

DESIGN AND POWER

A POLITICAL PLAYBOOK FOR CREATIVE LEADERS

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1st Principle: Politics is People

When you organize people to do something, each individual has opinions on what's right. This means no matter how talented leaders are, **some people will not get everything they want.**

This motivates people to influence the powerful or to try and take it for themselves. There are many ways to express ambition, some healthier than others, but **politics are everywhere people are.**

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ANTHROPOLOGY
SOCIOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY

IL PRINCIPE
DI NICOLO MACHIAVELLI
AL MAGNIFICO LORENZO
DI PIERO DE MEDICI

LA VITA
DI CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI
DA LVCCA.

IL MODO CHE TENNE
IL DVCA VALENTINO
PER AMMAZZARE VITELLOZZO VITELLI,
OLIVEROTTO DA FERMO, IL SIGNOR PAGOLO,
ET IL DVCA DI GRAYNA.

I RITRATTI
DELLE COSE DELLA FRANCIA
ET DELL' ALAMAGNA.



m. m. 1. 5.



M. D. L.



4 of Machiavelli's "cynical" Principles

1. It's better to be feared than loved
2. Always being nice leads to ruin
3. People can't handle the truth
4. People resist change

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

What Would Machiavelli Do?



The Ends Justify
the Meanness

"The ultimate guide to corporate backstabbing." —Entertainment Weekly

STANLEY BING

author of the National Bestseller *Throwing the Elephant*

His philosophy was born in a very difficult time. I don't think you need to be evil to be politically successful.

But some disagree.

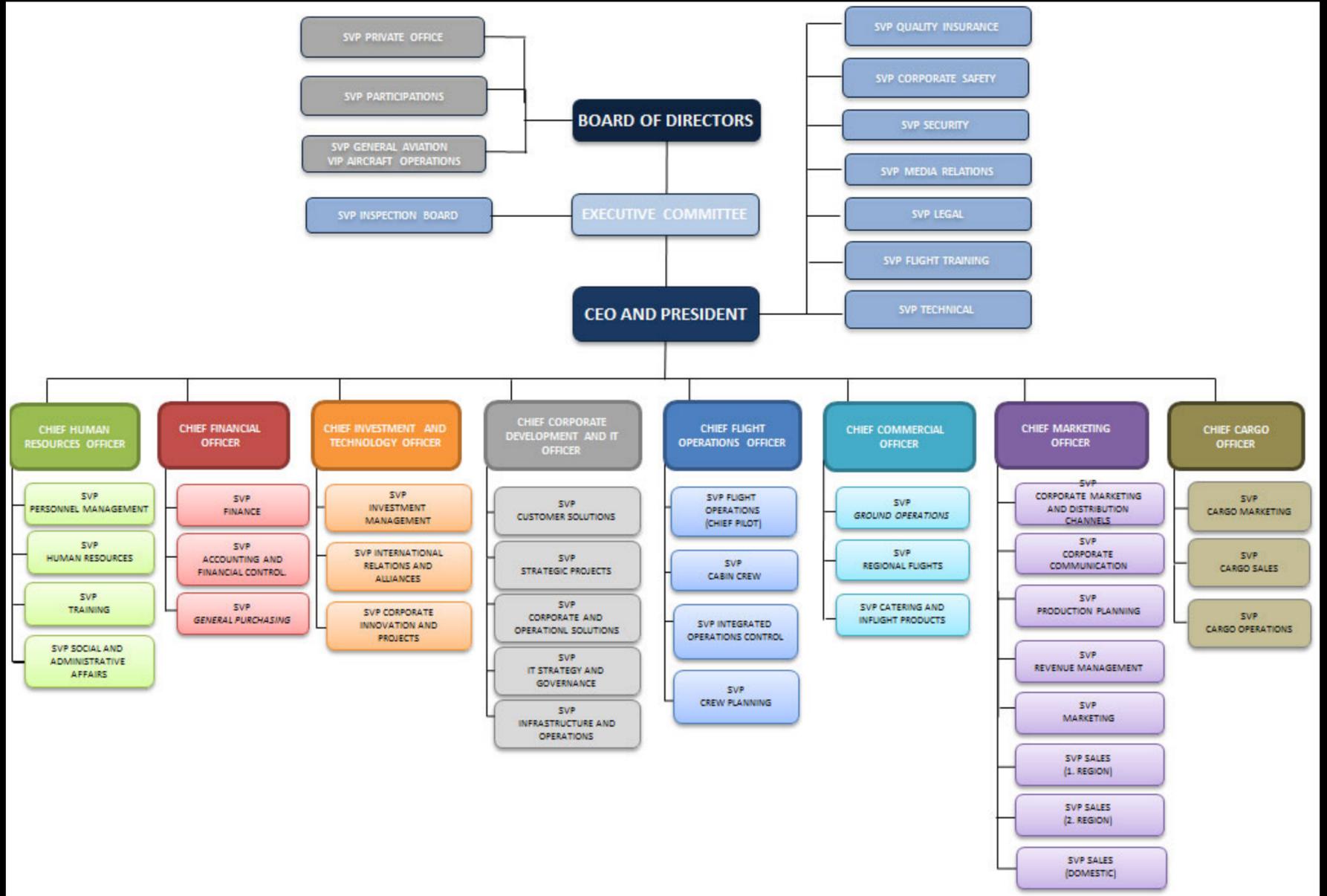
Books like this are hard to tell if they're satire or not.

Machiavellian Pragmatism

“Do all the worst things you need to do on the first day so later everyone can say ‘well, he’s not as bad as he used to be’”

- Salman Rushdie, paraphrasing Machiavelli

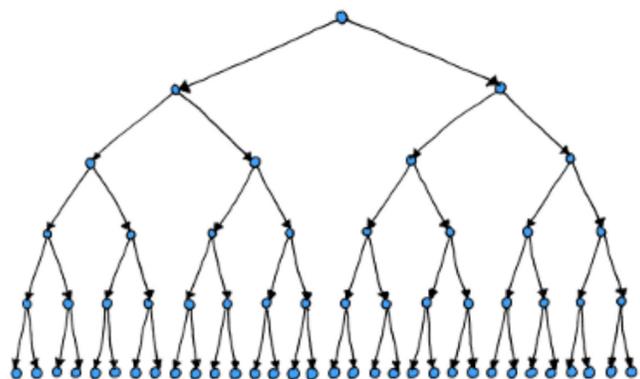
http://www.openculture.com/2011/07/salman_rushdie_machiavellis_bad_rap.html



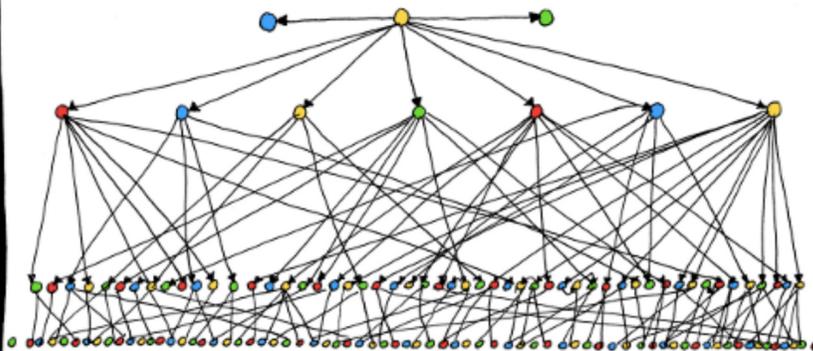
**2nd Principle: your organization is a
terrain**

