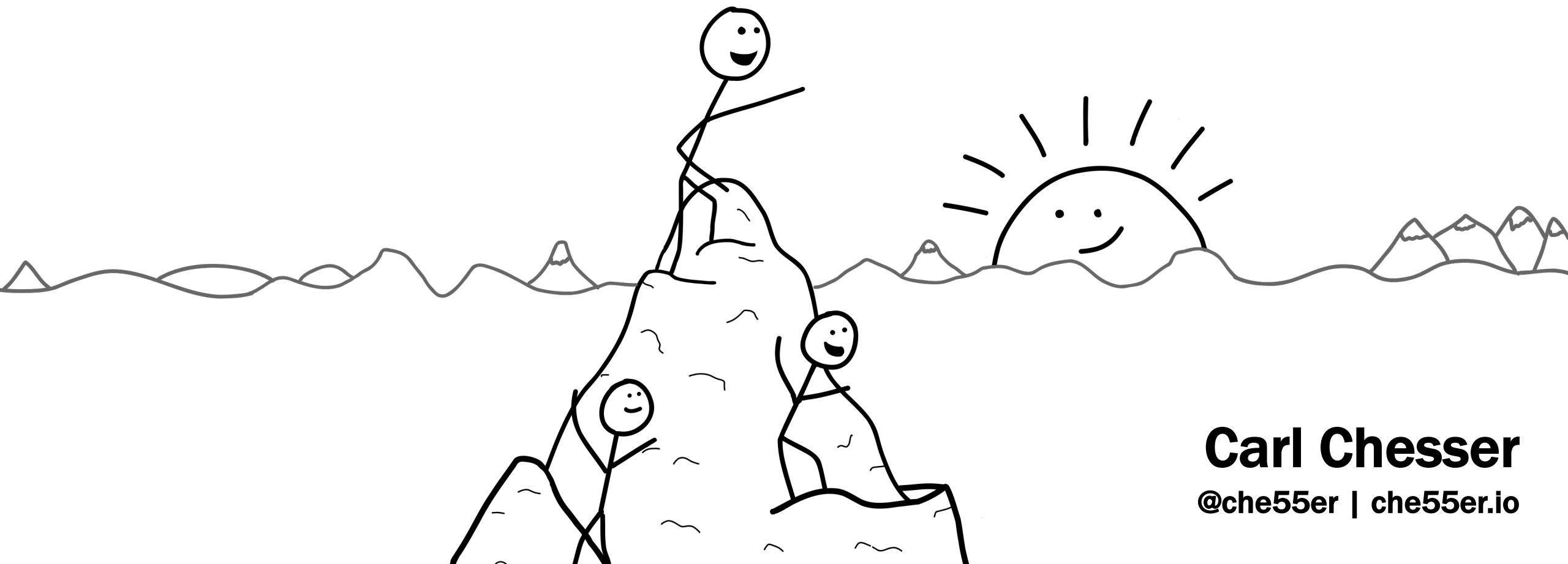


# Navigating Change with Communities of Practice



**Carl Chesser**  
@che55er | che55er.io



# Hi, I'm Carl!



Senior Principal Engineer @  
Oracle



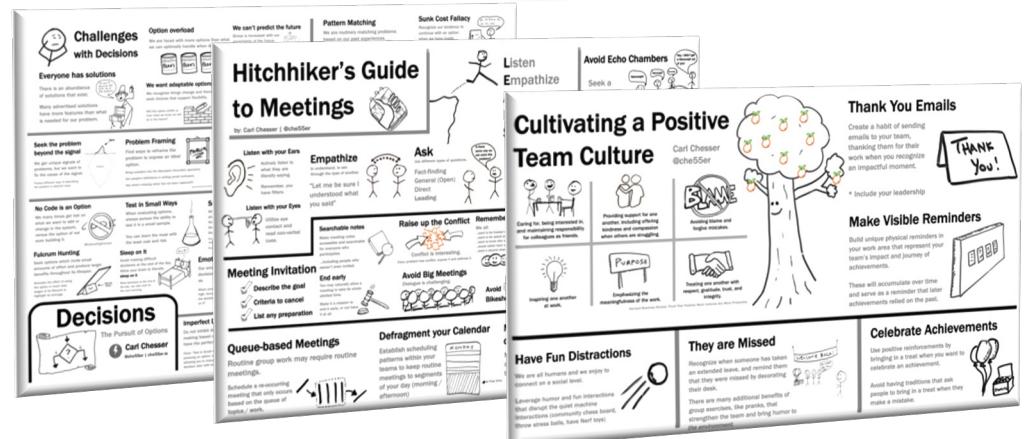
Joined Cerner in 2005, acquired  
by Oracle in 2022



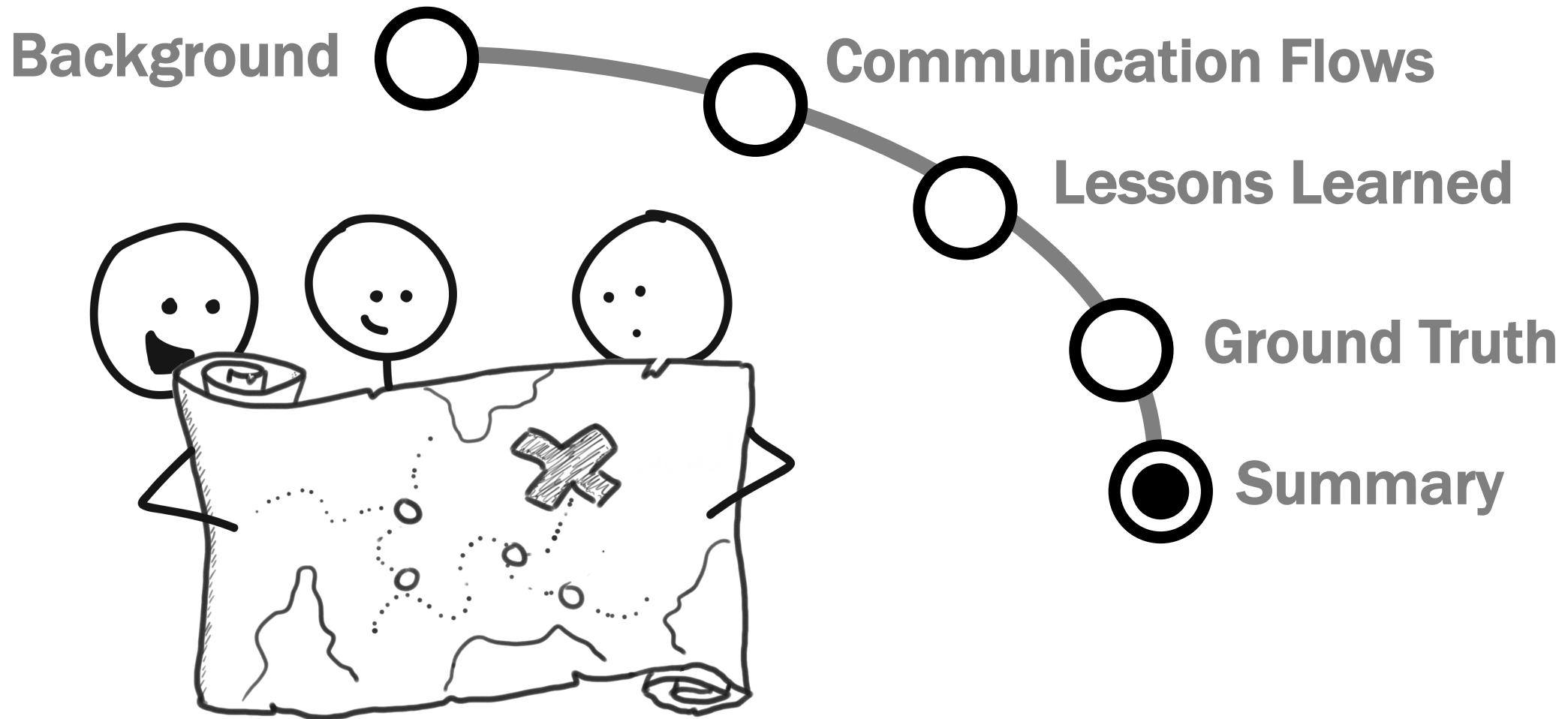
Purdue University + University of  
Kansas alumni



