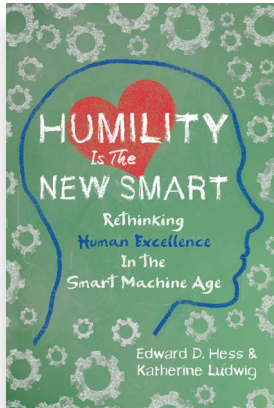


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Edward D. Hess

Edward D. Hess is professor of business administration at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business.

### Katherine Ludwig

Katherine Ludwig is a research, editing and publishing associate at the Darden School of Business.

# Humility is the New Smart

## THE SUMMARY

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### Introduction: Why You Should Read This Book

Society is on the leading edge of a technology tsunami. Advances in artificial intelligence, the internet of Things, virtual reality, robotics, nanotechnology, deep learning, mapping the human brain, and biomedical, genetic, and cyborg engineering will revolutionize how most of us live and work. Technology will be able to learn, as well as teach and program itself. We call this next big step the Smart Machine Age, or SMA.

The SMA has the potential to be as disruptive and transformative for us as the Agricultural Age and Industrial Revolution were for our ancestors. In the last few decades, the American worker has been outsourced, off-shored, and automated on many factory floors and in many routine tasks. Up next is a broader and more encompassing automation that will likely affect many more workers, including many professionals. This new reality should cause many of us to ask:

*Could a robot or smart machine replace me?*

*How can I thrive in this new era?*

*What can I do now to start preparing for the SMA?*

*What could this mean for my career plans? Will I have meaningful work?*

*What do my children need to do to begin preparing for this new age?*

# Humility is the New Smart

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While automation has been happening for decades, now technology is even beginning to replace knowledge workers—accountants, business managers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, researchers, architects, higher-education teachers, and consultants. Smart technologies will become ubiquitous, invading and changing many aspects of our professional and personal lives and in many ways challenging our fundamental beliefs about success, opportunity, and the American Dream.

The best research to date indicates a high probability that technology will replace 47 percent of US jobs or displace as many as eighty million US workers within the next ten to twenty years.

The consensus view is that humans will be needed to perform those skills that either compliment technology or constitute what machines can't yet do well, and that list includes critical thinking, innovative thinking, creativity, and the kind of high emotional engagement with others that fosters relationship building and collaboration. We call these SMA Skills.

Other experts—whom we call the “techno-optimists”—are predicting that technology will produce plenty of new jobs to replace those lost because that's what happened in the Industrial Revolution. In other words, they believe history will repeat itself. We're skeptical of that view. Our prediction, based on the data, is that this upheaval in the number and types of available jobs will require high-level thinking, creativity, and high emotional intelligence.

The purpose of this book is to propose how we can become much better thinkers, listeners, relaters, and collaborators and overcome our culture of obsessive individualism in order to thrive in the SMA.

This book is a call to action for anyone seventeen or older. The smart machines are coming, and we need to get ready! We invite you to read on and learn how to think, listen, relate, and collaborate better in order to reach your highest potential at work and in life. We invite you to join us in pursuing human excellence in the SMA.

## PART 1: A NEW MENTAL MODEL FOR THE SMART MACHINE AGE

### Chapter 1 - The Smart Machine Age: A New Game Requires New Rules

In the age of these smart machines—what we're calling the Smart Machine Age or SMA—operational excellence may well become almost totally technology-driven, making human innovation the key to value creation. Organizations will need their people to be hyper-learners who can adapt to rapidly changing environments. These needs are unlike what was required in the command-and-control-style organizations of the Industrial Age or more recently with respect to the repetitive and routine nature of knowledge work. Agility, adaptability, and responsiveness also will be required for most, and thus organizational efficiency will be necessary but no longer sufficient.

# Humility is the New Smart

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The type of human learning that will be required is continuous and iterative learning, where one's beliefs are constantly stress-tested against changing phenomena and adapted to better reflect reality. Those human processes are not efficient. In fact, they are hard and emotionally messy.

Humans can no longer add value by merely accumulating or analyzing knowledge, and it's now believed that most knowledge has a less than three-year shelf life. What you think you "know" is so quickly out of date that you must continually update your learning. Moreover, it'll be impossible for humans to know more facts or concepts, or be able to process, remember, recall, pattern match or synthesize more data than a smart machine.