**the landscape defines the kinds of
tactics that work best**

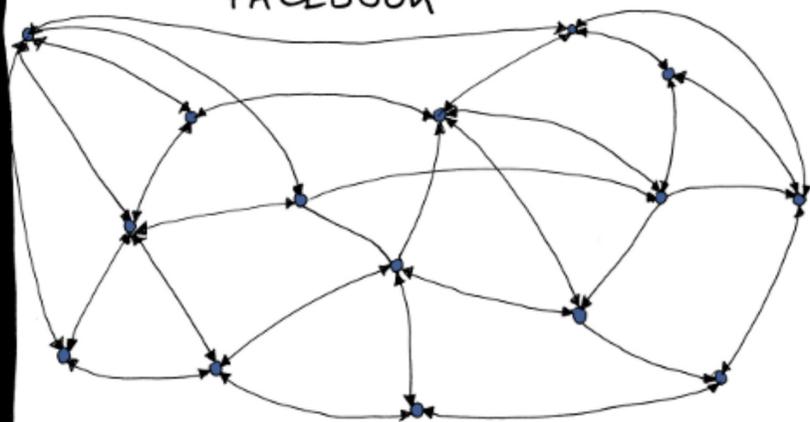
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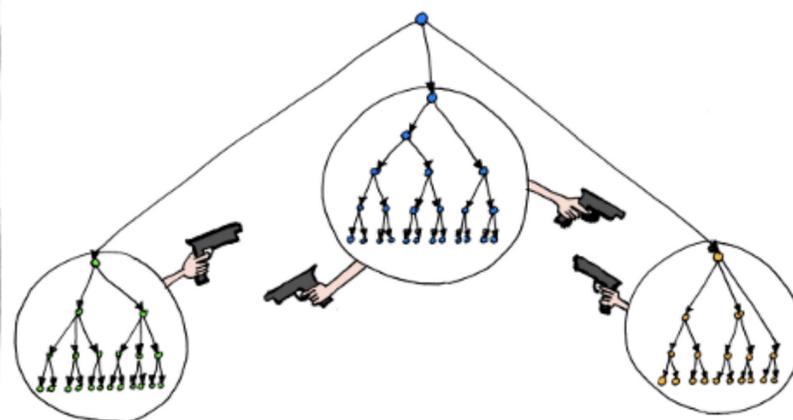
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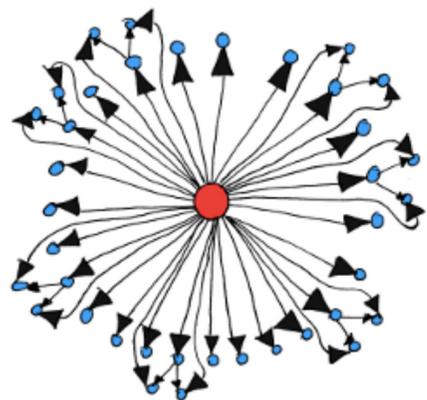
FACEBOOK



