

PDF SUMMARY

Start With Why

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Why do you do what you do? Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care...?

Simon Sinek asked himself these questions many years ago, and he has spent those years seeking the answers. In his bestselling book *Start With Why*, Simon shares powerful examples of individuals who built wildly successful companies based on passion, vision, and clear mission – their Why.

Through his research, Simon discovered that the most successful and fulfilled leaders were those who identified a mission and then followed it, no matter what. He named this process the “Golden Circle,” explaining that it starts with a vision (the Why), progresses to the implementation stage (the How), and ends with the product or service (the What). Unfortunately, most people and businesses do things the wrong way around, starting with the What and How and ending with the Why, hence the reason they struggle.

In order to live an inspired life, to wake up each morning with a clear sense of why the day matters, and to continuously feel fulfilled by the work we do, we are called to look inside. We are called to start with our why.

Key Points

- People do not buy what you do, they buy why you do it.
- Successful leaders identify their purpose, vision, or cause first. They follow the “Golden Circle” formula which starts with working out their “Why” followed by the “How” and “What”—not the other way around.
 - The “Why” comes from your core purpose and mission; it’s the reason you get out of bed in the morning.
 - The “How” is what makes you, your products or services different and desirable.
 - The “What” defines the day-to-day aspects of your life and business
- Great leaders...

- follow their intuition and inner voice and identify gaps in the market before customers realize they're missing out on something.
- create strong cultures in which everyone works toward the same mission.
- create space for innovation and an environment where inspired work can happen.
- persist through failure and hard work.
- are less concerned with the competition. They compete against themselves.
- build trust all around them.
- Humans want to belong. When you engage with your ideal audience, those who share your cause and core beliefs, they will share your goal with others, allowing your mission to manifest itself.
- “Tipping points” happen when a mass of early adopters, innovators, and enough influencers unite to support a WHY. This can be consciously designed.

In-Depth Insights

1. Inspiration over manipulation

There are 2 ways to influence human behavior: inspire it or manipulate it.

Many businesses use manipulation as a way to influence customers to shop with them, either by dropping prices or adding a novelty factor, but they also use fear (the most powerful manipulator) and peer pressure (celebrity endorsements) to get people buying.

There are also more subtle manipulation practices that consumers may not pick up on so readily, such as aspirational marketing messages (“Drop 10 Pounds Fast!”) or messages that sell their latest and greatest innovation.

All of these tactics create sales in the short term, but do nothing to create long standing customer loyalty. This leaves business owners going round in circles with more and more manipulative messages every time they need to push sales. Let's take promotions as an example: prices are routinely slashed or products are put on promotion (“Buy 2 get 1 free!”) to entice customers to buy, which they do. Customers then get accustomed to paying the reduced price or getting a freebie and don't want to pay full price again, only buying when the product is on offer, and they are happy to switch brands to get the best price or deal available.

If businesses started with answering the question of *why*, there would be trust between the business and the consumer, loyalty, and far easier decision-making for the executives. They could work on inspiring people to part with their cash rather than manipulating them.

Inspirational leaders know why they do what they do. They have a clear vision and follow that vision until they succeed, inspiring others around them at the same time.

Take flight as an example: In the early 1900s, there were several Americans from all walks of life with the same dream—to be the first person to fly a plane. Samuel Pierpont Langley was a well-educated Harvard math professor who was well connected with wealthy friends and a \$50,000 government grant behind him. Then there were the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, who had no education, no high-end connections, and limited finances, yet on December 17th 1903, they made history with their shared vision coming true. Why did they succeed when Samuel Pierpont Langley did not?

The Wright Brothers started with their “why,” while Langley started with the “what.” They did not have the same financial support as Langley did, but they did have the intrinsic passion, insatiable curiosity, and a never-say-die attitude. They had the will to fly like a bird and the vision of what it could do for the future of civilization.

In this context, it’s important to remember to follow your intuition, not just analysis. Neuroscientist Richard Restak says that when people make complex decisions based on data alone, they take more time and tend to overanalyze the situation, often doubting and second-guessing the decision they have made. But when you take into consideration your gut instinct as well, therefore putting less value on just facts and figures and more value on intuition, you access a source of intelligence that goes beyond the slow, logical human mind.