Outdoors: Bike riding, hiking,  
camping, skiing



# Journey

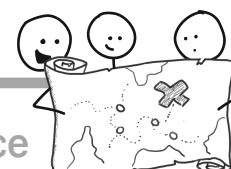


# What is it?

*“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”*



- Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner.  
"Introduction to communities of practice" (June 2015)



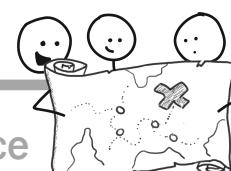
# What it is not...

- a central enforcement body on technology choices
- a team which takes on broad or highly coordinated development work



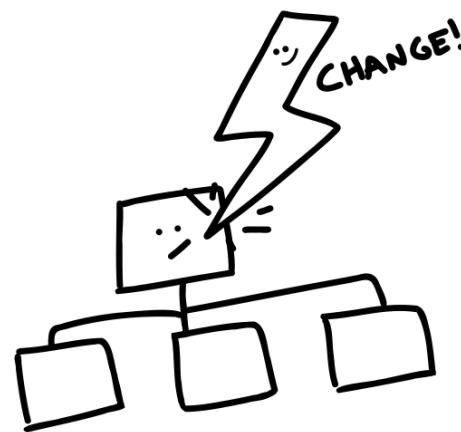
...rather, they may inform what is best for governance

...rather, a community is defined by their knowledge area (not the task) and can improve the consistent application of the work

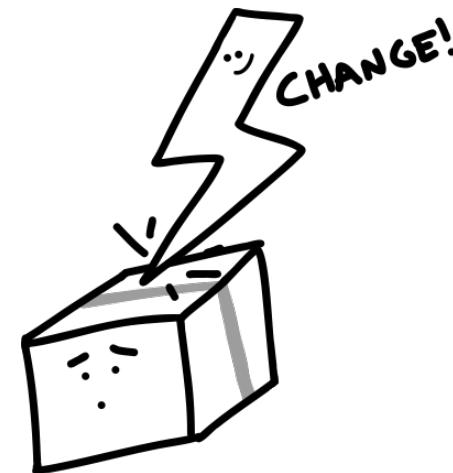


# Disruption of Change

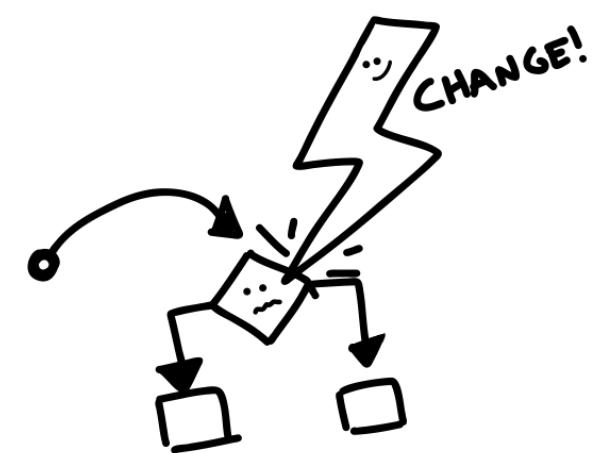
Organizational  
change



Technology  
change

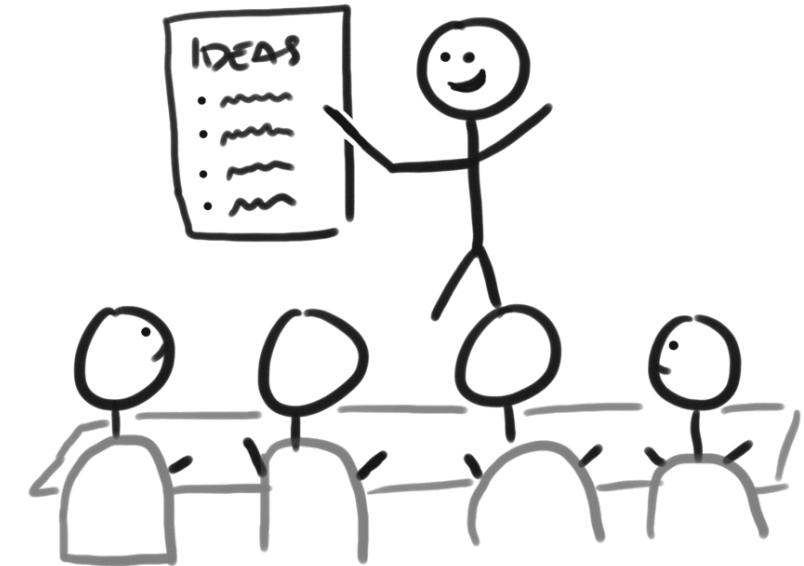


Process  
change

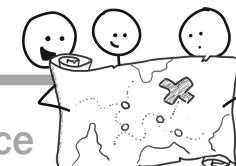


# Minimizing Feeling Isolated

When change occurs, it is valuable for teams to discuss, rationalize, and adapt.

