



Studio Axioms

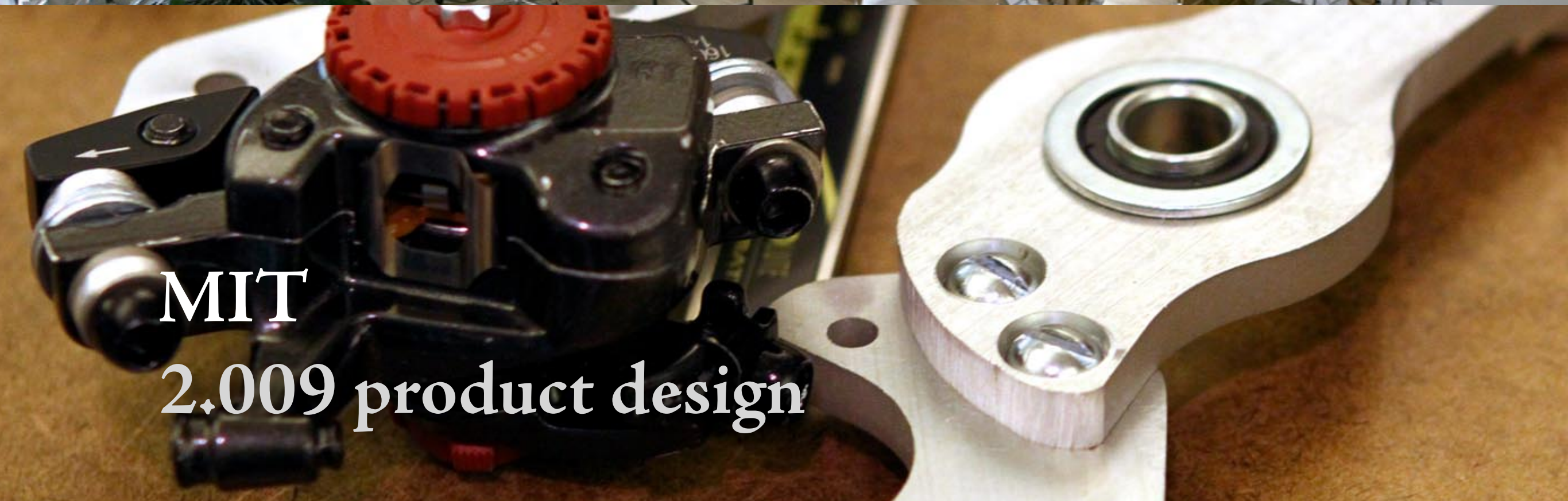
The unvarnished truth about starting
and running a software design studio

by Juhan Sonin, v.09, 17.Nov.14

goinvo.com
design studio



MIT
2.009 product design



PDF presentation just posted on Twitter

@jsonin



Getting Real

*The smarter, faster, easier way to
build a successful web application*

by 37signals

by 37signals

Achieving Excellence in your Design Practice

by Stuart W. Rose

by Stuart W. Rose

Design

Culture

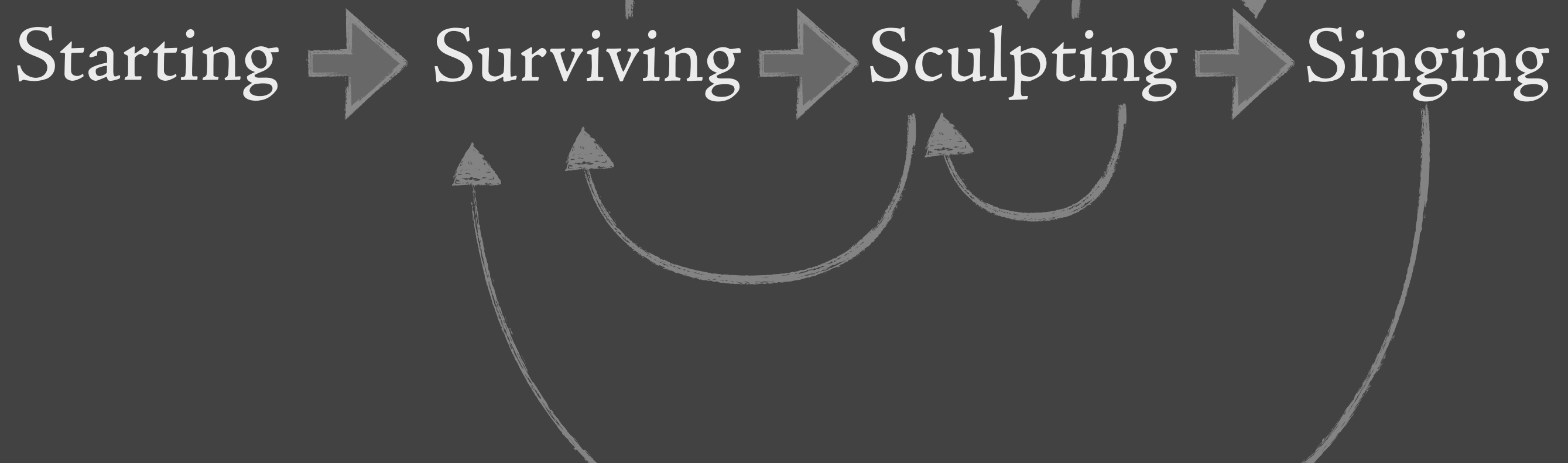
Running a Studio

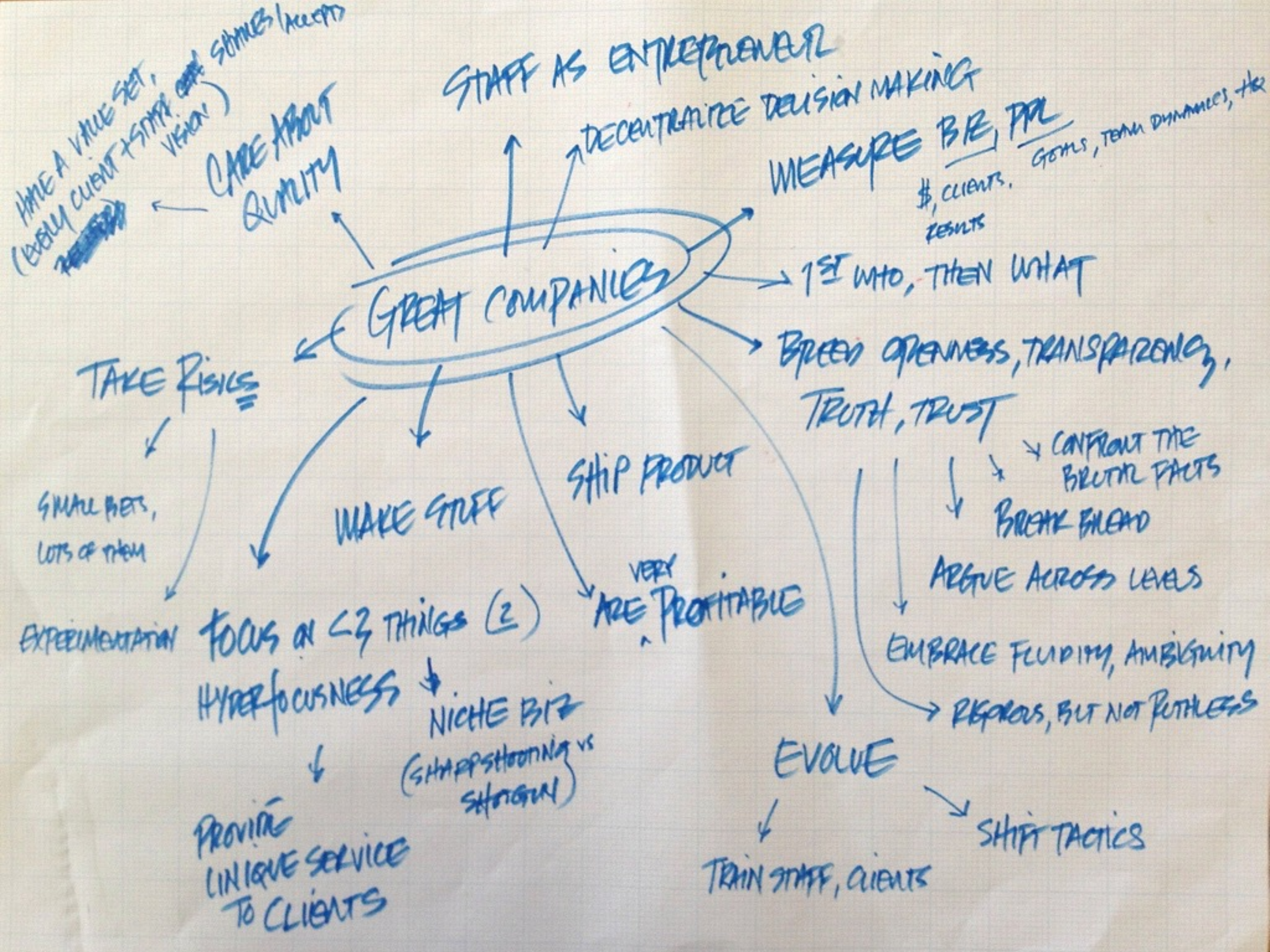
Business

Technology



Running a Studio





Studio Axioms

Define Who, then What

Your Culture is Your Company

The Case for Space

Build Like a Motherscratcher

Dance Card Fever

Counsel the Greybeards

Crush the Projects

Studio Axioms

Define Who, then What

Find an Amazing Partner
Find Employee #2, 3 Now
Hire Better than You
Interns are Integral
Have an Agenda

Your Culture is Your Company

Speak the Truth
Transparency Everywhere
Establish Citizenship
Staff as Entrepreneur
Small Bets
Hyperfocusness
Break Bread
The Positive No
Don't Sell. Just Serve.
Be Afraid. Just a little.

The Case for Space

Geo Matters
Space Matters
Size Matters
Big Prints = Bigger Impact

Build Like a Motherscratcher

Become a Craftsman.
Great Companies Code
You're IT. Go Cloud.
Make Stuff. Have Fun.
Details Make You

Dance Card Fever

Know Your Numbers
Don't Wait, Just Go
Get Real Data
Make Acceptance Criteria
Track Your Time
Use Lightweight Tools

Counsel the Greybeards

Seek Enlightened Lawyers and Accountants
Find a Mentor, Be a Mentor

Crush the Projects

Talk to God
Hire Smarter Clients Than You
Embrace Ambiguity
Drive, Don't Watch
You're Not Doing Enough
Diversify your Influence
From Protons to Galaxies

Define Who, then What

Find an Amazing Partner

Find Employee #2, 3 Now

Hire Better than You

Interns are Integral

Have an Agenda

Media Cafe, 1996

Software engineering and product design

12 people

Urbana, IL + Hoboken, NJ studios





Camille Goudeseune

remarkable 1st business partner and life-long friend

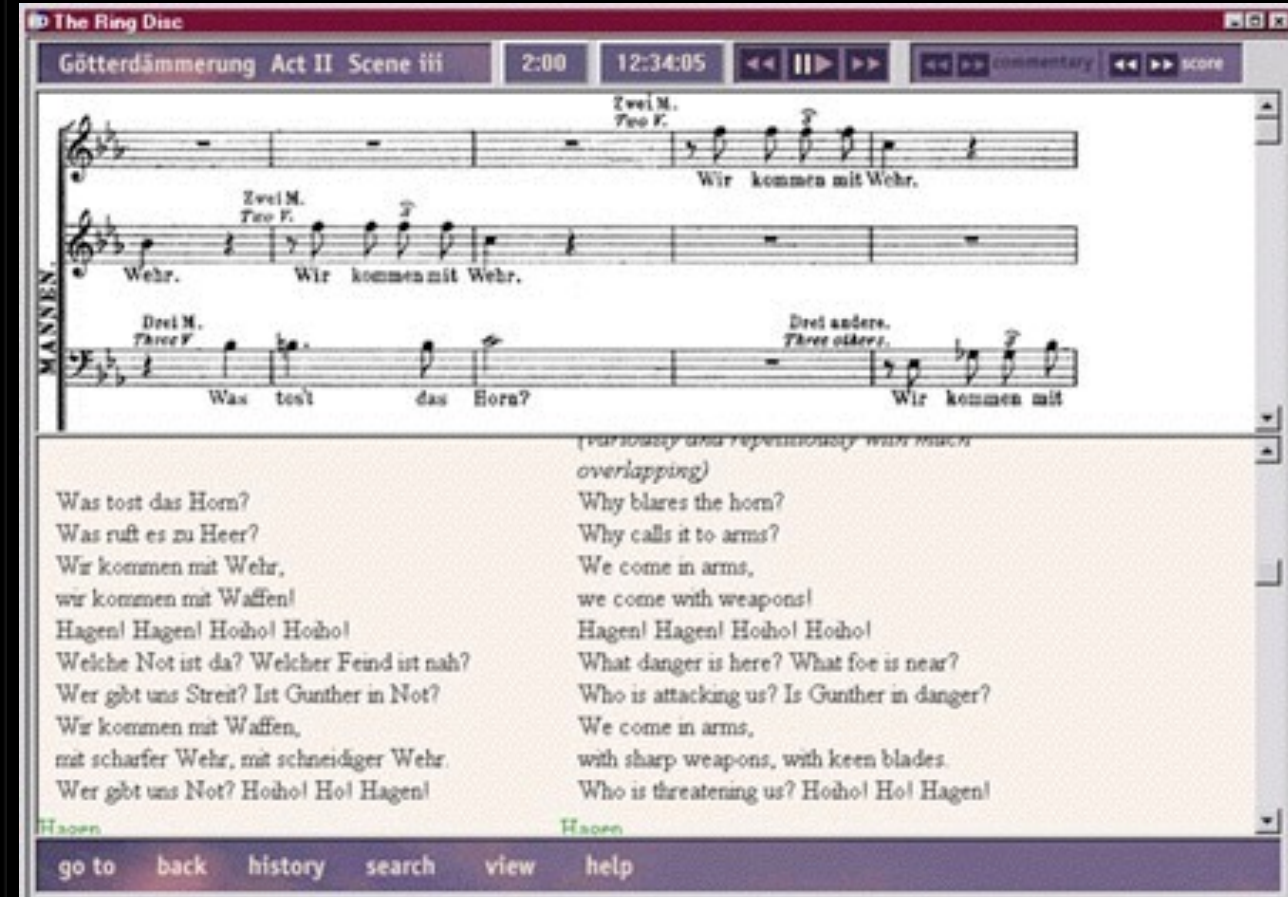
Open source zealot, Unix snob

Seriously considered becoming a monk

Musician, Audio engineer

Lead engineer on Win Word

B.S. in Math from Waterloo, PhD in Music and CS



Characters

RingDisc
1997

			Rhinedaughters	
			Flosshilde	Valkyries
			Wellgunde	Gerhilde
			Woglinde	Grimgerde
				Helmwige
				Ortlinde
				Roßweiße
				Schwertleite
				Siegrune
				Waltraute
				Wanderer
				Woodbird
				Wotan

