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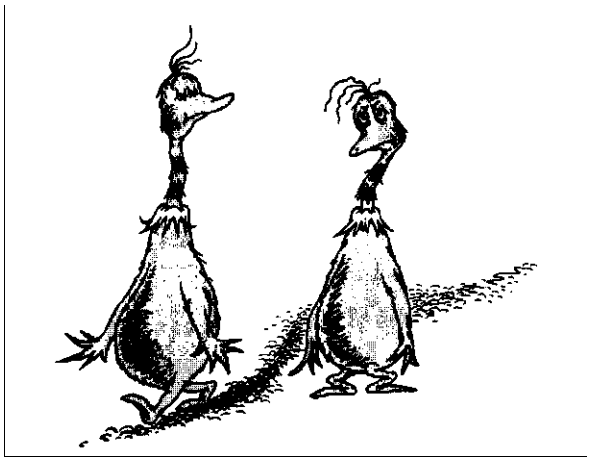
THIS IS NOT OPINION, THIS IS BIOLOGY

Now, the Star-Belly Sneetches had bellies with stars.
The Plain-Belly Sneetches had none upon thars. Those
stars weren't so big. They were really so small. You
might think such a thing wouldn't matter at all.



Then, quickly, Sylvester McMonkey McBean
Put together a very peculiar machine.
And he said, "You want stars like a Star-Belly Sneetch?
My friends, you can have them for three dollars each!"

In his 1961 story about the Sneetches, Dr. Seuss introduced us to two groups of Sneetches, one with stars on their bellies and the other with none. The ones without stars wanted desperately to get stars so they could feel like they fit in. They were willing to go to extreme lengths and pay larger and larger sums of money simply to feel like they were part of a group. But only Sylvester McMonkey McBean, the man whose machine puts "stars upon thars," profited from the Sneetches' desire to fit in.

As with so many things, Dr. Seuss explained it best. The Sneetches perfectly capture a very basic human need—the need to belong. Our need to belong is not rational, but it is a constant that exists across all people in all cultures. It is a feeling we get when those around us share our values and beliefs. When we feel like we belong we feel connected and we feel safe. As humans we crave the feeling and we seek it out.

Sometimes our feeling of belonging is incidental. We're not friends with everyone from our hometown, but travel across the state, and you may meet someone from your hometown and you instantly have a connection with them. We're not friends with everyone from our home state, but travel across the country, and you'll feel a special bond with someone you meet who is from your home state. Go abroad and you'll form instant bonds with other Americans you meet. I remember a trip I took to Australia. One day I was on a bus and heard an American accent. I turned and struck up a conversation. I immediately felt connected to them, we could speak the same language, understand the same slang. As a stranger in a strange city, for that brief moment, I felt like I belonged, and because of it, I trusted those strangers on the bus more than any other passengers. In fact, we spent time together later. No matter where we go, we trust those with whom we are able to perceive common values or beliefs.

Our desire to feel like we belong is so powerful that we will go to great lengths, do irrational things and often spend money to get that feeling. Like the Sneetches, we want to be around people and organizations who are like us and share our beliefs. When companies talk about WHAT they do and how advanced their products are, they may have appeal, but they do not necessarily represent something to which we want to belong. But when a company clearly communicates their WHY, what they believe, and we believe what they believe, then we will sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to include those products or brands in our lives. This is not because they are better, but because they become markers or symbols of the values and beliefs we hold dear. Those products and brands make us feel like we belong and we feel a kinship with others who buy the same things. Fan clubs, started by customers, are often formed without any help from the company itself. These people form communities, in person or online, not just to share their love of a product with others, but to be in the company of people like them. Their decisions have nothing to do with the company or its products; they have everything to do with the individuals themselves.

Our natural need to belong also makes us good at spotting things that don't belong. It's a sense we get. A feeling. Something deep inside us, something we can't put into words, allows us to feel how some things just fit and some things just don't. Dell selling mp3 players just doesn't feel right because Dell defines itself as a computer company, so the only things that belong are computers. Apple defines itself as a company on a mission and so anything they do that fits that definition feels like it belongs. In 2004, they produced a promotional iPod in partnership with the iconoclastic Irish rock band U2. That makes sense. They would never have produced a promotional iPod with Celine Dion, even though she's sold vastly more records than U2 and may have a bigger audience.

U2 and Apple belong together because they share the same values and beliefs. They both push boundaries. It would not have made sense if Apple released a special iPod with Celine Dion. As big as her audience may be, the partnership just doesn't align.

