



The Generalist Advantage

YOUR SUPERPOWER



The Generalist Advantage

PART 0: Introduction

PART 1: Idea synthesis

PART 2: Letter shaped skills

PART 3: Rapid learning

PART 4: Adaptability

PART 5: Leonardo syndrome

PART 6: Impostor syndrome

PART 7: Pareto principle

PART 8: Mastery

PART 9: Open source communities



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



SKANSKA



Jimmy Sjölund

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

Principal agile practitioner
@ Red Hat



Remember this
guy?





Photo: Fin Costello/Redferns





44255





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.

What is a generalist?

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

What is a generalist?

Courier Prime:

A generalist is a person with a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects

What is a generalist?

Courier Prime:

A generalist is a person with a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects

Cutive Mono:

A generalist is a person with a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects

What is a generalist?

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

What is a generalist?

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

- 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.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath>

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.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath>

having learned much

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.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath>

having learned much

*knowledge spans many
different subjects*

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.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath>

having learned much

*knowledge spans many
different subjects*

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.

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.

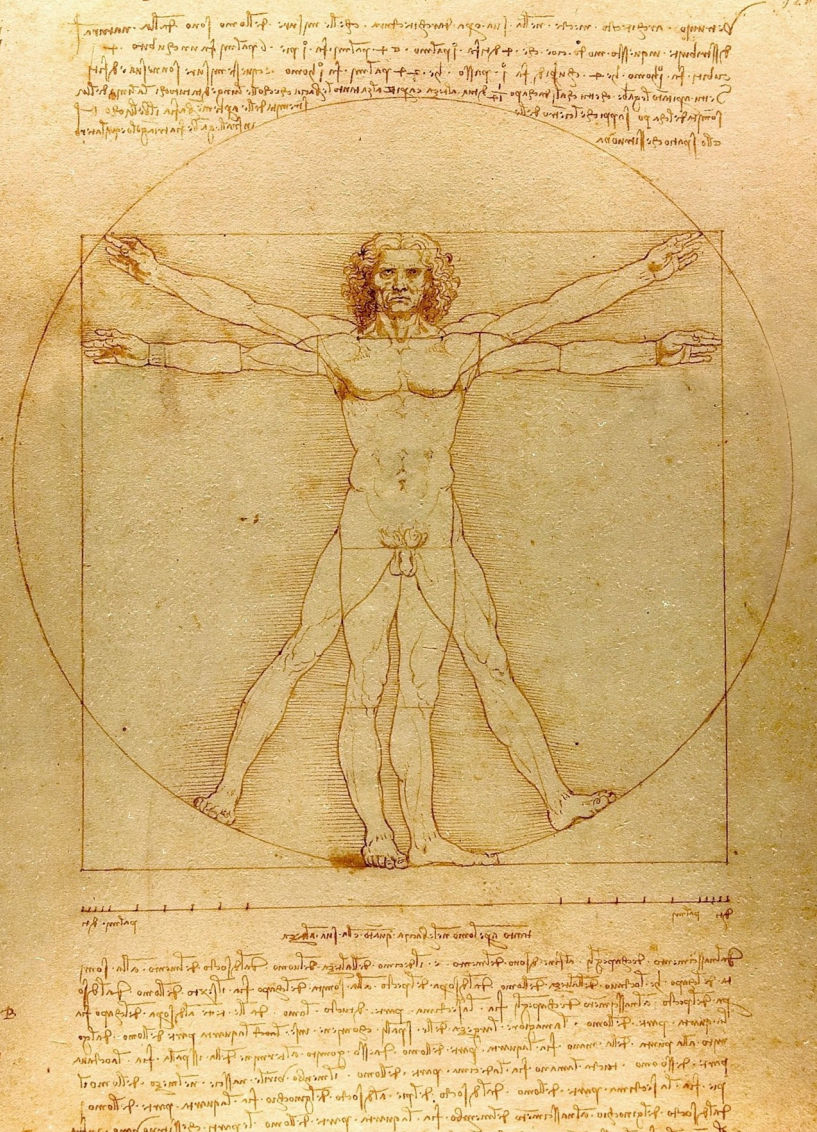
What is a polymath?

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.