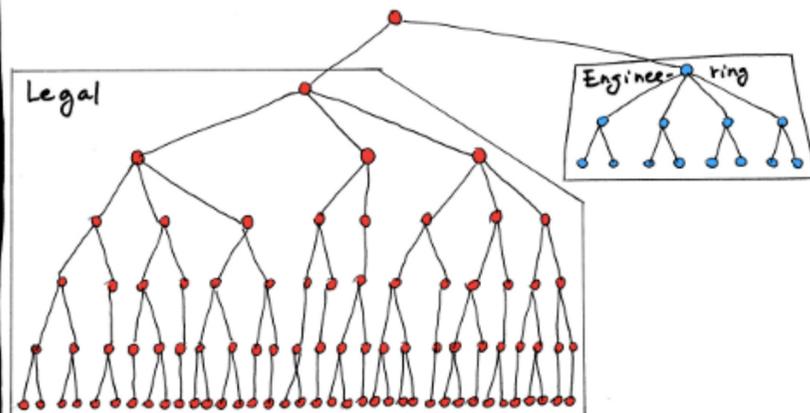
MICROSOFT



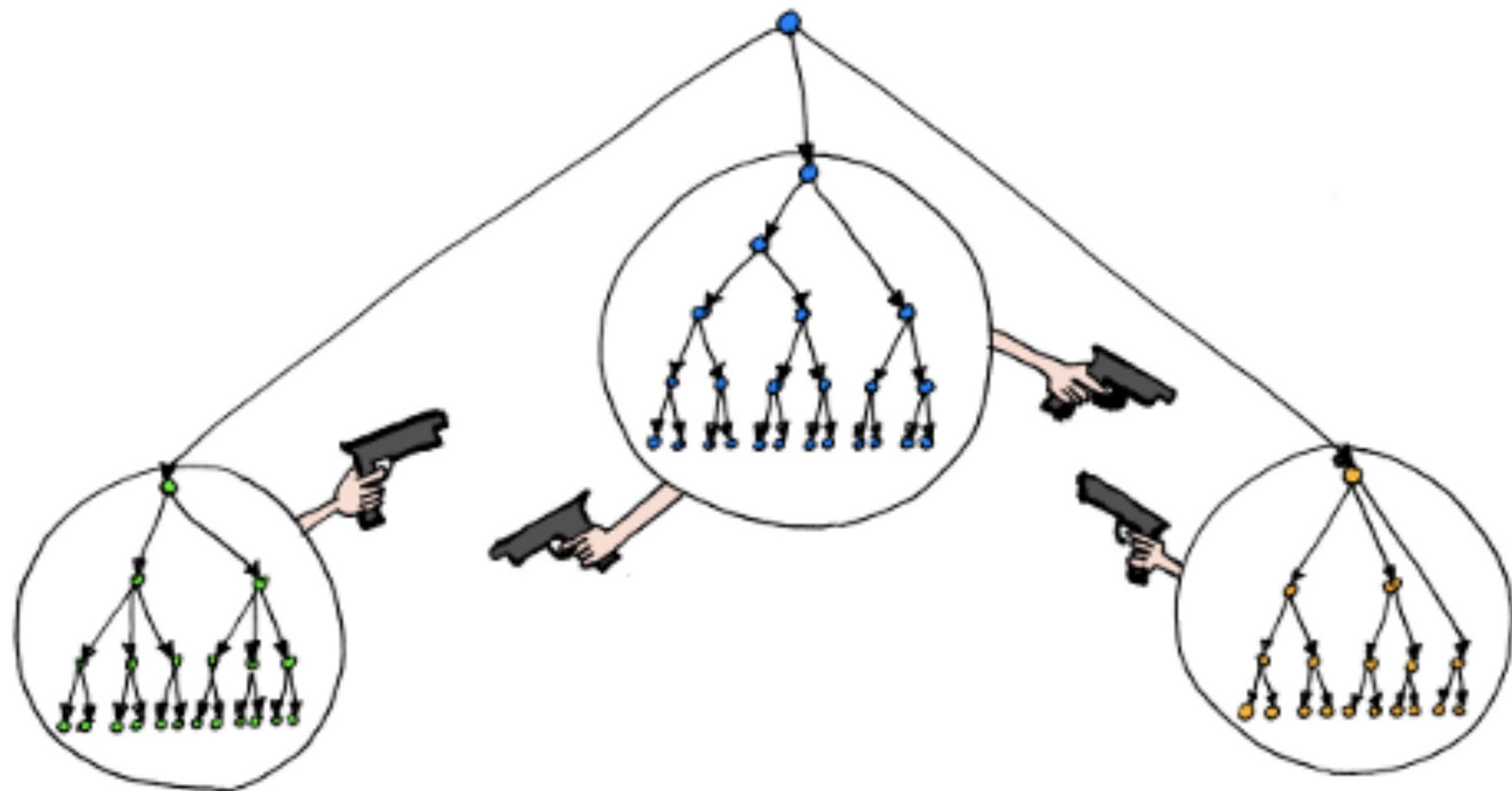
APPLE



ORACLE

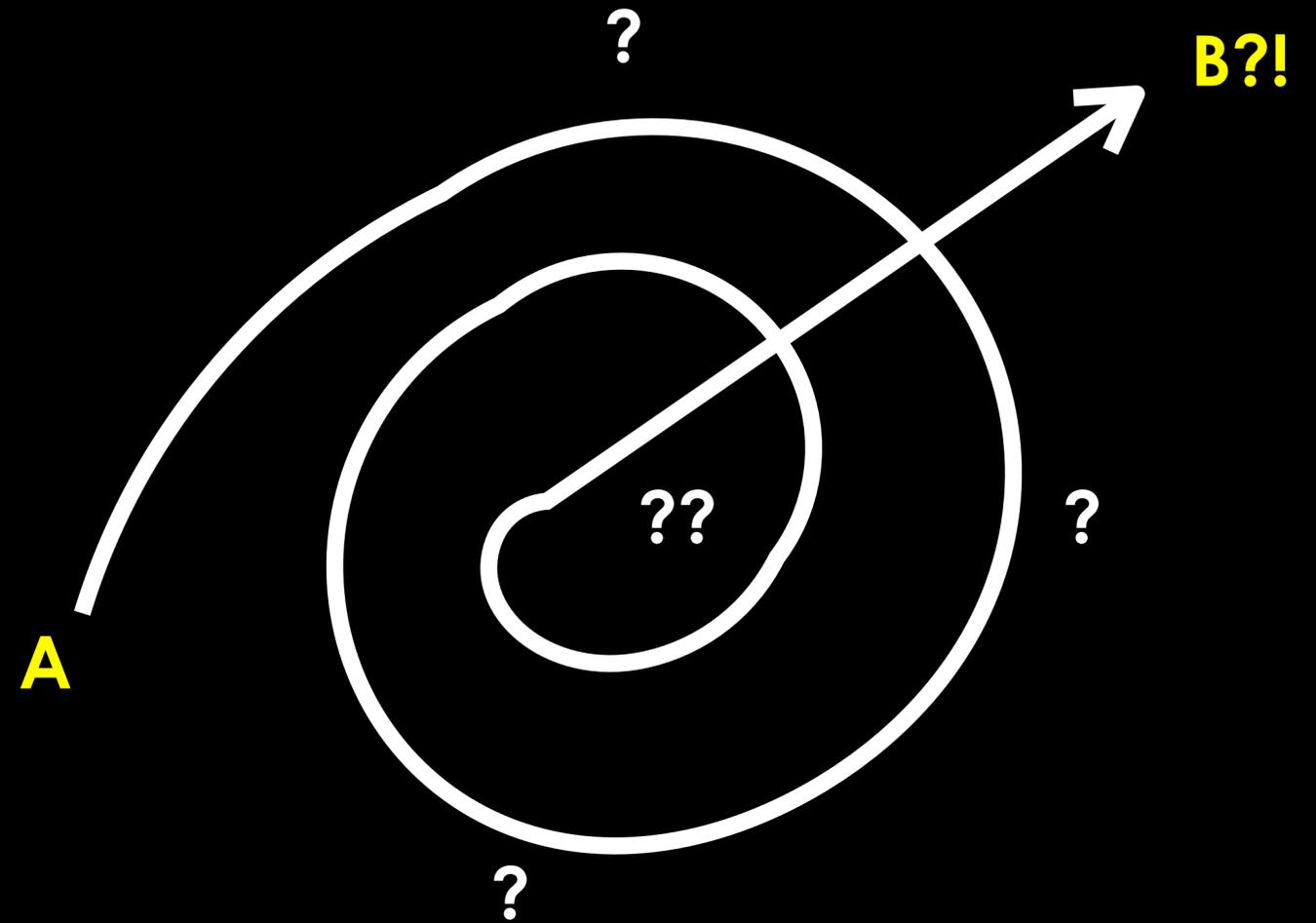


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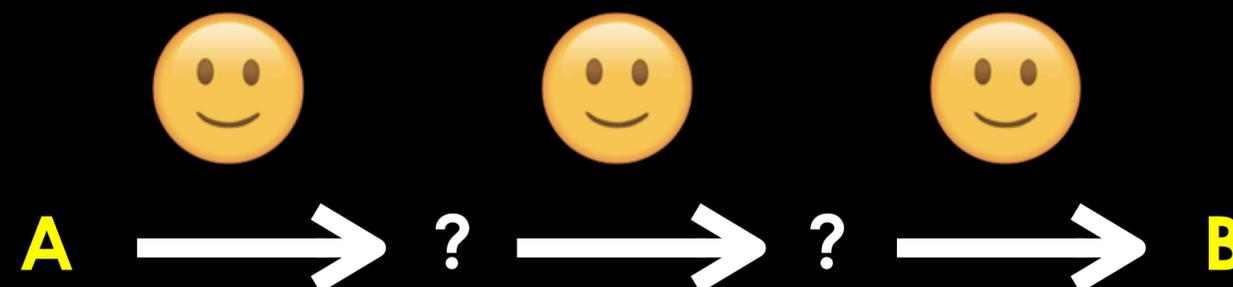
Direct communication style



**Passive Aggressive, Insecure,
Indirect Communication Style**



Direct communication style



**~~Passive Aggressive, Insecure,~~
Indirect Communication Style**

2nd Principle applied:

**All landscapes have challenges -
good leaders find and share paths
to thrive in the current environment**

Survey results

Years in leadership	2-10 years: 74%
Team size	0-10 : 64%
Design is advantage	64% (30% neutral)
Responses	58 (+20 not here)
Gender Ratio	7 M / 3 F / .2 O
Age	24-45: 81%

(Sorry about the survey UX)

Play #1: Study the landscape

- Who is thriving? Who is struggling?
- Who isn't even here?
- What tactics do you observe working for others?
- Who has skills or resources you need?

Play #2: Know the Business

“Steve Jobs didn’t commit Apple to competing on Design because he was some patron of the Arts. He did it because it was the ONLY option for adding value to a commoditized market.

Companies are Capitalist enterprises so unless you find ways to articulate how Design helps in the goal of making money, you’re not going to get much attention or support.”

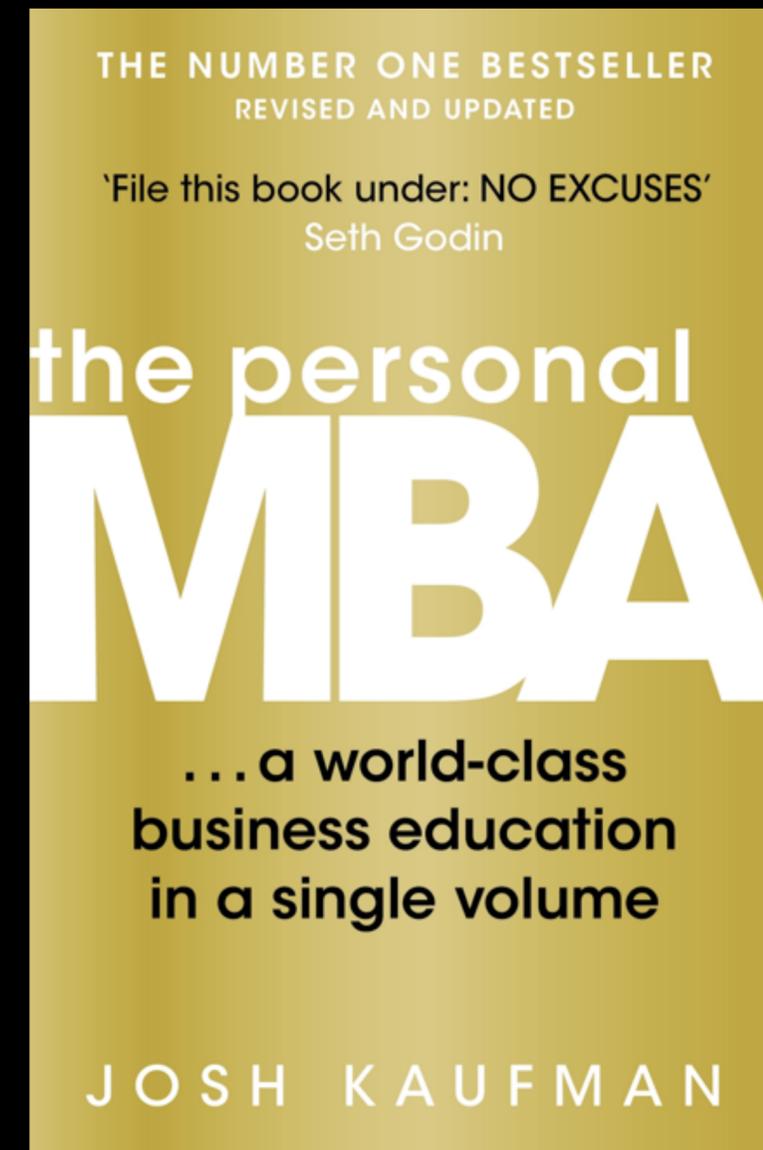
- **Bob Baxley, Director of Design @ Apple, Pinterest, Yahoo**

A.

Who is your closest peer or ally who primarily makes business decisions? Ask them to mentor you in what you don't know.

(local info + make an ally)

B.



**Play #3: Invest in how others
perceive you & your team**

HCI / HHI / HGI

HCI



HHI



HGI

Human to Human

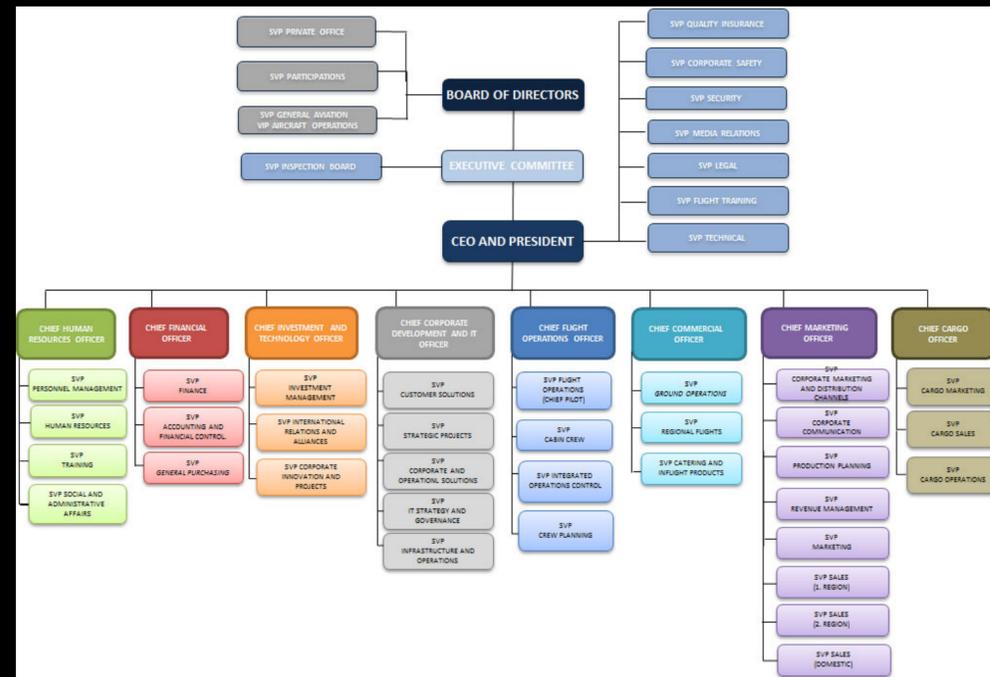
Human to Group

FACT: You will always be explaining Design

- Think of you and your team as **ambassadors**
- Designers should see teaching as investment
- “Designers are my favorite people to work with even when they challenge me”
- Be inviting, be known as problem solvers, be reliable - if you do this people will want MORE design involvement

