

## The power of Why

People don't buy **what** you do; they buy **why** you do it.

This statement got me thinking. When I'm facilitating strategic planning with a client we define a mission or purpose for the business. The formula is:

- What do you do?
- Who do you do it for?
- Why do you do it?

The 'Why' has always come last and is invariably the most difficult to define. I now realise it's the most important.

Why does your business exist? Can you verbalise it? Practising what I preach...

- [Stimulus](#) thrives on realising business potential (Why).
- We support the owners of privately held, medium sized companies within New Zealand (Who).
- We engage as an independent director or advise and stimulate action in the areas of strategy, succession and governance. (How/what)

On a slightly (!) different scale let's look at [Apple](#). Just another computer company? No way, yet they have the same access to resources and ideas as their competitors. But look at the start of how they describe their business:

*"Everything we do, we believe in thinking differently."*

The Why. They then go on to describe the how, who and what.

Here's a real life example from a company I'm on the board of. Which sounds better?

*PSL is proud to promote the quality of clinical research in Australasia and of our contribution to improving the health of New Zealanders (WHY). We achieve this through the provision of personalised clinical management and regulatory services (WHAT) to the pharmaceutical industry (WHO).*

or

*PSL provides personalised clinical management and regulatory services (WHAT) to the pharmaceutical industry (WHO). We are proud to promote the quality of clinical research in Australasia and of our contribution to improving the health of New Zealanders (WHY).*

A subtle change but one that I believe is very effective. I am now a strong advocate of leading with 'why'.

A lot of my thinking has been inspired by [Simon Sinek](#) and particularly his [Start with Why](#) video. Viewing the whole 18 minutes is worthwhile but if you are time poor, watch the first 5 minutes.



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One final snippet from Sinek that resonated with me:

*“Martin Luther King made an ‘I have a dream’ speech, not an ‘I have a plan’ speech.”*

Your challenge for February – communicate ‘why’ twice as often as you communicate ‘what’.

Thanks to Richard Wright at [Federation Media](#) for alerting me to the Simon Sinek video.

