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Communications of the Association for Information Systems

KNOWING YOU, KNOWING WHO, AND KNOWING WHAT COUNTS: A MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONVERSATION

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ABSTRACT

People who have had the most impact on our lives are those who have seen some special trait or character in us and then nurture that special something. Gary Dickson has had that kind of impact on others. Gary also has left us with a discovery framework for survival in academia. Surviving academics must groom themselves for their careers through the use of knowledge that can be turned into action. Knowing yourself and your strengths and weaknesses, your field and its perception by other academics, key players both while in a Ph.D. program and in an academic position, success factors in the job market and on the road to tenure and promotion, your publication outlets, and how you personally react to criticism are all part of your desired "knowledge package." But, knowledge is not enough. You must use your information system and knowledge base along with an action plan to reach your goals. Actions including but not limited to a balance in life, turning unstructured tasks into structured ones, and thinking beyond system boundaries all can guide you to be a survivor in academia. This conversation among Gary Dickson's first Ph.D. student, a newly minted Ph.D. who Ken advised, and a current student of Ken's, provides food for thought on building your knowledge base and some guides to actions that will aid your academic career.

Keywords: academic survival, publishing strategies, academic work habits

I. INTRODUCTION

Although many consider politics to govern success in academia, the key factor to success is management. This means practicing the functions of management including planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling your academic career. To practice these functions, information is needed. Being well informed can guide your actions. Without good knowledge, conscious thought, and a plan for action, an academic can wander aimlessly and have many false starts. Knowing yourself, knowing what you should know, and then knowing what you should do, are the objectives of this paper. Gary Dickson not only practiced the functions of a manager in an academic setting, but provided leadership that has been passed on from generation to generation.

Although the advice offered in this conversation is oriented to research-intensive environments in business schools, it must be remembered that the same kind of activity can be applied to other environments where the passion might be different. The key is that there must be *passion*.

II. SEEKING A FIT IN YOUR ACADEMIC FAMILY

Unlike our entry into the world where we cannot choose our parents, to some degree you *can* select your academic parents. Some of us were luckier than others when we did this without conscious thought. Gary Dickson was not only Ken's academic parent but the father of much of the IS academic field. He had a major role in founding the *MIS Quarterly*, the Management Information Systems Research Center (MISRC) at the University of Minnesota, and the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS). Ken has attempted to pass down and build on this parenting to his students, thus the co-authorship of this paper with a recently completed Ph.D., and with a student early in his Ph.D. program, both of whom have worked directly with Ken. It should be remembered that Ken's voice may be an echo of Gary Dickson.

Ken: Mentors will work to know you and see something in you that you might not see in yourself. Gary was a master at this. Then great mentors will nurture those characteristics or traits. Some of those characteristics could be creativity in teaching and research, tenacity or the stubbornness to stick to something you believe is a contribution, the ability to take an aggregation of tasks and establish a plan of action, the ability to organize resources and people to meet objectives, or the ability to see opportunities and become a "rainmaker" in finding support from other organizations.

Key Points
Mentors are instrumental in publishing success.
Mentors help to transform ideas into projects.
Your advisor can keep you motivated and moving forward.

Dirk: This is a critical point that I think many Ph.D. students miss. As the co-chair of my committee, Ken was instrumental in supporting my "riskier" research. At the same time, he made sure I was involved in more mainstream, and more easily published work. He consistently pushed for substantive, rather than merely publishable, research by frequently asking "Why would any reader care?" From what Ken has said, this is something Gary would have done. By mindfully supporting a "European style" of multiple-paper dissertation, he helped me become engaged with the publication process, learn how to value and respond to reviews, and get published before I completed my degree. This makes an enormous difference in the current academic job market.

Tomasz: I agree with Dirk that your advisor and mentors play a critical support role in research endeavors and are instrumental in guiding ideas towards publication. I returned to academia with numerous research ideas from my work experiences, and Ken has helped me to understand how to convert abstract ideas to publishable research projects. I also believe that an ideal working relationship with an advisor should involve more than mentoring; it should allow for collaboration where ideas are freely exchanged. I have had the opportunity to work with Ken since my first weeks in the doctoral program, and our meetings have always been an exchange of ideas and opinions. Our conversations always motivate me to pursue and progress with research projects.

