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THE SCORE TAKES CARE OF ITSELF

Growing Product Judgment When AI Does the Work

Marvin Guerra, Head of Engineering, Pulley

01

DRIVE 01

1979: TWO WINS. FOURTEEN LOSSES.

Bill Walsh’s first season with the San Francisco 49ers



BILL WALSH

“

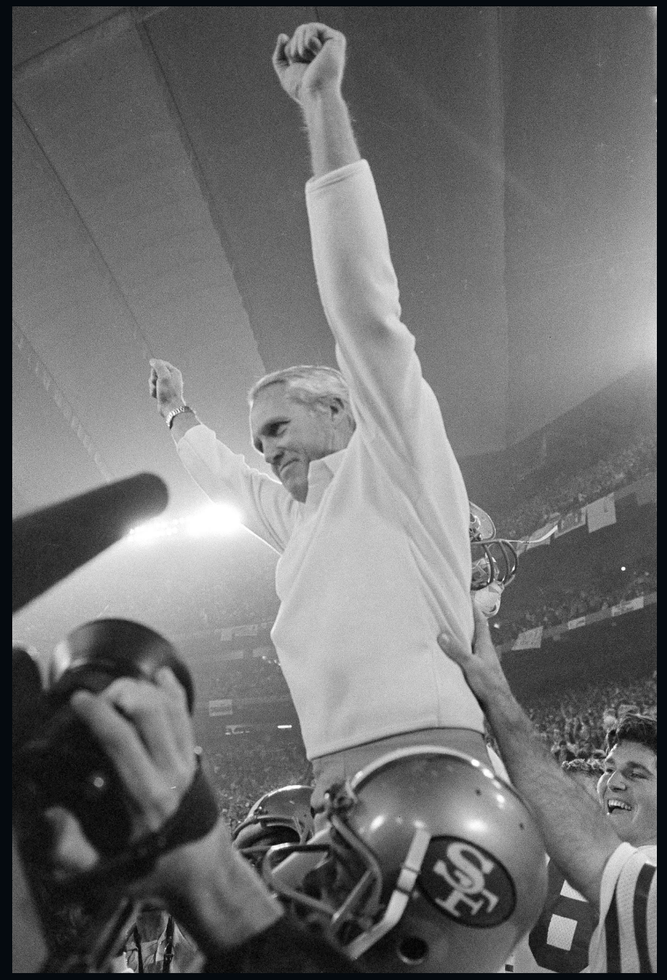
Concentrate on what will produce results rather than on the results, the process rather than the prize.

The Score Takes Care of Itself

1981 SEASON

13 WINS / 3 LOSSES

SUPER BOWL XVI CHAMPIONS



Bill Walsh after Super Bowl XVI · AP Photo

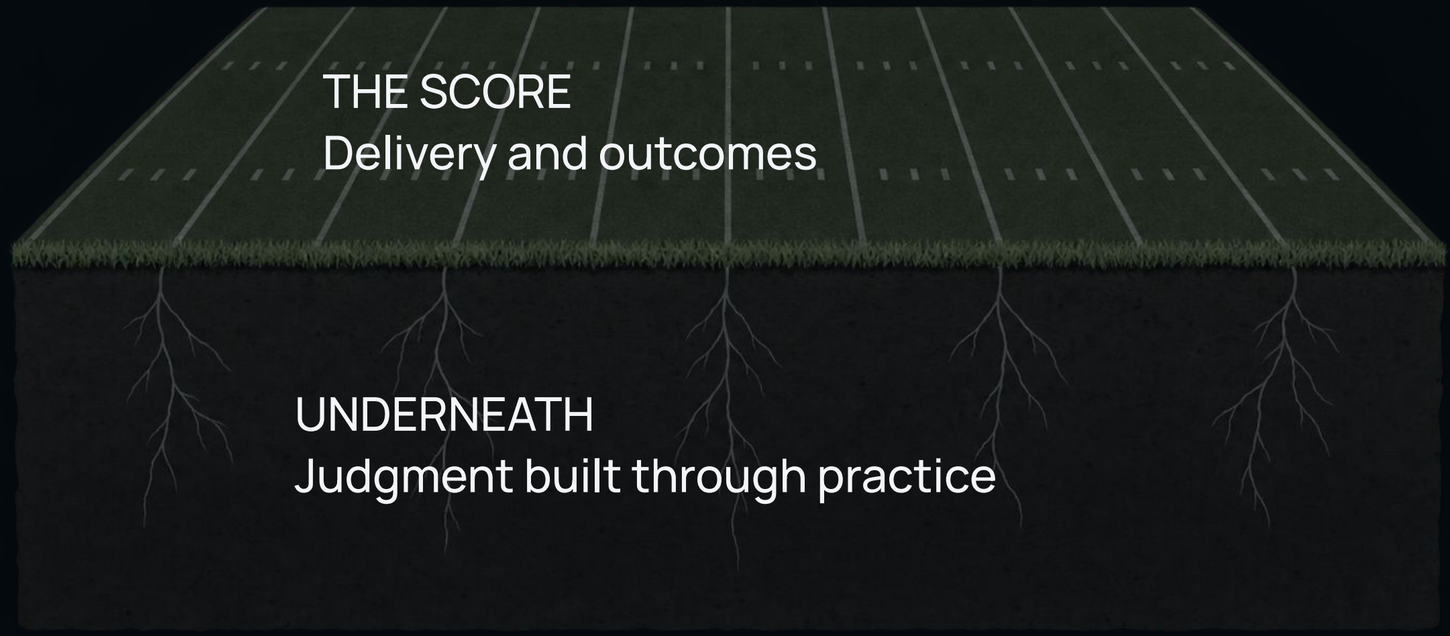
THE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE

