

Cynthia Matossian, MD, says that working well with industry requires the same basic decent behavior that is needed for any effective relationship, organization, or interaction in society. Be prepared, be ethical, and play well with others, she recommends. Based on her stellar reputation and involvement with all areas of the eye care industry, the formula works like a charm.

PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS



Working well with industry is key to staying current. The rules of thumb that I have found useful in building my reputation and playing well with everyone are outlined here.

RULE NO. 1. Be proactive. Do not wait for industry to come to you; approach the company or companies you want to work with. You can offer to participate in advisory boards, speak at local dinner programs, or write an article, for starters. Do not be discouraged if you are offered small projects at first; bigger ones will come later, especially if you offer suggestions, assistance, and information that companies find useful.

RULE NO. 2. Be responsive and timely. Answer requests from industry in a timely manner, and be sensitive to their deadlines. Do not make them follow up repeatedly. Industry representatives remember the

physicians who are reliable and do not require constant reminders. Be respectful of the medicolegal review process. Turn in requested materials on time—even early, if possible. If you are making presentations, be aware of audiovisual requirements. Make the time to visit the Speaker Ready room before presentations to ensure a smooth program.

RULE NO. 3. Be forthright. You can work with multiple companies, even competitors, if you are careful to be forthright with everyone involved. Do not claim you are exclusively using only one manufacturer's product if it is not true. Be open and direct, explaining that you like the product in question and use it, but you also use other products and work with

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Dr. Matossian (third from left) at the CheckedUp ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Dr. Matossian receiving the 2016 Inside Out Award from TearScience, in recognition of bringing meibomian gland imaging and meibomian gland dysfunction treatment to the forefront of ocular surface health management (top left); receiving the 2017 Ophthalmic World Leaders Visionary award (bottom left); sitting on a panel for Marco (bottom right).

"You can be in demand with industry because of your expertise and experience. ... You can earn a place on the short list of those who are called on early and often to represent new and cutting-edge technologies and products."



other companies in the same space. Do not let company representatives find out the hard way; state your other relationships frankly from the start.

RULE NO. 4. Be ethical. Do not engage with a company or product in which you do not believe, refrain from speaking about products that are not aligned with your own experience, and always speak from your own true experience.

RULE NO. 5. Be prepared. Ask industry representatives questions about the goals and key messages on which they want you to focus, and review and practice your presentation in advance. If you are not familiar with a particular cited study, review the relevant papers. If you are not sure about what is intended in a slide or graph, ask. Last-minute changes are difficult to accommodate, so it is best to develop your talk well in advance; never begin preparation the night before a talk.

RULE NO. 6. Be compliant. Understand the rules and the regulatory environment. Attend any compliance training required, and pay close attention to staying within the lines regarding what can and cannot be stated, what must be disclosed, and how compensation is handled.

RULE NO. 7. Be realistic about time commitments. Do not over-commit to industry projects. If you do not have room on your plate for a project, turn it down. In case of schedule conflicts, always be quick to offer an alternative time.

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YOU CAN BE IN DEMAND WITH INDUSTRY because of your expertise and experience. If you follow the guidelines outlined here, you can earn a place on the short list of those who are called on early and often to represent new and cutting-edge technologies and products. ■

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- Financial disclosure: None acknowledged