

MEDIAKIM

BUSINESS PRINCIPLES

Good Is the Enemy of Great: The One Thing Focused Businesses Get Right

Most businesses fail not by doing the wrong things, but by doing too many things adequately. Greatness comes from focus — and from one disciplined idea.

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Jim Collins opens his classic study of great companies with a deceptively simple line: good is the enemy of great. We do not have great schools, he argues, principally because we have good schools. The same trap catches businesses. Adequacy is comfortable, and comfort is where greatness quietly dies.

> **“Good is the enemy of great.”**
>
> **— Jim Collins, Good to Great**

Scattered effort feels productive — and rarely is

Struggling businesses are often busy, not lazy. They offer everything to everyone, chase every opportunity, and end up doing many things competently and nothing exceptionally. Great businesses do the opposite. They find the one thing they can be truly excellent at, and they pour themselves into it.

The Hedgehog: one big thing, done relentlessly

Collins borrows an old idea: the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. Great companies are hedgehogs. They find the intersection of three questions and build their whole strategy on it.

> **FIGURE**
>
> The Hedgehog Concept: greatness lives where what you are best at, what drives your profit, and what you are deeply passionate about overlap.

- What can you be the best in your world at? (not just good — best)
- What truly drives your economic engine? (the one metric that moves profit)
- What are you deeply passionate about? (the work you would defend even when it is hard)

Where all three overlap is your edge. Everything outside that circle — however tempting, however lucrative for someone else — is a distraction that dilutes your greatness. Saying no to good opportunities is the price of a great business.

> **FOR THE FOUNDER DOING EVERYTHING**
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> If you are stretched across ten half-built offerings, the growth move is subtraction. Pick the one you can be best at, that pays, that you actually care about — and let the rest go. Focus is not a limitation; it is the strategy.

The bottom line

You will not become great by adding more. You become great by choosing the one thing that sits at the centre of your hedgehog and refusing to be average at it. Good is comfortable. Greatness is focused, and focus is a decision you make on purpose.

Sources

- Jim Collins, Good to Great — good is the enemy of great; the Hedgehog Concept.
- Isaiah Berlin, The Hedgehog and the Fox — the original parable Collins draws on.

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