



## BUILDING A MEANINGFUL BRAND AS AN RIA

How to achieve success by defining your WHY, HOW, WHAT and WHO

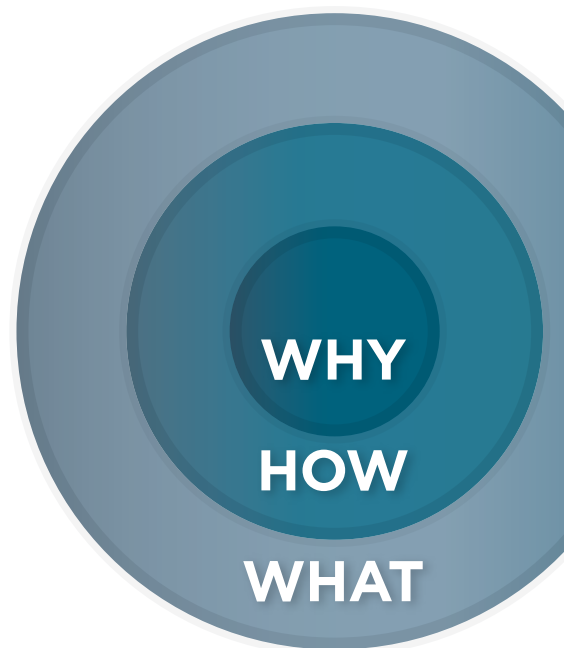


A brand is essential to the success of any business — it's the key to differentiating yourself. The best brands are unique, meaningful and creative. They break through the noise created by the competition, as well as the public's usual indifference. But how do you create a successful brand? Where do you start? That's what this guide is all about.

### THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Simon Sinek, the famous author of *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, suggested a great reason for why some organizations and leaders are able to inspire others and succeed — while others aren't: the Golden Circle. It all comes down to your WHY, HOW and WHAT. Why do you do what you do? How do you do it? And what exactly is it that you do?

**Here's the key.** Most people tend to start with the WHAT of what they do (because that's the easiest to define). They explain what they do, say how they're different and expect some sort of customer behavior. But the inspired organizations are the ones that start with the WHY, and very few people know why they do what they do.



The Golden Circle

---

"For values or guiding principles to be truly effective they have to be verbs. It's not 'integrity,' it's 'always do the right thing.' It's not 'innovation,' it's 'look at the problem from a different angle.' Articulating our values as verbs gives us a clear idea — we have a clear idea of how to act in any situation."

— From Simon Sinek's book, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*

---

**Here's a great example** from Simon Sinek using a company we are all familiar with — Apple. Plenty of companies make computers and electronics, but for some reason, Apple stands out. It's their WHY:

How Apple would talk if they were like everyone else and started with the **WHAT**

"We make great computers. They're beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. Want to buy one?"

How Apple *actually* communicates, starting with the **WHY**

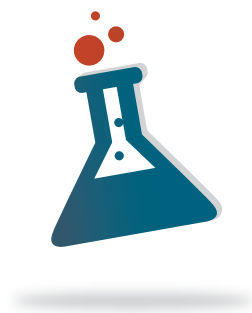
"In everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?"

*From Simon Sinek's talk at TEDx Puget Sound*

So which of the above inspires you? It may seem like just a subtle reversal of order and a few extra words, but it makes a big difference.

**Because people don't buy what you do — they buy why you do it.**

This means that first, you need to know why you do it. And that's why we've created this paper: to help you formulate your WHY and then follow it with your HOW, your WHAT and our personal addition: your WHO.



## BEFORE YOU START...

Before you start formulating your own Golden Circle, you might want to do some competitive research. Are there other RIAs in your area that you're competing with? What are they saying?

What is their WHY, HOW and WHAT? Is there an obvious gap in the competitive landscape you could fill? Keep all this information in the back of your mind as you go through the following steps, because you want to try and differentiate yourself by saying something different from your competitors.



## THE WHY

**What is your purpose? What is your cause? Why does your company exist? Why do you get out of bed every morning? And why should anyone care?**

The first step is answering those questions. In 1-2 sentences, you need to summarize what drives you in a way that resonates with your clients. We know that's easier said than done, but take your time and give it some serious thought. It's important to get this part right before you move on.

This has to be about more than just making money. That's simply one of the end results of what you do. And it can't be about you loving numbers, wanting to own your own business, or being fascinated with markets. What would your investors care about? What can they connect with and be inspired by?

**Here are some themes to get you thinking:**

- Helping people achieve financial freedom
- Protecting families financially
- Creating new financial opportunities for others
- Enabling people to live the lives they want
- Being the one who can simplify something that often seems difficult and scary to the average person

---

## The Trust Company of America WHY

**We exist to help RIAs realize their full potential.**

---

“Recently, when I was asked why I became a financial planner, this was my response: I watched my father work through my first 38 years as a self-employed businessperson, and saw how he just didn't have the tools and guidance he needed to truly enjoy his life and his money. I also saw how difficult it was for my mother and father to talk to each other about money.

So I told myself I would love to help people protect, prepare and provide for themselves, their families and the things they care about — specifically in dealing with life and money.”

– Marty Kurtz, Founder/President, The Planning Center



## THE HOW

**Think of your HOW as your value proposition. How do you plan to fulfill on your WHY in a way that differentiates you from others?**

This is about more than just the products and services you provide, because most RIAs can probably say they offer similar products and solutions.. What's different about you? What do you really excel at? And don't make it just about you. What's the ultimate benefit to your clients?

