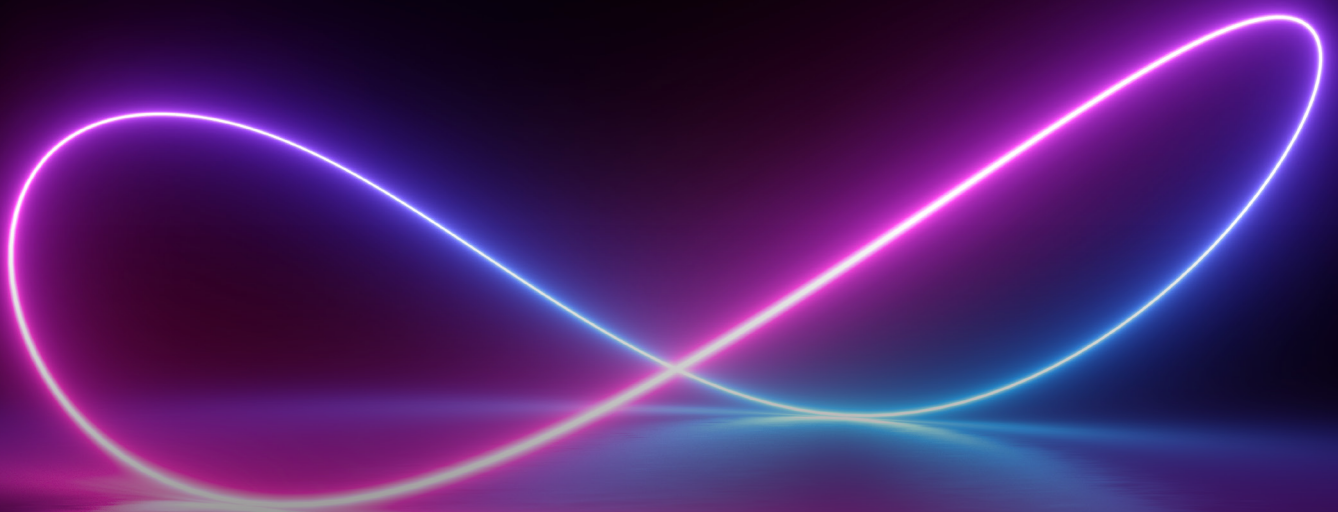




HOW AND WHY A BUSINESS **NEEDS TO PLAY FOR THE INFINITE GAME**

SEPTEMBER 2020



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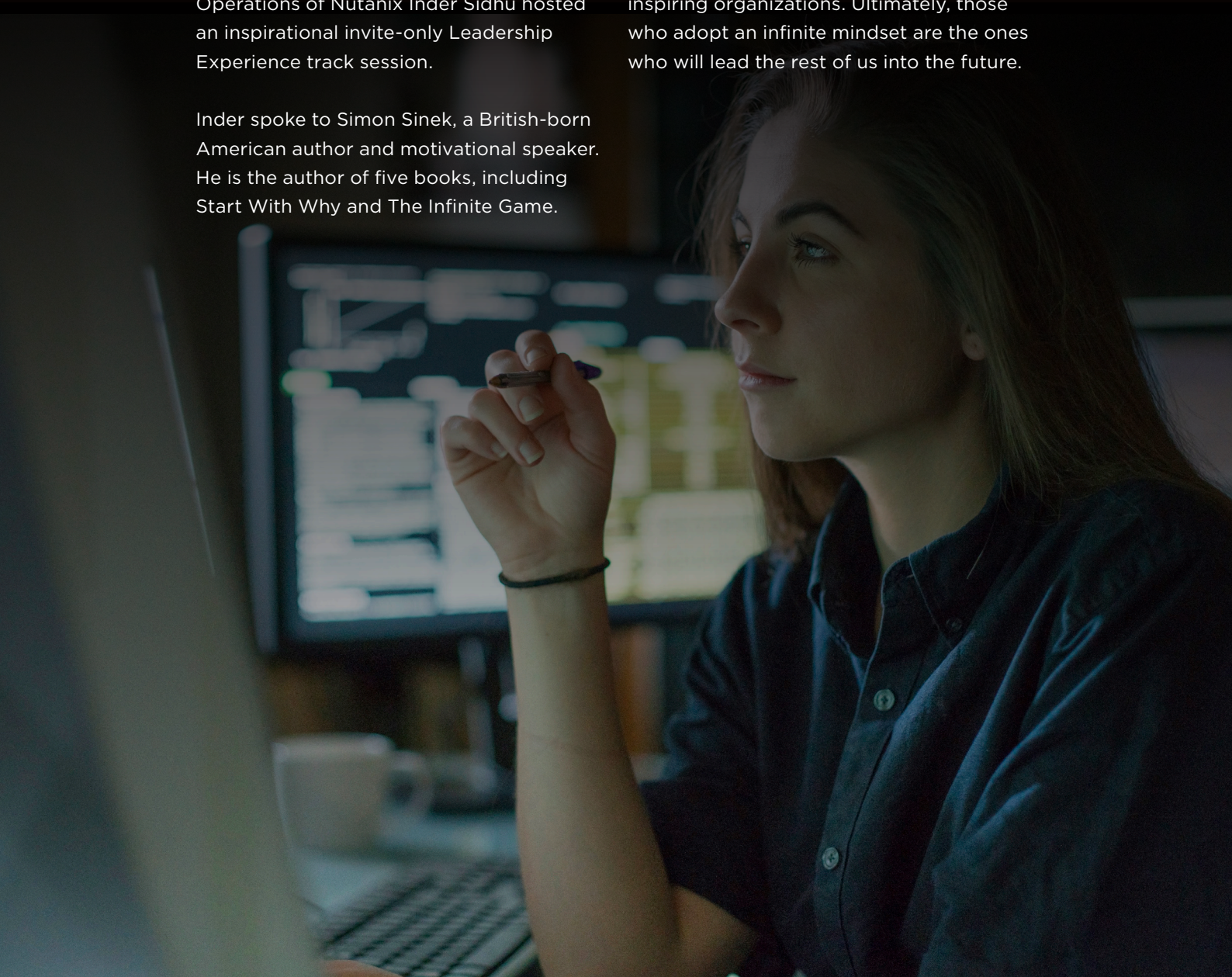


