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## Dick Maggiore: Foundation for business success boils down to 4 basic questions

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Jump-starting or growing an organization requires answering 'why,' 'where,' 'how' and 'what' to put together effective strategies.

By Dick Maggiore / Special to The Canton Repository

With more than 40 years invested in developing advertising campaigns in all sizes and dimensions, we have learned that regardless of the company or product, the foundation for the work boils down to four basic questions.

They are: Why? Where? How? What?

Today, in our first weekly column for The Repository's expanded Business coverage each Tuesday, we begin a series of discussions about marketing principles. Our aim is to be helpful in jump-starting and growing businesses and other organizations.

So we begin ...

### **Question One: Why?**

What is your "Why?" Why do you do what you do? Why do you exist (beyond making money)? Put another way, what is your company or organization's purpose — your reason for being? What's your why?

As you think about why and weigh the nuances associated with all of those questions, you will begin to gain a clearer picture about your business or organization.

Clarity is critical. Clarity contributes to focus, and focus is the foundation for savvy marketers' successes. Businesses that know exactly why they exist have a better chance of succeeding. Those with fuzzy focus usually fail.

A popular 18-minute **TEDX video** presented by Simon Sinek titled, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," explores "why" in depth.

Sinek is a great storyteller. In his video, he entertainingly explains that for an organization to have a better shot at winning, the "why" must be addressed with the customer in mind. He builds on the customer focus established by American business management pioneer Peter Drucker, who declared, "The purpose of a business is to produce a customer."

So ask yourself why does your organization do what it does? And then we can go to question two.

### **Question Two: Where?**

Where can you win? The question is as important as why you do what you do.

Yes, "where" does include geography, but it refers to much more. Say, for example, you sell sheet metal. Focus on the "where" and your business will benefit.

Where will you sell? Will you sell your steel or aluminum to heating and air-conditioning contractors to make ductwork or to the automobile industry to make car bodies? Will you sell through distributors or direct to HVAC companies or automakers?

Will you sell online or off — or both. Are you going to sell to the higher-priced end of your category or go low price?

They all are "where" questions, and your answers for each are building blocks for your business' foundation.

### **Question Three: How?**

How will you win against the competition? This often is described as your differentiator. We call it the positioning idea.

How is your product or service different from the other choices for your customers.

Not just better, but different?

It's possible you might need some reverse engineering to figure out your differentiator.

For instance, you might discover that determining your differentiation from your competition is difficult based on the "where" you chose. Consider adjusting your "where" so it aligns with your "how."

Alignment's byproduct is focus. And focus helps you with decision-making throughout your organization. That's very important.

#### **Question Four: What?**

What must you put into place to make all this happen? When you know your why, where and how, it's time to execute. This often is where organizations fail. They don't learn why, where and how, and thus find it impossible to know what to do.

So why and where do you do what you do? How will you win? And what must you have ready to succeed in execution? Answer them correctly and you will have the foundation on which to jump-start your business.

Next time, we will provide examples of putting Why, Where, How and What together in one very important positioning statement.

*Dick Maggione is president and CEO of Innis Maggione, founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.*

