

THE INFINITE GAME
WORKSHOP

How to Lead with an Infinite Mindset



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**WE CAN'T CHOOSE
THE GAME.**

**WE CAN'T CHOOSE
THE RULES.**

**WE CAN ONLY CHOOSE
HOW WE PLAY.**



THE INFINITE GAME

How do you win a game that has no finish line?

Finite games, like football or chess, have known players, fixed rules and a clear endpoint. The winners and losers are easily identified. In infinite games, like business, politics or life itself, the players come and go, the rules are changeable and there is no defined endpoint. There are no winners or losers in an infinite game, there is only ahead and behind.

Finite	Infinite
Known players	Known & unknown players New players can join at any time
You have to play by the fixed rules	No fixed rules. Play however you want
Has a finish line	No end to this game
Winners & losers	Only ahead & behind

Every organization has finite goals, these are perfectly valid and good. Problems arise, however, when we rely on these same metrics and standards to measure our health in a game that has no end.

The infinite game is not the absence of finite games, it is the context within which those finite games exist (think about having a fitness goal: lose X pounds by a certain date, the context is to be healthier). Finite metrics still have utility in the infinite game, but we also need to understand the standards by which to be better players in an infinite game so that we can stay in the game as long as possible and perpetuate the game itself.



In order to lead with an infinite mindset, we must adopt five essential practices.

1. ADVANCE A JUST CAUSE

A specific vision of a future state that does not yet exist; a future state so appealing that people are willing to make sacrifices in order to help advance towards that vision.

2. BUILD TRUSTING TEAMS

An environment in which people can operate at their natural best.

3. STUDY WORTHY RIVALS

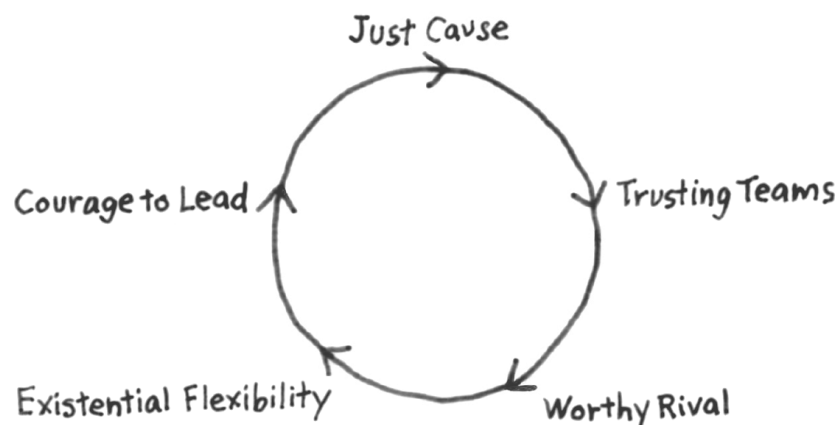
A Worthy Rival is another player in the game worthy of comparison. Studying them reveals to us our own areas to improve.

4. PREPARE FOR EXISTENTIAL FLEXIBILITY

The capacity to initiate an extreme disruption to an operating model or strategic course in order to more effectively advance your Just Cause.

5. DEMONSTRATE THE COURAGE TO LEAD

A willingness to take risks for the good of an unknown future.





How does leading with an infinite mindset presently apply to the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), your career and/or life?

In an **Infinite Game
the goal is not to win
The goal is to **constantly improve****



1. ADVANCE A JUST CAUSE

A specific vision of a future state that does not yet exist; a future state so appealing that people are willing to make sacrifices in order to help advance towards that vision.

A Just Cause has five characteristics:

- **For something** – a positive and specific vision of the future
- **Inclusive** – open to all those who would like to contribute
- **Service oriented** – for the primary benefit of others
- **Resilient** – able to endure political, technological and cultural change
- **Idealistic** – big, bold and ultimately unachievable

Example Just Cause: *Imagine a world in which the vast majority of people wake up **inspired**, feel **safe** wherever they are and end the day **fulfilled** by the work they do.*

A Just Cause:

- Transcends your product or industry
- Is bigger than simply turning a profit
- Is not about *being the best* or *being number one*
- Is bigger than a moonshot
- Is more than Corporate Social Responsibility

The condition of your Just Cause is not measured in how many inspiring stories you have from your past.

