INS1GHTS 2021
BUILD THE BETTER FUTURE

7 Things Executives Can Learn From Software Engineers

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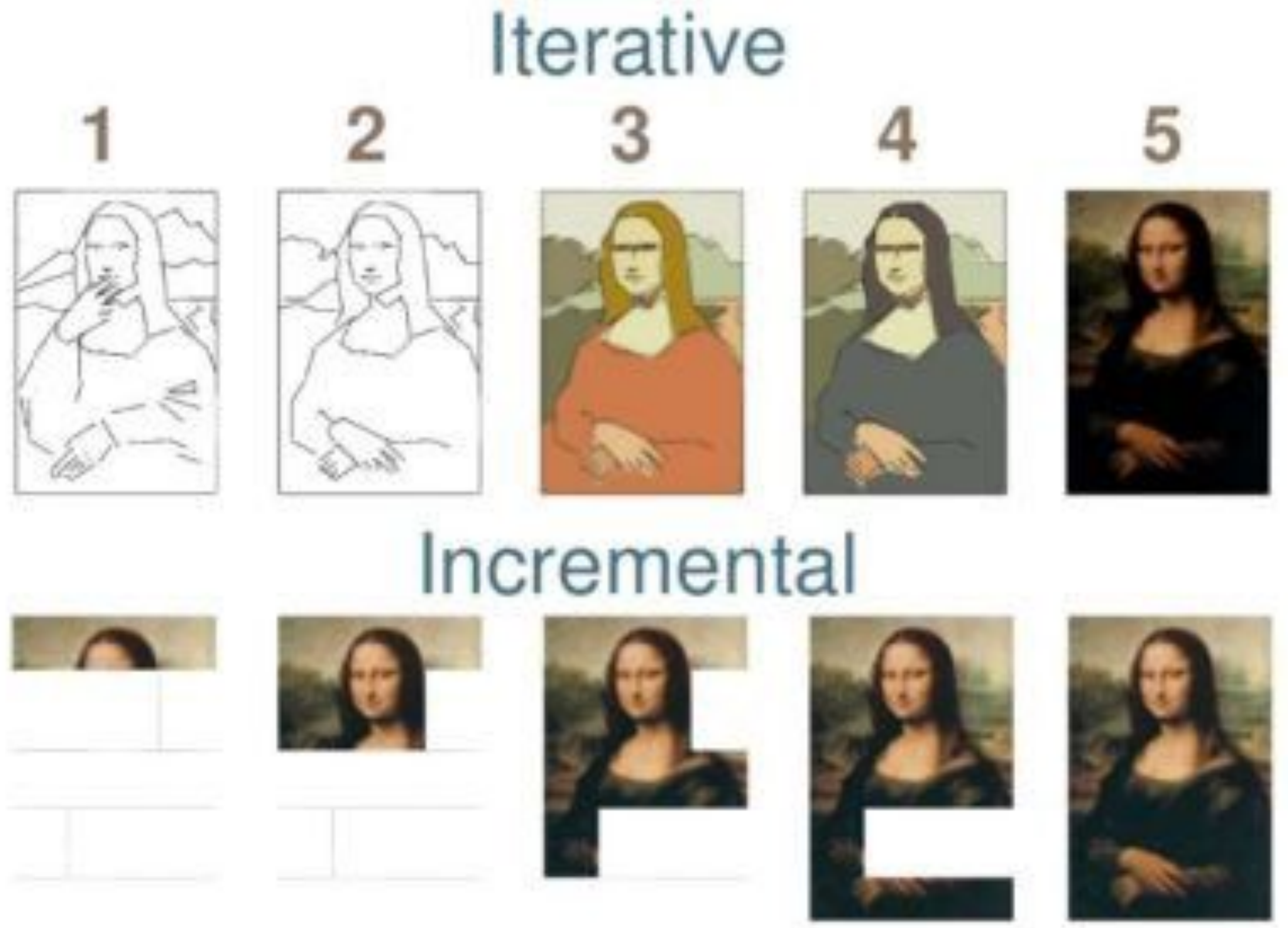
Nerd culture is mainstream now. So when you use the word "nerd" derogatorily, that means you're the one that's out of the Zeitgeist.

NS1.

The power of iteration

NS1.


