

goto;

GOTO **AARHUS 2023**

#GOTOaar



Discover Weekly



How Autonomy Saved One of Spotify's Most Loved Features From Being Killed




...or How we accidentally fixed Mondays

crisp.

Joakim Sundén

crisp. 2017-

 **Spotify®** 2011-2017

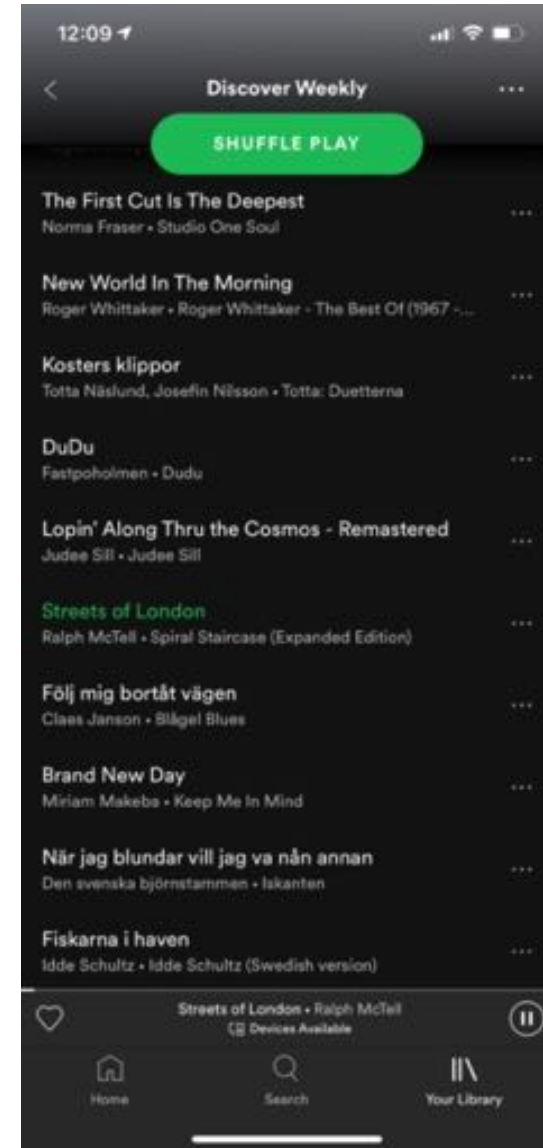
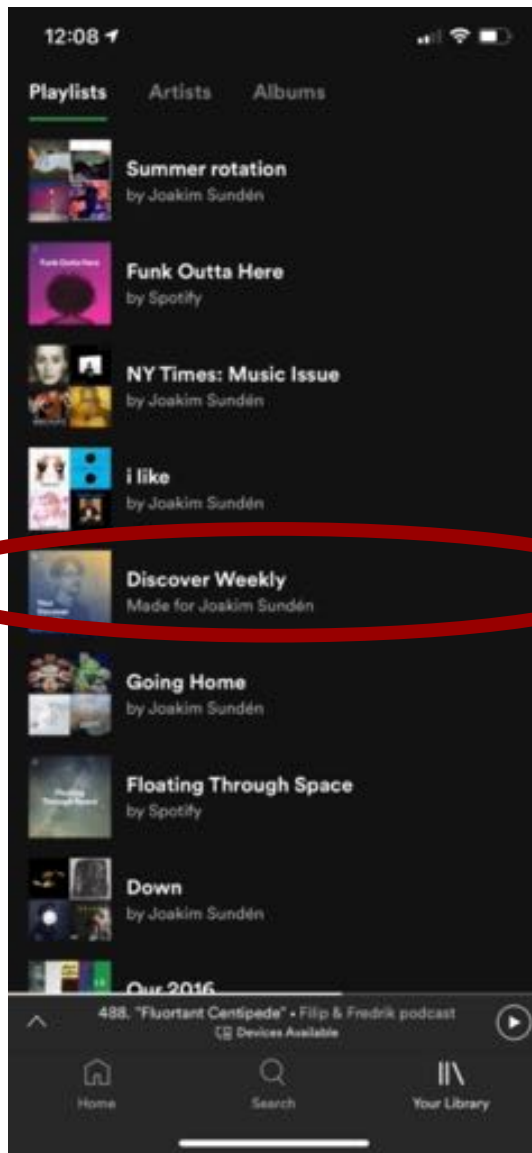
 www.joakimsunden.com
 linkedin.com/joakimsunden
 joakim.sunden@gmail.com

crisp.



Joakim Sundén





crisp.



Q Search

Meanwhile at Spotify HQ...

Hey, we've nailed
search and play!
Congrats!

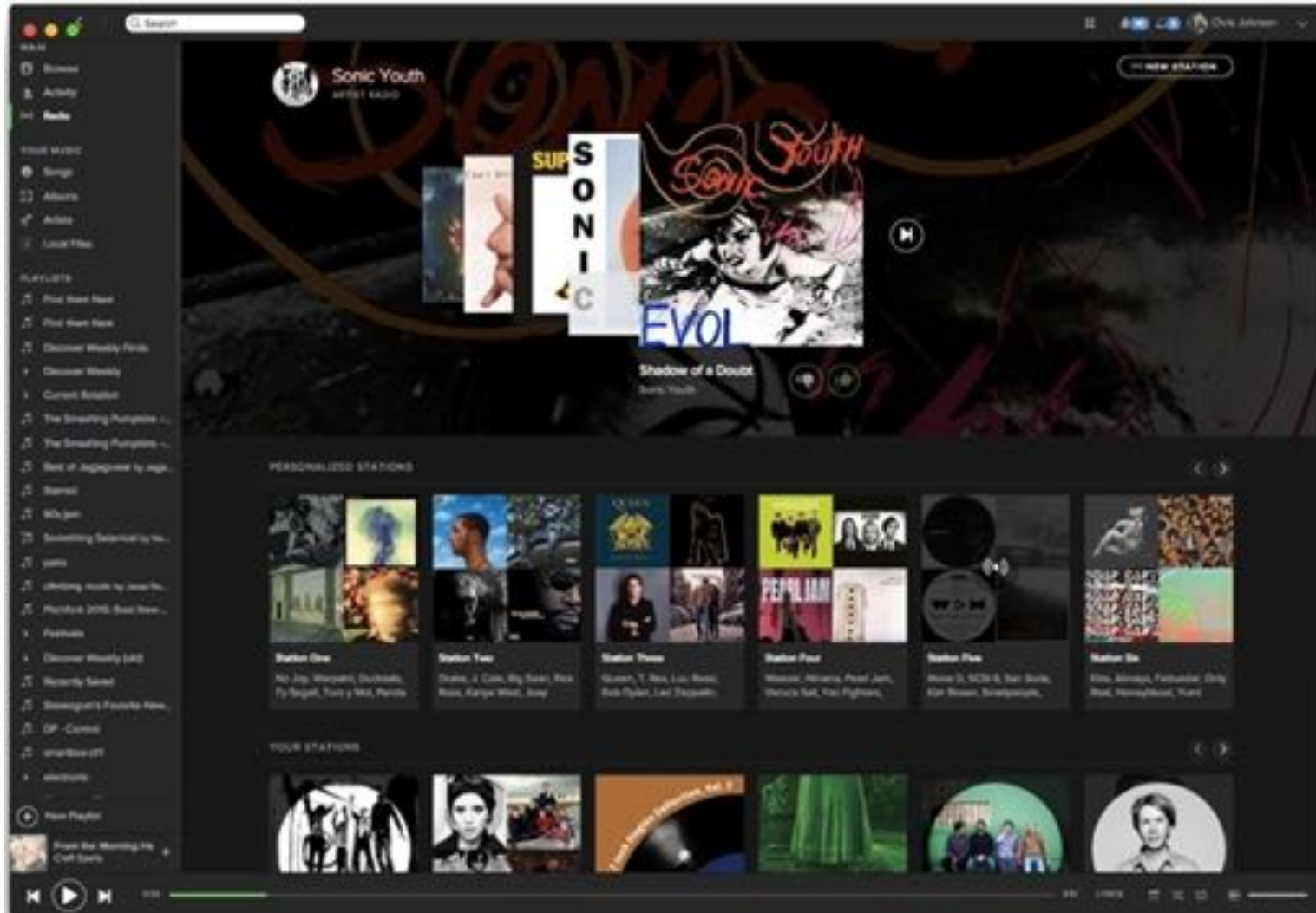
BUT....

If you **DON'T KNOW**
what you want to listen
to....
our product is **USELESS!**



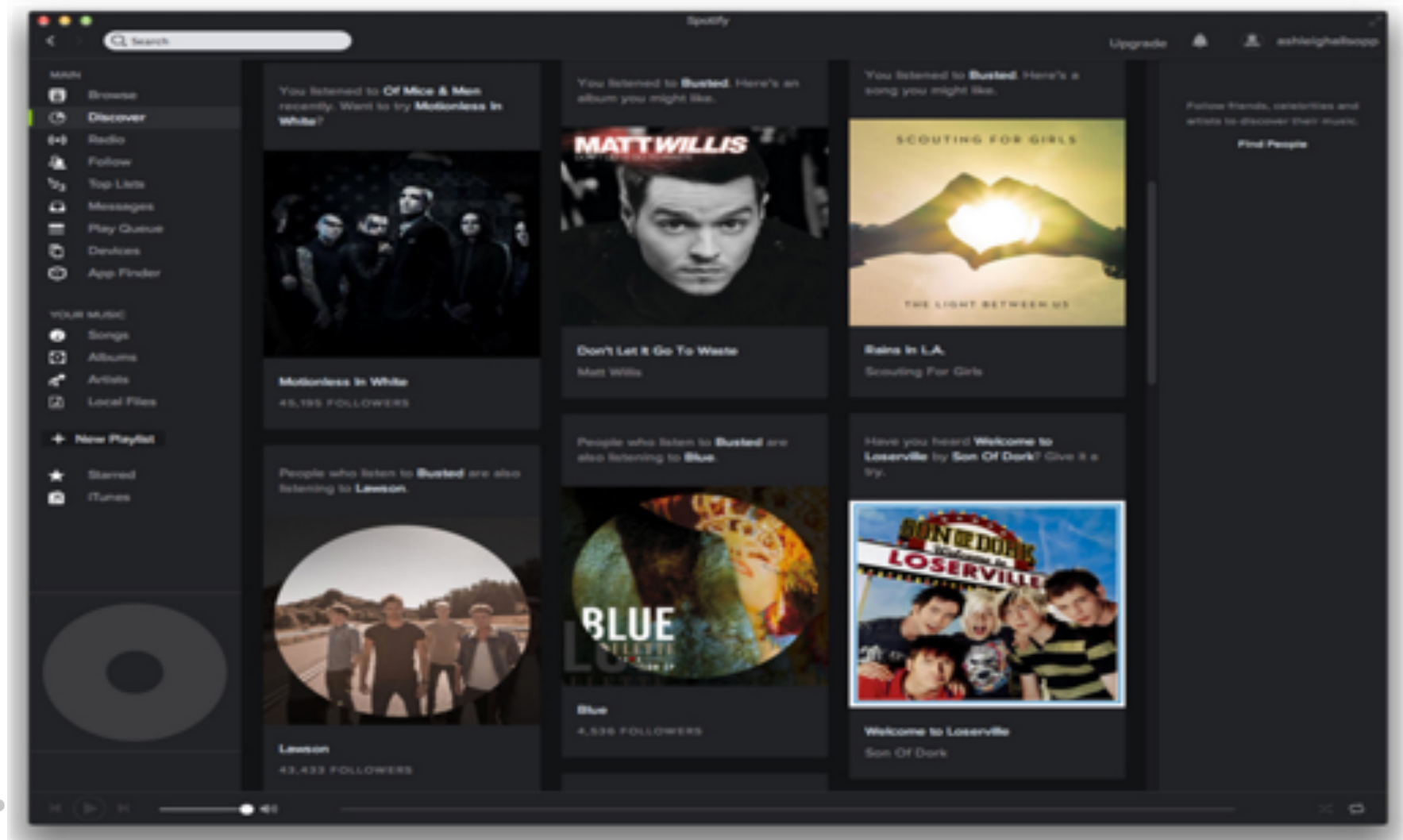
crisp.

Radio



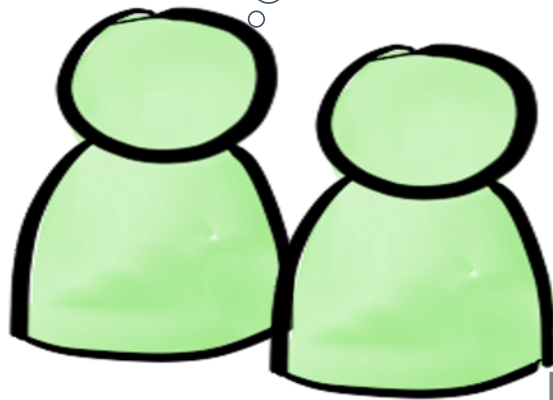
crisp.

Discover



crisp.

There must be
a better way...

