

# A Personal View on Establishing a Career in the Life Sciences Sector

Dr Sharon Williams

# Overview

- Who am I?
- How I started
- Work experience
- What has helped me to establish my career

# Who am I?

- Dr Sharon Williams – Downstream Process Development Manager at ProMetic BioSciences Ltd (PBL)
- PBL is an biotechnology company based in Cambridge, that designs and manufactures affinity separation products for the manufacture of biopharmaceutical and biomedical products
- The Research and Development facility in Cambridge employs 30 people
- I am responsible for the development of separation processes for proteins from complex feedstocks using specifically designed affinity adsorbents coupled with conventional separation techniques

# How I started

- In 1994 I began a degree in Biological Sciences at the University of Wolverhampton
- 1996-1997 I completed a year as a Research Assistant in the School of Chemical Engineering at the University of Birmingham as part of a sandwich degree course
- After graduating in 1998 I began a PhD in the School of Chemical Engineering at the University of Birmingham
- I graduated with a PhD in Chemical Engineering in 2001

# Work experience

- In 2001 I became a Post Doctoral Research Associate at the Cambridge Unit for Bioscience Engineering (CUBE) in the Chemical Engineering Department at Cambridge University
  - I had the flexibility to conduct my own research in addition to the project I was employed to work on
  - Access to facilities and knowledge
  - Had the opportunity to work with PhD students and final year project students – fantastic opportunity to share your passion for your subject!!
  - There were negative aspects including; poor pay, short term contracts, inability to apply for your own research grants, often treated as a commodity by the academic staff, lack of team working environment

# Work experience

- In 2004 I began working at ProMetic Biosciences as a Senior Scientist in the Downstream Process Development Group
  - Lab based role working on the downstream processing of client proteins
  - Working on separation materials that were used in processes for the manufacture of biopharmaceuticals
  - The negative aspects included; balancing tight project deadlines with the desire to research what you're working on, often products are made to standards that are 'good enough' in order to get products to market, learning and understanding the company politics, your work being directed by the Sales and Marketing team

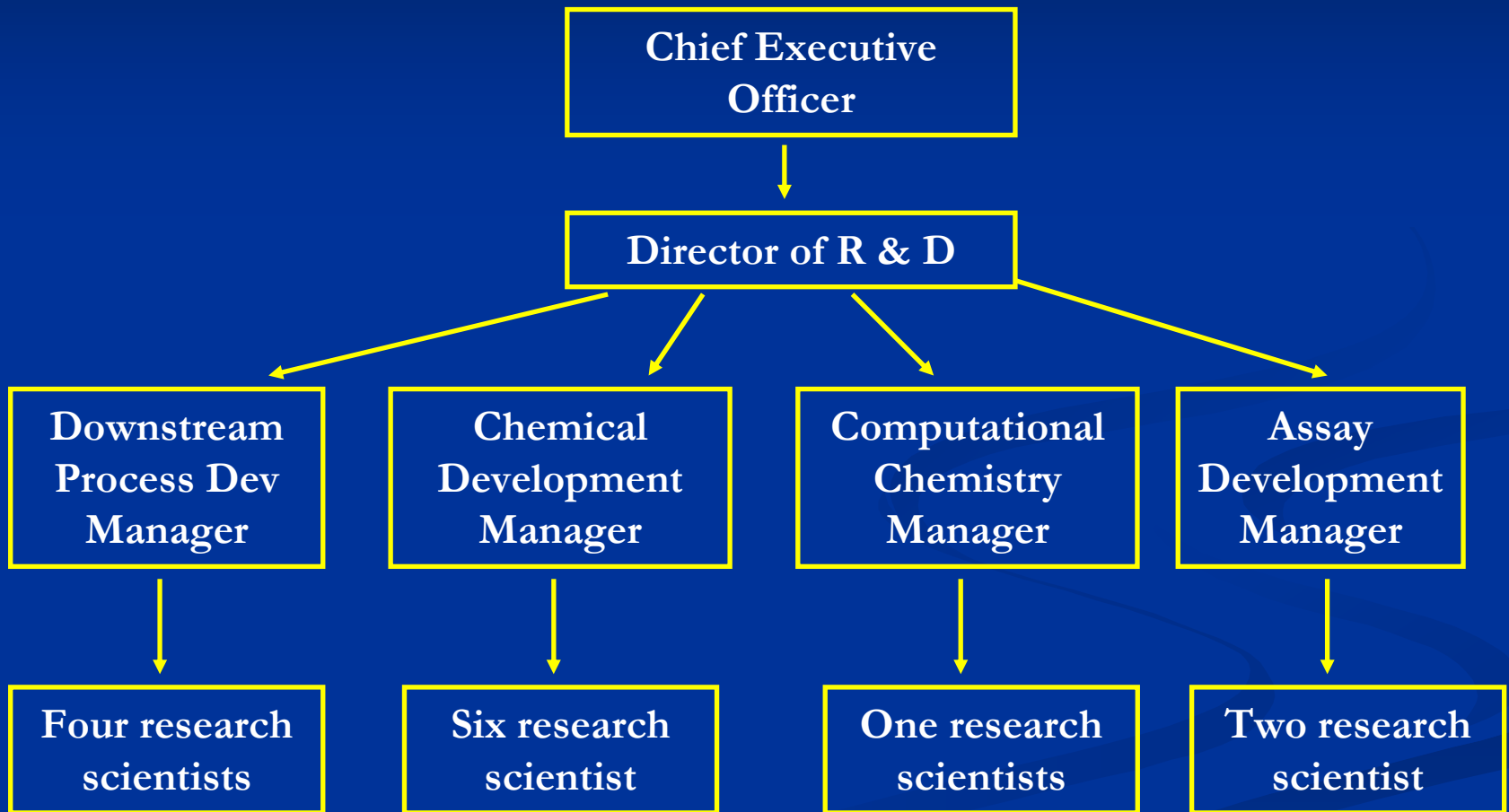
# Work experience

- In 2005 I was promoted to the role of Downstream Process Development Manager
  - Moved into a desk based role
  - I became responsible for the day to day work of four scientists of varying standard from new graduates to experienced PhD's
  - Work closely with the Director of Research and Development; CEO, Global Sales and Marketing Manager and the CFO
  - My voice now makes a difference!
  - Negative aspects include; no longer working in the lab, accountability to the Senior Management team, HR responsibilities for the group

