

My Novartis journey so far



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Everything started with a misunderstanding... It was December 2003 and I was just finishing my MBA in Madrid while being excited about becoming a father soon. Hence, I was anxious to secure a job and started sending out applications left, right and center – basically “just” to have a job and to provide for my young family. Among others, I applied at a lumber trading company and in writing my motivation letter I felt it would increase my chances if I emphasized my upbringings in the Swiss mountains – basically having grown up in the woods – in lumber..., being well-grounded, resourceful and a hands-on doer. I never heard back from that company, yet got a call from Novartis, where I had applied in parallel. The hiring manager was sharing that he was in desperate need of a doer who was well-grounded, resourceful and hands on... The more I was listening, the more it dawned on me that I must have mixed up my motivation letters... I disclosed my mistake, we laughed – and I got the job!

In the last two decades I have had the opportunity to make diverse and rich experiences, both personally and professionally in many parts of the organization. In Animal Health, where it all started, I learned the basics of HR/P&O as a generalist. The following years at NIBR in the US taught me the value of diversity of thinking and styles. From my years at NBS/CTS I took away a rich lesson in the value of setting a vision and prioritization execution and my years with Oncology were characterized by many take-aways around the power of inclusive dialogue in decision-making.

I also got restructured twice. These experiences, as difficult as they have been, have forced me to grow my resilience muscle, they have heightened my awareness of what is important in life, they have led me to make conscious choices to protect my work-life balance

– and they have created strong gratitude for how Novartis has treated me in these forming moments of my life. In both restructuring cases, I felt I was first and foremost treated with respect, as a human being (not as a human resource!) who has feelings, anxieties and goes through his own motions. These moments of care and support are the moments I remember many years later and which have shaped who I aspire to be as a person and as a leader.

How 20 years Novartis shaped me

If I were to describe my leadership style formed with time through these experiences, there are two words that sum it up: values and value.

On the VALUES side, firstly, I've built a strong desire to be as transparent as I possibly can with the teams I have the privilege to work with. I believe that everybody should be trusted with information relevant to them (to the degree this information can be disclosed at any point), so they can make informed decisions – for the business and for themselves. Secondly, while at times there might be a perception out there that HR/P&O is primarily a ‘relationship-driven’ discipline, I believe that any decisions, including people decisions, need to be based on data and facts. Only then can we ensure objectivity and fairness, which is what the organization rightly so counts on us to do. And thirdly, the way we interact, how we communicate, i.e. the above mentioned relationship focus, defines how our associates feel respected, supported and can trust that we have their backs at any point in time, in any circumstance they find themselves in.

On the VALUE side, I believe we should be driven by adding value to the business with everything we do. In consequence, I am inclined to focus and to de-prioritize activities that might be interesting yet take away focus from the things that are truly impactful. I believe that “less is more” and aspire to live by the principle of working “smarter not harder.” Making value-based decisions is not always easy, particularly in a very creative organization like ours, yet I see it as

a responsibility towards the enterprise and our teams to drive for focus and impact.

Aspirations for the role

As I have been taking my first steps over the last few months as Head of P&O Switzerland, I have been meeting with many colleagues, including all the P&O Switzerland team members. I am deeply impressed by the quality and engagement in the team. This is the more so impressive as we are going through a period of uncertainty, supporting the organization through a big transformation and at the same time being transformed ourselves as a function. It's inspiring and heartening to see the professionalism, care, and dedication the team is showing in managing this stretch. Being able to keep this great engagement of the team, providing opportunities to develop and grow while reaching healthy, sustainable, work-life-integration levels, are aspirations we pursue across the TEAM.

Holding true with the focus on value creation, we have the opportunity (actually, we have no choice but) to prioritize our agenda and to focus for impact. A strong business understanding and CUSTOMER CENTRICITY therefore become crucial success factors. Since a few years our function is called "People & Organization" and that's for a reason. While many of us have traditionally been drawn into the function for the people aspect and this will always remain

a core competency, our impact will further expand as we are able to take a lead role on the organization aspect – preparing the organization at any point in time for the future. Excelling on both these aspects is the art we aspire to master within the P&O Switzerland team over time.

"The only thing that is constant is change" – I think this is a true statement in the world we live in which also applies for us as a company. This being said, we have an important role to play in ensuring continuity and to protect the ORGANIZATION from activity that does not drive maximum impact – wherever and whenever possible. Simplifying, challenging and integrating on one hand and resisting the temptation to initiate too many things on the other hand are aspects I would like to foster as elements of our P&O Switzerland culture. Through this, we enable focus on what really matters to our associates and our organization – and eventually support our strategy of reimagining medicines at Novartis.



As you can see on the pictures, one of my passions to recharge is mountaineering.