Nutanix put as much effort (if not more) to deliver its .NEXT 2020 virtual user, customer, and partner event this year, despite the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic and the ensuing effects it has wreaked upon the way we all operate.

In the appropriate “full conference” style, then, we enjoyed CEO Dheeraj Pandey’s opening keynote and the following plenary session opening presentations. Before afternoon breakout sessions and other more specifically aligned conference tracks, Executive Vice President of Global Customer Success and Business Operations of Nutanix Inder Sidhu hosted an inspirational invite-only Leadership Experience track session.

Inder spoke to Simon Sinek, a British-born American author and motivational speaker. He is the author of five books, including *Start With Why* and *The Infinite Game*.

Sinek spoke on the leadership topic of “infinite mindset.” He believes that many of the struggles that organizations face exist simply because their leaders are playing with a finite mindset in a game that has no end. However, the leaders who embrace an infinite mindset, in stark contrast, build stronger, more innovative, and more inspiring organizations. Ultimately, those who adopt an infinite mindset are the ones who will lead the rest of us into the future.





To infinite mindsets... and beyond

Talking about how he himself has coped with the pandemic, Sinek explained that he realized that this period was a good time to call a friend of his in the military and ask how to deal with a massive front-of-mind problem (like Covid-19) while still keeping a core objective (running the business) in focus at the same time.



Recounting his friend's advice, Sinek said that he found that in really tough times like 2020, it's better to open up to weaknesses and express how - even as a leader - you sometimes feel like there is more going on that you can cope with.

"Constantly expressing unerring strength as a leader can ultimately have a negative effect upon your workforce, because it can make employees feel weak in their own minds. For a leader to in fact say

that they are struggling and going to the extent of expressing vulnerability really shows the human side of management. But ultimately it builds trust and, eventually, it helps build higher-performing teams," said Sinek.

He suggests that actually speaking to your team and saying "I expect less of you right now" is a strange thing to do, but it actually takes the pressure off people and may well see employees outperform in any given situation.



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Changing priorities for business

Sinek and Nutanix's own Inder Sidhu are clearly fond of the history of economics; both men talked through the evolution of thought that has driven great theorists and authors in the arena of business demand and supply.

Adam Smith said that the definition of business was consumption. Milton Friedman in the 1970s theorized that it was the responsibility of business to maximize profit within the boundaries of the law. But these were times of economic boom and relative peace and these thoughts were popularized amplified throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

"We can even look at approaches like promoting the top-performing 10% of your workforce and firing your bottom-performing 10%, but these practices are typically for short term economic gain and are techniques that will actually hurt people." Today, thankfully for the most part, times have changed suggests Sinek.

From Sinek's perspective, contemporary forward-thinking modern business comes down to three principles.

- A business needs to exist to make something bigger than itself.
- A business needs to exist to look after people.
- A business needs to exist to make money

