

Innovation **Elegance**

What A People-Centric Methodology Looks Like



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Why This & Why Now



Teamwork is more difficult
Rights w/o Responsibilities
Authority w/o Accountability
Employee Experience
Communication Traffic Jams
Project Success Rates
Idle Work
2-4 Idle Workers

Why This & Why Now: Debt



Tech
Debt

Documentation
Debt

Innovation
Debt

Methodology
Debt[©]

Let's get out ... and stay out ... of debt

Agenda



Metaphors

Mechanics

Money (Cost Profile)

Market (Jobs)

Mental Health

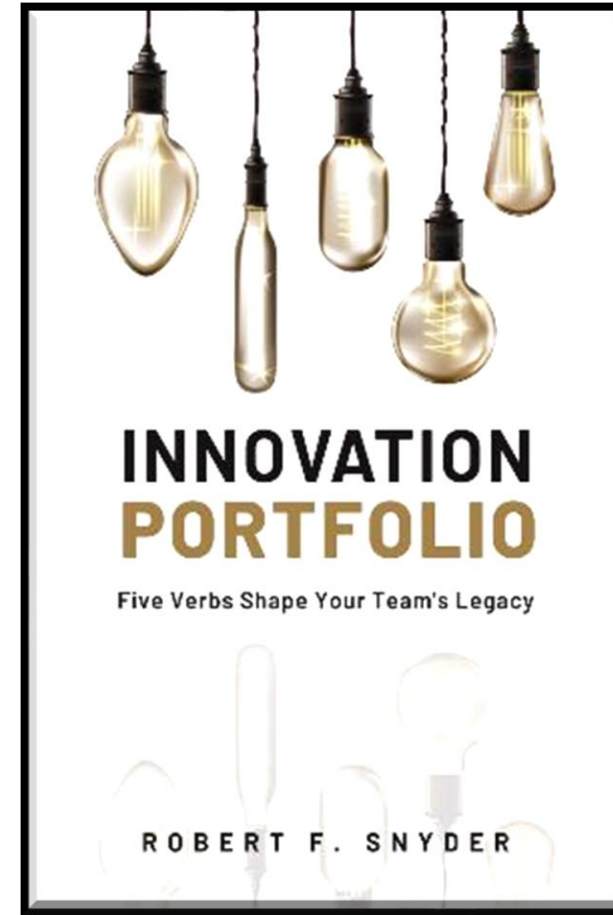
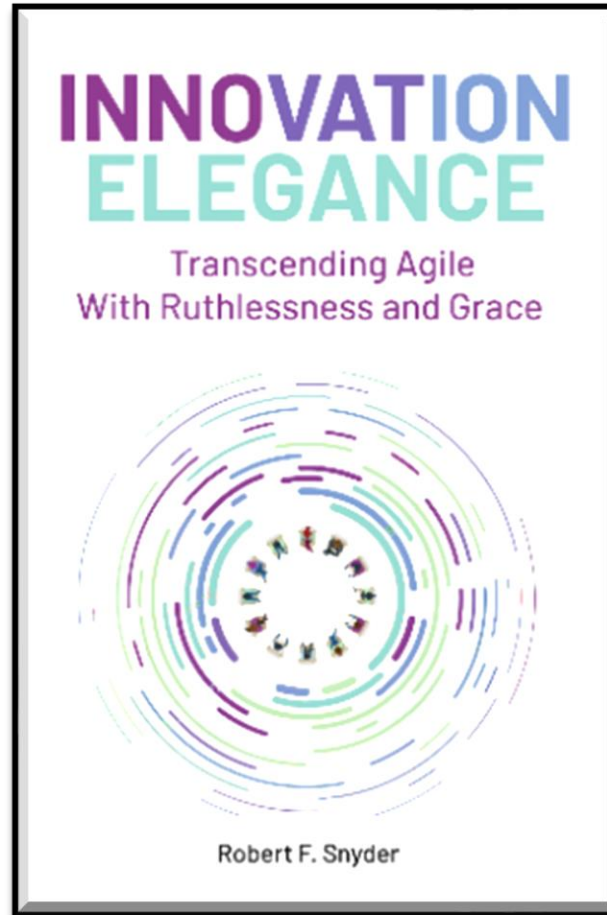


Takeaways / Objectives



Why and how to adopt to a people-centric methodology
Enthusiasm and confidence to adopt a new methodology
Safety, sanity, and self-respect whether you pursue this or not

Books



Books

Innovation Elegance: Transcending Agile With Ruthlessness and Grace January 2024

Innovation Portfolio: Five Verbs Shape Your Team's Legacy May 2024

Elegant Leadership: Distinguishing the Good, the Bad, and the False 2025

Typical Metaphors (despite Values)



Firedrill



Shiny New Object



Squirrel



Cat with laser pointer



Aloof versus Eager



Bull in a china shop

Typical Metaphors (despite Values)



Race | Sprint | Desperation

Bumper Cars | Whiplash

Bottleneck

Communication Traffic Jam

Climbership

Competition



Metaphors (Values) to Consider



Symphony (Synchronization)



Dance (Attentiveness)

Theater (Story)

Improvisation (Exploration & Play)



Metaphors (Values) to Consider



Parenting (Set & Bang the Table)

