


# PEOPLE (NOT TECHNOLOGY)

The True Value Creators

DR. GAUTHAM PALLAPA

FOUNDER, TRANSFORMITY AND EXECUTIVE ADVISOR, VMWARE

 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gpallapa/>

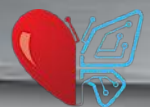
 @gpallapa





# CONTACTLESS + DIGITAL + REMOTE

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RETHINK / REIMAGINE





# Dr. Gautham Pallapa

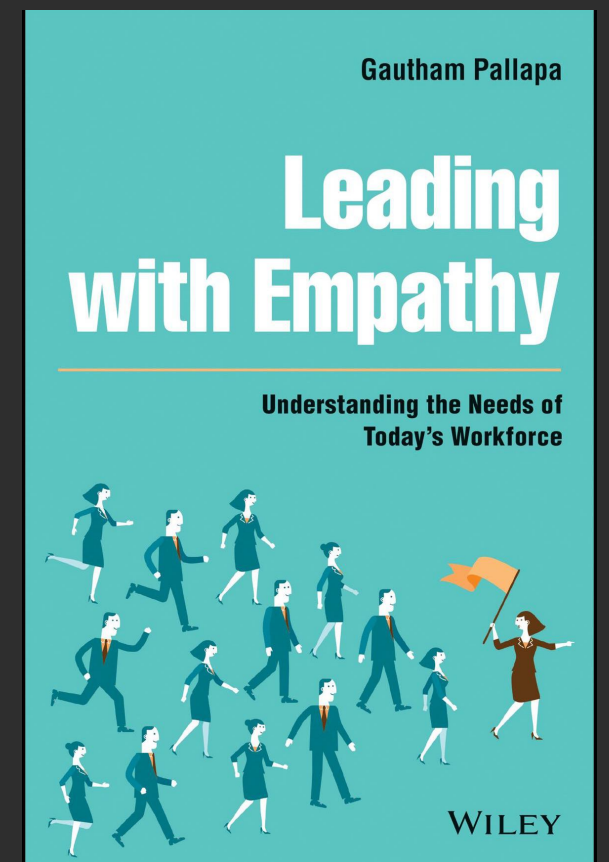
Founder - Transformity

Executive Advisor @ VMware



“ Transform with Empathy ”

Author – **Leading with Empathy**  
Understanding the Needs of Today's Workforce



## WORK EXPERIENCE

# 20+ years

Key executive roles in  
Digital, Retail, Telco,  
Emergency Services,  
Automotive, Travel,  
Research, Product,  
Academia



Business Transformation  
App Modernization  
Cloud Migration  
Value streams  
Organization Culture

## Lean, Agile, DevOps

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt  
SAFe Agilist  
Ambassador, Gartner Peer  
Insights, DevOps Institute



# TODAY'S JOURNEY

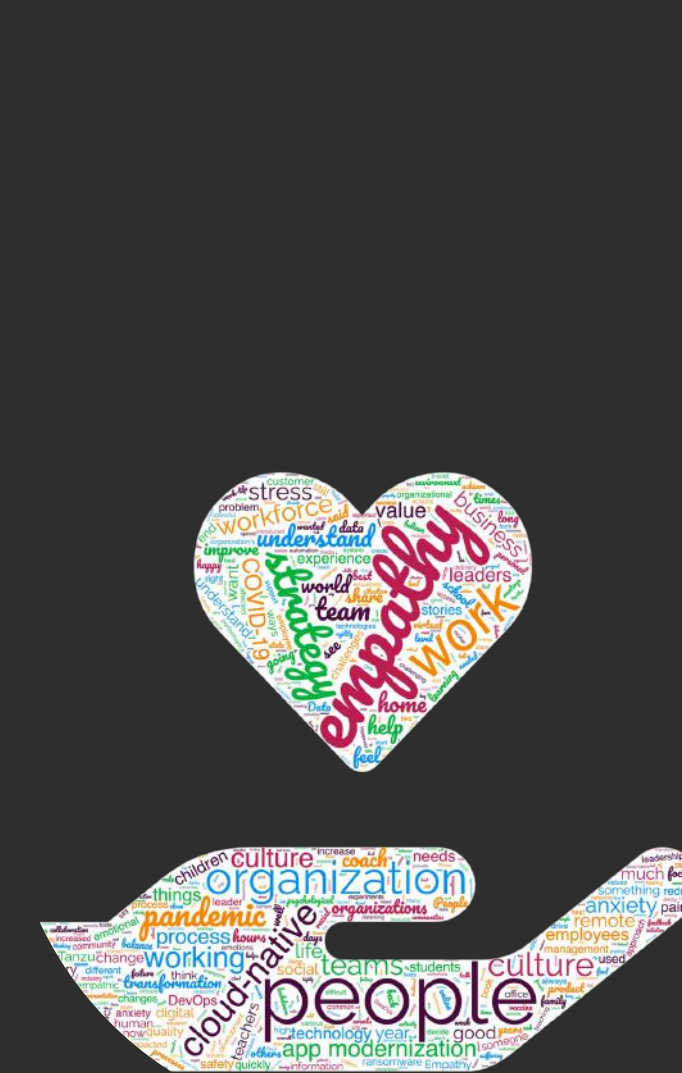
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Transformation Story



