

# Programmers are not projects

---

lessons learned from managing humans

Erin White @erinrwhite  
#c4l15 PDX

# Didn't Sybil just talk about this?

Yes and no.

Being in the air vs. taking off (30,000 ft vs 1,000 ft)

Newbie managers

# Agenda

1. “Soft” skills are hard
2. Be a human
3. Others are humans too

# 1. “Soft” skills are hard

- **Hard skills**

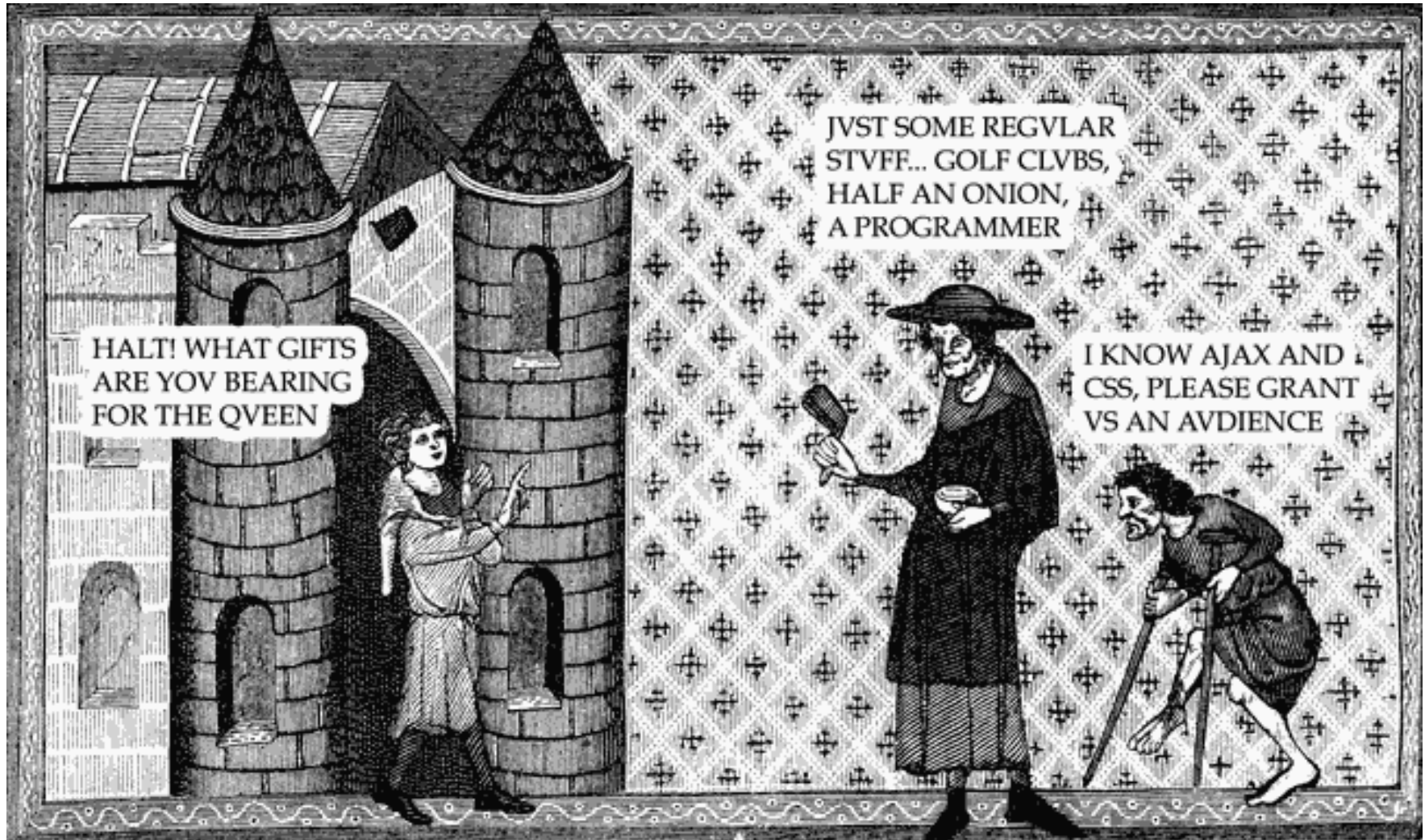
- Rule-based
- Quantifiable
- Consistent
- Factual-ish
- Some feeling that you have mastery of one thing in your life
- For once

- **Soft skills**

- People-based
- Intangible
- Contextual, societal, social, personal
- Change-y
- *Incredibly difficult and terrifying*

ps - It should be okay for everybody to talk about this.

