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<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<td>The High-Potential Leader</td>
<td>Ram Charan</td>
<td>John Wiley &amp; Sons, Inc © 2016</td>
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<td>978-8126568192</td>
<td>240</td>
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<td>Doing the Right Things Right</td>
<td>Laura Stack,</td>
<td>Berrett-Koehler © 2016</td>
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<td>162659509</td>
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<td>Patrick Hollingworth</td>
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<td>Kevin Kelly,</td>
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Power Forum is pleased to bring out its second issue of Good Reads.

In this Issue we are covering the areas of Strategy through Four books, namely:

1) The High-Potential Leader
2) Doing The Right Things Right
3) The Last and Fast Organisation
4) The Inevitable

The insights from these books is provided through Key, Take – Aways, Relevance and Summaries for each of them.

For those who would like to go into details and are interested in reading the complete book, details of the author, publisher, etc. are also provided at the cover page.
The High-Potential Leader
How to Grow Fast, Take on New Responsibilities
And Make an Impact

Take-Aways

- Rapid change has created a leadership void and a growing demand for young leaders.
- Great leaders develop over time through practice, coaching and stretch assignments.
- To accelerate leadership development, assign high-potential (“hipo”) leaders to take on increasingly challenging roles.
- If you want to lead, take charge of your career. Don’t wait for an invitation.
- Work daily on five skills critical for hipos. First, manage your time. Time constraints can derail you.
- Second, constantly search for hipo leadership talent inside and outside your firm.
- Third, test your ideas, share them boldly and get steadily better at executing them.
- Fourth, learn constantly. Get outside your walls, speak with customers, know your competitors and understand the world in which your firm competes.
- Fifth, develop better thinking skills and judgment by opening your mind, remaining curious and networking.
- Strive for a healthy balance between success at work and success at home.
Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn:
1) How to build five high-potential (“hipo”) leadership skills
2) How to identify and develop high-potential leaders.

Recommendation
Famed leadership guru Ram Charan – collaborating with writer Geri Willigan – describes five necessary skills that developing leaders need to possess. Three factors set this book apart from most others in the genre: First, the author draws on his decades of experience observing, coaching and mentoring many of the world’s foremost business leaders. Second, Charan emphasizes tactics and techniques for rapid leadership development to address a growing and pressing demand. Third, he includes detailed checklists at the back of each chapter for practicing and applying the skills.

Summary

New Leaders
Organizations increasingly struggle to find high-potential (“hipo”) leadership talent. Digitization, big data, and other radical changes make new demands on leaders and upcoming leaders. Employees with hipo leadership must be adaptable, agile and visionary. They should network well and be willing to ask for help. Hipos are resourceful, action-oriented and bold. They see the big picture and pursue a purpose, not just money.

Seek hipo leadership talent inside and outside your firm. Develop likely candidates quickly. To that end, General Electric conducts regular talent reviews to identify and assess staffers with leadership ability. The corporation develops detailed plans for each hipo, including deployments to unfamiliar, high-stakes leadership positions.

If you aspire to executive leadership, don’t wait to get recruited. Take charge of your career. If you possess leadership skills, you can inspire others to achieve high performance. However, while you may have the talent and drive of a hipo, you should be aware that many hipos contribute as talented individuals, not as executives. Don’t waste your talent and passion pursuing leadership unless it’s in your blood.

If you are an aspiring executive, develop your abilities in five critical areas:

1. “Increase the Return on Your Time”
You must learn to manage your time or it will constrain you more than any other single factor. One step toward improved time management is hiring good people – candidates who are better than you – and delegating to them. Recruit people with the potential to grow as the firm and the circumstances change.

Focus on the pivotal aspects that drive your business, and multiply your impact by leading others to do more. Set “crystal-clear” goals. Define your priorities according to market conditions and the projects that directly affect your goals. Respect your boss’s priorities, but defend yours as well. Choose tasks and duties you can pass along to others.
Keep up on your reading, but save time by using news alerts, filtering tools and online summary services. Read email only after you’ve spent time on your highest priorities. Make people – not teams – responsible for results. Coach staffers as needed, and answer their questions. Let them work their way, but check regularly and remove obstacles that impede their progress.

Eliminate unnecessary protocol and meetings. Build routines around necessary processes, like information flow. Former US Army General Colin Powell’s “40-70 rule” says to delay decision making until you have at least 40% of the information you’d like, but decide before you have 70%. Otherwise, you’ll wait too long, and the opportunity could pass you by.

2. “Multiply the Energy and Skills of Those Around You”

Make people your focus. Look everywhere for talent, and hire the best. Quickly remove employees who don’t work out. Don’t jump to conclusions about people within the first few minutes of meeting them. As you come to understand people better – whether they’re curious, outgoing or collaborative – check your impressions with others. Once you know a person’s top skills and strengths, leverage those competences and build on them as a sports coach would. Develop people mainly by giving them tough assignments and tasks. Throughout the development process, offer regular, authentic feedback – good and bad.

Learn how to dispense genuine personal advice, feedback and recognition; you can’t lead effectively without these skills. If after receiving coaching and support, a person’s performance doesn’t improve, move him or her into a more suitable position and do it quickly. Help employees see the big picture, not just their personal projects, roles or silos. Encourage cross-divisional integration via collaboration and knowledge sharing. At UST Global, an IT services and solutions provider, CEO Sajan Pillai makes serving as an “integrator” a formal requirement for anyone aspiring to senior leadership. Integration involves bringing people together, creating energy and value. Seek other integrators, and assign them to lead diverse teams. Run productive, focused meetings. Arrive at clear decisions that address problems.

