Promotion to the Next Level

Cynthia Phillips, Ph.D.
Fellow
Sandia National Laboratories

Kathryn S McKinley, Ph.D.
Distinguished Software Engineer
Google

CRA-WP
Computing Research Association
Widening Participation

What is the Next Level?

- What does your organization value?
    - Publications, Grants, Company/Mission Impact, Code, Documents, Patents, Awards, External Leadership (Conference PCs, Professional Society Officership, Journal Editorships), Responsibility for customer interactions, Mentorship?
    - Demonstrating that value
        - Track everything
        - Continuously interpret your contributions for your management chain, mentors, and peers
        - Write your own performance review every 6-12 months

- What next level & beyond roles are available? How will your job change?

- What gives you joy and does it align with your organization?

CRA-WP
Computing Research Association
Widening Participation

Promotion at the Lab

At Sandia National Laboratories, technical ladder is:
- Member of Technical Staff (MTS) (e.g. master's degree)
- Senior MTS (starting point with a PhD)
- Principal MTS (write successful proposals and lead projects)

After this, special appointment process with promotion package, interviews, etc:
- Distinguished MTS (10% of technical staff)
  - Usually must be recommended by management and rise near the top of center (100s of people)
  - New process allows post-and-bid for jobs at that level (rare)
- Senior Scientist (1% of technical staff)
  - Now get 20% funding for lab service, more influence, very different job
- Fellow: (0.1% of staff) Process depends on lab director.

Different parts of the lab have different values and process.
Oak Ridge (more academic) and Lawrence Livermore have different names, but similar

CRA-WP
Computing Research Association
Widening Participation

Promotion Levels at Google

Promotion requires ALREADY performing next level characteristics
1) Impact 2) Technical expertise 3) Leadership and 'Googliness'

L3 Undergraduates degrees
    expected to deliver on well defined projects

L4 PhD & Masters (PhDs are expected to not stay at L4 very long),
    expected to collaborate on the design of a project

L5 Expected to lead design, come up with ideas, and influence others

L6 More accountability for impact and technical direction
    wider scope, either more impact, more technical complexity, more organizational complex

L7 Senior Engineer ++

L8 Principal Engineer ++ driving the company in the right direction

L9 Distinguished Engineer ++

L10 Fellow ++

CRA-WP
Computing Research Association
Widening Participation

Activity

12 minutes: 4 minutes self reflection; 4 minutes of pair sharing x 2

Consider 2+ levels up in your organization. Write down:

1. Who has the job you aspire to?

2. Why & what are they doing that you want to do?

3. What do you think got them there?

4. What do you need to do differently to get there?

   a. pick something new to do

   b. pick something to drop to make room

Deliver Value & Make it Visible

- Do impactful work!
  - Understand what really matters to your organization or external funders
    - What sorts of projects receive funding or extra funding?
    - What gets your management excited?

- Don't just know your department
  - Know who the key decision makers are
    - They should know who you are and what value you bring to the organization
  - Know the other organizations/departments and what they do and people within them

- Be a great leader and team member.

- Make sure you and your work are visible

  - Give great talks

  - Write clear compelling grants, papers, documents, etc.

  - Communicate your vision & enthusiasm to everyone who matters and is interested

Overcoming Obstacles

Management versus Individual Contributor

Watch out for re-organizations

- Re-organization can amplify your project or eliminate it

Limited number of position at the top

- Maybe you cannot grow where you are and need to change departments or institution

Asked and doing more service work

- Can takes away from what management truly values or be valued
  - Internal grunt work vs technical work
- External service is a leadership opportunity
  - Builds external visibility, can be a larger scope of influence

Organizational goals vs your career goals

If you only care about yourself & your career, people won't promote you

Try to derive pleasure in aligning your projects and impact with your organization

However, women put themselves up and ask for raises at a lower than rate men

Networking, mentoring, and sponsorship

Good Mentors Can:

- Give you additional perspective and advice on hard decisions

- Alert you to opportunities inside and outside your organization

- Tell you what you need to hear.. Not just what you want to hear

Good Sponsors:

- Can and will attest to the impact you can provide 1st hand

- Are in the circle of trust where they can impact your path

Networking

- Go places, give great talks, Do a great job on reviewing and PC committees

- As your job grows, you will need to depend on others to help achieve goals

- Networking gives you the opportunity to help and be helped

- The most sought-after opportunities may require more than a single sponsor

Be a mentor yourself for earlier-career staff even as you are a mentee for advancement.

CRA-WP
Computing Research Association
Widening Participation

Other Helpful Learnings

- Be positive while remaining realistic.

- Persevere is a must. Be resilient and flexible.

- Don't take failure personally

- Get out of your comfort zone, growth is uncomfortable.

- Be ready to seize unexpected opportunities.
- Be a life-long learner.

**No such thing as failure,
you either win or you LEARN**

Q&A