

Good to Great:

Why Information Management is critical to your Business' Success

Jim Collins, in his best-selling 2001 book, "Good To Great", makes the case that companies who make the transformation from a "Good" company to a "Great" company share many of the following characteristics. They include:

- the CEO came from within the company;
- executive compensation did not drive success;
- strategic planning was evidenced;
- technology accelerated but did not cause the transformation;
- companies focused on what not to do and stopped doing it;
- mergers and acquisitions did not impact their success;
- they produced revolutionary leaps in results with continuous improvement; and
- great success was driven by a conscientious choice.

Companies manage assets to be successful. Those assets include money (capital), machines, facilities, technology, and human resources. These assets managed in synchronization with a shared company mission, vision, goals and objectives enable companies to grow successfully.

All too often, however, one asset is overlooked in this discussion! It is the organization's data. They capture it, store it, transform it, and group it to analyze how the business runs. The management and quality of that data has a significant impact on the company's ability to make choices that will drive the company from good to great.

While Jim Collins makes many good observations, several need elaboration in light of data management.

Technology Accelerates Transformation -- It is not the technology per se that causes success, but it is the application of carefully selected technologies that enhance the companies' growth. In most cases, the data-to-information-to-knowledge cycle associated with these technologies causes this to occur. Managing "shared" data across the organization allows up-to-date, real time information to transform the decision-making model within the organization.

Business Process Change (What not to do and stop doing it) – You can't make this change without brutally evaluating the facts (data) about how your business runs. It takes discipline to understand exactly what actions are taking place (how) in your business by whom, when, and where. Most certifications (ISO 9000, 9001, etc.) document why and what actions take place in your business by whom, when, and where. You must have auditable data to achieve certification. So, having the facts (data) that document what is happening provide you the insight to assess "what not to do and to stop doing it" in your business processes.

Focus on Continuous Improvement -- Collect good facts (data) to drive good business decisions. Dr. W. Edwards Deming's principles support the global success of Toyota, Proctor & Gamble, Ritz Carlton, Harley-Davidson, and many other leading organizations. A central tenet of Dr. Deming's work is that a company must continuously improve its business processes (work that is done) to produce a "quality" product or service. Data capture, analysis and synthesis of the facts about your business process allow your team to assess and improve their work activities. Collecting facts (data)

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about the process and analyzing those facts provide insight into ways that help you improve your business' product or service. Techniques associated with business process modeling, monitoring, and automation (see referenced business processing web sites: www.bptrends.com , www.bpminstitute.org, or www.bpm.com) allow you to gather those facts that provide the foundation for the continuous improvements required to meet your business goals and objectives.

Moving your business from good to great is in part driven by the data-to-information-to-knowledge cycle. Manage your data as an asset of your organization. The defining, capturing, storing, transforming, securing, and grouping of it produces "quality" reliable decision-making information, an asset that every company needs today!

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