

## Good to Great, November 5, 2014

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For our session, we'll have an opportunity to discuss some leadership-related concepts from the best-selling author Jim Collins, specifically as expressed in his monograph "[Good to Great and the Social Sectors](#)". Collins' is best known for his widely lauded business book "Good to Great". After receiving feedback that his work didn't necessarily apply to social sector entities, such as government agencies and non-profit organizations, he retooled his ideas and came up with this "Social Sectors" addendum. Good to Great is one of the books Admiral Devany recommended to our group when we saw him in July of 2014. I personally have found Collins' descriptions of great leadership ("Level 5 Leadership") to be inspiring and well-researched, and have taken planning inspiration from his notion of the "Hedgehog Concept" -- knowing what our organizations stand for, are uniquely best at, and what best drives our resource engine.



### BEFORE OUR SESSION:

I'll be asking folks to do a little bit of reading in advance (sorry, no TED talks available by Jim Collins!). But please know that Good to Great in the Social Sectors is a brief monograph -- just 35 pages long. Many of you may very well be able to read through all of it within a half hour. I know we're all very busy, so if you can't read all of it, please just read the following parts:

- Pages 1-3: Introduction.
- Pages 9-13: Issue 2: Level 5 Leadership--Getting Things Done Within A Diffuse Power Structure.
- Pages 17-22: Issue 4: The Hedgehog Concept--Rethinking the Economic Engine Without A Profit Motive.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

"Level 5 Leadership":

1) Collins writes [page 11] that the Level 5 Executive is "ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission, the work--not themselves--and they have the will to do whatever it takes to make good on that ambition." He adds that in social sectors it takes a "compelling combination of personal humility and professional will" to create leadership "legitimacy and influence." Do you agree that this describes leadership traits that exist or are needed at NOAA? Have you seen this in "pockets of greatness" within our agency? Or, do you have another view on what leadership needs to look like within our setting?

2) Collins points out [page 11] that "executive" power-based leadership in the business world does not always work well within social sector institutions (e.g., NOAA, universities), whereas "legislative" leadership (relying more on upon persuasion, political currency, and shared interests

to create conditions for the right decisions to happen) may sometimes be a better fit. Do you lean toward one way or the other (executive vs. legislative) in terms of what you feel fits best or is needed most within NOAA, perhaps your own leadership space within our agency?

“Hedgehog Concept”:

3) Collins adapts his business-based "hedgehog concept", which is a way to think about gaining a piercing clarity about how to produce our best results, so that we are challenged to find the reinforcing intersection between answers to these three driving questions: what are we [our organization] deeply passionate about, what can we be the best in the world at, and what is our sustainable resource engine. Do you think these are the right questions to be asking within NOAA in terms of setting future direction and organizational identity? Do you think we, as leaders within various parts of our large agency, can take ownership of the answers to these questions, or is our large, layered, top-down managed organization a hindrance to that type of planning?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[jimcollins.com](http://jimcollins.com) is a web site loaded up with tools and resources to accompany the Good to Great series: articles, planning tools, discussion questions, and short video clips. In addition, Good to Great and the Social Sectors is available at libraries and a variety of online book-selling sources.