

SKIP LEVEL

strategic leadership for leaders ready to think two levels up

EPISODE 124 · WORKSHEET

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Move at the Speed of Culture

Poppi's cofounder says culture now moves on a three-day cycle, and brands stuck in data are missing it. Maya and Marcus turn that into a leadership skill: shorten the chain, decide before the data is perfect, and stay close to the edge where culture actually happens.

KEY STRATEGIES & IDEAS

1. Culture Moves in Three Days

Poppi's cofounder, Allison Ellsworth, says brands are getting everything wrong about Gen Z because they are stuck in data. A/B tests, decks, and approval chains. Meanwhile, culture now moves on a three-day cycle.

2. Speed Is a Skill, Not a Size

First, shorten the chain between the idea and the decision. Second, decide before the data is perfect, because perfect data usually arrives after the moment has passed. Third, stay close to the edge, where culture actually happens.

3. Borrow the Mechanism

PepsiCo did not try to become Poppi. They bought Poppi for almost two billion dollars, in part to learn from them, to stay culturally tuned in while letting Poppi stay agile. Poppi stays fast because the people closest to the culture make the call.

4. Slowness Costs More Than the Moment

When decisions crawl, people stop bringing you their best ideas, because they have learned the idea will age out before it gets an answer. Slowness costs the next ten ideas nobody bothers to pitch, and the next opportunity that one was supposed to prepare you for.

5. Two-Way Doors

If you can reverse the call next week, decide today. If you cannot reverse it, that is the one that earns the extra day. Most decisions are two-way doors, but leaders treat all of them like one-way doors, and that is where the weeks go.

The proof: PepsiCo did not try to become Poppi. They bought Poppi for almost two billion dollars, in part to learn from them, to stay culturally tuned in while letting Poppi stay agile — because the people closest to the culture make the call.

Joe Dutkiewicz

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ACTION & REFLECTION STEPS

- [ ] **Step one — audit your approval chain.** Take the last three decisions you made and count the days from idea to answer. Find the slowest layer, the person or committee that added days without adding judgment, and cut one approver from your next decision.

The slowest layer in my last three decisions:

- [ ] **Step two — sort your next three decisions by reversibility.** If the door swings both ways, decide today. If it cannot be reversed, that is the one that earns the extra day.

My two-way doors to decide today:

- [ ] **Step three — spend thirty minutes a week where culture actually happens.** Not a report about it. Where your youngest customers or your newest employees actually spend time. Listen more than you talk. You are not there to blend in. You are there to notice what is moving.

Where culture happens for my team:

- [ ] **Step four — name one decision you are hiding behind data right now, and make the call this week.** Just one. Speed is a habit, and habits start with a single rep.

The decision I am hiding behind data:

Think two levels up. — Maya & Marcus

Joe Dutkiewicz

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