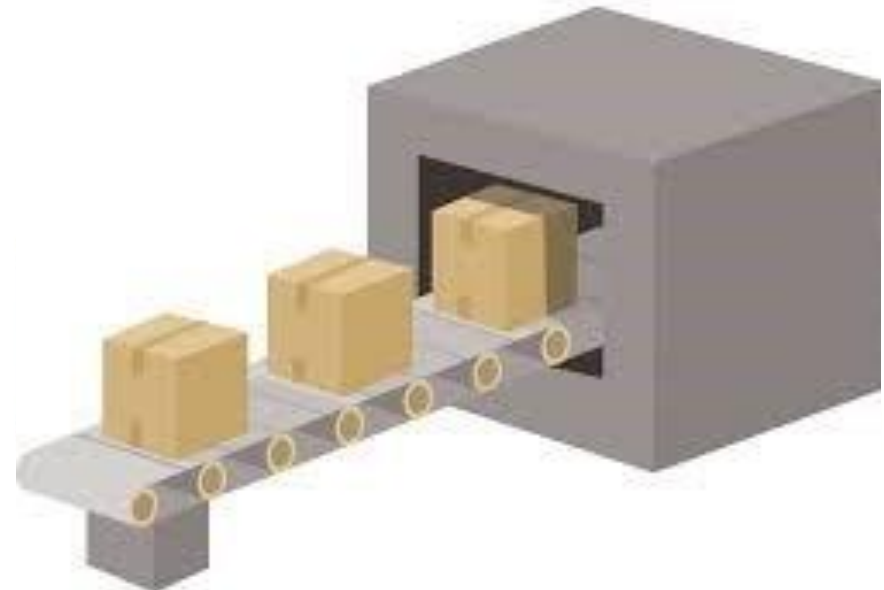


Aikido (Exaggerate what's contrary)

	Lens of the Market	Lens of the Team	Lens of the Individual	Current State
Project Independent	Market Trends Matrix	Change Log	Individual Status Report	Scenarios
	Value of the Customer and Seller	Parking Lot	Spotlight Report	Current State Inventory
	Decisions Unknown Outcomes	Lessons Learned	Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder Report	System Actor Inventory
	Roadmap	Approachability Menu	War-dated Report	Current State Scenarios
	Crisis Communication Script		DRS Report	Current State Process Flows
	Crisis Resolution Checklist		Rel Chart	Customer Experience Hierarchy
			The Case Assessment	

Love letter (Documentation)

Factory (Flow)





Mechanics: Typical

RACI (Four Adjectives)

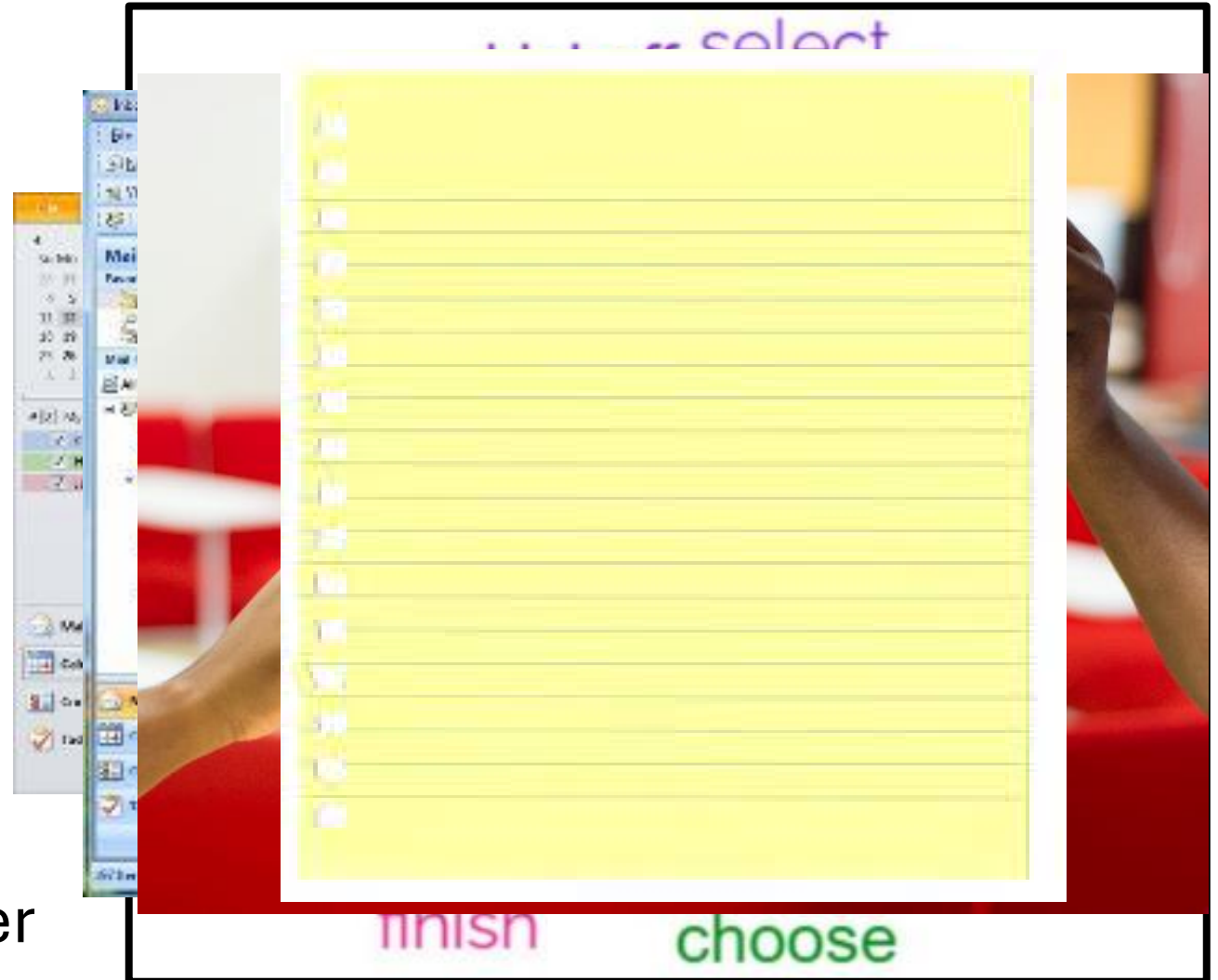
Verb Sprawl (public dumpyard)

