



Clovis Unified School District

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**Leadership Academy**

## **Built To Last Summary**

December 29, 2015 Niklas

Goeke Business, Creativity, Entrepreneurship, History, Management, Motivation & Inspiration, Startups, Success, Work

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Built To Last* examines what lies behind the extraordinary success of 18 visionary companies and which principles and ideas they've used to thrive for a century.

### **Favorite quote from the author:**

**“Visionary companies pursue a cluster of objectives, of which making money is only one – and not necessarily the primary one.”**

This book is the result of six years of research. Published in 1994 by James C. Collins (more commonly known as Jim Collins) and Jerry Porras, it's long been a modern classic and has been translated in over 25 languages.

Collins and Porras conducted a survey among hundreds of CEOs of the world's top corporations at the time and then compiled a list of **18 visionary companies**, which they then thoroughly analyzed, investigated, and compared with their non-visionary peers.

They wanted to find out what has helped them stay successful over decades, and, in some cases, even a century. Here are the 3 tidbits that most struck me:

1. You don't need a great idea to start a great company.
2. Without a core ideology, a company will never be visionary.
3. Visionary companies are like a cult.

Let's dig in!

### **Lesson 1: You don't need a great idea to start a great company. Or any idea, for that matter.**

In fact, you don't need any idea at all. Why? Because truly great and visionary companies **constantly turn out great ideas**, just because **they generate so many** in the first place. For example, guess what Akio Morita and Masaru Ibuka did, right after founding Sony He held a meeting to brainstorm business ideas. They discussed sweetened bean-paste and mini-golf equipment, among other things. American Express started as a mail business, Motorola with something very interesting (and soon obsolete) called battery eliminators and even though Apple's computers were a great success, eventually they would create the most profitable product in history – a phone.

The reason these companies succeeded is that instead of focusing on one idea or one great leader, they focused on **the process of coming up with ideas**, and producing leaders, either good, or bad. Being restless and persistent matters much more than having that one in a million idea.

### **Lesson 2: Without a core ideology, your company can't be visionary.**

A core ideology consists of two things: **a higher purpose and a set of core values**. For example, Walmart's core ideology is to bring people retail products at the **lowest prices, with**



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**the greatest customer service.** Apple's purpose: **Think differently.** They are here to disrupt, to change, to improve. The industry doesn't matter. They did it with computers, then music, then phones. One of their values is **user-friendly and beautiful design.** Notice how these don't stand in the way of progress. Apple never stopped experimenting. Otherwise, they would never have moved from computers to music players. However, doing something different and making all their products look beautiful are universal principles, which can always be applied.

**Your core ideology has to live through all products, employees and times.** It doesn't matter what it contains, but rather that it exists. If you have no purpose and no principles to hold up high, you'll never create a vision great enough to attract fellow great minds to help you build it. So much more than an idea you need a purpose and a set of values.

### **Lesson 3: Visionary companies are like a cult – you're in or you're out!**

This was interesting to me; I had never considered it. Since their core ideology doesn't leave much room for compromises, visionary companies will settle only for the best employees, with the same mindset. The core ideology is something that you either share, or you don't. There's nothing in between, which is why **new employees either thrive or leave very quickly.**

For example, you couldn't cuss around Walt Disney. If he heard you use a four-letter word other than love, you were fired. No exceptions.

Same with Apple. You either got why the serifs on a font were so important, or you didn't. The reason that this is important is that **the company feels like a big family, almost like a cult.**

Only once your sure employees follow your core ideology can you trust them enough to give them room to experiment and generate those ideas your company relies on.

### **Built To Last Review**

I had no idea that *Built To Last* was so popular and such a classic. An incredible effort went into this book, and you can see it in the countless examples, many of which made it into the summary on Blinkist, which I think is great. Lesson 1 was a game-changer for me, I didn't think you'd need to have a great idea, but I sure thought you had to have one. Imagining just sitting together with 2 good friends, starting a company, and then coming up with something surely puts entrepreneurship into a new light for me. I always knew it was a jump into a cold pool, but this actually makes it sound fun.

I've also never seen the idea of a core ideology formulated so clearly. The summary made it really easy to understand, I feel as if I could come up with my own right now. Jim's follow-up books *Good To Great* and *Great By Choice* are equally as interesting, by the way!