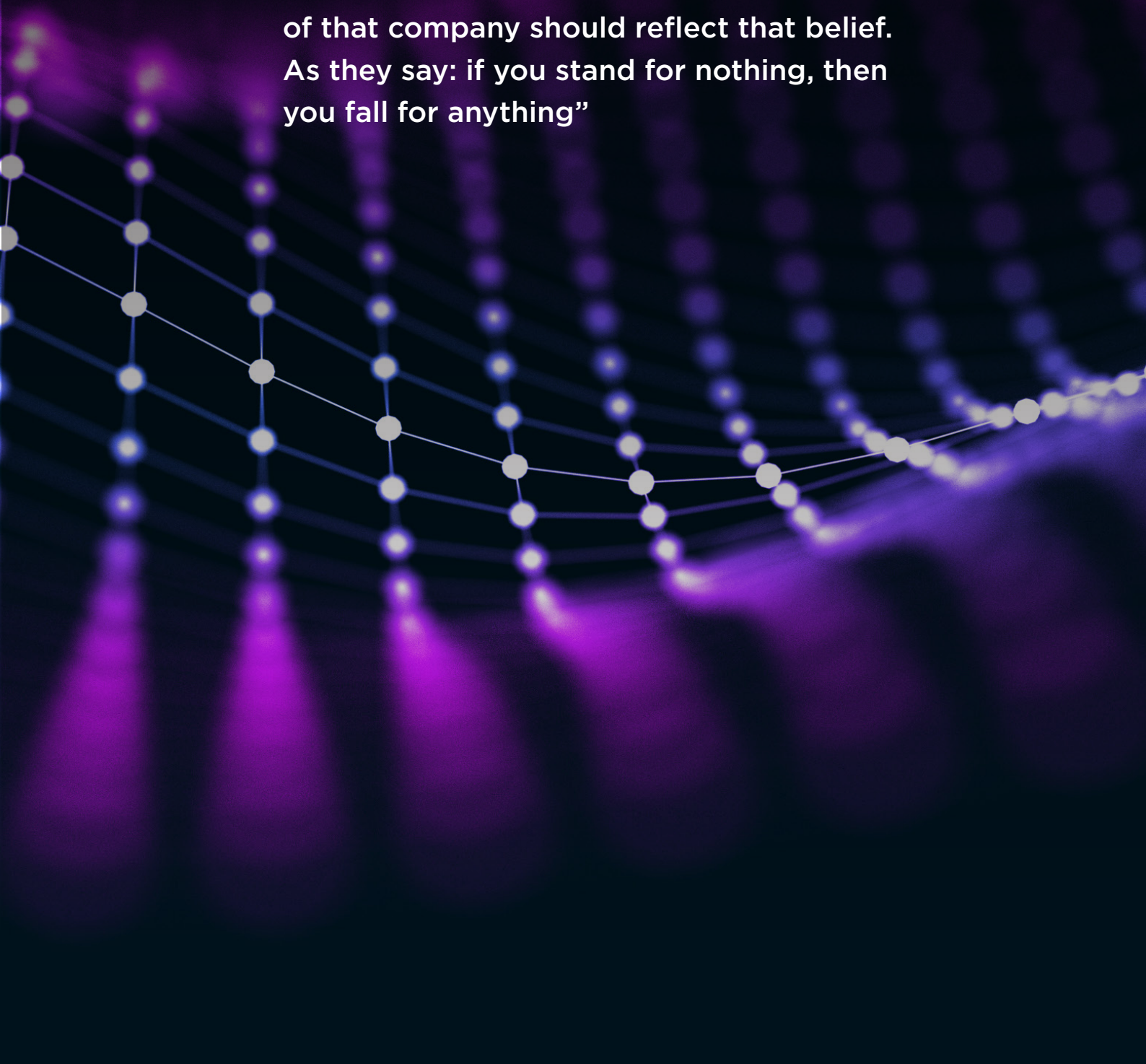
"The decision to make sure that a business stands for something more than just the pursuit of money is not just a good idea, it's the right thing to do. If a business actually stands for something then every piece of communication that comes out of that company should reflect that belief. As they say: if you stand for nothing, then you fall for anything," said Sinek.

This shift is all about the move in any organization to go from being shareholder-centric, towards being stakeholder-centric. But, Sidhu asked, is this just socialism recast in a post-Covid-19 (and indeed post-Bernie Saunders world)? Any business still needs a hard edge right, he asked?

In answering, Sinek broke down the proposition here a little further by explaining the difference between playing the finite or infinite business game.



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Finite games vs infinite games

In finite games, there are a known number of players, fixed rules, and an agreed objective, so ultimately there is a winner and there is a loser.

In infinite games, there are an unknown number of players, changeable rules, and a moveable objective--plus there is no winner and a loser. The objective is focused upon staying in the game for as long as possible.

He argues that building any business on a finite mindset is damaging. There is no winner and loser in business. During Covid-19 we have learned that just staying around and keeping the infinite game going (so that we'd all be here for tomorrow) is what really matters. Infinite players that work like this are the ones that realize that money is indeed still fundamentally important, but not at the expense of the environment.

"We know that China is building for the future and playing the infinite game is so much of what it does. Whether China engages in some business practices that most of us would think of as unsavory is a separate discussion. You just need to look at the way these companies are working. Look at your rivals, their strengths help you reveal your weaknesses," concluded Sinek.

As in business, as in life

The conclusion from this discussion appears to be that we can take all these ideas and apply them to our own lives. After all, we are the finite or infinite players in our own existence.

So, on the one hand, we can simply act as finite actors and try and make as much money as possible and then spend it all and die. Or, alternatively, or we can play as infinite humans and try and leave some lasting impact, contribute to the lives of others, and so leave some kind of legacy on this planet.

What sort of business do we want to lead Post Covid-19? What mark does it leave on our lives, and on the world?

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