work politics is just another kind
of problem-solving: **people problems**

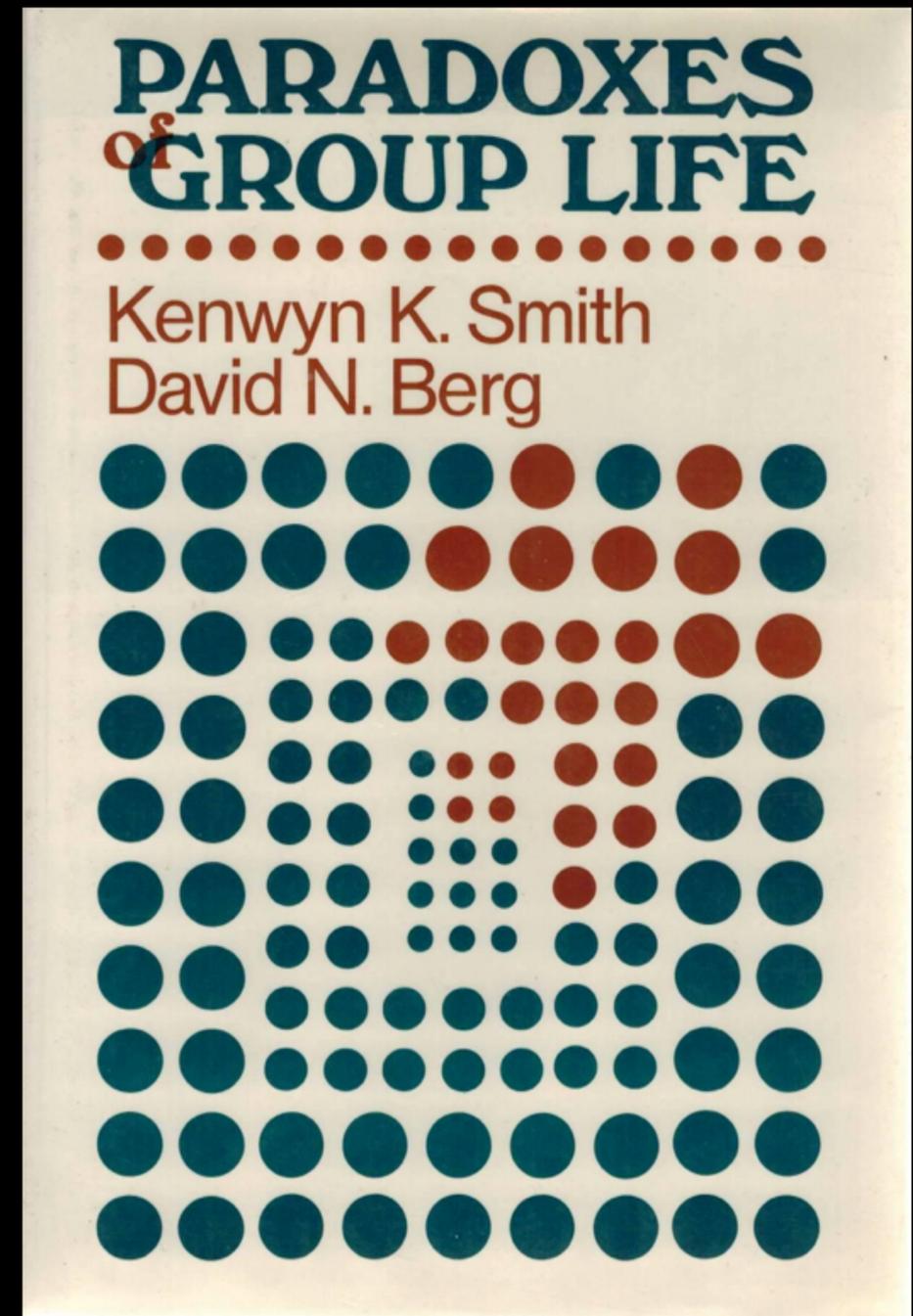
But do not despair ye designers!
Organizational design is a kind of design - **You have more potential for solving these problems than your peers.**



Inclusion / Exclusion paradox:

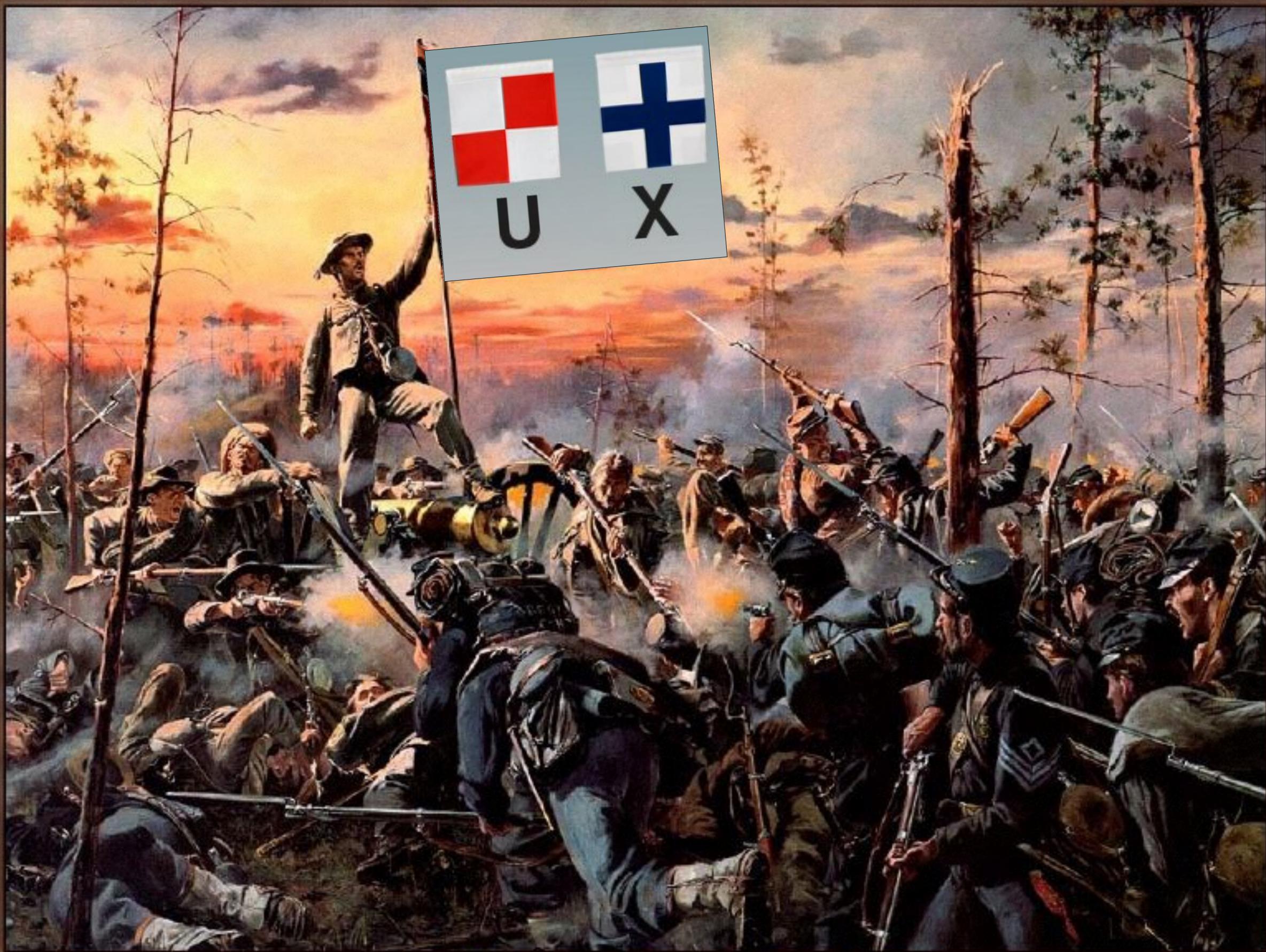
“I want to be seen as special
AND I want the group to accept
me as one of their own”

