

FORGING ROCK SOLID

Design Disciplines



Laura Van Doore
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Looking at design cultures through the lens of:

SaaS & Startups

FATHOM



Large Enterprise

**FLIGHT
CENTRE®**

Government



**Queensland
Government**

Agency



INTERACTIVE



CREATIVE

Managing Designers is hard.



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DESIGN HISTORY LESSON

A quick look at design team models

Centralised Teams



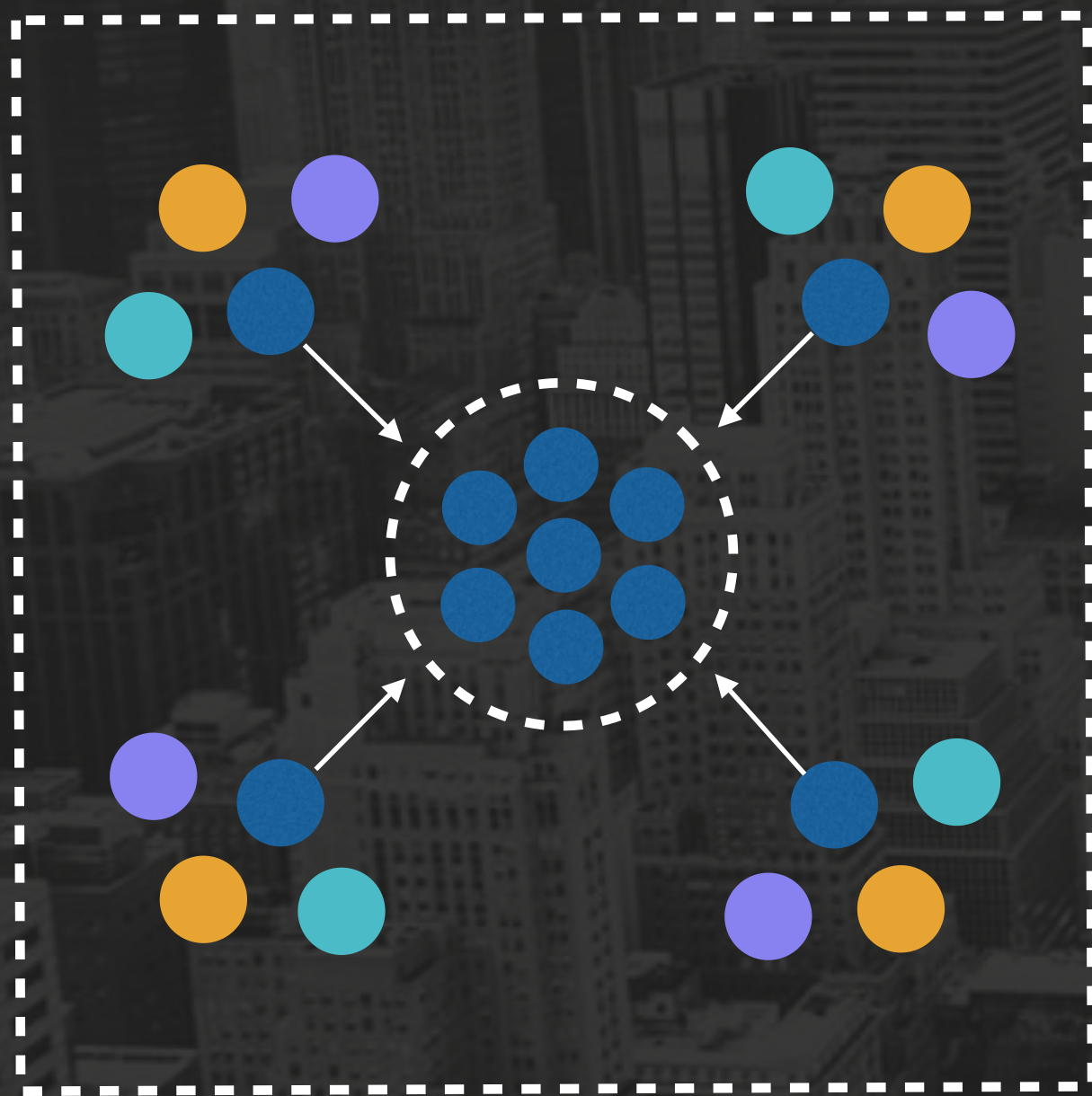
- **The ‘Agency’ model**
- Designers work in one team in shared space.
- Other teams approach the central design team with projects
- Great for creating a strong design disciplines, but other parts of the product delivery cycle can suffer.

