



The man behind the magic

Visionary. Tenacious. Innovator. That's how Rick Birkmeyer's former colleagues describe the strategist of scientific **startups**. To them, he's the guy that makes the magic happen.

Birkmeyer grew Strategic Diagnostics, now called SDIX, in the 1990s from a handful of employees into a publicly traded biotech **company** with 143 full-time and five part-time employees.

Today, a new dream has lured him out of semi-retirement and into another chief executive officer role, this time to turn **CD** Diagnostics, a joint fluid analysis company, into a success story. And everyone he's crossed paths with seems to think he will do just that.

Call it a challenge, a mission, a dream, but for a determined Birkmeyer, it goes much deeper than that.

"It is the creation and the building of the family that is absolutely fabulous," he said. "There's nothing like it. I know. I've done it before."

The task first calls for moving CD Diagnostics from an incubator at Lankenau **MedicalCenter** in Wynnewood, Pa., to New Castle County. Birkmeyer, who recently took the reins at CD, said his plans call for growing the company and its cutting-edge

testing kit from 15 employees to 170 employees by the end of 2015. By the end of this year, the company expects to reach 29 employees.

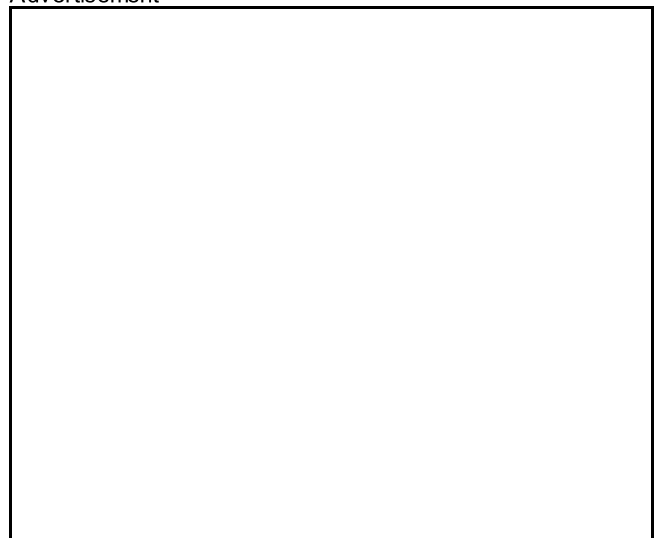
"Six months ago, we were three people," Birkmeyer said of himself; Carl Deirmengian, who founded the technology; and co-founder Michael Behr, vice president of sales and marketing.

"Our years at SDIX were pretty amazing," recalled Anne Cavanaugh, who worked beside Rick as a co-founder of SDIX.

"We grew very rapidly from zero to a company **trading** on Nasdaq with \$25 million in revenue. ... Rick is very creative at structuring business deals and has a real talent for creating win-win situations," she said. "I'm glad Rick is back in the game, and I know CD Diagnostics will be a success."

Andrew Watson has a slightly different perspective. He knew Birkmeyer as the boss.

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"Because he believes strongly in the technology and clinical utility of the products CD is developing, that will be evident to potential investors, clinicians, customers and the scientific community," Watson said. "Beyond that, Rick believes strongly in people. He cared as much or more about SDI's employees as he did about making a buck. As a result, SDI maintained a committed, loyal core of hard-working employees that would follow Rick anywhere just because he was Rick."

Like any strong leader, Birkmeyer's loyalty to a cause and the company it's tied to were easily recognizable to those around him, including Art Koch.

"The key to success at SDIX was a vision on which Rick formed the company and a tenacity to implement that vision through good times when it was an obvious correct strategy and more importantly, during those trying times before the vision turned into the anticipated profitable results where temptation to abandon the current course is so high," said Koch, a friend and former colleague. "I believe these traits of vision and tenacity will serve Rick again very well at CD Diagnostics."

The technology Birkmeyer is championing is a joint fluid analysis point-of-care kit much like a pregnancy test with an indicator for physicians to read. Fluid is drawn from a joint with a needle at the direct source of pain. Then a small sample is dropped on the unit, and diagnosis results are determined. CD's tests differ from other methods in that they deliver definitive

results on demand.