# My story



Married To The Sea.com

<http://www.marriedtothesea.com/043009>

# Managing in libraryland

- Getting Management Experience™

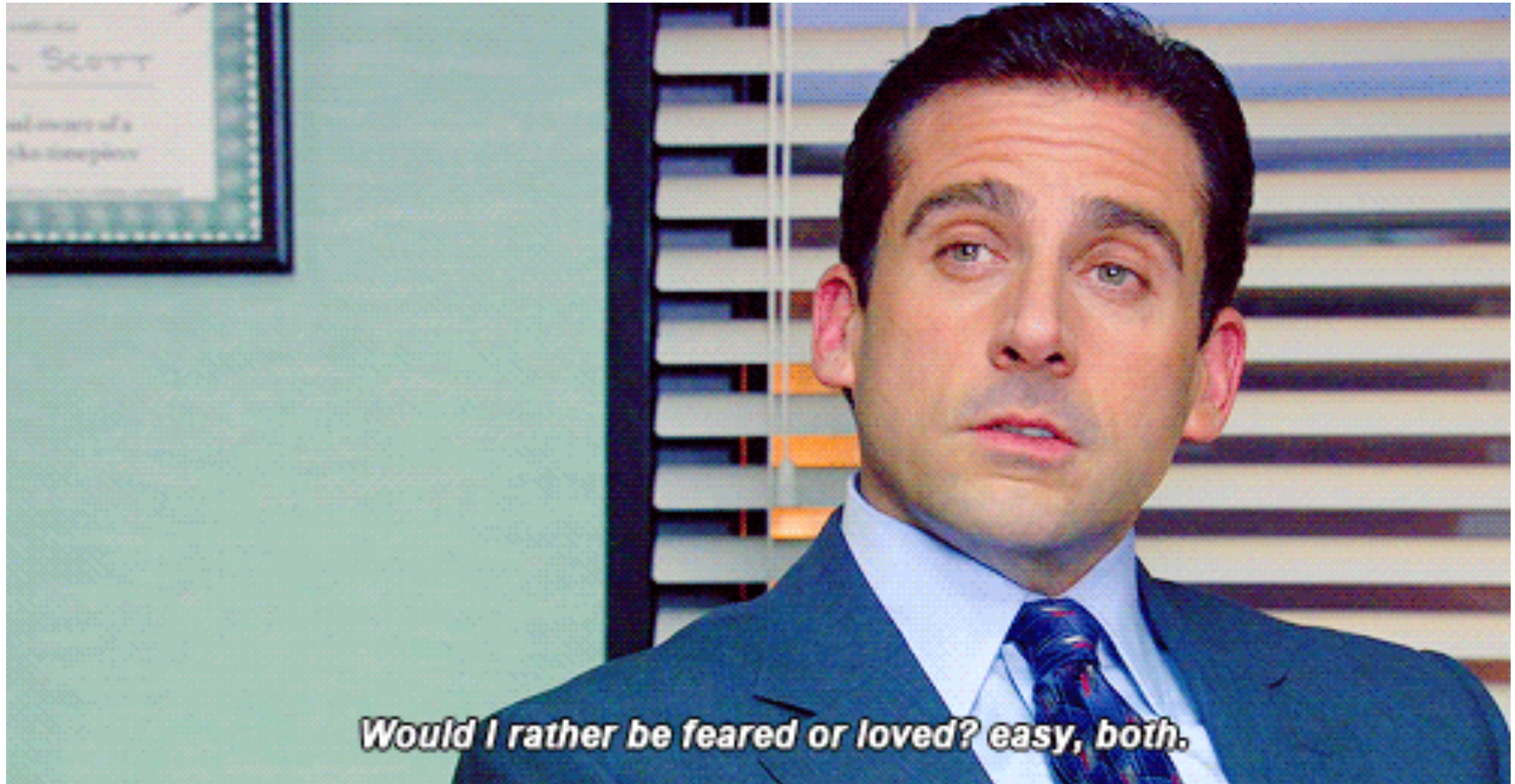
Newbie managers +  
little \$ for training

