

How to Get and Stay Motivated

By Paul Karasik



My father fought in an Army infantry division during World War II. He was a paratrooper and received a variety of combat commendations including the Purple Heart. For many years after he returned home, he would suffer from attacks of malaria. It was a dramatic reminder of the ordeal he had survived.

Being a fan of war movies, I would often beg him to share stories about what it was like to jump out of a plane behind enemy lines or fight hand-to-hand in the jungles of the Philippines. He flatly refused every time. But he would answer some questions and one of the answers became very significant to me.

Given that he had seen death first hand all around him on a daily basis, I asked what the secret to survival was, and he told me: "Son, I can't really give you any specifics like skills or attitude. We were all pretty equal in

these areas, but I did notice one thing. Almost everybody that came back alive, including me, had pictures. We kept them in our wallets or backpacks or tacked to a tree where we would shave. We kept them close, showed them to our friends, and looked at them all of the time.

"They were usually pictures of wives, sons, daughters and family. I had a picture of your mother, your brother, Alan, and your sister, Marilyn. Maybe we survived because we had a bigger reason to survive and to come home alive."

Similarly, companies that have a compelling core "why" are the most likely to thrive and survive in the face of disruption on an almost daily basis. "Why" occupies the higher realms of the psyche. It provides purpose that is beyond the paycheck. Why resides in the spirit of both the company and the members of the organization.

Why is expressed visibly in what is commonly called the company culture. Why is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of motivation. Why is what drives and motivates individuals to take ownership and responsibility in all aspects of execution. The bigger the why, the greater the motivation.

It is important to understand the dynamics and power of why. Why is not a mental construct. Why goes much deeper than thinking. It is what drives a mother or father to instinctively risk their life to save a child. It is what drives an athlete to practice endlessly to perform beyond their previous limits. It's the force that inspires a philanthropist to donate fortune or time for the benefit of others.

In business, the why is what gets members of the team to forget themselves and get lost in finding creative solutions to the challenges created by change. It is the why that motivates individuals to work harder or longer.

The first step in getting and staying motivated is to establish your why or multiple why's. In business, why is the domain of the mission statement. Unfortunately, many mission statements are ineffective, primarily because they have failed to answer the question: "Why do you do what you do?" Badly conceived mission statements get lost in minutia, features, details and corporate speak.

The best mission statements have gravity and are far reaching in their scope. They connect the spirit of the individual to a purpose that goes beyond "stuff." They identify an

element of service that helps people, society, and the world. They must be simple for everyone and clear enough for a 10-year-old to understand.

Here are a few examples of compelling mission statements of companies you are likely to be familiar with.

- **GOOGLE:**
"... to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."
- **FACEBOOK:**
"...to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together."
- **MICROSOFT:**
"...to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."
- **STARBUCKS:**
"To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time."

- **TRADER JOE'S:**
"...dedication to the highest quality of customer satisfaction delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, fun, individual pride, and company spirit."
- **PATAGONIA:**
"Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."
- **HONEST TEA:**
"... to create and promote great-tasting, healthy, organic beverages."

It is simple to create your mission why statement as leader by simply answering three simple questions:

- Whom do we serve?
- How do we serve?
- What benefits do we deliver?

The mission or "why" you identify or provide your team is a form of spiritual light in business. In the midst of

struggle with change and disruption, it's easy to become negative. Connecting the team to a bigger "why" enables teams to maintain attitudes to weather the storms.

Success is dependent upon maintaining a positive attitude that will foster the creative spirit and liberate the mind to focus on alternatives and solutions.

A big why will motivate in your personal life as well. Why start a fitness regime? Why lose that extra 10 pounds? Why do charity work? Why have children and raise a family?

The bigger the why in your personal life, the more motivated you will be. The more you will invest to succeed. The bigger the why, the greater the motivation.



Paul Karasik is one of America's leading sales and management consultants. He is the president of The Business Institute, a sales and management training and consulting organization, and has spent 18 years helping America's business professionals achieve their goals. He is the author of numerous business books, the most recent of which are "Brilliant Thoughts" and "How to Market to High-Net-Worth Households." He is a frequent speaker and seminar leader at management conferences and advanced sales and marketing programs both nationally and internationally. Paul is the founder and president of the American Seminar Leaders Association.

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