

Summary

The quality assurance (QA) professional should make an effort to develop communication skills. Ineffective communication can cause critical findings to be sidelined or ignored. This poster outlines some of the strategies for developing a positive, collaborative relationship with scientific staff.

Cognitive Adjustments

QA and scientists should have a collaborative rather than adversarial relationship.

Keep in mind that it is not in QA's scope to:

- Determine what resources are needed for a study
- Choose a specific corrective action for a finding
- Decide when additional training is necessary for personnel
- Determine scientific validity of study data

Avoid thinking of scientists as a list of their audit findings (keeping score). Approach each audit with fresh eyes.

Practice patience when a systemic issue is discovered; it may take time for a solution to be implemented.



Written Communication

Focus on the problem rather than the person. Frame your writing in this way.

- ✗ Scientist Smith failed to document pipette used in extraction.
- ✓ The pipette used in the extraction was not recorded.

Pick your battles. Determine which issues have highest priority and focus on those things first. Return to lower priority issues at a more convenient time.

Understand the pressures that scientists face: deadlines, sponsors, management, study directors, and others. Acknowledge the stressors they are facing when asking for additional work or documentation.



Verbal Communication

Never underestimate the power of a face-to-face conversation. Use a one-on-one discussion rather than an e-mail or messaging to brainstorm a solution that produces the highest quality data and achieves compliance goals.

When discussion of a solution is needed, listen to the scientist first and work with them to reach a compliant result.

Practice sincere apologies when an error occurs on your end. This includes acknowledging what went wrong, and what you can do going forward to avoid a repetition of the problem.

Make a point to give praise publicly for a job well done. Criticism should initially be given privately.

Be aware that some scientists may take critique of their work as a personal attack. Work with them to understand the common goals of compliance and data integrity.



Conclusion

There are many strategies for communication that can assist in overall regulatory compliance. The auditor should start by adjusting their thinking, then applying that attitude to written and verbal communication. Make an effort to develop a positive relationship with scientific staff before the relationship is tested by a stressful situation.