Developing the "Why" Frame in Business Decision-Making and Communications:

How Small Start-ups Evolved to be Global Companies

Capstone Research for M.S. in Public Relations and Corporate Communication

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December 9, 2015

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the function of the "why" frame in business decision-making and communications by exploring how successful startups develop and communicate their "why" frames in their business practices. Many companies, especially start-up companies, only focus on communicating the differences of their products. However, studies show that differentiation itself is not enough to establish trust and loyalty. Companies need to earn trust by communicating and demonstrating their core values and beliefs clearly and consistently to their audience. Creating a "why" frame that includes these values and beliefs within the corporation becomes very important.

This Capstone focuses on three case studies of the most successful startups of the past two decades, namely, Google, Facebook, and Uber. It also contrasts them to their competitors. The findings indicate that the "why" frame is not simply a slogan-like mission statement, though mission and vision are essential parts of the "why" frame. A solid "why" frame is based on a variety of aspects, including the founding story, the founders' backgrounds, the corporate culture and values, as well as the mission and vision. All the aspects are consistent and in correspondence with each other, displaying a full picture of the company's cause and belief. Moreover, the "why" frame is not static, but constantly evolving as the company is growing. While less successful companies concentrate on talking about what their products or services are when communicating internally and externally, successful companies start with why.

I. Introduction

To stand out from competitors and to survive in rapidly changing business environments, most companies, especially start-ups, spend the majority of their time in differentiating their products or services. They focus on communicating and promoting their superior quality, features and prices in order to grab attention, and they usually achieve those goals. However, later they find out that their marketing and PR strategies work only for a short time; they need to develop new strategies sooner to maintain the momentum.

Conversely, other companies concentrate first on crafting and communicating their beliefs and values before introducing differences: they consequently experience a completely different path of success. They do not worry too much about keeping public attention because their customers and employees are not temporary followers, but loyal disciples who are willing to turn down a better product, a better price, or a better offer, and continue doing business with them even in hard times.

When Apple first launched the iPod 14 years ago, they did not revolutionize Mp3 technology. Actually, the technology used in the iPod was invented by Creative Technology Ltd., a Singapore-based company specializing in sound and audio, and also had their Mp3 product at that time. Creative introduced the invention 22 months before Apple released the iPod. However, they marketed their product as a "5GB Mp3 player," while Apple promised everyone "1,000 songs in your pocket." The difference lies in that Creative told us what their product was but Apple told us why we needed it. Two years later, Dell saw the booming Mp3 market and started

to produce their own Mp3 players. Although Dell was famous for its product quality, people could not see the reason why they expanded into the small electronic goods market. In the end, poor sales forced Dell to go back to their core business as a computer company. The strategy was right, but soon Dell was overshadowed again by Apple's revolutions in personal computing (Sinek, 2009).

What we can learn from the previous example is the importance of "why" in corporate communication. Apple grasped the essence of "why" and successfully communicated it to its audience, while Dell and Creative were confused about their "why" and put the most efforts on what they were doing. Apple's "why" is deeply rooted into its corporate identity and values. When they say "1,000 songs in your pocket," instead of "5GB Mp3 player," they see themselves as the game-changer of the music industry — not just a technology company that can produce advanced devices. Being a game-changer or challenging the status quo is Apple's mission in the world: the revolutions Apple has brought to us in the past decade have proven that.

Companies influential on a global scale usually follow a similar communication strategy. They tell us first why they exist before talking about what they are selling. They know that to successfully connect with their audience, they need to first address what their audience is concerned about, not what is important only to themselves. The origin of their "why" often comes from the companies' genesis stories and the core values they have always embraced. They are not simply slogans for the purpose of grabbing attention, but something the corporations truly believe in and are willing to fight for: they are the foundations of the corporations' missions and visions.

This paper will examine the function of the "why" frame in corporate communication and explore how leaders from successful startups develop and communicate their "why" frames in business practices. It will focus on three case studies of the most successful startups (now global companies) from the past two decades: Google, Facebook, and Uber. Moreover, the paper will study the impact of their "why" frames on sustainability of business. I believe companies with "why" frames in their corporate communications are more likely to successfully adapt to changes and survive crisis, compared to those who only focus on business differentiation. Additionally, they are more competitive in maintaining stakeholders' trust in the long run.

II. Literature Review

1. Simon Sinek's "Start With Why"

In his book *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek (2009) argues that only a few leaders and companies truly inspire rather than manipulate in order to motivate people. Those individuals or corporations think, act, and communicate exactly the same way – they start with why. Different from most of us that often focus on delivering information, they start their conversations by talking about why they do what they are doing. Sinek also introduces "The Golden Circle" which according to him is the communication pattern those successful leaders and companies often use – communicating from inside out.

The Golden Circle consists of three layers, in which the most outside layer is "what", the middle layer is "how", and the core of the circle is "why." He points out that all companies know what they do, no matter how big or small, no matter what industry. They know the features of their products or services, and those features are easily identifiable. Some companies know how they do what they do. They develop strategies or "unique selling points" to differentiate themselves from competitors, and they are able to communicate those differences to their audience. However, very few companies know why they do what they do. They may have a "mission statement" on their websites, but the "statement" is about their differentiations, not their purposes, causes or beliefs. They do not clearly demonstrate why anyone should care about what they are doing (Sinek, 2009).

Sinek encourages companies to communicate from inside out, from "why" to "what", rather than from outside in. He further explains this theory by drawing scientific evidences. "The power of WHY is not opinion. It's biology. If you look at a cross section of the human brain, from the top down, you see that the levels of The Golden Circle correspond precisely with the three major levels of the brain" (Sinek, 2009). At the outside-most level is the neocortex, which is responsible for rational and analytical thought and language. The middle and core sections are called the limbic brain, which controls all of our feelings, such as trust and loyalty. It is directly related to our behaviors and decision-making. When we communicate from inside out, we are talking directly to the part of the brain that makes decisions, and the analytical part of the brain allows us to rationalize those decisions (Sinek, 2009).

However, the correlation Sinek strives to make has been challenged by some biologists and neuroscientists. Herman Mays (2014), an evolutionary biologist and professor from Marshall University, says that there is very little empirical, scientific support for Sinek's Golden Circle. He points out that it is problematic that Sinek claims the neocortex as responsible for all rational and analytical thought. "First, the neocortex is not unique to humans. Second, while it may be true that some brain functions are often localized, strict functional compartmentalization of the brain for most complex cognitive processes is an idea with dwindling empirical support."
Paul Middlebrooks (2015), a neuroscientist, also comments, "If you are referring to Sinek's claim that the limbic brain system does 'Why' and 'How', and the cortex does 'What', I can tell you we do not understand brain systems anywhere close to the point to make a claim like that."

Although there is still dispute on the theory's scientific root, "The Golden Circle" itself has its unique value for communication practice and is widely accepted by many leaders and marketers. From a linguistics perspective, the study of issue framing to some extent complements "The Golden Circle" theory. Human beings think in frames. According to George Lakoff (2006), linguistics and cognitive science professor at University of California, Berkley, and also known as "the father of framing," frames are mental structures that directly connect with the worldview we have in our mind. It is the source of decision-making and it cannot be easily changed by any information we receive, but selectively adapt to the facts that can fit in. In comparison to "The Golden Circle," frame locates at the "why" circle and organizes the information sent and received at the "how" and "what" level. For example, when we are making friends with other people, we do not simply throw out facts about ourselves, but try to find shared interests or beliefs. Those common interests or beliefs are based on the shared frames existing in our minds.

2. Framing in Communication

Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions – George Lakoff

2.1 The Concept of Framing and Its Function in Communication

In many situations, corporations are like politicians. To generate actions, whether it is buying a product, using a service, or supporting a cause, they need to win the hearts and minds of their

audience as politicians need to win the hearts and minds of their voters. Studies from cognitive science have shown us that human beings think in frames. We cannot see or hear frames, but they are part of our daily communication. When we say a word, we trigger the entire system related to that word. For example, when we say "war," the frame invoked in our minds includes a variety of things related to war such as soldiers, weapons, armies, commanders, attacks, and battlefields (Lakoff, 2006). Frames develop through substantial efforts and time; once the systems have been established, they are highly resistant to change. That is the reason why information itself is not powerful enough to connect with people: the facts must fit people's frames. If the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts will be ignored (Lakoff, 2014).

The communication process is to activate and connect with the frames in our unconscious mind. To complete this mission, rationality itself is not enough — it requires emotion. It used to be believed that emotions were bad for decision-making. Leaders and companies often try to communicate in a data-driven way in order to present the objectivity of their views. However, Lakoff's study tells us that when people intentionally stop feeling emotions, they also lose the capacity to think rationally (Lakoff, 2006). Many other studies on emotional intelligence have also proven that feelings actually play a central role in communication. They directly influence our memory recall, reasoning processes, creativity and decision-making. They help us weigh our options, make choices, and act wisely in the moment (Fairhurst, 2011).

Therefore, framing is significant in any effective communication. The most successful campaigns in the past all integrated and demonstrated the art of framing. In his campaign for the American Tobacco Company in the 1920s, Edward Bernay framed the whole campaign around

the issue of gender equality. For addressing the stigma of women smoking cigarettes, he used the term "Torches of Freedom" to communicate directly to all women at that time. It created a huge sensation as it challenged the stereotypes about women at that time. In the twentieth century, it was thought that only fallen women and prostitutes would smoke. Only sly and devious women were shown to be smoking on screen. This campaign triggered a discussion about those stereotypes by activating the frames associated with gender equality.

Bernay's practices of framing profoundly influenced modern public relations. In 2013, Dove launched a campaign named "Real Beauty Sketches" to address the relationship between beauty and women's self-esteem. In a three-minute video, several women describe themselves to an FBI-trained forensic artist who cannot see them. The same women are then described by strangers whom they met the previous day. In the end, the sketches for each woman are compared, with the stranger's image invariably being both more flattering and more accurate. The differences, when revealed, create strong emotional reactions in the participants and provoke a rethinking of beauty in both the participants and the audience.

Framing is also crucial during a crisis. Corporations that successfully incorporate framing into crisis communications can usually see healthy and organized communication with their stakeholders. In contrast, those who fail to do so are often troubled by rumors and media speculation. In the crises following the crashes of Flight MH370 and Flight MH17 last year, Malaysia Airlines experienced two huge communication disasters that later led the corporation into bankruptcy. Especially during the crisis of MH370, the information delay, the inconsistency among the stories of different parties, and the miscommunication with the victims' families

generated huge media speculation on the issue. Although lack of information was a major

obstacle for the airline's crisis communications, they could have managed the uncertainty by

properly framing the situation to different stakeholders. However, they messed up the framing

opportunity by presenting frames that are inconsistent with each other. At the beginning, the

communication focused on the "missing plane" frame as the investigation was in progress. Under

the "missing plane" frame, people believed that there was still hope for survival. A week later,

the victims' families suddenly received a text message from the airline announcing that "MH370

has been lost and none of those on board survived." This announcement triggered the "crashing

plane" frame that the media around the world had speculated about. However, the airline could

not provide sufficient evidence to confirm the crash of the plane. Therefore, they immediately

lost credibility among victims' families. Protests and criticism flooded the airline and the

Malaysian embassy in Beijing.

