QUALITY ARCHAEOLOGY
LEARNING FROM THE PAST TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT (AND THE FUTURE)

@alex_schl

HELLO!

- I'm a tester, consultant, product owner and CEO
  - I love agility, quality and humans
  - I also love goats, sport, music and hiking
- BREDEX GmbH
  - Individual software solutions
  - 160 employees: Dev, QA, UX, RE, DS/IS
  - Focus on quality and agility

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AGENDA

- Archaeology?
- Patterns I've seen recurring
- The thing that unites them
- Predicting the future
- So what now?

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QUALITY ARCHAEOLOGY

A SERIES OF SMALL WALLS...

Me at work (I wish)

QUALITY ARCHAEOLOGY?

- Quality is my lens

- It's how I evaluate software, teams, processes, outputs, everything...

- I mean it in a very wide sense

- "Quality is **value** to some person"

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PATTERNS FROM THE PAST –

WHAT HAVE I DUG UP?

...sadly not this skeleton...

1. IT'S HARD TO INCORPORATE NEW ROLES

- Adding something to a working system resets the system...
- Resistance
  - "Not technical enough"
  - "Get in our way"
  - "Extra effort"
  - "Cause rework"
- This pattern repeats itself with other roles
  - UX, RE/BA, Ops, Security, ...

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2. IT'S HARD TO INCORPORATE NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

- Let me tell you about the summer of pain…

- We're continually adding more responsibilities
  - Test data management
  - Pipelines
  - Testing in production/Observability
  - Support
  - …

3. ROLES CHANGE
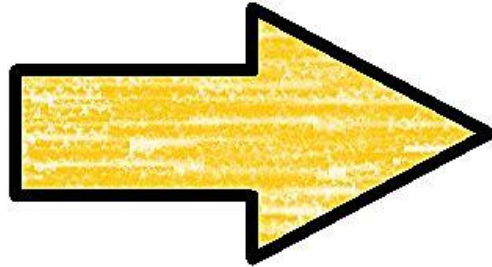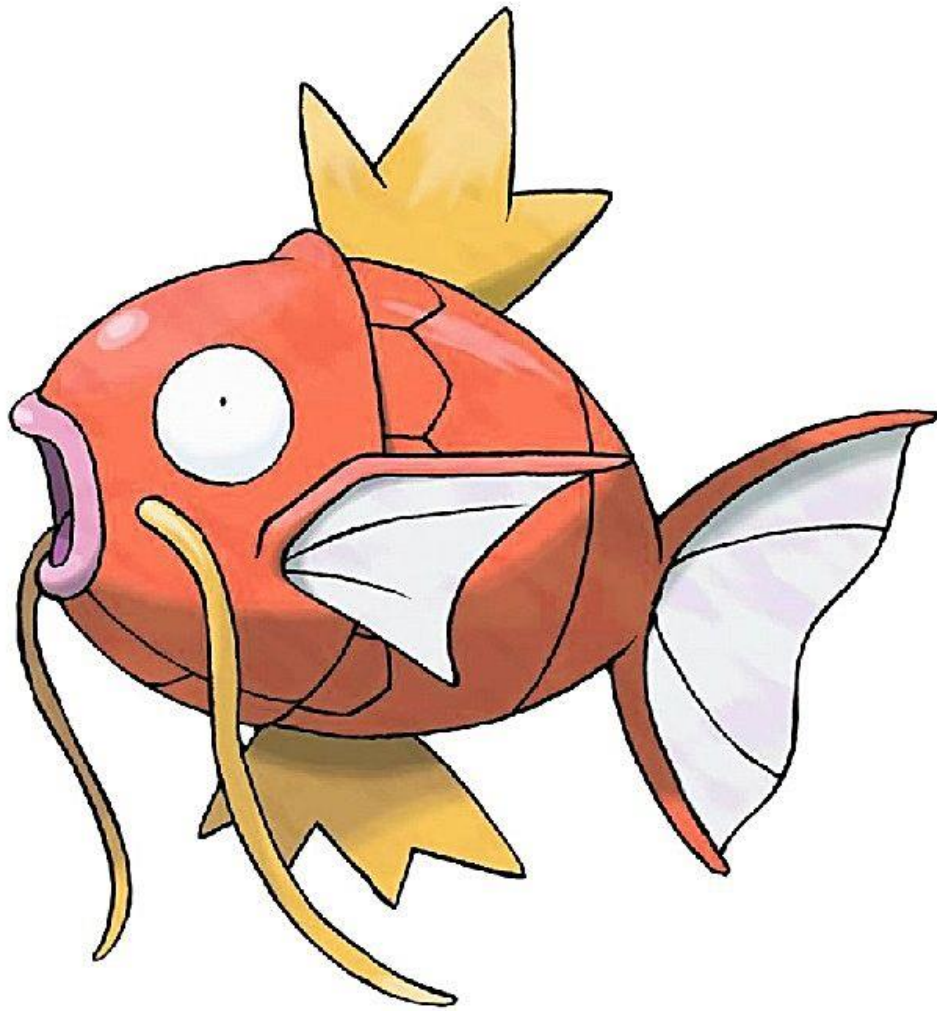
4. WE TEND TO TRIVIALISE THE HARD STUFF

