



Olumuyiwa Akinrole Oludayo

How Novices Become Experts

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Experts are rallying points of solutions in their field. Many of them started out as novices, having no clue about their careers but have grown to become sought after because of the value of insight they possess.

The secret of this successful transition is largely based on a commitment to keep improving. A lifestyle of continuous learning is what transforms a rookie to becoming a master. Many have move on from being ignorant to being standards of insights in their respective fields.

What exactly is the pathway to professional mastery?

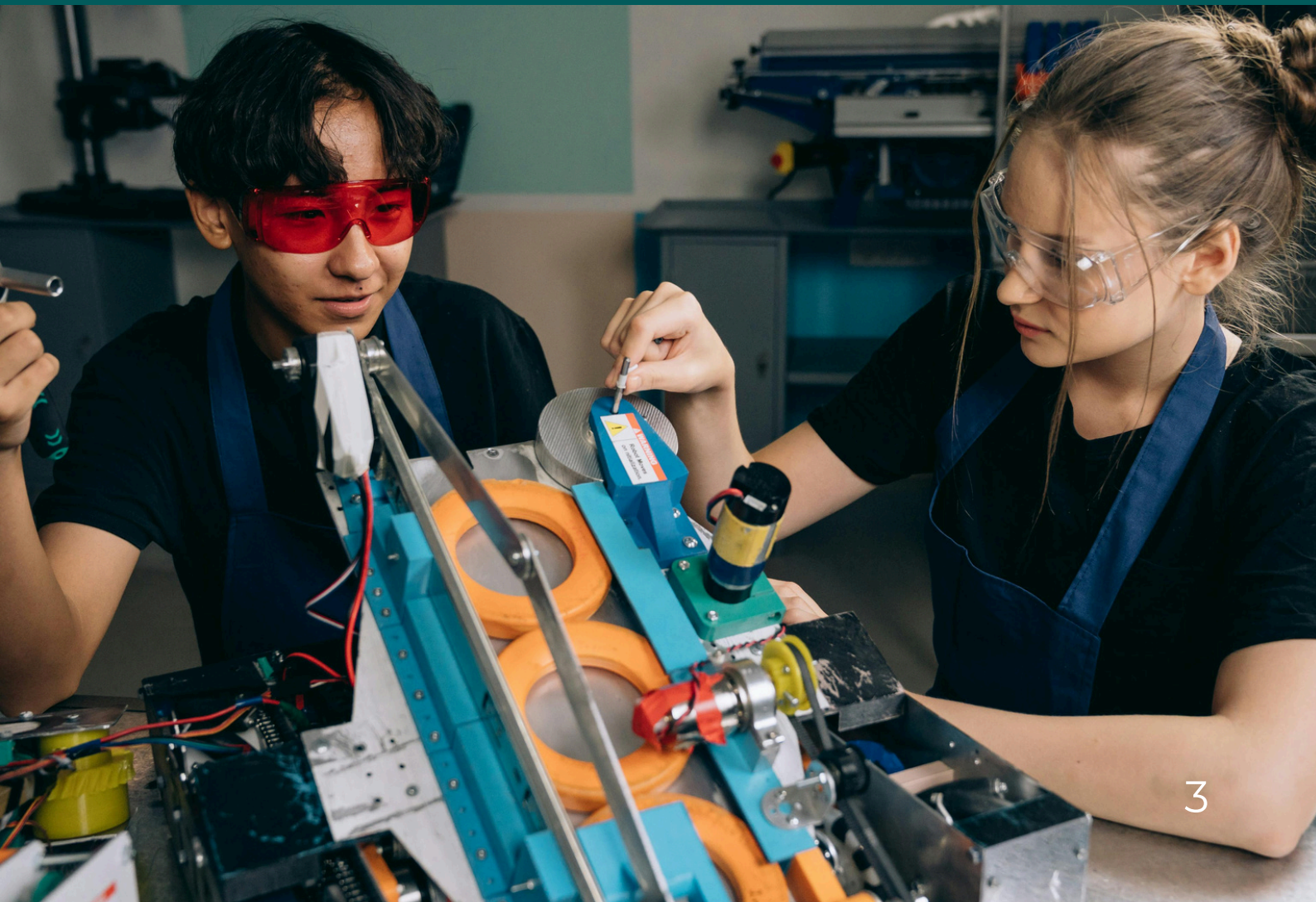
In this article, I reveal four proficiency levels with attendant obligations. These I believe are the transitional paths towards expertise in any field.



