# EFFECTIVE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION

**Catrina Ahlbach & Andrew Olson**

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# Catrina

# Andy

| Catrina | Andy |
|---|---|
| *Front End Developer* | *Front End Developer* |
| *Liberal Arts education* | *Engineering education* |
| *7 years at Bounteous* | *9 years at Bounteous* |
| *Adobe Experience Manager (AEM)* | *Drupal* |
| *Badger* | *Hawkeye* |
| *Ravenclaw* | *Hufflepuff* |

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With our different worldviews and priorities, how do we create a system where we can communicate effectively?
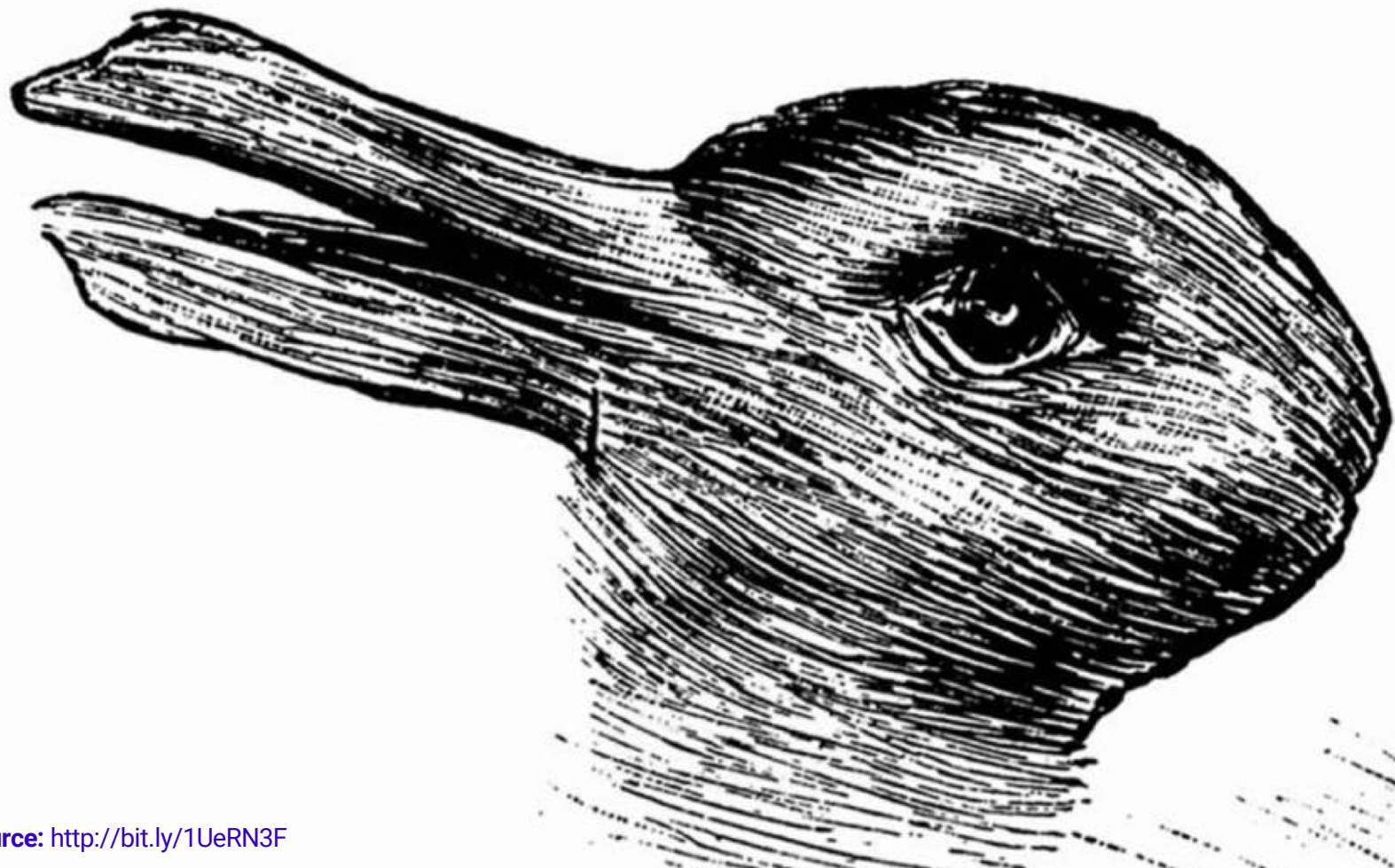
# AGENDA

