Jesús Cristóbal – CEO, Texpol, Spain

With the future evolution of European medical device regulation, I see an opportunity for the company

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Jesús Cristóbal, CEO of Texpol, the market leader for single-use surgical dressings in Spain, describes the company's beginnings and his role in its success. Cristóbal goes on to share his strategic vision as Texpol aims for international markets and a more diversified portfolio.

Please begin by introducing yourself and Texpol.

Coming from a financial background, I joined Texpol as a member of its board of directors in 2009 with the goal of improving the strategy of the company. As a family company, the management was in need of fresh ideas especially within the context of the financial crisis. In 2013, the company went through a major change by diverting one of its subsidiaries and I was offered the position of general manager.

My first objective was to professionalize the company. After one year, Texpol had improved significantly but there were more changes to be made and important investments. Due to this fact the original owners preferred to sell the company, they trusted in my project and philosophy so I bought it along with other investors in 2014.

How has Texpol grown in recent years?

After making the necessary fundamental changes within the company and taking profit of our potential as a manufacturer, I turned my focus to developing the sales offering of the company. Texpol grew its product portfolio and implemented a 48-hour maximum delivery time. We have over 2,000 reference products in gauze alone; there are no other competitors in Spain with this offering. As a result, in 2018 we will close the year with over EUR 21 million in turnover.

Another innovative initiative we have at Texpol is where we suggest reference products that best suit the needs of our customers based on their operations at a highly competitive price. We are creating added value for commodity products through our knowledge and experience.

What are your strategic priorities for Texpol in 2019?

Texpol is a well-known player in the Spanish market with a reputation of quality. Moving forward into the upcoming year, Texpol will be highly focused on diversification. We are creating a network of partners such as Promisemed, a diabetic health company, and Dr. Deppe, a disinfectant manufacturer, so we can offer a variation of products which are complementary to our portfolio. In the next few years, I hope to have more additional, high-quality products aside from our traditional surgical dressing offer.

In only the first year of this initiative, we have reached 15 percent of sales coming from the diversified area of our portfolio. We are aiming to bring new solutions to our customers and are willing to include areas where we feel we can stand out and offer a unique advantage.

How would you describe Texpol’s client base?

Historically, Texpol was only focused on hospitals within the public healthcare sector. However, because of the economic crisis, the budgets for public hospitals were cut and this was a difficult area to operate in. In four years, we have shifted our business from 95 percent coming from public hospitals to between 65 and 70 percent. Texpol is now entering areas such as pharmacies, veterinary surgeries, and private hospitals. Furthermore, we see opportunities to enter the supermarket sector with OTC products. There is a shift in consumer habits and shoppers are moving away from pharmacies and looking to buy health products in the same places they are making other purchases.

What innovation does Texpol offer in its products that has made the company a market leader?

As a commodity product, price is often the biggest consideration. Despite this challenge, one way to differentiate oneself is to listen to customer's needs. For example, a gauze de-threading or ripping can cause serious post-surgery complications. We offer a guarantee on the products we sell which helps to build trust with our customers. Additionally, our R&D team develops new products which are better adapted for the newest innovations in health such an alternative to traditional gauze products: Texpla® nonwoven surgical swabs or Laparotex® special swabs for minimally invasive surgery. We also plan to incorporate a new division with high technological products for complex cardiovascular procedures.

What is Texpol's international strategy?

We operate primarily in three markets: Europe, Latin America, and Africa. In Latin America, European products are very popular for their level of quality and safety and we have many distributors working with us there. Africa has been our most recent, and surprising, international focus but it is a region where we see strong potential.

At the moment, approximately eight percent of our turnover is generated by export activities. This is still a relatively small figure, but we are positioning ourselves for an unprecedented period of international growth.

We are looking for long-term distribution partners around the world who are looking to work collaboratively to invest into the market together. Within this relationship, it is important to be versatile and we are willing to work with our own brand and other customer brands as well.

What is your vision for Texpol in the upcoming five years?

With the future evolution of European medical device regulation, I see an opportunity for the company. Texpol is very prepared to adapt to the changes quickly over our competitors. Additionally, these changes will help our global brand image and quality perception as a European manufacturer.

On a personal note, how has your past experience outside of health translated in your current endeavors with Texpol?

I don’t come from the health sector, but I have a great team with strong expertise in this market behind me that I am very thankful for. The mix between my team and myself is very complementary; the Texpol team leverages their product and development knowledge and later I use my business experience to plan what is right for the Texpol strategy.

From my previous experiences as a financial analyst and consultant, I have become used to looking strategically at the big picture. When I first suggested diversifying our portfolio after only being in the company for a few years, people thought It was a risky decision. But I always view the whole chess board rather than just at a single pawn and knew it would be a worthwhile change.

Lastly, and very importantly, when I left finance I was not happy. I believe it is important to smile and enjoy what you are doing. I try to create an environment with the right energy and atmosphere where we can succeed together and grow together when times are difficult.

What is your final message you want to deliver about Texpol?

I have two messages, the first being that Texpol has soul, we really believe in our slogan “your trust, our commitment”. Secondly, we have a strong network within the industry and Texpol is here to listen to our customer needs, be flexible, and deliver valued solutions. Otherwise, we are just another company delivering a product.

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