Ken: Again, I learned this from Gary. I started working with him after I finished my undergraduate degree. He helped me achieve things that I might never have attempted. Overall, it is important that you consider this recognition and mentoring ability when you select a Ph.D. program and especially when you select your thesis committee. Your advisor can aid in your academic success.

III. YOUR ACADEMIC OBLIGATIONS: SERVICE, TEACHING, AND RESEARCH (OR THE EASE OF STRUCTURED TASKS VS. ILL-DEFINED CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY)

For research-oriented universities, research and publication in the best journals is what will lead to academic success. Accepted articles in the best journals cannot be taken away from you (unless you did something very unscrupulous). They are part of your academic scorecard. But, research is an unstructured activity. It can always wait until tomorrow. The only deadlines

confronting you are some conference submission dates or deadlines for special journal issues. You must make your research endeavors structured. But how can you do this?

Ken: When considering success, you should consider the typical day of an academic. It will consist of tasks related to service, teaching, and research (stated in reverse order of importance to academic success). If you allow your time to become fragmented with a focus on structured tasks such as committee work or teaching, you should reconsider what you are doing. It is essential that you have blocks of time to focus on the most portable portion of your academic record, your research achievements. When we started the Minnesota Experiments, we often worked into the night and on weekends. But, this was easier to do since Gary was around at these times as well.

Dirk: I think of the tasks of an academic as the seduction of well-structured tasks with defined closure (like teaching) versus the vague horror of ill-defined wicked problems like research that seemingly never end. Even when submitted, papers take months to receive the best-case scenario – the opportunity to spend more time revising the work! A few techniques help: set research/writing time aside EVERY day; keep a notebook of every interesting question you think of; as you finish reading any research paper, enter the citation into one of the bibliographic database tools; and attend talks in other disciplines where you may find fruitful questions or colleagues to work with. Ph.D. service is an insidious time-drain; meetings with students, reviewing conference papers, helping students with *their* research papers – all of these help you feel like you are accomplishing a great deal. But have you made progress on your dissertation research or a publishable paper? Ken was the master of the Ph.D. koan, “keep your eye on the goal – what service will complete your dissertation?”

Key Points
Devote blocks of time to research activities.
Work on your research/writing every day.
Service is a necessary evil.
Use course work to move your research forward.
Do not get consumed by your teaching commitments.

Ken: Gary would ask us, “How many pages did you write today?” and unless I did write something I did not feel like I was entitled to go home! Service can be seen as a necessary evil. If you do not pitch in, your colleagues could look at you in a bad light. If you allow committee work and other meetings to consume your time, you will feel that you are active but will not be fulfilled. Your research will suffer. You also should be aware that excellent service will be rewarded by more service. When early in your career, do what you need to do with regard to service but no more, remembering that it is highly unlikely that you will be tenured for your service contributions.

Tomasz: Like service, early in your Ph.D. studies, another time-consuming obligation is your course work. Some Ph.D. students seem to fall into a time trap with their course work; they spend all their time trying to get an A+ in every course they take. Some Ph.D. students even take extra courses because they seem remotely interesting. I believe that course work should be primarily used to accomplish your ultimate goal, the dissertation. Put extra effort into those course-related activities that are directly applicable to your research interests and do enough to get by with the other activities. You will not be kicked out of your Ph.D. program if you receive a B in a course. Approach your teaching obligations in the same manner. Teaching your first class could be a challenging and exciting opportunity, but it could also be a time killer. Do your best to satisfy your students, but also try to incorporate examples, case studies, or articles that are related to your research. Discussing your research with your students could generate new ideas for potential research projects.

Ken: Gary instilled a "discovery culture" at Minnesota and then demonstrated how important it is to share your discoveries through teaching. Teaching gives many of us pride and a sense of

accomplishment. We can contribute to the growth of others and nurture students to a successful career. Some academics are even tenured due to their teaching prowess and success. If you are at an institution that values teaching, this is great. But, you also can become consumed by your teaching. You can spend most of your time meeting with students, grading papers, preparing new material, and ensuring that students have the best college experience. Your classes meet a fixed number of times per week, you have a fixed class length, you have scheduled office hours, and you can spend as much time as you have available and still not feel that you have done enough. But you will get constant and positive feedback. At a school that holds research as the penultimate objective, minimizing the number of class preparations and being at least a satisfactory teacher should be your objective. Again, it is a matter of keeping your academic life in balance. Gary seemed to instill this as teaching was never downplayed, but seen as something professors must do and do well. This especially came through in the AACSB "re-tracking" program when there was a shortage of IS faculty. Gary taught me that respect for students is essential.

