



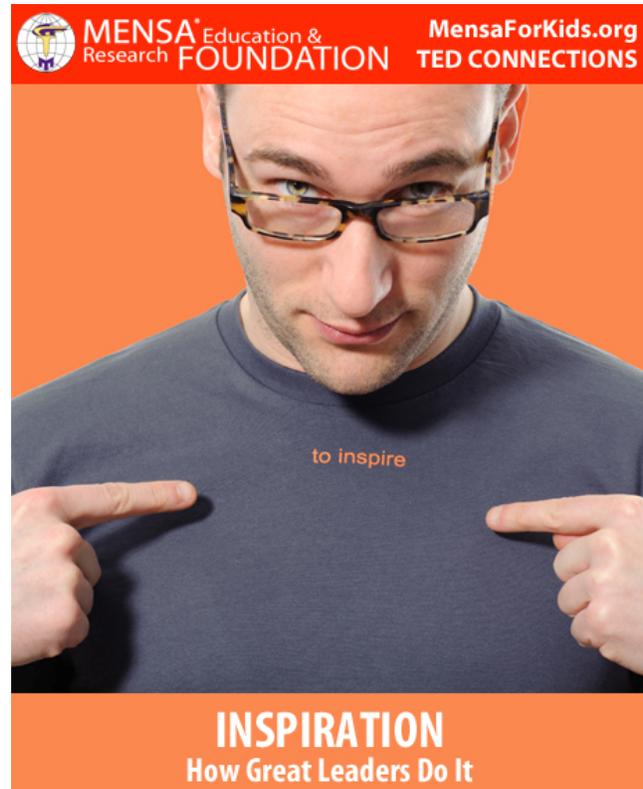
TED[®] Connection

How Great Leaders Inspire

Overview

Mensa for Kids' TED Connections are short, easy to use guides that help teachers, parents and youth use TED talks in a classroom or home setting. Rather than a lesson plan format, they have a list of discussion questions, all at higher levels of thinking.

Thinker Simon Sinek explains why some leaders inspire while others don't. He shares the secrets to getting to why and how that can guide and inspire you and others.



Watch the TED talk at:

http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html
or at <http://bit.ly/sinekleaders>



THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Simon Sinek begins his talk with questions: Do you ever wonder why Apple[®] is so innovative or why Martin Luther King became the leader of the Civil Rights movement? Who can you think of who is a somewhat surprising leader in your school or community or the world? Who does not necessarily look or act the part, yet has followers?

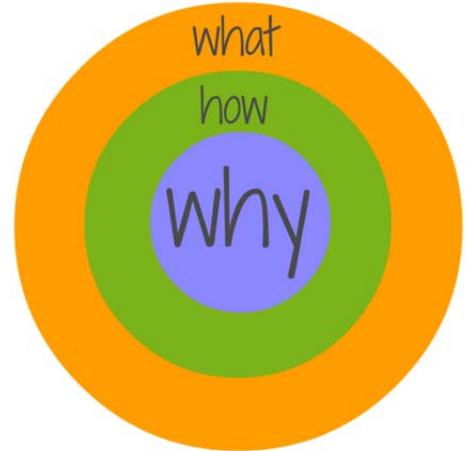
2. Sinek says that all great, inspiring leaders think, act and communicate in the same way, which is the complete opposite to everyone else. Do you agree with his assessment? Can you think of an exception to it – a leader who thinks the same as conventional thought in his/her arena or one who thinks differently from other leaders?

3. The Golden Circle Sinek describes has three concentric rings. He says that every business knows its outer ring – the “what” – that is does. What is your what? If someone described what you do, what would it be?

4. The middle ring is the “how” – the process – and Sinek says that some businesses know this. Think about your role as a student. What is the how, the process, of your role? How do you actually get the job done? Can you think of at least three processes in place that students need to accomplish their “what?”



5. The inner, smallest ring of the Golden Circle is the why, what Sinek describes as your “purpose, cause, or belief.” He says that this is the one that few know, and it’s not just profit. The educational equivalent of profit is a grade. If we remove that as a “why,” then what is a why for you with regard to school? If there were no grades, what would lure you to education?



6. In French, the phrase that describes this inner circle is *raison d'être* (literally, “reason for existence”). It is the name of a band, a number of songs and a beer. What else do you think *raison d'être* would be a good name for?

