

Listening That Leads to Results

How Roche Turned Site Feedback into Stronger Partnerships and Faster Study Start-Up

For years, sponsors have focused on becoming more “site centric.” Yet for many organizations, that still means making existing processes a little easier but oftentimes without the direct input of sites. Roche asked a different question: *What if sites helped design the process from the beginning?*

At Roche, true site centricity means co-designing processes alongside sites to jointly discover what works well, uncover areas for improvement, and grow collectively. Ultimately, the most effective workflows are built in collaboration with sites, rather than created for them.

That philosophy has reshaped how Roche approaches contracting, feedback, and collaboration across studies. Rather than developing solutions internally and asking sites to adapt, Roche engages sites as partners throughout the process—listening to feedback, testing ideas together, and continually refining the experience.

Trust, in this context, is not built simply by asking for input. It is earned when sites see their feedback directly converted into process optimization - with meaningful, visible results.

One of the results for Roche and its site partners is a contracting approach that reduces unnecessary work, strengthens trust, and has delivered measurable operational improvements across studies.

More importantly, it demonstrates that site centricity is not a single initiative. It is a way of working.

Listening First: Making Site Centricity a Strategic Priority

It's no secret that clinical research sites are managing increasingly complex portfolios while balancing growing administrative demands and workforce pressures. Roche recognized that if they wanted to become a sponsor of choice it would require understanding the demands and pressures from the site's perspective.

Through continuous dialogue with sites, including collaboration via SCRS, regular feedback highlighted clear opportunities to streamline contracting, enhance communication, and eliminate redundant tasks.

Rather than assuming they knew the answers, the team at Roche chose to begin by actively listening to their site partners. “We want to be a preferred sponsor. To do that, we have to hear directly from sites and understand where we can improve,” said Sunita Singh, Global Clinical Operations Excellence Leader.

That mindset positioned site centricity not as a customer service initiative, but as an operational strategy designed to strengthen partnerships while improving study execution.

Designing Processes with Sites

One of the clearest opportunities to improve study execution emerged during contract negotiations.

The catalyst came from a pattern Roche heard repeatedly during conversations. Sites were frustrated by renegotiating indemnification language that had already been agreed upon in previous studies and repeatedly reviewing identical budget terms. Every unnecessary negotiation consumes precious time, introduces administrative burden, and delays the work that ultimately matters most—bringing clinical trials to patients.

So, rather than asking sites to revisit settled issues during contract negotiation, Roche changed the process. Instead of beginning each agreement from scratch, Roche now starts with the most recently negotiated contract language and budget, whenever appropriate, and asks the site a much simpler question: “What has changed on your end?”

By recognizing the history of the relationship, Roche eliminated unnecessary negotiations while allowing flexibility where updates are truly needed.

The change was relatively simple, but the philosophy behind it was transformational. Rather than designing a process for sites to navigate, Roche worked to build one with sites, not just for sites.

As Sahar Naureen, Business Contracting Lead states, “It’s a mindset that we take really seriously—sites as our partners. Together, we get medicines to patients. Our mindset is centered on, ‘help us, help you.’”

Feedback as a Continuous Improvement Engine

Many organizations collect feedback after a process has been completed. Roche treats feedback as a real-time continuous improvement opportunity.

Every contract includes an opportunity for sites to share their experience. Roche also gathers feedback from its own contract managers, creating visibility into opportunities from both sides of the partnership.

When concerns arise, the conversation doesn’t end with a survey score. Teams at Roche investigate the underlying

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causes, speak directly with sites when appropriate, and identify changes that can improve future studies. Lessons learned are shared internally so that improvements become organizational knowledge rather than isolated successes.

As part of this process, Roche also prioritizes clear communication and transparency with sites. Teams explain why changes are being made, how processes will evolve, and what sites can expect moving forward. By keeping sites informed and involved, Roche builds confidence and encourages open dialogue throughout the lifecycle of each study.

Feedback is not treated as a scorecard. Like other Collaborate Forward contributors, Roche treats feedback as a foundational pillar of successful collaboration and one that drives progress while accelerating continuous improvement.

Reinforcing the Culture Internally

Site centricity doesn’t end with external relationships. Roche also works to reinforce those same behaviors internally.

Feedback from sites is shared across the organization so teams can identify trends, learn from one another, and measure whether improvements are having the intended impact over time. Further, Roche employees who receive exceptional recognition from sites are celebrated through internal recognition programs, reinforcing that relationship-building is every bit as valuable as operational performance.

Over time, the relationships that have been built often extend well beyond a single study. In some cases, sites proactively reconnect with Roche team members they have worked with previously—even when those individuals are no longer assigned to the next study. Those relationships reflect something deeper than process efficiency: they reflect trust.



Delivering Measurable Results

Collaboration is often described in terms of relationships. Roche's experience demonstrates that it can also produce measurable operational outcomes.

Operational Milestone	Measurable Result	Ecosystem Value
Site Activation	22 days faster	Studies launch faster, reducing the time it takes for patients to access them.
Contract Turnaround	Reduced from 103 days to 59 days	Eliminates months of administrative gridlock and budget dilution.
Negotiation Friction	Building from existing history	Respects the relationship by asking "what changed?" instead of starting from scratch.
Site Partnership	Radical transparency, and trust	Establishes Roche as a preferred industry partner.

The results reinforce an important lesson: operational excellence and site centricity are not competing priorities. When sites help shape the process, both improve.

What started as an improvement to solve a contracting problem resulted in larger outcomes that are just as valuable: stronger trust between sponsors and sites.

Looking Ahead

Roche views this work as an ongoing journey rather than a completed initiative.

Current efforts focus on simplifying contract language, harmonizing Clinical Trial Agreement (CTA) templates with broader industry benchmarks, creating more site-friendly documents, and improving consistency while maintaining the flexibility needed for individual studies.

However, the objective remains the same: Continue listening. Continue learning. Continue improving.

Collaborate Forward Takeaways

- **Site centricity is more than simplifying processes.** It means inviting sites into the design of those processes from the very beginning.
- **Feedback should fuel continuous improvement.** Collecting input only creates value when organizations investigate root causes, communicate what they've learned, and act on it.
- **Transparency builds stronger partnerships.** Explaining why change is happening creates confidence and encourages collaboration.
- **Culture sustains innovation.** Recognizing and reinforcing relationship-building behaviors internally helps improvements endure long after implementation.

Roche's experience demonstrates that some of the most meaningful innovations in clinical research aren't new technologies or entirely new processes. Sometimes, it's about building processes that are designed with sites, not just for sites. And when organizations listen with the intent to improve, better relationships build better results.

Let's move forward. Together.

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