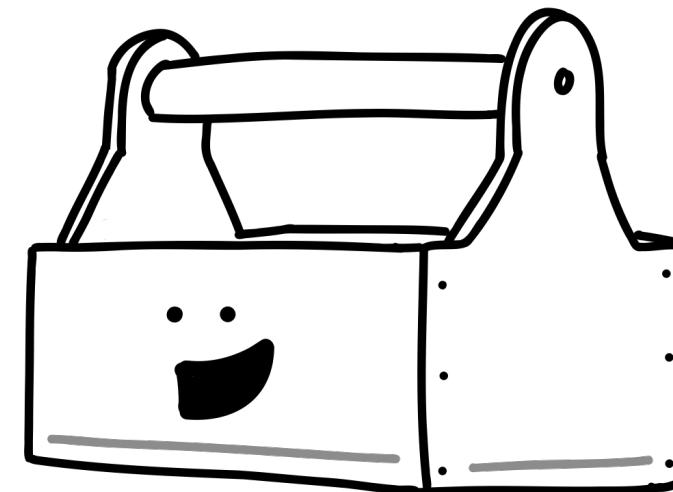


Local concerns of a change, may become identified as a shared global concern when discussing across a community.

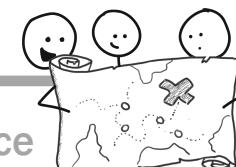


# Hone your Skills

Mastering your craft, often is sharing in tools and tool making.



*Bryan Cantrill – P99 Conf 2022: Sharpening the Axe: The Primacy of Toolmaking*

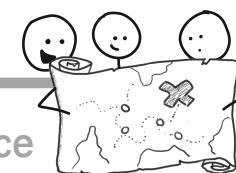
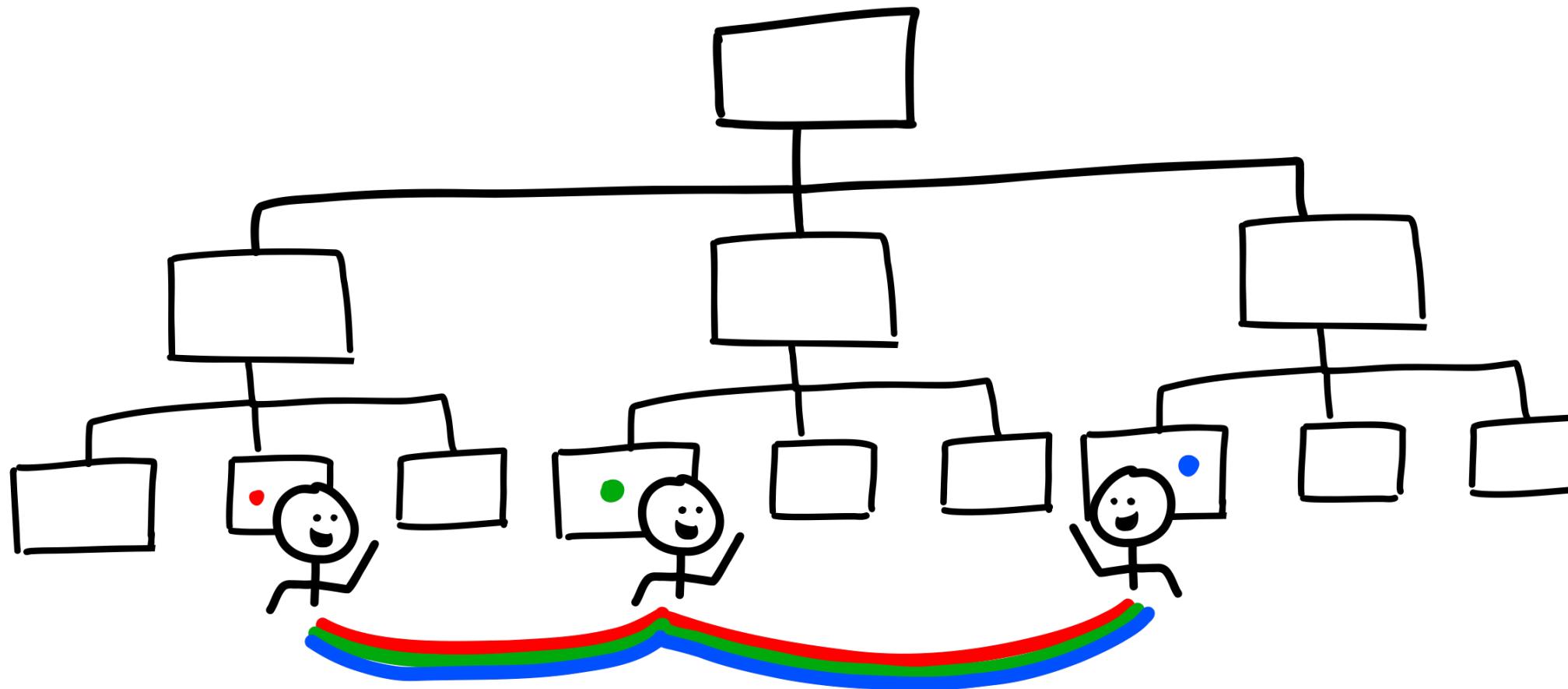


# Detecting Paper Walls

Barriers encountered by one team can be eroded faster by expanding the challenge to the larger community with diverse experiences.



