



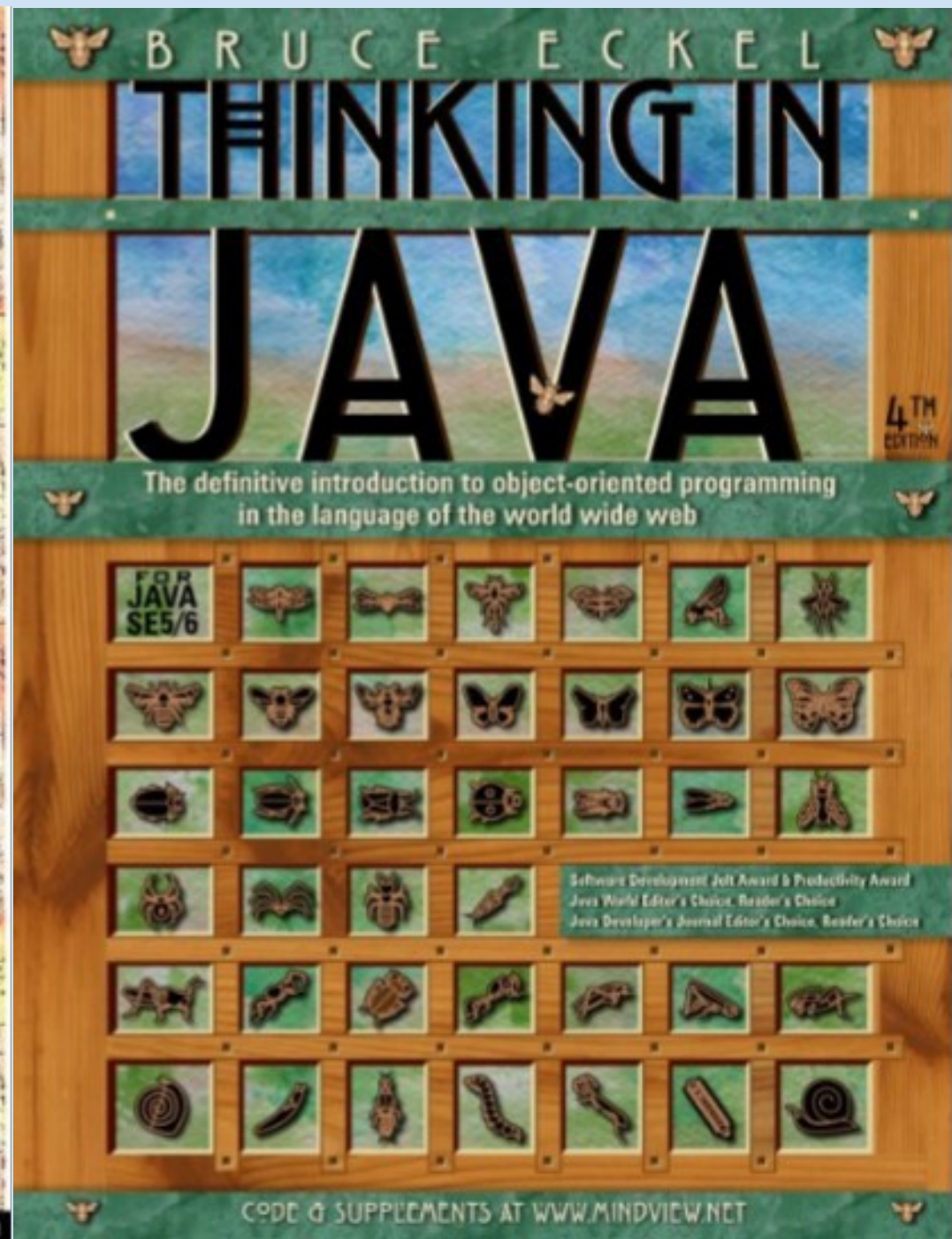
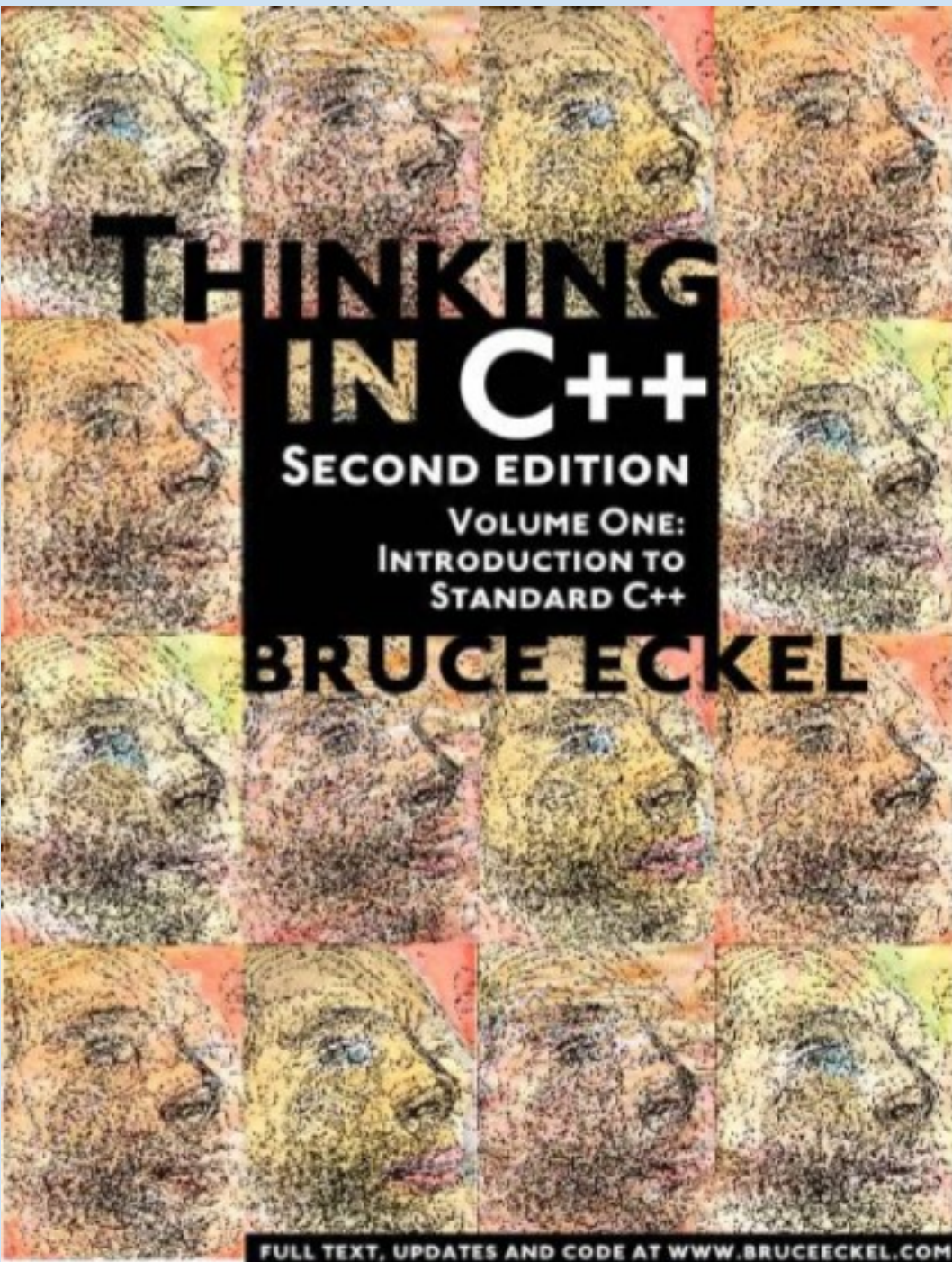
# The Culture is The Company

