

Charting Their Own Course

By Taren Grom

Every entrepreneur's journey is as unique as he or she is. The common denominator: a passion to improve the lives of patients.

Risk-takers, disrupters, change agents, visionaries — more than a dozen industry entrepreneurs discuss what it takes to make the bold step to create something new and the twists and turns of their journeys.



ASAF EVENHAIM
Co-Founder and CEO

Back in 1997, at his previous company, Asaf Evenhaim was working with pharmaceutical brands to develop digital patient engagement solutions — what we all now call social media. “The No. 1 question I heard from brand managers was, ‘how can I measure the impact of these digital programs?’” Asaf says. Because of HIPAA regulations, it was very difficult to connect these types of programs to health outcomes and brand impact. He saw a huge gap in the market and came up with technology to solve the problem by contemplating the best way to design a privacy-safe, marketing measurement solution from scratch. That led to the patents for Crossix SafeMine, Crossix’s privacy-by-design technology that is at the core of all the company’s solutions.

What’s in a Name: Connecting the Dots

“I wanted a name that communicated how we make connections across different types of data, while preserving privacy,” Asaf says. “It was very important to me that our name could grow with the company, so I didn’t want something narrowly focused on our first solutions in the market. Cross represents how we cross the different types of data and the x on the end represents how we keep the patient data anonymous. Hence, Crossix.”

Taking the Leap

For Asaf, being an entrepreneur is all about creativity. Crossix is not the only company he

CROSSIX SOLUTIONS INC.

Founded: 2005

No. of employees: 180

Location: New York, with offices in Tel Aviv, Israel; Minsk, Belarus

started; it’s the third. The first was a patient engagement technology in the early days of the Internet. The second was a consumer service for digital weight management. Like Crossix, both companies were focused on the intersection of healthcare and technology.

“It’s tremendously satisfying to be able to look back and see how you’ve taken a concept from an idea and turned it into a marketable solution,” he says. “From the beginning, I wanted to lead a company that wasn’t just offering a different version of the same solutions. I wanted to redefine the market and change the way the industry operates. I’m proud that our solutions have brought a whole new level of accountability and efficiency to marketing investments. Over the years, the more progress we make, the more we can appreciate what we’ve built.”

Crossix’s culture is rooted in its company mission and core values. And like most companies, the company culture evolved organically. But, as Crossix grew, the leadership team recognized the importance of documenting those values and making sure everyone at Crossix knew what they were. “One of our foundational values is our focus on what’s best for our customers,” Asaf says. “We listen to their challenges and deliver the best solutions to meet their needs. Our culture also puts a

strong emphasis on collaboration. We believe, and have seen, that the best work comes when we work together as a team. It’s not enough to establish or talk about a great culture; you must maintain it. It’s important to continue to lead by example, be clear what your values are, and make sure you hire and promote people who believe and behave in a way that reflects the company’s values.”

The Breakthrough Moment

In the beginning, because Crossix was often defining its own market, Asaf explains part of the sales challenge was convincing buyers that they needed to change the way they were evaluating their marketing investments. “Eventually, we reached a tipping point,” he says. “We no longer needed to convince people that they needed to connect their media programs to health outcomes. Instead, we were able to focus on our differentiation. It was a real breakthrough moment for the company and proved that we had successfully developed the market and our place as leaders within it.”

Leading the Entrepreneur’s Life

For Asaf, it’s been exciting to build Crossix into the company it is today. “I think the most satisfying part is the confidence I have in our team,” he says. “Entrepreneurs never really take vacations. I think one of my most satisfying moments came a few years ago when I realized that my team really could live without me for a week or two. And I took a two-week vacation for the first time in years. Coming back from those two weeks was great because I was able to bring a fresh perspective and there was so much to catch up on.”



Celebration

September 12, 2019

The Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers • New York

The **PharmaVOICE 100 Celebration** brings together inspirational and influential leaders from across all sectors of the life-sciences industry to engage in much-needed collaboration through the sharing of ideas, insights, and business perspectives, and to network in an intimate setting.

Imagining the Possibilities: the Future of Healthcare.

The **PharmaVOICE 100 Celebration** panel will explore the future of healthcare through the lens of innovative technologies, transformative business models, enhanced digital tools, and promising opportunities to improve the healthcare ecosystem for the ultimate stakeholder: patients.

Moderator



Melinda Richter
Global Head of
Johnson & Johnson
Innovation JLABS
*PharmaVOICE 100 –
Red Jacket*

Melinda fosters Johnson & Johnson's external R&D engine and supports the innovation community by creating capital-efficient commercialization models that give early-stage companies a big company advantage. By providing infrastructure, services, educational programs, and networks in global hotspots.

Panelists



David R. Epstein
Executive
Partner, Flagship
Pioneering
*PharmaVOICE 100
– 2010*

David, who is also Chairman of Axcella Health and Chairman of Rubius Therapeutics, has more than 25 years of drug development, deal making, commercialization, and leadership experience. From 2010 to mid-2016 he served as CEO officer of Novartis Pharmaceuticals.



Amy Heymans
Founder, Chief
Experience Officer,
Mad*Pow
*PharmaVOICE 100
– 2018*

Amy plays an essential role in Mad*Pow's visualization of a changed healthcare system in the United States. She works with organizations to improve the customer experience, leverage design to drive change, and facilitate human-centric innovation.



Michelle Keefe
President
Commercial
Solutions, Syneos
Health
*PharmaVOICE 100
– Red Jacket*

Michelle is an innovative healthcare executive with a proven ability to identify and capitalize on opportunities in the marketplace to improve competitive performance and deliver exceptional results.



Ritesh Patel
Chief Digital
Officer — Health &
Wellness, Ogilvy
*PharmaVOICE 100
– 2018*

Ritesh is a digital evangelist who is an outspoken advocate about the future of digital health. He is passionate about educating peers and clients about what digital transformation and innovation mean to healthcare.

Entrepreneur Ideation

The entrepreneur's interviewed for this issue provide their tips on what inspires them, how they ideate, and what keeps them motivated.



BONNIE A. BRESCIA
Founding Principal,
Corporate Development
Officer,
BBK Worldwide

My path to new ideas comes first by absorbing as much information and feedback as possible — whether by reading or listening or exploring. Most importantly, I make time for conversations every day that are undirected. With a BBK colleague, the cashier at a neighborhood café, a fellow passenger on a flight to Berlin, a cab driver in London, my daughter in Los Angeles, our team in Japan. These conversations that didn't start out being relevant to my work, inevitably become the source of insight, ideas, and innovation.



