# Designing a

# content design team

# Designing a world-class content design team

Jonathon Colman

# @jcolman

Senior Design Manager, Intercom

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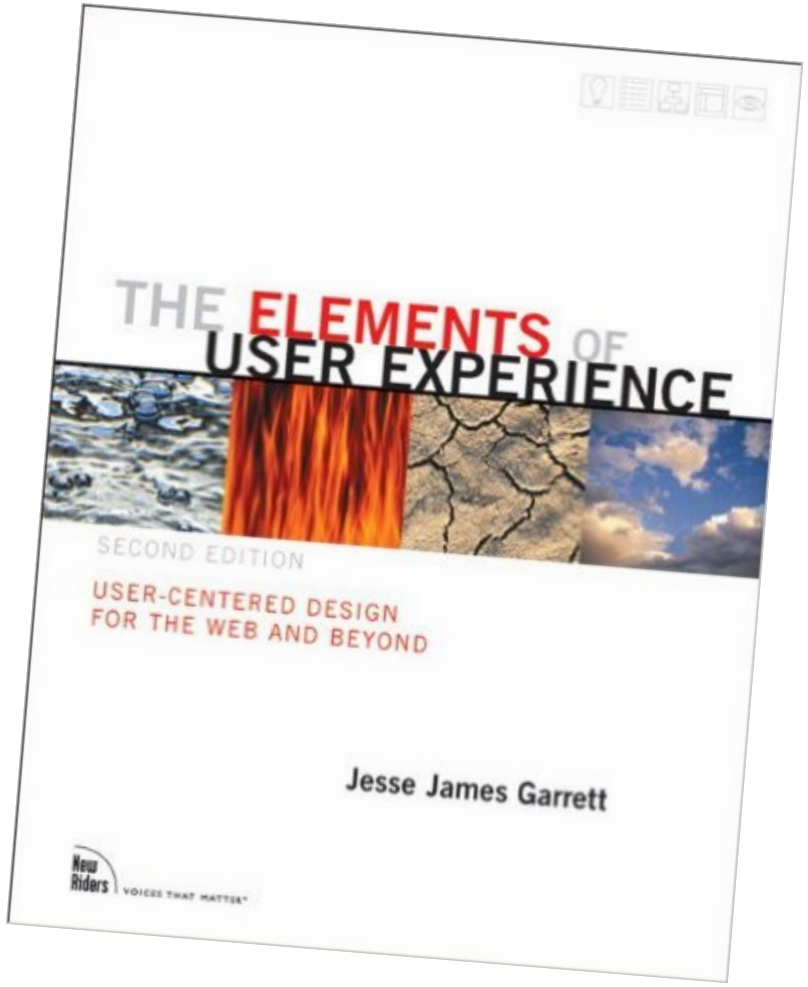
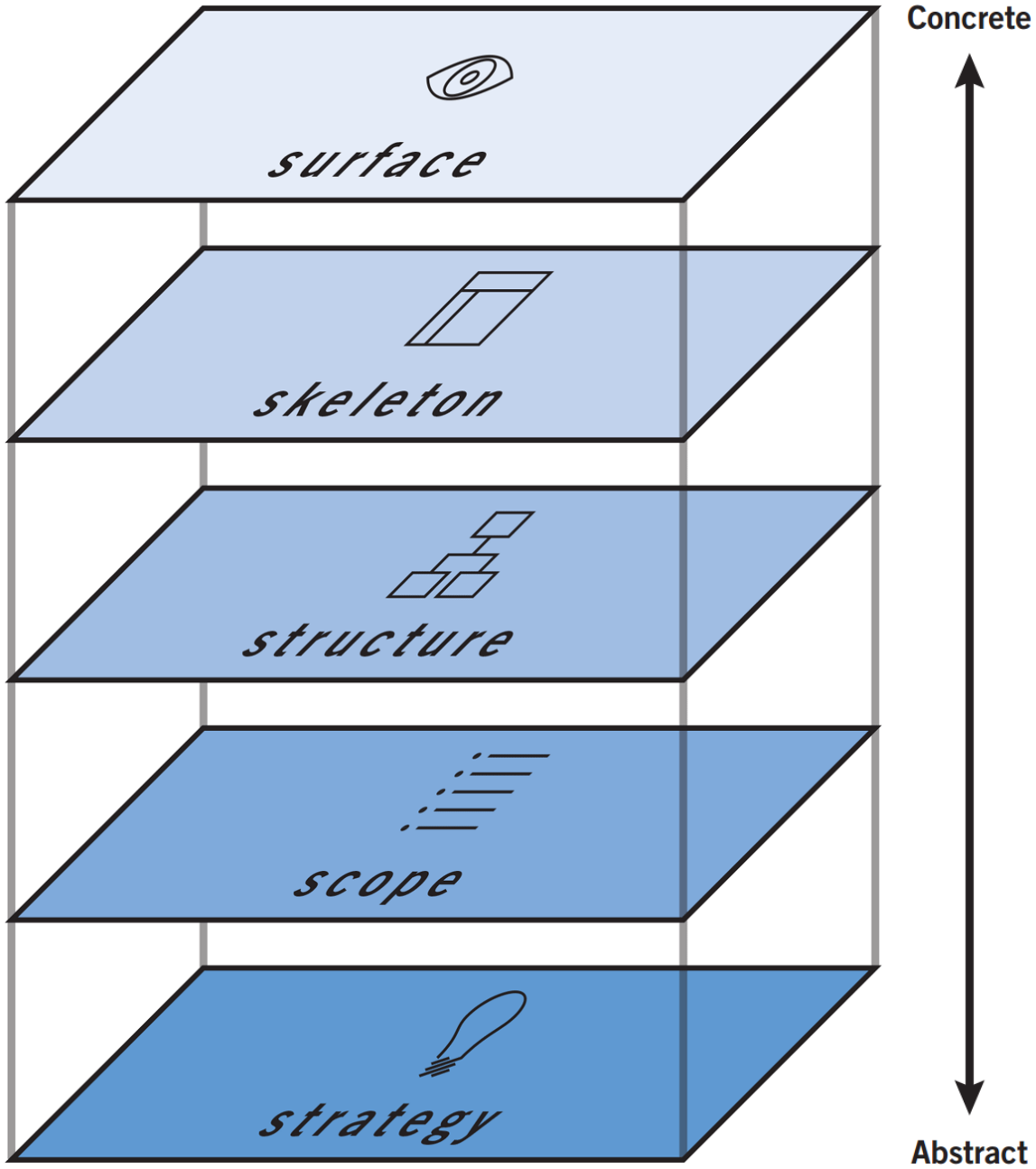
worldclass

# 2001

# Jesse James Garrett

*The Elements of User Experience*

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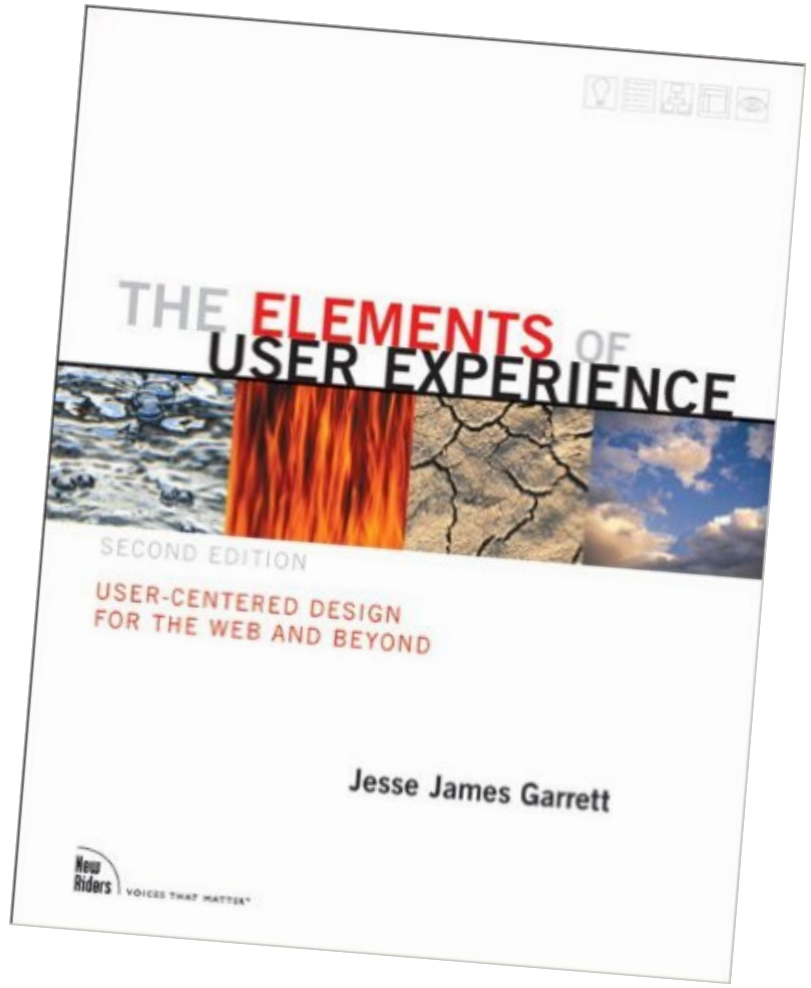
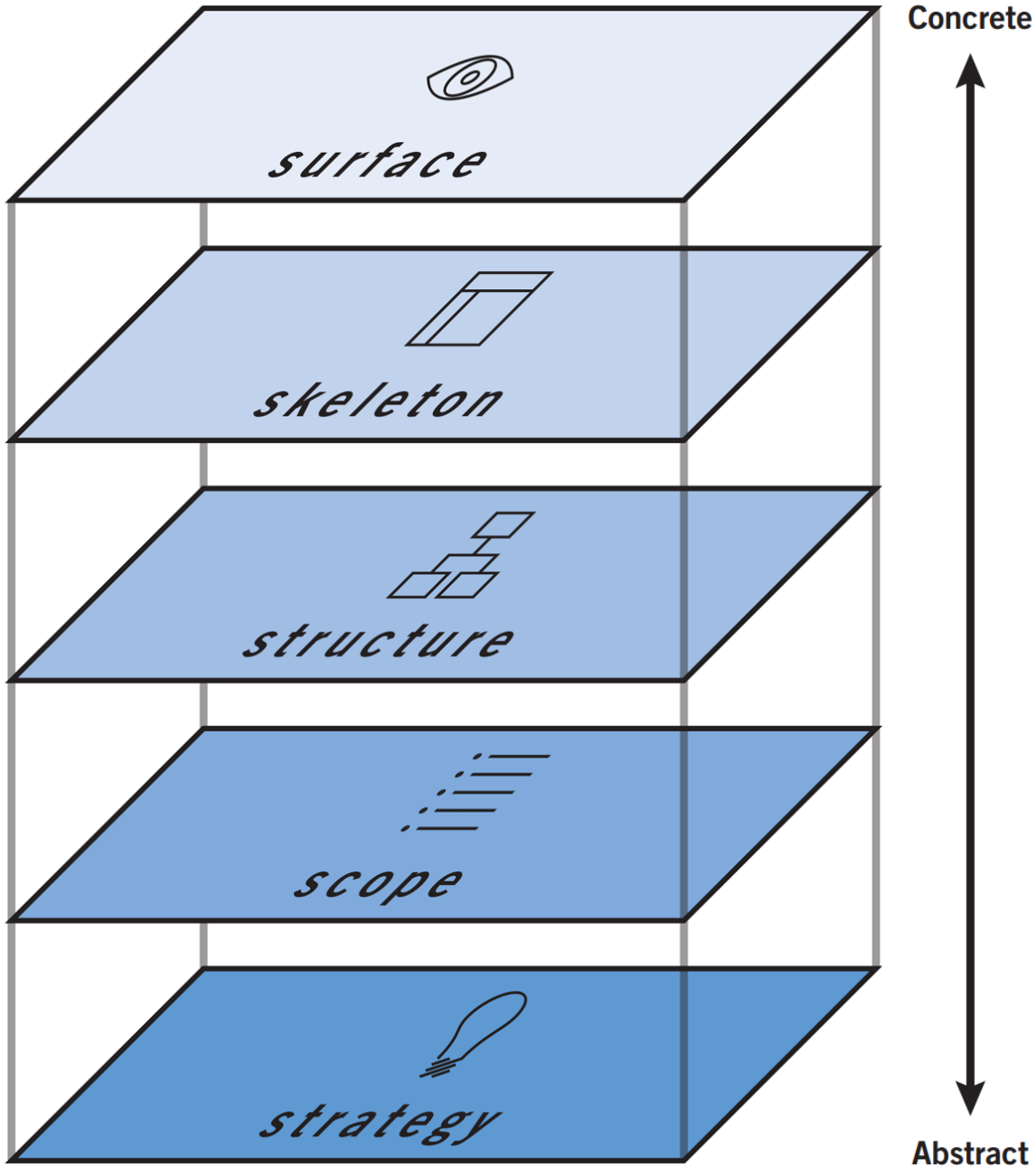

