

Soldiers and Zealots

I think I've been in the top five percent of my age cohort almost all my adult life in understanding the power of incentives, and yet I've always underestimated that power. Never a year passes but I get some surprise that pushes a little further my appreciation of incentive superpower.

—Charlie Munger

AT ANY POINT in time, there's a giant pool of graduates and young professionals with little knowledge of the real world, no polish, and few tasks they can perform at a high level. For many of those youngsters, math is one of those tasks. Fresh from the rigors of a degree in engineering or some other mathematical discipline, they can make their mark more quickly in a quantitative role than they otherwise would. Such bright prospects for quantitative types are evident in, say, a technology firm, but they're even more obvious in the financial industry. Math skills can place you on Wall Street's fast track just as quickly as sex appeal pushes you forward in Hollywood. When I joined the working world in 1986, I was equipped for Wall Street, not Hollywood. . . .