

The Fox And The Hedgehog: The Triumphs And Perils Of Going Big

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The Greek poet Archilochus wrote, “the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.”

There are many different interpretations of this parable, but [psychologist Phil Tetlock](#) sees it as a way of understanding two cognitive styles: Foxes have different strategies for different problems. They are comfortable with nuance; they can live with contradictions. Hedgehogs, on the other hand, focus on the big picture. They reduce every problem to one organizing principle.

“The hedgehogs are more the big idea people, more decisive. In most MBA programs, they’d probably be viewed as better leadership material,” Tetlock says.

This week, we have the story of a hedgehog by the name of Don Laub: a young surgeon who was eager to make his mark. In his words, he wanted to “do a big thing, and help a lot of people.”