



LOOKIN' FOR FLOW IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Chris Gallivan, Principal Flow Advisor - Planview



www.linkedin.com/in/twopizzafamily



What is Flow?

It's 2024, Let's Ask ChatGPT

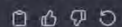
You
what is flow

ChatGPT

"Flow" is a concept often used in psychology to describe a state of deep absorption and engagement in an activity. When someone is in a state of flow, they are fully immersed in what they're doing, to the point where they may lose track of time and their surroundings. This state is typically characterized by the following features:

1. **Intense and Focused Concentration:** The person is completely absorbed in the task at hand, with their attention focused on the activity itself.
2. **A Sense of Ecstasy or Being Outside Everyday Life:** People in a flow state often feel almost transcendent, as if one is in a different world.
3. **Great Inner Clarity:** The individual knows exactly what they are doing. There is a sense of certainty and confidence in their actions.
4. **Knowing that the Activity is Doable:** The person's skills are well-matched to the task's challenges.
5. **A Sense of Serenity:** There's often a loss of self-consciousness, and concerns about oneself may fade away.
6. **Timelessness:** One's sense of time can be altered; hours can seem like minutes.
7. **Intrinsic Motivation:** The activity itself is rewarding, and there is an internal drive to engage in it.

Flow is most likely to occur when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable. It's often associated with creative activities, sports, gaming, or work tasks that are both challenging and rewarding. The concept was popularized by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who identified it as a highly productive and enjoyable state of being.



A state of being?

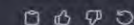
You
what is flow of value

ChatGPT

The concept of "flow of value" is commonly used in business and economics, and it can be understood from a few different perspectives:

1. **In Lean Manufacturing and Business Management:** Here, the flow of value refers to the streamlined process through which a company delivers its products or services to customers. The goal is to minimize waste and maximize efficiency, ensuring that every step in the production and delivery process adds value to the end product or service. This concept is central to lean methodologies, where the focus is on creating value for customers while eliminating waste. In these fields, the flow of value is often related to the efficient delivery of products or services to customers through software products or services. This involves continuously improving working software frequently and gathering customer feedback, and adapting to changing requirements. A key tool used in lean methodology to analyze and improve the flow of value is the value stream map, which is a visual tool used to map out the information required to bring a product or service to a customer. The goal is to visualize and analyze the value stream to identify and eliminate waste, thereby improving the efficiency of the value stream.
4. **In Economic Terms:** More broadly, in economics, the flow of value can refer to the movement of goods, services, and money within an economy. This includes how value is created, exchanged, and distributed among different actors such as consumers, businesses, and governments.

In all these contexts, the key idea behind the flow of value is the efficient and effective movement of goods, services, or information that brings benefit or value to the end-user or consumer. Optimizing this flow often involves identifying and removing obstacles or inefficiencies, streamlining processes, and focusing on customer needs and feedback.



A means to bring value sooner to customers?

A background image showing a person surfing on a wave. The person is wearing a striped shirt and dark shorts, and is captured in a dynamic pose as they ride the wave. The water is a vibrant blue-green color.

Why do people want Flow?

“

From the moment we are born, we
are always **chasing time**

Not All Time Has Equal Value

Which one means
more?

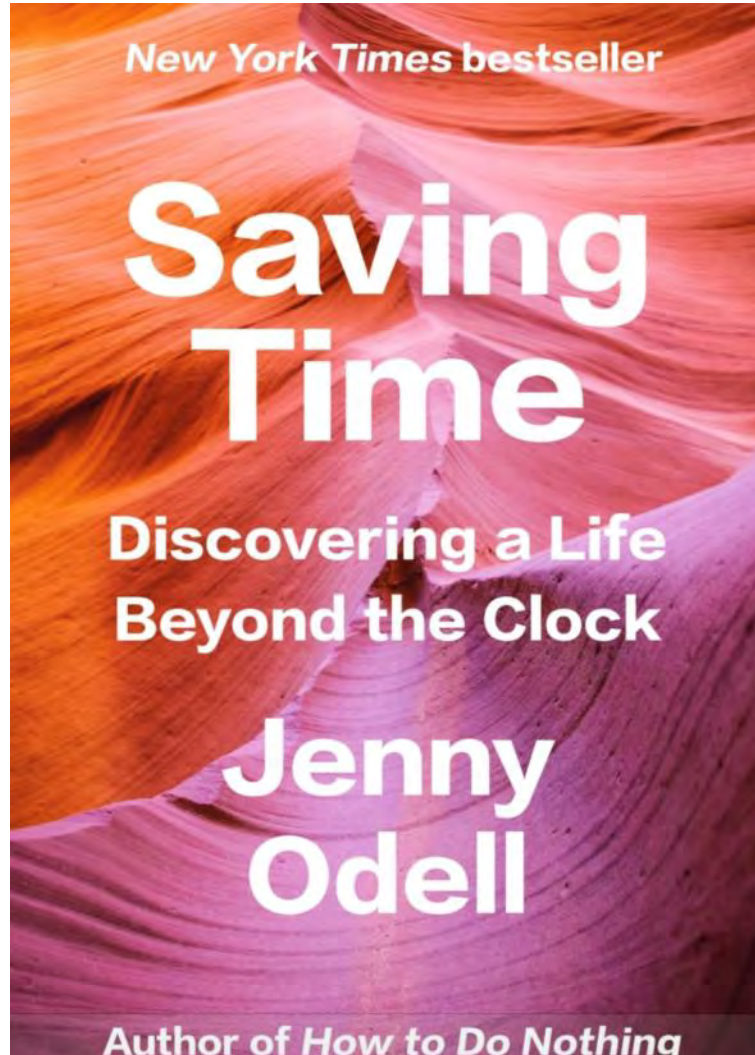


10 mins

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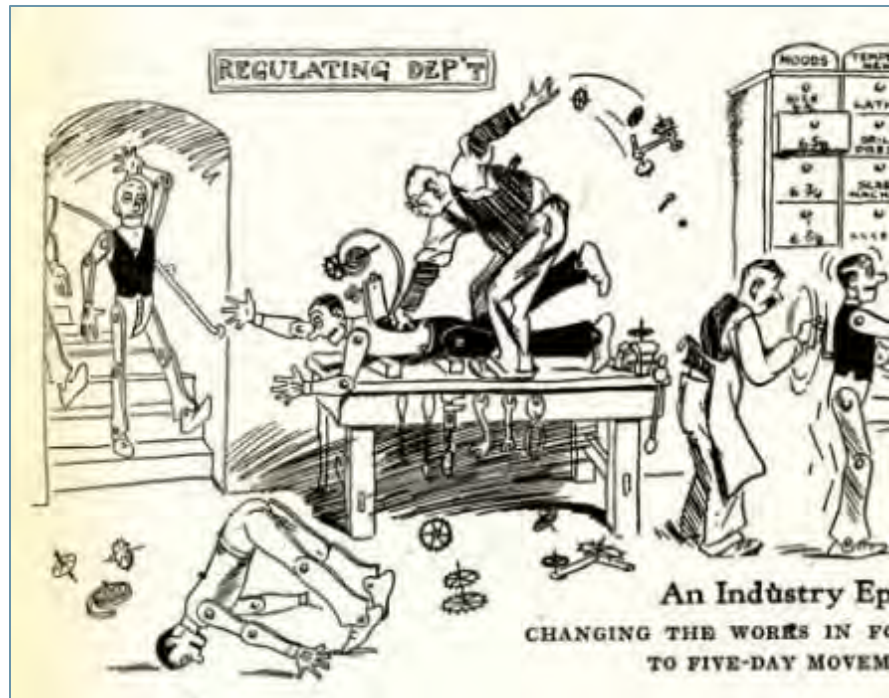


3 summers



Opting for **Surprise** over **Control**

"Time has felt the most expansive, and I have felt the most alive, when I was in an encounter with something or someone that was surprising, something that I didn't necessarily expect."



