

# great by choice jim collins

**great by choice jim collins** is a pivotal work that delves into the principles behind the success of certain companies in uncertain and chaotic environments. In this insightful book, Jim Collins and his co-author Morten T. Hansen explore why some organizations thrive while others falter, even in the face of adversity. They introduce key concepts such as the 20 Mile March, fire bullets then cannonballs, and the importance of a Level 5 leader. This article will provide an in-depth analysis of the main concepts presented in "Great by Choice," explore the research methodology behind the findings, and discuss how these principles can be applied in today's fast-paced business landscape. Readers will gain valuable insights into organizational resilience, strategic decision-making, and effective leadership.

- Introduction to "Great by Choice"
- The Core Concepts of "Great by Choice"
- The Research Methodology
- Applying the Principles in Modern Business
- Conclusion

## Introduction to "Great by Choice"

Published in 2011, "Great by Choice" is the result of extensive research conducted by Jim Collins and Morten T. Hansen, who aimed to understand why certain companies outperform their competitors, particularly during turbulent times. The authors identified companies that not only survived but thrived amidst uncertainty, and they sought to uncover the common traits and strategies that contributed to their success. The book introduces the concept of the "10X" companies, which are defined as those that achieved ten times the performance of their industry peers over a span of 15 years.

One of the key insights from Collins and Hansen is that success is not merely a product of luck or timing. Instead, they argue that disciplined thought and disciplined action are crucial for navigating chaos. The authors emphasize that organizations need to be prepared for the unpredictable nature of the business environment and develop strategies that allow them to maintain focus and resilience. This approach is encapsulated in several core principles discussed throughout the book.

# **The Core Concepts of "Great by Choice"**

At the heart of "Great by Choice" are several foundational concepts that distinguish successful organizations from their less successful counterparts. These concepts provide a framework for understanding how to achieve sustained excellence.

## **The 20 Mile March**

The "20 Mile March" is a metaphor that illustrates the importance of setting specific, attainable goals and maintaining consistent progress toward them. Successful companies set clear performance targets that they commit to achieving, regardless of external circumstances. This disciplined approach not only helps organizations navigate through unpredictable environments but also fosters a culture of accountability and resilience.

- Establishing clear goals
- Maintaining consistency in performance
- Fostering accountability
- Building resilience through discipline

Companies that engage in their own "20 Mile March" demonstrate a commitment to long-term success rather than short-term gains. This principle illustrates that sustained effort over time can lead to greater outcomes than sporadic bursts of high performance.

## **Fire Bullets, Then Cannonballs**

This concept emphasizes the importance of experimentation and strategic decision-making. Organizations are encouraged to test ideas on a small scale (firing bullets) before committing significant resources to a full-scale initiative (firing cannonballs). This approach reduces the risk of failure and increases the likelihood of success by allowing companies to learn from smaller, less impactful trials before making larger investments.

Successful organizations adopt this strategic framework to innovate carefully, ensuring that they are not putting all their resources at risk without first validating their ideas. This methodical approach to innovation enhances the ability to adapt and respond to changing market conditions.

## Level 5 Leadership

Collins and Hansen identify "Level 5 Leaders" as individuals who possess a unique combination of humility and fierce resolve. These leaders prioritize the success of their organizations over personal ambition and are deeply committed to building strong teams. They exhibit a strong work ethic, a willingness to learn, and a capacity for long-term vision.

Key traits of Level 5 Leaders include:

- Humility and a focus on the team
- Unwavering resolve and commitment
- Long-term strategic thinking
- Willingness to confront the brutal facts

Level 5 Leaders are integral to fostering a culture of excellence within their organizations, guiding their teams through challenges with a steady hand and an unwavering focus on the company's mission.

## The Research Methodology

The research methodology employed by Collins and Hansen in "Great by Choice" is rigorous and comprehensive. The authors conducted a thorough analysis of companies that thrived in chaotic environments, comparing them to their less successful counterparts. This comparative analysis allowed them to identify specific behaviors and practices that correlated with exceptional performance.

Some key aspects of their research methodology include:

- Identifying a sample of 20 companies with a track record of success during turbulent times
- Conducting in-depth case studies on each company
- Analyzing the decision-making processes and leadership styles within these organizations
- Comparing the findings to those of their less successful peers

This methodical approach ensured that the conclusions drawn in "Great by Choice" were grounded in empirical evidence rather than anecdotal observations. By focusing on data-driven insights, Collins and Hansen provide a valuable resource for leaders seeking to implement effective strategies within their own organizations.