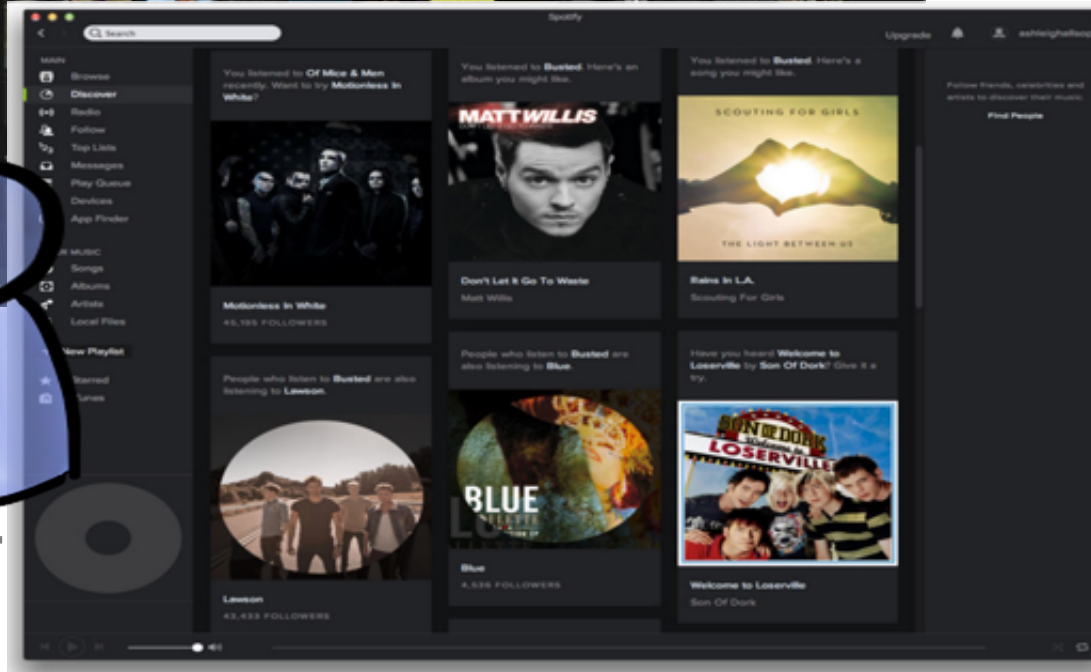
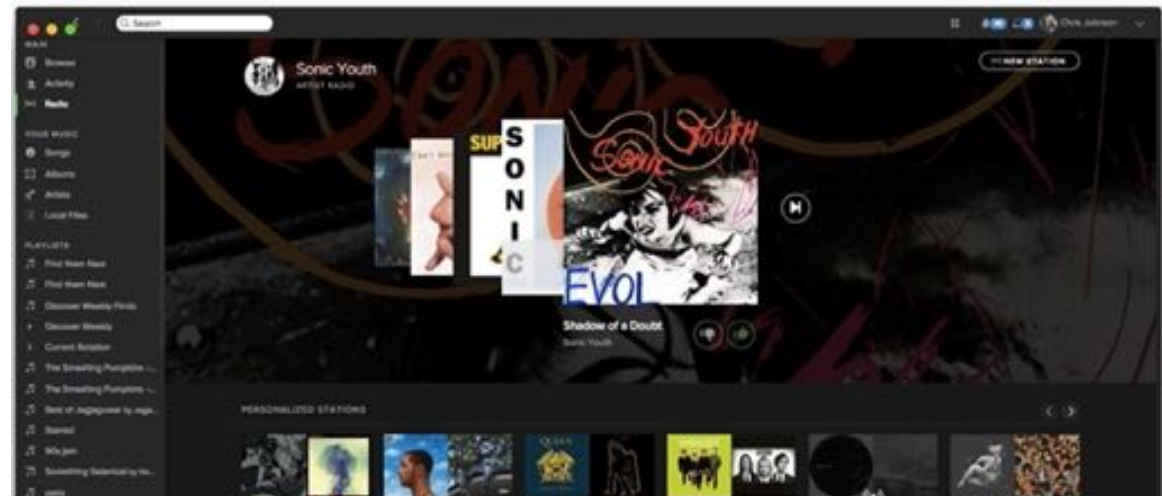


Engineers



Product
Manager

Designer



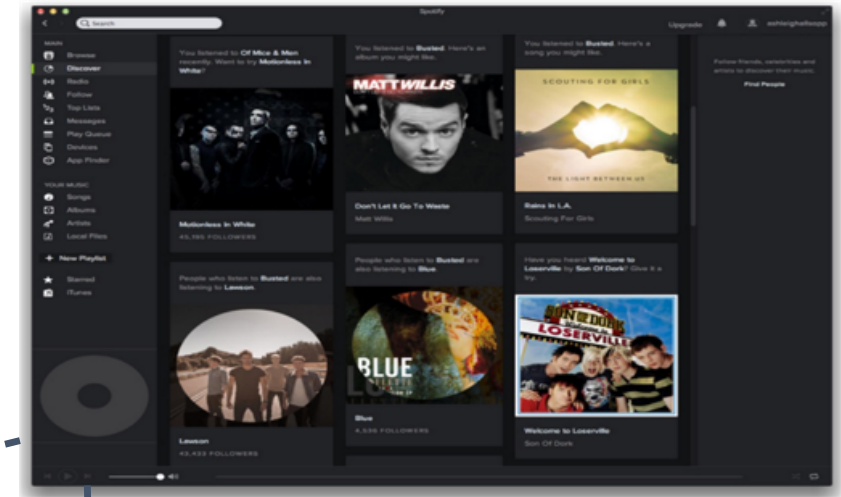
crisp.

Re-connecting the dots

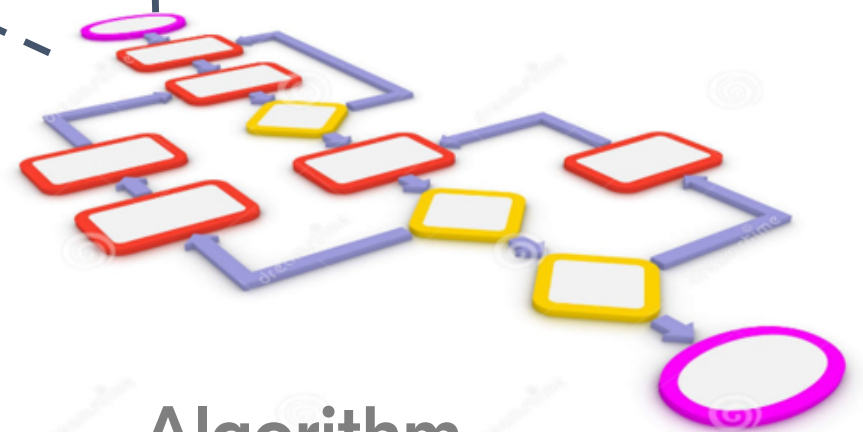


Data

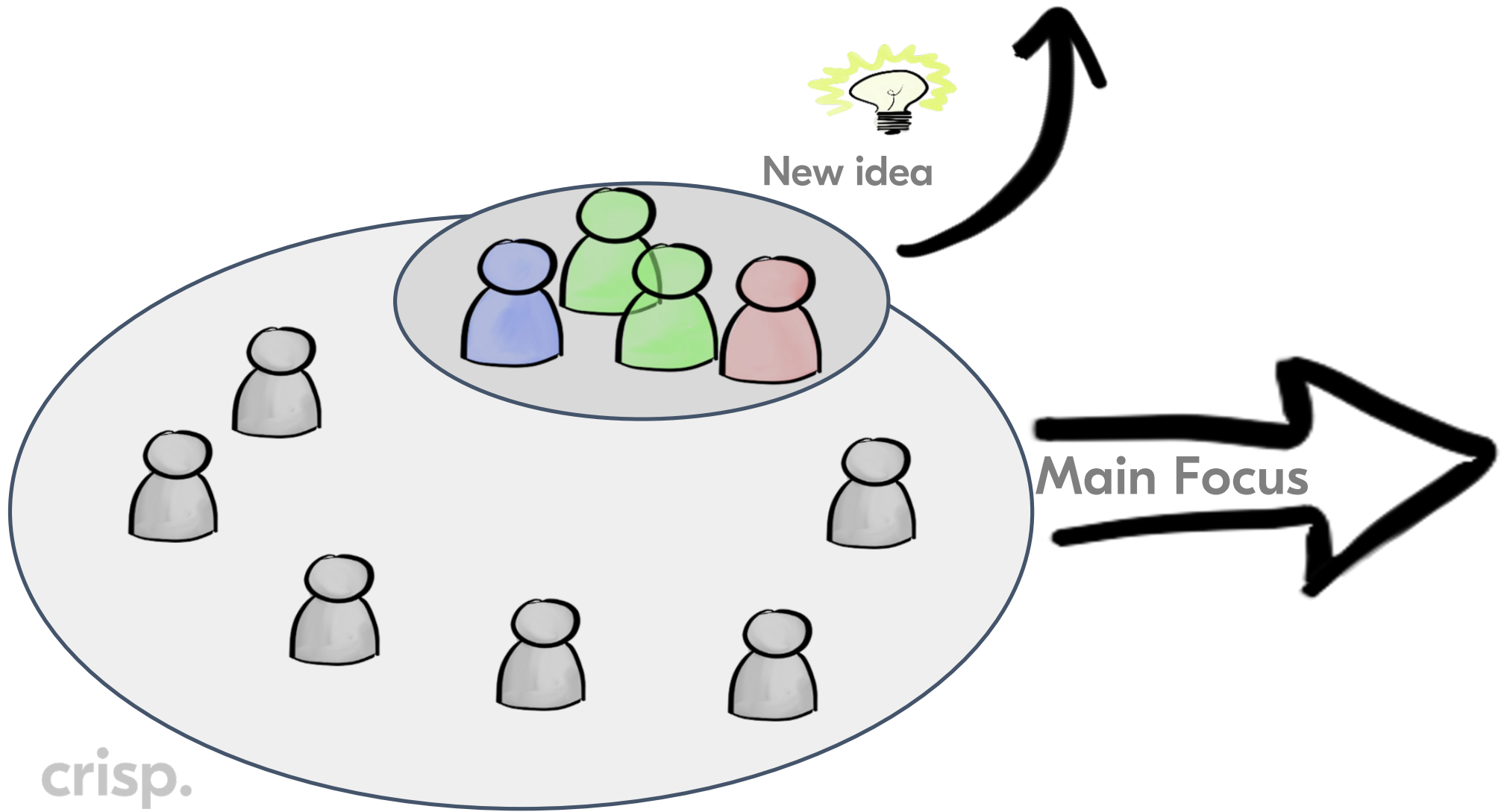
crisp.



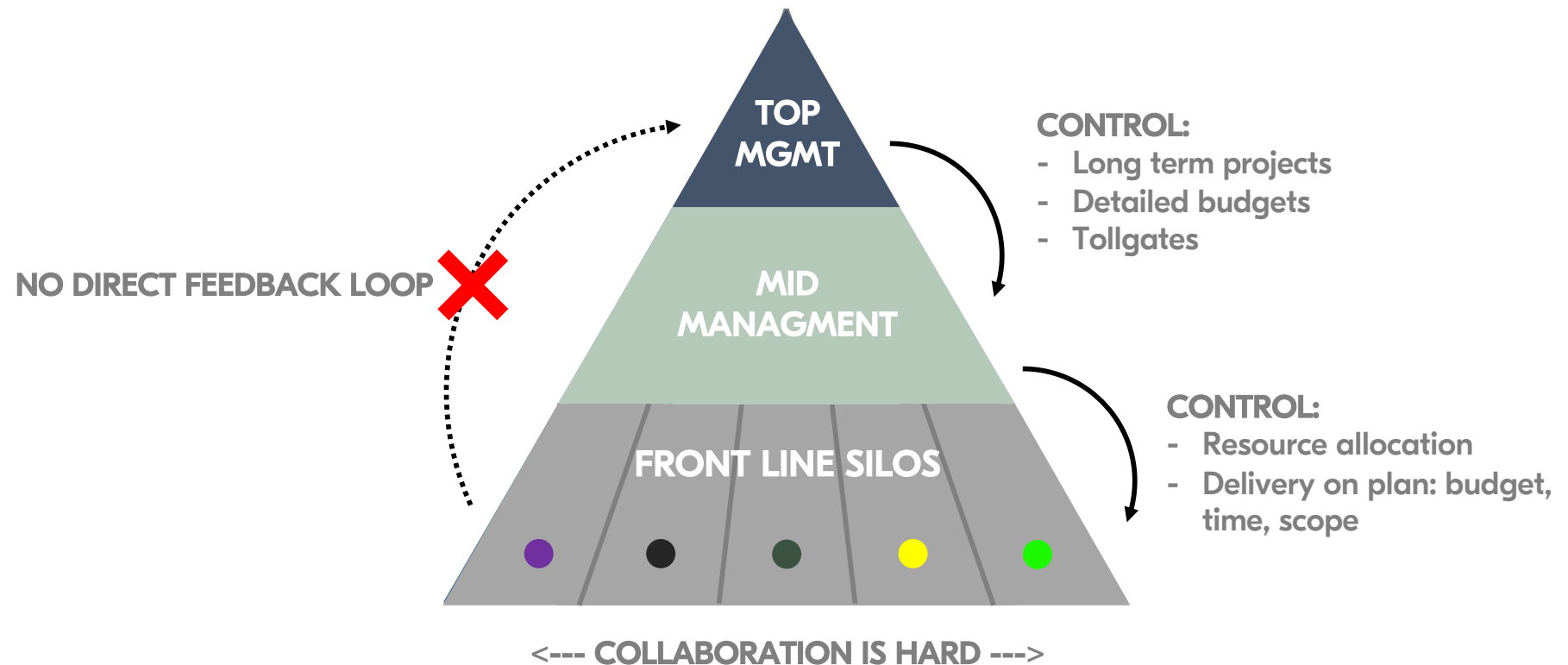
User Interface



Algorithm



"Traditional" organizations



The Autonomous Squad

“The most important feature of the organization is the autonomous squad. All other features are designed to support that mini-startup-like squad.”



Oskar Stål, Spotify CTO

aka Empowered Product Team

“The most important thing is to empower teams by assigning them problems to solve, and then give the teams the space to solve them.”