OLIVIER CHATEAU
Co-founder and CEO,
Health Union

I feel like I have a new idea every single day. About half are emotionally driven, coming from putting myself in the mindset of people who use our communities and who are affected by these conditions. The ideas come from just taking a look at what's going on in our communities or paying attention to the patient-reported survey data we collect.

The other half of my ideas are more pragmatic, focused around the business part of the company. They come from my experiences but also

engaging with our partners and monitoring what's going on in the industry.

For an idea to work or be worthwhile, I believe it needs to be people-first, providing meaningful value for people. From there, you can address how it can be done and what you would need to do to execute the idea.



ASAF EVENHAIM
Co-Founder and CEO,
Crossix

Ideas and innovation come from different places. Many of our new ideas come from the team, and one of our core company values is to continuously challenge ourselves to innovate. We also proactively talk to our customers and partners about their pain points and brainstorm potential solutions. We're always monitoring what is done in other verticals, so we can understand which of those ideas are going to best help our clients.



ED MITZEN
Founder, Fingerprint

I'm a news junkie and love hearing what other people are doing, even in unrelated businesses. This is especially true when I look for ways to give back more to our communities. Whether it is building a homeless shelter or donating a new bloodmobile for our community, new ideas are often derived by watching and learning how others are helping

those who are less fortunate.



LAURA NIKLASON, M.D., PH.D.
Founder, Humacyte

We have a highly collaborative culture at Humacyte that welcomes new ideas from all our employees. Our employees are highly encouraged to participate in industry forums and events where they would get the opportunity to network with peers and gain insights that could help with our business, clinical, and product development initiatives. Humacyte has the capability to help address a wide range of vascular and non-vascular diseases, and we're cognizant that we constantly need fresh thinking to fuel the R&D efforts that will allow the company to reach its full potential.



FRANK X. POWERS
Founder and Managing
Partner,
Elevate Healthcare

Living a well-rounded life, reading, and exploring new places, all allow you a rich tapestry of experience to tap into for new ideas. Seldom do ideas come to me just working at the office, but most likely when I'm out doing something else — driving/golfing/walking the dogs — which is when the thoughts come more easily to me.



BONNIE A. BRESCIA
Founding Principal,
Corporate Development
Officer

The idea to form BBK back in 1983 was quick to materialize. The company was co-founded by Joan F. Bachenheimer, founding principal and CEO and Bonnie A. Brescia, founding principal, and corporate development officer. "Joan and I worked together at another agency that supported sports and fitness clients with an emerging healthcare business," Bonnie recalls. "After a tough week, we met for

BBK WORLDWIDE
 Founded: 1983
 No. of employees: 55
 Location: Needham, Mass.

a drink one night to talk about what the real needs were for healthcare organizations and patients. These ideas mattered more to us than promoting the latest ski boots and bindings or weather-proof running gear. With more than a little encouragement from our families — who reminded us that we would probably never be in a better position to take this risk — we were

off and running." The two partners had their first discussion on a Wednesday evening by the following Monday they were incorporated, and by the end of the first week the Harvard Community Health Plan, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, and the Metro Boston Hospital Council were all clients.

A Twist on the Name on the Door

When Joan and Bonnie founded their company in the 1980s, it was common for agencies to go with the "names above the door" approach, especially those of the creative team members. "This was based on the idea that the person made the company," Bonnie explains.

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“We believed that no one or two people should be credited with the success of a business. Creative couldn’t exist without campaign managers or business development colleagues and vice versa. With a subtle nod to the industry practice, we chose to use our initials instead. At the time, there were three of us — two Bs and a K. So we named our company BB&K Communications and now are BBK Worldwide. Over the years our name evolved as we pressed forward to take our place on the crest of the wave in a changing healthcare environment.”

Having the Option to Have Options

Joan and Bonnie founded BBK Worldwide because they wanted options. They wanted seats on boards of directors as well as on Little League bleachers, and they bet heavily on their ability to accomplish this. “We came to understand that people who know how to make and keep commitments can be successful in having a rich career and a beautiful family,” Joan says. “We recognized that being financially successful brings one primary benefit — options. The option to change course, or to say no to a job that doesn’t match your values, or to invest in the future by deferring profits to another time.” And 35 years later, Bonnie says having options is still the best thing about being an entrepreneur.

Creating a Creative Culture

First and foremost, BBKers speak patients. “Patients are our language,” Bonnie says. The other pillars of the company’s culture

are based on arts and leisure, a government model, social organization, and customs and traditions. “We are creative, at work and at home, we are writers, graphic designers, songwriters and musicians, chefs, painters, photographers, and poets,” Bonnie says. “We use a traditional New England Town Meeting, when it comes to decision making. Everyone has a voice, functional committees make informed recommendations, sometimes the whole of BBK-town votes, and the management board takes accountability. We are a social organization. From our softball team, to Fantasy Football and Final Four brackets, to an annual event on the beach, to after hours gatherings of colleagues, we join together in groups small and of the whole. We also believe in customs and traditions. Employees who meet five-, 10-, 15-, 20-, 25-, 30-, and 35-year anniversaries are celebrated for their contributions and commitments. First-time parents are feted with a library of colleagues’ favorite books. And our management team still meets every Wednesday night to talk strategy and vision.”

A Bold Decision

BBK was founded in 1983 as an integrated healthcare marketing firm. “In 2002, we resigned our accounts outside of the clinical R&D sector of our business — almost 40% of our revenue base,” Bonnie explains. “This was a key moment in the evolution of the company. At that time, we recognized that finding and enrolling patients in clinical studies was

the single biggest obstacle to study completion. Without these studies, there would be few healthcare advances. We were determined to remove that obstacle for researchers and patients, reflecting our commitment to advocating for patients — increasing their access and understanding of healthcare options — a commitment that drives the company today.”

The second breakthrough, according to Bonnie, was applying their intellectual capital to the development of the company’s flagship technology, TrialCentralNet. This patient recruitment management system was an industry game-changer as it streamlined the management of clinical research outreach, enrollment, and retention and continues to institutionalize best practices for this discipline.