Iterative
1
2
3
4
5
Incremental

Small teams move fast

Time is money. Money is power. Power is pizza. Pizza is knowledge. Let's go.

NS1.

Small teams move fast

- Glue work between the teams
- Black box squads (input/output)
- Conway's law
- Software contracts extend to teams (“this api does x” etc)

Fast feedback

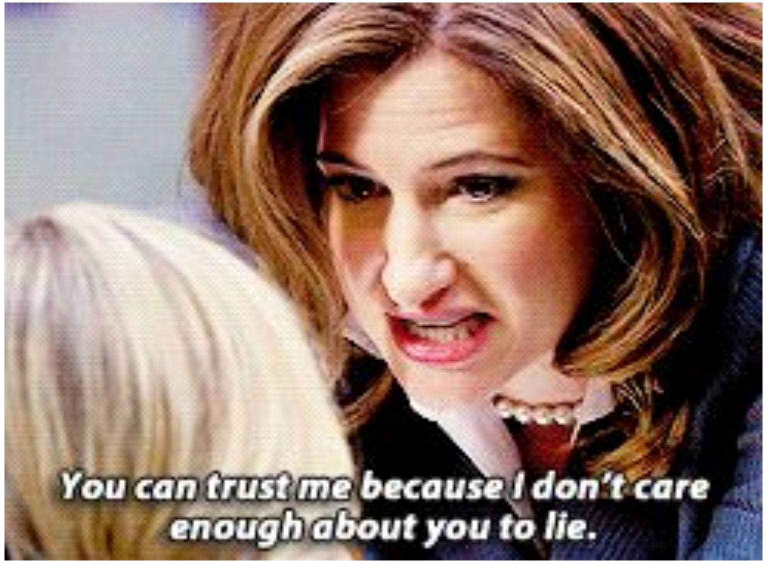
NS1.

Fast Feedback

- Set success criteria that is measurable
- Get changes in front of users/consumers quickly
- Create a process to share all feedback as soon as possible
- Automate feedback where possible

NS1.

Trust but verify


You can trust me because I don't care enough about you to lie.

NS1.

Trust, But Verify

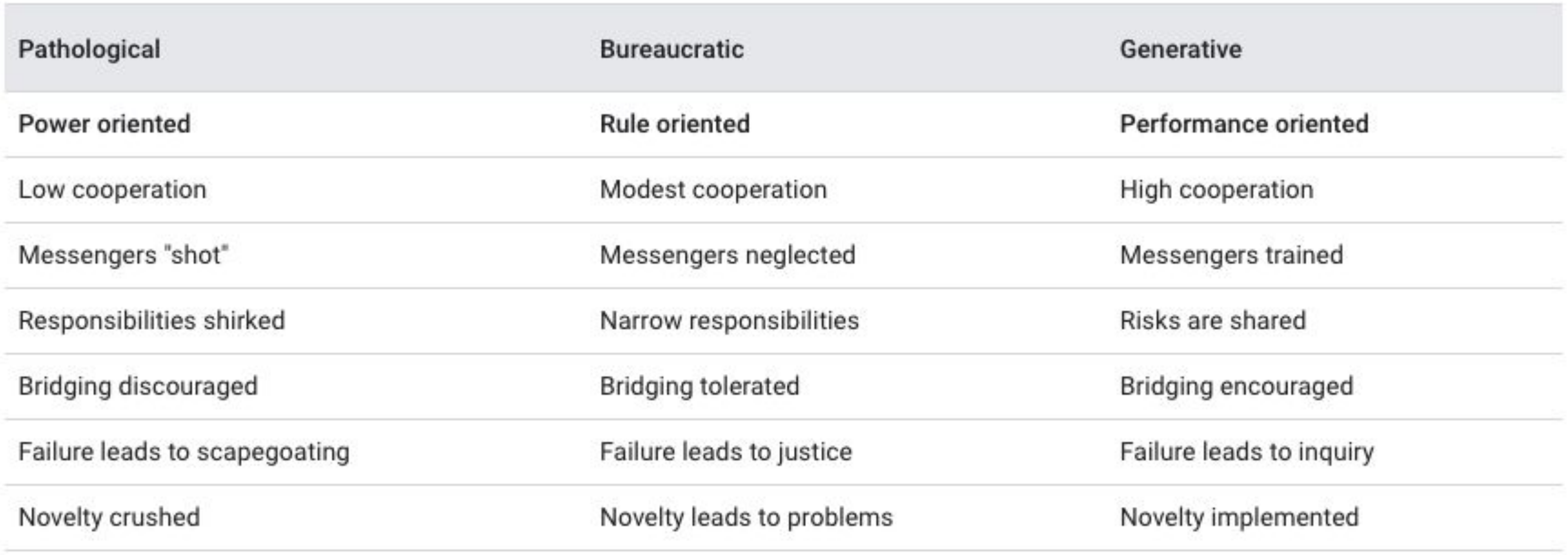
- Guardrails are good!
- Make the right way the easy way
- People want to do the right thing, but mistakes can happen