THE ELEMENTS OF
USER EXPERIENCE
SECOND EDITION
USER-CENTERED DESIGN
FOR THE WEB AND BEYOND
Jesse James Garrett
New Riders
VOICES THAT MATTER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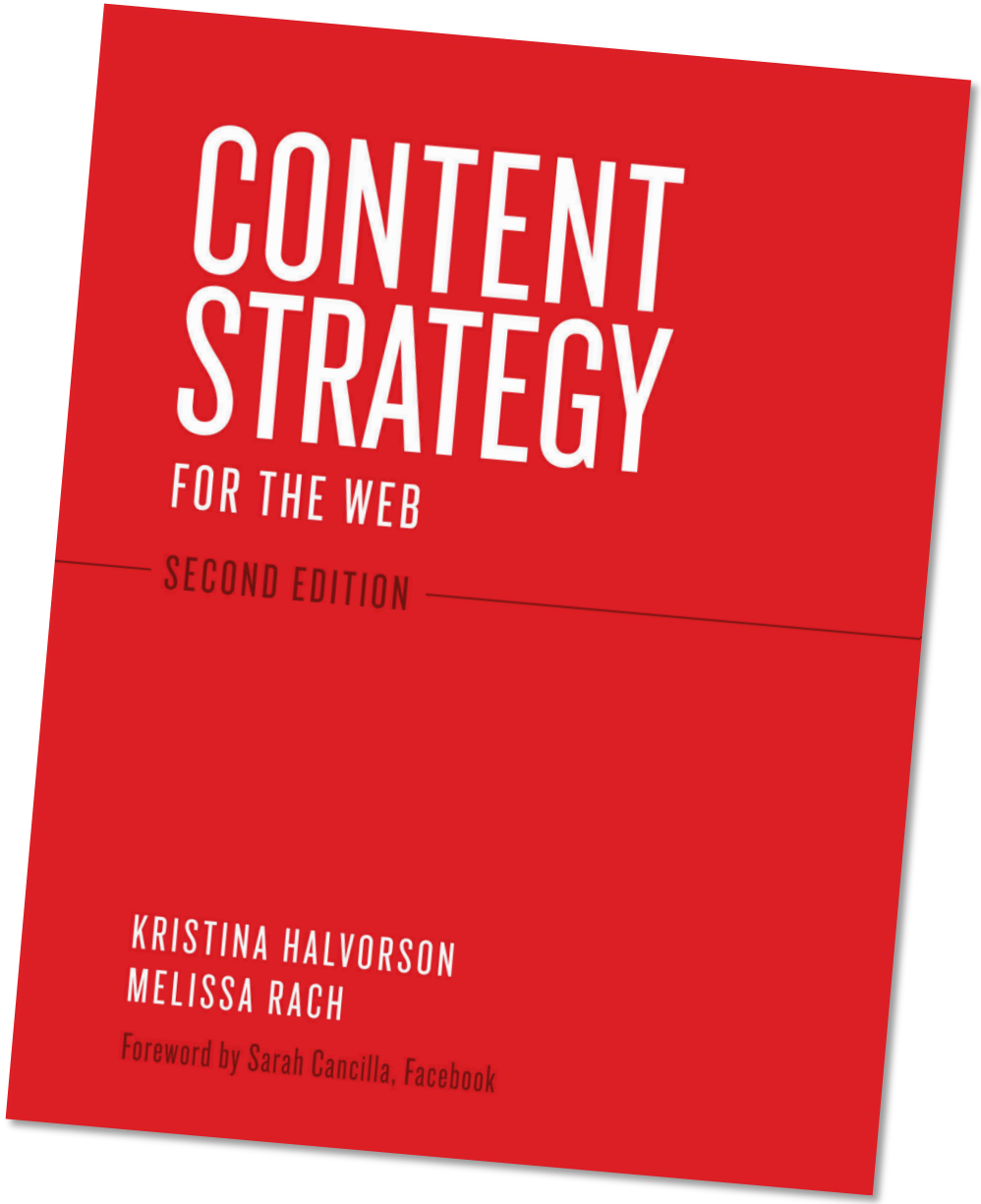
Abstract

