

TOP TEN LIST

TEN BEST WAYS TO DO SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION BADLY

With apologies to David Letterman, and thanks for editorial assistance to Elizabeth Kirby. Additional contributions from Judith Vessey, Boston College.

R.S. Kirby, November 2006

Top Ten List: Ten Best Ways to Do Scientific Collaboration Badly

Number 10

**Dateline: 8:00AM, Eastern Standard Time
(6:00AM on the Pacific Coast)**

When determining the time for the next conference call, assume that everyone is in your time zone. Force all your collaborators to make a mental conversion in order to determine whether they are actually available.

Helpful hints:

- 1. Early morning calls in the Eastern or Maritime time zones are great motivators for those on the west coast.**
- 2. Everyone has to eat sometime, so why not have lunch over a conference call?**

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Number 9

Stay Tuned for an Important News Update . . .

Don't keep minutes (or if you do, don't distribute them to the project members), don't send out notices for meetings, don't provide timely reminders, and above all, never follow up to see why those who fail to participate and don't notify the group leader aren't able to take part in the process.

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Number 8

Round Up the Usual Suspects

List everyone as an author, including those who contributed nothing to the project. Of course, it goes without saying that MDs go first.

Or . . . List no one, instead identifying the paper as authored by the Southern Obstetrical Wellness and Health Analysis Trial (SO WHAT)*

*see members (listed in 4.5 pt type) on page 631.

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Number 7

Don't You Have That Done Yet?

Volunteer for everything, but do nothing.

Or, volunteer a committee member who is not on the call or present at the meeting, without the permission of them or their boss. Then, neglect to tell them . . .



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Number 6

All In the Family

Only invite your colleagues and friends to participate in the collaboration. Ignore other stakeholders or don't realize they even exist, especially those from competing groups or those who are unlikely to agree with you.

These approaches are especially useful in public health, state/provincial, national and international collaborations.

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Number 5

There's Nobody Here But Us Chickens

Develop committees comprised only of chiefs, with no one to do the work.

As a committee member, always complicate discussions with extraneous issues that derail the process or stymie progress.



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Number 4

How Do You Make Busy People More Productive?

Don't honor or recognize the work of group members.

Assign outrageous deadlines that cannot possibly be met.

Give those who produce even more work.



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Number 3

Don't Pay for Anything You Might Get for Free

Assign projects that are both complex and time-consuming, but provide no resources or technical support to the collaborative group.

If the group doesn't produce, it's their fault. If they do, you'll be recognized as a bureaucratic genius!



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Number 2

**Ma'am, You Can Have Any Color You Want,
So Long as It's Black**

Ignore or belittle the perspectives and suggestions of those with disciplinary backgrounds different from your own.

The only reason they are there is to validate the collaborative process, not to actually contribute to an improved and more useful product or outcome.

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Number 1

Webster Had It Right All Along

Always remember the definition of collaboration:



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Definitions

Collaboration (n):

- ◆ 1. Working together, especially in a joint intellectual effort.
- ◆ 2. Cooperating treasonably, as with an enemy occupying one's country.
- ◆ 3. An unnatural act between two or more non-consenting adults.

Source: Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition, as modified by Tamara Copeland, R.S. Kirby and others.

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