

The one thing to stop being so busy

SPEAKERS

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Are you really busy? Is your organization not adapting fast enough? In this episode I will share with you why that is and what you can do about it. Once you understand this and apply this, your impact will increase and so will your peace of mind. And it will make a lot of things much clearer to you. Before we start this episode, I wanted to share something with you. In the last years, I have helped many leaders transform themselves or their organization. And I've identified specific traits that characterizes them. If you want to know which type of leader you are, we have developed a little quiz that will only take you two minutes to take. We share with you what type of leader you are. Just go to www.rebelleaderwithaheart.com/quiz or to the show notes of this episode. Take the quiz and you will understand what type of leader you are and also get seven personalized lessons to get you out of this overwhelm and into more peace of mind, especially in these fast-changing digital times. So just go there, it's completely free. And remember that you are a leader of your life. So, this is a leadership quiz. But you don't have to have a team to call yourself a leader. You really are a leader of your life. So, go take this quiz and share it with friends and colleagues if you think it could help them to find more impact and more peace of mind and have this meaningful life. So, let's dive in today's episode. Why are you so busy? Why are so many leaders busy? Why are organizations not adapting fast enough? And there is something that's really ironic, because in these digital times, we could automate a lot of the things we do. And in theory, we should all be able to work much less than before. But when I ask my friends, when I ask leaders: "how are you doing?" Often the answer that I get is, "oh, I'm busy. I'm busy, busy, busy, and I wish I had more time". It's really ironic. On one side we should be able to work less and automate a lot of things. And on the other side, we have never been so busy before. And why is that? To explain to you why that is, I just wanted to share a fact with you. I wanted to share with you how long it took for different technologies to hit 50 million users. So, it took the telephone 75 years before 50 million users used it. The radio was 38 years, television, 13 years. The internet four years, Twitter nine months and Angry Birds 35 days. So, what this is showing us is that the speed of change





is accelerating and it's accelerating at a pace that we have never witnessed before. We have never witnessed this before as people and we have never witnessed this before as organizations. And so, as the speed of change is accelerating, it means also that organizations have less and less time to adapt themselves to these new technologies. And the problem is that most of the business techniques and leadership habits that we have today were invented in slow times when the pace of change was much slower than today. And when I started as a CEO and I had to grow my revenues, I had to prepare for the digital transformation or for the disruption and I started reinventing my organization using the techniques that I have been learning in my career at university. So, I was looking for a competitive advantage, or a USP, a unique selling proposition. And then once we had that new competitive advantage, I made detailed plans and budgets to deliver that competitive advantage. And then I would divide the process of delivering that competitive advantage in specialties, in functions. We would isolate ourselves with the management team, think about the best organizational structure, come back and announce a new structure, still organized around functions like marketing, sales, publishing, finance, HR, etc. And then because we wanted to benefit from economies of scale, we would centralize decisions, meaning that the people higher in the organization would take a lot of the decisions for the rest of the organization. Also, in most of the teams, most of the departments, the managers were often the experts. So, the best in each department would become the manager. And those techniques, they worked really, really well in slow times. And with those techniques, I had some habits. So, I was very action oriented. When I saw an issue, I saw an opportunity, I would do something about it. And this was really appreciated. Also, I became really good in managing my time, like probably a lot of you I started having more and more to do. And I started realizing that I needed to become a better time manager. So, I followed a lot of courses about time management, and I became a really good time manager and especially with my children, because once I had children, I even became better at it at that. Then also another habit I had is that I used to deliver everything that was expected from me. I don't know about you. But in school, I was this great student and I was used to deliver what was expected from me. That was the way to good grades. If you did what was expected, you got good grades, if you didn't do it, you got bad grades. And that's how also I got recognition. So, delivering everything that was expected from me is something that is deeply ingrained in me and was a habit that served me very well in slow times. And then also, in meetings, it was really important to convince people by talking because the meetings are very chaotic, and if you don't talk, you're not being heard. And so, it was important to convince people by talking and also to be in control of things and people and my boss really required from to be on top of things, to be in control. This was something important. And this was something again that I learned in school, I had to be in control, anticipate everything. Order and structure is something really important. So those were the techniques and the habits





