Leaders need to shape their culture. What's the smallest, broadest intervention they can make?

How do they make it safe, reliable and scalable?

We'll cover

- The basis for Better Conversations

- Our model for open-sourcing learning

- Our approach to soft skills training

- What that means for leaders and managers

Cultural challenges in smaller organisations

What do we do differently at Amphora?

Challenges

- Software development is all about communication
  - Between different functions
  - And the market!
- Startup businesses are all about communication
  - Lots of fast iteration
  - I'd be trying stuff in front of prospects and then calling the office to tell them what I'd just made up
  - Something akin to the Lean Startup before it was a thing?
  - Very little formal process
  - Primarily because we had no money!
- And… I was a very bad communicator
  - Who had just re-mortgaged the house
  - And now had a job talking to people for a living
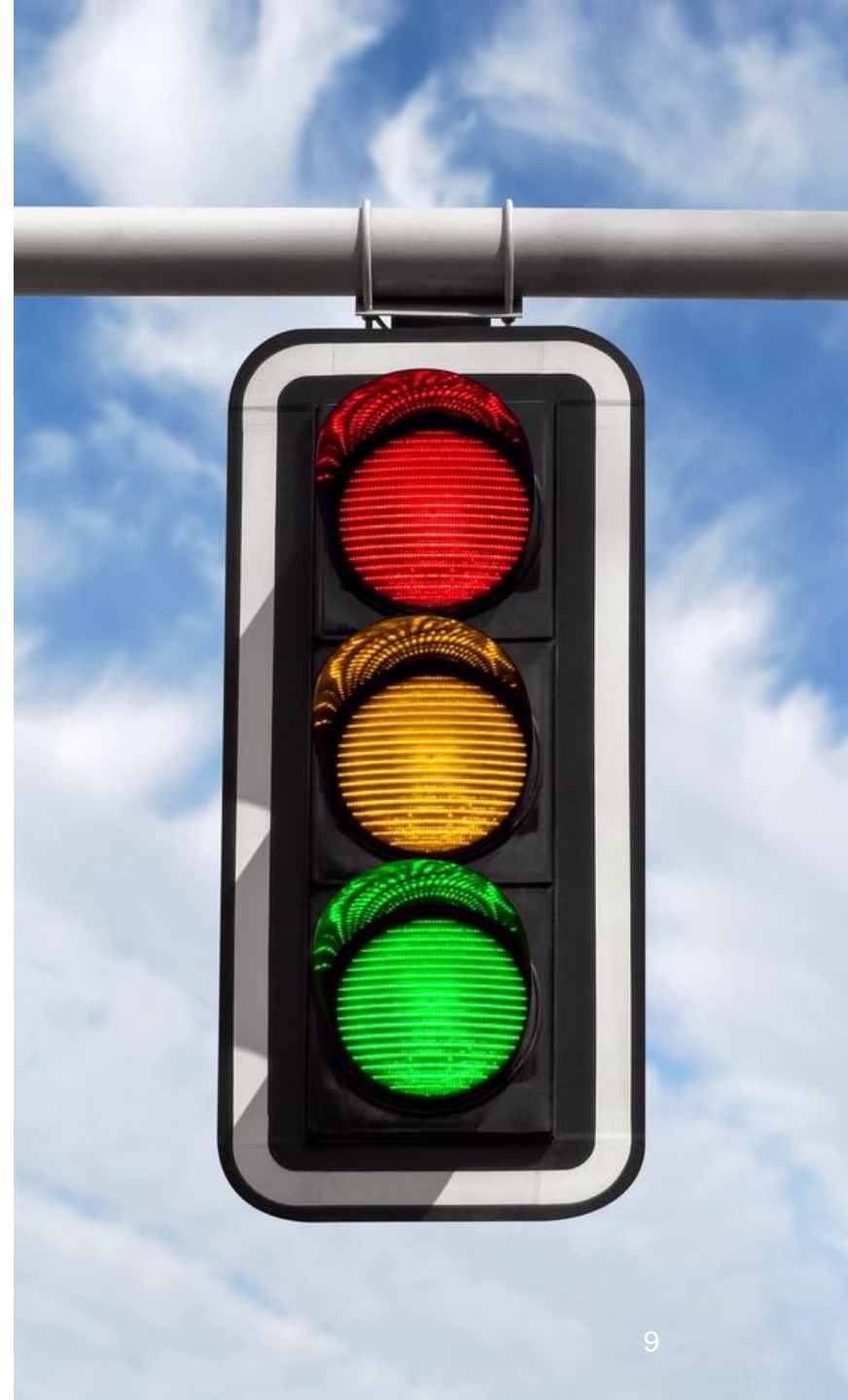
Established solutions suck

