

Rob Pickels

Boulder, CO

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Action Orientated Operations Leader | Research & Human Subjects SME

About Me

Industrious Operations and Product Leader with a proven record of driving organizational excellence, establishing Quality Control (QC) standards, and implementing efficient workflows in complex environments. Excels at translating high-level strategy into tangible operational procedures while fostering cross-departmental collaboration and team empowerment. Seeking to leverage expertise in process improvement, quality management, and facilities oversight to ensure regulatory readiness (GMP/GLP/21 CFR Part 11) and seamless execution of specialized research operations.

Competencies

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Regulatory Leadership<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ AABB / GXP / 21 CFR / CLIA / JCAHO✓ Operational Strategy<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Strategic Planning Execution, Financial Acumen, Cost Containment✓ Operational Management<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Advanced Process & Workflow Improvement○ Team Engagement & Empowerment○ Multi-level collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Research Planning & Execution<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Clinical Trial Management, IRB Submissions, Human Physiology & Biomechanics SME○ Adv.Laboratory Techniques (Flow Cytometry, PCR, etc.)✓ Project & Product Management<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Road mapping○ Market & Consumer Research○ Budget & Resource Management |
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Experience

Apeiron Research Center

Director of Operations | Boulder, CO | October 2024 – Current

The Apeiron Research Center is 501(c)(3) non-profit focused on democratizing cellular therapies for individuals afflicted with chronic disease. I successfully grew operations by bridging the gap between clinical and research operations to create a vertically integrated cellular therapy research facility by:

- **Ensuring AABB CTS Alignment-** Referenced AABB Cellular Therapy Standards for relevant operational and clinical decisions, prioritizing compliance in facility design, procedure development, and quality system implementation.
- **Orchestrating Laboratory Efficiency-** Successfully launched R&D and QC laboratory operations through equipment procurement, installation, validation, and initial SOP authoring. Developed and executed initial flow cytometry and PCR process workflows, establishing the analytical foundation for the cellular therapy program.
- **Building Compliant Facilities and Monitoring Systems-** Directed end-to-end construction of a GMP-compliant ISO 7 cleanroom and supporting workflows for the cellular therapy program. Designed and implemented Environmental Monitoring Systems (EMS) across research and clinical facilities.
- **Onboarding Qualified, Compliant, Vendors-** Established a reliable supply chain of equipment, consumables, facility construction materials, and specialized services by sourcing, qualifying, and onboarding vendors to approved vendor list standards. Negotiated contracts and managed renewal cycles to ensure continuity and cost control.
- **Overseeing Equipment Documentation, Validation, and Lifecycle Management-** Managed the full equipment lifecycle including procurement, installation qualification, operational qualification, performance qualification, calibration scheduling, and preventive maintenance programs. Coordinated complex multi-vendor installations of major equipment.
- **Developing Quality Systems-** Researched, selected, and implemented MES and QMS software platforms. Authored 59 of 270 controlled documents across SOPs and Forms, spanning Facilities, Equipment, QA, and Vendor areas. Approved comprehensive SOPs covering facilities, quality assurance, and laboratory operations.
- **Strategic Operations Expansion-** Led acquisition and negotiation of new research facility lease, achieving a 10x scaling of physical space aligned with mission and growth goals. Planned and coordinated buildout including cleanroom construction, environmental monitoring systems, and office spaces. Directed hiring and onboarding of laboratory, clinical, and support staff and implemented compliant training protocols to ensure regulatory and technical competency.
- **Containing Costs-** Identified inefficiencies, required justifications for spending, re-sourced vendors, and negotiated terms to reduce recurring spend by 30%.
- **Leading a Multi-Disciplinary Team-** Fostered a culture of respect, compliance, and safety. Drove full-cycle recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and performance management across laboratory, clinical, and operations staff. Coordinated with external physician and clinical partners to support patient-facing operations and research activities.

Experience

Apex Ski Boots

Head of Product | Golden, CO | January 2024 – October 2024

Apex is an innovative ski boot brand looking to address the most common marketplace complaint: Comfort. I am responsible for all aspects of the product creation process – from consumer insight and solution ideation to manufacturing specification and quality Control. I have driven product improvement by:

- **Strategic Planning-** Differentiated product features and price points based on consumer insight to reduce manufacturing costs and eliminate redundancy.
- **Solving QC issues-** Through materials selection, product redesign, improved tolerances, and stringent Golden Sample QC I was able to make much needed product improvements aimed at reducing the unnecessary cost of product failure.
- **Vendor Management-** Worked directly with vendors to improve manufacturing timelines, cost containment, contract negotiations, production issues.
- **Team Leadership:** Revitalized company culture through “listening sessions”, improving staff energy and operational positivity.

