



soundview

Executive Book Summaries®

Stretch

How to Future-Proof Yourself for Tomorrow's Workplace

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

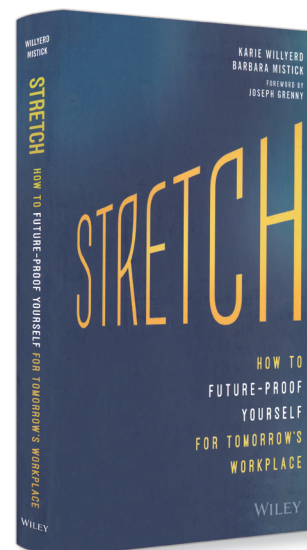
You know you can do more with your career. And the future is going to demand more of you. The problem is you are so busy keeping up with the day-to-day that you can't prepare for tomorrow. *Stretch: How to Future-Proof Yourself for Tomorrow's Workplace* gives you the confidence and knowledge you need to achieve your goals in an ever-changing world. Karie Willyerd and Barbara Mistick — established experts and the collective winners of dozens of awards in the field of personal development and learning — offer evidence-based guidance on obtaining the skills you will need to thrive in tomorrow's workplace.

Stretch offers advice, valuable insights, anecdotes and recommendations to make achieving your goals practical and within reach. To remain relevant in spite of change, you need to know how to learn in any situation, open your thinking to a world beyond where you are now, connect to the people who can help you make your future happen, seek experiences that will prepare you for tomorrow and stay motivated through the ups and downs of a career so you can bounce forward.

Stretch offers five practices to help you start, enhance and lengthen your career by anticipating the needs of tomorrow's work environment. Don't become obsolete. Instead, stretch to achieve your potential.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The global megatrends that will affect your future.
- The three stretch imperatives and the five practices that will allow you to fulfill those imperatives.
- The top 10 capabilities you will need for the future.



by Karie Willyerd
and Barbara Mistick

CONTENTS

The Stretch Imperative
Page 2

Learn on the Fly
Page 3

Be Open
Page 4

Build a Diverse Network
Page 5

Be Greedy About Experiences
Page 6

Bounce Forward
Page 7

Stretch Into Your Future
Page 7

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: STRETCH

by Karie Willyerd and Barbara Mistick

The authors: Karie Willyerd is the Workplace Futurist for SuccessFactors, an SAP company. Her articles appear regularly in *Harvard Business Review*. She is the co-author of *The 2020 Workplace*. Barbara Mistick is the President of Wilson College. Her public-service advocacy on behalf of entrepreneurs has won numerous awards from the U.S. Small Business Administration, Ernst and Young and The Girl Scouts of America. *Stretch: How to Future-Proof Yourself for Tomorrow's Workplace* by Karie Willyerd and Barbara Mistick. Copyright © 2016 by Karie Willyerd and Barbara Mistick. Summarized by permission of the publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 272 pages, \$26, ISBN: 978-1-11908-725-2. Summary copyright © 2016 by Soundview Executive Books Summaries ® www.summary.com, 1-800-SUMMARY.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

The Stretch Imperative

Gallup reports that the majority of us are disengaged at work. And as people live and therefore work longer lives, it becomes necessary to reshape the identities we formed in our careers. The future beckons. Will you remain one of the 70 percent of the disengaged zombies at work? Are you facing obsolescence? Instead, what if the life you are living is your bucket list, and all you want is to ensure that you get to live more of the life you have, work and all?

It's time to stretch, to prepare for tomorrow's workplace and put yourself in control of the career of your dreams.

Megatrends That Will Affect Your Future

In order to point ourselves in the right direction, first we need an idea of where we are going. Here are seven megatrends that will certainly have an impact on the types of jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and skills needed for workers in the future.

Globalization. McKinsey estimates that half of the world's largest companies will be headquartered in what are now emerging markets, such as Brazil, India and eastern European countries. Pressure from global competition and other factors resulted in over 40 percent of the companies that were in the Fortune 500 in 2000 falling off the list by 2010. These were replaced largely by new global entrants and technology companies. The types of jobs most affected by globalization will be ones that can be done anywhere in the world and shipped over the Internet. We are all interconnected.

