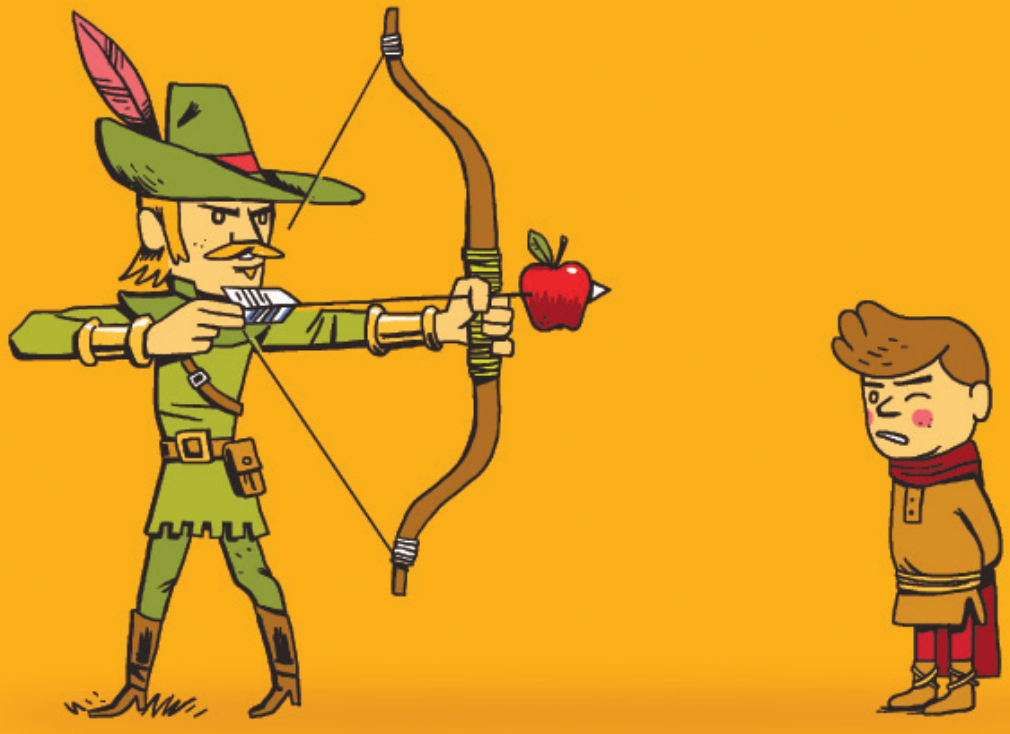

FIFTY
Quick
IDEAS

FIFTY QUICK IDEAS TO IMPROVE YOUR USER STORIES



by Gojko Adzic and David Evans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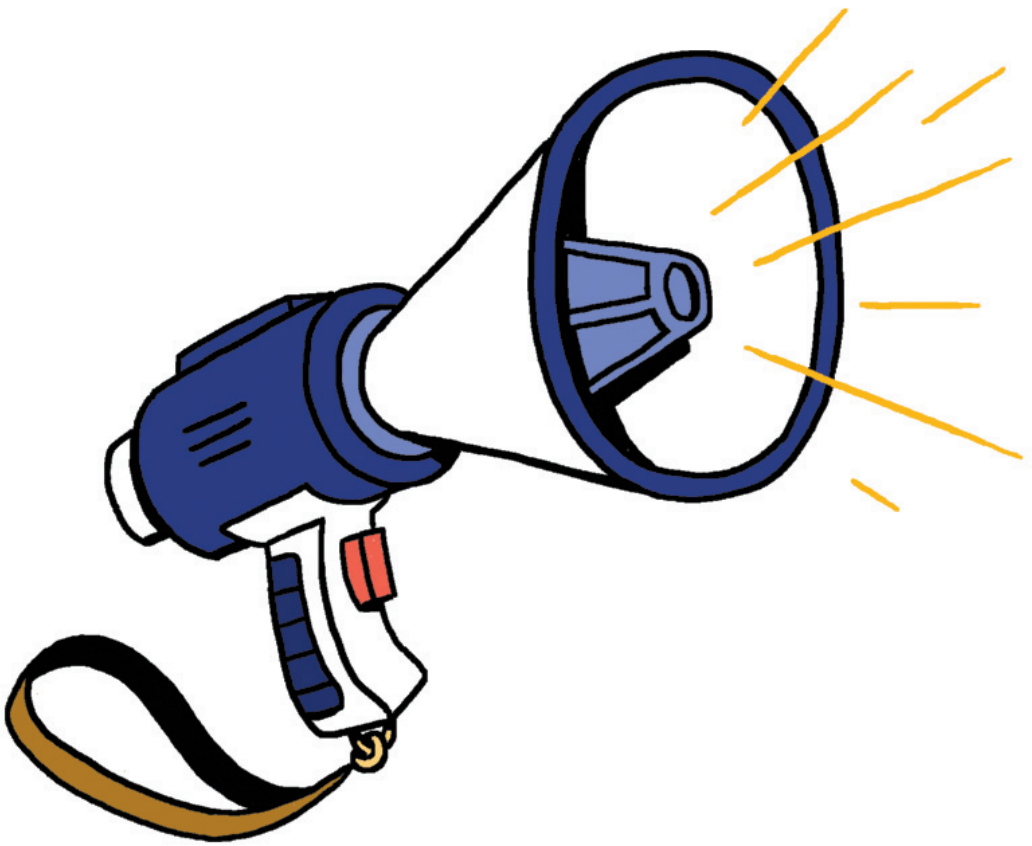
TELL STORIES, DON'T WRITE THEM

Collaborate to identify requirements instead of handing over documentation

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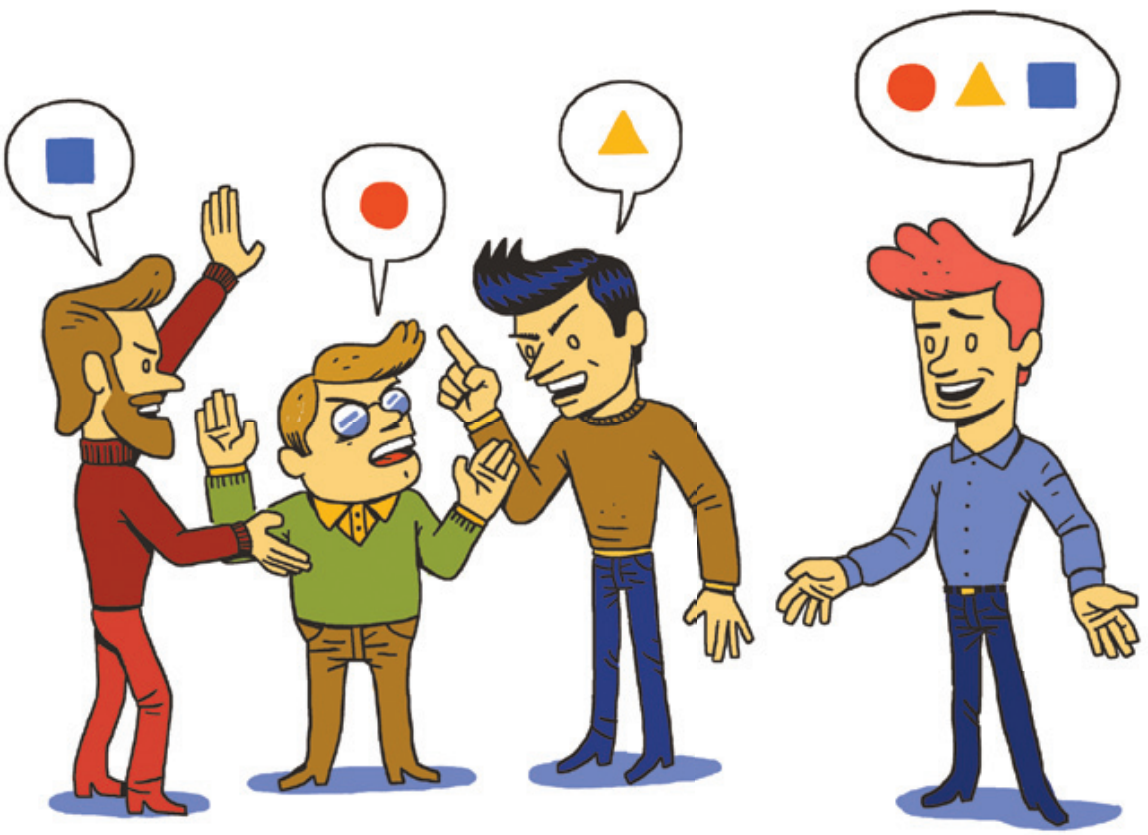
DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT STORY FORMAT

Collaborate to identify requirements instead of handing over documentation

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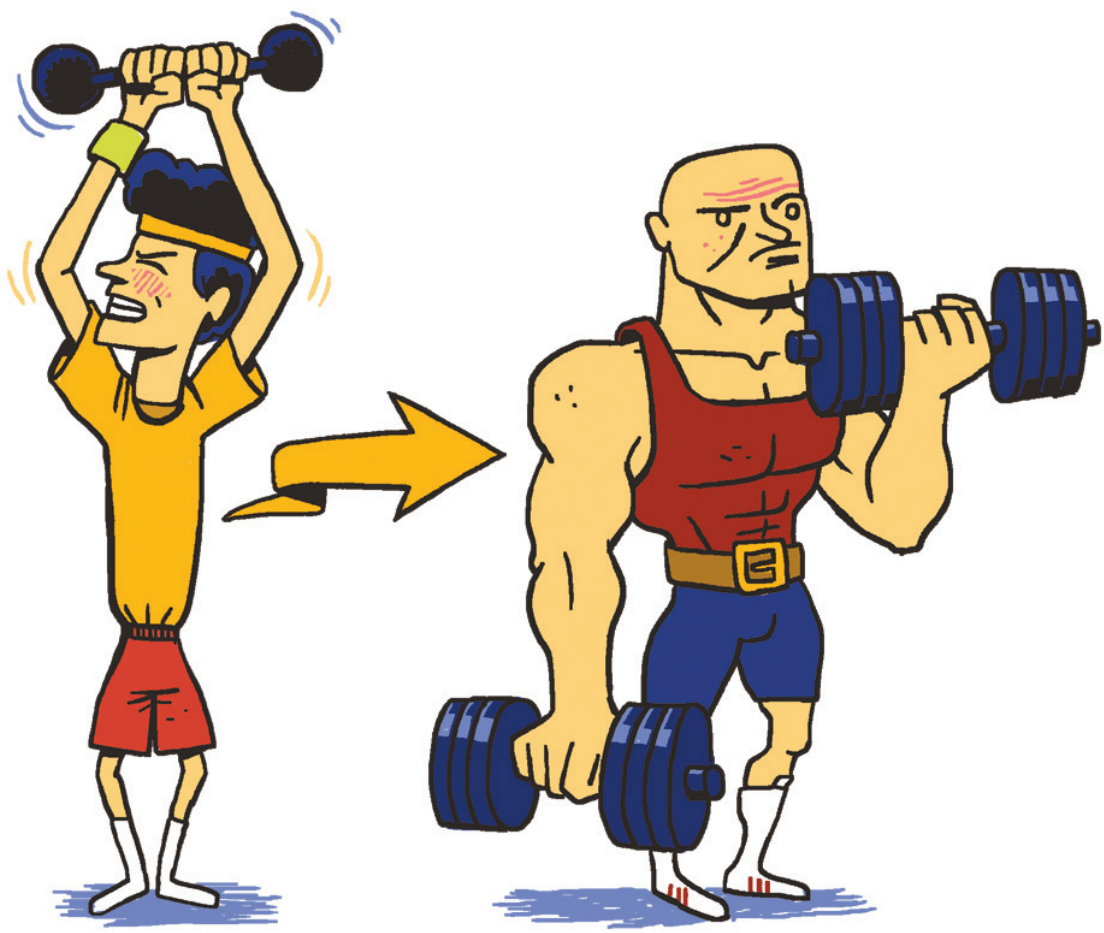
DESCRIBE A BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Capture a behaviour change to make a story measurable from a business perspective

