

A silver sedan is shown from a low angle, tilted horizontally on its side. The front wheel is pointing towards the bottom left, and the rear wheel is pointing towards the top right. The car is positioned on a patch of dry, brownish grass. In the background, there's a paved road, some trees, and a chain-link fence on the right side.

Oh #\$%#!

Risk & Expectation Management

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Who am I?

Bridget Veerhoff

Senior Project Manager



7+ years working on
user-facing web projects
at tiny and huge organizations

Today's talk is based on
my experiences and
observations of my peers

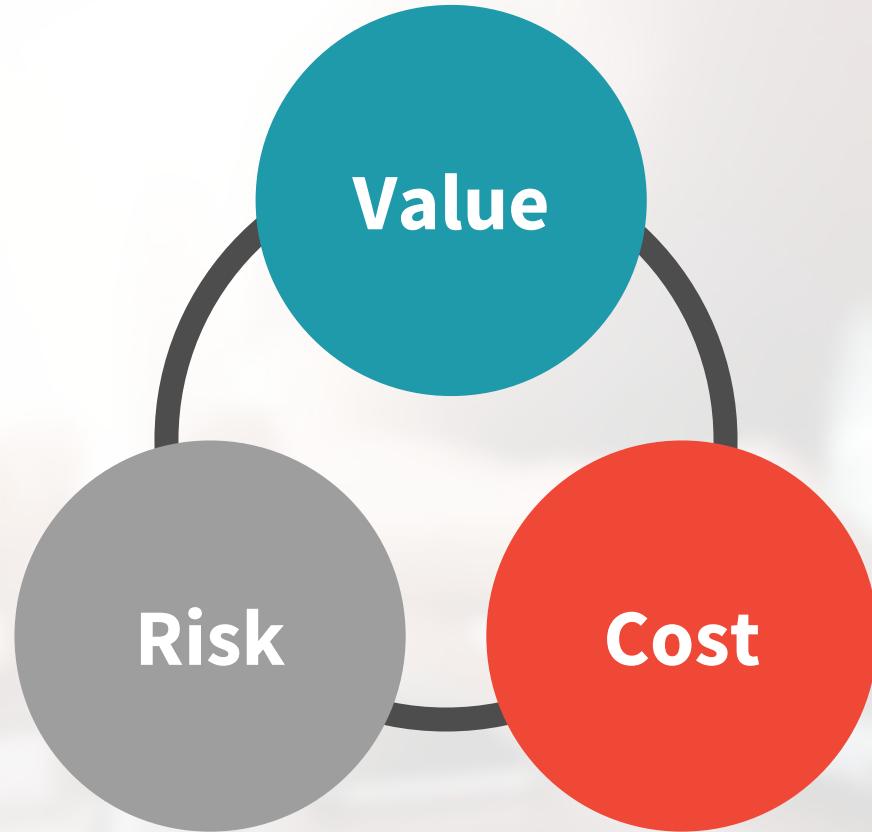
— A FULL-SERVICE DIGITAL AGENCY THAT
CRAFTS SOLUTIONS FOR THE WORLD'S
MOST INFLUENTIAL PROBLEM SOLVERS.

