

Make a Change – Make a Difference

One of the things about being an entrepreneur is the ability to affect change. Change the way it is done, change the way something looks, change the way everyone thinks about something, change the way we can be healed, change the way we live our lives, and more change, change, change! This is very empowering, and when you have it in your life, you feel how rewarding and motivating it can be.



In an interview in 1995, Steve Jobs discussed having the power to change things when he was at NeXT. He had success as an entrepreneur, but not the success he was getting ready to have with the iPod and iPhone development, starting around 2001. Even with the setback of being removed from Apple the first time, his passion to change and make things better was never stifled.

It is inspiring to know that everything around us is made up by others and we can go out and “poke life,” as he says, and make a dent in things. Making the mistake of believing that life is just there and that we are stuck living it as it comes is not the way to maximize one’s potential.

Check out the interview and be reminded that we have the power to change, and go out and make a difference in your own lives and the lives of others. Steve Jobs did this on a level that may seem hard to compete with, but even a small change can have a huge impact.

Steve Jobs: The Most Important Thing

What are you doing to poke life and mold it into something better?

Strategy Evolves, Does your Business?



How did your business strategy come about? Was it planned out in advance in the boardroom, or was it done by some type of trial and error? Did you start

out knowing exactly what you were going to become? We started with a plan, but it has evolved into one that has taken time and been filled with trial and error.

Efficiency came about as a company because we had an opportunity to come together and complete a big ERP system for companies that sell copiers to businesses. My partner, April Cox Abboud, was consulting in this space, came upon this opportunity and we started the company around this project. Our intentions were to build it and sell it, over and over, to other dealers and have a winning formula for success.

For many reasons, this didn't happen and we went on to work on Software as a Service (SaaS) products. We have been working on a handful of ideas to get out there, and we have had limited success with one, and not much at all with the others. As I continued to see and read what was happening in the world, we decided to turn into a mobile app development company and help

individuals take their ideas to the market, along with helping companies do the same.

We didn't have a certain vertical to go after in the mobile space when we started, but knew that we wanted to have one. As we have worked to build-out mobile apps for some clients, we have now come about an opportunity with one particular client in the industrial cleaning arena. That client wants to partner with us to build mobile apps for their network of other companies. This is a great opportunity to push a success story out to these other companies and fill a need that isn't currently being filled.

I have shared with you all for a while that we have been looking for a vertical in the SaaS, and now in the mobile space, to go after. As trial and error would have it, we have stumbled upon this opportunity. Our friend Rasmus Ankersen, whom I talked about in last week's blog, discussed this in his own blog post back in March, which focused around strategy. When Pfizer was testing a drug to treat high blood pressure in the 1980s, they found it not to be that effective, but the men in the trails didn't want to let go of their samples. Why? Because they were having a better sexual experience and soon the drug Viagra was born.

Jim Collins, in his book Great by Choice, discusses how empirical creativity was used by the companies that excelled over their competitors by 10 times. This basically means that when we talk about strategy, what you start with gives you data that you can work with, and create from there using real world feedback. Through trial and error, it comes about and sometimes ends up being nothing close to what you started out to accomplish.

I work hard to be open, adjust strategy and apply some creativity to the real world feedback that comes in as we go. How about you?

Follow the Big Trends or the Small Ones?

I have talked to a lot of people about the big trend of mobile, the growth in this area, how it is changing the way we do business, and how if we don't want to be left behind, we need to adapt. Some of this has a longer time horizon and some of it needs to be thought about in the short-term. The point is that this is a Macro trend that is happening and one that may be less of a concern than building your small [tribe](#) of followers that make a difference to the revenue and profits of your company.



Seth Godin's blog on *Macro Trends Don't Matter so Much*, makes a point that I agree with for the more focused, short-term aspects that drive your business. He says that the Macro trends, like internet subscribers some year in the future, or the number of Spanish speakers as a percent of world population, are not the key drivers to your growth and the group you are after. We could add things like, *Who will have more in Apple's IOS or Android's platforms by 2020? What percent of the world total output will China make up in the next 20 years?*

These trends are nice to watch, and some of you may want to think about it more than others. However, the key is that most companies and organizations need dozens, hundreds, or thousands to make a difference in their world. They don't need access to all Spanish speakers, to all internet subscribers, or all those on Apple's platform. What they need is the

ability to spread the word among a [tribe](#) of followers that are like-minded and passionate about your unique “[purple cow](#)” offering.

