

# **THINK BIG ACT SMALL**

## **How America's Best Performing Companies Keep The Start-up Spirit Alive**

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**JASON JENNINGS** is a business consultant and acclaimed keynote speaker. He is the author of *Less Is More* and a co-author of *It's Not The Big That Eat The Small...It's The Fast That Eat The Slow*. Mr. Jennings started his career as a broadcast journalist and then was notably the youngest radio station group owner in America. He subsequently went on to build the nation's largest media consulting company, in the process developing management and programming strategies that ultimately had the effect of revolutionizing this industry.

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**MAIN IDEA**

More than 72,000 U.S. companies were analyzed to identify those organizations which had grown revenues and profits by ten percent or more, for at least ten consecutive years, not counting acquisitions. This eliminated 99.99% of the companies, and generated a shortlist of around twenty-seven companies which met this criteria. Of those companies, nine from a variety of industries were selected, and researchers met with the CEOs, leaders, managers, workers, customers, vendors and suppliers of each company to try and identify what they were doing right that almost every other company was not. Eventually, a list of the ten most important and actionable findings was compiled as a guide for what an organization needs to do to prosper over the long term.

The ten building blocks of think big, act small business management

- ▶ 1 Always be humble and down to earth.
- ▶ 2 Keep getting your hands dirty on the details of your business.
- ▶ 3 Set short-term goals but have a long-term horizon.
- ▶ 4 Let go of obsolete products, services and processes.
- ▶ 5 Have everyone thinking and acting like an owner.
- ▶ 6 Invent and reinvent your business as often as required.
- ▶ 7 Be committed to the creation of win-win customer solutions.
- ▶ 8 Deliberately choose the competitors you go up against.
- ▶ 9 Build and grow your community of workers, customers & fans.
- ▶ 10 Rely on homegrown leadership rather than miracle-workers.

The common thread in all these findings is that each company thinks big but acts small. They come up with big ideas about how to solve their customer’s problems or how to make better products but they never stop acting like start-ups – they stay humble, treat every employee like an owner and have managers who get their hands dirty working on the frontlines rather than sitting isolated in the corporate headquarters.

In all, it really comes down to simple common sense – but it’s amazing how uncommon common sense can be in business.

*“Our findings genuinely surprised us. We didn’t discover any mind-bending tactics or top-secret methods that enabled these companies to grow their revenues consistently. Instead, because each has nailed the fundamentals better than all other companies, their dramatic and consistent growth occurs naturally, even organically. The ten building blocks these companies use to grow their revenues and profits every year would be no less valid if they weren’t practiced by every company, but surprisingly, in almost every instance, everything we found is a way of life at all of these companies.”*

– Jason Jennings

*“We live in interesting times. Complexity causes people to yearn for simple, profound ideas that can be readily related to diverse situations. These guiding principles are admittedly not academic jargon, nor were they developed in the mountaintop lab of a thought leader. Actually, they’re relatively simple ideas; the genius behind them lies in how they have been applied by these companies, despite differences in location, industry, political persuasion, or ownership model. People gravitate to confidence, decisiveness, and clear, powerful messages, searching for the ultimate metaphysical reference point. So we end with this message: to build an organization with balanced focus, camaraderie, and the ability to prosper over the long term, think big, act small.”*

– Brian Solon, lead researcher

**Building block #1** – Always be humble and down to earth. . . . . Page 2

**Building block #2** – Keep getting your hands dirty on the details of your business. . . . . Page 2

**Building block #3** – Set short-term goals but have a long-term horizon.. . . . Page 3

**Building block #4** – Let go of obsolete products, services and processes. . . . . Page 4

**Building block #5** – Have everyone thinking and acting like an owner. . . . . Page 4

**Building Block #6** – Invent and reinvent your business as often as required. . . . . Page 5

**Building block #7** – Be committed to the creation of win-win customer solutions. . . . . Page 6

**Building block #8** – Deliberately choose the competitors you go up against. . . . . Page 6

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