1 Billion Dollars

FOR OPEN SOURCE MAINTAINERS

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1 billion dollars per year!

That sounds like a lot… *but is it?*

Who am I?

- 👨🏽 Tobie Langel
- 🎶 Jazz drummer → open source dev → consultant
- 💼 UnlockOpen, consulting firm

♻️ 🛡️ *sustainability & supply chain security advocate before it was cool*

We need a mindset shift

- 💰 Money
- 👷 Maintenance
- 🔭 Beyond the “open source way”

- ❌ ~~*Who’s going to pay for this?*~~
- 👍 *Every project is different; this won’t always be a good fit*

MONEY

CHAPTER 1

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That sounds like a lot… *but is it?*

Let’s do the math!

How many developers in the world?

16 million pro developers worldwide

Source: IDC 2022

Average dev salary worldwide?

Average dev salary worldwide
$60,000 – $77,000*

** Loaded salaries can be up to twice as much!*

Source: Statista 2024

16 million × 65,000 = ?

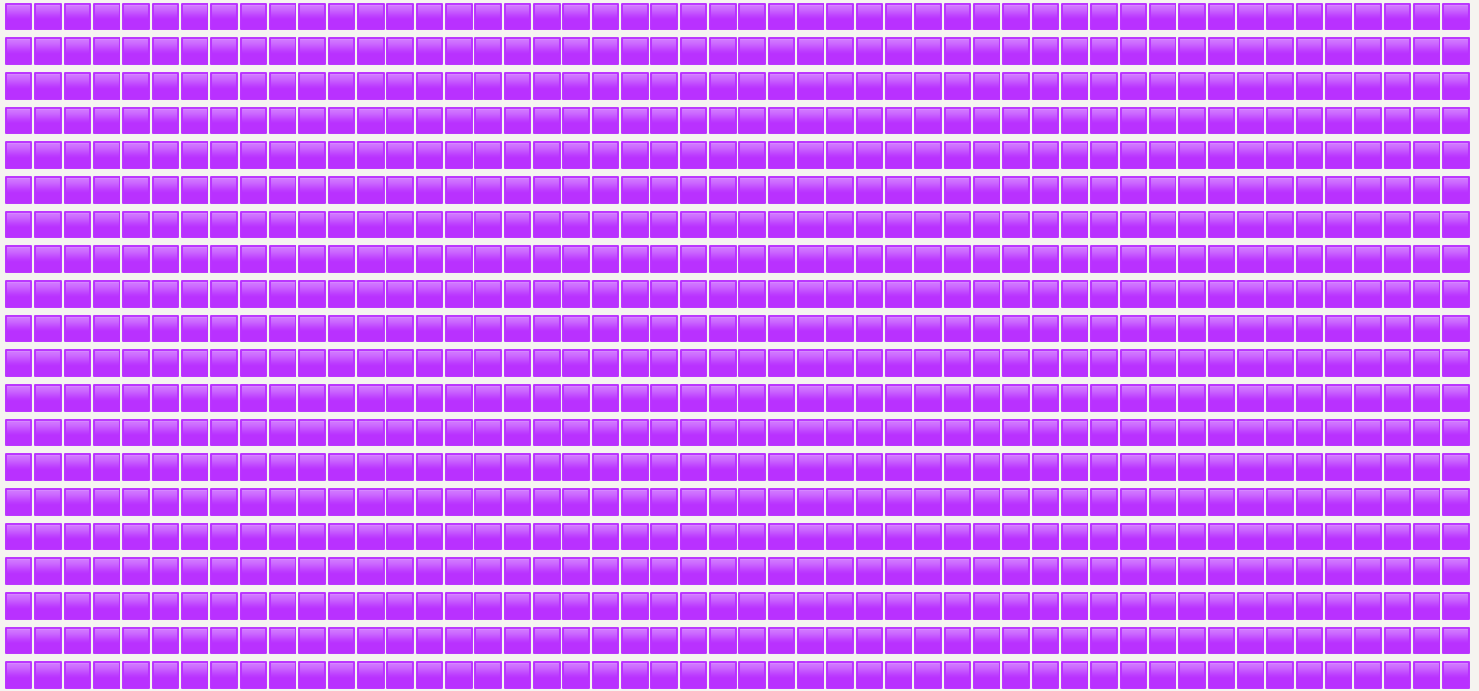
16 million × 65,000 = ~1 trillion

0.1% of 1 trillion = ?

