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## 5 Top Spanish Businessmen Active in the USA



### Antoni Brufau

Repsol's CEO is one of the most experienced and versatile business executives in Spain. Born in Lleida (Catalonia) in 1948, he graduated in Economics at the University of Barcelona and proceeded on to the prestigious IESE Business School before starting his professional career as an accountant at Arthur Andersen's, where he ended up being a partner. In 1988 he joined La Caixa (currently Europe's leading savings bank and Spain's third largest financial institution) as deputy managing director. In 1997 he was appointed chairman of the Gas Natural Group, from which he launched an audacious, though unsuccessful, hostile cash-and-share bid for the electric company Iberdrola in 2003.

In 2004, after sitting for eight years at the Board of Directors of Repsol-YPF (the Spanish oil and gas company, now the 15th largest petroleum refining company in the world), Brufau jumped to the top seat. His strategic program succeeded in turning the debt-ridden company around, increasing its presence in OECD countries, and diversifying upstream and downstream investments (in addition to the traditional Latin American core business) through new profitable projects in the US and Africa (expansion of drilling prospects in Alaska and the company's purchase of 1,500 sq.km of the vast Mississippian Lime to produce non-conventional hydrocarbons). Brufau, who is portrayed as a tenacious and competitive entrepreneur, is currently tackling the conflict over the nationalisation of YPF by the Argentine Government.

Antoni Brufau is married, a father of three, and likes playing golf and tennis. He received the Global Business Leader Award from the American Chamber of Commerce in Spain in 2009 and earned the CEO of the Year recognition at Platts Global Energy Awards in 2012.



### José Manuel Entrecanales

In 2004 José Manuel Entrecanales Domecq (Madrid, 1963) inherited from his retiring father, José María Entrecanales Azcárate, the executive chairmanship of Acciona, a major Spanish holding specializing in civil engineering, infrastructures, transport and environmental services. He is clearly an example of a new generation of Spanish businessmen, shaped by family roots but identifying fully with modernization. The dynamic Entrecanales studied in an elitist private school and graduated in Economics at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. In 1985 he was recruited by Merrill Lynch and worked at their London and New York offices for six years. He then decided to take on his first executive functions in the family business.

Throughout the 90s, Acciona acquired big stakes in the flourishing mobile telecom market, but Entrecanales sold them back in 2000 to British Vodafone. This operation's

capital gains were used to make a perfect landing on the energy sector, and Entrecanales served as CEO of Endesa (the largest electric utility company in Spain) from 2007 to 2009. Over the last years, Acciona has focused on renewable energies: Entrecanales, very active in international networks on sustainable development, is determined to make the group a world leader in the field and, notably, in the US (in 2012 Acciona Windpower has signed a contract with NaturEner USA to set up and furnish its Rim Rock wind park in Montana, and is currently competing with other Spanish firms in the bid to build the first high-speed railway in California).

This golfer, sailor and polo player some media call “green-entrepreneur” is also a Twitter enthusiast (4,000 followers). He is married, four children.



### **Gabriel Escarrer**

Gabriel Escarrer Juliá, founder and chairman of Meliá Hotels International, began to work in the tour operator business at age 16 in his native Majorca, at a time when the tourist boom which made the Balearic Islands one of the most popular holiday destinations in Europe was still a decade away. Five years later, in 1956, the young entrepreneur leased and managed a 60-room hotel in Palma. This humble first step signaled the start of an unstoppable business expansion: Escarrer acquired and opened hotels in the Balearic and Canary Islands first, then in the Spanish mainland and finally all over the world. Through an aggressive policy of takeovers, the original company, Hoteles Mallorquines, grew up to become Hoteles Sol, later Sol Meliá and finally, in 2011, Meliá Hotels International, S.A.

Today, Meliá operates 313 hotels in 32 countries, is the leading hotel chain in Spain, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, and ranks 16th in the world. Regarded a “visionary of tourism”, Gabriel Escarrer has received many professional awards for his contribution to the Spanish and international hotel industry. At 77, he is currently transferring his know-how and executive functions to his sons, Sebastián and Gabriel.



### **Víctor Grifols**

Víctor Grifols Roura (Barcelona, 1950) is President and CEO of Grifols, S.A., a global pharmaceutical and bio-scientific company that is Europe’s largest maker of blood plasma-based products. This third-generation family enterprise dates back to 1940, when the grandfather, hematologist José Antonio Grifols Roig, founded Laboratorios Grifols in Barcelona. His grandson graduated in Business Administration at the University of Barcelona. In 1973 he joined his family’s company to lead its commercial expansion, first in Spain, then onto the world market. In 1985 the youngest of the Grifols succeeded his father as CEO and, six years later, as the group’s chairman too.

With him at the helm, the Catalan multinational corporation embarked on a period of intense R&D+I activities and corporate operations focused on the US market, with outstanding results. In 2011 Grifols announced a \$4 billion deal to buy Talecris Biotherapeutics, a direct competitor. With this takeover, over 90% of Grifols’ profit now comes from the international market.

In 2012 Víctor Grifols attracted media attention by publicly asking the Spanish Government to liberalize the blood donation system in Spain (its is now entirely voluntary and altruistic) in order to meet demand (with payed donors), and he warned he was ready to drop all investments in Spain if this “broken” country does not “change the engines”.

A bioethics advocate, Grifols was honoured in 2011 by both the American Chamber of Commerce in Spain and the Spain-US Chamber of Commerce with the Business Leader Award. He is married and has three sons.



## Florentino Pérez

Being President of Real Madrid football club (twice) has allowed Florentino Pérez (Madrid, 1947) to enjoy a great popularity in Spain and reputation abroad. He is, however, first and foremost, a wealthy and powerful industrialist: the owner of Grupo ACS, a civil engineering, building, transport and logistic services global conglomerate, which is the world's top-ranking infrastructure concession holder. The bold financial strategy and sporting glories (ten major national and international titles for Real Madrid, a team with some of the best players in the world) that distinguishes "Florentino's era" in sport tend to overshadow the non-soccer related accomplishments scored by this quiet, self-made tycoon, sometimes called a "Building Midas".

Spain's king builder was raised in a home of storekeepers. A civil engineer by training, he was active in politics and public service before devoting himself exclusively to private business in the early 90s. A number of senior corporate jobs and shareholding operations paved the way to his election in 1997 as chairman and CEO of ACS.

A soft-spoken, bespectacled man whose wife and mother of his three children died recently, Florentino Pérez, the tenth richest man in Spain, is currently betting hard on the US market, where ACS is building highways, has contracted for public works in the New York Subway and is bidding to build high-speed railways in California. Some clouds are looming, though: as The New York Times pointed out, the construction giant "is saddled with a 9 billion euro debt pile that is twice the size of the company's shrinking market value".

