

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I SHOWED BRUNSWICK CEO NEAL Wolin the image of a wildly whirling world, asking if he thought it would work as the cover of our Acceleration edition, he asked a question I hadn't considered: Is the Earth turning faster?

At first, the question seemed a tad literal to me. Clearly, the image was meant to symbolize the prevailing sense that everything is changing fast. But early in my journalism career I learned not to shrug off an editor's request for evidence and substantiation. That extra work not only reduces the risk of getting something wrong, it opens up the possibility of an even better story.

Which is exactly what happened here.

It took only a few moments of research to discover that Neal's question was well informed. For some time now, in fact hundreds of millions of years, the earth's rotation has been slowing. A year—the time it takes our planet to orbit the sun—wasn't always 365 days. In our planet's faster-moving youth, it was 420 days. (A primary drag on the planet's rate of rotation is the gravitational pull of the moon.) "Estimates suggest that the length of a day currently increases by about 1.8 milliseconds every century," Discover magazine wrote early last year in an article about the earth's rotation.

This information created a bit of a quandary: Could the *Review* in good faith use a

decelerating object as a symbol of acceleration?

Except, just in: The earth's rotation isn't decelerating anymore. It's accelerating. The UK's National Physical Laboratory recently discovered that the planet is accelerating, ever so slightly. As ScienceFocus, a BBC website, wrote recently, the Earth "is now spinning faster than at any time in the last 50 years. In fact, the shortest 28 days on record all occurred during 2020." (Not that such records date back very far in astronomical terms.)

If that news has failed to capture the planet's attention, perhaps that's because it isn't as alarming as the global pandemic, the war in Ukraine, climate change or various other crises competing for Page One. Actually, it's not alarming at all, to hear it from astronomers around the world quoted about it in the science press. In a solar system 4.5 billion years old, trends are measured in hundreds of millions of years, not decades.

The actual acceleration of the planet requires no action from business, unlike the myriad crises that make us feel as though the Earth is spinning faster. How to manage those challenges is the subject of dozens of profiles and interviews with leaders of business in these pages. We hope that you'll find these stories illuminating, and please reach out if we can answer any questions or help in any way. ♦

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