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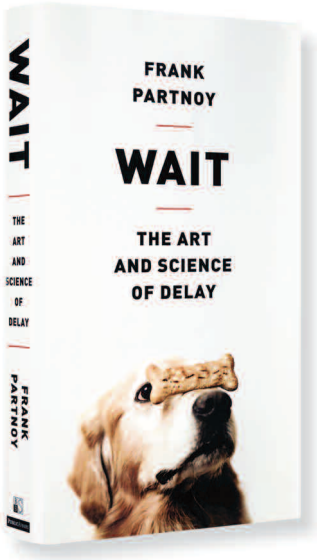
Wait

The Art and Science of Delay



by Frank Partnoy

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

What do these scenarios have in common: a professional tennis player returning a serve, a woman evaluating a first date across the table, a naval officer assessing a threat to his ship and a comedian about to reveal a punch line?

In *Wait: The Art and Science of Delay*, author Frank Partnoy weaves together findings from hundreds of scientific studies and interviews with wide-ranging experts to craft a picture of effective decision-making that runs counter to our brutally fast-paced world. Even as technology exerts new pressures to speed up our lives, it turns out that the choices we make — unconsciously and consciously, in time frames varying from milliseconds to years — benefit profoundly from delay. As this winning and provocative book reveals, taking control of time and slowing down our responses yields better results in almost every arena of life … even when time seems to be of the essence.

The procrastinator in all of us will delight in Partnoy's accounts of the power of delay on sports, investing, business and innovation. His insights underscore the myriad ways in which delaying our reactions to everyday choices — large and small — can improve the quality of our lives.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why experts take the necessary time to pause even during superfast reactions.
- The roles of the psychological system 1 (automatic and involuntary) and system 2 (effortful and deliberate) in the mind and how they work in decision-making.
- Why "thin slicing" sometimes needs to be measured in minutes rather than seconds.
- The way in which panic can warp our perception of time.
- Why "clock time" isn't the only way to organize your behavior.

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: **WAIT**

by Frank Partnoy

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For additional information on the author, go to www.summary.com.

Introduction

In recent years, scientists have made great progress in comprehending how we make decisions. Psychologists have suggested we have two systems of thinking, one intuitive and one analytical, both of which can lead us to make serious cognitive mistakes. Behavioral economists have said our responses to incentives are often irrational and skewed, sometimes predictably so. Neuroscientists have taken pictures of our brains to show which parts react to different stimuli.

Yet we still don't understand the role time and delay play in our decisions and why we continue to make all kinds of timing errors, reacting too fast or too slow. Delay alone can turn a good decision into a bad one, or vice versa. Much recent research about decisions helps us understand what we should do or how we should do it, but it says little about when. Sometimes we should trust our gut and respond instantly. But other times we should postpone our actions and decisions. Sometimes we should rely on our quick intuition. But other times we should plan and analyze.

Although time and delay have not occupied a prominent spot in decision-making research, these concepts lurk behind the scenes, especially in discussions about human nature. Many scientists say the key skill that distinguishes human beings from animals is our superior ability to think about the future. However, thinking about the future is different from predicting it.

The essence of my case is this: given the fast pace of modern life, most of us tend to react too quickly. We don't, or can't, take enough time to think about the increasingly complex timing challenges we face. Technology surrounds us, speeding us up. We feel its crush every day, both at work and at home. Yet the best time managers are comfortable pausing for as long as necessary before they act, even in the face of the most pressing decisions. Some seem to slow down time. For good decision-makers, time is more flexible than a metronome or atomic clock.