Insights and Learnings



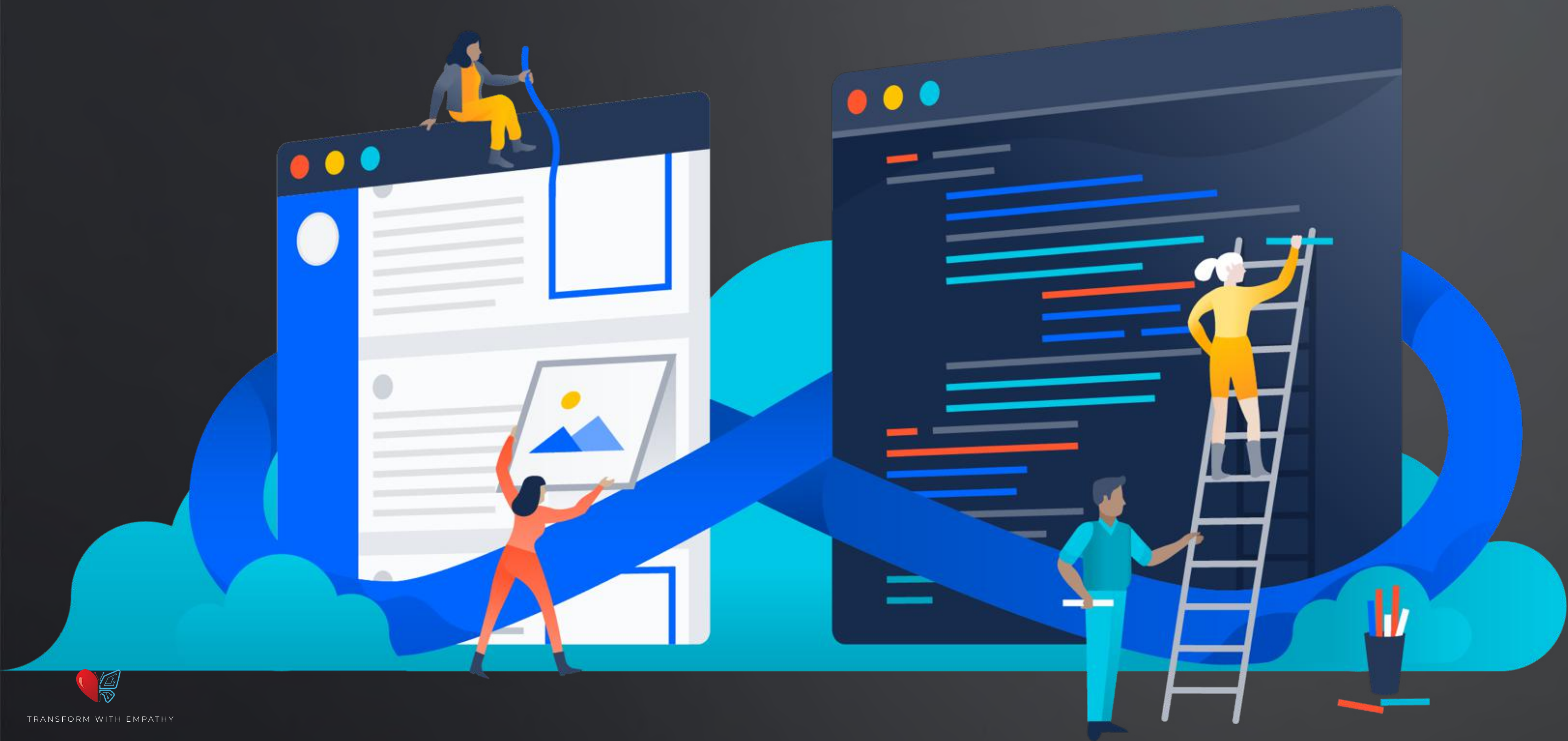
Focus on People



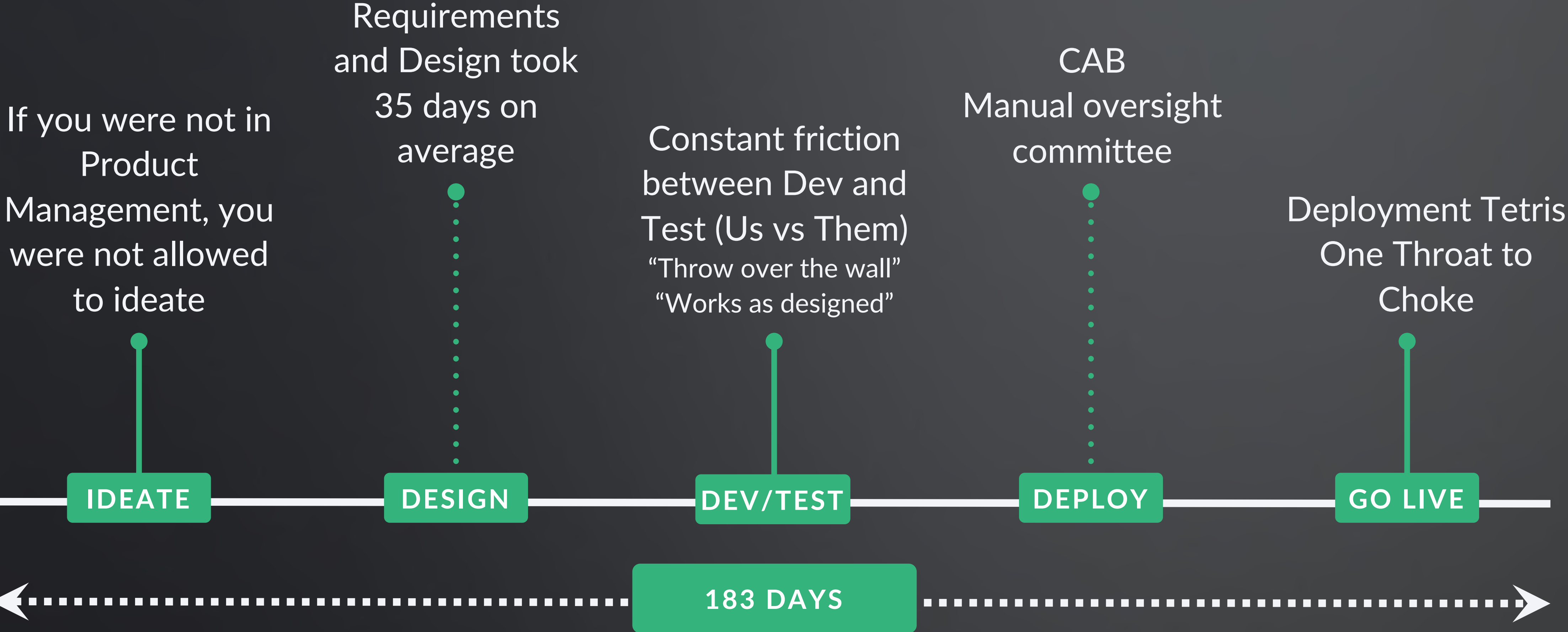


# ENTERPRISE TRANSFORMATION

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# SUBOPTIMAL SDLC





# CHALLENGES



High Attrition

18 – 42%



Low eNPS

-18



No Automation

< 15% of SDLC



Unstable code

At least 1 Sev1 per week  
Executive oversight  
Deployments on Friday  
nights  
Issues meant no  
weekends







