



Overcoming the waste of talent

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Introduction







8 wastes of Lean:

Motion

Defects

Waiting

Overproduction

Non-utilized talent

Inventory

Extra processing

Transportation

A photograph of a person standing on a dead, bleached tree on a beach at sunset. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with scattered clouds. The person is silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun. The tree is the central focus, with its intricate, bare branches reaching out. The beach is wide and flat, extending to the horizon where the ocean meets the sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

“Our employees
are our most
valued resource”

So where does it go wrong?

—

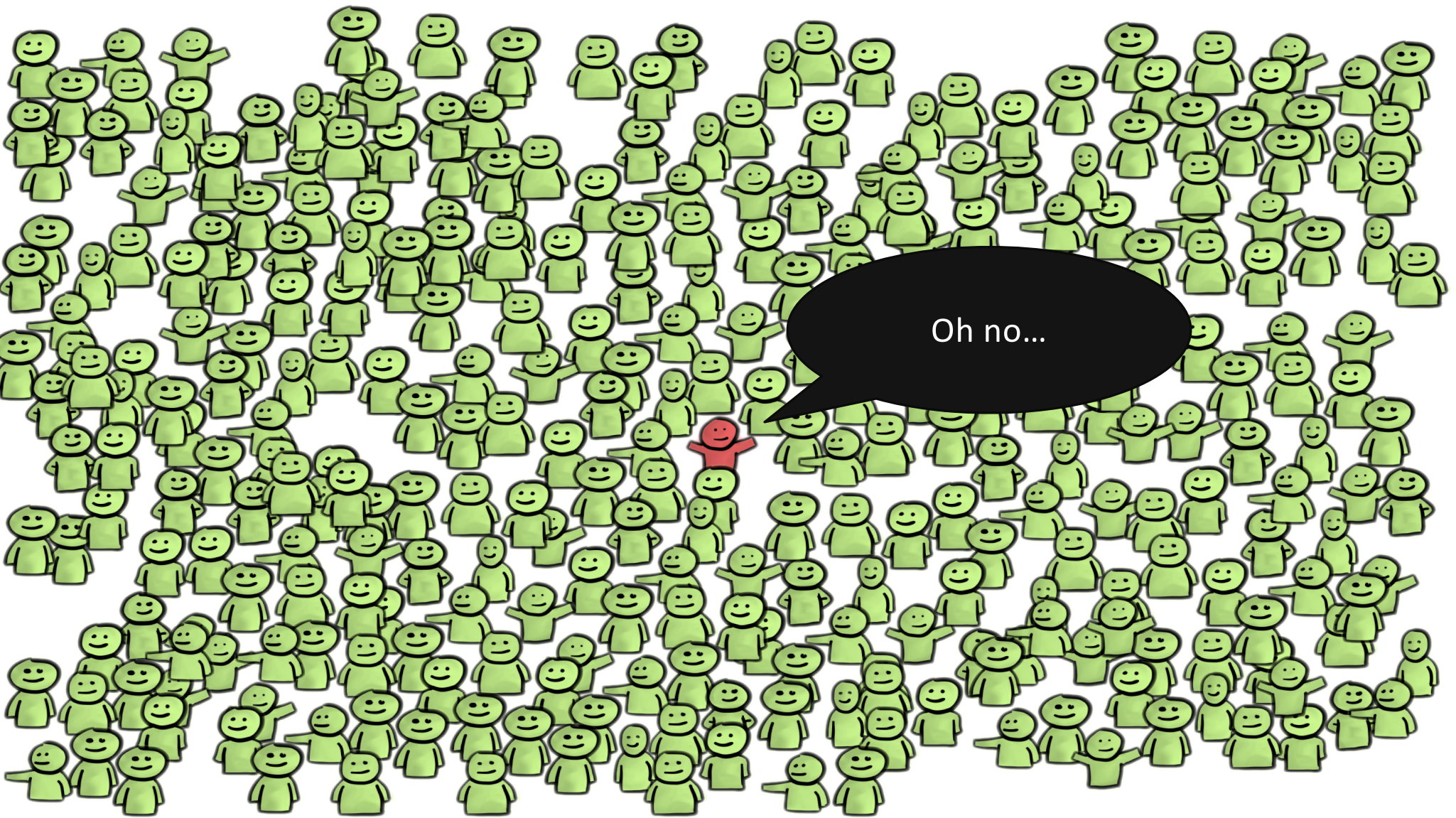


Let's do this!



Let's do this!

Yes... or maybe
that!



Oh no...

3 great ways to waste talent

1. Organize people in ways that disempower them
2. Tell people what to do
3. Reinforce the hierarchy

Waste of talent #1

Organize people in ways that
disempower them

“We need teams of missionaries,
not teams of mercenaries”

- John Doerr

CONSUMER EXPERIENCE ALLIANCE

Deepen relationships between artists and fans by extending Spotify into their favorite apps

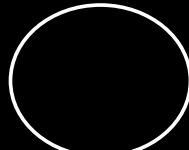
Filling homes with music that inspires every moment



