

Am I Still a Software Engineer If I Don't Write the Code?

Exploring the Software Engineering Identity Crisis

Annie Vella | 13th May 2025

Who Am I?

Software Engineer | Technical Leader | Self Professed Nerd

Present:

- Distinguished Engineer at Westpac NZ
- Master's of Engineering student at the University of Auckland

Previously:

- 2004 - 2014 - Software Engineer
- 2014 - Present - Technical Leader



Why this matters to me



The Joys of the Craft



“The programmer, like the poet,
works only slightly removed
from pure thought-stuff. He
builds his castles in the air,
from air, creating by the
exertion of the imagination.”

Frederick P. Brooks, The Mythical Man-Month
Chapter 1, Addison-Wesley, 1975



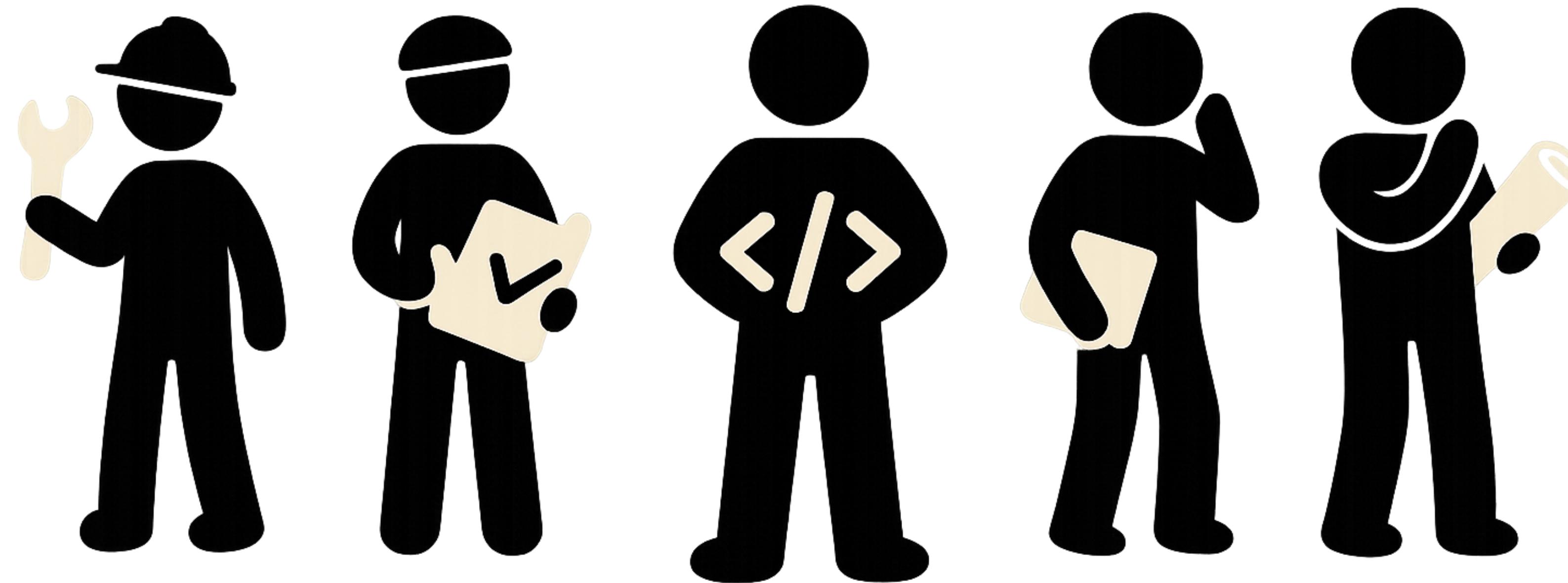
*It feels so good to
build something
useful*

The struggle is real

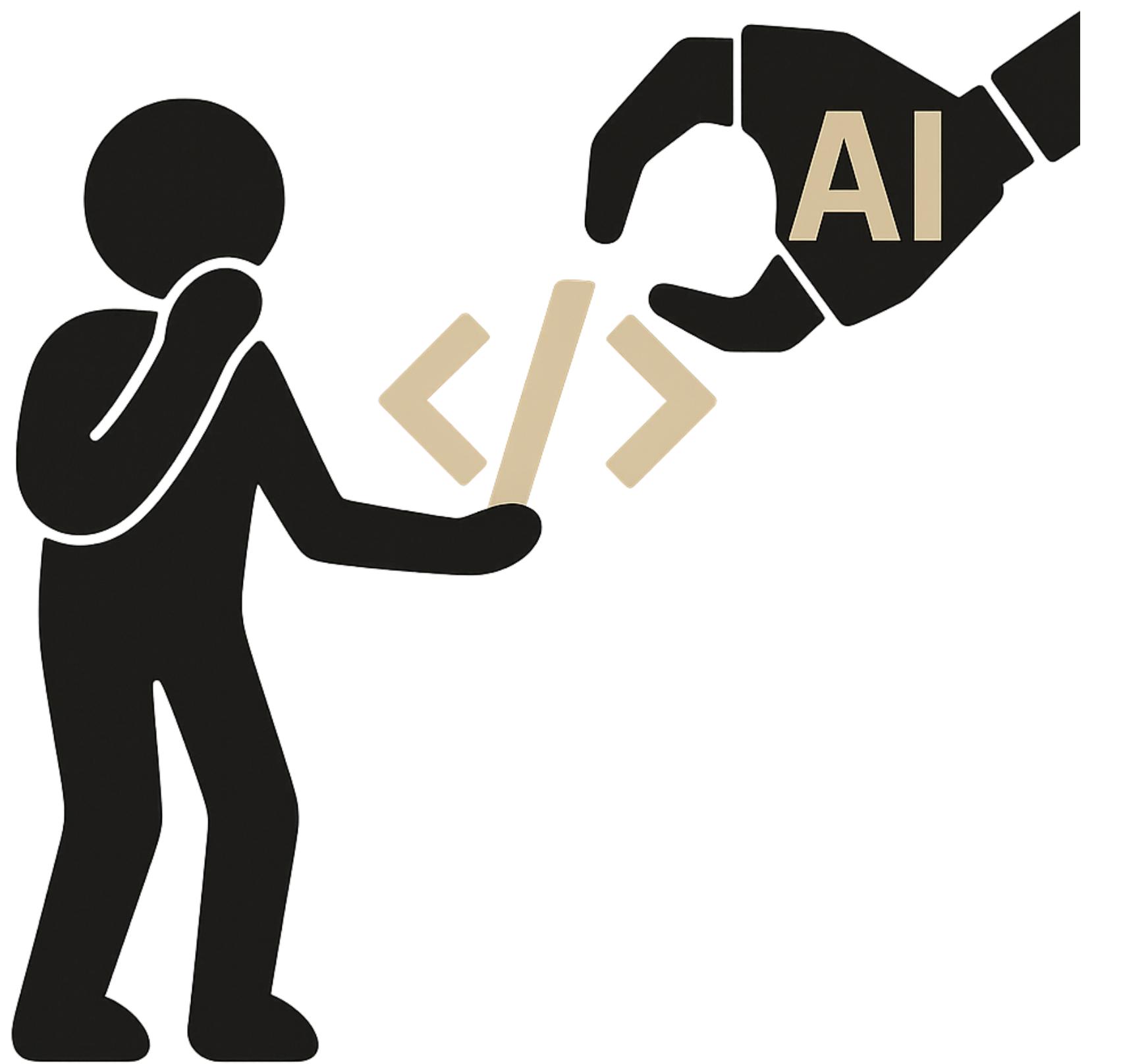
It's often challenging and
frustrating, and always takes
longer than you expect



Software engineering is complex



Product Engineer != Software Engineer



And now AI
has come
for the one
thing we kept

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei says AI will write 90% of code in 6 months, automating software development within a year — Is this the final nail in handwritten coding's coffin?

News

By Kevin Okemwa published March 13, 2025

Is coding dead in the water? Anthropic CEO claims AI will write 90% of code within the next 6 months.



