

# GAME CHANGERS FOR 60 YEARS

60 years of entrepreneurial adventure

## Episode 1: A start-up in the sixties

A human, scientific and industrial adventure, the history of bioMérieux has been an incredible family and entrepreneurial story since its creation in 1963.

Embark on a 5-episode journey to discover our 6 decades of commitment to improving health worldwide.

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At the end of the 19th century... the renowned Parisian Professor Louis Pasteur counts among his diligent students a certain Marcel Mérieux, grandfather of Alain, great grandfather of Alexandre!

The wonderful story of the bioMérieux group, a world leader in the field of *in vitro* diagnostics, begins here in Lyon: the entrepreneurial grandfather and pioneer in his time, created the "Institut biologique Mérieux." Established in the attic of an ancient hospital, on the banks of the Rhône River, this laboratory was dedicated to the production of tuberculin and therapeutic serums.

1963: It is the sixties and vaccine manufacturing is in full swing at Institut Mérieux, which is now located at Marcy l'Étoile, a suburb of Lyon.

But in the early 1960s, a new field, medical biology, is beginning to emerge. At that time in France, medical analyses were still commonly performed in pharmacies. However, a particularly dense national network of specialized laboratories is developing rapidly. Dr. Charles Mérieux already foresees that medical biology would become an essential discipline in human health.

At Institut Mérieux, a small department of about fifteen people is quietly engaged ... in the production of reagents: coagulation, virology, biochemistry ... but lacking the essential bacteriology to complete the palette ... what to do?

The idea then emerges to form a 50/50 partnership with Becton Dickinson, a world-renowned company in the field, to create a company dedicated to *in vitro* diagnostics.

In July of 63, B-D Mérieux takes off.

This chapter is important: the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation is already entering the race!: inspired by the pioneering spirit of his predecessors, Alain Mérieux takes the helm of this young company and steers it with the wind at his back towards a rapid expansion for biology.

Alain Mérieux, Chairman of Institut Mérieux and founder of bioMérieux : *"The story goes that in January of the same year, I travelled with my father to the United States to meet with Becton Dickinson Executives. They presented a mysterious device which was the fibrometer. As I was a hospital intern in biology at the time, I was able to find out what this device was used for and how it worked, so I looked pretty smart and the Americans asked me to take over the management of this little joint venture. That's the whole story."*

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The small B-D Mérieux team works in start-up mode to develop a commercial offer. In the summer of 64, it is ready to conquer the 4,000 local laboratories that exist in the four corners of France. And it decides to do it in an intelligent and efficient way:

Ah, the France of the 1960s! we look to the United States and President Kennedy, we dance, we sing, we dream the American dream!

B-D Mérieux understood it well: on the morning of a beautiful summer day, all future customers received a letter posted from the great country of America, with a stamp of the no less handsome president, thus capitalizing on the worldwide reputation of American biology!

It's a very successful initial marketing campaign and hits the mark!

Innovative and independent, the sixties start-up dedicated to infectious disease biology is moving fast and upsetting all the corporate codes: administrative and commercial staff work in open spaces teams visit all the analytical laboratories for miles around orders multiply, deliveries accelerate!

And always, always keeping in mind: attention to customer service and product quality requirements, which remain a trademark of bioMérieux today.

The whole thing forms a perfect cocktail to celebrate the arrival of the 1970s ... and great changes for the health of all!

It's a real revolution! all pregnant women can now benefit from the first BD Mérieux toxoplasmosis detection kit!

A new era of Innovation dawns ! among the most outstanding perhaps?

The first test allowing the detection of meningitis without prior culture or the chromogenic culture media still used today.

B-D Mérieux's brand image quickly becomes excellent, and its customers ~~come and~~ return looking for the winning combo: reagents adapted to the needs of analytical laboratories, of course but not only that: time-saving, safety standardization and excellent customer service !

In 1968 the French chemical group Rhône Poulenc takes a 51% stake in Institut Mérieux in BD Mérieux must remain independent, for Alain Mérieux, as for its north American partner, this is very clear, he then personally takes over the Institute's shares in the company!

*Alain Mérieux, Chairman of Institut Mérieux and founder of bioMérieux : "In 1968, when Rhône-Poulenc acquired 51% of the Institut Mérieux, the Americans didn't want to be associated with Rhône-Poulenc and asked me to buy back the Institut's shares accounting for 50% of B-D Mérieux, which at the time was still a very small company. And that's what I did in 1968. At the time, I was restricted to French-speaking markets by the new agreements, until, after lengthy negotiations and a lot of determination, I was able to take back 1% from the Americans in 1974. The company became bioMérieux at that time, its model based on the ability to export throughout the world, no longer having geographical restrictions."*

bioMérieux is born, long live bioMérieux!

The start-up has spread its wings under favorable winds: Alain Mérieux takes the huge gamble of developing *in vitro* diagnostics: with great intuition for a visionary leader!

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Today, 60 years later, bioMérieux has become a global player in *in vitro* diagnostics. Headed by Alexandre Mérieux, it continues the family's commitment to fighting infectious diseases worldwide. Its innovative diagnostic solutions are available in 160 countries. They allow healthcare professionals to better manage their patients' care and help the pharmaceutical and food industries to prevent contamination of their products.

We'll tell you all about the milestones of its successes in the service of public health in the next episode!