Alberich
Brünnhilde
Donner
Erda
Fafner
Fasolt
Freia
Fricka
Froh
Gunther
Gutrune
Hagen
Hunding
Loge
Mime

Norns
First Norn
Second Norn
Third Norn

Siegfried
Sieglinde
Siegmund

Wanderer
Woodbird
Wotan

Lessons sorta learned

Making a COTS product

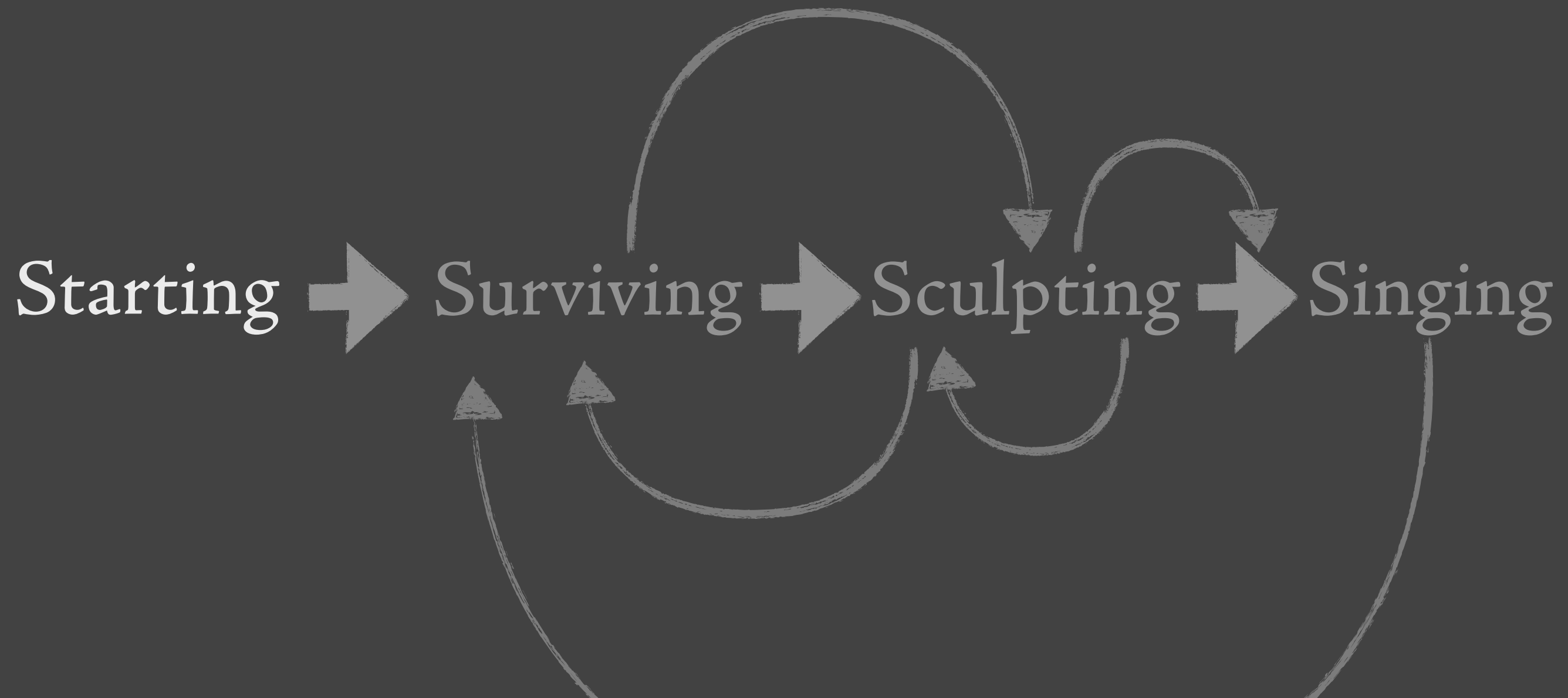
Microserf life: startup highs and lows

Trust

Balancing personal and professional agenda

Involution Studios

19.Jan.09



Find an amazing partner

... to anchor your company.

Design+business+technical can build a great culture

"I'd work for her [i.e. my partner]."

Axe-wielding
homicidal maniac or
managing director?



Dirk Knemeyer

Andrei Herasimchuk



Costs of Starting Up

rent (per month)	1,800
energy (per month)	400
5x desk, chairs	10,000
furniture nicknacks	1,000
3x Macs, 1x 30" LCD	8,000
Epson plotter	6,000
2x laser printers	800
Server, IT nicknacks	3,000
IT consultant	2,000
Lawyer	1,000
Accountant	1,000
Space renovation	3,000

\$41,600

could be chopped by 1/2

Start looking for employee *next*

At least know the types of people you need and where to go.

Hiring great talent takes time. Lots of it.

Tough Traction

Design positions in industry - more of them

Competing with Google, Facebook, Twitter, IDEO, Design Continuum, and high power design-centric companies

Salary

Invo has a little design cachet, but no major recognition in the design world (but we're working on that...)

Hire people who are better than us: There aren't many designers with 10+ years experience who are hands-on, have vision, and are fabulous

Need Identified



January						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

February						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12

March						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	1	2	3	4	5
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9

April						
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

May						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

June						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

July						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

August						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

September						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

October						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

November						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

December						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Offer Accepted



Start Date

goinvo.com/careers

ID/HCI discussion threads

Twitter, Facebook

Job Boards (37signals)

University Career Boards

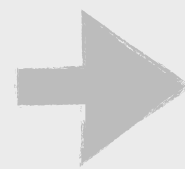
Portfolio Cruising

Local design meetings

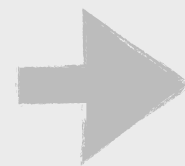
Conferences, Meetings

Personal and Staff Contacts

On-campus Career Days



~200 resumes



~50 phone interviews



8 in-person interviews



2 offers



1 accepts

Typical Process

Initial contact, email includes job description + portfolio

Require portfolio of candidate

Phone screen, 30m w/Juhan

If needed, phone chat, 30m with Eric

In person interview:

- ✦ 45m technical presentation to studio
- ✦ 1 hr w/Juhan
- ✦ 30m w/Eric
- ✦ 30m w/Jon
- ✦ 15m w/each staff

Extend offer or Thanks but no thanks

Salary negotiation

Hire or Thanks but no thanks

Lessons Sorta Learned

Finding outstanding design talent is extremely difficult.

Hiring a half-time job.

Mediocrity rules: lots of ok design people, very very few excellent designers

If you want to hire the best, compensate them accordingly (not just salary but creating their own micro-business)

Portfolios can be deceiving

Extend search mechanisms beyond typical practices... to NYC, San Fran, and Chicago-based publications, AIGA, west-coast universities, etc

Interns = integral staff

Great interns = next great staff

Deserve serious responsibilities,
project + task ownership

Make them smile

Weave them into everyday culture



A Fight for Interns

We're scheduling interns every quarter... almost a year in advance.

Scour portfolio sites on university CS + design departments

Post on college job boards (MIT, RISD, CMU, RIT, Olin, UC's)

We offer housing and \$1.2k/month stipend.

Where art thou Interns?

Rani @ Google



Oscar @Amazon



Rob @ Startup



Yang @ Microsoft



Dhaval @ Ebay Jen @Invo

Have an Agenda

Product design, OS hardware, usability,
software interface design...

What is going to get your rocks off?
Celltop, energy, health, skintop, what?

What's the thing you want to solve?

My Agenda

Software interface design consultancy

...evolving into a

Our own Product design MakeShop

physical and digital service design, industrial design, ME, EE, software dev

with a health, genomics, + energy focus

An Agenda Takes Time

in 2009, 0 dollars on internal projects

in 2010, 0 dollars

in 2011, \$150k

in 2012, \$220k

in 2013, \$250k...

Your Culture is Your Company



Your Culture is Your Company

Speak the Truth

Transparency Everywhere

Establish Citizenship

Staff as Entrepreneur

Small Bets

The Positive No

Hyperfocusness

Break Bread

Don't Sell. Just Serve.

Be Afraid. Just a little.

Speak the Truth

Changing the trust model with staff and the customer (a la FedEx did with package delivery).

Andy Grove engagement model:
honest, critical feedback to fellow colleagues
(gnaw on the idea, not the individual)... to make
us all better.

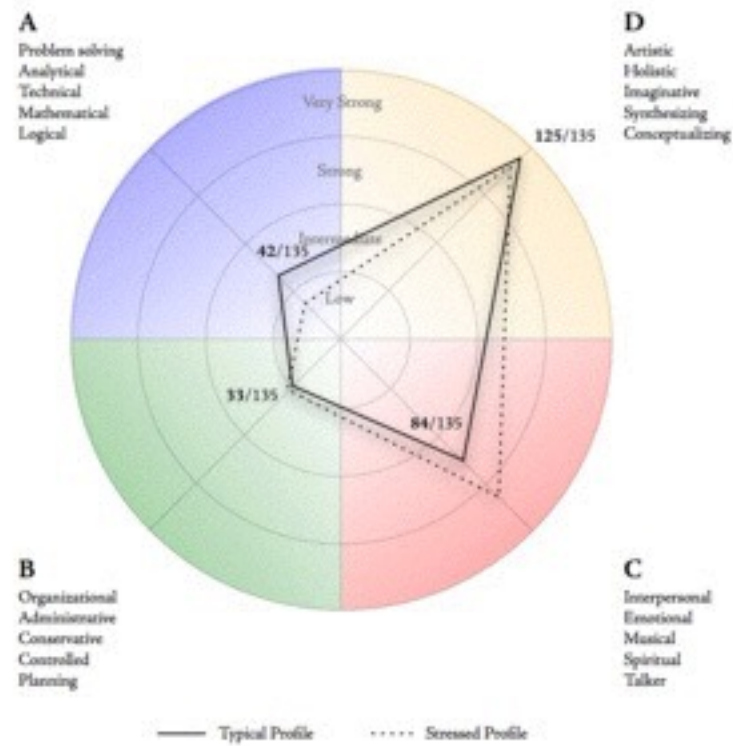
Transparency Everywhere

All aspects of the business need to be open to all staff... from financial to hiring to HR to projects to accounting

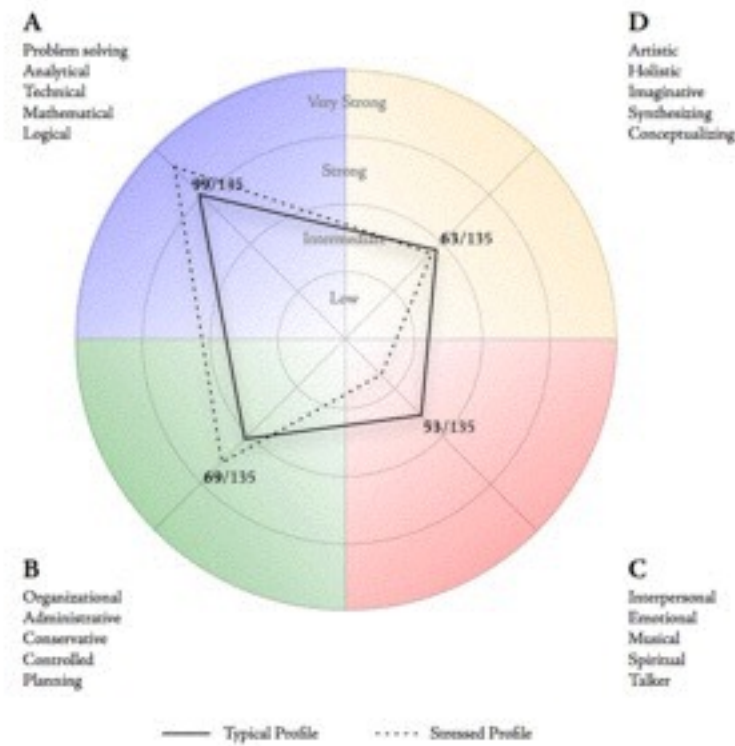
Openness breeds trust

Free electrons vs nucleus: if your staff doesn't understand the inner workings of your business, how can they really participate?

