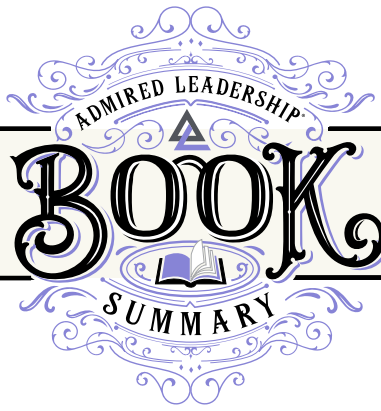




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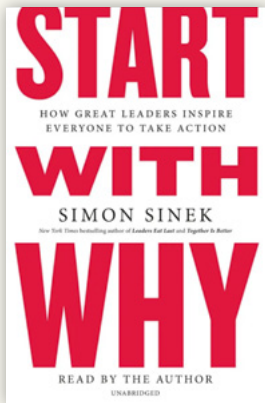
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Start With Why

How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

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Based on “the golden ratio” found in math and science, Simon Sinek’s concept “The Golden Circle” describes how leaders and organizations achieve success when they gain clarity of thought about their central purpose. Sinek’s book *Start With Why* explains that great leaders influence and inspire (rather than manipulate) by putting their *raison d’être* – their **WHY** – at the center of everything the organization does. When the **WHY** is at the center, motivated people who share that goal are inspired to follow. Sinek tells stories of people who led with **WHY**, such as the Wright brothers, innovators at Apple, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leaders who rally people around a core purpose inspire trust and attract a following of loyal people.

Key Quote

“Those who are able to inspire give people a sense of purpose or belonging that has little to do with any external incentive or benefit to be gained” (p. 5). — *Simon Sinek*

Key Points

Why Start With Why. A true leader does not inspire a course of action. A true leader will “offer you the cause of action” (p. 7).

Assume You Know. We all have unspoken assumptions. Those assumptions affect behavior. Great leaders understand the value of knowing what is not seen by merely looking at the finished product. Long-term success is built upon making sure your organization is built upon something intrinsically sound from the outset.

Carrots and Sticks. Leaders and companies have a choice to either manipulate or inspire people using a variety of tools to get them to follow their lead or buy their product. “Manipulations lead to transactions, not loyalty” (p. 30).

The Golden Circle. Leaders who inspire understand first WHY they are doing this work, and rippling out from that center of The Golden Circle follows HOW and WHAT. In inspirational companies, the WHY is what is at the center of everything they do and how they communicate.

This Is not Opinion, This Is Biology. We all have an essential human desire to belong to a group, and innovative companies understand this by drawing us in to a group that shares a particular WHY together. When we express a WHY, we are reaching past the analytical neocortex part of the brain into the “deeper” limbic part of the brain. The limbic brain is responsible for things like feelings and trust.

Clarity, Discipline, and Consistency. Understanding the WHY behind what you do introduces clarity of purpose. The WHY keeps your HOW in line with your values, and it keeps your WHAT authentic.

The Emergence of Trust. Building trust in employees first – even before customers – is paramount to building a company oriented around the WHY.

How a Tipping Point Tips. “The goal of business then should not be to simply sell to anyone who wants what you have – the majority – but rather to find people who believe what you believe” (p. 120).

Start With WHY, but Know HOW. “Energy excites. Charisma inspires” (p. 8). A charismatic leader has and expresses “the clarity of WHY; an undying belief in a purpose or cause bigger than themselves” (p. 134). “HOW’s are the actions we take to realize that belief and WHATs are the results of those actions” (p. 137).

Know WHY. Know HOW. Then WHAT? Everything an organization says and does communicates the leader’s vision to the outside world” (p. 156): products, services, marketing, advertising.

Communication Is not About Speaking, It’s About Listening. “A WHY provides the clear filter for decision-making” (p. 168).

When WHY Goes Fuzzy. Companies falter when they forget to keep the WHY at the center of what they do.

Split Happens. “The single greatest challenge any organization will face is success” (p. 185). The larger an organization becomes, the harder to keep the WHY at the center. Wise companies build the WHY into all of their operations and include senior leaders who share the cause. When the founder dies or moves on, the purpose is baked into the cake and the company stays on course.


The Origins of a WHY. To recall the WHY, don’t look to the future, at what you want to achieve and strategies to get there. Look back into history at why a company was founded; what was the cause the founders rallied around?

The New Competition. “When you compete against everyone else, no one wants to help you. When you compete against yourself, everyone wants to help you” (p. 223).


