

INSPIRE RESULTS

— Business Coaching —

Finding Your Why* Tool

What's *your* WHY? In his book Start With Why, Simon Sinek explains it this way... All the great and inspiring leaders of the world think and act the same way...they lead with their WHY and follow with their HOW and WHAT.

Organizations all know, and can well describe, WHAT they do and HOW they do it. But people don't buy WHAT you do or HOW you do it; *they buy WHY you do it*. They buy your purpose, your cause, why you get up in the morning, why your organization exists.

It explains why some organizations are able to inspire and others do not. Organizations all know, and can well describe WHAT they do. And they can typically describe well HOW they do it. But they don't typically describe their WHY well, and usually don't describe it at all. Sinek uses Apple as a prime example of a company that led with their WHY.

Apple could market by saying, "We sell great computers! (WHAT) They're beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly (HOW). Want to buy one?" Or, "Here's our new law firm. We have the best lawyers with the biggest clients. Call us today." Or "Here's our new car. It gets great gas mileage and has leather seats. Buy our car." But these are uninspiring.

Apple sells by saying, "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently (WHY). We challenge the status quo by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly (HOW). We just happen to make great computers (WHAT). Want to buy one?" All they did was reverse the order. We all know that Apple developed and still has a large force of extremely devoted followers.

Instead of just selling to people who need what you sell, the goal is to sell to people who believe what you believe.

Your WHY can be applied to your marketing, your sales, your employee communications, and to your hiring. The goal is not do business with everyone who needs what you have. The goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe. The goal is to hire people who believe what you believe and get them to follow you faithfully.

Why are you in business?

To make money? For independence? To be your own boss? While these are common motivations among small and mid-size business owners, they don't define your WHY. Your WHY defines your purpose. It is what your organization stands for. It reflects the values you bring to the world and what the world values most about you.

Your WHY is often a reason larger than yourself. For example, our WHY, our reason and purpose for being in business, is driven by a passion to help business owners solve their challenges so they can create stronger businesses and, in turn, stronger communities today and for the future.

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Knowing your WHY and communicating to others is a key servant leadership practice. Identifying your WHY focuses and drives you, your business activities and your employees. It requires some soul searching, but the benefits are well worth the effort.

Your business WHY and your personal WHY are connected

Your soul searching should start with YOU. It's hard, if not impossible, to discover your business' WHY without understanding your own personal WHY. You probably started your business based on some personal desire, trait, or skill. Your business has meaning for you beyond just making money and it is connected to your personal desires, personality, and talent.

What is your purpose in life? Why were you put on this earth? What were you meant to do or be? Rick Warren says that in order to know the purpose of something, you must ask its creator. In his book, The Purpose Driven Life, he states that you cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your creator. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. The book is a blueprint for discovering God's purpose for your life and we highly recommend it

A list of questions to get you to your WHY

Your WHY isn't something you create. You discover it. Sinek says it's fully formed by the time you're 14 - 20.

At Inspire Results Business Coaching, we've had the best success by asking clients to identify an "inflection point" in their lives during this age range. For IRBC owner, Roger Engelau, at age 14 he saw a smart, capable relative choose to take the easy path in life rather than to push to become the best they could be. He recalls being disappointed in that cousin, a disappointment that, looking back, had a profound impact on his life. He chose to take all college level courses in high school against the advice of his guidance counselor who said that he had shown no ability to handle that level of coursework to date. Nevertheless, Roger took those courses, finished near the top of his class and won an appointment to West Point. He is now working full time to help clients achieve their highest potential.

An "inflection point" is the point of a curve at which a change in the direction of curvature occurs. In your search for your Why, it's a time of significant change in a situation; a turning point, a point at which your life changes direction.

The longer you live, the more data points you have to find patterns. Once Roger identified his WHY, he was able to see that the decisions he had made and the work he had done were consistently made with potential in mind. It is like looking over a range of mountains and seeing a number of peaks heading back to the horizon. You can use those "peaks" to help you identify your WHY. The questions below will help you.

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Here are questions and activities to help you discover your WHY. Find a quiet or favorite spot, get a single sheet of paper, and ponder, brainstorm, and record answers to these questions. Or if you're an extravert, talk them out with someone.

It's important to jot all your answers and discoveries on a single sheet of paper (unlined so you can be creative). Then at the end, you can step back, look for patterns, determine the highest priority items, and ultimately form them into single statement of your Why.

- 1 Why do you do what you do? For the sake of what...? For whatever your answer, follow-up with the question, Why is that important? For whatever that answer, again ask, Why is that important? Repeat 2 or 3 more times.
- 2 List a few times when you were your happiest. What were you doing?
- 3 Think of times when you were oblivious to the passing of time; what were you doing?
- 4 What are your interests? What do you crave to spend time doing?
- 5 What cause or issue can get you on a soap box?
- 6 What cause or issue touches your heart every time you hear about it?
- 7 What excites you in the world? List 2 or 3 things.
- 8 What angers you in the world? List 2 or 3 things.
- 9 When you were a kid, what did you say you wanted to be when you grew up?
- 10 What did you do for fun as a kid? What were your favorite toys?
- 11 What came particularly easy for you as a child?
- 12 When you were in high school, what did you consider your dream job to be? List all the possible things that come to mind. Your values can effect this. For example, my wife would say Broadway singer and interior designer but when she lists her values of family and local community, interior designer fits more closely.
- 13 What are your values. You can use page 3 to work through a Values Ranking exercise.
- 14 What do you do best? What are your strengths?
- 15 When people say, "Oh, you're so good at _____," how do they complete the sentence?
- 16 Think of times when someone has been genuinely helped by something you've done. What did you
- 17 do? At those times when you're certain you're good at whatever it is that you're doing, what are you
- 18 doing? Write down at least 20 talents you've been given, then rank them High—Medium—Low.
- 19 What are 2 or 3 talents you have?
- 20 Write down what others say your strengths are.

*Simon Sinek [Start With Why](#)

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Consider these 3 questions from Jim Collins' Hedgehog Concept. The concept results from the juncture of the answers to these 3 questions:

- 21 What are you passionate about?
- 22 What can you be the best at?
- 23 What can actually make you a living?

Finally, determine your top 5 values. You can do this by completing the Inspire Results Rank Your Values Tool (on the Resources page of www.InspireResults.com). Write them on your single sheet of paper.

Now that you've got all your responses onto a single sheet of paper, you've got a lot of information about yourself. Step back and study. What patterns emerge? Circle the top 5 – 10 pieces of information that seem most important. Form them into a sentence, no more than two. Here are some sentence starters:

"I believe..."

or

"I envision a world..."

or

"We work to..."

People often find that what the statement they create is quite different than what they expected. You can always take out those opening words later, if you want. This is not the place for long-winded descriptions about what your company does or its value to the world. Leave what you sell out of it. This is a statement of your purpose, your WHY, not what you do. It should resonate with you, your employees, and customers alike. You have one WHY, not one for customers and a different one used internally with employees. My Why:

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Single Sheet for Notes