

Making the business case for *contributing* to open source

Tobie Langel, Principal, UnlockOpen



@tobie

tobie@unlockopen.com
unlockopen.com

“In short, software is eating the world.”
open source

—Marc Andreessen, WSJ, August 20, 2011.

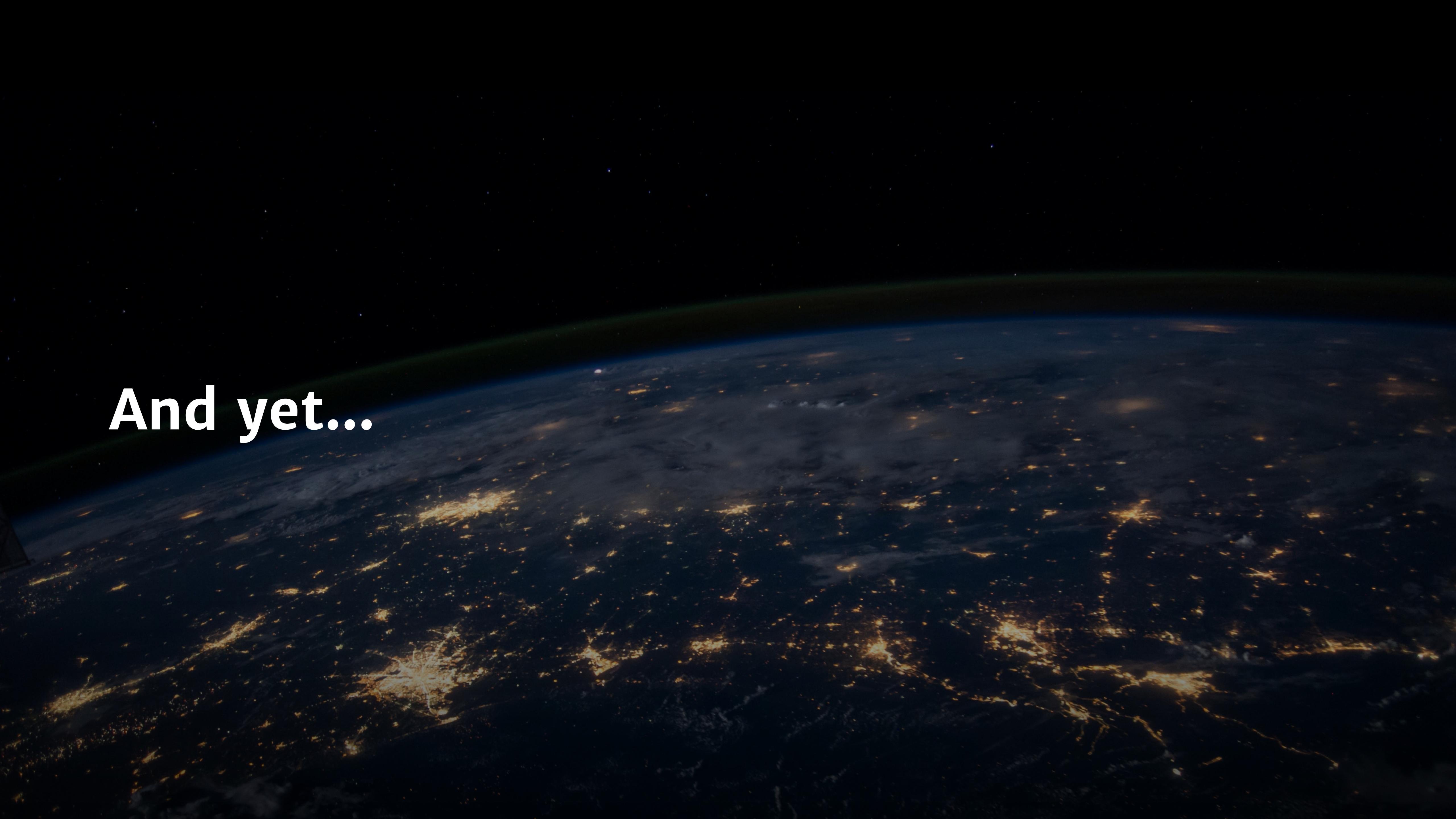
96%

OF APPS CONTAIN OPEN
SOURCE COMPONENTS

57%

OF CODEBASE IS
OPEN SOURCE

Source: Black Duck 2018 OSSRA

A nighttime satellite view of Earth from space, showing city lights and auroras.

And yet...

Why should companies *contribute* to open source?



Common good

The Right Thing To Do™

Paying it forward

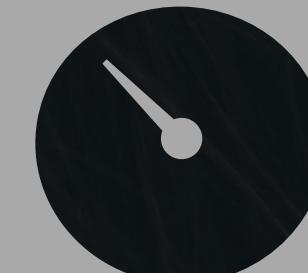
Etc.

