

A woman in a yellow dress is walking away from the viewer on a blue, curved path. The path is flanked by large, dark blue, curved structures that form a tunnel-like shape. The sky is a vibrant blue with white clouds. The overall scene is futuristic and surreal.

FUTURE FTENSE

powered by
LÜRSEN

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

2025

FUTURE TENSE 2025

In a world where boundaries between the digital and physical are blurring, the pace of change is no longer linear, it's exponential. Organizations and leaders are finding themselves at the intersection of opportunity and uncertainty, where the impact of artificial intelligence, automation, and global connectivity redefines the future of business and society almost overnight. This year's Future Tense powered by Lürssen gathered bold thinkers from across the globe in Zagreb to explore not only what comes next, but how we can shape it with intention.

The 2025 conference challenged us to rethink agility and resilience, not just as buzzwords, but as essential tools for navigating the unknown. How do we foster innovation while staying true to our values? What does sustainable growth look like in an era of climate urgency and demographic transformation? And as machines take on tasks once reserved for humans, how do we ensure technology serves our humanity, not the other way around?

Five keynote speakers, each a pioneer in their field, offered a powerful lens into the coming decade. Their insights spanned from reimagining urban life and business strategy to decoding the complexities of human behavior and the ethics of digital transformation. Through lively debate and visionary storytelling, Future Tense 2025 became more than a conference, it became a platform for future-readiness.

At its core, Future Tense powered by Lürssen is a celebration of curiosity and collaboration. We invite you to explore the highlights of this year's gathering, discover the questions that will define our shared future, and join a growing community committed to turning foresight into action. The pages ahead distill the most urgent lessons, surprising predictions, and bold challenges from our five keynote sessions. Welcome to the Future Tense powered by Lürssen 2025 Executive Summary, your guide to thriving in the age of perpetual transformation.





KOMUNIKACIJSKI
LABORATORIJ.

What lies ahead is more than a discussion on the future of business; it is about the society we want to create. We live in a world that constantly pushes us to accelerate. Daily we are overwhelmed by news, crises, and new fascinations. Yet, beneath the surface, silent shifts in societal structure, trust, and values unfold, shaping us for the long term.

More than ever, we question nearly everything, which is healthy. Technology is a prime example: we marvel at innovation but must also examine what we have gained and what we have lost. Are we, as a society, prepared to ask difficult questions, even if the answers are uncomfortable?

Discussing the future of business must include: what kind of society do we want to inhabit?

Are we open and inclusive?

Will young people wish to build their futures here, or will this only be a waypoint on their journey elsewhere?

These are crucial questions, greater than any business conference. But today, we begin this conversation.

We are often caught by short-term crises, but if we neglect quieter, long-term issues like sustainability, education, and institutional trust, we risk losing a more meaningful future.

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report for 2025 shows that what matters in ten years often isn't today's headline. Speaking about the future is difficult but necessary. ESG was recently the basis for strategy; now it fades behind "urgent" issues.

We must remember what matters, slow down, connect vision, expertise, and responsibility. Slowing down can unlock deeper insight, creativity, and sustainable growth.

Manuela Šola

GENERAL MANAGER AT KOMUNIKACIJSKI LABORATORIJ





The Future-ready Mindset:
Strategic Resilience In A World
Of Rapid Change

"A future-ready organization performs and transforms at once, guided by calm creatives who stay grounded, yet open. Curiosity isn't just a trait, it's a choice, and so is your most productive response."

Howard Yu is the LEGO® Professor of Management and Innovation at International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland. A Harvard Business School doctorate graduate and former banking professional from Hong Kong, he has dedicated his career to understanding how companies can maintain competitive advantage in rapidly evolving markets. His expertise in corporate strategy and management innovation (how organizations confront market disruption when they have the advantage of time) has earned him prestigious recognitions, including being named one of The World's Top 40 Business Professors Under 40 by Poets&Quants in 2015, and receiving the Strategy Award from Thinkers50 in 2023.

Prof. Dr. Howard Yu

LEGO® PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION AT IMD SWITZERLAND





Future readiness has become a defining challenge of our age. Organizations across all sectors must deliver on today's goals while reinventing themselves for a rapidly arriving tomorrow. The digital revolution, especially artificial intelligence, is reshaping industries and overturning traditional sources of advantage. Being future ready means balancing high performance now with sustained investment in the capabilities that drive future growth.