IV. BUILDING YOUR ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE BASE

To structure your research process, you must have knowledge that allows you to manage your career path. This knowledge comes from data that is transformed into information which is then converted to knowledge that allows you to select an appropriate course of action. But, you must act while using knowledge. Following are some of the things that you must know.

KNOWING YOURSELF

You must know who you are and recognize that you have different characteristics as well as different needs than anyone else. You can only be yourself, not someone else. You should attempt to discover yourself to make the most of yourself.

Ken: You need to foremost determine your strengths and weaknesses. Are there some things that you feel you can do better than others and other things that you feel you need help with, possibly something you can find in a co-author? As I think back, Gary assembled teams in this manner. The group of people put together seemed to click, especially in activities at the MIS Research Center.

Tomasz: In addition to just knowing your weaknesses, you need to know what weaknesses you want to improve. Are you striving to be a more effective and efficient instructor? Are there research methods in which you would like to become more proficient? Take action on improvements that are important to you and that will help you be successful.

Dirk: I would add that you should identify what ideas, problems, and intellectual challenges you are passionate about and find a way of pursuing them. Some research is convenient due to funding, access to data, or a colleague who takes the lead. But you may find that the "convenience" research does not keep you motivated and awake at night! If you focus your dissertation on something that you have no passion for, it will show in your writing and in your ability to stay motivated through the inevitable rounds of revision. You entered this field for a reason, because there were questions you could not ask. Find a way to pursue what you have a passion for!

Ken: You also need to find what else motivates you. Is it free time, or is it to make a discovery that could help others? Is it gathering data, analyzing data, or writing up results?

Tomasz: Similarly, you should consider what rejuvenates your energy and motivation. Some individuals need to get away from the office and spend a day outdoors, while others simply need to spend a few hours reading a book in a quiet location.

Dirk: Absolutely. There is danger lurking in the demands on new faculty and the sheer volume of work Ph.D. students face. Without conscious effort, it is possible to spend every waking moment writing, revising, reviewing, or starting new research. Beyond the obvious potential for burnout, the constant pressure to produce can have huge impacts on your family and spouse, on your friendships, and your own sense of well-being. Seek some balance between your academic and the personal lives and make sure you take some individual time every day/week.

Ken: Knowing your objectives is also vital. Gary quietly advocated that you should be your best and not be satisfied with mediocre results. This was part of the culture of Gary's students and became an unspoken guide. But you need to know who you are. Are you seeking a comfortable existence or do you want to influence the field, sometimes at the expense of other parts of life? What do you feel is a reward? This could range from praise by a colleague to an increase in salary to winning an award. You need to keep in mind that you will exhibit behavior that will be rewarded. Be sure you understand the rewards and whether they are meaningful to you.

Key Points
Determine your strengths and weaknesses.
Recognize which weaknesses you need to improve.
Identify what motivates you and what rejuvenates your motivation.
What ideas are you passionate about?
Know your objectives in academia and in life.
Determine your prime work location, work space, and working times.
Be conscious of your "mind state."
Learn how you react to criticism.

Tomasz: An essential consideration that individuals sometimes neglect is their prime geographic location. Do you need to be close to your family? Is a place with an abundance of outdoor opportunities essential to you? Are you more comfortable in a suburban or urban environment? Try not to end up in a place that is not right for you; you will not last long there.

Ken: Prime location is one consideration; a prime work space is another. This could range from your work office to a home office. Some persons work best in one distinct work space while others find that a change in environment is refreshing. Some people like noise and can work at the local coffee shop while others can think and analyze best when sitting next to a flowing stream. Everyone also has different prime work times. You should attempt to discover when you are most productive. Some can work into the wee hours of morning and others rise early and are most productive as the sun comes up. But, you may find yourself working at ALL these times.