JUDGMENT SITS UNDER THE SCORE

01 Results tell us what happened

02 Standards shape everyday work

03 Judgment guides the next decision



FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE

AT PULLEY, THE STANDARD CAME FIRST

01 Planning made commitments explicit

02 Retros changed how we worked

03 Post-mortems improved the system

97 TO 5
open bugs

90%+
drop in on-call load

80%+
of commitments delivered on time

THE SCORE TAKES CARE OF ITSELF

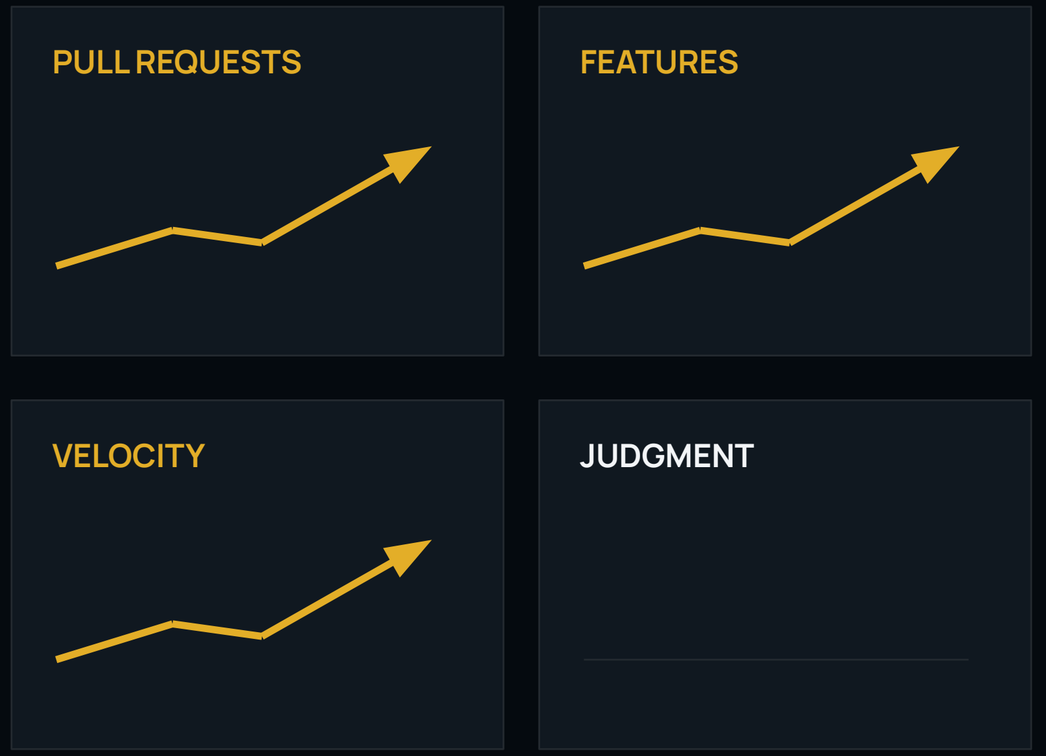
AI AND THE DASHBOARD

OUTPUT IS EASY TO SEE

01 More code moves through review

02 More ideas become features

03 Learning needs its own evidence



Illustrative trends

THE QUESTION

If AI does more of the work, where do people get the reps?

