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Unofficial, personal opinions of Radu 😊
For PhD students

- What is the most important thing?
  - 5% inspiration, **95% perspiration**

- Work 6-8hrs/day, **no more**

- Do something quantifiable every day
  - Write 2 pages on a paper OR
  - 500-1000 lines of code OR
  - Read and understand 2 papers, ...

- Student-advisor relationship is **not unlike marriage 😊**
  - Finding right advisor is most important
  - More **important than area** you work in

- Read, read, read (1-2 papers/day)
For SBU PhD students

- if you can, start some research immediately
- quals are important but advisor/research is even more important
- spread out quals over 3+ semesters, don't cram everything in first semester unless you have a certified ninja warrior diploma
Top 10

1. Do **not** submit to crappy conferences (only top 4)
2. Do get ready for rejection (5-6 times before paper gets in)
3. Do something quantifiable **every** day (read paper, write 1-2 pg, think)
4. Do take finding an advisor seriously, and **leave your** advisor early
5. Do **go to all top conferences** (to network mainly!)
6. Do make friends you respect
7. Do go to internships (even in large soul-crushing cubicle companies)
8. Do **not** get involved in organizing non-academic committees/BBQs/...
9. Do get involved in research service/program committees/reviews/...
10. Do save cash (so you don’t have to make cash-driven decisions later)
For MS students

- Take difficult courses
- Work on important projects!
- Don’t do what everybody is doing just because it is popular
- Definitely take:
  - OS, networking, algorithms, data structures, basic ML
  - Languages: C, Python, Go, Java
- Go work for startups
- Don’t try to impress parents/family with positions at big companies where souls are going to die
- Work on interesting things, startups etc.
For everyone: Money Mgmt

- Maximize 401k and other pre-tax retirement options available
- Additionally: invest 15-20% of after-tax income every month
  - Don’t think about it, invest automatically
  - Even as a student (!)
  - $250/month x 5 years @ 7% return = $18,000
  - $3000/month x 15 years @ 7.5% return = $1 million
- Don’t live beyond means
  - ensure 75% after tax income > expenses
- Beyond the above don’t worry about cash too much until after 35+
- Agree to 20-25% pay cut to work on important things
  - Looking back: it is much more important than cash
Career Plans

- Academia
- Research Lab
- Larger company
- Startup
- Small company
Academia

- Why
  - Freedom
    - Time
    - Topics
  - People
    - Work with smart people
    - Have some choice of who you work with
- Why Not
  - Lower Pay (25-50% lower !)
  - May not be able to keep up
Why: Cannot get academic job but want more freedom than typical company job

Why Not: main company treats you as a second-class citizen, usually very little impact
Larger Company

- Better Pay
- If you
  - Can handle cubicle boredom
  - Can handle (sometimes very) incompetent bosses
  - Can follow instructions
  - Don’t need too much independence
- Environment in larger companies is often biasing towards mediocrity
Startup = small company that has the potential to grow exponentially
Startup: why work for one?

- exciting
- lots of impact (individually)
- learn allot
- can become millionaire (low probability)
- you learn what you are made of
- stay 3 years and move on (unless wildly successful)
Startup: why not work for one?

- too much work
- lower pay (15-30% lower!)
- you actually have to do something 😊
- in big companies
  - you may end up doing NOTHING for a very long time
  - free food
  - stability
  - almost no impact (individually)
  - extremely inefficient (30-50 people do what usually 1 good person can do in startup) – so easy to escape unnoticed 😊
- what do you want to do with your life?
Startup: Compensation/Stock

- Salary: 15-30% lower than big corp
- what is equity? (stock, tokens etc)
- tricks related to equity
- what is it really worth it
- how much to ask for? 0.2%-3%.
Startup: why/how to found one

- + build MVP
- + don't be afraid to talk to hundreds of customers ASAP
  - every “customer” says good things because they are nice people
  - real test: will you pay me $5000 now to use the software for a year
- patents are usually useless and waste allot of money
- funding
  - self-fund as long as possible
  - govt grants: SBIR, etc
  - try to stay away from venture capital until you have MVP and 1-2 customers
Small Company

Don’t