Working With Colleagues

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Me

• Professor and Associate Chair for Education in Computer Science Dept. at Stanford University
  – Previously at Google Research

• Organizing stuff
  – Co-Chair, ACM/IEEE-CS CS2013 guidelines
    • Had the honor and privilege of working with Andrea and Dave
  – General Chair, Learning at Scale 2014
  – General Chair, Educational Advances in AI 2010
    • Coincidentally, held in this same hotel!

• Other stuff we won’t mention in polite company…
Themes

- Golden rule
- Being visible
- Being a good citizen
- Working with colleagues
- Forming teams
- Dealing with difficult situations
Golden Rule

*Be the colleague you would want to work with*
Being Visible

• Be visible in your department
  – Get to know colleagues
    • Go to lunch (potentially have a topic to discuss)
    • Speed talks or other ways to know what others are doing
  – Get help and advice
    • Sharing teaching materials
    • Understand history and culture of department/institution

• Be aware of departmental issues
  – Attend departmental meetings

• Take your service duties seriously
  – But don’t “overdo it” on service (as Jodi mentioned)
Being a Good Citizen

• Be respectful of others' time
  – Meetings ≠ productivity
  – If you call a meeting, have clear agenda and goals

• Time is everyone’s most precious commodity
  – Don’t ask for documentation no one wants/plans to read
  – Don’t call a meeting if it can be dealt with in an email
  – Don’t ask colleagues to do work you wouldn’t want to do

• Address potential problems early and directly
  – Ignoring a problem won’t make it go away
  – A little unpleasantness now avoids lots of it later
Working with Colleagues

• Always be professional and respectful
  – A reputation takes years to build and minutes to destroy (paraphrasing Warren Buffet)
  – Your adversaries today can be your allies tomorrow
    • You are building a career, not trying to win a game

• Choose your battles
  – Don’t feel compelled to get involved in every situation
    • Don’t get pulled into situations you don’t care about
  – Take time to understand different viewpoints
  – Take a stand for things you really believe in
  – Justify your position: data always beats conjecture
Forming Teams (Part I)

“There are no losers on a winning team and no winners on a losing team” -- David Patterson (UC Berkeley)

• Forming a team is the most critical aspect of a project
  – Be deliberate in the team you form
    • Consider who will bring something to the table
    • Ask colleagues for suggestions on people to work with
  – Working >> talking
    • It’s about execution, execution, execution
  – Don’t be afraid to say “no” to someone who wants to join
Forming Teams (Part II)

• The Golden Rule still applies
  – Don’t ask team members to do things you wouldn’t do
  – Be protective of everyone’s time
  – Lead by example

• Set expectations appropriately
  – Create a culture of accountability

• Make sure everyone on the team gets credit
  – Allow team members to lead
    • And then “follow by example”
  – Story time: a tale of two companies…

• Reciprocate when (past) team members ask for your time
Dealing with Difficult Situations (Part I)

• Be honest, but polite
  – Skirting around a problem won’t resolve it
    • Not responding allows issue to fester
  – Take time to understand others viewpoints
  – Be direct and forthright about the real problem

• Don’t be confrontational (unless it’s really necessary)
  – Create a dialogue
  – Look for solutions where everyone gets some benefit

• Don’t lose your temper
  – Makes you look bad
  – Doesn’t improve situation (and potentially makes it worse)
Dealing with Difficult Situations (Part II)

• Be a gracious “loser”
  – Things won’t always go the way you want
    • Don’t waste time dwelling on it
  – Determine how to best move forward
• Avoid working with people you don’t want to work with
  – If you don’t want to do it, say “no”
    • But, everyone has to sometimes do things they don’t want
  – Not responding ≠ “no”
• Be realistic about what you can do
A Message I’ve Found Very Useful

Thank you for the opportunity to <<do something>>. I appreciate your consideration. Unfortunately, I must respectfully decline as I am already committed to a number of other concurrent activities and would not have the time to take on this additional commitment.

[Optional: If a similar opportunity comes up in the future, please keep me in mind. I would be happy to be involved if I have more time in the future.]
Let Me Reiterate…

Be the colleague you would want to work with
Thank you for your attention

Questions/Discussion