

How to build A clinical team In a technology company.

Insights derived from
Google Healthcare leaders.

**“We believe that there is a way that
establishes a **robust, thriving clinical
team within a major technology
company****

that brings

**a deep understanding of the current
health care system to bear and a
passion to make **meaningful
disruptive improvements** that
improves people's lives “**

Lesson 1.

Clarify the Role of Health
Professionals Across the
Enterprise

“

A robust clinical team
only makes sense if
the company views
health as a **key part** of
its mission.



Health can mean many different things to a company:

- . **Oversight** of employee well-being;
- . **Adherence** to health and safety regulations in a given industry;
- . **Product development** for consumers, patients, and providers;
- . **Partnerships** with health systems and biopharmaceutical companies.

“

Are these efforts just a cost of doing business, or are health efforts an important part of how the company creates value?

Clarifying this point is a **precondition for success.**

Lesson 2.

Develop, Communicate,
and Act on a Consistent
Set of Clinical Values

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Having a **shared set of clinical values** that are **consistent** over time sets the **tenor, tone, and goals** of the organization for existing members, new members, and partners.

It also helps to ensure that the team's overall approach is **consistent** across a large enterprise.

Google's Clinical Team Values

Our team's set of tenets include:

- We make decisions based on rigorous evidence.
- We're building for everyone.
- We build products through an ethical and equitable lens.
- We think of health as more than health care – we consider nonmedical and contextual drivers of health.
- Success isn't just about better health or health care; success is about better quality of life for everyone, everywhere.

Source: The authors

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Lesson 3.

**Recruit for Talent —
but not only for
Clinical Expertise**

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Clinical expertise is table stakes, but clinical expertise without an **innate product mindset, flexibility, and the ability to adapt and integrate into a new culture does not help anyone.**

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Clinical team members must deeply understand not only the **user and user journey**, but also the **product, technical, and business constraints**.

“

Another key characteristic is **humility**.

This characteristic is critical not just for **cultural adaption**, but also for the **agility to flex roles** depending on the needs of the product or team.

“

For clinicians, especially physicians, moving from a health care–focused institution to one where health care is only part of the business portfolio can be a **major shift** because it places them **outside the focal point of attention.**

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Clinical teams should be **diverse** in race, ethnicity, gender, life experience, and health professional background/training.

The evidence is **overwhelming** that teams made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds are better at **solving hard problems**.

“

And, as in clinical settings, we believe that **multidisciplinary teams have better outcomes.**

Lesson 3.

Develop Clarity on – and
Build Consensus Around
New Ways of Working.

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The role of 'clinician' is a **new function** for technology teams, and new functions have **inherent ambiguity**.

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Companies also must avoid the potential risk that clinical engagements will follow a pattern of **only one-off, ad hoc** interactions.

When teams first encounter clinicians, they often think of them as **subject matter experts** and utilize them just for **ad hoc advising**.

“

While ad hoc advising has definite value, it does not reach the **full potential of a blended team.**

At Google, we've sought to evolve from these one-off engagements to a spectrum of activity that spans true **collaboration, cocreation, and leadership.**

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This transition from advising to collaboration and cocreation comes with a **learning curve for both** clinical and nonclinical team members.

It takes time because it is a **cultural change**, but this integrated approach can **meaningfully improve how we build products.**

Lesson 5.

Invest in the
**Infrastructure That
Supports Career
Progression.**

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Establishing organizational structures to support clinical team members, including **developing specific job ladders** and performance review expectations that are **customized** to the work of the clinical team, is absolutely **critical for success.**

Lesson 5.

**Be Ready to Adapt,
Grow...and Adapt Again**



In early stages of these clinical teams, it is common to have individuals playing multiple roles:

Nursing professionals who serve as product safety officers,

Physicians who check in code,

Clinicians who serve as product managers.

This is analogous to a **technology start-up**.

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Similarly, the role of clinicians becomes **more distinct over time.**

Informal influence becomes formal **responsibility**, and clinicians may have responsibility for **company-wide policies and approaches** that require the clinicians to **focus** on the roles and responsibilities for the broader team.

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Consequently, leaders working on establishing these teams **must be agile and continuously planning for their future evolution.**

REFERENCES

All excerpts are taken from the article:



JOURNAL ▾ EVENTS ▾ INSIGHTS COUNCIL ▾ TOPICS ▾ ABOUT COVID-19 🔍

COMMENTARY



Building a Clinical Team in a Large Technology Company

Six lessons from Google's health care leaders.

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