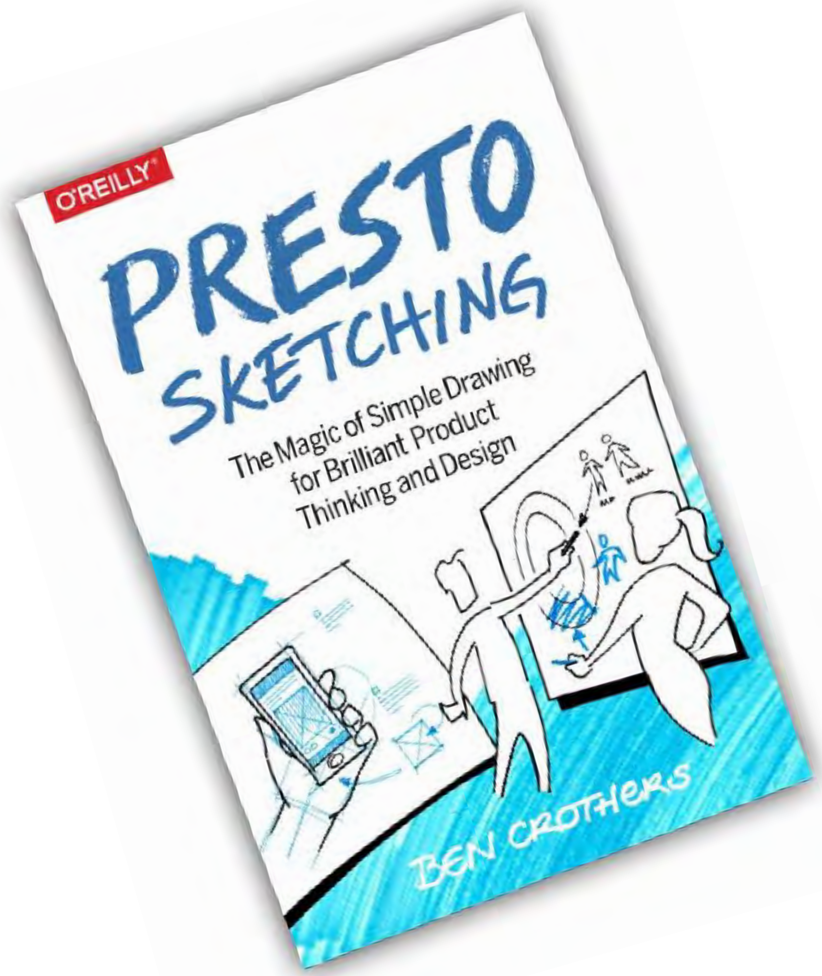
Breaking bad habits by making your own teamwork patterns

BEN CROTHERS

PRINCIPAL DESIGNER, ATLASSIAN | @BENCROTHERS | @PRESTOSKETCHING

I’m Ben



Principal Designer at Atlassian

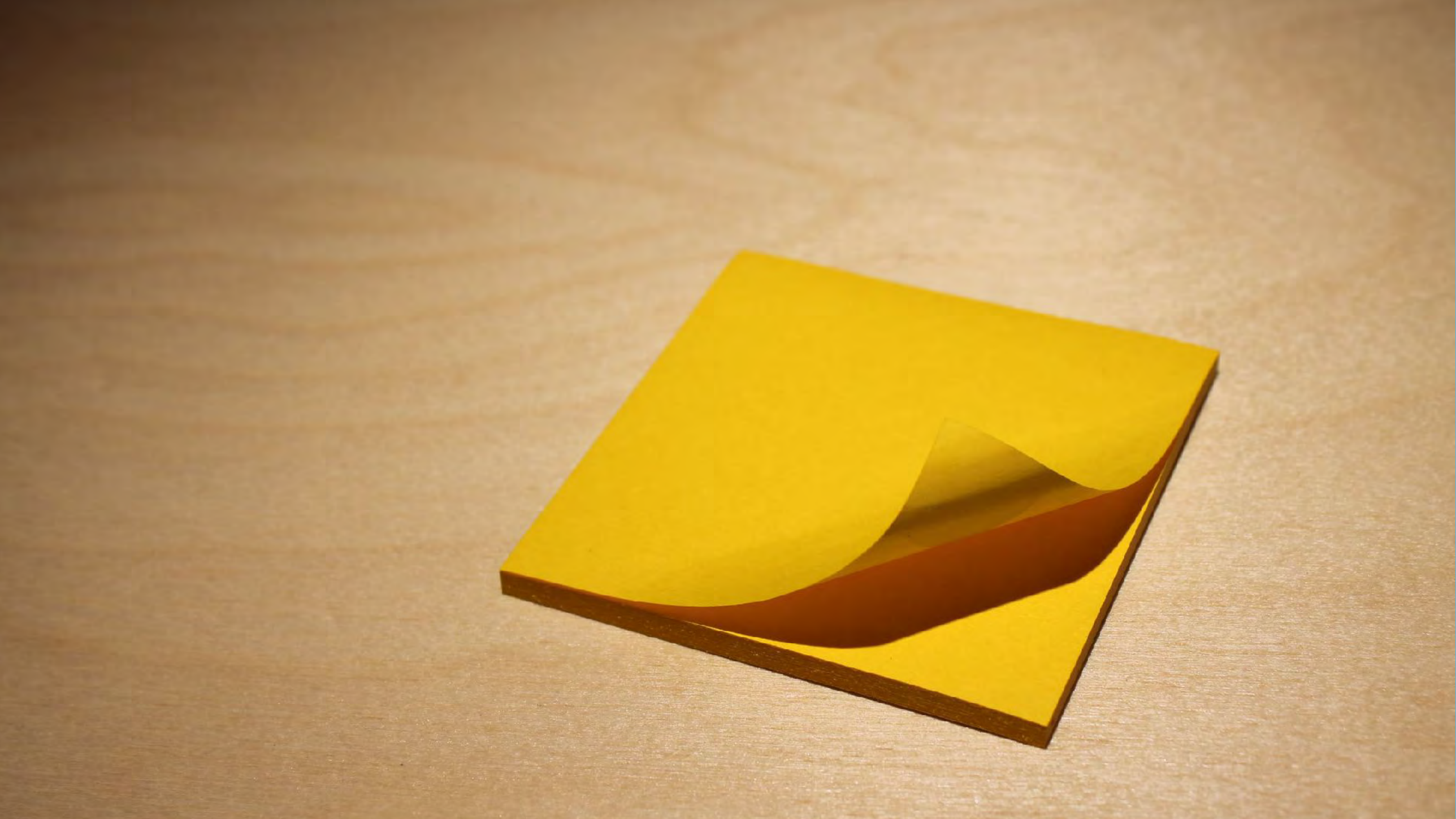
I help researchers, designers, content writers and product managers think better, and be more creative.

20 years in digital

I still think in code sometimes, but I dream in business model canvases.