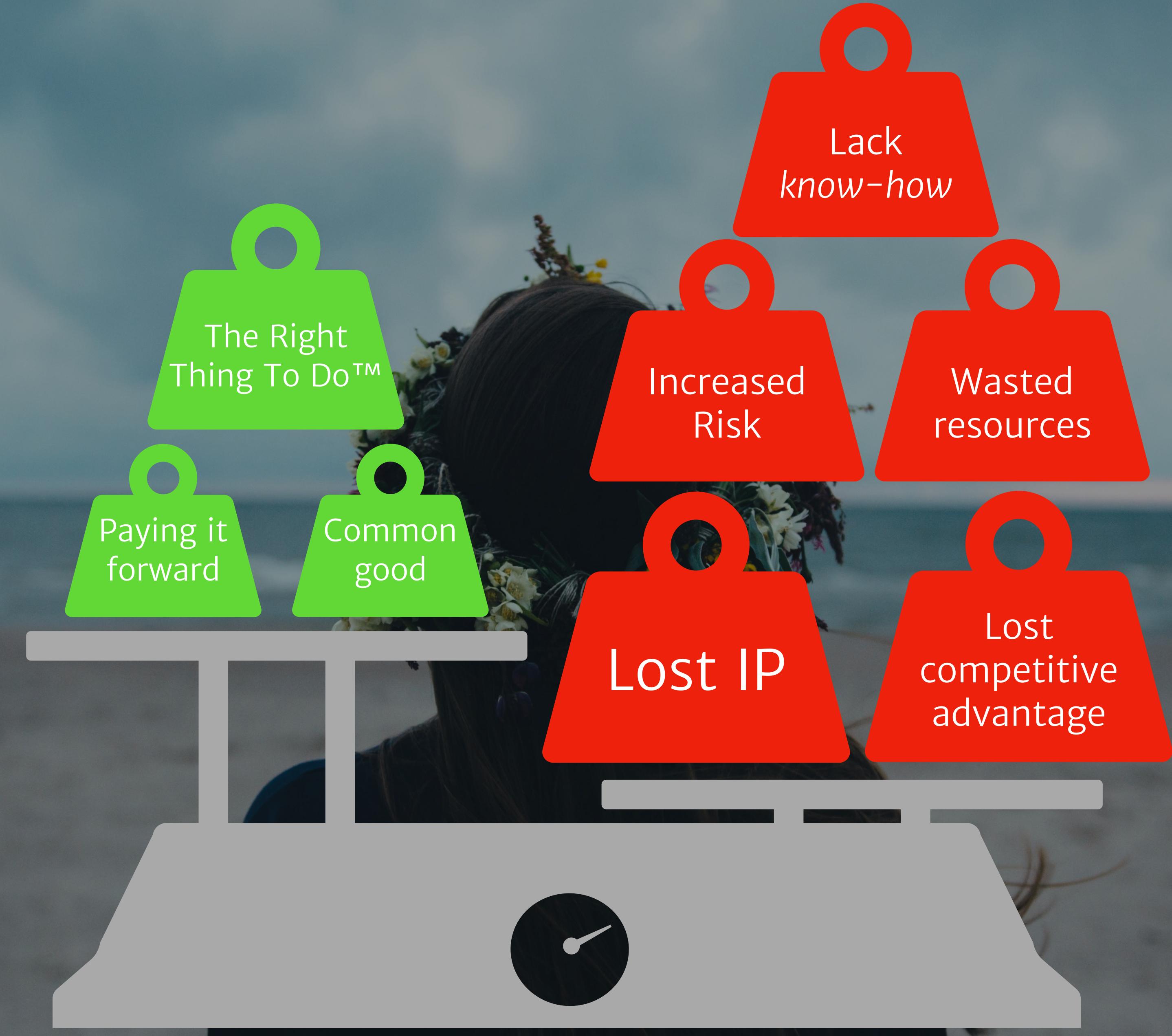
A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a large, lush floral crown made of various flowers and greenery. She is looking out over a body of water under a cloudy sky. The image has a dark, slightly grainy texture.

The Right
Thing To Do™

Paying it
forward

Common
good





The ROI of *using* open source is well understood.

The ROI of *contributing* to open source: not so much.



The risk of *contributing* to open source is:

- not well understood,
- generally exaggerated.



