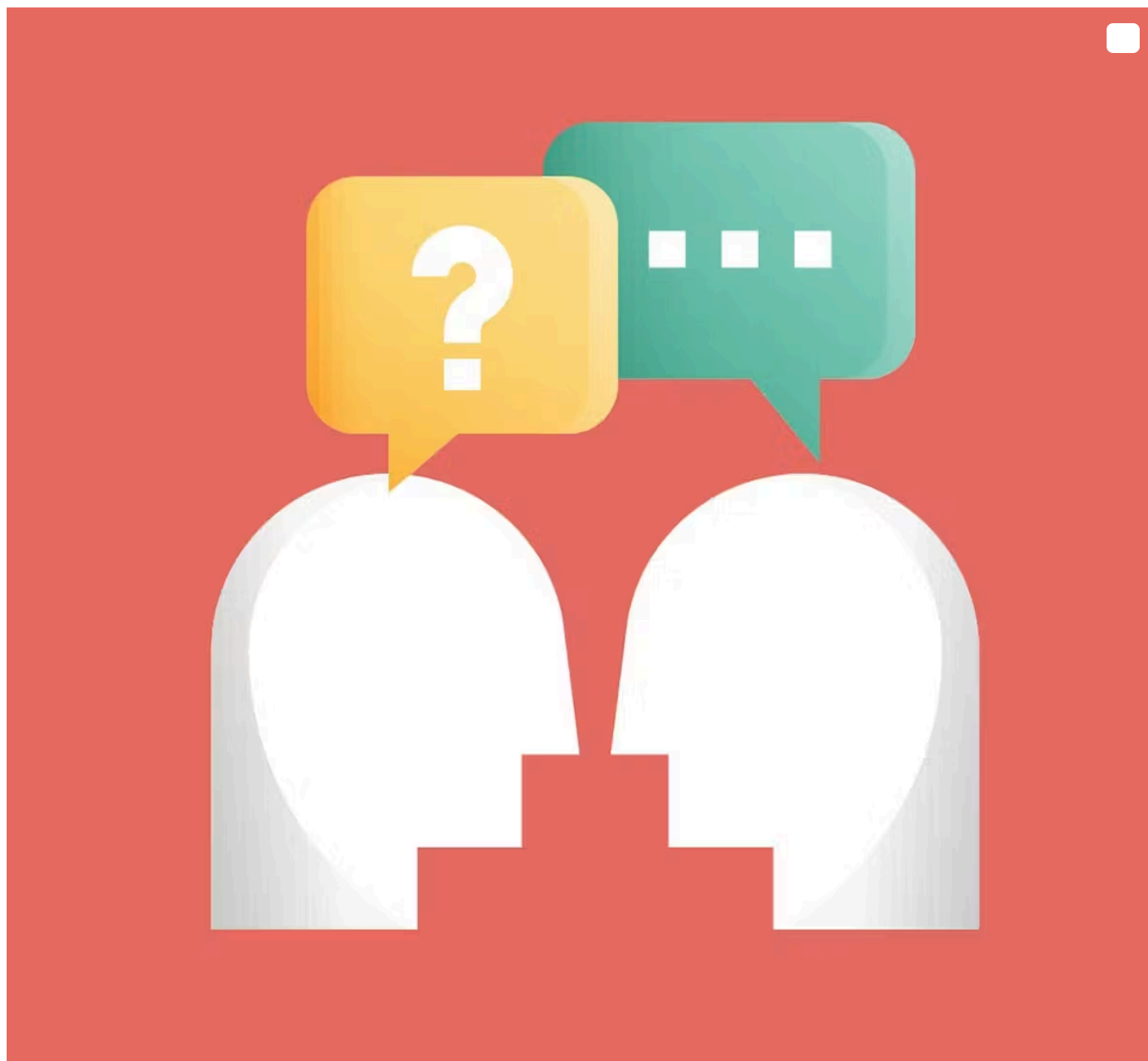




MANAGEMENT

Coaching Corner with Patty Eschliman

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What kind of attitude should a seasoned MT(ASCP) with an MBA take with a less experienced younger tech who I trained and who now feels she knows more than I do. I trained her, now she knows it all and acts like my supervisor. Help — this younger gen SUCKS! Unprofessional and arrogant and constantly uses the f-word.