- Video-based training doesn't really work generally and especially not for conversations!

- Plus, it's very performative

- For SMEs, freelance trainers are a typical option
  - Quality is hit & miss, content can be problematic
  - Grift risk is high
  - Very hard to replicate when the next employee arrives

- Inaccessible, especially for single parents and senior executives

- External dependence

- Under our ISO9001 system this is not a quality supplier!

What we needed

- Replicable, so we can have a consistent experience
- Delivered remotely
- 1h sessions, interleaved with "real" life
- Just what is needed, nothing more
- Universally applicable
- Solid
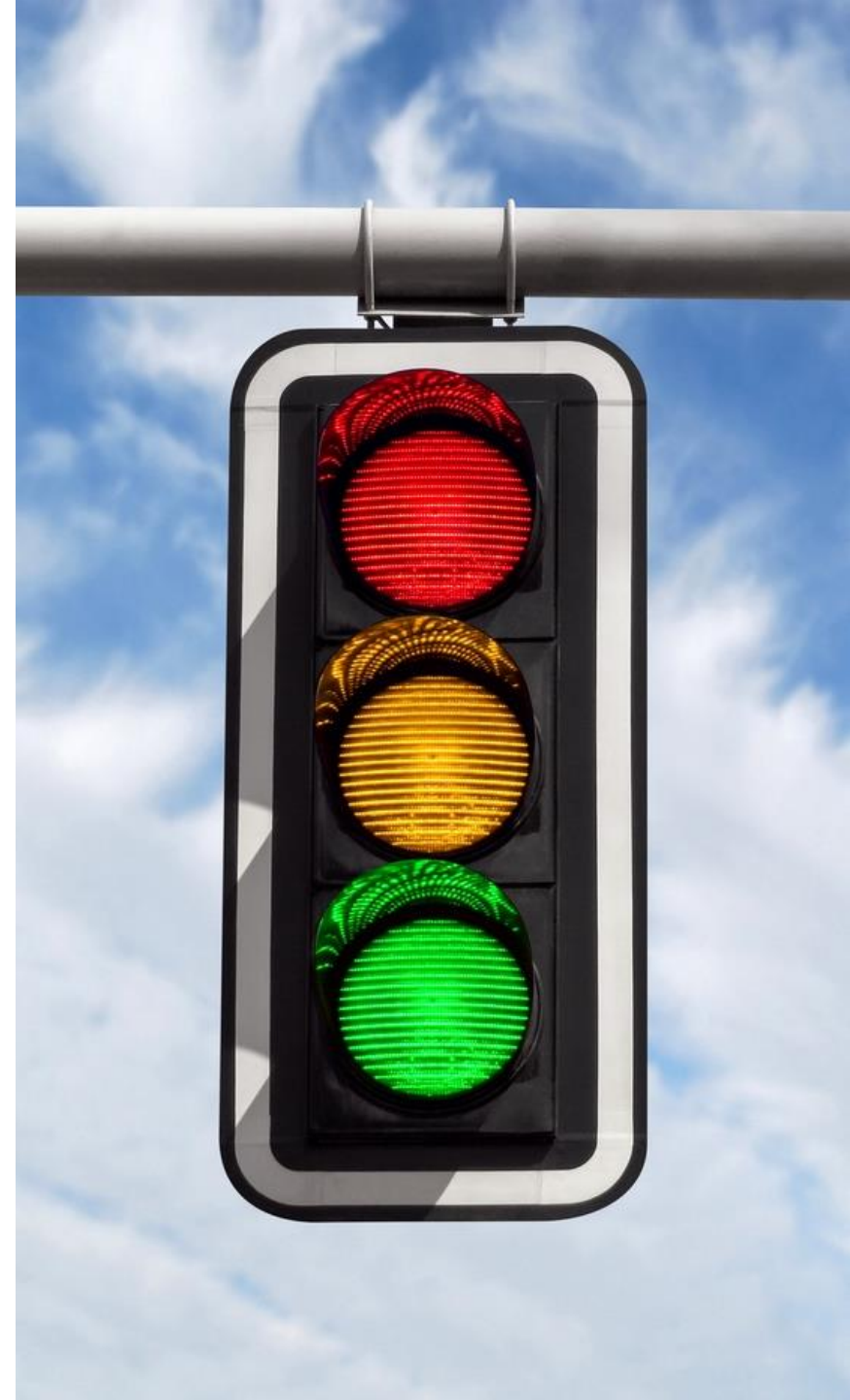- Safe
- Doesn't tell people they are wrong

