



# Purpose Driven Alignment

**Mastery** | **Clarity** | **Wisdom**

## Exercise: Purpose-Driven Alignment

### Objective

Reconnect your leadership team with the organisation's current core purpose. Ensure that principles and activities are aligned to your "Why" to drive strategy with integrity, especially in times of uncertainty or change.

#### Key messages:

- Clear purpose helps navigate complexity
- Values guide consistency in decision-making
- Activities must be mission-aligned - not just inherited or convenient
- Strategic alignment improves impact, morale, and public trust

### Workshop Steps

1. **Clarify Your 'Why' (Individual Reflection)** Each participant writes a short answer to:

"Why do we exist as an organisation *today* -not historically, but in our current context?"

Encourage clarity and simplicity. Avoid generic sector language. Focus on impact, not activity.

2. **Define the 'How' (Group Values Mapping)** As a group, identify 3–5 values or principles that underpin how your organisation operates when it's at its best. These should guide decision-making under pressure. Examples:

- Evidence-informed practice
- Equity and inclusion
- Community-led change
- Financial responsibility with integrity
- Transparency and accountability

3. **List the 'What' (Strategic Priorities)** Create a list of your top 5 current strategic actions or focus areas. Examples for MATs or charities:

- Professional development for staff
- Community engagement programmes
- Streamlining governance processes



- Expanding safeguarding provision
- Diversifying income streams

4. **Conduct a Gap Analysis.** Map each “What” against your “Why” and “How”. Ask:

- Which priorities directly reinforce our purpose?
- Are we doing anything because we always have, not because it still aligns?
- What’s missing that should be more central?

Use this step to identify legacy actions, misalignments, or initiatives that may need to be reconsidered.

5. **Board Report Prompt.** Finish by summarising:

“What are the three most important reflections the board needs to hear from this exercise?”

Encourage honest insights - this is about reconnecting strategy to mission, not justifying the status quo.

**Facilitator Intro Script:**

*“Today we’re starting with a purpose-driven lens. In periods of uncertainty, strong leadership comes from knowing who we are and why we exist.”*

*We’ll use Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle (‘Why, How, What’) to check whether our current actions and principles are really serving our purpose.*

*Start by writing down, in your own words, why this organisation exists now, not when it was founded. We’ll then build out how we deliver on that purpose, and what we’re currently doing. Our goal is to find where we’re aligned and where we’re drifting.”*



## Facilitator Background Briefing

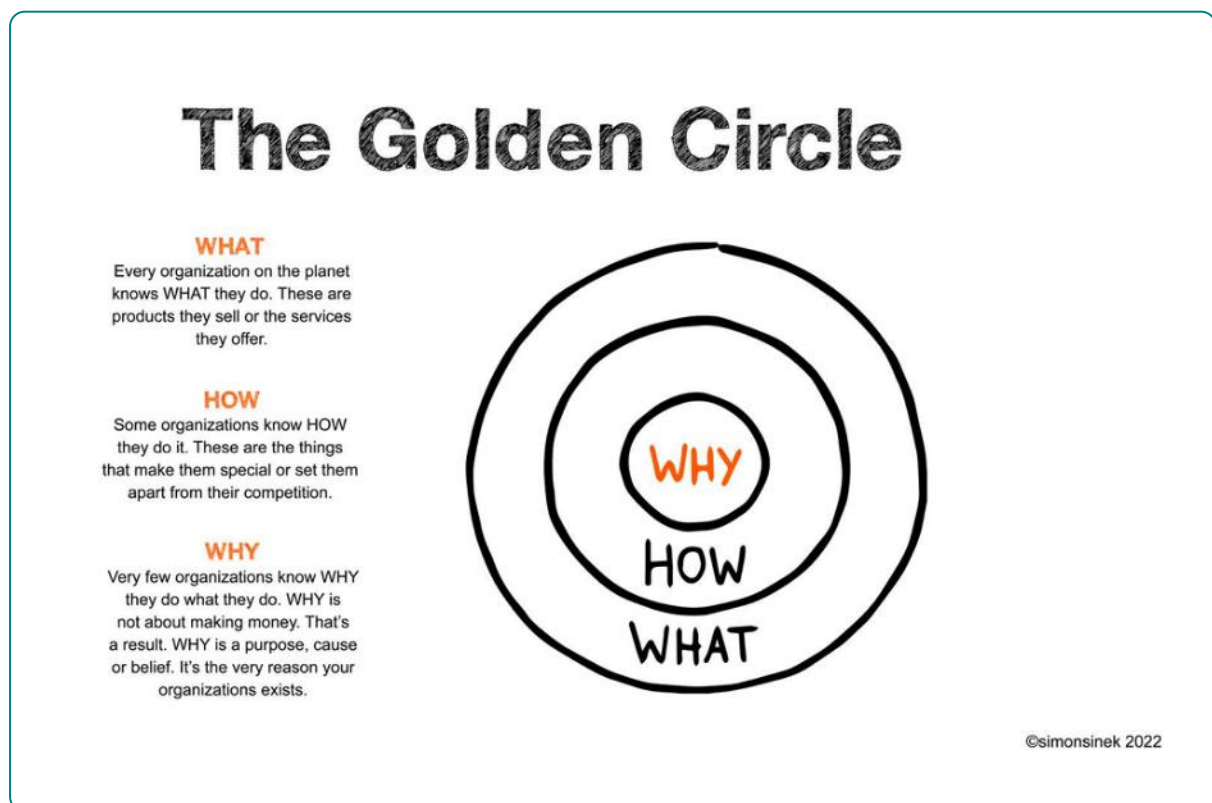
### What is the Golden Circle?