During superfast reactions, the best-performing experts instinctively know when to pause, if only for a split second. The same is true over longer periods: some of us are better at understanding when to take a few extra seconds to deliver the punch line of a joke or when we should wait a full hour before making a judgment about another person. Part of this skill is gut instinct and part of it is analytical. We get some of it from trial and error or by watching experts, but we also can learn from observing toddlers and even animals. There is both an art and a science to managing delay. ●

Hearts and Minds

Stephen Porges, a psychiatry professor and neuroscientist at the University of Illinois at Chicago, believes the key to our psychological development as human beings lies not solely in our brains but below them, along the nerve that serves as the two-lane racetrack for the signals that zip back and forth between our brains and the rest of our bodies. He focuses on the tenth cranial nerve, known as the vagal nerve, a strip of fibers that originates in a part of the brain stem and winds around the most important parts of our bodies, from the head and throat to the lungs, heart and digestive system.

In a 1994 speech, Porges said the vagal nerve that runs from our brain stem throughout our bodies is really two tracks of fibers wound together: one crude strand we inherited from our common ancestry with reptiles and one sophisticated strand we developed more recently as

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mammals. Both operate at high speed, within milliseconds, but they do very different things. The crude reptilian part controls our digestive and reproductive systems, while the more modern mammalian part controls the muscles of our head and face, along with our cardiovascular system. But, Porges carefully noted, both systems are connected to the heart.

According to Porges, when we confront a stimulating event — something exciting or scary — both strands of the nerve affect the heart, but in opposite ways. The tortoise part instantly sends signals to withdraw and shut down, like the emergency brake of a car. Many scientists refer to a fight-or-flight response, but Porges thinks of it as "fight, flight or freeze."

In contrast, the mammal part of the vagal nerve reacts to stimulation more flexibly, revving up and slowing down the body, as appropriate. It also can let up on the reptilian brake, which otherwise might shut everything down.

Time is a slippery concept, and we are often wrong about it. If we focus on how our brains react over the course of seconds and minutes, we will not see quicker reactions. This is a general problem we have with thinking about decision-making, for both children and adults. All too often, we find ourselves looking in the right places at the wrong time.

Research on the vagal nerve has revealed a high-speed world inside our bodies, one so fast that we cannot consciously access it. Yet when we are asked to make a decision, it is these rapid-fire responses that help determine what kind of a decision we will make. A speedy response in our hearts can help us delay a speedy response in our brains and bodies. It is a strange idea, but being fast at first really can help us go slow later on. ●

Superfast Sports

A tennis court, baseline to baseline, is 78 feet long. First serves are launched, by men and women alike, at more than 100 miles per hour. A player returning serve has just 400 to 500 milliseconds from when the ball leaves the server's racquet until it hits his or her own. Just half a second.

To understand why some tennis professionals are so good at returning serve, I made an appointment to see Angel Lopez. Lopez has coached numerous professionals and is a contemporary of Jimmy Connors.

Lopez explained how Connors revolutionized the return with his speed and focus. Lopez's mantra is "ball identification" — the preparation phase that precedes the decision about exactly how to hit the ball back. He told me to watch Connors' eyes as they darted around and then froze.

"The theory of returns used to be that you should hit the ball as early as possible. But as players got faster and equipment improved, they learned to hang back and hit harder returns. They spend more time on ball identification, getting a chance to read the ball and then really punish it."

Connors and Chris Evert didn't have substantially faster visual reaction times; no one does. But they were much faster at reacting physically. Their physical speed freed up time for them to prepare during the phase Lopez calls ball identification. This was when they absorbed the crush of data generated after the ball left the server's racquet. They split up the time available during a service return; because they were so fast, they had extra time to gather and process information. Finally, at the last possible instant, they committed to their choice of return and swung. They sandwiched a lot of preparing between seeing and hitting.

Connors and Evert were able to stretch time and gain an advantage from their ability to delay. They got fast first in order to go slow later. ●

High-Frequency Trading, Fast and Slow

In the middle of 2006, the stock trading firm UNX, Inc., found itself in trouble. The company was seven years old. Its technology was dated. Its computer platforms were falling behind, and its clients, including sophisticated hedge funds and Wall Street banks, were shifting to competitors. To survive, UNX needed to build a more efficient trading platform that could compete with other superfast trading firms.

