

A WEEK IN *Learning*

WHAT IS YOUR WHY?

Luisa Armijo, Retail Leadership Trainer

One morning, it was my turn to take care of the 3-5 year olds during Sunday service. I was in a not-so-great mood and didn't really want to go. However, I had made the commitment, so I went. I figured it would be good for me; I usually have fun with the kids. This is mostly because, like me, they have no filter and say it like it is. You never really know what they will ask or say. This particular Sunday, I had a little girl, Monroe, who was on a roll. I think she woke up with a case of the *Why's*. From the moment she came to class, she was already asking me questions. It went something like this:

Monroe: *Ms. Luisa why is part of your hair red?*

Me: *I wanted to change my hair, and it is my favorite color.*

Monroe: *Why?*

Me: *It is fun to change your hair sometimes, and red makes me happy.*

Monroe: *Why?*

Me: *I feel creative, and red is a powerful color! To me, it also means love.*

Monroe: *Ms. Luisa, why is it a powderfull color?*

Me: (Laughing) *POWER-ful, sweetie. Well, because it makes me feel good, strong, and confident.*



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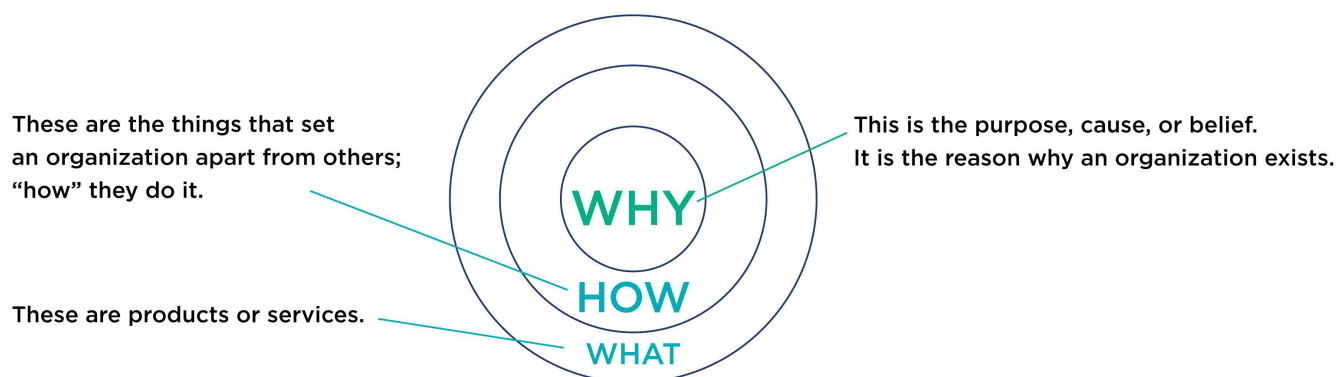
- Luisa Armijo

I think this satisfied her, because she then ran off and started to play with the other kids. We continued with the lesson, and at the end of class, her parents came to get her. Her mom asked what she learned and she said, *“Ms. Luisa put red in her hair because it is her favorite color. Red makes her happy, love, and powderfull.”* We both giggled and I gave her the biggest hug. When I saw Monroe the next week, she had a little red bow in her hair, with a red skirt. She ran up to me, pulled on my arm, and said, *“Ms. Luisa I putted on red today! I feel Powderfull and wanted you to smile and feel love.”* My eyes began to tear up a little. I gave her another big hug, told her that she was beautiful, and that she made me feel so loved.

In that moment, I learned so much from Monroe. She wasn't asking 'why' to be intrusive, but because she wanted to know more about why I made the choices I did, and why they made me happy. *BOOM!* Schooled by a 4-year-old. This little girl took the time to ask why I did what I did - seeking more to understand. Shouldn't that be what we, as leaders, do? We should find out our teams why, get to their purpose, and use it to acknowledge, motivate and encourage them. To understand our team member's why, we must also define our own.

As a Leadership Trainer, I do not only train. I build confidence, trust, and knowledge. It is easy to teach someone policies and procedures, but I want to show people how to do it with passion and purpose. I am on a constant

mission to make myself a better leader, mentor, and team member. I didn't have this all figured out at the beginning, though. One concept that helped lead me to my purpose here at Goodwill was *The Golden Circle*.



Simon Sinek's model of The Golden Circle really helped me define who I wanted to be as a leader. The model is broken into three sections: Why, How, and What. Sinek states that if you can't first explain why you do something, the 'How' and 'What' don't matter. Many organizations know what they do, and how they do it. However, they might not know their 'Why', or do not lead with it. Sinek states that all great leaders and organizations lead with the 'Why'. When you lead with purpose (**WHY**), people will connect to the cause and take it as their own to drive the mission (**HOW**) to reach the goal (**WHAT**) of a leader or organization. Imagine how much more of an impact our teams could make if we coached to the 'Why' instead of the 'What'.

Although the model is directed more towards organizations, I was able to dial it down to a personal level. It taught me that people don't buy into what you do, but why you do it. Here is an example of a personal statement that leads with the 'What' first, versus a statement that leads with the 'Why':

WHAT, HOW, WHY

I train managers for Goodwill by teaching them how to properly perform in all areas of production, money management, and training and development. I do this to help achieve the mission to end poverty in Arizona through the power of work.

WHY, HOW, WHAT

I want to serve our mission to end poverty in Arizona through the power of work. To do this, I will use my skills to teach, empower, and motivate our managers during their training program. This will provide them with the skills they need to successfully, staff, train, and run the Goodwill teams in our stores.

I encourage you to take a moment, and write out your own statement. Start from the middle, and work your way out. Thanks to the Golden Circle, and a lesson from a curious 4 year old, I now know my 'Why' - what's yours?

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