



## **Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action**

*Simon Sinek*

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"A powerful and penetrating exploration of what separates great companies and great leaders from the rest."

**-Polly LaBarre, coauthor of *Mavericks at Work*** Why are some people and organizations more innovative, more influential, and more profitable than others? Why do some command greater loyalty?

In studying the leaders who've had the greatest influence in the world, Simon Sinek discovered that they all think, act, and communicate in the exact same way-and it's the complete opposite of what everyone else does. People like Martin Luther King Jr., Steve Jobs, and the Wright Brothers might have little in common, but they all started with why.

Drawing on a wide range of real-life stories, Sinek weaves together a clear vision of what it truly takes to lead and inspire.

## Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action Details

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## From Reader Review Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action for online ebook

### Andy says

Great TED Talk, but not enough to carry a book.

The author utters the same platitudes over and over. The main concept is that persuasive argument starts with connection, then emotions, then facts. This goes back to Aristotle and is nothing new.

The plus-value here would come from present real world illustrations, but this is where he trips himself up in self-contradictions.

For example, Apple Inc. is great because they are so original, i.e. they don't just copy and refine, they truly "innovate." But Southwest Airlines totally copied and refined Pacific Southwest Airlines (PSA) including the name, the concept, even the stewardesses in the go-go boots, and PSA the true innovator is long gone while Southwest thrives.

So the details of the "why" become circular reasoning: if you are successful then you must have started with why, where "starting with why" means doing whatever it is that makes organizations successful.

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### William Aicher says

I get the message and agree that "why?" is probably the most important question any leader should be asking... and answering. The book was inspiring, to be sure. But it also felt full of speculation as to why certain companies succeed and others don't. It wasn't that what Sinek says is wrong, but it's based upon a lot of assumptions and relationships with little empirical evidence. Carefully chosen examples that tend to confirm his theory, but still anecdotal at best.

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### Experience Life says

We are easily caught up in the details of what we want to do, and how we are going to get it all done.

Communications expert Simon Sinek argues that we'd be far better off if we more regularly focused on why we're investing all that effort and activity in the first place. It's the WHY, after all, that inspires action, that galvanizes people and keeps them going when the going gets tough. Embodying our WHYs and effectively communicating them to anyone who will listen, asserts Sinek, is crucial to both personal and business success. "People don't buy WHAT you do," Sinek explains. "They buy WHY you do it." Sinek underscores his argument with profiles of leaders and companies that have won employee, partner and customer loyalty by operating according to a pattern he calls The Golden Circle (picture a simple target with a bulls-eye of WHY, surrounded by a center ring of HOW and an outer ring of WHAT). He explains how each of us can achieve greater success and satisfaction by inspiring others through a shared sense of purpose — as opposed to more commonly used tactics of coercion and manipulation. "If you follow your WHY," writes Sinek, "others will follow you." It's a refreshing redefinition of what constitutes true leadership, and a great tool for re-infusing your own work with purpose-centered passion.

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### ScienceOfSuccess says

TL;DR

The author wants us to communicate from the inside of the golden circle, not from the outside of it. He believes that people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

"People don't do business with everyone who has what they need. They do business with people who believe in the same thing they believe in."

more @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6Eui...>

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## Sean Gibson says

Me: "I'll take 'Books That Should Have Been Long Articles or Essays Instead of Books' for \$500, please, Alex."

Alex Trebek: "This book takes hundreds of pages, including at least 4,398 references to how great Apple is, to make a fairly simple (albeit important) point, and was likely written by someone from the Department of Redundancy Department."

Me: "What is 'Start With Why'?"

The idea at the core of this book—that successful companies can clearly articulate WHY they are in business (beyond making profit) rather than just being able to describe WHAT they do and HOW they do it—is a compelling one. It's helped me think about how my team operates in the context of our firm, and how our firm defines its own value proposition.

But, I don't think I needed 250+ pages to get me to that point. 25 probably would have been sufficient.

Contrary to popular belief, my time is valuable, people! It's not just going to waste itself, you know.

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## Jurgen Appelo says

One good point, offered with endless repetition, extreme oversimplification, and annoying inconsistencies, in a bad writing style.

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## Jesse Field says

Stuart Sinek gave a really great TED Talk that summarizes the argument of this book: when we get caught up in the details of HOW and WHAT we are working on, it is very easy to forget WHY we are doing it.

For example, at the turn of the 20th century, the Wright brothers were trying to build something that would fly with no support and very little money of their own. Meanwhile, Samuel Pierpont Langley was given full government subsidy to solve the problem of flight. But the Wright brothers got their first and Langley didn't. How so? "They were pursuing the same goal, but only the Wright brothers were able to inspire those around them and truly lead their team to develop a technology that would change the world. Only the Wright brothers started with Why."

"Why" here means not the motivating factors, but the "passion" to succeed, directed at some measurable activity. As A. mentioned, this is an argument a serial killer would use to get the idea that he was doing the right thing by being the best serial killer he could be (and damn the world for doubting his passions!). It is an amoral, ethics-free system for thinking about enterprise.