Andre Perold, then the chair of UNX's board, understood the problem and knew just who to call. Scott Harrison, the man Perold called, said, "Our goal was to become faster and cheaper than anyone."

Harrison and UNX quickly raised money and built a cutting-edge computer trading system. Both the hardware and software were designed to be faster and therefore more efficient. Harrison set up the new machines in a second-floor office in Burbank, Calif., 3,000 miles from Wall Street. Then he flipped the switch.

When UNX switched on its new computers, its trading costs immediately plummeted. The new platform supercharged UNX's business. Suddenly, the firm could

buy and sell shares at a lower cost than just about anyone else. Clients rushed to do business with them.

Although UNX's new trading platform was a huge success, he thought they could do even better by moving their computers 3,000 miles — from Burbank to New York. Harrison understood that geography was causing delay: even at the speed of light, it was taking UNX's orders a relatively long time to move across the country.

He studied UNX's transaction speeds and noticed that it took about 65 milliseconds from when trades entered UNX's computers until they were completed in New York. About half of that time was coast-to-coast travel.

This is where the story gets, as Harrison put it, weird. "We saved 35 milliseconds by moving everything east. All of that went exactly as we planned," Harrison said. "But all of a sudden, our trading costs were higher. We were paying more to buy shares and we were receiving less when we sold. The trading speeds were faster but the execution was inferior.

"Finally, we gave up and decided to slow down our computers a little bit, just to see what would happen. And when we went back up to 65 milliseconds of trade time, we went back to the top of the charts. It was really bizarre. In a world that values speed so much, you could be slower, yet still be better."

Like professional athletes, Harrison, Perold and UNX learned there is an art to delay, even for preconscious reactions that take only milliseconds and even if those reactions are implemented by a computer, not a human being. By delaying its trades slightly, UNX avoided the extra costs that arose from the rush of instantaneous trading. It got better results by waiting a few dozen milliseconds — by procrastinating at the speed of light. ●

Bad Call

Psychologists often say there are two systems of the mind: system 1, which is automatic and involuntary, and system 2, which is effortful and deliberative.

So far, we have been looking at what a psychologist would refer to as system 1. As we have seen, timing and delay play an important role even for the kinds of superfast preconscious reactions that psychologists would label as automatic. Even during just a split second, there is a lot of variability in heart rates, athletic responses and subliminal reactions.

Once we have at least half a second, we can engage in effortful, conscious thought, either to reinforce the automatic reactions of system 1 or to try to slow down or change them. When both systems are involved, we often get caught in an internal battle: intuition versus analysis, or instinctive emotion versus logical deliberation. With just a few seconds, we are capable of thinking through some judgments and choices, but probably not all of them. Both systems are prone to error, particularly under time pressure. System 2 has the capacity to correct system 1, but it also can magnify a mistaken snap reaction.

Bob Gibson and the New York Giants

It is Sunday, November 19, 1978, another dark fall afternoon for Bob Gibson, the offensive coordinator of the New York Giants football team. With a record of 5-6, the team desperately needs a win at home against the Philadelphia Eagles, who lead by one game in their division. Late in the fourth quarter, the Eagles trail by just five points and the crowd at Giants Stadium is on edge.

Odis McKinney, a rookie defensive back for the Giants, intercepts what might have been a touchdown pass from Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski. All Coach Gibson needs to do is call three quick plays and the Giants will win.

The game has ended for just about everyone. Except Coach Gibson, who still has to make his final, crucial decision. Both of Gibson's decision systems are firing: his system 1 is automatically reacting to the threat to an important member of his team and his system 2 is consciously considering his choices. Should he tell Giants quarterback Joe Pisarcik to fall on the ball and risk exposing him to an onslaught? Or should he call a play designed to keep his quarterback safe? He has just a few seconds to make the call.

