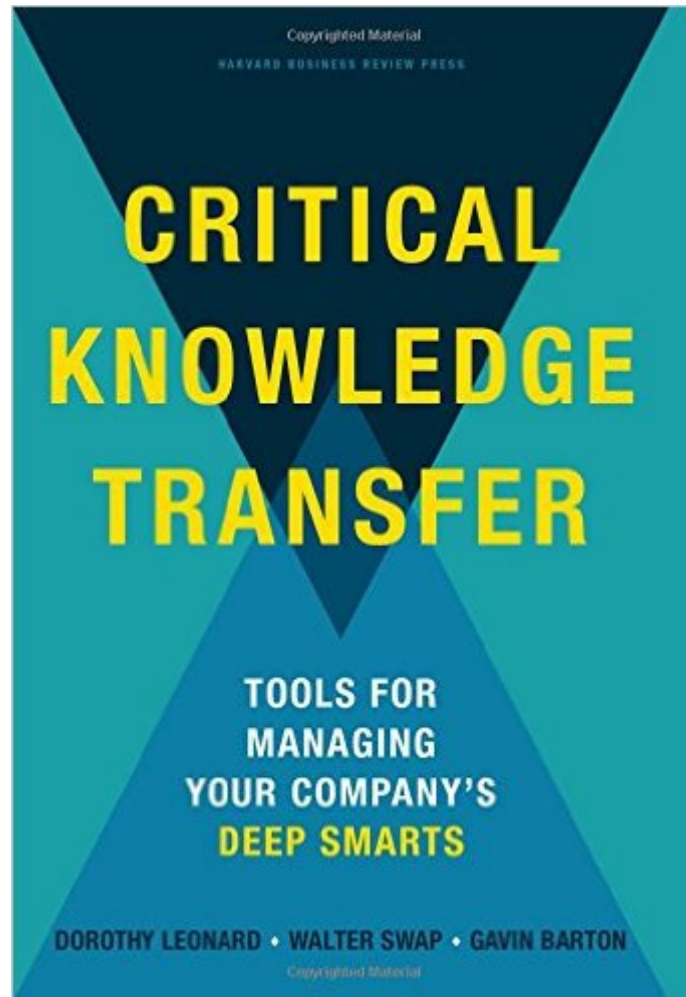


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# Critical Knowledge Transfer: Tools For Managing Your Company's Deep Smarts



## Synopsis

How to transfer your organization's most important knowledge before it walks out the door. When highly skilled subject matter experts, engineers, and managers leave their organizations, they take with them years of hard-earned, experience-based knowledge; much of it undocumented and irreplaceable. Organizations can thereby lose a good part of their competitive advantage. The tsunami of baby boomer retirements has created the most visible, urgent need to transfer such knowledge to the next generation. But there is also an ongoing torrent of acquisitions, layoffs, and successions; not to mention commonplace promotions and transfers; all of which involve the loss of essential expertise. Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap first addressed this acute loss of knowledge in their groundbreaking book *Deep Smarts* (2005). Since then, managers have repeatedly asked them for practical, proven techniques that will help transfer those deep smarts; the organization's critical, experience-based knowledge before it's too late. Now, with coauthor Gavin Barton, the authors share a comprehensive approach to doing just that. Based on original research, numerous interviews with top managers, and a wide range of corporate examples, *Critical Knowledge Transfer* provides a variety of practical options for identifying your firm's deep smarts and transferring that intelligence from experts to successors. *Critical Knowledge Transfer* will enable managers to:

- Determine the seriousness of their knowledge loss
- Identify the deep smarts essential to their business
- Utilize proven techniques for transferring knowledge when its loss is imminent
- Identify and implement long-term transfer program apprenticeships
- Set up individual learning plans for successors
- Assess the success of their knowledge transfer initiatives

This book is essential reading for anyone managing talent in today's volatile environment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dorothy Leonard is among my intellectual heroines. I make it a point to re-read at least once a year her previously published books, *When Sparks Fly: Igniting Creativity in Groups* (1999) and *Deep Smarts: How to Cultivate and Transfer Enduring Business Wisdom* (2005), both co-authored with Walter Swap. What we have in this latest book is a wealth of information, insights, and counsel provided by Leonard, Swap, and their co-author Gavin Barton that business leaders can use to locate, obtain, assimilate, manage, and leverage your organization's "Deep Smarts." As Leonard and Swap explain in a *Harvard Business Review* article (September 2004, "When a person sizes up a complex situation and comes to a rapid decision that proves to be not just good but brilliant, you think, 'That was smart.' After you've watched him do this a few times, you realize you're in the presence of something special. It's not raw brainpower, though that helps. It's not emotional intelligence, either, though that, too, is often involved. It's deep smarts, the stuff that produces that mysterious quality, good judgment. Those who have deep smarts can see the whole picture and yet zoom in on a specific problem others haven't been able to diagnose. Almost intuitively, they can make the right decision, at the right level, with the right people. The manager who understands when and how to move into a new international market, the executive who knows just what kind of talk to give when her organization is in crisis, the technician who can track a product failure back to an interaction between independently produced elements--these are people whose knowledge would be hard to purchase on the open market. Their insight is based more on know-how than on facts; it comprises a system view as well as expertise in individual areas.

*Critical Knowledge Transfer* is beautifully organized, precisely written, and tremendously interesting. Reading it opened wide my door of comprehension about what "deep smarts" are. Though the definition and explanation of deep smarts are contained in the previous book by Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, this follow-up book is so practical, so down-to-earth, so interesting that anyone who is involved in business, education administration, or entrepreneurship would benefit from the ideas and procedures presented. As a retired CEO of an educational institution, I wish that I had had access to this book when I was actively overseeing a large number of people, all of whom

possessed some degree of deep smarts. Promotions, retirements, resignations, change of status created many job transitions. Certainly, many individuals left the institution before sharing in a significant way their experience and knowledge. I could have put to good use the question/answer portions, the charts, the examples. I loved the way the book is organized. The questions at the end of each chapter give an opportunity for even the least experienced manager to review principal points and to map out possible actions. However, it was the examples -- dozens and dozens of them -- that really caught my attention and kept me focused on the points being made. Leonard, Swap, and Barton must have conducted hundreds of interviews in order to make the salient points. I was particularly intrigued by the lengthy perusal of the relationship of Steve, striving to step into the shoes of Jack, an especially talented vice-president of international sales for a company selling mining equipment.

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