



Entrepreneurial  
Training & Consulting

## WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR SERIES

*“You have to be open to constructive criticism to move forward.”*

Hannah Hensel  
CEO  
Brio Device

Brio Device was formed in 2011 with the core purpose of creating solutions that made endotracheal tube placement easier, faster and more accurate. Even with an excellent, marketable idea and an expert team, they have run into a series of roadblocks and speed bumps.

Hannah Hensel was one of the founders along with Chief Technical Officer Laura McCormick, Ph.D. and Sabina Siddiqui, a pediatric surgeon who acts as Chief Medical Officer. Once the company moved beyond the research stage, an entrepreneurial-oriented attorney Shah Pedersoli, joined the leadership team as the Contracts Manager. Hensel has used her leadership, sales, marketing and business management experience to help identify multiple opportunities for Brio Device's products — from the surgical suite to the ER to critical care to military and EMT use in the field.

Brio began as a spin-out of the University of Michigan Medical Innovation Center when the founders were Fellows. They had a depth of research understanding root cause analysis, unmet clinical need and market demand, but no prototypes in hand. Securing outside funding proved to be difficult initially because, although investors were mostly concerned with marketability, they needed to see the science as well. Without funding for research, Brio Device had problems moving forward.

Hensel looked beyond the obvious and decided to attend a training seminar put on by BBCetc. It was there she discovered the possibilities of seeking SBIR/STTR funding from government agencies as well as the help BBCetc could provide in developing successful proposals.

“BBCetc provided in-depth training to help us along each step of the way,” said Hensel. “It’s important to shape the explanation of the science involved, but it’s equally important to craft a grant proposal that is both clear and compelling. BBCetc was instrumental in making sure we ultimately presented a comprehensive package, done in the right way.”

So far, Brio Device has succeeded in securing two Phase I awards — one for developing software that functioned as what amounts to an anatomical GPS to properly place the endotracheal tube during intubation and another for research on creating optimal camera

alignment on the intubation instrument to facilitate placement. Brio Device has also been awarded one Phase II grant for the single most problematic opportunity for their products — infants and neonates. The team is also familiar with submitting SBIR applications that are not scored in the payline but have been awarded after resubmits and revisions. They have successfully produced fundable applications with the benefit of BBCetc coaching in response to the constructive criticism of the reviewers.

By 2017, Brio's product development had advanced enough to merit substantial outside investment. This allowed the company and its manufacturing partners to perform a pilot run of the first generation product in 2018 for in-hospital use. That would not have been probable without the grant funding. The company is now poised to begin manufacturing design and FDA submission for two intubation devices that incorporate visualization — one for infants and one for the adolescent/adult population.

"It's taken us from 2011 to until now to secure enough funding to develop the idea that founded the company," said Hensel. "It's not all smooth sailing; there are always multiple challenges along the way. But you have to listen to expert feedback, know which ideas and suggestions make the most sense to incorporate, and continually find the best ways to move forward."

It appears that Hannah Hensel and her partners at Brio Device are successfully making that happen.