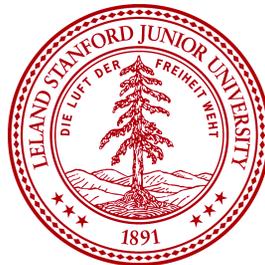


Working With Colleagues

Mehran Sahami

Computer Science Department
Stanford University



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 \neq 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 its 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