1. **Communication Ground Rules**

2. **Disconnect Points**

3. **Bad Communication & Constructive Language**

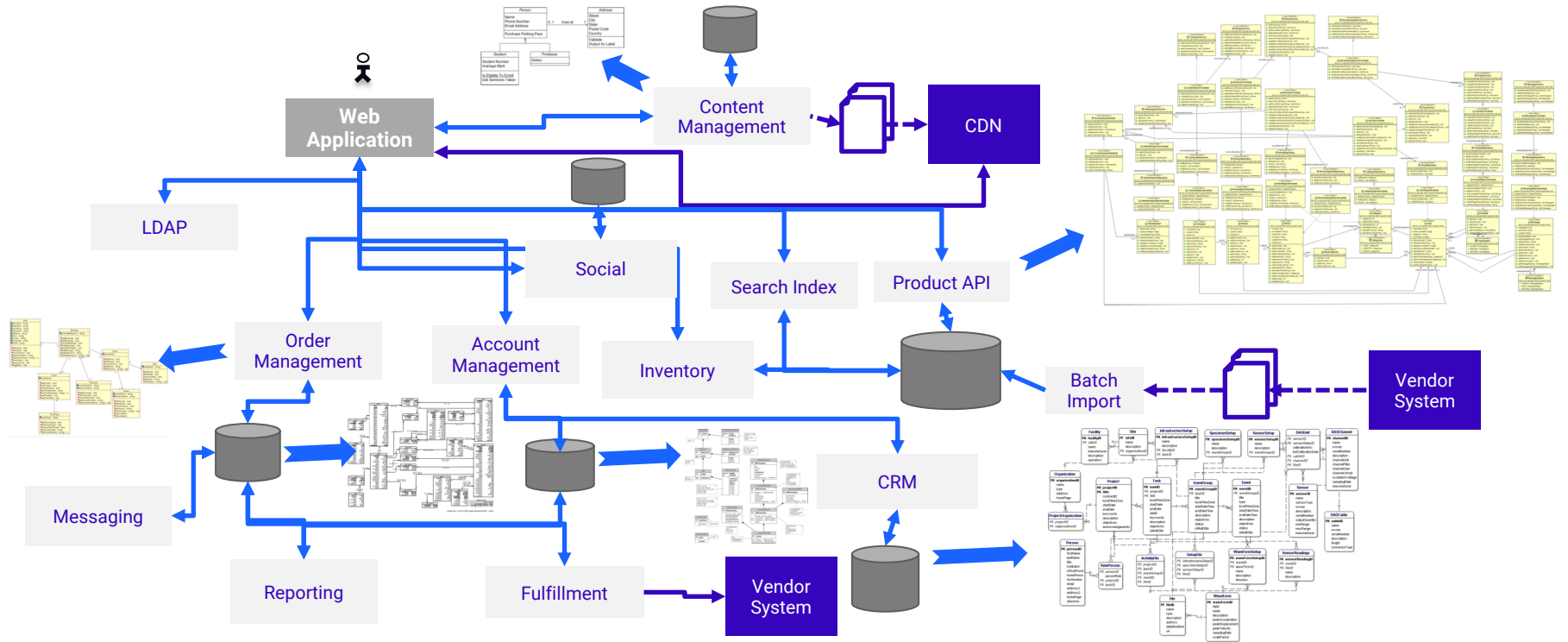4. **Recap**

1. COMMUNICATION GROUND RULES

**Creating an Environment That Fosters Inquiry**

# 1

# Always Assume Positive Intent

# ENGINEER'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

**2**

# Communication Goes Both Ways

"

The ability to listen is as important as the ability to speak. Miscommunication is always a two way street.

