

# SPEED

MOVING FAST TOWARDS WHAT MATTERS

KEITH V. LUCAS, PHD



Some leaders think speed is simply about working harder or moving faster. It isn't. The speed that matters is **Mission Speed**, the rate your mission advances in the direction you've chosen. As teams scale, that speed can erode: decisions pile up, energy diffuses, and everyone's busy but less gets done than should. In his limited series podcast *Speed*, Keith Lucas, former Roblox CPO/CTO, author and startup advisor, unpacks how the best operators move fast.

Guests include: Harold Hughes, founder and CEO of Divi, Matt Curtis, cofounder and CEO of Splendid Games, Yaniv Bernstein, cofounder and CTO of Vera, Jesse Stinebring, cofounder and CEO of Blue Rose Research, Anna Shedletsky, cofounder and CEO of Instrumental, and David Baszucki, founder and CEO of Roblox.

## The topic

Speed. What is it? Why does it matter to these founders' businesses? And how do they cultivate it?

## The thesis

Not all speed is created equal. The speed that matters is not performative but directional.

## The result

The podcast "*Speed: Moving Fast Towards What Matters*".

[www.keithvlucas.com/speed](http://www.keithvlucas.com/speed)

## The Punchline

Competent speed is *Mission Speed*:

**Mission Speed is the rate at which mission advances in a desired strategic or tactical direction.**

The central question that all guests are trying to answer is about *latency*:

**How long are we waiting for the next thing that changes what we know or what the mission can accomplish?**

The strategic framework for improving Mission Speed is *The Aligned Autonomy of Mission Athletes*, the overarching framework of Keith's book "*Impact: How to Inspire, Align, and Amplify Innovative Teams*":

**Give people something clear and compelling to align to. Create human and automated feedback loops that identify and self-correct errors. Build a team of capable mission-driven peers who inspire and elevate.**

[www.keithvlucas.com/frameworks/alignedautonomy](http://www.keithvlucas.com/frameworks/alignedautonomy)

## Putting it all together:

**Mission Speed**  
The outcome.



**Latency**  
The diagnostic lens.



**Aligned Autonomy**  
Speed at scale.

## Guest Consensus

Across six Speed podcast conversations, **there is a real consensus about competent speed**. The guests use different language, but they are mostly describing the same underlying operating model.

This is **Mission Speed**. It's not merely working harder or moving faster, but the rate at which mission advances in a chosen direction. As teams scale, speed must become cultural and systematic rather than dependent purely on heroics.

### THE CONSENSUS ON COMPETENT SPEED

The shared operating model can be summarized as follows:

**Competent speed is the ability to shorten the loop from decision → action → evidence → learning → meaningful outcome, while staying pointed in the right direction and protecting the things you cannot afford to break.**



### SIX COMPONENTS UNDERPIN THIS CONSENSUS.

#### Speed is directional, not simply velocity. 1

David's "long view + get stuff done" magic quadrant is probably the clearest articulation: action without direction is dangerous, but vision without continuous execution is also slow. [7, 04:49–07:18] Matt makes essentially the same point when he says execution velocity alone is a bad definition of speed and later describes **vision plus iteration** as the right combination. [3, 02:52–03:44] [3, 12:21–15:18] Yaniv makes it almost mathematical: speed is really a vector—you have to be moving fast *in the right direction*. [4, 26:44–27:28]

#### The useful unit of speed is usually the learning loop, not the amount of work produced. 2

Matt's phrase is the sharpest: "**length of time between decision and evidence.**" He couples that with instrumentation, cheap mistakes and reversible bets. [3, 02:52–05:17] Jesse reaches the same conclusion from another industry: going from a month to a week to a day to an hour dramatically increases the number of consequential decisions Blue Rose can inform. [5, 05:09–06:33] Harold describes repeated fast failures beating an attempt at a perfect first version because the faster person accumulates more learning. [2, 03:33–04:09]

### Speed and quality are not fundamentally opposites. 3

In fact, several guests argue that well-designed speed increases quality. Jesse says the speed/quality tension is generally wrong; standardization, repeatable tooling and disciplined QC allow both to improve. [5, 11:17–17:03] Matt says fast validation and iteration can get you to higher quality faster. [3, 23:00–25:13] Anna similarly rejects a simple trade-off and embeds both “own the outcome” and “deliver with speed” into the operating culture. [6, 25:10–29:04]