Finding Funding

Bonnie says it’s hard to explain to today’s entrepreneurial women how different funding was in the 1980s.

“For a women-owned services business it was nearly impossible to obtain a business loan and there was little, if any, outside investment capital for such a venture,” she says. “So, we borrowed \$30,000 from Joan’s parents, put \$10,000 in the bank, \$10,000 in an operating account and invested \$6,000 in a word processor and printer. There was no such thing as a desktop computer at that time. We never touched the \$10,000 we set aside for just in case. And by the end of year one we had repaid our seed loan with interest and left more than \$250,000 in the business to fund future growth.”

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LAURA LIOTTA
 Founder and President

The idea for a unique PR agency grew out of Laura Liotta’s own personal needs managing PR agencies while working inside big pharma and biotech. “Every client wants and needs the same thing: a committed team with the right experience offering smart strategy and quality execution with minimal staff turnover,” she says. “In order to ensure that the right people stay at your agency for a long time, you need to create a collaborative, entrepreneurial, and rewarding environment that promises challenging work and life balance. And for Laura, those people are not always in one city, which is why she built Sam Brown Inc. Healthcare Communications, a full-service healthcare PR agency that builds customized, dedicated account teams from a nationwide network of senior healthcare communicators.

SAM BROWN INC. HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

Founded: 1999
 No. of employees: 45

All in the Family

Why Sam Brown? Well, Sam Brown is a family nickname, Laura says.

“In the early 1920s, my grandfather, Samuel Mastrangelo Sr., started a big band orchestra in Atlantic City and changed his name to Sam Brown to be more memorable,” Laura says. “Eventually, my dad was also known as Sam Brown. I adored him. My personal drive, ambition, and success developed from the confidence he gave me to always be a leader, believe in myself, and take a risk. He passed away in June 2004 and was very proud of the agency’s first few years. He would love it now. I am very proud to carry their name and be Sam Brown.”

Living One’s Best Life

As inauspicious as it sounds, Laura’s agency was conceptualized on a rare day off. “One day, I was home sick watching Oprah and she asked her now-famous, simple question, ‘Are you living your best life?’”, Laura recalls. “And, I was not. I really wanted to find a way to continue my fulfilling career in healthcare public relations, while also having work-life balance. When I started Sam Brown, I didn’t even have children yet, but I already knew I didn’t have a life. And, I knew I could build a better model for a PR agency than was available at the time.” Laura is very competitive and she wants her teams to be the best.

“I take our reputation very personally so delivering the highest quality and value are daily driving factors for me,” she says. “Further, I want my daughter to have a really good role model of a woman in a leadership role who also makes lasagna and goes to the occasional soccer game. Frankly, women can’t have it all

without some sacrifice, but the key is to find that right balance to fulfill all parts of your professional and personal life.”

The agency has a culture of support, trust, and accountability that is driven by the entrepreneurial spirit of its people.

“We work hard and play hard together and support one another above all things,” she says. “There is a fulfillment and enjoyment of working with knowledgeable, experienced peers, who function as true partners — with each other and our clients — and these strong working relationships drive our results.” Laura has ensured that there is little to no hierarchy and there is mutual respect for one another. “By leveraging each person’s individual strengths we can do our best work and retain talent for years — decades in many cases — and maintain long-lasting client relationships.”

Getting Started

In 2000, GlaxoSmithKline invited Sam Brown

Inc. to participate in an RFP for the U.S. oncology franchise PR business against some very large and impressive healthcare firms, and the agency won. “This was a pivotal moment in my career and for Sam Brown,” she says. “I will never forget how GSK took a chance on a new PR agency with a very unique model. The work with GSK, which lasted more than 10 years, helped me recruit so many terrific team members and solidified our deep expertise in oncology. Today we work with some of the coolest emerging cancer companies in the industry.” Laura adds she took a line of credit on her mortgage to pay for the GSK PR RFP in 2000 and since then the agency has been self-sustaining.

One of Laura’s favorite things about being an entrepreneur is that she can actually listen to her gut and do things the way she believes is best. “I also like being able to decide not to work with clients that don’t treat my team right or collaborate well,” she says. “This freedom builds loyalty and feels really empowering.”

Satisfying Science

For Laura there have been many satisfying moments working on some of the most innovative and important new medicines that have changed lives. “It’s the scientists who inspire us,” she says. “And, we work with many leaders who are also entrepreneurs. I love the energy of working with start-up companies, like Tmunity, which is translating innovative science into groundbreaking therapies. We are there from the beginning, developing brands, websites, presentations, patient engagement, advocacy, and media relations to help achieve business objectives along their own entrepreneurial journey to the patient. It is satisfying to help our clients, such as GW Pharmaceuticals, forge new paths with the launch of the first-ever FDA approved cannabis plant-based CBD product for children with rare epilepsies. We saw firsthand how this medicine impacts families and I am proud of our team for the quantity and quality of the media coverage over the past two years.”



JOE SHIELDS
Founder and President

Joe Shields and Joe Meadows have collective experience of more than 50 years in the life sciences, and they were keenly aware of a need for marketing strategy and services for the supplier community and for smaller biopharma brands. “I managed brands of all sizes during my pharma career, including blockbuster biologics such as Enbrel that had access to many resources,” Joe S. says. “With Health Accelerators, we intend to provide expertise to companies and brands with big aspirations but smaller budgets.”

The two partners took a very practical approach when it came time to name their new company. “We chose the name to say exactly what we do: We deliver speed-to-market and speed-to-growth for healthcare companies and brands,” Joe says.

HEALTH ACCELERATORS LLC

Founded: 2018
No. of employees: 3
Location: Exton, Pa.

Controlling One’s Destiny

Having worked for global Fortune-100 companies his entire career, Joe decided he needed a change and more control over his destiny. “I also wanted to get much closer to the strategy and creative work, which is where I started my career,” Joe says. “Sadly, the more successful some people are in large companies, the farther away they get from the work they truly enjoy.”

Health Accelerators’ culture is described as efficient, effective, and essential. “Each day we try to strip down our processes, our communications, and our work to focus on what is absolutely necessary to solve our clients’ challenges

while providing a healthy work-life balance for ourselves and our partners,” Joe says. “We hire people from different backgrounds who also have this mindset. One more word I would add to describe our culture is execution. We hold ourselves and each other accountable not only for strategic and innovative ideas, but also for bringing these ideas to life in partnership with our clients.”

