



AAPA 2026 **Annual Conference**

“The Pathologists’ Assistant Advantage: Turning
Workflow Expertise into Industry Innovation”

September 13-17, 2026

Sheraton Phoenix Downtown • Phoenix, AZ

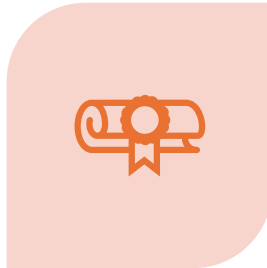
#AAPAfall26



Lecture Objectives



IDENTIFY INDUSTRY CAREER
PATHS RELEVANT TO
LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS
AND STRATEGIES TO
EFFECTIVELY PREPARE FOR AND
PURSUE THESE ROLES.



IDENTIFY THE TRANSFERABLE
SKILLS DEVELOPED IN
LABORATORY ROLES THAT
SUPPORT SUCCESS IN INDUSTRY
SETTINGS.



DESCRIBE THE KEY CHALLENGES
AND MINDSET SHIFTS INVOLVED
IN TRANSITIONING FROM
HANDS-ON LABORATORY
PRACTICE TO CROSS-
FUNCTIONAL INDUSTRY ROLES.



EXPLAIN HOW LABORATORY
EXPERIENCE AND VOICE-OF-
CUSTOMER INSIGHTS CAN BE
TRANSLATED INTO WORKFLOW-
DRIVEN SOLUTIONS THAT
IMPROVE QUALITY, SAFETY, AND
CONSISTENCY.

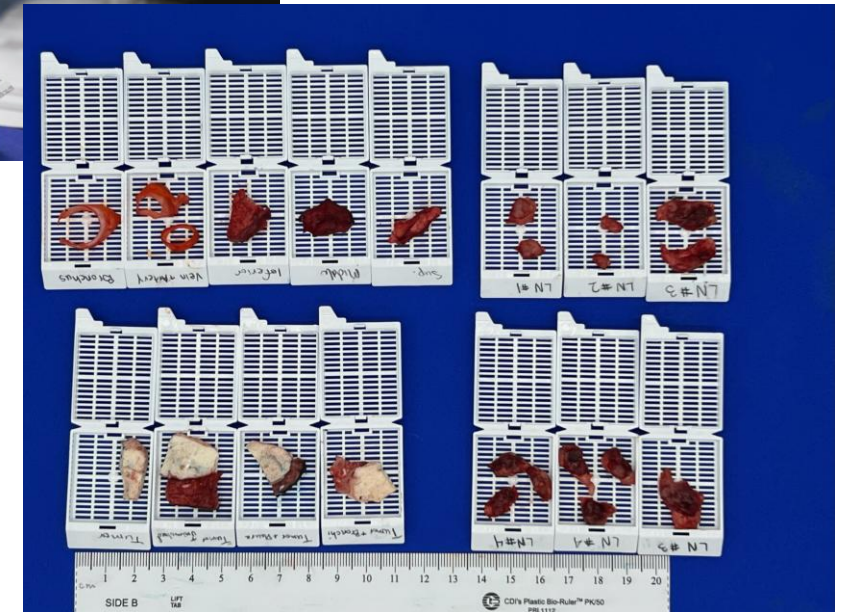
Disclosures

- Product Manager and Clinical SME, Mopec Group

A little bit about me

- **Roseann Vitale, MS, PA(ASCP)^{cm}**
- Product Manager, Clinical SME
- AAPA Grossing Guidelines pediatric section author and advocate for the PA profession.
- **Outside pathology:** family, dog, cars and motorsports.





Why consider a career change?



Why consider a career change?





**“Life shrinks
or expands in
proportion to
one’s courage.”**

— Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*,
Vol. 3 (1939–1944)



**“Far better it is to
dare mighty things, to
win glorious triumphs,
even though checkered
by failure,”**

— Theodore Roosevelt,
“The Strenuous Life” (1899)

WHERE CAN A PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT GO IN INDUSTRY?

