

# *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek (2009)

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## 1 Content warning for text below

- L = Language
- C = Cynicism
- !!! = Book should never actually be bought or read

## 2 Notes on these notes

This page is something of an experiment. Usually, I keep all my notes and comments for a book in one big file with most of my other notes, but I'm giving *Start with Why* its own file because I made so many comments on it, and so my book club at work (hi, guys!) has access to them.

Excerpts are in rough order of appearance in the book.

This second version of the notes has some improvements, such as a clickable table of contents and internal links that serve as discussion threads in a “discussion” with the author. I wish I'd had more time to develop this side of my notes; for more information on the intent, see this Wikipedia entry:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zettelkasten>

## 3 Notes on the book

For those who have an open mind for new ideas, who seek to create long-lasting success and who believe that your success requires the aid of others, I offer you a challenge. From now on, start with Why.

**Note:** Need a manifesto for <http://ludism.org>

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I have a friend who invests some of his own money. Whenever he does well, it's because of his brains and ability to pick the right stocks, at least according to him. But when he loses money, he always blames the market. I have no issue with either line of logic, but either his success and failure hinge upon his own prescience and blindness or they hinge upon good and bad luck. But it can't be both.

**Note:** It *could* be both, but... Fundamental attribution error

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental\\_attribution\\_error](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_attribution_error)

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It wasn't too long ago that the majority of people believed the world was flat. This perceived truth impacted behavior. During this period, there was very little exploration. People feared that if they traveled too far they might fall off the edge of the earth. So for the most part they stayed put. It wasn't until that minor detail was revealed—the world is round—that behaviors changed on a massive scale. Upon this discovery, societies began to traverse the planet. Trade routes were established; spices were traded. New ideas, like mathematics, were shared between societies which unleashed all kinds of innovations and advancements. The correction of a simple false assumption moved the human race forward.

**Note:** Not true. This is a really ignorant idea to start the book with.

The myth of the flat Earth is a modern misconception that Earth was believed to be flat rather than spherical by scholars and the educated during the Middle Ages in Europe.

The earliest documentation of a spherical Earth comes from the Ancient Greeks (5th century BC). Since the 600s AD, scholars have supported that view, and by the Early Middle Ages (700-1500 AD), virtually all scholars maintained the spherical viewpoint.

Since the 1400s, belief in a flat Earth among educated Europeans was almost nonexistent. This despite fanciful depictions in art, such as the exterior of Hieronymus Bosch's famous triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, in which a disc-shaped Earth is shown floating inside a transparent sphere.

According to Stephen Jay Gould, "there never was a period of 'flat Earth darkness' among scholars, regardless of how the public at large may have conceptualized our planet both then and now. Greek knowledge of sphericity never faded, and all major medieval scholars accepted the Earth's roundness as an established fact of cosmology." Historians of science David Lindberg and Ronald Numbers point out that "there was scarcely a Christian scholar of the Middle Ages who did not acknowledge [Earth's] sphericity and even know its approximate circumference".

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth\\_of\\_the\\_flat\\_Earth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth_of_the_flat_Earth)

### 3.1 Elliott

This dance between gut and rational decision-making pretty much covers how we conduct business and even live our lives. We can continue to slice and dice all the options in every direction, but at the end of all the good advice and all the compelling evidence, we're left where we started: how to explain or decide a course of action that yields a desired effect that is repeatable. How can we have 20/20 foresight?

**Note:** The most rational decision making needs emotion to clinch it (cf. case study with Elliott's brain lesion below). Otherwise, my gut tells me to avoid those who laud gut decision making.

We process emotions in the front part of the brain, and damage to those frontal lobes can spell disaster for decisions.

Take the strange case of a brilliant former business exec known only as Elliot.

Surgery for a brain tumor left his intellect intact. Doctors were thrilled . . . until they realized what the surgery had not spared . . .

“He lost the ability to experience emotions,” said Lehrer. “Now, you’d think if you were Plato, for instance, that this would make Elliot the best decision maker possible, right? ‘Cause he’d be perfectly rational. He’d have no emotions leading him astray.

“It turned out, though, that Elliot became pathologically indecisive,” Lehrer said. “He would spend all day trying to figure out where to eat lunch, or which pen to sign his name with. I think the larger point here is about just how essential our emotions are in the decision making process.”

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/decisions-decisions-6430448/>  
Buying a TV

### **continued**

Their Japanese guide looked at them and smiled sheepishly. “We make sure it fits when we design it.” . . .

What the American automakers did with their rubber mallets is a metaphor for how so many people and organizations lead. When faced with a result that doesn’t go according to plan, a series of perfectly effective short-term tactics are used until the desired outcome is achieved. But how structurally sound are those solutions? So many organizations function in a world of tangible goals and the mallets to achieve them. The ones that achieve more, the ones that get more out of fewer people and fewer resources, the ones with an outsized amount of influence, however, build products and companies and even recruit people that all fit based on the original intention. Even though the outcome may look the same, great leaders understand the value in the things we cannot see.

**Note:** Really? Sources? This smells like a corporate urban legend, maybe no more valid than “everyone used to think the world was flat”.

(later) Well, at least Sinek gave sources for this in his notes. I haven’t read them yet.

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

**Note:** Really? Hmm. See de Bono's second law: "Proof may be no more than lack of imagination."

Anyway, Apple's carrot: Buy our stuff and you can Think Different (self actualization in Maslow) and belong to our tribe (belonging, tribalism)

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No matter how they rationalized it to themselves or their clients, price is a highly effective manipulation. Drop your prices low enough and people will buy from you. We see it at the end of a retail season when products are "priced to move." Drop the price low enough and the shelves will very quickly clear to make room for the next season's products.

Playing the price game, however, can come at tremendous cost and can create a significant dilemma for the company. For the seller, selling based on price is like heroin. The short-term gain is fantastic, but the more you do it, the harder it becomes to kick the habit.

**Note:** Granted, Apple products are more expensive. Actually, this is a marketing trick to get people to see your product as more valuable and sell even more of them, as Sinek well knows.

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Businesses also use fear to agitate the insecurity we all have in order to sell products. The idea is that if you don't buy the product or service, something bad could happen to you.

**Note:** FUD: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear,\\_uncertainty,\\_and\\_doubt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear,_uncertainty,_and_doubt)

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If anyone has ever sold you anything with a warning to fear the consequences if you don't buy it, they are using a proverbial gun to your head to help you see the "value" of choosing them over their competitor. Or perhaps it's just a banana. But it works.

**Note:** If it works, why do we need WHY?

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If fear motivates us to move away from something horrible, aspirational messages tempt us toward something desirable

**Note:** This is Apple.

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... you can get someone to buy a gym membership with an aspirational message, but to get them to go three days a week requires a bit of inspiration

**Note:** So it's a quantitative difference?

---

... short-term response to long-term desires...

Just like the habitual dieter, “they never have the time or money to do it right the first time,” she said of her client, “but they always have the time and money to do it again.”

