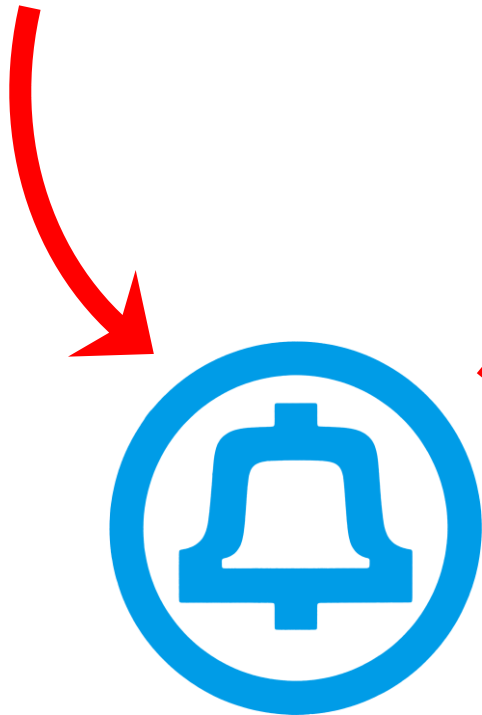


Game Studio Leadership: You Can Do It

Jesse Schell

GDC 2017





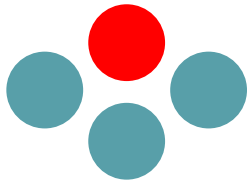
SHELL GAMES



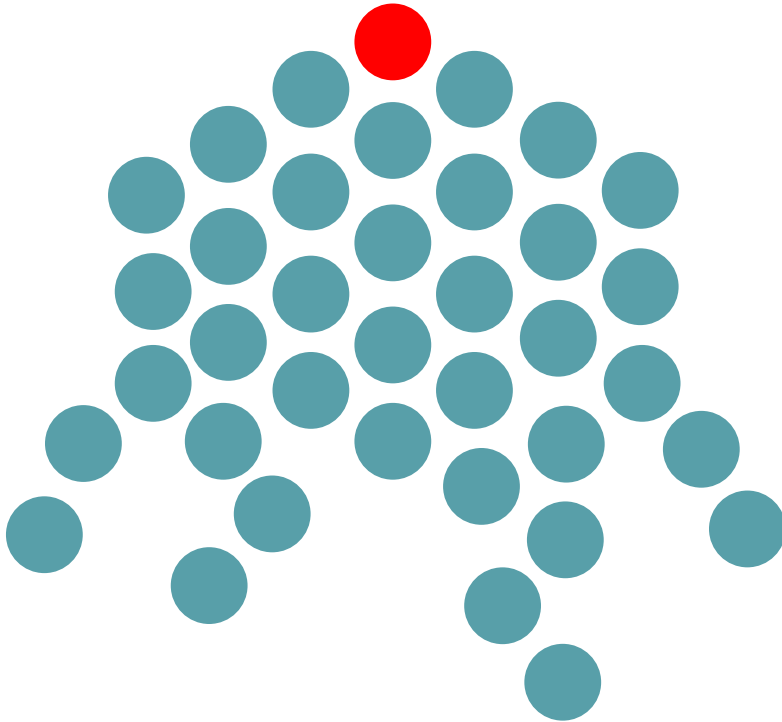


Who is this talk for?

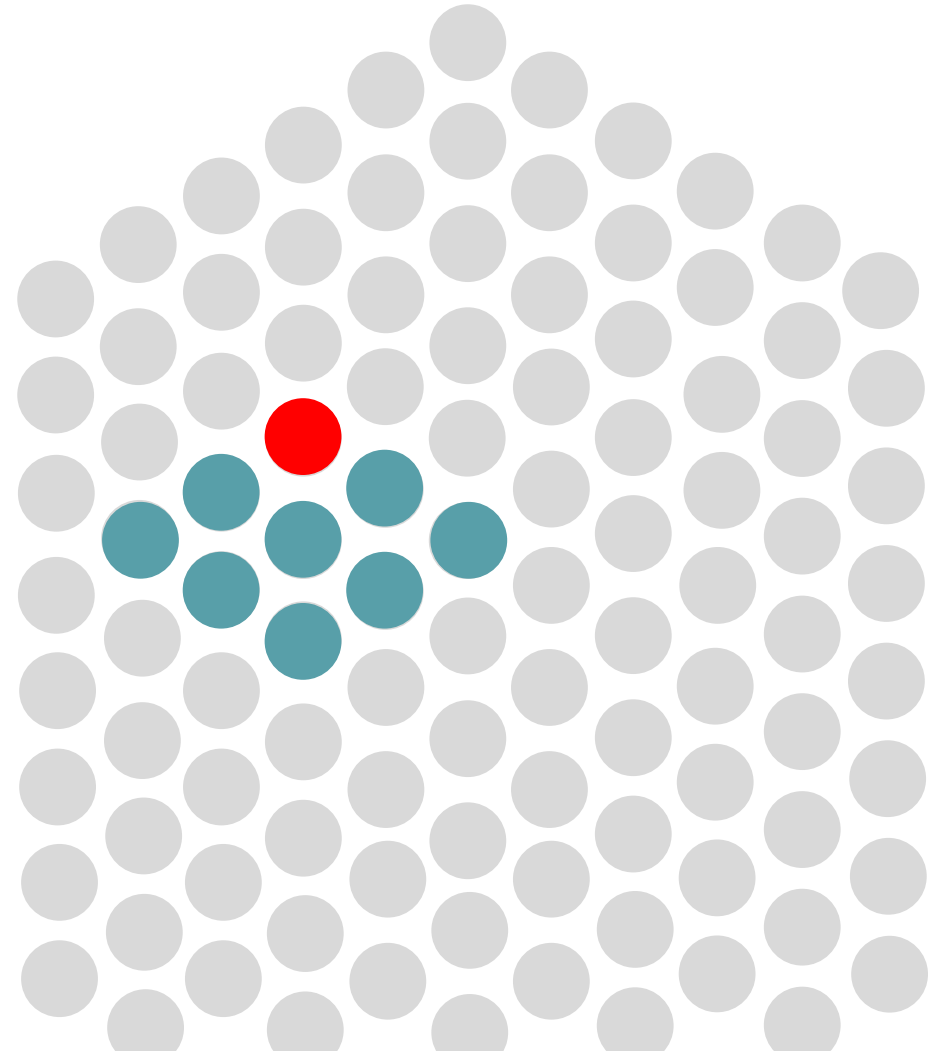
Small Studios

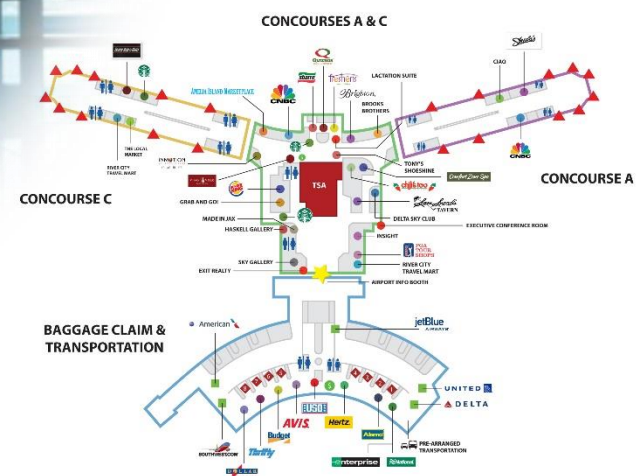
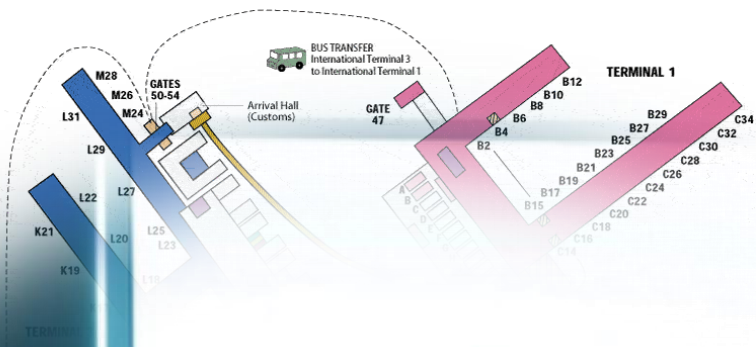
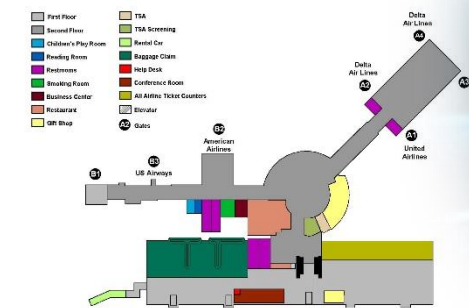


Growing Studios



Embedded Studios





YOU CAN

DO IT







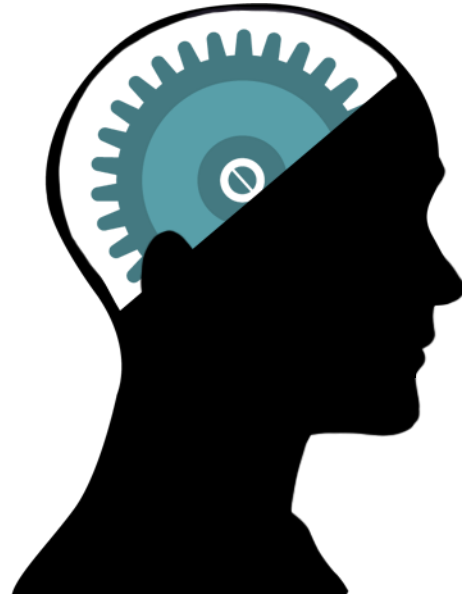
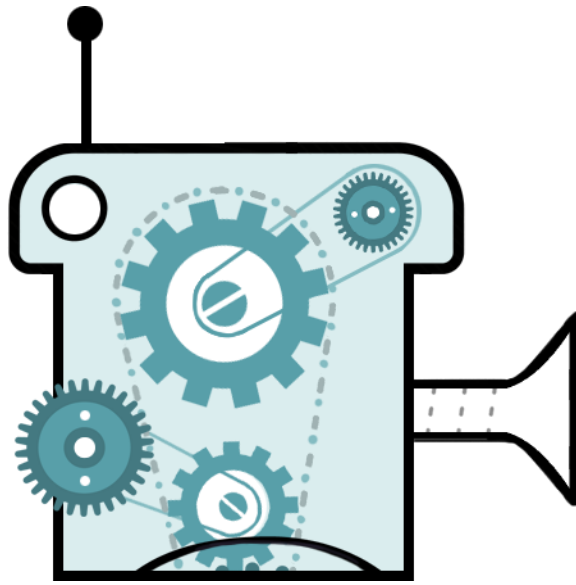
YOU CAN

DO IT

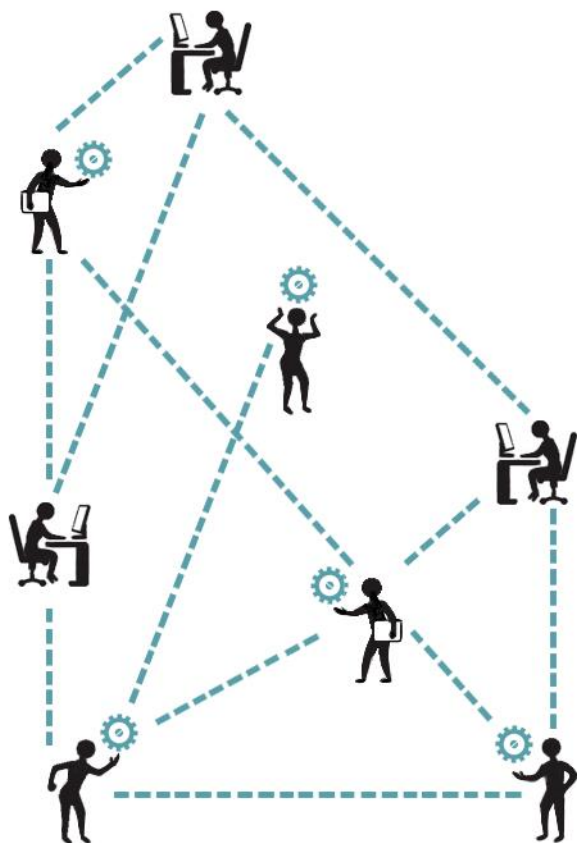


The Plan™

1. Build a Studio
2. Make Awesome Games!



— **wow!**



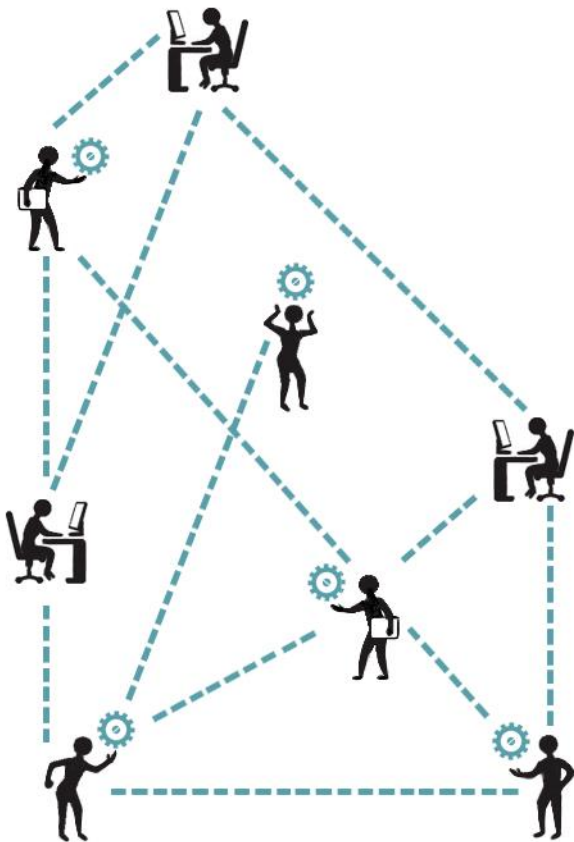
Good followers excel in orderly situations.

Good leaders excel in chaotic situations.

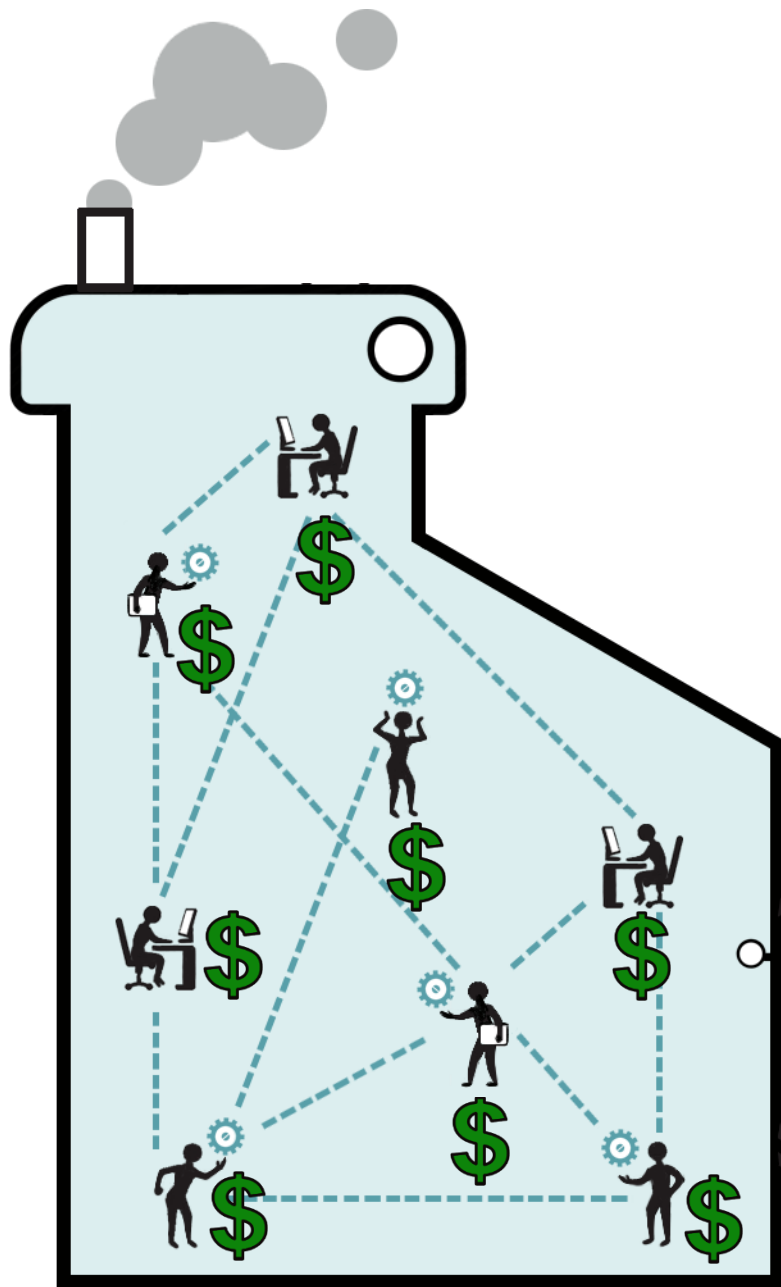


YOU CAN

DO IT







\$?

Worker ?