———————

**Sheryl Sandberg,**
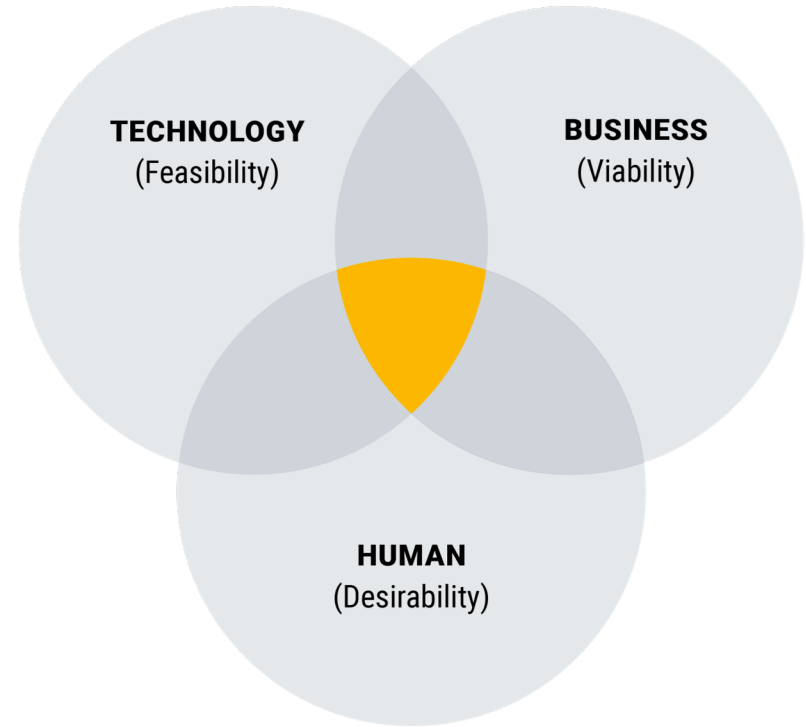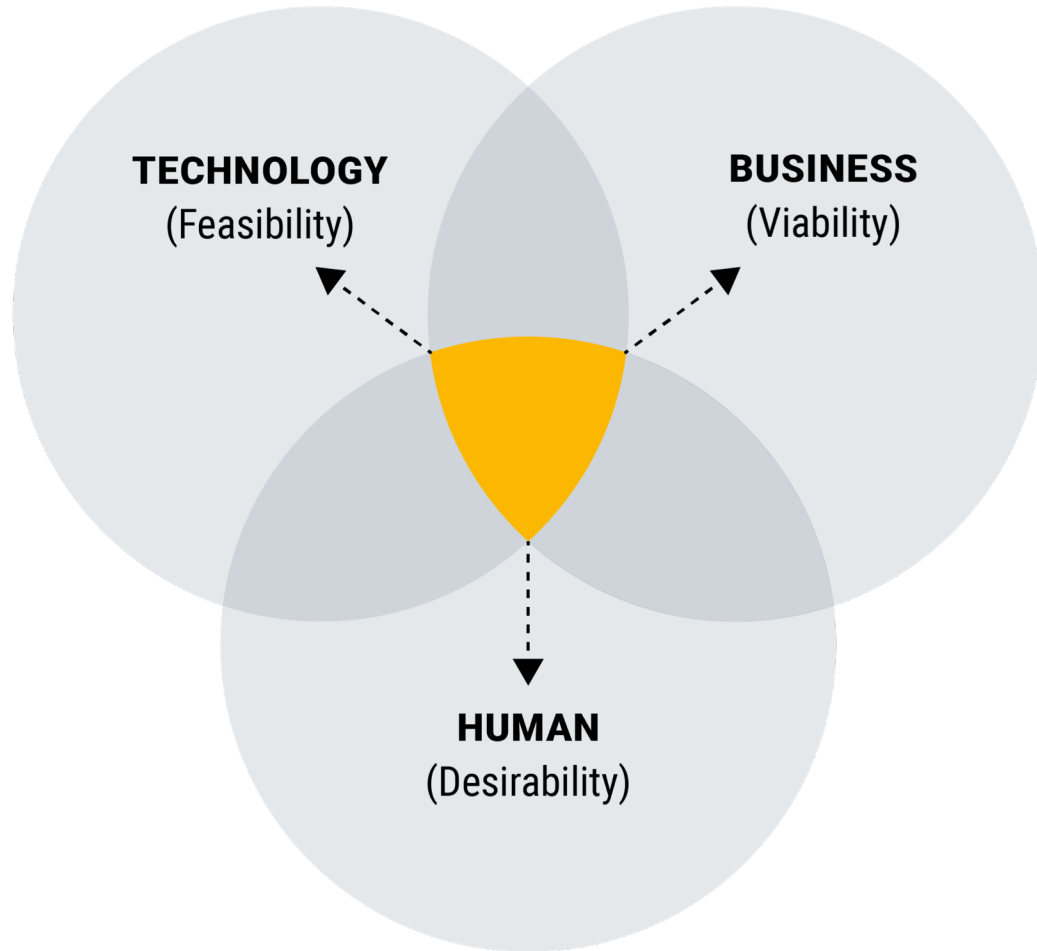**Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead**
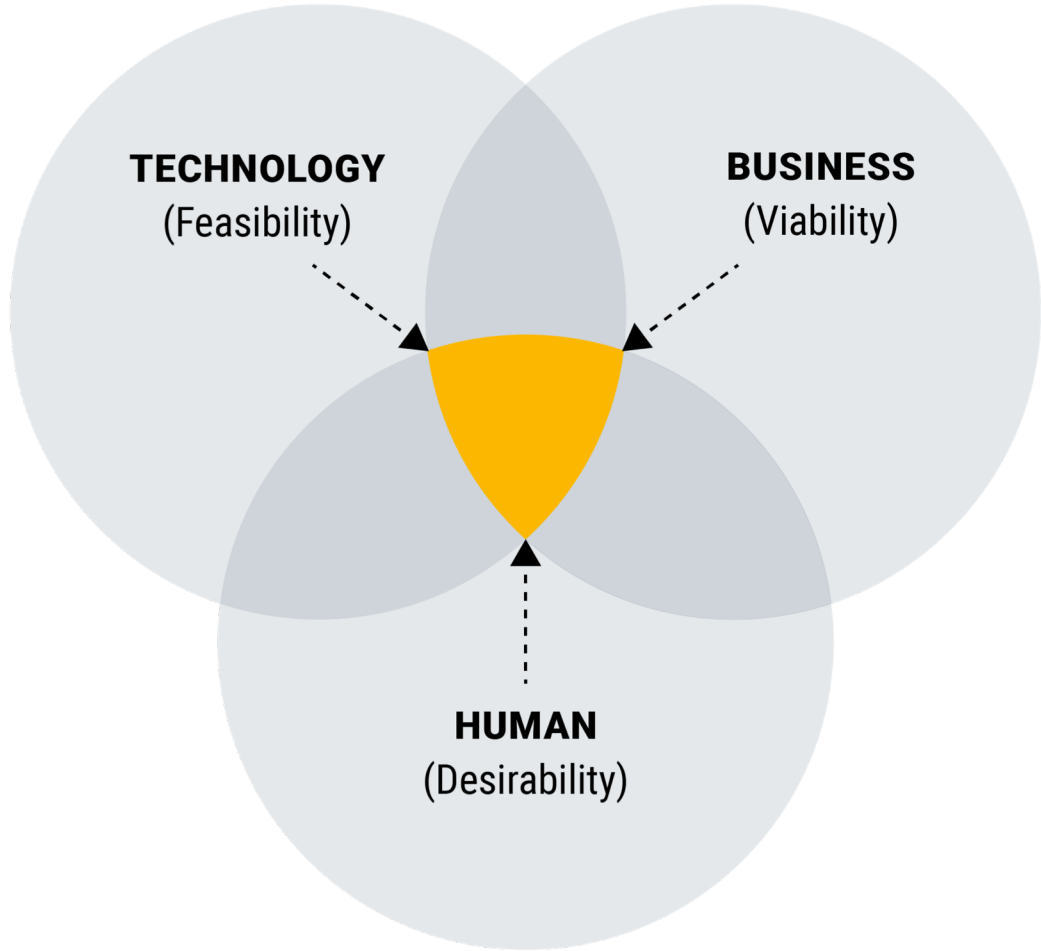
**3**

