Qualities of a Field Soil Scientist

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What sort of special qualities does it take in a person to excel at a particular job? Recently that thought came to mind when I was trying to describe a field soil scientist. Another thought quickly followed. If you could hand-pick the "perfect" person applying for a field soil scientist job, what would they be like?

1. Conscientious about their work.
2. Consistent.
3. A team player.
4. Follows written and spoken directions.
5. Learns from training.
6. Carries assignments through to completion.
7. Strives for self-improvement.
8. Self-reliant.

After the seemingly perfect person begins work, several more things are necessary to be able to successfully map soil. After field training, it remains to be seen if the person is:

1. Able to project thoughts of above- and below-ground processes that affect soil formation.
2. Able to visualize past, present, and future pedologic, geologic, and climatic processes.
3. Able to make predictions about an area based on observations at a point.
4. Able to make decisions that they are willing to defend but not unwilling to compromise if needed.

Reviewing these qualities has made me realize just how demanding soil mapping is and how special the people are that perform it successfully.

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