## **Applying the Principles in Modern Business**

The principles outlined in "Great by Choice" remain highly relevant in today's fast-changing business landscape. Organizations that wish to thrive amid uncertainty can benefit from adopting the core concepts discussed in the book. Here are some practical ways to apply these principles:

### **Setting Your Own 20 Mile March**

Organizations should take the time to define their own "20 Mile March" by setting clear, measurable goals that align with their long-term vision. This involves evaluating the current market conditions and establishing realistic targets that can be consistently met, regardless of external challenges.

### **Encouraging Experimentation**

Fostering a culture of experimentation can lead to innovation and growth. Companies should encourage employees to propose new ideas and test them on a small scale, allowing for learning opportunities without the fear of significant loss. This approach can lead to breakthroughs that drive the organization forward.

### **Developing Level 5 Leaders**

Investing in leadership development programs that focus on cultivating humility, resilience, and strategic thinking can prepare current and future leaders to guide their organizations effectively. By prioritizing the development of Level 5 leadership qualities, companies can create a strong foundation for sustained success.

## **Conclusion**

"Great by Choice" by Jim Collins offers timeless insights into what it takes to build and sustain a successful organization in the face of uncertainty. By embracing the principles of the 20 Mile March, firing bullets before cannonballs, and cultivating Level 5 leadership, businesses can better navigate the complexities of today's environment. The rigorous

research methodology behind these findings enhances their credibility and applicability, making this book an essential read for leaders looking to cultivate resilience and drive long-term success.

## **Q: What is the main premise of "Great by Choice" by Jim Collins?**

A: The main premise of "Great by Choice" is to explore why some companies thrive in chaotic environments while others do not. It identifies key principles such as the 20 Mile March, fire bullets then cannonballs, and the characteristics of Level 5 leaders that contribute to exceptional performance.

## **Q: How does the concept of the 20 Mile March apply to business strategy?**

A: The 20 Mile March emphasizes setting specific, consistent performance goals that organizations commit to achieving, which fosters discipline, accountability, and resilience in the face of challenges.

## **Q: What does "fire bullets then cannonballs" mean in the context of innovation?**

A: This concept encourages organizations to conduct small-scale experiments (bullets) to test ideas before committing significant resources to a full-scale initiative (cannonballs), minimizing risk and maximizing learning opportunities.

## **Q: Who are Level 5 Leaders, and why are they important?**

A: Level 5 Leaders are individuals who combine humility with fierce resolve, prioritizing the success of their organizations over personal ambition. They are crucial for building strong teams and guiding organizations through challenges.

## **Q: How did Collins and Hansen conduct their research for "Great by Choice"?**

A: They conducted a thorough analysis of 20 companies that thrived during turbulent times, comparing their practices and decision-making processes against less successful companies to identify key behaviors that led to exceptional performance.

## **Q: Can the principles from "Great by Choice" be applied in today's business climate?**

A: Yes, the principles remain relevant, as they provide a framework for organizations to navigate uncertainty, set clear goals, foster innovation, and develop effective leadership in a rapidly changing environment.

## **Q: What are some practical steps organizations can take from the book's insights?**

A: Organizations can define their own 20 Mile March, encourage a culture of experimentation, and invest in leadership development to cultivate Level 5 leaders, all of which contribute to long-term success.

## **Q: What is the significance of disciplined thought and action in business?**

A: Disciplined thought and action are essential for navigating chaos, as they enable organizations to focus on long-term goals, make informed decisions, and maintain resilience amid external challenges.

## **Q: How does "Great by Choice" differ from Jim Collins' other works?**

A: While "Great by Choice" shares themes of leadership and organizational success with Collins' other works, it uniquely focuses on companies that excel in uncertainty and chaos, providing specific strategies for thriving in such environments.

## **Q: What role does accountability play in achieving the 20 Mile March?**

A: Accountability is critical in achieving the 20 Mile March, as it ensures that organizations stay committed to their goals and fosters a culture where individuals take responsibility for their performance and contributions to the organization's success.

## **[Great By Choice Jim Collins](#)**

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