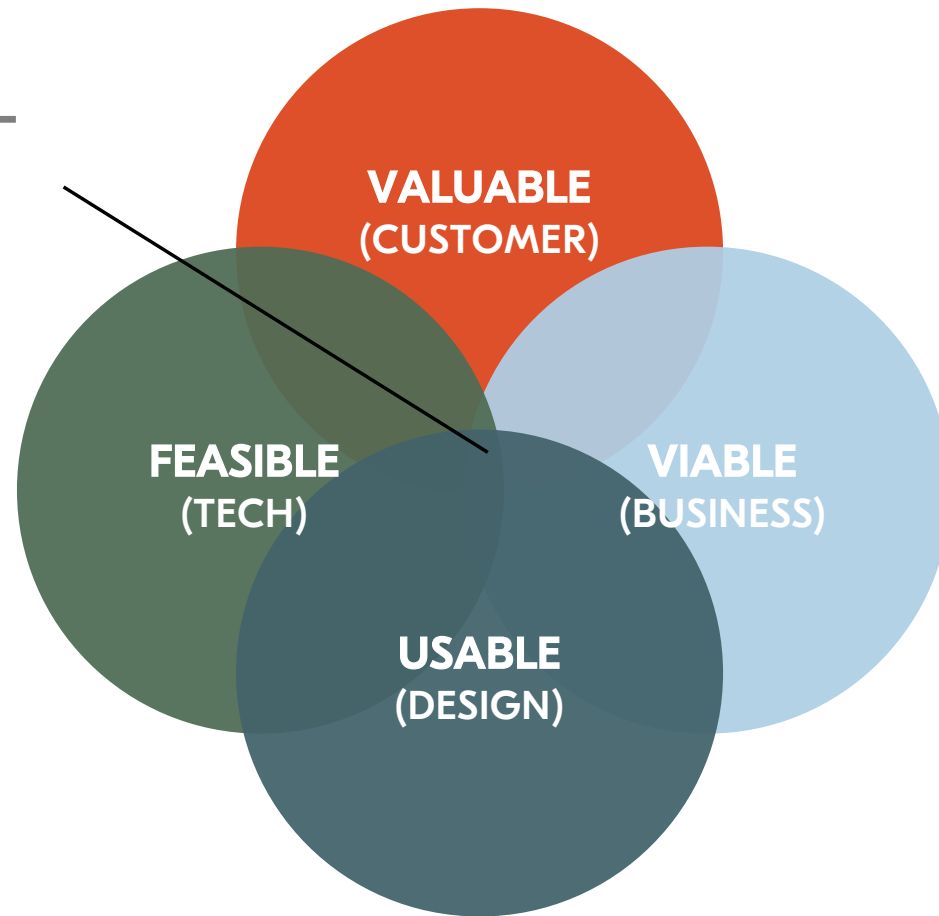
Marty Cagan



crisp.

The 4 Risks in Product Development

SUCCESSFUL
PRODUCT



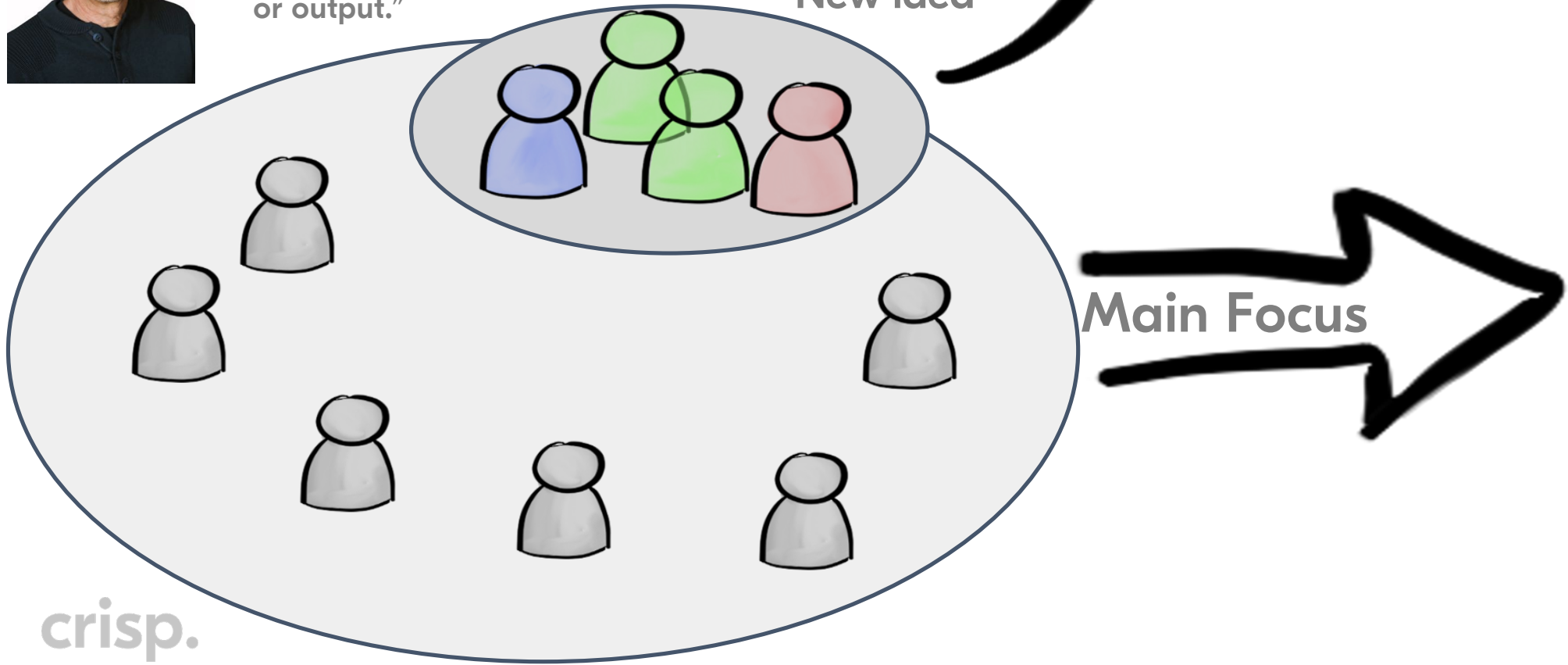
“The most important thing is to empower teams by assigning them **problems to solve**, and then give the teams the space to solve them.”



“And it’s essential that we define success by **business results** (aka outcome), and not simply activity or output.”

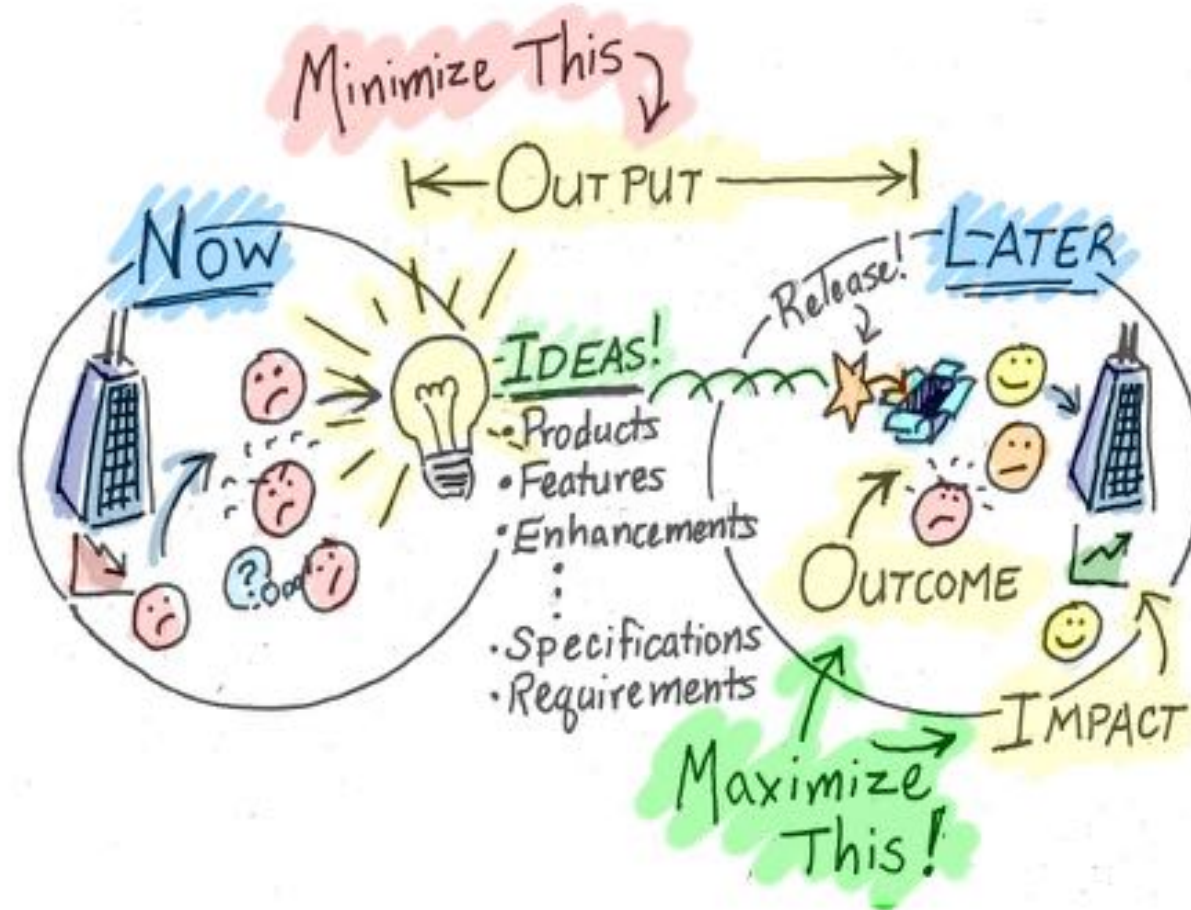


New idea



crisp.

Focused on Outcomes, not on Output



crisp.

Activities, Epics, Features, Stories...

- How we believe we are going to reach our goals
- These are just hypotheses/bets
- They have to change if the numbers aren't improving



These bets have a low success rate



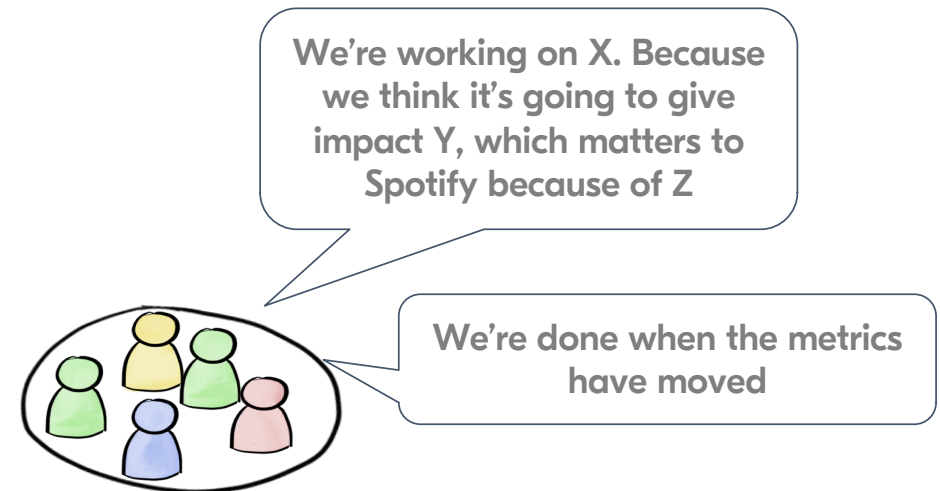
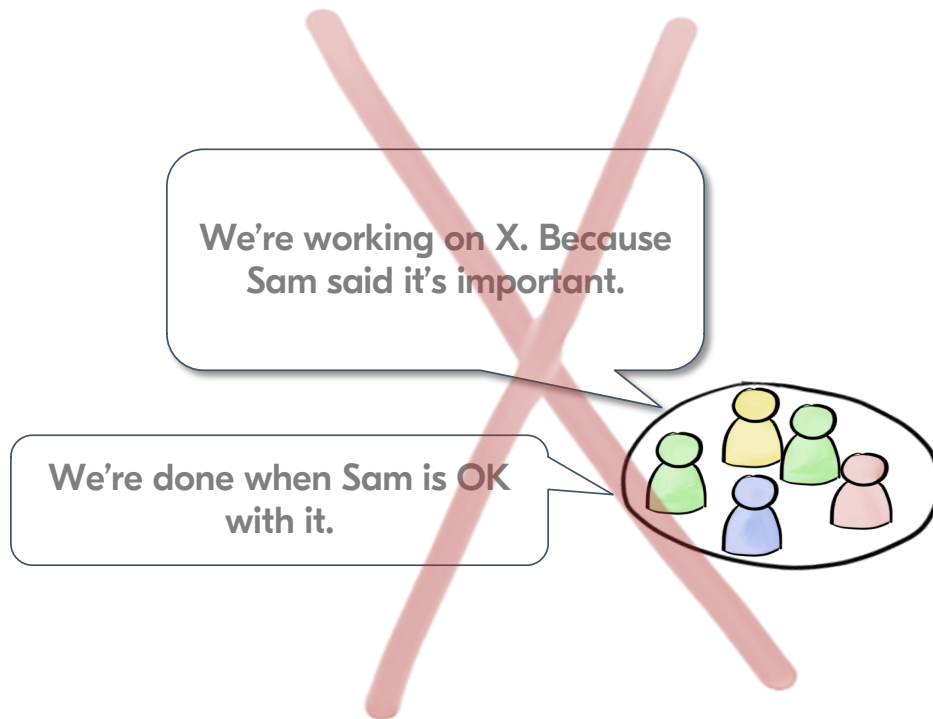
The vast majority of [new ideas] fail in experiments, and even experts often misjudge which ones will pay off.

At Google and Bing, only about 10% to 20% of experiments generate positive results.

At Microsoft as a whole, one-third prove effective, one-third have neutral results, and one-third have negative results.

Ron Kohavi, ex-Amazon, ex-Microsoft

Moving from opinions to data





Let data drive decisions, not the Highest Paid Person's Opinion.

crisp. #HowGoogleWorks

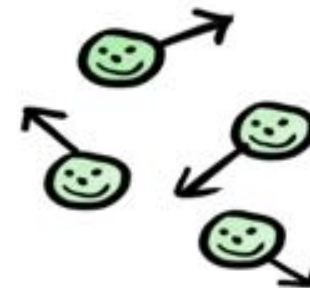
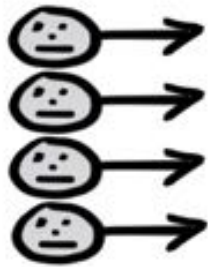
HowGoogleWorks.net

False dichotomy!

