Description

It’s a Lot Like Dating

You may not need to resort to Match.com or eHarmony.com, but the process of finding a collaborator for your research study can be just as nerve racking.

But to begin with, there’s no need to change your hairstyle, lose weight, or embellish details about your life. For the search to be successful, approach it like a process with clear objectives and milestones. This way, you won’t have to lose sleep over finding a research collaborator the next time.

Where To Start Looking?

Establish clear guidelines for your search—understand what you need from your collaborator before you start looking. Sources, in order of convenience, would include the following:

- Colleagues within your institution
- Colleagues within your professional associations
- Conferences
- Research Databases such as GoPubMed

Setting Clear Objectives

Successful collaboration on a research study requires a firm commitment to a complementary outcome for both or all co-authors. This cannot be achieved if any of the parties involved feel abused, mis-represented, or taken advantage of. Approaching the collaboration as a *quid pro quo* forces you to understand what you are bringing to the table in terms of skill and experience. If you are a relatively new researcher, you may be introduced to potential collaborators who bring more specific skills to the table. Are you committed enough to the project to hand over primary authorship to a more skilled colleague or would your ego preclude that?

Transparency is needed

A clear declaration of why you’re seeking a collaborator, what you need from that person, and in what time frame can save a lot of time in extended but fruitless discussions.

- *A resource issue* – the study is too big to go solo, or you need specialist equipment
- *A skills issue* – the study requires a complementary set of skills and experience
- *A data issue* – your collaborator may have access to data that can expand the parameters of your study or give you a larger population sample

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license

Be willing to approach this as an iterative process. It's unlikely that you'll find the perfect collaboration partner in the first round of replies, but you'll at least get a sense of who is available in your research niche and allow you to make some decisions as to where you can modify your protocol to accommodate that availability. Ultimately, you may have to arrive at a combination of resources, skills, and experience to get your project off the ground.

The harder choice lies in the number of collaborators you are willing to bring on board. Many hands may very well make light work, but the corresponding maxim is that "too many cooks spoil the broth."

Don't Get Married Right Away

This may not be possible if you're facing a funding or publication deadline, but successful collaborators often advocate for a smaller trial project to test the waters of a new relationship before undertaking a major study. Take the extra time to find "Dr. Right" rather than settling for "Dr. Right Now." Remember that a research study, as divorce in marriage, can be messy and painful for all concerned.

Category

1. Promoting Research
2. Using Online Media

Date Created
2015/11/13
Author
editor

Copyright: Enago Academy under the CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 license