### But competent speed has non-negotiables. 4

This is where “fast” separates from “reckless.” Anna explicitly uses the distinction between urgency and recklessness and scales the amount of deliberation to the importance and reversibility of the decision. [6, 04:17–07:48] Harold says trust cannot be sacrificed to speed, particularly around financial assets. [2, 13:23–15:14] Yaniv makes security and customer-data handling unbreakable constraints while allowing rough edges elsewhere to be fixed forward. [4, 15:11–17:25]

### At scale, speed becomes an organizational-design problem. 5

Anna describes her transition from “leading from the front” to creating genuine owners, because personal heroics cap organizational output. [6, 09:04–14:01] David says almost exactly the same thing: at 20–30 people a CEO can personally drive speed, but at thousands it has to be built into an operating system based on autonomy, responsibility and distributed leadership. [7, 14:40–17:25]

### Speed is contextual. 6

Nobody argues for “maximum speed everywhere.” The appropriate form of speed depends on reversibility, risk, organizational stage, market timing and what is actually constraining the mission. Anna talks about finding the limiting factor; Matt distinguishes small-team distraction from large-team dependency problems; Yaniv advocates root-cause analysis rather than simply pressing people harder. [6, 19:02–22:32] [3, 08:21–10:41] [4, 19:05–23:16]

## WHAT COMPETENT SPEED IS NOT

Collectively, the guests reject:

- ✗ **Busyness or performative urgency.** Yaniv calls this “speed theater”: more OKRs, meetings or reporting layered over a bad engine. [4, 22:13–23:16]
- ✗ **Execution velocity without direction.** Matt and David are especially strong here. [3, 14:04–15:18; 7, 04:49–07:18]
- ✗ **Perfection before contact with reality.** Harold, Matt and Yaniv all argue for learning earlier. [2, 03:33–04:09; 3, 04:27–07:55; 4, 08:12–10:14]
- ✗ **Founder heroics as the permanent operating model.** Anna and David both say this breaks at scale. [6, 09:04–14:01] [7, 14:40–17:25]
- ✗ **Going so fast you destroy trust, security or an essential quality bar.** Harold and Yaniv are explicit about this. [2, 13:23–15:14] [4, 15:11–17:25]

The interviews reveal different **emphases**, rather than opposing camps. The closest thing to a tension is between Matt’s emphasis on small, reversible experiments and Yaniv’s argument that AI has changed the economics enough that you can sometimes “boil the lake” and build a much fuller experiment immediately. But even there, they’re optimizing the same thing: **getting high-quality evidence sooner at acceptable cost.**

[3, 04:27–05:17] [4, 11:50–14:22]

# Three takeaways from each guest

DIVI

## Harold Hughes

### 1. Speed demonstrates intent.

Harold has perhaps the most human framing of speed in the series: how quickly you act communicates how much you care. Speed signals motivation, focus and resourcefulness—and repeated fast attempts let you learn faster than someone polishing a first attempt. [2, 02:39–04:09]

### 2. Startup speed has to encompass the whole company, not just product development.

A founder who obsesses over product while neglecting customers, partners, fundraising or distribution isn't actually moving the company quickly. Harold's answer is initially broad founder involvement followed by specialization and collaboration as the team develops. [2, 04:55–07:13]

### 3. AI raises the expected bar for resourcefulness.

Because founders can now create meaningful product experiences extremely cheaply and quickly, "I'll build it after you fund me" is becoming a weaker proposition. Harold argues that founders should arrive with something people can actually experience. But the same lowered barrier means competitors can catch up quickly, making customer intimacy and differentiation more important. [2, 09:01–12:37] [2, 15:44–20:05]

**Memorable framing:** *Speed shows intent.*

SPLENDID GAMES

## Matt Curtis

### 1. Speed is "the length of time between decision and evidence."

This is a particularly clear operational definition of speed. Matt explicitly distinguishes it from execution velocity. [3, 02:44–03:44]

### 2. Make being wrong cheap.

Instrument the product, use feature flags and kill switches, run experiments, make reversible bets and break large ideas into smaller tests. Failure then becomes information rather than an ego event. [3, 03:44–05:17]

### 3. Vision + iteration beats either one by itself.

Matt echoes David strongly here. Vision gives iteration direction; iteration prevents the vision from turning into a giant speculative build. He also gives an excellent scaling distinction: small teams die of distraction; large teams die of dependencies and system problems. [3, 12:21–15:18] [3, 08:21–10:41]

