



# People management in a lab environment

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**MB&C Course 2026**



# People management in a lab environment

## Agenda

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1. Introduction
2. Personal experience
3. Overview of people management skills
4. Conclusions and perspectives

# Before starting ...

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- What is your name ?
- Where are you from ?
- What position are you in ?
- What do you expect from this workshop ?

# Institut de Pathologie et de Génétique (IPG)



- Established 1958, unique model
- Located in Brussels South Charleroi Biopark, heart of Europe
- Buildings: 10.000 m<sup>2</sup> (extension completed in 2023)
- Values : Dynamism – Solidarity – Engagement

## Key Numbers :

- 357 FTEs
- Turnover: 60 M EUR
- > 8,000 consultations / year
- 200.000 patients followed each year

# Institut de Pathologie et de Génétique (IPG)



- Anatomic pathology laboratory (Art 32, 33 bis, 33 ter)
- Center for human genetics (Art 33)
- Molecular Biology Department
- Laboratory for molecular microbiology (Art 24 bis)
  
- ISO 15189-2022 accreditation, flexible scope (381-MED)
- IVD-R compliant (successful FAGG-AFMPS inspection in 09/2025)

# People management in a lab environment

## Agenda

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1. Introduction
2. A few personal tips and tricks
3. Overview of people management skills
4. Conclusions and perspectives

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### A few questions I'd like to ask to you:

- Have you ever known a great people manager ?
- Is it important to be a great people manager for a MLT, a PhD, a MSc, a pathologist, a geneticist or clinical biologist in 2026 ?
- What are the key qualities for a good people manager ?
- What is the most difficult day you have ever had on your job?

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### Management for scientists

- Management is not formally taught during university/ high school education
- Many of us take responsibilities (team leader, chief MLT, Lab manager, Lab Director, ...) with little or no training in people management
  - > fundamental mistake and high risk for organization
- In medicine and laboratories, much focus is placed on hard, not soft skills

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

### Hard skills

Accounting

Marketing

qPCR

Transfusion

Financial management

Sarcoma pathology

Whole Genome Sequencing

Bioinformatics

Flying a F-35 fighter plane

...

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### Soft skills

Communication

Critical thinking

Teamwork

Adaptability

Leadership

Problem solving

Creativity

Emotional intelligence

...

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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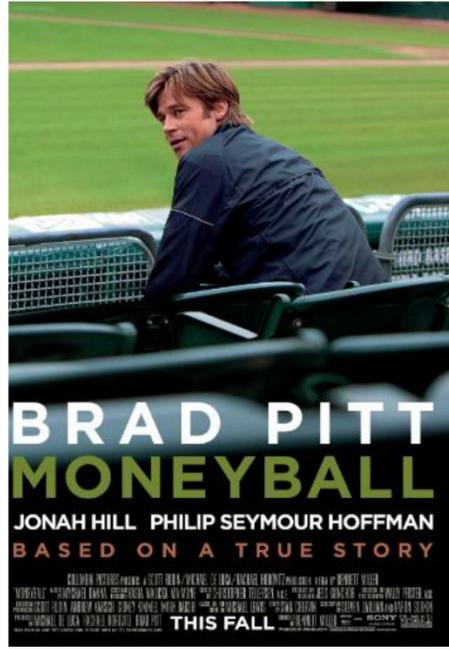
### Cause for tensions in molecular and flow cytometry laboratories

- High level of technical hard skills required
- Rapidly evolving field, automation,...
- Increasing clinical applications and workload (...Covid-19 PCR...)
- Financial strain (economic situation in hospitals, -15 % in clinical labs, decrease of reimbursements in genetics and pathology ...)
- Positioning (molecular: is it genetics, pathology or clinical biology ?)
- Concentration trend (networks, fusions, ...)

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

A few great people managers ...