# THE STEAMDRILL INITIATIVE

Enterprise modernization through Lean, Agile, and DevOps





# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



## Collaboration

Break silos  
Team bonding  
Transparency



## Speed to Value

Process optimization  
Flow modernization  
Automation first approach



## Digital Transformation

Lean Experiments  
Innovation  
Happier culture





# SteamDrill Initiative

## Initial Reaction

Increased friction, Backlash, eNPS dropped,  
Increased retention, unhappiness

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# CHANGE CAN BE STRESSFUL





# SteamDrill Initiative

## Initial Reaction

Increased friction, Backlash, eNPS dropped,  
Increased retention, unhappiness

## Too much change too soon

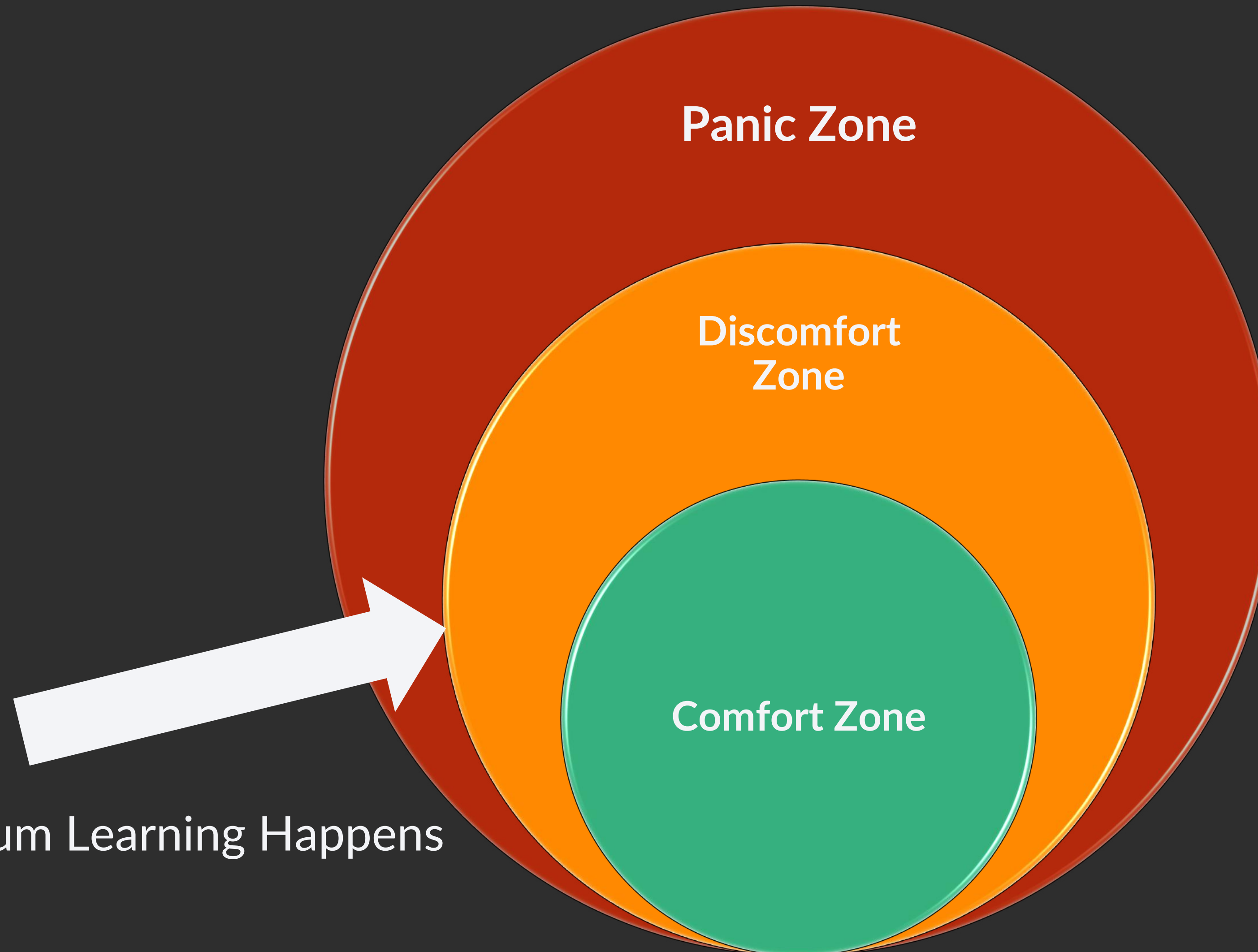
Hard to adapt, steep learning curve, aggressive  
timelines, people felt threatened

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# HOW MUCH OVERLOAD CAN ONE TAKE?



Where Maximum Learning Happens





# SteamDrill Initiative

## Initial Reaction

Increased friction, Backlash, eNPS dropped,  
Increased retention, unhappiness

## Too much change too soon

Hard to adapt, steep learning curve, aggressive  
timelines, people felt threatened

## Cannot mandate change

Show the benefit, bring people along, purpose,

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# Leading with Empathy

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**Understanding the Needs of  
Today's Workforce**





# DEFINING EMPATHY

Love and understanding for your fellow humans

Reaching out to people and making sure that we are all collectively working together and being happy

## In an Enterprise:

Ability to step into one's role

Look at things from their PoV

Understand the reasoning behind why an action occurred or decision was taken





# MY GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR EMPATHY

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When you can look at a human being and put yourself in their shoes,  
understand the pain and stress they are undergoing,

**You value their happiness above your own – and do something about their  
pain**



# TYPES OF EMPATHY

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## COGNITIVE EMPATHY

Ability to understand what the other person might be thinking or feeling

No need for emotional engagement  
Rational and Intelligent approach

Con: Manipulation, Self-Serving

Ex: Negotiators, Sales Executives

## EMOTIONAL EMPATHY

Ability to share feelings and have a deeper understanding

Affects the way one feels  
Create a genuine connection

Con: Exhausting and overwhelming

Ex: Team leadership

## COMPASSIONATE EMPATHY

Ability to not only be concerned and experience emotional pain, but also take practical actions to reduce pain

Most active form of empathy

Con: Your Mileage May Vary

Ex: Mentoring





## INSIGHT #1



You do not need a title or permission to lead with empathy

Your actions to improve human quality of life is what makes you an empathic leader



