

STANDARDIZATION & SECURITY: A PERFECT MATCH

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For 165 years, Northwestern Mutual has been helping families and businesses achieve financial security.

Revenue \$34 billion

#97 on FORTUNE 100

9,900+ Financial
Professionals

7,600+ Employees

Headquartered in
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Downtown NYC
Corporate Office

Our Strength, In Numbers



FORTUNE's® 2022 World's Most Admired Companies

#1 among life insurers for
"Financial Soundness,"
"Quality of Products/Services," and
"Use of Corporate Assets."

Unsurpassed Financial Strength

with total company assets of
\$335 billion

Aaa
HIGHEST
Moody's
Investors
Service

A++
HIGHEST
A.M. Best
Company

AAA
HIGHEST
Fitch Ratings

AA+
SECOND
HIGHEST
S&P Global
Ratings

97%

of policyowners stay
year after year



U.S. Independent Broker-Dealer

Measured by 2020 revenue

Wealth Management

\$244 billion

retail investment client assets held or
managed by Northwestern Mutual



Largest direct provider
of individual life
insurance in the U.S.



Total clients

4.9+ million



Industry leader in total dividend payout

\$6.5 billion

AGENDA



Paradox of choice



Our experience with too many options



How standardization helps



Technology and cultural implications



Outcomes



Lessons learned

Paradox of choice

TOO MUCH CHOICE



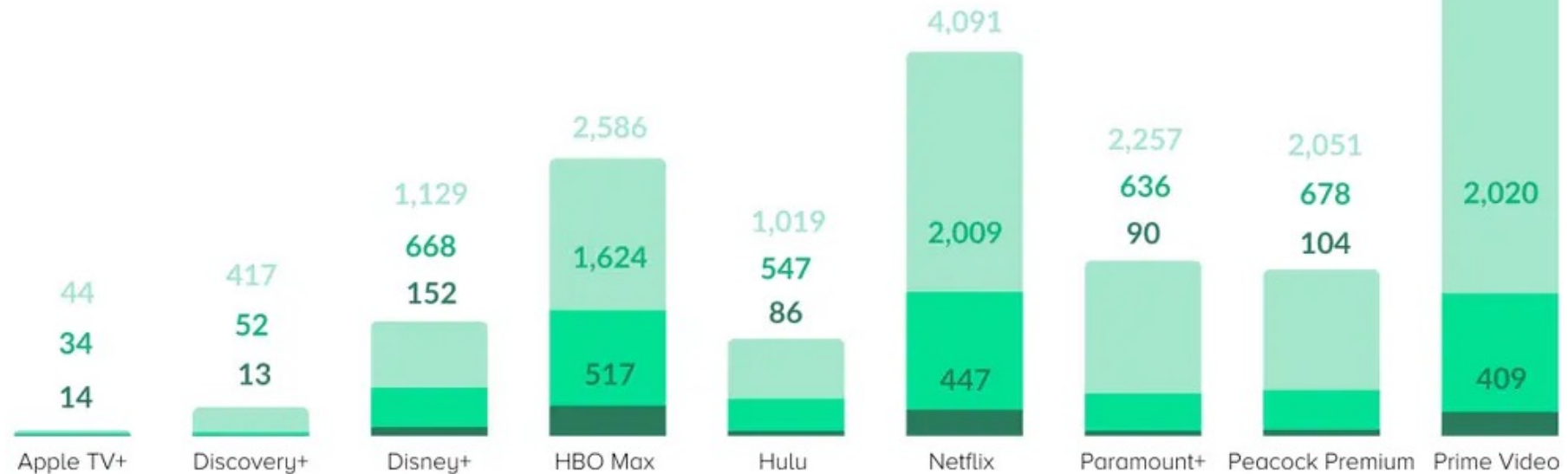
TOO MUCH CHOICE

Number of Cable TV Stations in the US: 1761

MOVIES AVAILABLE ON U.S. STREAMING SERVICES

*based on catalog data from Reelgood and IMDb ratings as of Apr. 11, 2022

- Total Movies Available
- Quality Movies - rated 6.0+ on IMDb, with 300+ votes
- High-Quality Movies - rated 7.5+ on IMDb, with 300+ votes



