

Interview with David Barthel, CEO of Health Logic Interactive

By [Sheeva Azma](#)



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I recently spoke with David Barthel, CEO of [Health Logic Interactive](#), to ask him about his secrets for running a successful biotech company. Despite the fact that Health Logic Interactive is an early-stage company, founded in 2020, Barthel is no stranger to the biotech space; in 2000, he founded The SmartPill Corporation, where he oversaw the development of an ingestible wireless motility capsule system for gastrointestinal (GI) motility. The SmartPill Corporation was acquired by biotech giant Medtronic in 2014 to expand their GI health offerings. After the sale, Mr. Barthel stayed on as Area Vice President of the Southeast Division. Since his departure, he has also advised other large cap biotech companies.

Barthel brings over two decades of experience in the biomedical devices sector to Health Logic Interactive, a company that is currently developing the first point-of-care lab-on-chip digital diagnostic device for diagnosing chronic kidney disease.

Keep reading for my interview with Mr. Barthel.

How did you get your start in your career?

I started out working in sales opportunities, developing my communication skills. I wanted to get into specific sales in life science or technology. I started out working at VWR Scientific, a large global scientific distribution company. There, I learned how to manage a territory, budget, and how to sell a large portfolio of products. I wanted to move into sales management and executive management for a life sciences company. I followed this thread into technology, building into my work on SmartPill.

You built your first company, SmartPill, from scratch. How did you do it?

Smartpill was a classic ground-zero high-risk, high-reward start-up. You have to have confidence as a leader and be willing to fail fast in order to succeed. One out of ten start-ups succeed, while nine out of ten fail.

You have a strong work ethic if you're a start-up – working 24/7. You have to have strong communication skills and be able to constantly overcommunicate. I am a big believer in partnerships, developing relationships across multiple disciplines within a business. You need to understand the science and technology and have both a clinical and business acumen.

A strong finance background and focus was also essential. I have an MBA, which gives me experience and building blocks to be a leader – leading by example and creating a successful collaborative start-up culture.

Health Logic Interactive CEO David Barthel's advice for new biotech startups: be willing to work hard. Communicate often. Maintain a financial focus. Be high-energy and passionate.

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Energy and enthusiasm are key, too. A lot of CEOs can be intellectually dry, but you have to possess high-energy and be passionate. You have to be a believer. People pick that up, and they want to believe in the technology, the opportunity, and in the leader.

How did you get Medtronic to acquire SmartPill?

SmartPill was built from the ground up. You have to be very disciplined and process-oriented, and you have to always be raising money based on achieving significant milestones.

The first success was developing an internal team. The second was development of the product. The third was building an advisory team and successful clinical trials. Getting FDA approval means you can sell the product on the US market. Then, once you get the green light from the FDA, you need to manufacture the product and generate revenue to your target market. Most of the success was due to a strong, talented team. We survived both the dotcom crash of the early 2000s and the financial crisis of 2008 via good people and leadership.

What are your top leadership tips for running a start-up company?

Every effective leader has pillars of leadership that they use through their entire career. To me, the pillars of leadership are transparency, overcommunication, accountability, and integrity. Those are key. I bring passion and tremendous energy that is key to driving yourself and your team every day. Not many people have that sustainability and persistence to overcome obstacles and challenges.

Tell us about your current role as CEO of Health Logic Interactive.

As for how Health Logic Interactive is like SmartPill, some things are the same, and some things are different. There are some procedural things I learned at SmartPill that I am bringing to Health Logic Interactive, such as the specifics of

the Project Management and FDA approval process for diagnostic medical devices.

Unlike SmartPill, Health Logic Interactive is not a ground-zero start-up built from scratch. That makes things easier in a lot of ways, but there are still challenges. One of the reasons that we'll be successful is that we have a terrific team. Having a strong cohesive team is key — including my Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr. Claudio Rigatto, who is responsible for the clinical direction of the product, and, my Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Harrison Ross, who is responsible for the financial direction of the company. Both provide not only support for me but we approach all decisions as a team. We are in a large, rapidly growing digital market space and as a result we are building a great team with dynamic leadership.

Our product at Health Logic Interactive is a disruptive point-of-care lab-on-chip device for monitoring and managing chronic kidney disease or CKD. This is a very hot space with the need to move the lab to the home, providing true point-of-care to the patient in their home.

There are four huge value drivers for any business: building relationships; partnerships; a talented team; and a transparent, cohesive culture. These are keys from SmartPill that we are applying to Health Logic Interactive. Work ethic, passion, and integrity matter in any start-up. Those values are now core drivers at Health Logic Interactive.

What is your advice to new founders?

Jump in with both feet: that's what it will take to be successful. A hot space such as CKD requires a lot more focus, discipline, and experience. Having done it before certainly helps. A hot space gets hotter, too. You have to be all in — you can't be half in. Give it 110% and surround yourself with talented people and good partners.

“Jump in with both feet: that's what it will take to be successful.” — David Barthel, CEO of Health Logic Interactive, on founding a biotechnology startup

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What is your proudest career achievement?

Building a medical device company and providing a technology that aids and helps patients suffering from GI motility disorders. It comes back to helping the patient – we created a product that helped people that suffered. We provided a novel way to diagnose GI motility diseases using an ingestible sensor-based capsule. That's the achievement. Selling our company to Medtronic was just a result of doing all the other things right.

What's unique about Health Logic Interactive?

You have to start with the technology – disruptive, innovative, novel technology nobody has seen before. Take it to the patient. Provide a quantitative diagnosis to the patient in their home. Bringing a traditional lab test to the home is the newest trend in point-of-care diagnostics. Digital healthcare plays a huge part, too – there is lots of data that we're going to be able to send to someone's smartphone. They will be able to have the data in their hands, in their home, and on their smartphone. The data can be collected, sent to them in the form of dashboards, trends and alerts, and sent to their physician. This is incredible technology – groundbreaking and very clinically relevant for these times.

Because of COVID-19, there's a new normal in which point-of-care technologies are relied upon more because people cannot always go to their physician or get laboratory tests. Being at home, understanding one's disease state, taking control, and having data in your hands is essential in our current time, and this is a trend that is likely to continue well after the pandemic.

Tell us more about the novel diagnostic medical device you are creating at HLI. How are you helping manage CKD?

We've created a lab-on-chip, point-of-care platform technology for CKD. We're also exploring other progressive chronic diseases. Our focus is quantitatively

measuring biomarkers and analyzing them on a disposable computer chip.

Due to the rise in obesity, an increase in diabetes, and high-risk patients, more and more people are at increased risk for CKD. Our goal is to slow progression of kidney disease by enabling earlier diagnosis, and effective treatment, much earlier in the continuum of care. We want to reduce the number of people who have to go on dialysis and eventually we will save lives.

What advice do you have for investors?

Be agile and adaptable. Make sure you identify and study trends — be a year ahead. In terms of technology, try to identify and anticipate specific needs. In COVID-19, continue to anticipate the needs of the new digital medicine market space.

What's your favorite quote about entrepreneurship?

Don't give up, don't ever give up. Survive and advance.

Visit Health Logic Interactive on the web at www.healthlogicinteractive.com.

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