3. “Be a Master of Big Ideas and Execution”

Test and refine your ideas before you share them. Ask yourself which customers your idea serves and what value it brings them. Consider whether the idea has “platform” potential – something around which you can build a network of contributors. Can your idea scale quickly? How might your competition respond? What resources will you need? What impediments block your way? Does the market’s current timing help you? Are people ready for your idea? How can it make money, allowing for margins and cash flow?

If your idea stands up to these questions, share it. Speak up, no matter your place in the hierarchy. Develop a vision for your idea by imagining the world after your idea succeeds. Consider how outside economic factors or geopolitical change might help or hurt you. For example, Ted Turner had to convince the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to change the rules so he could launch his national cable channel, CNN.

To execute, consider the budget you’ll need and how current processes may have to change to enable your idea’s implementation. Execution means getting each step to happen, and often that’s something you can’t delegate. Set clear goals, priorities and deadlines. Stay in constant contact with your teams to anticipate and solve problems. Ask tough, penetrating questions, listen and act decisively. Recognize and frequently reward the right behaviors. Bolster peoples’ confidence, but deal swiftly with “nonperformers.”
4. “Get to Know Customers, Competitors and the Macro Environment”

Get outside your walls, speak with customers, know your rivals and understand the world in which you compete. Pay attention to the news, industry websites and competitors’ movements to stay abreast of new developments and changes that might affect your business. Make sure you know – from beginning to end – how people learn about your business and how they turn into prospects and then buyers. Observe how clients experience your product or services, and discover what makes customers remain or leave. Build a deep, instinctual feel for what your market wants; don’t rely solely on data. Speak to consumers, and watch them to understand their behavior.

The Indian fashion mogul Kishore Biyani studies Indian society. As India’s culture grows more permissive, Biyani observes subtle changes, often before other merchandisers discern them. He uses his early insights to design new fashions, gaining a competitive advantage. Study your rivals. Consider whom they hire, their earnings, how they spend money and with whom they partner. Assess the personalities of their leaders. Piece this information together to gain insight into your competitors’ goals and directions. In 2016, Uniqlo, a clothes retailer, sent employees into its stores and its competitors’ stores to observe, find problems and look for opportunities. Their insights led to changes that saved time and improved the company. The results added to Uniqlo’s understanding of how its major rival, Zara, introduced new fashions much more quickly.

Increasingly, competition includes whole platforms, wherein multiple partners collaborate to produce and sell goods. General Electric and Apple, for example, attract thousands of external participants who contribute to these platforms’ massive growth and dominance. In most cases, you’ll join a platform, rather than owning or controlling one. Embrace the opportunity, even though your competitors also may participate on the same platform.

Threats and opportunities can come from inside or outside your industry. Fast change means you should view your firm from the perspective of its shareholders, especially vocal ones who may see a disruption on the horizon before you do. Heed the work of scientists, researchers and politicians to keep pace with scientific, technological, social and regulatory developments that could affect your firm. Ask yourself why companies invest billions in certain technologies, as GE has in 3D printing, or Tesla and Amazon in space travel.

5. “Build Your Mental Capacity”

Open your mind, network and remain curious. Talk to people you admire in your industry or elsewhere – no matter how high and mighty. “Keep learning” or you’ll plateau. Explore widely, reflect deeply and turn knowledge into insight. Build and leverage your networks by tapping into the expertise and knowledge of the people you know. Aaron Levie, founder of enterprise cloud company Box, used his network to build a valuable business and again to help him decide what to do when he received a strong offer to sell the company. The insights he gained from his network helped him realize that he had underestimated the potential of his business. This saved him from making a bad decision.

Read widely – at least 30 minutes a day; no other learning habit delivers as much value or enables you to stay on top of trends and to explore areas outside your field. Use the abundant and often free learning materials available on the web – like courses, TED Talks and YouTube videos – to expand your thinking. Acknowledge your biases and test your assumptions. Consider other people’s perspectives. Ivan Seidenberg, a former chairman and CEO of Verizon, helped transform the company from a minor telecom firm to an industry leader by understanding the FCC’s point of view. He earned the respect...
of commission staffers and the opportunity to work with them on deregulation rules that benefited consumers and Verizon.

**“Take Charge of Your Growth”**

Map out and direct your own career. Change roles and employers, not for money, but to learn and make progress in fulfilling your plan. Develop your skills by looking for expansive, even “exponential,” advancements that test and stretch your abilities. Seek challenges, not familiarity or sure success.

For example, if you lead a sales territory and earn the opportunity to lead three territories, that’s terrific. But a better next step might be managing the profit and loss of a specific product line. That will challenge you even more and will introduce you to new skills. Opportunities to work overseas can challenge you to expand your perspective while gaining new skills. Make a move only after you master your current position. Don’t refuse lateral moves; consider them if they add perspective and personal growth development.

Find a mentor and work for bosses who coach and develop their people. If you can’t make your next leap in your present company, leave. Use your extended network to seek opportunities. Use the web to research organizations and jobs. Make your next move based on your purpose and passion, rather than for pay, prestige or other extrinsic reasons. Seek a position at a firm with a reputation for stewarding and valuing talent. Leave your old company with grace. Maintain good relationships with past employers. Start your new job by listening and building trusting connections. Don’t assume that what worked in your last organization will work in your next one.

Strive for balance between success at work and success at home. Work’s intrinsic rewards can sustain you, so choose a career that fulfills the needs of “your head and heart.” You want a position with purpose and meaning – that is, a calling, not a job. Things fall into place when you work for love rather than money or prestige. Loving your work leads to “peak performance” and a state of flow in which distractions fall away. Let your strengths and passions drive your success.

**Hipos’ Progress**

Know what type of leaders you and your firm need now and in the future. Build a talent pool of leaders, and develop them by offering them greater responsibilities and challenges. Choose hipos not for their technical skills or IQs but for their leadership skills. Form a talent review committee to identify hipos. Use stretch assignments to promote them.