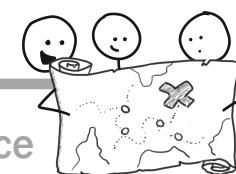
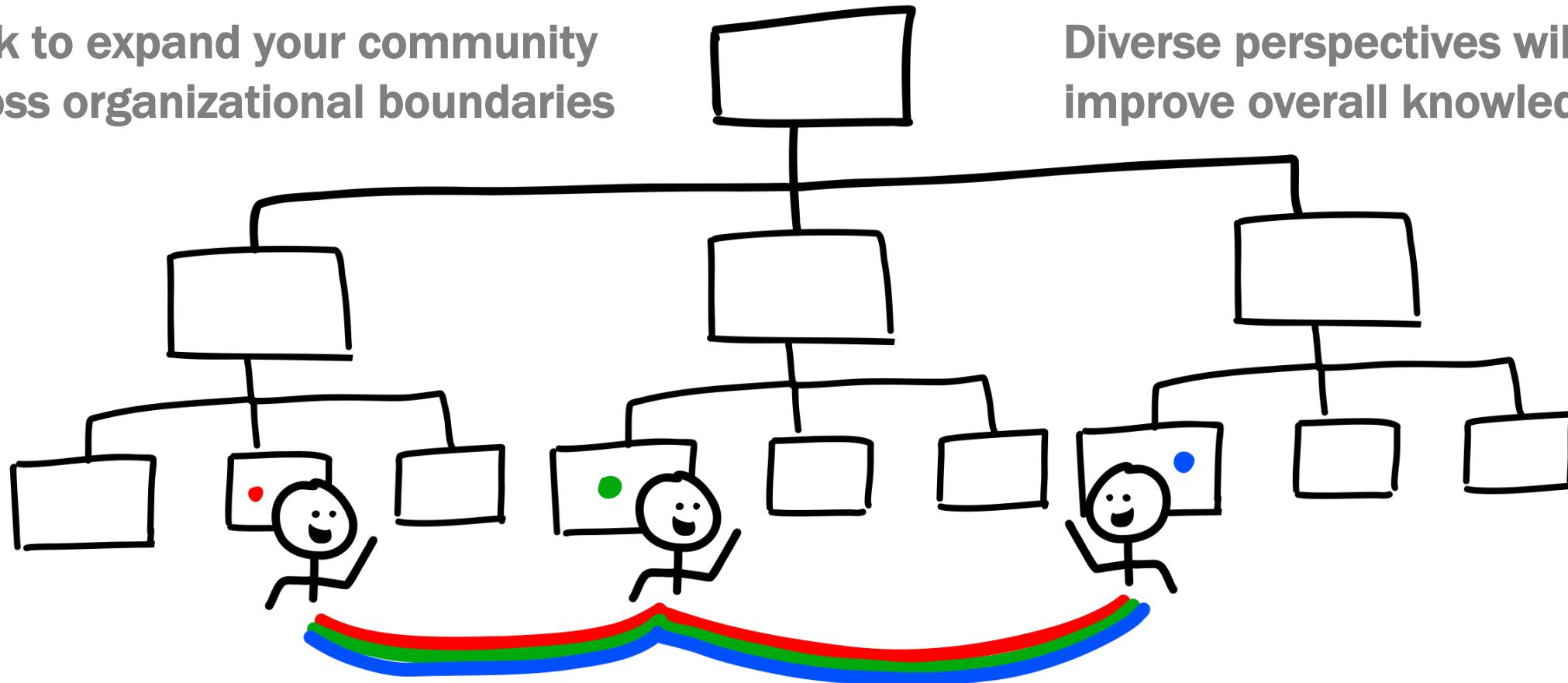
# Interfaces in a Network



# Knowledge Network

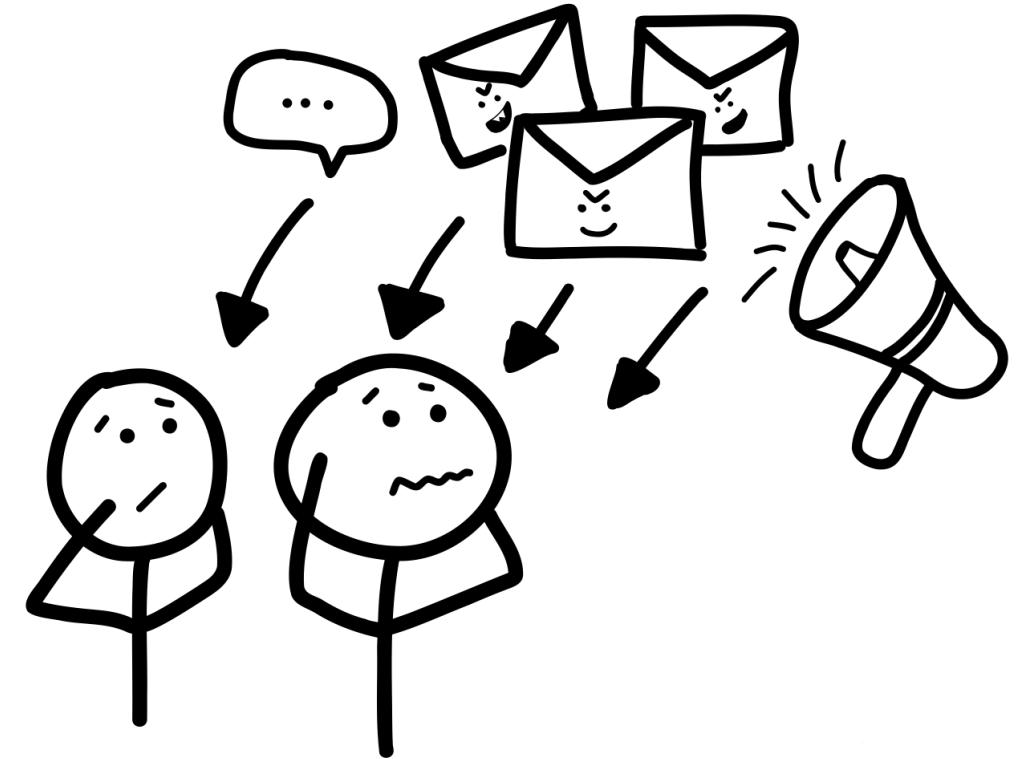
Seek to expand your community across organizational boundaries

