Hiring and managing people

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Recruiting

"I've edited it down...."

Make sure your CV stands out for the right reasons....
Top Questions from Poll

• Why have you applied to work here?
• How do you think the project would benefit from your expertise?
• Where would you like to see your career in the next 3-5 years?
• What are your future research goals?

(43% of responses)
Top Questions from Poll

• Why have you applied to work here?

• How do you think the project would benefit from your expertise?

• Where would you like to see your career in the next 3-5 years?

• What are your future research goals?

  (43% of responses)

• Describe how you dealt with a difficult situation?

• Do you have questions for us?

• Experience with teaching/student supervision?
Recruiting (I): students

• Grades ≠ research ability
  But don’t ignore poor grades!
• Do they have research experience?
  Have they used astronomy tools?
• Why are they applying to do astronomy?
  Do they know what they are letting themselves in for?
• Why do they want to work with you?
  Have they done homework?
  Have they worked with you?
  Where else are they applying and why?
Recruiting (2): postdocs

- Do you know the letter writer?
  If in doubt – ring them up!
- Did their PhD research have impact?
  How much was original/creative?
  What do letters say about independence?
- Do they have a good research plan?
  Do you want a ‘super star’?
- Have they heard of you?
  Again have they done their homework?
Managing People

Before you begin, let me just say I don't want to hear about any problems or difficulties you've been having.

I don't want to hear any excuses or extenuating circumstances.

The only thing I want to hear is what you're doing about it.

What's your plan to resolve the situation?

My plan was to come here and have you tell me what to do.

You need a new plan.
A new student...

• Be prepared for the time commitment
  At least 4–5 hours a week

• Should have a WRITTEN thesis plan
  Ideally a 1 page summary before you start

• Should SCHEDULE regular meetings
  ‘My door is always open’ – Really?

• Won’t save you any time
  (or your not doing your job right!)

• Should have >1 supervisor
  And a senior student mentor...
Management: The Basics

- Your behaviour
  Look at your own habits? How would you react?
  How do you react to bad news?

- Achievement
  YOU set the targets – make them achievable

- Recognition
  Everyone wants to feel appreciated

- Motivation: leadership and vision
  Research should be CHALLENGING. Share dull tasks around – and do them yourself!

- Responsibility – assign it!

- Advancement – what happens next?

Ref: http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art6.html
The dreaded ‘progress meeting’

• Highlight the positive and accomplishments
• Praise this, err on the side of too much
• Point out what needs improving
• Be SPECIFIC with advice and be CONSTRUCTIVE with criticism
Styles...

• Control:
  plans / action items / progress reports

• Laissez-faire:
  ‘Go away and do something interesting’

• Something in-between?
  Different time-scales and styles for students and post-docs
  ANNUAL REVIEW systems ARE helpful (if they work)

• ‘Style tension’ is inevitable – live with it

• Look at yourself in a mirror
You CAN!

- Provide pointers to the literature
- Give them good ideas
- Enthusiasm and motivation
- The scientific big picture
- Help with the small details
- Show them how to run software/read papers
- Fund them – pay *detailed* attention to budgets
- Feedback on papers and thesis chapters
- Give career guidance and mentoring
- Build a group/team – strength in depth
You CAN’T!

- Be a parent
- Be available at all hours
- Write their papers for them
- Provide detailed step-by-step research guidance
- Teach them how to write/program etc.
- Solve their life problems
- MAKE them write their thesis/papers on time
- Guarantee them a job
- Be a tyrant... or a saint.
Difficult situations

- Students that can’t progress
- Proposed research is not being accomplish
- Personality / resource conflicts
- Unethical behaviour

TIPS:

Avoid EMAIL to resolve situations

Avoid getting personal / making defensive: focus on the specifics and the FACTs / engage person in solution

Formal systems and structures can help you

Practice ‘prevention’ rather the cure (recruitment!)

You can’t solve everything

Astronomy isn’t life & death

Remember the Kobayashi Maru
Thanks!

A BUSINESS MAGAZINE IS SENDING A REPORTER TO INTERVIEW ME.

YOU?

THEM WANT TO LEARN MY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY.

WELL, LET ME TELL YOU...

THAT’S A LITTLE LIKE MILKING A SQUIRREL BECAUSE YOU NEED BUTTER.

SOMETIMES YOU MILK THE SQUIRREL, AND SOMETIMES THE SQUIRREL MILKS YOU.

I DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANT, BUT I LIKE THE WAY IT SOUNDED.

“HE IS LIKE A ZEN MASTER. HIS WORDS ARE PEPPERED WITH SQUIRREL-RELATED WISDOM.”