Divergent study guide questions and answers

Without the luxury of a one-size-fits-all product, virtual receptionist Answer 1 addresses customer service and marketing with a uniquely diversified target audience. By collaborating with ConsumerAffairs, Answer 1 has been able to connect with consumers further down the sales cycle, which is one of the most profitable marketing channels for the company. The problem: Providing support in the digital (lly Dependent) AgeAs business world continues to shift toward more digital-focused service offerings, companies that want to stay ahead of the curve continue to increase their reliance on technological integration at all levels. Answer 1 knows the importance of the response to the service shift along with the times. Virtual reception services, such as those offered by Answer 1, answer that call for a more integrated, digital solution, so traditional answering services ol' to fall by the wayside in favor of advanced service offerings such as scheduling, on-demand bilingual translation, order, help desk support, email and text monitoring, online chat, and CRM data entry, to name a few. Goals: Customization is key with the diverse client BaseAnswer 1 goal is to act as an extension of your clients' business, and with such a wide-reaching customer base, representing small and large businesses alike in many different industries, that is, Answer 1 must adapt to provide the custom services they offer to best suit the needs of each client. With their varied range of services that ranges from simple call responses all the way to Tier 1 IT support, Answer 1 is able to answer that call to customize and serve each of its clients in a way that is unique to their needs. Read the full case study here. In an in-depth interview, we asked Collins about the implications of his research and ideas for the economy, the stock market, and the very nature of executive leadership. The good-to-large companies that you've written about have all achieved remarkable stock market results over a 15-year period. But today, the stock market is down. Does that mean we won't see any good companies today? First, I want to correct a big misconception. The stock market is not down. What does the stock market look like compared to 1985? The stock market is not down. What does it look like compared to 1990? The stock market is not down. The market was irrational from the morning - we didn't have a stock market; We had a speculative casino. The tech bubble wasn't a new economy - there is a new economy that has been going on for years at a deeper level. But the brutal fact is that companies that were at the top of the tech bubble didn't have results. You can't make zero profits and claim to have results. In the case of companies that had great results before the bubble burst, they are now in the period down, but what? The bottom line for companies like Cisco is, we know the answer yet. It is possible that these companies are only in a very difficult 6- to 12-month period. Let me use an analogy. Let's just say you have a great basketball dynasty like the UCLA Bruins led by John Wooden. This is a team that is going to win 10 NCAA championships in 12 years. They're a team that went from good to great. But they lost three games in 1970. Does that mean we write them off and say they're not a great team? We have to look at the longer term. The same goes for companies caught in a bubble. It was too short a period of time. It will take longer to tell which companies that are in trouble now are simply going through a momentary period and will have the resilience to come back. But for many entrepreneurs, the current slowdown is a sign of the demise of the new economy. This is one of the most beautiful periods in history. Two or three years ago, what was the main complaint we heard? It's so hard to get good people! Whining, whining, whining! Today we have the greatest opportunity that we will have for decades to capture the cargo ship - not the busload, but the boatload - of great people. And big companies always start with whom, not what. We can finally get to the right side of Packard's law. Packard's law is like the law of physics for big companies. She says no company can become or remain big if it allows its sales growth rate to exceed its growth in attracting the right people in a sustainable way. It's one of those timeless rules that transcends technology and economics. Now, instead of trying to accumulate capital, we can accumulate people. If I were running a company today, I would have one priority over everyone else: getting as many people as I could. I'd put off everything else if I could afford it - buildings, new projects, R&D - to fill my bus. Because things will come back. My flywheel starts to rotate. And the single biggest limitation to the growth and success of my organization are not markets, not technology, there is no opportunity, there is no stock market. If you want to be a great company, the single biggest limitation of your ability to grow is the ability to get in and hang out with pretty good people. This is also a great time to get a look back. When you violated Packard's law, you probably left a lot of bad people on the bus. This is a good time to get them out. In fact, it's a little easier to do that now. We can blame it on the circumstances. What else would you do to take away this period of revaluation? This is also a great time to ask yourself some really tough questions. In a time of irrational prosperity where the market would give you money whether you delivered or not, many companies did not answer any of the questions in the three (What can we be the best in the world? What is the economic denominator that best drives our economic engine? And what are our core people deeply passionate about?). They had no idea what they could do better than any other company in the world that was sustainable, they had no denominator of profit, and the only thing they had a passion for was flipping the company. Now we can't live in that fantasy country anymore. We have to take a hard look at all the things we do and put them all to the three-way test. Any things that don't such the test we have to stop doing - today. I see a lot of companies that find themselves with a lot of capital. So they wandered into all kinds of acquisitions or new businesses or new directions, simply because they could. But they didn't necessarily fit into three circles. Today, the challenge for them is to prune away. Those who clarify their three circles will come out of it just fine. Those who don't deserve to die. CeOs today find themselves with little time to prove their worth. What advice would you give the CEO in the hot seat? If I were the CEO of a hot seat takeover company that I wanted to move from good to big, here's what I would do. I'd take that good-to-great stock chart, and I'd put it in front of my directors. I'd say we're on the left side of this curve. We want to be on the right side of the curve. Transport? If this is what we all want, we know what it will take to get it. You can't keep lurking from CEO to CEO. If you do that, you'll find yourself in the Doom Loop - and then we'll end up as one of the comparison companies, not one of the big companies. I don't think all directors are stupid. Most are intelligent, but they're operating out of ignorance rather than lack of good intentions. We have to hit them in the head with empirical results. Our task is to beat the market in a sustainable way over time. We need to think about the share price over a five-year period. And we need to start doing all the things that will be needed to turn that flywheel around. Finally, when I'm CEO, I want the board to