one sweet to them. Furthermore, Pierre Fabre Dermo-cosmetics are still relatively new in Poland, arriving here only in the early 2000s. Brand loyalty and awareness is definitely an area we need to work on within Poland.

What are the incentives and activities you have been taking to raise the brand's awareness?

Our communication targeting doctors, pharmacists and consumers is oriented towards evidence-based data. The company conducts clinical trials with doctors to prove the efficiency of our substances.

For example, we conducted clinical trials in Warsaw for A-derma® last year, to show the possibility of using our products for new-born babies. Moreover, we launched an educational application for dermatologists and are excited to launch in March 2018, the first world congress of trichoscopy, a method of evaluating and diagnosing scalp and hair disease. The aim is to support medical personnel in improving their knowledge of the disease the products available to them.

Moving forward, what are your strategic priorities for the affiliate?

First, keeping our close relationship with pharmacists and dermatologists is critical over the next ten years and this is a win-win partnership. Equally, they assist us to reach our consumers with research and development.

We see that in Poland the structure of pharmacies needs to change. Indeed, too many Polish pharmacies are still operating in a traditional approach, not competing against the emerging e-commerce player quite well developed in Poland. To stay ahead of the game and reach consumers higher expectations, point of sale pharmacies need to be more price competitive and offer additional services in store.

In the future, we want to address the direct needs of the patient and better understand their concerns to have consumer-centric view. This is what we are doing with Elancyl®, our blockbuster slimming product and we are happy to have now eighty percent market share. Understanding the consumer is the key and developing privileged relationships with them is even more crucial. We can do this further by interacting with healthcare professionals, such as dermatologists, to understand the patients' needs.

Last but not least, we wish to be exceptionally transparent with our products and show that we genuinely care about the environment from R&D to production. Poles are increasingly aware of the need to be "green" and the company's objective is not confined to helping people live healthier, but to be environmentally accountable.

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