# Conflict Isn't Inherently Bad

# HUMAN CENTRIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Our approach to design thinking is to focus the:

- *Business* on things their users want that we can build.

- *Technology* on the best solution that solves problems in the business's domain.

- *Human* on great experiences in line with business domain.

**TECHNOLOGY**
(Feasibility)

**BUSINESS**
(Viability)

**HUMAN**
(Desirability)

TECHNOLOGY
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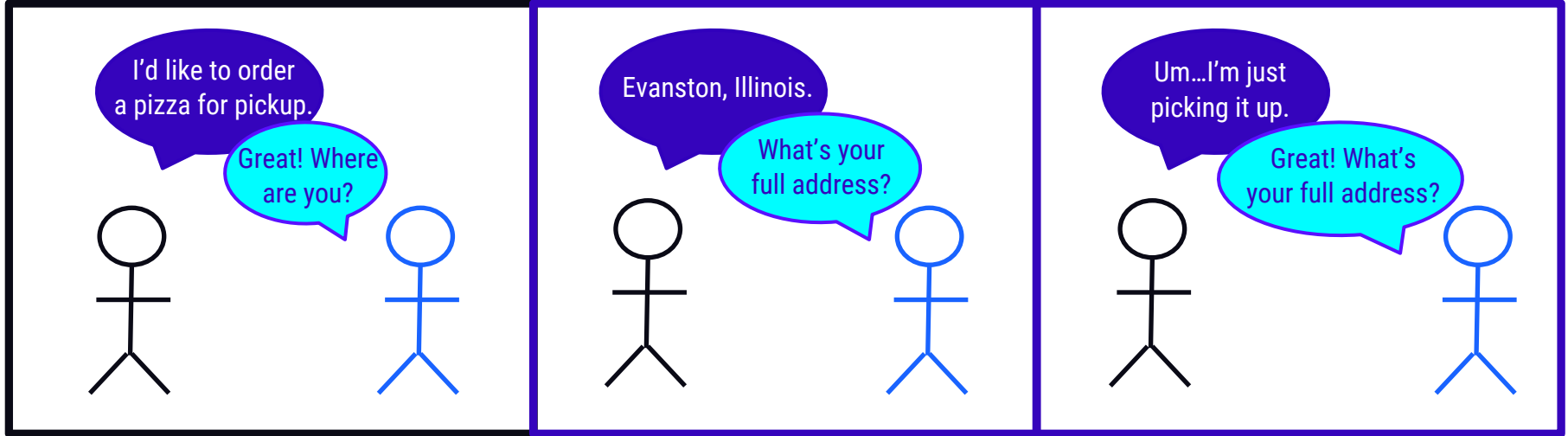BUSINESS
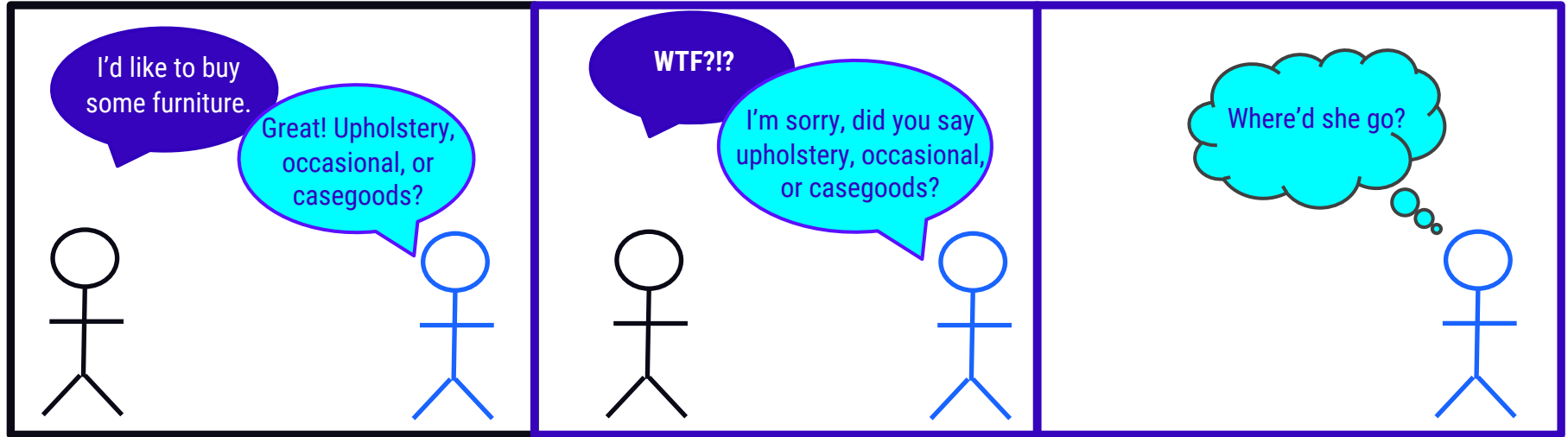(Viability)

HUMAN
(Desirability)

# Unresolved Conflicts Create Real World Problems

# ORDERING PIZZA

# SEARCHING FOR FURNITURE

**4**

Don't Fall
for the Illusion
of Communication

NO

ACTUAL
DISCONNECT?

