

# Exploring *Leadership*, *Management*, and *Mentorship*

In Open Source

**Charlie Robbins**  
**FullStack London 2017**

July 14th, 2017

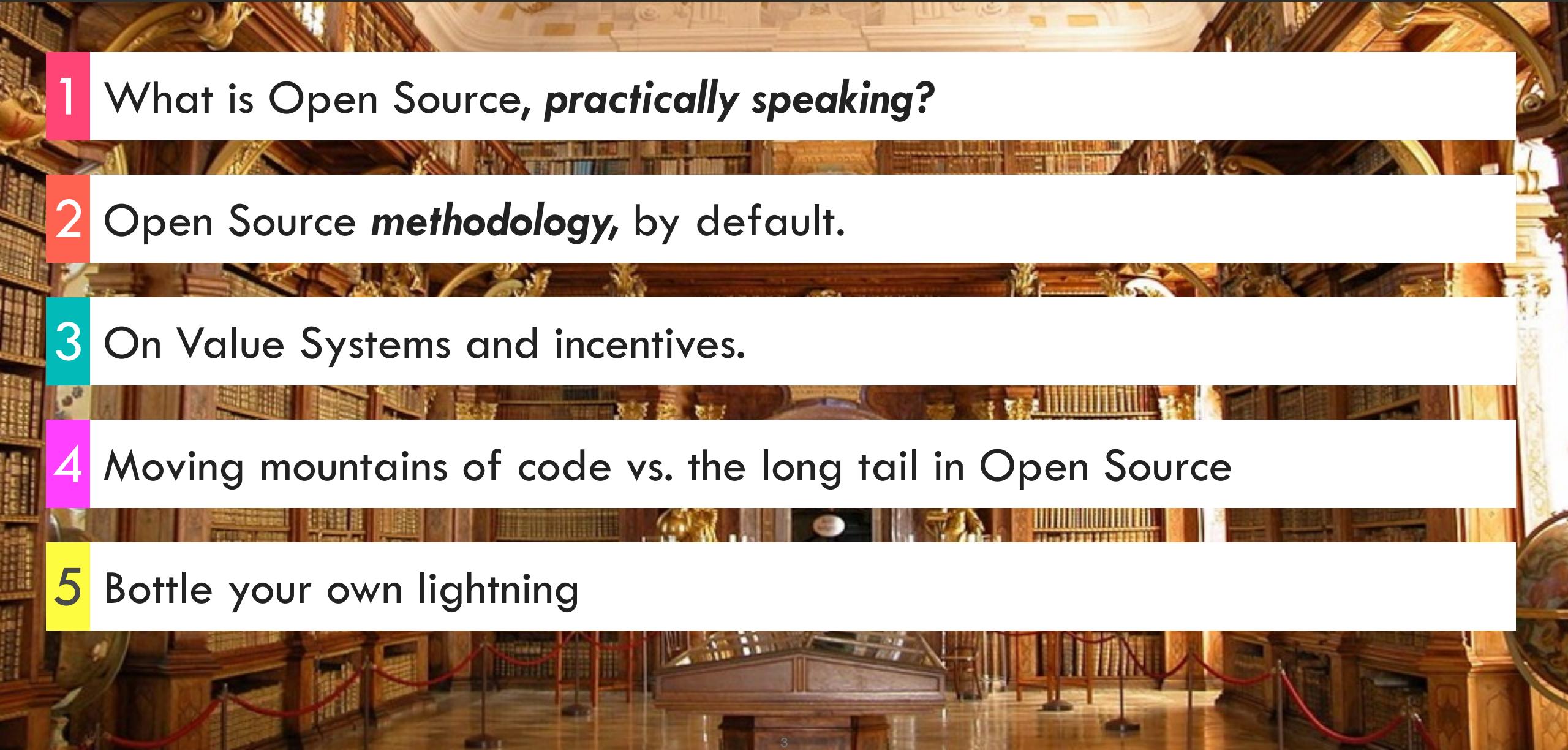




— Why —  
**Hello There.**

— Let's —  
**Get Started.**

# What am I going to talk about?

- 
- 1 What is Open Source, *practically speaking*?
  - 2 Open Source *methodology*, by default.
  - 3 On Value Systems and incentives.
  - 4 Moving mountains of code vs. the long tail in Open Source
  - 5 Bottle your own lightning



What am I NOT going to talk about?



# Open Source Foundations

## Standards Bodies

## Open Source Licensing

## What am I NOT going to talk about?

A black and white photograph of a man dressed as a detective. He is wearing a fedora hat, a trench coat, and a bow tie. He is holding a magnifying glass up to his right eye, looking directly at the viewer with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

— Just —  
**Who am I?**



@INDEXZERO

GITHUB

TWITTER



GoDaddy™

ENG. DIRECTOR

**UX PLATFORM**

FORMER BOARD MEMBER, NODE.JS FOUNDATION

FORMERLY FOUNDER at NODEJITSU



# *Creator of ...*

winston

forever

http-proxy

nconf

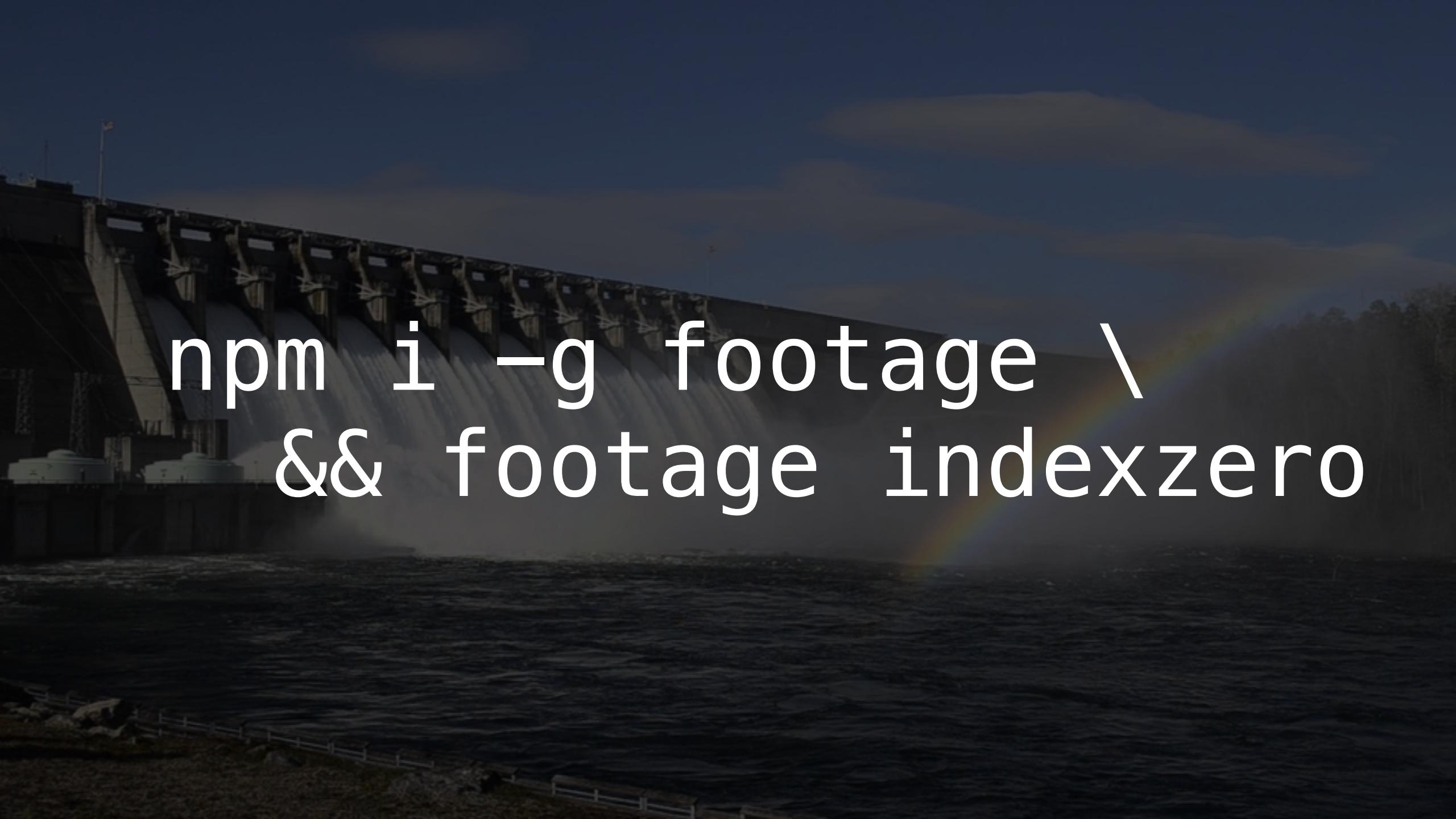
# *Creator of ...*

and

literally

**hundreds more**



A large concrete dam with multiple gates is shown against a dark, cloudy sky. A bright rainbow is visible in the background, arching from the left side of the image towards the right. The water in front of the dam is dark and choppy. In the bottom left corner, a small portion of a white railing is visible.

npm i -g footage \  
&& footage indexzero

# 38 MILLION ...

A large concrete dam with multiple gates is shown against a dark, cloudy sky. A rainbow is visible in the background to the right of the dam.

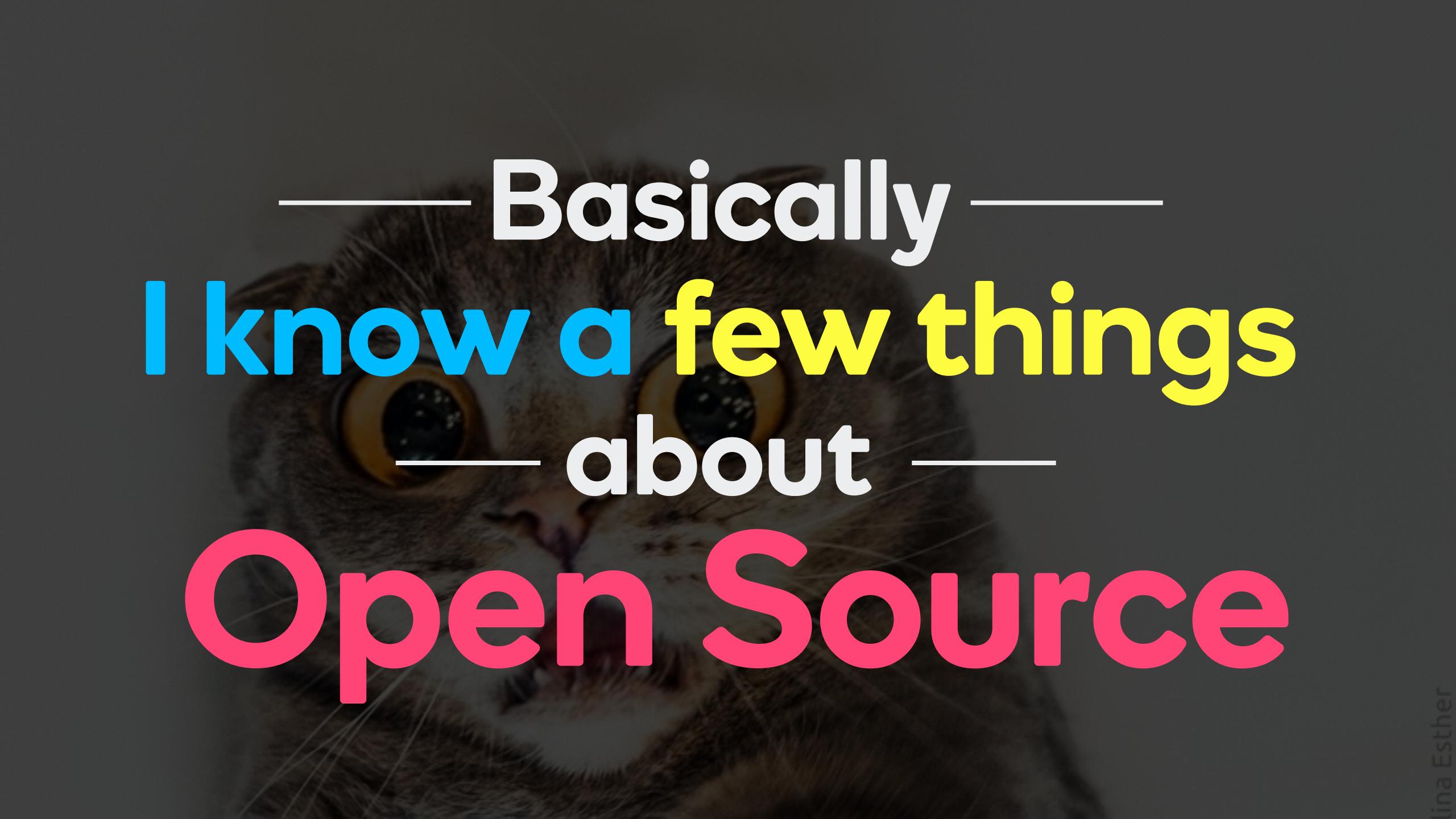
npm i -g footage \  
&& footage indexzero

