

Roundtable Session 2 – Table 6– How Can We Enable Career Development for Young Scientists?

Facilitator: Mimmi Ballard, *Vir Biotechnology*

Scribe: Nicole Houck, *J&J*

Abstract:

Many early-career scientists enter industry excited to apply their training, yet soon face uncertainty about how to grow, advance, and make intentional career choices within complex organizations. Questions often arise around role progression, visibility of different career paths, expectations for advancement, and how to balance technical depth with broader influence. Unlike academic careers, industry pathways are often non-linear and vary widely across organizations, making career navigation opaque, especially for scientists early in their industry tenure. This roundtable will explore how organizations, managers, and individuals can better enable career development for young scientists.

Questions:

1. What career paths are most visible to young scientists in industry, and which ones tend to remain “hidden”? How clear are the distinctions—and expectations—between being a technical expert, a people manager, or a cross-functional leader?
2. How do early-career scientists determine whether they are on the “right” path for their interests and strengths? How should young scientists think about lateral moves, role changes, or pauses versus traditional upward advancement?
3. What responsibility do managers and organizations have in making career options transparent and accessible? What types of mentoring, sponsorship, or development programs have been most effective, or most lacking, for young scientists?
4. Beyond strong science, what skills most enable long-term growth in industry (e.g., communication, influence, prioritization, decision-making)? How can young scientists proactively develop these skills without stepping away from technical excellence?

Notes:

Topic 1 – the current job market issues where there are a lot of skilled applicants but not a lot of positions. How are we navigating that either as a hiring manager or someone looking for a position?

- Hiring managers can really see a difference in applicants who are coming from academia vs members already in the industry
 - Academia applicants have resumes that are very project focused
 - Really try to tell your colleagues about the CASSS mentoring program – which is for graduate students to link up with someone who works in the industry to help them navigate their next steps
 - Look into programs at schools or within your company to help you add to your skill sets (for example - university of Maryland has a master's program and certificate program for professional studies in biotechnology, or if your company has micro- certificates for automation, etc.)

With AI now helping weed out applications you need to tailor your resume accordingly

- Make your resume specific for that position, do not have 1 resume applying to multiple jobs
- Use key words and make sure they stand out on the resume so the AI tool and hiring manager can find them easily – precise and accurate
- Speak to your experience – find your niche expertise that will help you stand out against your peers
- In your current position whether academia or industry – try to get experience in management, critical thinking, presentations – which will help you add to your resume with non- lab skills which will help you stand out as a candidate

Topic 2- we went around the table and discuss our experiences. Some of us got to our current position doing the “unconventional path” (not getting a PhD). How do we get a push/ support for the younger generation that might not want to do a PhD and go the unconventional route?

- It starts with us who are already in the industry to help guide or mold these younger scientists and let them know the options
- Reach out to our previous universities to come and talk to the younger generation
- Join a mentoring program at CASSS or at your current company
- Take on co-ops and help them experience as many sections in your company so they can see all aspects of the industry

Topic 3- how do I see past my current silo? If I want to potentially change roles and gain experience in other sectors of the industry

- Asking yourself these questions – really think about your development plan and what you want for your career. Your manager can only help you but you need to be the CEO of your career and need to drive for what you want.
- Speak with your current manager about opportunities within the organization
- See if your company has a mentor program and see if you can gain a mentor from a different department
- Attend networking events and talk to other members

- If you get asked to review a report or protocol (for example – pharmacy manuals, stability indicating, spiking studies) really review them and ask the questions
 - Why are you doing this? What information will you get from this study? How will this help the development process? Will this data be filed?
 - Asking the questions will show the other team that you are engaged in what they are doing and you can establish a good relationship with them which might help you when looking at other positions down the road
- Look into training courses within your company/ job to help you build your skill set to help with future positions
- Reach out to other functional areas to see if there would be an opportunity to shadow someone within their department
- See if your company has a GROW rotation or GIG rotation where you can take a leave of absence from your current position to explore a different department for an extended period of time