

Sustainable Performance in an Always-On World: What's Required?

Organizational leaders have to deliver continuous value creation in an increasingly fast-paced, uncertain, turn-on-a-dime marketplace.

Disappearing quickly are the simpler days of Monday-through-Friday operations and episodic change management, when a business could focus on one area of improvement at a time – optimizing Business Process Engineering this year and Employee Engagement next year. The global marketplace is “always on,” and every person and every component of an enterprise has to be firing on all cylinders simultaneously for a business to succeed. In fact, strategic advantage in the Always-On World derives from a company’s ability to deliver Sustainable Performance, meaning value creation all the time, across time.

As these performance pressures have increased over the last decade or more, leaders have pushed the messages of “do more with less” and “do it quickly!”, wringing out as much margin as possible in a highly competitive and increasingly time-driven business environment. Unfortunately, many organizational leaders have responded to these ever-more-demanding pressures by instilling immediacy cultures into their operations—whether they intended to or not. More often, fast has been turning into urgent, even frantic and “just get it done, I don’t care how!” messages have started to proliferate. Employees are reaching their breaking point, with fatigue in the workplace rising and productivity declining.



The recent experience with the Deepwater Horizon Explosion and Oil Spill is instructive for leaders in every industry today. By pressing urgently for the conclusion of its initial deep-water drilling operations, BP squandered the potential profits from the Macondo Oil Field, cost itself untold billions in both real costs and reputation costs, and put the entire deep-water oil exploration industry in the U. S. at risk. Remember the infamous words in the email from the BP Rig Manager to the drilling contractors when he decided to cancel the required

cement bond test, which could have prevented this disaster: “10 more hours; that’s too long!” This short-term, urgency thinking led to the multi-billion-dollar environmental, business, and human catastrophe in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico. And, as with BP, the overall costs of urgency-based actions to companies, industries and communities as a whole are significant and growing.

Business leaders have not fully accounted for the “hidden costs” of the urgency-driven workplaces they’re creating, but such costs are becoming more and more evident.

