

Getting the “right people on the bus.”

Tammy Erickson is a McKinsey Award-winning author. Her compelling views of the future are based upon extensive research into changing demographics, employee values, and how successful organizations work.

She recently interviewed Jim Collins, who has been working on his third major analytical investigation of strong companies, this time focusing on how successful companies weather crises. His findings are summarized in his new book *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In*.

In the interview, Collins reflected on the lessons he has drawn from his three major research programs, including two earlier investigations that led to *Good to Great* and *Built to Last*. Of several dozen key characteristics and actions he identified, some stand out as being perhaps the most important — the foundational core of sustainable greatness. One of those lessons, from his first study, involves getting the “right people on the bus.”

Collins has found that great companies have clarity around both the definition of key positions — that is, which roles are essential for success — and an intense focus on making sure the right people occupy those positions. This is necessary if you are striving to make a good company great — and even more so if you are trying to excel in turbulent times. It needs to be an organization’s highest priority. Unless you are surrounded by the right people, little else will matter.

Erickson agrees that this observation is correct — and will only increase as a point of differentiation between the great and not-so-great as talent shortages make finding the right people more difficult.