

Career Strategy: It Pays to Diversify



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Would you dump your life savings—every single dollar—into a single stock? Probably not; it's far too risky to put all your eggs in one investment basket.

And yet, you'd be surprised how many people manage their careers with a single-stock mindset. They toil away, year after year, investing their talents in a narrow field of interest.

Until recently, this approach made a lot of sense. Conventional wisdom dictates that if you do one thing really well, you'll never be out of a job.

But times have changed, and so have strategies. While it's still true that a solid career is built on a foundation of position-specific expertise, it's become increasingly important to maintain a balanced portfolio.

When employers look for talent, they typically settle for people with the proficiency to perform certain tasks. But what they *really* want—especially in today's hyper-competitive market—is an **adaptable breed of cat**, whose broad-based set of skills crosses over into a variety of disciplines.

Want proof?

Poke your head into any meeting room in which star performers are present. You're likely to hear a sales manager exploring the potential of XML technology; or an engineer debating the virtues of a strategic alliance; or a CFO pondering the benefits of a co-branding opportunity.

In other words, as organizations flatten, **more is expected** from each individual contributor. Which means that versatility is not only fashionable, it's become a key ingredient in modern-day career progression.

Now, I'm not suggesting you spread yourself so thin as to master nothing at all. But in order to reach top-percentile status in today's rugged job market, you'll need an **expanded arsenal of skills** to deploy.

To round out your resume, look for areas of weakness (or "blind spots"), and try to develop them into strengths. For example, if you're a design engineer and you want to improve your company's product or advance its market position, here are some issues to consider:

By gaining knowledge in areas that were formerly considered the domain of "somebody else," you'll increase your overall market value. The more you can offer a multiple spectrum of knowledge—rather than a single color of skill—the less likely you'll be to paint yourself into a corner.