

9 Management Habits Quietly Burning Out Your Best Engineers

Presented By :

Andrew Murphy

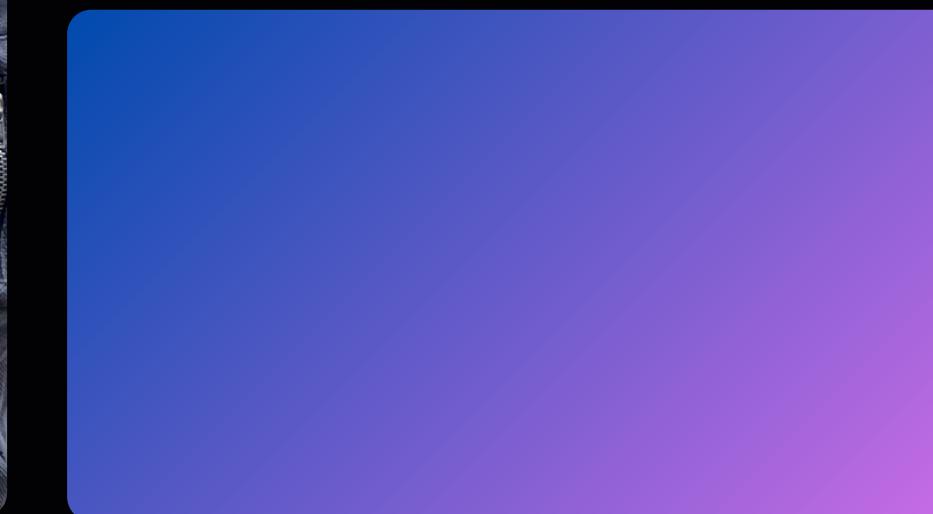
debuggingleadership.com

- Why are we talking about this?
- What are the 9 habits?
- What do we do about it?
- Q&A



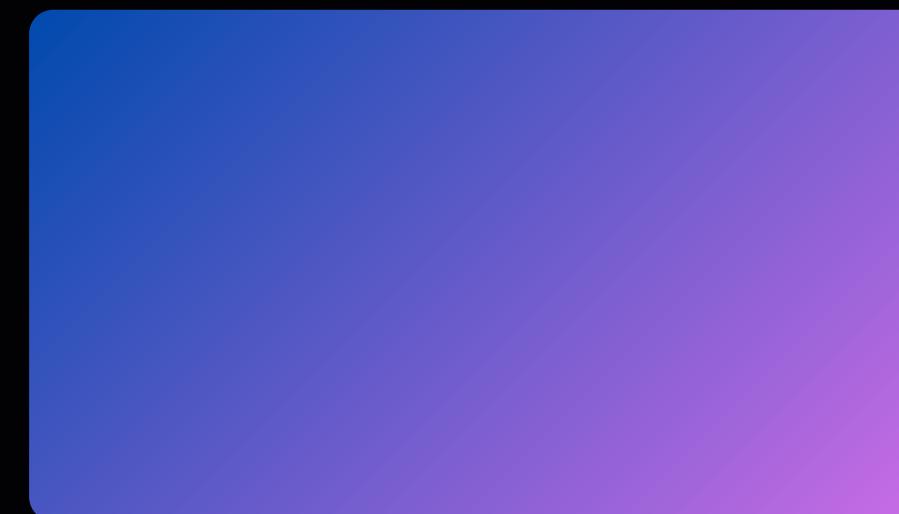


This isn't a monologue.
Interruptions are expected and
even encouraged.

 Debugging Leadership



Debugging Leadership





My Career:



Coder
~25 years

Tech leader
~17 years

Trainer (TLL)
~7 years

Debugging Leadership
~NEW!



Burnout in engineering teams is rarely caused by a single event



Persistent habits that quietly
erode motivation, well-being, and
performance



What is burnout?



The 9 Habits:

1.

Equating Busyness With Value

- Try to measure and reward impact, not activity.
- Implement weekly "impact reviews" where developers showcase one meaningful contribution rather than listing all activities

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



2.