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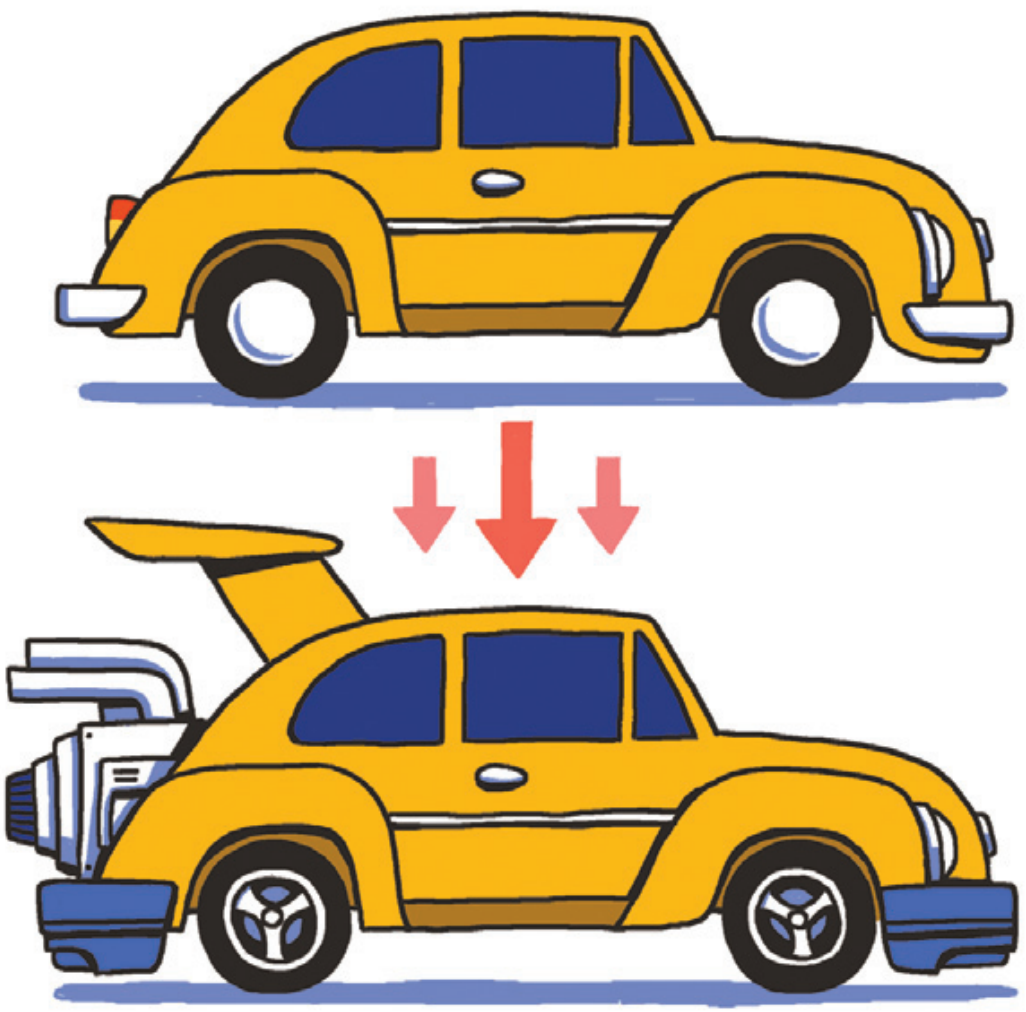
DESCRIBE THE SYSTEM CHANGE

Clearly delineate the scope of the change to help create shared understanding

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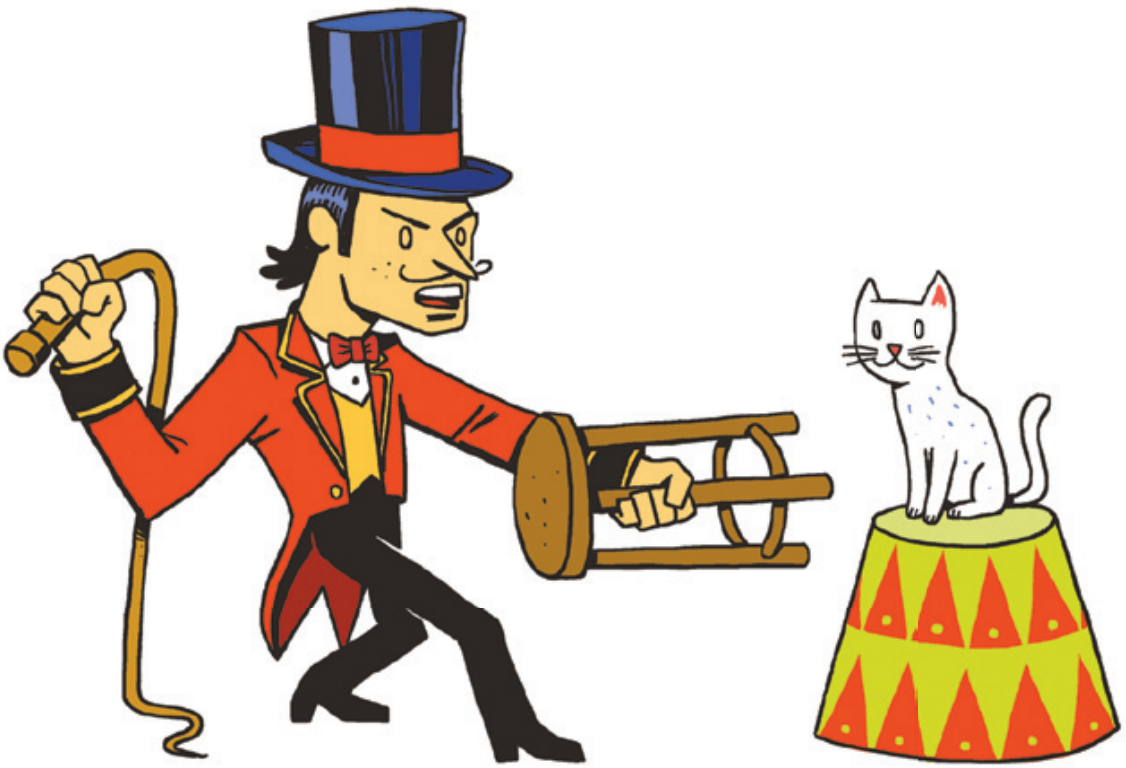
APPROACH STORIES AS SURVIVABLE EXPERIMENTS

Stories are based on assumptions that might turn out to be right or wrong

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WATCH OUT FOR GENERIC ROLES

Focus on a specific customer role to help provide a useful context for discussion


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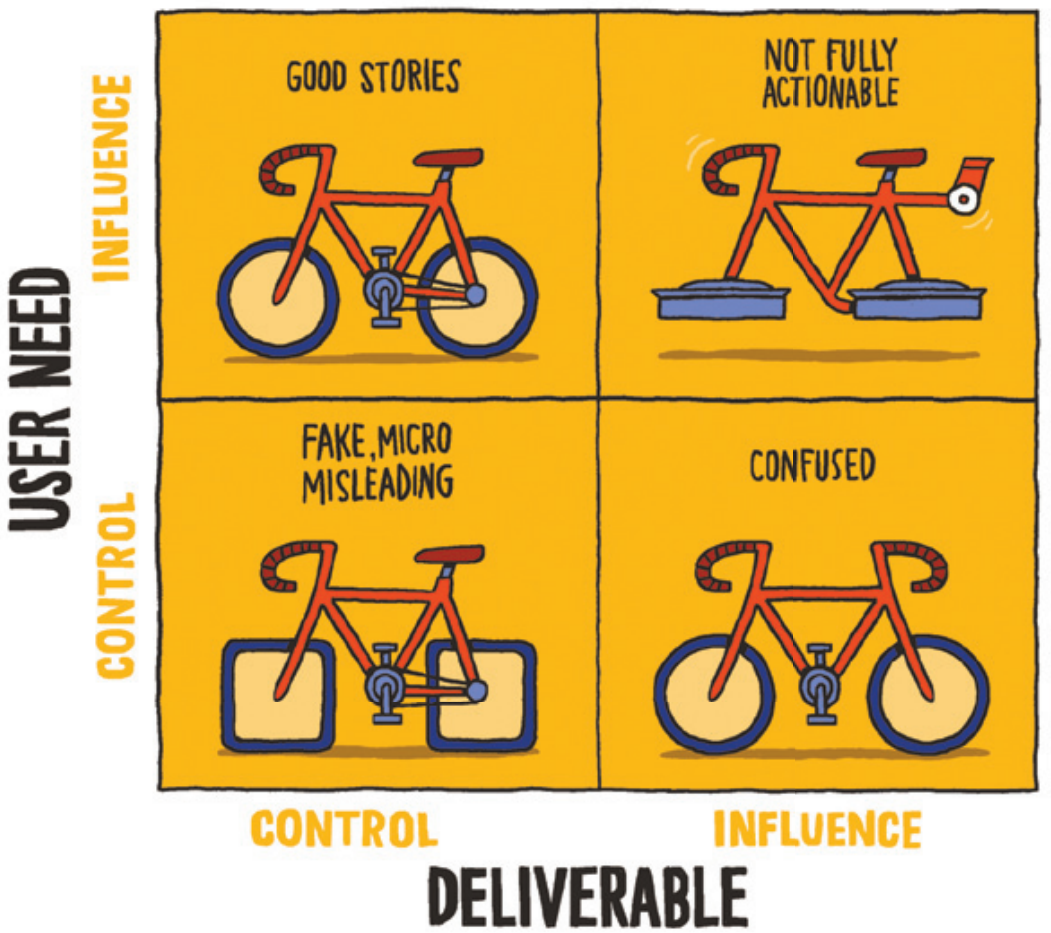
EVALUATE ZONE OF CONTROL AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Deliverables should be in your zone of control, and user needs in your sphere of influence

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PUT A ‘BEST BEFORE’ DATE ON STORIES

Manage time-constrained stories separately, so they don’t turn into emergencies


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SET DEADLINES FOR ADDRESSING MAJOR RISKS

Strike the right balance between short-term business wins and long-term sustainability


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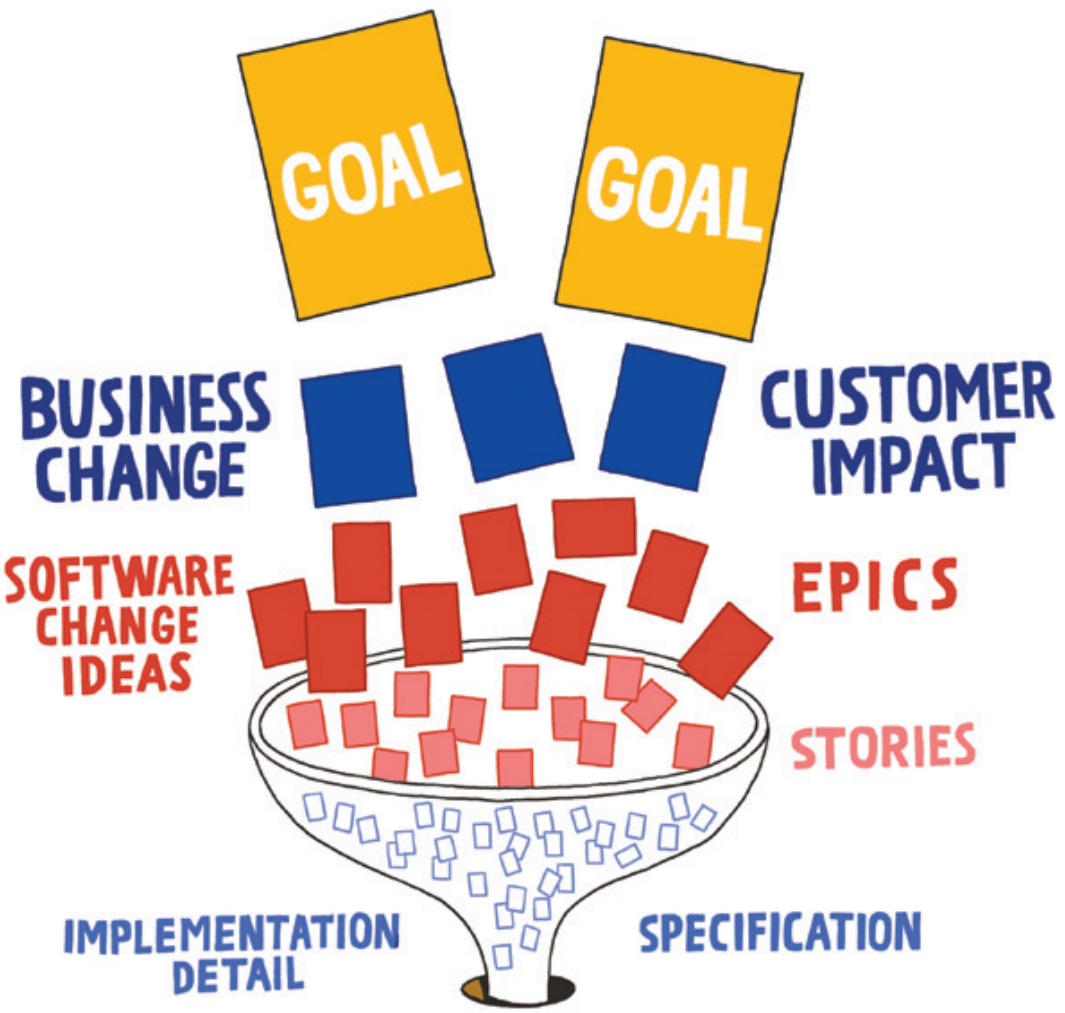
USE HIERARCHICAL BACKLOGS