When you purchase through links on our site, we may earn an affiliate commission. [Here's how it works.](#)



Anthropic's CEO thinks all code will soon be AI generated. (Image credit: Getty Images | Chesnot)

"AI Will Do Most Of Coding Soon, Better Than Top Coders": Mark Zuckerberg

Currently, AI can help in auto-completing a section of code, and soon will become even better than the top coders, he added.

Edited by: [NDTV News Desk](#) | [World News](#) | May 02, 2025 18:43 pm IST ⓘ

Read Time: 2 mins



"Sometime in the next 12 to 18 months, most of these codes will be written by AI," Zuckerberg said.

META CEO Mark Zuckerberg has revealed that artificial intelligence (AI) will do most of the coding work for his company's Llama Project, adding he believes it will be smart enough to write most of the code on its own in the next 12-18 months.

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/ai-will-do-most-of-coding-soon-better-than-top-coders-mark-zuckerberg-8311461>

Is software engineering dead?

A screenshot of a Reddit post from the subreddit r/WGU. The post is titled "Is software engineering dying??". The author is BennieMiller and it was posted 1 year ago. The post content discusses concerns about the job market and the impact of AI on software engineering. It has 94 upvotes and 133 comments. There are buttons for sharing and a link to the full post.

I am currently in my first term for computer science and have been seeing all of the massive layoffs. I also just saw that there is a newer ai that is writing advanced code at a 98% correctness rate. Is this going to kill the need for developers? Is this even a real threat? Should I just graduate and find a job doing something else with the degree that isn't software engineering and is so like what? I won't graduate for at least 2 years and only really got in this field in the first place because I'm smart enough to do it and it's a really good paycheck. I don't really have any love for this field but I don't want to work construction or manual labor anymore as that's what I've been doing the last 6 years. I could go for business or something but I don't really know what jobs that degree helps you get.

94 133 Share

A screenshot of a Hacker News post. The title is "Is it too late to enter software engineering in 2024?". The author is lottle and it was posted 11 months ago. The post content discusses concerns about the job market and the impact of LLMs on software engineering. It has 4 points and 13 comments. There are buttons for sharing and a link to the full post.

Y Hacker News new | past | comments | ask | show | jobs | submit login

▲ Is it too late to enter software engineering in 2024?
4 points by lottle 11 months ago | hide | past | favorite | 13 comments

Hi HN, I am a third-year undergrad studying CS in the US. I've noticed that it's extremely difficult to secure internships for this school year, and I also know this is true for people looking for new grad jobs too. Some say this is due to the recession, but I wonder if it's also influenced by LLM models like ChatGPT, Claude, and so on. As these models are becoming better, it seems like we need fewer people in the field of software engineering. More senior software engineers could easily leverage the power of LLMs, reducing the need for junior devs to accomplish some of the simpler tasks in the near future.

I am really concerned about this future. What if I graduate and face a job market that is even worse than the current one for new grads, mainly due to the impact of LLMs?

<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=39664697>

https://www.reddit.com/r/WGU/comments/1b89euw/is_software_engineering_dying/

A screenshot of a Reddit post from the subreddit r/AskProgramming. The post is titled "My dad says I shouldn't do software development because those jobs will die in 10 years, is he right?". The author is Garlic_Hacker and it was posted 2 years ago. The post content discusses concerns about the long-term viability of a career in software development due to AI. It has 1 upvote and 1 comment. There are buttons for sharing and a link to the full post.

r/AskProgramming • 2 yr. ago Garlic_Hacker

My dad says I shouldn't do software development because those jobs will die in 10 years, is he right?

I'm 26 and I've finally decided what i wanted to do and I really like coding. I just wanna know if trying to become a software developer is still a viable career option? I live in Australia. My dad thinks software developer jobs will die due to AI and oversaturation.

https://www.reddit.com/r/AskProgramming/comments/yqg0wk/my_dad_says_i_shouldnt_do_software_development/

What's my craft now?

Am I still a software engineer
if I no longer write the code?



So, I wrote about it:

Annie Vella

Resources Speaking About

The Software Engineering Identity Crisis

March 21, 2025

Many of us became software engineers because we found our identity in building things. Not managing things. Not overseeing things. *Building* things. With our own hands, our own minds, our own code.

But that identity is being challenged.

AI coding assistants aren't just changing how we write software - they're fundamentally transforming *who we are*. We're shifting from creators to orchestrators, from builders to overseers. From engineers to something that looks suspiciously like... managers.

The irony cuts deep: for years, we've said that software engineering transcends mere coding. Requirements, design, testing, operations - these were all supposedly part of our craft. Yet the industry pushed us in the opposite direction. We handed these responsibilities to specialists - Product Owners, Architects, Quality Engineers, Platform Engineers - while we doubled down on our coding expertise. We became masters of our code, proud wielders of a modern magic.

And now, just as we've perfected this craft, AI is threatening to take it away from us.

<https://annievella.com/posts/the-software-engineering-identity-crisis/>

Top performing posts

Based on impressions gained in the past 90 days

Annie Vella posted this · 1mo

If you're a software engineer, you might be starting to sense a bit of an identity crisis creeping in....
[...show more](#)

The Software Engineering Identity Crisis - Annie Vella
annievella.com

▲ 116,171
Impressions

 Dayan Kodippily and 627 others

61 comments · 57 reposts

1	The Software Engineering Identity Crisis - Annie Vella	51,341 (65.5%)
2	Dear Software Engineer: It's Time to Reclaim Your Role - Annie Vella	6,114 (7.8%)
3	The SDLC Strikes Back: Adapting to AI-Driven Development - Annie Vella	3,705 (4.73%)

Fan mail - The Software Engineering Identity Crisis

Absolutely flipping awesome.

Read your recent post on the Engineer Identity Crisis and I loved it!
Would love to connect :)

I loved (and reposted on LI) your piece on our current identity crisis, and am now catching up on the rest of your previous posts.

I saw your recent post and really appreciated your perspective. It was thoughtful and clear. I wanted to reach out and connect.

Hi Annie, I just read your article "The Software Engineering Identity Crisis" and omg, SO GOOD! The connection with the pendulum article from Charity Majors was a pleasant surprise at the end too! I'd love to connect and follow you here on LI!

Hi Annie,

I really enjoyed your article. I'm struggling with exactly the same thing. Like yourself, I started on a C-64, fell in love with programming, and now I'm in my early 50s watching AI have all the fun. The high point of my career was discovering the lisp family of languages and reigniting my passion for language itself and the power of expression that comes with such languages.

 **Charity Majors** • 1st cofounder/CTO, honeycomb.io
4w · 

Last night, as I was falling asleep, I stumbled upon this beautiful, bittersweet piece by [Annie Vella](#) on the software engineering identity crisis being brought upon us by AI.

I left *multiple* reminders for myself to circle back to it today, so here you are. 😊 Towards the end it cites the engineer/manager pendulum as a potential path forward, which was the cherry on top of a lovely, thought-provoking read.

Is human creativity at risk?



Beth Spencer
<https://bethspencerillustration.com/>

Despite the fears, AI adoption is surging



92% of 500
US-based devs use AI
(GitHub, 2023)

62% of 61,000
global devs use AI
(Stack Overflow, 2024)

97% of 13,372
global devs use AI
(HackerRank, 2025)

Sources:

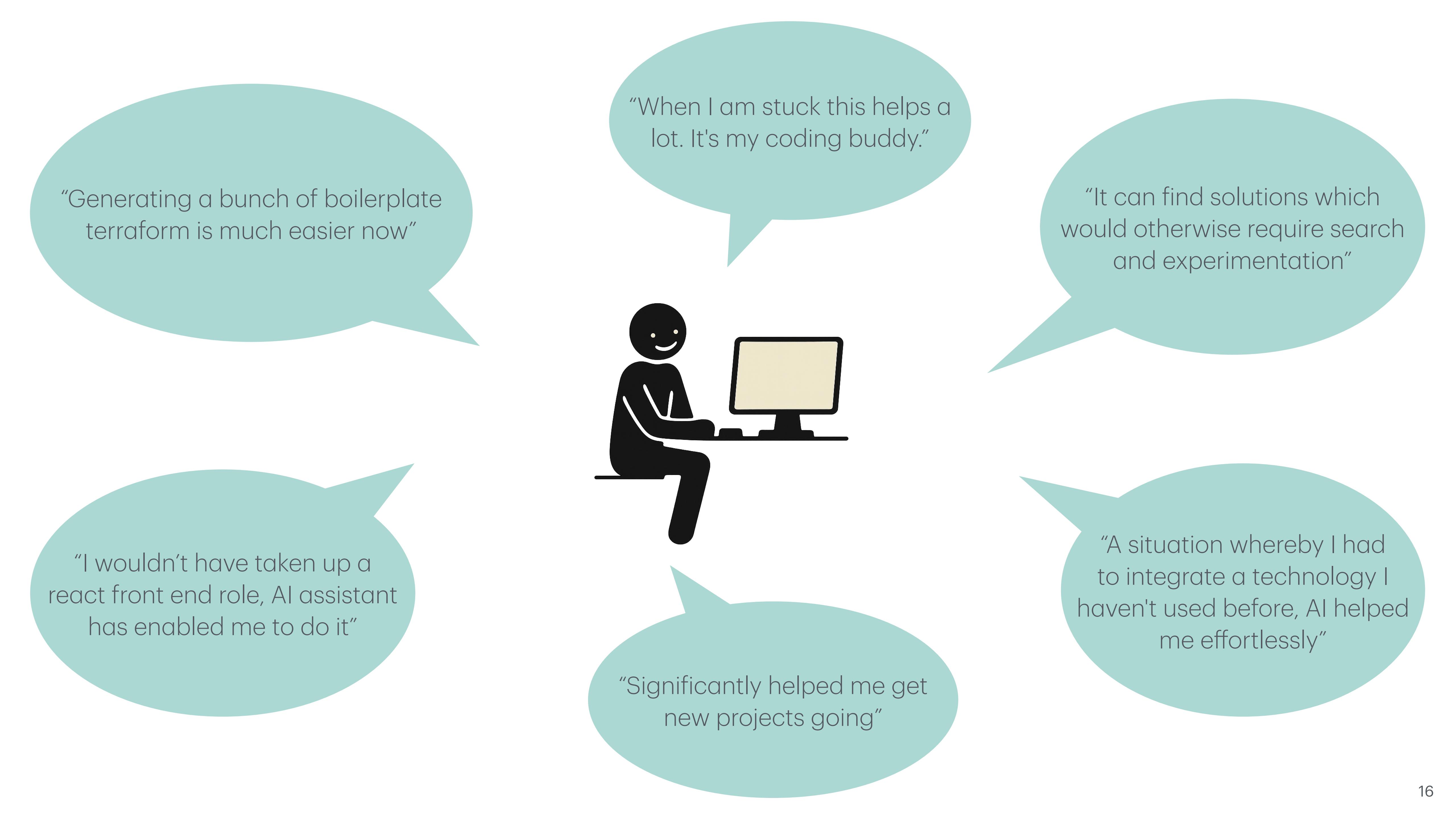
- <https://github.blog/news-insights/research/survey-reveals-ais-impact-on-the-developer-experience/>
- <https://survey.stackoverflow.co/2024/ai/>
- <https://www.hackerrank.com/reports/developer-skills-report-2025/>

The benefits
are very
tempting

 Time efficiency

 Cognitive support

 Improved flow state



“Generating a bunch of boilerplate terraform is much easier now”

“I wouldn't have taken up a react front end role, AI assistant has enabled me to do it”

“Significantly helped me get new projects going”

“When I am stuck this helps a lot. It's my coding buddy.”

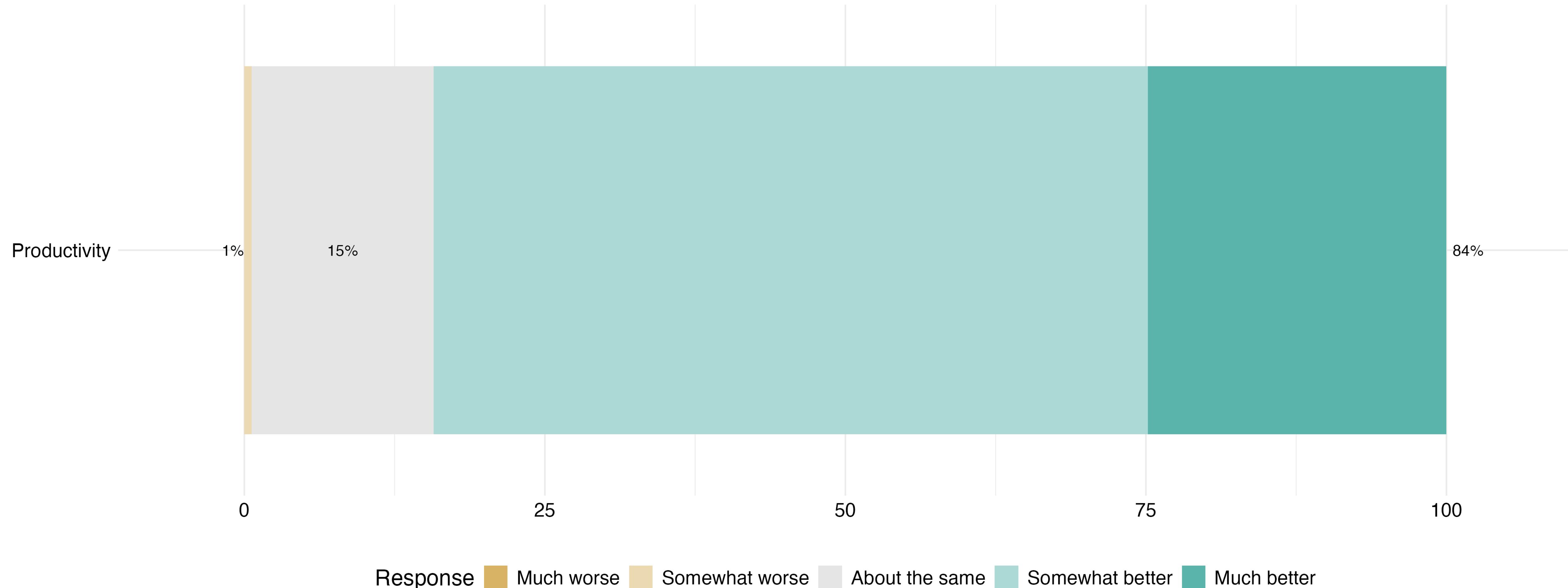
“It can find solutions which would otherwise require search and experimentation”

“A situation whereby I had to integrate a technology I haven't used before, AI helped me effortlessly”



84% report improved productivity

Impact of AI Coding Assistants on Productivity (Q4.1)