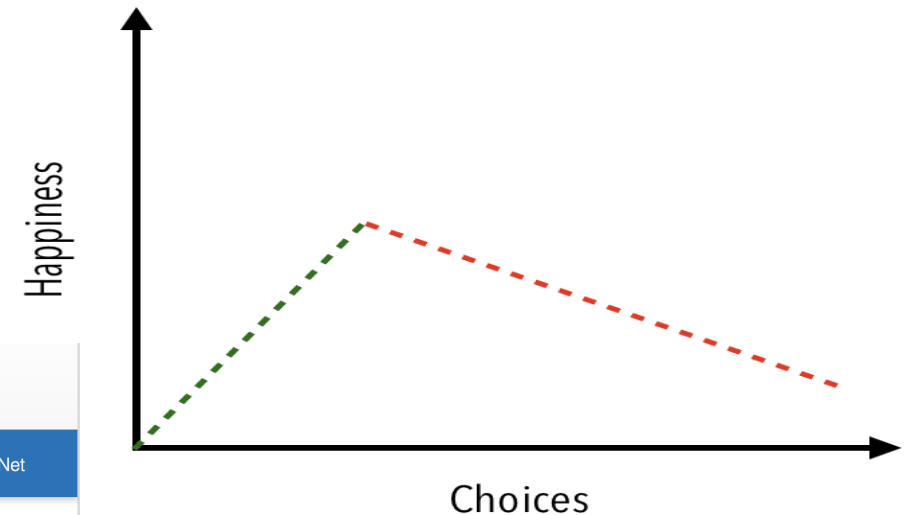
WHY IS TOO MUCH CHOICE PROBLEMATIC?