... LAST MONTH



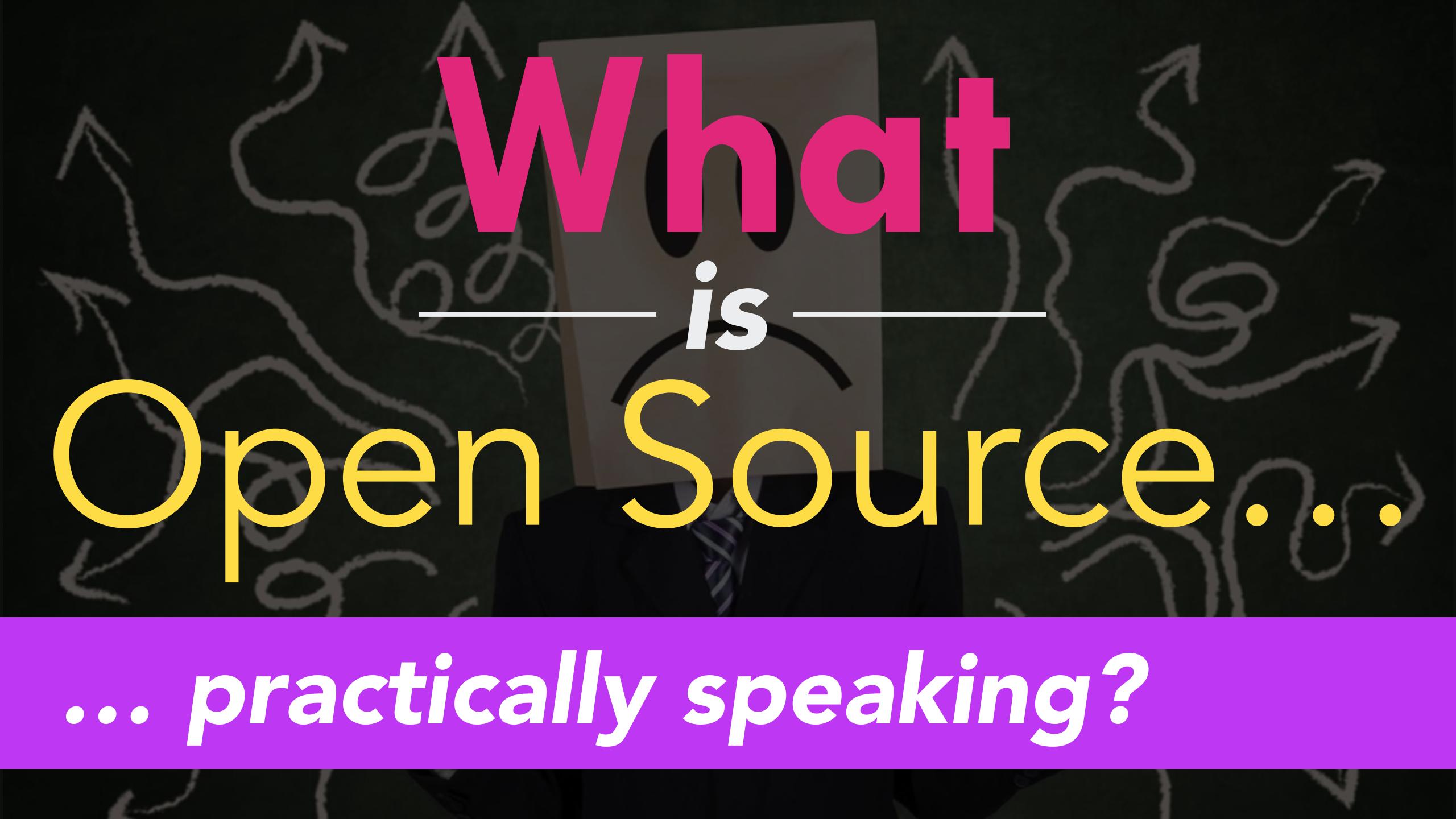


— Basically —  
I know a few things



— Basically —  
I know a few things  
— about —  
Open Source





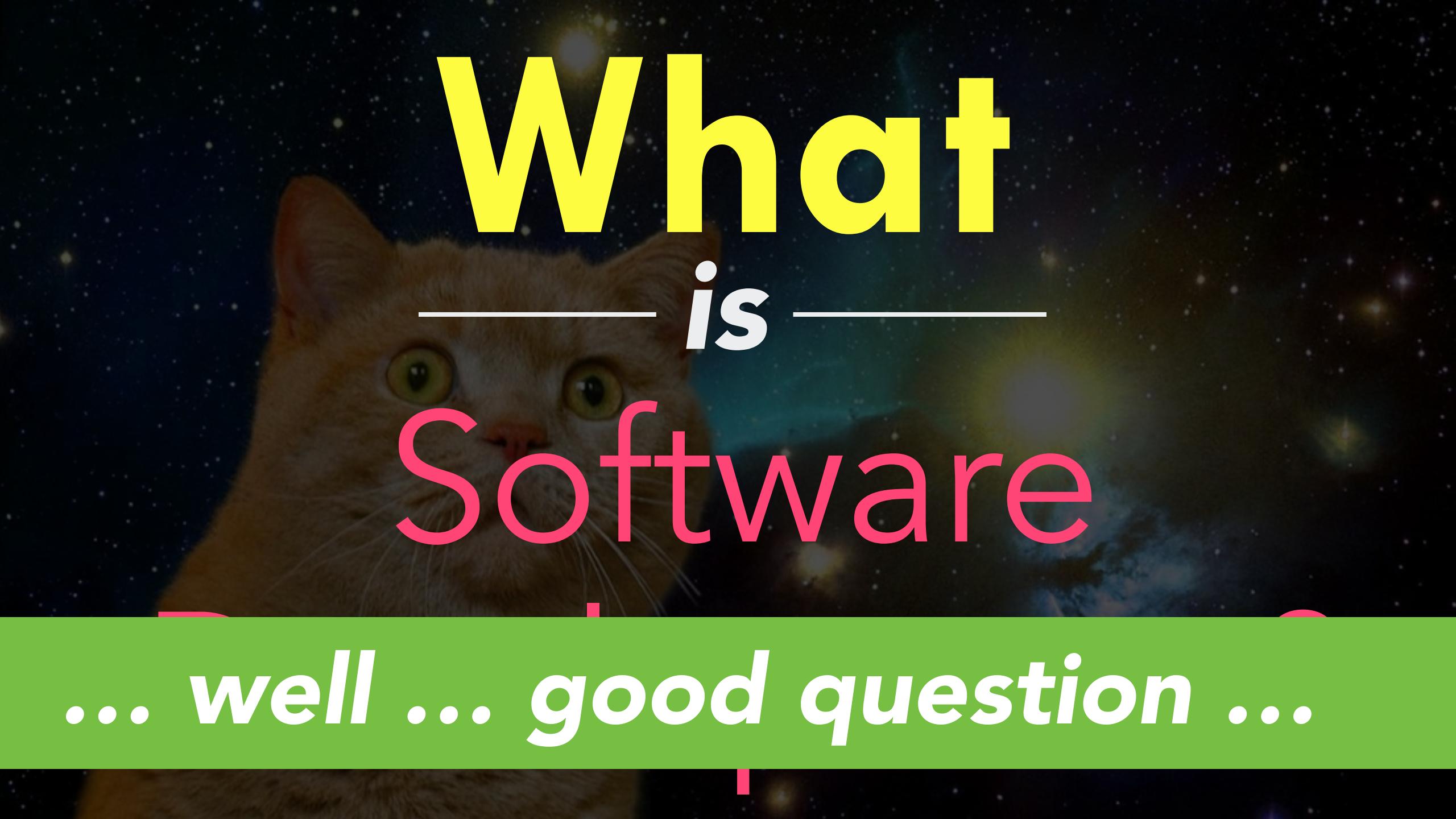
What  
is  
Open Source...

... *practically speaking?*



A close-up photograph of a cat's face, looking directly at the camera with large, wide-open green eyes. The cat has white fur on its face and chest, and brownish-orange fur on its ears and the rest of its body. The background is a dark, star-filled space with a nebula-like glow.

What  
— *is* —  
Software  
Development?

A close-up photograph of a cat's face, looking directly at the camera with large, expressive green eyes. The cat has orange and white fur. The background is a dark, star-filled space with a nebula-like glow.

# What — is — Software

... well ... good question ...

... Software Development ...



... trust me. I know this feel.



Meetings

New  
Feature  
Requests

Technical  
Debt

Planning

Support

EMAIL

Reliability  
& Ops

AND PEOPLE

lots of

**PEOPLE**





Individual  
Contribut  
or

**Junior?**  
**Senior?**

Engineer

*Engineering*  
Manager

Product  
Manager

Project  
Manager

Program  
Manager

UX  
Designer

Ops /  
ITSec



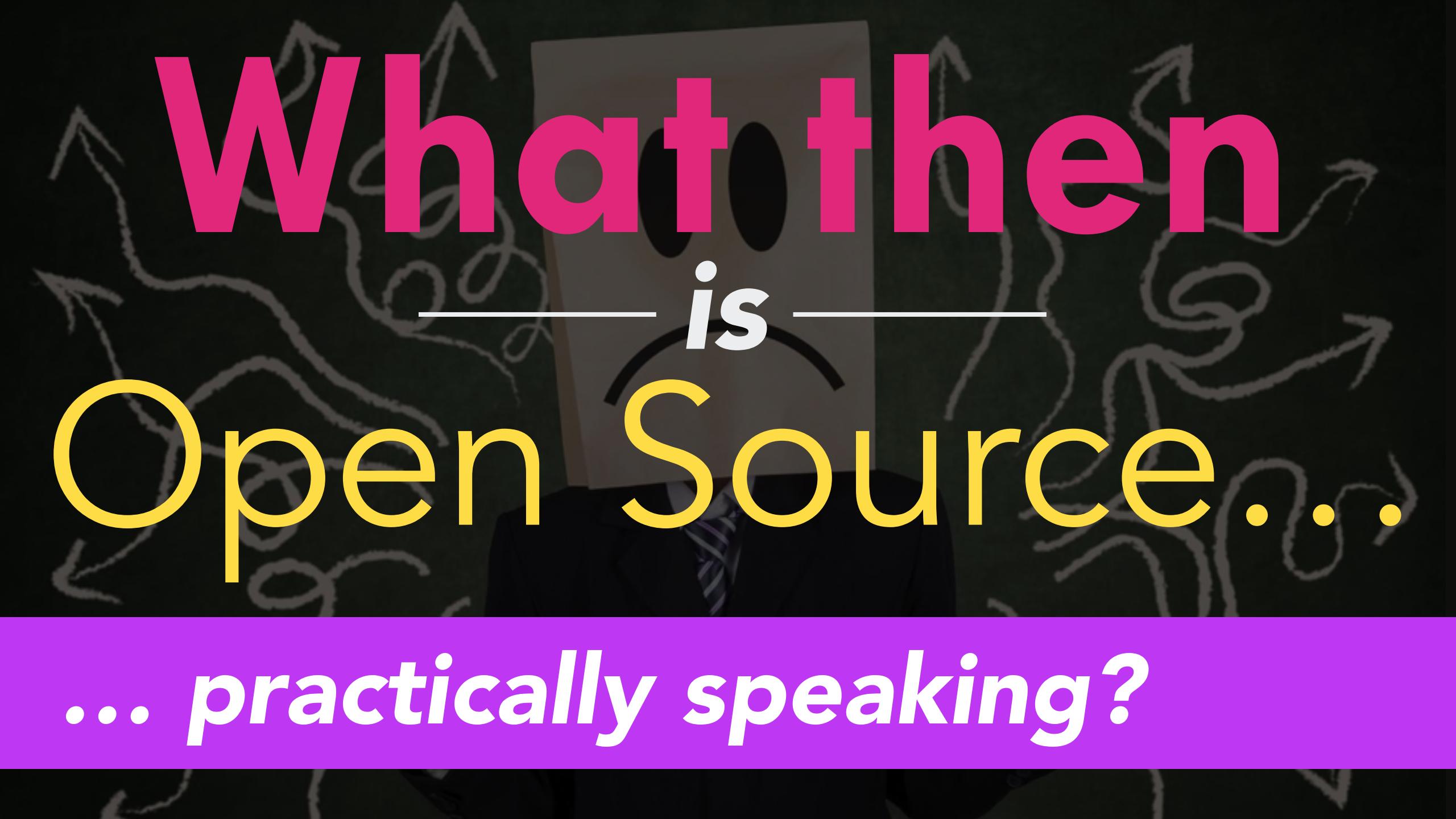


Process

— lots of —

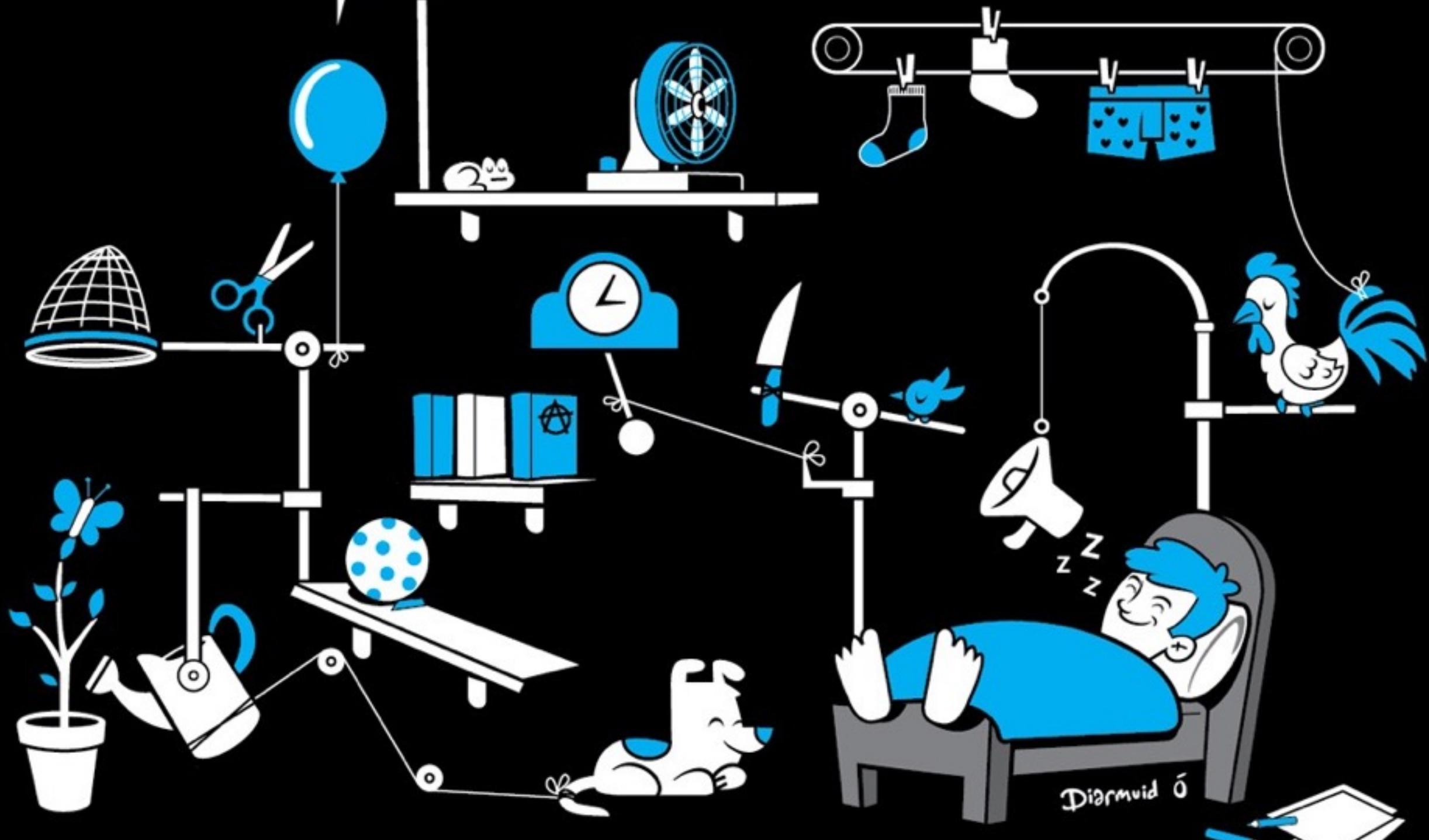
Process





what then  
— is —  
Open Source...