Most hipos want fast career progression. In fact, they may leave if they don’t advance quickly. Guide them with coaching – either internal or external. Encourage their formal and informal learning. Recognize and reward leaders who develop talent. Track hipos’ progress. Monitor each hipo’s ability to inspire others, think strategically and earn trust. Correct those who show a tendency to take shortcuts or those who seize undue credit. Talk to your hipos about your plans for them. Meet with them and their bosses to discuss their progress.

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**About the Author**

**Ram Charan** is a well-known coach in agile practices and big data. He has extensive experience leading digital transformation. His other books include *Boards that Lead*, *Leadership Pipeline* and *The Attacker’s Advantage.*
Take-Aways

• Executives must be flexible, adaptable, “efficient and effective.”

• They should fulfill the “3T” leadership roles: “strategic thinking, team focus and tactical work.”

• Leaders have 12 concerns that fall under these 3T areas.

• Strategic thinking means identifying your best results and making them your goal.

• Leaders’ concerns in this area are “goals, change, communication” and “decision making.”

• Team focus means leading unified, coherent teams focused on results.

• Its concerns are the business “environment, performance, motivation” and “growth.”

• Tactical work calls for controlling how you spend your time, concentrating on goals, leveraging your strengths and prioritizing work-related tasks.

• Its concerns are “value, technology, agility” and “balance.”

• Poor leaders issue orders; good leaders collaborate and make results-oriented decisions.
Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn:
1) Why executives must be “efficient and effective”
2) How to manage the “3T” leadership roles of “strategic thinking, team focus and tactical work,”
3) How to carry out an executive’s 12 most vital practices in these three areas.

Review
In 1967, Peter Drucker, the father of modern management, published The Effective Executive: The Definitive Guide to Getting the Right Things Done. Drucker’s best-selling work, which codified business productivity, remains a revered, popular classic. Some of Drucker’s concepts, however, are more traditional than modern. Productivity consultant Laura Stack takes up where Drucker left off, offering a fresh perspective in her updated supplement to Drucker’s indispensable manual. She presents three “T’s” of leadership – “strategic thinking, team focus and tactical work” – as the organizing rubric for 12 critical management goals. Stack details why and how modern executives must operate in “efficient and effective” ways.

Summary

“Efficient and Effective”
Today’s executives must operate effectively to achieve results and must use resources efficiently in reaching their goals. To attain these standards, executives should follow the credo: “Once you know you’re spending time on the right things… focus on doing them right.”

In his classic book The Effective Executive, Peter Drucker (1909-2005) listed necessary “habits of the mind” – or “effectiveness practices.” He advised knowing how to spend your time and controlling how you spend it, concentrating on results, leveraging your strengths, prioritizing work-related tasks and making results-oriented decisions.

To become and remain effective and efficient, executives should make 12 vital practices the core of their management approach. These 12 practices are organized according to the “3T” leadership roles of “strategic thinking, team focus” and “tactical work.”

Part I: Strategic Thinking
Strategic thinking calls for identifying your intended outcomes and planning your activities around achieving those goals. Take advantage of your organization’s structure while striving to improve it.

Strategic thinking generates a long-term impact, applies to all units within the firm and sets out to plan and execute tactics that achieve your targeted results. Consider the needs of the group. Make sure your team members’ plans and goals align with your firm’s objectives. Then, once you decide on your strategic course, execute your decisions without delay.

As a primary strategist, the leader focuses on the big picture and deals with four primary areas of strategic thinking:
1. “Goals: Align Strategy and Objectives”
As an executive, you must understand your organization’s strategy and ensure that your team and personal goals align with your firm’s plans. Your organization can achieve its objectives only if your employees feel mutual ownership of those goals. To make sure that your team’s targets align with the firm’s goals, work with a minimum number of objectives that keep team members focused and productive. Emphasize shared, core values and make sure they know how to “translate goals into operations.”

2. “Change: Embrace Innovation and Adaptability”
Ongoing innovation leads to growth and new business. Make innovation integral to your operations. Promote new ideas throughout your organization. Strive to develop a flexible, forward-thinking culture.

3. “Communication: Share Mission, Values and Ideas”
Share your vision and expectations with your employees and make sure they accept the organization’s mission. Work to develop a cohesive, company-wide sense of drive and purpose. Communicate with team members verbally and in writing. Keep your communications brief and to the point. Let all team members know exactly what you expect. After you convey a message, make sure that everyone understands it.

Executives make decisions; that’s their raison d’être. Don’t be afraid to decide. Making the wrong choice is better than remaining passive or letting events decide for you. Your decisions should support your organization’s “core values, mission and vision.” For every decision, keep return on investment in mind and consider the opportunity costs. Try to resolve problems promptly.

Overall collaboration characterizes every successful business today, so teamwork is crucial. Foster cooperation so team members work together to achieve shared goals. Executives must function as facilitators and motivational cheerleaders. Promote profitable teamwork by treating employees as valuable assets, demonstrating leadership in every facet of your work, empowering staff members and democratizing authority on behalf of all the members of your team.

Encourage your team members to upgrade their professional skills by seeking more training. They will achieve the best results when they have enough room and time to do their jobs and when you make sure they have access to the resources they need to perform at their best.

Part II: Team Focus
Good leaders help their employees stay productive, enthusiastic and engaged. This encompasses creating a receptive, “risk-taking” culture; fostering outcomes-based performance; motivating employee engagement; and promoting growth based on challenging goals, personal responsibility and careful conflict management.

