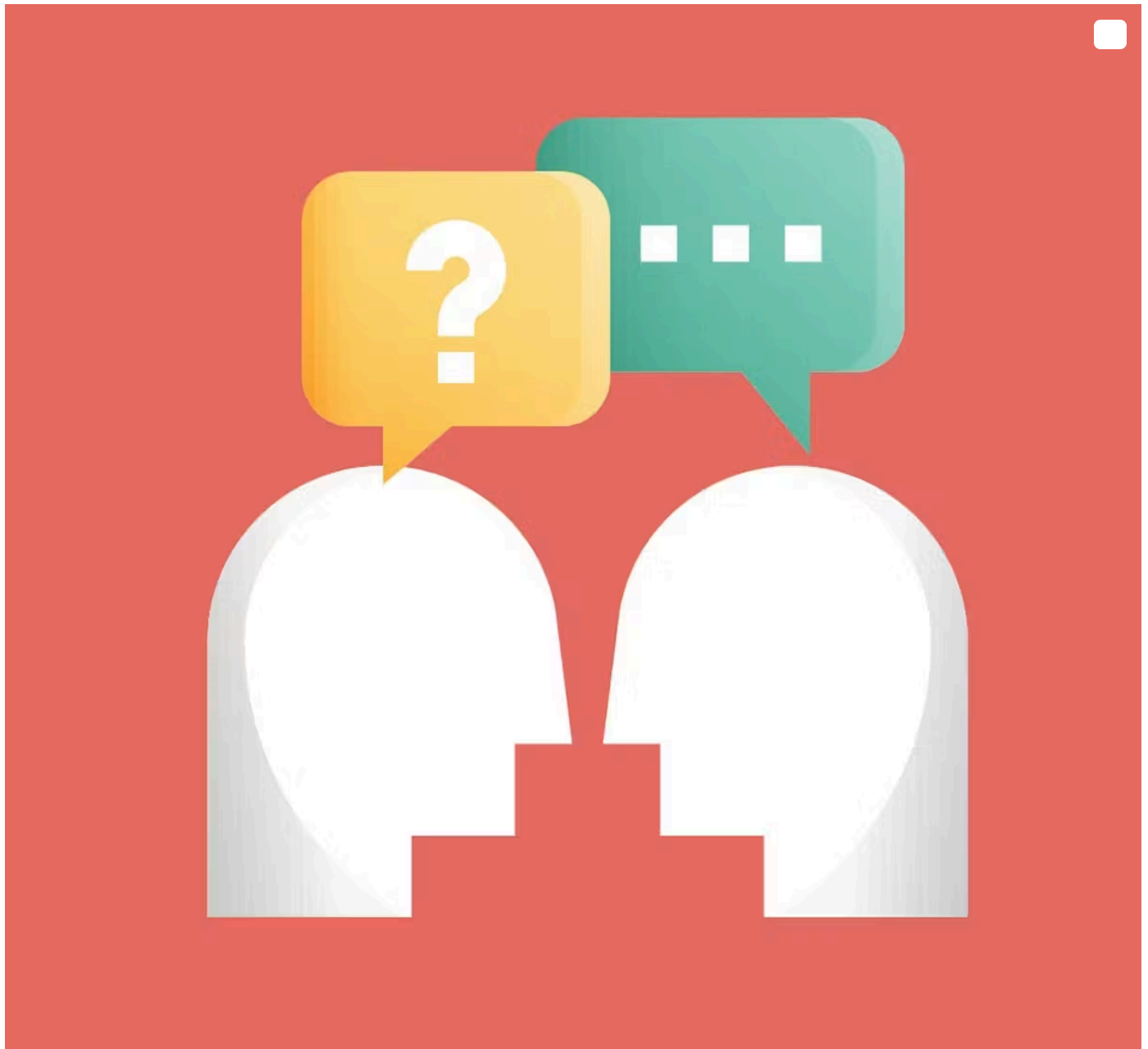




CAREERS

Coaching Corner

Patty J. Eschliman, MHA, MLS(ASCP)CM, DLMCM, CPC

I like your article and answers. Thank you. My comment is about the Coaching Corner in the September 2025 issue:

I just have another suggestion for this Team Building meeting situation — other than just lack of trust. As an introvert, like many science- and engineering-type people, when I am asked point blank what my concerns or questions are, I can't think of a thing. I need to mull it over and process the question. I don't think well "on the spot." Because of this, I have learned to run my meetings by letting people know beforehand if I will be looking for suggestions about a particular topic. I could have them write down their thoughts to bring to the meeting. If it is a sensitive topic, I would let them email their concerns BEFORE the meeting so that I can anonymously share those thoughts with the group.

I have become very aware of how extroverts and introverts differ in their work style and the advantages of each, so that was my first thought when I read this question.