7. According to Sinek, most businesses go from the outside in, whereas inspired leaders go from the inside out (they start with their “why”). What makes this important? What does it matter if you start with what or start with why?

8. In what way do you think Sinek’s ideas apply to relationships? Is it important to consider why you enter a relationship with someone, rather than simple attraction? What impact would it have on relationships (not just romantic ones) if the people in the relationship had different whys?



9. The recurring refrain of the talk is “people don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.” Think of something you buy frequently or a single big-ticket purchase. Do you know that company’s why? Why did you purchase that item instead of a different brand?

10. The biology of Sinek’s ideas is rooted in the neuroscience of brain structure. The neocortex (“new brain” from the Latin “new bark”) is our thinking brain. Scientist Carl Sagan says the neocortex is where “matter is transformed into consciousness.” In what way do Sagan’s ideas match Sinek’s?



(image credit: flickr)

11. The limbic system of our brains is the emotional, feeling part. Think about Sinek’s argument that we are actually making many of our decisions from this part of our brain, as opposed to the thinking, analytical neocortex. If true, why is this beneficial? How can it be dangerous?

12. Think about the advice he shares with business owners: “Don’t just hire people who need a job: hire people who believe what you believe.” Is this always possible? When might it not be? How does this philosophy compare with how schools encounter students? How would school be different if students and schools made belief matches?



13. When Sinek talks about Samuel Langley and his race to flight with the Wright brothers, he says that Langley quit when the Orville and Wilbur accomplished their feat rather than resetting a new goal. Can you think of a time you quit something or were tempted to because someone else did it first?

14. The Law of Diffusion of Innovation that Sinek discusses was first written about in 1962 by an Iowa farm boy turned statistician named Everett Rogers. Thinking about the categories Rogers outlined, where do you think you fall in general? Are you an innovator, creating ideas, or more of a laggard, waiting to make a decision until it is inevitable? Or are you somewhere in between? Is there some area of your life where you are more to one end of the curve than is typical for you?

In this illustration, the yellow line denotes what happens eventually – one company passes the tipping point and garners virtually the entire market.

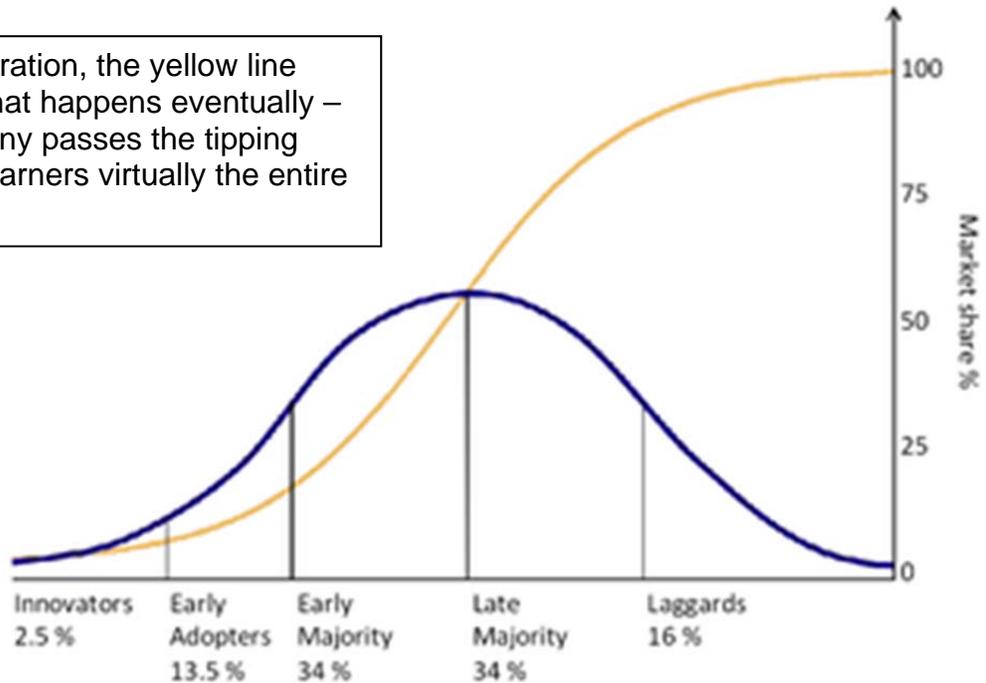


Image credit: Wikimedia



15. In describing the Tivo failure, Sinek says that what you do is proof of what you believe. Let's accept that this is true. Can you think of something you are doing in your life right now that is out of alignment with what you really believe?

