

# Brief

## For those too busy:

The latest research, thinking  
& news on growth pace and delivery  
from around the world

## Leading for speed

### It looks like there will be no return to 'long-term stability'

We live in an increasingly fast-moving world. There is strong evidence that, over the long-term, turbulence is increasing. Following the banking-led recession we are seeing ongoing unpredictability. There can be no return to long-term 'stability'. For all these reasons being agile, responsive - and just plain faster – has become much more important to success. We looked at a range of recent published material for the secret of successful organisational speed.

### Strategic speed has become a top priority for leaders, as well as operational speed

A recent McKinsey survey found 90% of leaders ranked organisational agility as both vital to success and growing in importance, with 86% saying the same of speed. They also said the benefits of speed and agility are: higher revenues, greater customer satisfaction, increased market share, and faster time to market.

Time-based competition was a defining idea of the 1980s and 90s. As a result most industries have accelerated their operational processes. Operational speed was radical (at least for the US and European companies that copied their Japanese counterparts), but left many aspects of business untouched. The new need – where the gap still exists – is on strategic speed. Senior executives still work the same old way and have not adapted their decision-making and working practices.

What are the barriers to speed? According to research the biggest organisational barriers are slow decision-making, managing multiple initiatives, inconsistent communication of targets and unclear accountabilities.

### Six ways to lead for speed

Looking at what the literature says about strategic acceleration, it identifies six common keys to success:

- 1. Make simplification a goal in its own right:** put it in the framework for strategy, set specific targets for simplification and performance incentives to support simplification.
- 2. Speed up decision-making and related processes:** push decisions down where possible. Create or clarify decision rights and decision points. Create clear roles and accountability, streamline, and reduce duplication.
- 3. Ensure faster feedback:** with the same set of up-to-date and relevant facts (as Jack Welch said), a leadership team is much more likely to quickly come to a common conclusion and then put their energy into the action required. Make this the norm.
- 4. Forge clearer links between strategy and individual performance goals:** creating a clear line of sight to strategy, not just for leaders, but for all employees, has great potential to fuel growth, pace and delivery. Frequently, this is not the case and the opportunity is lost.
- 5. Simplify organisation design:** well intended responses to new business challenges, year after year, lead to layers of extra complexity. Reduce those layers, simplify accountabilities, and consolidate similar teams and tasks.
- 6. Simplify your personal impact as a leader:** why should anyone else do what you won't? Stop redundant, duplicating or conflicting projects. Reduce communication overload, manage meeting time, and stop death-by-PowerPoint.