

Better organisation design enables great testing

Recognising the power of testers to shape organisations

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Agile Testing Days 2022

Ash's Golden Rules of No Look Consulting

You have too much
work in progress

You are building
stuff no one will use

Your testing is bad, but
its not the real problem

Real problem was doing some heavy lifting so I added one more...

Your organisation design is holding you back

Testers are on the sharp end of
organisation design

Especially **very poor** organisation
design

Testers spend their time exploring
where teams and systems meet

Anti Patterns

- Release testing as performative therapy for management
- Shared end to end tests that everyone pretends don't exist
- Low testability systems that are hard to integrate with



anti pattern to pattern with
one easy change

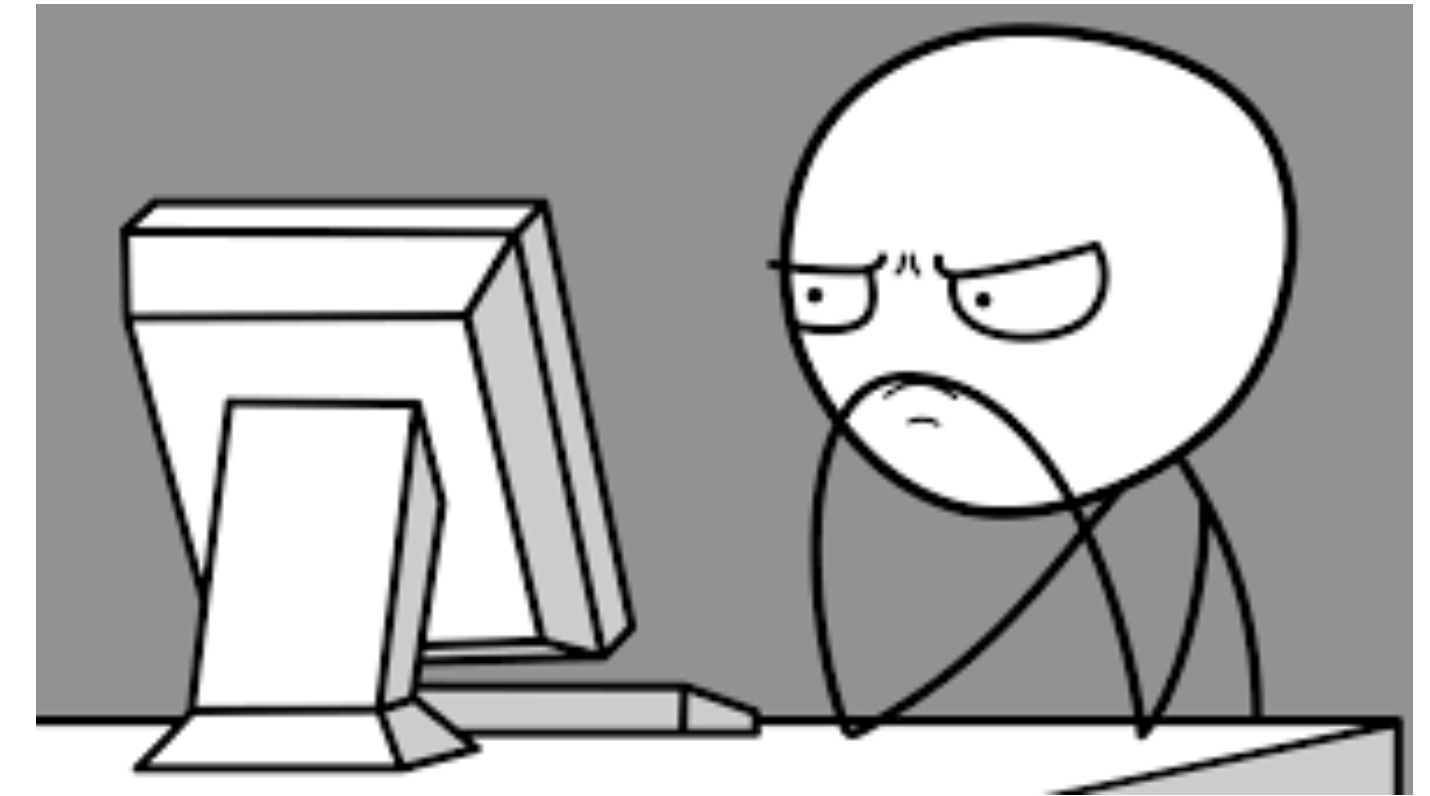
**If you want to know the truth about your
organisation design, ask the testers**