Business today is defined by volatility, uncertainty, and polarization. Technology brings both opportunity and anxiety. Across industries, organizations face the dual challenge: deliver immediate impact and simultaneously invent, scale, and embed new skills for long-term sustainability.

Research shows that thriving companies do not choose between performance and transformation. Innovation is treated not as a luxury, but as a consistent discipline, maintained even in downturns. These organizations invest steadily in talent, technology, and learning, ensuring progress is ongoing, regardless of external uncertainty.

Howard Yu illustrates these principles through the automotive industry. Traditional manufacturers once dominated through scale and engineering, but now face competition from newcomers like Tesla and BYD, who prioritize data, software, and direct customer engagement. Tesla's agile software development and BYD's evolution from battery maker to EV leader highlight the value of adaptability and a willingness to learn.

Success, Yu argues, requires organizations to "run their own race." There is no universal template for transformation, winning depends on clear priorities, knowing what to build, where to compete, and where to focus resources. As Disney's leadership philosophy notes, too many priorities mean no priorities. In uncertain times, focus, discipline, and clear communication are crucial.

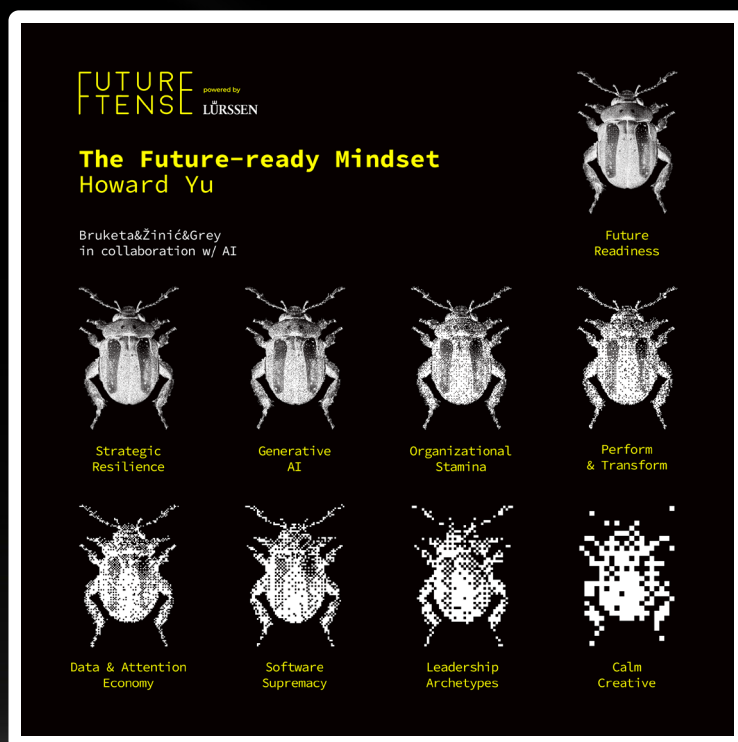
People remain central to future readiness. The most effective organizations foster "calm creatives", teams who combine clarity, resilience, and curiosity with the discipline to deliver and the courage to transform. These are neither reckless innovators nor resistant traditionalists, but those committed to continuous improvement.



Innovation must be purposeful, using new tools, especially data and AI, to create tangible value for customers and society. The shift from hardware to software, and the need to rapidly adapt business models, define today's competitive landscape. Top organizations blend technical expertise with deep customer understanding, using data both to optimize and to reimagine offerings.

Increased uncertainty, from supply chain shocks to global instability, demands more than technical fixes. Building a future-ready organization means fostering a culture of trust, learning, and hope. Companies that develop these qualities weather crises and seize opportunities faster. Leadership development, reskilling, and collaboration are as essential as any technical upgrade.

Thriving companies do not choose between performance and transformation. Innovation is treated not as a luxury, but as a consistent discipline.



Yu's core message: future readiness is a continuous journey, not a finish line. It requires relentless focus, constant learning, and courageous choices about where to innovate and where to reinforce strengths. Organizations that succeed will not just survive disruption, they will help set new standards for performance, resilience, and impact in their fields.