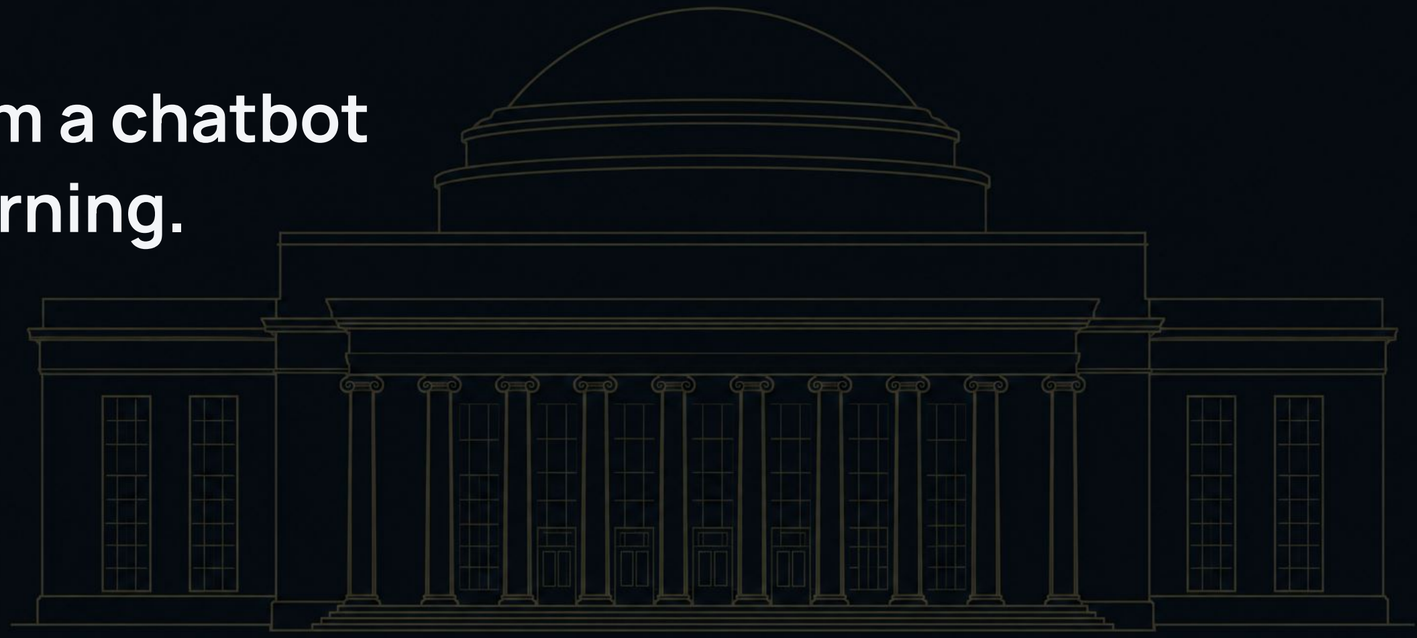
MIT, AUGUST 2026

“COGNITIVE SURRENDER”

“

Getting the right answer from a chatbot can create the illusion of learning.

