

# POLYMATH MANIFESTO

WISDOM ACROSS WORLDS<sup>®</sup>



LinkedIn Group - **Polymath Forum** ▾

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# Introduction

## Purpose of the Manifesto

Through this Manifesto, we aim to elevate the role of polymathy as a vital and highly regarded social, business, and academic norm.

Our purpose is to recognize and celebrate polymaths as multi-disciplinary experts who bring a unique breadth of perspective and multiple depths of expertise.

We see polymaths as invaluable assets in today's world, capable of innovating, creating, facilitating, and catalyzing transformative change across various domains.

By endorsing and living these ideals, we strive to foster an environment where the polymathic approach is appreciated and essential in navigating and thriving in our interconnected world.

Additionally, this Manifesto serves as a rallying call to unite polymaths globally, forming a strategic think-tank dedicated to addressing and solving complex, multifaceted problems. A 'World Polymathic Forum,' akin to institutes like the World Economic Forum, RAND Corporation, The Aspen Institute, Chatham House, The Brookings Institution, The Trilateral Commission, The Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), or the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS).



## Definition of Polymathy

This manifesto defines polymathy as integrating and applying diverse and deep knowledge across multiple disciplines, underpinned by a commitment to sustained intellectual exploration.

A polymath is characterized by an expansive intellectual curiosity, an ability to think critically and creatively across boundaries, and a proficiency in linking concepts from various fields to forge innovative solutions.

Polymaths are recognized for their multi-dimensional expertise and roles as creators, facilitators, liaisons, and catalysts for (social) change. Importantly, we consider discipline mastery a fundamental aspect of polymathy, achieved when a polymath has dedicated sustained attention to a subject – arguably some 3–5 years.

This sustained engagement signifies a depth of understanding and expertise that complements the breadth of knowledge inherent in polymathy.

This manifesto recognizes polymathy as a critical approach to addressing complex challenges in our increasingly interconnected world. It values polymathy to foster a more adaptive, creative, and holistic understanding of the world. It elevates it as a respected and essential approach in various sectors and a key driver for innovation and problem-solving in modern society.



# Core Principles

## Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning represents an unending pursuit of knowledge across diverse disciplines. This principle espouses a mindset of continuous curiosity and adaptability, emphasizing that education is an enduring journey beyond formal schooling. It encourages innovatively integrating new information with existing knowledge, fostering a deep understanding and versatile application of learning.

Lifelong Learning is not just about acquiring facts; it's about continuously expanding one's intellectual horizon and adapting to the ever-evolving landscapes of science, arts, culture, and technology. This commitment to perpetual growth and exploration is fundamental to the polymathic way of life, driving continuous personal and collective human advancement.

## Interdisciplinary Agility

Interdisciplinary Agility champions the fusion of diverse fields of knowledge, embodying whole-system thinking to foster a holistic understanding of complex issues.

This principle asserts that profound insights and innovations often emerge at the intersection of disciplines, where different perspectives and methodologies converge, reflecting the interconnected web of a whole system. It encourages polymaths to transcend traditional boundaries, blending science, arts, humanities, and technology and



viewing them not as isolated silos but as interconnected parts of a larger whole.

This approach enriches the polymath's intellectual repertoire and is crucial in addressing multifaceted problems with comprehensive and nuanced solutions. Embracing Interdisciplinary Agility means engaging in whole-system thinking, recognizing the intricate interconnectedness of all knowledge, and utilizing this interconnectedness to drive holistic progress and innovation in our increasingly complex world.

## **Adaptability**

Adaptability, as a core principle of polymathy, underscores the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in an ever-changing world. This principle recognizes that knowledge, technology, and societal needs constantly change, and adapting is crucial for continued relevance and effectiveness. It calls for polymaths to be agile in their thinking, open to new ideas, and willing to revise their understandings in light of new information.

Adaptability in polymathy is not just about adjusting to change; it's about proactively embracing it and using a diverse knowledge base to anticipate and respond to new challenges. This agility enables polymaths to seamlessly navigate across various domains, making them invaluable in tackling the multifaceted problems of the modern world. By championing adaptability, this principle advocates for a mindset that is receptive to change and thrives on it, ensuring that polymaths remain at the forefront of innovation and progress.



## Collaboration and Diversity

Collaboration and Diversity form a fundamental core principle of polymathy, emphasizing the power of collective intelligence and the richness that varied perspectives bring to problem-solving and innovation.

This principle advocates actively seeking diverse viewpoints, experiences, and expertise, recognizing that breakthroughs often occur when different minds work together. Collaboration in this context is not just about working alongside others; it's about profoundly valuing and integrating the unique contributions of each individual.

This approach nurtures an environment where creative ideas can cross-pollinate, leading to more robust, well-rounded solutions. The diversity here extends beyond cultural or demographic differences to include a diversity of thought, discipline, and approach.

