



EMPOWERING AGILE SELF-ORGANIZED TEAMS  
*with Design Thinking*

.....

WILL EVANS



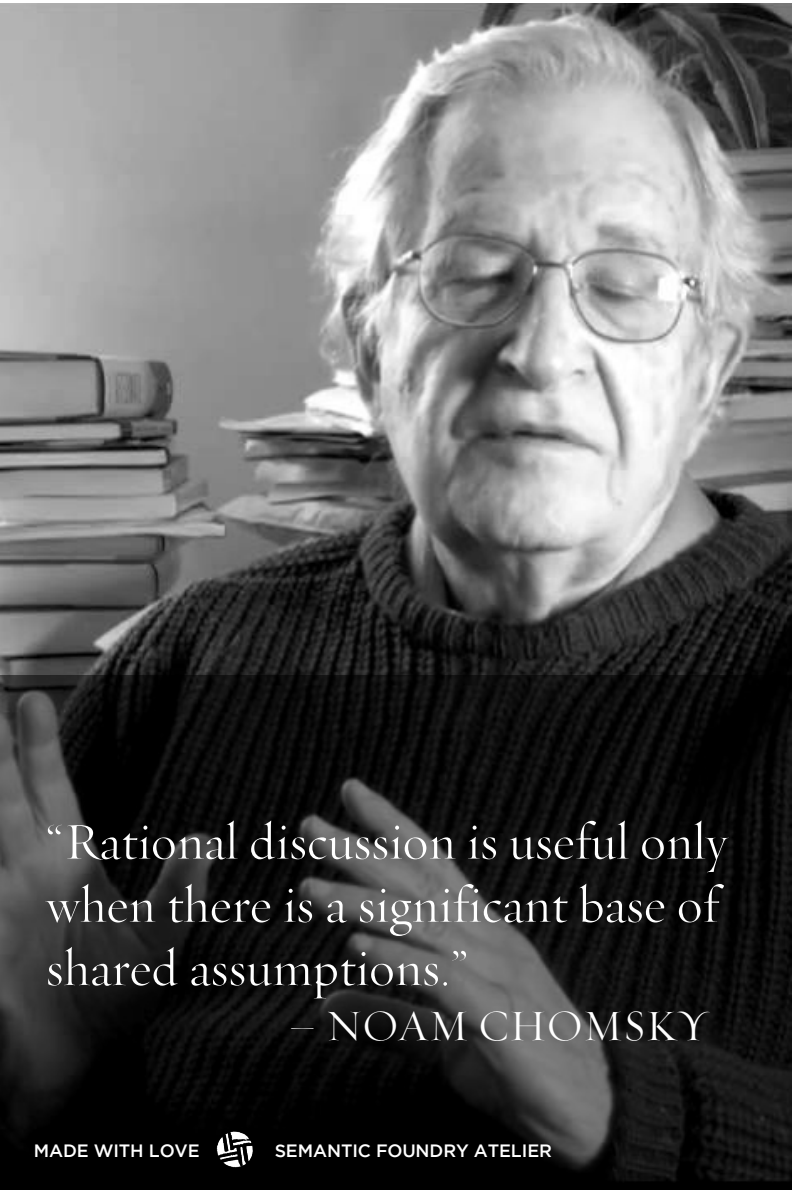
Empowering Agile Self-Organized  
Teams With Design Thinking

Hashtag: **#QConNewYork**  
**#EmpoweredTeams**

Twitter: **@semanticwill**



*Welcome*



“Rational discussion is useful only when there is a significant base of shared assumptions.”

– NOAM CHOMSKY

## ASSUMPTIONS

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- » **We all exist and work within complex social systems.**
- » **We are all responsible for the design, development, and maintenance of purposeful systems.**
- » **Before you can design an amazing customer experience, you must design a team to create the customer experience.**
- » **To build a great team, you must have an organization design that enables teams to design great customer experiences.**
- » **The most acute constraint organizations currently face is that their organizational design is incongruent with their strategy; places to many policies, procedures, reporting lines, and queues between the teams delivering great experiences for their customers.**

# Things That Suck

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Releases suck.

Quality sucks.

Change management sucks.

Morale sucks.

Death marches suck.

Moral dilemmas suck.

Firefighting sucks.





*“People are already doing their best; the problems are with the system. Only management can change the system.”*

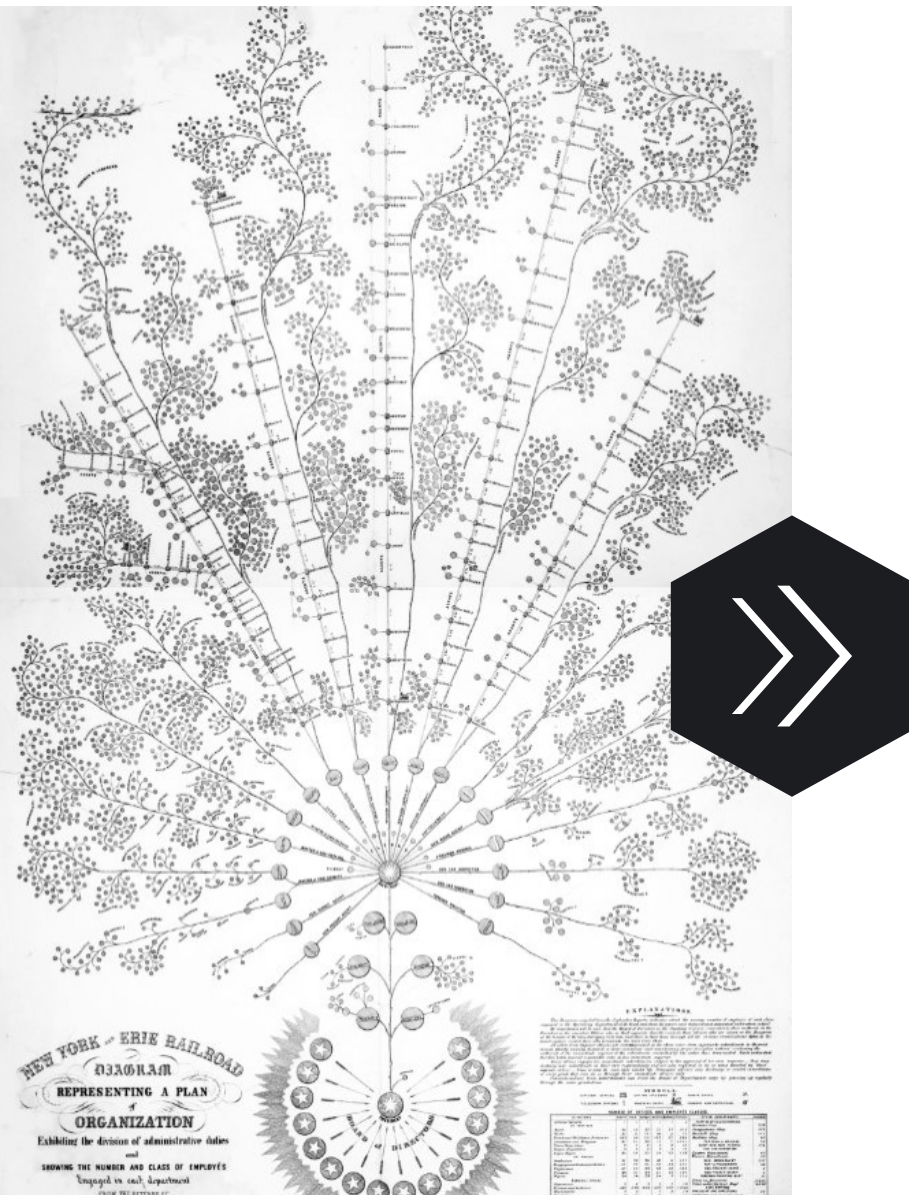
— W. EDWARDS DEMING

# WHAT IS *Organization Design?*

**There is no one best way to organize.**

“Organization design is conceived to be a decision process to bring about a coherence between the goals or purposes for which the organization exists, the patterns of division of labor and inter-unit coordination and the people who will do the work.”

— JAY GALBRAITH, ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN



“Organizations that operate from the authoritarian, hierarchical, command and control model, where the top leaders control the work, information, decisions, and allocation of resources, produce employees that are less empowered, less creative, and less reductive.”

– Creativity and Innovation: The Leadership Dynamics. Journal of Strategic Studies

# Command & Control

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- Isn't just a mindset and a style of management (though it is both those things).
- Command and Control is traditionally about setting targets and ensuring compliance (to the process).
- It is a way of making or delegating decisions through the organizational structure.
- **Traditionally, managers have power....**  
(to bound, constrain, decide, structure, monitor, reward, punish)

*and that power comes from different sources.*



“I’m sad to report that in the past few years, ever since uncertainty became our insistent 21st century companion, leadership has taken a great leap backwards to the familiar territory of command and control.”