Understanding the value of contributing to open source

1. Strategic benefits
2. Operational benefits
3. Second-order benefits



Understanding the value of contributing to open source

- 1. Strategic benefits**
- 2. Operational benefits**
- 3. Second-order benefits**



Commoditize Your Complement

Company	Focus	Complement
Google	🔍	○ Android
intel®	chip	Tux
redhat.	bag	Tux
facebook	coins	Open Compute Project



An aerial photograph of a complex highway interchange. The image shows multiple levels of elevated roads and ramps. Interspersed among the concrete structures are several playgrounds with vibrant green and red surfaces, and a basketball court with blue markings. The surrounding area includes some greenery and a few buildings, including one with a large parking lot and solar panels. The overall scene is a mix of urban infrastructure and recreational spaces.

On-ramp developers

Understanding the value of contributing to open source

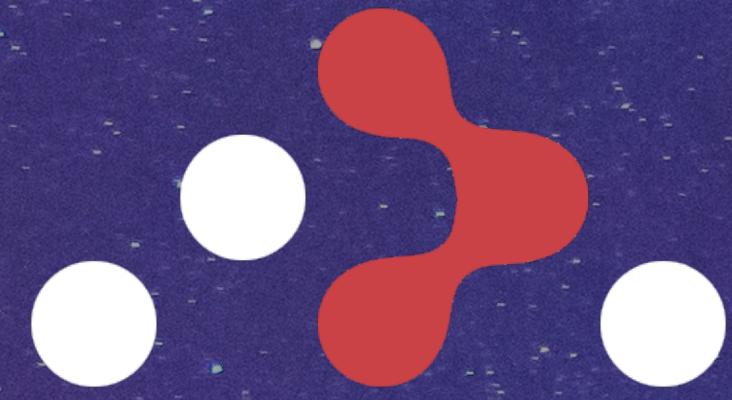
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- 2. Operational benefits**
- 3. Second-order benefits**