Instead, to be marketable and stay relevant in the SMA, humans will need to excel at the kinds of jobs and skills that either complement technology or are those that technology cannot do well—at least not yet. That list includes critical thinking, innovative thinking, creativity, and high emotional engagement with others that fosters relationship building and collaboration. Collectively we refer to those as the SMA Skills. (Note that by creativity we mean to refer to the original expression of ideas and thoughts, including through art and otherwise. By innovation, we mean to refer to the commercialization of new ideas, methods, or things.)

The SMA is a new reality requiring new ideas and rules. Our old quality-based notion of smart, what we call Old Smart, is the new "stupid." Knowledge workers, you've been warned. Developing the behaviors and ultimately the skills that will give us a chance for human excellence in the SMA, then, requires that we first change our mental model of what it means to be smart and what it takes to succeed.

## **Chapter 2 - NewSmart: A New Definition of "Smart"**

To change our mental model for the SMA, we first need to accept a quality-based definition of "being smart"—a NewSmart—that we define as excelling at the highest level of thinking, learning, and emotionally engaging with others that one is capable of doing. NewSmart is a measure not of *what* you know or *how much* you know but of

- the quality of your thinking, listening, collaborating, and learning.
- how good you are at "not knowing" and decoupling your beliefs (not values) from your ego.
- how good you are at being open to continually stress-testing your belief about how the world works.
- how good you are at trying out new ideas and ways to accomplish your objectives and learning from those experiments.

# Humility is the New Smart

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Humans can't compete with technology on "smarts," at least not in the traditional way we have come to understand that term. We need to embrace a new definition of smart, because we are heavily invested in Old Smart behaviors and need to understand how they inhibit us. So what does the high-quality thinking, learning, and emotional engagement underlying NewSmart look like in practice?

We've determined that five principles exemplify NewSmart:

1. I'm defined not by what I know or how much I know, but by the quality of my thinking, listening, relating, and collaborating. I will not identify with the content of any belief, but only identify with the way I come to my beliefs. I view collaboration not as a competition to see who is right but rather a conversation to find the most accurate answer.
2. My mental models are not reality—they are only my generalized stories of how my world works.
3. I'm not my ideas, and I must decouple my beliefs (not values) from my ego. (If you identify too closely with your ideas, you will take offense when they are challenged.)
4. I must be open-minded and treat my beliefs (not values) as hypotheses to be constantly tested and subject to modification by better data.
5. My mistakes and failures are opportunities to learn. We're not suggesting that every mistake and failure is acceptable, particularly if you're making the same mistakes over and over. That's not learning.

NewSmart is already relevant today, but its importance will rise to mission critical over the next decade, as the SMA engulfs many workplaces. Whether you work for a big company or a small company or you're a freelancer or entrepreneur, your success will depend on the quality of your thinking and your abilities to connect and emotionally engage with other people.

## **Chapter 3 - Humility: The Gateway to Human Excellence in the SMA**

Humility is rarely associated with intellectual aptitude or professional success in Western societies, especially in the United States. That's because synonyms for *Humility* often include *lowliness*, *meekness*, and *submissiveness*—characteristics that would seem to be the antithesis of achievement and success.

Our definition of Humility comes from our study of it as a philosophical, intellectual virtue and psychological construct. We define Humility as a mindset about oneself that is open-minded, self-accurate, and "not all about me," and that enables one to embrace the world as it "is" in the pursuit of human excellence.

# Humility is the New Smart

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That doesn't mean thinking less of yourself, but it does mean thinking about yourself less (e.g., how you look, what other people are thinking or saying about you; how you're coming across; how you're being judged). It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

What ultimately is needed to thrive in the coming SMA is this kind of openness to perceiving and processing the world more as it is and not merely as we believe or would like it to be. That is what's at the heart of our definition of humility. In the SMA, we all will have to acknowledge the need to spend less time focused on "big me" and instead balance our competitive spirit with a collaborative spirit, because critical thinking, innovative thinking, and high emotional engagement are all team sports—"big us."

We're not saying that a complete loss of self-interest or ambition is advisable. Certainly not. The problem is not in being more successful than others but in needing to prove that we're better/smarter/more special than others in order to feel successful, which leads to the kind of ego defensiveness that gets in our own way. It's that kind of excessive self-focus that's not in our long-term interest in the SMA.