Diverse perspectives will improve overall knowledge

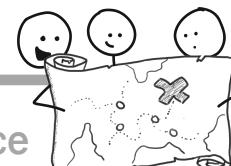


# Communication and Cognitive Load

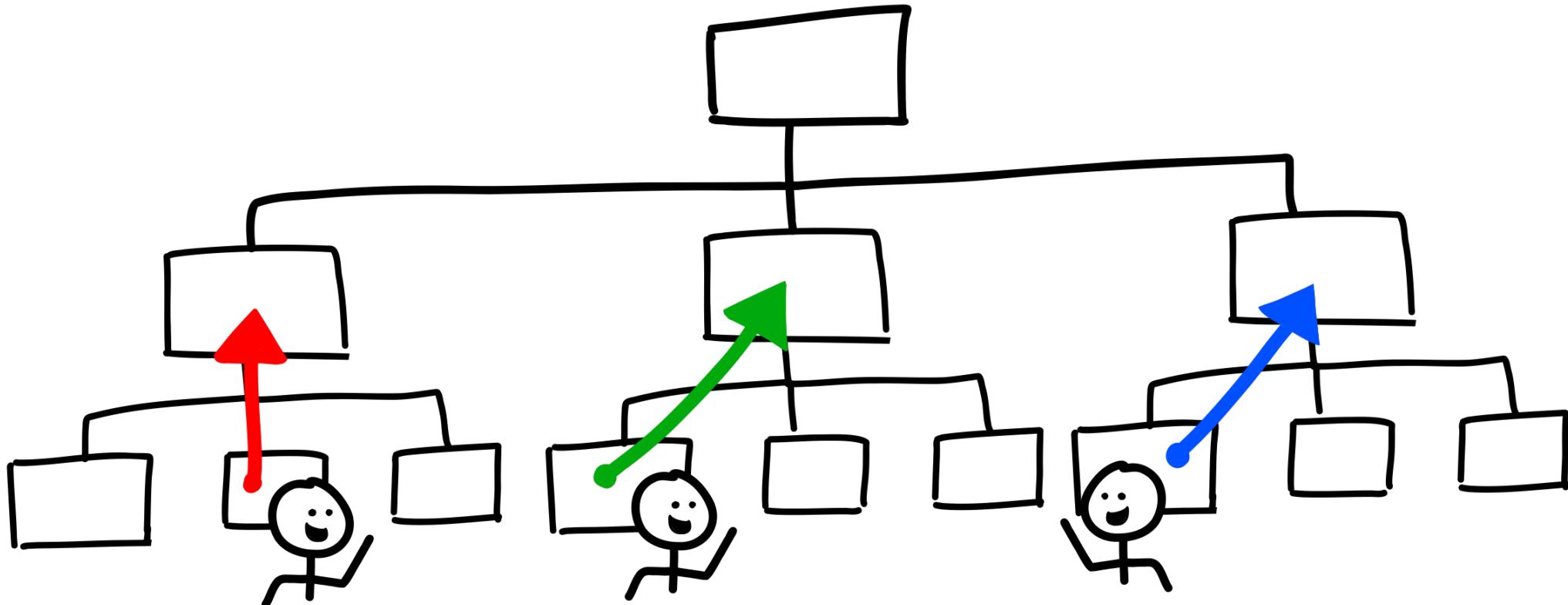
Having a known  
interface into teams  
can simplify incoming  
team communication  
streams.



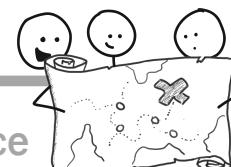
→ reducing a team's cognitive load.



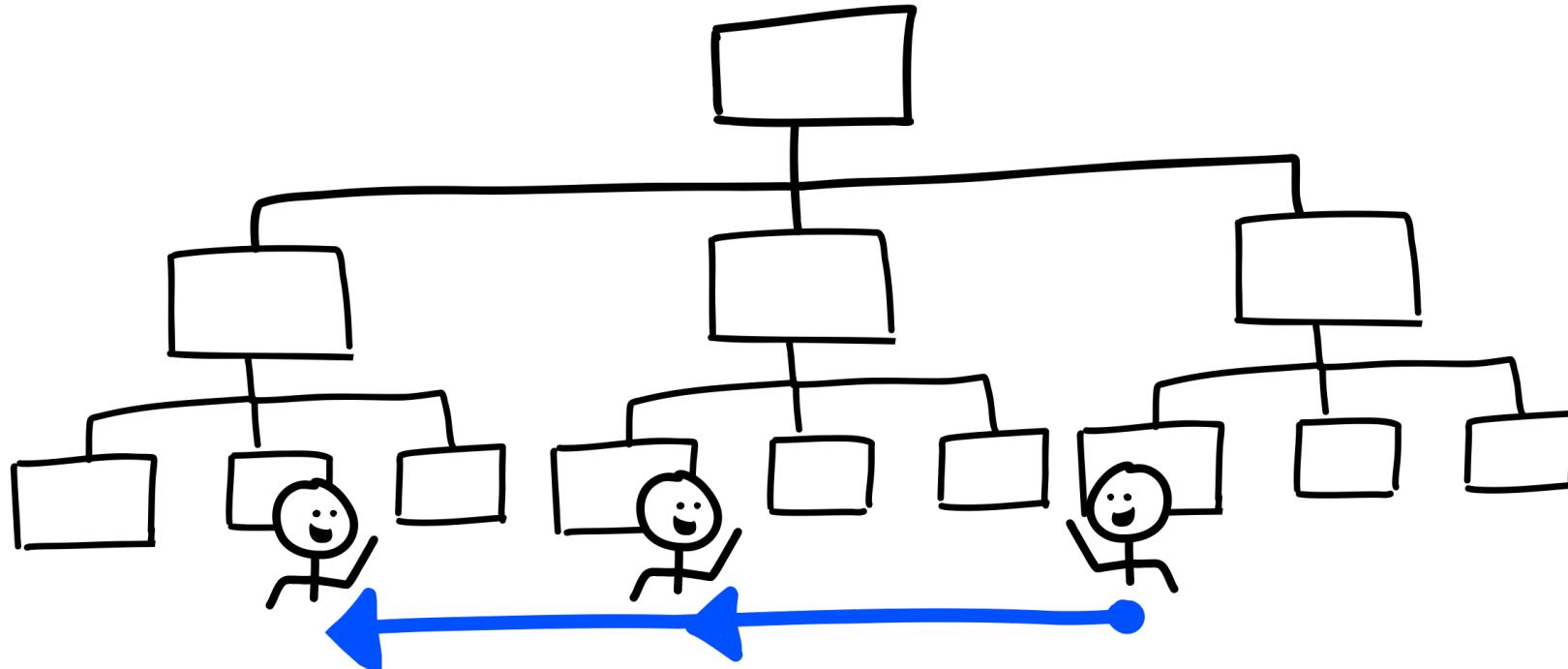
# Communication: Vertical



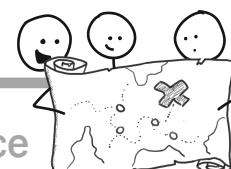
Effectively improve the communication of broad topics to what areas of interest in their organization



