Words to Live and Work By

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① Be nice and work hard.

Everyone wants to work at a company where they feel welcome and comfortable, and employees at AVIO should enable those feelings for each other. It is also important to remember that work is work --- and work should be taken seriously.

② Care personally, challenge directly.

Drawn from the book [Radical Candor](#). Doing both of these things leads to more productive conversations and better working relationships.

③ OPEN SANS.

A bit of a joke based on feedback from my own work and the work of others. Client facing artifacts should not simply be created using the open sans font, but these artifacts should always look polished, professional, and engaging. This item embodies the idea that all of the content we create should represent not just ourselves, but AVIO's brand.

④ Stay hungry, stay busy, own your destiny.

Enjoy the benefits of working at a small company. One of those benefits is that there is an immense amount of upside --- if you seek it out. You will not always be told what to do at AVIO, nor should you expect to be. If you work proactively to add value, you will see that effort paid back in kind by the company, if for no other reason than that your actions can make a large relative impact over similar jobs at larger companies.

Your life is yours to lead. Take your life seriously, and make work a part of your life.

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⑤ Show up with an artifact, listen actively, and leave with notes.

It really helps to come prepared to interactions with anyone at work, whether those interactions are with coworkers or clients. Doing so helps convey that you take their time seriously, and in turn you will often find that your work is taken seriously as well. One tactic for "showing up prepared" is to create an artifact --- notes, slides, diagrams, etc. --- that show you are ready to have a conversation.

Active listening can be facilitated by taking notes (Google "note taking and paying attention"). Regardless of your personal preference here, taking notes while listening to a client can be a crucial exercise that can save you time and frustration down the road. Multitasking may not always be the best thing to do, but being able to multitask a great skill to have, particularly in consulting.

If you were taking notes when you were listening, you'll have notes ready when you walk away from a conversation. If a follow-up is required, you'll have most of your work out of the way if you've practiced good note taking.

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6   Live and breathe agile, even while going over a waterfall.

AVIO executes on waterfall projects, and contracts shouldn't be refused on the basic premise that the client wants to execute under the waterfall methodology. However, by employing core aspects of the agile methodology, like continuous testing and encouraging releasable code throughout a project, the pitfalls of the waterfall methodology can still be avoided.

Engaging with the customer and ensuring that developed functionality aligns with the intended vision from stakeholders is also important. Even the most well-written requirements can be misinterpreted, and a process in which development is confirmed by stakeholders is important for ensuring that the project is moving along as expected. This process drives the agile iteration workflow, and helps deliver a quality product when performed in regular intervals, even on waterfall projects.

7   Work toward compromise to get work done. Don't get lost in the details.

While there are certainly exceptions to this, it typically makes sense to approach disagreements with an open mind and ensure you are helping coworkers and clients reach an overall goal. Keep an eye on the big picture and make sure you are not having an argument simply to prove that you are right.

If you concede on this, what will realistically happen? Try to be wary of perspective and keep in mind that burning social capital by having a disagreement may be more costly than implementing your design paradigm.

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(8) Share knowledge, and expect that knowledge be shared with you.

Embrace AVIO's generous MBO policy and share your (important) thoughts with the company.

Generally speaking, a question from a peer should be met with an answer. There is such a thing as a stupid question, be mindful of this --- but in most scenarios, all coworkers at AVIO should work to build each other up, including by providing thoughtful and polite answers to questions from their peers. For those asking the question, it is worth considering that these thoughtful and polite answers will be more easily obtained if some degree of self-help happens before asking the question. Did you try to find the answer and educate yourself before asking someone else? In the words of W. Edwards Deming --- "If you do not know how to ask the right question, you discover nothing."

Be a "rubber duck", and be a rubber duck for others. Bouncing ideas off of coworkers can be an invaluable exercise for individuals that are stuck on something or need a fresh perspective, and providing that help to coworkers that need it can help find and solve problems more efficiently.

(9) Embody and encourage continuous improvement.

Be the change you want to see in the world, and work to ensure you are always moving forward. Your coworkers will learn from your example.

Be wary of doing the same thing over and over again simply because you've done it that way before. Always consider, however briefly, why you are making the decisions you are making so that you can seek improvement at all times.