The Dreaded Reorg*

*Otherwise known as
planned chaos with
mixed intentions

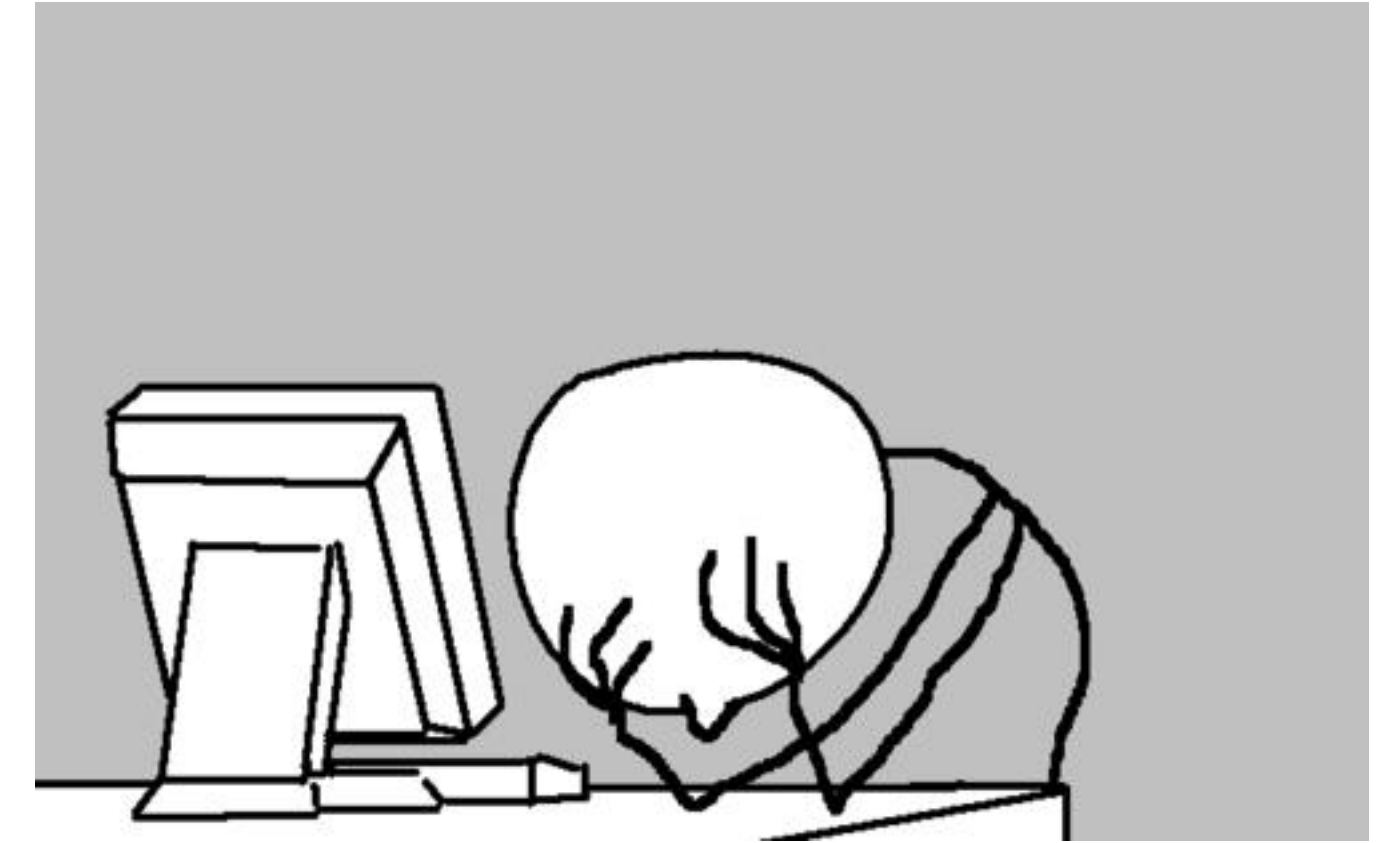
Planning is essential

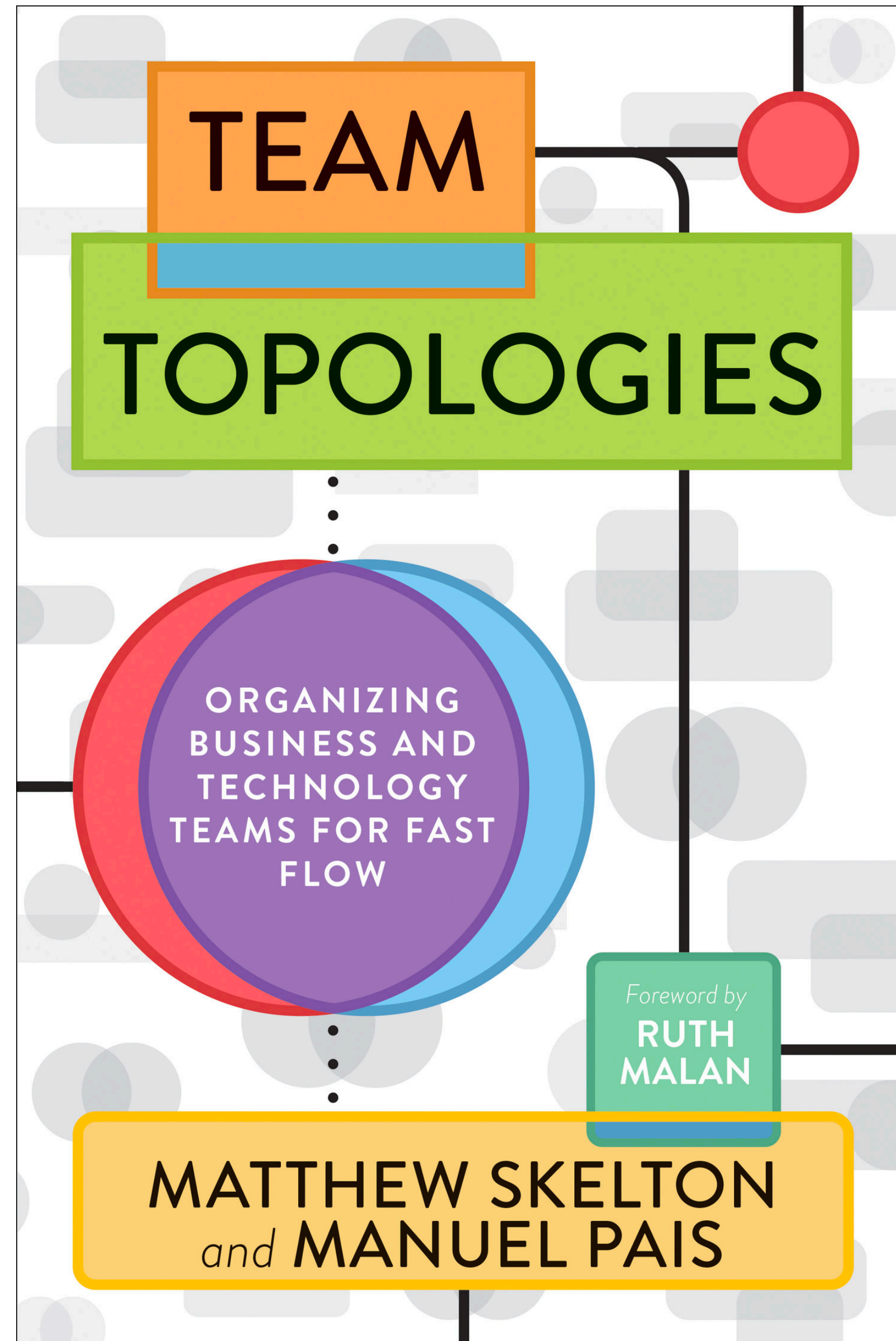
- Too many severity one incidents
- Open session to pitch ideas to management
- The problems 'liked' would get worked on
- We would vote with our feet



Plans are worthless

- 20 developers on one pitch, few on others
- Testers TRADING themselves between teams
- Management gave in and got involved
- The world returned to what it was
- Just for once, testers had POWER





We are going to cover

Recognising Patterns

- Org Chart Thinking
- Team Cognitive Load
- Conways Law
- Platform Teams

Becoming an Influencer

- Team Types
- Interaction Modes
- Learn your Fracture Planes
- Getting Testers on Platform Teams

Recognising Patterns*

*Challenge and
opportunity go hand
in hand

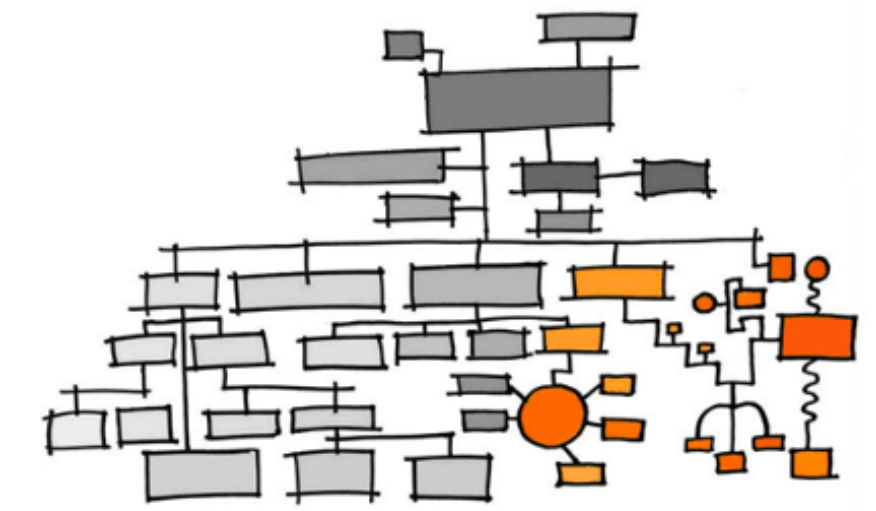
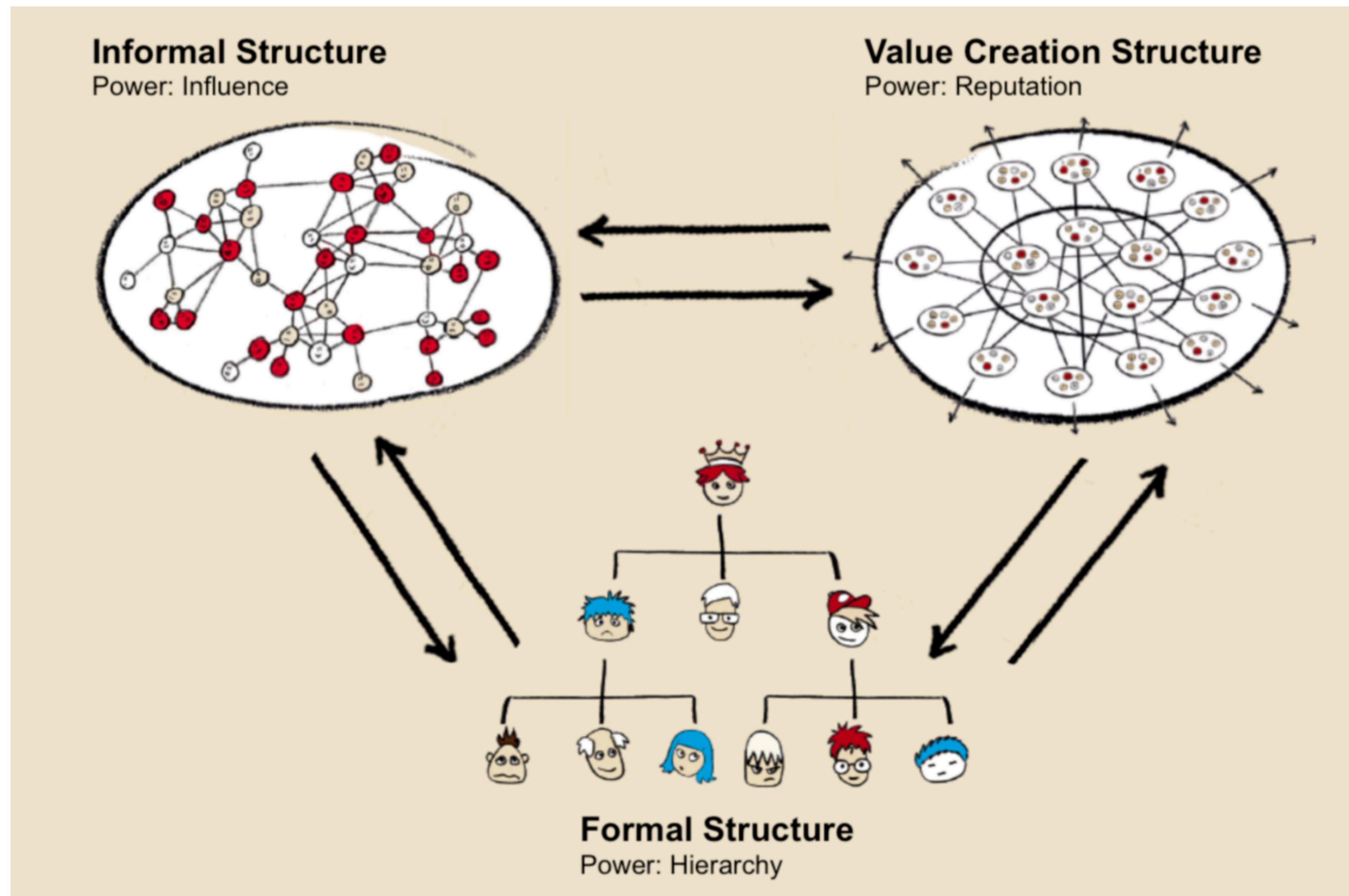