... *practically speaking?*

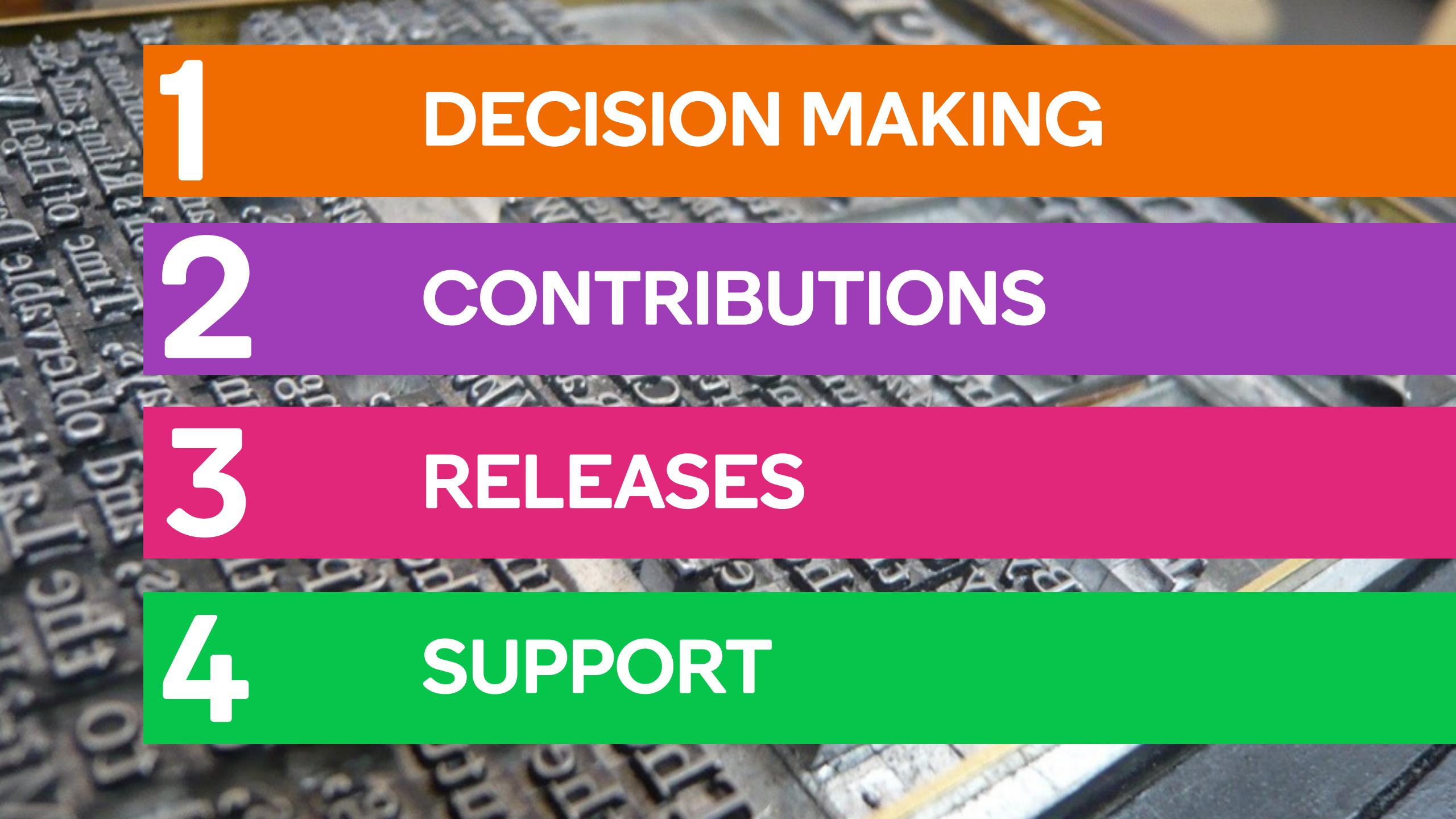


# (Different) Process

but still lots of

# Process





1

# DECISION MAKING

2

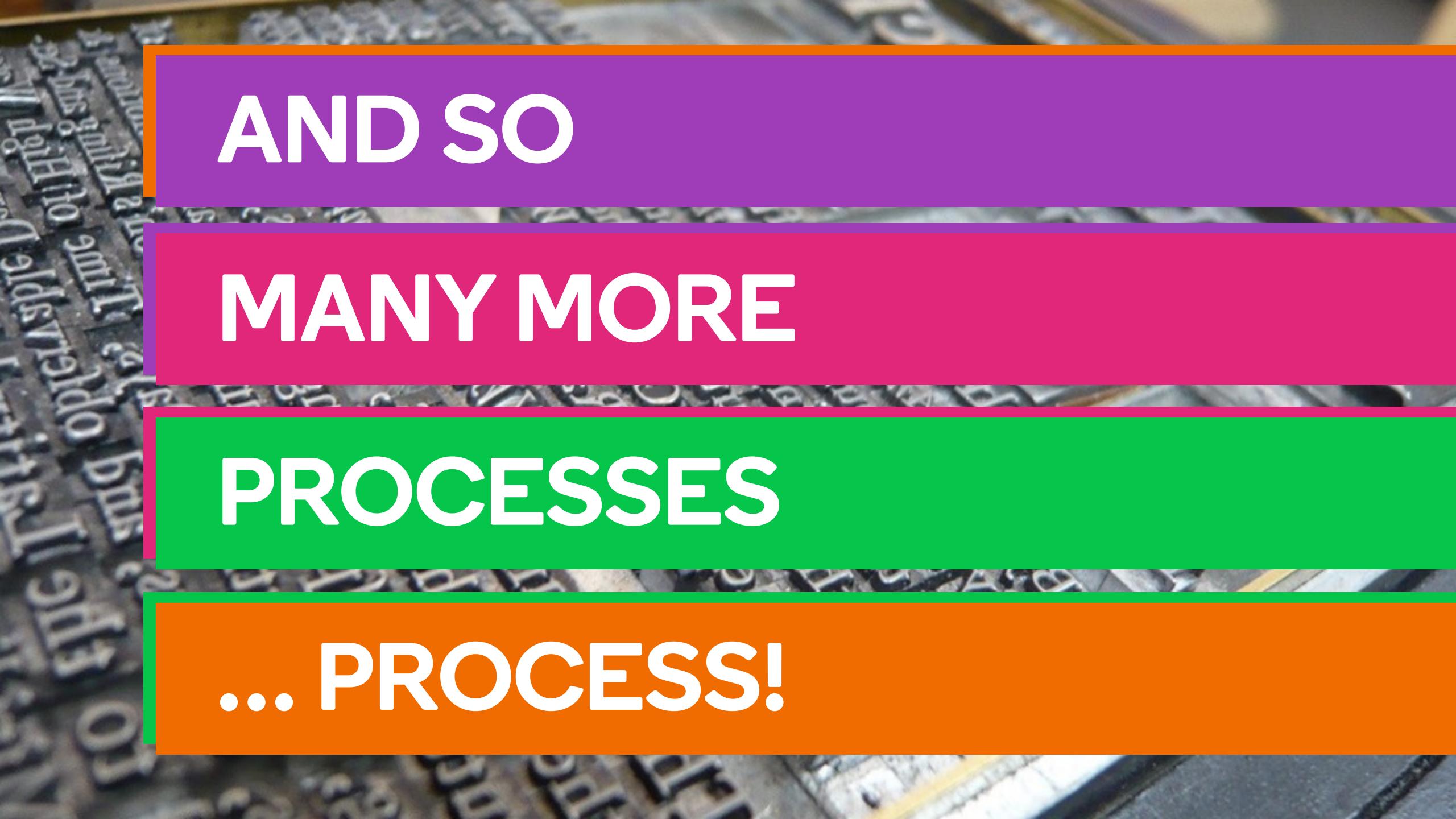
# CONTRIBUTIONS

3

# RELEASES

4

# SUPPORT



AND SO

MANY MORE

PROCESSES

... PROCESS!



AND PEOPLE

---

even more

---

PEOPLE

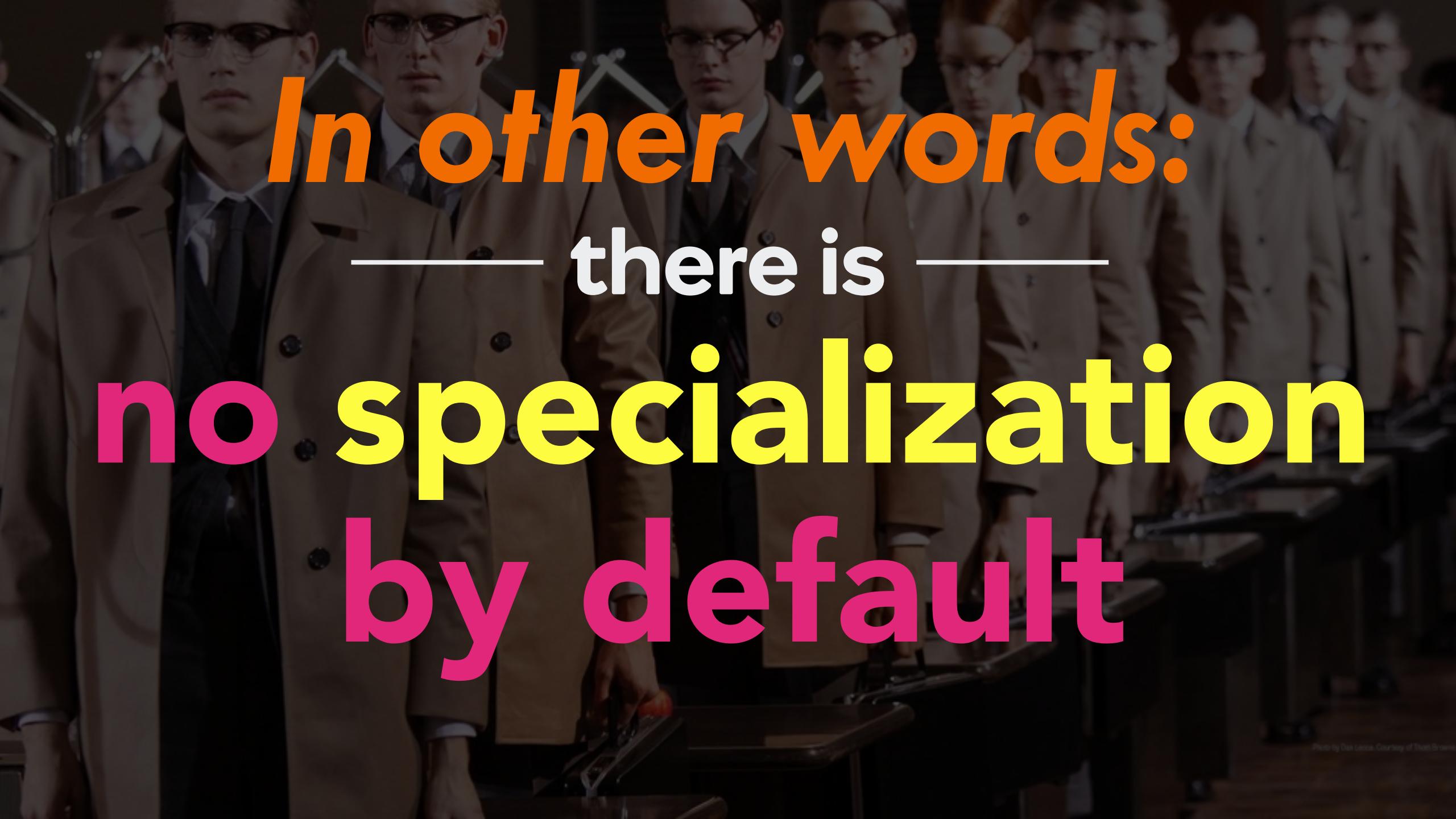


A dark, semi-transparent background image of a person wearing a grey and white horizontally striped shirt. The person is seen from the side, with their right hand scratching the small of their back. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the stripes and the person's skin.

“Every good work  
— of software —  
starts by  
**scratching**  
— a developer’s —  
**personal itch”**



Photo by Dan Lecca. Courtesy of Thom Browne



**In other words:**  
— there is —  
**no specialization  
by default**



OPEN

A glowing neon sign with the word "OPEN" in red. The sign is enclosed in a thin blue rectangular border. The background is a solid dark blue. The neon glow is bright and creates a strong contrast with the dark background.

Open Source  
—methodology—  
**BY DEFAULT**

Once upon a time

See...  
— what had —  
happened was

WE  
NEVER  
CLOSE

IN EARLY 2015 nodejitsu WAS



acquired by **GoDaddy**™

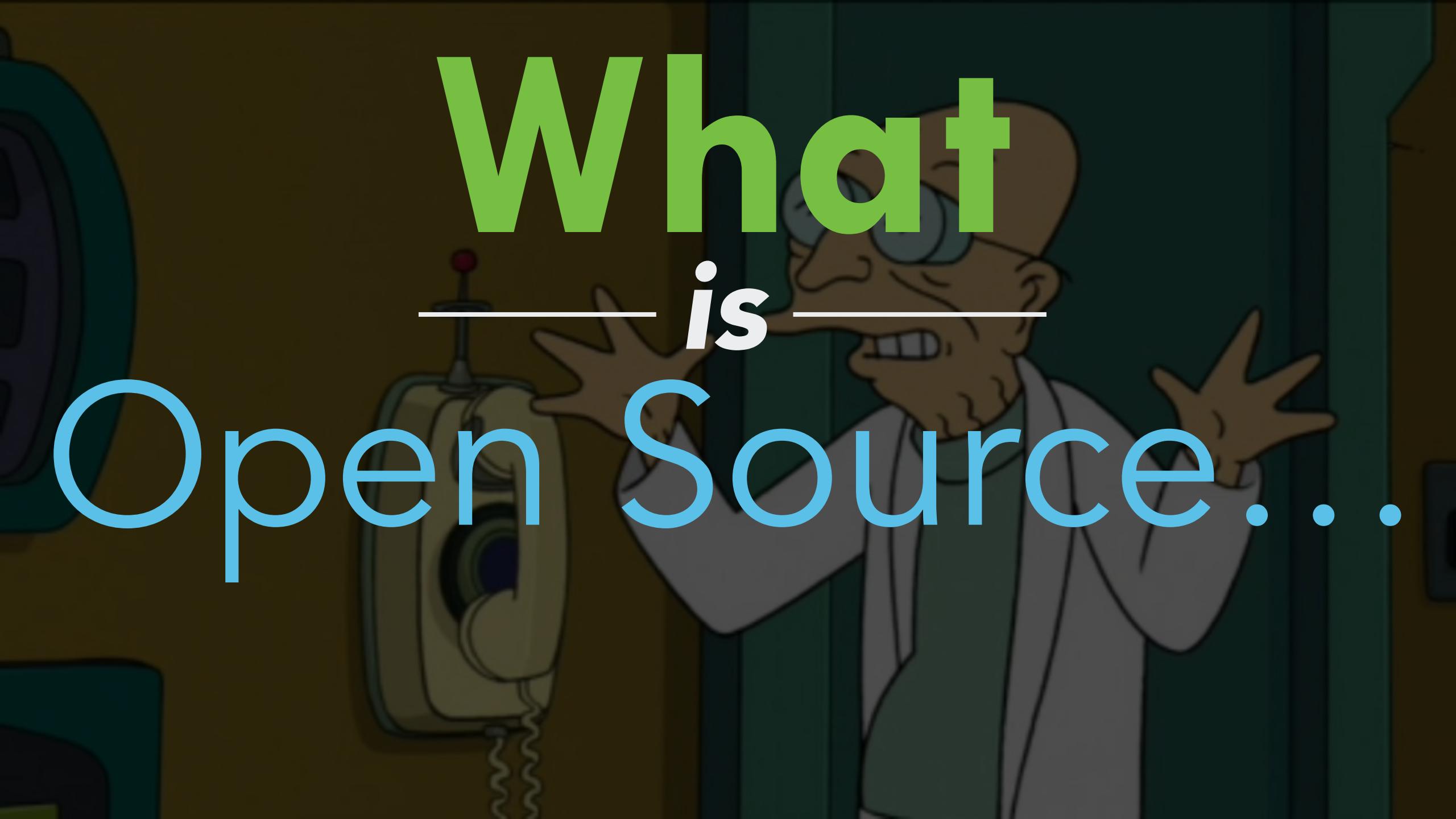
IN EARLY 2015 nodejitsu WAS

*At the time*  
— I was —  
**thinking** ...

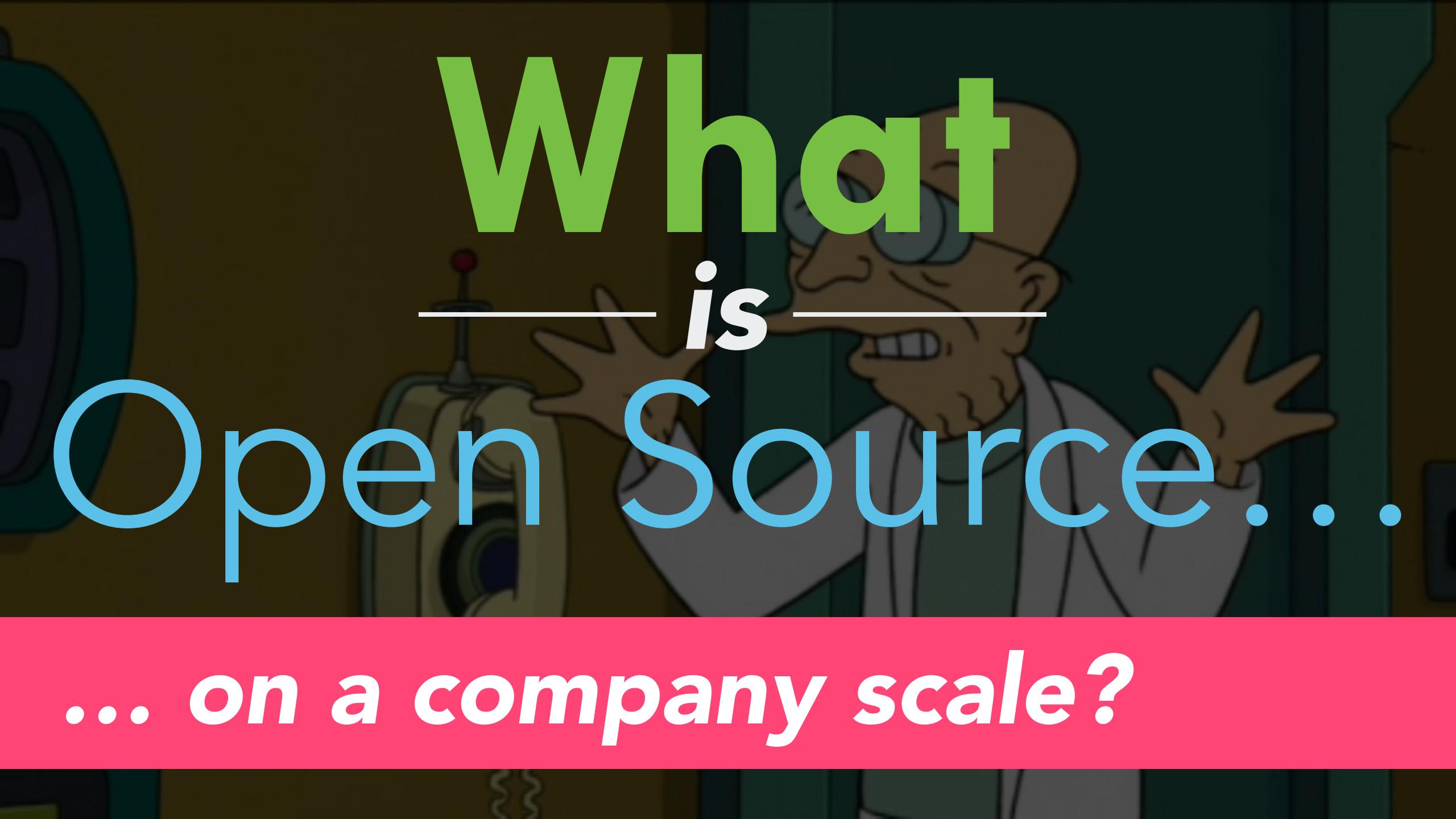


acquired by GoDaddy™



A cartoon illustration of a scientist with a mustache and glasses, wearing a lab coat, looking surprised with hands on hips. He is in a laboratory setting with a microscope and starfish models. The background is dark.

What  
is  
Open Source...

A cartoon illustration of a scientist with a mustache and glasses, wearing a lab coat, looking surprised with hands on hips. The scientist is positioned behind the text.

What  
is  
Open Source...

... on a company scale?