So, what happened?
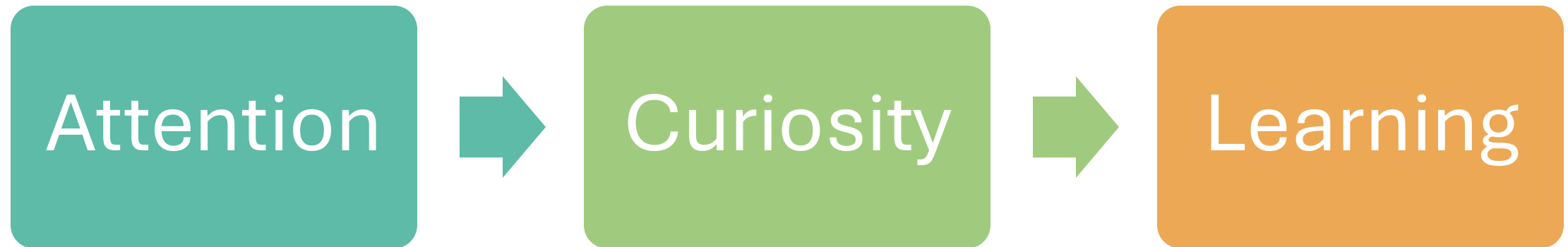
Example: Traffic Light Model

States of thinking/feeling

- Red – stop, and take a break
  - avoid harm
  - avoid loss
  - seek safety and the resources that keep you alive
- Amber/yellow – proceed with caution
  - seek *social safeness* by forming bonds with others who are helpful and supportive.
- Green – good to go
  - All needs met, system in balance
  - Learning, working and thinking at your best

The basis of the Better Conversations course

Attention → Curiosity → Learning

Organisational training spans multiple needs

Course/Trainer centric   *Outcome centric*

Classroom style groups of individuals

Learning must be translated into work context by learner

Time-linear, time-limited to fit training schedule

Learning for shared purpose and responsibilities

Learning must be immediately applicable within work context

Flexible to needs of participants

Informational and knowledge based

Service to managers, generalised theory

Trainer trains content, measures success against course objectives

Relational and skills based

Co-learning with managers, adaptive to local challenges

Learners become facilitators of learning, success is subjective

Based on Kegan and Lahey, Immunity to Change, p312

Benefits of open-source

- Training is a relatively backward industry
  - Lots of "proprietary" IP
  - But actually, it's all reworking the same stuff
  - I explicitly don't want "unique" and special solutions
    - Buggy
    - Often dangerous

- Information is free (especially with AI)
  - Open Source built The Internet!

