



**ATIPIIC INSIGHT SERIES**  
Continuous Opportunity and Risk Dynamics  
*Article 2 of 7 — Funding the Right Action*

# Accelerators and Amplifiers: Why Small Events Become Existential

*The two forces that turn an insignificant incident into a global crisis — or a small advantage into a global triumph — and how to measure them before they move.*

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## The Problems This Approach Addresses

- Risk registers capture the largest risks but miss the weak signals that actually trigger disasters.
- Severity and probability alone cannot explain why some minor events escalate catastrophically and others do not.
- The speed at which a risk materialises is underestimated, leaving leadership permanently on the defensive.
- Windows of opportunity open and close unseen because the same escalation forces are never read in the positive direction.
- Legacy exposures inherited through M&A aggregate quietly until they surface as a single, outsized event.

## Summary

Severity and probability alone cannot explain why some minor events become existential while others fade. Two forces decide the outcome: accelerators, which look inward at the time and timing of an event, and amplifiers, which look outward at the media and the level of world interest at the moment it occurs. Assembled into a value driver tree and read in both directions, they expose weak-signal escalation — and the windows of opportunity — before they move.

A relatively small incident in an insignificant plant catches the world's attention and the company's value falls dramatically. A single report, a misunderstood fact, a poorly timed statement — and a trend forms that leadership can no longer steer, only defend against. And every hour spent defending is an hour not spent taking the company forward. The mirror image is equally true: a small advantage, caught at the right moment, can be amplified into a global success that competitors never saw coming.

Most risk teams focus on the highest-ranked risks and treat everything below the line as noise. Yet those lower-ranked items are precisely the ones susceptible to weak-signal escalation. They are rarely captured, usually underestimated, and their full range of consequences is almost never explored. Across the major global events of recent years, two driving forces consistently separate the incident that fades from the one that escalates. I call them accelerators and amplifiers.

*It is not only severity and frequency that decide an outcome. It is the hidden factors of time and timing — and whether anyone was watching the global radar when the clock started.*

Both forces follow the familiar discipline of risk management. An initiator is identified, an impact scenario is envisaged, and the attenuating or aggravating circumstances around it are examined. The distinction is one of direction. Accelerators look inward at the organisation and concern the time and timing of the event. Amplifiers look outward at the world at the moment the event occurs. Together they can be assembled into a value driver tree, so that the underlying elements are assigned, weighted and measured consistently and repeatably.

## 1. Accelerators: the clock inside the organisation

Accelerators draw on knowledge the company already holds. Similar events with similar causes are collected and, depending on category, indexed. A cluster of events within a short period scores higher than the same number spread over many years — and any repetition scores higher than a one-off. Legacy events inherited through mergers and acquisitions deserve particular care, because they aggregate exposure and therefore vulnerability. Sensitive categories — safety, compliance, environmental mismanagement — carry a higher index than the rest.

Time is the fundamental element here, and it is the one most distorted by financial reporting horizons. Quarterly reporting and three-year strategy cycles hide both short and long duration risks. A transformer leaking slowly for ten years registers on no quarterly dashboard — right up until it has polluted a critical water source. The exposure was always significant; the *reporting cadence* simply could not see it.

The signature of an accelerator is repetition: the same circumstances recurring, a problem repeatedly missed, or an issue managed ineffectively. The consequence is not only the event itself but the question it raises — what else has been missed? — and the erosion of confidence in leadership that follows. Climate and governance risks are accelerating in exactly this way: decision-makers who measured only severity and probability have been caught off guard by the speed of materialisation.

## 2. Amplifiers: the climate outside the organisation

Amplifiers are forces that can exert a disproportionate influence on a risk from the outside in. They are also bound up with time, but they act on the business sector, the country or the company through two channels: the media, and the level of world interest at the moment the event occurs. The two are intertwined but distinct, because the management response to each differs.

## Media

Every company carries the risk of poor communication, information leakage and reputational damage. The more frequent or recent the events, the more readily the media seizes on them — and once a story enters the public domain it takes precedence, even when it is wrong, forcing a reactive, defensive posture. The *speed* of coverage shapes the magnitude of the consequence. Some events are far more media-sensitive than others, and a company's honest assessment of that sensitivity — together with its response strategy — is a primary driver of how large the scenario becomes.

There is an asymmetry worth naming here. The same machinery applies to opportunities, but opportunities have to be *managed* into the public domain rather than contained. The question every organisation should ask is simple and rarely asked: who is managing your spin-offs?

