

Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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Your quality doesn't define my value

During the 1980s, it was all about "hi-fi." All the electronics companies competed on who could produce higher fidelity sound. But then, in an instant, high fidelity sound didn't matter at all. As soon as the mp3 became the music format of choice, the quality standards changed. The mp3 was designed to compress more data into a smaller filesize and, by its very nature, the output offers relatively poor quality sound compared to almost all other digital or analogue formats. But all the big names in audio - Yamaha, Onkyo, Bang & Olufson, all of a sudden abandoned their devotion to the highest fidelity possible and started producing systems that you could stick your iPod in. They may sound good - but they are certainly not as good.

Cameras are the same. Film is as good as it gets. In fact, camera companies compete over which of their digital cameras comes closest to reproducing the quality of film. Megapixels became the name of the game and we were told we all wanted more of them.

Then the makers of mobile phones started adding cameras to our phones and, in an instant, the quality of the picture became less of an issue. Sure they are still making strides to improve the quality of the cameras, but a camera on a cell phone is still far from good. In fact most are pretty bad. But go to any event or any museum and watch how many people, young and old, are taking pictures with their phones.

Companies always ask consumers if we care about quality - sound quality, picture quality or any other quality - and we always say yes. And we think we do. That is, until we don't. Not as much as we thought, anyway.

We will gladly sacrifice high fidelity sound in favor of 1,000 songs in our pockets. We will gladly sacrifice the quality of film or the weight of a good camera to snap a few bad pictures with our phones. Even YouTube is relatively bad quality, but we're ok with it because it's so easy to use.

Companies still think we value the quality and the qualities they think are important. Cellphone manufacturers kept adding more and more buttons and features to their phones because, as they said, that's what their consumers wanted. That was until Apple showed up and gave us less...and it turned out what we told

companies we wanted, was not what we wanted.

The "superior quality" that so many companies strive for does indeed make their products better, but value is only achieved when their products make our lives better...and that can often happen with lower quality products.