The area of team focus covers four more crucial management targets:

5. “Environment: Build an Open-Team Culture”
Leaders should foster a positive organizational culture and work to maintain it through everything they do and say. In an open-team culture, teams work efficiently together. Emphasize the importance of risk-taking, “urgency, nimbleness and swift execution.” Don’t be afraid of change or evolution; get back up if change knocks you down.
“As a leader, you have to regularly set aside time for strategic thinking, so you can take your team from start to finish with the least interference along the way.”

“As if you want your team, division, department or company to truly improve, you have to hire for versatility, not indispensability.”

“We can still work in teams, and we can still be superbly productive both individually and collectively. But in time, we’ll all become executives as the roles of manager and worker merge.”

“In a knowledge-based economy, your teammates become especially valuable, because their skills are completely portable; they live in those few pounds of gray matter between their ears.”

6. “Performance: Forge a Results-Oriented Team”
Business is based on outcomes, which depend on each team’s performance and productivity. Effective executives set up and lead unified, coherent teams that focus on results. Accentuate your team’s strengths and minimize its weaknesses. Manage and resolve disagreements, while valuing useful dissention among team members. Savvy companies have no room for “cubicle hermits and slackers.” However, don’t dismiss workers who seem to have a “few rough edges”; often, they are the ones who generate new ideas and innovation.

7. “Motivation: Harness Creativity and Loyalty”
Engage employees by ensuring that they understand how their individual efforts contribute to the organization’s strategic goals. Avoid micromanagement, which demotivates your best employees. Inspire team members through words and actions; be a positive role model. Motivate employees’ loyalty and promote their creativity.

8. “Growth: Emphasize Continuous Improvement”
Organizations that don’t grow will stagnate. Yet, growth, like any change, often proves painful. No matter who you are or where you work, the uneasiness of growth is an unavoidable fact of life.

Growth – and personal and organizational development – usually occur during challenging periods. Executives must stress the importance of the organization’s efforts to improve, nurture professional development and encourage all workers to take accountability for their actions.

Superior Productivity
After strategic thinking and planning, and after priming your team for success, you still have to carry out your actual work. Handling it well requires superior productivity, which calls for:

• “Excellence” – Commit to outstanding work and secure the same commitment from your team members.
• “Planning” – Perform your work in a sequential, logical, step-by-step order.
• “Effort” – Give your team members the independence to do their work; facilitate everything they need and remove obstacles that impede their progress.
• “Quality” – Remember that employees’ results depend on your executive guidance.

“Part III: Tactical Work”
The leader is responsible for ensuring that employees complete their tasks. Managing this area involves delineating meaningful values, using technology in a controlled and deliberate way, and fostering agility through continuous improvement and ongoing education. Executives should lead the way in striving to achieve personal balance.

Tactical work covers four more important areas:

9. “Value: Focus on High-Impact Activities”
Respect your time and your employees’ time. Successful time management requires selfdiscipline. Executives must develop the ability to say no to avoid getting snowed under by projects and tasks. Delegate as much as possible. Use your work time on the most meaningful activities. Never tolerate team members who waste time.
10. “Technology: Master Data Handling and Workflow”
Technology can help you master a massive flow of data, avoid information overload and streamline your workflows. Whenever possible, promote the development of new technology while remaining aware that technology also can be a huge time-waster. Anyone can become sidetracked by its distractions – social media, compelling links and email. Limit the number of times a day you check your email.

11. “Agility: Maximize Speed and Flexibility”
Amid the constant flux of the modern business world, try to be quick and nimble. Help your team members stay current by promoting their professional development. Encourage their participation in training and education. Promote flexibility for your organizations, yourself and the teams you lead. The sequential nature of project management – handling one stage and then another stage, and so on – is not an agile system. Instead, adopt a flexible project management approach based on “independent milestones, due dates and testing phases.” Break your projects into distinct parts, and delegate them to the team members who can handle them most effectively.

You can't be an effective, efficient executive if your life is out of balance. “Brain work” can prove as exhausting as physical labor, so maintain your health and intellectual edge. Eat well, exercise, rest periodically during the day and get plenty of sleep. Build in regular relaxation, and take your vacation time.

“Protopia is a state of becoming, rather than a destination. In the protopian mode, things are better today than yesterday, although only a little better.”

“'Protopia' is a state of becoming, rather than a destination. In the protopian mode, things are better today than yesterday, although only a little better.”

This very large thing provides a new way of thinking (perfect search, total recall, planetary scope) and a new mind for an old species. It is the Beginning.”

The Evolving Business of Business”
In the bygone business era – before female executives, the Internet, smartphones, telecommuting and offshoring – executives and staff members filled distinctly different roles and responsibilities. Executives were in charge, and staff members did as they were told.

Today, no effective boss can behave like a dictator; bosses are team members and leaders. Corporate decentralization demands employees who can think and act for themselves. Executives can’t remain aloof if their organization or team needs them to roll up their sleeves and pitch in.

Thanks to advanced technologies, team members may work at distant locations, but such outsourcing and out-of-the-office staffing decentralizes work even further. Executives must trust the judgment of their long-distance employees and not indulge in constant supervision. Today’s knowledge and information workers often make executive decisions. This makes them executives, too: people who “execute strategy.”

Being an executive in today’s high-pressure world requires long hours, high stress, serious thinking, social involvement, and good project and time management. To meet these challenges, pay close allegiance to your 12 vital practices.

About the Author

Laura Stack founded The Productivity Pro consultancy. Her other books include What To Do When There’s Too Much To Do and Execution Is the Strategy.
The Light and the Fast Organization
A New Way of Dealing with Uncertainty

Take-Aways

- “Light and fast” describes a mountaineering style that quickly adapts to a changing environment.

- Mountaineers’ “alpine style” can inspire the way you deal with “volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (VUCA).

- Most people don’t like change, and prefer it to happen to anyone but them.