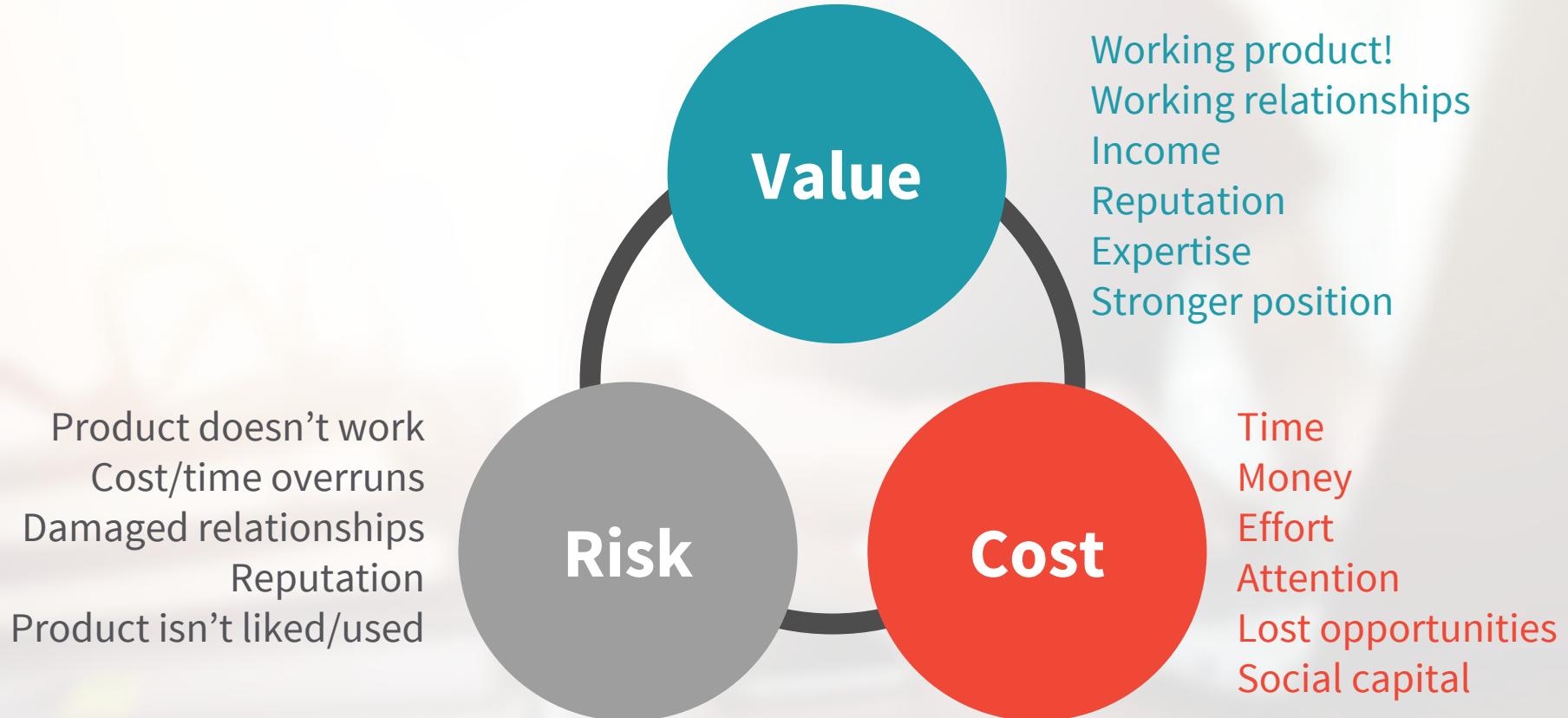


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Project = ?

Project =
Delivering **value**
for the least **cost**
while managing risk





Value ↑ Cost ↑

high	high
	med.
med.	med.
low	med.
	high
	med.

Development

Code reviews

Client meetings

Standups

Testing

Planning and projections

...etc.

