



# NETWORKING IN TODAY'S SCIENTIFIC WORKPLACE

We all know the form of classic networking, and people in sales or supply chain management pioneered it for business purposes. It's where they meet casually with colleagues. Maybe the individuals involved don't work for the same company. They might even work for competitors. Nevertheless, it's an opportunity to share ideas—and to get a clearer reading of what everyone else is doing.

For people who work in and manage labs today, the scenario is no different. The world of work—especially in laboratory science—is changing dramatically. Networking in the classic sense is essential, because more than 50 percent of jobs in the lab space today tend to be discovered through connections to other scientists.

The scientific workforce across the

of networking among labs themselves also has become essential. It is already informing the way labs do business on a daily basis, and it is imperative that lab managers recognize this in order to remain productive and competitive.

The shift largely happened because of what labs must now do to keep a competitive advantage. Labs still usually have an a la carte list of general capabilities, but those in the most demand often have one specialty that makes them stand out from the rest. Labs also are informing their customers that they can provide a total solution, especially since customers are increasingly more sophisticated about what they need and want. If one lab can't provide a total solution, the customer certainly can engage a different lab that can provide this capability.

The best way to address this is for labs to network with each other to provide optimal results for clients. While one lab certainly may be capable of doing everything within a specified project, it still might not have every skill and resource required for the best outcome. Partnerships with other labs have become valuable tools for utilizing the most effective resources and also

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At the very least, the knowledge and resources gained usually lead to a better understanding of one's own goals and objectives through informal collaborations. At the opposite end of the spectrum, alliances are formed when simple collaboration is taken to a higher level. Mutually beneficial business relationships and tangible business results often follow. These professionals understand how all levels of networking can lead to better practices and better business. And they know that connections are instrumental in developing products and driving results.

globe also is more connected than ever, allowing an extreme amount of flexibility and mobility. Scientists are more aware of what their peers are doing, and they can use these connections to easily share ideas, results, and data to make their work more effective and in demand. A project can also start quickly and end quickly, playing into the versatility™ of today's scientists, who possess a broad range of skills and can work in many different environments when and wherever a new opportunity comes up.

A less obvious, but higher, level

for dramatically reducing the costs associated with a large project.

Customers also know that they no longer have to engage only one lab in order to get a project done and, as a result, these companies increasingly elect to use several different labs. In the past their businesses were much more silo-oriented, and these companies would elect to do everything in-house, employing their own scientists and labs. Now companies are seeing the advantages of engaging the best resources from several different outside labs that are connected to each other, ultimately eliminating costs and freeing up the company to focus on core competencies. A lab's ability to partner with other labs to get a project done, then, often is the key to retaining customers and ensuring future business down the road.

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The appetite for conducting lab work on a network basis isn't likely to wane and will become the normal course of action, just as traditional networking has become for salespeople and researchers. Results will come faster, and the quality of work will soar. And ultimately, the rewards will be greater.

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