

# AI & The Intellectual Trades

**Experiences, Impact and the Road Ahead**

<https://bit.ly/ai-intellectual-trades>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/chrisholland/>

**Chris Holland, VP of Software Development, CertainPath - 2025.08.26**



# About Me.



# Background

- VP of Software Development at CertainPath
  - 5 Software Engineers
    - 1 Field Services SaaS Application with iOS / Android Apps
    - 1 “Customer OS” for Finance, Ops, Learning, Rebates & Marketing
    - 1 Internal Finance Hub Application
- Almost 30 years in Software, 19 in Leadership roles
- In Austin since 2016

# Agenda



**The Question on Everybody's Mind ...**

# When will AI replace humans in organizations?





# Agenda

- My Team's Journey with AI
- Lessons Learned
- Impact
- Future

# AI and my Team





# Types of AI

- Companion AI
  - Assists you as you're doing things.
  - You know what you're doing, and can validate things.
- Agent AI ( ... Vibe ... \*sigh\*, coding.)
  - Does things for you.
  - You may or may not **know** what you're doing.

# My Team's Journey with AI

- 2023 - Mostly Companion AI
- 2024 - 99% Companion AI, 1% Agent (Agent was ... painful.)
- 2025 - 95% Companion AI, 5% Agent (Incubating Agent, promising results)

