

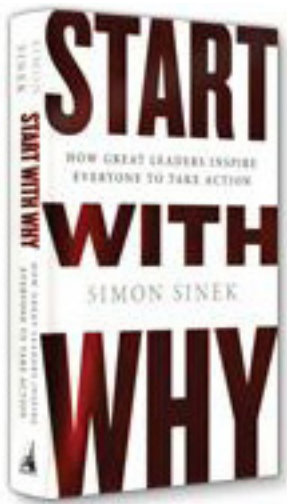
Rich Readings

Executive Book Summaries



October 2013

Produced by Jessica Rich for EDUC 862



By Simon Sinek



Start With Why

How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

The Summary in Brief

What is your true north? What makes you tick? In other words, what inspires you? To begin answering this question, Simon Sinek proposes that we ask ourselves *Why?* Why do we do what we do?

While searching for his own sense of *Why*, Simon discovered similarities amongst famous historical and contemporary leaders, such as the Wright brothers, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior, and Steve Jobs. Through case studies, Simon illustrates how great leaders inspire followers and evoke change by starting with *Why*.

According to Simon, everyone can learn to lead. The main obstacle to overcome is identifying and articulating your *Why* so that others who share your vision can connect with you and promote your cause. Simon developed the *Golden Circle* to explain why

certain leaders are more successful in bringing about lasting change. Successful leaders know their *Why*, can articulate and share their *Why* with others, enact their *Why* in all that they do, and stay true to their *Why* over time.

In organizations, effective leaders, or visionaries, are charged with the task of maintaining the clarity of their *Why* for all stakeholders. Individuals in middle management roles are responsible for determining *How* to advance the shared *Why*. Last but certainly not least, those in entry-level *What* positions deliver the tangible goods (products and services) that embody the shared *Why* of the leader and the organization.

Through the lens of authentic leadership, Simon explains how leaders can inspire action in followers by starting with a clear sense of *Why*.

Simon's obsession with *Why* emerged from a dark period in his life - a time when he had lost all passion for his work. Lacking fulfillment, Simon embarked on a personal journey to regain perspective and rediscover his passion in life.

Looking back on his childhood upbringing, Simon noticed an emerging theme in his life story. He is an eternal optimist. Time and time again, he took it upon himself to inspire people to believe that they can do anything they want in life. Now, with a clear sense of *Why*, it was time for Simon to inspire the world.

Starting with his circle of friends, Simon began sharing the power of *Why*. Before long, he was

receiving invitations to speak across the world, to audiences of entrepreneurs, large corporations, non-profit organizations, and political groups.

In 2009, Simon was given the opportunity to expand his reach by publishing "*Start with Why*." Since then, he has continued his consulting business with clients worldwide.

Some of Simon's more current endeavours include writing and commenting for major publications such as the New York Times, teaching a graduate-level course in strategic communications at Columbia University and working with not-for-profit organizations committed to assisting female entrepreneurs and promoting artistic expression.

"To inspire people to do the things that inspire them, so that, together, we can change the world." (p. 219)

...Simon's Why

Where to find...

Author's Aims	p. 2
Key Models and Messages	p. 2
Case Study: Apple	p. 3
Connections to Leadership	p. 4
Quotable Quotes	p. 5
Critical Evaluation	p. 5
Book Club Questions	p. 5
Recommendations	p. 5

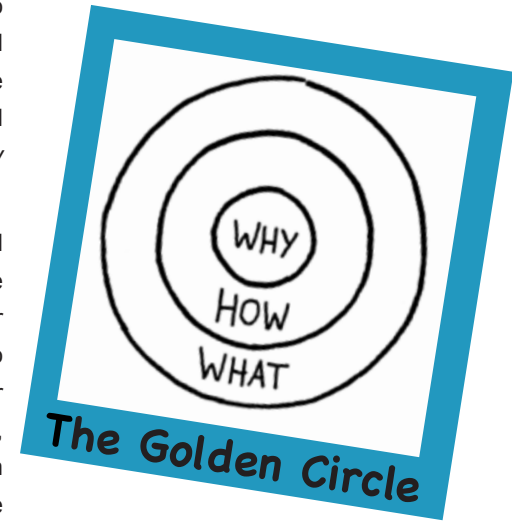
Key Models and Messages

Simon's Aims...