In a world of constant change, the most vital advantage is the ability to perform and transform, simultaneously and consistently, over the long term.



Future Behaviours For A Sustainable Society

"Sustainable behavior is no longer a question of awareness; it is about overcoming real barriers."

Tamira Snell is a distinguished futurist, advisor from the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies, and keynote speaker specializing in strategic foresight and futures studies. With her background in cultural sociology, she brings unique insights into human behavior, cultural patterns, and societal change. Her expertise lies in understanding emerging needs and the complex drivers behind how we live, think, and consume. Through years of advisory work, she has developed comprehensive frameworks for foresight and sociocultural analysis, offering strategic insights across sectors, industries, and geographies. Her approach combines mixed methods research with deep cultural understanding to help organizations navigate future challenges and opportunities.

Tamira Snell

FUTURIST & CULTURAL SOCIOLOGIST AT COPENHAGEN INSTITUTE FOR FUTURES STUDIES





The future is never singular. Tamira Snell urges leaders and organizations to abandon the illusion of a single, predictable path. Instead, she champions “futures thinking”, an approach that explores a plurality of possible, plausible, and preferable futures, always grounded in a deep understanding of human behavior, culture, and values.

Snell's message is clear: preparing for uncertainty means embracing it, planning for multiple scenarios, and cultivating the mental flexibility to adapt as the world changes. Drawing on personal experience like sailing across the Atlantic with her family, Snell illustrates how the best preparation is a combination of strategic foresight and the ability to improvise in the face of the unknown.

Sustainable behavior is no longer a question of awareness; it is about overcoming real barriers. While most people say sustainability matters to them, many still feel disconnected from it. We want green choices, but only if they are convenient and cost the same. And when we face either too little or too much conflicting information, we often believe our actions do not make a difference. Real change begins when we recognize these obstacles and start working to remove them.

Central to futures thinking is the recognition that concepts like sustainability, prosperity, and well-being have no single definition. Every community and culture interprets these ideas differently, shaped by their own histories and lived experiences. For organizations and policymakers, this diversity is an asset. It creates a wealth of approaches, values, and priorities to draw from when planning for the future. Success depends on listening, dialog, and the willingness to adapt strategies to the unique needs and aspirations of different groups.

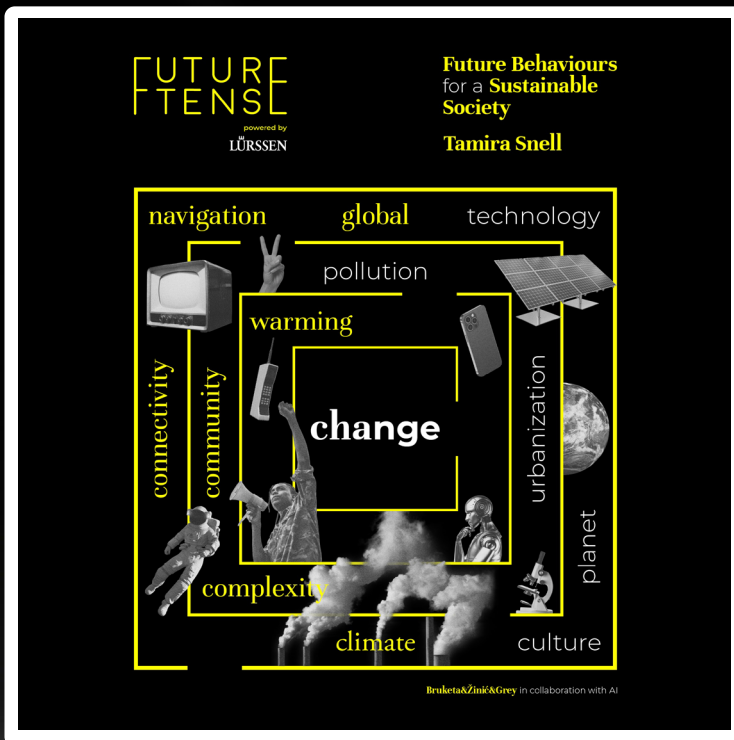
Snell emphasizes that organizations must look beyond rapid technological change to understand the slower, foundational shifts: demographic trends, evolving family structures, and changes in urbanization. The rise of single-person households, new forms of family life, and the search for belonging in dense urban spaces all shape the workforce, consumer needs, and innovation itself. Preparing for the future means integrating these slow-burning trends into decision-making at every level.



