

Good is the Enemy of Great

by Gary Tomlinson

Learning from the school of hard knocks can be very informing, but often the tuition is too high! We should learn from other people's experiences. The purpose of this column is to share great business wisdom from the experiences of authors like Jim Collins, Michael Gerber, Gary Harpst, Michael LeBoeuf, Ron Willingham, Stephen M.R. Covey and others. Because when you combine great business education with your own business experiences the outcome you'll receive is far greater than the sum of its parts.

The wisdom of Jim Collins' *Good to Great* has been chosen to share with you this week. Collins begins his book with a powerfully strong statement: "Good is the enemy of great." He goes on to say "that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools because we have good schools. We don't have great government, principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good – and that is their main problem."

Collins and his research team spent five years contrasting the good-to-great companies with a carefully selected set of comparison companies that failed to make the leap from good to great. What was different? Why did one set of companies become truly great performers while the other set remained only good? After sifting through mountains of data and thousands of pages of interviews, Collins and his team discovered the key determinants of greatness – why some companies make the leap and others don't. This book is dedicated to teaching what they've learned.

The findings of the *Good to Great* study will surprise many readers and will shed light on virtually every area of management strategy and practice. The findings include:

♦ **Level 5 Leaders:** The research team was shocked to discover the type of leadership required to achieve greatness. Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves.

♦ **The Hedgehog Concept:** To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence. A Hedgehog Concept is a simple, crystalline concept that flows from deep understanding about the intersection of these three key points:

1. What you can be the best in the world at.
2. What drives your economic engine.
3. What you are deeply passionate about.

♦ **A Culture of Discipline:** When you combine a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship, you get the magical alchemy of great results. All good-

to-great companies had a Culture of Discipline that started with disciplined people. Next there was disciplined thought. Finally, there was disciplined action. The order was very important. Disciplined action without self-disciplined people is impossible to sustain, and disciplined action without disciplined thought is a recipe for disaster.

♦ **Technology Accelerators:** Good-to-great companies think differently about the role of technology and technological change than mediocre ones. Collins found that:

- Good-to-great organizations avoid technology fads and bandwagons, yet they become pioneers in the application of carefully selected technologies.
- Good-to-great organizations always ask the key question about any technology: “Does the technology fit our organization?” If yes, then let’s be a pioneer in the application of that technology. If no, then let’s ignore it.
- Good-to-great organizations used technology as an accelerator of momentum, not a creator of it.

♦ **The Flywheel and the Doom Loop:** Those who launch radical change programs and wrenching restructuring will almost fail to make the leap. The good-to-great companies understood a simple truth: Tremendous power exists in the fact of continued improvement and delivery of results. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough.

To learn more about Collins’ *Good to Great* you can download Gary’s 24 page book report at: http://www.gary-tomlinson.com/index.php?pr=Book_Reports_Covers. Enjoy the education and feel free to share it with others because as Alvin Toffler says; “The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

Gary Tomlinson is an entrepreneur and founder of five successful businesses. Today he is an accountability consultant and professional speaker. He works with executive teams to help clarify and achieve organizational initiatives. His speaking topics include “Top Ten Messages from Ten Top Books” and the “Art of Telling – Communicating Your Way to the Top.” You can engage Gary at gary@gary-tomlinson.com or visit his website at www.gary-tomlinson.com