Looking for **Flow** in the Industrial Age

“

Principles of Scientific Management, 1909

1. Discover the most efficient way to perform tasks
2. Clearly divide responsibilities
3. Pay according to performance
4. Rigid hierarchy and strict surveillance of employees



Frederic Winslow Taylor

The guy who invented managers and consultants,
and RACI charts

“

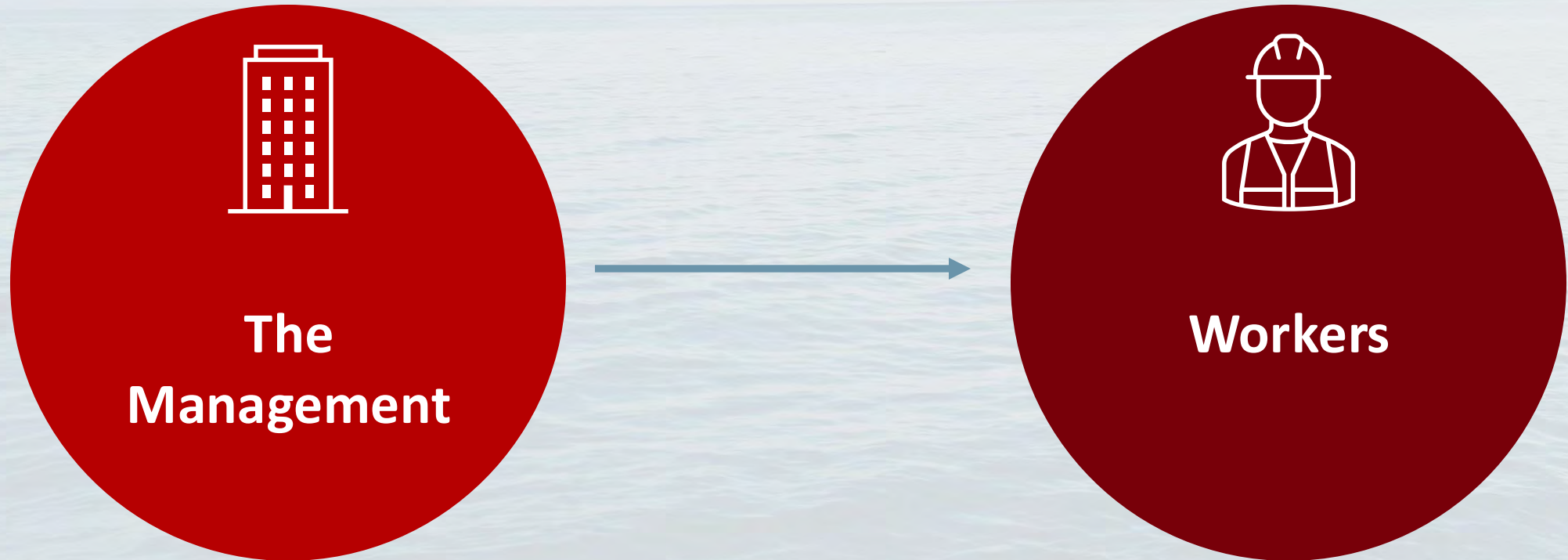


Frederic Winslow Taylor

Divide the work from the responsibility

“In most cases one type of man is needed to plan ahead, and an entirely different type to execute the work”.

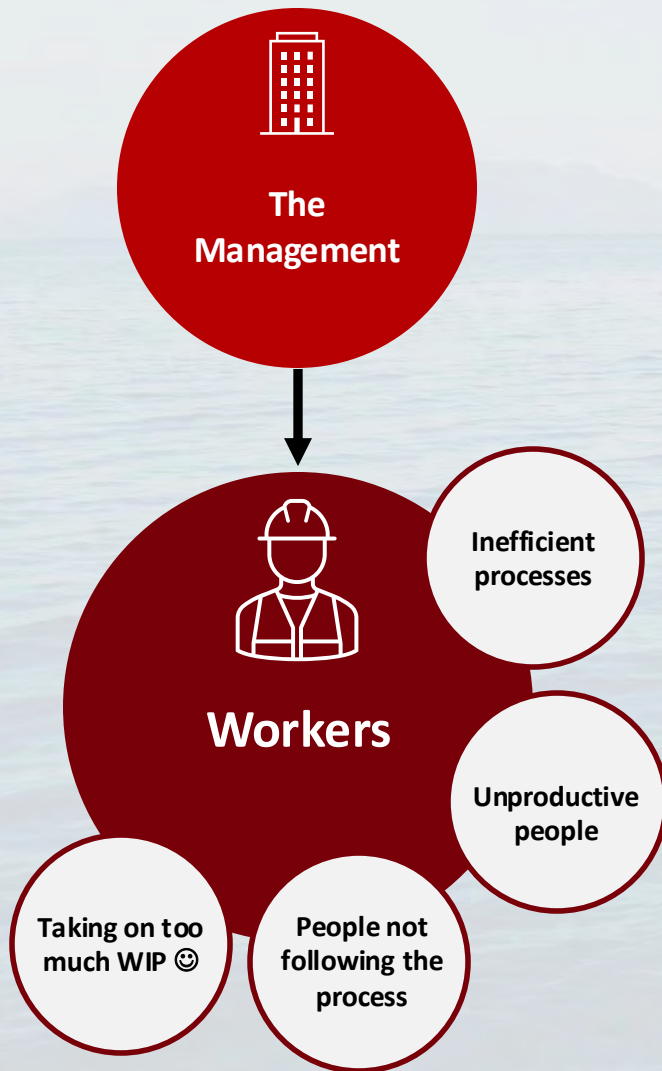
A Simplistic View of an Organization Emerges





Looking for **Flow** in the **Digital Age**

100 Years in - Why Some Managers Still Think Work is Delayed



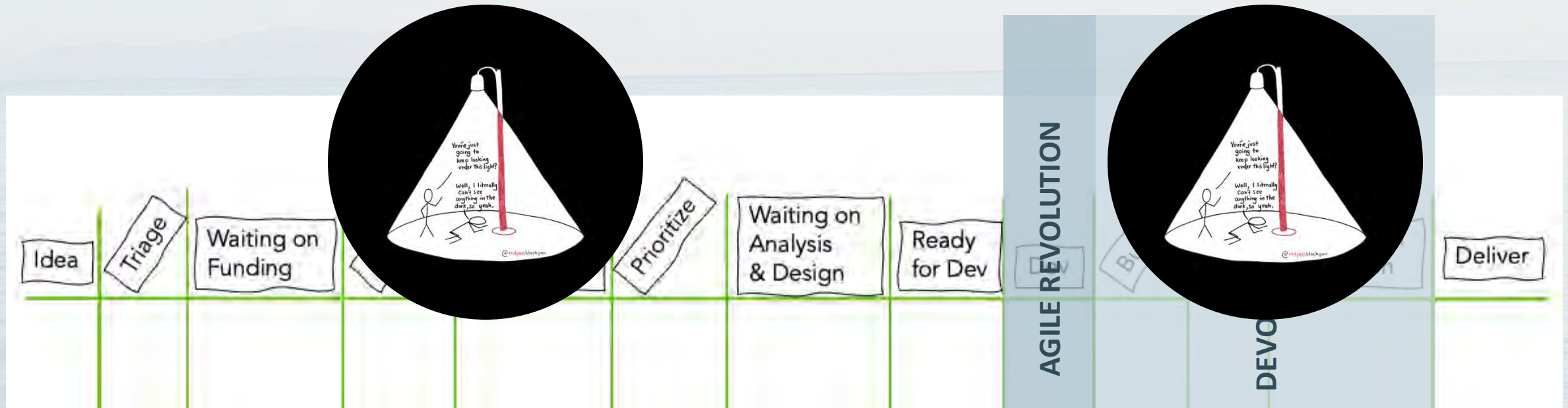
Principles of Scientific Management, 1909

- 1. Discover the most efficient way to perform tasks
- 2. Clearly divide responsibilities
- 3. Pay according to performance
- 4. Rigid hierarchy and strict surveillance of employees

Streetlight Effect



What Did We Apply Lean Thinking To?