Dirk: What adds to creativity in your work? Ideas for original research can be hard to find. As students and new faculty, we are inculcated and somewhat co-opted by the disciplinary matrix or paradigms in our area of expertise. These consist of the topics of interest, problems, exemplars, and criteria for evaluation shared by the community. There is a natural tension between operating within the disciplinary matrix of the intellectual community and being creative and pursuing original research. Ken often spoke of his experiences at Minnesota where Gary encouraged reading widely from other disciplines, the trade publications, and the many general audience books to spark ideas and questions leading to new connections and research ideas. The pressure to keep up with the articles in top journals can narrow our vision of information systems. Reflecting on the purpose and goals of the IS field and seeing the ubiquitous influence of human-information system interaction can inspire valuable research questions.

Ken: You should consider what must be your mind state before you get work done. If there are small tasks that prevent you from focusing, then take care of them. This could be cleaning your work area, having food or drink available, or getting the kids settled for the night. Gary treated us like individuals and respected our individual differences.

KNOW YOUR RESEARCH TEAM

Very seldom will you be working completely independently. Others can provide assistance and you can do the same for them. One great benefit to co-authorship is motivating each other. It works like a seesaw or teeter-totter. When one is down, the other can be up or when one feels dejection, the other can feel enthusiasm.

Key Points
Know who can support your weaknesses.
Find co-authors you can work in a teeter totter fashion.
Determine who will lead the research effort.

Ken: Know who can support your weaknesses and benefit from your strengths. Once you have an inventory of your strengths and weaknesses, you can look for others that you can work with to support each other. If you are weak in statistical analysis, but strong in conceptualization and writing down your thoughts, try to find others where synergy can be generated. You should recognize whom you can work with in a teeter-totter fashion. Besides knowledge and skills, you need to work with persons who can buoy you up emotionally. Beware of the eternal pessimist who lacks self-confidence and is always down. Be sure you are not that person. You need to believe in yourself and believe you can offer things to others. Gary often was there to believe in his students and somehow knew when to push and when to reinforce them. This is a fine line of motivation that Gary mastered.

Tomasz: Similarly, you should figure out if you need to be the leader of your research team or be led. Some people are natural leaders and thrive on control over the direction of a research projects. Other individuals are more comfortable being handed specific tasks by a colleague. Figure out what leadership responsibilities work for your co-authors and you.

Dirk: Our field places high value on publication in highly ranked journals and it is tempting to get involved as a third or fourth author on a paper targeted to an “A” journal. I have heard some negative reactions in the current job market from hiring committees who recognize that in doing this, you and your colleagues are ”gaming” the system. If you are not substantively contributing to the paper or if it is an intellectual domain quite different from your main research streams, you may want to ask whether that line on your CV will help or hurt you in the hiring process.

Ken: At the beginning of a project, do not forget to split up the work so that each co-author contributes. If you do not contribute, you are on the road to not being part of the team next time. Gary did not tolerate free riding and I support and practice this belief.

KNOWING YOUR FIELD

What is important in the eyes of both those in your field as well as those in other business disciplines?

Ken: Although very hard to predict, try to know what does or doesn’t get published. You need to be aware of what is meant by good research. Care in developing measurement instruments, finding a strong theoretical foundation, understanding the limitations of your chosen method, and carefully selecting a sample are a few of the key factors leading to good research. You should read publications in the top journals and understand why you think they have been published. I was fortunate in that Gary founded the MISQ and let his team members understand the definition of quality.

Tomasz: Also, you should familiarize yourself with IS departments that have a strong focus in your area of interest. You probably do not want to end up at a university where you are the only one with a research or teaching interest in a particular area. You might have to look outside of the IS department, but make sure that individuals exist with whom you can collaborate and regularly discuss your ideas.

Dirk: Although we like to think of our highly ranked journals as being "umbrella" outlets for IS research, it is important to recognize which journals are more apt to publish the type of research you are pursuing. You can spend a great deal of time and effort submitting and revising articles for journals that rarely accept your type of research. Read the editorial statements of the journals and skim through old issues to get a feel for frequently published research domains – if your area is not found in that journal you may want to consider other outlets.