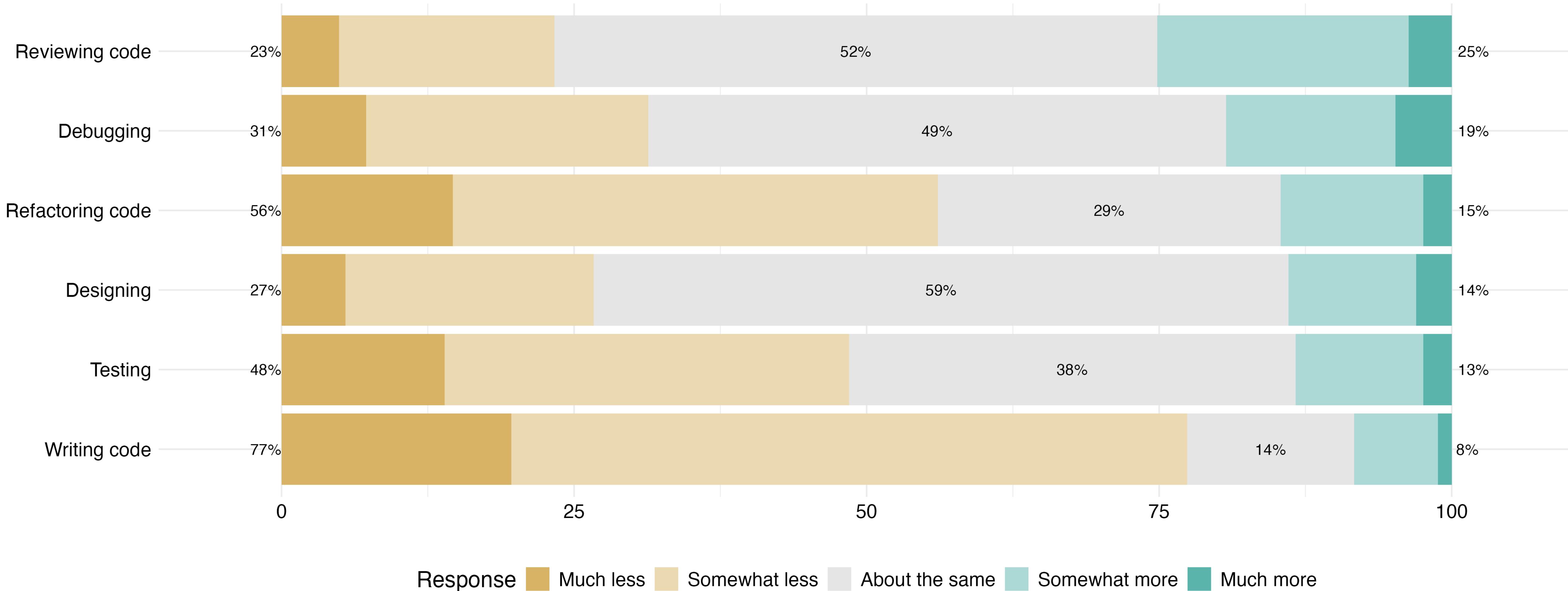
We're gaining
speed and scale.

But what are we
trading away?



Shifts in task focus

Time Spent on Software Engineering Tasks with AI Assistance (Q3.4)



AI smooths the terrain

But when the terrain is too smooth,
we stop noticing what we're
stepping over.



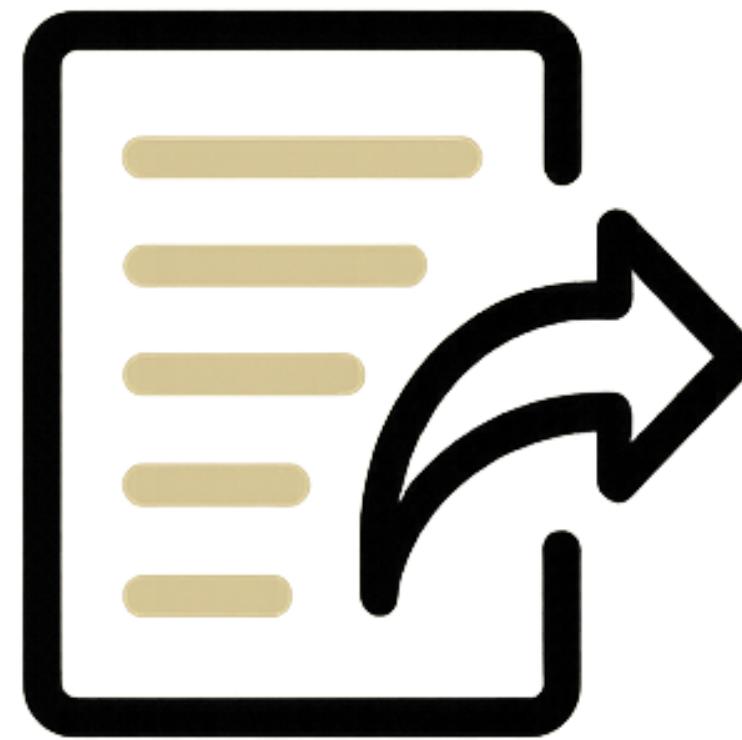


It can lead us astray

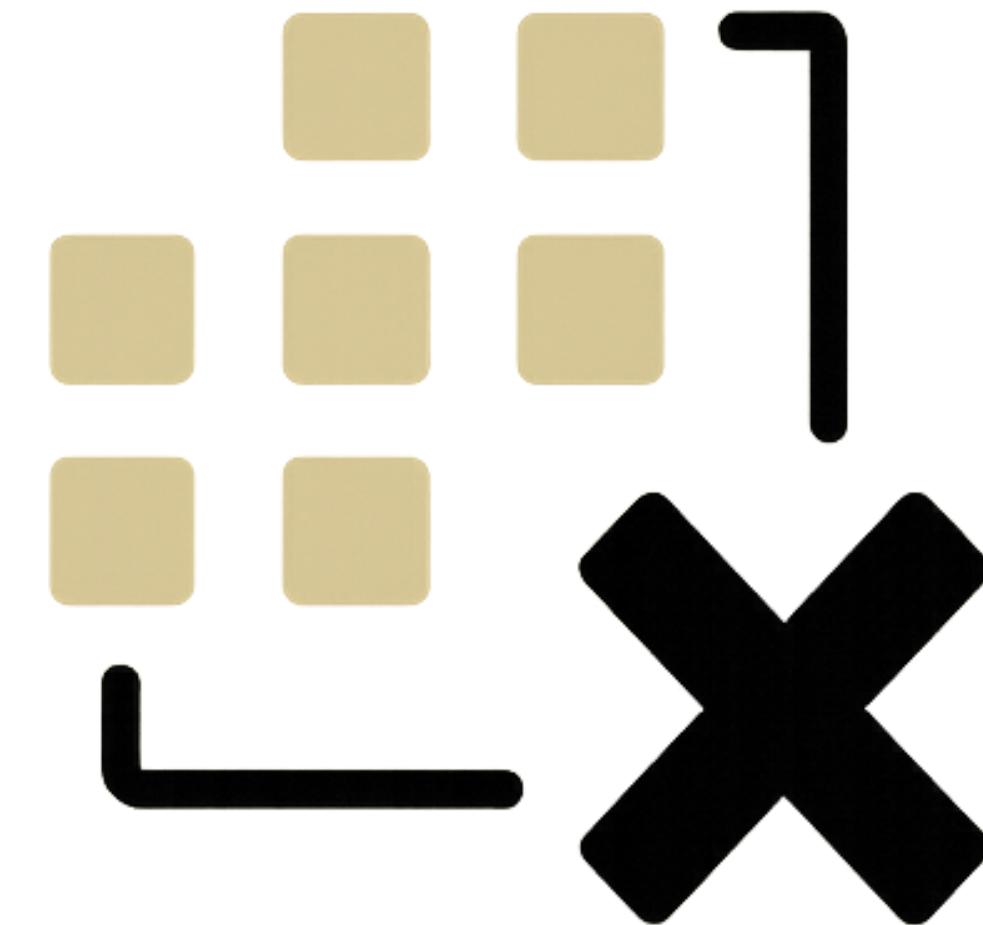
AI isn't always right and it
doesn't signal doubt which
amplifies misplaced trust.

