FIREFIRST

DISCUSSION GUIDE & ACTION PLAN

— LIZ WISEMAN —
ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is an accompaniment guide for ROOKIE SMARTS by Liz Wiseman.

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ROOKIE SMARTS by Liz Wiseman
Available where books are sold.

Visit www.RookieSmarts.com for additional information, resources, and to sign up for Liz’s free tips email newsletter.
THE ROOKIE SMARTS FIRESTARTER

If you want to facilitate a group discussion or take a more personal introspective look at *Rookie Smarts*, this guide can serve as your personal firestarter kit. The questions and action-based activities will help you exchange ideas, raise issues, and discuss new possibilities, either by yourself, as a book club, or as a team in the workplace.

To get started, make sure you have your copy of *Rookie Smarts* and either read it in advance or read it as you utilize this guide.

*In this booklet you will find:*

A. Warm Up

B. Teleport Yourself Experiment

C. Firestarter Questions

D. Rookie Smart Itineraries
WARM UP
Warm up by asking yourself or your team to summarize your key take-aways, ideas, and insights from *Rookie Smarts*.

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ROOKIE SMARTS EXPERIMENT

TELEPORT YOURSELF

Set the tone for the conversation by running the Teleport Yourself experiment. Transport yourself in time and place to when you were starting your first professional job after college. Remember how you felt, what you did, and how you approached the work. Use this insight to provide leadership to your team, a new college graduate, an employee in a rookie assignment, and even to renew your own work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RETURN</th>
<th>Identify a time when you were a rookie (inexperienced, new to an important task)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When was it? Year:.Month:.Day:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where were you?</td>
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<tr>
<th>RECALL</th>
<th>What were you nervous or worried about?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What didn’t you worry about?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What were you hopeful about?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What could you see that others couldn’t?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who did you seek out for expertise or guidance?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What did you do to prove yourself quickly?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you get feedback and stay on track?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What mistakes did you make? How did you recover?</td>
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<tr>
<th>RENEW</th>
<th>How would this rookie version of you approach your current job?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>What specifically would you do differently?</td>
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CAVEAT: If possible, actually physically return to the scene of your first time. Go back to your old office or put on your interview suit and go sit in the building lobby of your first job and remember what it was like.

PROMISE: As we gain experience, we increase knowledge and capability, but we also can become callous or blinded by our expertise. By remembering how we worked when we were new, we can combine the best of expertise and naiveté.
QUESTIONS FOR ACTION PLAN/FIRE STARTER

Once the tone has been set and rookie minds are engaged, use a few of the following questions to start a thought-provoking conversation. If you are using this packet by yourself, journal space is provided for you to write down your answers.

CHAPTER 1
THE RISE OF THE ROOKIE

1. How is it possible to be “at our best” when doing something for the first time? __________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Who do you know that is an excellent example of a rookie in action? ________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Why do we find rookie experiences both very challenging and very rewarding? _______________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
4. What research findings from the book surprised you the most? Why? ____________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. In what circumstances do you want to operate like a rookie? In what circumstances do you need to use the savvy and wisdom of experience? __________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Where can rookies be valuable in your business’s or your organization’s mission? ______________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

7. What are the organizational forces that pull us toward the “veteran comfort zone” (operating like caretakers, local guides, marathoners, and settlers)? How can we counter these forces? _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
1. What causes us to get weighed down and entrenches us in our views? 

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2. How can we unencumber ourselves, so we can explore new ideas and innovate? 

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3. What is preventing us from asking the naive, fundamental questions (the ones that most people are thinking, but no one is willing to ask)? 

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
1. Why do we get stuck in the “echo chamber” where we hear opinions that support our existing views and receive information that validates our current practices?  ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. How can we escape the “echo chamber?”  ______________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. Where is the “echo chamber” deafening someone on a critical issue?  ________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

4. How can we ensure mentoring doesn’t just happen top-down, but also flows bottom-up?  ______________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
5. What would you like to learn being mentored by a rookie? What would you like to teach a veteran? _____________
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CHAPTER 4
FIREWALKERS

1. What’s the difference between self-confidence and situational confidence? Why is low situational confidence advantageous? _______________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Why can it be dangerous to operate at a steady, consistent pace? __________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. What keeps experienced professionals and managers from getting the feedback they most need? How else might they get the feedback they need? ________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
4. How can we create space for people to experiment and quickly test new ideas? ________________

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CHAPTER 5

1. How do we (both as individuals and as a team) benefit from our “settling” behaviors (building secure infrastructure, policies, etc.)? ________________