– MEG WHEATLEY

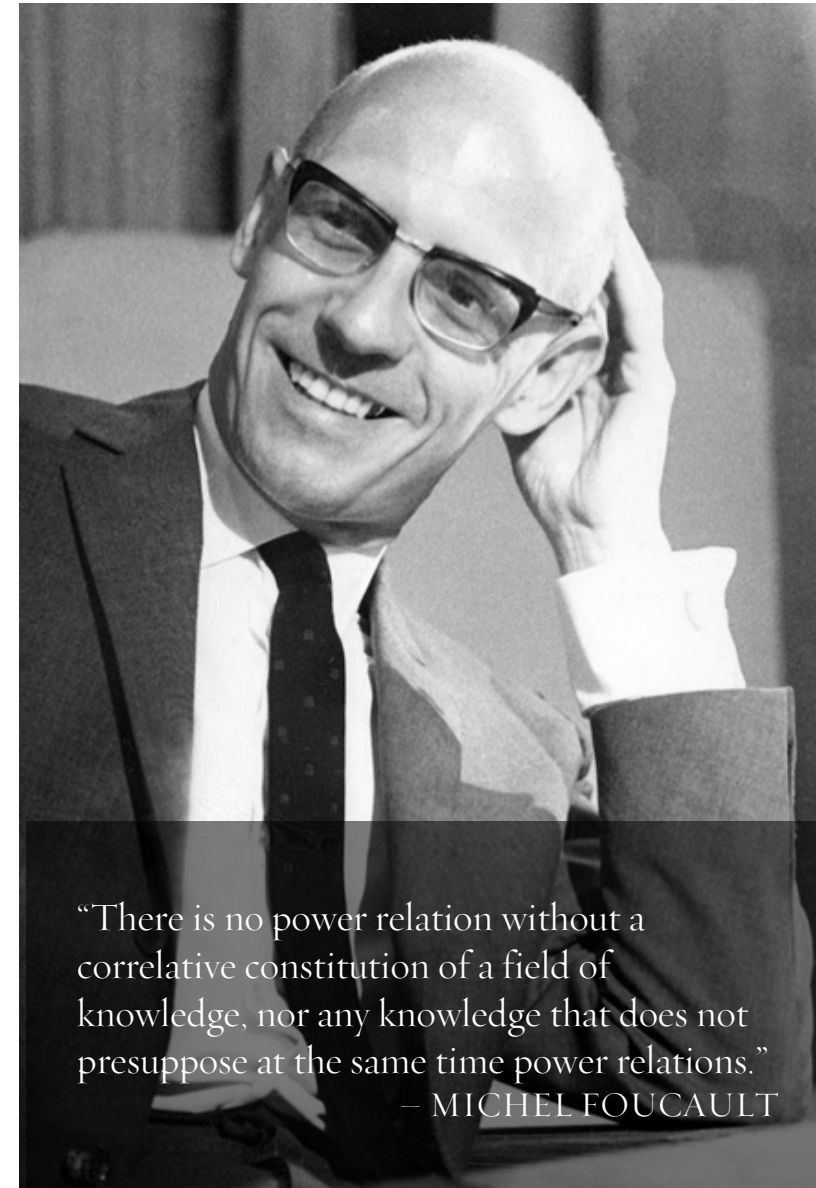


## 6 SOURCES OF *Power in Org Design*

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- **Legitimate Power:** formal authority in a hierarchy.
- **Expert Power:** possessing knowledge or expertise in a particular area.
- **Referent Power:** use and exercise of interpersonal relationships a person cultivates and social capital a person accumulates.
- **Coercive Power:** ability and willingness to influence others through threats, violence, or sanctions.
- **Reward Power:** ability to influence the allocation of incentives within an organization including pay, appraisals and promotions
- **Informational Power:** ability to control the flow of information and disinformation within a social group.

French, John R. and Raven, Bertram (1959) The Bases of Social Power. Studies in Social Power



“There is no power relation without a correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose at the same time power relations.”  
– MICHEL FOUCAULT



## *Designing for Empowerment Through Governance*

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**GOVERNANCE** is a process by which power is intentionally allocated across the organization.

Governance systems are how managers intentionally delegate decision-making vertically into the organization through hierarchy and policy, and establish decision rights horizontally across functions and business units. This becomes the structure of empowerment.

When power dynamics are not designed well, the result is prolonged decision-making, endless meetings, mindless email chains, misunderstanding, friction, failure, and death.



When those with more power in a group aren't needed to help with bounding, structuring, or deciding, **they need to get out of the way** so that the team can do what teams do best — share, discuss, and integrate diverse perspectives and knowledge to create value.

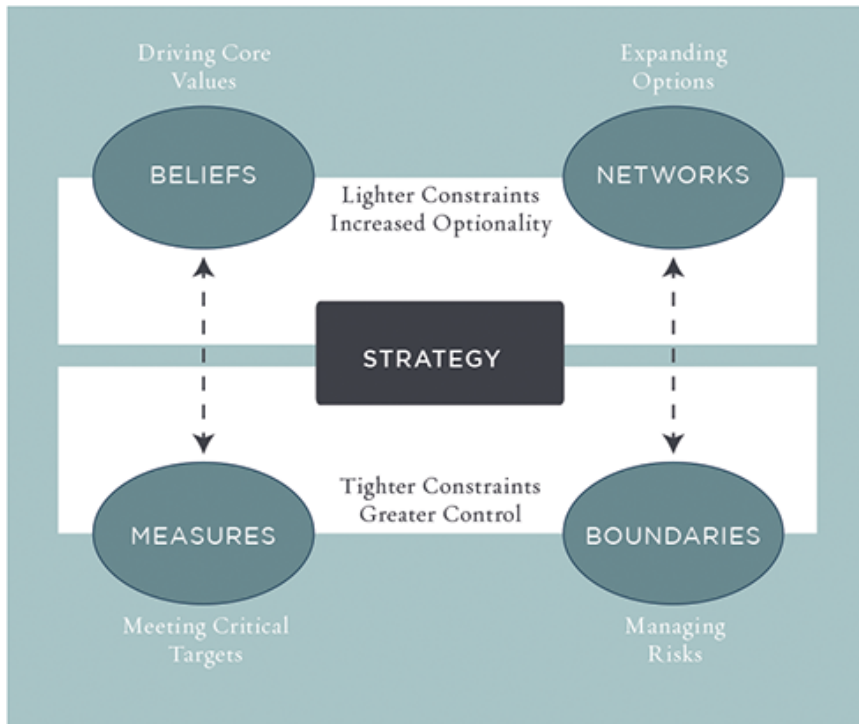


*“Self-organization is the spontaneous formation of interest groups and coalitions around specific issues, communication about those issues, cooperation and the formation of consensus on and commitment to those issues.”*

– RALPH STACEY

# CONSTRAINING ACTION

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Robert Simon's Four Levels of Control

The Four Levels of Control model (derived from Robert Simon's work) serves as a way for leaders to consciously make governance part of the organizational design process.


## The four levers are defined as:

1. Belief Systems, used to inspire and direct the search for new opportunities
2. Interactive Networks, used to stimulate organizational learning and the emergence of new ideas and strategies
3. Boundary Systems, used to set limits on opportunity seeking behavior
4. Measurements, used to monitor and reward achievement of specific goals.

## Defining Empowerment

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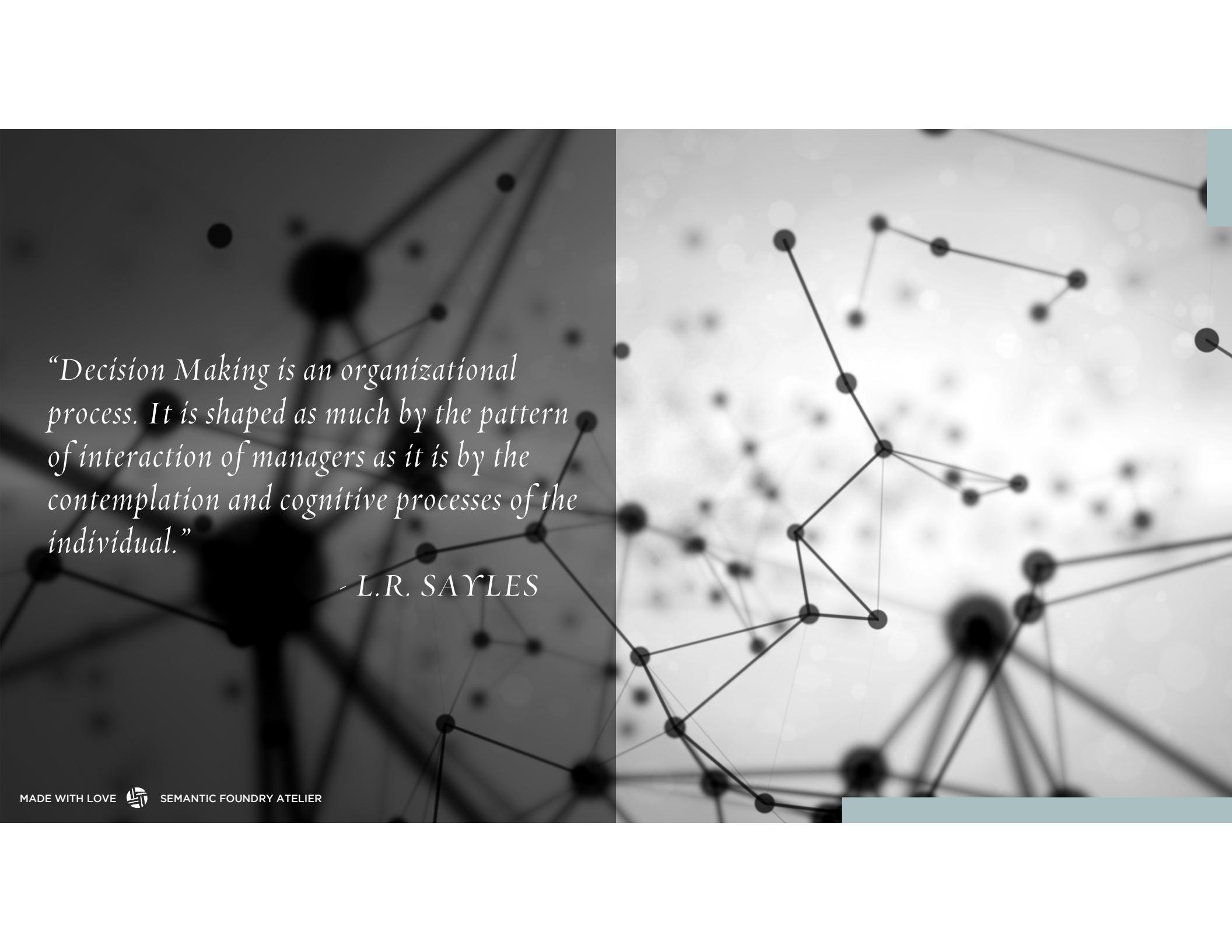
When management tells a group of people they are empowered, it means those people *have the power to make a set of decisions* without their managers second-guessing them.