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle is a leadership and communication framework introduced in his 2009 TED Talk and book *Start With Why*. The model proposes that truly inspirational organisations and leaders operate from the inside out, starting with why they exist, before moving on to how they operate and what they do.

The model consists of three concentric circles:

- **Why** – The core purpose, cause, or belief that drives the organisation. It's not about profit, efficiency, or compliance - it's the deeper reason for being.
- **How** – The values, guiding principles, or unique processes that shape the way the organisation delivers on its purpose.
- **What** – The tangible services, outputs, programmes, or actions the organisation delivers.

Sinek writes: "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it."



While he applies this mainly to branding and leadership, it's just as powerful as a strategic clarity tool, especially for purpose-driven organisations navigating uncertainty or change.

### Why It Works Well for Non-Profit Organisations

In charities, schools, and trusts, the pressures of regulation, funding, and public scrutiny can



pull organisations in multiple directions. It becomes easy to lose sight of the original intent, or to prioritise what's measurable over what's meaningful. Sinek's framework brings purpose back into focus.

When applied in a workshop or board context, the Golden Circle:

- Helps re-centre discussions on mission and impact
- Surfaces misalignments between activity and intention
- Encourages leaders to articulate purpose in their own words—not just recite the vision statement
- Supports long-term, values-driven decision-making
- Builds buy-in by connecting operational decisions to shared purpose

#### ☑ Benefits

- Builds clarity and alignment
- Encourages strategic focus
- Strengthens culture and morale
- Makes difficult decisions easier

#### ⚠ Common Pitfalls

- Participants may default to historic or vague mission statements. Encourage them to stay present-focused and concrete

Without honest gap analysis, this becomes an echo chamber. Create space for reflection, not performance

### Golden Circle in Practice: Reflection Questions

To prompt discussion and challenge assumptions, use targeted questions:

For the “Why”:

- *What would the world lose if we no longer existed?*
- *Whose lives are we trying to change—and how?*

For the “How”:

- *What values are non-negotiable, even under pressure?*
- *When we are at our best, what behaviours stand out?*

For the “What”:

- *Are we doing anything out of habit or legacy, not alignment?*
- *What activities consume effort but don't advance our mission?*





### Connecting the Golden Circle to Strategy

Once the Golden Circle is clarified, it becomes a powerful filter for prioritisation:

- Strategic planning: Do new initiatives align with our “Why”?
- Governance oversight: Are we measuring what matters?
- Risk decisions: Will this compromise our values?
- Comms & stakeholder engagement: Are we leading with purpose or process?

In short: clarity on “Why” strengthens resilience, cohesion, and credibility.

### Resources Needed

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Sticky notes or index cards
- Marker pens or pens for all participants

Optional:

- Handouts showing the Golden Circle model
- Timer (optional for breakout timing)

## Worked Example: Small Multi-Academy Trust

### **Why:**

“To ensure every pupil in our care receives a quality education, regardless of background or circumstance.”

### **How:**

- High expectations for all
- Inclusive, trauma-informed practice
- Evidence-led professional development
- Ethical leadership
- Community involvement

### **What:**

- Embedding a new literacy strategy
- Centralising finance and HR functions
- Piloting outdoor learning in KS2
- Running weekly attendance panels
- Launching a digital wellbeing platform




### **Gap Analysis:**

- The literacy strategy and outdoor learning directly support the “Why”
- Attendance panels are time-intensive and often punitive—need review
- Centralisation is efficient but risks distancing local schools—consider feedback loops
- Digital wellbeing aligns with both inclusion and quality, but lacks long-term funding

### **Board Report:**

1. Our “Why” remains strong but needs to guide operational trade-offs more explicitly
2. We identified two “What” priorities that may need realignment or redesign
3. Staff want more opportunities to influence the “How”—culture is a key enabler



Each of our tools encourages structured, values-driven thinking. Use them to bring mastery, clarity and wisdom to volatile decision-making environments.

For help facilitating our activities or adapting them to your board or trust, contact Mastery | Clarity | Wisdom Ltd.

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