

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA, CEFM, DBIA

Business is still business; the game is just played a little differently now. The two books reviewed this month address what is required to succeed and how to do it from different perspectives. They present behaviors or styles that are needed to meet either personal or organizational goals. Reading either or both of these volumes could be a nice way to start the new year and help achieve some resolutions.

THE INFINITE GAME

Simon Sinek, Portfolio/Penguin, New York, 2019, 272 pp., hardcover (\$28), ebook (\$14.99), and audiobook (\$23.97).

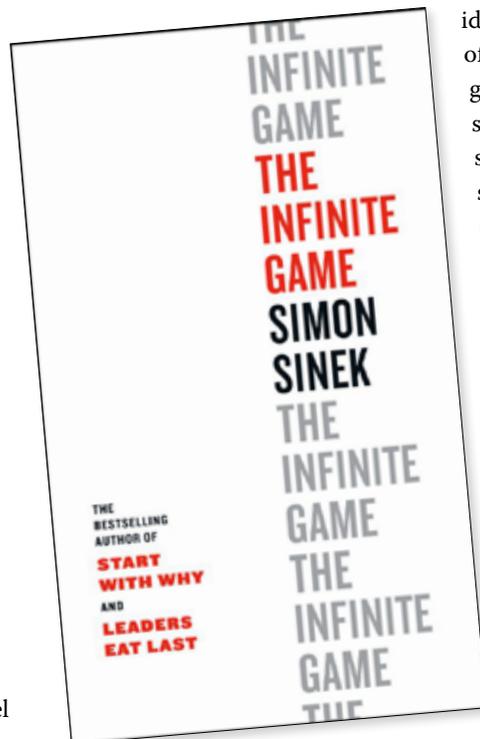
The goal of many organizations is to be around for more than just one or even several business cycles; but as Simon Sinek discusses in *The Infinite Game*, business behavior is often different. That is, many organizations are focused on a reporting quarter or year to validate their overall value to stakeholders (shareholders) despite having an overall goal of being around for a long time (decades or centuries). This is an area of criticism in the business/investment community.

Educational institutions have been around a long time, so the foundational rationale Sinek presents should not be foreign. However, as with any industry, it is possible for us to slip into a short-term mindset about what it takes to make an organization successful or recognized over peers and competitors.

In *The Infinite Game*, Sinek focuses on the things that make an organization successful repeatedly, not in the short term or focused on a single metric such as lowest cost, best value, or highest profit margin. It's a tough level

for an organization to perform at, because it means continuous improvement, constant innovation, great customer service, and strong customer loyalty. Sinek knocks down some traditional business mantras, identifying why many organizations are not focused on an *infinite* quest but on a short-term goal.

While Sinek bashes some leaders who have focused on the finite game instead of the infinite game, he spends more time identifying the value and benefits of thinking beyond a short-term goal. He includes adoption of a society-wide stakeholder mindset, similar to recent announcements by some business leaders. He argues that this "new way of thinking" will improve long-term business success despite the potential for short-term losses. In an industry where we like to think of ourselves as being better the older our organization is, it certainly makes sense to follow Sinek's recommendations and change our perspective of how to be successful.



FLIP-FLOPS & MICROWAVED FISH: NAVIGATING THE DOS AND DON'TS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE

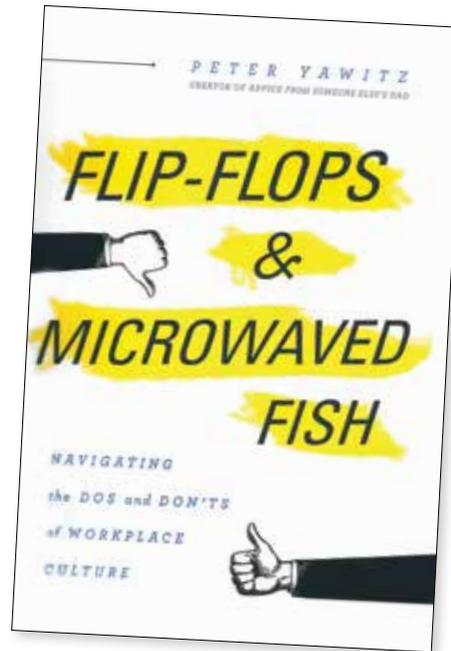
Peter Yawitz, Greenleaf Book Group, Austin, TX, 2020, softcover (\$24.95).

Several generations ago, the way etiquette should affect our lives was defined in publications by Emily Post, Amy Vanderbilt, and Miss Manners. The recommendations they proffered defined how polite society should interact with each other, including situations involving differences of age, attitude, opinion, politics, and size. Etiquette was an interface between different people; it was the way to preserve one's position while working with others who held different positions.

In the 1960s, this kind of advice started to be seen by many as antiquated and elitist. They claimed etiquette was simply a tool of the wealthy to separate themselves from those less fortunate. The use of these publications declined, although it is still possible to acquire them.

However, as the business and social environment evolved, differences between people interacting with each other grew more frequent. Some large companies, to ensure employees did not offend potential customers (and each other), employed trainers who essentially taught etiquette to their employees. While the white or blue shirts worn by IBM employees devolved to other colors, manners and behavioral norms were maintained, at least for a little while.

Now, we see CEOs wearing hoodies in lieu of a three-piece suit; some businesses permit even more casual dress. The norms of your parents or grandparents have disappeared, but the need for etiquette to avoid unnecessary clashes in the workplace has not. *Flip-Flops & Microwaved Fish* provides advice on business standards in a fluid workplace where members of different nationalities, backgrounds, and experiences interact. The advice extends beyond what to wear and behave, identifying differences in national norms and how to



bridge them. It also provides advice on how to communicate with peers, subordinates, or superiors in order to achieve one's goals.

The need for a system or some form of rules for interacting with others remains, whether it is based on old standards or new ones. *Flip-Flops & Microwaved Fish*, while not the same as *Miss Manners*, is a good substitute and a handy reference. 💰

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