A football coach's predicament is like that of an emergency room nurse or a firefighter or a military first responder. Life moves fast for these people, and a large part of their decision-making is unconscious. However, with a few seconds, they also have a little bit of time to think. The trick in this slower time frame is to tap into cognition when it helps and to shut it off when it doesn't.

A few seconds isn't long enough for system 2 to map out every possibility, but it is long enough for a coach's biological systems to kick in and interfere with his ability to deliberate. The noise from these physical reactions can lead to mistakes from both systems 1 and 2.

System Overload

Coach Gibson's body is bursting with biological responses as he decides which play to call during the Eagles' final time-out. The primary actor is his adrenal

medulla, located on the top section of the kidneys — right smack in the middle of what we think of as the gut. As Gibson perceives danger, neurons fire in the basal ganglia region of his brain, telling his adrenal medulla to pump fight-or-flight hormones, particularly adrenaline, throughout his body. The adrenaline rush causes his blood pressure to rise. Physically, he is a mess.

Mentally, he is a mess too. Much of the executive function of his brain, in the cerebral and prefrontal cortices, shuts down and is overruled by the amygdalae. As his conscious system 2 breaks down — not immediately, but over the course of a few seconds — he defaults to his unconscious system 1.

When our brains are loaded with stimuli, it is more difficult for our conscious processes to work. As the load on our brains increases, we rely more on our unconscious processes. That is what is happening to Coach Gibson. As the seconds tick, he is moving away from control toward automaticity. His brain is full.

When Gibson calls the final play — a handoff to running back Larry Csonka — the Giants players are stunned. In the huddle, Csonka tells Pisarcik, "Don't give me the ball." The players are disorganized as they line up. One says, "Joe, just fall on the damn ball."

Then, Pisarcik loses control of the snap. He tries to tighten his grip, but now Csonka is too far away and he shoves the ball into Csonka's hip instead of his hands. The ball falls to the ground. It is picked up by the Eagles player Herman Edwards, who runs the ball into the end zone. With that touchdown, the Eagles won the game, 19-17. The play became legend, known as the "Miracle at the Meadowlands."

Gibson was fired the next morning and never worked in football again. Unfortunately for scientists who study decision-making, he has never said whether he called the play more as an automatic response or whether his decision was based on some quick deliberation. To this day, he refuses to talk about the fumble or its consequences. ●

A Slice Too Thin

The expression "thin slicing" was coined in a 1992 article published by Nalini Ambady and Robert Rosenthal in the *Psychological Bulletin*. They used the term to describe people's ability to detect patterns in an event even if they experience only a narrow portion of that event. In particular, they focused on what people can glean from brief, silent video clips. And their answer was: a lot.

Their best-known finding, from a 1993 follow-up study, was that people who watched a series of brief, silent videos of a teacher reached similar judgments about the teacher as did students and supervisors who sat through the teacher's class for months. The study has been widely cited as an example of the power of our unconscious system. Its subtitle says it all: "Predicting Teacher Evaluations from Thin Slices of Nonverbal Behavior and Physical Attractiveness."

In 2005, Malcolm Gladwell published *Blink*, a book that introduced thin slicing research by Ambady, Rosenthal and others to a broad audience. Gladwell begins with an example of thin slicing extraordinaire, a story about whether a marble statue purchased by the J. Paul Getty Museum in California was a fake. He describes four experts who saw the statue and were instantly repulsed. He then introduces the book as follows: "In the first two seconds of looking — in a single glance — they were able to understand more about the essence of that statue than the team at the Getty was able to understand after 14 months."

The two-second time interval became a popular mantra for thin slicing. Suddenly, everyone was talking about two seconds. Gladwell reinforced the importance of the two-second interval in talks, on his website and within *Blink*, which he summed up as "a book about those first two seconds."

Stop for a moment now and think about the idea of thin slicing. When we thin slice we detect patterns in an event even if we see only a narrow portion of that event. The key to the concept is that we reach a conclusion even though we don't have the full picture. Thin slicing is driven by the unconscious system because it takes the lead over the conscious system in decision-making during such a short period.

