

Book review: Good to Great By Samuel

Do you get good grades in your studies? Do you have a good family? Do you have a good marriage? If you do, are you satisfied to be just good? In the book "Good To Great", Jim Collins identifies and characterizes why good companies do not easily transform into great ones. "Because good is the enemy of great, and that is why we have so little that becomes great." At first, you may find the book a bit boring, but once you get past the pages of academic research, this book is a great selection if you want to know how to prepare yourself for the better.

Let me introduce myself: I am an all rounder. I am good at almost every subject, badminton, tennis, table tennis and piano, but never great in any of those. I am also a good son who cares for and loves his parents, but not a great one. I am writing an article on this book because I have had problems transforming from good to great.

For 16 years, I have failed to be great at anything I learned. I was never the best in class, I was never the best in music competitions, and I was never the best in debating. I was good, just good, nothing more. For 16 years, I have botched to understand the main reason for my failure. Through Collins' precise and clear explanation of why good companies failed to become great companies, I now finally know.

Good companies are companies that do well for a short period of time, but when different problems arise they gradually lose that competitiveness, and they are no longer good. Great companies are companies that are never quite satisfied with what they had already got, and that they finally developed into something that can last. Even in bitter circumstances, they can still figure a way out and solve the problems by a simple basic concept. According to Collins, I have lacked the "continuity" and "determination" as written in the book.

Let us face it. We all encounter the same problem as most good companies do at the stage that transforms it from good to great or staying the same. It is the thought of "I am already good, why do I have to be great?" that stops us from further improvement. In other words, we lacked the determination to strive for the better, because we were totally satisfied with what we had already got.

Determination is essential and important throughout the development of technology and knowledge of mankind. If Galileo had not been determined to explore the world, we may still be thinking that the world was flat. If Thomas Edison had not had the determination to invent the light bulb, we may still be living with candles as our only source of light. If John Nash had not been determined to invent the Game Theory, the world may not be the same. From the examples listed above, we know that determination is very important in the transformation from good to great. However, it is only the first step to success.

Many companies have determined to be great, but in the end most of them fail. Why is that happening? It is because they lacked the "continuity" or they simply choose the wrong path. In other words, they fail to concentrate on their ultimate goal and lose faith in what they are doing easily when problems arise. Or they simply waste their resources in wrong areas that are inappropriate for the future advantageous development of the company. Many of us failed to be great because we chose the wrong path. According to the Chinese saying: no needle can be sharp at both ends, as no one can be perfect. Albert Einstein is a great scientist, but he is obviously a bad cook. Jamie Oliver is a great chef, but he is obviously bad at science.

The question is: "How do we grasp the chance?" "If we choose the right path, how can we leap from good to great through loads of difficulties, hardships and uncertainties?" "How can we sustain continuity?" There are many choices waiting to be made throughout the course of our life. To ensure that we make the right choice, we need to ask ourselves one question: "Who am I?" We usually make wrong choices because we do not really understand ourselves. We do not know what is best for us. Getting to know whom you really are helps a lot in making choices. Thus, guiding you to the right path, providing you with the strength to endure different problems and uncertainties of prospect.

According to Collins, the major criterion of the transformation is self-discipline, including our thought and action. We must determine a firm goal and strive for the best, "never settle for less." During the transformation process, we will inevitably confront brutal facts like management problems, uncertainties of prospect, lack of resources, etc. Most people back out when they encounter difficult problems, and that is why there is so few that become great. However, if we can discipline our thought and action, yet never lose faith in what we are doing, everything will turn out fine.

In addition, Collins introduced the useful "hedgehog concept" to his readers by a simple extract from Isaiah Berlin's famous essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox". He stated that despite the greater cunning of the fox, the hedgehog always wins. Why? Because the hedgehog simplifies a complex world into a organizing idea, a basic principle that unifies and guides everything. For a hedgehog, anything that does not relate to the basic principle holds no relevance. The fox attacks by a series of cunning moves, but each time the hedgehog simply response by rolling up into a ball of spikes. If we can see through complexity and discern underlying patterns, we can definitely survive in any difficult circumstances. Greatness is not far away.

Being teenagers ourselves, we should not let computer games; karaoke and other leisure stuff distract us from our studies. We should not allow excuses for our laziness as well as greediness. We should learn from the "hedgehog concept", value something that we consider to be Great, and strive for it with determination.

"Good To Great" is a book suitable for ages 15 and up. I will definitely recommend this book to my classmates, my friends and even my relatives, because I think everyone will gain their own useful insights after reading it. Let me conclude by asking you some questions: "Are you are good student? If you are, why not consider being a great one?" "Are you are good businessman? If you are, why not consider being a great one?" "Are you are good son or daughter? If you are, why not consider being a great one?" "Are you are good father or mother? If you are, why not consider being a great one?" "Are you are good husband or wife? If you are, why not consider being a great one?" "Have you read the book "Good To Great"? If you have not, go to the nearest bookstore and buy it right away!"

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