



How to Make the Beneficial Collaboration Work?

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

To build a successful research lab, the beneficial and interdisciplinary collaboration is needed although it also comes with potential risks such as being scooped due to power imbalance (1, 2). If you do not know personally (directly and indirectly) collaborators having complementary expertise due to being just identified by internet searches and lacking extensive personal networks, how to make the beneficial collaboration work?

In our experience, we have contacted potential collaborators with a letter describing our research identifiers, the common goal of collaboration and research part that our lab cannot do but the collaborator can do. As research identifier, ORCID ID (<http://orcid.org/>) or Research ID (<https://www.researcherid.com/>) is a good and unique identifier that helps researchers maintain an accurate record of their research output.

Within one month after contacting them, there were three different responses to our collaboration proposal: (i) around 25% showed no responses; (ii) nearly 50% responses were negative with recommendation of other researchers and some reasons such as no available manpower due to their ongoing projects; and (iii) about 25% were positive and never small. Therefore, do not be afraid to contact unknown collaborators.

In the next step, we met the positive and candidate collaborators in person to discuss each responsibility and authorship of any resulting papers (3). And then, we had been welcoming the chosen collaborator(s) as equal member(s) for the best beneficial collaboration.

Furthermore, a recent report points out that collaborative research between PhD students and/or postdocs in a lab is needed for the best science (4). As it said, a bigger concern on collaborative research in the lab is the final authorship decision.

In our experience, co-first/equal authorship is a better model to boost collaboration than two collaborators decide on authorship order. Co-first authorship is when two or more individuals are referred to as offering the same or equal contributions to a paper.

“Since biomedical and clinical research has become increasingly complex and team-driven, there has been a dramatic increase (>30% of all research publications in 2012) in the percentage declaring co-first authorship” (5). In the early stage of the collaborative research process, two collaborators plan to contribute equally (50%) to the collaborative project, and principal investigator always needs to provide co-first authorship to two collaborators, if their contributions do not



make a significant difference, for the most profitable and strongest collaboration.

In summary, the following points are needed for the beneficial and strong collaboration work: (i) for collaborators outside a lab, contacting with potential collaborators with a letter describing our research identifiers and the common goal of collaboration; and (ii) for collaborators in a lab, providing co-first authorship to each collaborator.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflict of interests to disclose.

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