2.2 The Science and Emotion Behind Framing

A psychology study conducted by researchers Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky (2011) from

Stanford University, reveals that metaphors have a profound influence on how we conceptualize

and act on a specific social issue. In their experiments, they designed two contrasting metaphors

for crime: crime as a virus and crime as a beast. They divided the participants into two groups

and gave them two similar crime reports describing the increasing crime rates in the City of

Addison. The statistics in the reports were the same, but in the first report, crime was

metaphorically described as a beast preying on Addison, while in the second report, crime was

presented as a virus infecting Addison:

Crime is a [wild beast preying on/virus infecting] the city of Addison. The crime rate in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past three years. In fact, these days it seems that crime is [lurking in/plaguing] every neighborhood. In 2004, 46,177 crimes were reported compared to more than 55,000 reported in 2007. The rise in violent crime is particularly alarming. In 2004, there were 330 murders in the city, in 2007, there were over 500.

After reading the reports, participants were asked to respond how they would recommend solving Addison's crime problem. The results showed that being exposed to different metaphors greatly influenced how people conceptualized the issue and approached solutions. Those who read the "crime as beast" report were more likely to propose law-related solutions, for example, hiring more police officers, building more jails, catching and punishing the criminals, modifying the criminal justice system, and strengthening law enforcement. However, those who read the "crime as virus" report were inclined to suggest social reform related solutions, for example, investigating the underlying cause of the problem, improving education, fixing the economy, or providing healthcare. These are two entirely different approaches to solving problems induced by the exposure to two different metaphors. Moreover, at the end of the experiment, when participants were given opportunity to identify the most influential aspect of the crime report, they all ignored the metaphor but chose the statistics as being influential in their reasoning (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

This study vividly reveals the power of frames in our reasoning process. Even a simple one-word metaphor that may go unnoticed can manifest complex knowledge structures that influence people's reasoning on a particular issue.

We found that metaphors exert an influence over people's reasoning by instantiating frame-consistent knowledge structures, and inviting structurally-consistent inferences. Further, when asked to seek out more information to inform their decisions, we found that people chose information that was likely to confirm and elaborate the bias suggested by the metaphor – an effect that persisted even when people were presented with a full set of possible solutions (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

Moreover, the experiments also show that metaphors are most effective when they are presented early in the narrative and have significant impact on "organizing and coercing further incoming information" (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

Needless to say, the metaphor is one essential type of frame. In the book *Whose Freedom*, Lakoff (2006) further explains from the perspective of cognitive science how frames work in our lives. He points out that most thought uses conceptual metaphors, and the metaphorical frames in our brains define common sense. "Metaphorical thought is normal and used constantly, and we act on these metaphors….Commonsense reasoning is just the reasoning we do using the frames and metaphors in our brains" (Lakoff, 2006). Moreover, Lakoff also divides frames into "surface" and "deep." Surface frames are related to particular words or phrases, while deep frames connect directly with our worldviews and moral systems. In communication, deep frames are the ones that inspire actions because "they characterize moral and political principles that are part of your identity." In contrast, the surface frames are effective only given the deep frames. "Without the deep frames, there is nothing for the surface message frames to hang on" (Lakoff, 2006). The "why" frame discussed in this paper belongs to the category of deep frame. In addition, Lakoff (2006) mentions that frames have boundaries. When we think within a frame, we tend to ignore

what is outside the frame. Take the "war on terror" as an example. When this frame is triggered in our minds, the picture includes Iraqi soldiers, tanks, planes, and probably Saddam Husein as they fit the semantic roles of the frame. However, we will not associate this frame with Iraqi culture, education or economics as they do not fit into the "war" frame.

As in Thibodeau and Boroditsky's study, when people were exposed to the "crime as beast" frame, they focused on the result of the crime as we usually regard a beast as a huge threat to our lives. However, when people were exposed to the "crime as virus" frame, they concentrated more on the cause of the crime because we usually believe that to cure a disease, we need first to find the cause. Once people started thinking inside a frame, the reasoning process followed everything that conventionally fit into the frame. It was hard for normal participants to realize this unconscious process without being made aware of both frames at the beginning.

The resources for framing often come from our own thought processes. Lakoff reveals that most thought is unconscious and we may not be aware of our own reasoning processes. "The concepts we think with are physically instantiated in the synapses and neural circuitry of our brains. Because thought occurs at the neural level, most of our thinking is not available to conscious introspection" (Lakoff, 2006). Moreover, most of our thought processes are subdivided into mental models. Fairhurst (2011) mentions in her book *The Power of Framing* that a mental model is the representation of a human mind's thought process. Everything that a person sees is represented as models inside his/her minds. They help people make sense of the world through categories, concepts, identities, prototypes, narratives, etc. We use these mental models to make sense of reality (Fairhurst, 2011). Inventors comprehend the mental model of their consumers to

understand their demands and needs. In business, people use mental models to do daily transactions more economically. Framing is based on the mental models we have developed. However, sometimes in urgent circumstances, such as a crisis, we do not have time to develop new mental models for a specific framing situation. Therefore, we need a channel to connect with the models we already have, and priming can be an effective way to achieve it.

Priming, in cognitive psychology, is an unconscious form of human memory concerned with perceptual identification of words and objects. It refers to the activation of particular representations or associations in memory just before carrying out an action or task (Psychology Today). For example, a person who sees the word "yellow" will be slightly faster to recognize the word "banana." This happens because yellow and banana are closely related in memory (Psychology Today). In communications practice, we can train ourselves or others to automatically pull out specific mental models by consciously and periodically priming them. For example, leaders who want to turn mission statements into working philosophies can prime the core mental models of employees on a regular basis so that they will constantly be mindful of the organizations' purpose and discipline themselves to adhere to its values and beliefs (Fairhurst, 2011). To some extent, communication itself is part of the priming process. When leaders are communicating the corporate values to their employees and customers, they also enhance the mental models in their own minds.

As discussed in the previous section, effective communication requires not only rationality, but also emotional intelligence. Generally speaking, psychologists describe emotional intelligence as the ability to identify and manage our emotions and the emotions of others so as to assist thought

and make reasonable decisions (Elder, 1996). To effectively frame an issue or a situation, communicators or leaders must first understand the emotional conditions of both themselves and their audience in order to find the right time for framing. Emotionally intelligent people reflect on and treat their own emotions as data, combining reason and emotion to facilitate the right decision and framing for the benefit of those involved (Fairhurst, 2011).

3. Managing Trust in Corporate Communications

The fundamental purpose of corporate communications is to connect with a potential audience and to maintain a relationship with them. As we all know, any relationship is based on trust. Trust is not a rational experience, but a feeling, an emotion — a sentiment. Sometimes we trust some people and companies even when things go wrong, but sometimes we do not trust others even though everything goes as it should. "Trust begins to emerge when we have a sense that another person or organization is driven by things other than their own self-gain," notes Sinek (2009) in his book.

However, the reality is that many companies and leaders do not realize the irrational nature of trust and the necessity of establishing a trusting environment. In many organizations, communication is conducted in a one-way, top-town manner, by the executives, or their PR people; all the internally assembled information is then passed down to their employees. They often defend the good intentions of this communication style, "We just did something. And communication is good. Let's communicate what we just did" (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). Very often, employees do not even bother to open the emails or materials because they assume it is not

related to them. In this way, how can corporations engage their employees as brand ambassadors? If employees cannot feel cared for and trusted, how can the company convince them to stay in hard times? Moreover, if an unhealthy environment gradually forms in which employees ignore most of the information delivered through formal channels, but prefer other informal channels, it will create potential danger for an organization's long-term reputation.

Sinek (2009) clearly points out in his book that trust comes from a sense of value, not superficial values such as money, but those that can define where we belong. We cannot convince someone by simply saying "I trust you", but we need to earn his/her trust by communicating and demonstrating that we share the same values and beliefs as he/she does. We have to talk about our "why" and prove it with "what" we do. In other words, we have to be authentic. However, if we do not even know why the organization or the products exist in the first place, it is impossible to know whether the things we say or do are authentic or not. Authenticity cannot be achieved without the clarity of why, and it is essential for the long-term success of an organization.

III. Methodology

This paper will focus on three case studies, namely, Google, Facebook, and Uber. The case studies aim to explore the function of the "why" frame in the evolution of the companies, from startup to global scale. In the case studies, four aspects will be examined based on the following questions. (1) What is the company's "why" frame? (2) How has the "why" frame been developed? (3) How does the company communicate its "why" frame? (4) What is the impact of the "why" frame on its business decision-making and its performance in crisis?

The resources for these case studies come from secondary research about the three companies, including books based on in-depth observation of the subject companies, news coverage, financial performance, videos of CEO interviews, mission statements, company blogs, press releases etc. The data and information collected range from the companies' founding stories, developing histories, corporate cultures and values, to the relationships between their major business transformations and the impact on the general development of the society.

The case studies will be first conducted separately and then subject to comparison and contrast in discussion. The paper will compare the three case studies and further examine the relationship between their corporate "why" frame and the impact on their business practices. It will also draw other failed cases into discussion and suggest a practice guideline for developing and implementing the "why" frame in daily decision-making and communications.

IV. Case Study 1 – Google

1. Google's "Why"

1.1 "Focus on the user and all else will follow"

Since their early days at Stanford, Larry Page and Sergey Brin wanted to create the best search engine in the world. It is the reason that Google exists in the first place. Back in the early years at Stanford University as PhD computer science students, both Page and Brin were looking for topics for their dissertations. The future of search engine industry at that time was still gloomy and unpredictable. Few companies were willing to spend time and money on search engines. Big companies like Yahoo and Excite were more interested in being portals than search engines. The search engines at that time such as Alta Vista could only offer the basic keyword search. "If you did a search for 'university' on Alta Vista, it heaved at you every text that contained the word 'university,' without ranking value or assessing whether people were actually using the links," notes Ken Auletta (2009) in his book *Googled: The End of the World as We Know It.*

Page and Brin also point out in their joint dissertation that the initial search engines such as Alta Vista, Highbot, Lycos, Excite, Infoseek, GoTo, Yahoo were not objective, as they relied on humans to create search results for specific topics. "They were more interested in becoming sticky portals that trapped users on their sites, which diluted their focus on search by allowing advertisers to buy their way to the top of the search results" (Auletta, 2009). Page and Brin felt that what was desperately needed in search was a way to ensure that users received the most

relevant information to meet their search needs impartially. Soon after, they created an algorithm – dubbed PageRank after Page's name – that operated by taking into account the number of links to a particular site and the number of links to each of the linking sites. Instead of relying on keywords as earlier search engines had, PageRank counted the sites that were most frequently visited by users, analyzed the relationships between them, and pushed the most relevant information to the top of the search results. They believed that this "wisdom of crowds" approach was a more objective way of measuring which webpages were most important (Auletta, 2009). They knew clearly that their primary goal was to improve the quality of search results, which had become less of a priority for some existing companies at that time for whom generating methods to make money from search had become a higher priority (Auletta, 2009).

Since Google's founding in 1998, the search remains the core competency of Google. Although more and more new features have been added year after year, it never ceases to fulfill its original mission of creating the best search engine for users. Products such as Google Maps and Gmail are built on this competency, and Google continues to seek ways to develop new products based on its commitment to constantly improving search (Scott, 2008). Among the "Ten Things We Know To Be True" on the company's website, the second one is "It's best to do one thing really, really well." Google's commitment to making the best search engine and producing the best results for search has never wavered in the history of the company.

1.2 "Smart Creatives"

Google has been the No.1 on *Fortune Magazine*'s "Best Company to Work For" list six times

since 2006. In 2006, compared to Google, tech giant Yahoo was 44th on the list and Microsoft

was 50th. In 2015, Google still tops the list, but Yahoo and Microsoft are out of the top 50. One

thing that distinguishes Google from other companies is the unique character of Google's

employees. They are called "Googlers," as well as "Smart Creatives." Google regards its

employees as part of its mission to "make the world a better place" (Levy, 2011). Page once said

in an interview, "We don't just want you to have a great job. We want you to have a great life.

