

## **Great Organizations – How to Develop and Foster Cultures of Discipline and Greatness**

Collins (2005) defines a great organization as one that delivers superior performance and makes a distinctive impact over a long period of time. These great organizations measure their performance relative to the mission – how effectively do we deliver on our mission and make a distinctive impact?

Great organizations have a relentless culture of discipline where disciplined people engage in disciplined thought and take disciplined action (Collins, 2005). Great organizations build a culture around the idea of freedom and responsibility. They fill the organizational culture with self-disciplined individuals who are willing to go the “extra mile” to fulfill their responsibilities and their part of the mission.

When it comes to leadership, don’t confuse a culture of discipline with a tyrannical disciplinarian in charge. Great organizations are often led by Level 5 Leaders (Collins, 2005). These are leaders who can get things done in the modern organization of diffuse power structures. They practice –

- The power of inclusion
- The power of language
- The power of shared interests
- The power of coalitions

Level 5 leaders are ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the mission, the work – not themselves – and they have the will to do whatever it takes to make good on that ambition. They possess a combination of personal humility and professional will that is a key to fueling their legitimacy and influence. Level 5 leadership is not about being soft or nice or purely inclusive or focused on consensus building. The major emphasis is ensuring the right decisions happen no matter how difficult or painful, for the long-term greatness of the organization and the achievement of the mission, regardless of consensus or popularity (Collins, 2005).

According to Collins (2005), one important key for effective leadership is getting the right people *on the bus and in the right seats*. Leaders must develop a group of people who commit to a culture of discipline. Greatness is first and foremost a function of having the right people in key positions. Great organizations use rigorous early assessments with rigorous hiring mechanisms to ensure they hire the very best employees. They also focus on keeping the right people employed – those who are highly productive, self-motivated, and self-disciplined.

Another key to a great organization is following *The Hedgehog Concept*, which leads to a focus on the intersection of what you are passionate about, with what you can be best at, and what drives your economic engine (Collins, 2005). It helps to attain clarity about how to produce the best long-term results, and commit to the relentless discipline to say “no thank you” to opportunities that fail the hedgehog test.

Finally, great organizations and leaders are attuned to the *turning of the flywheel* – building momentum by building the brand (Collins, 2005). People want to feel the excitement of being involved in something that works and is successful. Success breeds support and commitment, which breeds even greater success, which builds more support and commitment – round and round the flywheel turns.

The fundamentals of greatness center on the relentless culture of discipline led by level 5 leaders who adhere to the *Hedgehog Concept*, and capitalize on the momentum of the flywheel. Twenty-first superintendents can implement these fundamentals to develop a culture of greatness in their districts!

### **Resources**

Collins, J. C. (2005). *Good to great and the social sector*. Boulder, CO: Jim Collins.