The other type of "latency" every company cannot ignore

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Throughout my career, I have seen technology achieve unimaginable levels of speed across our data networks. In so many ways, what we once considered network "latency" is quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Now the real challenge might be biological. In a world of high-tech, data-driven interactions, it's easy to forget that people are a key ingredient for driving change. While we must control network latency to enjoy the benefits of faster technologies, we also need to find ways to reduce what I would call "human" latency—the systems and processes we have in place to manage everything.

Let me offer a few ideas about "human latency" that can help any enterprise grappling with the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Embracing Automation For Acceleration.

Lumen has always embraced the value of human interaction, especially in the workplace, so I have been particularly impressed how quickly everyone has adapted to remote working arrangements. We all have our routines, and our business relies extensively on processes and procedures. Over the past year, we have begun to truly re-examine the value of these old approaches, and more importantly, to become willing to break free from traditional work models. How? By shifting teams from linear workflows to working in pods, basically forming agile workgroups, eliminating time-consuming processes and cutting through the red tape that stifled new ideas. For example, circumstances brought about by the coronavirus triggered new ways of thinking about safety. The result—we deployed several smart, automated tools that allowed enterprise customers to self-monitor and manage their capacity needs. Once we broke-out of silos, our people expedited tech deployment and improved service quality. We further reduced our latency by pushing the platform out to employees to generate their own bots that replicate mundane work. Now, a single team builds, troubleshoots and brings applications to market in a fraction of the time.

Together, each shift helps accelerate change, delivering to our customers a better product, faster.

Driving Change Through A Culture Of Curiosity And Continuous Learning.

With more autonomy, our people can build what they need in real time, but skills can quickly erode. To ensure that my team can keep pace, we have encouraged a cultural change to support a new cadence around work and learning. Our DNA is built around an understanding of data. Our customers expect it.   As employees learn new skills and technology, they can confidently tackle the next challenge—techs writing automation scripts, operations closely aligned with Sales and Customer Success teams—all blurring the lines of work for the sake of speed.

Establishing Partnerships Around Listening

Everyone has something important to say, especially our customers. When we listen to our customers, we bring them directly into the process, using their insights and perspectives to help us "incubate" new ways of building and delivering products. With data, we can help any business gain customer insights and accelerate change. And by managing data properly, we can also proactively manage both high-touch and digital interactions with our customers. The data we collect and translate tells a story. We need to make sure we take the time to listen to it.

Our willingness to rethink how we work, by injecting an entrepreneurial spirit into a global workforce of over 40,000 people, gives us the ability to deliver amazing solutions just as quickly as the marketplace demands them. Race car driver Mario Andretti knew a little something about

speed. He once said, "If everything seems under control, you're not going fast enough." Maybe a better approach is to worry less about control, and more about simply staying agile, so that when speed provides opportunities, you have a workforce ready to seize them. When we make a commitment to reduce both network and human latency, we put ourselves on a pathway that allows enterprises everywhere to further human progress through technology.

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