Meeting factory (gridlock)

Email factory (overload)

Ticket factory

Unglamorous: scribe, note taker



Mechanics For Discipline & Empathy



Five Verbs (in your project plan)

Named, bundled agreement

Expectation Factory

Discipline & Empathy dis

Project Independent

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Assignments	Duration	Percent Complete
Draft	█					Tracy	1 day	0%
Review		█				Va, Will, Xin	1 day	50%
Revise			█			Tracy	1 day	
Approve				█		Yolanda	1 day	
Distribute					█	Zach	1 day	

Build Code Migration Script Deployment Plan Test Test Approach Test Conditions Test Cycles Test Scripts Test Data Actual Results Defect Log

User Interface

“Strategic” still deserves collaboration on paper & formal management

What to Not Formally Manage



sensitive
creativity
no collaboration
expression style
authenticity
one-way communication
flair improvisational talk
subtle not repeated
disposable nuance
chat other verbs
low-risk

Be brilliant at the basics

Be fabulous at the fundamentals

Be magnificent at the mundane

... at muscle memory

A Culture of Speed



Speed as a *leading* culture trait



A Communication **Traffic Jam**

Speed as a *lagging* culture trait



Synchronization

A Communication **Symphony**

Quotation on Speed



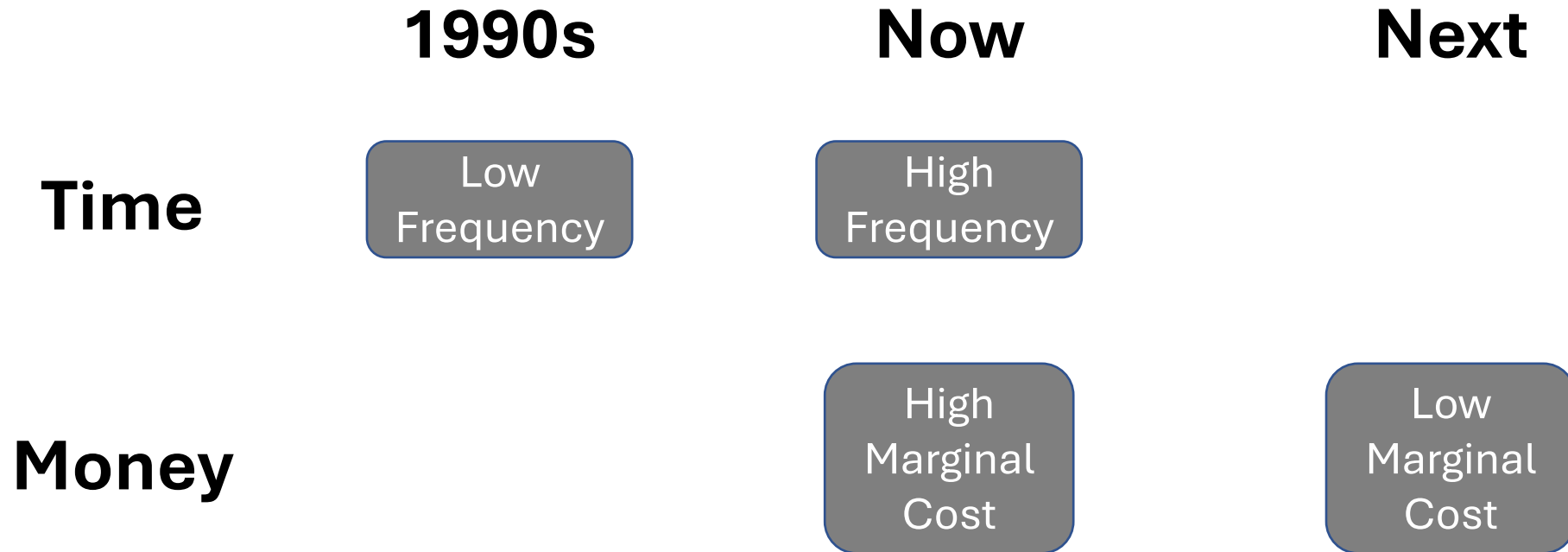
“The speed
of the boss is
the speed of the team.”

- Lee Iococca,
American automobile executive

“The *synchronization skill*
of the boss is
the speed of the team.”