**[tinyurl.com/re-business](https://tinyurl.com/re-business)**

Bruce Eckel: Blog @ Reinventing-Business.com

I search for structures to increase creativity & productivity







## Learn Flex Fast

*This book will take you through your first steps on your way to becoming a powerful user interface programmer.*

You'll learn everything you need to know to begin building applications and exploring the Flex landscape – but only what you need to know.

We've gone to great lengths to show you the world of Flex without burying you in information you don't need right now. At the same time, we give pointers to places where you can go to explore more.

*First Steps in Flex* is the ideal starting point for any programmer who wants to quickly become proficient in Flex 3.

**Bruce Eckel** ([www.MindViewInc.com](http://www.MindViewInc.com)) specializes in languages and rapid-development tools and techniques, and provides consulting, workshops and conferences. He is the author of the multi-award-winning *Thinking in Java* and *Thinking in C++*, among others.

**James Ward** ([www.JamesWard.org](http://www.JamesWard.org)) is a Technical Evangelist for Flex at Adobe. He travels the globe speaking at conferences and teaching developers how to build better software with Flex.

# First Steps in Flex



cover design by will-harris.com



Price: \$24.00

**By Bruce Eckel**  
*President, MindView Inc.*  
**& James Ward**  
*Flex Evangelist, Adobe Inc.*

FIRST STEPS IN FLEX

By Bruce Eckel & James Ward

# First Steps in Flex

**Building Applications with Flex 3**



# SANTALAND

# DIARIES

By **DAVID SEDARIS**

Adapted For the Stage by

**JOE MANTELLO**

Starring **BRUCE ECKEL**

**December 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30 and 31**

**7:30pm. Doors Open at 6:30 with pre-show musical entertainment and very happy hour!**

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**"A delightfully thorny account of working as a yuletide elf at Macy's. Priceless observations, both outrageous and subtle."  
--NY Times**

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Mature  
Elves  
Only!**

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**403 Second Street - Mallardi Cabaret Theatre - Crested Butte, CO**





Other than running his own small consulting business and ventures for the past 30 years, Bruce Eckel has no management experience.

However, through studying physics, engineering and new programming languages he has developed the ability to hurl himself repeatedly and tenaciously against intractable problems.