# My Fundamental Beliefs

Happy People are Productive people





# My Fundamental Beliefs

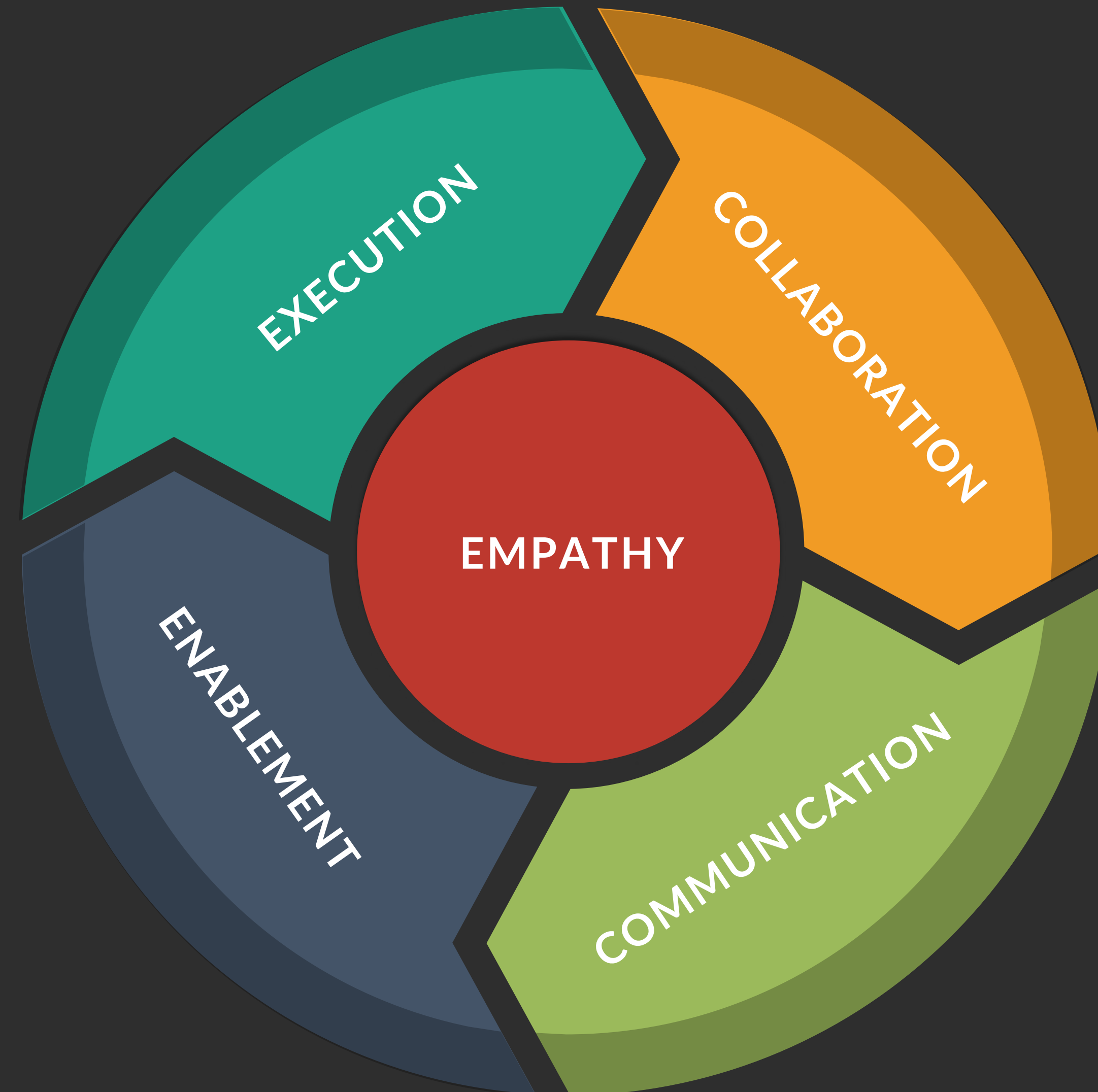
Happy People are Productive people

Strategic Disruption leads to Progress





# FOCUS AREAS FOR ENTERPRISE TRANSFORMATION





STEP 1: CREATE

# AN EMPATHIC CULTURE

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# ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFT



## Pathological

Power - oriented

### SYMPTOMS

- Low Cooperation
- Messengers Shot
- Responsibilities Avoided
- Collaboration Discouraged
- Failure → Scapegoating
- Novelty Crushed



## Bureaucratic

Rule - oriented

### SYMPTOMS

- Modest Cooperation
- Messengers Neglected
- Opportunistic Responsibilities
- Collaboration Tolerated
- Failure → Justice
- Novelty Caused Problems



## Generative

Performance - oriented

### SYMPTOMS

- High Cooperation
- Messengers Trained
- Shared Risks
- Collaboration Encouraged
- Failure → Inquiry and Learning
- Novelty Utilized





# HOW TO BE AN EMPATHIC LEADER

## Be Authentic

Say-to-Do Ratio close to 1  
Helping can be hard

1

## Be Vulnerable

Wear your heart on your sleeve  
Vulnerability with boundaries

2

## Be Approachable

Gemba walks, MBWA  
Skip levels, AMAs, Lean coffees

3

## Be Attentive

Active full-body listening  
Ask "How" instead of "Why"

4

## Be Appreciative

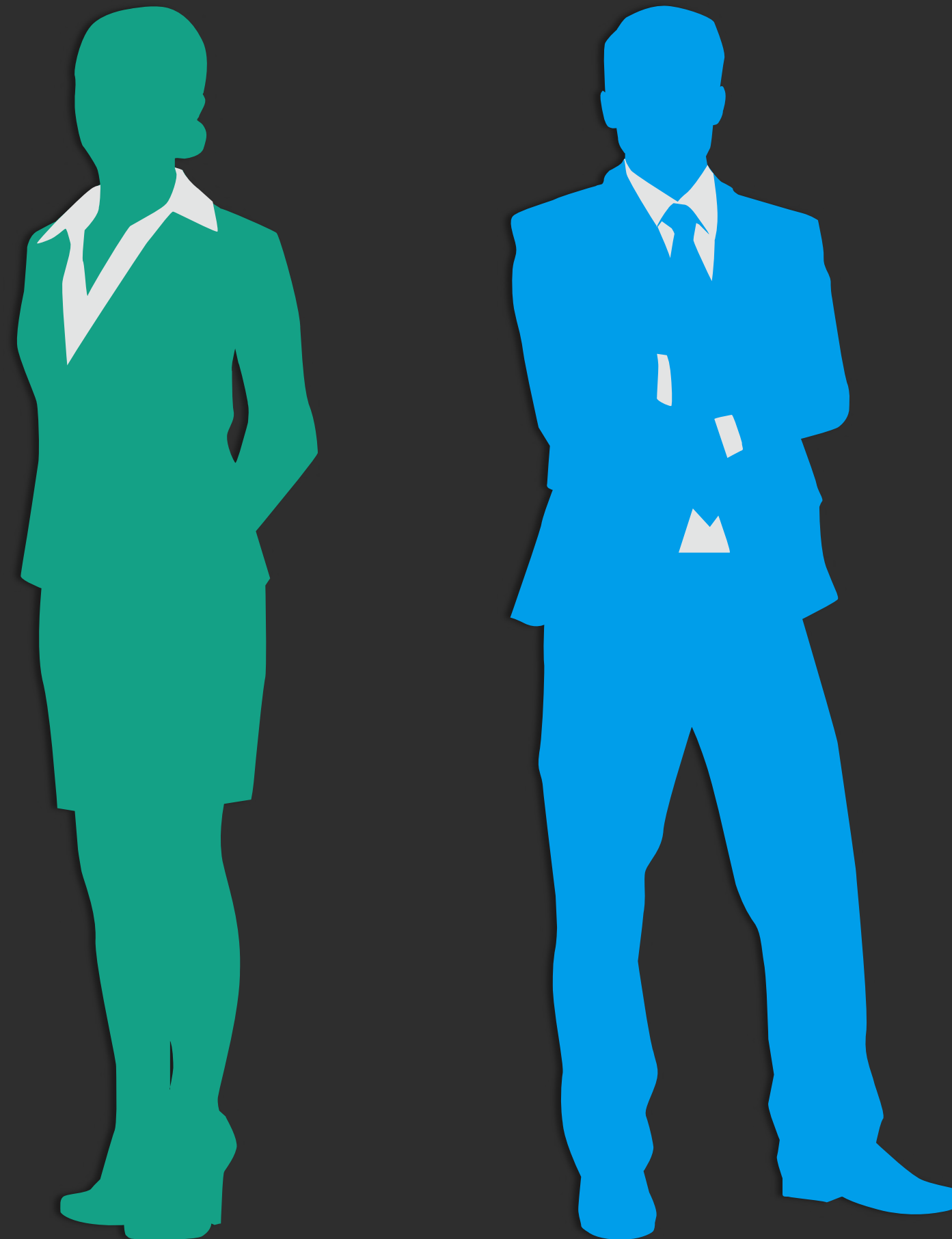
Praise in public. Feedback in private  
Evaluate outlier behavior with empathy