Practically  
implementing —

Open Source

at —

GoDaddy



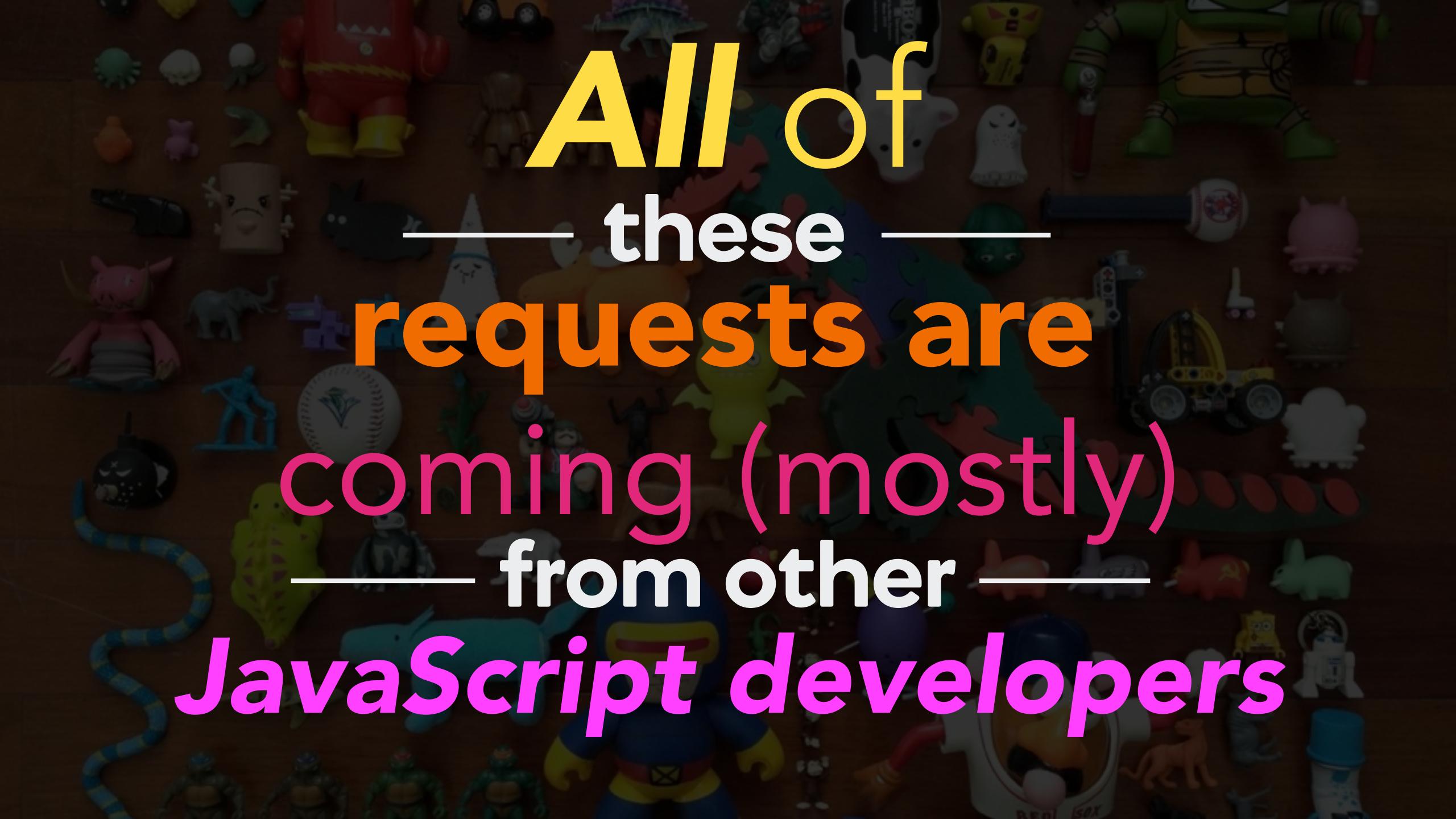
TM





Any UI Platform  
— is a —  
**single-point of failure**  
— for both —  
**customer experience**  
— AND —  
**developer experience**





All of  
— these —  
requests are  
coming (mostly)  
— from other —  
*JavaScript developers*

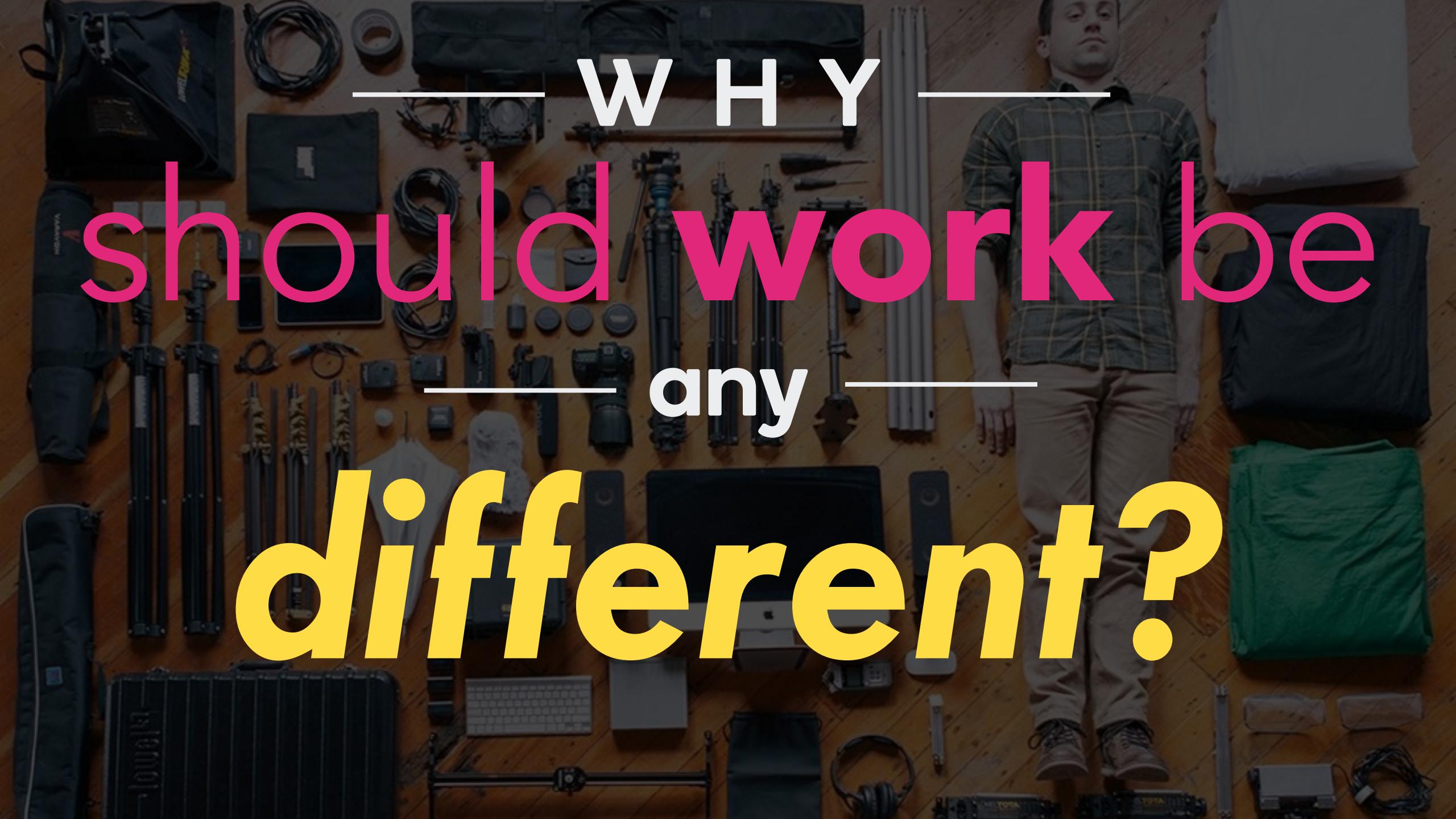
A person is completely buried in a large pile of crumpled white paper, with only their head and shoulders visible. They are wearing a white button-down shirt. Their right hand is raised, palm facing forward, while their left hand holds a small, rectangular white sign with the word "HELP" printed on it in a black, sans-serif font. The background is a solid, dark grey.

HELP

A person is sitting in a dark room, holding a small sign that says "HELP". They are surrounded by a large pile of crumpled paper. The text "Thrown over the fence" is overlaid on the image, with "Thrown" in pink and "over the fence" in white.

Thrown  
over the  
fence



A photograph of a man standing in a workshop or studio. He is wearing a green and black plaid shirt and light-colored pants. He is looking down at the floor. The floor is covered with various pieces of equipment, including cameras, lenses, tripods, cables, and cases. The background shows shelves and walls covered in more equipment and supplies.

— W H Y —  
should work be  
any —  
different?

**“Any organization that designs a system  
(defined broadly) will produce a design  
whose structure is a copy of the  
**organization's communication  
structure.****

— Melvyn Conway, 1967

BETTER KNOWN AS CONWAY'S LAW





Code OWNERSHIP  
— is an —  
anti-pattern  
— for any organization —

— what would —  
**open source**  
do? —



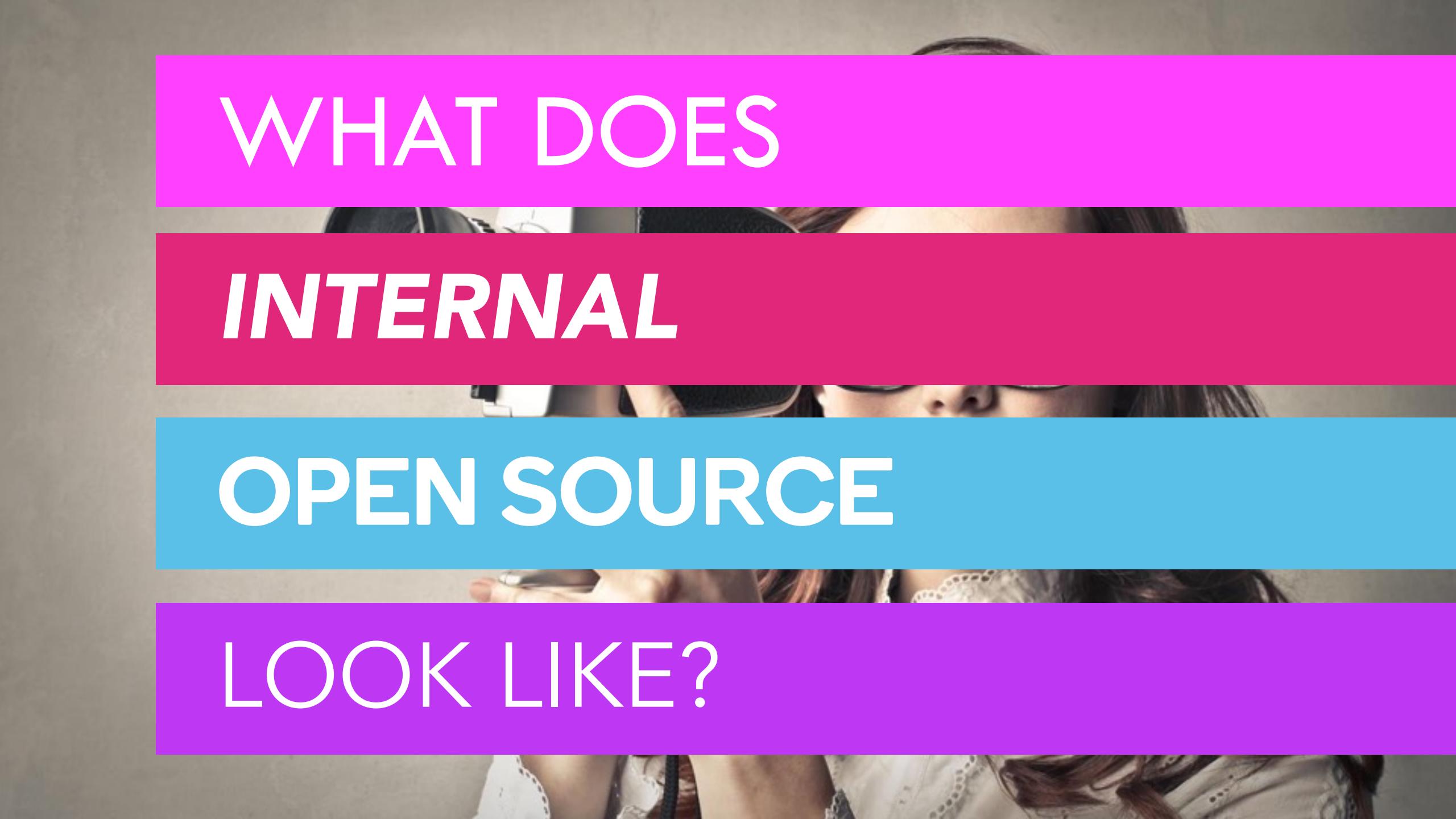
TRY TO

MAKE

EVERYONE

A CONTRIBUTOR



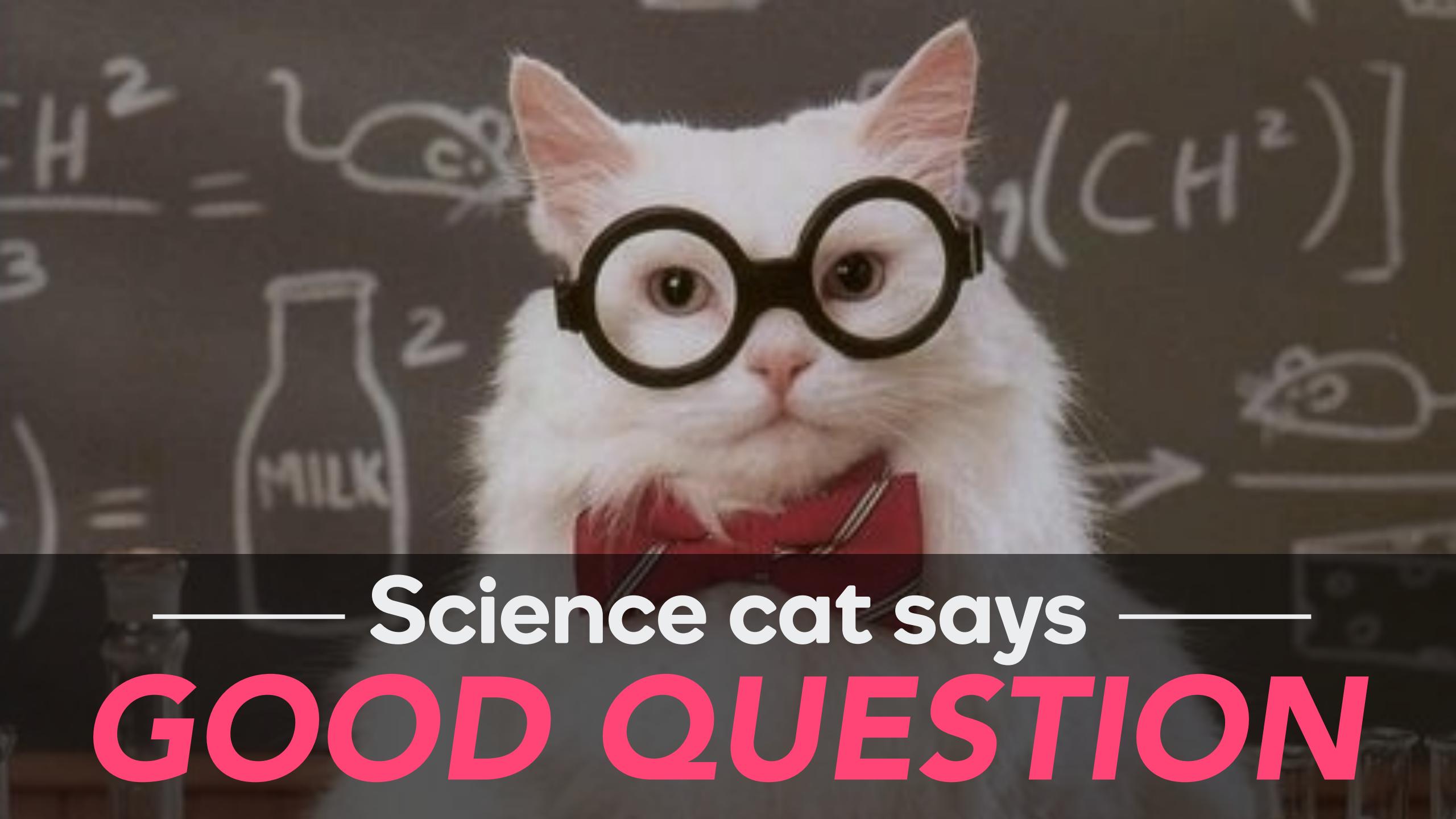
A photograph of a woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a white lace-trimmed shirt. She is looking down at a small object in her hands, possibly a smartphone or a small device. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

WHAT DOES

*INTERNAL*

OPEN SOURCE

LOOK LIKE?



— Science cat says —  
**GOOD QUESTION**

It all starts with support.



A man and a woman are performing a partner yoga pose on a mat. The man is lying on his back with his legs raised and bent, while the woman is positioned above him, supporting his legs. They are in a dimly lit room with a potted plant visible in the background.

It all starts with support.

