In My Opinion...
Dean Says:

When "Good" Becomes The Enemy Of "Great"

"And now, to the question we have to face in this morning's staff meeting: 'When does *good* become the enemy of *great?*'"
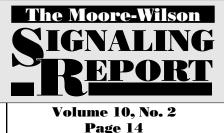
The CEO cast a wavering eye on the key executives of this multinational corporation. A few of the leaders of this well-respected firm glanced away from making eye contact with the boss. The one female executive in the room let out a barely audible sigh. A few of the others rustled the papers laying in front of them. One man coughed softly. The silence stretched on for what seemed like an eternity.

No ready answers here. No quick cliches. No stammering attempts to butter up the boss. Just silence. Long, merciless, unbroken silence.

The whole idea that "good" might serve as an enemy seems quite foreign. Why practically every mom bid her children farewell each school day with the admonition, "Now, be good."

In fact, every educator across the span of our educational experience urged us to concentrate on doing a good job.

How in the world can "good" become the enemy of "great?"

In his ground-breaking and best-selling business book, *Good to Great,*[1] Jim Collins has taken great pains to answer this question.

While I cannot begin to adequately treat the essence of Collins' book in these few paragraphs, he asserts three main concepts and six supporting sub-concepts:

> *Disciplined People*
> Level 5 Leadership
> First Who…Then What
> *Disciplined Thought*
> Confront the Brutal Facts
> Hedgehog Concept
> *Disciplined Action*
> Culture of Discipline
> Technology Acceleration

These concepts interrelate to form timeless principles that lead to success. One disciplined action that separates truly successful endeavors from comparisons rests in the decision by leadership that accepting "good" would not stand in the way of achieving "great."

In the fire alarm industry, the time has come to take a disciplined action. The time has come to decide that accepting "good" will no longer stand in the way of achieving "great."

If you manufacture fire alarm products, the time has come for you to decide that making "good" products must not prevent you from making "great" products.

If you design fire alarm systems, the time has come for you to decide that creating good designs must no longer stand in the way of creating "great" designs.

If you install fire alarm systems, the time has come for you to decide that installing "good" fire alarm systems must no longer stand in the way of installing "great" fire alarm systems.

If you review plans for fire alarm installations or inspect newly installed fire alarm systems, the time has come for you to decide that performing your vital role in a "good" manner must no longer stand in the way of performing your vital role in a "great" manner.

The time has come for the level of fire protection that saves lives, protects property, maintains mission continuity, helps assure heritage preservation, and helps ensure environmental protection to rise above the "good" and become truly "great." Owners of buildings and other system users have long deserved and should now demand that fire alarm systems, and every other type of fire protection system or equipment, move from "good" to "great."

The impact that fire has on the lives of people, and the impact that fire has on the economy of the United States and Canada, remains staggering. While some appear to remain committed to offering only mediocre products and services that barely rise to the level of "good," the possiblity exists for businesses and organizations involved in the fire protection community to excel beyond their wildest dreams. All the factors they have to employ to achieve this level of success will begin to come together when they make that conscious decision to no longer allow "good" to become the enemy of "great."

Manufacturers can produce truly "great" fire protection products that perform at the highest possible level of service, while doing so at an affordable price.

Designers can produce truly "great" fire protection designs that will meet stakeholder needs in a superior fashion,

that we have allowed the "minimum" requirement to become the accepted norm, the "good practice" in smoke detector spacing. The time has come for the fire protection community to take up the challenge. We need more definitive research to determine how smoke detectors react to various fires and how spacing relates to that detection.

Every time you tell a customer that you have provided a code-compliant design or installation that meets the established good practices of the industry, remember how little we really know about smoke detection and the installed spacing of smoke detectors. Encourage your organization to support research in this area. Encourage manufacturers that you work with to participate in this research. And finally, understand what the current installation spacing "good practice" really means. ❏
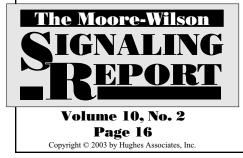
yet do so in a cost effective manner.

Installers can install truly "great" fire protection systems and, at the same time, do so without using methods that fracture the budget.

Authorities Having Jurisdiction can review plans and inspect systems in a "great" fashion, without doing so in a way that will overburden the manufacturers, designers, installers, or users of the fire protection systems.

Can the fire protection industry move from "good" to "great." I say "yes!" What do you say? ❏

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[1]Collins, Jim. *Good to Great.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001. ISBN 0-06-662099-6 (hc)

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SIGNALING REPORT

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■…Fire protection codes, standards, and recommended practices, fire safety educational resources, and fire alarm and fire protection seminars:
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The Moore-Wilson Signaling Report **is published by**
Hughes Associates, Inc., 3610 Commerce Drive STE 817, Baltimore, MD 21227-1652
Phone: 410-737-8677 • FAX: 410-737-8688 • E-mail: tm-wsr@haifire.com

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