

HOW TO DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE AND FACE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE (DR. JOHN IZZO)

I have spent the last two weeks helping two organizations reimagine and define their purpose while coaching another leader to define hers. One of the companies is a startup creating a disruptive innovation and the other is an established business with a long history. In this blog I want to tackle **why it matters for organizations and individuals to define their purpose**. I'll also discuss the biggest challenge we all face in defining and naming our purpose.

WHY DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE?

Naming a clear purpose does three important things. Firstly, it inspires us and others. Time and again I have witnessed the power of a newly named purpose to reinvigorate companies and people. Suddenly our work becomes more than just tasks and we see our effort in terms of **service towards a worthy goal**. While I can't name those I am working with, I can tell you that I see the excitement people experience as they begin to **identify their highest desires** and dream about their **maximum contribution in life**.

Second, identifying and naming our purpose helps us make decisions. **Once we name our purpose it becomes a beacon that guides us in the choices we make**. When I went on sabbatical in 2015, I came back with a clear purpose "to help accelerate the shift of consciousness required for humanity to thrive." Over the last three years that purpose has helped me know when to say yes and, as importantly, when to say NO.

Thirdly, naming our purpose creates alignment. Once we name our purpose it helps people opt in and out of an organization, it serves to bring divergent efforts together in service of a common goal, and it helps **align our use of time and resources with our values**.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WHEN NAMING YOUR PURPOSE

Having helped scores of organizations and hundreds of people name their purpose, I have found one big challenge we all face when we decide to take this journey: **Playing it Safe**.

Organizations and individuals both tend to focus too much on what others will think or the fear that people will say "Who are YOU to try to do that?" When we focus on the fear of looking too ambitious, we create safe statements or corporate speak that offend no one and inspire no one. Imagine if Unilever was not bold enough to make *sustainable living commonplace* or Starbucks said, "Who are we to *inspire the human spirit*?"

That fear gripped me when I named my purpose to "accelerate the shift of consciousness required for humanity to thrive!" Who the heck am I to do that? Yet that IS my purpose and naming it has helped those who truly want to work with me find me.

Instead of asking “Who are we?” or “Who am I to that?”, ask a different question: “Why not me, why not us?”

If your purpose doesn't feel inspiring to you, if it doesn't feel like a stretch, or if it doesn't ruffle a few feathers, then maybe you need to pause and reconsider.



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