



WHY ASK WHY?

By Dr. Randall Spence

Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

By Simon Sinek

Portfolio Hardcover, 256 pp. \$26.95

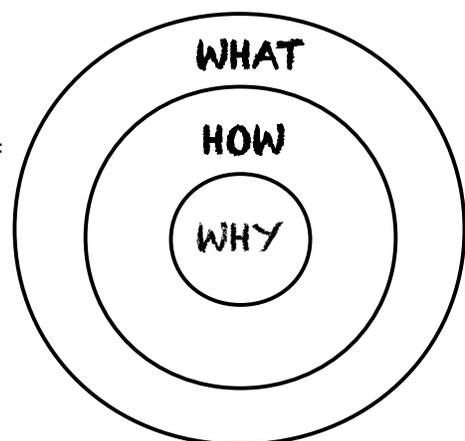
In his book, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, author Simon Sinek draws a distinction between two types of leadership: those who are leaders and those who truly lead. Leaders hold a position of power or influence, but do not necessarily foster a sense of purpose or fulfillment in their followers. Those who truly lead do so through inspiration rather than coercion. Their followers are there because they *want* to be, not because they *have* to be.

There are but two ways to influence human behavior: manipulation or inspiration. While we typically think of manipulation as a negative behavior, it is done constantly in the world of business. Manipulating others' behavior includes tactics like dropping a price, running a promotion, using fear or even aspirational messages. As a sales strategy, manipulation tends to be very effective, but can often be a sign that a company does not have a clear sense of what really motivates their customers' purchasing habits.

However, there are some leaders and organizations that choose to inspire rather than manipulate to get results. Their starting point? The question WHY.

The Golden Circle

These inspirational leaders and organizations employ a naturally occurring pattern of motivational thought that Sinek calls The Golden Circle, which is made up of three elements: WHAT, HOW and WHY. The elements refer to the foundational structure of an organization: WHAT the company does, HOW they achieve results and most fundamentally, WHY does the company do what it does. WHY is at the core of The Golden Circle because it represents the purpose, cause or foundational belief from which the company grows.



It is quite common for organizations to work from the outside of The Golden Circle inward. Simply put, it is sometimes easier to identify *what* you do than *why* you do it because it is more concrete and tangible. WHY tends to be more fuzzy, conceptual and difficult to explain.

Despite WHY's elusiveness, the reality is this:
People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it.

Building Authenticity

It all starts with clarity: You have to know WHY you do WHAT you do. Once you know your WHY, the next step is HOW. An organization's HOW reflects its values or principles that guide it. Establishing the HOW creates standards to which you are held accountable. This can be one of the hardest things to do as a leader.

A common mistake in determining HOWs is describing them as nouns like “integrity”, “innovation” and “honesty.” The problem with this is that nouns are not actionable. You can't hold people accountable to a noun. Instead, says Sinek, we should frame HOWs as verbs. So instead “integrity,” the HOW would be “always do the right thing.” Instead of “innovation” the HOW would be “look at the problem from a different angle.” These descriptions are actions against which performance can be measured.

WHY is a belief, HOW is the action you take to realize that belief, and WHAT is the result of that action. WHAT encompasses your products, services, culture, staff and any other tangible representation of the organization. When a company's WHY, WHAT and HOW are consistent with one another, then the company will be seen as *authentic*. Authenticity means that your Golden Circle is in balance. It means that what you say and do are backed up by actual belief in those things.

Organizations with a strong sense of WHY are far more likely to inspire their employees and members. They also engender trust. These are the fun places to work and the places that are more productive and innovative.

The WHY-HOW Partnership

There are WHY people and there are HOW people. The WHY people are the visionaries who have the power to change the world if they only know HOW. The WHY people tend to be optimists who believe that what they imagine can really happen. The HOW types, on the other hand, tend to live more in the here and now. They are practical realists that focus on processes and execution.

In virtually every case of a leader or organization that has inspired people and done great things, there is a strong partnership between WHY and HOW. For instance, Bill Gates may have had the vision for Microsoft, but Paul Allen built the company. Likewise, Steve Jobs may have dreamed up the concept and prototypes for Apple but it was engineer Steve Wozniak who made those dreams reality. History has shown that it takes both a vision for the future and the talent to get it done to achieve greatness.

In any organization, it is the leader's job to make sure the WHY is clear, that their team is bought into it, and that they have what it takes to take the WHY and create the HOWs necessary to achieve the WHAT.

WHY and Ministry

Although it seems that identifying the WHY in ministry should be easier than in the secular marketplace, it is not always the case. Often interpersonal challenges or organizational inefficiencies muddy the water and distract from the real mission. Realigning your ministry around its WHY may be a much needed and powerful exercise to bring its true purpose back into focus.

One final note: Finding WHY is a process of discovery rather than of invention. It is a process that takes place over time. Each of us needs to know not only the WHY of our ministry, but our personal WHY. What is your WHY? What motivates you? What are you passionate about? What do you believe deeply? The answer is your WHY. Your WHY is the compass that sets the direction for your life and the glue that holds it all together. So why not start with WHY?

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