A key lesson for leaders is to treat megatrends as prompts for exploration rather than fixed road-maps. Futures thinking is not about rigid planning, but about building adaptive, open cultures that encourage questioning and experimentation. Organizations that build in flexibility and encourage collaboration are best positioned to respond to both expected and unexpected change.

Snell also warns that advanced technology alone cannot guarantee livable, successful futures. The story of Songdo, a high-tech planned city that failed to create a vibrant community, shows that a sense of belonging, meaning, and human connection is essential. The most resilient strategies always put people at the center.

Preparing for uncertainty means embracing it, planning for multiple scenarios, and cultivating the mental flexibility to adapt as the world changes.



In practice, this means leaders must stay connected to the values and needs of stakeholders, supporting ongoing learning, dialogue, and tailored solutions. Integrating nature into urban environments, supporting diverse work styles, and creating space for creativity and collaboration are vital.

By honoring complexity and embracing multiple narratives, organizations can build futures that are sustainable, inclusive, and meaningful for all.



Navigating Radical Innovation

"The guide for navigating this landscape is simple but demanding: unlearn what no longer serves, relearn what's needed for the next wave, and build teams comfortable living in the unknown."

Peter Hinssen is a pathological optimist and globally recognized authority on innovation, technology, and leadership. As the founder of Nexxworks, he helps organizations thrive in what he calls the "Never Normal." His expertise has been sought by Google, Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft, while his academic influence extends to prestigious institutions like London Business School and MIT Sloan. Today, he serves as a board advisor to companies like Belfius, Mediahuis, and Ergon Capital, guiding their innovation and technology initiatives. His thought leadership is captured in bestselling books including "The Phoenix and The Unicorn" (2020) and "The Day After Tomorrow" (2017), which explore the intersection of long-term thinking, innovation, and digital transformation.

Peter Hinssen

GLOBAL INNOVATION EXPERT & FOUNDER OF NEXXWORKS





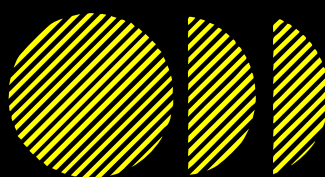
The “Never Normal” is the new reality: a business and social environment where the pace of change is accelerating, disruptions are constant, and yesterday’s certainties no longer apply. Peter Hinssen, an entrepreneur, technology strategist, and chronic optimist, invites us to see this era not as a source of anxiety, but as an opportunity for reinvention and growth. Rather than waiting for stability to return, leaders and organizations must learn to thrive in an environment defined by volatility, ambiguity, and relentless innovation.

In this context, Hinssen champions the idea of Phoenix companies, established organizations that, despite legacy systems and past baggage, successfully reinvent themselves by focusing not on short-term gains, but on long-term transformation and the ‘day after tomorrow.’

Hinssen’s perspective is shaped by decades at the intersection of analog and digital, startups and global enterprises. He describes how every major technology, whether the mechanical typewriter, mobile phone, or social platform follows a cycle of slow emergence, rapid acceleration, and then normalization. What has changed is the tempo: innovations that once took decades to mainstream now disrupt entire industries in a matter of months. This compression of time is both exhilarating and exhausting, requiring new strategies for survival.

The Never Normal is characterized by creative destruction, where old business models crumble and new ones are built on their ruins. Success is no longer guaranteed by size or tradition, but by adaptability, curiosity, and a willingness to embrace risk. Hinssen’s case studies, ranging from Netflix’s content algorithms, inspired by the backstory of co-CEO Ted Sarandos, to the viral rise and intentional addictiveness of TikTok, highlight how new leaders emerge by seeing around corners, experimenting relentlessly, and putting user needs at the center of every decision. The story of Ted Sarandos, a video store clerk turned CEO, demonstrates that innovation often grows from unexpected origins and a lifelong obsession with new ideas.

