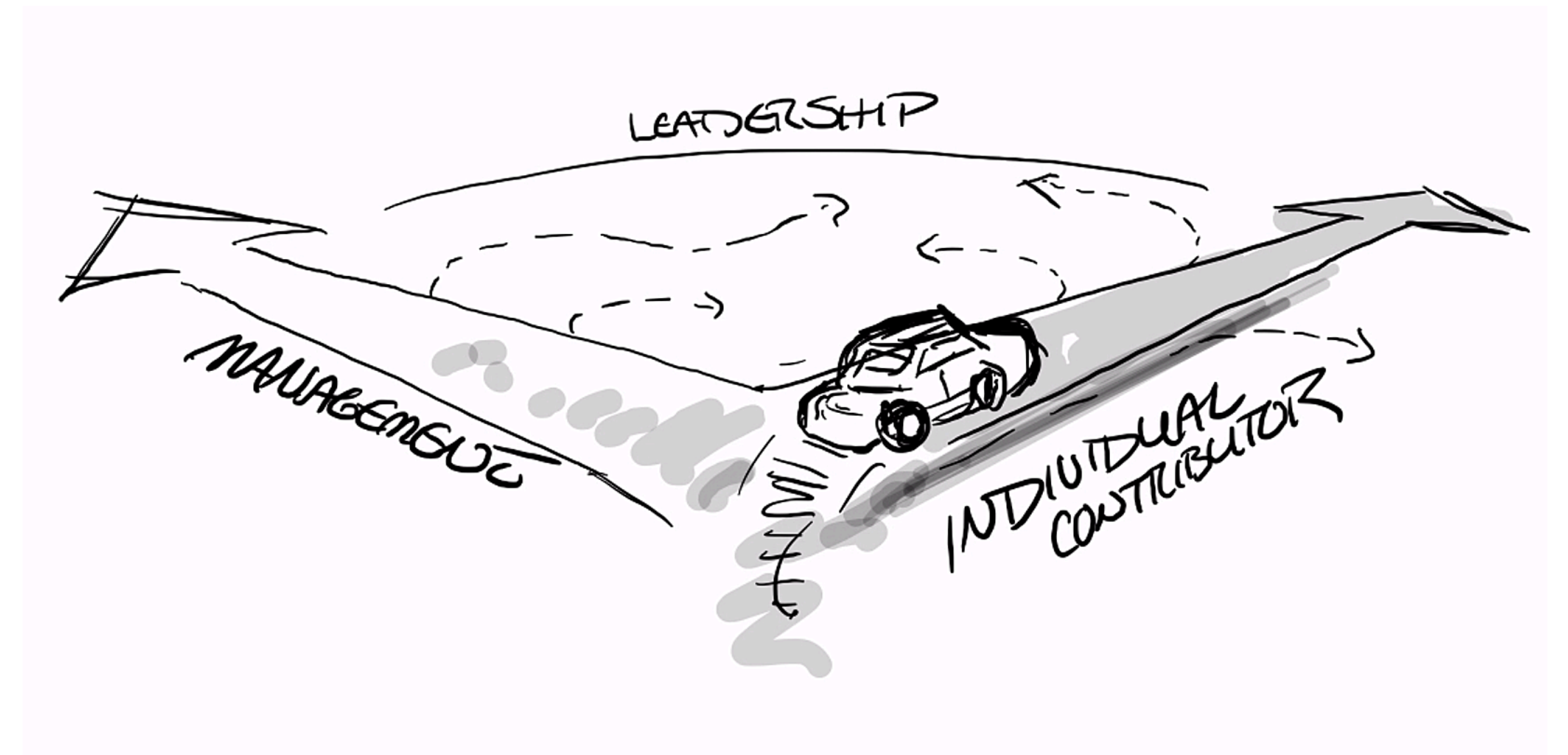


The Principal Path

JOURNEYING FROM MANAGEMENT
TO INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
IN A SCALING UX TEAM



Who is this talk for?

“When people are in their element, they connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose, and well-being...”