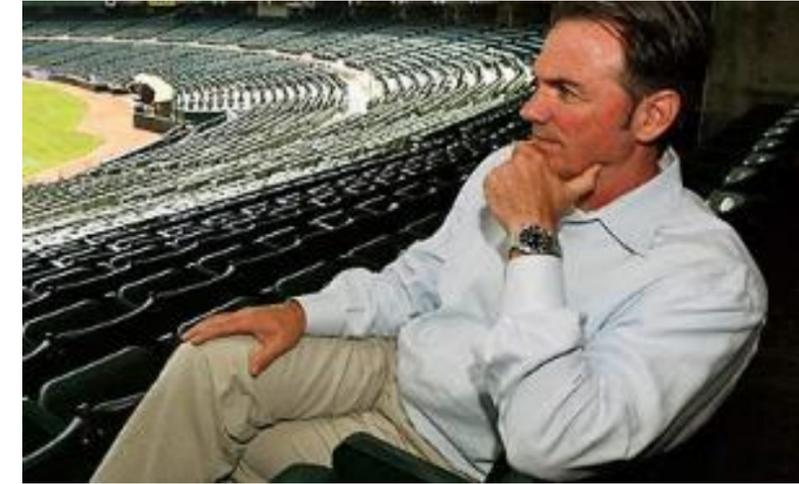


# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

### I few great people manager I know:

- **Billy Beane (Oakland Athletics General Manager):**
  - Challenging traditions
  - Resilience and adaptability
  - Direct communication
  - Delivering cost-conscious high performance



# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

### I few great people manager I know:

- **Raymond Reding (Pediatric Transplant Surgeon and author) :**

- Talent developer
- Confident delegation
- Positive and enthusiastic vision

+ outstanding surgical ability

+ great culture

+ great writing skills



# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

### I few great people manager I know:

- **Frédéric Gallois (GIGN commander 2002-2007) :**
  - Rapid assessment and decisive actions in ambiguous environments
  - Close and legitimate command over special units
  - Aligning talents with collective missions



# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### I few great people manager I know:

- **Jurgen Klopp (Liverpool manager 2015 – 2024):**
  - Clear vision and identity
  - Emotional authenticity and passion
  - Strong man management and empathy
  - Clear and direct, charismatic communication
  - Humility and accountability



# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

### My Own management experience:

*46 years old next Friday;*

*Reference dates MD 2005 – Clinical biologist 2010*

- High School final year President 1998-1999
- Responsible for trainees in Clinical Biology UCL 2006-2008
- Lab Director St. Luc Bouge 2016-2020 (6 Clinical biologists, 63 FTEs)
- Secretary Medical Council St- Luc Bouge 2014 -2017 , then President 2017 – 2019
- Medical Director IPG 2020, -> (42 MDs, 357 FTEs )

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### Management situations I have faced:

- Planning nightshifts, holidays in 24/7 labs
- Hiring MLTs, Physicians, scientific experts, administrative Assistants
- Reframing physicians and other personnel (formal warnings and sanctions)
- Terminating contracts (sometimes all by myself)
- Negotiations with Administrative & Financial management
- Dealing with deeply rooted conflicts between staff members

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### Management situations I have faced (cont.) :

- Resignation of key people
- Performing evaluations
- Dealing and negotiating with Unions
- Replacing a Lab Director in position for 24 years
  
- Changing position and getting out of my comfort zone
- Getting through multiple assessments and 360 evaluation
  
- And many other situations...

# People management in a lab environment

## Situation :

You have a management position in a lab working with drivers who go on the road to get patient samples. During summer, HR comes to you because a driver was found, repeatedly, to buy a sandwich and a coke with his fuel card. He is the son of a well-known GP working with your lab, sending lots of samples.

### -> What do you do ?

- You tell HR to terminate his contract immediately.
- You do nothing, it was only worth a couple of hundred Euros !
- You tell HR to end his contract ASAP, but you give a few a few months so that he can get a new job.
- You see him and sent him a formal warning.

# People management in a lab environment

## 1. Introduction

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### My management training:

- Management option course UCL 2010
- Managing aggressive communication 2014
- “From colleague to manager” ifbd 2018
  
- “Managing high level collaborators” ifbd 2021
- Personal development coaching 2022
- IPG board of Directors management training 2022 – 2025

# People management in a lab environment

## Agenda

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1. Introduction
- 2. Personal experience**
3. Overview of people management skills
4. Conclusions and perspectives

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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### What I find challenging about management positions :

- Staying calm in emotionally tense situations
- Time management (so many meetings...)
- Disconnecting (holidays, scientific meetings !)
- Keeping fit and healthy (lot of meetings , social events, business lunches,...)
- Taking situations seriously enough but not too seriously , not being obsessed
- Confronting someone
- Not always envisage the worse possibility

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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### Staying calm in emotionally tense situations:

- Always face the problems and your responsibilities
- Problems won't disappear by themselves !
- If you plan something to go wrong, act on it !
- Before a tense meeting/event/ confrontation:
  - Take a few deep breaths
  - Full conscience respiration (4 seconds breathing by nose followed by 4 seconds expiration by mouth)

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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### Time management

- Organize your tasks (Outlook flags – 1 list of tasks and reminders)
- Book time in your agenda for :
  - Personal work (by example 3\*1h30 sessions a week- complete 3 tasks every morning)
  - Reading emails
  - Working on your tasks
  - Lunch with colleagues
  - Working on your assigned projects
- Respect yourself (family, sport, friends, passions outside of work)
- Manage dead time (read audiobooks while driving !)