By embracing Collaboration and Diversity, polymaths champion a more inclusive, participatory, and effective way of tackling complex challenges, leveraging a varied group's collective wisdom and strengths to drive progress and innovation.





## Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is a cornerstone principle of polymathy. It represents the rigorous analysis and evaluation of ideas from multiple disciplines. It involves a disciplined approach to understanding problems, questioning assumptions, and synthesizing information to form well-reasoned judgments and solutions.

This principle emphasizes acquiring diverse knowledge and its thoughtful application, encouraging polymaths to approach complex challenges with an analytical mindset.

Critical thinking in polymathy is about seeing beyond the apparent, challenging conventional wisdom, and exploring ideas' more profound implications. It requires openness to new perspectives and a healthy skepticism that questions and refines understanding.

By integrating this analytical rigor with their breadth of knowledge, polymaths are uniquely positioned to navigate complex problems, bringing clarity, innovation, and depth to their resolutions.

This commitment to critical thinking fosters a culture of intellectual precision and nuanced insight, essential for effective decision-making and advancing human understanding.



# Shared Values

Specific values are essential for polymaths to thrive. These values create an environment conducive to the growth and recognition of polymathic talents:

- **Intellectual Humility:** Recognizing one's limits and valuing the knowledge of others.
- **Curiosity and Openness:** An unending desire to learn and explore and openness to new ideas and experiences.
- **Integrity and Honesty:** Upholding strong ethical standards, honesty in all pursuits, and authenticity in interactions.
- **Collaborative Spirit:** Embracing teamwork and appreciating the value of diverse perspectives and expertise.
- **Resilience and Perseverance:** The ability to navigate challenges and persist in the face of setbacks.
- **Adaptive Flexibility:** Adjusting and adapting one's approach as situations and information evolve.
- **Creative Innovation:** Encouraging innovative thinking that transcends conventional boundaries.
- **Critical and Analytical Thinking:** Applying rigorous analysis and thoughtful questioning to understand complex issues deeply.
- **Empathy and Social Awareness:** Understanding and valuing the impact of one's actions on others and society as a whole.



- **Global and Cultural Awareness:** Appreciating and integrating diverse cultural perspectives and global contexts.
- **Sustainable Mindset:** Prioritizing long-term impacts and sustainability in thought and action.
- **Continuous Improvement:** A commitment to personal and professional growth, constantly seeking to enhance one's knowledge and skills.
- **Inclusivity and Equity:** Promoting equal opportunities and respect for all, regardless of background or discipline.
- **Value Creation:** Focusing on creating meaningful, positive outcomes in various domains.

These values support the personal and professional growth of polymaths and ensure they are valued and trusted members of any community or organization they are part of.

They highlight the importance of knowledge, skill, character, and impact in the polymathic journey.



# Vision

We envision polymaths as the vital link to a more dynamic, integrated future in a world of specialization and a reductionist approach.

With their interdisciplinary expertise and holistic perspectives, we believe that polymaths are uniquely positioned to navigate and lead in today's complex reality, where change is the only constant.

The traditional model of predictability, manageability, and control is no longer sufficient in addressing the challenges of global competition, fragile supply chains, and rapid technological advancement.

Our vision is of a future where businesses and societies actively seek and value polymaths as essential catalysts for innovation and problem-solving. In this world, polymathy is appreciated and considered fundamental in bridging the gaps between specialized disciplines.

Polymaths thrive in these interdisciplinary 'wastelands', bringing together disparate fields to forge innovative, comprehensive solutions that a singular specialist view might overlook.

We see polymaths as agents of change, equipped to address the multifaceted challenges of our times. Their ability to think holistically and in detail enables them to adapt and innovate in ways crucial for sustainable growth and success.



Our vision is for a world that embraces the dynamics of markets and societal needs, transcending traditional silos and embracing the fluid, interconnected nature of knowledge.

Through this manifesto, we aim to catalyze a shift in perception, recognizing the invaluable role of polymaths in driving progress, fostering innovation, and solving the complex problems of today and tomorrow.

We believe we can create a more adaptable, resilient, and thriving global community by harnessing the power of polymathic thinking.



# Commitments

Here's a proposed list of commitments for adherents of the Polymath Manifesto to uphold:

## Collective Commitments

- **Promote Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Actively seek and engage in collaborative efforts across different fields and disciplines.
- **Value and Respect Diversity:** Embrace and respect diverse viewpoints, backgrounds, and approaches in all interactions.
- **Contribute to Community and Society:** Apply polymathic knowledge and skills to impact the broader community and society positively.
- **Support Fellow Polymaths:** Encourage and assist others on their polymath journey, sharing knowledge and experiences for mutual growth.
- **Champion Sustainable Practices:** Advocate for and implement sustainable and ethical practices in personal and professional life.
- **Drive Holistic Problem Solving:** Utilize a comprehensive approach in addressing complex issues, considering multiple facets and potential impacts.



