



HIV VACCINE
TRIALS NETWORK

FRED HUTCHINSON
CANCER RESEARCH CENTER

A LIFE OF SCIENCE

November 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

In August 2005, I hired Steve DeBroux to help me establish the Center for Collaborative Research (CCR) at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. Our initial focus was the establishment of the HIV/AIDS Network Coordination project (HANC), funded by the National Institutes of Health. I was charged with uncovering efficiencies across six federally funded HIV/AIDS clinical trials networks while encouraging scientific collaboration and the transparent exchange of data and ideas across the research disciplines. This was a novel and very ambitious (some said impossible) project as the work of each clinical trials network was seen as competitive and dissimilar. Because the investigators in this effort were scattered across the globe, I hired Steve to help explore ways that emerging internet technologies could support global collaborative efforts such as the HANC project.

After researching various technology solutions, Steve recommended that we implement Microsoft Office SharePoint Server as our web-based collaborative technology backbone. Working with Hutchinson Center server operations, Steve oversaw the initial installation of the hardware and server software. We also hired and worked with an excellent team of IT consultants. SharePoint was a new technology to all of us, and Steve took the lead in working with this team to understand how we could best utilize document management systems, communication tools (blogs, wikis, and discussion libraries), team sites and workspaces to support the scientific needs of our collaborators. In addition to this work, as our IT Coordinator Steve was responsible for all our IT-related needs including design and development of business collateral and branding, and design and deployment of our public facing and member websites.

Steve is intelligent and motivated to learn, which was critical, as we needed him to quickly get up to speed on both a complex new information technology and the rapidly evolving science of HIV research. We were working in a startup environment with many demands, limited resources, and a great deal of ambiguity, all learning together where the opportunities were and figuring it out as we went along. Steve's communication skills were incredibly valuable during the technology adoption process, as we had to convince skeptical scientists to change their behavior and adopt new processes and tools. Steve conducted much of the training and proved adept at translating technology in ways that users could understand and get excited about. In the process, he also gathered important usability information that allowed us to improve the tools we were providing.

After the first year, we saw rapid growth in both scope and resources. We were awarded a contract from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to establish the Alliance Management office for a new global effort in HIV science. The Collaboration for AIDS Vaccine Discovery (CAVD), established to support many of the most prominent and promising HIV vaccine scientists in the world, was a great opportunity for us to show what our new collaborative system could do. Steve oversaw the rapid deployment of over 30 distinct team sites, providing online spaces where teams of scientists could both collaborate privately and also share their work with the rest of CAVD. Steve spent time with several CAVD consortia to discover how they were currently working, and uncover ways that SharePoint could be adapted and used to make their work processes more efficient. This work was showcased at the first meeting of the CAVD and became the template that other CAVD consortia would follow to develop their collaborative spaces.

On a more personal note, I have known Steve both personally and professionally a long time and have observed him in a variety of situations. His background in psychology, genuine curiosity about who people are and how they think, and his affable personality allow him to connect and work well with all kinds of people. We traveled and worked together in Malawi where Steve negotiated the challenges of language and culture smoothly, with humor and respect. He has an easy confidence that makes people quickly feel comfortable. This was a real asset on the HANC and CAVD projects because of the variety of roles involved and the international diversity of these projects. I am confident that Steve could make an easy transition into both an independent and a teamwork-oriented environment.

I recommend Steve without hesitation or reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Kublin'.

James Kublin, MD, MPH
Executive Director
HIV Vaccine Trials Network
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center