Decentralised Teams



- **The ‘Agile’ approach**
- Each designer is assigned to a cross-functional team
- Designers have great autonomy, but it can be challenging to develop their skills further
- Designers can feel isolated and disconnected from their peers

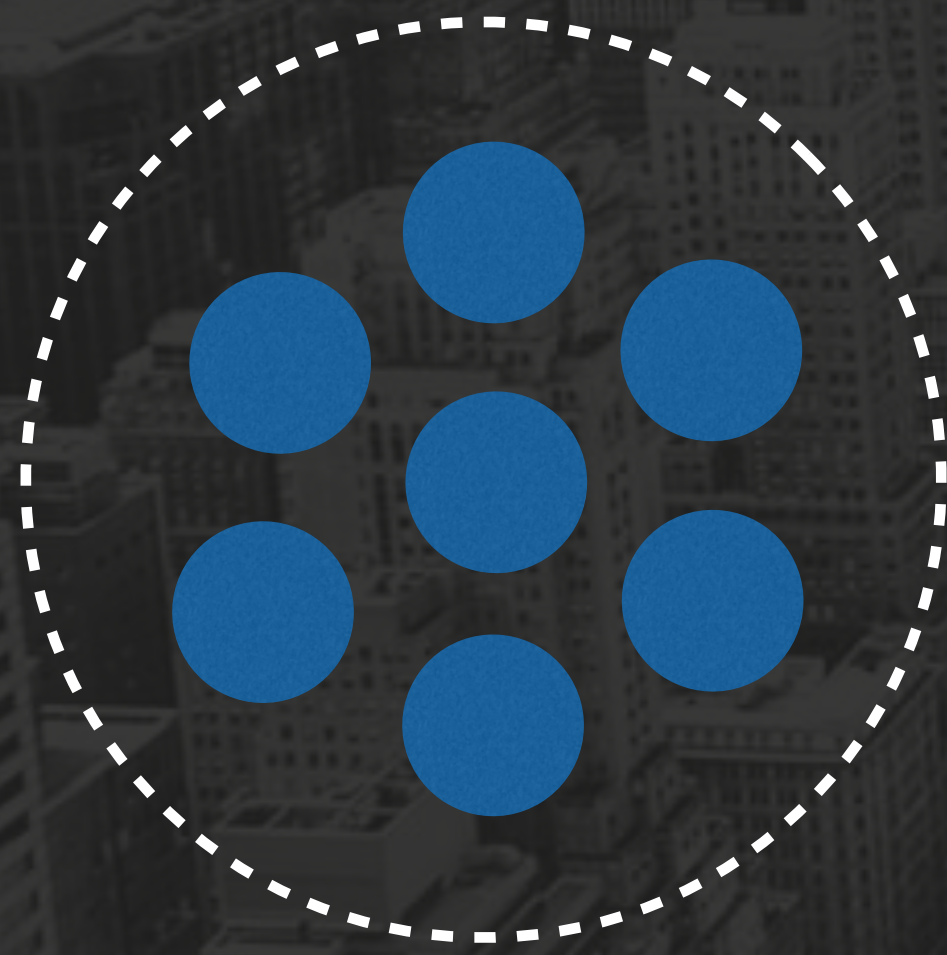
Hybrid Teams



- **The 'Blended' model**
- Designers are embedded in agile teams, but regularly return to a central 'design guild'
- Benefits from cross-functional collaboration, but retains a strong sense of design culture

