

Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action is a 2009 book by Simon Sinek. It compares and contrasts manipulation and inspiration as methods to influence human behavior and direct the course of companies in the modern marketplace.

#1 The Golden Circle

One of the key concepts of the rest of the book circles back to again and again is the Golden Circle. This concept focuses on the "why", "how", and "what" affect the values that influence human purchasing decisions and why people buy the things that they do. "Why" is the first step in the Golden Circle, as the reasons why people do things affect both how and what they do after deliberation.

#2 How is Number Two

Next in the Golden Circle is number two, or "how". You need to consider how people want to solve their problems or purchase their products before you consider fulfilling those needs. You should also consider how your business will fulfill the core belief or "why" of your potential customers. How is just as important as the first level of the circle because it affects your overall trustworthiness and the relationships you build with your customers.

#3 What is Number Three

Finally, consider "what" you'll do to fulfill your company's core belief or purpose and fulfill the beliefs of your customers. The "what" that you do might seem simple at first glance, but it affects how your actions are perceived and the results you'll get.

#4 Don't Manipulate

Many businesses these days are focused on manipulating their customers in order for short-term gain and to maximize their profits. This book argues that this is not an effective way to acquire repeat and loyal customers. You must avoid ambulating people in order to obtain customers that can be relied on again and again.

#5 The Golden Circle Order Matters

Don't try to solve the problems or goals of the Golden Circle out of order. You should always focus on understanding the "why" of your business before the other two parts, as this will direct your efforts when you decide "how" and "what" to do.

#6 Inspirational Marketing is Better

Rather than spending your time and energy manipulating your customers, Sinek proposes that your marketing campaigns should be inspirational and make people feel better about themselves. If your company can be responsible for providing a good feeling to its customers, those customers are more likely to come back and become loyal to your brand.

#7 Choose Employees and Partners Carefully

Any business that seeks success will need to build itself over time, which includes hiring more employees and possibly partnering with other corporations and business entities.

But you need to be sure that you choose these partners and workers carefully. Above all, they should align with the “why” of your business so there aren’t any motivational setbacks and your customers aren’t confused about your intentions or business relationship.

#8 The Two Tradesmen

Sinek’s best tale in the book relates a story about two tradesmen that lay bricks on a project for years, working together to build a cathedral that will not be finished within their lifetimes. The first man does not like his job and only does the minimum work, lining bricks every day. The second man is inspired by what he is doing, building the cathedral out of the love for his craft and goal. The latter worker is better because he believes in his mission and has a sense of purpose.

#9 A Plan is Important, So Find a Partner

Sinek notes that while a visionary or dreamer is important for many companies to get off the ground, successful companies will also need solid plans to follow to maximize their success. As a result, it’s often a good idea to pair a dreamer or “why” person with a more practical or plan-oriented “how” person.

#10 Early Adopters Matter

When you are initially building your customer base and trying to get enough people to try your product or service, you should have a strong “why” for your business plan in order to entice early adopters and innovators. These people are naturally riskier in the products and services they try, and if they enjoy what you offer, they can bring new customers and leave your customer base to grow to a “tipping point”, beyond which you enjoy consistent success.

#11 Success is a State of Being

While any company that hits its quarterly metrics will enjoy its achievements, only those visionaries who believe in what they are doing can feel like they achieved some measure of success. Success is not tangible or measurable but is instead, “a feeling or state of being”.

#12 Leadership Beliefs Must Align

A company’s leadership can change throughout its lifetime, especially as the market shifts and as people age out of their primary working years. No matter what, new leadership must still align to the same beliefs as the company's founder. This will ensure that the "why" of the company remains intact even as the captain of the ship changes from time to time.

#13 Logos are Symbols of Purpose

Over time, as your brand and company grow and become known for its strong purpose and mission, your logo will eventually become symbolic of that idea. Don't shy away from this but use your logo's power to bolster your advances and improve your mission.

#14 Target Buyers Based on the “Why”

After you’ve set up the purpose of your company or brand, you can sometimes find potential customers or buyers by thinking about who can benefit from the mission of your company. Don’t just fire shots in the dark; match up your organization with those who can get the most use out of what you offer.

#15 Study Great Leaders

Especially if you’re a beginner, it’s critical that you study the success of real business leaders with great work cultures and inspirational missions. Outright copy their methods and business styles if you need to reorient your company or brand to become a more positive and inspirational group.

Top 10 Quotes from Start with Why

1. “People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe.”
2. “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”
3. “Great companies don’t hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them.”
4. “If you hire people just because they can do a job, they’ll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they’ll work for you with blood and sweat and tears.”
5. “You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.”
6. “Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress: Working hard for something we love is called passion.”
7. “You don’t hire for skills, you hire for attitude. You can always teach skills.”
8. “The true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own. Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest.”
9. “The role of a leader is not to come up with all the great ideas. The role of a leader is to create an environment in which great ideas can happen.”
10. “Leadership requires two things: a vision of the world that does not yet exist and the ability to communicate it.”