Demographics Shifts. In many economies around the world, advances in healthcare and declining birth rates have resulted in a population that is graying and a workforce that is shrinking. Diversity is also on an uptick. An increasingly diverse workforce will demand more representation in leadership positions and in pay equity.

Explosion of Data. Experts estimate that from 2009 to 2020, data will grow 4300 percent. Organizations that can mine this data to reveal customer trends will lead the markets of the future. No matter what field you are in, the interface with data and machines will increasingly become a factor.

Emerging Technologies. In April of 2015, the first driverless car to cross the United States arrived at its destination in Manhattan after nine days. With 3D printing, manufacturing will move from being a subtractive process to an additive one, where objects are built in layers by printing rather than by machining a block of material. How soon will you interact with a robot providing customer service? The answer may be sooner than you think.

Climate Change. The OECD anticipates that by 2050, more than 40 percent of the world's population will live under severe water stress, resulting in floods or drought that, combined, can put the economic value of assets at risk at record highs. Becoming efficient with resources is socially responsible and cost beneficial.

Redefined Jobs. The nature of work is going to be increasingly a transactional task exchange, which is to say, those with in-demand skills will be hired to accomplish one specific project, rather than given a full-time position.

Complexity. At the organizational level, complexity multiplies with layers upon layers of government regulations, in multiple countries, combined with requirements



1-800-SUMMARY
service@summary.com

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.

Published by Soundview Executive Book Summaries® (ISSN 0747-2196), 511 School House Road., Suite 300, Kennett Square, PA 19348 USA. Published monthly. Subscriptions starting at \$99 per year. Copyright © 2016 by Soundview, Inc. **Available formats:** Summaries are available in several digital formats. To subscribe, call us at

Rebecca S. Clement, Publisher; Sarah T. Dayton, Editor in Chief; Ashleigh Imus, Senior Editor; Masiel Tejada, Graphic Designer; A. Imus, Contributing Editor

SUMMARY: STRETCH

from customers with their own unique specifications. At the individual level, the need to master this complexity and balance competing demands is also on the increase. Stanford researchers identified a number of stressors that affect overall health and wellness for employees, including long hours, job insecurity, extraordinary job demands, work-family conflict, unfair work situations and others.

Studies agree resoundingly that these megatrends are forging the working landscape of the future. The question is not whether you have a sell-by date. You do. The real question is what you are doing to extend that date.

The Stretch Imperatives

Three themes represent the realities of today's workplace. They are called the Stretch Imperatives.

Stretch Imperative 1: It's All on You. Not only is your engagement all on you, but your development is too. Research shows that the number one attribute executives value in employees is a high degree of education and qualification. Yet fewer than one-third reported that their companies offered incentives or benefits related to obtaining more education, whether it was degree-oriented or job-specific.

Stretch Imperative 2: You Need Options. Even if you have a defined career path at your company, you may not be willing to follow that prescribed plan. You need options in order to maximize your personal development.

Stretch Imperative 3: You Have Dreams. Survey respondents and interview subjects shared hopes and aspirations for building their careers now to achieve loftier goals in the future. That might be bigger and more significant roles at your company or another one, or it might mean starting your own business. You want more for yourself and your family, and you are willing to take the steps to be career-ready.

There are five practices that people who stretch to their potential employ. The five practices connect to the Stretch Imperatives.

- Since the first Stretch Imperative confirms that it's all on you, you must be able to learn on the fly in any situation and open your thinking to a world beyond where you are now.
- Because you need options, the practices included in the second imperative will help you connect to the people who can help you make your future happen and seek experiences that will prepare you for tomorrow.
- Finally, to ensure you are able to fulfill your dreams, as cited in the third imperative, we offer some motivational strategies to bounce forward and stay motivated through the ups and downs of a career.