**Note:** People fail at diets because the concept of diets is broken, not because the people are broken. Something to think about in this context?

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“A double-blind study conducted at a top university concluded . . .” pushes a late-night infomercial. “If the product is good enough for professionals, it’s good enough for you,” the advertising eggs on. “With over a million satisfied customers and counting,” teases another ad. These are all forms of peer pressure.

**Note:** If citing double-blind studies is peer pressure, then I guess science is peer pressure. *If science is peer pressure, then I never want to be confident.*

- 
- Novelty (a.k.a. Innovation)...

**Note:** By listing all these sales motivations, one after the other, dude is making WHY sound like just one more.

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... device that measures just 13.9mm thin...

**Note:** Again, Apple did this one too, with the wafer-thin Macbooks.

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Motorola had successfully designed the latest shiny object for people to get excited about... at least until a new shiny object came out. And that’s the reason these features are more a novelty than an innovation.

**Note:** Fair enough and the reason for my latest book.

[http://www.ludism.org/tinfoil/Parallel\\_Pastimes](http://www.ludism.org/tinfoil/Parallel_Pastimes)

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Manipulative techniques have become such a mainstay in American business today that it has become virtually impossible for some to kick the habit. Like any addiction, the drive is not to get sober, but to find the next fix faster and more frequently. And as good as the short-term highs may feel, they have a deleterious impact on the long-term health of an organization. Addicted to the short-term results, business today has largely become a series of quick fixes added on one after another after another.

**Note:** Board games and Cult of the New

<https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/1631375/define-cult-new>

## 3.2 Overdue realization

To constantly have to come up with a new promotion, a new guerrilla marketing tactic, a new feature to add, is hard work. Combined with the long-term effects of years of short-term decisions that have eroded profit margins, this raises stress levels inside organizations as well. When manipulations are the norm, no one wins.

**Note:** This is not a perennial book. It's a book about marketing.  
Marketing

### continued

Like the golden ratio, which offers evidence of order in the seeming disorder of nature...

**Note:** Largely debunked. This guy is a big happy bundle of misinformation...

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_ratio#Disputed\\_observations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_ratio#Disputed_observations)

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It offers clear insight as to how Apple is able to innovate in so many diverse industries and never lose its ability to do so.

**Note:** That is, emotional vs rational appeals.

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**WHAT:** Every single company and organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. This is true no matter how big or small, no matter what industry. Everyone is easily able to describe the products or services a company sells or the job function they have within that system. WHATs are easy to identify.

**HOW:** Some companies and people know HOW they do WHAT they do. Whether you call them a “differentiating value proposition,” “proprietary process” or “unique selling proposition,” HOWs are often given to explain how something is different or better. Not as obvious as WHATs, many think these are the differentiating or motivating factors in a decision. It would be false to assume that's all that is required. There is one missing detail:

**WHY:** Very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do. 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? WHY do you get out of bed every morning? And WHY should anyone care?

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their uncanny ability to attract a cultlike following

**Note:** Emotional appeals. Maslow is useful here. Appeals to the belonging need. Harley Davidson too. (Apple)

### 3.3 Manipulation

Let's look at that Apple example again and rewrite the example in the order Apple actually communicates. This time, the example starts with WHY.

Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently.

The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user-friendly.

And we happen to make great computers.

Wanna buy one?

There's no trickery, no manipulation, no free stuff, no aspirational messages, no celebrities.

**Note:** Like fuck there's no manipulation and no aspirational messaging. What else *is* this?

For example, Sinek has said over and over that Apple's products are no better than others'. If they say "we make great computers", that's a lie and a manipulation. See Apple isn't better, part 1 and part 2.

#### continued

When communicating from the inside out, however, the WHY is offered as the reason to buy and the WHATs serve as the tangible proof of that belief. The things we can point to rationalize or explain the reasons we're drawn to one product, company or idea over another.

Why are they consistently more profitable? And how did they manage to build such a cultish loyal following—something very few companies are ever able to achieve?

**Note:** For one thing, they have that kind of product. It's hard to imagine Impinj (for example) selling industrial products like RFID readers with emotional appeals like Apple's. They're *not that kind of product*.

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Regardless of the products they make or industry in which they operate, it is always clear that Apple "thinks different."

**Note:** And, implicitly, that you can Think Different too if only you buy Apple products with all the other Apple fanbois.

Apple's slogan used to be "Computers for the rest of us." So...

*Think Different Like the Rest of Us*



Like any corporation, Apple's *real* Why, as opposed to their advertisements, is to maximize the profit of their shareholders.

### 3.4 Apple isn't better #1

How many of us can say with certainty that, indeed, an iPod is actually better than Creative's Zen? iPods, for example, are still plagued with battery life and battery replacement issues. They tend to just die. Maybe a Zen is better. The reality is, we don't even care if it is

**Note:** Speak for yourself  
Inspiration as manipulation

#### continued

How many people do you think would stand on line for six hours to buy a new cell phone from Dell, as they did for the release of Apple's iPhone?

**Note:** This is different functionality or WHAT

---

The same cannot be said for their competitors. Although they all had a clear sense of WHY at some point—it was one of the primary factors that helped each of them become billion-dollar companies—over the course of time, all of Apple's competitors lost their WHY

**Note:** Examples?

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Like the products the company produces that serve as proof of the company's WHY, so too does a brand or product serve as proof of an individual's WHY.

**Note:** Not a proof but a promise, sometimes an impossible promise

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depending on what kind of woman you're looking to meet, I guess; I too shouldn't make assumptions

**Note:** Such as that your readers are straight men!

### 3.5 Apple isn't better #2

That some people are viscerally drawn to a Ferrari more than a Honda Odyssey says more about the person than the engineering of the product. The engineering, for example, would simply be one of the tangible points that a Ferrari lover could point out to prove how he feels about the car. The dogged defense of the superiority of the Ferrari from the person whose personality is predisposed to favor all the features and benefits of a Ferrari

cannot be an objective conversation. Why do you think most people who buy Ferraris are willing to pay a premium to get it in red whereas most who buy Honda Odysseys probably don't care much about the color at all?

Macintoshes are, in practice, only better for those who believe what Apple believes. Those people who share Apple's WHY believe that Apple's products are objectively better, and any attempt to convince them otherwise is pointless . . . the argument about which is better or which is worse without first establishing a common standard creates nothing more than debate.

But what if both parties were right? What if an Apple was right for some people and a PC was right for others? It's not a debate about better or worse anymore, it's a discussion about different needs. And before the discussion can even happen, the WHYS for each must be established first.

**Note:** Inspiration as manipulation

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Consider the classic business school case of the railroads. In the late 1800s, the railroads were the biggest companies in the country. Having achieved such monumental success, even changing the landscape of America, remembering WHY stopped being important to them. Instead they became obsessed with WHAT they did—they were in the railroad business.

**Note:** Er, what was their original WHY, exactly?

### **continued**

And all those big railroad companies eventually went out of business. What if they had defined themselves as being in the mass transportation business? Perhaps their behavior would have been different. Perhaps they would have seen opportunities that they otherwise missed. Perhaps they would own all the airlines today.

