

Whistle While You Work: Pre-Award Lessons Learned from the Seven Dwarfs

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Heigh Ho!



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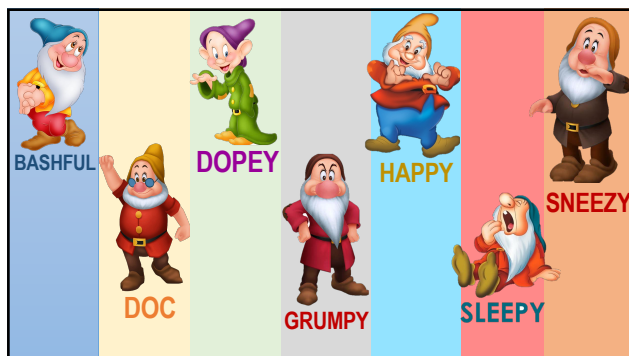
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Doc - Characteristics

- Leader of the dwarfs
- Wears glasses
- Intelligent & reliable
- Often mixes up his words
- Sometimes loses train of thought
- Comparable to a “seasoned” researcher/PI or RA



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Doc - Lessons

- Don’t need to “dumb down” information
- Don’t over-explain
- Don’t treat them like newbies
- Approach revisions and needed changes in a different way
- Ask how they have handled situations in the past
- Learn about their research



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Happy - Characteristics


- Jovial dwarf
- Optimistic
- Bright, friendly and approachable
- Usually portrayed laughing
- Comparable to a new PI or RA



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Happy - Lessons


- They're excited to be a part of and learn the process
- They may not know what questions to ask
- Discuss approach with new PIs versus seasoned PIs
- Lots of hand holding
- Key lessons/takeaways when working with them:
 - Prepare a flexible timeline
 - Send detailed lists or checklists of what's required based on the RFP
 - Provide background info on why
 - Try to make this a good experience for them so that they continue to submit



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Sneezy - Characteristics

- Extremely powerful sneezes
- Blows heavy objects across a room
- Never seems to get better
- Suffers from hay fever
- Comparable to both PIs (those who seem to be problem PIs) or research admins not taking care of themselves and their own health & needs




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Sneezy - Lessons

Principal Investigator	Research Administrator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out necessary revisions and explain why these are needed • Give more background, if needed • Provide specific regulations that state why we can/cannot do something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to take care of ourselves • Health – mental & physical are important for us to do our jobs and be successful • Find healthy work/life balance • You can't pour from an empty cup



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Sleepy - Characteristics

- Always tired
- Appears lethargic in most situations
- Constantly falling asleep
- Comparable to faculty who work on proposals in the middle of the night and/or PIs who are uninterested in RA rules & regulations

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Sleepy - Lessons


- Have/send info that's easy to read and understand
- Avoid having them search for things
 - Make info easily accessible
 - Checklists and reminders!
- Avoid giving too much information
 - Give needed info to complete the tasks
- Set early deadlines/create a flexible timeline
 - They're busy if they're working in the middle of the night
 - Prepare as much as you can ahead of time



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Bashful - Characteristics

- Very shy
- Self conscious
- Kind-hearted
- Rosy cheeks
- Comparable to a new faculty member/PI or a new RA




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Bashful - Lessons

Principal Investigator

- May be afraid to ask questions
- Could make lots of mistakes because they're only giving the appearance of understanding
- Ways to work through bashfulness:
 - Ask PI questions to ensure they understand
 - Have PI repeat information back to you
 - Reaffirm your office as a safe space




Research Administrator

- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Take a chance in learning more about your faculty and their interests
- It's ok to not know everything!
 - Key is to be transparent and willing to work hard to find the right answer
- Reach out to network/NCURA colleagues
 - Sign up for Collaborate communities

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Grumpy - Characteristics

- Grouchy, over-bearing and short-fused
- Deep down has a warm heart
- First strongly opposed befriending Snow White
- Then, warned her of danger and the lead the charge
- Comparable to tough/difficult PIs or other research administrators if they work in a central office



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Grumpy - Lessons



- Though tough to deal with, these PIs could also end up being our biggest cheerleaders when needed
- Be transparent
 - If you try to hide something, even minor, you'll lose trust
- Be patient
- Explain how and why
- Be willing to go beyond to help
- Offer positive reinforcement
 - Congratulate when compliant and/or successful

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Dopey - Characteristics



- Youngest, different from rest of dwarfs
- Accident-prone
- Doesn't talk
- Makes mistakes often, thought to be incompetent
- Often ignored by others
- Comparable to junior faculty preparing proposals for the first time, new RAs, and even some more seasoned PIs

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Dopey - Lessons

- Biggest lesson – They're experts in their area, not in ours, and that's okay
- They may require handholding every time they submit a proposal
- Best approach to work with Dopey:
 - Positive reinforcements
 - Repeat steps/processes
 - Utilizing a mix of directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating
 - Allow them to co-lead at times
 - Patience



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Closing

- Learn your PIs' personality and approach them accordingly
- Be patient and kind
- Be an ally for your PIs, they only know what they know
- Be flexible and proactive, when possible
- Make your office a safe space for PIs
- Coaching, supporting, positive reinforcements, and transparency goes a long way
- Mental/Physical health are important...take care of you

Heigh Ho, Heigh Ho, It's Off to Work We Go!



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