Author, Presto Sketching

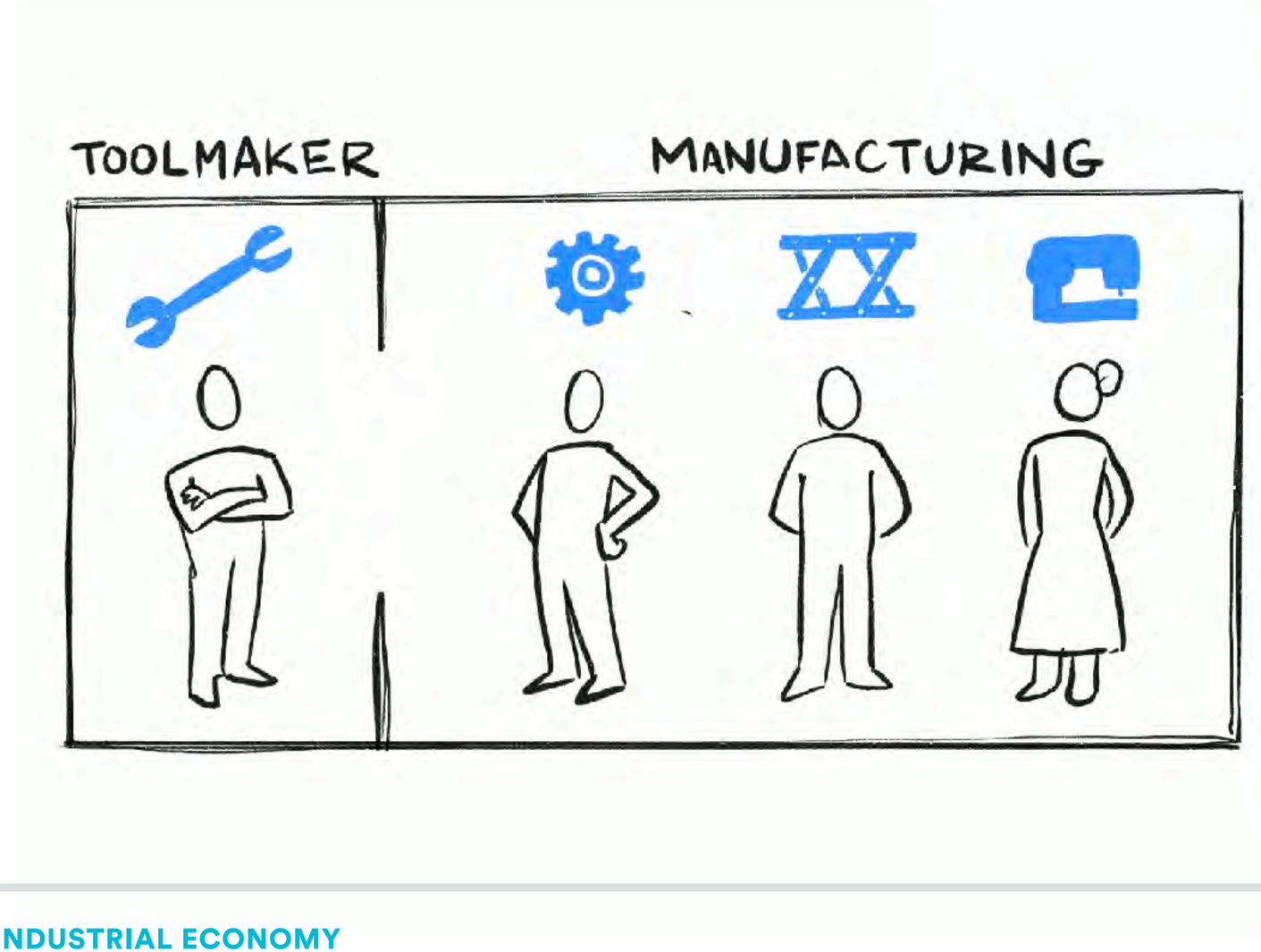
A book all about using simple drawing to help you and your team think better and communicate better. You should totally buy it, it’s really awesome.



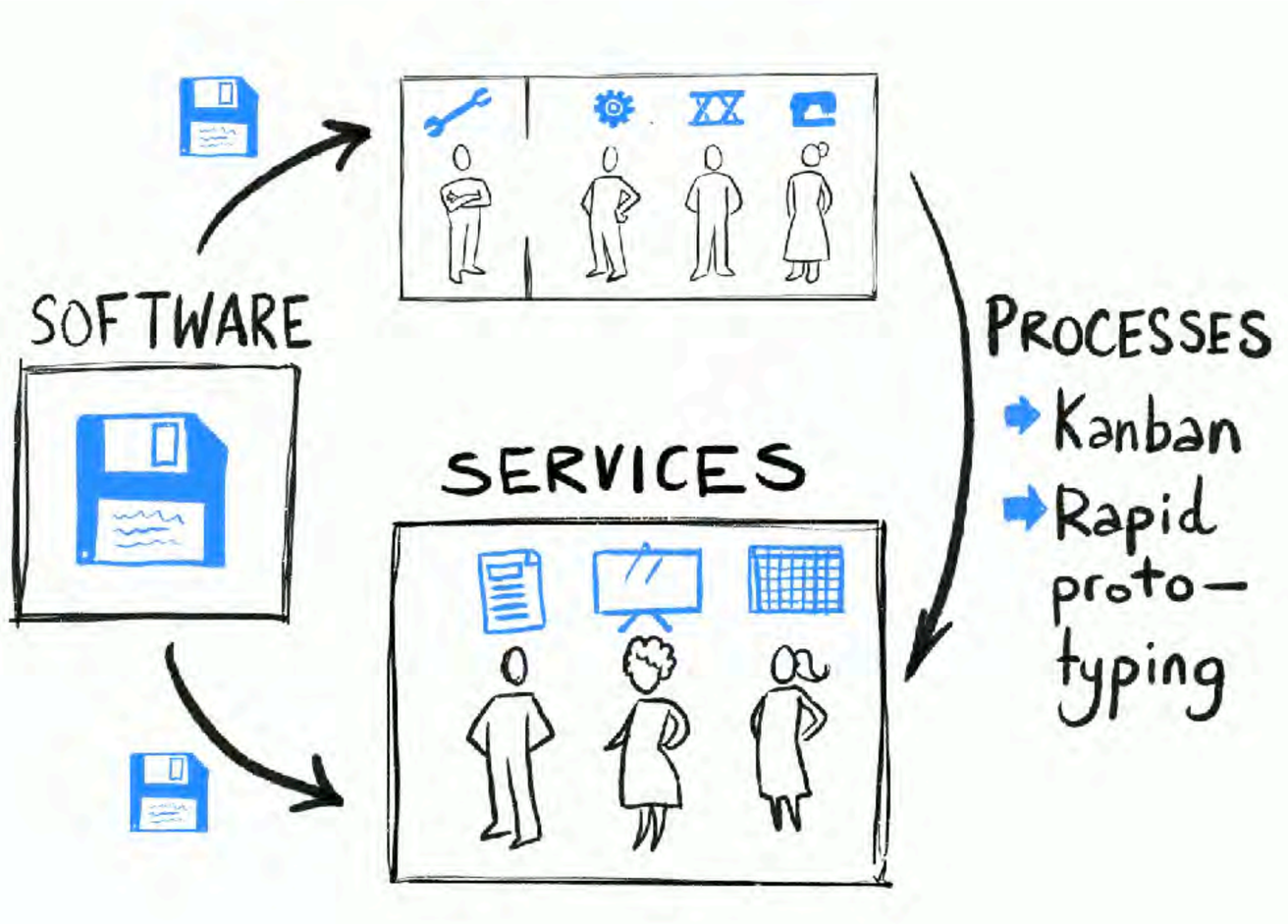
What drives
the **tools and**
rituals we use?

