

# Building Market Demand Before Product Launch

How Diagnostic Biochips Proved Demand and Generated \$2.6M Before Commercial Launch

Diagnostic Biochips | SomaFocus™ Neuronal Platform | Neuroscience Research Tools

**\$2.6M**

in revenue & orders  
before launch

**9**

active user sites

**180**

qualified leads at  
SfN conference

Diagnostic Biochips develops cutting-edge tools at the intersection of neuroscience, electrophysiology, and drug discovery. With 20–30% market share of the in vivo neuronal probe market for academic research, DBC faced slowing growth in a maturing market. SomaFocus™, their first in vitro product, was designed to move beyond basic research and into biopharma drug development.

## The Challenge

DBC had secured one marquee pharma customer—Merck—but lacked a clear path forward. With limited cash reserves and no full-time commercial leader, DBC faced a high-stakes mandate from potential investors: demonstrate real market demand and paying customers, or risk not raising Series A funding.

Leadership's initial instinct was to replicate the Merck relationship by pursuing more large pharmaceutical companies. And achieve it with a prototype that was twelve months away from commercial readiness.

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# The Sell Now™ Approach

## Phase 1: Primary Market Research & Pivot

*August–November 2024*

Rather than chase additional pharmaceutical customers, DBC conducted systematic primary market research, completing 30 discovery interviews across pharma, biotechs, and contract research organizations.

The findings were sobering but actionable: the biopharma market was not ready to adopt DBC's technology. Merck appeared to be a true Innovator in Everett Rogers' Innovation Adoption Curve—attempting to execute a sales strategy to biopharma would waste time and precious capital.

This data-driven insight triggered a strategic pivot. DBC identified a more realistic beachhead: **translational research labs**—sophisticated institutions bridging academic research and pharma R&D. These labs offered critical advantages: technical sophistication, lower risk aversion, budget authority, and fewer purchasing constraints.

While a smaller market, the evidence demonstrated readiness to buy. As is almost always the case with disruptive tech, the most effective market entry point is a niche market.

## Phase 2: Discovery-Led Pilot Strategy

*November 2024–July 2025*

DBC shifted from “launch and see who comes” to “discovery-first selling” of a prototype system. The company deployed systems into approximately 10 pilot sites across leading institutions, including Scripps Research and the Lieber Institute for Brain Development.

Critically, three of these pilots converted to paid engagements despite the absence of a commercial product—generating early revenue and validating willingness to pay. These pilots served triple duty:

- Generated revenue before product availability
- Produced real usage data and customer testimonials
- Informed positioning, pricing, and messaging with authentic customer language

## Phase 3: Pre-Launch Market Development

*July–November 2025*

With the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) conference as the focal point, DBC executed a six-month pre-selling commercialization campaign:

- **July:** Additional customer discovery to inform language-market fit
- **Aug–Sep:** A/B testing email campaigns to validate messaging
- **Oct–Nov:** Integrated campaign driving pre-conference engagement and qualified meetings
- **Nov 15–19:** Product launch at SfN in San Diego with scientific presentations from the CTO

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# Results

## Early Adopter Program

- **\$2.6M** in revenue and orders
- **9 active user sites** providing deep customer engagement
- Product-market fit demonstrated before commercial launch

## SfN Conference Performance

- **180 qualified leads** captured at the event
- Strong interest from pharma and leading academic centers
- Attendees referenced pre-conference outreach: *"I've been looking forward to meeting you. I keep getting your emails."*

## Key Success Factors

- 1. Evidence-Driven Decision Making:** Primary research revealed the biopharma market wasn't ready, preventing costly premature scaling.
- 2. Market Entry Point Selection:** Translational labs proved to be the realistic entry point—not because they were largest, but because they were ready to adopt now.
- 3. Selling Before General Availability:** With clear expectations and genuine value delivery, DBC secured paying customers with a non-final product.
- 4. Integrated Campaign Strategy:** Success at SfN resulted from months of discovery work, systematic pre-event outreach, and disciplined lead follow-up.
- 5. Customer-Informed Market Development:** Direct engagement with pilot partners shaped messaging, website design, and trade show presence.
- 6. Investor-Ready:** Real customers, early revenue, and pre-launch orders replaced speculative market projections, giving investors proof of demand and a de-risked path to scale.

*"As a life sciences tool company, understanding market drivers before building and launching is critical. Sell Now™ helped us meet the market where it actually was—not where we hoped it would be—and that changed everything about how we launched SomaFocus."*

— Brian Jamieson, CEO, Diagnostic Biochips

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*"If customers won't buy now, time won't fix it."*

**Ready to prove demand before you launch?**

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**SELL NOW™ — Prove demand. Fund development. Launch with confidence.**