Collaboration over competition

Collaboration over Competition

- Power structures can create unintended consequences
- Ownership/fiefdoms
- “Who moved my cheese”? (or who touched it)
- Resource guarding

Westrum Model



Pathological	Bureaucratic	Generative
Power oriented	**Rule oriented**	**Performance oriented**
Low cooperation	Modest cooperation	High cooperation
Messengers "shot"	Messengers neglected	Messengers trained
Responsibilities shirked	Narrow responsibilities	Risks are shared
Bridging discouraged	Bridging tolerated	Bridging encouraged
Failure leads to scapegoating	Failure leads to justice	Failure leads to inquiry
Novelty crushed	Novelty leads to problems	Novelty implemented

NS1.

Community spirit

Community Spirit

- Developers love to work in communities
- Communities can be internal and external
- We can learn from our peers - and help them as well
- Fewer things have to be secret than we think

Learning culture

NS1.

Learning Culture

- Learning from Incidents
- Shadow rotations (not just for juniors and not just for tech)
- Blamelessness

Incidents are unplanned investments; their costs have already been incurred. Your org's challenge is to get ROI on those events.

- John Allspaw, Adaptive Capacity Labs

NS1.

RCA != learning

Shadow Rotations

The impulse to blame and punish has the unintended effect of disincentivizing the knowledge sharing required to learn from incidents

Resilience and Organizational Dynamics

Blunt / Sharp End

Blunt End

Removed from experience

Upstream decision makers

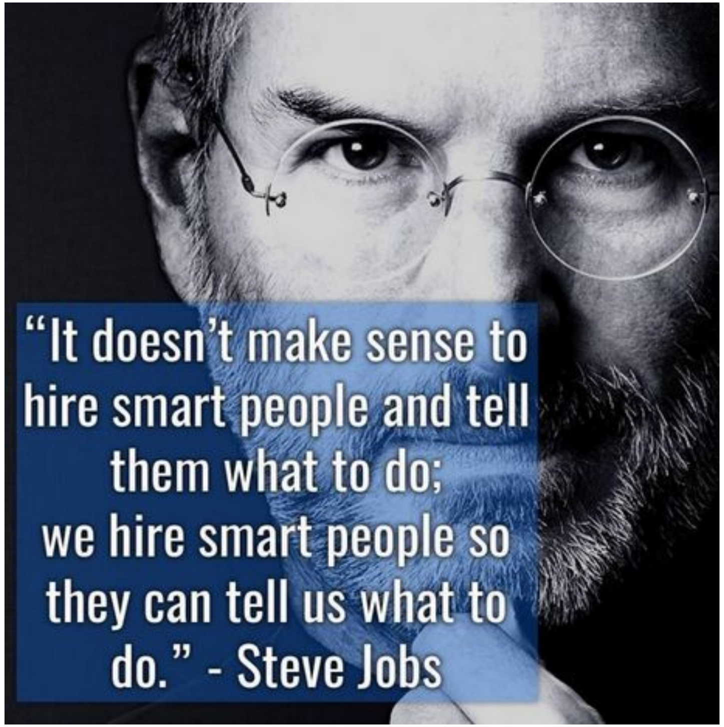
Sharp End

People directly engaged in the work

“Chop wood, carry water”

NS1.

Sharp End


"It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do." - Steve Jobs

Constantly building and destroying systems

Strong signaling

Improve systems based on strain

Will do so naturally if given ownership

[Psychological safety is] a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up

Amy Edmondson, Professor, Harvard Business School

NS1.

Radical candor?

If you are asking for candor/blunt feedback, what are you doing to make this safe?

Thank you!

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Podcast - ArrestedDevOps.com

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