Hierarchical plans allow organisations to react effectively to changing market opportunities

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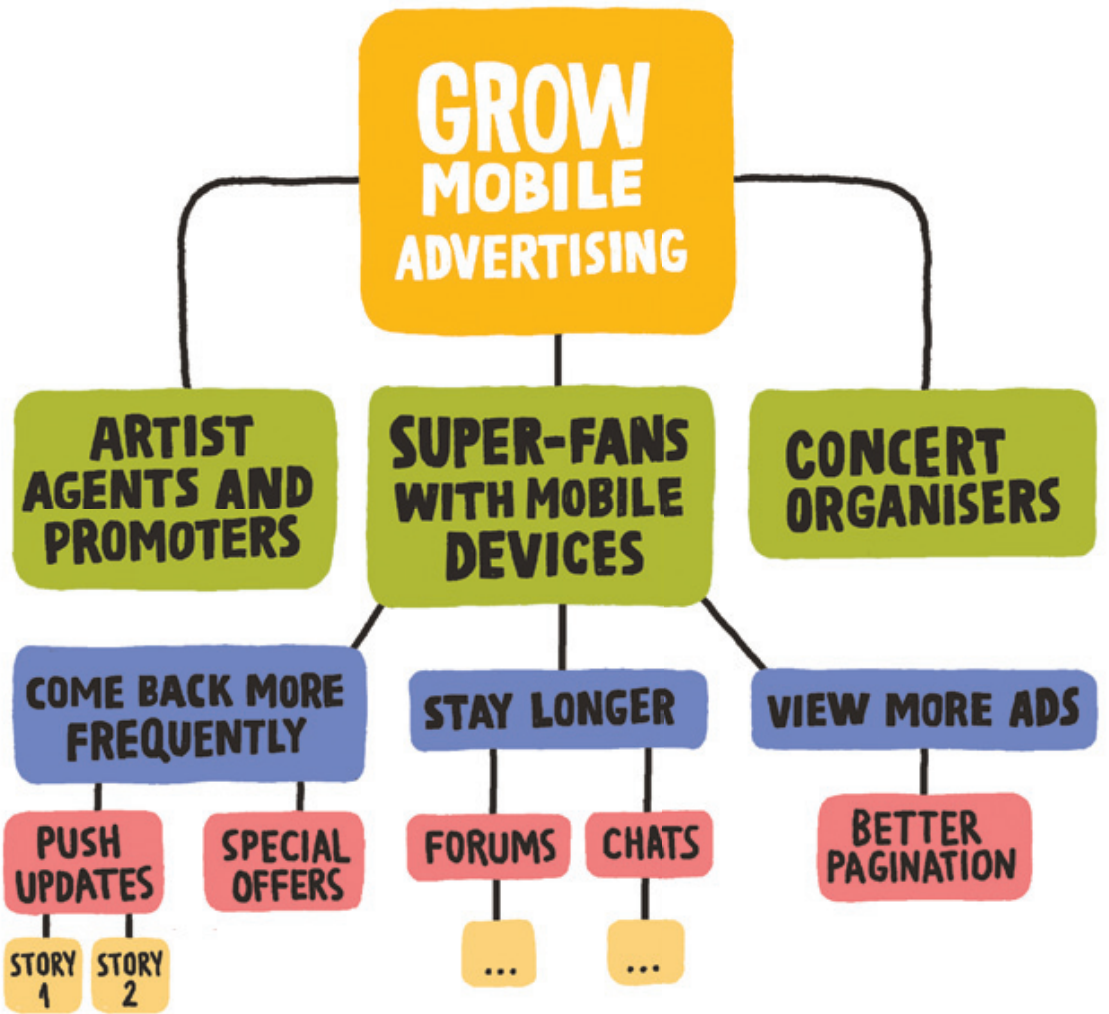
GROUP STORIES BY IMPACT

Visualise the connection between goals and deliverables to help stakeholders align on priorities

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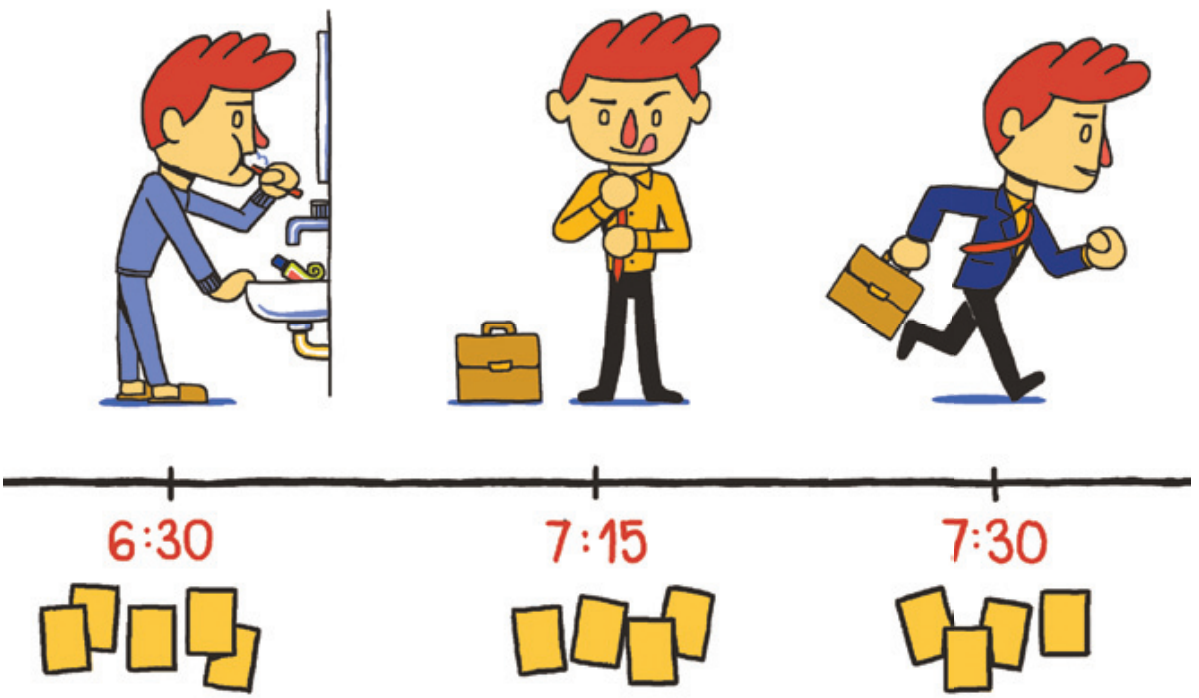
CREATE A USER STORY MAP

Remember that the customer experience often starts and ends outside interaction with software

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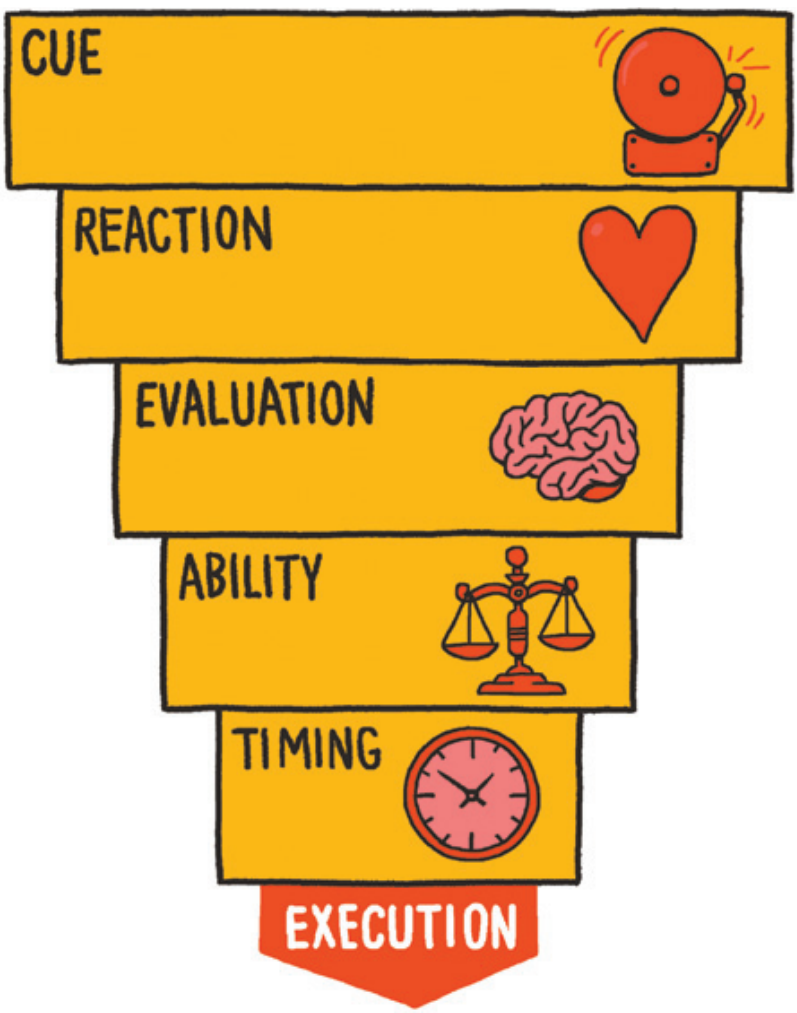
CHANGE BEHAVIOURS USING THE CREATE FUNNEL

Break activities into CREATE stages to come up with great product ideas

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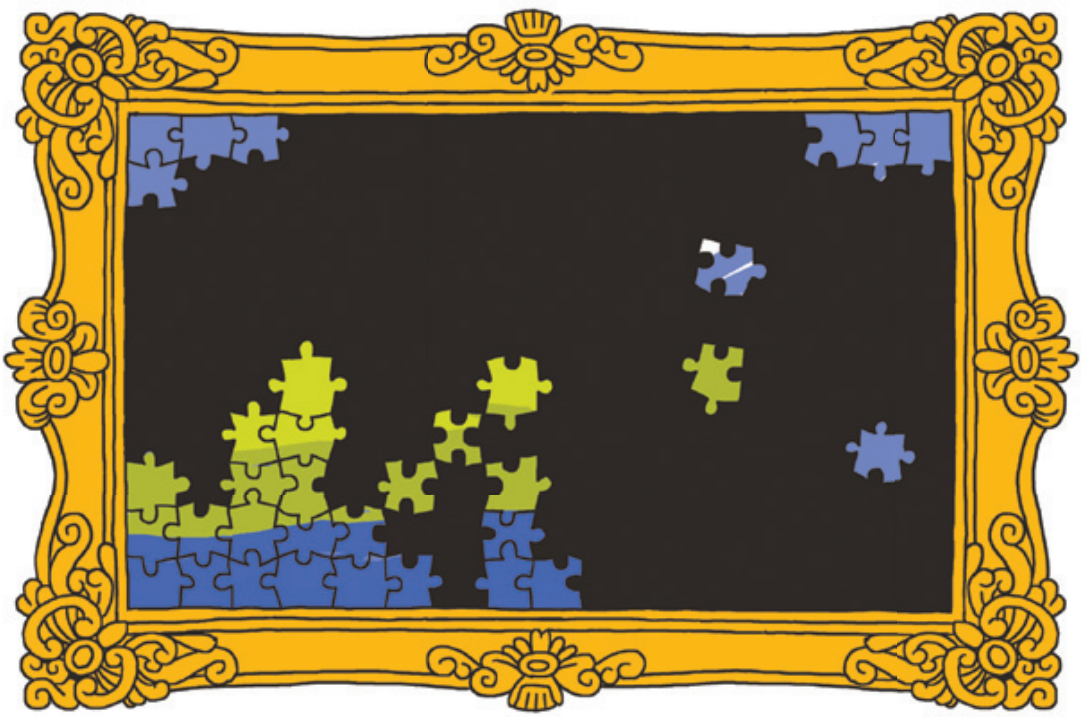
SET OUT GLOBAL CONCERNS AT THE START OF A MILESTONE

