

A photograph of a man and a child standing in a field of tall grass in front of a large, weathered wooden barn. The scene is captured at dusk or dawn, with a deep blue sky and a soft glow on the horizon. The man is wearing a dark hoodie and a baseball cap, and the child is wearing a plaid shirt. The barn has a gambrel roof and is made of dark wood. The field is filled with tall, thin stalks of grass.

Bill's Advice for Success

Old-Fashioned career advice from the outgoing GIS Director

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“Good judgement is the result of experience and
experience the result of bad judgement.”

Mark Twain

Experience taught me what follows.

It's all about the **Network!**

- It is not now, and never will be, a solo journey.
- Build great relationships.
- Join and actively participate in Professional Organizations. You'll find it enriching.
- Don't be constantly seeking favors, but rather cultivating long-term professional relationships so that you have "credit at the bank" for the times you really need it.
- Always share advice, experience, know-how, tips, comments, etc. with others.
- Ask for contact info, keep your contacts up-to-date.
- If you use social media for your contacts, establish some base rules:
 - I use LinkedIn, but I do not accept invitations from anyone I have not met or spoken with (no "blind dates" for me).
 - Share ratings, if you want others to endorse you.
- Stay in touch with your network, whenever you think of them:
 - It's always nice to get a friendly message "out of the blue".

Comms, Comms, Comms

- Even the very best idea will die if you cannot communicate it effectively to others.
- Default to Communicating. In writing (or follow up a verbal comm in writing), to the maximum extent, so that it is reusable/shareable and can be saved for later reference.
- Stay “on message”. Otherwise, it’s not comms, it’s gossip.
- **Learn to present well:**
 - Join a chapter of Toastmasters.
 - The key to great delivery is practice. Always rehearse your presentations!
 - Do a live dress rehearsal with colleagues.
- **Learn to write well:**
 - Always write in complete sentences with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, even in email.
 - If you want to write well, be an active reader. Books are way better than TV!
- Set a great example on communications – it’s infectious!

Boil it down to the **Key Points**

- A lot of our work is quite complex and detailed. However, you often have to explain things to leadership or others who do not want the details. Rather, they want to know what it means.
- A skill you need to master is to tease out the key points that summarize the details without using the details.
- This is hard to do.
- Practice on others outside of work. How do you explain what you do to your grandmother?
- A good reference point is the “elevator speech”, where you step into the elevator and find yourself alone with the CEO, who asks about your work. You have only 15 seconds until you reach your floor. What do you say?

Make it Real (convey meaning) with Storytelling

- A small number of people can absorb meaning directly from data.
- A few more can extract meaning from charts/graphs/maps/visualizations (if they take the time).
- **Everyone can learn from a story.** We're highly evolved to absorb storytelling, which was the primary means of human communication for thousands of years. **Stories draw us in.**
- Use stories in your communications – verbally, in writing, and **especially in presentations.**
- Great stories personalize the situation and allow use of empathy to win over your audience.
- There are a number of useful storyline arcs:
 - We meet our hero (you?). Life is good. → Adversity strikes. → Hero digs deep and finds a way to deal with the adversity. → Adversity is overcome and our hero finds a bright new future! Many Hollywood movies follow this arc, because it works. MLK's "I have a Dream" uses it. So does the Gettysburg address.
 - Detail/personalized problem. → Extrapolate to broad understanding of how widespread the problem is. → Show how your proposed solution fixes the problem for the person in your opening section. → Extrapolate to how that solution can be scaled up to solve the broader problem. Note how similar this is to the first arc.

Relentlessly maintain **Contextual Awareness**

- USAC is a quasi-governmental organization, so the political situation is always relevant.
 - **Stay abreast of news** related to fed agencies, telecom, broadband, technology, Congress, White House, health care, and other policy areas related to the USAC mission.
- **Know what the FCC is doing** (priorities, policy directions, goals).
- Stay abreast of happenings in your field:
 - Subscribe to relevant news feeds.
 - Follow “thought leaders”.
- Share information with others.
- Think about how something new might represent an opportunity to try out something here.
- Know what’s going on with the **USAC Leadership Team** and **Board of Directors**.
- Think about and understand how your work fits the broader picture:
 - Does it support a USAC Leadership priority?
 - Does it support an FCC policy goal?

