

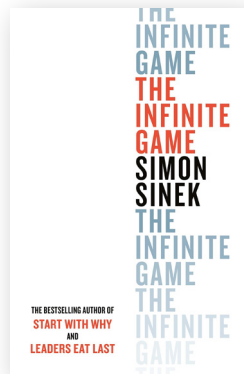


## THE INFINITE GAME: HOW GREAT BUSINESSES ACHIEVE LONG-LASTING SUCCESS

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## THE BOOK



## The Infinite Game: How Great Businesses Achieve Long Lasting Success

By Simon Sinek



## INTRODUCTION

Which game are you playing? New York Times best-selling author Simon Sinek makes sense of life and business by breaking it down to the games we are all playing. Finite games like soccer or chess have set rules and players and a definite end. But infinite games like business, politics, or indeed life itself, have no fixed rule and no end. You can win a finite game but the infinite game is the one you play for life. With this as his framework, Sinek, author of *Start With Why*, *Leaders Eat Last* and *Together is Better*, teaches how to grow an organisation and a life with staying power.

By embracing ethical values and understanding long-term thinking, your organisation will not only grow but thrive. Believe it or not, a world where workers love their jobs and companies thrive despite hardships is achievable. Simon Sinek's passionate and instructive book can teach you and your team how to embrace every challenge by playing the Infinite Game. Directed at business owners, it is also helpful for leaders and professionals who want to take the best approach to supporting the organisation they work for.



## 5 BEST QUOTES

**“Leaders are not responsible for the results, leaders are responsible for the people who are responsible for the results. And the best way to drive performance in an organisation is to create an environment in which information can flow freely, mistakes can be highlighted and help can be offered and received.”**

**“To ask, “What’s best for me?” is finite thinking. To ask, “What’s best for us?” is infinite thinking.”**

**“The ability to succeed is not what makes someone a leader. Exhibiting the qualities of leadership is what makes someone an effective leader. Qualities like honesty, integrity, courage, resiliency, perseverance, judgment and decisiveness,”**

**“One of the primary jobs of any leader is to make new leaders. To help grow the kind of leaders who know how to build organizations equipped for the Infinite Game.”**

**“When leaders are willing to prioritize trust over performance, performance almost always follows.”**



8 BIG IDEAS

### 1. FINITE VS INFINITE

The finite game has one of set rules, winners and losers. When a finite game is over, play ceases and the winner is triumphant. The mistake many make is in thinking that life and business are a finite game that you can win. This is far from the case. Business is an infinite game, one that must be played on and on. You can't 'win' in business or in your career because there will always be another company, another idea, another technology. As soon as you think you have won, you become complacent and stop playing the infinite game. The infinite game does not stop. Truly successful businesses and professionals understand this and they stay ahead because they never stop playing.

### 2. JUST CAUSE

The infinite game needs a 'Just Cause'. This is the aim and goal of the company you own or work for. A just cause is not 'make more money' or 'be the best'. Sinek describes a just cause as 'a specific vision of a future state that does not exist; a future state so appealing that people are willing to make sacrifices in order to help advance towards that vision'.

Sinek sites 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' as an ideal just cause. Your 'just cause should be an open-ended and idealistic aim that people who work with you can understand and want to strive towards. With a just cause, your business or your what you do for a living becomes meaningful to you and the people you interact with.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITY

Once a just cause is established, a company has a responsibility to its employees, customers, and to society and business in general.

#### **Sinek lays out three points:**

**Advance a purpose:** This will give people a sense of belonging so they feel that their work has value.

**Protect people:** A company should seek to protect its employees, customers and the environment.

**Generate Profit:** A profit is necessary to maintain the first two aims but note that it comes third. Profit is a means to an end and not an end in itself. A responsible organisation has strength in its forward-thinking stance and in the loyalty that is generated in its staff and customers.



8 BIG IDEAS

#### 4. TRUST

A team that cannot trust one another is destined to fail. In a finite game, a company or organisation may show great growth by pitting employees against one another, but business and work are infinite games.