- In software, "proprietary" is now a dirty word

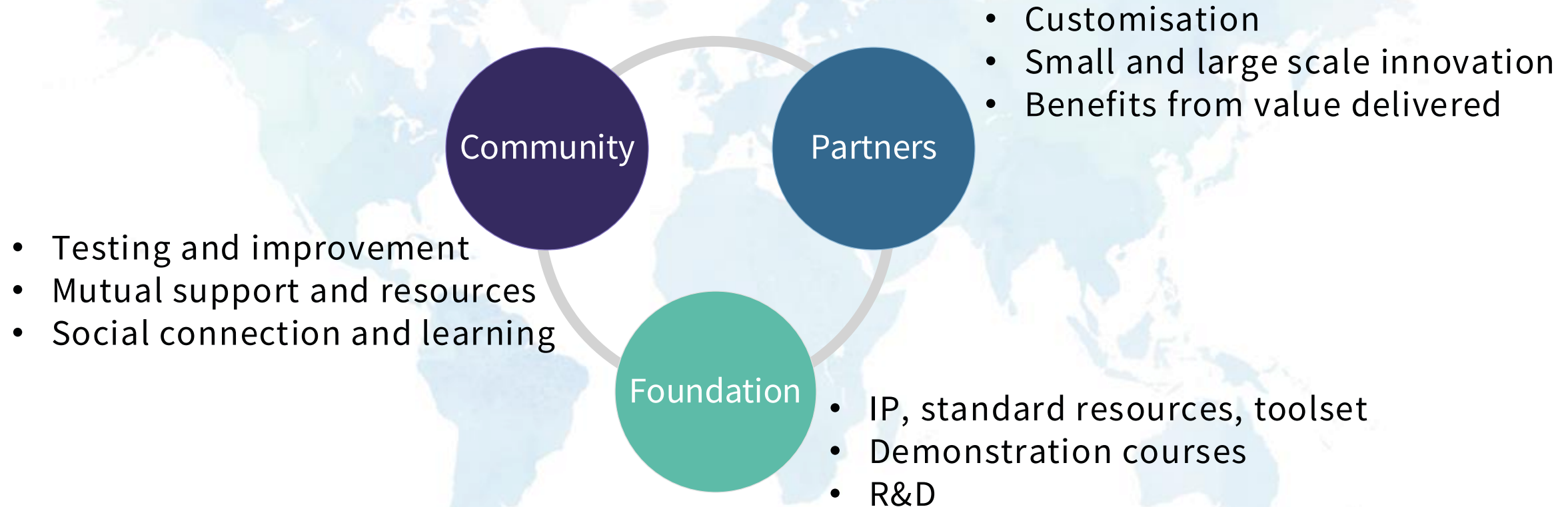- I think the same will happen in training

What happened when we applied Open Source to this course?

- Common IP
  - Better quality: Lots of experience is encoded in the course materials
  - End product much more robust and justified by research
  - Easier for people to partner up (no IP issues, a common barrier)
- More attractive to customers
  - Less risk
  - Large pool of case studies
- Allows a community to form
  - Mutual support & training
  - Faster time to revenue/impact

Tools – what do we use and why?

- Open Source software projects are enabled by tools. What do we use?
- Aims
  - Glue the project together
  - Support our partners, make it easier to spread this, support their businesses
  - Reduce our costs (aim is to be self-sustaining in the next year or two)
- Most of this is developed internally
- Flight plans etc. are Open Source (MIT)
  - https://github.com/Better-Conversations/

- Booking and reminders
  - Improve attendee experience
  - Support the flow: Attendee to Observe to Facilitate on our "Experience" Courses
- Flight Plans
  - Consistency
  - Translations
  - Ability to customize to neurodiversity and other variables
- Delivery Console
  - Neurodiversity
  - Support people with limited screen space etc.
- Community

Our model

Community

Partners

Foundation

- Testing and improvement
- Mutual support and resources
- Social connection and learning

- Customisation
- Small and large scale innovation
- Benefits from value delivered

- IP, standard resources, toolset
- Demonstration courses
- R&D

Better
Conversations
Foundation

"The world belongs to the people who are curious"

Albert Einstein

Please do join us!
https://bettercourses.org/r/ou-2024