**Note:** Isn't that just another WHAT? This whole book reads like a term paper tossed off the night before it was due

---

Yet the concept of WHY is spreading far and wide because it resonates with people on such a visceral level that they share it with those they love and care about.

**Note:** In short, emotional appeals. Mostly negative? Icehouse, Harley, Marlboro Man

Icehouse: <https://www.looneylabs.com/looney-pyramids>

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It spreads because this message is inherently optimistic. It is inherently human. And those who believe in it share it.

**Note:** Dude is using WHY to sell WHY. At least he demonstrably believes what he is saying.

### 3.6 Maslow

And the reason is simple. Apple inspires. Apple starts with Why.

**Note:** Emotional appeal. Apple openly appeals to self actualization, but *implicitly* lower down to belonging, an “animal need”.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow27s\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow27s_hierarchy_of_needs)

#### continued

Fear

**Note:** Apple doesn’t use fear but they do use scorn of out groups.

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As with so many things, Dr. Seuss explained it best. The Sneetches perfectly capture a very basic human need—the need to belong. Our need to belong is not rational, but it is a constant that exists across all people in all cultures. It is a feeling we get when those around us share our values and beliefs. When we feel like we belong we feel connected and we feel safe. As humans we crave the feeling and we seek it out.

**Note:** As before, “WHY” is mainly an emotional appeal to Maslow’s relatively low-level belonging need.

Also, Seuss is satirizing this need. In the end, whether you have a star is arbitrary, and always was. Author misses the point, as usual.

---

I remember a trip I took to Australia. One day I was on a bus and heard an American accent. I turned and struck up a conversation. I immediately felt connected to them, we could speak the same language, understand the same slang. As a stranger in a strange city, for that brief moment, I felt like I belonged, and because of it, I trusted those strangers on the bus more than any other passengers. In fact, we spent time together later. No matter where we go, we trust those with whom we are able to perceive common values or beliefs.

**Note:** Per Walter, why students sat with other students of their ethnicities in Commons at Yale

---

The power of WHY is not opinion, it's biology. If you look at a cross section of the human brain, from the top down, you see that the levels of The Golden Circle correspond precisely with the three major levels of the brain.

**Note:** The Triune Brain model is outdated  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triune\\_brain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triune_brain)

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The middle two sections comprise the limbic brain. The limbic brain is responsible for all of our feelings, such as trust and loyalty. It is also responsible for all human behavior and all our decision-making, but it has no capacity for language.

**Note:** Actually, in the triune brain model, the center (WHY) is reptilian! Values include aggression and other primitive functions. The triune brain limbic system really corresponds to HOW.

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These rational decisions tend to take longer to make, says Restak, and can often be of lower quality.

**Note:** ORLY?

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Consider the experience of buying a flat-screen TV at your local electronics store. You stand in the aisle listening to an expert explain to you the difference between LCD and plasma. The sales rep gives you all the rational differences and benefits, yet you are still none the wiser as to which one is best for you. After an hour, you still have no clue

You eventually make a choice and walk out of the store, still not 100 percent convinced you chose the right one. Then you go to your friend's house and see that he bought the "other one." He goes on and on about how much he loves his TV. Suddenly you're jealous, even though you still don't know that his is any better than yours. You wonder, "Did I buy the wrong one?"

... companies don't offer us anything else besides the facts and figures, features and benefits upon which to base our decisions. Companies don't tell us WHY.

**Note:** I don't WANT to buy a TV because I want to belong (a motive that often passes for WHY in Sinek's examples). I want to buy a TV because its feature set meets my rationally-determined needs.

### 3.7 Buying a TV

Your mind is on overload because you're overthinking the decision.

**Note:** My mind is on overload (in this situation) because the salesman is pushing all my emotional buttons, on purpose! Instead, read *The Wirecutter* etc ahead of time, think it out calmly, and buy it online without any pushy salesmen! Marty and I did that with our TV, and we're perfectly happy with it.

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/>

Marty comments that emotions come in somewhat. You have to have emotional values to decide on tradeoffs, eg is a bigger screen more important on your TV, or deeper blacks? See the story of Elliott.

### continued

When the computer revolution was afoot, computer users couldn't ask for a graphical user interface. But that's what Apple gave us.

**Note:** A GUI is a feature or set of features. What Apple sold was "A computer for the rest of us." Author is getting confused or deliberately confusing his readers.

---

"I can make a decision with 30 percent of the information," said former secretary of state Colin Powell. "Anything more than 80 percent is too much."

**Note:** The fucking liar. This is a terrible example. The supposed weapons of mass destruction had less than no evidence. He really shouldn't talk about having to make decisions with *too much* evidence.

---

Apple's computers are at least 25 percent more expensive than a comparable PC. There is less software available for their operating system. They have fewer peripherals. The machines themselves are sometimes slower than a comparable PC. If people made only rational decisions, and did all the research before making a purchase, no one would ever buy a Mac. But of course people do buy Macs. And some don't just buy them—they love them, a feeling that comes straight from the heart. Or the limbic brain.

**Note:** And this is good? Perhaps only for a marketer like Sinék. This whole book is Sinék's emotional appeal to get you to buy into emotional appeals.

Marketing Manipulation

### 3.8 Not selling it

This is beyond rational. This is a belief. It's no accident that the culture at Apple is often described as a cult. It's more than just products, it's a cause to support. It's a matter of faith.

**Note:** Again I ask, and this is good? You're not selling it to me so far, Sinek. But maybe I'm not the target audience.

Not selling it #2

#### continued

Nature abhors a vacuum. In order to promote life, Mother Nature attempts to find balance whenever possible. When life is destroyed because of a forest fire, for example, nature will introduce new life to replace it. The existence of a food chain in any ecosystem, in which each animal exists as food for another, is a way of maintaining balance. The Golden Circle, grounded in natural principles of biology, obeys the need for balance as well. As I've discussed, when the WHY is absent, imbalance is produced and manipulations thrive. And when manipulations thrive, uncertainty increases for buyers, instability increases for sellers and stress increases for all

**Note:** Teleological horseshit. Evolution is not teleological.

---

It's not "innovation," it's "look at the problem from a different angle."

**Note:** Really? You think writing that sentence on the wall instead will create a culture of innovators? As you just said, if you have to do that, you already have bigger problems.

---

A WHY is just a belief. That's all it is. HOWs are the actions you take to realize that belief. And WHATs are the results of those actions—

What authenticity means is that your Golden Circle is in balance. It means that everything you say and everything you do you actually believe. This goes for management as well as the employees. Only when that happens can the things you say and do be viewed as authentic. Apple believed that its original Apple computer and its Macintosh challenged the dominant IBM DOS platforms.

