

It's All About the Why...



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Spend some time around a 4- or 5-year-old and eventually — sooner rather than later — you'll begin to hear the “why” questions:

“Why are we going to the store?”

“Why is my hair curly?”

“Why does night have to come?”

The real challenge with a 4-year-old's why questions is how to produce a satisfying answer for them without invoking more whys.

Question: “Why is my hair curly?”

Your answer: “Because that's how God made you.”

“Yeah, but why?”

“Because.”

“Because why?”

Eventually (and sadly), as our children progress through school, the why questions dramatically subside. That's because in school we reward answers and not questions.

One study found that, when our kids enter school, they ask an average of 100 questions per week. By the time they get into middle school that number drops to nearly zero. What happened?

When we can begin to answer questions instead of just asking them, we begin to develop a sense of self, and the more answers we have, the larger sense of self emerges.

The same goes for not knowing the answers. When we don't know the answer, and others might, we also begin to develop a sense of self... or perhaps a sense of self-doubt. That is, we doubt the ability of our self.

The old saying, “Better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open it and remove all doubt,” certainly applies here. And that's a shame, because the why questions are the most important, both in learning something new or searching for new discoveries. Where would we be today if everyone stopped asking why?

There's also a direct correlation to the why question pertaining to your business, both from your side and your customers', and it gets right to core of your business's purpose.

The Purpose

The purpose of who you are, or the purpose of your business, can never be defined by how or what. They can only be defined by why.

For example: “We rebuild the best transmissions in town because we use the best parts and focus on root cause analysis, because we want to solve the problem once and for all, and we do it better than anyone else.”

That's a great “what we do and how we do it” statement, but it doesn't address the most important aspect of your business: the why. *Why* do you do it?

In his book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, author Simon Sinek introduces his readers to the Golden Circle (figure 1).

Within the context of your business, the Golden Circle illustrates that most every business or organization

understands and knows exactly what they do. Further, some know how they do it and how they do it differently and (hopefully) better than their competition.

But very few people or organizations know *why* they do what they do. Why do you do what you do? You might say “profit,” but that's a result. By why, Sinek is asking you to define your business's purpose. Why does your transmission shop exist?

Most of our thinking aligns with what, then how, and finally why. But, through his research, Sinek found that the inspired companies and organizations' thought just the opposite from the why (center) to the what (outer) (figure 2). People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. Pretty profound isn't it?

The Science

To further prove his point, Sinek explains that the tenets of the Golden Circle are all founded in the biology of the human brain. If you look at a cross section of the human brain, you see that it's broken into three major components that correlate perfectly to his Golden Circle.

Our newest part of the brain, our *neocortex*, corresponds to the “what” level of the circle. The neocortex is responsible for our entire rational decision making and language.

The middle two sections make up our limbic brains; this is the area of

our brains that make up all of our feelings, such as trust and loyalty. It's also responsible for all human behavior, all gut level decision making, and it has no capacity for language.

So when we communicate from the outside in, we can understand all the high level, rational thinking, like features and advantages — the parts you use in your rebuilds, the quality and expertise of your technicians, and other complicated facts and figures to differentiate your product over the competitors. It just doesn't drive behavior.

When we communicate from the inside out, we're talking directly to the part of the brain that controls behavior; then we allow people to rationalize it with the tangible things we say we do. This is where gut decisions come from.

If you've ever made a big ticket purchase, you know that if it doesn't *feel* right, then you probably won't buy, no matter how rational the sales pitch seemed.

But if you don't know why you do what you do, how do you expect to reach that part of your customer's behavior that makes her feel like she can trust you to make the purchase? You can't. You need to sell to people who believe what you believe; otherwise you're just pitching features and advantages. Good luck with that.

Making It Work

So how do you sell to people who believe what you believe? Do you really care what your customers' beliefs are, or do you just want to provide everyone with a great product delivered in a timely manner?

Sinek's Golden Circle tells us that you need to talk to your customers' hearts first and then their minds. You can talk about your quality parts and years of experience all day long, but that's not going to sell them on your shop.

Remember, your customer doesn't want to be there. He has a problem with his car... a problem that he knows is going to cost him a lot to get fixed. He knows that.

What you need to do is let him know that maybe he's wrong. Maybe he doesn't need to spend a bundle to fix it. And that's why he needs you... because you're going to be the one to make sure he doesn't spend a dime more than he needs to.

Then again, maybe he does need an expensive repair. In that case, you need to let him know that you're here for him. That you're going to make his car run the way it did before he noticed a problem. That's why he should trust you.

Sure, your nationwide warranty is important, but it's only a feature. You

need to let him know why it's important to him... that you're going to stand behind your repairs... that you're here for him... and that, wherever he goes, you'll be right there with him. The warranty means nothing: The security means everything.

You know that 10-day recheck you always try to convince customers to come back for? Sure, it's important to you to make sure there are no leaks or problems with your work. But it's more important to make that second contact with your customer. To let him know that you're here for him.

The 10-day recheck is your best deterrent for buyer's remorse, because it gives you a second chance to prove that they made the right choice by choosing your shop.

You can't fake your purpose either, at least not for very long. Eventually your true purpose will reveal itself in your actions. So make sure that the purpose of your business addresses who you are and how you feel about taking care of the folks who buy from you. Your marketing efforts should be about *why* you do what you do... not *how* you do it.

Kids can be annoying with their why questions. But for your business to be successful, you need to think about the whys, and answer them... whether the question gets asked or not. 

