

Technology Transformation Team (T3) Meeting – March 20, 2017

The Golden Circle of Why

I thought it would be insightful if I shared some of the highlights from Simon Sinek's book Start With Why.

All inspiring leaders have something in common. They inspire from **the golden circle of why**. This explains why some people can inspire and others can't. Every organization or person knows what they do. Most know how they do it. But most don't know why. They don't know their purpose. They haven't defined their cause. They don't communicate from their beliefs. He asks the question, why do you exist? Why do you get out of bed in the morning and why should anyone care?

- How we think, how we communicate, how we act, is usually from the outside in. We go from the clearest thing to the fuzziest thing. Inspired people all think and act from the *inside out*. That is where **the golden circle of why** is.
- He talks about Apple computers as an example. If Apple were like other companies they would say, we make great computers that are easy to use, do you want to buy one? Most companies say what they do and how they do it. This is uninspiring. This is what Apple says. They start with why. For example Apple says, in everything we do, we challenge the status quo. We believe in thinking differently (why). The way we challenge the status quo is that our products are beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly (how). We just happen to make great computers (what). Do you want to buy one? When you are communicating your ideas, reverse the order. Start with why. People don't buy what you do, they buy *why you do it*. The goal is not to do inspire people with what you have or can do. The goal is to inspire people with what you believe. If you talk about what you believe, you will attract those that believe what you believe.
- He talks about these concepts of what, how, and why as grounded in the tenants of psychology. The human brain is broken into 3 major components that correlate with the golden circle. Our neocortex corresponds at the what and how level which is responsible for all of our rational and analytical thought and language. The why section makes up our limbic brains, which is responsible for all of our feelings like trust and loyalty. It is responsible for all decision making and has no capacity for language. When we communicate from the outside in people understand vast amounts of information like features and facts. But that doesn't drive behavior. When we communicate from the inside out we are talking directly to the side of the brain that controls behavior. This is where gut decision making comes from.

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- Sometimes you can give someone all of the facts and figures but it just doesn't feel right. The part of the brain that controls decision making (the why) doesn't control language. Sometimes the best you can muster up is that it just doesn't feel right. Sometimes we say we are leading with our heart. That is when we are using the why in our limbic brain.
- If you don't know why you do what you do then how can you expect other people to believe in you? How can you expect them to be loyal and be part of what you do? The goal is not to inspire people with what you have. The goal is to inspire people to believe what you believe. At work, the goal is not to hire people that need a job. The goal is to hire people that believe what you believe. If they believe you, they will work for you with their blood, sweat, and tears.
- I love the example that he used about the Wright brothers versus Samuel Langley. He talked about Langley having everything he needed to be successful at inventing the first airplane. He was commercially funded. He had all the money in the world. He had the smartest people with all the engineering degrees imaginable, working on the invention. The Wright brothers had nothing. They had no money, no education, and no commercial backing. The difference was they were driven by a cause and a purpose. They believed if they could figure out how to fly the airplane, they could change the course of the world. Langley wanted to be rich and he wanted to be famous. He was in pursuit of the result. The people that worked for the Wright brothers worked with their blood sweat and tears. Langley's staff worked for the paycheck. Finally the Wright brothers were successful and no one even knew it until several days later. Langley was motivated by the wrong thing. The day the Wright brothers took flight, he quit. He could have said to the Wright brothers that had made an amazing accomplishment and work to improve their technology. Be he didn't. He didn't get first, he didn't get rich, and he didn't get famous - so he quit. He wasn't inspired by his why.
- He talked about the law of diffusion innovation. The first 2.5% of the population are innovators. The next 13.5% are early adopters. The next 34% are the early majority. Then the next 34% are the majority and the remaining 16% is the laggards. We all sit on the scale of diffusion innovation at different times. The market tells us if we want mass market success of an idea, we can't have it unless you achieve a tipping point between 15%-18% of market penetration. Then the system tips because the early majority will not try something until others have tried it first. The innovators and early adopters are comfortable going first because they are comfortable making gut decisions. They are intuitive about going with what they believe about the world and not just what product is available. These are people that wait in line to buy an iphone or an xbox because they want to be first when they could have waited until the next week and bought one off the shelf. They didn't do it because the technology was so great. They did it for themselves. What you do simply proves what you believe.

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- He talked about the example of unsuccessful marketing of TiVo. TiVo is the highest quality DVR system in the industry. The market was right. The product was right. Their funding was right. But, they were a huge commercial failure. They have never made money. When TiVo launched their product they talked about what their product did. They said we have a product that pauses live TV, skips commercials, rewinds TV, and memorizes your viewing habits without you even asking. The majority of people said we don't believe you. We don't need it. We don't like it. We won't buy it. He turns it around and said, what if they had said, if you are the kind of person that likes to have total control over every aspect of your life boy do we have a product for you. It pauses live TV. It skips commercials. Memorizes your viewing habits. Do you want to buy one? If TiVo would have inspired from the why, they most likely would have been successful. People aren't inspired by what you do, they are inspired by why you need it (people like to have total control of their time). We do what we do because of why we believe it.
- The last example I'll reference from his book is Martin Luther King when 250,000 people showed up in Washington DC in August 1963. They all came to listen to his I have a dream speech. They sent out no invitations. There wasn't any social media to publicize the event. Dr. King wasn't the only man in America that was a great orator. The difference was that he had a gift. He didn't go around telling people what they needed to do to change in America. He went around telling them what he believed. He told people, I believe, I believe, I believe..... People that believed what he believed embraced him and formed structures to support him. That is how Dr. King gained momentum. That is why the right people showed up on the right day at the right time to hear him speak. They showed up because of what they believed about America. It wasn't about black vs. white because 25% of the audience was white. Dr. King believed there were two types of laws. Those that are made by a higher authority and those that are made by man. And not until the laws made by man are consistent with those that are made by a higher authority will we live in a just world. That was his why. It just happened that the civil rights movement helped him bring his cause, his why, to light. People followed him because they believed what he believed. He gave the I have a dream speech not I have a plan speech.
- Listen to any true leader. Those that are inspiring don't talk about what or how. They talk about what they believe and why they believe it. There are those that are leaders and those that lead. Leaders hold a position of power or authority. Those that lead inspire us. We follow those who lead not because we have to but because we want to. We follow those who lead not for them but for ourselves because we are empowered by their why. It is those that start with why that have the ability to inspire those around them!

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- Successful people find an intersection between their natural talent and their personal passion. Civil rights leader Howard Thurmon wrote, “Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive, then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said, ‘He who has a why can endure any how.’

What is our why?

Why do we want to be the district that transforms education?