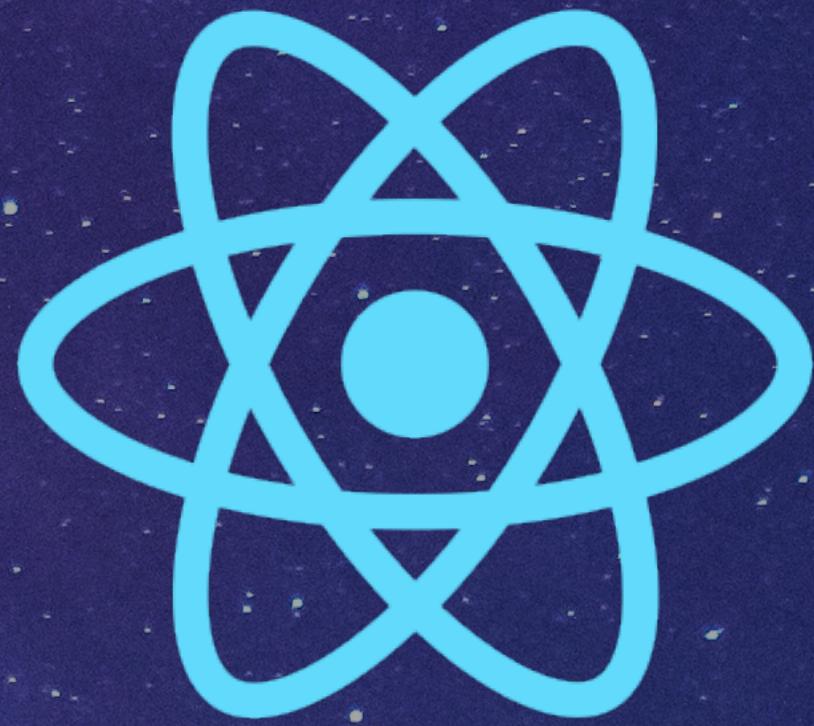
Payback Technical Debt



Leverage external contributions



React Router



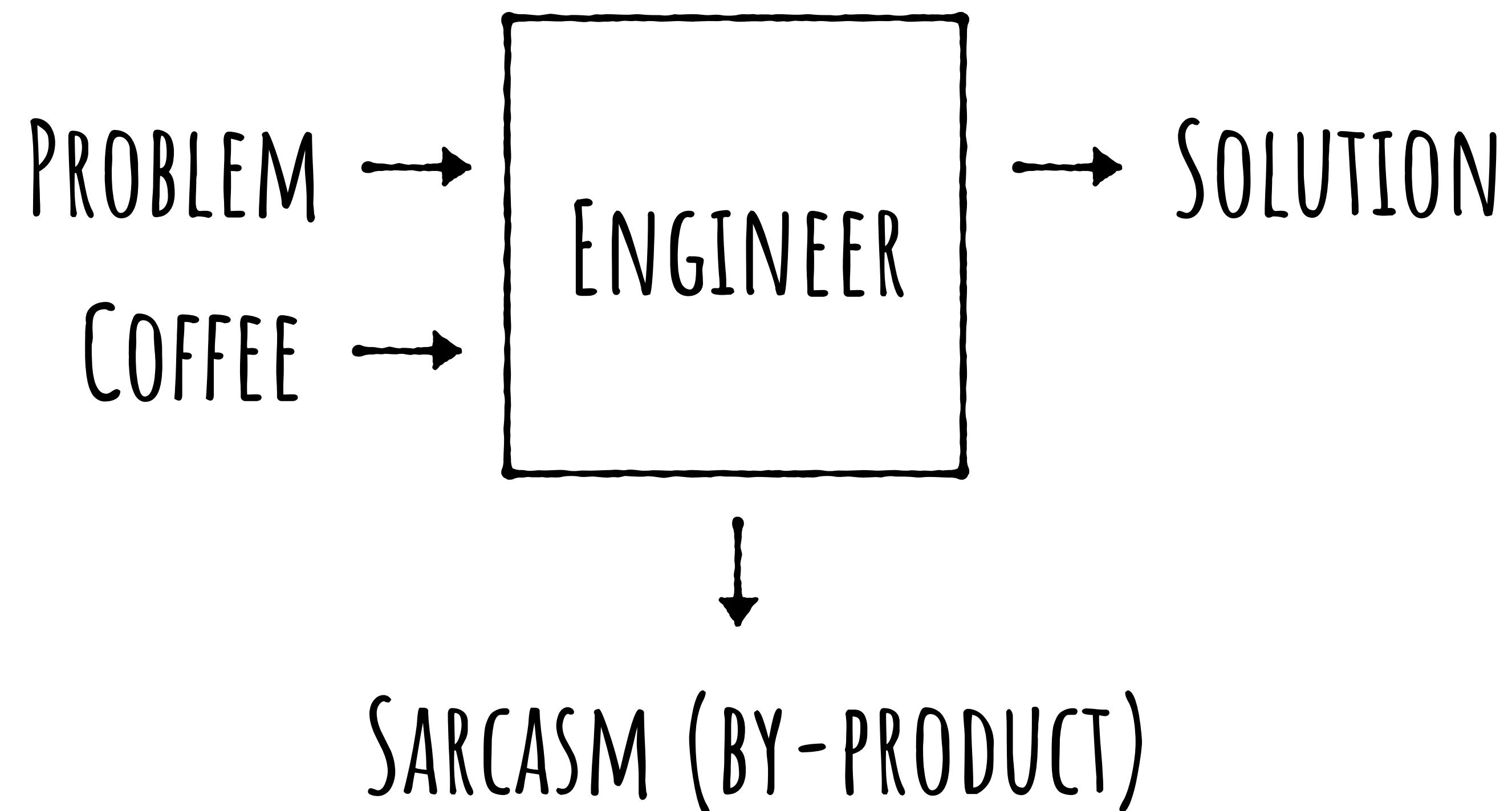