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# A Tale of Open Spaces



Old-style conferences are like  
industrial-age corporations

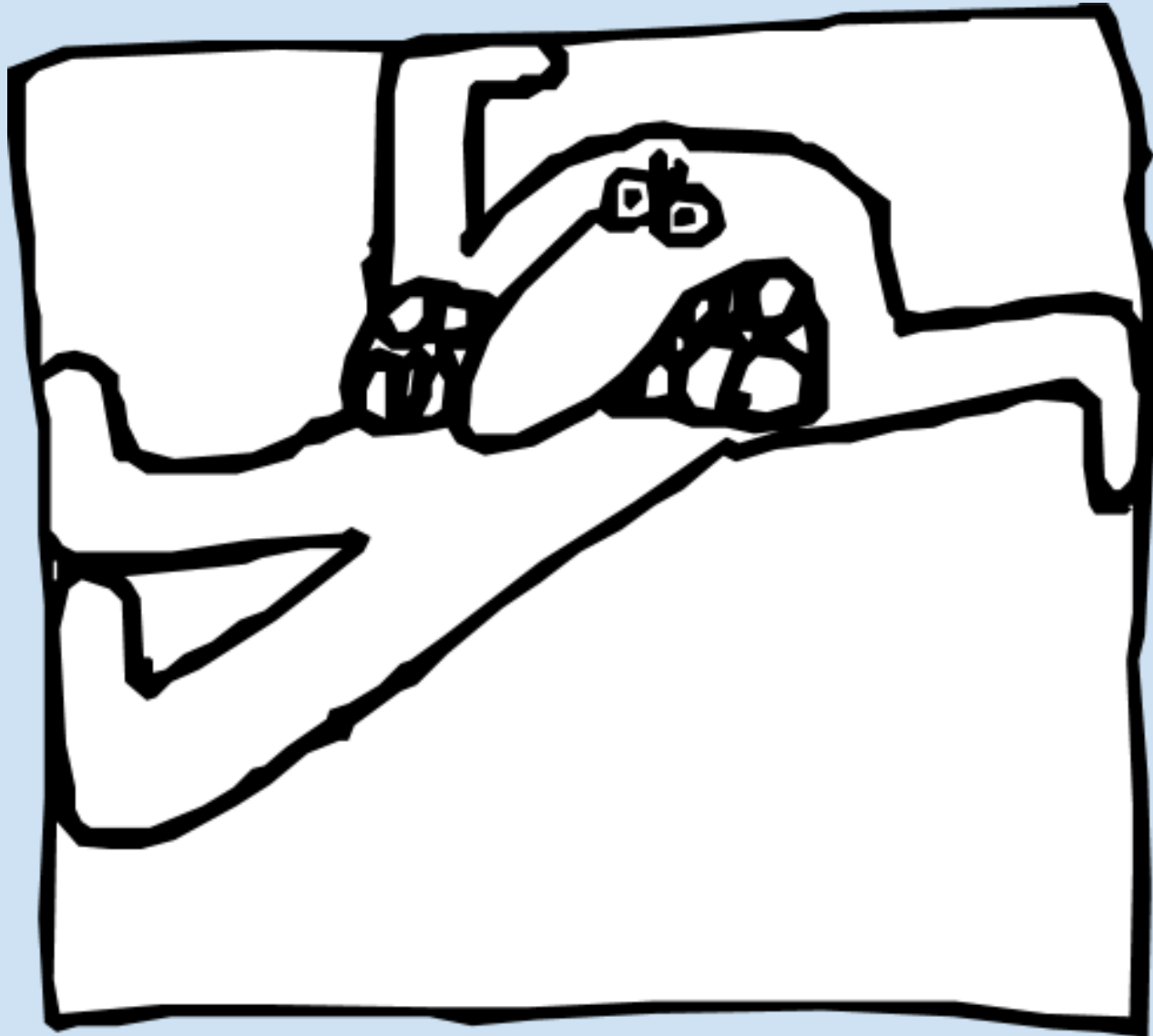
I seek an organizational structure that  
works more like an open-spaces  
conference

# What's



Outside

# The Box?





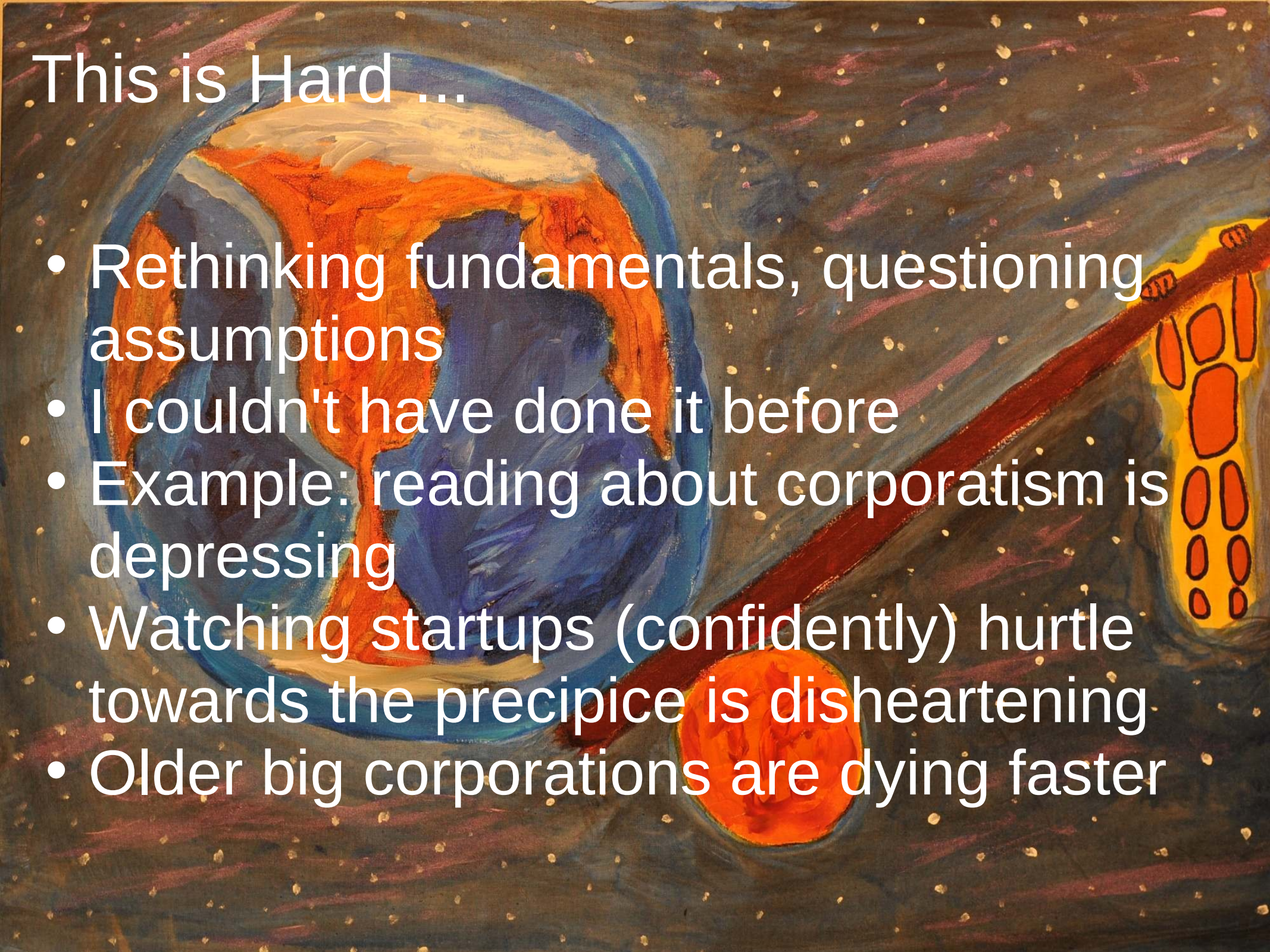
- Art (paintings and drawings here are mine)
- Writing
- New Languages/tools
- Theatre
- New kinds of learning events
- Workshops
- Burning Man
- Organizational structure
- Visit companies
- Travel (like this trip)





