



# GOOD, GREAT, OR DANGEROUS

## — the Three Disciplines of Dangerous Competitors

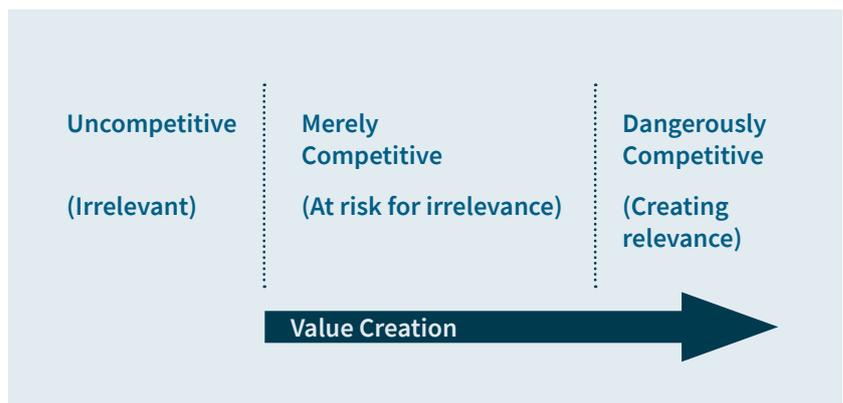
**F**orget merely going from “good to great.” What leaders need to focus on is becoming dangerous.

In business as in sports, there are two kinds of competitors: those that are merely competitive and those who are dangerously competitive.

Dangerous Competitors are the ones that others hold up to be the standard. They are the ones that get attention. They are the ones that customers love, and competitors love to hate.

As the diagram below shows, being merely competitive is an uncomfortable place to be. Of course, there is risk of losing out to more dangerous competitors. But there is also a risk of sliding into irrelevance. Business history is replete with examples of companies who were once at the top of their game, but lost their edge and position.

Kodak, Blockbuster, Sears, and Blackberry were all at one point considered the best of the best. Now all (and many others like them) are infamous for having missed out on new opportunities.



So, what is the difference between those companies that are dangerously competitive and those that are merely competitive?

### Dangerously Competitive

- Proactive and one step ahead
- Talent is the envy of their peers
- Standout in their field
- Use disruption as a weapon

### Merely Competitive

- Reactive (and often playing catch up)
- Take the talent they can get
- No/low distinction
- Slow to embrace change

While there are tremendous financial benefits to being dangerously competitive, it FEELS great too. That's because:

- Everyone wants to be part of a winning team.
- There is a sense of pride when a team is fully living up to its mission, vision, and values.
- Having raving fans inside and outside the company tells you that you are doing something that is highly impactful.
- It's amazing what can be accomplished when all parts of the organization are working together synergistically.

On the opposite side, being part of an organization that is merely competitive can feel:

- Frustrating because there is a sense the organization is not living up to its full potential
- Confusing because of lack of clarity on what needs to be done every day to win
- Disconnected from something big and meaningful
- Boring and unchallenging

## The Three Disciplines of Dangerous Competitors

Making the shift to becoming a Dangerous Competitor requires mastery of three disciplines: focus, innovation, and teams. These can be easily remembered with the acronym "FIT." Organizations must work on being "FIT" if they want to be dangerous.



**Focus** is the discipline to stay dialed in on those few most important things that it takes to win. Without strategic FOCUS, an organization is at risk of chasing the wrong things and wasting time.



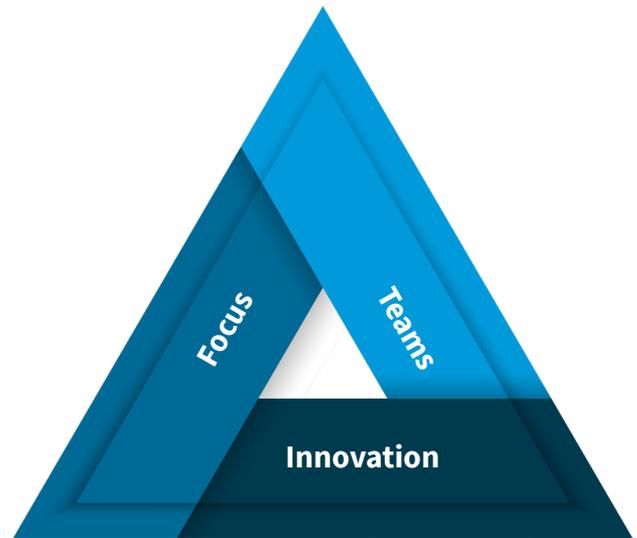
**Innovation** is the discipline to continuously improve. Without constant INNOVATION, an organization is at risk of losing relevance.