Breaking Through

Joe describes his first breakthrough moment when one of their clients asked him to be their part-time chief marketing officer last fall.

“This is when I realized that leadership at some companies truly values the deep experience of their external partners and sees them as more than just project shops,” he says. “One year in, Health Accelerators flexes to handle assignments of all sizes, yet we believe our greatest contributions happen when we have a seat at the table.”



FABIO GRATTON
Founder

Fabio Gratton is a serial entrepreneur who runs Alchemy Factory, a California-based digital health and tech incubator and co-work space. Alchemy has launched a series of ground-breaking ventures, including Carma Project, a life-saving game designed to accelerate the recall of deadly Takata airbags, Cu-

INVIBE LABS

Founded: 2013
No. of employees: 10
Location: Costa Mesa, Calif. and Philadelphia

reClick, a novel crowdsourced clinical trial recruitment service, Sonic Health, a story-driven idea consultancy, BryteLife, a rehydration soda water enriched with performance-level electro-

lytes, and his latest venture, inVibe, a disruptive speech emotion market research platform for health. Previously, Fabio co-founded one of the leading digital agencies in the United States, Ignite Health, that was sold to inVentiv Health in 2007.

inVibe is a personal journey for Fabio. “Someone at my previous company was diagnosed with cancer and I soon found myself struggling to provide him with the emotional support I wanted to give him,” he explains. “Direct contact was impossible. A get-well

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card felt woefully inadequate. And clogging his voicemail was just rude. His friends and colleagues shared in my frustration. So that's when I had the idea for an app that would allow someone to invite friends on Facebook to leave a voice message in a communal mailbox, which would be delivered after a specified number of days."

He and his business partner Jeremy Franz built a rudimentary version, and it worked. "I remember how happy he was to hear all our voices while he was undergoing chemo," Fabio says. "A few years later an industry colleague came to me with a challenge he was facing in conducting qualitative market research at scale with patient influencers — and it just seemed so obvious that an automated voice capture solution similar to what inspired that cancer app would be the ideal solution. So we built what is now inVibe."

Good Vibrations

The company was originally called Vocalize, but Fabio says they couldn't get the dot.com version of the name and the trademark application was denied. "We knew we would probably have to change the name one day, but that day came much sooner than we thought when we received a very cryptic email that started a bizarre round of negotiations that culminated in an offer too good to refuse — more money than we made all year," he says. "During the time we were contemplating selling the name we went through hundreds of possible new names and ultimately landed on inVibe. The 'in' captured the immediacy of our platform — how the technology would enable companies to capture the voice of their customers 'in the moment.' The 'vibe' represented the idea of resonating, or being 'in tune' — which is what companies want their messages to do,

and something that our platform helps by analyzing acoustic markers in the voice."

Timing is Everything

Fabio says he didn't set out to become an entrepreneur, which sounds strange for a man who has created multiple companies. "I knew I liked to create things, and I also knew that I had a knack for getting people to align with my ideas," he says. "This ability, combined with the good fortune of being at the right place at the right time ultimately resulted in an invitation to join two industry veterans to start a company back in 2000 — Ignite Health — which would go on to become one of the most successful digital health agencies of its day.

"The biggest driving force that prompted me to start this entrepreneurial journey was my state of mind," he continues. "I felt that I had nothing to lose, and I was excited and grateful for the opportunity. But once we set things in motion, it set something in motion within me that I've never been able to turn off — the sheer thrill and excitement to know that I am capable of creating something that will be loved by more than just my mother."

In the first couple of years, Fabio says inVibe was extremely small, and pretty much all they did was eat, breathe, and drink product. "There was little time for culture, and we really weren't too concerned about that," he says. "As we started to grow, we struggled a bit with culture because we only knew one way to operate — which was heads-down 24/7, so we attracted people who shared that mentality — and that meant things were pretty quiet in the office."

However, as the company continued to grow the need to interact emerged organically, and Fabio says this is starting to yield a beauti-

ful yarn spun out from the passion they all feel about what they do, and it's bringing his team together in a way he never thought possible. "If there's anything I've learned about a culture, it's this: it's incredibly important to have, but extremely difficult to create," he says.

Ears to the Ground

For Fabio, the breakthrough moment for inVibe was when he and his team realized that what they had was a "listening company." "For years we described ourselves as a 'voice company,' partly because voice-tech was hot, but also because that's exactly what we do — we capture voice," he says. "Then one day I found myself reading Snap Inc's S1 as it prepared to go public and when Snap's CEO Evan Spiegel described his vanishing message company as a 'camera company' it just hit me like a ton of bricks. It was so surprising, disorienting, yet it so perfectly described how Snap was completely redefining the camera experience for a new generation. I felt like that's what we were doing — completely changing the way people listen to their customers — so now suddenly calling ourselves a voice company felt as uninspired as Snap calling itself a social network. At that moment I knew that how we described ourselves needed to do much more than highlight our unique technology, it needed to communicate our core mission, which is to ensure that all people are given a chance to be heard."

To achieve that goal, Fabio and his team set out to be the best listeners in the world. "And so it was that inVibe found its soul, and this has made a world of a difference in so many ways — from how we talk about our product, how we interact with our team, and most importantly, how we listen to our customers," he says.



STEVEN MICHAELSON
Founder and CEO

Steven Michaelson has founded not one but two successful healthcare advertising agencies. Calcium came about through the triumph of his first agency, Wishbone. "We were not interested in selling Wishbone, but the buyer really wanted to be in our space and wanted our clients," he says. "The buyer kept coming at us with offers, and eventually the deal was just too good to pass. We eventually started Calcium on the same premise we started Wishbone: Big agency talent and experience without the big agency bureaucracy. This premise is still as relevant today as it was back in then."

CALCIUM

Founded: 2012

Location: New York and Philadelphia

Then as he says, there's the back story. "After we sold Wishbone, I was a soccer parent for two years and just needed to get back to work," Steven says. "Not that there is anything wrong with being an assistant coach of your son's basketball team, a coach of his flag football team, picking up and putting down kids all over town, waking them, up and getting them to school, and helping them to sleep. I found out very quickly that I'm a great dad of three kids, when I only have to do it for a few hours a day. At one point I thought I could be a stay at home dad, but realized that 24/7 is a

whole other game. The people who do this job are doing the most important job that anyone can do; I have the most admiration and respect for them. That said, it was time for me to get back to my career and time to finish what we started at Wishbone."