Organizations that thrive in the Never Normal do so by building cultures that reward experimentation, celebrate learning from failure, and stay open to new ideas. The evolution of technology follows a familiar “gradually, then suddenly” pattern, as seen in the exponential rise of AI, from DeepMind’s world-changing protein-folding breakthroughs and transformation of Nobel Prize categories. Change is no longer just fast; it is fundamentally unpredictable and interconnected, creating a cocktail of disruption that touches every aspect of society.



Today's organizations must learn to respond to shocks more quickly, drawing inspiration from economists like Carlota Perez and Joseph Schumpeter, who showed that creative destruction is as old as progress itself, but now unfolds at hyper speed.

The accelerating waves of change require leaders to be more aware of societal side effects, such as technology addiction, blind faith in algorithms, and the blurring line between work and life.



Rather than waiting for stability to return, leaders and organizations must learn to thrive in an environment defined by volatility, ambiguity, and relentless innovation.



The guide for navigating this landscape is simple but demanding: unlearn what no longer serves, relearn what's needed for the next wave, and build teams comfortable living in the unknown. Hinssen encourages leaders to observe the next generation, whose fluency with new digital habits signals the shape of things to come. Humility, curiosity, and space for bold experimentation are essential. In the Never Normal, change is the only constant and those who can ride its waves will shape not just their organizations, but the societies and industries of the future. The challenge is not to predict the next wave, but to build cultures, systems, and mindsets agile enough to thrive, whatever comes next.

SMART CITIES



Smart Cities And Intelligent Buildings

"The smartest cities of the future won't be defined by sensors or algorithms, but by their ability to learn, adapt, and empower the people who live in them. True urban progress begins when cities become platforms for collaboration, inclusion, and continuous learning, turning complexity into opportunity and diversity into collective strength."

Prof. Dr. Sami Kazi leads Smart Cities and Intelligent Buildings research at VTT, the Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd. He holds positions as Adjunct Professor of Project Management at the Hanken School of Economics and Distinguished Adjunct Professor at the Asian Institute of Technology. As former Vice President for Research Strategy & Foresight at VTT, he pioneered the iBET (innovative business from emerging technologies) programme and drove organizational strategy renewal. His experience spans over 85 international research and development projects focusing on strategic roadmapping, smart cities, construction IT, virtual organizations, and nature-based solutions. He authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications, including ten books covering smart cities, knowledge management and energy-efficient buildings.

Prof. Dr. Sami Kazi

RESEARCH TEAM LEADER FOR SMART CITIES AND INTELLIGENT BUILDINGS AT VTT, FINLAND





Urbanization is one of the defining megatrends of the 21st century. By 2050, cities will house the majority of the world's population, drive most of its economic output, and produce most of its innovation and its pollution. Dr. Sami Kazi, a pioneer in smart cities research, believes that true urban progress hinges not on technology alone, but on the capacity to put people at the center of every innovation.

Kazi challenges conventional wisdom by insisting that technology, infrastructure, and data are just the starting points. The most successful cities are those that act as platforms for collaboration, citizen empowerment, and continuous learning. He highlights that “smartness” is not a fixed feature; it is the ongoing ability of cities to adapt, evolve, and respond to their residents' needs and aspirations. This human-centered view recognizes that urban challenges and solutions are deeply intertwined with the behavior, culture, and ambition of people themselves.

The risks facing modern cities are substantial: energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, social inequality, and climate vulnerability. Over half the world's population now lives in cities, and this is expected to rise to 70% by 2050. Cities consume more than two-thirds of global energy and emit 70% of greenhouse gases. Rapidly growing metropolises like Mumbai exemplify the strains of unplanned growth, where modern high-rises and sprawling slums sit side by side, testing infrastructure, creating pollution, and exposing social divides. Cities like Beijing struggle with pollution in air, water, and even noise, affecting quality of life and public health. New York's dense population and old infrastructure pose renovation challenges, requiring both policy innovation and public engagement.

Even highly planned “smart cities” such as Masdar City in the UAE or Songdo in South Korea demonstrate that advanced systems alone cannot guarantee livability if they ignore social context and citizen experience. Masdar's bold ambition to become the first zero-carbon city faltered, not due to lack of technology, but because of unclear governance and limited understanding of how people actually want to live and interact in urban spaces. Songdo, built for efficiency and connectivity, struggled to attract vibrant community life, highlighting the gap between technological promise and human reality.