that I had, and that a lot of leaders are using or are having. But the problems came when I used these techniques and these habits from slow times in fast changing digital times. So just to repeat myself. There is nothing wrong with these techniques and these habits, because these techniques and these habits, they have really increased productivity. They have brought us where we are today, and we are much better off today than we were 50 years ago. But the problems came when I was using these techniques and habits in these times that are changing really, really fast. And the first problem we encountered, because we were looking for a new competitive advantage, was that the world was changing so fast. There were a lot of things happening. First of all, we got new technologies, new customer demands, new regulations, not every couple of years, not every couple of months, but every couple of weeks. And also, when we had this competitive advantage in the past, we could keep it for a couple of years and then it became a couple of months and then it became a couple of weeks before we got copied by our competitors. And because we were constantly looking for a new competitive advantage, we ended up with way too many things to do, and a lack of clarity. It wasn't clear anymore what was a priority in the organization and then making these detailed plans. Well, the problem is with all these changes, is that we were making these detailed plans before starting the implementation, but they kept changing and changing before even starting to implement the plans. And so, it was driving everyone mad, because, you know, we like to be in control. So, we like to try and foresee everything before we start working. But in fast changing digital times, it's not possible anymore to foresee everything because it keeps changing. So, the plans kept changing all the time, and it was driving everyone crazy. Then the organizational structure that we had divided in functions. Well, with every change the people in every department, they had to align, and they weren't finished aligning around one change that the next one was there, and the next one, and the next one. And so, people in my organization were spending much more time in meetings trying to align than doing their actual job. And that's when we got, of course, communication issues, collaboration issues. But that's also when we got like, two big issues. First, you had the people who kept running, who were really motivated. They wanted to have impact, they wanted to matter. They wanted to deliver everything. And so, they kept running and running until the stress was really high, and they burned out. And then we had the other category of people who could feel that this wasn't working anymore. And as a way to protect themselves from burning out. They became resigned, and they started to focus on their job description, their nine to five timetable, the objectives of their department and that's when we had silo thinking. That was only as a way to protect themselves from burning out. Then the centralized decisions. By the time we made a decision that the decision reached us the management team that we then took a decision and communicated it to the rest of the organization, things had changed. Or we were way too far from the problem to really understand the problem. So, we were making





stupid decisions, or sometimes people were waiting and waiting for decisions that never came. And the slow and inefficient decision process is what frustrates people the most in organizations. So, these were the problems, all because we were using techniques from slow times in fast times. So just look at your organization. Are you facing these problems as well? Because maybe it's because you're using these techniques of slow time. Then the problem was that I wanted to compensate for all these problems. And so, with my habits of being action oriented, of managing time, of trying to deliver everything, of trying to be in control, I started to work harder and harder. I started to sacrifice things, important things to me, like exercise, time with my family, time with myself, with my friends, sleep sometimes. And that led to frustration, overwhelm, being exhausted, resigned, and it wasn't still enough. So, I was working even harder, till a certain point where I wondered, "For the sake of what am I working this hard?". I had sacrificed so many things and was wondering for what? Just to increase shareholders value. Just to increase profits. It's really not worth it. And that's when I had lost my motivation, but also lost my sense of purpose. That's what I see also a lot in leaders today, they have been working so hard and sacrificed things that really are important to them. And then wonder why they have lost their motivation and sense of purpose. All because we are using techniques and habits from slow times in fast changing digital times. So, do you recognize this? Is your organization facing the same issues? Are you trying to compensate? Do you still have the habits that I just described? So, when I realized this, that's when I got to this crossroads that I talked about in the first episode. And so, I decided to do something about it. And the first thing I decided to do is to adopt the new business techniques of fast changing digital times. Instead of focusing on a new competitive advantage, we decided to focus on the customer's experience. Because today, for the customer, it's not a matter of "Where can I find something?". It's a matter of "what do I have to choose? There is so much choice, I don't know what to choose anymore". So, the competitive advantage, it's not that important anymore, especially since everyone gets copied. What becomes really important is this customer experience. So, we started to focus on developing new business models and ecosystems, that would increase the customer's experience. So also, in our digital products, much less functionalities, a much better customer journey. And then instead of making detailed plans and budgets, that would change all the time, we focused first on developing a great purpose and values because nobody gets up in the morning to increase shareholders value. We wanted people in our organization to have meaning and to get up for something greater and bigger than themselves. And also, we wanted them to be aligned with our values. So, we developed this great purpose and we defined our values which are not things that you just stick on the walls, but really values that are lived, decisions that are aligned with them. And then we started working in sprints or iterations to deliver the plans. So instead of making detailed plans from A to Z before starting, we made plans from A to





