Your Career - Don’t Let It Manage You
A Few Tips to Manage Career Security

Bala Prasanna
Senior Member, IEEE
IBM Program Manager
bprasanna@ieee.org

21 Sept 2013
IEEE- North Jersey Section
Stevens Institute of Technology

This material was presented at the IEEE North Jersey Advanced Communications Symposium - Hoboken, NJ - Sep. 21, 2013
Great things are not done by impulse,  
but by a series of small things brought together.  *Vincent Van Gogh*

Life consists not in holding good cards  
but in playing those you hold well. *Josh Billings*

This time, like all times, is a very good one,  
if we but know what to do with it. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Our problems are many,  
but our capacity to solve them is limitless. *Ronald Reagan*
For the lack of a nail, the shoe was lost.
For the lack of a shoe, the horse was lost.
For the lack of the horse, the message was lost.
For the lack of the message, the battle was lost.
For the lack of the battle, the war was lost.
For the lack of the war, the kingdom was lost.
All for the lack of a horseshoe nail.

Something your grandmother may have taught you
Tomorrow Will Be Nothing Like Today

*from a billboard in JFK Airport*
We Are All *Alone In This Together*

- Graham Lindsay

Career Security through Career Growth
- Learning and Practicing Soft Skills as an important path

Driving Your Own Behavior Around Values of Importance to You

Being Relevant in Workplace
- Personal management System
  - training
  - relation management
  - creating track record
- Stay Disciplined
If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Isaac Newton
take a step...

...there’ll be a bridge
Once you’re in low Earth orbit (LEO), you’re halfway to anywhere.

*Robert Heinlein*

*Science Fiction Writer*

This is due to the mechanics of space launch, where accelerating into LEO is a large portion of your journey.

Storing mass in LEO is a way to make trips beyond LEO easier.
how people perceive you

is under your control
Life Management Skills For Success

- Career Planning
  - Balancing work & personal: leveling the scale
- Networking
- Interpersonal Skills
- Leadership
- Volunteering
grasp the big picture

- Players
- Rules of the Game
- Unwritten Rules
- What is the Big Idea?
- Business Control Practices
- Breaking the Rules
- Annual Productivity measures
- Performance assessment
- Strategy and Tactics

- Be Wary of Seduction of Binary Thinking
- Legal & Ethical
  - Intent counts in ethics

roll with the punches...
Failing to Plan is Simply Planning to Fail

• Health, Family, Vacation, Hobbies/Stress Relief
• Deadlines, Workload, Overtime, Training
• Work Career Plan - Technical, Management

Work Your Balance Muscles
Head with Heart
Money & Meaning
Top of the Mountain & Journey
Friendly & Firm

To ignore or deny this balance is setting yourself up for disappointment & dis-ease

You must always be training for the next level up if you wish to advance.

. Be willing to experiment with behavior modification
. Train a back-up
. Do not procrastinate - a true stress buster!
. Gain control - Think Time & Think Place
Communicating Skills - Basics

The importance of first impressions

- Good posture
- Neat appearance
- Positive non-verbal communication
- Eye contact
- Confident handshake
- Be positive and energetic
- What you say and how you say it
- Establish how you want to be treated
- Talk Less, Say More

If you don’t manage your relationship with your manager and peers, you will not have resources to get your job done.
NETWORKING
where?
with whom?
when?
what will I be able
to contribute?
gain?

• If you help others, they’ll be more likely to help you
• Follow up with leads; acknowledge sources
• Thank contacts
• Do what you promised to do
• Keep your antenna up

dig your well before you are thirsty
Is your NET-working for you?
Leadership is not about position; it’s about doing.

- Live & work with paradoxes
- Push the frontiers rather than follow
- Promote innovation
- Influence and guide
- Act as catalysts
- Champion causes
- Have that invisible something that attracts followers
- Articulate a vision and make it happen
- Focus on customers

- Anticipate the future
- Stick your neck out
- Focus on the real work, not the mundane
- Deal with ambiguities - can you rationalize fuzzy data
- Be transcendent
- Own higher levels of confidence

This material was presented at the IEEE North Jersey Advanced Communications Symposium - Hoboken, NJ - Sep. 21, 2013
Conflict Holds Creative Potential

**win/win**: conflict can be healthy when it brings out new ideas & relationships

**win/lose**: distrust, anger, withdrawal

*conflict is unavoidable & common*

**negotiation** is the primary key to resolving it

**conflict & negotiation** are central parts of organizational life

Don’t let conflicts/differences harden into resentment, hate, or anger
Handling Conflict Productively

- **Competing**: assert your position w/o opposing view points
- **Avoiding**: stall, ignore, sense of timing
- **Collaborating**: fully satisfying both sides (relationship is important)
- **Accommodating**: forgoing (your) concerns (selfless)
- **Compromising**: negotiating, finding middle ground

*do not overuse anyone*
Office Politics

You always have to play politics.