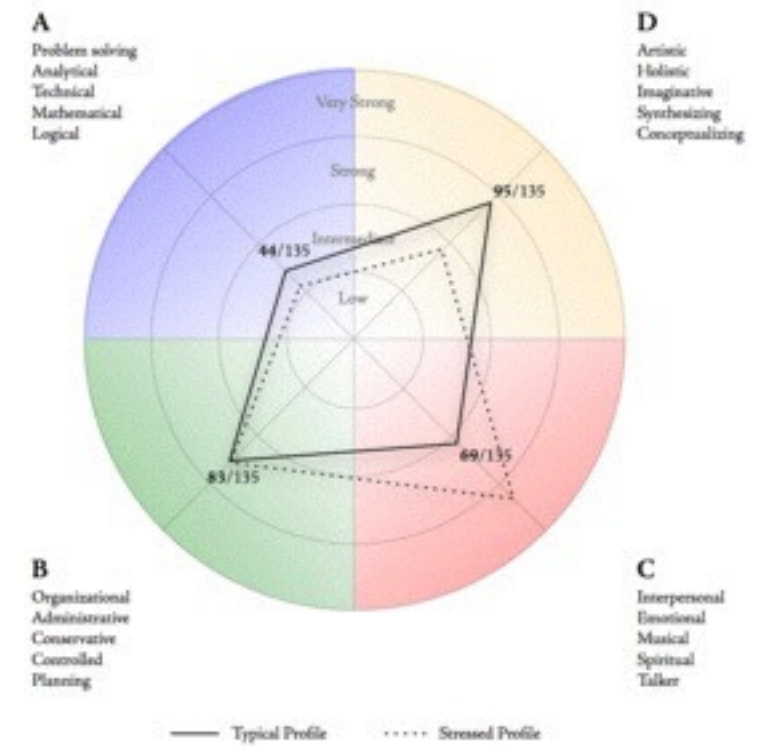
Juhan's HBDI Profile



Christian's HBDI Profile

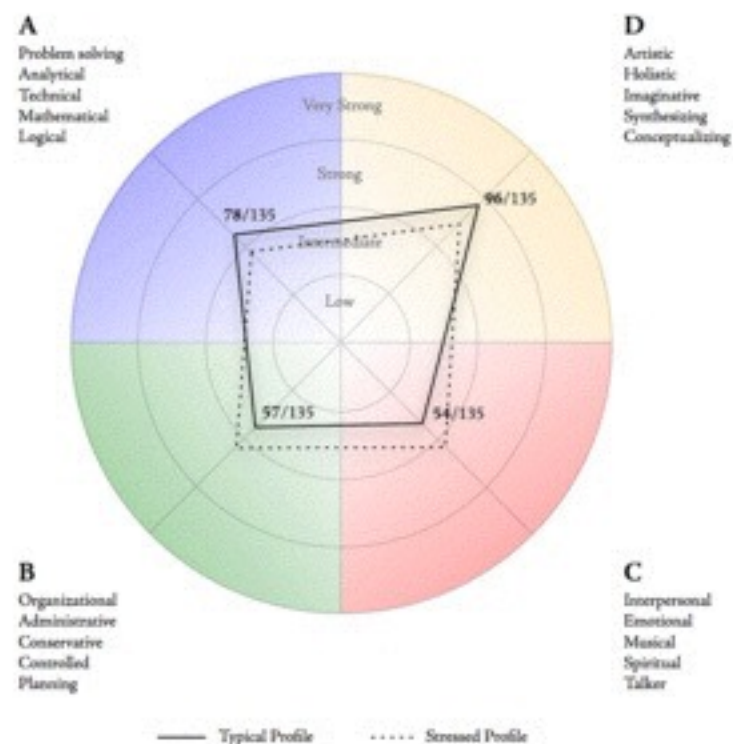


Dawa's HBDI Profile

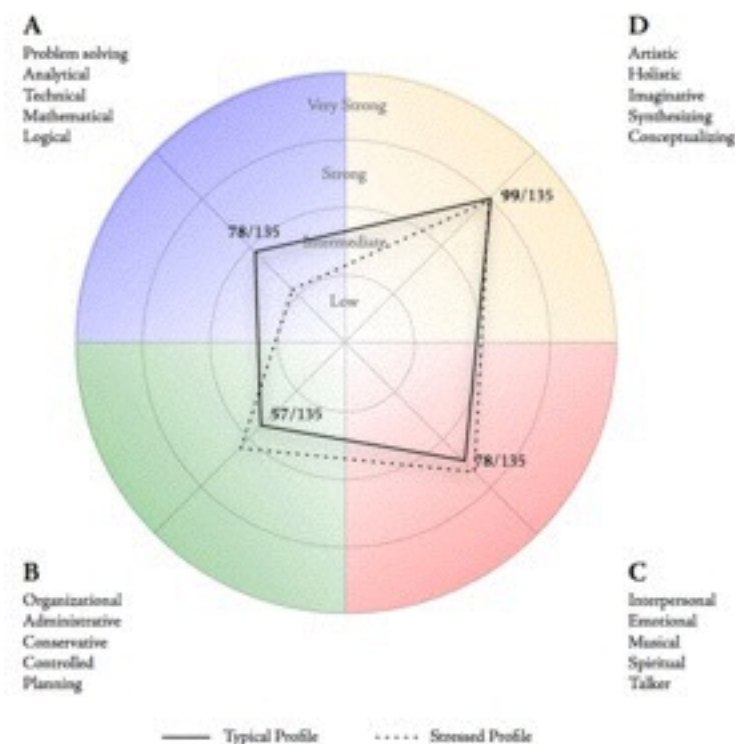


Our data is public (within the firewall)

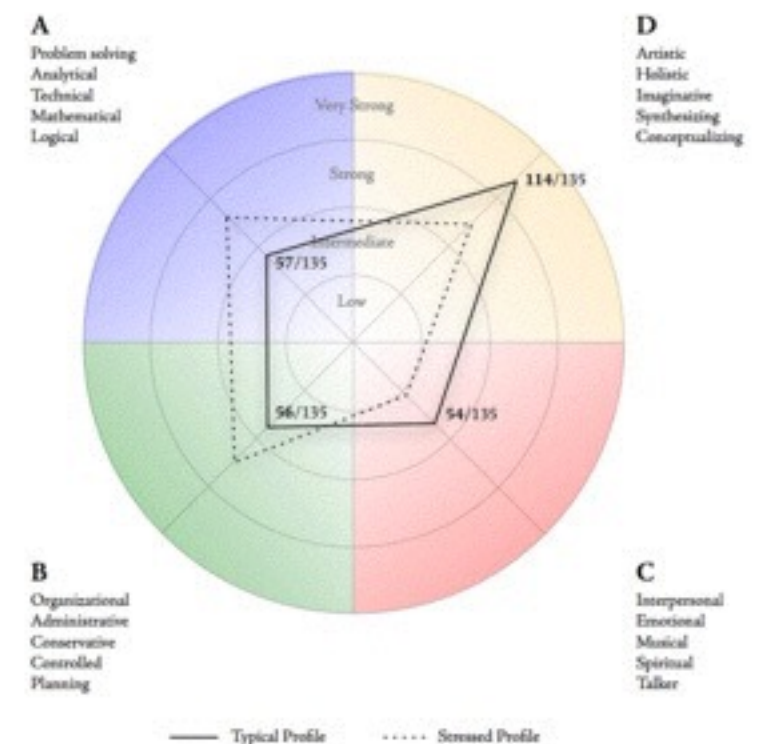
Eric's HBDI Profile



Jon's HBDI Profile



Dirk's HBDI Profile



Establish Citizenship

Design a minimum rule set to be a remarkable studio citizen

Code of Ethics (expectations across our work)

Constitution (rules of engagement inside the firewall)



Speak the Truth

We shall be honest and objective, inside and outside the firewall.

We shall be transparent, provide insight into as much of our thinking and work processes as possible.

Be Accountable

We shall be responsible designers and engineers, held accountable for our actions and commitments to the studio, clients, and society.

We shall meet our deadlines and keep our promises.

Focus and Deliver

We shall commit to creating meaningful goals to our fellow staff, projects, and clients.

We shall produce useful, usable, and beautiful solutions.

Learn, Build, and Share

We shall develop our skills throughout our careers and provide guidance and educational opportunities for our colleagues and clients.

We shall embrace change and be flexible in our processes, operations, and values.

Protect the Public

We shall hold paramount the safety, health, welfare and other rights of human beings.



Speak the Truth

We tell the truth to others, with the intention and in the way of trying to do the most possible good.

Learn, Share & Build

We are curious, open creators who welcome new ideas and the input and ideas of others.

Go Like Hell

We are driven and committed to what we do, putting in exceptional effort in our quest for exceptional results.

Make the World Useful and Beautiful

We exercise the discipline required to produce ideas and things that are useful to and beautiful in the world.

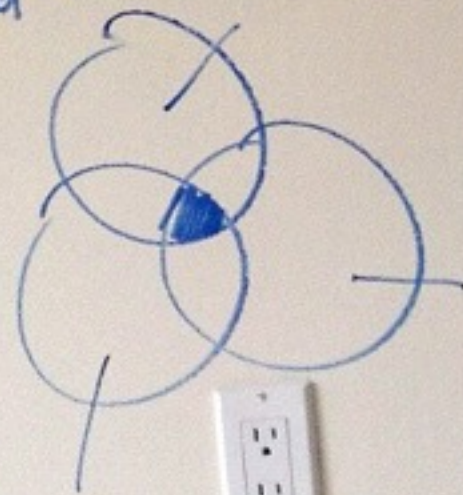
Protect and Delight

We live in intentional ways, vigilant to protect others while thoughtful to also delight them.

Establish Citizenship

Design a minimum rule set to be a remarkable studio citizen

1. Provide remarkable service to your customer and your team.
2. Proactively manage your Staffplan, work schedule, yearly goals
3. Find or create at least one job opportunity a year.
4. Update your resume, skills, and biography by the 3rd Friday in every January.
5. Write at least one 500 word white paper or produce a technical concept poster, once a year.
6. Meet your deadlines; keep your promises.
7. Speak the truth.
8. Find the work you are meant to do; actively manage your career.
9. Give back to the group, Invo, the OSS community, the world...
10. Be a mentor for at least 1 person. Extreme code/design regularly with 1 person.
11. Raise our Design IQ: create artifacts and share your knowledge. Give it away.
12. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.
13. Attend at least 1 class or conference a year.
14. Help hire others who are better than you.



- Decentralizing decisions
- making decisions as a team
 - not one person laying down the hammer

Culture of Disruption



- Communication
- Staff & Clients
- orgs across levels (rigorous, not ruthless)
 - constant line of communication
 - knowing their values
 - * FEEDBACK *
 - how their project is going

Investment

- staff → training courses

Belief & Values

- Staff - know & deliver
- Company Mission
- first who, then what

Experiments

- what works & doesn't
- lots of small bets
- expect most to fail

US

- small teams
- selective on talent per project
- no layers of people
 - who you're working
 - who you work for
 - direct work relations
- engineering & design married application
 - wholistic
- transparency & openness
 - helps prepare noobs better for going out there

Company niche

- specialties & skills
- being hyperfocused
 - ↳ unique values
 - know it, be it

People types

- cogs in the machine of the company
- Strengths & weaknesses
- dichotomies/combinations

US/client relationship

- problem solving for client
- ongoing relationship w/ client
 - operations & management
 - ~ don't undercut

Task Groups

- lot staff solve problems (sometimes through experimentation)

involutionstudios

FIELD GUIDE



#11 ROCK *the* STATUS QUO

SEE YOUR STUFF
Print out your work. The physicality of having your work in the real world, instead of just living on your computer, allows you to see your designs more clearly and track the maturity of your creative process.

BE A FREE ELECTRON

The farther away you are from the nucleus, the farther away you are from the mediocre, staid, middle-of-the-road market, and your idea becomes more interesting and potentially impactful. So be a free electron and extend a finger to the creamy, slow-moving, business-as-usual center.

THERE ARE 10^{27} WAYS TO SKIN A CAT

With hundreds of potential good solutions, find and fight for the best few. Have your own vision and voice to defend it. Scrutinize the dogmas you've been fed. We all have the power to make a difference in the world, and believing in your point of view is step one.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Confidence and talent will only get you so far if you haven't thoroughly learned the tools of the trade. Know the rules so you can be smart about breaking them.

#10 PUBLISH *or* PERISH

TELL THE WORLD

Make your work as accessible as possible. Showing your work means that you can't hide it in the privacy of your hard drive. Open up your work for others to see and absorb their feedback. Revel in the free advice and ad hoc collaboration that comes with visibility. When appropriate, post outside the Invo firewall.



#1 SHIP GREAT STUFF

SCREW GOOD ENOUGH

Meh just won't cut it. The product has to ROCK our world. We create stunning services and products and accept nothing less from you.

PROTOTYPE LIKE CRAZY

Design and deliver rapid prototypes to sharpen customer requirements, expand our tech skills, and evolve our design and business IQ. There's no better way to see what works and what doesn't.

DESIGN + BUSINESS + TECHNOLOGY

Everything we do needs to be a combination of these three essentials.



#2 STAFF as ENTREPRENEUR

LEAD

Direct your own projects, contribute to staffing decisions, and train both yourself and others.

SET GOALS

Goals are important benchmarks for self-improvement and direction. Set goals for improving your technical skills and for directing your personal and professional life.

CULTIVATE SIDE PROJECTS

Find and develop your own gigs that meet your interests and support the studio's goals.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Never get too comfortable. If you're not challenging yourself, you're not growing.

PROPEL THE STUDIO MISSION

Keep the big picture in mind. You're a part of something bigger - creating awesome products that will have a positive impact on people's lives.





Straight outta Endor

Welcome Jennifer Patel to Invo Boston.

Jennifer is a rare hybrid who breathes life into crafting software using both a design and engineering eye. Graphic design, typography, Javascript, Processing, HTML, and CSS are only part of her technical arsenal.

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she received her bachelor degree in New Media Design and Imaging from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY in 2011.

My blood type is coffee + code.



Welcome Ben Salinas to Invo Boston.

Part mathematician, product designer, and entrepreneur, Ben brings a multi-disciplinary approach to design and engineering to the studio.

Ben was brewing his software development skills as a research systems engineer at Parietal Systems, Inc (PSI) for the past two years. Simultaneously, he co-founded Luminaire Coffee Equipment, and invented, designed, and built next generation commercial coffee



Artist. Teacher. Writer.

Welcome Emily Twaddell to Involution Studios.

Emily brings her instructional design, healthcare, technical writing, and teaching skills to be Involution's studio manager.

Emily recently hails from healthcare giant McKesson, where she designed web-based training materials for healthcare payer and provider

Staff as Entrepreneur



The Business of Ben

Engineer, Designer, Maker

Leads projects + other staff

Mentors staff + clients

Entrepreneur outside the firewall

Next up: Bringing in work (new + repeat)



#4 TAKE SMALL BETS



TAKE RISKS

Risks are a form of experimentation. Come up with an idea, model it, and figure out how to implement it. Then, test your idea and study the results. What worked? What didn't? Repair it, refine it, and then try it again. The more tests you do, the more material you have to work with and the better your chances are for success.



USE IT OR LOSE IT

Implement your experiments in the real world. Involve risk-taking in your projects and share your attitude and ideas with your clients. Your clients should never be treated as uneducated patrons. They're usually smarter than us.

KNOW WHEN TO GO ALL IN

Make the case for a big bet. An idea will never grow to its full potential if you're only giving it half your attention.

Small Bets = Increased IQ

Instead of analyzing over and over, ask what it would cost to find out by doing it?

The cost of conducting an experiment is often less than the cost of proposing/planning it.

= inexpensive learning.

Small Bets with Clients

Success criteria in inexpensive learning = tests can relate to your client.

Your client shouldn't be treated as an uneducated patron who wouldn't understand. Share your ideas. Wrap them into your attitude of experimentation.

On every project, some aspect can be experimental.

Recent Small Bets...

Health Axioms (\$20k)


healthaxioms.com



Card deck,
website,
iOS app

Arlington Visual Budget (\$20k)

arlingtonvisualbudget.org

Arlington, MA 

Town Budget, Visualized

Revenues

Expenses

Funds & Reserves

Search

Map view

Tabular view

2013



Expenses

All uses of money to provide town & school services.
For more information, see the [Glossary](#).

Go back

\$2000

your yearly tax contribution.