We provide you with everything you need to be productive and happy on and off the clock"

(Levy, 2011).

Former CEO Eric Schmidt describes Googlers as "smart creatives" who are ambitious, hard-

working, and "willing to question the status quo and attack things differently" (Schmidt &

Rosenberg, 2014). These characteristics can be found in the two founders themselves and their

original team who began in their garage in Menlo Park, California. Google's first employee,

Craig Silverstein, was also a computer science grad from Stanford who believed in the power of

technology. Page and Brin have known the importance of people since the beginning of the

company, and they take hiring very seriously. They understand that early employees set the tone

for the company. There has been a tradition in Google's hiring practices even after the company

moved to Palo Alto, that the last word always goes to Larry Page, who insists on signing off on

every employee hired at Google. Page does not think it makes him look like a micro-manager,

but regards it as a necessary process to guarantee the unity of Google's corporate culture, which

he believes is the foundation of Google's mission in this world (Levy, 2011).

1.3 "Don't be evil"

"Don't be evil" sets up the basic moral standard for Google, Googlers and everything they are

doing. This term originated in a meeting early in the company's life. In the meeting, the

engineers, along with Page and Brin, were debating the merits of a change to the advertising

system, one that had the potential to be very profitable for the company. One of the engineering

leads pounded the table and said, "We can't do that, it would be evil." The room suddenly

became quiet (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). When the meeting ended, "Don't be evil" was just a

feeling and a broad statement in people's minds. However, one engineer, Amit Patel, who was

also one of the very first employees, believed that the phrase really said it all for Google:

followed that commandment, and the rest should take care of itself. He then wrote this term

everywhere he could and created a powerful effect within the company, especially among the

engineers. Alan Eustace, Google's director of engineering, believed that the motto simply

reflected what was in the souls of Googlers: "I look at people here as missionaries – not

mercenaries," he says (Levy, 2011)

Today, "don't be evil" has become Google's creed. It is integrated into the Google brand, the

corporate culture, and the "why" behind the decisions made. From hiring new Googlers,

developing new products, and building new services, to looking for investors, expanding to

global markets, and going public, Page, Brin, and all Googlers ask themselves first "is it evil to

do this?" Although, ironically, this creed has been challenged by media around the world when

Google has expanded globally, the founders themselves have always embraced "Don't be evil"

as their own hopes for the company. Since Google's creation, Page and Brin have dreamed of

finding a solution that would gather the world's information and present it in the way people

mostly need. By believing and serving the end users with their inventions, Page and Brin have

seen the power of technology in making the world a better place. As they continue their journey,

they need followers who share this vision and belief.

2. Developing the "Why"

For a typical startup company, the formation of "why" is associated with its founders and their

life stories. "You can't understand Google," said Marissa Mayer, one of the first Google

employees, "unless you know that both Larry and Sergey were Montessori kids" (Levy, 2011).

"Montessori" refers to schools that have adopted the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori,

an Italian physician and educator, who believed that children should be given the freedom to

pursue whatever interests them. Children raised in the Montessori schools are more inclined to

challenge the status quo and push boundaries without asking for permission. They make

independent decisions.

When Page and Brin first met at Stanford in 1995, they had a big debate on local zoning and city

planning. At that time, Page had just arrived at Stanford while Brin was his group's orientation

week tour guide. "We [have] argued a lot since first meeting," recalled Brin (Levy, 2011). This

kind of natural instinct to question authority later became the inspiration for the unique Google

management methodology. Former CEO Eric Schmidt (2014) mentions in his book *How Google

Works* that unlike other organizations where people usually long for hierarchy, Googlers prefer a

flat organization, "less because they want to be closer to the top, but more because they want to

get things done and need direct access to decision-makers." Page and Brin once tried to accommodate this need by abandoning managers altogether. Although this novel practice was eventually replaced, this showed the founders' willingness to experiment with typical management style that matched the company's "why." Google has still maintained its start-up culture, as inspired by the founders' life experiences, even today.

However, when a startup is rapidly growing, the original "why" may not be sufficient to facilitate a bigger vision. With more people joining in the cause, it is necessary to enrich the original "why" frame by creating shared values: the corporate culture. Google established its culture very early. "Even when we were three people, we had a culture," says Silverstein, "partly it's just our personalities, and partly it was the vision that we had for the company" (Levy, 2011). According to Susan Wojcicki, who owned the house that hosted the company after it moved from Stanford, Google's origins in a residential setting, with all the comforts of home, set a tone for the eventual working environment the company would offer its employees. "Because they were working out of a house, they realized that a lot of these conveniences are really important to have," she says. "For example, having a shower is really important. When you're attracting a really young group that's mostly come out of college, having these services is pretty important, like having the food around, having a washer and dryer" (Levy, 2011). Page and Brin had long been thinking of creating an environment similar to a university, rather than a typical corporation, so that they could better implement their original "why." After all, the company began in a Stanford dorm room. By creating a university-like environment, the founders have encouraged Googlers to share a supportive, collaborative, and ideas-focused culture.

Their efforts in incubating, enriching, and integrating their "why" into the corporate culture can also be found in their strict hiring process. According to Schmidt (2014), Google's leaders treat every potential Googler with the same level of intensity during interviews. It does not matter whether the person will be an entry-level software engineer or a senior executive. The leaders invest the same amount of time and energy to ensure the quality of hiring. This is consistent with Page and Brin's original mentality of creating a university environment within Google. "Universities usually don't lay professors off, so they invest a lot of time in getting faculty hiring and promotion right, normally using committees. This is why we believe that hiring should be peer-based, not hierarchical, with decisions made by committees, and it should be focused on bringing the best possible people into the company, even if their experience might not match one of the open roles." explains Schmidt.

One of the most important values Google upholds in its culture is openness and transparency. This is rooted in their original "why" and consistent with their larger "why" frame. Google has a tradition of sharing the board meeting results with all of their employees even if it is not necessary for public consumption. "We try to share virtually everything. The company's Intranet MOMA includes information on just about every upcoming product…we trust our employees with all sorts of vital information, and they honor that trust," says Schmidt (2014). This internal transparency works in correspondence with their external openness. Google has a special relationship with the technology community of engineers and programmers. Unlike corporations such as Microsoft and Apple that regard their source codes as secret to their innovation, Google has created an interactive learning community around its products and services by opening its source code to developers and inviting programmers to use it and to share their use of it with

Google's engineers (Scott, 2008). Page and Brin are strong advocates of open-source code and they believe innovation lies in the exchange of ideas, not information hoarding. This is also why Google constantly offers free tools to average Google users as well as free products and services to small and large businesses.

3. Communicating the "Why"

For long-term success, it is not enough for companies to only have a "why" frame, but more importantly to communicate the "why" frame to its stakeholders. Thanks to the open and bottom-up corporate culture, Google is able to communicate its "why" consistently and efficiently. Since the early stage of its development, every Friday afternoon at 4:30 p.m., there is the all-hands meeting called TGIF. The early TGIF is a way for Page and Brin to announce the latest news, introduce new employees, and maybe give someone a birthday wish. Over the years, the format of the TGIFs has become more formalized with emphasis on "no-holds-barred" Q & A from all employees. Page and Brin always host the session unless they are out of town. As Google begins opening offices around the country and the world, TGIFs have been webcast to those locations (Levy, 2011).

Also, since its early years, Google adopts a special management system called Objective and Key Results (OKR) to facilitate the internal transparency of communication. Every employee has to set, post, and update their OKRs company-wide every quarter. "When you meet someone at Google and want to learn more about what they do, you go on MOMA and read their OKRs… It's the fastest way to figure out what motivates them to do what they are doing." says Schmidt

(Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). OKRs start from the top. Every quarter, Page, Brin or executive teams will post their OKRs and host a company-wide meeting to candidly discuss where they failed and why. After the meeting, other Googlers go off to create their own OKRs with a clear conscience of the company's priorities for that quarter.

As mentioned before, Page and Brin's original concept of a corporation is based on the university model. In a university, students have mentors to instruct them in thesis research and professors also have office hours to answer students' questions. At Google, to connect the new "smart creative" with "tribal elders" who possess unique expertise in their fields and a deep knowledge of the organization, the leaders team also hold regular office hours (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). Take Marissa Mayer as example. She is employee No.20 at Google in its early days, and now the president and CEO of Yahoo. During her time at Google, she set aside a few hours per week where anyone could come and talk to her. People signed up on a white board outside her office, and on Wednesday afternoons, the couches were full of young product managers with questions to discuss (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). Through talking to people like Mayer, those new Googlers saw and experienced the authentic meaning of being a Googler, and understood the "why" consciously or unconsciously.

Moreover, Google communicates its "why" not only through face-to-face communications, but also through the physical environment it designs for its "smart creatives." When the company was growing exponentially and had to move to a larger place at Mountain View, Page and Brin paid great attention to make sure that the new campus expressed Google's values. They insisted on sustainable and low-energy elements with zero tolerance of any toxic emissions for its

buildings to ensure an excellent working environment; they hired "an innovative gourmet chef" to offer high-quality free food for all employees; they built up first-class dining facilities, gyms, laundry rooms, massage rooms, haircuts, carwashes, dry cleaning, commuting buses, and offered all those "perks" to its hardworking employees for free (Levy, 2011). By investing in its employees, Google expresses clearly its goal on a long-term and sustainable success. "We provide you with everything you need to be productive and happy on and off the clock" remarked Page (Levy, 2011). In order to generate the greatest freedom and efficiency for innovation to keep serving the users, Google has created a culture of "why" that is well integrated into the life of every Googler.

After building up a solid foundation of "why" internally, when communicating externally, Google has the confidence of emphasizing and amplifying its "why" to other stakeholders, and this can be reflected in two aspects: hiring and funding. Google is well known for its low admission rate for employment, sometimes even lower than applying to Harvard University. However, Google regards the long interview process and the committee based decision-making process as a necessity to select not only the best people, but also the right ones that can fit into Google's "why." Google openly acknowledges that its employees are the company's most valuable assets because they see employees as an essential part of Google's "why" and they carry this "why" wherever they go.

Similarly, when communicating to investors, Google puts its "why" first in a cautious and skeptical manner. When Google was preparing for its first IPO, Page and Brin worried a lot about the potential damage going public would bring to Google's fundamental values. "It was

the values of Google squaring off against the values of Wall Street, which embodied everything

its founders despised about tradition-bound, irrational corporate America" comments Levy (2011)

in his book *In the Plex: How Google Thinks, Works and Shapes Our Lives*. Actually, neither

Page nor Brin wanted to go public at first. "I think there's always the opportunity to screw it up,

be it private or public" Brin said. "Perhaps I'm naïve, but I think that we could maintain Google

being private" (Auletta, 2009). It took Google a long, painful negotiation process with SEC and

Wall Street to reach an agreement as Page and Brin refused to follow the tradition of offering

only one type of stocks to all shareholders. Instead, they adopted the dual class ownership

structure by offering Class A stock, which counted as one vote per share to ordinary investors,

and Class B stock, restricted to founders, directors, and owners, which would have a weight of

ten votes per share. Page and Brin were afraid that the short-term gains would erode the purity of

Google's "why", so they wrote a personal letter to potential investors explaining why Google

was special and therefore would have a different relationship with its shareholders than other

companies did. The SEC was unimpressed by this "Owner's Manual" and asked them to delete

the statement from the company's files (Auletta, 2009).

