

Look back. Look forward. Using the power of simplicity to succeed

Today's post *Look back. Look forward. Using the power of simplicity to succeed* returns to the classic story of the hedgehog and the fox. The modern incarnation of the ancient Greek poem – made famous by [Isiah Berlin](#) – stems from *Good to Great*, the best-seller by Jim Collins. The Greek poem held that 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing'.

Hence the title of today's post *Look back. Look forward. Using the power of simplicity to succeed*.



Isiah Berlin divided people into two groups: foxes and hedgehogs.

He argued foxes are sleek and shrewd that pursue many goals and interests at the same time. Because of their wide variety of interests, their thinking is scattered and not focused, limiting what they achieve in the long run.

Whereas hedgehogs are slow and steady. People often overlook them because they are quiet and unassuming. Unlike the fox, however, the hedgehog simplifies the world and focuses on one overarching vision that guides their actions like the north star. And helps them succeed against all odds.

Applying the idea

Jim Collins showed leaders how to apply the hedgehog principle in *Good to Great* using three overlapping circles:

- [1] what are you deeply passionate about,
- [2] what you can be best at, and
- [3] how to maximise the economic return on your effort.

In my post [Getting from good to great](#) there is a table showing how these three areas align, i.e. overlap as circles, with each other. The greater the overlap, the more powerful the synergy and the greater the likelihood of career success.



I commend the practical advice of [Mind Tools](#) on how to apply the three-circle model to yourself and your organisation.