Failing to Set, Respect and Model Healthy Boundaries

- Model healthy boundaries and encourage your team to disconnect after hours.
- Use different channels/tools for different urgency levels



3.

Promotion Paradox: Rewarding Crisis Over Consistency

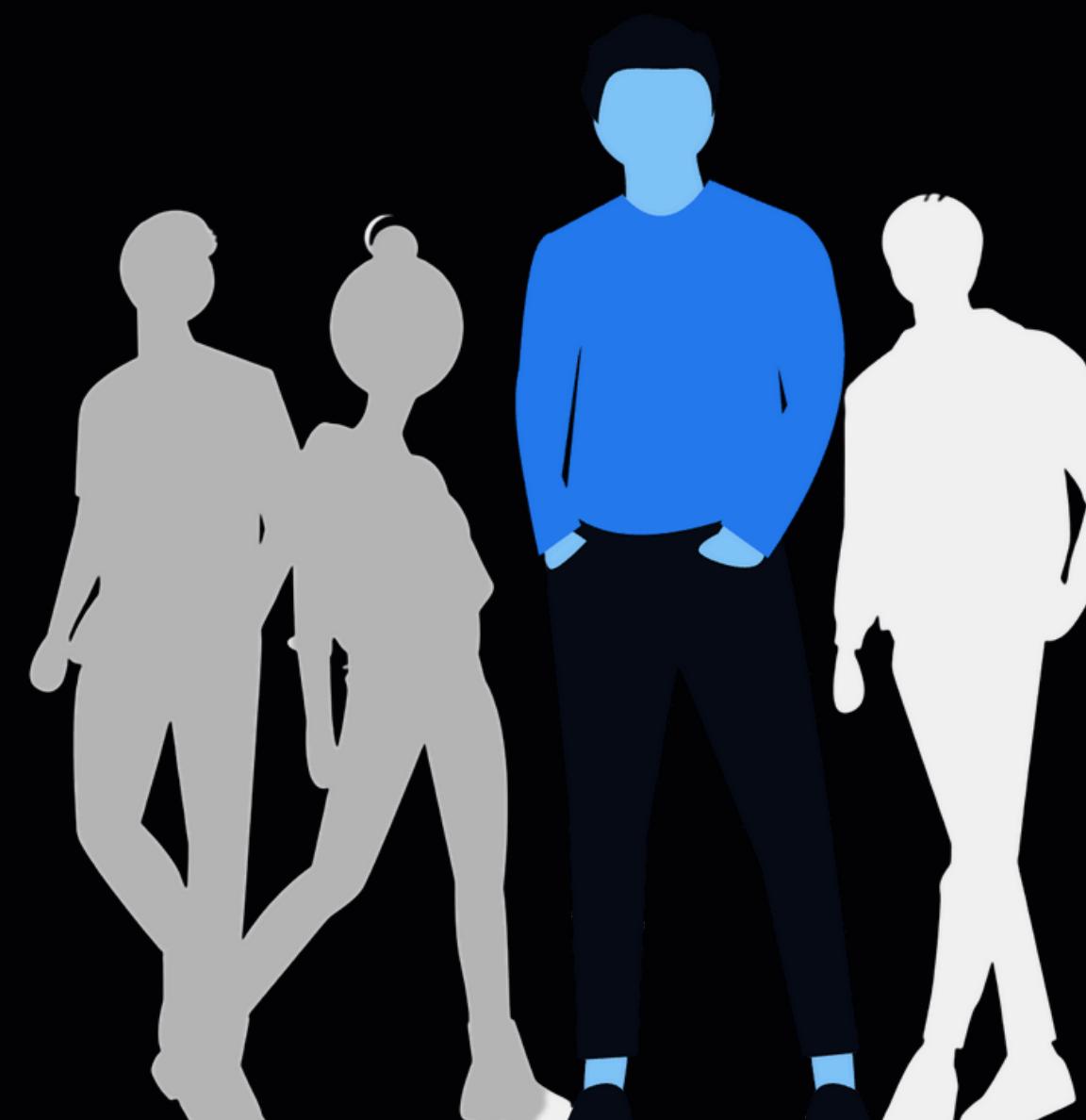
- Change promotion criteria to value preventive impact equally with incident response.
- Create "impact portfolios" to document how preventive work avoided potential issues



4.