App Integrations



Home consumer electronics



Team X



Team Y

CORE EXPERIENCE TRIBE

PPX TRIBE

Create the most delightful music experience

Tailor the Spotify experience to platforms and partners

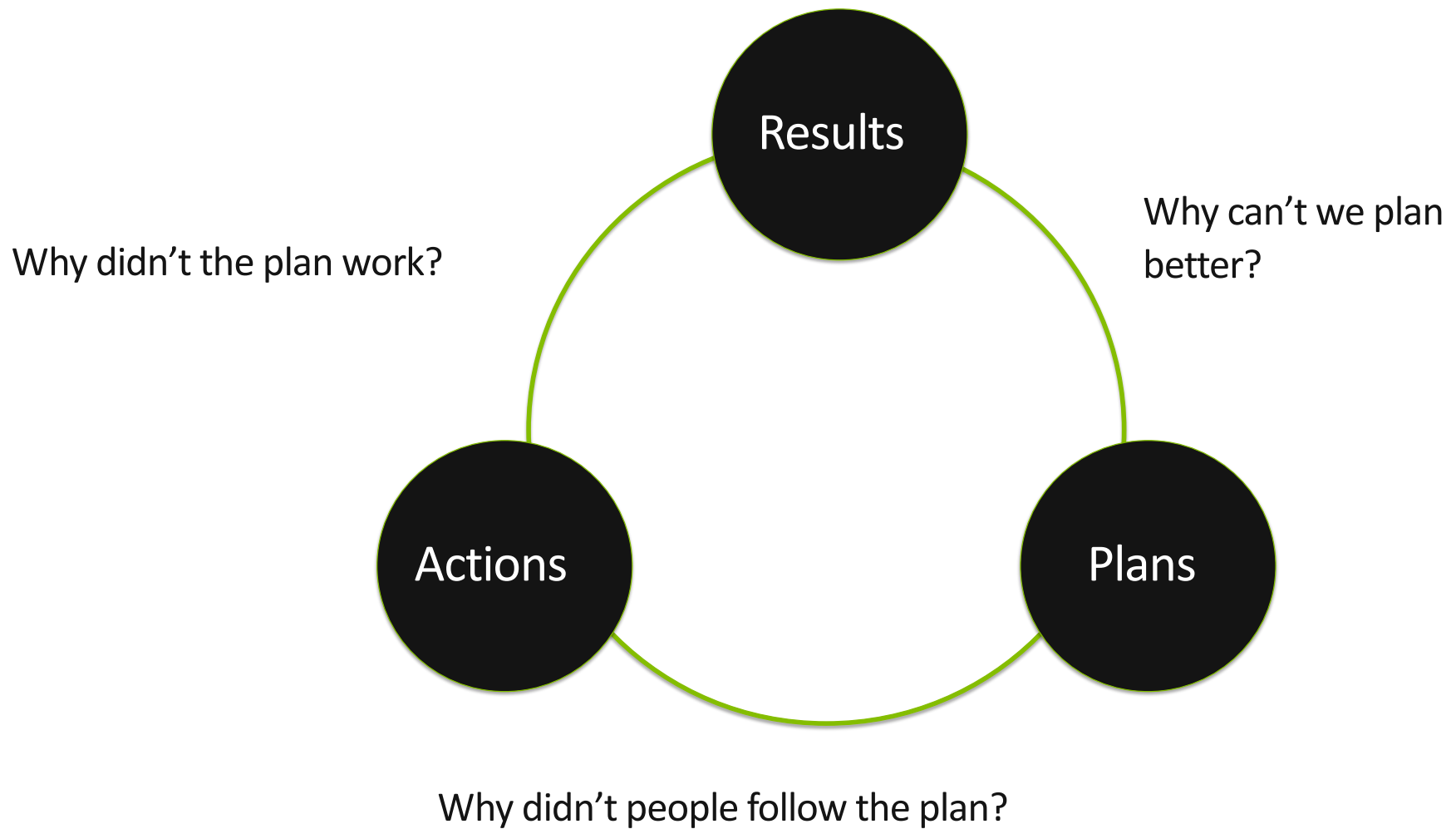
Define and evolve Spotify's core experience

Anti-waste principle #1

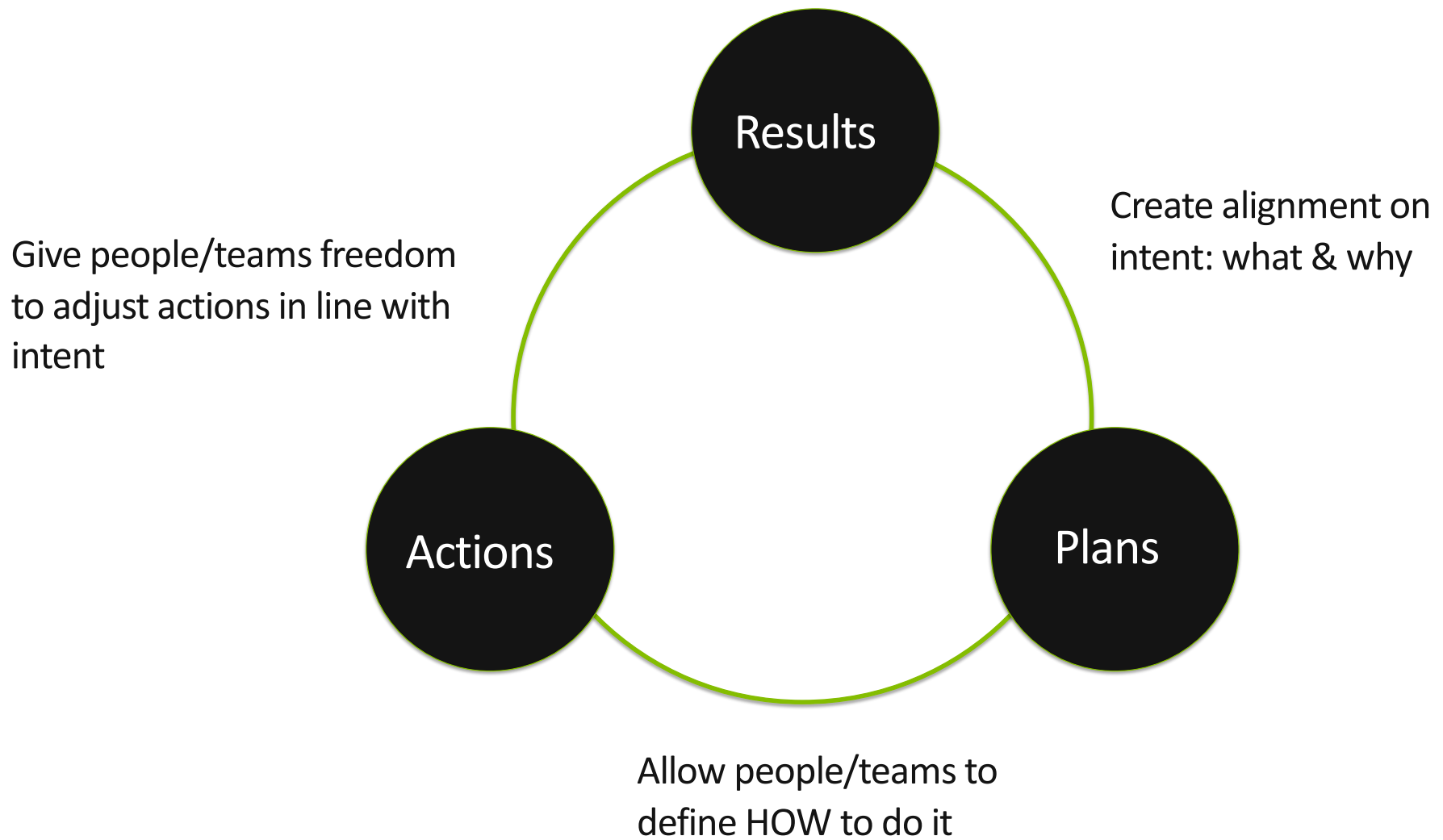
Build the org around autonomous
mini-startups