Alignment

Autonomy

Do what
I say!



Do
whatever



crisp.

**“Autonomy doesn’t mean the
freedom to do what you feel like”**



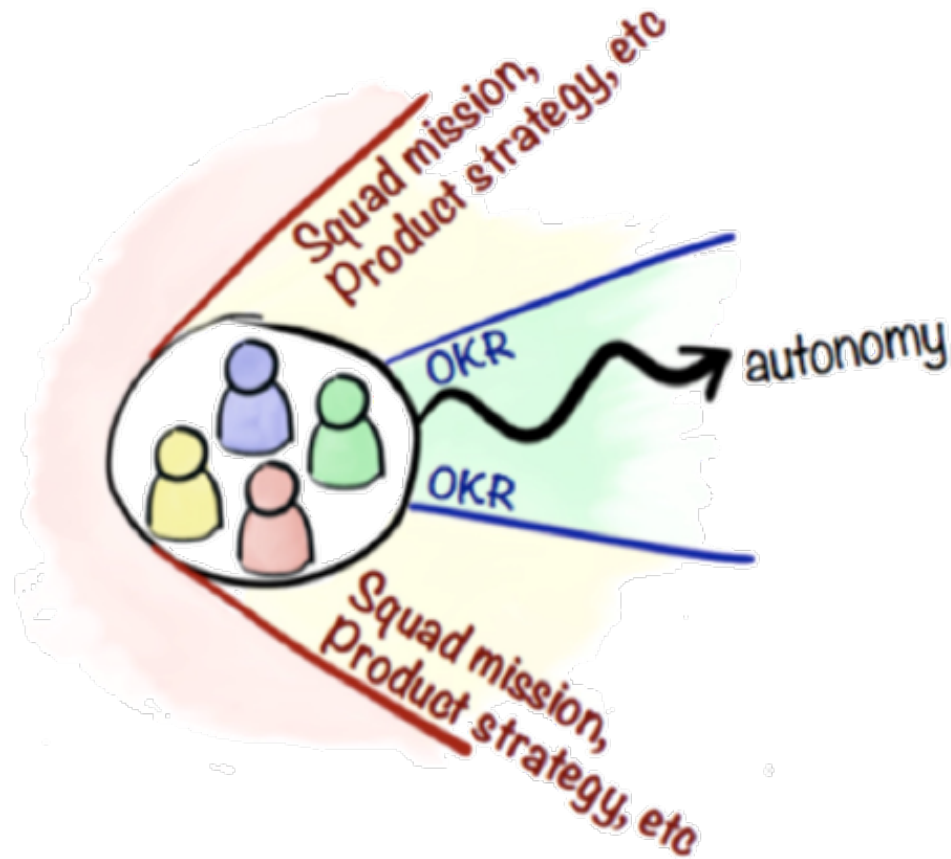
Jason Yip,
Spotify NYC

“Autonomy means feeling free to act, with all your capabilities, to contribute toward a collective outcome.”



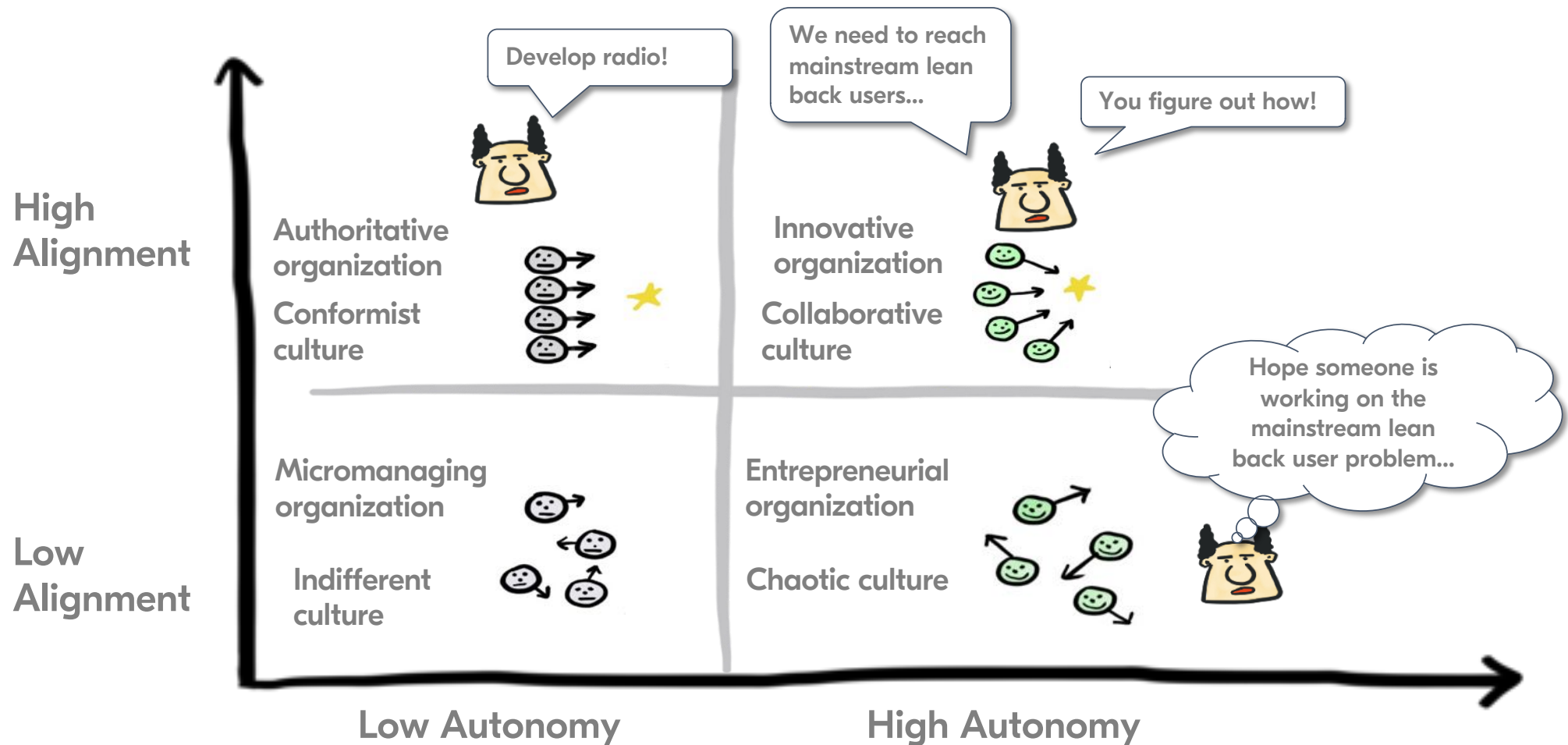
Jason Yip,
Spotify NYC

Aligned Autonomy



crisp.

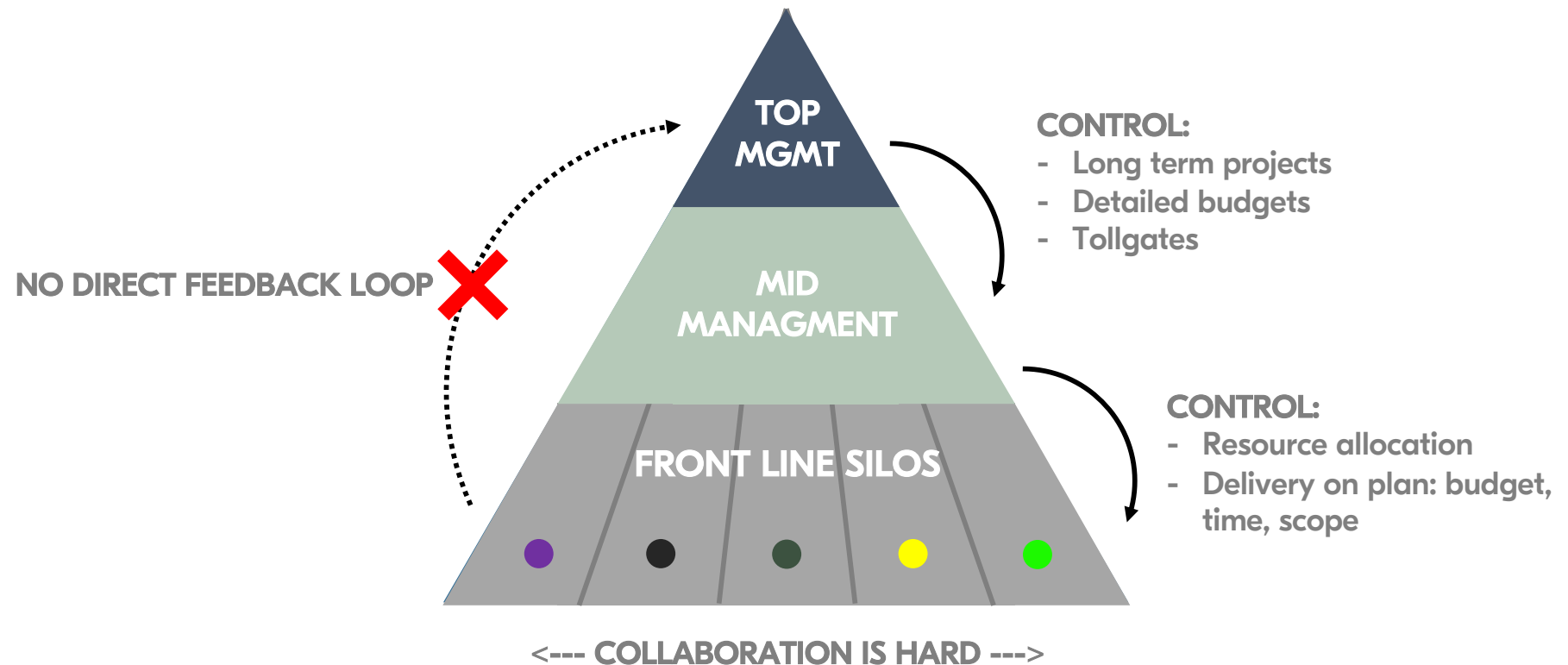
Aligned Autonomy



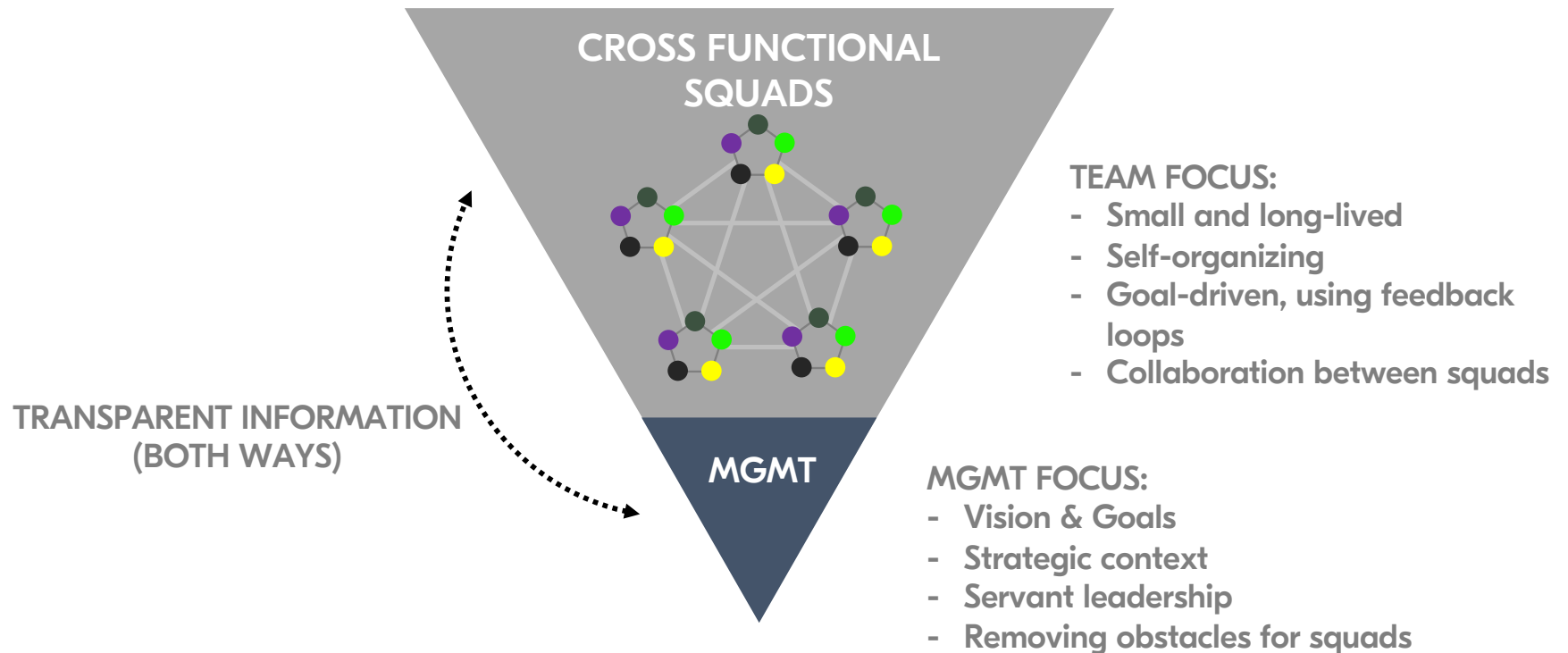
crisp.

