

How can your business prosper during competitive attack and economic chaos?

- What is your 'be the first to reach the South pole and home safely' goal for your business?
- What is the 'one main thing' that will drive you to make the correct decisions in your business whatever the weather?
- What measure will you put in place to help you win every day, week or month?

CONTENTS:

1. **An inspiring story** – how Amundsen used his 'one main thing' to plan out his entire race for the pole in 1911 (including his team's safe return)
2. **Game: Scott and Amundsen comparison** - get your team engaged to identify what to do to be more Amundsen and less Scott
3. **Exercise: Finding your 'main thing'** - how can a small business that experienced a catastrophic external incident navigate their way back to profit again.
4. **Checklist : 7 point checklist to help develop your 'main thing'**
5. **Spider Diagram: Your 'main thing' must drive behaviour in all elements of your business.**
6. **The Book** – Great by Choice – Jim Collins
7. **References**

STOP: thinking you can successfully focus on several things at the same time.

START: by choosing your 'one main thing' and identifying your '15 miles a day' number

1. An inspiring story:

In 1911 there was no satellite communication or GPS.

Setting out on their quest for the South Pole both Scott and Amundsen were using rough maps, compasses and a sextant.

Both took identical sledges (although Amundsen modified his).

Scott took a route previously followed by Shackleton in 1908. Amundsen took an unproven route.

Both faced similar weather conditions.

Scott travelled 120 miles more but Amundsen climbed a 10,000-foot high mountain.

Both took dogs but only Amundsen put his faith in dogs, sledges and skis as a proven mode of transport. Scott tried unproven diesel vehicles and horses.

Both laid out stations of food stocks and supplies in advance of their eventual attempt on the Pole.

So how come Amundsen made it and Scott didn't?

The answer to this question is encapsulated in this one quote:-



“Our plan is one, one and again one alone – to reach the pole. For that goal I have decided to throw everything else aside”

Roald Amundsen 1911

‘One, one and again one’

Here's how this relates to your business life...

‘Financial markets are out of your control. Customers are out of your control. Earthquakes are out of your control. Global competition is out of your control. Technological change is out of your control. Almost everything is ultimately out of your control. But when you ‘15 mile march’ (like Amundsen did), you have the tangible point of focus that keeps you and your team moving forward, despite confusion, uncertainty, and even chaos.’

Great by Choice – Jim Collins



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2. Comparison Game – Are you more Scott or Amundsen?

Play this game (in a group or individually). Print out a few copies of the comparison table on the next page (A3 is best).

1. Start by writing the name of your business
2. Read the Amundsen and Scott comparison columns
3. Does 'S' or 'A' best reflect your approach to your business. Mark an S for Scott and an A for Amundsen in each row of the red column.
4. Give yourself a score in the yellow column (You score -2 for an S or +2 for an A)
5. Total up your score at the bottom. How's it looking? What did you score out of a possible +10?

The green column is green for 'go take action'.

Write down in the green column what you can do to become more Amundsen and less Scott.

Use the helping hands in this column to direct the action you must take to be more 'Amundsen'.



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Name of Your Business Here

Amundsen, Intel, Southwest Airlines	Scott, AMD, Your competition?	Are you more Scott (S) or Amundsen (A) at the moment? (mark S or A for the approach you recognise in your business)	Score S = - 2 A = +2	Next Steps What could you do to change your business to be more A than S?
Only 1 goal – get to the South Pole first – 10 photos	More than 1 goal – get to the South Pole first and collect scientific data – 2000 photos and carry rocks back			Helping hand: The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing – what should you do?
In bad weather – go 15 miles if possible (but settle for 8 miles)	In bad weather – zero miles – stay in tent			Helping hand: What one daily or weekly measure should you obsess about?
In good weather – go 15 miles (rest and repair instead)	In good weather – go as far as possible			Helping hand: What limit do you give yourself so you don't over stretch yourself and burn out?
Use proven transport – arctic/antarctic mode of transport – dogs, sleds and skis	Test unproven transport – vehicles and horses and don't use proven power of dogs			Helping hand: What tried and tested 'things that work well in your industry that you should/could do more with?
Over prepared – expecting the unexpected – room for error 4 thermometers	Prepared just enough – not expecting the unexpected – no room for error 1 thermometer (which broke)			Helping hand: What can you do to ensure that you and your business are prepared to enable the one main thing to happen



3. Exercise: Finding your main thing?

Here's a profile of a vehicle repair garage – this is a true story.

John runs Blandford Hall Workshop a small garage workshop based on a farm.

The business has been built entirely on word of mouth recommendations and they have an outstanding reputation in the area for service and flexibility.

Earlier this year there was a catastrophic fire and their workshop garage burnt to the ground, taking with it all of the tools, equipment, and courtesy vehicles.