Instead, the outward focus that follows from a Humility mindset is what's in our best interest. Truly effective teamwork, collaboration, and innovation can't happen when we're defensive or when we're too tied up in looking or feeling superior to our colleagues, teammates, clients, or customers (big "me"). We must instead approach the SMA with Humility (big "us").

Humility is the gateway to human excellence in the SMA. We believe that it's necessary in order to excel at the foundational NewSmart Behaviors which underlie the highest levels of thinking, learning, and emotionally engaging with others—the SMA Skills. We hope that you will deeply and seriously consider adopting Humility as your mindset.

## PART 2: NEWSMART BEHAVIORS

People are more inclined to change their behavior if they first change their personal mental model—their views of self and world—in a manner that supports those new behaviors. In other words, beliefs drive behaviors, and we believe that accepting the NewSmart definitions and the Humility mindset will enable you to embrace the NewSmart Behaviors that underlie the SMA Skills.

Good intentions are not enough. You must slow down and make daily, thoughtful choices and exert effort to engage in the behaviors that will allow you to develop the skills you'll need to survive and thrive.

# Humility is the New Smart

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## Chapter 4 - Quieting Ego

Quieting Ego is how we can deliberately work to reduce our reflexive emotional defensiveness; have empathy and open-mindedness; engage in reflexive Listening; and proactively seek other people's feedback and perspectives to stress-test our own thinking. Quieting Ego is a way of practicing and operationalizing Humility.

To quiet our ego is to perceive others and the world without filtering everything through a self-focused lens and to tamp down on negative or self-protective "inner talk" that is driven consciously or subconsciously by our fears and insecurities. In many cases those perceptions are untrue, and this tendency to self-focus and distort reality negatively affects our behavior, thinking, and ability to relate to and engage with others.

Take a moment to think about your inner talk. We all have fears and insecurities, and we all want to be accepted, appreciated, and loved; however, we differ in the degree and the manner in which we choose to deal with our fears and insecurities. The purpose of quieting that self-focused inner talk is to be more open to perceiving the world as it really is—not as we wish or have rationalized it to be. This clearer, more open and accurate reception is necessary to be highly proficient at the four SMA skills.

We have found that the most effective way to quiet our ego is through practicing mindfulness. Quieting Ego through mindfulness results in heightened attention and awareness to experience and reality—in the present moment—that is open and receptive without bias or distortion. (Most adults spend only about 50 percent of their time in the present moment.) It's brutal honesty without the brutality.

That sounds simple, but of course achieving nonjudgmental mindfulness is anything but simple. Why? We're so judgmental by nature because our egos get in the way of seeing things objectively and because we're too concerned with defending our egos and with evaluating ourselves to just "be" and just "see" clearly.

Meditation is one way to improve mindfulness, to quiet our egos, and to behave with humility. Another way to practice Quieting Ego is through gratitude. Studies of gratitude have discovered wide-ranging physical and psychological benefits associated with it. A more recent study showed that gratitude and Humility are mutually reinforcing. You can see how taking the time to thank others for helping you or making your life better or easier is important because it requires you to focus on the value of others.

## Chapter 5 - Managing Self: Thinking and Emotions

Managing Self—our emotions and thinking—aids us in engaging in the higher-level thinking and behavior required by SMA Skills. It's necessary to remain open-minded and be willing to test



# Humility is the New Smart

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our beliefs and modify our points of view if presented with better data. It's also how we're able to overcome our fear of mistakes in order to take ownership of them and learn from them, and helps us more effectively relate to and collaborate with others.

We all, of course, use self-regulation and emotional intelligence every day—when we decide to ignore distractions to do our work or recognize when we need to walk away from someone before we say something we'll regret.

Some of us do these things a lot better than others, but all of us struggle to self-regulate our basic humanity which includes our biases, fears, insecurities, and natural fight-flee-or-freeze response to stress and anxiety. We all can do better, however, and increasingly we must—the SMA will require that we do so.

Can you see how the tendency to “forget the self” and accept one's strengths, weaknesses, and mistakes, which comes with a mindset of Humility, puts you in a better frame of mind to manage your thinking and emotions?

