



WEEKEND PROFESSIONAL

{ COMPANY CULTURE }

The why factor is crucial to success

Businesses that put numbers before people are making a mistake

PADMA IYER

IMAGINE three concentric circles. The outermost is called the "what" circle. The middle one is "how". The innermost circle, the bullseye, is "why".

People who keep the "why" in view — why they do what they do — will be articulating their core values and beliefs. Their success is long-lasting and engages those who work with them.

Those who talk about the "what" — for instance, "we are in the business of making excellent widgets" — will have trouble getting others to believe in them because no one knows what they believe in.

This is author Simon Sinek's simple framework for understanding people and companies. His book *Start with Why* explains many concepts, companies and people using the three circles of what, how and why.

If you don't know why you are doing what you are doing, you will tire of your work very soon.

Companies with a clear statement of "why" have a strong culture that employees find easy to fit into. The best run companies care about people.

"There are very few companies that are truly glamorous," says Sinek. "Most industries are rather boring. They might make nuts and bolts. And the functions we have in those companies are equally boring. We are not all in advertising or making Apple products. It is

the people. It is always the people." Employees find fulfilment in connecting with people and solving problems.

Finding a cultural fit with the company gives meaning to work. It enables us to define our work in terms of why we do what we do.

"For the founder of a company, the personal 'why' and the company 'why' are the same thing," he says. "Because the company is one of the things they have done in their lives to bring to life their own core beliefs. Richard Branson is Virgin. His personality and the company personality are exactly the same thing."

"As individuals, what we want is for our 'why' to be consistent with or connected to the company's 'why'. Just like we want our 'why' to be closely related with our friend's 'why'. That's why we get along with them. They don't have to be the same, but they have to be co-operative. So understanding one's own 'why' ... makes it much easier to evaluate jobs, companies and even others that come into our lives."

Sinek, who teaches graduate-level strategic communications at Columbia University in New York and who is an adjunct staff member of think tank Rand Corporation, is passionate about his three circles. It is his algorithm, his taxonomy or philosophy for understanding the successes and failures that people and businesses go



ALAN PRYKE

'Customers do not come first. People come first,' says author and academic Simon Sinek

'For the best companies, hiring is like adopting a child'

SIMON SINEK
AUTHOR

through. His words resonate with unshakable belief in the validity and consistent applicability of his concepts. He uses the concept of the "golden circle" — his term for the triple-circle framework — to analyse the success of people and companies as diverse as Martin Luther King and Apple.

Sinek's book gives the example

of 20th-century English explorer Ernest Shackleton, who sought fellow travellers to the Antarctic with this ad: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success."

Shackleton was looking for a

How to pitch for a higher salary

WE are pitching for a higher salary wrongly, says author Simon Sinek.

"The mistake we all make is that we attempt to make a rational case for an increased salary. We write down all the things we have accomplished, and we bring this list of accomplishments. We expect that it will convince someone to pay us more. It is the same logic when companies are looking to fire someone: they will list the things they have done badly. The problem is, for every list of good and bad there is the opposite list ...

"Every time we are asking for something, we are selling

... We want them to give us something. In return we will give them something. You give me money, I will give you hard work.

"Selling is the wrong word. We are helping them buy. We want our companies to buy more of us. So we have to put into words what they will be buying, not what they have already got ... They are going to pay for something they are going to get later.

"We always make the case that I should be paid more for what I have already done." Instead, we should be making a case for what companies can look forward to.

"Nobody wants to buy the past, they want to buy the future," Sinek says.

PADMA IYER

cultural fit with his co-travellers. The ad ensured every applicant believed in what he did.

Successful companies look for a similar cultural fit.

"The best-run companies have a very clear understanding of what their culture is and who makes a good fit," says Sinek. "They are relentless about who they let in. For the best companies, hiring is like adopting a child. You are going to let that child live in your home by themselves, and maybe even have responsibility to look after your other children. You are going to be careful about who you let in."

When we join a company, we are joining a collection of people, says Sinek. "Just as the company needs to screen for the child they are adopting, we need to screen for the family we are joining."

People don't need to feel trapped in their jobs, especially if they are no longer deriving any fulfilment. "Most of our careers are accidents anyway," he says. "Very few of us are living our childhood dreams." Considering job skills are transferable and the diversity of skills can be useful in a new job, people should never feel stuck.

"The most valuable thing in a company is its people," says Sinek. "Companies don't make decisions, people make decisions. Companies don't merge. It's always people doing business with people. So what fascinates me is the number of companies who put numbers before people. Yet the numbers won't help you in hard times. The numbers won't innovate. The numbers won't find solutions to difficult problems. And the num-

bers won't keep your customers happy. Numbers are always a result. So we cannot put them first."

Sinek finds it strange that many companies should declare they put customers first. "Customers do not come first," he says. "People come first. Some of them buy from you, some of them work for you."

Company managers should look after their people with the same sense of responsibility that parents have towards children, Sinek says. "We don't want to do everything for them. We want them to learn self-reliance. We want them to invest effort to get reward. We want them to do chores before they get their pocket money, not just get it for free. We have to teach them to work hard and they will get the reward at the end. And ... we will protect them and offer them safety. And this is why our children love us."

It works the same way in companies. "We want to give our people skills, we want to give them opportunity, we want them to try for themselves, but we will pick them up when they fall over. Managers should think of themselves as parents. Not in the sense of you-do-as-I-say parents but in the sense of I love you unconditionally and I want to see you succeed and I want to be proud of you when you grow up. Ten years from now, I want to say: That was my employee and I am so proud, look where he or she has gone on to."

Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action, by Simon Sinek (Portfolio Penguin).

WORKOUT

Size doesn't matter with social media

YOU don't need to be a big, powerful organisation to utilise social media and get results, says Greg Savage, CEO and founder of Firebrand Talent.

Savage says his company has gained scores of new clients and generated client fees worth hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past year through an integrated social recruitment strategy.

"Using a mix of social media channels, our website, blog, an online survey and marketing tools that don't cost the earth, we're now generating a direct flow of candidates from untapped talent pools and developing broader client networks. We've been able to reduce our traditional sourcing expenses, such as on job boards, by 90 per cent," Savage says.

"For a business of only 80 staff, it goes to show that anyone can reap the benefits of social media to create a competitive edge, but you need to be ready to accept a degree of trial and error."

"We work in a world that is more transparent, with fewer degrees of separation, and where people want faster response times. Recruiters need to stay relevant and ahead of the game."

Savage says the key is to have an authentic presence online and to recognise that with the right training and resources, your employees can be your biggest brand advocates.

Greg Savage will be a speaker at the May 22-24 Australasian Talent Conference in Sydney.

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Photography by Marcel Campbell

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(4 weeks on / 4 weeks off)
Up to \$267,000 per annum

Based in Western Australia you will provide optimum primary healthcare to the 11 communities with an emphasis on health promotion, infectious and lifestyle related diseases, and participate in other programs when required.

A Ngaanyatjarra Health Service General Practitioner is an integral component of a comprehensive trans disciplinary primary health care mode. There is a supportive work environment with Remote Area Nurses and health workers.

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Qualifications: Medical practitioner registered to practice independently in Western Australia.

The job application packs and closing dates are available at www.nghealth.org.au
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For further information, please contact Mr Brett Cowling on 0439 267 215.

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