← What about the rest of the process???? →

IDEATE

120 days

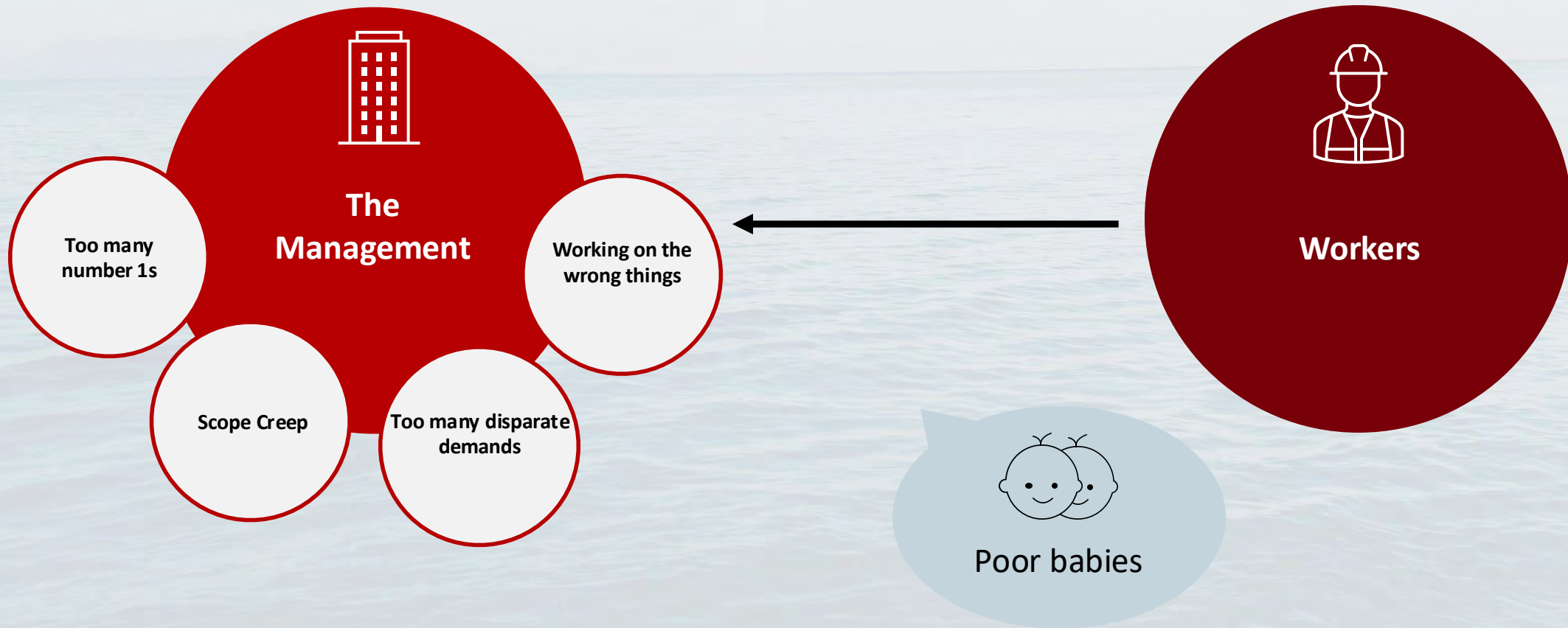
CREATE

20 days

RELEASE

50 days

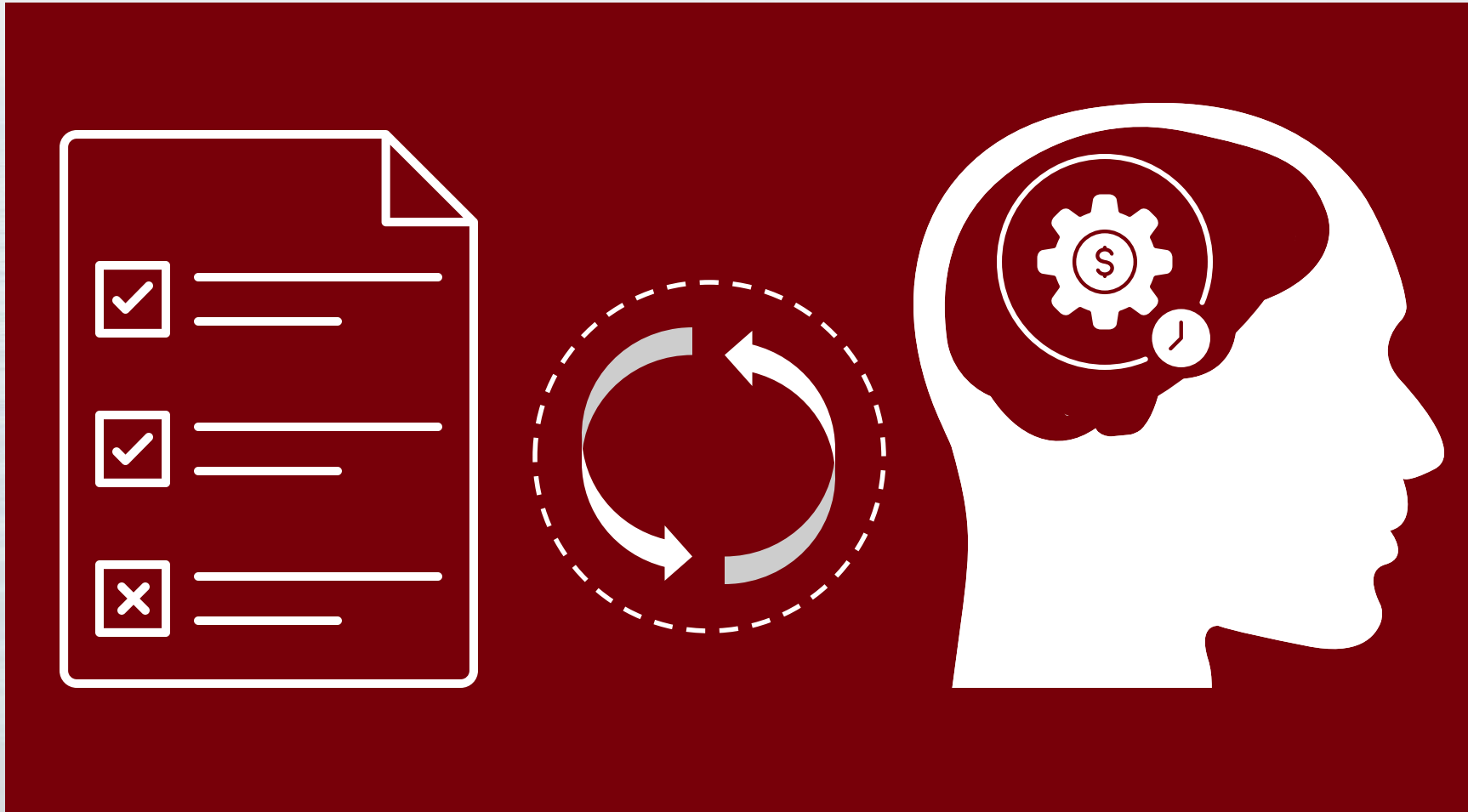
Why IT workers (developers) think work is delayed





So you can't keep up,
and you want me to dial back the
demand?

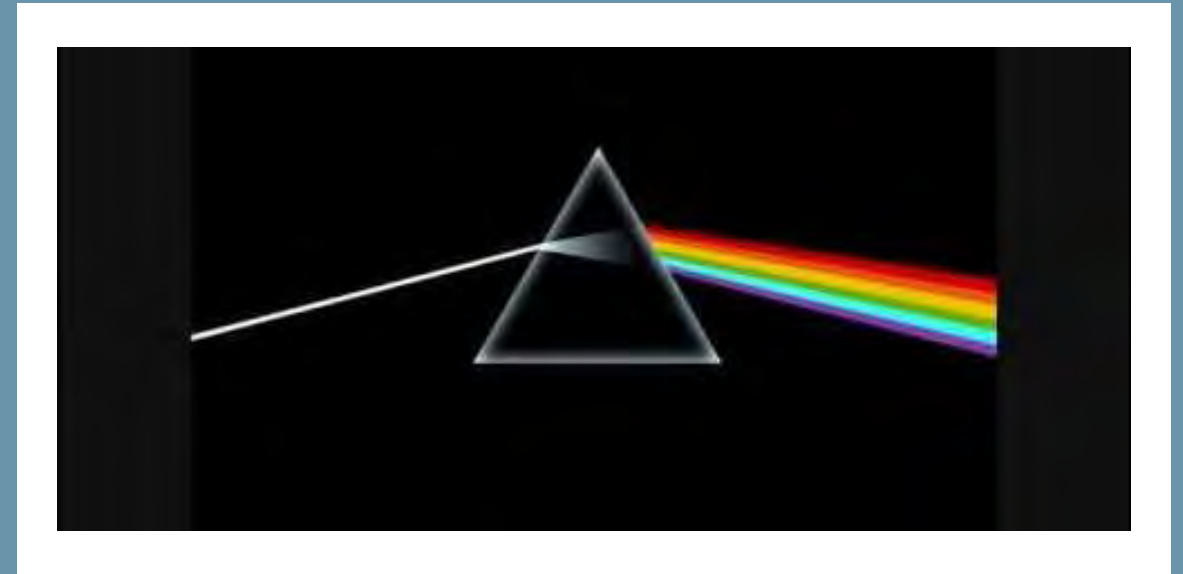
We've allowed ourselves to become task
focused instead of value focused



“Eventually we become comfortably numb (in red)”*



I've tried all these things,
and **none of them ever worked**



But were they the right things?



