The Generalist Advantage

YOUR SUPERPOWER

The Generalist Advantage

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PART 1: Idea synthesis
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PART 4: Adaptability
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PART 8: Mastery
PART 9: My AI and me

GENERALIST

SPEAKER

VISUALISATION ENTHUSIAST

OPEN ORGANIZATION AMBASSADOR

Jimmy Sjölund

Organisational transformation expert with extensive experience sparking change at large, multinational companies

Principal agile practitioner
@ Red Hat

CABLE & WIRELESS

interoute
from the ground to the cloud

GTT

basefarm

orange Business

SKANSKA

Telia Company

Red Hat

Open Org

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Remember this guy?

Photo: Fin Costello/Redferns

Ellinor Algin - https://digitaltmuseum.se/021026360742/persondator

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallingwater

Sveit
FOLKHÖGSKOLA
KANSANKORKEAKOULU

Remember this guy?

What is a generalist?

A generalist is a person with a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects, useful or not.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generalist

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- Polymath
- Multipotentialite

Definition

A **polymath** (Greek: romanized: polymathēs, lit. 'having learned much'; Latin: homo universalis, lit. 'universal human')[1] or **polyhistor** (Greek: romanized: polyīstor, lit. 'well-learned')[2] is an individual whose knowledge spans many different subjects, known to draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems.

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to solve specific problems

What is a polymath?

Polymaths are characterised by a great curiosity that leads them to continuous learning and involvement in different areas, especially in some with different expressions as it is not only about accumulating knowledge but also about applying and expressing it.

https://www.iberdrola.com/talent/polymathy

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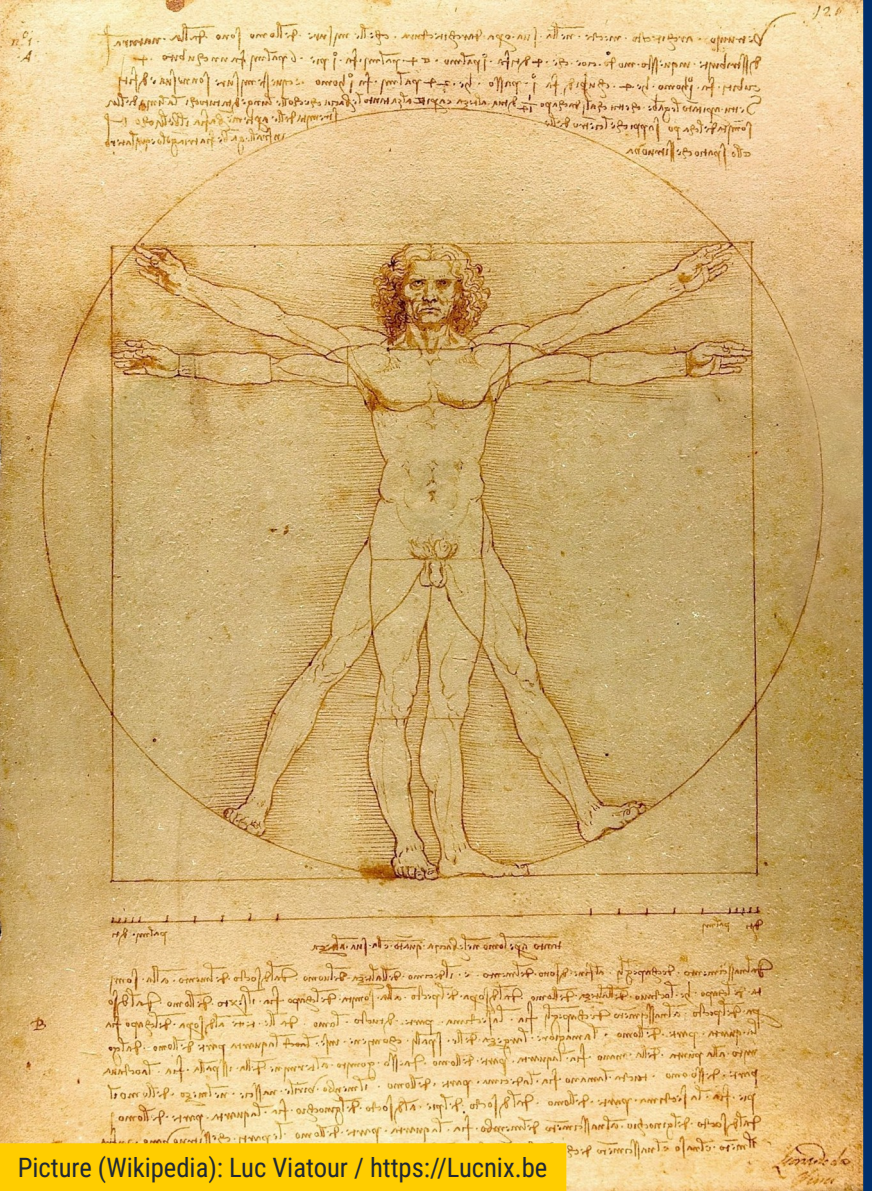

Picture (Wikipedia): Luc Viatour / https://Lucnix.be

Leonardo da Vinci

- Painter and sculptor
- Engineer
- Scientist, anatomical studies
- Architect
- Theorist
- Astronomy
- Botany
- ...

Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets.

Bruce Dickinson

- Singer, Iron Maiden
- Olympic fencer
- Commercial pilot
- Professor in ancient history
- Honorary PhD in Music
- DJ
- Screenwriter

Life is about learning,
it's about growing

Natalie Portman

- Actress
- Bachelor's degree in psychology from Harvard University
- Fluent in English, Hebrew, French, and Spanish.
- Director and producer

I don't love studying. I hate studying. I like learning. Learning is beautiful.

Idea synthesis

- Connecting the dots
- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary innovation
- Effective communication
- Problem-solving versatility

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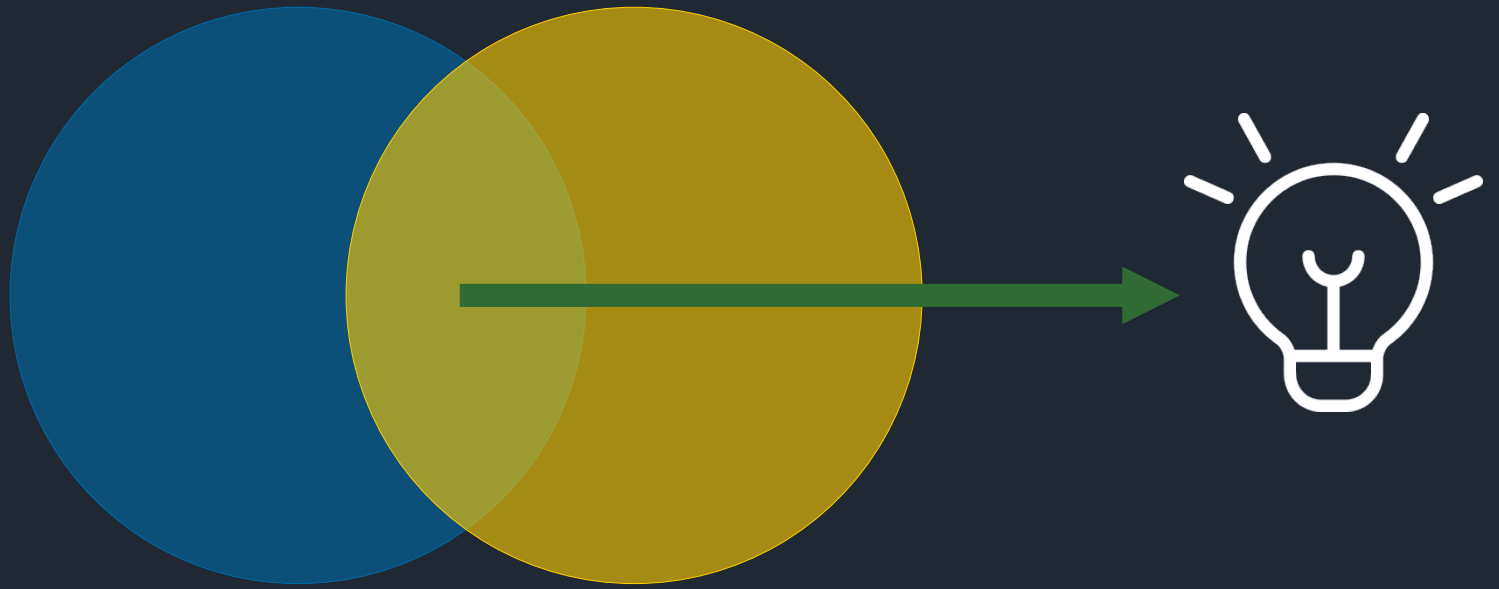