Turn global concerns into design constraints, instead of ignoring predictable problems

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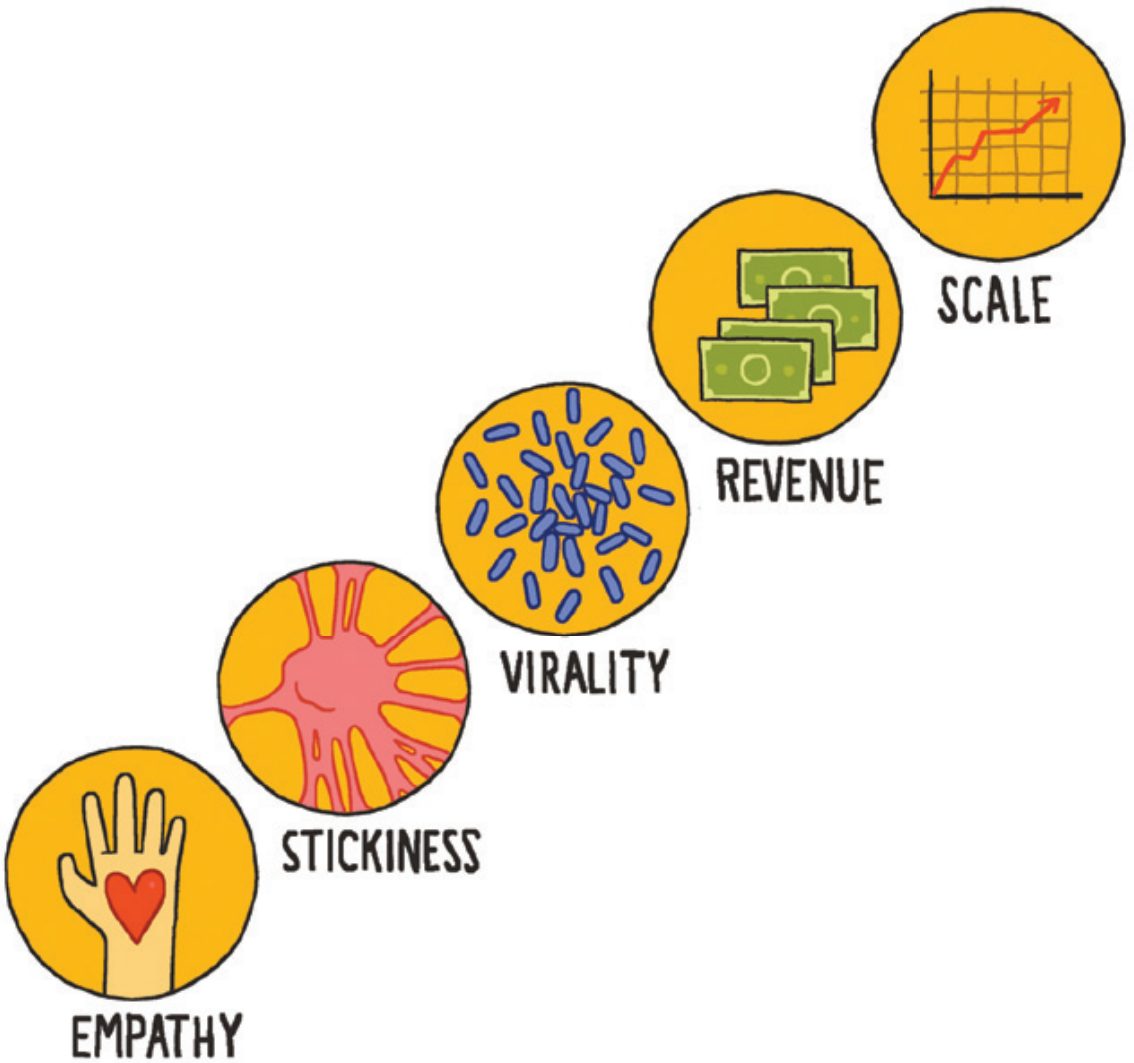
PRIORITISE USING STAGES OF GROWTH

User stories need to be aligned with current business priorities

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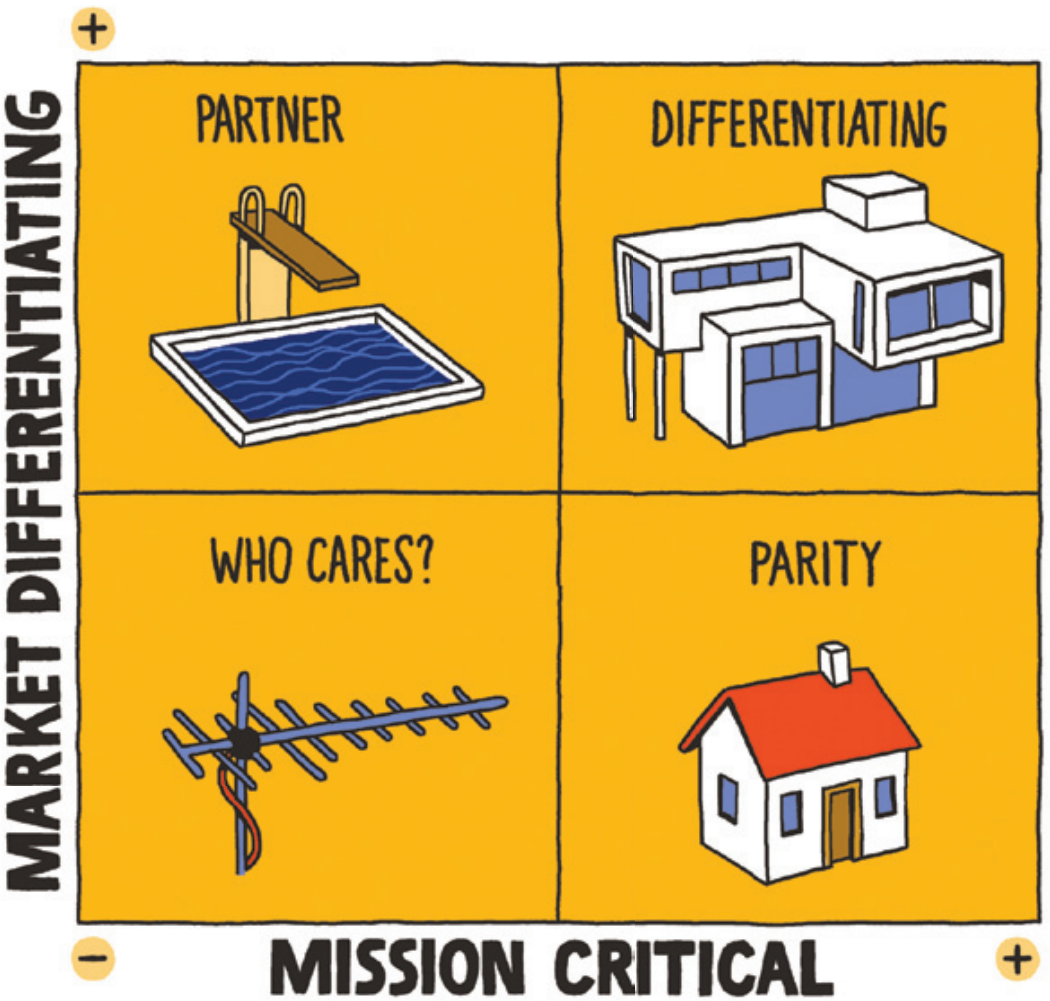
PRIORITISE USING PURPOSE ALIGNMENT

Split stories into those where you need to excel, and those where you just have to be good enough

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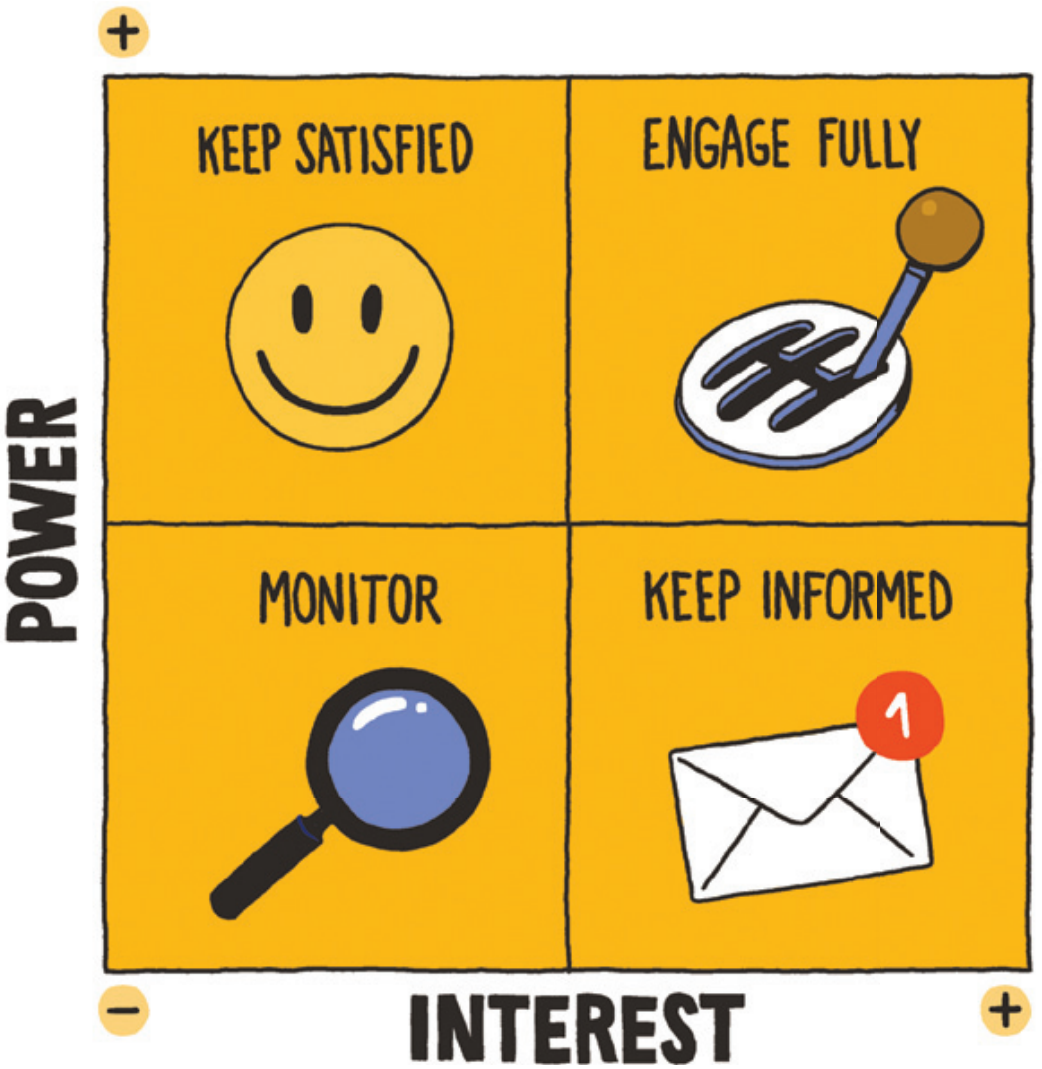
MAKE A STAKEHOLDER CHART

Do not forget big-picture stakeholders who won't necessarily appear in user stories

