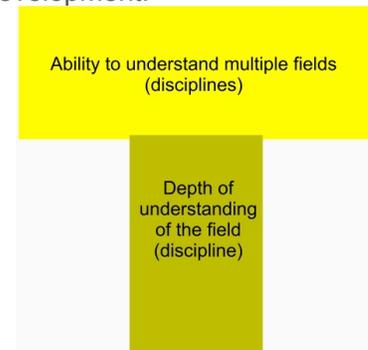


## Succeed as a T-shaped professional

A "T-shaped" professional has both breadth of knowledge in their field and a deep spike of expertise. Being T-shaped is a good basis for easier and more lucrative business development.

Some clients want more than just a professional service, and T-shaped professionals can respond. T-shaped professionals can deliver much more value to some clients; often those potential clients will pay handsomely to professionals having both depth and breadth.

Most prospects say they are looking to get something, e.g., resolving a legal matter, getting a building built, having a market researched; many indeed are looking for just what they claim. Others though, may be looking for advice and counsel along with (or even under the cover of) the service they are buying. Clients who value advice and counsel often pay much more because they want to be challenged by new perspectives and to engage in a broad conversation about their issues and the multiple dimensions of their situation. It's often a great opportunity for professionals who can handle the other side of that kind of engagement.



### Being T-shaped makes your life easier (and perhaps more fun)

It does so in several ways:

- You can often charge more. A consultant who includes a piece of market research in their work can get more for the work than a market researcher can.
- Even when you cannot charge more for a technical project, you can use that project to demonstrate an ability to add more value, which can often turn into other projects more based on your ability to counsel and advise.
- If you have a client whom you counsel and advise, you will occasionally find yourself in an opportunity to do new kinds of work. Sometimes this kind of client prefers having someone they know and trust do something rather than a more technically skilled person (in this new line of work) who is an unknown or unproven in the client's eyes.
- You'll find yourself more able to be helpful (free or for pay) in more situations. T-shaped people can shape their knowledge to fit the problem at hand rather than insisting that problems they

address appear in a particular, recognizable form.

- You'll get closer to clients, and deal with more kinds of issues and probably issues of greater importance.

### **You can become T-shaped**

Here are a few thoughts on how:

- Find out what other issues and challenges your clients have, and start to learn about them. Read about your client's industry.
- Get the most learning out of any situation. You can ask questions wherever you are about the context of the work. You can ask your colleagues or even your clients for guidance in learning other things you want to know that are outside the scope of your current work.
- Find low-risk ways to learn more and practice being "broad". Have breakfast or lunch with people and ask them about what they know and what they are working on. Do your best to be helpful, or to ask more so you understand more.

## **What to do this week**

Evaluate how T-shaped you are and how T-shaped you'd like to be. To make the potential opportunity more concrete, think about how you might be able to do more in your current client situations if you added a broader perspective.

If you desire a change, develop an easy learning plan (e.g., download some items to read that you can read in the evening or when traveling) and get started in small steps. Take a client or two to lunch and ask them about the challenges they have in their job right now.