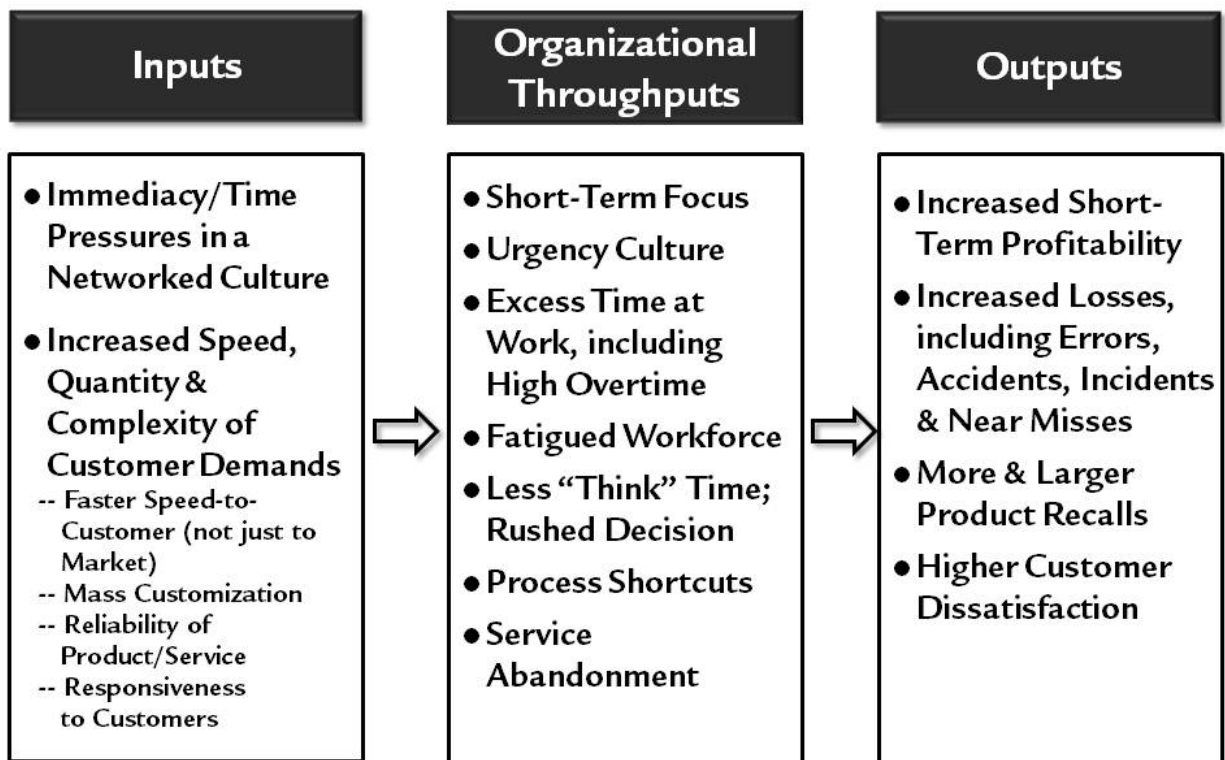
Our 21st century workplaces are finding themselves in a safety and performance paradox. Companies have been improving their personal safety management and decreasing their rates of individual accidents and injuries, especially their Lost-Time Accident rates. Yet, at the same time, they have been *increasing* their frequency of near misses, loss-producing incidents and deadly process events, as well as the costs associated with these occurrences. Looking backwards from the Deep Water Horizon Explosion in the summer of 2010, a one-decade, historical review of major workplace accidents across the globe shows a rising frequency of these major disasters in several key industries—from the Connecticut Chemical Plant Explosion (2009) to fatal airline crashes in India (2007), Lexington, KY (2006) and Buffalo, NY (2005), to the Texas City Refinery Explosion (2003) and the French Fertilizer Plant Explosion (2000)—all of which have been linked to increased urgency in the workplace and the corollaries of sleep deprivation and fatigue among the workforce.

Similar urgency-driven performance errors have had adverse effects on industries as diverse as hospitals, data processing, mining, and all types of manufacturing. And the stakes in making these performance errors are getting greater and greater, even for venerable companies. The reactions to the BP Oil Spill and recent fatal air crashes demonstrate that customer satisfaction and loyalty—the lifeblood of business—are being adversely affected by continuous reports of urgency-driven errors in the workplace and resulting fatalities or product safety dangers.

The human toll from workplace urgency has manifested in new ways as well, with stress-related health problems like obesity reaching epidemic proportions, and performance-related factors like job satisfaction and employee engagement at all-time lows.

Following is a graphic illustration of the Negative Performance System that is operating today in many enterprises large and small. This Negative System is creating a vicious circle within companies who have been so focused on short-term profitability that they’ve missed the unintended and potentially long-term consequences of their urgency-driven decisions and “just get it done” messages.