4. The Impact of the "Why"

4.1 In Business Decision-making

When a company starts with why, choices become clear in each business decision. Google's

creation is based on the belief in the power of end users, and one of Google's core principles is to

commit to the needs of the end users. Different from other search engines where the pages are

full of ad banners, Page and Brin designed Google's page simple and straightforward with only the company's logo and a big search box in the middle. They had extraordinary clarity about what search experience users might want. "They rejected the conventional wisdom embraced by AOL and Yahoo and Microsoft's MSN to create portals that keep users in their 'walled garden' with an array of content. They believed the right approach was to get users out of Google and to their search destination quickly," explains Auletta in his book *Googled* (2009).

By holding that belief, Page and Brin had "zero discussion about any kind of Google advertising until late 1999" recalled Salar Kamangar, who crafted Google's first business plan and became vice president of product management (Auletta, 2009). At that time, Google was growing fast with an average of seven million searches per day. However, the company was also burning cash as it did not have a solid business model to support its growing needs. Page and Brin tried other means to avoid advertisement such as working with Yahoo to support its search system. Few users knew they were conducting a Google search because Yahoo wouldn't allow Google's branded search box on its page. However, the question of how to monetize search by turning traffic and data into money remained unanswered. Unlike AOL, Google did not have subscription revenues, and unlike Yahoo, it did not have content sites to place banner or display advertising. At the same time, Page and Brin still strongly despised the existing advertising business model. When Bill Gross, the founder of the GoTo search engine, approached Page and Brin for a potential merger, they immediately rejected it, "Google would never be associated with…a company that mixed paid advertising with organic results" (Auletta, 2009).

In October 2000, Google introduced its own advertising program – Ad Words. The program

challenged the existing advertising model at that time by only allowing the advertisers to place

small text ads on the side of the search results. Companies gave Google their keywords and went

online to retrieve data on the number of times users typed their keywords into the search box. At

the beginning, this service was not as efficient as it is now. However, the intention and effort in

protecting the purity of search results from potential jeopardy demonstrates and complies with

Google's original "why" – the promise to its users of the best search experience.

4.2 In Crisis.

While Google was growing in the 2000s and expanding to global markets, China became an

extremely challenging battlefield for Google because of the unique political environment. At the

beginning, the management team had a huge debate on whether to enter into the Chinese market

due to the concern about government censorship. Brin, influenced by his childhood experience of

the Soviet Union, was especially skeptical about the decision to work with the Chinese

government. However, if Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it

universally accessible, China is the largest market that simply cannot be ignored. In addition, at

that time, Google was already late to the game as Yahoo had opened an office in Beijing one

year before Google started thinking about China.

Starting from 2005 when they first entered, Google tried to launch the website without

cooperating with the Chinese government but failed. The whole website was blocked by the

Great Chinese Firewall. The setback made Google realize that if China was the place they

needed to conquer, they had to comply with local censorship regulations. However, Google did

not regard this gesture of compliance as submitting to the government, but hoped their presence

in China could improve China's existing Internet environment (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014).

Therefore, Google decided to work with the Chinese government, but with a twist: inform users

when results were being blocked. "They couldn't access the censored information, but at least

they would be informed that censorship was occurring." This is how Schmidt (2014) describes

the "grudging" decision of Google's China strategy.

In December 2009, after three years of its operation in China, Google encountered the biggest

crisis in the company's history. "It was the worst moment in our company" recalled Page and

Brin (Levy, 2011). Google was under attack by the Chinese government. A team of unknown

hackers attacked Google's corporate servers. However, according to Schmidt (2014), different

from previous hackers who only intended on disrupting Google's services, the hackers this time

not only attempted to steal intellectual property, but also tried to access Gmail accounts,

including those of human rights activists. The result of the investigation pointed to the Chinese

government, which completely enraged the Google management team. Page, Brin, Schmidt, and

other top leaders organized an emergency meeting. Before the attack, Page had sided with

Schmidt, who believed that engaging in China was both a right business decision as well as a

moral one while Brin had always disagreed. But the unexpected hacking this time completely

changed Page's mind. "The behavior we were seeing was evil" he told Schmidt, "and wasn't

going to stop." Although Schmidt still believed that staying in the Chinese market was the best

thing for the company, he had sensed the sentiment in the room. Page and Brin had no longer

believed that Google's presence in the market could help change government censorship

practices, and they did not want to participate in any way anymore in that censorship (Schmidt &

Rosenberg, 2014). The next day, Google published the decision on their blog:

> These attacks and the surveillance they have uncovered – combined with the attempts over
>
> the past year to further limit free speech on the web – have led us to conclude that we should
>
> review the feasibility of our business operations in China. We have decided we are no longer
>
> willing to continue censoring our results on Google.cn, and so over the next few weeks we
>
> will be discussing with the Chinese government that basis on which we could operate an
>
> unfiltered search engine within the law, if at all. We recognize that this may well mean
>
> having to shut down Google.cn, and potentially our offices in China.

Google's decision to leave China swept Mountain View like an earthquake. "I think a whole

generation of Googlers will remember exactly where they were when that blog item appeared,"

said Rick Klau, a product manager at Google (Levy, 2011). Media reactions towards this

decision were more complicated. Many were questioning Google's consistency on keeping its

"don't be evil" motto when they started to work with the Chinese government in the first place.

However, unlike other corporations such as Yahoo and Microsoft who experienced the same

painful process but comprised again and again on censorship issues in order to strengthen their

presences in the world's largest market, Google made a different decision, and this decision was

simply motivated by three words "Don't be evil."

V. Case Study 2 – Facebook

1. Facebook's "Why"

"If the world is more open and connected, it will be a better place"

At the time Facebook was created, the concept of social networking was not new. As early as 1968, engineers J.C.R. Licklider and Robert W. Taylor envisioned an online interactive community where "you will not send a letter or telegram; you will simply identify the people whose files should be linked to yours" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Later in the 80s, companies such as IBM, Sears, and AOL all started to further develop the idea of social networking. The era of modern social networking began in early 1977 when a New York-based start-up called sixdegrees.com inaugurated a breakthrough of online social networking based on real names. When Friendster lunched in February 2003, it became an immediate hit. Within months it had several million users (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Facebook's why originated from this environment.

In the history of Facebook's development, there are two core concepts – connection and openness – that founder Mark Zuckerberg firmly believes in and tries to evangelize. He believes that if the world is more open and connected, it will be a better place. To change the world, first you need to connect it. When Facebook (originally Thefacebook) was created in the Harvard dorm room, Zuckerberg regarded it as a very basic communication tool, aimed at solving the simple problem of keeping track of schoolmates and what was going on with them. At that time, there was a desperate need within the Harvard community for an online student directory and

school-wide social network. Thefacbook quickly became the solution for this outcry. However, the connection was limited within the Harvard community. After its success in several other elite American universities such as Columbia, Stanford, and Yale, Zuckerberg and his team began to work on breaking the boundaries among those colleges by establishing cross-campus connection on Facebook. Then it entered into high school and finally switched to open registration in September 2006: anybody who is above 13 and has a valid email address can sign up. The expansion path of Facebook reflects Zuckerberg's original goal of connecting people.

Facebook started with a faith in connection, but as Zuckerberg and his Facebook were helping the world connect to each other, they were also exploring the meaning of connection. In 2009, Facebook changed its mission statement and included the key word "open" for the first time. This small change, however, was the result of numerous successful and unsuccessful experiments on the idea of "openness" for the previous five years. In 2006, when Facebook first introduced its new feature – the News Feed, Zuckerberg intended to make the online connection more visible and transparent, and of course at the same time attracting more new users to join the network. However, since its first day of launch, Zuckerberg received a huge backlash from users, mostly students, criticizing the invasion of their privacy. The later introduction of Beacon where users were able to broadcast their purchases encountered greater intensity of criticism (Kirkpatrick, 2010). However, Zuckerberg did not give up or stop testifying his bold notion of "open is better." He revised the News Feed and transformed it into one of the most popular features of Facebook today.

The following is the evolution of Facebook's mission statements from 2004 to 2009 (Reagan, 2009)

➢ Thefacebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges [Harvard only]*[2004]*

➢ The Facebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at schools [Now there are two Facebooks: one for people in college and one for people in high school] *[2005]*

➢ Facebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at schools *[2006]*

➢ Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you[Facebook is made up of lots of separate networks – things like schools, companies, and regions] *[2006]*

➢ Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you. [upload photos or publish notes – get the latest news from your friends – post videos on your profile – tag your friends – use privacy settings to control who sees your info – join a network to see people who live, study, or work around you] *[2007]*

➢ Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you. [Use Facebook to… keep up with friends and family, share photos and videos, control privacy online , reconnect with old classmates] *[2008]*

➢ Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life. *[2008]*

➢ Facebook gives people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.*[2009]*

As we can see from the language of its mission statement, from "online directory" to "social

utility", from "help you connect" to "give people the power to share", from "colleges" "schools"

"companies" to "your life" and "the world," Mark Zuckerberg's ambition has always been

associated with the frame of "more connection, better world." It is the original "why" of

Facebook and it continues bringing inspiration to the choices it is making everyday. A few weeks

ago, in a Mandarin speech at Tsing Hua University, Zuckerberg mentioned why he founded

Facebook. "There were so many websites on the Internet, and you could find almost everything

— news, music, books, things to buy — but there was no service to help us find the most

important thing to our lives: people." Connect the people, let them talk directly, and the world

will be different.

2. Developing the "Why"

In the Academy Award winning movie "Social Network," the founding of the Facebook was

portrayed as a revenge adventure where the quirky Harvard sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg,

created the website of ranking hotness among Harvard girls after being kicked out by his

girlfriend. However, the real Mark Zuckerberg, was strongly against this exaggerated reflection

of him and his company. "They just can't wrap their head around the idea that someone might

build something because they like building things" (Bloomberg Business, 2013).

Before Facebook, Zuckerberg has already done many experiments on building up programs that

can better connect people. One of the most controversial projects was Facemash, a game website

that allowed visitors to compare two student pictures side-by-side and choose who was "hot" and

who was not. Zuckerberg established this website by hacking into Harvard's student profile database. Therefore, later Facemash was accused by the Harvard Administrative Board for "breaching security, violating copyrights, and invading individual privacy" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). However, this failure did not stop him thinking about how to connect people in a more efficient way. Zuckerberg said that it was the *Crimson*'s editorials about Facemash that gave him the initial idea for how to build Thefacebook. "Much of the trouble surrounding Facemash could have been eliminated," wrote the *Crimson*," if only the site had limited itself to students who voluntarily uploaded their own photos" (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

On the afternoon of Wednesday, February 4, 2004, Zuckerberg launched Thefacebook. Its home screen read, "Thefacebook is an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges. We have opened up Thefacebook for popular consumption at Harvard University. You can use Thefacebook to: search for people at your school; find out who are in your classes; look up your friends' friends; see a visualization of your social network." Having learnt from previous experience, Zuckerberg integrated the privacy control into the original design of Thefacbook. Also, different from other existing social networks such as MySpace and Friendster, there were some big restrictions: you could not join unless you had a Harvard.edu email address, and you had to use your real name. This made Thefacebook exclusive, but it also ensured that users were who they said they were (Kirkpatrick, 2010). This principle became essential to Zuckerberg as he continued envisioning the future of Facebook – the mission to facilitate a more open and connected world through voluntary information sharing.

