

Simon Sinek: How great leaders inspire action

TEDxPuget Sound 2009

INTRODUCTION

How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after year, they're more innovative than all their competition. And yet, they're just a computer company. They're just like everyone else. They have the same access to the same talent, the same agencies, the same consultants, the same media. Then why is it that they seem to have something different? Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement? He wasn't the only man who suffered in pre-civil rights America, and he certainly wasn't the only great orator of the day. Why him? And why is it that the Wright brothers were able to figure out controlled, powered man flight when there were certainly other teams who were better qualified, better funded -- and they didn't achieve powered man flight, and the Wright brothers beat them to it. There's something else at play here.

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.

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.

Ken Robinson: How to escape education's death valley

TED Talks Education 2013

INTRODUCTION

I moved to America 12 years ago with my wife Terry and our two kids. Actually, truthfully, we moved to Los Angeles -- (Laughter)

thinking we were moving to America, but anyway -- (Laughter)

It's a short plane ride from Los Angeles to America. (Laughter)

I got here 12 years ago, and when I got here, I was told various things, like, "Americans don't get irony." (Laughter)

Have you come across this idea? It's not true. I've traveled the whole length and breadth of this country. I have found no evidence that Americans don't get irony. It's one of those cultural myths, like, "The British are reserved." (Laughter)

I don't know why people think this. We've invaded every country we've encountered. (Laughter)

But it's not true Americans don't get irony, but I just want you to know that that's what people are saying about you behind your back. You know, so when you leave living rooms in Europe, people say, thankfully, nobody was ironic in your presence. (Laughter)

But I knew that Americans get irony when I came across that legislation, "No Child Left Behind." (Laughter)

Because whoever thought of that title gets irony. (Laughter)

Don't they? (Applause)

Because it's leaving millions of children behind. Now I can see that's not a very attractive name for legislation: "Millions of Children Left Behind." I can see that. What's the plan? We propose to leave millions of children behind, and here's how it's going to work.

And it's working beautifully. (Laughter)

In some parts of the country, 60 percent of kids drop out of high school. In the Native American communities, it's 80 percent of kids. If we halved that number, one estimate is it would create a net gain to the U.S. economy over 10 years, of nearly a trillion dollars. From an economic point of view, this is good math, isn't it, that we should do this? It actually costs an enormous amount to mop up the damage from the dropout crisis.

But the dropout crisis is just the tip of an iceberg. What it doesn't count are all the kids who are in school but being disengaged from it, who don't enjoy it, who don't get any real benefit from it.

And the reason is not that we're not spending enough money. America spends more money on education than most other countries. Class sizes are smaller than in many countries. And there are hundreds of initiatives every year to try and improve education. The trouble is, it's all going in the wrong direction. There are three principles on which human life flourishes, and they are contradicted by the culture of education under which most teachers have to labor and most students have to endure.

Tali Sharot: The optimism bias

TED2012

INTRODUCTION

I'm going to talk to you about optimism -- or more precisely, the optimism bias. It's a cognitive illusion that we've been studying in my lab for the past few years, and 80 percent of us have it.

It's our tendency to overestimate our likelihood of experiencing good events in our lives and underestimate our likelihood of experiencing bad events. So we underestimate our likelihood of suffering from cancer, being in a car accident. We overestimate our longevity, our career prospects. In short, we're more optimistic than realistic, but we are oblivious to the fact.

Take marriage for example. In the Western world, divorce rates are about 40 percent. That means that out of five married couples, two will end up splitting their assets. But when you ask newlyweds about their own likelihood of divorce, they estimate it at zero percent. And even divorce lawyers, who should really know better, hugely underestimate their own likelihood of divorce. So it turns out that optimists are not less likely to divorce, but they are more likely to remarry. In the words of Samuel Johnson, "Remarriage is the triumph of hope over experience." (Laughter)

So if we're married, we're more likely to have kids. And we all think our kids will be especially talented. This, by the way, is my two-year-old nephew, Guy. And I just want to make it absolutely clear that he's a really bad example of the optimism bias, because he is in fact uniquely talented. (Laughter)

And I'm not alone. Out of four British people, three said that they were optimistic about the future of their own families. That's 75 percent. But only 30 percent said that they thought families in general are doing better than a few generations ago.

And this is a really important point, because we're optimistic about ourselves, we're optimistic about our kids, we're optimistic about our families, but we're not so optimistic about the guy sitting next to us, and we're somewhat pessimistic about the fate of our fellow citizens and the fate of our country. But private optimism about our own personal future remains persistent. And it doesn't mean that we think things will magically turn out okay, but rather that we have the unique ability to make it so.