But thin slicing is almost never about just two seconds. In fact, not even the titles of the leading articles on thin slicing are about two seconds. The revolutionary paper by Ambady and Rosenthal is entitled "Half a Minute." John Gottman's coauthored study of videotapes of couples is called "Predicting Divorce Among Newlyweds from the First Three Minutes of a Marital Conflict Discussion." Minutes, not seconds.

Neither of those studies found that anything close to two seconds was the optimal thin slice. To the contrary, Ambady and Rosenthal found that although students who watched three two-second videos (six seconds total) of a teacher did pretty well in matching the evaluations of people who sat through the entire semester, students who watched 10-second videos did better.

More recently, Ambady and other coauthors defined a thin slice as "any excerpt of dynamic information less than five minutes long."

So how thin should a thin slice be? The answer is rarely two seconds. If we are judging whether someone is dangerous, our brains and bodies are wired to react very quickly, within milliseconds.

But for other questions, two seconds isn't nearly long enough. If we are asked to tell whether someone is friendly or dangerous, we do better with more time. To accurately assess whether someone is sociable, we need at least a minute, preferably five.

The research on thin slicing demonstrates that we can be fast, but it also shows that even a little bit of extra time can often help us make better decisions. One slice does not fit all, and there is nothing magical about two seconds. Instead, how long we should thin slice depends on what we are slicing. ●

Don't Panic

The writer Douglas Adams used the phrase "Don't panic" prominently and often. Arthur C. Clarke said Adams' phrase was the best advice ever given to humanity.

One of the main reasons why "Don't panic" is such valuable guidance is that the sudden onslaught of fear we label panic can seriously interfere with our ability to decide on the best course of action. Panic makes it difficult for us to use logic or reason. Panic shuts down our conscious system 2 and leads us to rely on our primal automatic system 1. Relying on system 1 is not necessarily a bad thing, especially if we are experts.

One problem with panic has to do with our perception of time. How we experience time varies depending on our environment, even when we aren't stressed or afraid. If you live in a city with a population of more than 1 million, a pause will seem twice as long as it does to someone who lives on a farm or in a small town. Try pausing for a full minute during a conversation or a speech. You probably won't make it. Instead, after 10 or 20 seconds you will break down and speak.

When we are panicking, this time warping gets much worse. People who have panic attacks often experience time dramatically slowing down or speeding up. If you have been in a car accident or a high-speed chase, you probably felt time expand.

What is happening? Our brains are making time elastic. Time itself isn't stretched, but our perception of it is. Under extreme stress we are hyper-attuned to the moment. Surges of adrenaline warp how we experience time under pressure, fooling our judgment. After the fact, the culprit is the intensity of our memories. Because memories are carved more deeply into our brains during high stimulation, the event seems to have taken longer in retrospect.

Because of how panic influences our perception of time, it magnifies the difference between experts and novices. Experts understand the downside of panicking, but they also use time warping to their advantage by stretching every second to maximum effect. Novices are more vulnerable. Their world speeds up and slows down whether they want it to or not. ●

At Last, Procrastination

Our society is obsessed with productivity, and we despise procrastination. And then, beginning in the 1970s, the do-it-now anti-procrastination industry burst onto the scene. Over time we began to feel terribly guilty about procrastinating, yet we did it even more. The percentage of people who say they procrastinate "often" has increased sixfold since 1978. According to some studies, nearly one in five adults is a "chronic" procrastinator. Our focus on procrastination is relentless.

But it wasn't always so. In ancient Egypt and Rome, procrastination was thought to be useful and wise. Studies find that although procrastination is problematic for some people, others can procrastinate but still get plenty done without stress, coping problems or low self-esteem.

Academics who study procrastination fall into many camps. Many psychologists follow a definition from Piers Steel, a leading researcher, that procrastination is "irrational" delay.

