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Focus on the Facts Not Dreams!

Dear Small Business Owner:

In Jim Collins' new book "**Good to Great**", he talks about the critical strategies that companies need to adopt in order to make themselves great. He talks about many strategic practices that every company could learn from in this book. Some of these are obvious and some not so intuitive.

He said one thing that seems counter-intuitive at first, but makes a lot of sense when looked into more deeply. When talking about what makes companies excel, Collins says "facts are better than dreams." Let's look at what he meant by that.

Brutal Facts Must be Uncovered



Many entrepreneurs have been taught that they should follow their dreams and that will help them succeed in their businesses.

While there is nothing wrong with having a vision for your company, companies that are on a path to greatness must confront the facts of their own brutal reality first. An honest and diligent assessment of the current realities of the company must happen.

Some examples of things to uncover could be:

1. Initially it may make sense to have a project/department suck profit from other areas of the company, but how long can that really continue?
2. Top management may not be close enough to clients to know what they are really saying. So, do they listen to employees who hear the feedback every day?
3. The marketing data says that the trend in your industry is headed to something that you don't want to embrace. Will it really pay off for you to buck the trend and stay on the same course?

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How to Get to the Facts



It's not easy to adjust the direction of your company and assess what's really going on. In order to do this, there must be a culture where employees have the opportunity to be heard, and therefore the truth of what's really happening in the company is heard.

Here are several things leaders can do to help create the culture inside their company.

1. Lead with questions, not answers. This means holding meetings where the leader asks lots of why questions and just listens to the answers. When is the last time you asked an employee, "What should I be worried about?"
2. Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion. Don't shy away from intense dialog but leave your ego at the door. Resist the urge to say "I'm the owner and I've been around the longest, so I know how things are supposed to be done."
3. Conduct autopsies without blame. Failures will happen. They should not be ignored. Analyze what happened, its implications and its lessons. Don't make judgments about the situation, just search for understanding and learning.
4. Build "red flag" mechanisms. Having the data about possible problem areas is the first step. Having a process to assess the timeliness and importance of the data is the second step. Make sure you give those in the business with you (employees, customers, suppliers, etc.) the freedom to raise a "red flag."

Are you open to the facts that are going on in your company? Once you uncover them, do you act on them?

If you're looking for a third party who can help you face the facts and then follow your dreams, give **Alpha Business Coaching** a call.

Sincerely,

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