‘Shaping’ an academic career

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‘Outside’ factors

• PhD
  – Local funding on the day I got an psychologist post

• Post doc ambitions
  – £10 million centre at the point I finished my PhD

• Centre leadership
  – Massive movement of senior staff
‘Shapers’ of success

• Delivery
• Branding
• Writing
• Originality versus simplicity
• Added value and juggling
• Relationships
Delivery

• Don’t gain much if you do
• Lose reputation if you don’t
• ‘Safe pair of hands’
Added value

• Not what you do in your main job
• What you achieve on top
  – Unfunded work amongst best cited
Branding

• ‘Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers’

• What do you do?
Writing
Originality

• In science the credit goes to the man who convinces the world, not to the man to whom the idea first occurred.
  – Sir William Osler (1849-1919)

• I haven’t had an original thought in my career
  – Colleague and NIHR Senior Investigator
Simplicity

• *Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler*  
  – Albert Einstein

• Familiar refrain of ‘complexity’ in HSF  
  – Not what people want

• ‘Elegance’
Spinning plates

• How many projects can you run at the same time?

• How many areas can you retain expertise in?

• What is the opportunity cost of new work?
Managing relationships

• Managing ‘up’

• Managing ‘across’

• Managing ‘down’
Managing ‘up’

• Look and learn

• Watching senior colleagues work:
  – Engagement with University
  – Negotiations with academics
  – Discussions with policy makers
  – Brainstorming ideas
Managing ‘up’

• ‘Strategic non-compliance’

• Learning when to ignore senior colleagues
Managing ‘across’

• Peer group critical
  – Productive collaborations
  – New ideas
  – ‘Agility’
Managing ‘down’

• Getting the most out of staff
  – Staff selection
  – Motivation
  – Support
Managing ‘down’

• Goal setting
• Timelines
• Underperformance
• Breaking bad news
Questions