

Distributed R&D: Isn't There Something Better than Spreadsheets and email?

Randall K. Julian, Jr. Ph.D., President, Indigo BioSystems, Inc.

Until recently, drug companies looked like automobile companies of the 1920s: self contained command-and-control monstrosities. Today, it appears that we are heading toward a much more distributed and fragmented business model involving dozens of companies collaborating across the globe on complex research projects. If we are to be successful and move to the distributed R&D model we will need some better tools for communicating and managing risk than we have now. If researchers are expected to do more with less, doesn't it beg the title question: How can we do our jobs when all we have to manage the complex projects we run are spreadsheets and email? Don't our jobs and the future of our companies depend on being efficient and making good decisions?

This talk is intended to present alternatives to the document-centric and fire-wall locked approaches that dominate the lab informatics landscape today. We will discuss innovations that carry us far beyond simply using modern programming languages in our system implementations. If the drug industry is reinventing itself, it is time for a new informatics paradigm focused on making individual scientists more productive and better equipped to prosper in the new pharma business model.