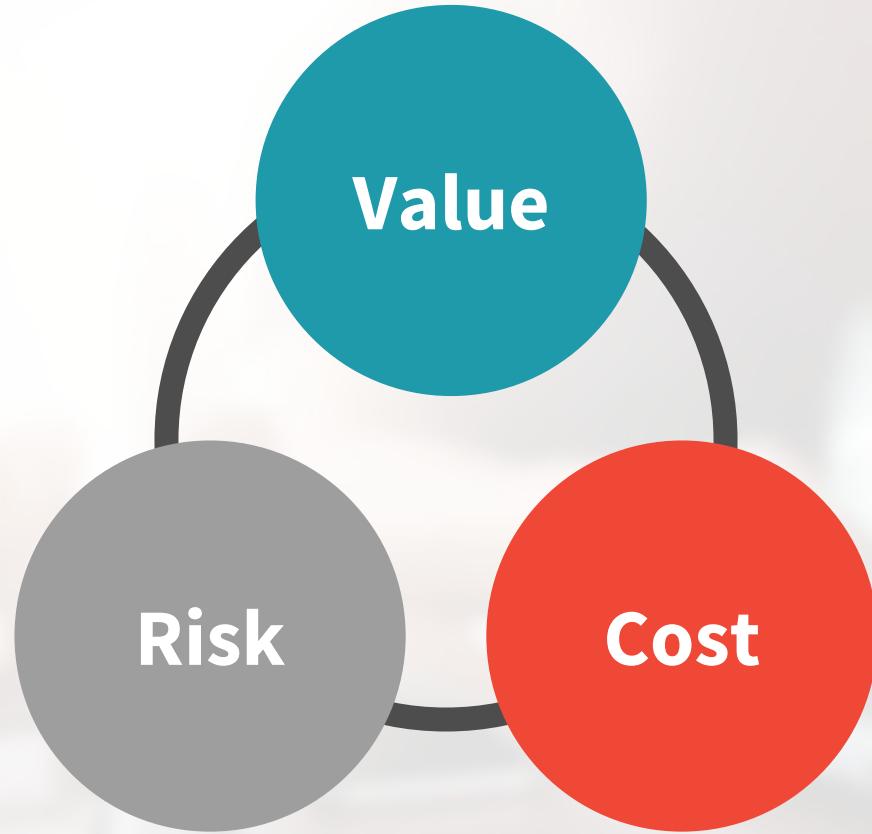


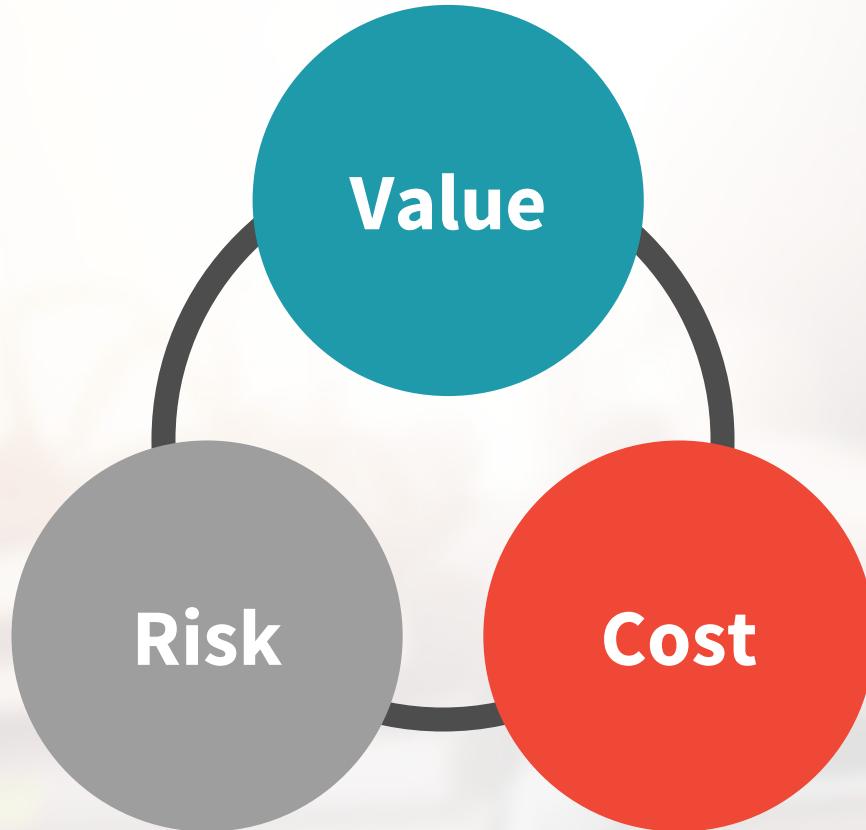
Value ↑ Cost ↑ Risk ↓

high	high		Development
	med.	med.	Code reviews
med.	med.	med.	Client meetings
low	med.	med.	Standups
	high	high	Testing
	med.	med.	Planning and projections

...etc.







**Pursuing Value
Costs you, and
generates Risk**

**Value, Cost, Risk
should *balance***

Key points

- A project is composed of Value generation, Risk, Cost
- Articulate risks together at the beginning
- Create opportunities to spot warning signs
- Process exists to reduce risk
- Risk estimation (break it down)
- Gain should exceed the pain
- Value, Cost and Risk should be balanced

Today:

- Common risks
 - simple framework
 - tips & Tricks
- Unique risks
 - simple framework
 - tips & Tricks

Keeping it simple

- There are whole disciplines around risk management!
- Huge bodies of knowledge out there!



“We’re not saving babies here”*

* Scott Molvar (my first boss)

... Unless you are saving babies

- If:
 - the cost of failure is unacceptable (example: a life)
 - there are a lot of parties involved in the project
 - likelihood of failure is high
- then a more rigorous framework is needed.
- That's rare in our work.



