Georg Pirmin Meyer – SVP & Head of International, Blueprint Medicines



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Georg Pirmin Meyer, SVP and Head of International at Blueprint Medicines, shares insights into the company's journey from a promising startup to a fast-scaling biotech leader focused on allergy/inflammation and haematology/oncology. Meyer discusses Blueprint's innovative approach to international expansion, patient-centric strategy, and ambitious plans for growth in new markets. He also highlights the company's ongoing efforts to address complex regulatory landscapes and drive sustainable success through targeted partnerships and the added value of a high-impact, agile organizational culture.

With over 20 years of experience in the industry at companies like Sanofi, Amgen, and Vertex, what led you to join Blueprint Medicines?

I am a physician by training, and I began my career in orthopaedic surgery and traumatology across different European countries. However, after a few years, I realized that operating on hips and knees every day for the rest of my career was likely not fulfilling enough for me. I wanted more diversity in my work, so I decided to explore the pharmaceutical industry, starting in medical affairs at Sanofi's German affiliate. Later, I had the opportunity to relocate to Spain where I continued in medical affairs as a medical advisor.

As I gained experience, my curiosity grew beyond medical affairs alone. There are so many avenues in this industry, so I transitioned into marketing and then took on various sales roles. At a certain point, I had to make a decision. Should I stay in pharma, shift to biotech, or return to clinical practice? Clearly, I chose to stay in the industry, which turned out to be a great decision for both my career and personal growth. I spent several years in Spain before joining Amgen for a unique opportunity to launch a monoclonal antibody in a retail setting—a first in the industry.

After years of learning in larger organizations—Sanofi as big pharma and Amgen as a sizable biotech—I moved to smaller companies like Vertex motivated by my desire, as a physician, to work closer to the patient impact side of the industry. Vertex's focus on cystic fibrosis was particularly inspiring, as they continually innovate to address the root cause of the disease. That hands-on work was incredibly rewarding.

Finally, Blueprint Medicines reached out and its mission captivated me. I saw Vertex's path as rather well-defined, while Blueprint presented a unique opportunity to help shape the company's direction. Five years ago, I joined as General Manager for Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (DACH). Today, I serve as the SVP and Head of International—a role I have held for the past three years.

Can you please outline Blueprint Medicines's global footprint as it stands today?

As a company, Blueprint is 13 years old and began expanding its international operations in 2017. The executive team and board chose to establish our European headquarters in Zug, Switzerland. The location provides access to a strong talent pool, excellent infrastructure, and central proximity to other European markets, which all play a role in our growth strategy.

Today, we operate directly in 13 international markets. For regions where a direct presence is not feasible, we partner with local distributors. Partnerships are integral to our approach, enabling us to reach patients in markets such as Israel, Central and Eastern Europe, and Canada. We are also evaluating opportunities in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America, as we aim to support patients in need across these regions.

Our focus remains on maximizing patient impact in high-priority markets. For instance, Germany stands as our largest European market, not only due to its size but also because its pricing and market access framework is stable and well-defined. Our products, which address significant medical needs, particularly target underlying disease mechanisms. A key example is our treatment

for systemic mastocytosis, which offers new hope for patients. This complex disease ranges from diverse forms of hematologic blood cancers called advanced systemic mastocytosis (AdvSM)to indolent systemic mastocytosis (ISM), and our treatment represents an important advancement in meeting the needs of these patients.

Blueprint is focused on targeted therapies for rare cancers and blood disorders, specializing in precision medicine. Can you elaborate on the work you are doing in this area?

Our work began with a focus on precision oncology, specifically targeting rare mutations in cancer. While our approach has since evolved, this origin in precision oncology continues to shape our mission. Initially, we saw an opportunity to address limitations in existing treatments for gastrointestinal stromal tumours (GIST), specifically in cases with the very rare PDGFRA D842V mutation, which could not be effectively targeted by existing therapies. This led us to develop our therapy, which can target this specific mutation and address the underlying cause of the disease.

Over time, our focus has shifted more towards haematology, particularly in systemic mastocytosis, a rare blood disorder that severely impacts the quality of life. Our aim is always to go beyond symptom management and tackle the underlying drivers of these diseases. In systemic mastocytosis, a particularly challenging and underserved condition, we have broadened our research to include both advanced systemic mastocytosis (AdvSM) and indolent forms of the disease (ISM), where patients have previously had very limited treatment options.

Our mission is straightforward yet ambitious: to make a meaningful difference for patients and caregivers by addressing areas that have been largely overlooked. With systemic mastocytosis, for example, the disease is highly debilitating, and very few companies have pursued treatments at the level of depth and breadth that we have. We developed our asset entirely in-house, and it is a milestone for us in the way it provides a more targeted approach for this condition. We are now reaching more patients worldwide, with approximately 40,000 potential patients across Europe and about 75,000 globally, including in the U.S.