Key Concepts:

A WORLD THAT DOESN’T START WITH WHY

Our “behavior is affected by our assumptions and our perceived truths” (p. 11). Sinek challenges us to ask ourselves if we really know why some organizations succeed and others don’t.



“There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”



To illustrate the value of seeing beyond a merely transactional approach to business, Sinek tells the story of American and Japanese car companies and their approach to design. At one time in American car manufacturing, it was routine for a specialized line worker at the end of the assembly line to use a rubber mallet on car doors to make the hinges fit properly. However, in Japan, that job and task didn't exist. The reason was that, when car-door fit was initially found to be a problem in Japan, the design process itself was examined and corrected. And thereafter, the car doors arrived at the end of the line already made to fit properly.

Sinek states, "There are those who decide to manipulate the door to achieve the desired result and there are those who start from somewhere very different. Though both courses of action may yield similar short-term results, it is what we can't see that makes long-term success more predictable for only one. The one that understood why the doors need to fit by design and not by default" (p. 15).

Sinek believes, "There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it" (p. 17). He goes on to describe that manipulation is not necessarily a pejorative term, but a common and benign tactic. Examples of manipulation include dropping the price, running a promotion, using fear, peer pressure or aspirational messaging, and promising innovation to influence behavior. Each manipulation leads to transactions, not loyalty. While manipulations are common, Sinek believes there is a higher and more effective approach when it comes to seeking organizational success (p. 34).

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AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to motivation, few leaders make the choice to inspire rather than manipulate. Sinek believes that truly effective leaders think, act, and communicate by following a concept called "The Golden Circle" (p. 37). This concept is inspired by "the golden ratio," which is a simple, orderly, elegant mathematical relationship of proportions commonly found in nature by mathematicians, biologists, artists, and others throughout history.

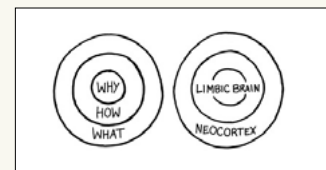
Sinek explains that "The Golden Circle is an alternative perspective to existing assumptions about why some leaders and organizations have achieved such a disproportionate degree of influence" (p. 38).

Illustrated, The Golden Circle has three rings with WHY in the center, then, moving outward, HOW in the next circle, and then WHAT on the outer ring.

Sinek believes a wise individual or company starts with WHY whenever it pursues an action.

The HOW clarifies how a given process or proposition is better than a different approach. And most individuals and companies can easily describe the WHAT, which is what they do. However, Sinek believes that if you challenge yourself by first and foremost answering WHY, then clarity about the HOW and WHAT will follow (p. 39).

More than a communication hierarchy, The Golden Circle is grounded in human biology and corresponds with the major systems of the brain (p. 55).



The neocortex function of the brain corresponds with the WHAT and is responsible for logic and language, among other things. The limbic system is the part of the brain responsible for behavioral and emotional responses. This illustrative comparison is shown to the right (p. 56).

Sinek believes the roles of the limbic system and neocortex are echoed in the phrase “winning hearts and minds.” “The heart represents the limbic, feeling part of the brain, and the mind is the rational language center. Most companies are quite adept at winning minds; all that requires is a comparison of all the features and benefits. Winning hearts, however, takes more work” (p. 59). “Great leaders are those who trust their gut. They are those who understand the art before the science. They win hearts before minds. They are the ones who start with WHY” (p. 60).

Sinek believes authenticity means everything you say and do aligns with your beliefs. In fact, the only way people will know what you believe is through what you say and do. If you’re not consistent in the things you say and do, no one will know what you believe (p. 67).

The goal should not be to do business with everyone. Instead, Sinek believes you should focus on people with similar WHYS, because trust and loyalty naturally emerge when WHY is mutual (pp.79-80).

LEADERS NEED A FOLLOWING

Leading “means that others willingly follow you – not because they have to, not because they are paid to, but because they want to” (p. 85). People follow leaders who have their interests at heart.

The former CEO of Continental, Gordon Bethune, demonstrated this level of leadership by earning his employees’ trust. Bethune changed the culture “by giving everyone something they could believe in” (p. 85). He instituted an open-door policy and treated the entire company like a family, even slinging bags with baggage handlers at the airport (p. 87). He understood trust stood at the heart of a company’s success.

Sinek believes a company is its culture, and culture is a group of people brought together and behaving in accordance with a common set of values and beliefs. The goal should be to hire others who share similar beliefs.