“X for designers” reinforces being
“other” as we exclude ourselves





Southern Cross Battle of Glendale, June 30 1862

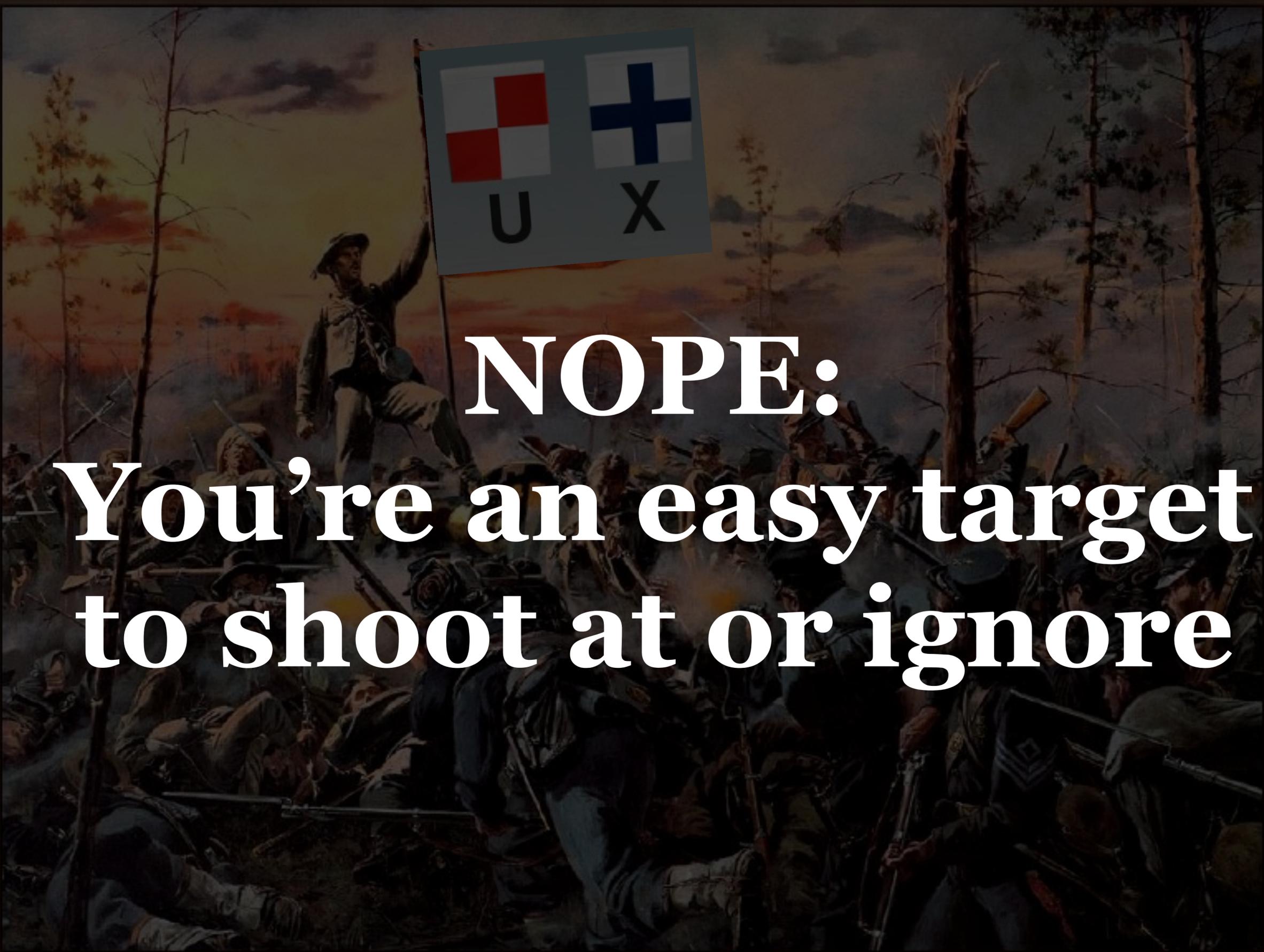


Southern Cross Battle of Glendale, June 30 1862



I'M A CHAMPION!

Southern Cross Battle of Glendale, June 30 1862



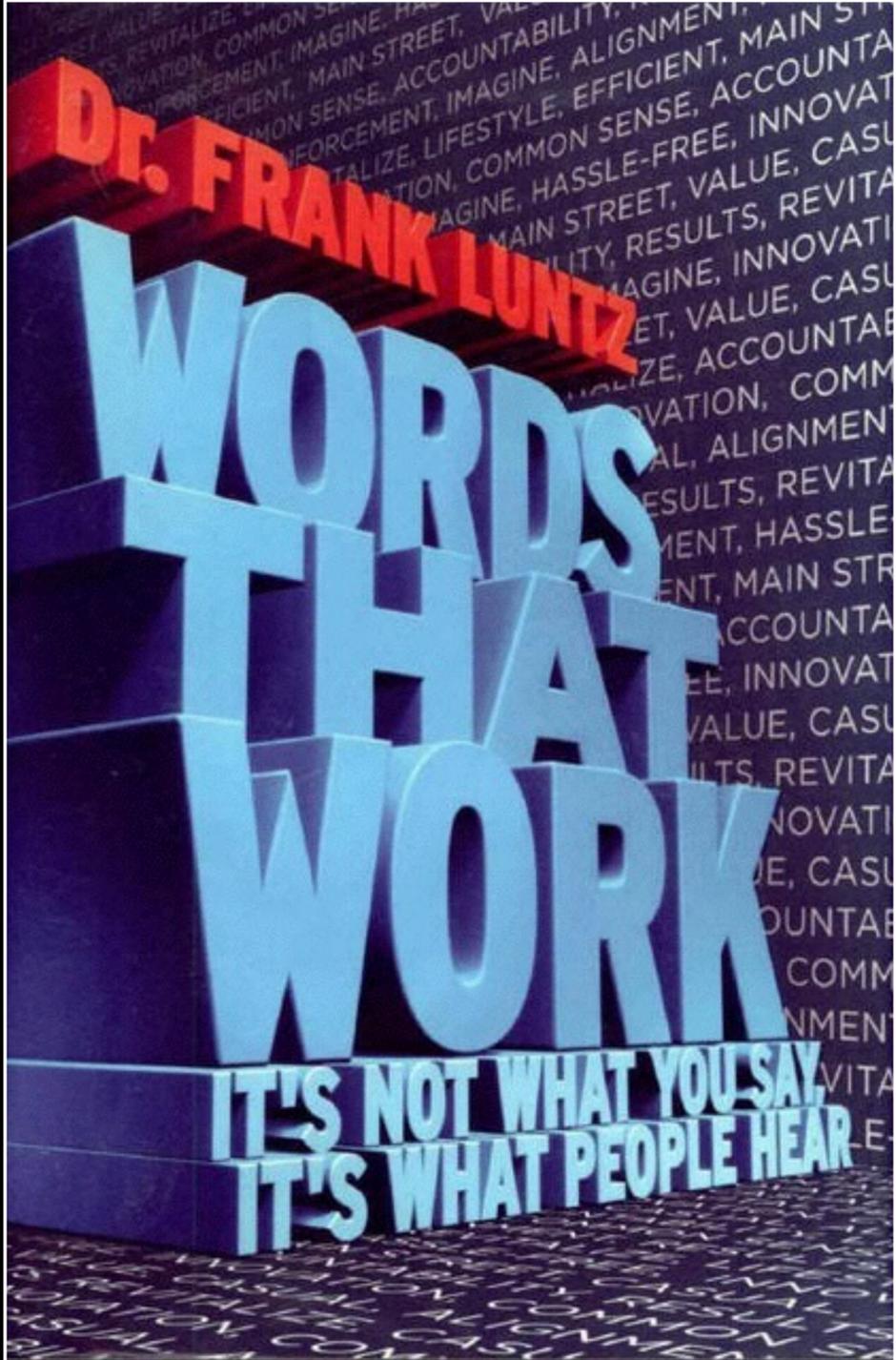
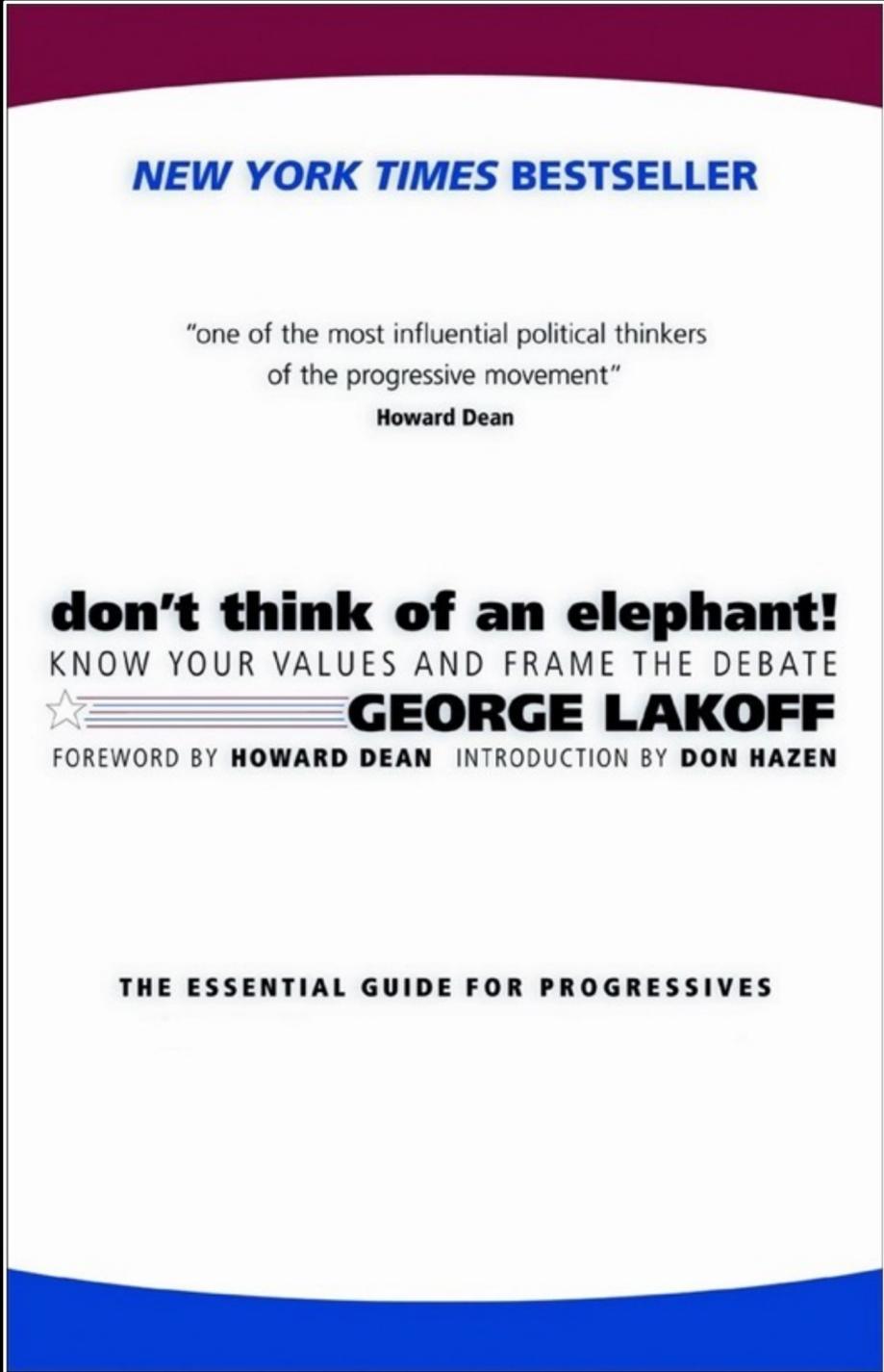
NOPE:
You're an easy target
to shoot at or ignore

