

## Proteus CEO takes an original path

**A**t the end of most profile interviews, it comes time to ask the crystal ball question: Where will you be five years from now? Usually, the interviewee responds with something like, “I cannot imagine working anywhere but here.”

Which is why Andrew Thompson’s response to that question is so interesting. “Forget five years,” he says. “Twenty years from now, every medicine will have a chip in it. Once it’s clear that a digital medicine is a more powerful product than a dumb medicine, and that the cost is reasonable, why would anyone use the dumb medicine?”

That’s sign number 32,775 that Thompson, co-founder and CEO of Proteus Digital Health, is not your typical health-tech exec. As opposed to many of his peers, Thompson comes from an engineering background. In a two-decades-plus career, he has founded or worked for Silicon Valley-based startups that include CardioRhythm (since acquired by Medtronic) and FemRx (acquired by Johnson & Johnson).

Also unlike the majority of his peers, his interests go beyond healthcare and technology. He was one of the founders of Summit Preparatory Charter High School, one of the institutions featured in the education-reform documentary “Waiting For ‘Superman.’” With a Masters in education from Stanford University and an MBA from its Graduate School of Business (on top of his MA in engineering from

**“Twenty years from now, every medicine will have a chip in it”**

**Andrew Thompson**  
CEO,  
Proteus Digital Health

**2001–present**  
President, CEO, co-founder,  
Proteus Digital Health

**1999–present**  
Managing director, co-founder,  
Spring Ridge Ventures

Cambridge), Thompson sits on Stanford’s Libraries and Information Resources Advisory Council.

If there’s anything that Thompson’s ventures have in common, it’s this: at every step, he has devoted himself to transforming the way individuals create and disseminate knowledge. Which makes Proteus, a maker of sensor-enabled pills and biometric sensor patches that interact with smartphones to form a digital health feedback system, a natural next step for him.

Proteus has its roots in an American Heart Association meeting attended by Thompson and Proteus co-founder and chief medical officer George Savage in the early aughts. As they walked the floor, Thompson and Savage noted how the medical device industry was embracing technology and starting to use data to create patient-specific therapies. “But the pharma industry wasn’t doing anything like that,” Thompson recalls. “That led to a conversation about the future, about how someone could create a sensor that allows a drug to become a digital product.”

First up was creating the sensor, mainly a technological challenge. Proteus then turned its attention to regulatory approvals, which the company received after forging what Thompson calls “a deep and collaborative relationship with the FDA.” The company now finds itself in the third stage of its evolution, a big part of which is educating partners, regulators and the public about the promise of digital health. The health and investing communities are believers: Proteus’ most recent round of funding this July, its seventh, generated an additional \$172 million, driving the total to around \$400 million. Investors include Oracle, Kaiser Permanente and Novartis.

“The message is simple,” Thompson continues. “Consumers and families do more healthcare work than paid professionals. We want to empower patients to take control of their own health environment.”

It’s clear that Thomson views this journey as more an odyssey than a typical corporate progression. “Mobile connectivity is to the 21st century what electricity was to the 20th century,” he says. “It’s utterly transformative and it’s redefining the way people behave and interact. We’re right at the beginning of the journey.” —Larry Dobrow



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