



# The Soft Edge: Where Great Companies Find Lasting Success

*Rich Karlgaard*

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## What Does it Take to Get Ahead Now—And Stay There?

High performance has always required shrewd strategy and superb execution. These factors remain critical, especially given today's unprecedented business climate. But Rich Karlgaard—Forbes publisher, entrepreneur, investor, and board director—takes a surprising turn and argues that there is now a third element that's required for competitive advantage. It fosters innovation, it accelerates strategy and execution, and it cannot be copied or bought. It is found in a perhaps surprising place—your company's values.

Karlgaard examined a variety of enduring companies and found that they have one thing in common; all have leveraged their deepest values alongside strategy and execution, allowing them to fuel growth as well as weather hard times. Karlgaard shares these stories and identifies the five key variables that make up every organization's "soft edge":

- **Trust:** Northwestern Mutual has built a \$25 billion dollar revenue juggernaut on trust, the foundation of lasting success. Learn how to create an environment that engenders trust and propels high performance.
- **Smarts:** In most technical fields your formal education quickly becomes out of date. How do you keep up? Learn how the Mayo Clinic, Stanford University women's basketball team, and others stay on top by relentlessly pursuing an advantage through smarts.
- **Teamwork:** Since collaboration and innovation are a must in the global economy, effective teamwork is vital. Learn how global giant FedEx stays focused and how nimble Nest Labs relies on lean teams with cognitive diversity.
- **Taste:** Clever product design and integration are proxies for intelligence because they make customers feel smart. But taste goes further into deep emotional engagement. Specialized Bicycles calls it "the elusive spot between data truth and human truth." How can you consistently make products or services that trigger these emotional touch points?
- **Story:** Companies that achieve lasting success have an enduring and emotionally appealing story. What's your company's story? How do you tell it *your* way? Gain the ability to create a powerful narrative in a world where outsiders often exercise the louder voice.

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