Org Chart Thinking

Organisational Invisibility Cloak

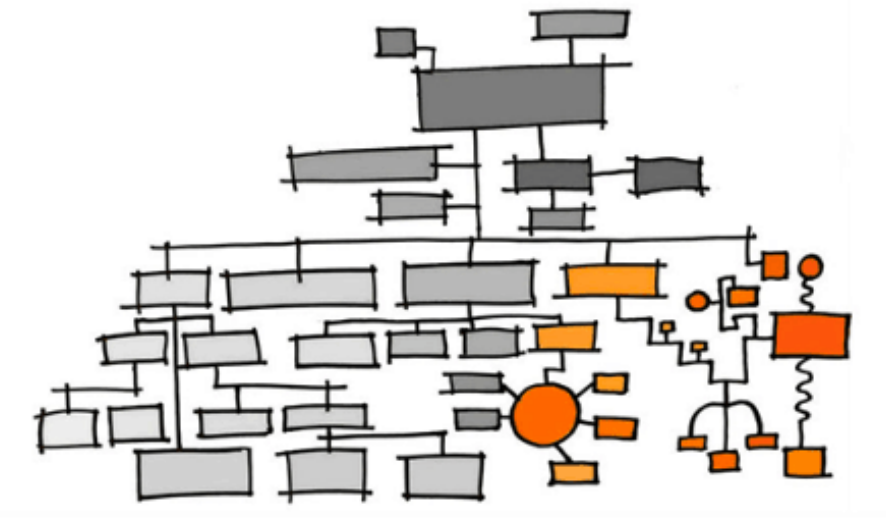


- Infrastructure-as-a-problem impacted everyone
- Infra team needed testing help
- As Principal Non Managing Tester I could sneak off to help
- Everyones outages reduced

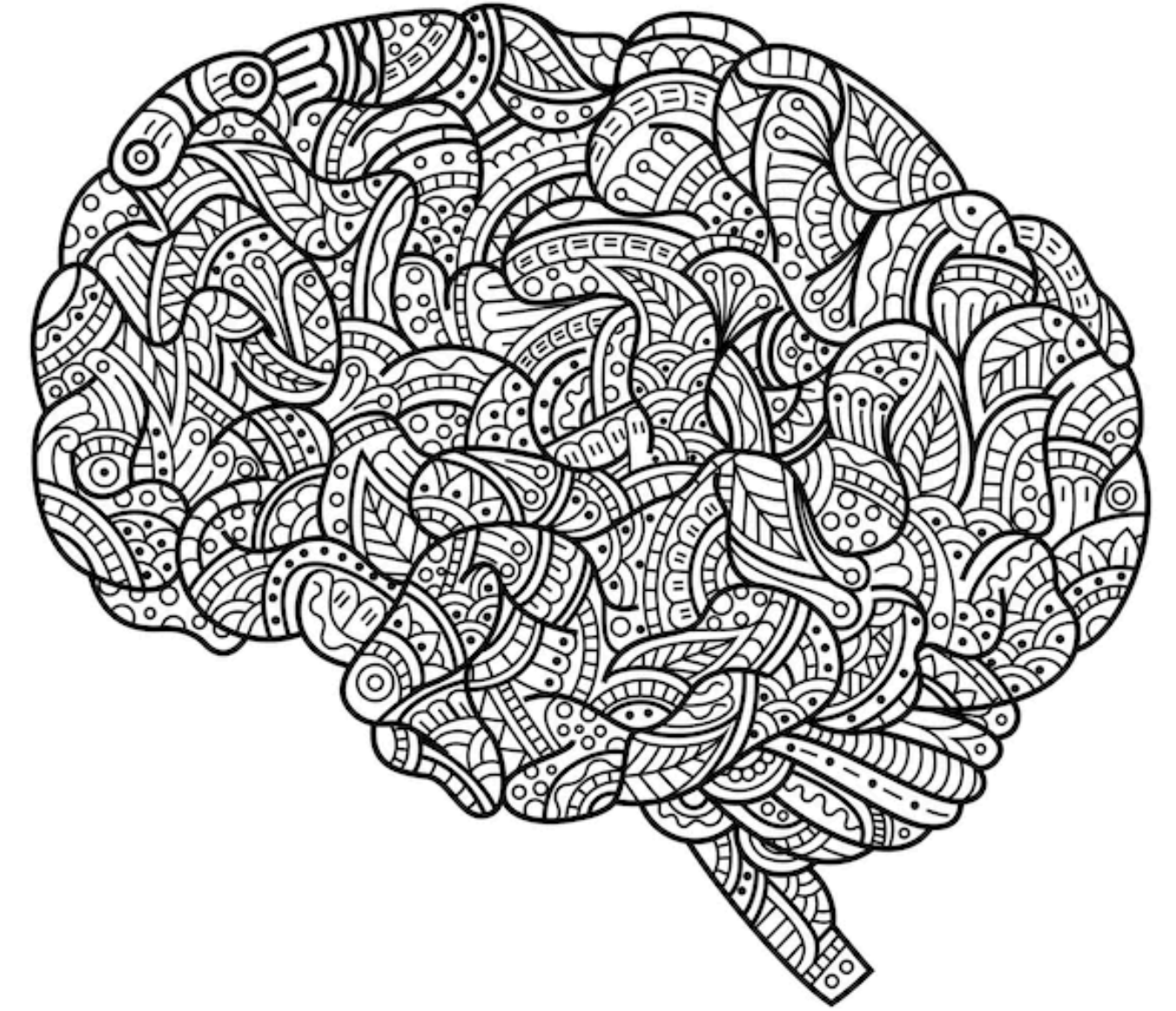


- Testers tend to live within and between the informal and value creation structures
- Which is where the work gets done in the organisation.

Source: <https://nielspflaeging.medium.com/org-physics-the-3-faces-of-every-company-df16025f65f8>