The condition of your Just Cause is measured in **how many new stories you create every day.**



What makes you feel proud to be a part of AFRL? Think of specific moments and the people involved that exemplify AFRL at its best.

If everything you did went perfectly, what would the world look like?



2. BUILD TRUSTING TEAMS

An environment in which people can operate at their natural best.

A **team** is any group of two or more people working together toward a common goal or objective.

How to Build Trusting Teams:

1. Create a **Circle of Safety** – leaders create and expand a feeling of safety
2. Show **vulnerability** – exposing of our weaknesses and strengths
3. Use **candor** with care – ability to have the conversations that lead to growth
4. Live the **culture** – *Culture = Values + Behaviour*

A team is not a group of people who work together.
A team is a group of people who trust each other.



Who is someone with whom you'd like to build greater trust?

Think of a specific example where trust eroded in the relationship or when you wished trust were stronger.

What actions can you take to build greater trust with them?



3. STUDY WORTHY RIVALS

A Worthy Rival is another player in the game worthy of comparison. Studying them reveals to us our own areas to improve.

Who are they & where do they come from?

- An organization, individual, ideology or force
- Infinite-minded or finite-minded
- Individuals or organizations
- Inside or outside our industry
- Someone who is consistently better than us at something
- Someone who we admire or someone who frustrates us
- An organization or someone who represents an opposing ideology

Competitor	Worthy Rival
Forces us to take on an attitude of winning	Inspires us to take on an attitude of improvement
Focuses our attention on the outputs above all else	Focuses our attention on the process
Moves our attention to a win-at-any-cost mentality, which can cause us to act unethically	Keeps us focused on doing everything in our power to advance our Just Cause



Think about the individuals and organizations you admire or the ones that frustrate you the most. What about them?

Individuals

Organizations

What opportunities for your own improvement are revealed from studying them?

Stop seeing your competition as a threat and start seeing them as a resource to **make the things you do even better.**



4. PREPARE FOR EXISTENTIAL FLEXIBILITY

The capacity to initiate an extreme disruption to a business model or strategic course in order to more effectively advance your Just Cause.

In your career, you may or may never go through an Existential Flex, though we must prepare our leaders and the organization to be able to execute on one should the need arise.

In order to exercise an Existential Flex, we must have:

- A clear Just Cause or service to something bigger than ourselves
- Trusting Teams
- Forward focus rather than reactive

**Finite-minded leaders
fear uncertainty.**

**Infinite-minded leaders
find opportunity in uncertainty.**



Imagine you are starting your career or organization tomorrow. What are 15 new ideas to better serve your customer and advance your Cause?

In your breakout, share your top idea that will allow you to pivot your career or organization.



5. DEMONSTRATE THE COURAGE TO LEAD

A willingness to take risks for the good of an unknown future.

The Courage to Lead is about consistently making values-based decisions, rather than interests-based decisions. These are the decisions that are in the best interests of the group, rather than any individual's self-serving interests.

The Responsibility of Business (Revised)

1. Advance a purpose: Offer people a sense of belonging and a feeling that their lives and their work have value beyond the physical work.
2. Protect people: Operate our companies in a way that protects the people who work for us, the people who buy from us and the environments in which we live and work.
3. Generate profit: Money is fuel for a business to remain viable so that it may continue to advance the first two priorities.

Accountability is never to a number.
Accountability is to a person.



What is one thing you commit to doing that requires courage?

Perhaps it's an unpopular choice. While it's the right thing to do, it may be hard to do.

Who will you lean on and call when you want to give up?

You can't do it alone.

Person	How can you form accountability with them?