5

## Be Connected

Look for signs of overwork or burnout  
Reduce manual toil

6





STEP 2: FOCUS ON

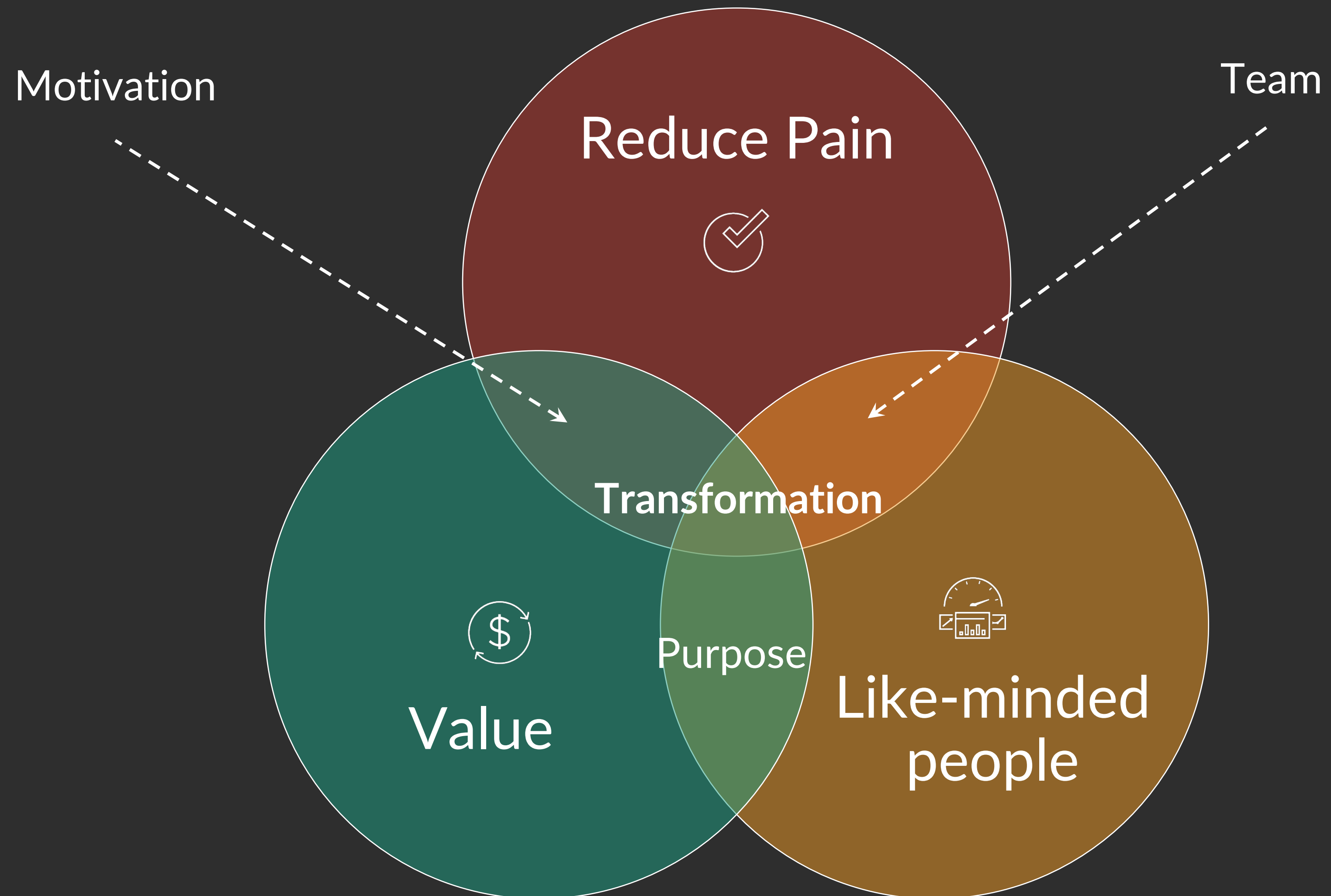
# VALUE AND PURPOSE

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# TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EMPATHY



Source: Every Enterprise Transformation is Rooted in Empathy - <https://bit.ly/3fTmVh7>





STEP 3: IDENTIFY YOUR

# OUTCOMES

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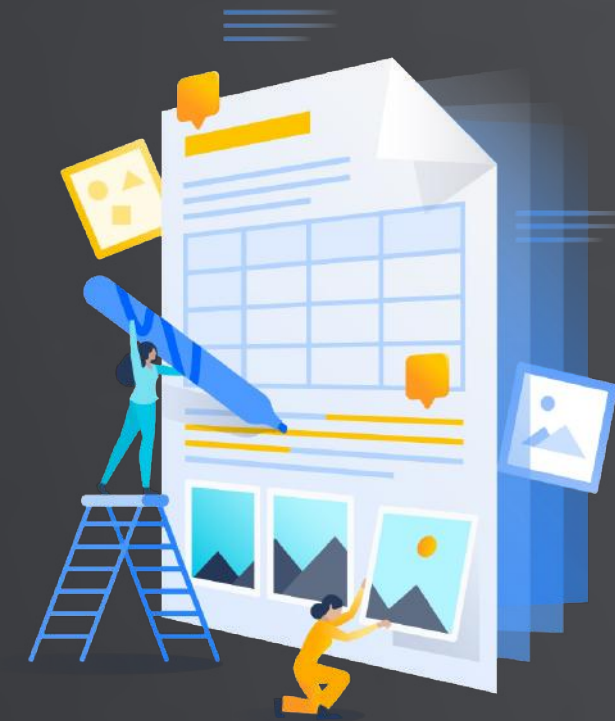


# IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS OUTCOMES



## Value Generated

What are we achieving  
Who are we achieving it for  
Benefits



## Definition of Success

Quantifiable  
SMART  
Accountable



## Measure What Matters

Tell the whole story  
Data-driven Decisions  
Pivot or Persevere





STEP 4: OPTIMIZE YOUR  
**WORKFLOWS**





# WORKFLOW OPTIMIZATION



1

**Accelerate Time to Market**

Deliver new services that differentiate and delight the customer

2

**Scale Seamlessly and Automatically**

Seamlessly add or reduce resources on demand and with automation

3

**Enable Rapid Change**

Quickly and confidently make changes while ensuring DevEx, quality, security and compliance

4

**Positive Culture**

Trust, Empathy, Psychological Safety  
Fail Often, Fast, Cheap

5

**Measure and Optimize**

Provide visibility to and immediate feedback on Changes and Service Performance, Usage

6

**Minimize Security Vulnerabilities**

Consistent End-to-End security regardless of deployment or environment

7

**Enable, Educate, Engage, Eliminate**

Maximize outcomes for employees, customers, and the business. Deliver a great experience for all



STEP 5: EMPOWER YOUR

# TEAMS

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# EMPATHY AND EMPOWERMENT

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## Trust and Respect



Team Bonding  
Collaboration  
Communication

## Psychological Safety



Safe Environments  
Enablement  
Lower Attrition

## Innovation



Take Risks  
Experimentation  
Comfortable with Failure

## Positive Culture



Break Silos  
Learning Culture  
Happy Humans







## INSIGHT #2

Failure of one team is validated learning for the entire organization







STEP 6: REDUCE

# MANUAL TOIL

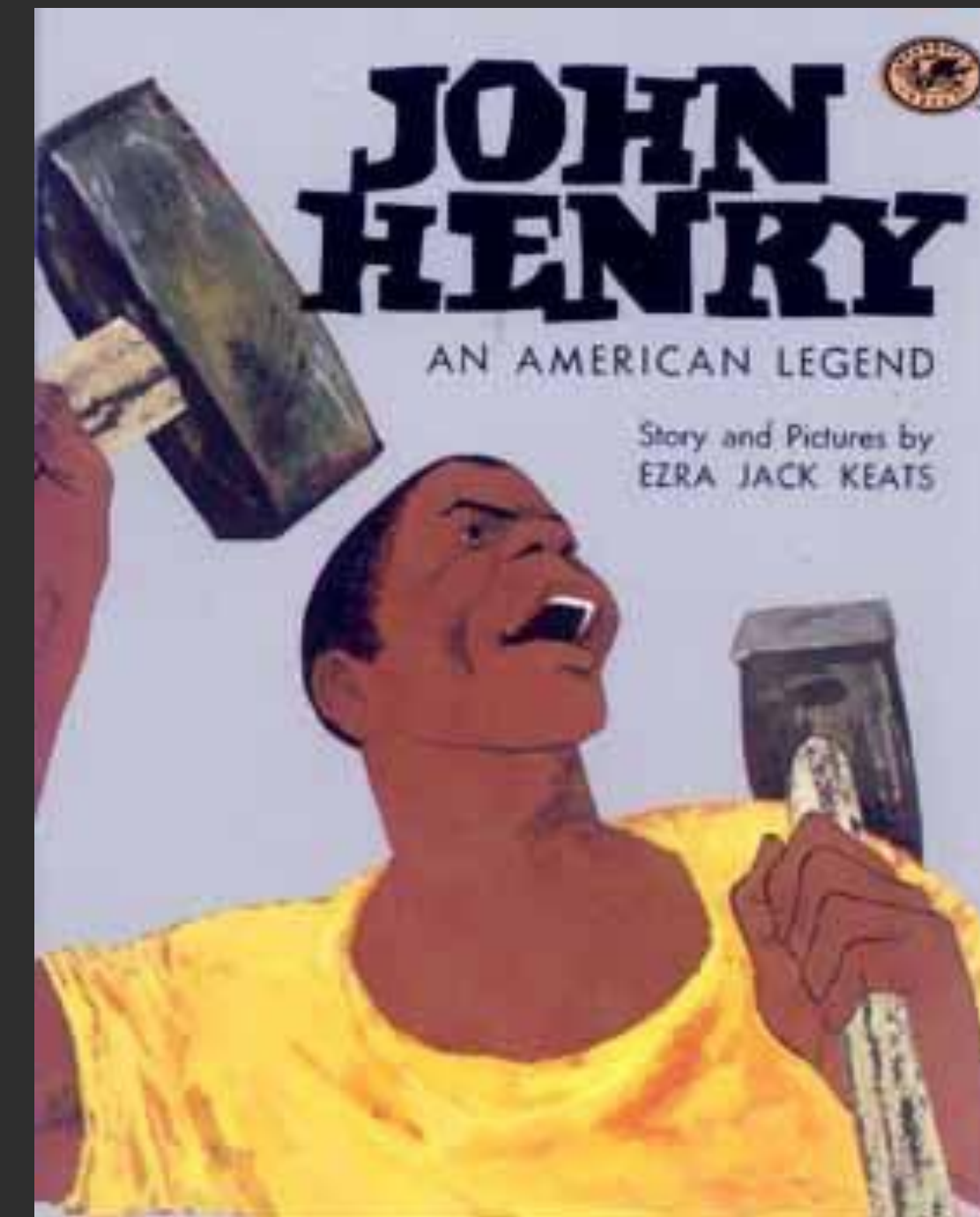
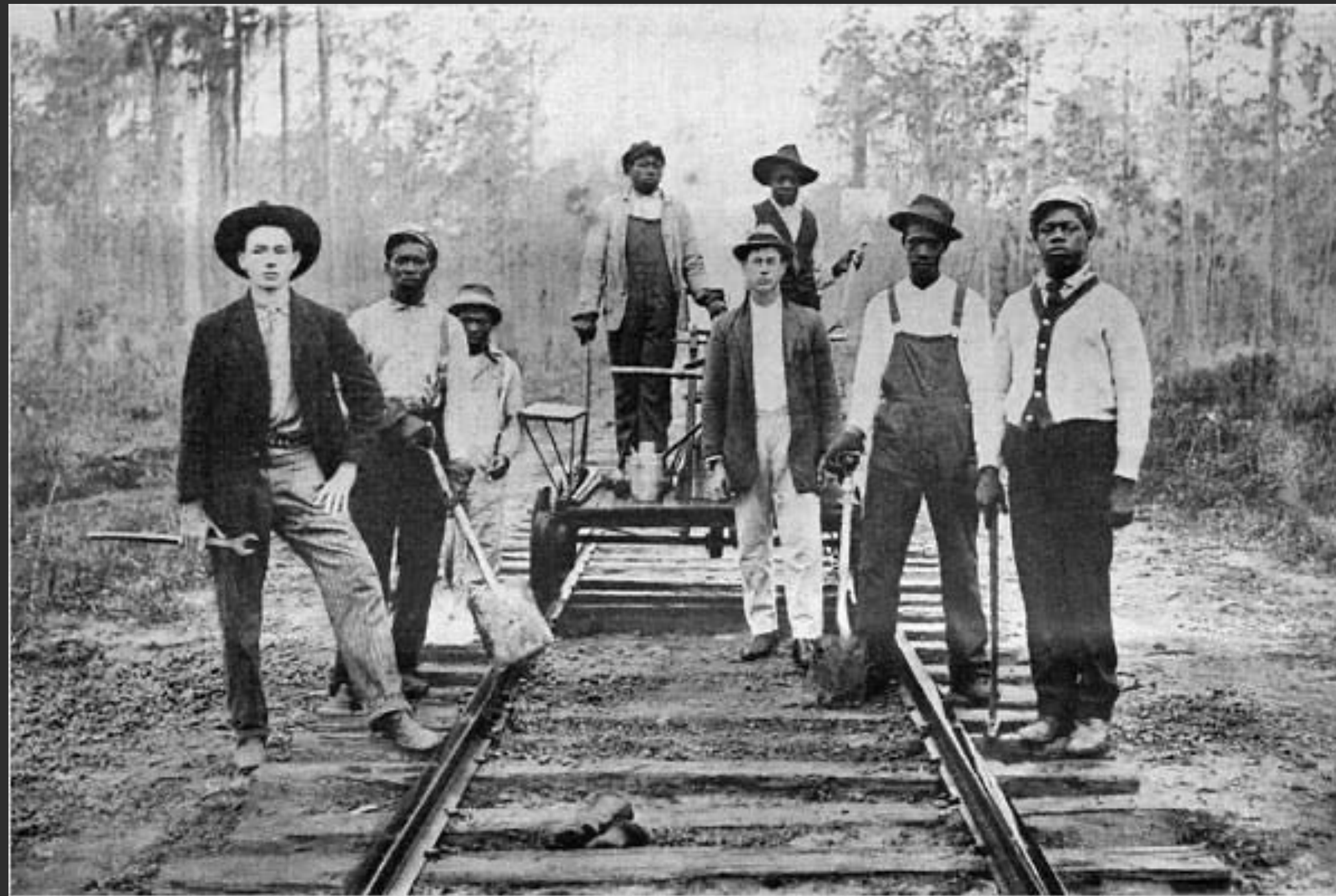
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# THE LEGEND OF JOHN HENRY