Source: Stephen Bungay, Art of Action

"Traditional" organizations



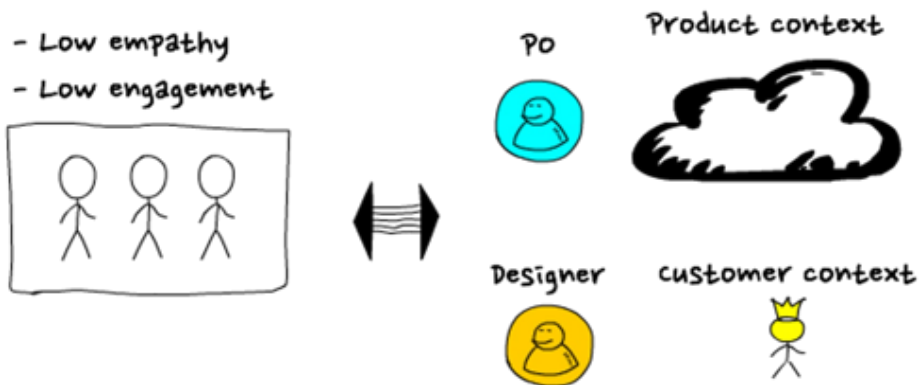
Aligned Autonomy



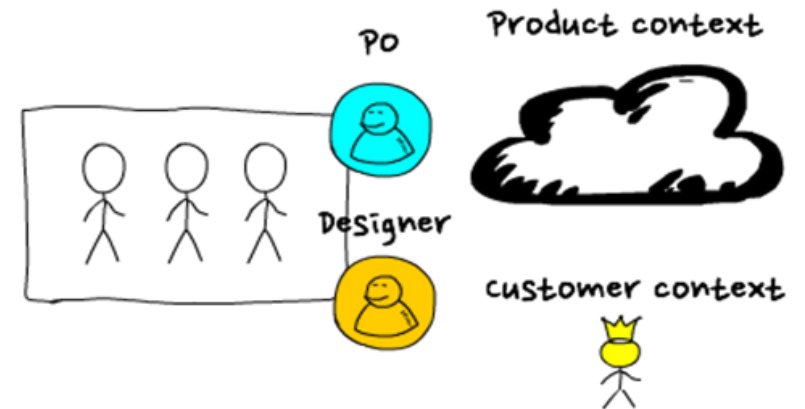
Gatekeeping vs Facilitating Context

Gatekeeping context

- Low empathy
- Low engagement



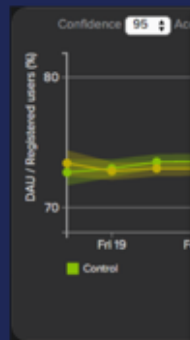
Facilitating context



Facilitating Context

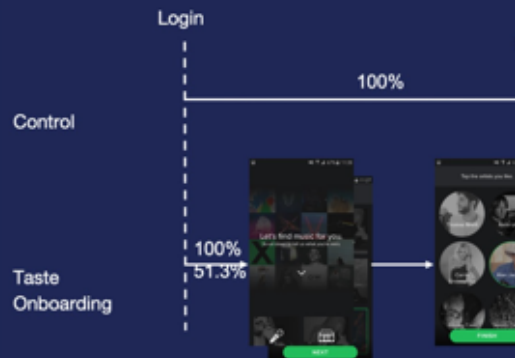
Play Day 1

Decrease by -0.7pp due to added friction, see next section "Day 1 Funnel" for further explanation



Day 1 Funnel

8pp of regs drop out in the taste onboarding flow. To improve we should optimise friction vs. taste signals, and get more people to play without hurting recommendations

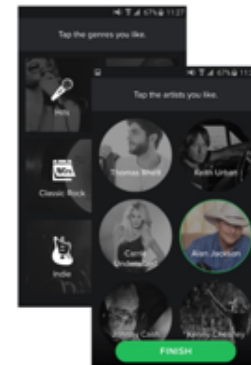


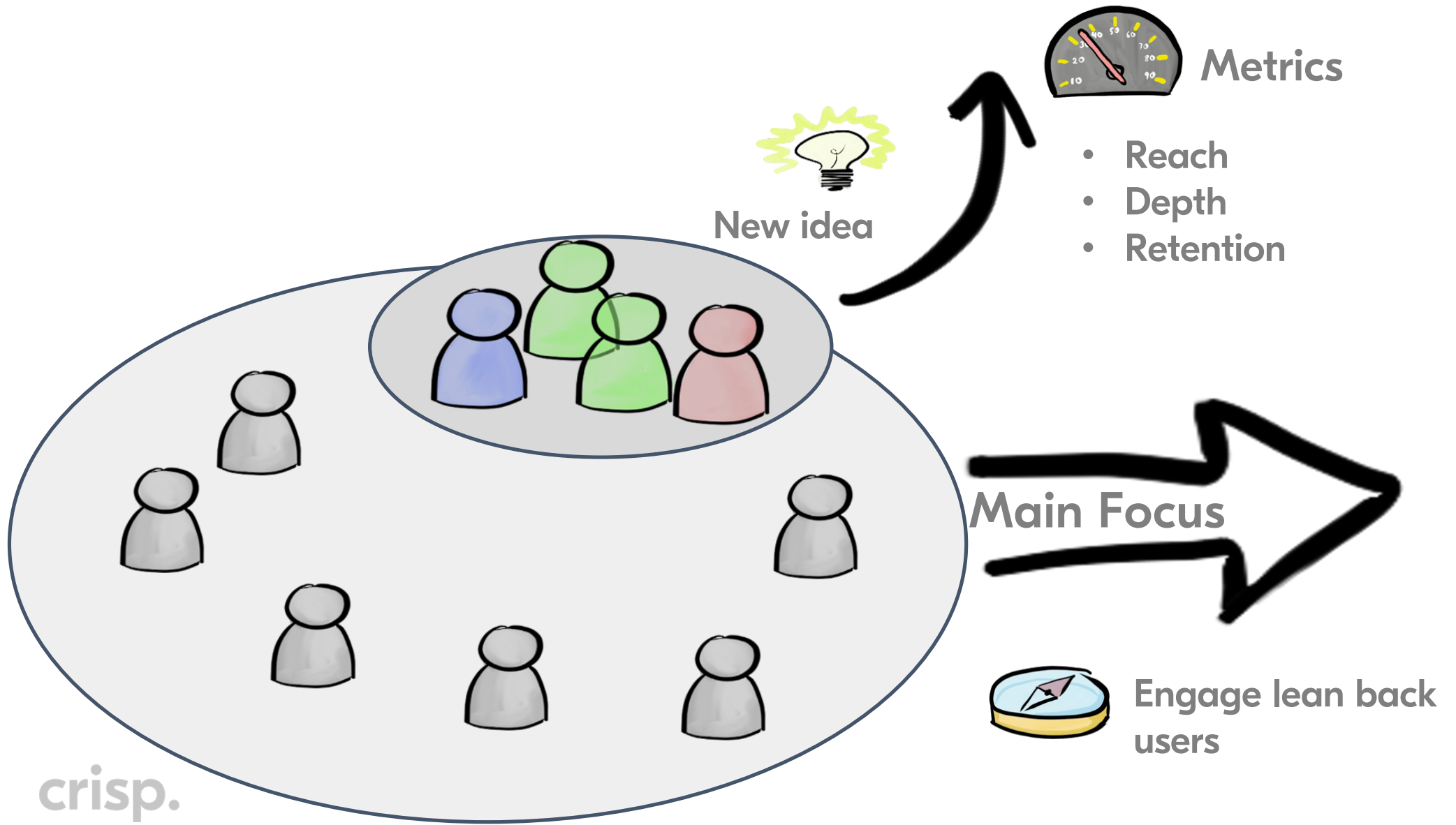
Not all participants realised they could pick several genres and artists.

- This is something we've seen in several tests before and should be taken into consideration when evaluating the quant test.
- As we've seen in the previous test (read [THIS](#) report), this can potentially be solved by adding different context.

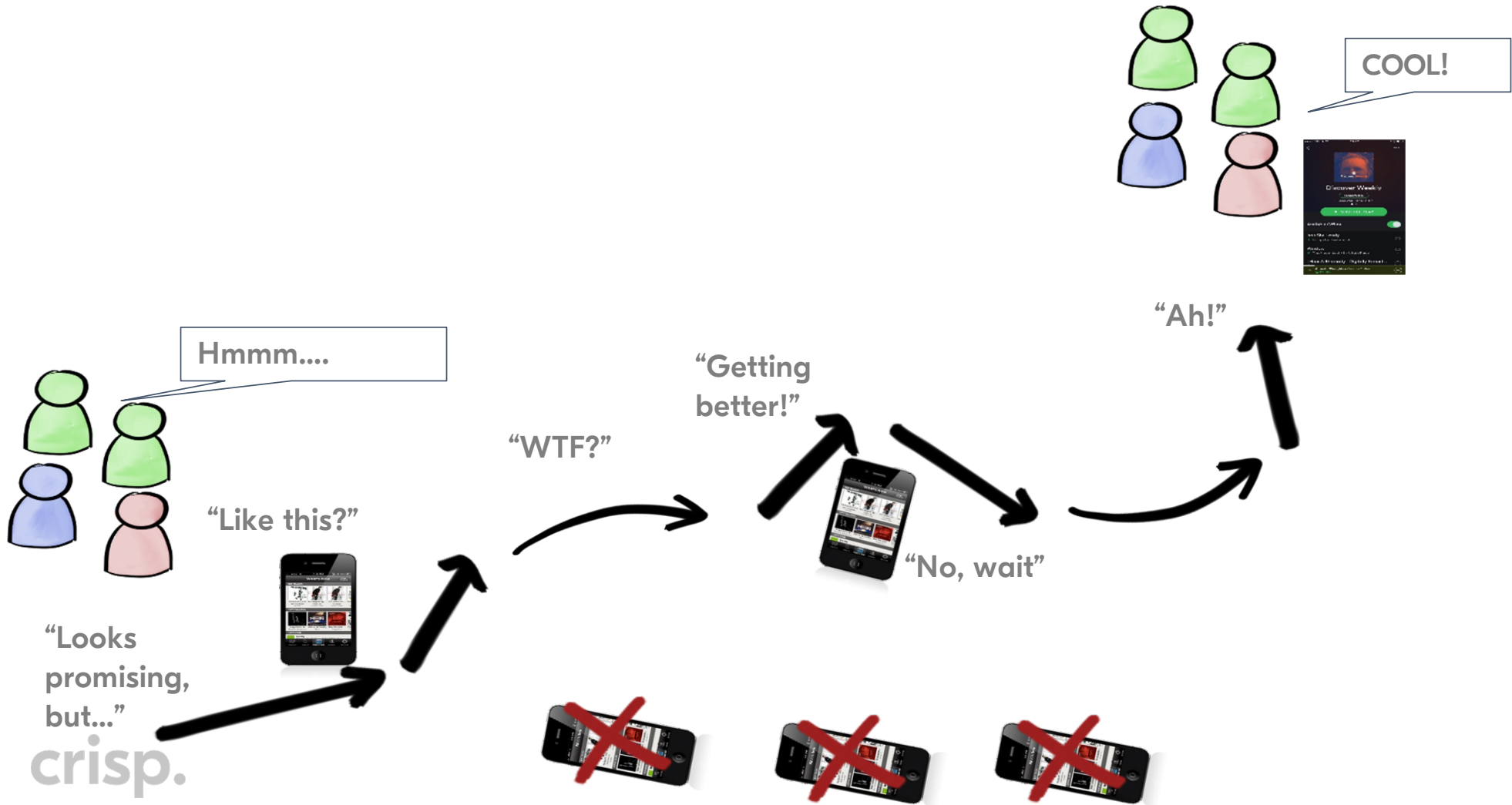


'I didn't really see that I could pick multiple artists' (nor did she pick multiple genres) - Bonnie





Iterate, iterate, iterate...



Team using it, continuous improvement

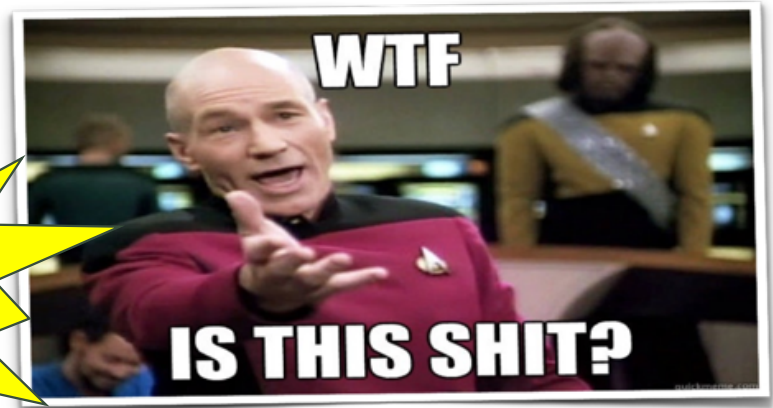


Experiments, experiments

Q: What should the cover art look like?

A: ME! But with cool colors.

10% lift
in WAU!



Fixed lots of content WTFs



What's the right length?

~~4~~ hours

~~3~~ hours

2 hours

Q: How often should it be updated?
A: Every week.

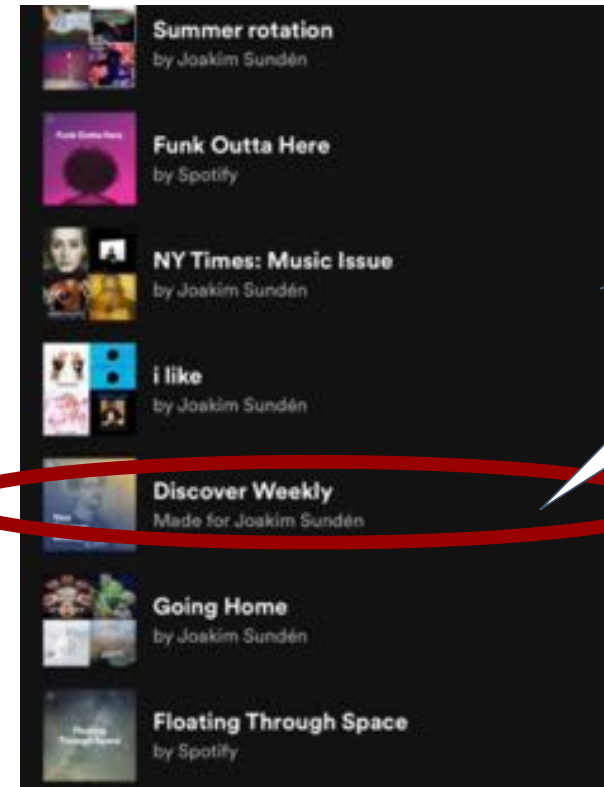
Too unfamiliar
crisp.

