

# Charlie Munger in Praise of Multidisciplinary Thinking

Adapted from the following website:

<http://www.talkativeman.com/charlie-munger-multidisciplinary-thinking/>

A multidisciplinary approach involves drawing appropriately from multiple disciplines to redefine problems outside of normal boundaries and reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations.

From **'Charlie Munger: The Complete Investor'** by *Tren Griffin*

*No one can know everything, but you can work to understand the big important models in each discipline at a basic level so they can collectively add value in a decision-making process. Simply put, Munger believes that people who think very broadly and understand many different models from many different disciplines make better decisions - and are therefore better at seeing issues and opportunities more effectively – which is, of course, critically important in the investments field.*

**CHARLIE  
MUNGER**  
THE COMPLETE INVESTOR



TREN GRIFFIN

 Columbia Business School  
Publishing

Multidisciplinary thinking offers a schema or a philosophical template within which thinkers can find an intellectual connectedness to *decompartmentalize* their approach and face the new intellectual horizons with a broader perspective. Single disciplines are too narrow a perspective regarding many phenomena.

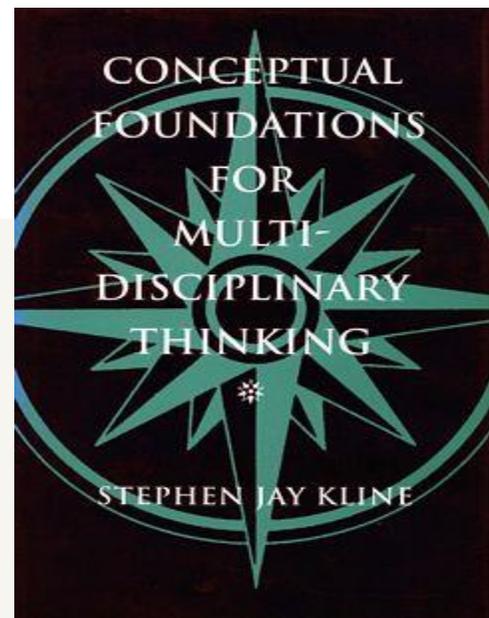
Human thought, as it has evolved in detached disciplines, and the physical systems within which we live exhibit a level of complexity across and within

systems that makes it impossible to understand the important phenomena that are affecting humans today from the perspective of any single incomplete system of thought. Thus [interconnected systems](#) and [high levels of complexity](#) yield a situation in which multidisciplinary tactics to understanding and problem solving produce the real growth industry in the next generation of scholarly thought.

Disciplines develop their own internal ways of looking at the phenomena that interest them. Become as broadly knowledgeable as possible about any particular phenomenon of interest *before* constructing theories and asserting truth assertions. Problems arise from the lack of a viewpoint from which one can understand the relationship between various disciplines.

In '[Conceptual Foundations for Multidisciplinary Thinking](#)', Stanford's Prof. [Stephen Jay Kline](#) expounds the necessity of multidisciplinary discourse:

*Multidisciplinary discourse is more than just important. We can have a complete intellectual system, one that covers all the necessary territory, only if we add multidisciplinary discourse to the knowledge within the disciplines. This is true not only in principle but also for strong pragmatic reasons. This will assure the safety of our more global ideas.*



Producing and applying knowledge no longer work within strict disciplinary boundaries. New dimensions of intricacy, scale, and uncertainty in technical problems put them beyond the reach of the insights of any single discipline. Advances with the most impact are born at the frontiers of more than one discipline. This phenomena can clearly be seen in the intellectual landscape of the most innovative universities, where [“interdisciplines”](#) are outnumbering traditional disciplines as college majors.

Multidisciplinarity, in this case, refers primarily to the idea of “integrative thinking” or to the internalization of knowledge from diverse origins. This

happens when abstract associations are developed using an outlook in one discipline to transform a perspective in another or research techniques developed in one elaborate a theoretic framework in another. Taking these ideas to the next level, we can see a deeply “interdisciplinary” aspect to this line of thinking – the integration of ideas across disciplines in order to be able to understand the multidimensional nature of reality more effectively.

To get the most out of their R&D workforce, many organizations seek persons who comprehend a range of principles and procedures widely crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries in order to guarantee that work will be advanced most effectively.