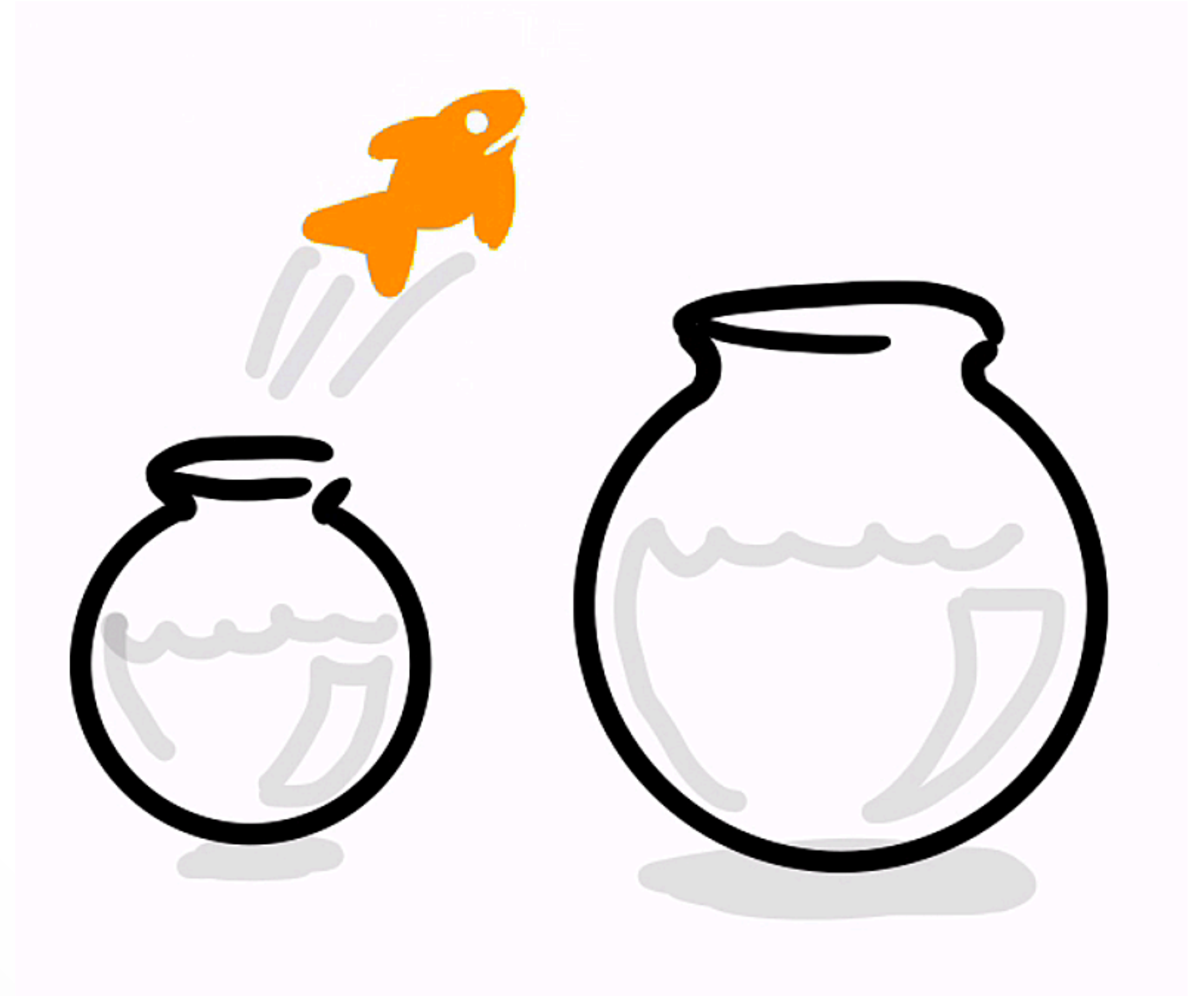
- Sir Ken Robinson

I joined Workiva
nearly nine years ago.

2012



Went from a creative director of a small agency to a design lead at a growing start-up.



Quickly, I was on
the **management path**...



I liked **management.**

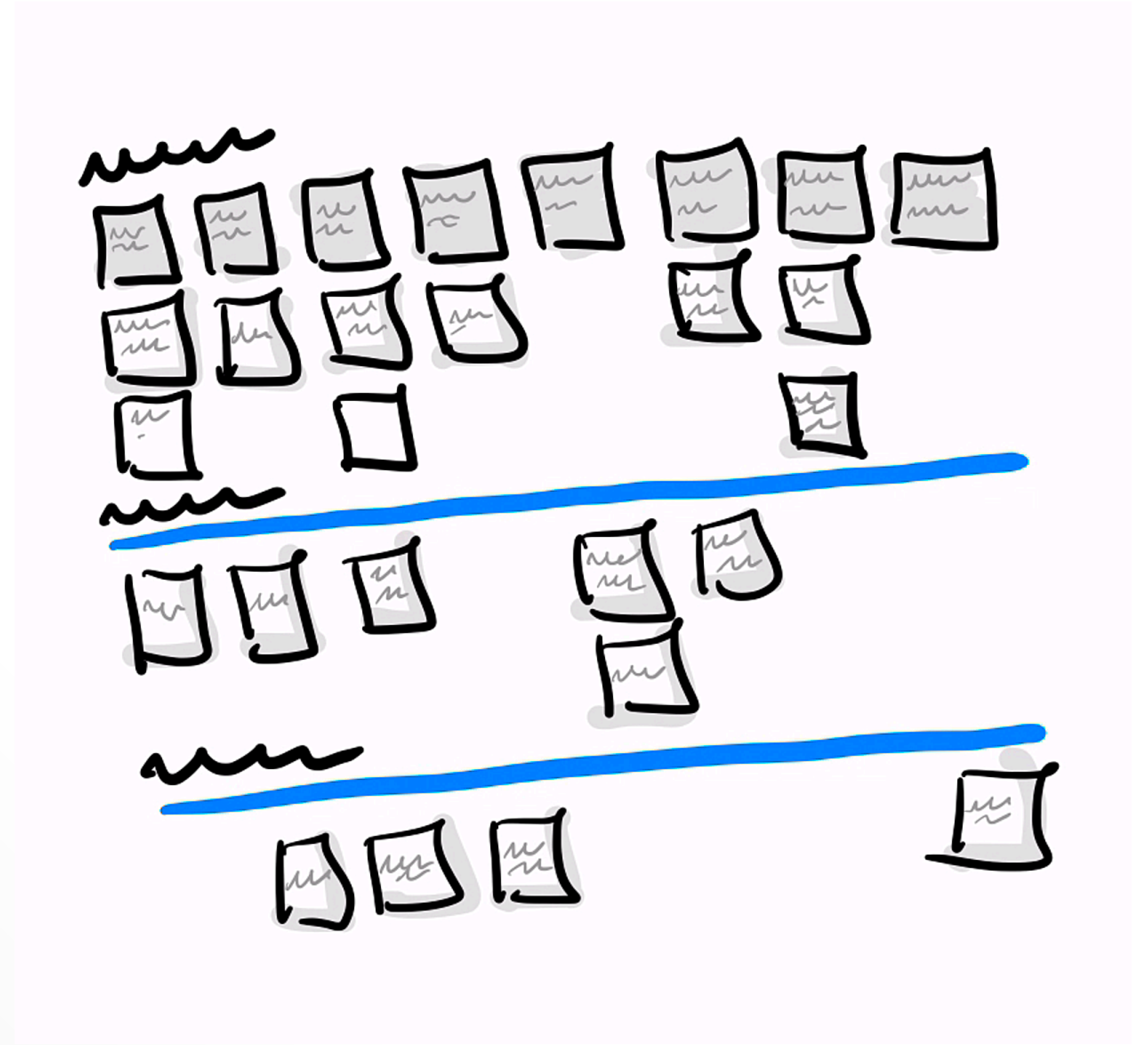
It started as more
of a **hybrid role**...



