



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

Rookie Smarts (Enhanced Edition): Why Learning Beats Knowing in the New Game of Work

by Liz Wiseman

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53 Highlights | 13 Notes

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 6

You shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our journeying will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. —T. S. ELIOT

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 3

My value didn't derive from having fresh ideas; it came from having no ideas at all. What my team and I lacked in experience and conviction we compensated for with our willingness to learn, to think creatively, and to deliver quick wins to prove ourselves.

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I came to realize that the best jobs are often the ones we're not fully prepared for.

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Is it possible that we can be at our best when we are underqualified, doing something for the first time? With the right mindset we can. When we are stretched to reach beyond our current capabilities, we can open ourselves up to learning from everyone and everything around us and tap into a different mindset—what I have come to call rookie smarts.

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When the world is changing quickly, experience can become a curse, trapping us in old ways of doing and knowing, while inexperience can be a blessing, freeing us to improvise and adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 10

the critical skill of this century is not what you hold in your head, but your ability to tap into and access what other people know. The best leaders and the fastest learners know how to harness collective intelligence.

Yes @lizwiseman (and exactly the aim of our Academy, too)

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 11

This book is about living and working perpetually on a learning curve. It is about why we do our best work when we are new to something, striving up that steep ascent.

This from @lizwiseman a great compliment to @neilpasricha

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 16

The ark was built by amateurs, but professionals built the Titanic. —RICHARD NEEDHAM

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 22

What we know might actually mask what we don't know and impede our ability to learn and perform. All too often, the person doling out the advice is the one least likely to learn.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 25

First, rookies are strong performers. Our research, conducted across a broad array of industries, gave veterans a slight advantage, but when we isolated the results specifically on knowledge industries, we found that rookies performed at slightly higher levels than veterans.

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Second, rookies have a unique success profile. Our data showed that rookies and veterans take very different paths to success, but that they both fail in much the same way. The highest-performing rookies sought out expertise in others, connected the dots, experimented, learned from mistakes, and focused on making incremental gains. Conversely, the top-performing veterans had a distinct savvy of their own: They were fast to act, marshaled resources, found simple solutions, persisted along a path, and focused on solving the right problem.

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Third, rookies aren't always what they seem. As you might have guessed, our research confirms that rookies listen more, are more likely to ask for help, believe they have a lot more to learn, and learn faster.¹⁹ Our research also found that veterans are more politically savvy, use more intuition, and are more likely to default to past behavior.

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We also found that:

- Rookies have significantly higher levels of self-awareness than veterans, although we often assume they are clueless.
- Rookies seek out expertise more than veterans despite having weaker networks. And, when they do reach out, it is to a surprisingly high number of people.
- Rookies tend to deliver more timely solutions despite having a steeper learning curve.
- Rookies are more attuned to politics (although veterans possess greater political savvy).²¹

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Finally, experience creates dangerous blind spots. Our analysis identified a number of areas where experience created blinders that narrowed the veteran's focus and kept him stuck in a rut. With experience come habits, and once we form a habit our brain stops working.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 27

We live and work in a culture obsessed with youth. Who doesn't want to look young and feel young? But real vibrancy comes from thinking young. Fortunately, no matter how old you are, no matter your level of experience, you can once again begin to think with the acuity and agility of a newcomer and generate new learning every day.

Critical point from @lizwiseman

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 28

1. Backpacker—Because rookies typically have nothing to weigh them down and nothing to lose, they are open to new possibilities, explore new terrain, and act wholeheartedly. Instead of getting stuck in yesterday's best practices, rookies find new practices to fit new realities. This unencumbered and hopeful mindset allows them the freedom to wander and explore new terrain. Rookies operate like Backpackers.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 28

2. Hunter-Gatherer—Because rookies are disoriented and lack know-how, they are forced into a sense-making mode that causes them to pay close attention to their environment and reach out to others for guidance. They scan the area, seek out experts, and return with ideas and resources to address the challenges they face. Instead of bringing one person's expertise to bear on a problem, rookies marshal a network of experts, garnering five times the expertise on average.²⁶ Alert and seeking, these rookies function much like Hunter-Gatherers.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 29

