



# BEYOND GAME DESIGN

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Game Director at Ubisoft Toronto

**GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE**

MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19

# 14 YEARS IN GAMES



TIBURON



CHICAGO

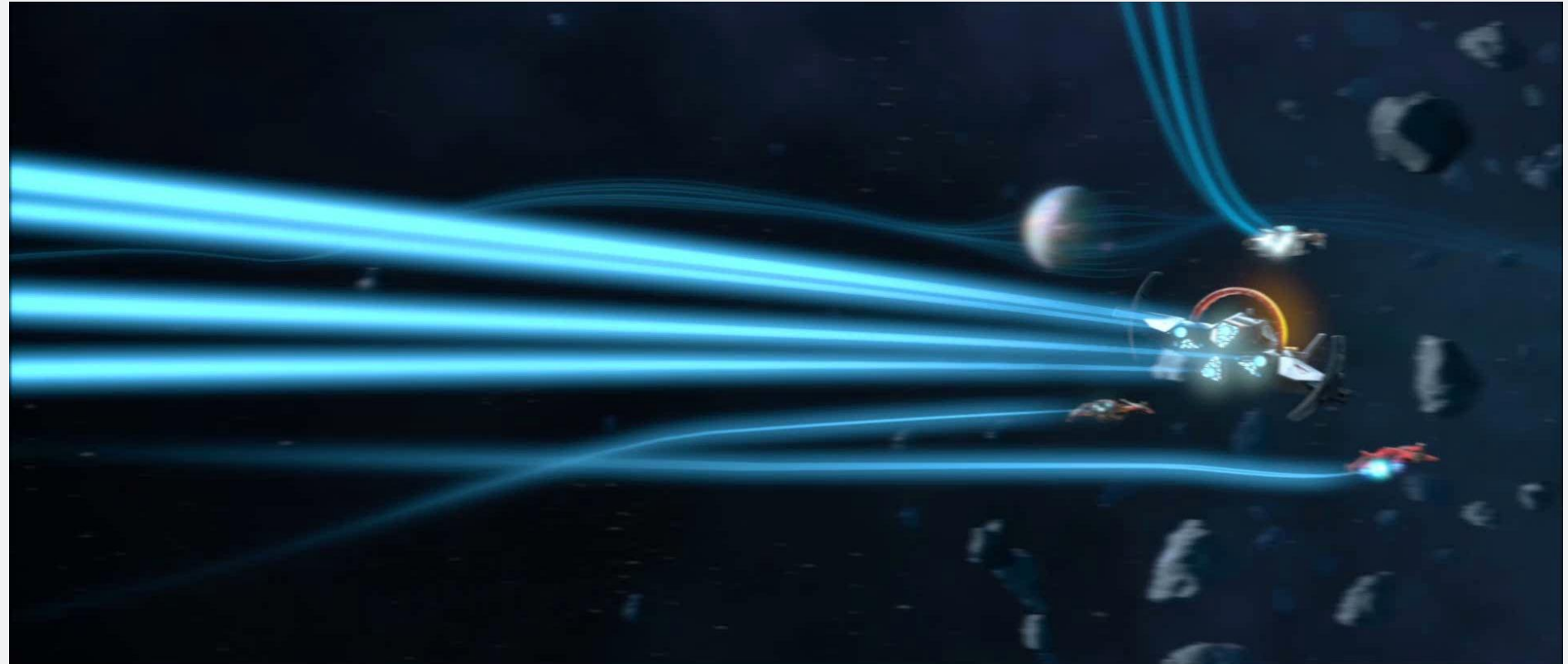


TORONTO





# STARLINK: BATTLE FOR ATLAS





# *Building a Positive Design Culture*

HOW SOFT SKILLS LEAD TO STRONG TEAMS

# NEGATIVE MINDSETS

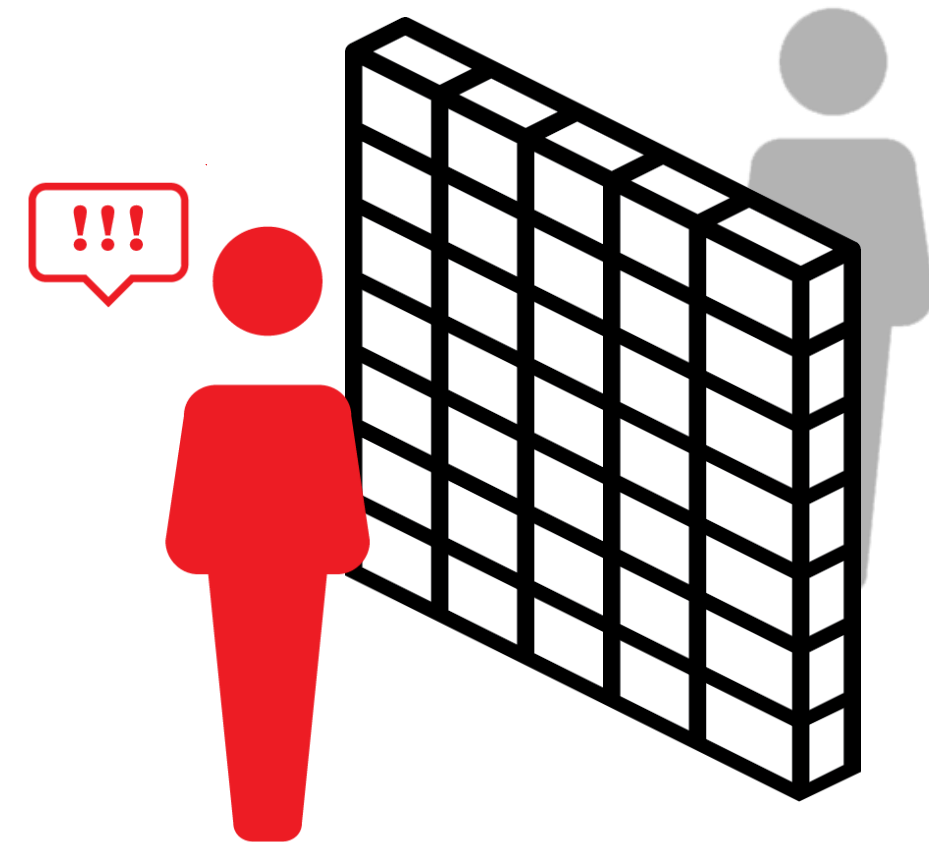
«ررررر» *“I’m the designer, let me do my job”*  
⇒ What you’re saying doesn’t matter

«ررررر» *“I know best”*  
⇒ I know best, you know nothing

«ررررر» *“Give me feedback, not designs or solutions”*  
⇒ Tell me what I want to hear the way I want to hear it

«ررررر» *“This is the design we approved”*  
⇒ I don’t want to listen to you or reflect on feedback

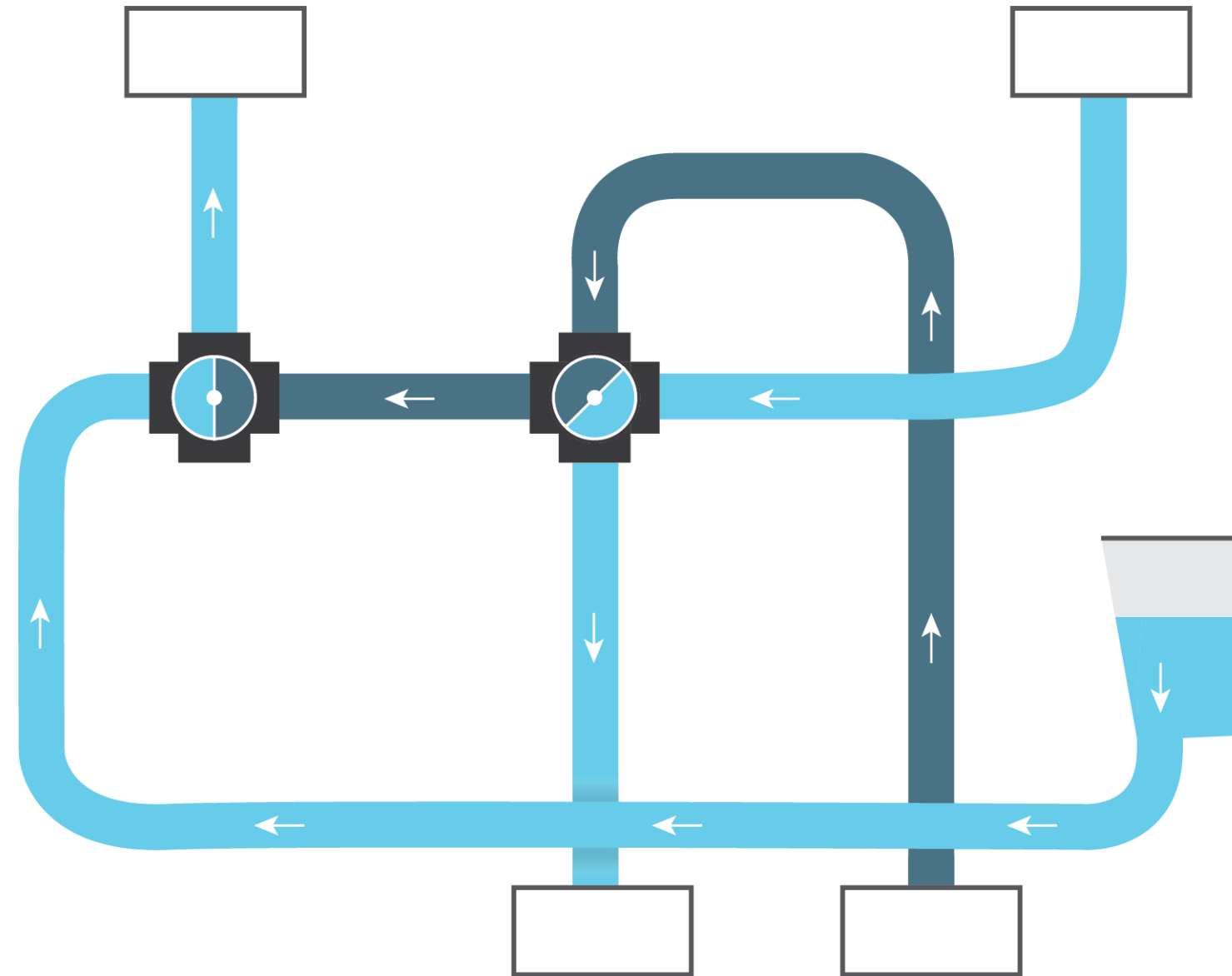
«ررررر» *“Trust me”*  
⇒ I don’t trust you



