Shepherd Payne Streamlines Co-Development Processes with Effective Teamwork, Decision-making and Communication

One of Shepherd Payne's clients was feeling competitive pressure to launch their new asthma product early. Part pharmaceutical and part medical device, the combination product required two highly skilled teams -- the client's internal development team and a key supplier -- to work efficiently in tandem. Shepherd Payne was asked to step in and facilitate this complex co-development project.

Shepherd Payne founding partner Barry Payne's first step was to change the membership of the working core team. Barry wanted to avoid a phenomena he refers to as "the submarine effect" where a team meets once to assign deliverables to a supplier, who then goes "underwater" to work for several months with minimal communication. Results are often off-target with this approach, and the client couldn't afford delays.

Instead, Barry asked a partner from the supplier company to join the core team as a full-time member. This accomplished two things: it facilitated better communication, and built a true partnership between the teams. The supplier team member acted as a champion for the project within his company. It also helped break down the "us versus them" mentality than can sometimes arise on co-development projects.

Barry's next step was to form a joint steering committee with leadership from both companies. Many times steering committees don't play a very active role on projects, but not in this case. At the first meeting, the committee discussed several uncomfortable questions such as: *If a mistake is made, who will pay for it? If adverse conditions occur, what will we do about it?* They defined their relationship from the start and decided how they would work together.

Key issues at the core team level were elevated to the steering committee. The questions were submitted prior to the committee meetings so members could research them in advance and come to the working meetings prepared to make decisions. The committee met regularly both in person and by phone to settle issues. Over the course of the project, the steering committee put in lots of travel time, but the investment was worthwhile.

The product launched six months ahead of schedule -- a feat many originally felt was impossible. "Many people worked hard and put in extra hours to make things happen. They went above and beyond because the team had a good relationship. At the end of the day it all comes down to relationships," said Barry.

In post-project surveys many team members felt that having Shepherd Payne as a third party facilitator was a key to the project's success.

Contact Shepherd Payne to learn more about their expertise with team and project facilitation.