

A talent program that asks scientists to slow down first

UMC Utrecht and Relevance developed a talent program for young academics: 24 physician-researchers, assistant professors and post-docs from different disciplines who were given room to reflect on their ambitions before practicing the skills to pursue them.

UMC Utrecht • Netherlands • Since 2025

24 scientists

physician-researchers, assistant professors and post-docs in the first cohort

3 new groups

starting after the first program

1.5 days

on personal leadership and values before any skill training

The challenge

Trained to absorb knowledge, rarely to reflect

Scientists receive a lot of theoretical training but generally have little experience with self-knowledge and self-reflection, and in the rush of the day there is no time for it. UMC Utrecht wanted to help them discover what really drives them, and to strengthen them accordingly.

The approach

Slow down first, then practice the power skills

The program was co-created by Relevance consultants and trainers and UMC Utrecht employees, entirely online because of the lockdown, and then run partly online and partly on location. Relevance's years of experience in university and healthcare institutions gave the organization the confidence to work together.

- **Personal leadership first** One and a half days on values and ambitions, opened with a peak-experience exercise, before any skill training.
- **Power skills** Effective communication, presentation and negotiation, practiced in small groups with feedback, such as telling your story in different 'gears'.
- **Expert dialogues** Senior colleagues from UMC Utrecht share their experience and the support that exists inside the organization.
- **Online learning portal** Theory and knowledge on the portal, so that the concise sessions stay practical.
- **Multidisciplinary cohort** 24 scientists from different disciplines who become sparring partners and mentors for each other.

What changed

Powerful career choices and a network across the hospital

Participants got to know themselves, each other and the breadth of UMC Utrecht. They learned to define their ambitions as a 'what' and a 'why' and to take the steps toward them, which lets them make powerful career choices. Colleagues became sparring partners and mentors, in work and in well-being.

At a glance

Program

Talent development program for young academics

Audience

Physician-researchers, assistant professors and post-docs

Format

Blended: training days, online portal, expert dialogues, small-group practice

Cohort

24 participants, three new groups starting

Region

Netherlands

What they did

Blended learning journey · Face-to-face training days · Virtual classroom · Online learning platform · Custom curriculum, co-created

"Participants not only got to know themselves and each other better, but also the breadth of UMC Utrecht."

Myriam van Wijk

Talent Development Advisor, UMC Utrecht

The biggest takeaways

1 For people trained to absorb knowledge fast, the program has to slow them down first: reflection before skills.

2 Keep sessions concise and practical, put theory on the portal, and let the expert dialogues come from inside the organization.

3 A multidisciplinary cohort builds the network that spreads through the organization afterwards.



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