Overabundance of options can lead to

- Anxiety
- Indecision
- Analysis paralysis
- Dissatisfaction

The Paradox of Choice

Customers want choice, just not too much



APA PsycNet® AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SEARCH ▸

BROWSE ▸

Recent Searches

My List

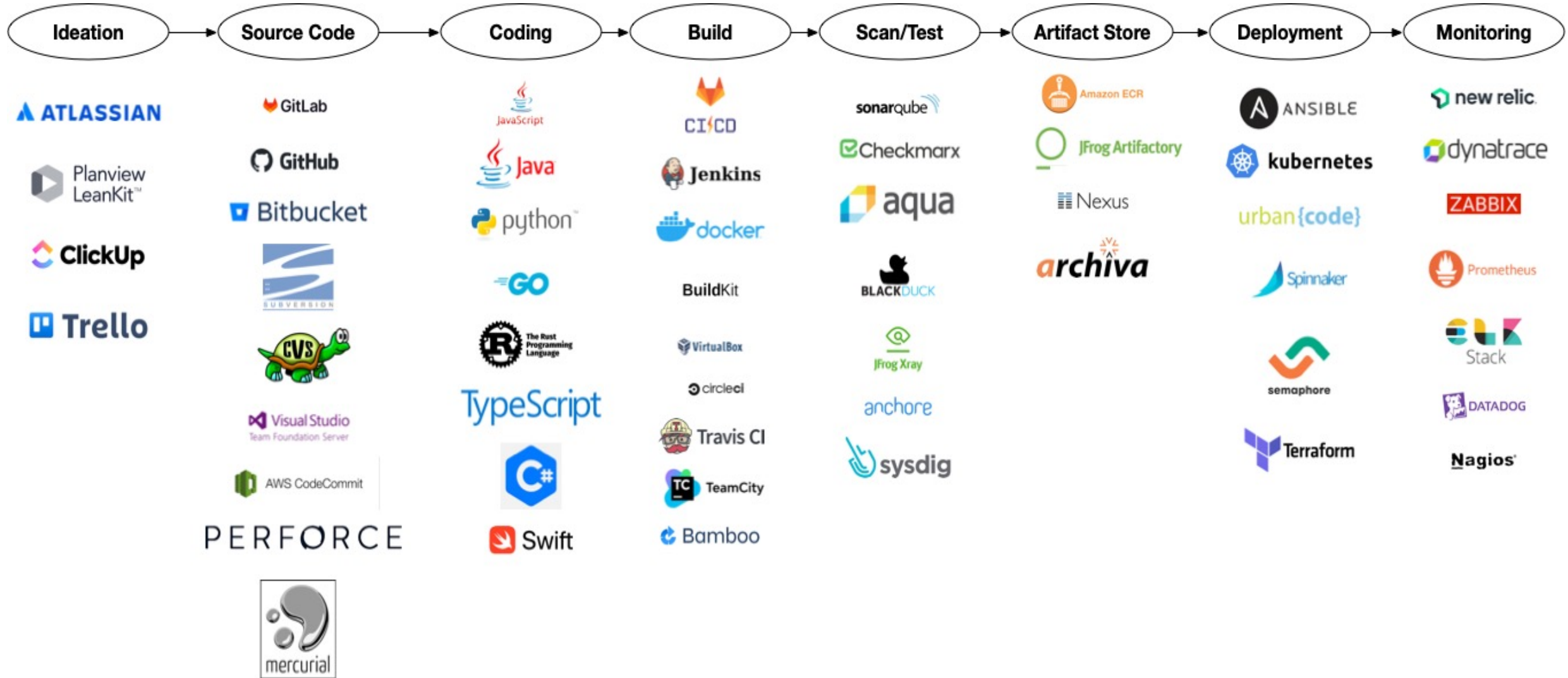
My PsycNet

Making choices impairs subsequent self-control: A limited-resource account of decision making, self-regulation, and active initiative.

- Finite amount of mental energy
- More decisions we must make creates **Decision Fatigue**

Our experience

TOO MANY TOOLS - LANDSCAPE



TOOL SPRAWL - EFFECTS

High cost of
maintenance

Islands of
automation

Increased
complexity

Security is a
challenge

Lost
productivity

Widening
skill gap

Standardization

GOLDEN PATHS



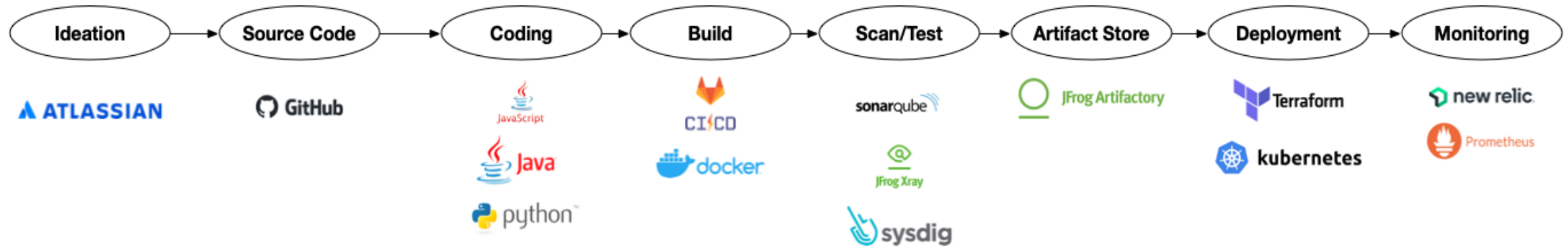
VS.



