



Rookie Smarts

Why Learning Beats Knowing in the New Game of Work

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Is it possible to be at your best even when you are underqualified or doing something for the first time? Is it still possible, even after decades of experience, to recapture the enthusiasm, curiosity and fearlessness of youth to take on new challenges? With the right mindset you can.

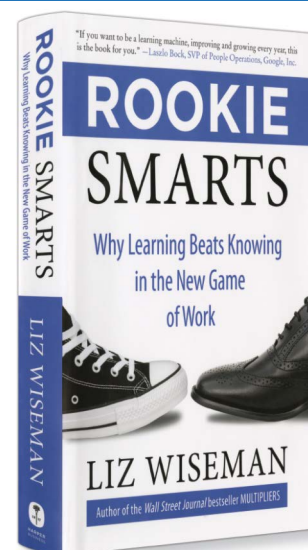
In a rapidly changing world, experience can be a curse. Being new, naive and even clueless can be an asset. For today's knowledge workers, constant learning is more valuable than mastery.

In this essential guide, leadership expert Liz Wiseman explains how to reclaim and cultivate the curious, flexible, youthful mindset called Rookie Smarts. Wiseman reveals the different modes of the rookie mindset that lead to success: Backpacker, Hunter-Gatherer, Firewalker and Pioneer.

Rookie Smarts addresses the questions every experienced professional faces: Will my knowledge and skills become obsolete and irrelevant? How will I keep up? The answer is to stay fresh, keep learning and know when to think like a rookie.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to cultivate a curious, flexible mindset.
- How rookie and veteran talent can form powerful teams.
- The four modes of the rookie mindset that lead to success.
- How to be at your best when doing something for the first time.



by Liz Wiseman

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: ROOKIE SMARTS

by Liz Wiseman

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Rookie Smarts: Why Learning Beats Knowing in the New Game of Work by Liz Wiseman. Copyright © 2014 by Liz Wiseman. Summarized with permission of the publisher, HarperCollins Publishers. 290 pages, \$28.99, ISBN: 978-0-06-232263-0.

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Introduction

Sometimes not knowing is more valuable than knowing. A certain genius gets sparked in our rookie state, and a learner's advantage kicks in.

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 called "Rookie Smarts."

Sometimes a young professional has been given the chance to hit above his weight class. Other times an executive has taken on a new assignment outside her area of expertise. Once out of their comfort zones, these rookies experience a sense of challenge and exhilaration. Whether the rookie is a new college grad or a seasoned executive, behind them you will likely find a manager who took a risk and bet on their ability to learn quickly.

In other organizations, driven people can be seen idling away at a job they've been doing for years. They confess that they've become stale in their jobs, working well past their sell-by date. They feel themselves wasting away, anxious that their hard-earned knowledge and skills will become obsolete, wondering if they will be fit to work anywhere else.

While experience provides a distinct advantage in a stable field — like the realms of bridge building, ballet or concert piano performance — it can actually impede progress in an unstable or rapidly evolving arena. 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.

Fortunately, even the most experienced professionals and organizations can tap into their rookie smarts. Those who choose to live and work on a learning curve will experience greater vitality in their careers and will be well positioned in the new game of work. ●

PART I: ROOKIE SMARTS LIVING ON THE LEARNING CURVE

The Rise of the Rookie

Rookies are more capable than we might expect. We often see it on the athletic field, but it also plays out in the halls of the workplace. Research suggests that, in many cases, inexperience can work to your advantage: It can spark a dazzling performance and help you compete with, if not surpass, even the most talented, experienced players. Not only does inexperience confer an advantage, but also it is desperately needed in today's rapidly evolving world of work.

The Research on Rookies

My team of researchers studied almost 400 workplace scenarios, comparing how rookies versus veterans tackled work assignments. We defined a rookie as someone who had never done that type of work and a veteran as someone who had previous experience with that type of work — both regardless of their age. Our work yielded four major, surprising observations.

First, rookies are strong performers. Rookies consistently outperformed veterans in innovation and time to completion.

Second, rookies have a unique success profile. The highest-performing rookies sought out expertise in others, connected the dots, experimented, learned from



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Published by Soundview Executive Book Summaries® (ISSN 0747-2196), 511 School House Road., Suite 300, Kennett Square, PA 19348 USA, a division of Concentrated Knowledge Corp. Published monthly. Subscriptions starting at \$99 per year. Copyright © 2014 by Soundview Executive Book Summaries®. **Available formats:** Summaries are available in several digital formats. To subscribe, call us at 1-800-SUMMARY (240-912-7513 outside the United States), or order online at www.summary.com. Multiple-subscription discounts and corporate site licenses are also available.

