

BY ROBIN ROBINSON



# Effective Global Teams **ARE ALIGNED** **NOT BUILT**

Trust, understanding, common goals and perceptions, speaking the same language — literally and figuratively — all sound like the ingredients for a successful marriage. The same factors that are inherent in any successful relationship must be present among the members of global cross-functional teams, or the results are just as disastrous: missed deadlines, delayed drugs to market, and rising costs. Issues can arise from every angle: geographical, cultural, and most obvious, language barriers that include differences in meaning, tone, and delivery.

PharmaVOICE asked industry thought leaders to discuss the importance of team building and how having a process in place can equip cross-functional teams with the tools they need to keep projects and goals moving forward.

The following are their pertinent responses culled from our interviews.

## Team Alignment is Critical

*There was a time not so long ago when working virtually or with others that were located across*

## THOUGHT LEADERS

**SHIDEH SEDGH BINA**, Cofounder, Insigniam Performance, a global management consulting firm with a proprietary methodology for enterprise performance transformation and catalyzing breakthrough results. For more information, visit [insigniam.com](http://insigniam.com) or e-mail [sbina@insigniam.com](mailto:sbina@insigniam.com).

**CHRIS BOGAN**, CEO, Best Practices LLC, a research, consulting, database, and publishing firm. For more information, visit [best-in-class.com](http://best-in-class.com) or e-mail [cbogan@best-in-class.com](mailto:cbogan@best-in-class.com).

**NANCY FETROW**, VP, Project Management, Auxilium, a biopharmaceutical company providing innovative solutions for unique diseases that improve health and quality of life. For more information, visit [auxilium.com](http://auxilium.com).

**HOWARD M. GUTTMAN**, Principal, Guttman Development Strategies Inc., a management consulting firm specializing

in executive coaching; building horizontal, high-performance teams; strategic and organizational alignment; and management development training. For more information, visit [guttmandev.com](http://guttmandev.com).

**RITA KELLEY**, Senior Director, Marketing, EpiCept, which is focused on the development and commercialization of pharmaceutical products for the treatment of cancer and pain. For more information, visit [epicept.com](http://epicept.com) or e-mail [rkelly@epicept.com](mailto:rkelly@epicept.com).

**LESLIE POTT**, Spokesperson, AstraZeneca, a pharmaceutical company focused on six therapy areas, including cancer, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, infection, neuroscience, and respiratory, and inflammatory. For more information, visit [astrazeneca-us.com](http://astrazeneca-us.com).

**KEN RIBOTSKY**, President and Founder, The Core Nation, which leverages strategic talent and resources across three agencies: Core-Create, Alpha & Omega, and Brandkarma. For more information, visit [thecorenation.com](http://thecorenation.com).



*"It is critically important for team members to understand how their duties affect others."*

**KEN RIBOTSKY**  
The Core Nation

In the global nature of today's business environment, team alignment is critical to success.

the world was unheard of. But, today that situation is commonplace for even small companies.

According to a Best Practices benchmarking field study and report, *Best Practices in Building Global Capacity for Corporate Teams*, more than one-third of employees surveyed at 56 companies work on a global team, and at 25% of those companies, 60% to 100% of employees work on global teams.

Along with the benefits of the talents and skills provided by the diverse members of virtual teams come just as many challenges. In terms of creating effective cross-functional global teams, team rapport building is out — team performance alignment is in.

**BINA. INSIGNIAM PERFORMANCE.** Twenty years ago globalization was not a factor in employee performance for organizations, but it sure is now. Team building today is so much more than going on a retreat and rappelling down a cliff. The global environment adds more complexity. In addition to traditional issues, there is a whole other set of global issues that pertain

to different nationalities, cultures, and understanding of what it takes to be a team leader or a team player in a global context, as well as the issues generated by distance and virtual teaming.

