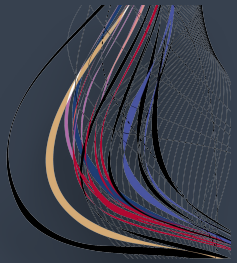


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November 5, 2025



DevLin2025

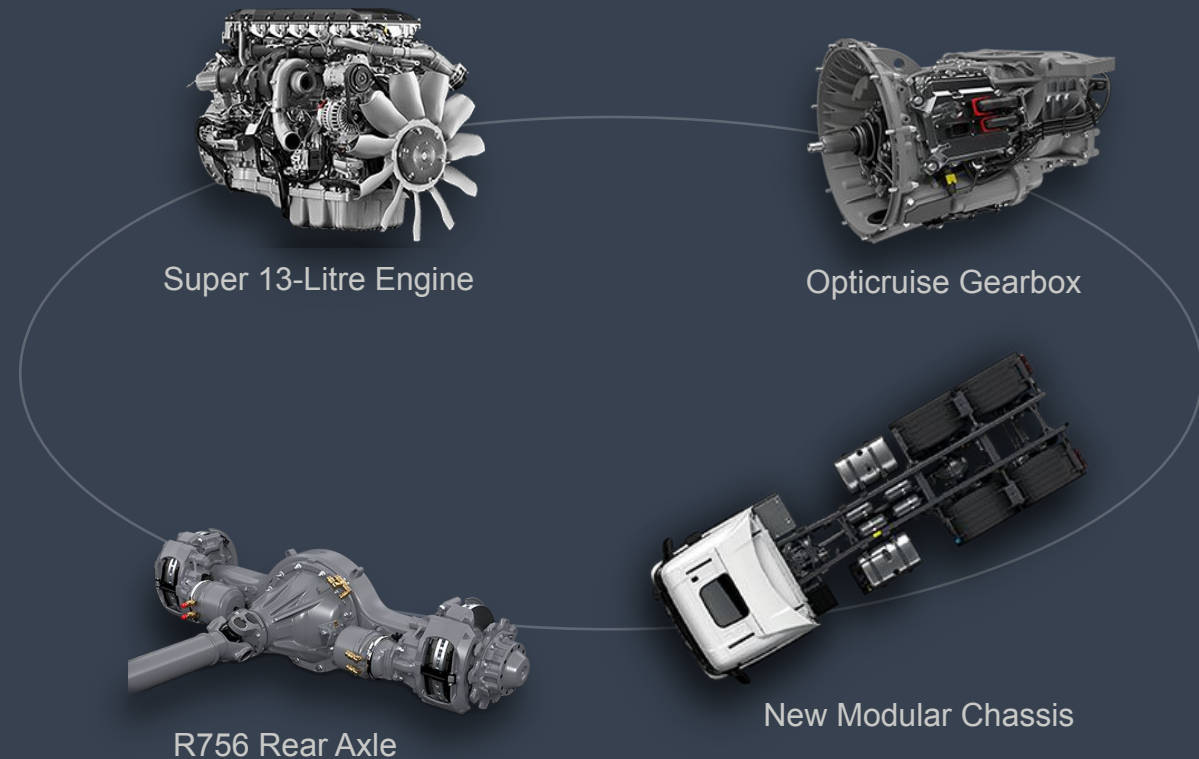


GUIDING STAR OKRs

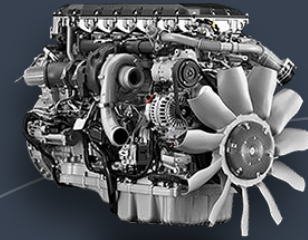
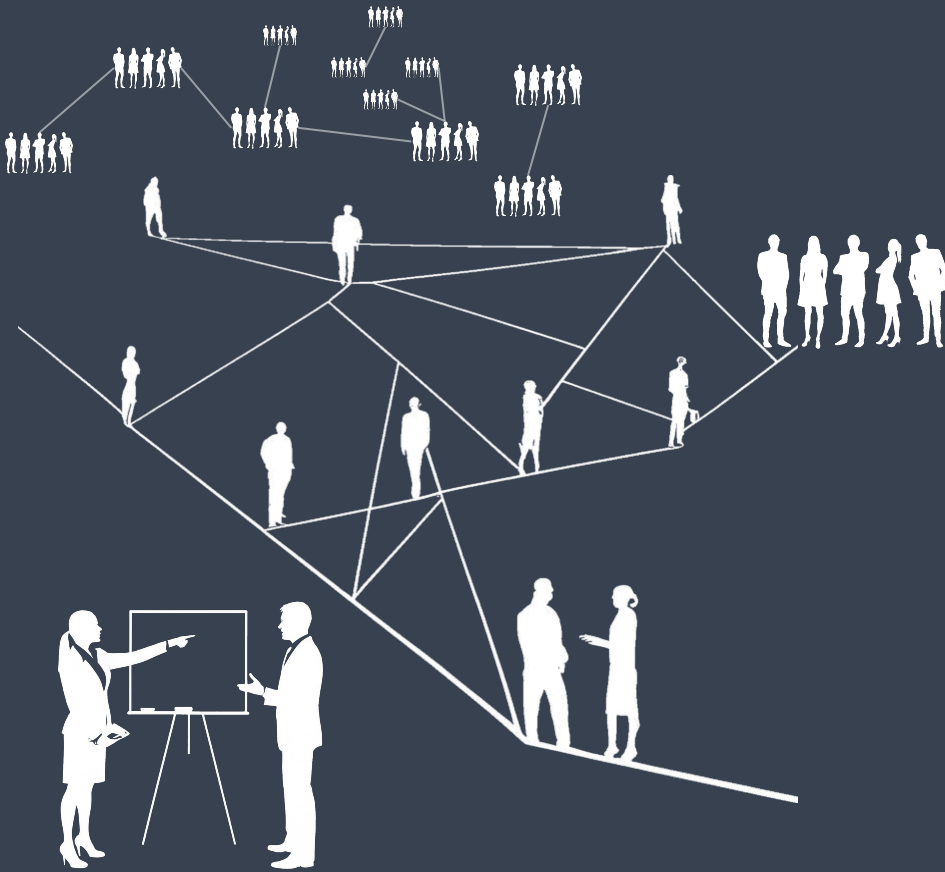
Scania Super Powertrain: Components & Whole

Performance defined by Intelligent Whole

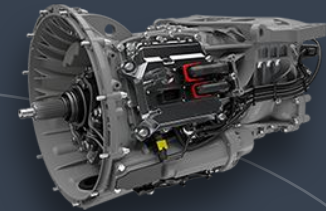
- Best-in-class components not enough
- Without integration: friction and wasted potential



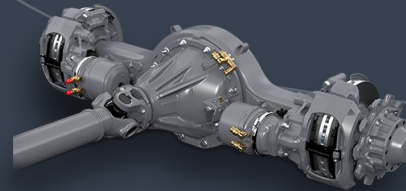
Behind Scania Super Powertrain there are 1000s of humans



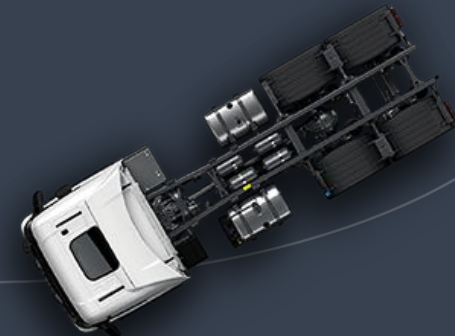
Super 13-Litre Engine



Opticruise Gearbox



R756 Rear Axle



New Modular Chassis

Every single successful company runs on OKRs or some other kind of structured, goal-driven framework. It's just standard operating procedure now.

And almost nobody gets any real, tangible value out of that work.



