

Interview: Eduardo Gutierrez – Business Leader, Philips Personal Health Mexico



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29.05.2017

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An ambassador for Philips’ global vision of spearheading innovation, business leader of Philips Personal Health Mexico, Eduardo Gutierrez, shares his insights on the key growth drivers in the segment, digitalization, connectivity, and his personal motivations in the role.

To begin, can you introduce the main facets of your role at Philips Consumer Lifestyle to our global executive readers?

I spearhead the Personal Health division, which is concentrated on enabling healthier lives with connected propositions focused on health routines and care. Philips, as a leading health technology company, focuses on providing innovative solutions that make an impact on people’s health across the health continuum, from healthy living and prevention of diseases to diagnosis, treatment and home care. We leverage advanced technology and deep clinical and consumer insights, delivering integrated solutions to enable better health and better care at lower costs.

Within our Personal Health portfolio, our key business segments include Philips Avent, focused on mother and child care, with products including breastfeeding and baby monitoring devices, oral healthcare products including Philips Sonicare toothbrushes and Philips Kitchen appliances, with products that promote healthy eating through the preparation of healthy and well-balanced meals at home. We also have lines of beauty care products for both men and women. These include male and female shavers as well as hair care products that address the global self-care trend.

What has been the key growth driver in this segment?

The growth engine for Philips Personal Health is strongly anchored on the direction of macroeconomic and social trends. In Mexico, for example this includes the increase in demand for healthy food and people looking to live healthier lifestyles. In Latin America the obesity epidemic has spread further and Mexico does not escape this reality, but now there is a conscious shift towards providing healthier alternatives and adopting public policies to mitigate this phenomenon. For instance our Philips Kitchen appliances line includes products like juicers and blenders which the recommended intake of fruits and vegetables. In addition, they are easy to use and clean which make them ideal for people with busy lifestyles. Under the same segment we also have the Philips AirFryer, which cooks food using up to 80% less fat. Regarding our Avent line, the growth driver lies in the continued and increasing initiative by government and NGO organizations to improve mother and child care and provide the necessary tools that ensure a healthy life for both mothers and children.

Why are quality breastfeeding products becoming more important and what is the significance of having a product category specifically dedicated to the wellbeing of the mother and child?

The driving force behind this segment was the development of a new baby formula, which then led to the development of a bottle that closely resembles the manner in which the baby latches onto the mother's breast. Having a product architecture that mimics natural dynamics offers a strong value to our products. Today, Philips Avent has the leadership in the premium segment in Mexico and represents our largest unit thus far.

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Pieter Nota, global CEO of Philips' Health Business, has talked about how Philips is at the forefront of digital health with a wide range of personalized and connected health programs in areas such as oral care, sleep and heart hub. Can you please elaborate on your digitalized solutions for the Mexican market?

When people are able to gather information and data about their health, they become accountable for it. For example, our Philips Health Watch can connect to a blood pressure meter and enables the congregation of information into one system, providing a holistic analysis of the person's health profile. Even our Philips Sonicare toothbrushes are connected to an app, which produces a set of statistics on current brushing techniques and how to improve oral care. In sum, connectivity enables people to track their own health and progress, empowering them to make healthy choices every day.

We integrate connectivity into each aspect of the Health Continuum as we believe that it is conducive to greater economic efficiency, improves access to care and can enable stronger health outcomes. In this line, for example, our medical informatics solutions streamline management and analysis of patient data from imaging systems, patient monitors, and cardiac testing equipment, while also offering innovations that enhance clinical pathways and aid workflow. By connecting hospital information systems, you gain easy access to aggregated data across the patient care continuum, helping you to gain visibility into the overall health of a patient and proactively manage population health.

The Healthcare Continuum is a staple concept of Philips HealthTech, which encompasses areas including prevention, diagnosis, treatment and home care. How does this concept manifest itself in Mexico and how can the country take a global leadership position, especially in terms of mitigating the growing prevalence of diabetes in the country?