**Note:** No, historically, the Apple II came way before the IBM PC.

---

Manipulation and inspiration both tickle the limbic brain. Aspirational messages, fear or peer pressure all push us to decide one way or another by appealing to our irrational desires or playing on our fears. But it's when

that emotional feeling goes deeper than insecurity or uncertainty or dreams that the emotional reaction aligns with how we view ourselves. It is at that point that behavior moves from being motivated to inspired. When we are inspired, the decisions we make have more to do with who we are and less to do with the companies or the products we're buying.

**Note:** That's it? They're both emotional appeals, but "inspiration" has to do with belonging and stuff? I think his inspiration is just covert manipulation. Think different (high level value) by buying our stuff (low). Thinking differently becomes just another feature, the main feature.

Yor "inspiration" is deeper than dreams? Than MLK's dream? Go home, Sinek, you're drunk.

---

When WHY, HOW, and WHAT are in balance, authenticity is achieved and the buyer feels fulfilled

**Note:** Maybe

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The human animal is a social animal. We're very good at sensing subtleties in behavior and judging people accordingly. We get good feelings and bad feelings about companies, just as we get good feelings and bad feelings about people. There are some people we just feel we can trust and others we just feel we can't. Those feelings also manifest when organizations try to court us. Our ability to feel one way or another toward a person or an organization is the same.

**Note:** I guess I'm just an aspie. My Why seems to come from my What (eg love of free/open source software).

---

If the levels of The Golden Circle are in balance, all those who share the organization's view of the world will be drawn to it and its products like a moth to a light bulb.

**Note:** Heh heh, he's avoiding saying "flame" which imho is more apt.

---

This time the chances Brad will get a second date, assuming that whoever is sitting across from him believes what he believes, went up exponentially. More importantly, he's also laying a good foundation for a relationship, one based on values and beliefs.

**Note:** What?! This is appalling! What an egocentric dope! He's just rephrasing the first part!

---

When we can only provide a rational basis for a decision, when we can only point to tangible elements or rational measurements, the highest level

of confidence we can give is, “I think this is the right decision.

**Note:** Wrong. You can sometimes give a probability or confidence estimate in percentage. *Estimative probability* (CIA analysts). They need to provide reason, not hunches.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/sherman-kent-and-the-board-of-national-estimates/6words.html>

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The Golden Circle finds order and predictability in human behavior. Put simply, it helps us understand why we do what we do.

**Note:** Why is circle “golden” like ratio?

---

explains why people tattoo Harley-Davidson logos on their bodies

**Note:** My constant refrain: This is good why?

---

... no longer serves as the reason to buy, they serve as the tangible proof of their cause...

**Note:** Apple is not a charity, nor is Harley. I don’t care about their “causes”.

---

Apple introduced their iPod by offering us “1,000 songs in your pocket.” With the iPod and iTunes, Apple did a much better job of communicating the value of both the mp3 and the mp3 player relative to how we lived our lives. Their advertising didn’t offer exhaustive descriptions of product details; it wasn’t about them, it was about us. And we understood WHY we wanted it.

**Note:** Jesus, Sinek, you’re all over the map. 1000 songs in your pocket is a What, not a Why. A feature of their product.

---

THIS IS NOT OPINION, THIS IS BIOLOGY

**Note:** This *is* opinion. This *is not* biology.

---

The PC, as defined by Apple, is in a suit. Older. Stodgy

**Note:** Yet IRL everybody liked “PC” John Hodgman, who is more memorable, and a best selling author, with multiple appearances on *The Daily Show* and various other projects. Does anyone know what “Mac” is doing these days?

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And you can’t have a good product without people who like coming to work. It just can’t be done...



**Note:** What about automation?

---

...ranked last in every measurable performance category

**Note:** Last among whom?

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Value, by definition, is the transference of trust.

**Note:** I doubt that. But see David Snook's notes.

---

From now on, this was a family and everyone had to work together.

**Note:** ORLY? Did he divvy up his billions with them?

---

Cultures are groups of people who come together around a common set of values and beliefs.

**Note:** No, cultures are the values and beliefs. Societies are the people.

---

It's not true that all immigrants have an entrepreneurial spirit—just the ones that are viscerally drawn to America

**Note:** Evidence? Borderline racist.

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So the logic follows, the goal is not to hire people who simply have a skill set you need, the goal is to hire people who believe what you believe.

**Note:** "Culture fit" can be a rationalization for racism, sexism, ageism...

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...leaving one remaining conquest: the crossing of the continent via the southernmost tip of the earth...

**Note:** Just one? not very imaginative

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Men wanted for Hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success."

**Note:** Yet another corporate urban legend.

- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/shackleton-probably-never-took-out-an-a>
  - <http://blog.idonethis.com/greatest-job-ad/>
- 

Herb Kelleher famously said, "You don't hire for skills, you hire for attitude. You can always teach skills..."

The best engineer at Apple, for example, would likely be miserable if he worked at Microsoft

Likewise, the best engineer at Microsoft would probably not thrive at Apple

**Note:** Not according to Microserfs :)

[https://smile.amazon.com/Microserfs-Douglas-Coupland/dp/0061624268/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=microserfs&qid=1591662105&sr=8-1](https://smile.amazon.com/Microserfs-Douglas-Coupland/dp/0061624268/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=microserfs&qid=1591662105&sr=8-1)

---

The goal is to hire those who are passionate for your WHY, your purpose, cause or belief, and who have the attitude that fits your culture. Once that is established, only then should their skill set and experience be evaluated

**Note:** OK, I can kind of see this. Kind of like the advice “Don’t marry for money. Go where the money is and marry for love.”

---

asking everyone to simply trust their gut is too risky

**Note:** Aw gee, why is that? :/ I thought you were a big advocate of the gut, Sinek.

---

Great companies don’t hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them

**Note:** Rather, train and educate them. They are already inspired.

---

He had had a passion for aeronautics since a very young age, but he did not have a cause to champion. More than anything else, Langley wanted to be first. He wanted to be rich and he wanted to be famous. That was his driving motivation.

**Note:** Contradictory

---

What the Wright brothers’ team had that Langley did wasn’t luck. It was inspiration. One was motivated by the prospect of fame and wealth, the other by a belief

**Note:** Inspiration is not a belief. It is more like getting punched in the face.

Inspiration comes from the Muse, for whatever value of “Muse” you have, not from a corporate motto, and not even from other people. The most other people can do is carry and convey the flame of inspiration to set you alight.

Nevertheless, I’m enjoying this chapter the most so far, with its musing on meaning. Makes me want to go back and reread Frankl. Fortunately, a “lost” Frankl book was just published this week.

Frankl

---

Average companies give their people something to work on. In contrast, the most innovative organizations give their people something to work toward.

The best they can do is add more RAM, add a feature or two, or, as one PC maker has done, give people the option to customize the color of their computer casing.

**Note:** Um, anyone remember Apple's candy-colored iMacs? "Yum." :P

---

Companies with a clear sense of WHY tend to ignore their competition, whereas those with a fuzzy sense of WHY are obsessed with what others are doing.

Thomas Edison, a man definitely driven by a higher cause, said, "I didn't find a way to make a lightbulb, I found a thousand ways how not to make one."