I’m the designer, do what I say

**Stop trying to do my job!**

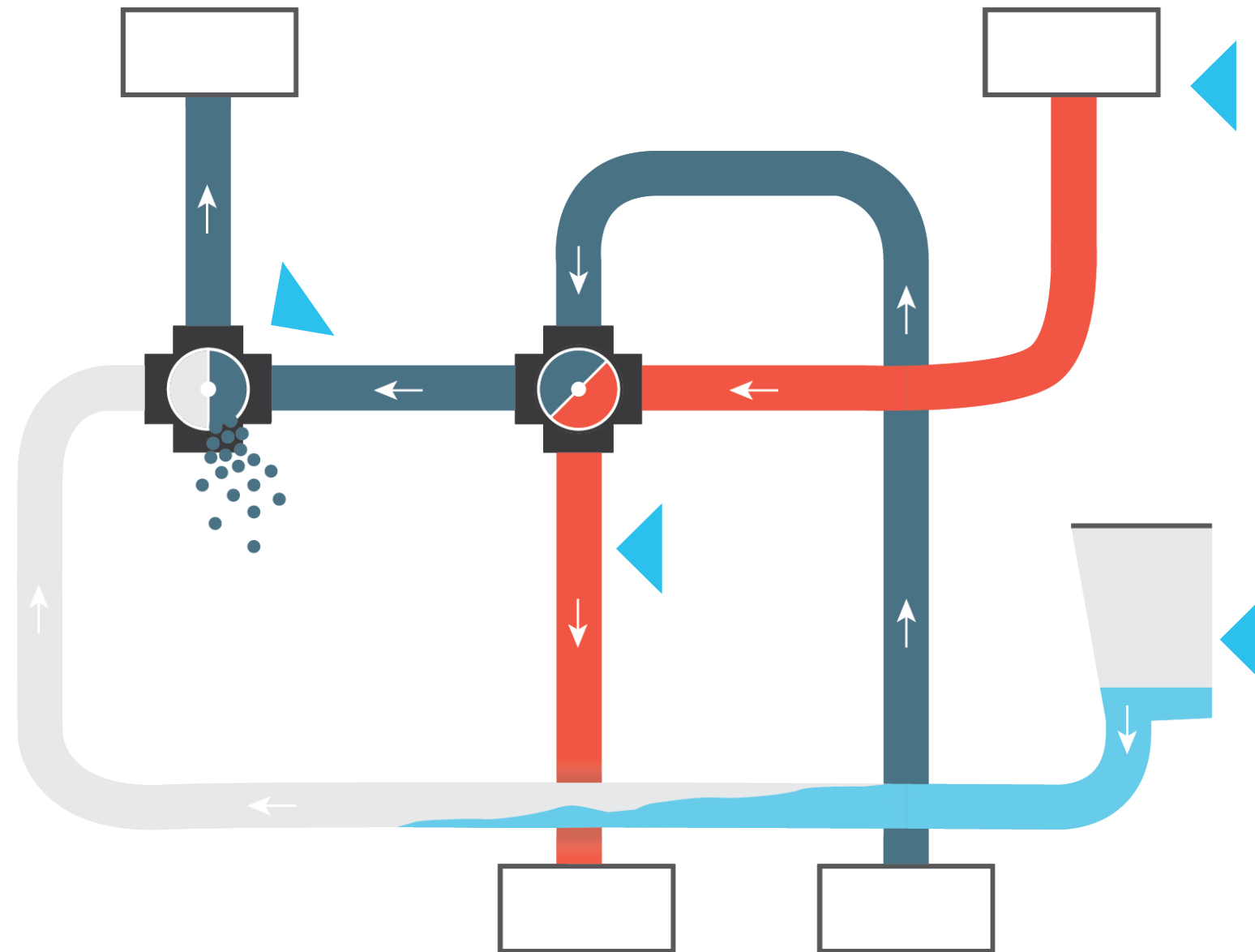
## THE PERFECT DESIGN



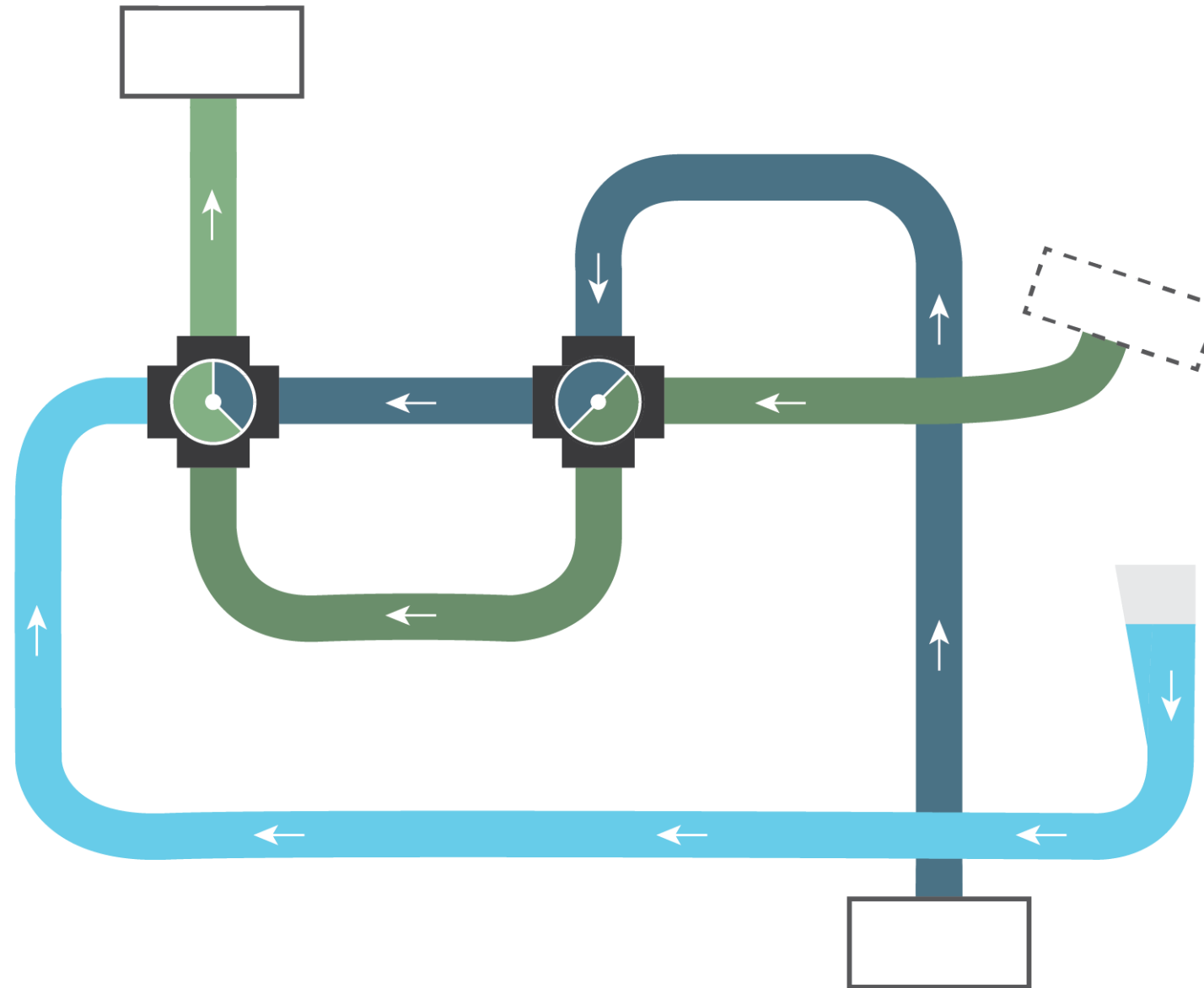




# THE BROKEN DESIGN



## THE TEAM'S DESIGN



BUILDING A POSITIVE DESIGN CULTURE

How soft skills lead to strong teams



NEGATIVE MINDSETS

- 🗨️ *I'm the designer, let me do my job*
- 🗨️ *I know best*

# DESIGN GOALS

## DEFINITION

*What problems is your design trying to solve?*

*Example:*

## WAR METER

- To display the status of the Planetary Conflict.
- To give more meaning to the player's actions.
- To portray the Legion as an oppressive force.

