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Personal Readme  
(or… a short user guide to working with me)

## Why?

## One of the working relationships we need to define is ours. The following is a user guide for me and how I work. It captures what you can expect out of the average weekly working with me, how I like to work, my north star principles, and some of my, uh, nuance. My intent is to accelerate our working relationship with this document. My intent with this artifact is not to suggest how you should work.

## First Principles

### Humans first.

 I believe that happy, informed, and productive humans build a fantastic product. I optimize for the humans. Other leaders will maximize the business, the technology, or any different number of important facets. Ideological diversity is key to an effective team. All perspectives are relevant, and we need all these leaders, but my bias is towards building productive humans.

### Leadership comes from everywhere.

My wife likes to remind me that I hated meetings for the first ten years of my professional career. She’s right. I’ve wasted a lot of time in poorly run meetings by bad managers. As an engineer, I remain skeptical of managers, even as a manager. While managers are an essential part of a scaling organization, I don’t believe they have a monopoly on Leadership. I work hard to build other constructs and opportunities for any human on the team to be a leader.

### I see things as systems.

I reduce all complex things (including humans) into systems. I think in flowcharts. I take great joy in attempting to understand how these systems and flowcharts all fit and work together. When I see large or small inefficiencies in these complex systems, I’d like to fix them with your help.

### It is important to me that humans are treated fairly.

I believe that most humans are trying to do the right thing, but unconscious bias leads them astray. I work hard to understand and address my biases because I understand their ability to create inequity. I believe those in power have a disproportionate responsibility to proactively invest in humans who have historically been disadvantaged.

### I am heavily biased towards action.

Long meetings where we are endlessly debating potential directions are often valuable, but I believe starting is the best way to begin learning and make progress. This is not always the correct strategy. This strategy annoys those who like to debate.

### I default to delegation.

I believe the delegation of increasingly large, complex, and high-risk projects to my team is the correct way to build trust and grow the team. If you feel a thing I’ve delegated to you is too large, complex, or risky, you should tell me, and I will help. You should know that I would not make this delegation choice if I did not believe you would be successful.

### I believe in the compounding awesomeness of continually fixing small things.

I believe quality assurance is everyone’s responsibility, and there are bugs to be fixed everywhere… all the time.

### I start with an assumption of positive intent for all involved.

This has worked out well for me over my career.

### I need you to know that sometimes we are in HIGH ALERT, and things will get strange.

There is an exception to many of my practices and principles, and that is when we are in a HIGH ALERT situation. HIGH ALERT conditions usually involve existential threats to our product, team, and/or company. During this time, my usual people, process, and product protocols are secondary to countering this threat. If it is not obvious, I will alert you that I am in this state, along with my best guess when we’ll be done. If I am constantly in this state, something is fundamentally broken. You should tell me this. I might be so busy that I need the reminder.

## Meeting Protocol

I go to a lot of meetings. I deliberately run with my calendar publicly visible. If you have a question about a meeting on my calendar, ask me. If a meeting is private or confidential, its title and attendees will be hidden from your view. The vast majority of my meetings are neither private nor confidential.

My definition of a meeting includes an agenda and/or intended purpose, the appropriate amount of productive attendees, and a responsible party running the meeting to a schedule. If I attend a meeting, I’d prefer to start on time. If I run a meeting, I will start that meeting on time. If it’s not clear why I am in a meeting, I will ask for clarification on my role in this meeting.

If you send me a presentation deck a reasonable amount of time before a meeting, I will read it before the meeting and will have my questions at the ready. If I haven’t read the deck, I will tell you.

If a meeting completes its intended purpose before it’s scheduled to end, let’s give the time back to everyone. If it’s clear the intended goal won’t be achieved in the allotted time, let’s stop the meeting before time is up and determine how to effectively finish it.

# Nuance and Errata

## Communication Order of Operations

My preference for communication might seem old school, but there is some science behind it! If you are curious, ask me. My order of operations for communication starting from most to least preferred is:

1. face-to-face
2. video call/conference (this means cameras on!)
3. voice call (teams, skype, mobile, landline, tins cans)
4. instant message
5. email

## Interacting with others

### When discussion is required, I *always* prefer a face-to-face conversation

I think that being able to physically sit in a space with other humans is much more conducive to producing good outcomes. My preferred order of communications is in the point before.

### Contacting me

If it is possible to do so, PLEASE come and physically talk to me! If that is not possible, follow the **Communication Order of Operations** above.

### I am not an introvert

However, prolonged exposure to humans is exhausting for me. Weird, yeah? I am always happy to have a conversation, but I might limit how long it goes for. The same with meetings. Meetings with up to five of us are perfect, five to nine are ok, and more than nine, you will find that I am strangely quiet, unless it is an audience and I am presenting in which case I am usually fine. Please do not confuse my quiet with a lack of enthusiasm or engagement. Sometimes directly asking for me to offer input or ask a question will get me to be more involved in large meetings.’

The corollary to all of this is sometimes I struggle to not interrupt or talk too much. I can be prerry passionate on topocs that I care about, or I know well. If I talk too much, I am not offended if someone tells me to shut up… usually. **I can be hyperbolic** but it's almost always because I am excited about the topic.

I also swear sometimes. Sorry.

### Ask assertive versus tell assertive

When you need to ask me to do something, ask me. I respond incredibly well to ask assertiveness ("David, can you help with X?"). I respond poorly to being told what to do ("David, do X.”) I have been this way since I was a kid, and I probably need therapy.

### I am bad at asking for help

There are likely some interesting reasons why this is, and a suitably skilled psychologist might be able to extract them from me. It is sufficient to say that when I do ask for help, it is because I REALLY need it. I am also painfully aware that I probably should have asked for help earlier, and I've made the situation direr than needed. Again, sorry.

### Humans stating opinions as facts are a trigger for me — I prefer facts, evidence and data

I will often unexpectedly jump into a conversation to clarify opinions and facts when I hear this. I will also get on my high horse about the importance of evidence and data in decision making.

### Humans who denigrate, speak poorly of, or otherwise behave badly toward others is a trigger for me.

I will defend someone’s right to speak to the final hour. I will not necessarily defend what one says, but I will damn well defend one’s right to say it. I will also encourage healthy and robust debate, but I will not countenance rudeness, or nastiness. Play the ball, not the person!

### Humans who gossip for sport are a trigger for me

Gossip is inevitable in a large group of humans, but that doesn't make it ok or valuable. If you want to know something about someone, ask them. It is then their decision to share or tell you to mind your own damn business.

# Finally…

**This document is a living breathing thing** and likely incomplete. I update it frequently. If there is something you think I should consider adding, deleting, or changing, I would appreciate your feedback.

**When the 1:1 feels over, and there is remaining time** I always have a couple of meaty topics to discuss. This is brainstorming, and the issues are usually front-of-mind hard topics that I am processing. It might feel like we're shooting the shit, but we're doing real work.

**When I ask you to do something that feels poorly defined** you should ask me for clarification and a specific call on importance. I might still be brainstorming. Your clarifications can save a lot of people a lot of time.

**I love to start new things** but I often lose interest when I can mentally see how the thing will finish, which might be weeks or months before the thing is done. I attempt to solve this by pairing with humans who are strong operators and who are very good at checking things off lists.

**If I am on my phone during a meeting for more than 30 seconds, say something.** My attention wanders.

**This document is a**[**living breathing thing**](https://github.com/randsleadershipslack/documents-and-resources/blob/master/howtorands.md) and likely incomplete. I update it frequently and would appreciate your feedback.