

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE PHARMA R&D MINDSET: LESSONS FROM PIONEERS

An effective R&D mindset is one that engenders an inspired and collective effort to innovate. It can therefore have enormous value to pharmaceutical and biotech companies, because the reality is that great science and innovative products are ultimately created by people working together, inspiring each other to bring their best to what they do.

The most essential elements of the effective R&D mindset are clarity of vision, leadership at every level, a cross-functional collaborative spirit, and courage in raising controversial or challenging opinions.

There are certain structural elements or “hygiene factors” such as cross-functional teams and governance bodies that need to be put in place as the foundations for building and nurturing an effective R&D mindset. These ensure all team members are aligned on the R&D vision, the need to balance the exploratory nature of science with a focus on driving value for the organisation, and the boundaries within which team members operate. They are the platforms where collaboration can occur, ideas can be exchanged and debated, and decisions can be made.

Once the structural foundations are in place, R&D leaders must visibly role

model the mindset they expect in their organisation and encourage leadership, collaboration, and courage in raising contentious ideas. R&D leaders are responsible for picking and empowering the right people to be part of cross-functional teams and governance bodies, and ensuring that those selected receive training on leadership and accountability to represent their function and act collaboratively. R&D leaders must also communicate that collaboration is rewarding; this is particularly important in R&D, where many people come from less collaborative technical environments. To promote fearlessness in raising differing opinions, leaders must allow all ideas to be proposed, but still subject to transparent scrutiny in a way that team members can anticipate and appreciate.

In summary, R&D leaders can cultivate the mindset in their organisations that generates innovation and success by putting the structural foundations in place, constantly and clearly communicating their vision, and encouraging leadership, collaboration, and courage in all the people that collectively contribute to creating great medicines.

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