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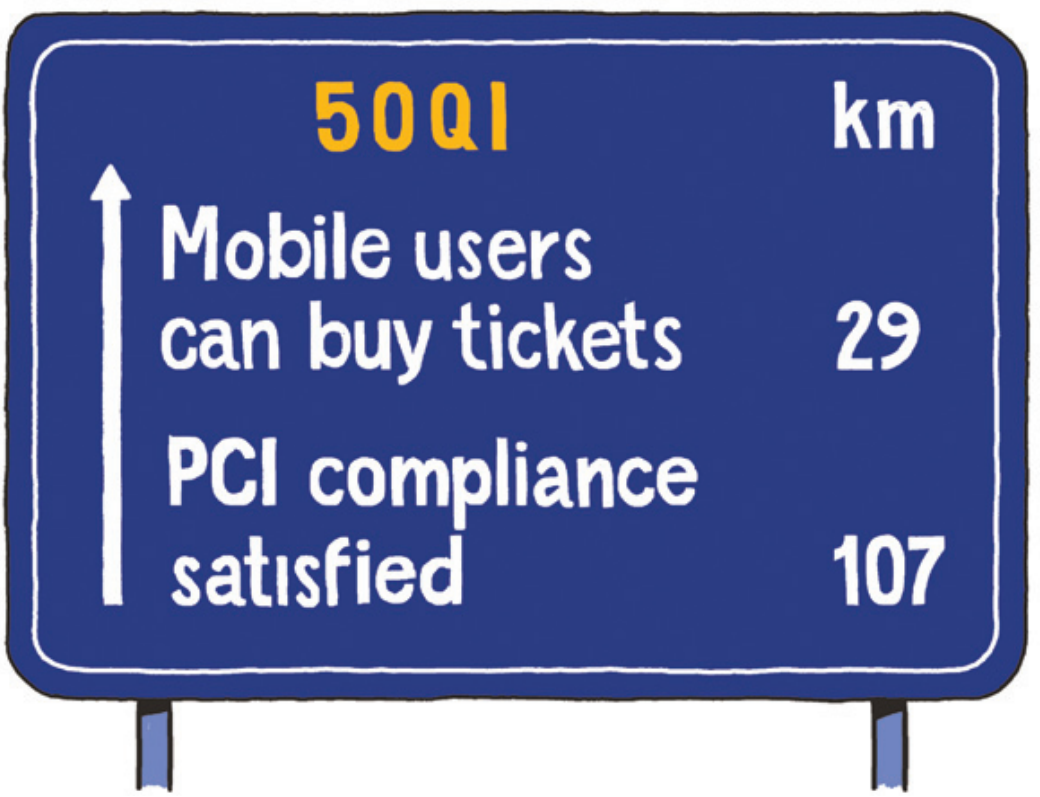
NAME YOUR MILESTONES

Meaningful milestone names help stakeholders prioritise

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FOCUS MILESTONES ON A LIMITED NUMBER OF USER SEGMENTS

Select target users to prevent generic stories and reduce scope creep


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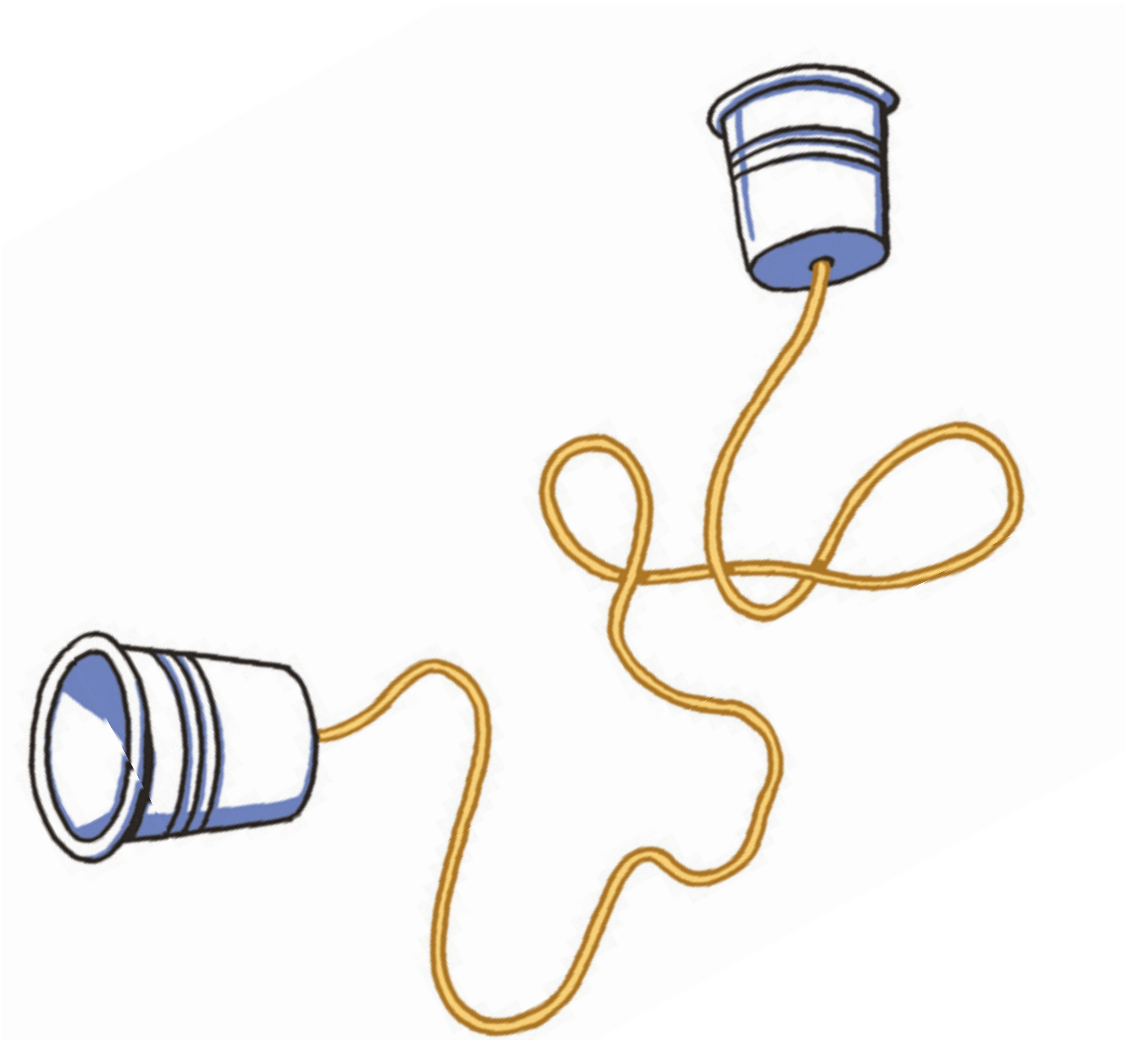
USE LOW-TECH FOR STORY CONVERSATIONS

Discussions around whiteboards are faster and more productive than using a technical tool

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IMAGINE THE DEMONSTRATION

Work out how you will show that you have met the requirements


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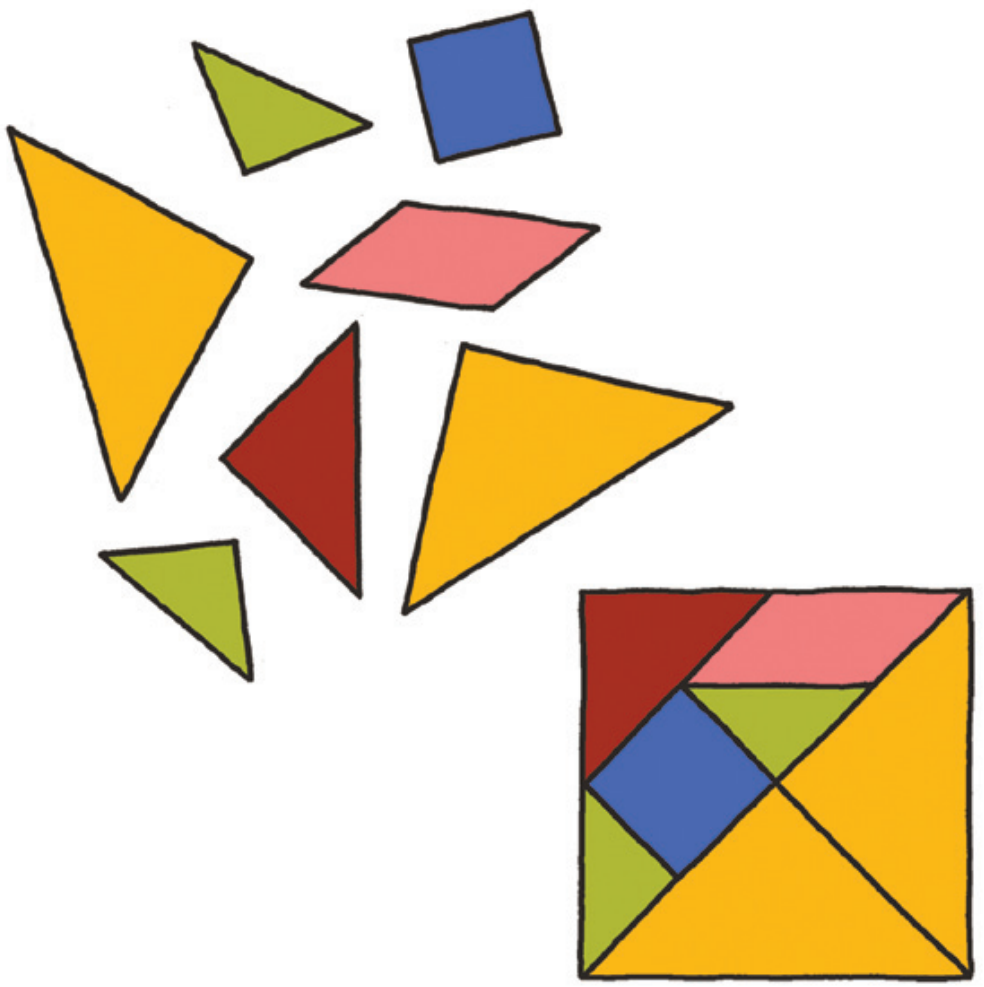
DIVERGE AND MERGE FOR STORY DISCUSSIONS

Work in smaller groups to increase the participation of individual team members

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INVOLVE ALL ROLES IN THE DISCUSSION

Instead of delegating analysis to a single person, involve various roles to cover all the perspectives


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MEASURE ALIGNMENT USING FEEDBACK EXERCISES

Measure shared understanding instead of asking ‘Do you have any questions?’


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PLAY THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Challenge expressed user needs and roles to discover fake stories early


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DIVIDE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFINING STORIES

Let stakeholders express the need, and those who can design software express the solution


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SPLIT BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS

Keep stakeholders interested and engaged by focusing story discussions on their needs


