

Start With Why

Book Discussion

Biology of Why

- Participants began by sharing what the book title Start With Why meant to them.
- A key takeaway was that “why” should not be based on “because that’s how we’ve always done it.”
- A strong “why” creates connection, motivation, and engagement with one’s role, department, and the company’s mission.
- Without a clear “why,” individuals can lose connection to their work and organization.

The Golden Circle (Why, How, What)

- The Golden Circle concept was introduced
- Apple was referenced as an example of emphasizing “why” rather than just stating “what” they do.
- Discussion focused on defining the What, How, and Why and relating it to Golden Circle.
- Participants agreed “why” is clear, even to new hires.
- Leaders play a key role in ensuring:
 - Their teams understand the leader’s “why”
 - Teams understand their own “why”
 - Team “why” aligns with overall mission
 - Communicate the mission
 - Provide direction toward the vision
 - Explain the purpose behind training initiatives

Values as Action

- Quote discussed: “For values or guiding principles to be truly effective they have to be verbs.”
- Participants generally agreed with the statement.
- Core values were viewed as actionable and accountability-driven.
- Core values were described as promises that guide behavior and decision-making.

Leadership and Inspiration

Participants shared examples of how leaders inspire:

- Being visible and present on the floor
- Connecting daily work to the larger mission (building submarines)
- Recognizing employees for their contributions
- Knowing employees personally (names, individuals)
- Leading by example

“People Don’t Buy What You Do, They Buy Why You Do It” (Ch. 3, p. 41)

- Most participants agreed with the statement.
- The “why” behind a product or service creates stronger connection and trust.
- Connection to business:
 - Recruiting efforts should clearly communicate “why”
 - Leaders should help teams understand their smaller “why” within larger mission
 - Emphasis on asking why something is done, not just how

The Stonemason Story (Ch. 6, pp. 94–95)

- Two stonemasons perform the same work but view it differently: one as a job, the other as a calling.
- The difference lies in seeing the bigger picture and impact of the work.
- One mason lacks passion due to focusing only on the present task.
- Connection to Business:
 - The major project was cited as an example of long-term impact.
 - Work completed today will affect outcomes 10–15 years into the future.
 - Even if individuals are no longer present, their work remains.
 - Pride and passion are essential because projects outlast the people who build them.

“Best Practices Are Not Always Best” (Ch. 9, p. 166)

- The author cautions against simply copying what or how high-performing organizations operate.
- Discussion highlighted the danger of the mindset “this is how we’ve always done it.”
- focus on process improvement supports innovation and continuous improvement.
- Even effective methods can be improved for efficiency and effectiveness.

Trust and Ethics

Trust Through Shared Values (Ch. 4, p. 53)

- Most participants agreed that trust forms when common values and beliefs are shared.
- Trust is strengthened when leaders:
 - Are visible
 - Work alongside their teams
 - Show that they value their employees
- Engagement levels influence trust and task alignment.

Trust Beyond Self-Interest (Ch. 6, p. 84)

- Trust grows when leaders and organizations are perceived as acting beyond self-gain.
- Communication and coordination across departments were identified as essential.
- Trust must extend across the entire business, not just within individual departments.

Decision-Making

Decisions as the Starting Point (Ch. 1, p. 15)

- Every instruction and action begins with a decision.
- Trust is built when leaders:
 - Address problems early
 - Make thoughtful decisions in employees' best interests
- Employees expressed the importance of trusting leadership decisions.
- A shared sense of responsibility exists for outcomes resulting from leadership decisions.

Decision-Making Without a “Why” (Ch. 4, p. 59)

- Participants agreed that decisions are more difficult without a clear “why.”
- Lack of purpose can lead to:
 - Overthinking
 - Missing key facts
 - Delayed decision-making
- A clear “why” supports confidence and clarity in decisions.