DAISY

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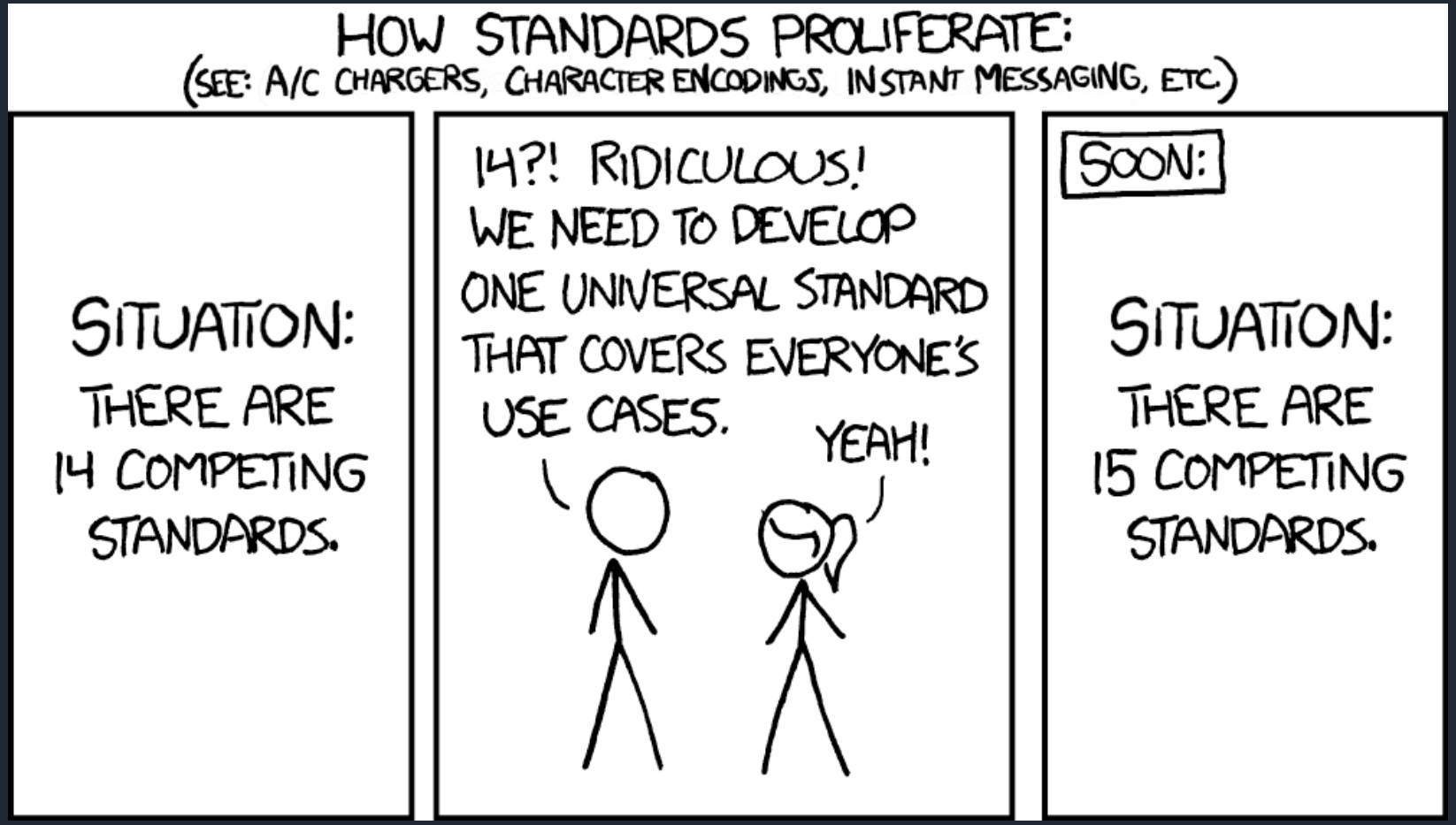
DAISY 2.02
Överförd från analog talbok
www.btj.se
OBSERVERA



https://xkcd.com/927

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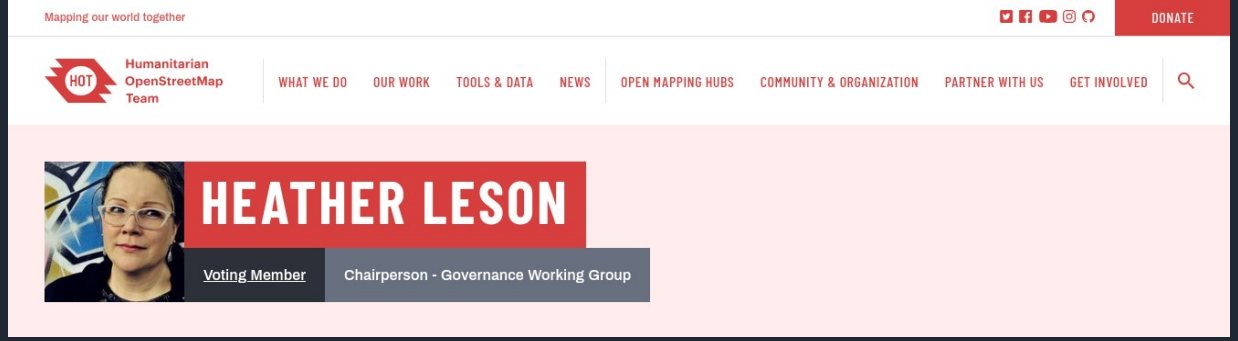

