

INTERVIEW

THE GOOD LISTENER FINDS HER IDEAL ROLE

● Audrey Derveloy, the boss of Novartis Ireland, has all the ingredients to create more growth

Sean Pollock



It isn't easy to move countries at the best of times. Still, Audrey Derveloy, the country president and managing director of pharmaceutical firm Novartis Ireland, ended up doing so at the onset of a global pandemic.

When Derveloy and her family moved from their homeland of France to Dublin in early 2020, a new illness was devastating the Chinese city of Wuhan. Come March, that same illness had spread to Europe, and eventually it arrived in Ireland.

Thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, Derveloy had a "very special" start as head of Novartis Ireland – the Irish subsidiary of the \$194.2bn-valued pharmaceutical giant Novartis.

"I think I will remember this experience for a long time," she says. "It was a family project to move to Ireland. We were very excited – and then this crisis happened. Honestly, it has been hard for the family and me, and for everyone across the world. We have all had lots of learnings."

"Now we are frustrated not having been able to visit other parts of Ireland," she adds of her hunger to explore her new homeland with her young family.

"Again, I think we had this big wish to discover a new country and meet many people. Hopefully we will be able to do this soon."

It has been a baptism of fire for the head of the country's third-largest pharmaceutical company.

Novartis Ireland had to respond quickly to the changing needs of the company's 1,400-plus employees, who are dotted across the country from the manufacturing facility in Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, to the main base in Dublin's Elm Park.

The period has not been without drama, says Derveloy – the firm has had to deal with positive Covid cases of its own.

"We had some people who got Covid during this crisis, but generally speaking, it was very low," she says.

"We followed the protocols very well and were able to maintain production. Safety is a key priority."

Novartis Ireland produces medicines used to treat cancer, skin and joint conditions, cardiology and respiratory diseases. It also utilises artificial intelligence to help improve patient outcomes and has one of the group's Global Drug Development centres in Dublin.

While it has various business functions, the capital is also home to Novartis Business Services – where over 650 people work across areas such as scientific and commercial services, and digital and IT.

Last year the Irish company had sales of €161.5m. Direct spend in Ireland is €280m, while its economic activity is valued at €295m. Novartis also estimates that three packs of its medicines are supplied every minute to patients in Ireland.

"Despite the significant disruption of healthcare provision due to Covid, in 2021 we are pleased to maintain our number three position in the market, with sales in 2021 broadly similar to sales in 2020," Derveloy says.

"I see very positive trends in Ireland, and the outlook for the sector here is very strong."

Derveloy believes her parent's professions are to thank for the skills that brought her to a career in pharmaceuticals. Growing up in the small city of St Quentin, near Lille in northern France, her father was the chief executive of French sugar giant Tereos, and her mother was a science teacher.

"That's why I have leadership skills and a sense of responsibilities," she says. "Maybe it is a mix of my parents' experiences."

Having excelled at school, Derveloy's parents suggested it would be good for her to train to become a medical physician. She agreed with her parents, and soon got to work embarking on the first stage of her career.

Derveloy's first role as a physician was in a hospital on the west side of Paris, where she worked on diseases linked with blood. She counts the experiences she had there as incredibly valuable, providing an understanding of the needs of very sick patients.

"You realise when you work in a hospital that you need to listen to sick people – they have so many things to share about their troubles and issues."

"And when you have been used to listening to your patients' needs, you don't work in the same way as others. I have been trained to listen to these people as well and understand their needs."

"It is not only about our pills," she



TAX IS TOPIC NUMBER ONE, BUT IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT TAXES. IRELAND IS WELL LOCATED, YOU CAN FIND TALENT LOCALLY – AND THEN THERE IS THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Audrey Derveloy, country president and managing director of Novartis Ireland.
Picture by Mark Condren

adds. "In pharmaceuticals, we can give more than a pill. We must deliver the best treatments, but we also have the responsibility to do more. This is exactly the mindset at Novartis."

While working in Paris, Derveloy's husband was offered an opportunity to work in Hong Kong, which he gladly accepted. The couple moved to Asia, where Derveloy was shocked to find she couldn't continue her hospital work.

"It was not easy," she says. "They didn't recognise our diplomas from Europe, which is crazy."

Derveloy instead joined the Pasteur Institute, a renowned medical research facility, but soon felt she might be more suited to a people-facing role. So she joined Salusmed in Asia, helping establish its vitamins and supplement business in that market.