Key Points
Try to know what does or does not get published.
Know the strengths of specific IS departments.
Be aware of misconceptions of those in your field.
Be aware of misconceptions of other disciplines about your field.
Familiarize yourself with the key players in your field.
Actively involve yourself with practitioners in your discipline.
Do not lose sight of success factors in the job market and for tenure.

Ken: Misconceptions of those in your field are also important. The major misconception that comes to mind is how many articles in top journals are needed when you come up for promotion and tenure. Dennis et al. [2006] stated that a survey of senior IS faculty at 49 leading universities found 86 percent to expect three or more articles in elite journals at tenure review. Yet, over a 12- year period, only three persons (2.1 percent) in a graduating year had three or more articles in a set of 20 elite journals within six years of graduation. Thus, meeting senior faculty expectations by having three or more premier journal hits at tenure review is highly unlikely. These same senior faculty members often are called on for external tenure review letters. Similarly, understanding the perceptions and misconceptions of other disciplines about your field at a national/international level is vital. Some might believe that Information Systems is computer science and thus publication outlets and standards are similar. This simply is not true. Some other disciplines believe that one publication a year in top journals is necessary. If so, no one in IS would be tenured if using the strictest definition of top journals.

Dirk: There are many judgment calls in choosing research projects. As a Ph.D. student or new faculty, it is tempting to pick well-trodden domains and find research with rapid data collection/analysis and writing cycles. But it is also worth considering what will make a difference. What are the questions researchers will still be asking in five years? Ten years? If you can contribute to those discussions now, your papers will have an impact and continue to be cited.

Ken: You will not get far if you do not know who the key players are in your field. Make sure you read the masthead of the top journals to see the names of people influential in the field. Make note of who is writing the issues/opinions articles in the top journals. Your Ph.D. program should familiarize you with literature in the field and authors who are influencing the field. You don't have to agree with the work, but you need to be aware of it. You need to attend conferences where the journal editors and significant publishers in your field are present and you need to meet them. Since I came from the very early days of IS, I got to know most of the key players. But one reason for this is that Gary made sure that I met and knew these people. He also was responsible for inviting many of them to the University of Minnesota as speakers and visitors and made sure that students got to meet and know these visitors. Again, this is a culture we have adopted in Colorado.

Tomasz: Knowing the work of leading researchers in your field is vital. But, also having an understanding and contact with practitioners in one's discipline is critical. If you want to do research that has a direct impact on organizations (and possibly society in general), you need to familiarize yourself with the latest trends in your area of interest. You might find exciting opportunities to do some field work. Some companies even have funding opportunities for researchers with an appropriate research expertise.

Ken: Gary was key in this aspect as the MISRC had corporate affiliates and sponsors. My association with the Society for Information Management also came through Gary. But, most importantly, do not lose sight of success factors in the academic job market. At one point of your academic life, grades and transcripts and leadership in student organizations was important. In a tough job market, the major concerns are whether a person can survive in a classroom and whether they have publications on their all-important vita. Plus, you must be a collegial and mature person who understands academic life. Similarly, you should always have an understanding of success factors for promotion/tenure. You need to be aware that acceptable teaching and outstanding research will get you tenure. You must not only be submitting to the top journals, but should have success with publications, positive reviews for your submitted work, and a healthy pipeline of work in progress. One thing that I won't forget about Gary is that he had a Colorado mountain home to support his ski habit, but he always took time to visit the Minnesota graduates at the University of Colorado and took time to visit with the dean to keep the dean informed about the IS field.

KNOWING YOUR OWN SCHOOL'S KEY PLAYERS

Ph.D. students and hired faculty members need to know who in your school is respected and followed with regard to research careers and distinctions.

Ken: Ph.D. students should know the formal and informal leaders in your school. Who will others follow and listen to? These may be the committee members you should seek. Gary helped me in this regard since the IS field was not recognized. But he had his eyes open for other disciplines and faculty members who would understand and support our work who could serve as committee members.

Key Points
Know formal and informal leaders at your school.
Familiarize yourself with experts in specific research methods.
Know who sits on research evaluation committees.

Tomasz: Ph.D. students should also quickly familiarize themselves with the experts at their school in specific research methods and statistical techniques. You need to know where to get advice that will reliably solve questions and issues that you encounter. Try to build a working relationship with these individuals, so that you can count on their help in the future.