Redux

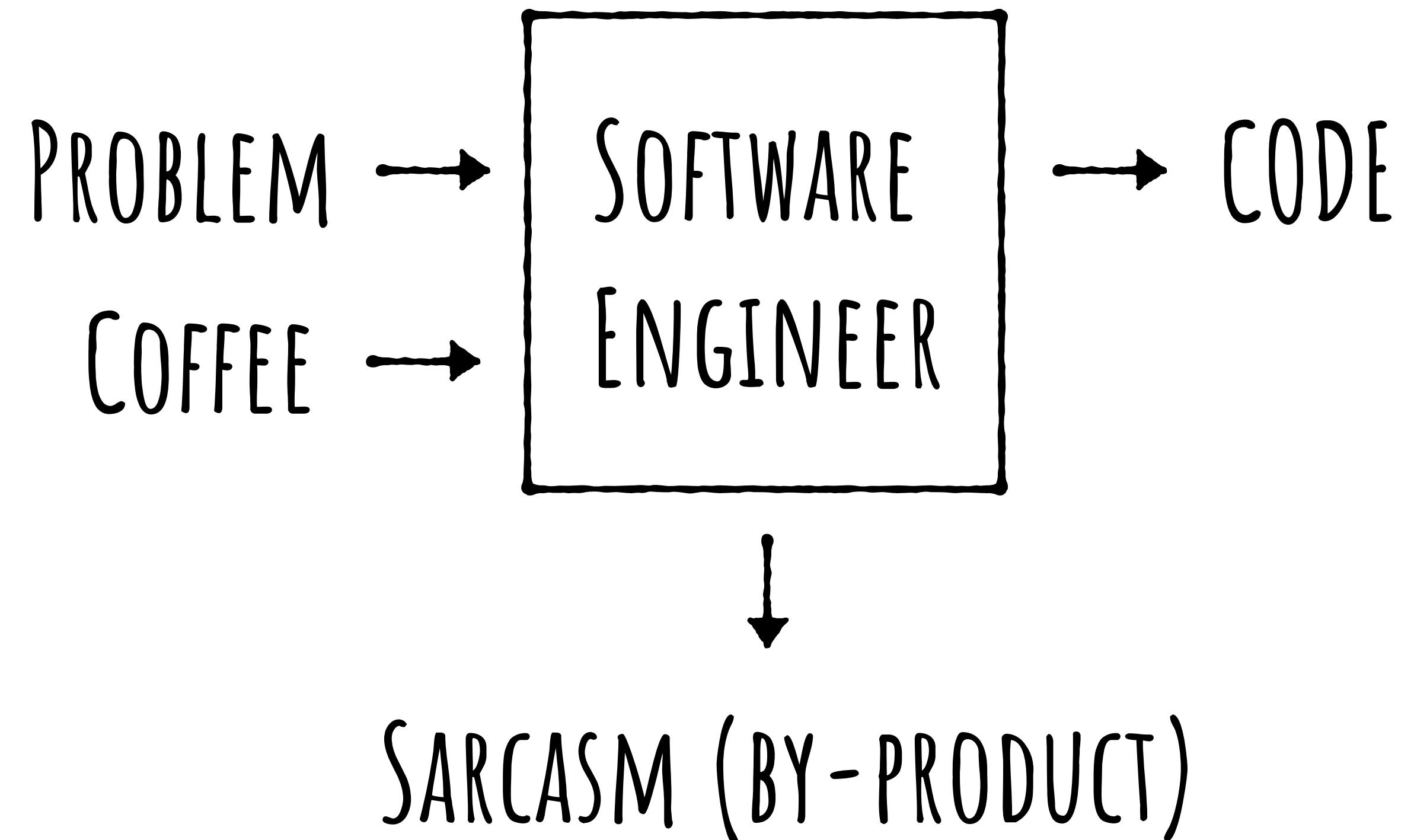
React Ecosystem

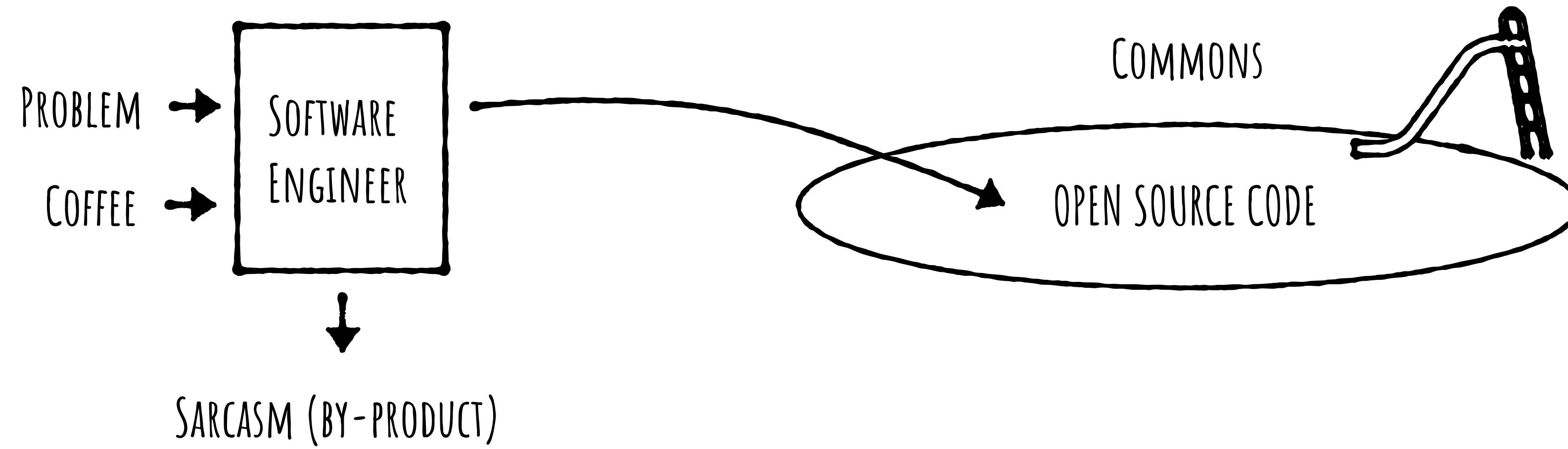
Understanding the value of contributing to open source