Southern Cross Battle of Glendale, June 30 1862

“Each time I visit a conference I hear the same problems faced by UX professionals... ‘my CEO just doesn’t listen to me in meetings, they seem to switch off and just don’t understand my point of view.’ In the majority of cases this is probably your problem, not theirs. “

- **Alastair Simpson, Head of Design, Atlassian**

Thinking In Frames / Metaphors



CHARM

CHARM IS
DESIGNED

CHARM DEPENDS ON CONTEXT

DIFFERENT PEOPLE ARE CHARMED BY
DIFFERENT BEHAVIORS

“AS THE LEAD
DESIGNER, I’M TELLING
YOU **WHAT YOU ARE
DOING IS WRONG**”

“HERE IS SOMETHING
THAT WILL SOLVE
YOUR PROBLEM”

“HERE IS SOMETHING
THAT WILL INCREASE
REVENUE”

“HERE IS SOMETHING
THAT WILL MAKE US A
TRUSTWORTHY BRAND”

“HERE IS SOMETHING
THAT WILL **SAVE**
YOUR TEAM DAYS OF
WORK”

“HERE IS SOMETHING
THAT WILL HELP ME
GET MORE POWER”

HCI



HHI

Human to Human



HGI

Human to Group



WORKSHOPS

Leadership workshops for every level

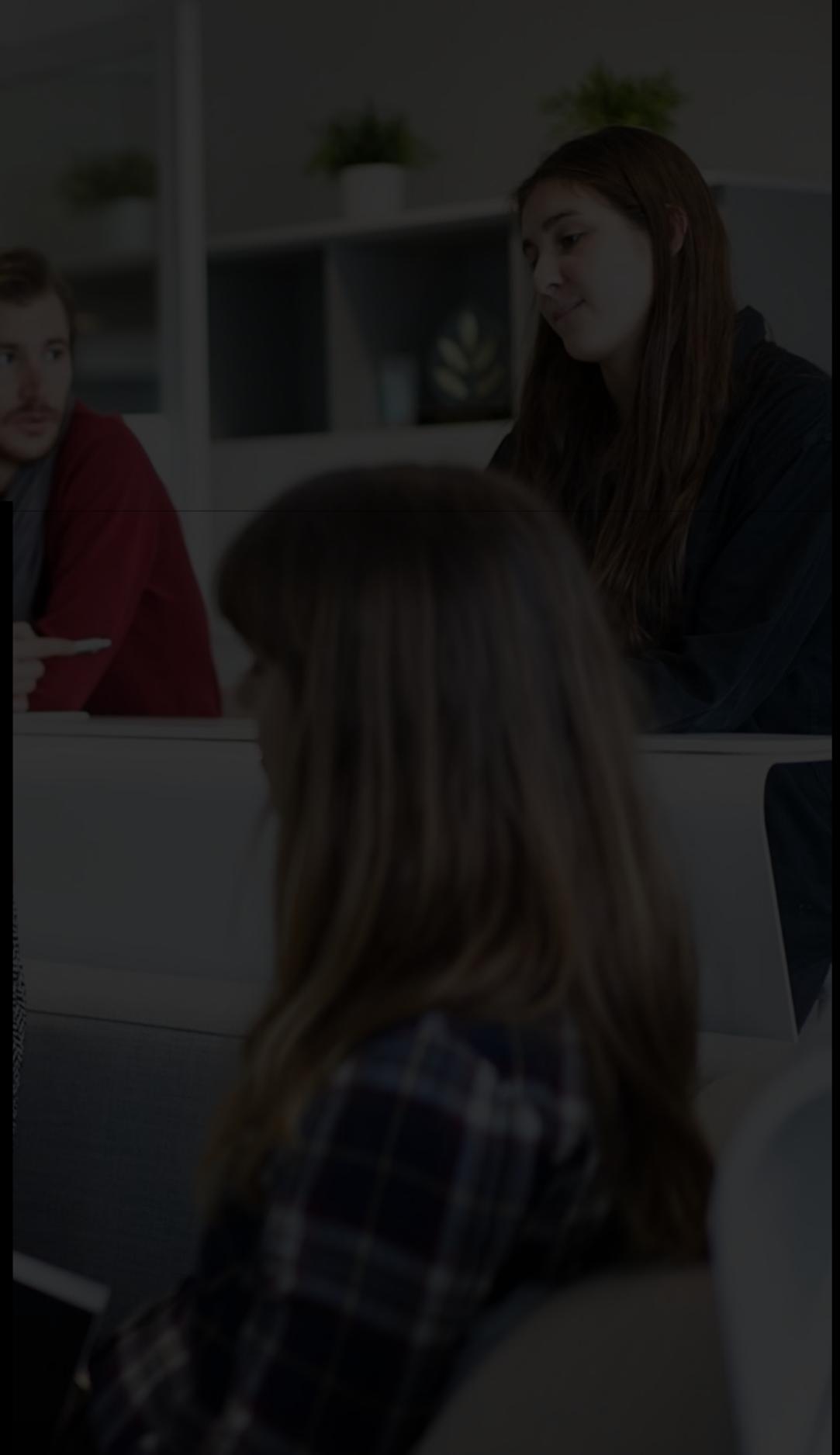
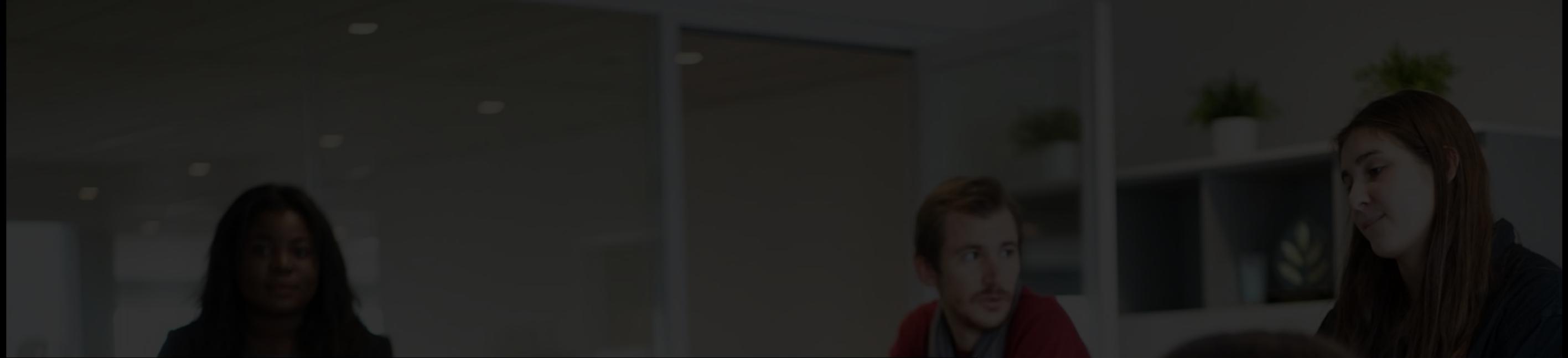
Join a group of peers from across the industry for one to two days of guided, interactive