In 1914, Ernest Shackleton set out to explore Antarctica, traveling 1,700 miles to cross the South Pole. In 1915, his ship Endurance became trapped in the packed ice and eventually sank. Using lifeboats, the crew found safety on an island while Shackleton embarked on a hazardous 800-mile journey in a lifeboat with only a few other men to find help. The remarkable team was rescued, no one died, and there was no mutiny. Luck didn’t save the day. Instead, his success started way back, when he hired his crew before embarking on his voyage. **Shackleton hired for fit and found people who shared his WHY** (pp. 91-92).

“Great companies don’t hire skilled people and motivate them; they hire already motivated people and inspire them” (p. 94).

People motivated by a WHY are more successful. Both Samuel Pierpont Langley and the Wright brothers were building flying machines, yet both teams operated very differently. Langley was the obvious frontrunner: he had the resources, network, notoriety, and passion for aeronautics.



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But he did not have a WHY that compelled something grander. He was motivated by being first and by being rich and famous. Meanwhile, the Wright brothers had a dream, and they understood why it was important to build an airplane. They had fewer resources, but they were inspired to change the world and envisioned how a flying transport could benefit society, and the community around them was inspired to help. In 1903, the Wright brothers were the first to fly. Shortly after, Langley quit (pp. 97-98).

HOW TO RALLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE

Sinek believes, “Energy excites. Charisma inspires” (p. 133). While charisma is difficult to define, Sinek further states, “All great leaders have charisma because all great leaders have clarity of WHY; an undying belief in a purpose or cause bigger than themselves” (p. 134).

In contrast with previous CEOs of Microsoft, Bill Gates is not the most energetic speaker. In fact, he is known to be socially awkward. But he is still an inspirational leader through his masterful intellect, clear direction, and inexplicable charisma.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream, and he inspired others to make their own WHY. Dr. King’s mentor, Ralph Abernathy, helped people understand the HOW. Sinek believes that, for every leader who starts with WHY, there will be team members who understand the HOW who build the infrastructure (p. 138). Dr. King didn’t inspire a movement alone. His charisma brought on the “early adopters,” and the HOW experts partnered with him collectively to make it possible.

Walt Disney had a vision for his company. However, it was Roy Disney who helped build the company into what it is today, by guiding the business and financial decisions of the company (p. 140). “For a message to have real impact, to affect behavior and seed loyalty, it needs more than publicity. It needs to publicize some higher purpose, cause or belief to which those with similar values and beliefs can relate” (p. 146). Sinek ends the chapter by saying, “To change the world, [it] takes the support of all those who believe” (p. 153).

It is important that your WHAT and your HOW are “consistent” with your WHY (p. 166). While this is an idealistic goal and it is not always perfectly executed, the WHY provides a clear “filter” for decision-making and helps to build trust with other people when you consistently believe the same thing. Ultimately, “what companies say and do matters. A lot” (p. 171).

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS SUCCESS

Many leaders get to a point when their WHY, HOW, and WHAT are out of balance. In the case of a small company, the founder can rely on his or her gut decisions. As the organization grows, however, many others make major decisions and the clarity of WHY can be diluted (p. 182).

In the case of Dell and Starbucks, “When the person who personifies the WHY departs without clearly articulating WHY the company was founded in the first place, they leave no clear cause for their successor to lead” (p. 197).



*Be prepared to practice in a place
that is not glamorous and might
pay nothing or very little, but
nevertheless makes you excited.*



*Pressure will only increase as
you climb, so you must learn
to manage it.*

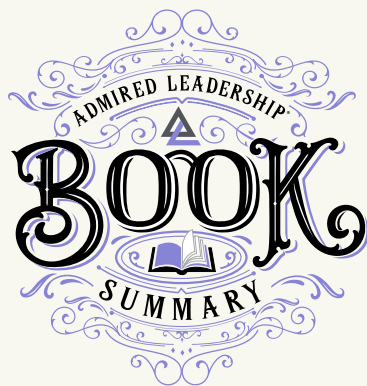


When planning an effective succession strategy, Sinek believes it is of first importance to find “someone who is in lockstep with the original cause around which the company was founded” (pp. 200-201).

DISCOVER WHY

Sinek concluded, “Leaders don’t have all the great ideas; they provide support for those who want to contribute. Leaders achieve very little by themselves; they inspire people to come together for the good of the group. Leaders never start with what needs to be done. Leaders start with WHY we need to do things. Leaders inspire action” (p. 228).

Sinek, Simon (2009) *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York: Penguin Books.



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The Latest and Greatest Books for Leaders

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