Good Bones

Calcium was the natural progression from Wishbone. "A wishbone is all about a bone that embodies hope and aspirations," Steven says. "The tagline said it all 'Imagine the possibilities.' Calcium is the evolution of this vision. Calcium makes bones stronger. Calcium is literally the growth element. Today, at Calcium we don't just imagine the possibilities, we bring them to fruition by supplying our client's products and our employees with all the nourishment they need to grow and succeed."

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Steven's drive is the driving force behind Calcium's success, and it's an entrepreneurial trait that is not teachable. "Drive is an inherent element that helps you keep striving to do the best and to be the best you can be," he says. "As an entrepreneur you need to believe in yourself and to believe in the people around you — together you can achieve anything."

Nourishing Talent

Togetherness defines Calcium's people-first culture. "Cultivating our talent and giving them the tools they need to succeed is job one," he says. "There is nothing more import-

ant than taking care of the people who take care of our client's business. We have a can-do culture; it's a how can we do it better culture; it's an over-deliver, whatever-it-takes, never-say-die culture.

For Calcimites there is no ceiling; if they can dream it they can be it. For Steven and other leaders of the agency, it is extremely important they create a culture that nourishes employees' growth in much the same way they nourish their clients' business. "Our industry is a great industry, but it is not easy," he says. "We need to do everything possible to help our people succeed and be who they want to

be: work hard, play hard — whether that means a party night, or home with the family, or writing a book, or running a marathon — we want Calcium to help make that dream happen for all our people."

Steven's favorite part of owning a business is also what he's most proud of: the people. "The people who we put together at our agencies, people who may have never met each other if it wasn't for working at one of the agencies that we built," he says. "People who have met there, fallen in love, gotten married, and had children. What could be better than that?"



OLIVIER CHATEAU
Co-founder and CEO

While Health Union Co-founders Olivier Chateau and Tim Armand were working at GlaxoSmith-Kline, they always felt more

could be done to have a meaningful impact on the day-to-day lives of people living with chronic health concerns. "As a brand marketer managing diabetes.com, I learned the power of matching a URL name to a condition," Olivier says. "However, I was frustrated that I couldn't develop the site in a way that truly impacted people with diabetes."

From this experience, the two partners saw an unmet need that Health Union has ultimately filled. "We created the partner we wished we had as pharma marketers by building condition-specific online health communities, driven by relevant daily content and amplified via social," he says. "By establishing relationships with people impacted by these conditions, we've proven there is a way to create meaningful relationships that bring value to patients, caregivers, and our biopharma partners, ultimately making them smarter."

Creating a Healthy Journey

It was important for the two partners to find a name that combined "health" with the concept of bringing people together through their health experiences and journeys. "I'm proud that we've lived up to our name and our mission by creating safe and supportive environments both within our 22 individual condition-specific communities and internally within our team," Olivier says. "I've always been energized about being part of something impactful. Creating and building a company that actually makes a difference in people's lives is very stimulating. Many people have innovative ideas but might be averse to the risk that comes with starting a

HEALTH UNION
Founded: 2010
No. of employees: 141
Location: Philadelphia

company. I'm actually motivated by the challenge of taking risks and seeing all the parts come together."

For Olivier, having a strong support system — both at home and at work — of family and friends who are willing to go through what he calls the "craziness" with him has been invaluable. "Additionally, coming directly from the pharma industry where it takes so long to create something new or get something approved, it's thrilling to be able to finalize, change, learn, and even fail at a fast pace," he says.

Mission-Driven

Olivier believes if companies want to be successful, they have to be mission-driven. "Many companies are service-driven, and it's imperative to offer a great service," he says. "However, having a true mission gives a company, as well as the service offered, a guiding light. Health Union's mission to help people live better with challenging health conditions drives our culture and guides our core values: community, inclusion, transparency, and excellence."

For the two partners establishing the culture was fairly easy, but maintaining that culture over the past nine years, as the company has grown from 10 employees in to nearly 150 now, remains a huge priority. "The main thing that helps us maintain that culture has been staying true to our mission and adhering to our core values in everything we do, from how we operate our online communities to how we engage our partners and how we foster our workplace environment."

Breaking New Ground

Health Union's breakthrough moment was

when the company launched its first "In America" survey — the signature survey of patient-reported data it conducts annually for each community. "In 2012, more than 2,000 people living with migraine completed the 100-plus-question, Migraine In America survey for free," Olivier recalls. "That was a moment of extreme validation, and it showed we had built trusted relationships by creating a safe environment for people to share experiences and consume relevant content. "In America" surveys help us understand patients' perspectives and, as a result, better address their needs.

"Our second breakthrough moment occurred when we realized our online health community model was replicable to other conditions when we launched our second site, MultipleSclerosis.net, in 2013," Olivier continues. "We were able to grow faster because we had a better understanding of the types of content most relevant to people with chronic conditions and how best to engage with them."

Creating a Market Disrupter

One of Olivier's favorite aspects of being an entrepreneur of a self-funded company is building new products, specifically those that have made an impact for both the people with chronic conditions the company serves and its biopharma industry partners.

As Health Union's team has grown, building new innovations and launching new online health communities has happened more quickly. As a result, the disruption in the market has been exponential, he says.

"Another aspect I've loved is bringing along people who have grown with the company," Olivier remarks. "These are people who have worn multiple hats, have done so much that has contributed to the company's success, and who now have the opportunity to see the amazing impact that Health Union has had — and will continue to have — on people's lives over the years."

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Olivier is also gratified by the success of Health Union's annual Connexion conference.

"Creating and executing our Connexion conference, which brings together our many patient advocates from across all of our communities, is extremely satisfying," he says. "This event solidifies everything that we've already been doing so well digitally for years and gives us a chance to further show our apprecia-

tion for these people who are representative of our mission."

Staying motivated is easy for Olivier. He is driven by feeling that there's still so much to do and that Health Union has barely scratched the surface in terms of how it can positively impact the lives of people with chronic health concerns. "There are so many applications of what we do that have not been tapped into

yet," he says. "One example is our publications team that has been leveraging all of the data, information, and real-world evidence we collect and transforming that into papers published in journals and presented at conferences. This data could impact the way the pharma industry engages with patients, how clinical research is conducted, or how National Institutes of Health funding is determined."