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.*



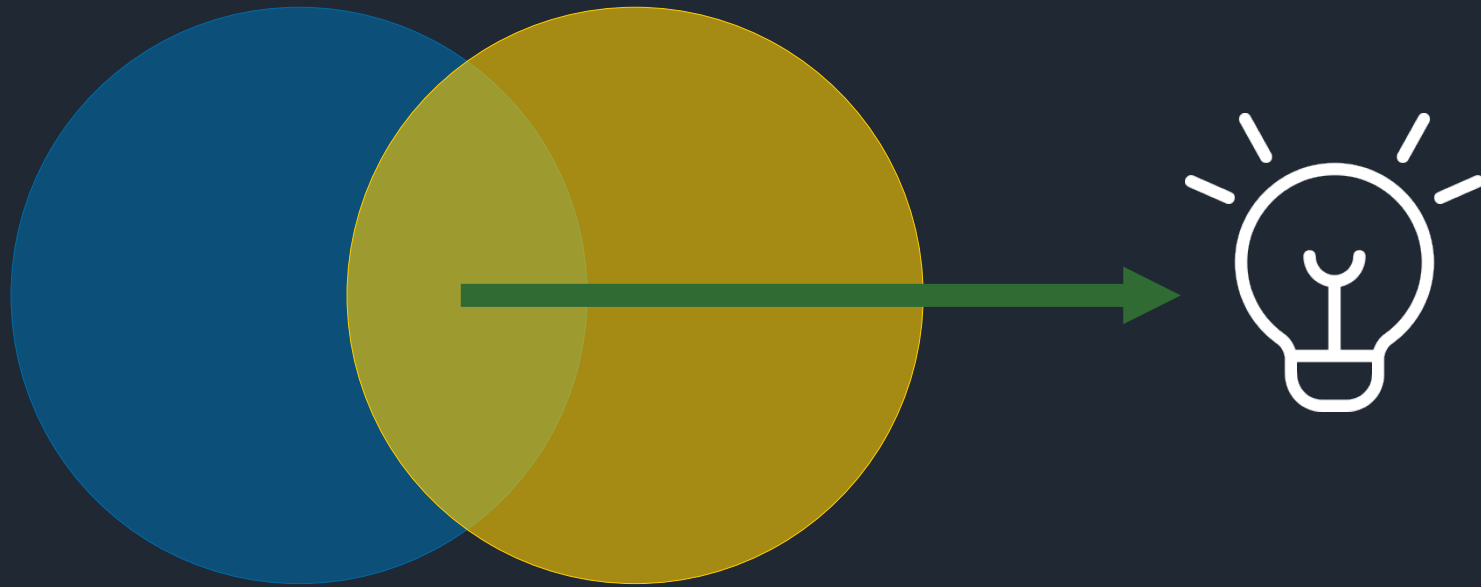
Idea synthesis

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

Idea synthesis

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

Idea synthesis



DAISY

Minoritetsspråk



DAISY

Minoritetsspråk

Jiddisch
Meänkieli
Romani
Samska

Talbok, DAISY

Fakta

Norska långserier

Levnads-
öden



DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

DAISY content

Lindqvist, Herman
**Historien om Sverige. Från
slottning till kungarrike**

Inläsare: Bertil Odlund, 1993



Speltid
14 tim., 42 min
cd-rom 1(1)
IRIS-inläsning
TPB-nr C43812
DAISY 2.02
Överförd från
analog talbok

www.btj.se

OBSERVERA
Den här talbok är framställd för personer med funktionshinder enligt
17 § Lagen om tillgänglighet. Ökade spridning eller överföring beivras.

HOW STANDARDS PROLIFERATE:

(SEE: A/C CHARGERS, CHARACTER ENCODINGS, INSTANT MESSAGING, ETC.)

SITUATION:
THERE ARE
14 COMPETING
STANDARDS.

14?! RIDICULOUS!
WE NEED TO DEVELOP
ONE UNIVERSAL STANDARD
THAT COVERS EVERYONE'S
USE CASES.



SOON:

SITUATION:
THERE ARE
15 COMPETING
STANDARDS.

DAISY

Minoritetsspråk



DAISY

Minoritetsspråk

Jiddisch
Meänkieli
Romani
Samska

Talbok, DAISY

Fakta

Norska långserier

Levnads-
öden

Historik

DAISY content
S-O
Inläsning
TPB-nr
C43812

Lindqvist, Herman
**Historien om Sverige. Från
slottning till kungarrike**
Inläsare: Bertil Odlund, 1993



Speltid
14 tim., 42 min
cd-rom 1(1)
IRIS-inläsning
TPB-nr C43812
DAISY 2.02
Överförd från
analog talbok

www.btj.se

OBSERVERA
Den här talbok är framställd för personer med funktionshinder enligt
17 § språkstämningen. Ökta språkljud eller översättning beivras.

Idea synthesis

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

Idea synthesis

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



HEATHER LESON

Voting Member

Chairperson - Governance Working Group

- **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.