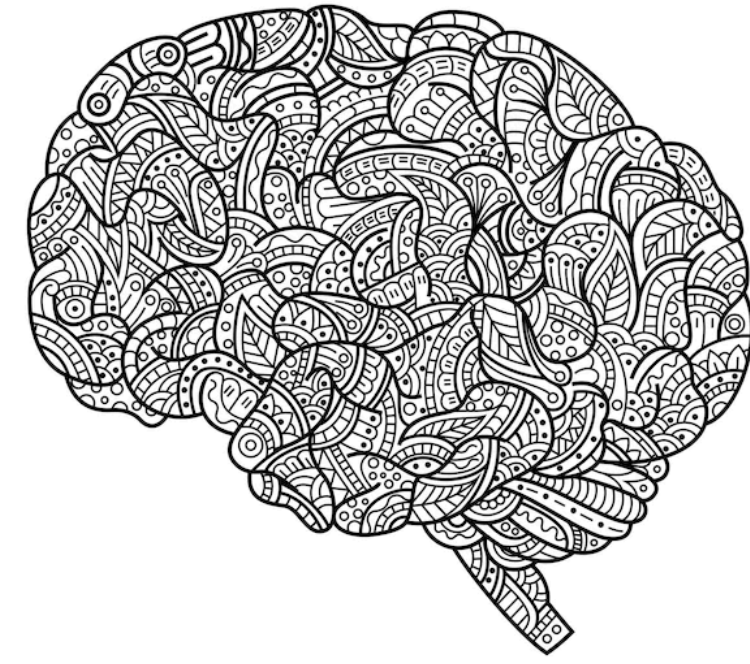


Testers aren't always on the org
chart, so lets call it **freedom**



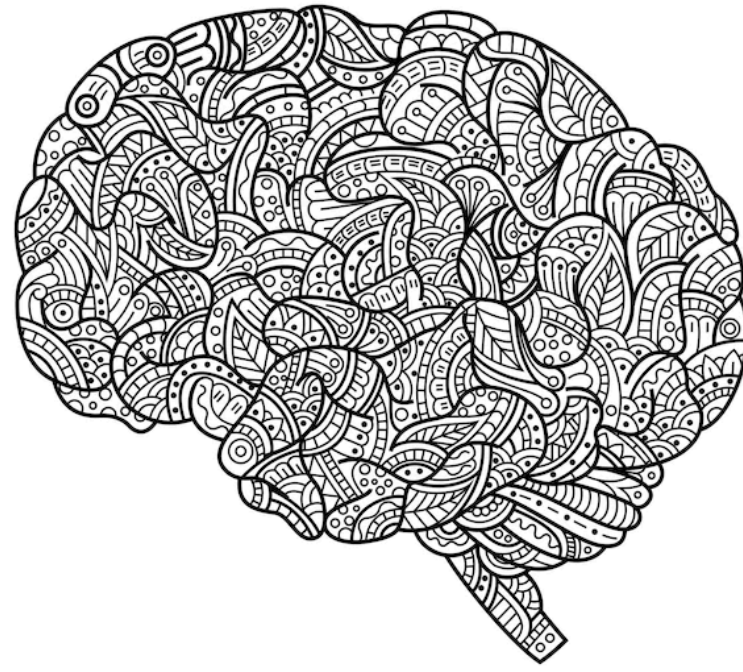
Team Cognitive Load

10 Pizza Team

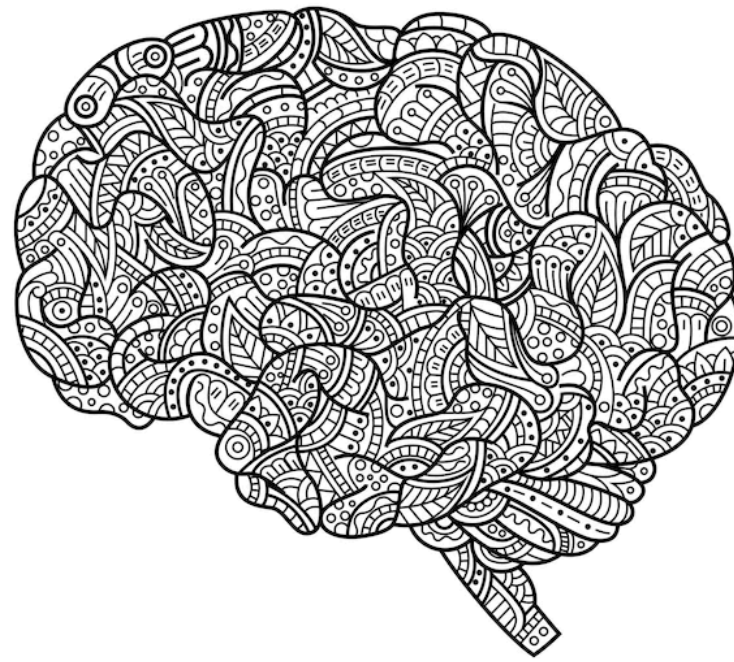


- Massive team needed to change
- No consensus on how to split
- Testers burning out, context switching
 - features, operations, automation
- Managers, waiting to intervene
- Without any context. Danger.

