

# Pay Attention, Stay Focused

I learned the principle of paying attention and staying focused as a volleyball player in college. My team was playing a very tight game, and I was in a bad mood. I was called on as a substitute and took off my warm-up pants. I suddenly heard a roar from the crowd and realized I had forgotten to wear my play shorts. I was promptly red carded and suspended for two games.



## Carlos Alonso

Luck, preparation, and courage are words that describe success for Carlos Alonso. Recently promoted from General Manager to Corporate Vice President and President of Baxter's Latin American operations, Alonso has held numerous international positions with the manufacturer of bioscience, medication delivery, and renal products and services. Today, he oversees an employee base of 5,900 and a division accounting for nearly \$1 billion in 2008 sales.

With Baxter stints from Asia to Turkey to New Zealand, Alonso says that his professional luck is due in part to having the business acumen to be at the right place at the right time. "In his current position, Carlos has successfully managed the growth of the company in the region despite significant business challenges," said Robert L. Parkinson, Jr., Chairman, CEO and President of Baxter.

Preparation is also a big part of the equation for his success. As the son of Spanish immigrants living in Brazil, he learned to speak Spanish, Portuguese, English, German, and Catalan. "I was given the opportunity to receive a good education and experience various positions in chemical engineering and business," he explained. "All these experiences have helped build critical business skills and cultural awareness that I have used throughout my career."

Courage is the third leg of Alonso's success stool. "I have learned by experience that to make a difference and realize high-impact changes, it is important to have a sense of purpose, conviction, intellectual honesty, and pragmatism."

Alonso revels in dealing with ambiguity, critical thinking, and problem solving. He is often confronted with a rapidly changing business environment and requirements based on political and healthcare systems—economic and social realities are common in Latin America. "This is especially true for an American company, and sometimes I have to act quickly, without uncertainty," Alonso explains. "I have to zero in on critical information and anticipate the implications of my decisions and actions."

Early in life, Alonso zeroed in on critical information and reflected on his decisions. "I fluctuated between wanting to be a priest, a doctor, and a politician," he says. "All reflect a strong devotion to leadership and serving others." His father, who died of cancer shortly after Alonso started his own family, helped foster these characteristics and, he emphasizes, is the catalyst for his success. Alonso recalls his father's illness and passing as the most difficult time in his

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life but says he was fortunate to have learned from his wisdom.

It's that sort of wisdom that led Alonso to find his passion for business. “I was reluctant to accept that, despite my training as an engineer, my talent and interest were in business.” It took him eight years to realize, but his epiphany serves him well as a mentor to others. He is a member of the Latin America CEO Network, and business schools at the University of Miami and Florida International University have embraced him as a guest speaker for MBA classes.

“I am also particularly proud of the successful teams and organizations that I have established at Baxter,” he admitted. “I continually try to inspire, engage, and teach colleagues by using a leadership model based on self-awareness, creativity, service, and courage.”

Alonso's leadership and affinity to service led him to help the Brazilian Orphanage Sonho de Crianca build a library and study room and help create a garden to help teach children about the origins of food and the value of patience.

Firmly believing that his purpose in life is to help create a better world through efforts at work and in life, Alonso takes to heart better citizenry through the support of education. The three legs of his success stool of luck, preparation, and courage support him strongly.

*CareerFOCUS Magazine*<sup>TM</sup> and the National Eagle Leadership Institute<sup>®</sup> salute 2009 Eagle Award winner Carlos Alonso.

#### **Nominating Company**

Baxter International Inc.

#### **Current Position**

Corporate Vice President and President,  
Baxter Latin American Operations

#### **Professional Milestones**

- Latin America CEO Network

#### **Community Leadership**

- President of Honor,  
Orphanage Sonho de Crianca
- Volunteer, Florida Coast Water Polo Club

#### **Leadership Principle**

Help create a better world through my efforts at work and in life.

#### **Education/Training**

- Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, Universidad Federal Parana Curitiba, Brazil
- Master of Science in Process Control, Instituto Quimico Sarria Barcelona, Spain
- Master's in Management, Universidad de Navarra Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa Barcelona, Spain

#### **Birthplace**

São Paulo, Brazil

#### **Current Home**

Miami, Florida

### **The Leadership Promise at at Baxter**

As a global healthcare company that provides life-saving products to patients in more than 100 countries, Baxter's success depends on its ability to effectively incorporate diverse perspectives, skills, and backgrounds throughout its operations. A clear set of leadership expectations defines Baxter's culture and establishes the foundation for hiring, assessing, and developing people at all levels. These leadership expectations include the personal attributes, competencies, and shared values necessary to drive a high-performing organization, and are integrated into the human resources processes for recruiting, hiring, on-boarding, performance management, development assessment, and training worldwide. Within this framework, one of Baxter's most important priorities is promoting an inclusive and diverse workplace—creating and sustaining an inclusive culture where diverse ideas, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are respected and valued. Baxter believes the combination of an inclusive culture and a diverse workforce can drive innovation, create trusted partnerships with customers, suppliers, and community partners, and contribute to business success.