ED MITZEN
Founder

For Ed Mitzen, the joy of creating is what inspired the name of his second start-up agency: Fingerprint. "I wanted a name that brought back the creative joy we had as children before life beat us down and made us color within the lines," he explains. "The name is ego-free, which is directly on brand with what I wanted Fingerprint to be about.

"I had recently sold my first advertising agency, Palio, to inVentiv Health in 2006," Ed recalls. "And I was longing again for the start-up/entrepreneurial spirit of an independent agency, and Fingerprint became my mulligan. I could take what I loved about my first agency and make it even better. That became the impetus for Fingerprint.

Ed always had a desire to be in control of his own destiny. "It was obvious to me I'd never be the smartest person in the room, but I knew no one could outwork me," he says. "From the beginning, we established a culture based on putting our people first. We knew taking care of and appreciating our folks would translate into great work for our clients.

FINGERPAINT

Founded: 2008

No. of employees: 230

Locations: Saratoga Springs, NY, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Arizona

Empathy for others, and a driving spirit to give back to our local communities, is a cornerstone of Fingerprint's culture. In fact, this summer, in collaboration with Forbes Books, I have my first book coming out on the importance of advertising agency culture in creating a great company and producing awesome work."

Gritting it Out

Ed recalls back in 2010, he was about three weeks from declaring bankruptcy — having used savings and credit cards to fund the start-up — the economy was in a tail spin, and the business was sputtering. "Then we won our first big pitch: Alimera Sciences," he says. "This win provided us with enough cash to keep the lights on for a few more months, and then we started to catch fire as our confidence and work product improved dramatically. I will never forget what the Alimera marketing team did for the survival of my company."

Ed takes tremendous joy in providing a place for awesome people to do great work and feel appreciated and rewarded.

"Seeing someone getting a promotion or a well-deserved spot award, taking their sabbatical after five years, or receiving help with student loans and healthcare costs makes all the stress and hard work so worth it," he says. "I also love giving back to our communities, not out of a sense of obligation but out of a fundamental belief that we are so fortunate, and many others need some help getting there too."

Fingerprinters can take advantage of a four-week paid sabbatical after they have been with the agency for five years. "This is in addition to their regular vacation time," Ed says. "We remove their emails from their phones and tell the staff and clients that they will be off the grid for four weeks. People start planning for these sabbaticals two years out. We have folks who have gone to New Zealand for a month, taken a RV across the country with their families, or earned their pilot's license, and some just give themselves a good old-fashioned staycation. To see them come back truly refreshed, rejuvenated, and more connected with their friends and family is so incredibly rewarding to me."



VIMAL NARAYANAN
Founder and CEO

MedTriX is derived from "med"ical communication and "trix," which depicts a complex interplay of medical, creative, and digital capabilities all in one place, hence MedTriX. Vimal Narayanan says he created the company to address the need for one platform to address several challenges and catalyze the way healthcare communication is managed, which is the fundamental idea of the company's business.

"The power to think and be able to bring a change to people's lives and add innovation to how pharma industry functions were the key drivers of why I chose the entrepreneurial path," Vimal says.

MEDTRIX HEALTHCARE LLC

Founded: 2012

No. of employees: 45

Locations: New Jersey, Bangalore, and Dubai

Carving Out a Path

"We have a very diverse organization with people from different backgrounds such as medical writers, graphic designers, 3D animators, gaming technologists, creative directors, creative writers, tech developers, project managers, and business development teams," Vimal says. "All are encouraged to experiment, try, learn, fail, and succeed. We have been able to embed the fact that success is not a destination or a permanent state of being. This is mainly established by providing seemingly

daunting tasks to people and not being too keen on the outcome and focusing only on their efforts to excel."

Vimal can count several breakthrough moments, including winning some major contracts and accolades from some key clients such as Novartis, Allergan, Amgen, Nestle Health Science, Merck, and Lilly. "We have won awards but when our clients win awards for the work that they have done with us is when we feel that we have had a breakthrough," Vimal says. "It's an extremely satisfying feeling to see our clients win.

"We generate new ideas by partnering with clients to address a specific problem that a client has," Vimal continues. "This coupled with remaining on top of the game by constantly staying on top of updates from various sources on science, technology, and the industry."

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Vimal gets a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that the company has been profitable for six of seven years of operation,

and the company has not lost a single client to date.

“All or most of the people who have left

us have gone on to bigger positions using MedTriX as a good platform to springboard their careers,” he says.



NATALIE MCDONALD
President and Founder

As founder of Create NYC, Natalie McDonald set out to redefine efficiency in healthcare advertising for today’s rapidly changing industry through a unique on-demand model and flat-fee approach, which sets Create NYC apart from traditional agencies. “The idea came from my own first-hand experience and frustrations as both a client and an agency leader,” she explains. “Until now, there has not been a pharmaceutical advertising agency dedicated exclusively to efficiency as measured by client timelines and budgets in addition to creating quality tactics.”

The name was conceived to communicate both what the agency does and where the company has its headquarters.

“It’s been perfect and leaves plenty of opportunity to expand to offices around the world,” Natalie says. “As Create NYC approaches its 10-year anniversary, we have be-

CREATE NYC
Founded: 2019
No. of employees: 43
Location: New York

come an industry leader in efficient execution of core healthcare tactics.”

Creating a New Model

As an entrepreneur, Natalie was compelled to conceive a way to fill a glaring unmet market need. Specifically, she wanted to create a tactical execution agency that delivered high-quality work more efficiently. “With shrinking budgets, it was more important than ever for clients to get what they need, when they need it, all within what they were able to spend,” she says. “To accomplish this goal, Create NYC was designed around a unique flat-fee model, which promotes risk sharing with client partners so that excellent work is consistently produced on time and within budget.”

Having worked her entire career in the

healthcare industry, she says she was fully aware of the advertising industry conventions in which hierarchy, process, and lackluster leadership abound. “As an entrepreneur, I knew my greatest challenge would be to attract, retain, and empower talent to lead and define our growing organization and so I set out to build a culture in which everyone was incentivized in our success,” Natalie says. “We are a group of engaged, high performers who also have a common set of core values — values that are fundamental to who we are as people. These values describe the essence of our culture and when combined with our people and other aspects of life at Create NYC including our unique telecommuting policy, make Create NYC a special place to work.”