# This is Hard ...

- Rethinking fundamentals, questioning assumptions
- I couldn't have done it before
- Example: reading about corporatism is depressing
- Watching startups (confidently) hurtle towards the precipice is disheartening
- Older big corporations are dying faster

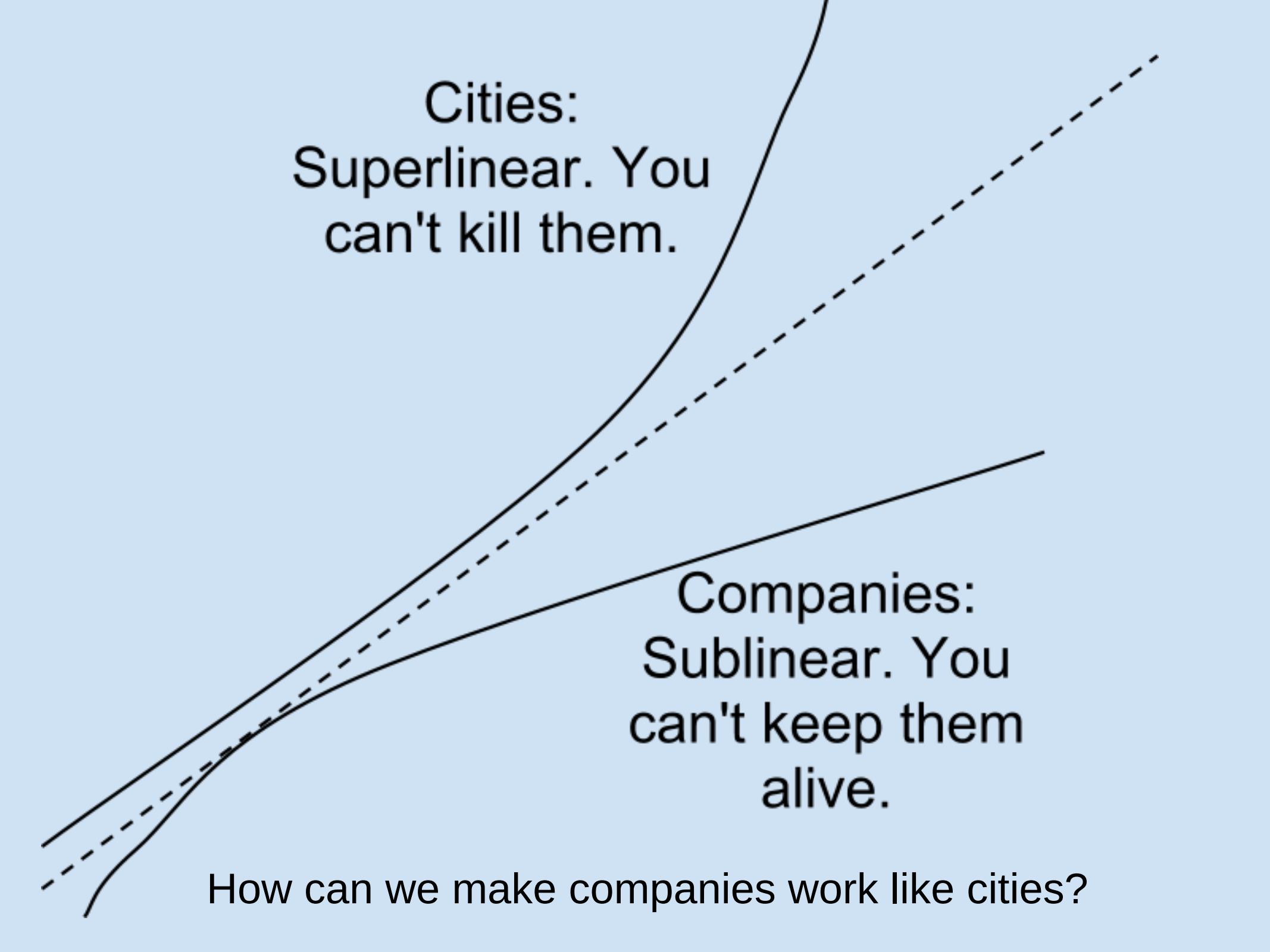




# How you can help

- Almost everything we know about business is wrong, because the methodology of business "science" is "making s#!t up" (Read *The Management Myth* by Matthew Stewart)
- Start thinking about the problem, in a long-term way. See if you can discover, talk about, publish little insights.
- Suggestion: Don't approach the problem head-on. I find that the small side stories tend to be much more revealing.





Cities:  
Superlinear. You  
can't kill them.

Companies:  
Sublinear. You  
can't keep them  
alive.

How can we make companies work like cities?

"Passion is inversely proportional to company size" (the smallest companies are the most passionate) -- from an interview by Moira Gunn on the IT Conversations podcast



A watercolor illustration on a light beige background. On the left, a person with red hair wearing a red dress stands next to a taller person with red hair wearing a light blue shirt and blue pants. On the right, another person with red hair wearing a white shirt and blue pants is walking a small brown dog on a leash. The text "10% Fail Every Year" is centered in the upper half of the image.