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2. How might our existing tools, infrastructure, or protocols be keeping us from innovating? ________________

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
3. What are the signs that someone (or an organization) is truly hungry for success?  
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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Where have we become too comfortable and need a push out to the frontier?  
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. What might an exciting pioneering expedition look like for you in your current role?  
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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

CHAPTER 6  
THE PERPETUAL ROOKIE

1. Who do you know who is a perpetual rookie — someone who, despite experience and success, can still operate with a rookie mindset? What drives him or her?  
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
2. How can you tell if someone is intellectually curious? Humble? ________________________________________________

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3. What helps you to maintain a youthful orientation to your work? ________________________________________________

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4. Who do you know who is a perpetual rookie? How do they maintain this orientation? How do they cultivate it in others? ________________________________________________

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CHAPTER 7

ROOKIE REVIVAL

1. What are the signs that you’re not operating in rookie mode? ________________________________________________

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2. What helps you shift from a mode of knowing to a mode of learning? ______________________________________

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3. How can we help people rediscover their rookie style of thinking and operating? ______________________________

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4. What challenges might you have with balancing your veteran experience with your rookie smarts in your work?

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5. Why is it easier to see when a colleague has lost their rookie smarts than it is with ourselves? _________________

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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
CHAPTER 8
THE ROOKIE ORGANIZATION

1. How can we better utilize rookie talent on our team? ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What do people in a rookie assignment need from their managers and leaders to be successful? ________________
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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. How can we combine rookie and veteran talent to form powerful teams? ________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. What conditions need to exist within a team to make the best use of both types of talents? _________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
5. What can we do as an organization to help all professionals stay in the rookie zone?

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6. Which of the talent management strategies suggested in the book could have the greatest impact for our team? ___

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7. In what part of our operation must we ensure that we maintain our rookie smarts?

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8. What is the simplest first step we can take?

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ROOKIE SMART
ITINERARIES

To help you apply the theories of *Rookie Smarts*, my colleagues and I have created a set of learning itineraries. They are meant to guide your learning journey, much like a recommended travel itinerary might serve as a starting point for the adventure of a lifetime. Each itinerary maps out the first steps in one of eight different scenarios in which you might seek to strengthen your rookie smarts.

Each itinerary includes a starting point, a destination, and learning experiments along the way that will get you to your rookie destination. The path moves “up a learning curve,” so start at the bottom left and traverse your way up and to the right!

The last itinerary is available for you to fill in, so that you can create your own rookie smarts adventure of a lifetime.
Hazel Jackson is CEO and founding partner of biz-group, a management consultancy company based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, that provides leadership training, teambuilding, and business coaching. Hazel Cowling is partner and consultant director at biz-group responsible for managing accounts and developing the consultant workforce.

A. Starting Point
Your company has been growing fast for the last five years, but the competition is nipping at your heels. Innovation is taking longer, and you fear this will only get worse. Access to timely data is a bottleneck to fast decision making and innovation execution.

1. Wipe the Slate
Return to a mental state when you were delighted with the work that each member of your team was delivering. Ditch any baggage you have about disappointing performance. Run your next weekly meeting in this state of mind.

2. Throw Away your Notes
Throw away the agenda for your next strategy meeting and ask the team to bring what they believe is important for you to know. Remain totally open and use naïve questions to get deeper into their selection of topics.

B. Destination
The company maintains fast growth in revenue and profit by accelerating the pace of innovation and remaining agile. The team moves with a sense of urgency and balances risks by using the relevant management information. Managers read numbers with a rookie mindset, seeing between the lines to find the lurking fresh ideas and opportunities.

3. Staple Yourself to a Problem
Spend three days in the finance team, following the existing process. Get into the weeds and learn why it takes so long to pull management information and how to extract information quickly and accurately.
ITINERARY 2

SHARPENING YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

BY SALLY CRAWFORD & ROBERT DUPLANTIER

A. Starting Point

Your company used to move fast but has become slow and is settling into “the way we do it here.” While your company is enjoying the fruits of earlier labors, more nimble competitors are eating away at your market share. You watch competitors release new features faster than you can coalesce agreement on what features to include in the next product release. How can you move swiftly and re-establish your competitive edge?

B. Destination

While many parts of the organization are still slow to change, you’ve built muscle for experimentation and rapid innovation and have proof-points to help mobilize the rest of the organization.

1. Wipe the Slate

Ensure your projects have clearly defined beginnings and ends. Implement the agile development method where product development is done in “sprints” – short bursts of work with clearly defined functionality. Clearly punctuating work cycles provides a sense of completion, builds energy and momentum, and enables the company to respond nimbly to changes in the market.