To achieve success, Natalie chose to only use the right resources at the right time rather than employ multiple levels of each discipline that are often redundant and unnecessary. “By using our Creator Hub with more than 350 hand-selected creative talents from all disciplines in the business, we can deliver projects with incredible speed and skill,” she says.



LAURA NIKLASON, M.D., PH.D.
Founder

The idea of Humacyte and the company’s flagship product, the Humacyl — or the Human Acellular Vessel (HAV) — originated during Dr. Niklason’s training at Massachusetts General Hospital. “I saw a problem in the operating room when vascular and heart surgeons were conducting the process of searching for a good quality replacement vein in the patient’s legs, arms and at times — even the abdomen,” she says. “This led to a vision to create lab-grown replacement vessels constructed from human vascular cells, in the laboratory.”

While starting up the company with her co-founders, Dr. Juliana Blum and Shannon Dahl, Dr. Niklason says they batted many potential names around. “We settled on Humacyte one evening on our way to dinner in Chapel Hill,” she says. “It just seemed like the right combination of novelty and communication of our core technology ideas.”

Getting to the Heart of Disease

Dr. Niklason was driven to take the entrepreneurial plunge when she saw there were hun-

HUMACYTE
Founded: 2004
No. of employees: 140
Location: Durham, North Carolina

dreds of thousands of patients suffering from vascular diseases with unmet medical needs. “I knew there was a unique opportunity to bring an innovative and much-needed solution to the market,” she says. “Humacyte has allowed me to combine my background and skills as a physician, academic, and biomedical engineer, in bringing superior quality of care to patients. The company’s remarkable success so far and the team’s hard work of 15 years continue to motivate me every day.”

Dr. Niklason is hard pressed to identify one breakthrough moment as the company has had many memorable occasions for celebration. “Publishing our Phase II study results in *The Lancet* was a remarkable milestone for Humacyte,” she recalls. “At that time, it was one of the most comprehensive studies that had ever been undertaken in the bioengineered vascular tissue space. It was one of those critical moments in our journey, which illustrated the promise of Humacyte and indicated how our HAV can help patients with

end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Another wonderful achievement for us was being the first company to receive the Regenerative Medicine Advanced Therapy (RMAT) designation from the U.S. FDA. This designation from the leading federal agency validated the breakthrough nature of our innovative technology.”

Keeping It Real

She and her partners at Humacyte strongly encourage employees to be entrepreneurial, collaborative, and patient-centric. The company’s many successes so far have been a result of the entrepreneurial spirit of their employees and their commitment to working together to help the company reach its business goals. “In addition, we have a big focus on keeping it real, by which I mean allowing the data and the science to lead our efforts, and not to be distracted by hype, or group-think,” she says. “Since Humacyl is intended to help patients with unmet medical needs, the one thing that we always keep in mind is that the patient is at the core of everything we do.”

As an entrepreneur, Dr. Niklason is excited to apply herself and her background to meet many different goals. “There is no other job that would allow me to utilize my skills and experience as a scientist, physician, biomedical engineer to take a novel technology all the way

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to the patient's bedside," she says. "At Humacyte, I am able to fully immerse myself in the various activities and projects that benefit

from my expertise, and it is always enjoyable working with people who have different skill sets and experiences from my own."

She is motivated by two things: figuring out solutions to problems, and seeing experiments bear out some prediction or theory that

Do You Have What it Takes to Be a Successful Entrepreneur?

Successful entrepreneurs provide their secrets to success. Top of the list: perseverance and patience.



BONNIE A. BRESCIA
**Founding Principal,
 Corporate Development
 Officer, BBK Worldwide**

Successful entrepreneurs keep their eyes on the mission of their business with a complement of fearlessness and risk management. Surround yourself with people whose ideas intrigue you. Listen carefully, but don't follow.



OLIVIER CHATEAU
**Co-founder and CEO,
 Health Union**

First, you need to be patient because success never happens as fast as you want.

Second, it's important for entrepreneurs to go into markets they understand.

Third, once a company's mission or service is established, it's important to deviate as little as possible. Some entrepreneurs start with an idea, realize it might not work and start doing something else or take shortcuts to make a quick dollar.

Fourth, if you truly believe in what you're doing and that what you're doing can positively impact people, try not to take it to heart when other people say your business or idea won't work.



ASAF EVENHAIM
**Co-Founder and CEO,
 Crossix**

To be a successful entrepreneur, I think you need both grit and the ability to pivot quickly. Grit helps you focus on the long-term vision instead of short-term rewards and gives you the patience to overcome challenges and navigate through setbacks. In most industries, including health-care marketing, entrepreneurs need to be able to pivot quickly to react to changing market conditions and ensure that they continue to innovate. Without that agility, it's just too easy

to rely on the status quo, especially when it comes to developing technology.



LAURA LIOTTA
**Founder and President,
 Sam Brown Inc. Healthcare
 Communications**

It's been said before, but I'll say it again — surround yourself with the best people across all functions of the business and take really good care of them. I think I'm good at matching people's interests with the work. And, if for some reason it isn't a good fit or someone isn't successful in a role, there is a compassionate way to make a move that is best for everyone. We foster collaboration.



NATALIE MCDONALD
**President and Founder,
 Create NYC**

Starting a business requires an incredible commitment and, as the company grows, there is an ever-increasing responsibility to staff and customers. To thrive under these circumstances, I believe the entrepreneur must have passion for their service or product in order to be successful. At Create NYC, passion is also a core value because we believe each of us is a leader of our agency business. We define it as an intense and daily desire to succeed in our dynamic advertising industry.



STEVEN MICHAELSON
Founder and CEO, Calcium

Building a successful agency takes something really special. Bruce Springsteen said it best, when putting a band together ... you don't necessarily need the best, or most talented people, you need the right people. When you have the right people, that unteachable, intangible, special magic happens. Well, I have to say that is absolutely the case for both Wishbone and Calcium. I believe the secret to

success is surrounding yourself with the right people.