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mistakes, and focused on making incremental gains. Conversely, the top-performing veterans were fast to act, marshaled resources, found simple solutions, persisted along a path, and focused on solving the right problem.

Third, rookies aren't always what they seem.

While we might think of rookies as clueless and bumbling, in actuality, rookies listen more, are more likely to ask for help, believe they have a lot more to learn and learn faster. And while we might think of rookies as bold risk-takers, the research showed that rookies actually work more cautiously, biting off smaller pieces and checking in frequently with stakeholders to minimize risk.

Finally, experience creates dangerous blind spots.

With experience come habits, and once we form a habit, our brain stops working. As we build (and come to rely on) experience, we also become desensitized to the world around us. As we climb to the top of the learning curve, we also tend to stop seeking feedback. We also stop exploring new domains and paths. With experience inevitably comes bad experiences. While these quickly scar over, we often dismiss ideas and ventures that might reopen these wounds.

The Rookie Smart Mindset

You can start drinking from an intellectual fountain of youth by putting yourself into the rookie smarts mindset, which is characterized by four distinct modes: Backpacker, Hunter-Gatherer, Firewalker and Pioneer. Each mode is a component of how we tend to think and act when we are in a rookie assignment: doing something for the first time.

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. The mindset is *unencumbered*. In contrast, veterans can too easily act as Caretakers. Having accumulated a track record, a trophy case and the spoils of success, they maintain the status quo. The mindset is *protecting*.

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. The mindset is *alert and seeking*. In contrast, because veterans are often confident that they understand their environment, they don't seek new information. They act like Local Guides who stay close to what they know, doling out advice rather than seeking out learning. The mindset is *advising*.

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. The mindset is *cautious and quick*. In contrast, because veterans feel capable, they tend to operate like Marathoners running the long race. It is a mindset of *staying steady, pacing oneself and plodding along*, assuming one is still doing a great job.

4. Pioneer: Because rookies are traversing uncharted and often uncomfortable territory, they improvise and work tirelessly to provide for basic 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*. In contrast, because veterans are well established and have access to more resources, they tend to behave like Settlers and put down roots. Having already established themselves, they stay in their comfort zone, follow protocols and rely on what's available. The mindset is one of *comfort and consumption*.

The Perpetual Rookie

Learning how to pivot between savvy veteran in some situations to rookie in others gives you the agility and helps you innovate and stay relevant. For example, if you are beginning a new product development cycle, you might invoke your rookie smarts by talking to outside experts, asking the naive questions, and carefully orchestrating a quick experiment to test the viability of bold ideas. However, if your project team is floundering, dead in the murky waters of corporate bureaucracy, you might toggle to your veteran savvy — what veterans are capable of contributing when they are at their best — helping the team clarify their goals, simplifying their approach, and connecting them to the people inside the organization who can speed their progress.

When the world is changing fast, you want a rookie on the job. Not just any rookie — you want someone with rookie smarts. You want someone who can free herself from the past, mobilize the expertise of others, operate cautiously but quickly and then forge ahead into new territory. In short, you want someone who can learn. ●

Backpackers: An Unencumbered Mind

Too often our managers become burdened by yesterday's ideas, today's resources and the expectations for continued performance tomorrow. Instead of using their success as a launching pad, they become anchored in place, guarding and protecting the status quo.

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The Backpacker's Way

The rookie has an unencumbered mind that allows him to question the establishment and a hopeful mindset that allows him to see new possibilities.

Practice 1: See New Possibilities. Like a hiker who trudges obliviously past a snake lying quietly in the brush, rookies simply walk past the obstacles they don't see. And because they don't know what they are supposed to be looking for, they can end up seeing what others fail to notice. How do rookies identify new possibilities? They ask fundamental questions, see new patterns and find mistakes.

- **Ask the Fundamental Questions.** Newcomers, without the weight of knowledge, ritual and rule to constrain their thinking, often ask questions that cut to the core of an issue. It isn't that experienced people don't recognize problems. But the longer we live with a problem, the less likely we are to think we can do anything about it. People fresh to a problem haven't convinced themselves that they can't solve it.
- **See New Patterns and Find the Mistakes.** When we have identified a pattern, it becomes difficult to ignore the pattern and to see what actually exists. We fill in the blanks, mentally forcing reality to conform to the pattern we expect to see. Fundamental errors can go undetected by those with mastery. On the other hand, novices can find mistakes and logical flaws in conventional wisdom. Their lack of pattern recognition also accelerates and fortifies their learning since our brains retain what they work harder to obtain.