These five practices form the foundation for supporting your ability to reach your career goals and to be resilient and prepared for a future you have yet to envision. ●

PART II: IT'S ALL ON YOU

Learn on the Fly

To avoid becoming obsolete, you must continue to learn and not just in a classroom or in other formal learning settings. In a sense, we must all learn a living because, as people said repeatedly in interviews, "It's on me to develop myself." You must learn on the job, often "on the fly" if you are to have any hope of keeping up.

Strategies for Learning on the Fly

Here are some strategies to help you become more adept at learning on the fly.

Adopt a Growth Mindset. The first strategy to learn on the fly is to commit to a mindset that you have the capacity to learn and grow. According to author Carol Dweck, a person with a growth mindset believes that true potential is "unknown and unknowable because it is impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil and training." People with a growth mindset, Dweck asserts, "don't just seek challenge, they thrive on it. The bigger the challenge, the more they stretch." With a growth mindset, opportunities to learn will abound and you will find yourself more open to new experiences, and you will be more likely to achieve the skill improvement and professional development goals you set for yourself.

Cultivate Curiosity. Committing to a learning mindset and observing in the moment are stronger when followed up with curiosity about why. Curiosity helps us avoid complacency and disengagement. Since we all work from a set of unconscious rules we have acquired from our experiences, asking "Why?" with a sense of curiosity can help bring the unconscious rules to the conscious level.

Know When to Unlearn. EMC, the IT storage company, reports that by 2020 there will be more data bits available now than there are stars in the universe. If you considered just the knowledge you need to absorb in your field, the amount of content is beyond what any one individual can absorb in a lifetime, and also facts change. The half-life of facts is changing constantly and differs between fields, but what you learned in school or on the

SUMMARY: STRETCH

job might actually now be wrong or outdated. We have to be able to rapidly unlearn as well as learn new things.

Expect to be frustrated when you are unlearning, as that is a natural part of the process. Feeling like you are back to ground zero is the uncomfortable phase you have to go through when unlearning. Having your career goals in mind makes it worth the effort to push through.

What Organizations and Managers Can Do

Forward-thinking organizations can provide an environment that makes it easier for their employees to learn on the job and to fulfill their potential.

Create On-Boarding Success Maps for All Transitions. Help employees consider all the new things they will need to learn and know in any new role. Good on-boarding or transition plans can encourage learning on the job by defining early on what the employee will need to learn, from whom they can learn it and then encouraging those connections.

Curate Learning Options for Employees. LinkedIn helps their own employees sift through their ample corporate learning offerings by giving them a variety of lenses with which to cull resources. Not only do they have their training or knowledge resources sorted by functional categories and topic areas, but they also use a tool to ask employees, “How would you like to transform?” Through a series of questions, the system refines suggestions for the employee. As they drill into the specific expertise area, a limited set of curated items are available, including online courses, downloadable books, links to TED talks, articles, Lynda.com training resources or executive videos. ●

Be Open

As the first Stretch Imperative tells us, it’s all on you, so you must be able to consider many possibilities to progress in your career. You don’t want to become stuck in a view of the world that limits your possibilities, even if that worldview has been successful in the past.

Preparing for a changing future requires that you allow yourself to be open to options you may have rejected in the past or to approaches you find uncomfortable at first. Career growth demands adaptation.

Stretch Strategies to Be Open

The following strategies can help you recognize when there might be opportunities to develop, career shortcuts to take or new options to open your career journey.

Consider Yourself a Lean Startup. Successful entrepreneurs start with an idea and adjust as they learn

what people respond to. The least successful entrepreneurs are the ones who never test new ideas and, instead, remain steadfast on their current track. Thinking of yourself as if you were a lean startup means that you generate and engage the ideas of where you want your career to go, put some of them into play and test whether those ideas are working. Adapt accordingly. Just like Silicon Valley startups, by doing your due diligence, you are increasing the odds that your time and money will pay off.

Develop Drone Abilities. In spite of all the controversy around drones, there are some useful analogies that can help you to remain open to job and career development opportunities. You may be a person who tends to see the big picture and operate at a high level, or you may build the big picture by aggregating the details. Rotating between the two views can help achieve the most comprehensive understanding of options and possibilities. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author and Harvard professor, calls this zooming in and zooming out. Every decision lies in a broader context. No matter how tempting a promotion may seem, if you step back to a higher level and look at, for example, your industry, is it in trouble? Would taking the promotion make you feel obligated to the company at a time when you may have more options if you left your industry?