- **Background:** Digital humanitarian and community organiser
- **Cross-disciplinary blend:** Emergency response, mapping, data, and global coordination.
- **Contribution:** Coordinated responses during natural disasters using OpenStreetMap, training volunteers to contribute maps critical for rescue and recovery.
- **Why it matters:** Heather connects the dots between mapping tools and real-world crisis response, uniting technologists, NGOs, and affected communities.

https://www.hotosm.org/people/heather-leson/

Idea synthesis

- Connecting the dots
- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary innovation
- Effective communication
- Problem-solving versatility

I already told you: I deal with the god damn customers so the engineers don't have to. I have people skills; I am good at dealing with people. Can't you understand that? What the hell is wrong with you people?!

Idea synthesis

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Letter shaped skills

Letter shaped skills

I

Letter shaped skills

I T

Letter shaped skills

I T E

Letter shaped skills

I T E M

Letter shaped skills

I T E M m

Letter shaped skills

I T E M m

Letter shaped skills

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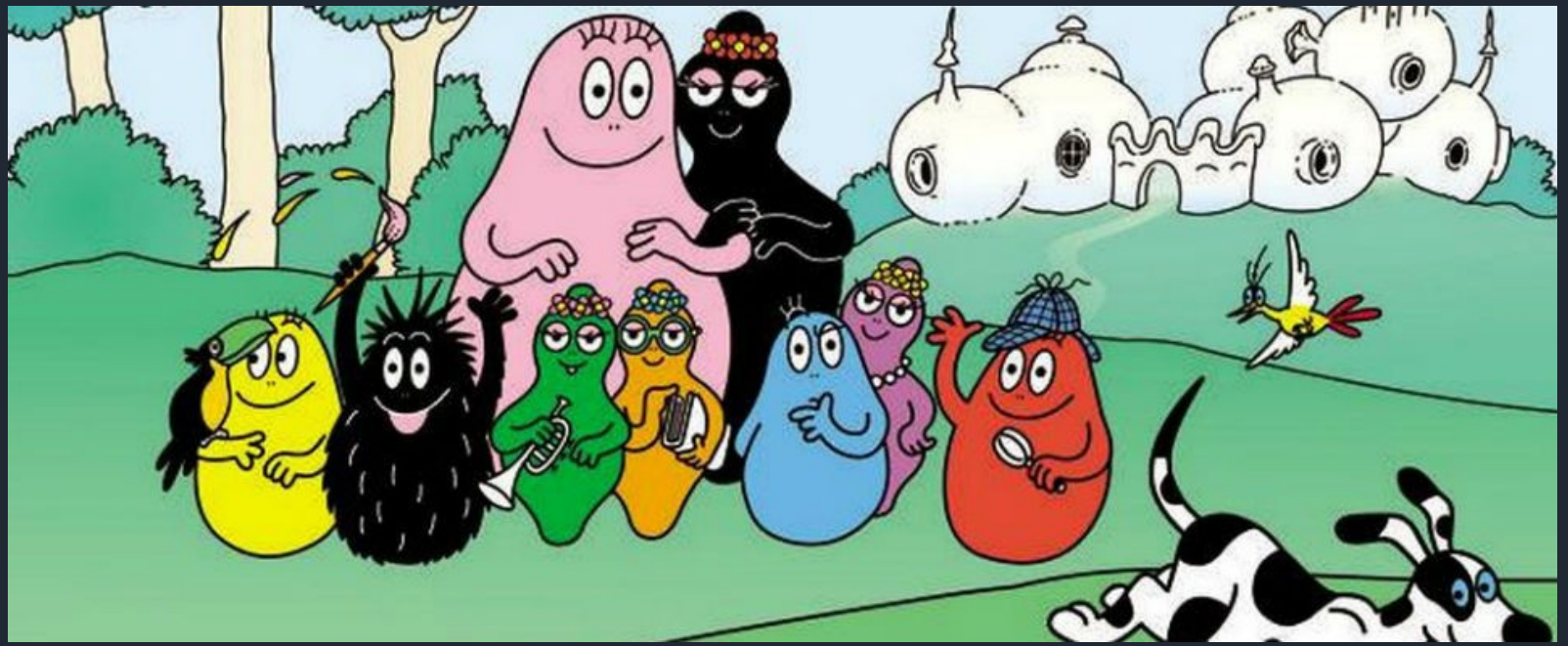
Rapid Learning

