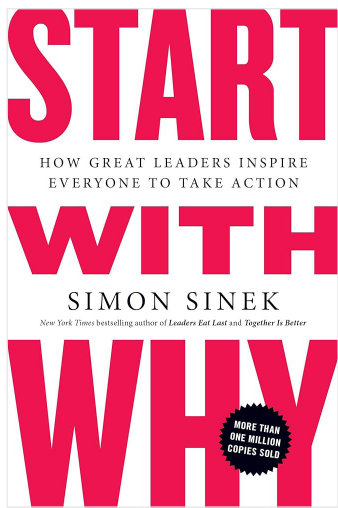


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Start With Why

THE NUTSHELL

Portfolio 2011

There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it. By manipulate, I don't necessarily mean something negative; it's a pretty common tactic. Typical manipulations in the business world include: dropping the price; running a promotion; using fear, peer pressure or aspirational messages, etc. When companies or organizations do not have a clear sense of why their customers are their customers, they tend to rely on a disproportionate number of manipulations to get what they need. And for good reason—they work!

There are a few leaders who choose to inspire rather than manipulate in order to motivate people. Whether individuals or organizations, every single one of these inspiring leaders thinks, acts, and communicates exactly the same way. And it's the complete opposite of the rest of us. Consciously or not, they do it by following a naturally occurring pattern that I call the Golden Circle.

Before going on, let's define our terms. WHAT is easy. Every company knows WHAT they do; anyone can identify the products or services a company sells. Some companies know HOW they do WHAT they do. You might call a HOW a "unique selling proposition." HOWs are often given to explain how something is different or better.

Very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Sinek

Simon Sinek teaches leaders and organizations how to inspire people. Sinek is quoted frequently by national publications and teaches at the Strategic Communications Program at Columbia University.

Start With Why

When I say WHY, I don't mean to make money—that's a result. By WHY I mean what is your purpose, cause, or belief? WHY does your company exist? Note: People don't buy WHAT you do; they buy WHY you do it.

Starting with WHY is just the beginning. For the Golden Circle to work, each of the pieces must be in balance and in the right order.

It all starts with clarity. You have to know WHY you do WHAT you do. If people don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it, so it follows that if you don't know WHY you do WHAT you do, how will anyone else?

Once you know WHY you do what you do, the question is HOW will you do it? HOW's are your values or principles that guide HOW you bring your cause to life. They manifest in the systems and processes within an organization and the culture. The hardest part of the whole process is making yourself accountable to your HOWs. Too often we write our HOWs as nouns—Integrity. Honesty. Innovation. But nouns are not actionable. You can't hold people accountable to a noun. For values to be truly effective they have to be verbs. It's not "integrity" it's "always do the right thing." It's not "innovation" it's "look at the problem from a different angle." Those things we can be accountable for.

A WHY is a belief. HOWs are the actions you take to realize that belief. And WHATs are the results of those actions—everything you say and do: your products, services, marketing, PR, culture, who you hire, etc. These all need to be consistent. When they are, you will be seen as authentic. Authenticity means that your Golden Circle is in balance. It means that everything you say and do you actually believe.

Bill Gates imagined a world in which the computer could help us all reach our greatest potential, and it happened. The Wright brothers imagined a world in which we'd all take to the skies as easily as we catch the bus. And it happened. WHY-types have the power to change the world...if only they knew HOW.

WHY-types are visionaries, and tend to be optimists who believe that what they imagine can really happen. HOW-types live more in the here-and-now. They are the realists and have a clearer sense of all things practical. They focus on processes and getting things done. Neither type is better than the other; they are just different (and necessary). Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, the Wright brothers—they are all WHY-types. They need HOW-types to make things happen.

In nearly every case of a person or an organization that has gone on to inspire people and do great things, there exists a partnership between WHY and HOW. Bill Gates had the vision, but Paul Allen built the company. Steve Jobs is the rebel's evangelist, but Steve Wozniak is the engineer who made Apple work. It's the partnership of a vision for the future and the talent to get it done that makes an organization great.

How do you find your WHY? The WHY does not come from looking ahead at what you want to achieve and figuring out an appropriate strategy to get there. It comes from looking in the completely opposite direction from where you are now. Finding WHY is a process of discovery, not invention. Learning the WHY of a company or an organization or understanding the WHY of any social movement always starts with one thing: you.

To find your WHY, look back over your life at the things that inspire you or motivate you. Look at the places you have had the biggest impact. It may take some time, but you will discover it. You don't have to create one—that never works. But it is inside you, waiting to come out. Waiting to inspire you. Before you do anything else—Start With WHY.