Seek Feedback. The search for genuine feedback becomes more and more your own responsibility over the course of a career, so it’s good to start early. When you are receiving feedback, it’s best to switch to a listening and recording mode, so that you can write down both the positive feedback you receive along with the critical information. It’s important not to react to criticism. Instead, try taking a reflective stance and thank the person giving the criticism.

What Organizations and Managers Can Do

It’s important that organizations support employees in remaining open to all their career options and to the feedback that will help them grow. The good news is that some of the most effective strategies that follow are not expensive or time-consuming. Simple cultural choices and management practices have yielded big financial results for organizations.

Create a Development Culture. Robert Kegan and his colleagues have spent hundreds of hours observing organizations that they refer to as Deliberately Developmental Organizations (DDOs). One of those is Decurion, a privately held company operating businesses such as ArcLight Cinemas, Pacific Cinemas and Hollybrook Senior Living. However, to define Decurion by its businesses is a great disservice. When you land on their

SUMMARY: STRETCH

main home page, this is how they begin the description of who they are: “Decurion provides places for people to flourish.” That central purpose is shown in practices such as weekly conversations between managers about employees and what job assignments will allow them to grow, public competency boards where everyone can see who has developed new capabilities, and talent assessments as part of the business review that include promotion-ready candidates.

Provide Training on How Your Organization Really Operates. To help people develop drone capabilities — the ability to zoom in and zoom out — having access to training on how the organization operates can really help. People who understand the strategy and bigger picture of their organization make fewer errors, are more productive and are more satisfied. If you want more collaboration across your organization, train your employees on how the organization fits together via a custom-developed program. ●

PART III: YOU NEED OPTIONS

Build a Diverse Network

The reward of an ever-expanding network is powerful and often transformational. That is why developing a diverse network is one of the practices that address the second Stretch Imperative: You need options. Networks facilitate collaboration on the job, assist in meeting your overall career goals, and provide support in celebrating life’s successes and rebounding from its disappointments.

Building diversity into your networks prepares you to anticipate change and make sure you have the resources to stay relevant at work. It’s your personal system to access when you need to understand changes in your field of work or industry.

Strategies to Build a Diverse Network

Social networks are powerful tools that can help us develop, maintain and expand our contacts. Having the largest number of followers or contacts is not necessarily a sign of network strength. The secret is to find the right balance for your career goals between online social networks and off-line relationships, perhaps by using some of the following strategies.

Groom a Clan. As we’ve fallen into the habit of gathering friends and contacts, many people think that just accepting every request to connect can help build their

networks. As it turns out, in most cases, quality matters more than quantity. If you are likely to have dozens of vendors contacting you to try to sell to you, then a more selective approach might make sense; but in an example of “the more the merrier,” if you are in sales, knowing as many people as possible might be a better strategy. Understanding what you want your network to do for you can help you determine its ideal size and makeup.

Adjust Constantly. Just building a network is not enough. Our experience and research have shown a need for dynamic, adaptive networks that can shift over time because our relationships with our relationships change. The colleagues you saw every day at work change when you change organizations. Although your hometown stays constant, when you move, the proximity to your relationships change and new relationships are formed. When you change to a new role, you must also think about what and how your network needs to shift.

Strive for Five to Thrive. The best network stretches you. While you may have hundreds of people in your network, who are the five people who can help you be a better person, especially when it comes to your work? Every time you are with them, you feel you have upped your game and are thinking a little differently. Since we can’t maintain close connections to everyone in our networks, focus on the five you could groom to help you thrive.

What Organizations and Managers Can Do

Collaboration relies on people having good networks to know who they should reach out to without spending an inordinate amount of time finding the right connections. Here are some ideas to consider.

Sponsor Mentoring and Affinity Programs. Having a mentor who can help navigate the political and organizational structure at work improves your employees’ networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness and, ultimately, their career outcomes. Establishing communities of practice based on common interests or function-based networks is ideal.