# 2009

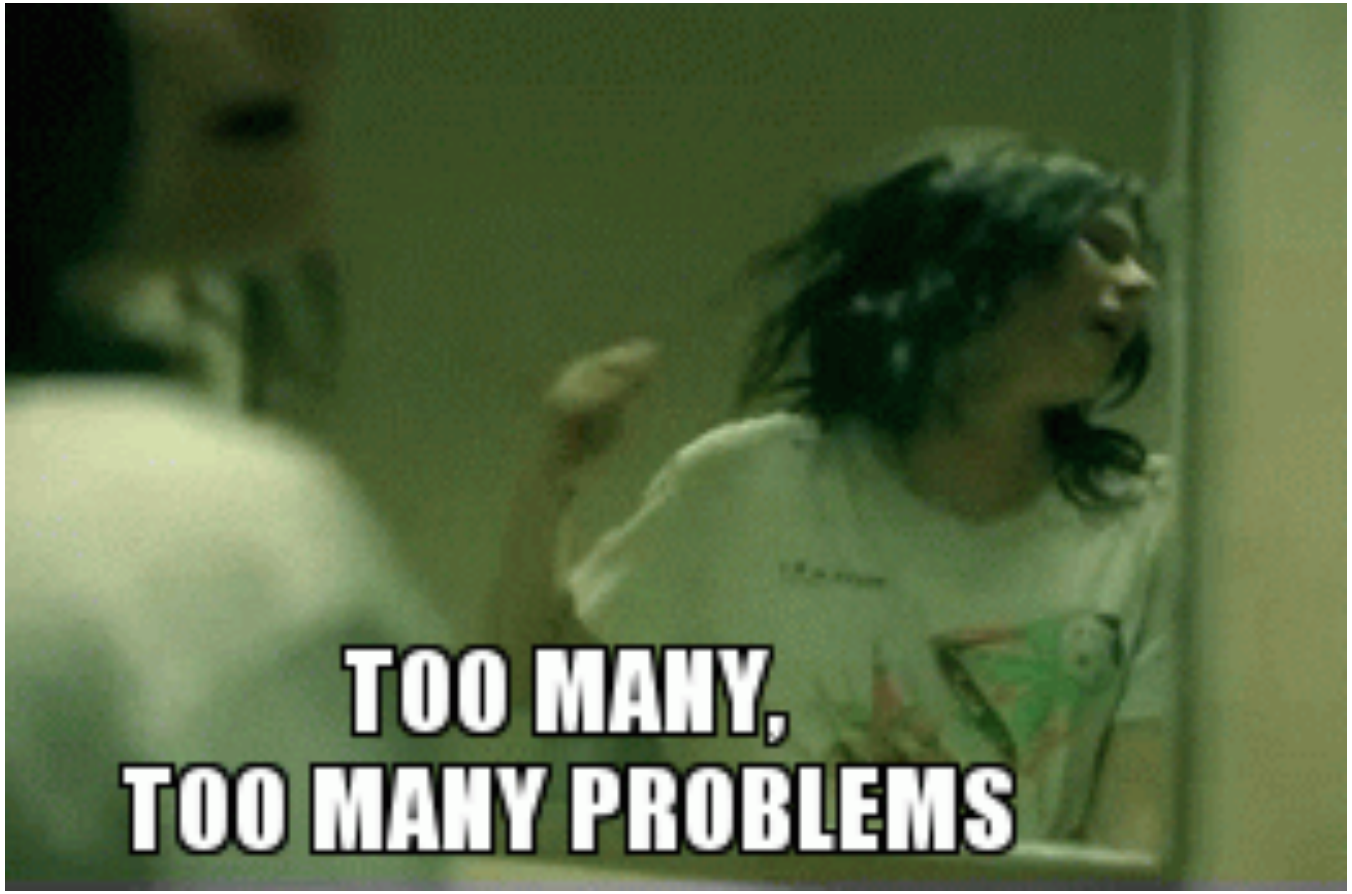
# Kristina Halvorson

*Content Strategy for the Web*



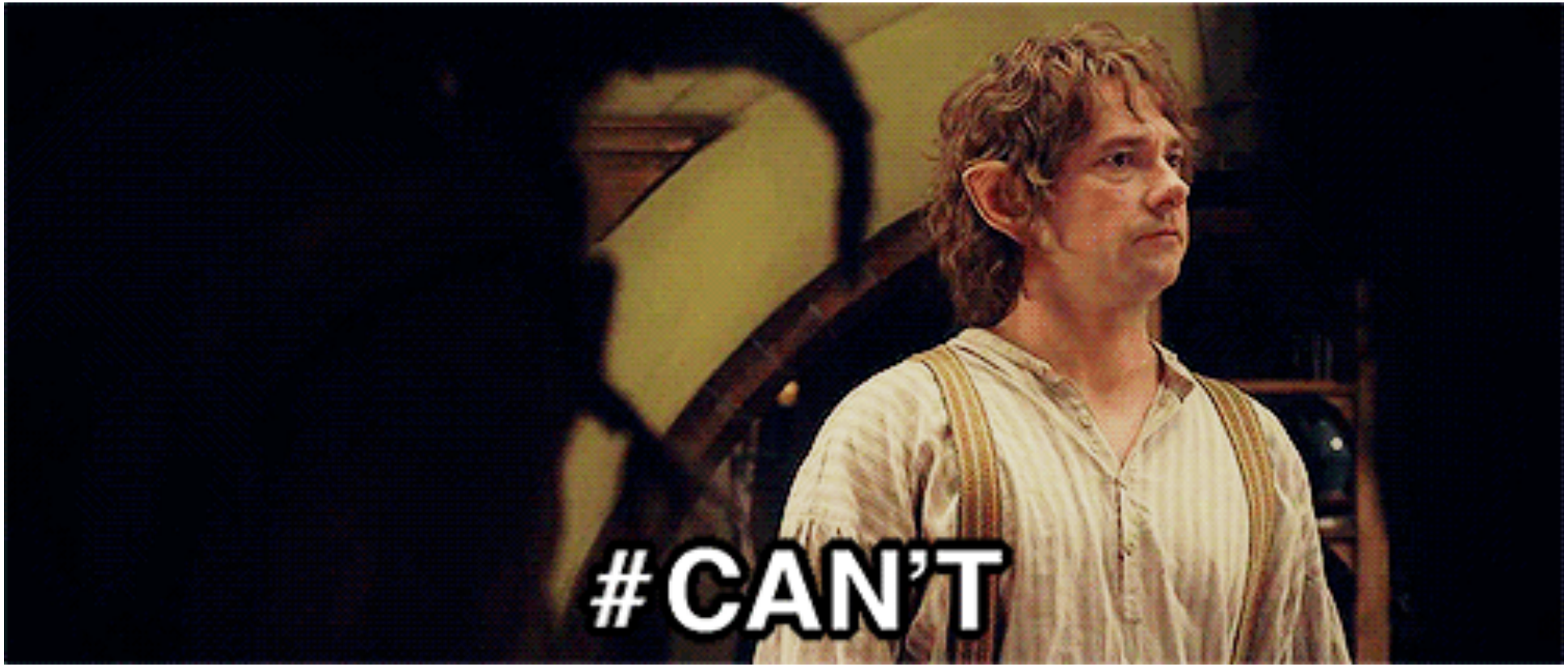
The End

# 2019


TOO MANY,
TOO MANY PROBLEMS

- Overworked
- Underpaid
- Spread too thin
- Little recognition
- Lack of influence
- Poor credibility
- Poorly understood

- Overworked
- Underpaid
- Spread too thin
- Little recognition
- Lack of influence
- Poor credibility
- Poorly understood
- Overly reactive
- High context shifting
- Low impact
- Unfulfilling work
- Hard to advance
- Harder to lead
- Burned out AF