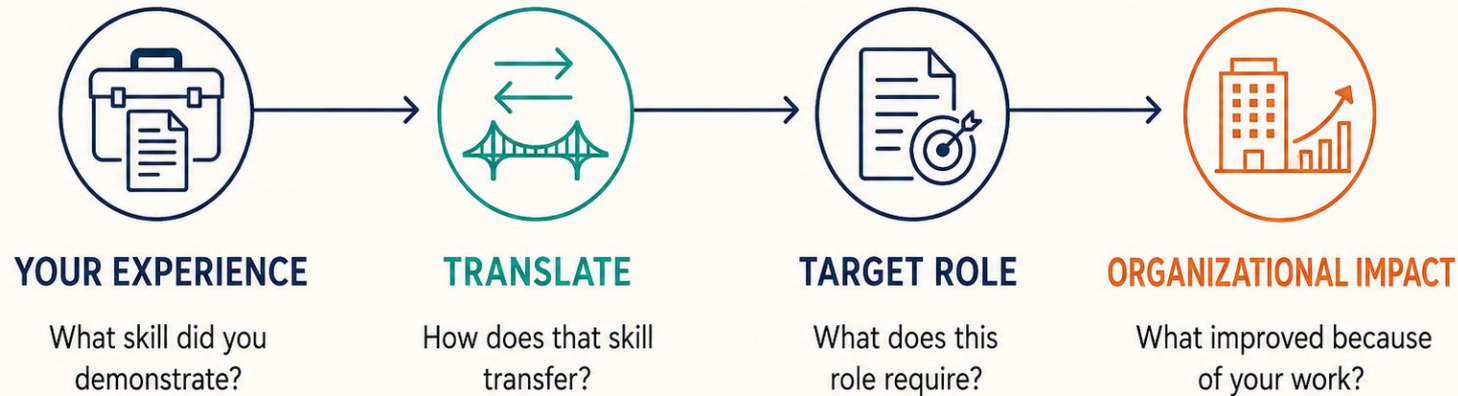


Clinical expertise + workflow knowledge + communication + problem solving

How to get there



Resume Refresh



Skill + role language + evidence of impact

quality • time • safety • cost • people

Translate the work. Show the value.

PA EXPERIENCE



Developed and maintained laboratory protocols and provided administrative oversight of workflow.



INDUSTRY-FACING VERSION



Led workflow governance and standardized operating procedures to strengthen operational consistency, quality, and compliance.

 **ADD EVIDENCE:** cycle time • error reduction • audit results

PA EXPERIENCE



Implemented information technology solutions as an Epic Beaker Super User.



INDUSTRY-FACING VERSION



Supported enterprise technology implementation by translating user needs into workflows, troubleshooting adoption barriers, and enabling change.

 **ADD EVIDENCE:** users supported • adoption • issues resolved

PA EXPERIENCE



Investigated and resolved problems across clinical and support departments.