Workshops are held throughout the year in a variety of cities, with visits from local guest



Play #4: TALK ONE ON ONE
(Seats at tables are overrated)





You rarely make allies *in* meetings

- **When meetings start, people already have positions**
- **People behave differently when others are watching**
- **Pitching an entire room at once is very hard**
- **But after a meeting, a coffee with someone can transform your understanding of what is going on**

Grow acquaintances into allies

- Relationships grow from interactions over time
- If you need more influence, you need to lead the creation of more relationships
- Like dating, success rates are low - but worth it
- Goal: Engineering VP fights for resources for you

Play #5: Befriend Engineers



**“YOUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ENTIRELY
ON YOUR ABILITY TO
INFLUENCE ENGINEERS”**

**-Joe Belfiore (my first PM boss),
VP, Microsoft**

MBWA - Management by Walking Around

IBWA - Influence by Walking Around

Think of everyone as a partner

“One day I suddenly realized it didn't matter who reported to who. I should treat everyone like they reported to me, which means this:

When you report to me, I make it clear what you need to do to make me successful, and I help you do that. Then you tell me what you need and I do that too. Our success is interlinked: it's just about conversation and support. So it doesn't matter who reports to who, we all need to communicate and support each other.”

- **Christina Wodtke, Former GM @ Yahoo, Myspace, Zynga**

Play #6: Read the room



ANALYSIS:

234654 453 30

654334 450 16

245261 865 26

453665 766 46

382856 863 09

356878 544 04

664217 985 89

254346 956 32

SCAN MODE 43894
SIZE ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT COMPLETE

FIT PROBABILITY 0.99

RESET TO ACQUISITION
MODE SPEECH LEVEL 78

PRIORITY OVERRIDE
DEFENSE SYSTEMS SET
ACTIVE STATUS
LEVEL 2347923 MAX

MATCH ■





Sally (Biz Dev VP)

Wants to be CEO





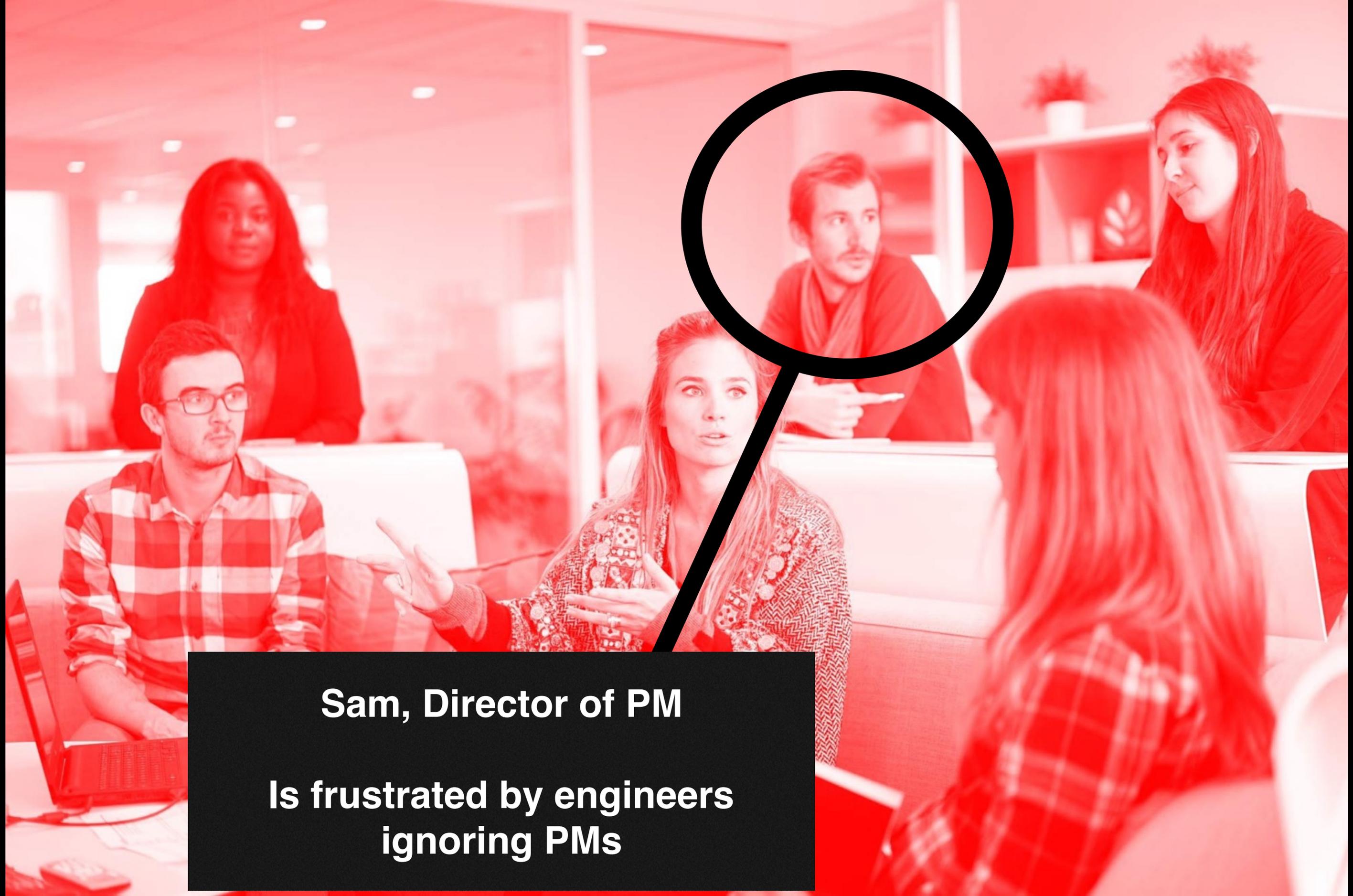
Nancy (CEO)