Overloading Top Performers

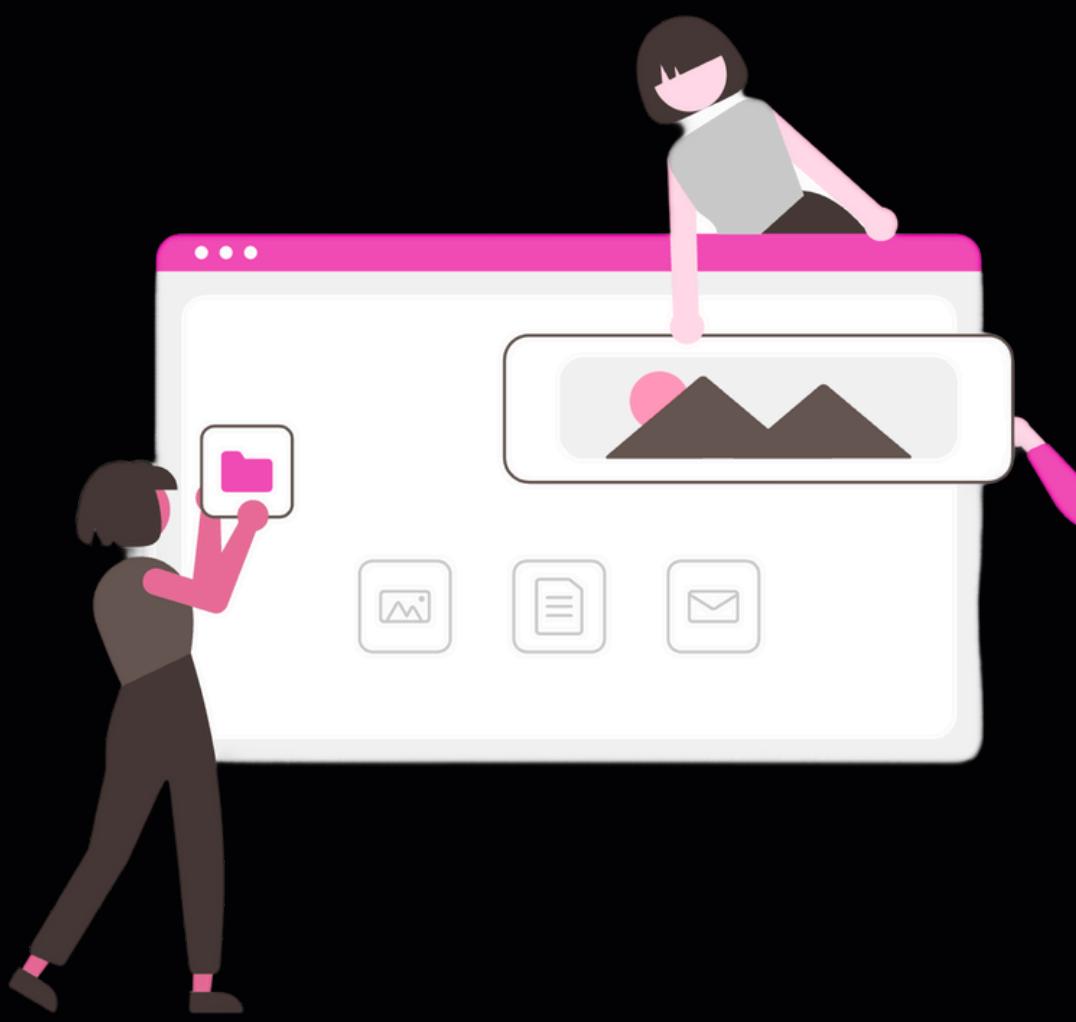
- Distribute workload fairly and rotate responsibilities.
- Recognize and reward contributions openly.
- Create a "task rotation system" where complex/interesting work is shared



5.

