

Cover Story

Johannes BREUKERS

A Life Shaped by Bold Choices
and Global Experiences

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Founder & CEO
First Choice Bio, Inc.

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Every industry has its innovators, but few come with a life story as layered and compelling as **Johannes Breukers, Founder & CEO of First Choice Bio, Inc.** His journey crosses continents, industries, and disciplines, each chapter leaving behind a trail of reinvention. To understand his work in biotech and the personalization of medicine today, one must first look at the winding road that brought him here.

Raised in Holland, Johannes grew up immersed in a broad education that included six languages and a formal degree in animal genetics and husbandry. At just eighteen, he turned down a promising offer to join a general partnership in a large production facility. For him, the role lacked the kind of challenge he sought. Instead, he chose a different path, one that carried him across borders and into ventures that tested his resilience and vision.

Canada became his home for nearly two years before he returned to Holland at age twenty. That period marked a turning point in his life when his mother passed away from Lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system. Johannes stepped into responsibility, taking over the family farm and transforming it into one of the nation's top five breeding animal producers, with sales that reached global markets. When he eventually sold that business, it was not the end of his story but the start of another.

New Zealand offered the next stage, with agriculture-related roles and an MBA program that shaped his business perspective. He then launched into hospitality, running his own venture for seven years before selling it as well. Never one to stand still, he earned a degree in computer science and set his sights on California. The dotcom collapse shifted his path once more, pushing him into casino consulting, undercover assignments, and eventually business consulting for small and medium-sized companies. It was through this work that he encountered the biotech industry, a space that would finally tie together his varied background into a mission with personal meaning.

The Spark behind First Choice Bio

The beginnings of **First Choice Bio** did not follow a straight line. When colleagues first approached Johannes, the idea was simple: create a distribution center for research samples in Europe. At first, it seemed like an opportunity to solve a clear logistical challenge. Yet reality quickly set in.

Johannes recalls that the initial plan faltered almost immediately. *"The supply from the United States was inconsistent, and that made it unreliable,"* he explained. With shipments arriving late or incomplete, the supply could not deliver what researchers needed. The very foundation of the business, which in this case was trust in timely and accurate supply, was shaky from the start. The problem was not small. Overpromising and underdelivering became a recurring theme, and the numbers painted an even clearer picture. Local and nationwide distribution faced the same troubles, leaving seven out of ten invoices marked with a dispute. That level of inefficiency was not just frustrating; it was unsustainable.

Instead of forcing a flawed model forward, Johannes and his team chose to step back and reassess. The experience did more than end one idea. It revealed the deeper issues in biotech supply chains and planted the seed for a venture that would later focus on reliability, quality, and accountability.

A Mission Rooted in Progress

First Choice Bio began with a straightforward mission: *give researchers the exact cell samples they need so they could make real progress toward cures.* At first, the focus was on distribution, but the model did not generate enough to ultimately finance their collection center. A pivot became inevitable.

Johannes and his team realized that success required more than logistics. *"Differentiation was necessary. A moat had to be created to attract investors,"* he explained. That moat emerged from a deeper look at the research industry itself.

The problem is visible to anyone paying attention. It starts at the Discovery and Preclinical levels, with globally some 80 billion dollars in resources wasted annually, and still leads to clinical trials that often produce endless side effects, followed by the familiar disclaimer, *"Results may vary."* As Johannes points out, results vary because people are different. Blind samples from the general population limit reproducibility, and that makes reliable translation into any phase of research nearly impossible.



Redefining Biotech Through Individualization

What sets First Choice Bio apart is its focus on individualization of cell samples, leading to subdivision of the total population. For Johannes, real cures and true prevention require a shift away from traditional models. *"If we want to find real cures, and ultimately prevent diseases, then a different approach is needed,"* he explained.

At the center of this vision is the patent-pending **CellDecoder™** system. The technology screens samples for biomarkers and then divides the total population into subcategories. The reasoning is clear: similar biomarkers often trigger similar responses. This becomes the first filter in a process that breaks free from the one-cure-fits-all mindset.

Yet Johannes believes the work is just beginning. With the human body holding over 30 trillion cells, there are countless potential differentiators to uncover. By categorizing one component at a time, First Choice Bio moves the industry closer to true personalization of medicine.

Building a Network of Support

For Johannes, the path toward personalization in biotech has never been a solitary effort. He often credits the researchers who encouraged First Choice Bio to continue its bold vision. *"After all, we are asking the industry for a major overhaul,"* he said. Their encouragement confirmed that the idea of individualization was not only viable but welcomed. In every conversation and interview, Johannes found the same response: *no one dismissed the concept of moving beyond one-size-fits-all medicine.*

Alongside researchers, inspiration has come from former colleagues, his fellow founders, and, most recently, the team at **MoonshotNX**, now serving as the company's lead investor. Each group has strengthened the mission and helped validate its direction.

Collaboration remains a core principle for First Choice Bio. Influential partners include **Baback Gharizadeh** of **ChapterDX**, **Michelle Cunningham** of **STEMilk**, **David White** in general consultancy, **Steven Castillo** of **Rxperius**, and **Tim Kapp** of **Cinco AI**. Together, they form a network driving meaningful progress.

Leading with Vision and Focus

As a founder guiding a young company, Johannes carries a wide range of responsibilities. At this stage, his primary focus lies in due diligence to ensure First Choice Bio is fully prepared for investment. With **MoonshotNX** already on board as the lead investor, Breukers is working closely with their team as they prepare to introduce the company to a wider network of potential backers.