10%  
Fail  
Every  
Year

- Stanford Entrepreneurial Thought Leader Podcast
- Each entrepreneur gives you the secrets
- They all disagree
- [Ed Catmull, Pixar](#): "Success hides problems"



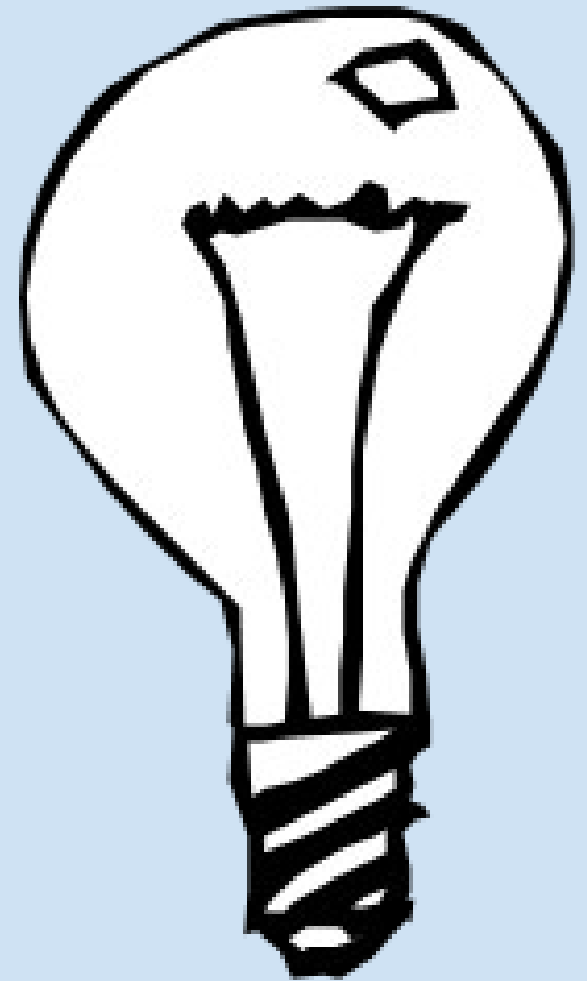
# Failure = Epiphany

*"Ever tried. Ever Failed. No Matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail Better" -- Samuel Beckett*

- We fear failure, but ...
- Most experiments fail
- Freakonomics Podcast on Quitting vs. Sunk Costs
- Seth Godin's "The Dip"
- Most startups must "pivot" (Invest in team, not idea)
- Experiment (cheaply) a lot
- Fail fast (Easy to say, hard to do)

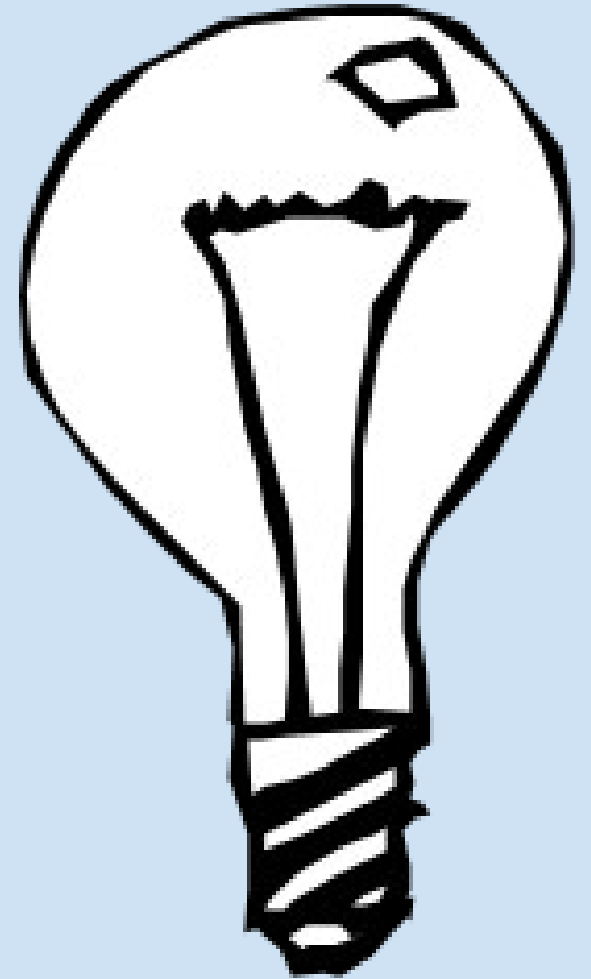


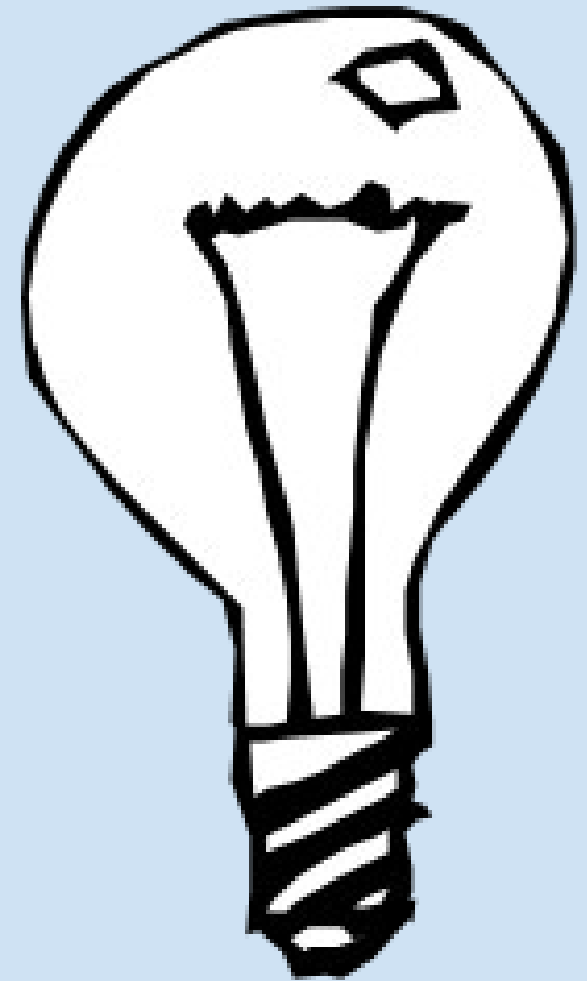
My failure to take business seriously, to understand that every business doesn't have to be awful





I could have been creating  
businesses (with people)

