



# MISSION POSSIBLE

Becoming a World-Class  
Organization While There's Still Time

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**MAIN IDEA**

The future of any organization rests solely on its ability to co-manage two dynamic and necessary processes:

1. Improving quality, profits and levels of customer service in the short run.
2. Developing the breakthrough innovations that are going to form the foundation for the organization in the longer-term.

These two processes are the only way any organization can stay competitive today and in the future. In fact, even though the two processes call for entirely different skill sets, there is a vast amount of dynamic additional energy that is liberated by the head-to-head battle between the two processes. Organizations that recognize, learn from and harness the power of that interaction have the opportunity to leap-frog their competition and achieve world-class status -- meaning they perform better than any other comparative organization.

The goal of becoming world-class and building a world-class organization in any field is not impossible. Nor is it easy. It requires a willingness, on the part of the leader, to accept the challenge to create an organization in which people can excel while simultaneously managing the present and creating their own futures. The key to achieving that has more to do with people and their relationships with each other and less to do with products and technologies than most people will realize at first glance.

1. The Characteristics of a World-Class Organization . . . . . Page 2

A world-class organization actively invents its own future by:

1. Working out ways to make its present operations better and more effective.
2. Committing resources to the development of future innovations.
3. Creating ways to learn from both initiatives simultaneously.

2. First-Curve Improvements . . . . . Page 4

Making first-curve enhancements to the existing business will usually require three broad initiatives:

1. The ability to envision and articulate how the organization needs to change to better serve its customers.
2. Identifying the shortest path between where you are and where you want to get to in the next 18 months.
3. Implementing the plan and making the requisite changes to realize the new vision.

3. Second-Curve Innovations . . . . . Page 5

Second-curve innovations are typically delivered on a foundation of three initiatives:

1. A vision of where your organization wants to drive your industry.
2. The ability to identify the shortest path between where you are and where you want to be in 5 years.
3. A tentative outline of the value proposition on which you plan to compete once your organization arrives.

4. Getting the Right People on the Right Teams . . . . . Page 6

World-class organizations know the very best ideas come out of a mix of ideas put forward by First-Curve (Improvement) teams and Second-Curve (Innovation) teams. The dynamics of having people with markedly different temperaments and viewpoints working together can create loads of synergy -- which world-class organizations find effective ways to harness.

5. Implementing the Two Curve Ideas . . . . . Page 7

Vibrant and robust world-class organizations are always open, and even eager, to embrace change.

They do that by:

1. Continuously finding ways to improve the group culture.
2. Incorporating appropriate humor into the organization.
3. Building the self-esteem of all employees.
4. Listening to employees intensely.
5. Giving people recognition for what they're doing well.
6. Encouraging ongoing personal improvement.

In the final analysis, world-class organizations focus on their people, because only they can change and improve the organization's present while at the same time designing its future.

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