

Managing Your Career as a PhD

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What is a PhD?

- Definition: Doctor of Philosophy, abbreviated **PhD** or **DPhil**, for the Latin philosophiæ doctor, meaning “**teacher of philosophy**”
 - open to qualified individuals
 - original and significant research
 - demonstrate in-depth knowledge via thesis

What is a PhD?

- Doctoral Education: “a program of **research, teaching, and scholarship** which develops a broad skill set that can qualify one for a **wide variety of career paths** and not as a progressively specializing process for a singular career path”

-- UC Berkley Career Center

Why do people do a PhD?



👁️ subject interest



👁️ desire for **career progression** (avoid “glass ceiling” in some professions)

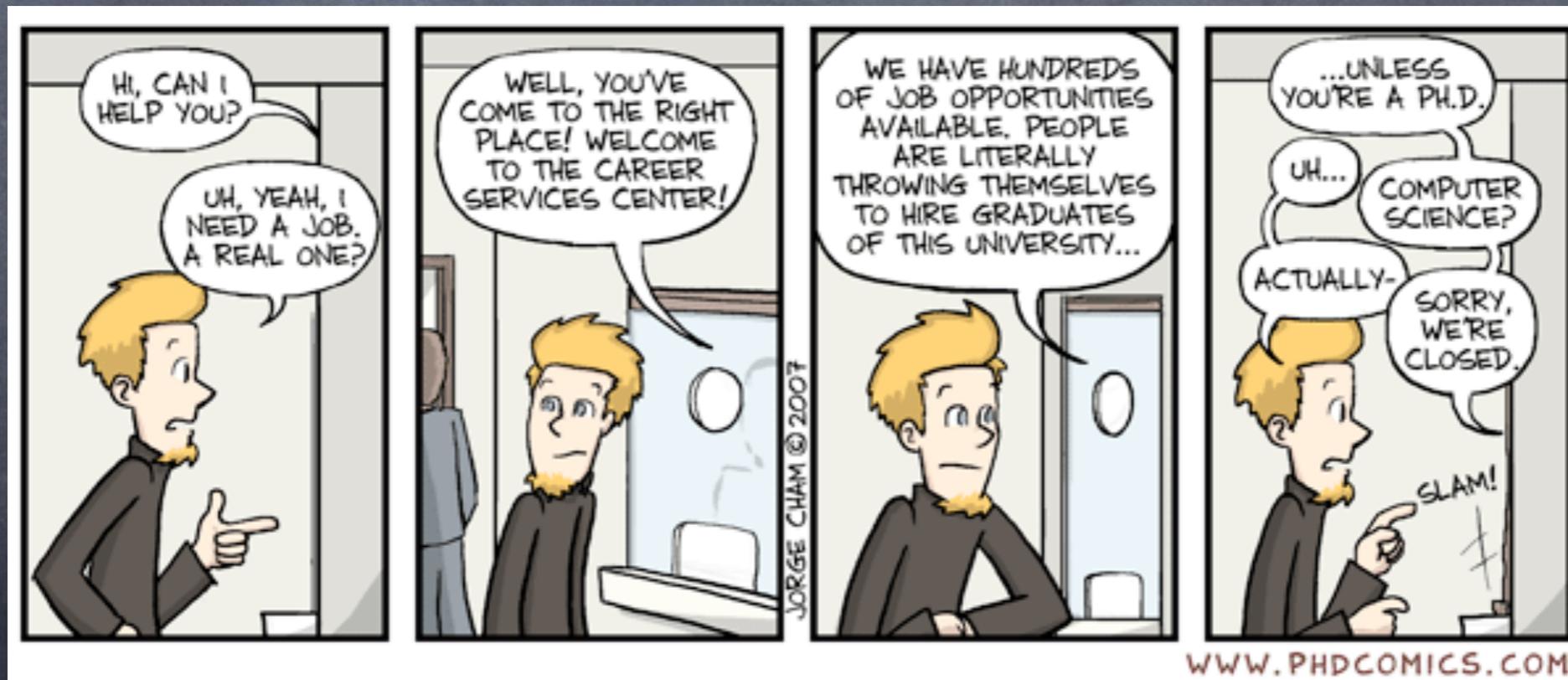
👁️ **broader career choice** (stand out in a crowd)

