

# OUTSIDE THE BOX

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## Commit to the Build

*Building something better is a process requiring grit, determination and hard work.*

Building is one thing — building better is a completely different story. Evaluate almost any organization, entity or business that has sustained success, and at the core will be found a few key commonalities. It was built by the right people, dedicated to a clearly defined set of values and centered on an acknowledged sense of purpose that unified the team in times of both abundance and scarcity. In truth, *what* was built turns out to be far less important than *who* built it or *why* it was built.

### Business myth busters

In their classic work, *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras indicate the biggest myth in business is you have to have a great idea to start a great company. Instead, great companies are committed to discovery.

They acknowledge starting is the critical element and is not dependent on knowing perfectly the final destination. Waiting for the great idea actually limits the possibilities available to an enterprise. When a person expects the “right” idea must come from within themselves, the entire marketplace and all of its nuances are pushed to the sidelines, if

not completely ignored.

Great companies are great not because of their one brilliant idea, but because of their ability to listen, interpret and sense the signals coming from the marketplace. Great organizations continually embrace the idea of “built better” and are driven by curiosity and a desire for mastery. They are tireless in their pursuit of creating solutions for customers.

Instead of trying to predict the future, they channel their inner Columbo — the television detective played by Peter Falk — who, through the power of observation, keen intuition and the ability to ask the right questions, was able to solve case after case through active discovery.

Furthermore, great companies are not dependent on style but rather on substance. As a case in point, if you have ever skied or played tennis, your experience has likely been enhanced because of the work of Howard Head, an engineer who began his career in aircraft manufacturing. Applying his knowledge of materials and prototyping, Head would largely be responsible for the technical breakthroughs in equipment design that would revolutionize both sports

“I can remain focused on and suffer for the big thing longer than anyone else.”—Tommy Caldwell, world class mountaineer

by enhancing the user experience.

Head said, “Those people who go around trying to invent something, fall on their tails. The best inventions come from those who are deeply involved in trying to solve a problem.”

Enterprise creation, entrepreneurship and innovation are overly romanticized while ignoring the gritty work required to build it better. Undertaking the task of building requires difficult work, plus the capacity to absorb disappointment without losing resolve.

There is also an incorrect assumption the flamboyant leader who relishes celebrity status is the standard of excellence. Those with the potential to undertake the challenge of building better are often ordinary in appearance but heroic in focus, discipline and work ethic.

Building something wonderful and meaningful does not require the great idea, charisma, superhuman powers or clairvoyance. Instead a deep sense of curiosity, the courage to ask questions both internally and externally, the confidence to bring folks with unique complementary skills into the process, and a streak of peasant toughness sets the stage for pursuing success.

These truths offer hope. However, action is required to convert hope into reality. Do not wait — begin! 