

# Interview with Karel Fucikovsky, General Director Mexico and Central America, Pierre Fabre Farma de MÃ©xico

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23.05.2012

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**a brief rundown of Pierre Fabre's activities in Mexico since they opened an affiliate here, specifically the company's milestones and achievements along the way?**



Pierre Fabre (PF) is now celebrating its 51st anniversary as 2012 rolls in. A French based company founded by Mr. Pierre Fabre, whose vision and "Savoir faire" on the research, development and management fields, not only made it possible to deliver real break-through products in different therapeutic areas, thus improving the quality of life of patients, but also made the Internationalization of the company and start-up operations on a world-wide basis possible, led by Mr. Jacques Fabre who ensures the continuation of the Vision and the direction of the organization growth to new heights. Mexico is the result of this vision of market expansion, and Pierre Fabre MÃ©xico is represented by two brother companies; Pierre Fabre Medicament (PFM - Pharma & Oncology)- for which I am fully responsible- and Pierre Fabre Dermo, led by the talent of Mr. Ludovic Leo, with brands such as Avene, Ducray, and Klorane, and a strong focus on Dermatology and Consumers.

We started operations in Mexico approximately nine years ago with a legal entity when some of our products were already licensed in the market to other pharmaceutical companies. Following this period, our major strategy was to take back the products, as our own independent affiliate was emerging. Since then, every year our sales have been presenting steady growth year on year of almost double digits.

Over these past years Pierre Fabre Medicament (PFM) has been focused on strengthening the commercial structure of the company, including fundamental areas such as: Finance G&A, HR, Regulatory and Medical Affairs, Q&A, and of course our relationship with our key distribution partner Chinoin.

Mexico is also the hub for our pharmaceutical Business activities in Central America, where we are present in 7 countries through a pure local distribution partnering business model.

**How does Pierre Fabre Mexico fit into the company's global structure in terms of priority, sales, and future strategies?**

Mexico's turnover and contribution to the company's global financial results of past 2011 puts us inside the top ten rank of the Pierre Fabre world.

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We are a very important affiliate outside the domestic market and inside the company's core international operations. We are clearly flying on the radar; Mexico is a priority market for Pierre Fabre.

This year we are aiming to stay in the top ten ranking, and with the market authorization of new products that come from our own pipeline and license opportunities, plus our current portfolio, we will with no doubt remain there and even continue climbing the rank.

It is hard work, and requires a lot of commitment from our team. In Pierre Fabre part of our philosophy is that the people who work in the company are just as important as the results and objectives: Pierre Fabre in many ways is a talent management company, very strongly oriented on developing its employees.

**You mentioned there are a few more products to get registered in Mexico: can you tell us more about these, and on which therapeutic areas they are focused?**

Our strategy is to focus on Women's Health, Primary care and Oncology. In the short term we have two products coming soon for women's health, and a novel drug in Oncology that will address the treatment of bladder and breast cancer.

How do you attribute the success of Mexico for Pierre Fabre? It is often "under the radar" for many European companies.

If you compare us to other pharmaceutical companies that have been in the market for many more years than us, and competing in the same market segments, Pierre Fabre Medicament (PFM) is a young pharmaceutical company.

The success of PF Mexico is directly linked to the quality of products, market and segment focus, clear Investments and use of resources, constant ROI monitoring, and above all, the team members that are committed to delivering the best of themselves. It is team spirit that really makes things happen.

**Do you have any special in-house training programs or do you focus more on recruiting the most fitting candidates for the job?**

We do the training in-house, but unfortunately it's not our top area of performance right now. We are working on re-shaping the area, including more technology and e-training models.

Training is a major concern for Pierre Fabre and we want to make sure that every sales representative who goes out into the field to see our clients has sufficient information to reply to whatever the market is asking for.