Problem 1: Strategic Drift

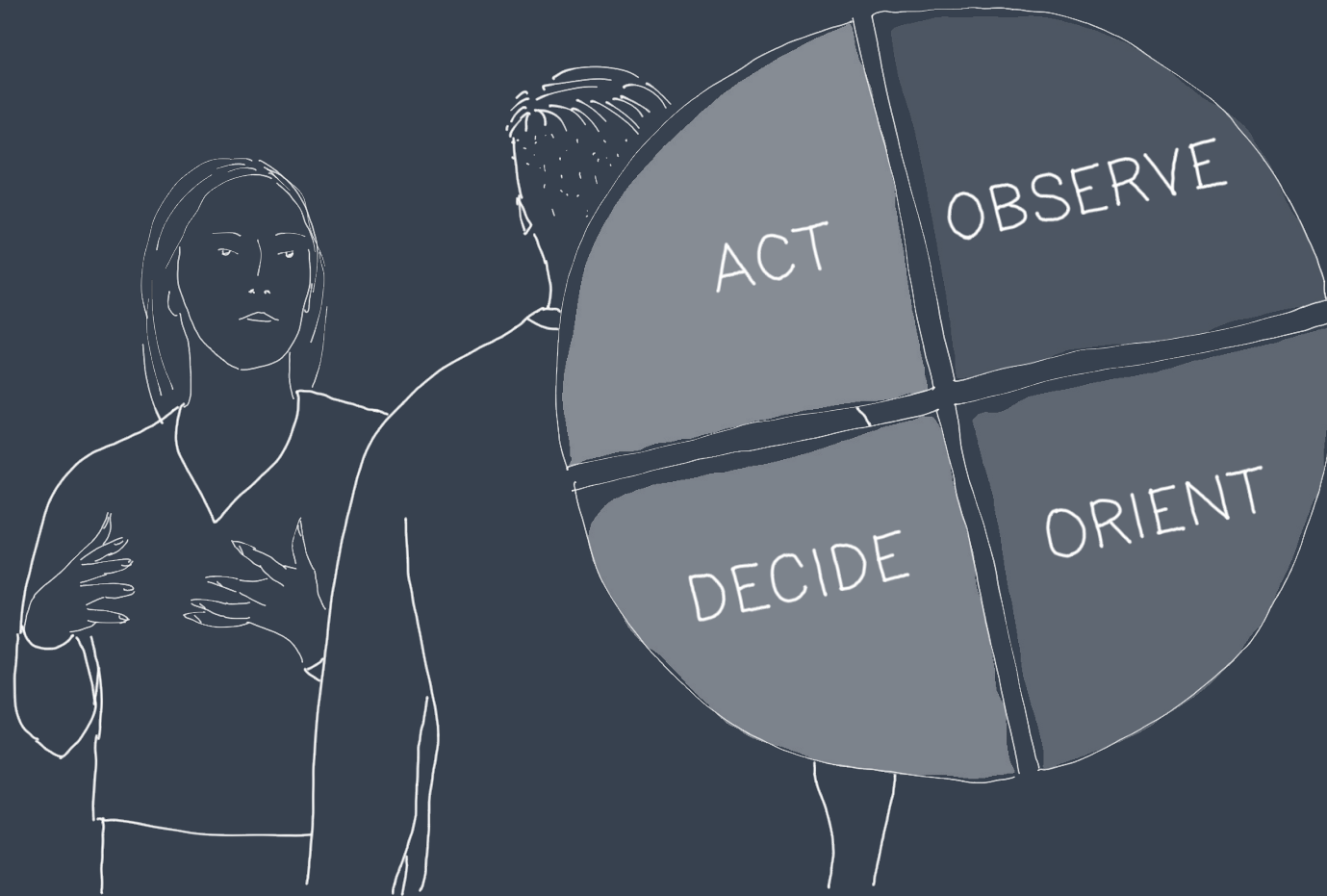


In the day-to-day rush, urgent matters constantly overshadow truly important strategic initiatives.

Problem 2: Silo Mentality



Problem 3: Unresponsiveness



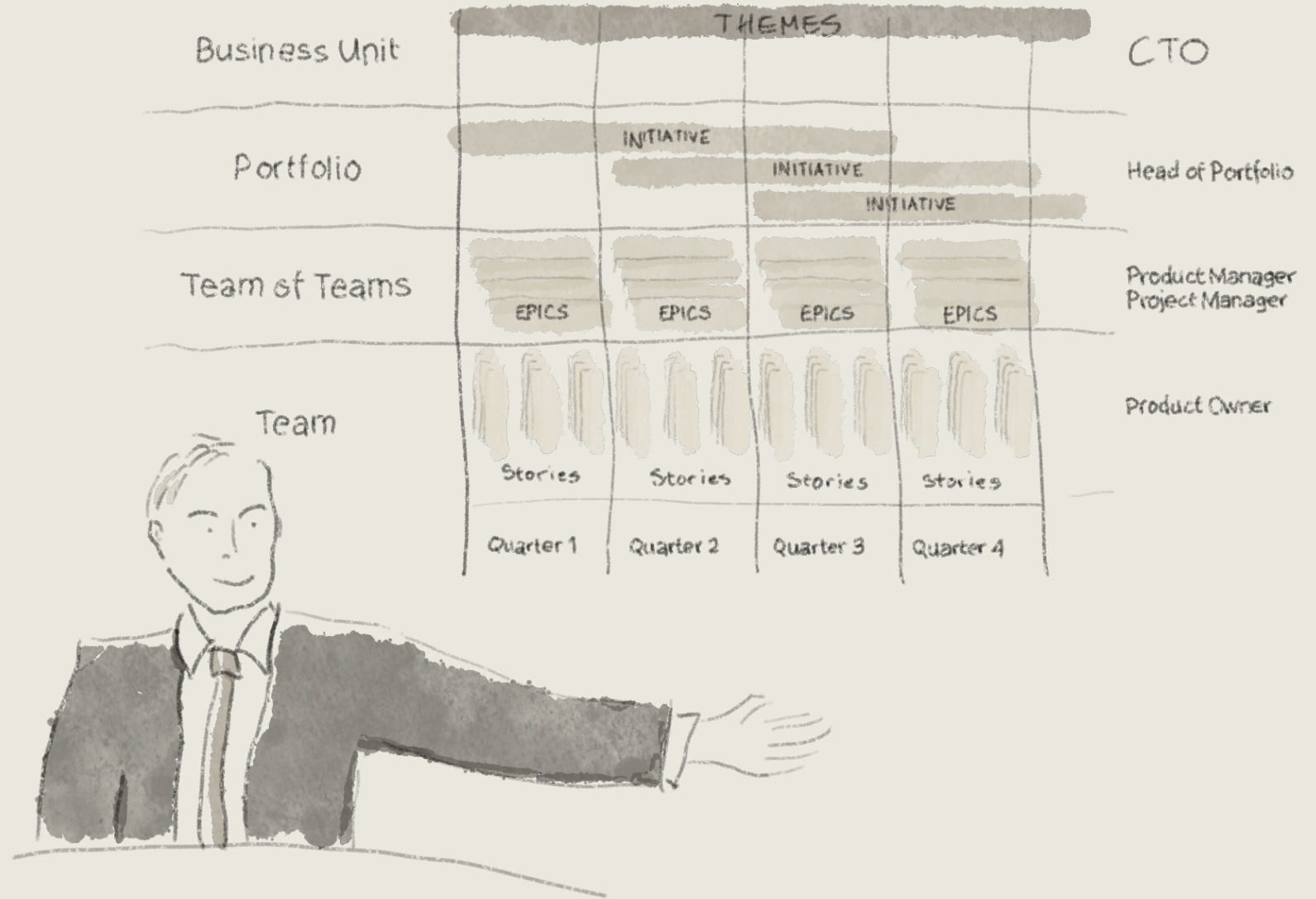
The executive meeting

This time, there was something expectant in George's eyes. It was as if he was about to unveil his plans for a major transformation, and he was curious about the team's feedback.



CTO shares his proposal

The process is based on agile methodology, but it's been scaled up to create a feature factory. This means that all of our work will be broken down into four levels: themes, initiatives, features, and stories.



Head of PMO shares his concerns

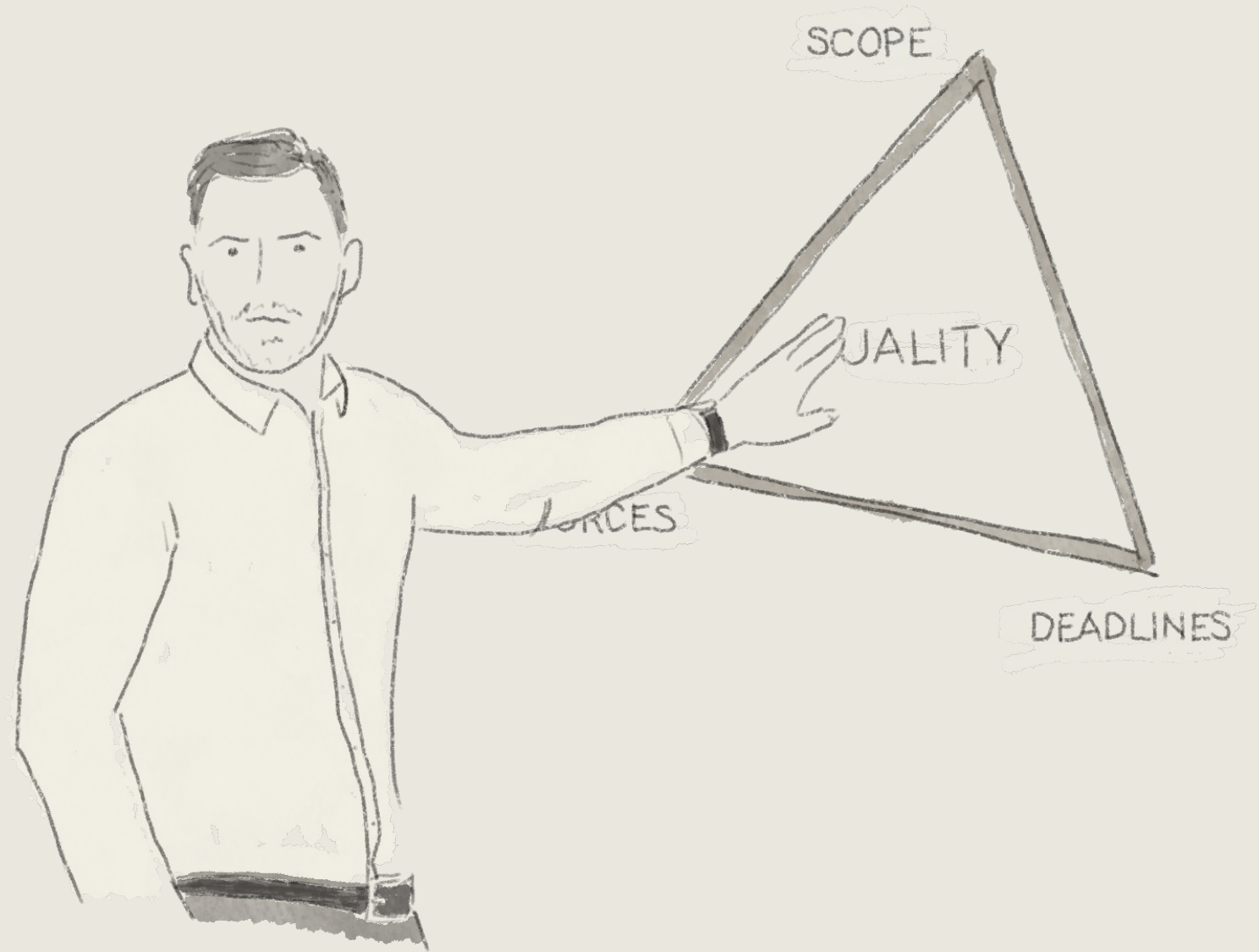
Progress monitoring is aggravated by fragmented and distributed work breakdowns.