**FETROW. AUXILIUM.** Most companies are focusing on developing lean and mean solutions as there has been quite a bit of belt tightening in the past two years, and the shift is on to do things more efficiently. Sometimes the only place to build efficiency is in how well a team works together. Teams need to be able to communicate, identify issues, and rapidly build solutions and put them in place, which moves products faster to market and many times results in a higher quality product as well. Clearly, companies are focused on team building because cross-functional, high-performing global teams are even more critical in this industry. There are very few companies that do not have a global presence. Even small biotech companies work globally if they partner with other companies. And although these compa-



*"Without senior management buy-in on the importance of face time for establishing relationships, it's going to be very difficult for teams to be as efficient and productive as they can be."*

**NANCY FETROW**  
Auxilium

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*"In this global environment, horizontal teams are no longer an option — they are a necessity."*

**HOWARD GUTTMAN**  
Guttman Development Strategies



*"Global team alignment is complicated; trying to define it is akin to summarizing how to have a great marriage in three easy steps."*

**CHRIS BOGAN**  
Best Practices



*"Successful cross-functional team building is less about training and more about attitude and culture building within an organization."*

**LESLIE POTT**  
AstraZeneca

nies may not have a direct cross-functional global team, they function in a very cross-functional team environment.

**GUTTMAN.** GUTTMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. The days of "Sign up Tuesday for a training class" are over. Companies are now investing in organizational development to align senior teams and turn them into high-performance powerhouses. There is a significant competitive advantage in having aligned, high-performing global teams. Think about it: products can be easily imitated; processes can be duplicated; and companies have access to the same consultants. But the competition cannot buy the skills of an aligned team. Now, more than ever, companies are focusing on business deliverables. But teams cannot deliver when they aren't aligned. Performance intangibles — strategy alignment, business goals, roles and responsibilities, protocols, and business relationships — can make or break a team.

**POTT.** ASTRAZENECA. Team building these days is about changing team attitude, aligning team focus and outreach, and incorporating multimarket considerations in building out strategies and capabilities. Companies have to put more attention on building cross-functional team to address technology advances; ease of travel; access to more markets; managing complex, yet often similar, needs of customers; and a desire to do business in more markets because of a growing middle class that is demanding more and better healthcare options. To be successful in the global environment, companies must focus on operating efficiently and with an eye to customization to meet local market demands.

**KELLEY.** EPICEPT. The current concept of team building is to bring groups of people together who have a common objective and to put them in situations that require them to solve a problem together. This is achievable, but this approach doesn't reflect building a team. Such exercises don't build trust or engender self-investiture between colleagues. The lack of personal investment prevents a true sense of team.

**BOGAN.** BEST PRACTICES. Team building has

always been a cornerstone of corporate success. In today's world, global teams are more important than ever. Global teams must learn to work flexibly across time zones, cultures, continents, and communication styles; there are new complexities to team creation, team communication, team structure, and healthy team functioning.

### Coaching is Imperative

*Companies that do not invest in coaching global teams will lose creatively, financially, and competitively. While experts and surveys report that global teams need to have guidance to function efficiently, not all companies are on board with providing all of the necessary tools that will help global teams work effectively. In today's competitive landscape, this is a dangerous practice that can lead to many losses across the board.*

**BOGAN.** BEST PRACTICES. Companies recognize that cross-functional teams are a requirement for success in market entry and brand building. Consequently, there is more investment in developing training tools around communication, intranet exchange, and personality styles. However, there is little evidence that companies are investing in forward-looking cross-functional team management, health assessments, conflict resolution, network or ecosystem management, etc. This higher level of cross-functional training and development is still a great opportunity area.

**KELLEY.** EPICEPT. More organizations are attempting to provide training to their cross-functional teams; however most of the programs focus on communications and fall very short of providing the tools that build on an individual contributor's strengths and, in turn, team objectives and goals.

**FETROW.** AUXILIUM. Some companies try to improve team functioning with in-house efforts and others hire outside consultants. Personally, I have not had great experience with in-house efforts, simply because the individuals who are trying to build a stronger team are familiar with other team members and have established relationships. This approach does not create an even playing field for all members of the team. Part of the process in team alignment is to air the dirty laundry — members must identify their own hang-ups, clean up the messes, and get rid of the baggage. Team members often are more comfortable and confident when a neutral third party is facilitating the process.