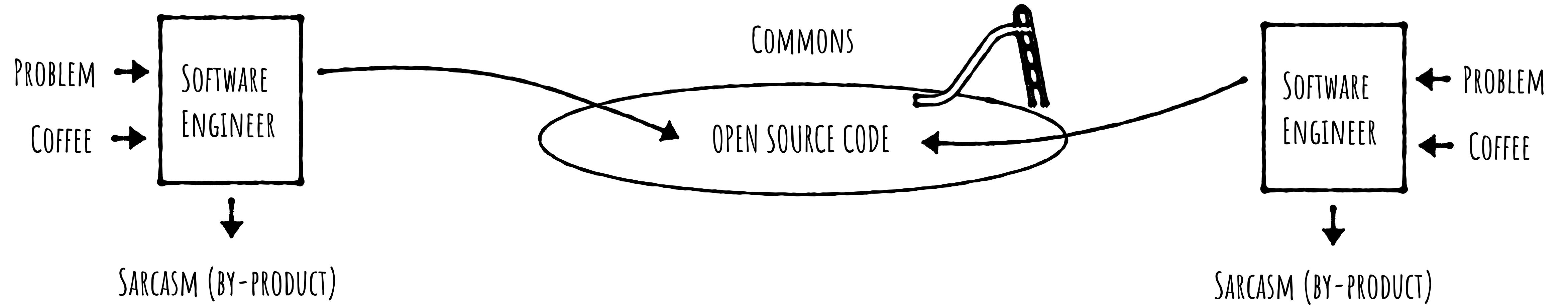
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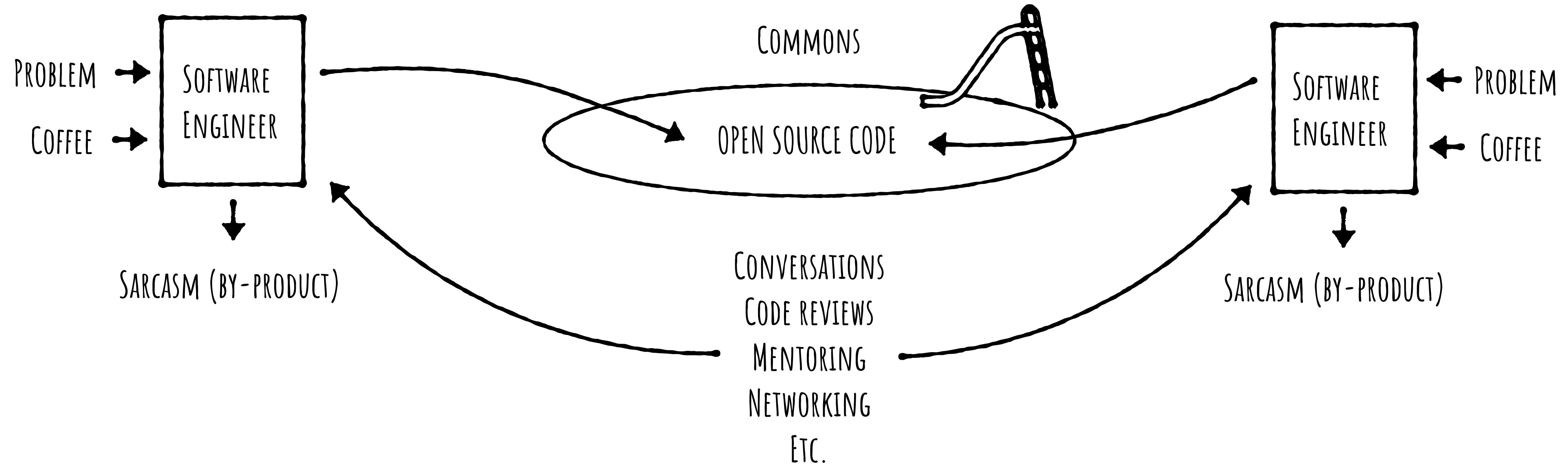