**Here's one way to approach it:**

1. Start by brainstorming a list of your offerings.
2. Cross out anything on that list that's too generic or uninteresting.
3. Circle the things you're strongest at and are willing to commit to constantly improving.
4. Try to put yourself in your clients' shoes and pick out the things you think would matter most to you.
5. Once you're left with your final set of options, articulate their ultimate high-level benefit to your clients. This should be a natural extension of your WHY.

AFFILIATIONS  
CUSTOMER SERVICE  
PARTNERSHIP  
DEPENDABILITY  
CULTURE  
TECHNOLOGY  
EXPERTISE  
PROVEN RECORD  
**HISTORY**  
AVAILABILITY  
COMMUNICATION  
KNOWLEDGE

## The Trust Company of America HOW

By offering extraordinary levels of non-competitive partnership with our clients, we empower RIAs to evolve their practices by leveraging our specialized expertise, user-friendly technology and culture of RIA-first growth.

## THE WHAT

**What products, services and benefits are you selling, and what do they help your clients achieve?**

This is where it gets easier, because you don't have to be too creative or introspective. Once you get to this step, you just need to succinctly explain what it is that you do, and how people can benefit from becoming your customers. This is essentially Apple's "we make computers."

**Here are a few more relevant examples:**

- We are a boutique provider of financial planning services that uses a full suite of tax, legal and accounting resources to help high-net-worth individuals and families protect their wealth.
- We provide 401K-plan design, administration and education to companies with between 100 and 500 employees.
- We utilize cost-efficient mutual funds to keep fees low so you keep more of your money.

### The Trust Company of America WHAT

We are a leading independent provider of custody, technology and advisory services that radically simplify RIA practice management and growth.



## THE WHO

**Who is your ideal customer and who isn't? For which kind of person is your WHY, HOW and WHAT most relevant?**

This isn't part of Simon Sinek's Golden Circle, but we think it's an important piece for you to consider, because you need to know whom you're selling to. Being able to clearly define your audience will help you create more effective targeting and messaging strategies to capture their attention.

**Here are a few potential considerations for segmenting:**

- |                        |             |                                |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| • Average account size | • Net worth | • Business tenets              |
| • Age                  | • Gender    | • Service expectations & needs |
| • Life phase           | • Location  |                                |

### The Trust Company of America WHO

Growth-oriented RIAs who recognize the value of technology for increasing operational efficiency and enhancing customer experience.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that you've defined your WHY, HOW, WHAT and WHO, you need to create a plan for how you're going to use them. They won't do you any good if they're just hidden away on a piece of paper at the bottom of your briefcase.

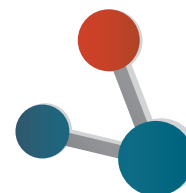


### Build out your brand

You've defined some very important things that serve as the foundation for a brand. Now it's time to think about how that will extend to your manifesto, your tone, your logo, and any other places where your new brand can shine. A great exercise is to give your brand a set of defining personality words that will guide those decisions.

### Share internally

Set up a time to present your new brand to your internal team. Explain your decisions. Get them excited about it, because they should champion your brand just as much as you do.

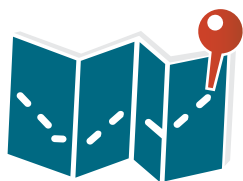


### Share externally

Incorporate your new brand into all outward-facing messaging: your website, your emails, your brochures — even your business cards. A lot of your decisions should have been made with your clients in mind, and they will appreciate that.

### Refine your hiring practices

Surround yourself with people who believe what you believe. You can't be the only one at your company who champions your WHY.



### Create an action plan for the future

You need to always be working towards your WHY. What are 3-5 things on your list of HOWs that you can work on to move you closer to your goal? What can you do in the next week, the next month and the next year? It's okay to start small. Your plan doesn't have to be perfect. Executing a good plan is better than failing to execute a great plan.

### Ready for more?

A great exercise to go through next is to define your brand archetype. A brand archetype is a classic personification of your brand that borrows well-known character types from storytelling (Hero, Maverick, Philosopher, etc.). It will help you define types of characteristics you should inject into your brand identity and voice in order to create a cohesive, resonant story.



## WHY TRUST COMPANY OF AMERICA

At TCA, we have many years of experience helping RIAs define their goals, grow their companies and reach their full potential. We pride ourselves on knowing your business and providing you with unparalleled personalized service.

### **We offer expert consultations on:**

- Your brand and defining your WHY, HOW, WHAT and WHO
- Your website and how it can be improved, including a list of designers and web developers we recommend working with
- Search engine optimization (SEO) and how it can be used drive more traffic to your website
- Using Google analytics to gather insight into what your viewers want

### **We also help create:**

- A branded video to help you market yourself
- A branded Liberty app that enables you, your reps and your clients to track account performance
- Branded client statements to send to your customers

**Please contact us at 1-800-955-0245 or [trustamerica.com/contact-us](https://trustamerica.com/contact-us) to learn more.**

### **About Trust Company of America**

Trust Company of America (TCA) is the only independent RIA custodian offering fully integrated real-time technology, consultative services and back office support exclusively to RIAs. Since 1972, TCA has been a dedicated champion of RIAs, committed to personally helping them optimize their portfolios, streamline their business processes and achieve their full potential — all without competing for their clients. Visit [trustamerica.com](https://trustamerica.com) to learn more.

© Trust Company of America (TCA). All Rights Reserved. Member FDIC Insured – No Bank Guarantee – May Lose Value.