We’ve been
swindled.

TOOLS DID THE HEAVY LIFTING OF MANUAL LABOUR



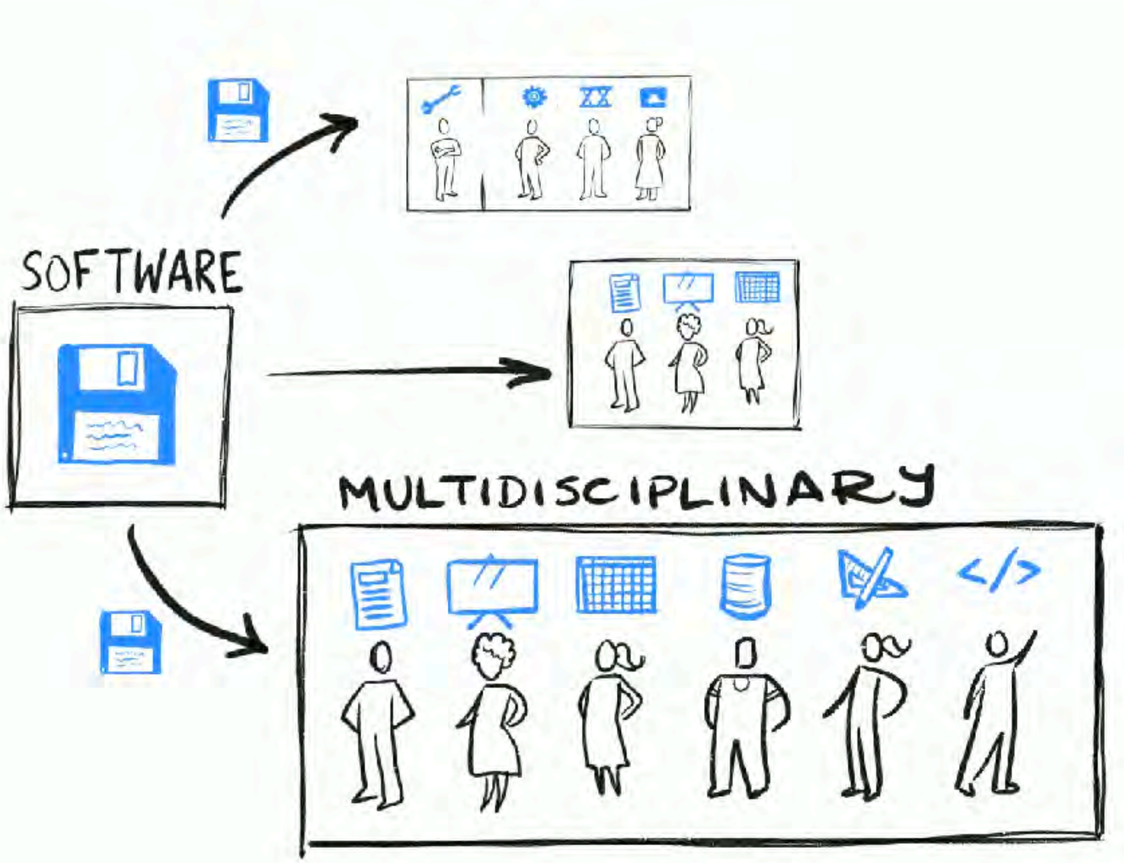
SOFTWARE DID THE HEAVY LIFTING OF MENTAL LABOUR



19TH C. - INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

20TH C. - SERVICES ECONOMY

RISE OF PATTERNS AND MINDSETS



Patterns

Agile patterns
Canvases
Playbooks

Mindsets

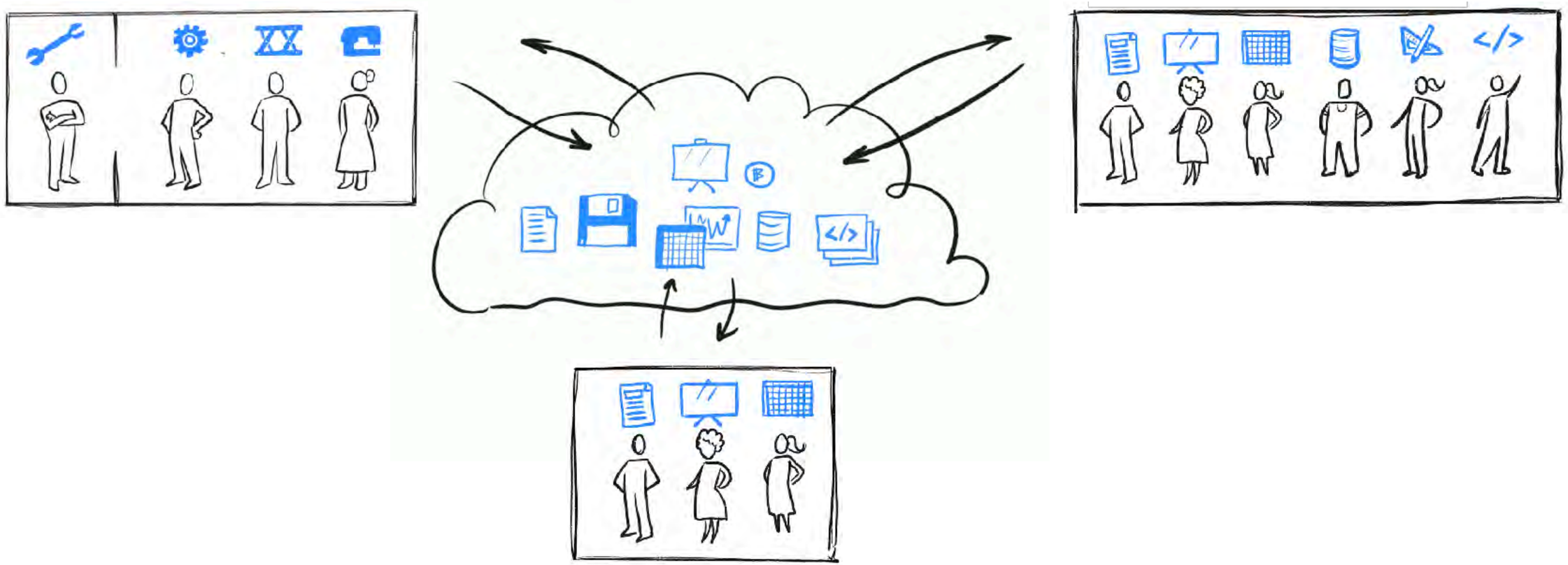
Agile
Lean
Design Thinking

19TH C. - INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

20TH C. - SERVICES ECONOMY

21ST C. - EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

CLOUDIFICATION OF SOFTWARE AND SERVICES



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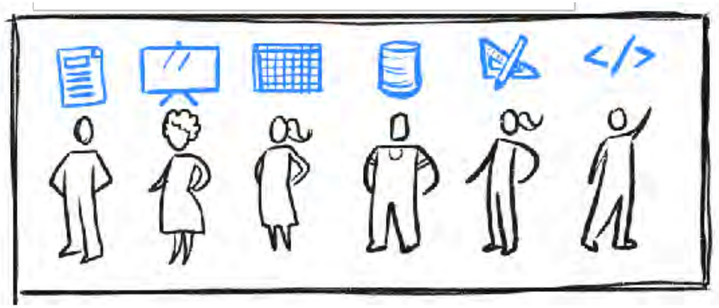
WHAT ABOUT WE TRY -
EFFICIENCY! SCALE!
imgflip.com

WE’VE OUTSOURCED THE MAKER MINDSET

?