Misunderstandings and conflicts follow from a decrease in overall transparency.

Project precision matters.

Meeting regulatory requirements ensures avoidance of fines and bans.

The company's reputation is at stake when tier-one delivery is late.



Agile coach shares his concerns

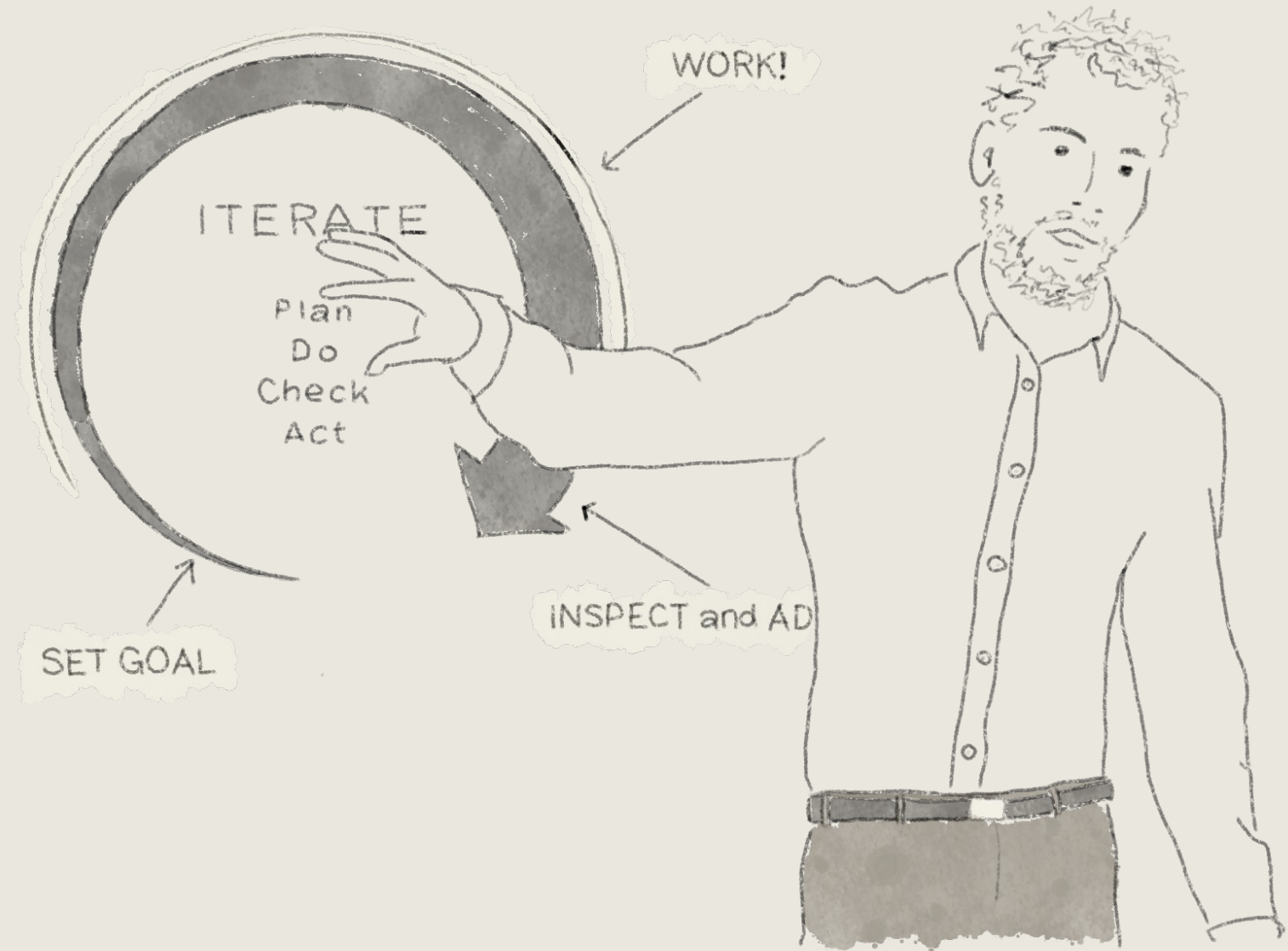
Agile teams are key to success.

Autonomy, mastery, purpose, growth, and social interaction drive teams' intrinsic motivation.

Teams should own their processes to improve continuously.

Technical solutions may emerge through experimentation.

Teams are experts in estimating their work effort and technical solutions.



Head of product shares her concerns

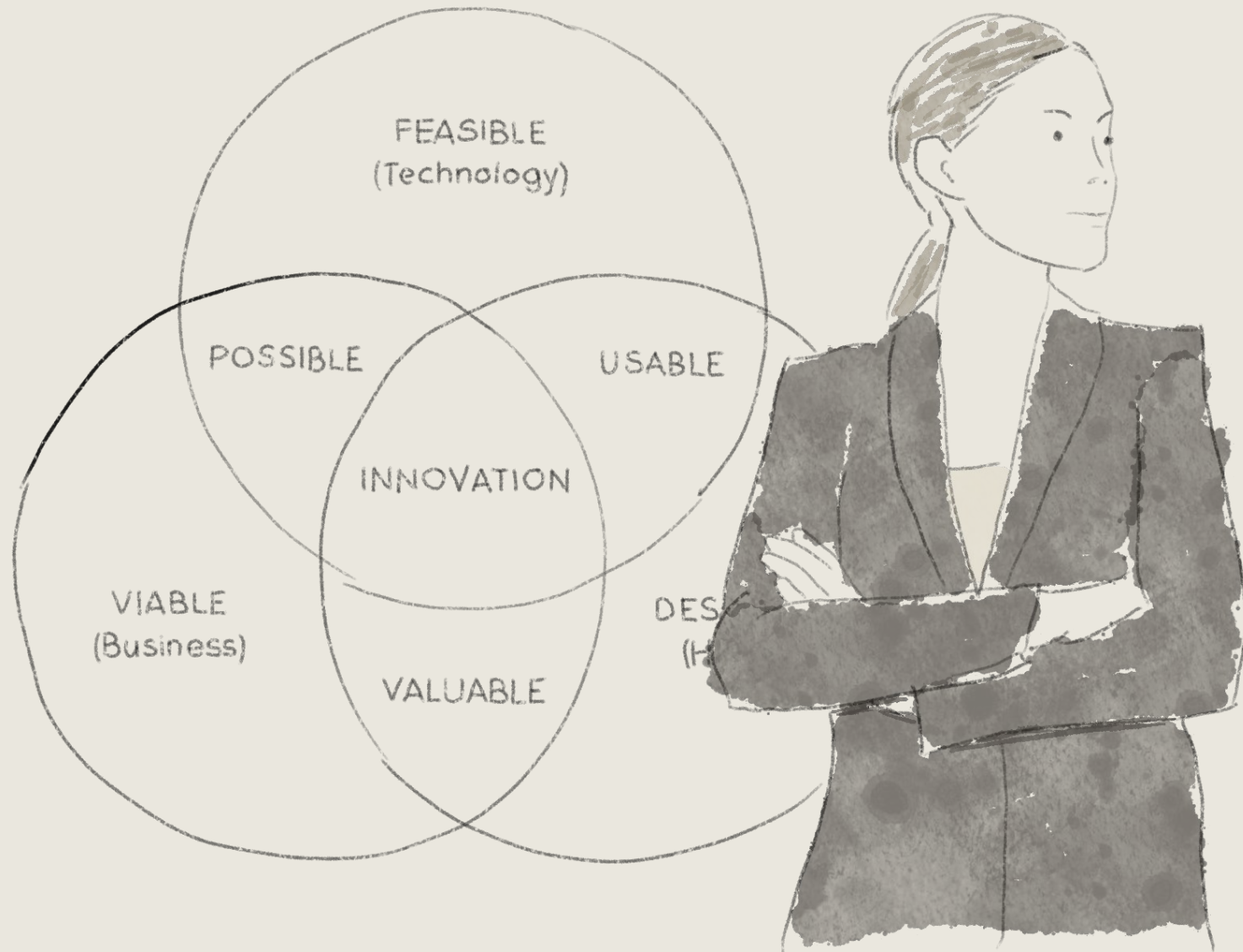
Products should be easy to use and solve customer problems.

