

# Slowing down can prevent premature burnout of 'McDonaldized' companies and staff

April 20 2021, by Luke Lambert

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Managers should consider taking a slower approach to leadership if they want to ensure improved company longevity and reduce the likelihood of

staff burnout.

A new report, co-authored by André Spicer, Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Business School (formerly Cass), finds that 'fast management'—increased levels of management that is more prone to change, in high demand for [new ideas](#) and done with increasing speed—can result in negative longer-term consequences for businesses.

Despite providing short-term benefits, 'fast management'—or 'McDonaldisation' by which 'new' ideas and products are sold due to the accelerated marketplace—can result in the creation of new projects, initiatives, and departments with companies consequently less likely to allocate the necessary attention to delivering core tasks.

Perhaps counterintuitively, slower forms of management may result in improved levels of organizational performance and improved responsiveness. Additionally, adopting 'slower' techniques can lessen the probability of burnout among workers, along with subpar performance and a short organizational life.

'Slow management' would involve nurturing locally specific—and not global—varieties of management, ensuring managerial initiatives have a longer time to be fully worked through and delivered, and allow for initiatives that are high on substance. This would create organizations that are less hyper-active and demanding on their employees' time and lives; are not engaged in costly cycle of constant, often fragmented, and pointless change initiatives; have increased life-expectancy; and generate fewer negative externalities for the rest of society.

To allow for effective 'slow management', managers would be advised to adopt the characteristics of:

1. Reflexive skepticism—whereby tough-minded managers

routinely question cases for change they face on an everyday basis

2. Encouraging and building focus in followers—to engage in deep concentration on a select few critical processes, as effective with teachers who train the attention of children onto particular tasks and sports coaches who focus the mind of team members on the performance and blocking out additional noise
3. Being politically savvy—which requires them to spend time building and nurturing relationships, but also understanding the interests, perspectives and ideas of others around them.

Professor Spicer said his research demonstrated that a more considered approach to management is likely to be better for individual managers, employees, organizations, and for society at large.

Our research suggests this approach is better for individual managers because it means they are not stretched across multiple projects with tight turn-arounds.

"It is better for employees because they are not bombarded by new fads and fashions which detract them from doing their actual work. It is better for companies because it keeps them focused on their core tasks which they are actually good at doing. Finally, it is better for society at large because it leads to an economy which is based around more resilient and longer lasting organizations."

"Slow management" by Professor Andre Spicer, Professor Dan Karreman, and Professor Rasmus Koss Hartmann will be published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Management*.

**More information:** Dan Kärreman et al. Slow management, *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.scaman.2021.101152](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2021.101152)

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