- Low code

- Communication

- This can be outsourced

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5. WE OVERCOMMIT

- As a response to pressure
- Great mechanism, brain!
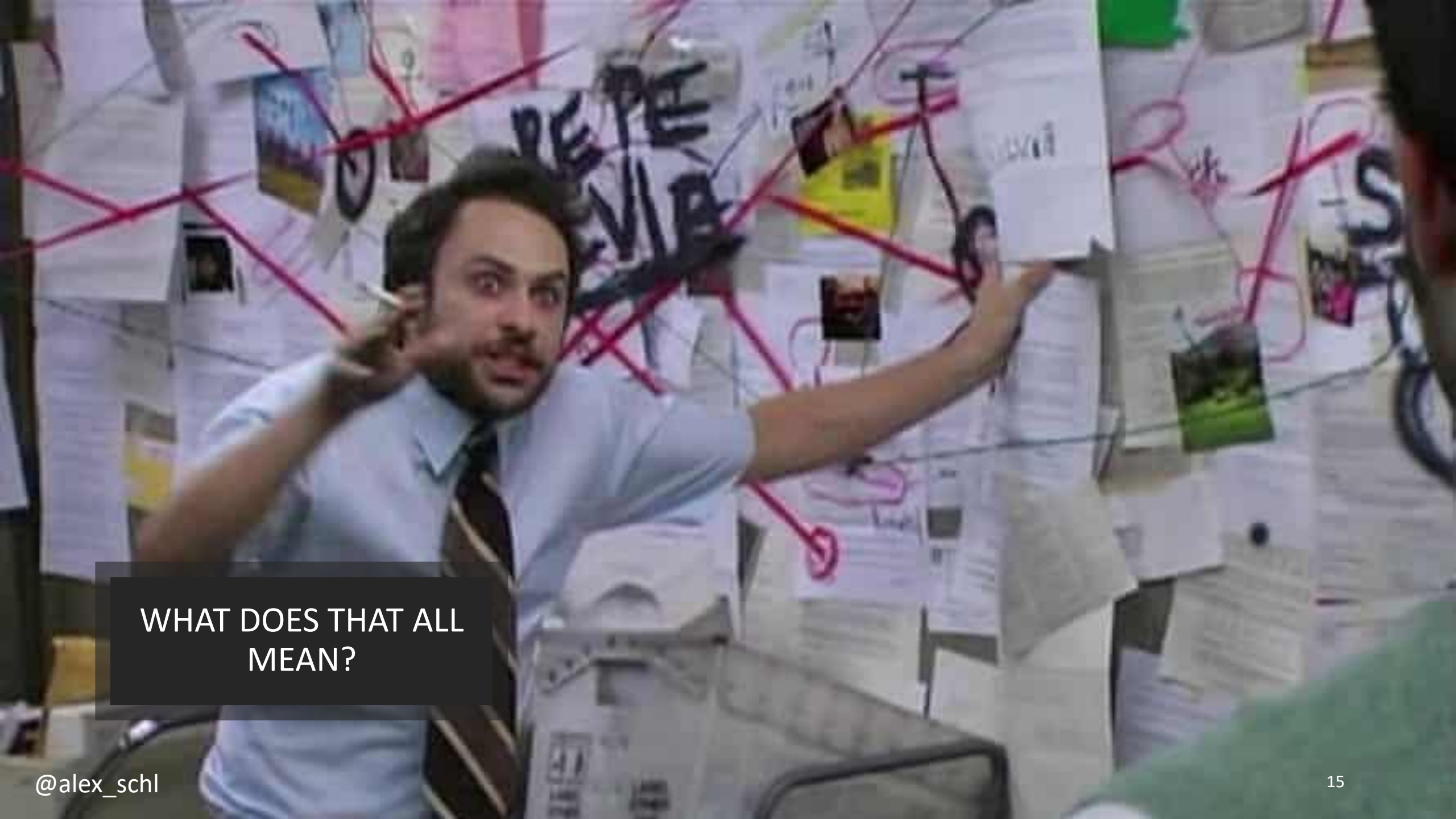
WHAT DOES THAT ALL MEAN?