# Lessons Learned

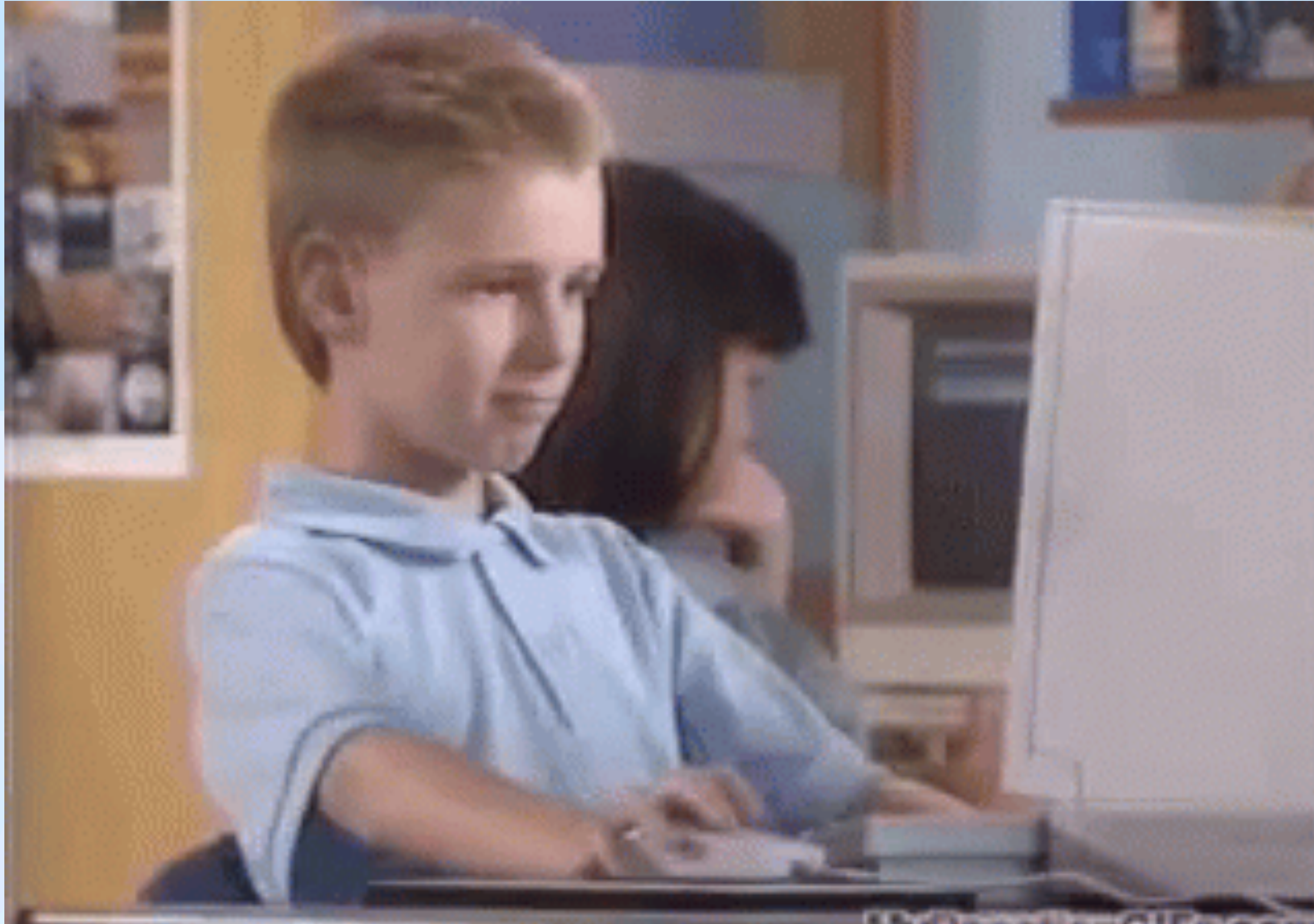


# Lessons Learned: Companion AI

- Companion AI
  - Saves us batches of 5 to 30 minutes throughout the day.
  - Increasingly helpful at Troubleshooting and Rubber-Ducking.
  - Great tool if you know your craft well.
  - 95% positive.



# Companion AI ...





# Companion AI ...





# Lessons Learned: Agent AI

- Agent AI
  - Pretty awful in 2024
  - 2025 has yielded some impressive results ...
    - But also terrifying: Faked-Out Deliveries, Bugs, Hallucination Loops
  - 50% Positive
  - Risk must be mitigated