0.1% of 1 trillion = 1 billion

1 trillion dollars

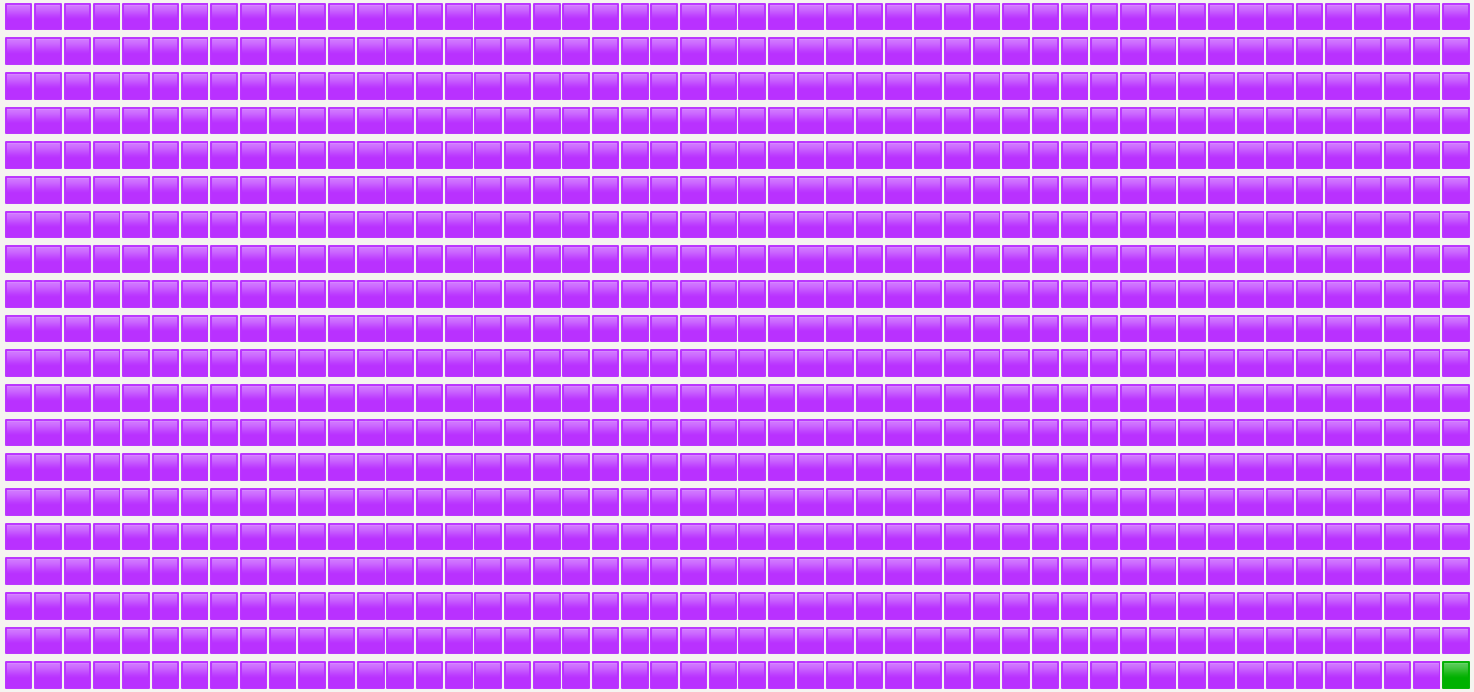
Spent on software development yearly



= 1 Billion Dollars

1 trillion dollars

Spent on software development yearly



= 1 Billion Dollars

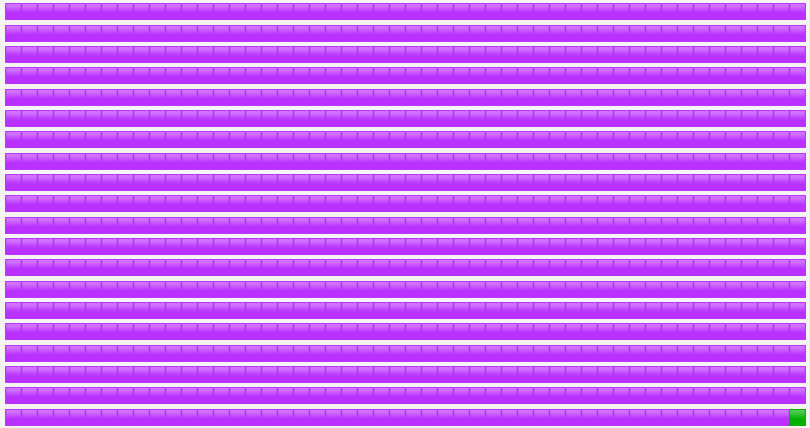
$1B for open source!

76% of code is open source

= proprietary = open source

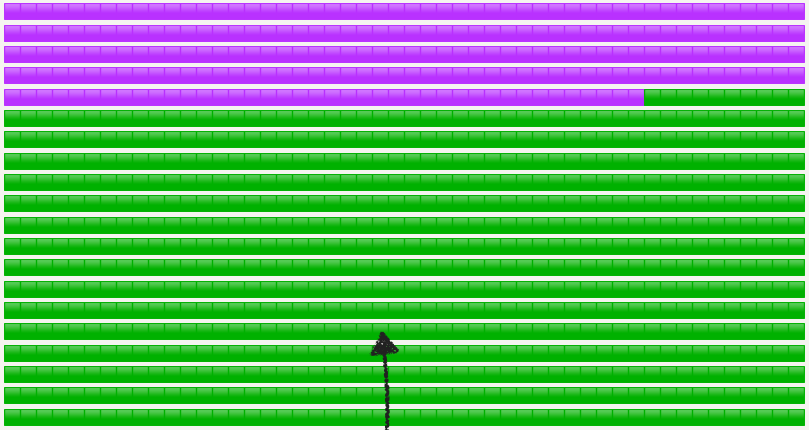
Source: Synopsis OSSRA Report 2023

$1T spent on software dev



Share of the money we feel is absurdly high to even think about

76% of code is open source



Part of the stack we're responsible for

So… does 1 billion dollars per year still sounds like a lot?

MAINTENANCE

CHAPTER 2

So I hear you all thinking…

“Money would kill open source!”