Negative Performance System



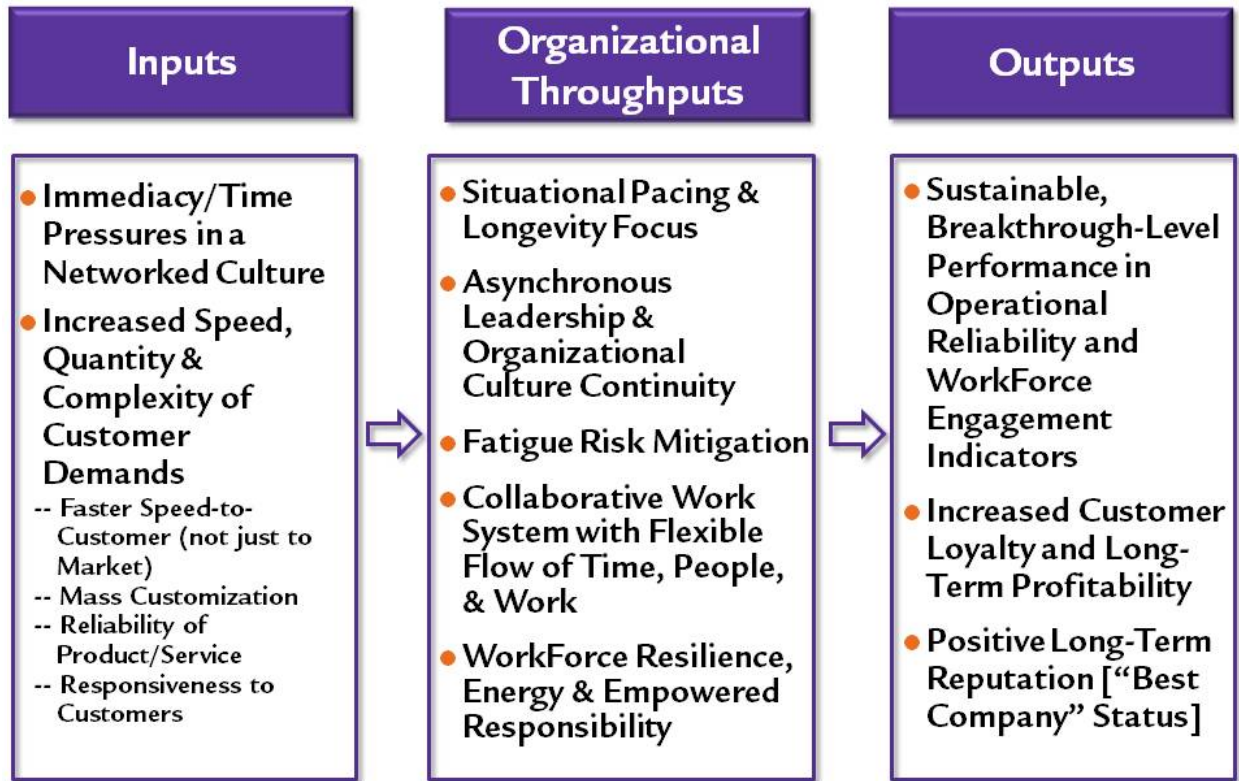
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As the risks from urgency-driven operations are tallied in human and financial terms, it is becoming increasingly evident that a recalibration of current business practices is required. To find the right business approach to the new time-driven marketplace, leaders first must recognize that the age-old story of “The Tortoise and the Hare” is no longer applicable in the Always-On World. We can no longer succeed with “slow and steady” pacing, but we also cannot succeed with a sprinter’s pace in what clearly is a continuous global marathon. For this reason, business leaders must move beyond an “either/or” mindset — shifting away from messages of urgency and immediacy, while still moving their enterprises away from slow or episodic pacing.

For sustainable enterprise success, organizational leaders must stop their urgency and immediacy focus, and leverage the more positive and productive time forces¹ operating today—forces of longevity, continuity, asynchrony and situational pacing, to name a few.

¹ For more information on the new Time Forces affecting businesses, follow Dr. Koen’s blog, *Time-Driven Performance*, and especially her initial post: Time Forces Rock The Business World [<http://timedrivnperformance.com/2011/01/11/new-time-forces-rock-the-business-world/>].

Sustainable Performance System



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Companies today need to embrace a Sustainable Performance Mindset and, from this systems-thinking² perspective, select appropriate Time Forces Strategies and business, operational and HR/HCM execution plans for the current Always-On World. This systems approach enables organizational leaders to apply fast-paced action where needed to meet real-world demands, like time-to-customer and speed-of-innovation, without falling prey to the fear-driven use of urgency and immediacy forces at every turn.



RoundTheClock Resources has identified four Pillars of Sustainable Performance for today's Always-On World. An explanation of each of these Sustainable Performance Pillars is summarized on the following two pages. In addition, on the last two pages of this White Paper are an operational model of the Sustainable Performance System, and a chart of Comparative Characteristics for Traditional Businesses vs. Sustainable Performance Businesses.