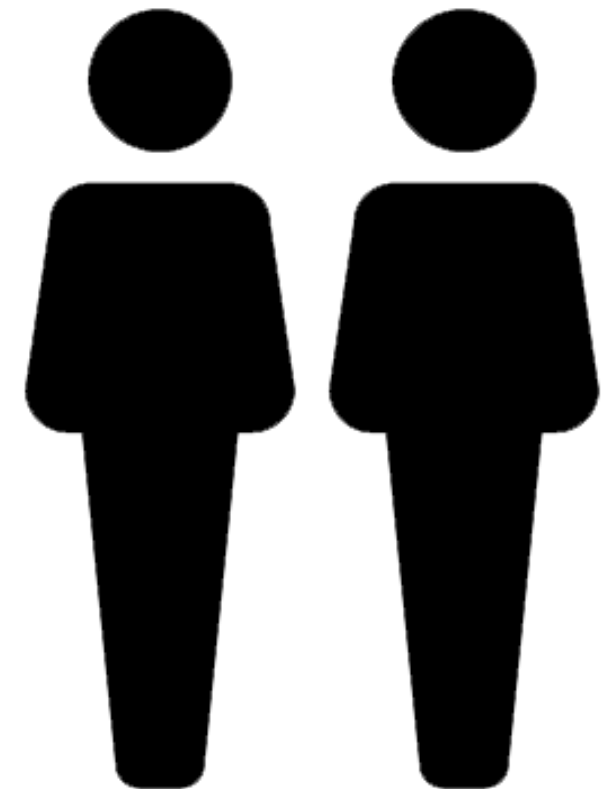




## *1) Create Goals w/ Peers*

### **WAR METER**

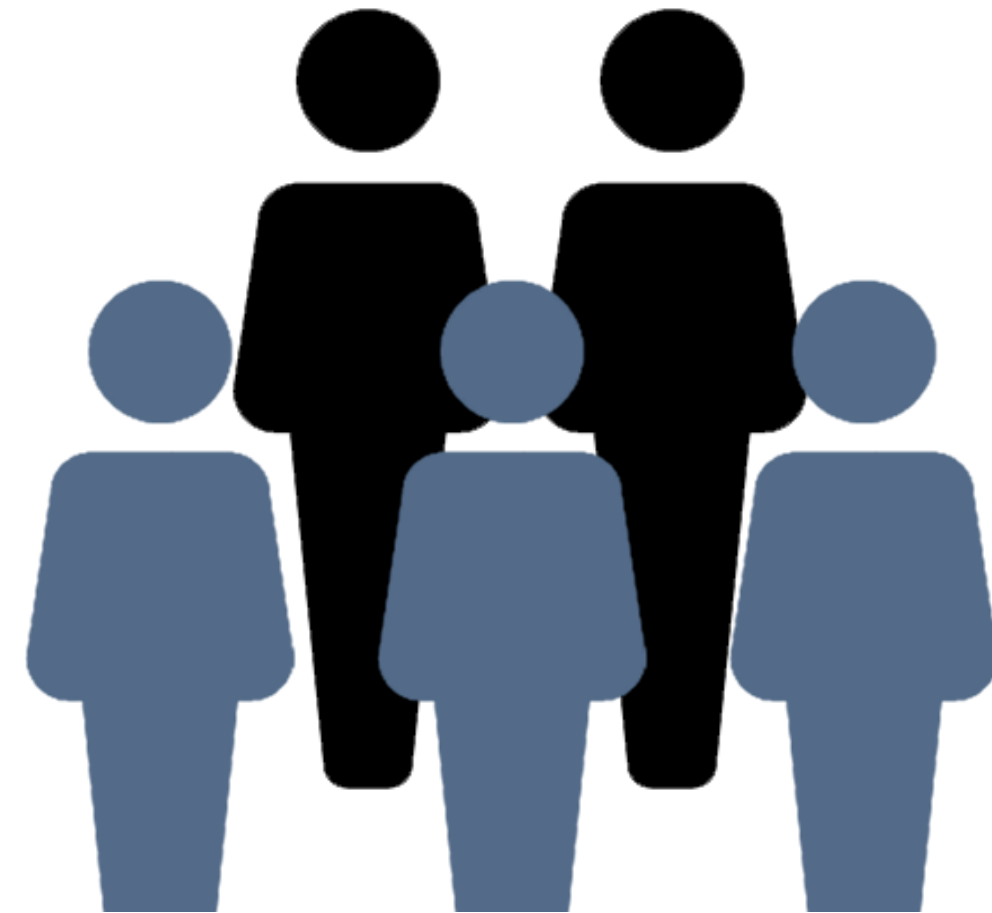
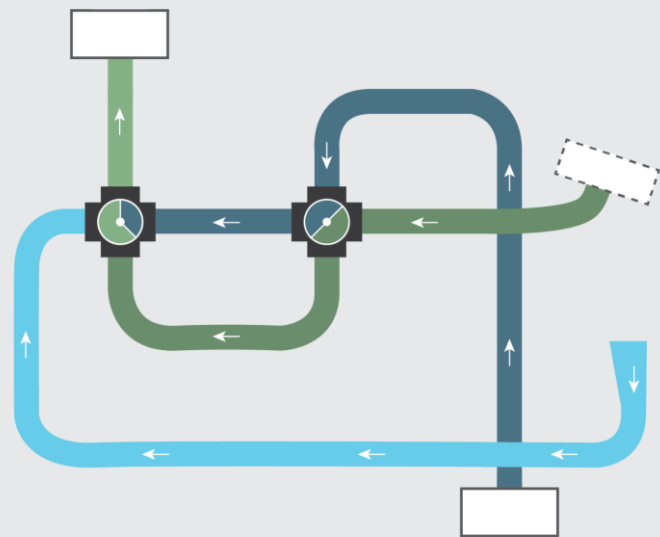
- To display the status of the Planetary Conflict.
- To give more meaning to the player's actions.
- To portray the Legion as an oppressive force.







- 1) Create Goals w/ Peers*
- 2) Build Design w/ Devs*

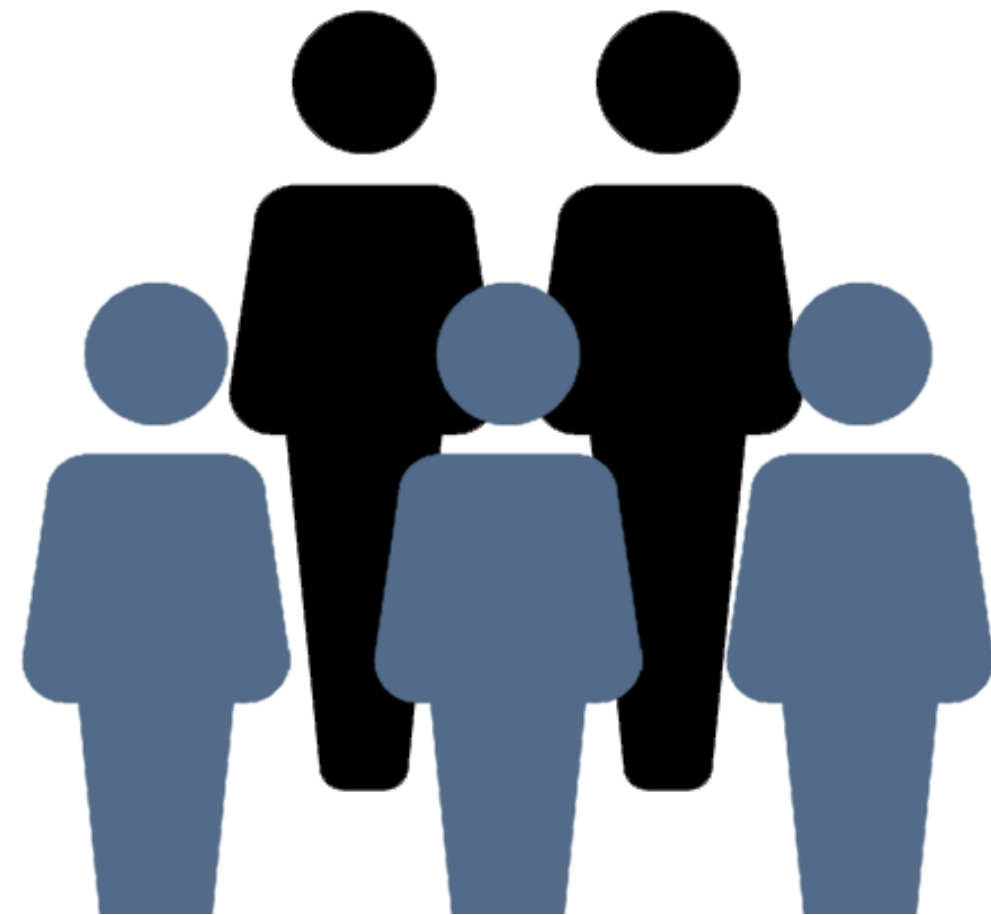




- 1) Create Goals w/ Peers*
- 2) Build Design w/ Devs*
- 3) Pitch Both to the Team*