Practice 2: Explore New Terrain. It is difficult to escape the gravitational pull of comfortable competence. But when we have not yet developed a body of expertise, we are free to explore new terrain and find new paths.

- **Take Shorter Paths.** Freed from convention and protocol, neophytes find simple patterns and direct paths.
- **Make Bigger Asks.** Not knowing perceived limits enables rookies to score more often, and it also allows them to score bigger gains.
- **Act Erratically.** Without a preestablished pattern, rookies can act erratically, which can confuse those with mastery and catch them off guard.

Practice 3: Act Wholeheartedly. Without reputation, rookies can operate without ego or fear of falling. They have nothing to lose and nowhere to go but up, which spurs them to act boldly and reach higher.

- **Act Boldly and Recover Quickly.** Bold action brings mistakes and necessitates the courage to recover quickly.
- **Work Passionately.** Working wholeheartedly — without reservation, without exception, without

limitation — is at the very core of our humanity.

Through full engagement we find deep meaning in our work and serve beyond self.

The unencumbered Backpacker can venture out, but the rookie's naivete prevents him from wandering aimlessly. Aware of his own lack of knowledge, the rookie embarks on a desperate, focused, diligent search, hunting for experts who can teach him and guide his way. ●

Hunter-Gatherers: Finding Expertise

The *echo chamber* is a pervasive disease of our time. This term captures our tendency to customize and configure our environment so that we only hear and see our own thoughts and beliefs echoed back to us.

Veterans, brimming with opinions formed by years of experience, can insulate themselves in this echo chamber and begin acting like small-town locals — old codgers sitting around Joe Bob's coffee shop, having the same conversation they've been having for the last 20 years. Their opinions are predictable, their observations routine. In this mode, we are confident that we understand our surroundings, and we stop asking questions and seeking guidance. Old ideas and opinions reign supreme, while new ideas and information bounce off the walls.

The Hunter-Gatherer's Way

In a hunter-gatherer system, the focus is outward, venturing forth, harvesting game and foraging for resources to bring back to the tribe. Rookies work in Hunter-Gatherer mode because they have no existing resources or expertise to tend to or rely on. Here's what rookies do when operating in Hunter-Gatherer mode:

Practice 1: Scan the Environment. Sense making, or rapidly converting information into intelligence, begins with gathering data. Rookies are sense-making machines. Whether they are connecting the dots between data points or connecting with colleagues across a company, their value comes in their outward orientation. And, in this hungry search for much-needed knowledge, they seek out experts to teach and guide them.

Practice 2: Seek Out Experts. Rookies are four times more likely than veterans to ask for help. With little to lose and everything to gain, rookies seek help and reach out to experts who can guide them and augment their deficits. In addition to reaching out more often, when they do reach out, they reach out to far more people — five times as many on average. When you ask one veteran, you get one expert. When you ask a smart rookie, you gain access to a team of experts.

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Practice 3: Mobilize Ideas and Resources. The best rookies seek out and marshal expertise and bring back their newfound network, like a big-game hunting prize to feed their community. In complex environments, winning organizations tap into the greatest number of brains. Crowdsourcing is growing as a viable and efficient alternative to in-house or expert-led solutions to complex problems. Perhaps it is a flash mob of talent, mobilized around an immediate challenge, which then dissipates when the problem is solved. But these talent pools can extend beyond simple crowdsourcing to form lasting learning communities. ●

Firewalkers: Moving Cautiously but Quickly

Understanding the physics behind walking on fire unlocks one of the keys to those with rookie smarts. They move like firewalkers: both cautious and quick. How can a lack of experience actually help someone take bold action without getting burned?

The rookie's reality consists of a glaring, gaping hole between what they've previously done and what they must now do. They don't necessarily lack self-confidence. What they do lack is situational confidence — the easy assurance that you've successfully completed a similar task in the past. Consequently, the rookie feels anxious, uncertain of his footing and eager to prove himself.

The rookie's anxiety is not of the clinical variety that causes people to shut down; rather it is a productive paranoia, an urge to break out of one's comfort zone, to join a new peer group, to move to the next level of performance. Our study revealed that people in rookie situations were twice as likely to feel pressure to impress their coworkers than in situations in which they were more experienced. They also reported feeling more pressure to impress their bosses in these rookie situations. Yet, counterintuitively, employees were more likely to feel a debilitating sense of pressure in situations in which they had more experience. In other words, pressure to perform propels rookies forward while the same sort of pressure impedes progress for veterans.