MIT AI and Education Report, August 2026



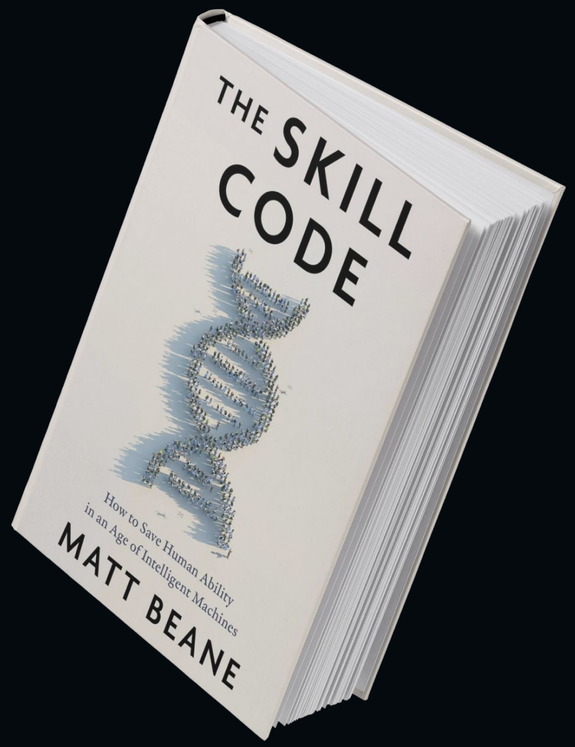
THE SKILL CODE

THREE CONDITIONS SUPPORT SKILL

01 Challenge: work near your limits

02 Complexity: understand the context

03 Connection: learn with an expert



MATT BEANE

The Skill Code, 2024

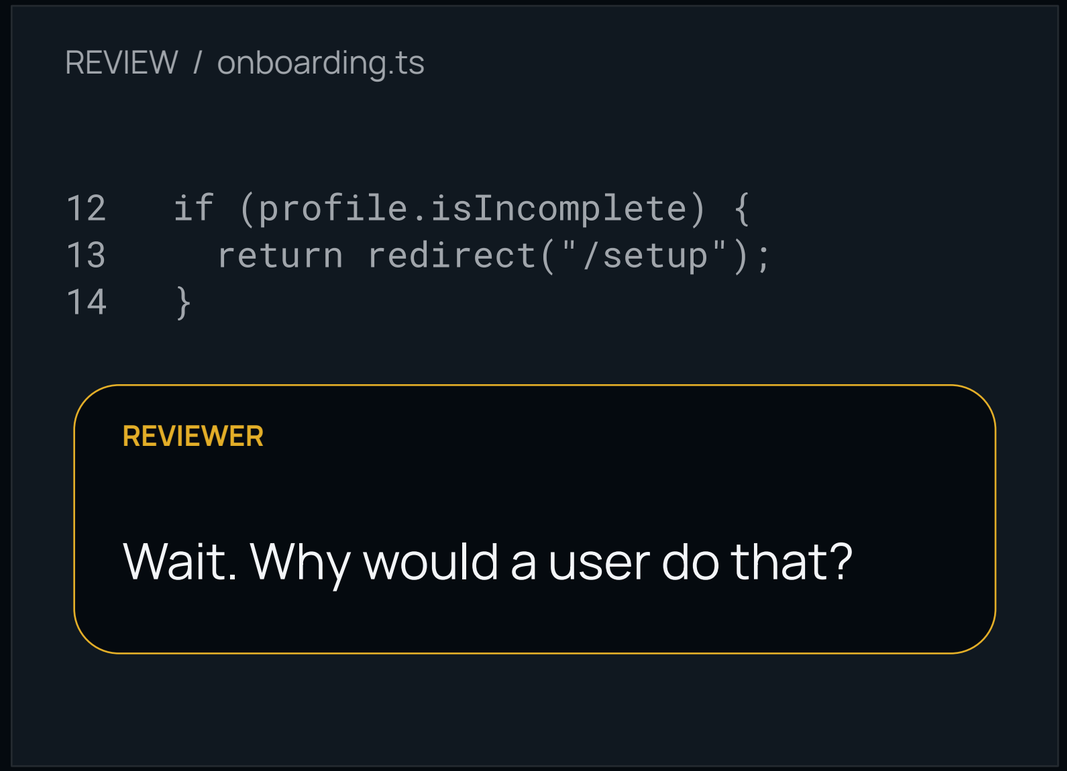
HOW PRODUCT JUDGMENT DEVELOPS

THE SMALL REPS ADD UP

01 A first draft exposes assumptions

02 A support ticket reveals context