Make the Boss Look Good

- It's not about you. Really.
- When you set the boss up to be successful, he/she will remember and appreciate it.
- The benefit from the boss being successful is greater than the benefit from you being successful.
- I repeat: The benefit from the boss being successful is greater than the benefit from you being successful.
- This can create a “win-win” or a Virtuous Circle.

Time is Important, so manage it well

- The most productive people manage their time well.
- Time is the great equalizer. We all have **exactly the same amount!**
 - Smile to yourself whenever you hear anyone complain that they don't have enough time. What they most surely have is either a time management problem or a prioritization issue.
- Set time limits on tasks, then move on.
 - When you come back later, you'll invariably have a slightly different (and therefore useful) perspective.
- Show up **on time** for meetings and appointments.
- End meetings **before** the time has run out.
- If you want something done, seek out the busiest person. Those are the people who have mastered time management. Work with them. Watch them. Listen to them. Learn from them. Thank them.

Don't sweat the **Small/Stupid Stuff**

- And **a lot of it** is small/stupid stuff.
- Have 1, 2 or 3 (not more!) Big Goals on your horizon. **Know thy goals!**
- Keep the Big Goal(s) in mind and ask yourself if the current task is contributing to it.
- Don't ignore small tasks, but if they aren't important, dispense with them quickly and get back to the Big Stuff.
- You may be able to delegate or refer tasks that do not align with your Big Goals. Or have a conversation with your manager to re-assess or reconsider their importance.

Good Habits (old school) never go out of style

- Professionalism – cultivate a complete set of professional behaviors.
- Punctuality – respect other people’s time; they’ll notice and appreciate it.
- Manners – politeness, defer to others, respect, show/convey appreciation, be genuine.
- Establish good personal protocols: email organization and response turnaround, hold meetings at the other person’s location, avoid use of smartphone during meetings, taking/sharing notes, etc.
- Follow up promptly.
- Humility and modesty are good. Self-deprecating humor often helps.
- Try to stay one step ahead – anticipate what will be needed next and provide it before anyone asks for it.
- Personal touch – learn names, show interest in others, remember a few key details.

Blocking & Tackling

- You must know the **fundamentals** of your job.
- Most of your work will be less glorious, but built on those fundamentals.
- It's the “tortoise and hare” story. We know who wins.

Define the Role for yourself

- Nobody knows your job as well as you do.
- The job description may have been something generic or provided by HR. Or it may be dated and no longer accurately reflects what you do.
- Take ownership and **make it the job you believe it needs to be** (within the boundaries).
- Only when you own it can you fully inhabit it.

Show the Way

- Nothing you do on your own can scale up.
- It's very rewarding to teach others.
- The maturity path requires that we move from **few with key skills** to **many with those skills**.
- The magic formula seems to involve a combination of a **core team** that can do the **most sophisticated work**, but can also teach others by **showing the way**.

Teach, Encourage, Support your colleagues

- Your colleagues are what make the job worthwhile. Not the budget. Not your salary. Not your title. Not the task you just completed. Your colleagues.
- The job will be far more satisfying for you and your colleagues when you develop into a **true team**.
- **Teamwork** is a term applied rather loosely (in many cases) to any work situation involving 2 or more people. **Real teams** “gel” around a common mission and support each other.

Take the High Road

- There is zero satisfaction in “telling someone off” or having a tantrum. Zero. You’ll feel like a bum afterwards and nobody will respect you.
- When you take the High Road, others will surely admire you for it, even if they don’t express anything to you.
- You’ll have a clear conscience.
- You will be more easily forgiven for your inevitable mistakes if you show the same respect and kindness to others.
- Burned bridges may not seem important now, but you may need to cross one of those bridges in the future.

Be Truthful, Fair, and Don't Play Games

- Most people are quite good at detecting a phony, so don't even try.
- A lie, even a small one, can have a disastrous, long-term effect on your reputation.

Lather, Rinse, Repeat

- If you are consistent in applying the advice in this deck, you will gradually accumulate a **great reputation** as someone who can be **depended upon** and **trusted** with important assignments.
- **Your reputation is your most valuable asset.** Treat it accordingly!

Good Luck!