This is where you what to really drill down into who your client is and what it is he wants. Robert Bloom, in his amazing book “The Inside Advantage,” gives us a step-by-step process for drilling down to the true look and feel of who your client is and what is unique about what you are offering him. Knowing your customers in this way will allow the laser-like focus to zero in on your [tribe](#).

Finishing up in Seth’s blog, he says that the big trends are a numbers game, and that by realizing that, you are “treating the market as an amorphous mass of interchangeable parts.” You realize the micro is more important than the macro and that it is about the people – that we are individual human beings and we have names, desires, wants and interest.

What is your micro group that you are focused on?

[My Mistakes](#)

Do you ever think about the mistakes you’ve made in running a business or in life? I would hate to think about the mistakes I have made with the various businesses that I have overseen. If you listed them on a hard drive, you would probably need a gigabit of space. These mistakes include timing, strategy, approach, negotiation, what to focus on, what not



to focus on, not keeping it simple, too much process, not enough process, people, and on and on. It just seems endless, and it makes me wonder how I ever had successes, but it also makes me realize why things seem so hard at times. So what do you do?

Well, my simple answer is to not fret too much because mistakes are going to continue to happen. We are all human. The more introspective answer is to learn from the mistakes and avoid making them again. It seems that I get the angriest when I realize that I have made a mistake for the second or even the third time (geez where is a wall I can beat my head against)! I try to ask what caused the mistake and then put a process or approach in place to ensure it doesn't happen again. If the mistake happens again, I realize that I didn't take the time to follow up on what I wanted to have in place to start with (oh boy, another mistake)!

One of the mistakes I've realized over the past couple of years is not being as focused in a specific niche or vertical within the software space. I have made the excuse that the product side of our business, which is more of the swinging for the fences approach with a lot of strike outs, would be our grand plan. But it is not stable and consistent so we need to have a side that produces cash flow and consistency. That was supposed to be the development of custom software for various businesses. The custom software was ad hock with no real focus and also had a lot of inconsistency. This was not working and for good reason, so it had to change.

We have made changes in our firm to have a specific focus. We have hired and plan around that focus and create an environment of synergy around the health care space. I wrote a blog a while back on the [clipper ship strategy](#), which discusses being flexible and going where the money is, and that is definitely in healthcare. We will tighten this strategy and create a much better outcome and pipeline for our company.

This is one mistake that has been painful, and I will energize us to move forward in a new way. Again, Happy New Year and here is to a making it the best year yet as you and I recover from our previous mistakes!

Kick Start The New Year

As we start the New Year, so many of us reflect upon what it would be like to make this year a better one. Instead, what if we think about how we can make it happen? How does the reality that we want to see actually manifest? It happens by first figuring out where you want to go and removing the obstacles that are stopping you from getting there.



When I was in Istanbul, Turkey I heard [Matthew Kelly](#) talking about getting to where you want to go and dreaming of the possibilities of what might be. As a life and business coach, Matthew helps people and businesses focus on their greatest desires and dreams and then helps them get there. He also wrote the best-selling book [The Dream Manager](#). Reading his latest blog post reminded me of some of the planning, focus, and what we should avoid in order to reach our greatest desires.

To kick start your life and make 2013 the best ever, ask yourself the same questions Matthew asks. I will share the questions as well as provide one example from each to demonstrate changes I will make this coming year.

1. If you could only accomplish three things next year, what would they be?
2. What are you going to do to ensure you have more energy next year than you did this year?
3. What relationships do you want to improve? How will you improve them?
4. What new habit(s) are you going to adopt in 2013 to grow spiritually?
5. What bad habits are you going to eliminate?
6. What are you going to spend more time doing?
7. What are you going to spend less time doing?

I will make it a key top priority to build successful mobile apps. I will do P90X2 cardio workouts twice a week on top of the weight workouts to increase my energy. I will improve the relationship with my team and the culture of our company, and I will do this by injecting a positive energy with all my interactions and eliminating any negative people or conversations that come up. I will read a page each day from my spiritual books. I will eliminate the habit of complaining about the small stuff. I will spend more time reading books and material that have big ideas and positively change my thinking. I will spend less time watching negative news stories that bring my vibrational energy down.