ED MITZEN
Founder, Fingerprint

You must be the eternal optimist, the chief cheerleader in charge. No one will ever understand the stress you are under to cover costs and keep everyone fed, and you must bear that pressure with a smile on your face and a spring in your step. And you must work harder than anyone. I always tell folks the difference between an entrepreneur and a traditional role: For a traditional role, Thanksgiving is the start of a long weekend to celebrate with family and friends. For the entrepreneur, Thanksgiving is a Thursday.

LAURA NIKLASON, M.D., PH.D.



Founder, Humacyte

The ability to wear many hats is critical for an entrepreneur. Unlike a corporate job, entrepreneurs cannot limit their work to specific functions or initiatives. As a company grows over time, it becomes important to have a versatile outlook on how you can contribute every day to make sure that the business and the teams are able to get the support they need.

FRANK X. POWERS



**Founder and Managing
 Partner, Elevate Health-
 care**

At the end of the day, I believe you need to be comfortable with risk to be a successful entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs need to be able to make changes to answer market dynamics in rapid fashion. We need to be able to pivot and react quickly, something that is a positive with the speed of business today.

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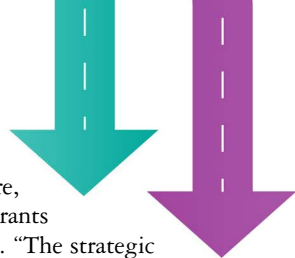
they have had. “Biomedical engineers, like all other engineers, are inherently problem solvers,” she says. “There is nothing more satisfying to an engineer than to identify an issue that is stopping progress, and then finding the fix. Secondly, it is really thrilling to hypothesize about some aspect of biology or medicine, and then to design experiments to determine whether or not that hypothesis is correct. Having a hypothesis is like having a dim looking glass, with a fuzzy image of what

the future might hold. Designing experiments to test a hypothesis is like creating a future that at first we can only dimly see, but which becomes more and more visible, the more experimenting we do.”

To make Humacyte’s goals come true, Dr. Niklason says the company is immensely honored with remarkable funding.

“Our funds raised to date equal \$480 million, which includes a global consortium of private investors, corporate investors such as

Fresenius Medical Care, and federal and state grants and contracts,” she says. “The strategic global partnership with Fresenius Medical Care was an incredible moment for Humacyte. As a global biomedical company and a leader in the renal disease space, we were thrilled to get Fresenius Medical Care’s support as we ramp up our operations and get ready to potentially commercialize our product across the globe.”



FRANK X. POWERS
Founder and Managing Partner

For partners Frank X. Powers and Lorna Weir the idea for Elevate came from working in the healthcare marketing industry for many years, seeing the climate evolve as all business environments do, and seeing a need that wasn’t being served.

“There were whole segments of our market that needed more attention from experienced talent focused intently on their marketing challenges,”

Frank says. “Elevate was created to fill that void. Seeing what is happening in the business you’re in and being able to see what’s going on around you with clarity is everything. Shifting to a new business model with a new organization naturally followed.

“Being clear and focused on the purpose of this new company to raise the standards or service and creative that clients have access to led to the name Elevate,” Frank says. “It was front of mind from the very beginning. The name had simplicity and pur-

ELEVATE HEALTHCARE

Founded: 2015
No. of employees: 27
Location: Blue Bell, Pa.

pose and it was a call to action. It was a name that also described our mission.”

An Entrepreneurial DNA

Frank came by his entrepreneurial spirit naturally, as both of his parents are successful entrepreneurs.

“I’m not sure I had much of a choice in the matter,” he says. “As a child, sitting at the family dinner table, business was always discussed, and I always watched — and listened — with amazement.”

His careful attention to the lessons learned all those years ago have culminated in a culture that is defined as healthy, respectful, and fun. “At Elevate, we have a group of people who want to do things differently, and are comfortable in doing so,” he says. “I’m quite proud of the team that we have put together, and you need to feed and cherish something so special.

A Cheers Moment

Like all entrepreneurs, there are several mo-

ments that these risk takers realize it’s for real and it’s time to press forward. For Frank, one of these memorable moments was Cinco de Mayo 2016. “After a lot of hard work to start up, we officially launched, our pictures were up on the big screen in Times Square, and we unveiled Elevate to the industry,” he recalls. “I was sipping a post-workday margarita at our conference table with colleagues and thinking this is the end of a long process, and also just the beginning.

“When we debuted a new campaign in the market for our first client, this felt like another breakthrough,” Frank continues. “Then launching a series of campaigns for our then newest and now largest client was a breakthrough on the next level. And truthfully, I still get that feeling every time we initiate — and complete — a campaign that I know is going to make a difference for our clients.”

Those moments are even more satisfying given that Frank and Lorna bootstrapped the organization personally, and neither of them took a salary until the business could comfortably handle it. Does Frank have any regrets? The answer is no. “I’ve been fortunate to be honored by the industry on some significant occasions, including recognition as one of the PharmaVOICE 100 on two occasions, but launching Elevate ranks first in the satisfying moment category.”



MARK HANLEY
Founder, President, and CEO

Before Mark Hanley took the entrepreneurial plunge two years ago, he served as CEO of Radiant Research, a network of clinical trial sites. At the same time, he was serving on the board of directors for a company providing translation services to hospitals using a video platform. Through this combined experience, he was part of 10,000 trials. “I saw the challenges we continually faced as a site network — enrollment and retention,” Mark says. “I thought if we could

VIRTRIAL

Founded: 2018
No. of employees: 4

add a telemedicine component to the trials it would help to solve these issues.”

Thus was born VirTrial. “I wanted the name to be simple yet tell the industry what we did,” he says. “We enable virtual trials to be performed, therefore VirTrial.”

Team Work Makes the Dream Work

The company, while small, is very much fo-

cused on teamwork. “We care about, respect, and support each other,” Mark says. “We work hard but also have fun in the office. The core team has worked together for more than eight years. I have tried to establish an environment of autonomy. I know what the team is capable of — which is why I hired them. But I am also supportive if they have questions or need advice. I also believe in work/life balance. Employees need to be happy to be productive.”

Mark believes to be successful, an entrepreneur needs vision, hard work, and patience. And for him the best part of starting VirTrial is seeing his vision/plan come to fruition. **PV**

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Director, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), NIH

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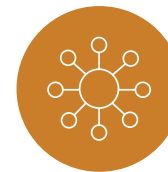
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