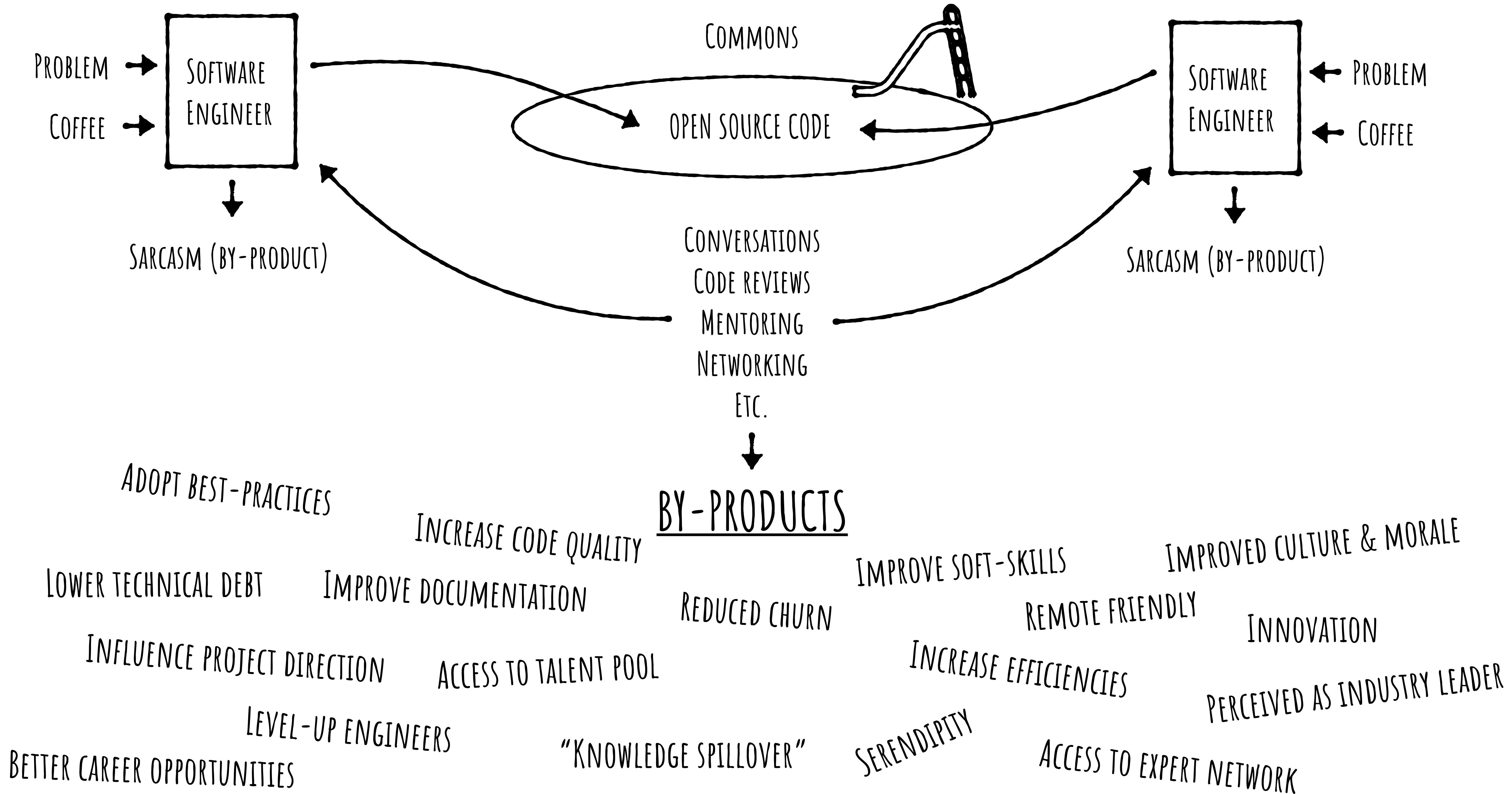








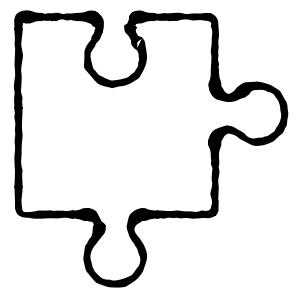






BY-PRODUCTS

PROJECT



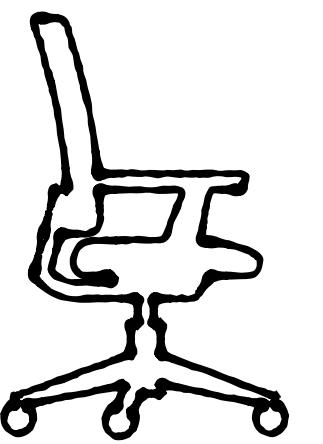
IMPROVE DOCUMENTATION

INCREASE CODE QUALITY

LOWER TECHNICAL DEBT

INFLUENCE PROJECT DIRECTION

INDIVIDUAL



LEVEL-UP ENGINEERS

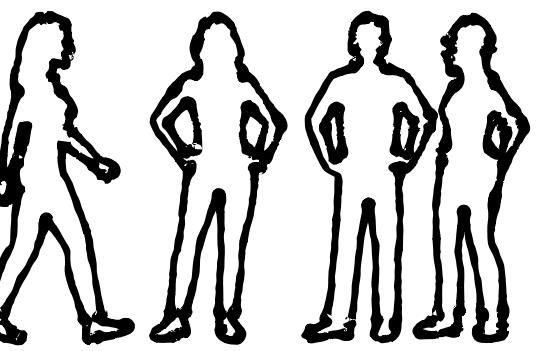
ADOPT BEST-PRACTICES

IMPROVE SOFT-SKILLS

ACCESS TO EXPERT NETWORK

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

TEAM



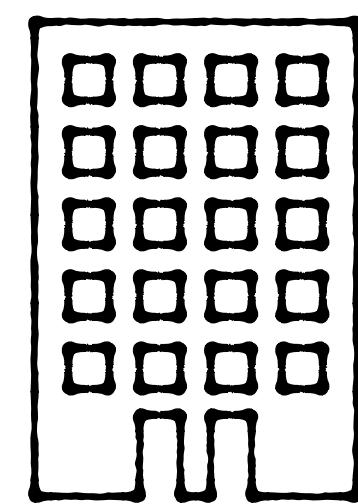
INCREASE EFFICIENCIES

SERENDIPITY

INNOVATION

"KNOWLEDGE SPILLOVER"