Token mention of Martin Luther King aside, most examples in this book refer to the enterprise of coming up with products to sell: iPhones, TiVo, Harley-Davidson. It's as if all great tasks in life are things we sell each other, from motorcycles to social justice. That's a profound thought, and not one I can either accept or deny at the moment. Is spreading justice a matter of salesmanship? As a teacher I respond immediately with "yes," but as a researcher and a devoted reader I remember, out at the edge of my mind, that there is something to life besides sales. There's something else, a need to connect with others, a drive to help, to add to the world, that isn't covered here.

The style of the book is short, blockish sentences. Clearly it is written so that even people with short attention spans will be engrossed. This works better in speech than in print. Overall, I'd say the TED talk is a far more successful product than the book.

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### Abo Ahmad says

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### Mehrsa says

Have you ever noticed that books written for entrepreneurs or other tech-bros love to write about Shackleton? Am I the only one who thinks the dude put himself and his crew in a pickle and then gets lauded for getting them out of the self-imposed pickle? Anyway, they also love to talk about the Wright brothers and Steve Jobs.

The thing with these books is that they can't prove that these people succeeded because they had a WHY. In fact, I've seen those stories used to prove a whole bunch of different things. I mean Robert Greene uses each of those stories like 5 times in his Encyclopedias of Being an Asshole for Techbros. There is a lot of luck

involved and there are lots of other market factors and just plain numbers. So how do we know that Southwest succeeded because they had a why and then it failed because they lost their why? I mean, there are HBS studies on southwest and none of them mention the golden circle, but they do talk about stuff that matters like competition, etc? As Karl Popper said--the scientific method requires that a hypothesis be disproved. This one cannot be. And so you're going to have a bunch of failed Shackleton and Jobs wannabes out there looking for their why and blaming their failure on not finding it as opposed to say, the coming tech bubble.

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### **Henry Manampiring says**

DON'T WASTE TIME READING THIS. WATCH THE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE INSTEAD.

I was lured by this book because of Sinek's TED video. Great video and idea, and I should have stopped there.

I feel that the book can be cut by 75% without losing its message. What's really annoying is the overuse of Apple as a example. Like, really? There are other examples in the book, the massive use of Apple story is just irritating.

Borrow the book and skim through it. But it is not worth buying. Watch the TED video for free instead.

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### **Jason Boling says**

Using selective facts or analogies to suit an assertion, gratuitous statements often contradicting other assertions, and selective use of parts of a bigger story while conveniently overlooking others in the same context are among the reasons why I found this book to be of no value in leadership development. The author works backwards in that he has a belief in his view of what makes great leaders and selects biased or incomplete data or uses unsubstantiated hyperbole to set about making the case for that view. It is easy and academically lazy to decide what you believe and then to set about finding examples of supporting evidence while simultaneously omitting examples of things from those same sources which would contradict the view you are attempting to convince the reader is valuable. The only real benefit I can see to this book is seeing how using management speak and lazy manipulation of data can let one manager or business person sell to another. For the rest of us who are the actual customers of the companies the author uses as examples, this is at best detached and at worst condescending popular psychology without the merit of peer review. Your money is better spent reading "You Are Not So Smart." Even the editing is poor. For example, the last time I checked, data was plural and the author refers often to "the data" as if it is singular. It is, start to finish, lazy hyperbole and more of the same fist bumping "you're number one baby" so called "leadership" slang that business people often spout to one another to convince themselves how masterful they are at understanding the customer and what it is they need to hear. This is almost surrealistic in its similarity to "The Emperor Has No Clothes." How can anyone buy in to this meaningless chatter?

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### **Lili Manolache says**

Simon Sinek describes in his book "Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" how leaders and companies should work as a series of circles, i.e. "The Golden Circle" - the why, how, and

what. This idea explains why organizations and leaders inspire the others. Everybody knows what they do, some know how they do it, very few people know why they do what they do. The way we communicate, think and act is very easy: we go from the clear things we know to the more fuzzy ones. The WHY theory gives us the ability to communicate why we are doing certain things, helps entrepreneurs take better decisions, as well as individuals in the every day life.

All in all, the most important fact Simon Sinek is trying to point out is that the way something is communicated must be believed in, explained, and people accept it for themselves, because THEY believe in it. It is a very inspiring, enlightening and insightful book that I would recommend to anyone!

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## Loy Machedo says

Loy Machedo's Book Review – Start With Why by Simon Sinek

TED Talks is an incredible platform for someone to either make it or break it. And in the case of Simon Sinek, the 5 Million plus views he received on his talk not only must have catapulted him to the 'Management Guru' status, it also ensured his book became a New York Time Best Seller.

But here let me surprise you – The book is Great and then the Author & Book Publisher Mess it up badly.

Lets start with the fundamentals.

What made Simon Sinek famous?

It was his 20 minute TED Talk.

And obviously, for those who have spoken on the TED Talks stage, you are not allowed to speak beyond your allotted time. Tony Robbins was the only exception to this rule as he very intelligently saved the best story for the last – and then got his extra few minutes of fame.

So in the case of Simon, in those amazing 20 minutes, he not only impressed the audience with the simplicity and powerful message, he created a fan follower. The examples were of Apple, The Wright Brothers and Martin Luther King were used.

