

Leading the Change, TED talk by Simon Sinek

Transcript:

http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action/transcript?language=en

1:17 About three and a half years ago, I made a discovery. And this discovery profoundly changed my view on how I thought the world worked, and it even profoundly changed the way in which I operate in it. As it turns out, there's a pattern. As it turns out, all the great inspiring leaders and organizations in the world, whether it's Apple or Martin Luther King or the Wright brothers, they all think, act and communicate the exact same way. And it's the complete opposite to everyone else. All I did was codify it, and it's probably the world's simplest idea. I call it the golden circle.

2:07 Why? How? What? This little idea explains why some organizations and some leaders are able to inspire where others aren't. Let me define the terms really quickly. Every single person, every single organization on the planet knows what they do, 100 percent. Some know how they do it, whether you call it your differentiated value proposition or your proprietary process or your USP. But very, very few people or organizations know why they do what they do. And by "why" I don't mean "to make a profit." That's a result. It's always a result. By "why," I mean: What's your purpose? What's your cause? What's your belief? Why does your organization exist? Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care? As a result, the way we think, we act, the way we communicate is from the outside in, it's obvious. We go from the clearest thing to the fuzziest thing. But the inspired leaders and the inspired organizations -- regardless of their size, regardless of their industry -- all think, act and communicate from the inside out.

3:13 Let me give you an example. I use Apple because they're easy to understand and everybody gets it. If Apple were like everyone else, a marketing message from them might sound like this: "We make great computers. They're beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. Want to buy one?" "Meh." That's how most of us communicate. That's how most marketing and sales are done, that's how we communicate interpersonally. We say what we do, we say how we're different or better and we expect some sort of a behavior, a purchase, a vote, something like that. Here's our new law firm: We have the best lawyers with the biggest clients, we always perform for our clients. Here's our new car: It gets great gas mileage, it has leather seats. Buy our car. But it's uninspiring.

4:00 Here's how Apple actually communicates. "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?" Totally different, right? You're ready to buy a computer from me. I just reversed the order of the information. What it proves to us is that people don't buy what you do; people buy why you do it.

5:48 None of what I'm telling you is my opinion. It's all grounded in the tenets of biology. Not psychology, biology. If you look at a cross-section of the human brain, from the top down, the human brain is actually broken into three major components that correlate perfectly with the golden circle. Our newest brain, our hominid brain, our neo-cortex, corresponds with the "what" level. The neo-cortex is responsible for all of our rational and analytical thought and language. The middle two sections make up our limbic brains, and our limbic brains are responsible for all of our feelings, like trust and loyalty. It's also responsible for all human behavior, all decision-making, and it has no capacity for language.

6:35 In other words, when we communicate from the outside in, yes, people can understand vast amounts of complicated information like features and benefits and facts and figures. It just doesn't drive behavior. When we can communicate from the inside out, we're talking directly to the part of the brain that controls behavior, and then we allow people to rationalize it with the tangible things we say and do. This is where gut decisions come from. Sometimes you can give somebody all the facts and figures, and they say, "I know what all the facts and details say, but it just doesn't feel right." Why would we use that verb, it doesn't "feel" right? Because the part of the brain that controls decision-making doesn't control language. The best we can muster up is, "I don't know. It just doesn't feel right" Or sometimes you say you're leading with your heart or soul. I hate to break it to you, those aren't other body parts controlling your behavior. It's all happening here in your limbic brain, the part of the brain that controls decision-making and not language.

15:11 Now let me give you a successful example of the law of diffusion of innovation. In the summer of 1963, 250,000 people showed up on the mall in Washington to hear Dr. King speak. They sent out no invitations, and there was no website to check the date. How do you do that? Well, Dr. King wasn't the only man in America who was a great orator. He wasn't the only man in America who suffered in a pre-civil rights America. In fact, some of his ideas were bad. But he had a gift. He didn't go around telling people what needed to change in America. He went around and told people what he believed. "I believe, I believe, I believe," he told people. And people who believed what he believed took his cause, and they made it their own, and they told people. And some of those people created structures to get the word out to even more people. And lo and behold, 250,000 people showed up on the right day at the right time to hear him speak.

16:16 How many of them showed up for him? Zero. They showed up for themselves. It's what they believed about America that got them to travel in a bus for eight hours to stand in the sun in Washington in the middle of August. It's what they believed, and it wasn't about black versus white: 25% of the audience was white. Dr. King believed that there are two types of laws in this world: those that are made by a higher authority and those that are made by men. And not until all the laws that are made by men are consistent with the laws made by the higher authority will we live in a just world. It just so happened that the Civil Rights Movement was the perfect thing to help him bring his cause to life. We followed, not for him, but for ourselves. By the way, he gave the "I have a dream" speech, not the "I have a plan" speech.