Ken: Academic position holders need to know who sits on the research evaluation committees both at the department level and the school level. These are the persons who will judge your research output and decide whether it meets their expectations. You also need to know who sits on the evaluation committees for promotion and tenure decisions. These persons will determine your destiny. You might consider what Gary did and, if field leaders visit your school, have them meet with some of the school research leaders.

KNOW YOUR SCHOOL AND ITS RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

Schools as well as individuals are unique.

Ken: Each school will have a different view of publication success. Some schools only recognize the top two journals in the field and feel that conference presentations are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Others believe that quantity in acceptable journals is favored over a limited number of publications in the highest quality outlets. Not all faculty ends up at research intensive institutions so you should understand the focus of your school. If it is teaching and pedagogy, then orient some of your publications toward these outlets. If you are not in a business school, know the culture and requirements of your academic unit.

Dirk: As I have "gone on the market," I have realized how important it is to recognize your own goals and aspirations and whether you are willing and able to meet the research expectations of each school at which you seek a position. Once again – what are your priorities, skills, and aspirations? The review process of the top journals can be demanding and demoralizing. Learning to react to aggressively critical or unconstructive reviews is an important skill for any publication outlet. But if your targeted schools have very high publication expectations for promotion and tenure, it is worth asking whether you will enjoy the demands of competing for a limited number of annual publication slots in the top journals.

Key Points
Know what your school's view of publication success is.
Do not lose sight of schools that you aspire to go to.

Ken: Be sure to not only consider the school you are at now, but those that you aspire to. Academic mobility can lead to quicker progress on a career path when tenure and/or promotion can be gained by a move to a different school. Also remember that tenure at one institution does not assure tenure at another, especially if you are moving to a school with a perceived higher quality research reputation.

KNOWING PUBLICATION OUTLETS

Once you have established a process for producing work, your research must be sent off to either conferences or journals. It is essential to know your potential audience.

Ken: Familiarity with journals and conferences in the IS field is essential. You should be aware of the types of work published, their review process, and any special issues that may align with your research specialization. Restrictions on article length, need for theoretical foundations, and favored research methods should be known. Also, be aware that these factors change with editorial changes. Since Gary founded some of our journals and conferences, he has set some of these standards. We owe him for these difficult and ground breaking efforts.

Key Points
Be familiar with journals and conferences in the IS field.
Target a journal from the start of a research project.
Know when to give up on a research paper.

Tomasz: At some point, you also need to learn how to give up on a paper. You will start at the top and work your way down the quality journals, but you might find that a particular project simply is not of interest to others or does not seem to make enough of a contribution. Your limited time will be spent more wisely concentrating on a more promising research effort.

Ken: Strategize when you start a research project. You should start at the top and shoot for the highest quality journals. Usually these journals will contain the most cited articles and those that will gain you the greatest respect.

Dirk: Here I differ with Ken. Although publishing in the top two journals will have a huge impact when you hit the job market, targeting these journals alone can be devastating. The top journals publish a tiny percentage of all submitted research and are targeted by the majority of researchers. The review/revise cycle tends to be long so that if you want to have a paper accepted in a top journal by the fall of your fourth year, you really have to have your research completed and submitted in the start of your third year! It is worth considering having some accepted research in addition to “under review” work in top journals as you begin to interview. This means sending some research to lower prestige journals from the start.

Ken: This could work, but don’t make it a habit! But as Gary taught me, be open to different strategies.

V. MOVING FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Now that you are armed with knowledge, you need to have a conscious set of actions for your career. You will want to structure some of your unstructured research tasks. Some hints for your action plan to aid academic survivorship include:

Ken: Creating a balance by respecting your family and significant others. The costs of a divorce are immense. The costs of a gone-astray child are huge. These types of activities are tremendous time and energy consumers. Be sure you have your priorities right and be conscious of what is really important to you.

Dirk: I thought balancing work and recreation would be easy – I have been an avid climber for years and without some outdoor time my work suffers in the extreme. But it was really hard to keep up with coursework, research, teaching, family, and my outside passions. Everything began to suffer until I set personal dates where I could allow myself to get out and get some exercise without feeling like I really should be working!