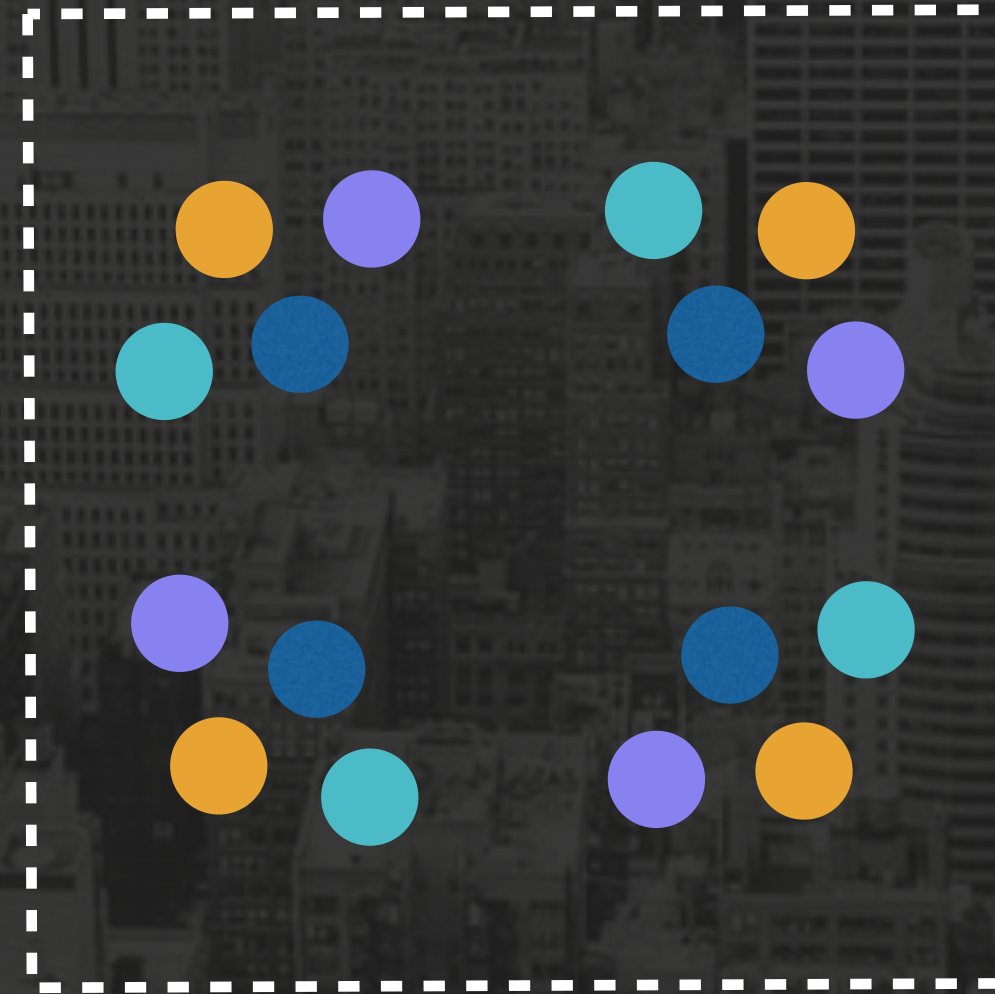
3 Models for Design teams

TRADITIONAL MODEL

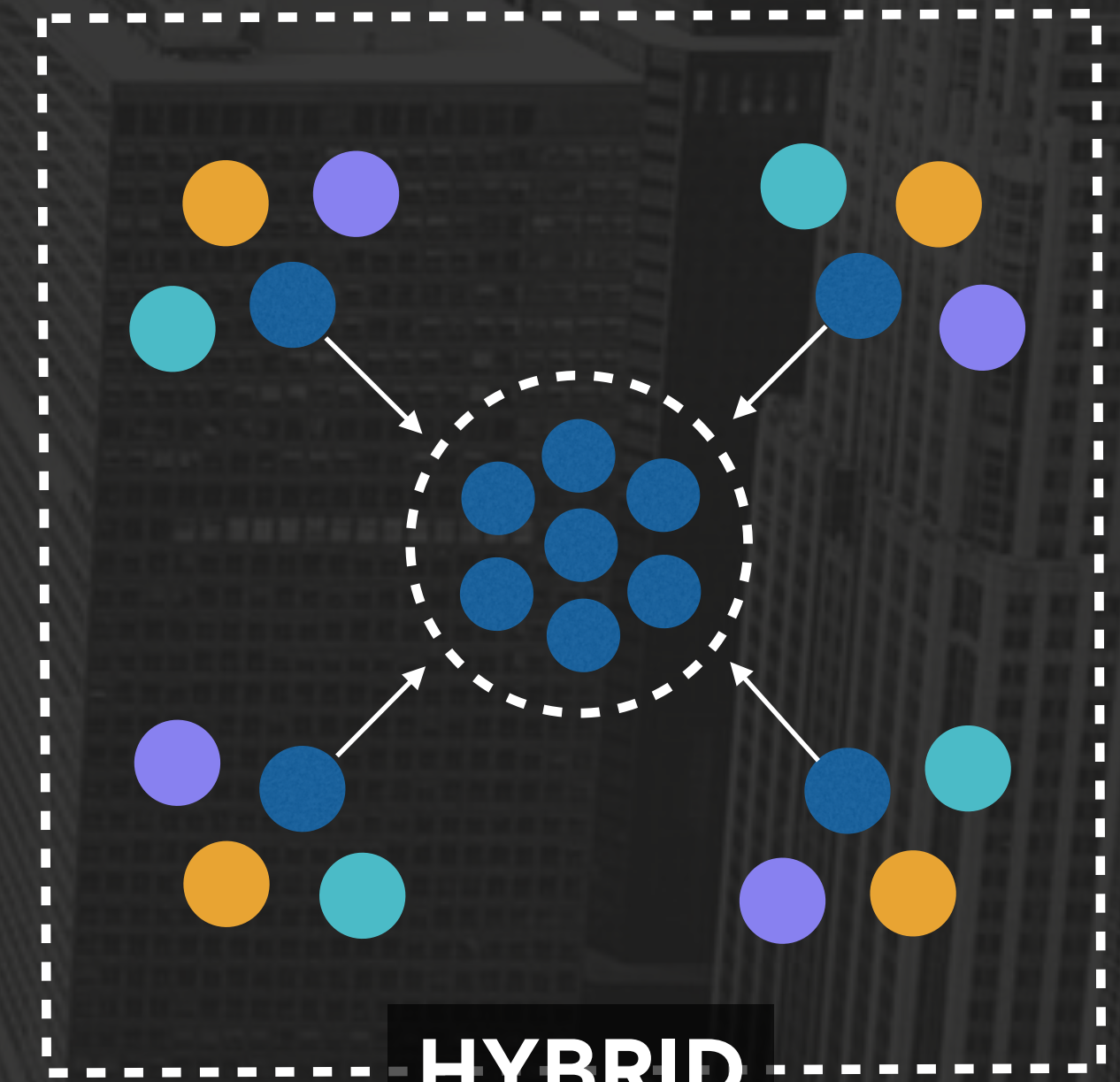


CENTRALISED

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL MODELS



DECENTRALISED



HYBRID

The Benefits of cross-functional teams

- **Aligned with agile delivery methods**
Designers working within delivery teams to shape outcomes
- **Better communication, faster product development**
Less chance of communication breakdowns, and bottlenecking
- **No 'us vs them'**
Fosters a collaborative culture across disciplines to build great products

Cross-functional teams

EXPECTATIONS



REALITY



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Challenges of managing designers in cross-functional teams