Misplaced trust leaves traces in the code

GitClear analysed 211m lines of code written 2020-2024



17.1% increase
in copy-pasted
code



8x rise in
duplicated
code blocks

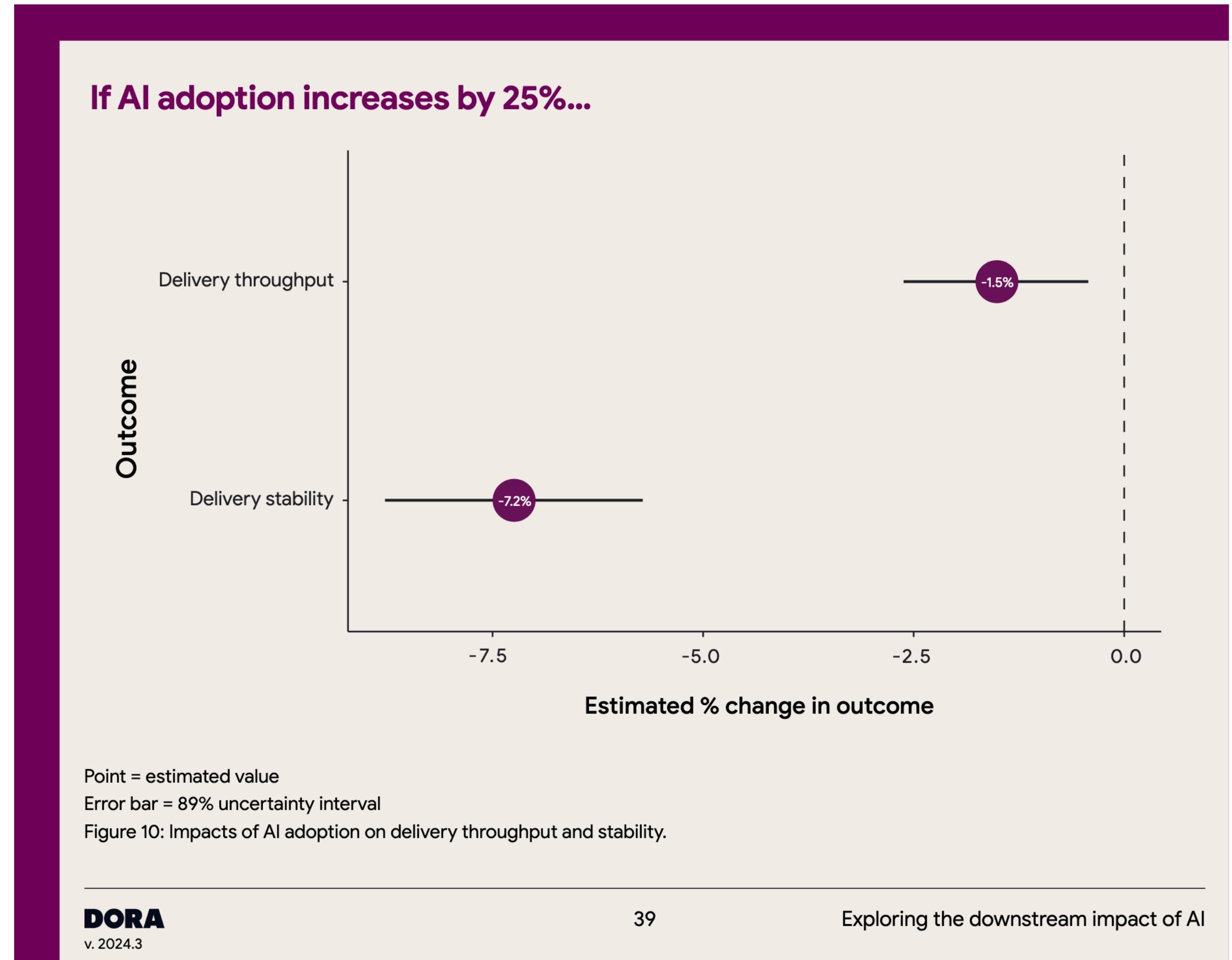


26% increase
in code churn

Early warning signs: stability is falling

DORA 2024 Report

AI adoption is negatively impacting software delivery performance.





Thomas Dohmke • Following

CEO at GitHub

1w • Edited •

...

GitHub Copilot is the first use case where AI has joined a sector of the workforce at-scale. In just a few years, prompting has become the new coding. Developers are morphing into systems thinkers and high-level architects. And we are generating a step change in the speed of software production globally. Now, GitHub Copilot enters its agentic evolution -- becoming the first AI agent broadly embraced by the global workforce.

Thank you for lending your voice to the story [Yang Lu & Tapestry](#), [Jason Gowans & Levi Strauss Co](#), [Brent Foster & TD Bank group](#) and [Kalyani S. & Verizon](#).



How AI Tools Are Reshaping the Coding Workforce

[wsj.com](#)