Teams should be sliced by customer or product type.

Feature factories focus on specs and forget about the big picture.

Shift from tech-focused proof-of-concept to proof-of-value.

Market research and fast experimentation feedback are needed.



Head of strategy shares her concerns

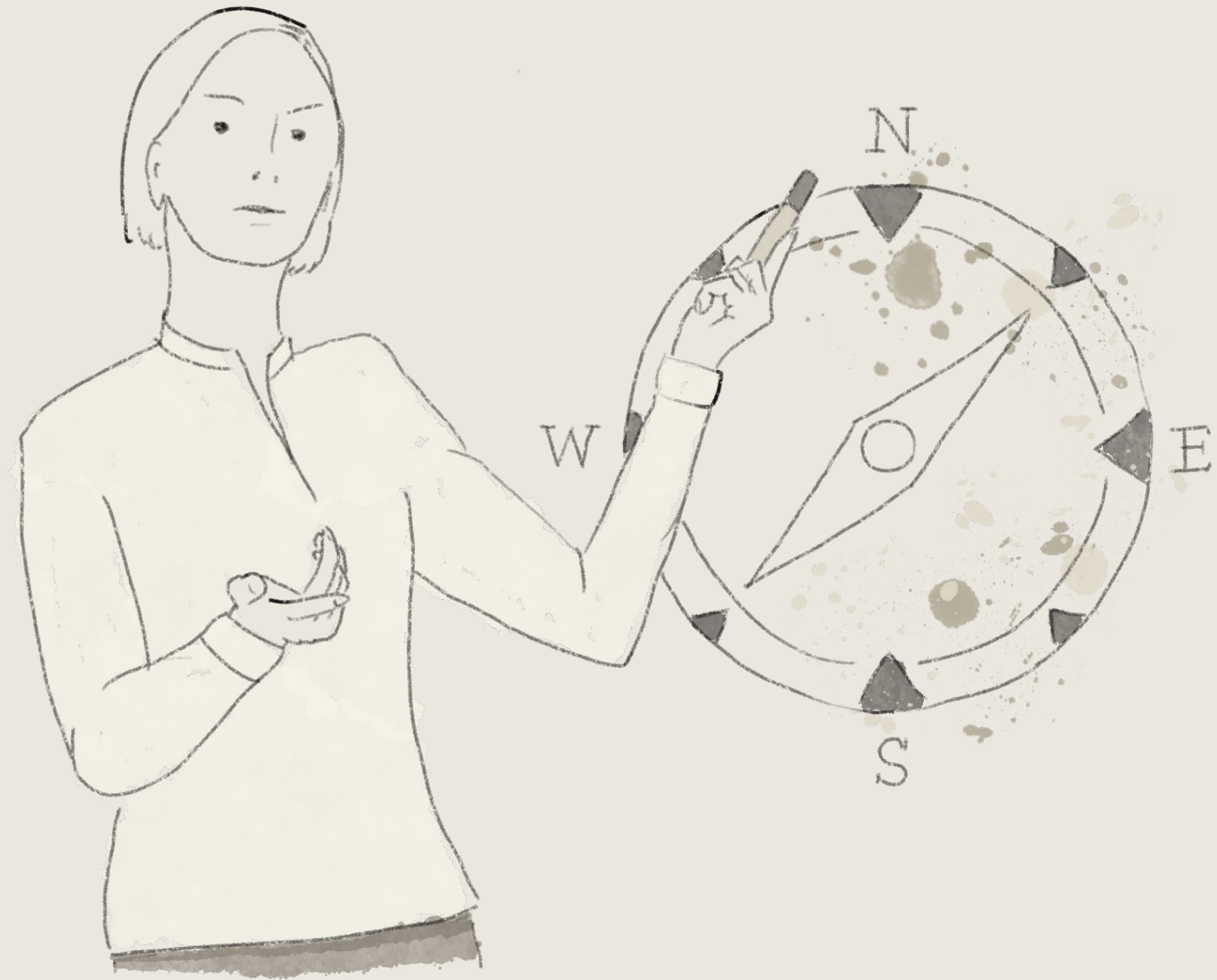
The company needs a long-term and coherent strategy.

Everyone should know the strategy, and it should impact the work.

The feature factory may result in a lack of risk analysis.

The company should be a learning organization.

Employees are asking for broader competence development.



CTO is disappointed

I was hoping for more passion, more willingness to change, and more of a winning instinct. While I can understand some of your concerns, I find it hard to accept the one-sided whining. We are a team working for each other towards a fantastic goal, aren't we?

With the attitude you're showing today, I might as well ask Stella for feedback.



Stella tells about the duck and the ants

Digesting Duck had centralized control and fake sophisticated capabilities.

An ant colony is a decentralized system that creates complex outcomes.

Each ant operates based on a simple set of rules.

Dual nature: A 500-person company may resemble BOTH the duck and the ants.

Dual nature emerges from the laws of complexity science.



Stella defines the company as a complex system

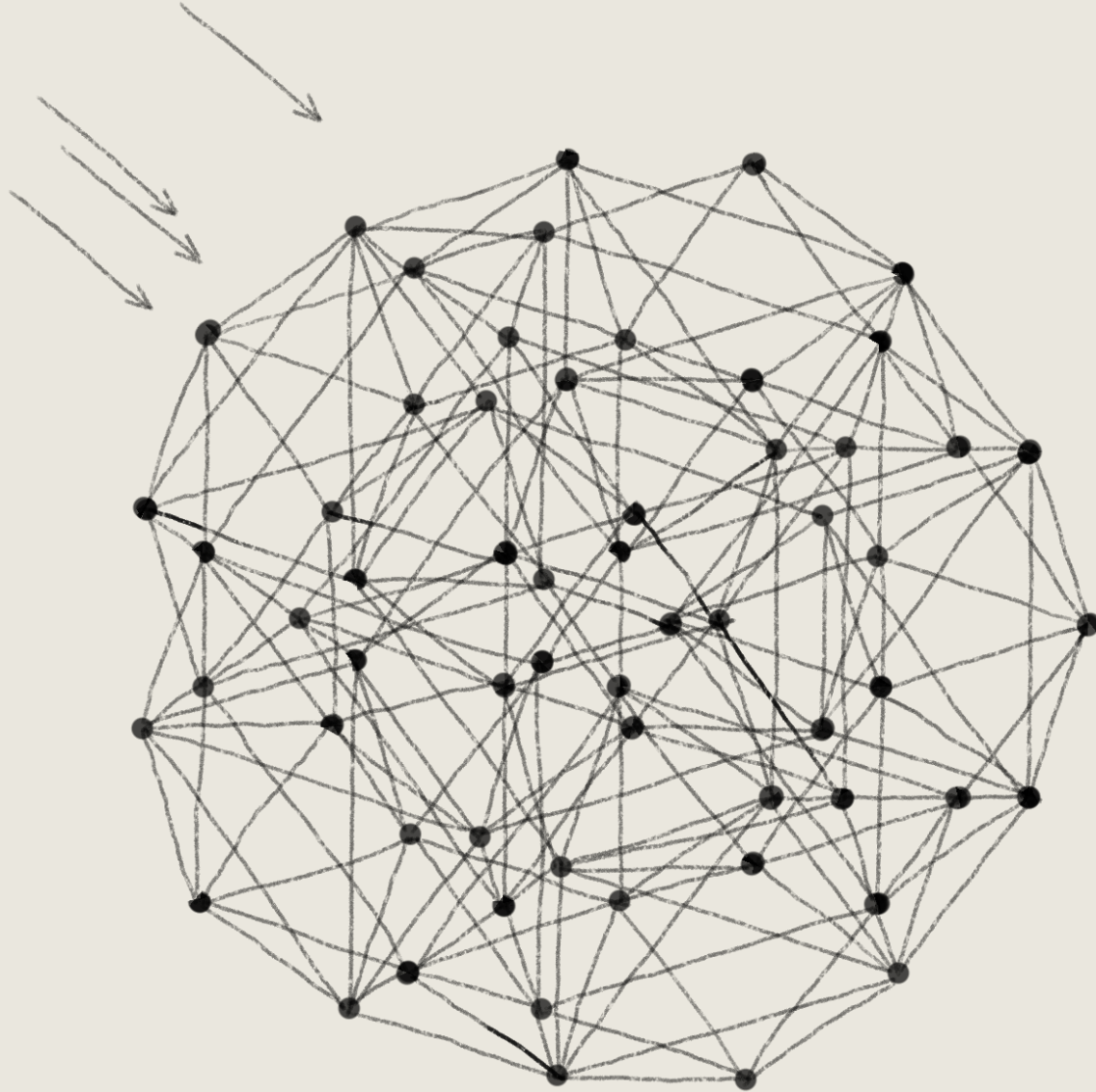
Numerosity . Many people interact many times in many different ways.

Diversity . Many meetings, decisions, and analyses are not centrally controlled.

Feedback . Employees will never stop adapting to new conditions.