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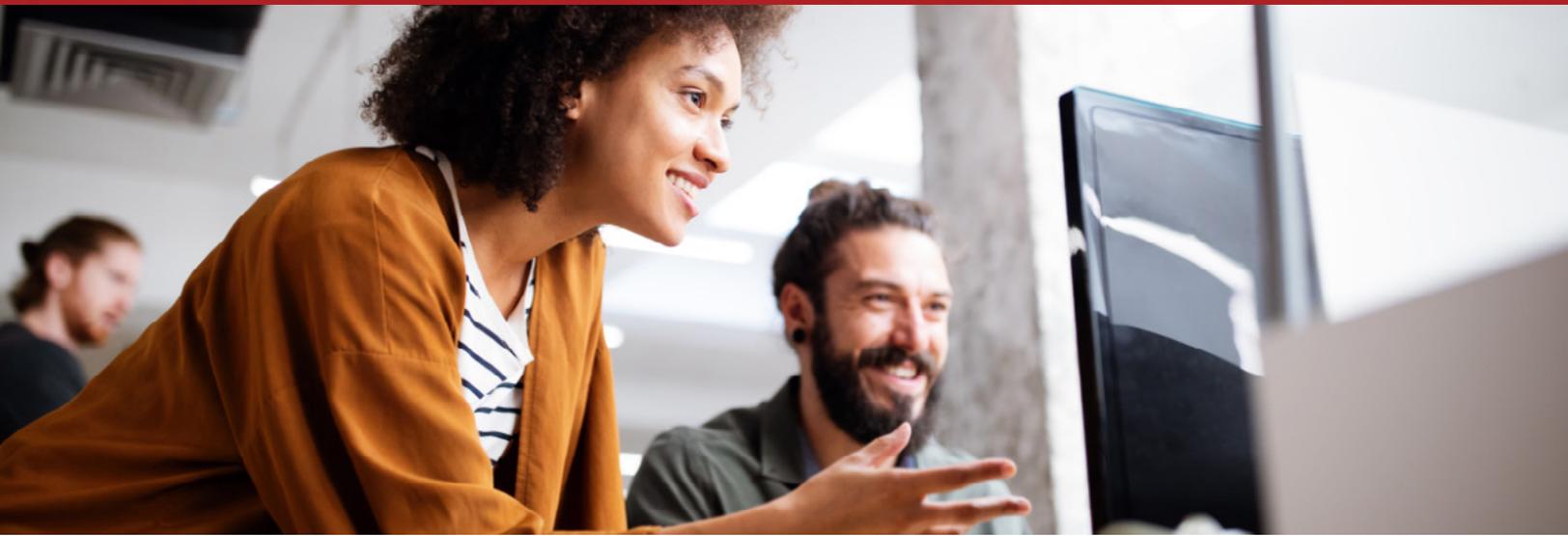
(10) Embrace challenge and failure. Grow faster by learning from both.

Take risks. If you win, you will be happy. If you lose, you will be wise.

(11) Provide feedback respectfully. Gather feedback proactively.

There are lots of methods for providing feedback, and methods for providing feedback may differ depending on the recipient's generation, but always avoid tearing someone down (and definitely avoid doing that in public). Embrace the "care personally" aspect of radical candor to ensure you're growing your relationships.

If you want feedback, you can ask for it. Coworkers at AVIO should be open to providing their thoughts and ideas, particularly since proficiency in this sort of exchange can be extremely helpful for consultants that are speaking with clients.

(12) Good ideas supersede tenure and old habits.

The words "because I said so" rarely carry meaning, and should not be uttered or implied at AVIO. A philosophy of "we do it like this because we've always done it this way" generally leads to more catastrophe than success. Good reasoning should be provided for decision making, and good ideas should be heard.

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13 Show up to meetings on time. Expect meetings to end on time.

In the spirit of respecting time, our most valuable resource, timebox your scheduled interactions.

Consider creating an agenda before any meeting. Although there are different schools of thought on this recommendation, an agenda will generally keep a meeting focused and productive. If the conversation veers away from the agenda, use the agenda as a way to keep the meeting productive and on track. Moreover, the level of thought necessary to create the agenda generally conveys a feeling of respect for the time of the attendees.

Blocking out short sections of time without an agenda can facilitate informal conversations, like in 1-on-1 meetings. Nonetheless, coming prepared with a list of talking points can help avoid having a "meeting for the sake of a meeting".

14 Write it down. Document, document, document.

Note taking and careful documentation has saved my butt as a consultant countless times. While having something in writing may not always be enough to persuade difficult clients as to why something happened the way it did, having this documentation rarely or never hurts more than it helps.

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15 Seek the documentation, read the documentation, improve the documentation.

In the spirit of continuing to ensure your ideas are heard, try not to ask stupid questions (again, yes, these do exist). Google it or look in AVIO's Confluence repository. Try to educate yourself before asking others to educate you --- doing so indicates you respect their time, and helps you look smarter.

16 Respect your life and the lives of others outside of work. DO NOT BURN OUT.

Working hours are important boundaries to respect. AVIO is not a company that values work above all else. Try not to bother coworkers outside of working hours unless absolutely necessary, and expect that they do the same for you.

Your work should not be your entire life, only part of it. AVIO respects this ideal, and hopes that you live a fulfilling life by remaining centered and doing things you enjoy outside of work.

17 Feel empowered to make AVIO better. If you have an idea, share it.

You should never feel like your ideas will be met with confrontation or dismissal at AVIO. Good ideas can help both you and your coworkers, and AVIO wants to acknowledge these ideas wherever possible.

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