

Zen and the Art of Research Management (with apologies to Sun Tzu),
John Naughton, Robert W. Taylor

1. Hire only the very best people, even if they are cussed.
Perhaps especially if they are cussed. Your guiding principle should
be to employ people who are smarter than you.
One superb researcher is worth dozens of merely good ones.
2. Once you've got them, trust them.
Do not attempt to micro-manage talented people.
(Remember rule# 1.) Set broad goals and leave them to it.
Concentrate your own efforts on strategy and nurturing the environment.
3. Protect your researchers from external interference,
whether from company personnel officers, senior executives or
security personnel. Remember that your job is to create a supportive and
protective space within which they can work.
4. Much of what you do will fall into the category of
absorbing the uncertainty of your researchers.
5. Remember that you are a conductor, not a soloist.
(Rule# 1 again.) The Lab is your performance.
6. Do not pay too much attention to relevance,
deliverables and other concepts beloved of Senior Management.
7. Remember that creative people are like hearts -
they go where they are appreciated. They can be inspired or led,
but not managed.
8. Keep the organisation chart shallow.
Never let the Lab grow beyond the point where
you cannot fit everyone comfortably in the same room.
9. Make your researchers debate with one another regularly.
Let them tear one another's ideas to pieces. Ensure frank
communication among them. Observe the strengths and weaknesses
which emerge in the process.
10. Be nice to graduate students.
One day they may keep you, even if only as a mascot.
(Moreover, they are a lot of fun!)
11. Install a world-class coffee machine and provide plenty of free soft drinks.
12. Buy aeron chairs. Remember that most computer science research is
done sitting down.
13. Institute a toy budget,
enabling anyone in the Lab to buy anything costing less than a
specified amount on their own authority. And provide a darkened
recovery room for accountants shocked by the discovery of this budget.
14. Pay attention to what goes on in universities.
Every significant breakthrough in computing in the last four decades has
involved both the university and corporate sectors at some point in its
evolution.
15. Remember to initiate and sponsor celebrations,
when merited.
16. When in doubt, ask yourself: what would Roger Needham
do in similar circumstances?