A fundamental component of managing ourselves is the simplest to understand but not always the simplest to do. That would be slowing down. This seems counterintuitive to the cultural pressures in this day and age of doing more and more, faster and faster, with fewer and fewer resources. What we are talking about, again, is being mindful; slowing down to pay adequate attention and curb our reflexive cognitive and emotional ways.

Our experience is that slowing down makes it easier to know when to switch from autopilot to intentional thinking mode. It also makes it easier to quiet one's ego and be more open-minded and less revved up and primed to emotionally defend, deny, or deflect different ideas or challenges to your thinking.

Managing “how you think” is also fundamental to becoming NewSmart and to defining yourself as a high-quality thinker willing to treat all your beliefs (not values) as hypotheses subject to stress tests and modification by better data (that is, to think like a good scientist).

Managing our emotions and behavioral reactivity is also important to managing ourselves, and so is our ability to understand and react appropriately to other people's emotions—which together constitute emotional intelligence (EI). This is so very important because so much of the value-added work humans will do in the SMA will be done in small teams. Sensitivity to other people's emotions has been found to be a key to effective collaboration (and we cannot stress enough how important collaboration is to the SMA Skills).

# Humility is the New Smart

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## Chapter 6 - Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is so important because it underlies all the SMA Skills. Your thinking and learning are limited by cognitive biases, emotional defensiveness, ego and fear. You need, then, to truly listen to others to open your mind, push past your biases and mental models, and mitigate self-absorption in order to collaborate and build better relationships.

It's hard for any of us to critique our own thinking and truly think critically. We're just too wired to confirm what we already believe, and we feel too comfortable having a cohesive simple story of how our world works. We need to have thinking "partners" who force us to confront those biases, and we need to listen to them.

Likewise, the most effective way to think innovatively is to think with others in small teams made up of people who have experiences and training different than us. Again, Reflective Listening is key to this kind of collaborating.

Lastly, emotionally engaging with others requires Quieting Ego and having sympathy, and that's both enabled and evidenced by listening reflectively to them. Reflective Listening indicates that you care about what the other person is saying, which builds the positive regard that leads to trusting relationships.

Listening is the way most of us learn. To be a good listener you have to be totally focused on the speaker with an open mind. You have to listen in a non-judgmental way, with the only goal being to try to understand what the other person is saying before you prepare and deliver your response. Good listeners ask questions to make sure that they understand before responding, or they paraphrase and repeat back what they believe that the person said and ask if they've understood correctly.

Taking the time to slow down and try on a new idea and see how it feels is what we mean by Reflective Listening. Note that this is exactly what mindfulness strives for—a quiet mind that can focus non-judgmentally on what's real and true and present.

## Chapter 7 - Otherness: Emotionally Connecting and Relating to Others

By now, we hope that you understand how important it is to seek the help of others to thrive in the SMA. We need others because we can't think, innovate, or relate at our best alone. To relate to other people you first have to make a connection with them. It is by building a relationship over time that you build trust, and when you have caring trust, you have set the stage for the highest level of human engagement.

We are all just "people who need people" in order to do our best thinking and learning—and doing that is critical for human excellence in the SMA. So how do you get better at connecting and relating? It's quite obvious that connecting and relating to people is inhibited by arrogance, self-absorption,



# Humility is the New Smart

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self-centeredness, not listening, closed-mindedness, lack of empathy, emotional defensiveness, and the ego protection and fear that flow from the Old Smart mental model.

Accepting NewSmart and Humility as well as practicing Quieting Ego, Managing Self, and Reflective Listening lays the groundwork for relationship building with others.

What else can you do to help yourself better focus on and connect with other people? Here are five keys to connecting with others: (1) be present, (2) be genuine, (3) communicate affirmation, (4) listen effectively, and (5) communicate support. Trust doesn't just happen—it takes hard work, and it requires slowing down and taking time to be genuine with and care about other people.

## **Chapter 8 - Your NewSmart Behaviors Assessment Tool**

When you assess your strengths and weaknesses with respect to the four NewSmart Behaviors that we believe underlie the higher-level thinking and emotional engagement skills that humans will need to master in order to thrive in the SMA, you may find you have lots of areas that need improvement. Most people do because few of us have ever had any formal training on how to excel at the key NewSmart Behaviors.

So don't get discouraged if you need to improve on all of them. We have also learned that many of those who have had some training on a particular behavior don't necessarily practice the behaviors as much as they think. There's often a big gap between what we know and what we actually do.

