Adapting to the Academic Environment: 5 Lessons from the Yogi

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Adapting to the academic environment*

*5 lessons from the Yogi

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Introduction

• My background: corporations → academia
• My observations on contrasts, adaptation
• Enlightenment provided by:

...Lawrence Peter (aka, “Yogi”) Berra

Source: Baseball Digest, front cover, September 1956
1. Learning the ropes

Corporate
• Workflow, responsibilities often well-defined and well-documented

Academic
• Workflow, responsibilities often loosely-structured, undocumented, and changeable.

Adaptation
• Engage in some informal “process mapping” to determine how things get done
• Enlist colleagues and mentors for guidance

Yogi: "You can observe a lot just by watching."
2. Articulating your position

**Corporate**
- Decision-making can be hierarchical
- Often the only person that you need to persuade is your boss

**Academic**
- Decision-making tends to be more diffuse
- May need to persuade multiple and varied audiences

**Adaptation**
- Develop skills and comfort level for engaging and persuading multiple audiences

Yogi: “There are some people who, if they don't already know, you can't tell 'em.”
3. Developing professionally

Corporate
- Development often follows naturally from good job performance
- Development paths well-defined

Academic
- Development also depends on considering/selecting from a broad range of opportunities
- Paths are unique and less-defined

Adaptation
- Learn to take an (pro)active and selective role in planning your career/professional development

Yogi: “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”
4. “Other duties as assigned”

**Corporate**
- Staff often have specialized roles
- Objective: efficiency through functional specialization

**Academic**
- Librarians often perform a broad range of duties for several academic departments
- Collection, liaison/outreach, instructions, ...

**Adaptation**
- Develop additional skills (both technical and soft) to successfully perform a broad range of duties
- Recognize need for flexibility

Yogi: “*He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious.*”
5. Scanning the environment

**Corporate**
- Engage in environmental scanning to identify trends relevant business operations and strategies

**Academic**
- Perform environmental scanning to identify trends related to users/usage, resources, services, and technology

**Adaptation**
- No contrast here!
- Scan for relevant trends using all available means, evaluate, incorporate into your practice

Yogi: “*In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.*”

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Conclusion

• Acknowledgement: Yogi’s wisdom sourced from brainyquote.com

• Caveat:

Yogi: “I never said most of the things I said.”