**Note:** <https://twitter.com/ChessifyMe/status/1260211744795963392>

Anyway, Edison was arguably driven more by money than a "higher cause", and he didn't find that thousand ways – his overworked employees did.

---

... gambling is very different from calculated risk. Calculated risk accepts that there can be great loses, but steps are taken to either guard against or respond to an unlikely but possible outcome

**Note:** No, you can make calculated risks at Poker and Blackjack.

---

It causes some pause when we consider how we hire people: what's more important, their résumé and experience, or whether they will fit our community? Our children are probably more important than the position we want to fill at the organization, yet we seem to exercise a very different standard. Is there a false assumption at play here as to who makes the best employee?

The trust the circus management gives him by providing him a net is probably afforded to other performers too. Soon all the performers will feel confident to try new things and push themselves further. That collection of personal confidence and personal risk results in the entire circus putting on a much better show. An overall better show means more customers. And the system thrives. But not without trust.

**Note:** Now you're talking. Regulations? "Net" here also stands for web of trust.

---

The strong sense of culture creates a sense of belonging and acts like a net.

**Note:** My “web of trust”, woven of human relationships.

---

Great leadership is not about flexing and intimidation; great leaders, as General Robinson proves, lead with WHY. They embody a sense of purpose that inspires those around them.

**Note:** Yes, purpose, meaning. This is why I’m reading the book, not the crap in the previous 5 chapters. This is the best chapter in the book so far, the WHY of the book. Cf. Frankl.

Frankl

---

When a journalist asked Kelleher who comes first to him, his shareholders or his employees, his response was heresy at the time (and to a large degree still is). “Well, that’s easy,” he said, “employees come first and if employees are treated right, they treat the outside world right, the outside world uses the company’s product again, and that makes the shareholders happy. That really is the way that it works and it’s not a conundrum at all.”

The question isn’t how should car companies talk to the father who bought the car. The question isn’t even how they court the highly influential opinion of his friend, the car guy. The concept of buyer and influencers isn’t a new one. The question is, how do you get enough of the influencers to talk about you so that you can make the system tip?

**Note: What are we even talking about anymore? I thought it was meaning and leadership, but it seems we’re back to marketing.**

Marketing

---

Don’t forget, the superior Betamax technology did not beat out the sub-standard VHS technology as the standard format for videotape in the 1980s. The best does not always win.

**Note:** Ok, so what was the “why” of VHS?

---

If you have the discipline to focus on the early adopters, the majority will come along eventually. But it must start with WHY.

**Note:** Sinek is piggybacking his WHY on Gladwell’s tipping point, and it’s teetering a bit.

---

There were a small number of TiVo loyalists, probably about 10 percent, those who just “got it,” who didn’t need an explicit articulation of WHY

**Note:** People like us who hate commercial TV.

---

If this line of logic were true, then no new technology would ever take hold. A fact that is patently untrue

**Note:** All facts are true. False facts are false to facts. Didn't Sinek have an editor?

---

And not all of his ideas were good

**Note:** Examples?

---

And in the summer of 1963, a quarter of a million people showed up to hear Dr. King deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

But how many people showed up for Dr. King?

Zero.

They showed up for themselves. It was what they believed

**Note:** What the hell does Sinek know about this?

---

He pumps his fists and runs from one end of the stage to the other, he screams and he sweats. He is remarkable to watch and the crowd loves it.

**Note:** At least until his Developers, Developers, Developers, Developers scream. Then he became a laughingstock.

---

Gates doesn't have energy, but Bill Gates inspires.

**Note:** And who is remembered better, and who has more influence today?

---

It's not Bill Gates's passion for computers that inspires us, it's his undying optimism that even the most complicated problems can be solved. He believes we can find ways to remove obstacles to ensure that everyone can live and work to their greatest potential. It is his optimism to which we are drawn.

**Note:** Are we ditching Jobs now?

---

But only charisma can inspire

**Note:** Really? But earlier you said Apple inspired. So corporations can have charisma?

---

Sumpter is very good at what he does—he's been one of the top-performing loan officers throughout his career

**Note:** Tired of anecdotes. Want some stats.

### 3.9 It's all about the marketing

And whamo, I'd gotten myself a new career in marketing. But that's just one of the things I've done—it's not my passion and it's not how I define my life. My cause—to inspire people to do the things that inspire them—is WHY I get out of bed every day.

**Note:** By which he means marketing.

#### continued

being serviced by the nation

**Note:** Kinky

---

in our very three-dimensional world,

**Note:** Isn't a cone topologically 2D? That's why he can do that. This trick doesn't gain anything. A distinction without a difference.

I'm not sure about the topology, but high=central, low=peripheral. Same mistake LeGuin made in *The Dispossessed*.

---

The leader sits at the top of the cone—at the start, the point of WHY—while the HOW-types sit below

**Note:** You mean he's "in the center," boss?

---

Gates is a WHY-type.

**Note:** ORLY? Just Why? He wrote a version of Basic in assembly code that he and his empire dined off of for years.

---

Like all WHY guys, Walt was busy thinking about what the future looked like

**Note:** Are there no dreamers who dream of the past?

---

Most people in the world are HOW-types.

**Note:** What do What types do? Why aren't there even more of them?

---

Bill Gates, for example, may have been the visionary who imagined a world with a PC on every desk, but Paul Allen built the company.

**Note:** Again, I don't know about Paul Allen, but Gates got his hands dirty with code

---

Even the ability to create a tipping point is possible without creating lasting change. It's called a fad

**Note:** Yup

---

It's no coincidence that the three-dimensional Golden Circle is a cone. It is, in practice, a megaphone.

**Note:** Oh, come ON! I suppose the megaphone shape was *foreordained* when we hunted gazelles on the savannah.

---

But for a megaphone to work, clarity must come first. Without a clear message

**Note:** He's in love with juggling his only three ideas

---

soda brand,

**Note:** ???

insurance company

**Note:** ?

mobile phone service.

**Note:** ?

... the list goes on.

**Note:** Like Trump's failures. Trump steak, Trump booze, Trump airlines...

---

In America, he realized, the vast majority of young people wake up in the morning with a feeling that there is opportunity for them in the future

**Note:** ORLY stats?

---

Bruder realized the problems we face with terrorism in the West have less to do with what young boys and girls in the Middle East think about America and more to do with what they think about themselves and their own vision of the future

**Note:** ORLY

---

But this is Yemen, and Yemen has no culture of philanthropy, making his achievement that much more remarkable. Yemen is also one of the poorest nations in the region. But when you tell people WHY you're doing what you're doing, remarkable things happen.

**Note:** ORLY

---

efefoundation.org

**Note:** Moved to <https://efe.org/>

Actually, they look pretty cool.

---

Agree with them or not, we know what they believe because they tell us.

**Note:** And it's inconceivable that their ads are lies, right? For a marketer, maybe.

Marketing

---

The only contact that the organized system has with the disorganized system is at the base—at the WHAT level. Everything an organization says and does communicates the leader's vision to the outside world. . .

