



AIG Notebook

Published by the Australian Institute of Geoscientists

ISSN 1443-1017

RUSSELL'S CAREER-GUIDING MANTRAS FOR YOUNG AND NOT-SO-YOUNG GEOSCIENTISTS

Through Russell Meares' long career as an Exploration Manager, he has developed these mantras and strategies to motivate himself, and to also share with his team and those geoscientists whom he mentors. In his "spare time", for many years Russell has been both a strong advocate for explorers through the NSW Minerals Council, and as the Australasian Regional Correspondent for the quarterly newsletter of the Society of Economic Geologists. In addition, he was also a member of the SMEDG Committee for 13 years.

- **Trust:** Always be honest and transparent – lead by example – without someone's trust you have nothing.
- **Reputation:** No matter in which field of geoscience you work, your reputation is your personal brand – so throughout your career, build your reputation on integrity, trust and respect.
- **Perceptions:** When trying to motivate/convince/negotiate with others, put yourself in their shoes and think of how they are reacting to you and how they are feeling about the issue at hand. I only learnt this approach later in my career, and I found that it gave me a much better understanding of other people's perceptions and motivations.
- **Problem solving:** When analyzing a complex problem or issue, dig down to find the basic "cornerstone" of the matter – you will usually find one. Until you identify it, you may only be coming up with a temporary "band aid" solution. And when trying to solve a complex problem and you have alternative possible solutions in mind, it helps to critically make a list of all the possible hypothetical decisions you could make to solve the problem, and having done so review these and go with the one which then looks best – rather than go with the most obvious one up front.
- **Exceed expectations:** This is a great one to use when you are coaching your team to help them improve their performance. If they aim to exceed expectations, then they will be seen to be delivering more than has been expected of them and it will re-pay them in spades. This is a great motivator when talking to staff about the importance of doing your very best at rehabilitating drill sites – because if you exceed the landowner's expectations then you will get them onside very quickly – and there are usually very few opportunities to impress landowners, so grab this one with both hands !
- **Assumptions:** Whenever I hear someone say "I assume.....", the warning lights start flashing. This is because sometimes assumptions are based on wrong or incomplete information, so that the decision you make based on that specific assumption may come

back to bite you. Just remember that if you “ass-u-me” somethingit can make an “ass of you and me”.

- **Every journey begins with one step:** This one sounds obvious, but I find it very helpful to think this way if a task seems too hard to even make a start. I have refined it to apply when I am talking to geologists about what has to happen before the long journey to make a discovery, by saying “every discovery starts with a single drill hole”.
- **The hardest journey in life is meeting someone half way:** This is a good one if you are trying to resolve differences between two people.
- **The road to hell is paved with good intentions:** I often use this one when hard-working people apologise for not doing something they had hoped to do, or for missing a deadline, and they end up in a “should’ve”, “could’ve” or “would’ve” frame of mind. If you have faith in your ability to make the right decision at any point in time, based on all the information available to you at that time, then never look back and say “I should have done this or done that” when talking about some past decision you made. All you do is dig a big hole for your self-confidence. It helps you keep positive by not looking back, and just keeping on moving forward.
- **Ownership:** Work constructively with your staff so that they set (and have ownership of) their own goals and KPIs, and then give them positive feedback/praise when they do well. This is one of the best ways to reward staff and improve individual performances, as I hear that not many supervisors these days give positive feedback.
- **You only get one chance to make a first impression:** Again, this sounds too obvious, but it is so true. When I am coaching explorers on how to approach landowners regarding accessing their properties, this is always my No. 1 lesson. Whether it is the first phone call or the first face-to-face meeting, you always have to make sure that you and your company give the best (and most open and honest) impression that you can – because that first impression somebody forms of you can set the tone for your future relationship with them.
- **Go hard or go home:** I sometimes mutter this one to myself on the tennis court when I feel I have not been trying my hardest. It can be a great self-motivator !
- **If you are not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much space:** This is one of my all-time favourites which I use to motivate myself. I have it written on a Post-it note which I have in my hard copy diary, and I move it forward every couple of weeks ahead of “today”, so that when I come to that day, it reminds me to lift my game. I came across it some years ago in an obituary written by some grandchildren who were thanking their recently-deceased grandmother for the values which she had passed on to them.
- **And finally, here’s a great mantra from the legendary American explorer, Sig Muessig:** “IQ gets you there, but NQ finds it “ !