— We —  
**treat contributors**  
— like —  
**team members**

# *Code reviews, ad-hoc Q&A,*



*and onboarding using Slack & Github*

Code reviews, ad hoc Q&A,

If you

— can make —

**time to contribute**

and onboarding using Slack & Github

Code reviews, ad hoc Q&A,

**If you**

— can make —

**time to contribute**

— then —

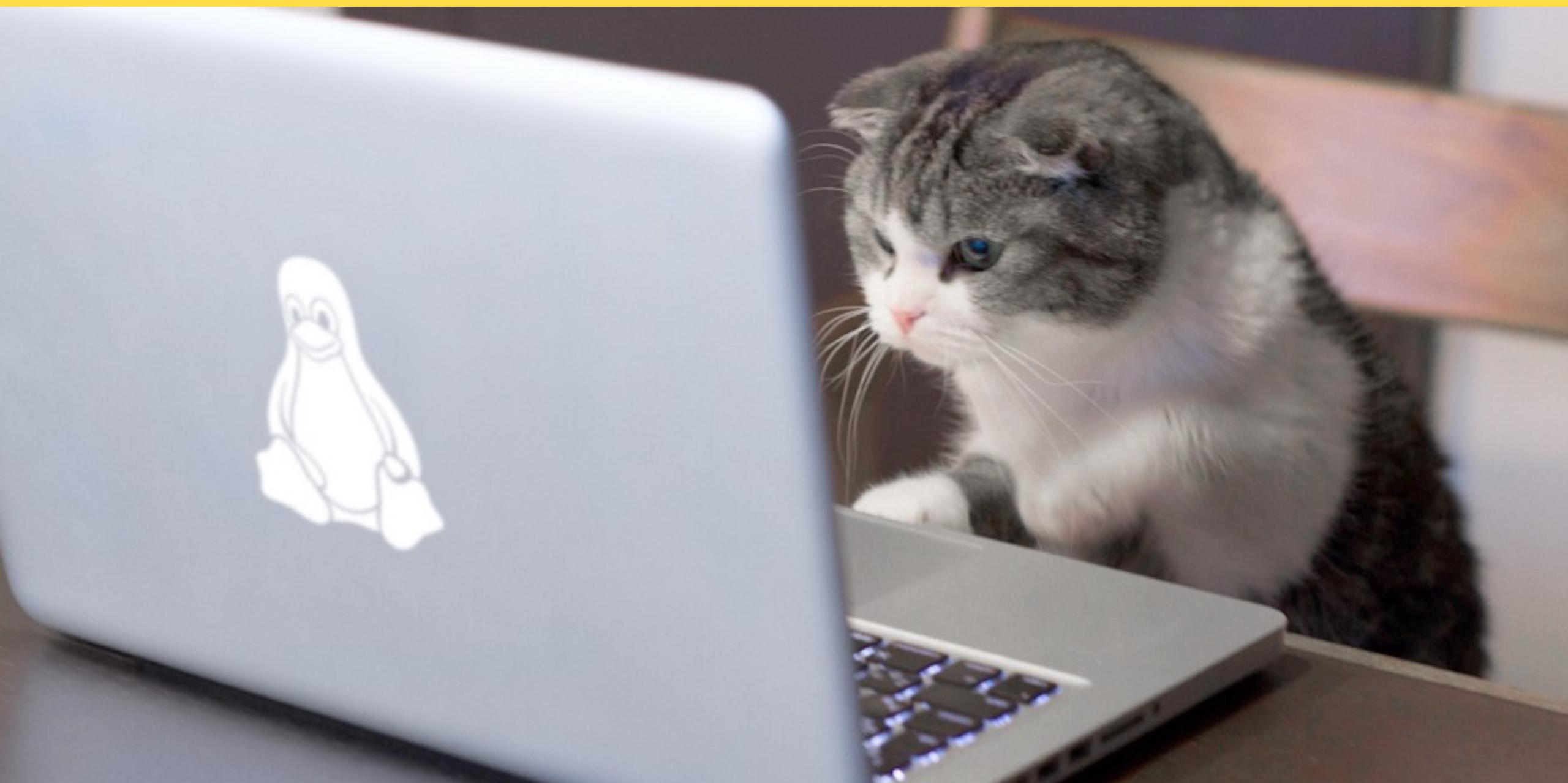
**your problems**

— are —

**our problems**

and onboarding using Slack & Github

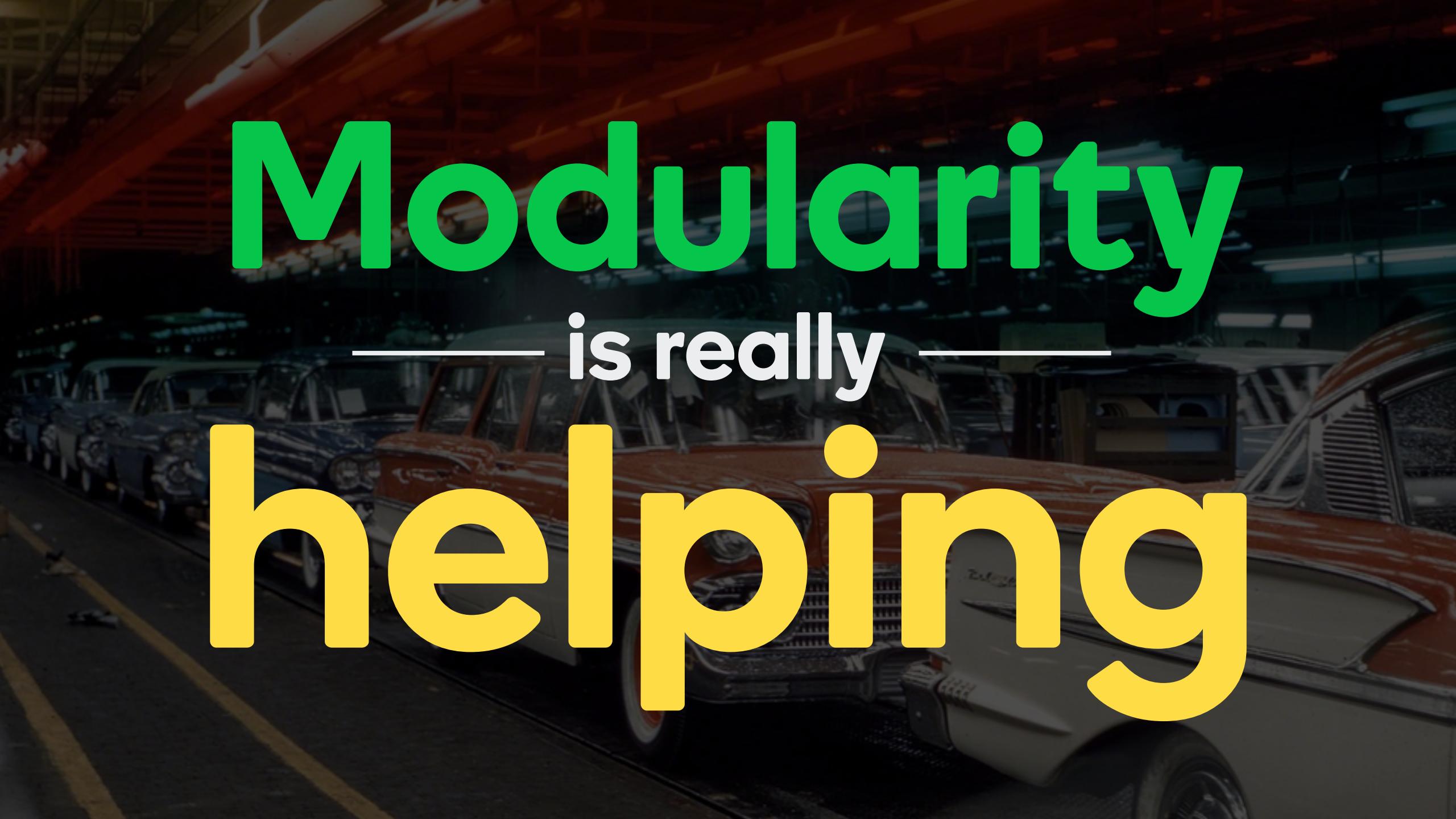
# When you are done & the PR is merged



When you are done & the PR is merged

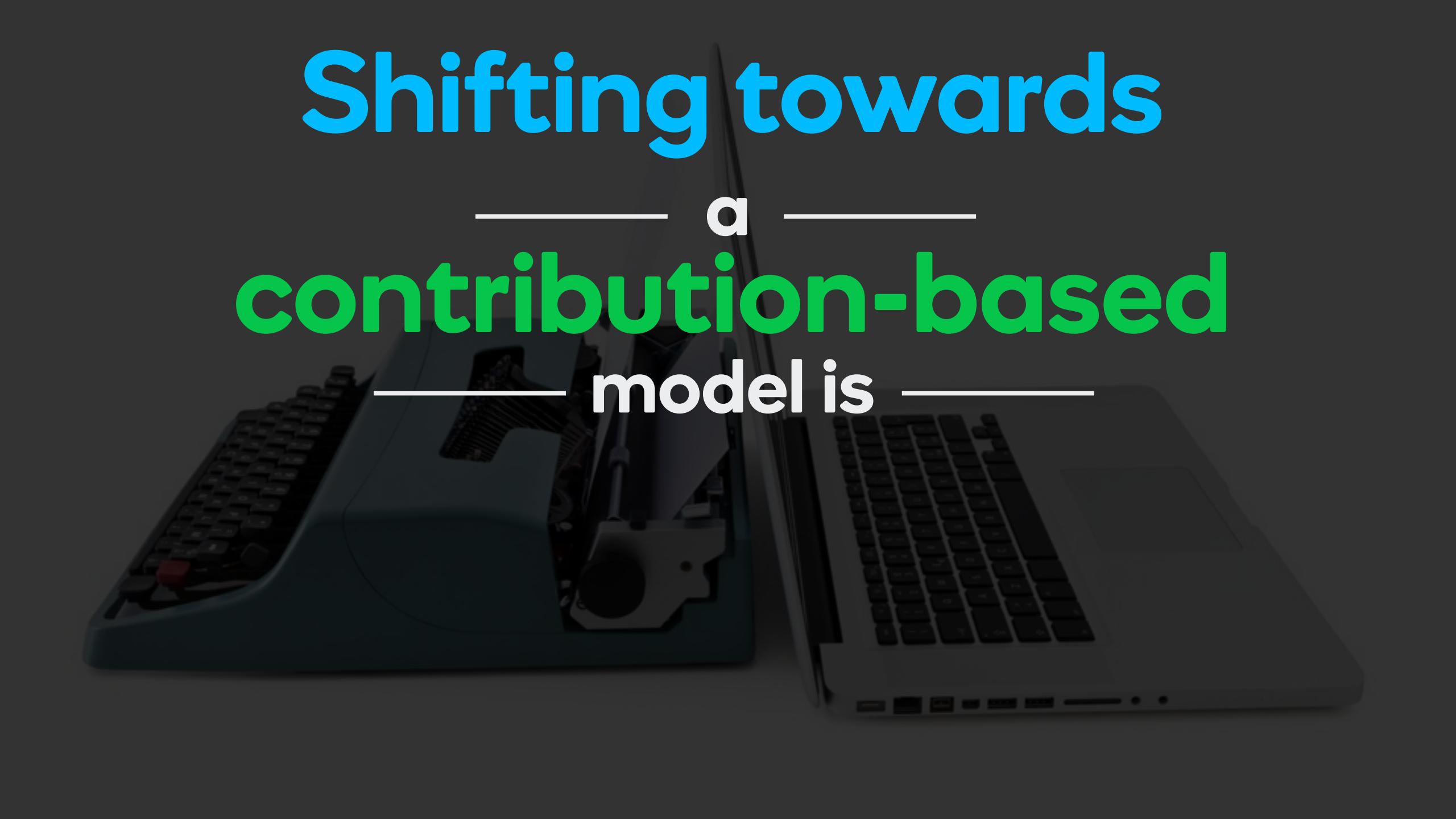
— We —  
**take over bug fixes**  
— and —  
**other support**



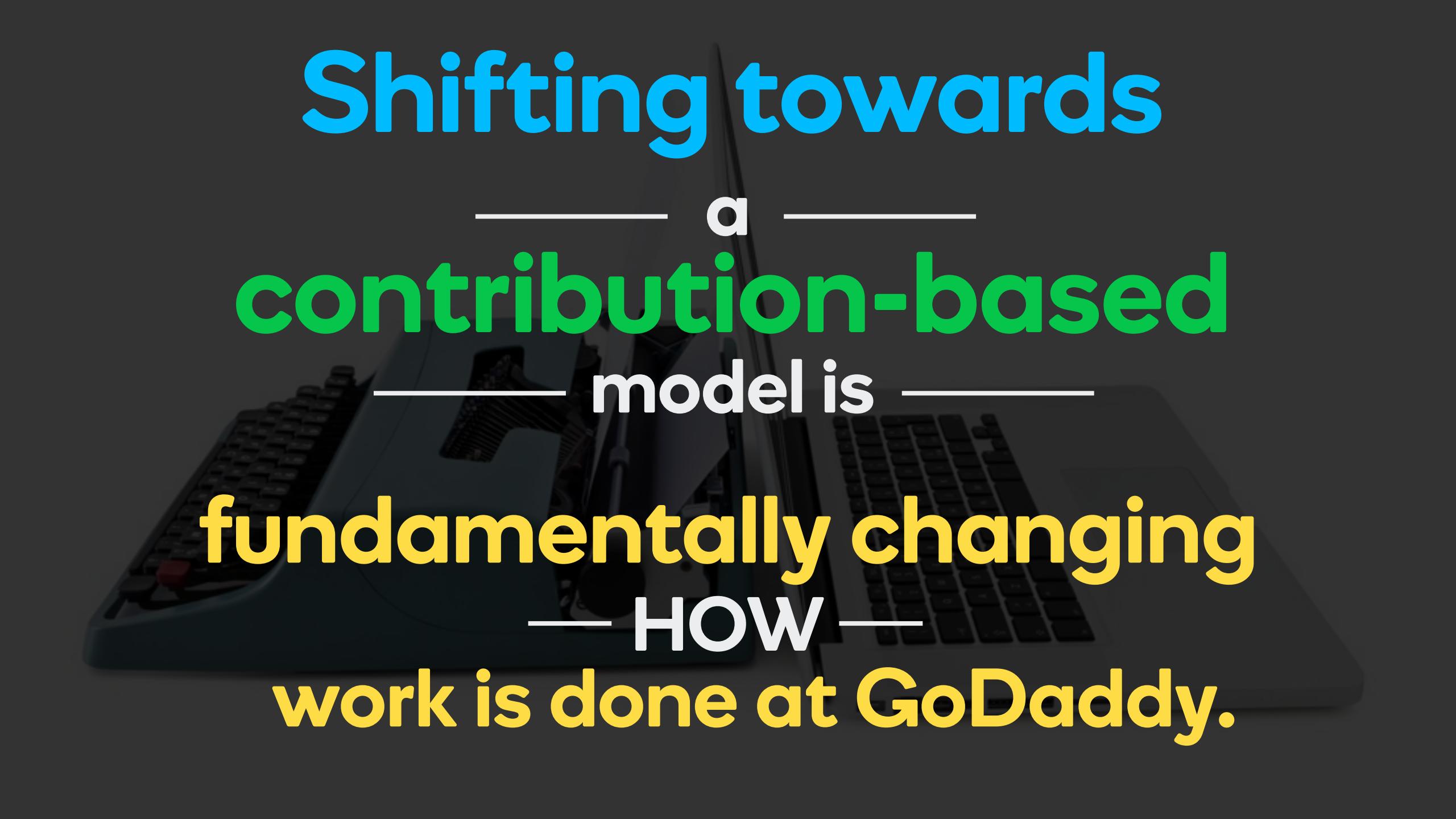
A black and white photograph of a vintage car show. In the foreground, a classic sedan is shown from a front-three-quarter angle, its hood and grille prominent. Behind it, several other classic cars are parked in rows, their bodies and roofs visible. The background is a dark, out-of-focus area, possibly a building or a covered area of the show.