With more and more users joining in Thefacebook, its reputation quickly spread. Some advertising companies such as Y2M came to Zuckerberg for potential cooperation, but were rejected by him almost right away. At that time, maximizing revenue by selling ads was less important to him than keeping users happy. "He would allow advertisements, but only on his terms," said Tricia Black, the CEO of Y2M. Zuckerberg turned down ads from companies he thought were against the playful student mood of Thefacebook, including Mercer Management Consulting and Goldman Sachs (Kirkpatrick, 2010). In Zuckerberg's mind, social networking should be fun and relaxed. Students would not be happy to see a serious investment bank ads on their screens. Also, his business partner Eduardo Saverin had suggested he think about adding job features such as allowing students to upload their resumes on Facebook, which was also rejected by him (Kirkpatrick, 2010). He knew clearly what kind of company Thefacebook should be. Since then, "fun" became part of Facebook's "why" when they were developing their early corporate culture. Zuckerberg saw the nature of social networking among his target audience, and he knew Facebook should be consistent with it.

There has been a well-known tradition at Facebook called "Hackerthon" - an all night hacking competition since its early years. Several times each year, Zuckerberg organizes the hacking games within Facebook. During that special day, all Facebook programmers come together, pick their own programming projects, and get them done by that night. The prize for that competition is always a T-shirt. Zuckerberg thinks it is a fun way to connect people within the corporation (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Even the night before its Initial Public Offering, when other companies might celebrate with lavish parties and champagne, Facebook celebrated with its 31st "Hackathon." "If you've collected 31 T-shirts, it means you've been hacking for the company

since the old days" (Gross, 2012). Zuckerberg once said in an interview, "One of the things that I do focus on in Facebook is making sure the culture is fun and friendly, you know that people hang out" (Bloomberg Business, 2013). The college atmosphere has been preserved even after Facebook moved to Silicon Valley. This can be reflected on its unique criteria for hiring. At Facebook, boldness is valued the most and leaving school is considered a virtue. "Why would you study it when you could be doing it?" Zuckerberg would ask graduate students he was trying to recruit. He sometimes even guaranteed that the company would pay someone's tuition if they quit school to come to Facebook and later decided to go back (Kirkpatrick, 2010). In the process of forming a young, vibrant, and fast-paced corporate culture, Zuckerberg enriched the original "why" of Facebook by establishing a team that fit into its mission, and it laid the foundation for its future takeoff on innovation.

3. Communicating the "Why"

Similar to Google, Facebook integrated its "why" into the physical working environment shared by all employees. According to Alex Fattal (2012), a Harvard researcher who had visited Facebook's headquarters in Palo Alto, California, "Facebook's office makes an immediate impression with its real life refashioning of the office to reflect website design and company values. When I entered for the first time, the space felt somehow familiar; perhaps because I'm one of Facebook's 901 million active users." As mentioned before, openness and connection are two core values at the heart of Facebook's mission statement, and these values can be experienced visually in the open floor plan with rows of clustered plug and play-work stations. You can easily find game rooms such as the "Guitar Hero room," the RipStick skateboards

strewn in the passageways, picnic benches lining the rooftop, and sporting facilities dividing the lawn between the two buildings (Fattal, 2012).

Different from traditional cubicles, the whole office is designed as an entire open space where accessibility and transparency can perform. Zuckerberg shares the space with other employees with a desk and a completely glassy conference room. Just beyond the entryway, you can find "The Facebook Wall," a white wall encouraging passersby to write something. The "Facebook Wall" makes tangible the virtual wall on the website. It is not only a reflection of one of Facebook's key features, but also a demonstration of the company's values such as "move fast," "be bold," "be open." Walking in the office, you can see mottos and slogans pinned to the walls everywhere – "Move Fast and Break Things;" "This Journey is 1% Finished;" "Done is Better than Perfect" – the sentences that express the value of speed and iterative improvement (Fattal, 2012).

Since Facebook's founding in 2004, every Friday, there is a "Q&A with Mark" meeting, where employees can ask any questions to the CEO and the team leaders. According to Carolyn Everson, Vice President of Global Marketing at Facebook, the leaders teams are required to share their performance reviews every quarter to the entire company by posting on Facebook. Moreover, employees are always encouraged to ask "hard questions" to Zuckerberg and their management teams. "We ask teams whether you have asked hard questions this week" said Carolyn at the Marketing Conference at NYU Stern School of Business. In November 2014, Facebook held its first "Townhall Q&A" to the public. The meeting was broadcast live fielding questions on a variety of subjects from Facebook users around the world (Albergotti, 2014). The

efforts on opening communication both internally and externally are vivid reflections of Facebook's belief in openness and transparency.

Moreover, when handling relationship with business partners and investors, Facebook always introduces itself, starting not from the products they have, but why they are created. In 2012, when Facebook was preparing for the Initial Public Offering, in Facebook's SEC S-1 filing, it clearly and confidently told the potential investors the "why" of Facebook – a company that can not only make money, but also make a real difference.

> We don't build services to make money; we make money to build better services…We don't wake up in the morning with the primary goal of making money, but we understand that the best way to achieve our mission is to build a strong and valuable company. – Facebook's S-1 Registration with the SEC (Facebook 2012b:305)

Meanwhile, it again revised its mission statement to "our mission is to make the world more open and connected." From the constant revision of its mission statement since 2004, we can also see that Facebook has always been thinking about its "why" and the potential impact it may create in the long run.

Although it is disputable on whether Mark Zuckerberg is a good CEO or not, one thing we cannot deny is that he never stops crafting and communicating Facebook's "why" frame whenever he can. For him, to some extent, Facebook has never been just a technology company, but more like a means to explore and achieve the potentiality of his own impact in this world. "It's never about money and status. He is as visionary as Steve Jobs. He is dealing with our lives, our identities" said Jose Vargas, a multimedia journalist from Bloomberg (Bloomberg Business,

2013). However, it is because this duality of Facebook – the mixture of the company's mission with the founder's own life pursuit - that enables it to stand out from its competitors and continue influencing our lives today.

4. The Impact of the "Why"

4.1 In Business Decision-making

"We are not just a blue app on your phone, all the things we are doing are part of our mission." – Carolyn Everson, VP of Global Marketing, Facebook

Facebook's mission is to connect people around the world. However, as an online platform, it cannot achieve this mission without the Internet. Statistics show that there remains an enormous population across the globe that still lacks regular access to the Internet and its services (Kokalitcheva, 2015). In many developing countries, people are still using the "2G" mobile devices, and in many African countries, people do not even have a phone. Facebook identified this problem and tried to develop solution to it. In August, 2013, Facebook launched Internet.org, a non-profit organization partnered with six other companies, to bring affordable access to selected Internet services to less developed countries. At the time of launch, Zuckerberg released a ten-page whitepaper he had written to introduce the vision. In the paper, he wrote that Internet.org was a further step in the direction of Facebook's past initiatives, such as Facebook Zero, to improve Internet access for people around the world. He also said "connectivity is a human right" (Zuckerberg, 2013). In March 2014, Facebook acquired Ascenta, the UK-based

aerospace company, and announced the Connectivity Lab as part of the Internet.org initiative, with the goal of bringing the Internet to underserved areas by building drones, satellites, and lasers. Earlier this year, Facebook launched the Internet.org Platform, an open program for developers, to easily create services that integrate with Internet.org. Although there are criticisms about Facebook's intention to targeting consumers in underdeveloped countries, it is undeniable that this decision is closely related to its mission to make this world more open and connected.

The tradition of making mission-driven decisions has long been recorded in the history of Facebook. In 2007, it launched The Facebook Platform - a system for letting outside programmers develop tools for sharing photos, taking quizzes, and playing games. The system gave rise to a "Facebook economy" and allowed companies such as game maker Zynga Inc. to thrive (Associate Press, 2014). Actually, since Facebook's early days, Zuckerberg had already begun to think about creating platforms. When Thefacebook was still at its testing period in the Harvard dorm, Zuckerberg created another software named Wirehog, a friend-to-friend file-sharing program, which is the first independent application to operate on top of Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010). After Facebook achieved great success beyond college, it was stuck in taking the next move to attract more users. At that time, Zuckerberg was fascinated by the stunning success of photos applications. He found the potential power of graphic production in multiplying friend connections. "We did some thinking and we decided that the core value of Facebook is in the set of friend connections. We call that social graph, in the mathematical sense of a series of nodes and connections. The nodes are the individuals and the connections are the friendships" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Zuckerberg explained that the same power could be applied to any sort of application, not just photos. The conceptual breakthrough at that moment motivated

by his intention to expanding connections triggered the entire planning of turning Facebook into a platform, and it was proven later to be one of the most successful decisions in the history of Facebook.

The impact of this mission-driven decision-making process can also be reflected from Facebook's relationship with its investors. For Zuckerberg, keeping Facebook's mission at the heart of decision-making sometimes means saying no to even big investors. After Facebook grew up from the dorm room to a real startup company, more and more investors started to pay attention to this potential future tech superstar. The first big investor approached to Facebook was the Washington Post Company. Although in the first meeting, the Post left Zuckerberg a good impression as a company that focused on long-term vision, he did not receive the offer because of his strong disagreement on the Post's advertising model. "Mark was kind of against ads, as far as we could tell," said Caroline Little, the CEO of the Post at that time, "but I just sat there salivating and thinking how easy it would be to monetize this" (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Soon after, Viacom joined the game with an intention to buy the entire company for around $75 million. It wanted to combine Thefacebook with MTV.com, which was a complete surprise to everyone at Facebook. At that time, Facebook was only one year old. If Zuckerberg accepted such an offer, he could become a millionaire immediately. However, this did not matter to him because he had no interest in selling. "A lot of VC firms had approached us, but I didn't want to play this whole Silicon Valley game of – take VC money, try to go public or sell the company really quickly, bring in professional management on an accelerated time scale – things like that" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Nonetheless, the existence of such an offer motivated Zuckerberg to re-

evaluate the potential impact Thefacebook might generate in the future. In the late spring of 2006,

following the demise of the Viacom talks, which topped to $800 million cash, Zuckerberg and

the board concluded that if someone bid $1 billion cash for Facebook, they would consider it

seriously (Kirkpatrick, 2010). It quickly appeared possible that Yahoo might be willing to pay $1

billion. However, the idea of News Feed developed by his team at that time pushed Zuckerberg

to think about a potential larger impact Facebook might generate. "This is a lot of money. This

could be really life-changing for a lot of people who work for me. But we have so much more

opportunity to change the world than this. I don't think I'd be doing right by anyone to take this

money" (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

In the fall 2007, Google hosted a conference at Silicon Valley for marketers and ad agencies to

talk about potential partnerships. Zuckerberg was invited and later reached out to for a potential

deal on acquisition. However, he firmly rejected the offer, partially because Google was trying to

negotiate a price less than $15 billion, which did not impress Zuckerberg and his ambition of

Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Moreover, he saw Google as a potential competitor that might

prevent his company from pursuing its mission. Soon after Google's failure in negotiation,

Microsoft saw and grasped the opportunity. CEO Steve Ballmer had flown to Palo Alto twice to

visit Zuckerberg and generously offered $15 billlion right away. Zuckerberg, as usual, was

unimpressed because he worried that the high price would shift the power of future decision-

making. "I don't want to sell the company unless I can keep control," said Zuckerberg, as he

always did in such situations (Kirkpatrick, 2010). After a long and painful negotiation process,

on October 24, it finally announced its deal with Microsoft, not about acquisition, but a $240

million investment for 1.6 percent of Facebook, which valued it at $15 billion. Facebook was clearly the biggest beneficiary from this deal (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