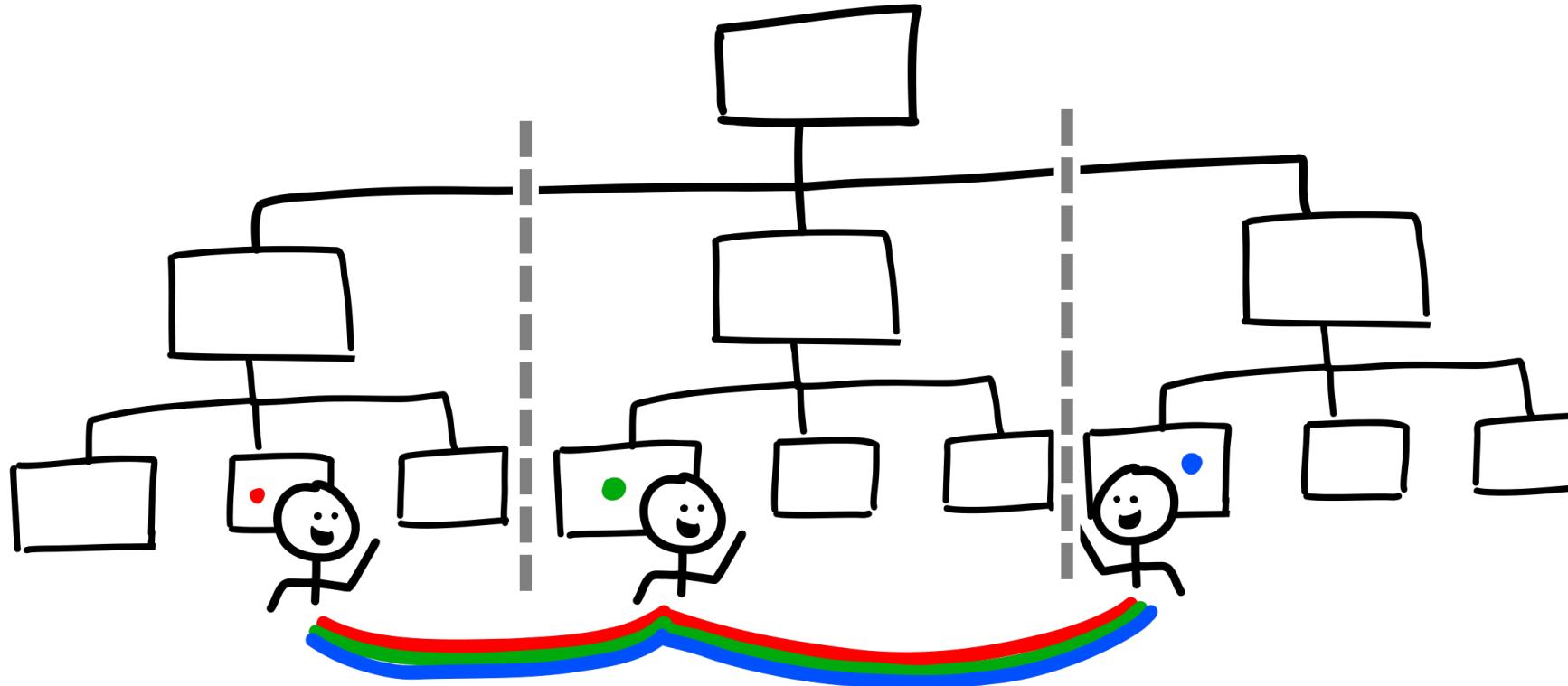
# Communication: Horizontal



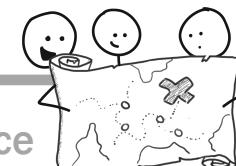
**By communicating locally perceived problems from one part of the organization, you can identify broader problems based on feedback across the organizations.**



# Recognize Conway's Law



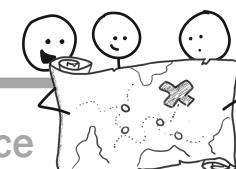
Unite development efforts by intentionally fostering communication across development teams that span organizational boundaries.



# Meet Consistently

Find a meaningful cadence that can work and ensure you maintain it.

When the community doesn't have a known time to share ideas, they don't plan to share ideas.

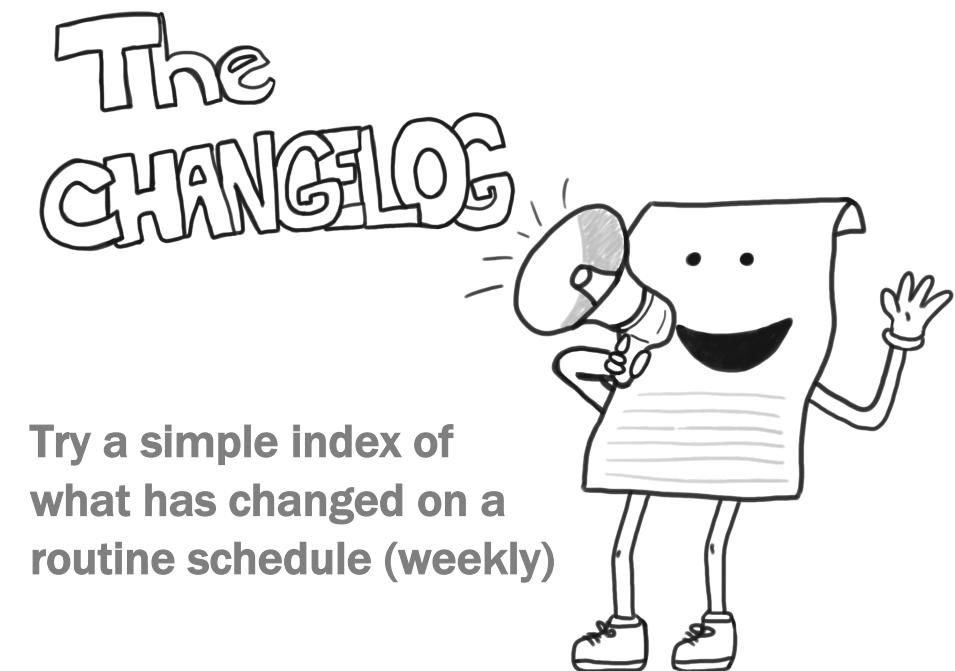


# Make it Easy to Follow

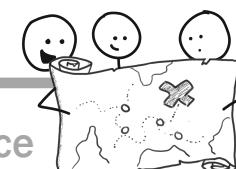
## Maintain an open discussion forum.

Not required to “be in the community,” everyone in your company can participate or follow if they wish.

Capture and provide meeting write-ups or shared meeting recordings.