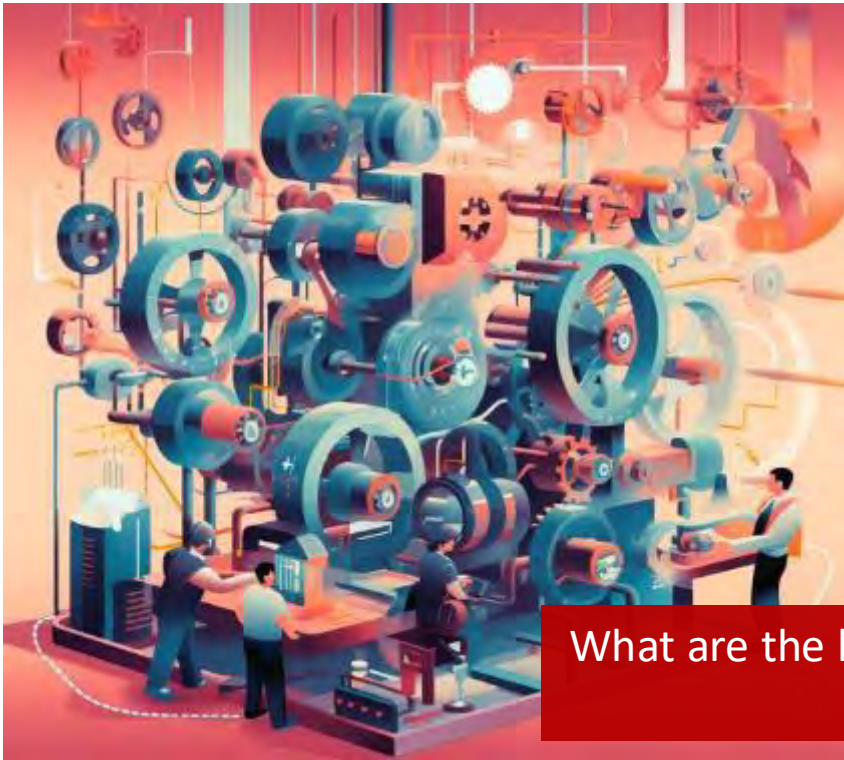


for Flow in
the Obsession



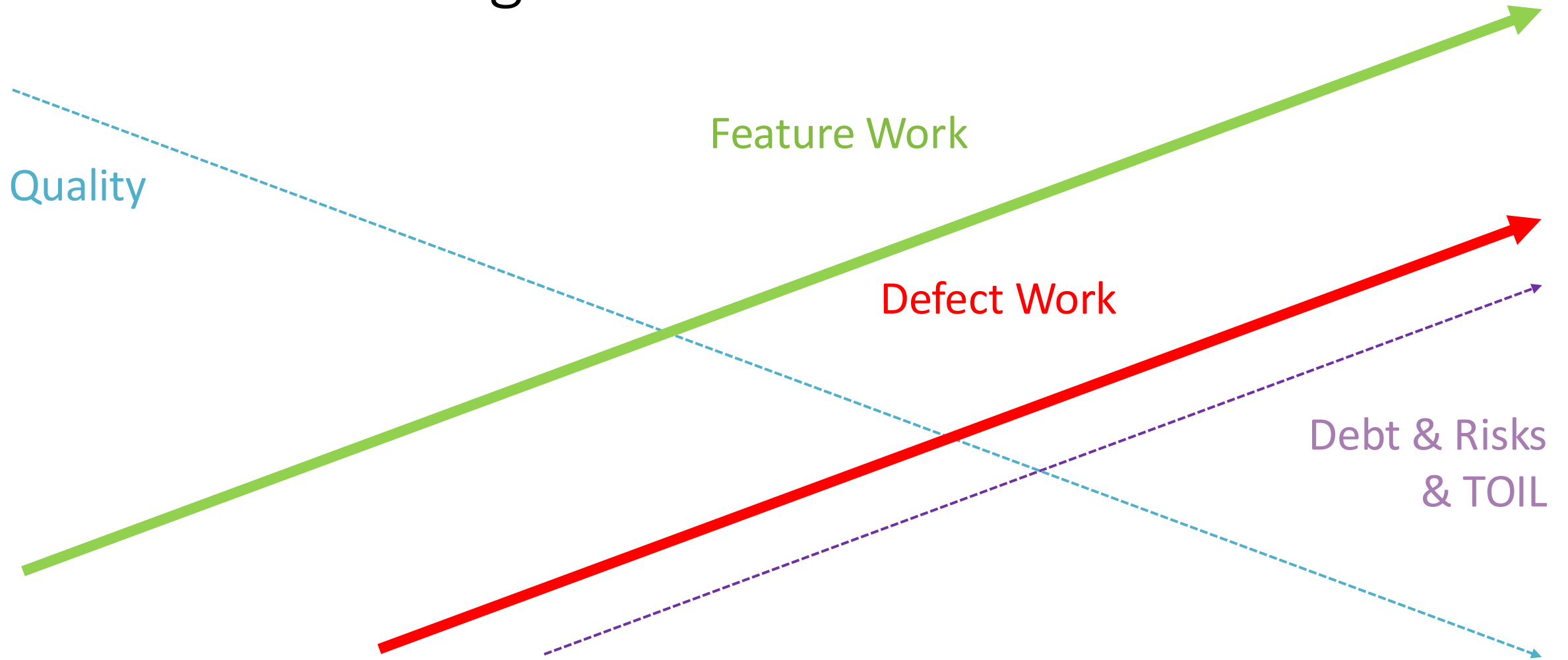
Obsessed with new features...

But **90%** of software costs are **maintenance**?

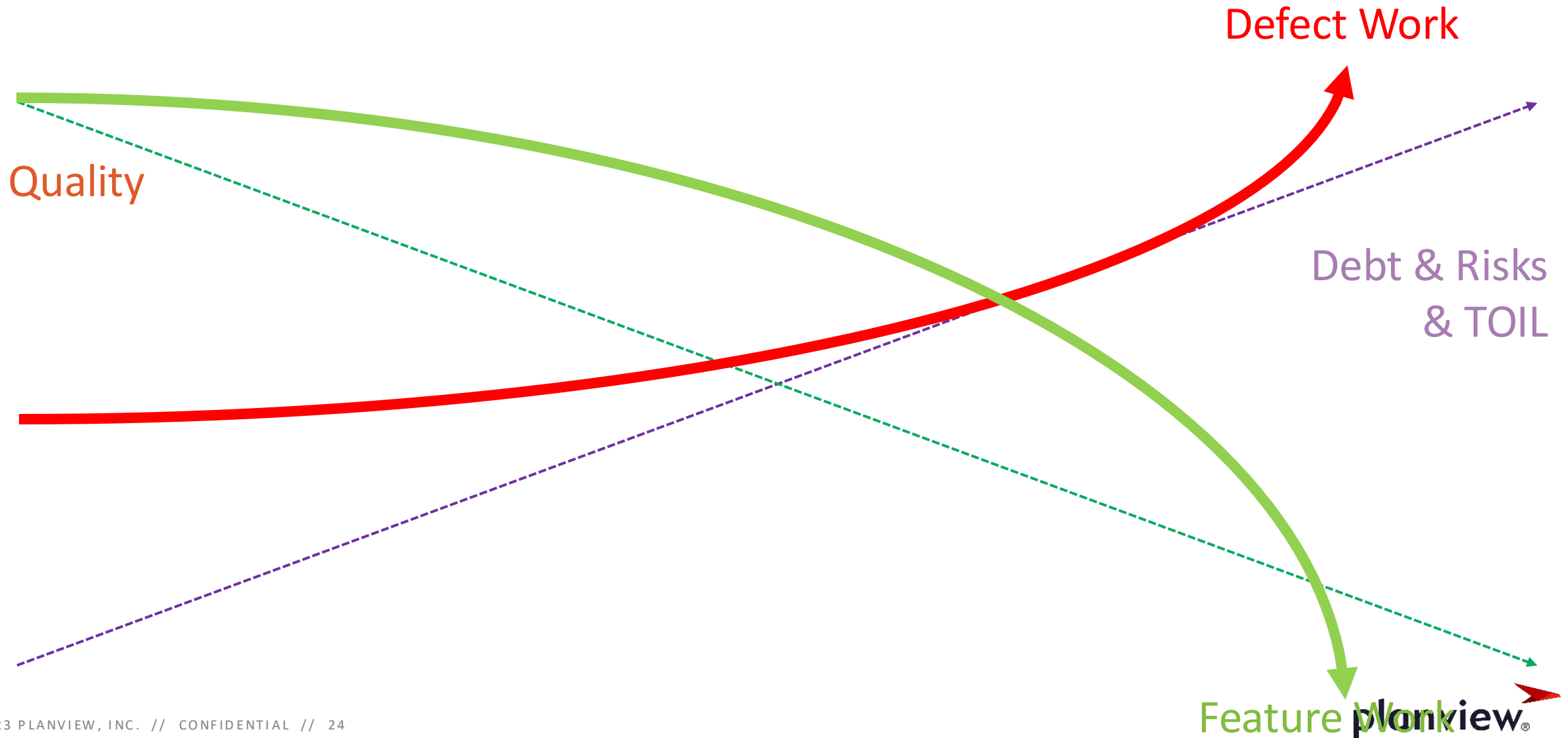


What are the hidden costs of adding more features?