ORGANIZATION



IMPROVED CULTURE & MORALE

PERCEIVED AS INDUSTRY LEADER

ACCESS TO TALENT POOL

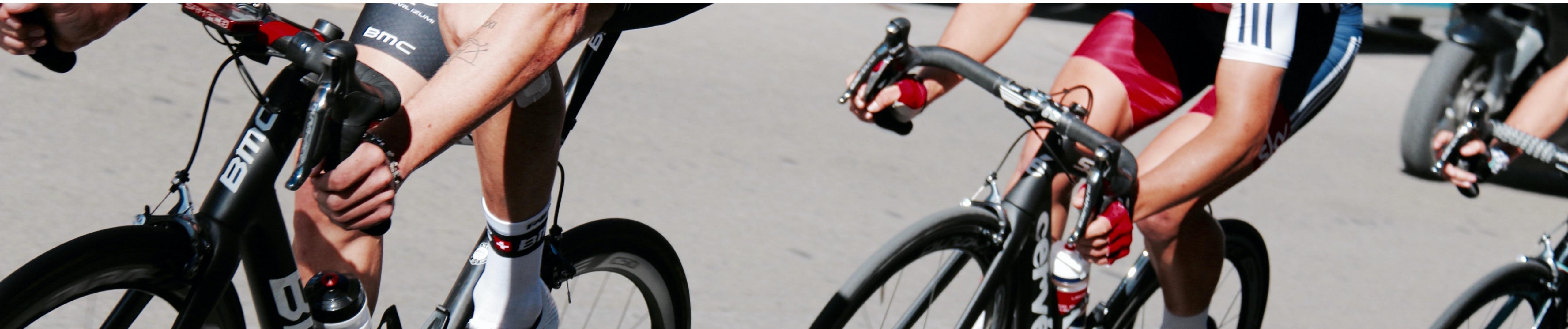
REMOTE FRIENDLY

REDUCED CHURN

2 X

TWICE AS EFFICIENT

Contributing firms capture up to 100% more productive value from usage of open source than their free-riding peers.



Source: Franck Nagle, Learning by Contributing, 2017.

A close-up photograph of two people's hands shaking. One hand is dark-skinned and wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. The other hand is light-skinned and wearing a grey ribbed sweater. They are both wearing cufflinks. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

75%

OF FACEBOOK'S NEW ENGINEERING RECRUITS
MENTION FACEBOOK'S OPEN SOURCE PROGRAM
AS A KEY REASON THEY ACCEPTED THEIR OFFER



"But we also noticed some effect that we didn't expect. All the public visibility [sponsoring Webpack] have given us lead to a situation where we suddenly became one of the most interesting companies to work for as a JavaScript developer. [...]"

"We've hired a lot of really great engineers who mentioned during their job interview that our sponsoring for Webpack was one of their primary motivations for applying, [...]"

*—Patrick Gotthardt, Lead JavaScript Architect,
Trivago, 9 July 2018.*



Mitigate the risk of contributing to open source





Lost competitive advantage

“I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been.”

— Wayne Gretzky



Photo: Rick Dikeman, 1997 (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Lost IP

“In today's world of fast-paced internet services deployment, owning IP has become considerably less important than turning research results into innovative products as quickly as possible, and deploying them at scale.”

— Yann LeCun, *Business Insider*, Aug. 3, 2018.





Increased Risk



Wasted resources



Lack *know-how*



Etc.



Now it's your turn!

- Framework to think in terms of business tradeoffs.
- A toolkit of benefits and mitigation strategies.
- See how it applies to *your* organization.



Now it's your turn!

- Be reasonable.
- Show empathy to other's needs in the organization.
- Aim for small wins. Start small.
- Remember it's a mindset shift.



A photograph taken from space at night, showing the curvature of the Earth. City lights are visible as numerous small yellow and white dots, primarily concentrated in coastal and urban areas. A bright green aurora borealis (Northern Lights) is visible in the upper left quadrant. The atmosphere appears dark and slightly hazy.

Thank you!

Tobie Langel (@tobie)
Principal, UnlockOpen
tobie@unlockopen.com
unlockopen.com



Virtual

EVERYWHERE

KEEP CLOUD NATIVE