**RIBOTSKY.** THE CORE NATION. Companies need to seriously consider the expertise needed to work effectively on a team when filling posi-





*"Leaders of global teams need to take initial steps to build confidence and trust early in the team establishment."*

**RITA KELLEY**  
Epicept

and is a model that meets with success. It is critically important for team members to understand how their duties affect others. This process helps make that more clear.

**POTT.** ASTRAZENECA. Successful cross-functional team building is less about training and more about attitude and culture building within an organization. Team structure and the inclusion of cross-functional behaviors into performance objectives are important for successful outcomes. When teams are rewarded on cross-functional activities and behaviors, they operate with a mindset that this is business as usual.

**BINA.** INSIGNIAM PERFORMANCE. These days the emphasis isn't on team building; rather it's about enhancing team performance or team effectiveness. Large, complex organizations are grappling with how to deliver higher levels of performance from individuals, teams, and even the entire enterprise. This is unprecedented in terms of historical trends and expectations. This need for a higher breakthrough level of performance is critical in new drug development these days, and teams are not going to get to those higher levels by just doing more of the same thing. It requires a whole new mindset and approach to aligning team members.

## Process and Human Nature

*According to Best Practices, agreeing on team operating principles and holding regular team improvement and operating reviews are successful global team operating mechanisms for working with other cultures. Cultural awareness training and short-term cross-cultural assignments also aid global team members working with different cultures. Our experts say human nature cannot be ignored as a huge factor in the effective functioning of a team. If individuals are given the opportunity to learn about the different influences of culture and language, form relationships with each other, and are given a framework to work within, global teams can flourish at a performance level never before experienced.*

**GUTTMAN.** GUTTMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, teams would embark on team-building activities, such as rappelling off rocks and canoeing down a river. These were experiential exercises aimed at building rapport. While building rapport is not a bad thing, companies today need to put more focus on team alignment. There are five distinct factors that need to be addressed to achieve team alignment: strategy, business goals, roles and responsibilities, protocols, and business relationships. Team members need to

tions and creating roles. Organizations should go one step further to create internal mentorship programs where employees can rotate in and out of functions they normally interact with. This begins the process of cross-training

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reach agreement around these five factors in order to be successful. When one or more of the five is not in place, the team becomes dys-

functional. For example, if team members don't agree on strategy or priorities, they will inadvertently compete for resources. If team

members aren't clear about business relationships, then they will revert to working in their own silos. All business teams must be aligned in all five of these areas. In today's competitive landscape, companies don't have the luxury of carrying dysfunctional teams.

## Sound Bites From The Field

### PHARMAVOICE ASKED THOUGHT LEADERS FROM GLOBAL COMPANIES TO IDENTIFY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH BUILDING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL GLOBAL TEAMS.



**JED BEITLER** is Chairman and CEO Worldwide of Sudler & Hennessey, a global healthcare marketing and communications organization. For more information, visit [sudler.com](http://sudler.com).

recognize smarter ways to work together but feel constrained by disjointed teams.”



**GLORIA GIBBONS** is President, EMEA, AP, Latina, Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide, a global healthcare communications network serving clients in 64 offices across 33 countries. For

more information, visit [ogilvychw.com](http://ogilvychw.com).

“We have in place global brand management (GBM) teams for key clients with a global leader assigned to that business. Through this infrastructure, we orchestrate our talent and our creative solutions. Like a conductor, the GBM leader will pull different teams together on a regular basis, across geographies and across disciplines, to assemble the best talent and ideas. This approach delivers not only quality and innovation, but cost efficiencies for the agency and our customers.”



**PHIL DESCHAMPS** is President and CEO of GSW Worldwide, an inVentiv health company, and a full-service advertising agency that provides liberating ideas to pharmaceutical, biotech, and health and wellness clients through offices around the globe. For more information, visit [gsw-w.com](http://gsw-w.com).