Waste of talent #2

Tell the organisation what to do,
rather than what you want



From: "The art of action", S Bungay (2010)



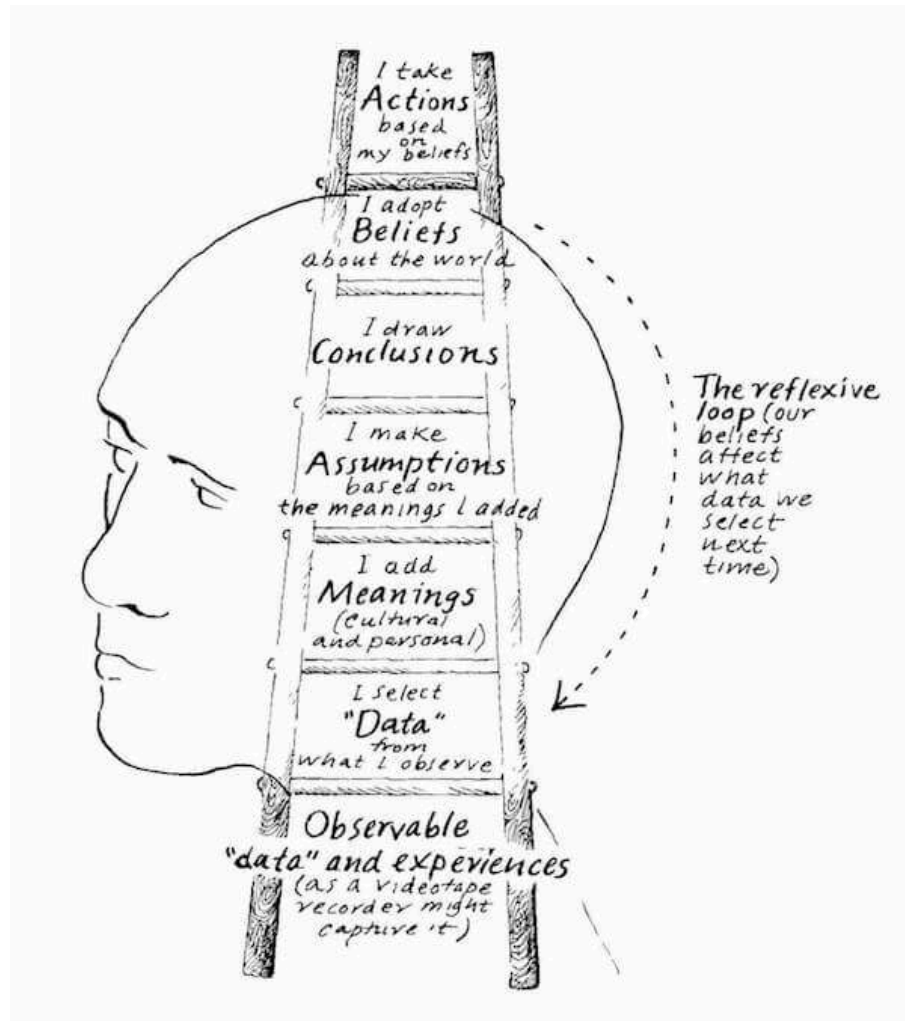
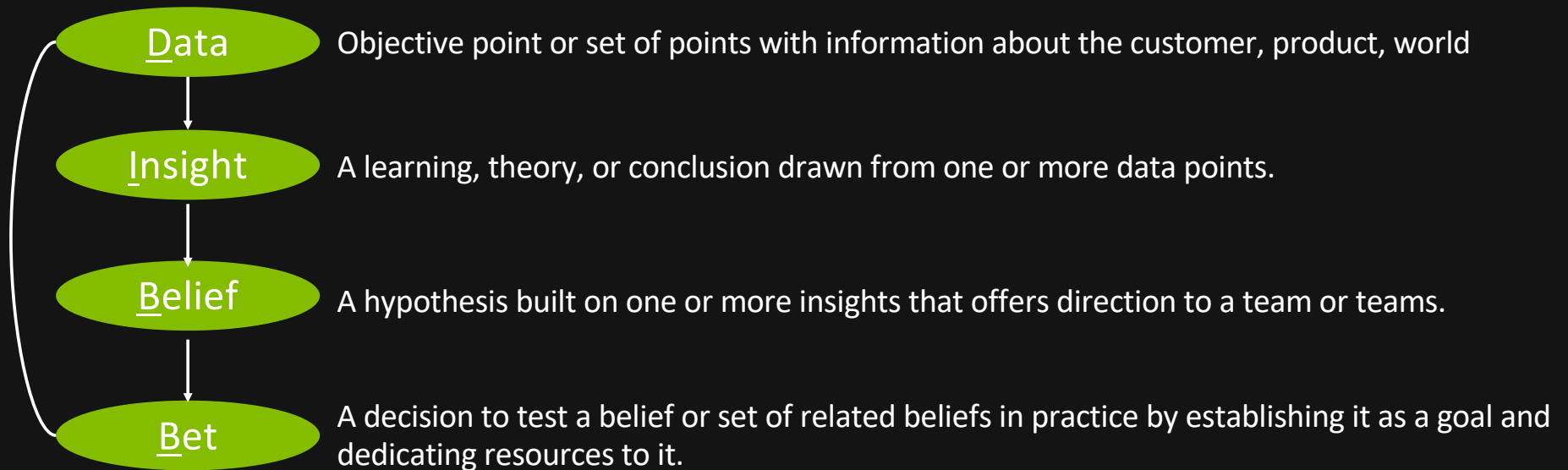
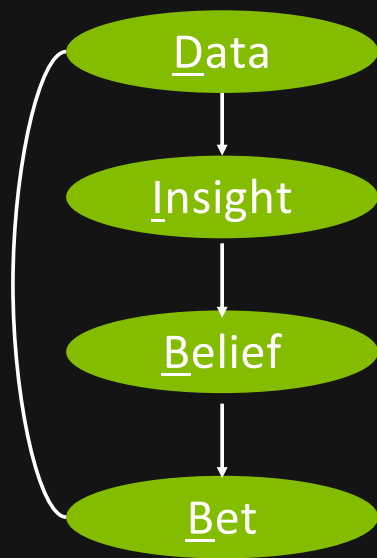