Another group of psychologists gives procrastination a more positive spin, depending in large part on the amount of energy the procrastinator expends. So-called active procrastination is smart: it simply means managing delay, putting off projects that don't need to be done right away. In contrast, passive procrastination is dumb, equivalent to laziness. This group says procrastination might be good or bad, depending on how much effort we put into it.

On one thing nearly everyone agrees: virtually all of us, at least some of the time, feel the urge to procrastinate. And there is wisdom in each camp.

In 2005, Paul Graham, a computer programmer, investor, writer and painter, wrote an essay called "Good and Bad Procrastination." He opened by saying, "The

most impressive people I know are all terrible procrastinators. So could it be that procrastination isn't always bad? Most people who write about procrastination write about how to cure it. But this is, strictly speaking, impossible."

Graham notes that when we procrastinate we don't work on something. However, he says, we are *always* not working on *something*. In fact, whatever we are doing, we are by definition not working on everything else. For Graham, the issue is not how to stop procrastinating, since we will always be not working on something and, thus, procrastinating. Instead, our real challenge is to figure out how to procrastinate well — how to work on something that is more important than the something we are not working on. In thinking about procrastination, Graham says what matters most is comparing what we are working on with what we aren't.

For Graham, procrastination is all about trade-offs. We are constantly trading off what we are doing now against what we might do in the future. As long as we are doing that in a reasonable way, it doesn't matter that we are putting some things off. ●

Master Class

The challenge of procrastination is figuring how to weigh immediate versus distant consequences. That same kind of now-versus-later evaluation is also at the core of professional expertise and judgment. We typically define professionals — lawyers, accountants, doctors, journalists and financial advisers — as people who do high-quality work, have specialized knowledge and follow high ethical standards. But professionals have another quality we might not notice as often: the ability to manage time.

The best lawyers and accountants are masters of delay. Litigators understand precisely how to allocate their time writing a brief or preparing for an argument or trial. Business lawyers develop an exact sense of timing of deals and when negotiations should move forward or end. Experienced auditors can plan backward from a filing deadline to map out when work should be completed, hour by hour.

True professionals are able to act quickly, but are willing to go slow. They are comfortable using both intuition (from the automatic system 1) and analysis (from the deliberative system 2). They resist the fast-running herd and wait for the ideal time to make their move. That doesn't mean their decisions are slow; they can be faster than just about anyone when it matters. The best professionals understand how long they have available to make a decision and then, given that time frame, they wait as long as they possibly can.

In Atul Gawande's provocative and insightful book *The Checklist Manifesto*, he shows how doctors can use checklists to save lives by reducing mistakes in medical decision-making, particularly during hospital surgery. He also advocates checklists for other nonmedical professionals, including airline pilots and financial professionals.

Checklists serve as a reminder when our memory fails and as a guard against cognitive mistakes. They provide a framework to make sure we pay attention to each step of a task. But there is an art to checklists. If they are too complex and cumbersome, they can be counterproductive. If a checklist includes too many steps or is inflexible, it will be inefficient or ignored. Good checklists streamline straightforward jobs. The ideal checklist is one page long, with not too many words on it.

Gawande's surgery checklist includes three "pause points": before anesthesia, before incision and before leaving the operating room. Each pause is designed to last no more than a minute — just long enough for members of the team to make basic checks. It might not seem like something as simple as making sure everyone on the surgery team introduces themselves by name and role would matter. But the results are striking: even taking just a few seconds before the incision helps to slow down the tempo of the surgical procedure, and that slower tempo leads to better outcomes. ●

Get Off the Clock

Much human behavior is based on "clock time" which divides our day into quantifiable units. Some clock time is based on nature, but much of it is fabricated. A day is a natural length of time, determined by the rotation of the Earth, but the hour is an entirely arbitrary unit of time.

Clock time isn't the only way to organize behavior. A second approach is "event time," where we continue doing something until we finish or some event occurs. For example, you might start work, not at 9 a.m. (clock time), but after you finish breakfast (event time). To illustrate the differences between clock and event time, imagine that you have five tasks to perform today. How would you organize them?

