

Megan Hills interviews

Nick Hunt,

Executive Director of Bosch Institute
University of Sydney,
Department of Pathology



Why scientists need team skills

Picture yourself as a manager of a scientific research team. Their job is to discover life-saving cures. The stakes are high. Smooth teamwork is vital. Now imagine your surprise when you realise your staff are all in the wrong jobs...

This is Nick Hunt's story. "It was during a 'Working With Different Personalities' training session with my team when I realised the staff who had a natural flair for structure and organisation were in roles that required spontaneity and flexibility. Meanwhile the highly adaptable staff had been assigned firmly structured forward-planning duties."

After the session, new roles were happily negotiated. Team spirit at the lab immediately soared and work efficiency increased to optimum levels.

"Many assume that scientists are all highly methodical and detail-driven people," Nick said. "But my team is just like any other: a colourful mix of different personality types that work much better when in the right jobs."

Nick's top 3 team management tips:

1. Meet regularly It's important to meet regularly with members of your team both individually and collectively. Use the time to get to know the person better, as well as for problem-solving and discussing direction.

2. Acknowledge all staff contributions Both individually and in front of larger groups. By acknowledging all staff, no negative perception around favouritism occurs. Those who start projects are often forgotten by the time the end result is achieved, so it is especially important to remember those people.

3. Assign duties & environments to fit the person Look at the personality preferences of each of your staff and what job they are likely to excel in. Also be conscious of where they work – e.g. some thrive in the interactive environment of open plan offices, while others find it hard to concentrate. So cluster those who don't want distraction into the same area.

What Nick Hunt Says About TLS

"Eleanor is funny, outgoing, organised and always well-prepared. In her presentations, she uses humour and stories extremely well. Her roleplay exercises reflect exactly what's going on in that group back at the workplace. It's so much better than just listening to cold facts."

Book a course on managing change for your team Call 0433 126 841