**Teams** is the discipline to work together to achieve what an individual cannot. Without high-performing TEAMS, an organization cannot execute for today or adjust for tomorrow.

## The FIT Framework

Henry Ford II, Carroll Shelby, and the Ford team were dangerous competitors. They proved it in 1966 at the 24 Hours of Le Mans by beating the historically dominant Ferrari team. They were singularly **focused** on winning that marquee event. They **innovated** relentlessly to reduce drag and improve handling. (The design was so good they had to improve the brakes to handle the added speed.) PLUS, they had an incredible **team** with great engineers working in tandem with stellar drivers.



All three factors were in play to create one of the greatest legacies in racing.

Two crucial questions must be answered for each discipline.

### Focus

1. Are we focused on the right things?
2. Are we focused on too many things?

There is no substitute for working on the right things. The right things are those drivers which move the needle on the most important outcomes. Blockbuster was not focused on the right things when it was optimizing its retail operations when the trend was to go digital.

And trying to focus on too many things is a real problem too. We have all seen what happens when people try to make everyone happy. The result is nobody being happy. If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

### Innovation

1. Are we innovating for high impact?
2. Are the improvements coming fast enough to matter?

All improvements are welcome, but not all improvements are strategic. Leaders need to make sure that improvements are being made in areas that will really make a difference. With the current move toward electric vehicles, improvements in battery life and fast-charging options seem a lot more important to a car maker than reducing the cost of mufflers.

Improvements must be substantial, but they must also be timely. Chip makers like Intel continually push themselves to deliver products that offer faster computing speed at lower cost. Chip makers that don't will lose relevance

### Teams

1. Do we have the right talent for the times?
2. Is the talent we have working synergistically?

When considering Kodak, it is easy to wonder what might have been different if they had leadership with a head for digital imaging instead of film-based photography. Effective organizations must have talent for the times. This is especially true now with so many changes coming from technology. Without talent for the times, the team will not see key opportunities or threats.

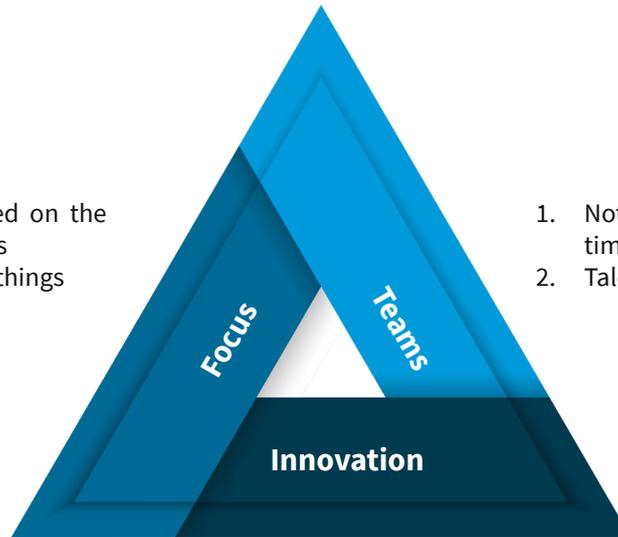
And even if an organization has the right talent, they can still miss opportunities if that talent is not working together effectively. A sports team can have a roster jam-packed with great players, but still be a mediocre team if they

and market share quickly. Windows of opportunity do not stay propped open. If organizations do not move fast enough they will find themselves on the outside looking in.

are not working together well. Most organizations have plenty of smart, capable people. But many of these don't reach their full potential because these smart, capable people are not working collaboratively.

## The FIT Framework

1. Not focused on the right things
2. Too many things



1. Not the right talent for the times (skills or people)
2. Talent is not synergistic

1. Low impact improvements
2. Improvements too slow

## Making the shift

So, what should a leader do to become (or maintain their position as) a Dangerous Competitor?

First, you will want to get clear on where you are on the three Disciplines (focus, innovation, and teams). You can do this by answering the two key questions related to each discipline. You can also download the FIT Assessment and Planning Guide at [www.garycovertconsulting.com](http://www.garycovertconsulting.com).

Second, commit to excellence in each of the three Disciplines. Make clear steps for what you will do to be great in each area.

Third, make it a game and have some fun. Raising our game is hard work, but the journey itself will provide enormous satisfaction every day.

Would you like more help? Contact me for a complimentary 1-hour coaching session. In this session, you'll get concrete strategies that will help you and your team reach your full potential.



### About Gary Covert

Gary Covert is a trusted advisor to CEOs, executives, and senior leaders. Through his tailored approaches, Gary helps leaders execute strategically, develop great teams, and innovate continuously without burning out. He works with top companies in energy, construction, logistics, water management, mining, healthcare, education tech, and national restaurant chains. Gary earned his MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management and his BA in Japanese from ASU.