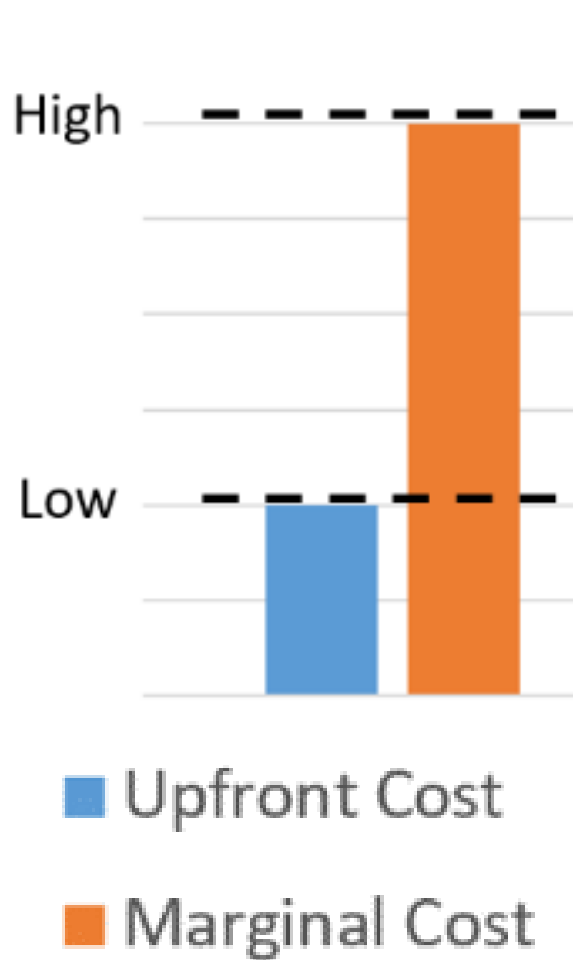
- Amateur musicians everywhere

Time & Money: Now versus Next



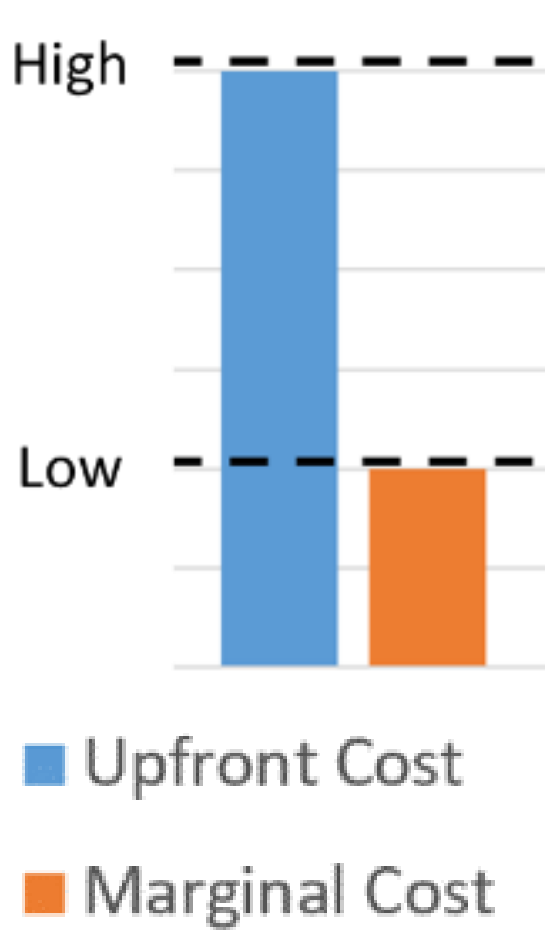
*High marginal cost cripples speed of the ensemble
High marginal cost harbors franticness, fatigue, burnout & VUCA
Hybrid (frequency) undermines synchronization*

Money (Past & Typical Cost Profile)



innovation debt
high latency
procrastinate
low empathy laborious
low expectations raci
systematic neglect chore
increased frequency
systemic neglect vuca
secondary activity
low volume
meeting gridlock
just enough
verb sprawl
email overload

Money (Proposed Cost Profile)



low latency
high volume five verbs
modest scope
minimize innovation debt
muscle memory
sampling neglect
high expectations
elegance high empathy
primary activity
proactive
earn versus burn

Quotation Related To Cost Profile & Laboriousness



*“Do what is easy and
your life will become hard.*

*Do what is hard and
your life will become easy.”*

- Les Brown (b. 1945),
American politician
and motivational speaker

Quotations Related To Gravity & Marginal Cost



*“You can ignore the laws of **gravity**, but the laws of **gravity** do not ignore you.”*

*“You can ignore the laws of **marginal cost**, but the laws of **marginal cost** do not ignore you.”*

