

Becoming a successful investigator in science or medicine requires more than having good ideas and receiving grants to investigate them. Managing your research career includes many elements; one of the most important is building and managing a research team.

Building and retaining an effective research team includes several elements. (1) The successful investigator/lab director needs to learn to interview carefully and hire the right person, based on a well-thought out job description. (2) He/she will provide adequate training and orienting for the newly hired person. This includes providing benchmarks of expected progress; evaluating often; providing frequent constructive feedback; and spending enough time training the new hire. (3) The successful investigator will learn to supervise and mentor well, which includes: stating clear expectations, communicating openly, praising in public but correcting in private, and encouraging personal development. (4) An accomplished investigator also will become skilled at promoting teamwork, with twin goals of maximizing personal development and minimizing unnecessary competition. (5) He/she will learn to master the "two hat problem:" supervising in a way that encourages team members to stay, yet being willing to help them move on to greater challenges.

These skills are rarely taught to scientists and physicians in graduate programs but they can be learned and will contribute greatly to career success.