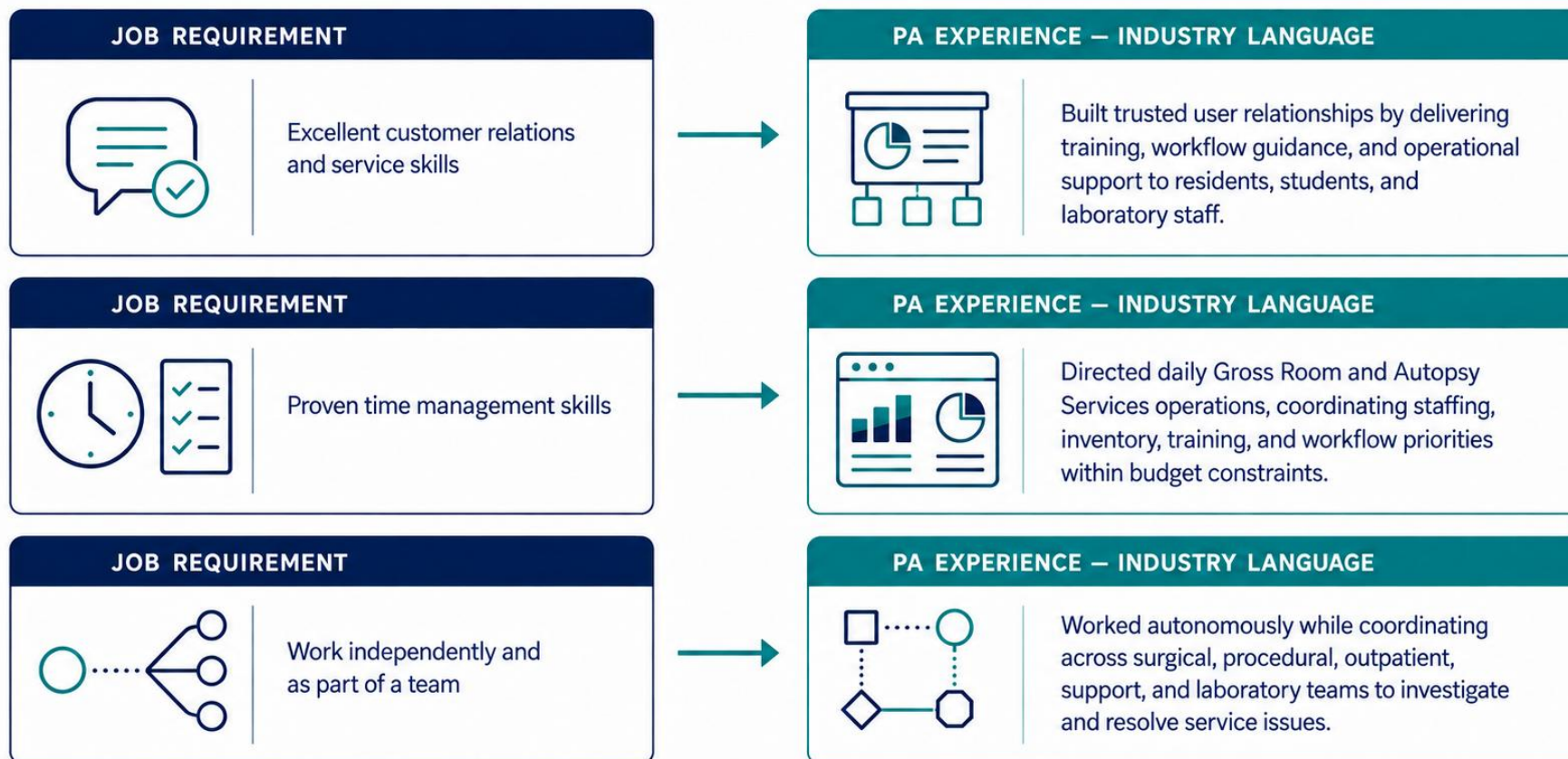
INDUSTRY-FACING VERSION



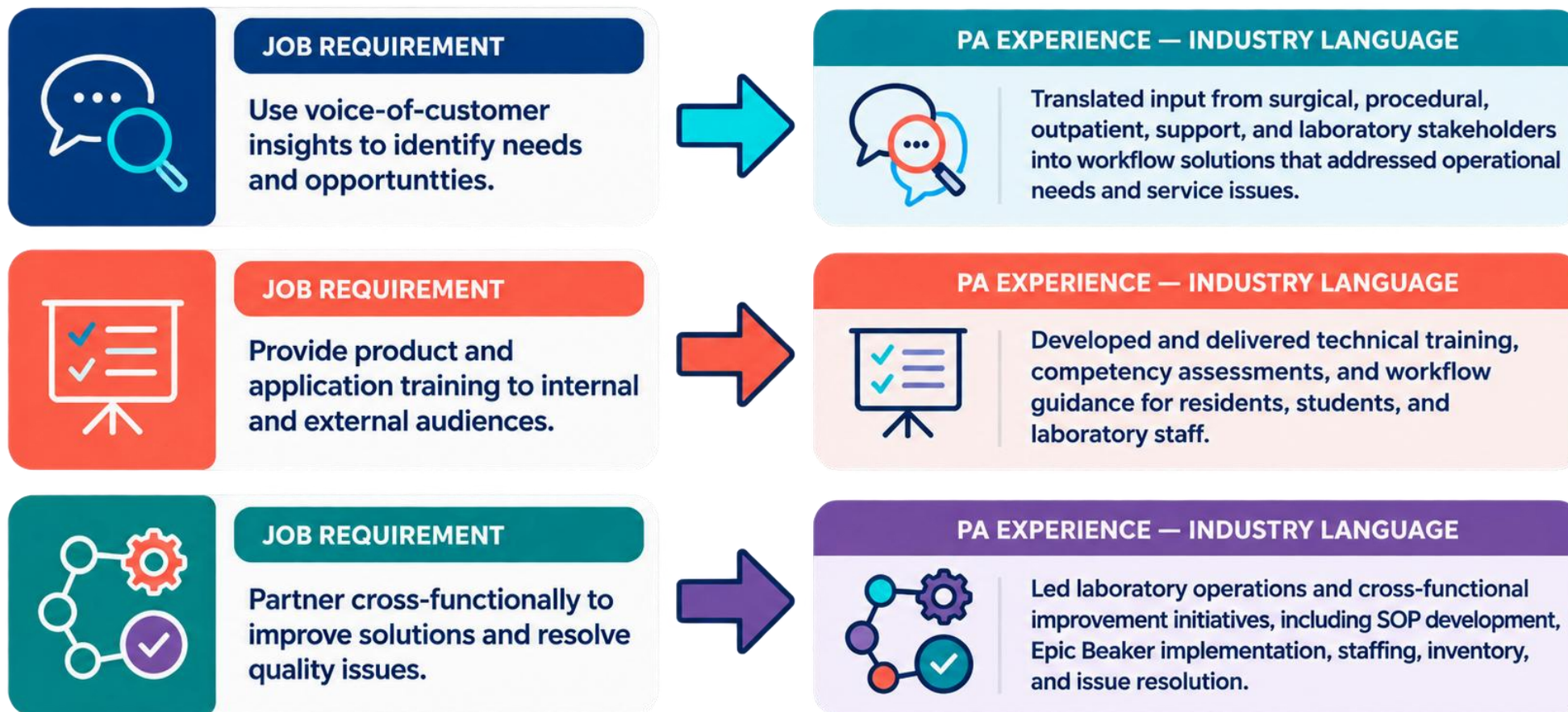
Coordinated cross-functional stakeholders to identify root causes, resolve service issues, and maintain reliable operations.

 **ADD EVIDENCE:** delays prevented • resolution time • satisfaction

Match the requirement. Translate the evidence.



Match the requirement. Translate the evidence.



FROM THE LABORATORY TO INDUSTRY

The work changes, but your clinical expertise remains the foundation.

COMMON CHALLENGES

-  Leaving a familiar clinical environment
-  Learning unfamiliar business language
-  Working without one correct answer
-  Adjusting to longer timelines
-  Influencing without direct authority
-  Measuring success in new ways

THE MINDSET SHIFT



WHAT SUCCESS REQUIRES

-  Curiosity and willingness to learn
-  Comfort with ambiguity and change
-  Communication tailored to the audience
-  Collaboration across different teams
-  Patience with longer decision cycles
-  Awareness of customer and business needs



**You are not leaving your laboratory expertise behind.
You are learning to apply it at a larger scale.**



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Here Comes the Sun:
Illuminating the Future of Pathology

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PA careers beyond the gross room

Five professionals. Five different paths.

Their stories show how clinical credibility can support a transition into research administration, education, performance improvement, consulting, entrepreneurship, and sales.

Different destinations. A shared foundation in pathology.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

CONSULTING & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

PATHOLOGY SALES

HIRING PERSPECTIVE

Jenne Stensland, PA, MHA, ASCPcm

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATION



**Sponsored Project
Specialist**

Mayo Clinic

Adjunct Professor

University of Jamestown

Clinical experience opened doors in research and education.