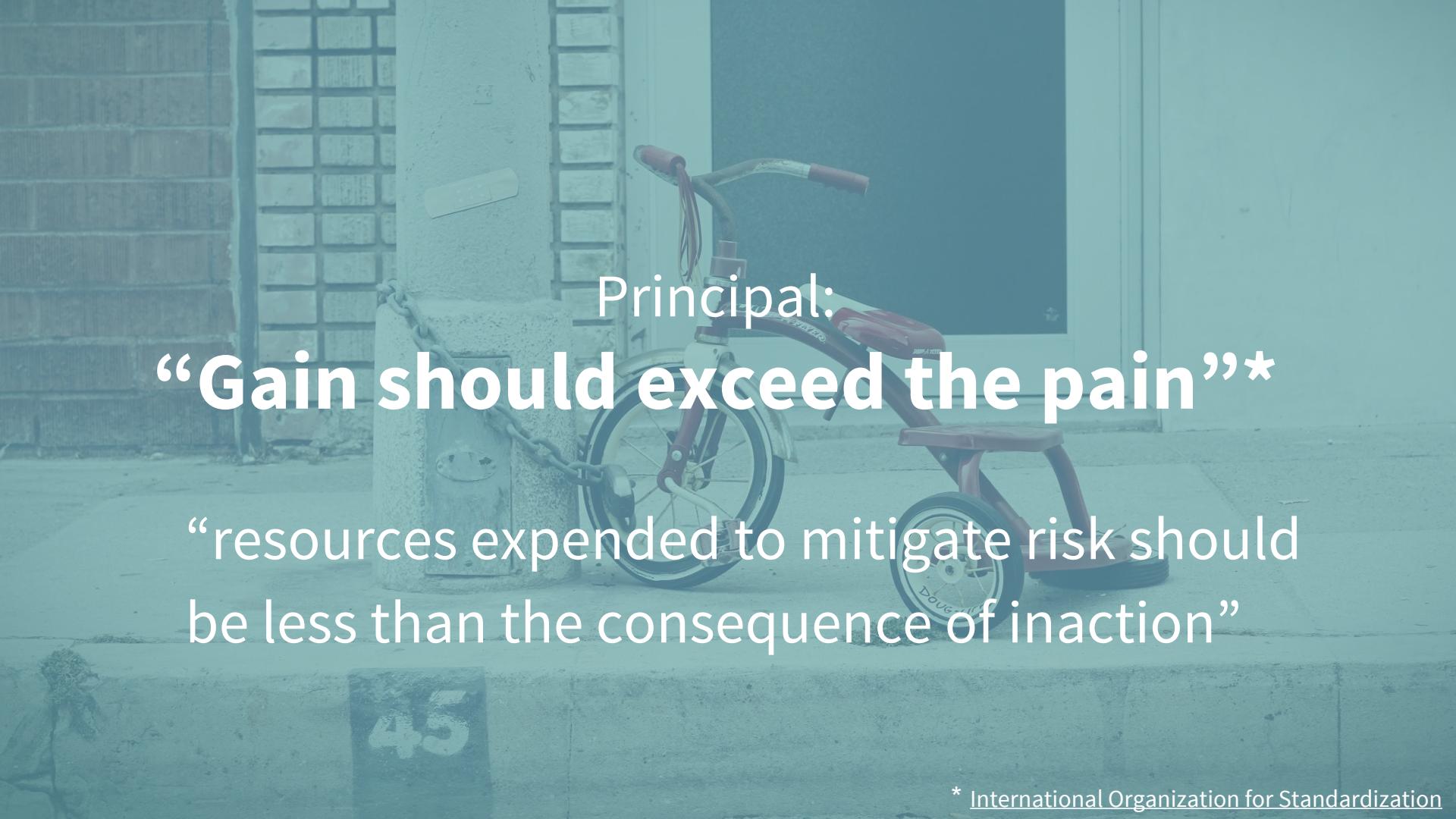


“We’re not saving babies here”*

A simple framework is likely enough

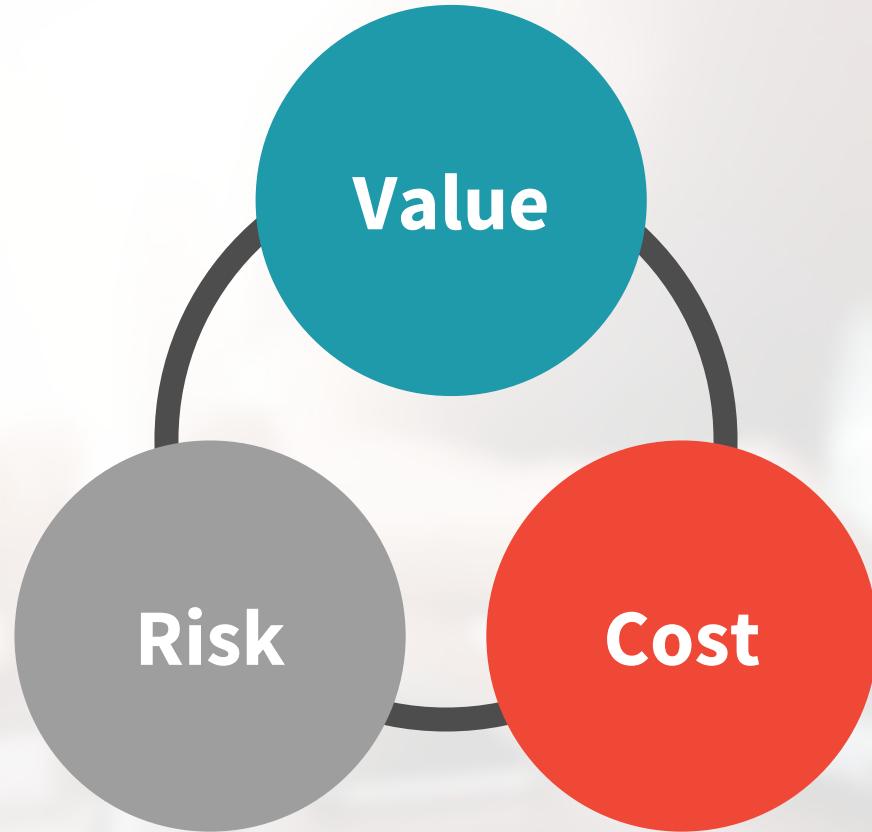
Ask me later: more rigorous frameworks

* Scott Molvar (my first boss)



Principal:
“Gain should exceed the pain”*

“resources expended to mitigate risk should
be less than the consequence of inaction”





Principle: Articulate risks together

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Identify risks early - explicitly

- Helps establish trust
- Builds a shared reference list
- Exposes assumptions

Preemptive Techniques

Pre-Mortem

“It’s months into the future. We’ve just ended the project, and it didn’t go well.

Why? What would have happened that caused this project to fail?”



Check back in regularly

- new risks will be uncovered
- you'll know more about existing risks
- refresher on what other people are anxious about



Principle: Articulate risks together

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Common risks

Common risks

- Misaligned expectations
 - What are we doing?
 - Who's responsible for piece?
 - When are things going to be done?
- Estimates too low
- Unexpected technical challenges
- Bugs
- Clients change their mind
- ...etc.



PMs love process

PMs love **process**
preempting risks

Value ↑ Cost ↑ Risk ↓

high	high		Development
	med.	med.	Code reviews
med.	med.	med.	Client meetings
low	med.	med.	Standups
	high	high	Testing
	med.	med.	Planning and projections

...etc.