Conduct Speed Networking Events. The typical approach at speed dating is to have women sit at tables and men move from station to station. One organization uses a variation of this to introduce potential mentors to mentees. They have those looking for mentors sit at tables while the executives move from table to table. It’s a great way to meet a lot of people in a short amount of time. The next time you have a management meeting, can you invite in some up-and-coming talent and do a speed-networking session with them? ●

Be Greedy About Experiences

Whether you are launching your career, considering a career shift or simply wanting to stay relevant where you are, it's important to have a plan to manage and acquire a variety of experiences.

The word "greedy" is almost never used in a positive context. However, when it comes to experiences, the best way to future-proof yourself is to be voracious in seeking out as many opportunities as you can. Experiences are the most effective way to learn new skills, reinforce what you know and help you build on your strengths. People who have developed a repertoire of skills throughout their career know that this is a gradual and continuous process. It takes practice and repetition.

For example, once you have experienced the anxieties of presenting in front of groups, you understand the value of having well-developed strategies that help you feel confident. You learn that, even when a big deal is on the cusp of falling apart, you have to keep a level head and keep everyone talking until the deal is finished.

The more varied you can make your experiences, the greater the likelihood of developing a broad set of skills. Stepping outside your comfort zone into new situations that call for untested abilities is a great way to boost your confidence and discover new capabilities. If you don't feel in over your head at least three to four times a year, you are not aiming high enough. You are not stretching.

Strategies for Being Greedy About Experiences

Our natural default is to work on things that interest us. That may not be the best strategy. Instead, think strategically, both in terms of the number of experiences you'd like to acquire and the timeframe in which you hope to accomplish them. Don't just let experiences happen to you, but choose the experiences that benefit you the most.

Approach Work with a Development Stance.

According to researchers at Harvard, we can approach our work from one of three stances: completion, performance or development. The stance we take will affect how much we learn in any given situation. In the completion stance, our primary goal is to get the task or job done. If any learning happens, it is somewhat accidental. The stakes in a performance stance are little higher. Here you care more about high-quality results and may push yourself with new challenges. Surmounting these challenges leads to learning, even though it may not have been a conscious goal. In a development stance, you care about getting the task done really well and using what you learn to do even better work in the future.

Get Global. In today's globalized economy, international experience will differentiate you. Understanding culture and community in different countries is one of the benefits you can get from global experiences. You could also gain language skills and an opportunity to demonstrate that you can manage a multicultural, multi-lingual working environment while producing great work. Succeeding despite being outside your comfort zone lets organizations know that you are adaptable.

Stretch Your Limits. Stretching your limits doesn't always mean an upward step, as Lori Goler demonstrated. When Lori was looking to leave eBay, she called Sheryl Sandberg at Facebook and asked, "What is your biggest problem, and how can I solve it?" Lori's deep expertise in marketing at eBay was not a skill fit for Facebook at the time. Instead, Sheryl hired Lori to address Facebook's biggest problem — recruiting. Because Lori was willing to drop down a level to learn a new function and let go of her seniority status at eBay, she gained new skills and a successful career, rebooting her sell-by date.

What Organizations and Managers Can Do

Deliberate effort and encouragement can create space for people to be open to new ideas and experimentation, yielding big results for organizations while helping to ensure retention and maximum performance as jobs shift and change.

Give Employees Customer Experience. What if everyone in the organization could understand the customer experience by being in a front-line position at some point? At the Canadian telecommunication company TELUS, they can. Closer to the Customer (C2C) gives non-customer-facing employees a short experience away from their regular jobs to shadow other people. For example, a person in accounts receivable might shadow a store manager. Team members find insights into the customer experience that can help them make more informed decisions down the road, and they are exposed to other parts of TELUS.

