

Virtues and Tenets of a Profession

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Virtues you should strive for. Tenets you should apply.

There are many virtues and tenets you can follow in your profession. Explicitly knowing them can better guide you through the challenges and decision makings of your daily job.

Any particular set of virtues and tenets is highly subjective. You have to find out, through many years of personal experience, which particular virtues and tenets are the essential ones for yourself. So, the chance is high that you at least partially disagree with any particular collected and presented set of virtues and tenets – including the following one.

But even if you disagree with the following collection, it serves its purpose: it at least once draws your attention away from the myriads of products and technologies coming and going every month and lets you think about the values which back your profession. Be it those values presented here or the ones you then want to collect and express for yourself.

*Definition: **Virtue:**
quality or practice of moral
excellence or righteousness.*

7 Virtues of a Profession

PASSIONATE For Profession

Develop a true passion for your profession. This ensures you can keep yourself motivated for your jobs in the long-term. It also is the only way to continuously keep up a strong *stamina*. You mastered this virtue if you regularly think and muse with ecstasy on how to further improve your profession – even if nobody demands nor expects this from you. For instance, you generalize a problem, develop a corresponding generalized solution and find the required particular solution for your particular problem by just instanciating the generalized solution.



Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.
– Oprah Winfrey

ENTHUSIASTIC For Achievements

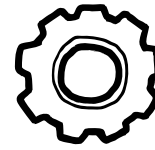
Develop an intrinsic enthusiasm for *potential* achievements, long before they are actually achieved. This gives you the right amount of *motivation*. You mastered this virtue if you find yourself being intrinsically motivated by just imagining your future success situations. For instance, you imagine yourself already proudly giving a successful presentation on the solution you still have to develop.



True motivation comes from achievement, personal development, job satisfaction, and recognition.
– Frederick Herzberg

RESTLESS On Topics

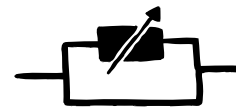
Be restless and always be on the go when it comes to the various topics and technologies of your profession. This ensures you are able to really master the *whole* scope of your jobs. Also, you cannot advance your profession yourself if you don't know about all knowledge areas and the current technologies which drive each of them. You mastered this virtue if you are regularly seeking out for new opportunities to learn new things for your jobs. For instance, you are daily glancing over your Twitter timeline and subscribed RSS feeds and monthly reading the primary magazines of your profession and its technology contexts.



Politics is for the moment, an equation lasts eternity.
– Albert Einstein

STRIVING For Challenges

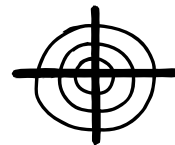
Never go the way of least resistance. Instead always strive for the true challenges. There is less *competition* and higher *reputation* when resolved. You mastered this virtue if others are wondering why you often make your own job more difficult than obviously necessary. For instance, instead of accepting that a technological solution is just not existing or you are even told it would be not possible, you are incited to create one yourself and prove the contrary.



It's not enough to be a great programmer; you have to find a great problem.
– Charles Simonyi

INSISTENT On Goals

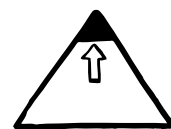
Be persistent and insisting on your *major* goals. An idea whose time has come will finally let you reach the goals if you are just patient enough. You mastered this virtue if you are abandoning your previous goals because of evolving personal perspectives only, but never because you just ran out of the initially estimated time. For instance, as long as you still find the idea of writing a particular book a good one, you give yourself even three times as much time as initially planned.



Do what you feel in your heart to be right – for you'll be criticized anyway. You'll be damned if you do, and damned if you don't.
– Eleanor Roosevelt

HARD-LINE On Excellence

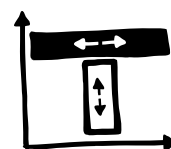
Develop an intrinsic hard-line to always strive for excellence. This allows you to regularly be somewhat *atop* the usual expectations and to continuously go ahead. You mastered this virtue if you always think about the ultimate solutions and require strong arguments to accept the usually sufficient eighty percent solutions. For instance, instead of just resolving multiple similar particular software development tasks, you first factor out the common functionality into a reusable library.



Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude.
– Ralph Marston

VERSATILE Across Disciplines

Become a T-shape expert by learning to be versatile across the disciplines of your primary profession and its related professions. Grand solutions are usually *interdisciplinary* ones. You mastered this virtue if your solutions are consisting of aspects of multiple professions or at least multiple disciples of a single profession. For



instance, you are a good architect because you combine Project Management and Software Development skills or you are a good technology presenter because you combine System Administration knowledge and Graphics Design visualization.

Strive to be a T-shaped expert, not a "Jack-of-all-trades, Master of none".
– Ralf S. Engelschall

Definition: Tenet:
opinion, principle, doctrine, dogma, etc., held as true by members of a profession, group, or movement.

15 Tenets of a Profession

Success Favors Preparation

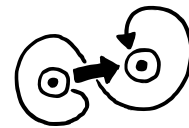
You can be successful either by accident or through serious preparation. Never rely on accidental success. Instead always prepare yourself as best as possible. It will pay out in the long-term. A good long-term strategy for good preparation is to continuously *evaluate* and collect principles, patterns, rules and tools *before* they are required.



