8 Rules for Career Success

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These slides are from a 15 minute presentation at a workshop sponsored by Women in Engineering (WIE).

I was asked to speak about my work and how I balance career and personal life. The slides are incomplete, since much of what I said is not contained here.

Given here are my personal rules for career success. I was asked to post them because others found them helpful, but "one size" doesn't fit all. Writing these rules was an interesting exercise in assessing what is important to me and how well my actions fit my principles.

Perhaps others will find a similar exercise helpful.

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Rule 1: Be passionate about what you do.

Passion is

- **a luxury,**
- **but essential to high success.**

"If you can't be with the one you love, …."

Rule 2: Establish goals.

Goals: things that you plan to do.

- Short term: finish project, organize a meeting, teach child to swim, take a course, plant a garden, …
- Long term: find better job, pay off mortgage, write a book, …

These are not goals:

- "I want to be a grandmother."
- "I want to be promoted."
- "I want to win the Nobel Prize."

These are **wishes**:

- "I want to be a grandmother."
- "I want to be promoted."
- "I want to win the Nobel Prize."

Not
"I want to be a grandmother,"

but
"I want to be more involved with children."

Not
"I want to be promoted."

but
"I want my record to merit promotion."

Not
"I want to win the Nobel Prize,"

but
"I want my work to be good enough to merit an award."

Rule 3: Demand reasons.

Reasons:

- **Know why your supervisor wants a task done.**
- **More importantly, know why you are doing the task!**

Your reason should be drawn from a short list:

- **I want to.**
- **It is a step toward my goals.**
- **It gives back to the community.**

Rule 4: Set priorities.

Setting priorities (a.k.a., time management)

"Pay yourself first." Take your time "off the top," not from the leftovers.

"Put the big rocks in first." Steven Covey

- **If you care about your research, schedule it for a substantial block of your most productive time.**
- **If you care about your family, save some energy for them!**
- **If anything is important to you, schedule time for yourself.**

Rule 5: Network up and down.

Networking:

- **Get to know the senior people. Right now, you need to be known by them.**
- **Get to know the junior people. Right now, they need you.**

Later, you will need them!

Rule 6:
Communicate well and often.

Communicate well and often.

- **Make sure that your supervisor and your colleagues know what you do.**
- **Have an "elevator speech".**
- **Keep your resume' updated.**

Rule 7:
Hone your skills.

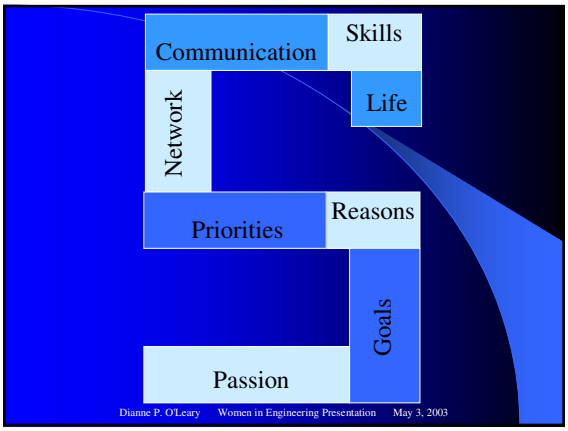
Hone your skills.

- Never stop learning.
- Be appropriately confident of your abilities.

Rule 8:
Get a life.

Get a life.

- Keep a balance in your life.
- Make sure all of you self-esteem eggs are not in one basket.

Support system:

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