Involving Yourself in Every Decision

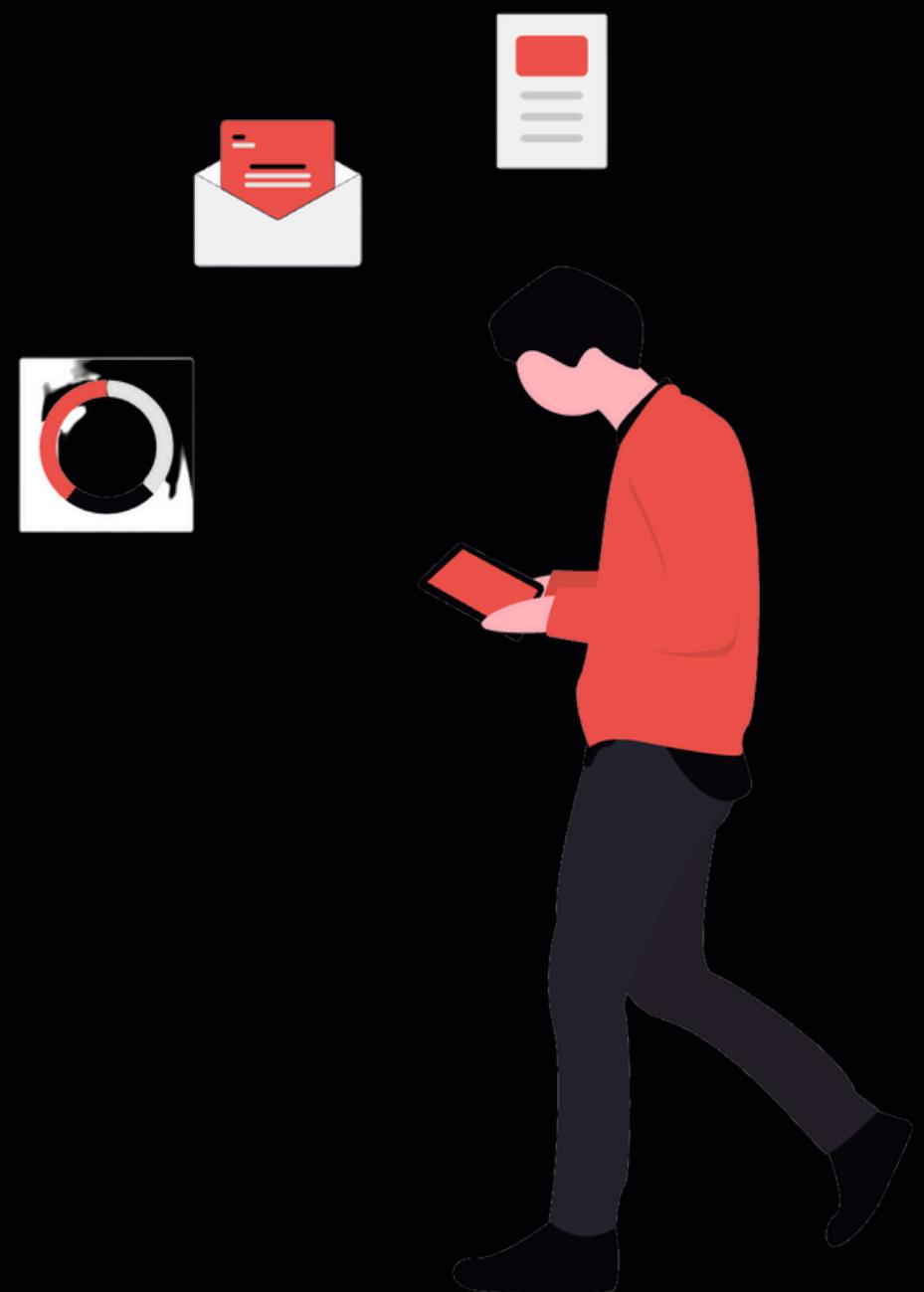
- Delegate routine decisions and establish clear frameworks such as technical decision templates for common scenarios (architecture choices, library selections, etc.)