The Plan™

1. Build a Studio
2. Protect the Studio
3. Make Awesome Games!



Lawyer



Legal Entity



Accountant



Payroll



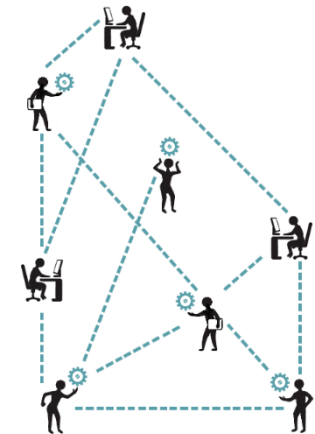
Office Space



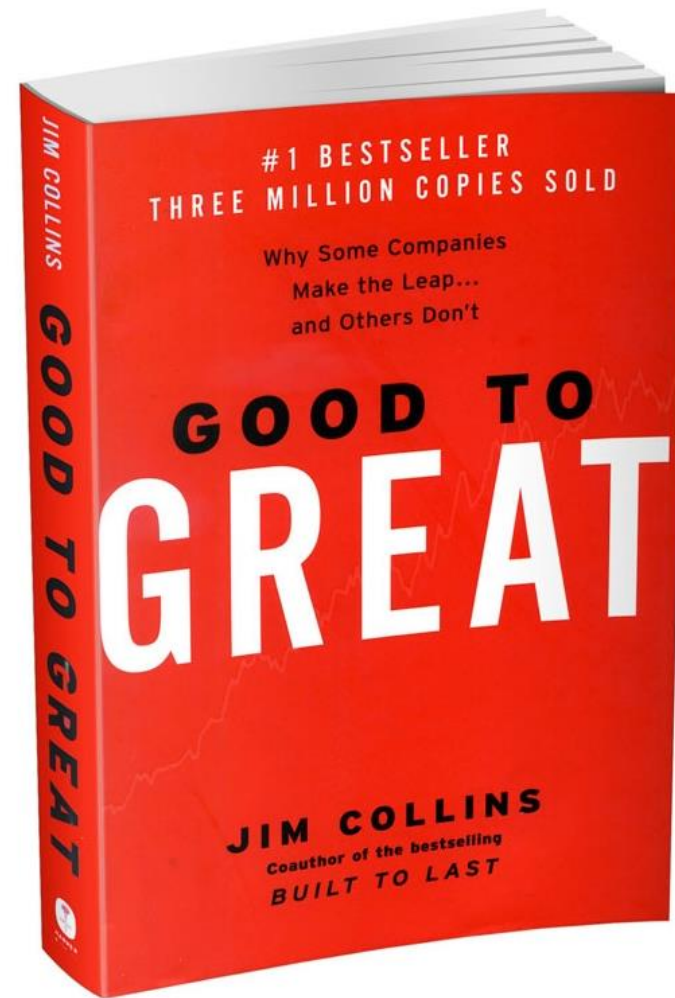
Insurance



Equipment



People





FIRST WHO THEN WHAT



PEOPLE BEFORE STRATEGY

Get the right people first and
then set the right strategy



Engineering

Design

Art



Skills



Enthusiasm



Respectability

n. The ability to make others feel respected.

$S \times E \times R = \text{Developer Value}$

$$2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$$

$$3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$$

$$3 \times 3 \times 0 = 0$$



Personality Types

More Curious	- or -	More Cautious?
X		
Detailed Planner	- or -	“Go With The Flow”?
		X
Introvert	- or -	Extrovert?
	X	
More Critical	- or -	More Accepting?
		X
More Nervous	- or -	More Secure?
X		

Related: What Champions Do You Need?



The Plan™



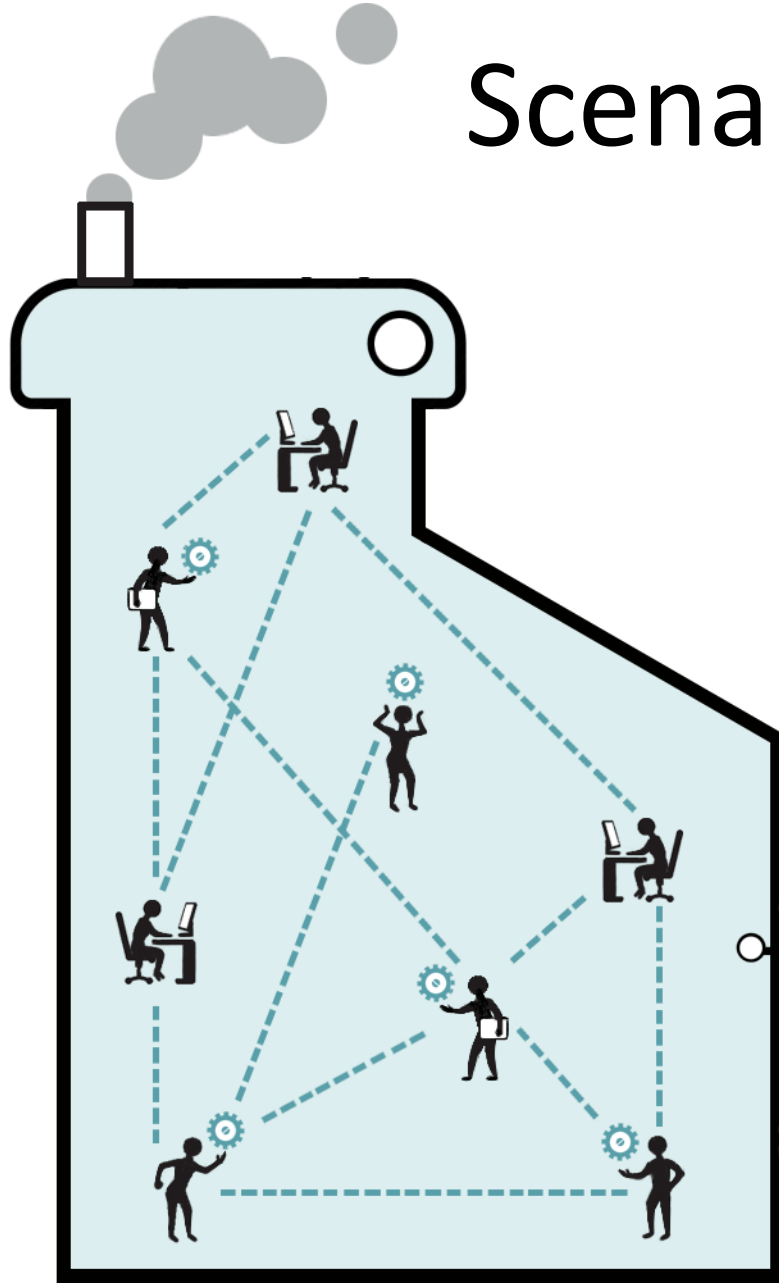
- ✓ 1. Build a Studio (get people)
- 2. Protect the Studio (get money)
- 3. Make Awesome Games!



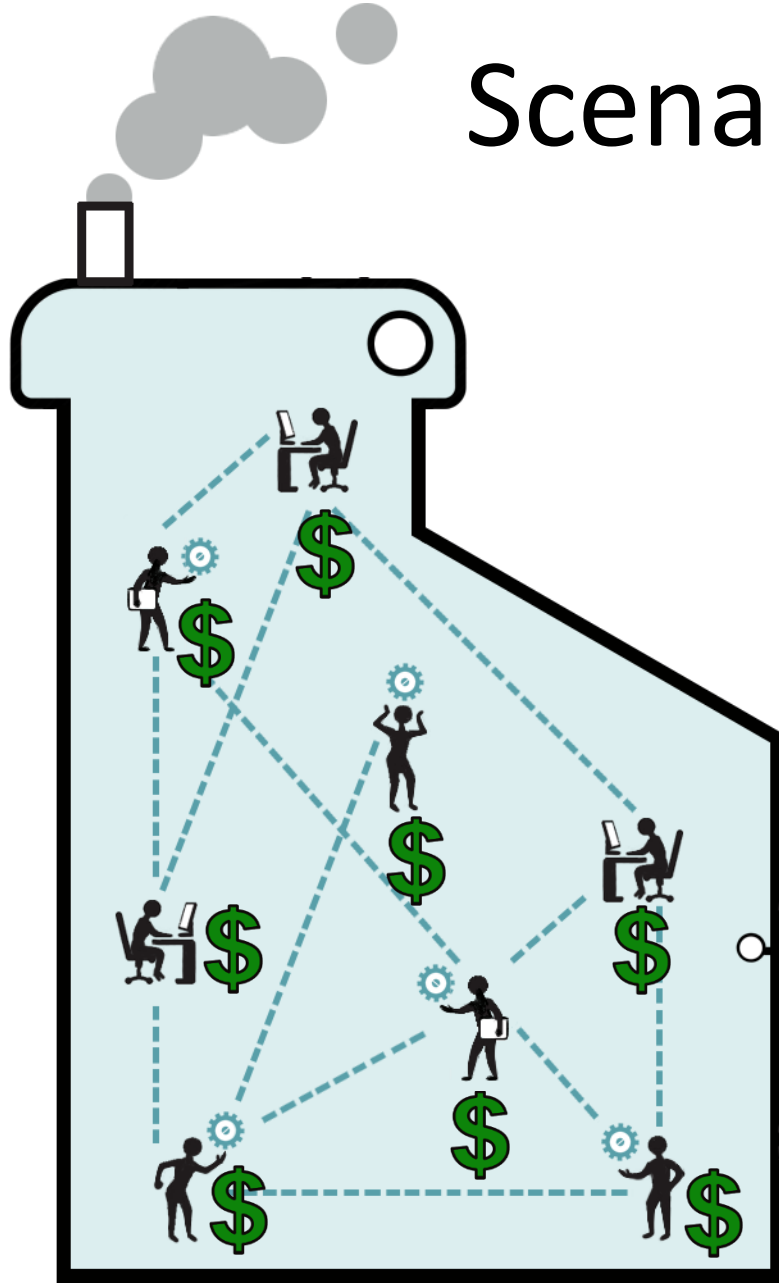


Scenario 1: Your Own Money

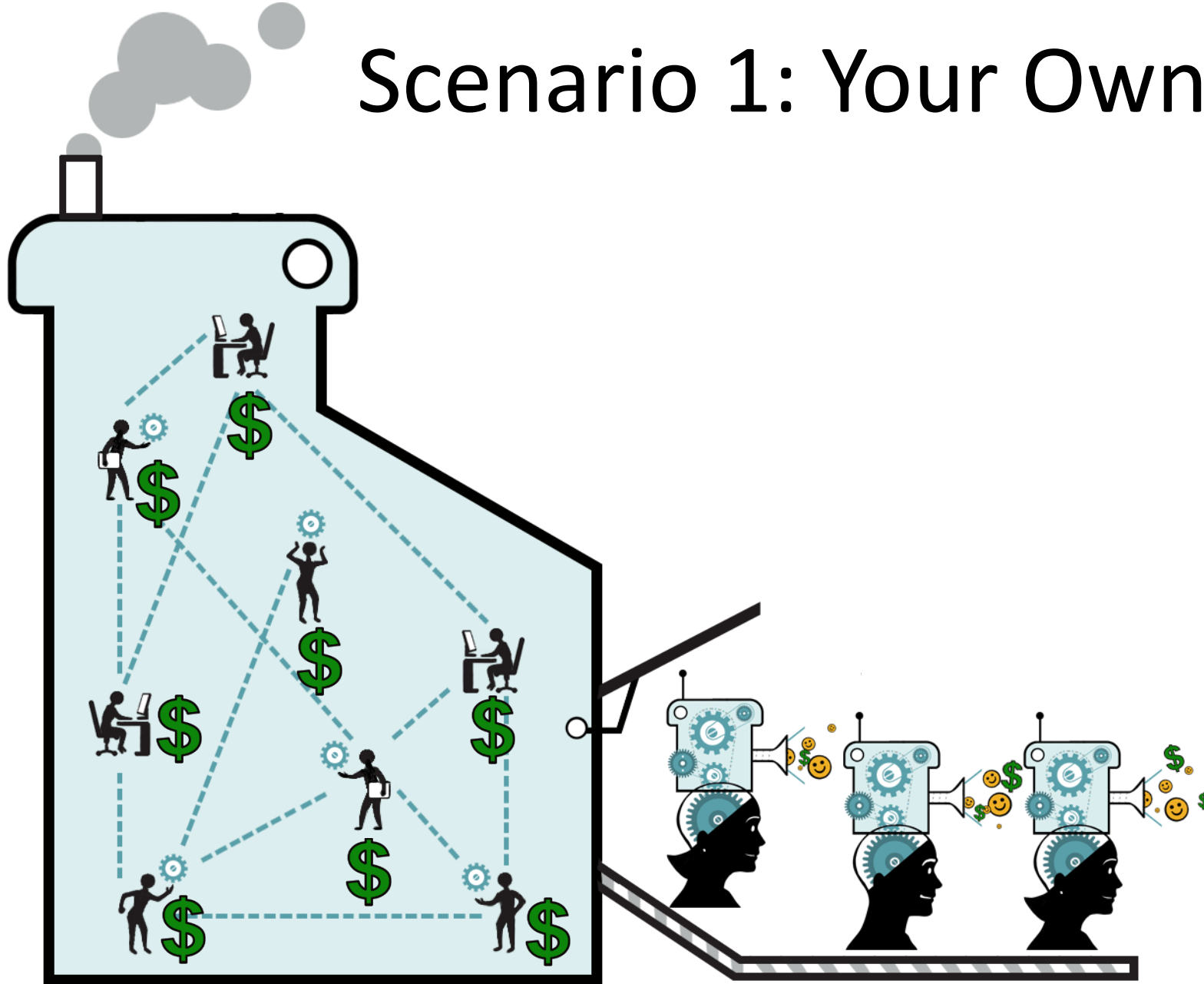
Scenario 1: Your Own Money



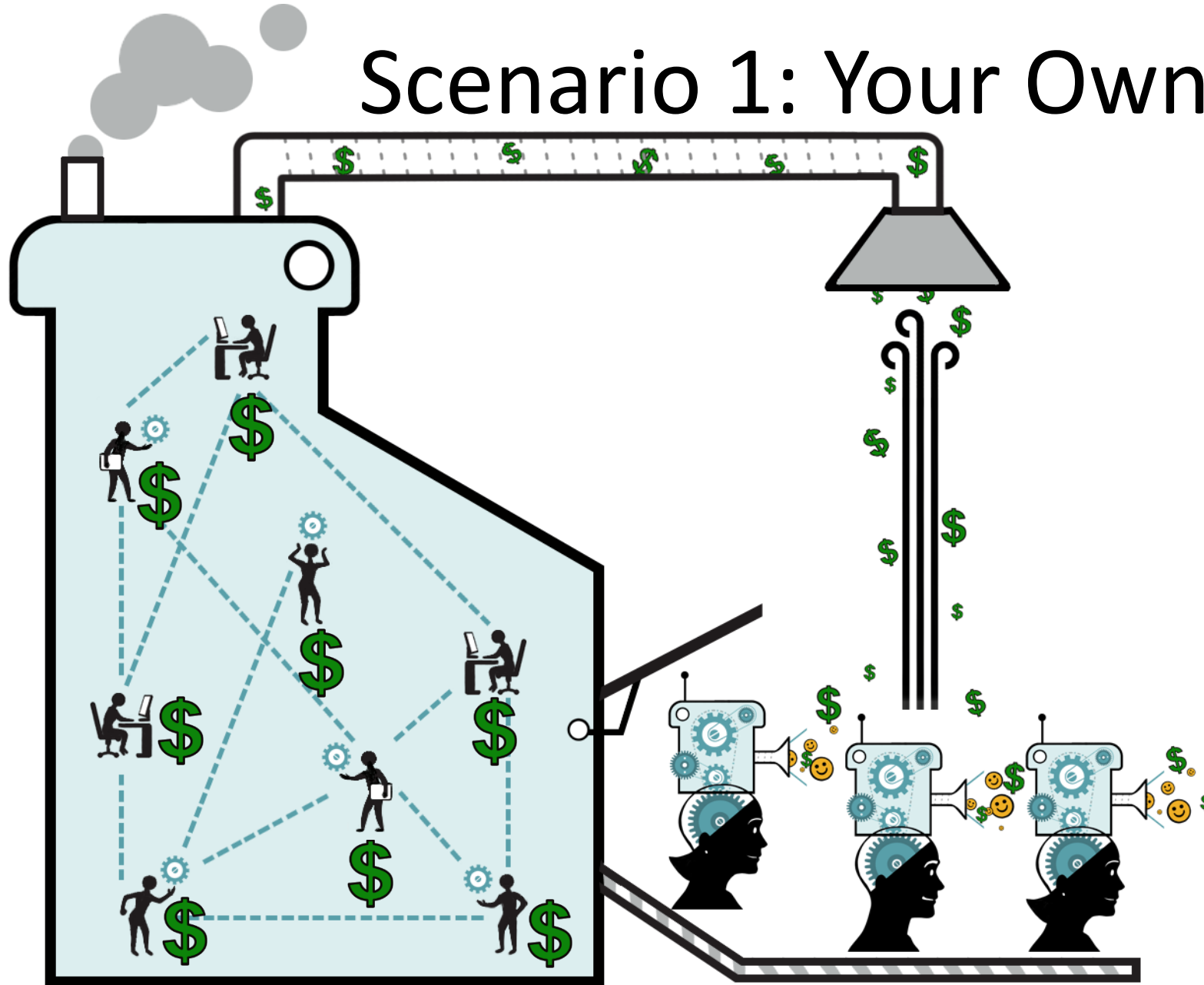
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Scenario 1: Your Own Money

