

MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP | 9 OCTOBER 2016

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Why you should become an exponential leader

In a world where technologies are ‘breeding’, being a traditional leader is no longer enough — exponential leadership skills will soon define successful CEOs.



Vanessa Gavan

Entrepreneur and innovator, Vanessa Gavan has consulted to a range of leading Australian and international organisations over the past 15 years.

In 1859, a keen hunter released 24 imported rabbits into the Australian bush, where none had roamed before. Ten years

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later, Australia's wild rabbit population was in the millions and by 1920, there were 10 billion.

Australia's rabbit infestation is an excellent example of exponential growth, where expansion happens at a mind-blowing pace due to the multiplier effect.

New technologies are today's rabbits. A single game-changing technology spawns other innovations that build up slowly at first, and then so rapidly that it's hard to keep up.

Digitisation and disruption are now the norm. Driverless cars, bitcoins and 3D printers are already here, and by 2020, the Internet of Things (IoT) will link 30 billion devices.

In a changing world, thinking long term is the responsibility of every leader. Fantastic growth opportunities are in the future, but without forward-thinking leadership, your organisation will miss them.

Traditionally, businesses strategies project five years ahead at the most, and CEOs often focus on the day-to-day. After all, you can't plan for what you don't know. But we no longer live in a traditional world: We live in an exponential world, and that demands exponential leadership.

Exponential leaders are tuned in to tomorrow. They pick the next Uber, Kickstarter or Airbnb before it starts disrupting and have strategies in place to handle the opportunities or potential fallout.

Thinking exponentially is exciting, but counter-intuitive. Our ancestors lived in a linear world, where things stayed the same for years and changes were slow and incremental. They didn't think ahead — their main concern was surviving in the present.

With technologies converging, overlapping and proliferating,

Chauhan

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it's not easy predicting the future - but it's essential. While sectors such as medicine, finance, manufacturing and media are transforming faster than others, there is no escape for any industry.

I'm working with my team to prioritise the quest for exponential leadership, and we've identified ten important qualities.

10 important qualities for exponential leadership



10 important qualities for exponential leadership

1. **Agility:** Ensure you, your people and your organisation are ready to react quickly to change.
2. **Vision:** A clear vision makes it easier to identify the most relevant trends.
3. **Openness:** Embrace new ideas instead of resisting them, or your business will stagnate.

4. **Robustness:** Be prepared for hard decisions; you may have to disrupt your own organisation with a restructure or repositioning.
5. **Market awareness:** Know your marketplace intimately so you are always on top of your customers' aspirations.
6. **Courage:** Be prepared to take risks as a person and as an organisation, and allow staff to fail constructively.
7. **Influence:** Foster innovation by encouraging collaboration, breaking down silos and nurturing creative problem-solving.
8. **Big-picture thinking:** Discourage mediocrity — maybe your company will be the next great disruptor.
9. **Growth mindset:** Be an exponential person who accepts and builds on personal disruptions and obstacles, and encourages others to do the same.
10. **Hunger for learning:** Discover as much as possible about being an exponential leader. The [Singularity University](#) and [Big Think](#) have excellent resources and Maximus International's new executive leadership experience, [Fire up the Future](#), taps into the latest global thinking.

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