What about you? What are a couple of big things that you are going to go after, and what will you eliminate to kick start your life to the big dreams that we are all after?

How To Be Happy During Challenging Times

When I was in Istanbul, Turkey back in September, I heard [Harvard](#) lecturer and Good Think CEO [Shawn Achor](#) give his presentation focusing on research around happiness. This was fascinating, filled with humor, and centered on the power of happiness can spread and lead to more productive workers. Sharing this now seems very appropriate, given that half the voters out there are not very happy about the outcome of the election. I myself feel like capitalism has been pushed aside in favor of a bigger, more controlling government. I believe economic growth and jobs come from entrepreneurs, and big government only gets in their way, so this doesn't motivate me to do a happy dance. So how can we all increase our happiness during challenging times?

Shawn has written a book called "[The Happiness Advantage](#)," and it explains that our problems with happiness come from our thinking that we will be happy when we get to a certain outcome or level of success. Therefore, any victories or accomplishments get pushed down the road and delay happiness. The problem is that when we get there, the level of success is reset and increased. This leaves us with a feeling of not ever getting to that happy place, so what are we to do?

You can also [click here](#) to watch the video.

Our brains work better when we are positive and function less efficiently when we are neutral or negative. We also have increased intelligence and creativity when we are positive. As empathic beings, when we share a smile it is contagious the same way a frown or depression can be.

How do we become happier, and what can we do to increase

happiness among those around us? Shawn shared 6 key areas on simple ways to change your happiness:

- **Gratitude** – write five things that you are grateful for each morning. This refocuses your brain and opens up your awareness to look for the happy things in life.
- **Journaling** – spend three minutes each day for thirty days writing about a positive experience. This has been shown to decrease doctor visits by 50%. You become more social, and your immune system improves.
- **Simplifying vs Multitasking** – do one thing at a time. This is what we are built to do. Multitasking increases stress, which eats away at every organ in our body.
- **Utilizing Strengths** – discover and focus on your strengths. This gives you high levels of energy and productivity with low levels of success.
- **Exercising** – work out. This is as powerful an antidepressant as the pills, and it releases dopamine in the brain, which cause positive and uplifting feelings.
- **Meditation** – relax and just watch your breath go in and out. It changes the way your brain structures itself and changes its electrical impulses. This allows a more balanced and positive feeling.

Shawn also discussed the activation energy that you use to get an activity to really kick in and become a habit. He wanted to play the guitar more but found that having to go into the closet and get it out deterred him. He reduced his activation energy (initial investment of energy necessary to accomplish a task) by placing the guitar in the middle of room. He then played for 28 out of 30 days.

What activity do you want to do to be happier? How are you going to reduce your activation energy and get it done?

Steve Jobs And The Power Focus!

I am writing this week's blog on Friday, October 5, which has great significance for me. My partner of 20 years back in my investment days was born on this day, along with my lifelong best friend Ronald Poles. It is also one year from the day that Steve Jobs passed away. [Verne Harnish](#) reminded me of this in his [blog](#), and he shared this [video put out by Apple](#). It is a nice tribute and a great reminder of what he and Apple have done for our everyday lives.

[Steve Jobs](#) is an icon of our time. In this country, we all love the story of the underdog or a great comeback story! That is the story of Steve Jobs. The board of the company that he started himself removed him, but then they asked him to return when things went bad, and he turned Apple into the most valuable company on the planet.

I also find it interesting that a man who demanded so much from his people and was considered so difficult to work with managed to accomplish so much. [Walter Isaacson](#) discusses the details in his book about Steve Jobs. Jobs pushed his people further than they thought they could go. I remember this saying I came across many years ago: When you look back over your life, the people that you will remember the most outside of your immediate loved ones are the ones that got the most out of you.

If I think back, that is true for me. The teachers and the coaches that pushed me to do more than I thought I could do are the ones that stand out in my mind. Jobs was that type of

person. Even though I am sure many people got frustrated with him, those same people remember going to the next level because they were around someone that pushed to get the most out of them.

