



LEADERS IN FOCUS

WITH DANIEL CUEVAS

Managing Director of Philip Morris Spain



Daniel holds a degree in Business Administration and Management, as well as in Market Research and Techniques, from the Pontifical Comillas University (ICADE). He has more than two decades of experience at Philip Morris International, where he has built a strong international career in various leadership and commercial management roles linked to the company's transformation.

He is currently the Managing Director of Philip Morris in Spain, a position he has held since June 2023, after previously leading the company in the Italian and Romanian markets. Throughout his career, he has held key positions in different areas, such as Director of Smoke-Free Products in Italy, Director of Sales and Distribution also in Italy, and General Manager in the Canary Islands.

In three words, how would you describe your leadership style?

Rather than three words, three pillars: putting people first by building trust-based teams; leading with strategic clarity through structured thinking and strong communication; last but not least holding high standards while remaining decisive and agile.

Swedish fika or Spanish picoteo?

Spanish picoteo, but the real answer is the people around the table. Whether it's fika or tapas, what matters is the conversation, the connection, and the time you make for each other.

Choose a fictional character or historical figure you admire as a leader, and explain why.

I admire Juan Sebastián Elcano. He led in extreme uncertainty, kept his people together through trust, and never lost sight of the most important outcome: bringing as many as possible safely back home. That mix of resilience, duty of care, and determination is timeless.

What advice would you give to someone leading across cultures for the first time?

Listen more than you speak, especially to the people closest to customers and consumers. Be curious about what's "normal" in each culture, clarify assumptions early, and create shared ways of working than combine best of both.



How do you protect your energy and focus as a leader?

I genuinely get energy from purpose and challenges, but I stay focused by being very deliberate about priorities, spending time where I can add the most value, surrounding myself with strong teams, and keeping space for reflection and decision-making.

How do you lead and make decisions when business strategy is closely linked to public, political and societal expectations?

I rely heavily on the expertise of my team and on a decision framework grounded in purpose and evidence. We take stakeholder expectations seriously, stay transparent about the “why” behind decisions, and choose the long-term path, even when it’s harder, because trust is built over time.

Following the acquisition of Swedish Match by Philip Morris, what have been the main leadership challenges of integrating two strong corporate cultures?

Culture doesn’t integrate through org charts, it integrates through behaviors. Our job as leaders is to model openness, collaboration, and a clear purpose, while staying humble and listening deeply to what made Swedish Match strong. The best part is that we shared a powerful common purpose from day one: moving toward a future free of cigarettes, and turning differences into a real source of strength.

Looking back, what advice would you give your younger self?

Be more PATIENT - much more. And don’t wait for the “big milestones” to celebrate: recognize progress, learnings, and small wins along the way, because that’s what sustains momentum.

Looking ahead, what is next for you personally, professionally, or for the sector you represent?

For me, what comes next is leading through complexity. The transformation of our sector is no longer only a business challenge, it’s also a societal one. That means continuing to push innovation grounded in science, building trust with regulators and society, and helping our people adapt to a fundamentally different future, ensuring progress is not only fast, but responsible, transparent, and sustainable over the long term.

Philip Morris is undergoing a major transformation towards a smoke-free future. What leadership capabilities are most critical to drive such change in a highly regulated environment?

Clarity of purpose is key: transforming ourselves to achieve our vision of a smoke-free future is the right thing to do. Purpose must go hand in hand with resilience, credibility, and the ability to lead through ambiguity, anchoring decisions in evidence, engaging stakeholders with transparency, and building trust inside and outside the organization. And not to forget collaboration. A smoke-free future is not something we can achieve on our own.