*“[P]art of **the reason much of open source is so good**, and often so superior to closed-source commercial projects, is the natural boundary of constraints. **If you are not being paid** or otherwise compensated directly for your work, **you're less likely to needlessly embellish it.** You're solving the problems for you and your mates, likely in the simplest way you could, so you can get back to whatever you originally intended to do before starting to shave the yak.”*

—DHH, The Perils of mixing open source and money, Nov 12, 2013.

The “open source way” is an incredible innovation engine

...but maintenance is not innovation!

Open source maintenance today

- “I have 14 features to maintain. I’m burning out!”
- “Here’s $10K for this new feature.”
- “Thank you!?”
- …
- “I have 15 features to maintain. I’m burning out!”

We suffers from featuritis*

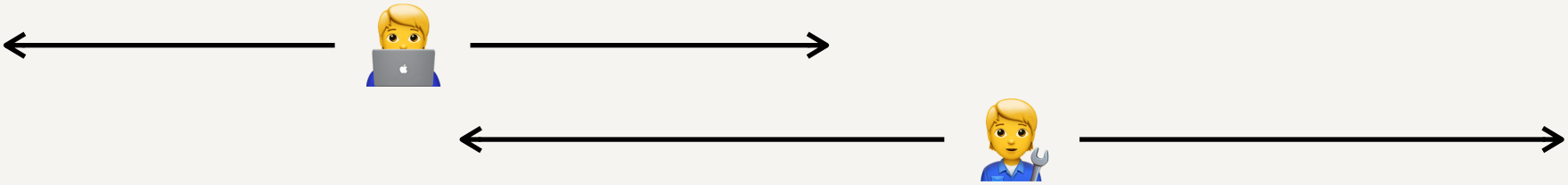
** also know as "Shiny Object Syndrome" or SOS* 😉

