Who has it better in the job market? The one that knows a lot (body: arms wide / vocal: high) about a little (body: pinch), or the one that knows a little (body: pinch) about a lot (body: arms wide)? By the way, the type of people with the skill sets I just mentioned have names. The former is a generalist. The latter is a specialist.

Take the resumes of two people. Which has it better in today’s global job market? Is it the PhD from a top-ranked science and engineering school, or is it the MBA from a top-ranked Ivy League school?

Explain: The PhD from the engineering school took on a life of research likely understood a problem. Studied math and science. The MBA took on working for a few years, and is well-equipped with practical skills and a network.

These represent two extremes of career paths. -- Many other career paths exist, and these are just examples (think). -- These examples help to identify an age-old debate, first brought by \_\_ , and that’s been great throughout history to the industrial revolution or invention of assembly line by Henry Ford ( -- make this more practical --): What’s better, generalists (MBA) or specialists (PhD)?

Recently, with the dawn of globalization, identified by The World is Flat, several arguments exist for the generalists. Take articles by \_\_ . Or the movement towards. A more harsh criticism is that PhD’s are over-qualified. This limits them to the positions of computer/technical jobs, and no upward mobility to CTO. But the people who make decisions is CEO. This seems unfair.

Professors of top-ranked engineering schools may give such advice.

They also signify an age-old debate, first brought up by \_\_\_ of generalists vs. specialists.

While not a rule, a manager of a consulting company with an MBA might be a generalist, and a scientist with a PhD might be a specialist (-- make clear purpose/intention of this sentence? --). The debate between the merits of a generalist and specialist is age-old. And both sides seem to have an argument.

The thing is, if you look online for this argument today, you’ll find several articles arguing for the importance of the generalists in today’s fast-paced and globalized world, with the core argument being generalists can see the bigger picture, adapt to a changing environment, and can promote team building. But there aren’t too many articles making the case for specialists. Can’t specialists (body: hands in the air) have these positive qualities too, even if they don't have actual management and leadership training that instills these qualities? As I see it, there are 3 different ways specialists can develop these strong qualities associated with a generalist.

First (body: ), a specialist can understand the big picture of the work they are doing. Many publications, particularly those in computer science, are judged by novelty. Knowing the novelty of a solution involves constant assessments of needs in society. Grant proposals require a broader impact section, and scientists must have a way to come up with good cases for their research, otherwise they will not get funded to do what they are doing.

Second (body: ), don't know broad skill sets, but specialists often have this unique ability to learn how to learn, allowing them to pick up a broad skill set if needed. The act of doing lab experiments to find a new virus requires discovery process requires learning new things as you go. Coming up with new algorithms and implementing them requires one to pick up technologies and skill sets in an uncertain environment where several technologies abound.

Third(body: ), specialists are already team-builders. Cross-lab collaborations are a big part of working together in research. It's often up to the scientists to seek out these collaborations, and this involves finding a way to work as a team. The training of many specialists (notably PhDs) often involves some aspect of teaching undergraduate students. This involves leading students to collectively learn (by making sure to answer all questions), planning and overseeing group projects. These skills can be transferred to leadership skills.

Fourth, Motivation

(Pause)

Generalists may be in high-demand due to their abilities to have a broad range (body: spread out hands) of skill sets applicable in many domains. Yet, the viewpoint that various articles suggest is that only they are well-equipped to take on leadership roles, and this viewpoint sometimes implicitly suggests that specialists aren’t. If one considers the skills that a specialist must have to succeed in her job, this viewpoint may be a bit extreme. A specialist can learn to adapt(body: finger1 ), understand broader impact(body: finger2), and build teams (body:finger3) too.

Perhaps their skills won't be as refined as managers, but they can learn on their own and pick up skills, if they worked hard at it to get practical, real-world experience doing it. In my opinion, it's a matter of realizing how the skills a scientist or engineer already has can be transferred (body: move hand left to right) in the context of managerial positions. Once realized, it’s then a matter of practicing and engaging oneself in such leadership positions, and thriving through energy that specialists so often have.

1. Generalists are good because:

a. they can tackle several problems and people have a broad range of info

b. agile in a job market that’s changing, demands are changing

c. world is becoming more global

1. Specialists are good because:

a. only person that knows a particular area

b. can ask lots of money since the position is hard to fill

c. can solve problems other people can’t

3.