Clinical experience became research fluency



What transferred

Understanding clinical abstracts and trials
Supporting researchers with tissue expertise
Building relationships across pathology

“Each step up opens more doors for you to explore.”

Her advice: Get to know the research teams in your institution. Create your own networking hub.

Education and relationships expanded the path

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION

A master's degree in healthcare administration strengthened her understanding of how laboratories and health systems operate.

INTERNAL NETWORK

Connections with surgeons, researchers, and pathology colleagues created visibility into roles beyond routine practice.

New credentials helped. Relationships revealed where to use them.

The PA skills that mattered most

FLEXIBILITY

Every day brings different priorities, just as every day in the gross room brings different cases.

SCIENTIFIC FLUENCY

Clinical knowledge helped her interpret research questions and communicate with scientific teams.

COMMUNICATION

She translated pathology experience for colleagues working in grants, trials, and research administration.

Your current role may already be developing the skills your next role needs.

Elizabeth Rizzo, MHS, PA(ASCP)cm

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT



Senior Performance Improvement Consultant

Dartmouth Health



PA skill that mattered most

“Expect the unexpected.”

Improvement training created new options

YELLOW BELT

Laboratory projects

GREEN BELT

She used process improvement training on real laboratory work. That experience sparked an interest in solving problems beyond the gross room.

Internal development opportunities can become the bridge to a different career.

Process improvement became the bridge

TRAIN

Yellow Belt and Green Belt
coursework

APPLY

Real laboratory improvement
projects

EXPAND

Work beyond the gross room

Start with your why.

What is the primary driver behind the change you want?

Danielle Lee Davis, BSc | CEO, Pathology Solutions



CLINICAL FOUNDATION

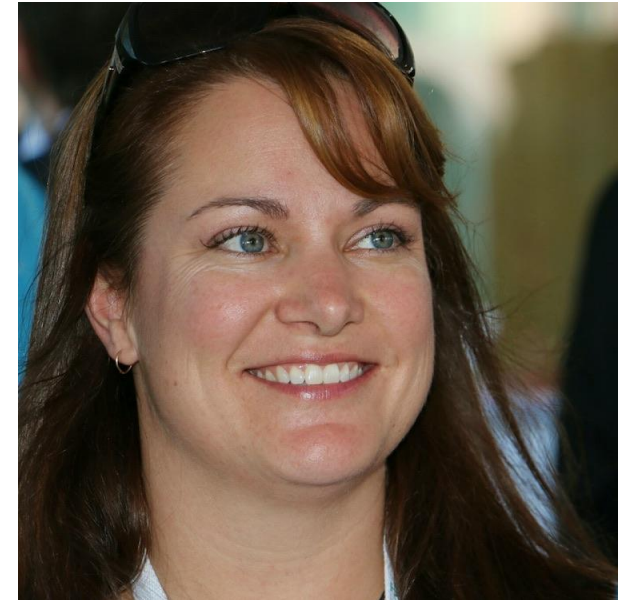
Began grossing as a laboratory assistant in 1996
Earned a BSc in medical laboratory science

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Chaired the PA Section Executive Committee for two terms
Served as the first PA Officer for CAP ACP
Became the founding CEO of CCCPA CCCAP

EDUCATION AND STANDARDS

Helped advance PA certification and supported the development of a PA master's program.



*Her career grew through sustained
service to the profession.*

Professional leadership prepared her for entrepreneurship

WHAT SHE BROUGHT

- Clinical credibility
- Professional relationships
- Committee and organizational leadership
- Experience with education and certification

WHAT SHE HAD TO LEARN

- Budgeting and accounting
- Hiring and payroll
- Contracts
- Business operations

“The learning curve has been the steepest since I started grossing.”

Her advice Research the field and learn from people already doing the work.

Mickey Haight, MHS, PA(ASCP)cm PATHOLOGY SALES EXECUTIVE, KUBTEC



“Your clinical credential is your biggest asset. Don’t hide it. Lead with it.”