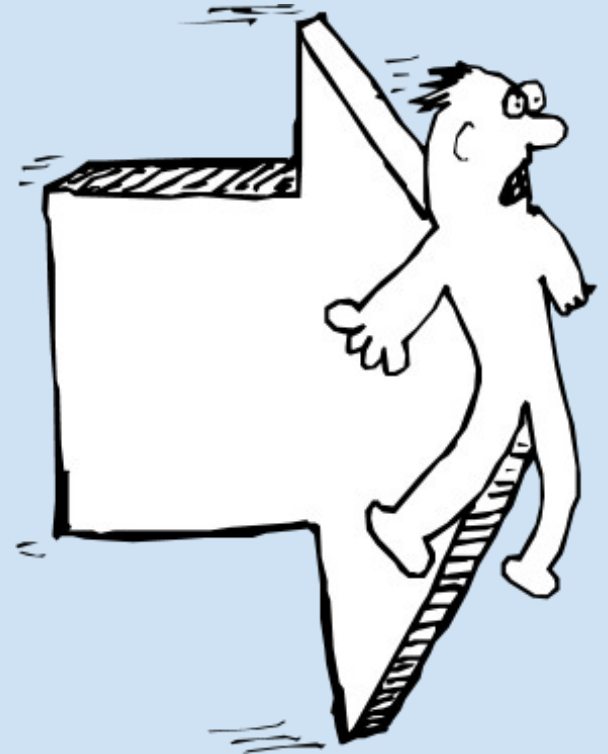




Oh well. Not too late...

# What If

- I could send a booklet back in time to myself when I was realizing I couldn't just keep going to grad school
- It showed how me and friends could start a business using this new organizational structure
- (If I was mature enough to understand it) Life would have been very different
- I don't like the way typical companies work, but I really like working in teams.





In the US, over half  
the people hate  
their jobs

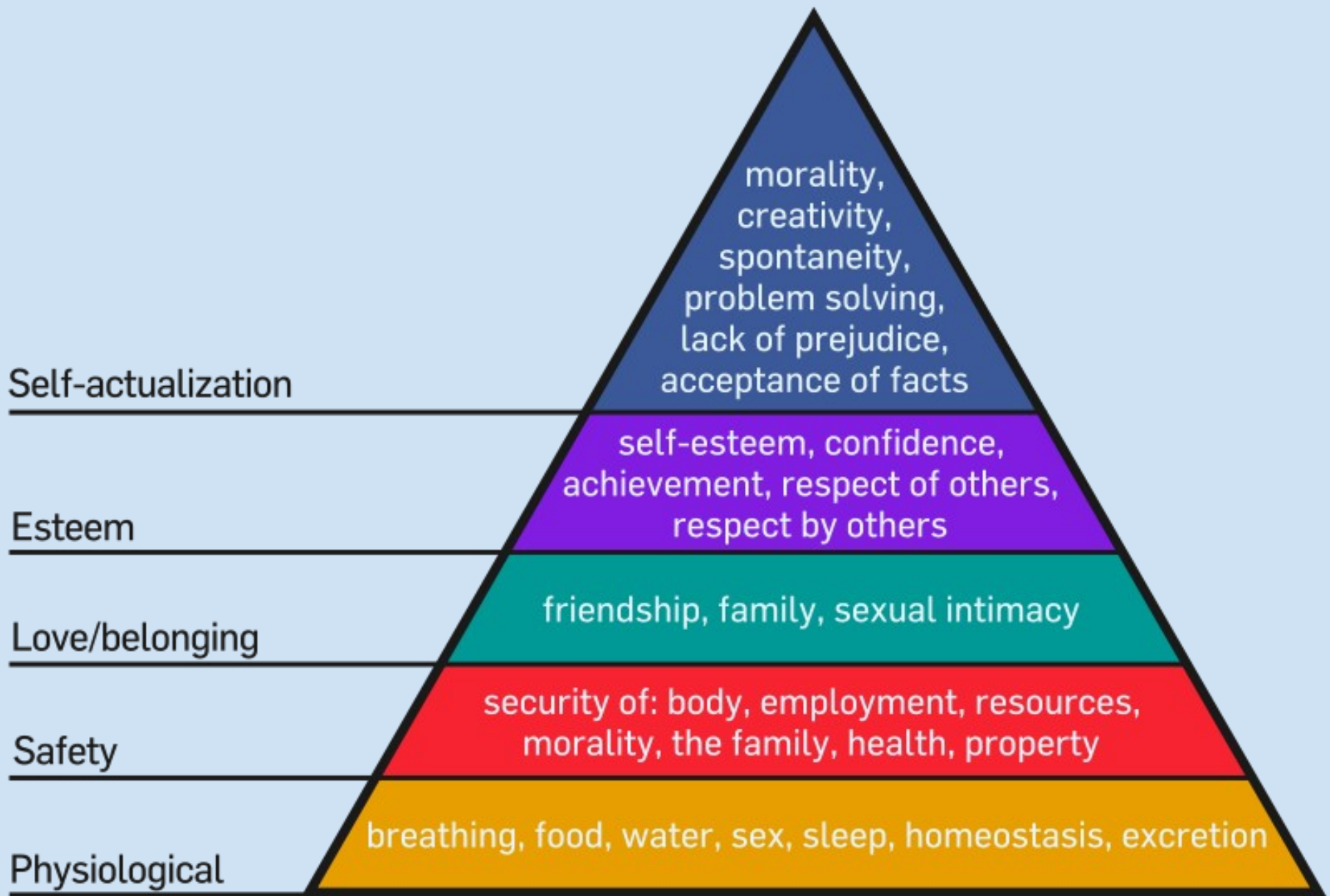
Their  
creativity/productivity  
is lost





# The inciting question

- What if everyone loved what they did?
- Sure, it's impossible. But what if we could do it anyway?
- *Drive* by Dan Pink: This would produce creativity and productivity
- Is it possible to structure a company around creativity and productivity and fun and personal satisfaction?
  - Seems like that company could make a lot of money, too



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Wikipedia)