*“Teams need leaders who don’t need to be out in front, who are able to work quietly, creating an environment where everyone on the team is empowered to make decisions.”*

– ESTHER DERBY



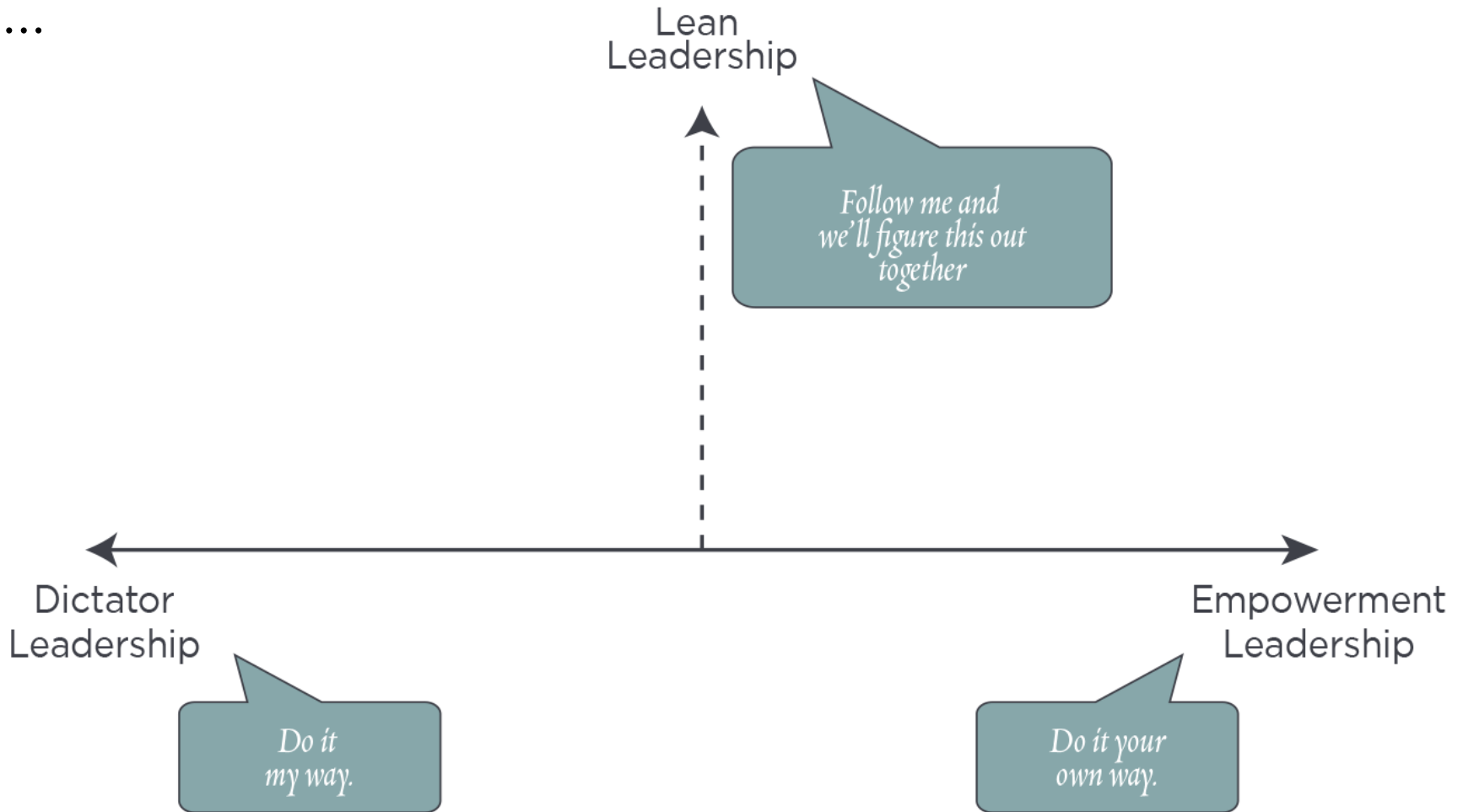


*“Decision Making is an organizational process. It is shaped as much by the pattern of interaction of managers as it is by the contemplation and cognitive processes of the individual.”*

*- L.R. SAYLES*

# The Leadership Continuum

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# The “Dictator”

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## What happens when we tell people what to do?

- We deprive them of the opportunity to think.
- You take the responsibility away from them.
- They might do it (and you might be wrong).
- Probably farthest from the work (or problem).
- Farthest from the customer.
- Least capable of ‘doing’ the actual work.

*In employee surveys, people will say they “aren’t empowered” and will give leadership low scores in collaboration and engagement.*

# The “Hippie”

.....

## What happens when we provide results targets & disappear?

- Sub-optimization (or local optimization)
- Waste resources / Thrashing
- Only short term benefits (if any)
- Loss of direction, control, potential synergies
- Risk-shifting
- Fratricide
- Blame-bombing

*In employee surveys, people will say there is no clear strategy, water cooler conversation tends towards whispers, calendars are completely booked.*

# A Lean Leader

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- Clarifies the **vision** and intent. (Why and What!)
- Articulates **boundaries**.
- **Distributes decision rights**.
- **Models** right behavior.
- Creates **Trust**.
- Favors **Safe-to-Fail** Experiments over Fail-Safe Solutions

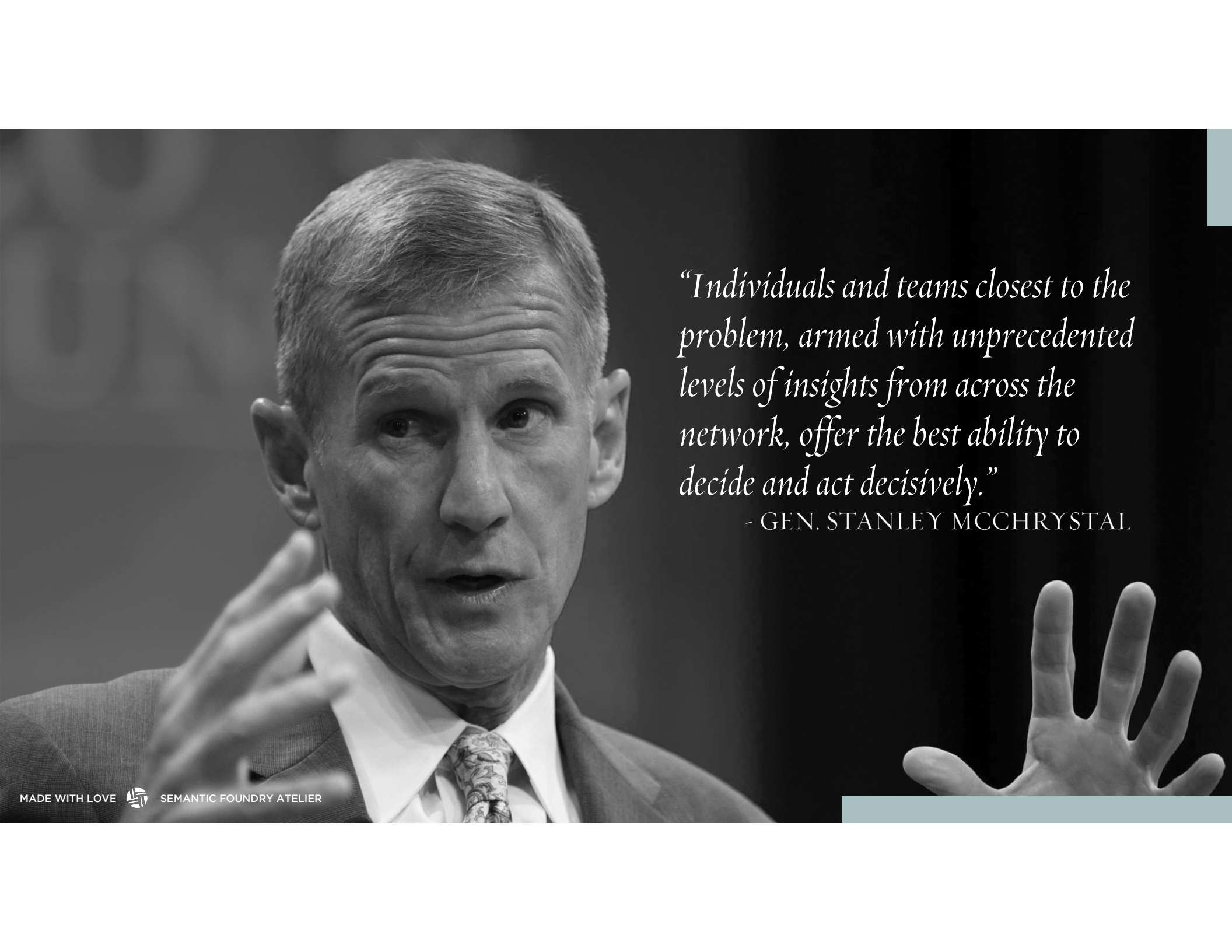


# Trust is bottom-up

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**Trust starts with the individual. Here is a shortlist of what people need to feel confident to enjoy their work:**

1. **Responsibility:** A person needs to feel confident they have the skills to undertake their responsibility and that they won't be asked to do something they think is undoable.
2. **Safety:** A person needs to feel physically and psychologically safe, which means they shouldn't have to worry about being suddenly "attacked" by either co-workers or management.
3. **Progress:** A person needs to find an interest in the job, see how it is useful and meaningful and slightly challenging, as well as a clear path to personal progress in the organization.
4. **Control:** Some degree of control over one's environment and skills is essential for humans to feel confident and good about the three previous points.



*“Individuals and teams closest to the problem, armed with unprecedented levels of insights from across the network, offer the best ability to decide and act decisively.”*

- GEN. STANLEY MCCHRYSTAL

# CASE STUDY

An agile transformation in infrastructure engineering.



The business\* said to IT:

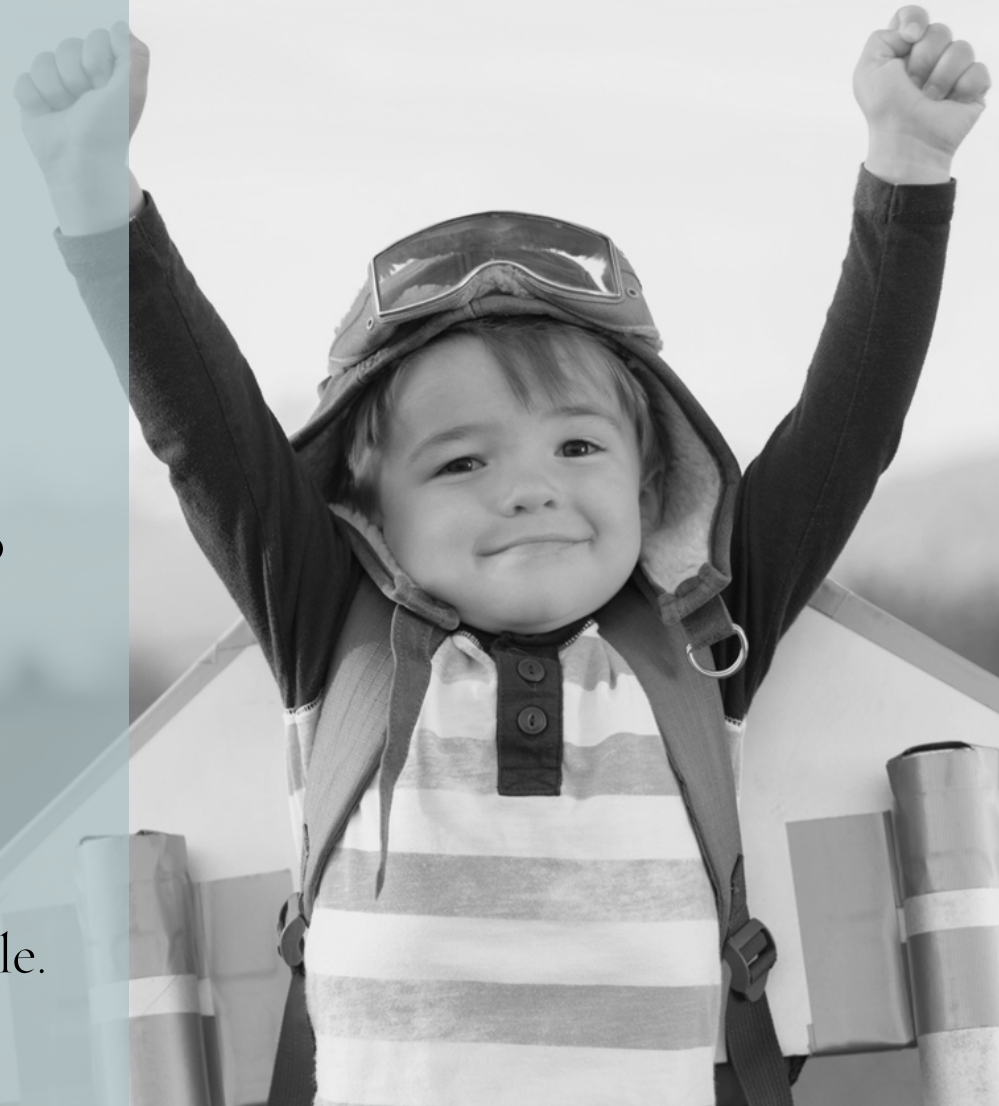
“You deliver last years tech,  
in **twice** the time,  
for **three times** the price,  
and a **fraction** of the value!”