16. What is the core difference between "I have a dream" and "I have a plan"? Can you think of a time that a leader's plan backfired even though the dream was one that was shared by many?

17. Sinek says leaders have powers and authority, while those who lead inspire – people want to follow them, not for them but for us. What do you see as the core difference between those two roles? Can you think of a leader with power who does not inspire?



DO IT:

- Complete your own Golden Circle

What: Three things I do

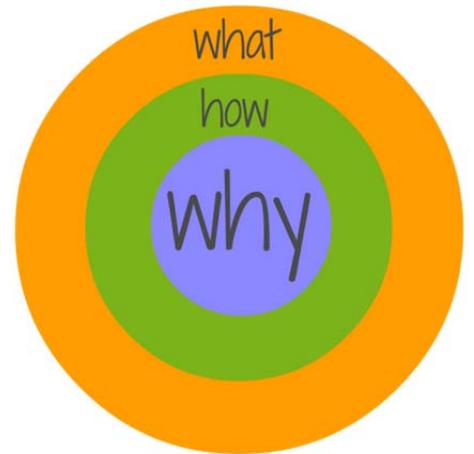
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How: Skills and Processes I Use

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

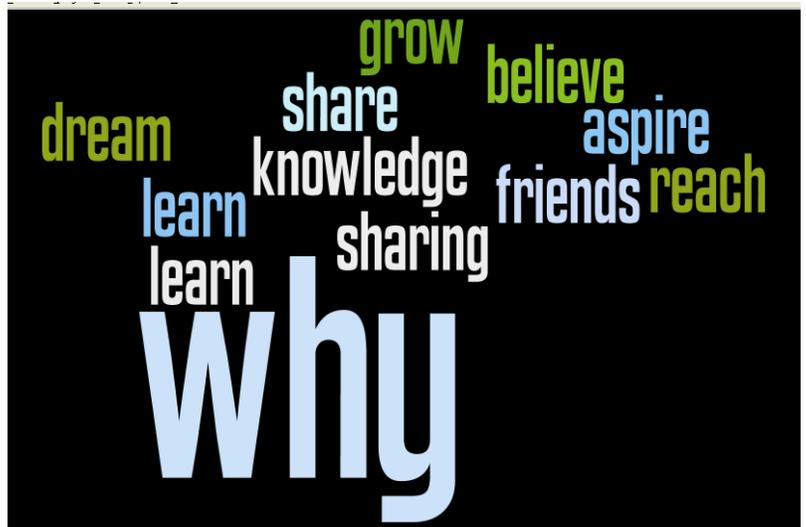
Why: I do what I do because I believe in these things

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



- Create a word cloud at Tagxedo.com or Wordle.net of the key ideas from your why responses above.

Type in the word WHY at least 10 times to make it prominent. Note: because “why” is a common English word, you will have to make sure that “Remove common English words” is not selected in the language area.



To get a word cloud that looks like the example shown here, use the “advanced” tab in Wordle and enter your words in this pattern:

why : 500

other words : 133

- Create your own “What I do, what people think I do” meme at <http://uthinkido.com/>
- Read the history of Tivo here <http://bit.ly/tivohistory> and rewrite it to emphasize a “why.”



READ ABOUT IT:

- Read Simon's book *Start with Why*
 - Read about the race between the Wright brothers and Samuel Langley in James Tobin's book *To Conquer the Air: The Wright Brothers and the Great Race for Flight*
 - For a less cerebral, more interactive read, try *The Wright Brothers for Kids: How they Invented the Airplane, 21 Activities Exploring the Science and History of Flight* by Mary Kay Carson
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WATCH IT:

- Watch Simon's talk "If you don't understand people, you don't understand business." <http://bit.ly/sspeople>
 - Watch videos of and about Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" Here <http://bit.ly/mlkhaveadream>
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SURF IT:

- Visit Start with Why. <http://www.startwithwhy.com>
- Harvard Business School has short bios on influential business leaders of the 20th century. Can you find their why? <http://bit.ly/hbsleaders>
- Learn more about standard deviation and the normal curve. <http://bit.ly/understandcurve>