Rapid Learning

- Adaptability

Adaptability



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning

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- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning
- Learning Techniques

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- Advantage in agile environments

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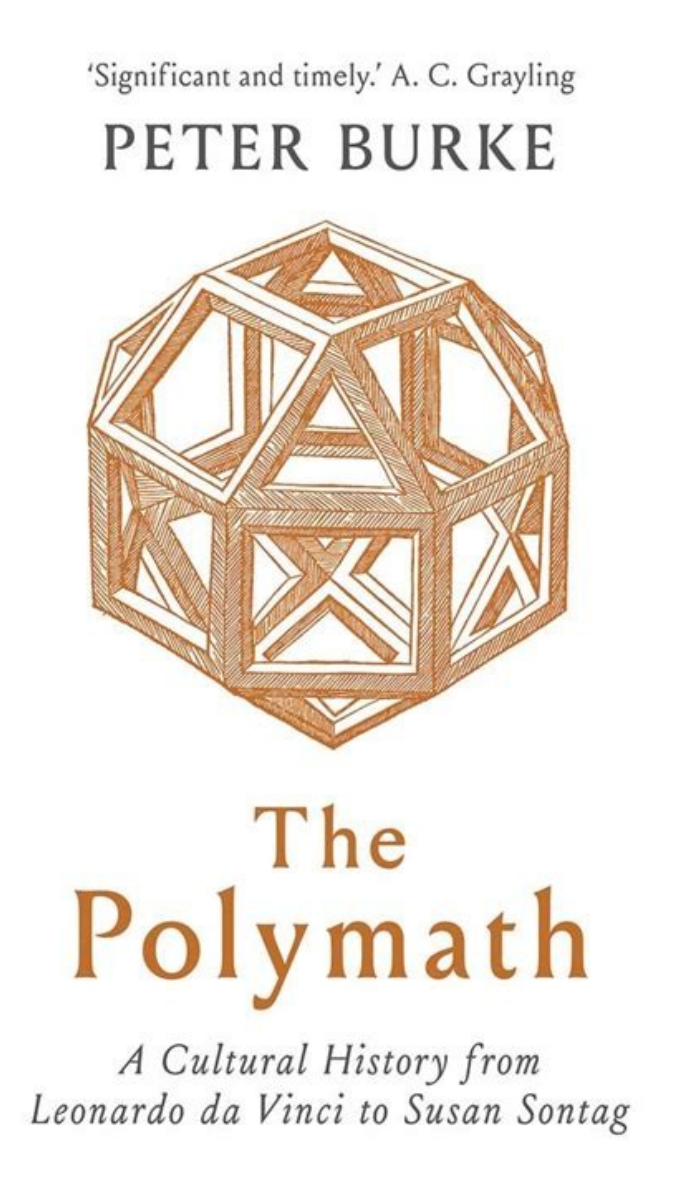
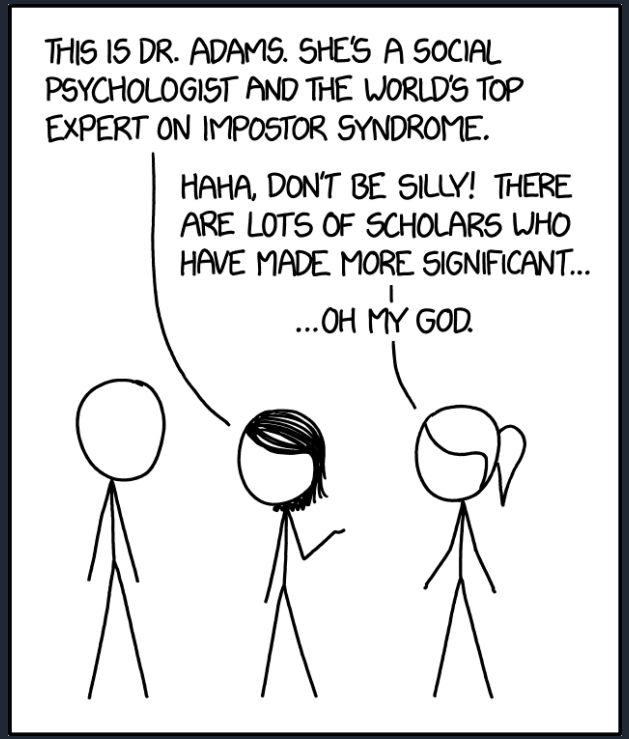


Leonardo syndrome

- Curiosity
- Impatience
- Stop starting, start finishing

Impostor syndrome



https://xkcd.com/1954

Pareto Principle

The Pareto principle (also known as the 80/20 rule, the law of the vital few and the principle of factor sparsity) states that for many outcomes, roughly 80% of consequences come from 20% of causes (the "vital few").
Many natural phenomena are distributed according to power law statistics.