Level 1: The Observer

The Nature of this Phase: The starting point on the journey to mastery positions you first as an observer. An observer is a novice with no experience to execute tasks masterfully. At this stage, you are just a beginner equipped only with potential and possibilities. As an observer or beginner, you are just been introduced to the nuances of your profession. You have not been exposed to the needed situations and circumstances that will grow your capabilities. What you possess and bring to the table at this level are basic skills and knowledge as evidenced by fundamental credentials.

Obligation to Transition to the Next Phase: What then is the obligation of the observer that enables transition to level 2? The answer is commitment to *Investigation*. An observer will move to the next phase of proficiency by embracing the principle of curiosity. This is the time to have a programmed plan of action that explores more practicable insights in the profession. This is the time to commence checking out as many details about the profession. It is expected that this exercise deepens interests and awakens desire to opportunities for contribution. At this stage, there's no demand for deep practice besides been curious about the extent of impact this profession can bring to humanity.



Level 2: The Learner

The Nature of this Phase: This phase is characterised by changes in actions, attitude, behaviours, beliefs, orientation, opinions, visions, and values. At this stage, you are beginning to define your preferences in the profession. You are beginning to understand the demand for growth. While you are still exploring new information about the profession, as a learner, you are beginning to take on the language of the profession. You are now beginning to show others. At this stage, you are now under active supervision. Tasks are now being committed to you to initiate. You are no longer looking on to see how the work gets done. You are now given an opportunity to bring your skin into the game. At this stage you will become more of a participant on the job than an observer of happenings.

Obligation to Transition to the Next Phase: The key demand for change at this level is Assimilate. This is the point where you begin to integrate your findings at the observation level into the work you do. At this stage you are expected to incorporate the behaviours of the profession into your job. This is your acculturation phase. You must allow the culture of your profession permeate all that you do. You must be like a sponge at this stage where you absorb every little detail. You are no longer scratching the surface for general knowledge. At this phase, you are becoming more particular about the things that gives a chance to be a contributor and not an onlooker.



Level 3: The Practitioner

The Nature of this Phase: Your status on this phase is marked by activity. Now, you are deeply involved in the tasks that truly define your profession. Unlike the observer and the learner, the practitioner now takes the lead in delivering results across projects, tasks and duties required by the profession. You now have the opportunity to bring to bear all your findings and discoveries in the previous 2 levels. This is the stage where you can begin to experiment your theories and test out your models. At this stage, your voice is strong enough to question existing approaches to getting work done in your profession. This is the point where you leave the rudimentary to move on to the advanced points of your profession. This is the point in your career journey where you become an executive. You now have the responsibility for delivering results. You become accountable for the outcomes that your job requires. This is the stage where you will make a lot of the mistakes your career will ever experience. This can only be attributed to the fact that you are executing more and spending a lot more time in operations. You cannot but make mistakes when you are committing to work. He errs that works always.

Obligation to Transition to the Next Phase: Your core obligation on this phase is to Disseminate the attributes, skills, knowledge, and experience require to flourish in your profession. This is the time when training others become vital for your career. This is the time when you must take on role modeling, coaching, mentoring, and sponsoring responsibilities. This is the stage where leadership development becomes a core task on your table. At this stage, you become an ambassador of your profession. You have the responsibility of advancing the career by enlisting more people in it. This is the point where you become an advocate of transformation in the profession. At this point, you have a lot of learning points to share from your experience, be it successful or failed.



Level 4: The Master

The Nature of this Phase: This is the mastery stage of your profession. At this stage, you have proofs to show that your expertise on the job and in your profession. You have not only raised great leaders, you have also shaped the profession through insights and models that have inspired change. You have now become a rallying point for solutions, a credible reference for those seeking excellence in their career. This is the stage where you execute a lot lesser when compared to the Practitioner phase and focus more on using your vast network and influence to promote the profession. You now take more responsibility outside your organization to focus more on industry standards. It is on this stage that your expertise will be sought by governments and global organizations. At this stage, you are now one of the foremost leaders of your profession. You must note that a number of your contemporaries will not reach this stage because they may not have seen many successes that will encourage them to move on to mastery level. Entry into this stage is determined by the quality of your outcomes and span of your influence. This stage is where you demonstrate to the world that you know how to produce meaningful results. At this stage, your counsel is taking as an instruction. Your position on a matter now becomes the standard upon which all other thoughts are measured. Never forget that you get to this stage by consistently producing great, yet scarce results from the practitioner phase.

