

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/opportunities-in-obscurity>

Kyle Forster, co-founder of Big Switch Networks, describes how becoming an expert in lesser known technologies can put one in a position to become a manager or leader within an organization. Seeking out those opportunities may pave a “non-linear” path into leadership, but mastery of an arcane area could increase your value exponentially, Forster says.



Transcript

And when I think about my early career breakout moments, they weren't from being a general business leader, they were actually from being an expert in some possibly very arcane corner of technology.. My first company, there were five of us that had this kind of semi-professional hobby of doing mobile development and you see PalmOS, this was like way before mobile development was cool.. We had enough customer demand within the company that the management team decided to formalize a practice around this and I wound up leading that practice and it wasn't because I was in any way qualified, in fact I was very unqualified for it, I wound up managing a team of 50 engineers frankly because I was one of only five people that knew a lot about this technology and of the five there were really two of us who - we kind of went all in, this was something which talked about to all of our colleagues who were very excited about, really showed a lot of passion around and we were just a few months ahead in terms of our expertise and in terms of our experimentation than everybody else.. So, on your kind of path from where you sit today whether you're going into an internship this summer or whether you've got a job lined up for the fall, or you're kind of thinking about anywhere in between.. I'd really encourage you to spend a little bit of time thinking about not a linear path into a leadership role, but think about an area of expertise that you can develop, where you can be your organization's most valued expert or ideally the industry's because there are opportunities there for exponential leadership growth...