Chance favors the prepared mind.
– Louis Pasteur

Unorthodox Thinking Fathers Awesome Solutions

Every great solution once had a predating unorthodox vision. Hence allow yourself those visions by intentionally thinking *against* the common sense and established body of knowledge. Only this way you will be able to invent and deliver awesome solutions afterwards.



We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.
– Albert Einstein

Do Not Fear To Be Eccentric

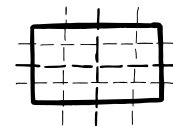
Following every trend, group opinion or social pressure might be the way of least resistance. But do not fear to be eccentric and this way different than the average. Always remain loyal to yourself and keep up following your beliefs. Always remember: those who follow other opinions often have no *own* opinion at all.



Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
– Bertrand Russell

Divide and Conquer Every Challenge

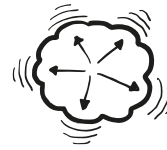
Independent what particular challenge you are confronted with, always use the proven *Divide and Conquer* approach to find a solution. First, strictly structure the overall challenge into manageable parts, then solve each part as separately as possible and finally combine all resulting partial solutions.



Divide et impera.
– Julius Caesar

Work Is An Ideal Gas

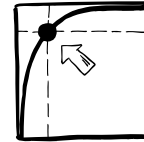
Independent what you are working on, the task will always expand to fill *all* the available time. Although working under time-pressure is nasty, giving a task too much time in advance is not wise, too. Hence, always try to prioritize your tasks according to importance and urgency, but focus on deadlines and work time-boxed.



Work expands to fill the time available.
– C. N. Parkinson

Cheap Quick Wins, Expensive Perfection

The Pareto Principle tells you that in 20% of the time you usually can deliver up to 80% of the requested results. The remaining 80% of the time you need to deliver the remaining 20% of the results. This implicitly explains that you always can achieve *Quick Wins* easily and you should understand that Perfection requires really lots of efforts.



20 percent of effort results in 80 percent of outcome.
– Pareto Principle

It's Easier To Apologize Than Ask For Permission

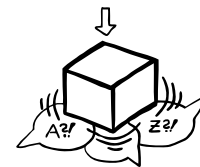
Acting politically correct is always the desired and preferred way. But sometimes, if you really have to bring something forward, it can be more efficient and economical to just start doing it than to get the official blessing of all *possible* stakeholders beforehand. If you really need progress, do not shy to just go ahead if *really* necessary.



Management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things.
– Peter F. Drucker

Results Trump Every Opinion

You can have as strong as possible opinions, but they are always trumped by actual delivered results. Hence, always focus on delivering results and establishing facts instead of just arguing in long discussions. Also remember: in delivery there is always less competition than in sales!



A Smith & Wesson beats four aces.
– William "Canada Bill" Jones

Thumbnail Results Are Better Than No Results

In case you have to deliver results, but you fail to deliver them, it is better to thumbnail alternative results than to deliver no results at all. This is especially true for numbers: better to provide precise-looking but “thumb-nailed” numbers than to deliver no or “round” and faked numbers at all.



[...] Nature does not allow a vacuum.
– Desmond Tutu

Content Convinces, Beauty Sells

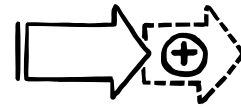
Form follows function: Always focus on delivering great content, because this is what convinces the receiver. But never forget that the best content will not sell without the proper beautiful wrapping. Hence, ensure that your results are both content-wise *and* aesthetically pleasant to the consumer.



Form [ever] follows function.
– Louis Sullivan

Going The Extra Mile

To allow your work results to be positively recognized you have to be regularly at least *somewhat* atop the expectations. This is usually achieved by providing aspects which were not originally demanded, but delight the task submitter. But know your price: if you deliver 150% *all the time* you just devalue yourself in the long-term.



The difference between a career and a job is about twenty hours a week.
– anonymous

Careers Require Self-Marketing

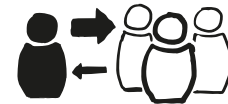
Always try to perform good work, but never forget that it will only pay out if you regularly *also* use the good work results to explicitly perform some self-marketing for yourself. For this, especially seek for the high-profile tasks which have the attention of the *right* stakeholders.



Do good things and talk about them.
– proverb

Fulfil Everything, Demand Nothing

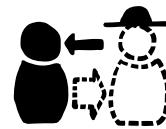
Always develop your skills to the maximum possible level, but still be fair to others. Best is to always try to fulfill yourself *everything* you demand from others and demand *nothing* from others what you fulfill yourself. Avoid being disappointed by accepting that the world is not fair and be happy if others may top your intentionally low expectations.



Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.
– Alexander Pope

Need Your Job Less Than Your Job Needs You

Separate between your profession and your job. Being a workaholic because you really enjoy your *profession* is one thing, but always ensure that at any time you effectively need your *job* less than your job needs you. Else, you will be too much of a victim of your job, experience a bad work-life balance and you are easily exploitable.



I really love my job! It's just the work at it which bothers me.
– anonymous

Discipline Requires Balancing Pleasure

Always be disciplined in your way of working by respecting deadlines, prioritize tasks, etc. But if you really want to have a strong stamina *in the long-term* you have to *balance* discipline with true pleasure and fun. Hence, explicitly interweave all your disciplined work with enough pleasurable work or you will be demotivated too fast.



Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.
– Aristotle