



# Life Science Leaders

The newsletter for executives in Biotechnology and the Life Sciences

May 2006

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Joe Murphy, co-author  
*Installing Quality Circles*

### The Odyssey in Quotes

*“In a world where a copy of a cost-accounting manual can matter so much, have you considered the ways, big and small, you can improve people's lives?”*

Lynn Ly Johnston  
*International Expansion:  
Need not Greed*

*Biotechnology is one of the most research-intensive industries in the world:*

- *The U.S. biotech industry spent \$17.9 billion on research and development in 2003.*
- *The top five biotech companies spent an average of \$101,200 per employee on R&D in 2002.*

## Besting the Bust of the Boom

The economic return has begun, although long in the coming for biotechs. Yet, as we once again (gratefully!) survey the prospects for adding new staff, we're seeing the number of new prospects diminishing.

Meanwhile, the skill-sets needed in those new hires is steadily growing. Technology convergence now requires that we span more areas of deeper knowledge than before, thus raising the bar for hiring.

The industry's international growth is also changing hiring requirements. While enhanced global communication has turned the world into one huge employment pool, it has also generated a need for understanding different cultures and methods.

That calls for a more sensitized, discriminating worker, with better judgment.

Raising the job-skill bar has made an already tight labor pool tighter.

The good news is that, as with the engineering and high-tech worlds, many talented scientists are being trained in new work markets, such as India and China. They bring with them not only the scientific rigor that biotech needs, but also the multi-cultural skills needed for the future.

But a challenge still remains in the U.S. as to how we hone openness to diversity.

I think we also have advantages over IT. By lagging the high-tech

industry growth cycle, we have their experience to learn from.

More importantly, while our search for innovative thinking shares similar techniques, its core value is different: Life science break-throughs are borne of long-term knowledge and years of arduous testing and validation, not just the latest training.

So another important goal is keeping people on the job longer.

Fortunately, the workforce is staying healthy longer. Concern about retirement resources also has many Americans considering putting off retirement.

Their years of knowledge and experience will be extremely useful in meeting the challenges ahead.

The question is how much longer can people stay engaged and contributing?

My guess is that the next era workforce will be more powerful on its own; driven by internal motivation, not corporate dictum. Paradoxically, it will need to be both more self-managed and more collaborative.

In addition to educating and hiring to higher global standards, this calls for building in culture and developing people in the workplace.

That train of thought led me to my own coach, Joe Murphy, a veteran of executive coaching and co-author of *Installing Quality Circles*. In addition to career and senior executive coaching, Joe consults with people who coach – like me.

*Mari Paul  
Founder, Life Science Leaders*

## Executive Interview:

### Joe Murphy

#### Executive Coach

**MP:** Joe, how do you envision the ideal workforce twenty years from now?

**JM:** Globalization is going to be paramount to everything that is happening over the next twenty years. This will require us to get along with a lot more people than before. Our influx of immigrants will contribute to this, as well as more and more global outsourcing, making an increasingly bilingual workforce

**MP:** So are you saying that where we have always thought that English would take over as the only language, we will now see “bilingual” taking over?

**JM:** Exactly. But it isn't just the language. It's methods. I just talked to a guy who is going to run a call center MCI is moving from India to the Philippines. His greatest translation challenge is not language, but rather, translating American business practices to other cultures.

**MP:** Moving on, where do you see under-tapped resources in our work market?

**JM:** Everywhere. The typical US company isn't managed well. Very few even have performance standards. This is especially true for knowledge workers, of which the US is the largest importer by a large margin.

I generally achieve a 39% improvement of performance on my engagements, which tells me that these companies were previously under-managed by at least 40%. What is worse, though, is that, by not having measures of performance, they cannot reward it.

**MP:** What skills do you think we should be trying to reward, and thus improve?

**JM:** All of them. But we should start with leadership, for which the most important discipline is listening. Most corporate leaders are tellers rather than askers. They have an ingrained disconnect to listening.

**MP:** How do we change this?

**JM:** Improving listening usually requires overcoming some ego. We really need to get that there is always enough credit to go around. I think one of our finest in Washington said, “There's no end to what can be achieved if you don't care who gets the credit.”

You may recall the Hawthorne Project, which consisted of raising and lowering lighting to see when productivity was stimulated.

They found that lights could be raised or lowered and productivity improved – just because it seemed like someone was paying attention.

But I think the second part of the Hawthorne Project was even more important.

In this segment, they brought in recent college graduates and asked them to go throughout the company and gather information about problems the workers were having.

They told the students that, since they didn't know very much about the business, they should only listen and gather information.

However, they found that in addition to gathering the information, the process also generated many solutions – just listening allowed many people to solve their own problems.

Additionally many compliments came in on how effective the consultants were. This is what I often do in my consulting.

We also can redefine leadership away from a focus on winning at the expense of another.

To achieve the greatest win is a function of the largest possible definition of winner; that is, defining efforts so everyone wins.

**MP:** How can we do this, Joe?

**JM:** We should talk more about what we're winning in competitive scenarios. How about also winning respect, goodwill and the reputation as a good corporation?

**MP:** Since much of this success relies on work attitude, what are some thoughts you would pass on to reinforce the progress? Go ahead and stretch us on this one.

**JM:** Let's look back at the 50's and ask ourselves how many of their Fortune 50 (did they have Fortune 50 back then?) stood the test of time.

We are told that the three institutions that have stood the test of centuries are the family, the church and the school.

**MP:** So we should have “kinder gentler” working relationships?

**JM:** Yes. Who's to say a biotech couldn't become even a little more eleemosynary? Research for the love of science and the good of mankind, living on charitable grants, government subsidies and awards from WHO, the UN, etc?

**MP:** Yep, that's a stretch. I can't think of a group that has tougher scientific and financial hurdles, but we also have to keep reaching out, don't we? ❖

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