One lesson we have learned from our research is that people who are very good at thinking, listening, relating, and managing their thinking and emotions never take it for granted. They stay focused on it daily by using processes, checklists, templates, and feedback. They are constructively paranoid about slippage and reverting back to our natural proclivities of lazy thinking and emotional defensiveness. They understand that it requires motivation to excel and self-discipline to work daily on improving themselves.

You will make mistakes. Learn from them and stay the course. Take it one day at a time. You'll never reach perfection, but you can incrementally improve. Striving to reach your highest potential is a never-ending process that can be a meaningful learning journey in itself.

## **PART 3: THE NEWSMART ORGANIZATION**

### **Chapter 9 - Leading a NewSmart Organization**

Creating the kind of work environment most conducive to humans excelling at the four SMA Skills and reaching their highest potential in the SMA requires an organizational system in which the

# Humility is the New Smart

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structure, culture, human resource policies, leadership behaviors, measurements, rewards, and processes are aligned seamlessly in a self-reinforcing manner that embraces and encourages the NewSmart + Humility mental model and NewSmart Behaviors.

## ***Old Cultural Ways***

*Individual wins, Play cards close to chest, Highest ranking person wins, Listen to confirm, Telling, Knowing, IQ, Mistakes are bad, Compete, Self-promote.*

## ***New Cultural Ways***

*Teams win, Transparency, Best idea wins, Listen to learn, Asking questions, Being good at not knowing, IQ & EQ, Mistakes are learning opportunities, Collaborate, Self-reflect.*

The ultimate challenge for humans in the SMA is to have the self-discipline daily to do the work to excel at the four SMA Skills. Embracing NewSmart and the Humility mindset and practicing the NewSmart Behaviors are a good start. We must also acknowledge and accept that engaging in the type of “messy” human activity necessary to create the highest levels of human thinking, innovating, and creating is not always comfortable or pleasant.

Subjecting our thinking to daily critique may not always be comfortable. It won't be comfortable to disagree respectfully with the crowd or higher-ups, own our mistakes, face our fears, or manage our ego. People need help to stay the path. That help can come from the organization's culture, processes, and leadership role modeling, as well as from empathetic teammates who know the difficulty and who will need each other's empathy about the same issues.

The journey we see coming for human excellence in the SMA is not efficient, nor does it happen easily, or quickly become second nature, because it requires us to go against evolutionary conditioning as well as more recent cultural norms and pressures. Nonetheless, we know it can be done because we have seen it done. We believe that the best-performing organizations in the coming decades will be those that are hyper-focused on developing their people and helping them to achieve human excellence. These organizations will be places where people will have the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

## **Your NewSmart Organizational Assessment Tool**

We believe that people-centricity and high employee engagement are necessary to take an organization to the highest levels of human excellence. That requires Positivity, meeting employee's Self-Determination needs, and Psychological Safety, along with a commitment to continuous iterative learning and human development.

# Humility is the New Smart

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Where do you start? Here's what we recommend:

1. Identify the specific mindsets and behaviors that you want to enable and promote.
2. Design an organizational system that enables and promotes those behaviors. By *system* we mean an organization's structure, culture, human resource policies, leadership behaviors, measurements, rewards, and processes. This system must be aligned and seamless to send consistent messages.
3. Note that processes are necessary—they facilitate self-discipline and help mitigate human autopilot tendencies.

## **Epilogue: Our Invitation to You**

Our purpose in writing this book is to invite you to consider a new way of thinking and behaving—a new “story”—for the SMA. Our story has two heroes, NewSmart and Humility, and four supporting actors—the NewSmart Behaviors—which will be necessary for you to excel cognitively and emotionally in the SMA and thus increase your chances of being successful in a world transformed by technology.

We invite you to begin implementing your NewSmart Behaviors Personal Improvement Plan so you'll have a better chance of creating meaning work and meaningful relationships in a world driven by ever-advancing technology. You have the choice to break the chains of automaticity, to quiet your ego, to listen reflectively, to manage your thinking and emotions, and to emotionally connect and relate to others in order to reach your full potential in the SMA.

All of us, and our children and grandchildren, can be served by a new mental model and the behaviors that enable the highest levels of human thinking, learning, emotionally engaging with others, and making meaning together, as we all try to navigate a volatile new world that is likely to be upon us within the decade.