WE'RE IN A COMPLEX SYSTEM

- Change happens
- We react to change (often badly)

WE'RE EXPERIENCING **FRICTION**

- Change happens
- We react to change (often badly)

FRICTION

"the totality of "uncertainties, errors, accidents, technical difficulties, the unforeseen and their effect on decisions, morale and actions""

"the very business of getting an organization made up of individuals, no matter how disciplined, to pursue a collective goal produces friction just as surely as applying the brakes of a car"

Friction is increased when more decision makers are involved, and in changing environments

Stephen Bungay, The Art of Action

WORK IN IT THEY SAID...

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FRICTION IS A RISK TO QUALITY

Personal Interests

Chaotic Environment

Emotion & Stress

Complexity

Different agendas

External actors

Independent wills

Unpredictable events

Different priorities

Chance

Independent agents

Human Finitude

Limited knowledge

Different interpretations

Imperfect information transfer

Imperfect information

Lack of data

Misunderstandings

Noise

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Stephen Bungay, The Art of Action

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WHAT DOES THE PAST PREDICT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

AND WHAT DO WE NEED TO WATCH OUT FOR?
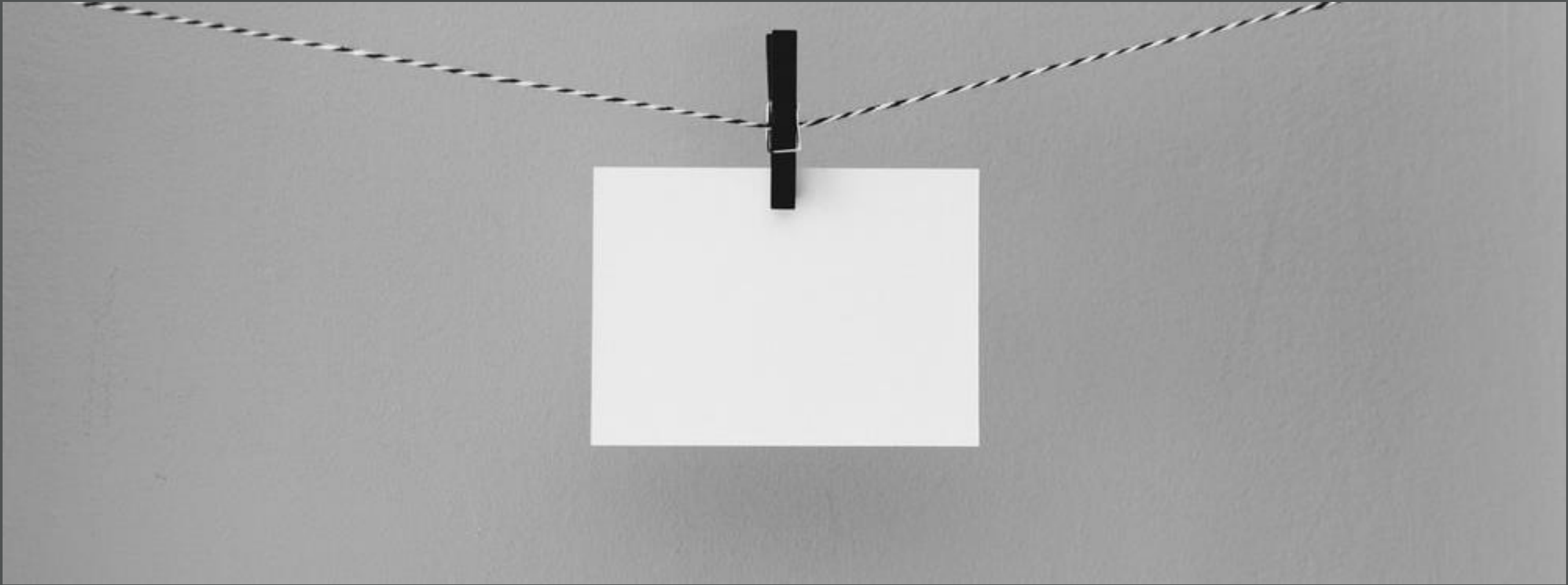
1. SMALL TEAM, CA. 2030

