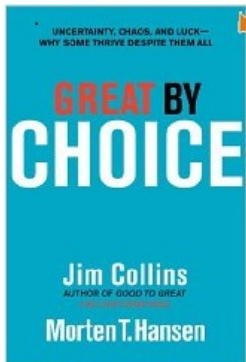Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck--Why Some Thrive Despite Them All
by Jim Collins

Publisher:	Harper Business
Date of Publication:	2011
Number of pages:	183
Book Club rating:	3.7
Reviewed by:	Laura Keckhut

Plot Summary:

In "Great by Choice", the author selected 7 companies out of 20,400 companies that beat their industry by 10 fold. He called them 10Xers. 10xers started from a small size and sustained great results for about a decade in particularly unstable environments. The author discovered that three behavioral traits were behind the 10xers: 1) Fanatic Discipline, 2) Empirical Creativity and 3) Productive Paranoia. Each 10xer held to their principles and values even in the face of diversity and pressure. They are extremely hard working and willing to put in extreme hours towards their goals. Although they were somewhat creative, the companies were also not the most creative in their industries. They based their creative on analysis and observations of evidence. A 10xer company is also constantly on the lookout for what could go wrong (both internal and external to the company). The author found that the 10xer company changed less than other companies in the industry and the author coined their behaviors as "the 20 mile march" and "firing bullets instead of cannons".

Jim Collins is also the author of the bestseller, "Good to Great".

Book Club Meeting Discussion:

There was mixed reception on the book. Some thought the book got too mired down in repetition regarding some of the author's concepts. Others thought the book was well written and flowed. General consensus was that the book is a must read to gain perspectives of the 10xers and their respective leadership styles and habits.

Personal Comments:

I enjoyed reading the book because I had always thought that the most successful companies were the most radical and the biggest risk takers.   The book challenged my original premise.   I also liked the concept of instead of making large shifts in the organization all at once, to make small changes within the enterprise and then continuing to make small changes. This allows the corporation to recalibrate and decide if the new direction still makes sense or what changes need to occur to support those changes. As a Project Manager, I could particularly relate to the "Productive Paranoia" trait ascribed by the author to 10xer companies. Project Managers need to be constantly on alert for scope changes, new risks, or changes within the project team. In addition, Project Managers use empirical data when presenting a business case or making a project recommendation.   I found the book to be well-written with many examples of using (and not using) the behavioral traits of the 10xer companies.   I would recommend it to any Project Manager, as well as an entrepreneur.