**PHILIP MCCREA** is CEO of ClearPoint Learning Systems, which is focused on developing learning solutions for the healthcare and life-sciences sectors. For more information, visit

[clearpointlearning.com](http://clearpointlearning.com).

“Building a culture that reflects the core values of a company but also celebrates the cultural diversity of a global organization is easier said than done. We created inSync, a bi-monthly newsletter dedicated to promoting people, ideas, and events across our offices worldwide. Each edition is 25 to 30 pages in PDF format with a generous mix of editorial content, pictures, and success stories. With no dedicated staff to produce inSync, we rotate editorial duties to different teams who work on each edition. What started as a vehicle to communicate strategy has become a much anticipated newsletter that bridges geography, culture, and functional teams.”

“As advanced as the tools and technologies are now, there is still nothing that compares with having members of a global team meeting and engaging with one another on a face-to-face basis. For both client/agency teams, as well as our own internal global teams, initiating a global project with a live, face-to-face meeting is always the best way to get to really know fellow team members. After that first live event, follow-on meetings, either through phone or videoconferences or e-mail, can continue to build team relations. The trick, however, is respecting time zones, holidays, and local cultures.”

“The most important tip to encourage effective team building is giving global teams the freedom to serve their clients, together. The most complicated aspects of working globally are around how financials are distributed and allocated, and it's up to senior management — not the affiliates — to work out those details up front so there's no confusion or misguided intentions.

In addition, it is important for senior management to communicate the company philosophy as clearly as possible and establish rules of engagement so teams can focus on making magic for their clients and still maintain consistency across the company. In absence of this, teams can become discouraged when they

**POTT. ASTRAZENECA.** AstraZeneca structures teams to support cross-functional working — from the membership and remit to workflow. We incorporate cross-functional behaviors into performance objectives and discussions, so they become the standard way of operating. Ineffective communication leads to inefficiencies, frustration, and waste. For example, when three separate teams in three parts of the world put together brand strategies focused on the same payers in our markets, we are inefficient. At AstraZeneca, we have been able to increase our effectiveness by collaborating in a single, cross-functional team that focuses on payers around the world. This single team ensures the company is not duplicating research, strategy development, or discussions that may have occurred in the former, decentralized model. The team reports back to the global business units, identifies best practices, and determines where investments should be made to maximize the value of our medicines with payers.

**FETROW. AUXILIUM.** It is so easy in business to forget to focus on human nature because we take it for granted, but it has such a huge impact on how people act, do what they do, and the influence they have on each other. When forming a global team, building the relationships, identifying leadership, and identifying key communications pathways are crucial. In our experience, global teams tend to do best when they can meet face-to-face once a quarter. With tight budgets, this is a challenge but it is usually time and money well spent. When a team can come get together with regular frequency they can build relationships; consequently the time in between those face-to-face meetings is that much more effective and productive. But if senior management doesn't buy in or understand the importance of having some face time to establish those relationships, it will be difficult for teams to be as efficient and productive as they can be.

**KELLEY. EPICEPT.** Team leaders need to take the initial steps to build confidence and trust early on when establishing the team. This can be done by setting ground rules, making sure the ground rules are always followed so that the team members trust that their contributions are valued, and communicating openly when issues arise, which ensures solutions are developed and blame is avoided.



*"It's virtually impossible to exploit the economies of scale and scope of the transfer of knowledge without investing in global team effectiveness."*

**SHIDEH BINA**  
Insigniam Performance

create a long-term investment, organizations should investigate the impact of pulling individuals from maturing business units into the potential business sooner. Also, to decrease the shortage of those with early commercialization experience, companies should take the opportunity to cross-train individuals with in-line experience by sprinkling them throughout the early commercialization team. By improving this process, these individuals

become more valuable to the organization and better positioned to manage brands no matter where they are in the life cycle.