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

### Time management

- Use a productivity timer



# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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### Hiring colleagues

- Have you ever received feedback ? Can you give an example ?
- Give me 3 of your strengths/ 3 points of developments
- Could you describe yourself in 3 verbs ?
- Do you have other passions outside your work ?

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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Draw the line: in the 2026 lab workplace, we cannot accept :

- (Sexual) Harassment
- Verbal and physical abuse
- Repeatedly underperforming individuals despite management/ HR follow up
- ...

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

**Situation :** You are in a management position. One of your reporting colleagues has been taking strong positions regarding Israel/Palestinian conflict on LinkedIn with his company account. What do you do ?

- You terminate his contract immediately.
- You do nothing. Freedom of speech !
- You tell him to stop immediately.
- You tell him to stop immediately, to remove his comments, send him a warning letter that you will keep in his personal file.
- You tell him to stop and to remove his comments.

# People management in a lab environment

## 2. Personal experience

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Since the last workshop, a few additional situations I have faced

- Again, reframing physicians and colleagues
- Resignation of 2 medical doctors
- Facing long absence of colleagues
- Discussing with permanent member of Unions
- ...

# People management in a lab environment

## Agenda

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1. Introduction
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# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Competencies required

- Courage
- Empathy
- Communication
- Conflict management skills
- Proactivity

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Competencies required: courage

- Courage is the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, ... without fear
- Courage can only be gained through multiple experiences involving personal risk-taking

***“Fear is of no use, because fear doesn’t remove danger”***

GIGN operator

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

**Situation : it is late in the day, a physician comes yelling at your office because too many MLTs are in training today. He leaves screaming and clashes your door.**

**What do you do ?**

- You come out of your office, screams back at him that he cannot disrespect you like that.
- You take a deep breath and let it go. He has always been temperamental, and it will be forgotten tomorrow.
- You take a deep breath, go to his office and explain the reason of the training and how much you believe in MLT education.
- You come back home, and you let emotions vent in your car.

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Competencies required: keep your calm !

- In management, there is no reason to lose temper and yell at people (even if some people are scratching you)
- Never shout at someone in public (or in private by the way)
- Never perform (negative) feedback in company of other people
- You will gain respect by staying calm in stressful situations

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Competencies required: empathy

- Listen actively
- Put yourself in the other shoes
- Why does he/she feel this way ?

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Additional competencies required

- Honesty
- Positivity
- Ability to motivate
- Availability / approachability

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### 360° Evaluation

- An evaluation of your social and emotional competencies
- You request the feedback of your manager and as many collaborators as possible
- This process will give your strengths and your points for development
- Powerful process that normally should “itch” a little

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### 360° Evaluation

- Leadership
- Political sense
- Team player capability
- Ability to develop others
- Knowledge of your own emotions
- Adaptability
- ...

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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- Leadership
- Efficient bidirectional communication
- Conflict management

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Leadership

- Leading means inspiring and guiding both individuals and groups
- People who are great leaders know how to unite a group and consistently bring the best out of individuals
- Leading involves directing others in a course of action, in decision making and in problem solving
- **“Leading is showing the way when nobody knows where to go”**
- Leading involves both being and doing
- The situation in which a leader acts is also a very important variable (-> situational leadership)

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Communication

- Communication is **bidirectional**: you need to listen efficiently and be able to communicate clearly
- Misunderstanding and miscommunication are frequent, destroy teams, and can be prevented
- **Efficient listening**: listen to the message, the body language, and the tone of the voice

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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### Efficient listening

- Stop what you are doing
- Maintain eye contact
- Do not glance at your watch or your smartphone
- Maintain an open body posture, do not close your arms, do not play with a pencil

