



# Lead With WHY

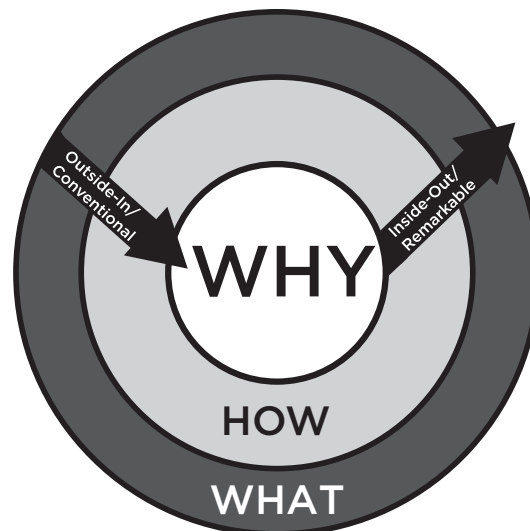
Leading with an equity imperative requires an inversion of the traditional approach to school and organizational planning. In his Ted Talk, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action”, Simon Sinek coined a very simple model to encapsulate this inversion: The Golden Circle (Sinek 2009). Though Sinek’s audience is private sector, his messages still resonate with those of us in public schools and non-profits. According to Sinek:

*Everybody knows “what” they do 100%. Some know how they do it. But very, very few people or organizations know WHY they do it. And I don’t mean to make a profit, that’s the result. It’s the “why”, why do you do it, why do you get out of bed in the morning, and why should people care. Inspired organizations and people all think, act, and communicate from the inside out (Sinek 2009).*

When you reflect on the organizations where you’ve worked, how many of them had a laundry list of initiatives, programs, or “best practices?” Did you ever feel lost in the myriad of priorities that seemed to point in multiple and even competing directions?

This disorientation is the cost of leading from the outside in; when leaders constantly roll out a new “what” (initiative, assessment system, etc.) the adults in the system often begin to splinter and work at cross-purposes.

The first antidote to this pattern is taking time to name a clear and compelling moral purpose that will drive a different kind of conversation about what really matters. Leading with the “why” allows you to evoke a higher purpose and calling that speaks to people’s emotional core, which brain research has show is key to change efforts. Once invested in the call and mobilized around a clear imperative, you will find colleagues much more willing to learn and grow, even when the going gets uncomfortable.



Adapted from Simon Sinek  
[www.startwithwhy.com](http://www.startwithwhy.com)