*Confusion/Concern?*

*- Do they still believe in the goals?*



# "ABILITY TO INSPIRE" MINDSETS



اينكى *I'm the designer, let me do my job*

اينكى *I know best*

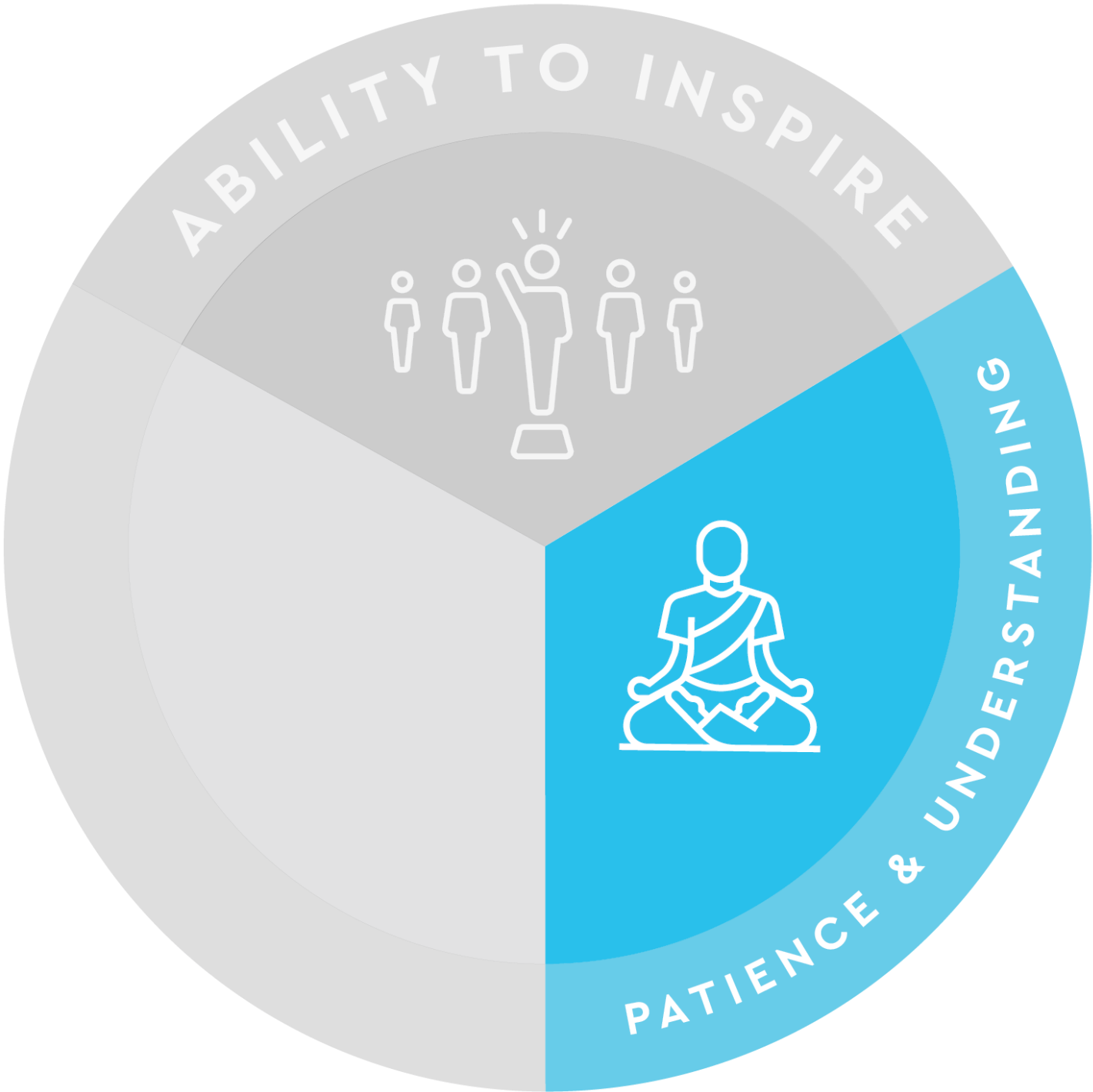


اينكى *It's my job to own the vision and  
empower the team to own the game*

اينكى *If you don't believe, that's on me*

BUILDING A POSITIVE DESIGN CULTURE

How soft skills lead to strong teams



NEGATIVE MINDSETS

- Give me feedback, not designs or solutions
- This is the design we approved

# INTERPRETING FEEDBACK



*I want a gun that kills everything in one shot!*

⇒ I want to feel powerful



*This game is pointless*

⇒ I don't feel like my actions are having an impact on the world





# INTERPRETING FEEDBACK



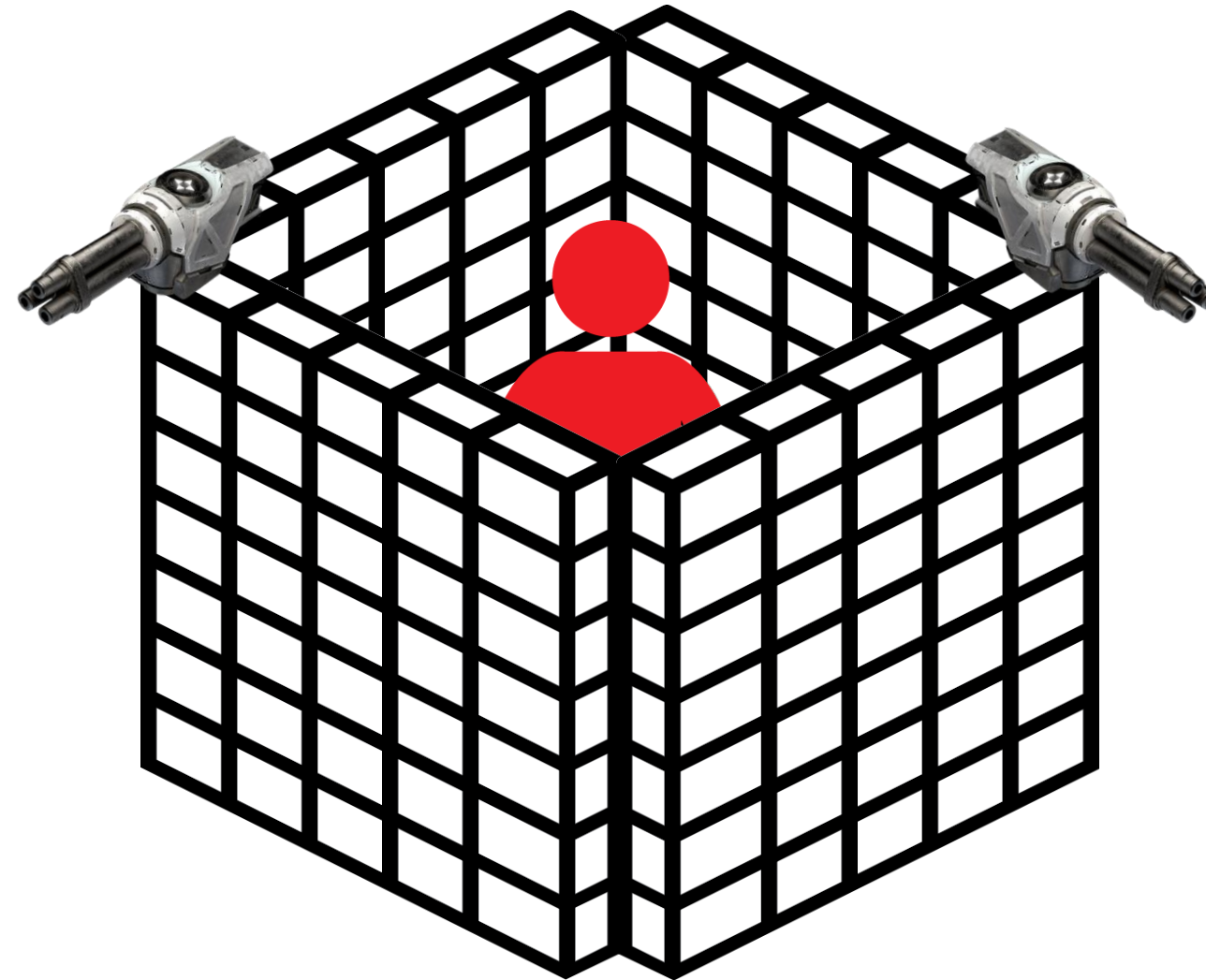
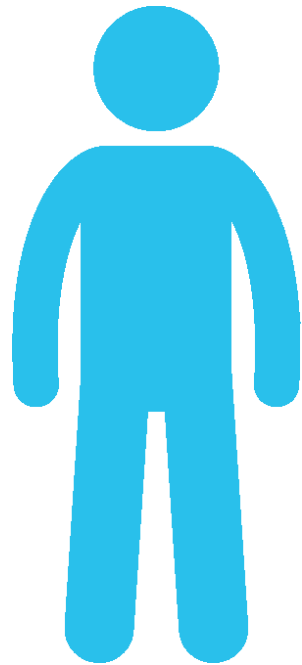
1. **ASK QUESTIONS:**  
“What problem are you trying to solve?”
2. **REITERATE THE ISSUE:**  
“So what you’re saying is...”
3. **RESOLVE THE ISSUE:**  
“What if we do X, does that resolve your concern?”



