

PROMOTION TO THE TOP TIER OF THE TECHNICAL LADDER

Deb Agarwal, Lawrence Berkeley Labs
Kathryn S McKinley, Microsoft Research



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PROMOTION WITHIN INDUSTRY LABS



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KATHRYN S MCKINLEY

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER, MICROSOFT

Better systems

Programmable, correct, secure, efficient

Uncertain programming with estimates

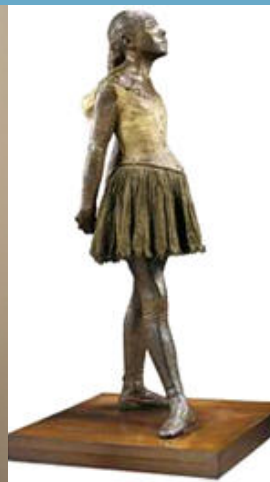
Immix Garbage Collection

DaCapo Benchmarks

Software / hardware cooperation

+ Life

- **Professional**
- ACM Fellow, IEEE Fellow, 22 PhD students, Testified to Congress
- **Family**, exercise, house



Increasing your visibility is critical to career advancement and promotion

Promotion starts with good work, but who knows about your accomplishments and expertise?

Increasing visibility is not bragging

Key decision makers should know:

1. Who you are
2. What value you bring to the organization

Being more visible

1. Volunteer, apply, & *create* for technical opportunities
2. Monthly/bimonthly meetings with skip level manager
3. Figure out “decision makers”



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Understanding the process is important – what is valued by your organization?

Understand your environment

Talk to others...

- Talk to your manager about the promotion process
- Talk to peers who were recently promoted
 - How did they make the case?
 - What was key to earning promotion?

Understand yourself... get feedback

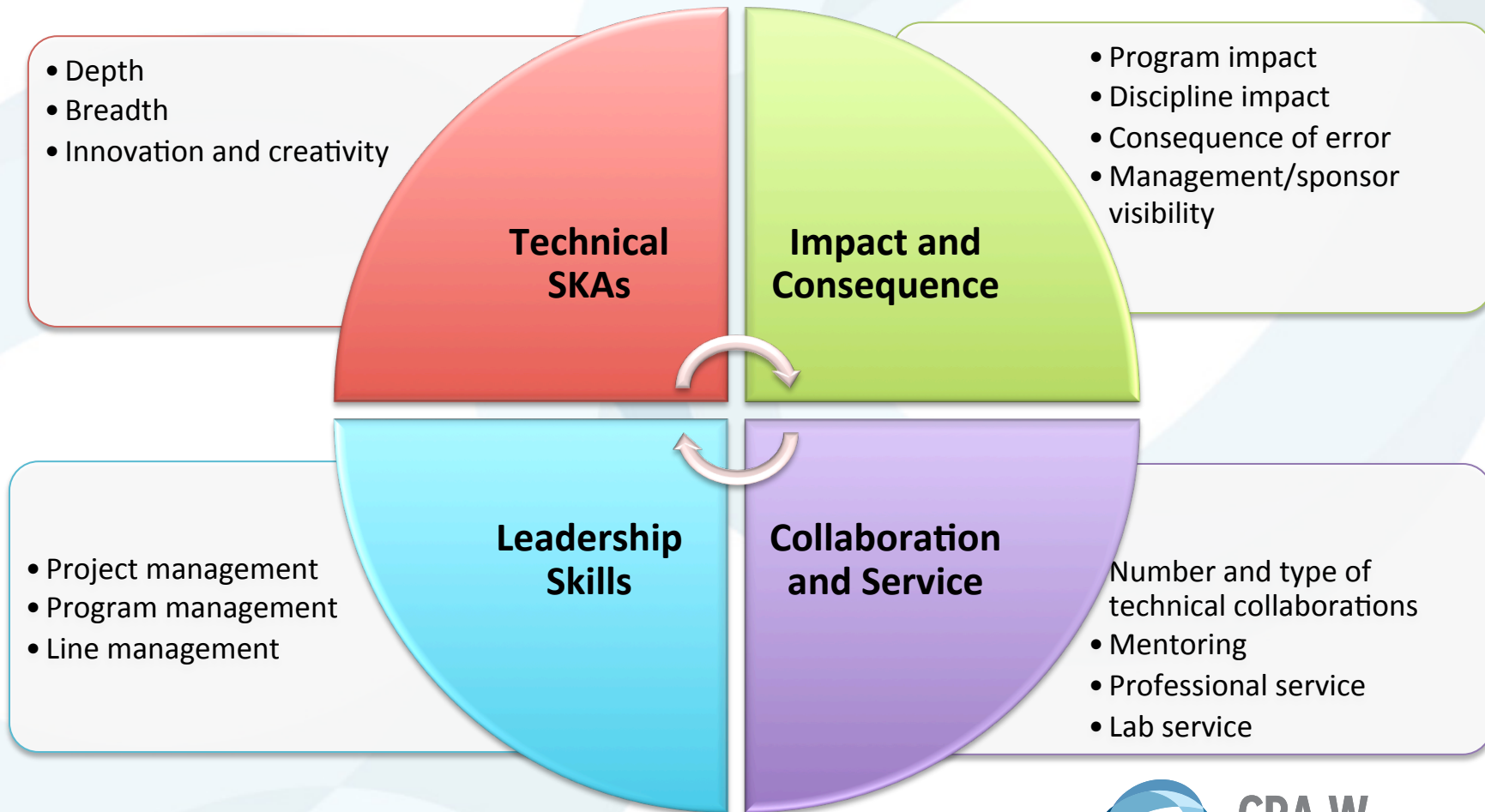
- What are your strengths?
- Where are your gaps? What can you do to fill the gaps?
- What are your values?
- In what type of job assignments do you thrive?
- Ask mentors & peers for candid feedback
- Listen to manager