**Note:** And the workers aren't worth consideration?

---

I love asking CEOs what their biggest priority is, and depending on their size or structure, I generally get one of two answers: customers or shareholders.

**Note:** Er, what about the employees answer? (Continental Airlines IIRC)

---

Just as it is hard for people to speak their feelings, like someone trying to explain why they love their spouse, it is equally hard for an organization to explain its WHY

**Note:** And yet humans have created some masterful love poetry. And Apple's ads are AWESOME!!!1, or at least that's what you told us two pages ago.

(I find myself talking directly to the author more than some future audience with this book.)

---

And we follow the flag into battle. That's some serious power. . .

**Note:** Speak for yourself

---

Reagan was trying to make a point, that words are hollow, but deeds and values are deep

**Note:** No, he was trying to score political points

---

Most companies have logos, but few have been able to convert those logos into meaningful symbols

**Note:** My patches, meaningful to me (not the flag)

---



Randy Fowler, a former U.S. Marine and now general manager of a Harley-Davidson dealership in California, proudly sports a large Harley tattoo on his left arm. “It symbolizes who I am,” he says. “Mostly, it says I’m an American.

**Note:** Jesus Christ, *these* guys, making my life off the busy road in front of my house a misery.

---

But national symbols are easy because most nations have a clear sense of culture that has been reinforced and repeated for generations. It is not a company or organization that decides what its symbols mean, it is the group outside the megaphone, in the chaotic marketplace, who decide. If, based on the things they see and hear, the outsiders can clearly and consistently report what an organization believes, then, and only then, can a symbol start to take on meaning

**Note:** OK, now *that’s* interesting. But true?

---

In 2003 and 2004, Apple ran a promotion for iTunes with Pepsi—the cola branded as “the choice of the next generation.” It made sense that Apple would do a deal with Pepsi, the primary challenger to Coca-Cola, the status quo. Everything Apple does, everything they say and do, serves as tangible proof of what they believe

**Note:** Or maybe bc Sculley still knew ppl at Pepsi? Apple: The Lost Years

### 3.10 Celery Test

Still somebody else comes up to you and says, “Celery. You’ve got to get into celery.”

Imagine you go to a dinner party and somebody comes up to you and says, “You know what you need in your organization? M&M’s. If you’re not using M&M’s in your business, you’re leaving money on the table.”

But what if you knew your WHY before you went to the supermarket? What if your WHY is to do only things that are healthy? To always do the things that are good for your body? You’ll get all the same good advice from all the same people, the only difference is, the next time you go to the supermarket, you’ll buy only rice milk and celery

And, most importantly, when you’re standing in line with your products in your arms, everybody can see what you believe

**Note:** Seriously? The most important thing about going to the grocery is what people see you buying?

This doesn't even pass muster as a metaphor. Surely, it's more important what you do for your company as CEO than what you are seen to do. Sinek's marketing bias reveals itself once again.

Marketing  
Celery Test #2

### continued

Disney operates with a clear sense of WHY—they exist to promote good, clean family fun and everything they say and do has, for decades, worked to prove it.

**Note:** Also sexism, racism, sizeism. . .

---

This is not rational.

**Note:** I entirely agree

---

What VW had done was inconsistent with what we knew them to believe

**Note:** Maybe they were changing their mind.

---

We don't want to come to work to build a wall, we want to come to work to build a cathedral.

**Note:** Or a bazaar <http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/>

---

A clear sense of WHY sets expectations. When we don't know an organization's WHY, we don't know what to expect, so we expect the minimum—price, quality, service, features—the commodity stuff. But when we do have a sense for the WHY, we expect more. For those not comfortable being held to a higher standard, I strongly advise against trying to learn your WHY or keeping your Golden Circle in balance. Higher standards are hard to maintain. It requires the discipline to constantly talk about and remind everyone WHY the organization exists in the first place. It requires that everyone in the organization be held accountable to HOW you do things—to your values and guiding principles. And it takes time and effort to ensure that everything you say and do is consistent with your WHY. But for those willing to put in the effort, there are some great advantages.

**Note:** This passage scared and confused some of my friends, but it's FUD (fear, uncertainty, and doubt)

---

By the time Sam Walton died, he had taken Wal-Mart from a single store in Bentonville, Arkansas, and turned it into a retail colossus with \$44 billion

in annual sales with 40 million people shopping in the stores per week. But it takes more than a competitive nature, a strong work ethic and a sense of optimism to build a company big enough to equal the twenty-third-largest economy in the world.

**Note:** Link: People's Republic of Walmart. Walmart is a command economy the size of a country, so contrary to accepted wisdom, command economies can work. Authors of that book used as negative example Sears, which fell apart bc CEO made internal depts compete, but another good example is Trump making states of US compete for medical equipment during pandemic.

[https://smile.amazon.com/Peoples-Republic-Walmart-Corporations-Foundation/dp/178663516X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=People%27s+Republic+of+Walmart&qid=1591663578&sr=8-1](https://smile.amazon.com/Peoples-Republic-Walmart-Corporations-Foundation/dp/178663516X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=People%27s+Republic+of+Walmart&qid=1591663578&sr=8-1)

---

That means that less than .004 percent of all companies make it to the illustrious list. To have such an impact, to build a company to a size where it can drive markets, requires something more.

Many small business owners dream of making it big. I meet a lot of entrepreneurs and it is amazing how many of them tell me their goal is to build a billion-dollar company. The odds, however, are significantly stacked against them

**Note:** Dunning-Krueger

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger\\_effect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger_effect)

---

The more Wal-Mart could give to employees, customers and the community, the more that employees, customers and the community would give back to Wal-Mart. "We're all working together; that's the secret," said Walton.

**Note:** That's why Walmart employees have to go on welfare, right?

---

The company once renowned for how it treated employees and customers has been scandal-ridden for nearly a decade. Nearly every scandal has centered on how poorly they treat their customers and their employees.

**Note:** Ah OK

---

The greatest challenge Wal-Mart has faced over the years comes from one place: itself.

**Note:** Stoicism: self mastery

---

It is not destiny or some mystical business cycle that transforms successful companies into impersonal goliaths. It's people.

Here was a room full of some of America's brightest entrepreneurs, many of them multimillionaires, some of whom don't need to work anymore if they don't want to, yet most of them still didn't feel like they had succeeded

**Note:** Impostor syndrome or brutal realism? :)

---

With each achievement, the tangible measurements of success and the feeling of progress increase. Life is good. However, for most of us, somewhere in the journey we forget WHY we set out on the journey in the first place.

**Note:** "Rosebud..."

---

Those with an ability to never lose sight of WHY, no matter how little or how much they achieve, can inspire us. Those with the ability to never lose sight of WHY and also achieve the milestones that keep everyone focused in the right direction are the great leaders

**Note:** billg got a new Why in later life: saving the world instead of conquering it.

---

Wal-Mart started small. So did Microsoft. So did Apple. So did General Electric and Ford and almost every other company that made it big

**Note:**

SOME COMPLEX SYSTEMS ACTUALLY FUNCTION  
COMPLEX SYSTEM THAT WORKS IS INVARIABLY FOUND  
TO HAVE EVOLVED FROM A SIMPLE SYSTEM THAT WORKED  
COMPLEX SYSTEM DESIGNED FROM SCRATCH NEVER  
WORKS AND CANNOT BE MADE TO WORK. YOU HAVE  
TO START OVER, BEGINNING WITH A WORKING SIM-  
PLE SYSTEM

-Systemantics

---

Even the United States of America started the same way.