👁️ personal benefit (self-confidence, sense of achievement, develop skills)



PhD and a Career

- Thinking about career plans during a PhD can be **very stressful!**



PhD and a Career

- Thinking about career plans during a PhD can be **very stressful!**
- inability to articulate and recognize transferable skills
- lack of opportunity to develop wider skills

PhD and a Career



PhD and a Career

- SOCIETY NEEDS PhDs:

- most highly educated and skilled group!

Transferable Competencies

- questioning and inquiring attitude
- self-confidence
- ability to defend new ideas
- problem-solving skills
- determination to find better ways to tackle challenges
- maturity and autonomy
- ability to make impact
- critical judgement
- ability to rise to the challenge
- ability to learn quickly
- ability to acquire new skills quickly
- expertise at analytic thinking
- adaptability
- ability to make impact
- talent to bridge different areas and communicate with others in different disciplines
- capability to handle high pace of knowledge economy

What is a Career?

- chosen pursuit
- long-term; built during lifetime
- spills over into personal life
- work as long as it takes
- matures gracefully like a fine wine

Suited for PhDs!

What is a Successful Career?

- What is success?

- Dictionary definition: the accomplishment of an aim or purpose

- Must set career goals.

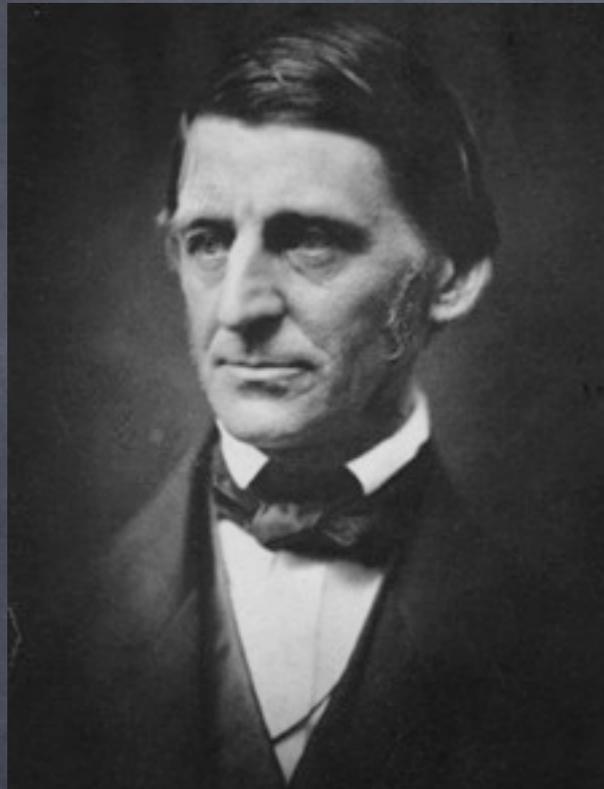
- level of responsibility, job function, title, salary, etc.

- other qualitative definitions of success ...

What is Success

by

Ralph Waldo Emerson



To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;

To find the best in others;

To leave the world a bit better, whether by
a healthy child, a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed
easier because you have lived;

This is to have succeeded.

The American Dream

- Opportunity exists (through hard work and free choice) for every individual to achieve their goals.
- Often equated to material prosperity or opportunities for education.

How should a PhD set Career Goals?

- Determine your commitment and desires.
- Identify your strengths and assets.
- Identify your weaknesses.
- Select what you may compromise on.

Mature and Personal Perspective

You and Your Goals

- You and your career are both a work in progress.



YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT
CONTROL OVER WHO
YOU ARE AND WHAT
YOU DO

STRATEGY 2: YOU MODIFY YOUR
CAREER GOALS TO SUIT
WHO YOU ARE



STRATEGY 1:
YOU MODIFY YOURSELF
TO MEET YOU CAREER GOALS

YOU HAVE
PARTIAL CONTROL
OVER YOUR CAREER

NEED BOTH!

STRATEGY 2: YOU MODIFY YOUR
CAREER GOALS TO SUIT
WHO YOU ARE



STRATEGY 1:
YOU MODIFY YOURSELF
TO MEET YOU CAREER GOALS

It helps to ...

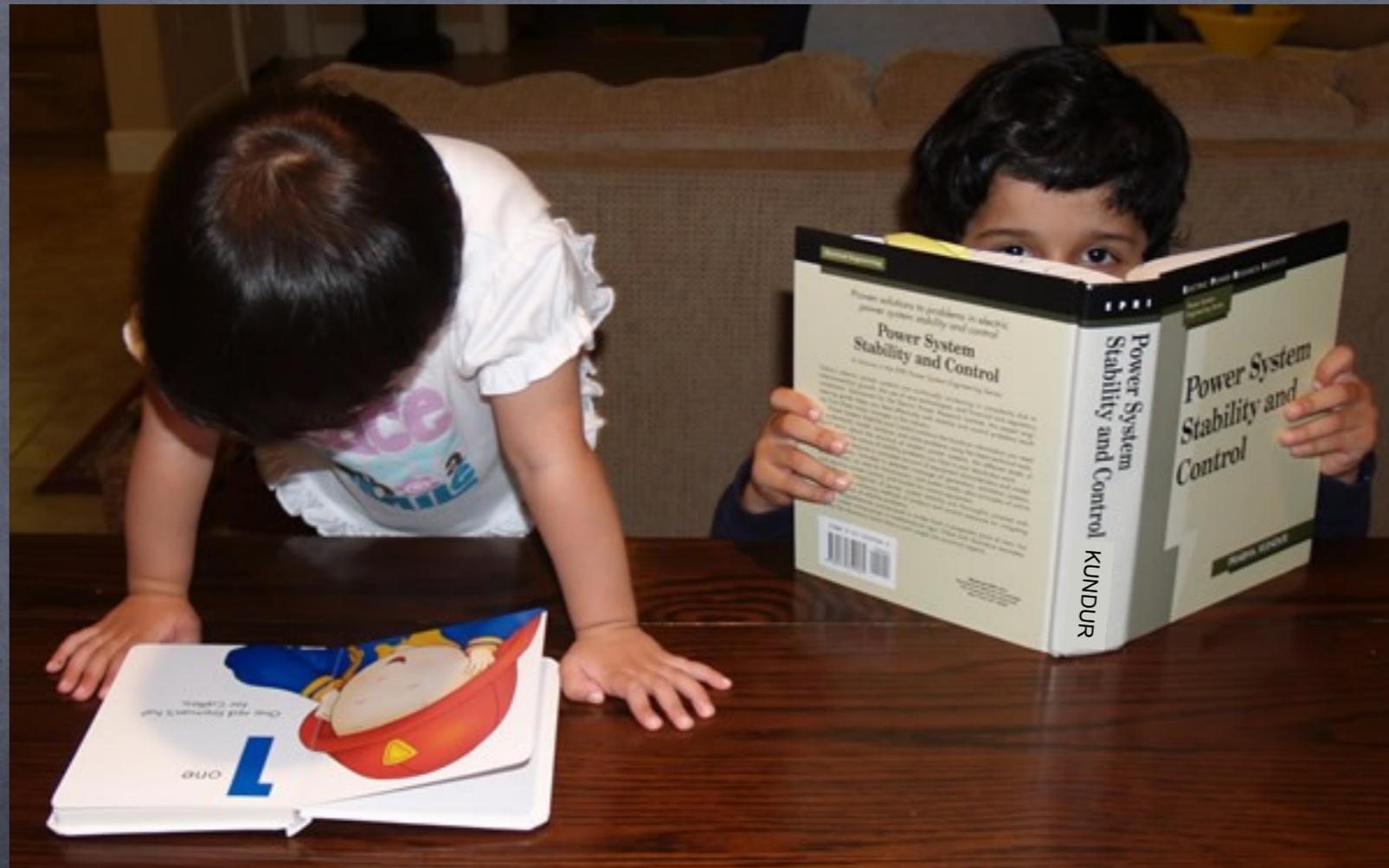
- have your career goals aligned with:
 - your interests
 - your strengths
 - the existence of a critical mass of supporters