The right employer will see your background as a strength, not a question mark.

His transition took more than a year of persistent effort before the right opportunity came along.

Clinical credibility shortened the learning curve

KUBTEC[®]
M E D I C A L

Pathologists' Assistants understand the end user workflow and can speak with PAs and pathologists as a peer.

Most representatives learn the product first. His PA experience meant he already understood the problem.



Ashley Olson, PA(ASCP)CM

AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Employers notice how you communicate before they evaluate everything else.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Explain your experience and interest with purpose.

RESPONSIVENESS

Reply promptly and follow through on commitments.

PROFESSIONALISM

Treat every interaction as part of the interview.

GENUINE INTEREST

Show curiosity about the role, team, and organization.



Alysha Ruston, MS, PA (ASCP)cm

Rush of Sweetness Bakery

Mother, Cake Artist, Pathologists' Assistant

IT STARTED WITH PREGNANCY CRAVINGS

Established in 2025 during my third trimester with baby number three, baking began as a nesting phase and quickly became my creative outlet. Outside of being a mom, I work full-time as a Pathologists' Assistant, a career that requires precision, patience, and a sharp eye for detail.

It didn't take long to realize those same skills show up in cake decorating too — from smooth buttercream finishes to carefully crafted details. What began as baking for friends and family soon grew into creating custom cakes and teaching decorating classes for my community.

Turns out pathology and cake decorating both require steady hands and a sharp eye for detail



Product Managers

Product managers help determine **what should be developed, why it matters, and how it will create value** for customers and the organization. They connect customer needs with business priorities and the teams responsible for creating and delivering the solution.

