

Stop Trying to be Perfect and Start Being Remarkable



THE BIG MOO is an unprecedented collaboration of 33 of the world's smartest business thinkers, blending their best ideas on how you can remarkableize your organization. This all-star team includes Julie Anixter, Tim Manners, **Malcolm Gladwell**, Dave Balter, Promise Phelon, Heath Row, Amit Gupta, Marc Benioff, Kevin Carroll, **Tom Peters**, Carol Cone, **Randall Rothenberg**, Lynn Gordon, Jay Gouliard, Donna Sturgess, Marcia Hart, Jackie Huba, **Guy Kawasaki**, Polly LaBarre, **Chris Meyer**, Robin Williams Jacqueline Novogratz, Dan Pink, Dean Debiase, Red Maxwell, **Mark Cuban**, Lisa Gansky, April Armstrong, **Tom Kelley**, Robyn Waters, William Godin, **Alan Webber**, and Seth Godin.

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TWO KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS

Have you ever seen a recumbent bicycle? They look sort of like *Easy Rider*-style chopper motorcycles, but the seat is even more reclined and there's no engine, except the driver.

It turns out that recumbent bikes are faster, more comfortable, and more fun to ride than the bikes we all grew up with. Speed aside, for anyone with back trouble, neck trouble, or the need to make a spectacle of himself, a recumbent bicycle is a great choice. There are more than a dozen "major" manufacturers of the bikes, each producing a few hundred or a few thousand recumbents a year. In total, the industry accounts for less than 1 percent of all bikes sold.

Here's the surprising problem: Recumbent bikes are taking off. At InterWest 2005, the giant bike show held every year in Las Vegas, all the major traditional-bike manufacturers were showing off bikes that are beginning to look more and more like recumbents. They're just responding to the changing market. Aging

baby boomers don't want a Lance Armstrong bike — instead, they want to be comfortable. So brands like Trek and Giant (which sell, in one day, as many bikes as most recumbent companies do in a year) are starting to push their designs in the recumbent direction.

So why is this a problem? Why isn't this great news for the existing recumbent manufacturers? After all, they're already good at building the bikes people want.

It's a problem because the long-suffering existing manufacturers are delighted that the marketplace has finally seen the light. "We were right!" they're thinking, and they're responding to the competitive pressure of traditional-bike manufacturers' going after recumbents by making *their* recumbent bikes more like traditional ones. In essence, they're emulating Trek while Trek is emulating them.

They're going to get crushed.

There are two kinds of organizations. One kind likes to be on the cutting edge, to do what hasn't been done before, to embrace the new. The other kind fears that, and holds back to allow someone else to go first.

The United Way is facing tough times because they're afraid to change. The Saddleback Church in California is doing wonderfully (10,000 percent growth over the last few years) because they love to change.

The recumbent-bicycle companies aren't organized to compete on price and distribution and consistency. They should let the Treks and the Giants of the world teach everyone what to buy,

while they keep making the expensive, quirky stuff for the real aficionados. As the market gets bigger, they'll thrive. They're good at staying on the edge, and they should stay there.

Companies that are good at being edgy will always find a way to thrive. The sure way to fail, it seems, is to attempt to compromise that affinity for edginess for the mass market. It's harder than it looks.

But what if your organization embraces its stuckness? What's it going to take for you to start changing? What do you do when the market is moving *away* from you, not toward you? It seems to me that if you wait too long, it'll be too late to do much of anything at all. Instead, recognize that change is coming, that the reality you operate in is dying out, and start practicing how to do the next big thing.

Betting on change is always the safest bet available.