Value ↑ Cost ↑ Risk ↓

high	high		Development	
	med.	med.	Code reviews	<i>process</i>
med.	med.	med.	Client meetings	<i>process</i>
low	med.	med.	Standups	<i>process</i>
	high	high	Testing	<i>~ process</i>
	med.	med.	Planning and projections	<i>process</i>

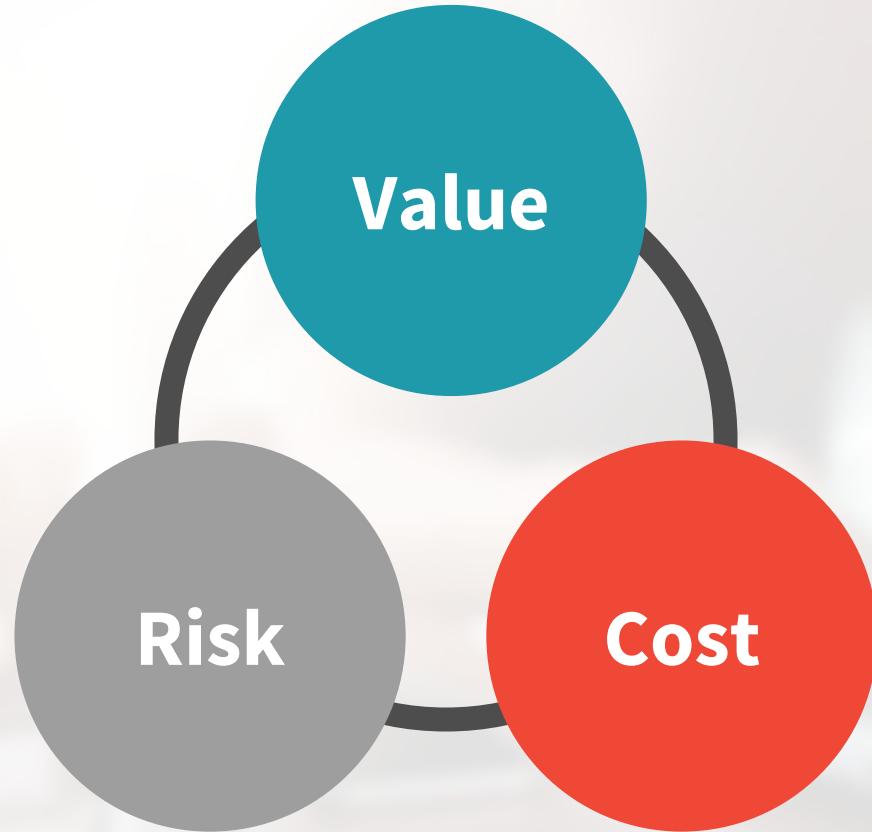
...etc.





Principle:
Process exists to reduce risk

Ask me later: managing the perception of a risk vs. the actual risk.



PM* = making sure...

- stuff happens
- everyone agrees on what's happening
- risks are mitigated

* Bridget's super unofficial definition

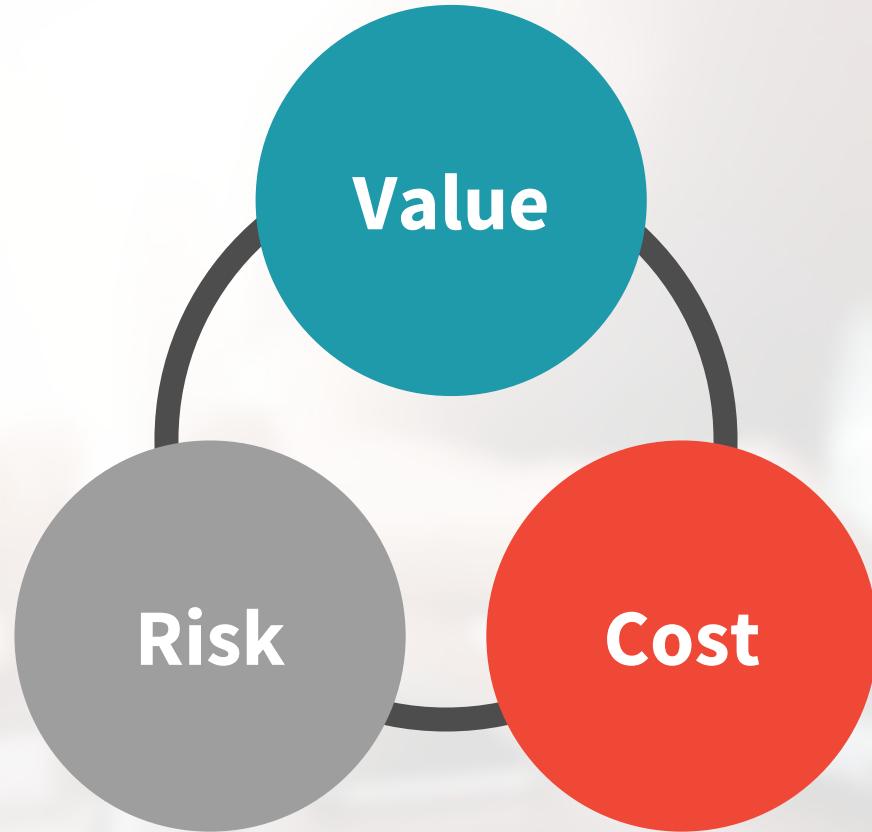


PM* = making sure...