Now I'm a scientist, I do experiments. So to show you what I mean, I'm going to do an experiment here with you. So I'm going to give you a list of abilities and characteristics, and I want you to think for each of these abilities where you stand relative to the rest of the population.

The first one is getting along well with others. Who here believes they're at the bottom 25 percent? Okay, that's about 10 people out of 1,500. Who believes they're at the top 25 percent? That's most of us here. Okay, now do the same for your driving ability. How interesting are you? How attractive are you? How honest are you? And finally, how modest are you?

So most of us put ourselves above average on most of these abilities. Now this is statistically impossible. We can't all be better than everyone else. (Laughter) But if we believe we're better than the other guy, well that means that we're more likely to get that promotion, to remain married, because we're more social, more interesting.

And it's a global phenomenon. The optimism bias has been observed in many different countries -- in Western cultures, in non-Western cultures, in females and males, in kids, in the elderly. It's quite widespread.

But the question is, is it good for us? So some people say no. Some people say the secret to happiness is low expectations. I think the logic goes something like this: If we don't expect greatness, if we don't expect to find love and be healthy and successful, well we're not going to be disappointed when these things don't happen. And if we're not disappointed when good things don't happen, and we're pleasantly surprised when they do, we will be happy.

So it's a very good theory, but it turns out to be wrong for three reasons.

Scott Dinsmore: How to find work you love

TEDxGoldenGatePark 2012

INTRODUCTION

Wow, what an honor. I always wondered what this would feel like.

So eight years ago, I got the worst career advice of my life. I had a friend tell me, "Don't worry about how much you like the work you're doing now. It's all about just building your resume."

And I'd just come back from living in Spain for a while, and I'd joined this Fortune 500 company. I thought, "This is fantastic. I'm going to have big impact on the world." I had all these ideas. And within about two months, I noticed at about 10am every morning I had this strange urge to want to slam my head through the monitor of my computer. I don't know if anyone's ever felt that. And I noticed pretty soon after that that all the competitors in our space had already automated my job role. And this is right about when I got this sage advice to build up my resume.

Well, as I'm trying to figure out what two-story window I'm going to jump out of and change things up, I read some altogether different advice from Warren Buffett, and he said, "Taking jobs to build up your resume is the same as saving up sex for old age."
(Laughter)

And I heard that, and that was all I needed. Within two weeks, I was out of there, and I left with one intention: to find something that I could screw up. That's how tough it was. I wanted to have some type of impact. It didn't matter what it was.

And I found pretty quickly that I wasn't alone: it turns out that over 80 percent of the people around don't enjoy their work. I'm guessing this room is different, but that's the average that Deloitte has done with their studies. So I wanted to find out, what is it that sets these people apart, the people who do the passionate, world-changing work, that wake up inspired every day, and then these people, the other 80 percent who lead these lives of quiet desperation.

So I started to interview all these people doing this inspiring work, and I read books and did case studies, 300 books altogether on purpose and career and all this, totally just self-immersion, really for the selfish reason of -- I wanted to find the work that I couldn't not do, what that was for me.

But as I was doing this, more and more people started to ask me, "You're into this career thing. I don't like my job. Can we sit down for lunch?" I'd say, "Sure." But I would have to warn them, because at this point, my quit rate was also 80 percent. Of the people I'd sit down with for lunch, 80 percent would quit their job within two months. I was proud of this, and it wasn't that I had any special magic. It was that I would ask one simple question. It was, "Why are you doing the work that you're doing?" And so often their answer would be, "Well, because somebody told me I'm supposed to." And I realized that so many people around us are climbing their way up this ladder that someone tells them to climb, and it ends up being leaned up against the wrong wall, or no wall at all.

The more time I spent around these people and saw this problem, I thought, what if we could create a community, a place where people could feel like they belonged and that it was OK to

do things differently, to take the road less traveled, where that was encouraged, and inspire people to change? And that later became what I now call Live Your Legend, which I'll explain in a little bit. But as I've made these discoveries, I noticed a framework of really three simple things that all these different passionate world-changers have in common, whether you're a Steve Jobs or if you're just, you know, the person that has the bakery down the street. But you're doing work that embodies who you are. I want to share those three with you, so we can use them as a lens for the rest of today and hopefully the rest of our life.