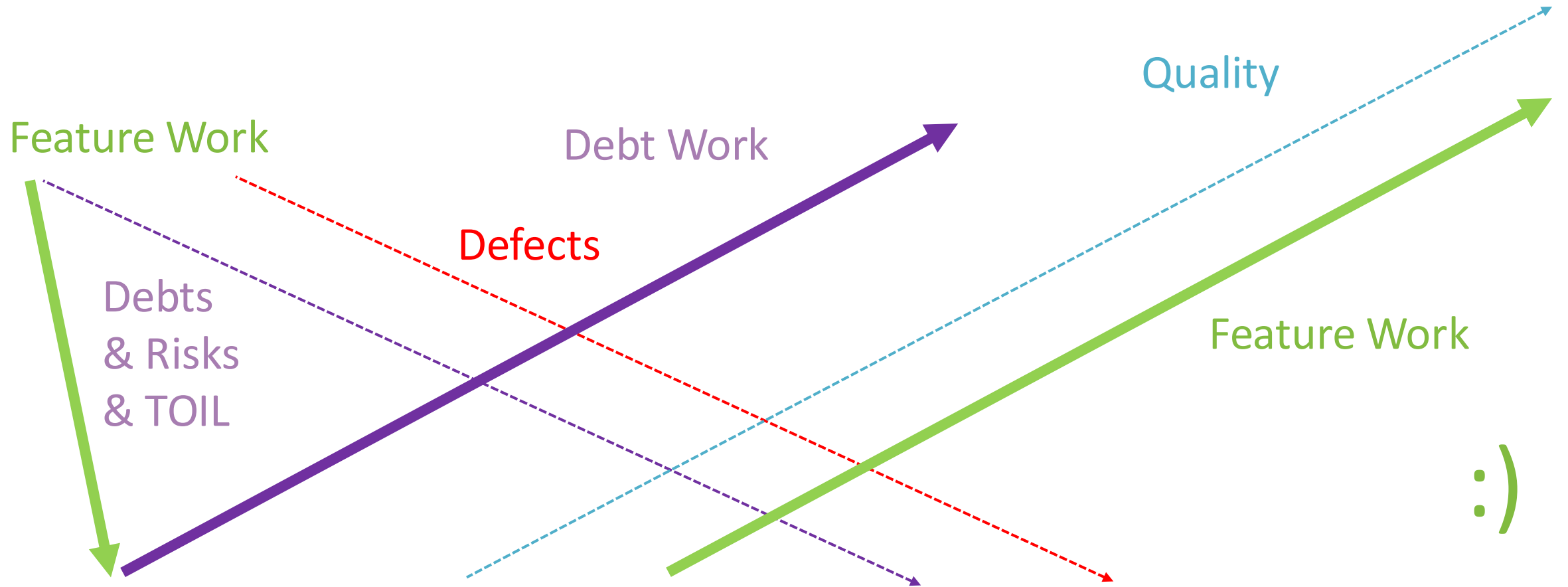
Pushing new features to market



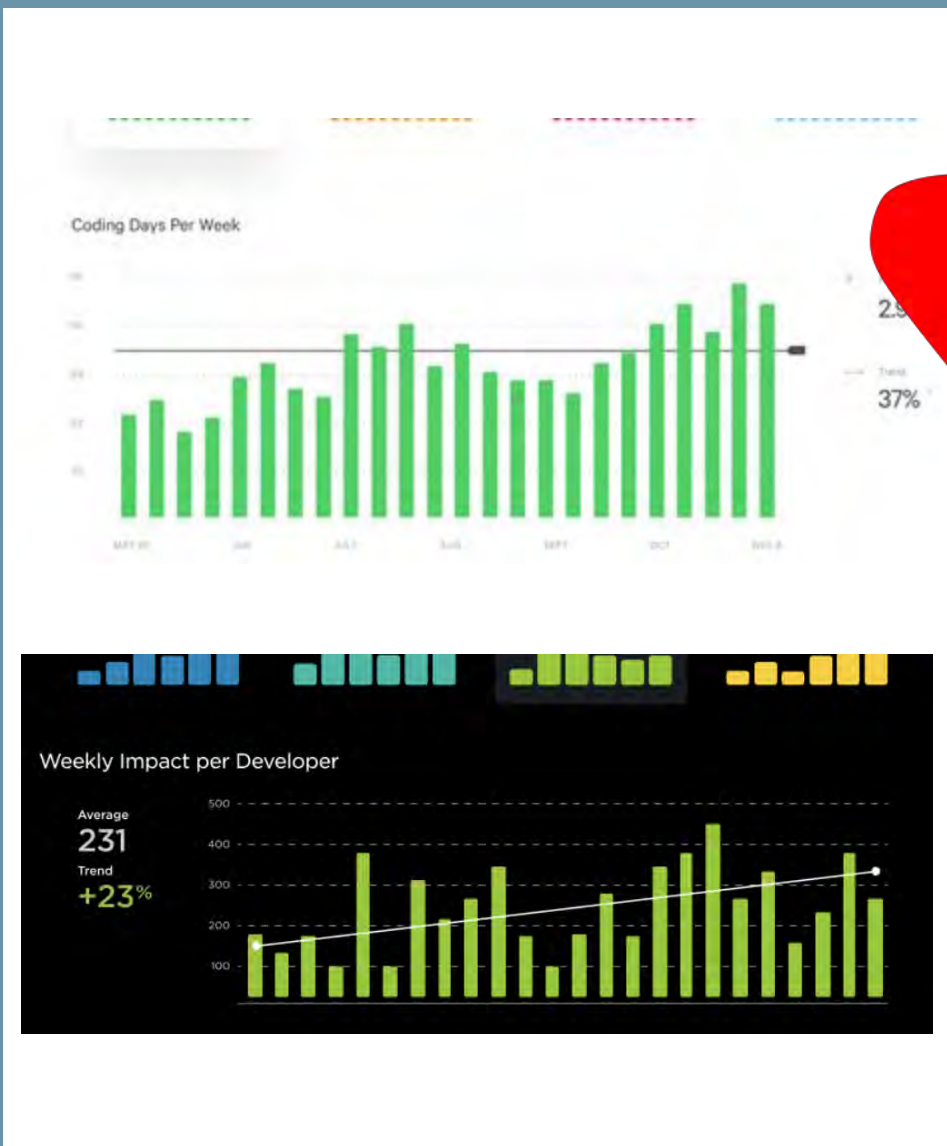
Debt Spiral



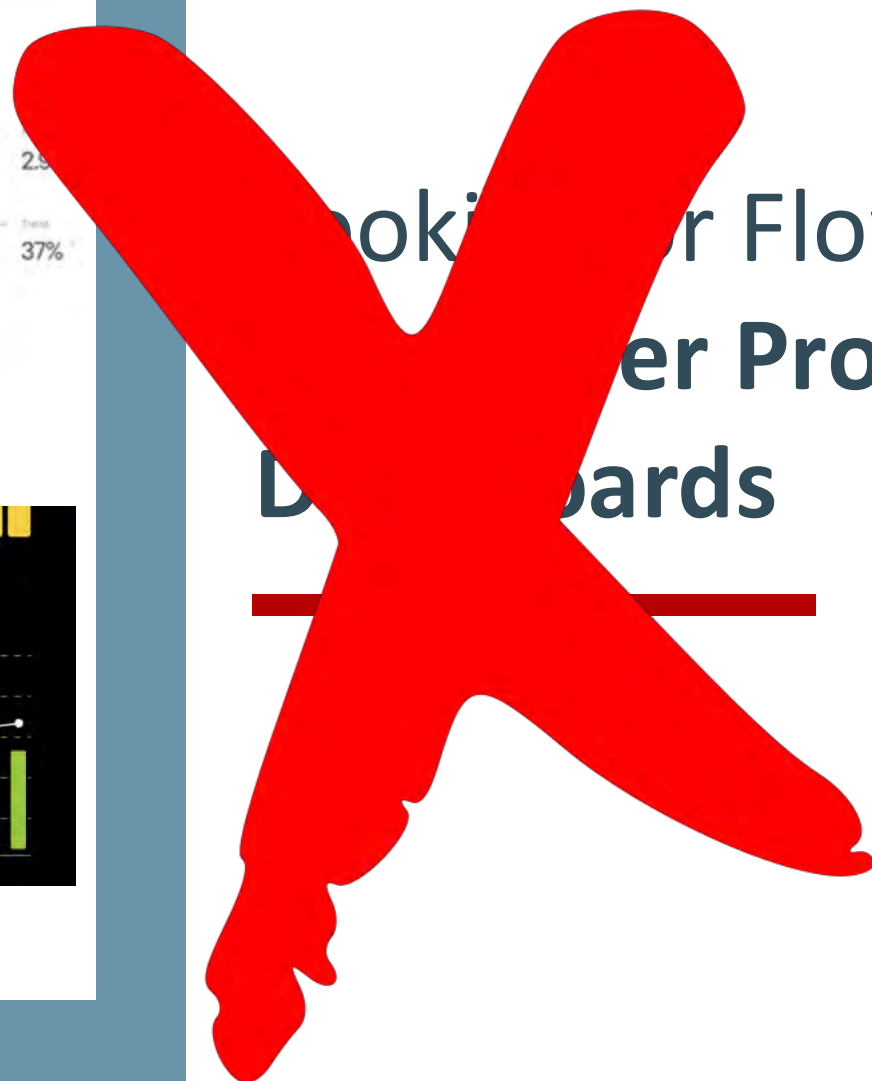
Debt, Risk & Defect Reduction



:)



Looking for Flow in Developer Productivity Dashboards



If 90% of software costs are **maintenance**?