Knows all budgets must be cut by 25%



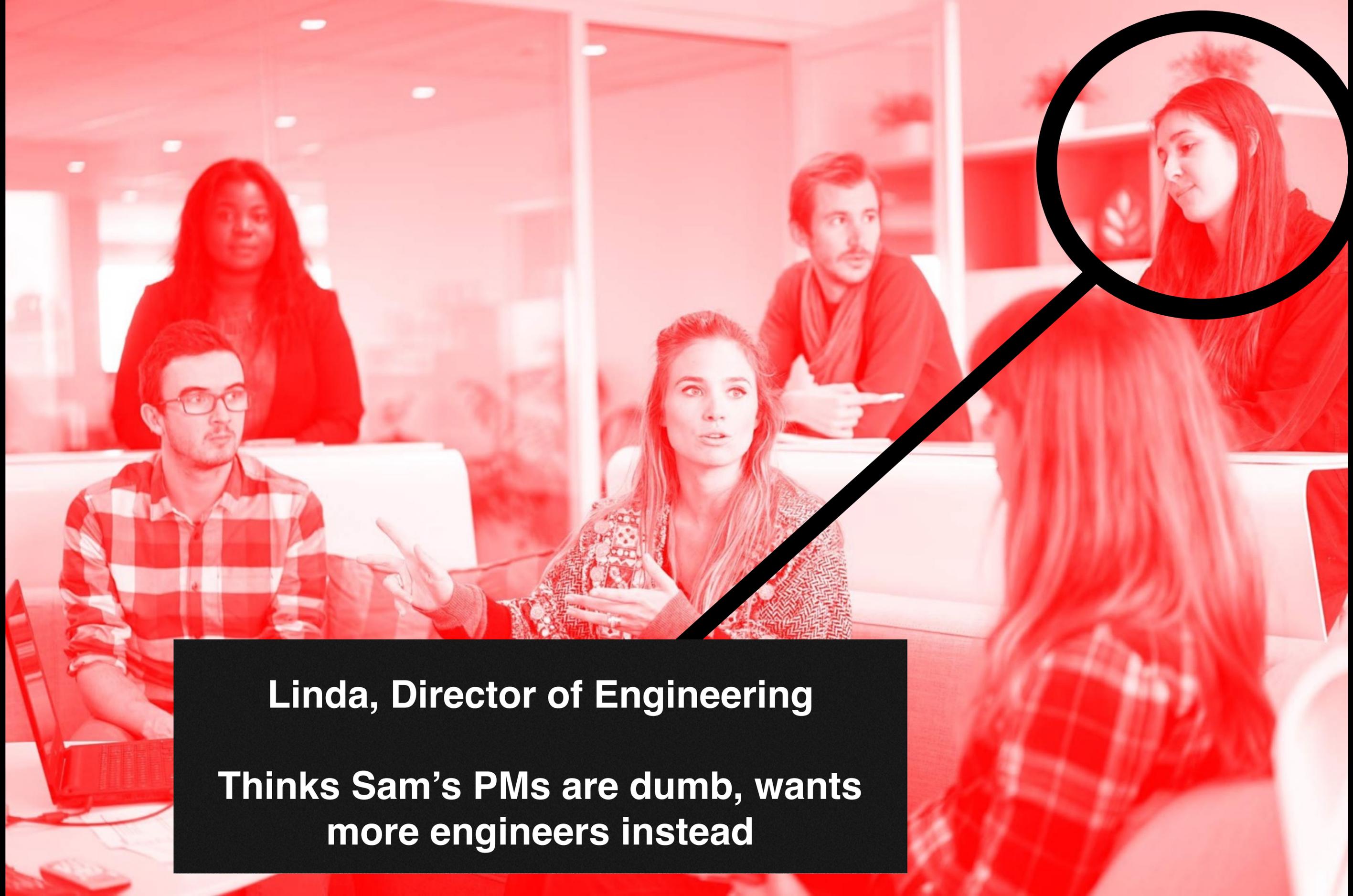
Steve (VP of Marketing)

**Is leaving the company
but no one knows yet**



Sam, Director of PM

**Is frustrated by engineers
ignoring PMs**



Linda, Director of Engineering

**Thinks Sam's PMs are dumb, wants
more engineers instead**



Kayla (Design VP)

**Only person in the room
who knows all of this**



**To subdue the enemy without
fighting is the acme of skill.**

- Sun Tzu

Play #7: Get ahead of decisions

If there are **more than 5 people** in the room, you have less power than you think

Access is often unfairly based on friendships, golf partners, or other insider connections hard to access especially if you're not a white hetero male*



***The biases of your regional culture may differ**

Play 8: Manage your boss

As you rise they have less time for you. They become another resource that you must manage.

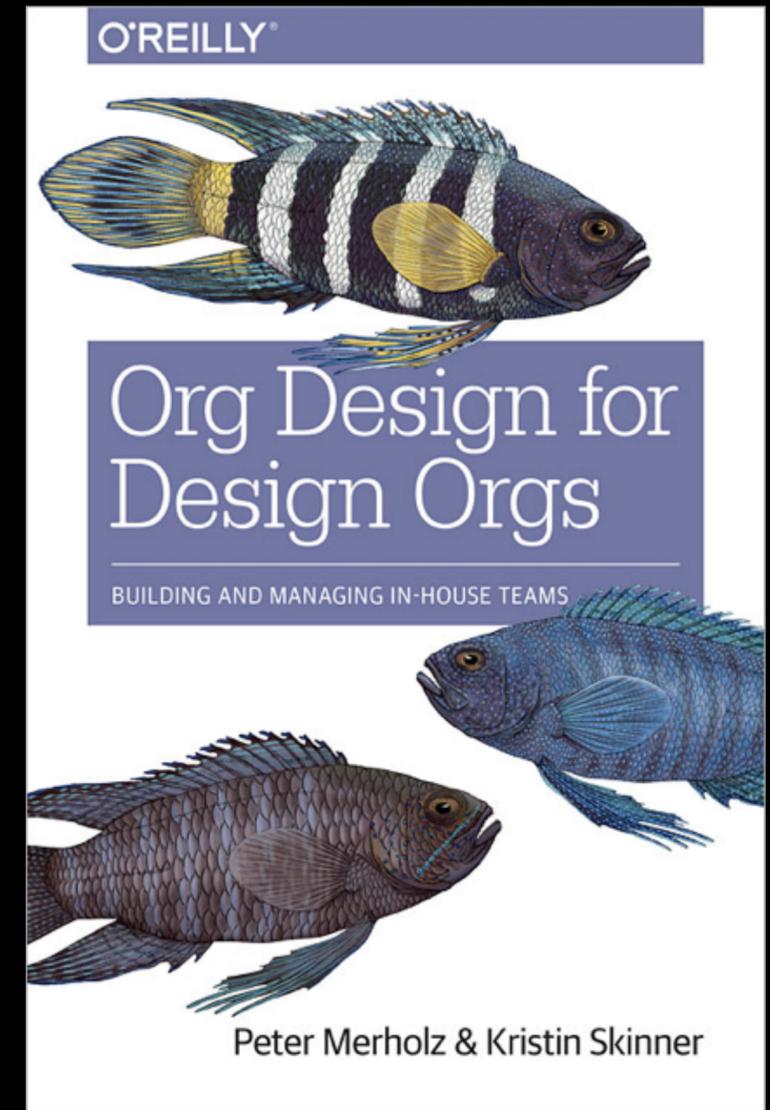
(psst: you also need to manage your skip level)

Play 8: Manage your boss

- Lead them in understanding your value/needs
- Learn how to make them look good, on their terms
- **Be efficient:** earn a reputation as effective & reliable
- When peer leaders complement, ask 'em to tell boss
- Never let them be surprised in meetings, especially from their peers, doubly-so for bad news

Play 8: Manage your boss

- **Over-communicate:** your team's success isn't self-evident
- **Push back:** don't let your team get run over or spread too thin - learn to say NO
- **Stand up** (respectfully) to executives who don't know better; if you don't who will?
- **Be relentless** in getting what your team needs: Don't take a single "no" for an answer



Play 9: Create a mini-landscape

- **Teach your staff the plays from the playbook**
- **Protect your team from stupidity (from above)**
- **When you have influence, improve the landscape**
- **Be a step ahead of your team**

**Ocean of
Machiavellian
turmoil and
despair**



**Oasis of sanity,
clarity and trust**

**Ocean of
Machiavellian
turmoil and
despair**

Play #10: When in doubt, look up

- **If bad employees don't get fired, look up**
- **If meetings are unfair and combative, look up**
- **Executives (\$\$\$\$) are responsible- it's no mystery who's accountable if culture is broken**
- **Don't be afraid to move on - there are healthier places that will value your talents**

Photo credits

- <https://www.aviano.af.mil/Site-Pages/Art/igphoto/2000130272/>
- <https://www.pexels.com/photo/analysis-brainstorming-business-business-group-466733/>
- <https://shop.barbican.org.uk/products/barbican-cross-section-mounted-print>
- <https://www.nps.gov/lacl/learn/nature/mountains.htm>
- <http://bonkersworld.net/organizational-charts> - Manu Cornet

THANK YOU

A POLITICAL PLAYBOOK FOR CREATIVE LEADERS

these slides: bit.ly/ld2018-berkun

1. Study the landscape
2. Know the business
3. Invest in perception
4. Talk one on one
5. Befriend engineers
6. Read the room
7. Get ahead of decisions
8. Manage your boss
9. Create a mini-landscape
10. When in doubt, look up

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