\* A Fortune 50 Pharmaceutical Company



## Six weeks later...

- Reduce the lead time for delivering enterprise services **from 9 months to days, and most cases, hours.**
- Unplanned work dropped from 64% to 28% of capacity.
- Business satisfaction increased by 72%
- The infrastructure engineering team **began the journey** from waterfall to agile.



HOW DID THEY DO THAT?



# Six Weeks to Flow

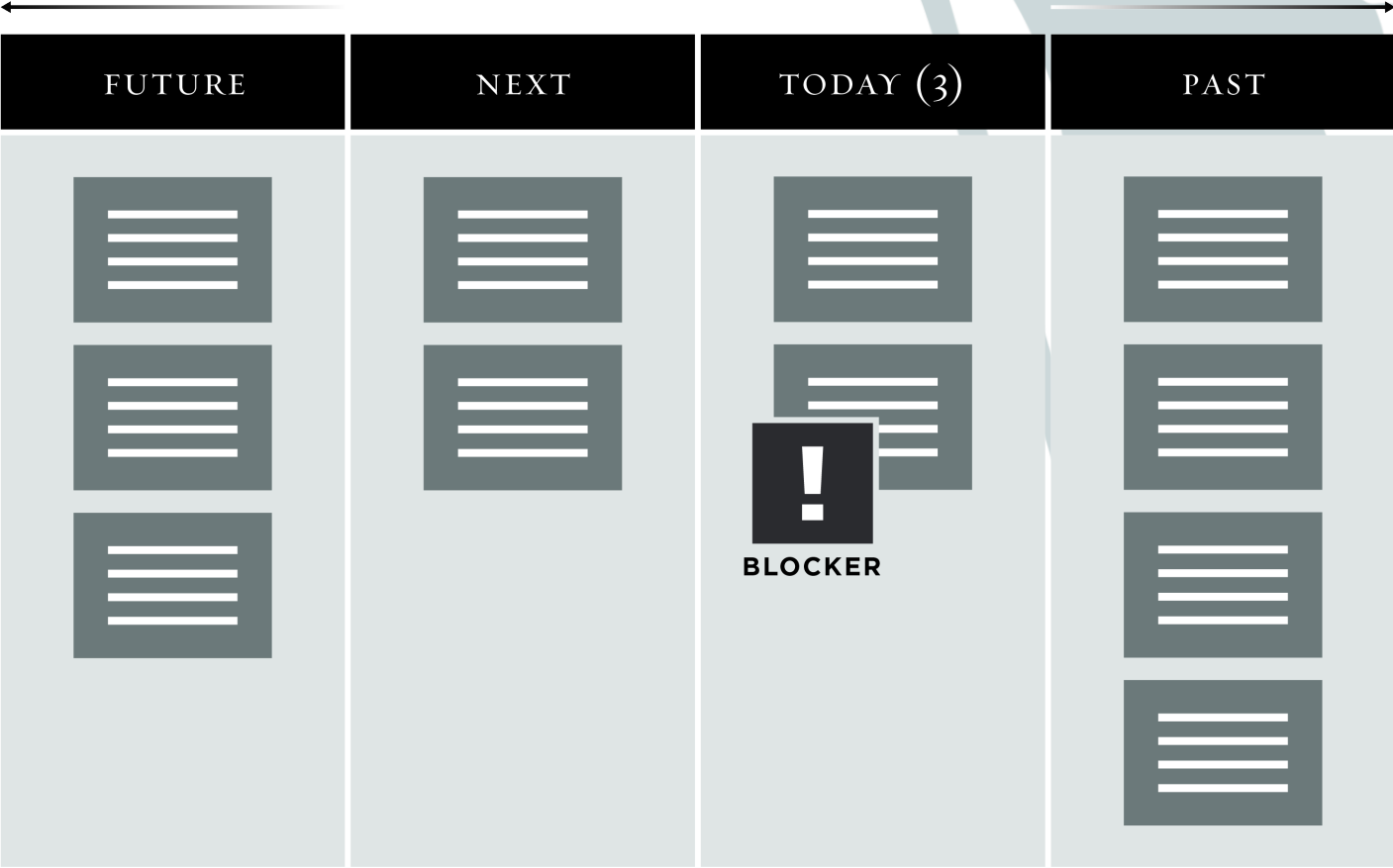
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1. Create a **Kanban** (this was harder than you think!)
2. Visualize all the work in the team
3. Map the value stream
4. Identify all the steps and waste (*approvals/handoffs/rework*)
5. Talk to the users!
6. Talk to the stakeholders (*this includes compliance, security, finance*)
7. Design Studio new processes!
8. Prototype, Test, Measure, Learn
9. Build MVS (Minimum Viable Enterprise Service)
10. Iterate, Test, Measure, Learn, Iterate, Repeat



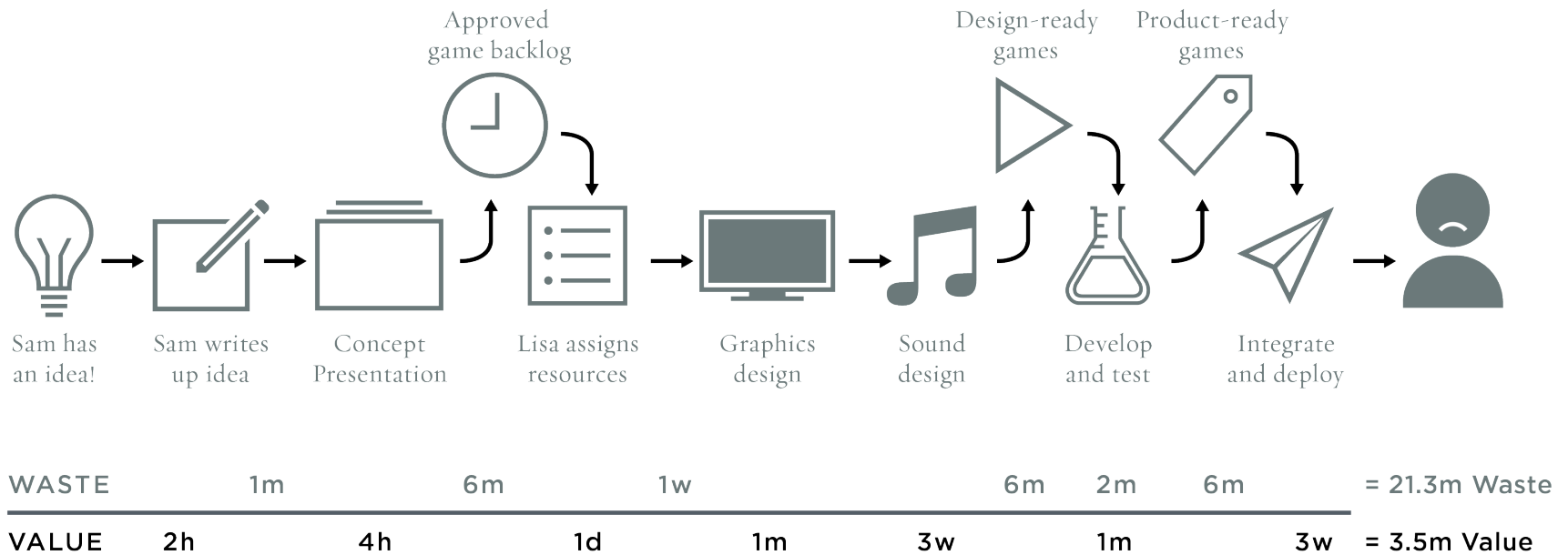
# Visualize the Work

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# Map End-to-End Flow

One way to evaluate the end-to-end workflow through your system is to draw a process flow map - *also known as a value stream map* - of the end-to-end flow of a product or a customer problem as it makes its way through your organization.