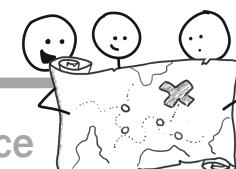
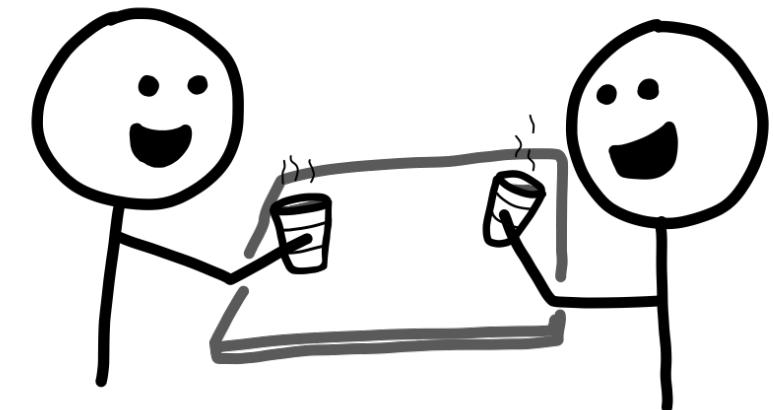
Try a simple index of what has changed on a routine schedule (weekly)



# Foster Small Group Discussion

Your community has grown, time  
to adapt to increase engagement.

Apply break-out sessions and then  
bring ideas back to the group.

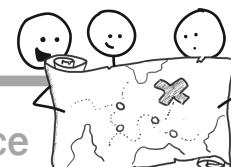


# Celebrate these Efforts

It requires effort and discipline to maintain vibrant communities.



Highlight this importance and your appreciation for those who grow it.



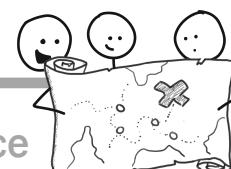


Getting to a shared  
understanding

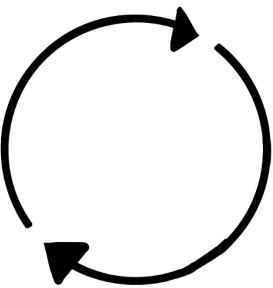
# Ground Truth

*“The more senior you become, the more staff you have to protect you from yourself and to push their own agenda. They mean well, but they can insulate you from **ground truth**. You have to get out and walk the floor. Have trusted agents and friends call you when they think the emperor has no clothes. In the Army, chaplains, inspectors general, and sergeants major can always give you a **ground truth perspective**. Above all, never forget you were ground truth once.”*

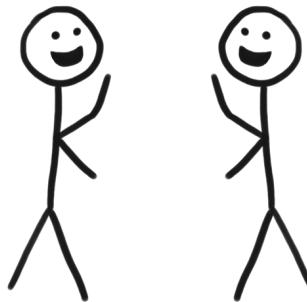
- Colin Powell, *It Worked For Me*



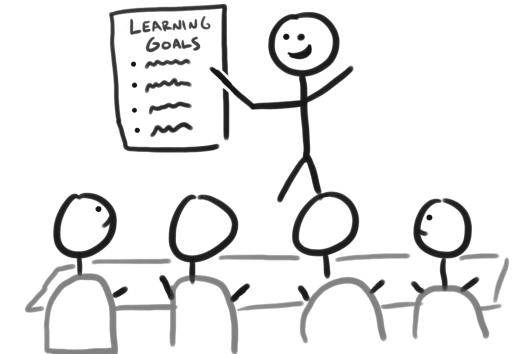
# Getting to Ground Truth



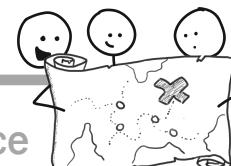
DevOps  
culture



Skip-level  
meetings



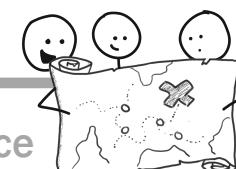
Incident  
Learning  
Reviews



# Beginner's Mind

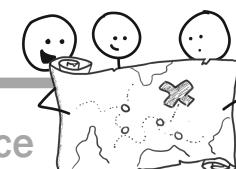
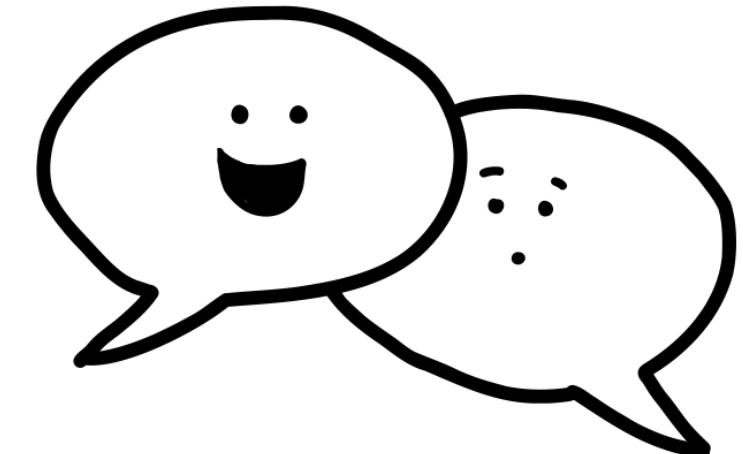
**Beginners see many possibilities,  
experts see few.**

Zen



# **Ask with “How” not “Why”**

**By forming questions with  
“How” vs. “Why” you learn  
more about the methods,  
considerations, rather than  
one perspective of cause.**



# Avoid Absolutes

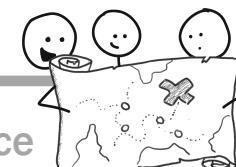
Hazards in seeking Ground Truth

**“We always do X.”**

**“We never do X.”**

**It only takes one exception to prove this is not an accurate assessment.**

**This can lead to people thinking you have a false understanding.  
Avoid stating things in absolutes.**

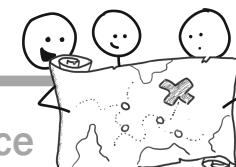
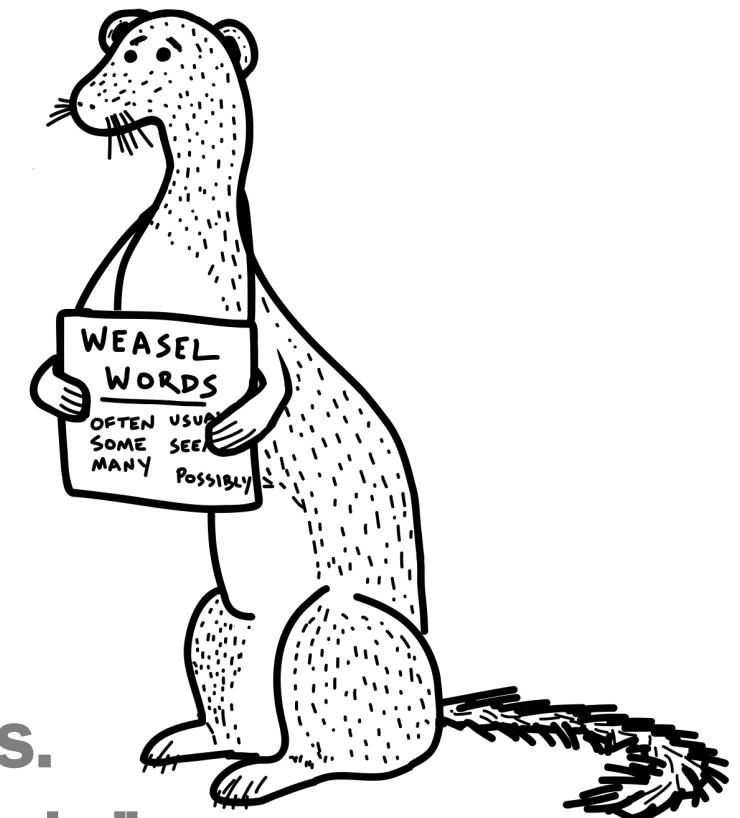