Nearly every company or organization starts the same way: with an idea

This is what I witnessed at the Gathering of Titans: I saw a room full of people with passion enough to start businesses, and with knowledge enough to build the systems and structures to survive and even do very well. But having spent so many years focused on converting a vision into a viable business, many started to fixate on WHAT the organization did or HOW to do it. Poring over financials or some other easily measured result, and fixating on HOW they were to achieve those tangible results, they stopped

focusing on WHY they started the business in the first place. This is also what has happened at Wal-Mart. A company obsessed with serving the community became obsessed with achieving its goals.

**Note:** Arguably, it was more about the systems, which took on lives of their own – Systemantics.

---

WHAT now comes first and all their systems and processes are in pursuit of those tangible results. The reason the change happened is simple—they suffered a split and their WHY went fuzzy.

**Note:** Load and annotate more Systemantics.

---

When organizations are small, WHAT they do and WHY they do it are in close parallel. Born out of the personality of the founder, it is relatively easy for early employees to “get it.” Clarity of WHY is understood because the source of passion is near—in fact it physically comes to work every day. In most small businesses all the employees are all crammed into the same room and socialize together. Simply being around a charismatic founder allows that feeling of being a part of something special to flourish

**Note:** Hasn’t Impinj gone through a couple of Whys over the years?

---

Microsoft has a remarkable opportunity to clarify their WHY and regain the inspiration that took them to where they are today.

**Note:** I think they have started to with Satya Nadella, but it’s still kind of fuzzy. If they open sourced Windows and Office, it would be a big step forward. But they have had outright employee revolt with their military contracting.

Overall, though, perhaps they have a new Why, like billg.

---

The School Bus Test is a simple metaphor. If a founder or leader of an organization were to be hit by a school bus, would the organization continue to thrive at the same pace without them at the helm?

---

... What gets measured gets done,” as well-known sales coach Jack Daly says.

**Note:** Incentives.

---

At Bridgeport Financial, bonuses were not given for the amount of money that was collected; they were given based on how many “thank you” cards her agents sent out

**Note:** A much better metric would be how many thank you cards etc the debtors sent out! Or 5s on phone surveys etc.

---

### 3.11 Celery Test #2

**Note:** I think a better name for the Celery Test is Purpose Filter  
The Celery Test

**continued**

The only difference was that when my uncle's rackets came off the assembly line, they didn't put the well-known brand logo on the product. My uncle's rackets sold for less money, in the same big-box retailer, next to the name-brand rackets. Month after month, the name-brand rackets outsold the generic-brand ones. Why? Because people perceived greater value from the name-brand rackets and felt just fine paying a premium for that feeling. On a strictly rational scale, the generic rackets offered better value. But again, value is a perception, not a calculation, which is the reason companies make such a big deal about investing in their brand

**Note:** For me, and rational people, value involves calculation. See/link my example of buying a TV. What if there were a Wirecutter back then (Consumer Reports?) and it exposed his uncle's rackets were the same? Wouldn't it cut into the name brand sales? Only rich idiots would buy them.

The Racket Racket  
value != trust (see earlier, David's comment)

---

loyal buyers will always rationalize the premium they pay or the inconvenience they suffer to get that feeling. To them, the sacrifice of time or money is worth it. They will try to explain that their feeling of value comes from quality or features or some other easy-to-point-to element, but it doesn't

**Note:** Because a sucker is born every microsecond in the Racket Racket. Cf Neal Stephenson's metaphor of Linux as personal tank. "Stay away from my house, you freak!"

<http://i-n-t-e-r-f-a-c-e.org/MEDIA/PDF/In-the-Beginning-was-the-Command-Line.pdf>

---

Make no mistake, Microsoft has done more to change the world than Apple.

**Note:** Agreed, but doesn't this undercut your example of Apple on every page? Why didn't you use MS instead?

---

Gates recognizes the need for people to produce real change, but he neglected to remember that any effective movement, social or business, needs a leader to march in the front, preaching the vision and reminding people WHY they showed up in the first place. Though King needed to cross the bridge from Selma on his march to Montgomery, it was what it meant to cross the bridge that mattered

**Note:** After you cross the river, you don't need the boat (Buddhism). But really, *Sinek* is telling *Gates* how to lead?

---

Although Microsoft went through the split years ago, changing from a company that intended to change the world into a company that makes software, having Gates hanging around helped Microsoft maintain at least a loose sense of WHY they existed. With Gates gone, Microsoft does not have sufficient systems to measure and preach their WHY anymore

**Note:** The wasteland of the Ballmer years.

---

It is worth considering how such a bad fit as Sculley even got the job at Apple in the first place. Simple—he was manipulated. Sculley did not approach Jobs and ask to be a part of Apple's cause. The way the real story unfolded made the fallout almost predictable. Jobs knew he needed help. He knew he needed a HOW guy to help him scale his vision. He approached Sculley, a man with a solid résumé, and said, "Do you want to sell sugar water your whole life or do you want to change the world?" Playing off Sculley's ego, aspirations and fears, Jobs completed a perfectly executed manipulation. And with it, Jobs was ousted from his own company a few years later.

**Note:** If it was almost predictable, why did Super Genius Steve fall into his own trap?

---

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

**Note:** Agreed, in general.

---

What will happen now that Jobs has passed?

**Note:** Admittedly no qualitatively new products like the iPod or iPhone, and an erosion of quality in existing product lines, eg the notorious butterfly

keyboard.

---

Steve Ballmer, a smart man by all accounts, does not physically embody Gates's vision of the world. He has the image of a powerful executive who sees numbers, competitors and markets. He is a man with a gift for managing the WHAT line.

**Note:** Make up your mind. Is this What or How? Anyway, agreed.

---

Ballmer knows how to rally the company, but can he inspire it?

**Note:** No cf stack ranking. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitality\\_curve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitality_curve)

---

It was at that point that Putnam felt he was the right man for the job. He loved that Kelleher was just like everyone else. He too had holes in his socks.

**Note:** Think Different Like the Rest of Us , alt title for this book or indeed Trump's campaign and the "alt" right.

---

The part of the brain that controls the WHY doesn't control language. So, like so many, the best Walton could articulate was HOW to bring his cause to life.

**Note:** Hey genius, How is part of your notional limbic system too. It doesn't have language either.

---

Following the same formula as other inspiring leaders, Costco believes in looking after its employees first. Historically, they have paid their people about 40 percent more than those who work at Sam's Club, the Wal-Mart-owned discount warehouse. And Costco offers above-average benefits, including health coverage for more than 90 percent of their employees. As a result, their turnover is consistently five times lower than Sam's Club.