4.2 In Crisis

In the history of Facebook, major crises have always been associated with the word "privacy." When the News Feed feature was first introduced, it received a huge backlash from the users. On the night of September 6, 2006, after the engineering team pushed the button to make News Feed alive, they sat and watched the reactions from Facebook's 9.4 million users coming in. The very first one read, "Turn this shit off" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Later, they found that only one in one hundred messages to Facebook about News Feed was positive. A junior student named Ben Parr from Northwestern University, quickly created the anti-News Feed group "Students Against Facebook News Feed". Within about three hours, the group's number reached to 13,000. At 2 a.m. that night, it had 100,000. By the end of that week, it hit 700,000. Other protest groups also mushroomed quickly such as "THIS NEW FACEBOOK SET-UP SUCKS!!!," "News feed is a chump dick wuss douchbag asshole prick cheater bitch," and "Ruchi is the Devil" (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

The primary reason people hated News Feed was that it sent too much information about users to too many people. A headline in the *Arizona Daily Wildcat* at the University of Arizona summarized: STUDENT USERS SAY NEW FACEBOOK FEED BORDERS ON STALKING. The *Michigan Daily* from University of Michigan quoted a junior student's reaction to the News Feed, "I'm really creped out by the new Facebook. It makes me feel like a stalker." The next day,

TV news crews began to gather in front of Facebook's Palo Alto headquarters building. Students from several schools were calling for a massive in-person protest there (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

At the same time in Facebook's conference room, there were heated debates on whether Facebook should shut off the News Feed. However, Zuckerberg, in New York on a promotional trip, argued firmly with his colleagues by email and phone that this was a matter of "journalistic integrity" – to cut off debate would be contrary to the spirit of openness that led him to create the company in the first place. "The point of the News Feed is to surface trends going on around you. One thing it surfaced was the existence of these anti-feed groups. We really enabled these memes to grow on our system" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). However, under the pressure inside and outside the company, he agreed to compromise and revised the News Feed by giving people more controls, but he never for a moment considered turning it off. "If it didn't work, it confounded his whole theory about why people were interested in Facebook. If News Feed wasn't right, he felt we shouldn't even be doing this," said Chris Cox, a senior engineer at Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Actually, Zuckerberg knew that people liked the News Feed, no matter what they were saying or protesting. The data they collected could prove it. People were spending more time on Facebook, on average, much more than ever before. In August, users viewed 12 billion pages on the service, but by October, with the launch of News Feed, it jumped to 22 billion (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Nowadays News Feed has been proved to be one of the most important milestones of Facebook. It completely shifts the way information is exchanged between people. Normally, when you want to share information with someone, you initiate the process and send his/her something. However, News Feed turns the whole process upside down. Instead of sending someone an alert

about yourself, people can "subscribe to" you so that they are able to automatically receive your information. This new form of automated communications makes it possible to stay in touch with many people simultaneously with a minimum of effort.

Moreover, News Feed challenges us to think about the relationship between openness and consistency. When people can see what you are doing, that can change how you behave. One reason News Feed evokes people's concern of stalking is because some of them perform differently online and offline. They are afraid of the exposure of their inconsistencies. Once everything you do is laid out in chronological order for your friends to see, people may recognize things about you that they never previously know, for good or evil. Another reason is because many people accept too many "friends" to show off their sociability. Facebook is designed as a way to communicate with people you already knew. But when some people "friend" too many strangers, they start to worry about the control power of their private lives.

Zuckerberg has a very radical view about transparency and consistency, which is not surprisingly in coherence with Facebook's mission.

> "Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity. The level of transparency the world has now won't support having two identities for a person… To get people to this point where there's more openness – that's a big challenge. But I think we'll do it. I just think it will take time. The concept that the world will be better if you share more is something that's pretty foreign to a lot of people and it runs into all these privacy concerns" said Zuckerberg (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Different from the public perceptions, Zuckerberg always considers himself an advocate for

privacy, and he is proud that Facebook has offered users many controls to determine who sees

their information. However, he also strongly believes that with the increase of openness, people

will adapt their lifestyles to the degree of that openness because if the world is more open, it will

be better. Zuckerberg never stops fighting for this belief through what he has – Facebook.

VI. Case Study 3 – Uber

1. Uber's Why

"Uber is ultimately a cross between lifestyle and logistics."

The story of Uber began on a cold rainy night in Paris in 2008. Two entrepreneurs Garrett Camp and Travis Kalanick were attending the Loic and Geraldine LeMeur's LeWeb conference, a conference focused on discussing blogging and the web world. Everyone at the conference was talking about the next big thing in the Internet era. At that time, Camp had sold his startup StumbleUpon (a discovery engine that finds and recommends web content to its users) to Ebay and Kalanick had just completed his tour with Akamai after selling Red Swoosh, a peer-to-peer file sharing company he established in 2001 (Uber, 2010).

When the two met each other, Camp was thinking about "cracking the horrible taxi problem in San Francisco" as he saw many San Franciscans had terrible experience in getting a cab especially during rush hours (Uber, 2010). Kalanick liked the idea and further related his experience of the black-car service in many cities around the world. They thought that usually the price of a black-car service was higher than cab service, but what if they could figure out a way to lower the cost by using cell phones. One year later, they developed the first prototype of the app and registered the company as UberCab. Kalanick was called by Camp the "chief incubator" of the company and was responsible of looking for more visionaries to join their

venture (McAlone, 2015). Like Google, Uber's "why" also starts with finding solutions for a problem.

In June 2010, Uber was launched in San Francisco. At the beginning, it cost around 1.5 times as much as a cab, but you could request a car in San Francisco by sending a text message or pressing a button. It quickly became a hit. Four month later, Uber closed a $1.25 million seed funding round from First Round Capital, Kalanick's friend Chris Sacca, and Napster cofounder Shawn Fanning. In February 2011, Uber closed an $11 million Series A funding round that valued the company at $60 million. In December 2011, it began to expand internationally, starting with Paris, France and it closed a $32 million Series B funding round led by Menlo Ventures, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, and Goldman Sachs. In August 2013, after Series C funding round that saw an enormous $258 million investment from Google Ventures, the company was valued up to $3.76 billion (McAlone, 2015). Uber was ranked by the *Fortune Magazine* the fastest growing startup of the year.

However, Kalanick never regarded Uber as only a car service company. Maybe Uber starts from solving the taxi problem in big cities, but that is not its destination, at least for Kalanick. On the company's website, it writes, "Uber is evolving the way the world moves." Klanick has already envisioned a bigger picture for Uber since 2012. In the summer of 2013, Uber launched its Uber Ice Cream App that allows people to summon ice cream delivery trucks whenever and wherever they need. At the 2013 *Fortune Magazine*'s Brainstorm Tech Conference, when the host asked Kalanick, "Is Uber more than cars? Can it be?" Kalanick said, "The way we look at Uber is the cross between lifestyle, which is 'give me what I want and give it to me right now' and the

logistics to get to you. Today, we are in the business of delivering cars. We are delivering a car to you and then you can do whatever you want with it. But we've done things like last Friday, Uber Ice Cream. You push a button in 33 cities, and an ice cream truck will come."

At the beginning of 2015, Uber rolls out UberCARGO in Hong Kong, which expands Uber's service to include all moving and delivery needs. Uber calls it a way for your goods to "travel like a VIP" (Uber, 2015). Three month later in April, Uber launches UberEATS, an on-demand food-delivery service that brings meals to your location in minutes. The service started in four pilot cities: Los Angeles, Barcelona, Chicago, and New York City (Uber, 2015). While people around the world are still astonished by the refreshing experience Uber has brought to our daily commutes, the leaders of Uber have already started thinking about how they can influence other parts of our lives. Uber's ambition of changing the way the world moves and its never-settle-down spirit in cracking problems in our lives are reasons it exists in the first place and also the "why" it stands out from its competitors to lead the world into a truly mobile era.

2. Developing the "Why"

If Uber's "why" originated from the idea of solving a transportation problem in the world's major cities, it is undeniable that its CEO Travis Kalanick enriched the "why" with a broader vision inspired by his own life stories. Interestingly, Kalanick is not the first CEO of Uber. At the beginning, he was hired by Camp as "chief incubator." Ryan Graves was the first CEO of Uber, but later stepped down in December 2010, and Kalanick was favored as the new CEO and spokesperson (McAlone, 2015).

Kalanick has started developing the spirit of entrepreneurship since high school. "He is an incredibly aggressive person," according to his early business partner Jordan Kretchmer (Chafkin, 2015). When he was still a computer engineering student at UCLA, Kalanick joined Michael Todd and Vince Busam's project Scour, a file-sharing service startup that predated Napster. He dropped out of school in 1998 to become a full-time employee in Scour. However, because of the protests and lawsuits from many big players of entertainment industry regarding its violation of copyrights, the company went bankruptcy in 2000 (Chafkin, 2015). Soon after in 2001, Kalanick launched another file-sharing company, Red Swoosh, which according to him was a "revenge project" to turn the companies suing him into customers. "You learn quick in that business how deals are done and not done, and how you can get run over. You learn a lot about that." Kalanick described his failure of Scour as a learning process (Chafkin, 2015). However, the six years with Red Swoosh was not easy either. During the hardest time, there were only two employees left in the company: Kalanick himself and another engineer, and Kalanick had to move in with his parents (Chafkin, 2015). In 2007, due to the remaining controversy of its services and the market's decreasing interest in streaming videos, Kalanick lost sight of the company's future and sold Red Swoosh to Akamai for $23 million.

With this $23 million dollars in hand, Kalanick wasted no time and quickly threw himself to another adventure. He started hanging out with former Google employee Chris Sacca, who is now a billionaire investor of Uber, and his other friends, including Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh and Twitter cofounder Ev Williams, for inspirations. According to Kretchmer, back in those days, "if Travis liked you, he'd invest in your company, and if he thought your idea was big enough, he'd

come to your office one or two days a week and work for free" (Chafkin, 2015). Since then,
Kalanick set the priority of his life to relentlessly seeking the next big idea that may change the
world, and this mission-driven lifestyle finally helped him find one in 2008.

After Uber became the new tech darling and is regarded as the fastest growing star-up in history,
Kalanick starts imagining a more ambitious and audacious future for Uber. He clearly knows that
Uber's competitive advantage lies in its low-cost accessibility. However, if Uber continues
lowering its pricing with larger affordability, there will be more and more cars on the road,
which will reduce the efficiency of accessibility. Therefore, Uber should figure out a way to
solve this paradox. One solution it came up with is the UberPool which encourages Uber
customers to use its car-pool service. However, Kalanick has another bold vision – a future
without drivers. In that world, a fleet of self-driving vehicles is summoned at the tap of an app to
take people wherever they want to go. "The reason Uber could be expensive is because you're
not just paying for the car – you're paying for the other dude in the car." he explained at the 2014
U.S. Code Conference, "when there's no other dude in the car, the cost of taking an Uber
anywhere become cheaper than owning a vehicle…when you bring the cost down below the cost
of ownership, for everybody, and then car ownership goes away."

Many media, government regulators, as well as the entire taxi industry see Kalanick as a ruthless,
arrogant, crazy troublemaker. Indeed, in the short history of Uber, it encountered numerous
challenges, for example, taxi drivers' backlashes, "cease-and-desist" letters from local
governments, media criticism of its pricing policy, and the concern of potential threat to
individual privacy. However, to some extent, Kalanick's unique character with the extreme

confidence, fearlessness, and determination, brought alive Uber's "why." If Uber was a car service company at the beginning, under Kalanick's leadership, it had successfully transformed itself to a technology company in the past five years. Although we still do not know whether it will become the next Google or Facebook, the Uber phenomenon around the world has proved its impact, originated and resulted from its "why."

