

Randy's Rules & Favorite Quotes

For a long fulfilling career in the high tech industry

1. Remember it is a privilege to work in this environment. You are working with some of the brightest and most talented folks on the planet to solve tough problems and invent new solutions in a revolutionary industry that has significantly changed our world for the better for the past half century. (closer to 70 years: solid state transistor invented 1947)
2. Enjoy the people you work with. Life is too short to let yourself become offended by others...especially in work related matters. That “condescending arrogant ignorant a-hole” may be a future friend or important ally in disguise...yes really. It is a reminder that we typically view reflections of our own character flaws as most abhorrent when manifest in others.
3. Never surprise your manager. Maintain dialog and communication with key stakeholders in your career. It is good when your manager gets promoted.
4. Learn: Never stop learning. Your University provided a good foundation- it is a starting point- a truly educated person will always seek more knowledge. Your colleagues are a good source of knowledge. Teach yourself a new skill. On line courses, the internet, books and other sources are available...so take the opportunity to continue your education.
5. Teach: Teach others what you learn- “give and it will be given to you” – Publish in top refereed journals and conferences – this amazing fast paced industry, still largely depends on sharing of information so that we bring the most rapid advancements possible to the world.
6. Invent: Invent new solutions. Don't fear rejection it is a necessary part of the learning process.
7. Read. Essential for following rule #4. It is a good goal to read 4-10 books a year.
8. Be honest. You do not have to know everything. Intellectual honesty means asking what you feel may be a dumb question at times...but better to know than to make an incorrect assumption.
9. Treat others (colleagues, managers, customers, male/female, skin tone, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion) with respect and dignity. The industry will change over your career (new HR slogans, buzz-words and social mores) but respect for others and pursuit of core personal integrity should not change. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (just to be clear: everyone on this planet is your neighbor).
10. Listen to the views of others – especially to those who disagree with your analysis or conclusion. Pay attention to the data- especially the data that does not line up with your expectations or opinion of what it “should say”.
11. Beware of confirmation bias. It is a common trait in “experts” who prefer short cuts over legitimate statistics and a deeper understanding.
12. It is okay to be wrong sometimes, own it, and learn from it. I do not want to know someone who has never been wrong... Really. Being wrong means you took a view

based on your best judgement that was likely not in line with the majority opinion at the time. It means you think independently. The world needs more independent thinkers who accept being wrong is part of the growth process.

13. Randomness: Despite our efforts to control our immediate situations and circumstances surrounding our career, randomness is part of the fabric of our universe. Your career (all long lived careers for that matter) will have ups as well as downs. This is normal, and in some ways essential. When you are in a down cycle, don't panic, remember rule 13 and embrace the time for personal development and investing in yourself and career.
14. There is a flaw: Any plan or paper for publication, or spreadsheet ...any document with higher complexity will almost always have a flaw...sometimes insignificant, sometimes not. Follow the discipline of reading and checking carefully when it matters.
15. Be prompt: Be on time (or early), start your meetings on time. As part of a lifestyle that reduces life's stressors I practice being early (to avoid the last minute interruptions which often allows me to be on-time rather than late). It is part of a lifestyle practice of doing what you say you are going to do.
16. Write it down; Keep a list: Write down your significant contributions across the year (as they occur) in a place that you can refer to when the yearly appraisal season comes. This is your number one defense against "recency bias".
17. Measure it: I have observed so many times that to solve a problem, we must first be able to measure and quantify the issue. Without a solid baseline measurement system in place, and having no clear feedback, the problem will inevitably continue.
18. Email rules: Try to cc those whose work or input is referenced. Avoid blind copy.
19. Document: Any meeting you hold, should be followed up by an email documenting a set of notes and follow up actions. This is your record – likely no one else will read it but it will reinforce the learning. It shows commitment to the business at hand and holds everyone, including you, responsible for the documented actions.
20. Be present: when in a meeting or group session, find your voice and make known your thoughtful input or question. It may seem unwelcomed at first (new voices to the table have to make their own space by becoming a productive part of the conversation).
21. Don't give up: Some problems you will encounter over your career will, at some point, seem unresolvable, but, never give up. It may be okay to take a short break from it, but keep turning it over in your head and asking questions, bring others into the effort as needed. Find a way, find a solution, never say "this is for someone else to solve".
22. Be humble: failure is an inevitable part of growth and learning. Don't think it can't or will not happen. It will happen at some point, (sometimes by rule 13, or sometimes it may even be our own fault) - own it, learn from it. Don't confuse success with self-worth.
23. Exercise: Develop a consistent routine of exercise for your life. Don't settle for a life less than your best. If you are not consistently exercising, you are not going to be your best.
24. Laugh: Cultivate a sense of humor. Humor breaks tension and tension kills creativity and the flow of open, honest creative dialog and thinking.
25. Smile: Choose a smile to reflect your default disposition. Internal feelings will generally catch up to our physical posture.

26. Give: Find ways to give and develop a lifelong habit of giving. Don't talk about it, just do it.
27. Enjoy life: Life is a lot more than a career. Guard your priorities and put family before career. Family and close friendships are essential to weathering life's most difficult moments – you need them more than you know. Develop hobbies that you can get lost in. A sport, art, music, etc. This is good for a balanced life and they help a lot when dealing with rule 13.

Miscellaneous and random favorite quotes... (1-4) learned from colleagues or just accumulated over the years.

1. Type 1 vacation is the conventional type you take. Type 2 vacation is when your manager is on vacation. Insight: "You should never take a type 1 when a type 2 is available." R. Larsen
2. "Never step on a cockroach; he may be your manager someday." Refer to rule 2.
3. "Your manager is the company to you." IBM
4. "If your family is okay, things are going to be fine." Paul Farrar
5. "The urgent is seldom important and the important is seldom urgent."... C. Swindoll
6. "What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us." R.W. Emerson
7. "Life is like riding a bicycle; you need to keep moving to maintain balance". A.E.
8. "Creativity is more important than knowledge". A.E.
9. "The measure of a good model is that you will get more out of it than you have to put into it." R. Feynman
10. "It's not the things you don't know that get you in trouble, but the things you know for sure – that just ain't so". M. Twain quote that I learned from L.Lehman (friend from Notre Dame)
11. "It doesn't matter how beautiful your theory, it doesn't matter how smart you are. If it does not agree with the experimental data, it is wrong". R.Feynman
12. "Esse quam videri" NC state motto – to be rather than to seem
13. "Finem respice".– consider the end, before beginning ...or begin with the end in mind