- Large organizations obsess about goals and make their processes too complex. They are “heavy and slow.”

- “New-world businesses” obsess over people and try new approaches. They embrace light and fast strategies.

- The “Alpine Style Model” is an ethos that calls for letting go of your need to control. Respond to changes as they occur.

- Create a “community of human beings” in which people come before profit.

- “Antifragile” organizations benefit from shock and disorder.

- Transform your business from “unaware” to “independent or interdependent.”

- “Sensemaking” – harnessing your awareness – is an essential Alpine skill.
Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn:
1) What strategies your organization can apply to handle volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA)
2) How “expedition style” and “alpine style” mountaineering lead to different outcomes
3) What strategies will help you apply the “Alpine Style Model” to your business.

Review
Consultant and mountaineer Patrick Hollingworth’s compact book will win your attention. He explores “alpine style” mountaineering and relates its important lessons to managing your organization. Hollingworth shows how mountain climbers can inspire you when you have to deal with “black swans” and “volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (VUCA) situations. He encourages you to embrace complexity and ambiguity as a way to develop your leadership abilities.

Summary

“Nordwand”
Nordwand – German for “north face” – is a two-kilometer vertical rock and ice stretch of Switzerland’s Eiger Mountain, which is famous for its inaccessibility and for the high death toll among those who attempt to climb it. At least 64 people have died on the Nordwand. In 1938, a group of four young men from Austria and Germany became the first climbers to reach the summit. It took them 96 hours. They came close to death – but prevailed.

In 2008, Swiss alpinist Ueli Steck embarked on a solo climb of the Nordwand. Dressed warmly but lightly and equipped with only the most essential technical equipment – a rope and a pair of ice axes – Steck applied a new technique: Climb “light and fast” and adapt quickly to the mountain’s challenges. He ascended the Eiger in less than three hours by applying the strategy of “extreme alpinism.” The Nordwand stands as a metaphor of today’s business world, which is beset with avalanches, falling rocks and nasty storms. Steck’s alpinist approach can transform businesses and how they deal with “volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity” (VUCA).

“The VUCA World”
Many people use the term “VUCA” to describe the changing world of business. Familiarize yourself with each of its four components:

1. **Volatility** stems from the Latin word *volatilis*, “to fly away.” People refer to fluctuations in the stock market or significant changes in the political landscape in terms of volatility.
2. **Uncertainty** describes something unknown or unreliable. *Certus* in Latin means, “to sift, discern or decide”; its negative form means the inability to make a decision. For example, the outcome of the ongoing Eurozone crisis remains uncertain.
3. **Complexity** comes from the Latin word *complexus*, which means “totality.” You perceive events as complex when they have many aspects that interact to form the “totality of parts.” The 2011 earthquake in Japan caused the tsunami that destroyed the Fukushima nuclear plant and led Germany to turn away from nuclear power, which in turn caused uranium prices to dwindle. This exemplifies real-world complexity.
If expedition style is about meeting and climbing the mountain on the climbers’ terms, then alpine style is about meeting and climbing the mountain on its own terms.

Use VUCA as a tool to examine change around you. Accept that change is actually happening. Most people do not like change, and they prefer for it to happen to everyone but them. Being honest about your feelings toward change will help you accept it. Acknowledge that the rate of change is accelerating. Moore’s Law describes the doubling of computing power about every 24 months. Acknowledge that exponential growth affects you and your working life.

Understand the nature of change. For example, author Nassim Nicholas Taleb describes the consequences of unlikely events on common predictions and taken-for-granted understandings in his book Black Swan, which posits that “just because you’ve never seen a black swan before doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist.”

The Old World
Most people feel comfortable when everything around them is stable, certain, simple and clear. Reacting to unforeseen events – such as the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks or the world financial crisis – with “dissonance, entropy and disengagement” feels perfectly appropriate.

Change is constant. Look at your company critically and ask if some of its organizational design might be outdated. Kodak, Nokia, Dell and Blockbuster once thrived due to their magnitude and influence. But these factors also made them “heavy and slow” – the exact opposite of what’s needed in today’s business environment. If your organization is “overcomplicated” and “obsessed with goals,” consider how technology organizations deal with the unknown and the unforeseen. Don’t educate your people with old-world leadership training based on “empowerment,” “leadership style” and “high-performance teams” – seek out newer, fresher ideas to develop the people in your organization.

The State of Engagement
Marc Bolland, CEO of Marks & Spencer, recognizes the importance of moving from a traditional organization with vertical hierarchies and fixed reporting lines toward being an organization based on innovation and engagement. The British retailer encourages senior staffers to spend time with “new-world businesses” such as Apple, Airbnb and Uber; to try new approaches; and to lead without asking for permission. He asks leaders only to admit to failure and learn from mistakes.

Shift your focus from your offerings toward the “community of human beings” who form your organization. Many companies put profits first and people last, but this leads to discouraging levels of disengagement. Gallup, a public research institute, has studied employee engagement in various parts of the world since 2012.

It has found that about half of the US workforce is “disengaged.” The typical disengaged worker is physically present, but mentally absent. Facing VUCA, a disengaged worker tends to ignore change and avoid seeking solutions. An “actively disengaged” person might even carry out destructive behaviors. It takes an engaged workforce to deal successfully with VUCA.
“Expedition-Style” Mountaineering

Expedition-style mountaineering started in the Himalayas, where the 8,000-meter (26,247-foot) peaks are particularly challenging to climb due to their daunting geography, thin air and low temperatures. After World War II, climbers sought new challenges, and from 1950 to 1964, expedition groups from different nations managed to climb all 14 “8,000ers,” including Mount Everest.