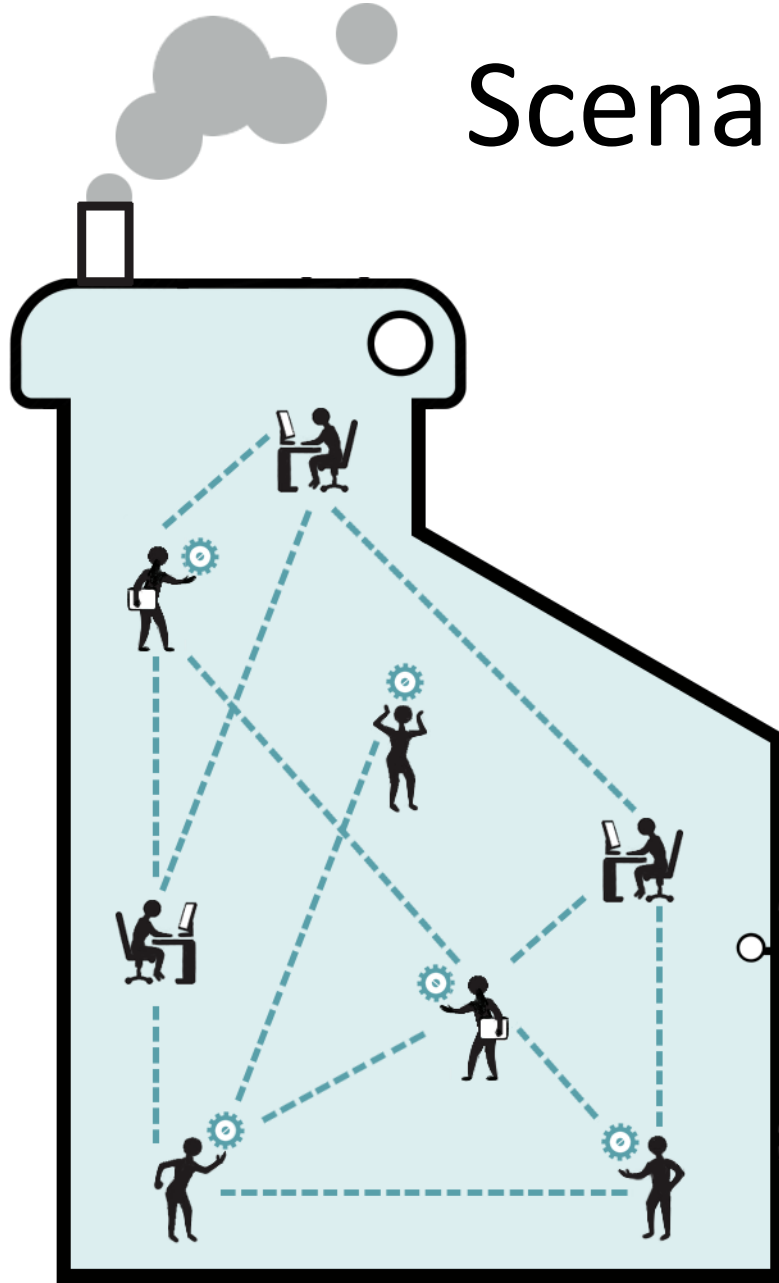


Scenario 1: Your Own Money

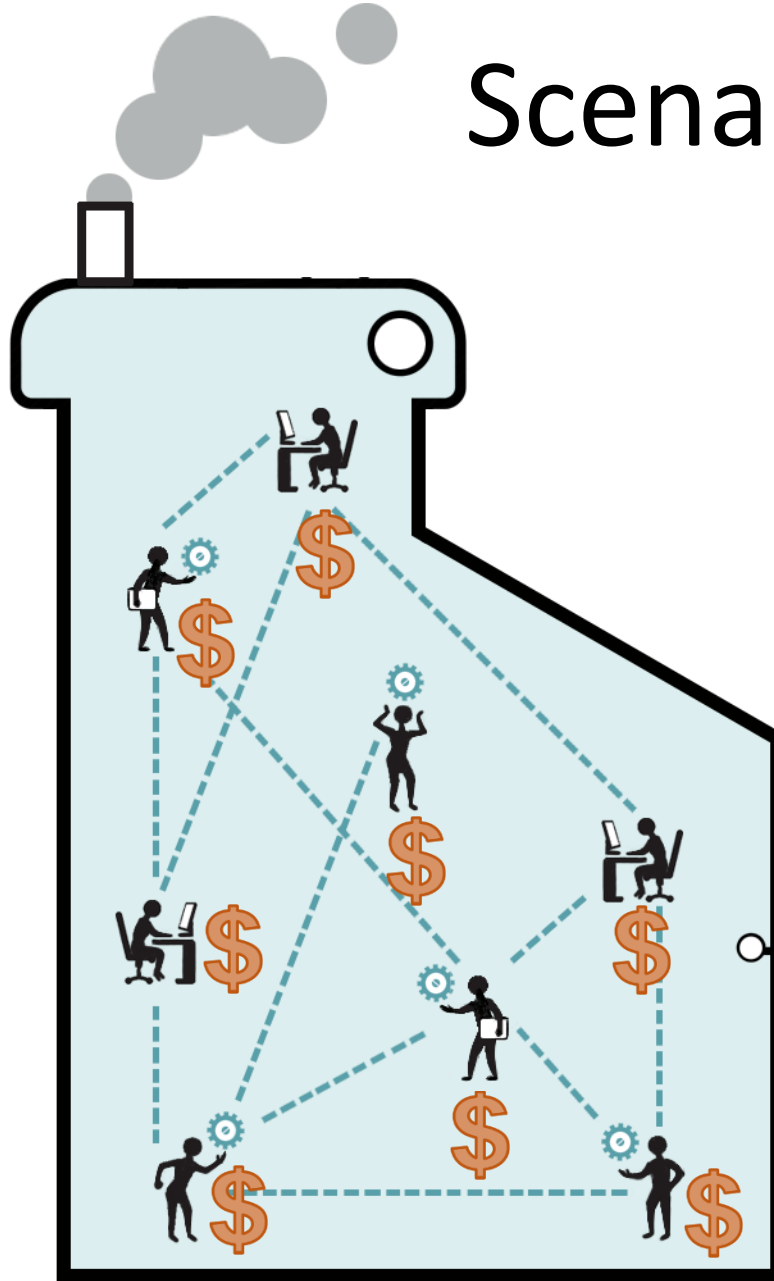


Scenario 2: Work for Hire

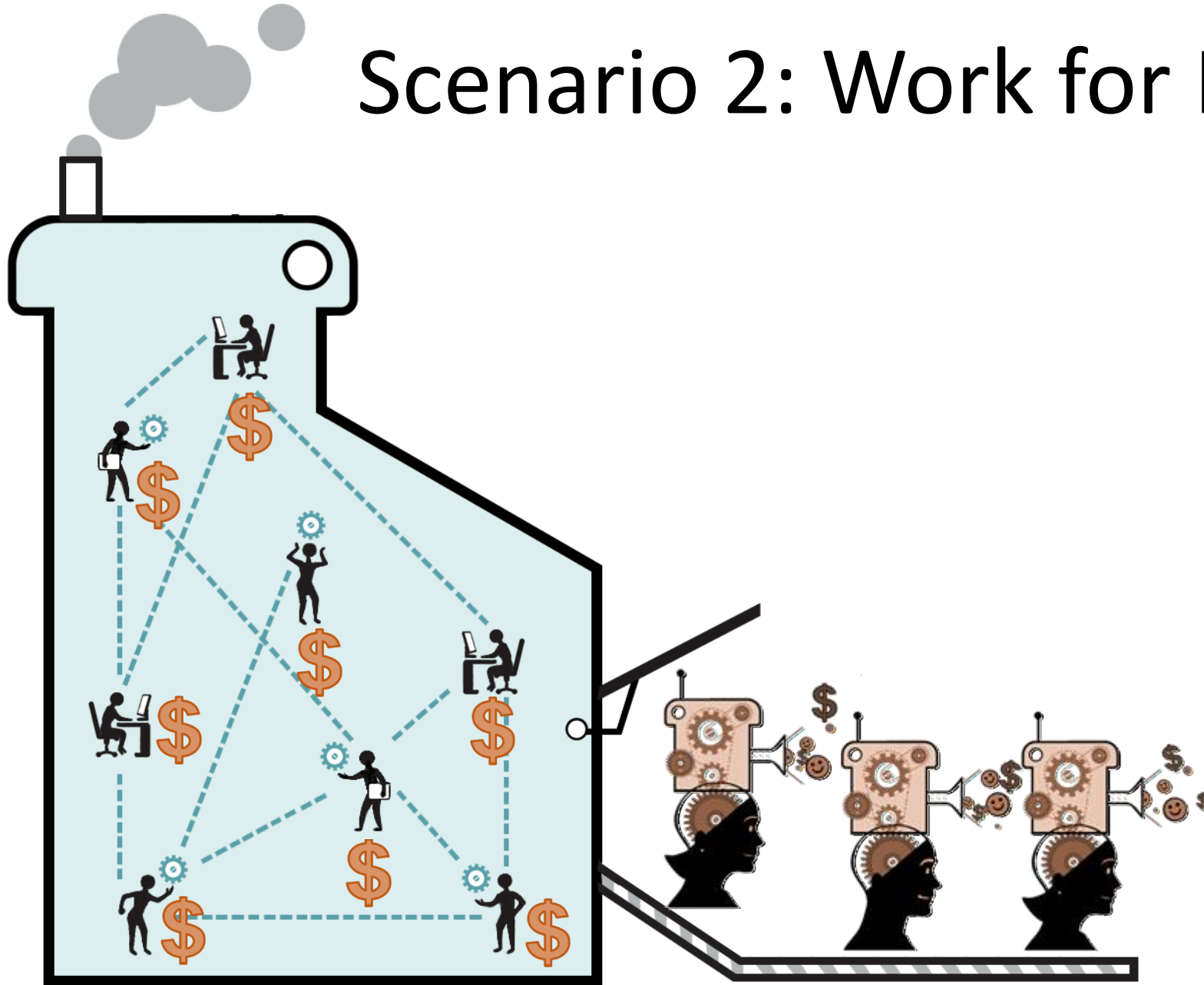
Scenario 2: Work for Hire



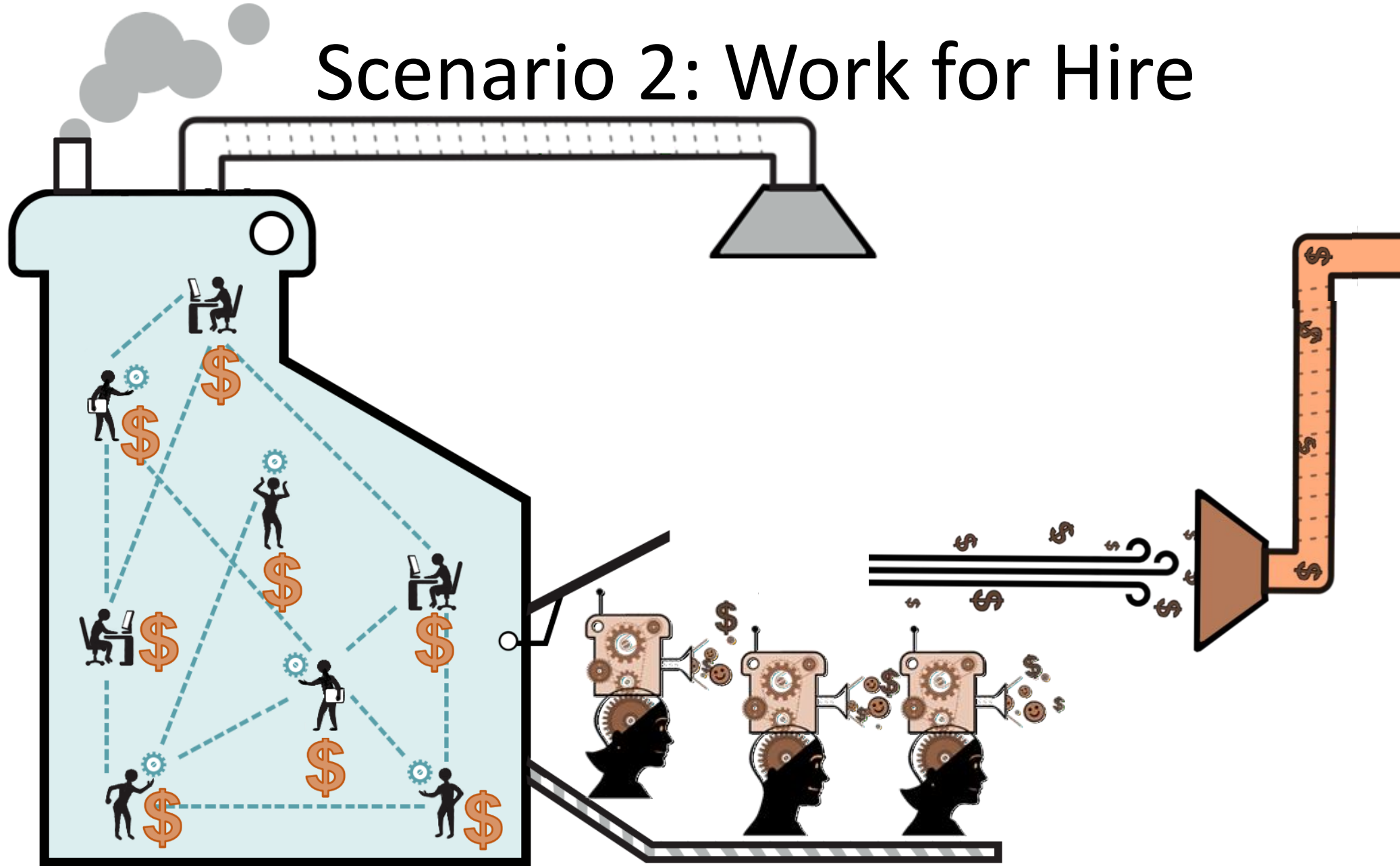
Scenario 2: Work for Hire



Scenario 2: Work for Hire

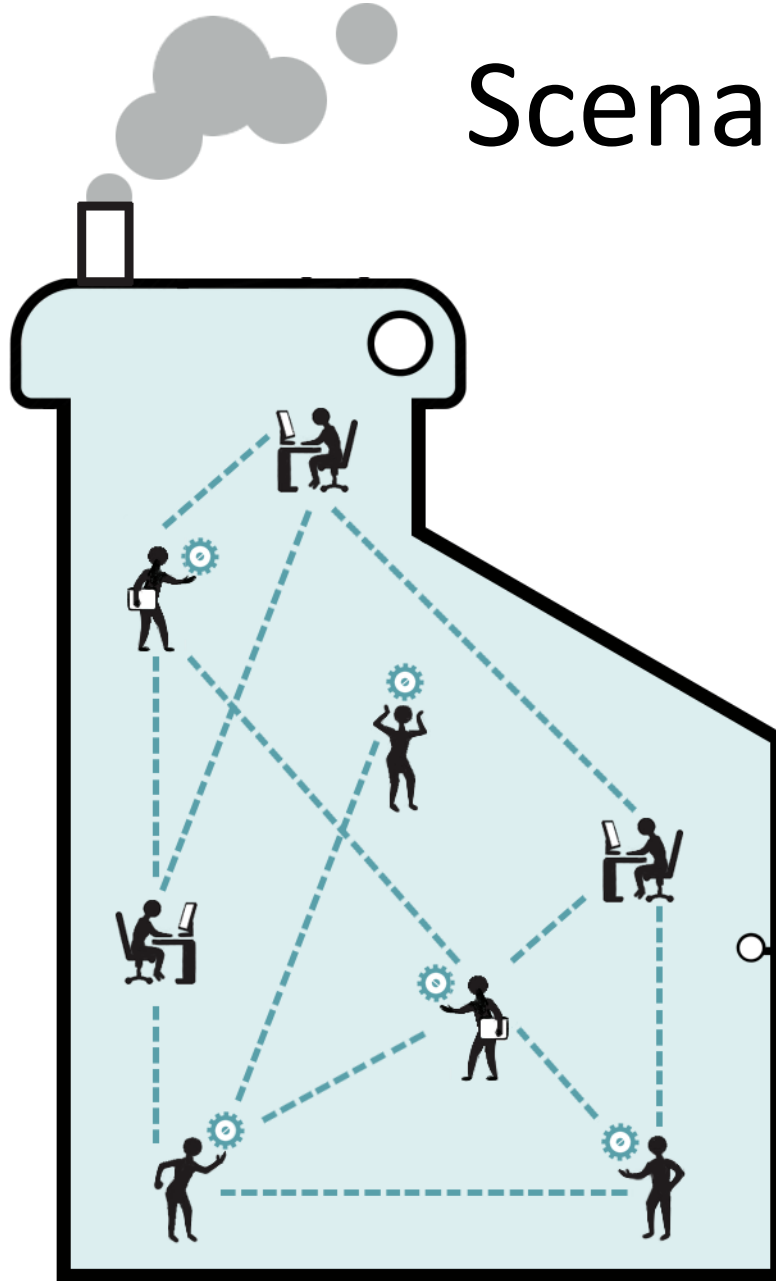


Scenario 2: Work for Hire

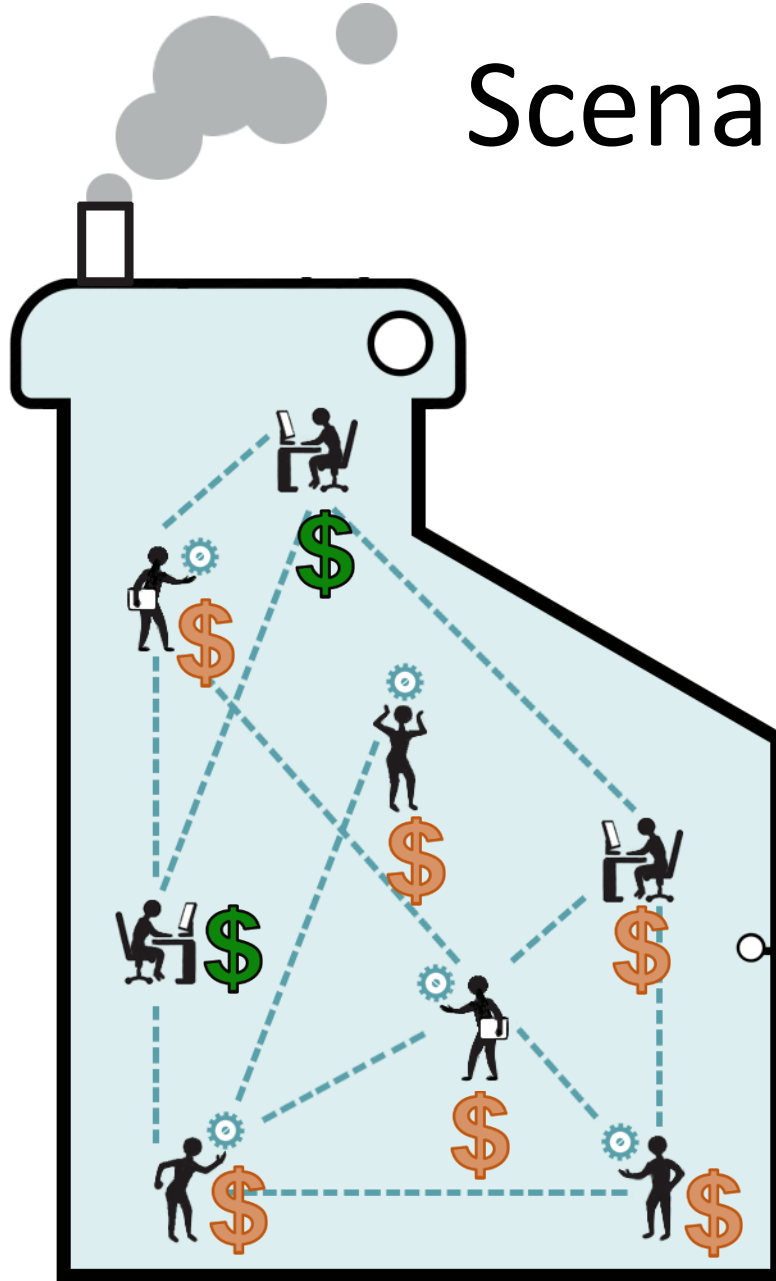


Scenario 3: Publisher

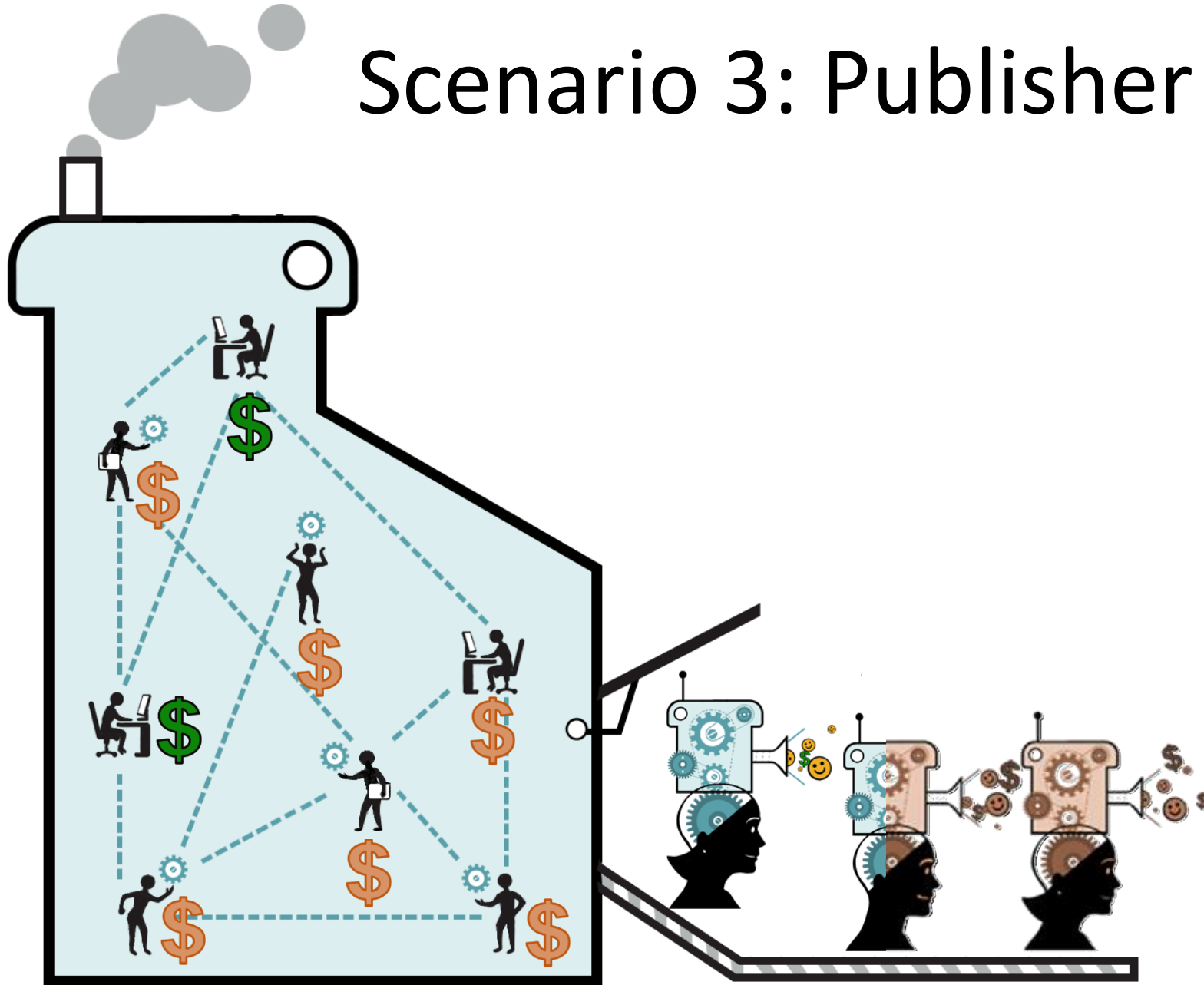
Scenario 3: Publisher