Too familiar



Winning formula

- 2 hours of personalised music recommendations
- Refreshed every Monday morning
- Delivered in a standard Spotify playlist
- Playlist image is based on user's FB account
- All songs are *replaced* each week



100% data-informed

No frontend development needed!



MADE FOR JOAKIM

Discover Weekly

Your weekly mixtape of fresh music. Enjoy new discoveries and deep cuts chosen just for you. Updated every Monday, so save your favorites!

Made for Joakim Sundén by Spotify • 30 songs, 1 hr 54 min

PLAY

FOLLOWING

...

OK. now what?

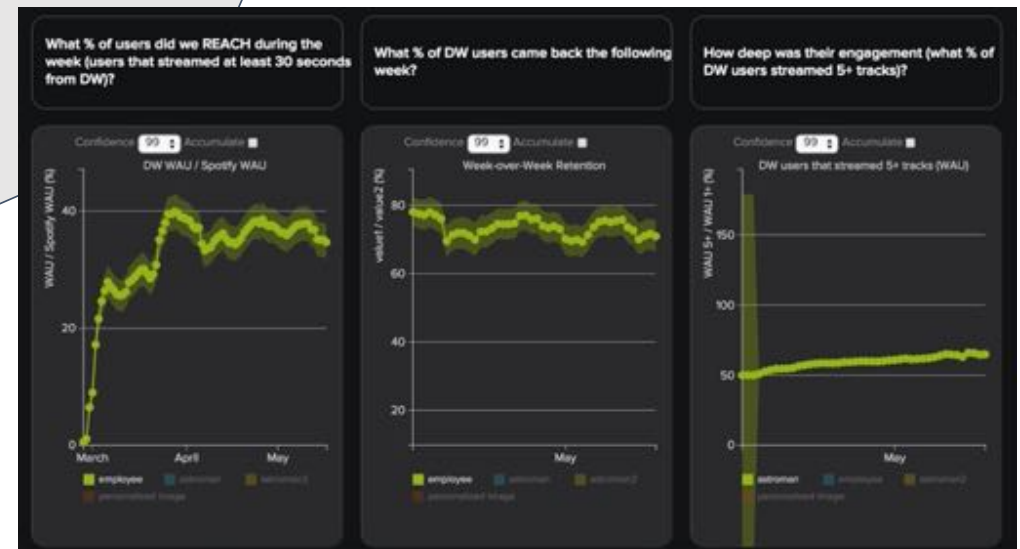
Employee release!



Metrics

- Reach
- Depth
- Retention

crisp.



Employee release

Employee Test: Discover Weekly



Matthew Ogle <mogle@spotify.com>

to Lambda, bcc: staff

What is it?

Discover Weekly is a new personalized playlist based on the popular playlists from 2014's Year in Review.

Every Monday we'll (re)fill it with two new hours of music, selected based on your recent listening.

How do I try it?

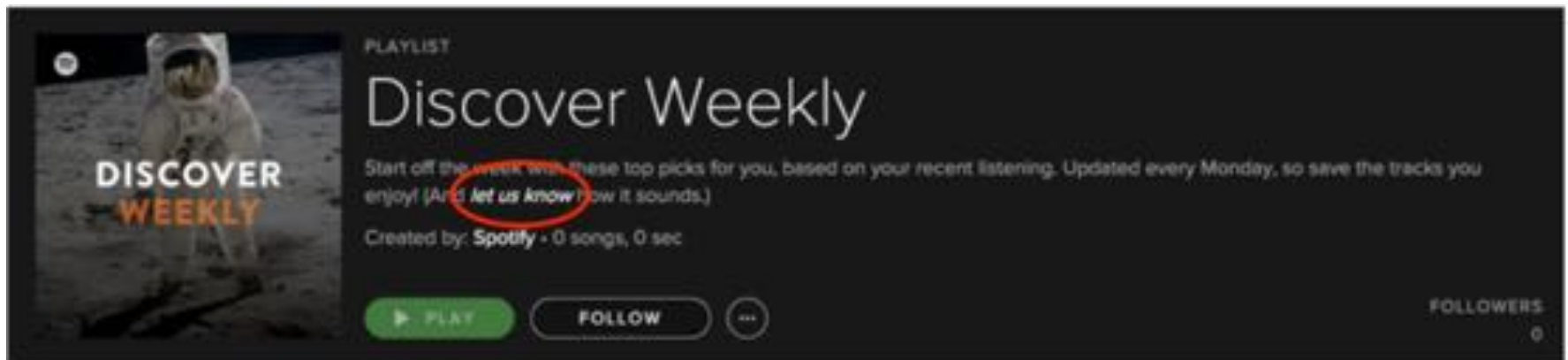
For the employee test, Discover Weekly should magically appear

Survey (google form)

"How much do you like the music in your discover weekly"

5 ↑ Love it! Found a new favorite song!
↓
1 Hate it!

crisp.

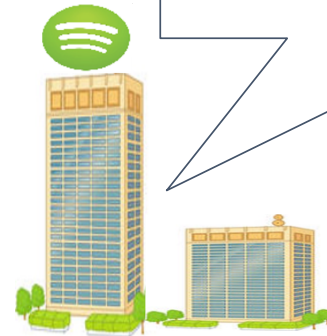


Rest of Spotify using it, loving it!

And giving feedback. More iterating!

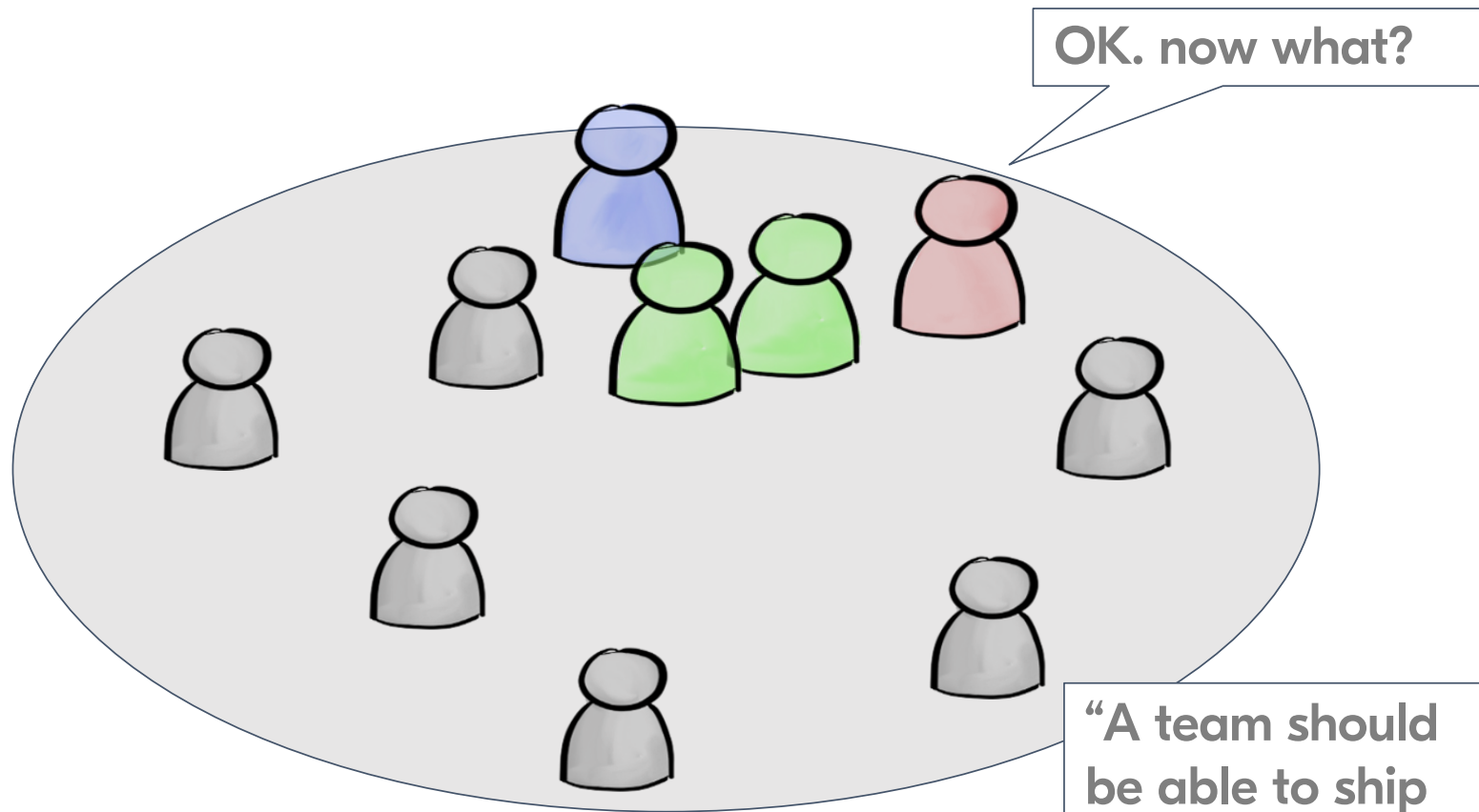


crisp.



Awesome survey results!

4	Great invention!!!
5	This is what I've b
5	This playlist was a
5	I adore this new fe
5	Please keep this u
5	
5	VERY impressed!!
5	
5	
4	
5	Spot on.
4	
-	



crisp.

“A team should
be able to ship
anything to 5%
of users”

- CTO



A photograph of a man with a shaved head, wearing a dark polo shirt, standing in a prison cell. He has his arms crossed and is looking towards the camera. The cell has a brick wall on the left and a metal door with the number '16' on the right. A metal railing is in the foreground.

Daniel Ek

**“We aim to make
mistakes faster than
anyone else”**

Celebrate Failure



Internal blog:

How we shot ourselves in the foot

How we shot ourselves in the foot

WTF?

How we shot ourselves in the foot

Internal blog:

Celebrate failure!