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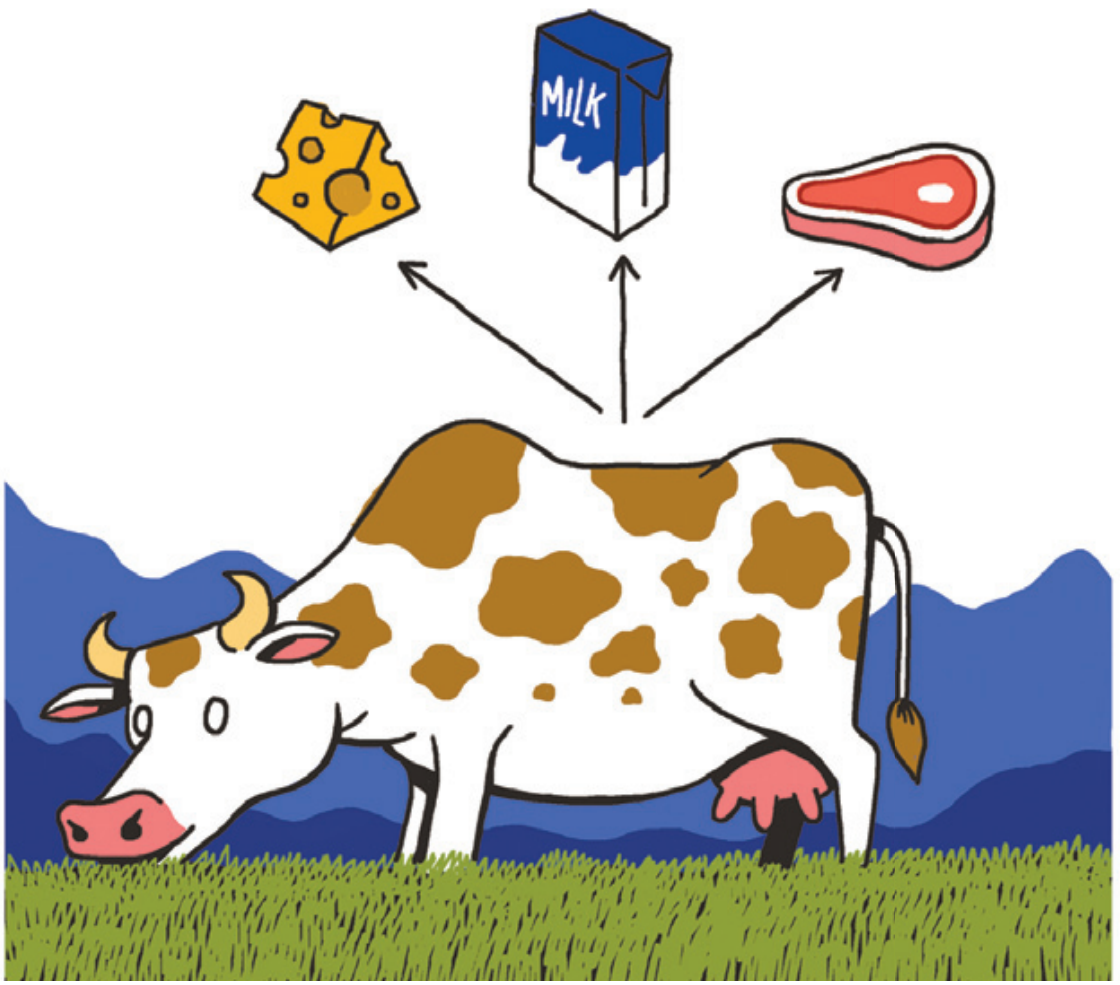
INVESTIGATE VALUE ON MULTIPLE LEVELS

When the whole chain of reasoning is clear, it's much easier to have a useful discussion

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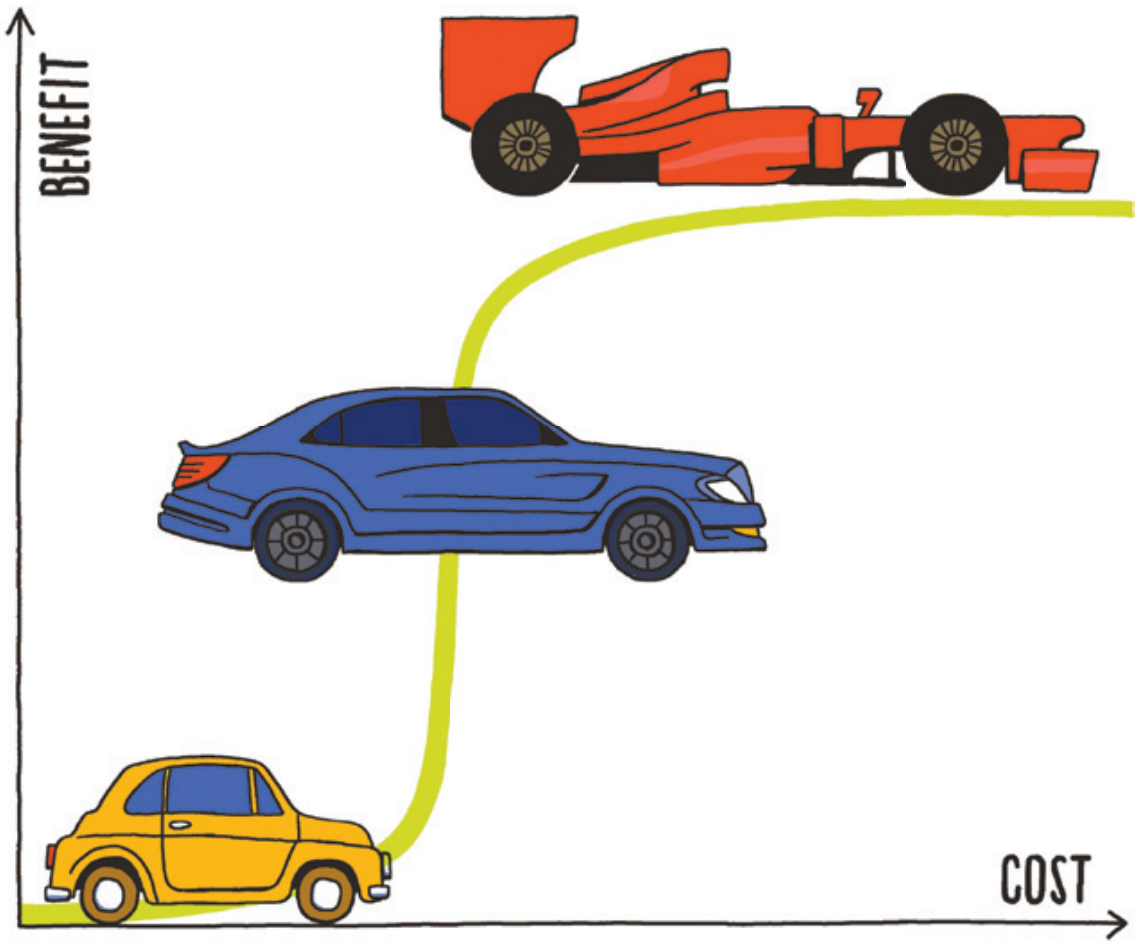
DISCUSS SLIDING-SCALE MEASUREMENTS WITH QUPER

Compare your product to the competition to expose hidden assumptions and requirements

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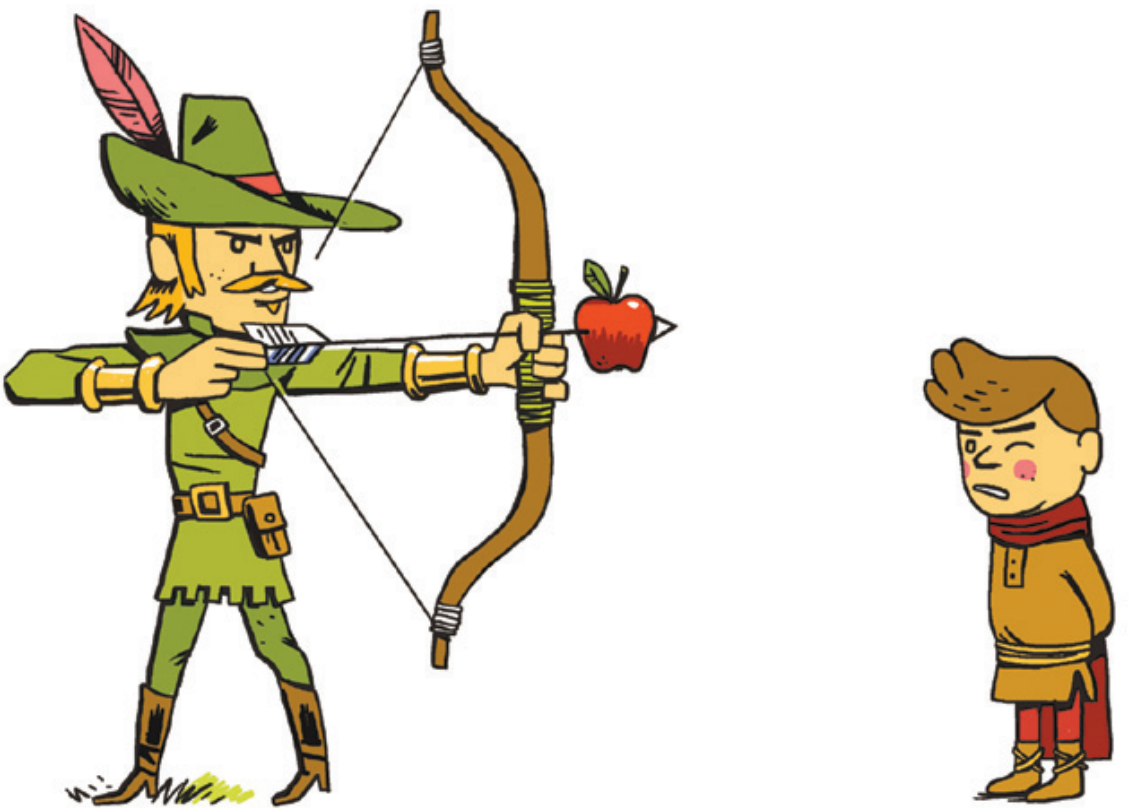
START WITH THE OUTPUTS

The value of a system is in its outputs, not its inputs

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FORGET THE WALKING SKELETON: PUT IT ON CRUTCHES

Deliver value early by nailing down user interaction, simplify the rest


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NARROW DOWN THE CUSTOMER SEGMENT

Give 2% of people 100% of what they need, instead of giving 100% of people 2% of needs


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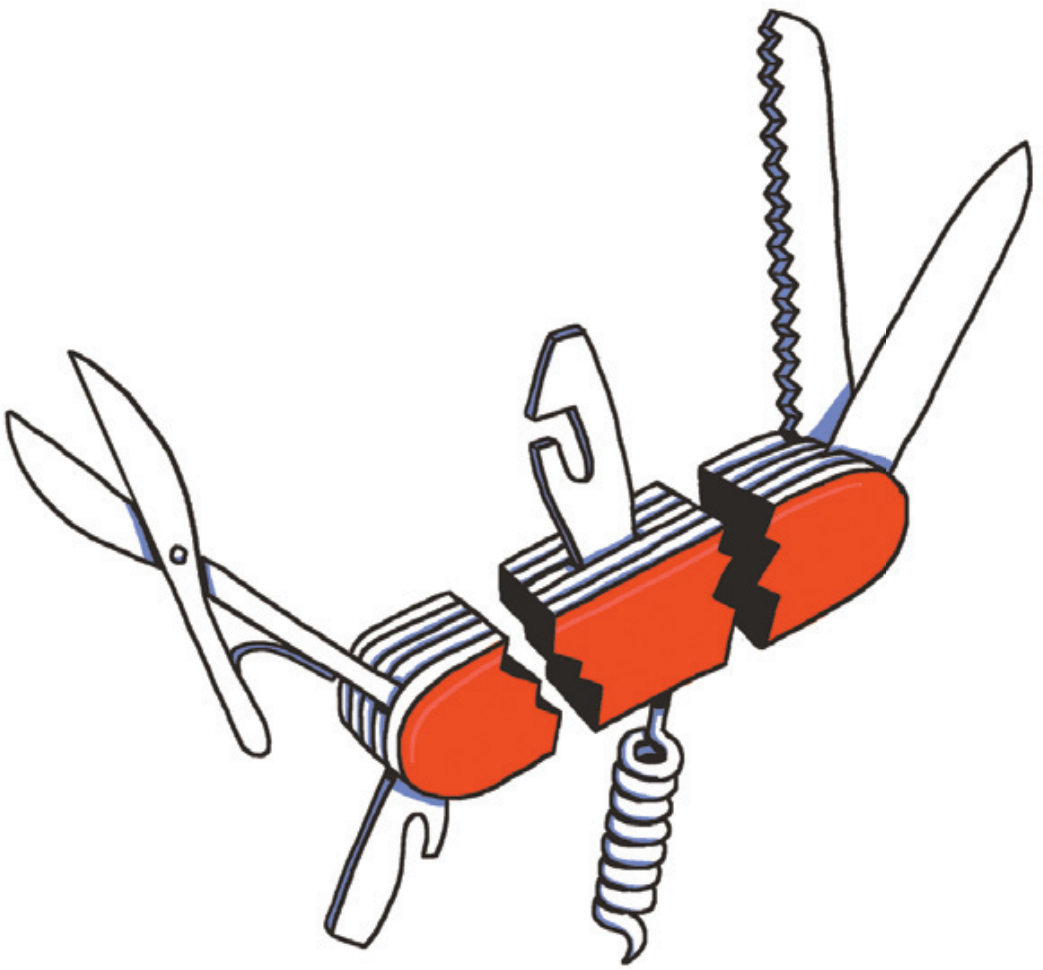
SPLIT BY EXAMPLES OF USEFULNESS

Don’t divide work technically and then look for value – divide by value and look for useful technical chunks