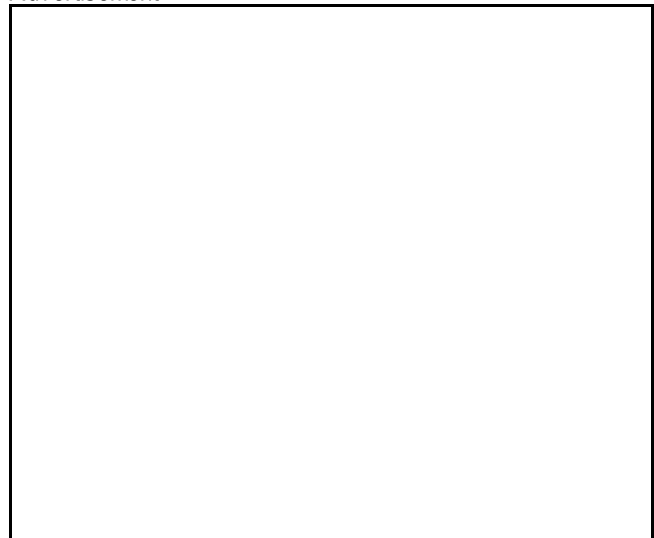
The startup is developing tests for Lyme disease, gout, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and infections. Birkmeyer believes the 2-year-old firm may become profitable this year and become "big" three years from now.

"I started here in August, and it's good timing, a perfect fit for me," said Birkmeyer, who left SDIX in 2003 to semi-retire, spend time consulting and catch his son's soccer games. "This is a huge market opportunity with protected technology, and I felt I could make a difference here."

Birkmeyer, a former DuPont scientist with a Ph.D. in immunology, thinks the product will be a tremendous success with a trajectory even greater than that seen at Newark-based SDIX, a company that makes tests for the pharmaceutical, food safety and biotechnology markets.

CD's test-kits audience is undeniably large. Some 17 million people suffer from joint

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pain, and it often is mistreated or misdiagnosed because of a lack of precise testing.

If Birkmeyer's right about the need for more precise tests, CD's decision to pass up a \$275,000 grant from Pennsylvania and instead accept a \$500,000 grant from the Delaware Economic Development Office and relocate to New Castle County could be a real boon for the First State.

"My heart is in Delaware," Birkmeyer said. Within the next month, the young company will acquire a building of 15,000-20,000 square feet for its new location. "I like that small support community of Delaware."

Building the right team of talent was an integral part of SDIX's success in Delaware, and Birkmeyer knows that as he embarks on repeating that same success once again.

"I've gotten lucky," he said. "I've also recognized my strengths and weaknesses and surrounded myself with a team that covers my weaknesses and allows my strengths to shine," he said.

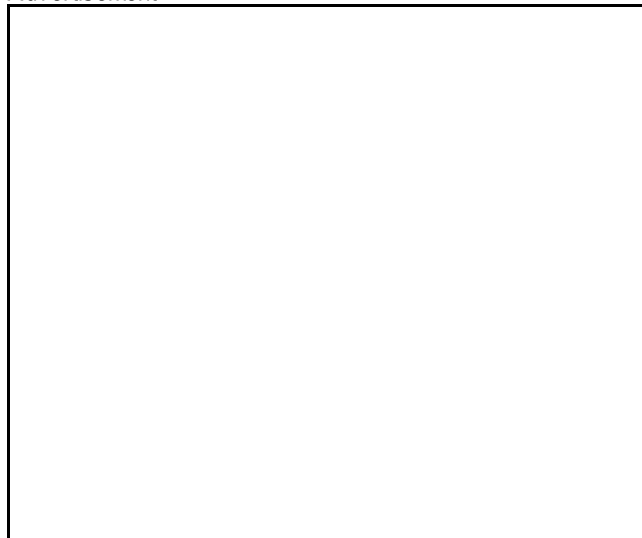


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Johanna Lightcap (left), a hybridoma scientist at CD Diagnostics, works in the lab last month as CEO Richard Birkmeyer watches. A chance to lead CD Diagnostics to success brought Birkmeyer out of semi-retirement. / THE NEWS JOURNAL/JENNIFER CORBETT

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