**BINA.** INSIGNIAM PERFORMANCE. Team success boils down to three fundamental

areas: cross-cultural fluency, a very strong and comprehensive face-to-face team launch, and continual touchpoints. Team members cannot be effective in a global environment unless they have a deep understanding that national differences result in perceiving the

world differently. In other words, two people can assess the same situation in two entirely different ways. The team launch should take two to three days, always be done face to face, and the agenda should include hammering out and getting alignment on the project plan, as well as creating a unique team culture that borrows from the best of all of the different cultures in the room. Key pieces of superior performance are perception and intellectual effort, in other words how the team members think. The third important ingredient to success is building in continual touchpoints along the course of the project for the team.

**BOGAN.** BEST PRACTICES. Defining how team alignment can be improved is a complicated issue, akin to summarizing how to have a great marriage in three easy steps. Training, communication skills, rules of engagement, team structure, decision rights and processes, health checks, etc. are all tools that can be helpful. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at [feedback@pharmavoice.com](mailto:feedback@pharmavoice.com).

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BY ROBIN ROBINSON

# Improving Team **PERFORMANCE**

PharmaVOICE asked our thought leaders to describe a situation they have observed or experienced that greatly benefited from global team alignment coaching. These are their stories.



**SHIDEH SEDGH BINA.** COFOUNDER, INSIGNIAM PERFORMANCE, a global management consulting firm with a methodology for enterprise performance transformation and catalyzing breakthrough results. For more information, visit [insigniam.com](http://insigniam.com).

There was one occasion in which the development of a drug was off schedule and the company was going to miss Wall Street's expectations. With some coaching and alignment, that team not only caught up, but it gained 44 days. The product was being developed multinationally, and there were definite and real cultural issues and misunderstandings. Those misunderstandings were leading

to an "us against them" scenario, and this attitude created a work slow down. We pulled the team together for a three-day, face-to-face meeting, during which we worked on cultural fluency and goal alignment. If you ask me, the cost and time invested in three days to improving performance and facilitating a product delivery worth hundreds of millions of dollars becomes loose change.



**NANCY FETROW.** VP, PROJECT MANAGEMENT, AUXILIUM, a biopharmaceutical company that provides solutions for unique diseases that improve health and quality of life. For more information, visit [auxilium.com](http://auxilium.com).

information, visit [auxilium.com](http://auxilium.com).

## Study reveals winning processes and key pitfalls in global team management

Participants of a study conducted by Best Practices reported that more than 50% of the tools, practices, and techniques listed that accelerate progress toward becoming a global organization involve establishing and following common global team processes, such as annual meetings, open communications, global scorecards for operational effectiveness, standardized practices, joint metrics, virtual meeting tools, and project management.

Source: Best Practices. For more information, visit [best-in-class.com](http://best-in-class.com).

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“ I really need a one-to-one meeting to discuss business challenges. ”

**Lorraine Casaol, Chief Nursing Officer**  
(Would benefit from attending this **marcusevans**' summit)

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I had the opportunity to work on a team that was charged with a complex global product that involved operational activities in numerous countries. The product was a very high priority for the company. The team was very stressed and was behind schedule. We were chasing the train from day one; it was an absolute disaster. There was frustration and friction in every single teleconference, and there were teleconferences every day. Even when we got together face to face, the team didn't gel. A training company was brought in to work with us — believe me this was no small task — through the duration of the project, and this made a huge difference. People left their baggage behind and started partnering and working together. It was amazing how successful the team became and we achieved an outstanding breakthrough deliverable, which was something considering where we started. We developed such a strong bond that now several years later we still get together socially.



**HOWARD GUTTMAN**, PRINCIPAL OF GUTTMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, INC., a management consulting firm specializing in executive coaching; building horizontal, high-performance teams; strategic and organizational alignment; and management develop-

ment.

### Study identifies successful global team approaches

According to a Best Practices' survey, agreeing on team operating principles and holding regular team improvement and operating reviews are successful global team operating mechanisms for working with other cultures. Cultural awareness training and short-term cross-cultural assignments aid global team members working with different cultures.

Below are the replies from respondents regarding what global team operating mechanisms they found most successful in working with other cultures. Study participants were asked to choose all that apply.

