

## The Kai user manual

The purpose of this document is to summarize things that are important to me and give you an idea of what to expect from me as a manager/coworker. Consider this the “Kai user manual”.

## My personality

I am an **INTJ** type in the Myers-Briggs personality types framework. I find it an eerily accurate predictor of my behavior!!

### Key INTJ Characteristics

- INTJs tend to be introverted and prefer to work alone.
- INTJs look at the big picture and like to focus on abstract information rather than concrete details.
- INTJs place greater emphasis on logic and objective information rather than subjective emotions.
- INTJs like their world to feel controlled and ordered so they prefer to make plans well in advance.

#### Strengths

- Enjoys theoretical and abstract concepts
- High expectations
- Good at listening
- Takes criticism well
- Self-confident and hard-working

#### Weaknesses

- Can be overly analytical and judgmental
- Very perfectionistic
- Dislikes talking about emotions
- Sometimes seems callous or insensitive

**Deep down I do not like uncertainty and ambiguity.** As a result:

- I appreciate a clear north star, and a well articulated strategy toward that north star.
- I value a healthy dose of structure and processes.
- I am obsessed with metrics. I believe we should not only use metrics to detect problems when code breaks, we should use them to tell stories and *prove* that code *is* working.
- I'm not good at guessing what's on your mind. So I appreciate a direct and straight-to-point communication style (and I'll try to do the same).

## What drives me

**I am energized by sustainable *progress* toward a meaningful *purpose*.** On a day to day basis, I'm driven by a sense of accountability, an innate desire to do a good job, and high standards of excellence. But this alone is hard to sustain. On a weekly scale, I need *progress*--ideally sustained, and fast progress--to stay energized. On an even larger scale, I need to see the clear purpose of my work, i.e., how my work / my team's work is contributing to us winning as a business.

## My management philosophy

**I believe that managers and their reports are partners.** I'm a fan of humble leadership. Managers are not superior to their reports in any way. We play different roles, and we support each other in our own ways. The manager supports and empowers his/her report through coaching, guidance, unblocking, and creating opportunities. The report supports his/her manager by getting work done, contributing to the team mission, and making the team better.

**I believe in "trust but verify".** I believe in delegation. I want to empower my reports to make their own decisions when it comes to software design and implementation, but ensure accountability through two verification mechanisms. First, metrics should be a first-class component of most (if not all) software deliverables, and I expect engineers to be able to reason about the correctness and performance of their code using their metrics. Second, engineers own their software design decisions and don't need my approval, *as long* as they have provided enough context for their decision, sought opinions from relevant peers/stakeholders, and explored alternatives thoroughly.

**I am a fan of [radical candor](#):** challenge directly, yet care personally. I expect us to be genuine and honest with each other; voice concerns but offer help.

**I believe a manager cannot succeed without his/her team succeeding.** We succeed/fail together as a team.

## What do I consider to be my biggest strengths?

**I consider myself having a strong sense of accountability,** an innate desire to do a good job, and high standards of excellence.

**I am comfortable with making decisions with imperfect/incomplete information.** In many cases I am able to fill in blanks using common sense and first-principles reasoning.

**I try to strike a balance between high standards and pragmatism.** I believe perfection is the enemy of good. Sometimes you have to build up tech debt in order to hit a deadline, but when you do so, make sure to pay down the debt with a fast follow.

**I ask "dumb" questions.** Call it truth seeking if you will. I think not being the smartest person in the room is an advantage--this helps democratize information and keep the team on the same page.

## What do I consider to be my biggest weaknesses?

**Exhausted mediocrity.** Trying to be good at everything can end up with being mediocre at everything. I battle this with ruthless prioritization and conscious deprioritization.

**Improvisation is not my forte.** I am not good at thinking on my feet, especially in areas I'm not familiar with. It takes me time to build up muscle memory in new domains, but once I do, I become a thorough thinker that is able to offer deep insights and sound judgment/decisions. Preparation and planning are important to me.

**High standards and critical thinking, if overdone, can lead to negativity and pessimism.**

**Impatience.** I draw energy from constant progress. As a result, I can fall victim to instant gratification, and can become restless in the absence of progress.

**I'm not a natural public speaker.** I'm an introvert and tend to be uncomfortable under the spotlight.

## What qualities do I value in an engineer?

I value the following qualities in an engineer:

- **Strong motivation and passion** for solving problems and making a big impact. Self starters with a winning attitude.
- **Strong ownership mindset** (no “this is someone else’s problem”, follow through, close the loop, own the problem not just the solution).
- **Curiosity:** truth seeking and desire to learn.
- **Craftsmanship.** High standards for quality, attention to details; take pride in and derive satisfaction from a job well done.
- **Take smart risks**, be bold / “foolish”; source of new ideas, and the drive to try them out (bias toward action).
- **Humble and collaborative** team player.

I'm also a fan of Dan Heller's [Ten Principles for Growth as an Engineer](#).

## What kind of team culture I'd like to build

The following are the culture values of an unnamed company that I find resonate with me very well:

- **Communicate Effectively.** Getting things done collaboratively requires authentic and clear communication. We frame conversations, understand each other, explore options together, and lead commitment loops. We consult markets or other departments when decisions impact them.
- **Radical Open-Mindedness.** We seek challenges to our ideas with radical open-mindedness. We ask questions, listen generously, and strive to understand why others disagree with us. It pays off to investigate whether it's us who might be wrong.
- **Obligation to speak up.** When we disagree with something, we respectfully voice our concerns. We don't speak behind anyone's back. Once a decision is made, we commit to it and give our all to see it through to success.
- **Fierce execution.** Speed of decision making matters. We quickly but consultatively take calculated risks when rigorous analysis is too costly. We clearly articulate goals, communicate a plan, and systematically track progress. We own our dependencies and don't accept excuses.
- **Hard on the problem, supportive of the person.** We believe that it's fine to make mistakes, but it's unacceptable not to correct them and learn from them. We don't tolerate mediocre work or mediocre results. When we see it, we assume positive intent, inspire course-correction and offer our support.

Last but not least:

- **I am an advocate of collaboration and teamwork.** I expect each of us to support/help each other and take pleasure/pride in doing so. Silos lead to misunderstanding and inconsistency. I strive toward a culture of knowledge sharing and a team habit of documentation.
- **Work to live, not live to work.** We're expected to give our best and take pride in doing great inspired work, but don't forget to take care of yourself and each other. Watch out for signs of burnout. You're not expected to sacrifice your physical/emotional wellbeing for work.