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Value systems for promotion



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Value systems for promotion

Microsoft Partner Promotion

**Company Impact
Visible to Partners**

from deep & sustained
technical innovation



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Showing initiative is a critical component to raising your visibility

Ask for more responsible assignments and do them well
show you deserve them
that your skills are underutilized

Take risks

Step outside your comfort zone – stretch professionally

Volunteer

represent your department at meetings, committees or projects
Look for opportunities to put unused skills to the test



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Include mentors and sponsors in your network to help ensure success

- **Mentor** Helps advise you on your career and company culture
- **Sponsor/Champion** Advocates for you; making sure your work is visible to influential people in the company
- Both can help you identify opportunities to shine
 - Speaking/presentation opportunities
 - Help you identify and pitch your strengths
 - Be sure they know your career goals!
- Have a variety of mentors and sponsors
- Become a mentor or sponsor yourself



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Not promoted this year

Mistakes

- Missing powerful advocate(s)
- Too many projects
- Collaboration credit not shared, leadership not recognized

Did Right

- Highly impactful projects & big research bet

Do differently? Will I get promoted next time?

- More visibility – leadership team, meetings with skip level
- Resourcing



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PROMOTION WITHIN THE NATIONAL LABS



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DEB AGARWAL

SENIOR SCIENTIST, BERKELEY LAB

Department Head

Data Science and Technology Department

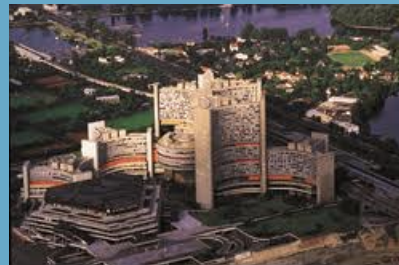
Inria International Chair

Earth Sciences Data Projects Lead

Distributed Systems Research

+ Life

- **Professional**
 - Not a fellow, minimal students
- **Family, garden, photography**



Positioning yourself within your organization

- Understand yourself
 - Goals, non-goals, and available resources
- Understand your institution's mission
 - Values, non-values, and institutional challenges
- Devise a plan so *you* are valuable to your organization
 - Dialog with your manager(s)
 - Dialog with your mentor(s)
- Be a leader
 - Technically, organizationally, and as a mentor



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Positioning yourself among your peers

- Know your organization
 - Promotion process and typical timelines
 - What is valued by your management and institution
 - Pay attention to organizational dynamics
 - Develop awareness of the other research around you at your institution
- Build your network and international reputation
 - Need locals who will recommend you for promotion
 - Need senior people who will write reference letters
- Be a leader
 - Technically, organizationally, and as a mentor



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Senior Scientist Process

- Manager recommends you
- Senior management agrees
- Case is prepared (typically with your help)
- Reference letters are collected
- Division staffing committee reviews
- Senior management reviews
- Lab staffing committee reviews
- Lab director reviews
- Entire process can take over a year



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My Path to Senior Scientist

- Decent achievements on projects
 - Low H-index (major metric)
 - Significant management achievements
 - Imposter syndrome
 - Low interest in having the title
 - Passionate about what I was doing
 - Excellent champion
-
- Circumstances forced the issue
 - Significant achievement can trump H-index if there is a champion



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Lessons Learned

- Persevere. Be resilient – you will have set-backs
- Establish your network--- volunteer
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Saying no is rarely damaging if you have a good reason – particularly if you can explain that your ‘no’ is good for the institution/team
- Having a passionate champion for your promotion and at least one highly valuable achievement can overcome other deficiencies in a promotion case
- Take advantage of opportunities that allow you to build your external/internal reputation as an expert or a leader



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