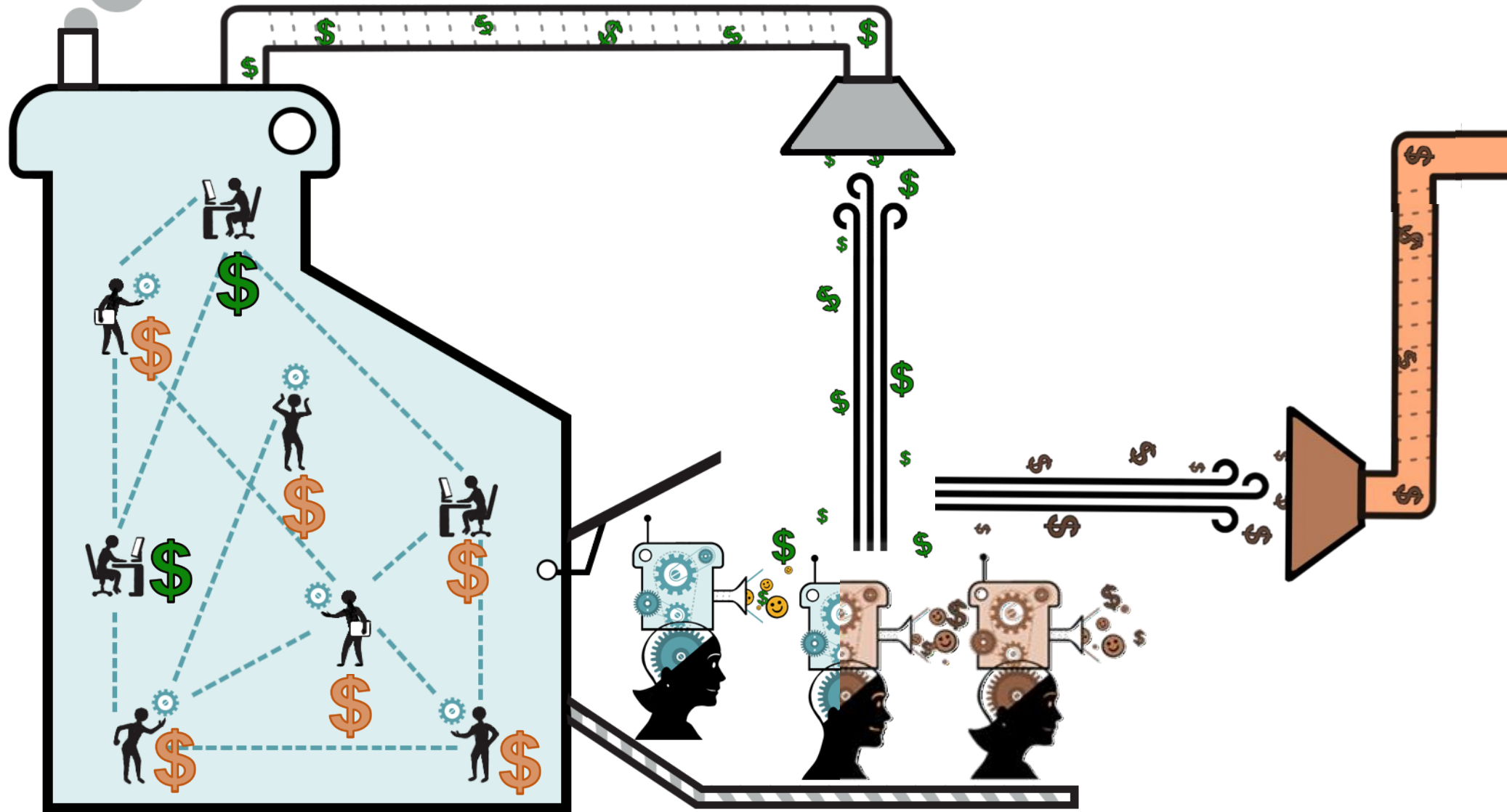
Scenario 3: Publisher



Scenario 3: Publisher

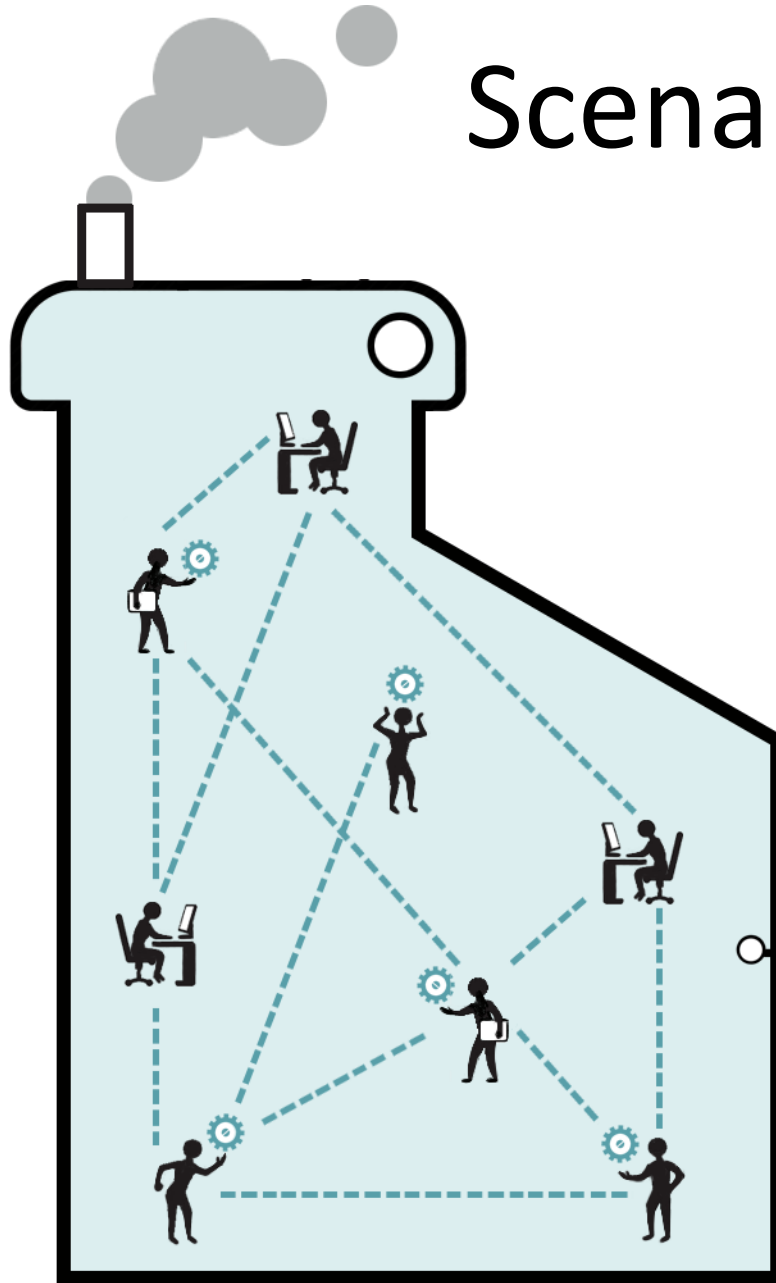


Scenario 3: Publisher

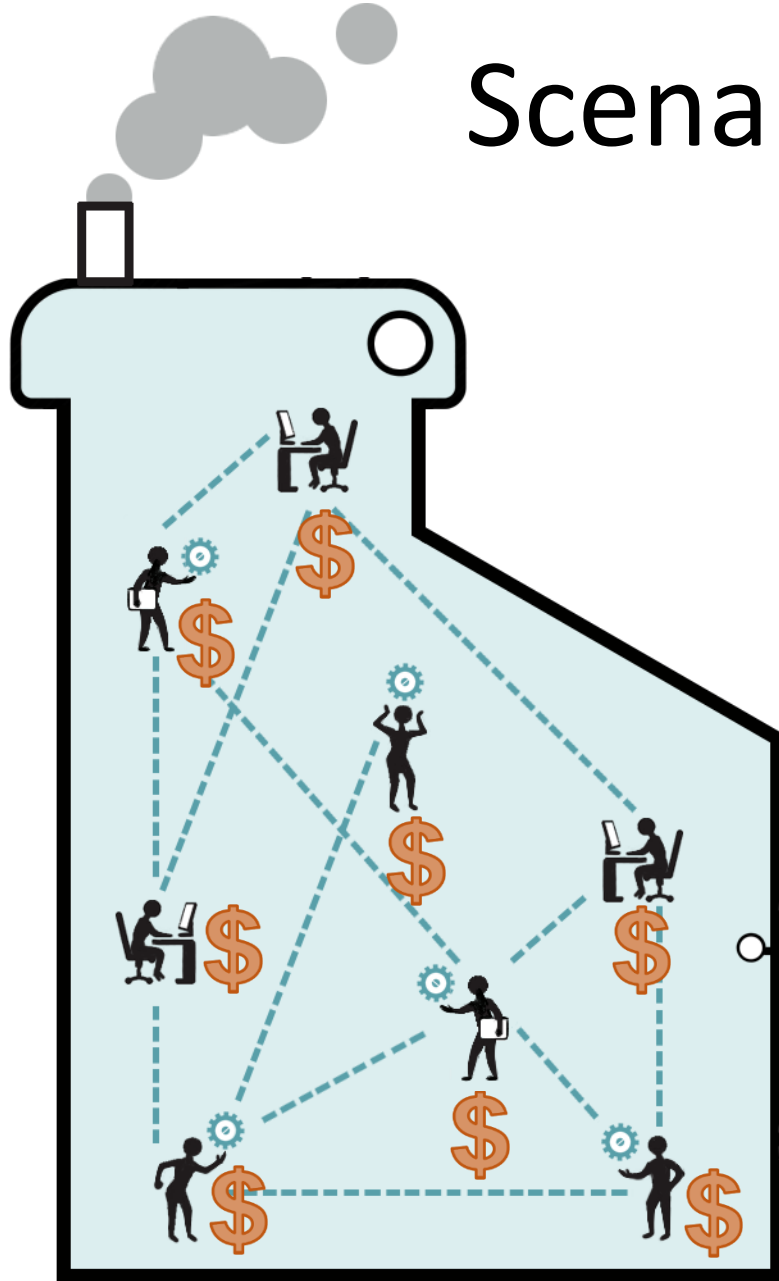


Scenario 4: Investor

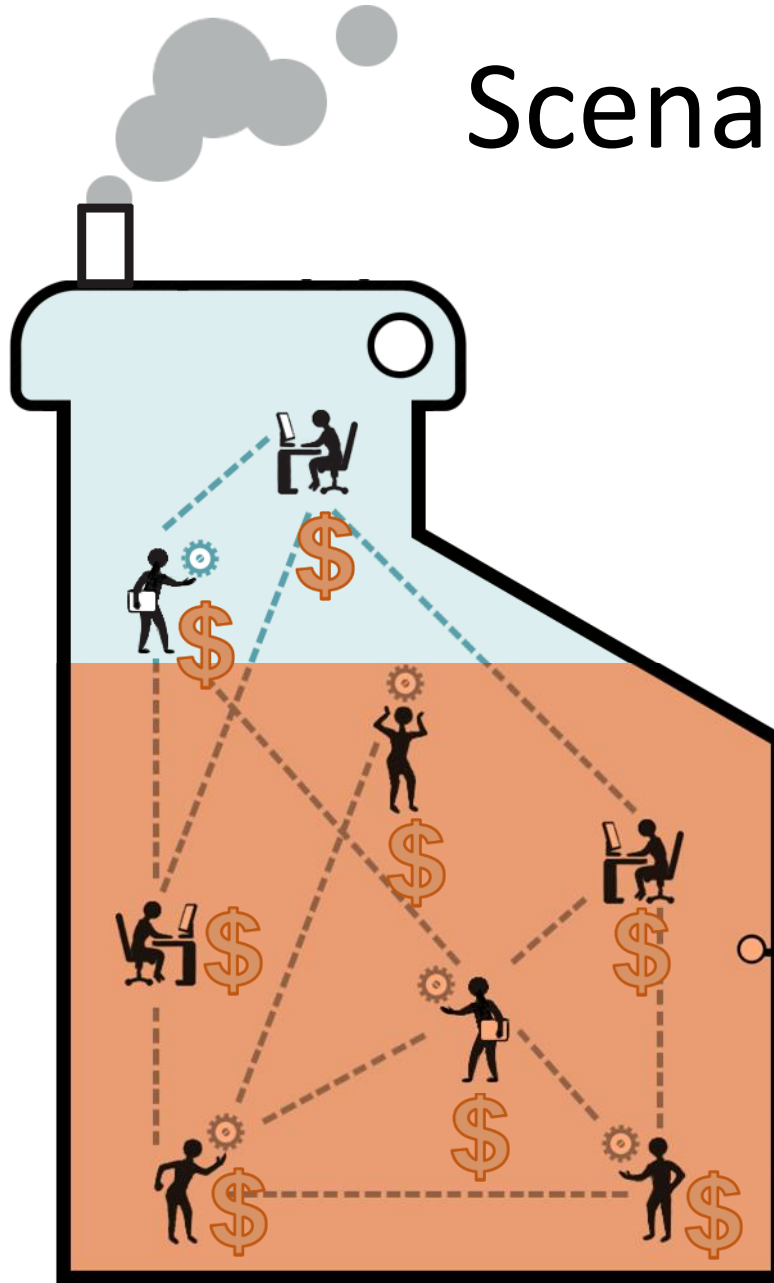
Scenario 4: Investor



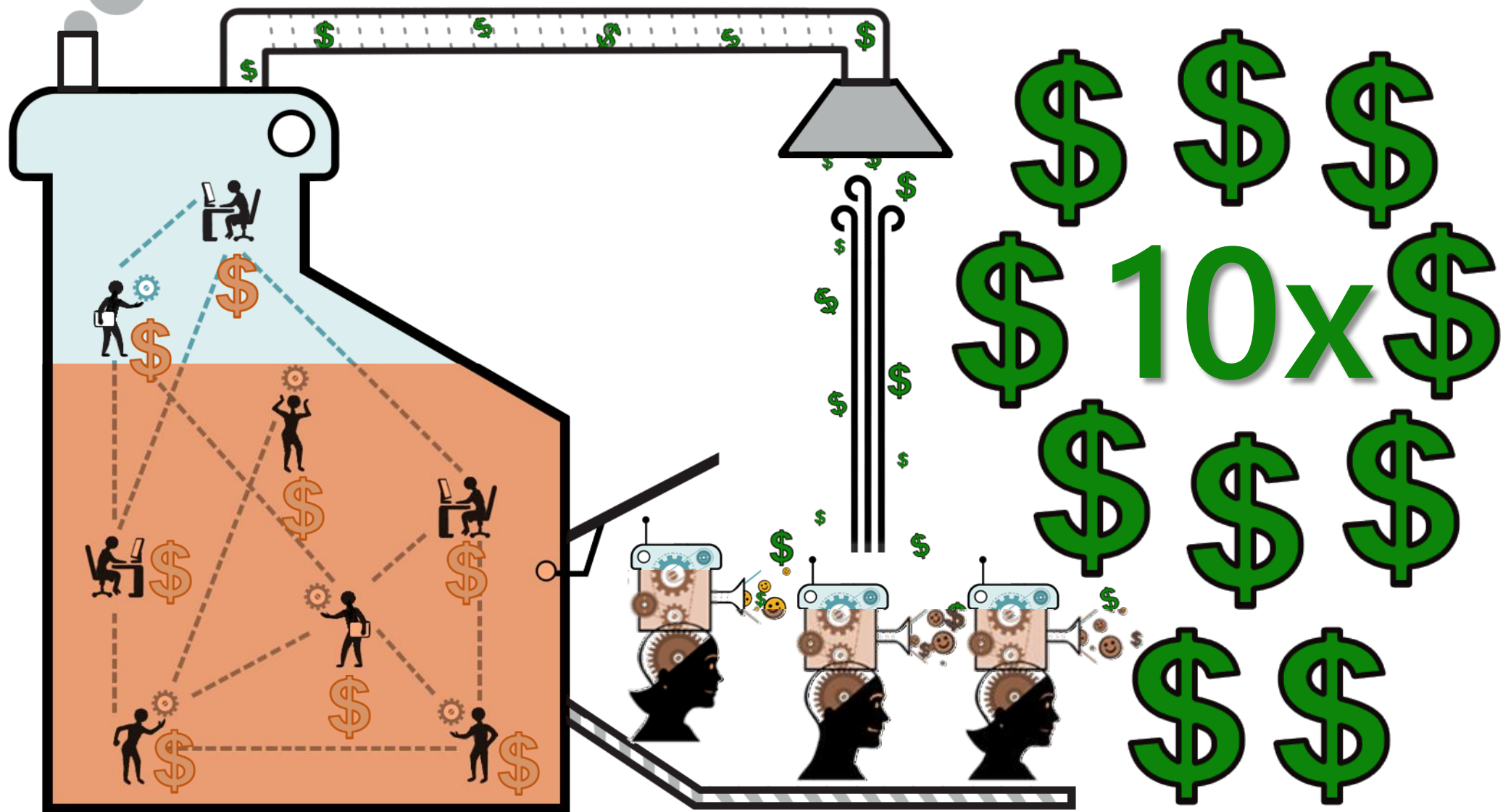
Scenario 4: Investor



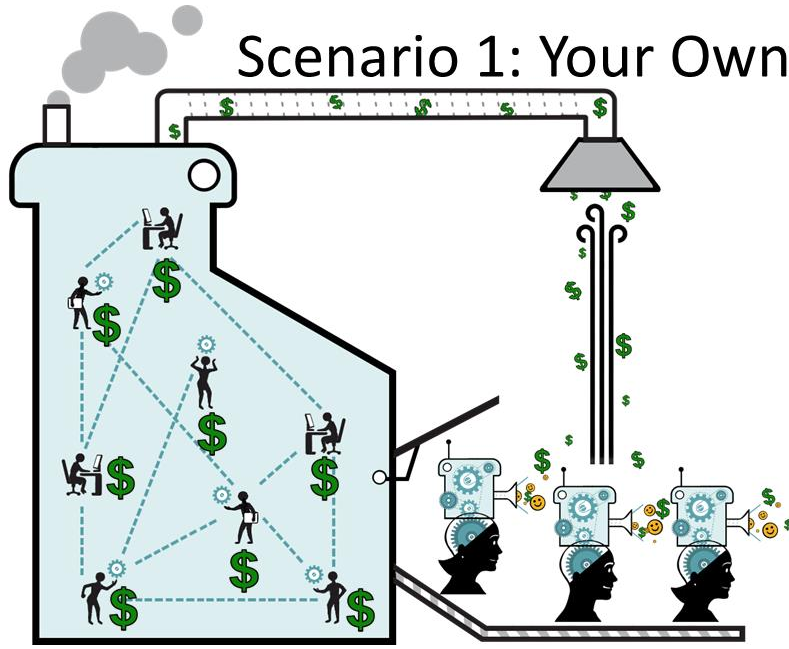
Scenario 4: Investor



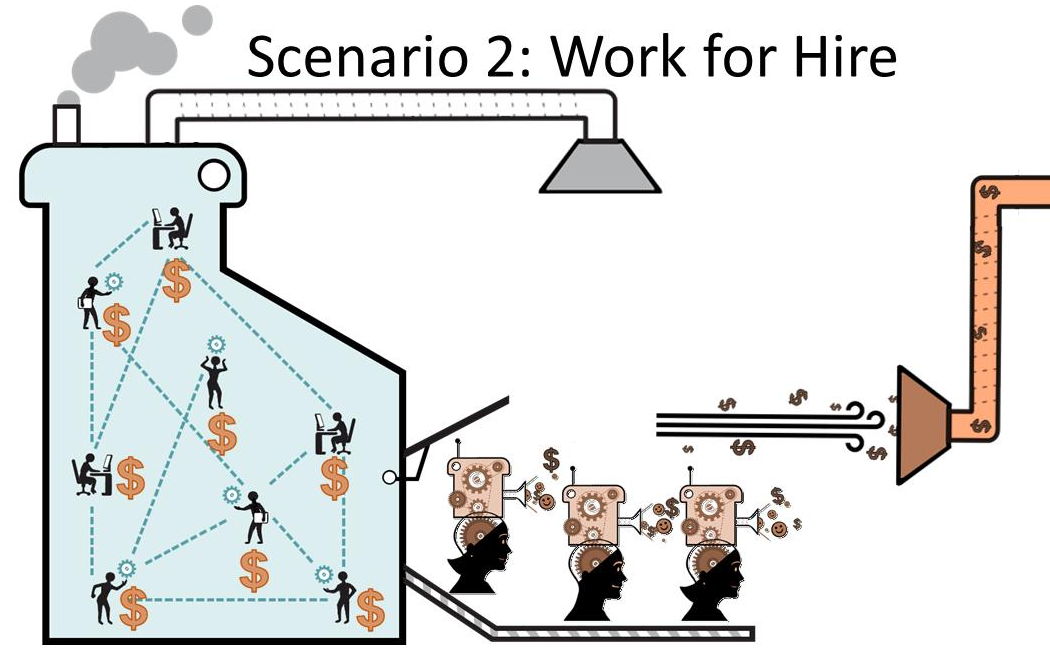
Scenario 4: Investor



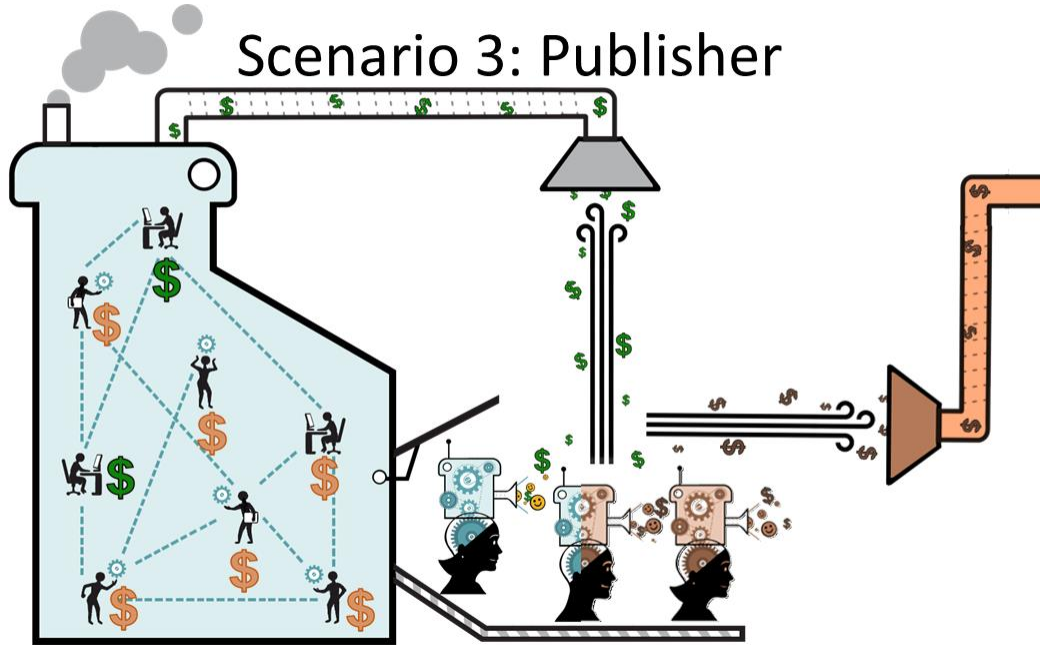