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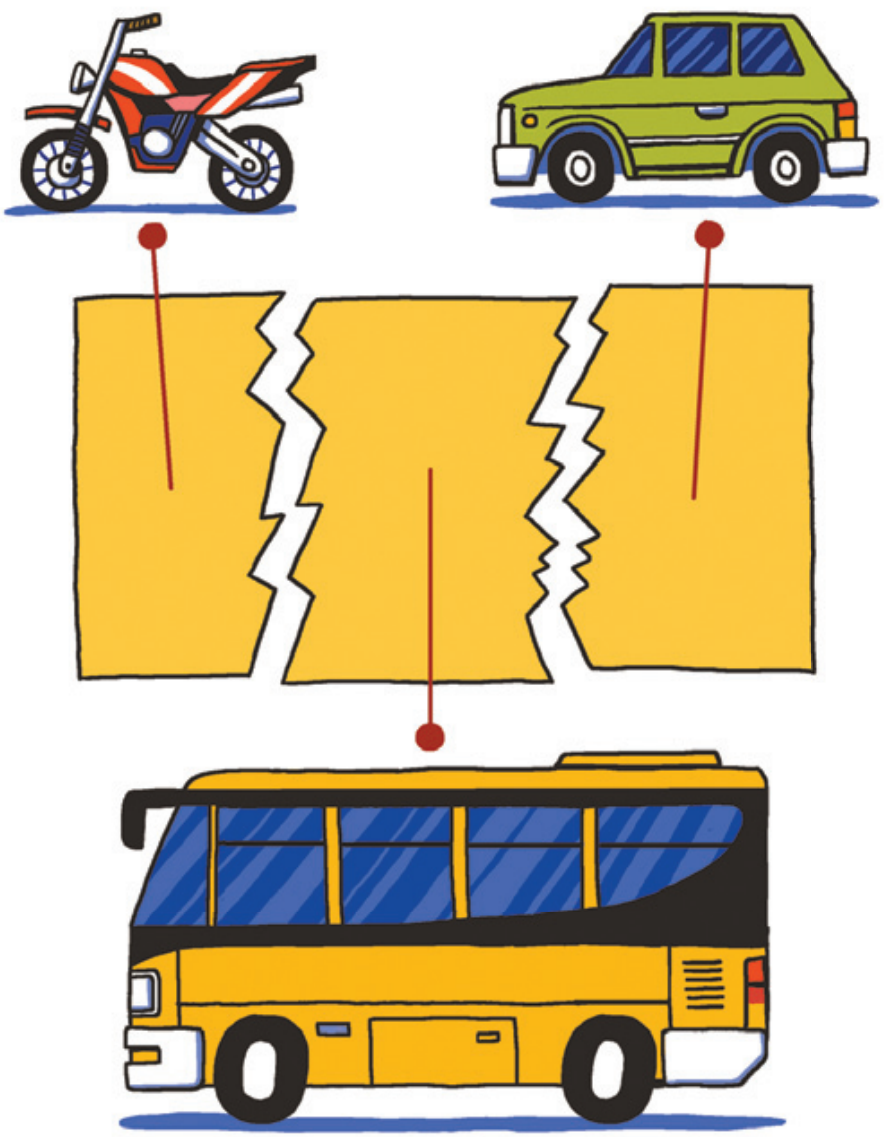
SPLIT BY CAPACITY

Capacity is often a good way of breaking down ‘all or nothing’ plans

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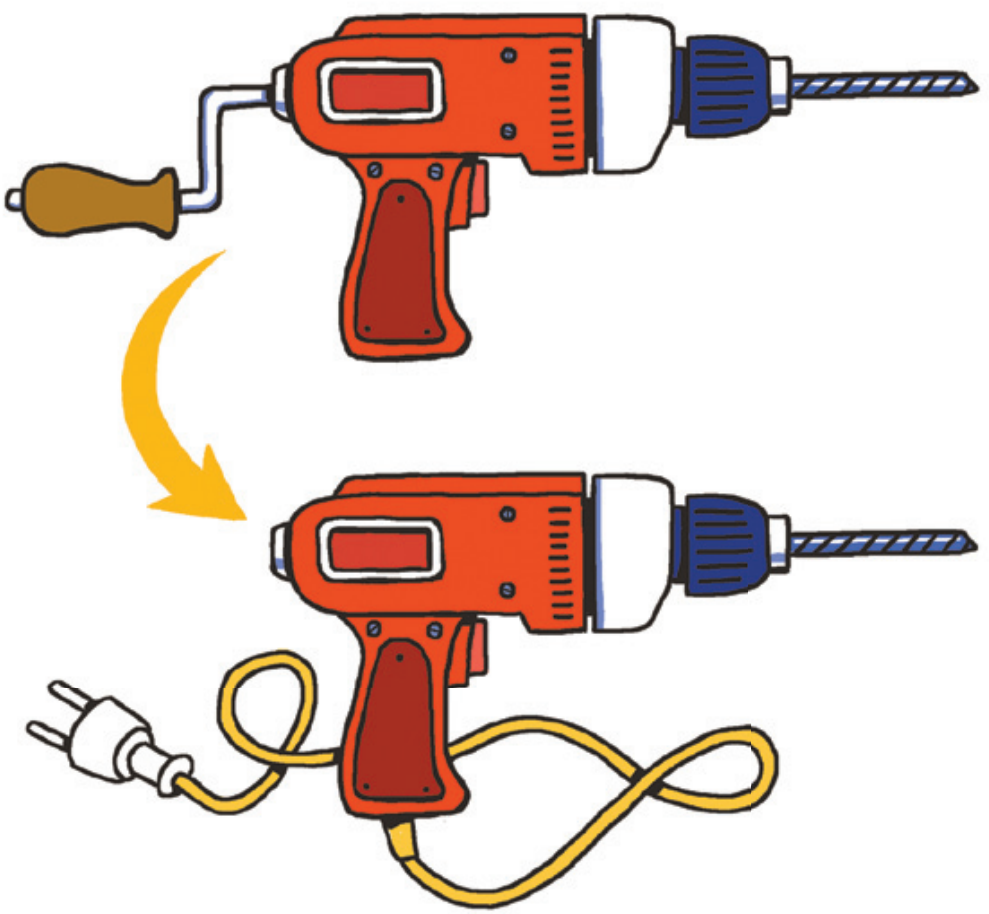
START WITH DUMMY, THEN MOVE TO DYNAMIC

Use hard-coded reference data in first story then connect to databases in a later one

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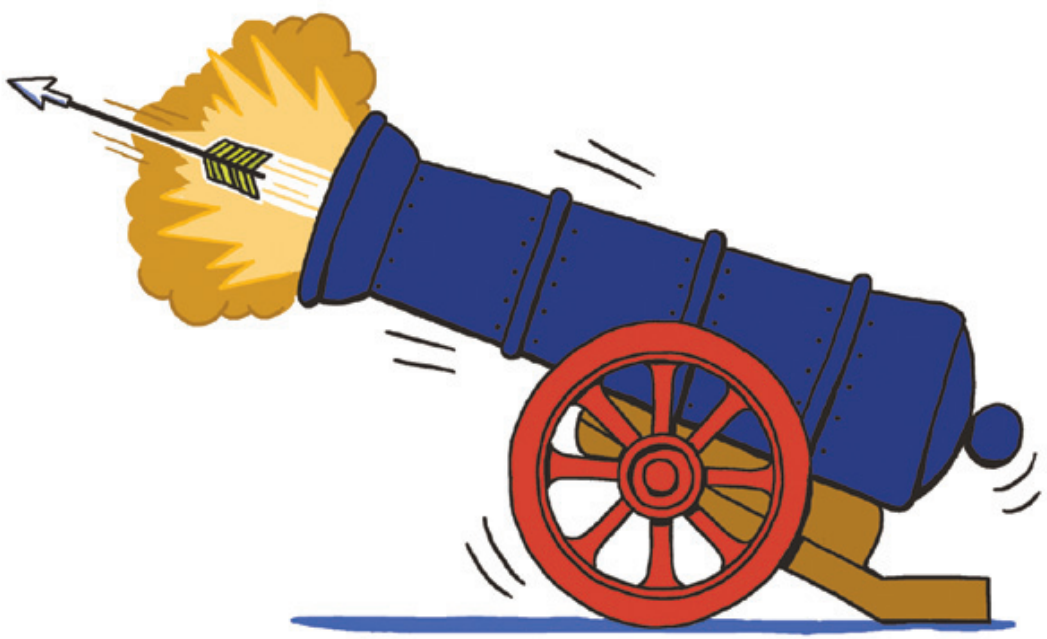
SIMPLIFY OUTPUTS

Investigate whether some outputs can be reduced or postponed to de-risk short-term plans

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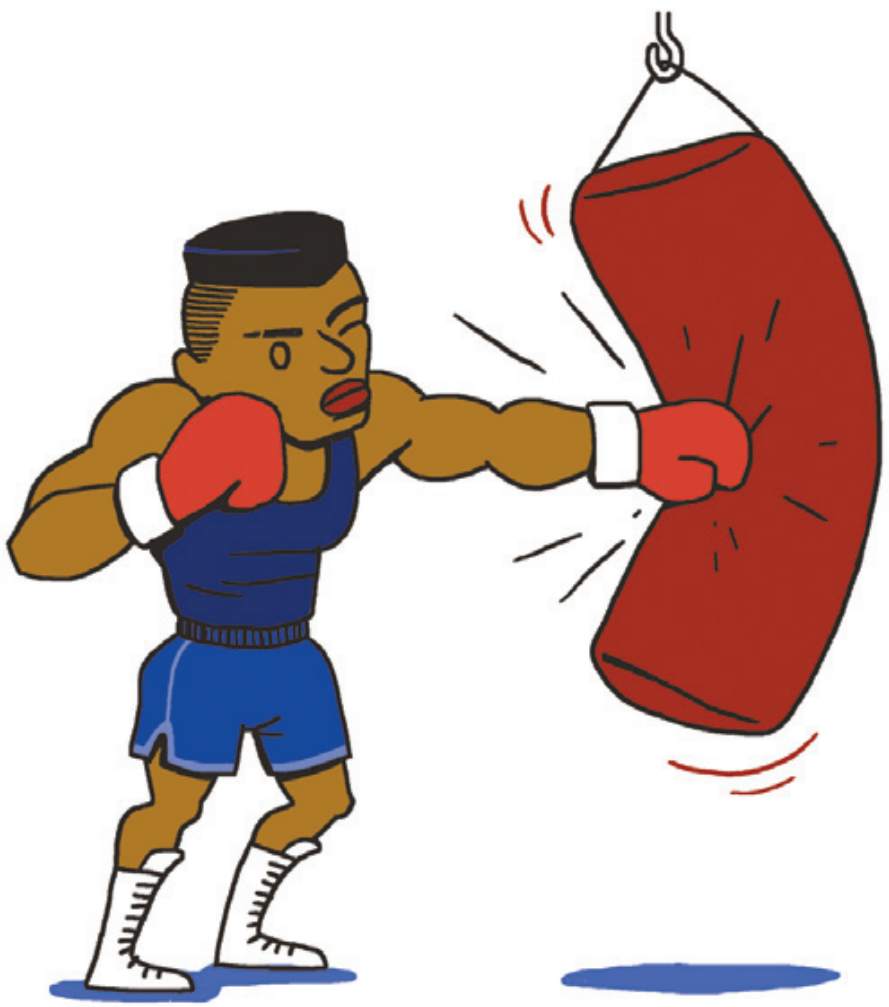
SPLIT LEARNING FROM EARNING

Time-box research instead of turning it into vague, uncontrolled work

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EXTRACT BASIC UTILITY

When business processes cannot be simplified, pare down user interaction to the bare minimum