**Thank you,
Susan**

Dear Susan:

Thank you for your email! Yes, speaking as a recovering introvert, I totally understand your perspective, and you are correct. It does take more time for some people than others to respond. I also believe that the more you meet as a team and make it safe for everyone to contribute, even the most introverted find they are valued for their input and will eventually open up. Especially those that

initially send their thoughts by email after the meeting as described by the person who wrote into *MLO*. It is good that you take everyone into consideration before and during the meeting. I bet that makes your meetings both engaging and productive!

Thank you for reading my column and let's keep the conversation going!

I am a new MLS graduate, and I am very excited to begin my career! I did great in training, interacted well with the teaching MLSs in the departments, am a hard worker, and received high scores on my exams. I didn't get a perfect score on my ASCP certification, but I passed in June and was offered jobs in two of the three hospitals where I interviewed. The hospital I chose has a great reputation, and I was very excited to be offered a 12-hour day shift generalist position. I am writing because I think I made a mistake. They seem to hate me here. I can't seem to do anything right and there is one person, in particular, that seems to run the show, and she is not even a supervisor! She is older and acts like I am an idiot and makes snide comments to the other MLSs about me. Should I quit and see if the other job is still open? Maybe this is not the right career for me.

Dear Growing Scientist:

It really pains me to read this because I believe you have chosen an amazing career and one that, because of the learning experience you have described, is a career that you will be very successful in and find fulfilling. No one should be expected to start their career, fresh out of school, knowing everything. It takes proper training, mentoring, and both understanding and grace to grow. It doesn't happen overnight and surely not in the very few three months since you graduated. Working only three days a week, there are probably some low volume tests that you have not even seen yet! I fear that what you are experiencing is bullying by the other scientists on the team, specifically this older "informal" leader that is being both unkind and unprofessional. Her

behavior is negatively influencing others to behave in the same intolerable way, and I am especially concerned if this is going on unchecked by leadership.

Bullying is becoming a big issue in the lab. In fact, the March issue of *MLO* published an article titled, "How addressing bullying in medical labs will improve overall retention" written by Alex Mitchell, the Marketing Communications Manager at Lighthouse Lab Services. In the article he quotes an informal poll, sent by Jon Harol, President of Lighthouse Lab Services as part of the 2023 annual wage and moral survey asking laboratory professionals if they have ever witnessed or personally experienced bullying in the lab. 75% of the 341 respondents said that bullying in the lab is a real concern. That is a huge number, which is both sad and totally unacceptable.

Please reach out to the leadership of your lab. If there is a direct supervisor over the older scientist, go to him or her first but if you don't feel like you are taken seriously, ask to speak with the director and Human Resources. This type of behavior must not be tolerated.

In my coaching, clients tell me they are reluctant to address bullying because of fear of retaliation. That is exactly the "game" that is played by bullies, and you will need to be both courageous and strong. I promise you that the effort will be worth it! You might feel like it is just you right now, but I am sure there are other scientists on the team who feel like they have made a mistake too, but it is no mistake! You have chosen a fantastic career and since the hospital has a great reputation, I feel certain that your Human Resource department will value your concerns.

At first, talk only to leadership about this situation, and let them handle it. It is unfortunate, but you don't know who you can trust if the team has an informal leader, that is the cancer metastasizing the group. Leadership should take swift action to address the situation and make sure this older scientist is held accountable for her actions while also setting firm expectations for appropriate behavior with the team. Be patient as this person also deserves the opportunity to improve. If the comments continue, say, "Please stop, your comments are not helpful/appropriate/professional." (You choose the word that you feel most

comfortable with.) However, if you feel like things are not changing or are getting worse, continue to work with leadership until it does. If at any point you feel unsafe or threatened, let your leadership know and submit your resignation. There are great labs out there with fun and caring team members led by responsible and attentive leaders. These are leaders who keep this behavior out of the team by holding themselves and others accountable to an engaging work environment and positive culture. Best of luck to you and let me know how I can help!

How do I become a good leader that people will respect?

Dear Goal Setter:

There is a quote that says "Respect: It's hard to attain but easy to lose" ~ Anonymous. The reason it is so hard to attain is because it is so uniquely important to people in different ways. Respect is often defined by behaviors and qualities such as integrity, honesty, empathy, consistency, presence, and being an active listener but many of these can be defined differently based upon the situation or the culture of a society, workplace, or team. I also believe that respect is a reciprocal action. You give respect and earn respect in return. It is easy to lose because there can be so much emotion around the vulnerability it takes in building great relationships.

I have studied leadership for over 30 years, but I will never scratch the surface for all the qualities that make a good leader and while I might do my best to practice what I have learned, it does not always mean that I have earned the respect of others. What I might say or do for one person that adds significant value may be offensive or cause frustration for another. It all depends on how it is said, how I hold myself accountable for my actions, and the trust I have built in the relationship. Stephen R. Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* said that "Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships." I recommend you start there, building trust. Stay genuine with your intent to serve others, stay kind, look for the best in others and interact in a consistent, positive manner, giving respect and listening to understand with an

open heart and open mind. It might take some time but stay the course. If you act from the foundation of a strong set of positive values, when it feels good to you, it will feel good to others too.

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