Non-equilibrium . Our company is constantly influenced by external factors.

Self-organization . We are partly self-organized, and we should leverage that.



Stella supports both CTO and team's feedback – Whining is opportunities

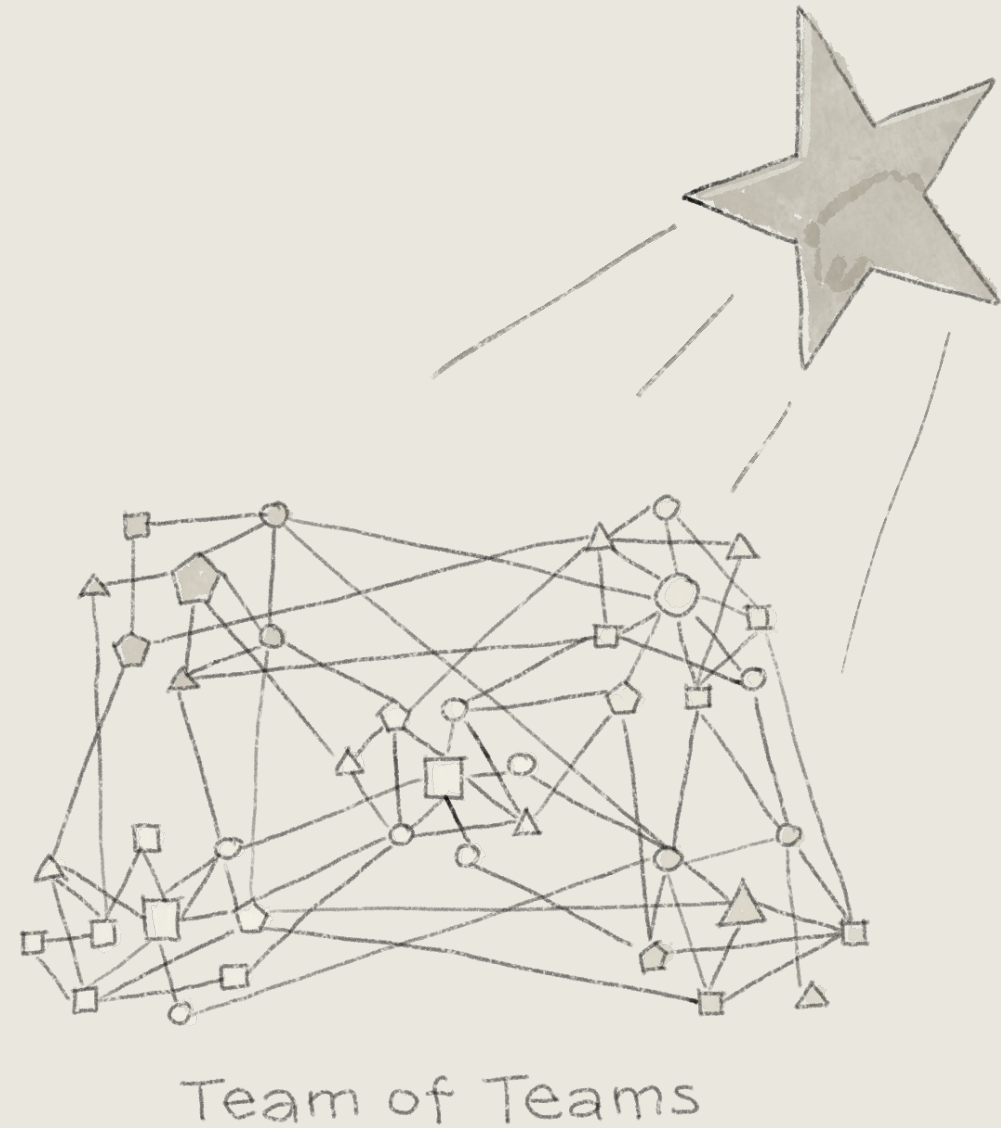
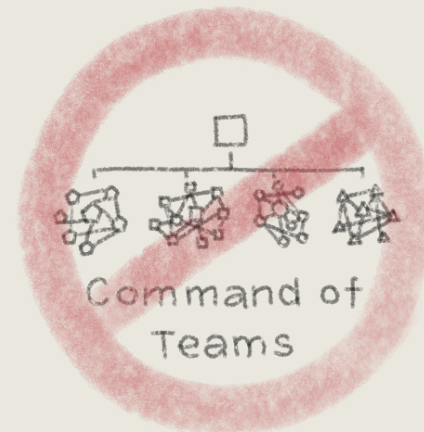
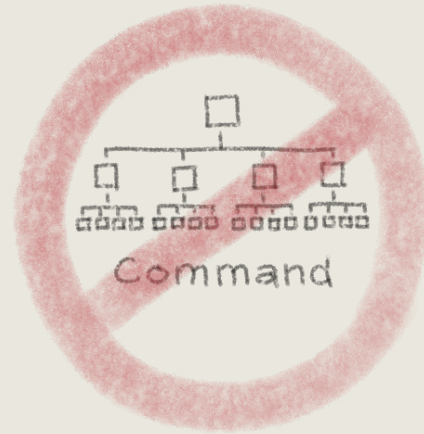
She supports both feature factory and team feedback.

However, the word "factory" leads astray. We are not machine-like.

A feature factory focuses on execution, however...

...the feature factory does not address the most important long-term goals.

The proposal must be complemented by a flexible, sensing, and uniting strategy process.



Stella talks about guiding stars and traffic lights

Ants naturally cooperate based on shared goals for survival.

Shared goals are strategic—they begin with end in mind.

Guiding stars are goals that help us prioritize operative work.

Guiding stars are not for tracking performance.

Guiding stars give purpose and direction while allowing for flexibility and self-organization.



V.S.



Stella dives into the importance of hierarchy

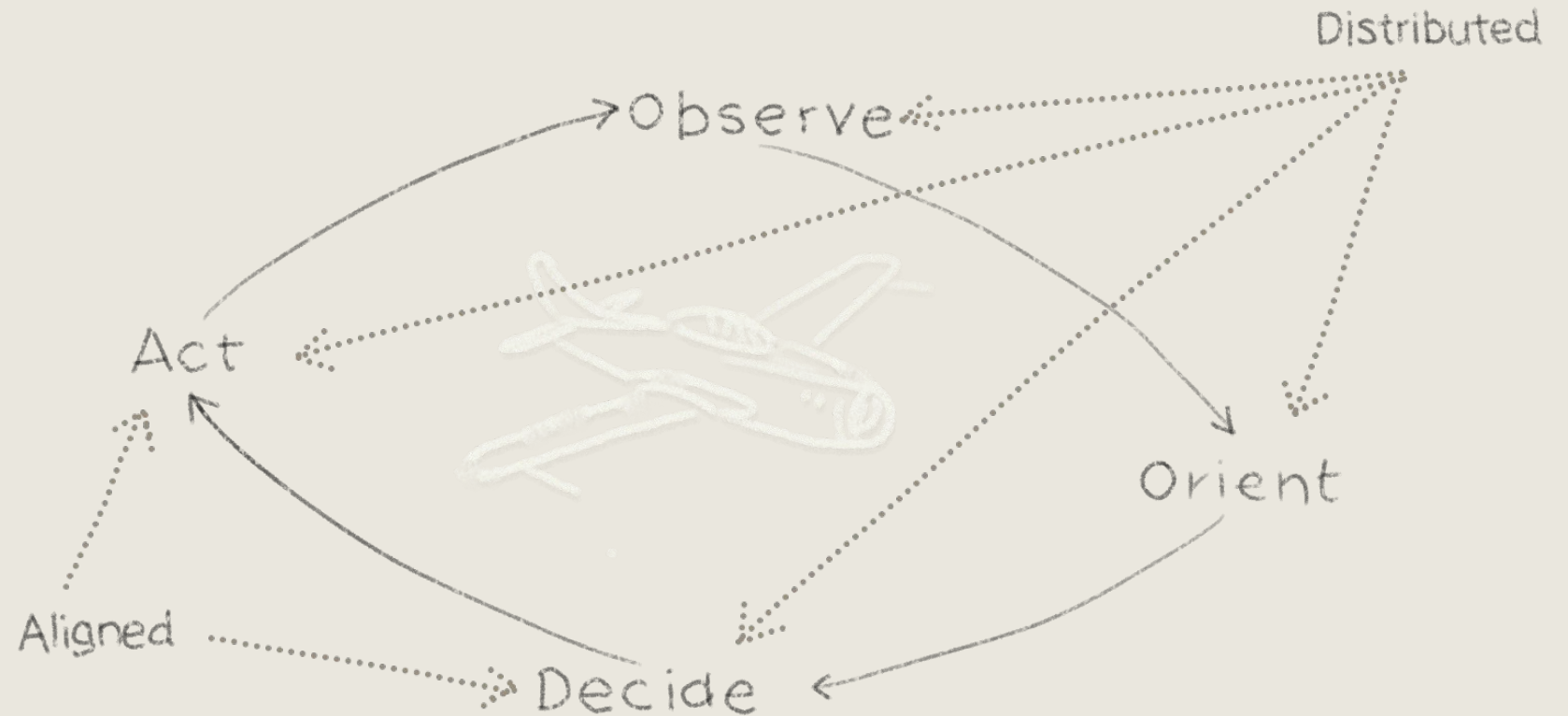
Top-down goal setting doesn't work in complex systems.