Steve Jobs also focused on one key priority and spent three hours a day on that issue. He considered this to be vital to moving forward and creating successful products. He also had lunch most days with [Jonathan Ive](#), his chief designer. During this time, they discussed the areas Steve thought mattered most and decided how to move forward with those ideas to create the great experiences we have today with Apple products. [Adam Lashinsky](#) outlined this in his book "[Inside Apple](#)."

That type of time takes a lot of energy to get the "[Flywheel](#)" spinning, as discussed by [Jim Collins](#). And what a Flywheel and legacy Steve has created! It still pushes out "gee-whiz" products that will have people standing in line for hours just so they can be one of the first to buy them.

I know I could definitely be more focused in my efforts. How much focus and effort are you putting on the most important areas of your company and your life?

Power of One

Having a business and being an entrepreneur, you attempt to make a difference in your life, sometimes in the lives of others, and not so often, in the world. I see this on a daily basis because running a company is integral in the lives of many people around me.

You usually see the small things but not the larger impact that you might make someday in the future. For example, you may have created some great product that improves the lives of others in a meaningful way, or you may go public in an [IPO](#) and share stock with your early hard-working employees that one day generates more money than ever imagined.

Sometimes, your greatest impact to make the world better may not even show up until after you're gone. This was the case for Rachel Beckwith, a little girl that forever changed the lives of 60,000 people after she was killed in a tragic accident. I will share the story briefly, and then you can watch the short video to see the effects of her dreams and actions. Warning to all viewers: if you are uncomfortable feeling the goodness of humans helping each other and fear a tear may build up around your eyes, don't watch this video.

At 9 years of age, Rachel Beckwith had a big heart and wanted to solve many of the problems she saw in the world. When [Scott Harrison](#) from [Charity Water](#) (my favorite charity) visited her church and shared how his organization helps young kids in Africa get access to clean drinking water, she set out to help and created her own fundraising page. With her ninth birthday coming up, she asked those that normally gave her gifts to donate \$9 instead, with a goal to raise \$300.

She raised \$220 and made a promise to try harder next year. However, a few weeks later, a tractor-trailer on I-90 near Seattle, WA jackknifed into a logging truck and smashed into Rachel's car. She was the only one critically injured, and on July 23, 2011, she was taken off life support. The news of her story soon spread, and in the month that followed, approximately 30,000 people gave \$1.2-million.

Watch as Rachel's mom goes to Africa to witness the new wells flowing with clean water and the impact that her 9 year old daughter has left on the lives of so many.

What is the legacy that you are going to leave behind?

See [VIDEO here](#).

Is Your Sandbox Big Enough?

In business we refer to a sandbox as the area in which you play or conduct business. It consists of three things: your geographical boundaries, your products or services, and either your client description if you sell direct or your distribution channel if you sell there.

When determining your sandbox, one area of thought is to make sure that the sandbox you are playing in is capable of getting you to the goals you have created for yourself. Problems could include not having enough customers or not having the right customers in your geographical boundaries. The product or service may have saturated the market you're in, and the client description could have changed or expanded.

In our situation, we found that to reach our goals we need to add a geographical boundary that is larger and more diverse than our existing one in [Knoxville, TN](#). We have the opportunity to open another office in a market that provides this, and we feel this will open the sandbox for us to get where we want to go.

April Cox, my partner and co-founder of [Efficiency](#), will be going to [Dubai](#) in the beginning of June to start our new

office in that fast growing and dynamic city. April has contacts there from her husband and [EO](#) members that we have met over the years, so she will be off and running to network and increase our reach in our new expanded sandbox.



Not only will she be in fast growing market, it is also a modern city adapting to the latest technologies. This will be a plus for us at Efficiencie because we believe there is a better way to leverage technology and growing in a new environment with other companies that believe this also will be mutually beneficial. It takes four hours by plane to get to our office in India from Dubai, so working with our team there will be more “local” for the companies we connect with as we work together.

We are excited for this expansion and the chance to open the door to new relationships, customers, and product opportunities.

Is your sand box big enough to get you where you want to go?

