

**Spotlight on Brian McKernan – CEO Fluent BioSciences
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In a candid conversation, we turn the spotlight on Fluent BioSciences' CEO Brian McKernan who details the company's origin, why the acquisition by Illumina is the perfect combination, and how Fluent will ultimately impact healthcare. Read the 3-minute conversation:

What is your origin story? How did Fluent BioSciences begin?

Brian McKernan:

"Fluent's technology originated out of Adam Abate's lab. Adam is a professor at the University of California San Francisco. The original thinking for the technology, which is a bead-based technology, almost a hydrogel bead-based technology, was to use this for targeted sequencing or liquid biopsy work and for single cell RNA sequencing work. Some very talented people from the genomics world were cobbled together to move the technology into the single cell space. The company raised a Series A round with Illumina Ventures and Samsara Capital, which gave them sufficient capital to bring the technology concept right up into commercialization. That's when I joined the company to help them move the ball a little bit further into the commercialization world, tighten up the operations, get a solid sales and marketing team in place, an operational infrastructure in place, and drive the technology forward."

What type of impact do you envision Fluent BioSciences having on healthcare?

Brian McKernan:

“Well, I think the impact is massive because drugs target diseases, and diseases differ by organs. There are 200 different cell types in our body, and about 40 trillion different cells. And, if you really want to understand how to move the needle forward from a human health standpoint, we really need to understand disease profile by cell, and by organ. You need a technology that will allow you to look at millions of cells at once, and that's what Fluent's technology allows you to do. In addition to that, you need a technology that brings these solutions forward at an attractive price point. A price point that will really allow the research world to expand its usage of this technology so you can look at a whole variety of different cell types for a variety of different applications and diseases because you need big data sets to look at the trends and patterns to see what's happening.”

How does Fluent stand out from the competition? In other words, what is your superpower?

Brian McKernan:

“Fluent's technology is unique because it's instrument-free. From my perspective, the biggest advantage is the dynamic range in the technology and that we can hone in on a couple hundred cells or millions of cells. Plus, the ability to iterate new applications on this technology is unparalleled from any other technology in the industry right now because if you want to hone in on single cell DNA, or single cell proteins, single cell RNA, or single cell omics, the development cycle for these new applications is far shorter than what you would be dealing with other instrument-based and other single cell RNA technology platforms.”

What type of opportunities does the Illumina acquisition create for Fluent?

Brian McKernan:

“I think the Fluent-Illumina combo is incredible. Illumina is incredibly strong in the sequencing market. And a lot of companies, when they get into the life sciences world, underestimate the importance of the sales and marketing distribution network. It costs a ton of money. It is incredibly hard to build a global, effective, highly dynamic sales and marketing distribution infrastructure, and it costs a lot more than the R&D to build the technology. Illumina has that in spades. Given Illumina's strength in the sequencing market, they're looking for new ways to build out their business and grow their business. And the Fluent technology is a perfect fit into their existing pipeline. They already have a great bioinformatics pipeline and now they're going to plug in the Fluent single cell capability in the front end of that pipeline.”