**PROCESS CYCLE EFFICENCY =  $3.5 / (21.3 + 3.5) = 14\%$**

# Value Stream Maps

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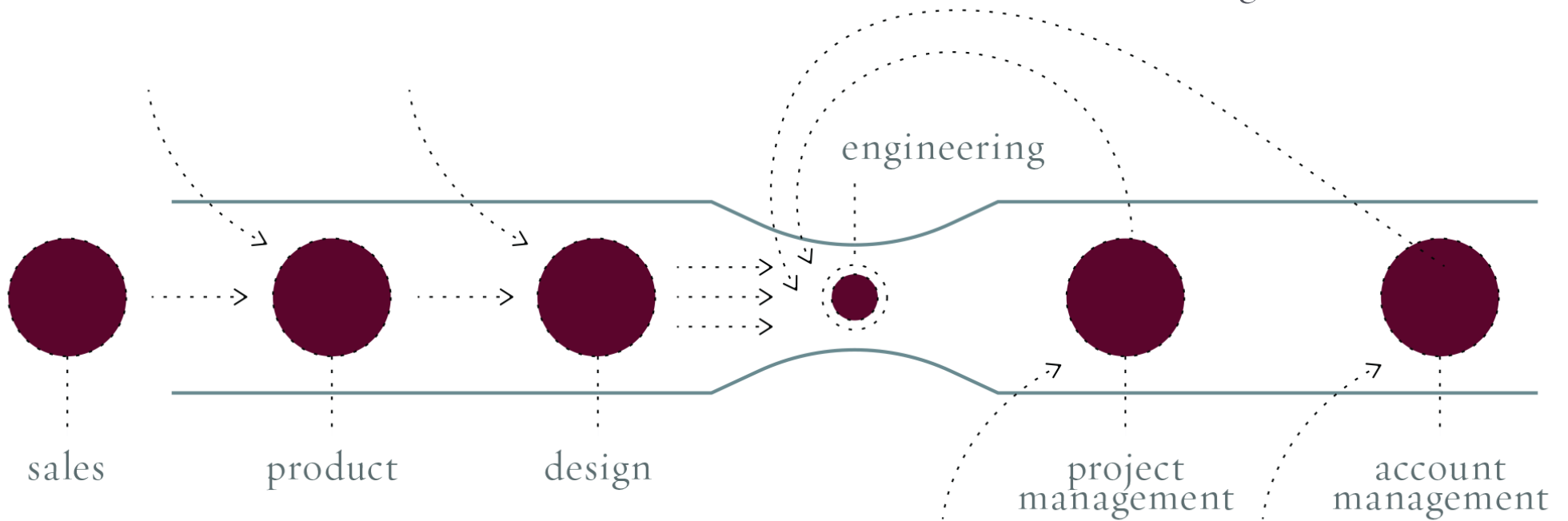
There are two reasons for drawing these maps:

1. Discover the reasons for failure demand, so it can be eliminated
2. Find waste in the system; waste includes:
  1. Queues
  2. Unnecessary approvals
  3. Returns and rework

Remember, all time spent handling failure demand is waste. It is better to map the process that creates the failure in the first place, than to map and improve the process that handles the failure demand.

# OVERBURDENING DISEMPOWERS

“Every system is perfectly designed to get the result that it does.”  
— W. Edwards Deming

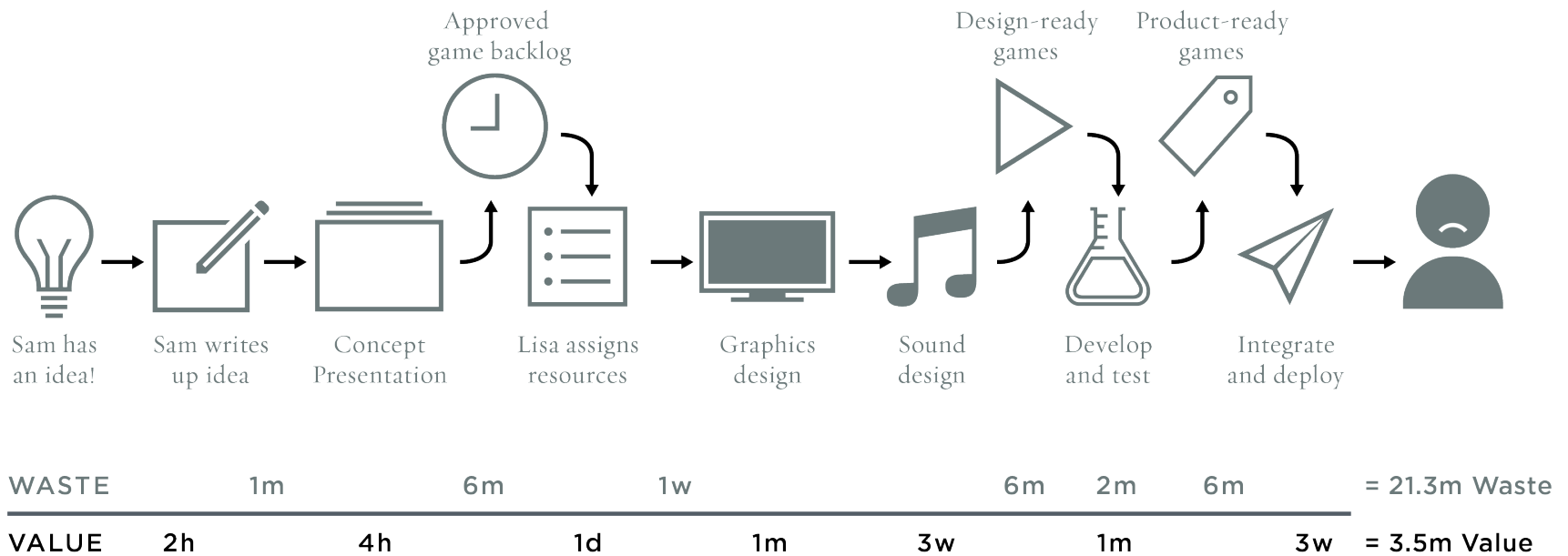


Adding more capacity upstream or downstream of the bottleneck will make things worse, not better. Try to “improve” any other point but the bottleneck, and you’ve made the whole system significantly worse.



# Identify Waste

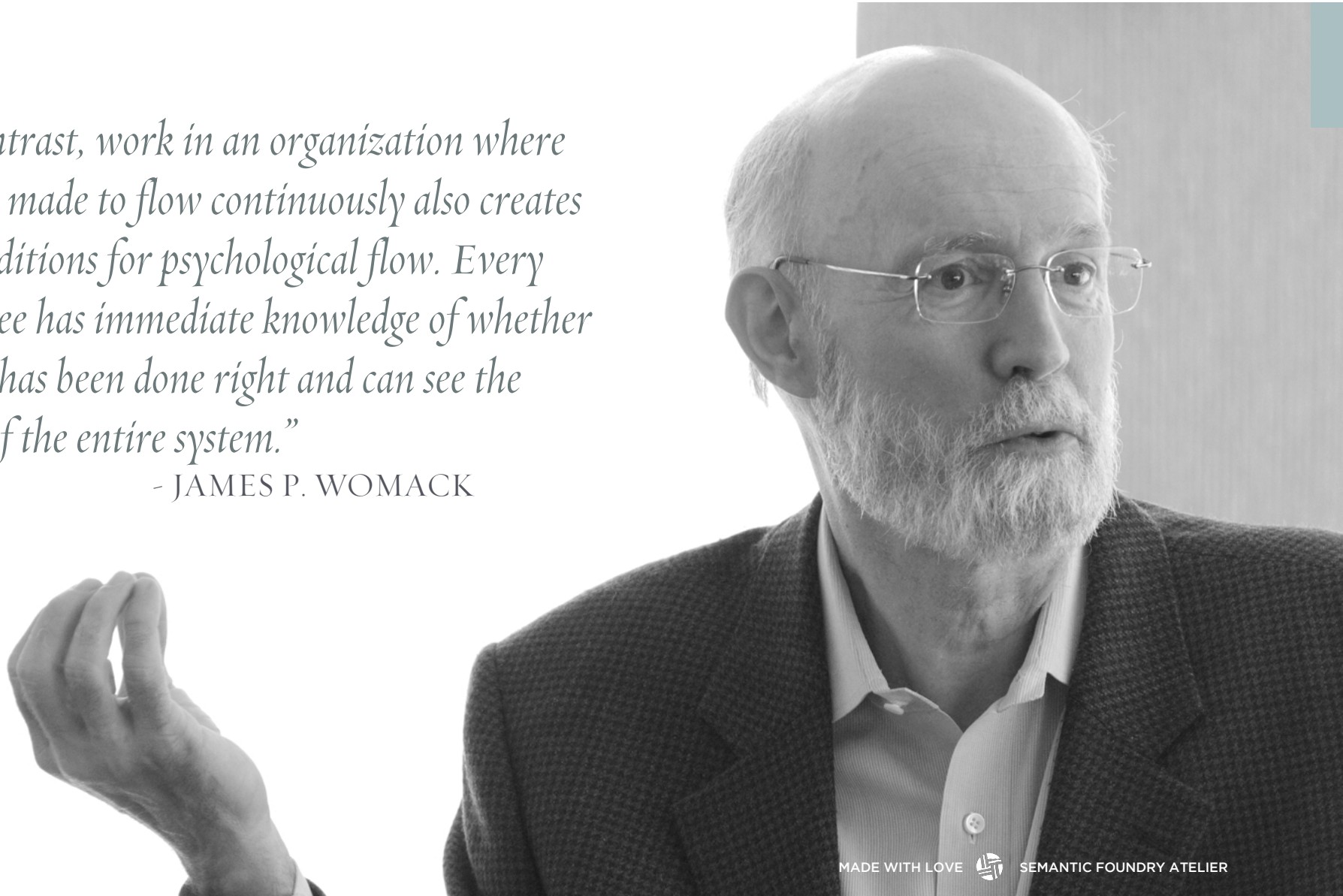
A **value stream map** is a diagram of the end-to-end flow of value-creating activities through your process; its purpose is to help you understand and improve the flow of value value through your system.



$$\text{PROCESS CYCLE EFFICIENCY} = 3.5 / (21.3 + 3.5) = 14\%$$

*“By contrast, work in an organization where value is made to flow continuously also creates the conditions for psychological flow. Every employee has immediate knowledge of whether the job has been done right and can see the status of the entire system.”*

- JAMES P. WOMACK





*Leaning into*  
Design Thinking



**Design Thinking** begins with an open approach to the people, the problem, and the possibilities involved in creating innovative solutions in complex adaptive systems.

*“In practice it combines empathy to enable deep understanding and reframing of a problem in context, divergence to generate insights and solutions; visualization and prototyping to document, connect and test ideas, and rationality to analyze and assess the solutions outcome.”*

- TIM BROWN, IDEO

1987



**Design Thinking**

Peter G. Rowe

The MIT Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
London, England

1992

**Richard Buchanan**

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Wicked Problems in Design Thinking

This essay is based on a paper presented at "Colloque Recherches sur le Design: Incitations, Implications, Interactions," the first French university symposium on design research held October 1990 at l'Université de Technologie de Compiègne, Compiègne, France.