Isolating Designers

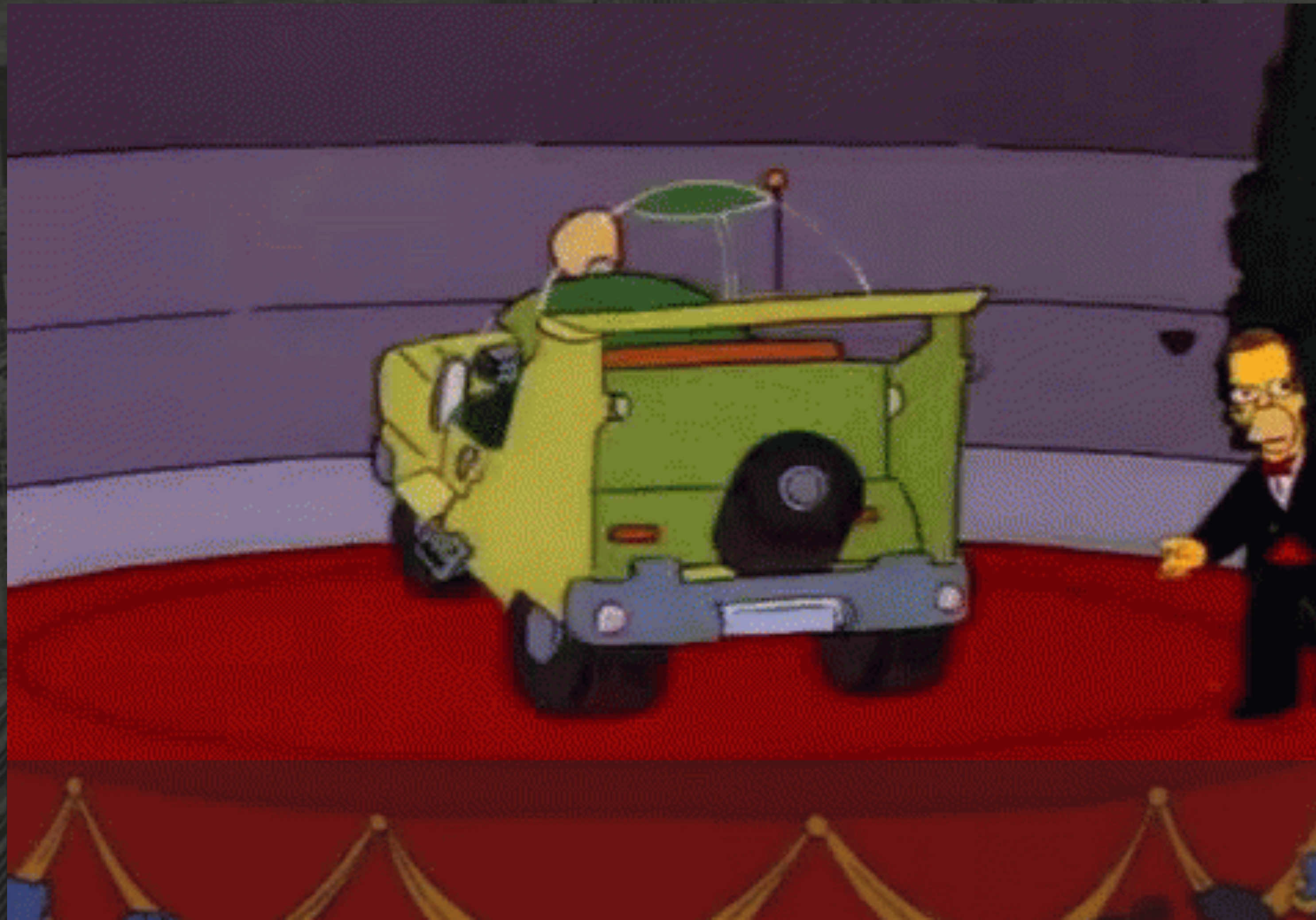


The Challenges

Isolating designers

Designers have more autonomy, but less support & guidance to turn to when they need it, and less development/progression opportunities.

Generalist Fever



The Challenges

Generalist Fever

In cross-functional teams, all designers tend to be treated as if they have perfectly matching skill sets

- **How can we utilise design specialisations?**

Designers will have different strengths & weaknesses, but how can you benefit from these if no one works together?

Inconsistent Outputs



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The Challenges

Inconsistent Deliverables

Since output from designers can vary radically from one designer to the next, no one really knows what to expect from a designer in their cross-functional team.

Designers feel outnumbered



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The Challenges

Designers feel outnumbered

It can be exhausting for designers to be the solo design & user advocate in their delivery team.

Engineering priorities can easily overtake UX priorities

ACTUAL HISTORY LESSON

Drawing inspiration from Ancient Greek Military strategy



The Spartan Phalanx

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The Spartan Phalanx

- Forms a 'wall of shields'
- Fought in formation in a highly organised and disciplined manner
- Each Spartan uses his shield to protect the man to his left
- Codified, streamlined battle training



GETTING STARTED WITH A

Design Guild

The things you'll need

- Your design team
- A dedicated time slot each week to meet together

#1

Codify Together

Codify Together

The Idea:

Set aside one day every 6 months for designing the way you work together.