FAST TALK LABORATORIES

Chief Operations and Product Officer | Boulder, CO | January 2022 – December 2024

Fast Talk Labs is the leading online sport science content knowledgebase and podcast which brings together a growing international community of experts in endurance sports. In addition to writing and co-hosting the internationally-known podcast, I successfully guided the company through its start-up and early-stage phases by:

- **Empowering our Organization-** Established a unified vision and singular source of truth by thoughtfully creating Mission, Vision, and Values, improving our internal communication, and rallying our team around a clearly defined central purpose. This created a cohesion that improved productivity and reduced turn-over.
- **Focusing on our Consumer-** Successfully navigated “FTL” from a founder’s dream to a company driven by our consumer’s needs. I created consumer and brand personas to drive needed improvements to content strategy, redesign our website UX, and create an MRR / ARR revenue model. This resulted in a significant improvement in both revenue and brand-love.
- **Streamlining our Product Strategy-** After an objective review of product offerings and consumer insights, I focused our efforts on a product strategy that emphasized the largest return for our team’s bandwidth. This improved the quality and impact of our product and increased traffic to our knowledge base.
- **Improving Processes-** Through process improvement, tool utilization, and organizational realignment I was able to create efficiencies that resulted in significantly higher output with lower burden to our staff.
- **Creating Strategic Partnerships-** Moving away from the fight for individual customers, I worked tirelessly to identify, court, and on-board strategic partners who supported both our current business and opportunities for market expansion.

PEARL IZUMI

Product Innovation Manager | Louisville, CO | February 2018 – December 2022

I was recruited into the product world by PEARL iZUMi to utilize my Sport Science and product validation knowledge to bolster their innovative products and I quickly rose to leading the innovation department. Key projects included our award-winning Levitate Chamois line, human-subjects testing of water-proof breathable solutions, design and validation of our “BIOVIZ” visibility program, creation of lighted and heated outerwear prototypes, as well as research and product validation with industry leader Woolmark. I achieved success by focusing on the following actions:

- **Creating User Centric Solutions-** Dedicated myself to deeply understanding the needs of both our consumers and retailers by observing users core to the cycling space, traveling to new markets, and participating in key events. My inquisitiveness allowed me to make holistic product decisions that resonated with our identified consumers.
- **Effective Product Management-** Utilized a deep understand of consumer, product, materials, and use-cases to create highly-compelling product briefs appropriate for our capabilities. I collaborated with Pattern, Materials, Design, and Development to align product with brand objectives. I planned strategies with marketing, sales, and supply-chain teams to ensure effective go-to-market execution. I also conducted periodic reviews of process and suggesting improvements.
- **Onboarding new vendors-** Created a supply chain of both raw and finished goods manufacturers to better align production with product price-point, quality-standards, and design ethos.

PEARL IZUMI

Physiologist | Louisville, CO | August 2016 – February 2018

- **Launching Research Initiatives-** Instituted an objective decision-making process by introducing human-subjects testing of our materials, designs, and product strategy. This included multiple sessions in the University of Ontario's Environmental Wind tunnel to directly test solutions on riders in a controlled environment as well as many smaller projects conducted in our local facilities and trails.
- **Go-To-Market Support-** Drawing on my sports science, materials knowledge, and my education background, I enjoyed being the de-facto subject matter expert for our internal staff as well as generating excitement and educating sales representatives at National and International sales meetings.
- **Finding Innovative Solutions-** Leveraged my wide knowledge of science, engineering, and deep experience in sports to bring non-traditional solutions that pushed our product forward in meaningful ways. This included hand-creating proof of concepts and inventing new internal tests and metrics.

CU Sports Medicine

Lead Exercise Physiologist & Marketing / Research Coordinator| Boulder, CO | June 2010 – August 2016

- **Laboratory Management-** Managed the day-to-day operations of a world-class physiology laboratory
- **Diagnostic & Performance Testing-** Performed a wide variety of physiological assessments, including VO2max, Pulmonary Function, Metabolic Testing, and blood lactate analysis
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensured department JCAHO and CLIA compliance, overseeing wet-lab processes and documentation for non-waived testing.
- **Quality Control:** Oversaw wet-lab processes including daily quality control assays, documentation, and corrective-action.
- **Personnel Competency & Proficiency-** Oversaw testing and documentation of annual staff competencies and ensured proficiency in laboratory process execution and analysis.
- **Program Development-** Created a contract-based product validation program to drive additional revenue through 3rd party independent testing
- **Created Digital Presence-** Led the development of a clean, informative, and user-centric website in addition to managing the clinic's social media presence.
- **Improved Brand Awareness-** Utilized marketing channels to increase visibility for the clinic's offerings, successfully driving an increase in patient visits and community engagement.

E d u c a t i o n

Master of Science in Exercise Physiology (2008)

Montana State University | Bozeman, MT

Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science (2005)

Ithaca College | Ithaca, NY