Ken: Create a balance in your life by working hard and playing hard. You will be further ahead by playing or consciously relaxing and giving yourself time to recharge your energy, often increasing your work efficiency from 20 percent to 50 percent. Not only take vacations but take a day-time break or even a weekly break. When I was a student at Minnesota, Gary helped organize and supported the "MISRSki Day" where the entire office took off to the great slopes of Minnesota. You will come back refreshed. Establish time blocks by making appointments with yourself. Go to your calendar and use your prime work time knowledge to agree on times where you will focus your energy on important research activities. Respect yourself by honoring these appointments.

Tomasz: Set concrete goals. Without goals you might find that you will get off track and have non-research activities take over. Some people need to create weekly lists of concrete goals to keep them moving in the right direction. For others, a few high-level goals for a semester are enough.

Ken: Learn to say "no" nicely. If you have a clear vision of your priority activities, you often can explain why a service assignment or an extra class preparation does not make sense in your career plans. Let the persons making these "offers" know that you are serious about your career and making your department or school look good with your research successes. You might even use guilt as the gift that keeps giving by hinting that you want the requestor to know that you are concerned about finishing your thesis or achieving tenure/promotion and that you do not want to be tempted to do things that will interfere with your academic success.

Dirk: At the same time remember that favors beget favors! Helping a member of your cohort with data coding may lead to a collaborative publication. Don't be shy about asking for time and help when you have helped others with your time!

Ken: Establish "think" time and space. Often going for a long walk, drive, or run can give you both time and space to think. Trying to force an idea or trying to write when you are wound so tight that you cannot read a novel is time to take a break. I learned from

Key Points
Respect your family and significant others.
Create a balance in life and stay healthy.
Establish time blocks.
Set concrete goals.
Learn to say "no" nicely.
Establish "think" time and space.
Learn to handle criticism and how to write good reviews.
Stay in contact with practitioners.
Go beyond information systems boundaries.

Gary that you can't force creative ideas and solutions to problems.

Tomasz: But you need to stay in touch with your goals and determine your means of accomplishing them.

Ken: You also need to stay healthy. Consider exercise, diet, and hydration. Often the discovery is made that when you try to get in good physical shape, you also increase your mental prowess. Know what foods affect your energy levels and don't abuse your diet. Eating too much of the wrong things can make you sluggish. Keep drinking water and you will find it can be an energy restorer.

Tomasz: I need to stay involved with practitioners. Consider attending a practitioner conference in your field. Join a professional organization. You might find that new ideas arise from these activities.

Dirk: Learning how to revise your research and react to criticism is critical -- you *will* get it! I would storm (OK, knock) into Ken's office waving the reviews and shouting, "Why don't they get it? This reviewer is so stupid!" Ken would nod, agree that they didn't get it, and remind me that editors want to publish good research and want to provide constructive feedback that will help you. It may not seem that way at first so you may want to put the paper and reviews away for a short while before reacting. Some people react best when discussing reviews with friends, colleagues, or significant others while others need space to think through things. Know what works for you. One way to start a revision is to identify exactly what the reviewers did not understand (even if it is obvious to you). In internal reviews of my work, Ken inevitably wrote, "Have empathy for the reader!" at the start of his comments. Reframing the questions, reducing jargon, and making use of tables or figures can all make the manuscript more accessible to the reader. In addition, look carefully at your reviews – what aspects are constructive? What was demoralizing, unhelpful, unwarranted? Learn from your reviews so you become a constructive reviewer!

Ken: And remember, I learned those things from the founding editor of the MISQ! He thought big and so should you. Go beyond traditional system boundaries. Try to determine if fields related to Information Systems can add to your research and teaching. Think widely and consider areas as wide as anthropology, landscape architecture, and music, which all have been used by my co-authors and me in finding a theoretical research foundation. Remember that you are an individual and what works for someone else may not work for you.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

By now, you have realized that this is not rocket science, but ignore this advice at your peril. We also might know what we should be doing, but just can't do it. It is similar to dieting. We know, but we do not do. Try to think of the end result. Think of how great it will be starting your new academic job, of being reappointed as an assistant professor, of achieving tenure and promotion, of being promoted to full professor, and receiving a named chair. It all can happen. What you think about can come about, so think positive thoughts. Learn from the masters such as Gary and pass it on. But remember, only YOU can make it happen.

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