\$125 M

in 2013.

+ 5.04%

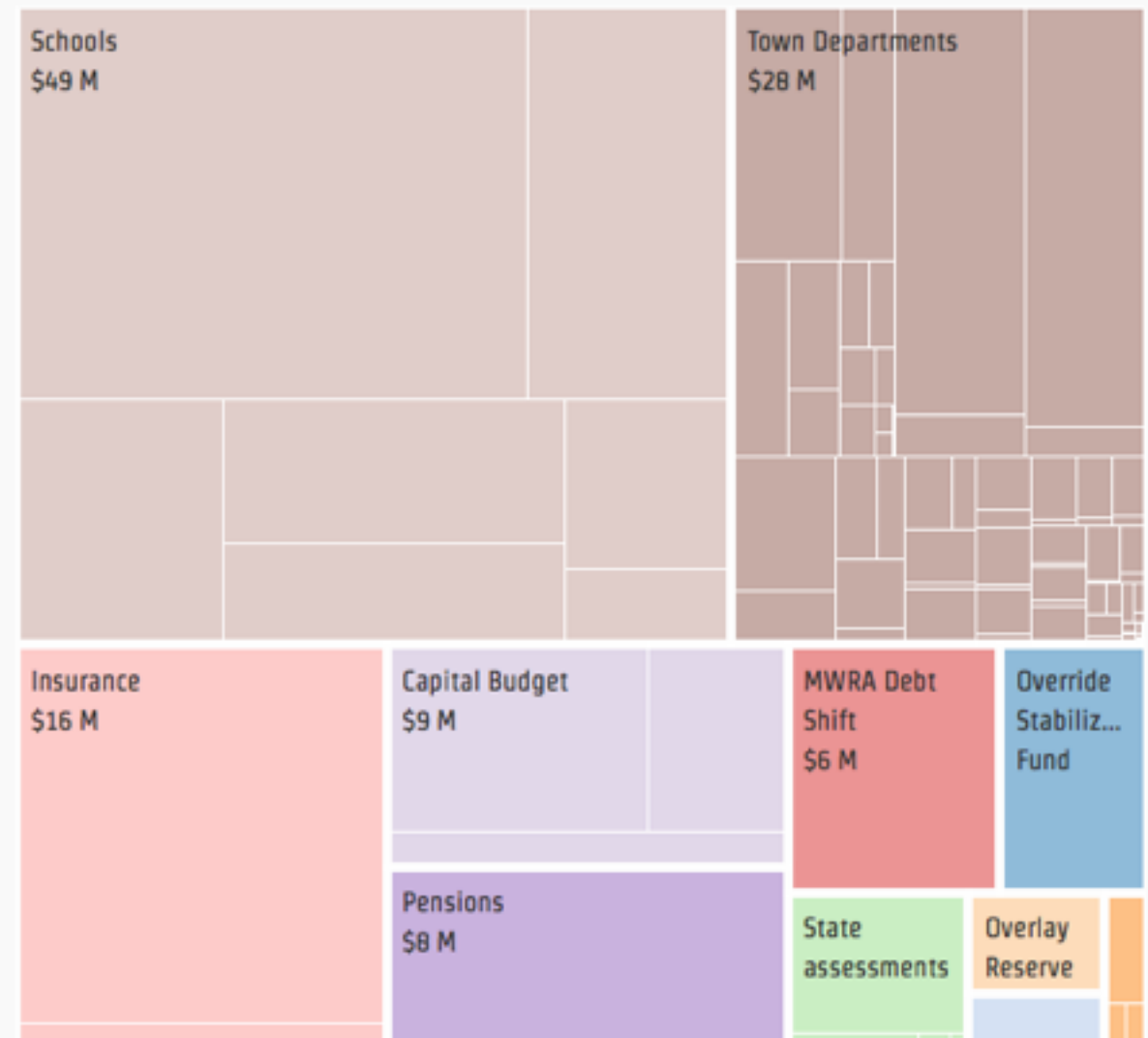
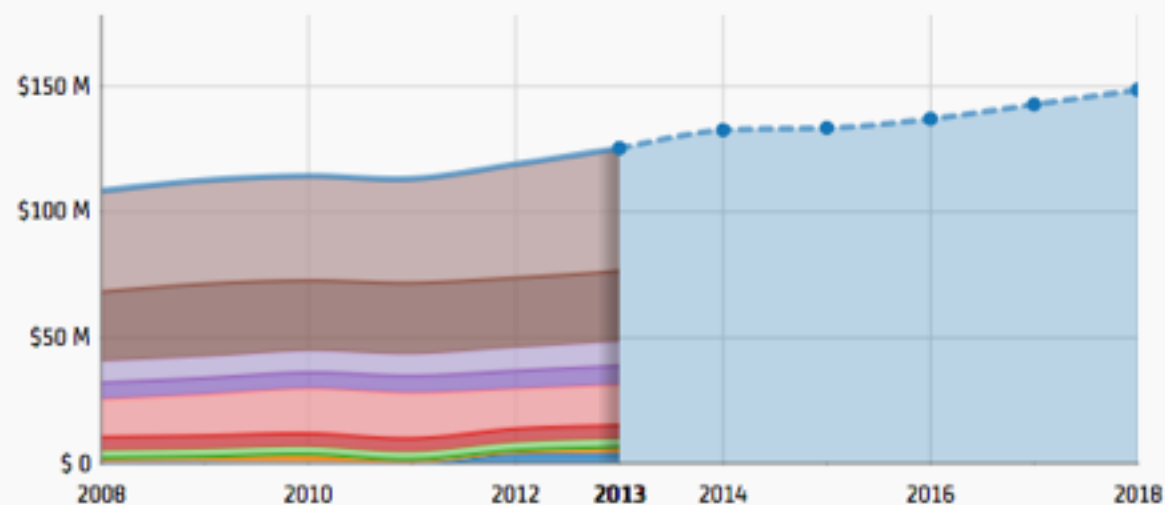
compared to previous year.

\$126 M

on average.

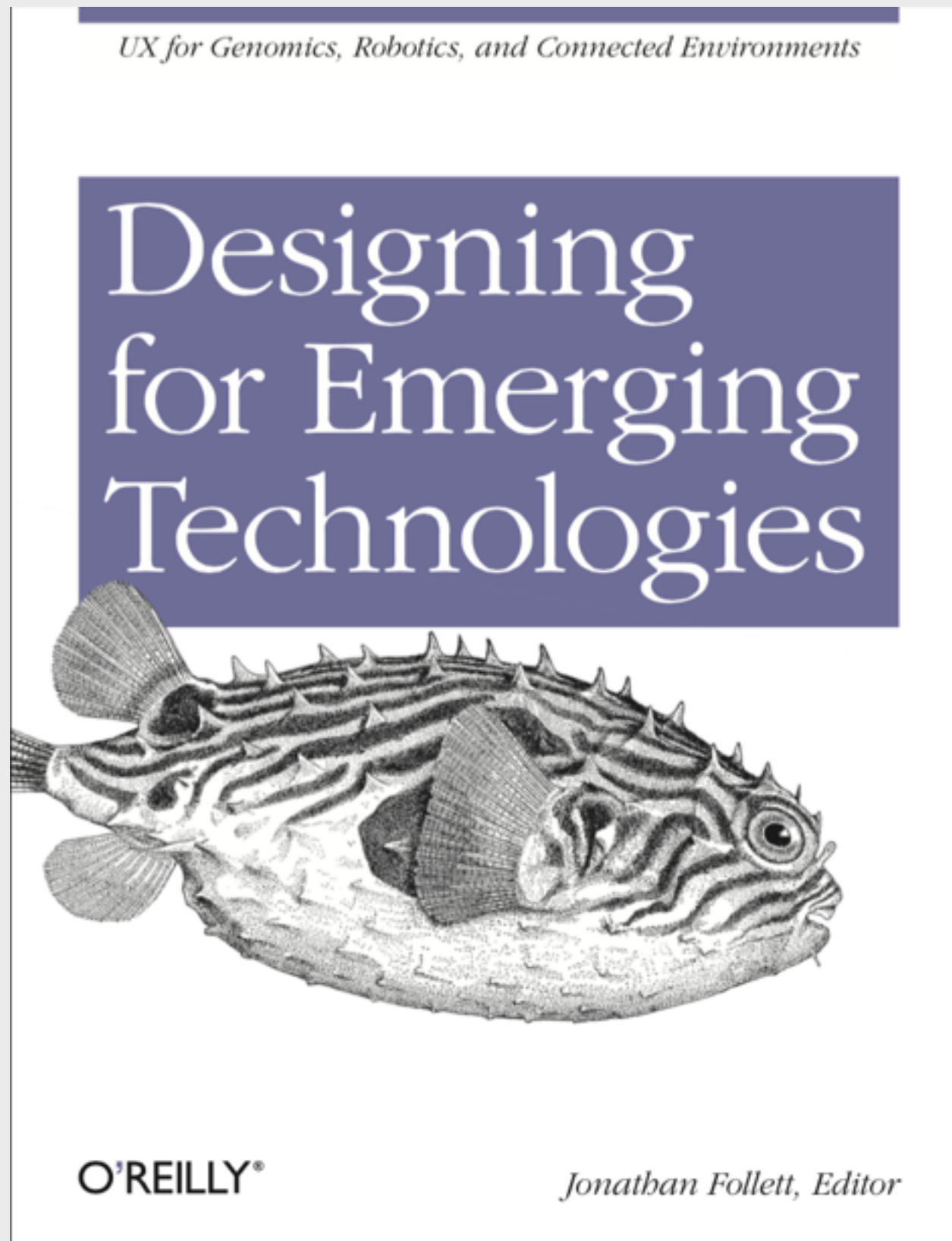
[Town of Arlington](#)

is the data source for this entry.



Designing for Emerging Tech (\$20k)

O'Reilly Book release in Dec 2014 by Jon Follett



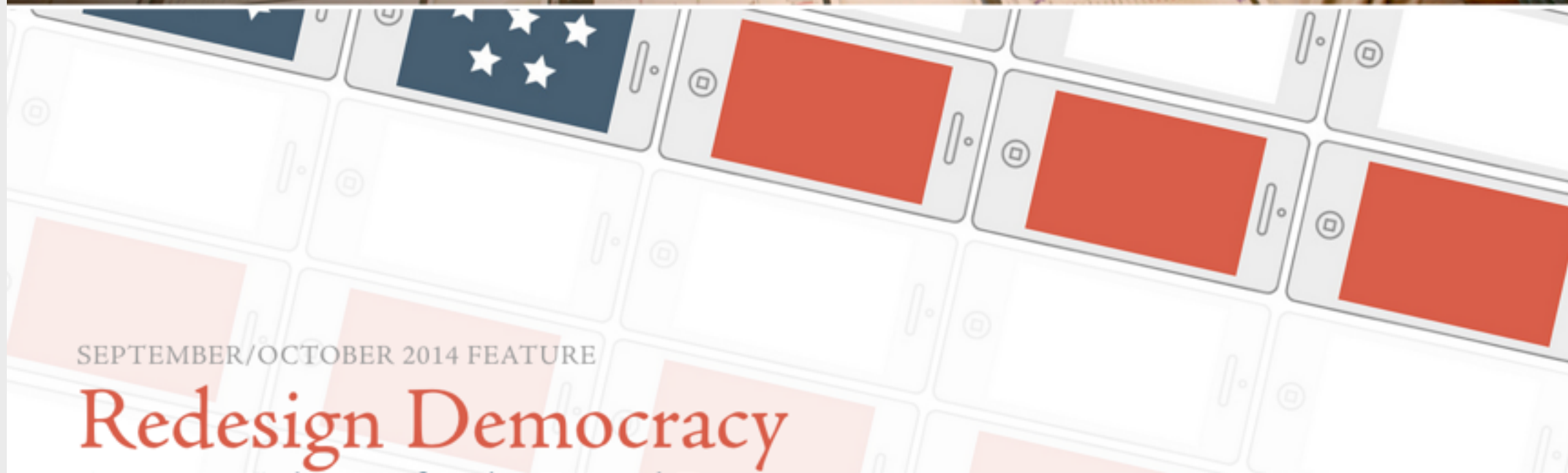
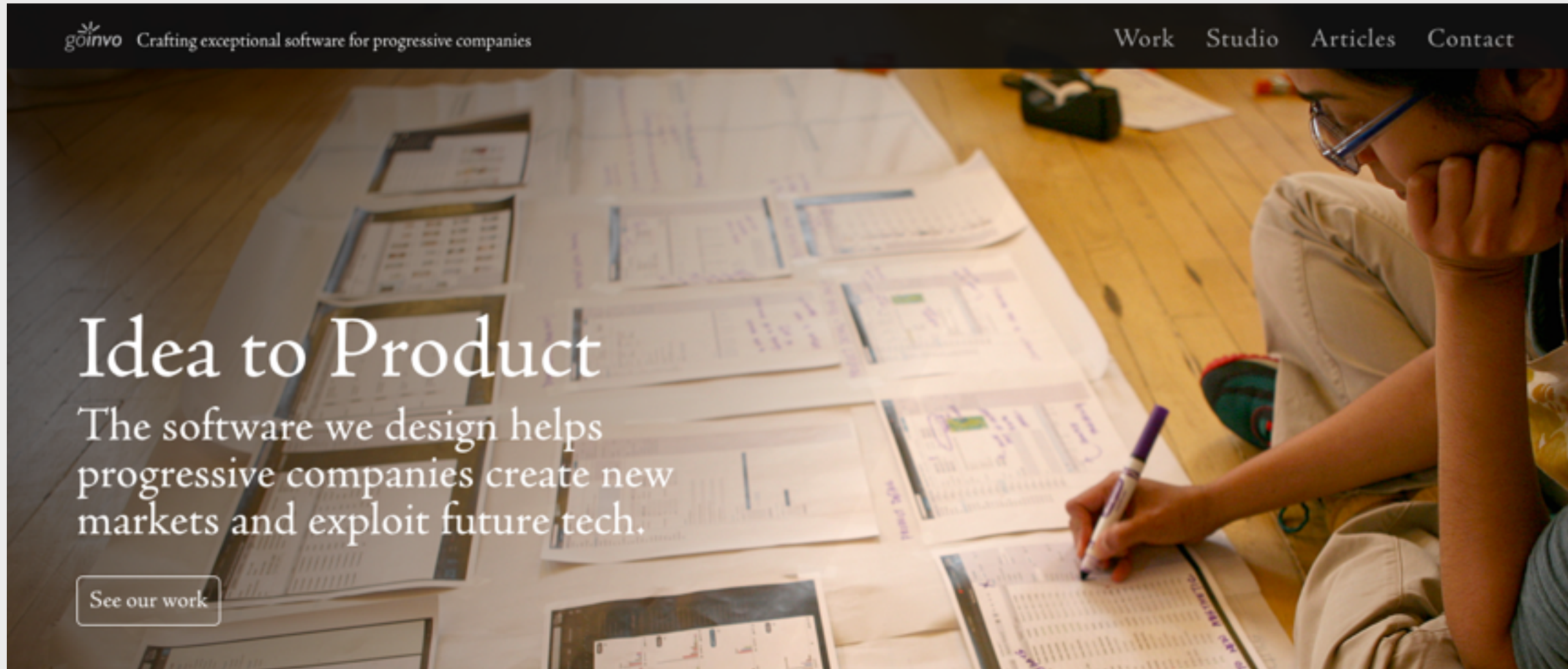
genetic engineering
biohacking
neuroscience
skintop
health
sensor dust
robotics
3d printing