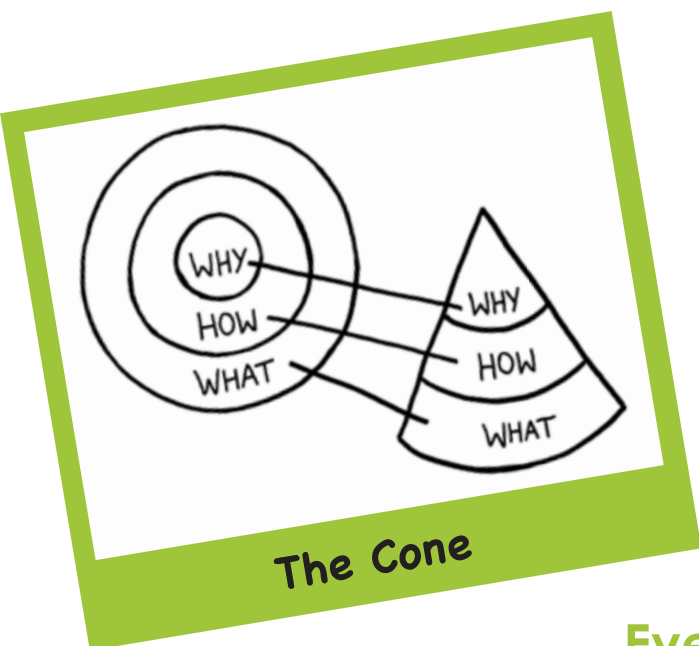
"Start with Why" is not a how-to book; rather, it presents evidence for a pattern of how inspirational leaders think, communicate and act. As a reader, you are left to formulate your own judgments about the power of Why and reflect on its potential for your own leadership.

The Golden Circle is a 2-dimensional model used to explain why some leaders are more innovative and influential than others, thus focusing on the level of the individual. This model is comprised of three distinct and independent elements (*Why*, *How*, and *What*) with *Why* strategically placed at the center of the circle.

The model is premised on the biology of the brain and how decisions are made. *Why*, placed at the center of the circle, represents the limbic brain, which is responsible for our emotions. *What*, the most peripheral circle, is akin to the neocortex and is the part of the brain responsible for language. Because these layers of the brain are separate, individuals often struggle with articulating their *Why*. In other words, they feel their *Why*, but it is difficult to translate their passion into words.



Element of the Golden Circle	Definition	Degree of Difficulty
<i>Why</i>	<p>The single purpose, cause or belief that serves as the unifying, driving and inspiring force for any individual or organization.</p> <p>For an <i>individual</i>, the <i>Why</i> guides the ideal and most fulfilling decisions – finding a job you love, maintaining friends you trust and buying the brands to which you are most loyal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why</i> do you get out of bed every morning? <p>For an <i>organization</i>, the <i>Why</i> inspires the products, services, marketing, culture, hiring profile and partnerships the organization makes or performs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why</i> does your company exist? 	Difficult: Very few people or companies can clearly articulate <i>Why</i> they do <i>What</i> they do
<i>How</i>	<p>The guiding principles or actions an organization or individual takes to bring their <i>Why</i> to life. <i>Hows</i> are written as verbs as they are actions to be performed and not just inactionable values to be admired. <i>Hows</i> are strategies.</p>	Challenging: Some companies and people know <i>How</i> they do <i>What</i> they do
<i>What</i>	<p>The results of actions taken to bring the <i>Why</i> to life. <i>Whats</i> are everything tangible an organization says or does. Everything outsiders can see, hear or experience (i.e. products, services, partnerships, marketing, etc.)</p>	Easy: Every organization knows <i>What</i> they do because it is obvious