Thought Leadership



Thought Leadership

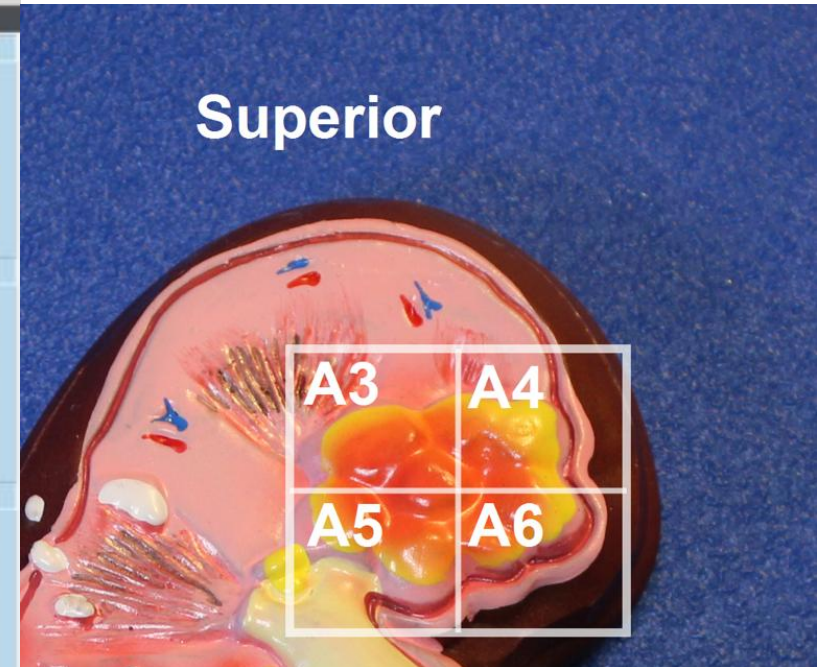
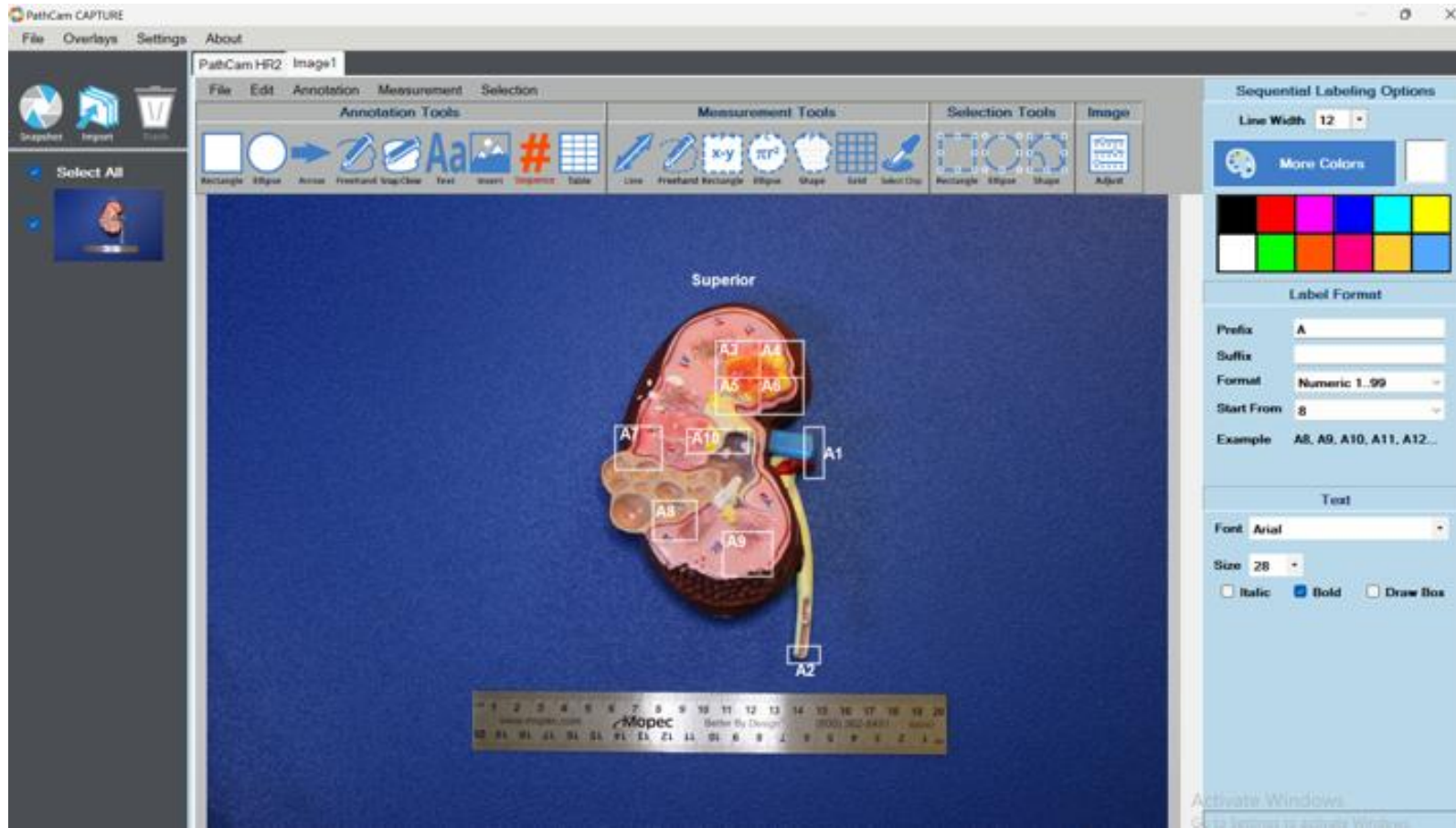


