

Workshop guide for leaders

Building the organization's "Why?" in 90 minutes



DURATION

90 minutes

PARTICIPANTS

6 to 12 people from the leadership team

FACILITATION

One person leading and one in support

OUTCOME

A version of the why, tested against real decisions

Objective

For the leadership team to state, in their own words, the organization's why, test it with real decisions and leave with concrete commitments.

Before the workshop

- Invite the top layer: general management, people, marketing and communications, and those who lead key areas.
- Ask each participant to answer the five questions of the brand narrative canvas in writing, on their own.
- Print one canvas per person and prepare sticky notes, markers and a visible clock.
- Pick three recent decisions of the organization (for example, about customers, people and resources) and write them on cards.

Agenda

TIME	BLOCK	WHAT HAPPENS
0:00–0:10	Opening	Purpose of the workshop and ground rules: speak in the first person, do not correct ideas while they are generated, what is said stays in the group.
0:10–0:25	What we do and how	Each person reads their answer to what do we do? and how do we do it?. The group marks matches and differences and agrees on one line for each question.
0:25–0:55	The why	Individual, pair and plenary work (details below). Two or three versions of the why come out.
0:55–1:15	Reality check	The versions are tested against the three recent decisions. The wording is adjusted.
1:15–1:25	The two-minute narrative	In pairs, each person tells the narrative with an example and receives feedback.
1:25–1:30	Commitments and close	Each person commits to one concrete action with their team over the next two weeks.

The central block: the why (30 minutes)

- 01** Individual (5 min)
Each person writes three answers to: why does this organization exist beyond making money? Making money is a result, not a reason.
- 02** In pairs (10 min)
They compare and pick the most inspiring answer. They deepen it by asking “and why does that matter?” up to three times.
- 03** Plenary (15 min)
They post the ideas, group them and draft two or three versions. These are reviewed against three criteria: does it inspire? Does it project the organization into the future? Does it define a style of its own?

Support questions for the facilitator

- What changes in someone's life because this organization exists?
- What would make us stop doing something profitable?
- How would a leader explain it to a newcomer, without reading a slide?
- Where have we acted in a way that contradicts this why?
- Who is not in the room and should be able to tell it just the same?

Common mistakes

- Generic phrases that could belong to any organization. Ask: could our competitor say this?
- Mistaking the why for the competitive advantage or the sales target.
- Polishing the perfect sentence without testing it against real decisions.
- Only the most senior person speaking. Use turns and individual work first.

After the workshop

- Write the narrative on one page and share it with participants within two days.
- Align the rest of the leaders before communicating: they align first and communicate afterwards.
- Activate the narrative in internal communication, onboarding and recognition.
- Measure the team's bond with the organization and measure again after 12–24 months to see how things have evolved.

This guide is a facilitation proposal based on the Brand Imprinting model, not a research result. Adapt it to your organization.

HOW TO CITE

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