Alvaro Hoffmann

Campo Alto

“ I saw an opportunity to inspire students to change their quality of life through access to jobs. ”

COUNTRY	Colombia
INDUSTRY	Prof. Services
EMPLOYEES	250
YEAR SELECTED	2010
PARTNERS	Andrés Angulo , Hugo Fernando Novoa
WEBSITE	www.campoalto.edu.co

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Andres, Alvaro, and Hugo have catalyzed change in Colombia's education sector and are now poised to significantly grow their skills and training business. Since starting CAMPOALTO in 1996 to offer nursing assistant training, the entrepreneurs have expanded to 16 different training programs offered at 5 campus locations in Bogota. Realizing that accreditation would further differentiate the business, the entrepreneurs recently advocated for a new sector of government regulated education and then became the first school in Colombia to be certified in this new sector.

CAMPOALTO now has over 5,000 students in its programs, mostly from low income populations that are attracted to its flexible approach to course scheduling and payment. With a graduate placement rate of 73%, CAMPOALOALTO is poised to have a high impact in Colombia, which currently has the highest unemployment rate in Latin America.

Alvaro, Hugo, and Andres realized a shared passion for medicine and education during their days as Teaching Assistants at Colombia's Universidad del Bosque. After graduation, each went on to pursue additional schooling and specialization. Alvaro focused his studies on Anesthesiology; Hugo achieved his MD in Internal Medicine; and Andres ultimately graduated from Ophthalmology, and went on to complete an internship at Harvard Medical School after receiving an MBA from INALDE. All three entrepreneurs also specialized in Health Management, receiving honorary Masters Degrees in Education Management at the Iberoamerican Council for Quality Education.

By the mid '90s, the three friends had plunged into the medical field, but the would-be doctors found themselves picking up the slack caused by a shortage of qualified nursing assistants. On top of this, they also faced diminishing returns on their hard work: a new law (Ley 100) passed in 1993 saw Colombia's healthcare sector become more bureaucratic and less favorable to private practice. These two factors – combined with the fact that Alvaro, Andres, and Hugo had each independently come to enjoy the teaching components of their jobs – led the entrepreneurs to found CAMPOALTO (CA) in 1996.

The vision for CAMPOALTO was to create an affordable, high-quality training program (focused on real-work competencies) for Bogotá's bottom of the pyramid. Alvaro, Andres, and Hugo rented an apartment in Suba, a low-income neighborhood in Bogotá, and distributed flyers advertising a nurse training program. By 2002, the entrepreneurs were splitting their time 50/50 between running CA and practicing medicine, and developed additional programs in administration, mechanics, and education.

They soon realized that accreditation would make the business more competitive, but at the time Colombia did not regulate anything outside of the formal education sector. The entrepreneurs advocated for a new sector of government-regulated education and in 2006, Colombia created the "Education for Work and Human Development" category, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. As a result, the entrepreneurs became the leaders of the ASENOF, an assembly which would include all Bogotá organizations certified under the new category. By 2008, CA's prestige and reach had grown significantly: CA operated three different "campus" locations in Bogotá and had received the Iberoamerican Award for Education Excellence. In 2009, CA became the first institution to receive the new certification as a school for Work and Human Development.