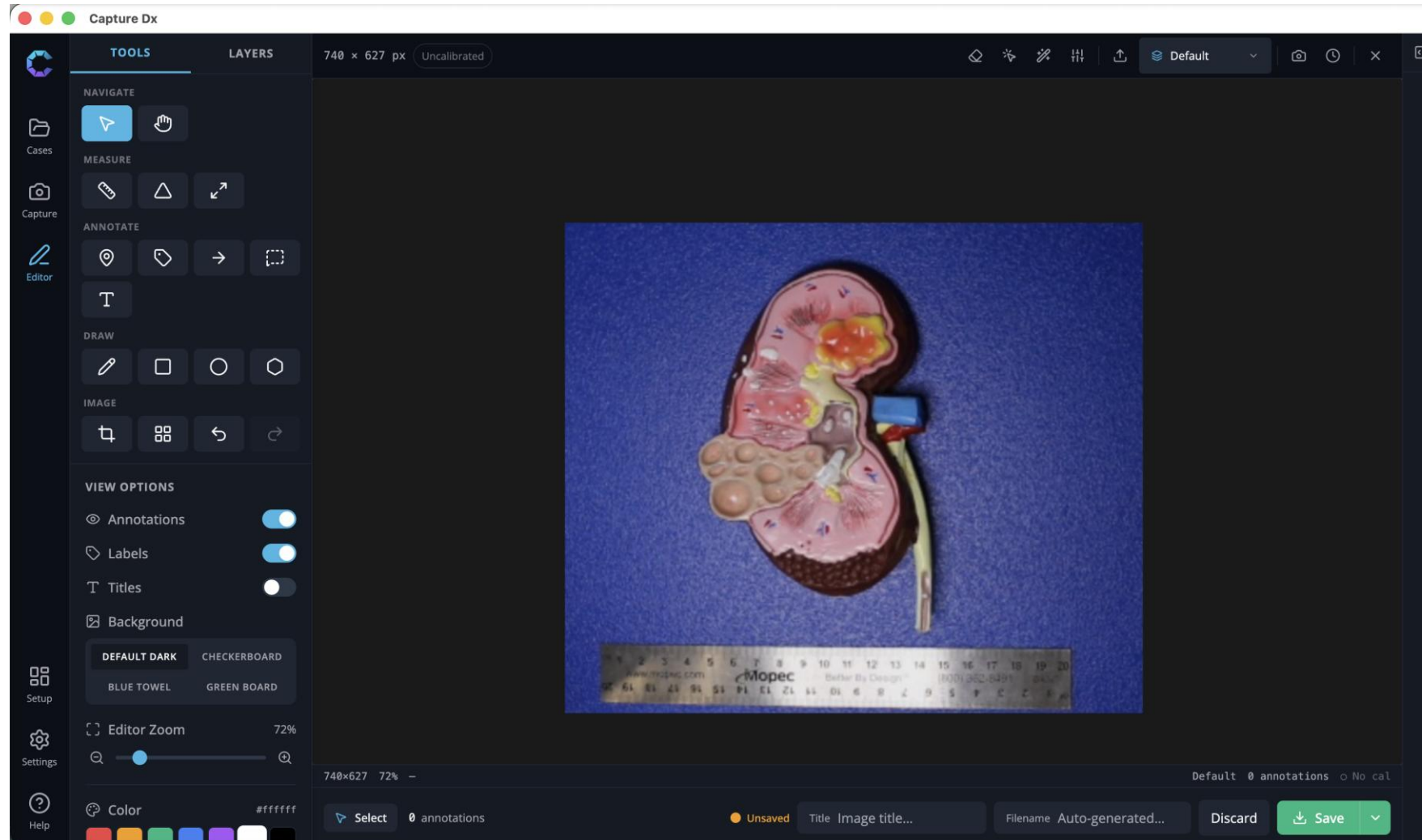
Advisory Board



New Product Development









Why Pathologists' Assistants Can Be Effective Product Managers

PAs bring valuable experience in:

- Understanding real laboratory workflows
- Recognizing safety, quality, and usability concerns
- Identifying downstream consequences of workflow decisions
- Translating clinical needs for nonclinical teams
- Communicating with diverse stakeholders
- Evaluating whether a proposed solution will work in practice
- Representing the voice of the customer during development
- A product manager's role is not to have every answer. It is to make sure the team is solving the right problem.

Thank You for Your Attention



Roseann Vitale

Product Manager and Clinical SME at Mopec
Group • Pathologists' Assistant



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<https://meetings.hubspot.com/roseann-vitale>