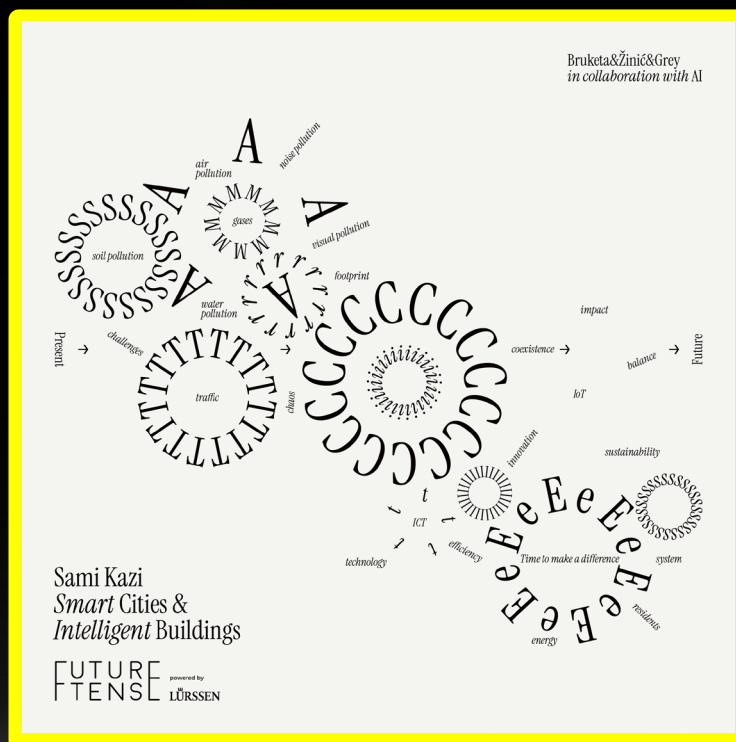


Kazi argues for a triple-bottom-line approach to urban innovation. Every idea and project must be societally desirable, meeting the real needs of diverse populations, economically viable for long-term sustainability, and environmentally feasible to support a greener future.

He points to Nordic models, where high levels of trust, transparent communication, and continuous investment in people result in successful urban policies, inclusive transit systems, strong health outcomes, and digital government services.



The most successful cities are those that act as platforms for collaboration, citizen empowerment, and continuous learning.



The cities of the future must function as dynamic innovation platforms, where the physical and digital worlds converge to offer real choices, personalized services, and community-driven solutions. This requires new forms of governance, open data policies, and active engagement with residents at every stage of planning and delivery. In Kazi's view, smart cities are not made "smart" by technology, but by their capacity to learn, include, and serve their people, turning complexity into opportunity and diversity into a source of collective strength. True urban progress is measured not by the sophistication of infrastructure, but by the city's ability to nurture creativity, resilience, and wellbeing for all its inhabitants.

SLOWNESS



Slow Down,
Power Up

"In a world obsessed with speed, true progress comes from choosing the right pace. Slowing down is not about doing less; it is about doing what matters better. By pausing to reflect, focus, and connect, we build the resilience and clarity needed to thrive in constant change."

Carl Honoré is a bestselling author, journalist, and the leading voice of the Global Slow Movement. His expertise centers on the intersection of pace, productivity, and human wellbeing in our accelerated world. His influential TED talks on "How to Slow Down" have garnered millions of views worldwide. The author of internationally acclaimed books including "In Praise of Slow" and "Under Pressure" (dubbed by Time as the "gospel of the Slow Parenting movement"), his work has been translated into 36 languages. His two main-stage TED talks have reached millions globally, establishing him as a leading voice in challenging our society's obsession with speed.

Carl Honoré

VOICE OF THE GLOBAL SLOW MOVEMENT & AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR





Today's organizations and individuals are caught in a cycle of ever-accelerating demands, constant multitasking, and digital distraction. Yet, in this relentless drive to do more and move faster, there is a growing realization, championed by global thought leader Carl Honoré, that the very traits that should help us thrive in the future might be undermined by the speed at which we try to realize them. Future readiness, it turns out, is not about squeezing more into every minute, but about choosing the right pace for every activity, relationship, and decision.