Hierarchy still matters, since joint outcomes matter.

Faster OODA than competitors' is like getting two moves in chess for their one.

Everyone should contribute to the OODA loop for speed and accuracy.

Shared goals align decisions and actions across the company.



Stella explains how insights may flow up and down, across the organization

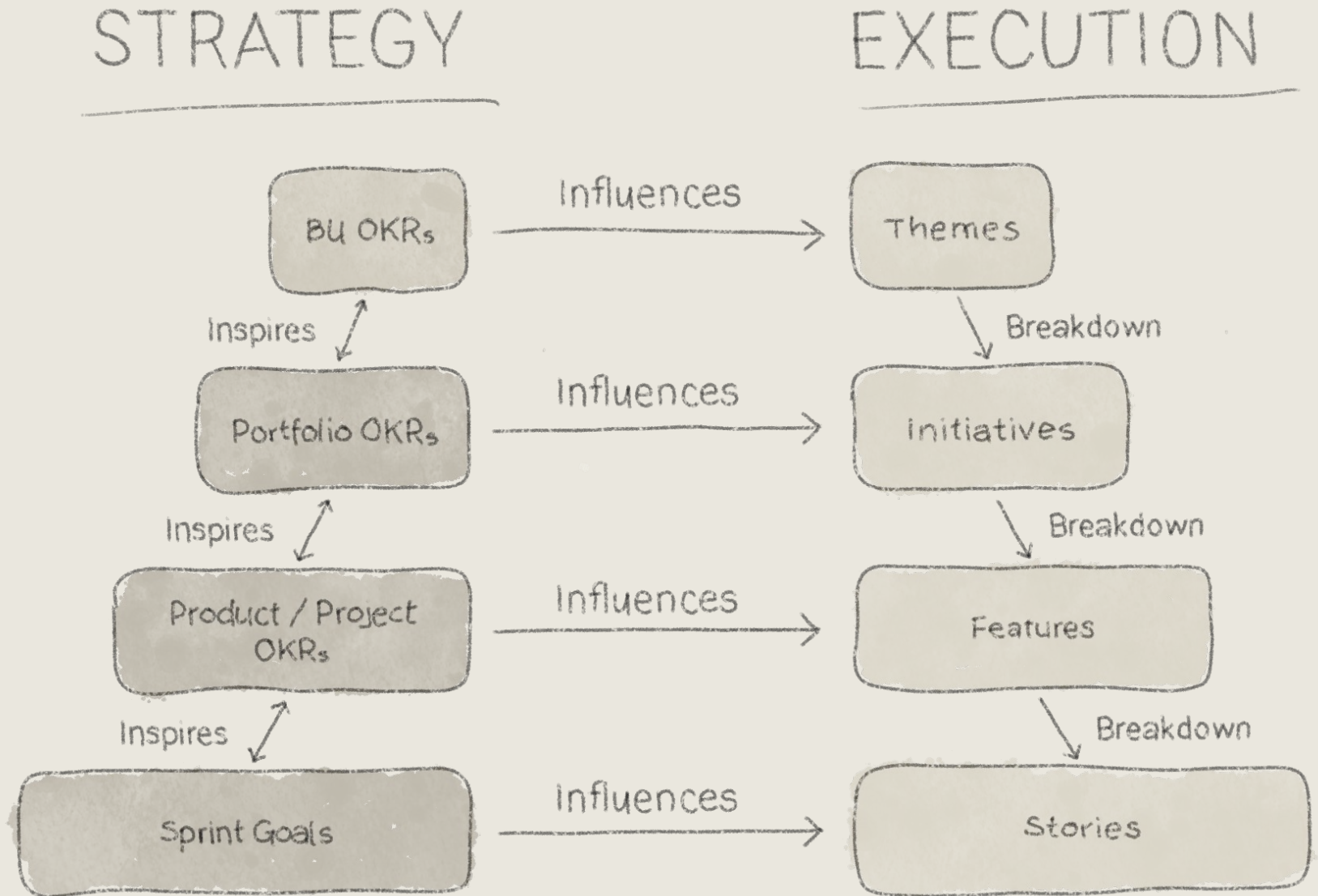
Insights should flow up, down, and across the organization for better decision-making.

Using a modified version of OKRs and Hoshin Kanri for goal-setting.

Inspired, local, shared, owned-OKRs have a mix of these properties.

Goals are set through discussions at all levels, including feedback going upwards.

Hierarchy can coexist with agility when managers own goals and share accountability.



Stella introduces a new kind of OKR: Guiding Star OKRs

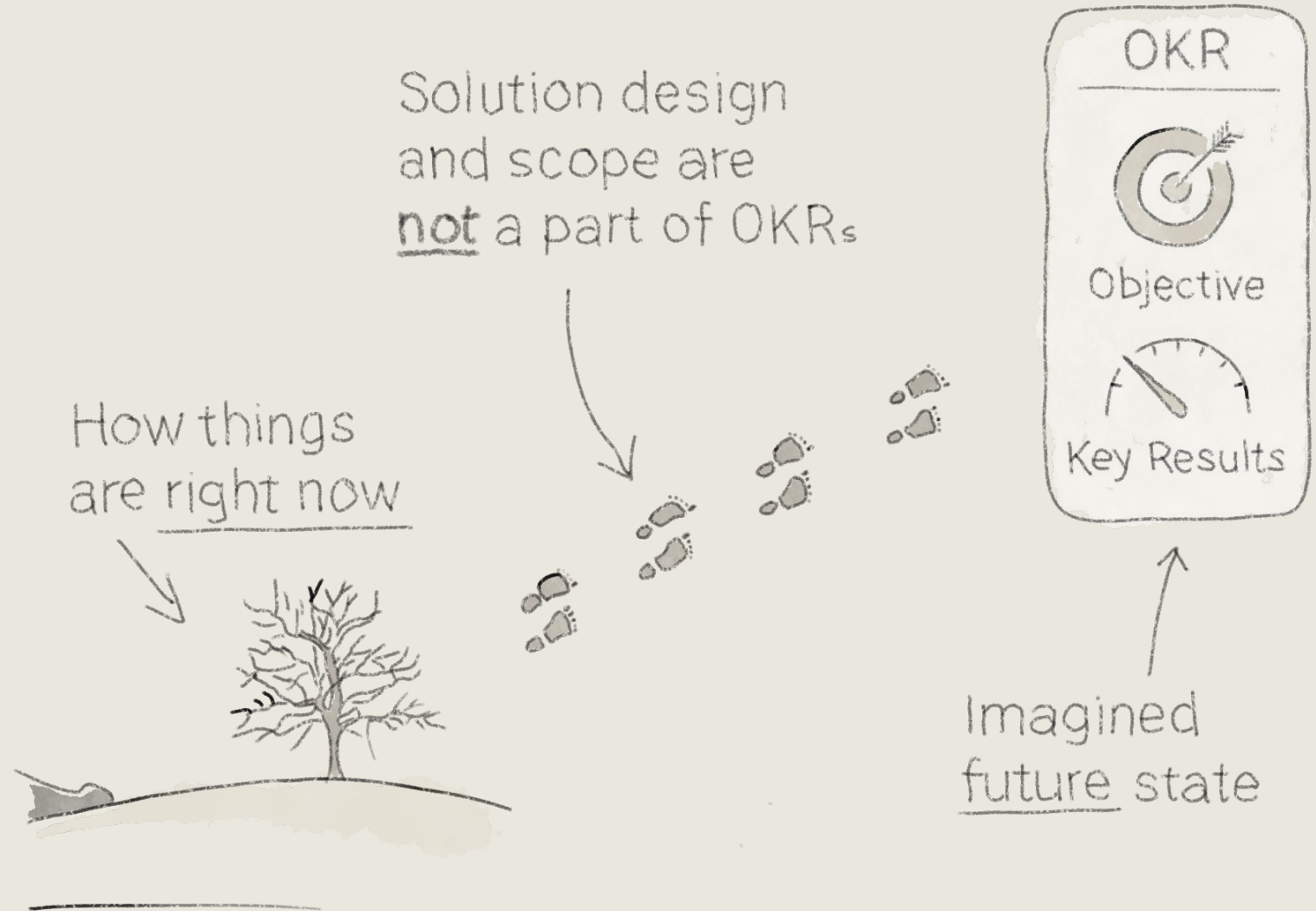
Guiding Stars are used for shared vision not measurement.

Guiding Stars describe the current and the desired future state.

Guiding Stars are not system solutions, activities, or features.

Guiding Stars makes strategy precede execution.

Guiding Stars should be limited to avoid prioritization conflicts.



Stella dissects the objectives of Guiding Star OKRs

OKRs illuminate important but not yet urgent tasks that focus on new capabilities.

Objectives are short campfire stories focused on customer-valued outcomes.

Objectives focus on outcomes that we can influence, not just on financial or market goals.

Objectives show a clear difference between the current and desired future states.

Objectives help guide choices by aligning decisions with the guiding star.



Stella dissects key results of Guiding Star OKRs

Key results illustrate the objective, but achieving them doesn't guarantee success.

Key results focus on the measurable state of the objective, not the effort invested.