Those expeditions involved a few hundred people and vast amounts of equipment and oxygen that local Sherpa guides would carry. It took several months of prestocking multiple camps and fixing ropes to lead climbers up and down. Now, more than 90% of the climbs in the Nepalese Himalayas involve commercial expedition-style climbing excursions.

In May 1996, 13 climbers died during commercial Mount Everest expeditions in the “world’s most infamous mountaineering disaster.” The media gave these events a lot of attention, and numerous books and films describe how the disaster unfolded. These tragedies can demonstrate to your organization that rigid structure and a desire to control the environment – in combination with a dependence on infrastructure – make you “fragile,” not invulnerable.

Many traditional organizations use a linear, hierarchical structure, which is rigid and inflexible. These fragile organizations break easily and risk falling apart over time, especially in the face of change. To prepare for the “onslaught of VUCA” and the appearance of black swans, change your organization to the opposite of fragile. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, describing the tendency of things to get better after being exposed to chaos, calls this state “antifragile.” Antifragile firms benefit from shock and disorder. People in these organizations come to love volatility and uncertainty.

“Alpine Style”

Alpinists Athol Whimp of New Zealand and Andrew Lindblade of Australia seek uncertainty and ambiguity to fuel a different mountaineering approach. These world leading alpinists have climbed high peaks in the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas, including the north face of Jannu Mountain. Their climbing follows no rigid structure and deals with the VUCA environment as it happens: Make a plan, go for it, then – when the circumstances change – make a new plan, and go for that.

This “alpine-style ethos” is about letting go of your inborn need to control and, instead, to respond to changes in the environment. In alpine style, you set out with only a small pack of equipment you can carry yourself, without Sherpas. Thus you “travel light and fast.”

Alpine-style climbers build critical skills in accordance with the “10,000-hour rule” as Malcolm Gladwell discussed in his book *Outliers*. By practicing techniques for 10,000 hours or more, you build up exceptional abilities, such as the highly skilled way alpine-style climbers use ropes and other tools. When you climb alpine style, your motivation springs from within and you focus on the tasks ahead as they unfold. This is very different from climbing in a commercial expedition, where your sole goal is to reach the summit. “Goalodicy” can make you vulnerable when circumstances change, as happened in the 1996 Mount Everest tragedies.

The “Transformation Model”

Consider how you can apply the climbing analogy to your organization. Some companies already employ alpine-style approaches to business. For example, Uber, now a $50-billion
company, changed the traditional landscape of public transport and challenged the taxi industry, which still clings to its outmoded expedition-style parameters.

No matter what product or service you provide, your company can develop into an alpine style organization using the Transformation Model, which unfolds in five stages:

1. “Unaware” – At the start, you’re unaware of what’s around you, like a tourist passing through a foreign nation. You don’t recognize that people speak a different language.

2. “Reactive” – You focus only on yourself and how the world affects you. If anything goes wrong, you blame the external environment: other people did a bad job.

3. “Dependent” – Despite your self-focus, you recognize that others can help you achieve the goals you seek. This describes a mountaineer joining a commercial Himalaya expedition or an employee in a “traditional, linear, hierarchical” organization.

4. “Independent” – You develop “self-reliance and responsibility” and understand you must adapt to the world to be successful. Steck, who climbed Eiger’s Nordwand alone, illustrates this stage.

5. “Interdependent” – Your focus shifts toward collaboration; your attention is “in and out.” You work with others to achieve personal and team goals – as Whimp and Lindblade did when they ascended Jannu’s north face with alpine-style mountaineering.

This profound transformation from “unaware, reactive or dependent” to “independent and interdependent” is not a “superficial makeover.” Simply changing your office layout to an open plan with bright lounge areas and a fancy coffeemaker won’t do the trick. You need to go deeper to transform into a true alpine-style organization.

“The Alpine Style Model”
“Sensemaking” is an essential skill in the Alpine Style Model. The process of sensemaking demands that you consciously look, see, imagine, show and act. You harness your emotional intelligence and your subconscious thinking as components of how you make decisions. Gaining insight from neuroscience findings about how the human brain works can prevent you from falling into goalodicy mode and help you activate your brain to engage in “slow thinking.”

To pave the way toward open, healthy team discussions, question old assumptions and beliefs by “getting critical.” See if you really understand your strengths and weaknesses. By gaining awareness of them, you acknowledge your imperfections – an insight that helps you strengthen teamwork in your organization. Focus on the process, not the outcome.

Pay attention to “risk attitude” so you perceive risk as an opportunity rather than as a negative construct. Risk depends on individual perception – different people see risk in different ways. Risk is not the same as “danger,” because a situation is either dangerous or not. Differentiating between risk and danger helps you recognize the upside potential of VUCA.

About the Author

An experienced mountaineer who climbed Mount Everest and other 8,000-meter peaks using the alpine-style approach, Patrick Hollingworth is a consultant who helps individuals, teams and organizations deal with the VUCA world.
The Inevitable
Understanding the 12 Technological Forces that Will Shape Our Future

Take-Aways

- Twelve “inevitable” technological developments will reshape society by 2050.
- They are: “becoming, cognifying, flowing, screening, accessing, sharing, filtering, remixing, interacting, tracking, questioning” and a new “beginning.”
- The changes of technology now in the process of becoming will drive a trajectory toward a restless, innovative “protopia” – more dynamic than any utopia or dystopia.
- Artificial intelligence and the cognified Internet of Things (IoT) will disrupt daily life.
- The flowing of endlessly copied data fuels both real-time services and digital goods.
- Sharing’s “digital social-ism” will alter buying and selling.
- Endless filtering and remixing mash up content and challenge copyright laws. Virtual reality promises mass interaction.
- Questioning by human and AI minds will disrupt old dogmas.
- Human and machine minds are beginning to form a “superorganism.”
- This profound “soft singularity” will release untold opportunities.
Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn:
1) What 12 main technological currents are likely to affect humankind through 2050.
2) What opportunities these forces offer.
3) How technology’s “inevitable” momentum is building toward a globally networked hybrid mind.

