PROMOTION TO THE TOP TIER OF THE TECHNICAL LADDER

Lori Diachin, Lawrence Livermore National Lab
Vida Iderem, Intel
Kathleen Fisher, Tufts University
PROMOTION WITHIN THE NATIONAL LABORATORIES

Lori Diachin, Director
Center for Applied Scientific Computing
Lawrence Livermore National Lab
Increasing your visibility is critical to career advancement and promotion

- You must work hard, but others need to know of your accomplishments and expertise
- *Increasing visibility is not the same as bragging or clamoring for attention*
- Key decision makers should know:
  1. Who you are
  2. What value you bring to the organization
Understanding the process is important – what is valued by your organization?

Every organization is slightly different so it’s important to investigate what you need to do in the context of your current environment.

**Understanding your environment:**
*Talk to others…*

- Talk to your supervisor about the promotion process
- Talk to peers who were recently promoted
  - How did they make the case?
  - What was the key change that earned the promotion?

**Understanding yourself… get feedback**

- What are your strengths?
- Where are your gaps? What can you do to fill the gaps?
- What are your values?
- In what type of job assignments do you thrive?

- Have a 360 evaluation done
- Have a mentor give you candid feedback
An example: The CASC value system has four basic axes we consider for promotion

- Depth
- Breadth
- Innovation and creativity

- Project management
- Program management
- Line management

- Number and type of technical collaborations
- Mentoring
- Professional service
- Lab service

- Program impact
- Discipline impact
- Consequence of error
- Management/sponsor visibility

Technical SKAs

Impact and Consequence

Leadership Skills

Collaboration and Service
Showing initiative is a critical component to raising your visibility

- **Ask for more responsible assignments** and do them well – show you deserve them and that your skills are underutilized
- **Take risks** - Step outside your comfort zone – stretch professionally
- **Volunteer** to represent your department at meetings, committees or projects
- Look for opportunities to put unused skills to the test
Include mentors and sponsors in your network to help ensure success

- **Mentor**: Helps advise you on your career and company culture
- **Sponsor/Champion**: Advocates for you; making sure your work is visible to influential people in the company
- Both can help you identify opportunities to shine
  - Speaking/presentation opportunities
  - Help you identify and pitch your strengths
  - Be sure they know your career goals!
- Have a variety of mentors and sponsors
- Become a mentor or sponsor yourself
Actions I have taken that have helped my chances for promotion

- Volunteered for a variety of assignments (some were not very glamorous)
- Stretched professionally – taking on deputy and leadership roles and then working hard to ensure they succeed
- Found great mentors and sponsors
- Take advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves – say Yes!
- Focused on improving presentation skills and speaking up more in meetings
- Introspection to understand strengths and weaknesses; build support teams with complementary skill sets
PROMOTION WITHIN THE INDUSTRY LABS

Vida Ilderem, VP Intel Labs
Director Wireless Communication Research
Intel Corporation
Lessons Learned/leadership Qualities

- Understand the requirements to get to the next step
- Be passionate about what you do—Deliver --- Get noticed
- Be noticed by a sponsor
- Establish your expertise. Become go to person
- Persevere. Be resilient.
- Establish your network---volunteer
- Get out of your comfort zone
PROMOTION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

Kathleen Fisher, Professor
Tufts University
Positioning yourself for promotion

• Understand yourself
  – Goals, non-goals, and available resources

• Understand your institution
  – Values, non-values, and institutional challenges

• Devise a plan so you fit your organization beautifully
  – Dialog with your manager(s)
  – Dialog with your mentor(s)

• Be a leader
  – Technically, organizationally, and as a mentor
Understanding myself

• I want to be a recognized leader in my research field (programming languages)
  – Work on problems I find technically interesting
  – Publish papers in top venues
  – Serve as program chair, journal editor, etc.

• I wanted my work to solve technical problems facing AT&T
Understanding AT&T

• Valued:
  – Contributions to solving company problems
  – Contributions to research community
  – Building systems that others can use
  – Leadership (in pretty much any form)

• Not Valued:
  – PL in abstract, papers for papers sake

• Challenges: Cataclysmic industry upheaval
  – Monopoly -> Competitive industry
  – Low-growth industry -> Pressure from Wall St.
  – Lay-offs and downsizing
Assessing the initial fit
The (bumpy) Road to a Beautiful Fit

AT&T Evaluation

Below Meets Exceeds Exceptional

1996

Wow!

Highlights:
2004 ICFP PC Chair
2011 ACM Fellow

Hired!

Useful, but not a leader

She does what?
So, Promotion?

• Not at AT&T 😞
  – Layoffs, promotion and hiring freezes
  – Were considering using my case to force a thaw

• Transitioned to other institutions, with the equivalent of a promotion:

  - Individual contributor
  - Program Manager
  - Full Professor
Lessons Learned

• Believe in yourself.
• Mentors are important for keeping sanity.
• Champions are necessary for advancement.
• Don’t limit your horizons to current employer.
  – Employability is the best job security
  – Craft your work so your CV shows you are well qualified for desired jobs & advancement levels.