Key results lack verbs like "launch"—they aren't about tasks.

Key results use numbers to define the current and target state—not just true/false).

Key results should be trackable continuously to provide proactive information.



Stella shows how Guiding Star OKRs are customer-centric

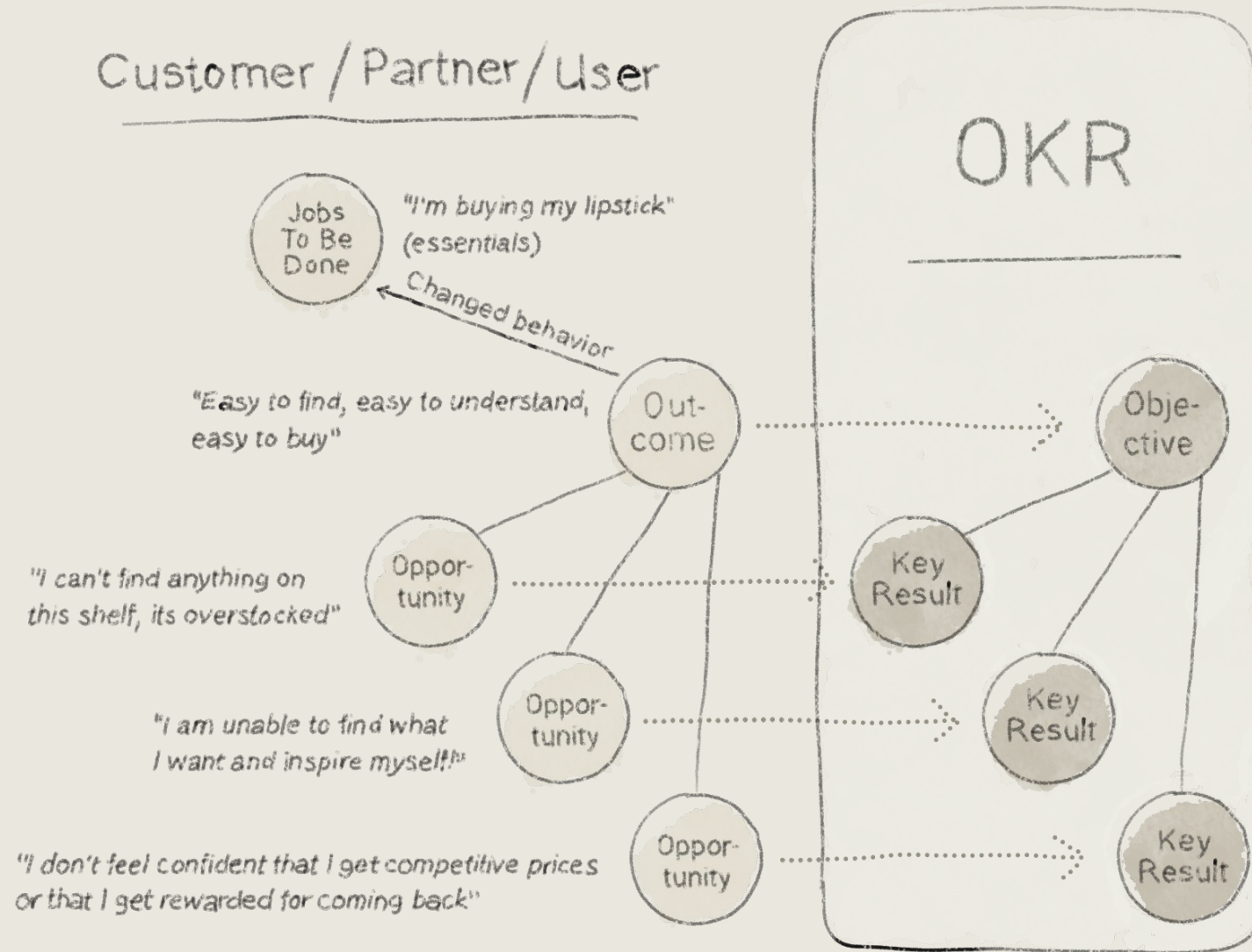
Entirely new customer needs, not incremental improvements to existing products.

Our customers' customers don't care about our features. They want their job-to-be-done to be achieved.

Strategy comes first-guiding stars set direction, not solutions.

Key results are derived from our customers' customer pain points.

By making things easy for our customers' customers, we drive new behavior and create value.



Stella explains a process for Guiding Star OKRs

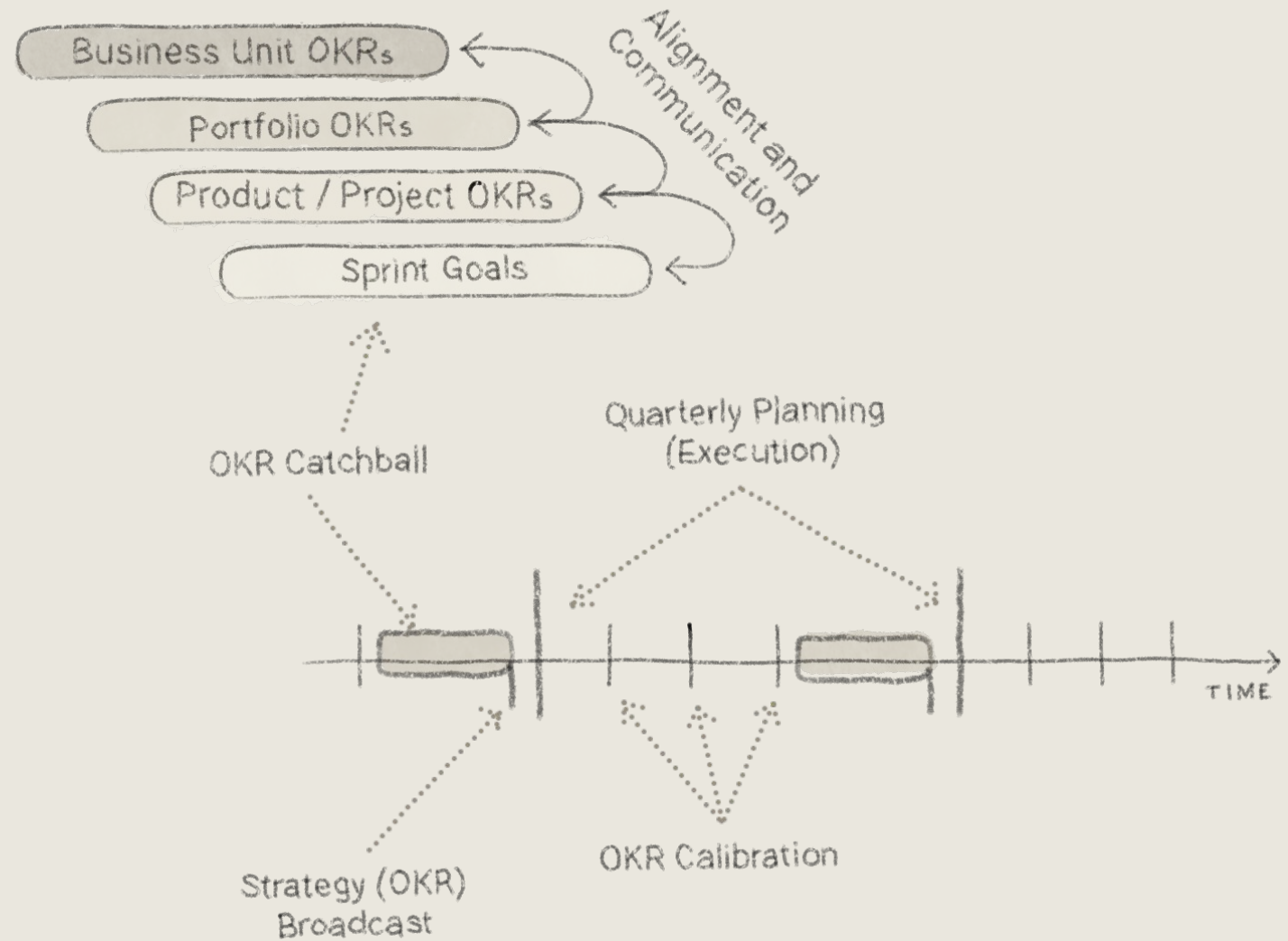
The Guiding Star process is inspired by Hoshin Kanri to address key strategic obstacles.

Guiding Stars are defined collaboratively through the "Catchball" process for insights across the organization.

Guiding Stars are transparently communicated through Strategy Broadcast and Lean Coffee sessions.

Strategy influences quarterly planning sessions.

Guiding Stars drive decision-making during the execution phase, with regular check-ins and Open Space sessions.



Stella rushes off

"This is amazing!"
George exclaimed with
a broad smile. "Where
did you learn all this?"
"I visit companies.
Talk to people. Read
books," Stella answered.
"That kind of stuff."