However, given the nature of rare diseases, we recognize there may still be many patients out there who remain undiagnosed. Identifying patients early, supporting physicians in the diagnostic journey, and raising awareness about systemic mastocytosis are essential parts of our work, and we are only at the beginning of what we hope to achieve in this space.

Can you tell us more about your ISM Therapy which marks a new era in the treatment of this disease?

We received last December the European Commission approval for our ISM therapy, a huge milestone for Blueprint and for patients with this disease. Our product has now three indications, beginning with its use in oncology for a specific GIST mutation—a narrow area where we initially launched the product in the US and Germany. However, the more significant developments have been in systemic mastocytosis.

In AdvSM, there remained an unmet need as not all patients could stay on traditional therapy long-term. In Germany, for instance, there are up to 500 diagnosed AdvSM patients – a very small but severely impacted group. AdvSM is typically managed by a handful of specialists at centers of excellence, due to the disease's complexity and rarity.

In ISM, it significantly impacts quality of life. ISM can cause debilitating symptoms—skin issues, digestive disruptions, mental health challenges, chronic fatigue, and poor concentration. Until now, patients could only rely on best supportive care, using antihistamines for allergic reactions, skin treatments, and sometimes corticosteroids. These treatments helped manage symptoms for some patients but did not address the underlying disease.

Now, we have a targeted option that goes beyond symptomatic care. It is an exciting opportunity for us as a company to make a meaningful difference in the lives of many more people. I sometimes compare this to the journey Vertex took with cystic fibrosis (CF) treatments, where today over 90% of CF patients have access to life-changing therapies. Although we are at an earlier stage with ISM, our hope is to someday provide the same kind of impact—meeting the needs of as many patients as possible and improving the quality of life for both them and their caregivers.

Blueprint's revenues for the year 2023 ended with $250 million and witnessed a remarkable 185% year-over-year growth in Q2 2024. What role has your region played in this success?

We are certainly experiencing significant revenue growth which translates into reaching more patients in need. Our international region has played an essential role in this by driving geographic expansion. Currently, Germany is the only market where we have launched the major indication for ISM, which was introduced last December. In Germany, we have the benefit of immediate market

access which has allowed us to support a substantial number of patients very quickly. From my perspective as a physician, it is most rewarding to see how rapidly patients are gaining access to treatment.

Our contribution to Blueprint's global growth now centers on expanding the ISM indication into additional markets. Next year will be a pivotal one for our international operations as we bring this indication to major markets, starting with Italy, France, and Spain. While the UK has been following these countries, we are fully committed to launching there. We are working collaboratively with the NHS, MHRA and NICE to make sure patients with systemic mastocytosis in the UK have access to this treatment, which is a significant step forward for both advanced SM patients and potentially soon, indolent SM patients in that region.

Additionally, we are targeting what we refer to as mid-sized markets. We are already active in the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland, and are now working to expand into the Nordics. We are also seeing some exciting progress in Central and Eastern Europe, which is highly encouraging for our ongoing mission.

Looking forward, what international growth goals have you set for Blueprint and opportunities are you hoping to capitalize on to achieve them?

This current growth period represents the first wave in our efforts to support Blueprint's global target of achieving $2 billion in revenue over time. For 2024, the guidance on a global product level is around $475 to 480 million, and we are confident that we are on track to meet, and possibly exceed, this goal. When we compare our rare disease launch trajectory to others, we see that we are progressing well and doing so sustainably.

Blueprint currently has approximately 640 employees globally, with our international team now numbering slightly over 90, and we plan for measured growth. Our approach is to earn our growth, supporting all our direct markets in Europe without building large country-specific teams. This international hub coordinates both direct and distributor markets, with active offices in Munich, Paris, Rome, the Netherlands, and the UK. Reflecting on our journey since I joined five years ago—starting as a team of just four—we have achieved significant growth, even as we faced the challenges of building remotely during COVID.

Our vision in international markets is to become the trusted partner in systemic mastocytosis treatment globally. I believe we are still at the very start of our journey, with substantial

opportunity ahead. For instance, we are already planning our next-generation therapy to continue advancing the systemic mastocytosis field. At conferences, it is encouraging to hear from physicians, patients, and stakeholders that they view us as key partners. We aim to build on that trust as we continue to drive impactful innovation in this space.

Will Indolent Systemic Mastocytosis disease continue to be the main focus of Blueprint's development?

