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The KIT

Knowledge & Information Technology

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Guest Editorial

Prof. Bertrand Meyer, a longtime friend (and Stanford classmate) who needs no introduction given his stellar worldwide accomplishments as a leader in the field of software engineering, sent us the following contribution, which we include with gratitude.

Even the best things have to come to an end, and I respect Claude Baudoin's reasons for closing down his "KIT" after 300 (!) issues. But I think someone should speak up for the faithful readers. Over the years, Claude's semi-monthly newsletter has punctually informed us, enlightened us and often entertained us thanks to its author's deep knowledge of the IT industry, his talent as a

This issue is the last one, but cébé will continue to provide consulting services to existing and selected new clients. The KIT archive will remain online for the foreseeable future.

perceptive observer, his multi-faceted experience as an engineer, manager and consultant, his broad and deep computer science culture going back to his time as a student at Stanford with the likes of Knuth, Floyd, Cerf, McCluskey and McCarthy, and – as the reader's bonus – his wit. In the KIT's lifespan Information Technology has undergone extraordinary transformations; the newsletter has helped us make sense of it. Even after it's gone we'll continue to be grateful to Claude for tirelessly weaving his thread through it all. We wish him the same success in his next endeavors.

– Bertrand Meyer

ICYMI

The KIT is ending with this issue for three main reasons. One is simply age, and a related desire -- in spite of overall good health -- not to emulate those celebrities who refuse to retire before their abilities decline. After 300 iterations, sitting down to compose the KIT twice a month can start feeling like a chore, even if it was always done with passion and a sincere desire to help. Finally, that there are plenty of free newsletters to choose from nowadays, including news aggregators that serve a similar purpose, and many smart and witty people to follow on Twitter.

It has already been suggested that the past content of the KIT could be mined and those items that aged well could be made into a useful compendium. I'll think about it. If someone wants to help make it happen, let me know. Another former colleague wishes to see a collection of the "Seen Recently" items, especially the more sarcastic ones, with which each issue of the KIT ended. Ditto.

Lessons from a Career; or, Best Practices for Professional Effectiveness and Self-Respect

After 47 years (and two months) of continuous work in software engineering, IT management, and knowledge management, some principles and lessons emerge, and some readers may appreciate them -- especially those whose career is ahead of them, not behind them. Here are some key points. Take what you want, and leave the rest.

- Know yourself. Two dimensions of your personality will make you very unhappy if you don't pay attention to them. First, do you want to climb the management ladder to the point where you will make more money but will spend much of your time on budgets, M&A, personnel issues (including layoffs), and using MBA lingo in front of clients and collaborators alike? Or do you

want to stay personally connected to technology and operations? Secondly, are you people-, process-, action- or ideas-oriented? Don't cast yourself in the wrong part. Instead. seek the help of the people who can complement you.

- You don't have to suffer fools -- at least not for long. They'll sap your energy and your self-esteem and just make you upset. Warning: in the corporate world, the fool may be your boss. Act accordingly, but in all cases preserve your dignity and self-esteem.
- Your knowledge is your key asset -- even more so if you are an independent -- but people will only appreciate it if you share it. Sharing will not make you dispensable: it will tell others "there's more good stuff where this came from." Now, in order to meet that expectation, you need to wow people with your ability to retrieve just about anything you've ever read, heard or written within minutes. You need to organize everything you know about clients, projects, people, companies, technologies, standards, past events, etc. It's harder than it may seem.
- Collaboration is key, and humans are social animals. Problems that have eluded committees over dozens of weekly one-hour Zoom meetings can sometime be solved over dinner, at the hotel bar, or during a walk in the park.
- Build your network *before you need it.* Too many people find themselves laid off, or dismissed by a client, without having a solid network to rely on to find the next job. Spend some time discovering where your contacts have moved, especially those you've known for a long time. If they're now in your area, or if you visit their city on a business trip, have coffee with them. This renewed connection may come in handy later. Meeting people in person is irreplaceable. It took a pandemic to make us fully appreciate this.
- Your LinkedIn profile is your business card and your résumé. It needs to be complete, current, and flawless. Period. In addition, if you own a company or are self-employed, you need a website. You will probably not sell anything because of the website -- but if you don't have one, it will not look serious.
- Know your tools. You don't expect the plumber who comes to your house to fix your toilet to struggle with his C-wrench. Especially if you are a consultant, no one wants to hear you ask where the unmute button is, how you set styles in your Word document, or how to attach a voice-over narration to a PowerPoint presentation.
- As a business owner, lots of people will court you with offers to help you with lead generation, government contracts, business loans, etc. Almost all of them are useless. Obviously, they're not there to help you, but to help themselves. If you let those people into your network, most will consume your time and return no value. The "ignore" button is there for a reason.
- Write and speak well. If you say "er, you know" fifteen times a minute, or start every other sentence with a cliché, people will stop paying attention to what you say. Same thing if you make frequent mistakes in written documents. Spend some money on a speaking coach before a crucial talk. If you need to write in a language you are not super-fluent in, get some help. And if your grammar or style are bad even in your native tongue, swallow your pride and take writing classes.
- Cultures and diversity are important. If English is your native language, learn at least the rudiments of another one. When you travel for business, spend an extra day to appreciate the place and its people. Your openness and embrace of others will not go unnoticed.

Those ten pieces of advice are often interrelated. When I started my company in 2009, I chose the following motto: Honesty--Knowledge--Connections. All of the above is a set of variations on those three very important words. Adopt and adapt those ideas at your discretion. Thanks for reading.

-- Claude Baudoin

Seen Finally...

"I think telling is just as important as showing and it's just a matter of knowing which one is the right one to do given the context."

-- Benjamin Dryer, @BCDreyer

"Technology is an enabler to our people. Our success is based on our people, but they can only do a great job if they have good tools."
and:
"Most people don't come to work saying, 'I'm going to do something to screw up my company today.' They want to do a good job, but they need to have the data."

-- Larry Kellner, then Chairman and CEO of Continental Airlines,

at the CIO Executive Forum in May 2009 (quoted in The KIT No. 1)