In general, you should use a calendar when your primary concern is efficiency and you should use a to-do list when your primary concern is effectiveness. Efficiency means going fast; effectiveness means being complete, even if it takes longer. If you have a brief that must be filed by Friday, you care more about efficiency and should put the filing date on a calendar and plan

your work accordingly based on clock time. But when you go to the grocery store, you should use event time to make sure you don't leave the store until you have every ingredient necessary to make dinner.

Perception of Time

If you are like most people, you feel there aren't enough hours in the day. You perceive you are working longer and harder than in the past. But this perception is wrong. It is well documented that people feel more time pressure today. Yet the fact the median number of hours that people actually work has remained relatively constant during the previous five decades and has declined in recent years.

Time pressure gets worse as we make more money. Studies show that higher income generates more time stress, even when the number of hours worked is held constant. In an experiment by Sanford DeVoe, people performed a task and were told to keep track of their time in six-minute increments. Half of them believed their work was being billed at $90 per hour, the other half believed their rate was $9 per hour. After finishing their work, those billing at a higher rate said they felt significantly more time pressure, even though everyone did exactly the same work under the same conditions for the same amount of time.

Pay inequalities have grown in part because of the massive shift in compensation policies from long-term event time to short-term clock time. Whereas pay used to be split more evenly among managers and employees, now a much larger share goes to the most senior executives. As shorter-term clock time comes to dominate our work and the pay gap widens, there are two potentially serious consequences.

First, for many people, work becomes less satisfying overall. If we are motivated to accomplish something important in our work, we will be willing to wait decades and understand that jobs we start might not be finished until after we are gone. Hourly pay eats away at this philosophy and ultimately makes work less fulfilling.

The second risk is that the accelerating pace of technology and ticking of the clock will make companies less profitable over the long term. Quick responses are important and useful, but so is strategic perspective. Workers who are accustomed to instant gratification expect major advances to come quickly. ●

A Lifetime of Innovation

The most important innovations of modern times — the automobile, camera, computer, cotton gin, light bulb, penicillin, sewing machine, steam engine, telephone, television — were not overnight epiphanies. They took decades or longer to invent and develop. And although the cycles are getting faster, the most dramatic innovations of the modern era — Apple, Google, Facebook — have taken years.

Einstellung Effect

The word "Einstellung" means "attitude" in German. The Einstellung effect refers to our tendency to become stuck in our ways, to act or think in the same manner we've always acted or thought, even when we are presented with alternatives that are obviously better. The best innovators are skilled at overcoming the Einstellung effect.

Somewhere out there is a kid thinking about an idea that might ultimately lead to a discovery as important as gravity or oxygen, or something as routine as a Post-it. Right now, that idea is an unformed, dim thought. If the discovery comes, it will not be a light bulb suddenly going on. It will be the culmination of a decades-long process. ●

Go Long

Most of life's big questions need to be answered over the long term, but understanding shorter-term decision-making can help us handle the epic questions more completely and thoughtfully. An appreciation of the minuscule gives us a better chance at tackling the massive.

Our ability to think about delay is a central part of the human condition. It is a gift, a tool we can use to examine our lives. If there is just one word of wisdom about decision-making for children born a hundred years from now, people who will have all of our advantages and limitations as human beings but will need to navigate an unimaginably faster-paced world than the one we confront now, there is no doubt what that word should be.

Wait. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Wait*, you'll also like:

1. ***The Pause Principle* by Kevin Cashman.** Cashman describes the need to pause to grow personal leadership, develop others, and foster a culture of innovation. By following the pause practices Cashman describes, executives will learn how to step back to lead forward.
2. ***The Accidental Creative* by Todd Henry.** This summary offers a method to help readers generate brilliant ideas on demand.
3. ***Extreme Productivity* by Robert C. Pozen.** Pozen explains how to determine your highest priorities and match them with how you actually spend your time.