#CAN'T

We have unfulfilled potential

# WARNING

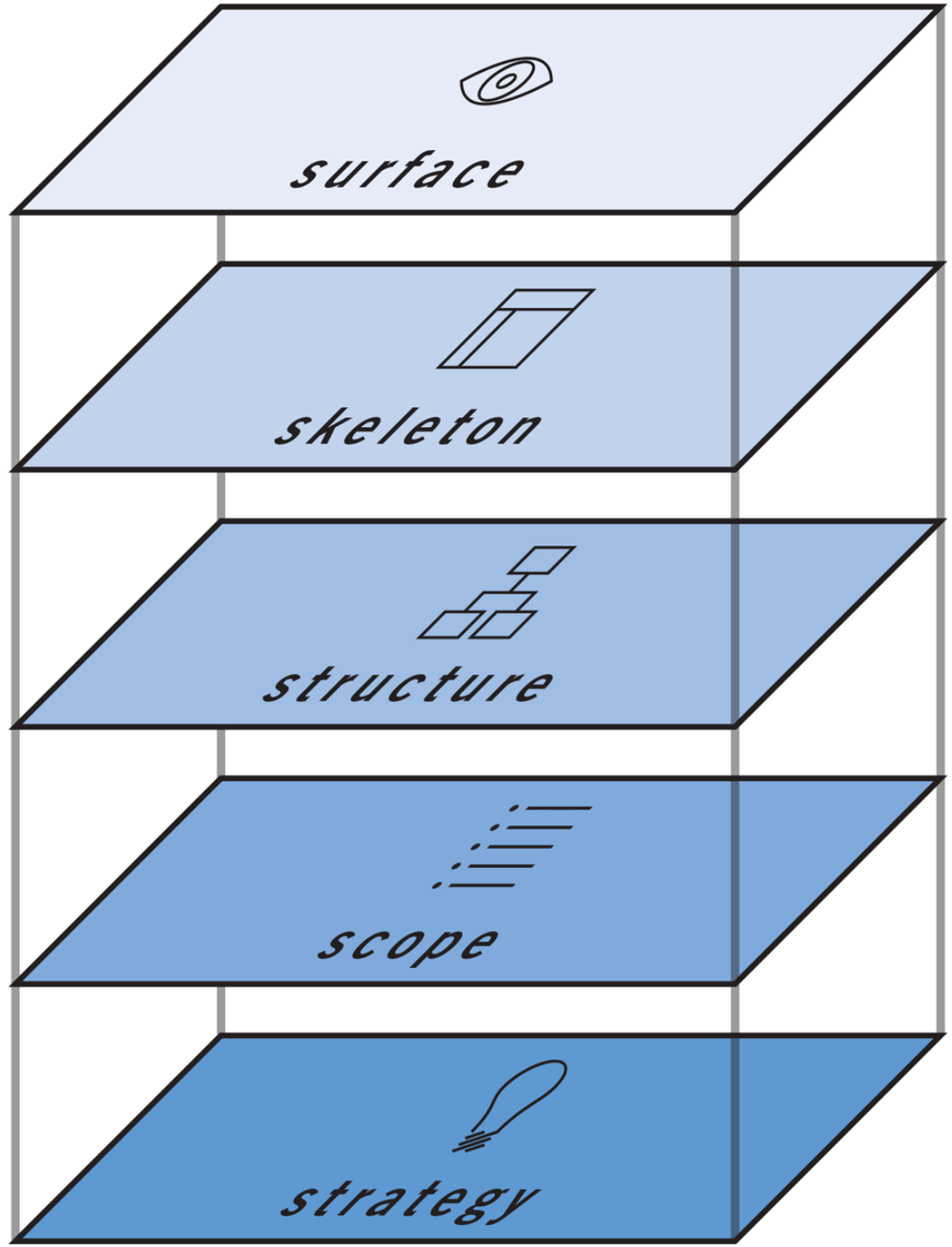
WARNING

# STRONG OPINIONS AHEAD

# STOP

1

# Stop working on more than one product at a time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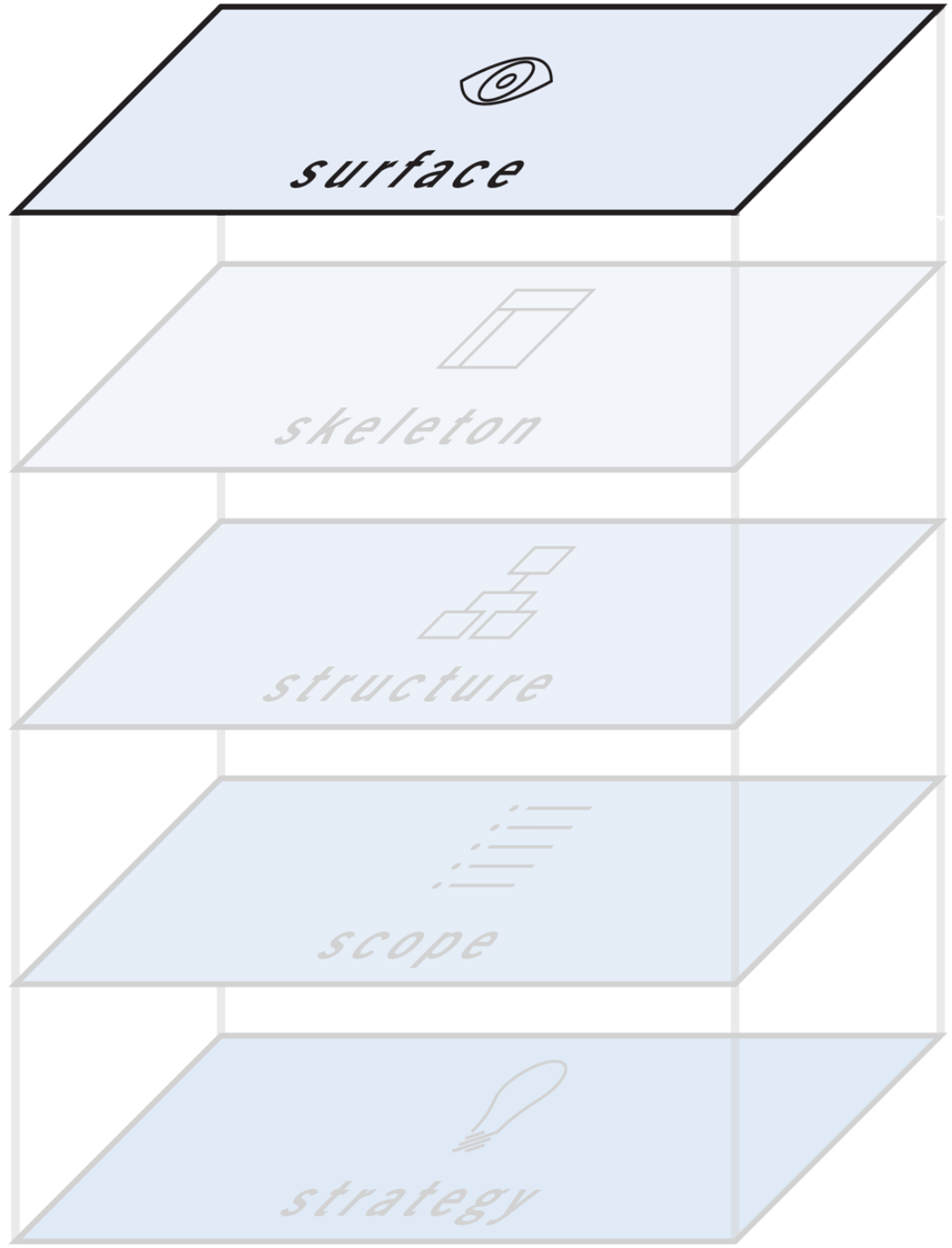
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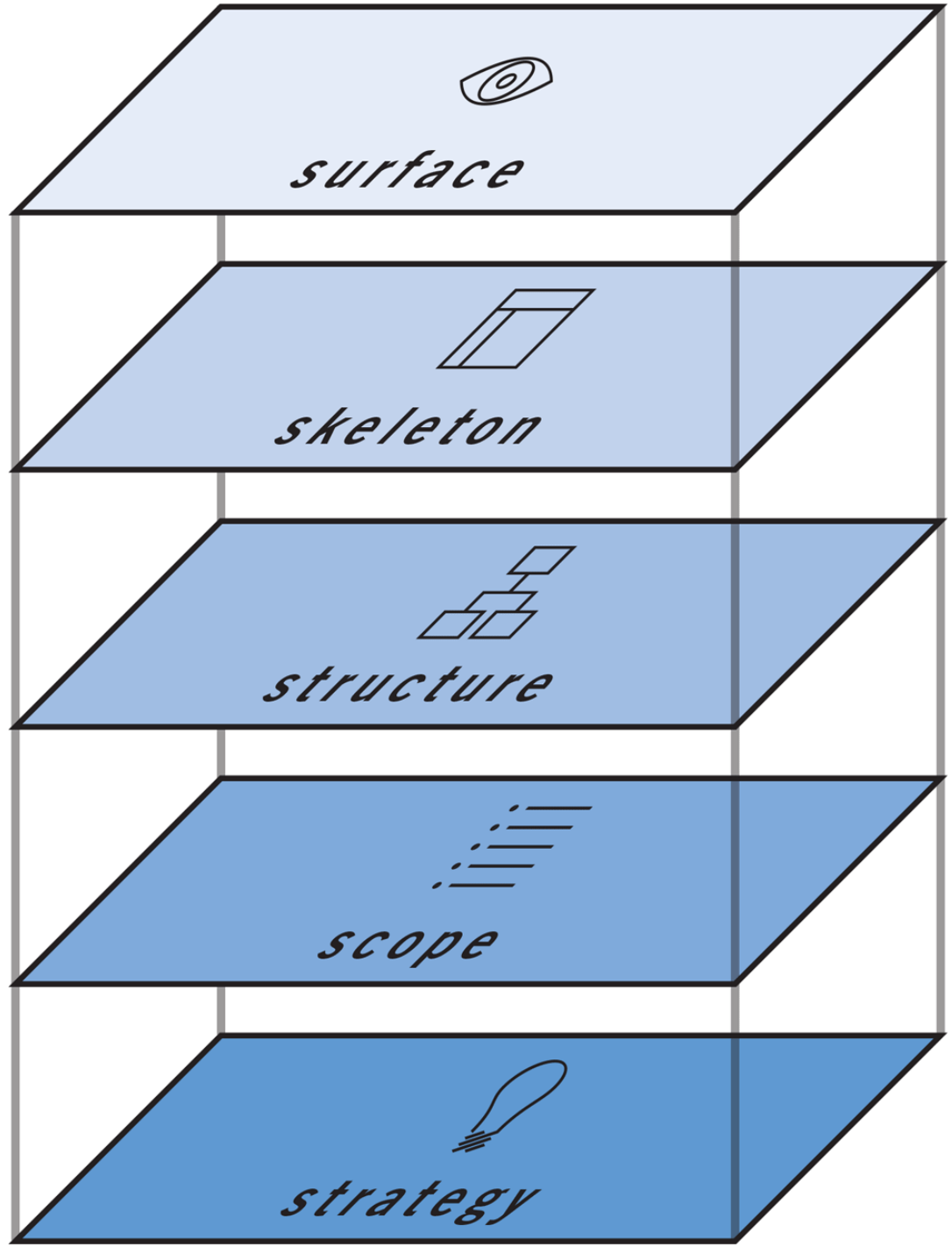
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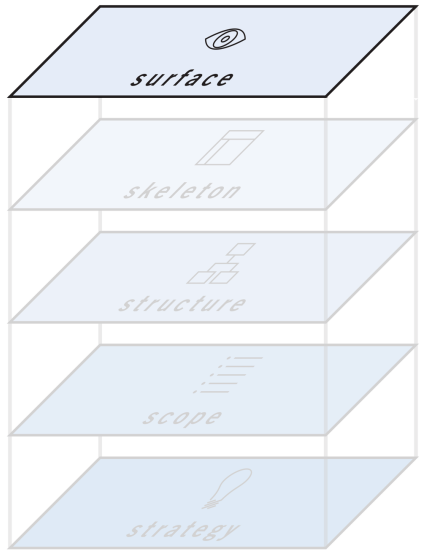
# 2

# Stop holding “office hours” and other ad hoc support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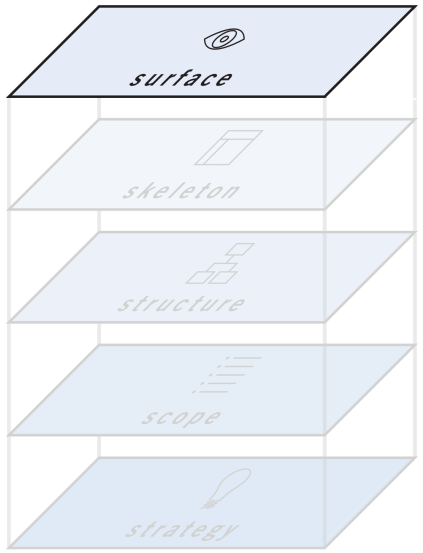
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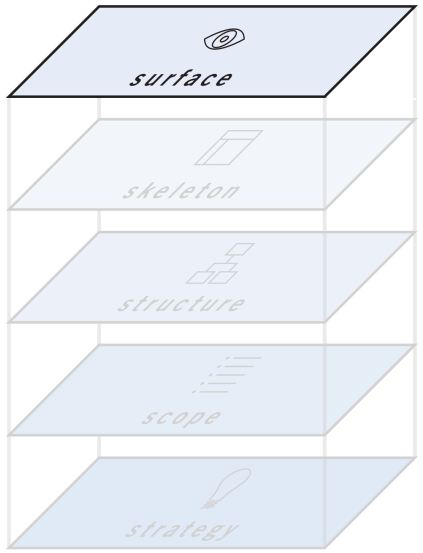
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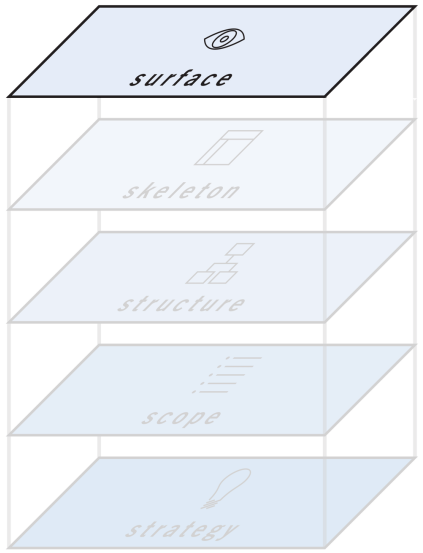
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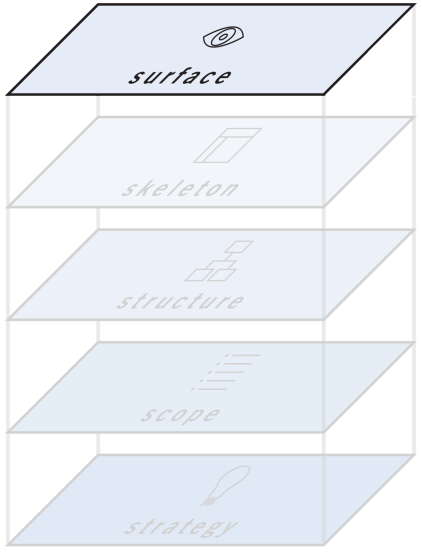
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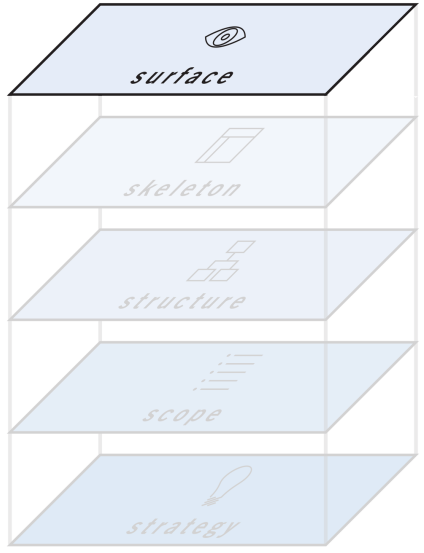
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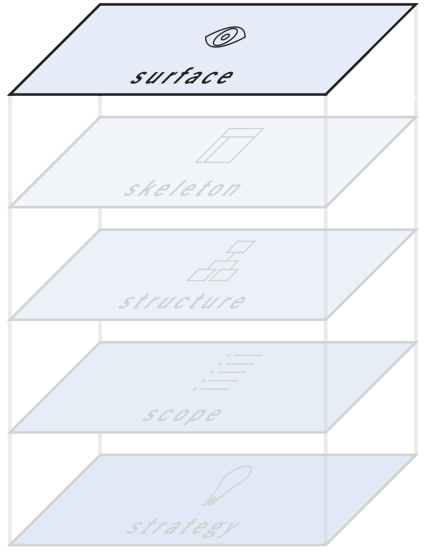
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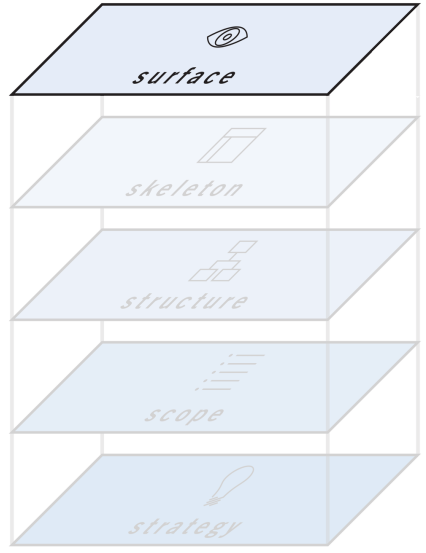

