

# Getting the Most out of your Functional Service Provider Partnerships

*To improve efficiency and save costs, many sponsor companies have moved beyond conventional outsourcing to a more strategic model such as a Functional Service Provider (FSP) Partnership. In this article, Dr Chris Eastwood, Allergan's Senior Regional Area Manager, GB R&D Europe, and Linda Christmas, Senior Executive VP, Global Resourcing Solutions at Chiltern, share some of their tips on how to get the most out of your FSP relationships.*

## Start with mutual trust and respect

It all starts with mutual respect and trust between the sponsor and provider. Any imbalance can cause friction and mistrust, and can create a “blame culture”. From our experience, the old “Master / Slave” relationship has proven to be counter-productive, and it is important therefore to have this mutual respect right from the start.



Other important items that are crucial for discussion are:

- Administrative support.
- IT systems compatibility
- Invoicing requirements.

## Recruit the right people

If a sponsor provides a consistent pipeline of resourcing or headcount requirements, they can help the provider to deploy the most effective recruitment strategy.

## Put the basics in place

A successful relationship depends on effective forward planning of objectives and strategies, backed by a solid communication and risk management plan. This reduces the need for ad-hoc fire-fighting, which can be damaging to the overall partnership as well as to the individual projects concerned.

Clear criteria and expectations for candidates then enable the provider to pre-screen for the right individuals, and to make sure all candidates have accurate information on the role. This helps people make an informed decision on whether to apply, attracts the right



people for the role, and reduces time spent interviewing unsuitable applicants.

Ideally, a joint governance approach should cover both the structure and control of the partnership. This should include joint handling of issue escalation.

Clear expectations, open feedback, and lessons learnt should be integral to the partnership from the planning stage right through to the end of the project.

When these basic elements are in place from an early stage, mutual trust and commitment is far more likely to follow.

Once the best person has been identified, it is vital to make a quick and competitive offer, in order to secure the candidate ahead of the competition.

## Follow through into the maintenance phase



A thorough induction programme is crucial in helping people to settle in to

the working practices and culture of the sponsor organisation. Both sponsor and provider need a consistent approach to managing workload. To motivate and retain good team members, it's also important to share training and career development plans between sponsor and provider.

Employee engagement surveys, appraisals, customer surveys and exit interviews all give valuable feedback that should be used by both parties. Take notice of feedback and act on the issues highlighted, and you see greater staff commitment, higher standards of work, and improved profitability.

Regular appraisals and on-the-job assessment by both parties also allow management to spot individual strengths and weaknesses and to target areas of concern. This in turn increases productivity, job satisfaction and loyalty.

It's also critical to ensure that IT systems are compatible. Without this, you can't be confident of efficient and effective communications.

### Look to the Future

To implement a successful FSP relationship, sponsors need to choose providers with proven functional expertise, disciplined business processes and experienced clinical professionals. FSPs are not short-term solutions - they are mid-to long-term arrangements that require significant

investment from both sides. As the partnership develops, further integration possibilities often emerge.

These include:

- Greater freedom for providers to select staff.
- Integration of sponsor and FSP personnel to promote the "One-Team" sentiment.
- A wider range of opportunities for FSP employees within the sponsor organisation.
- Expansion of FSP roles into the sponsor's other business divisions.
- Provision of add-on interim solutions and task-based services.
- Higher retention rate through innovative and engaging programmes.

### Top Take Home Messages



The key success factors in developing and maintaining successful sponsor-provider relationships include:

- Mutual respect and trust.
- Communication, communication, communication!
- Planning.
- Shared oversight, shared ownership.
- A sense of humour. There will always be challenges, but the way they are tackled is key!

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