

The Wise Worker is Shrewd

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Proverbs

A persistent myth in some circles is that the shrewdest leaders scorn advice. Their very shrewdness consists of seeing opportunities that others are too low to glimpse. It is true that just because many people advise something, that doesn't make it wise. If an idea is bad or wrong ("against the Lord"), no chorus of yes-men can make it good or wise.

But the myth of the genius who succeeds against all advice is seldom true in reality. Creativity and excellence build on multiple points of view. Innovation takes account of the known in order to step into the unknown, and great leaders who reject the conventional wisdom have usually mastered it first, before moving beyond it.

A shrewd person acts to improve her skill set or knowledge.

As the industrial economy in the developed world has given way to a technological economy, continual training and education have become indispensable for employers and employees. In fact, this is becoming the case in many emerging economies as well. The work you are prepared for today is not likely to be the work you will be doing 10 years from now. A shrewd worker recognizes this and retrain for the next opportunity in the workplace. Likewise it is becoming harder for employers to find workers with the skills needed for many of today's jobs. The highest-performing individuals, organizations and societies will be those who develop effective systems for lifelong learning.