Review
Developing technologies are bending toward certain “trajectories” that seem likely to take the world to uncharted realms in the decades ahead. Though they don’t yield to detailed forecasting, these accelerating forces are carving out interconnected channels of societal change. Technology guru Kevin Kelly describes 12 of the most potent irresistible forces, conveying his message with insight based on immersion in cyberculture. People “screen” instead of reading. They “flow,” “access” and “share” instead of buying and owning. While accepting some of the negatives, he finds optimism and opportunity at this unparalleled “beginning” of the human-machine civilization.

Summary

The Dozen Major “Forces”
Twelve “inevitable” technological developments will reshape society between the present and about 2050. These currents will disrupt old norms, laws, perceptions, interactions and national interests. A dozen strong forces – expressed as 12 restless “verbs” of change – accelerate each other in a ceaseless, expanding cycle of “trajectories.” Now that society’s illusions of “fixity” and control are obsolete, humans should exercise engaged vigilance over these developments. That will be of more service than clinging to orthodoxy. These pivotal technocultural advances are:

1. “Becoming”
The point where technology and culture merge – called the “technium” – keeps evolving. Unlike a static utopia, or a moribund dystopia, this burgeoning “protopia” drives people to innovate and grow. The technium’s unquenchable birthing or becoming knows no bounds, despite the difficulties and challenges it poses. “One aspect of the ceaseless upgrades and eternal becoming of the technium is to make holes in our heart.”

2. “Cognifying”
Affordable, ubiquitous artificial intelligence (AI) will disrupt every area of human life. Interlinked cognified objects – each with small amounts of intelligence – will contribute to a cloud-based “superorganism” more potent than any lone supercomputer. As people struggle to recognize or localize it, this AI is arriving quietly. For instance, IBM’s Watson computer rapidly went cloud-based and now self-learns medical diagnostics.

On-demand intelligence will become a web service. Granting objects cognition makes them smaller, cheaper and more efficient. Digital cameras, for example, use smart algorithms. Omnipresent AI “smartness” will touch all areas of human endeavor. In 2002, Google cofounder Larry Page said Google is really about creating an AI; its searches teach and polish its own AI.
The “AI winter,” a time of scant progress, ended with the advent of cheap, parallel processing GPUs (graphics processing units) that run neural networks, big data and deep learning algorithms. Nobody knows which types of “minds” may emerge: superfast, superslow, quantum or “half-machine–half-animal symbiont.” For example, people collaborate with AIs in freestyle chess matches as champion hybrid centaurs. AI-driven robots will take jobs from people, but at that inflection point, humans may rise to more-worthy challenges. The web acts as a vast copy machine, reproducing and immortalizing data, some of which goes viral by reproducing exponentially. This plethora of copying creates wealth. “We can’t stop massive indiscriminate copying. Not only would that sabotage the engine of wealth…but it would halt the Internet itself.”

3. “Flowing”
Algorithm updates flow into your phone: Music, video and social media stream before you. No longer batched or stored locally, streams and flows arrive in “real time – as do on-demand services – from the cloud. Once it’s digitized and copyable, music streams cheaply or for free. Consumers can sample it, edit it, remix it and mash it up – therefore expanding its scope through “democratization.”

Though not yet remixable like music, e-books’ “fluidity” contrasts with the “fixity” of printed works. All media will flow in four stages – “fixed and rare,” then “free,” then “flowed and shared,” and finally, “open and becoming.” Knowledge will gain dominion over matter. Easy-to-copy things will tend toward being free, while both hard to-copy objects and intangible abstractions gain value. Such generative values include “trust,” “immediacy,” “personalization,” “interpretation,” “authenticity,” “accessibility,” “embodiment,” “patronage” and “discoverability.”

4. “Screening”
Ancient spoken-word transmission of knowledge gave way to the written word, which expanded in the 15th century with Gutenberg’s printing press. Expert knowledge and rules are spread in books on law and science, leading to a culture of respect for authority. Now the “People of the Book,” who favor authority, are in conflict with the majority: the tech-driven “People of the Screen.” The concept of the book endures in e-ink e-books, including Kindles, but physical traditional paper books are dissolving into screenable flows. Traditional publishers want to keep e-reader books immutable, but they, too, will liquefy. Books stream via social interaction, then merge with all other text and media into a “universal library.” Screens will tell people the stories of their past and future by provoking them to dig for information, to act and to think in real time.

5. “Accessing”
In a world of access, ownership matters less than ever. Airbnb owns no houses or hotels; Netflix viewers never own the movies they watch. Organizations and users don’t need to maintain or store goods, so access replaces ownership. Five trends are hastening the growth of accessing:

- “Dematerialization” – Products improve by adding intangibles like algorithms; for example, you have a small smartphone instead of a brick-size “dumb” phone. Tangible products – like owned cars – transform into intangibles, streaming as on-demand services, like Lyft and Uber, to meet diverse needs efficiently.

- “Real-time on demand” – “To run in real time, our technological infrastructure needed to liquefy…Fixed solid things became services.” Uber’s ride-on-demand model points the way to endlessly scalable real-time or instant services.
“Our appetite for the instant is insatiable. The cost of real-time engagement requires massive coordination and collaboration that were unthinkable a few years ago.”

“The filters have been watching us for years; they anticipate what we will ask. They can almost autocomplete it right now.”

“Consumers say they don’t want to be tracked, but in fact they keep feeding the machine with their data because they want to claim their benefits.”

“A simulated environment...you can enter at will is a recurring science fiction dream that is long overdue.”