03 A senior challenges the reasoning



Illustrative review

02

DRIVE 02

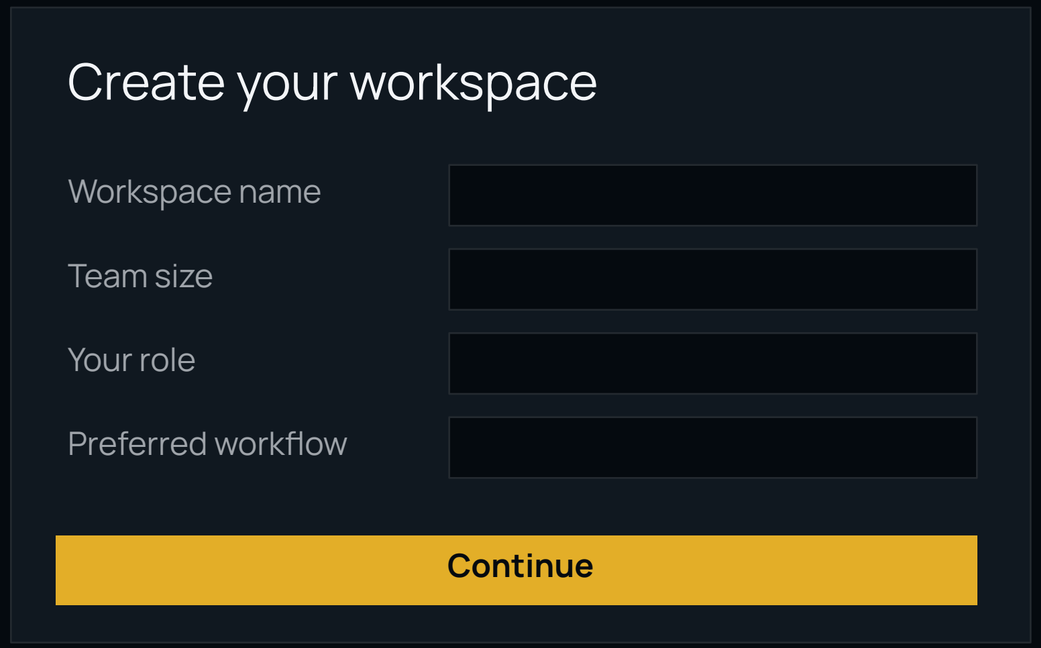
CHOOSING DESERVES MORE ATTENTION

As implementation gets easier, deciding what matters becomes more valuable

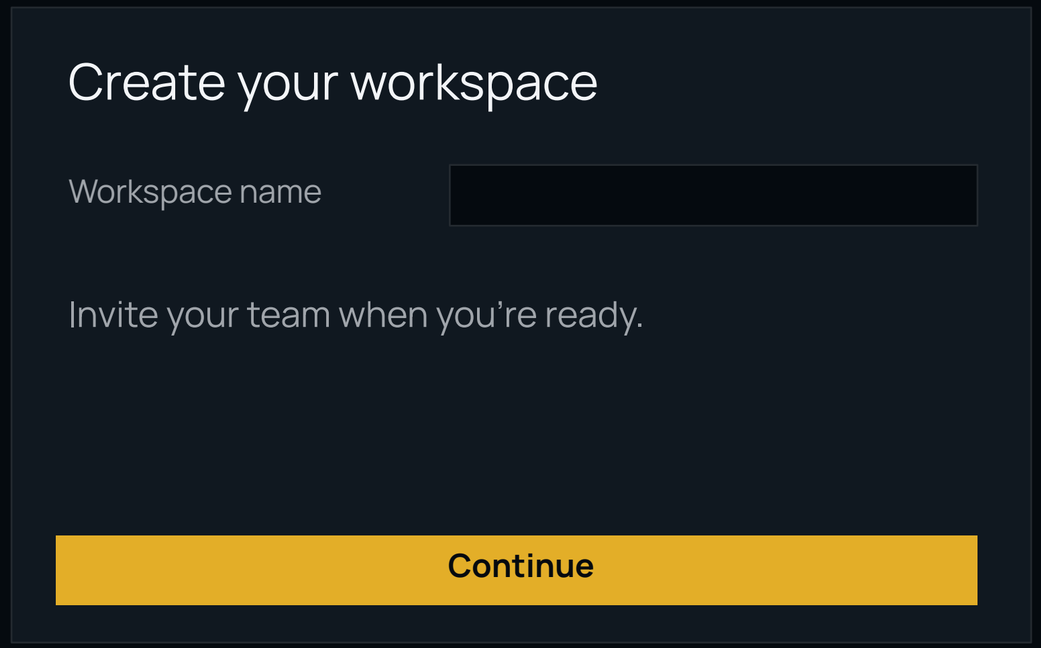
THE COST OF ADDING MORE

MORE FEATURES CAN ADD MORE FRICTION

FOUR DECISIONS BEFORE STARTING



ONE STEP TO GET STARTED



Start with the customer’s obstacle. Ask only what the next step needs.

