

INSPIRE RESULTS

— Business Coaching —

Finding Your Why* Tool

What is Your Why?

Knowing your 'why' can be one of the most profound discoveries of your lifetime. Many people never take the time to discover it and for others, it's obvious. For most of us, we must think back, dig into our pasts, look for lightbulb moments and patterns. But when we uncover our why, it's as if the clouds part, the sun breaks through, and we couldn't stop ourselves, our businesses, and our lives from soaring high, even if we tried. Your why is there inside you waiting to be freed to do what it does best—take your hand and show you the way to clarity, productivity, abundance, and joy.

We take the idea of your 'why' from Simon Sinek's book [Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action](#). As always, we've modified the process for business owners.

Your why is a statement of your core passion. 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. Your why might be a phrase or a sentence or two that describe the emotional core of why you do what you do, the driving force in your life. Your WHY is your purpose.

The typical business owner can easily describe WHAT your company does and HOW you do it. But, as Sinek says, people don't buy WHAT you do or HOW you do it; *they buy WHY you do it*. They buy your purpose, your cause, your why-you-get-up-in-the-morning. It explains why some organizations inspire and others do not. Sinek uses Apple as an example of a company that led with their WHY. Apple could market by saying, "We sell great computers (their WHAT). They're beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly (their HOW)." But that would be uninspiring. Instead, Apple sells by saying, "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently (their WHY). The result, unlike other computer companies, is a large force of extremely devoted Apple followers.

You probably started your business based on a personal desire, trait, or skill. However, there's likely a deeper reason behind the energy, time, and sometimes money you pour into your business. If we ask you why you are in business, not unlike most of us business owners, you'd say, 'to make money' or 'to be my own boss' or 'I'm good at this or at that and I wanted to do it my way.' Those, however, would not be your why. Those are your motivations. Why you *started* your business is not your why. Your business has meaning for you beyond just making money. That's where finding your why comes in.

Your why becomes apparent as you grow up and as you grow your business. Instead of just selling to people who need what you sell or hiring people who need a job, your reason becomes larger, loftier, and more inspiring... to sell to people and hire people who believe what you believe.

Your Company's Why

As the owner of the business, the company's why and your why are one and the same. While we often advocate for getting the input of your key leaders in order to get the best of all minds and to get buy-in, in the case of the why, the company's why is the owner's why.

Your core passion is the engine for your personal life and your business life. It is the lifeblood of your character and as a part of your company culture it's the foundation for every decision you make and every action you take.

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How to Discover Your Why

Your why isn't something you create; you discover it. It usually takes some digging, some soul-searching. Sinek says it's fully formed by the time you're 14 - 20. With concentrated effort you can probably discover it in an hour or two.

When we work with an owner to find their why, we start by looking back to your teens and early 20's. What we're looking for is an *inflection point*. An inflection point is the point of a curve at which a change in the direction of curvature occurs. It's a time of significant change; a turning point, a point at which your life changes direction. We ask you about your high school years—what were they like for you? What interested you? Bored you? Was there an incident, a comment, or a realization that changed your direction? It could be a comment made by a parent or teacher that, looking back, changed how you viewed your future. We ask you the same questions about your college years or post-high school years. We look for patterns or dichotomies or conflicting points. We almost always find that your inflection point isn't something you were aware of before you made a deliberate effort to find it. It surfaces only with the perspective that comes from looking back upon it years later.

For Roger, at age 14 he looked up to a smart, capable cousin who chose 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 the choices he made for 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. Nevertheless, Roger took those courses, finished near the top of his class and won an appointment to West Point. His why is helping business owners achieve their highest potential.

Some people *just know* what their why is. For others, their why isn't so obvious. Most of us must conduct a search for our why. You'll find lots of advice on ways to find your why. The process you use to find your why will be as individual and unique as your why itself.

For that reason, we developed a "cafeteria style process" that offers a smorgasbord of questions that work well for business owners working to discover their why. The questions accommodate various learning and thinking styles. Since your why is formed between ages 14 to 20, the questions start by asking you about your current life and then jump back in time and ask about your childhood and growing up years, ending with the "million dollar" question about your inflection point. It may not be necessary for you to answer every question.

Choose the questions that work best for you though we encourage you to answer most all of them. If you have an extraverted preference, try talking out your answers with a trusted partner. If your interaction style preference is introverted, reflecting alone in your favorite chair and favorite cup of tea may work best. We've seen great success using a business coach to ask the questions and listen deeply to the answers and assist in identifying dichotomies and patterns. If it's a business coach who is familiar with your background, work, struggles, personality, etc., even better as they can use that knowledge to apply to the search.

Operating with a clear why promises profound benefits personally and for your business especially for business owners.

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Get some paper and ponder, reflect, brainstorm, and write down your discoveries. If you write all your answers on a single sheet of paper, you can more easily step back and examine the data for dichotomies and patterns. The idea is to look for connections between your past and your present choices and decisions.

1. List a few times when you were happiest. What were you doing?
2. Think of times when you were oblivious to the passing of time; i.e. in flow, what were you doing?
3. What are your interests? What do you crave to spend time doing?
4. What cause or issue can get you on a soap box?
5. What cause or issue touches your heart every time you hear about it?
6. What excites you in the world? List 2 or 3 things.
7. What angers you in the world? List 2 or 3 things.
8. What are your top 3-5 values. You can use Inspire Results Values Ranking Tool.
9. What do you do best? What are your strengths?
10. When people say, “Oh, you’re so good at _____,” how do they complete the sentence?
11. Think of times when someone’s been genuinely helped by something you’ve done. What did you do?
12. At those times when you’re confident at what you’re doing, what are you doing?
13. Write down 20 talents you’ve been given, then rank them High—Medium—Low.
14. Why do you do what you do? For the sake of what...? For whatever your answer, ask yourself, ‘Why is that important?’ For whatever that answer, again ask, Why is that important? Repeat 2 or 3 more times.

Next, let’s explore your past with the goal of identifying your inflection point.

15. What did you do for fun as a kid? What were your favorite toys and games?
16. When you were a kid, what did you say you wanted to be when you grew up?
17. What came particularly easy for you as a child?

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18. What were your high school years like? What bored you? Interested you? What subjects did you get good grades in? Bad grades?
19. When you were in high school, what did you consider your dream job(s) to be? List all the possible things that come to mind.
20. What were your post high school or college years like? Did you have a plan? What were your goals? Did you achieve them? What got in the way of your goals? What fell into your lap?
21. What was your first real job? Your second or third? What did you enjoy? Not enjoy?
22. Was there a turning point around high school, post high school, college, or during that first job after school time period, a point where your life changed direction, where you began to get traction, where you found your “tribe” or community, where things began to fall into place for you, when you began to experience success? It could’ve been a positive or a negative comment by a teacher or parent, a positive or a negative incident, a realization that you were doing or weren’t doing what you wanted to do. It might’ve been a decision you saw someone else make that caused you to draw a conclusion about your own future.

Now that you’ve got all your responses on 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 “My why is...”

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Notes