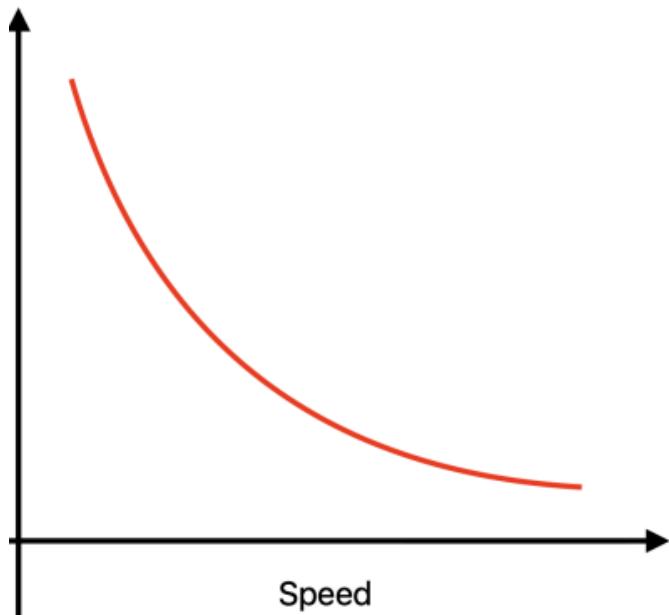
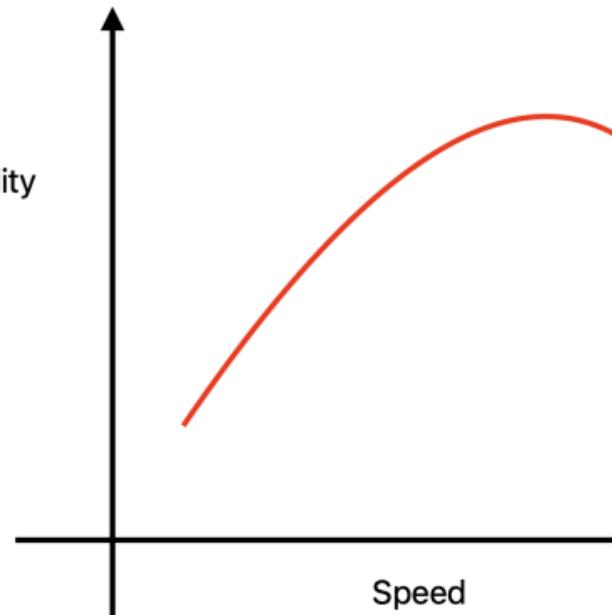


Daniel Lemire's blog

Daniel Lemire is a software performance expert. He ranks among the top 2% of scientists globally (Stanford/Elsevier 2024) and is one of GitHub's top 1000 most followed developers.



How people think it works.



How it actually works.

Why speed matters

The one constant that I have observed in my professional life is that people underestimate the need to move fast.

Of course, doing good work takes time. I once spent six months writing a URL parser. But the fact that it took so long is not a feature, it is not a positive, it is a negative.

If everything is slow-moving around you, it is likely not going to be good. To fully make use of your brain, you need to move as close as possible to the speed of your thought.

If I give you two PhD students, one who completed their thesis in two years and one who took eight years... you can be almost certain that the two-year thesis will be much better.

Moving fast does not mean that you complete your projects quickly. Projects have many parts, and getting everything right may take a long time.

Nevertheless, you should move as fast as you can.

For multiple reasons:

1. A common mistake is to spend a lot of time—too much time—on a component of your project that does not matter. I once spent a lot of time building a podcast-like version of a course... only to find out later that students had no interest in the podcast format.
2. You learn by making mistakes. The faster you make mistakes, the faster you learn.
3. Your work degrades, becomes less relevant with time. And if you work slowly, you will be more likely to stick with your slightly obsolete work. You know that professor who spent seven years preparing lecture notes twenty years ago? He is not going to throw them away and start again, as that would be a new seven-year project. So he will keep teaching using aging lecture notes until he retires and someone finally updates the course.

What if you are doing open-heart surgery? Don't you want someone who spends days preparing and who works slowly? No. You almost surely want the surgeon who does many, many open-heart surgeries. They are very likely to be the best one.

Now stop being so slow. Move!

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