The Firewalker's Way

Anxious to establish themselves as productive members of a peer group, top-performing newcomers propel themselves forward through iterative cycles of experimentation while learning to stay deeply connected to their stake-

holders. In their mad dash to advance, the top-performing newcomers tend to take small steps, move quickly, and seek feedback and coaching.

Practice 1: Take Small, Calculated Steps. The newcomer is operating in the dark, so she minimizes risk by taking small steps. Rookies use every available sense to navigate their way through an unfamiliar environment. They maintain close contact with their surroundings to avoid unanticipated obstacles and calibrate their movements in order to mitigate the risk associated with exploring new territory. Rookies aren't big risk takers. They only act boldly when they don't realize they are acting boldly. They take risk out of a venture with their small steps and continual feedback loops. Once they realize how clueless they actually are, rookies become risk-mitigating machines.

Practice 2: Deliver Quickly. Instead of pacing themselves for a long, slow race, rookies tend to operate in bursts and often at full throttle. Despite, or perhaps because of their speed, rookies can quickly get off track. Just because they solve problems quickly doesn't mean that they are good at figuring out which problems are the most important. Knowing they are highly motivated to move fast, a wise manager will make sure the rookie is pointed in the right direction before the starting gun goes off.

Practice 3: Seek Feedback and Coaching. Moving cautiously but quickly in unfamiliar terrain, rookies require constant feedback to know if they are on track. Because rookies seek frequent feedback, they regularly receive vital information that helps them quickly learn and calibrate their performance. As they adjust, their adaptability invites the coaching that so naturally follows feedback.

Smart managers need to make sure rookies have a regular stream of feedback and information to help them calibrate their performance and the connection points to stay on track. And, if experienced managers are truly smart, they will ensure that they, too, are receiving the same sorts of feedback to help them optimize their own performance.

Because rookies lack confidence, they operate cautiously but they also operate quickly, seeking to close the knowledge gap. Through feedback, they rapidly convert information into intelligence.

You don't need to walk on coals to develop a Firewalker's mindset. You simply need to move closer to the heat in whatever venture you are pursuing and begin to take well-considered risks. And if you fail fast, make sure you learn faster. ●

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Pioneers: Forging Ahead

Like pioneers, rookies build paths through new territory every day, whereas veterans tend to stay where it is comfortable and settle in. For too many wizened workplace veterans, work becomes the equivalent of ordering a hamburger at every new restaurant we try. Once comfortable and consuming the fruits of previous labor, we can slip into a mode of behavior where we rely on what's available, follow protocol and stay in a comfort zone.

The Pioneer Way

Rookies are willing to tolerate discomfort and evince a relentless drive to tame the wilderness and survive. In our research, we've found that those who are new to a situation or type of work tend to build new tools and structures, improvise and work relentlessly.

Practice 1: Build New Tools and Structures. How does working in "survival mode" focus your energy and attention? We learn because we have to. Out in the field, in the moment, we must improvise and adapt to ever-changing conditions in order to survive.

Practice 2: Improvise. We found that those new to a task were twice as likely to believe they didn't have the resources or skills they needed. So they have to get scrappy and make do with the resources they can scrounge up. Rookies are improvisers and imperfectionists.

When faced with constraints, we improvise. We get creative. Improvisation can lead to discovery and land us in new places.

Practice 3: Work Relentlessly. Perhaps the most motivated are those who lack another choice. For example, when the boss has already hired a backfill for our former job, we have no choice but to push forward. There are several conditions that cause newcomers, facing large gaps in their knowledge and capability, to move forward with urgency, working relentlessly along the way.

1. Basic needs are not yet met. When we are on the bottom rung of the ladder, and when that rung is mostly underwater, we are propelled to climb.

2. New player. When we are the new guys on a team, we are highly motivated to establish ourselves as players.

3. Public scrutiny. When all eyes are on us, retreat can equal failure. ●

PART II: CULTIVATING ROOKIE SMARTS

The Perpetual Rookie

Perpetual rookies are leaders who, despite years of experience and success, maintain a rookie mindset. They

stay amazed — curious, humble and fun-loving. Instead of clinging to a false sense of mastery, they live and work perpetually on the steep side of the learning curve. These leaders aren't just rookies by circumstance; they are rookies by choice and through deliberate practice. It is a choice available to each of us.