YOU CAN SOLVE IT, BUT SHOULD YOU?

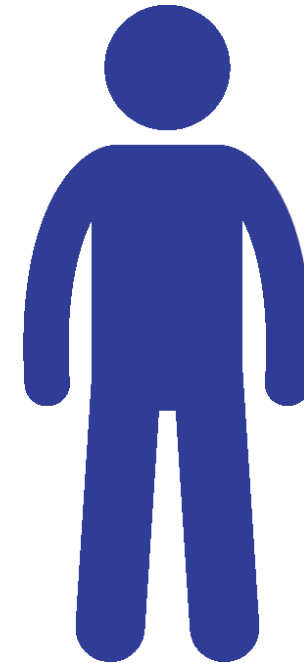
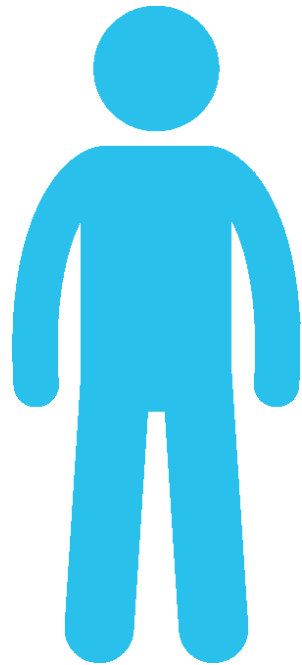
Does the solution align with your goals?

# BREAKING DOWN WALLS

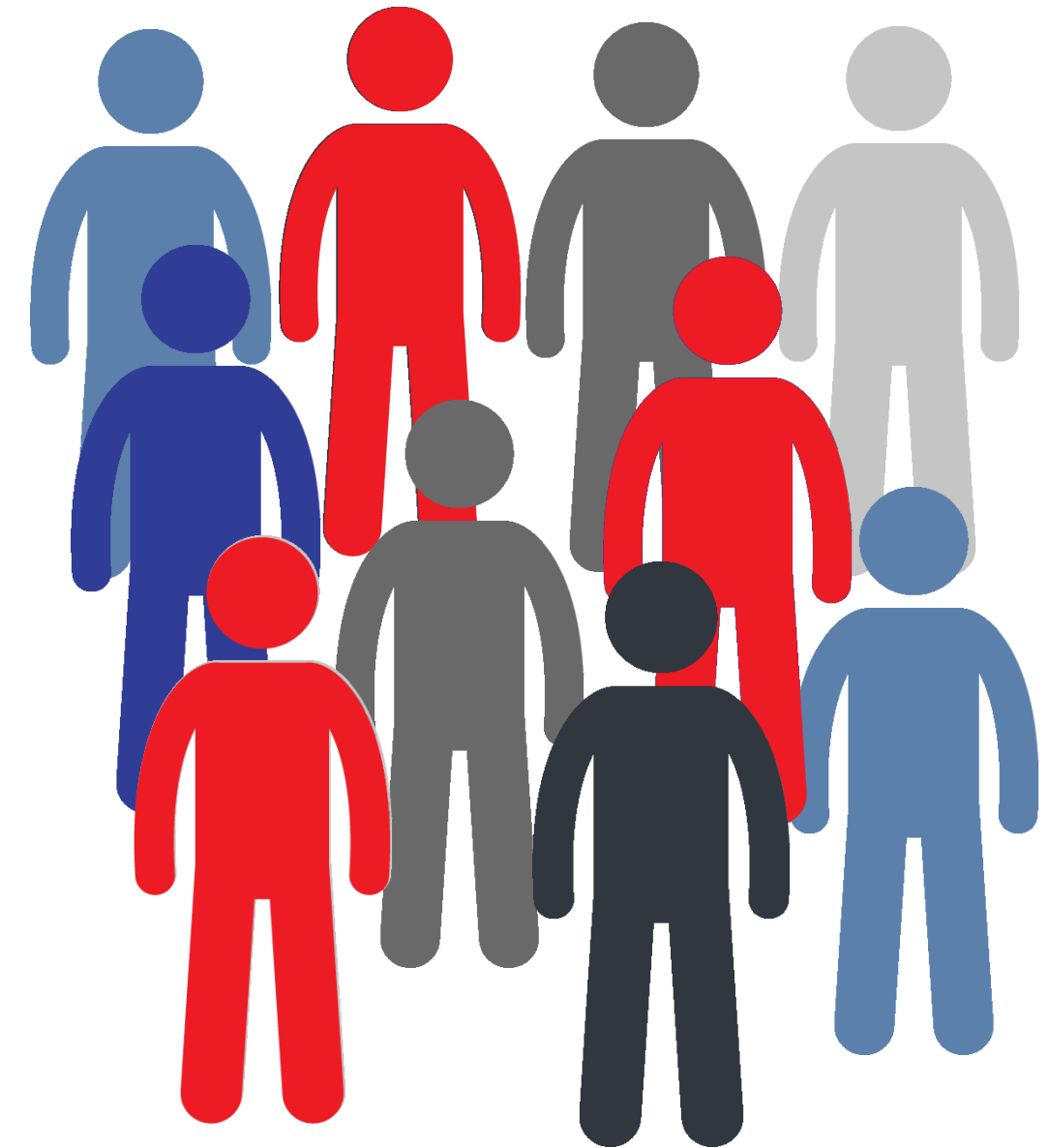




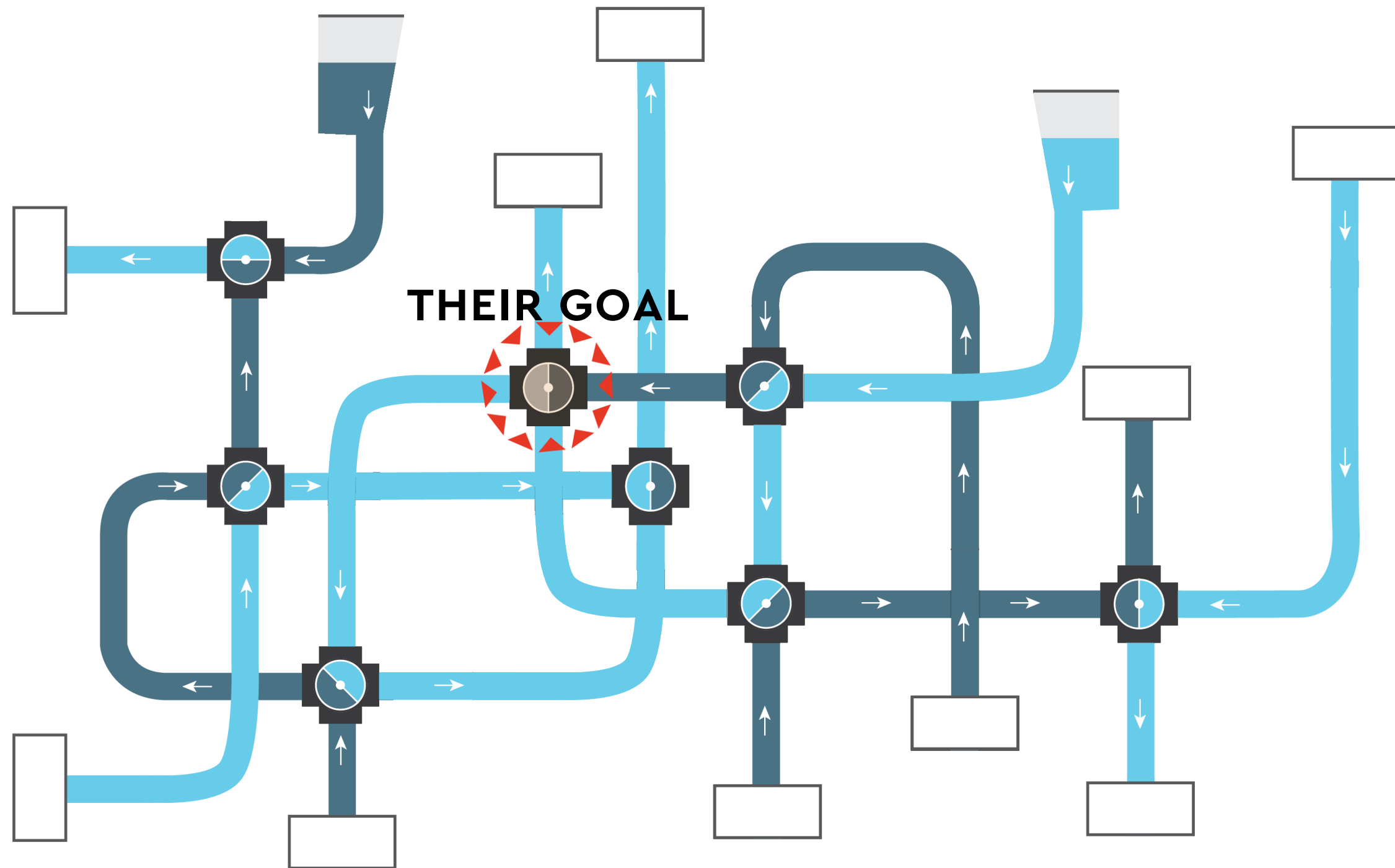
## THE ADVOCATE



## THE TEAM



# BREAKING DOWN WALLS



# BREAKING DOWN WALLS



SCENARIO 1:

It Can Be Integrated

SCENARIO 2:

It Already Exists

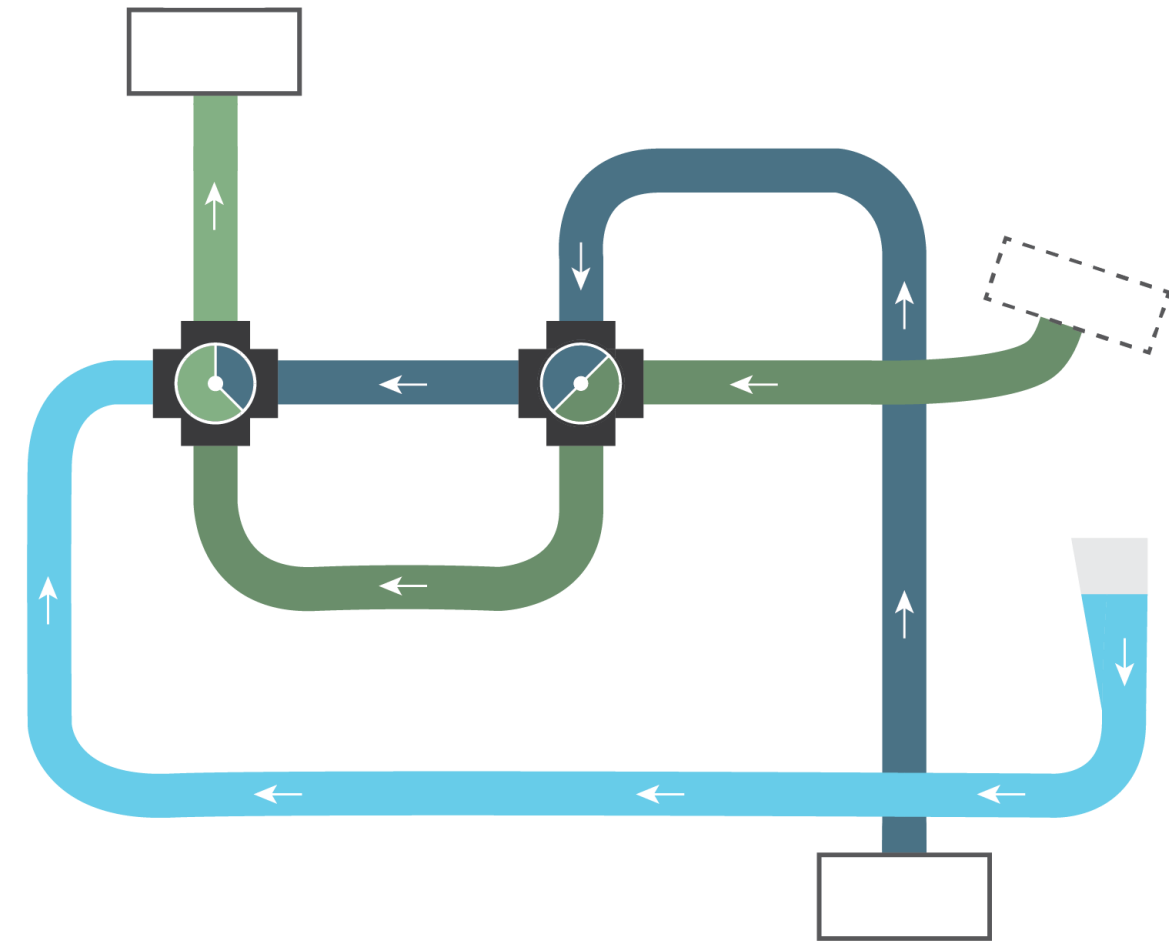
SCENARIO 3:

