

# **SIMPLY BRILLIANT**

## **How Great Organizations Do Ordinary Things in Extraordinary Ways**

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**WILLIAM C. TAYLOR** is a speaker and entrepreneur. He was a cofounder and founding editor of *Fast Company* which sold for \$340 million six years after it commenced publication. Since starting *Fast Company*, Bill Taylor has written three books on leadership and change including *Practically Radical* and *Mavericks at Work*. He currently blogs and writes feature articles for the *Harvard Business Review* and writes a column for the Sunday Business section of *The New York Times* titled *Under New Management*. He is a graduate of Princeton University and the MIT School of Management.

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**MAIN IDEA**

Everyone assumes that to be part of a great success story today, you have to be involved in a technology-driven start-up that is part of the "new economy" and which is doing something highly disruptive. That's not really the case.

The future is open to everyone – even those who are working in very mundane fields. It's not just the start-ups which can apply radical creativity. Breakthroughs can be achieved in any industry where leaders are willing to reimagine what's possible and turn their product or service into something which is simply brilliant.



To excel today, find a way to refresh your product or experience. Don't settle for average, work to make what you offer simply brilliant. It can be done.

*"There is no such thing as an average or old-fashioned business, just average or old-fashioned ways to do business. In fact, the opportunity to reach for extraordinary may be most pronounced in settings that have been far too ordinary for far too long. If how you think shapes how you compete, then it should be easier to compete in fields locked in to old ways of thinking."*

– William Taylor

*"Today, average is officially over. Being average just won't earn you what it used to. It can't when so many more employers have so much more access to so much more [above-average] cheap foreign labor, cheap robotics, cheap software, cheap automation, and cheap genius. Therefore, everyone needs to find their extra—their unique value contribution that makes them stand out."*

– Thomas Friedman  
New York Times columnist



**4 Principles for Becoming Simply Brilliant**

- 1 Stop trying to be the best, figure out a way to be the only
- 2 Don't let what you know limit what you can imagine
- 3 It's just as important to be kind as it is to be clever
- 4 The allies you enlist matter more than the power you exert

**Principle #1 – Stop trying to be the best, figure out a way to be the only . . . . . Pages 2 - 3**

Today's most successful organizations don't just offer the best deals. They champion the most original ideas and manage to do the things other organizations don't even attempt.

Can you develop a definition of success which inspires others?

Can you explain why what you do matters and how you will win?

**Principle #2 – Don't let what you know limit what you can imagine . . . . . Pages 3 - 5**

Expertise in a field is great but sometimes it gets in the way of innovation. To be simply brilliant, get into the habit of challenging the status quo in your industry and in your history.

Are you prepared to rethink your conventions of success?

Are you determined to stay interested in fresh ideas?

**Principle #3 – It's just as important to be kind as it is to be clever . . . . . Pages 5 - 6**

To perform at a high level, not only do you have to think differently but you also have to care more than everyone else. Simple acts of compassion and connection matter.

Do you pay as much attention to emotion as you do to technology?

Are your values reflected in your organization's value proposition?

**Principle #4 – The allies you enlist matter more than the power you exert . . . . . Pages 7 - 8**

You can't be brilliant without finding a way to invite ordinary people to make extraordinary contributions. That will only happen if you have leaders who are humble and hungry.

Are you humble but at the same time hungry for more success?

Are you prepared to share the spoils of success far and wide?