Photo credit: [Fifth Discipline Fieldbook](#) by Peter Senge

Spotify use "DIBBs" to debate and decide

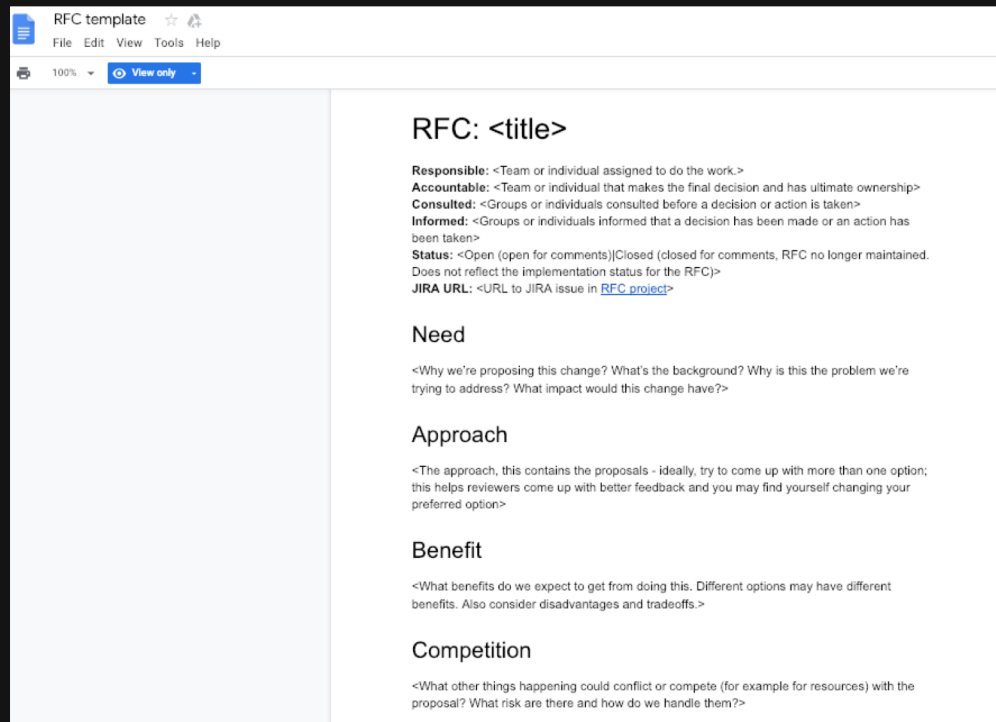


Example: Mobile free tier



- Mobile sales increasing
- Mobile streaming increasing
- Mobile staffing low
- Mobile is overtaking desktop
- Our mobile team is disproportionately small compared to desktop
- We need to become mobile first
- To be competitive, we need a free tier on mobile
- Launch a new product, mobile free tier
- Ramp up the mobile team

RFCs: Common tool at Spotify to clarify intent, and debate your proposed solution



The image shows a screenshot of a web-based document editor displaying an RFC (Request for Comments) template. The document is titled "RFC template" and has a menu bar with "File", "Edit", "View", "Tools", and "Help". The view is set to "View only" at 100% zoom. The main content area is divided into two columns. The right column contains the following sections:

- RFC: <title>**
- Responsible:** <Team or individual assigned to do the work.>
- Accountable:** <Team or individual that makes the final decision and has ultimate ownership>
- Consulted:** <Groups or individuals consulted before a decision or action is taken>
- Informed:** <Groups or individuals informed that a decision has been made or an action has been taken>
- Status:** <Open (open for comments)|Closed (closed for comments, RFC no longer maintained. Does not reflect the implementation status for the RFC)>
- JIRA URL:** <URL to JIRA issue in [RFC project](#)>
- Need**
<Why we're proposing this change? What's the background? Why is this the problem we're trying to address? What impact would this change have?>
- Approach**
<The approach, this contains the proposals - ideally, try to come up with more than one option; this helps reviewers come up with better feedback and you may find yourself changing your preferred option>
- Benefit**
<What benefits do we expect to get from doing this. Different options may have different benefits. Also consider disadvantages and tradeoffs.>
- Competition**
<What other things happening could conflict or compete (for example for resources) with the proposal? What risk are there and how do we handle them?>

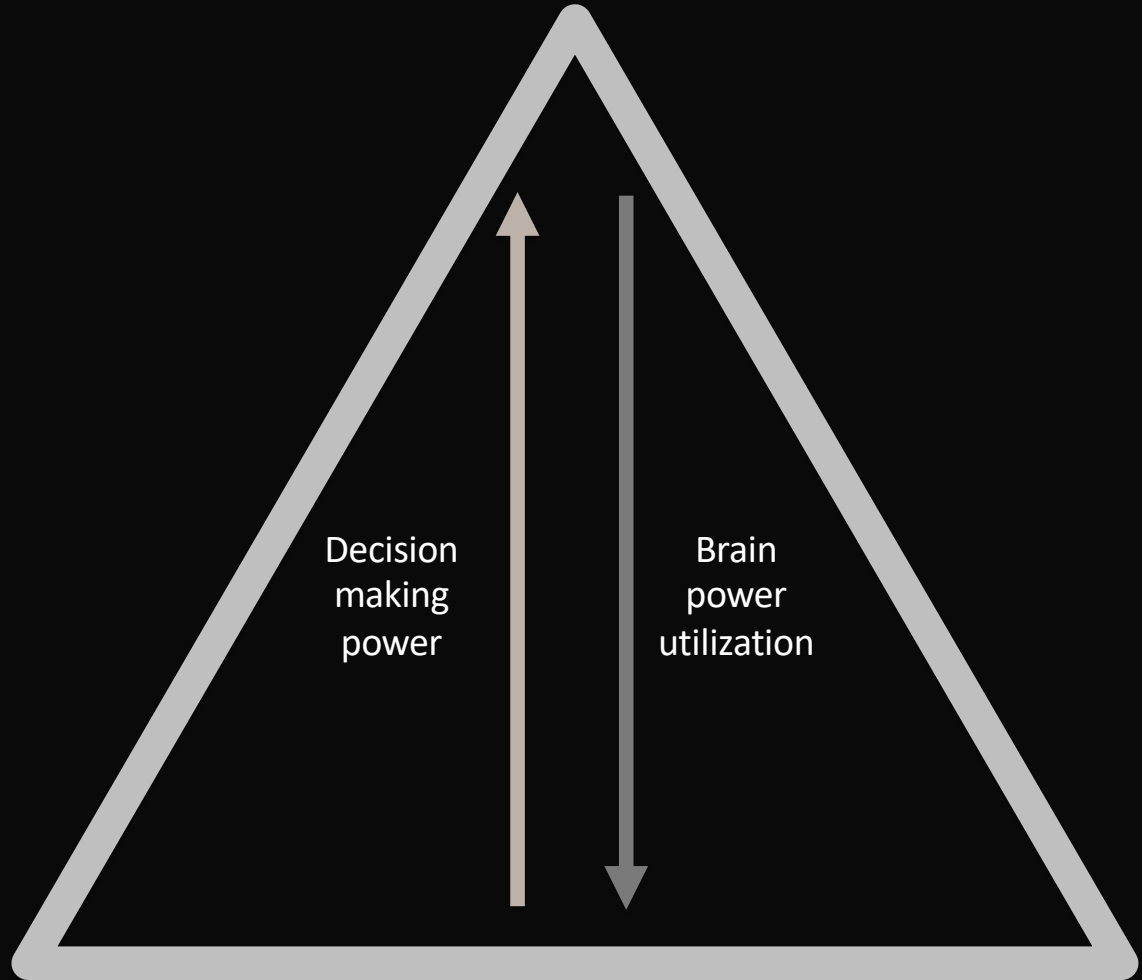
Anti-waste principle #2

Express intent, not actions.

And get really good at arguing about what to do.