Shouldn't we just make code easy to understand (tech debt)?

70% of coding effort is **understanding the code**



Humans are most **energized** when they **feel** a sense of **agency** over the **work** they do



Shouldn't we just allow devs to have a say in the work?

90% of the work is dictated by management





So **70%** of what we **build**
our users **don't use**,
and you want me to be predictable?



for Flow in Scrum ~~Dashboards~~

We are **delivering** stories
(tasks) to an **artificial** cadence



But our **delivery** of value
looks like **2004**





There must be a **Better Way**

A Better View of Software Delivery



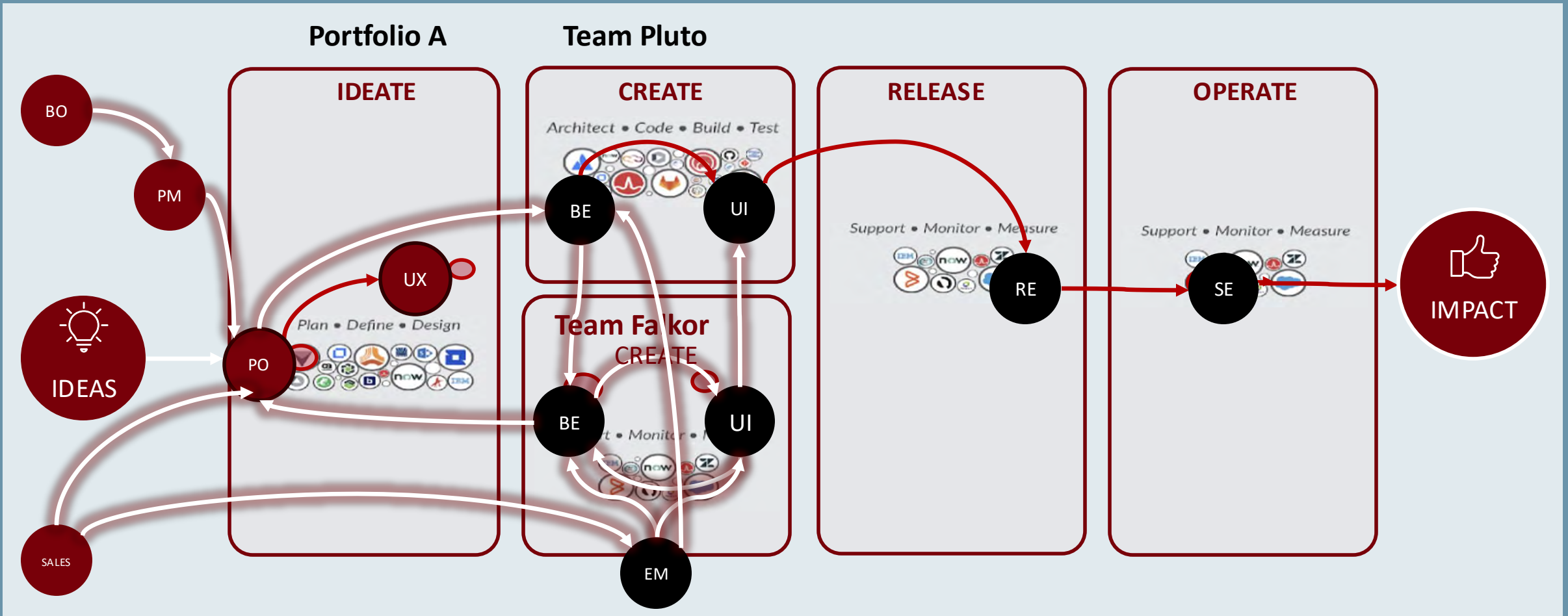
A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles. The left circle is red and labeled 'Demand Generation'. The right circle is blue and labeled 'Demand Fulfillment'. The intersection of the two circles is highlighted by a white horizontal bar that contains the text 'Flow gets lost in the seams'.

Demand
Generation

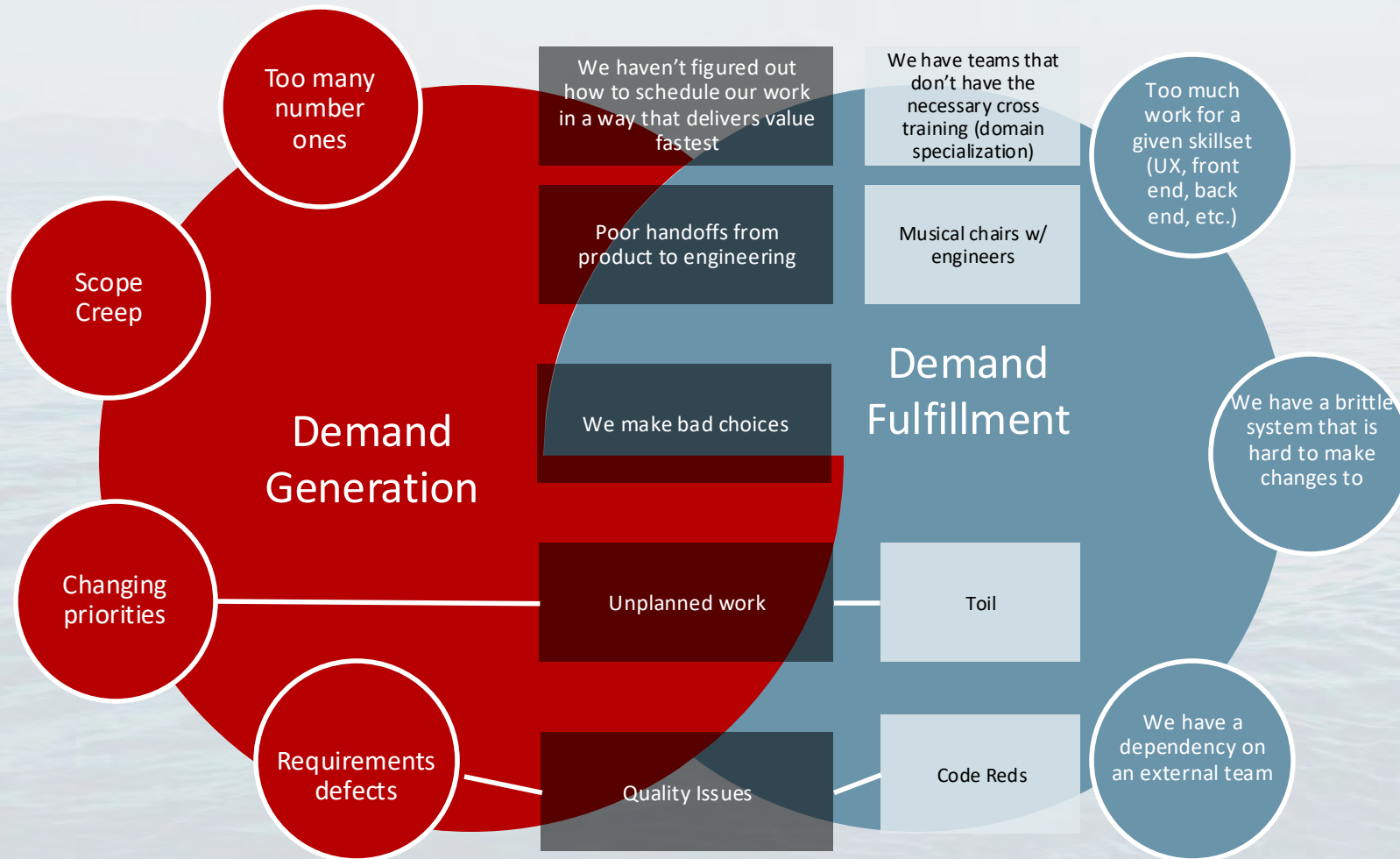
Demand
Fulfillment

Flow gets lost in the seams

It's actually way more complex – there are seams everywhere



Real Reasons why Flow is Impacted



The Physics of Improvement

Everyone has a performance gap...

It takes discipline to keep it closed...