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From "Ain't Nothing but a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry"  
by Scott Nelson and Marc Aronson  
<https://tinyurl.com/yju757aw>

By Ezra Jack Keats  
<http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/john-henry-an-american-legend/>





# What We Learn From This Story

## Importance of Sustainable Pace

Manual toil will work for short stints but at a heavy cost

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## Focus on the Value Line

Identify High Value Activity

Systems & automation handle mundane tasks

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# What We Learn From This Story

## Importance of Sustainable Pace

Manual toil will work for short stints but at a heavy cost

## Focus on the Value Line

Identify High Value Activity

Systems & automation handle mundane tasks

## Change is not a threat

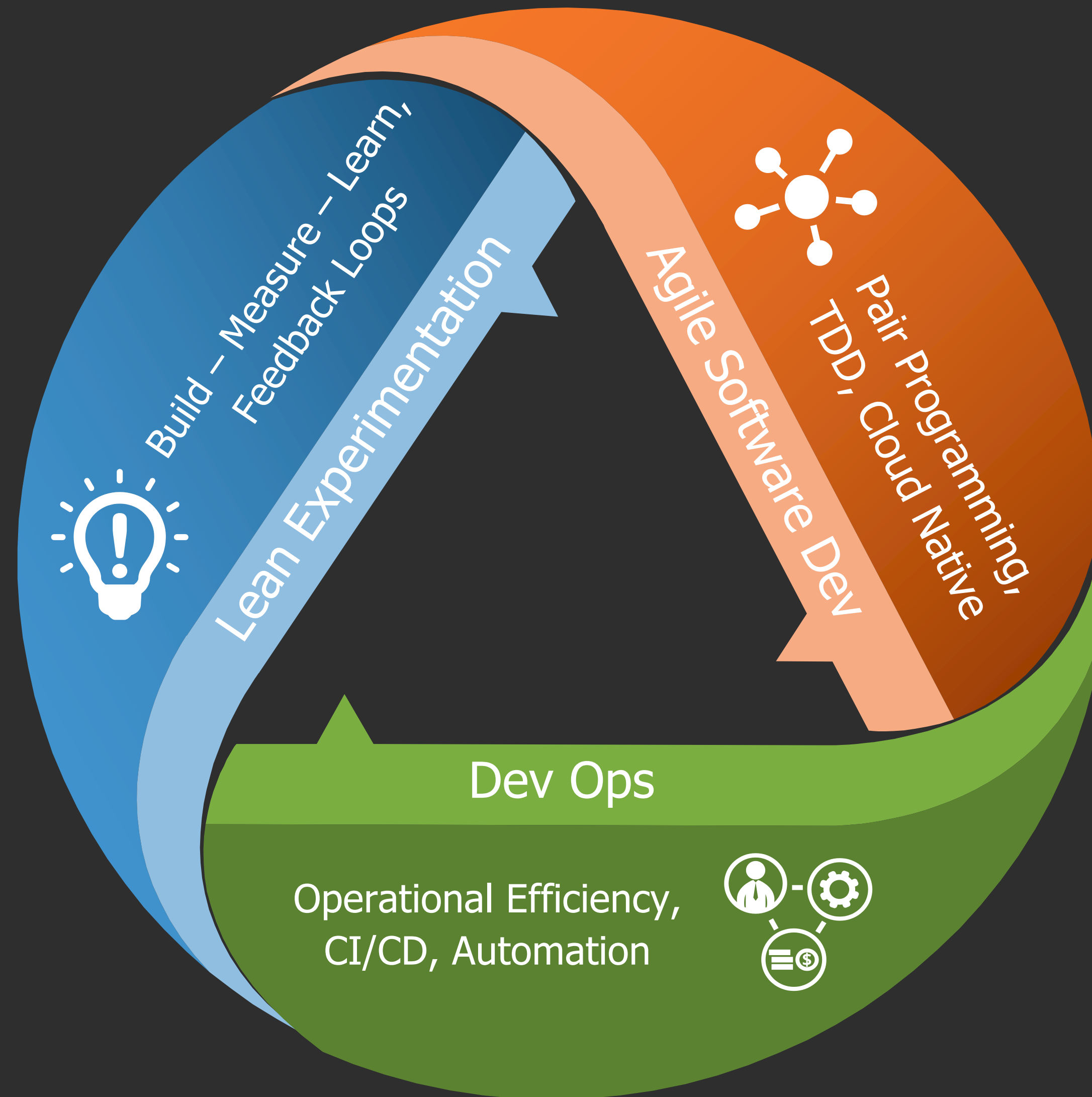
Opportunity to upskill people and improve human quality of life