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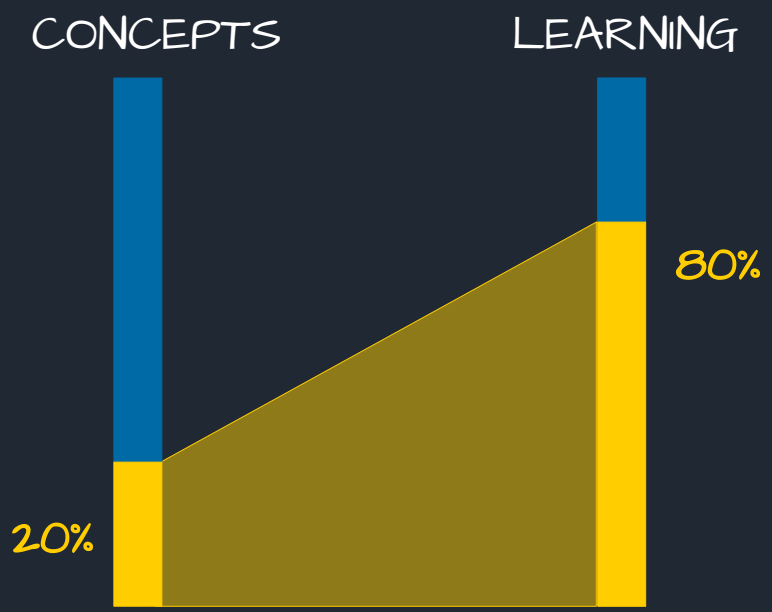
80% of sales come from
20% of your clients/products

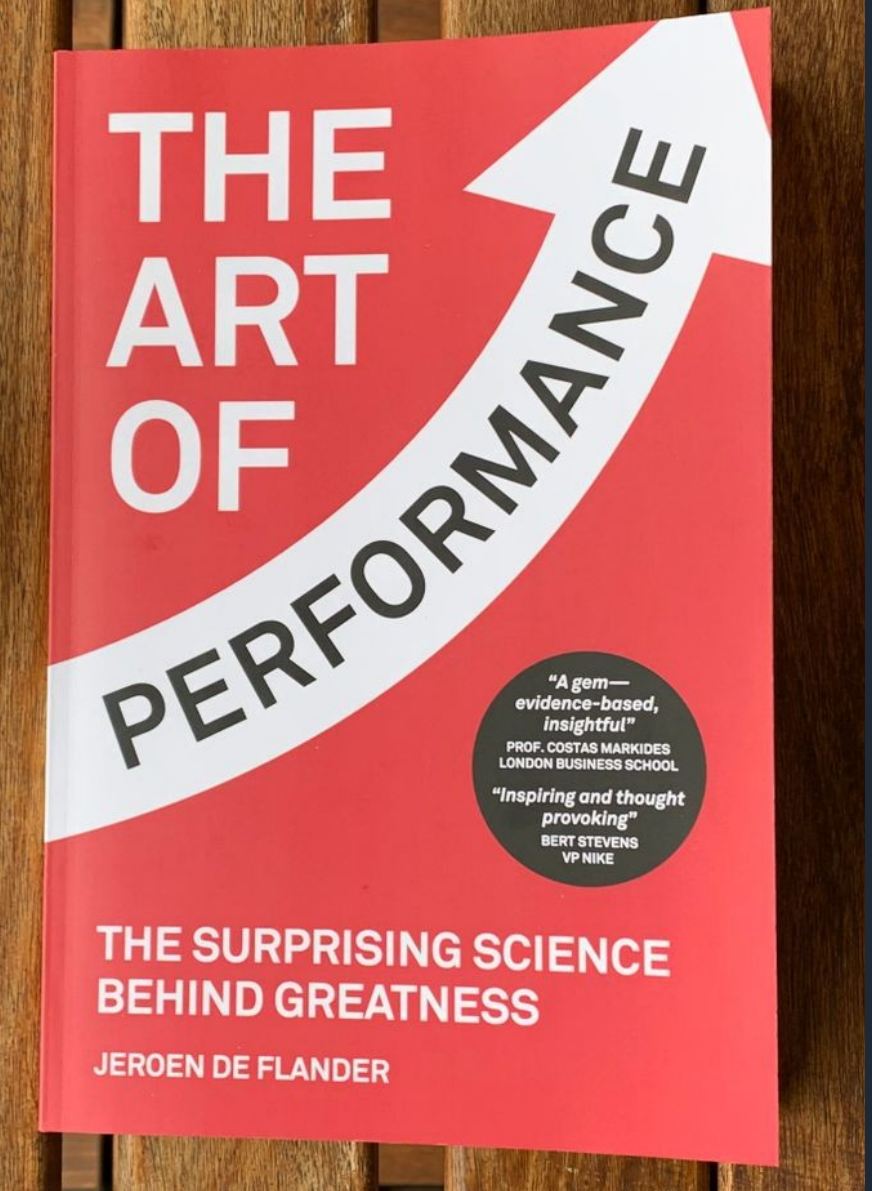
80% of the wealth is owned by
20% of the population