2. Get Your Hands Dirty

Examine your business from an outsider’s perspective. Spend time with your customers to see how they are using and adapting your products. Let your rookies lead the customer conversations – they will ask questions (and get answers) you never thought of. Examine your business through your competitor’s lens. Instead of dismissing their claims, look for areas where you have a competitive vulnerability.

3. Risk & Iterate

Experiment with rapid prototyping in one part of your business. Instead of designing in long cycles, go “straight to making” and get immediate feedback. Start with a small team, but excuse them from the usual procedures and rules. See how fast they can go from idea to prototype.

Sally Crawford is vice president of the leadership development practice at the Wiseman Group and leads the education business worldwide. Previously she was the CEO of a firm specializing in technology transfer and adoption.

Robert Duplantier is a senior HR leader with 15 years of experience in human resources development, management, and analytics.
Mario Borghino is an expert consultant and keynote speaker in the fields of strategic planning, leadership, and innovation. He has authored six books (some of the top bestsellers in Latin America). He advises CEOs and government officials.
ITINERARY 4
RECHARGING YOUR SCHOOL’S LEADERSHIP TEAM
BY ELISE FOSTER & ALYSSA GALLAGHER

Elise Foster teaches leadership to and coaches business and educational leaders. She is the co-author of The Multiplier Effect: Tapping the Genius Inside Our Schools.

Alyssa Gallagher is the director of strategic initiatives & community partnerships at the Los Altos School District. She was named as the Multiplier of the Year in Education for 2013.

1. Make a Map
   Try seeing your school through the eyes of a student. Sit in a student, teacher, or colleague’s seat and walk the halls as they do. How do these observations inform the work of your leadership team?

2. Talk to Strangers
   Connect with principals of other schools or leaders outside of education altogether. Recharge by learning about what’s happening in health care, business, or the local Boys & Girls Club.

3. Try to Get Fired
   List the top ten changes your team would make to improve student learning if you weren’t afraid. Share the list with your superintendent, president of the Teachers’ Association, or member of the School Board.

4. Risk & Iterate
   We’ve created “maker spaces” for our students, but where is the playground for school leadership teams? Set-up a playground for your team, where everyone can experiment with procedures, processes, and the status quo. Let your staff meeting be your sandbox - change the location, invite students, or frame the agenda with three big questions to encourage collaboration.

A. Starting Point
   The daily pressures of leading a school can be exhausting and all consuming. Your team is caught up in the day to day and you are struggling to deliver on the bold vision you set for your school.

B. Destination
   When your team steps outside of the fray and gains new perspectives, you all can be more present with your staff, students, and community. The fresh perspective and recharge may be just what your team needs to deliver on that bold vision (or make it even bolder).
ITINERARY 5
KEEPING YOUR CHURCH CONGREGATION VIBRANT & HOPEFUL
BY HEIDI BRANDOW & BILL HYBELS

Heidi Brandow is a senior advisor in leadership development at World Vision International. She is also a master practitioner and learning designer for the Wiseman Group.

Bill Hybels is senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church and chair of the board for Willow Creek Association. He is a bestselling author of more than 20 books, including Leadership Axioms and Simplify: Ten Practices to Unclutter Your Soul.

A. Starting Point
You want to build ministries that bring hope and help to those in need. But you realize you can’t do it alone. You must create a vibrant church culture that inspires and engages others to use their gifts, talents, and passions to lead those ministries.

1. Reverse the Mentoring
Determine your area of greatest interest and least understanding. Ask one of your new staff members or volunteers with expertise in that area to help you learn. Ask questions and learn from their answers.

2. Talk to Strangers
Humble learners can learn from anyone. Find authors with whom you disagree—and read them. Gather input from people outside your congregation to understand the greatest needs of your community. Take what you learn and see what changes your congregation needs.

3. Get Your Hands Dirty
Take a step back and serve in an area that you passed on to someone else long ago. Pay attention to what has changed and find new ways of serving and leading in that space.

B. Destination
Your church has a vibrant culture, where ministries are led by engaged staff and volunteers who are empowered to innovate, learn from their mistakes, and bring others alongside them to produce results. The staff and congregation alike are finding fulfillment by using their God-given talents and gifts, and even the newest member has a significant contribution to make.
ITINERARY 6
STEPPING INTO A NEW, BIGGER JOB
BY DEEPA KRISHNAN

Deepa Krishnan is a firm believer in Rookie Smarts, having held various positions in law, business development, and product management. She is currently a VP of Product Strategy and Development at a late-stage startup in San Francisco, and holds a J.D. from UCLA and a B.A. from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.