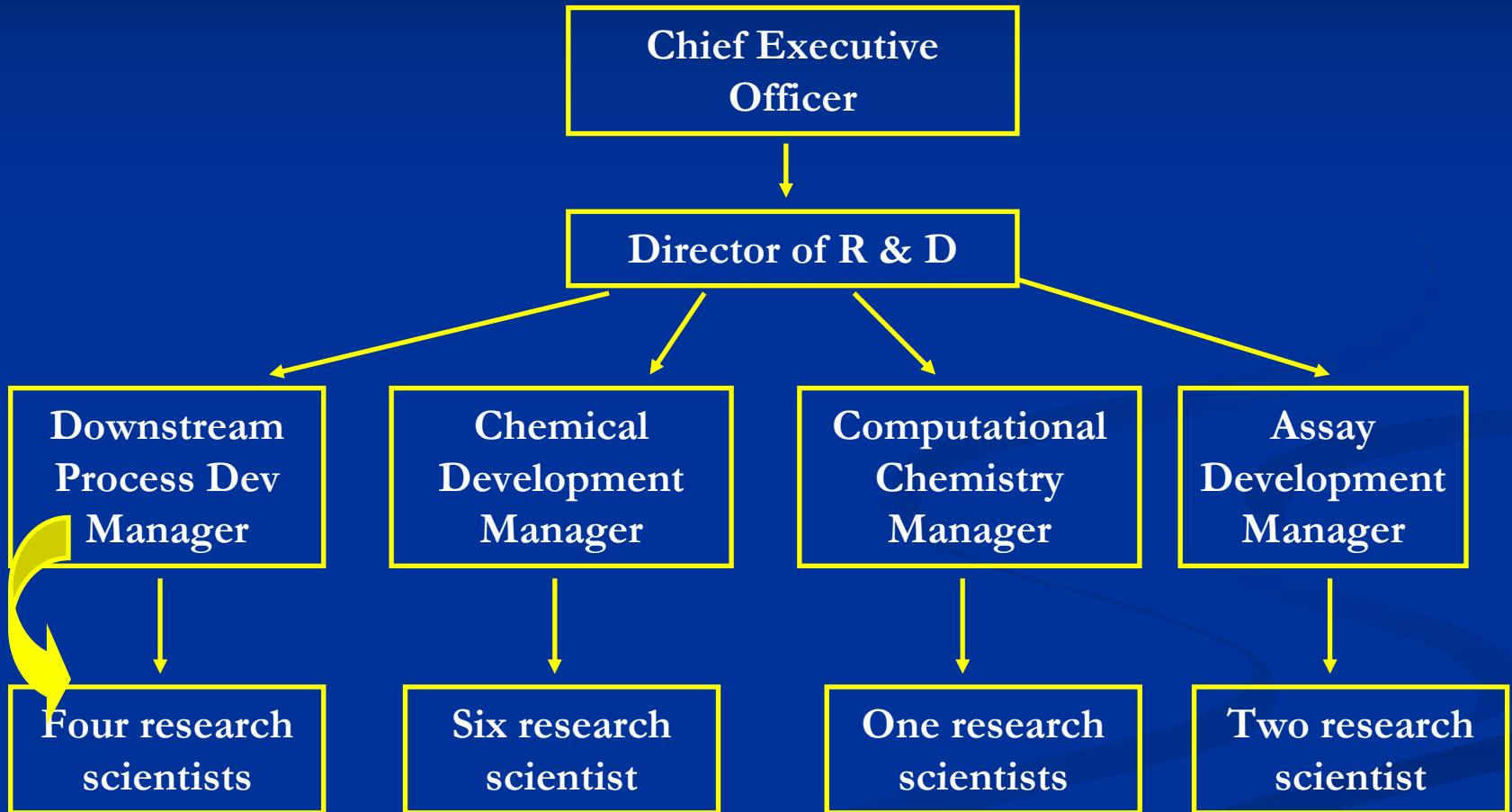
# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels