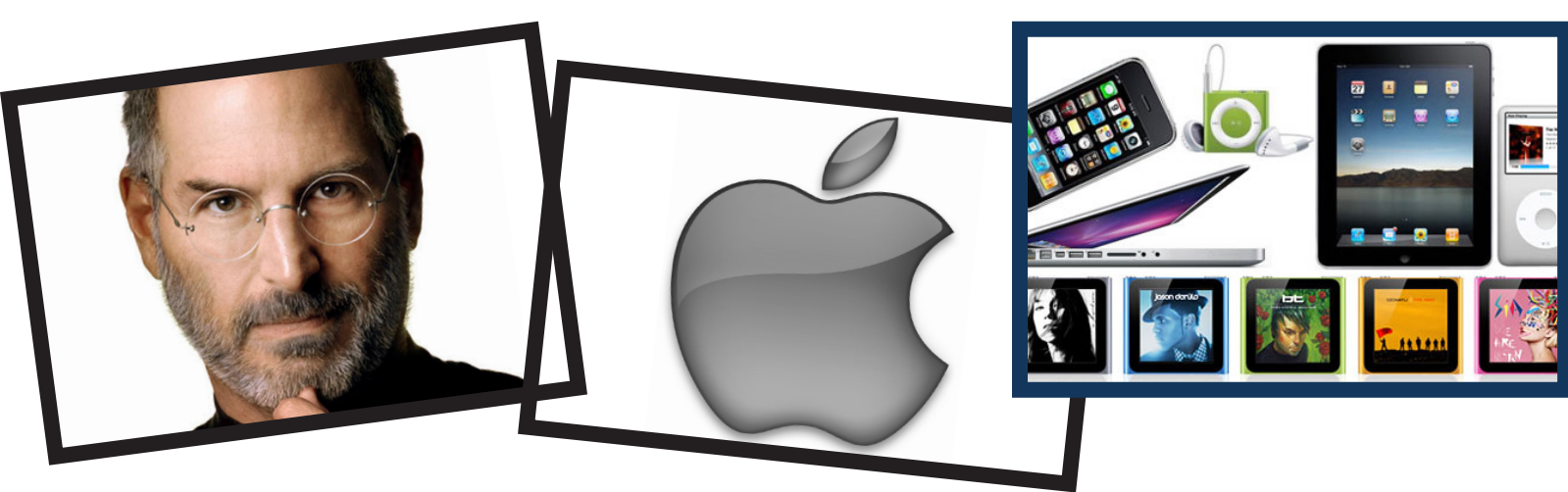


The Cone is a 3-dimensional representation of the Golden Circle, from a top-down view, starting with *Why* at the apex. This model is used to explain how the Golden Circle functions at the organizational level; specifically, how *Why* filters through an organization.

Individuals occupying top leadership positions in an organization must possess and maintain a clear sense of *Why*. Those in middle management roles work closely with the visionaries in order to determine *How* to advance the *Why*. Last, but certainly not least, the *What* people, in the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, deliver the tangible goods and services that represent the *Why*.

The Cone can be thought of as a megaphone for delivering loud and clear messages to the organization's target audience. Volume signifies the amount of publicity or goods and services sold, while clarity denotes how well the organization's *Whats* signify the *Why*.

Everyone has a *Why*. What's yours?



Demonstrating *The Golden Circle* through an Important Case Study

Apple: An organization with a leader who starts with *Why* and communicates from the inside out

The Golden Circle explains why Apple has successfully changed so many industries and can attract a cult-like following. Apple starts with *Why* and has repeated this pattern over and over again in all they say and do. Apple's *Why* is to challenge the status quo, to think different and to empower the individual. By consistently thinking differently, Apple has successfully changed conventional development in the computer, small electronics, music, mobile phone and entertainment industries.

Many other companies make these same products. Interestingly, Apple did not invent the technology for the mp3 player, but they are credited for changing the music industry with the iPod. Therefore, it is not *What* Apple does that distinguishes them from competitors, it is *Why* they do it. Apple is perceived as being authentic because *What* they do is clearly and consistently aligned with *Why* they do it. iPods, iPads and iPhones are evidence that Apple thinks differently.

Marketing Message Example

Most companies start from outside of *The Golden Circle* and move in. In other words, they start with *What* and end with *Why*.

Ineffective - trying to convince followers		Effective - inspiring followers
Typical Pattern	Typical Example	Starting with Why
Start with a statement about <i>What</i> the company does or makes.	We make great computers.	Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently.
Followed by <i>How</i> they think they are different or better than the competition.	They are beautifully designed, simple to use and user-friendly.	The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed and user-friendly.
Ending with some call to action.	Want to buy one?	And we happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?



As a student, Simon studied anthropology at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts before beginning a career in advertising and marketing. Simon's fascination with people and corporate expertise are evident in his selection of case studies on Apple, Southwest Airlines and Microsoft, just to name a few.

"The Golden Circle can be used as a guide to improve leadership, corporate culture, hiring, product development, sales and marketing. It even explains loyalty and how to create enough momentum to turn an idea into a social movement." (p. 38)

"It all starts from the inside out. It all starts with Why" (p. 39)

Simon's Views on Leadership....