Scenario 1: Your Own Money



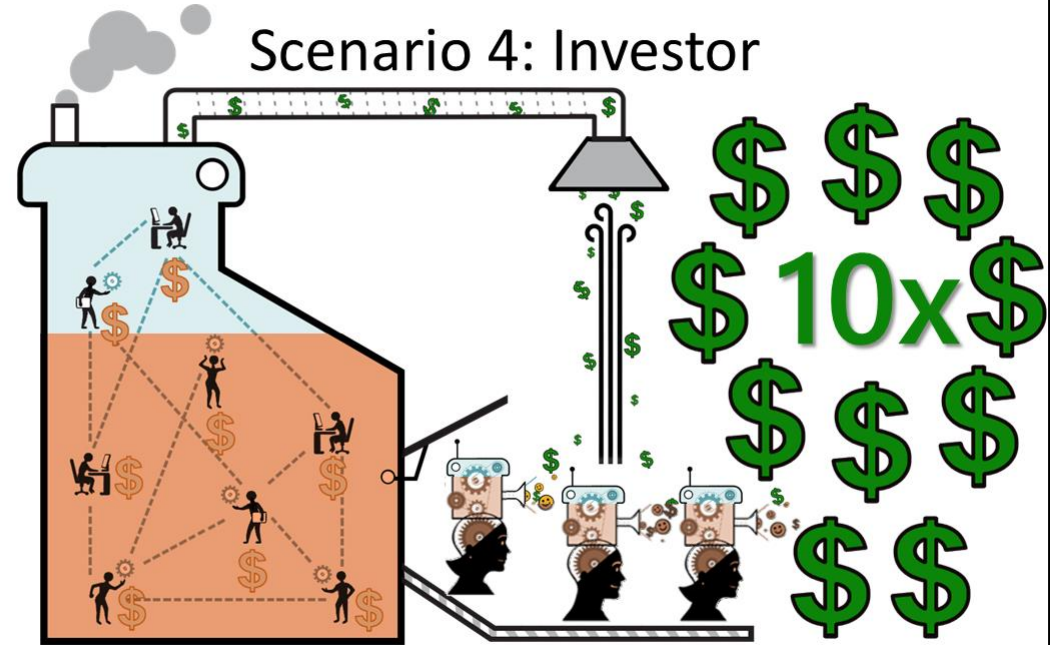
Scenario 2: Work for Hire



Scenario 3: Publisher



Scenario 4: Investor







The Plan™



1. Build a Studio (get people)
2. Protect the Studio (get money)
3. Make Awesome Games!

The Plan™



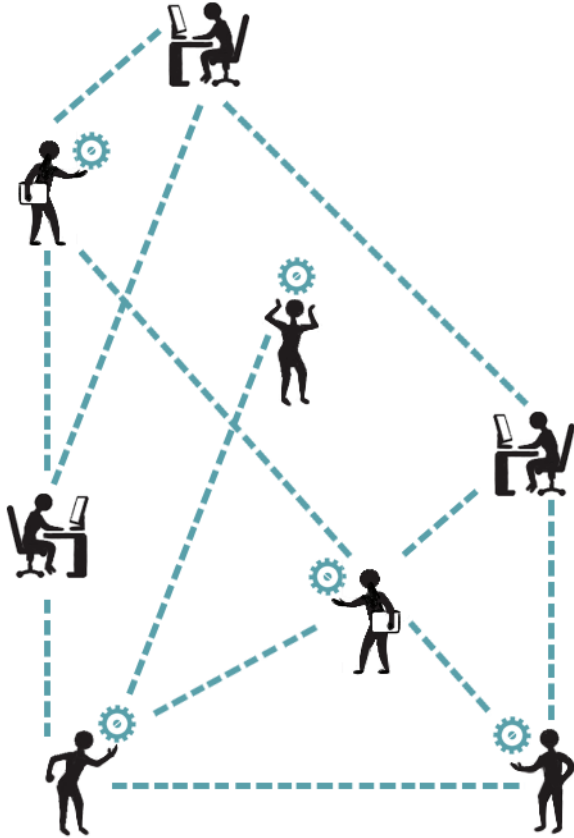
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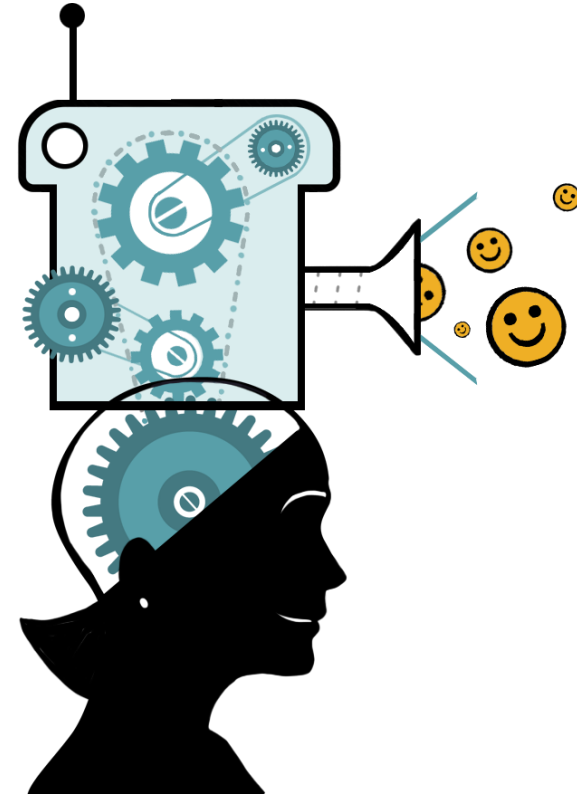
1. Build a Studio (get people)
2. Protect the Studio (get money)
3. ~~Make Awesome Games!~~
3. Optimize the Studio