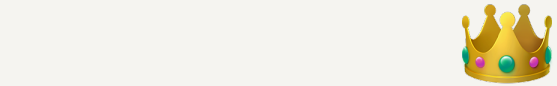
Project lifecycle

Initial Dev → Growth → Maturity → Sunset

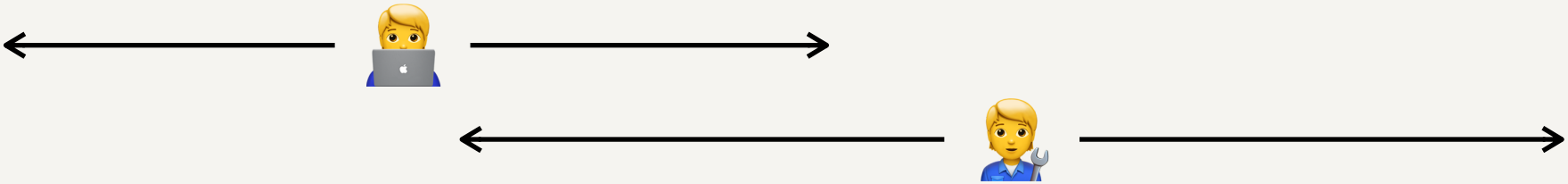
♻️

Initial Dev → Growth → Maturity → Sunset

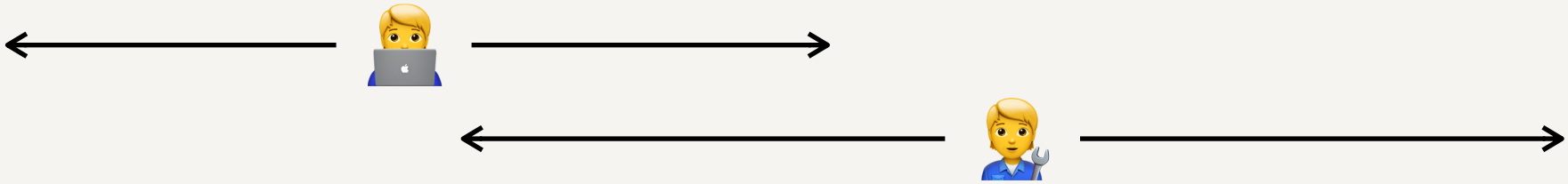




BDFL → open governance

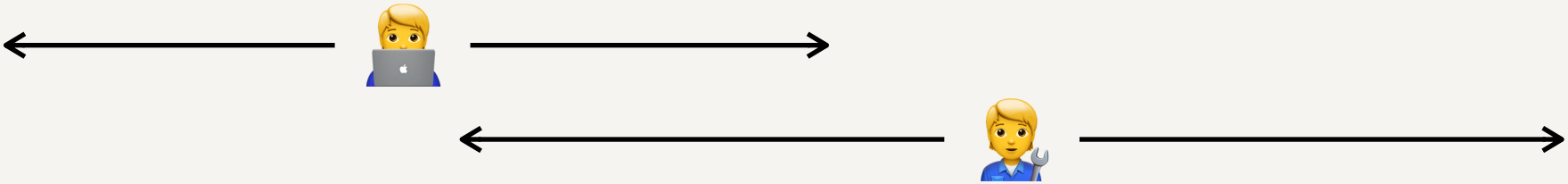