Soon enough though
I didn't **design much**...



I always found a way
to **contribute**...

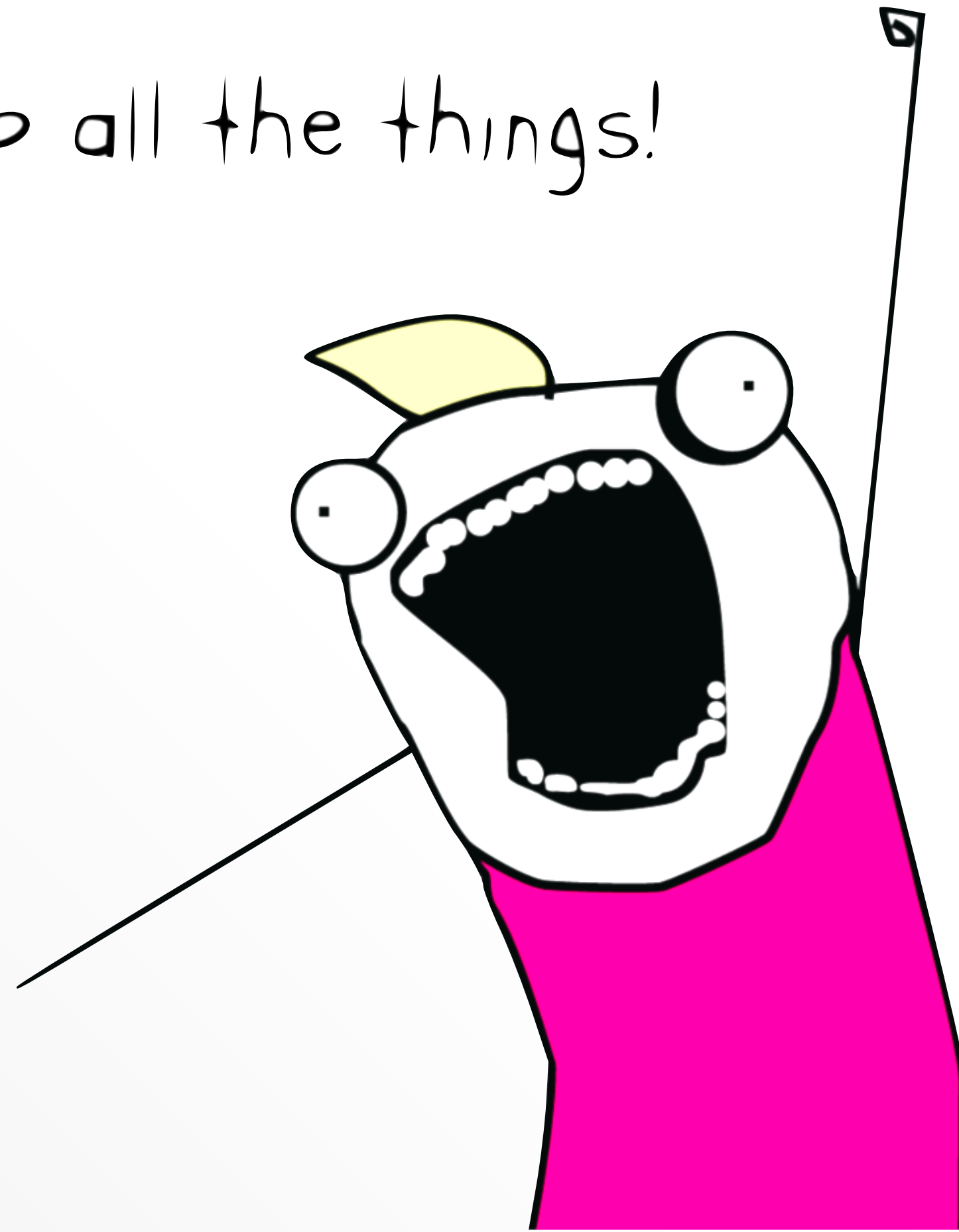


I really missed **design**

I tried to do **both**.

I tried to do **both**.
(at least somewhat)

do all the things!