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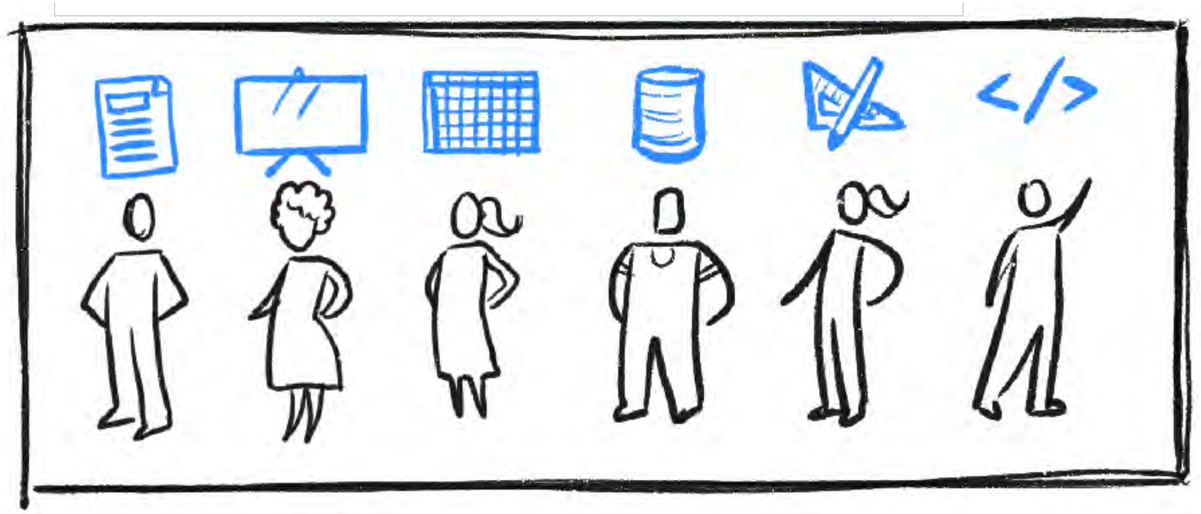

19TH C. - INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

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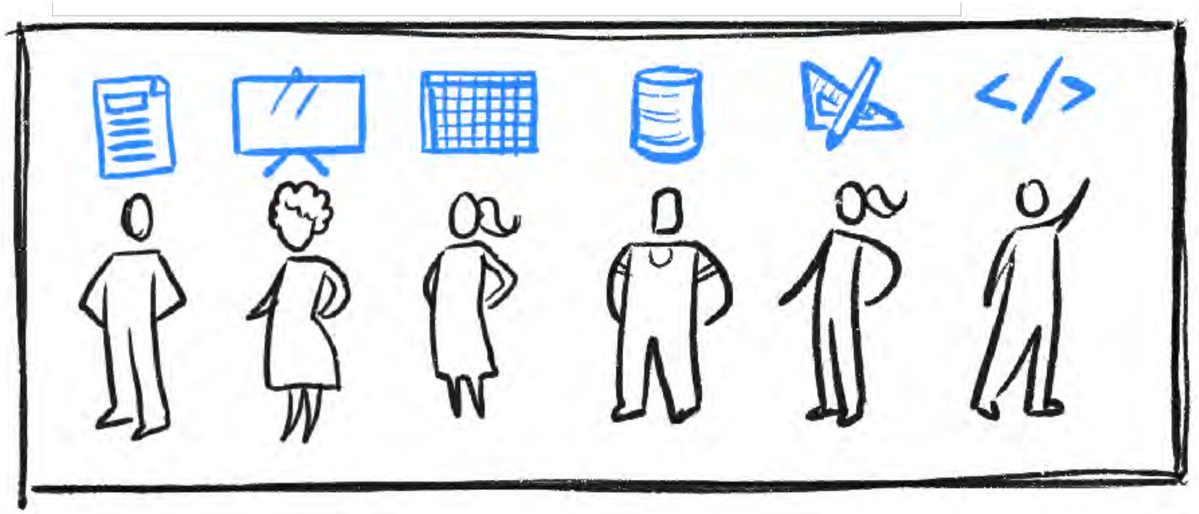
When we feed efficiency, we **starve our learning**.

THIS AFFECTS ATLASSIAN TOO

ATLASSIAN



Agile is about being **more effective**, not more efficient.

Has your team slipped into **bad habits**?

IS THE WAY YOU WORK ACHIEVING YOUR OUTCOMES?

Should get us...

Patterns	Outcomes
Stand-up	Shared understanding of each other's work and blockers
Retrospective	Rapid diagnosis of work for continuous improvement, and fostering an open atmosphere
Sprint planning	Shared estimation and shared ownership
Showcasing	Meaningful progress and working software

ARE YOU OPTIMISING FOR THE PATTERN OR THE OUTCOME?