80% of software problems
are caused by 20% of bugs

Pareto Principle

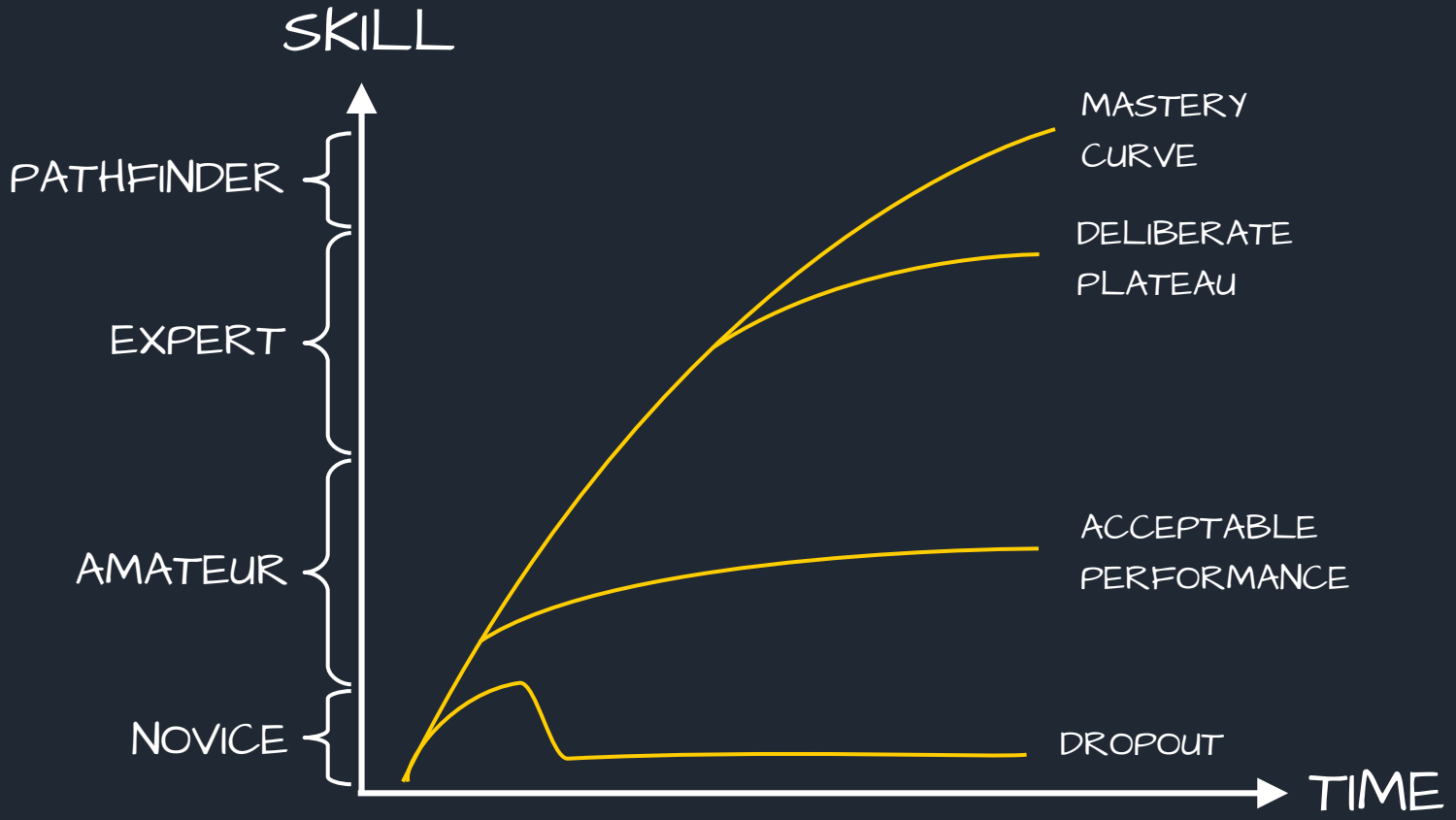


https://barkleypd.com/blog/a-mastery-curve-for-teaching/



Mastery Curve

- Passion and purpose
- Deep practice
- Persistence



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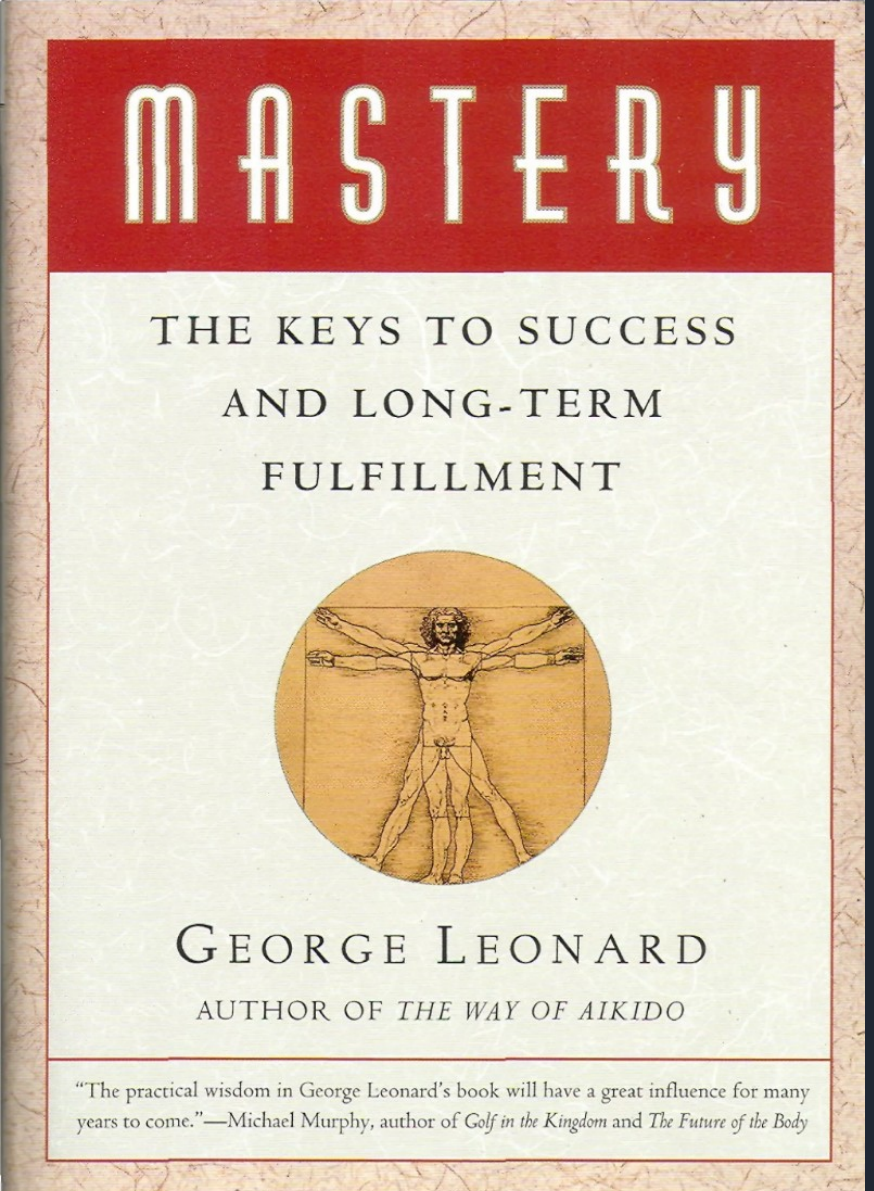

Mastery

- What is Mastery?
- Loving the plateau
- The Dabbler
- The Hacker
- The Obsessive
- Mastery vs Pareto

Loving the Plateau

The Dabbler

The Obsessive

The Hacker

Mastery vs Pareto

My AI and me

My AI and me

- Editor

My AI and me

- Editor
- Personal assistant

My AI and me

- Editor
- Personal assistant
- Tutor

My AI and me

- Editor
- Personal assistant
- Tutor
- pAIr programming

My AI and me

- Editor
- Personal assistant
- Tutor
- pAIr programming
- “Creative” artist

My AI and me

- Editor
- Personal assistant
- Tutor
- pAIr programming
- “Creative” artist
- Downsides … ?

I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so that I can do art and writing.

not for AI to do my art and writing so that I can do my laundry and dishes.

— Joanna Maciejewska

The Generalist Advantage

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They function as generators of innovations.

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- They function as generators of innovations.
- They enrich working groups.
- They have a greater capacity to adapt to change.
- They are intellectual crosstalks, bridges between specialised working groups.

Thank you!

@jimmysjolund@mastodon.social

https://sjolund.se

Uicons by Flaticon