*Genesis → Custom built → Product → Commodity**

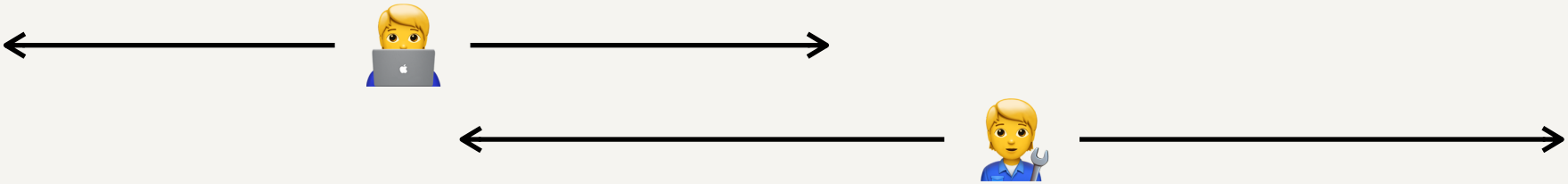


* *Wardley Maps*

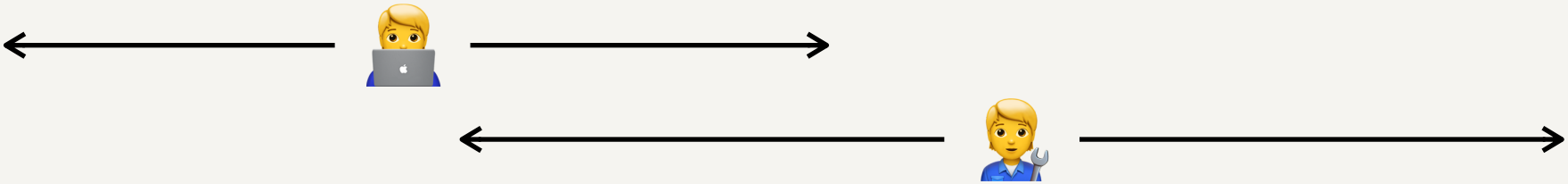
Agile → Lean → Six Sigma



Pioneers → Settlers → Town Planners

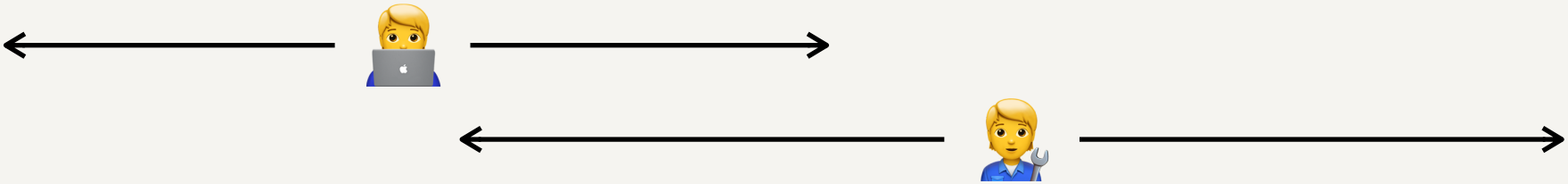


Craft → Industrialization