The Strategy Trifecta

1. Strategic Drift → Persistence

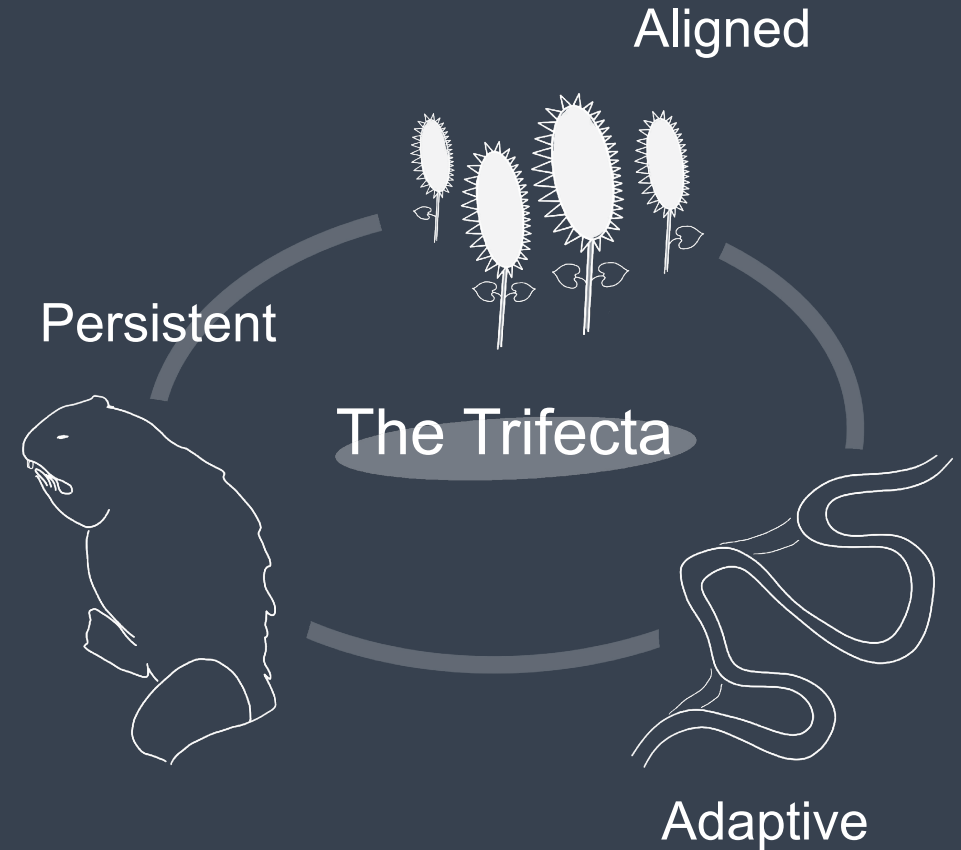
This is about maintaining focus on our long-term, transformative goals and preventing the organization from becoming distracted by short-term initiatives or "firefighting". This provides a steady "guiding star" that anchors the organization's efforts over time and counteracts strategic drift.

2. Silo Mentality → Alignment

This is about ensuring that everyone is moving in the same general direction. This is achieved not through rigid, hierarchical commands, but through a shared understanding of the strategic landscape and our customers' needs. It directly counteracts a silo mentality by creating a common purpose that transcends departmental boundaries.

3. Unresponsiveness → Adaptability

This is about building in the capacity to learn and adjust our course as new information becomes available. This ensures our strategy remains relevant and directly counteracts the adaptability deficit.





Integrating Strategy into Daily Work

Front-Load Strategy in PI Planning

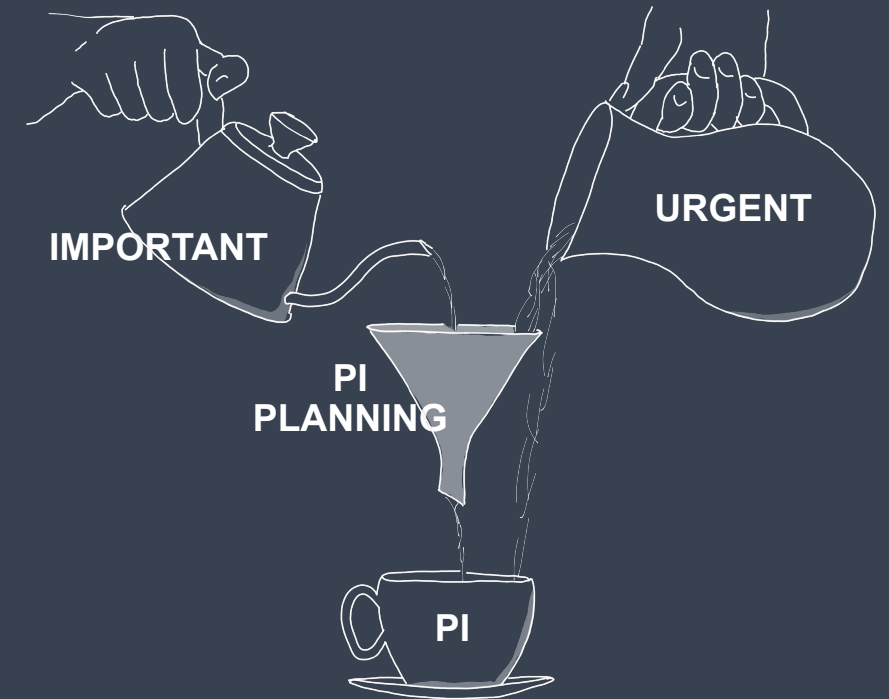
Dedicate capacity for strategic work before the planning cycle begins. This ensures that progress on the strategic direction is a core part of the plan, not just an afterthought crowded out by urgent deadlines and routine tasks.

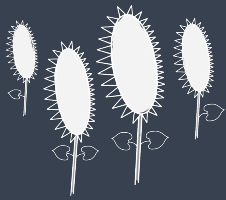
Reinforce Strategy Continuously

Use regular "cross-pollination" sessions where employees share and create insights related to the strategy. This keeps the overall strategic direction top of mind for everyone and fosters alignment across the organization.

Prioritize Finishing to Maintain Momentum

Adopt a "stop starting, start finishing" mindset. Ensure that key strategic initiatives persist across multiple planning periods to build momentum, rather than being abandoned for new ideas each quarter.





Direction, not position

Recognize "Puzzle" Problems

Some problems are well-structured, like a puzzle with a known final picture. For these, you can define a precise endpoint (a "position") and follow clear steps to solve them.

Navigate Complexity with Direction

Most significant business challenges are ill-structured—the solution is unknown and the rules can change, like debugging random software crashes. For these problems, defining a fixed endpoint is impossible; instead, you need a clear direction of improvement.

Choose "Towards" Over "There"

The crucial shift is from defining a static destination ("there") to committing to a dynamic path ("towards"). This allows you to make immediate progress based on a strong hypothesis, such as "improving overall stability," even when the final destination isn't fully visible.





Calibrate the Future, Don't Grade the Past



TRADITIONAL:

"Did we hit our target?"



PAST



GUIDING STAR:

"Where are we heading?"



FUTURE

Avoid Set-and-Forget Behavior

The traditional method often creates goals that are disconnected from daily work. They are set at the beginning of a quarter and only checked at the end, turning them into a simple pass/fail grade on past performance.

Strategy Comes Before Planning

Instead of selecting a goal during planning, set a clear, strategic direction beforehand. This "Guiding Star" serves as a proactive compass that influences all subsequent planning decisions and steers daily work.

Focus on Learning and Adapting

The shift is from a punitive, backward-looking review to a forward-looking process. This empowers teams to continuously learn, adapt, and calibrate their course toward achieving more meaningful results.

SUMMARY: Strategy is not Project

The Strategy Trifecta

Persistence, Alignment, and Adaptability.

Integrating Strategy into Daily Work

Front-Load Strategy in PI Planning. Reinforce Strategy Continuously. Prioritize Finishing to Maintain Momentum.

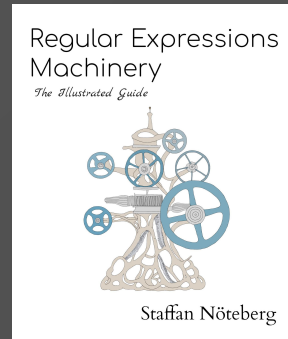
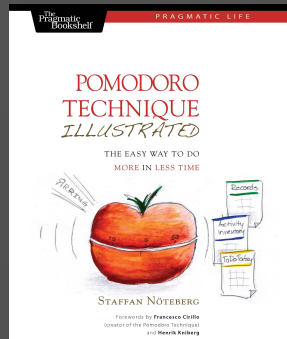
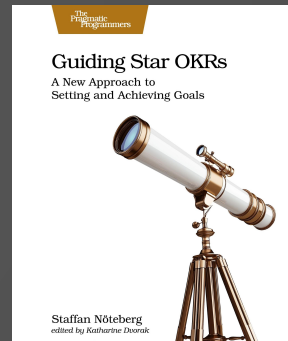
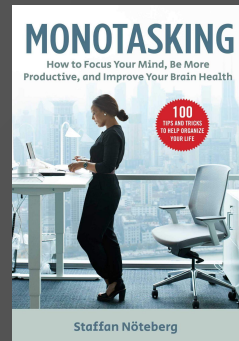
Direction, not position

Recognize "Puzzle" Problems. Navigate Complexity with Direction. Choose "Towards" Over "There."

Calibrate the Future, Don't Grade the Past

Avoid Set-and-Forget Goals. Strategy Comes Before Planning. Focus on Learning and Adapting.





Staffan Nöteberg



Komplexitetspodden