Pattern	Ways of doing the pattern
Retrospective	What went well / What needs improvement / Next steps
	Stop / Start / Continue
	Roses, buds and thorns
	4 Ls: Liked / Learned / Lacked / Longed for
	Acclamations / Asks / Actions

Get back that
making feeling

BENEFITS OF MAKING

Stimulates a more effective conversation

Builds better resiliency in the team

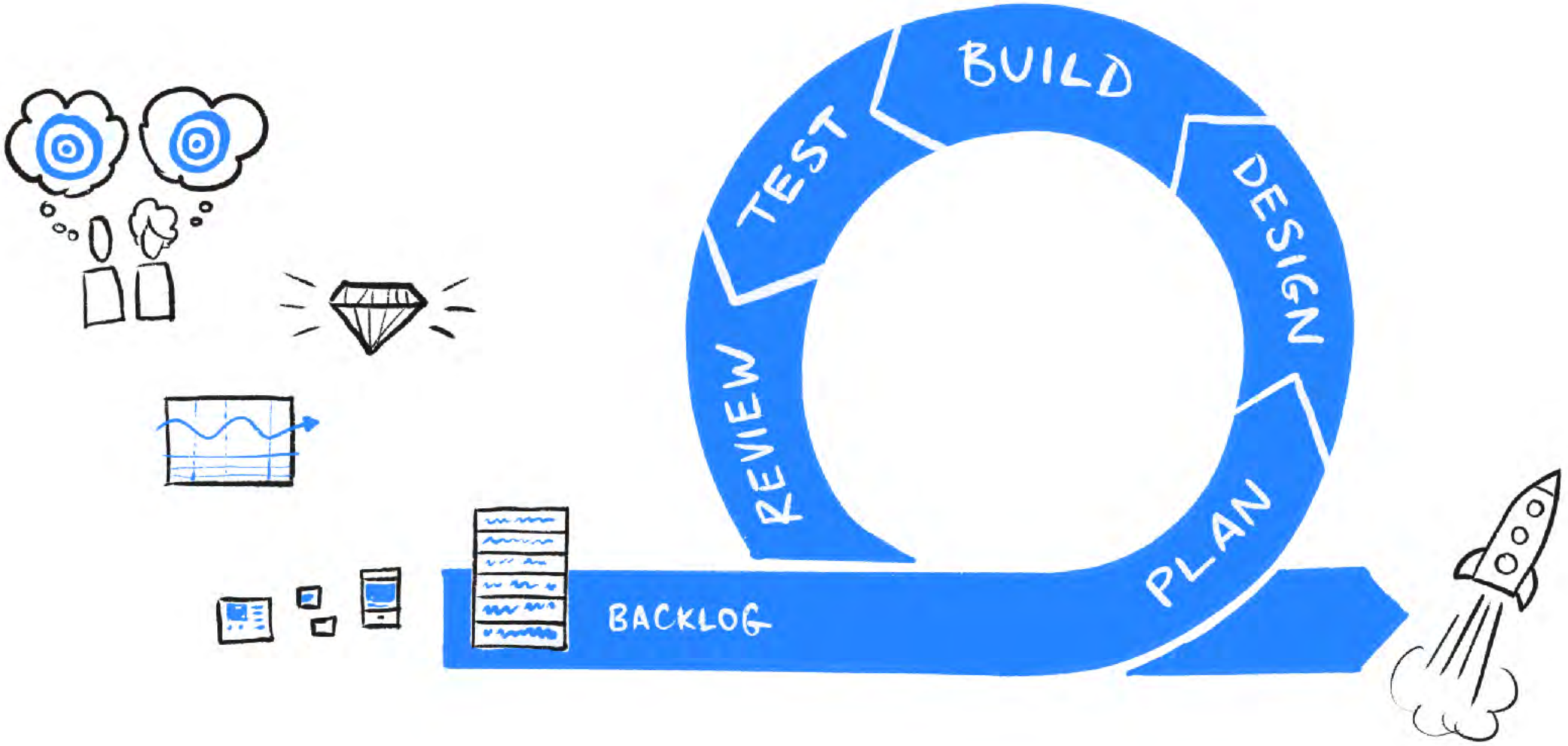
Inspires others when they see creative problem-solving

Making together
is as valuable as
what is made

How do we make **new patterns together**?

#1 Break the habit of waiting for the ‘right part of the process’