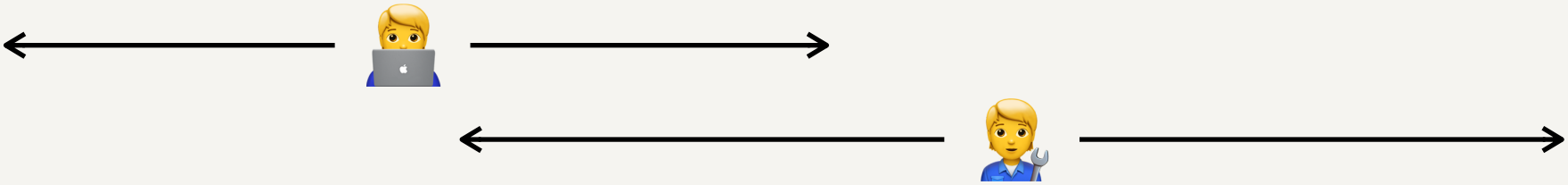


🤗

Hard skills → Soft skills

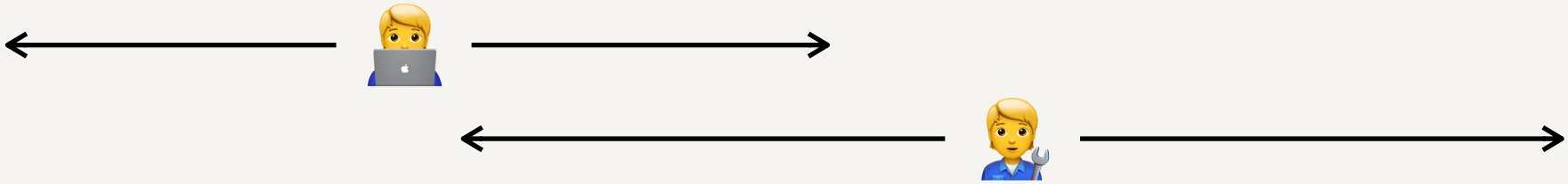


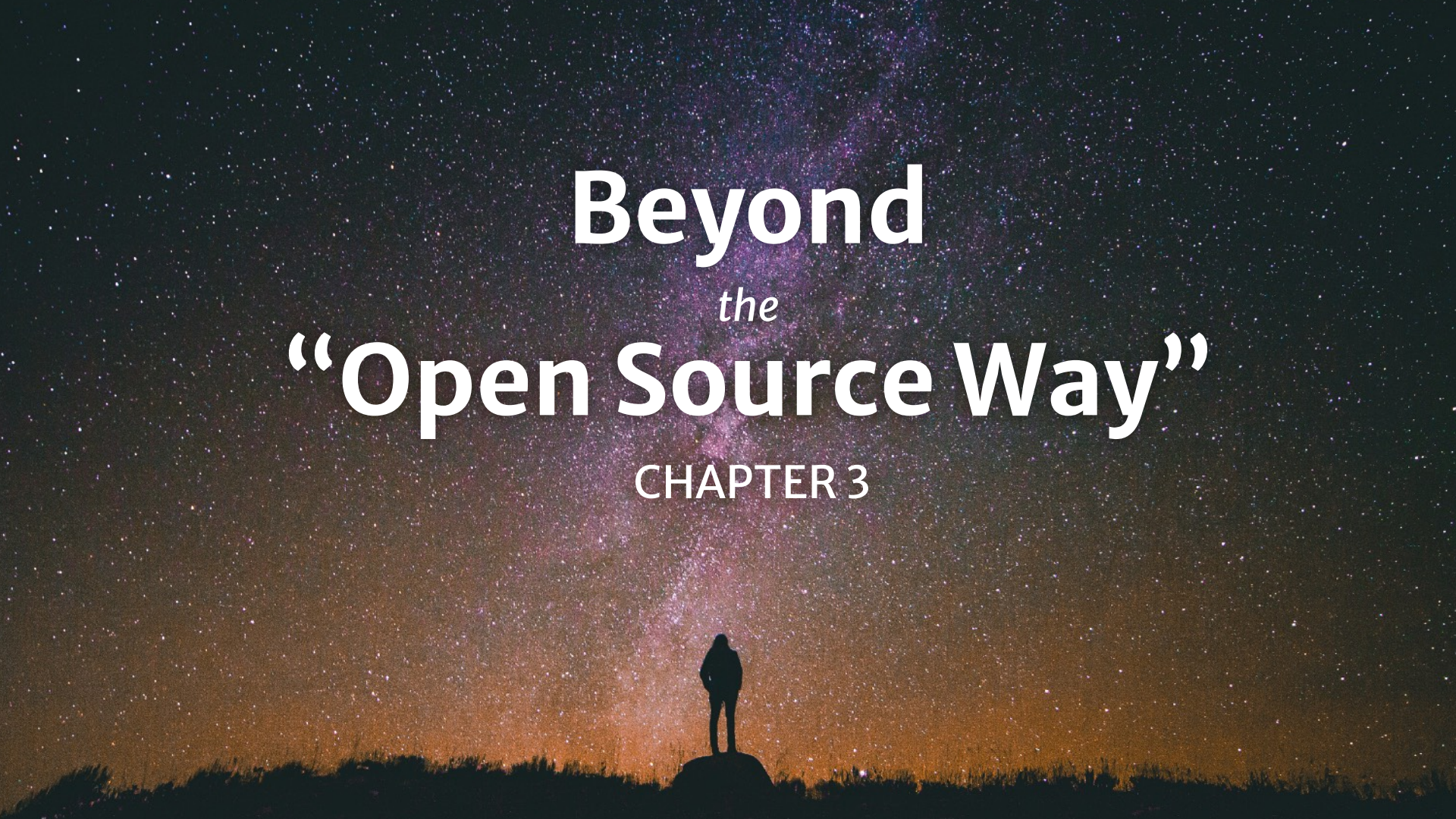
Maker's schedule → Manager's schedule



🤔

“Open source way” → *???*




Beyond
the
“Open Source Way”
CHAPTER 3

How we think about “today”

?