Job Market



Idle Work

Innovation Demand



Efficiency

Expectation

Frustration



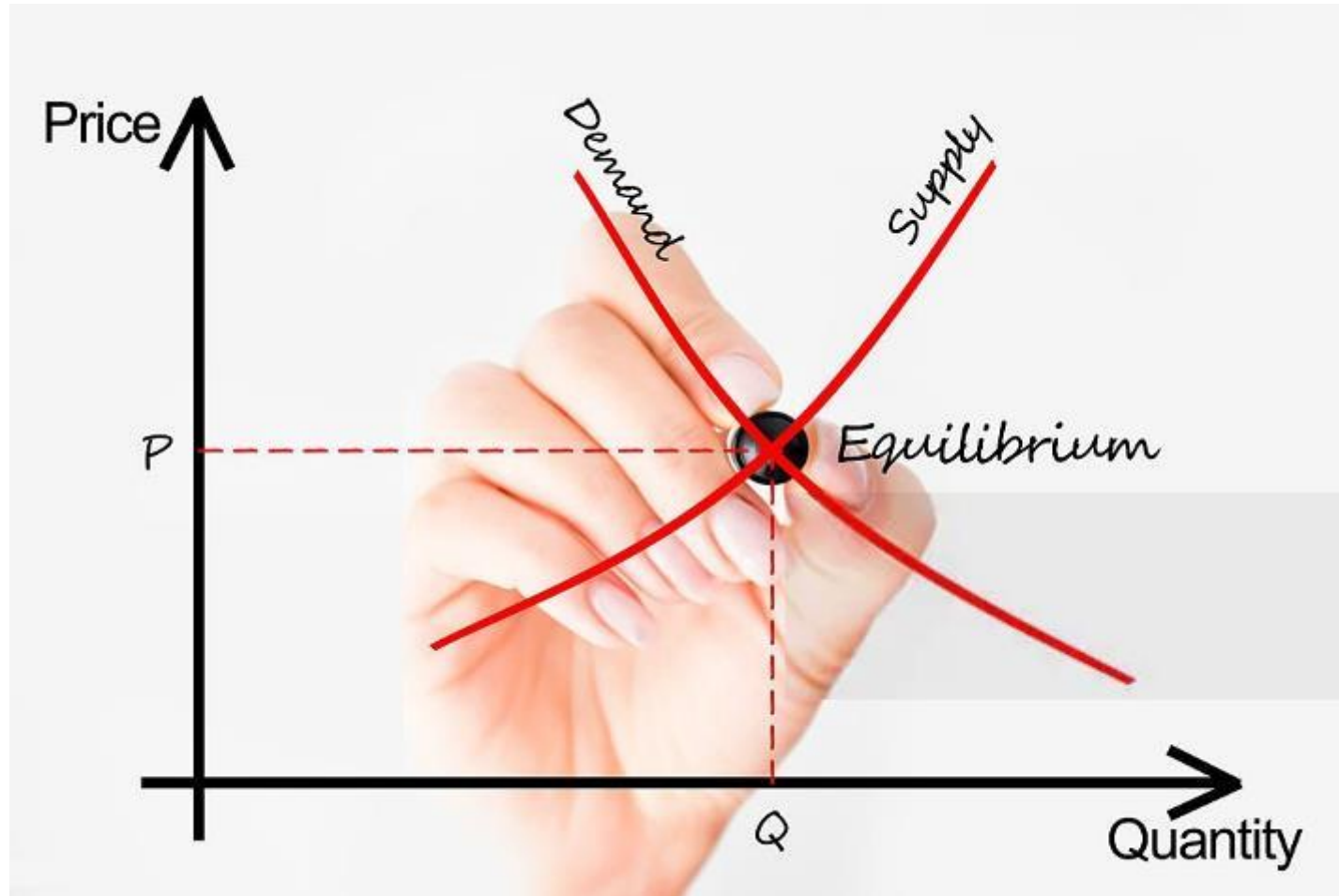
Idle Workers

Innovation Supply



Reduce marginal cost → Increase traffic → Reduce innovation debt

Job Market: Supply & Demand



Confidence ↑

Demand curve →

Employee Retention ↑

Supply curve →

Idle Work ↓

Idle Workers ↓

Innovation Debt ↓

Culture of Current Methodologies



Companies pursue a competitive advantage



Incentivizes climbers

Culture of a People-centric Methodology



Companies pursue a collaborative advantage



Incentivizes leadership

Improving Mental Health



Metaphors
Mechanics
Money
Market



Easy to opt-out

Easy to detect opting out

Easy to own opting out

Mental Health with Opting Out



fatigue debt
insecurity
disrespected
poor boundaries
underpaid
individualistic
burnout

Metaphors
Mechanics
Money
Market

Mental Health: Metaphors



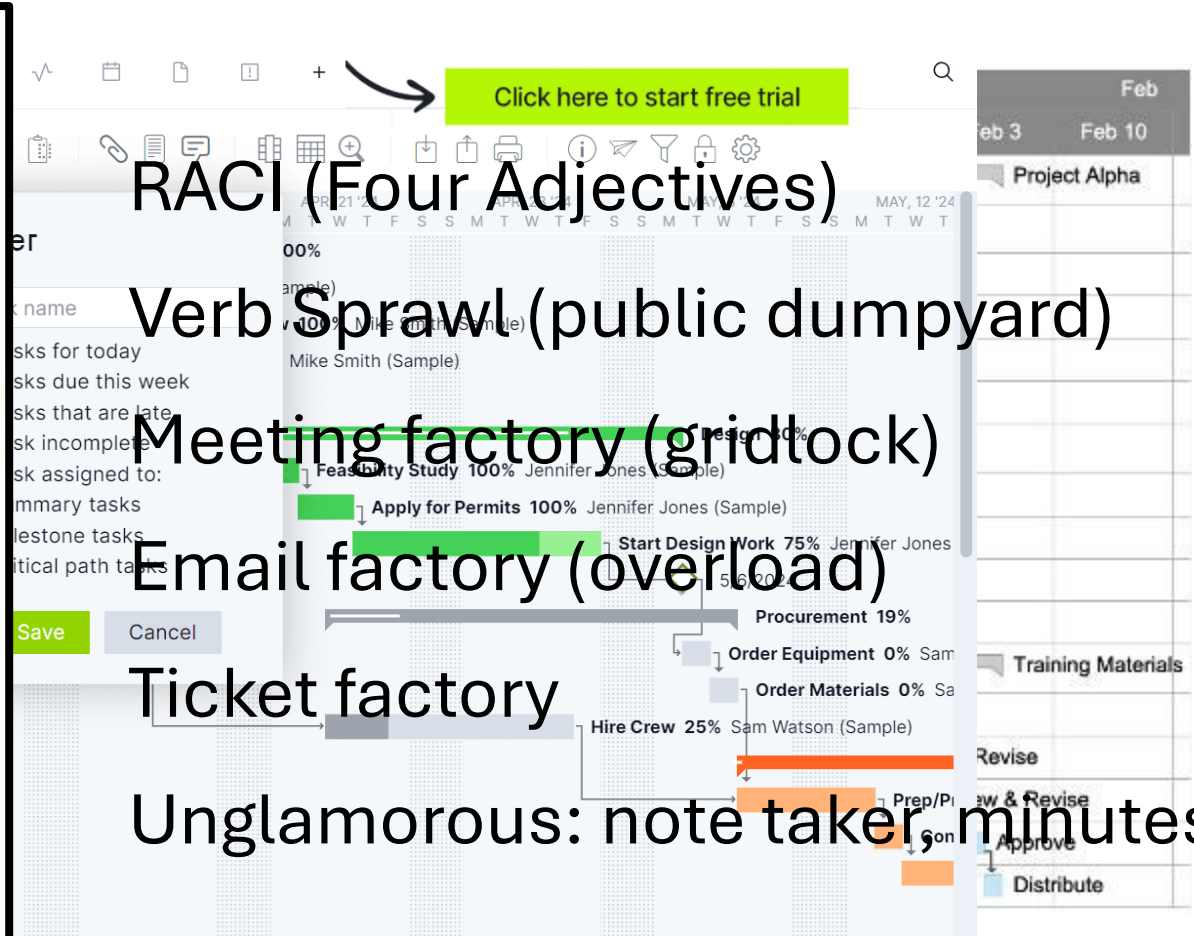
If your preferred metaphors are rejected, you have license to exaggerate what's in place