surface
skeleton
structure
scope
strategy

# 3

# Stop running content-only critique sessions

# 4

# Stop running content-only performance reviews

# START

# 5

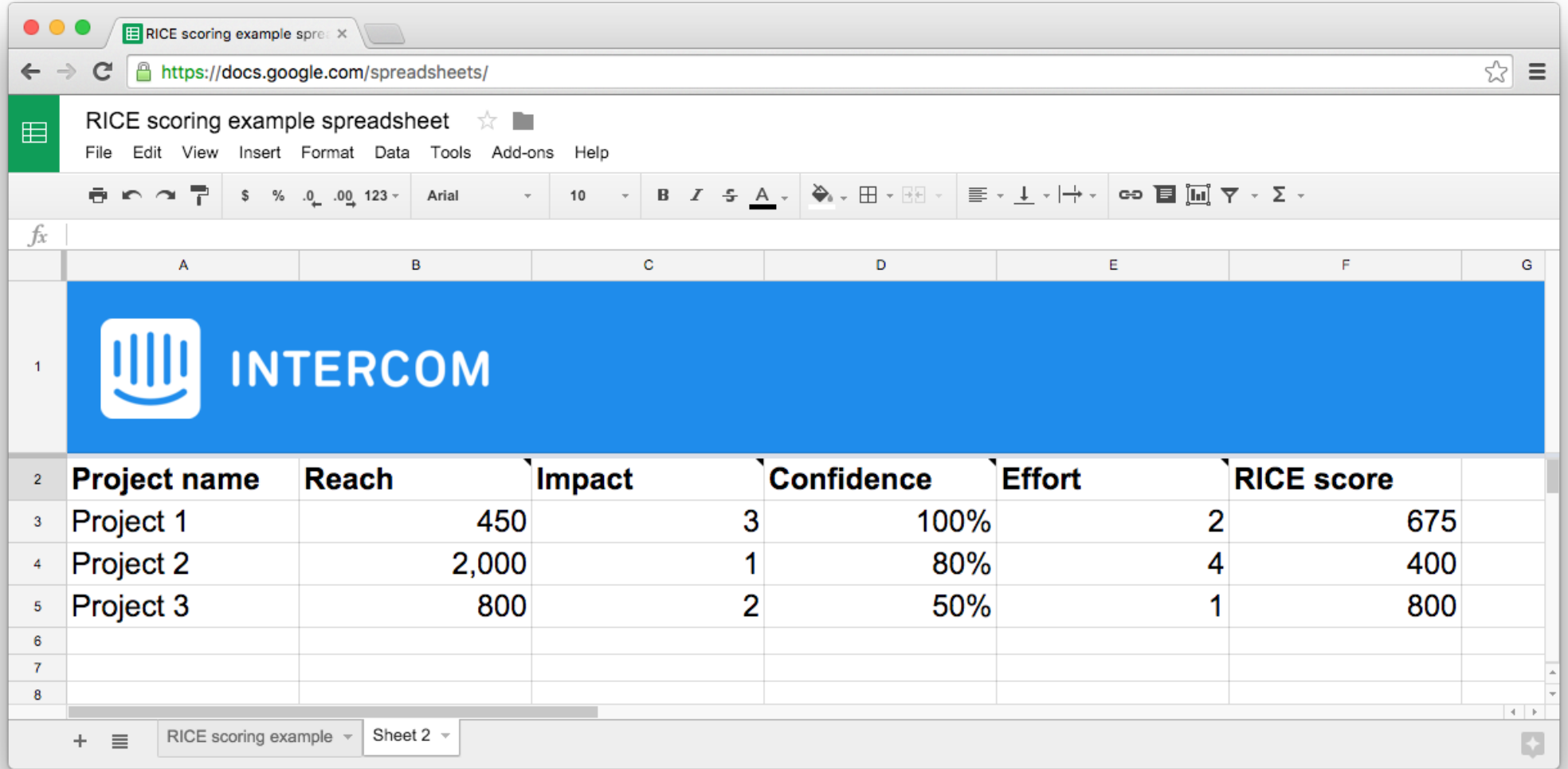
# Start letting some or more products launch without content design

# RICE: Simple prioritization for product managers

SEAN MCBRIDE
Product Manager, Intercom
@smcbride

Main illustration: Maddie Edgar

Prioritization is a perennial challenge when building a product roadmap. How do you decide what to work on first?


RICE scoring example spre
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/
RICE scoring example spreadsheet
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help
INTERCOM
Project name | Reach | Impact | Confidence | Effort | RICE score
Project 1 | 450 | 3 | 100% | 2 | 675
Project 2 | 2,000 | 1 | 80% | 4 | 400
Project 3 | 800 | 2 | 50% | 1 | 800
RICE scoring example
Sheet 2

# 6

# Start using the same job expectations for content and product design

GET THIS AT

# intercom.design

## Product and content designer levels at Intere

Part of intercom.design

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Overall, all designers at Intercom are accountable for:

**Creating market impact with teams by shipping high-qualit**

### How to use this:

1. Review what we expect for your level and the one above yours
2. Consider how your practice aligns with our expectations, create a copy of this doc, and highlight the boxes that you feel best represent your work
3. Discuss with your manager to create a growth plan together
4. Assess your performance in growth areas regularly

### Related resourc

- Having impact as a d
  Clarifies how designe
- See related levels do
  managers as well as

### 1. Products and teams

How you understand, envision, and influence products and their strategy with teams to create market impact.

| Competencies | Associate | Mid-Level<br>*In addition to Associate* | Senior<br>*In addition to Mid-Level* | Principal<br>*In addition to Senior* | Senior Principal<br>*In addition to Principal* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.1** Building product knowledge | • Learn your product area<br>• Apply Jobs to be Done<br>• Know competitors, their solutions, and our gaps | • Know your product area<br>• Demonstrate proven knowledge of jobs, how competitors solve them, and where gaps exist | • Develop deep domain knowledge of your product area and how to solve its problems<br>• Create modern, simpler, and better solutions | Look beyond your domain to engage with Intercom's wider product set | Be recognized as an expert in the broad domain of customer communications inside/outside of Intercom |
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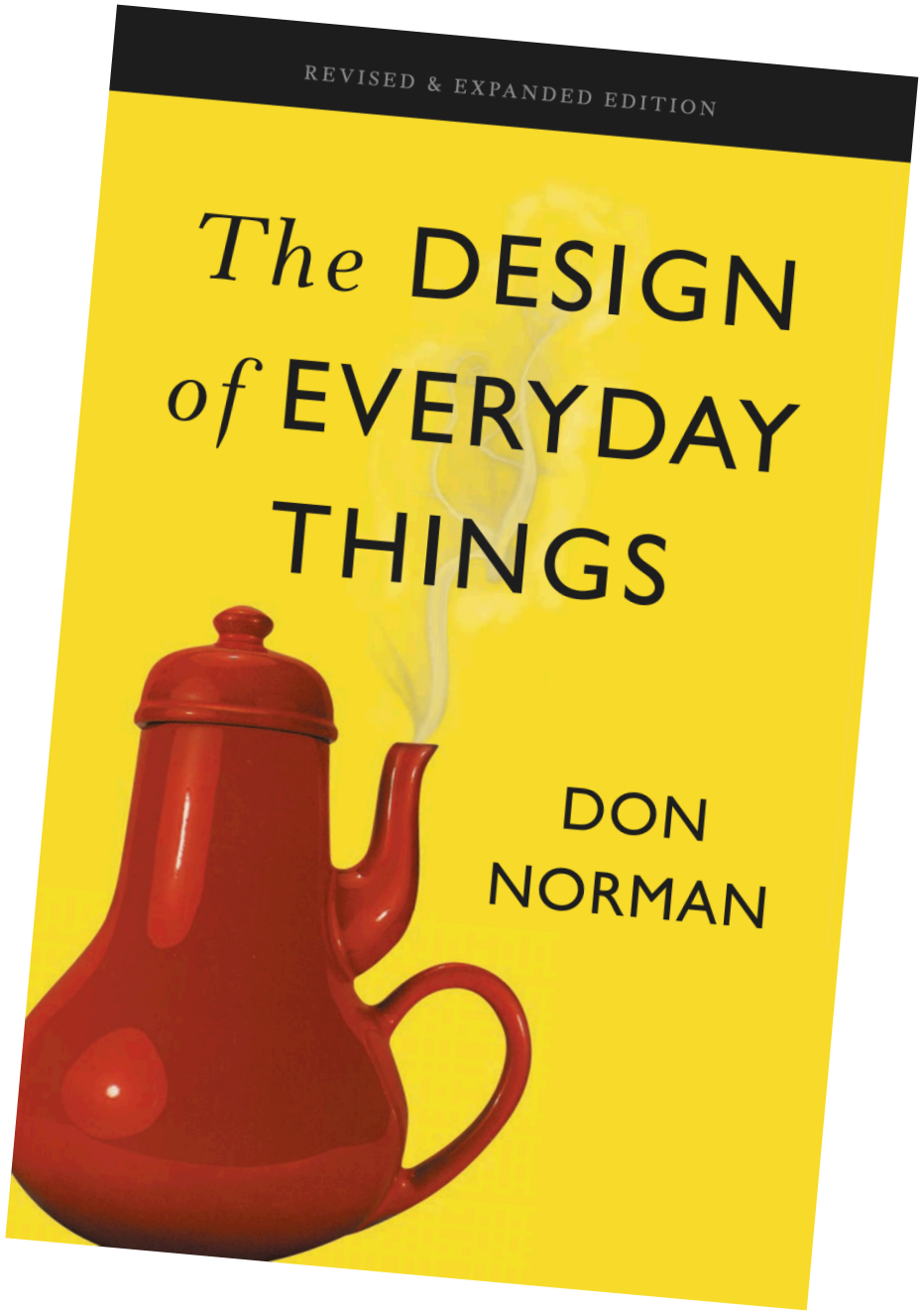
| **1.3** Working with partners across functions | • Build relationships with peers across disciplines<br>• Learn how different disciplines work together to build products | • Earn partners' trust to drive effective relationships<br>• Build high-quality products with your team and improve on them | • Influence partners and their approach, strategy, and processes<br>• Drive the team's excellence in execution | Shape critical efforts and define new processes that lead to better, more strongly aligned product outcomes | Propose new design-led efforts and gain alignment for them to change how customers think about us and our products |