- Agreed-on team operating principles **85%**
- Regular team improvement on operating principles **85%**
- Cultural awareness training **48%**
- Short-term cross-cultural assignments **44%**
- Virtual team building activities **37%**

Source: Best Practices. For more information, visit [best-in-class.com](http://best-in-class.com).

# Communication BREAKDOWNS

The most common pitfall for global teams is the lack of team alignment — in other words, nobody is on the same page.

According to Shideh Bina, cofounder of Insigniam Performance, team failure, more often than not, happens almost immediately.

"A team's effectiveness can break down virtually from the very first second, especially if the team has not had adequate time spent on cross-cultural fluency, had a comprehensive face-to-face launch, or developed designated follow-up touchpoints along the way," she says.

Ms. Bina quotes statistics from a recent MIT Sloane Management Review: out of 70 global teams, only 18% of team members considered their performance highly successful, and 82% said they fell short of their goals. One-third — 33% — said they were largely unsuccessful.

Speaking from experience, Nancy Fetrow, VP of project management at Auxilium, agrees that if a strong foundation is not built at the beginning, a communication breakdown and team failure will happen very early on in the project, because team members are not aligned on exactly what their goals are for the team.

"For example, clinical trial members may think the goal is to deliver the clinical trial," she says. "But the questions become what is in the scope for delivering and what is out of scope for delivering the result; what do team members have to worry about and focus on and not worry about and focus on? If these goals are not clearly outlined up front, the team will spin out of control from the beginning rather than being successful. If the issues are addressed and handled quickly, then everyone can be aligned."

Leadership is critical in global team functioning, says Rita Kelley, senior director of marketing at EpiCept.

"I believe the first breakdown occurs when the person tasked with leading the team makes the assumption that being a leader means subjugating the other members of the team to doing the work," Ms. Kelley says.

A team can't be effectively built, managed, and sustained in an environment if each member doesn't feel responsible for his or her contributions.

"From the cross-functional perspective, a

team member who is allowed to blame others for failure perpetuates failure across the team," she says.

A breakdown in communications can start from the top down, says Ken Ribotsky, president and founder of The Core Nation.

"If top management does not set the vision and goals, the team is left to execute against its own functional or regional needs," he says. "Items such as the cost of goods can become more important than long-term investment in a brand franchise. Additionally, over-investment or under-investment in key markets may occur without the long-term goals of the organization being crystal clear."

Another common stumbling block can be the approach by which an organization creates global brands, Mr. Ribotsky says.

"Market dynamics can differ vastly from country to country, as can the needs of the teams responsible for sales and marketing at the country level," he says. "So, with funds tighter than ever, the solution is making tough decisions about where the most effective investments can be made."

"Pharmaceutical companies need to take the opportunity to provide less-funded markets with tools, enabling them to effectively sell in their own market while maintaining the efficiencies of a global brand," Mr. Ribotsky adds. "This is an area where a cross-functional team can have a much-needed positive impact."

Best Practices LLC has identified several friction points where team effectiveness can break down.

According to Chris Bogan, CEO of Best Practices, these points occur around marketing and sales perspectives, compliance and marketing needs, the product's target forecast, product positioning, cultural differences across functions and partners, and generational differences on the team.

"There's an old saying: success has many parents and failure few," he says. "This adage is reversed when it comes to cross-functional teams. There are many places where stress occurs and fault lines appear."



## Global TEAMS

ment training. For more information, visit [guttmandev.com](http://guttmandev.com).

I recently worked with a pharmaceutical company on a product launch that was not going well. The cycle time was too slow and decision gridlock prevailed. The 20-person team was just too unwieldy, so we began by whittling it down to a core group of eight. The rest of the team members became extended players who did not participate in every meeting. We then moved to align the core team around the five key factors, which transformed it into a highly engaged, fast-moving entity. As a result, the team got back on track, and the launch plan was executed on goal, on time, and on budget.



**RITA KELLEY**, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, EPICEPT, which is focused on the development and commercialization of pharmaceutical products for the treatment of cancer and pain. For more information, visit [epicept.com](http://epicept.com).