“... find your passion.”

My personal DOs and DONT's ...

DOs

Prepare and Work Hard



Prepare and Work Hard

“Opportunity is missed by most because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

– Thomas Edison

- Focus on the **fundamentals** and work hard!
- Make use of the **available opportunities**.
 - Opportunities in academia often stem from volunteering.
- Take responsibility for doing well.

Competent vs. Confident

- Competence can protect you from getting voted off the island, but confidence will not.



Independent vs. Interdependent

- How do you know when you are competent enough? A: you achieve independence/you are awarded your PhD!
- interdependence:
 - be proactive
 - think win/win
 - listen first then speak
 - synergize and have integrity

YOUR VALUE AFTER A
PhD IS RELATED TO
YOUR ABILITY TO BE
NEEDED BY YOUR
ORGANIZATION

Produce Sustainable Results

- You should be able to communicate what you can do and have done.
- Publish, present and network.
- Do what others do not want to do.

Value your Mistakes

"Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment."

- Rita Mae Brown

- learn more from failures than successes
- take feedback - don't be defensive!
- good judgement takes time to develop ...

Honesty, Integrity and Loyalty

“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” -Krishnamurti

- “walk the talk”
- always tell the truth
- keep your word - careful what you promise!
- do your best (even when no one is watching)
- give back however you can; you will reap rewards in the long run

Manage your Time

- Volunteer your time effectively.
- avoid procrastination, change your thinking



Manage Your Emotions



My personal DOs and DON'Ts ...

DON'Ts

Don't Take Things Personally

- Your PhD is a personal endeavor, but the feedback you get is about the work not about who you are or your potential.
- What happens at work is often not personal.
 - Leads to unnecessary “drama” and stress.
- Understand that what someone does is because of them, not because of you.

Don't Make Assumptions

- You could be wrong and make something negative a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.
- Avoid believing "gossip" (it's often wrong); you'll play other people's politics and create unnecessary enemies.

Don't Give Up

“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

- Don't give up on yourself ... even if others have; if you give up, you will surely fail!
 - PhD/research success comes from persistence.
- quick starts vs. late bloomers – both good!

Don't be Fearful



“Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”
– Yoda, Star Wars

- Fear can prevent long-term success and creates dysfunction.
- ~~“I’ll fail so why should I try?!?”~~
- 6 cancers (by Stephen R. Covey):
 - cynicism, criticism, comparing, competing, complaining, contending

Don't Worry about Conflict

- Conflict is natural; **healthy** conflict is good.
- Avoid **dysfunctional** conflict/situations/people.
 - “politics”/“backstabbing” occurs when at least one party is fearful
- **Behave fairly** (even when others are not); focus your energy on the goal, not on the conflict.
- Choose your battles.

Concluding Remarks

- People often have much more influence and control over their career success than they believe.
- Regardless of your stage of success, you can be happy. Note: Success \neq Happiness

“Success is getting what you want.
Happiness is wanting what you get.”
– Dale Carnegie

Further Reading

- What do PhDs do? by C. Ball, J. Metcalfe, E. Pearce and S. Shinton
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and The 8th Habit by Stephen R. Covey
- The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom by Don Miguel Ruiz

Contact

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