

## **Neurotically Productive**

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2006, published in the Houston Home Journal on April 20, 2006

I had occasion this week to cross paths with a long-time friend who is actively involved in a non-profit advocacy group for children and families. She told me of an upcoming conference for which she is preparing by reading “Good to Great” and the Social Sector: A Monograph to Accompany “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. She said the booklet (42 pages) had just been published.

I said I'd like to borrow it sometime. She retrieved the booklet from her car immediately to allow me to skim it (she insisted she'd be back to reclaim it in two hours!)

I expected the content would be superb. After all, in the four years since Good to Great was published, surely Jim Collins had grown in many ways and would have included new awareness he'd gained during that period.

Wow! If you've not read Good to Great but have wanted to, pick up this little booklet. You'll lose much of the detail from the original, but you'll find focused nuggets page after page!

I looked at it quickly, knowing I had several other responsibilities to handle before the return of my friend. I shared insights with my wife from several places in the booklet. I then was called away to handle another responsibility, and my wife started looking through the pages.

My wife made notes for her personal use, applicable to her responsibilities as a teacher. They came from several different sections of the booklet and I wanted to share all of them here, too. But, alas, I am constrained by space.

Let me focus on the source of the title for this column. Among the notes my wife had made was this quote: “The great companies focused on finding and hanging onto the right people—those who are productively neurotic, those who are self-motivated and self-disciplined, those who wake up every day compulsively driven to do the best they can because it is simply part of their DNA.”

My wife had found the answer to the question that she asks me periodically: “Why do you work all the time?” You see, I'm supposedly retired. Yet I'm blessed with many clients. I'm up at all hours of the night sending them e-mails, sharing some new suggestion or summarizing our coaching telephone calls.

As we talked about this behavior, she pointed to another quote from Collins: “They are amazingly productive because they have an almost neurotic need to improve.” There's no doubt I love working with leaders who are guiding their organizations to continuously improve their processes. The one system that leverages all the others is the simple leadership development process that I install.

My wife and I also talked about the “small group” that we host in our home each Sunday evening as part of the discipleship program in our church. The participants have been talking about spiritual gifts and natural talents. In particular, we've been exploring the difference between those who are productively serving in the areas of their gifts and those who either don't yet know their gifts or haven't found the right place to serve. We all agree that to serve in a role where you've been gifted is far more satisfying than to be a square peg jammed into a round hole.

I appreciate where I am in my life. I spent a thirty-year career wondering “what do I want to do when I grow up?” I am delighted to finally be “neurotically productive!” And though my wife thinks I should relax more often, she realizes I was designed to serve.