I would describe our work in ISM as a pathway of "serial innovation," with a focus on becoming the leading company in mast cell research and treatments. ISM represents our entry point into the broader mast cell space, and it aligns with our mission in rare diseases, serving as our "north star." We are actively exploring new approaches to harness the power of controlling mast cells, including development projects targeting conditions like chronic spontaneous urticaria. These areas, along with systemic mastocytosis, are all deeply connected to mast cell biology, and we are committed to leading in this space.

That said, we are also advancing other assets outside of mast cell research, including in breast cancer and, historically, lung cancer. However, with our focus on "earning our growth," we are leveraging our existing therapies to introduce next-generation treatments and further establish ourselves as the primary partner in mast cell research.

While we started with small molecule therapies, particularly tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs), we are now exploring additional modalities, such as targeted protein degradation, to further expand our R&D model. We are also evaluating other innovative approaches that we will disclose in the future. Essentially, we are using today's achievements to fuel tomorrow's growth, advancing our capabilities and expanding the ways we can impact patient lives.

What challenges has Blueprint faced in navigating regulatory and market access landscape and how do you expect to overcome these hurdles?

Navigating regulatory and market access landscapes is certainly an intense challenge. Over the past five years, pricing and market access have represented about 70% of our business focus, especially as each country presents unique hurdles for reimbursement and pricing approvals.

One key challenge stems from how different HTAs work across Europe. Clinical trial designs, especially primary endpoints, must address FDA or EMA requirements for approval—yet they must also meet the varied criteria of HTAs in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and the Nordics—each of which uses unique cost-effectiveness and benefit assessment models. For instance, in Italy, we navigate a distinct approach with AIFA; in Germany, it is the AMNOG HTA benefit assessment; and in France, a blend of both. This level of complexity requires a country-specific market access strategy. To tackle this, we have invested in building a dedicated international market access team rather than jumping straight to commercial hires. This ensures we are setting up our studies and data to resonate with payers, aligning with both patient and payer priorities.

Another strategic choice was our commitment to pursue market access even in traditionally challenging regions, like the UK, where engagement with NHS and local payers is complex but essential to our purpose. Similarly, we are in active discussions with payers in the Nordics and are reaching out to Central and Eastern European markets. By prioritizing access and working directly with regulatory teams, we strive to achieve the patient-centric mission that fuels us every day.

Looking ahead, we are working to embed these considerations even more deeply into our research and trial design. This includes establishing secondary endpoints that demonstrate patient-centered benefits, not only for FDA and EMA standards but also for broader, region-specific HTA requirements. These efforts, while challenging, hold enormous potential for our strategy, enabling smoother launches for upcoming therapies and accelerating the delivery of life-changing therapies to patients worldwide.

Since Blueprint’s inception, strategic business development has been a core pillar of the company’s strategy. Can you expand on your broader partnership approach?

Blueprint’s partnership approach is crucial to expanding our reach and enhancing our innovation pipeline, especially given our lean operational model. From the outset, we have focused on targeted collaborations to strategically broaden our footprint and deepen research capabilities, with an emphasis on sustainable growth and responsiveness to patient needs worldwide.

In terms of international expansion, partnering has been a cornerstone of our approach. A significant example is our 2018 partnership for China and Greater China, where the complex regulatory environment and unique healthcare landscape made a local partnership essential. By working with local experts, we have successfully introduced our therapies in these challenging but important markets. Similarly, in regions like Central and Eastern Europe, Israel, and Canada, we

collaborate with distributors and local players who have deep market insight, enabling us to reach patients more effectively without the logistical and financial strains of establishing full local operations.

On the research and development front, partnerships are integral to advancing our innovation pipeline, particularly in emerging fields like targeted protein degradation. Our collaboration with VantAI, for instance, enhances our drug discovery library through AI-powered insights, setting the stage for breakthroughs in targeted protein degradation—a modality we expect will gain prominence within the next decade. Additionally, we collaborate with top-tier clinical trial sites and KOLs in the US and Europe, not only through advisory roles but through active research partnerships. This enables early insights and validation, directly informing our R&D process.

This partnership model not only accelerates drug development and access but also embodies our commitment to patient care. Through these collaborations, we have been able to offer compassionate use in many countries, even before formal market entry, allowing physicians to treat patients with high unmet needs. This patient-centric, partnership-driven approach enables us to reach new markets and continue innovating within our resource framework, setting the stage for sustainable global growth.

Being a successful biotech company amid a growing international expansion, how important is talent in terms of driving Blueprint's long-term success?