COLLECT THE INPUTS ABOUT ISSUES DURING YOUR WORK



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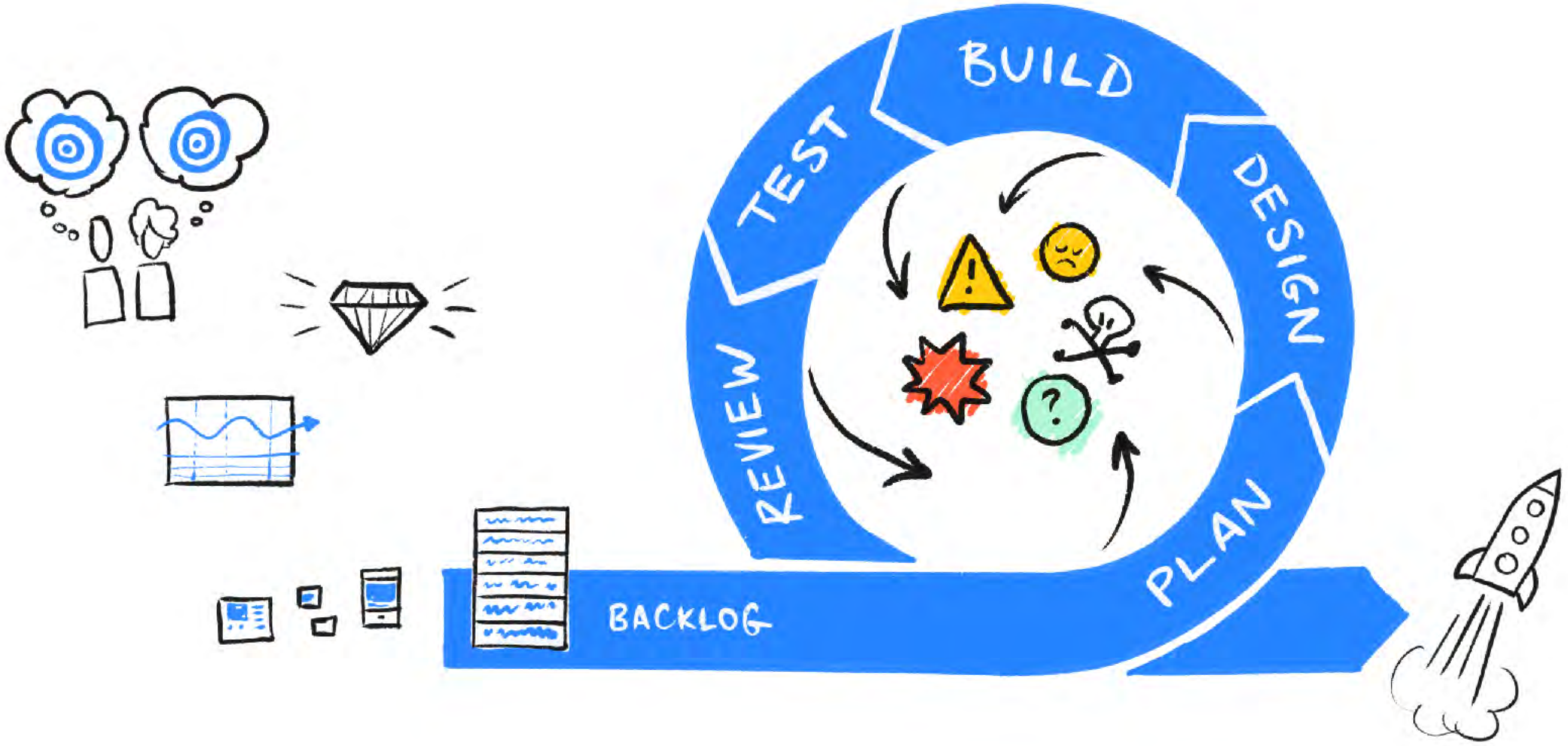
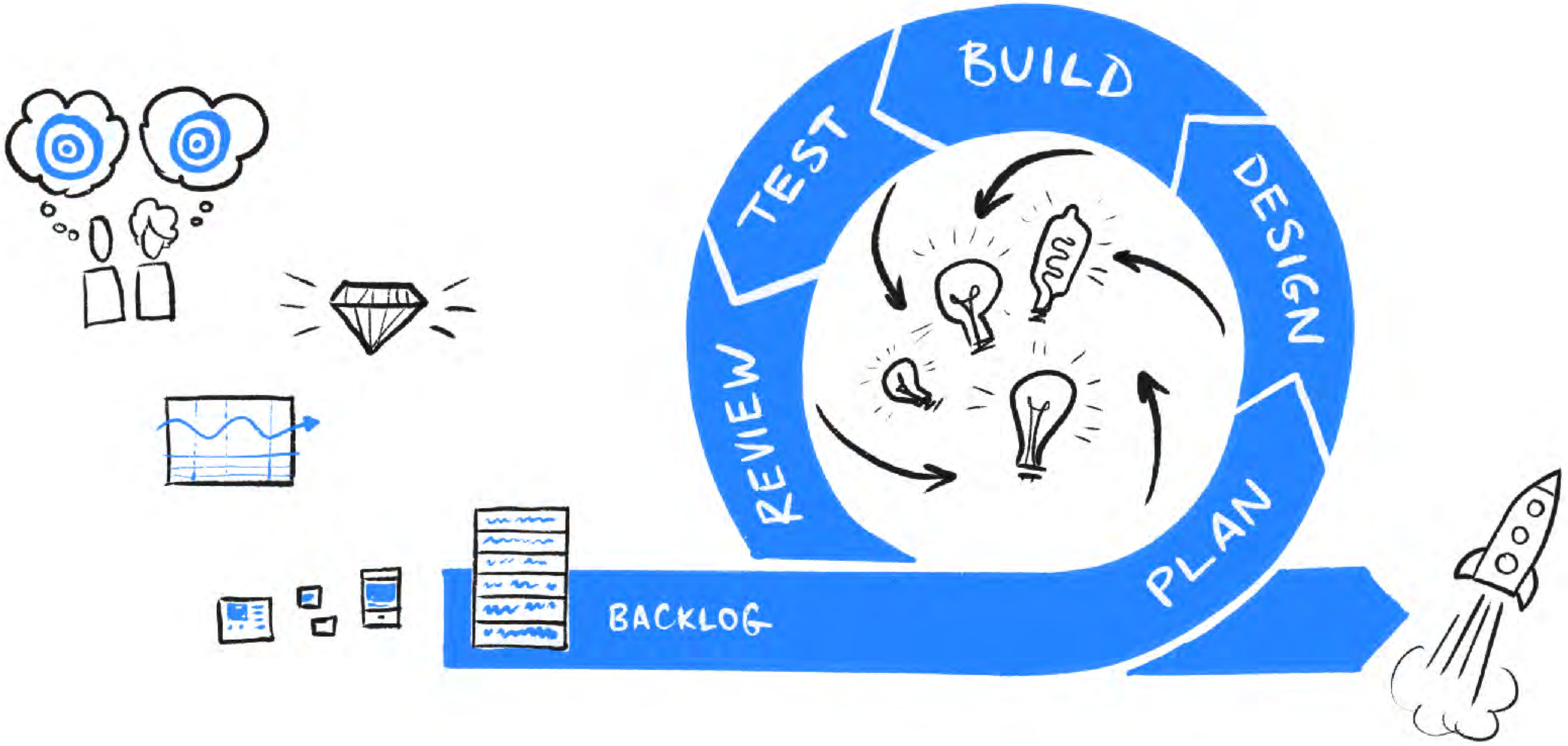


CAPTURE IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH THOSE ISSUES



#2 Run a diagnostic about what's not working

RUN A DIAGNOSTIC

Outcome

What outcome are we **not** achieving as well as we want?

Issues

What are the **symptoms** we think are happening that are affecting this?

Behaviour

Where do we see this happening in our **existing patterns and rituals**?

DIAGNOSTIC EXAMPLE: CODEPENDENT TEAMS AT ATLASSIAN

Outcome

Meaningful progress hasn't been as fast (or customer-centred) as expected

Is being held back by...

Issues

Unclear roles and responsibilities

Vague expectations of influence

Competing OKRs

...and we see this happen in...

Behaviour

'Roles and responsibilities' play is being done by-the-numbers

No place to capture how influence will happen

OKR pages aren't connected

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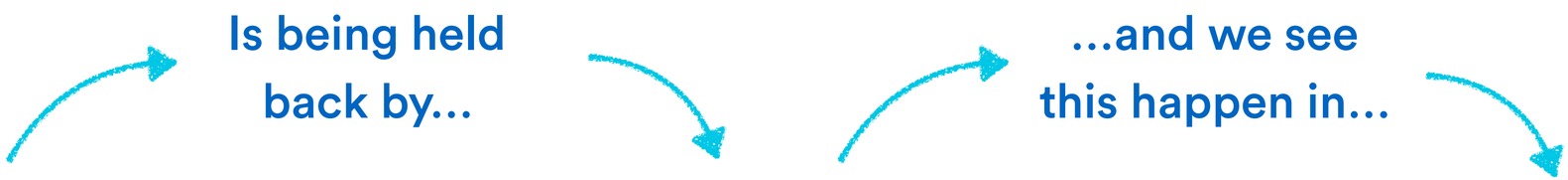
#3 Frame the desired behaviour and outcome as a challenge

FRAME THE DESIRED BEHAVIOUR AND OUTCOME AS A CHALLENGE



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FRAME THE DESIRED BEHAVIOUR AND OUTCOME AS A CHALLENGE

How do we...