Your People



#1 Priority

Your Game

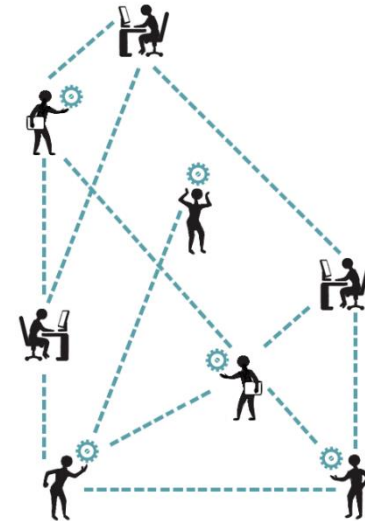


#2 Priority

Your **team's top priority is
making the **game** great.**



****Your** top priority is
making the **team** great.**



Things Your Team Wants

- Adequate Salary
- Believe In Their Mission
- Culture They're Proud Of
- Distractions Removed
- Excited By Their Work
- Feel Cared About
- Good Feedback
- Helpful Coaching
- Information That's Clear
- Joint Feeling of Respect
- Keep Communication Comfortable
- Like Their Teammates
- Measurable Progress

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Halfabet

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Halfabet of Happiness

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YOU CAN

DO IT

Practical Superhero Tips

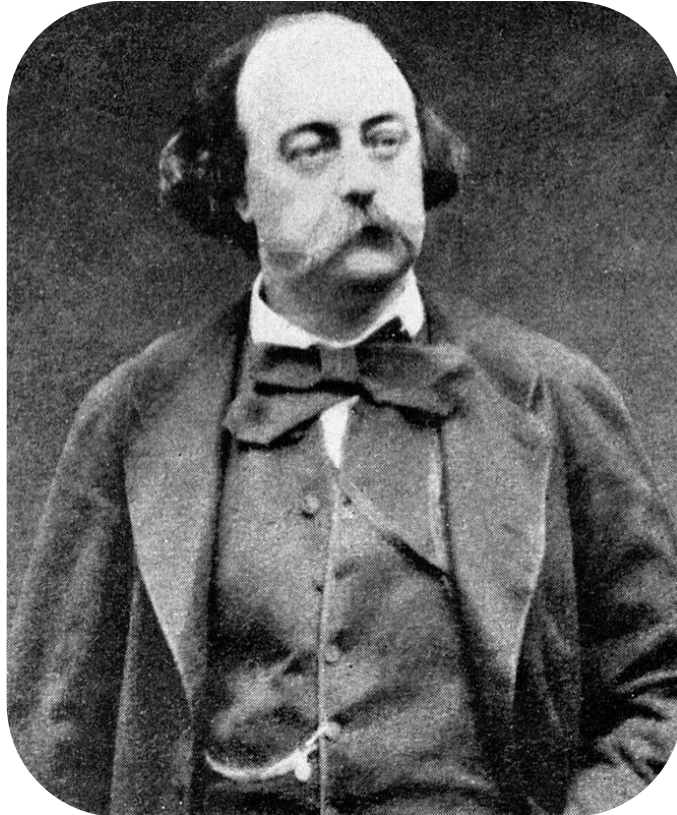
1. Get Organized





Be regular and
orderly in your
life, so you may
be violent and
original in your
work.

Gustave
Flaubert



Organization
will set you
free!

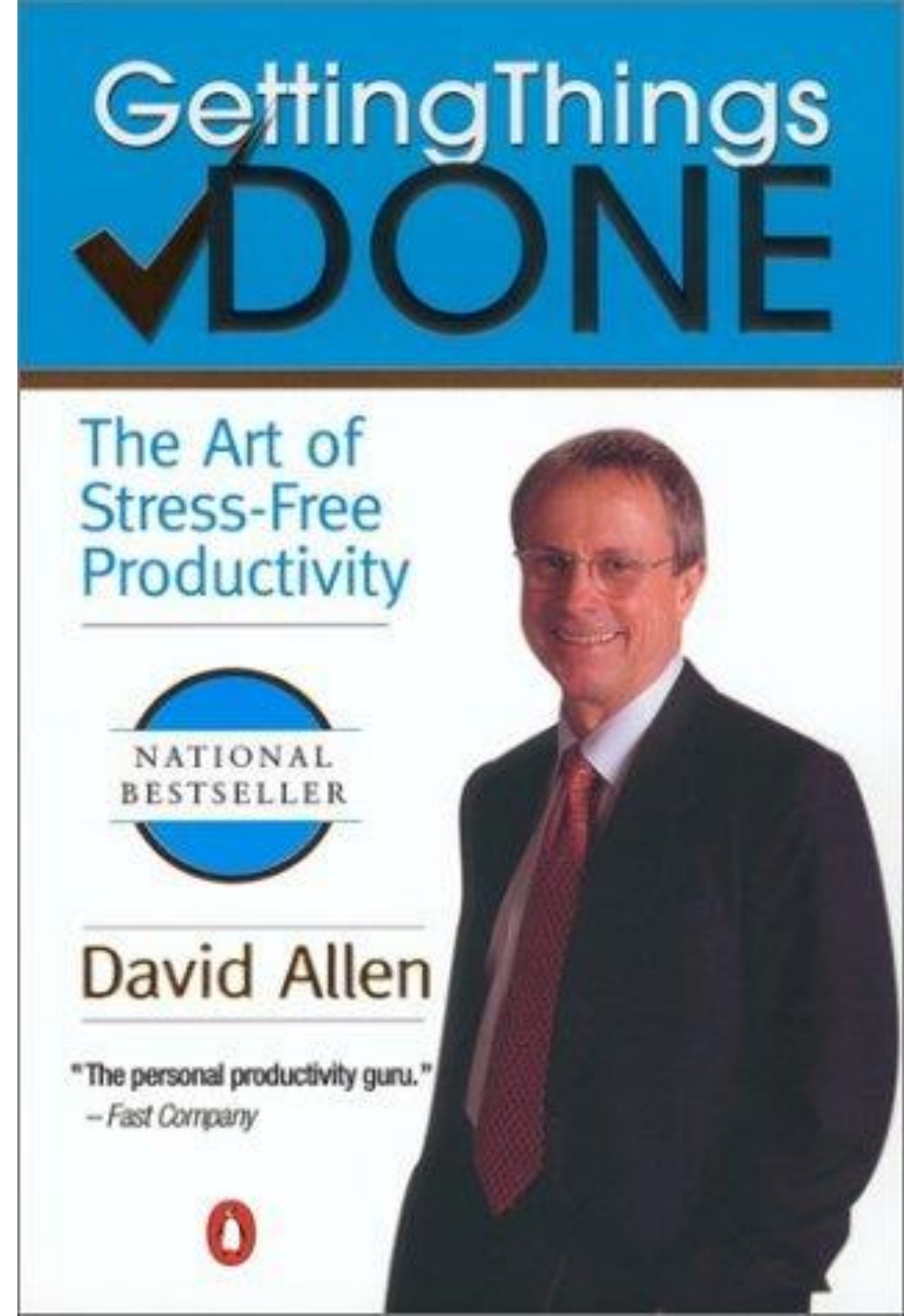
Alton
Brown





Get a Notebook.
Your Memory Sucks.

- At minimum:
 - To-Do List
 - General Notes
 - Hot List



① VP ISSUES →	1
② JAKE →	2
③ REAGAN →	3
④ MATT →	4
⑤ HARLEY →	5
⑥ CHUCK →	6
⑦ SPECTRE →	7
⑧ FROSTBOUND →	8
⑨ LONESTAR →	9
⑩ ODYSSEY →	10
⑪ STRIPES, PEG STRAPS, CAT →	11
⑫ MONSTERPIECE →	12
⑬ BLUEBOOK →	13
⑭ HAPPY ATOMS →	14
⑮ WILDSIDE →	15
⑯ RED →	16
⑰ NAUTILUS →	17
⑱ SKYCASTLE →	18
⑲ SUPERCHEM →	19

MONSTERPIECE

12

M1: TEXT PROMPTS?

☒

M2: E-MO-TIONS & MO-TIVATION

☒

M3: FINAL ANIMATION SAMPLE

☒

M4: CURTAIN / POSTER JAGGIES / WHITESPACES

☒

M5: NO GOT'S SMALL - AMBIGUOUS

☒

M6: NO STAR REACTION - WEIRD GASP?

☒

M7: DOTTED LINES TOO LEADING? ^{BLOCKING?} ^{CREATIVITY?}

☒

NO MORE DOTS

M8: VOICE?

☒

TIM SICK

M9: DOTTED OUTLINES MUST COME BACK

☒

NOT DOTTED, BUT VAGUE

M10: DOES NEW FUNDING CHANGE PRIORITIES?

☒

MEMENTO

MEX: TOO MUCH SCOPE! ESPI AVATARS



ME2: TOO MUCH SCRIPT









Practical Superhero Tips

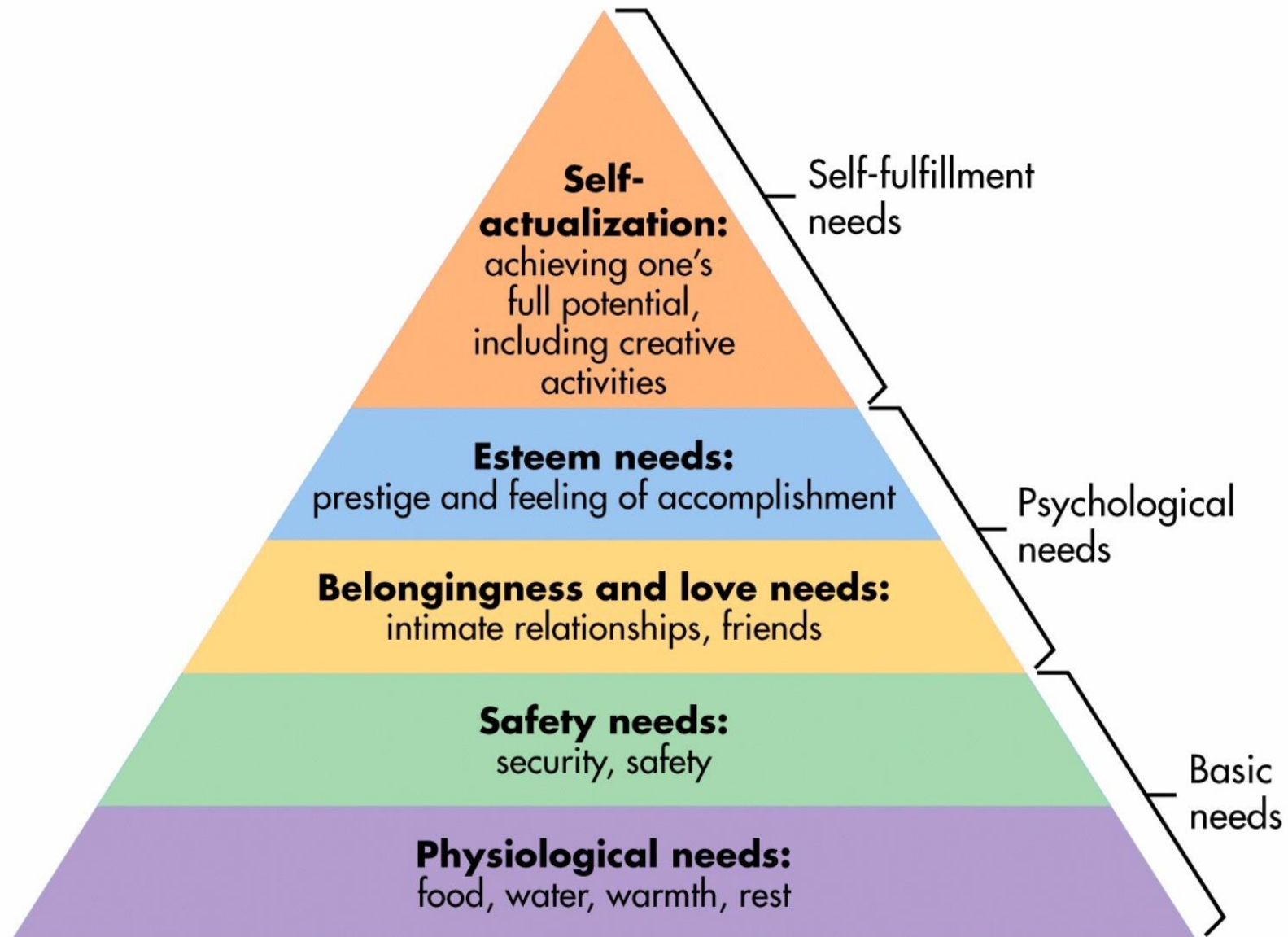


1. Get Organized
2. Get Beyond Firefighting
3. Delegate
4. Keep Doing What You're Best At
5. Be Humble
6. Find Your Healthy Self
7. You Eat Last

Halfabet of Happiness™

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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Halfabet of Happiness™

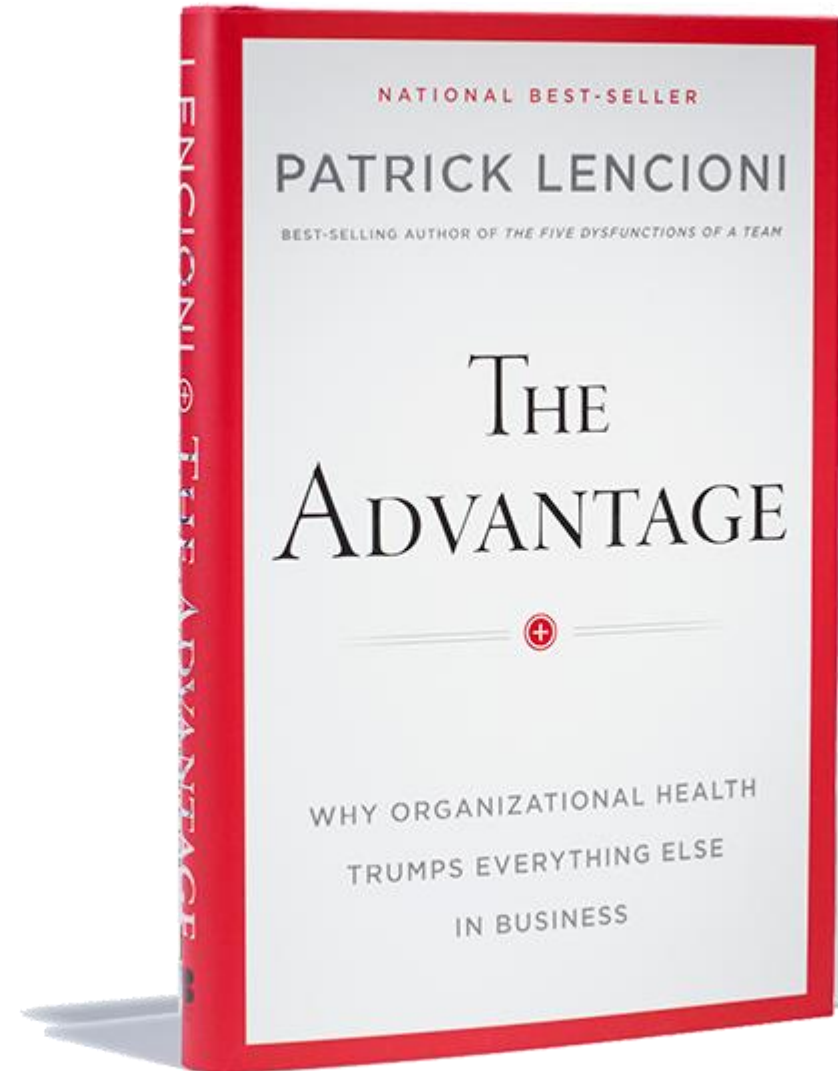
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Adequate Salary



Believe In Their Mission

- Mission Statement
- Core Values
- Studio Principles
- Top Studio Priority Right Now



SG Principles

Our mission: To make experiences we are proud of with people we like, so we can make the world a better place.

1. Amazing Teams

- 1. Only hire people who have the skills and passion to make the best experiences possible.**
- 2. Only work with clients and partners who share our passion to create the best.**
- 3. Always treat everyone with the utmost respect -- even when (especially when) you are frustrated.**
- 4. Diversity makes us strong.**
- 5. It's not a decision until the team is on board.**
- 6. If you don't believe in your work, speak up.**

2. Amazing Fun

- 1. We don't make experiences to make money. We make money to make experiences.**
- 2. Experiences should be beautiful inside and out.**
- 3. Beauty is in the details. Give attention to every little thing.**
- 4. Planning, organizing, and optimizing information flow are essential to quality.**
- 5. All experiences must have all key aspects fully playable halfway through production.**
- 6. Know, respect, and defend the guest. The experience is for them.**
- 7. Playtest constantly. It's the only way to know.**

3. Amazing Transformation

- 1. Always ask: "How does our experience change the guest?"**
- 2. Always ask: "Is there a better way?"**
- 3. Dreams and plans only matter if we ship.**
- 4. Belief can turn the impossible into reality.**
- 5. Be brave. If you don't, who will?**

Top priority right now: Protect and leverage our VR/AR momentum.