**Is it easy to recruit the right kind of people here in Mexico that fit in with the company's corporate structure and philosophical outlook?**

It is not an easy task for the pharmaceutical industry in Mexico generally speaking, even though there is a lot of talent in the country. At Pierre Fabre we also share the same hurdles. It is not easy to scout for, and bring talent into your organization because in some cases it is like tossing a coin: the people who do well in interviews are not necessarily the people who do the best job inside the company. In Mexico it is always a bet to see if they fit with the organization's principles and can also deliver what they have been promising along the way, in terms of performance and commitment.

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On the other hand, it is also our responsibility to coach, train, and to give the necessary tools to support a well performed job, to all of the employees in the company.

### **On a more personal basis, what motivates you in the position you have today?**

Before I started working for Pierre Fabre, I had several interviews with my current boss: Marc Vincenti (Director for the Americas), he transmitted an incredible passion about the company and its products, sharing the hurdles and objectives to tackle in the medium to long- term.

Since my first day on the job, I could see and feel exactly what Marc had spoken of during my interviews.

Pierre Fabre is a passionate company that is focused on results, allows innovation, respects talent, and incentivizes best practices.

### **When you first arrived then, what was your roadmap for the next few years of Pierre Fabre in Mexico?**

I had to immediately tackle a few main objectives upon arrival including re-structuring the marketing and sales areas; strengthening our relationship with the distributors and wholesalers; re-shaping the human resources department; giving strict follow-up on the registration processes for the new products; continuing to support strong financial discipline inside the company; establishing a talent retention program; and lining up the organization towards the principles of our Global 2020 Ambition Strategy plan (focused on Innovation, Improvement, adaptability and encouragement of our talent development) Those are the big priorities.

### **If we come back in five years from now, where would we find Pierre Fabre?**

Today we are ranked 61st in the pharmaceutical market, but the goal of Pierre Fabre Medicament is to become a recognized player and partner within the field of Medicine and Health Care. We want to be leaders in the therapeutic areas in which we compete; we want to be top in Oncology, and be the number one for specific indications in Gynecology and Primary care. In five years I am positive that we will improve our actual market position

### **How do you plan on reaching that goal?**

Firstly we have to improve our sales force performance because there is still a lot of room to grow in terms of productivity. We should implement more intelligent metrics and key performance indicators for both sales and marketing, and we need to push our marketing teams to do more field marketing, and less "desk" marketing. Nowadays it is imperative that we keep focusing on hearing the voices of the market (insights).

Marketing should not only be responsible for the development of strategies, but they should also be supporting sales in establishing relationships and networks with all our stakeholders; medical associations, clients, Key & Thought leaders, wholesalers and distributors. At the end of the day it is still a support area for sales, and it is part of the transformation that we have to go through.

Secondly, in terms of reaching that goal, we need Permanent Segmentation and targeting. To my understanding, the market is a living body that changes rapidly, and at times much faster than we can even notice. That is the reason why we should remain open and constantly monitor its dynamics.

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The third element of growth is the introduction of new products in the therapeutic areas mentioned, which will support our global strategy.

We are also very open to in-licensing products from other companies who would like to have us as partners.

**Do you have a final message about Pierre Fabre for the readers of Pharmaceutical Executive?**

Pierre Fabre Medicament is here in Mexico to stay: we will be key players in this pharmaceutical industry, and my job is to continue delivering a profitable business; accelerate growth; expand our reach and market penetration; make sure that our products continue to improve the quality of life of our patients and remain absolutely reliable to our practitioners, while continuing to fully comply with our local health authorities and internal group governance rules and practices.

Even though Mexico is not a BRIC country anymore, the potential here is huge. The rules of the market will eventually keep changing, and we will have a higher penetration of generics as there is an increasing loss of patents. International companies will start to focus on higher specialty drugs, and a company like Pierre Fabre Medicament that is very focused on products and medical specialties, will be able to deliver growth.

In sum, at PFM MÃ©xico and CA we are all committed to making things happen! This is our road map to success.

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