staffplan.com



Studio Website (\$70k)

goinvo.com

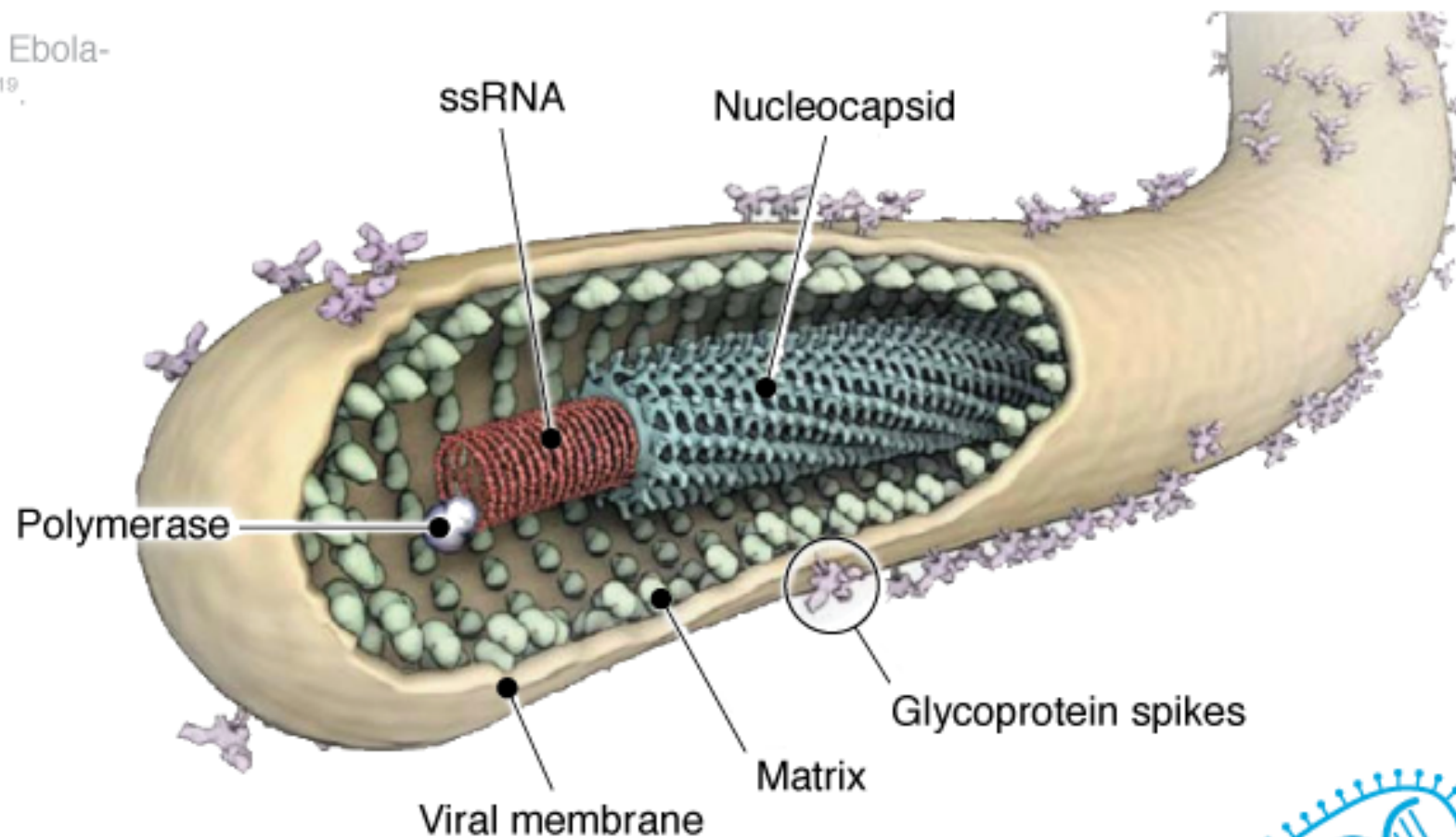
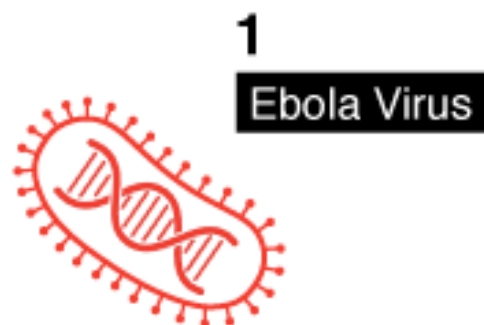


Visual Guide to Ebola (\$5k)

goinvo.com/features/ebola

Filamentous up to 1000 nm long for Ebola-virus. Diameter is about 80nm^{16 17 18 19}

— 20 nm



2

Attachment. Endocytosis

Ebola virus fuses with cells lining respiratory tract, eyes or body cavities

5

Assembly. Budding

New copies of the virus are produced and released back into system



3



Other Small Bets... in the past 3 years

Design Axioms (\$20k)

Bytes and Atoms (\$12k)

Invo Live (\$8k)

Runnan (\$8k)

PainTrackr (\$15k)

The Digital Life podcast (\$20k)

Dojo, ipad game (\$80k)

Fac.io (\$300k)

Total \$250k

Small Bets... in the *next* 12 months

Invo Website (\$25k)

PR professionals (\$30k)

Health Axioms v2 (\$15k)

NuCare (\$20k)

#2 FOCUS YOUR FOCUS

SHARPSHOOT

At Invo, we're sharpshooters, not shotgunners. When you divide your attention between too many things, you lose focus and direction.

PRIORITIZE

Unlike people, projects are not created equal. Decide which one needs your attention and concentrate on getting it done. The most important work isn't always the most interesting. Plan your time well so every project has its chance in the sun.



A group of about ten people are gathered in a meeting room. They are seated around a long table covered with a green tablecloth. The table is set with various items including water bottles, coffee cups, and food containers. The room has large windows with wooden blinds. The walls are covered with numerous yellow sticky notes, some of which are organized into columns and rows. A man in a dark shirt is standing on the left, looking towards the group. A woman in a white jacket is standing on the right, looking at the sticky notes. The overall atmosphere is collaborative and focused.

Break Bread







Nutrition + Life Coach



Broccoli Moco

- great @ lowering cholesterol, when steamed
- DETOXIFIES!
really scrubs you out
- Vitamin D
(+A+K, which helps vit D metabolism)
- Flavonoid kaempferol
= anti-allergies
(lessens allergic response)

KALE!!!



One of the most health-supportive things in this kitchen, Kale:

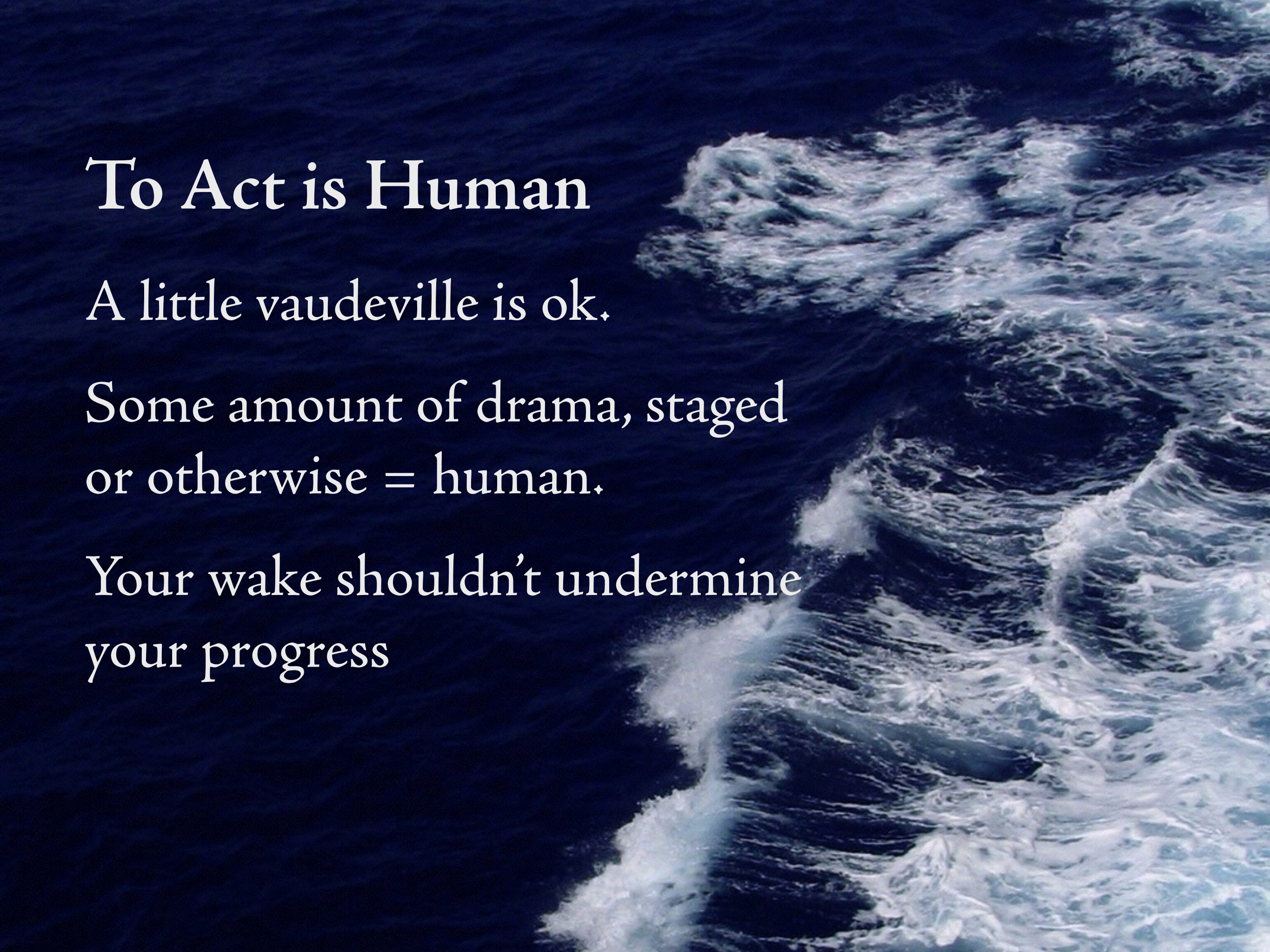
- Per calorie, has more iron than beef
- Has lots of Vit. K (brain! ♥! bones!)
- Packed w/ antioxidants (aging! cancer prevention!)
- Is great for detox. Very cleansing!
- Per calorie, has more calcium than milk
- Lots of Vit. C+A
- Anti-inflammatory (a root cause of many diseases)

To Act is Human

A little vaudeville is ok.

Some amount of drama, staged
or otherwise = human.

Your wake shouldn't undermine
your progress



Don't sell. Just serve.

Host an event.

Host people.

Host ideas.

Let go of your company name.

Don't sell. Just serve.





VENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN

New paths can be a bit scary, but that's where discovery and excitement are born. From the darkness of chaos comes light. We are here to support you.

FEAR IS A TOOL FOR LEARNING

Fear forces us to learn. It propels us forward so we don't get left behind.

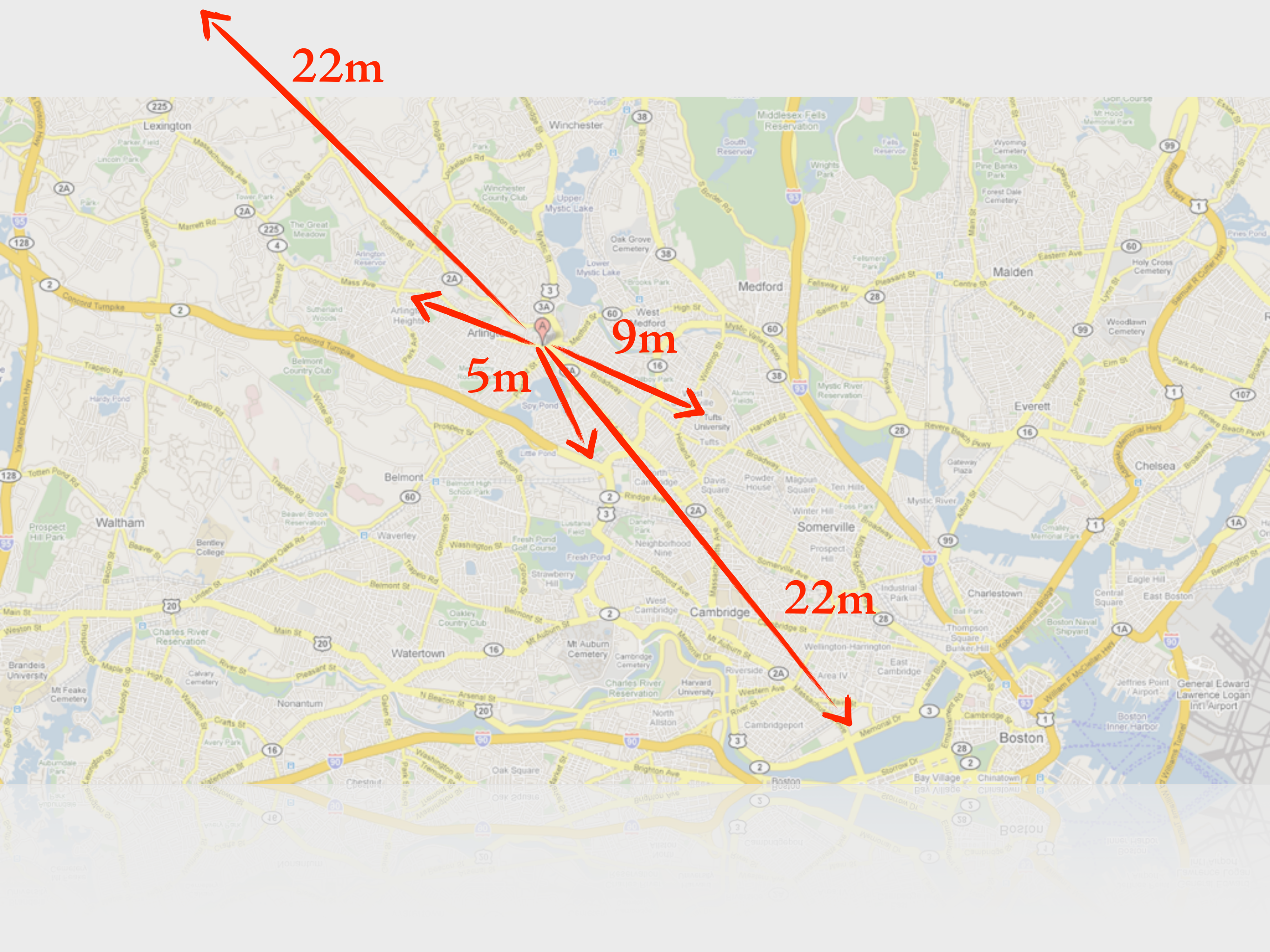
#6
BE AFRAID,
JUST A LITTLE

Geo matters

While we have to mentally and physically accommodate remote working, *nothing* beats sitting side-by-side with your team.