Mental Health: Mechanics



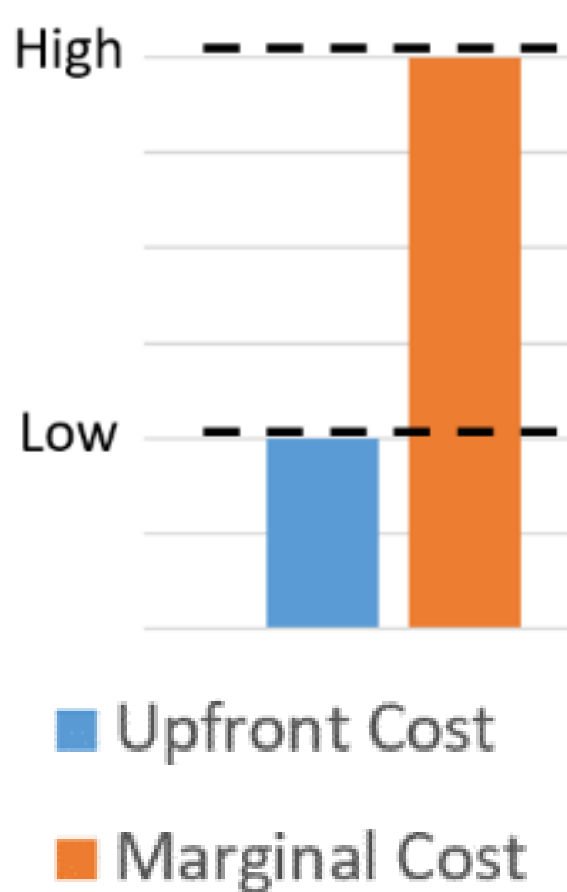
If your preferred mechanics are rejected, you have license to exaggerate what's in place



Mental Health: Money



If your preferred cost profile is rejected, you have license to exaggerate what's in place