"This was the start for me in the commercial space," she says. "I had had the medical experience, but I also realised – maybe it was through my dad's experience – that business would be fun. So when I came back to France, I decided I wanted to learn more about the pharma sector."

The move back to Paris proved fruitful. She started at US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer before jumping ship to Novartis. Moving to the Swiss-headquartered company felt natural for Derveloy, and it soon showed. She rose up the corporate ladder, eventually becoming business head of ophthalmology in France, overseeing a large team.

The responsibility and high-ranking position at Novartis appealed to Derveloy – but there was still the hunger to work in an international environment. So when the chance to head up the Irish business arose, Derveloy jumped.

"When they mentioned that maybe there was an opportunity in Ireland, I raised my hand and said: 'Yes, I want to be in the interview process,'" she says.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name
Audrey Derveloy
Age
43
Position
Country president and managing director of Novartis Ireland
Lives
Dublin (born in St Quentin, France)
Family
Husband Alexandre and two children, Olympe (14) and James (12)
Education
MD, physician
Previous experience
A physician by training, she was inspired by learning in Paris with internationally renowned health professionals. She joined the Pasteur Institute and Salusmed in Asia, then worked with Pfizer, before joining Novartis France in 2013
Favourite sports
Running, swimming
Favourite book
All the Marcel Pagnol books
Favourite film
Seven and The Usual Suspects
Favourite album
All French music!

"I had a very positive image of Ireland, plus the responsibility and what I can learn."

Derveloy's view of Ireland was rooted in the massive role the pharma sector has in the country's economy. The latest trade numbers from the Central Statistics Office show that in 2020 the value of pharma exports rocketed by 25pc to €62bn, accounting for 39pc of all Irish goods exported.

With the sector continuing to thrive, Derveloy says that its success was one reason she was so keen to take up the role. She believes that even with pressure on global tax, which remains an influential factor for multinationals, the Irish sector will continue to attract foreign investment.

"I think tax is topic number one, but it's not only about taxes. If you look at the location in Europe, Ireland is very well positioned," she says. "I think you can find talent locally in Ireland."

"Also, there is the quality of life. When they decide to work in a sector, the young generation wants to work with companies with the right culture. In Novartis, we are excited by our new culture."

Beyond the pandemic, Derveloy has several challenges she is working her way through with Novartis. She is working to help speed up ease of access to medicines for patients, while also dealing with the challenges brought on by Brexit.

The UK's decision to leave the EU has left Novartis' Irish team working on navigating regulations and moving its products between Europe and the UK seamlessly. Derveloy has noted challenges in packaging, with her team working hard to get it right.

"We will get there, but it is extra work," she says. "It is only the beginning, and we are all learning."

Globally, one area Derveloy proudly follows is Novartis' role in the fight against the pandemic. Besides its

\$40m Covid-19 response fund, which has supported four projects in Ireland, Novartis has agreed to manufacture vaccines for others.

"Novartis is proud to play its part in providing solutions to end the Covid pandemic," she says. "In Switzerland, we're manufacturing the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and in Austria, we have agreed to manufacture the CureVac vaccine."

"We expect to make up to 50 million doses of the CureVac vaccine by the end of 2021 and up to 200 million doses next year."

While Novartis Ireland isn't currently manufacturing the vaccine, Derveloy says she would welcome the opportunity to do so in future.

"As you can imagine, we are doing our best to make Ireland very active and visible for the company," she says. "We would be very pleased one day if Ireland would be one of these sites."

She added: "They are working on different molecules, and it is not so easy to make some changes in one day. That's why we have all these issues worldwide regarding supply. The response today is no – but again, we don't have a crystal ball."

Fifteen months into her spell as Irish boss, Derveloy is pleased with Novartis Ireland's progress so far.

Among her proudest achievements is how Novartis Ireland navigated its way through the pandemic, promoting flexibility to staff and enhancing the workplace culture.

Post-pandemic, it isn't just exploring her new homeland that Derveloy is excited about. With Novartis Ireland continuing to grow, developing leading medicines, and playing a significant role in the global group's operation, she believes the future will be even brighter.

"I think we have all the right ingredients at Novartis Ireland to continue to grow," she says. "We have all the reasons to be optimistic."

BUSINESS LESSONS

What is the one piece of advice that you would give people starting their career?
Stay curious. The world is evolving. Working in science is all about innovation.

Even if you are a top performer, it is important to stay curious. It's not only about your competitors, but the needs of your patients and the system.