Cambridge = 28% of Health GDP, hit a lecture by a nobel prize winner, easier to recruit...

Arlington = 9 min away from Cambridge, 1/8th the cost, amazing space (*my justification*)



22m

9m

5m

22m

Space matters

I WANT to go to work... and love the design of the space.

This doesn't mean you need to have a swanky, high-gloss space (in fact, quite the opposite).







Design your Chapel

A “nicely put together” space is cold.

A studio isn't a timeshare condo, ie not lived in
or engaging.

Design your Chapel

Arrange with care vs just arranged

Beloved objects give people comfort

Photographs prompt happy memories





Clippings

Anthropologie

Rejuvenation

Restoration Hardware

Portland Salvage

New England Salvage

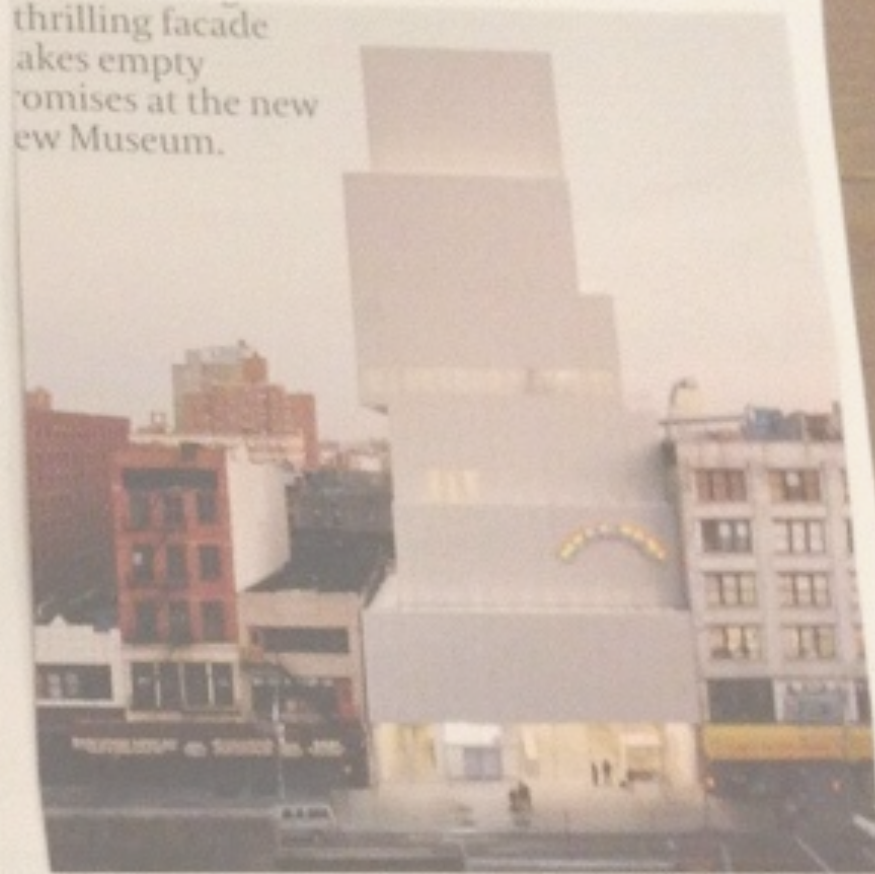
TradeBuzz

Get Back Ink Furniture

From the Source

Interior Designers (2x)

thrilling facade
akes empty
romises at the new
ew Museum.



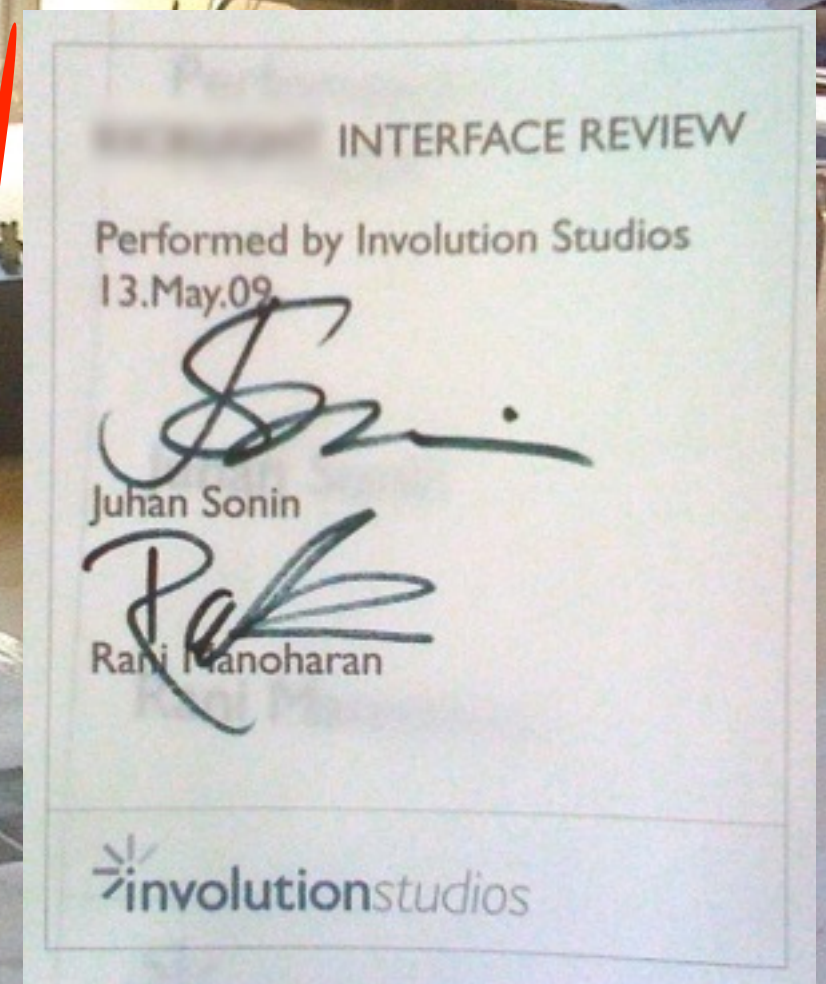
"ReCode assumes all Australians
are perverts."











Dance Card Fever

Don't Wait, Just Go


Know Your Numbers

Get Real Data

Make Acceptance Criteria

Track Your Time

Use Lightweight Tools

An illustration of a young man with dark hair, wearing a red jacket over a grey shirt and blue pants. He is pointing his right index finger towards a bar chart. In the background, there is a line graph with a blue line showing fluctuations. Below him is a green donut chart with several small colored dots (orange, grey, red) around its perimeter.

#3

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

KNOW THE COST

Know how much your projects cost and how much it takes the studio to operate. If you don't understand, just ask someone.

TRACK YOUR TIME

Record how many hours you spend on projects. See how you're spending your time and prioritize your tasks.

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Linear thinking human beings are not good at non-linear thinking. Yet our work is increasingly multi-dimensional. When it comes time to make hard choices, coordinate and present the key artifacts driving decisions. Have rationale for your possible courses of action. Envision the unintended consequences. And go!

Know your Numbers: Rate Cards

\$8k

per week

1 full-time designer
with oversight from Juhan Sonin

\$10k

per week

1 full-time designer
(either Juhan, Erik, or Jon)

Know your Numbers: Rate Cards

...Then adjust \$\$ if you:

Need to get smarter in a particular domain

Want to work with X

Bust in to a new industry

Have a bigger human impact

\$TBD
per week

Get Real Data

= make better decisions.

Believing the story you want versus truth through data.

Show the lie.

What's your monthly run rate? FTE?

What is your client's current happiness quotient?

Monthly Expenditures	Cost (\$1000s)
payroll, contractors	90
rent, energy	9
healthcare	15
IT services, insurance	6
accounting, software, hardware	5
food, studio extras	3
credit card, other	15
	\$143

Know the Cost

How much does a project really cost (internal vs client charged)?

How much does a staff member cost from salary to healthcare to overhead to vacation to training to...?

Make Acceptance Criteria

Why are you taking this job? Should you take it?

bring in money

make \$\$

learning

fun (learning and fun = the same)

new techniques, ideas

great clients

open source

big data

info viz

national importance

good for the soul/karma

impact++ on entire product,
customer business

impact++ for planet earth

hardware + software

wetware, hardware, + software

Job Acceptance Criteria

Project	Money	Domain	Clients	Fun	Open source	Increase our IQ	Strategic Opptny	Enterprise	Consumer	Gaming	Big Data	Mobile	Impact	Total
Project A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Project B	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
Project C	0	0	(-)1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Project D	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Project E	1	1	(-)1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
Project F	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Project G	(-)1	1	(-)1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2
Project H	0	1	(-)1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	8
Project I	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	8
Project J	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
Project K	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
Project L	0	0	0	(-)1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Project M	0	0	0	(-)1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Project N	0	0	(-)1	(-)1	0	0	(-)1	1	0	0	0	0	0	(-)2
Project O	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	7
Project P	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Project Q	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	8
Project R	(-1)	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	(-)1	2
Project S	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	7

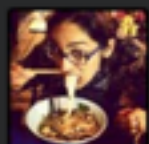
Track your time

How do you know you're making money on a project? Losing money?

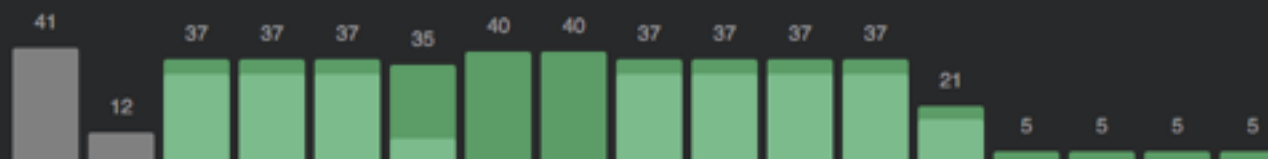
Often forgotten about, time tracking allows you to instrument your business.

Once a week, put in how many hours you spend on projects/tasks (everyone in your shop needs to do the same).

Collect data, see how your business really works.



Reshma Mehta



Client

+ Project

< 11/3 11/10 11/17 11/24 12/1 12/8 12/15 12/22 12/29 1/5 1/12 1/19 1/26 2/2 2/9 2/16 2/23 >
Nov Dec Jan (2014) Feb

Conference



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

36

Actual

0 0

47 Δ+11

New Business



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2

Actual

0 0

28 Δ+26

Website



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

8

Actual

0 0

53 Δ+45

SV Studio Planning



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

6

Actual

0 0

17 Δ+11

Corporate

+ Training



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

26

Actual

0 0

41 Δ+15

Vacation



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 20 40 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

152

Actual

0 0

88 Δ64

Holiday



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 40 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