“Decentralization” – As an example, Bitcoin decentralizes currency. Its blockchain cryptographic trust ledger eliminates the need for central bank regulators and guarantors.

“Platform synergy” – Multifaceted marketing platforms like Facebook, Apple and Google sell services. They encourage user marketing based on sharing and application programming interfaces (APIs).

“Clouds” – Services based in the ether – “ethereal forces” – ease the demand on local devices and encourage access, collaboration, backup and self-extension.

6. “Sharing”
A strain of “digital social-ism” drives most online activity. This organically emerging, non ideological socialism decentralizes digital goods and provides them for free. Media theorist Clay Shirky says sharing will become collectivism in four stages: 1) “simply sharing” digital goods, 2) practicing “cooperation” via Creative Commons–type licensing and other means, 3) using “collaboration” to streamline noncommercial projects, and 4) enjoying people-powered “collectivism” to enhance personal autonomy and group effectiveness. Digital socialism improves outcomes in health care, drug discovery, education, and other areas. To serve people better, anarchic collectivism needs controlling.

For instance, Wikipedia cedes its main editing responsibilities to about 1,500 experienced users. When scaled-up, collectivism transforms into a hive mind. Crowdsourcing empowers innovators. A system for full peer-to-peer shared investments would unlock a further productivity boom. Collaborative, collectively owned groups will revolutionize work, economies and daily life.

7. “Filtering”
With millions of songs and books, thousands of films, billions of tweets and an array of lifestyle options – food to taste, places to visit, stocks to invest in – people need filtering options. Various filters such as “brands, curators, gatekeepers” and friends help shoppers narrow their choices. “Recommendation engines” – Amazon, Netflix, Spotify, and others – use algorithms to offer personalization, but they also may trap users in “filter bubbles” showing repetitive results.

Often unwittingly, users collaborate in refining their own filters, honing Google, Facebook and other platforms simply by using them. The logical outcome of mass personalization is “mass customization.” In the near future, you’ll receive customized food, clothing, transportation, and more – on demand. In a world of abundant options, attention is scarce – but advertisers rank it as having low value anyway. Systems like Google AdSense match and filter to focus attention on relevant ads. Soon, advertisers may pay for your attention. New filtering and personalization will push people to consider what they want. Filtering will help you define yourself – to yourself.

8. “Remixing”
This trend gives birth to new genres and subgenres. Consumers and fans remix movies, trailers, music, literature, art, commercials, and the like. In this mash-up age, everyone plays editor. Actions borrowed from literature – such as paraphrasing a quote – carry over to other media. This heralds a new “visual literacy.” Readily available content – like Flickr photos – provides opportunities to grab, remix and create. AI tech boosts “findability,” letting people search for images using natural language. “Rewindability” fuels appreciation of visual content. Software lets you undo, so you can return to any previous point in your work. User remixing challenges intellectual property laws and the concept of owning ideas. As remixing boosts the prestige of creative works, laws must recognize the added value of creative transformation of original ideas.
9. “Interacting”

Early virtual reality (VR) didn’t live up to its hype. But new versions appeared with the advent of cheap, powerful, sensor-equipped smartphones. New “light field-projection” VR technology like Microsoft’s HoloLens will bring realistic VR to the public. “Interaction” and “presence” make VR hot; users want to immerse in virtual environments, in the style of the Star Trek holodeck.

“Affective technology” systems – including eye and facial expression trackers – let software assess and respond to people’s emotions. New gesture- and voice-controlled systems increase interactivity. “Wearable” technology places sensors against the skin, while “brainmachine interfaces” bring them close to – or even into – the brain – which proves adaptable to novel input. Immersive, sensor-packed VR will give people unprecedented types of experiences via first-person viewpoints. Augmented reality “overlays virtual elements on top of reality.” By the year 2050, “anything that is not intensely interactive will be considered broken.”

10. “Tracking”

The “quantified self” describes people monitoring their heart rates, caloric intake, diet, sleep, genes, mood, and other factors in statistical detail. “Self measurement” extends into people’s working and social lives; some record every keystroke, phone call and email. Some engage in “lifelogging” capturing their lives in a series of videos and photographs – a flow of life data, or “lifestream.” Cheap, efficient sensors, batteries and cloud storage power user adoption and advances in self-tracking. The Internet of Things will drive tracking to new levels, impelling citizens to push for transparent “coveillance” to monitor those who monitor the public. People say they want privacy, but relinquish it freely on social media; unsustainable anonymity will dwindle.

11. “Questioning”

Human nature suggests that a vast, free collaboration like Wikipedia shouldn’t work, but it does. Globally linked as never before, tech-augmented questioning human and AI minds will blast through old dogmas into new paradigms. Inevitable disruptions – good and bad – will see humankind study its core nature. Facts and “antifacts” clamor – in real-time – for attention. Knowledge and unknowns expand as deeper, sharper questions arise. This creates a vast wealth of seemingly “technically impossible” horizons, bringing people to value the power of constant, fathomless inquiry or debate.

12. “Beginning”

Earth’s sphere of consciousness – this emergent thing of wires. Wi-Fi, objects imbued with Internet intelligence and billions of human brains – is coalescing into a single vast mind: the “holos.” Interaction or lack of it strengthens or weakens connections in the holos. By 2025, the holos will include everyone. Some people will benefit more than others; some will rebel. This “soft singularity” will bring a convergence of humans and machines – a more fluid existence of perplexities and wonders.

About the Author

Cyberculture writer and editor Kevin Kelly worked with Stewart Brand on the Whole Earth Catalog, The Whole Earth Review and Signal. In 1992, Kelly became executive editor of Wired magazine, where he is now “seniormaverick.” He also wrote New Rules for the New Economy and What Technology Wants.
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