Conflicting Goals

THEIR GOAL

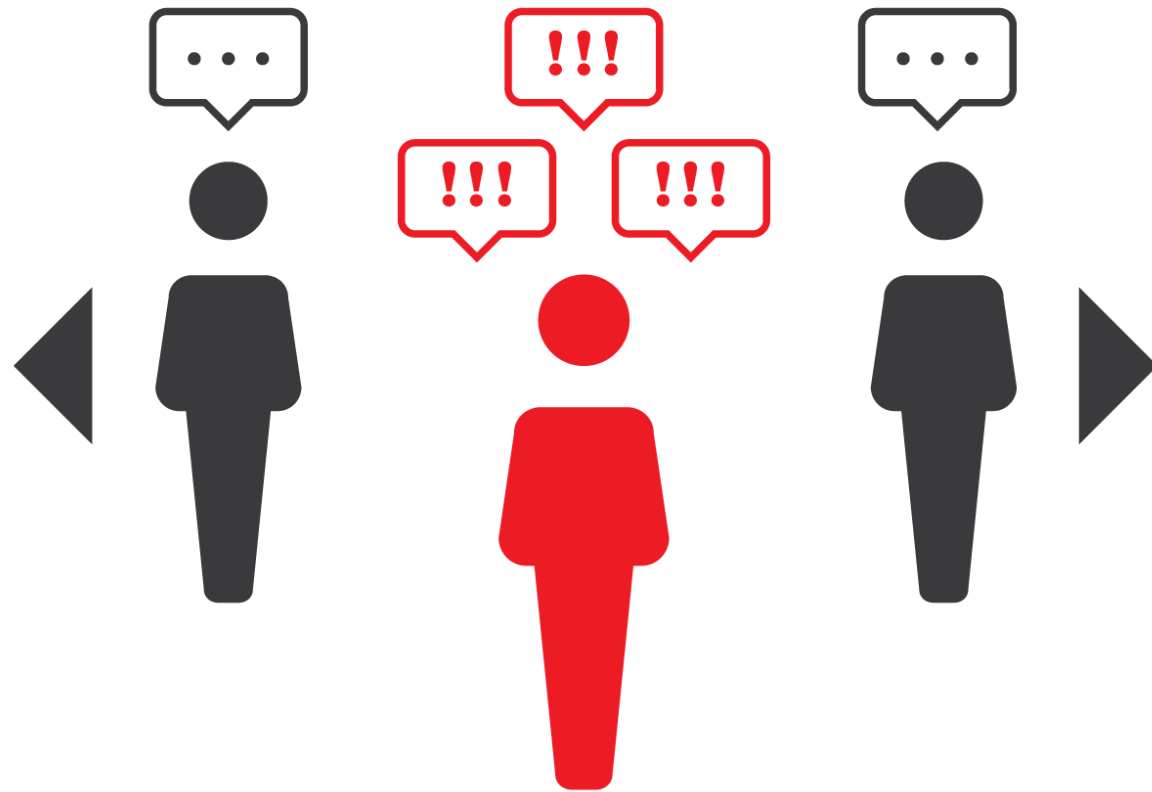


THE DESIGN



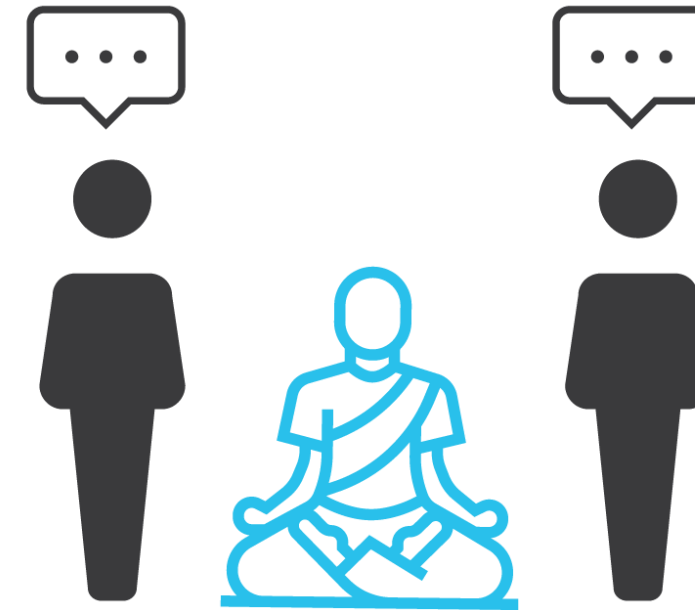


# "PATIENCE & UNDERSTANDING" MINDSETS



﴿﴾ *Give me feedback, not designs or solutions*

﴿﴾ *This is the design we approved*



﴿﴾ *Give me feedback, designs or solutions*

﴿﴾ *What are your concerns with this design?*

BUILDING A POSITIVE DESIGN CULTURE

How soft skills lead to strong teams



NEGATIVE MINDSET

Trust me

# WHAT IS TRUST?



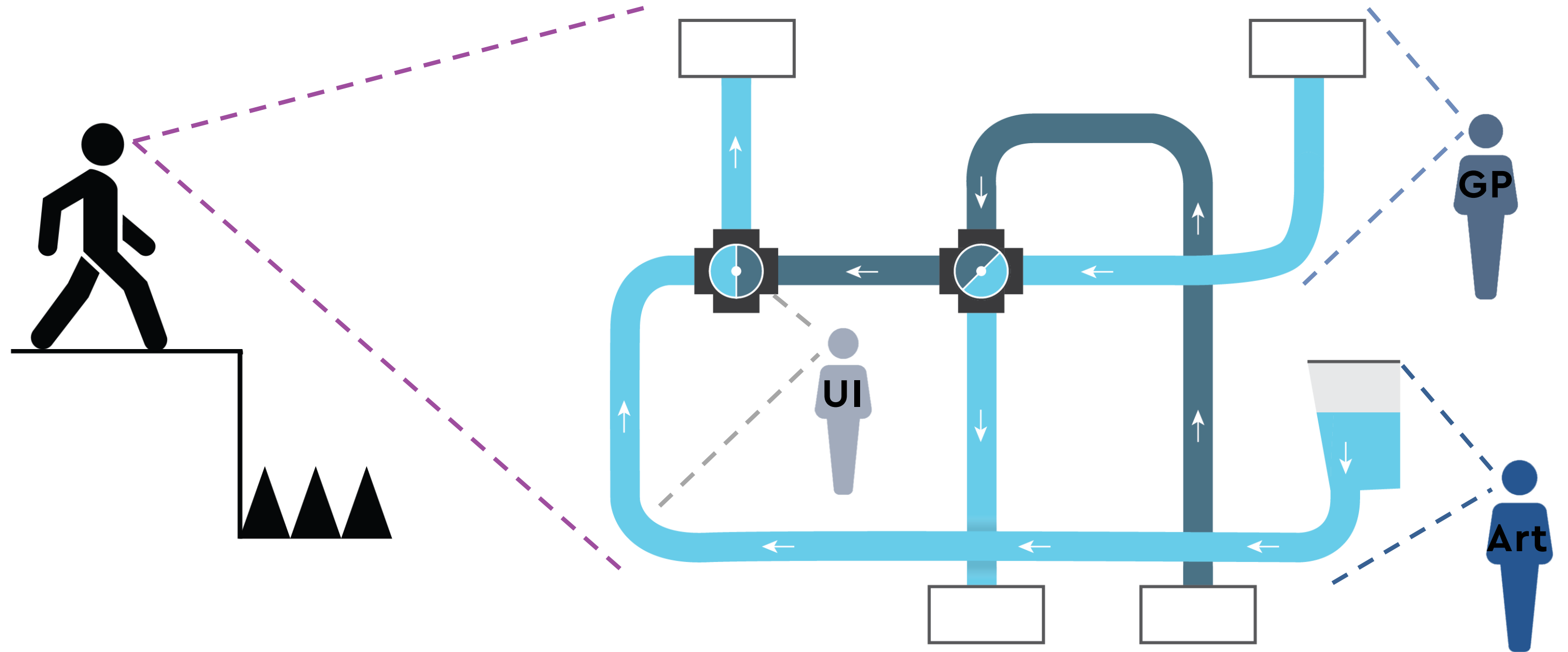
Trust isn't blind loyalty.  
Trust doesn't silence opposition.

Trust goes both ways.  
Trust is feeling safe.