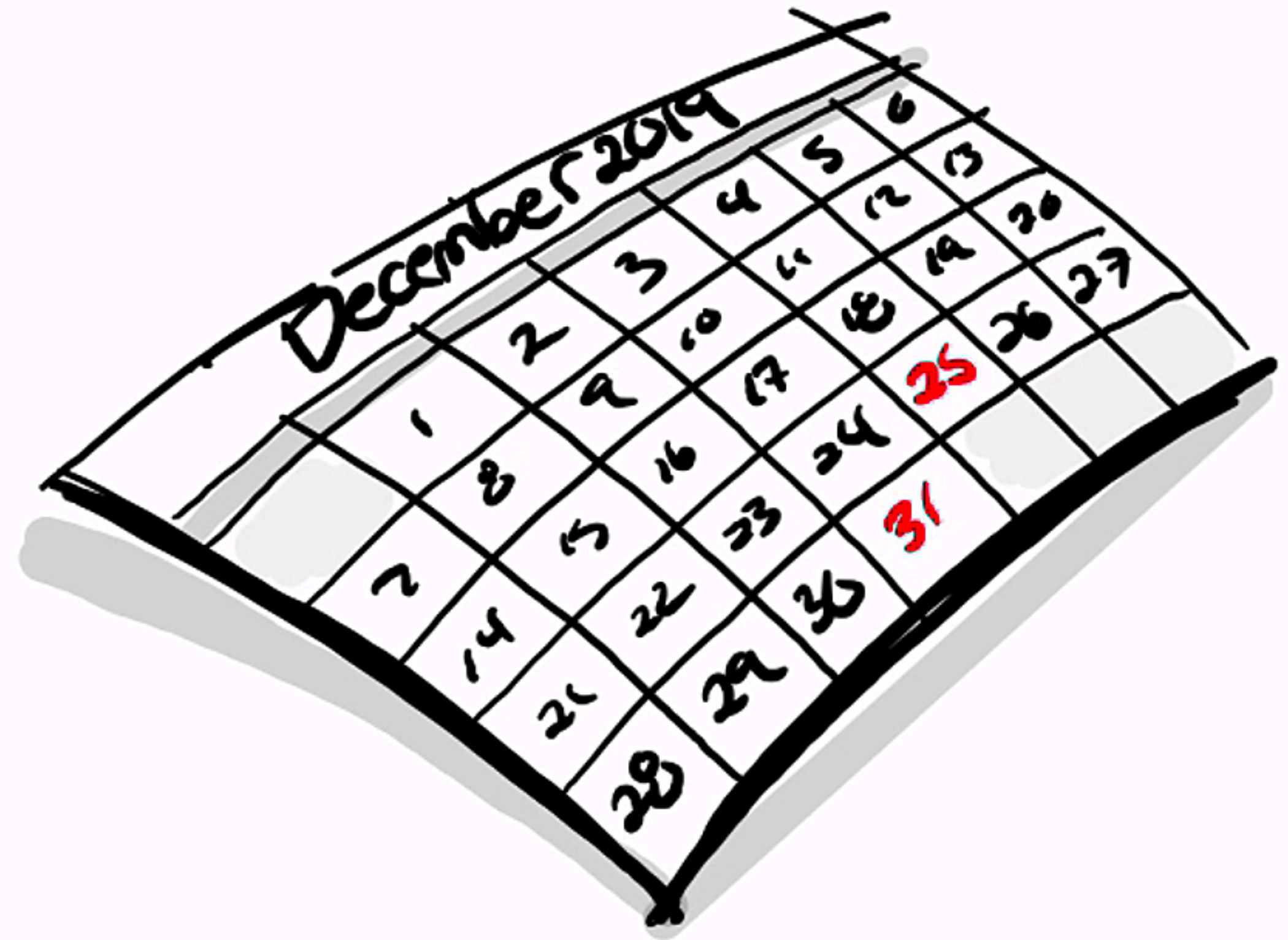


Credit: Allie Brosh - *Hyperbole and a Half*

*“ Do you feel you are a manager...
...or a designer?”*

- Many, many people

Many Months Ago...



“ Name a role from a movie that best describes what you like to do?”

I always liked the story
of the Wolfe from
Pulp Fiction.

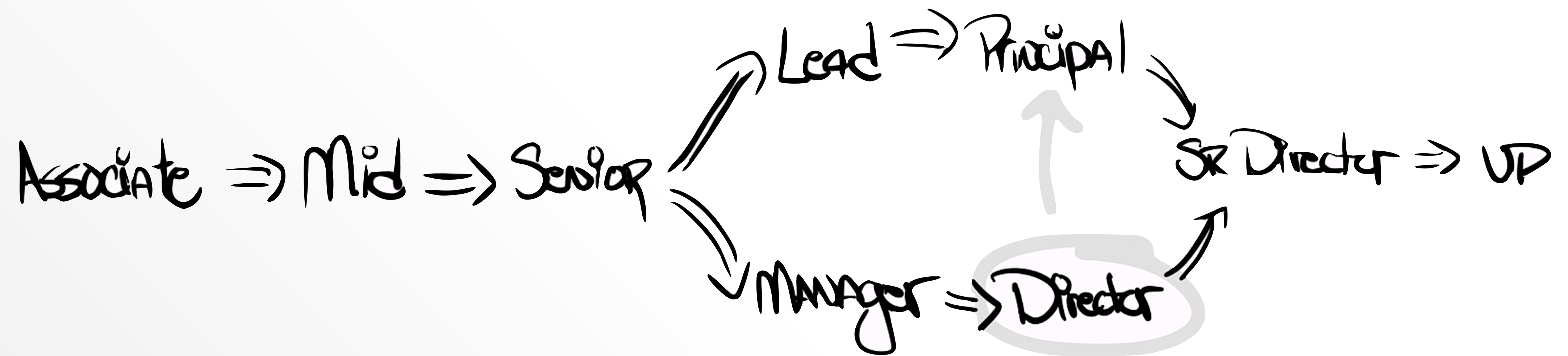


I always liked the story
of the Wolfe from
Pulp Fiction.

“That’s leadership,
but not management.”



I was lucky...



We were able to chart a path that empowered me and set me up for success.