give me the following assurance: How long or short my tenure as CEO can be, who I choose as my successor needs to pick that flywheel in the middle of the year and keep pushing in a consistent direction. I can only get a flywheel turning to 16 RPMs. But my successor has to take it to 100 RPMs. His successor must take it to 500 RPM and his successor 1000 RPM. It's not about me as CEO - it's about commitment to a consistent program. We're not going to do Doom Loop.The CEOs who take their companies from good to great have been largely anonymous - a far cry from the celebrity CEOs we read about. Is it an accident? Or is it cause and effect? I believe it's more a matter of cause and effect than an accident. There is something between the absence of celebrities and the presence of good results. Why? First, when you have a celebrity, society turns into one genius with 1,000 helpers. It creates a sense that the whole thing is really about the CEO. And this leads to all sorts of problems - if the person leaves, or if it turns out that the person is not a genius after all. On a deeper level, we found that for leaders to make something big, their ambition must be for the greatness of work and society, rather than for themselves. That doesn't mean they don't have an ego. That doesn't mean they don't have any needs of their own. This means that at the point of decision after decision point - at critical moments when choice would favor your ego and Choice B would benefit society and its work - time and time again these leaders choose Choice B. Celebrity CEOs, at the same points of decision, are more likely to favor themselves and the ego over society and work. Like anonymous CEOs, most companies that are transforming from good to big are unheralded. What does that tell us? The truth is that most people don't work in the most glamorous things in the world. They do a real job - which means most of the time they do a hell of a lot of dribbling with just a few points of excitement. Some people store baked bread. Some are building retail stores. The real work of the economy is done by people who make cars, who sell real estate, who run grocery stores and banks. So one of the great findings of this study is that you can be in a big company and do it in steel, in drugstores, in grocery stores. It's just not that if you're not in Silicon Valley, you're not cool. It doesn't matter where you are. So no one has the right to whir about their company, their industry, or the kind of business they are in - sometimes again. Has it taken advantage of the transformation of 11 companies that have used their anonymity? One of the great advantages that these companies had was, no one cared! Kroger began his transformation; Nucor began its transition; no one expected much. They could promise and overstue. In fact, if I were taking over the company and trying to make it go from good to great, I would tell my vice president of communications that his job was to make the whole world think that we were constantly on the verge of doom. In the course of our study, we actually printed transcripts of CEO presentations to analysts from good to large companies and comparison companies. We read all of them. And it's striking. Good people always talk about the challenges they face, about the programmes they build, about the things they fear. You go to comparison companies, they're constantly hyping themselves, they're selling the future - but never produced results. If I'm not the CEO, how do I get good lessons? Good-to-great concepts are applicable to any situation – as long as you can choose the people around you. That's the crucial thing. But basically we really are - we have a lot of discretion over the people in our lives, the people we choose to leave on our bus, whether it's in our department at work or in our personal lives. But the basic message is this: Build your own flywheel. You can do it. You can start building momentum in something for which you have responsibility. You can build a great department. You can build a great church community. You can take every single one of the good-to-great ideas and apply them to your own work or your own life. What has your study taught you about business change in general? Is it basically a message to get back to basics? Very rarely do significant changes ever lead to results in a sustainable way. This is one of the really important findings of the book. We started with 1435 companies. And 11 companies did it. Let's take a look at this for a moment. The fact is, it doesn't happen very often. why not? Because we don't know what the hell we're doing! And because we don't know what we're doing, we're running all kinds of things that don't know the results. We end up like a bunch of primitives dancing around a bonfire chanting on the moon. What I feel strongly about is that we need some science to understand what it really means to change things. Is it back to basics? No, it's forward to understanding. Why is it back to basics to say that CEOs need to be ambitious for their companies and not for themselves? Why is it back to basics to do who and people question first and what and where the question of the second? Since when is it back to basics for society to start with a question like, Why have we been aseed for 100 years, and what are the brutal facts that we have to face? Why is it back to basics to say that stop-making lists are more important than to-do lists? And since then, when has it been back to basics to say that technology is just an accelerator and not the creator of anything? I don't think these concepts are back to basics. Because if so, we should be able to go back in time and find out that people are using these ideas. People don't - which is why there are only 11 out of 1,435. So no, it's not back to basics. It's moving forward to understanding. What is your assessment of the new economy? We've seen a lot of change, and we've seen a lot of resistance to change. How do you make sense of all this? The huge changes that are taking place around us make it the most exciting time in history to be alive. It's really fun. All these changes – changes in technology, globalisation – are brutal facts that must be incorporated into any decisions we make. In the event that the at Walgreens did not ignore the Internet because they were focused only on the basics. Confronted by the brutal fact of the Internet, they then asked: How can it fit in our three circles and how can we use it to rotate our flywheel faster? Never ignore change - you come across them head-on as brutal facts, or you come to them with a great sense of joy and excitement. This change, this new technology opens up a way for you to win, to be even better as a society. All good-to-large companies made changes and used them to their advantage, often with great pleasure. When the new pianos arrived, Mozart didn't hang up his music. Did not say, There are these new pianos! The forehead is out of the way, so I'm washed up as a composer! He thought it was great! I can do it out loud with piano forte! This is really elegant! He held the discipline of writing great music while hugging with great joy and excitement the invention of pianos. With all the changes around us, we have to be just like Mozart. We maintain great discipline about our music, but at the same time we accept things that can allow us to make even more music. Alan M. Webber (awebber@fastcompany.com) is the fast company's founding editor. Jim Collins (jimcollins@aol.com) wrote an essay Built to Flip in the March 2000 issue of Fast Company. His new book, Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make Leap... And others don't, it will be available in October. October.