7

# Start empowering content designers to work deeply across all five planes of UX



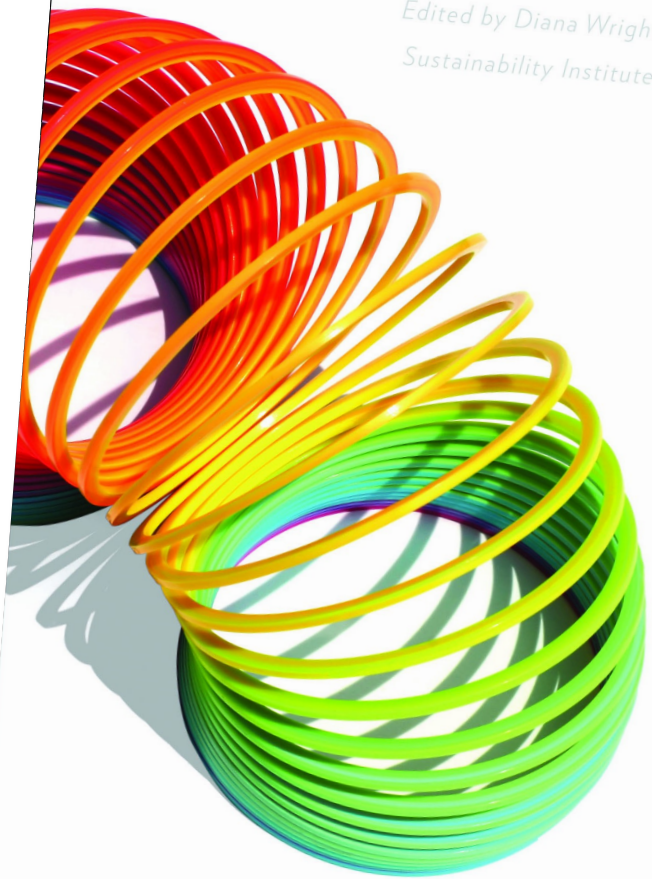

"**Design is concerned with how things work,** how they are controlled, and the nature of the interaction between people and technology."

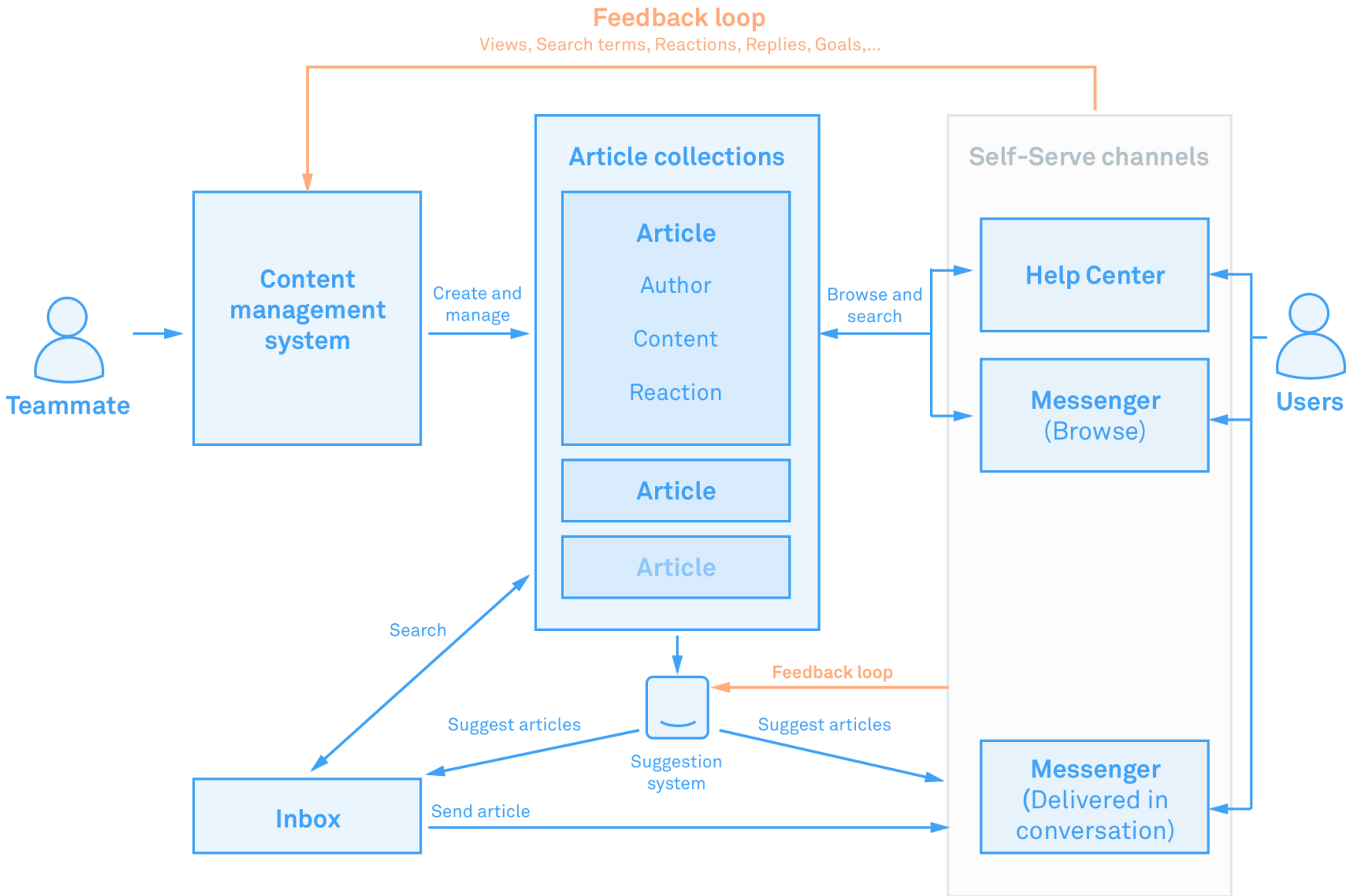
# Thinking in Systems

A Primer

Donella H. Meadows

Edited by Diana Wright,
Sustainability Institute




Feedback loop
Views, Search terms, Reactions, Replies, Goals,...
Teammate
Content management system
Create and manage
Article collections
Article
Author
Content
Reaction
Article
Article
Browse and search
Self-Serve channels
Help Center
Messenger (Browse)
Users
Search
Feedback loop
Suggest articles
Suggest articles
Suggestion system
Inbox
Send article
Messenger (Delivered in conversation)

8

# Start paying content and product designers the same by level and experience

# THEN

9

# Incentivize content and product designers to focus on product, not design

# TRADEOFFS

# Product quality decreases without content design support

# 2

# Blurred lines between content and product design

3

# It’s much harder to work holistically across everything

# 4

# Content design impact is more closely scrutinized

# 5

# It’s much harder to invest time in content ops

# 6

# Content design team feels more like a design team

7

# Content design costs more, which can slow headcount growth

8

# It’s harder to recruit/hire content designers who can work like product designers

# OUTCOMES

# When content design is on, it’s REALLY ON

# 2

## Teams with content designers know what they do and why it matters

3

# Teams without content designers are incentivized to become advocates

# 4

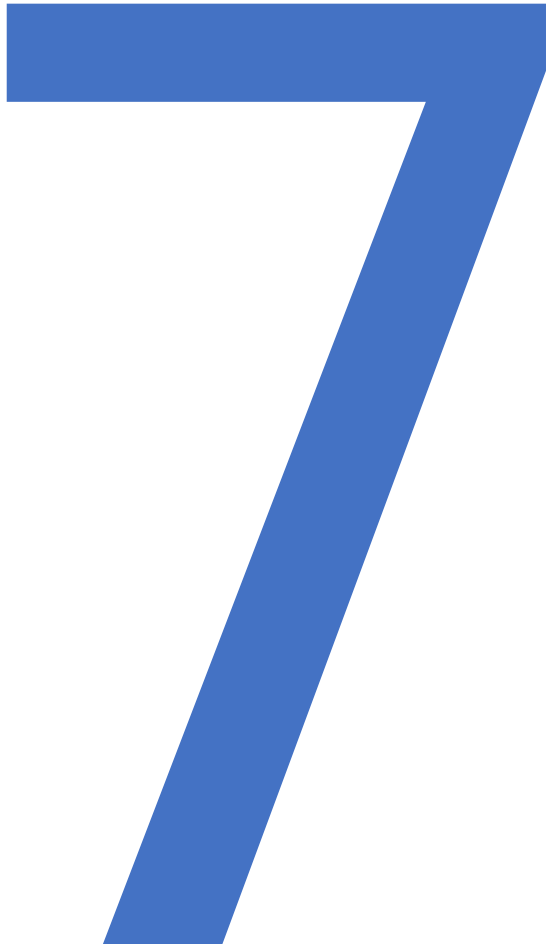
# Content design impact is recognized—and there's more of it

# 5

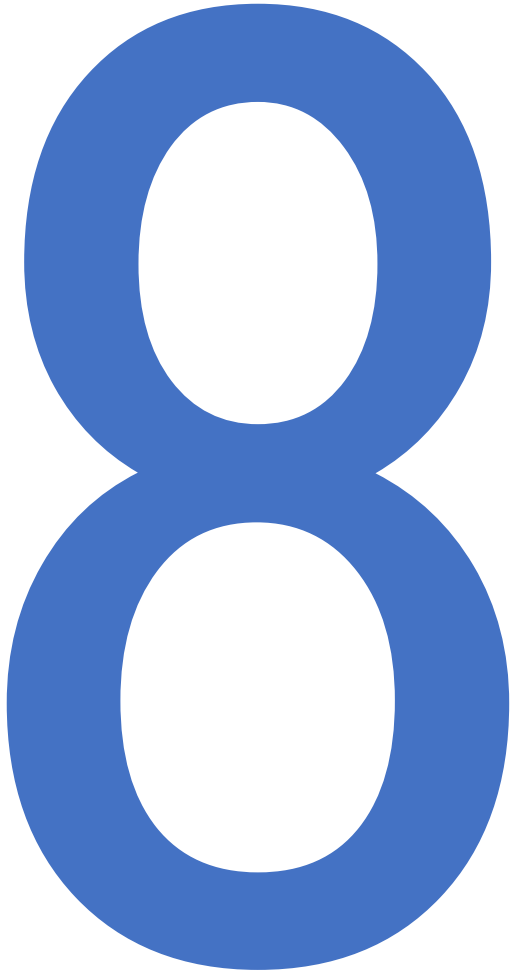
## Content designers feel more fulfilled in their work