**Memorable framing:** *Speed is time from decision to evidence.*

## Yaniv Bernstein

### 1. AI changes the cost surface, not merely the speedometer.

Yaniv's most interesting claim isn't simply that coding is faster. It's that when an activity becomes radically cheaper, old trade-offs stop being rational. Refactoring, rebuilding and producing higher-fidelity experiments can now be cheap enough that teams should rethink old development habits. [4, 11:50–14:22]

### 2. Take “good technical debt” early.

The primary early-stage risk is often never getting off the launchpad. Overengineering for hypothetical scale can be more dangerous than knowingly borrowing from your future in order to learn now. [4, 08:12–10:14]

### 3. When a team is slow, diagnose the engine rather than pushing the accelerator harder.

Root-cause the delay and change the constraint. His manual-QA example is a good one: removing the gate changed ownership, forced better automated testing and increased release frequency. Adding planning meetings and superficial metrics without repairing the underlying system is “speed theater.” [4, 19:05–23:16]

**Memorable framing:** *Speed is a vector; AI changes the trade-offs; don't confuse speed theater with speed.*

## Jesse Stinebring

### 1. Speed multiplies the number of important decisions you can affect.

This is a mission-level definition of speed. The relevant question isn't “how quickly did we complete an analysis?” but “how many consequential decisions can our insight arrive in time to improve?” A one-hour answer can be categorically more useful than a one-month answer, even if both are analytically sound. [5, 03:00–06:33]

### 2. The real enemy of simultaneous speed and quality is often uncontrolled complexity.

Jesse argues that standardized systems, shared expertise and centralized quality control can produce *more* speed and *more* quality. The failure mode is attempting to force every custom question through a system not built to answer it. Discipline includes saying, “we can solve this one quickly, but not that one.” [5, 11:17–17:03]

### 3. As AI commoditizes building, expertise, taste and trust become more important.

The harder problem increasingly becomes encoding what is distinctive about the organization into its products and services. Fast code isn't sufficient differentiation if competitors can obtain the same capability. [5, 17:57–19:16]

**Memorable framing:** *Speed increases the number of decisions you can improve.*

## Anna Shedletsky

### 1. “Urgent” and “reckless” are different.

Good speed starts with good, fast decisions. Debate, dissent and obtaining missing information can actually accelerate a team by preventing it from confidently sprinting in the wrong direction. Her “10th man” mechanism institutionalizes dissent, while the amount of deliberation should be proportional to reversibility and consequence. [6, 02:42–07:48]

### 2. Ownership is how you get speed at scale.

Leading from the front works when a company is tiny or in a crisis, but eventually it suppresses ownership. The scalable version of Anna’s personal urgency is to hire owners, give them missions and resist doing the work for them.

[6, 09:04–14:01]

### 3. Attack the limiting factor, and measure customer time-to-value.

Her interpretation of “speed of light” is especially good: don’t simply tell everyone to go faster; identify what is actually limiting the system and remove it. Instrumental operationalized this through “2 + 2 + 2”: an internal goal of two weeks for each of three phases from a signed deal to demonstrated customer value. It is not achieved for every customer or necessarily promised externally; where achieved, it accelerates expansion. [6, 19:02–22:32]

**Memorable framing:** *Urgent is not reckless; own the outcome; find the limiting factor.*

## David Baszucki

### 1. Speed’s “magic quadrant” is long view + get stuff done.

Long-term vision without daily progress becomes a giant drop-ship project; getting lots done without a long view becomes random motion. The goal is continuous execution in service of an ambitious destination. [7, 04:49–09:06]

### 2. Sometimes the ambitious long view actually makes you faster.

In David’s internationalization example, once automatic translation everywhere became the non-negotiable destination, the team stopped debating whether the hard thing should be attempted and shifted into solving it. A compelling destination can collapse indecision. [7, 11:16–13:32]

### 3. At scale, the CEO’s job is to design the system that produces urgency.

If David finds himself needing to personally rescue a slow project, his more useful question is: *why didn’t the system make this move quickly without me?* Roblox’s answer is distributed ownership, autonomy and leaders operating much like CEOs of their own areas. [7, 14:40–17:25; 26:56–28:07]