Illustrative onboarding screens

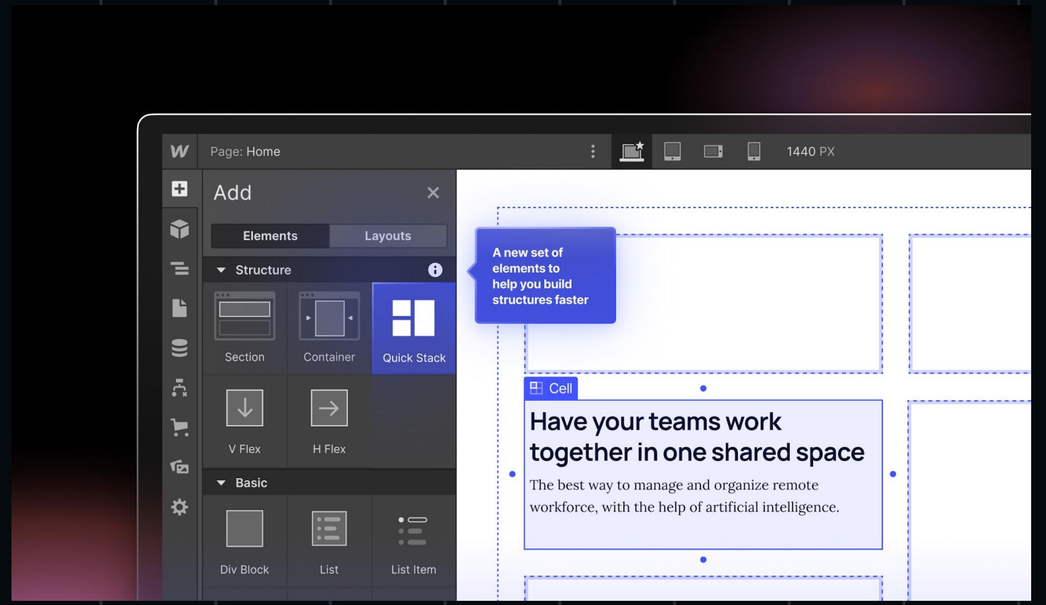
QUICK STACK

WEBFLOW: THE BLOCKER WAS LAYOUT

01 Four weeks of diary research

02 Funnel analysis located the drop-off

03 Activation rose 5% relative after launch



Quick Stack UI • Source: Webflow

WHY THIS IS PRODUCT STRATEGY

PRODUCT OUTCOMES DEPEND ON SMALL CALLS

01 An onboarding step asks for effort

02 A default makes an assumption

03 A feature adds something to learn



THOUSANDS OF DECISIONS

Too many for one leader to review

THE CONCLUSION

Delivery can improve while opportunities to develop product judgment shrink.

A STANDARD FOR AI-NATIVE TEAMS

01	CHALLENGE	**Stretch on purpose** Leave a real decision with the learner
02	COMPLEXITY	**Keep the whole problem visible** Connect the ticket to the customer outcome
03	CONNECTION	**Protect connection** Make expert reasoning available
04	SHARED LEARNING	**Make learning visible** Give useful practices time and support

