
Fecc's interviews: anniversary special

Caldic

This is the second part of a series of interviews with CEOs from member companies, which celebrate special anniversaries this year.



Fecc interview with Caldic: Alexander Wessels and Laurent Pasqualini

Recently appointed as Caldic's new group CEO, Mr. Wessels has over 30 years' experience in the chemicals, food ingredient and pharma sector.

Mr Pasqualini is the CEO Europe at Caldic. He joined the company in 2013 and before that has been working in the paint industry for 17 years.

As your company celebrates an important anniversary and a great achievement, how would you describe the evolution of the chemical distribution sector and which are the new targets for the future?

Caldic was founded in 1970 and in these 50 years, we have witnessed many changes in the chemical distribution sector. Starting as a distributor of mainly base chemicals, we noticed both suppliers' and customers' needs went beyond delivering chemical goods. Our focus shifted to specialty chemicals and providing complete solutions in other markets, including food ingredients, pharma and personal care. Producers were increasingly striving for more efficiency and productivity by upscaling volumes, increasing standardization and regularity in planning. Alternatively, the users of ingredients have a growing need for smaller, tailor made and on-demand specialty solutions. This evolving shift created a gap and we jumped into that gap. Today we connect producers and users and aim to add value for both parties by offering supply chain services, in-house research and development expertise, production services and more.



Alexander Wessels, Caldic's new group CEO



Laurent Pasqualini, CEO Europe at Caldic



Which are the key challenges your company had to face through the years and how these challenges contributed to the evolution of the sector?

- As mentioned in the previous question, the evolving shift between producers and users of ingredients, which created not so much a challenge, but more of an opportunity and contributed to the evolution of the sector. As a result, we stepped into the role of being this connector.
- Digitalization. We live in a world that is characterized by a digital revolution. We've developed ourselves, also in terms of aligning and connecting our systems, creating an online work environment for colleagues, stay connected in order to stay relevant, add value and strengthen our position in the market.

Has the relation with your customers/principals changed through the years? How you see this collaboration evolved and which will be the future challenges?

Relationships have become closer. Both customers and principals are looking for long-term partnerships and this requires mutual trust, commitment and relentless efforts from both sides. We can only add real, sustainable value for partners when we know what occupies their mind. How have they designed their processes? Which issues are they dealing with on a day-to-day basis? By asking the right questions, we will find the core of the issue, and that will allow us to provide a tailored solution. As soon as customers see this commitment, a solid base is formed and paves the way for future challenges. For us, this implies continuous development of our knowledge, expanding our expertise, stay on top and keep ahead of market developments to maintain their partner of choice.

Do you see innovation and digitalization as key aspects of the chemical distribution sector? In which way?

Digitization is certainly a key aspect to take into account.

"Relationships have become closer. Both customers and principals are looking for long-term partnerships and this requires mutual trust, commitment and relentless efforts from both sides".

Fact is that we are living in an era where technology is developing at the speed of light and everyone is getting used to a certain level of fast and flexible service – nowadays so many things are just a few clicks away.

At the same time, there will always be certain areas or ways to add value that cannot be replaced by digital alternatives, such as human contact, technical support, building relationships....

What other trends are rapidly evolving in the chemical distribution sector in your opinion?

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, showing the high dependency of some industries from China raw material source and production, manufacturers, like in the pharmaceutical market, are redistributing the productions between Asia and Europe to be strategically more balanced.

The "go green" and less harmful approach is becoming more and more important and formulations are being revised to stop some of the big historical volume chemicals. For that reason, Caldic, through its close and agile partnerships with our principles and our own assets, is constantly developing and promoting innovative high value added solutions.

Sustainability and circular economy are clearly high on the European agenda with the EU Green Deal being a central topic in the European Commission – how do you see chemical distribution contributing to these key aspects?

Sustainability and circular economy are key aspects and relevant topics in the chemical distribution sector, applying to all parts in the chain. We can see the growing commitment and consequential choices that are being made to diminish environmental impact. At Caldic for example, we've taken action not only to reduce energy consumption and waste but also taken the initiative to reduce our environmental footprint in our product portfolio by opting for bio-based products (e.g. green solvents) and the expansion of our range of plant-based and alternative protein food solutions. In order to strengthen the impact of our improvements, we joined the Ecovadis platform, the world's most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings, intelligence and collaborative performance improvement tools for global supply chains. In addition, we ask our suppliers to do the same and work with them not just in pursuit of the most sustainable path forward, but also in the social responsibility arena.

How regulation impacts your business and in which way your business could benefit from regulation in your opinion?

As an international company, Caldic is subject to various laws and regulations around the globe that we need and want to comply with. Full legal and regulatory compliance as well as compliance with our own Code of Conduct, policies and procedures, is fundamental to our corporate culture and the way we do business. In terms of third parties we work with, we require them to adhere to the same or similar values and principles. Our Compliance Program is essential to ensure integrity, credibility, respect, honesty and stability – the qualities and characteristics that have defined Caldic for years and will continue to define Caldic for the years to come. As we have in the past, we continue to focus on innovation, expanding knowledge and creating a reliable and ethical work environment. We benefit from regulation, as it sets a certain standard – resulting in trustworthy partnerships and high quality products and services.

How has the chemical distribution sector been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and which consequences/challenges do you see coming in the next ten years?

Like in any other sector COVID-19 has turned things upside down and has affected many companies. It requires a significant amount of creativity, flexibility and endurance, but it has also offered some interesting insights and a new perspective. In some cases, new opportunities arose as certain developments gained momentum. At Caldic, we always try to see the possibilities in obstacles. Caldic has proven to be resilient, so we are fully convinced that despite the impact and aftermath of COVID-19, many companies will come out stronger because it forced them to be creative and find new ways of working.



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Editorial Staff:

Fecc Secretariat

Pictures:

iStock, CANVA, member companies, private pictures

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