

This world is moving fast. Superfast. Technological change in business is partly responsible for this great acceleration, with platforms stacking on platforms, experiences becoming exponentially easier and disruption being contagious. High-profile organisations show us vertiginous growth – Uber going from nothing to \$58bn valuation, WhatsApp to a billion users, both in only half a decade. This pace is exhilarating for many in business. Speed thrills. For others it's sometimes just exhausting. Expectations are accelerating, too, and what goes up can also go down (fast). Organisations are disappearing out of the FTSE 100 at a faster rate than ever before.

Business leaders are therefore constantly battling expectations around speed, from the hot breath of their shareholders and investors, to the pressure of the press and the ever-increasing impatience of customer expectations.

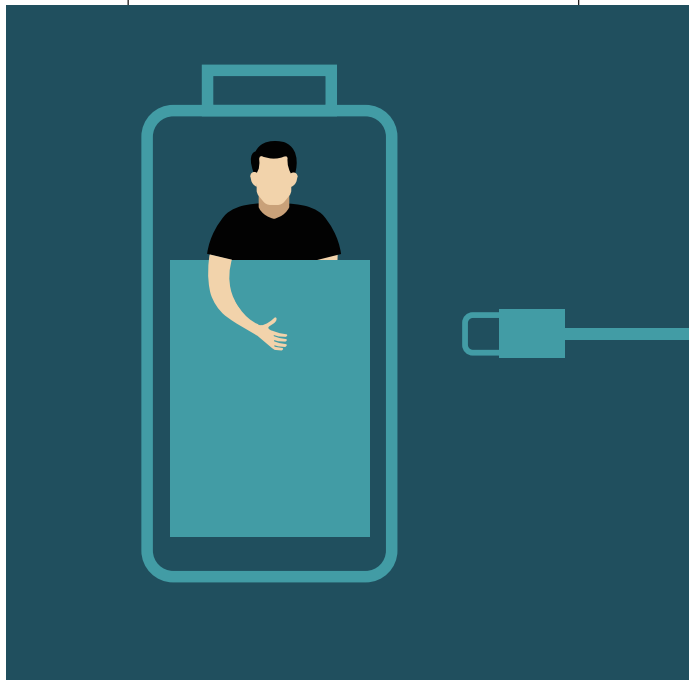
I'm fascinated by how leaders lead effectively in this world of accelerating speed. I've made it my mission to understand more about how they deal with both pace and performance. As part of my research for my new book *Superfast: How to lead at speed*, I've spent time with more than 100 leaders, including founders of hyper-growth startups and the captains of multi-billion-dollar global 'supertankers'. One universal preoccupation for all of them is energy: how to nurture and maintain it in their people and themselves. Here are three things I have learnt about energy in leading at speed.

Energy is your most precious asset

To move fast, don't waste time thinking about time management, obsess instead about managing your energy. Know thyself and what energises you, what time you are

NEED FOR SPEED

Managing energy is key to dealing with the rapid rate of technological change, says **Sophie Devonshire**



at your best, how to handle fuel, sleep and exercise (so many superfast leaders use exercise as their time to think and as a way to provide the resilience to deal with everyday challenges). Pause and rest, lie fallow from time to time to recharge. Energy also comes from consciously doing less. Reduce the number of decisions made in a day to keep your brain fresh for the tough ones. Cut your commitments and your goals right down to the minimum. Say no frequently – and politely. The best piece of advice I ever received was: "You can do anything, but you can't do everything."

Energy comes from the right people Find the radiators not the 'drains', the people who can unblock issues and smooth out the speedbumps. Hire slowly, fire fast. Set up a filter for the right type of people for your organisation to hire faster – a filter that includes driving diversity (sparks fly and inspiration ignites when your teams are mixed and have different perspectives). Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella asks two simple questions of new hires:

"Do they provide energy and do they provide clarity?" Hire as well as you can and at a sensible pace but don't rush to fill a gap. "Better a hole than an a**ehole," says Dan Jacobs from Apple (a mantra enthusiastically adopted by the Innocent founders, too). Toxic hires will slow everything down.

Energy comes from a sense of purpose (and of progress)

Set your North Star and your organisation's purpose – 'the why' – to drive motivation and focus. It helps filter decision-making and inspire innovation. Move at pace and share the stories of progress to give that sense of momentum – success fosters belief and energy. And always aim for a high-velocity decision-making approach to energise and to accelerate.

As Jeff Bezos, the man who could be seen as one of the original architects of acceleration in business, puts it: "Speed matters in business, and a high-velocity decision-making environment is more fun too."

The world won't slow down. We'll need energy to keep up. And we might as well find ways to enjoy the ride. ■

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SOURCES: RADA IN BUSINESS; CABA; MONKEY PUZZLE TRAINING