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World Courier is the most trusted specialty logistics company in the world for clinical trials. The general manager of the Mexico affiliate discusses the challenges clients face in the country and how the company helps them focus on their work, while World Courier take care of all their shipping needs.

What have been the company's most important milestones in Mexico?

We were first established as a premium courier in 1975. Almost two decades ago, World Courier started working on investigation and clinical research, and since then we have been preparing for the challenges faced by the pharmaceutical industry. In 2012 we were bought by drug wholesaler AmerisourceBergen, and since then we have started working with commercial products as well. Prior to becoming part of Amerisource, we were mostly specialized in clinical trials only; now, we are open to all industries. However, particularly in Mexico as across all Latin America we are working more with the pharmaceutical industry than any other industry.

World Courier is the leading distribution and logistics firm for pharmaceutical products worldwide. What is the strategic role of Mexico within the global strategy of the group?

Mexico, after Brazil, is very important to the region. All pharmaceutical companies have Mexican affiliates, which means we have a huge market in which to be present and we are very close to the US, where most of our clients are headquartered. Globally our main strategy has always been to analyze customer needs and to offer highly specialized and personalized services, as we deliver directly hand-to-hand.

What specific challenges does Mexico present with regard to supply chain management that you help your clients overcome?

Supply chain management is a key procedure of ours. We do not consolidate shipments, which helps us be more flexible in our routes and be able to change at any moment. However, there are also a lot of challenges implied. Packaging is complicated, especially in Latin America where there are not as many options as in the US, for example. And as for logistics, the competition is increasing day-by-day. When it comes to risk management, it’s important to analyze the risks and to be ahead of the game. However, on the positive end, in recent years in Mexico we have experienced a better regulatory environment, which has made our work much easier.

What are the main differentiating factors of the Mexican market as opposed to those of other countries where you are present?

We have one major advantage and that is our geographic location. We are near to the US, which means that costs are lower than in the rest of Latin America. We are able to offer a more affordable option to our customers, even though it is not always the case because of the high specialization of our services.

When it comes to temperature-sensitive products any temperature change can prove detrimental to the shipment and, ultimately, to clinical trials. What are the most serious risks of having product affected by temperature, and how does World Courier guarantee control over this?

Companies trust us to transport and store their time- and temperature-sensitive products because they value the peace of mind that comes with our unsurpassed knowledge, global reach and flawless supply chain execution. Each trusted partnership we form with a customer is deeply rooted in our shared vision of improving global health — and it starts with gaining a holistic understanding of their strategic business objectives. With this knowledge in mind, we design and execute world-class logistics processes that mitigate risk, maximize the return on R&D investments and advance medicine. No other specialty logistics company has the experienced personnel, global offices and in-market expertise required to ensure the optimal handling, transport and delivery of vital

healthcare products

With the recent opening of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) to clinical trials, many people think Mexico has the potential to become an important regional hub for clinical research. How do you think this will impact Mexico, and how do you plan to adapt to the changes in the clinical trial environment here?

More than 70 percent of the studies in Mexico are conducted by the government, by hospitals, or by other public institutions. For this reason, it should be very good and we really hope this opening can bring more sponsors to Mexico, as the country has many advantages. For one, the population is very large, which means that it is a very good location for clinical trials. The investigators are very well prepared and well trained. Some of them have even studied in the US and have a lot of knowledge about the sector.

Client operations for clinical trials can be very complex because sometimes they do not have the import permit. Now, however, we have a lot of advantages because we can use our protocol authorization or our import permit, whereas not too long ago we still needed theirs. Overall, the main advantage for us has been reducing the time factor.

You are working both with private industry as well as with local universities. How do the needs change from one to the other?

I think the private sector is more demanding; although, with universities sometimes we have some very unexpected needs to deal with, like transportation of live animals for clinical trials, for example. In these cases, we have to be very strict about local requirements, especially when it regards an import. World Courier offers a complete logistics so we cover requirements from both sides: from imports and exports.

What are the major risks that clients face?

For one shipment, which presents various challenges —for example, permits and duties. We also have to be checking flights and routings. We keep in mind any embargo that may delay our shipment. I think the most common critical issue is when the customer is not prepared for receiving a permit. We try to get as much information as possible about the product before hand, and we ask all the necessary questions. We try to deliver as quickly as possible, without compromising our standards of quality. We have a very good relationship with the authorities because we are always following regulation properly, which makes our work much easier. We are the perfect shipping partner because we let the client focus on his work, while we take care of all the shipping needs.

The success of the organization is in large part due to its client-driven nature, and adapting to customers' unmet needs. What local services are you supplying here in Mexico today and where do you see the company over the next five years?

World Courier provides clients in Mexico with two important things. First, standardized procedures. We follow the procedures established by the company step-by-step, are GXP complaint and combine good practices with an outstanding quality management system. Second, packaging. Clients demand very good solutions for packaging, so we have implemented a specialized team that handles critical issues like temperature.

It is very important in Mexico that all our procedures are based on good practices. It definitely helps to confront any audit or any customer dissatisfaction. However, we go above and beyond local regulations because we think we must provide the best possible solutions. We want to be the preferred logistics partner. We also want to keep representing an added value to the logistics supply chain, which I think is only possible if we continue to make our customers' needs our priority. We want to diversify our customer base in Mexico, and, to do so, we are entering into commercial products as well.

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