**Note:** Another reason to shop at Costco.

---

Costco, on the other hand, was later than Wal-Mart to announce an environmental policy, yet has received a disproportionate amount of attention. The difference is that people believe it when Costco does it. When people know WHY you do WHAT you do, they are willing to give you credit for everything that could serve as proof of WHY

**Note:** Good point.

---



That means that less than .004 percent of all companies make it to the illustrious list. To have such an impact, to build a company to a size where it can drive markets, requires something more.

**Note:** Dunning-Krueger. Everyone thinks *they'll* be the one to win the lottery. Cf the studies that show luck plays a large role in success.

---

Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs...

**Note:** How did I guess?

---

...they saw a different way to change the world that didn't require protesting or engaging in anything illegal.

**Note:** Many things you did with computers then were illegal. Things Woz did anyway.

---

the two Steves made something they called the Blue Box

**Note:** Yes, this, but Sinek makes it sound as though they invented it.

---

Jobs and Woz never actually used the device themselves

**Note:** It says in Isaacson's hagiography that they never inhaled, either, amirite?

---

But they liked the idea of giving other individuals the ability to avoid having to play by the rules of monopolistic forces, a theme that would repeat many more times in Apple's future.

**Note:** Oh man, was there ever a company that loved lock-in more than Apple?

---

All computer and technology companies have open access to talent and resources and are just as qualified to produce all the products Apple does. It has to do with a purpose, cause or belief that started many years ago with a couple of idealists in Cupertino, California. "I want to put a ding in the universe," as Steve Jobs put it. And that's exactly what Apple did in the industries in which it competes

**Note:** It's such a cliché that company founders "want to make the world a better place" that it was a running joke on *Silicon Valley*. Hmm, but Jobs just wanted to put a "ding" in it, or vandalize it? *That* doesn't sound like someone I can worship. But we knew that.

---

If Apple stays true to their WHY, the television and movie industries will likely be next.

**Note:** Didn't happen.

<http://www.theonion.com/articles/weeping-tim-cook-spotted-screaming-for-help-at-ste-32104/>

---

There is no difference between an Apple customer and an Apple employee

**Note:** The latter is technically capable and produces devices for the less capable former.

---

Jobs, his company, his loyal employees and his loyal customers all exist to push the boundaries

**Note:** Well, his customers have boundaries pushed for them, and are flattered they're rebels, for a price.

---

But it cannot be denied: they stand for something.

**Note:** So did Barnum

---

They are so effective at it, they are able to clearly identify their own products simply by preceding the product name with the letter "i." But they don't just own the letter, they own the word "I."

**Note:** I'd like to see them try. They certainly own one shade of the color blue, so why not a pronoun?

---

Conservative estimates put the numbers at three to one. But some historians have said the English army was outnumbered by six to one.

**Note:** In medias res – pretty sneaky, sis!

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But what does the battle of Agincourt have to do with finding your WHY?

Before it can gain any power or achieve any impact, an arrow must be pulled backward, 180 degrees away from the target. And that's also where a WHY derives its power. The WHY does not come from looking ahead at what you want to achieve and figuring out an appropriate strategy to get there. It is not born out of any market research. It does not come from extensive interviews with customers or even employees. It comes from looking in the completely opposite direction from where you are now. Finding WHY is a process of discovery, not invention.

**Note:** Because you're shooting MEGAPHONES at them! I bet megaphones come in here somewhere.

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It is the discipline to trust one's gut,

**Note:** Every time I hear about someone trusting their gut, I'm inclined to stab them in it. That's multiple times for Sinek.

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The few that are able to build a megaphone, and not just a company, around their cause are the ones who earn the ability to inspire.

**Note:** I knew it.

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Learning the WHY of a company or an organization or understanding the WHY of any social movement always starts with one thing: you.

**Note:** Technically, the You starts with Y.

It's 3AM. Are these notes even making sense anymore, or have I just lost all respect for Sinek and am just flailing away with potshots?

---

The foolishness of thinking that you're a part of the small minority of those who actually will make it past three years and defy the odds

**Note:** Don't flatter yourself. 10% is not that small a minority. The figure cited earlier for the number of people who become billionaires is a small minority.

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I was certain anyone who worked for me didn't like me and that my clients knew I was a fraud. I thought everyone I met was smarter than me. I thought everyone I met was better than me.

**Note:** Er...

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I started having desperate thoughts, thoughts that for an entrepreneur are almost worse than suicide: I thought about getting a job.

**Note:** See, Sinek, this is not rock bottom, and it's brutally un-self-aware of you to think that it is. This one sentence fills me with more nausea than the rest of the book. Suicide is suicide. Getting a job, no, *considering* getting a job is not suicide, you ignorant, self-pitying, braggadocious sack of shit.

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It was a little pet project with no real application, just something I found interesting.

**Note:** For once we're in agreement.

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While I was trying to understand why some marketing worked and some didn't, I had tripped over something vastly more profound.

**Note:** What you discovered was a halfassed, occult table of correspondences. Put on your big boy pants and stop touting it as science.

Marketing

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Henry Ford said, “If you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.” He was a brilliant WHY-guy who changed the way industry works.

... man who embodied all the characteristics of a great leader, who understood the importance...

**Note:** He was also a contemptible racist.

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perspective

Though the Golden Circle and the concept of WHY was working for me, I wanted to show it to others. I had a decision to make: do I try to patent it, protect it and use it to make lots of money

**Note:** Oh please

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The experiment started to work. Prior to starting with WHY, I had been invited to give one public speech in my life. Now I get between thirty and forty invitations per year, from all sorts of audiences, all over the world, to speak about the Golden Circle

**Note:** That doesn’t mean the “GC” is true. It just means it makes people feel good. And that’s not necessarily a good thing. Scientology does too. Whew, avoided Godwin’s Law. Or did I?

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... Ben, you see, has cerebral palsy.

**Note:** “Because, you see, I was DEAD.”

Bathos! Sinek is just not a good enough writer to pull off this rhetorical trick.

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When you compete against everyone else, no one wants to help you. But when you compete against yourself, everyone wants to help you.

**Note:** Fair enough. See the Stoic saying about true victory.

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### 3.12 Not selling it #2

Leadership requires two things: a vision of the world that does not yet exist and the ability to communicate it.

The question is, where does vision come from? And this is the power of WHY. Our visions are the world we imagine, the tangible results of what the world would look like if we spent every day in pursuit of our WHY.

**Note:** Dude, you might have the vision, but you sure couldn’t impart it to me.

Not selling it #1

### 3.13 At last, Frankl

... and the single most important book everyone should read, the book that teaches us that we cannot control the circumstances around us, all we can control is our attitude— *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl.

**Note:** YES! I mentioned this to the reading group when we got started on this book. At least Sinek has the sense to steal from the great this time.

#### **continued**

There are a few books and authors that have, over the years, inspired me, spurred ideas and offered me new perspectives:

**Note:** So much middlebrow crap...