B, and then from B to C, and then from C to D. And that's how we moved forward every time just persevering, if it was working and pivoting if it needed to be changed. Then a huge change that will make all the difference for the people being in meetings all the time was that we changed our organizational structure. So instead of organizing ourselves around specialties or functions like sales, marketing, production, finance, HR, etc. We decided to transform the organization and to organize ourselves around the customer. So, we were an educational company, an educational media company. So instead of having marketing, sales and publishing departments, we had a department Primary Education, where marketing sales and publishing was together in one team. So, we still had defined roles, but we were organized around the customer. And then instead of centralizing decisions, we wanted people to be able to solve their own issues. And so, we decided to increase empowerment and to push as much decisions as possible, as low as possible in the organization so that people could solve their own issues or could seize their own opportunities without having to wait for a decision. So, I thought, okay, these are the techniques of fast time, so great, my solution is there. My problems are now behind me. Everything is great, but of course, it wasn't the case. Implementing these new business techniques was even more chaotic than using the old ones. And that was not because those were the wrong techniques. But that was because we didn't have the appropriate culture to implement these techniques. And as culture is the sum of the habits of an organization, we had to change the habits of everyone in the organization. But we had to start with the leaders, and I had to start by changing my habits. And so my habits of being action oriented, managing my time, trying to deliver everything, being in control those habits that had served me very well and got me this far in my career were now standing in the way of my own peacefulness of my own happiness, but were also standing in the way of the transformation of my organization. And just think about that for a second. Have you ever asked someone why they're doing a specific task? and got the answer? Because that's how we have always done things. And that's the problem with habits. You can decide something, and all agree on new things. But you get back to your office. And without even noticing it, your habits take over and you still do the old things. So if you want to change the culture, if you want to adopt new habits, if you want to not be busy anymore, if you want your organization to adapt rapidly to the fast pace of change, you will have to change your habits. Because when you manage to change the habits of the people in your organization, that's when you change the culture. And with your new culture, that's when you can implement the techniques of fast changing times. And with these new techniques, that's when you can become agile and when you are able to seize many, much more opportunities than your competitors. And that's how you become successful in these digital and disruptive times. And with their new habits, the people in your organization will be happier and you will be happier. To illustrate this, I just wanted to share another story. So, during my time as a





CEO, my shareholders who were private equity, they wanted to sell the organization. And so, during my time when I was facing all these challenges, I had to transform, I had to do the turnaround, to increase in profit again. I also had to sell the organization. And so twice I told my whole strategy to two of my biggest competitors. I told them everything, when we were going to launch things, what we were going to launch, how we were organized, the salaries of the people, who were the people, I told them everything because they were going to buy us and then guess what? They didn't buy us. And so, they didn't buy us, and I still had these very ambitious goals, profit goals to reach, and they knew everything. It was really frustrating because for me, it felt like playing poker with only my cards being on the table and I didn't see anything about their cards. But even with the whole strategy and everything explained by me and by everyone in my organization, not everyone but a couple of people in my organization. Even with that, they couldn't implement our strategy and not because it wasn't a great strategy, but because they didn't have the appropriate culture, they didn't have the habits to be able to implement that strategy. And that's why I believe that strategy is not that important anymore. Of course, it's important, but it's much less important than the culture and the habits. So, strategy wasn't enough. We still reached better results than they did. And we often say, culture eats strategy for breakfast, but I believe it's habits that eat strategy for breakfast. And that's also what Tom COO noticed. He was a participant of one of my courses. And he said that by applying new habits, that's when he saw empowerment, and he also realized that having a successful digital transformation is not about convincing people. It's about changing the habits of everyone in the organization. And so successful leaders focus on people and their habits and traditional leaders, they will focus more on strategy, plans and to-do's and they don't find the time to coach, mentor and support the people. So why are you so busy? Why is your organization not adapting fast enough? Because you are using techniques and habits of slow times in fast times. So today, reinventing your organization is not so much about strategy anymore. It's about adopting the new business techniques, changing your culture and the habits of everyone in your organization. And the problem I see is sometimes, I was in a couple of boards of directors or I'm invited by board of directors to help them reinvent their organization, but then they expect me to help them reinvent their organization using the old techniques, an inappropriate culture and leadership habits from the past. And that's not possible. So, it all starts with new habits and new mindset and then new business techniques. So, this was a lot and in the show notes, you will find a link to an infographic where you will find the techniques and habits of slow and fast times. So just go to <http://www.rebelleaderwithaheart.com/2> and you will find the link to our quiz, to the infographic and to other extras. So that was it for today. In my next episode, I will share with you the new habits of fast changing digital times, but I'll also share what the biggest mistake is that traditional leaders make and what you could do instead.