Sponsor Mid-Life Internships. The British bank Barclays announced a mature workers program designed for those who have been out of the workforce for at least two years and want to return. Unlike unpaid college internships, older interns receive salaries and can provide an opportunity for companies to test prospective employees before committing. The head of the apprenticeship program at Barclays remarks, "We see real benefit in employing a workforce . . . who have had previous careers and greater life experiences . . . and are able to really understand and support our customers." ●

PART IV: YOU HAVE DREAMS

Bounce Forward

Bouncing Forward is a key practice of people who have the ability to overcome even the most extreme hardships. At any moment, many of us are dealing with insecurities and uncertainties. Mounting performance pressures in the workplace, radical changes in the global business world plus strained economic forecasts mean we need to figure out how to thrive and not simply survive. It's not just about having the mental stamina to bounce back but about moving forward — bouncing forward.

The Recipe for Springing Back

To be prepared for the future, you will need an understanding of grit, resilience, and motivation and the ways in which they combine to create the multiplier effect you need to succeed.

Grit. The only way to achieve true genius in a field is to dedicate to the mastery of it. This is the underlying rationale for grit: a never-yielding commitment to self-discipline. Grit is like having the discipline to be disciplined. Not to be confused with motivation, which is merely the willingness to do something, grit is the determination to do whatever it takes over time. Your grittiness increases achievement by acting as a multiplier of skills and knowledge, at the same time increasing skills and knowledge, which results in increased chances of success.

Resilience. Harvard journalist Diane Coutu reports that resilience is not just genetic, as people can become more resilient over their lifetimes. Resilient people invest a lot of effort in what Coutu calls an uncanny ability to improvise in seeking solutions. They understand that, when searching for answers in difficult situations, the more realistically they grasped the true situation, the more quickly they were able to move into a problem-solving mode.

Motivation. Many companies are still focused on compensation as a primary motivator. However, extensive research substantiates that money is not the answer. Rewards may help you accomplish the things you don't enjoy doing, but for the things you love, intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor in inspiring performance. To facilitate your own intrinsic motivation, consider the five sources of meaning for humans at work: the impact of your work on society, the customer, the company, the team and "me." According to McKinsey, connecting to

one or more of these five sources of meaning can help you tap into your enthusiasm.

Mental Strategies to Help You Bounce Forward

Now that you've learned the three fundamental components of bouncing forward, it's time to consider the practical strategies to deploy them.

Renounce. If you aren't receiving feedback at work, ask for it. And when you hear something you don't like, use it as an opportunity to bounce forward. Renounce the fixed mindset that you always have to be right or in control. Instead, adopt a growth mindset where you learn as much from failure and feedback as you do from success.

Pounce. In his breakthrough book *The Resiliency Advantage*, Al Siebert advocates adopting a curiosity habit. First, he asks, "How do you react to surprising incidents?" Do you hunker down and try to stay the course, or do you wonder what's going on, look for answers about cause and effect? Curious people ask a lot of questions, which is a great way to gather information and stage the best action for the best outcome — pouncing.

Trounce. Setting the stage for winning comes from practice and repetition. Just like basketball players, we can't expect to score if we aren't prepared to shoot. Being prepared to shoot comes from a relentless commitment to practice. Not just practicing before games but practicing every day. Not just weekdays but every day. Not just this year but year in and year out.

Announce. Announcing your intentions to others can help you find the motivation you need to stay focused on your goals. Enroll a few people directly in your sprint goals. When you announce a goal, people will jump in to help you and keep you on track.

Denounce the Small Stuff. We all need to be able to hold onto inspiration to stay motivated. Too often the first year in a job becomes the fifth and then the tenth, indistinguishable from one another. Not sweating the small stuff let's us put our focus elsewhere and think about the big picture. ●

PART V: CHARTING THE PATH FORWARD

Stretch Into Your Future

How do you future-proof yourself for tomorrow? To help you make a concrete plan for the capabilities you need for the workplace to come, here is a synthesis of dozens of studies and expertise identifying the top 10 capabilities you will need for the future.

SUMMARY: STRETCH

Capability 1: Functional Excellence. Tim Brown, the CEO of the design consultancy IDEO, says he likes to hire people with T-shaped skills. “T-shaped people have two kinds of characteristics, hence the use of the letter ‘T’ to describe them. The vertical stroke of the ‘T’ is a depth of skill that allows them to contribute to the creative process.” This part of the T refers to functional excellence, which means having a set of honed skills related to a specific discipline, such as finance, architecture, social science or software engineering. You want to be the go-to person for expertise in your area at work.