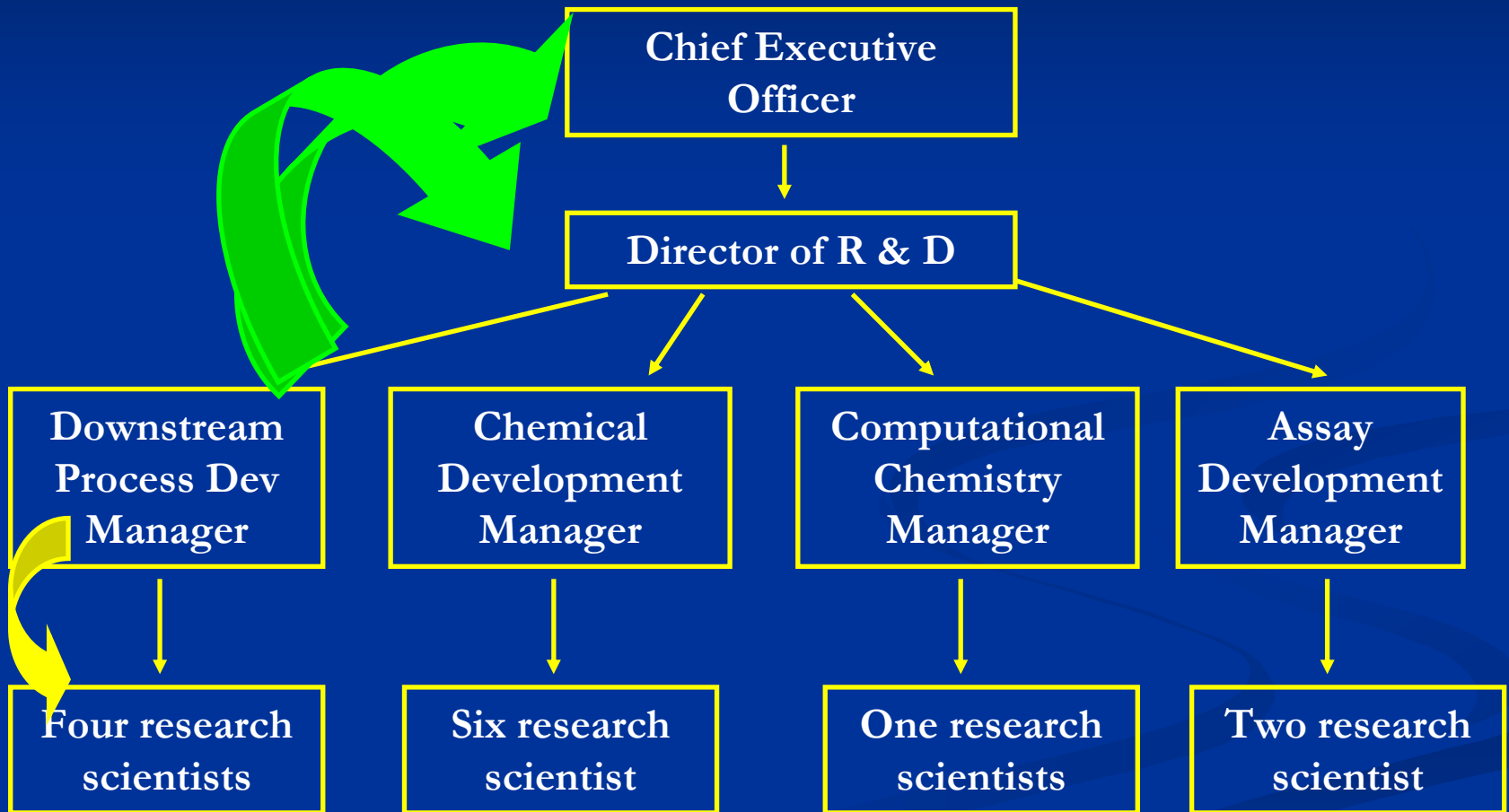
# Communication



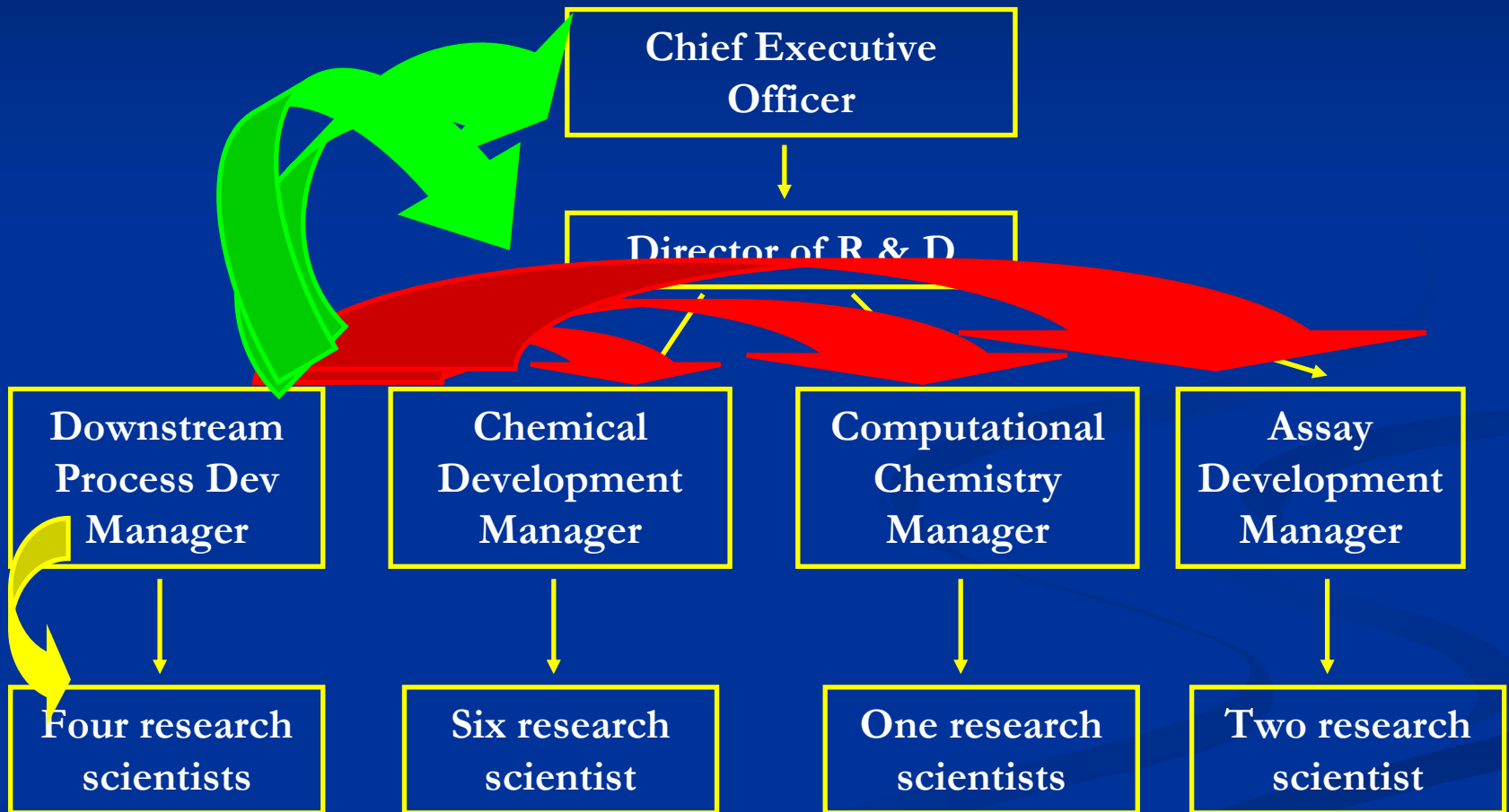
# Communication