FIGURE 2. The Work Harder Balancing Loop

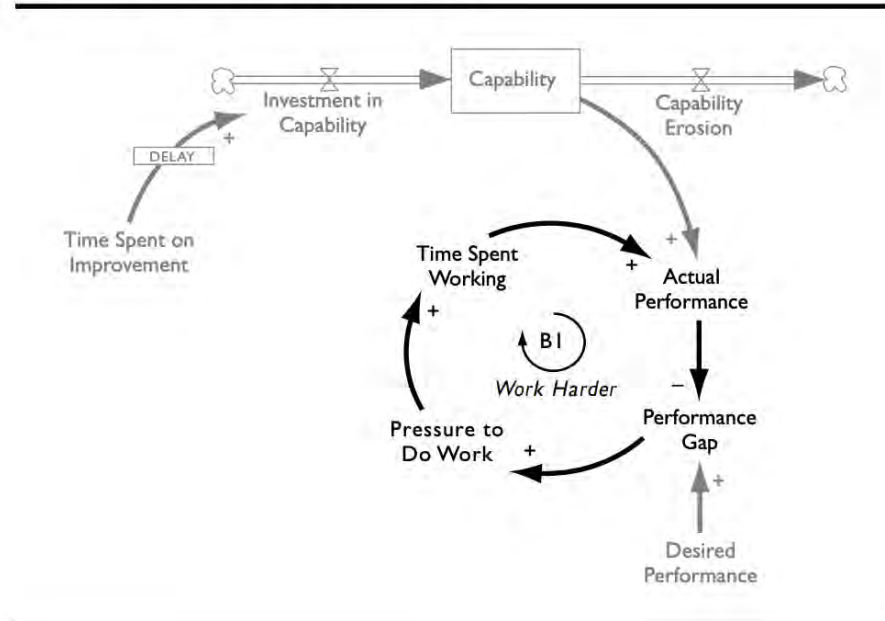
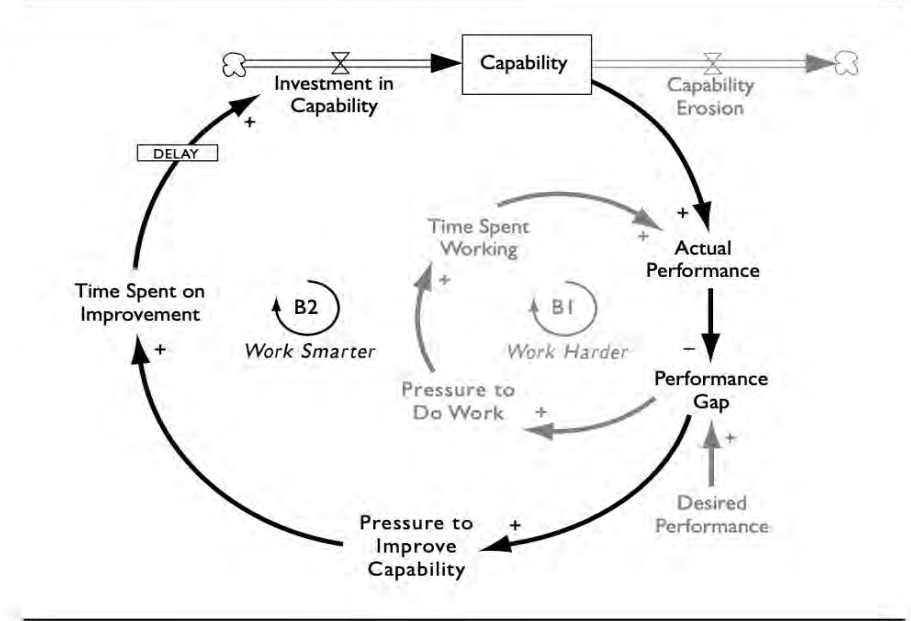


FIGURE 3. The Work Smarter Balancing Loop



“

Don't play what's there, play what's not there.



“In systems thinking, increases in understanding are believed to be obtainable by expanding the systems to be understood, not by reducing them to their elements.”

Dr. Russell Ackoff

The
seams

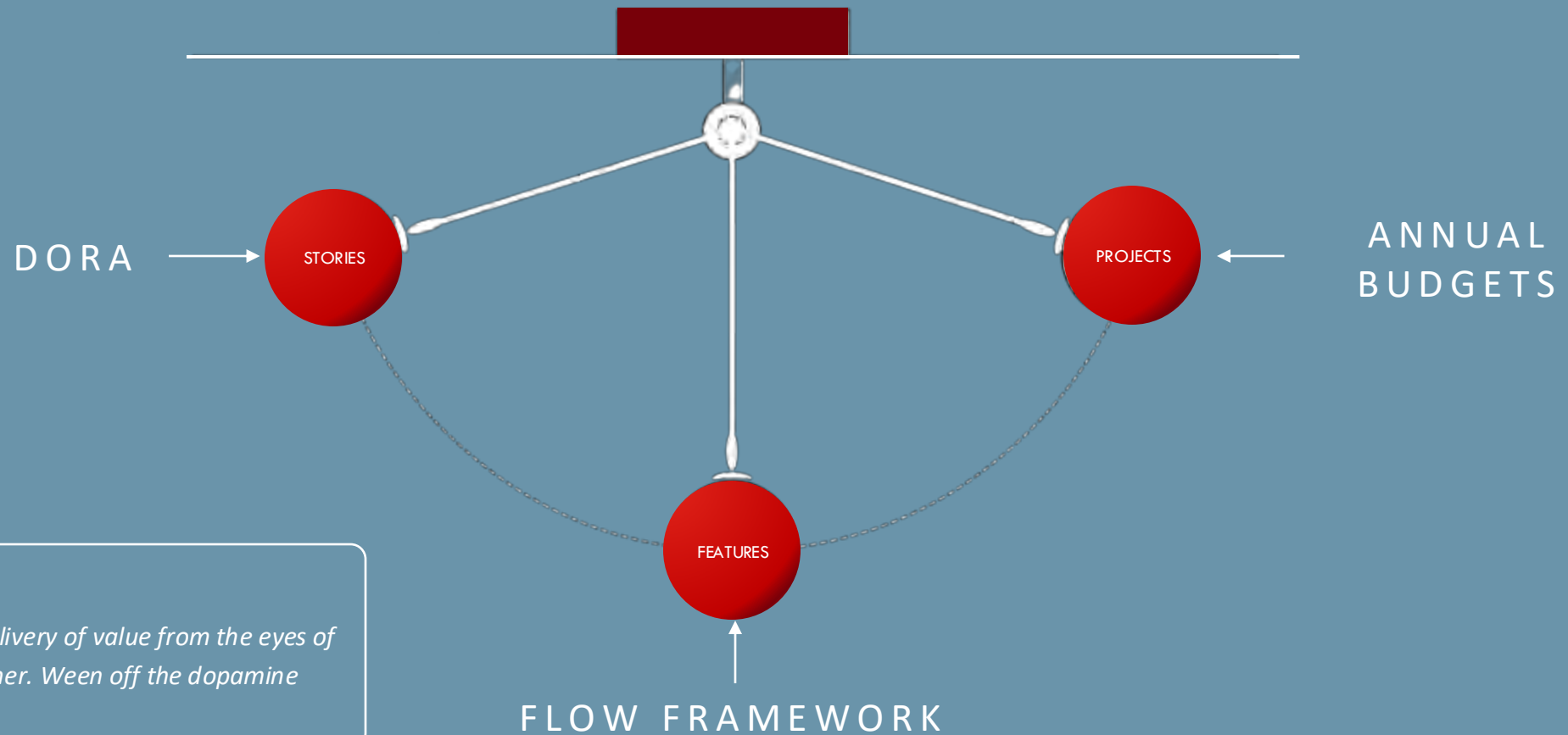
Resist the urge to break everything down and focus on the pieces.

Miles Davis, Chopin, and others spoke of the spaces between the notes being where the magic resides—not just playing the notes themselves. This transformative idea of recognizing the importance of the relationships between the parts versus just looking at the parts and ignoring what ties them together is not unique to music.

Instead, adopt a mindset of seeing the big picture, recognizing how different elements within your organization are interconnected and impact each other.

Unfortunately, the budgeting process usually runs counter to this principle—we break things down into line items, functions, and parts of a system and think we are seeing the whole, but we are missing the relationships among the investments and programs and functions—the space between the notes.