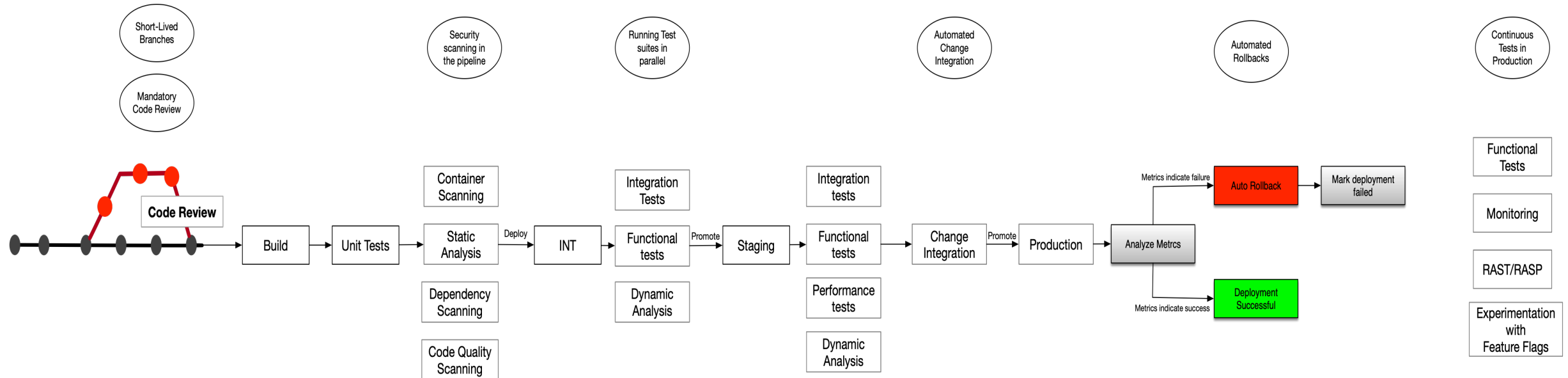
Drive intentional standardization and simplification
Purposeful evolution of technology

Golden Path: A unified and standard approach to creating applications and infrastructure

STANDARDIZED PLATFORM



STANDARDIZED PIPELINE



One Pipeline To Rule It All

Standardized build/scanning/deployment stages

Development Standards Enforced (Code Reviews, Artifact Sign, Security etc.)

CHECKS AND BALANCES

*Enforcements are **key to success**. What can we enforce?*

Programming Languages

Mandatory Code Quality Scanning

Code Review Standards and Trunk Based Development

Change Ticket for every Production change

Security Scanning in the pipeline (Static Code, Container, Dependencies etc.)

Pretty much anything the organization wants (Costs/Resource Limits etc.)



Implications

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SET OF TOOLS

Simple things should be simple, complex things should be possible - Alan Kay



Pick tools with the
end in mind



Layout pros and
cons for all
vetted tools



Pick tools that have
better integrations
into the ecosystem



Scalability
is key

Non-Functional Requirements

Who will maintain the tool?

Performance

Cost and Licensing model

TOOL CONSOLIDATION

- 1 Long road to migration
- 2 Business continuity needs to be maintained
- 3 Data migration is a challenge
- 4 Employee training on tools

IS STANDARDIZATION DETRIMENTAL TO INNOVATION ?

- ☐ All technology decisions require trade-offs
- ☐ Innovation could be masking 'not invented here' syndrome.
- ☐ Standardization provides a foundation on which innovation can build
- ☐ Technology evolves continuously – critical to align innovation to business objectives.
- ☐ Align the incentive model – reward business outcomes vs. "cool" tech selection

Outcomes

OUTCOMES WE EXPERIENCED

Centralized governance is possible; hence, improved security

Improved lead time to change

Standardization leads to consistency in environment

Improved developer collaboration

Reusable automation & simplified onboarding

Lower cost of licensing; economy of scale

Lessons learned

LESSONS LEARNED

☒ Single source control is an absolute **MUST**

☒ Central DevOps team with a **GLOBAL VIEW** of things is essential

☒ One “**PRETTY GOOD**” tool is better than multiple amazing tools

☒ Consistency in the environment is **FAR** more powerful than devs leveraging custom solutions

☒ It's not all boring; it can be made **FUN**

THANK YOU