40

Actual

0 0

32 Δ8

SSI

+ Pricing Tool



Plan

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

42

Actual

0 0

49 Δ+7

RapidMiner

+ Software UI v1



Plan

32 32 32 32 32 10 0 0 32 32 32 32 16 0 0 0 0

98

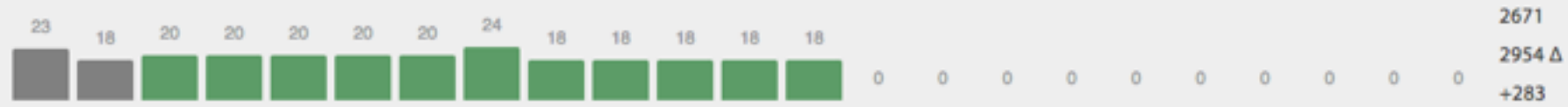
Actual

39 11

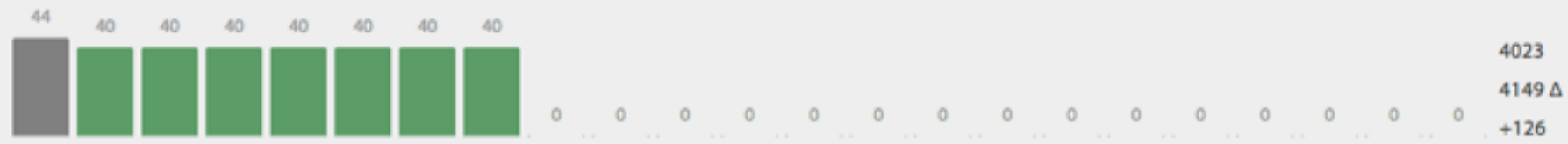
103 Δ+5



Ben Salinas



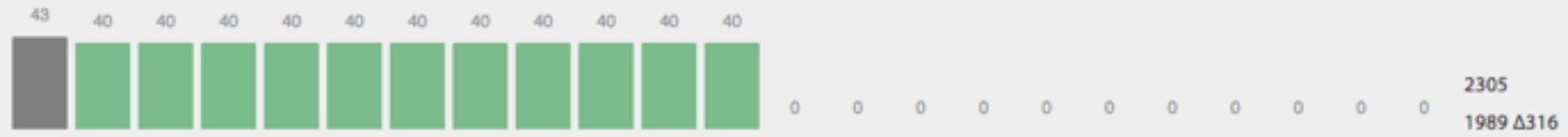
Jon Follett



Erik Dahl



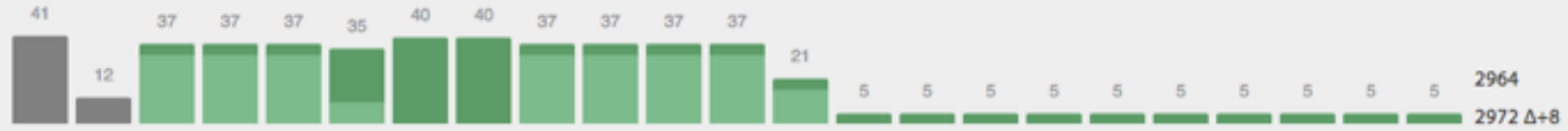
Roger Zhu



Emily Twaddell



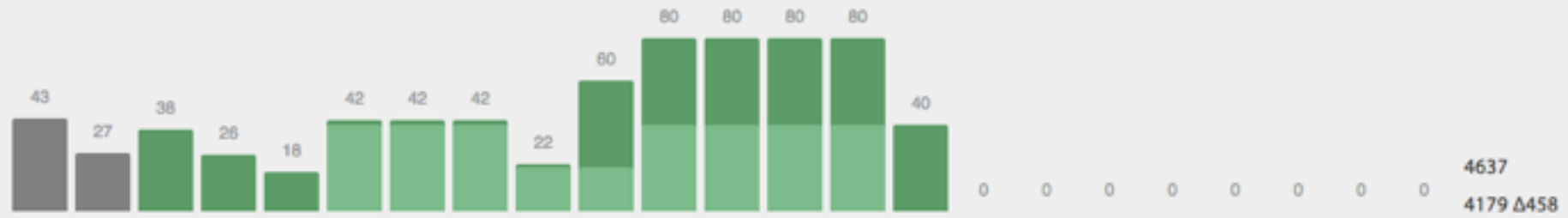
Reshma Mehta



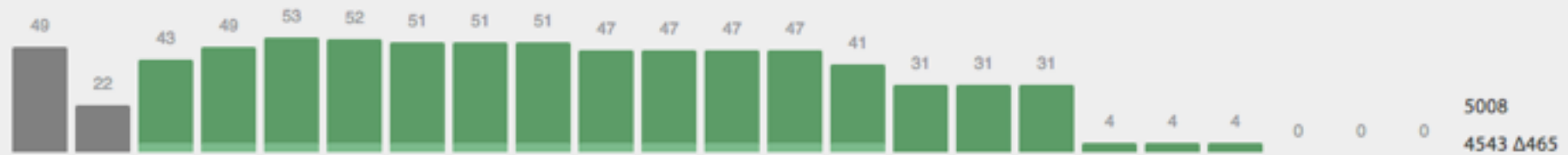
Sein Woo



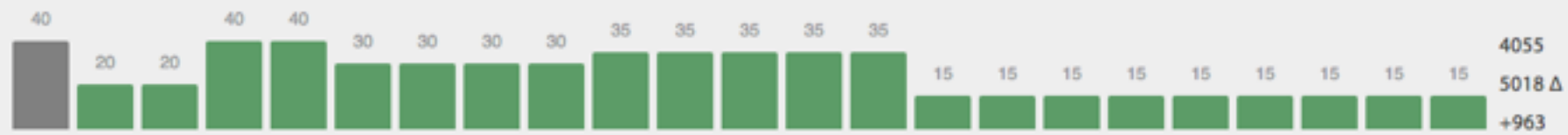
Eric Benoit



Juhan Sonlin



Jennifer Patel



Build like a Motherscratcher

Become a Craftsman

Great Companies Code

You're IT. Go cloud.

Make stuff. Have fun.

Every Detail Counts

#15 SKILL TRUMPS PASSION

BECOME A CRAFTSMAN

Instead of banking on what the world can offer you, focus your energy on what you can offer the world. Choose the path to mastery by building ability, versus chasing after the mirage of passion's promise and hoping that everything will work out by itself.

BUILD SKILLS & VALUE

Accumulate skills by going out and doing things that require you to learn and make an effort. Don't waste too much of yourself on what already comes easily.



You need skills + market value

In the hunt to start up a consulting career that gives you control, creativity, and impact...

Myth: It's just the act of getting a business started that trips us up.

Great work doesn't just require great courage, but also skills and real value.

Differentiating

Non-differentiating

95% of humans



Differentiating

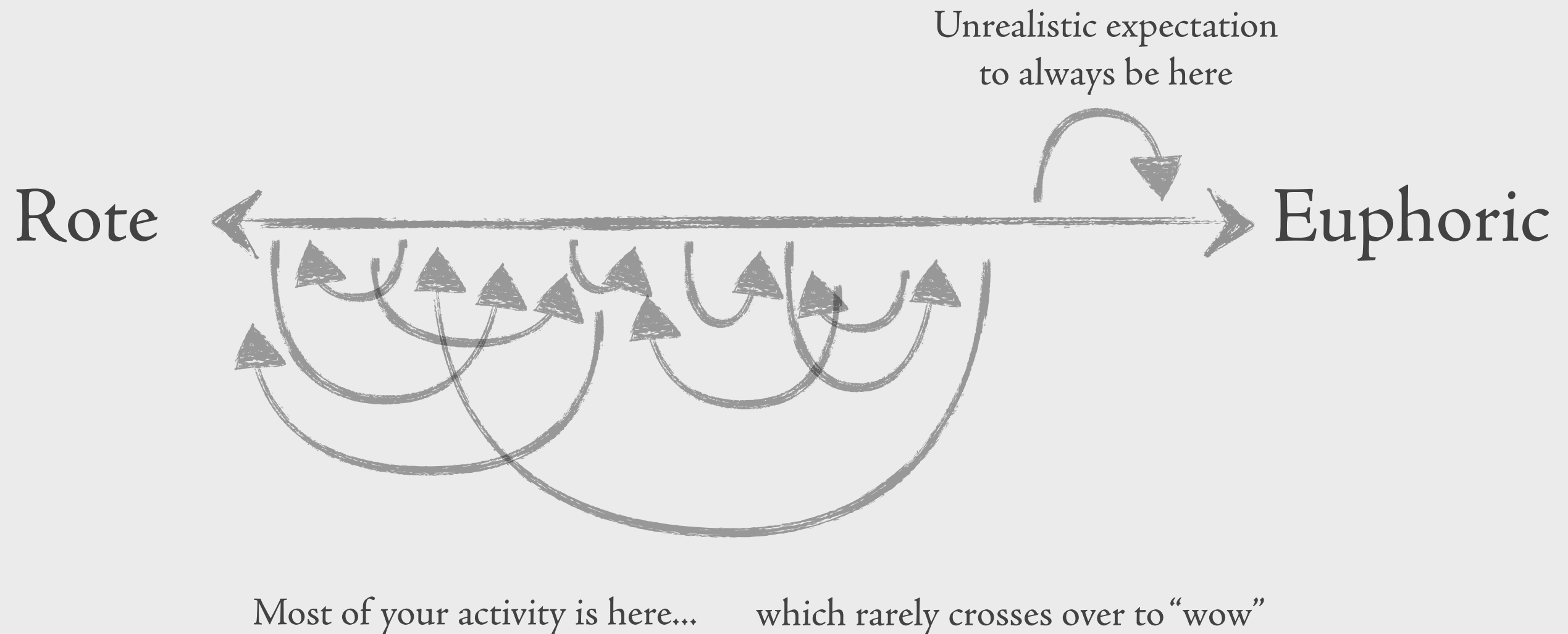
For the *few*,
life-long passion,
is transparent early on + achievable.

Think pro athletes and Mozart.

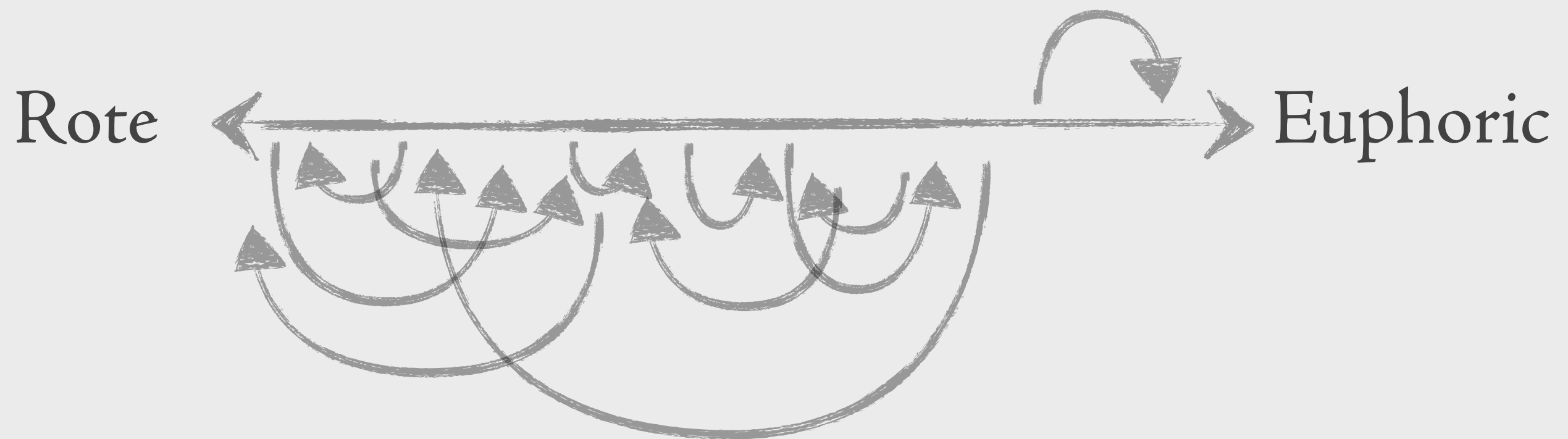
This is the exception.



Everyday Activities



Everyday Activities

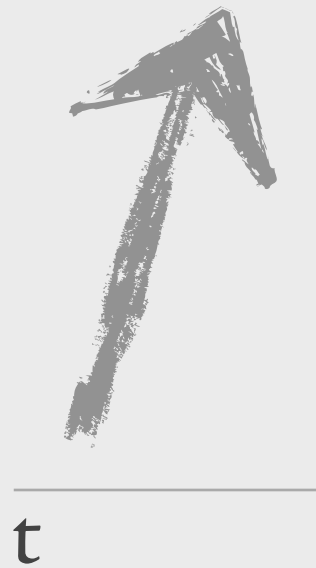


This is where learning happens

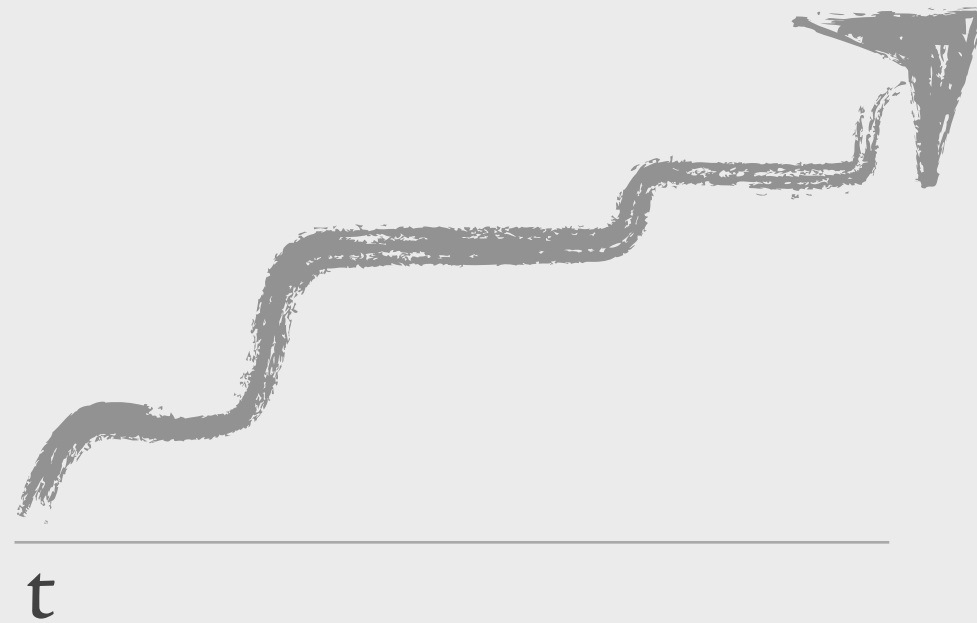
Expert

Intermediate

Beginner



Opening a beer,
\$ from an ATM



Writing, farming, coding, designing
software, professional reputation

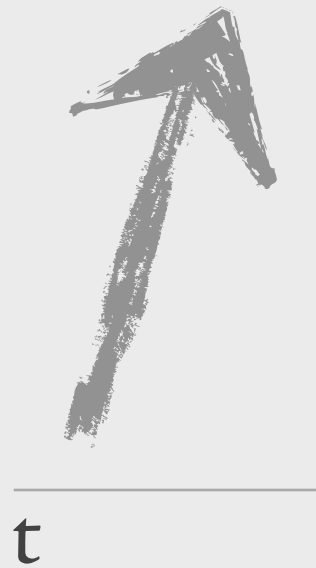


Parenting

Expert

Intermediate

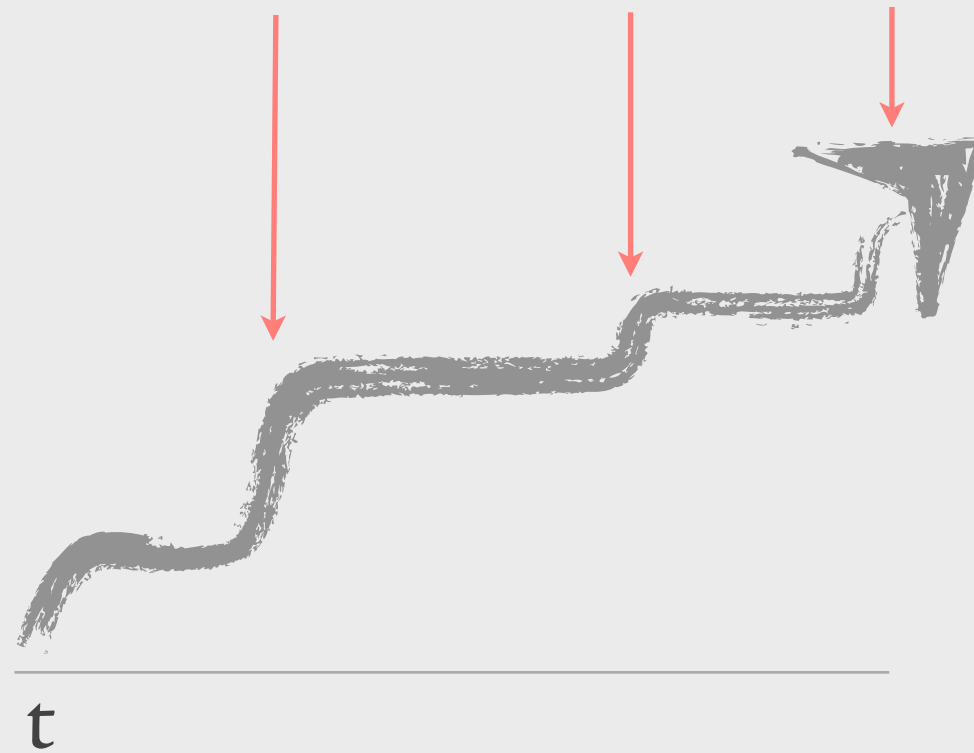
Beginner



Opening a beer,
\$ from an ATM

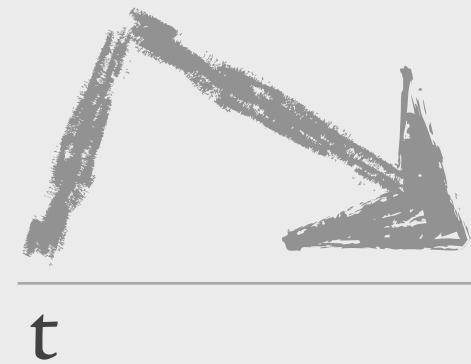
“It has to be easy.”
“No learning curve.”