Curious. Most researchers agree that curiosity is an innate, basic emotion that can be nevertheless easily extinguished by habit, routine and other life experiences. Once lost, how do we rediscover our innate curiosity? By breaking habits and thrusting ourselves into new and unfamiliar circumstances where our assumptions are challenged and our senses can be overloaded.

Humble. The first step to learning is accepting that we don't know everything. When we recognize our own limitations, we seek guidance and remain open to correction. Humility, without regard for expertise or position, allows for the development of coachability and teachability. In fast times, everyone is winging it — even the leaders at the top. But amazing things can happen when we admit that we don't know.

Playful. If mastery requires deliberate practice, being a perpetual rookie requires purposeful play. When our work is play, time flies and we stick with it. We forgive mistakes, improvise and learn. We invite others to join the fun. This levity effect lightens our load as we climb an arduous learning curve.

Deliberate. Perpetual rookies are also deliberate; they approach their work with a great deal of intentionality. They are likely to be mindful of what they are doing and how they will do it. They don't jump in impulsively or erratically; instead they deliberately adopt an open mindset. The real skill of the perpetual rookie is knowing when to play the role of veteran and when to don the rookie cloak. In times of tumult and transition the best leaders know when it is time to stop, unlearn and relearn. ●

Rookie Revival

What does it take to rouse us from the comforts of convention, from the boredom and complacency and downright unhappiness that so many professionals experience?

In surveying approximately 1,000 professionals, we found a strong correlation between "challenge level" at work and "satisfaction level" at work. As the challenge level goes up, so does satisfaction. Unfortunately, job satisfaction plummets for those shielded from real challenge.

Taking on more work can be exhausting, and yet, ironically, the antidote to this strain of burnout isn't *less* work.

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The cure for burnout is *harder* work. The escape from a mountain of work is not *through*, but *up* — up the learning curve, that is. It is in these moments, when we start working our intellectual “muscles” again, that we feel the most engaged.

Learning to Relearn

Here are some strategies for planning your own climb on new terrains. First, change your mindset: Shift from the certainty of leadership to the uncertainty of learnership. Second, change your venue: Place yourself in a situation that demands rookie thinking and behavior. Finally, pace yourself.

1. Shift from Leader to Learner. Psychologists use the term “confirmation bias” to capture the tendency of people to favor information that supports their preexisting beliefs or hypotheses. One reason we are susceptible to confirmation bias is that once we are deemed experts, once we are in a position of power, the costs of being wrong can feel dangerously high. Another reason we accept information that supports our preexisting beliefs is that doing so often appears to be the shortest, most direct route between where we are and where we’d like to be. To defeat the blinders of confirmation bias, we need to shift our sights: Instead of looking down from our position of leadership, we need to begin looking outward and upward.

2. Step into a Discomfort Zone. When we leave our comfort zones, we become more likely to encounter what cognitive scientists call “expectation failure.” These are situations when we expect one thing to happen but are surprised when something else takes place. When things work as we expect them to, we begin to assemble mental scripts that explain the world around us. These scripts help us predict the outcomes of our actions while at the same time limiting our thinking. It is easy to become boxed in by our scripts. But when we are in an unfamiliar situation and things don’t work the way we expect them to, our scripts fail. Without a way to explain events, we are motivated to seek and find new explanations — we are motivated to learn.

3. Take Small Steps. When the gap is too big, we break. We may simply give up, or we may even be forced out. Those who master the learning curve, on the other hand, have sized the gap just right by taking on challenges that are uncomfortable but not impossible to achieve. As we take small steps, we build our capacity to climb up steeper, higher paths.

Aspiring perpetual rookies must continually guard against routines. The very rituals that rejuvenate us, at some point become the habits that bind us. In your

pursuit of renewal, break routines, change rituals and be skeptical of dogma. Maintaining our rookie smarts is like maintaining a house or your health — it is never done. ●

The Rookie Organization

Rookies are more capable than most people imagine. A manager at eBay remarked, “I had thought that people who were new to the work were empty and I needed to fill them up. But they come whole and full, just like any other collaboration.” Still, rookies need leadership and guidance. 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. Rookies need managers who know when to rein them in and when to unleash them, and they need to be placed in an environment conducive to learning and insight. Here are three ways vigilant leaders can maximize the contributions of their rookie talent:

1. Freedom with Direction. To provide clear direction, do the obvious — clarify what needs to be accomplished and why it’s important. Set the guardrails and criteria for completeness of solution. But remember to also direct them to the experts who can provide guidance. You can help activate the Hunter-Gatherer mode by providing a set of contacts, making introductions, and even challenging them to consult with at least five experts. Once you’ve given clear guidance on what, why and who, let them figure out how.