Vision



Influence

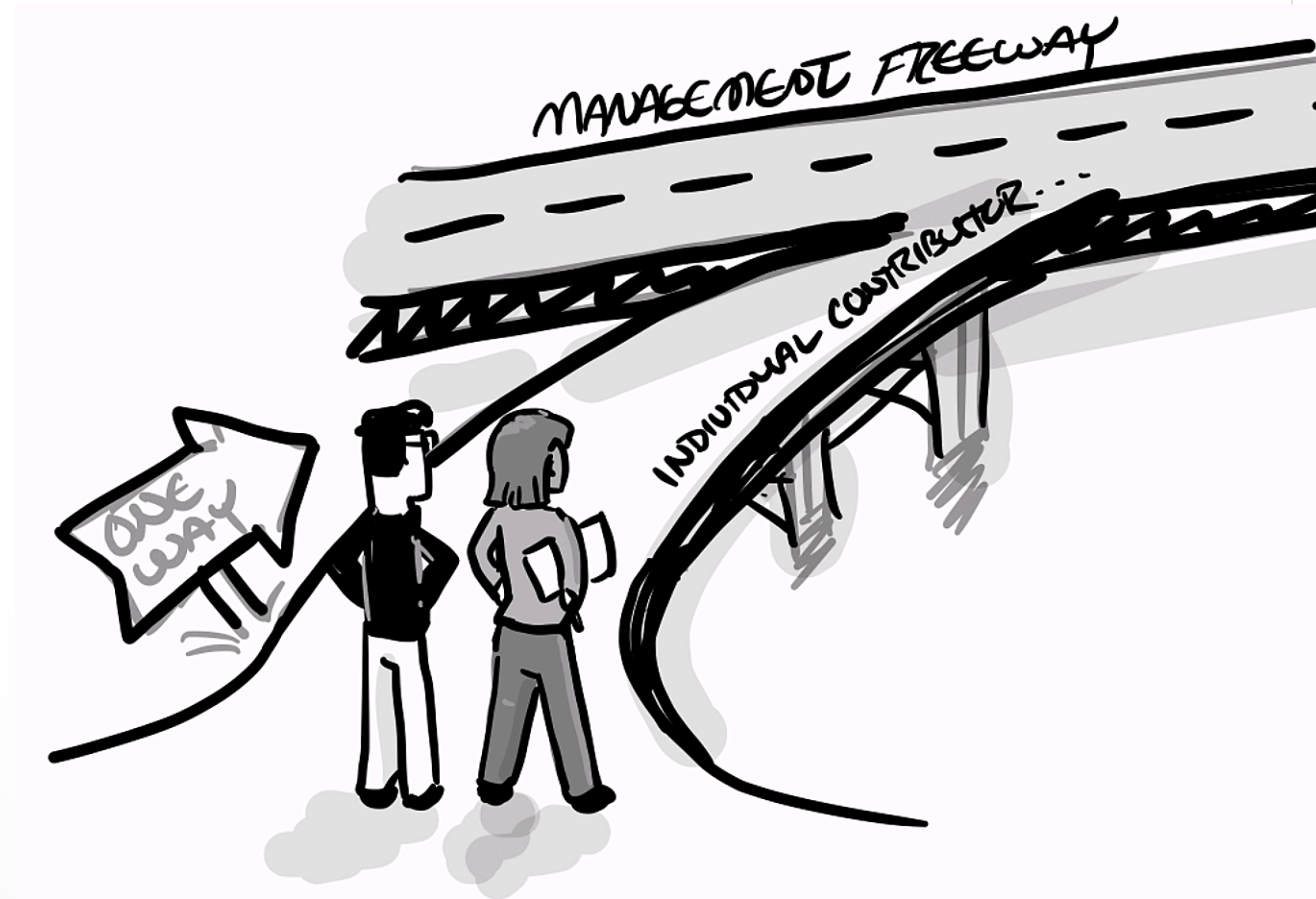


Leadership

“ Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another.”

- John Maxwell

For many UXers, management seems like the **only road** to advance one's career.



Leadership \neq Management

Leadership is **influence**

Leadership is **influence**
(it is not a title)

We must empower those with the passion for craft to build their impact, influence, and leadership skills.

And we must **give them a path.**

“Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.”

- Oprah Winfrey

The **Principal** Path

Principal Manifesto

Principal **Manifesto**

(Creative Leadership / People Leadership)

Principal (Creative/Influencer)

Manager (People/Process)