6.

The On-Call Illusion: When Availability Becomes Addiction

- Implement "split-shift" models where daytime and evening responsibilities are separated.
- Reduce “Alert Fatigue” by reviewing alerting thresholds to eliminate false positives.

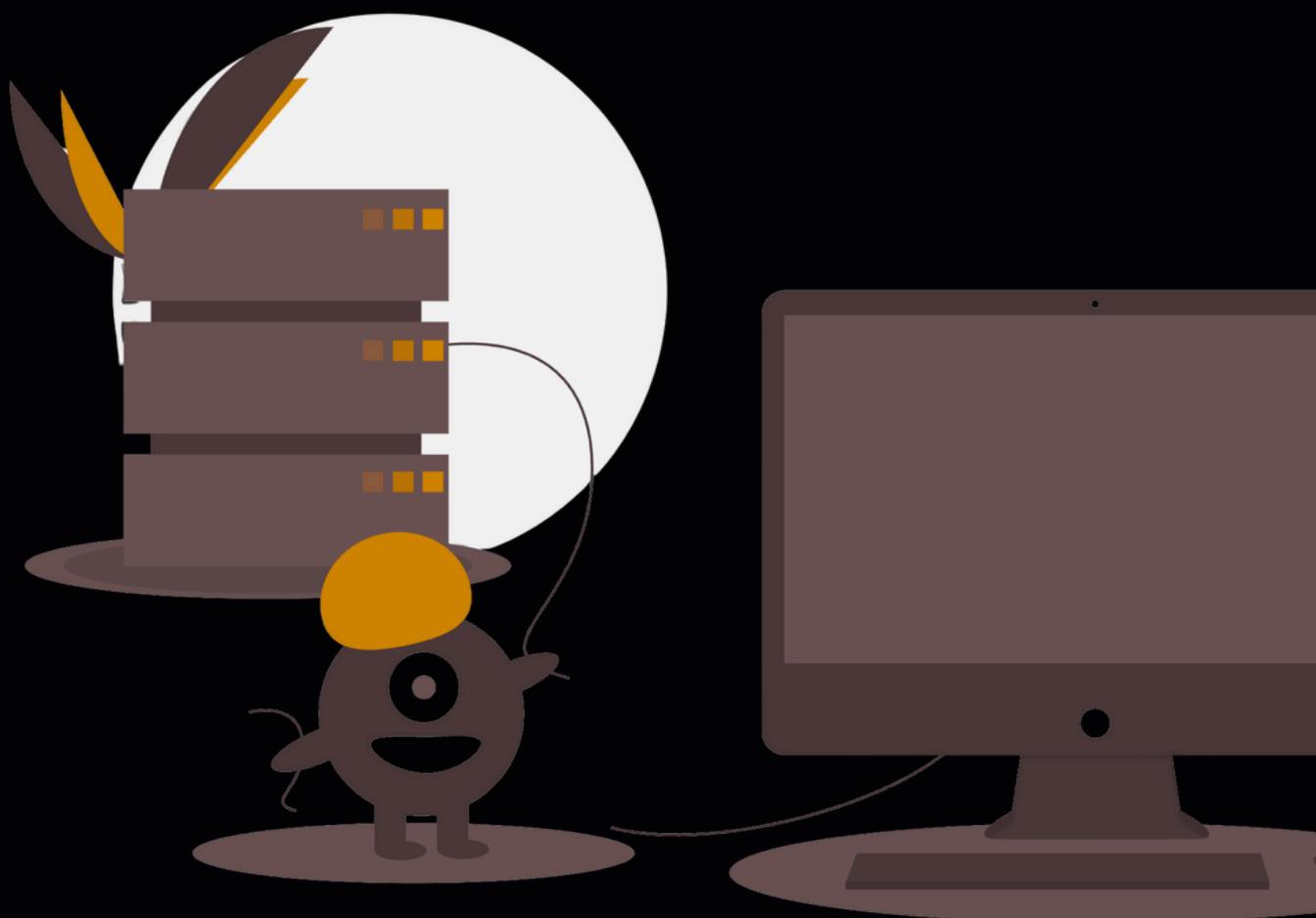


7.