Nick Frolov and 412 others

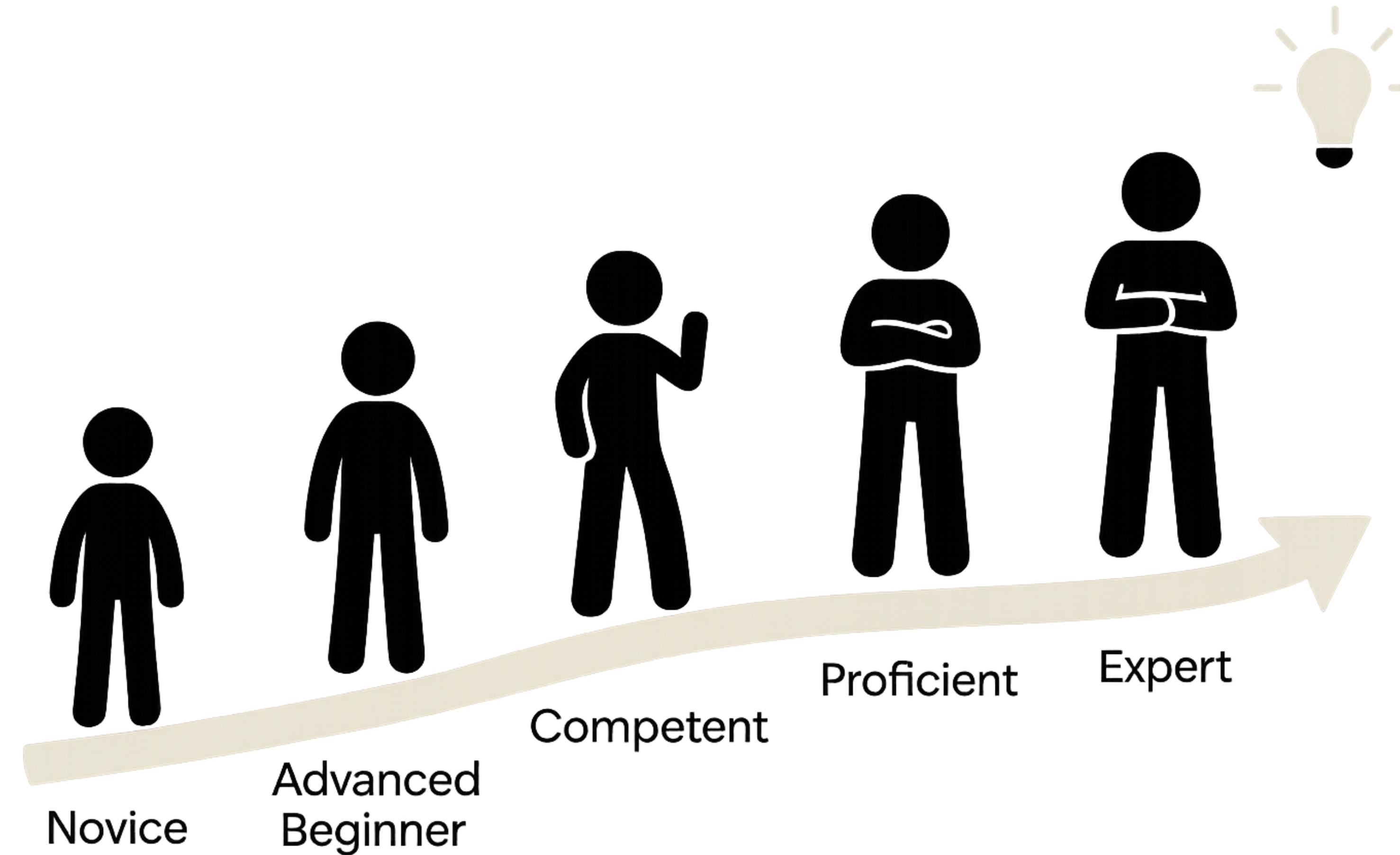
14 comments · 47 reposts

AI is
transforming
software
engineers
into architects

You can't prompt your way to intuition

The Dreyfus Model

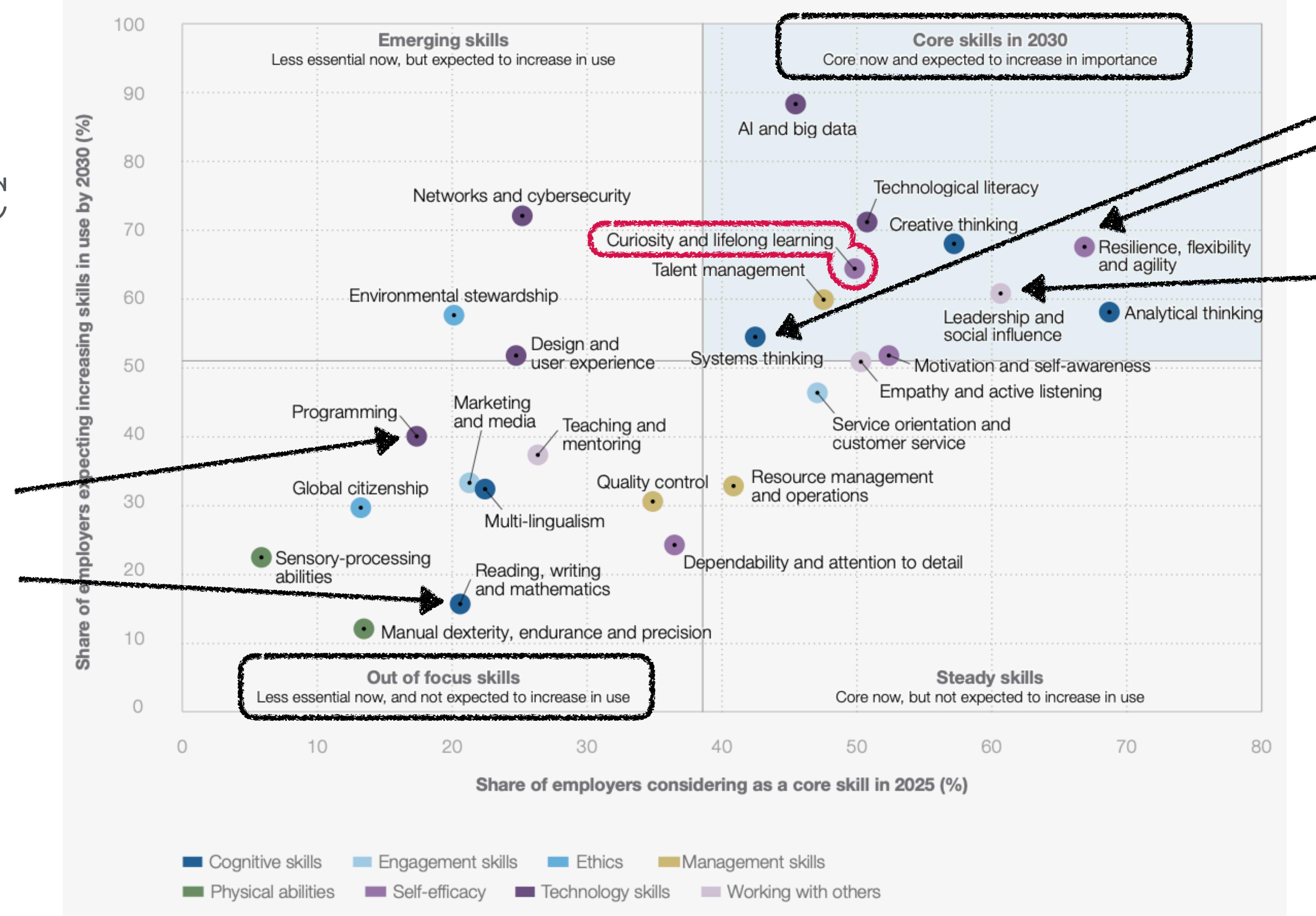
- Recollection
- Recognition
- Decision
- Awareness

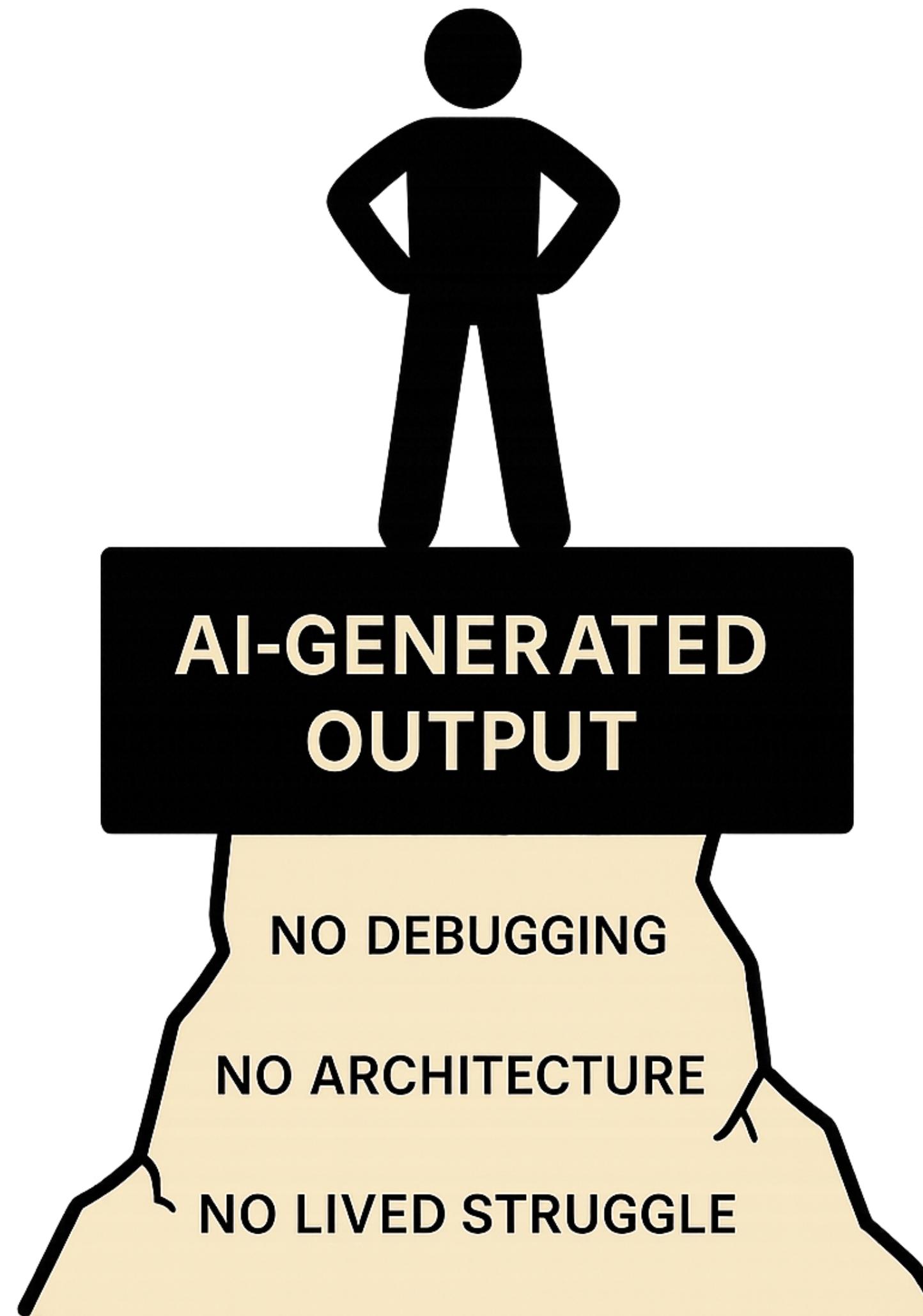


10 years of hard, varied work

World Economic Forum

The Future of Jobs Report 2025





The risk of over-reliance on AI

How will we recognise quality
if we've never had to learn
what makes it good?



"I feel like I am building a dependency on the tool and committing less to memory."

"I've tried to bring down the dependence since I feel it affects my skills."

"I am feeling that excessive usage is making me feel dumb about myself"

"I will usually copy and paste my code into GPT as soon as I run into a problem instead of thinking it through logically because a lot of the time, it can do it faster than I can."