# WHEN TO ALTER COURSE



## THE "PERFECT" DESIGN



# ALTERING COURSE EXAMPLE

*War Meter*





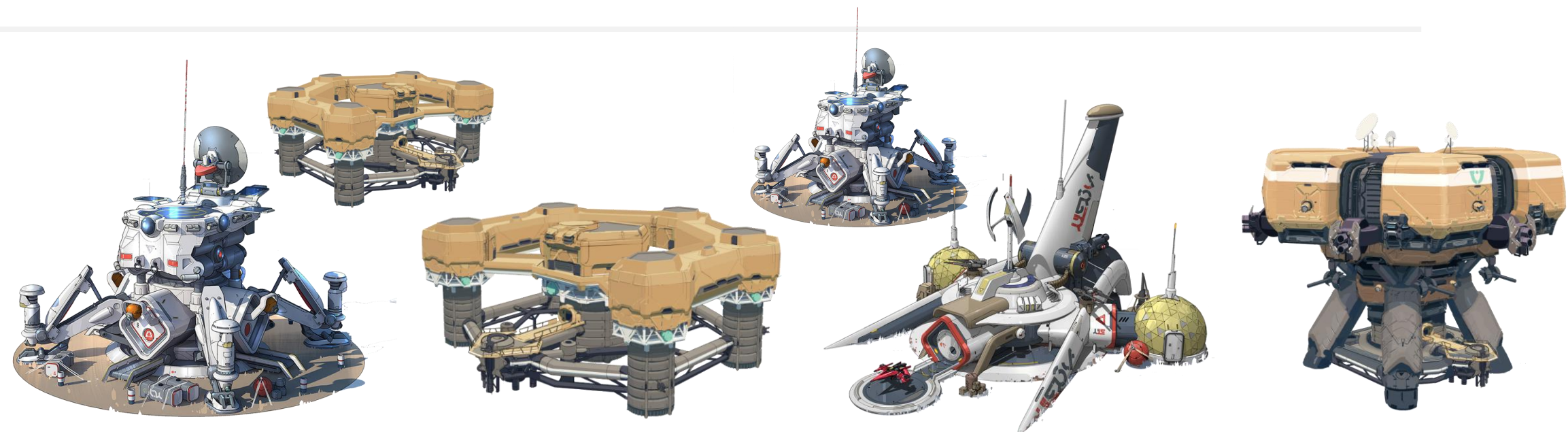
# ALTERING COURSE EXAMPLE

War Meter

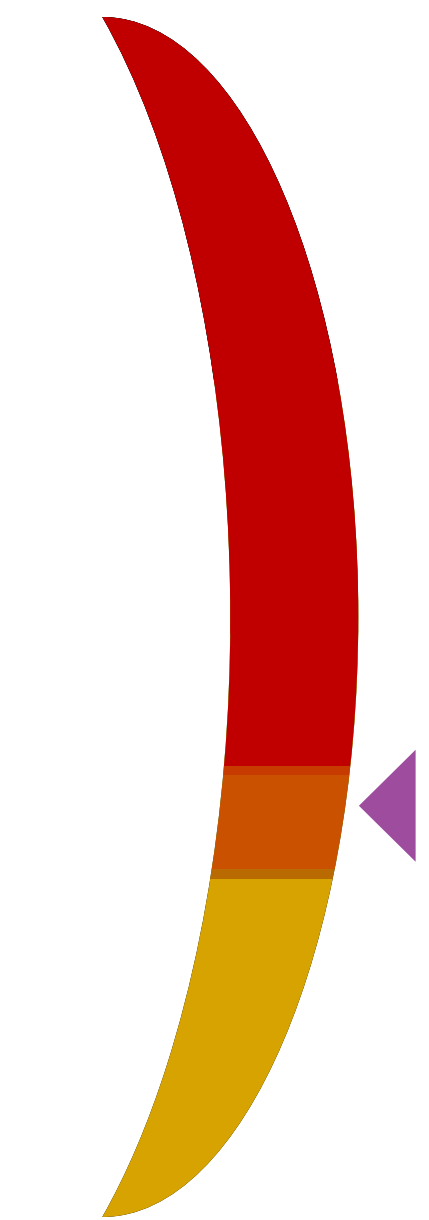
LEGION



ALLIANCE



70%



30%

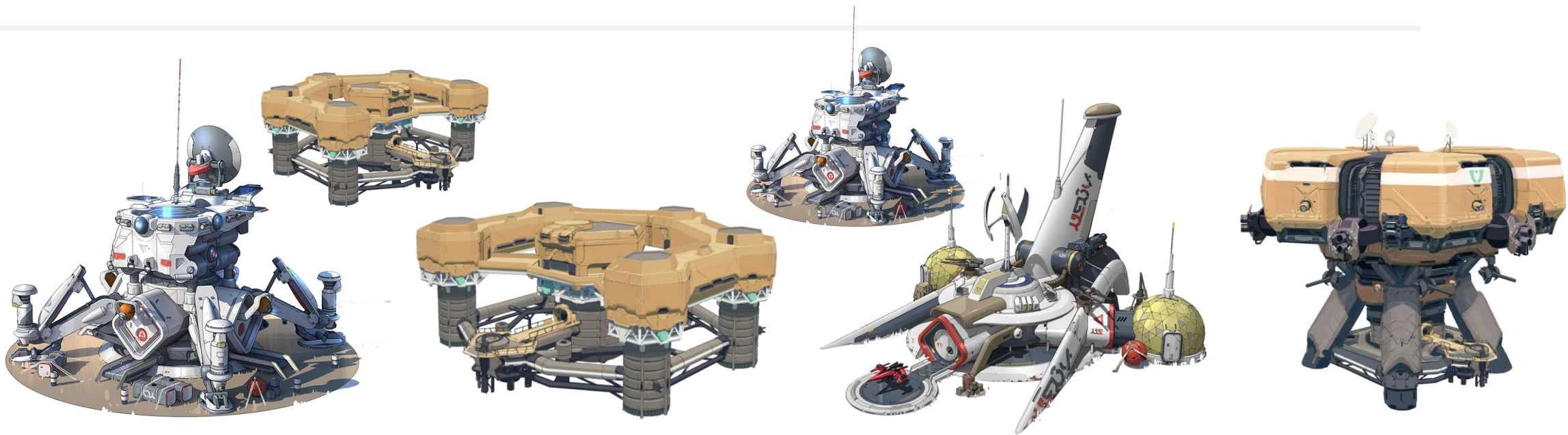
# ALTERING COURSE EXAMPLE

War Meter

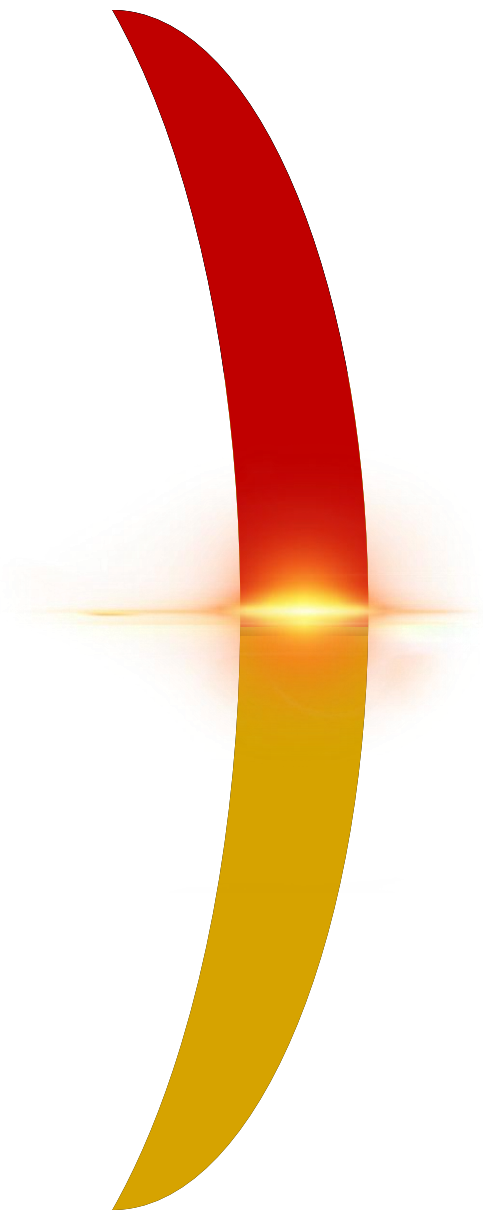
LEGION



ALLIANCE



50%

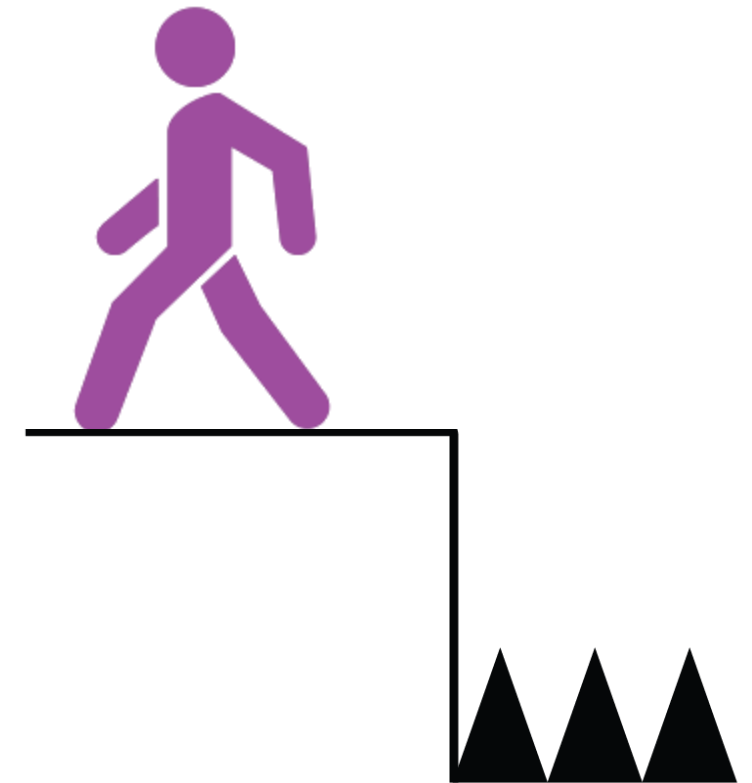


50%

# WHEN TO ALTER COURSE



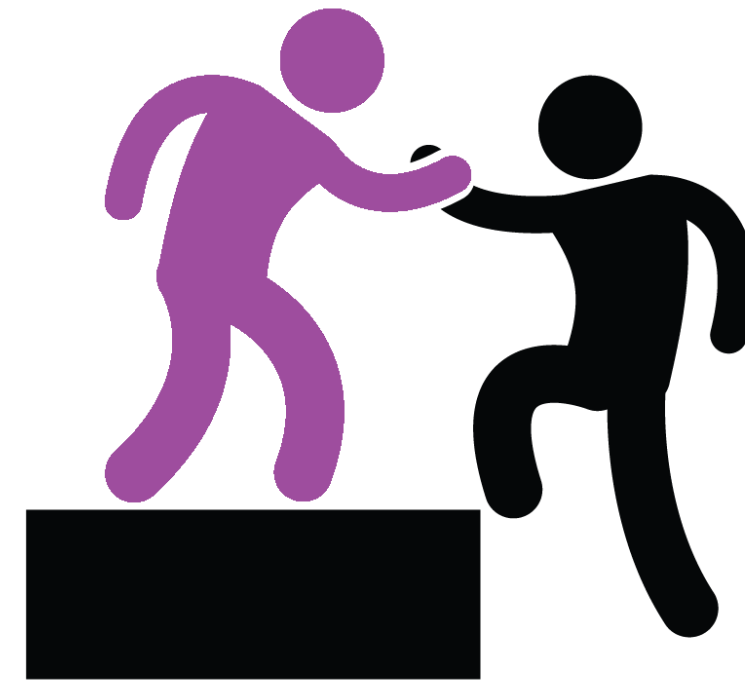
1. *Defend the Vision*
2. *Listen with Patience & Understanding*
3. *Stop & Reflect on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike*



# "TRUST & HUMILITY" MINDSETS



Trust me



I trust you



BUILDING A POSITIVE DESIGN CULTURE

*How soft skills lead to strong teams*



# DESIGNER MINDSETS



((ريكي)) *It's my job to own the vision and empower the team to own the game*

((ريكي)) *If you don't believe, that's on me*

((ريكي)) *Give me feedback, designs or solutions*

((ريكي)) *What are your concerns with this design?*

((ريكي)) *I trust you*



*My biggest successes in game design have come from listening.*

**CONTACT INFO**

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*Twitter: [@Carrillo\\_GD](https://twitter.com/Carrillo_GD)*

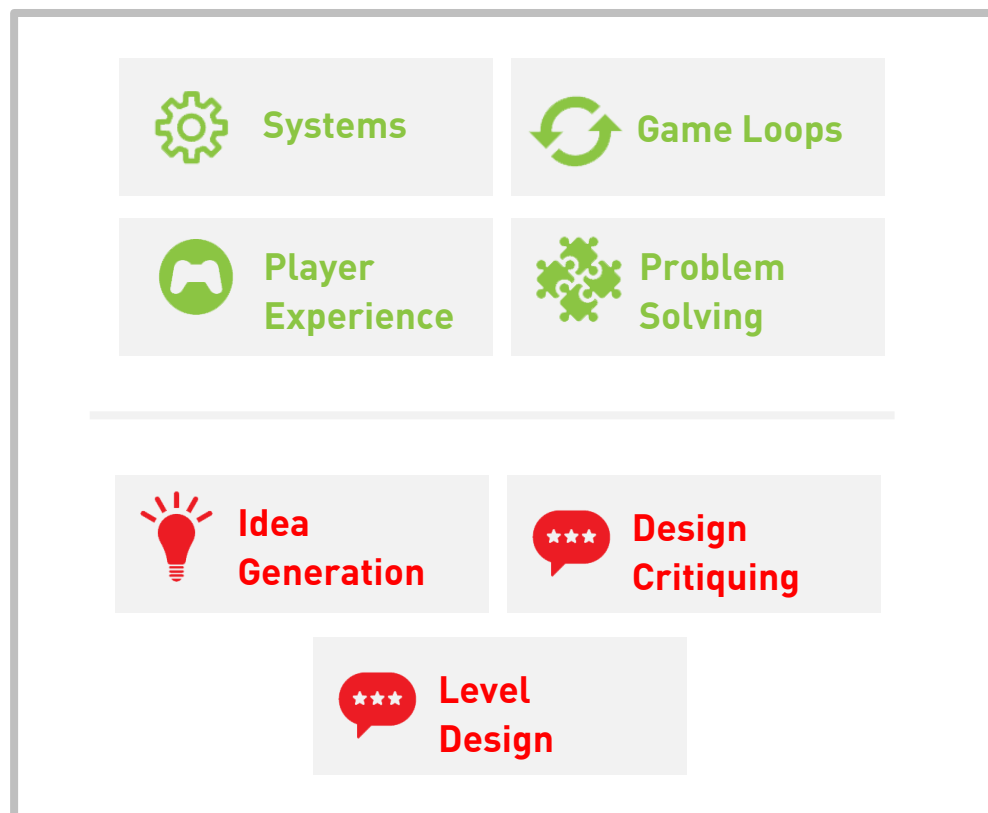


# Previous Talks

## HOW TO EXCEL AS A GAME DESIGNER



DESIGNING YOUR  
DESIGN TEAM



INTERVIEWING FOR  
GAME DESIGN



BEYOND  
GAME DESIGN