

Management Perspective for 2006

Hal Johnson, November/December 2006

As we approach the end of 2006 I found myself thinking back over the year about the general message being delivered by this year's top management books. According to Amazon, these have been among the top sellers:

- *Good to Great* – Jim Collins
- *Blink* – Malcolm Gladwell
- *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* – Stephen Covey
- *Now, Discover Your Strengths* – Marcus Buckingham & Donald Clifton
- *Getting Things Done* – David Allen
- *The Five Dysfunctions of the Team* – Patrick Lencioni

Is there a common theme? The focus seems to generally revolve around an interest in high performance, whether it is individual, team or corporate. We seem to be searching for the magic ingredients to high levels of success. Are there really any short-cuts? Is there a new discovery that will make success a little easier to obtain?

Once you plow through the books, you find you are generally back to the same conclusion that seems to be ageless: success usually takes a lot of hard work, unless you inherited it. There really are no short-cuts. But, there truly are some ways to work smarter.

Some of these books have been out for several years but are still among the top 10 business and leadership sellers. For example, Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*,

was published in 2001. But the big surprise to me is Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits*. It was published in 1989 – seventeen years ago. And it's still a top seller (over 5 million copies sold)!

There's a reason *7 Habits* has sold more than 5 million copies and been translated into 32 languages. Serious work obviously went into it, and serious change can likely come out of it--but only with constant discipline and steadfast commitment. As Covey makes clear, this is no quick fix for what's ailing us in our personal and professional lives. The path to "Great," based on Jim Collin's material, is not too dissimilar to Covey's path – discipline and focus. It's based on identifying the best path, then staying the course.

Before you can adopt the seven habits, you'll need to accomplish what Covey calls a "paradigm shift"--a change in perception and interpretation of how the world works. Covey takes you through this change, which affects how you perceive and act regarding productivity, time management, positive thinking, developing your "proactive muscles" (acting with initiative rather than reacting), and much more.

I can remember the buzz in management circles in the early 90's with a vast number of business leaders talking about their recent "paradigm shifts" and being more "proactive." Covey had high impact on the business vocabulary.

LEADERSHIP UPDATE



Like most paths to great results, usually it takes a lot of hard work. It's what drives the hard work that I find fascinating. The path is open to any and all who decide that is the direction they want to go. Some decide to commit – many don't. It's like many other life-endavors that are good for us: exercise, dieting, balance. We have good intentions, but something seems to prevail over our resolve to do what is good for us.

This is where we go back to Covey's observations about the need for a paradigm shift – to realize what is keeping us from "getting to Great." More often than not it is the same thing that keeps us from regularly exercising – lack of resolve.

Sustaining constant discipline and steadfast commitment is not the activity of the meek. That's at the heart of leadership. Leaders come to work every day and add that special ingredient, whether they feel like it or not. They are in the game to win, do the right stuff, stay the course, regardless of circumstances.

Take a look at the leaders in your organization. How supportive and encouraging can we be in their quest for "Great?" Our opportunity for the next year is to find ways to support and encourage more "constant discipline and steadfast commitment" on a personal, team and organizational basis. As a leader, how do you do that? Glad you asked. You model it.

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