1. WORKING IN GROWING TEAMS

- All together with streamlined communication?

- Smaller teams with constant floating coaches?

- Dual specification?

- "Scrum Masters" become friction reducers

2. PROACTIVE EVOLUTION TOWARDS COMB SHAPING

3. LEARNING TO DECOMPLEXIFY WILL BE CRITICAL

- We need excellent product owners
- Minimal solutions and small steps (like, really)
- Not reinventing the wheel – reuse > rewrite
- Hopefully – more well-maintained open-source solutions

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4. WE NEED TO TALK MORE ABOUT RISK

- Everything is becoming more complex…
  - Connectivity
  - Integration
  - Communication
  - Ethical concerns
- We're adding roles and responsibilities to respond to complexity
- Added complexity plus friction = more risk…

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4. RISK AFFECTS QUALITY

- You'd think everyone could really get behind that!

- But quality (and testing!) are often considered "on top", "extra", "too expensive"

- My beloved area needs a new name?
  - Risk avoidance experts
  - Risk warriors
  - Nightmare hunters
  - Vampire slayers
  - Parachute designers

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SO…

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- Change and friction are here to stay
- Teams will continue to grow and diversify
- Roles will first be clearer and then more mixed as time passes
- Reducing complexity will be important
- All changes that happen are risks to quality

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ARE YOU SURE, ALEX?

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NO
(AND I'VE BEEN WRONG BEFORE)

- "Web technologies are too instable to be of use to customer projects"
- "Testers shouldn't program"
- …

- I believe in loosely held strong opinions
  - Explore and learn – and pivot if necessary

WHAT DO I DO NOW? HELP!

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WHAT CAN I DO AS A TEAM MEMBER?

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Reflect – is my opinion needed for this?
- Skill matrices and expectation matrices for working together
- Be willing to experiment in how to work together
- Keep learning to prepare for future challenges
- Pairing, ensembling – with other roles too
- Understand friction, risk and quality

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AS A MANAGER

1

Understand the concept of friction

2

Understand that you

- Can't know everything
- Can't predict what people will do
- Can't predict what outcomes will be

3

Be agile!

- Communicate intent
- Allow teams to decide how they achieve that intent
- Give teams freedom to adjust their actions in line with intent

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THE TAKEAWAYS

- Change, friction and quality are related

- Our stories can guide us

- Thought experiments are useful

- Remember, we've done hard stuff before! Do it mindfully and agilely

- Learning to survive and thrive in changing environments will continue to be critical to teamwork and quality

- Communication, learning, experimentation and growth mindset are needed!

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