"It does mean I don't figure out the problems myself sometimes. So I lose out on that experience of understanding"

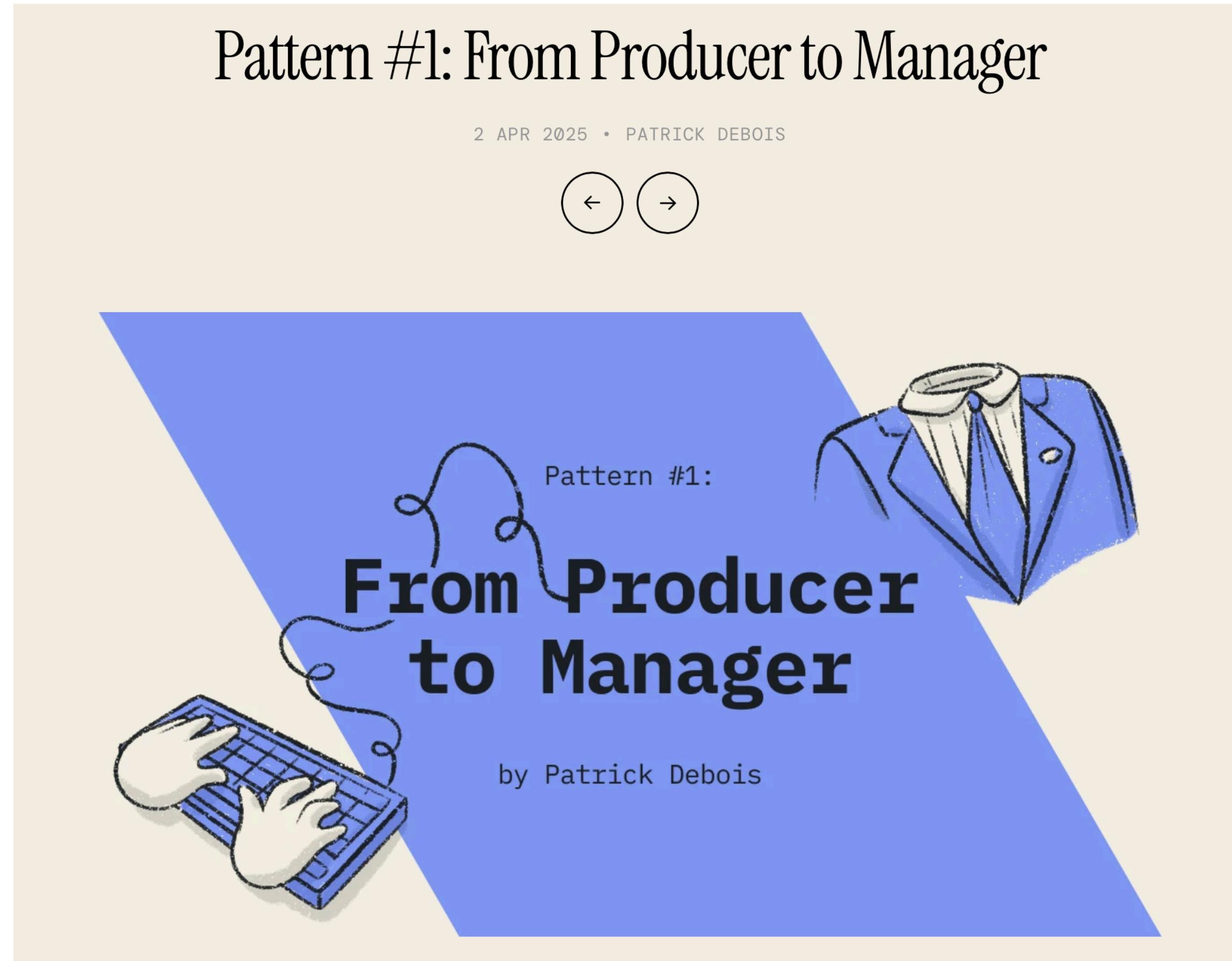
"May also lead to over reliance, potentially slowing down the development of problem solving skills and deep technical expertise."

My own identity crisis

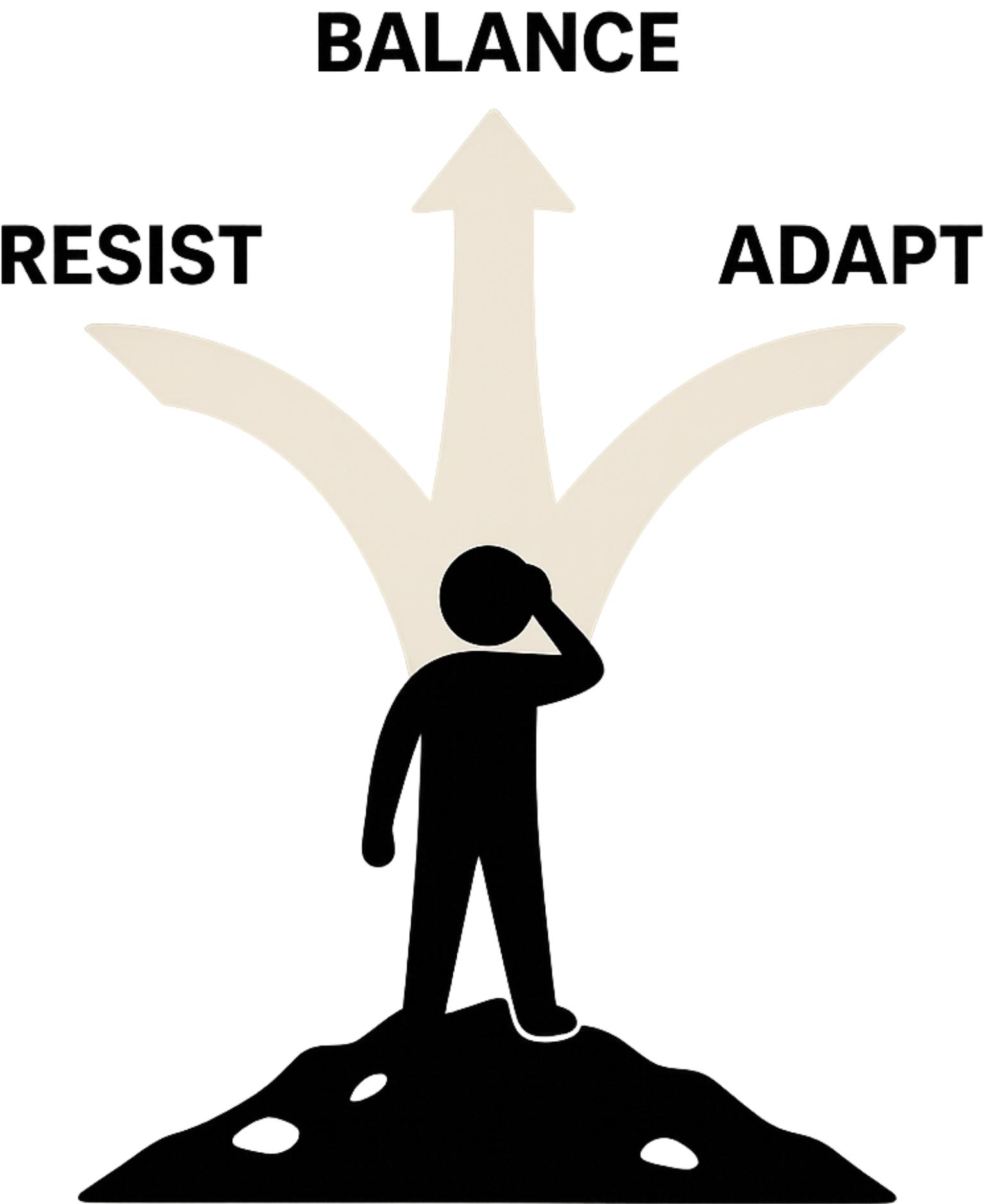
The Reluctant Manager



A familiar feeling



<https://ainativedev.io/news/from-producer-to-manager>



Ok, so what now?

We have no option but to
learn how work in this
new system

Reclaim your role

Are we seeing a return of the generalist?