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# LEAN, AGILE, & DEVOPS





RETHINK / REIMAGINE







Before

183 days – Concept to Consumption  
15% automation  
1 Sev1 per week  
18 – 42% attrition  
Mindset - 100% uptime, 0 defects,  
Failure is not an option  
eNPS = -18



11 Months Later

21 days – Concept to Consumption  
Up to 87% automation  
1 Sev3 per quarter  
6.4% attrition  
Psychological safety, innovation,  
Embrace failure  
eNPS = +35 (295% increase)  
CSAT score increased 65%



# POWER-FUL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATION

## Purpose

Clearly articulate the Why  
What value are we providing?

## Workflow Optimization

How can I deliver value quicker?  
How can I reduce friction in my value stream?

## Reduce Manual Toil

Improve automation footprint  
Lean experimentation, Agile methods



## Outcomes

What do we want to achieve?  
What is the definition of success?

## Empower

How can I empathize, enable, entrust  
and equip my teams for success?



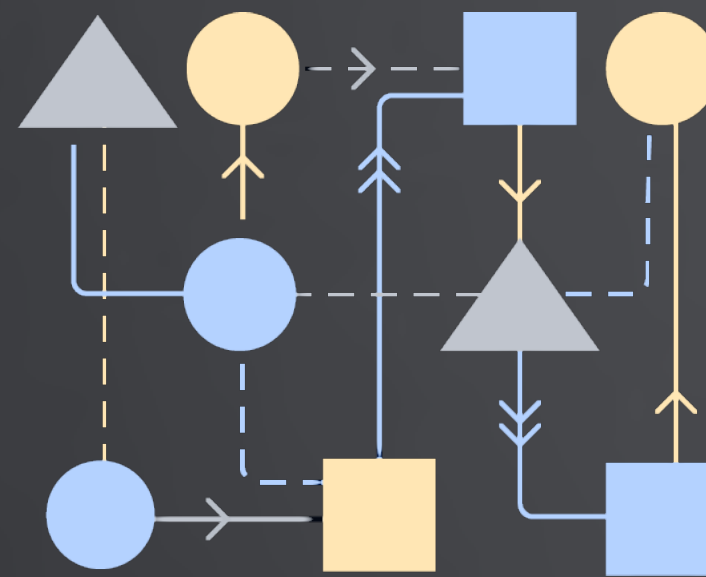


# EMPATHY AS THE CORE TENET



## Work-Life Balance

Have people focus on their  
high value activity  
Increase automation and  
systems



## Value Stream Map

Process Analysis and Flow  
Modernization



## Psychological Safety

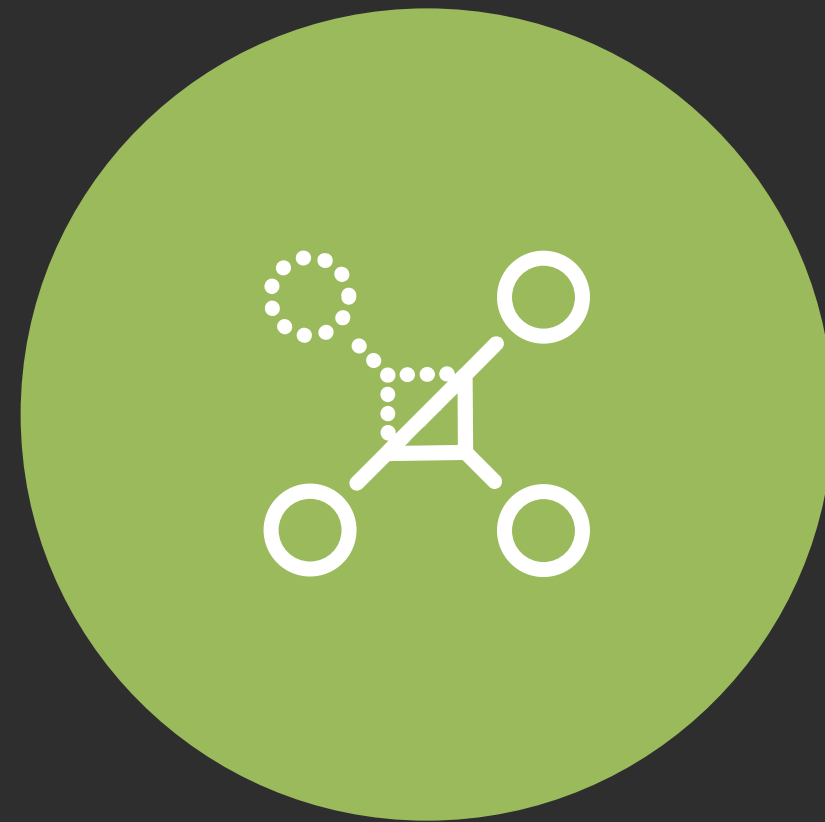
Reduce stress and anxiety  
Collaboration, innovation,  
Speed to value





# MAKE EMPATHY A PART OF YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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## Start Small

Reduce manual toil  
Improve Communication and  
transparency



## Lean Experimentation

Small experiments  
Hypothesis-based  
Celebrate failures and successes



## Share

#transformity  
#leadingwithempathy  
gpallapa@pm.me







REFLECTION

# WHAT VALUE STREAM CAN YOU TRANSFORM WITH EMPATHY?

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Gautham Pallapa

# Leading with Empathy

Understanding the Needs of  
Today's Workforce



WILEY

THANK YOU



Dr. Gautham Pallapa  
gpallapa@pm.me

 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gpallapa/>

 @gpallapa



TRANSFORM WITH EMPATHY