More powerful rewards



Writing, farming, coding, designing
software, professional reputation

Most of the things worth doing,
require learning, effort, and our time.



Parenting

Become a Craftsman

Choose the path to mastery (vs passion's mirage)

Skills are the metric of success

Become a Craftsman

Passionistas barter on
What the world can offer you

Craftsman bank on
What can you offer the world

Every Detail Counts

From choosing carpet to magnets to food to printing brochures to software tools, the small details count.

Each decision = the growing building blocks to your studio's aesthetic and personality.



Not thinking through the impact of micro decisions =
hodgepodge design.

This is YOUR company. Design it all.

Crush the Projects

Talk to God

Hire Smarter Clients Than You

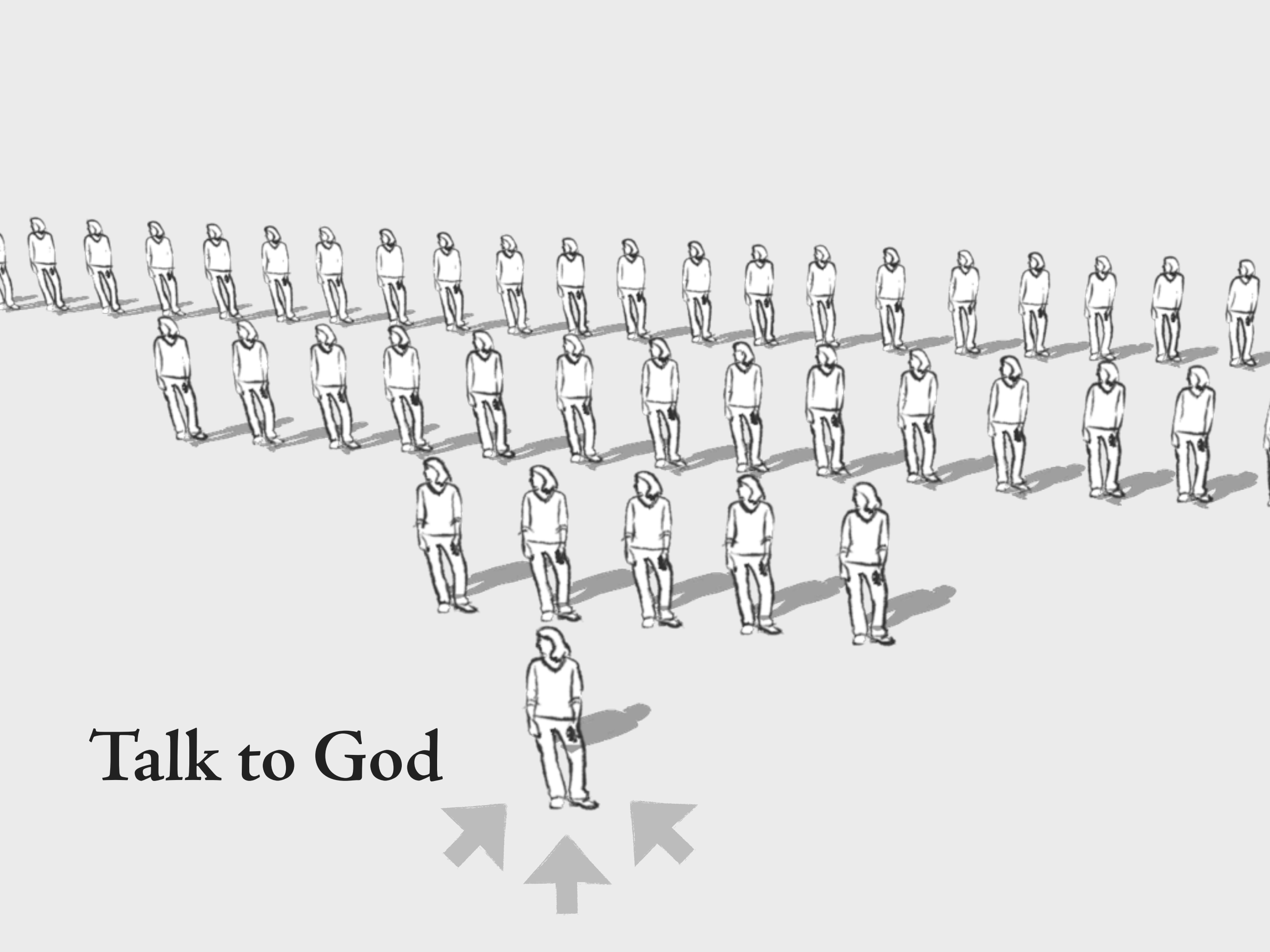
Embrace Ambiguity

Drive, Don't Watch

You're Not Doing Enough

From Protons to Galaxies

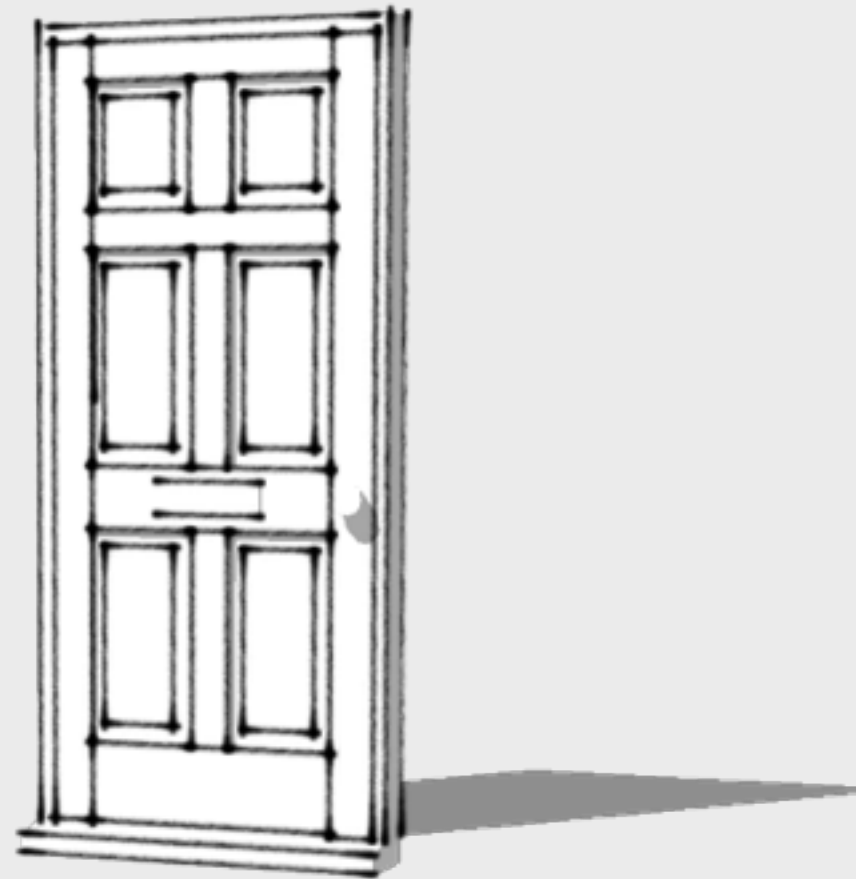
Diversify your Influence



Talk to God

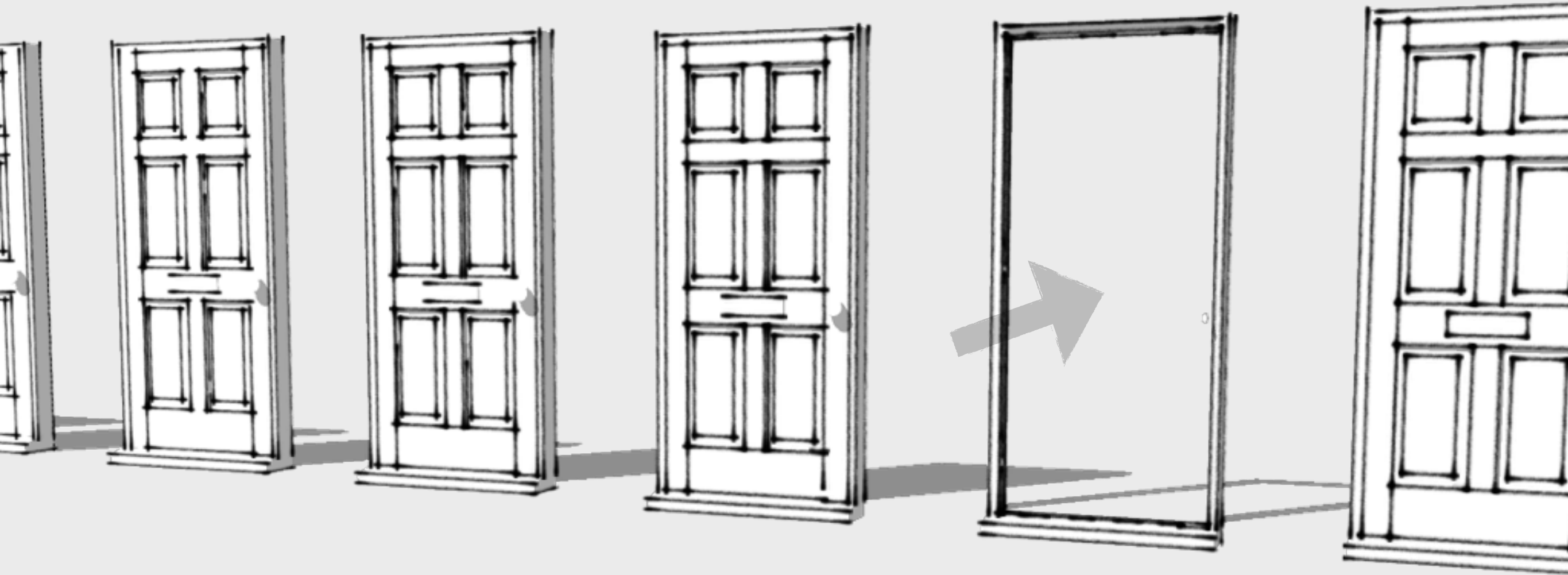
Diversify your Influence

Don't keep knocking down the same door.



Diversify your Influence

Don't keep knocking down the same door.



Weave the story based on your audience
Change tactics on influencing influencers

Diversify your Influence



Fashion

Commerce

Infrastructure

Governance

Culture

Nature

Open Issues @ Invo

Ad hoc, organized chaos vs a perfected,
repeatable process

Closing projects with grace

Hyperfocusness vs promiscuousness

Spectacular pixels

Refining a strategic rhythm

Spreading the Invo reputation



You need to
become a craftsman
ship real products
live and breathe Design
hear *no* as *yes*
ability to change tactics quickly
... then
recognize talent
see and weave the Politics
make your colleagues better

Go the opposite direction as everyone else.

Be afraid. Just a little.

Studio Axioms

Define Who, then What

Find an Amazing Partner
Find Employee #2, 3 Now
Hire Better than You
Interns are Integral
Have an Agenda

Your Culture is Your Company

Speak the Truth
Transparency Everywhere
Establish Citizenship
Staff as Entrepreneur
Small Bets
Hyperfocusness
Break Bread
The Positive No
Don't Sell. Just Serve.
Be Afraid. Just a little.

The Case for Space

Geo Matters
Space Matters
Size Matters
Big Prints = Bigger Impact

Build Like a Motherscratcher

Become a Craftsman.
Great Companies Code
You're IT. Go Cloud.
Make Stuff. Have Fun.
Details Make You

Dance Card Fever

Know Your Numbers
Don't Wait, Just Go
Get Real Data
Make Acceptance Criteria
Track Your Time
Use Lightweight Tools

Counsel the Greybeards

Seek Enlightened Lawyers and Accountants
Find a Mentor, Be a Mentor

Crush the Projects

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Embrace Ambiguity
Drive, Don't Watch
You're Not Doing Enough
Diversify your Influence
From Protons to Galaxies

Special thanks to:

Harry Sleeper
Dirk Knemeyer
Eric Benoit
Kimberly Chang (Illustrator for Field Guide)
Camille Goudeseune
Jon Follett
Roger Zhu
Ben Salinas
Andrei Herasimchuk
Rob McCready
David Curtis

and all of the people who have elevated my design
and life IQ...

and Kate Sonin.

People I've stolen from:

Paul Arden, Stewart Brand, Jim Collins,
Tom Peters, Stewart Rose, David Wallace,
Cal Newport



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photo by See-ming Lee



Studio Axioms

The unvarnished truth about starting
and running a software design studio

by Juhan Sonin, v.09, 17.Nov.14