Education is key to social progress, therefore at Philips we believe that greater health literacy for the population will lead to stronger health outcomes. In Mexico, the population is vulnerable to chronic illness such as diabetes and cardiovascular issues including heart disease and obesity. It has been proven that these can be prevented by taking a proactive approach to one's health and through the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. However, people need to be educated on how to prevent these illnesses and as a company focused on health and well-being it is our duty to work both with government and individual entities to empower the Mexican people to live healthier lives.

Across the entire health continuum our goal is to enable patients, healthcare institutions and providers to have access to technological solutions that can provide better health outcomes. For example, in home care we enable patients to continue their treatment from the comfort of their own home by teaching them and providing them with the tools to manage their condition from the comfort of their home. Hospitals also benefit from home care as it reduces costs and enables more efficiency in operations.

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Unfortunately Mexico still lags behind in terms of technology adoption in the healthcare sector. At Philips, we are actively addressing this by partnering with both the public and private sector to provide innovative solutions and business models that close this technological gap.

When we interviewed Dr. Jose Ahued Ortega, secretary of health of Mexico City, he spoke about the necessary paradigm shift that needs to be ignited in Mexico in order to promote more proactive healthcare. What role can Philips Healthcare play to encourage this shift?

Promoting prevention through a healthy lifestyle and innovative solutions is the key to achieve more proactive healthcare. We are already working in this and are working with other companies as well as key NGOs to promote health literacy and education— including education on best practices in maternal care, oral healthcare and nutritional education. We also work with key opinion leaders in Mexico and complement their knowledge with our own insights and expertise. We are very methodical in our approach. For instance, we study local customs and socio-economic trends to identify population needs and opportunities, in order to efficiently address the core issues and promote a shift in mindset when thinking about healthcare.

One of the biggest opportunities in Latin America is the exponential growth of digital technology, which contributes to improving health outcomes. Access to proper medical care has been one of the greatest challenges for a growing country like Mexico, and while we are working providing more access to technology we also need to complement this with education. For instance when we look at diagnosis in the health continuum, while technology is key to provide efficient and early diagnosis, health literacy is key because if we cannot identify the symptoms, we cannot diagnosis. Philips is a strong proponent of this and is working to increase access to healthcare to enable early and correct diagnosis especially in rural areas in Mexico that are in grave need of proper healthcare and health education

What is the strategic importance of Mexico to the rest of the Latin American region?

Mexico is on top of the global agenda for the company; because of its growth potential there is great

opportunity to deploy innovative strategies that contribute to optimizing the healthcare sector. Mexico currently sets the benchmark for standard and quality for the entire region because of the nascent opportunities available in the market, as well as the infrastructure of talent to foster it.

What are the key priorities in your agenda for the next two to three years in the Mexican market?

Our prime focus is to continue consolidating our leadership as a health technology company and improving people's lives through innovation. In the recent years, we have impacted the lives of millions of Mexicans and we aim to continue this path for growth both in Mexico and globally. Our goal is to improve the lives of three billion people a year by 2025 and in Latin America in 2016 we already improved the lives of 178 million people. We are also focusing on the integration and convergence of the healthcare sector as it is key in rendering coherence to the Health Continuum and thus improving the access and quality of care.

At a more personal level, what has been the main motivation for the longevity of your career in Philips?

The flexibility of the roles available within the company has been the primary motivator for staying at Philips. Being able to face different challenges and responsibilities while building an established relationship with one brand was ideal for me, as it was the perfect balance of dynamism and stability.

The fuel of Philips is innovation and it is a company that re-invents itself constantly. With innovation at its core, I am never left disinterested in staying abreast with the dynamic pace of change in the organization. When I began my career at Philips as a student in 1981, it was a drastically different company solely focused on consumer electronics. Today, it is impressive to see the successful and independent business units that have spun out of this one brand. In retrospect, there has not been one year where I did not see any level of organization within the company.

Philips' vision to impact the lives of millions of people in the world is poignant and I am certainly proud to be a part of it.

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