10 Pizza Team

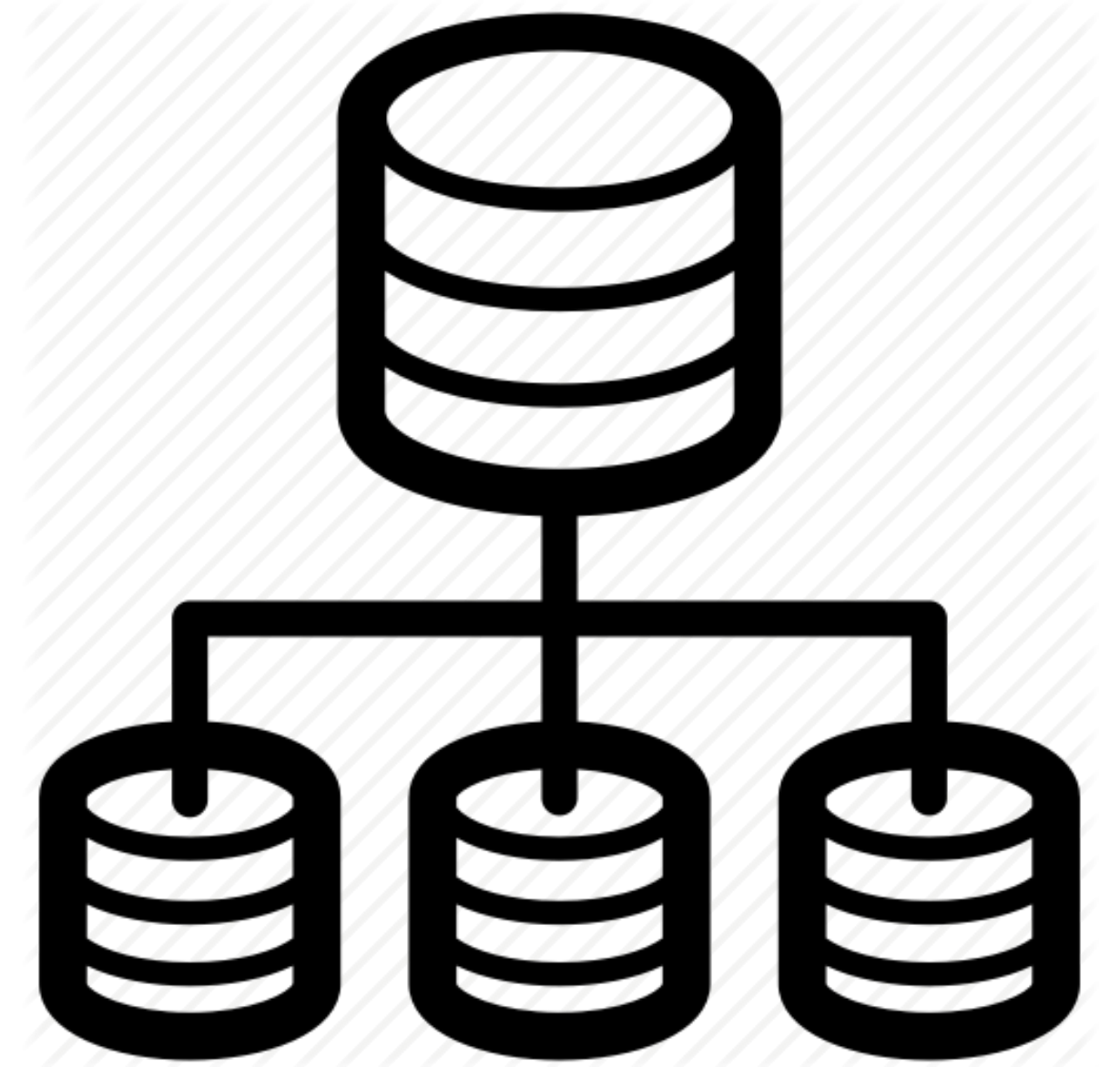


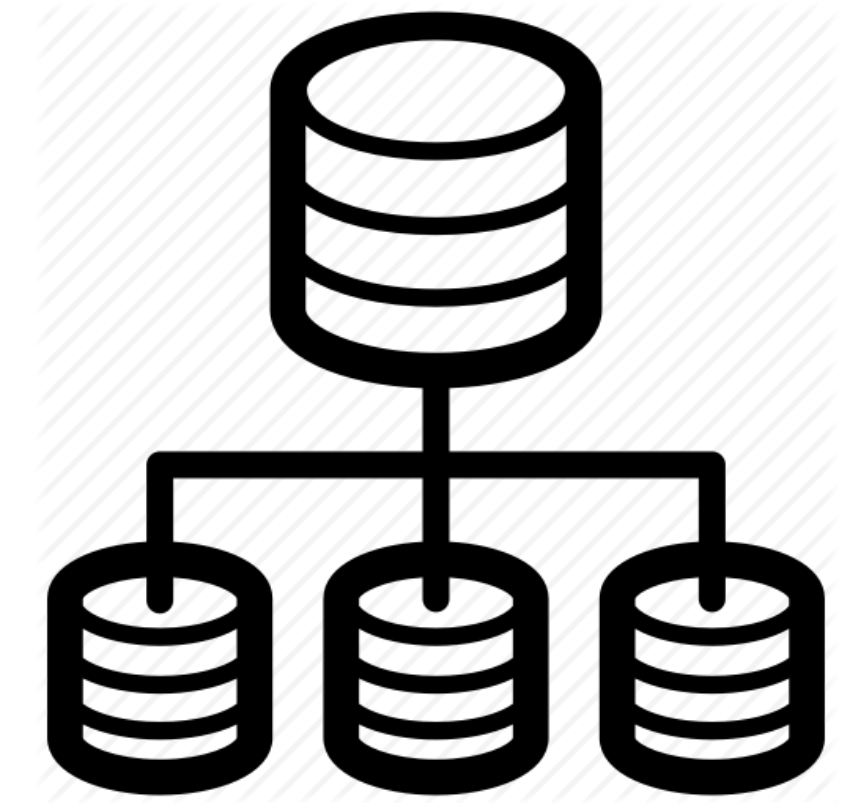
- The testers did what testers do.
Discovered context.
- Proposed split on business domain,
skills and technology lines.
- The team was split, everyone was
delighted.



If the testers are **suffering** from **cognitive load**, then so is the team

Conways Law



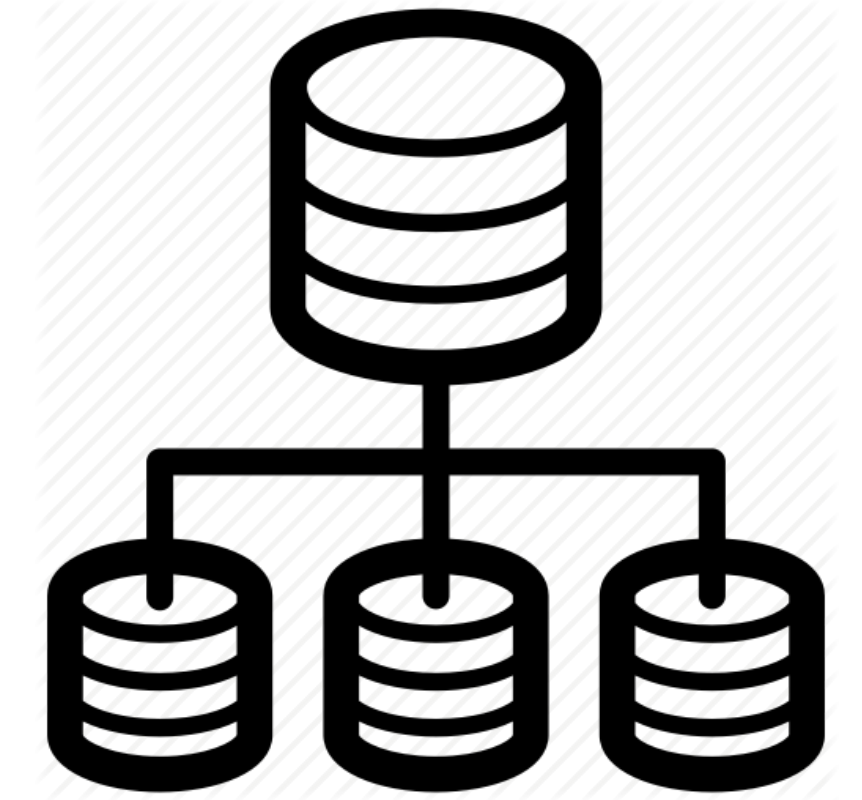


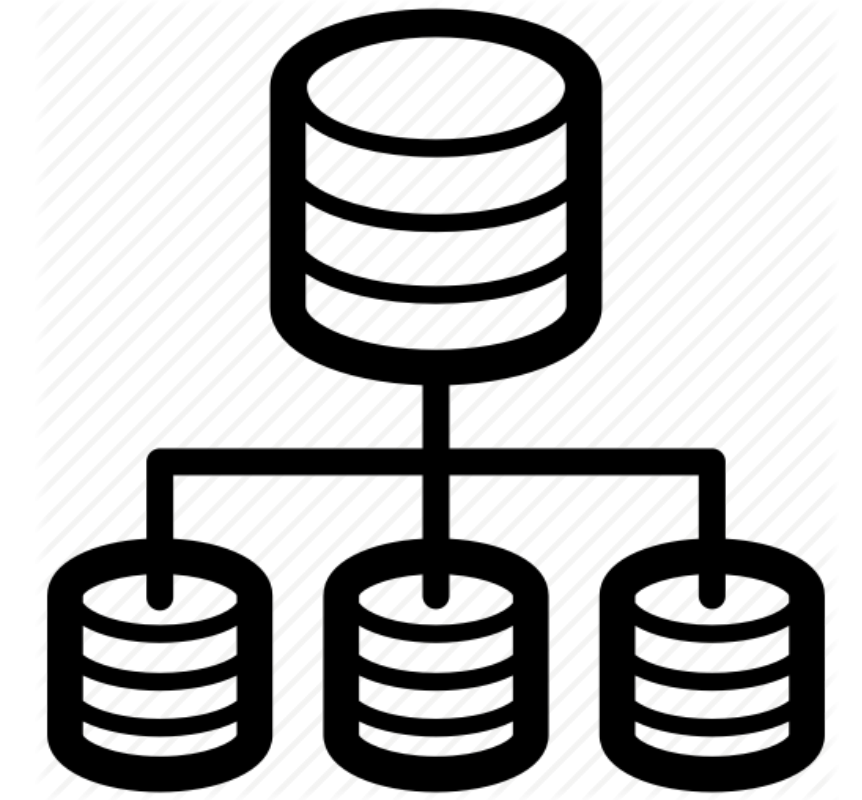
"Organisations, who design systems, are constrained to produce designs which are copies of the communication structures of these organisations."

Melvin Conway

Big Data(base Team)

- Big database team, big centralised database server.
- Many web apps deployed by pipeline, database changes by ticket.
- Performance and deployment was a trial. Enthusiasm waned.
- (DBA's battling a broken system)