John had to act quickly to keep the business going. He has been able to secure temporary accommodation for their business in a nearby industrial unit.

The temporary arrangement is workable but is not a long-term solution for Blandford Hall Workshop or their customers.

John and the team need to rebuild their premises. The cost of the rebuild involves a bank loan for the significant capital outlay of £160,000. This feels like a huge mountain for a small business to climb.

Before committing to this investment it makes sense for John to work out what his 'main thing' focus must be. And what his one single measure should be, his '15 miles a day'.



What would you have as your 'main thing' in John's shoes?

On the next page are a series of questions that will guide you through determining the 'Main thing' for this workshop business. You can then repeat the exercise to help you work out the 'main thing' for your business.



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Part 1: OPTIONS

Rather than go straight into one 'main thing' it pays to generate several possible 'main things' first.

What one 'main thing' could John have in each of these areas of his repairs business?

Intel's one 'main thing' was to double the processing power of their chips every 18 months – Intel's one 'main thing' was operational.

N.B. This exercise works better when several people are involved.

Consider these areas:

- i. Operations
- ii. Marketing & Lead Generation
- iii. Selling
- iv. Customer Care
- v. Finance
- vi. People

Part 2: CHOOSE

Reject the 'main things' that are obviously not right. Discuss and choose the most likely 'main thing' from the remaining options.

PROFIT WARNING

It's easy to make 'Profit' the 'main thing' but profit is a consequence of many things - sales, costs, competition, number of clients. Southwest airlines 'main thing' was "Profitable No Frills Low Cost Air Travel". It defined the way in which the profit would be achieved. Avoid just profit as your 'main thing'.



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Part 3: MEASURE

Amundsen's main thing was the South Pole, his measure was nautical miles.

Your measure like Amundsen's has to show up as relevant to and in the same 'currency' as your main thing.

If the 'main thing' is financial – your measure is financial.

If the 'main thing' is distance – your measure is distance.

If the 'main thing' is no frills low cost – your measure is no frills low cost.

Part 4: DOUBLE CHECK

In what ways could your chosen 'main thing' damage, hinder or undermine your business?

- Does this tell you that this could be the wrong 'main thing' for your business?
- If it's too risky will it contribute to the chaos around you, rather than cut through the chaos?
- Are any of these things compromising/interfering with the values/principles and ethos of the business.

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the 3 questions above you need to explore a different main thing.

Example:

If John were to identify that collecting and dropping off customers cars for them at their homes was reducing the number of hours that he could actually be fixing cars, he could choose to stop doing this because it was impacting profits. However this undermines a core value of his business around the customer service that he offers and has gained a good reputation for. He will run the risk of losing valued customers as a result.

Next Steps: Repeat the exercise for your business and work out your 'main thing'



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4. The 'Main Thing' Checklist

Deliver high performance in the good weather and the bad

- ✓ Provides crystal clear focus on what's required every day or every week inside your business
- ✓ Provides internal constraints to prevent over stretching people and resources
- ✓ Relevant to your industry/business
- ✓ Puts you in control
- ✓ A timescale measure that is long enough to be meaningful and short enough to spot deviation away from the 'main thing' – hourly, daily, weekly.
- ✓ Can be done consistently in a disciplined way
- ✓ Stops you doing the things that undermine your 'main thing'

