

# Communication Soft Skills for the Hard Core Geek

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#geekskills

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**UniForum** **Chicago**

The International Association of Open Systems Professionals

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# pjr

- IT Consultant
- Sun Server System Administrator for ACNielsen / The Nielsen Company
- UNIX Administrator and technician for various VAR's
- Started working professionally with UNIX in 1986
- Interested in computers & electronics 1981

# Before we dive in...

- Why is this important?
- Resources
- Theme – To provide ideas and tools to enable the already great geeks of UniForum Chicago to be even better
- Question – what will you implement?
- No quick fixes – plan and commit

# Roadmap

- IT Support
- Business
- Networking
- Humor
- Personal Development
- Speaking & Presenting
- Sales / Persuasion / Influence
- Leadership

# IT Support

- Niche / Specialty
- Become a thought leader
- Who are your clients, and what do you do for them? Why are you there, really? What are the problems you're there to solve?
- Support can be tough!
- Are you part of their team?

# IT Support (2)

- Think of analogies to help your clients
- Work hard in your niche, yet still learn about other IT areas and IT business
- Learn about what works and doesn't
- What are you known for?  
What do you want to be known for?  
Are these in alignment?

# Mission

For the presentation, this page had an embedded video – now see the link referenced below to view the video, from American Express OpenForum by Dan Heath, co-author of Made to Stick.

<https://www.openforum.com/idea-hub/topics/marketing/video/made-to-stick-writing-a-mission-statement-1>

# Business

- What does your company **do**?
- Really?
- B2B, B2C, mixed?
- Clients?
- Competitors / market share / leaders?
- How does your company generate business?



# Business (2)

- Attend company training
- *Read* the company website
- Learn the language!
- Read business publications, both industry-specific and general (Crain's, WSJ, BW)
- Resource list book pick:  
100 Best Business Books of All Time

# Networking

- You already do this! (You're here tonight!)
- Expand into networking with clients and management
- Meeting "after" the meeting (Cozymel's)
- Conference "hallway track"
- Un-conferences
- Active listening

# Networking (2)

- How can I help this person?
- Relate – understand what they need
- Network with those who need the services that you provide – let them know what you do and how you can help them
- Find ways to continue connecting
- Networking example –  
demo and physical positioning

# Humor!

- Don't forget to laugh and have a good time!
- ***But*** not at the expense of clients, co-workers or management
- Laugh and learn
- Crossover humor – Conor Cunneen
- Nobody on their deathbed wishes they hadn't laughed so much

# Humor! (2)

- BOFH
- Dilbert
- User Friendly
- Enjoy these, however they should ***not*** be a model for your support style...
- Whatever humor appeals to you, enjoy it – you deserve a release!

# Break

- Back in 10 minutes

# Personal Development

- What fuels your passion?
- Learn something new *every* day!
- Failure is **good** – *if* you learn from it
- Write / blog
- Read fiction / quotations / poetry
- Expand vocabulary
- Variety of music
- Art

# Personal Development (2)

- Library & bookstore – what appeals to you? Don't forget to wander around!
- Automobile university
- Take a class (library / local junior college / Discovery Center / Teaching Company / NIU Outreach Reading program)
- Learn to get “stuff” out of your head, so you can reflect, focus and implement



# Speaking & Presenting

- **You** belong up here!
- Yes, it can be uncomfortable – learn to channel and use the anxiety
- When you teach, you learn better
- Appearance should match expectations
- Credibility
- Observe time limits
- Stories!

# Speaking & Presenting (2)

- How to present – tell them (x3)
- What do you want the audience to **do, think** or **feel**?
- Don't try to teach everything at once
- You won't connect with everyone - focus on those who are engaged
- What do you have to say and share?

# Sales / Persuasion / Influence

- Do you sell?
- Learning sales skills will help with buying and selling
- Clarity of objective and next step
- Classic sales process:
  - Opening (greeting) stage
  - Information stage
  - Presentation stage
  - Closing stage

# Sales / Persuasion / Influence (2)

- Lead > Prospect > Client
- Features vs. benefits
- Geek perspective – observe the process
- Apple store

# Leadership

- Peer group
- Coach
- Authority
  - Official or legitimate
  - Implied
  - Unofficial
- Inspiration / motivation
- Accept and provide constructive criticism

# Leadership (2)

- Volunteer for a cause / nonprofit / charity
- Help in a way that does good and makes you feel good
- You *will* meet new people and expand your network
- No shortage of opportunities for your expertise (*you* are an expert, remember?)

# Wrap Up

- Remember – this will take time and commitment – formulate a plan of action
- What are the one or two things that you will implement by the end of this week? By the end of next month? End of year?
- Are you planning to **grow** or **die**?
- Will you do something different and be unique, or just be “one of the geeks”?

# Wrap Up (2)

- Resource listing will be on UniForum website shortly, or leave your card or email me (or request on Feedback form)
- Feedback form – name, phone, email, website are optional (but helpful)
- Please return completed form to me and pick up your free “Freelancing” tips booklet, and see my tips on page 15



# Connect

- Available for customized presentations, coaching, and IT consulting
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