



Product
Development



MAINTAINING STABILITY IN A MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR BIOPHARMA ALLIANCE

An alliance between biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies can mean big opportunity—and big risk. Working out structure and process details in advance helps. But maintaining stability is still a challenge.

Integrated Project Management Company, Inc. (IPM) worked with a large biopharma company that formed a multibillion-dollar alliance. The organization wanted to add multiple promising assets to its arsenal. It teamed up with another international company that was looking to co-develop assets and seeking sales and manufacturing support so it could more quickly cure debilitating neurological diseases.

HIGH LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



Because each partner owned multiple assets, they set up the alliance with detailed governance processes in their agreement. Separate joint committees for marketing, finance, manufacturing, and clinical development were formed to govern the assets. Each committee's lead rotated every year, and each company chaired different committees. Executives at both companies participated in each committee to ensure the shared assets received the proper attention and commitment.

The assets were in various stages, from those in early clinical trials to those preparing for manufacturing and launch. To keep details straight, the alliance established strict meeting frequency, agendas, and

outcomes. The contract defined the roles, responsibilities, and abilities. It seemed the companies thought of everything. But with an alliance that is large, complex, and global, there were bound to be challenges.

The contractual details made for restrictive guidelines, so proposing changes required in-depth discussion and agreement. Because the teams were from two different countries, sensitivity to cultural differences was also important.

And then the alliance manager for one of the companies resigned, followed shortly by his replacement.

THE UNDERSTUDY ALLIANCE MANAGER



An IPM consultant had been leading a project under one of the alliance workstreams when the first alliance manager resigned. The new alliance manager had witnessed the consultant's planning, project leadership, and soft skills, and he asked the consultant to help him. Then the new alliance manager left the

company. Company leaders asked the IPM consultant to become the interim alliance manager and keep the critical partnership on track.

The consultant called his counterpart with the other company right away. The two talked about their professional experience as



well as their families and other personal topics. Each brought the same emphasis on building relationships to the workstream team members in their company.

With strong executive presence and stakeholder management skills, IPM's consultant was comfortable interacting with and guiding the vice presidents and C-suite leaders on each workstream. This gained their confidence and helped maintain the alliance's stability.

His project management expertise came to play in many ways, including gathering, distilling, and communicating information so people could make intelligent decisions. With team members and stakeholders in multiple countries, he strategically scheduled meetings around time zones and holidays.

The alliance manager prioritized strategic thinking over tactical thoughts. For example, a workstream argued about the look of a

pill and wanted to escalate the problem to the executive level. The alliance manager brought the teams together to understand concerns and reminded them about putting the patient needs first. They agreed on a solution, so they didn't need executives to intervene.

When leaders rotated on workstream teams, the alliance manager started the conversations early between the chair and their vice chair, who were switching roles, to prepare for smooth transitions. They determined what responsibilities each person would keep and what they were handing over and when.

The IPM consultant also took on the cultural differences head on. While he represented only one company in the alliance, he built relationships and tried to balance the efforts of both parties. He aimed to increase the commitment and passion of both teams. And he managed the expectations of his counterparts about the budget and resource constraints they needed to adhere to.

BRIDGING THE GAP



The IPM consultant's alliance manager role was a temporary one. But the projects and workstreams involved in the alliance stayed on track during the nine months of his leadership. Moving the work forward while filling the management gap enabled the biopharma company to find a suitable permanent alliance manager and get them up to speed.

The drugs that were in development have been FDA approved, are still on track, or have been strategically abandoned. Importantly, today the multibillion-dollar alliance is still stable and functional.