- create value *and*
- manage expectations *in order to...*
- reduce risk

* *Bridget's super unofficial definition*





Preemptive Techniques

Roles & Responsibilities

Clarify these! Explicitly!
At the beginning!



List tasks

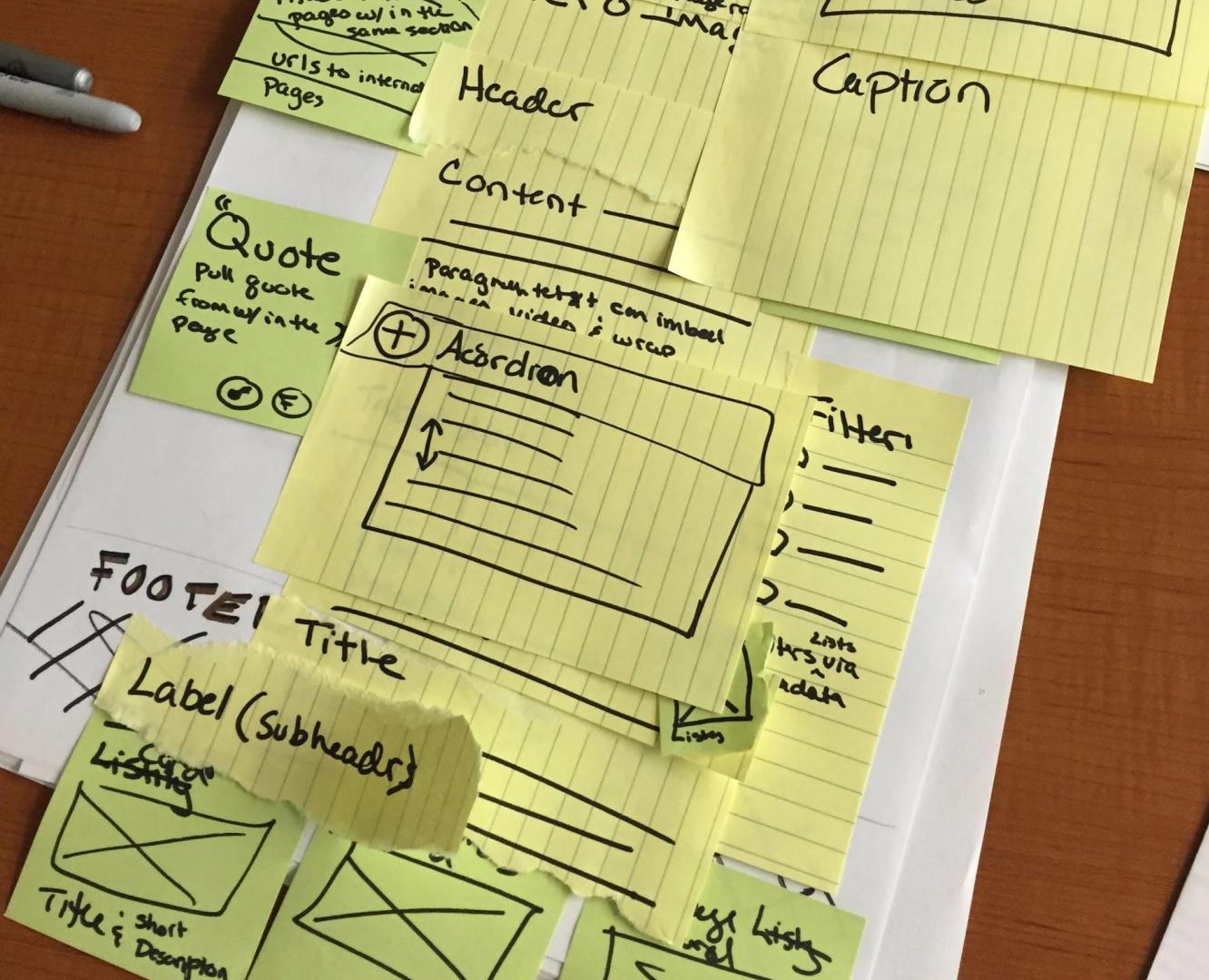
Who	By when	What
Bob	11/2 @ 5pm	Set up Dev + Stage environments

- Summarize at the end of EVERY meeting.
- Put in writing and send to all involved.

Preemptive Techniques

...and More

- Stakeholder identification
- Demos
- Retrospectives
- Testing
- Projections
- Critical event communication
- ... etc.