**Introduction**

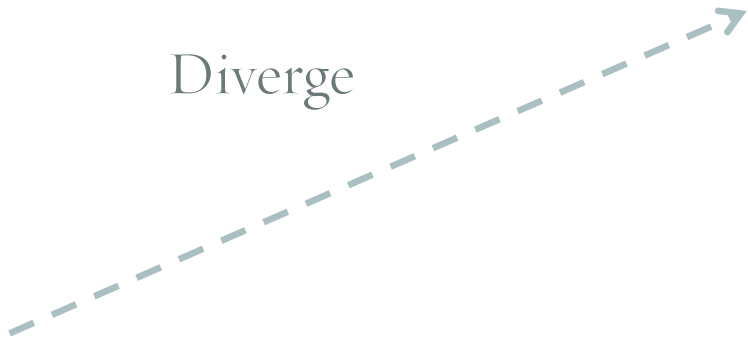
Despite efforts to discover the foundations of design thinking in the fine arts, the natural sciences, or most recently, the social sciences, design eludes reduction and remains a surprisingly flexible activity. No single definition of design, or branches of professionalized practice such as industrial or graphic design, adequately covers the diversity of ideas and methods gathered together under the label. Indeed, the variety of research reported in conference papers, journal articles, and books suggests that design continues to expand in its meanings and connections, revealing unexpected dimensions in practice as well as understanding. This follows the trend of design thinking in the twentieth century, for we have seen design grow from a *trade activity* to a *segmented profession* to a *field for technical research* and to what now should be recognized as a new *liberal art of technological culture*.

It may seem unusual to talk about design as a liberal art, particularly when many people are accustomed to identifying the liberal arts with the traditional "arts and sciences" that are institutionalized in colleges and universities. But the liberal arts are undergoing a revolutionary transformation in twentieth-century culture, and design is one of the areas in which this transformation

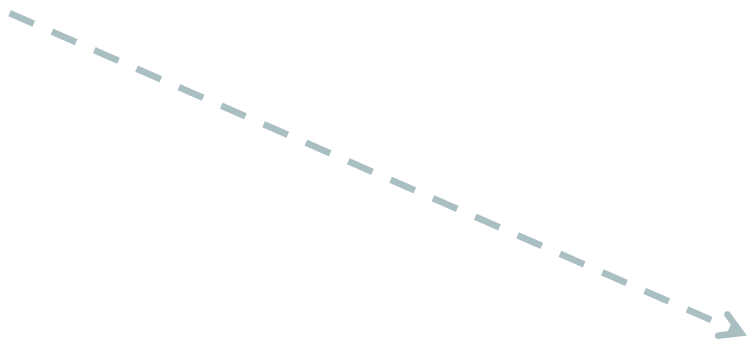
# Divergence/Convergence

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Diverge



CREATE OPTIONS



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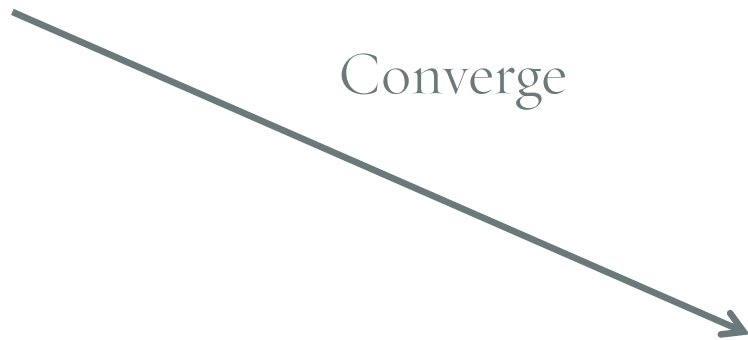
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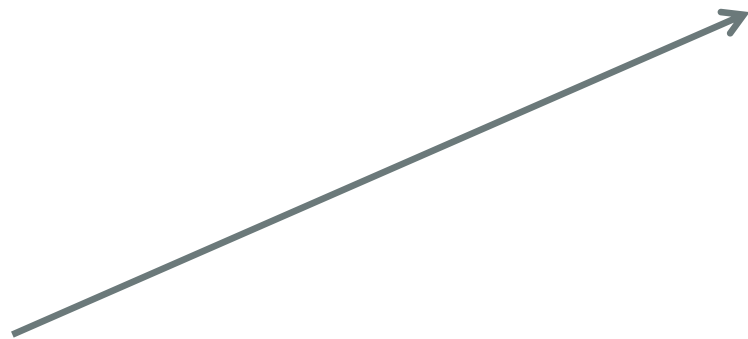
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Converge



MAKE CHOICES



# Design Thinking Mindsets

## Exploration

*We have problems*

What is the context?

Who is impacted?

Where is the value?

## Ideation

*I have an opportunity for design*

How do I make sense of the data?

What are our options?

What experiments could I run?

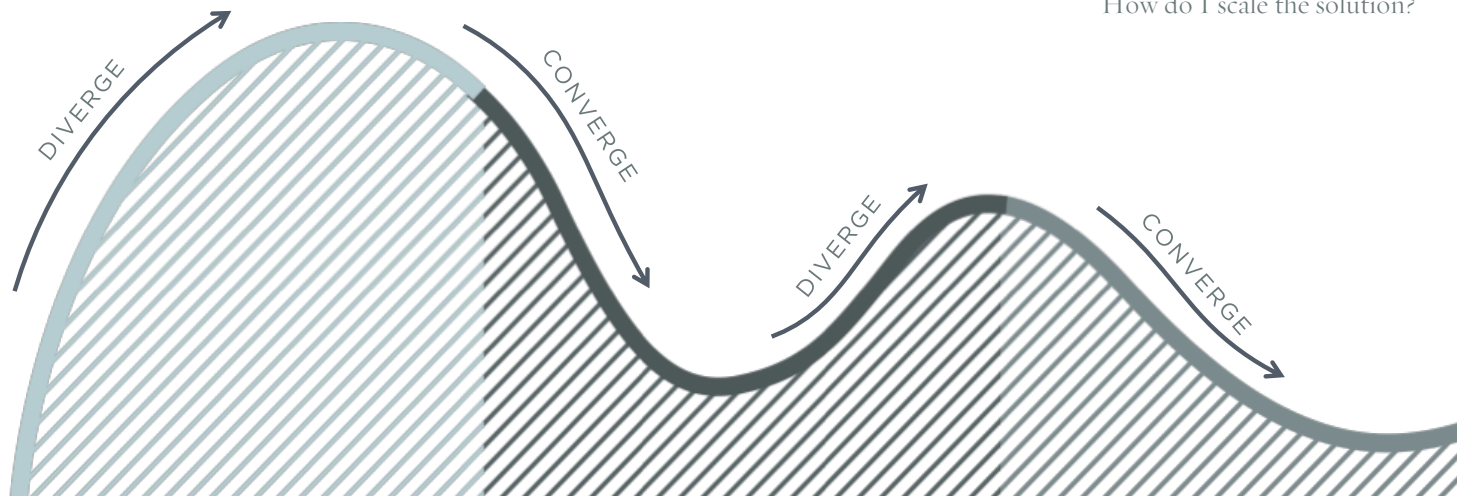
## Experimentation

*I have an interesting solution*

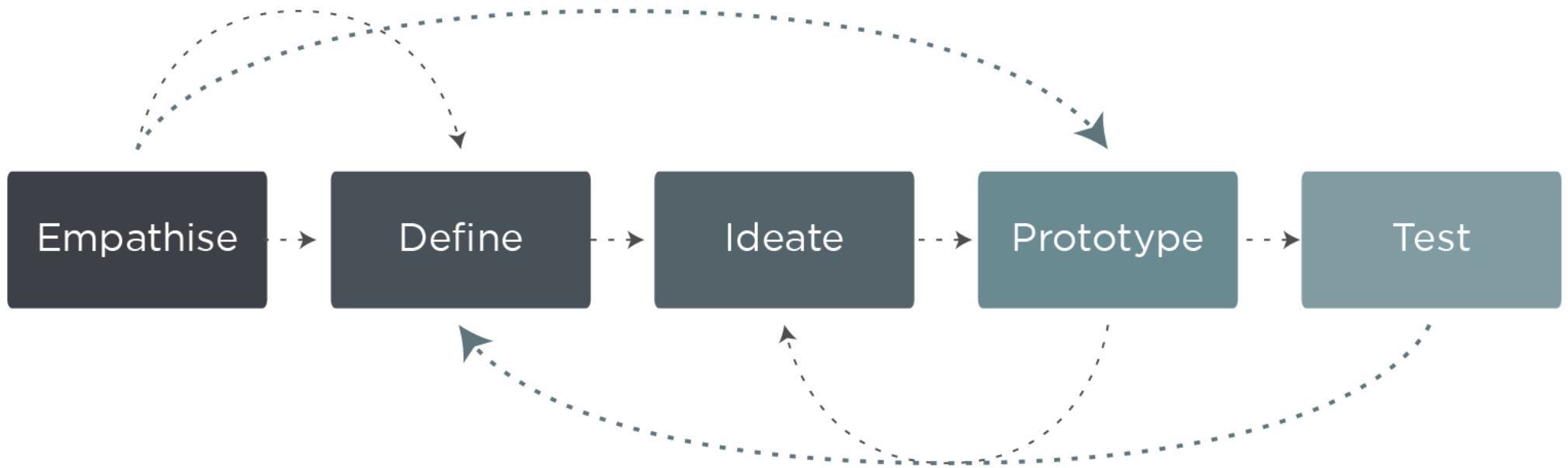
What is the smallest experiment I could run?

How will we know things are getting better?

How do I scale the solution?