² Systems Thinking is looking beyond short-term, linear cause and effect and examining the underlying elements and their interactions—the interrelationships of a given system—for patterns of behavior and operation as well as the outcomes (intended and unintended) of those patterns. Systems Thinking uncovers deep-level root causes.

Generating breakthrough success in an uncertain, ever-more-demanding and Always-On World requires companies to institute four Organizational Pillars of Sustainable Performance.

#1: Asynchronous Leadership & Culture Continuity

The global, mobile and 24/7 nature of work today has made the time-honored practice of management-by-walking-around (MBWA) increasingly obsolete. Executives and Managers now must have the mindset and competencies required for leading from different time zones and times of day than their workforce. More importantly, to achieve speed and reliability of performance, every company has to infuse leadership capabilities and actions within all levels of its workforce and across all hours of its operation. Asynchronous Leadership is the model required to build these engaging, collaborative and distributed leadership capabilities across an enterprise. RoundTheClock Resources' **Asynchronous Leadership Consultations** enable client companies to establish this critical Pillar across their enterprises.

With leadership occurring more asynchronously, organizational culture is playing an even greater, more critical role in knitting together geographically-dispersed and Always-On operations into a unified Performance System. Additionally, culture increasingly is the mechanism for delivering continuity – including both continuity in workforce performance (regardless of time of day, day of the week or time zone) *and* continuous reliability in the quality and safety of the product or service delivered to each customer in the enterprise “chain” – especially to the end user. To achieve these ends, leaders need to embed the Positive Time Forces of asynchrony, continuity and longevity as well as situational speed into their enterprise-wide culture, while simultaneously driving out the negative forces of urgency, immediacy and episodic pacing. Our **Culture Continuity Consultations** enable enterprises to embed the same core beliefs and behaviors anywhere, anytime, all the time, and to create a Sustainable Performance Culture for an Always-On World.

#2: Fatigue Risk Mitigation

A core Pillar of Sustainable Performance in today's Always-On World is Fatigue Risk Mitigation. Reduced headcount combined with escalating time pressures at all levels of the enterprise have created rising fatigue levels, and have endangered key performance metrics like reliability, process and people safety, productivity, and quality. To truly mitigate this mounting risk to business success, companies need to build a comprehensive, aligned and *strategic* system that overlays all aspects of organizational culture, structure, processes, rewards and people. It is not enough to set our sights on individual fatigue management. Organizational leaders are beginning to understand and focus on fatigue risk mitigation—tackling fatigue at all of its root sources within their operations, rather than just managing it once it manifests in the workplace. Our Fatigue Risk Mitigation System (FRMS), known as the **SAFR SYSTEM™**, includes two

major components: SAFR Operations™ and SAFR Individuals™ in the Workplace. Within each component are risk assessment tools, training courses, and systemic risk defenses for mitigating the costly consequences of heightened human fatigue in an Always-On World. These SAFR SYSTEM™ resources are comprehensive, science-based, field-tested and results-producing.

#3: Collaborative Work System with Flexible Flow of Time, People & Work

Historically, organization designs for business enterprises have been built to ensure leadership command and control, as well as efficient use of capital and labor. Today's global and dynamic marketplace requires a more innovative, energized and Collaborative Work System with Flexible Flow of Time, People and Work — a core Pillar of Sustainable Performance. While matching the pace of the Always-On World, today's enterprises cannot fall into the costly traps of urgency and immediacy. Rather, all components of the work organization, from the workforce staffing model, work environment and work system design to the work schedules, work rewards and work culture have to be aligned for agility, reliability *and* speed in the midst of constant change. That's the framework RoundTheClock Resources utilizes in its **Collaborative Work System Consultations**.