**Memorable framing:** *Take the long view + get stuff done = the magic quadrant.*

# Themes across the guests

| THEME                                                     | GUESTS IT STRONGLY APPLIES TO    | WHAT THEY CONTRIBUTE                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Direction + iteration                                     | David, Matt, Anna, Yaniv, Jesse  | David/Matt: vision plus iteration. Anna: deliberate first step, then refine. Yaniv: speed is a vector. Jesse: organize around the discrete decision that matters. [3, 4, 5, 6, 7] |
| Shorten the learning/evidence loop                        | Matt, Harold, Jesse, Anna, Yaniv | Decision → evidence; fail and learn; time-to-answer; obtain missing data; build/test/refactor cheaply. [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]                                                            |
| Speed and quality can reinforce each other                | Anna, Jesse, Matt, Harold, Yaniv | Quality improves through iteration and systems, while trust/security remain guardrails. [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]                                                                           |
| Ownership/autonomy are prerequisites for speed at scale   | Anna, David, Matt, Yaniv, Harold | Owners, founder mentality, aligned autonomy, radical autonomy, specialization. [2, 3, 4, 6, 7]                                                                                    |
| Systems beat heroics as the company grows                 | Anna, David, Matt, Jesse, Yaniv  | The bottleneck migrates from individual effort to organizational design and dependencies. [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]                                                                         |
| Focus is part of speed                                    | Matt, Anna, Yaniv, Jesse, David  | Avoid distraction; attack limiting factors; root-cause the problem; constrain scope; let vision resolve trade-offs. [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]                                               |
| Reversibility should affect how fast you act              | Anna, Matt, Yaniv, Harold        | More reversible = faster experimentation; irreversible/trust-sensitive areas receive stronger safeguards. [2, 3, 4, 6]                                                            |
| Customer/mission time matters more than internal activity | Anna, Jesse, Harold, Matt        | Customer time-to-value, decision impact, customer learning and real-world evidence matter more than task completion. [2, 3, 5, 6]                                                 |
| AI is a speed amplifier that changes expectations         | Yaniv, Harold, Matt, Jesse, Anna | Cheaper building, faster experimentation and deployment—but also faster competitors and a greater premium on judgment. [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]                                            |
| Speed needs to be culturally encoded                      | Anna, David, Matt, Jesse         | Values, principles, operating systems and disciplined expectations turn speed from personality into repeatable behavior. [3, 5, 6, 7]                                             |

## ONE ESPECIALLY INTERESTING RECURRING RELATIONSHIP IS:



Vision isn't just strategy. David and Matt both imply that it reduces the number of local decisions that need escalation: if people understand where the organization is going, they can make more decisions independently. Anna arrives at the same destination through ownership. This suggests that vision can accelerate everyday decisions as well as inspire people. [3, 09:27–10:16; 6, 10:35–12:05; 7, 26:56–28:07]

# Additional takeaways from the series

The following conclusions synthesize patterns across the interviews rather than represent direct quotations or a formal position agreed by every guest.

## LATENCY MAY BE THE DEEPEST COMMON DENOMINATOR

Almost every guest is trying to compress a different latency:

|         |                      |                                                 |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Harold: | idea                 | → something a customer/investor can experience. |
| Matt:   | decision             | → evidence.                                     |
| Yaniv:  | concept              | → production software.                          |
| Jesse:  | question             | → useful insight.                               |
| Anna:   | purchase             | → deployed value → expansion.                   |
| David:  | long-term aspiration | → continuous shipped progress.                  |

That suggests a very useful distinction for the podcast:

### VELOCITY

Velocity asks, “How much are we producing?”

### SPEED

Speed asks, “How long are we waiting for the next thing that changes what we know or what the mission can accomplish?”

This is one of the strongest emergent ideas from the series.

## SPEED IS A CONTINUOUS LEARNING LOOP

A common loop across the interviews is:



The best organizations aren’t necessarily extraordinary because any single step happens exceptionally fast. Their advantage is that **the entire loop has low latency and runs continuously**.

That also explains why Matt’s definition is so useful: “decision to evidence” captures roughly half the loop, and the rest of the interviews fill in what happens afterward.

## KNOW WHAT TO PROTECT AND WHAT TO MAKE INEXPENSIVE

This may be the clearest distinction between competent speed and recklessness.