Testing is **hard** because your organisation is the **wrong** shape

~~DevOps~~ Platform Teams

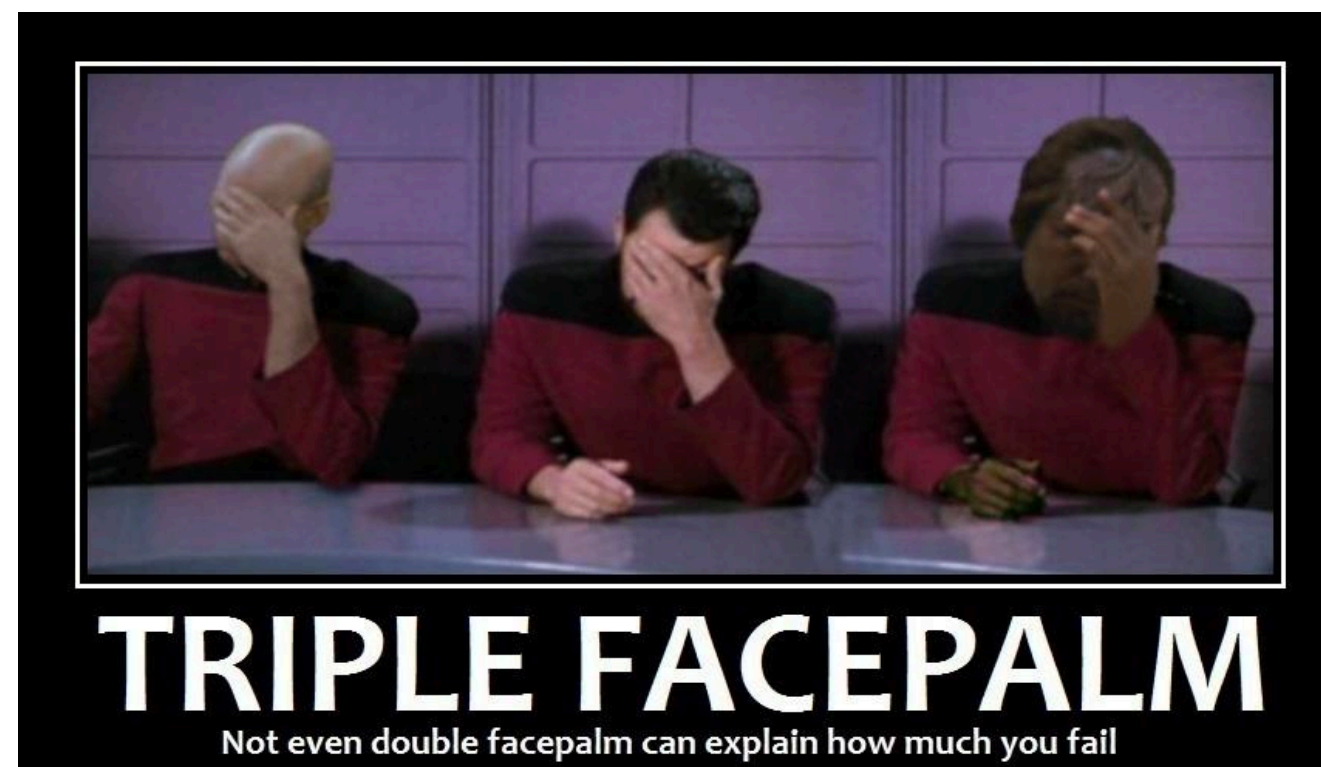
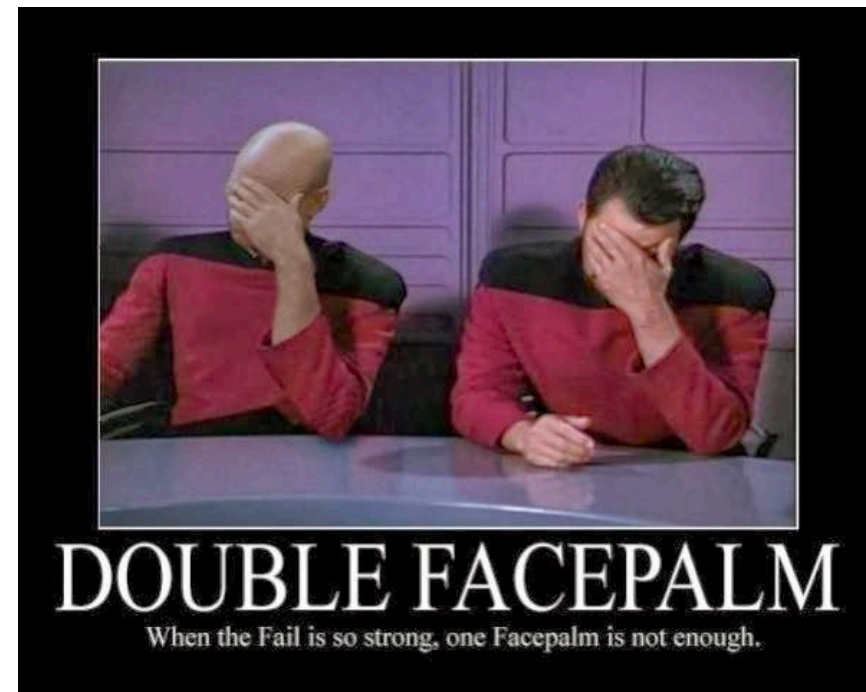
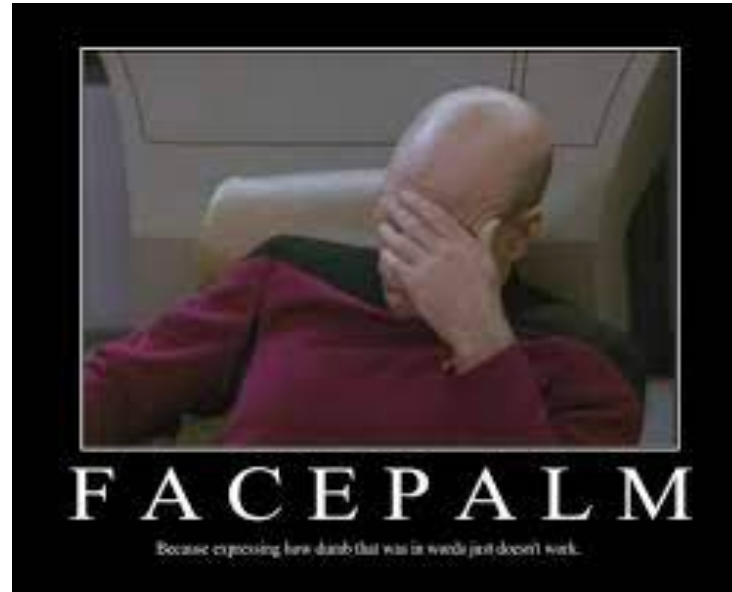




"A platform is a foundation of **self-service** APIs, tools, services, knowledge and support which are arranged as a **compelling internal product**."

Evan Bottcher - <https://martinfowler.com/articles/talk-about-platforms.html>

Platform Facepalm Scale



- Hidden platform team within multiple development teams
- Platform teams funded by multiple projects
- Individual-as-a-platform





Platform teams are a **rare** opportunity to
influence testing for the **whole**
organisation

Becoming an influencer*

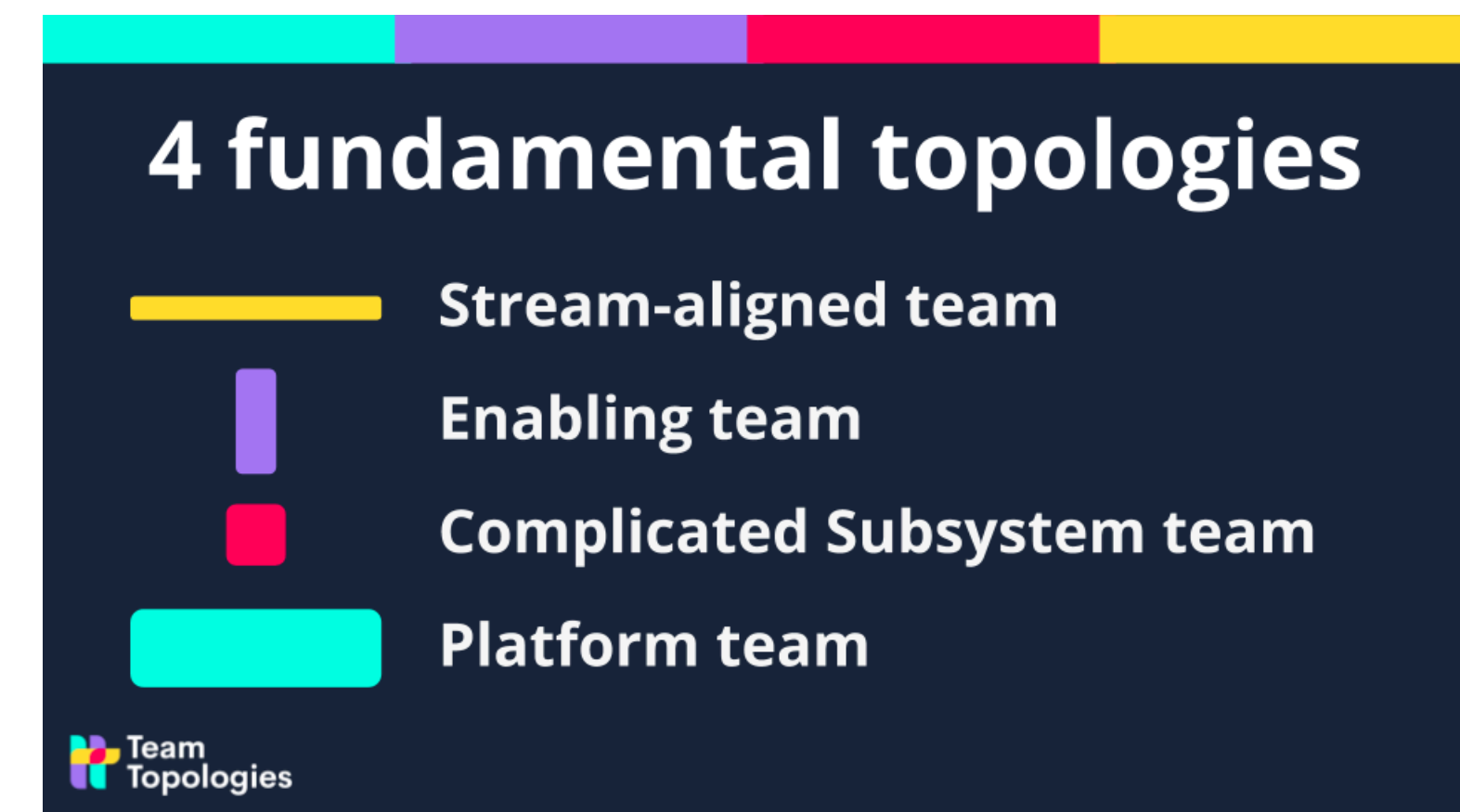
*Once you get involved
it would be shame if
you didn't know what
to do and just shrugged