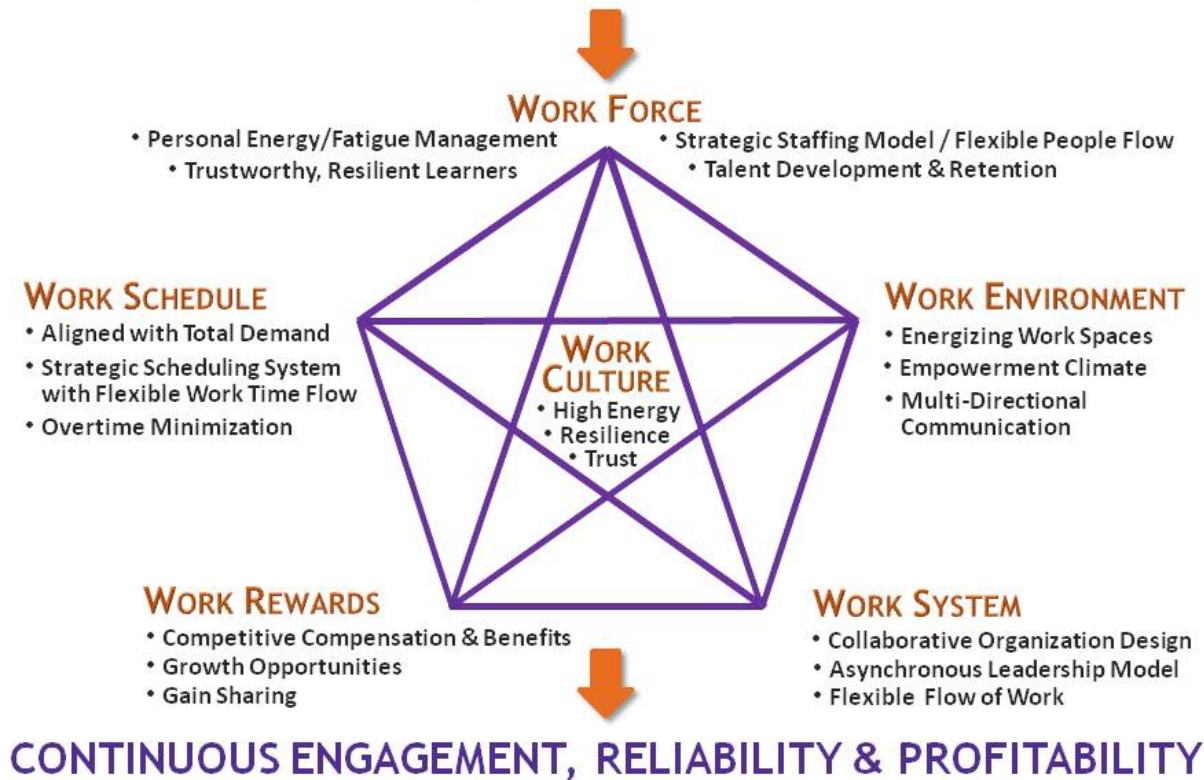
#4: WorkForce Resilience, Focused Energy & Empowered Responsibility

The last but certainly not the least significant Pillar for Sustainable Performance is a workforce instilled with resilience, high energy and empowered responsibility — the precursors of high engagement. Defined as “the ability to handle change easily and recover quickly...”, resilience is especially critical for everyone faced with the pressures of the Always-On World—and especially the time-driven work that must be completed at higher quality *and* faster speeds than ever before. That's why RoundTheClock Resources has developed **Building Resilience & Energy™** Training Courses for Leaders as well as for Extended DayWork, ShiftWork, and GlobalWork. These unique Courses enable companies to generate focused energy and empowered responsibility as well as resilience across all levels of the enterprise and across all work times.

Once a company is equipped with all four Organizational Pillars of Sustainable Performance, the whole enterprise and its people can achieve and sustain breakthrough-level performance, regardless of the time of day, day of the week or time zone of operation. At this pinnacle of performance, a business is primed for success in the Always-On World.

Sustainable Performance System

ALIGNED BUSINESS, OPERATIONAL & HR STRATEGIES



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Comparative Characteristics