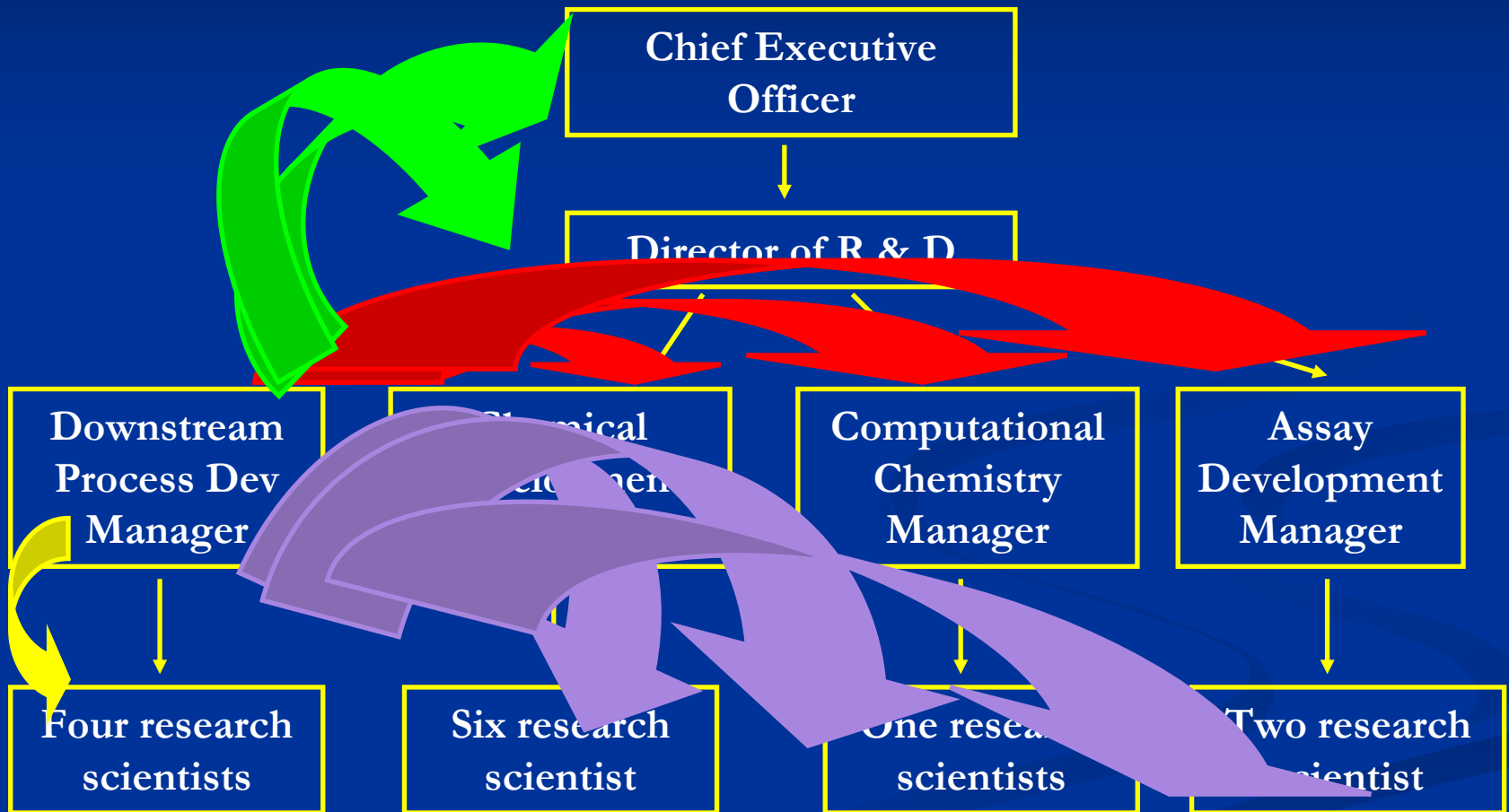
# Communication



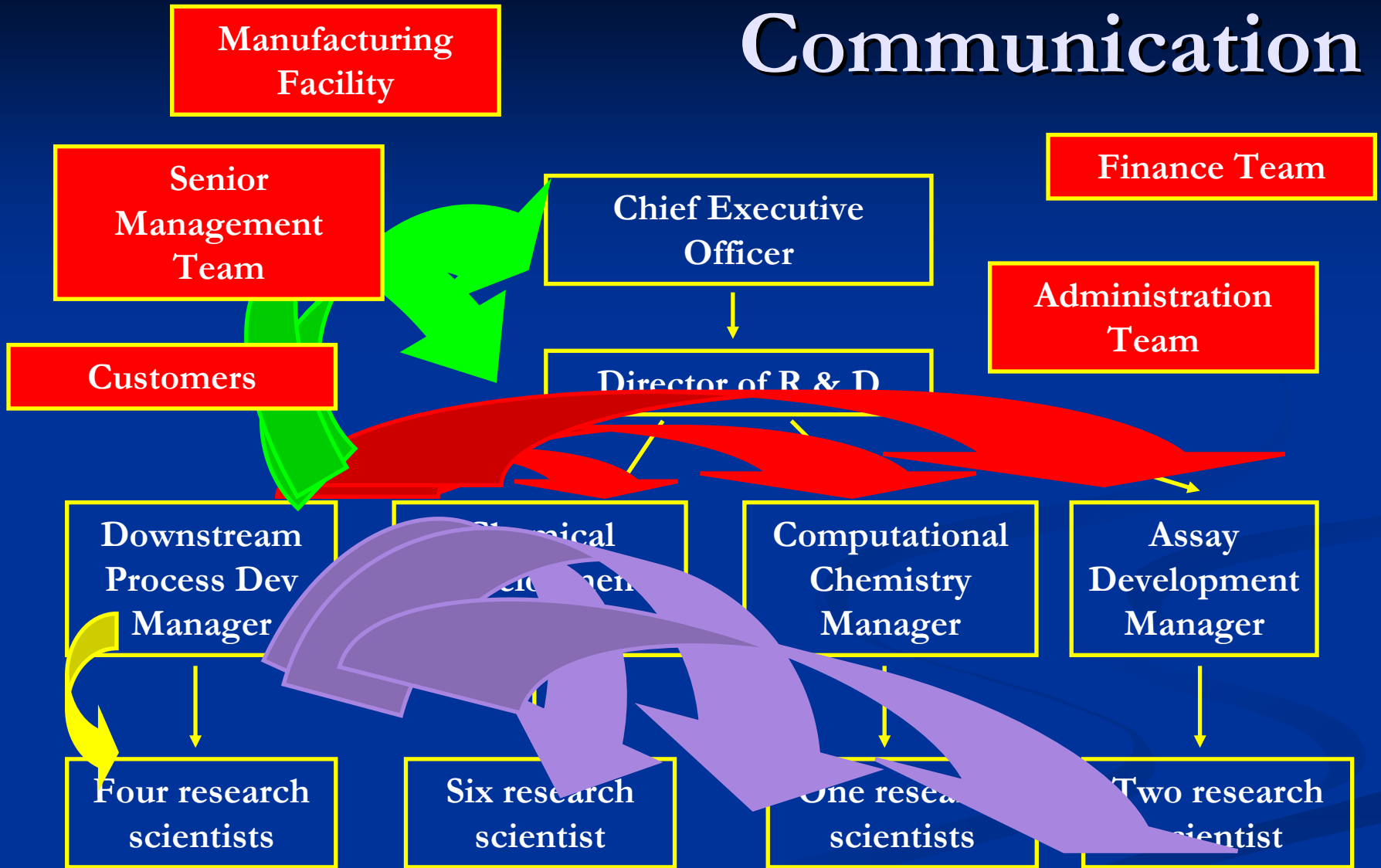
# Communication



# Communication



# Communication



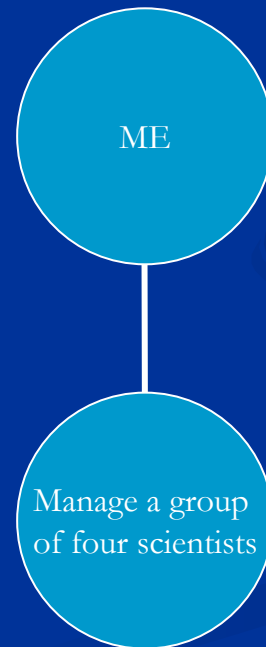
# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with

# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity

# Flexibility and opportunity



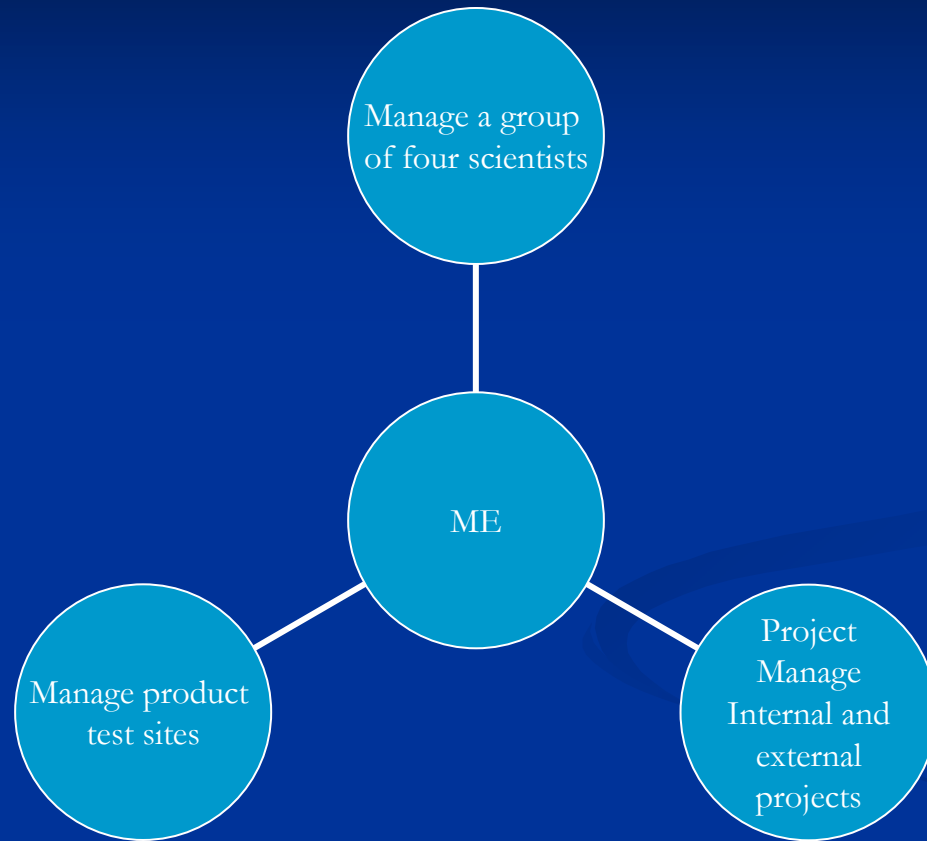
# Flexibility and opportunity

Manage a group  
of four scientists

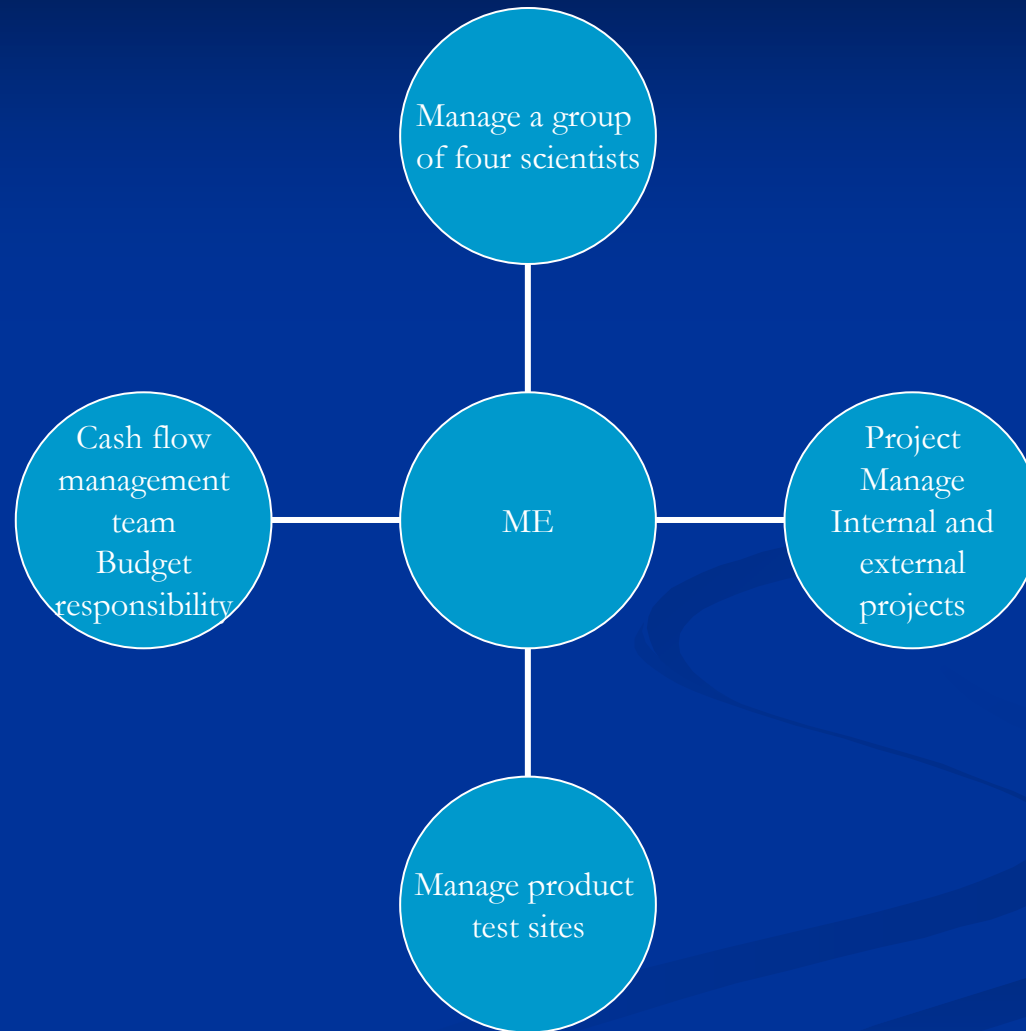
ME

Project  
Manage  
Internal and  
external  
projects

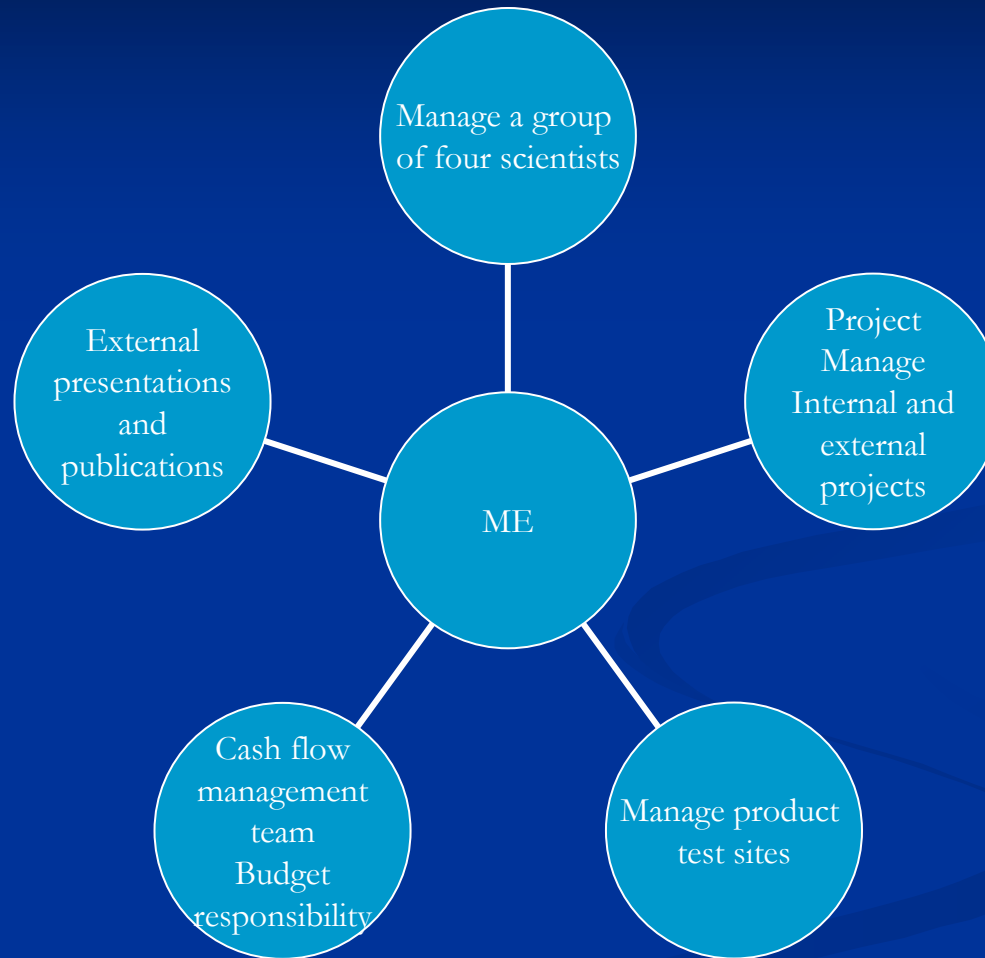
# Flexibility and opportunity



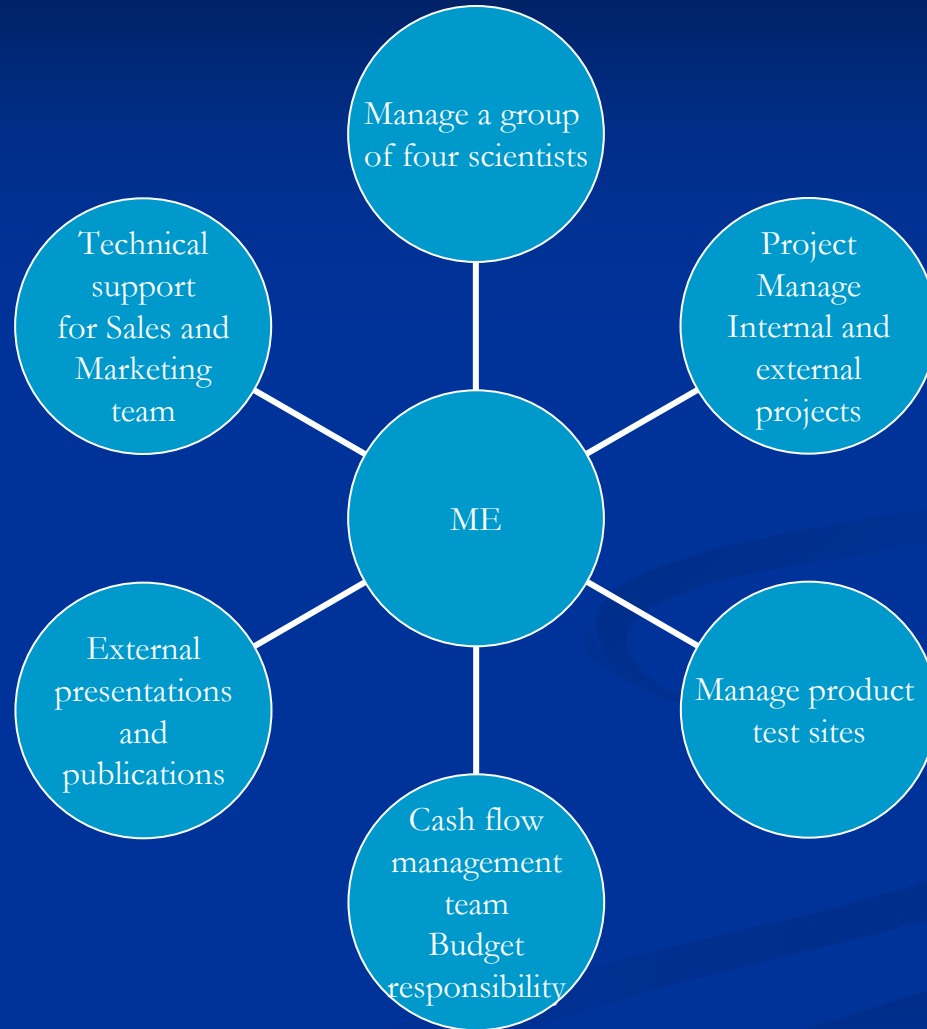
# Flexibility and opportunity



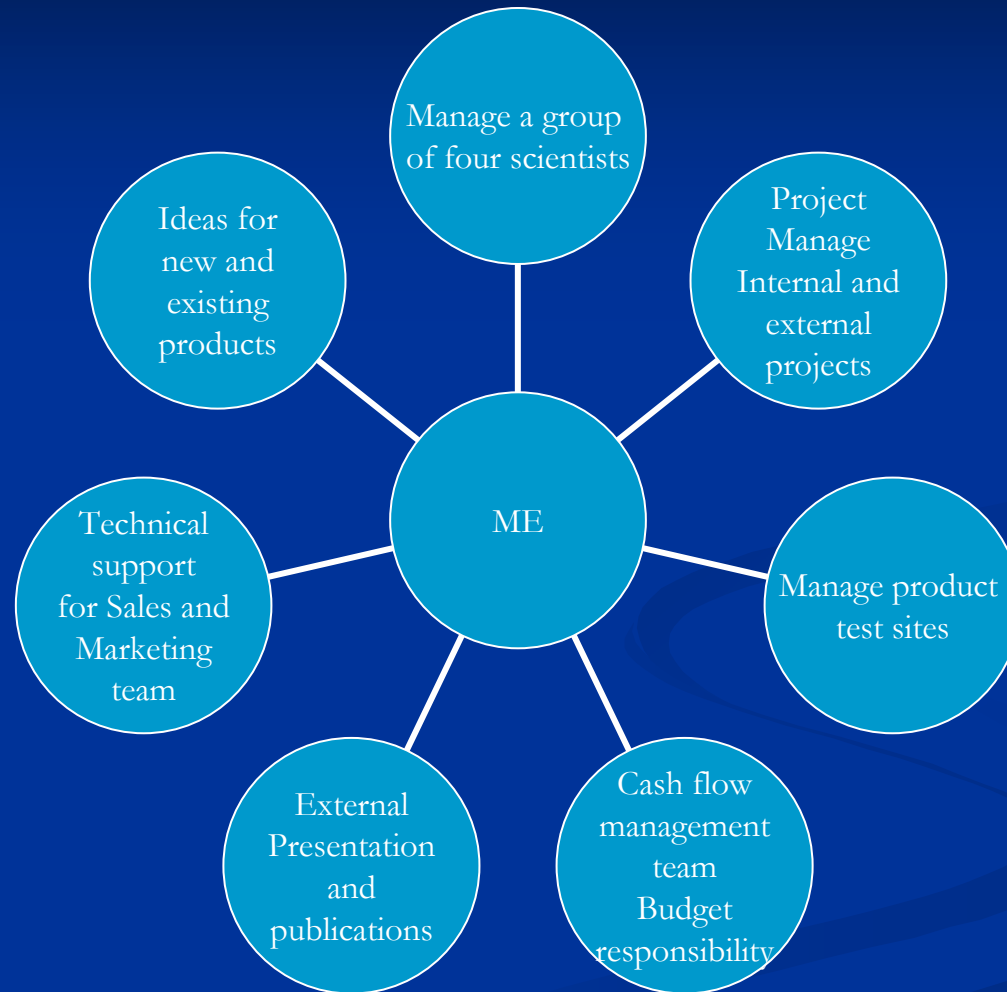
# Flexibility and opportunity



# Flexibility and opportunity



# Flexibility and opportunity



# What has helped me?

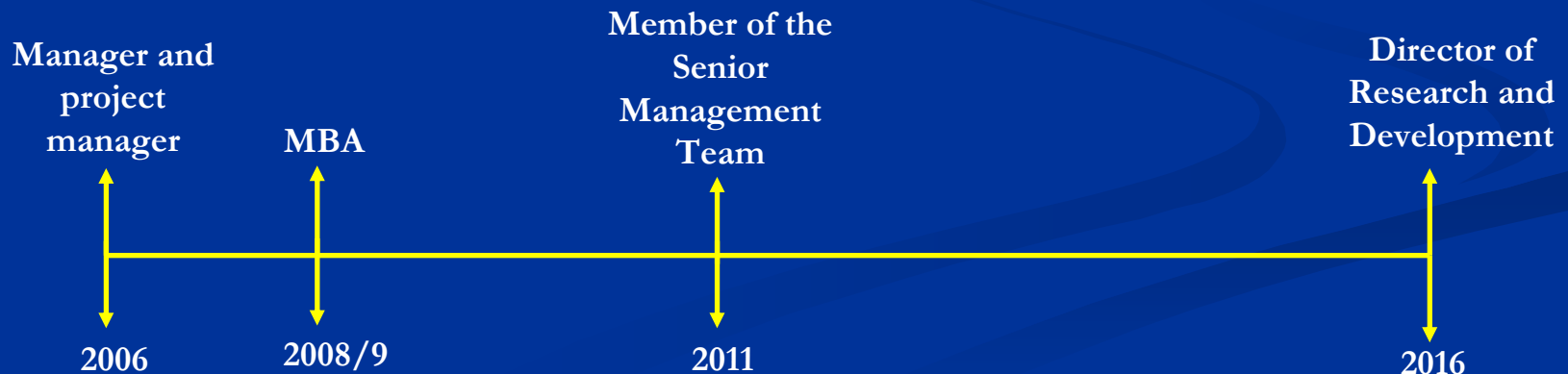
- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts

# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts
- Writing a personal development plan and being ambitious

# Personal Development Plan

- Where I am now
- Responsibilities
- Where I want to be
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- What could stop me
- What can help me achieve my goals
- Short term goals (within the next 1-2 years)
- Possible training courses
- Medium term goals (within the next 5 years)
- Long term goals (within the next 8-10 years)
- What I need to work on



# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts
- Writing a personal development plan and being ambitious
- Having a mentor

# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts
- Writing a personal development plan and being ambitious
- Having a mentor
- Establishing and maintaining a network

# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts
- Writing a personal development plan and being ambitious
- Having a mentor
- Establishing and maintaining a network
- Getting involved

# What has helped me?

- Ability to communicate at all levels
- Knowing the people I am working with
- Flexibility and opportunity
- Asking for help, knowing what advice to take and trusting my instincts
- Writing a personal development plan and being ambitious
- Having a mentor
- Establishing and maintaining a network
- Getting involved
- Commitment and hard work

# And Finally....

- Good luck!!!!