Modularity  
— is really —  
helping



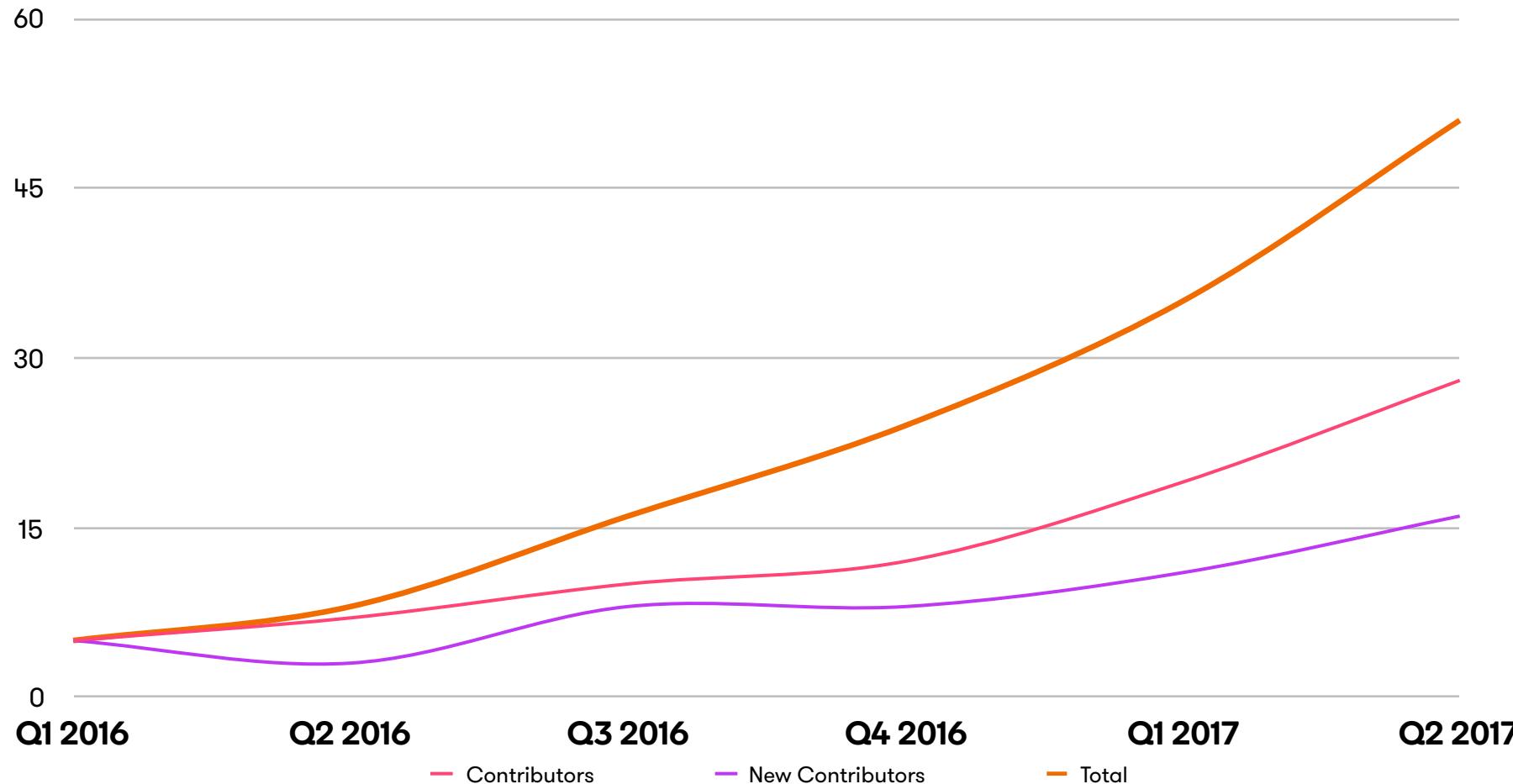


Shifting towards  
— a —  
**contribution-based**  
— model is —



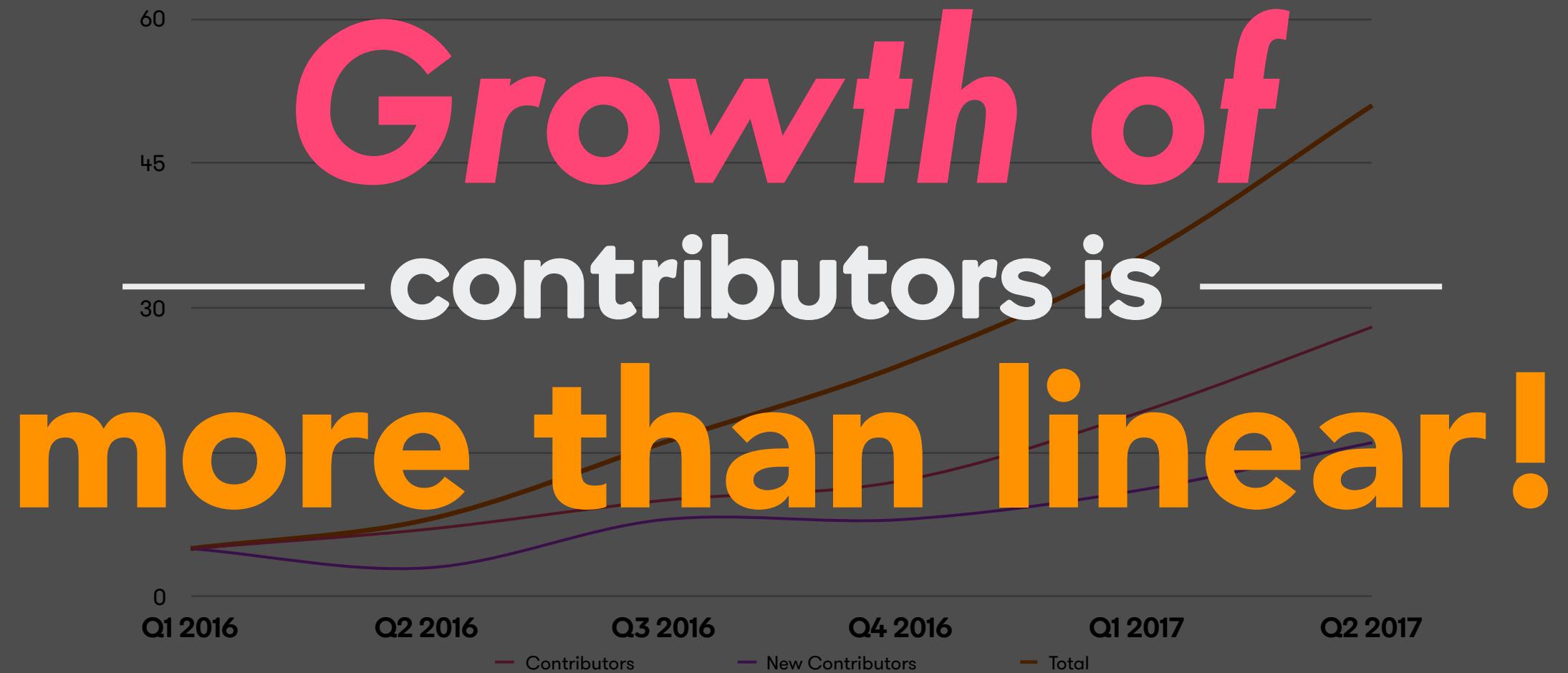
**Shifting towards**  
— a —  
**contribution-based**  
— model is —  
**fundamentally changing**  
— HOW —  
**work is done at GoDaddy.**

# ***"Inner Source"*** has proven



VERY ***effective.***

**"Inner Source"** has proven



VERY **effective.**



A statue of Justice (Lady Justice) is positioned in the center of the image, set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The statue depicts a blindfolded woman holding a scale in one hand and a sword in the other. The text is overlaid on the image, with 'value systems' in pink and 'incentives' in yellow.

On  
value systems  
and  
incentives



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing glasses and a white shirt with red polka dots, is looking down at a laptop screen. The screen displays a large, stylized text message.

— why —  
are **YOU** doing  
— what —  
**YOU** are *doing*?

JUST HOW  
— do —  
people

JUST HOW  
— do —  
**people**  
— get —  
**BETTER?**





—Everyone —  
**mentors**  
— someone else —

S<sub>1</sub> I<sub>1</sub> M<sub>3</sub> P<sub>3</sub> L<sub>1</sub> E<sub>1</sub>

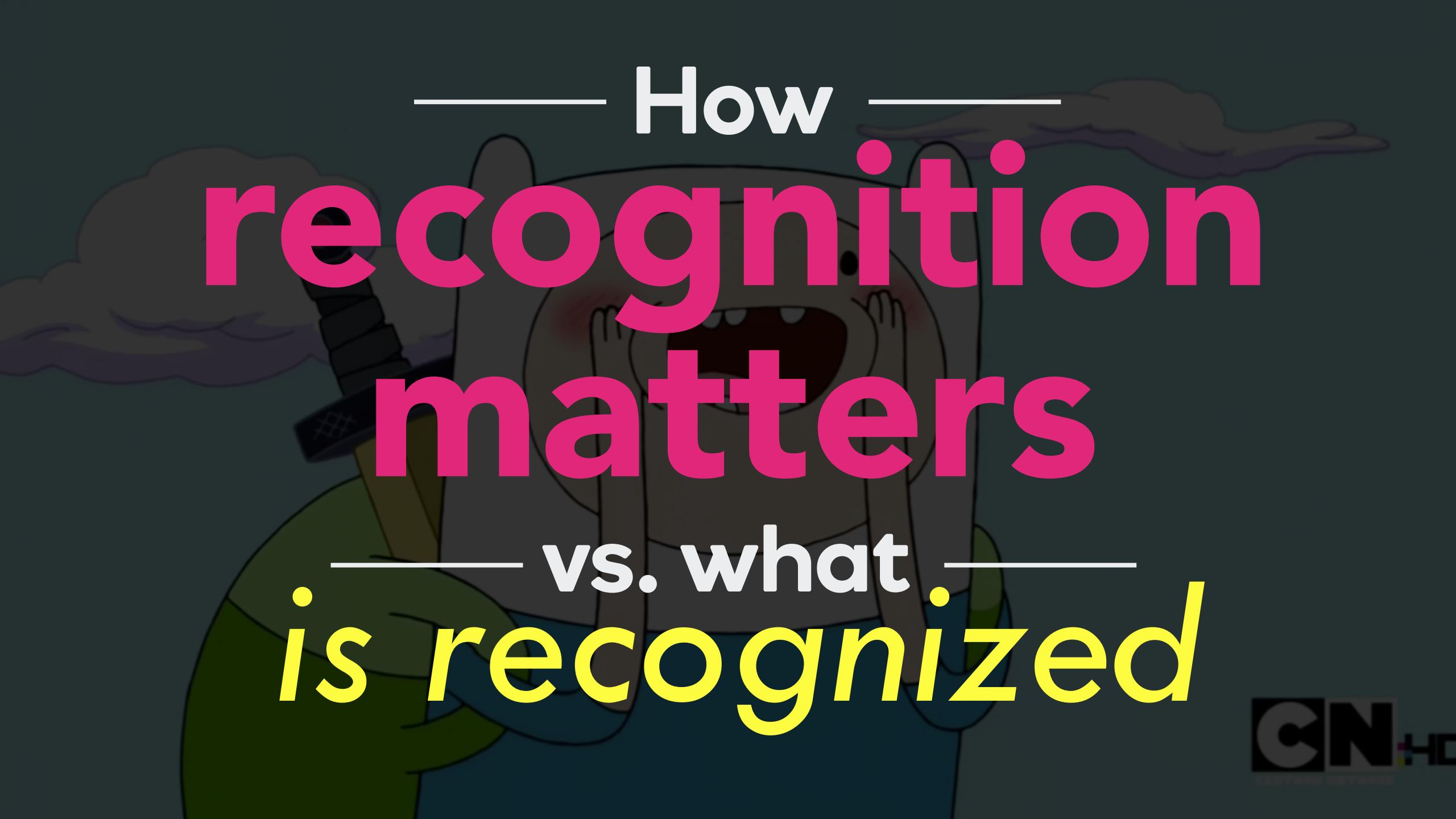
· O

R.

We make  
value-based  
decisions



**CN**  
CARTOON NETWORK

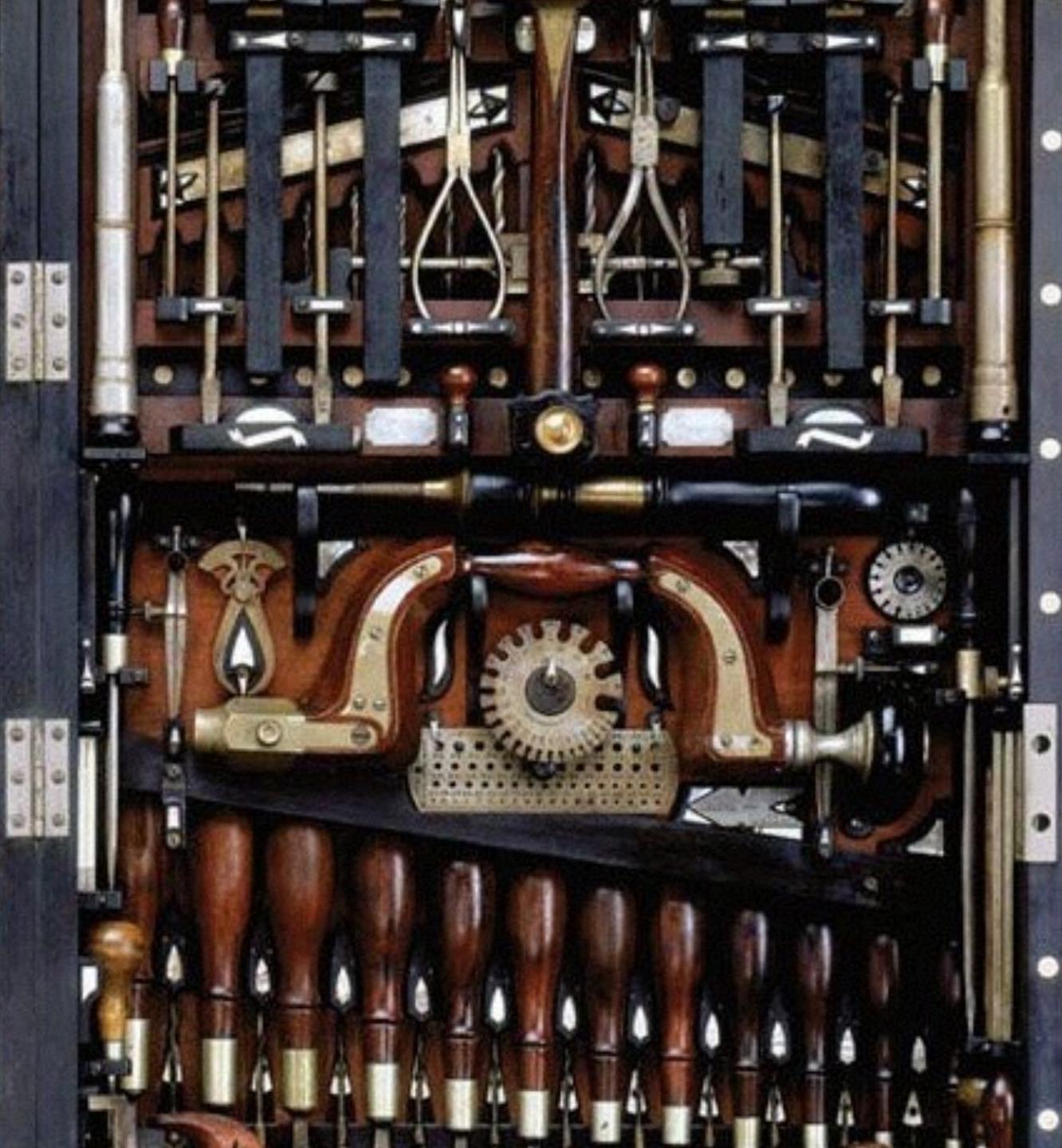


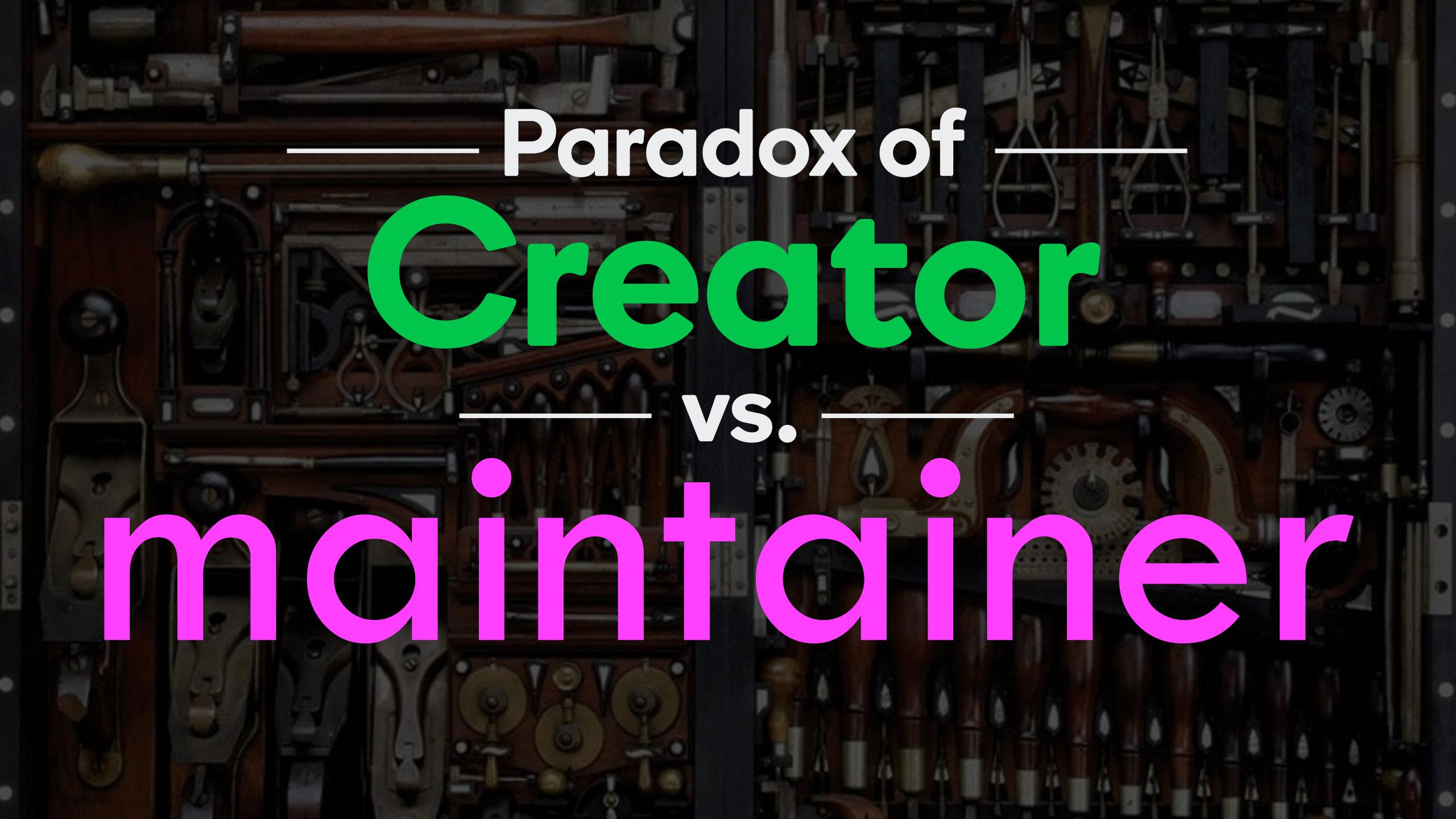
— How —

# recognition matters

— vs. what —

# *is recognized*





— Paradox of —

# Creator

vs.