Of course, talent is truly the engine behind our long-term success, especially amid our international expansion. As set by our former CEO, our approach has been to grow with deliberate focus—prioritizing quality and development over quantity. This strategy allows us to cultivate a culture of agility, innovation, and resilience, which is essential in a field as complex and dynamic as biotech.

Our approach to talent is based on creating opportunities for our existing employees, encouraging them to take on "stretch assignments" and assume multiple roles. This results in a workforce that is deeply embedded in Blueprint's mission and values, making them able to quickly adapt to new challenges. For instance, many of us in the international region manage responsibilities that cross functions or span across markets, ensuring we remain connected to on-the-ground realities and keep a clear, patient-centered perspective. This adaptability prevents the disconnect that sometimes arises in larger organizations where local needs can be overlooked.

Switzerland was chosen as our international hub partly due to the local access to highly specialized talent and a competitive market that challenges us to remain an attractive, purpose-driven workplace. Blueprint thrives on a work culture that encourages extreme ownership—a mindset where every team member, whether in supply chain or regulatory roles, understands how their work directly impacts patient outcomes. This patient-focused approach aligns daily tasks with a greater purpose, making every role meaningful and connecting our people to the patients who rely on us.

Ultimately, our success relies on finding individuals with both mental agility and a passion for mission-driven work. The demands are high, and each day brings new challenges, but it is incredibly rewarding. Our initial growth approach—starting with “one size too small” and “boundless jobs”—was and is not for everyone, but it has helped us foster a team that thrives on innovation, resilience, and purpose. This sets us apart as we expand and continue to evolve in the global landscape.

As a leader, you have been in the industry for many years across various big pharma players. What kind of philosophy do you lead with as you build up Blueprint’s international team?

I believe in creating an inclusive, flat structure where everyone’s voice holds weight, regardless of title or role. To me, the best idea is simply the best idea—no matter if it comes from an office coordinator or the CEO. This approach ensures that we tap into the full potential of every team member, building a culture of openness where innovation can flourish. My experience in big pharma reinforced this idea as I saw the value that diverse perspectives bring to complex challenges.

Lifelong learning is also at the heart of my philosophy. Personally, it has been a constant driver for me—I never initially set out to be a general manager, thinking it would be too complex. But as I grew, I realized that anyone can overcome challenges and expand their impact if they are open to learning. I encourage my team to adopt this mindset, which is particularly valuable in an industry that evolves as fast as biotech.

A principle we practice here at Blueprint is what we call “WOIAT”—We Own It All Together. This means that no matter your function, we are all united in the purpose of supporting our patients and customers. It fosters a collective accountability that empowers everyone to contribute beyond their role, which strengthens our mission. Whether it is someone in marketing with a fresh pricing insight

or an admin with a solution for supply chain logistics, I want my team to feel that they are crucial to our mission.

At the core, our vision in the international group is to be the trusted partner for patients with systemic mastocytosis. Every decision we make aligns with this vision, and WOIAT is our way of ensuring that each person feels that their contributions matter. By emphasizing inclusivity, continuous learning, and shared ownership, I aim to cultivate a team that is resilient, innovative, and fully committed to making a tangible difference in patients' lives.

Looking forward, what is your strategic vision for Blueprint over the next 3 to 5 years?

My ambitions for Blueprint revolve around several key priorities that will shape our evolution as a globally impactful, agile organization. First, I aim to retain a close-knit, manageable team structure. This is central to ensuring that each individual feels valued and recognized, with a strong focus on people development. I plan to nurture internal talent and foster growth opportunities so that many of today's team members can continue advancing within Blueprint.

On a market level, a significant focus will be unlocking and supporting smaller, high-need markets, such as Portugal, Belgium, and Finland, which present unique access challenges. Exploring opportunities in additional global regions will also be a strategic goal. Although complex, these markets have patients in urgent need, aligning with our mission to prioritize areas where we can deliver the greatest impact.Our portfolio will continue building on a strong foundation, preparing to bring our next-generation systemic mastocytosis inhibitor to market. This will be coupled with the development of new indications for our expanding asset base. The long-term goal is to create a globally operational company known for innovative therapies in underserved regions and diseases, while remaining agile, purpose-driven, and patient-centered.

Is there a final message you would like to deliver on behalf of Blueprint?

Blueprint Medicines' journey truly embodies the resilience and reward of growing from a startup into a thriving scale-up. I began with Blueprint five years ago, no one could have predicted the challenges, like COVID, that would come. Yet, thanks to the dedication and adaptability of our incredible team, we have navigated these obstacles and built a sustainable organization with a strong foundation. It has been an inspiring journey so far, and I am excited to see where the next five years will take the Blueprint team as we continue to make a difference for patients worldwide.

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