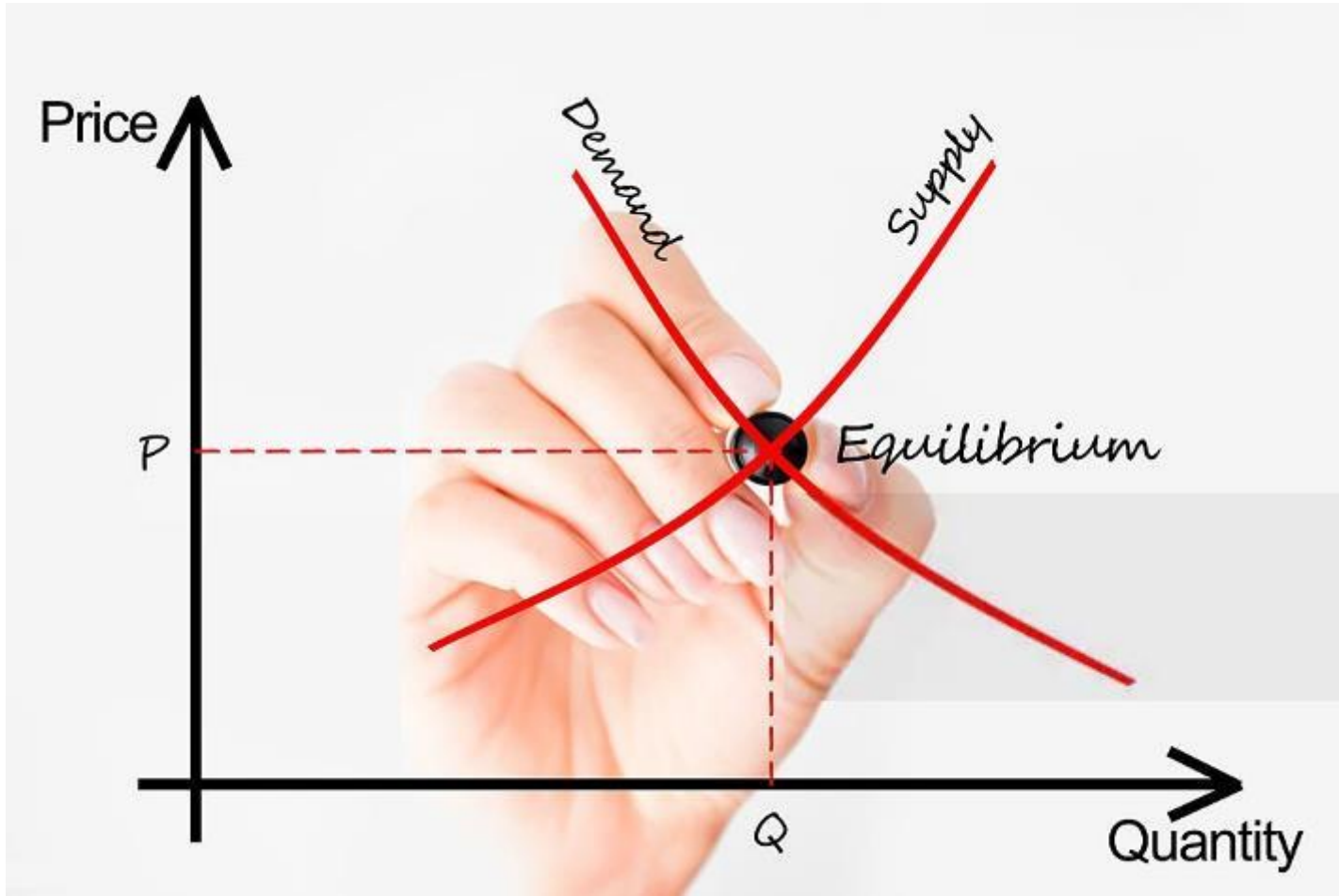


innovation debt
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systemic neglect
secondary activity
low volume meeting gridlock
just enough
verb sprawl
email overload

Mental Health: Market (Jobs)



If your preferred job market is rejected, you have license to exaggerate what's in place



- Confidence* ↓
- Demand curve* ←

- Employee Retention* ↓
- Supply curve* ←

- Idle Work* ↑
- Idle Workers* ↑
- Innovation Debt* ↑

A License For Low Expectations



Aloof



Mirror



Orphans

Safety, Sanity, and Self-respect



“Lead, follow, or
get out of the way.”

“This is their world.
You’re just in it.”

“Blessed are the flexible for
they will not allow themselves
to become bent out of shape.”

Summary



Debt

Metaphors

Mechanics

Money (Cost Profile)

Market (Jobs)

Mental Health



Discipline + Empathy = Elegant Expectation Factory

Quotation Related To the Status Quo



“Nothing will change until the status quo (of methodology debt) is more painful than the transition.”

*– Professor Laurence J. Peter,
Professor of Education, University of
Southern California*

Takeaways / Call-to-Action



Explore and pursue a people-centric methodology

Bring others along – it's a team sport!

Safety, sanity, and self-respect whether you are successful or not

Thank You!

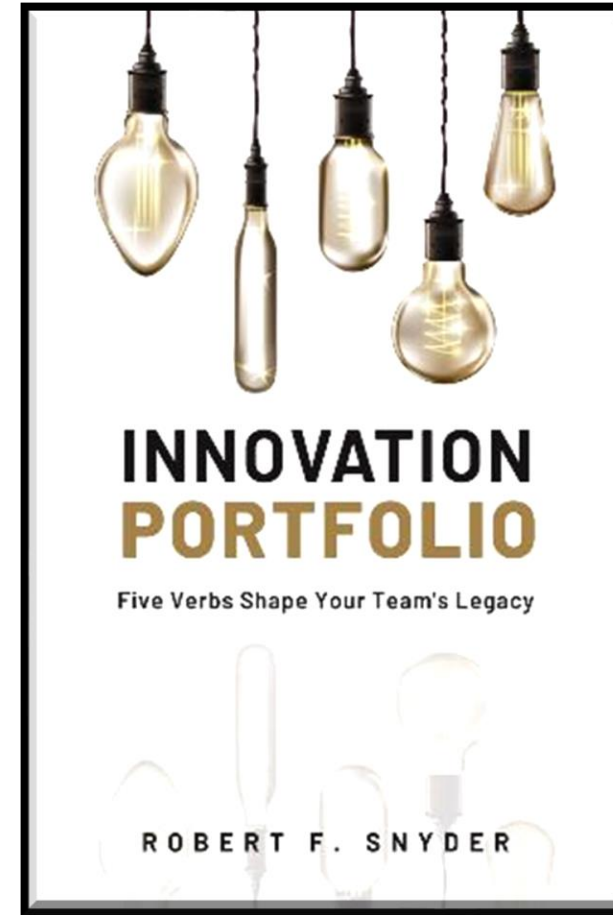
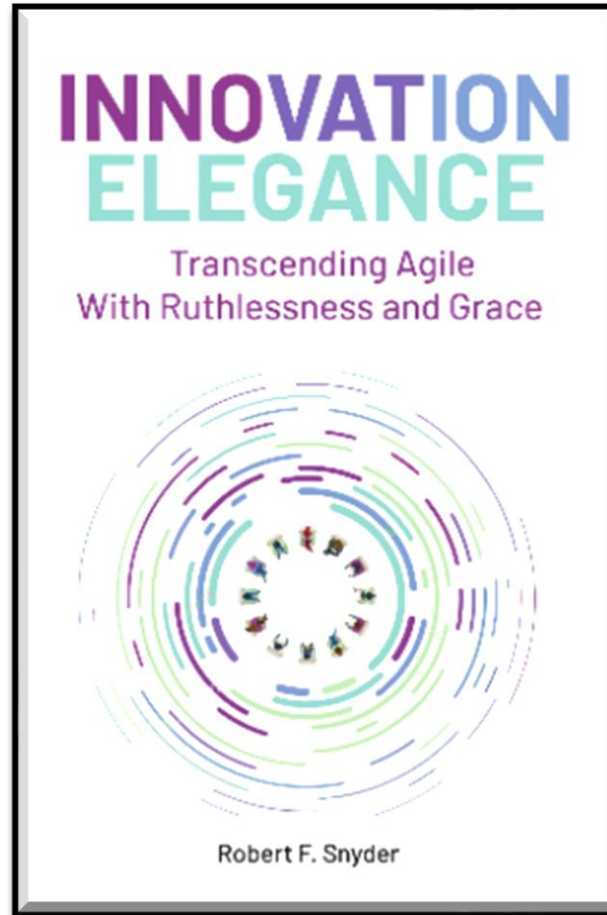