Codify Together

- **Uniformity vs fluidity**

Decide as a team what should be locked in & where there's some flexibility.

E.g. At Fathom, we require Sketch for high fidelity UI, but wireframes & prototypes can be designed in your tool of choice.

Codify Together

- **Templates and guides for common UX deliverables**

As a team, design the best possible templates for Personas, Empathy Maps, Journey Maps, and other common design deliverables your team produces.

This saves time from everyone creating their own versions, standardises the outputs, and helps newly onboard designers get productive as fast as possible.



#2

Design Pairing

Design Pairing

The Idea:

Instead of having one designer on 100% of one project, split two designers 50% across two projects.



Design Pairing

The Reality:

- More design iteration, happening at a faster cadence
- Two designers will continually challenge each others concepts until they are solid
- Work doesn't grind to a halt if someone gets ill
- Benefits from cross-pollination

#3

A Bookclub Apart

A Bookclub Apart

The Idea:

Reading the same short book, and discussing it as a group a month later.



A Bookclub Apart

The Reality:

Realising way too late that everyone in our team had different tolerances for reading.





Failure
A ~~Bookclub~~ Apart



#4

Pitch & Enrich

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Pitch & Enrich

The Idea:

Each member pitches their latest design concepts to the group.

The group offers constructive criticism & tries to 'enrich' the design further.



Pitch & Enrich

The Reality:

- More robust design choices
- Better presentation skills
- Support, guidance and validation for designers throughout their design process
- Identify early when experiences are feeling inconsistent

Universal Principles of Design

William Lidwell
Kritina Holden
Jill Butler

ROCKPORT

#5

Universal Design Presentations

100 Ways to Enhance Usability, Influence Perception, Increase Appeal, Make Better Design Decisions, and Teach through Design

Universal Design Presentations

The Idea:

Read & research a principle outlined in the book 'Universal Principles of Design'

1 week later, give a 10 minute interactive presentation to the rest of the design guild.

Fibonacci Sequence

A sequence of numbers in which each number is the sum of the preceding two.

A Fibonacci sequence is a sequence of numbers in which each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers (e.g., 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13). Patterns exhibiting the sequence are commonly found in natural forms, such as the petals of flowers, spirals of galaxies, and bones in the human hand. The ubiquity of the sequence in nature has led many to conclude that patterns based on the Fibonacci sequence are intrinsically aesthetic and therefore, worthy of consideration in design.¹

Fibonacci patterns are found in many classic works, including classic poetry, art, music, and architecture. For example, some literary scholars argue that Virgil used Fibonacci sequences to structure the poetry in the *Aeneid*. Fibonacci sequences are found in the musical compositions of Mozart's sonatas and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Le Corbusier meshed key measures of the human body with Fibonacci sequences to develop the *Modulor*, a classic system of architectural proportions and measurements to aid designers in achieving practical and harmonious designs.²

Fibonacci sequences are generally used in concert with the Golden Ratio, a principle to which it is closely related. For example, the division of any number in a Fibonacci sequence by an adjacent number yields an approximation of the Golden Ratio. Approximations are rough for early numbers in the sequence but increasingly accurate as the sequence progresses (and the numbers increase in size). As with the Golden Ratio, debate continues as to the aesthetic value of Fibonacci patterns. Are such patterns considered aesthetic because people find them to be more aesthetic or because people have been taught to believe they are aesthetic? Research on the aesthetics of the Golden Ratio tends to favor the former, but little empirical research exists on the aesthetics of *non-golden* Fibonacci patterns.³

The Fibonacci sequence continues to be one of the most influential patterns in mathematics and design. Consider Fibonacci sequences when developing interesting compositions, geometric patterns, and organic motifs and contexts, especially when they involve rhythms and harmonies among multiple elements. Do not contrive designs to incorporate Fibonacci sequences, but also do not forego opportunities to explore Fibonacci relationships when other aspects of the design are not compromised.

See also Aesthetic-Usability Effect, Golden Ratio, and Most Average Facial Appearance Effect.