=

lots of room for growth, i.e. messing up



## (2) Being a human



<https://www.tumblr.com/search/my-Office-gif>

ass+u+me



<http://todaymade.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Bill-Lumbergh-Gary-Cole-Office-Space.jpg>



ass+u+me

# Curious, mission-driven tinkerers

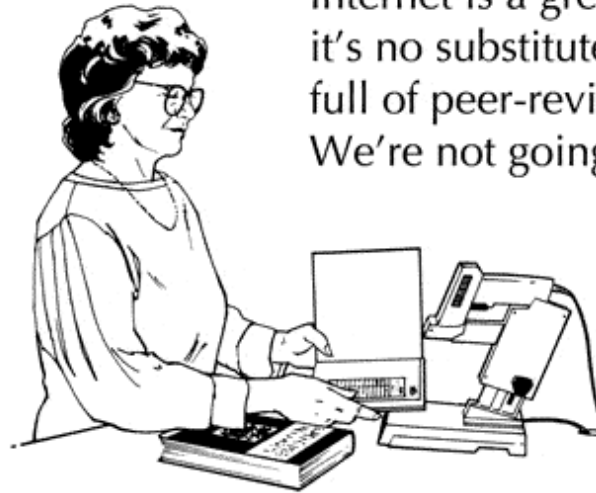
# Your work, lol

- No roadblocking
- Cross-train, document, delegate
- Prioritize
- Be interruptible
- Let go

# Staying current-ish

- Knowing the stack = asking good questions + making good decisions
- Small, non-urgent things
- Good test of documentation

Don't get me wrong, I think the Internet is a great resource. But it's no substitute for a library full of peer-reviewed research. We're not going anywhere.



# Mindfulness



# Balance




Married To The Sea.com

<http://www.marriedtothesea.com/090914>



(3) Other people are humans too

# Recruiting and hiring

- What's attractive? Mission-driven work + modern tech stack
- Competitive salary, if possible
- Other incentives:
  - Non-pay bennies
  - Only a 40-hour workweek! 
  - Telecommuting
  - Travel/development
  - 10-20% time projects
  - Learning on the job

# Keeping people around

## The talk.

- How do you want to grow?
- What are you excited about?
- What do you want to learn?
- What do you need?
- What do you want your career to look like?

# Work ≠ billable hours

- travel to/from another library
- talking in a hallway about a project
- attending another department's presentation
- attending a library event
- going out to coffee with your coworker
- reading articles about libraries or technology
- experimenting with new code frameworks
- brainstorming ideas while staring off into space or walking around the block
- etc etc etc

# The mix of projects

- **Core projects**

- Mission critical
- Core services
- Uptime is important
- Maintenance/existing tech

- **Satellite projects**

- Projects that excite
- Not mission critical
- New technologies



# Messing up :D

## Fundamental attribution error:

people's tendency to place an undue emphasis on internal characteristics to explain someone else's behavior in a given situation, rather than considering external factors

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental\\_attribution\\_error](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_attribution_error)

# Communication

- Most failures = communication fails
- One-on-ones + preferred communication methods
- Give enough information to help people succeed
  - Rationale, constraints, resources, motivations and political considerations
    - Transparency and TMI
  - Be open to other solutions

# Closing thoughts

- Humans want to grow
- Tune your assumptions
- Communicate
- Be open

# Bye!

- Team culture at angellist
- How etsy increased diversity
- UX leadership, part 1
- If you want to be in management, don't expect to be liked
- From operator to guide
- How to interview sysadmins
- Blameless postmortems and just culture at Etsy
- Why do you want to lead people?
- How to make the leap from engineer to manager
- Harvard business review: Manage your boss
- MVC: Command management vs service management
- Book: UX Management
- Book: Leading Snowflakes (thanks Francis Kayiwa!)