Building Fragile Engineering Systems

- Build “Learning-Oriented” Systems: blameless post-mortems that focus on system improvements rather than individual fault-finding.

Don’t forget the near misses...



8.

Neglecting Strategic Thinking and Team Development

- Block time for strategic planning and learning.
- Set up "lunch and learn" sessions where external experts or team members share knowledge.

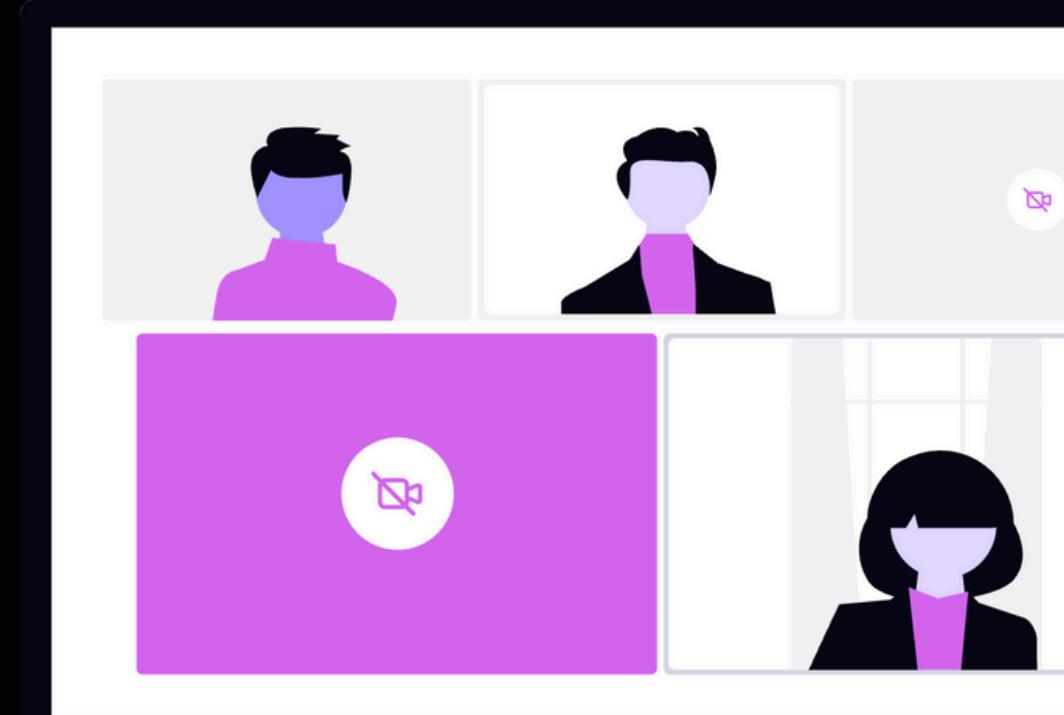
Show your own learning publicly.



9.

Meeting Vampirism: The Stealth Tax on Cognitive Capital

- Replace most status meetings with asynchronous video updates.
- Create shared dashboards showing project status, eliminating need for most status meetings.



The 9 Habits

Equating Busyness
With Value

Failing to Set,
Respect and Model
Healthy Boundaries

Promotion Paradox:
Rewarding Crisis Over
Consistency

Overloading Top
Performers

Involving Yourself
in Every Decision

The On-Call Illusion:
When Availability
Becomes Addiction

Building Fragile
Engineering Systems

Neglecting Strategic
Thinking and Team
Development

Meeting Vampirism:
The Stealth Tax on
Cognitive Capital



Q&A / Thank you!