Understand and capture how influence will happen

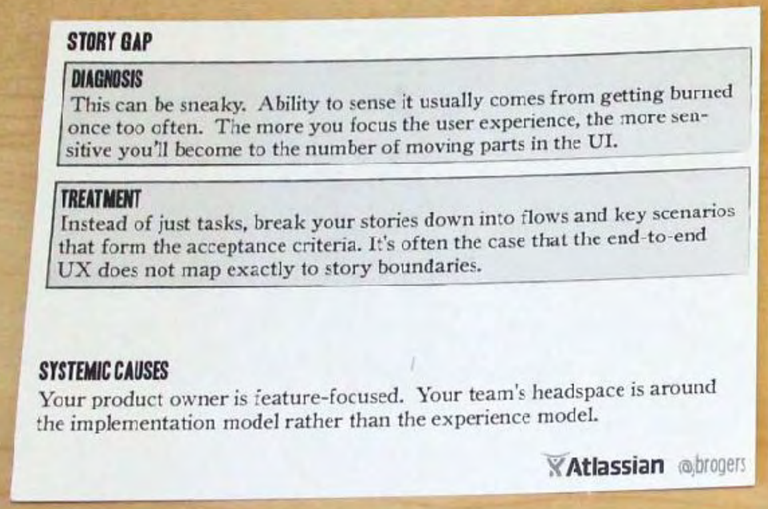
So that we get...

Meaningful progress

#4 Try solving the challenge using commonly available materials

MADE IN GERMANY
STAEDTLER tradition HB
Sharpie FINE POINT Permanent Marker
Sharpie FINE POINT
Artline 200

SOMETHING IS BROKEN
NOBODY KNOWS
LOOK FOR HELP LINK
SEES CAC/DAC
ASK MY TEAM
COPY & PASTE INTO GOOGLE
OVERWHELMING SEARCH RESULTS
CLICK INTO STACK OVERFLOW/CAC/DAC
ASSESS 16 MATCHES PROBLEM
SEE ERROR MESSAGE
ASK IT TEAM
ASK ATLASSIAN ANSWERS CAC/DAC
GET ANSWER
TRY
DOESN'T WORK



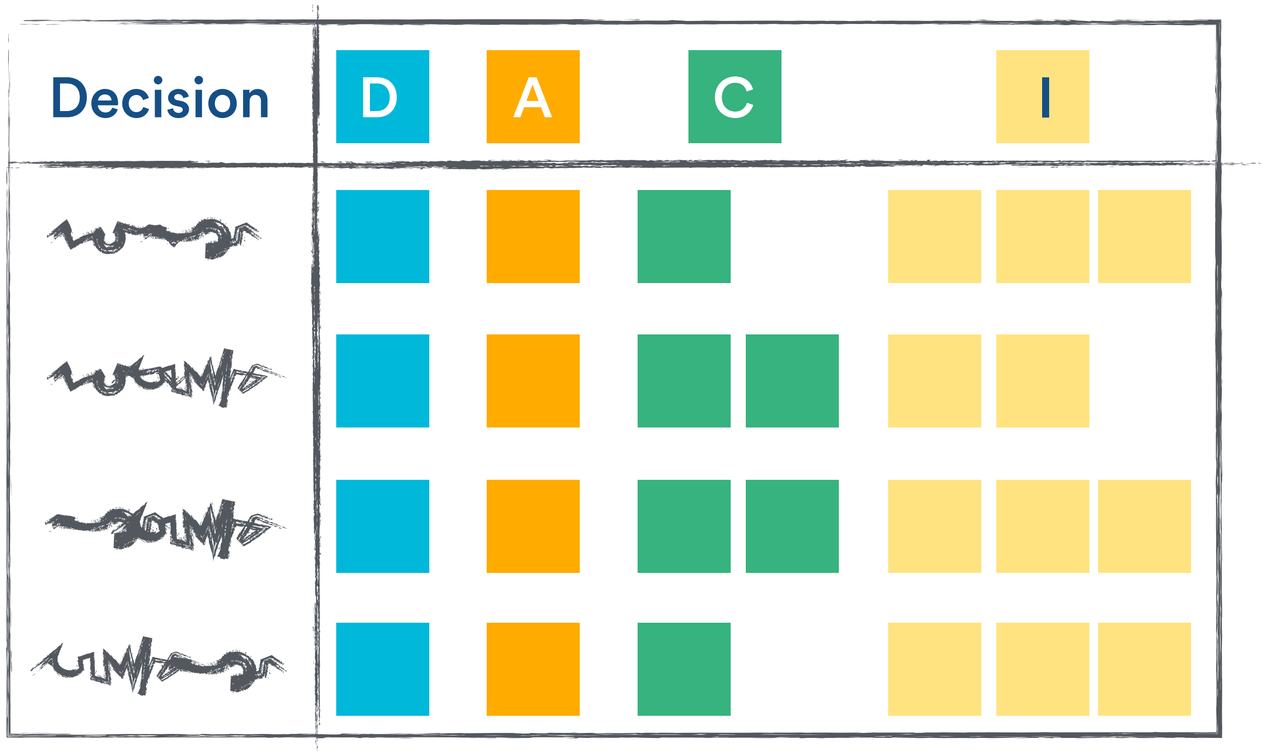
Design + Agile cards

Persona cards

Communicards

EXAMPLE OF A NEW ‘PLAY’: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

DACI Matrix



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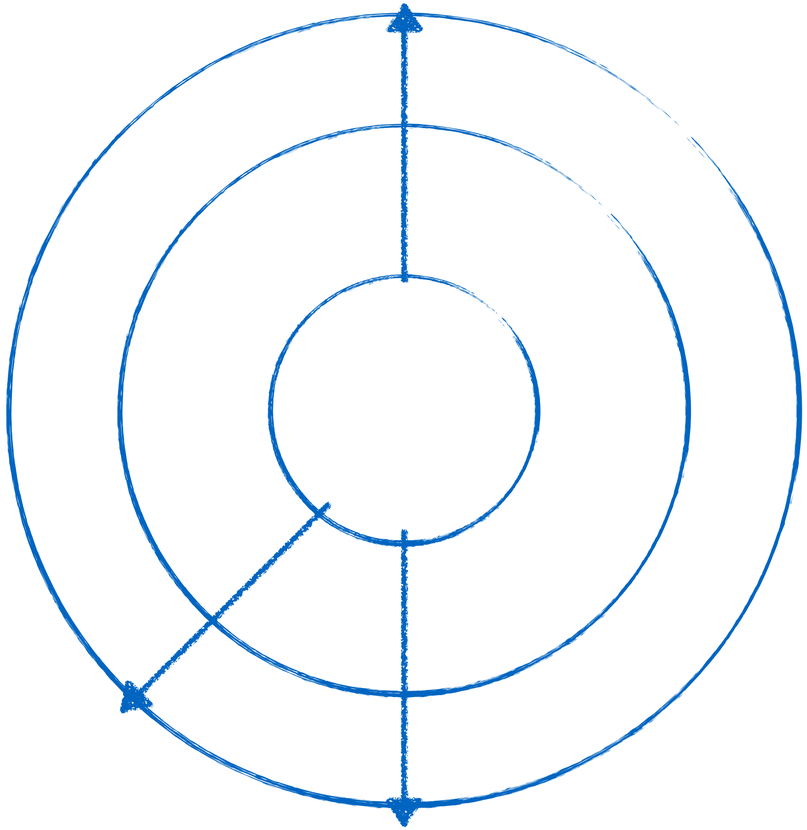
DACI Matrix