# maintainer





— Accept that —  
**all contributors**  
— create value —

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CODE.

— Accept that —

**all contributors**

— create value —

**[kentcdodds/all-contributors](https://github.com/kentcdodds/all-contributors)**





— prioritize being —  
***INCLUSIVE TO***  
basically everyone —





HAVE A CODE  
— of —  
*conduct*  
— policy —



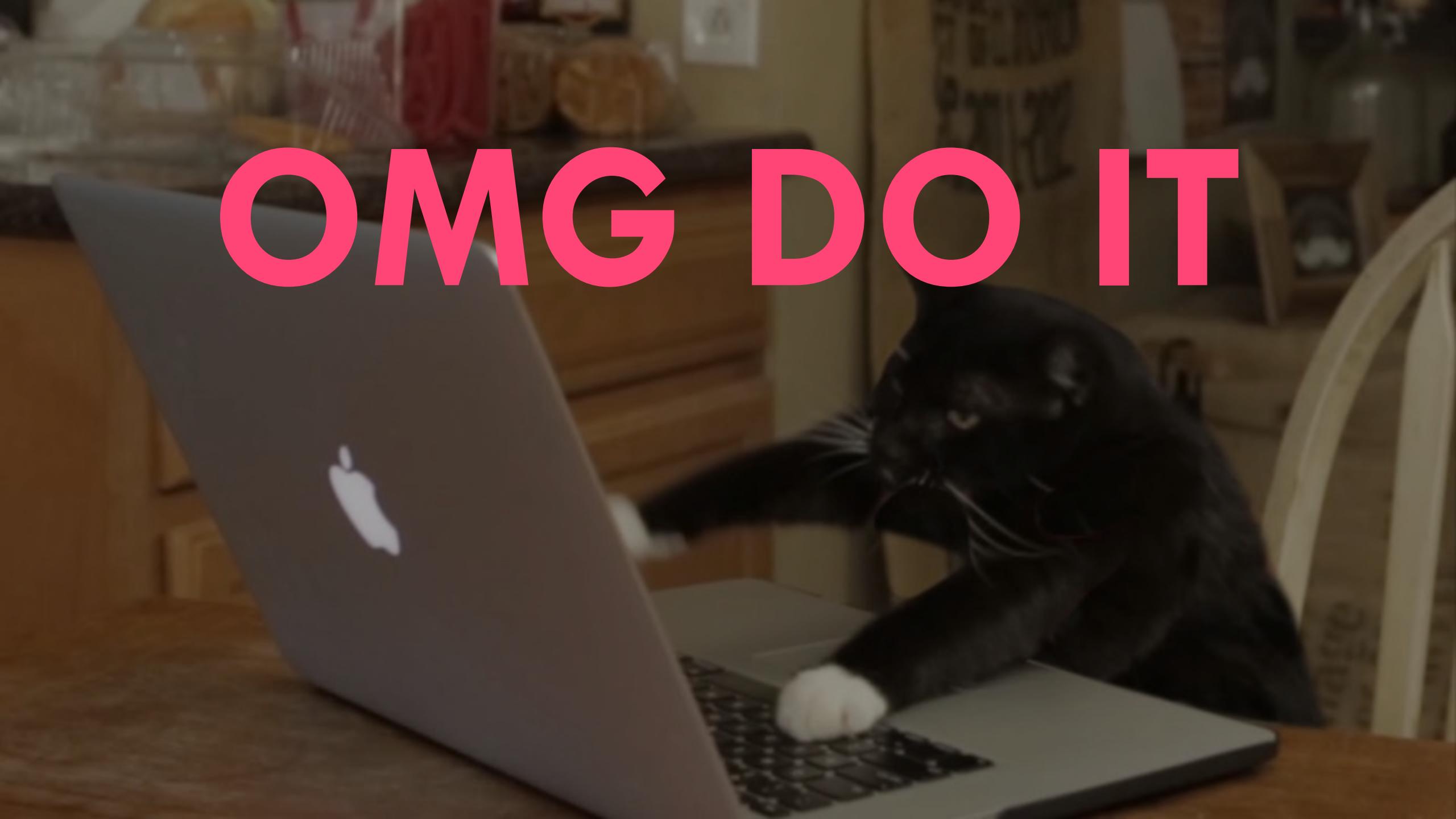
# HAVE A CODE — of — *conduct* — policy —

TL;DR? READ THIS AND USE IT.

[contributor-covenant.org](http://contributor-covenant.org)



OMG DO IT



OMG DO IT

— right meow! —

YES, RIGHT MEOW!



A dark, semi-transparent background image of two people. On the left, a man in a white shirt is looking intensely at the camera with a furrowed brow. On the right, a woman in a blue shirt is leaning forward, her hands gripping the man's shoulders in a firm, assertive hold. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on their faces and hands.

— It's all about —

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A dark, moody photograph of a man and a woman. The man, on the left, has a shocked expression with wide eyes and is looking towards the camera. The woman, on the right, is partially visible, looking down with a serious expression. They appear to be in a dimly lit room, possibly an office or a bar.

— It's all about —

**CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION**

— for serious... —



“

“Every *Open Source governance model*  
is a shallow wrapper (defined broadly)  
to a basic **conflict resolution strategy.**

— Me? I guess? Today?

“Every *Open Source governance model*  
is a shallow wrapper (defined broadly)  
to a basic ***conflict resolution strategy.***

— Me? I guess? Today?

PLEASE DON'T CALL THIS A LAW

“Every *Open Source governance model*  
is a shallow wrapper (defined broadly)  
to a basic ***conflict resolution strategy.***

— Me? I guess? Today?

PLEASE DON'T CALL THIS A LAW

IT'S JUST HUMAN NATURE



A scenic mountain landscape at sunset. The sky is a vibrant orange and yellow, transitioning into a darker blue. In the foreground, there's a dirt path winding through a forest of green trees. The middle ground shows a valley with more trees and a small body of water. The background is dominated by majestic, rugged mountains with patches of snow on their peaks.

Moving mountains  
— of —  
of code?



AFL-CIO

UNION  
LABOR



— Let's talk about —

# GOVERNANCE





Simple? —

**BDFL**





Democracy.  
— NOT —  
meritocracy





Meritocracy  
is  
a lie

MERITOCRACY COMPLETELY IGNORES

BASIC POWER & SOCIAL

DYNAMICS INHERENT IN

all human relationships



A large conference room with rows of white chairs facing a front. A large window in the background offers a view of a city skyline at dusk or night. The room is well-lit by numerous small, warm-toned lights hanging from the ceiling.

— How —  
**about we just**  
— say —  
**COMMITTEE  
BASED?**

### Benevolent Dictator

Leads the technical direction of the project and organizes the community; final say on project decisions and community disputes



### Committers

Can make direct changes to the code (approved in official release deliberations); evaluate committers' code



### Contributors

Developers who contribute to a project in any meaningful way.

WITH THE EXCEPTION

OF A “CLASSIC”

BDFL STRUCTURE

IT'S ALL COMMITTEES

# SERIOUSLY. THIS IS

## WHAT APACHE

## CONSIDERS

## “MERITOCRACY”

### Project Management Committee

Reviews code contributions, participates in strategic planning, approves changes to the governance model and manages legal issues within project; selects committers; resolves community disputes

### Committers

Can make direct changes to the code (approved in official release deliberations); evaluate committers' code

### Contributors

Developers who contribute to a project in any meaningful way.

### KEY

Represents collaborative, non-hierarchical nature of meritocratic structure

SERIOUSLY. THIS IS

Hierarchy

IS

implicit

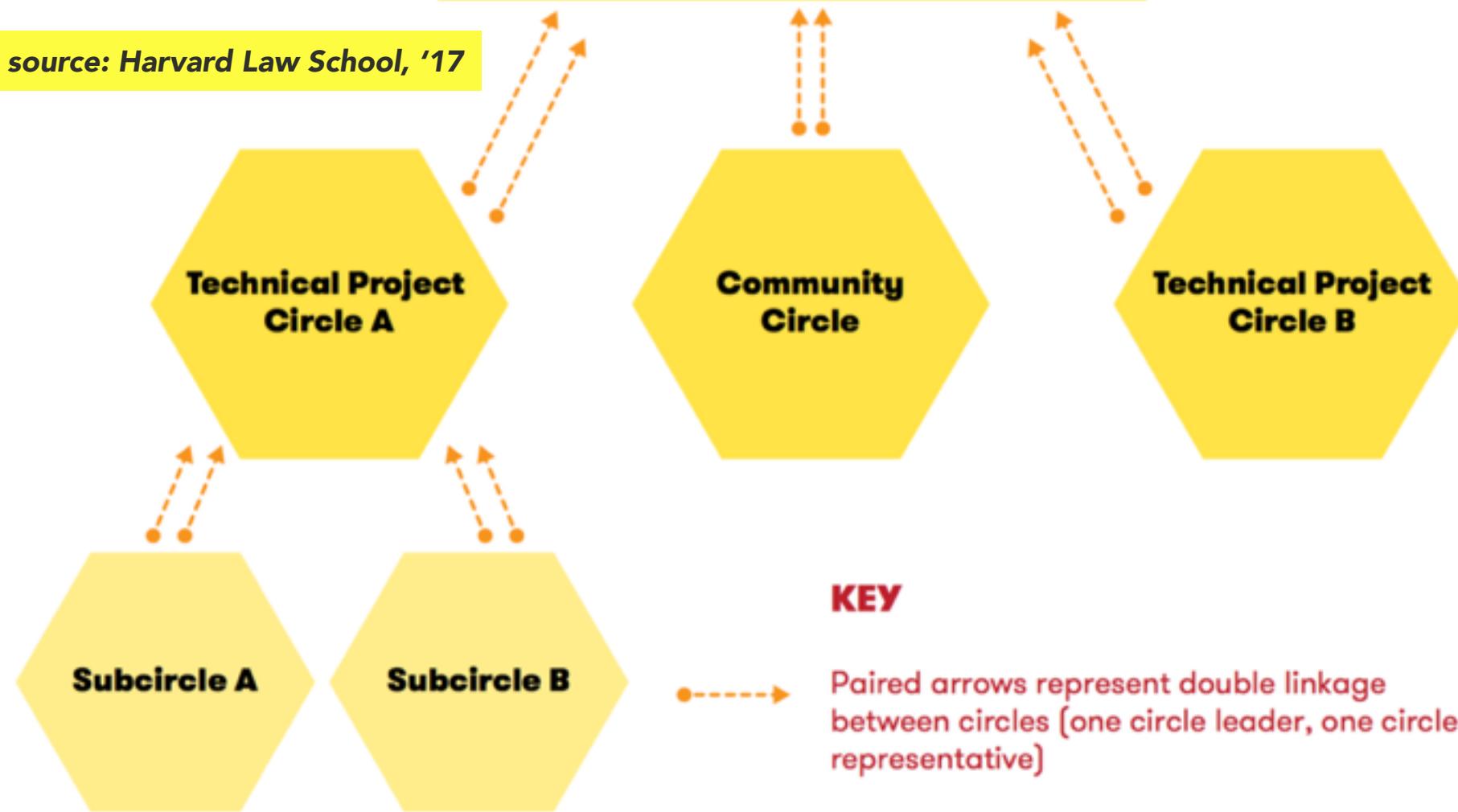
“MERITOCRACY”



## General Circle

Highest governing body, where project founders, project circle team leaders, and representative contributors from each project circle sit

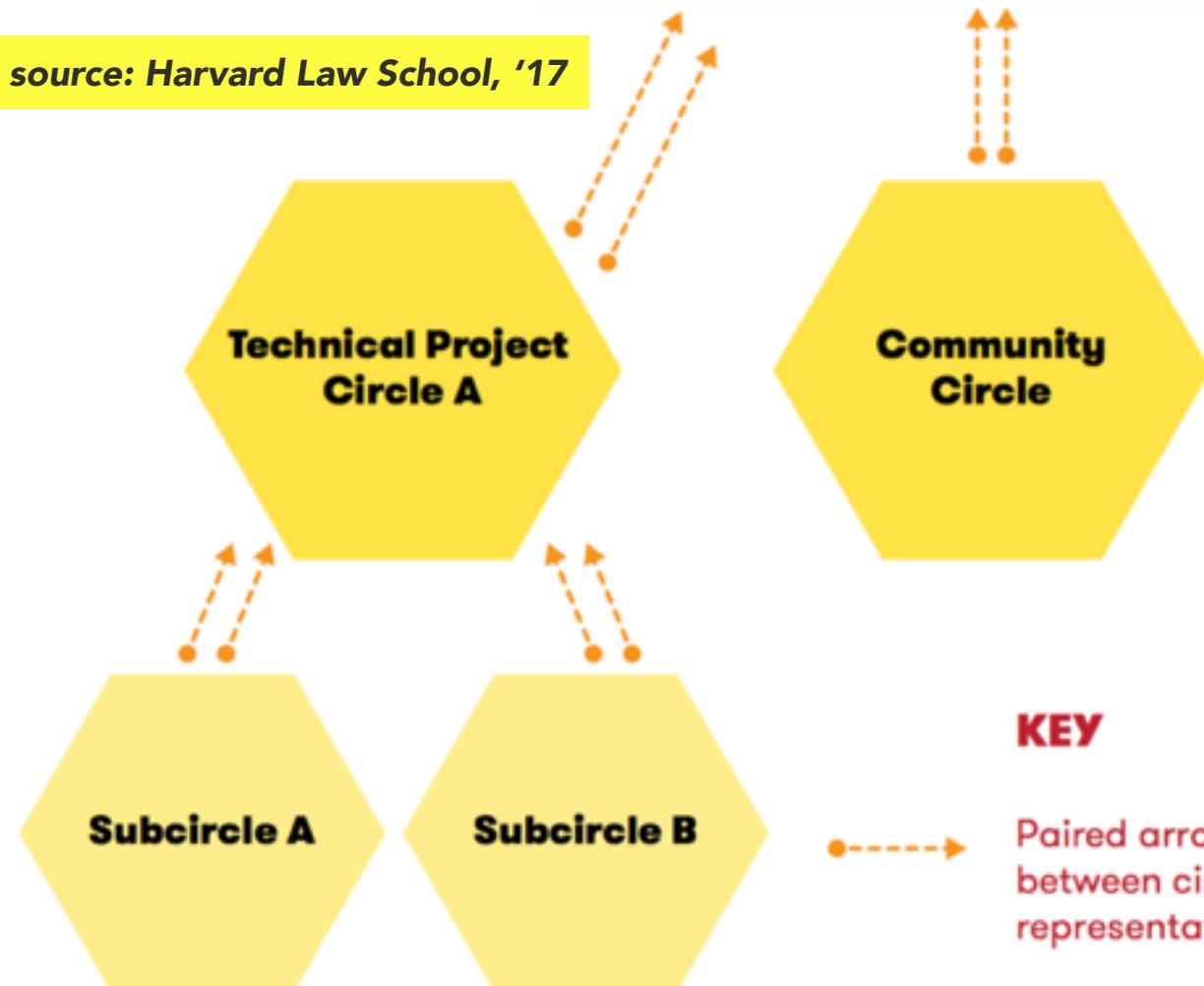
source: Harvard Law School, '17



### General Circle

Highest governing body, where project founders, project circle team leaders, and representative contributors from each project circle sit

source: Harvard Law School, '17



SIMILAR TO BUT

NOT EXACTLY

NODE.JS'