The Organizational Hierarchy of Needs

# Jonah Lehrer's book *Imagine*

- Inspiration comes when you stop focusing on the problem (Roundup attendee had to promise his manager he wouldn't ski!)
- "Industrial management" only knows how to keep people focusing on the problem
  - Equates time with productivity
  - Can't find new problems or new solutions
  - Thus, industrial management stifles innovation
- Industrial companies can only optimize what they're already doing
- They buy other companies to try to buy innovation (but the innovators leave)
- Companies managed industrially are thus structurally unable to innovate, thus doomed in the new innovation world



# New Organization Manifesto

- To Be The Place You Want to Work
- Self-reliance / Personal responsibility
- Autonomy - Mastery - Purpose *(from Drive)*
- Our task: To Experiment
- Experiments must be: Fast - Survivable - Meaningful
- Objective for new people: 50% failure rate.  
More experienced people should develop *higher* failure rates.
- ROWE: Results-Only Work Environment
- As transparent as possible

# A Company is Made of Teams

Team formation/maintenance must support:

- Everyone is different
- Not everyone fits on the team
- No one but the team knows who fits on the team
- Do experiments instead of giving tests
- Un-fit must be self-correcting, ASAP

What is boundary/relationship between "team" and "company?"



# We Only Hire the Best People

- How? What's everyone else doing? How do you know *they* aren't getting all the best people?
- Interviews are very bad indicators of suitability. We can't think of anything else so we keep doing interviews.
- "Best" *who pass through your sieve*
- You don't know who is simply unattracted to your company
- You don't know your hidden cultural filters
- You don't know who is actually out there but never shows up
  - The underground network doesn't tell you why they aren't interested in you
  - (Customers don't tell you why they go away. They just go away)
- Result: Self-delusion as to what "best" means

# A Company *is* its Culture

It happens anyway when you don't make the choices.

Core company structure must invest the culture in new people.

*True* culture flows from the ground up, and trains new people to adapt, rather than being subject to change from new people.

It isn't culture if it depends on who happens to be running things at the moment.



# The Obstacle: Power

- Every problem seems to come from the power hierarchy (Example: communication)
- It's hard to tell people who want power to give it up ([Snakes in Suits](#))
- Do I need to start a company to demonstrate a better way?



# The Unknown Structure

- This requires a super-open mind. We tend to quickly "know" why something won't work
- Fortunately I've had some experiences which have helped crack open my mind ... a little.
  - Various workshops
  - Cohousing
  - World Travel
  - Burning man
  - Open Spaces conferences







We're Special. We'll be Different.

- Insanity: Do the same thing, expect different results
- "People are our most valuable asset" (until they're not)
- "We have a shallow hierarchy"
  - It's easy to add more layers
- "We'll only grow" (no plan for retreat)



Unless you have mechanisms that protect your values, those values will get compromised. Just like every other company who claimed to hold those values, with no way to preserve them. (Enron's mission statement)



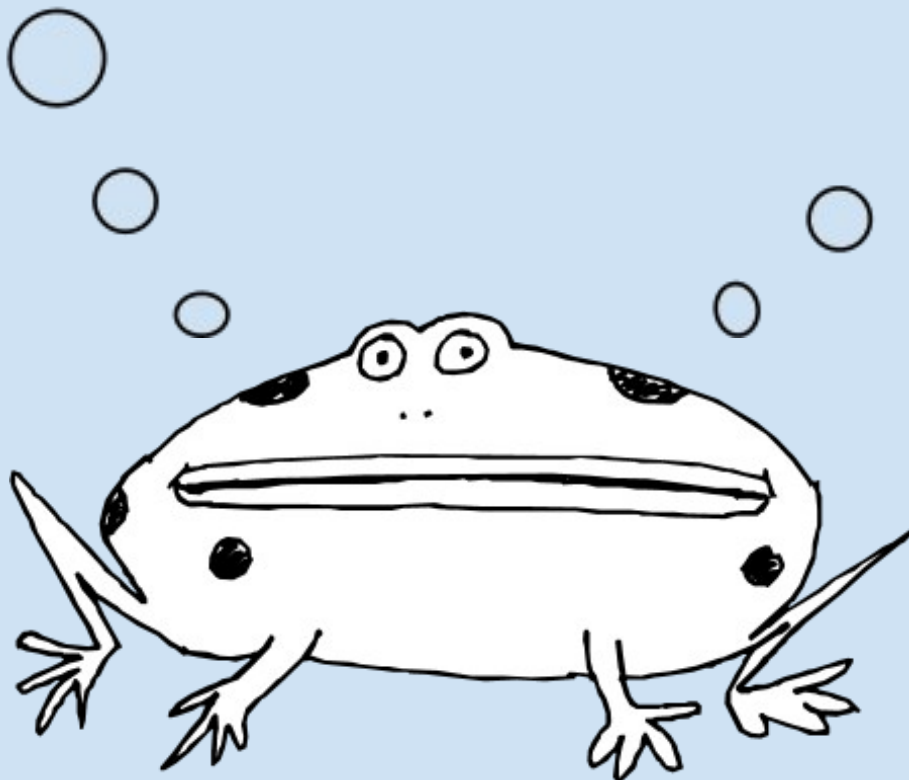
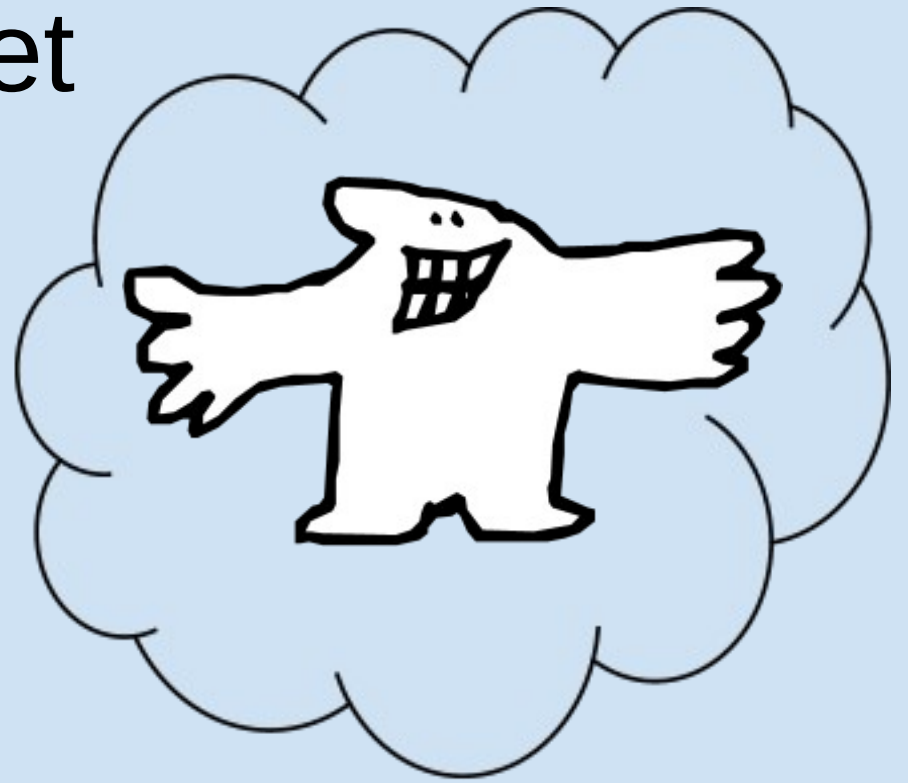