Slowing down is not the enemy of productivity; rather, it is the secret to sustainable high performance. Honoré points out that in health, education, and business, mindful deceleration allows us to focus, listen, and learn deeply. In the medical world, a renewed emphasis on attentive listening is producing better patient outcomes and satisfaction. In fitness, slower disciplines like yoga and Pilates enhance not just physical health, but inner calm and clarity. In family life, taking the time to be present improves relationships and emotional well-being.

Modern workplaces that prioritize quality over quantity, depth over superficiality, and presence over constant activity find that they are better positioned for innovation and resilience. Mastering the "clock of work" means knowing when to accelerate and when to pause. Teams given the freedom to unplug, reflect, and recharge report gains in creativity and loyalty, while leaders who model a more balanced approach foster healthier, more productive cultures. Meetings that emphasize substance, rather than speed, and workplaces that encourage deep work over shallow busyness, are emerging as blueprints for sustainable success.

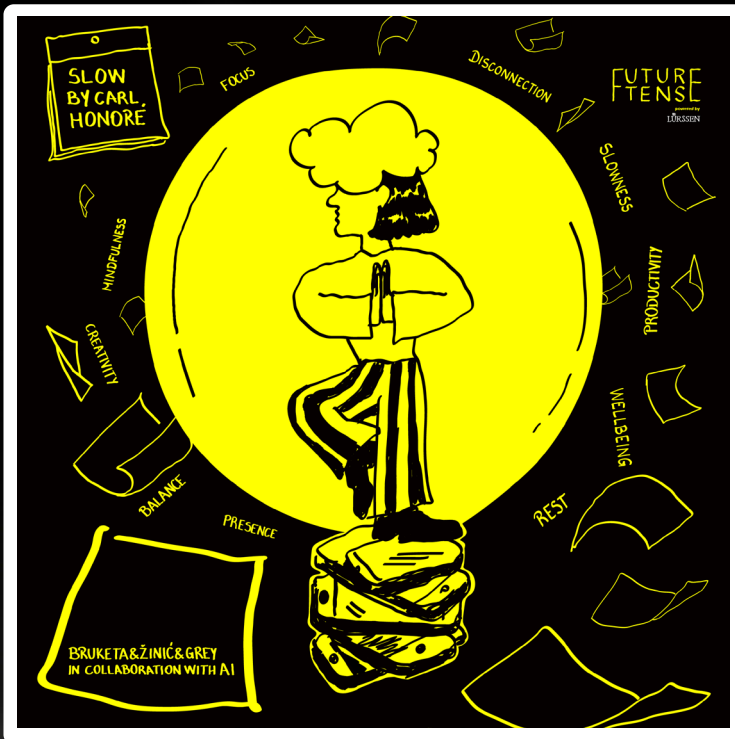
Honoré argues that slowness, when applied judiciously, yields paradoxical advantages. By stepping back from the frenzy, organizations can actually respond more quickly to change. A less frantic pace makes it easier to spot trends, seize new opportunities, and adapt with agility. This "slow to go fast" strategy is particularly effective in a world shaped by uncertainty, where resilience is as important as raw speed. Companies that normalize reflection and rest weather crises more effectively and are less likely to fall victim to burnout or groupthink.



Leadership in the age of acceleration requires courage to break free from the myth that “faster is always better.” Instead, leaders should model balanced rhythms of work and rest, encourage single-tasking where it matters most, and prioritize quality output.

The value of slow is echoed in movements across disciplines, from “slow food” to “slow medicine”, all pointing to a universal truth: slowing down allows for greater presence, deeper connection, and more sustainable progress.

Slowing down is not the enemy of productivity; rather, it is the secret to sustainable high performance.



Honoré’s research and advocacy reveal that embracing slowness is not about resisting change or rejecting technology, but about making progress serve our deepest values and ambitions. By focusing on the right speed at the right time, organizations and individuals alike rediscover meaning, depth, and genuine connection. These are the foundations of enduring success in a world where the only constant is change. Ultimately, the organizations and leaders who thrive will be those who cultivate the wisdom to pause, reflect, and choose their tempo with intention, proving that sometimes, the fastest way forward is, in fact, to slow down.

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