

Start with Why by Simon Sinek: a summary by Katie Boyer Clark

A book that answers the question: How do great leaders inspire others to take action? The answer: they know their Why.

A business or leader that does not have a clear sense of their own Why, will be forced to manipulate customers with pricing, features, service, fear, peer pressure, and aspirational messages; which forces a continuous cycle of lower prices, rebates, and new features. It forces companies to treat their products as commodities. Manipulations are expensive. Manipulations encourage short term decision making which leads to the collapse of the system. They lead to sales, but not to loyalty. "Loyalty is when people are willing to pay more or be inconvenienced in order to work with you."

"Why, is the belief. How, is the action. Whats, are the result of those actions." What we do is easy to identify, and many can identify how we do it; very few can articulate their Why – that is, their purpose, cause or belief. Companies like Apple, leaders like Martin Luther King, start with their Why (Think Different, I have a Dream) and thus are able to inspire loyalty. "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." What you do, serves as proof of your cause. Everything you do, should demonstrate your why.

Our desire to belong is what compels us. It is our main motivation. When a Why is clearly communicated, and we believe what they believe, then we will go to great lengths to include them in our lives because they become symbols of what we hold dear. They make us feel that we belong. They give people a way to tell the outside world who they are.

The part of our brain that controls decision making, has no capacity for language. When companies or leaders fail to communicate their Why, we are forced to make decisions based on empirical evidence, leaving us to overthink, and then feel undecided. "When our decisions feel right, we are willing to pay a premium, or suffer inconvenience for those products or services." We are sure of our decision, and the ability to justify our choices comes naturally.

A successful leader focuses on the people who believe what they believe. This is authenticity. This is when trust emerges. We do better in cultures where we are good fits, and we must find people who believe what we believe to move forward. Find those who are passionate about your Why; give them something to believe in and they will share it. Try to appeal to everyone; and you have lost your why, and your authenticity. Try to appeal to everyone, and you appeal to no one.

For every great leader who is able to inspire with Why, there is an inspired How group which actually makes things happen. "The leader imagines the destination, the How types find the route to get there. A destination without a route leads to meandering... a route without a destination, may be efficient, but to what end?" Most organizations that have inspired people or done great things, have a special partnership between Why and How. When the Why and the How are clearly stated, it acts as a filter for decision making. When What you do proves Why you do it, it is easy to show the outside world what you believe.

"To change the world takes the support of all those who believe."

*All quotes are from Start With Why