Team Types

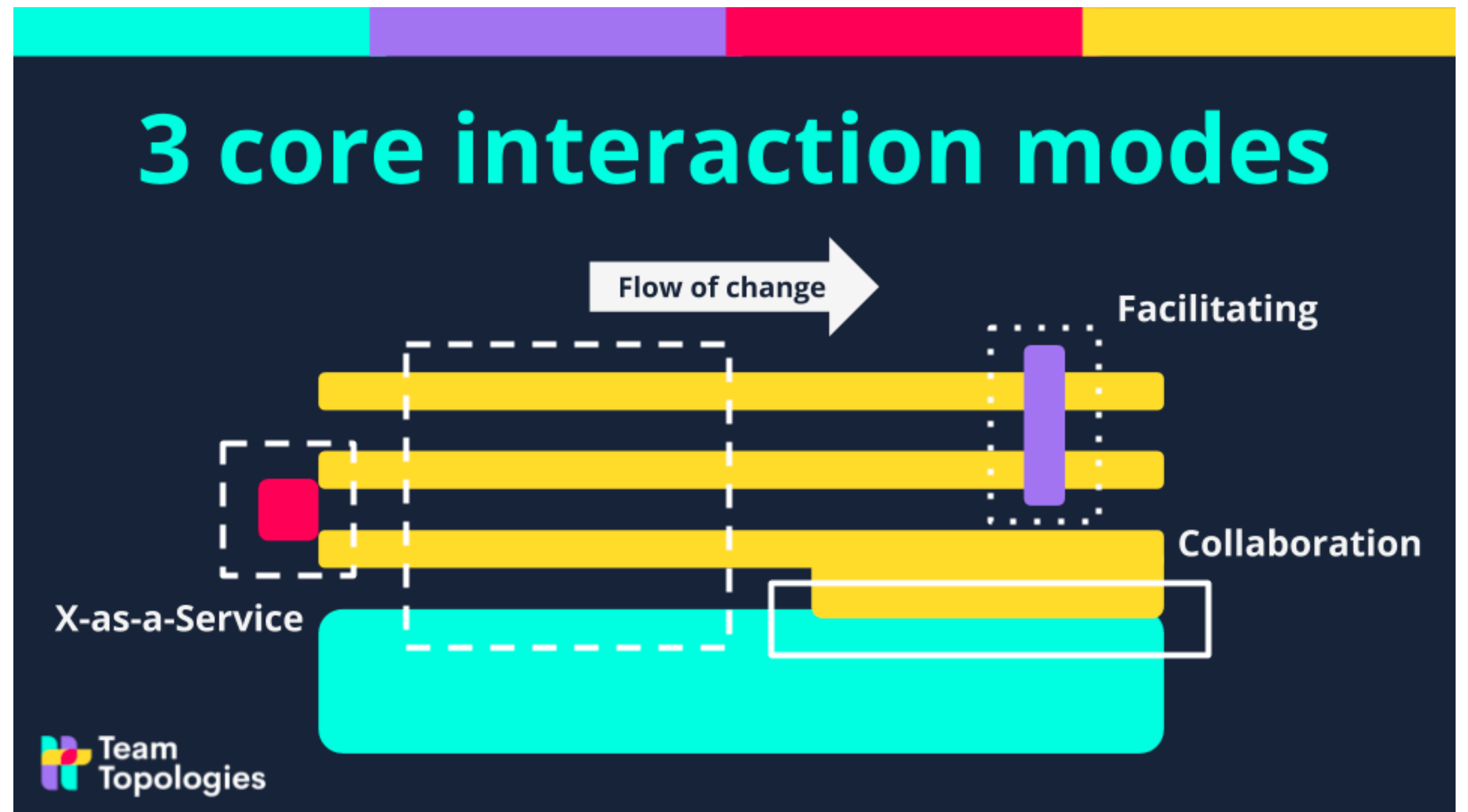


Team Types

- Change approach based on team type
- Ask if all stream aligned teams need a tester
- Unexplored benefits of testing on complicated subsystems
- More impact with enabling teams