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Mission Statement

Core Values

Top Priority

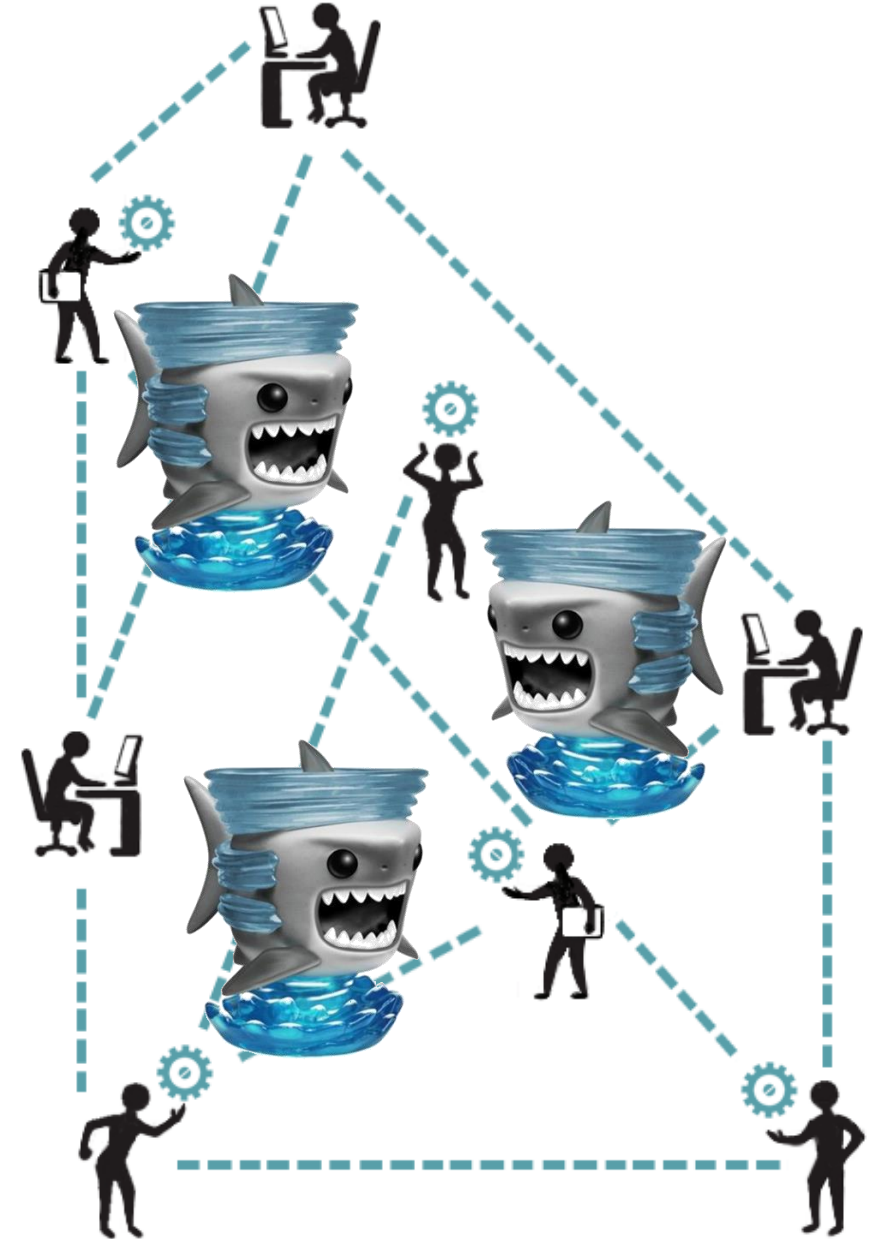
Studio Principles

Culture They're Proud Of



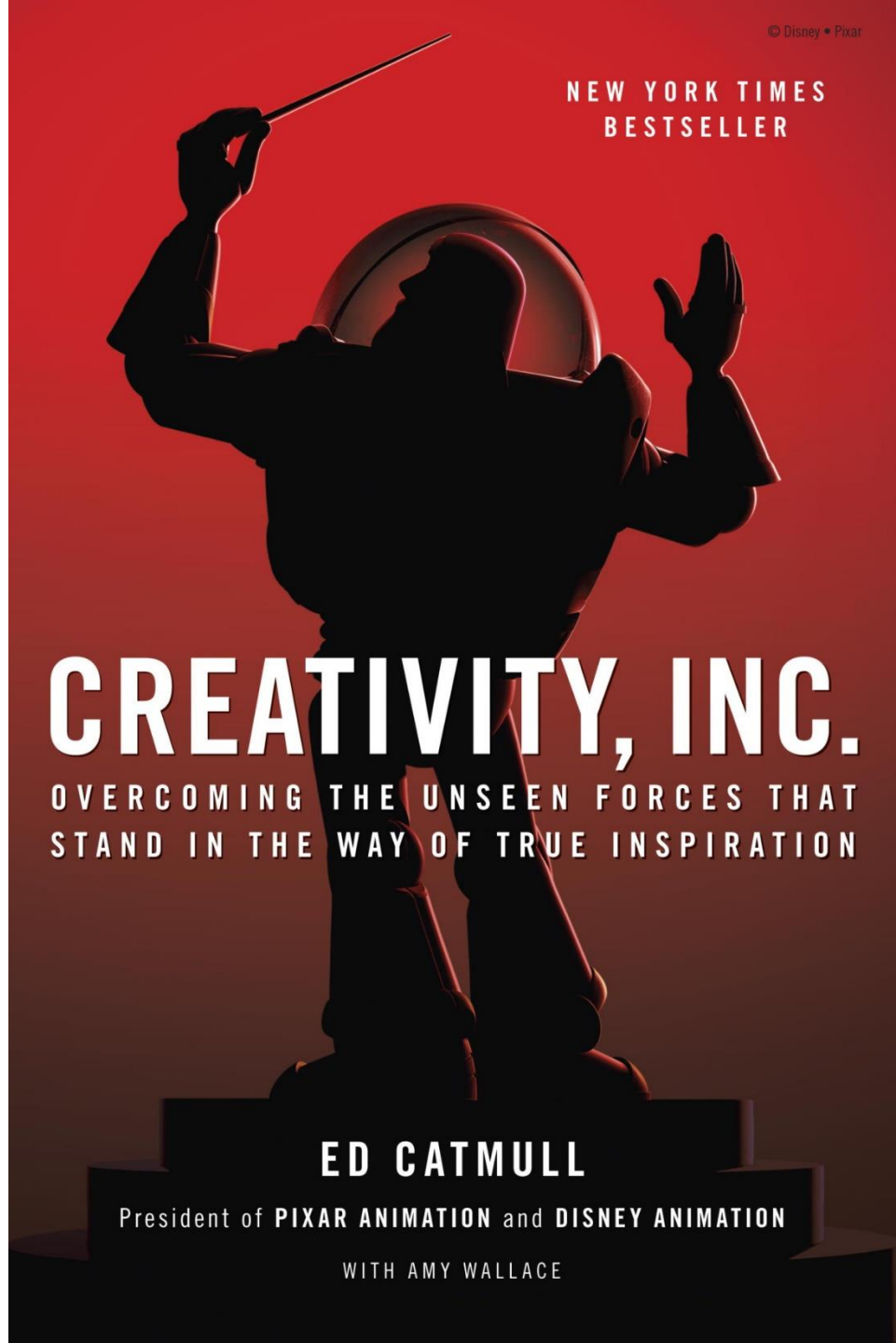
Distractions Removed

- Chaos can come from within!
- It is super distracting!
- It can come from...
 - Team members
 - Bad Process
 - You



Advice from Ed Catmull

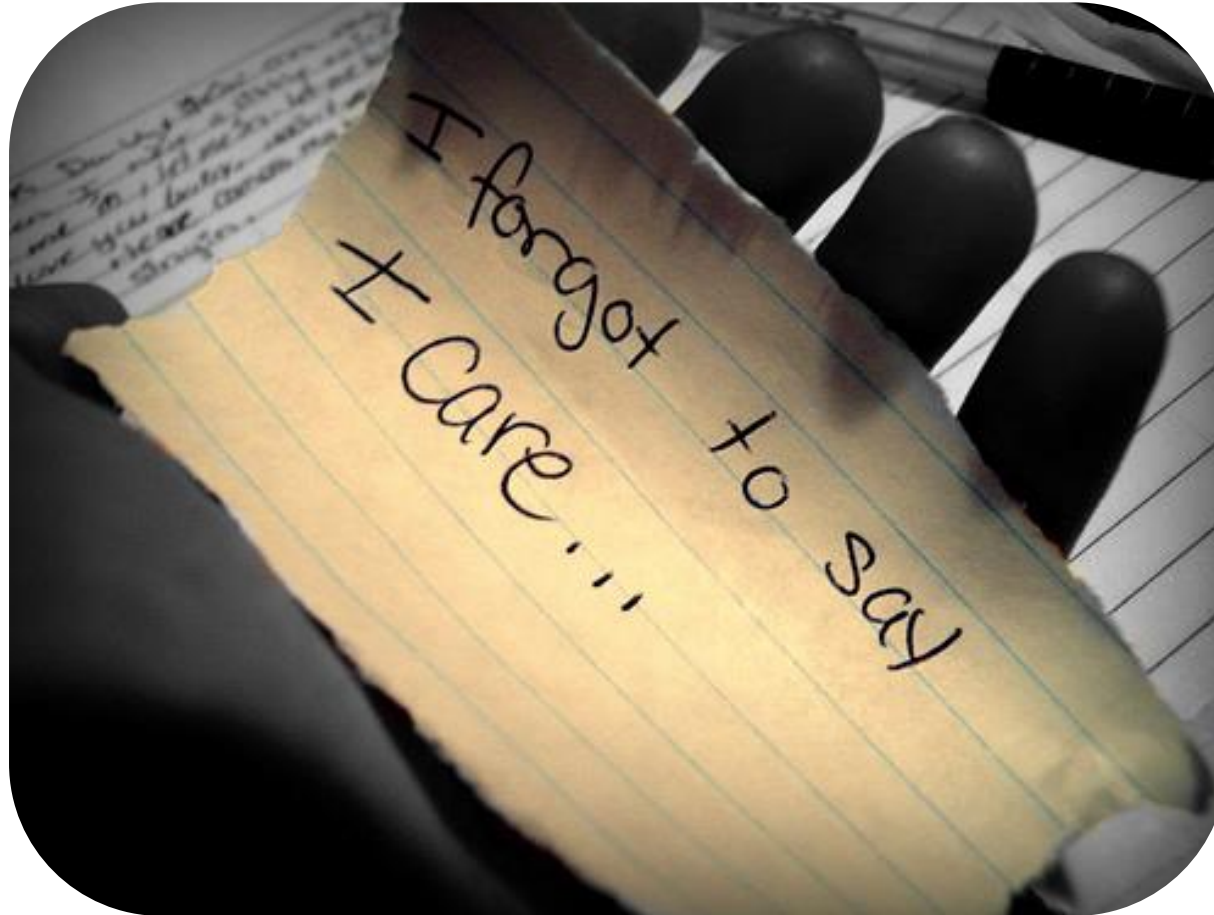
- “You have problems you know, and problems you don’t know.”
- “The good hides the bad.”
- “Only leaders can remake the rules.”



Excited By Their Work



Feel Cared About

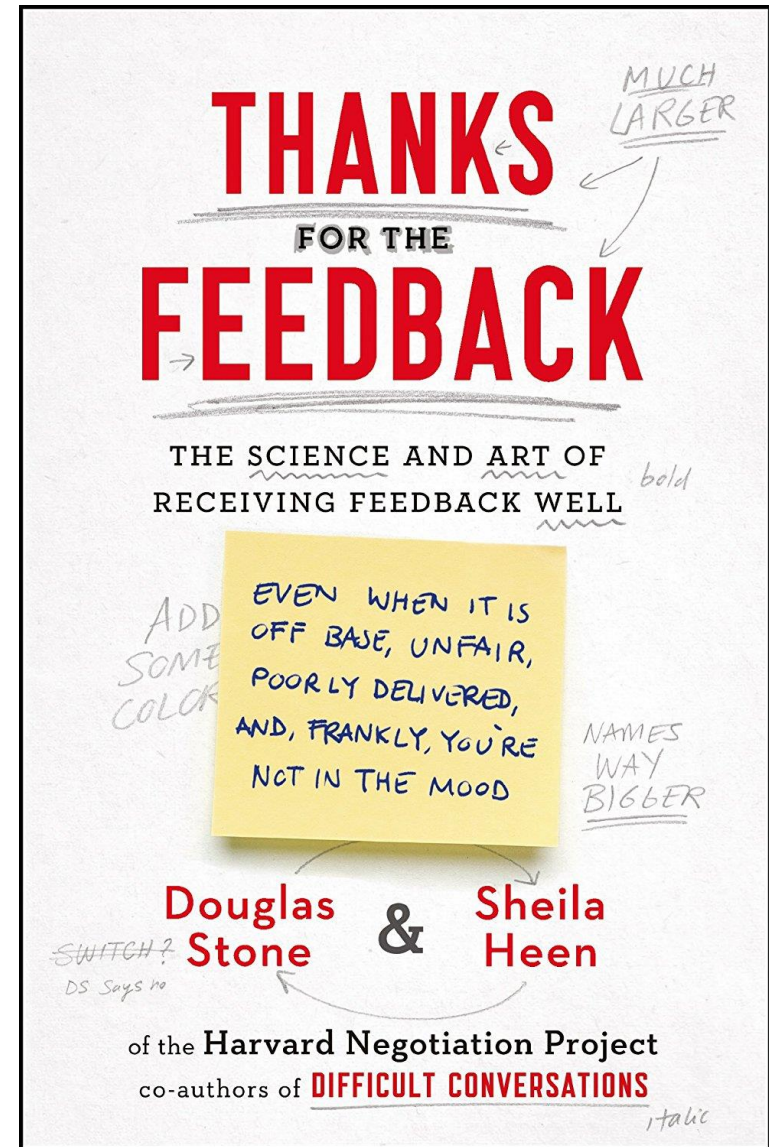
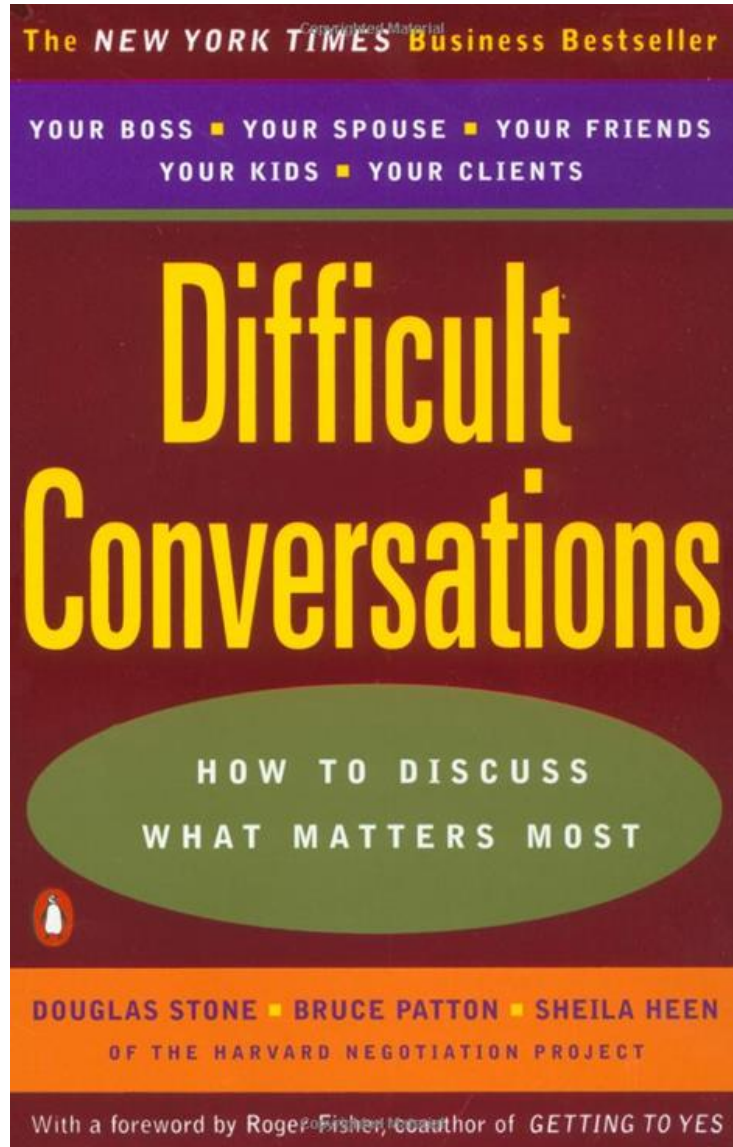


Good Feedback

- 360 feedback is essential
- Who are your A, B, and C players?
- People need to know where they stand
- C players must improve, or be fired

Helpful Coaching

- You **MUST** make time for one on one coaching meetings
- This is your #1 Priority
- Keep your core values and principles handy
- Help them coach each other

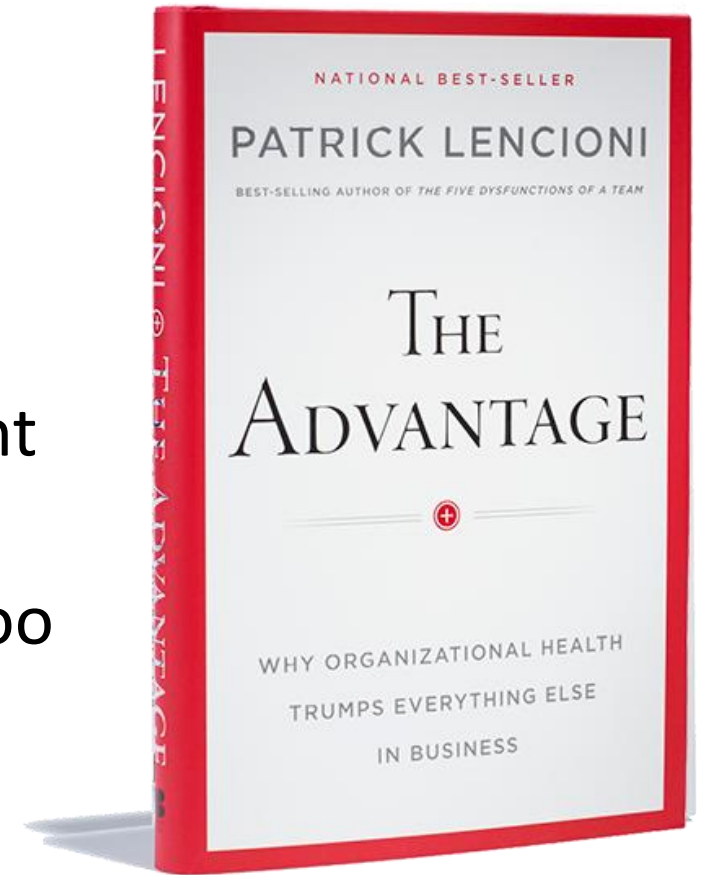


Get a Tool for Anonymous Feedback



Information That's Clear

- No one can read your mind – **overcommunicate** what's important.
- Repetition of important things is helpful.
- Repeat important things.
- Say important things, again and again, in different ways.
- It is better for people to hear important things too often than not enough.
- Important things: You should repeat them.



