

# MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE IN PHARMA THROUGH CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

Effective cross-functional collaboration is highly valued in the pharmaceutical industry, but it is difficult for an organisation to implement. To encourage successful collaboration and make a lasting difference, leaders should bring focus to cross-functional meetings and build an environment where people are empowered to make decisions. These principles are the same regardless of the size of the company, as are the difficulties involved in implementing effective cross-functional collaboration and the time it takes.

The starting point for making a lasting difference through cross-functional collaboration is the shared purpose of making a positive change to the organisation's strategy and ultimately to patients' lives. Despite this shared goal, cross-functional discussions can be difficult, as each person possesses a large amount of knowledge, and people frequently focus on their own or their functions' priorities. It is the leader's role to bring focus to a cross-functional discussion, ensuring meetings don't become lost in detail, and to remind everybody involved of the shared purpose that they can get behind to make decisions that benefit patients.

For cross-functional teams to be valuable, a clear decision-making remit is required. If a team's remit is unclear, nobody makes decisions.

Equally, if the decision-making remit is very rigid and top-down, it impedes collaboration because people know they can go straight to a decision maker outside of the meeting. Therefore, there must be a remit for people to be empowered to make decisions in cross-functional teams. Part of this involves leaders transitioning away from decision-making roles towards coaching roles, helping people learn to make decisions themselves and creating an environment where people aren't afraid to say what they think and feel their opinion will be heard.

To make a lasting difference, transforming how a company conducts cross-functional collaboration is necessary, but it typically takes at least 3 years to see a material change, although this varies depending on how committed people are to the change process. Remote working has reduced the opportunities for people to build trust and relationships, which makes instilling a collaborative cross-functional culture even more difficult.

Over the next 10 years, functions could be replaced altogether by teams comprising people with various areas of expertise working towards a common goal rather than as functional representatives.

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