



Lessons on Harnessing Disruptive Technology and Exponential Leadership for Your Business

by David Mustin, MBA

David Roberts' cup cares about David Roberts.

Really.

In addition to holding his water, this remarkable cup is equipped with a sensor that monitors David's daily water intake and downloads that data to the cloud for analysis. When usage and/or consumption levels dip below his historic averages, David receives an alert, informing him he may be, at best, thirsty, and at worst, dehydrated.

Whether David chooses to act upon this intelligence is unclear. Yet, one thing is certain: The technology that transforms a simple cup into a wellness tool is relatively cheap, highly adaptable to products of nearly every shape, size and function, and by extension, *disruptive*.

Quenching thirst is one thing. But disruptive technology has much more profound implications for you, me and everyone; its relevance cannot be ignored. Consider: If you or a loved one receive a diagnosis of early stage lung cancer, you'll likely seek the counsel of a specialist physician. According to industry statistics, about half of all physician-generated lung cancer treatment recommendations ultimately are deemed correct. Conversely, IBM's Watson, an artificial intelligence (AI) platform widely known for its *Jeopardy!* prowess, collects and processes data from tens of thousands of lung cancer cases around the globe, then develops treatment recommendations that are about 90 percent correct.

Through data analysis and exponential learning, Watson has disrupted the delivery of health care by providing lung cancer patients and their doctors with vital information that potentially can save lives. Knowing this to be true, would you accept one treatment diagnosis from one physician with a 50 percent chance of success *and not at least consider Watson's* treatment recommendation, with its 90 percent success rate?

On October 5, attendees of the Spark Symposium at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame learned about the power and implications of these and other disruptive technologies; were inspired to harness their collective and individual potential for good; and were challenged to lead exponentially in their own spheres of influence.

Presented by John Carroll University's Boler School of Business and co-sponsored by Skoda Minotti and KeyBank, the program was highlighted by David's keynote address, "Technology Disruption and Exponential Leadership." A Distinguished Faculty member at Singularity University and one of the world's top experts in these areas, David made the case that technology advances like AI are exponential in

nature—not linear. Accordingly, “the future won’t be like the past,” as he put it, which compels business leaders to think differently. Using examples from automotive, consumer products and health care industries, David demonstrated that disruption also is a two-way street; while it creates unprecedented opportunities for jobs and revenue, it ensures disruption of a very negative kind for companies that don’t respond—including even the disrupters themselves (think AOL, BlackBerry and Nokia, for starters).

Flash Presenters Offer Exponential Leadership Examples and Inspiration

The Symposium’s three flash presenters signaled equal excitement over ways in which their enterprises are adopting disruptive technology and leading exponentially.

KeyBank’s Chief Data Officer Mike Onders highlighted the multi-faceted challenges – technical and otherwise – that businesses face in an increasingly vulnerable cyber-environment. Ty McTigue, strategic account manager for Current, Powered by GE, explained how technologies like “smart” LED bulbs offer a universe of potential applications that impact society in ways well beyond mere illumination. And Skoda Minotti client, Jan Jensen, CEO of Trailhead Biosystems, demonstrated how his company’s groundbreaking work in the biotechnology sphere is leveraging computer modeling to build industrial-grade, specialized human cells and by doing so, move toward 3-D printing of human organs.

What Does All This Mean for Business?

- **Play to win—and to avoid getting run over.** Disruptive technology presents businesses, be they product or service oriented, with challenges and opportunities of equal scopes. Integrating disruptive technologies like AI smartly within a business can potentially drive exponential growth and truly make our world better. It’s becoming clearer by the day that the costs of inaction, of resisting disruptions or smaller-scale innovations and continuing with business as usual, will leave companies vulnerable to irrelevance, or even extinction.

That’s not to say businesses should dive headfirst into disruptive thinking and take big gambles. At Skoda Minotti, we help our clients plan for and integrate change incrementally in ways that account for impacts on their workforce, products, processes and customers. Equally important, we design benchmark and measurement tools to help our clients gauge success throughout the journey, course-correct when needed and think intelligently moving forward. Above all, we keep them focused, and caution them to not let technology-related hype lead them astray. Big, bold plans may be necessary to compete in an expanding marketplace; but often, they start with simple solutions to fundamental challenges.

- **Lead exponentially.** To accomplish your business goals in the 21st century, it’s imperative for leaders to think and act differently. Exponential leadership is all about sharing a vision, inspiring those around you, and empowering people to leverage the skills and expertise that make them special.
- **Don’t go it alone.** Companies in all business sectors increasingly rely on business advisors with holistic capabilities to help them understand the sweeping technological changes that are occurring today; understand the technologies themselves; and devise strategies for harnessing appropriate technologies in ways that drive innovation—and perhaps one day, disruption. Like scaling a mountain, we believe – as do our Spark Symposium partners – that it’s wise to employ a guide who knows the territory and can help you plan a successful ascent.

The future, according to David Roberts and the flash presenters, is growing exponentially. Internet-enabled cups and smart light bulbs are harbingers of much more significant changes that will profoundly impact people’s health, prosperity and happiness in the months and years ahead. Things are changing fast, and it all starts at business’ doorstep. Keeping your company in the game isn’t just a challenge anymore—it’s an existential necessity, one that demands innovative thinking, smart execution, exponential leadership and strong partnerships.

Do you have questions about disruptive technology, exponential leadership or other business growth challenges? Contact Dave Mustin, MBA, at 440-449-6800 or email Dave.