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## Talking tech with Singularity's Salim Ismail



In a daylong workshop, Salim Ismail, global ambassador and the founding executive director of Silicon Valley's famed Singularity University, presented a workshop at Miami Dade College's Idea Center and supported by Rokk3r Labs and Knight Foundation. | **MIAMI HERALD STAFF** NANCY DAHLBERG

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If you think technology is moving fast now, strap in.

In a daylong event, Salim Ismail, global ambassador and the founding executive director of Silicon Valley's famed Singularity University, presented scores of mind-blowing examples of technology moving at exponential speeds to the workshop participants, who included entrepreneurs, investors, consultants and corporate executives.

The sometime scary, often inspiring information-packed workshop was held last week at Miami Dade College's Idea Center and supported by Rokk3r Labs and the Knight Foundation.

Reading DNA is one of the fastest-moving technologies, Ismail said. What cost \$2.7 billion to sequence the first human genome 13 years ago now costs about \$1,000. In 2020, it will cost pennies. Think of the possibilities and implications, he said. "The Chinese just announced they are now changing and reprogramming embryos inside the mother. ... All the bio-ethics folks are freaking out right now."

Energy? The price of solar is dropping like a stone, and at this pace, solar energy will be abundant and free in 23 years, Ismail said. Again the possibilities: The poorest countries in the world are also the sunniest.

Another near-necessity of life that will be abundant and free? By the end of the decade we will have free Internet globally, he predicts. We are heading to the age of infinite computing and infinite storage — all for free.

Or take the driverless car. The sensors on that car cost \$300,000 a car six years ago, \$75,000 two years later and \$1,000 today. Google's car has already driven a million miles without an accident — what human can say that?

And while many experts think it will take 15 to 20 years for the driverless car to be readily available, Singularity believes it will take three to five. "Someday soon we will look back and say, 'Why did we ever let humans drive?'"

Bottom line, said Ismail: "In the history of the world, we have never seen so many technologies moving so fast. It is the best time in the history of the world to be an entrepreneur ... and the biggest marketplace in the history of humanity is being created in this five-year period."

So how do startups become fast-moving, fast-growing exponential organizations? And if you own a big company, can you become an exponential organization?

The short answer is yes, but for the hows, well, Ismail has written the book on that one — *Exponential Organizations: Why New Organizations Are Ten Times Better, Faster, Cheaper Than Yours (and What to Do About It)*.

Ismail outlines 10 qualities that exponential organizations possess, and he says a company doesn't need all 10 — four will suffice. Some of them are encouraging experimentation, or the Lean Startup method, leveraging the community and crowd, such as testing product ideas on Kickstarter like Sony does, employing algorithms and using big data (and that doesn't mean employing a data scientist; use Kaggle's platform with 300,000 of them), valuing autonomy (more on that below) and leveraging social technologies, such as what a Chinese phone maker does by allowing users to vote on the features.

Nabyl Charania is a believer. "Soon the power of 7 billion connected people will reshape the world as we know it," said Charania, who is CEO of Rokk3r Labs, a co-building organization based in Miami Beach. Not only is his company practicing the ExO principles, but every company Rokk3r brings in to co-build will strive to be an ExO company, he said.

Ismail, who has given this workshop twice this year in South Florida, also talked about companies that are turning corporate structures upside-down, such as Valve, with no CEO, no hierarchy and no

meetings, to Zappos, which is moving to that model. Haier, the Chinese refrigerator maker with 80,000 workers, overhauled the structure into 2,000 autonomous teams, and since then has tripled market cap — twice, Ismail said.

Although most people in the room said they didn't believe big companies could change radically, a way to begin is to let innovation happen at the edges of the organization. Create cells of your best change-agents, and give them autonomy — there's that word again — to innovate. Also, tap into the power of your analytics and partner with disruptive startups in your industry, he advised.

Last week, Ismail appeared on CNBC's *Squawk Box* for a segment on the Fortune 500 ranked by their Exponential Quotient. In case you are wondering, the top 10 would be: Google (by a significant margin), Amazon, Apple, IBM, Verizon, Disney, General Electric, Microsoft, Cisco and Oracle. There you have it.

Tech executive and investor Robert Goldberg also spoke at the workshop. Among many business successes, Goldberg took Zynga from 30 people to 3,000 people and did 40 acquisitions in 10 quarters, an M&A success rate that has never been seen in the corporate world, said Ismail.

"We're now in an age of hyper-hyper growth," said Goldberg. To get your company off the linear growth curve and into hyper-growth, it starts with establishing where you want to be in a future of exponential growth, and then setting goals in smaller steps, perhaps three-year increments, to get there. What will you also need?

"The 5 percent rule, the other 95 percent just doesn't matter," said Goldberg. "Question what you do every day. ... It's ruthless prioritization. Deciding what you don't do is more important than what you do do."

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