# 6

# Content designers feel more included in product

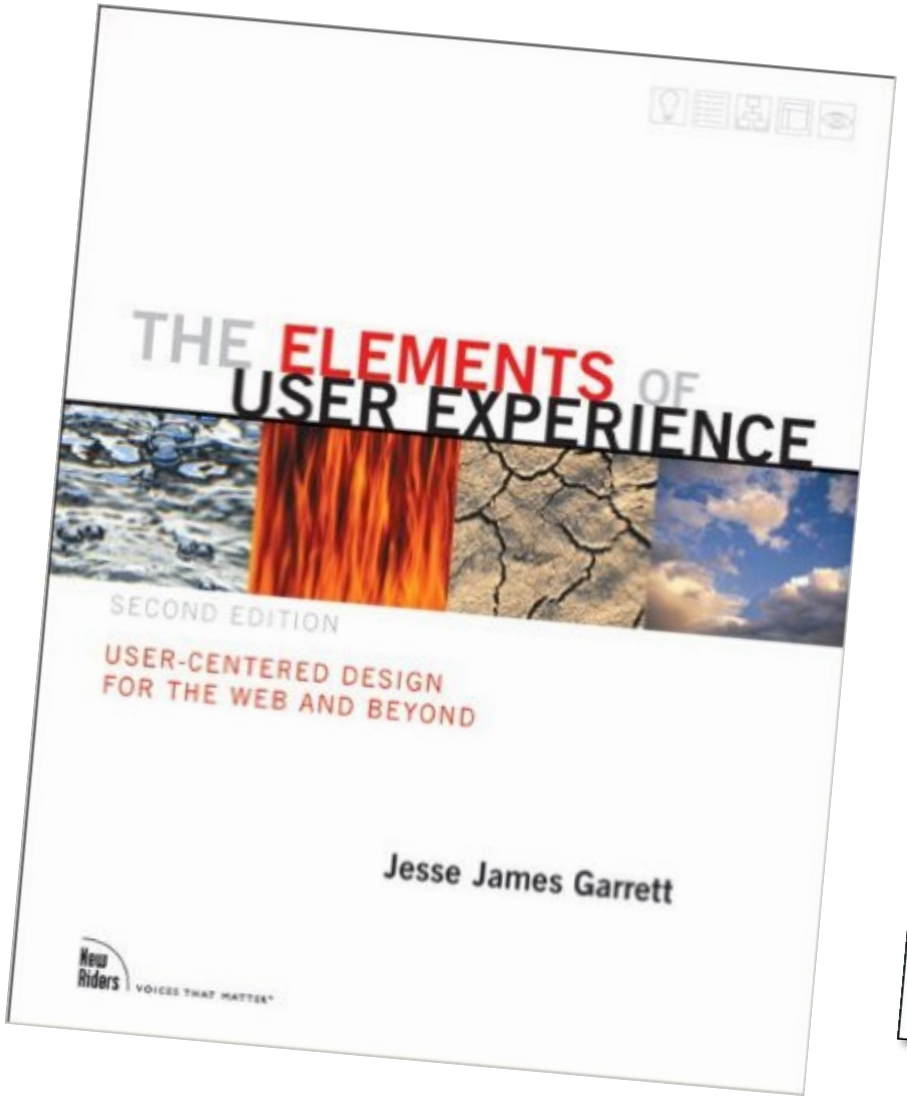


# Content designers get equal pay for equal work



# We realize more of our true potential on products

# CONCLUSION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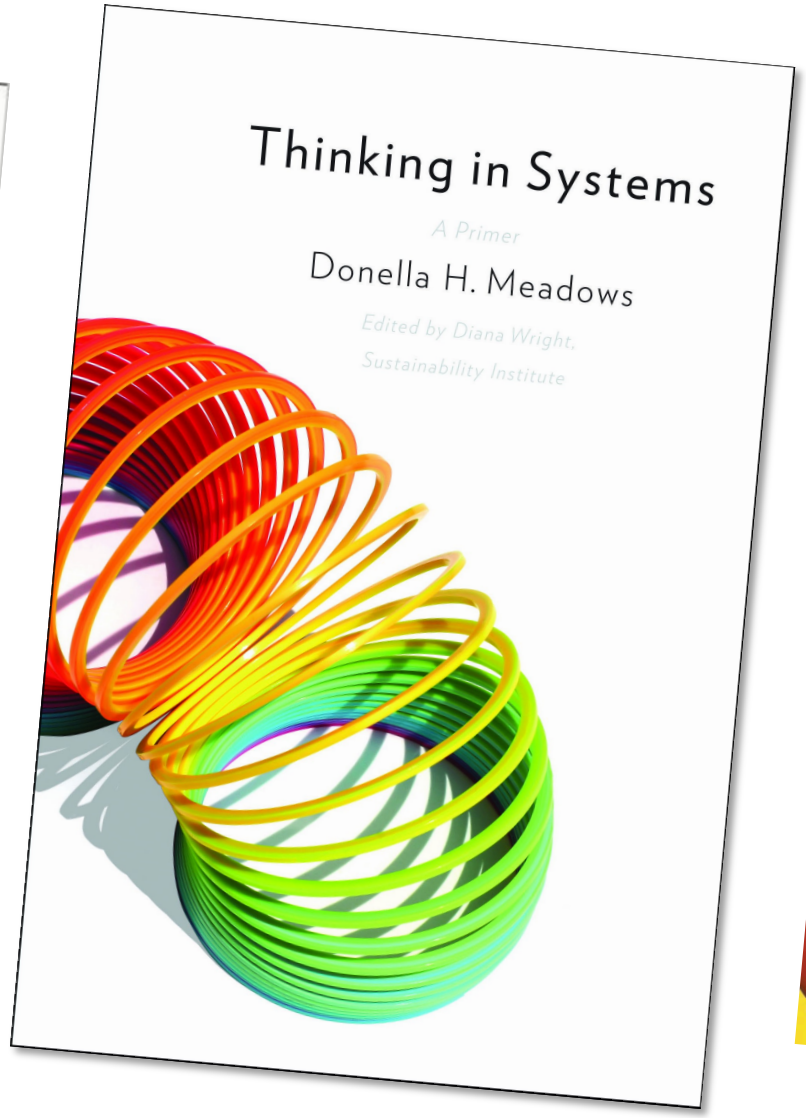
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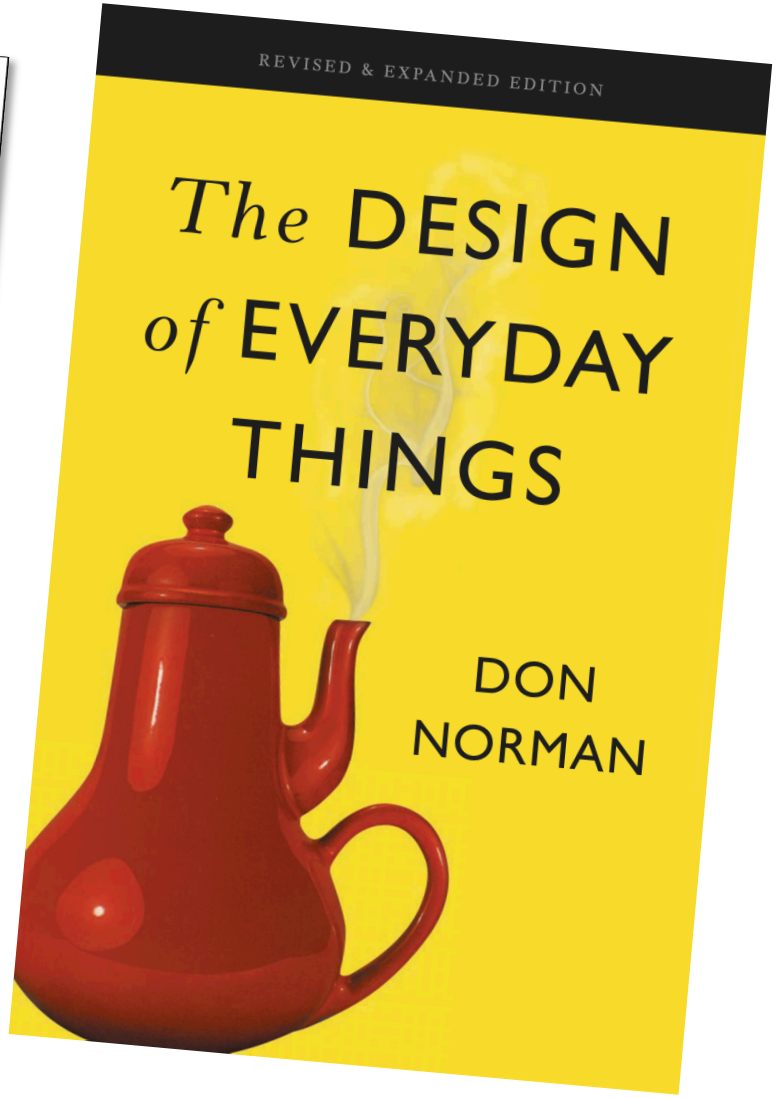
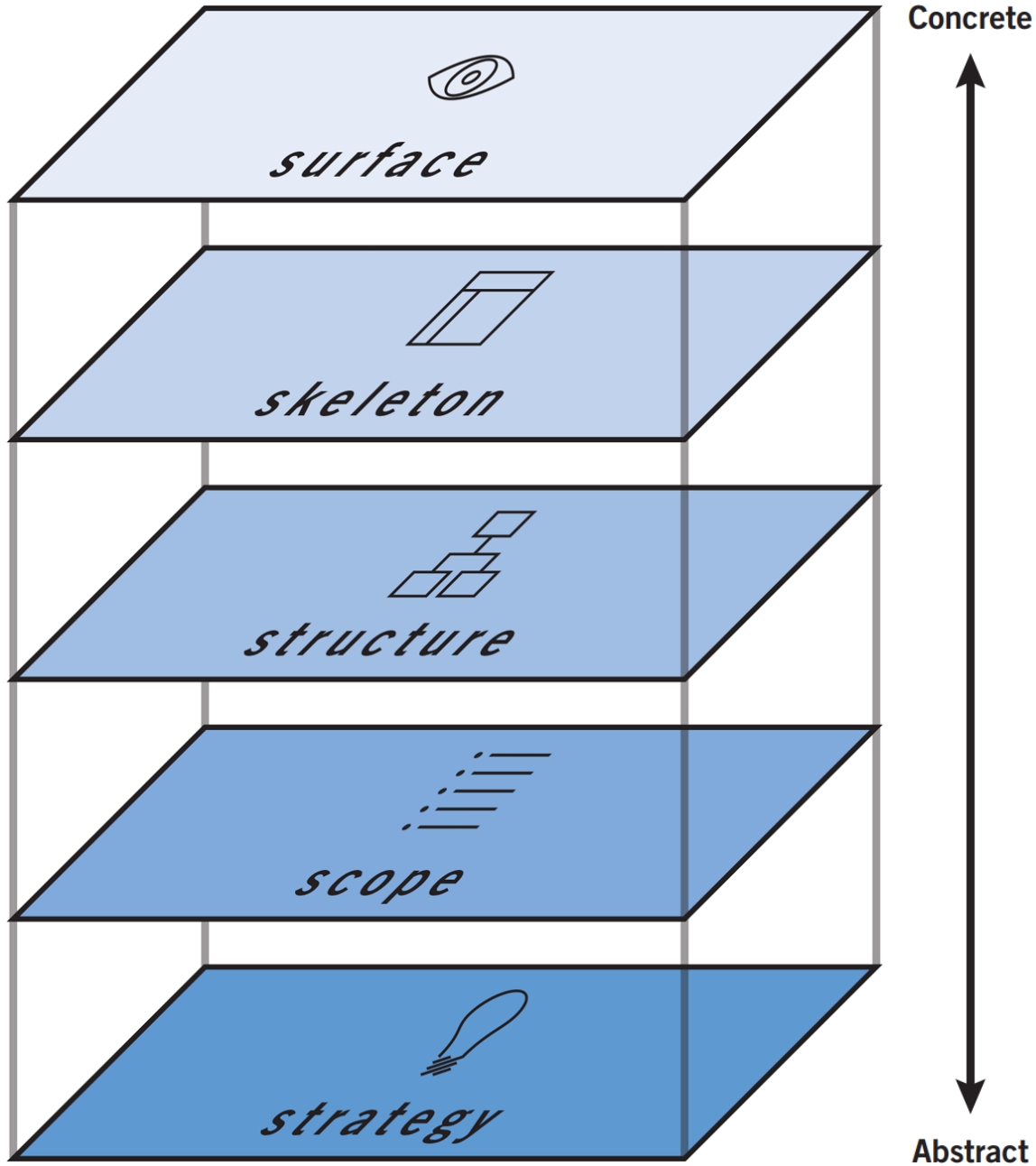