01 / CHALLENGE

STRETCH ON PURPOSE

01 Set a decision within reach

02 Use AI to explore alternatives

03 Ask for reasoning and tradeoffs



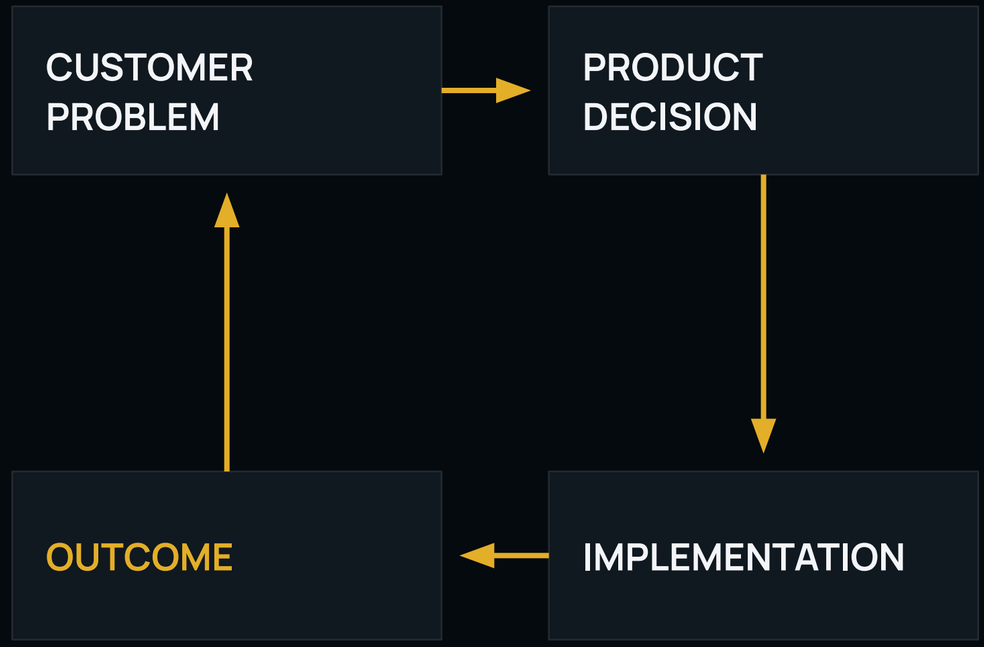
02 / COMPLEXITY

KEEP THE WHOLE PROBLEM VISIBLE

01 Hear the customer's problem

02 Carry the decision into delivery

03 Return to the result after launch



Return to what customers need

03 / CONNECTION

PROTECT CONNECTION

01 Pair on a consequential decision

02 Explain reasoning in design reviews

03 Include engineers in customer calls

DESIGN REVIEW / next action

REVIEWER

Change this.

A DIRECTION

REVIEWER

What do you expect the user to do next?

A CONVERSATION

One real decision. Time to think together.

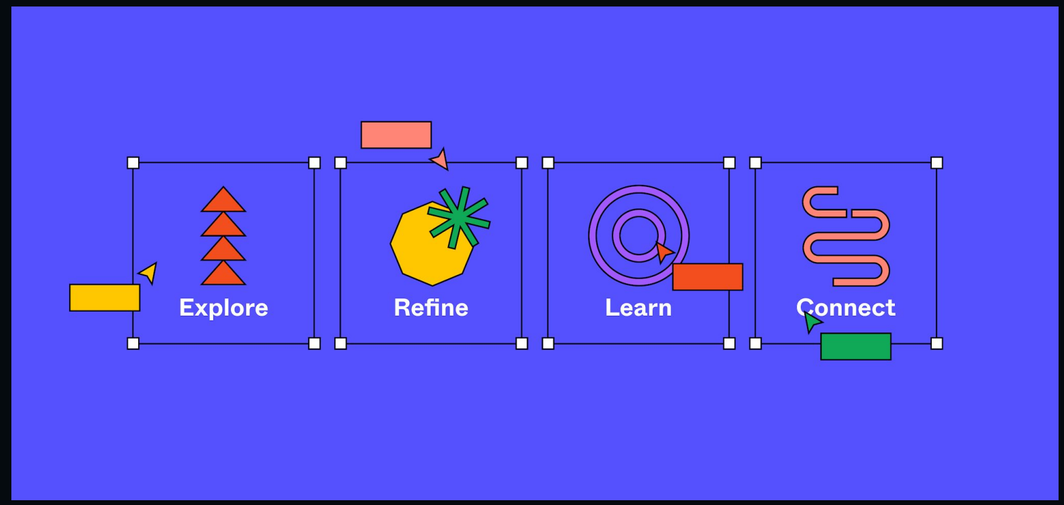
04 / SHARED LEARNING

MAKE LEARNING VISIBLE

01 Ask how people actually learn

02 Give useful practices work time

03 Review AI-assisted decisions openly



FIGMA MAKER WEEK

Time to explore and learn together

Figma Blog, 2021

THE THIRD QUESTION

What does automating this take away from someone's growth?

If useful practice disappears, give it a deliberate replacement

SIGNALS TO TRY

THE SCORE AND WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

THE SCORE	WHAT'S UNDERNEATH
Features shipped	Who understood the customer problem?
Delivery speed	Who can explain the choices and tradeoffs?
Experiments run	What did we learn, and what changed?
AI-assisted pull requests	Who can explain and check the result?

PUTTING THE STANDARD INTO PRACTICE

ONE WEEK TO START

01 Choose one AI-assisted workflow

02 Give one engineer a real decision

03 Review the reasoning and outcome

MONDAY
Choose the rep

DURING THE WEEK
Pair on the decision

FRIDAY
Review what changed

THE SCORE TAKES CARE OF ITSELF.
THE STANDARD IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

Keep the delivery gains. Make room for the reps.

SCORE / STANDARD

LET'S CONNECT

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