3. Communicating the "Why"

In a leaked document about an internal Uber presentation published by *Business Insider* (2014), Uber lists the qualities all Uber employees are expected to possess. It is called "Uber Competencies." The qualities include vision, quality obsession, innovation, fierceness, execution, scale, communication, and super pumpedness. All employees are rated annually by themselves, by their managers and by their peers based on these traits. Among all these qualities Uber values for its culture, "fierceness" and "super pumpedness" seem fancy and fresh. Uber defines the two traits as follows:

> Fierceness – Be fierce. Do whatever it takes to make Uber a success, even when it's hard and takes some risk to get there.
> Super Pumpedeness – Bring energy and infectious enthusiasm to everything you do. For Managers: motivate and inspire team members to perform their best, and stretch themselves professionally.

One Uber employees further explains, "The 'fierceness' is to which degree employees are willing to make bold, game-changing moves, whether that be through slogging (drive recruitment) or out-of-the-box product" (Shontell, 2014). This character Uber is looking for from its employees can also be reflected from its CEO Travis Kalanick. With all those impudent decisions and visions he has designed for Uber's future, it makes sense for him to gather and walk together with those who share the same boldness.

Externally, Uber's strategy of communication is through the concept of "Uber Experience." The communication starts from the hub of tech innovation – Bay Area. At the beginning of the company, Uber put intense market focus on creating local network effects in their launch city, San Franciso, while prompting the word-of-mouth growth through targeting the early adopters. In San Francisco, there were many tech communities that were constantly looking for new tools and services to improve their quality of life (Brown, 2015). Uber provided those people free rides and sponsored tech events. Uber knew clearly the nature of tech savvys who shared the same belief in the power of technology. If their minds could be blown up, the "Uber experience" would be spread out quickly among their friends, tech press, and social media.

According to Kalanick, Uber relied almost exclusively on word of mouth, spending virtually nothing on marketing. "95% of all our riders have heard about Uber from other Uber riders." Quickly, Uber gained attention from celebrities such as comedian Dave Chappelle, actor Edward Norton, venture capitalist Marc Andreessen – who called it a "killer experience," – and Airbnb's CEO Brain Chesky – who claimed that "Uber makes it very easy to not own a car" (Brown, 2015). To some degree, the word-out-mouth strategy reflected Uber's confidence in its service

and the big idea behind it. After it became a hit in more and more cities, facing a larger variety of audience, it launched a rider referral program called "You Got A Free Ride" - if you are an Uber rider and refer your friends to sign up for Uber by using your code, then the two of you will each enjoy a referral reward in credits. The reward was originally set up for $30, which to some people was enough to cover multiple rides (Hum, 2015). By offering "free ride" through the friend referral program, Uber addresses directly to its audience the pressing taxi problem in many cities, which is also why Uber exists in the first place – to solve this problem.

4. The Impact of the "Why"

Since the first year of its launch, Uber has been perceived as the "disruptor" or troublemaker in the eyes of taxi drivers and government regulators. The battle with the taxi industry all over the world and local government regulations never ceased. Several months after Uber was launched in San Francisco, it received its first cease-and-desist letter from the San Francisco Metro Transit Authority & the Public Utilities Commission of California, accusing the startup of operating as an unlicensed taxi company. Kalanick and Uber executives were facing fines of $5,000 per ride and 90 days in jail if they stayed in business. However, they were not scared. They kept the cars on the road, dropped "cab" from the company name, and scheduled a meeting with the city's Municipal Transportation Agency to talk about the definition of Uber as not a taxi company but a technology service for independent drivers (Kolodny, 2010).

By the middle of 2015, Uber has been involved in 173 lawsuits in the United States alone, regarding its eligibility of operation (Abbound, 2015). In many cities, taxi operators sued their

cities for allowing Uber to devalue million-dollar operating permits. Also, in the year of 2014, with its rapid global expansion and the entering into heavily regulated markets such as Asia and Europe, Uber received more controversy internationally. In April, Belgium imposed a ban on Uber's peer-to-peer ride service, UberPop, after tens of thousands of taxi drivers gathered to protest Uber because they felt the government had failed to regulate it. In July, Seoul declared Uber illegal under South Korean law, and in September, Germany announced a nationwide ban on UberPop. By the end of 2014, countries such as France, Spain, Thailand, India etc. either completely denied the legal status of Uber, or banned part of its services such as UberPop and Uber X (Griswold, 2015).

Uber's response to this worldwide outrage varied from country to country. In some cases, Uber chose to suspend operations in response to surging pressure from local communities such as in Panama City Beach, Florida. In some cases, it decided to face the challenge and continue operating. For example, at the beginning of 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa, the traffic police impounded 34 Uber vehicles because the drivers did not have valid license permits for metered taxis. After the incident, Uber started communicating with the local government and helping prospective drivers go through the complicated license application process. In other cases, legal loopholes allowed Uber to continue its operation. For example, in Germany, taxi licenses are different from commercial driver's licenses. In order to keep attracting drivers, Uber decided to purchase the commercial licenses for its drivers in order to keep the low-cost service (Khosla, 2015).

No matter how many lawsuits and controversies Uber was facing, it never stopped cracking the road around the world. "In terms of challenges, we have faced them our whole life. We faced challenges in Chicago, DC, Portland, Houston, Vegas and many, many more cities here in the U.S. But we eventually worked through the regulatory hurdles in those cities as the elected officials came to realize that job growth, a reduction in DUIs, enablement for mass transit, and a higher level of safety and transparency (vs. taxi) are all good things." said Bill Gurley, a key investor and board member of Uber (Abbound, 2015).

Besides the battle with the taxi industry, Uber is facing more and more problems, the recent rape case in India, for example, or the self-inflicted ones such as the bad relationship with journalists and Kalanick's sometimes offensive speaking style. However, the reason why Uber continues being favored by more and more investors and customers lies in its audacity to always push the boundaries, the character that is rooted in the company's original "why." "The taxi industry has been ripe for disruption for decades. But only technology has allowed it to really kick in." the 37-year-old CEO, sees himself the perfect man for the job of liberating drivers and riders (Stone, 2014). Moreover, as mentioned before, he has a more radical view of the company's future – self-driving cars replacing the current system. In September 2015, Uber announced its $5.5 million donation to the robotics department at Carnegie Mellon University to support a new robotics faculty chair as well as three fellowships (Uber, 2015). The partnership with CMU explicitly declares Uber's ambition to build up a driverless future. Kalanick further explained at the 2014 Code Conference, "Google's doing the driverless thing. Tesla's doing the driverless thing. Apple's doing the driverless thing. The question for a tech company is do you want to be

part of the future or do you want to resist the future. In many ways we don't want to be part of

the taxi industry before us, so that's how we think about it."

VII. Discussion

1. The Importance of "Why" in Business Decision-making and Communication

From the three case studies above, we can see the significance and the power of "why" in the history of a successful company. In sum, there are three pivotal aspects shared by all the companies above:

(1) All of them have a clear "why" of their existence in the first place, and the origin of that "why" is not for themselves, but for better serving others. Google was created because Page and Brin wanted to improve people's search experience at that time; Facebook was brought into being because of the desperate need from Harvard students for a comprehensive online social network based on real identity; Uber was built to tackle the common issue of terrible taxi experiences in major cities around the world. They are all originated from finding solutions for existing problems which concerned people at that time, and this is valued more than making money.

(2) All the three companies place their "why" at the center of decision-making, whether it is business decisions or internal management. When Googles' engineers are developing and discussing new project, they are encouraged to always ask the question "Is it best for our users? Is it evil?." Moreover, when hiring new employees, Google tries every means to make sure that person not only has the skills needed, but also fits into the "smart creative" culture – a culture that is "willing to question the status quo and attack things differently." Facebook rejected advertisers whose businesses were not relevant to a college social culture even

though they were companies like Goldman Sachs that could bring large amounts of money to the small startup. Later, it also turned down several deals with big investors such as Viacom and Yahoo no matter how much they offered because Zuckerberg did not think those companies understood Facebook's vision. When Uber was facing the huge backlash from the taxi industry and government officials, they did not fight back immediately, but focused on presenting their "why" to their customers as well as local governments. It did not work out in every city, but it provoked a worldwide discussion on this issue, which to some extent helped increase Uber's brand awareness.

(3) Neither Google, Facebook, nor Uber stops enlarging and enriching their original "why" frames, which shows they are constantly thinking about their "why." Google interpreted their "why" clearly to the public through the "Ten Things We Know To Be True". On Google's company website, it writes, "We first wrote these '10 things' when Google was just a few years old. From time to time we revisit this list to see if it still holds true. We hope it does— and you can hold us to that." Facebook revised its mission statement more than ten times since its first establishment in 2004. Uber now positions itself as a lifestyle and logistics company, rather than a car service company, and they have already started proving it through their new trials such as Uber Ice Cream or UberEATs.

In contrast, many of the competitors in the history of Google, Facebook and Uber failed to create their own "why" or make their "why" a priority. Therefore, they either lost the competitive advantage quickly or simply could not compete at all.

(1) Facebook vs. MySpace: MySpace existed and was widely welcomed before the inauguration of Facebook. It targeted the same audience – college students, received a lot of early press, and generated huge valuation among its investors. However, Facebook started to quickly overtook its market share. One crucial reason is that after being purchased by the News Corporation, MySpace's original "why" no longer fit into its new reality. News Corp tried to guide MySpace by using the "professional management " to determine the business's future. Leaders from News Corp sat down describing where the business would head, where they would invest and how they would earn a positive ROI with projections of what would work (Hartung, 2011). Those professional leaders at News Corp had no idea about the nature of social network among college students and they ran MySpace like a professional business. Contrarily, Mark Zuckerberg allowed Facebook to go wherever the market wanted it. They looked into the comments of its users and understood their audience well. Moreover, if you had an idea for social networking, they would push its tech folks to make it happen. They always focused on openness and connection, which started first from listening to their users (Hartung, 2011).

(2) Google vs. Bing: On May 28, 2009, Microsoft CEO, Steve Ballmer, publically demonstrated Bing for the first time at the All Things Digital Tech Conference in San Diego, California. In the live interview at the conference, when asked why Microsoft decided to rebrand the name of Live Search as Bing, Ballmer said the search engine industry was a large growing market and Microsoft wanted to be in that market. To make their presence more obvious, they needed a short and crispy name that can "verb it up." Reports also showed that Microsoft was planning to spend $100 million for the marketing campaign of Bing (Spring, 2009).

Compared to Google, Bing indeed differentiated itself in many aspects. While Google used a quick-loading design to create a list of highly relevant search results, Bing's search results were organized into categories such as the Web, Maps, Images, and Health. One more distinction was that Bing was able to figure out the searcher's intent rather than relying heavily on matching keywords to Web documents, which later was also adopted by Google (Spring, 2009). However, after six years, according to the latest statistics from netmarketshare.com, Google is still the dominant search engine with 69% market share around the world while Bing only accounts for 12% even after its partnership with Yahoo. When companies lose their "why" at the beginning, it's usually hard to catch up later. Microsoft did not know clearly why they rebranded their search engine. Therefore, even if they successfully differentiate the product from competitors' via marketing campaigns, loyalty doesn't follow.