YES

YES                              NO

PERCEIVED DISCONNECT?

ACTUAL DISCONNECT?

- NO
- YES

Discussion

PERCEIVED DISCONNECT?

- YES
- NO

- Obvious disconnect

- Can be very helpful

|  | **PERCEIVED DISCONNECT?** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **YES** | **NO** |
| **NO** | **Clarification** | |
| **YES** | Discussion | |

**ACTUAL DISCONNECT?**

- Time to slow down

- "I think we're saying the same thing"

- Discover new vocabulary

**ACTUAL DISCONNECT?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **NO** | Clarification | **Highly Functioning Team** |
| **YES** | Discussion | ❗ Illusion of Communication |
| | **YES** | **NO** |

**PERCEIVED DISCONNECT?**

- Being a highly functioning team doesn't mean that there are never disconnects.

- Good communication moves quickly to shift to an aligned team.

## 2. DISCONNECT POINTS

**Identifying Dysfunction and Moving Toward Alignment**

# THE 3 DIS-ES OF REMOTE COMMUNICATION

**Disengagement**

**Distraction**

**Distrust**

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3. BAD COMMUNICATION & CONSTRUCTIVE LANGUAGE

**How to Stop Miscommunication in Process**

# BEWARE OF MISCOMMUNICATION SIGNALS

**What You Might Hear**

- Good / Bad

- Important

- This is the right / wrong way to do it

- "They"

- "Handed off"

- "There's no time"

- That's the best / only way

- That's hard

**Why it Should Flag Your Spidey Sense**

- Opinion instead of facts

- Judgement instead of implications

- Us vs Them instead of We

- Advocacy instead of inquiry

- Short-sighted instead of outcome-focused

# BEWARE OF YOUR COMMUNICATION ANTIPATTERNS

**What You Might Be Saying**

- "As I've said before…"

- "That's just common sense"

- "I know that"

- "I'm really busy"

- "I told them"

- "Because I said so…"

- "Words have meaning"

- "The client approved it"

**How It Shuts Down Inquiry**

- Impatience

- Weasel words

- Implicit put down of other people

- Lack of responsibility and ownership

- Dictatorial

- Focuses on only your own point of view

- Ignores outcomes

# BEWARE THE ILLUSION OF COMMUNICATION

## Types of Illusions

- I told them that

- It was in an email

- They were in the room when it was discussed

- It's in Confluence / Sharepoint / wiki / etc.