Inspiration and intuition have led many leaders and visionaries to identify a void in the market before customers detected it, resulting in hugely successful businesses.

2. Who & Why first, What and How later

Successful leaders who inspire aim at a target known as the Golden Circle. The reason “Why” is the smallest circle in the middle of the target, surrounded by a slightly larger circle with “How” written on it, followed by another larger circle marked with “What.”

Most people are able to define what they do, how they do it, and what makes their business, service, or products different from the competitors, but only a few can explain why they do what they do. That’s because they are using a reversed target with “What” being at the center and “How” and “Why” the larger outer circles.

Let’s use Apple as an example and see how their advertising might look using the Golden Circle and the reversed version of it.

If Apple were an ordinary company it might say, “We make great computers and phones that are user-friendly and beautifully designed. Want to buy one?” However, being an innovative company that leads and inspires its advertising actually sounds more like: “We believe in thinking differently—in everything we do, we challenge the status quo. We do this by making our beautifully designed products user-friendly. We make great computers and phones. Want to buy one?”

Apple has loyal customers who believe in the company's vision, so they don't need to rely on manipulative tactics to reach customers and make sales. Companies that don't know their "why" back themselves into a tight corner with only price, quality, and service to compete, and they struggle to differentiate themselves as new companies enter the market.

A company, an entrepreneur, or anyone in the creative world who sells products should not want to do business with just anyone, but seek to connect with those consumers who share the same beliefs and values. This allows consumers to have faith and trust in the company, and it makes them feel valued and a part of something.

3. Trust is the foundation of leadership

There are 2 components that are key to building trust in business. First, you must build trust with your team, and secondly, you must back your words with actions.

Continental Airlines had trust issues in the 80's and 90's due to it having the most delays, low customer satisfaction, and high employee turnover. Then, CEO Gordon Bethune took over and turned the company around. He made himself accessible to employees, often working alongside them (including the baggage handlers), and created a sense of team spirit within the company. He fixed the delays which were costing the company \$5 million a month and offered to pay every worker in the company an extra \$65 a month (separate from their regular paycheck) for every month that the airline ranked in the top 5 for on-time performance to reinforce the message that every employee was responsible for the company's success.

You see, it's not only the customers who need to believe in the company's values and beliefs, but its employees, too. When the Golden Circle is perfectly aligned, this is easy to achieve; people perform at their best when they're part of a culture they believe in, so make sure you're hiring people who have the same values as the company.

Remember, you can't always succeed alone. Behind every inspirational leader who has the *why*, there is usually an inspired, action-oriented partner who knows the *how*. Steve Jobs couldn't have made Apple a success without Steve Wozniak. Bill Gates couldn't have made Microsoft without Paul Allen, and Walt Disney couldn't have done it without his brother Roy who was in charge of finances and selling, while Walt was in charge of dreaming and drawing!

4. Focus on those who embrace change

Finally, in order to see your business succeed you have to get the innovators and early adopters on board. These people will believe in your mission or product, even if it's completely new and alien, and they'll ultimately lead the majority to your products and company by proving it works and is needed or useful.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*, talks about “connectors” and “influencers” as he explains the tipping point that must be reached before ideas or behaviors go viral. Products are often marketed to influencers in an effort to reach the “early adopters” before the majority, and finally, the “laggards” catch on to the product or business. The “Law of Diffusion of Innovation,” as it’s known, follows a bell curve with 2.5% of people needed on one side of the curve, these being the innovators. The curve then rises to 13.5% of people who are the “early adopters,” followed by 2 sets of 34%, the majority of people who follow early, and the second 34% who adopt late with the remaining 16% on the other side of the downward curve being the “laggards” who are the last to adopt a new trend or new technology.

It’s the brave and trusting innovators and early adopters, those who are the first to try new products and new ideas, and are therefore prepared to take a leap into the unknown, who push the majority of society to follow, so that something that was once brand new is now a new normal and is known to work. They trust their intuition and are willing to pay more as well as to be inconvenienced if it doesn’t work out.

Think about those early adopters of the internet, smartphones, or going back to aviation, those people who were willing to be the first passengers long before hopping on a plane to go on a holiday abroad became ordinary. Then think about the people you know who are stuck in their ways, who refuse to embrace change—these are the “laggards.” As a leader, where do you fall on the chart, are you usually an early adopter or one of the last to get on board?

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