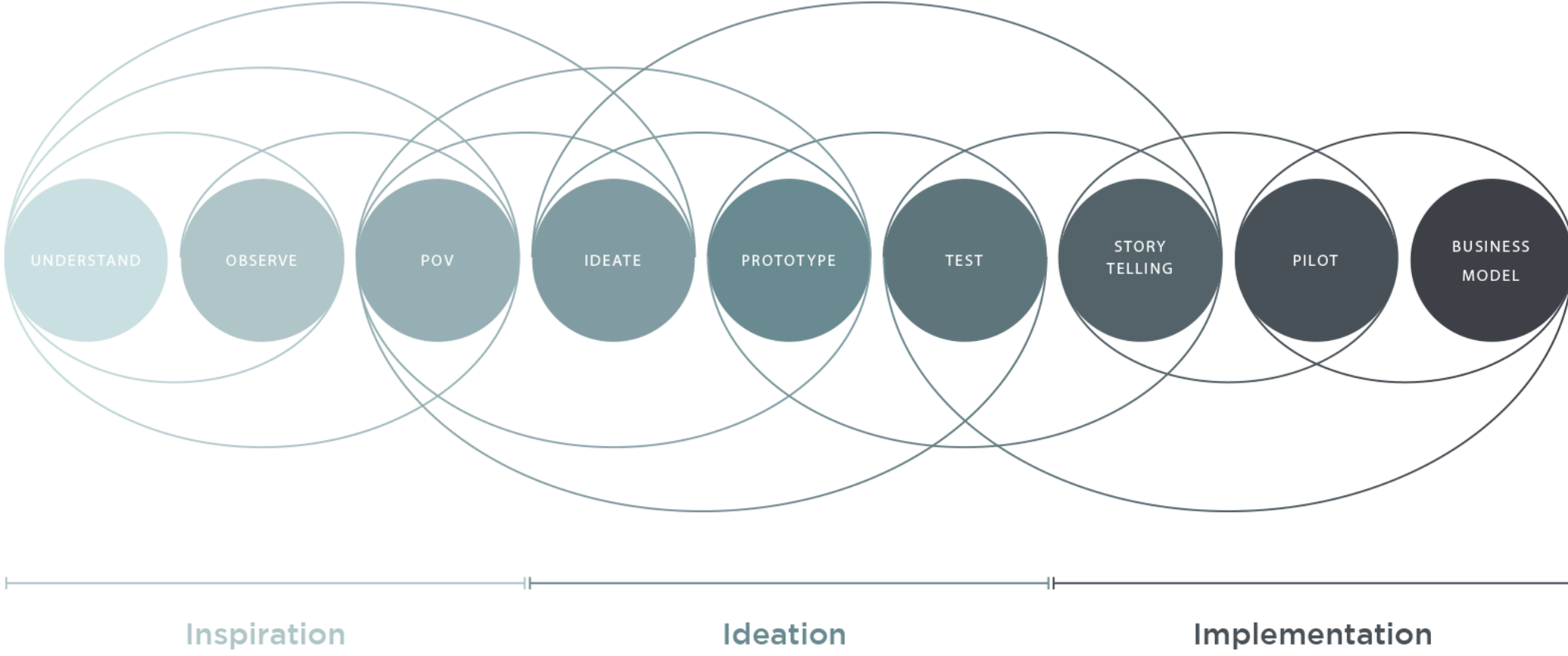


# A Simple 5 Stage Model

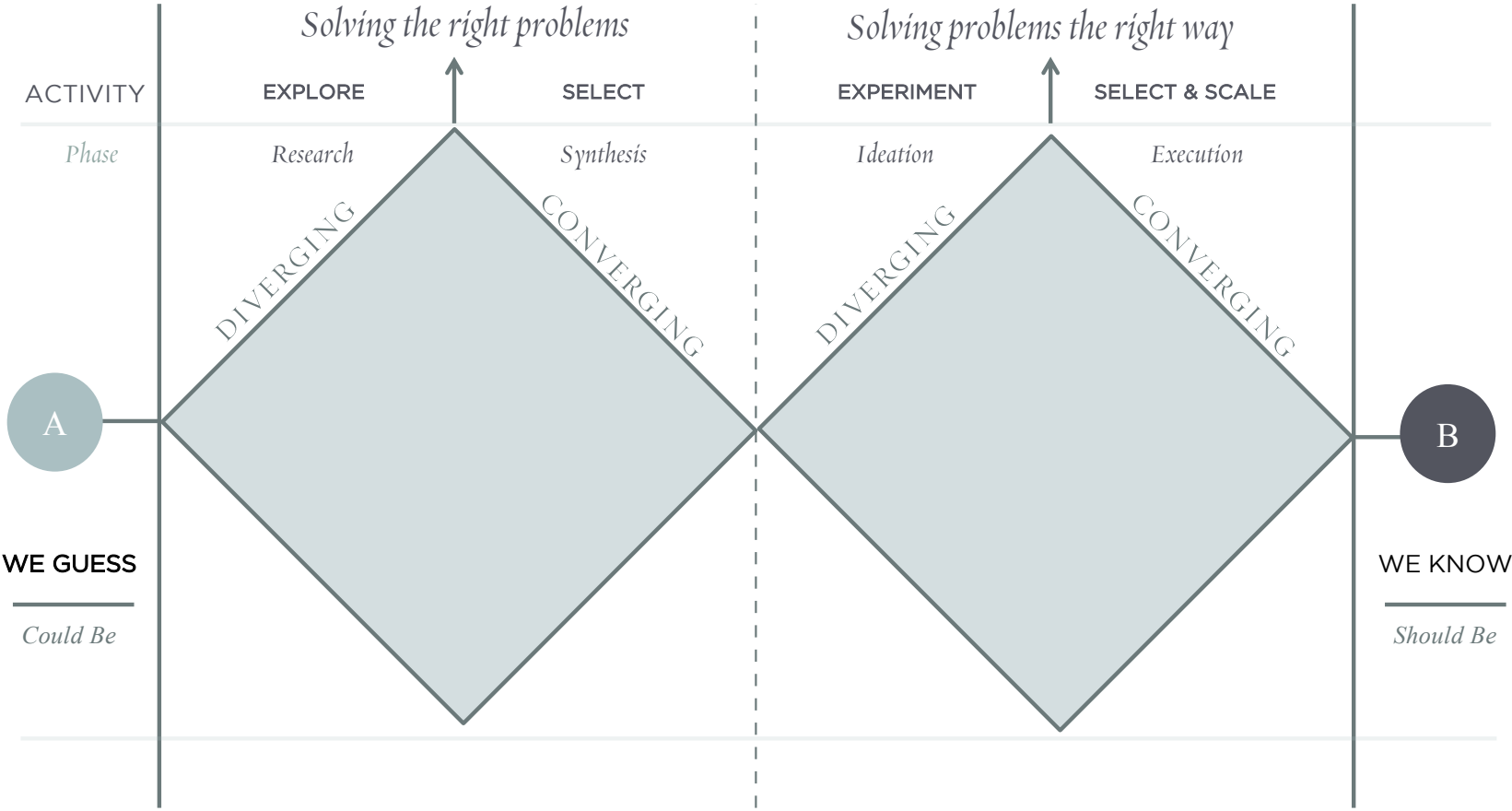




# The Design Thinking Process



# Double Diamond Model



# On Problems

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“A problem well stated is mostly solved.”