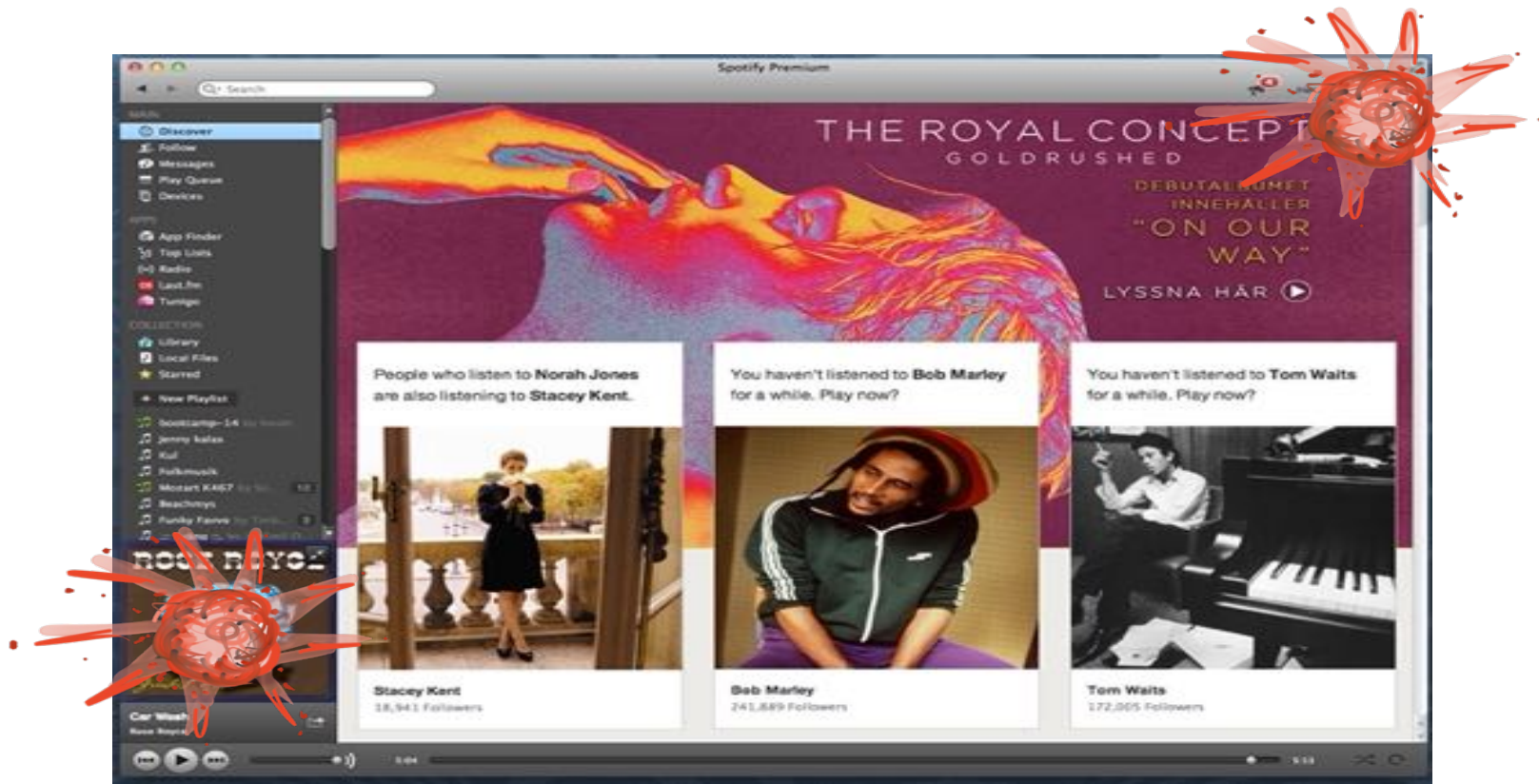
How we shot ourselves in the foot

How we shot ourselves in the foot

How we shot ourselves in the foot

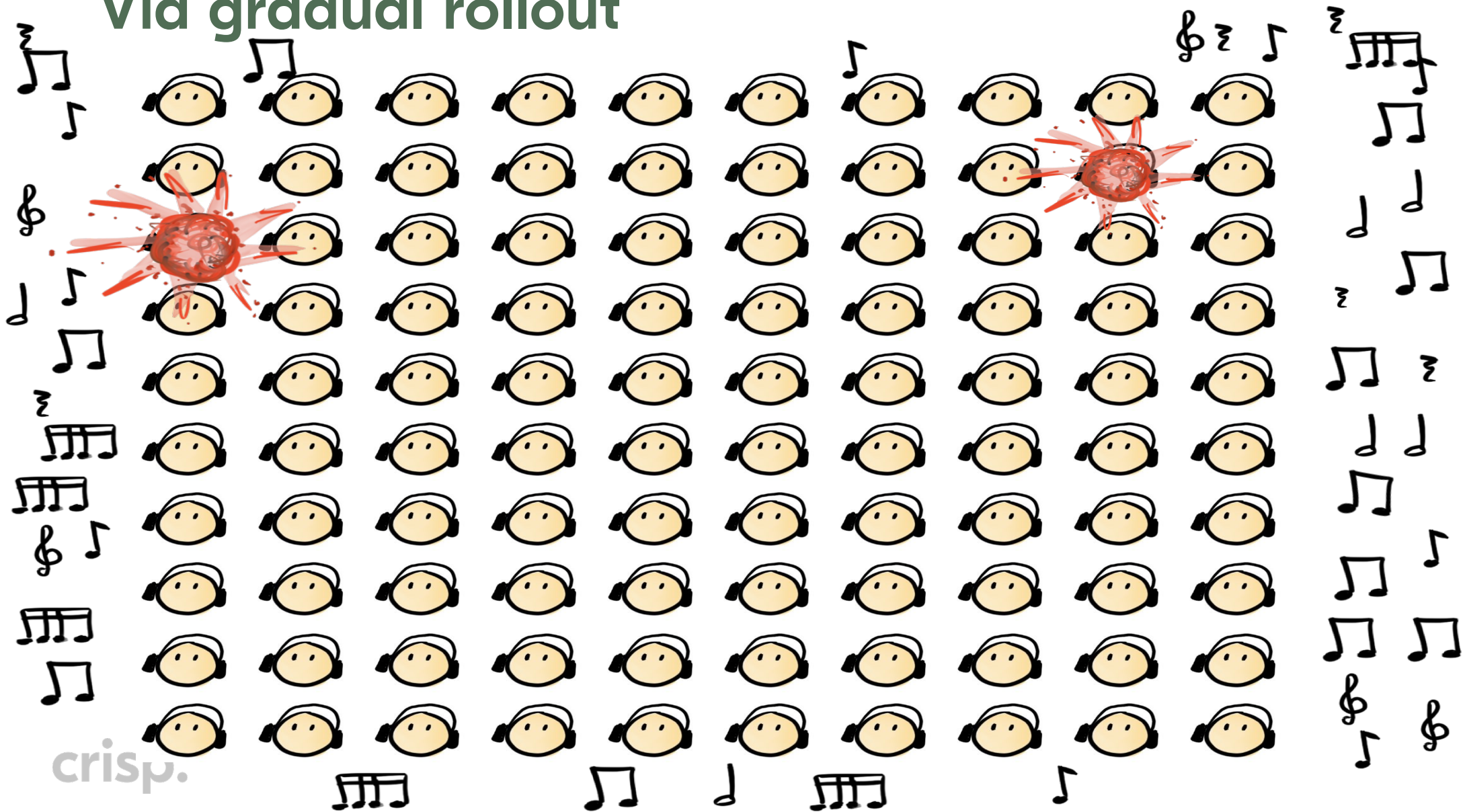
crisp.

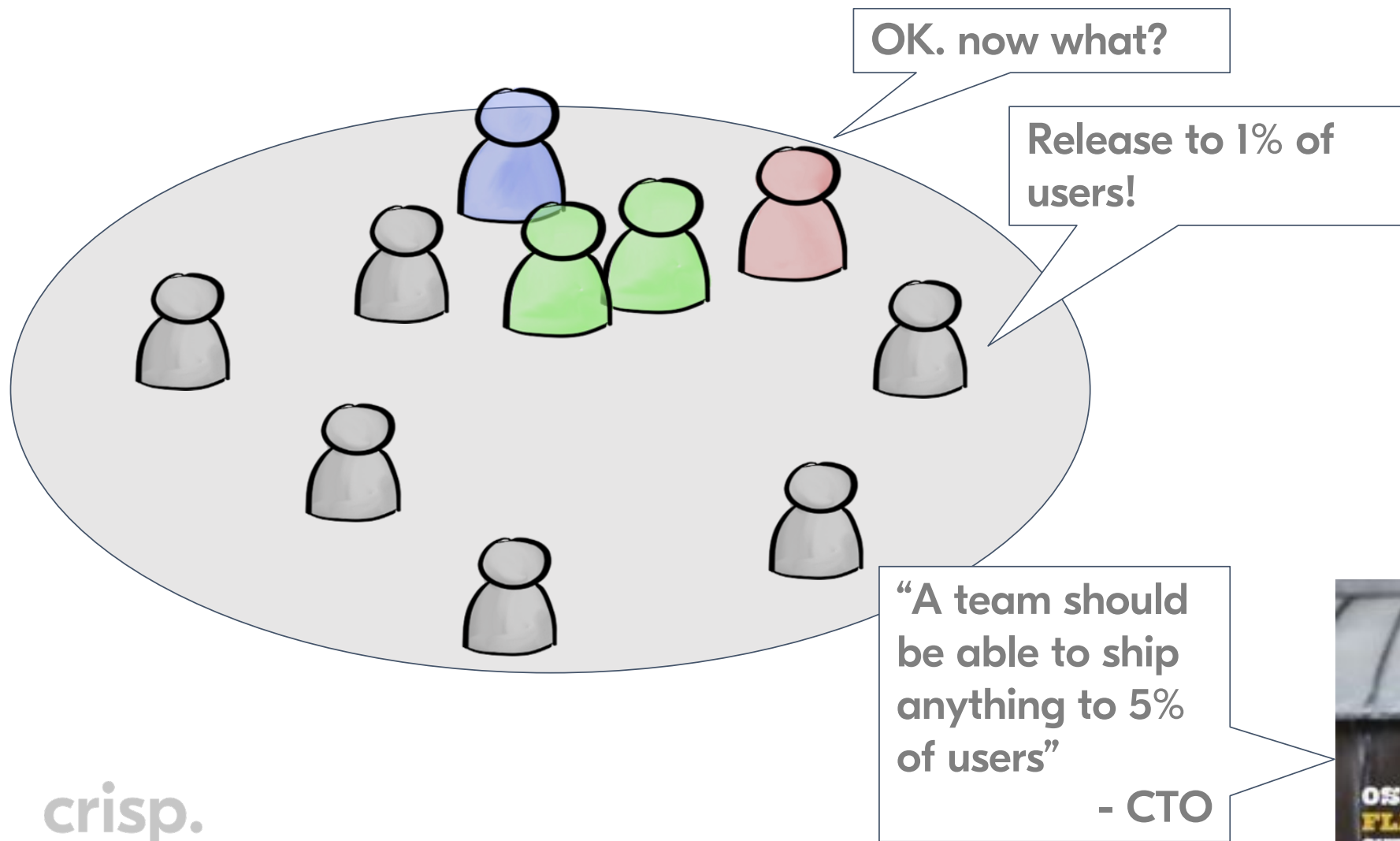
“Limited Blast Radius” via decoupled architecture



crisp.

Via gradual rollout





crisp.



But will the rest of the world like it?

Dunno. We'll find out.



crisp.

Watching the data

1200 survey responses



User metrics



Watching the buzz



dave horwitz
@Dave_Horwitz



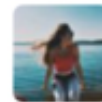
It's scary how well @Spotify Discover Weekly playlists know me. Like former-lover-who-lived-through-a-near-death experience-wit h-me well.



Amanda Whitbred
@amandawhitbred



At this point @Spotify's discover weekly knows me so well that if it proposed I'd say yes



Audrey Rothers
@AudreyRothers



Discover Weekly on Spotify eliminates the need for a musically knowledgeable boyfriend. Now I can be single forever! #economica

crisp.

Conclusion: We have a winner!



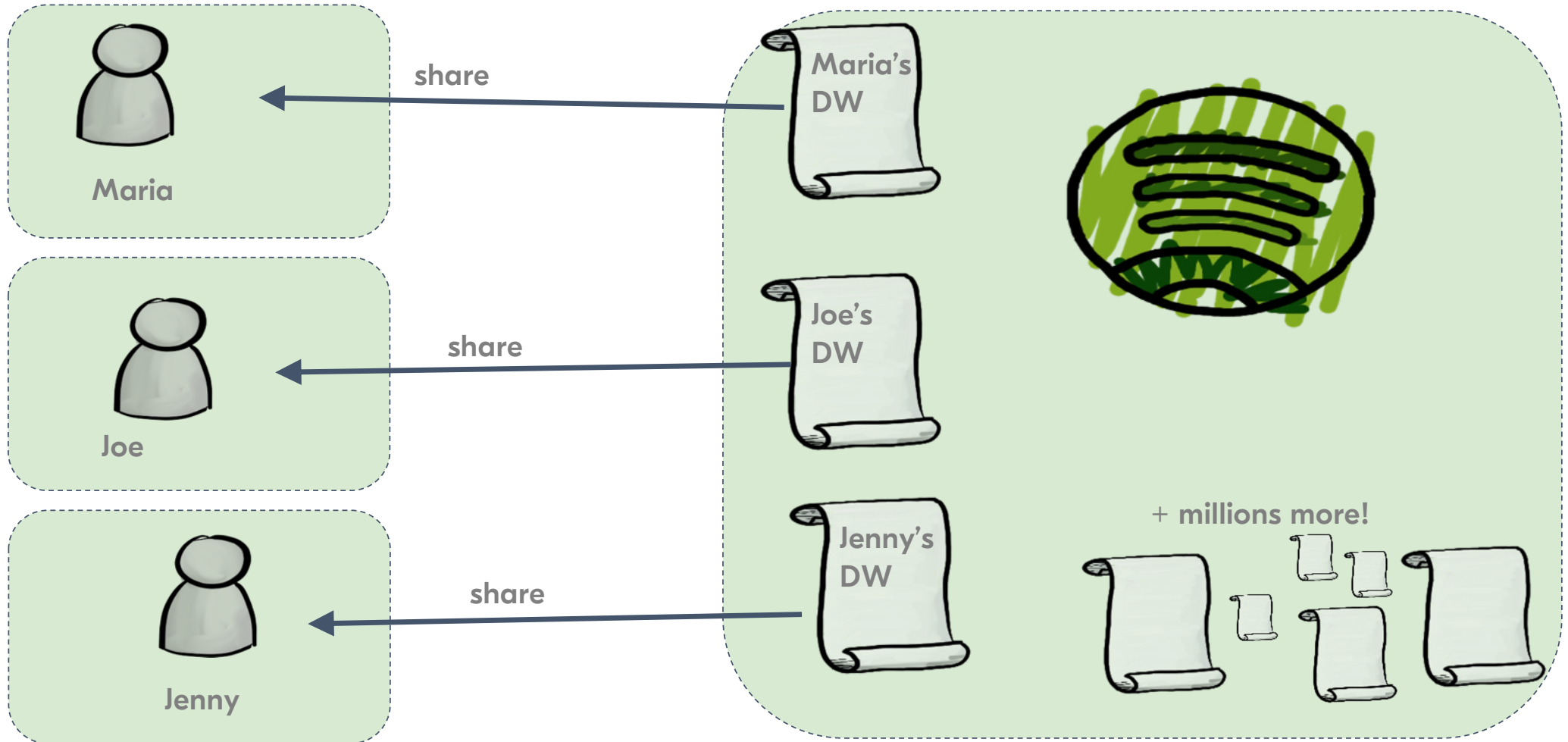
But...



crisp.

It didn't scale :(

Spotify = a single “user” with 75 MILLIONS of shared playlists, and they CHANGE EVERY WEEK on the same day!



crisp.

Undeploy...



Hilary Goudeau
@HilaryGoudeau



 Follow

And just like that, my @Spotify Discover Weekly playlist was taken from me. I am in mourning. I hope it returns soon. 💔



11:02 PM - 11 May 2015

crisp.



KEVIN HIRTH @KevinHirth · Jun 7

Thank you @Spotify for my brief tenure with **discover weekly**. Best 3 weeks of music I've ever had. Feel free to come back any time!



Brad Seidel @BradSeidel · May 29

@Spotify needs to bring back "Discover Weekly" playlists #ASAP



nathália @nattfs · May 20

o que aconteceu com a playlist **discover weekly** do **spotify** eu to surtando



Harry Wilson @HjwilsonHarry · May 18

@Spotify What happened to the **discover Weekly** playlist



Brad Baraud @BradBaraud · May 18

@Spotify My **Discover Weekly** hasn't refreshed in 2 weeks :(was it just a temporary thing?