He also highlights the support of **Jon Flatt** and his team at **Magic Bullet** in Austin, Texas. Their efforts on LinkedIn have helped expand visibility and strengthen global connections. The outreach is crucial, since the company's ambitions extend far beyond a single collection center.

Johannes is passionate about scaling the model. Researchers cannot depend solely on frozen samples, while fresh samples remain viable for only 48 to 60 hours. To solve this challenge, First Choice Bio plans to establish collection centers worldwide, applying the CellDecoder™ system to samples across regions.

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Shaping a Mission-Driven Culture

For Johannes, culture begins with clarity of purpose. As a startup in the seed stage, First Choice Bio operates with a lean structure, with each team member working remotely from home offices. While the setup is simple, the guiding principle is not. Johannes makes it clear that anyone joining the team must believe in the company's mission to reform research through individualization of cell samples leading to personalization of medicine. *"Team members will only be or become those that believe in our mission,"* he explained.

At the same time, he recognizes the practical needs of the industry. The company continues to supply traditional blind samples when requested, ensuring researchers have what they need today. Yet Johannes views this as a bridge rather than the destination. By promoting their premium product and the promise of individualized research, he fosters alignment within the team, keeping everyone focused on the larger goal of transforming how cures are developed.

Leadership Tested Through People-Centered Values

Leadership, for Johannes, has always been defined by being one of the team, where every member, including himself, is given the respect they deserve according to their actions. Having spent most of his life self-employed, he has faced moments where his ability to guide and resolve conflict was tested. He approaches these challenges with a clear philosophy: people come first. As he puts it, *"You hire people for their abilities, so do not change your expectations of people without their consent."*

Johannes often envisions a team as a round table with the goals placed at the center. Every person may contribute differently. One may carry a larger share, another a smaller one, but what matters most is that all efforts align with the collective purpose. When disputes arise, he favors patience over haste. He takes a deep breath, sometimes allowing a night to pass, before hearing perspectives from every side. If the individuals cannot resolve the matter themselves, he steps in to make a fair and balanced decision.



Early Recognition and Promising Milestones

Even in its early stages, First Choice Bio has captured attention across the biotech industry. For Johannes, this recognition is meaningful but far from a reason to slow down. He shares, *"We have already had six M&A offers, but obviously we consider this a job unfinished. Making such a call would be premature."*

The interest demonstrates that the vision of individualized research resonates with investors and industry leaders alike. Each offer validates the company's approach and the potential of its patent-pending CellDecoder™ system. Yet Johannes emphasizes that the real measure of impact lies in the work ahead by expanding collection centers, advancing personalization of medicine, and improving reproducibility in research.

Rather than viewing early recognition as an endpoint, he treats it as motivation. The offers highlight the promise of First Choice Bio's approach, while underscoring the responsibility to continue building a company capable of making a global difference in how cures are discovered and delivered.

Looking Ahead: Partnerships and Global Impact

Johannes views the future of First Choice Bio as a landscape full of opportunities. He is constantly seeking strategic partnerships, considering potential investors as collaborators in the mission. *"This industry cannot have enough collaborations if mankind wants to live healthier, longer lives,"* he said.

The focus on personalization is driven by a desire to address the frustrations people face with conventional medicine. Patients are often left dealing with side effects, exclusions, and false hopes rather than real cures. Johannes sees this as a challenge that requires both innovation and collaboration.

First Choice Bio has only begun to explore the possibilities. With countless components influencing health and well-being, the company is poised to expand its reach, refine its CellDecoder™ system, and establish collection centers globally. For Johannes, this is just the start of the beginning, a phase in which new breakthroughs and partnerships promise to shape the future of personalized medicine worldwide.

Finding Strength and Passion Beyond the Lab

Johannes approaches life with the same intensity he brings to business, yet he has faced profound personal challenges. Since losing his wife in January, he has been adjusting to a new reality. *"I can honestly say there is still no balance,"* he shared. Meditation in the morning provides a sense of calm, but it cannot fill the void. Work offers structure and focus, and Johannes embraces it fully, often dedicating sixteen or more hours a day without complaint — though he admits that focus and motivation are not always there, as major changes in his personal circumstances continue to weigh on him every day.

Sports also provide an outlet for both energy and reflection. As a Dutchman, he grew up with soccer, speedskating, cycling, and rugby. Living in New Zealand deepened his love for these activities, though he now enjoys them in a slightly different order. Even in the United States, where commercial interruptions frustrate him, sports remain a source of enjoyment and perspective, helping him navigate both personal and professional challenges.

Leading with Humility and Self-Awareness

Johannes believes that leadership begins with self-awareness and humility. He encourages readers and aspiring leaders to recognize that circumstances and priorities vary for everyone. *"Generalizations do not apply; you'll have to do your own thing,"* he said. Yet he emphasizes one universal truth: never be afraid to ask for help.

Daily self-reflection is central to his approach. Looking in the mirror each morning and acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses is not a sign of doubt but of authenticity. Johannes views these traits as essential for being a true member of any team. Humility, he explains, removes the pressure to seek constant recognition. *"By facilitating and taking responsibility, I am just a small wheel within the team, while other team members represent the bigger wheels that actually make things happen. No need to pat yourself on the back. If others don't do it, you've probably not yet earned it. Life is so much easier that way,"* he added.

For Johannes, this mindset shapes how he leads, makes decisions, and inspires those around him while building a company focused on meaningful change.

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