3. Firewalker—Because rookies lack situational confidence, they operate cautiously but quickly in an effort to close a knowledge or a performance gap. They take small, calculated steps, move fast, and seek feedback to stay on track. Because they operate in fast cycles, they build agile, lean organizations. The mindset is cautious and quick. They move like Firewalkers.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 29

4. Pioneer—Because rookies are traversing uncharted and often uncomfortable territory, they improvise and work tirelessly to provide for basic needs. They face a paucity of resources, so they keep things simple and focus on meeting core needs. Their work pushes boundaries as they take ownership and create value for others who follow in their footsteps. The mindset is one of hunger and relentless pursuit. They forge ahead like Pioneers.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 45

Some of the world's greatest feats were accomplished by people not smart enough to know they were impossible. —DOUG LARSON

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 49

Defending the paths of the past can quickly constrain thinking and limit innovation. As one CEO of an Internet start-up warned, "The most lethal person in your organization is the one who thinks he has something to defend."

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 70

Backpackers have nothing to weigh them down and nothing to lose, which opens them to see new possibilities, explore new terrain, and act wholeheartedly. Caretakers have accumulated a track record, a trophy case, and the spoils of success, which cause them to expend their energy maintaining the status quo.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 76

People are pattern seekers. We form beliefs about the world based on our experience. Then we ignore or disregard data that challenges these beliefs and give priority to information that confirms the patterns we think we've seen.

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Without access to disruptive information that threatens their worldview, veterans tend to broadcast their views without adjusting for new information or ideas.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 81

When dropped into a new environment, rookies become disoriented: not terminally confused, but unsettled and somewhat dazed. With much out of focus, they zoom in on the immediate problems, driven to make sense of their surroundings. While many of us might think that newbies are bumbling, clueless clods, we found the opposite to be true—rookies are keenly aware of where they stand and see their deficiencies to a far greater extent than their experienced colleagues (our study showed 2.5 times higher levels of self-awareness in rookies).

Fascinating from @lizwiseman

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 83

That was nearly twenty-five years ago, but I can still tell you what the woman on the bus in Madrid looked like, and that in Munich the bus was blue, the taxi was a light tan Mercedes, and that I stayed at the Holiday Inn on the Hochstrasse. I had been on high alert for five grueling days: I paid close attention to everything. I scanned for navigational clues like a lost sailor and I noticed everyone, especially those who looked like they could help a struggling, novice traveler.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 84

When veterans feel desperate, they tend to close up and confide in a few trusted colleagues (or their smartphones). Under similar circumstances, newcomers, with a heavy dose of humility, reach outward as they scan the environment, seek out experts, and mobilize ideas and resources.

True. From @lizwiseman

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As Epictetus said centuries ago, “It is impossible to begin to learn what one thinks one already knows.”

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 86

In our study, we found that rookies are four times more likely than veterans to ask for help. Steve Jobs, reflecting on his success, pointed to the importance of asking for help throughout his career. In a video interview for the Silicon Valley Historical Association, he said, “Most people don’t get those experiences because they never ask. I’ve never found anybody that didn’t want to help me if I asked them for help. . . . I called up Bill Hewlett when I was a 12-year-old. He lived in Palo Alto, his number was still in the phone book. And he answered the phone himself. He said “yes,” I said, “Hi, I’m Steve Jobs, I’m 12 years old, I’m in high school and I want to build a frequency counter and I was wondering if you had any spare parts I could have,” and he laughed and he gave the spare parts to build this frequency counter, and he gave me a job that summer at Hewlett Packard working on the assembly line putting nuts and bolts together on frequency counters. He got me a job at the place that built them, and I was in heaven. . . . Most people never ask. And that’s what separates sometimes the people that do things from the people that just dream about them.

Huge

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 94

2. Multiply Your Expertise—Build an expert network by seeking expert advice. The next time you are faced with a challenge that falls within your area of expertise, avoid the temptation to jump in. Instead, reach out to at least five other experts with your questions, thus bringing in new expertise to bear on the challenge at hand. Ask the experts and keep asking them until you find new patterns. 3. Reverse the Mentoring—Ask a junior colleague to mentor you. Reverse the learning roles. Instead of offering your insights and expertise to a more junior colleague, find someone younger and less experienced who can mentor you. Allow them to teach you new approaches or technologies and give you insights that reflect your consumer base or employee population.