The Value Measurement Equilibrium





Measure Twice, cut Once

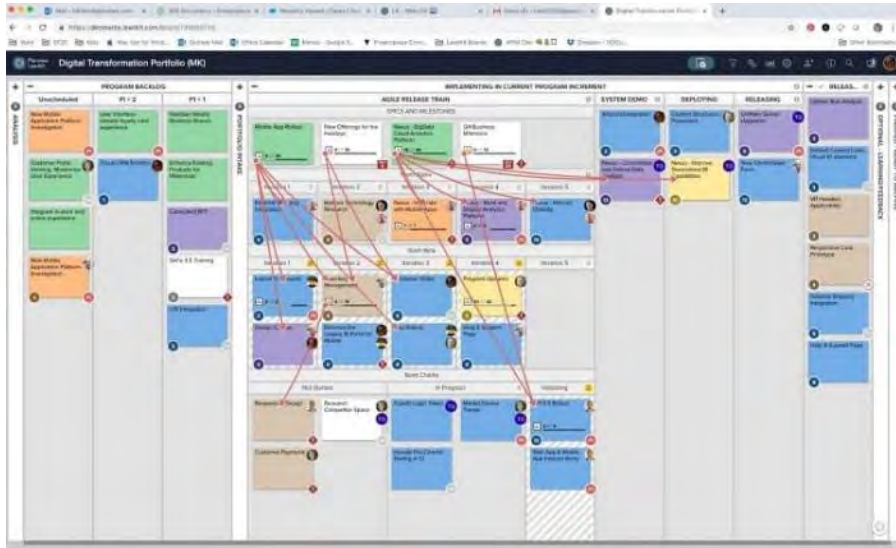
TIPS:

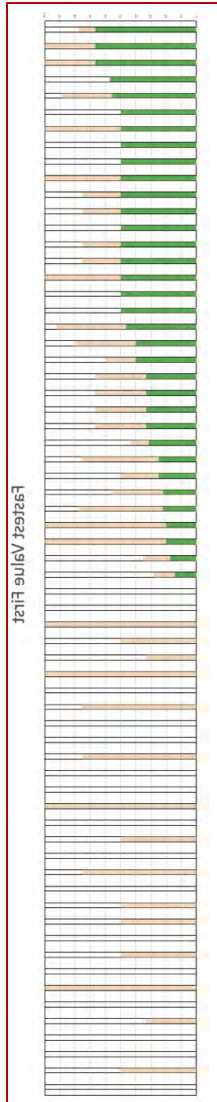
Set aside enough time to allow engineers to properly design new work. Don't fall prey to using less experienced people to do the design.

Identify & Track Dependencies

TIPS:

Dependency tracking is hard. Do it anyway. Pay attention to the seams between teams.



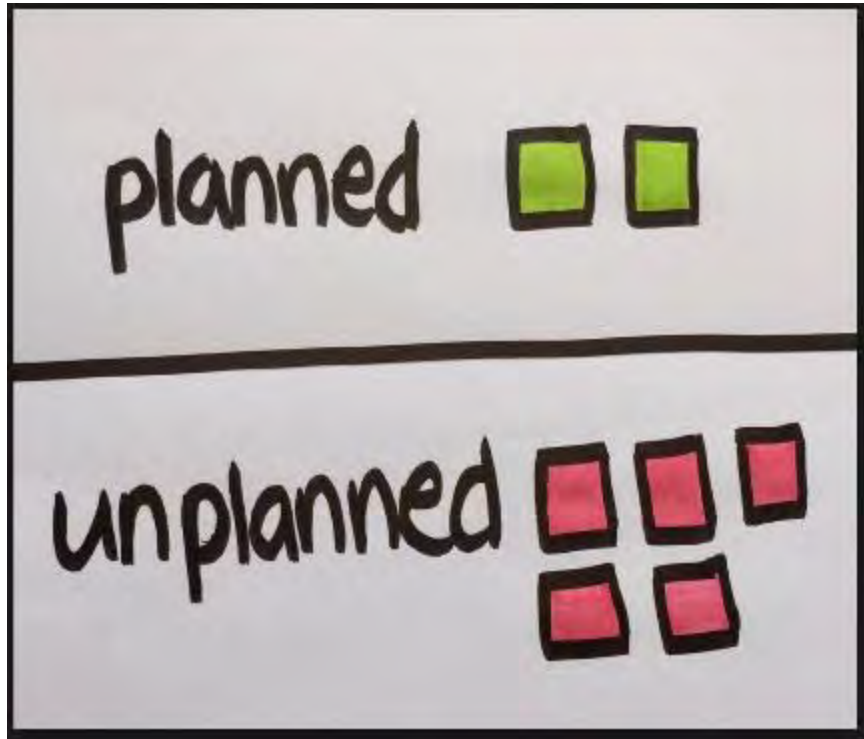


Sequence Work Considering "Fastest Value First"

TIPS:

*Focus on scheduling work in a manner which delivers customer value fastest.
Emphasize finishing work over starting work. Less status meetings.*

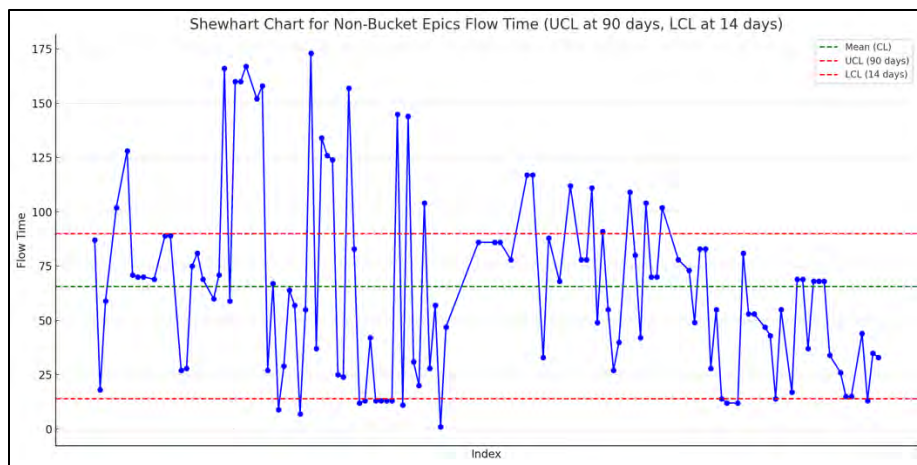




Pay Attention to Unplanned Work

TIPS:

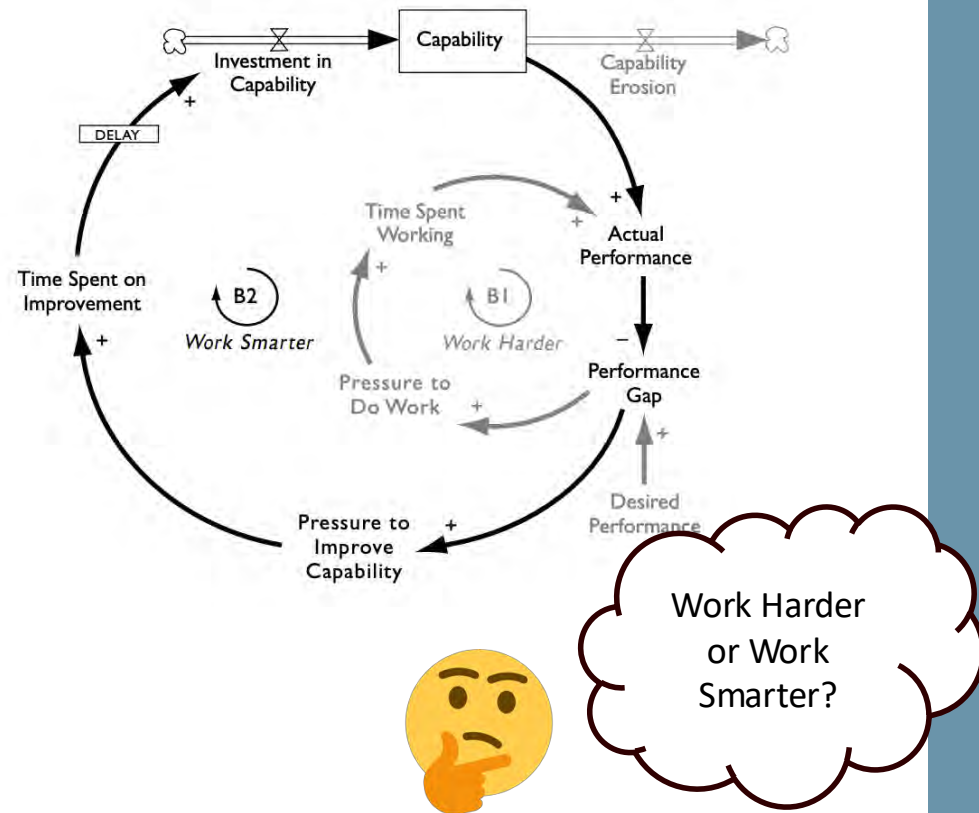
Nothing affects flow more adversely than interruptions. Measure interruptions rigorously and act when they get out of control.



Understand Your Variability

TIPS:

Be careful with averages. Look behind the numbers to see the real “lanes in the traffic”. Understand what is causing each delay.



Make Better Choices

TIPS:

Things are the way they are because of the choices we make. Understand how your choices impact your performance, and make better choices to improve outcomes.

Thank you
😊