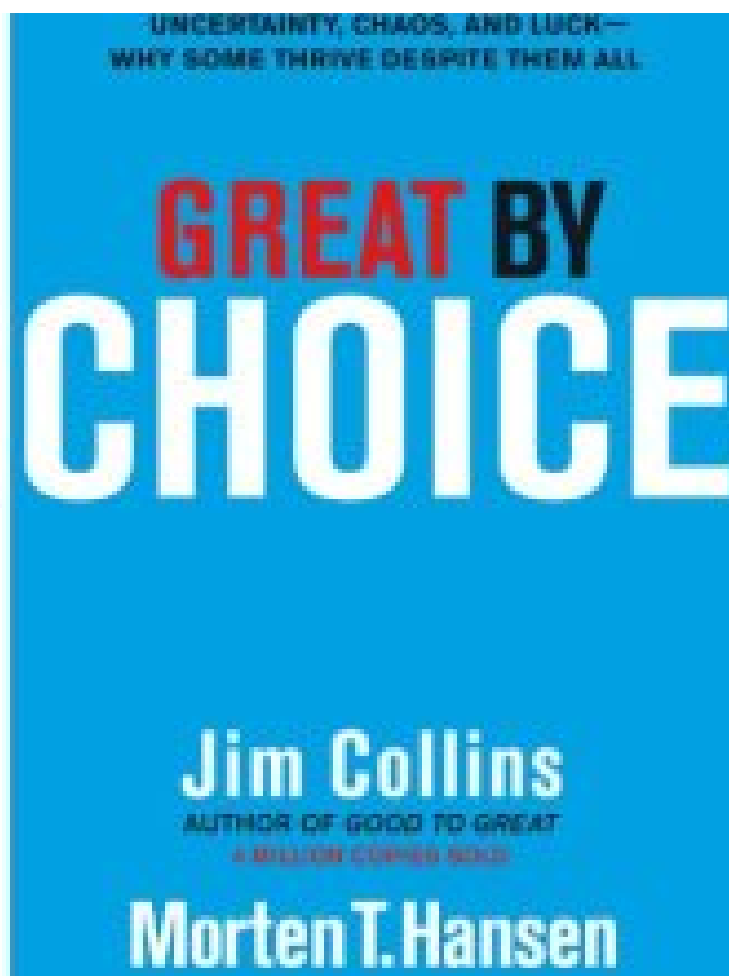
[3 Keys to Business Greatness!](#)

If you asked me the business authors out there who I think provide the most value, I would have to say [Jim Collins](#) and [Peter Drucker](#). Both of these guys have provided huge insight

to the business community on how to run a successful company. Like most businesses, we at Efficiencie are starting the year formulating strategies and goals to make forward progress toward our destination, and reading Collins' and Drucker's material has always been good preparation.

Peter Drucker is legendary and has since passed on. I credit him for giving me the insight in the early '90s to see how the information revolution would provide the future with value and to develop a mutual fund called [IPS Millennium Fund](#) in '95 to participate in this information revolution.

Jim Collins opened my mind to creating a company that had a big vision with a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), a heart with a core purpose, and personality with core values. So, when Collins came out with his new book, I was anxious to see the new awareness that would come from his decade long research.



In [Great by Choice](#), Collins and Hansen set up an awareness of how three key areas acted as the common themes in the companies that have dealt with uncertainty, chaos, and luck as well as why some companies thrive despite all this. What they found was very interesting and contradicts common thinking about great companies. They discovered what they call 10Xers (companies that have been beating the marketing and comparison firms by at least 10 times in stock market performance) were **not** more visionary, more bold, more risk taking, more innovative, or more creative than the comparison companies.

They were more of 3 things:

1) More Disciplined

2) More Empirical

3) More Paranoid

This book is very eye opening! When we think of a company that has had great success, we usually assume it has done so with a new break through idea, a new patent, or by taking a big risk that is paying off. However, this was not the case. Of course, to a point, these companies were innovative and creative, but they became really great by finding what works through empirical evidence, testing that out, and then being super disciplined to get it done. They also worried excessively about what was out there that could change the game for them.

I will discuss each in more detail in next week's blog. Happy New Year, and I wish you much success this year being worried about what is coming, gathering evidence that your ideas work, and implementing them with vigorous discipline.