## Global Commitments

- **Foster Global and Cultural Awareness:** Remain conscious of global dynamics and cultural nuances, integrating these perspectives into problem-solving and innovation.
- **Advance Human Understanding:** Work towards enhancing the collective understanding of humanity through interdisciplinary integration and collaboration.
- **Promote Polymathy in Education and Business:** Advocate for including and recognizing polymathic thinking in educational curriculums and business strategies.
- **Champion the Polymathic Approach:** Act as ambassadors for the polymathic way, demonstrating its value and effectiveness in various realms.

These commitments are designed to guide the actions and behaviors of polymaths in personal, collective, and global contexts, reflecting the core principles and values of the manifesto.



# Action Plan

Here are some actionable steps and strategies to live out the principles of polymathy in professional endeavors and lifelong learning:

## In Professional Endeavors

- **Cross-Disciplinary Projects:** Seek opportunities to work on projects that require cross-disciplinary knowledge or collaboration.
- **Networking:** Build a diverse professional network to gain different perspectives and ideas.
- **Mentorship:** Either mentor or be mentored by someone in a different field or a polymath – We encourage you to mentor or seek mentorship among our Forum members.

## In Lifelong Learning

- **Set Learning Goals:** Set specific, achievable learning goals across disciplines.
- **Online Learning Platforms:** Utilize online courses and platforms to learn new skills or deepen existing knowledge.
- **Attend Lectures and Seminars:** Regularly attend talks and seminars on various subjects.
- **Travel and Cultural Exposure:** Explore different cultures and places to gain new perspectives.





- **Skill Sharing:** Share your skills and knowledge with others, and learn from them in return.

## Overall Strategies

- **Time Management:** Efficiently manage your time to accommodate learning and exploring different areas.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up with current events and advancements in various fields.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Engage in group learning or community projects that require diverse skills and knowledge.
- **Feedback and Self-Assessment:** Regularly seek feedback and assess your progress in different areas.
- **Document Your Journey:** Record your polymath journey, including successes, challenges, and insights.
- **Post on Social Media:** Share your polymathic journey to inspire others; your diverse insights enrich us all and drive innovation across communities and humanity.
- **Write articles, author books, or pursue a Ph.D.:** Engage in creating high-quality content that contributes to the global research and development of polymathic learning and its practical application.



# Conclusion

As we conclude this manifesto, we are reminded that the journey of a polymath is not merely an individual pursuit but a collective endeavor toward a more enlightened, innovative, and interconnected world.

We call upon thinkers, learners, creators, and leaders from all walks of life to embrace the principles of polymathy: to cultivate lifelong learning, engage in interdisciplinary integration, practice adaptability, foster collaboration and diversity, and uphold critical thinking.

Let us step forward with a shared commitment to this polymathic path, recognizing that our diverse knowledge, when woven together, creates a tapestry rich with potential and possibilities.

We urge individuals and institutions alike to break the silos of specialization, to explore the fertile grounds of interdisciplinary collaboration, and to harness the full spectrum of human intellect and creativity. Together, let's build communities and societies that value the polymath as a vital contributor to progress and innovation.

Let's shape educational systems that nurture polymathic thinking from an early age and foster work environments that encourage and reward intellectual versatility. In doing so, we are not just advocating for a change in mindset but actively creating a future where complexity is met with curiosity and challenges with creativity, and the polymath spirit is a guiding light toward a more adaptable, resilient, and thriving world.



# Nabla Symbol

We've adopted the Nabla  $\nabla$  symbol as the symbol for Polymathy.

The Nabla  $\nabla$  symbol, resembling an inverted triangle, is traditionally used in vector calculus to denote gradient, divergence, and curl – concepts that involve differentiating in multiple directions. This mathematical usage mirrors the polymath's approach to life and learning: exploring various directions, dimensions, and depths. Just as the Nabla operates across multiple axes in mathematics, a polymath navigates through diverse fields, synthesizing and integrating knowledge to create something new and extraordinary.

For polymaths, the journey is not just about acquiring knowledge in breadth; it's also about diving deep. The inverted nature of the delta symbolizes this dive – going beyond the surface, delving into the depths of multiple disciplines. It represents a relentless pursuit of understanding, not just in one specialized area but across a spectrum of subjects. This depth and breadth equip polymaths with a unique lens to view problems, seeing connections and solutions that might be invisible to the specialist's eye.

The Nabla symbol in the context of a polymath also signifies the point of convergence – where ideas, disciplines, and perspectives intersect. These intersections are where innovation thrives. In a world that often operates in silos, the polymath's ability to connect and intersect these silos is invaluable. They bring a holistic view, weaving together threads from various disciplines to create a rich tapestry of understanding and innovation.



# Feedback

We invite Polymath Forum Members to send their questions, suggestions, and feedback. Your insights remain invaluable to us.

Polymath Forum Board:

- **Aksinya Samoylova**
- **Dr. Jonatan Vignatti**
- **Edwin Korver**

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