# Beware of Weasel Words

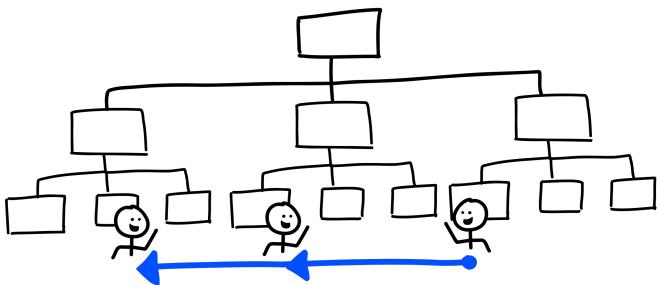
Hazards in seeking Ground Truth

Words that have little  
meaning  
...avoids being clear.

Describe things with quantifiable measures.  
“5% of our PRs fail on builds in the last week.”



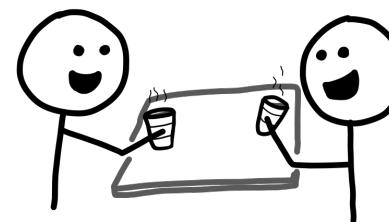
# Summary



Enable horizontal communication, optimize vertical communication



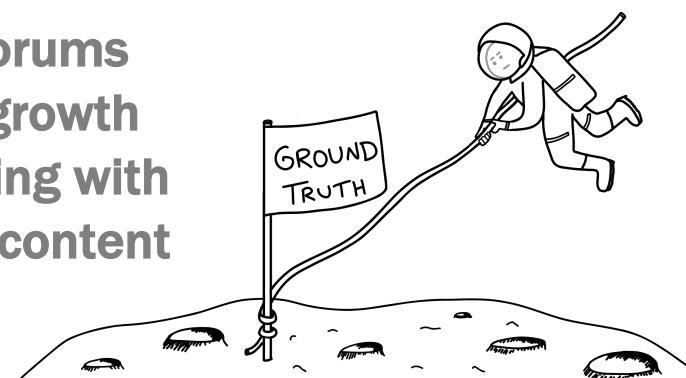
Enable open communication forums to foster organic growth and consider pairing with simple digests of content



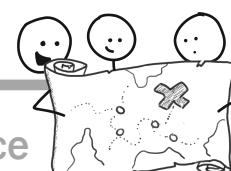
Recognize continual energy is needed for community management and growth



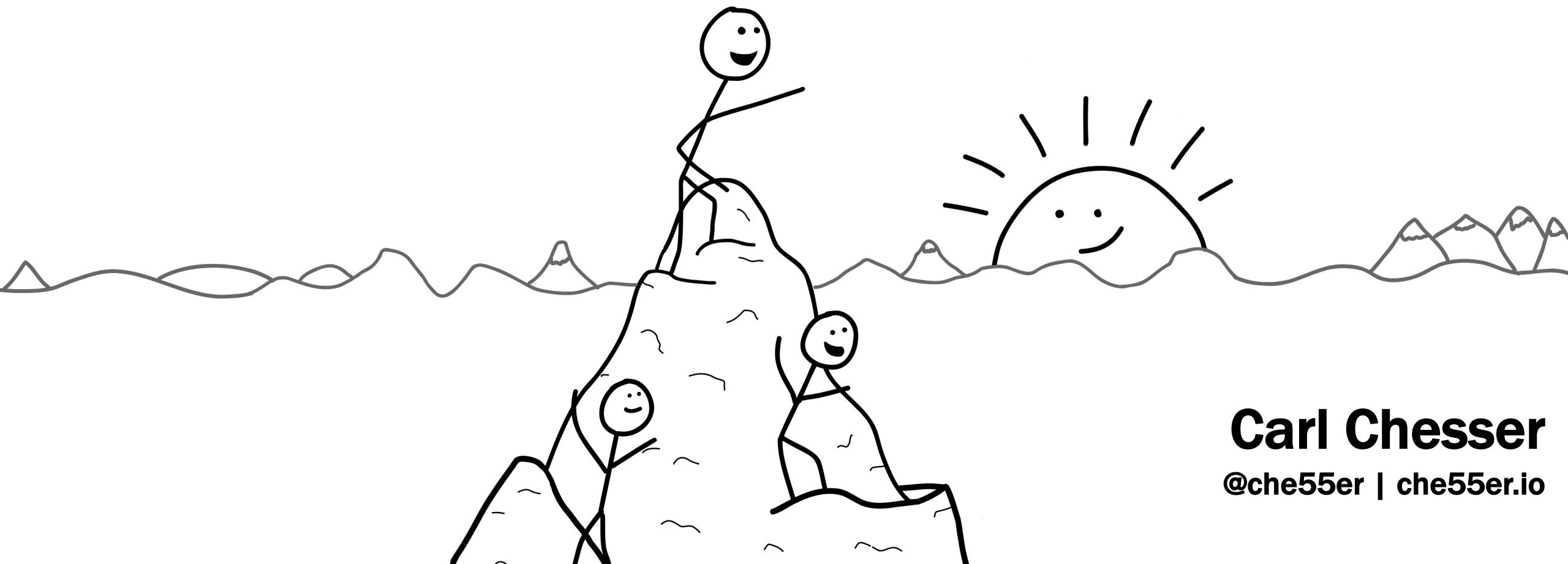
Recognize the value of knowledge building across your organization



Seek *ground truth* by getting close to the source and be mindful in how you describe your understanding.



# Thank You!



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