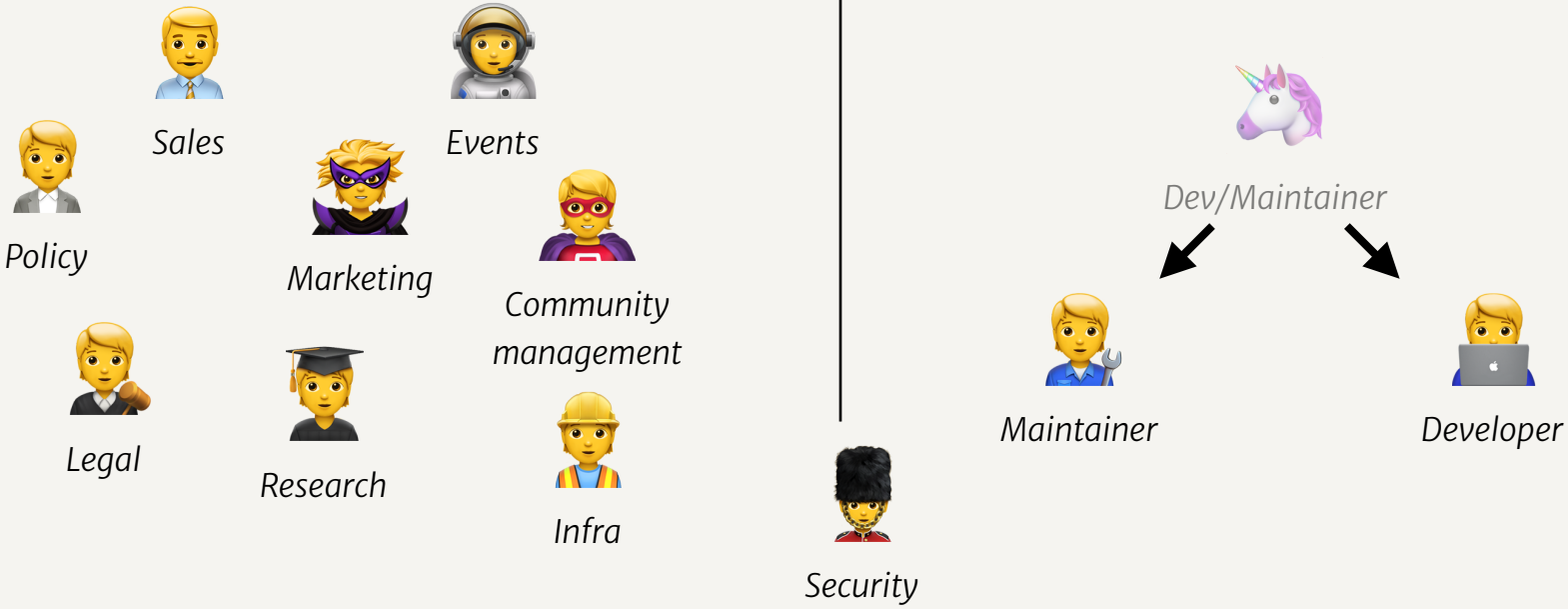
Dev/Maintainer

FUNDED

VOLUNTEER

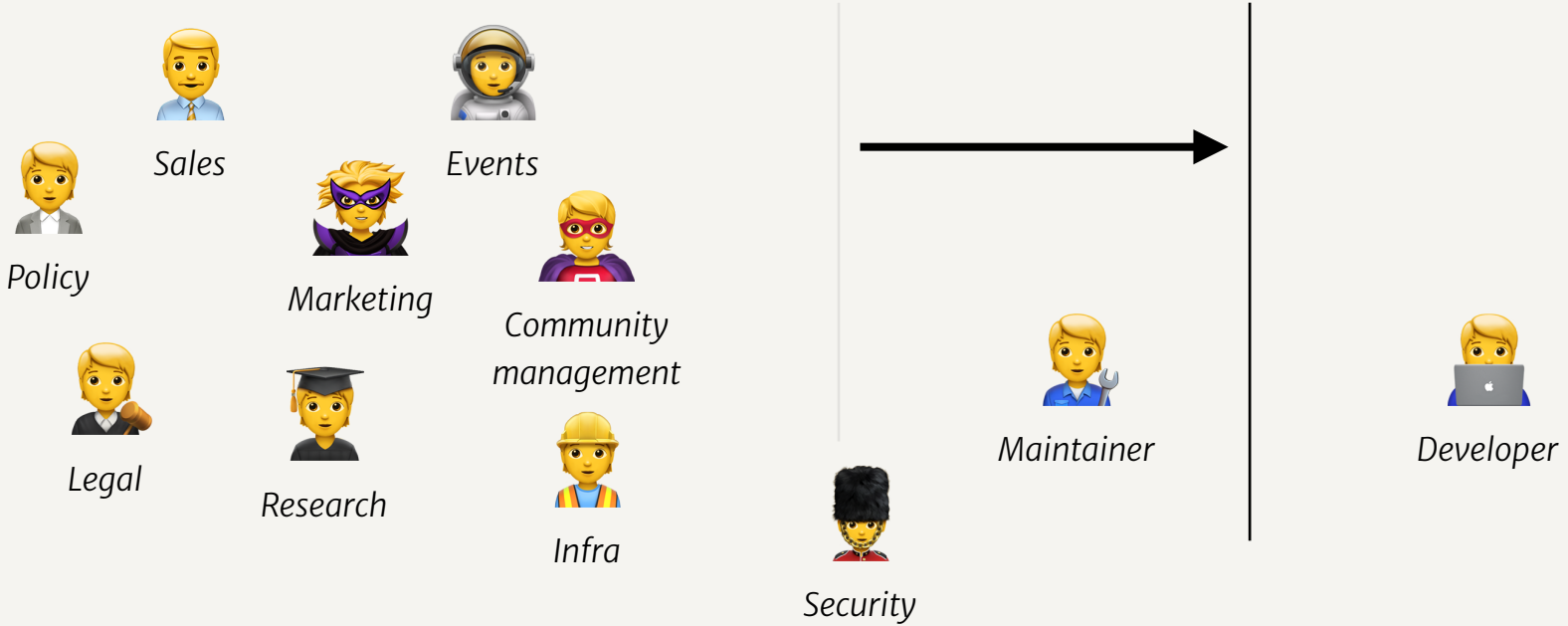
What “today” actually looks like

Mindset shift



Tomorrow

Support software maintenance without disrupting the open source innovation engine



$1B/year is enough to hire ~10’000 maintainers

Legal entities

- 🏡 Existing open source foundations
- 🏛️ Existing fiscal hosts + funding platforms
- 🔧 New entities focused on maintenance
- 🇪🇺 Open source *stewards*

👉 *Combination of the above*

Team organization

- 📋 Develop dedicated practices
- 👨‍🏫 Training for maintainers
- 👨‍💼 Proper management & career path
- ⅕ Fractional maintainers for smaller projects
- 💰 Share resources across projects

Focus

- 🛡️ Security support & training
- 🔧 Tooling & infrastructure
- 🐞 Bug triaging
- 🚀 Release engineering
- 📚 Documentation
- 👨‍💼 Compliance

Benefits for maintainers

💼 Part time opportunities

👨‍💼 Proper management support

❤️‍🩹 Healthcare

🛝 Better separation between work & play

💰 Fund development through maintenance, not maintenance through development

✅

We know this model works!

Recap

💰 $1B is pocket change compared to the impact of open source

👷 We should consider dev and maintenance separately

🔭 We can shape a better future for open source and maintainers

❓ *We still need to figure out how to pay for this!*

👉 *Every project is different; this won't always be a good fit*

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