[View conversation](#)

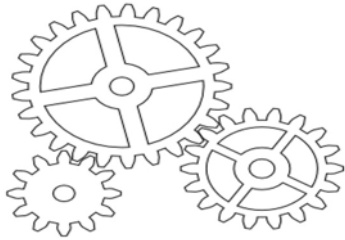


travis @angstnmyveins · May 15

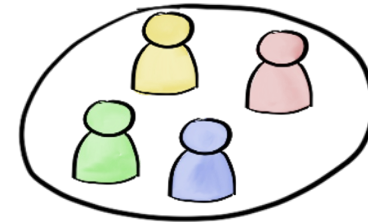
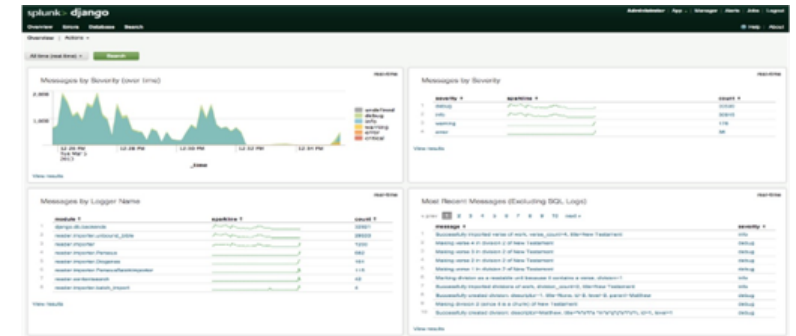
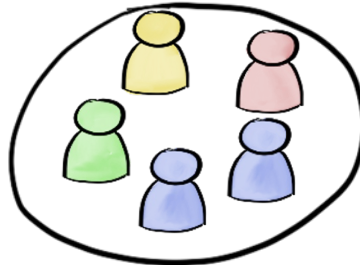
@Spotify @SpotifyUSA Why did my **Discover Weekly** playlist disappear?! I looked forward to that every week!



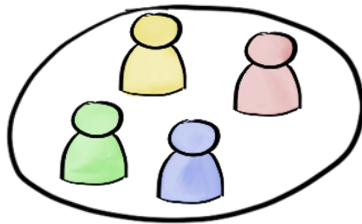
Sort out the tech issues



Hmmm....

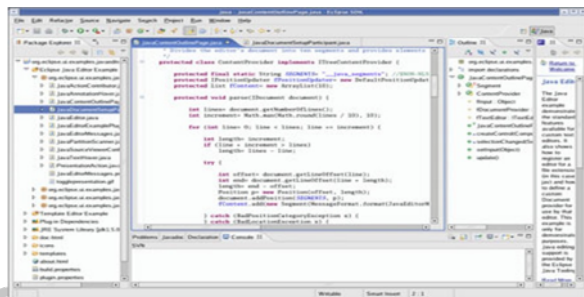
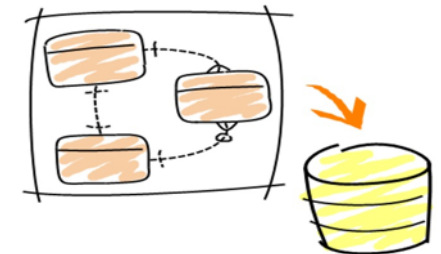
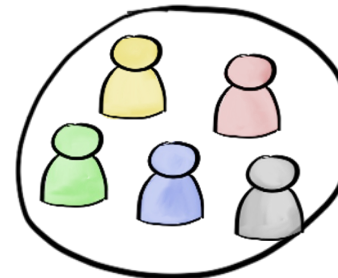


Lemee just...



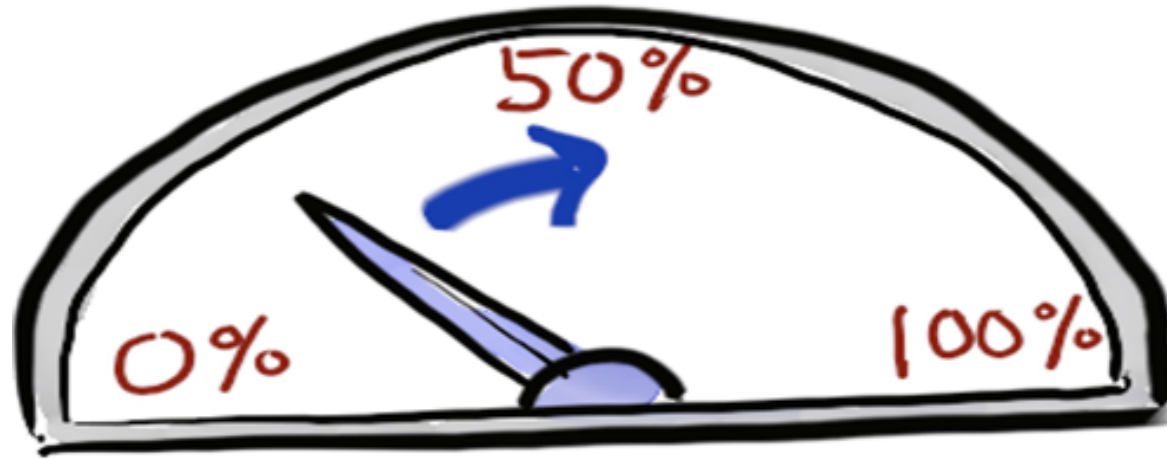
How about....

Let's try....



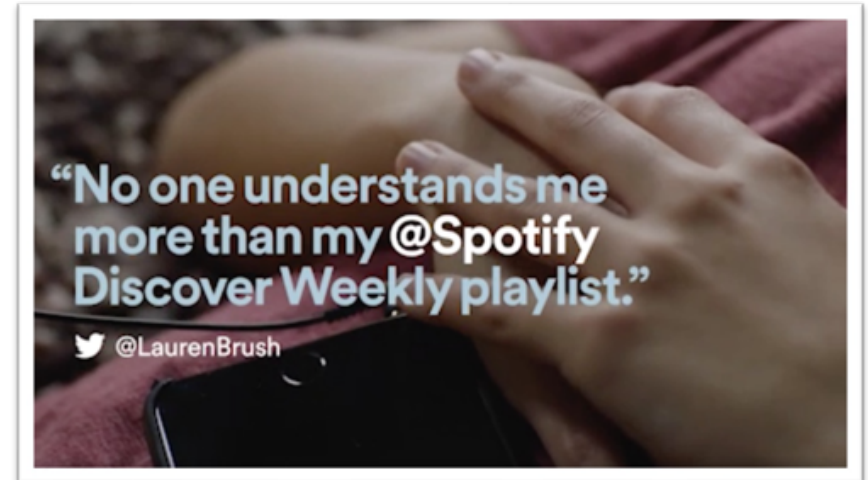
crisp.

Gradually roll it out again



crisp.

Tweak the marketing message



Used user's own language
in the launch

Tweak the packaging





PRESS

LATEST NEWS INFORMATION THE TEAM IMAGES VIDEO

Discover Weekly reaches one billion tracks streamed in 10 weeks

Posted on October 8, 2015 by [Martin Vacher](#)

It seems we've found a cure for "a case of the Mondays." In just 10 weeks, 1 billion tracks have been streamed from Discover Weekly playlists. It's the [best-ever recommendations](#) delivered to you as a weekly mixtape of fresh music each Monday.

71% of Discover Weekly listeners save at least one song to their own playlists and 60% of users who go on to stream five or more tracks. Wow.

For the music fans who listen, discover and share music and artists every week — the entire Spotify team behind DW is overwhelmed with this

level of the discovery — the more you listen, the better your Discover Weekly



gothman
@arthoeofficial

monday mornings i take a bath and listen to discover weekly

LIKES
2



7:20 AM - 28 Dec 2015



rachel
@crotchel_

Got really excited and started crying a little because I realized tomorrow is Monday and spotify is making me a new discover weekly.



Tom Conrad
@tconrad

OK, everyone is right. Discover Weekly is absolutely perfect.

Co-creator
of Pandora!



Ste
@SteLFC91



Follow

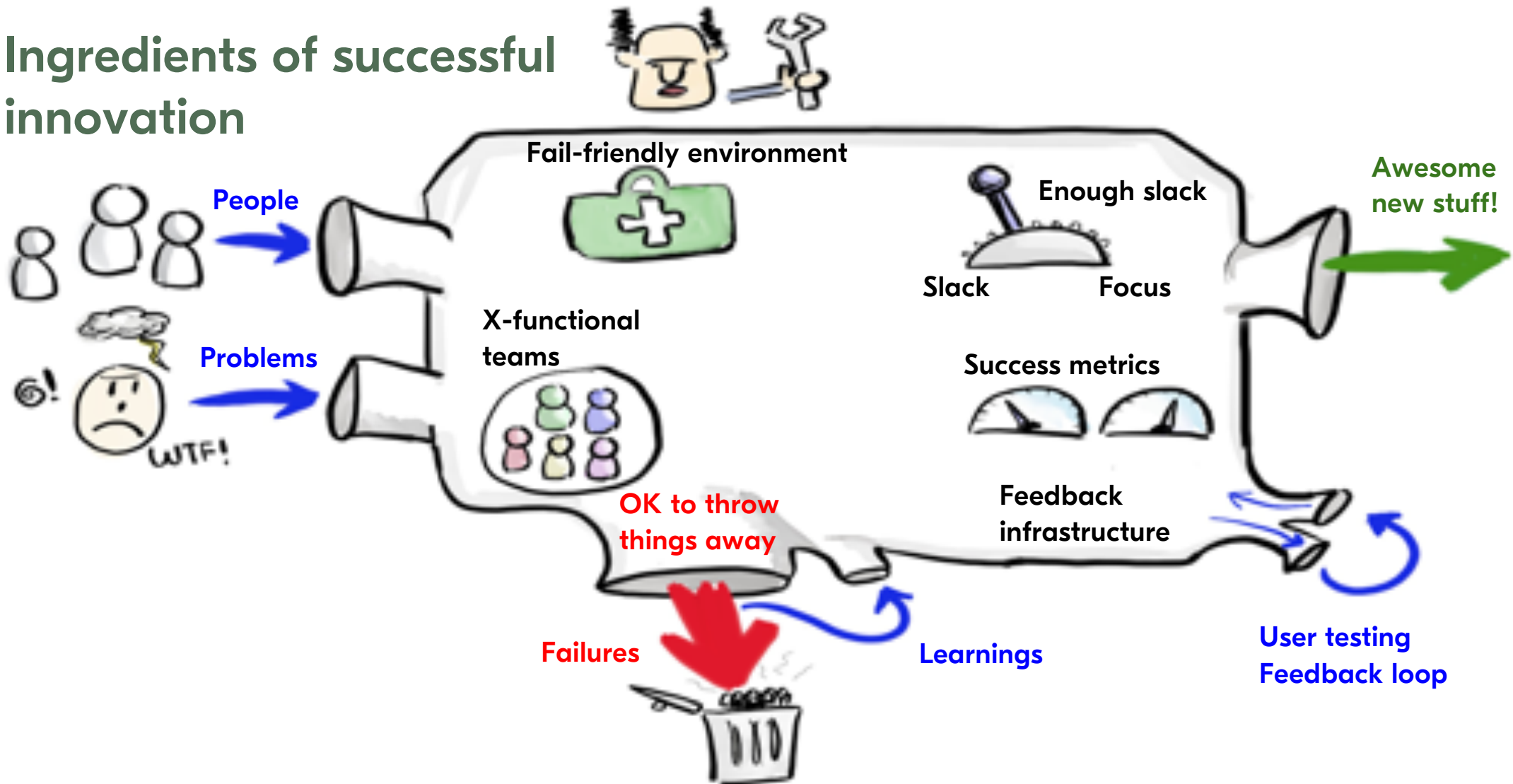
It's actually so sad how excited I get for a new Discover Weekly on Spotify every Monday

LIKES
4



12:40 PM - 18 Jan 2016

Ingredients of successful innovation



crisp.

Illustration: Henrik Kniberg

08.07.18

Exclusive: Spotify CEO Daniel Ek on Apple, Facebook, Netflix—and the future

An intimate look inside the mind of the CEO bending the music industry into his vision



[Photo: Ilya S. Savenok/Getty Images for Spotify]

FC: You've had some pretty successful consumer rollouts, like the Discovery Weekly personalized playlist.

DK: I would have killed that if it was just me, 100%.

FC: Why would you have killed it?

DK: I never really saw the beauty of it. I questioned them two, three times: Are you sure you really want to do this? Why are we spending all this time and energy? For awhile, we didn't give that team any more funding in terms of headcount, but they kept working on it anyway. All of a sudden they shipped it. I remember reading about it in the press. I thought, oh, this is going to be a disaster.

And then obviously it turned out to be something really successful. It's one of the most loved product features that we have. There are lots of things in this company that I didn't think were good ideas that turned into some of the best things. One price promotion for the holidays, three months for 99¢. I'm like, this is so fucking dumb. People are just

crisp.

Innovation can't be forced


Just enabled & encouraged & supported

Managers cannot make innovation happen - but they can create an environment to support it and stop it from being killed



Illustration: Henrik Kniberg

Do you want to learn more?



With Joachim Sundén

When Scaling Agile becomes *foggy*

An interactive session

TRIFORK

[In-Person] When Scaling Agile becomes foggy with ex-Spotify Joachim Sundén, Wed, May 24, 2023, 8:30 AM | Meetup

AGILE TRANSFORMATIONS USING THE “SPOTIFY MODEL”: LESSONS FROM THE TRENCHES

Wed, May 24th 2023, 10:50 CEST

Lille Sal

For a long time Spotify people (including me!) have tried to convince the world that there is no “Spotify Model” and if there ever was one, Spotify isn’t using it anyway, you shouldn’t either. And yet, countless organizations are using the Spotify model.

09:00 - 16:00 CEST 2 Day Masterclass - Day 1

2 Days: Agile at Scale, Inspired by Spotify



Joakim Sundén

Consultant, Speaker, Coach, Teacher at Crisp

crisp.

Joakim Sundén

crisp. 2017-

 **Spotify®** 2011-2017



www.joakimsunden.com



linkedin.com/joakimsunden



joakim.sunden@gmail.com

crisp.



Joakim Sundén

Don't forget to
vote for this session
in the **GOTO Guide app**