



Read2Lead

Start with Why by Simon Sinek

Book Summary:

New York Times bestselling author Simon Sinek gets right to the point in his book, *Start With Why*. For Sinek and millions who have watched his Tedx Talk, there's a better way to deal with life and business than simply manipulating others. According to Sinek, this improvement is inspiration rooted in an authentic "why," and it's vastly superior to manipulations like fear, peer pressure, or price manipulation. In fact, Sinek claims his emphasis on "why" reflects not just the timeless principles of the [Golden Circle](#), but an innate need to answer to our [limbic brain](#). Sinek further claims that his why-what-how priority sequence explains not just Steve Jobs and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s success, but could help us as well. How then do we start with "why" enroute to our how and what?

First, trust your gut and recognize that rationality is overrated. Second, have the discipline to stick with your how and, third, have the consistency to produce, sell, or live an authentic what. Trust, according to Sinek, is what happens when these elements are in balance, and will inevitably reach our customers or clients. However, this underlying "why," argues Sinek, needs to be a "megaphone," aimed at critical influencers in our industry to enlist those who can support us. Simon even insists that, "the biggest challenge is success," and that setbacks will occur only when our intangible "why" becomes disconnected from our tangible what. Ultimately, concludes Sinek, our only competitor is ourselves, and if we embrace a growth mindset, our true why, how, and what will be fully revealed.

Suggested Questions for Moderators:

1. What "rubber mallets," or tail-end, compensatory adjustments, are you using in your organization to adjust for previous mistakes? In what ways can your platoon or company start with "why" to avoid the headache and frustration inherent to the "rubber mallet" solution?
 - a. *Encourage participants to consider their individual or unit's weekly schedule. Are Friday's a hectic sprint to finish the week's tasks? Could these problems be solved much earlier if they were addressed via proper planning instead of rubber mallets?*
 - b. *Encourage participants to think about how they fill out their OER support forms. Do they fill them out periodically, or wait until they are due, and forget critical details?*
2. What tactics like price manipulation, fear or peer pressure are you using in your platoon or company that could easily be replaced by something better? How could you replace manipulation with inspiration to better motivate the behaviors you're trying to encourage?
 - a. *Encourage participants to consider how they are incentivizing Soldiers. Are they using carrots and sticks like four-day passes or UCMJ, when, really, they could be providing a stronger "why" for their organization?*
3. In Chapter 4, Sinek emphasizes the importance of gut or limbic-brain decisions over rational ones. Where in your career have you made a gut decision that wasn't supported by, or even

- contradicted, the data? What metrics does your battalion or company track that, in your opinion, fail to accurately reflect the ground truth?
- a. *Encourage participants to consider the Colin Powell quote on page 60, “I can make a decision with 30 percent of the information. Anything more than 80 percent is too much.” Have participants ever made decisions under similar circumstances?*
 - b. *Encourage participants to think about their training meetings or their command and staff meetings. Do the metrics examined accurately reflect their unit?*
4. Within your platoon or company, who are the innovators you need to reach to affect the change you wish to see? Who, in your unit, if they adopted an attitude or behavior, would seriously change the trajectory of your unit?
 - a. *Rank obviously carries tremendous influence in the military, but outside the platoon sergeant or first sergeant, who is an informal leader within your formation? For a platoon, is it a knowledgeable or trusted senior sergeant? For a company, is it a similarly experienced senior staff sergeant? Encourage participants to consider what can be done to win over these individuals to change wider formation behavior.*
 - b. *Encourage participants to consider this article from Decision Lab, “Change Agent” on how to leverage knowledgeable and supportive individuals to achieve a desired end state.*
 5. As a captain or lieutenant, is your “how” person your first sergeant or platoon sergeant, respectively? Or, are you the how person and is your enlisted counterpart the “why” person? How do you think this why/how model applies to Army units you’ve been in?
 - a. *An officer’s NCO counterpart may be the obvious answer, but it may not be.*
 6. Is having a team develop a “how” more important than an individual? Could a group crowdsource a more enduring “how” than its leader?
 - a. *Encourage participants to consider this article from Harvard Business Review, which lists some techniques to enlist the wisdom of a group while avoiding group think.*
 7. Within your career, have you ever lost sight of your “why?” Was it because of success? Have you ever felt as if you were so preoccupied with the “what” that you lost sight of the “why?”
 - a. *Encourage participants to think about transition points, be it commissioning, getting promoted, or even attending CCC. Did these transition points overshadow their initial reasons for joining?*
 8. In the Army, do you feel as if your primary competitor is yourself? Or, do you feel as if you’re drawn into competition with your peers away from yourself? Do think this takes away from your “why?”
 - a. *Encourage participants to consider how they are evaluated, especially relative to their peers. Even though the Army might pitch participants against their fellow lieutenants and captains, ask participants whether they can find meaning in improving relative to themselves. What if they’re not the best? But what if it’s okay that they themselves are better than they were a day, a week, or a month ago?*

Follow-on Reading and Resources:

- The “[Start With Why](#)” Tedx Talk, a possible refresher to introduce the Read2Lead
- [An Ad Exec Reacts to Mad Men’s Don Draper Leaning on Why](#)
- [Diffusion of Innovations](#) by Everett Rogers

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