# Cultural Maintenance Must Come From *Everybody*

- The MBAs *know* that, given the opportunity, everyone will take as much as they can from the company ... because that's what *they're* doing (e.g. CEO pay).
- If people genuinely care about the company, they will guard, protect and promote the culture.



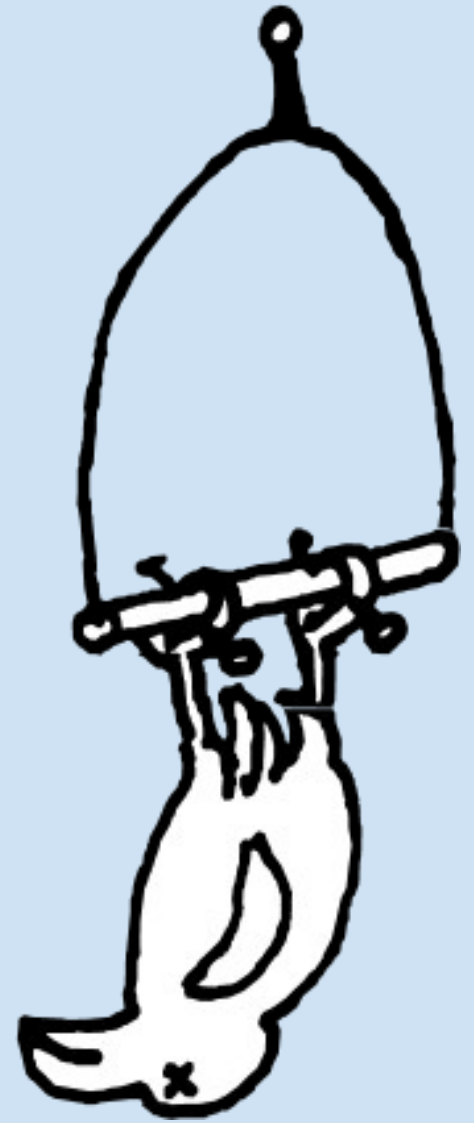
You Only Get  
One Wish





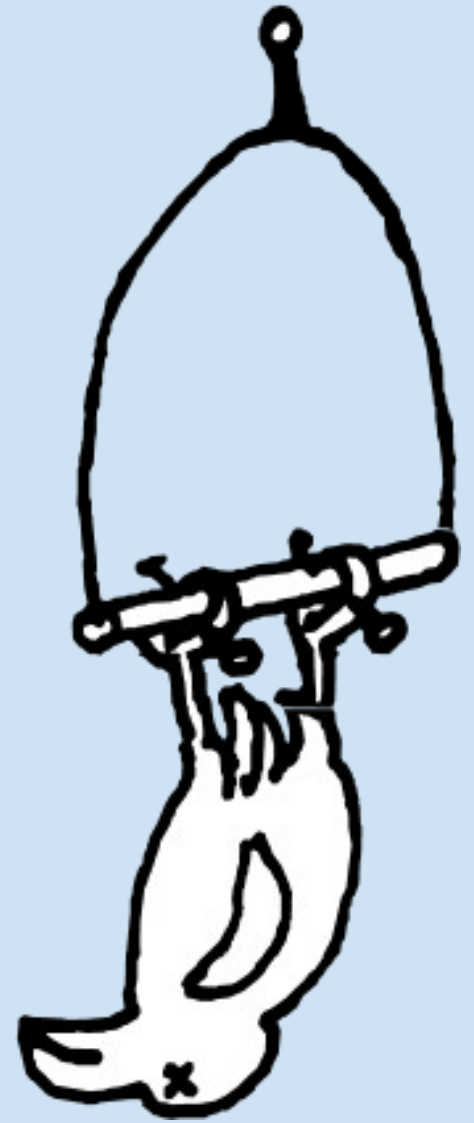
# Canaries

- Can you bring your dog to work?
- Do people want to work on the codebase?
- Is the company "growing up" by taking away free sodas?
- Products or beans: Who's running things?
- What critical question decides whether the company hires you?
- Is the company's core "business" or "product" or even "experience"?
- Are you afraid?
- Daily two-hour remote status meetings
- Senior management doesn't understand the products



# Canaries

- Forced grading on a curve
- Management by numbers
- You are your manager's only report
- Deepening hierarchy
- Planned Overtime
- High Employee Turnover
- People you think are smart start leaving
- Posterior-guarding behavior
- No one takes any risks





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**Questions?**

