

# 17. A Different Kind of DNA

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- A design and architecture meeting with teeth.
- We do not have a good idea how to systematically grow engineers outside the traditional management hierarchy.
- Everyone wants to grow.
- A flat organization is one that minimizes hierarchy.

## No Ticker-Tape Parade

- Problem is that once leads and managers are recognized as such, their peers no longer see them the in the same way.
- A solution begins with rebranding, by introducing the idea that managers and engineers are hierarchically no different.
- We need leads and managers as a means of scaling responsibility and communication.
- We need to dispel the idea that their roles are also the exclusive owners of decision-making.
- Introducing the DNA meeting.

## Five Kinds of Win

- DNA stands for design 'n' architecture.
- At it's core, it's just a meeting.
- It's a collection of bright engineers from across the teams in a room tasked with a specific purpose.
- Five kinds of win:
  - It shines a light brightly.
    - Something big and technical is going down.
    - Not a bet-the-company decision but a bet-the-group or the division decision.
    - Failing at this can result in extreme consequences.
  - Bring respectable firepower.
    - The DNA team is not only the set of engineers who are best to vet the big idea, but those who can talk about how to make it better, can constructively criticize, and are distinctly drama- and politics-free.
  - It has teeth.
    - DNA meeting is not a regular meeting. Treat it so.
    - If you don't contribute, you won't be invited back.
    - It needs to be culturally understood that if you don't bring your A game to the DNA meeting, the team is authorized to mentally kick the shit out of you.
  - DNA has absolutely nothing to do with management (and everything to do with leadership).
    - DNA meeting is a staff meeting of the influential engineers who don't want direct reports, but want to lead.
    - They make decisions critical to the technology.
    - This meeting is to cultivate technical leadership.
  - DNA is achievable and aspirational.

- DNA exists as an acknowledgement that a team is led not by the folks who build the people, but also by people who build the project.
- It is not a popularity contest to be part of this team.

## **Flat Is a State of Mind**

- You build a DNA meeting...
  - To suit your culture.
  - So your technical leaders have a platform where their ideas are heard, debated, and acted on.
  - To remind the team that all forms of leadership matter.