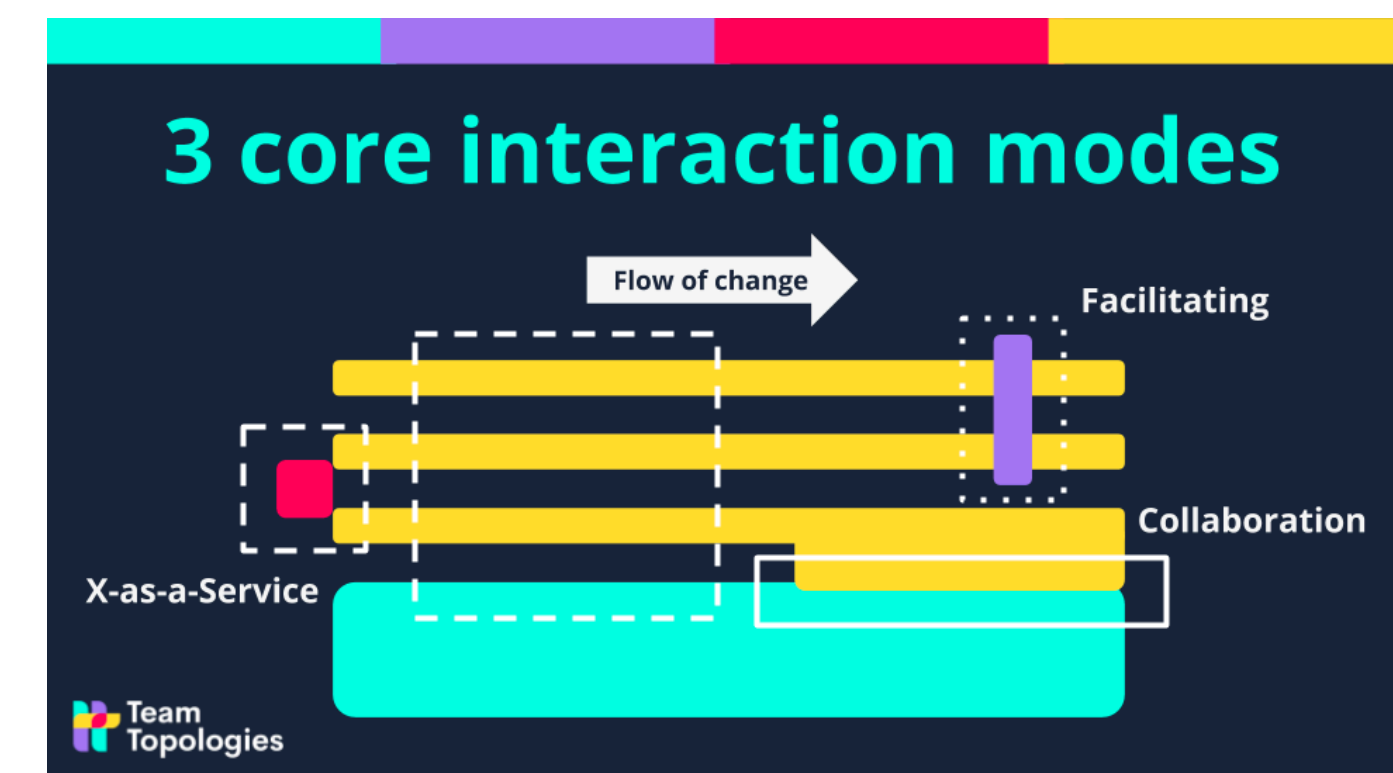


Interaction Modes

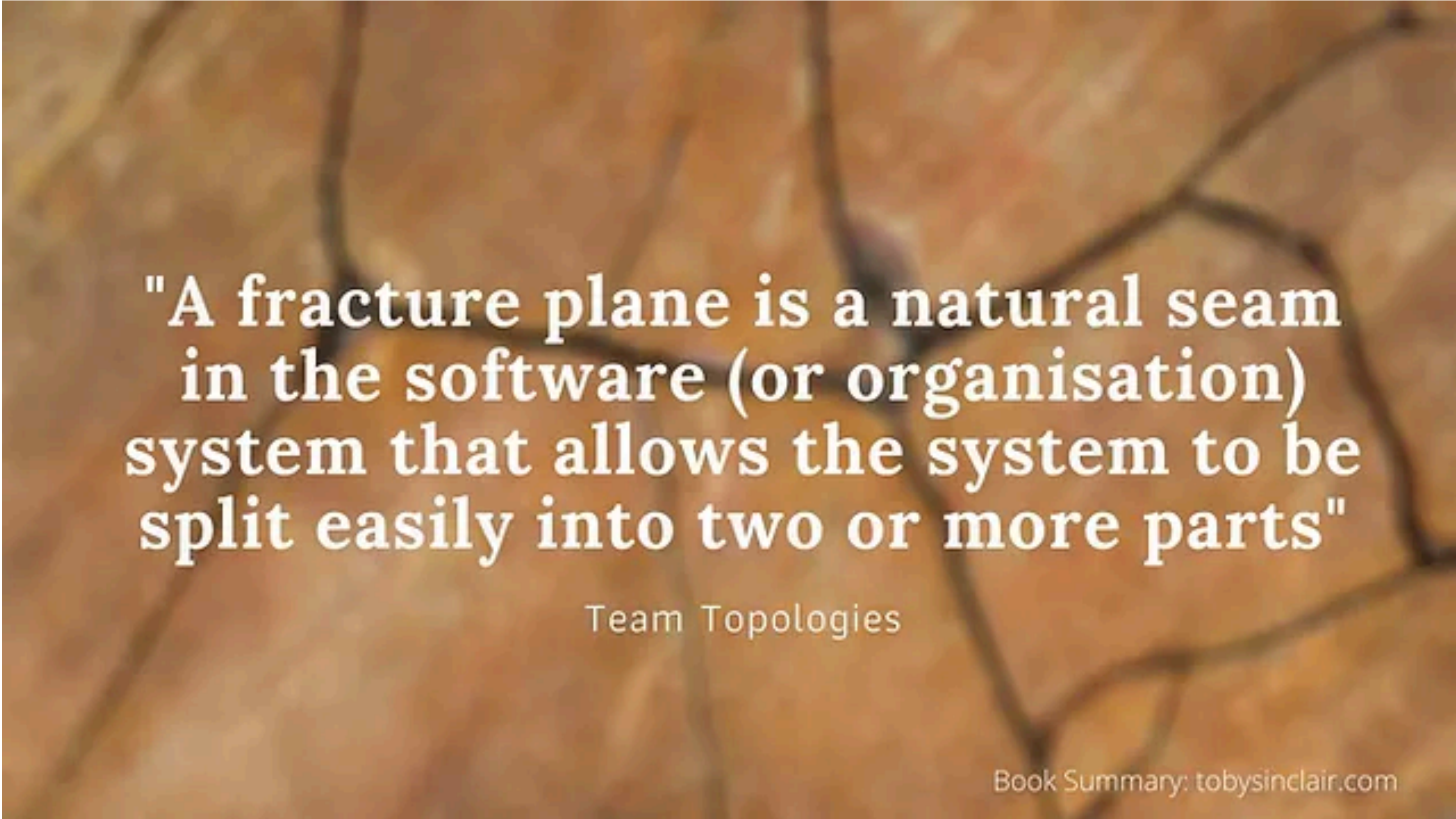


Interaction Modes

- Testing is built around interaction modes
 - Collaboration - exploring, questioning
 - As a service - automation, contracts
 - Facilitating - sharing, radiating information
- Determine the right mode, then pick the best test approach.



Fracture Planes



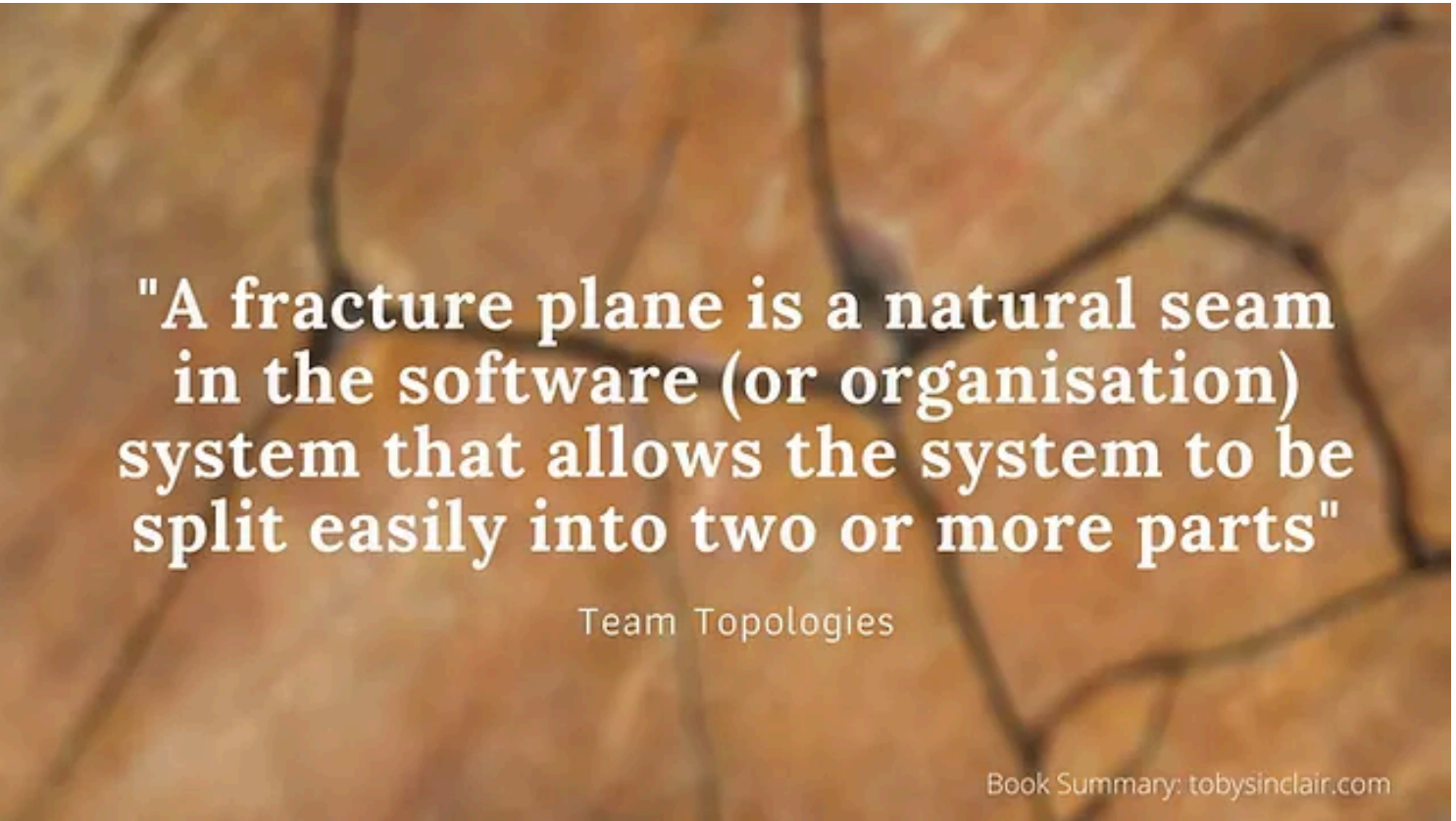
"A fracture plane is a natural seam
in the software (or organisation)
system that allows the system to be
split easily into two or more parts"

Team Topologies

Book Summary: tobysinclair.com

Fracture Planes

- Testing regularly exposes fractures
- Dependent on another team? Fracture plane.
- Another part of the technology stack? Fracture plane.
- End to end tests are often scary because they cross fault lines.



"A fracture plane is a natural seam in the software (or organisation) system that allows the system to be split easily into two or more parts"

Team Topologies

Book Summary: tobysinclair.com

Getting Testers on Platform Teams



Getting Testers on Platform Teams

- Huge influence on how testing is performed organisation wide
- The tools that get built
- What automation gets done
- Information that gets radiated
- A gift to testers and testing everywhere



Big finish

**Information and communication are the
currency of testing, the same forces
shape our organisations**

There are loads of **testing professionals**
changing the shape of their organisations



Gwen has
changed the
world

"A tester is somebody who knows that things can be different."

Jerry Weinberg

Our organisations can be **different**,
becoming **humane** places where **great**
testing helps deliver great products

The End