Love these by @lizwiseman

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 95

Most of us have been taught the basic story: Michelangelo painted this great work while lying on his back for four years supported by a network of scaffolding. When I dug into the history, however, I was rather surprised to learn that the Sistine Chapel was his first fresco and that he didn’t do it alone. The suggestion to commission

Michelangelo for this work was whispered in Pope Julius II's ear by several of Michelangelo's rivals. They knew that Michelangelo favored sculpture and that he had never painted using the fresco technique (painting on a plastered wall while the plaster is still damp, allowing the colors to chemically bond with the plastered walls). They proffered his name in hopes that his rookie project would be a fiasco and that Raphael, who was painting the fresco The School of Athens in a room down the hall from the Sistine, would be summoned to save the project.¹⁰ Michelangelo sought expert help. He collaborated with the learned theologians of the papal court, who suggested themes and ideas that the artist then further refined.¹¹ Aware of his inexperience with fresco, the great artist hired two assistants, each deeply skilled in the technique, who worked alongside him for several weeks until he had mastered the necessary skills. He then continued working essentially solo, with the minimal collaboration of assistants.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 97

Hunter-Gatherers lack the knowledge and expertise they need and are forced into a sense-making mode that causes them to reach out to others for guidance. Local Guides are confident and operate in an environment that they understand, so they stay close to what they know and dole out advice rather than seeking out learning.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 121

Firewalkers lack confidence and operate cautiously but quickly, seeking feedback to calibrate their performance and close the gap. Marathoners feel capable and confident and operate at a steady pace, often forgetting to check in with stakeholders along the way.

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The more you go to your limits, the more your limits will expand. —ROBIN SHARMA

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Pioneers are traversing uncharted and often uncomfortable territory, so they work to survive, improvising and working tirelessly to provide for basic needs. Settlers are in established territory and have access to more resources, so they tend to follow protocols and do what is more comfortable.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 156

2. **Throw Away Your Notes.** Toss out your best practices and develop new practices. The late management thinker C. K. Prahalad was repeatedly ranked as the world's top business professor by the Thinkers50 website. At his memorial in 2010, his wife, Gayatri, revealed that C.K. threw away his teaching notes every semester. When she responded with alarm the first time she saw his precious teaching notes in the rubbish bin, he replied, "My students deserve my best, fresh thinking every time." It is no wonder students at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business lined the halls trying to listen in to his perpetually oversubscribed classes, creating a fire hazard. Try shredding your crib notes, stump speeches, and the other templates that have you stuck in a rut. As you do, you will offer fresh thinking to others while also renewing your mind.

Good challenge

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 160

The Buddha said, “It is better to travel well than to arrive.” A Zen master knows that when it comes to knowledge, the joy is in the mastering, not in being a master. It isn’t always an easy journey, but the sting of learning can be transformed into joyful relearning.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 161

Perpetual Rookie Traits Curious—A strong desire to know something, a thirst for knowledge and understanding, and a hunger to seek out novel experiences. Humble—A belief that we are not elevated over others and a state of mind in which we are teachable and able to understand and learn from everyone around us. Playful—A belief that our work is play, not just bringing play into our work environment. Deliberate—Approaching one’s work with high levels of intentionality, being mindful of what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 162

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.1 —ALVIN TOFFLER

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10 SIGNS YOU ARE READY FOR A NEW CHALLENGE Things are running smoothly. You are consistently getting positive feedback. Your brain doesn’t have to work hard to be successful. You don’t prepare for meetings because you already know the answers. You’ve stopped learning something new every day. You are busy but bored. You’re taking longer showers in the morning and you take your time getting to work. It makes you tired to think you could be doing the same job a year from now. You’ve become increasingly negative and can’t identify why. You’re spending a lot of time trying to fix other people’s problems.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 170

Keep an “I Don’t Know” List. Shane Atchison, CEO of POSSIBLE, a creative agency, maintains a list of “seven things I don’t know.” He says, “Every so often, I sit down and write out a list of things I don’t know and need to understand. This is easily the most important part of my toolkit. Why? Because the list forces me to get out of my own bubble and take a critical look at what’s going on around me. It’s a bit like the old saying, if you don’t admit you have a problem, you’ll never find a solution. A list like this can also help you get out of your ego. . . . It reminds you that Einstein was brilliant, you’re not, and there are important things you need to work on.”