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

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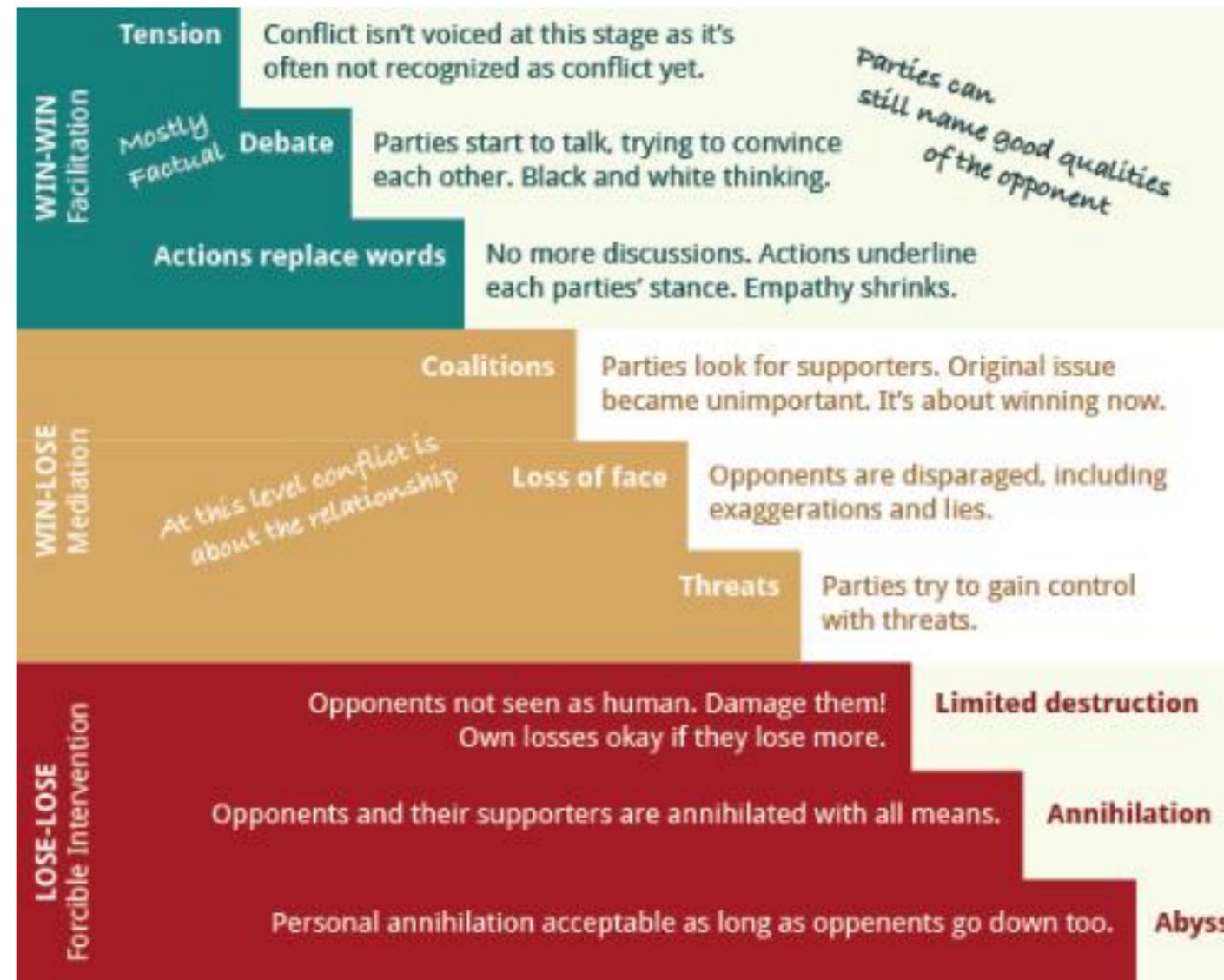
### Conflict management

- Conflict is normal in a team
- Do not avoid it
- But please handle it in time before it gets out of control
- Encourage to talk about it openly

# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

### Conflict management: F. Glasl's scale of conflict escalation



# People management in a lab environment

## 3. Overview of people management skills

**Situation : you are a team leader since 2 years. In your team of 6 MLTs, two of them hate each other. They systematically try to involve you in their conflict. It has been happening since 20 years. What do you do ?**

- You do nothing and wait for this conflict to resolve;
- You tell them you have enough and threaten them of terminating one, the other or both contracts ;
- You start looking for external mediation ;
- You decide to request the help of an external conflict manager, and you involve the top hierarchy

# People management in a lab environment

## Agenda

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1. Introduction
2. Personal experience
3. Overview of people management skills
4. **Conclusions and perspectives**

# People management in a lab environment

## 4. Conclusions and perspectives

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- Management is a science that is rarely taught to scientists and physicians
- People management is probably the most challenging, most time consuming, most painful aspect of management - it can be also very rewarding
- People are also a source of happiness in the workplace
- I highly encourage you to follow formal training that is widely available
- Talk with people with management experience, take their advice, and avoid making mistakes they have already done ...

