

OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH QUICK



Businesses know about our love affair with quick. They realize we'll like their products and services better if they somehow build in speed. So because of us, they keep trying to squeeze more time out of everything they do.

It should be perfectly clear to all of us that speed is a key source of competitive advantage. The dollar value of time keeps climbing. That means organizations need to save as much of it as they can.

Delay gets deadly in a world of high-velocity change. The outfit that fails to show enough sense of urgency will see its customers disappear. Somebody else will beat it to market with a newer, better product or service. In our over-capacity world, speed is a basic survival skill.

Of course, a company can't be fast if its people are slow. It can't adapt rapidly to change if employees resist.

Our mindset should be to think of ourselves as accelerators for the organization. Our job is to bring speed to everything we touch...to help push more productivity out of every hour. If the customer is addicted to quick, our challenge is to outrun the competition and get there first.

We don't pull this off successfully by struggling to pack more effort into the work day. We do it by subtracting rather than adding. The secret is to free up time, not to become more frenzied.

Some experts say that as much as 92 percent of our work time is wasted. Research by Tor Dahl, former Chairman of the World Confederation of Productivity Science, indicates that the average American business wastes or misdirects work time as follows:

- 23 percent waiting for approvals, materials, or support
- 20 percent doing things that shouldn't even be done
- 15 percent doing things that should be handled by someone else
- 18 percent doing things wrong
- 16 percent by failing to do the right things.

With the increasing complexity of our world, we must learn to streamline. To abandon the expendable. Much of what seduces our attention is clutter—provocative, maybe, but unimportant. The more our attention wanders, the more our time slips away. We need to focus...operate with a clearer sense of priorities...simplify.

We live in an impatient world. But people like you and me help call the cadence.



“Fast organizations will be as large as necessary and as small as possible. Like computer chips, they will shrink in size while they grow in value. The recipe for action is simple: Change your organization as fast as your business changes—and no slower.”

– Stan Davis and Jim Botkin,
The Monster Under the Bed

“In 1880 it took more than 20 man-hours to harvest an acre of wheat land. By 1916 the number of man-hours was reduced to 12.7. Just 20 years later only 6.1 man-hours were required. Now it can be done in a matter of minutes, but today's farmers are “busier” than ever.”

– Jeremy Rifkin,
The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era

Concepts in this paper are from the *Business As UnUsual* training program.