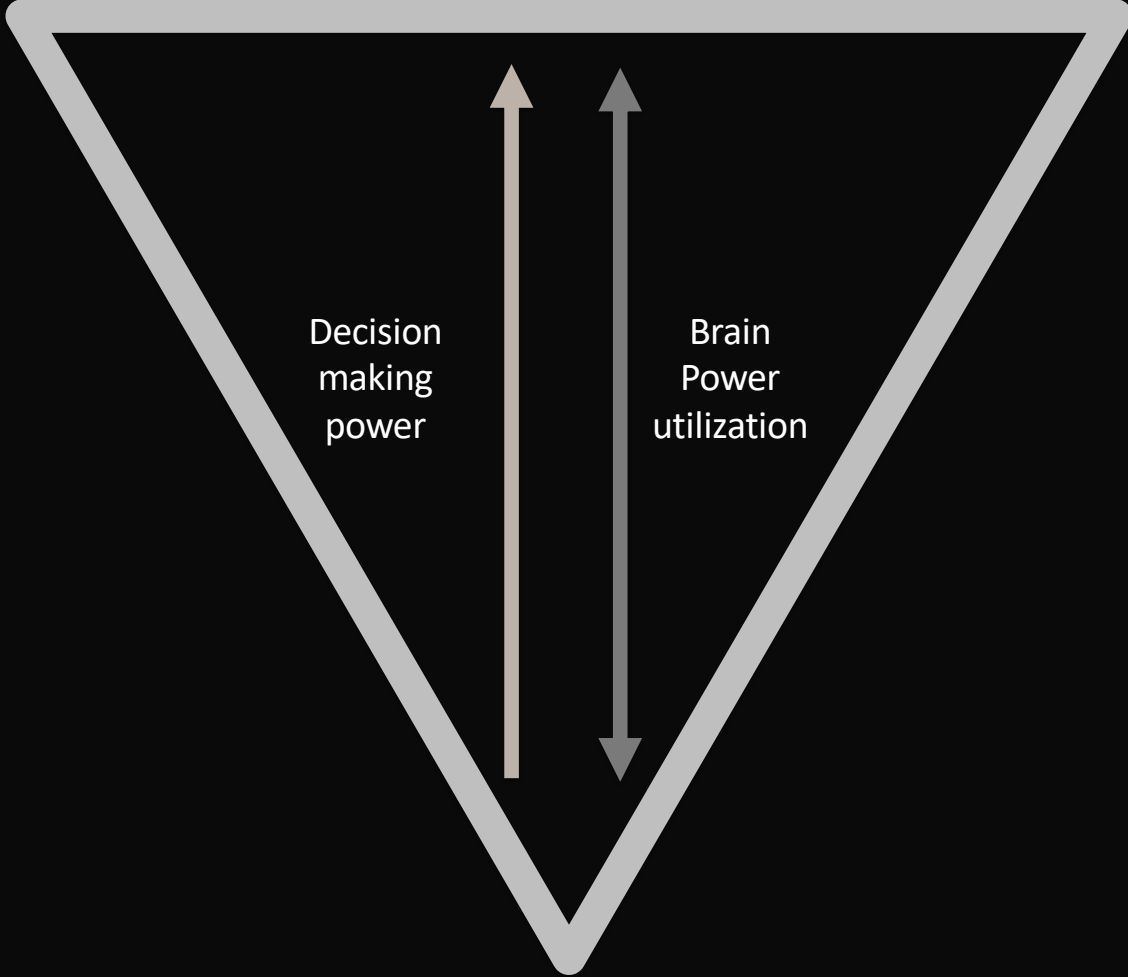
Wasting talent #3

Reinforce the hierarchy

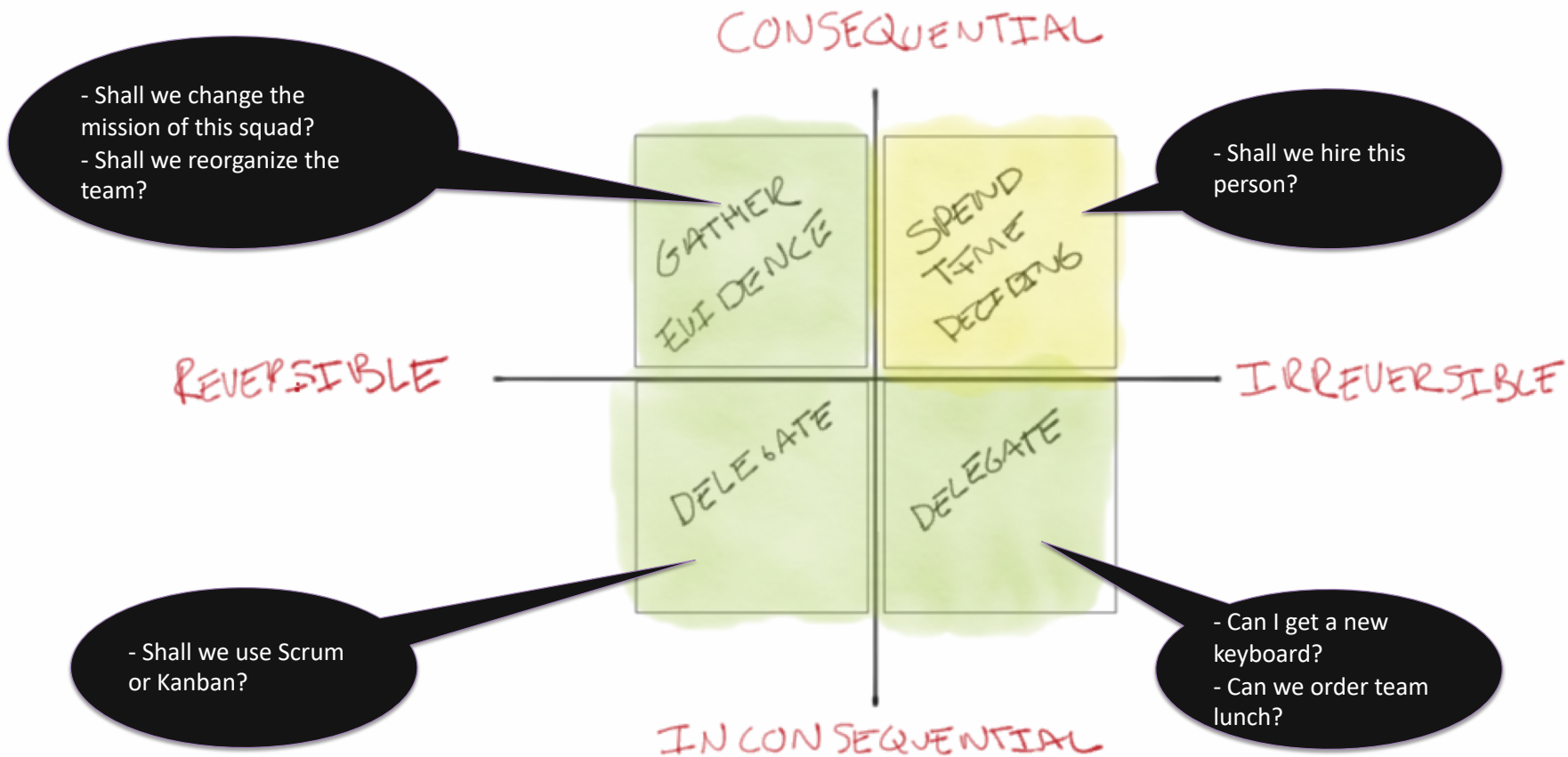


Decision
making
power

Brain
power
utilization



Ideas on how to distribute decision making



High consequence decision

Example 1

Crafting strategy

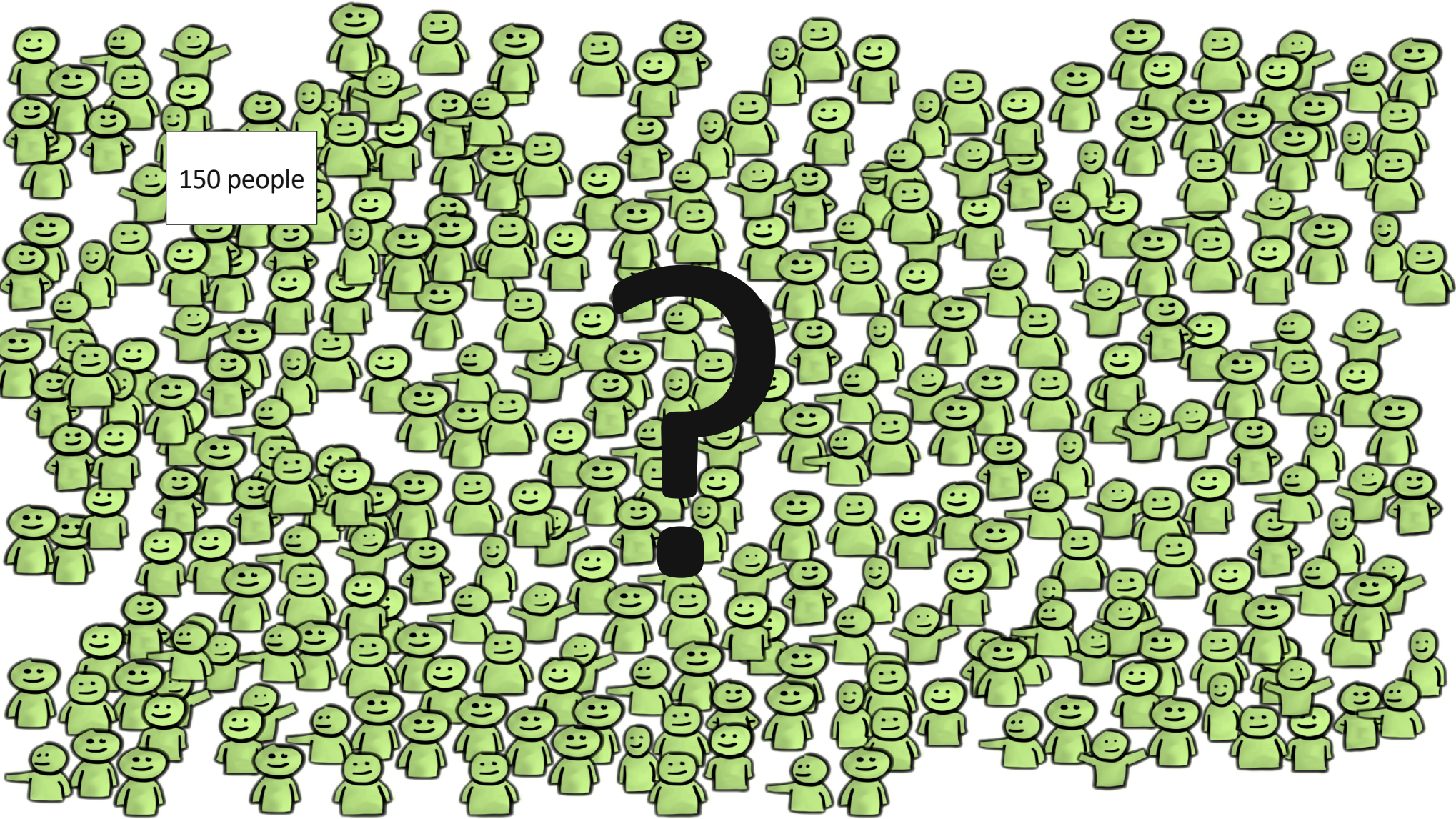


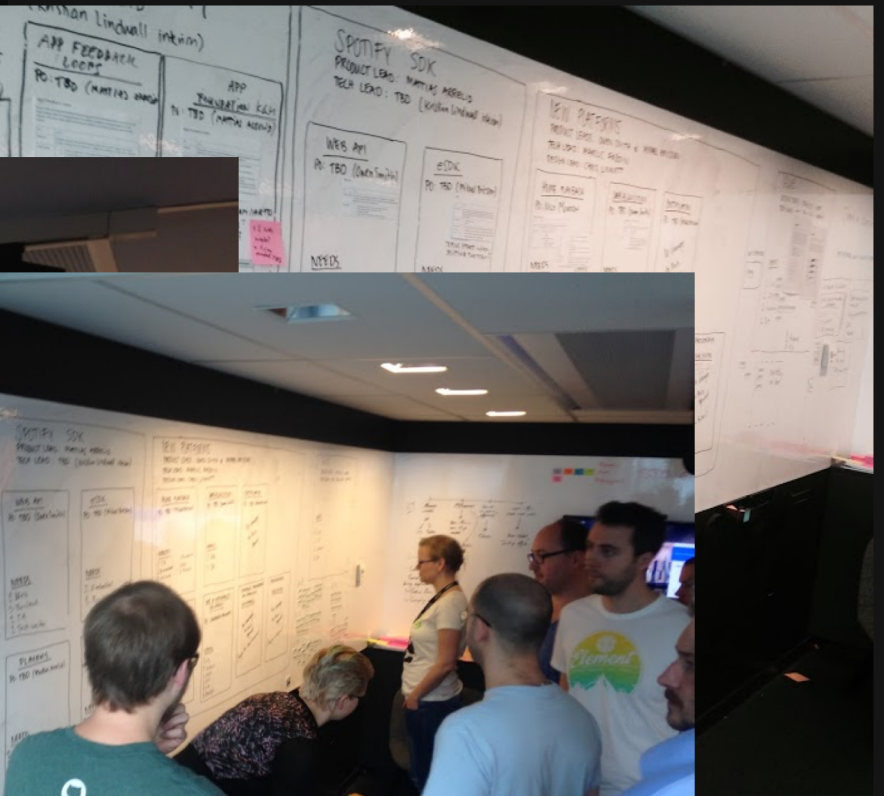
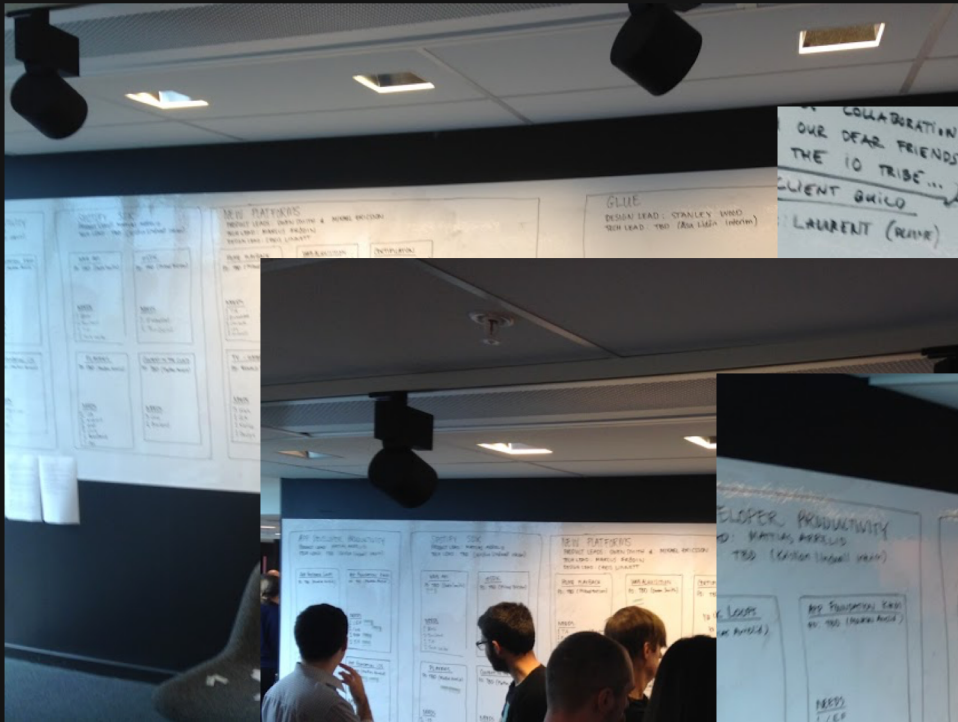
High consequence decision

Example 2

Large scale reorg

150 people





High consequence decision

Example 3

Changing role expectations

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

The art of solving problems in the right way

Technology is at the core of what we do, both on a strategic and tactical level. As a technology leader, you need to be fluent on both levels. Engaging in strategic technical discussions and working with your team to lead them in making sound decisions are both important aspects of the role. You make sure the team has a healthy tech stack, make sound architectural decisions and have good engineering practices.

