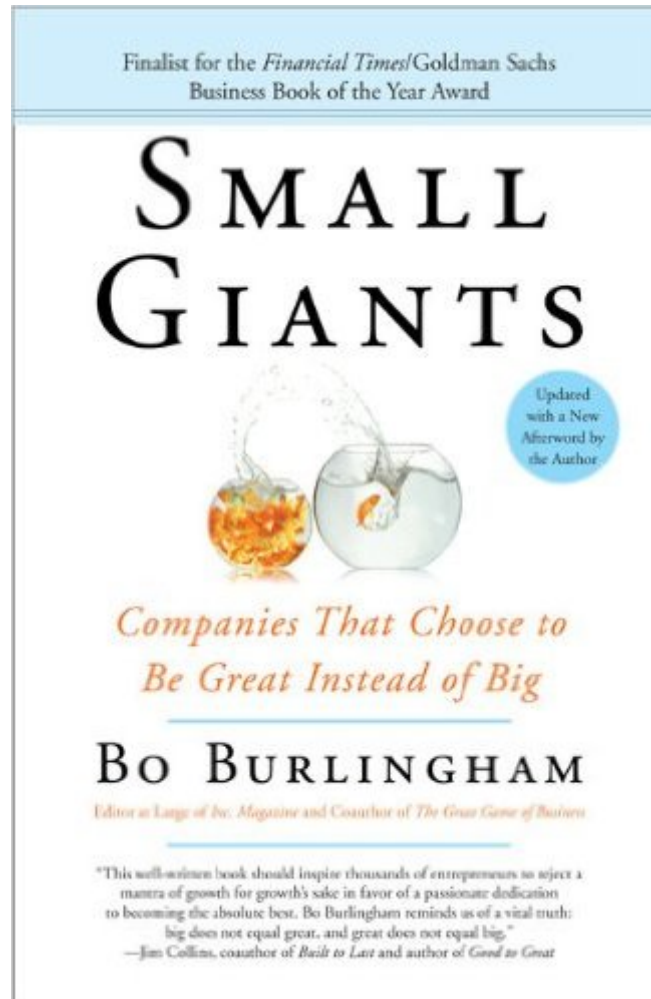


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# Small Giants: Companies That Choose To Be Great Instead Of Big



## Synopsis

The bestselling, award-winning classic on how maverick companies have passed up the growth treadmill to focus on greatness, now in a revised and updated tenth-anniversary edition. It has long been a business article of faith that great companies, by definition, constantly focus on maximizing their revenues year after year. Yet quietly, under the radar, a growing number of undeniably great companies have rejected the pressure of endless growth to focus on more satisfying business goals. A Veteran journalist Bo Burlingham takes us deep inside fourteen of these remarkable companies that have chosen to march to their own drummer. He shows the leaders of these small giants recognized the full range of choices they had about the type of company they could create and made the choice to pursue greatness by placing other goals ahead of getting as big as possible as fast as possible. And he shows how we can all benefit by questioning the conventional definitions of business success.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

During a GE annual meeting when discussing entrepreneurial companies, Jack Welch explained why he admires them: "For one, they communicate better. Without the din and prattle of bureaucracy, people listen as well as talk; and since there are fewer of them they generally know and understand each other. Second, small companies move faster. They know the penalties for hesitation in the marketplace. Third, in small companies, with fewer layers and less camouflage, the leaders show up very clearly on the screen. Their performance and its impact are clear to everyone.

And, finally, smaller companies waste less. They spend less time in endless reviews and approvals and politics and paper drills. They have fewer people; therefore they can only do the important things. Their people are free to direct their energy and attention toward the marketplace rather than fighting bureaucracy." Presumably Bo Burlingham agrees with Welch, perhaps adding that the size of a company such as GE does not determine whether or not it has these characteristics. Rather, he would identify 14 companies which he calls "small giants." They range from Selima Inc. (a two-person fashion design and dressmaking firm) to O.C. Tanner (a company with 1,700 hundred employees and annual sales of \$350-million). Although quite different in size and nature, Burlingham has identified seven common threads: "First, I could see that, unlike most entrepreneurs, their founders and leaders had recognized the full range of choices they had about the type of company they would create." "Second, the leaders had overcome the enormous pressures on successful companies to take paths they had not chosen and did not necessarily want to follow.

As an entrepreneur, I can relate to the business situations, tribulations, and growth pains described in this book. "Small Giants" presents various aspects of business in the life of an entrepreneur through the stories of several businesses of various sizes, types, and positions in their life cycle. Among the requirements the author used in selecting them was the idea that the private owners had made a choice to be a certain kind of business. They had the opportunity to go public or grow through franchising or grow by taking on a level of project that would require them to scale and transform into something new, but when faced with this they decided to do something else. Why and for what? The author, Bo Burlingham, also looked for companies that were admired and emulated in their own industries. And he also looked for companies that had been cited for recognition by third parties. The book is arranged by various topics rather than by business. He draws in examples from a few of the businesses in each chapter as appropriate to illustrate the point he is making. The first chapter, "Free to Choose", discusses the realization that each of these businesspeople had that they did not have to follow the public corporation path of going public, or giving up what they loved doing in order to pursue the maximum bottom line profit. It is interesting to see what conclusions each of them came to and the direction they chose. The second chapter discusses the various approaches various businesses take to "bosses". Some of these guys run the business themselves from a strong center. Others are very egalitarian and try to delegate a great deal. There is a fascinating range of approaches to this issue. The third chapter discusses the idea of uniqueness.

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