Principle: Warning Signs

create opportunities to spot them

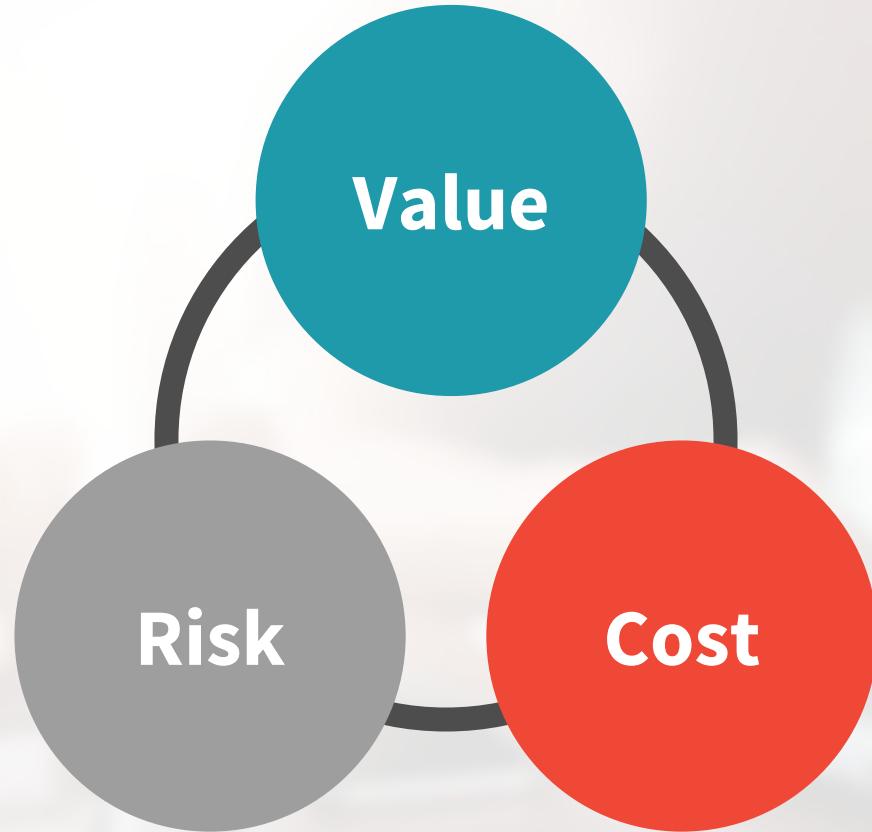
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Common risks

Unique risks

Unique risks

- Every project is different
- Custom approach for each unique risk
 - *if it's worth it*



Estimate Risk

- How much effort is managing it worth?
- Break it down

Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
 - What happens?
 - Who is affected by it?

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
- Severity
 - How bad is it?
 - What cost will we have to pay?
 - Are there work-arounds?

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
- Severity
- Likelihood

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
- Severity
- Likelihood
- Preventative measures
 - How can we reduce the likelihood?

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
- Severity
- Likelihood
- Preventative measures
- Warning signs
 - What do we need to monitor? Look out for?

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

- Impact
- Severity
- Likelihood
- Preventative measures
- Warning signs
- Responsible party

Ask me later: Risk perception. Inherent biases



Anatomy of Risk

Value you're protecting				Cost of that protection		
Risk	Impact	Severity	Likelihood	Preventative measure	Warning signs	Responsible party
bike stolen	no bike!	cannot get to my job; likely to be fired	low	bike lock ugly bike secured room	see other bikes stolen nearby	me (owner)