Time will always show the truth and a lack of trust in the workplace will always take a toll in the long run.

A workplace built on trust and respect has a much stronger foundation on which to grow. People who trust one another and who can be trusted themselves perform better in the long run and will be happier at work. Not only this, they will also be more likely to present problems to be solved rather than ignoring or hiding them until things come to a head.

#### 5. ETHICS

Sinek discusses 'ethical fading'. An organisation that suffers from ethical fading will start to cut corners or perform tasks in an unethical or even illegal way in order to get ahead.

This is a slippery slope that will lead to job loss and reputation loss. Maintaining a good ethical standpoint will enable businesses to stand tall and grow a faithful consumer base.

In the infinite game, consumers seek out ethical companies. Employees also work harder for and make more sacrifices for a company that they believe in and that they know believes in them.

#### 6. RIVALRY

A rival need not be an enemy. Rivalry helps to push you forward in order to find your strengths and work on your weaknesses.

In *The Infinite Game*, Sinek explains how Apple found different 'worthy rivals' over time to keep them at the top of the game. From the early 70s, IBM was their rival in producing personal computers. Later, Apple focused this rivalry on Microsoft.

By finding a rival, the team at Apple was able to drive their company and to fill niches that their rival could not. Most tellingly, as times change rivals must change. If Apple had considered themselves the 'winner' once IBM changed to a software focus, they may have become lax and lost sight of future possibilities.



## 8 BIG IDEAS

## 7. FLEXIBILITY

Future possibilities are indeed integral to success in the infinite game, and that means the ability to exert 'existential flexibility'. This means the ability to change directions mid-stream if one course has become more favourable.

Again, Sinek uses Apple as an example. The company had exerted much time and effort into their new operating system in the early 80s when the leaders saw the new general graphic interface (GUI) being developed at Xerox.

Steve Jobs knew this was the technology the company really needed to change the face of home computing. Despite the fact that months of work had to be discarded, he exhibited flexibility and Apple made home computers what they are today.

## 8. COURAGE TO LEAD

The ability to make such flexible decisions also takes great courage. This courage to lead is essential to maintain all of the steps above.

It takes real courage to pivot in desperate times or to make decisions that align with your ethics and just cause but may not meet the standards of Wall Street. Such courage, though, is what can make and break companies.

The pioneers of popular photography were undeniably Kodak. This brand's products brought cameras to the general public for generations. Much of their profit though, was tied up in film, a medium that digital photography threatened. Rather than embracing the future, the executives suppressed digital photography.

In the short term, Kodak stayed at the top of its game. As is always the case with the infinite game though, time sowed the truth and now Kodak is a tiny fraction of the powerhouse they once were. Had Kodak shown the courage to embrace change, they might have led the digital revolution.

**3 ACTION STEPS**

The Infinite Game is about growing organisations by switching to an infinite mindset over a finite one. Here are the three key steps to achieving this:

**1. JUST CAUSE**

Find a good reason for your organisation or work to exist beyond being 'the best' or acquiring the most revenue. A cause for you and your employees to work towards at all times that is bigger than all of you.

**2. BUILD TRUST**

Building trust within your company will make your workers happier and more dedicated and will create trust among your customers as well.

**3. BE FLEXIBLE**

Be prepared to pivot and change your direction. The world is in constant flux. If you don't embrace this, your organisation may stagnate and be left behind.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

Playing the game with a finite mindset is counterproductive. You are not playing the game that you are actually in.

By embracing an infinite mindset, you can grow an organisation well beyond this year's exam results or profits and into the distant future. Build a company or school that stands the test of time.

Create a just cause and strive to be ethical and flexible and your organisation will weather the harshest of storms. The finite mindset of so many institutions these days has led to their downfall as is becoming more and more apparent. With an infinite mindset you can lead your organisation and your life through current troubles and into a bright future.

**The key message of the book is to play the infinite game. Don't aim to win, aim to keep playing. In the infinite game, there are no winners, only those ahead and behind.**

**Through infinite thinking, you can pilot your business or your personal goals through even the hardest times.**



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