Deep UX skills across several disciplines

Deep knowledge to mentor and coach

Embraces strategic product leadership

Balances people, projects, and process

Passion for big unknown problems

Passion for growing talent and careers

Able to make hard strategic decisions

Able to have the hard performance conversations

Mentor

Connector

Communicator

Feedback

Exemplar of team culture

Reinforces team culture

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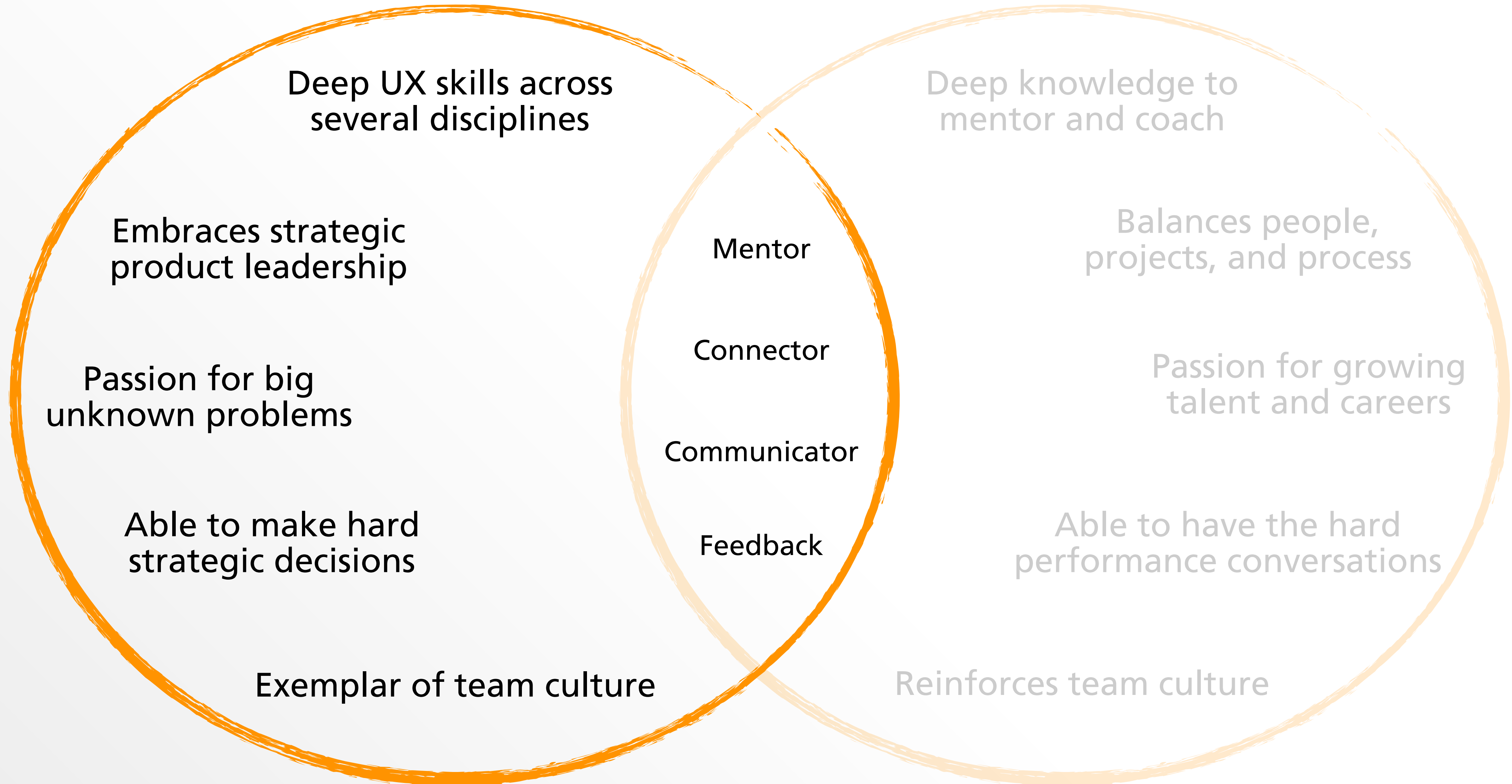
Connector

Communicator

Feedback

Principal (Creative/Influencer)

Manager (People/Process)



Principal Details

Senior ICs can be some of the best **natural leaders**

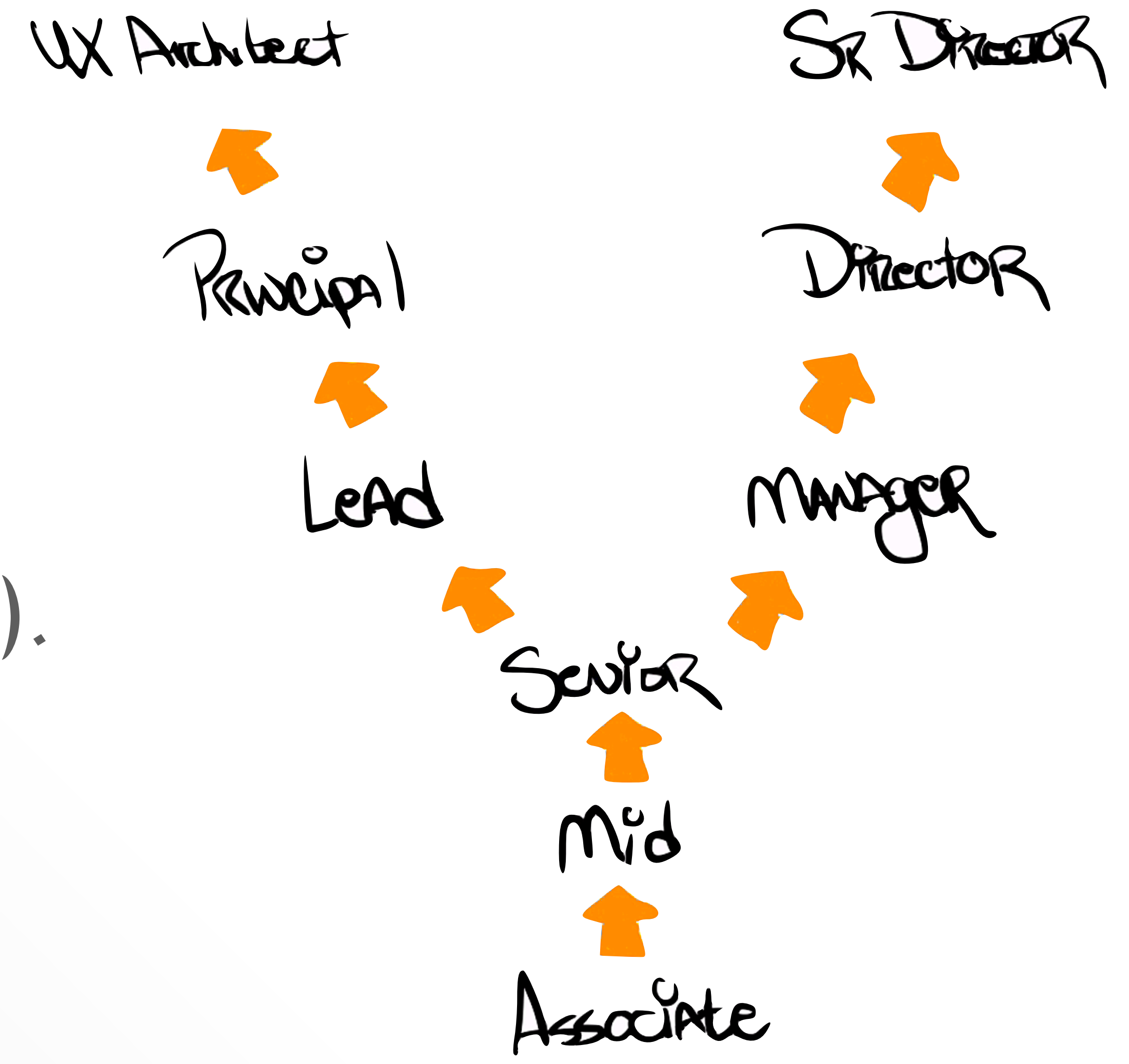
- Deep knowledge of their craft (intuition)
- Built cross-functional networks (influence)
- Experience leading projects (organization)
- Demonstrate empathy across disciplines (empathy)

