PURPOSE OF THIS PRESENTATION

• Provide food for thought
• Your coming transition
  • University environment to the work environment
• How the office works
  • Things you may not know
  • Things you should be aware of
• How your supervisor is evaluating you
• Evaluating your supervisor
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOU

• In your 20s
• Intelligent
• Ambitious

• Good chance:
  • You want to become excellent at something
  • You want to be successful
THE WORKPLACE

• Most organizations are run by curmudgeons like me

• Curmudgeon ≡ grumpy old man (or woman)
  • May not appear grumpy on the outside
  • Keeping score in their head
  • Tend to make judgments based on that score

• As bosses age
  • 40s: appear open minded, but may be closet curmudgeons
  • 50s: odds of curmudgeonliness have risen significantly
  • 60s: no doubt about it

• The following is to help you avoid getting on their bad side
RULE #1: DON’T SUCK UP

• Shameless flattery

• Agreeing with their bad ideas

• Any attempt to ingratiate yourself with them

• Certainly, don’t suck up to the incompetent
  • They can’t help you
  • The good guys will notice

• The good guys value honesty and integrity
  • Be tactful, not abrasive
  • Don’t agree just to go along
RULE #2: USE OF FIRST NAMES

• People who are considerably older
  • Don’t use first names until asked to
  • Sometimes not even then

• Safe: use last name for people in authority
  • When comfortable, they’ll tell you to use their first name

• First meeting: “Call me Bill.” Should you?
  • Could be serious
  • Could be hiding his or her curmudgeonlyness
  • Thank him or her, but continue to use Mr. or Ms.
  • If serious, he or she will say so
RULE#3: WORD-USAGE TO AVOID

• If you use “like” as a verbal tic: STOP IT
  • If you, like, can’t speak without, like, inserting…
  • Leaves an impression of a lack of education

• “You know” and “you know what I mean”

• No important sentence ever began with “Dude, …”
  • “Dude, I just, like, figured out Warp drive and it is, like, totally awesome.”
OTHER WORD-USE IRRITANTS

• Using “impact” as a verb when you mean “affect”

• Machines *interface*, people *interact*

• Data
  • First syllable rhymes with *rate*
  • Data is plural; i.e., “The data reveal…”

• Avoid using *dialogue* and *liaise* as verbs

• Avoid PC monstrosities like *differently abled*

• Worn out: *proactive, paradigm, stakeholder, point in time*
THE USE OF STRONG LANGUAGE

• The *f*-word is not just another word
  • Be very, very careful using it around senior people
  • Certainly not in your job interview

• Sometimes you need to express anger or shock
  • Regular use of strong language dulls the effect when it’s needed
  • Includes other “classic” words and word combinations
    • Constant use is tiresome and pointless
    • Indicates a lack of imagination
    • Coarsens the language

• Abstention conveys the quality of adulthood
PIERCINGS, TATTOOS, AND
PURPLE HAIR

• More readily accepted than 20 years ago

• Not seen often among engineers

• Earrings (guys), eyebrow, lip, tongue, or nose piercings
  • If you must, pierce something that can’t be seen while dressed

• Try to cover up current tattoos – no new ones
  • If you must, tattoo something that can’t be seen while dressed

• Hair of a color not found in nature
  • More acceptable, but it will depend on your boss
  • Also helps if you are hard working and productive
OFFICE DRESS

- Strict dress codes were common in the past (IBM)
- Current norm is more relaxed, but can be pushed too far
  - Men
    - Suit and tie for men are rarely required for non-executives
    - Ties aren’t typically required
    - T-shirts and sweats are not a good idea
    - Hair and beards should be kept trimmed
    - Bathe frequently
  - Women
    - Most women like to look nice at work
    - Don’t let your attire outshine your performance
- Dress like a serious person who deserves respect
OFFICE EMAIL ETIQUETTE

• Personally, I think email is a curse
  • Check out Send by David Shipley and Will Schwalbe

• First email? Start with “Dear ___”

• Don’t use “u”, “ur”, “4” to your boss

• Grammar, syntax, and punctuation should be correct
  • Always proof read before sending
  • Really important? Wait a day, proof read it again before sending

• Acknowledge receipt if
  • Email contains an instruction or notification

• Thank someone who complies with a request of yours

• Be very careful using Reply All

• Avoid flaming emails – You cannot un-ring the bell
  • Don’t say something you wouldn’t want to see in the newspaper
  • Don’t personally insult someone via email
DO YOU HAVE A BAD BOSS, OR DO YOU JUST NOT LIKE HIM/HER?

• Nice but incompetent

• The boss is the seed of Satan
  • What flavor: sexist, racist, crude, etc.?
  • Have you been asked to do something illegal or unethical?
  • Is he good at what he does?

• Pin down what's bothering you
  • Could you be part of the problem?
    • People in charge don’t always say “please”
    • People in charge don’t always say “thank you”
    • They do say “No” without feeling the need to explain
  • Before quitting, seek advice from someone you trust
BE AWARE OF THE BIG “E”

• Entitled
• May be an unfair label, but it’s out there
• You have to prove it doesn’t apply to you
  • Your first job may not be exciting
  • Your second job may not be exciting
  • Don’t moan about doing mundane tasks
  • Do your best at whatever job they give you
• Guarantee: the boss does more mundane tasks than anyone
MANNERS IN THE OFFICE

• My generation is to blame
  • Self-absorption: “Everything that happens has to first be assessed in terms of how I react to it and how it affects me.”
  • Affluence affects how we interact with others
  • Too much time staring at a computer screen
    • Isolating
    • Easy to avoid interacting with people
• Deterioration of manners
  • Most people still say please, thank you, and excuse me
  • Negligent rudeness
    • Blocking the hallway
    • Loud talking while people are trying to work
    • Loud talking on cell phones in public
    • Not offering a bus/subway seat to someone who needs it
STANDING OUT

• Easy to feel lost in a sea of new hires

• Good news: Good help is *really* hard to find and it stands out
  • Working long hours because the task requires it
    • May not be asked to
    • If asked, *do not* say “No”
    • Not make work, but meaningful work
    • Make an impression while you are young
    • It helps if you are competent
    • Secret: “Few people work nearly as hard as they could”
  • Every task is an opportunity to make an impression
    • Bosses talk, and those who produce get talked about
    • Your GPA no longer matters after you get your first job
    • But your performance does
BE SINCERE IN PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

• “I’ll be there for you.”
  • No you won’t.
    • “I hereby make a meaningless, pretend commitment”
    • Everyone knows it

• If you want to help, be specific
  • “Who do you want me to kill?”

• Better yet, actually be there for your friend
  • “I’ll be there in 10 minutes.”