New tools, new problems, new solutions

Smarter
source control
systems

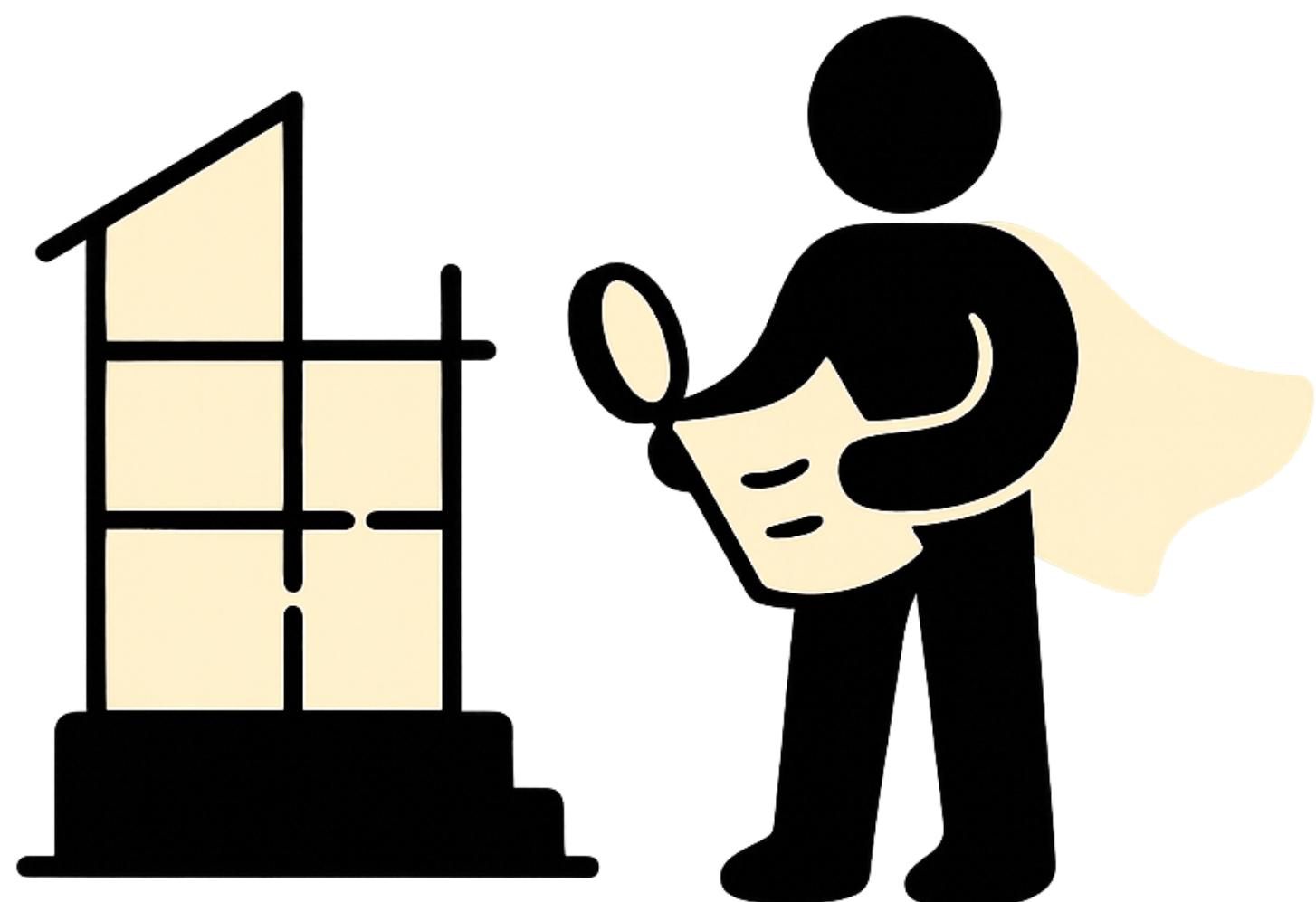
Prompt-driven
development

Designing non-
deterministic
systems

Digital
Identity for AI
agents

Internet
designed for
AI

Human-AI
teaming



New builders

Consider the importance of creativity

Seamful AI

- ✓ Signals doubt
- ✓ Presents various options
- ✓ Documents and preserves the “paths not taken”



Let go of control,
not awareness

The craft is shifting from
hands-on to system-aware



The Identity Pendulum

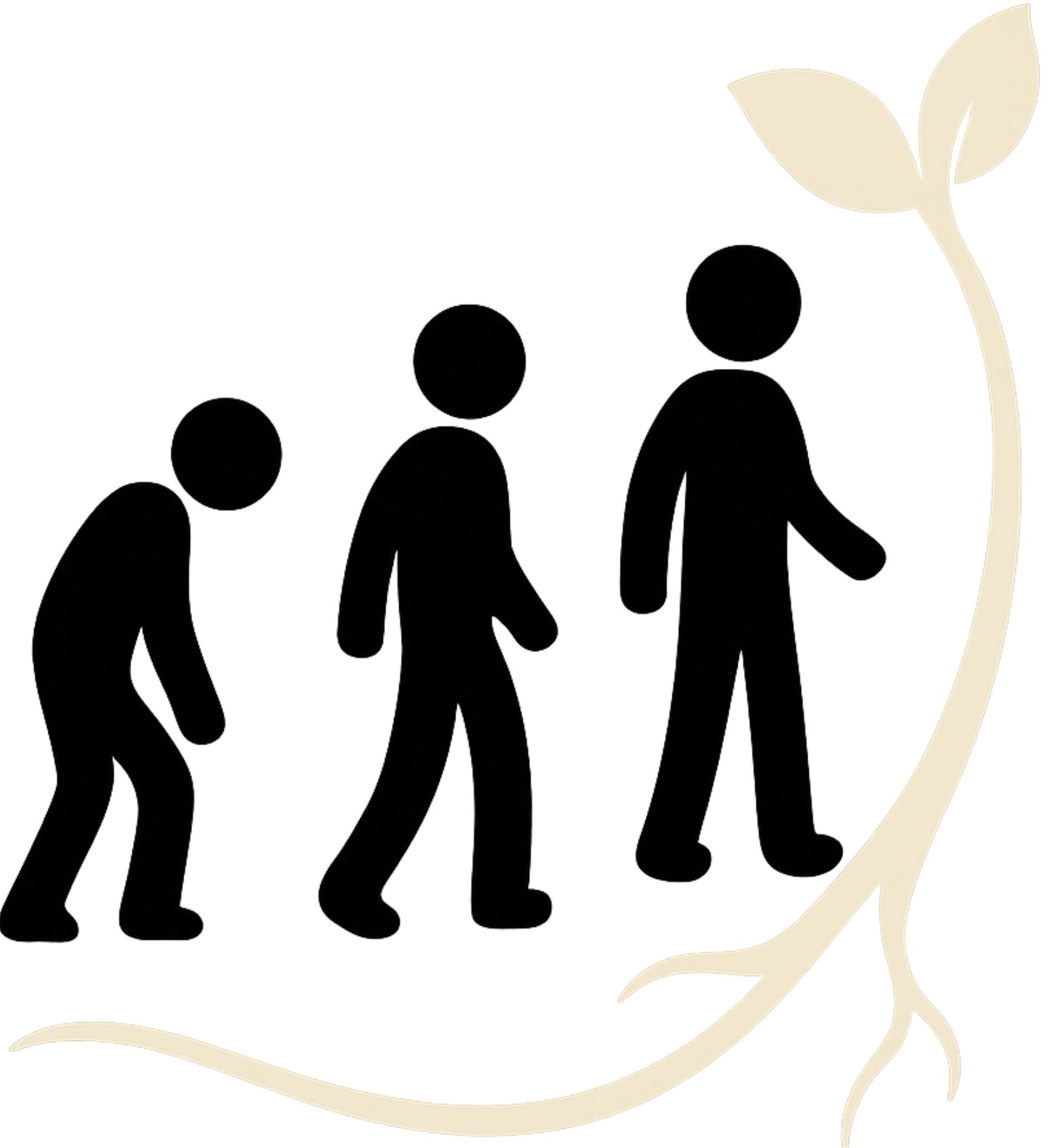


Your career
doesn't have to
be a straight
line.

Evolution, not extinction

The role isn't disappearing -
it's being *reimagined*.

And we get to shape it.



So, am I still a software engineer if I don't write the code?



Am I still solving problems? Still shaping systems? Still carrying the craft forward?

Contact Details



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Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/codefrenzy.bsky.social>