Smart idea

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The Center for Creative Leadership analyzed thirty years’ worth of data in their Lessons of Experience report and found that the optimal formula for workplace learning is a 70-20-10 blend of challenging assignments,

developmental relationships, and coursework and training. This ratio emphasizes the critical role of challenges in the learning process—challenges place us in a position of ignorance. We don't know what we are doing, we are stretched beyond our known limits, and so we learn because we must.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 175

While many corporate training and development programs are anchored in aspiration-based learning, the reality is that we respond better to desperation-based learning.

Exactly the reason the CFL Academy exists

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 176

Push yourself into the discomfort zone by signing up for a job the way a wise parent shops for shoes for preschoolers . . . one size too big. Like oversize shoes, the new role will be initially uncomfortable, but you'll grow into it. If you are in a leadership role, you can supersize a role for someone on your staff. Size it just one (or maybe two) sizes too big, remind them to engage their rookie smarts, and they will grow into it.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 191

In fact, rookies tend to operate at their best working under vigilant, mindful leaders—leaders who give them freedom to explore new possibilities coupled with enough responsibility to propel them up a learning curve.

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When a team is heterogeneous, composed of people of dissimilar backgrounds and experience levels, working together can be harder, but it can also produce better outcomes, especially where creative, cutting-edge thinking is needed.

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Instead of hiring for experience, hire for learning agility. While there are numerous instruments that test for learning agility, the four traits of perpetual rookies are a good guide—curious, humble, playful, and deliberate. These traits both produce and predict the endurance of rookie smarts.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 203

According to Google's human resources chief, Laszlo Bock, the least important hiring criteria is expertise. But at the top of the list are 1) learning ability, 2) leadership (specifically the ability to flow between leadership and followership), and 3) intellectual humility.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 205

As you review candidates in the succession planning process, factor in each candidate's learning agility—are they curious, humble, playful, and deliberate? Look at their job history to see if they have a track record of

success in rookie assignments. If you are considering someone for a job that is more than one size too big, look through his career history to see if he has been successful in other equally oversized jobs. This might be the best predictor of the ability to handle a stretch assignment.

Echos of Patrick Lencioni here.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 205

Learning and Development. Most learning and development professionals understand the power of desperation-based learning: They too have been rookies with little choice but to climb the learning curve. So, why are most formal training programs designed the other way around, in an attempt to inspire comfortable people to get off the couch and go charge an unseen hill? Many organizations have slipped into the cycle approach to development, conducting training consistently at regular intervals (for example, quarterly management classes, annual management meetings, annual development plans). But we don't learn because the calendar says it is time to; we learn when we need to.

Yep, this is how it's done most places

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 206

In my ongoing coaching with executives and in consulting with other executive coaches, I've noticed only a few scenarios where the learning window is likely to be open, the client ready to learn new skills and approaches. I have found that people in the workplace are most open to learning when they are:

- Brand-new to their role
- Facing a daunting challenge
- Coming out of a painful failure or loss
- Returning from an epiphany outside their normal terrain
- At a loss for how to get to the next level in their career

What is common across all these experiences? In each scenario, individuals are working without a script; they've encountered an unprecedented situation. Their expectations have been violated, and their existing scripts and frameworks have failed to work. They are stunned and feeling desperate. In other words, they are in rookie mode. Rookie assignments create learning windows; hence they make good targets for your training and development investments.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 208

Instead of teaching competencies, use training programs as a forum to solve real, high-stakes problems (not case studies or simple action learning). When program participants are given a daunting challenge "above their pay grade," a chance to contribute to something important, and the accountability to deliver a solution immediately, they learn quickly and perform immediately.

Amen @lizwiseman

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 210

Senior leaders also need to be given explicit permission to be rookies themselves: to be uncertain, to learn, and to be vulnerable. When senior leaders embrace rookie assignments, it sets the tone for the rest of the organization. Not only do they enjoy heightened learning and fresh insights themselves, but they also inspire

junior colleagues and, having just sat in the rookie chair, they are now less likely to squelch the contributions of the rookies in the organizations they lead. Give your leaders permission to be learners. Their rookie-mindedness will leave behind footprints for the next generation of leaders.

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