LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Start with Why

by Simon Sinek

People do not buy what you do - they buy why you do it. Start with the cause, and the sales follow.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **People don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it.**

The book's central line. Your product is only proof of your belief - the cause is what earns fans who stay, pay more, and spread the word.

02 **Great leaders work from the inside out: WHY first, then HOW, then WHAT.**

The Golden Circle. And your WHY is a purpose or belief, never money - profit is a result, not a reason to exist.

03 **There are only two ways to move people: manipulate them or inspire them.**

Price cuts, promotions, fear, peer pressure, and hype all work - briefly. Manipulations buy transactions; not a single one of them breeds loyalty.

04 **Feelings decide before words can explain.**

The limbic brain, where WHY lands, runs trust, loyalty, and gut decisions but has no language. That is why the right choice often just feels right.

05 **Apple doesn't sell computers. It sells 'challenge the status quo.'**

Because Apple leads with its WHY, the same believers happily buy its computers, phones, and music players alike. The products change; the belief doesn't.

06 **King said 'I have a dream,' not 'I have a plan.'**

A quarter of a million people came to Washington for a belief they shared - no website, no invitations. A clear WHY gathers people on its own.

07 **Run every decision through the celery test.**

If you believe in healthy living, the celery goes in the cart and the junk stays on the shelf. When your WHY is clear, what fits and what doesn't becomes obvious.

08 **Trust can't be bought. It grows between people who believe the same thing.**

No discount or ad campaign can manufacture it. When everything you say and do proves the same WHY, people feel they can rely on you.

09 **Don't chase the majority. Win the believers first.**

The Law of Diffusion: innovators and early adopters move on belief and gut instinct. Only after they reach about 15-18% does the majority follow and the idea tips.

10 **Every vision needs a builder: WHY-people need HOW-people.**

Jobs had the vision, Wozniak made it real. Walt Disney dreamed, his brother Roy built. Find the partner whose strength is your missing half.

11 **Success, not failure, is what blurs your WHY.**

As the WHAT grows - money, size, sales - the cause that started it all goes fuzzy, and the mission drifts. Walmart lost its way after Sam Walton, the keeper of its WHY, was gone.

12 **Your WHY is discovered, not invented - and it's found looking backward.**

A WHY comes from your story: the experiences and people that shaped you. You can't brainstorm one in a marketing meeting; you uncover it from your past.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Sinek opens with a choice: there are only two ways to influence human behavior - manipulate it or inspire it. Most companies manipulate: they drop prices, run promotions, use fear, peer pressure, and claims of novelty. Manipulations work, but every one of them produces transactions, not loyalty. Almost every organization can explain what it does; very few can say why it exists.

The alternative is the Golden Circle: WHY at the center (your purpose, cause, or belief), then HOW you act on it, then WHAT you sell. Most people communicate from the outside in. Inspiring leaders and companies go inside out - and Sinek argues this is biology, not opinion. The neocortex handles facts, features, and language - the WHAT. The limbic brain handles feelings like trust and loyalty and drives decisions, but it has no capacity for language. That is why gut decisions feel right before we can explain them, and why a clear WHY beats a feature list.

The proof comes in stories. Apple leads with 'we believe in challenging the status quo,' so its believers buy whatever it makes. Martin Luther King Jr. galvanized a movement by sharing a dream, not a plan. And the Wright brothers, funded out of their bicycle shop, beat Samuel Langley - who had money, press, and a dream team - because they were chasing a cause while he was chasing fame and riches.

Movements then spread by the Law of Diffusion of Innovations: the innovators and early adopters who share your belief move first, and only at about 15-18% adoption does an idea tip into the mainstream. Trust emerges among people who believe the same thing, and a cause needs both WHY-people to imagine it and HOW-people to build it. The operating rules are clarity of WHY, discipline of HOW, and consistency of WHAT - with the celery test as the filter: if it doesn't fit your WHY, it doesn't go in the cart.

The warning: the biggest challenge is success. As WHAT grows, the WHY tends to go fuzzy - Sinek's 'split' - and companies like Walmart drifted once their founders were gone. The fix is to protect the WHY, and to know where it comes from: a WHY is discovered, not invented, found by looking back at the story that made you who you are.

DO THIS WEEK

Find your WHY by looking backward, not brainstorming: write down three moments in your life when you felt most proud or most alive, and find the thread that connects them. Turn it into one sentence: 'I exist to ___ so that ___.' Then take one message you send often - a pitch, a post, a bio - and rewrite it to start with the WHY before the WHAT. Run every big choice this week through the celery test.

Start with Why by Simon Sinek, first published 2009. If you sell, lead, or post anything, this book changes the first sentence of everything you make.