

My Benesch My Team – Skincential Sciences

AUGUST 28, 2019

“Working with Benesch is like having a team that’s skilled and creative, smart and practical on your side. They understand the science and the business, so we are able to collaborate closely to develop very practical approaches.”

Russ Lebovitz
Founder
Skincential Sciences

Skincential Sciences and its breakthrough skincare solution emerged from diagnostic technologies originally developed to improve cancer research. Russ and his team turned to Benesch to develop strategies and tactics to protect this valuable intellectual property and apply it commercially in a new way. Russ continues to collaborate with Benesch in his follow-on venture to bring a novel and potentially life-changing medical diagnostic to market. From securing patents, copyrights and trademarks to protecting trade secrets to drafting IP-related agreements and managing complex litigation, Benesch combines legal, business, scientific and engineering knowledge and experience to help clients preserve and protect their most valuable assets.

Skinceutical Sciences was first imagined as a medical diagnostics company in southern California based on technologies to help improve cancer research. Later these technologies were found to have beneficial effects when used in skincare, ultimately leading to Skincential Sciences’ founding in 2010. Below is a testimonial from Russ Lebovitz, Founder of Skincential Sciences.

How long have you worked with Benesch?

I actually have a much broader relationship with Benesch than just Skincential Sciences. I’ve worked with Benesch since 2007, both on Skincential and on two other companies, one active and one that was sold.

Skincential itself has been around since 2010. I have a lot of very positive words for the Benesch team. They’ve done really great things for Skincential, and they’ve also done really great things for several other companies that I’ve been associated with, as I said.

Considering that you are on the West Coast and Benesch is in Ohio, how did you connect?

We connected because I was looking at a company that had interesting technology whose founders had been in Cleveland. That led me to Benesch. They did an amazing job, and ever since then I’ve been very loyal. I’m very committed to the kind of thinking and the quality of the work that the group does, therefore location doesn’t matter.

Are you a founder and an inventor?

Yes. It's a little complicated. I usually find technologies that are very early, but that I believe have something unusual and important to offer. There are initially very crude ideas and intellectual property, and in order protect what we would really need to make use of them, there's more work that has to be done. Since I know what that work is, I make that happen, either with the original inventors or someone else, and that's how I become an inventor.

The first thing I do is look at whatever IP is there and see what it would take for me to make it work. I know right from the beginning what I would need, and one of the great things about working with Benesch is I can say, "Hey, I've found this new thing; I'm thinking about it this way; here's what we would need to make it useful; here's what's there-what do you think? Can we get it from A to B? What are the risks? How long will it take, and how much will it cost?"

What I find is the Benesch team usually says, "Yes we can get there, but here's what we're *likely* to get, here's what we *might* get, and here's what we can try for and are *unlikely* to get-can you live with what we're likely to get? And how happy would you be with what we might get?"

Based on that, we either decide to move ahead or not. And when we do, we craft our strategy and tactics together, right from the beginning. So, I like working very closely with the Benesch team, and it's partly why I'm an inventor on these things.

Do you actually have a role in running Skincential?

There's a team there to handle day-to-day matters, so I'm more directing at the Board level. But I'm still actively involved on a week-to-week basis. When we first founded this company, we saw medical applications. And we still do, but it turns out that the same products do amazing things to your skin instantly, so we chose to take a path directly to consumers, which requires sales and marketing in a variety of channels. It's a very interesting challenge, but it's not my main expertise, so I'm not the one to run it day to day.

You mentioned you've been involved in several companies. Are you always searching for the next thing you want to do?

My hands are full. I have Skincential that I still do a lot with, but I also have a company that's working on something that I believe, and with Benesch's help, will be game-changing for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases. It's not a drug, but a diagnostic that enables drugs to be invented. We're working on a test that your doctor would prescribe that would absolutely and definitively tell you whether you have a progressive neurodegenerative disease before there are symptoms. And we could figure out the subtypes, so we could tell Parkinson's from Alzheimer's and Alzheimer's from other types of dementia.

We feel that we've reduced these diseases to certain molecules and biomarkers, and that the test works, is scalable, and is reasonably well-protected with Benesch's help, so we'd like to have our first test on the market in the U.S. in 18 months. We're also working with a lot of big drug companies because they believe our test would enable their drugs.

I'm pretty passionate about this. It takes up the bulk of my time, and Skincential takes up whatever's left. I've done it all with Benesch.

What do you like best about working with Benesch?

It's really what I described- that they become your team. They spend time up-front learning about what you want to do, and they really come up with great ideas. It's like having a team that's skilled and creative, smart and practical on your side. They are all those things together-and those things don't always go together-so that's what I like about Benesch. We can have discussions and get to the point where they fully understand the science and the business, so we become very practical-I don't want to file anything that isn't going to enable a product or a service.

It's a fun and collaborative experience. Benesch listens well, and if you listen well to them, a lot of good things happen.

I don't usually do testimonials like this, but Benesch happens to be one of the few organizations I would do this for. I just feel that they provide exceptional service. There can be a reluctance on both coasts to use people who aren't on both coasts, but there's still a big middle of the country. I feel very strongly that you pick the best people, and these are the best people.