### Make inexpensive and reversible:

prototypes, code that may be discarded, experiments, failed hypotheses, product iterations and local decisions.

### Protect aggressively:

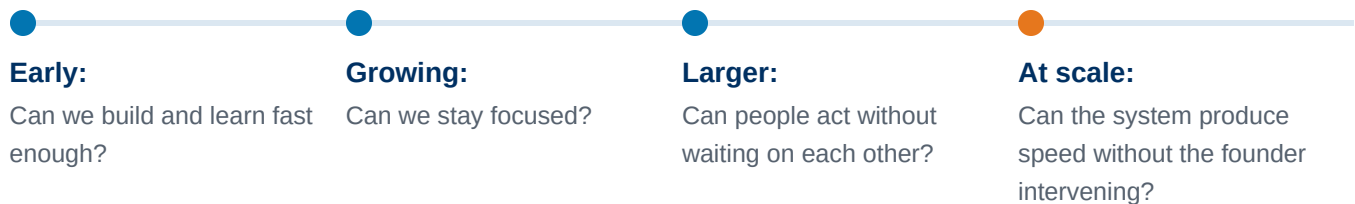
customer trust, security and privacy, foundational mission direction, irreversible decisions and the particular expertise or value that makes the company distinctive.

That's Anna's reversibility principle, Matt's cheap mistakes, Harold's trust constraint, Jesse's discipline around scope and Yaniv's security guardrails all expressed as one operating philosophy.

[2, 13:23–15:14; 3, 04:27–05:17; 4, 15:11–17:25; 5, 15:59–17:03; 6, 07:23–07:48]

## THE BOTTLENECK MOVES AS THE ORGANIZATION GROWS

There is a remarkably coherent progression across the interviews:



Anna and David describe this transformation most explicitly. Matt gives it a memorable shorthand: small organizations get killed by distraction; larger ones get killed by dependencies. [3, 08:21–10:41]

**This is highly consistent with the “scrappy to scale” thesis underneath the series.**

## AI INCREASES THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDGMENT

This is perhaps the biggest forward-looking conclusion.

### When building becomes cheaper:

- prototypes become cheap — **Harold**;
- game iteration gets faster — **Matt**;
- code and refactoring become cheap — **Yaniv**;
- sophisticated new offerings become easier to produce — **Jesse**;
- engineering and deployment processes accelerate — **Anna**.

### What does not become cheap at the same rate?

Knowing what problem is worth solving, customer intimacy, taste, expertise, deciding what evidence matters, choosing the right direction, trust, and leadership and ownership.

[2, 17:09–20:05; 3, 21:35–22:20; 4, 05:11–07:19; 5, 17:57–19:16]

So the AI-era version of competent speed may increasingly be:

It's not about "who can build fastest?" but "who can decide, learn and exercise judgment fastest?"

### SPEED COMPOUNDS

Several guests imply that today's speed makes tomorrow's team faster.

Matt explicitly describes experience as a kind of **compression algorithm**: learnings turn into modules, libraries and intuition. [3, 04:52–05:52] Anna's 2+2+2 cycle creates faster expansion, which drives faster growth. [6, 20:41–22:32] Harold's repeated attempts create more learning than a single polished first version. [2, 03:33–04:09]

The implication is that speed can compound when each cycle produces reusable knowledge, better systems and stronger customer relationships. **The lasting advantage comes from carrying those gains into the next cycle.**

## Sources

Numbered citations refer to the source list below. Transcript times use minutes and seconds from the supplied edits; they may differ from published episode timings. The guest names Anna Shedletsky and Jesse Stinebring reflect the corrected spellings.

[1] **Podcast one-sheet** | Page 1

Speed Podcast Outreach 1-Sheet v20260630.pdf

[2] **Harold Hughes** | Divi

SPD\_Harold\_First Edit\_transcript.txt

[3] **Matt Curtis** | Splendid Games

SPD\_Matt\_First Edit\_transcript.txt

[4] **Yaniv Bernstein** | Vera

SPD\_Yavin\_First Edit\_transcript.txt

[5] **Jesse Stinebring** | Blue Rose Research

SPD\_Jesse\_First Edit\_transcript.txt

[6] **Anna Shedletsky** | Instrumental

SPD\_Anna\_Second Edit\_transcript.txt

[7] **David Baszucki** | Roblox

SPD\_Dave\_First Edit\_transcript.txt