

MASTER OF NONE

How a Jack-of-All-Trades Can Still Reach the Top

CLIFFORD HUDSON

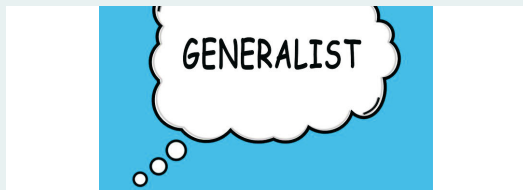
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ISBN 978-1-77687-035-6

MAIN IDEA

Are you better off being an expert in one field or a jack-of-all-trades when it comes to business?



Ever since Malcolm Gladwell published *Outliers* in 2008, the "10,000-Hour Rule" has ruled supreme. Gladwell suggested that to become an expert or world-class performer in any field, you had to commit to 10,000 hours of deliberate practice – roughly about three hours of focused practice every day for a decade – before you became an expert.

That's all well and good, but assuming you endure the sheer monotony of that, what happens if you spend 10,000 hours getting really good at some business skill that then becomes obsolete? Is mastery really better, or should you put a higher premium on being adaptable enough to do a little bit of everything, and then pivot as interesting opportunities arise?

"I'm sure it's gratifying to be the best or even considered among the best at something. But focusing too narrowly comes with its own risks—perhaps even more in today's technology-driven environment, which constantly changes the nature of work and the skills required. Overinvesting in expertise is often riskier than learning to be adaptive and in an always-learning mode. I don't know about you, but I've chosen to go through life experiencing as much as I can and becoming good enough to be successful in a variety of endeavors. That phrase "good enough" might not sit well with you, but when you evaluate the actual benefits of exactitude, you might find, as I have, that becoming good enough to be broadly successful is a better and far more rewarding experience. Variety isn't just the spice of life; it's an untapped strategy for succeeding sooner and in more ways than one."

– Clifford Hudson

The 10 Rules-of-Thumb of the Generalist

1	Stability is a myth: Change is a constant	6	Focus is good but you also must innovate
2	You achieve more if you're not in control	7	Don't link your identity to your label
3	Harmony requires contrast and many voices	8	Only a win-win approach sustains growth
4	Say "Yes" and figure it out as you go along	9	Embrace options not of your own choosing
5	Seize the opportunities created by others	10	Mastery is fine, but it's not 100% necessary

Rule #1 – Stability is a myth: Change is a constant Page 2

Expertise is great because it seems to offer stability, but it's a myth. Change is going to be always with us, so you're far better off being prepared for change by being nimble.

Rule #2 – You achieve more if you're not in control. Pages 2 - 3

Control is an illusion. The best way to achieve more is to surround yourself with people who know more than you do. Ask people for their best ideas, and do that.

Rule #3 – Harmony requires contrast and many voices Page 3

Always allow your people to work individually, but operate collectively. There's nothing finer than finding a way to blend people's talents together to come up with great ideas.

Rule #4 – Say "Yes" and figure it out as you go along Page 4

Generalists say "Yes" to every opportunity that comes along. They then scramble to figure things out, and turn opportunities into benefits. Make it your habit to do the same.

Rule #5 – Seize the opportunities created by others Pages 4 - 5

Leaning on your own abilities is fine, but you should also seize the opportunities others create as well. Do see the big picture, and then be prepared for anything and everything.

Rule #6 – Focus is good but you also must innovate Page 5

Making your business run better is worthwhile, but you also have to add new ideas as well. Never lose sight of the fact you need to innovate all the time to grow.

Rule #7 – Don't link your identity to your label Page 6

Everyone in your organization (including you) with have a job title, but teach them to embrace "and" as well. Don't let labels constrain your thinking. Let everyone innovate.

Rule #8 – Only a win-win approach sustains growth Pages 6 - 7

Servant leadership – where the leader is the least important person in the team – works incredibly well. Make sure it leads to win-win outcomes that benefit everyone.

Rule #9 – Embrace options not of your own choosing. Page 7

Always look at change as good, even if the change is imposed from the outside. You never know what new heights you can reach when freed from your present concerns.

Rule #10 – Mastery is fine, but it's not 100% necessary Page 8

Be proud of the master of none badge. Variety is life's multiplier of opportunity.