¹ The seminal work on the Fibonacci sequence is *Liber Abaci* (Book of the Abacus) by Leonardo of Pisa, 1202. Contemporary seminal works include *The Geometry of Art and Life* by Mafra Chyka, Dover Publications, 1978 (1946); *Elements of Dynamic Symmetry* by Jay Hambidge, Dover Publications, 1978 (1920).

² See, for example, *Structural Patterns and Proportions in Virgil's Aeneid* by George Eckel Duckworth, University of Michigan Press, 1962; and "Did Mozart Use the Golden Section?" by Mike May, *American Scientist*, March-April 1996; and *Le Modulor* by Le Corbusier, Birkhauser, 2000 (1948).

³ "All That Glitters: A Review of Psychological Research on the Aesthetics of the Golden Section" by Christopher D. Green, *Perception*, 1995, vol. 24, p. 937-968.

Le Corbusier derived two Fibonacci sequences based on key features of the human form to create the *Modulor*. The sequences purportedly represent a set of ideal measurements to aid designers in achieving practical and harmonious proportions in design. Golden ratios were calculated by dividing each number in the sequence by its preceding number (indicated by horizontal lines).



Universal Design Presentations

The Reality:

A complete success.

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Universal Design Presentations

BENEFITS:

- Improved team presentation and public speaking skills.
- Challenged designers to present concepts creatively & persuasively.
- All designers became fluent across a standard set of principles and terminology.

1

Codify Together

2

Design Pairing

3

A Book(club) Apart

4

Pitch & Enrich

5

Universal Design Presentations

Don't forget to take stock

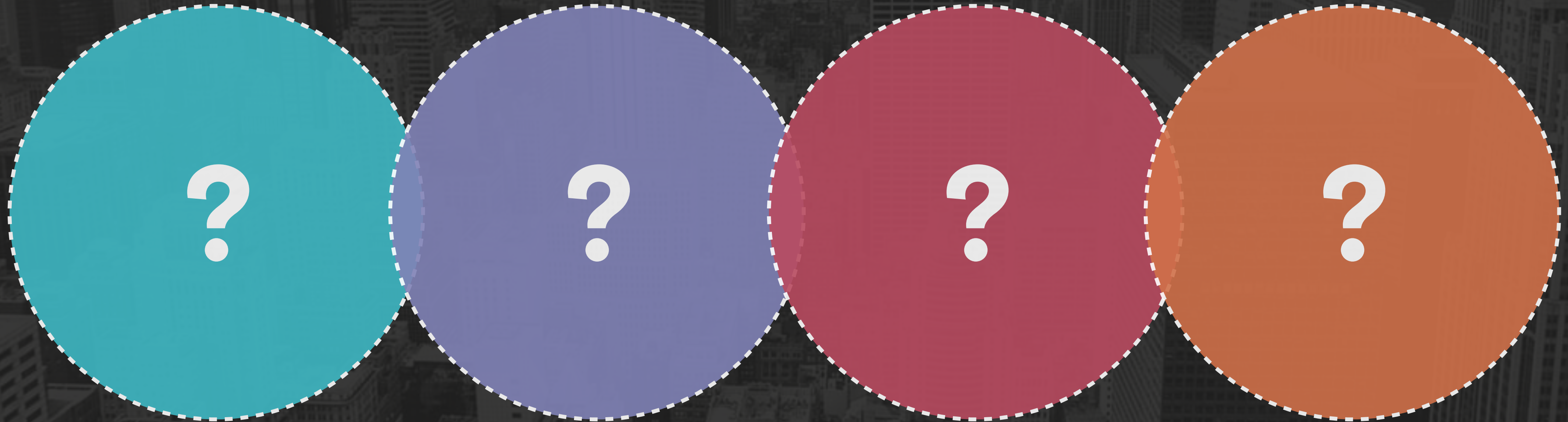


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Don't forget to take stock

Regularly ask your designers what they need out of their guild time.

Crafting a 'Design Phalanx'



Crafting a 'Design Phalanx'

**Core Design
Principles**

**Codified
Deliverables**

**Discipline
Strengthening**

**Design Pairing
(No lone wolves)**

Thanks



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