



# FROM LAB TO TEAM

## FIVE STEPS TO JUMP-START YOUR TEAM FOR SUCCESS

By Cher Holton, PhD

**D**oes teamwork matter in a laboratory setting? Absolutely! Teamwork contributes to synergy, creativity, enhanced decision-making, customer/client responsiveness, and an engaged, motivated working environment.

In every organization, there are cross-functional teams operating in a lab setting that enjoy a reputation for team performance that outshines other teams in the organization. These teams are not necessarily smarter, more experienced, or even harder working than their peers. However, in their day-to-day activities, they constantly demonstrate a spirit of cooperation and willingness that sets them apart from other teams. How can a cross-functional team enhance its effectiveness as a team?

While time is always at a premium, it is important that a lab team invest time up front to set itself up for a successful experience. Here are five fundamental questions that the lab team needs to answer before it begins working on any projects.

### Fundamental Question #1: What is our purpose?

This includes clarifying why this specific group of people has come together in the lab setting as a team and

what deliverables or outcomes they will produce. A prerequisite in answering this question is that the team has a shared vision of its purpose. Never assume that any team member automatically knows the purpose for the team.

### Fundamental Question #2: How will we operate as a team?

Here the team members determine the key operating behaviors for working together in the lab setting, including how they behave together, handle disagreements, reach consensus, communicate, hold each other accountable, share responsibility and accountability, and determine leadership. While samples of key operating behaviors can be helpful, it is best if each team works together to create its own. The discussions required to create the list is every bit as valuable as the final list itself.

### Fundamental Question #3: What are our roles and expectations?

This discussion opens the opportunity for team members to identify the unique skills and abilities that brought them to the lab in the first place. The discussion includes specific roles needed to achieve the agreed-upon results as well as clarification of their preferred styles of working with others.

### Fundamental Question #4: What will success look like?

Here the team members share how they will know they have been

successful. Together they decide how to measure their outcomes, stay focused, and know when they are done with work on a specific project.

### Fundamental Question #5: How will we celebrate and honor team success?

Among the most overlooked keys to successful teams are the recognition and celebration of success. By making time to come together to celebrate things that are going right, a team builds bonds that can see it through difficult situations or testy challenges—plus it strengthens the camaraderie of the team.

When lab teams are working at their best, both the organization and the individuals on the teams benefit! When people understand what is expected and believe they are valued as legitimate team members, they will drive themselves to unbelievable excellence!

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## LABCAST

Be sure to attend Cher Holton’s Lab Manager Academy webinar, “From Lab to Team: Keys to Powerful Teamwork” on Wednesday, April 2 (or afterward at [www.labmanager.com/powerfulteamwork](http://www.labmanager.com/powerfulteamwork), to watch the archived video).