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

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

Idea synthesis

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

Letter shaped skills

Letter shaped skills

|

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

π

Letter shaped skills

I T E M m



Rapid Learning



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning
- Learning Techniques



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning
- Learning Techniques
- Advantage in agile environments



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning
- Learning Techniques
- Advantage in agile environments
- Continuous improvement



Rapid Learning

- Adaptability
- Cross-disciplinary learning
- Learning Techniques
- Advantage in agile environments
- Continuous improvement

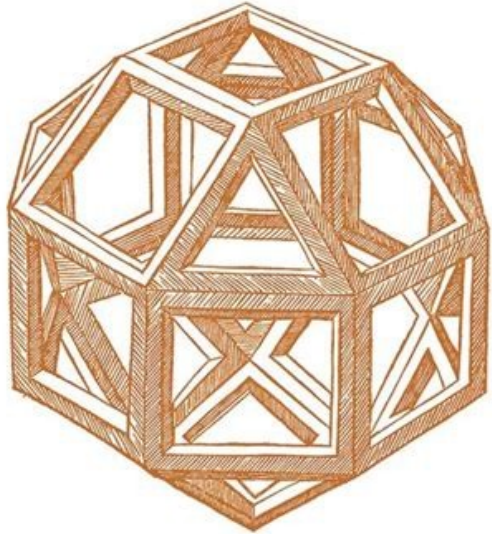


Adaptability



'Significant and timely.' A. C. Grayling

PETER BURKE



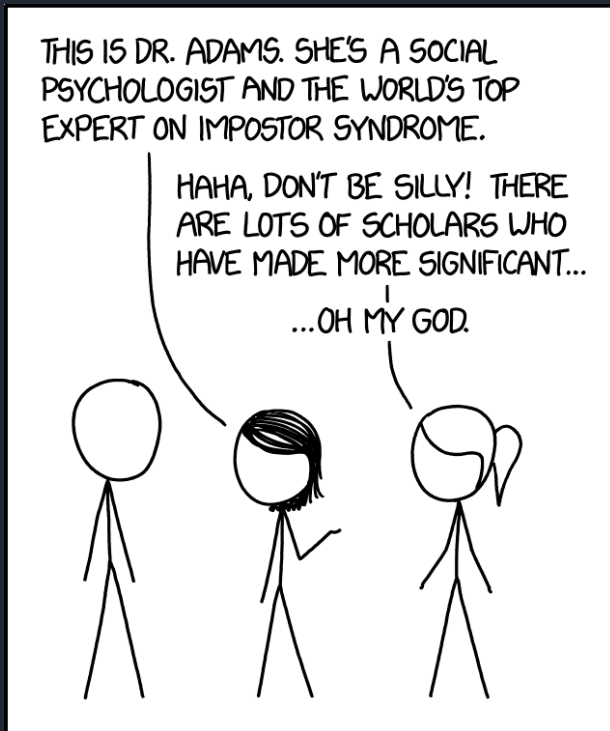
The Polymath

*A Cultural History from
Leonardo da Vinci to Susan Sontag*

Leonardo syndrome

- Curiosity
- Impatience
- Stop starting, start finishing

Impostor syndrome



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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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

Pareto Principle

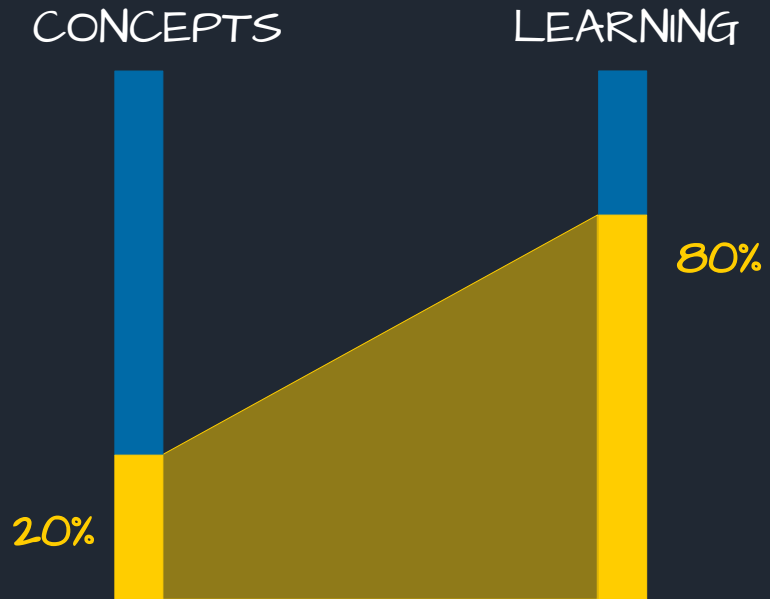
The Pareto principle (also known as the **80/20 rule**, the law of the vital few and the principle of factor sparsity) states that for many outcomes, roughly 80% of consequences come from 20% of causes (the "vital few"). Many natural phenomena are distributed according to power law statistics.

