

United BioSource Corporation (UBC) Bethesda, Md.

An interview with Ethan Leder, chief executive officer

What is UBC's background?

We formed UBC to help meet a growing need for scientific and evidence-based support for commercializing pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. We see the industry shifting its focus away from promotion-based product commercialization and toward scientific solutions to demonstrate product value to healthcare professionals, consumers, public and private payers and regulatory agencies. What that translates into is a lot of work in real-world populations, designing and managing late stage clinical trials, registries, training clinical investigators and publishing results in peer-reviewed journals. It covers a set of specific disciplines critical to the demonstration of product value—large streamlined clinical studies that reflect real-world clinical practice, pharmacoeconomics, health outcomes, epidemiology and risk management, investigator training and sophisticated technology to tie together our project management and execution capability. About 65% of our work is with large pharmaceutical companies, and about 35% of our work is with biotechnology.

How has the industry changed?

The pharmaceutical industry makes immense contributions to the enhancement of healthcare but receives little credit.

Consumers, physicians, government officials and the media simply do not see the value in new, innovative medicines. Our clients are going to have to get much more science- and evidence-based in terms of their approach to demonstrate the value of their products in terms of product effectiveness, safety and economic benefits. For example, because each state's Medicaid program is in some level of crisis, budget cuts tend to focus on prescription drugs, even if these drugs may help reduce overall spending for healthcare. People need to understand that the unit cost of a drug is not the measure of whether or not that reduces or increases pricing within the healthcare system. If we want to help our clients build back the public trust—trust of the physicians, regulators, legislators, consumers—we as an industry have to come back and say, 'What we do is of tremendous public benefit' and we need to demonstrate that benefit in terms of product effectiveness, demonstrated safety and economic value.

What distinguishes UBC?

UBC's distinguishing characteristic is our scientific expertise. The business we're in requires that you keep current, and our real asset is our scientific creativity and staff. If you don't have industry experts working together with project managers and opera-

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Employees: 420
Active projects: 450
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tions experts and thinking about how to address scientific challenges, you're not going to be cutting-edge and then you're going to be just like everybody else. I don't think the world needs another massive, all-things-to-all-people CRO. UBC provides scientific experts from start to finish—not everyone in this industry can make that claim.

What are your plans for growth?

In the next six months we'll continue to beef up our scientific leadership. Where we have focused our scientific leadership is in areas of epidemiology, safety, risk management, health economics and patient outcomes. In the coming 12 months we'll add scientific leadership in the therapeutic category of oncology, CNS [central nervous system] and cardiology. We are also working to expand our geographic reach. We've got offices in Europe and we're exploring some potential growth in Asia to satisfy customer needs. During the coming year we'll add strategic product development services as a business line. That will be a business line that we either launch or acquire.

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