Areas they can excel **as leaders**

- Team leads/coordinators in a product area, tier, or ecosystem.
- Be point person on key product initiatives
- Developing/advocating experience vision, architecture, & strategy
- Leading growth & skunk works projects

They are also some of the **best partners** for managers

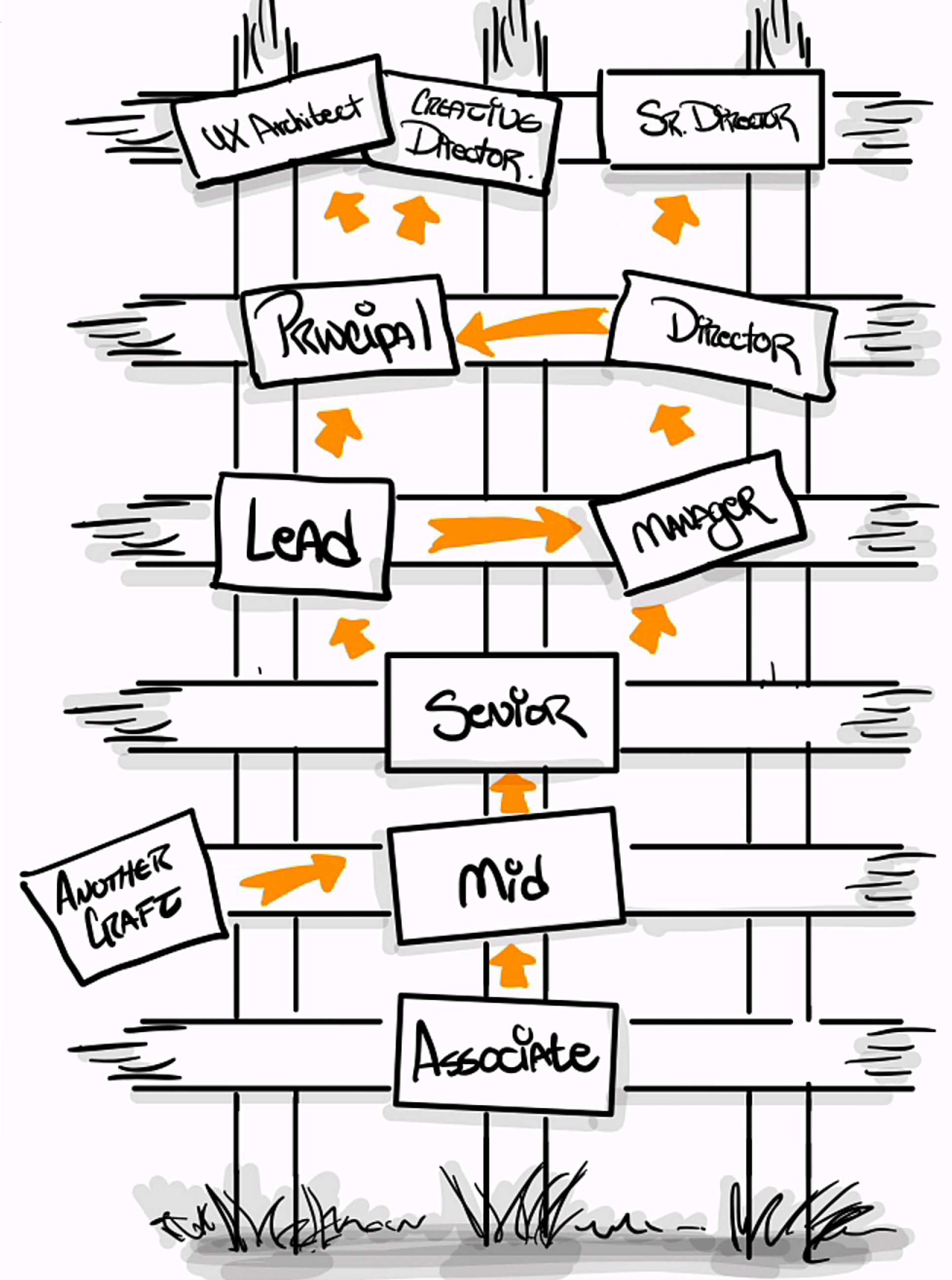
- Be a key person to delegate critical assignments
- Act as an expert for team feedback and guidance
- Partner on coaching/mentoring
- Be an champion for design & discovery across the ecosystem



IC Track (Creative/Influencer)

Manager Track (People/Process).

