How Do I Get from Good to Great?

Driving home that night, we tried to contain our excitement, but it was a lost cause. We would have had more success holding a beach ball underwater!

Pattie and I had just enjoyed a soul-stirring evening with our good friends talking about a seminar that we would soon launch designed to help people think and act biblically and deliberately about how to leverage the second half of life for maximum Kingdom impact. We were fired up!

Several weeks earlier, God had impressed on our hearts to develop this seminar. From there, Pattie and I set out to find a team of people who not only would confirm this ministry initiative but, more importantly, would join us in developing it. Over the weeks that followed, what began as a seed of possibility became a harvest of reality—all through the beauty of collaboration.

Collaboration. A big word. With even bigger potential. When people purposefully partner together, the potential for something big to happen is formidable.

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In Proverbs, the quintessential book on all things wisdom, this truth is tightly packaged and stocked on the lower shelf for ease of access: *"Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances"*. Do the math—more collaborators, better outcomes.

The upsides of collaboration are many. In addition to creating superior output, you build **team spirit**—a sense that you are engaged in something much bigger than yourself. You build **commitment**—as your involvement increases through collaboration, so does your dedication. And you build **ownership**—nothing feeds motivation more than upgrading your seat from hired hand to stockholder.

So how does a leader cultivate collaboration?

- **Start with an admission.** Go on record that not only do you want help, but that you need help.

- **Establish access.** Make it unmistakably clear that everyone has equal opportunity to influence a decision or direction. Everyone's input is valued regardless of what box they occupy on the o-chart. No tenure required. No dues to pay.

- **Lead out with questions.** There is nothing quite as empowering as a well-stated question that kicks open the door for thought-provoking dialogue.

- **Set the stage.** Give permission to debate ideas and concepts vigorously. In fact, be clear that it is what you expect.

- **Create safety.** While ideas should be 'attacked', the person presenting an idea never should be. Be quick to toss a penalty flag if the discussion gets personal.

- **Embrace the mess.** Be prepared for the chaos of collaboration. Expect that there will be moments when your self-talk includes something like: "WHAT was I thinking?!" Be encouraged. The majority of the time, having embraced the momentary confusion, you will not only emerge with a direction that simply will be better than if you had gone it alone, but you will have a group of people engaged at a much deeper level. Simply put, the ROI is worth it.

In short, leadership is not a solo-sport. Rather, it is the privilege and opportunity to join with others, and in so doing, tap into the beauty and potential of collaboration. Take it out for a test drive. I guarantee you'll be back for another spin.

Chuck Olson
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