Capability 2: Emotional Intelligence. “The horizontal stroke of the T,” Brown continues, “is the disposition for collaboration across disciplines. It is composed of two things. First, empathy. It’s important because it allows people to imagine the problem from another perspective — to stand in somebody else’s shoes. Second, they tend to get very enthusiastic about other people’s disciplines, to the point that they may actually start to practice them.”

Capability 3: Personal Advocacy. Personal advocacy means the ability to publicly support and promote yourself in a way that persuades others to engage with you. This includes both in-person and virtual personas, allowing you to have connections and options in many forums. An essential building block of personal advocacy is establishing and building a personal brand. The trick is in the balance: Sell yourself, keep relationships two-sided and have fun content to share.

Capability 4: Cross-Cultural Dexterity. You can anticipate an increasingly diverse set of colleagues, even in your own country, whether it’s the elderly front desk receptionist, the Gen Y software engineer celebrating his marriage to an arranged bride, or your female black manager — a Gen X MBA from Harvard. Embracing and flourishing in diversity will be a key criteria for success both now and in the near future.

Capability 5: Geek Acumen. The phrase “I’m not really that technical” should be banned from everyone’s thinking. To be ready for the future, we all must embrace at least the technologies and the enabling power of machine learning in our own fields. Otherwise, be prepared to become obsolete.

Capability 6: Virtual Collaboration. Virtual collaboration has three components. First, it requires being able to work independently to achieve a set of shared goals. Second, you must be able to communicate and share knowledge effectively with others who are not in time or space proximity to you. Finally, people who have a capability to virtually collaborate are able to use technology-mediated communication tools.

Capability 7: Entrepreneurial Spirit. Successful entrepreneurs bring a set of skills and competencies, such as the ability to identify a niche market, financially manage a business and build customer relationships, among others. Additional entrepreneurial traits are initiative, passion, innovation and the willingness to take risks.

Capability 8: Creative Problem Solving. Traditional problem solving followed a fairly linear path: First identify a problem, involve others in seeking solutions, collect data and conduct analyses, search for best solutions and, finally, make a decision. The valued contributor of tomorrow will adapt to any situation with creative resolve and always have the ability to revisit and modify while still engaged in a methodical problem-solving process.

Capability 9: Leadership. Research showed that employees yearn to be inspired by others, to have a vision to follow, to see meaning in their work and to be guided with a clear pathway for making the vision come alive. These are the responsibilities of leadership, and they will remain an important capability in the future. New leaders must be able to collaborate and connect in real ways with employees, making social media and other technology and staff tools the delivery system for the company mission.

Capability 10: Stretchpertise. Stretchpertise is the professional ability to creatively restructure and repurpose in order to adjust to changing environmental demands. Stretchpertise means adapting your career to meet your own evolving personal needs and motivation. You must be able to learn on the fly, be open, create an effective network and gather a variety of experiences. Stretchpertise is the immunization against obsolescence and requires the bounce-forward skills of grit, resilience and motivation to aim toward longer-term goals.

The future beckons. Will you be one of the disengaged, or will you stretch to new capabilities, extending your sell-by date? The fulfillment of dreams doesn’t happen by luck. Stretch to become your best self — the person who you know you can be. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Stretch*, you’ll also like:

1. ***The 2020 Workplace*** by Jeanne C. Meister, Karie Willyerd. Meister and Willyerd present a functional guide to help you and your organization create tomorrow’s workplace of choice.
2. ***Triggers*** by Marshall Goldsmith. Goldsmith details six engaging questions that can help us enact meaningful and lasting change in order to become the person we want to be.
3. ***Rookie Smarts*** by Liz Wiseman. Wiseman explains how to reclaim and cultivate the curious, flexible, youthful mindset of a rookie in order to keep up with what’s needed from employees in a rapidly changing world.