

"Good" is the enemy of "Great"

It is easier to do the basics for something good than to really work for something great. Isn't it easier to settle for a B on an exam rather than work hard to get an A? This concept of being content with par keeps so much in our world from being great. In the fraternity world, making the move from an average chapter with average grades, an average house and average membership to an excellent chapter seems to happen only when there is a collective, organized effort to be the best.

In a Gallup Poll study of companies that made the move to sustained greatness ("Good to Great" by Jim Collins), there were six characteristics that were present in each of those cases. Those six characteristics, in a fraternity context, can mean the difference between simple mediocrity and true excellence.

First who... then what:

The first step is to make sure the right people are on board and there are not people dragging down the chapter. Look around your chapter right now and see if there are men around who have poor conduct, don't pay their dues, and cause more problems than what little support, if any, they might contribute. If they are not willing to step up, don't let them pull down your new members. Once everyone has either stepped up or stepped away, you will know that everyone there is committed to make the move to greatness.

The second step is to elect the right men to leadership positions. Does it seem like only seven guys are running for six positions every year? "He's a good guy, let's give him something to do." Being an officer may mean a better parking spot, but not making brothers step up and fulfill their responsibilities almost guarantees sub-par performance. Require all officer candidates to fill out an application with specific ideas for that position; don't use the "trickle down" method of sliding elections so a member runs for five different positions and gets elected "F" by default when he really should not be the "F." Hold elected officers responsible. For more on officer responsibilities, read the *Chapter Management BRIEF*.

Then there's the topic of recruitment. When recruiting, keep in mind the 10 Basic Expectations, and look for men who are willing to live up to them. You are recruiting the future leaders of the chapter, so it's not the time to skimp on effort. Good chapters go out and find good new members. They recruit friends, guys from class or the gym, leaders on campus and so on.

Great chapters do all of that *and* some things extra, such as recruit during the summer, have large new member classes and initiate them all, have more than one new member class per semester, don't dismiss small classes under the guise of "we prefer quality over quantity," and get better at recruitment each semester. For more recruitment ideas and techniques, see the *Recruitment BRIEF*.

Confront the brutal facts (yet never lose faith):

This is a hard step, but it appeared to be one of the most critical for the move to greatness. If you don't look at things from a realistic point of view and admit that things are not as good as they can be, they won't get better. The chapter must

have unwavering faith that it can become the best while admitting its shortcomings. Fear can be paralyzing. The truth can be liberating, especially when it motivates change. Work as a chapter to build a plan for greatness, set goals that can be measured, and hold each other accountable for progress. For more on chapter evaluations, read the "Chapter Performance Appraisal" in

Section VI of the *Chapter Management BRIEF*. *Note: also refer to your most recent Leadership Consultant visitation report, as it follows the same format.*

The Hedgehog Complex:

Find something and be the best at it. There should be (at least) one great thing for which your chapter is known. If another chapter has better grades, are you going to stop studying? Of course not. Being among the best in academics and recruitment must be standard. But your chapter *could* be the best at campus leadership, intramurals, community service, or so on. For more on chapter image, read "Brand

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Identity” from the Recruitment Chairman section under “Officer Reference Materials” in “Resources” on the Delta Chi website.

The Culture of Discipline:

Does your current chapter culture encourage improvements? Does it drive members to be the best they can be? Does it force the chapter to progress every semester, never resting on its accomplishments from the past? Or does it stifle change with “traditions?” Does it discourage new members from getting involved until after initiation? Do seniors mentor new members or do they drink in chapter meetings, blow off recruitment events, and argue when the elected leaders push for change?

Is your chapter’s risk management programming just a list of “don’ts” and “can’ts” or does it focus on letting members know what they can do while keeping themselves and guests safe? The culture of your chapter will determine how the chapter operates, improves, and makes that move to greatness.

Technological Accelerators:

Great companies, according to the Gallup study, were not dependent upon new-age technology. Instead, they were the best at a few select forms of technology. Companies too technology-dependent had limited ability to adapt quickly and began to lack the basic skills critical for business.

Likewise, brothers who spend more time on Instant Messenger or playing online games than hanging out together lose their ability to work as a team. At the same time, specific uses of technology, like creating a recruitment CD or DVD to send to potential members and having an impressive, updated website, can have immeasurable benefits. Choose technologies that complement what makes your chapter great, and train new members to update them or they’ll be useless in three years.

Momentum* and the “Doom Loop”:

None of the “great” companies made just one dramatic revolution. They didn’t just invent something. They didn’t jump off a cliff and build their wings on the way down. They made considerable improvements in every single area and kept improving every single day.

Small changes may take place in the form of one member acing a test instead of settling for a B; another will invite a friend of his to a recruitment event. Maybe someone spends a little more time with his little brother, helping him memorize the Preamble, and another will work on new plays for an upcoming flag football match. Before too long, A’s instead of B’s or B’s instead of C’s

on tests add up, a few more potential members show up to recruitment events, and intramurals start to improve.

Each time the work of the previous brother is built upon by the next. Before too long “average” becomes good and good becomes great. Now it only takes effort to keep it moving. Every small improvement helps make a big difference in the long run. For more on academic improvements, read the *Scholarship BRIEF* and for brotherhood ideas, read “Building Better Brotherhood” on the Delta Chi website in “Officer Resource Materials” under Social Chairman in the “Resources” section.

The doom loop concept is the exact opposite. Go inactive as a senior so you don’t have to pay dues but still come to parties and the doom loop gains some movement. Let one member slide on paying his bills, and it gains some more. Encourage a brother to get intoxicated the night before an exam and it gains even more. Haze your associate members and it really starts to spin.

Anything done to push the doom loop is only dragging your chapter down and diverting energy from what momentum was being built by positive efforts. To make the jump from average to good and then good to great, you have to stop feeding the doom loop and get working on that momentum.

For more on all of these concepts, you are encouraged to read “Good to Great” by Jim Collins, which was the basis for this article.

**In “Good to Great,” Jim Collins refers to the concept of momentum with the analogy of a flywheel.*