REVISED & EXPANDED EDITION
The DESIGN of EVERYDAY THINGS
DON NORMAN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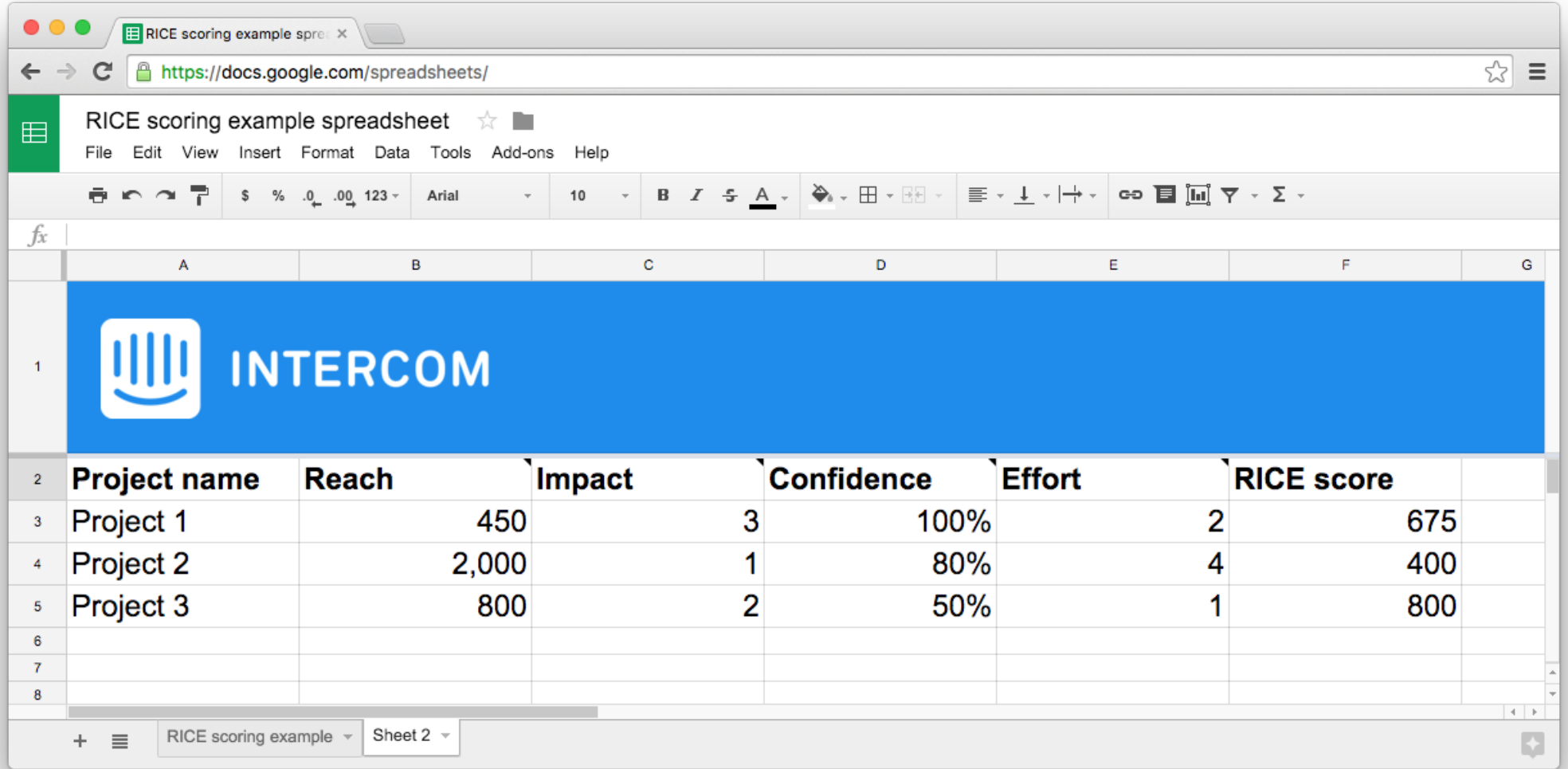
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RICE scoring example spreadsheet
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INTERCOM
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RICE scoring example
Sheet 2

# Product and content desig

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Overall, all desig

**Creating market impact with te**

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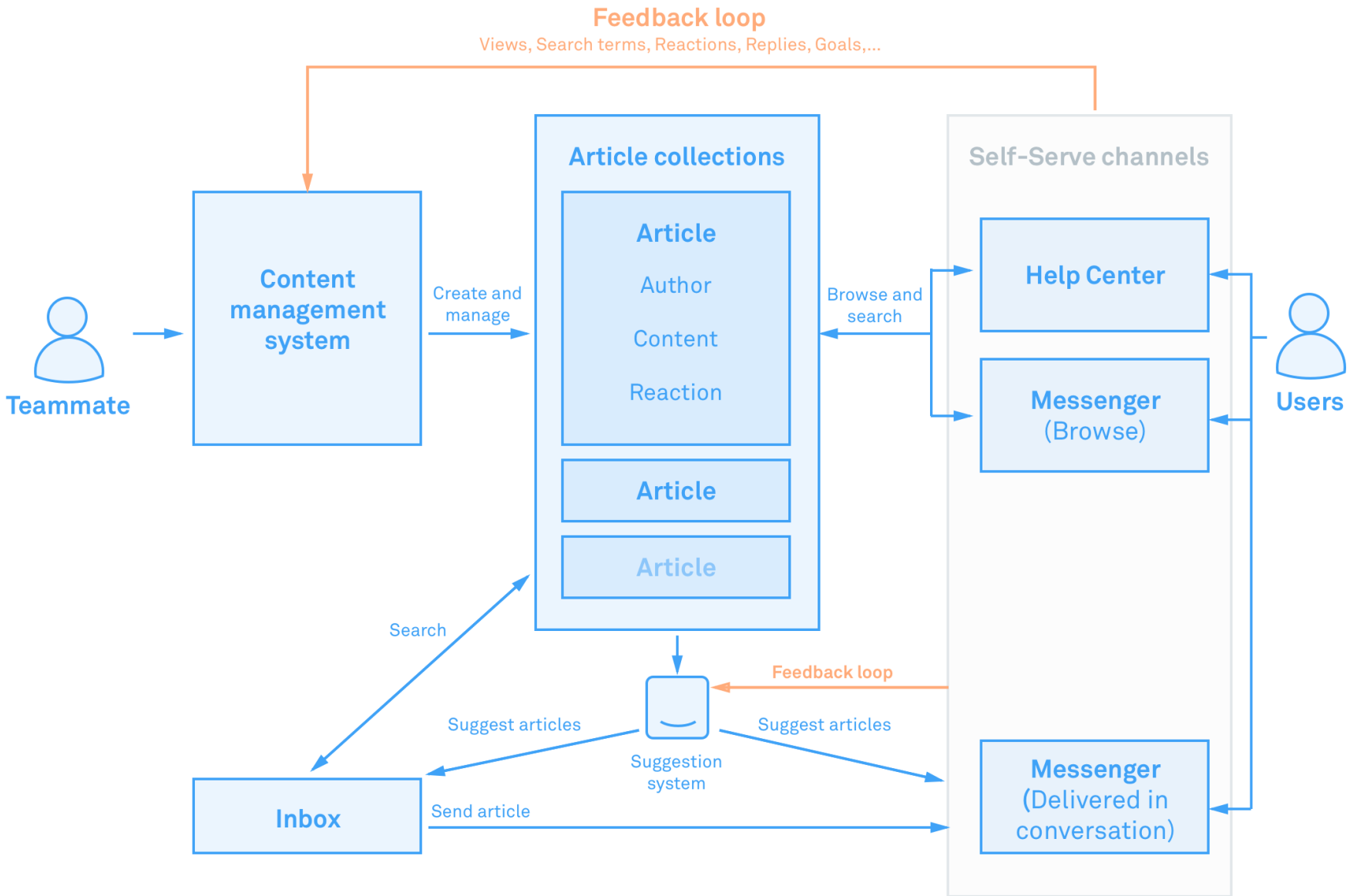
Feedback loop
Views, Search terms, Reactions, Replies, Goals,...
Teammate
Content management system
Create and manage
Article collections
Article
Author
Content
Reaction
Article
Article
Browse and search
Self-Serve channels
Help Center
Messenger (Browse)
Users
Search
Feedback loop
Suggest articles
Suggest articles
Suggestion system
Inbox
Send article
Messenger (Delivered in conversation)

# 1 Work on one product at a time

1 Work on one product at a time

2 Hold content and product designers accountable for the same expectations

1. Work on one product at a time

2. Hold content and product designers accountable for the same expectations

3. Pay both roles the same

# Designing a world-class content design team

Jonathon Colman

# @jcolman

Senior Design Manager

Intercom

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The End