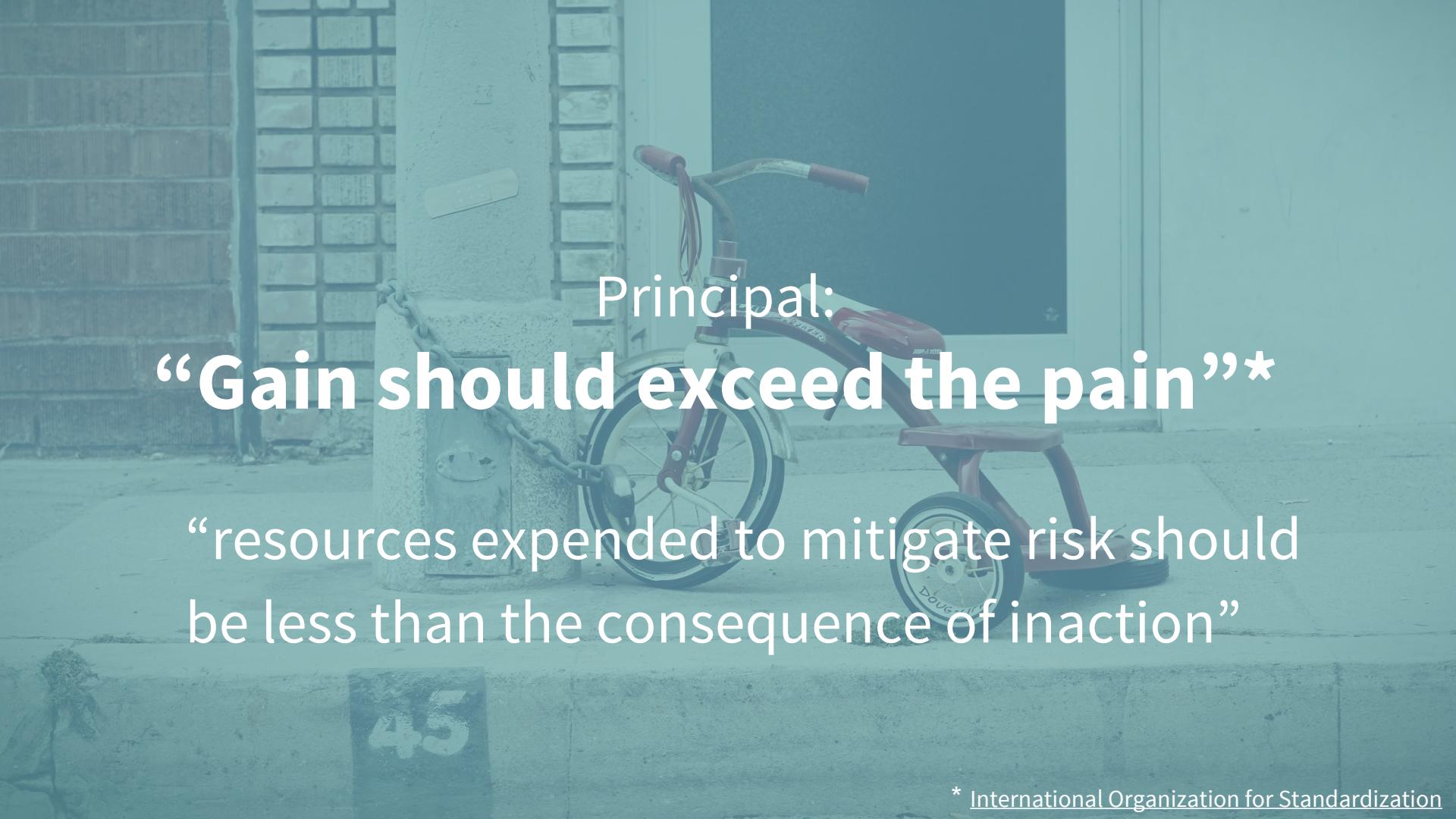


Common areas to look for risk

- Technical complexities & unknowns
- Team
 - capacity: availability, skillset, interest
 - efficacy: autonomy, transparency, communications
 - coherency: standards, expectations
- Authorizing environment
 - hidden stakeholders
 - key contacts with low authority or low confidence
 - limited attention of key decision makers
- Market / end user interest

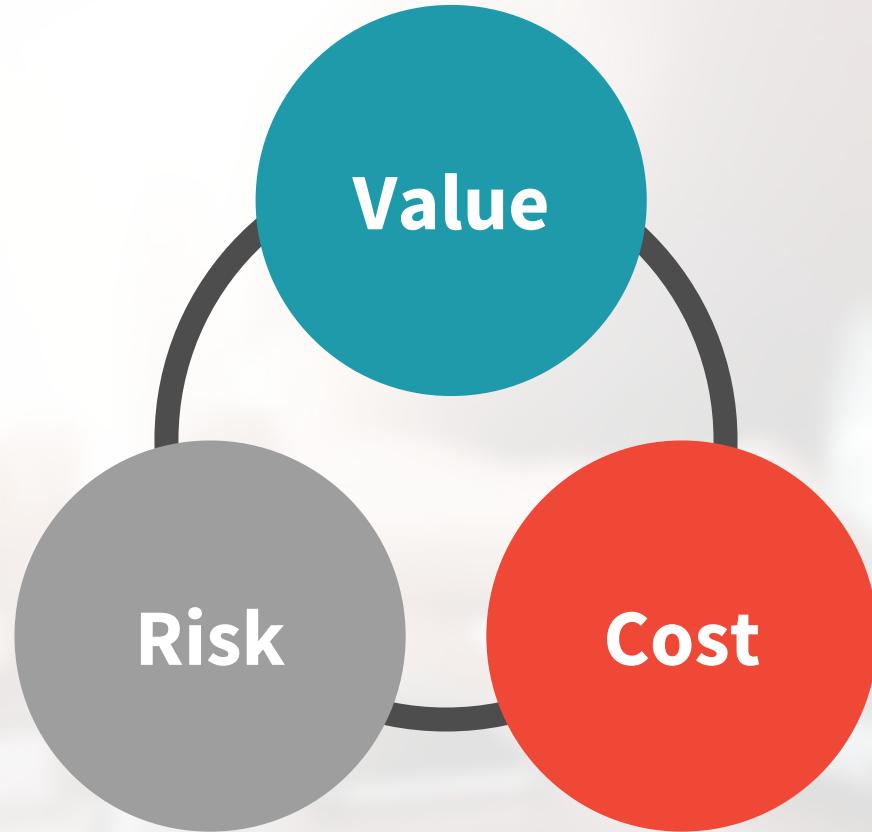
Look at different scales

- Specific tasks/features
- Specific meetings and relationships
- Project-wide
- Cross-project
- Organization-wide



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Things not discussed:

- Expectation management
 - Perception of risk
 - Biases in risk perception ([Big Think's article](#) is a great summary)
 - Role assignments that increase risk
 - Projections
 - Authorizing environments
 - Testing
-

A silver sedan is shown from a low angle, tilted 180 degrees so it appears to be driving upwards. The car is positioned on a grassy embankment next to a metal fence. In the background, there's a residential area with houses and trees.

Q & A

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THANK YOU!

Bridget Veerhoff
bveerhoff@forumone.com

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