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

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

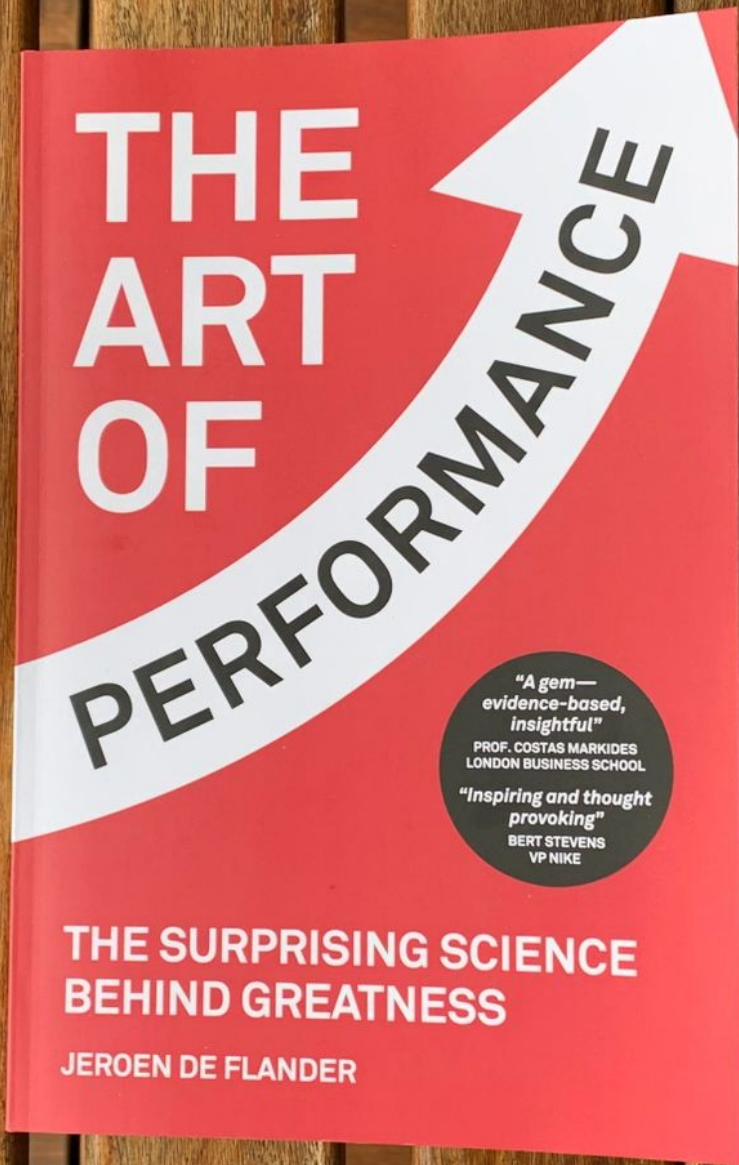
*80% of software problems
are caused by 20% of bugs*