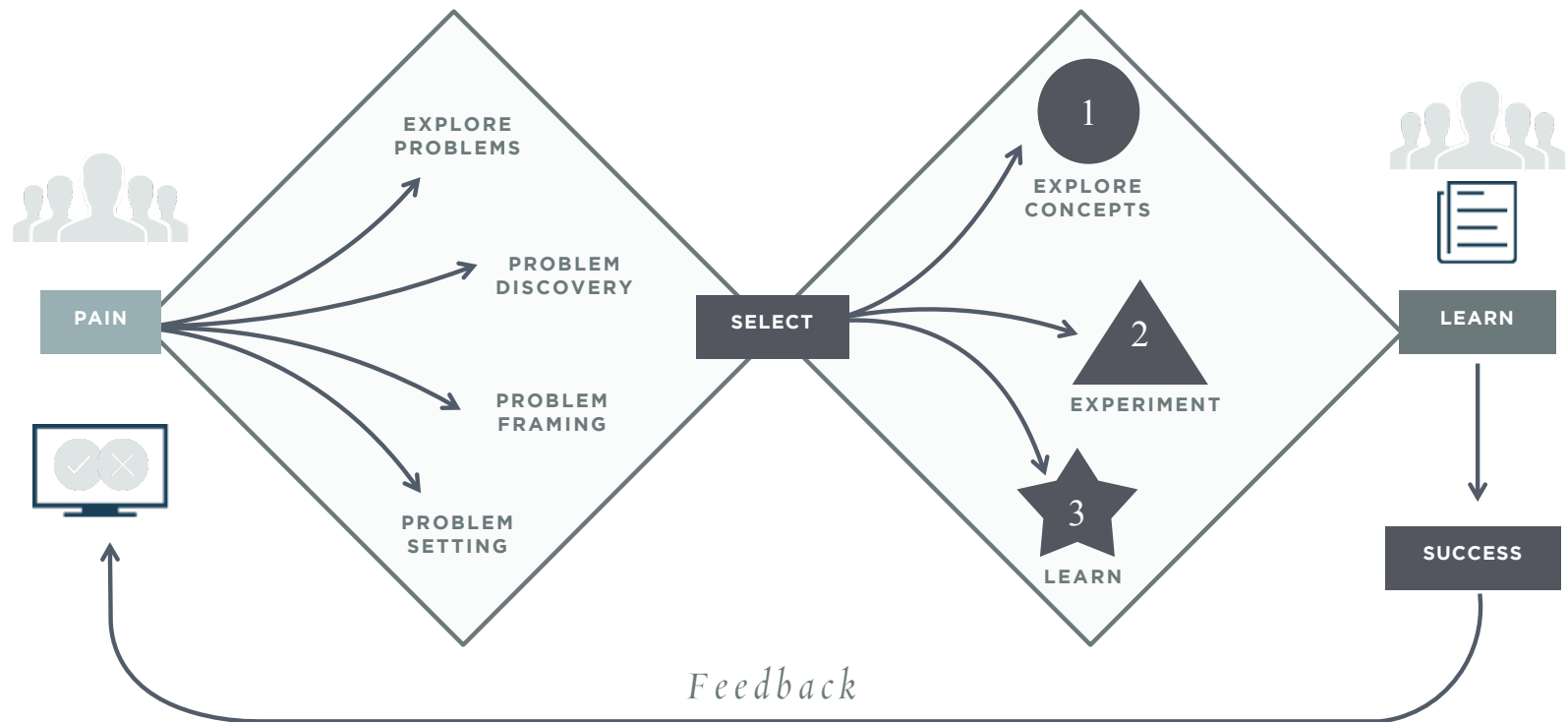
— CHARLES KETTERING

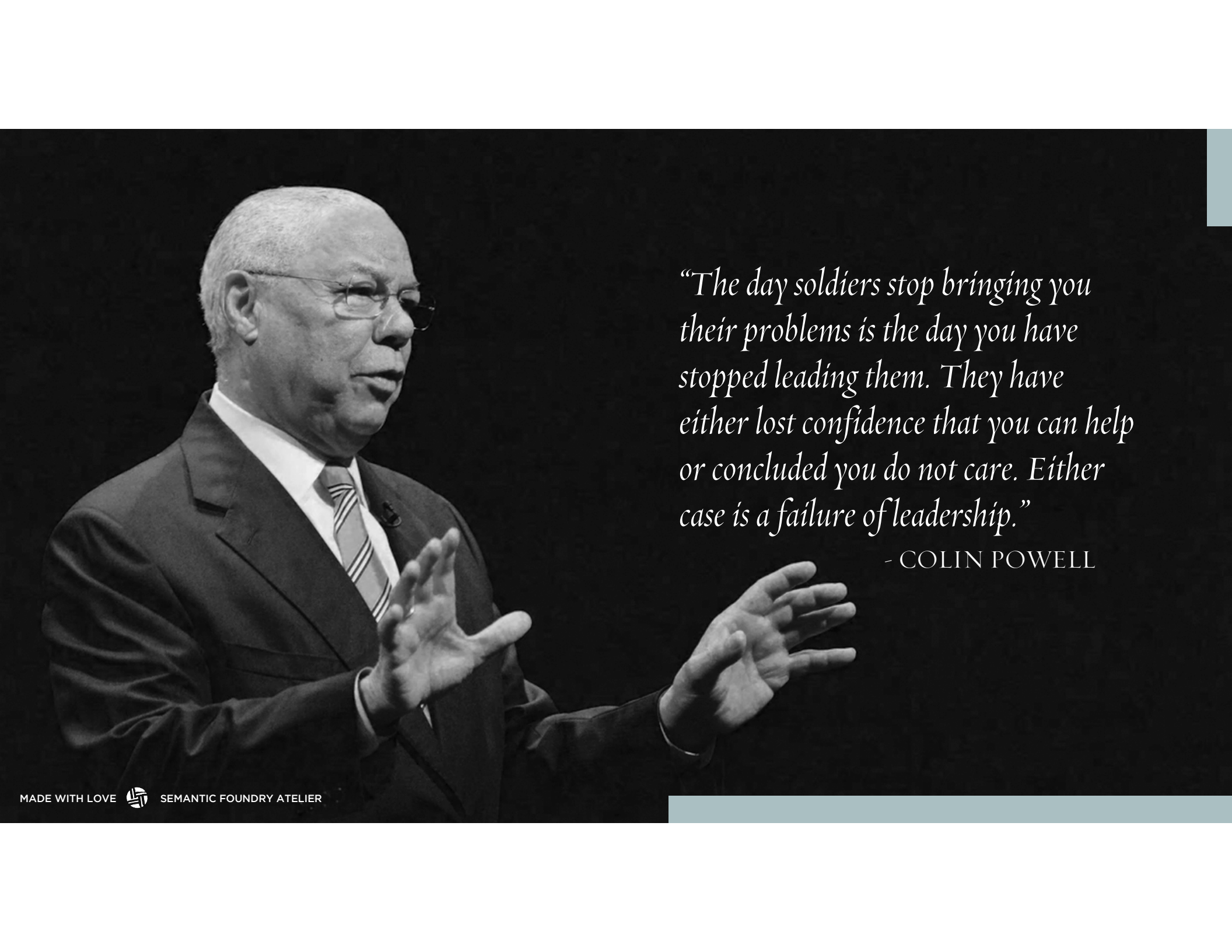
*The problem is that stating a problem well is really hard.*

Just as our cognitive default is to see and try to solve symptoms, not their underlying causes, our brains normally jump to solutions as well instead of framing and stating a problem clearly.



# Double Diamond Model





*“The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”*

- COLIN POWELL

# Empathy for Users

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Empathy — it's a buzzword in the CX (customer experience) design world.

Empathy requires us to put aside our learning, culture, knowledge, opinions, and worldview purposefully in order to understand other peoples' experiences of things deeply and meaningfully.

# Practiced Empathy

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1. **Abandon Your Ego.** It really isn't all about you.
2. **Adopt Humility.** You really don't know more than you think.
3. **Active Listening.** Stop waiting to talk, and actually hear what people are saying.
4. **Observation.** 93% of communication is non-verbal. See what people are saying.
5. **Care.** You need to actually be driven by a need to make things better for others.
6. **Be Curious.** Surface explanations never uncover the complex web of meanings and causes.
7. **Be Sincere.** Your intentions must be transparent, and your mindset open.

Z E N



A R T

of MOTORCYCLE  
MAINTENANCE

— an inquiry into values —

ROBERT M. PIRSIG

# Collaboration

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Collaboration is the cooperative behavior of a team **empowered** to solve *clear and meaningful problems*.

The capabilities, frames, and subjective experiences of the team are leveraged in addition to the collection of individual skills (practices) to both solve the problems – and deliver value.





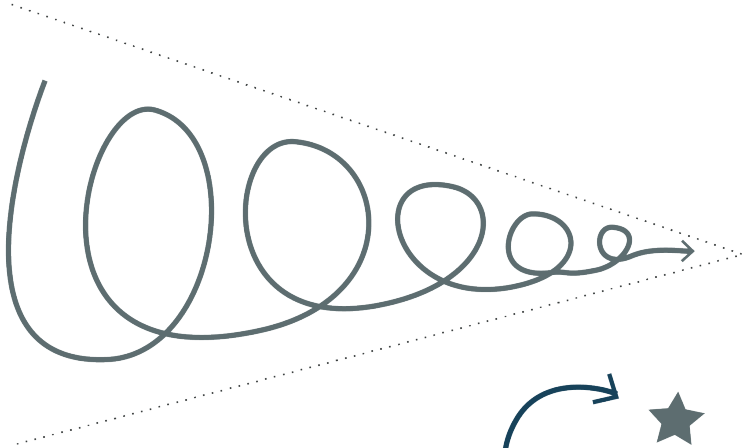
# Design Studio Process



1. Framing the Problem
2. Solo Ideation (Silent, 8 Concepts)  
*5 minutes*
3. Generative Critique (Yes, and...)  
*5 minutes*
4. Steal & Integrate
5. Solo Ideation (Silent, 1 Concept, 5 minutes)  
*5 minutes*
6. Critique  
*5 Minutes*
7. Solo Ideation (1 Concept, 10 minutes)
8. Transference & Seeding
9. Synthesis (Team Design, 1 Concept)  
*30 minutes*
10. Ritual Dissent (Only Negative)  
*10 Minutes*
11. Active Decision Making  
(Ignore, Innovate, Remove, Best Practice)  
*10 Minutes*
12. Kill Your Babies
13. Final Design, Ritual Assent  
*60 minutess*

# Value of Options

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BEST SOLUTION  
IS MISSED



REFINE  
FROM HERE



*Solving the right problems*

*Solving problems the right way*

ACTIVITY

EXPLORE

SELECT

EXPERIMENT

SELECT & SCALE

*Phase*

*Research*

*Synthesis*

*Ideation*

*Execution*

DIVERGING

CONVERGING

DIVERGING

CONVERGING

A

B

WE GUESS

WE KNOW

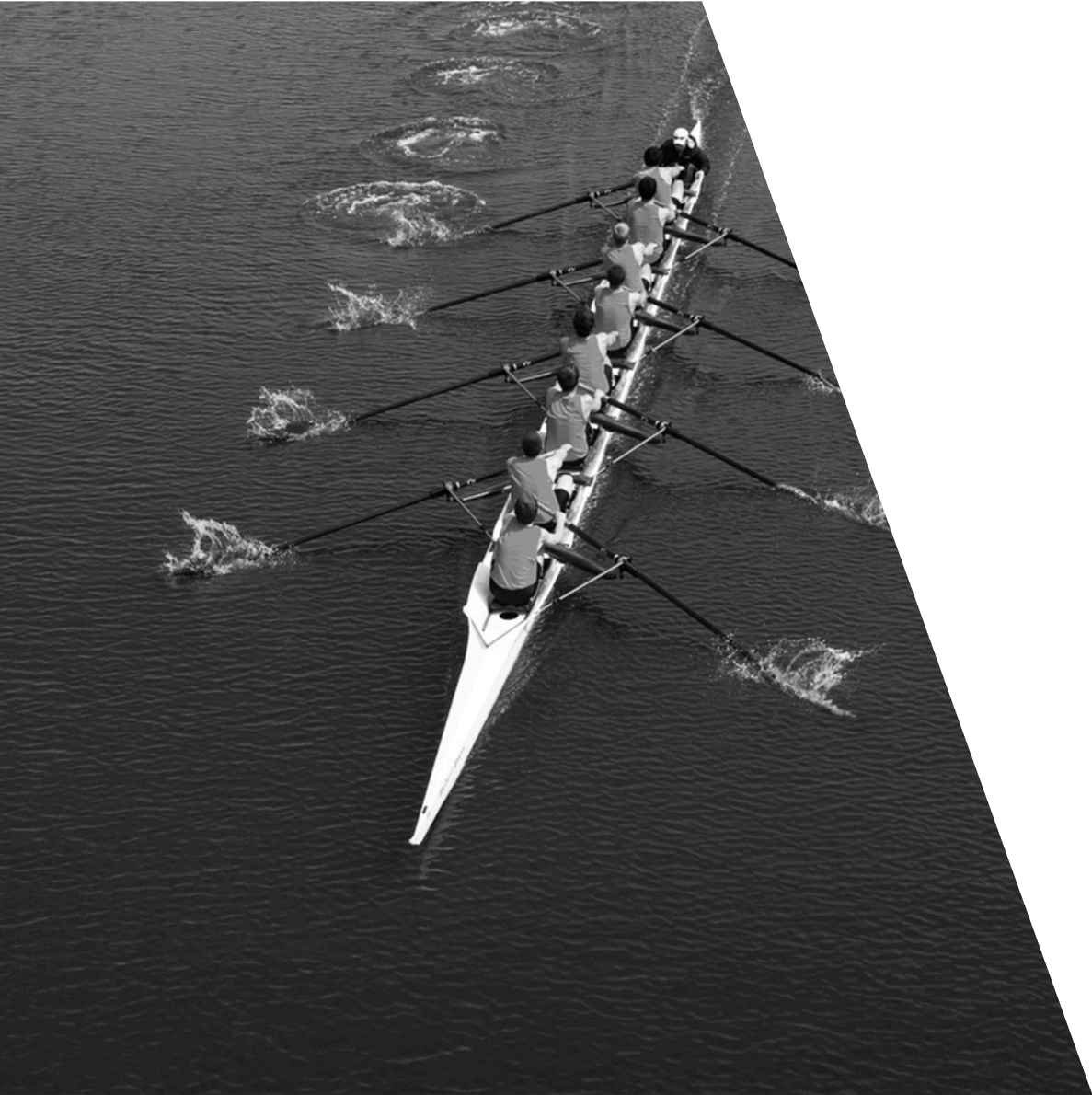
*Could Be*

*Should Be*

# Final Thoughts

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- Self-organizing teams still need a vision and a goal.
- Boundaries and constraints allow exploration and meaningful interactions to emerge.
- Empowerment means intentionally distributing decision-making authority closest to the problems.
- Teams require access to information to make good decisions.
- Teams must be trusted to talk with customers or users.
- Creating trust takes time and consistent modeling by leaders.
- Designing Thinking (divergence/convergence) is a collaborative process to create shared empathy, create options, test prototypes, and move towards better value creation.
- Design Thinking isn't brain science!



# Thanks!

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