Good to Great - 20 Mile March Workshop

Goal- To create and execute concrete, clear, intelligent, and rigorously pursued performance mechanisms consistently.

The 20 Mile March concept uses the example of the divergence in strategy between the explorers Roald Amundsen and Robert Falcon Scott, in their efforts to lead their teams to be the first to the South Pole in October 1911.

The 20 Mile March is more than a philosophy. It's about having concrete, clear, intelligent, and rigorously pursued performance mechanisms that keep you on track. The 20 Mile March, just like Amundsen and his team, creates two types of self-imposed discomfort:

I.   The discomfort of unwavering commitment to high performance in difficult conditions.

II.   The discomfort of holding back in good conditions.

To achieve consistent performance, you need both parts of the 20 Mile March: a lower bound and an upper bound, a hurdle that you jump over and a ceiling that you will not rise above, the ambition to achieve, and the self-control to hold back.

20 Mile Marching helps turn the odds in your favor for three reasons:

I.   It builds confidence in your ability to perform well in adverse circumstances.

II.   It reduces the likelihood of catastrophe when you are hit by turbulent disruption.

III.   It helps you exert self-control in an out of control environment.

A good 20 Mile March has seven key characteristics:

I.   Clear performance markers.

II.   Self-imposed constraints.

III.   Appropriate to specific enterprise.

IV.   Largely within the team or company's control to achieve.

V.   A proper timeframe – long enough to manage, yet short enough to have teeth.

VI.   Imposed by the company or team on itself, not by external forces.

VII. Achieved with high consistency.

Discussion Questions:

- Are you an Amundsen or a Scott?

- How do you establish performance markers?

- Describe examples of practicing self-imposed constraints

- Do you have a 20 Mile March, something you can commit to achieving for years with as much consistency as great companies?