Obligations to Consolidate this Phase. Your core obligation on this phase is one of **Validation**. Your role on this phase is to uphold the profession. You are at this point going to be responsible for proving the relevance of your profession to the development of humanity across several spheres of human endeavour. This is the time to put your weight on new productive models that may trump the ones that you have hitherto used and produced results with. This is the time standby and lend your vast resources to the growth of the next generation of Professionals. Your role will now transcend from being a position holder to becoming an institution. You must learn not to contend for roles that makes you a practitioner again. You are now a coach, and not knowing when to retire from active engagement will make you vulnerable for reproach.



Transitioning Successfully

The following represents the behavioural competences you need to develop as move through levels 1 and 4. They constitute who you must become in order to do what the profession demands.

1. Curiosity:

You must cultivate a strong desire to acquire relevant attributes, skills, and knowledge. Desire is the starting point for all success.

2. Creativity:

You must develop the ability to produce things that will ensure success for your organization. You will be a success if you know how to give form to thoughts.

3. Collaboration:

"One of us is not better than the rest of us." is a quote by Ray Kroc that speaks about the diversity of competence within a team to deliver results. If you will be a force to be reckoned with in your field, learn to work together with others.

4. Communication:

Your career journey will require that you persuade others to join a cause that you believe in. You must develop stellar verbal and written skills that enables ideas to become products and services that people will love to own.

5. Capacity:

It is not enough to possess skill to do work, you must have the ability to produce more than others. You must have the wherewithal to increase the range of what you can bear as you take on more demands. Your competence must be scalable.

6. Confidence:

You will find many dissenting voices on your journey. You need to show courage, belief and trust in your chosen cause. You must show to others that they can follow your leadership because you have got faith in the vision you have subscribed to.

7. Conscientious:

Those who become masters are assiduous. They pay the price of diligence to produce excellence in all their endeavours. They are diligent and industrious; always painstakingly taking on tasks and assignments committed to their care. This is who you must be to success in your career transitions.





Behavioural Competences Needed to Obtain Mastery



Final Word

The journey to mastery begins with a discovery of who you are and what the profession holds for you. Never forget that an apprentice will remain a novice if he/she does not practice. You have the responsibility to investigate possibilities and patterns that produce results. Necessity is laid on you to assimilate the nature and culture of your profession. You cannot move on to leadership if you will not produce results by participating in tasks that guarantee such. Mastery and Professional leadership is never reserved for those who only desire it, it is earned by lighting the candles of those who are ready to pay the price for the journey.

Rise up to the occasion and deliver value to humanity.





Profile for Dr. Olumuyiwa Akinrole Oludayo

Dr. Olumuyiwa Akinrole Oludayo is a transformative leader and consultant with a distinguished career across higher education, human resource management, and organisational development. His professional journey reflects an enduring commitment to influencing impactful change and advancing practices that drive growth and excellence at both individual and organisational levels.

With a strong foundation in academia, Dr. Oludayo has contributed extensively to higher education as a Member of Faculty for Human Resource Management, guiding the next generation of professionals and leaders. His roles as Dean of Students, Registrar, and Director of the African Leadership Development Centre have enabled him to influence institutional leadership and capacity-building across Africa, crafting learning environments that are centred on holistic development and resilience.

As a Research Fellow with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria, Dr. Oludayo has made notable contributions to HR practice in Nigeria. His publications and development of frameworks have significantly shaped best practices within the industry, equipping HR professionals with contextually relevant strategies that address both contemporary and emerging challenges.

Organisations that engage Dr. Oludayo's consulting expertise benefit from a wealth of experience and a bespoke approach to people management. Through his work, he has supported a diverse range of organisations in optimising their talent strategies, enhancing leadership capacity, and creating resilient teams. His consulting work is marked by a commitment to solutions that are analytically robust and deeply aligned with an organisation's unique culture and objectives.

By partnering with Dr. Oludayo, organisations gain access to innovative approaches to talent development and organisational effectiveness. His strategic guidance encourages a culture of resilience, adaptability, and continuous improvement. His proven ability to integrate strategic insight with a people-centred approach makes him an invaluable asset for organisations striving for sustainable growth and a competitive edge.

In bridging the realms of academia, research, and practical consulting, Dr. Oludayo offers a holistic perspective that is both visionary and results-driven. His contributions go beyond enhancing performance; they cultivate lasting organisational value, enabling businesses to thrive through a stronger, more cohesive approach to human capital management.

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