A. Starting Point
You’ve just been promoted into a management position in your company. The only problem is that the job is about two sizes too big, and you’ve been asked to take over a function for which you have no direct experience. The business is taking a chance on you, and you don’t want to disappoint.

1. Ask Naive Questions
In your first few weeks, you have extraordinary leeway to ask questions. Set up meetings with individuals throughout the organization, and ask the same question five different ways, if that helps you solidify the answer in your head. It’s a great idea to keep an “I Don’t Know” list during this time period, and if a colleague can’t answer a specific question, ask them to refer you to someone else who might have the answer.

2. Get Your Hands Dirty
There’s no better way to understand than to jump in and get your hands dirty. Find out what your team is already working on, and offer yourself as a resource. When you find yourself needing to assign new tasks, keep a few for yourself, so that you can build your domain expertise and simultaneously lessen the load on your team.

3. Multiply Your Expertise
By now, having asked naive questions and gotten your hands dirty, you have built a rough framework for the position. It’s time to fill in the holes and add depth to your knowledge. Seek out experts in the field and tap into their brilliant minds. Fight the temptation to jump to quick conclusions, and instead, listen hard until patterns start to reveal themselves to you.

B. Destination
It’s month three at your new job and you are a humble yet confident leader, bringing fresh insight to the organization. Most importantly, you believe in yourself and the job no longer feels two sizes too big. Go get ‘em!
ITINERARY 7
GETTING MORE FULFILLMENT AND PASSION IN YOUR WORK
BY NADIA LAURINCI

Nadia Laurinci is the CEO of Laurinci & Company, a talent agency working with leading experts and authorities around the world and spreading their knowledge to places where it is needed and impactful.

A. Starting Point
You have always invested your all into everything you touch. When you initially took on your current role, you embraced it with all your enthusiasm, smarts, and passion. Now, every day looks more and more the same. You are running on autopilot and have lost the passion and enthusiasm you used to bring to your work. You want to get the energy and inspiration back.

B. Destination
You are in a place where your excitement is back, and you are full of new ideas. You are ready to take your work to the next level, push the boundaries, and try something new. You radiate positivity and a can-do attitude. People around you say “she is back!”

1. Ask Naïve Questions
Imagine you are new to the job and have the liberty to ask anything. What 3 basic questions about your group, company, or industry come to mind? Set your expertise aside. Give your colleagues a “heads-up” that you are intentionally taking a fresh perspective.

2. Staple Yourself to a Problem
Don’t wait for your manager to assign you a new problem to solve. Find a challenge in your company, community, or country and go after it until it’s solved. Don’t wait for others to tell you that you are worthy of a challenge. Take the lead!

3. Surf with the Amateurs
Think of what you liked doing as a child. Did you enjoy a certain activity or pastime? Do it again. Next, look up a startup incubator or co-working space in your city. Spend a day with startups and entrepreneurs. Get inspired by people who try to create something new.
ITINERARY 8
MAKING A BIG CONTRIBUTION WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG AND UNAFRAID
BY NATE MEIKLE

Nate Meikle holds a Juris Doctorate from Stanford University and is currently a PhD student in organizational behavior at the University of Utah. He is the author of the forthcoming memoir, Little Miss: a father, his daughter, and rocket science.

A. Starting Point
You are fresh out of college entering the full time work force for the first time. But “new” doesn’t mean incapable – your company could really use a younger perspective. You just need to convince your manager to not overlook your capability simply because you don’t have the experience. But how?

1. Staple Yourself to a Problem
Identify a complex problem the company is dealing with, ideally one that no one else wants to take on, and throw yourself at it. Because no one else wanted the challenge, you’ll have the autonomy to use your creativity, all while becoming the expert in that domain. And, you’ll prove yourself fast.

2. Announce Your Ignorance
Let your colleagues and manager know that you don’t have the answers yet, but that you have a plan for seeking out guidance, asking the right questions, and learning fast. When you announce your ignorance but show openness, it invites your manager in to coach and help you be successful.

3. Multiply Your Expertise
Identify five experts outside of your organization and ask them for advice on how to deal with the projects you are working on. You will not only get five unique, out-of-the-company perspectives, but also gain access to organizations that more senior coworkers don’t have.

B. Destination
You are able to show your manager that you are resourceful and unafraid yet coachable. You will make some mistakes in the process, but will be respected for your drive and persistence. And managers would much rather be pulling employees back than pushing them ahead.
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