2. A Constructive Challenge. Offer stretch goals, but don’t overwhelm rookies. When someone is in a rookie assignment, err on the side of making the first challenge doable — make it a constructive “micro-challenge,” one with enough tension to create movement and with just the right mix of relevance, difficulty and opportunity for recognition. When leaders offer a right-size challenge, people contribute quickly, build confidence and are ready for bigger challenges.

Along with a micro-challenge, rookies need micro-feedback — a steady stream of information to help them correct course and stay on track. The best feedback comes in small doses and quick bursts. It is typically delivered in drive-by fashion rather than in formal meetings.

3. A Tightrope with a Safety Net. When people are working above their current skill level, with real responsibility and visibility, they are essentially walking on a tightrope. Veteran leaders and mentors must not only place the rookie up on the tightrope; they must also be there

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to catch them when they fall. In establishing a safety net, remember that:

1) the best safety nets aren't managers, but rather senior colleagues and project managers (who oversee the client engagements rather than directly manage staff).

2) the safety net should be positioned as a service, a benefit to which an employee is entitled, rather than a punishment.

3) managers should have a large enough span of control that they can offer meaningful coaching and mentoring but not enough time to micromanage their junior talent.

4) when someone is a complete rookie, the rope may be set low and the net set high. But as rookies gain experience and have success, the manager can raise the rope and lower the net without rookies even knowing the parameters have changed.

The rookie holds an equal if not greater obligation. Rookies need to be willing to work outside their comfort zones, ask for help and learn quickly. They also need to let their management know when they are ready for a stretch assignment. Despite these expectations for rookies, managers don't need to wait for someone to declare their readiness. Sometimes people just need a push.

Building Powerful Teams

Not only are rookies capable of doing amazing work themselves; they are frequently the critical spark that ignites a team of veterans. Often the combinations of rookies working in tandem with veterans is what produces truly spectacular results. Here are four configurations that have the potential to produce stellar results.

The Ground and the Spark. In this power duo, the veteran typically brings clarity, gravitas of purpose and a ground to reality. The rookie brings new energy and determination.

The Talent Scout and the New Talent. In this power duo, the rookie brings novel ideas and an innovative approach, while the veteran sees and champions the promise and potential in their work.

The Advisor and the Entrepreneur. One of the most powerful talent configurations in technology and innovation-driven organizations is the partnership between the rookie entrepreneur and the veteran business adviser. The rookie brings new ideas and technologies that have the potential to disrupt an entire industry. The veterans typically open up their business networks, creating rich terrain for rookies in Hunter-Gatherer mode. Veteran business leaders provide critical advice and words of cau-

tion. To generate a big impact, pair someone who wants to change the world with someone who already knows how the world works.

A Hetero-Genius Team. When a team is 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. When the distinct talents of both the veteran and the rookie are appreciated, the tension between their disparate contributions sparks collective brilliance. When either is dismissed, the tension dissipates into frictional loss.

Rethinking Talent Management

Adjust your talent management practices to keep the entire organization agile and in a state of constructive challenge. For example:

Hiring — Hire for traits shared by perpetual rookies, such as curiosity, humility, playfulness, and deliberateness.

Job design and succession planning — Design jobs so that each job has a rookie component, rotate talent to keep it fresh, and, when considering a candidate for promotion, look for a history of success in rookie assignments.

Learning and development — Target your development investments when people are in rookie assignments and are most open to learning.

Rookie smarts isn't an age or an experience level; it is a state of mind — one that is available to those willing to unlearn and relearn. It is also a choice. As the world of work speeds up, we can either slow down and get left behind, or we can quicken our step and keep up. It is a choice between the dull ache of stagnation and the short-lived discomfort of unlearning what has worked for us in the past, and then relearning what we need to know now.

In the new world of work, the game will go to the learners. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Rookie Smarts*, you'll also like:

1. ***Multipliers* by Liz Wiseman, Greg McKeown.** Learn how to become a multiplier of talent and people.
2. ***The 2020 Workplace* by Jeanne C. Meister, Karie Willyerd.** By 2020 employers will be challenged to manage employees who have vastly different values, beliefs and expectations. Here is a functional guide that can help.
3. ***The Inclusion Breakthrough* by Frederick A. Miller, Judith H. Katz.** Miller and Katz explain how to make diversity a central and profitable part of an organization's strategy.