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Books



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APPENDIX

Empathy Disguised As A Template

Prompt



Individual Status Report

Workload Report

I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder

Approachability Menu

Lessons Learned

Individual Status Report

Workstream	Accomplishments and Highlights of Past Week	Plans and Goals for Next Week
Task A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed W	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start Z
Monthly Process B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete X
Project C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Started Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue Y

Weekly

Accountability, Alignment, Momentum

“Manage up without kissing up”

Workload Report



5 = Workload is too high and not sustainable
I'm a bottleneck for a workstream
Idle work exists
Reduce workload
Strip assignments
Reminder to lead, follow, or get out of the way

3 = Workload feels healthy and sustainable
Short burst of additional work is OK

2 = Workload can handle additional new workstream
Idle worker

1 = Workload is very low
Idle worker

4 = Workload is full
Increasing workload might create a bottleneck

I'd love to be challenged more
I am concerned about my job security

Weekly

Sustainability, Balance, Inclusivity

Keep levels of idle work and idle workers modest

I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder (For Individual)



“I like the enthusiasm I saw among the testers.”

“I like the thoroughness and tough decisions I see in the Project Charter.”

“I wish the webpage we designed wasn’t so busy.”

“I wish this code didn’t feel throwaway knowing what’s coming up on the Roadmap.”

“I hope our Test Data is ready in time for the start of test execution.”

“I hope training sessions will include all offices.”

“I wonder if training sessions will be in-person, online-only, or hybrid.”

“I wonder if we have to purge data related to the divestiture.”

Weekly | “Quiet teams are scary teams”

Stylish, Morale, Psychological Safety

Low footprint engagement survey

What to ask long before the exit interview



Approachability Menu[©]

Communication Channel	More	Less	Color Commentary
Meeting Etiquette			
Punctuality	✓		
Participation	✓		
Multi-tasking		✓	
Email Etiquette & Usage			
Responsiveness	✓		
Overuse of "Reply All"		✓	
Belongs in doc		✓	
Documentation Contribution			
Draft		✓	
Review & Revise	✓		
Approve / Signoff			

Monthly

Two-way accountability

Psychological safety

Morale

Subtitled

*"I know you hate me
but what do you
want me to do differently?"*



Lessons Learned (For Team)

Area	I Like	I Wish I Hope	I Wonder
Safety Inclusivity			
Belonging			
Transparency			
Simple and Straightforward			
Accountability			
Alignment			
Momentum			
Morale			
Sustainability			
Scalability			
Stylish			
Learning			
Emphasis			
Balance			
Success Is Inevitable			

Monthly

Self-awareness

Self-confidence

Humility

Anticipates

“Pattern in the Problems”

Basis for new session

“Choose Your Own

Adventure Culture”



Late 2024: Choose Your Own ~~Adventure~~ Culture

Culture Trait	Assets
Safety, Inclusivity, Belonging	I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder Approachability Menu Project Plan
Transparency	Use Case Assessment Awareness Blast Stoplight Report
Simple and Straightforward	Project Plan Process Flows
Accountability	Individual Status Reports Project Charter Project Plan Closure Report
Alignment	Workstream Status Report The verb "Approve" Individual Status Report
Momentum	Workstream Status Report Go-Live Announcement Project Plan
Morale	I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder
Sustainability	Roadmap Approachability Menu Workload Report
Scalability	Executing Five Verbs over time Pie Chart
Stylishness	Individual Status Report Elevator Pitch
Learning	Project Charter
Emphasis	Scorecard Use Case Definitions Project Charter Training Materials
Balance	Roadmap Individual Status Reports Project Plan Workload Report
Success Is Inevitable	Parking Lot

Empathy In The Arts



Collaboration

rehearse
listen safety
authenticity
bring out their best
join a team
practice
trust

Competition

resilience
vigilance
receiving rejection
giving rejection
failure
balance

Enforced collaboration
Acknowledge competitive energy
Convert energy to ambition
Pursue collaborative advantage

Artist-Audience Intersection

portfolio
legacy
intimate or distant
performance
picky & forgiving
positive & negative reactions
audience experience
pays the bills
moments that matter
get no glamour
celebration

Empathy In The Arts



simulation
not reinventing the wheel
feedback transparency
integration
story
context

Theater

hackathon
sheet music
tension diversity
jam session
synchronization
harmony
positivity
tuning
tempo

Music

Improv

rotation
vulnerable
mechanics style
civility variability clarity
rest learning never stops
lead self-management
poser boundaries
retention self-awareness ease
poise elasticity steward
follow humility reset
mistakes
minimalism

Partner Dance

The New Hybrid

*on-script
or
off-script?*

stageworthy
got your back
bloopers are fun authenticity
self-consciousness
thinking on your feet
yes and thank you because
no single point of failure
bring a brick not a cathedral
co-creation collaboration space
momentum campfire of ideas
no preparation
theater for vuca world
follow the follower