It is more like a scaffold
Not a one-way path.



Lead

(Manager - Equivalent)

Owns the UX around a specific area of the product

Leads on high-impact challenges

Influences the tactical work of product of that area

Partners with and reports to a UX Manager

Principal

(Director - Equivalent)

Owns the UX around broad tiers of the product

Drives innovation-centric or growth challenges

Influences the strategic work of product of that tier

Partners with and reports to a UX Director

UX Architect

(Sr. Director - Equivalent)

Owns the UX at the ecosystem level

Architects broad-based experience systems

Has broad influence across the organization

Partners with and reports to Sr. Director / VP

Responsibility

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Responsibility

“I solve problems.”

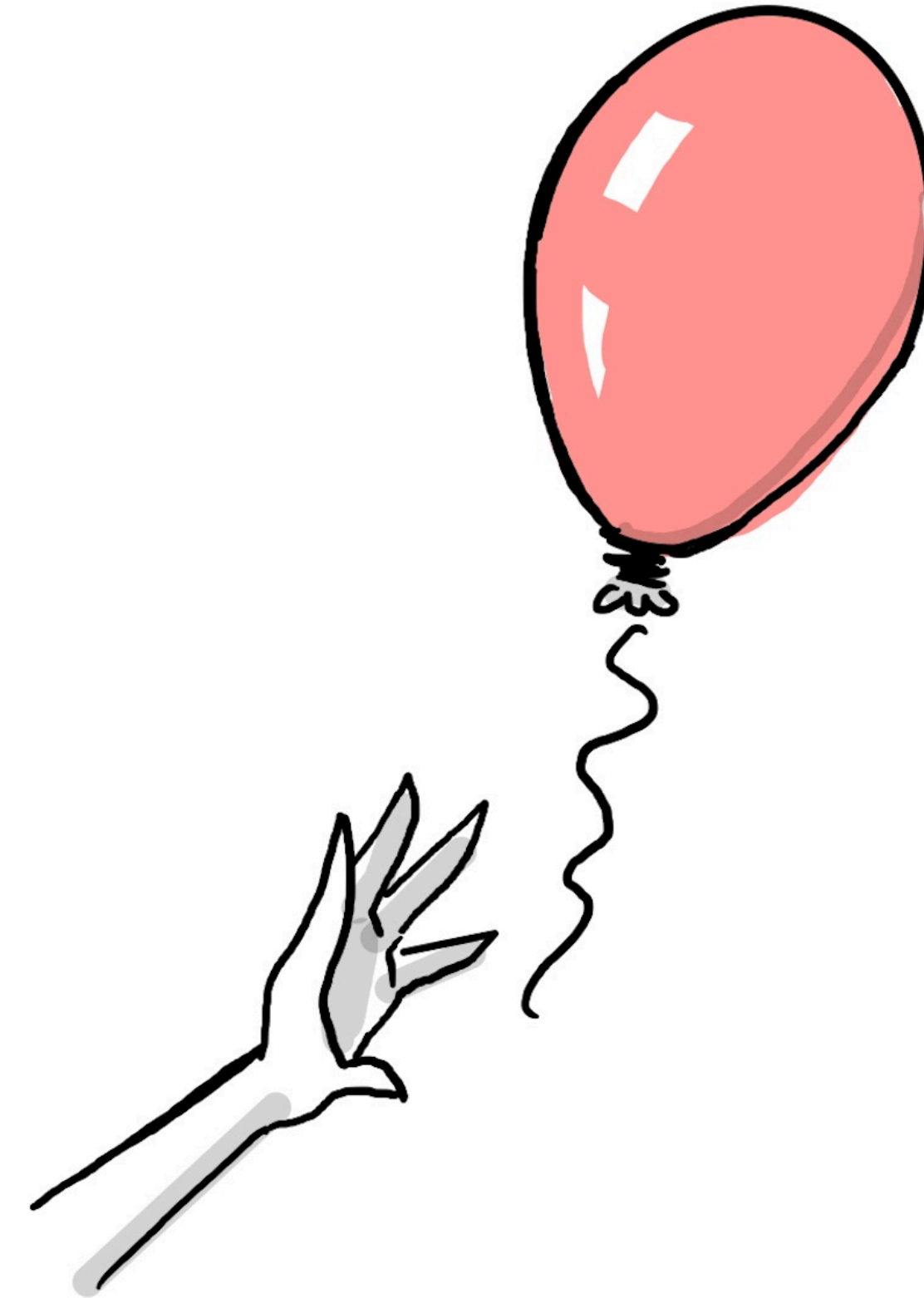
- Harvey Keitel as Winston Wolfe

My embracing the Principal Path

Challenges

Challenges

(Letting go)



Opportunities

Opportunities

(Persuasion vs Hierarchy)

Results

After over 18 months...



Leading product initiatives



Bigger overall impact



Providing an example

*“Do you want to know who you are?
Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate
and define you.”*

- Thomas Jefferson

For **UX Leadership** who are scaling teams

As you build out your team structure, consider building into your career paths a scaffolding of leadership that includes IC leaders on the Principal Path.

For **Management** but who miss the IC craft.

Moving sideways can be a step forward in your career. Letting yourself explore another form of leadership where your craft is paramount may key to getting back into your element.

For **UXers** currently considering options

Leadership is not management, but I learned a lot from it. Both paths are valid, if different in focus. Look for teams that embrace both rich management and IC career paths. Try them.

Questions?