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NEWSLETTER · IN CONVERSATION WITH SCOTT SCHLIEBNER

A little early

Scott Schliebner — thirty years in biopharma and a committed patient advocate — on the grant that made him leave academia, watching decentralised trials arrive just before their time, and putting patients at the centre.

Scott Schliebner has spent nearly thirty years across biotech, CROs and non-profits, and now runs Ascent Biostrategies. He's widely known as a patient advocate — but he'll tell you the pivot that set the direction came early, in academia, staring at a federal grant application he couldn't quite believe in.



I couldn't convince myself it mattered to more than a handful of academics.

— Scott Schliebner, on Pharma Prescribed

The grant that changed course

Published young and on the conventional path, Scott hit a moment writing a grant to justify why his research mattered — and found he couldn't. There were interesting scientific questions, but only a handful of academics truly cared. That honesty pushed him toward work with real-world patient impact, and it's shaped a career spent asking not just whether the science is good, but whether it matters to anyone living with the disease.

Decentralised, before its time

One of his sharper stories is about being early. Pre-COVID, at PRA Health Sciences, his teams were building the technology for what we'd later call decentralised trials — remote visits, patients not trekking to a site weekly for a year. The response was often 'do it ten more times and call us back.' Then COVID hit, and six months later the thing nobody was ready for became the thing everybody needed.

Patients at the centre

The consistent thread across thirty years and every technology shift — paper to EDC, site-based to decentralised — is designing development programmes that meaningfully incorporate patient needs rather than bolting them on at the end. For Scott, patient-centricity isn't a slogan; it's the correction he made when he realised good science, on its own, wasn't enough.



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Scott Schliebner *is the CEO and founder of Ascent Biostrategies, a biopharma executive of nearly thirty years and a recognised patient advocate.*