# People management in a lab environment

## 4. Conclusions and perspectives: additional resources

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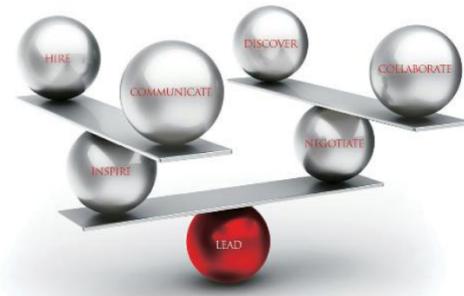
- Internal trainings at your institution
- Training with Institute for Business Development ([ifbd.be](http://ifbd.be)) or other companies
- Read Harvard Business Review

# People management in a lab environment

## 4. Conclusions and perspectives: additional resources

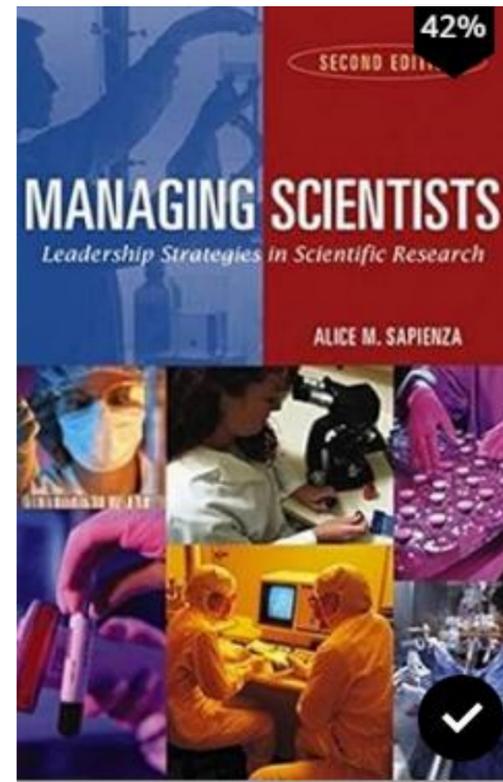
### LAB DYNAMICS

THIRD EDITION



Management and Leadership Skills for Scientists

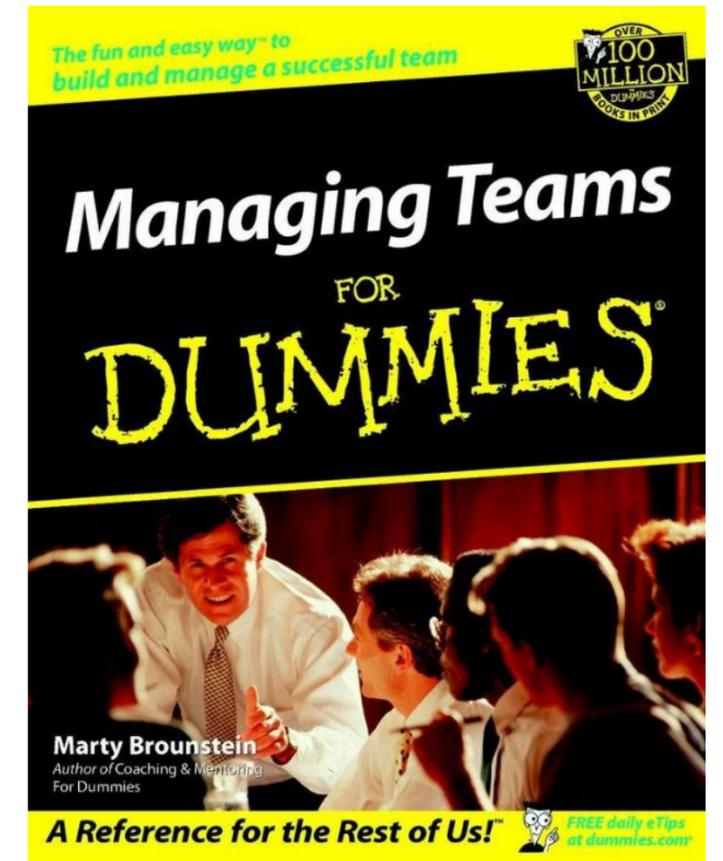
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### MANAGEMENT FOR SCIENTISTS



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# People management in a lab environment

## 4. Conclusions and perspectives

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### A few questions I'd like to ask to you:

- Have you ever known a great people manager ?
- Is it important to be a great people manager for a MLT, a PhD, a pathologist, a geneticist or clinical biologist in 2024 ?
- What are the key qualities for a good people manager ?
- What is the most difficult day you have ever had on your job?

# Thanks for your attention and active participation

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