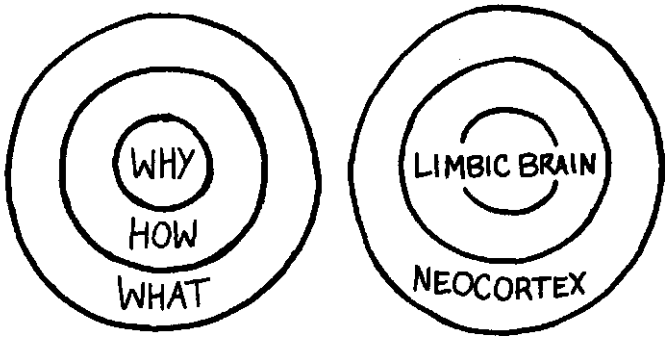
Look no farther than Apple's TV commercials "I'm a Mac and I'm a PC" for a perfect representation of who a Mac user needs to be to feel like they belong. In the commercial, the Mac user is a young guy, always in jeans and a T-shirt, always relaxed and always having a sense of humor poking fun at "the system." The PC, as defined by Apple, is in a suit. Older. Stodgy. To fit in with Mac, you have to be like Mac. Microsoft responded to Apple with its own "I'm a PC" campaign, which depicts people from all walks of life identifying themselves as "PC." Microsoft included many more people in their ads—teachers, scientists, musicians and children. As one would expect from the company that supplies 95 percent of the computer operating systems, to belong to that crowd, you have to be everyone else. One is not better or worse; it depends on where you feel like you belong. Are you a rabble-rouser or are you with the majority?

We are drawn to leaders and organizations that are good at communicating what they believe. Their ability to make us feel like we belong, to make us feel special, safe and not alone is part of what gives them the ability to inspire us. Those whom we consider great leaders all have an ability to draw us close and to command our loyalty. And we feel a strong bond with those who are also drawn to the same leaders and organizations. Apple users feel a bond with each other. Harley riders are bonded to each other. Anyone who was drawn to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. give his "I Have a Dream" speech, regardless of race, religion or sex, stood together in that crowd as brothers and sisters, bonded by their shared values and beliefs. They knew they belonged together because they could feel it in their gut.

Gut Decisions Don't Happen in Your Stomach

The principles of The Golden Circle are much more than a communications hierarchy. Its principles are deeply grounded in the evolution of human behavior. The power of WHY is not opinion, it's biology. If you look at a cross section of the human brain, from the top down, you see that the levels of The Golden Circle correspond precisely with the three major levels of the brain.

The newest area of the brain, our *Homo sapien* brain, is the



neocortex, which corresponds with the WHAT level. The neocortex is responsible for rational and analytical thought and language.

The middle two sections comprise the limbic brain. The limbic brain is responsible for all of our feelings, such as trust and loyalty. It is also responsible for all human behavior and all our decision-making, but it has no capacity for language.

When we communicate from the outside in, when we communicate WHAT we do first, yes, people can understand vast amounts of complicated information, like facts and features, but it does not drive behavior. But when we communicate from the inside out, we're talking directly to the part of the brain that controls decision-

making, and our language part of the brain allows us to rationalize those decisions.

The part of the brain that controls our feelings has no capacity for language. It is this disconnection that makes putting our feelings into words so hard. We have trouble, for example, explaining why we married the person we married. We struggle to put into words the real reasons why we love them, so we talk around it or rationalize it. "She's funny, she's smart," we start. But there are lots of funny and smart people in the world, but we don't love them and we don't want to marry them. There is obviously more to falling in love than just personality and competence. Rationally, we know our explanation isn't the real reason. It is how our loved ones make us feel, but those feelings are really hard to put into words. So when pushed, we start to talk around it. We may even say things that don't make any rational sense. "She completes me," we might say, for example. What does that mean and how do you look for someone who does that so you can marry them? That's the problem with love; we only know when we've found it because it "just feels right."

The same is true for other decisions. When a decision feels right, we have a hard time explaining why we did what we did. Again, the part of the brain that controls decision-making doesn't control language, so we rationalize. This complicates the value of polls or market research. Asking people why they chose you over another may provide wonderful evidence of how they have rationalized the decision, but it does not shed much light on the true motivation for the decision. It's not that people don't know, it's that they have trouble explaining why they do what they do. Decision-making and the ability to explain those decisions exist in different parts of the brain.

This is where "gut decisions" come from. They just feel right. There is no part of the stomach that controls decision-making, it all

happens in the limbic brain. It's not an accident that we use that word "feel" to explain those decisions either. The reason gut decisions feel right is because the part of the brain that controls them also controls our feelings. Whether you defer to your gut or you're simply following your heart, no matter which part of the body you think is driving the decision, the reality is it's all in your limbic brain.

Our limbic brain is powerful, powerful enough to drive behavior that sometimes contradicts our rational and analytical understanding of a situation. We often trust our gut even if the decision flies in the face of all the facts and figures. Richard Restak, a well-known neuroscientist, talks about this in his book *The Naked Brain.* When you force people to make decisions with only the rational part of their brain, they almost invariably end up "overthinking." These rational decisions tend to take longer to make, says Restak, and can often be of lower quality. In contrast, decisions made with the limbic brain, gut decisions, tend to be faster, higher-quality decisions. This is one of the primary reasons why teachers tell students to go with their first instinct when taking a multiple-choice test, to trust their gut. The more time spent thinking about the answer, the bigger the risk that it may be the wrong one. Our limbic brains are smart and often know the right thing to do. It is our inability to verbalize the reasons that may cause us to doubt ourselves or trust the empirical evidence when our gut tells us not to.

Consider the experience of buying a flat-screen TV at your local electronics store. You stand in the aisle listening to an expert explain to you the difference between LCD and plasma. The sales rep gives you all the rational differences and benefits, yet you are still none the wiser as to which one is best for you. After an hour, you still have no clue. Your mind is on overload because you're overthinking the decision. You eventually make a choice and walk out of