Decision	D	A	C		I		
	■	■	■		■	■	■
	■	■	■	■	■	■	
	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	■	■	■		■	■	■

Circles of influence



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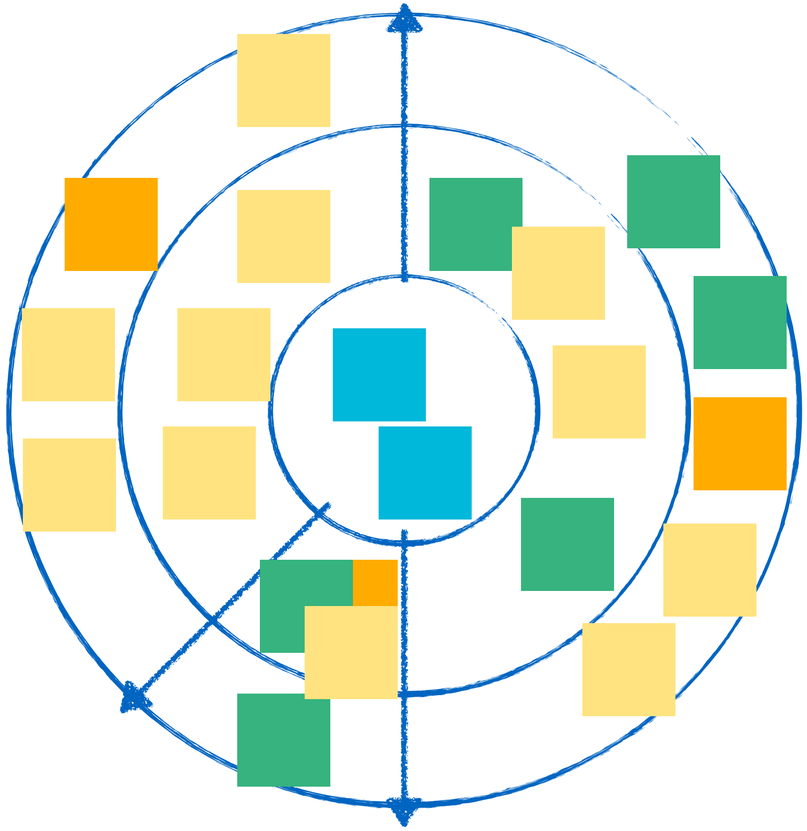
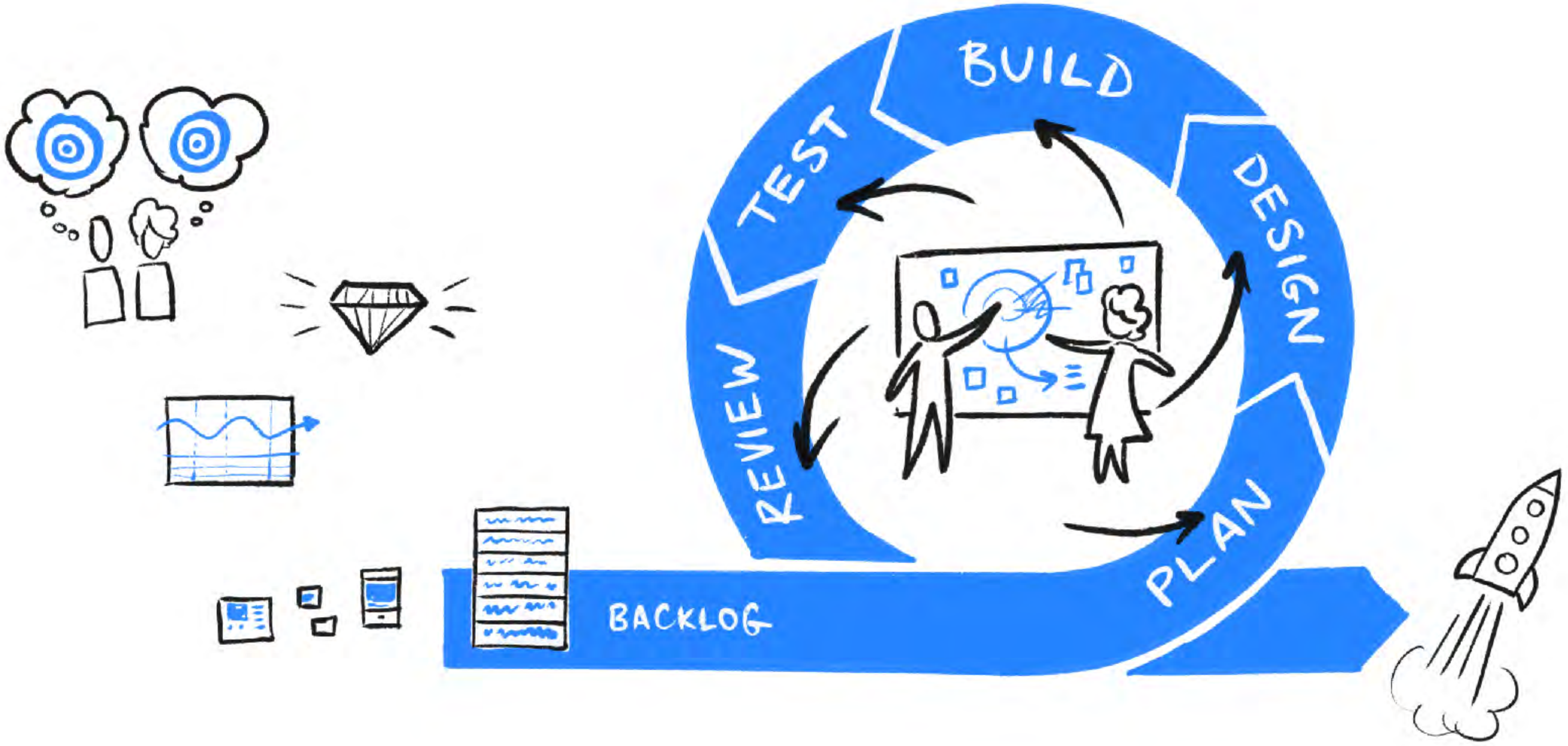


USE THE NEW PATTERN WHEREVER YOU CAN



BUT WAIT...

Cautions and caveats

DIY doesn’t always = best

Just because you’ve made it yourself, doesn’t mean it’s the best thing for the job.

Outcome over output

Always optimise for the outcome, not for the IKEA effect.

Diff’rent strokes

Be wary of sharing it; what might be right for you might not be right for other teams.

RECAP

1. Break the habit of waiting for the ‘right part of the process’
2. Run a diagnostic about what’s not working
3. Frame the desired behaviour and outcome as a challenge
4. Try solving the challenge using commonly available materials

Making together
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Thank you

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