- **Tech strategy**

You team up closely with product and the team and are in the end accountable for the **technical aspects** of the strategy. Based on the business problems the team is solving, how do we approach that strategically from a technical standpoint.

- **Decision making**

Engineers and teams constantly make decisions that have varying degrees of impact. You support and challenge them in making these, help them understand trade-offs and also make sure that the decision making process in itself is effective. To do this, you need to understand the tech stack the team is dealing with. When making decisions there are always options, and getting stuck in analysis paralysis is something you keep an eye on and can help the team with, both as a facilitator and tie-breaker.

Resolve

This seems to be tightly coupled with individual squads. While this a good start, I believe our CLs are capable of [Show more](#)

On your first point: It is not intended to be purely coupled to squads. The use of the word "team" is probably ambiguous. [Show more](#)

Perhaps mention in the introduction paragraph that a "team" can refer to the squad the CL is engaged in, as well as [Show more](#)

My thinking is that normal state should be that the engineers can own the responsibility for building healthy tech. [Show more](#)

High consequence decision

Example 4

What new ideas should we try out?



Anti-waste principle #3

Delegate low consequence,
distribute high consequence
decisions.

Summary

Our organisational structures, culture, leadership and processes will define how much of people's capacity we leverage.

Optimize for autonomy. Support by giving tools for effective decision making at scale. Delegate as much as possible.

Your people ARE the most valuable resource in the company. Make sure you don't waste that talent.

Thank you!



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