- I gave them a link to the wires

- They said that they could do it

## Why it's an Illusion

- Unconfirmed assumptions of understanding

- "Inside out" method of communication

- Lack of initiative

- Puts responsibility (and potential future blame) on other people
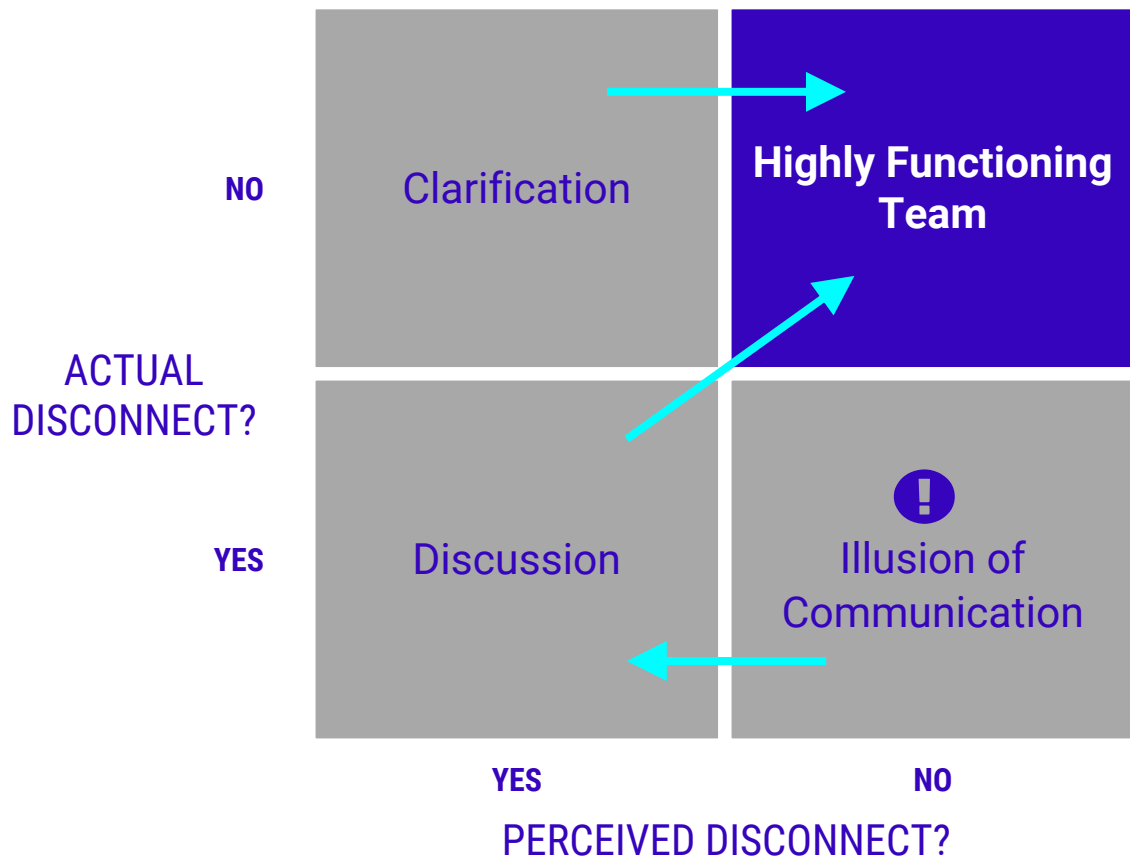
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NO — Clarification

Highly Functioning Team

ACTUAL DISCONNECT?

YES — Discussion

Illusion of Communication

YES        NO

PERCEIVED DISCONNECT?

- Being a highly functioning team doesn't mean that there are never disconnects.

- Good communication moves quickly to shift to an aligned team.

# MISCOMMUNICATION SIGNALS

**What You Might Hear**

- Good / Bad

- Important

- This is the right / wrong way to do it

- "They"

- "Handed off"

- "There's no time"

- That's the best / only way

- That's hard

## How You Might Respond

- What I hear you saying is...

- Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

- Let's talk about the potential impacts of this path.

- Let's reframe, focused on outcomes...

- How firm is that constraint? What are some alternatives?

- Working as a team, we might need to be creative. What would we recommend if we were starting with what we know now?

- Let's quantify the extra effort and the potential impact.

- What do you see as next steps?

# COMMUNICATION ANTIPATTERNS

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## How You Might Rephrase

- It sounds like we might have a disconnect

- I think we're coming from 2 different sets of assumptions

- To summarize, I'm hearing you say 3 things

- It sounds like this is important to you. Can you help me understand the urgency?

- When I use that phrase, I mean something different. Let's explore that together.

- The reason that this is important is because these are the potential outcomes...

- Someone already decided this, but let's see if this merits reevaluation.

# ILLUSION OF COMMUNICATION

**Types of Illusions**

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**Questions You Can Ask Yourself**

- Did your message get effectively transmitted to your audience?

- Did you verify your message was understood?

- Are you taking ownership for the success of the communication?

- Did you confirm that the other person agreed to the same thing you think they agreed to?

- Do all necessary parties have the same shared understanding?

# 4. RECAP

**Create the Right Environment
for Good Communication**

We succeed or we fail as a team

**GROUND RULES**

**1** Always assume positive intent

**2** Communication goes both ways

**3** Conflict isn't inherently bad

**4** Don't fall for the illusion of communication

Communication is a learned skill that requires practice

# Thank You.
## We Want Your Feedback!

## http://mid.camp/257

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@SoNotKidding

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