What is the best lesson you have learned during your time in business?
Be responsible and be accountable for your project and activities.

How do you get the best out of people?
Creating the right culture in a team is critical for me to get the best out of people.

MEDIA & MARKETING

Could Nespresso's brand allure be starting to wane?

John McGee



In 1975, a Swiss engineer by the name of Eric Favre was walking through a busy square in Rome when he stumbled upon a bustling Italian café called Sant'Eustachio Il Caffè.

Having recently started working for Swiss food and drink giant Nestlé, he was wondering why the other cafes on the square were nearly empty, while this particular one was busy.

The barista told him about the unique way in which they made their coffee, which ultimately led to a thicker crema – the foam-like cream on top of the espresso.

It turned out that by forcing more water and air through the pump on

the espresso machine, which led to increased oxidation, the baristas were able to dispense a more flavoursome coffee with a nice frothy crema.

For Favre, it was a eureka moment – and when he returned to work back in Nestlé's HQ, he set about inventing a more compact coffee machine that would embrace and enhance the techniques employed by the baristas of Rome, as well as making it suitable for home use.

Like Ralph Waldo Emerson and his ruminations about building better mousetraps, Favre believed if you could build a better coffee machine then coffee drinkers the world over would beat a path to your door.

But it wasn't until 1986 when Nespresso was launched. In one fell swoop, the coffee world was about to be upended forever.

While Favre was the technical brains behind the original Nespresso, it was Jean-Paul Gaillard (who joined as its first commercial director in

1988) who is credited with defining the brand's personality and developing the marketing strategy that would position it at the upper end of a market which nobody knew existed.

Gaillard wanted Nespresso to be the Chanel of the coffee world – a premium product that would command premium pricing.

The brand would only be sold online or in exclusive Nespresso boutiques where customers were invited to be part of an exclusive global club which had its own magazine. With George Clooney as its cheerleader, it became a luxury lifestyle choice.

In other words, a triumph of marketing over substance.

Much like Gillette's business model with its cheap razor and expensive razor blades, the cost of entry to the world of Nespresso was relatively low – but once you were in you had no choice but to buy your coffee capsules from it. And there's money to be made in coffee.

According to Nestlé's most recent results, which were published two weeks ago, sales of Nespresso in 2020 rose by 7pc to a staggering €5.53bn, buoyed by the fact that much of its key target market were working from home for much of the year.

But the world has also moved on from Nespresso. Today there's no shortage of appliance and coffee manufacturers selling their own single-serve machines and capsules, often at a fraction of what Nespresso charge.

Parallel to this, consumers have developed more sophisticated palates when it comes to coffee – and while the rise of the branded coffee shops such as Starbucks, Insomnia, Café Nero and Costa have contributed to this, there's also been an explosion in the number of artisanal coffee roasters that sell quality coffee to a growing customer base.

Here in Ireland, brands like Ariosa, FIXX, Badger & Dodo, 3fe and Silver-

skin spring to mind. And if you insist on using these brands to make coffee in your Nespresso machine, you can buy re-usable capsules that will let you do so. Not quite what Jean-Paul Gaillard envisaged back in 2006.

Nespresso, of course is not taking any of this lying down. Unless you have been hiding under a rock, there's no escaping its current Clooney-less marketing campaign to promote the Nespresso Vertuo.

Once again using proprietary technology and capsules, while retaining its sophisticated image, the Vertuo offers coffee lovers a much bigger choice than espresso sized drinks – including mug-sized servings, as favoured by many people and as served in many coffee shops.

While it may be some time before the competition catches up with this latest technological and product offering which, let's face it, still makes good coffee, the question has to be asked do they really need to bother?

Woodie's new friend

Following on from the success of its Christmas ad campaign which featured Mrs Higgins and her broken gate, Woodies has launched a new summer campaign called New Best Friend.

Created by Rothco, part of Accenture Interactive, the TV campaign revolves around Liam, an imaginative little boy who sees his back garden as a playground full of exciting and adventurous things to do, including helping his mother with the planting.

Core bags SSE Airtricity

With the Irish sponsorship market starting to pick up again after a tricky 2020, SSE Airtricity has appointed Core to advise it on all existing and future sponsorships. These include the League of Ireland Premier and First Division in men's football, the Women's National League, also in football, as well as the SSE Arena in Belfast, and Sustainability Partner to Dublin Zoo. Led by Noel Martyn of Core, it will also support the brand to source and evaluate new opportunities.