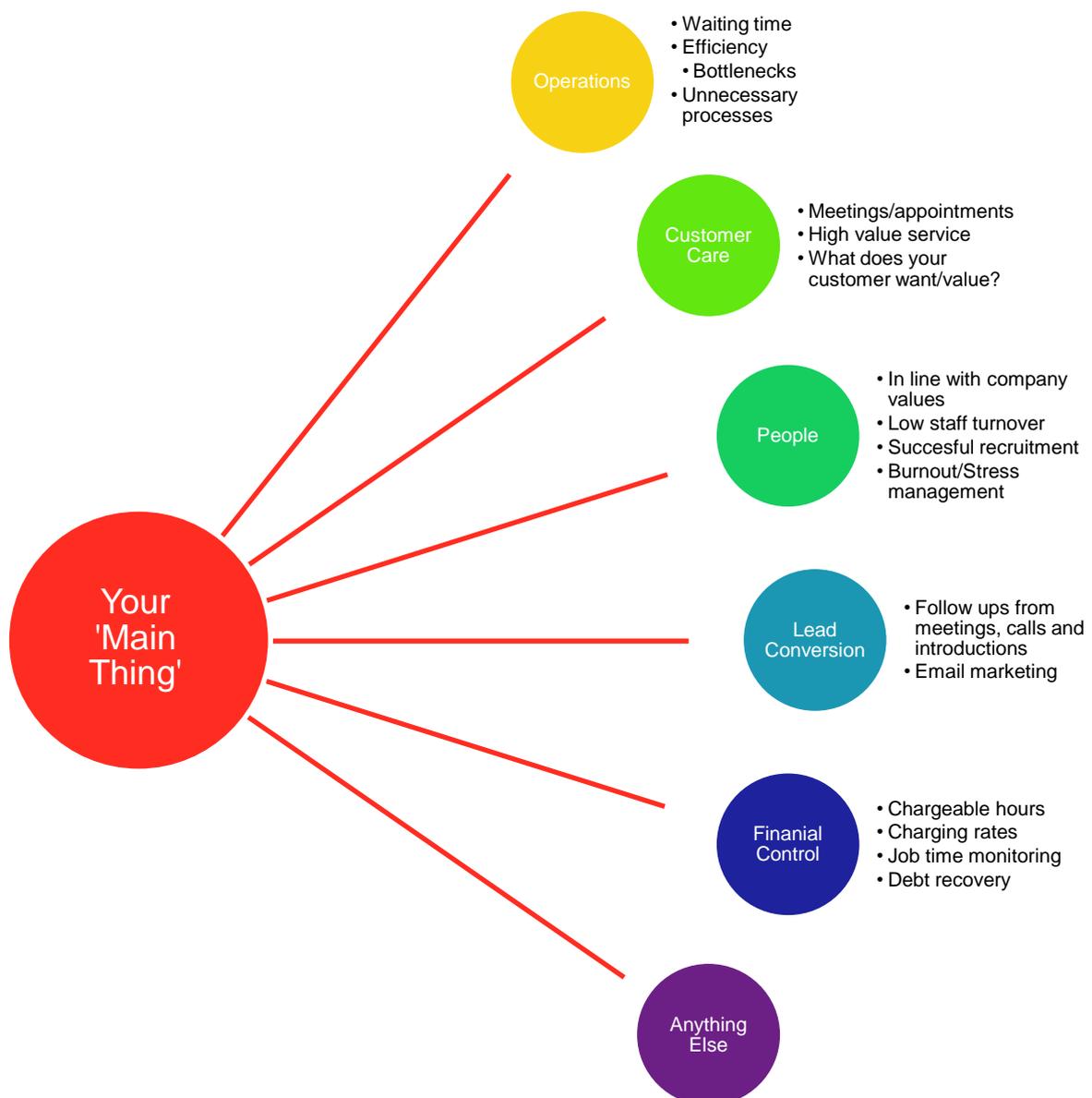
These checklist points are taken from the brilliant book 'Great by Choice' by Jim Collins. You can read more about Jim's book in section 6.

On the next page you can use the Spider Diagram to put your 'main thing' at the very heart of all your business decisions.

5. Spider Diagram

Your 'main thing' must drive behaviour in all elements of your business.

ACTION: Put your 'main thing' at the centre of this Spider Diagram and see how it directs your business behaviours.





6. THE BOOK: Great by Choice

This brilliant book by Jim Collins focuses on why some companies thrive when subjected to external chaos and turbulence, and others do not. The findings are based on the rigorous analysis of 9 years of research. The book challenges 5 entrenched myths.

- Entrenched myth 1: Successful leaders in a turbulent world are bold, risk-taking visionaries.

On the contrary: Successful leaders built foundations first – their actions are disciplined, paranoid and evidence based.

- Entrenched myth 2: Innovation distinguishes companies in a fast-moving, uncertain and chaotic world.

On the contrary: Innovation for the sake of it does not win the race. Creative discipline and the ability to scale innovation is more important.

- Entrenched myth 3: A threat-filled world favours the speedy; you're either the quick or the dead

On the contrary: The tortoise wins the hare according to the evidence.

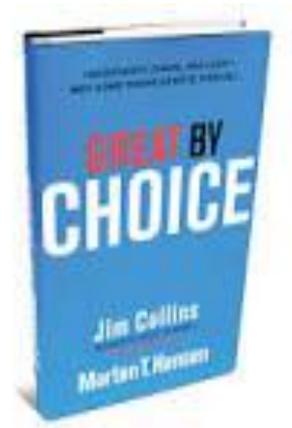
- Entrenched myth 4: Radical change on the outside requires radical change on the inside

On the contrary: The evidence showed that successful companies did not inflict radical change internally in response to turbulence outside - "stick to your knitting"

- Entrenched myth 5: Great enterprises with great success have a lot more good luck

On the contrary: It's not how lucky you are it's how you respond to good and bad luck)

The dispelling of these entrenched myths is also backed up with real life stories of companies that you know. Grab yourself a copy of this book, we can't recommend it highly enough if you want to learn about prolonged success whatever the weather.



7. References

For more on Scott and Amundsen here's some valuable and fascinating websites:

<http://www.scottslastexpedition.org/expedition/journey-to-the-south-pole/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amundsen%27s_South_Pole_expedition