Dear Seasoned MT(ASCP):

What attitude do I recommend? Humility. I believe everyone has something to bring to the table. Whether you are seasoned or of a younger generation, we can all add value. Additionally, if we remain open to our differences, we often learn a lot from each other. Saying a generation different than yours SUCKS, I feel, is unprofessional and arrogant. It has been said that our feelings for another person can sometimes be a mirror into what we, ourselves, need to learn in order to grow. Generations often express disappointment with the next generation but life marches on. Combining our strengths is always more productive than defining our differences. Maybe she does know more than you or maybe she is just a new scientist that is insecure, feels your negative energy, and is trying to overcompensate. When you get furious, become curious. Get to know her better, you may have something in common.

By the way — I strongly dislike the word SUCKS, we can be challenged by different things and frustrated by others, but this word has no place in a professional's vocabulary, which leads me to the f-bomb — the worst of all poor choices in professional expression! Don't get me wrong — there are several very specific uses of the f-bomb in private or social situations that no other word

fits, but never in a professional workplace and certainly not in the lab. I recommend that you do not react the next time the f-bomb is used (so as to manage your own emotional reaction). But on a good day, mention, "Hey _____, Can I share something with you that really bothers me? I notice that you use the f-bomb quite a bit and it doesn't feel right. To me, it feels offensive and unprofessional. I really want us to have a good working relationship. Can you please not use that word while at work?" If the behavior continues, go to management.

How do I support my team's development and growth through participating in learning opportunities and stretch/growth assignments while not overburdening them with too much to accomplish during their working hours so that they don't burn out? The management level above me has told me that it is ok for my team to accumulate overtime to complete the tasks they deem necessary for team development. I feel like a failure as a leader if I task them with more than can be reasonably accomplished within their working hours. While that can be somewhat controlled or limited, I fear this will leave no space or flexibility to tackle emerging issues and will result in multiple failures across the team or overburdening myself with picking up everything that gets dropped.

Dear Caring Lab Leader:

You are never a failure as long as you care and show your team that you care about them. I understand the risk of overburdening your team and appreciate your concern for burnout. Burnout, to me, is caused by continuous, prolonged, and unrelenting stress or frustration that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion. If you were to find out from your team the kind of activities they would find fun or engaging, would those activities contribute to stress and frustration or possibly add some freshness to the daily grind and alleviate some of the pressure? I realize that staffing is a challenge but instead of paying overtime, would your administration be open to a part-time or PRN scientist that

can help lift some of the day-to-day burden so there is more time for projects? If you do not already have one, I would recommend a career ladder that you could design with help from your team. A career ladder can consist of different levels of attainment that one can only accomplish on an annual basis thus helping with retention. Level One, the first year, Level Two the next year and so on. Incentives to work on these levels could be financial bonuses (a few hundred dollars) or some type of status recognition. Each level would include more challenging projects with a higher incentive. If you are not yet connected to a professional organization such as ASCLS or ASCP, I recommend that you do because these peers can be a great source of ideas as you start developing your career ladder. The key is to get staff involved — they are the only ones who can help build the excitement for the things they find of value. Including a public service goal is a great idea to consider! One of the greatest strategies to decrease burnout is to broaden our world, think bigger, and find gratitude around us. Giving back to your community can be as simple as hosting a blood drive or collecting food for your local food pantry. Best of luck!

I have two different microscopes in my lab. Counting platelets (PLTs) with oil immersion with microscope shows variability. How do I standardize this?

Dear Microscope Scientist:

As long as you have similar microscopes that are in good repair and you are consistently using the same power (100x) under oil, the variation is probably human, not equipment. The two greatest issues that cause variability would be the quality of your peripheral smear and the policy you use for counting. Make sure your team knows how to make a good peripheral smear. A perfect smear is a smooth distribution of cells from concentrated to thin with a rainbow edge you can see when you hold it up to the light. No tails, no ridges, no streaks. Anything less needs to be redone. Go through 30 slides if you must. Next, make sure you have a policy that ensures your team is consistently counting multiple fields (usually 10) within the same area on the peripheral smear and then using whatever calculation you identify to get to a final number. Different labs can

recommend different calculations. There are procedures out there to help or reach out to your professional community.

Justify the purpose of sampling materials in quality control and explain why 100% inspection is not always feasible.

Dear QC Analyst:

Running quality control on every assay is not only required by our regulatory bodies, it also ensures that the testing system performs appropriately with known values so that when we introduce unknown values (patient samples) we have a 95% confidence rate that these patient values will be reported accurately. Why not 100%? Because we do not live in a perfect world and there will always be multiple types of errors including random error.

About the Author



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