(3) Uber vs. Lyft: In 2011, after selling off their 4-year-old company Zimride to Enterprise, John Zimmer and Logan Green created another peer-to-peer ride sharing company called Lyft. At that time, they tried to learn from the failure of Zimride which was a hit especially among college students before Uber. However, the astounding success of Uber brought a lot of pressure to Zimride as they were no longer appealing to young groups. The founders decided to sell the company and try something new. "Lyft came out of a hackathon project where we were trying to figure out what does Zimride look like on mobile," Green said, noting that they initially thought of calling Lyft "Zimride Instant." On May 22, 2012, they launched Lyft to "give Uber some low-priced private driver/Taxi competition" (Gallagher, 2013). At the time, Lyft differentiated themselves from Uber by adding two more pillars to its business:

ride sharing for long-distance car rides, and a University program where Lyft charges colleges for specific campus car-sharing programs. Now three years after its launch, Lyft indeed received many positive reviews from its community and is growing steadily in the U.S. However, compared to the sensation Uber created around the world, Lyft looks more like a different version of Uber, rather than having its unique corporate identity. When a company's "why" is mainly based on business competition, not the solution to the problems their users or potential users care about, it may have a sound short-term gain by differentiating their services, but will face larger challenges in the future as it is growing.

Statistics show that nine out of ten startups failed in the past. The major reason according to Fortune magazine's analysis is that "they make products no one wants." CB Insights in 2014 parsed 101 post-mortem essays by startup founders to discuss the reasons they believe their company failed. The No.1 reason for failure, cited by 42% of polled startups, is the lack of a market demand for their product (Griffith, 2014). In other words, they failed to create their "why" in the first place. Not surprisingly, many successful companies sometimes also lose direction on launching products. In 2011, Hewlett Packard introduced its TouchPad with attempt to compete with Apple's iPad. With powerful video capability and impressive processing speeds, the TouchPad was widely anticipated to be the biggest challenge to iPad. HP also invested large amounts of money for press and promotions. However, it turned out to be a huge failure in the end with the loss of $855 million (Time Magazine, 2014). One common reason for those failed product launches is that when communicating to the public, they did not start with why, but with product features describing what the devices do. When you are talking "why", you put your

audience at the center of communication, but as you are talking "what," you put yourself or the product at the center of communication.

The current public relations industry is facing a challenge of losing the "why" in their communication practices. A large amount of campaigns nowadays focus on how to deliver the message to attract attention, but not why the audience should care. Public relations, under this circumstance, becomes a tool or means to simply execute the existing decisions, instead of critically examining those decisions first. A century ago, when Edward Bernays first expanded public relations from a narrow concept of press agent to a broad scope of seeking influence on changing public opinion and behavior, he positioned public relations as social science. "Public relations is a vocation applied by a social scientist who advises a client or employer on social attitudes and the actions to take to win support of the public upon whom the viability of the client depends." He wrote in his famous book Crystallizing Public Opinion. As a social scientist, "why" should always be the center of discussion. In an interview with Public Relations Quarterly in 1971, Bernays further pointed out that PR practitioners should be both "thinkers and doers". "It is a great shame that with all the knowledge available, there should still be the great gap between the thinkers and the doers in our country" (Public Relations Quarterly, 1971). In 1991, when he turned 100, he showed his disappointment of the public relations industry at that time: "Public relations today is horrible. Any dope, any nitwit, any idiot can call him or herself a public relations practitioner" (The New York Times, 1995). Although his words were harsh, he revealed honestly that the biggest challenge of modern public relations was the lost of its own "why". When a consultant doesn't know "why" they are doing what they are doing, the advices he or she gives to the clients will also lose directions.

2. Developing the "Why" frame

When developing the "why" frame for a corporation, it is not necessary to start from a broad enough statement such as "to change the world." Actually, from the case studies above, we can see the origins of their "why" are all very specific - addressing a particular issue at that time. However, as the company is evolving, it will not be sufficient to simply keep the "why" into its origin. As we can see from Google, Facebook, and Uber, all of them are constantly enriching their "why" based on the development phrases they are going through. Therefore, the process of creating the "why" frame can be divided into two parts.

The first part is the formation of the original "why." Usually, the company's genesis story is at the core of its original "why." From the three case studies, we can see the power and the impact of the founders at the beginning of the company. Page and Brin created Google in Stanford dorm room as part of their PhD researches, and their academic backgrounds and personal beliefs later influenced many aspects of Google's growth. Zuckerberg and Facebook's founding story was so appealing to even Hollywood movie makers, and was brought live on the big screen in 2010. Uber's original "why" was conceived because of the founder Garret Camp's observation of the horrible taxi experiences in San Francisco, and he decided to solve this problem via the power of technology.

The second part is the enlargement of the "why" frame. To successfully fulfill the mission of the original "why," leaders usually cannot finish it only by themselves. They need people who share

their vision to make it real together. At this time, corporate culture becomes very important for a company to convey its "why" and to represent its "why" to the outside world. Both Google and Facebook establish their unique cultures at very early stage. They have similarities and differences based on how they define themselves. Similarly, both of them adopt the bottom-up management style and the flat corporate structure as they both believe in openness and transparency, but despise bureaucracy. Both Google and Facebook use the working environment to demonstrate and communicate the values to their employees. They build up the office environment based on those values so that employees can be constantly reminded and inspired. Differently, the whole Facebook brand is more associated with Mark Zuckerberg than its corporate culture while Google runs the opposite. After Page and Brin successfully established Google's corporate culture, they let the culture shine and become Google's brand image.

3. Implementing the "Why" Frame in Daily Communications

The Arthur W. Page Society (2014) introduced a new model for corporate communications based on their studies on corporate character and authentic advocacy. The new model confirms the crucial function of "the enterprises' stated purpose and values" in stakeholder engagement. "It is imperative that an enterprise not only looks, sounds and thinks like its stated values, but also that it regularly performs to those ideals. The better a company performs in this respect, the more inclined stakeholders are to constructively engage with, trust and advocate on its behalf."

The implementation of the "why" frame in daily communication starts first internally from employees. As shown from the case studies, both Google and Facebook start very early on

establishing an effective communication mechanism within the corporation. Whether it is Google's TGIF meetings, quarterly OKRs report, or Mark Zuckerberg's Q&A session every Friday and Facebook's regular Hackerathon competition, leaders at Google and Facebook know clearly the importance of internal communication to a corporation's long-term success. Employees are, after all, a company's best and most valuable brand ambassadors. Nowadays, with the rapid growth of social media, everything happening internally can be external news. An inside-out approach to engagement empowers employees in this process by allowing them to personify the company's values externally. Therefore, companies should spend time first on thinking and developing a suitable and efficient system for internal communication and create a culture of "why" within the company.

After having a solid "why" internally, companies will have more confidence in external communications. One key principle in external communication is to meet audience where they are, not where we are. This requires corporations to shift their focus of communication from brand itself to its audience. Audience, or precisely the market, is always the "why" brands exist in the first place. By first addressing what the audience are concerning about, companies create a frame of communication that provides meaningful context for introducing the facts and features of their brands. Before communication, companies should always ask themselves why the audience should care about what they are saying. It is also a process to activate and connect with the frames in the audience's minds. If we fail to establish the "why" frame at the beginning, chances are our audience will ignore or quickly forget the information we want to convey to them as it may not fit into their mental models.

4. Is "Why" Enough?

No matter how powerful the "why" sounds, if no person in the company is able to bring that vision to reality, "why" loses its value. When Page and Brin was thinking to solve the search problem at that time, they had already started researching and developing strategies under the instruction of their thesis advisors; when Zuckerberg was envisioning a more influential future of Facebook by launching "The Facebook Platform," he already knew clearly what a "Platform" was from his previous trials, and he had a talented engineer team that were capable of finishing this mission. Moreover, if Google, Facebook, and Uber failed to offer the topnotch experiences to their users, people would not believe in their "why." Therefore, having the "why" only is not enough, though we should always start with why.

After creating the "why," companies need to start thinking how to implement the "why" by establishing an effective infrastructure with systems and processes that can best sustain the execution of the "why." In his book, Sinek (2009) further adapts "The Golden Circle" to building up an effective structure of a company. He regards the Circle as a three-dimensional pyramid. Leaders is sitting at the top of the pyramid, representing the "why"; senior executives who are inspired by the leader's vision and know the strategies to implement it are at the middle level, representing the "how"; the majority of the employees, representing the "what," spend efforts on making the "why" tangible at the bottom, and they are the foundation of the whole pyramid to stand. This structure can effectively rally different types of talents – the "why" type, the "how" type, and the "what" type – to achieve the shared vision.

VIII. Conclusion

"People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." This is the core argument Simon Sinek articulated in his TED talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," as well as in his book *Start With Why*. The three cases this paper studies – Google, Facebook, and Uber – not only prove the importance of the "why" in business decision-making and communication, but also demonstrates the process of developing and implementing the "why" frame in corporate communications.

Generally speaking, successful startups place their "why" at the center of decision-making, and when communicating internally and externally, they frame their "why" in the messages they want to convey, which are usually more compelling than those that only contain product-or-service-related information. In addition, in the process of enlarging the original "why" frames along with the companies' growth, these startups shrewdly demonstrate the consistency and authenticity of their missions and visions. In contrast, many of their competitors who struggle in business do not realize the significance of the "why" in business decision-making and communication. They focus on creating marketing packages for each of their products or services, but forget the connection of their messages to the overall brand image – the "why" frame. They start their conversations with what they believe are important to themselves rather than to their users, customers, or targeted audience. Therefore, they often lose attention quickly in communications as people cannot visualize a deeper connection with them.

In developing and enriching the "why" frame, companies should also be aware that the "why" frame is not simply a slogan-like mission statement, though mission and vision are essential parts of the "why" frame. A solid "why" frame, in both the original and extended forms, reflects two

developmental phases. The original "why" is closely associated with the founding story of a company – why the company exists in the first place - whether it is to find a solution to an existing problem as Google and Uber did, or to meet the demand of a particular group as Facebook did. The origin of the "why" should not be self-centered profit gaining, but should be motivated by the purpose of creating a larger benefit for others. The extended "why" should be consistent with the original "why" and is often embodied in a company's culture and values. From the case studies, we can see that successful companies establish their cultures and values at a very early stage, and the cultures and values can be displayed through the hiring process. The founders make sure their employees understand and believe in the same values and regard their hires as part of the companies' "why." Therefore, the founders create a culture of "why" within the corporation before communicating the "why" to the outside world.

Business leaders and public relations practitioners nowadays often forget their "why" in communications. They spend huge amounts of marketing budget on differentiating their new products from those of competitors, but only see a short-term ROI; they send out numerous press releases with all the necessary information, but are soon frustrated by the reality that no one picks them up; they revise a business practice, but eventually receive a backlash. Those leaders and PR practitioners think that the audience will care more about product-or-service-related facts and figures because data can talk for itself. However, the case studies and the research from cognitive science mentioned in this paper prove this wrong. In order to effectively connect with the audience, customers, or stakeholders, the "why" should always be at the center of communications. Moreover, to successfully generate trust and loyalty, what the company does

should always be consistent with its "why" frame. Otherwise, the "why" frame itself will be challenged.

This paper has explored in depth, through case studies, the function of "why" and the process of developing the "why" frame in corporate communications. However, technology companies have been the focus of my analysis, which may not be applicable enough to all types of startups. Future studies can further examine a variety of companies, nonprofits, or governmental organizations regarding the relationship between their "why" frames and their business practices to enrich or challenge the argument presented in this paper. In addition, due to limited time and resources, the case studies here are based on secondary research. Future studies may want to include more primary research such as in-depth interviews to diversify the methodology.

Sinek says there are only two ways to influence human behavior – manipulation or inspiration. Business decision-makers can easily grasp and reproduce manipulative strategies in their communications, while generating inspiration usually requires richer thoughts and deeper motivation. Developing the "why" frame starts the company on a journey of self-exploration and lays the foundation for a steady flow of inspiration.

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