GOVERNANCE MODEL





# ***IMPLICATIONS***

— of —

# **lazy consensus**

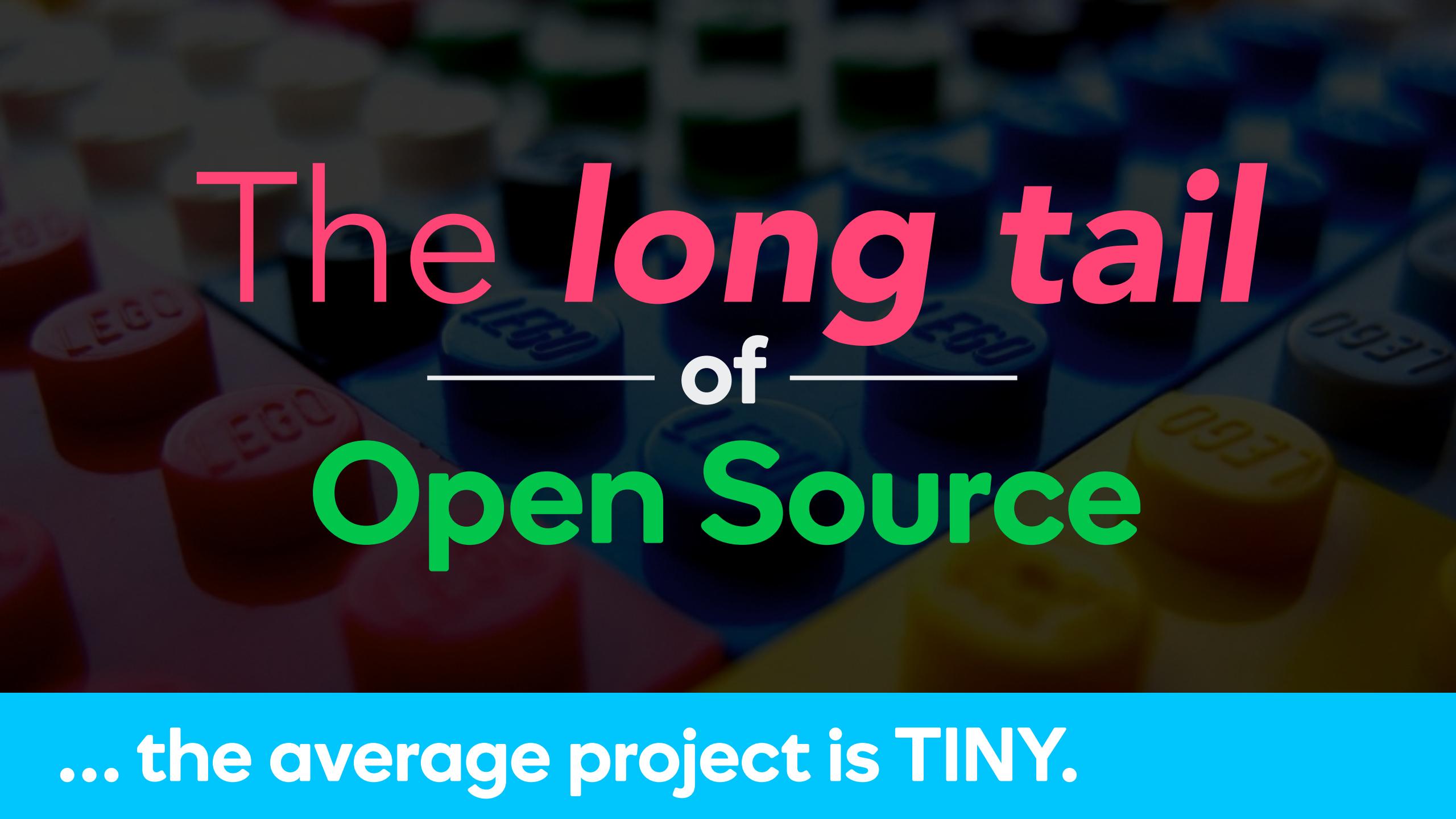
# **IMPLICATIONS**

— of —

# **lazy consensus**

`/** 'contributor' !== 'martyr' **/`





# The *long tail* of Open Source

... the average project is TINY.





Moving mole-hills  
— of —  
of code.





— Guess what? It's —  
**GOVERNANCE**  
— again —



A black and white photograph of two people playing a game of hot potato. A woman with curly hair and a red shirt is on the left, smiling and looking towards the right. A man with short hair and a dark shirt is on the right, also smiling and looking towards the left. They are both holding their hands out as if passing a potato between them.

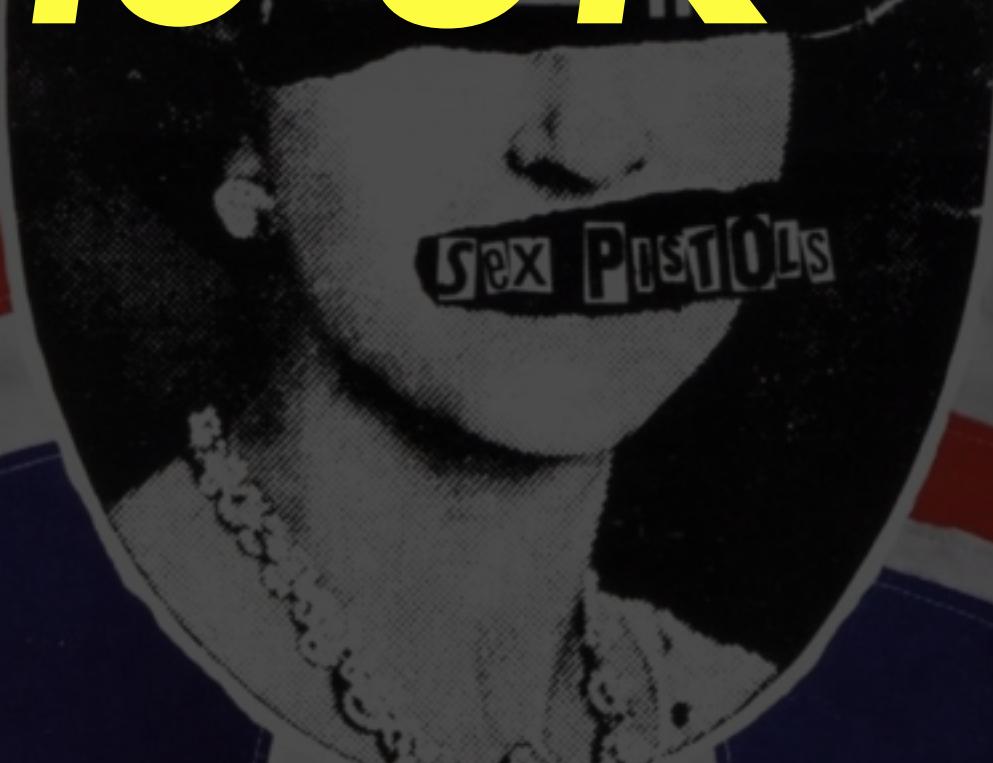
— the classic —

**HOT POTATO**

— governance model —



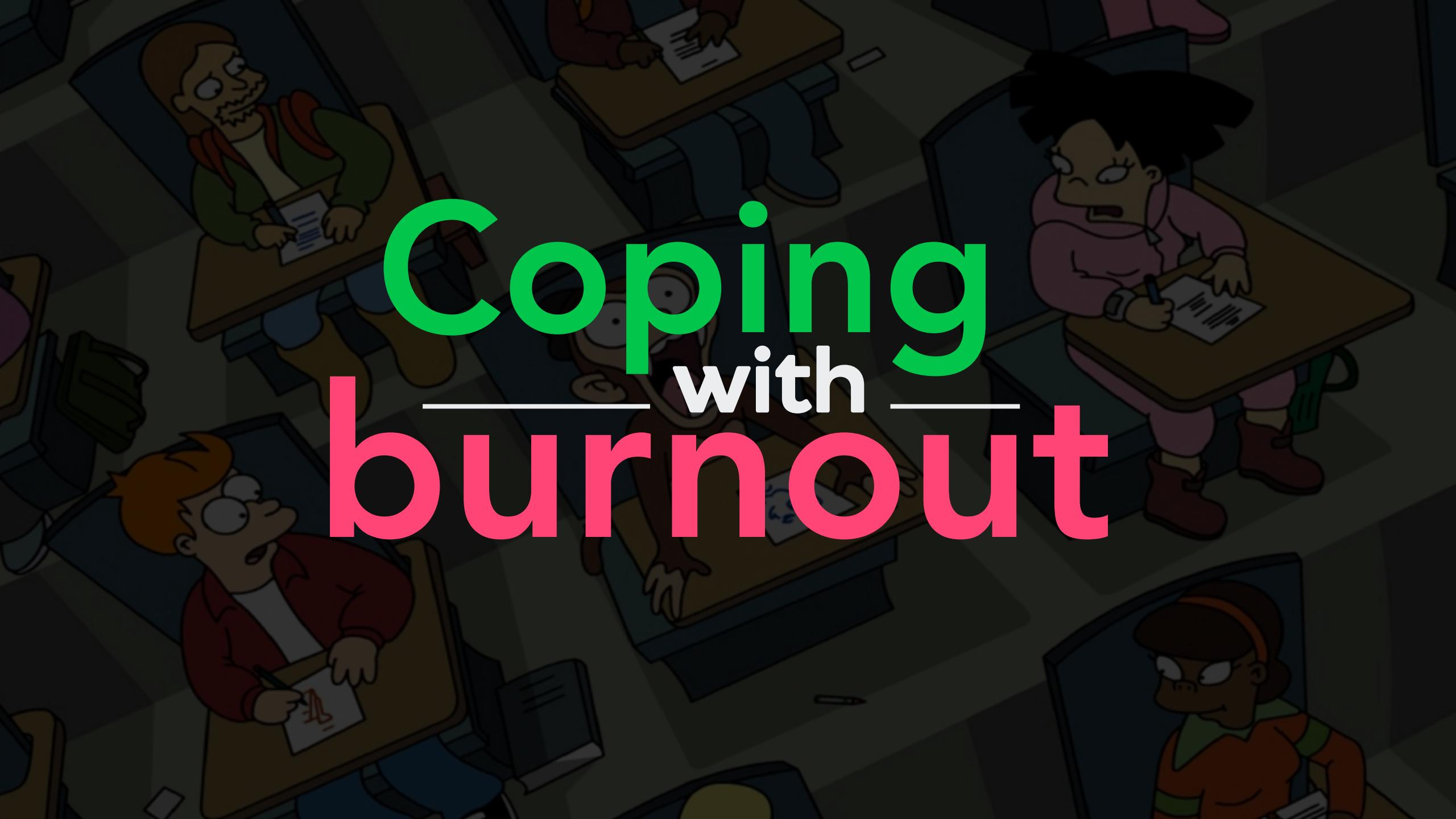
ANARCHY  
the UK not in —





ANARCHY  
the UK not in —  
the Internet maybe on —





# Coping with burnout

Cutting down  
big Redwood.

California.





# LEARNING — to — *handle growth* — effectively —

365  
Cutting down  
big Redwood.  
California.

365

Cutting down  
big Redwood.  
California.

LEARNING  
to  
handle growth  
effectively  
gets  
EASIER.  
**I PROMISE IT IS TRUE.**



A photograph of a person sitting on a bench in a park. The person is seen from the side, wearing a dark jacket and trousers. They are sitting on a bench covered in fallen leaves. In front of them is a path also covered in fallen leaves, leading into the distance. The overall atmosphere is one of abandonment or neglect.

— is this project —  
**ABANDONDED?**  
— is an anti-pattern —





— Turns out that: —  
**PUBLIC SHAMING**  
— does NOT work —



A dark, stormy sky filled with numerous white lightning bolts of varying sizes, creating a dramatic and powerful atmosphere.

Bottle  
your own  
lightning



A large industrial mining site at dusk or night. Several massive excavators with long booms and conveyor belts are visible against a dark, cloudy sky. The scene is dimly lit, with the machinery appearing as dark silhouettes against the lighter sky.

Help  
with moving  
a mountain



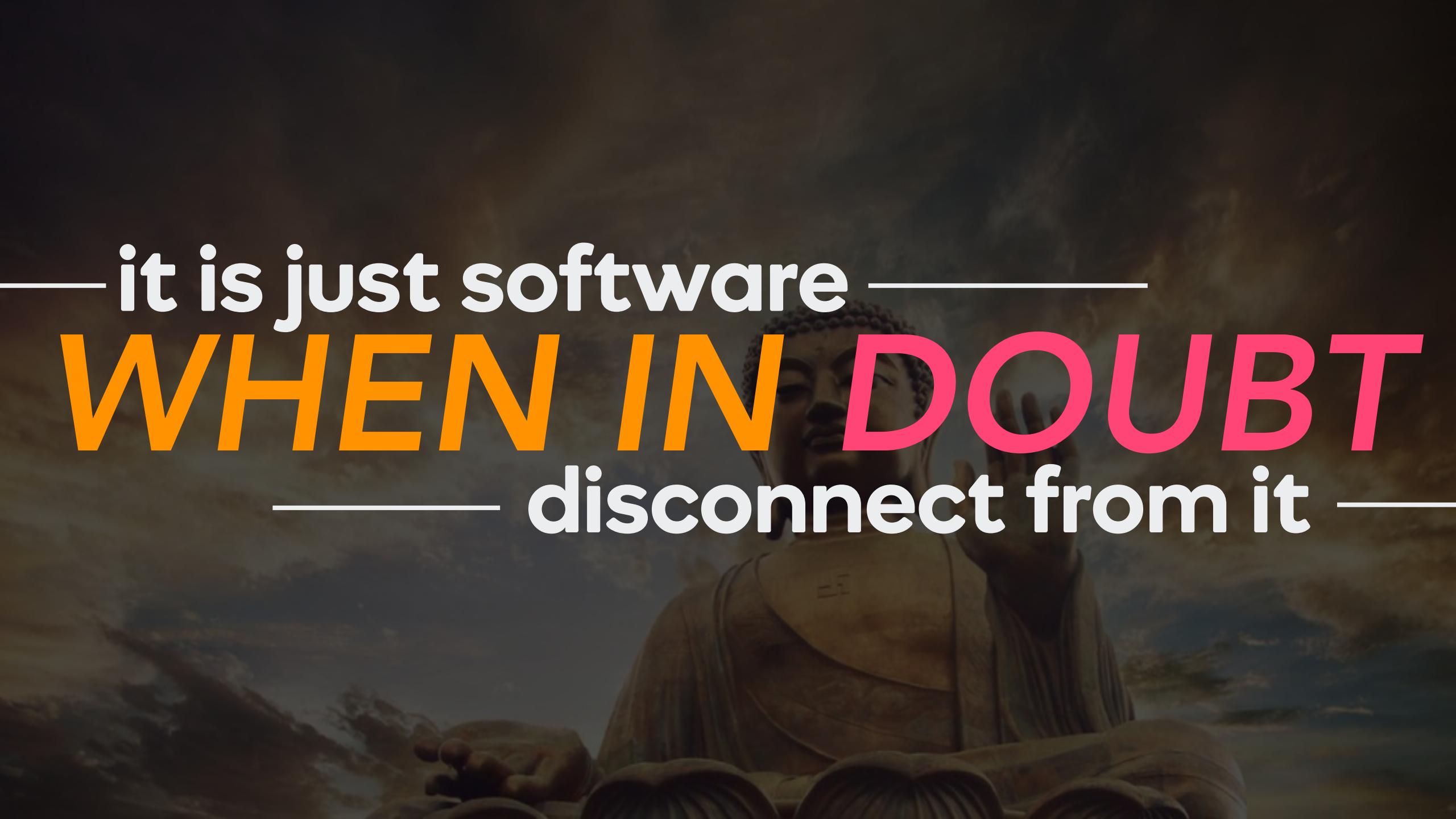
# Build

— your own molehill  
— or a hundred! —



A large, serene statue of a seated Buddha with a dark, cloudy background.

**WHEN IN DOUBT**  
— disconnect from it —

A large, serene statue of a seated Buddha with hands in mudras, set against a dramatic, cloudy sky.

— it is just software —  
**WHEN IN DOUBT**  
— disconnect from it —



{github, twitter}.com/indexzero

THANKS. Q&A TIME.

MAY THE SOURCE BE WITH YOU