In a previous position, I led a product in Phase III development. When I became responsible for leading this cross-functional team, there was tremendous discord between the different members. This resulted from a lack of confidence in the team's capabilities. The lack of confidence caused tremendous consternation among certain members and prevented the team as a whole from meeting its stated goals.

No ground rules or goals had been agreed

upon, and as result of this lack of alignment, team members went off and did their own thing, with no regard as to how their actions were perceived or impacted others.

The team went through a relaunch. Off-site training provided a multi-disciplinary approach to learning and expressing trust, facilitating open and honest communication, project ownership, and team mentoring, all of which led to a highly functioning team.

As a result of this particular approach, the team successfully navigated the completion of its project, allowed the product's timeline to be met, and achieved the corporate goal of a successful registration and launch of the compound.



**LESLIE POTT**, SPOKESPERSON, ASTRAZENECA, a pharmaceutical company focused on six therapy areas, including cancer, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, infection, neuroscience, and respiratory and inflammatory. For more information, visit [astrazeneca-us.com](http://astrazeneca-us.com).

At AstraZeneca, we have identified the value of creating a one-stop, cross-functional team. Previously, when a brand team needed to garner approval for a strategy on a ready-to-launch brand, the team leaders would go from commercial leader to commercial leader, and back to the R&D leadership team, shopping the strategy and gaining consensus. After eight

or nine meetings, the concepts would be presented a final time to the senior leadership team, often consisting of the same team members. By structuring a one-stop, cross-functional team that consists of global commercial leaders, human resources, finance, compliance, legal and communication, the team can quickly discuss the issues, identify the problems, and develop a solution in a single meeting.



**KEN RIBOTSKY**, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, THE CORE NATION, which was created to leverage strategic talent and resources across three agencies: Core-Crete, Alpha & Omega, and Brandkarma. For more information, visit [thecorenation.com](http://thecorenation.com).

We worked on a global brand with several markets outside of the United States; we weighed in on everything from positioning to campaigning. With an abundance of decision makers, the process severely lacked efficiency and effectiveness. To improve the situation, we created an in-depth brand development process for the extended team to work within; levels of approval were clearly indicated to streamline execution and production. We successfully advanced the global marketing team's ability to take everyone's needs into account. By integrating this process, our team and that of the organization became tremendously more efficient and worked together cohesively for an

### Three key goals to improve global team performance

Team success can be boiled down to three fundamental areas: cross-cultural fluency, a very strong and comprehensive team launch that is done face-to-face, and continual follow up touch points.

#### Cross Cultural Fluency

If one is working in a company that is owned outside of the United States, minimally an employee has to have fluency in the way the world is perceived from those cultural perspectives. This issue of cross-cultural fluency is probably the least tended to — companies send employees for language training, but not necessarily cultural fluency. For example, in Spanish and Japanese, the phraseology of blame is conjugated in a way that cause and effect does not exist. In those languages, if a vase gets broken, the literal

translation is that the vase broke itself. So if something happens within the team, the relationship to blame is very different and serious misunderstandings can arise.

#### Face-to-face Team Launch

The second piece that is extremely important is to have a strong comprehensive face-to-face team launch. The launch should take two to three days, always be done face to face, and the agenda should include not only hammering out and getting alignment on the project plan but creating a unique team culture that borrows from the best of all the different cultures in the room. A key piece of superior performance is accountability and intellectual effort — how the team members think. Cross-cultural fluency becomes a matter of one's ability to be agile in thinking and behavior, for example, finding

common ground on how to communicate and agree on what is accountable behaviors and how trust is earned.

#### Touchpoints

The third important ingredient to success is building in continual touchpoints along the course of the project. These days it is too difficult for people to travel all the time for meetings, so using videoconferencing and a new technology called telepresence allows everyone to be at a virtual table and look each other in the eye. Technology has not completely caught up with the need to work globally, but when it does it will make a huge difference in the effective functioning of a global team.

Source: Shideh Sedgh Bina, Cofounder, Insigniam Performance. For more information, visit [insigniam.com](http://insigniam.com).

# Not just another pharma social media conference



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**Cynthia North**  
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