But remember, there is good politics & there is bad politics.

- Managing your boss
- Managing your peers: relations with coworkers are often trickier than managers
- Who are your angels?
- Hustle & Harmonize
- Nobody wins unless everybody wins
- Don’t just ask for opinions; change them
- Everyone expects to be paid back
- Success can create opposition
- Don’t ignore the aftermath of success
what is your brand?

When you have Joe’s word, you can take it to the bank.

No matter when I go and what question I have, Mary has given me satisfactory answers all the time on this project.

When you see my name on a technical document, it comes with a 100% guarantee - no equivocation!

Russ’s thought process, judgment & communication at the right time has never let me down.

When you assign testing to Kumar, good as gold.

Wow, you make a great teacher/mentor/debugger ..!

When in doubt, I always count on Dawn for my answers.

You cannot be all things to everybody. Understand your strengths & create a positive branding of you.
Don’t sweat the small stuff...

- Avoid weatherproofing
- Choose your battles wisely
- Praise & blame are all the same
- Do one thing at a time
- Just for fun, agree with criticism directed towards you (& watch it go away)
- Surrender to the fact that life isn’t fair
- Look for the extraordinary in the ordinary
- Give up on the idea that more is better

... and it’s all small stuff
Now, the **big** stuff...

- Manage for Results
- Differentiate & understand Headlines vs. Trendlines
- Don’t burn your bridges
- Learn to prioritize
- “And then more” - *Overachieve on expectations*
- Milk a cow; don’t milk a duck
- Time Management - front loading & multi-tasking
- **Time, Relationship, Career, Anger Management**
- **Money, Money, Money**
  - Power of Compounding - Save $ .. *Did you know ..?*
  - good credit (student loan, buying a house, ...) & bad credit (car, furniture, ...)
- Member of a professional society
- Quality of life for you and people around you
- Disillusionment at work -
  - *too much idealism gets in the way of progress; be philosophical in approach*

... if you screw up, go back & ask:  
*What can I do REGAIN your confidence in me?*

... and it is **big** stuff...
... and some more

- Personality amplifiers (*bring back that smile on your face*)
- Managing “self”
  - Time, Relationship, Career, Anger
  - Wide angle view of the profession
  - Read your boss’s mind
- Have your elevator speech ever ready (not more than 45 seconds)
- Monkey on the back (*mine vs. yours*)

Is sloppiness in speech caused by ignorance or apathy? I don’t know and I don’t care. *William Safire*
... and some more

- Be passionate about deadlines
- Be a maintenance-free employee
- E-mail etiquette
  - Not a private communication between sender/receiver
  - Reply-only-sender vs. reply-all
    - *What court are you playing?*
  - Writing/expressive skills
  - Promptness in response

Be a Professional!
Separate your personal attitudes from professional expectations
Consider PE or PMP training
As a professional, have the stamina of a marathoner, not a sprinter
It’s all about choosing friends

how you interpret criticism/feedback

how you feel

to nurture peer
& boss relationships

assignments

to equip yourself with occupational armor - training, networking

so make the right choices.

Think of Simon Cowell (American Idol) & Dr. House (House). Would you have them on your side?
Responsible Students

• Set goals, stay focused on the future
• Plan their time:
  • Use a calendar to keep all events, due dates in plain sight
• Study everyday:
  • Do it steadily
• Take notes:
  • Teachers almost always highlight what is important
• Keep their commitments to themselves and others
• Get ready ahead of time:
  • Being late or early is not something that simply happens; it is a choice you make!
Q: “At Auschwitz, tell me, where was God?”
A: “Where was man?”
- from Sophie's Choice

You have a role to play in this world - a reason for being here. But it is up to you to find your part and direct your future.

You alone determine your destiny through your own efforts. Accept this responsibility - not just for yourself, but for us all. You have the power to change your life and the lives of others as well.

Don’t back away from the exercise of this power or wait for some one else to act. Of course you can get what you want, but part of what you want should be to help others along the way.

The good life is not a passive existence where you live and let live. It is one of involvement where you live and help live.

Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it. Mahatma Gandhi
Being a volunteer

Every man must decide whether he will walk
in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of selfishness.
This is the judgement.
Life’s most persistent and urgent question is,
what are you doing for others?

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Acknowledgments

- http://www.fastcompany.com/online/14/politics.html
- Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff (and it’s all small stuff): Richard Carlson
- http://www.theinstitute.ieee.org/
- http://www.officepolitics.com
- Carnegie Success Connection
- and several everyday sources
Life Doesn’t Frighten Me by Maya Angelou

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Tough guys fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Life doesn't frighten me at all