I became his instant fan after the video and that is why I was desperately waiting to get my hands on the book.

Now the book goes down the same path with a few more examples – Sam Walton of Walmart, Herb Kellerman of SouthWest Airlines and Bill Gates of Microsoft. But this is where he goofs it up. He repeats the same examples and phrase "People don't buy what you do they buy why you do it" so many times, you become sick of it. For instance, if he would pay you a dollar for every time he repeated that phrase, I think you could buy yourself 3 copies of the same book.

I remembered the overly used example (I think it was a Chicken Soup for the Soul – please correct me if you do find the right reference) – The example where a Priest roused the congregation to donate money for the new building. The author immediately took out a dollar from his pocket – which was quite a lot for those days. And as he held on to that dollar waiting for the collectors to come and collect the money, the priest went on bombarding the audience with his oratory. And he went on so long, that finally, when the collectors came, he had irritated the audience so much, the author in anger, took out money from the collectors box instead of putting the money in.

This is exactly the effect Simon Sinek had on me. He irritated the bananas out of my head.

So overall, what would I say?

Simon's book is a Good book with a Great Sugary Concept. However, too much of Sugar is bad for taste and health. So, if you can bear an overdose of sugar for once in your life, go ahead and buy this book. However, if you just want a gist of the book, watch his TED Talks video. That's about it.

Overall Rating

10 out of 10 if he didn't repeat himself so madly.

7 out of 10 because of his continuous blabber, fluff and unwanted number of extra words.

Loy Machedo

loymachedo.com

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## **Avolyn Fisher says**

I am only on page 90 and this book is driving me nuts. I usually don't review a book or make a comment before I have finished reading it but I have to get this off of my chest so I can power through the rest.

First of all, I agree 100% with Sinek in that a company has to have an established vision and mission in which the company culture hinges upon with a unified purpose. I believe that it is important to hold yourself and your company to an ethical standard. However, beyond that I think Sinek was a little misguided in weaving together the fabric of his theory.

First of all, his examples seemed a little far fetched, he mentions countless successful companies and individuals and says that they succeeded because of his theory without presenting any substantial examples or evidence to make the connection between them and his theory. It's as if he said "These people were successful because they were able to get off of the couch and do it. You can't be successful without getting started" - ok that isn't what Sinek says but the concept and theory of his book is so vague and loosely tied together that it feels like a similar sentiment.

Second of all, business is not emotional. Yes, if I worked at a children's hospital or if I managed an animal rescue it might be a different case, but in many professional settings our emotions have to be checked at the door. And even at a children's hospital or an animal rescue I feel you would have to check your emotions when it came to working with others. Sinek mentions that you shouldn't work with people you don't like and for many of us, the reality is that we will encounter people we don't like. We will encounter people who have different beliefs than us. That doesn't mean we can't work together and be successful and I would argue that the ability to get along and work with others who have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs than you, is key to being successful and being a leader at work. Even his comments about moving to another city were driving me crazy. I moved from Des Moines, IA to California last year and I can tell you that people who live in different cities and states are more alike than we think and I don't think it's simply because we're "American" and we fit into "American Culture" I feel that it's because most people are good, want to do good, and are good at heart. The people who are bad or don't have the best interest of others at heart are few and far between and I have learned that if you believe in the good of others and make a conscious effort to be a positive person and a positive force, you can get along with almost anyone. It's not a "cultural" thing, it's a "respect" thing.

We will see if I can power through the rest of this book ---- I'd probably have abandoned this one if I weren't reading it for a book club at my office.

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Yup, couldn't do it. Life is too short, abandoned this one.

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## Jeff says

Simon Sinek presents a compelling vision of how companies, organizations, and individuals can achieve success. His simple message? Start with why. Which is to say the guiding principle of our endeavors should be based not on what we do or how we do it, but rather on why we do it. According to Sinek, those agencies that can effectively articulate their "why" (or purpose) are most likely to develop loyal followers and long term success.

Sounds great Jeff, so why just two stars? Well, there's a number of reasons. First, the redundancy of Sinek's message played a role. I'm not sure I got much more out of the book than I'd gotten previously from his 18:00 minute TEDtalk. Second, Sinek overreaches a bit when he tries to connect his Golden Circle to both our brain structure and the Golden Ratio. I understand the intent ("See? This is universal! This is big picture stuff! The fabric of the universe!") I just find these connections suspect at best and specious at worst. Finally, the evidence Sinek presents is all very anecdotal. Sinek provides maybe a dozen or so examples (from Henry V to MLK Jr to Apple), but really just focuses on a few cases that neatly fit the narrative of success he's constructed. And that narrative? Well as Andy points out in his review (<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>), it's all a bit circular. Apple is successful because they start with why. How can we tell they start with why? Simple, it's because they're successful!

Addendum: Here's a link to Sinek's TEDtalk: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6kbcE...> And in fairness there were a few other nuggets in the book worth considering. I appreciated the discussion concerning the idea that "What gets measured gets done". I also thought the distinction between achievement and success was helpful.

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