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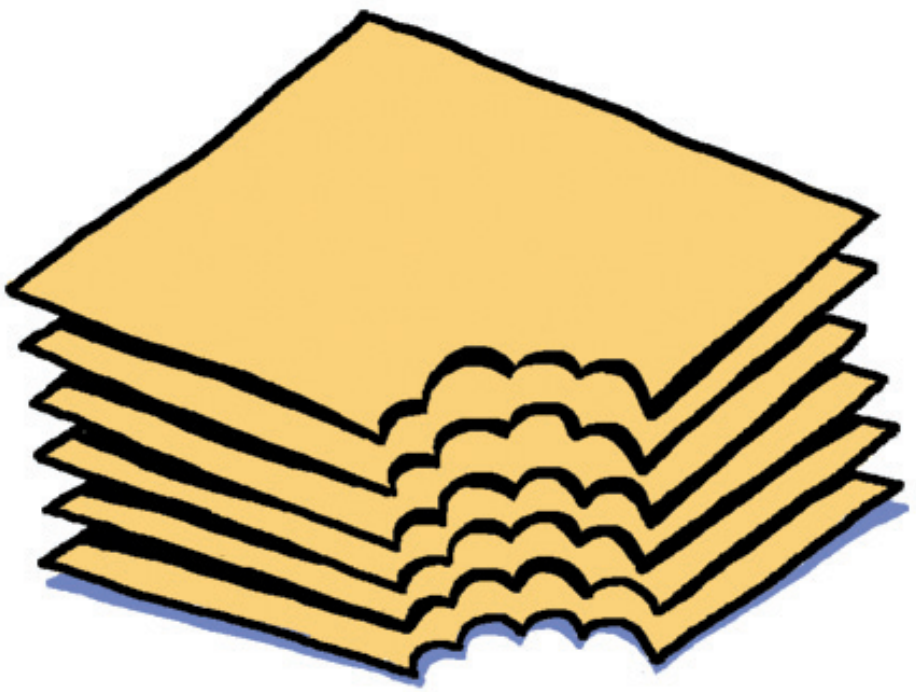
WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, SLICE THE HAMBURGER

Break down technical workflows and group tasks by value

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DON'T PUSH EVERYTHING INTO STORIES

Avoid faking stories to cover internal tasks so that you can keep your plans simple and clean


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BUDGET INSTEAD OF ESTIMATE

Don’t commit on scope, commit to deliver business value


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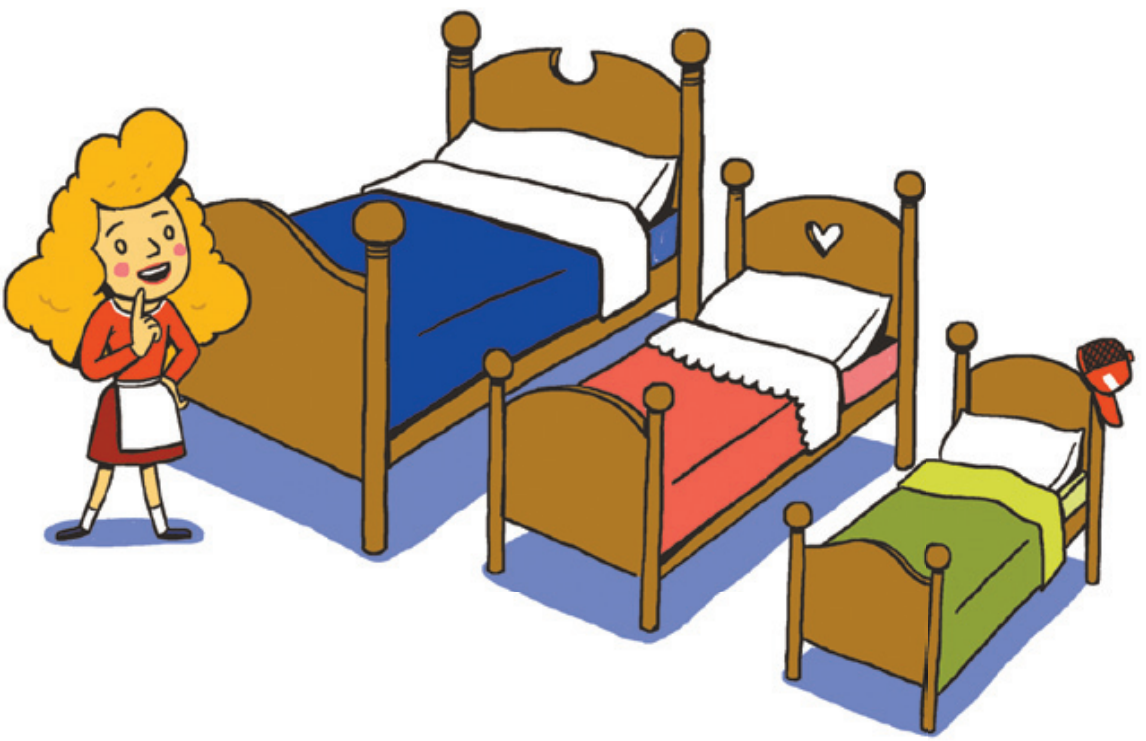
AVOID USING NUMERIC STORY SIZES

Don’t add up story sizes – that way people won’t be able to misuse them

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ESTIMATE CAPACITY BASED ON ROLLING NUMBER OF STORIES

If you have to add up story sizes, use only similar stories so that averages make sense


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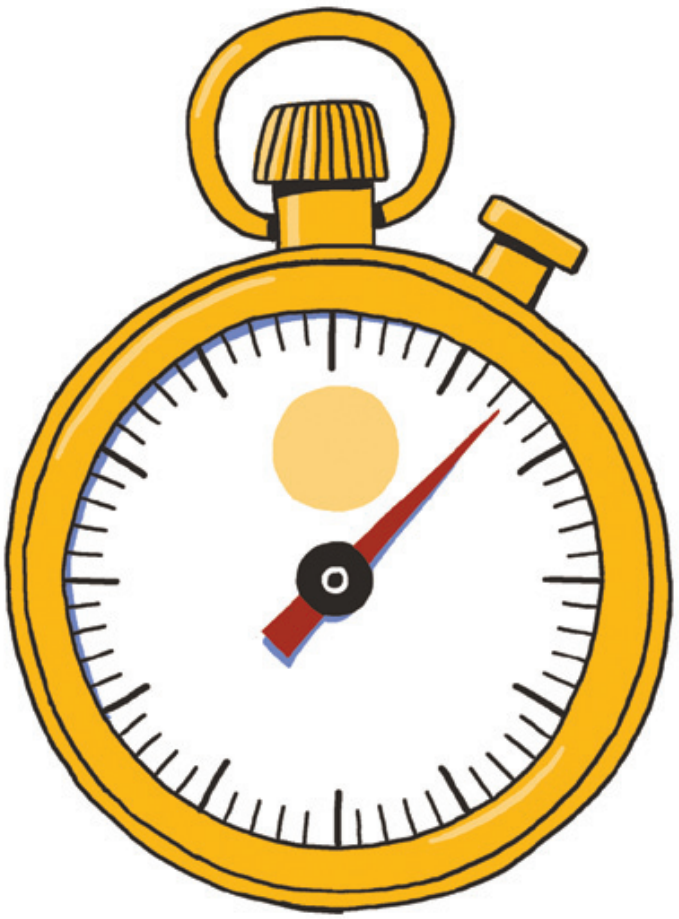
ESTIMATE CAPACITY BASED ON ANALYSIS TIME

If you don't have time to discuss a story, you probably won't have time to deliver it

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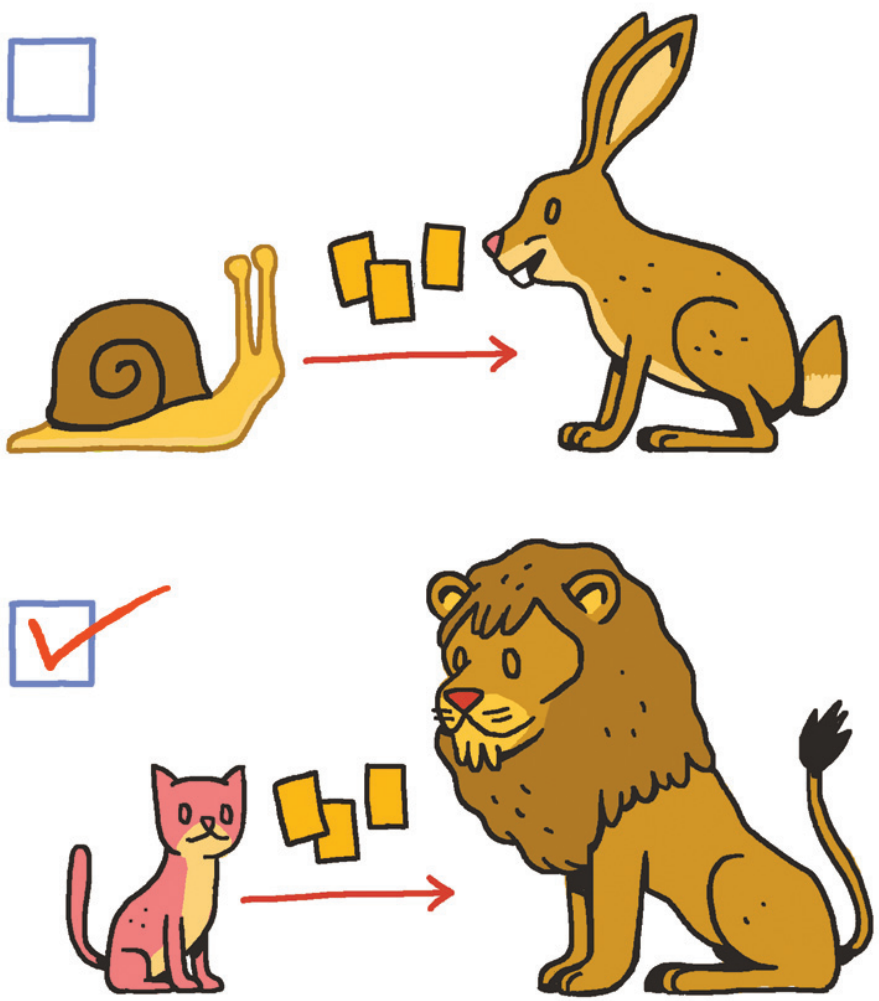
PICK IMPACTS INSTEAD OF PRIORITISING STORIES

Focus on achieving a big impact instead of balancing work so that nobody gets angry

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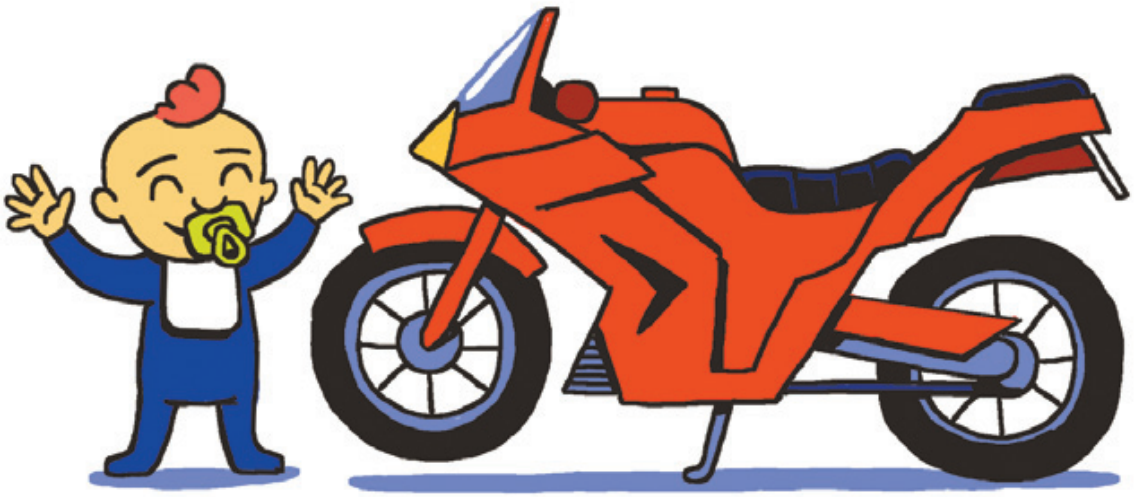
NEVER SAY 'NO' – SAY 'NOT NOW'

Negotiate sequence of delivery instead of refusing requests

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SPLIT UX IMPROVEMENTS FROM CONSISTENCY WORK

Manage consistency work and large interaction improvements separately


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GET USERS TO OPT IN TO LARGE USER INTERFACE CHANGES

Roll out UX changes gradually by offering something important and asking people to opt in


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CHECK OUTCOMES WITH REAL USERS

Check with real users whether they actually got expected benefits


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THROW STORIES AWAY AFTER THEY ARE DELIVERED

Specifications and tests should explain how a system works currently – not how it changed over time