## Global interest

Reaching the front page or the evening news amplifies the consequences of any event, and this channel is almost purely external — a function of the social climate at the time. Causes wholly unrelated to a company's own risk scenarios can trigger global sentiment, positive or negative. The interaction is counter-intuitive: a significant event of yours occurring at the same time as a globally dominant story may be drowned out and barely amplified at all. But if yours is the only story available, and it is poorly handled, the impact is magnified. Awareness of which way the global tide is running, and how it intersects with the risks high on your register, is the difference between a proactive response and one that arrives too little, too late.

## 3. What this changes

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Reading both forces deliberately allows a risk team to:

- Understand why certain risks are systematically underestimated — it was never only severity and frequency, but these underlying factors of time and timing.
- See the disproportionate influence that small risks can exert on the portfolio, and respond before they escalate rather than after.
- Build a more accurate and dynamic picture of vulnerability, feeding weak signals into the risk profile as they emerge.
- Capture windows of opportunity — reading the amplifiers in the positive direction to time investments for a higher return.

## 4. How to Initiate This in Your Organisation

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Most of the raw material already exists inside the company. The work is to structure it and keep it live.

1. Build a value driver tree for accelerators and amplifiers, adapted to your organisation, and assign weights that create the sensitivity your sector requires.

2. Index historical events by recency, clustering, repetition and category sensitivity — and flag legacy exposures inherited through M&A so aggregated risk is visible rather than buried.
3. Stand up a global radar: a standing practice of scanning external trends and news, and explicitly linking them to the scenarios and high-register risks they could amplify.
4. Assess and record media sensitivity for each major scenario, with a pre-agreed response posture, so the reactive scramble is replaced by a rehearsed move.
5. Wire the output into business continuity and crisis plans, and ensure risk owners — not just the risk manager — are alerted to weak signals in time to open a discussion before the event, not after it.

## Conclusions

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Because the system is dynamic, its value lies in timing. The same architecture that warns an incumbent of an accelerating threat tells a well-positioned challenger exactly when to move. Measuring these forces is how a company stops being surprised by its own risks — and starts being the one that surprises the market.

## Key Takeaways

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- It is not only severity and frequency that decide outcomes, but the underlying factors of time and timing.
- Accelerators are internal and indexed from corporate memory; amplifiers are external, driven by media and world interest.
- Quarterly and three-year reporting cadences hide both short- and long-duration risks until they surface.
- A standing ‘global radar’ links external trends to high-register scenarios so the response is proactive, not reactive.
- The same architecture that warns an incumbent tells a well-positioned challenger exactly when to move.

## About This Series: ATIPIC Insight — Seven Articles for Business Leaders

### The Overarching Message

Your organisation makes risk decisions daily with tools designed thirty years ago. They score severity. They do not measure direction. They record what is at risk — not whether you still have time to act. This series shows business leaders how to move from static risk registers to a dynamic, causally-grounded risk and opportunity intelligence system that integrates with the frameworks you already have.

**Why this matters to CEOs, CFOs and boards:** Risk misread as stable when it is accelerating destroys value silently. Opportunity visible in the data but invisible in the framework is value permanently foregone. ATIPIC provides the temporal and causal layer that converts existing risk data into forward-looking strategic intelligence.

### Article 1 | Funding the Right Action

**Problem:** Competing CapEx requests are judged by advocacy and seniority, not value, so the actions that create the most holistic value are never the ones funded.

**Key message:** A transversal management system places every action on a level playing field and prioritises by value created and vulnerability reduced.

### Article 2 ◀ YOU ARE HERE | Accelerators and Amplifiers

**Problem:** Severity and probability cannot explain why some minor events escalate catastrophically while others fade.

**Key message:** Two forces — internal accelerators and external amplifiers — are measured to reveal weak-signal escalation before it moves.

### Article 3 | Foresight: The Other Half

**Problem:** Risk management still looks backwards and is repeatedly blindsided by predictable surprises.

**Key message:** Foresight watches how the world is moving, not just where the company stands, answering 'where do we need to be?'

### Article 4 | Opportunities & the Comfort Zone

**Problem:** Opportunities go unmanaged and an oversized comfort zone leaves whole sectors stagnant and exposed.

**Key message:** Keeping the comfort zone deliberately small turns identified opportunity into captured value.

### Article 5 | Push to Pull

**Problem:** Risk management is reported after the fact and cannot show its value, so it stays a push rather than a pull.

**Key message:** Embedding risk into everyday decisions through transparency, value measurement and foresight makes it visible and sustainable.

### Article 6 | What We Need to Survive

**Problem:** Resilience is confused with robustness and resistance, and the buffer erodes invisibly until one event too many.

**Key message:** Resilience is engineered in the system, the balance sheet and — decisively — the behaviour of people under crisis.

### Article 7 | Procurement: A Golden Key

**Problem:** Procurement is measured on cost while expected to deliver resilience, ESG and growth.

**Key message:** A managerial bridge turns the supply chain from a cost centre into a value-creation engine.

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