Pareto Principle



Mastery Curve

- Passion and purpose
- Deep practice
- Persistence



THE
ART
OF

PERFORMANCE

*"A gem—
evidence-based,
insightful"*

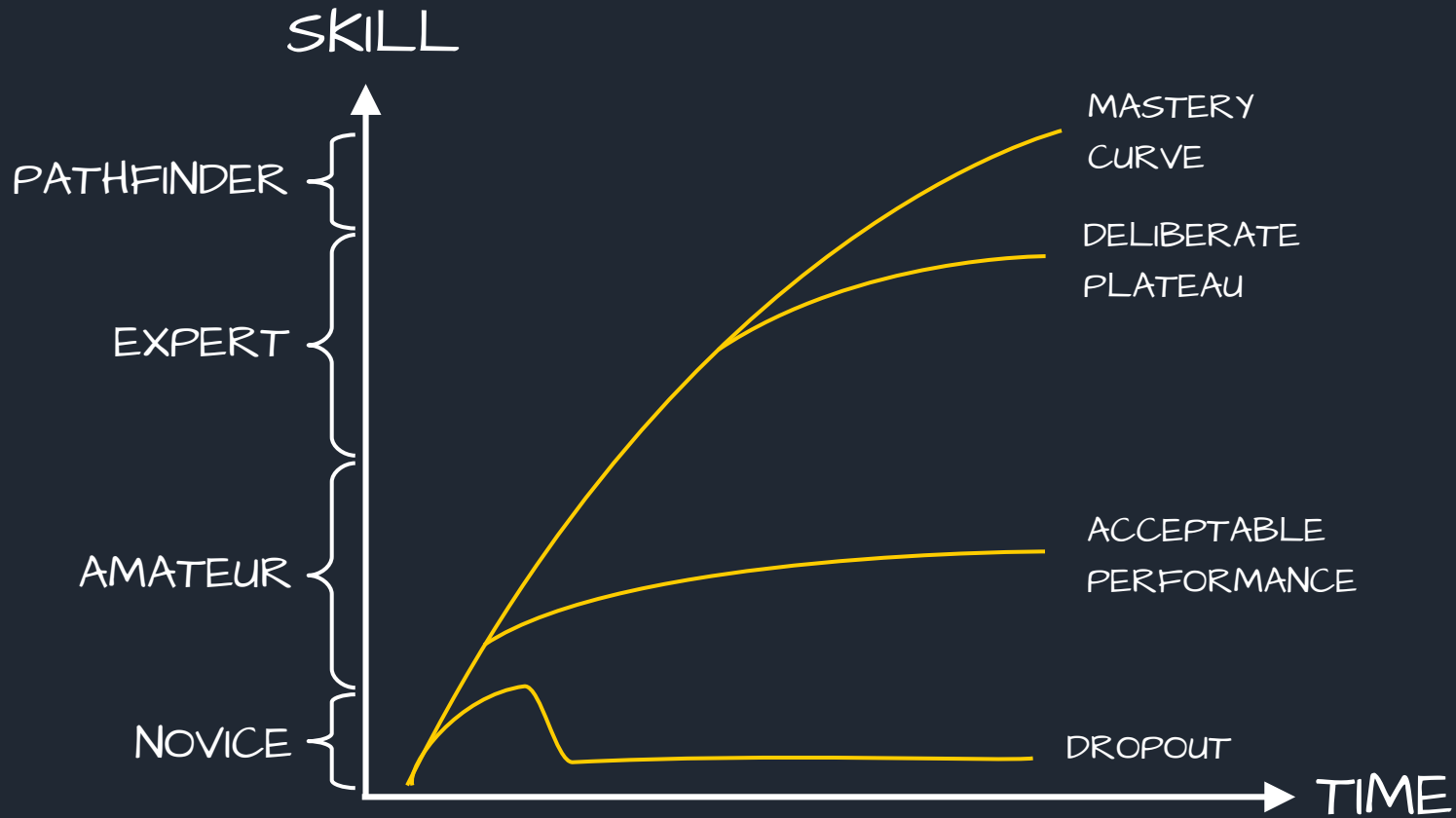
PROF. COSTAS MARKIDES
LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

*"Inspiring and thought
provoking"*

BERT STEVENS
VP NIKE

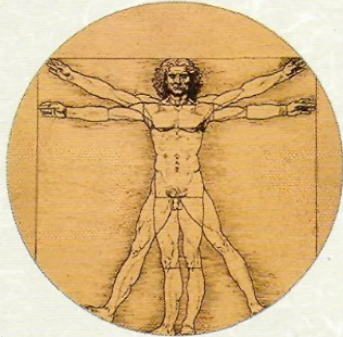
THE SURPRISING SCIENCE
BEHIND GREATNESS

JEROEN DE FLANDER



MASTERY

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS
AND LONG-TERM
FULFILLMENT



GEORGE LEONARD

AUTHOR OF *THE WAY OF AIKIDO*

"The practical wisdom in George Leonard's book will have a great influence for many years to come."—Michael Murphy, author of *Golf in the Kingdom* and *The Future of the Body*

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



Open source communities

- Collaborative
- Transparency
- Diverse skills
- Community support
- Continuous learning
- Volunteer-driven

Open source communities

- Collaborative
- Transparency
- Diverse skills
- Community support
- Continuous learning
- Volunteer-driven
- Bridging gaps
- Versatility
- Adaptability
- Holistic perspective
- Onboarding/mentoring
- Innovation
- Coordination

The Generalist Advantage

The Generalist Advantage




 They function as **generators** of innovations.

The Generalist Advantage





 They function as **generators** of innovations.

 They **enrich** working groups.

The Generalist Advantage

-  They function as **generators** of innovations.
-  They **enrich** working groups.
-  They have a greater capacity to **adapt** to change.

The Generalist Advantage

-  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>