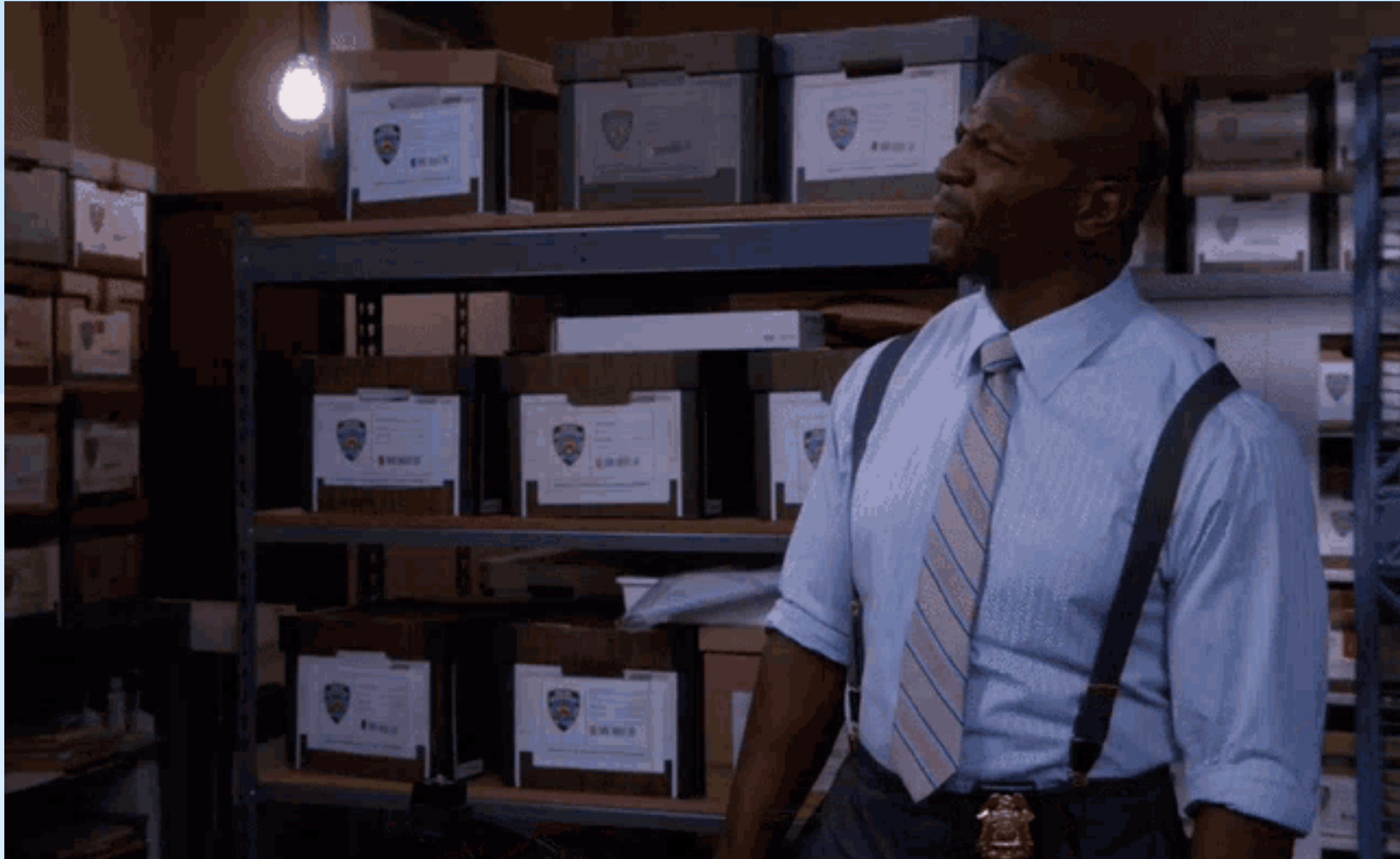


**Agent AI ... 50%**





# Agent AI ... 50%



# Impact: Team





# Impact of AI on our Team

- We've been able to "Say Yes to More", with same team size.
- Companion AI with ***sharp Engineers*** ==> Massive Productivity Boost.
- Agent AI with non-Engineers: (Vibe Mode)
  - Some impressive results with early prototyping, early vetting of products by stakeholders, builds trust and saves iterations in "engineering phase".
  - Risk Mitigation remains challenging. We built a safe "Labs" Environment.
- Sharp Engineers are Key.

# Impact: Industry





<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2025/jun/02/artificial-intelligence-jobs-techscape>

AI threatens the job you had after college

The Washington Post reported in March that more than a ***quarter of all computer programming*** jobs in the US ***vanished*** in the past two years

“I see the bottom rung of the career ladder breaking”

“The labor market for recent college graduates deteriorated noticeably in the first quarter of 2025”

# Future



# Where we're headed

- Sharp Engineers were once Junior Engineers
- Overall pool of sharp Engineers will dwindle rapidly
- Agent AI gains more ground every single week
- With less sharp Engineers, Agent AI ***Risk*** becomes impossible to ***mitigate***
  - ***Time and money will be lost.***
- This evolution is likely to impact many intellectual trades

# Possibilities



# Possibilities: Redefining “Sharp”

- Sharp  $\neq$  “years of experience”
- The Good ...
  - AI can accelerate true learning.
  - Avoid hours googling things: 100x more productive learning paths w/ AI
  - Folks can “sharpen” at a craft at an accelerated rate.
- The Bad ...
  - Folks are faking acumen, leaning too much on AI, and wasting money.



# Possibilities: Be a Driver of Growth

- Investigate how AI can help your workflows
- Demonstrate your AI adoption to your manager and stakeholders
- Create new opportunities for your business
- Help stave-off or reduce layoffs



# Who here has ideas?



# Possibilities: Hedge your Bets

- If companies can do more with AI with less employees ...
  - ... More employees could become solopreneurs.
  - “Today’s layoffs could be tomorrow’s Competition”.
- Turn your intellectual trade into a Business, use AI to offer more
- Harness AI Automation in: Marketing, Sales & Accounting
- Use AI to put together a business plan.
- ***Moonlight early, moonlight often.***

# Possibilities: Transitions

- While mainstream players might reduce workforce.
- More companies will emerge as cost of bootstrapping reduces.
- Reduced reliance upon Venture Capital.
- From Mega Corporations catering to millions of paying customers.
- Millions of entre(solo)preneurs actively engaged in a peer-to-peer economy.
- Increased share of GDP generated outside of Employer/Employee paradigm.

# Thank You.

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