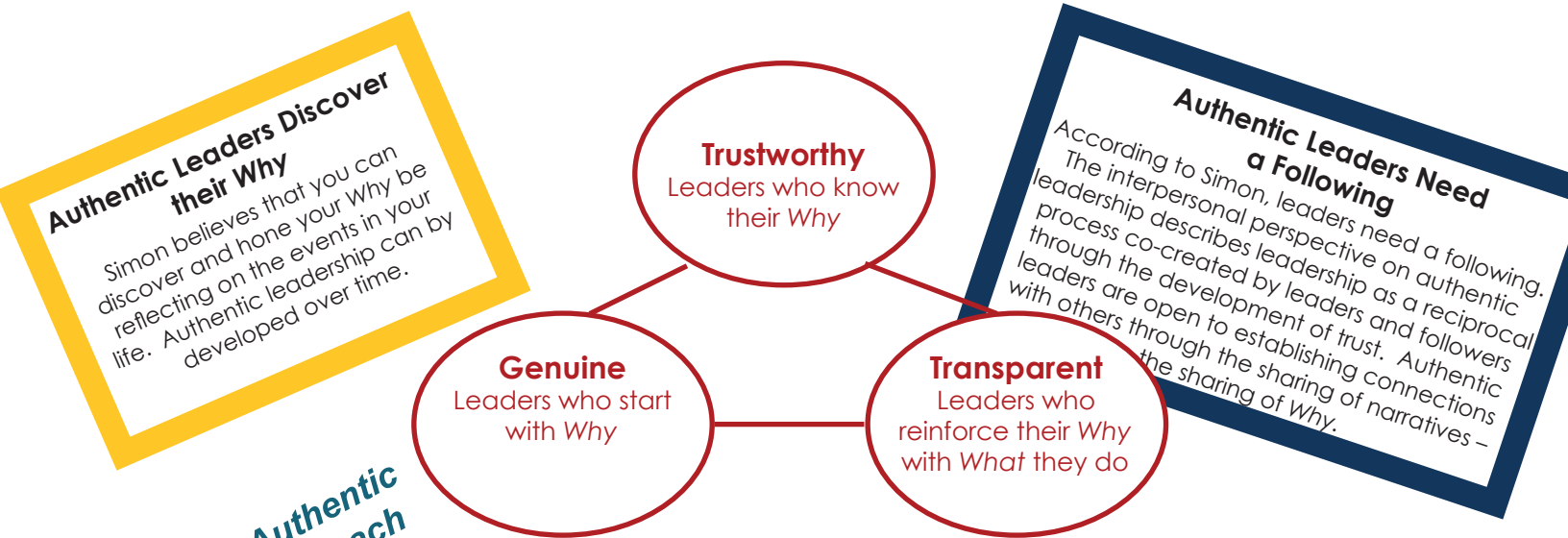
According to Simon, "Those who lead are able to do so because those who follow trust that the decisions made at the top have the best interests of the group at heart. In turn, those who trust work hard because they feel like they are working for something bigger than themselves." (p. 85) When employees trust their leaders, and there is a strong sense of culture, employees are more likely to invest themselves, work hard to advance the organization, and take personal risks. This is because the feeling of trust originates in the limbic brain, a more

primitive neural structure compared to the frontal lobe (neocortex), which is responsible for logical thinking and reasoning. This explains why individuals often make "gut" decisions despite convincing logical analyses. Therefore, the leader's aim is to know their *Why* and communicate it clearly so that s/he can attract employees and consumers who share their beliefs. Trust develops with followers over time when you communicate and demonstrate that you share the same values and beliefs. You have to communicate your *Why* and reinforce it with *What* you do.

Leadership is about trust

Authentic Leaders "Start with Why"

Simon's views on leadership align with the authentic leadership approach, which is premised on followers' desire for trustworthy, genuine, and transparent leadership.



