

## Revolutionizing Communication

An Interview with Tomas Gorny, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Nextiva

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Tomas Gorny was born and raised in Poland. He moved to the United States in pursuit of the American Dream at the age of 20 without knowing any English. Today, he's a technology visionary, Co-founder and CEO of Unitedweb and Nextiva, and on the board of directors for Endurance International Group. He has received numerous awards for his leadership in the technology industry. In 2014 he was recognized as the "Business Leader of the Year" at Arizona Technology Council's 2014 Governor's Celebration of Innovation, and in 2017 he was named Top Tech CEO by the Phoenix Business Journal. Gorny is passionate about making a mark and driving positive change in his community around charitable causes he believes can make a widespread impact. His philanthropic efforts are achieved through Nextiva Cares and the Gorny Foundation.*



Tomas Gorny

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Nextiva (nextiva.com) powers billions of conversations every year across cloud business phone systems, text and team messaging, video meetings, and more. From one powerful communication hub, Nextiva is transforming the way businesses engage with their customers. Nextiva's Amazing Service® and customer-centric philosophies have been the foundation of the company for 15 years. Founded in 2008, and headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona, Nextiva raised \$200 million from Goldman Sachs Asset Management in its first-ever funding round at a \$2.7 billion valuation in late 2021.*

### Will you highlight your career journey?

When I was a young boy growing up in communist Poland, at the age of seven I already knew that I wanted to come to America. My exposure to America was through movies and books. By the time I was a teenager I had already started a couple of businesses while attending college in Germany, so my desire for entrepreneurship was always there.

I took the next step in 1996, when I moved to Los Angeles two months before graduating to help a friend start a website hosting business, after he seemed impressed by what I was doing in Germany. He couldn't afford to pay me and offered to give me equity instead. I saw

this as my opportunity to pursue my American Dream. At the time, I didn't speak English and I had to work additional jobs to cover my expenses. The company sold after just two years and made me a millionaire overnight, so very quickly I came from living off \$3 a day in my early days in the U.S. to being a millionaire. However, subsequent ventures faced challenges, especially during the burst of the dot-com bubble. Undeterred, I started IPOWEE in 2001, which became one of the fastest-growing website hosting companies in the world and eventually sold for nearly a billion dollars in 2011. Today, it's the second-largest hosting company after GoDaddy. In 2008, I founded a website-security company called SiteLock with a mission to protect and optimize every website on the internet. Through the years, we've grown to protect over 16 million websites, collaborated with 200+ partners, and established a global presence that surpasses any competitor.

### What was your vision for creating Nextiva?

I grew up during the computer revolution and developed my career in the year DOS transitioned to Windows. I developed a

keen sense for understanding how businesses communicate with their customers and teams. You can see why I wanted to be a part of the tech industry and make technology accessible to all. That became the cornerstone of my motivation. Our mission was to simplify business communications, and our first slogan was to "help every business – regardless of size – feel and operate like a Fortune 500 company," and we've backed this up with a powerful platform, easy to use products, and amazing service. We want to make a difference and leave a mark by empowering businesses around the world through innovative technology. When I look at today's entrepreneurial culture, I see that many young people forget to build a business in the process of chasing financial outcomes. The culture, the way you treat your employees, the atmosphere in the office, providing opportunities for your employees to shine – that's where the heart of the business is and exactly why I never focused on an exit strategy, despite selling and buying businesses and taking them public.

### How do you define Nextiva's mission and purpose?

Every relationship starts – and grows – through conversation. Nextiva unifies every conversation channel. Every relationship starts – and

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grows – through conversation. Nextiva unifies every conversation channel. This aligns with my general viewpoint that we are living in the era of the customer, where expectations have soared to unprecedented heights. While businesses are undoubtedly hearing more from their customers, they often find themselves understanding less. Having experienced the pain of using computers during the early days of the PC, I wanted Nextiva to empower businesses, especially those less technically inclined, to level the playing field against larger enterprises. We believe meaningful connections generate better outcomes for all. We are constantly looking around the corner because we are in the business of change. We are in the business of future-proofing our software, our technology, and delivering the greatest customer experience.

**Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Nextiva?**

At Nextiva, we created a culture around continuously evolving. You need to be willing to think outside the box, challenge the status quo and not only “imagine” a better way – but take action. I see our biggest chances for growth in the constantly changing world of communication channels. As technology keeps advancing, we’re well-positioned to come up with innovative solutions that match the ever-shifting needs of businesses. By proactively staying at the forefront of technological advancements and understanding evolving communication preferences, we are delivering valuable products that set us apart.

That being said, our objective is not merely to address present requirements, but to anticipate future trends, equipping businesses with the necessary tools to thrive in a dynamic and competitive environment.

**Will you discuss Nextiva’s focus on talent and investment in its workforce?**

If there is one thing I did right, it was embracing great people. I learned that through

the adversity I faced when coming over to the U.S. – I was just another foreigner who didn’t know the language. But you cannot build a business by yourself – you need the support of other people and together, you can achieve any goal. To this day, my closest partners are the same people I have been working with for the past 10 or 20 years. Of course, we are always on the lookout for promising individuals. Nextiva prides itself on being in line with the sign of the times. Culture forms the backbone of every company.

**What do you see as Nextiva’s responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and to be a force for good in society?**

Giving back to society is one of the driving principles of our identity, which is why we have

a philanthropic branch set up – Nextiva Cares. Each month, we team up with local nonprofits to lend a helping hand. Whether it’s time, funds, or resources, we’re in it together to make a positive impact. It’s about creating change, spreading kindness, and building a better community, because we believe success is meaningful when shared. So far, we have supported more than 50 organizations, with 650+ volunteers working diligently to be a true force for good in our society.

**Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?**

Absolutely. I already started a few companies while I was studying in Germany, first of them at the age of 16. When the opportunity came knocking, I took it and continued building businesses in America. I always wanted to make a meaningful difference and leave a mark. Even if you make mistakes, learn from it and move on. Remember, past mistakes don’t dictate the future.

**What advice do you offer to young entrepreneurs beginning their careers?**

I typically share three pieces of advice with aspiring young entrepreneurs – look for a gap in the market, offer more value than your customer is paying for, and focus on building a business, not financials. This may sound abstract, but even if you have an amazing idea, you have to assess whether people are willing to pay for it. Creating a product that offers great value for money gives you one of the most important tools in marketing – word of mouth, it gets you referrals and builds the potential for your future customers to stay longer with you. Also, work with good people – don’t waste your time being stressed working with people you don’t like. Reflecting on and analyzing past experiences helps avoid repeating mistakes. ●

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