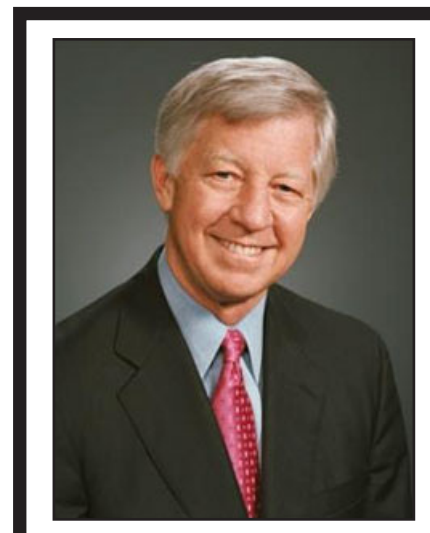
Bill George's Authentic Leadership Approach



Authentic Leaders Demonstrate Five Basic Characteristics: (Northouse, 2013, p. 258)

- (1) They understand their purpose
- (2) They have strong values about the right thing to do
- (3) They establish trusting relationships with others
- (4) They demonstrate self-discipline and act on their values
- (5) They are passionate about their mission (i.e. act from the heart)

Bill George
Harvard Business School
Professor



This figure illustrates the five dimensions of authentic leadership (and the related characteristics) as identified by Bill George (2003) in *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (Northouse, 2013, p.259)

Book Club Questions

Thought provoking discussion questions for readers...

1. What is your *Why*? Why do you get out of bed every morning?
2. Is your *Why* evident in your daily activities (i.e. your *Whats*)? Is your *Why* reflected in your occupation, hobbies, recreational activities, relationships, volunteer history? Please explain.
3. Can you think of a time in your life when your *Why* went fuzzy? How did you regain your sense of *Why*?
4. How will a better understanding of *Why* improve your own leadership ability? Please explain.
5. How will a better understanding of *Why* improve your overall fulfillment in life?

"Great leaders [...] lead with *Why*. They embody a sense of purpose that inspires those around them." (p. 109)

"When you tell people *Why* you're doing what you're doing, remarkable things happen." (p. 152)

"People don't buy *What* you do, they buy *Why* you do it." (p. 41)

"With a *Why* clearly stated in an organization, anyone within the organization can make a decision as clearly and accurately as the founder." (p. 168)

"My cause - to inspire people to do the things that inspire them - is *Why* I get out of bed everyday. The excitement is trying to find new ways, different *Whats* to bring my cause to life, of which this book is one." (p. 136)

Quotable Quotes

"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)

"Every single person has a *Why* and every single organization has one too." (p. 214)

"People who come to work with a clear sense of *Why* are less prone to giving up after a few failures because they understand the higher cause." (p. 101)

"Companies with a clear sense of *Why* tend to ignore the competition, whereas those with a fuzzy sense of *Why* are obsessed with what others are doing." (p. 100)

Recommendations

If you like this book, I would also recommend...

Watching:

1. TEDxMaastricht - Simon Sinek - "First why and then trust"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VdO7LuoBzM>

2. TEDxPugetSound - Simon Sinek - 9/17/09

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA&list=PL0A90F2AF477C0F83

Browsing:

Startwithwhy.com

Reading:

Rath, T. 2007. *Strengths Finder 2.0*. New York, NY: Gallup Press.

References

Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Northouse, P. G. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and Practice (6th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Critical Evaluation



"*Start with Why*" is an interesting and easy read that is applicable to a variety of audiences, from adolescents expressing an early interest in leadership, to working professionals and scholars looking to inspire followers.

Simon takes a stealth approach to leadership curriculum in this book by conveying his ideas through annotated case studies. While the concepts Simon presents are far from groundbreaking, the messages are appealing because they are intuitive, logical and simplistic. Unfortunately, due to the sheer number of case studies discussed, Simon's ideas are greatly outnumbered by his supporting evidence. Furthermore, because case studies are picked-up and dropped-off throughout the book, Simon's ideas tend to be repetitive. Sadly, I feel as though I read a lot, and learned a little. However, on a more positive note, Simon is an excellent storyteller. His narrative-style writing effectively entertains the reader while simultaneously ingraining seminal concepts.

To my surprise, despite the obvious

connections, Simon does not explicitly link his leadership conceptions or models to authentic leadership theory. As a scholar reading this book, I anticipated Simon making this association in order to validate his claims. Similarly, other assertions, such as the relationship between the Golden Circle and brain neuroanatomy/function lacked clarity and depth. Even though Simon's intention in writing this book was to inspire the masses, I can't help but feel as though accuracy suffered for the sake of simplicity.

With this being said, I would recommend this book to friends and colleagues for two reasons. Firstly, Simon has a gift for storytelling. It is evident from the clarity and conciseness of his writing that Simon is passionate about sharing his *Why* with the world. As a reader, you can't help but be inspired to discover your own *Why*. Secondly, the insightful selection of historical and contemporary leaders as case studies provides context to leadership that is both entertaining and educational.