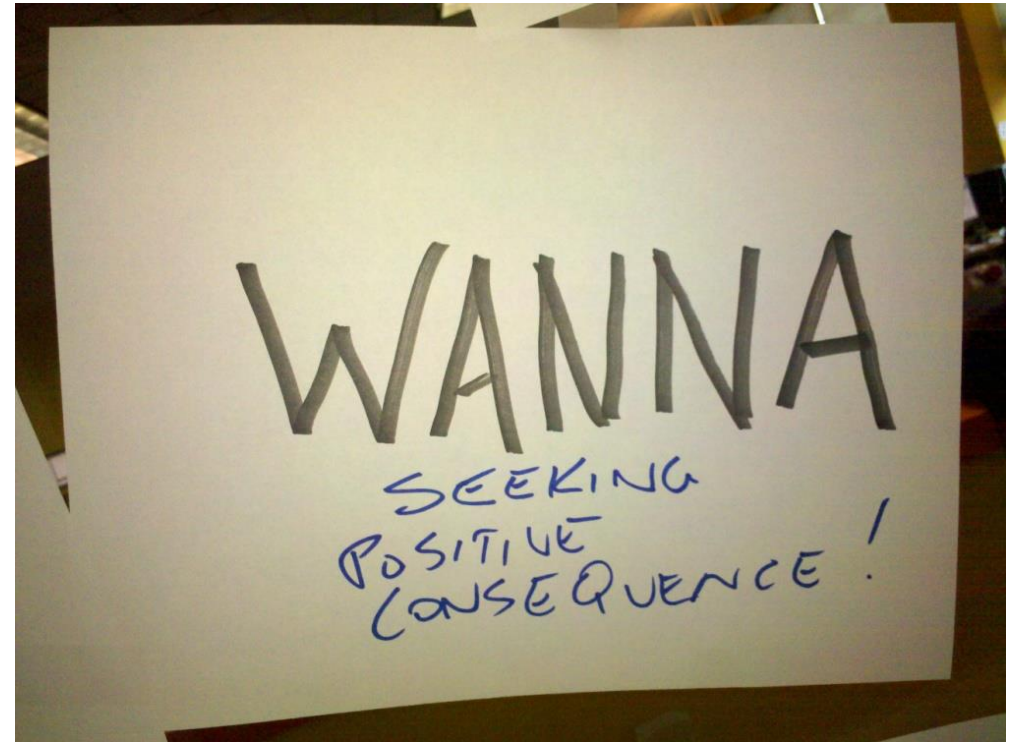
Joint Feeling of Respect



Respectability

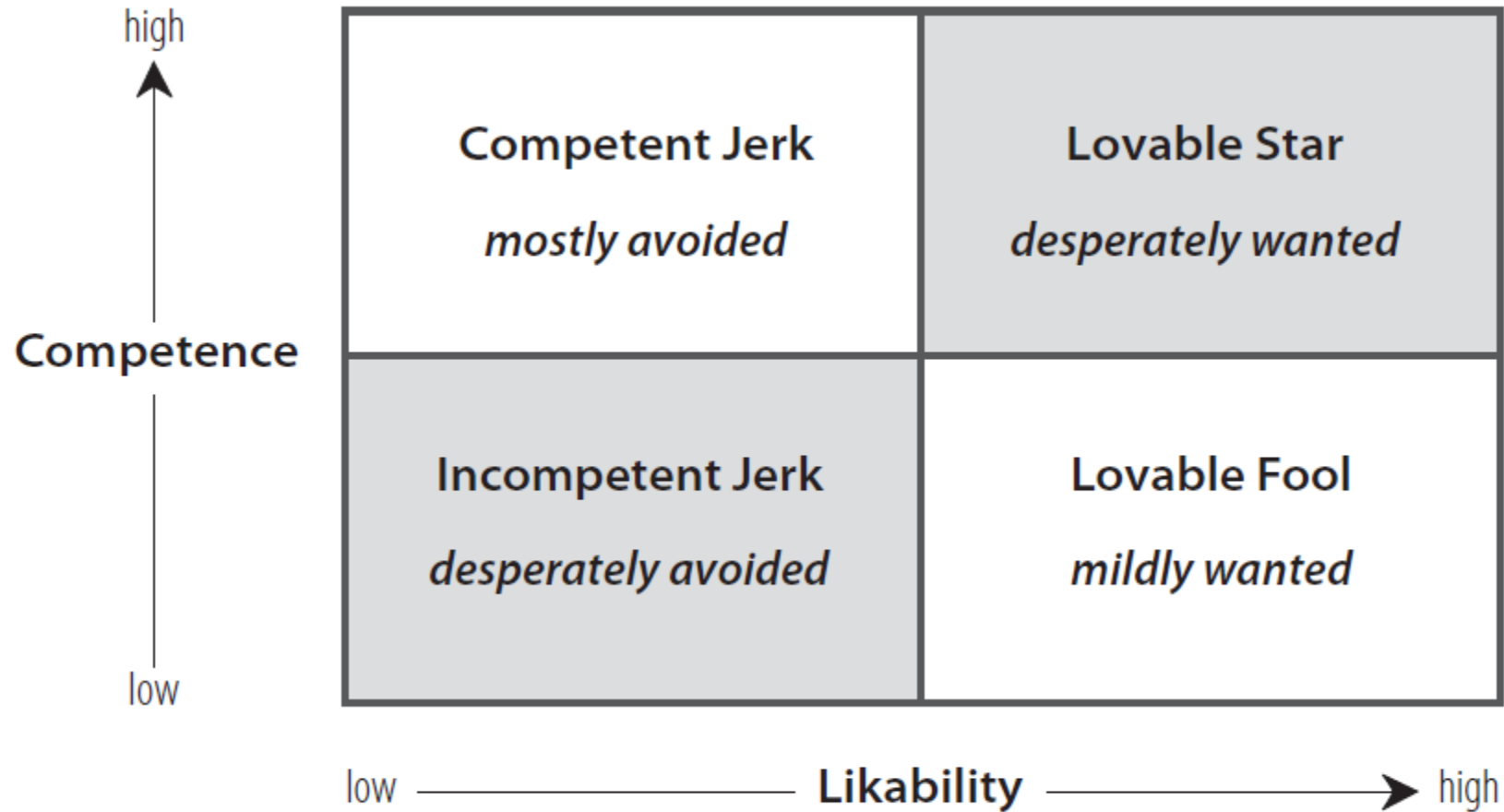
n. The ability to make others feel respected.

Keep Communication Comfortable



Why are people communicating with you?
With each other?

Like Their Teammates



Likability is more important than competence.

M_easurable Progress

- Can come from...
 - The Project
 - Raises
 - Growth of Responsibility
 - Job Titles
 - Clear Feedback
 - Growth of the Studio



Studio Growth Rules of Thumb

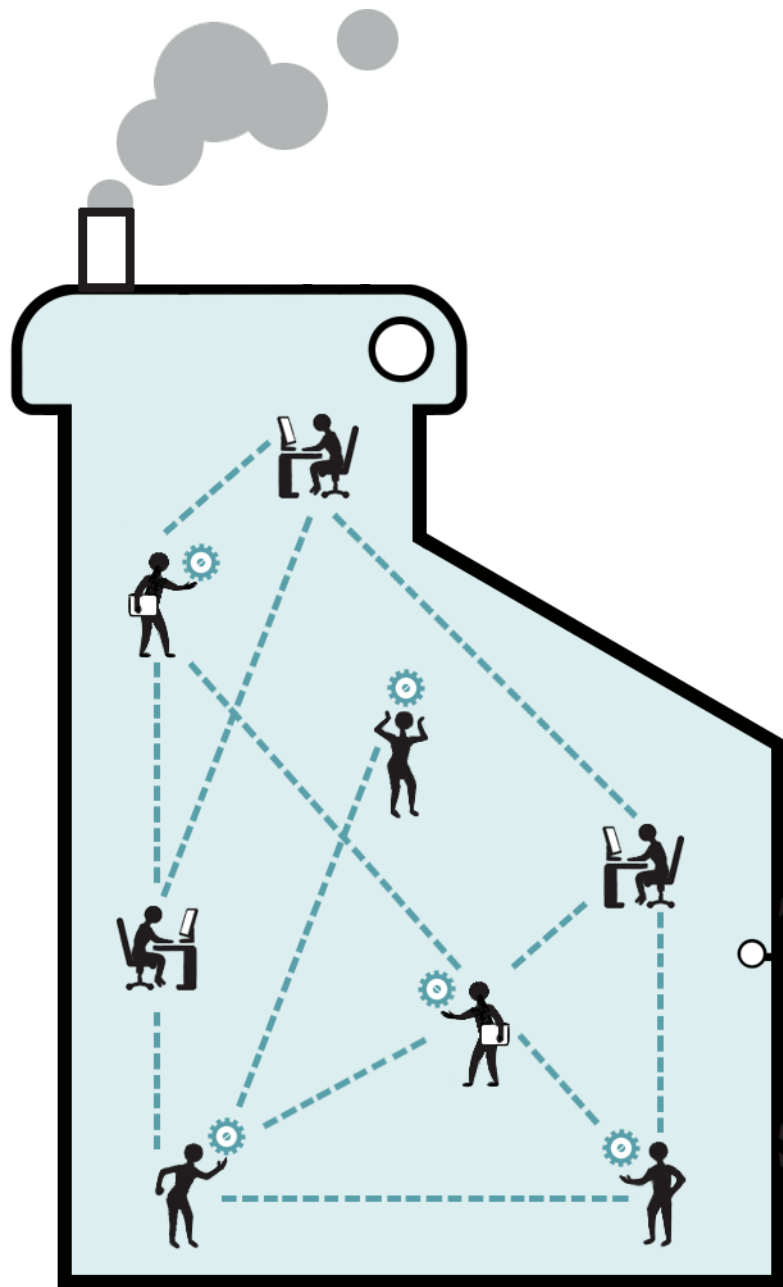
- >5: You need a producer, and another for every 10 developers.
- >10: You need sub-team meetings for some kinds of communication.
- >20: You need to assign coaching responsibilities.
- >30: You need a full-time IT professional, and another for every 50 developers.
- >40: You need departments, and leaders for them
- >50: You need full-time HR, and possibly accounting/finance
- >60: You need two layers of management for coaching inside departments
- >150: You have reached Dunbar's number. Your organization must split.

Business Development? Marketing? It depends!

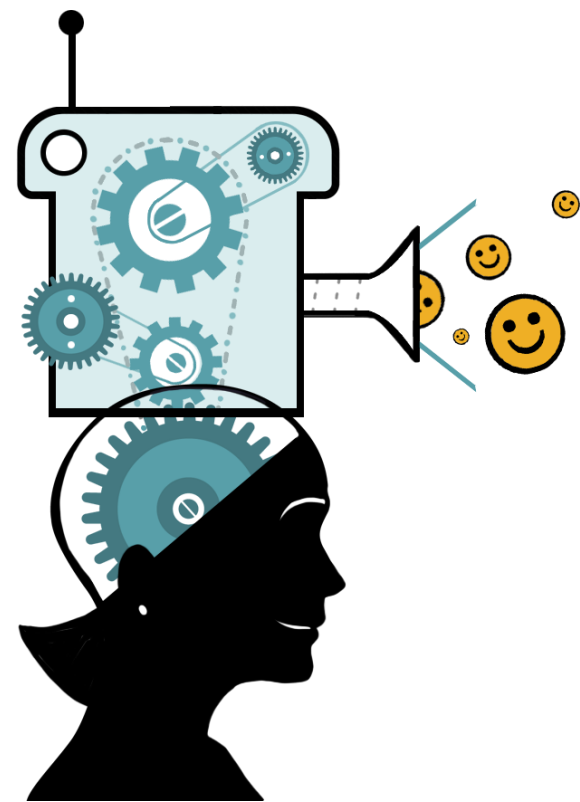
The Plan™



- ✓ 1. Build a Studio (get people)
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- ✓ 3. Optimize the Studio



=



☰

More

?


Random

123


Sort


★


Favorites




1


 Emotion







2


 Essential Experience

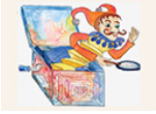





3


 Venue







4


 Surprise







5


 Fun







6


 Curiosity







7


 Endogenous Value








8


 Problem Solving




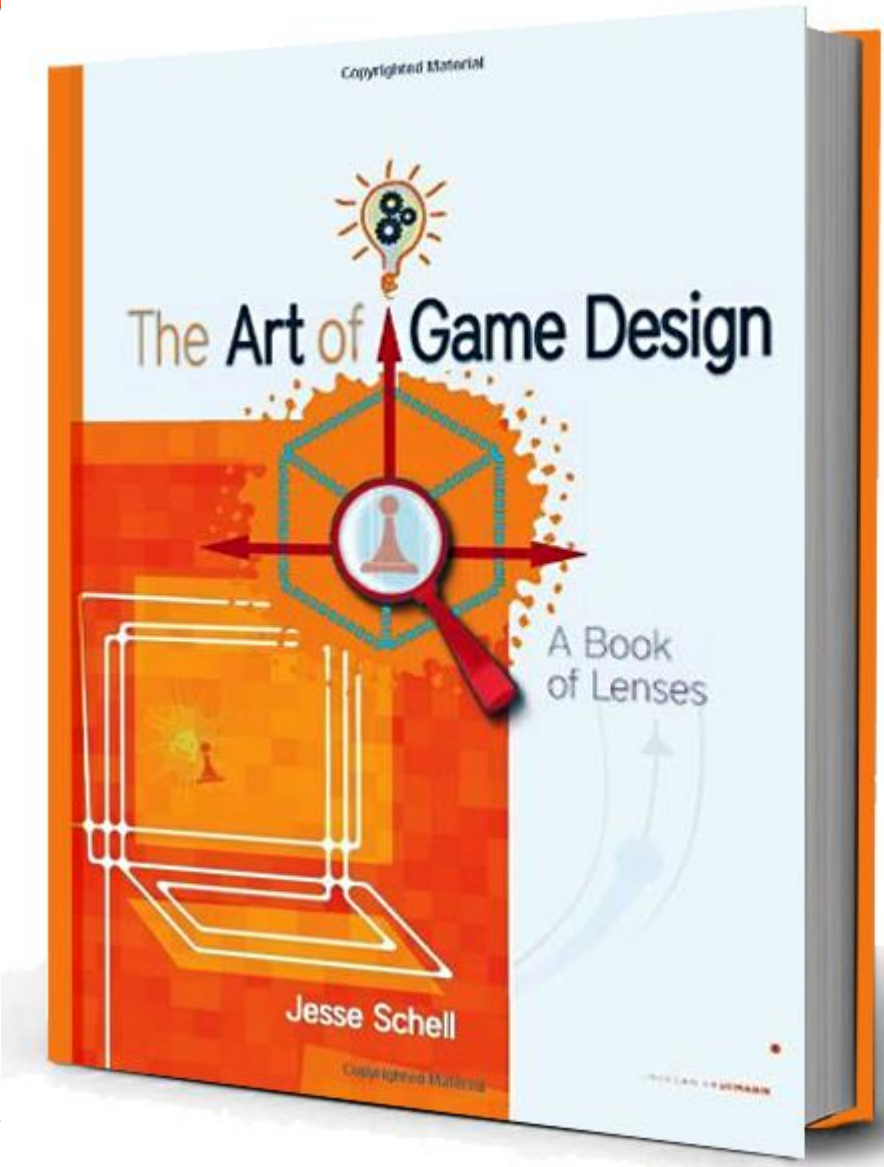
 Designer

 Player

 Experience

 Process

 Game



☰

More

?


Random

123


Sort


★


Favorites




18


 Passion







19


 The Player







20


 Pleasure







21


 Flow







22


 Needs







23


 Motivation







24


 Novelty








25


 Judgment




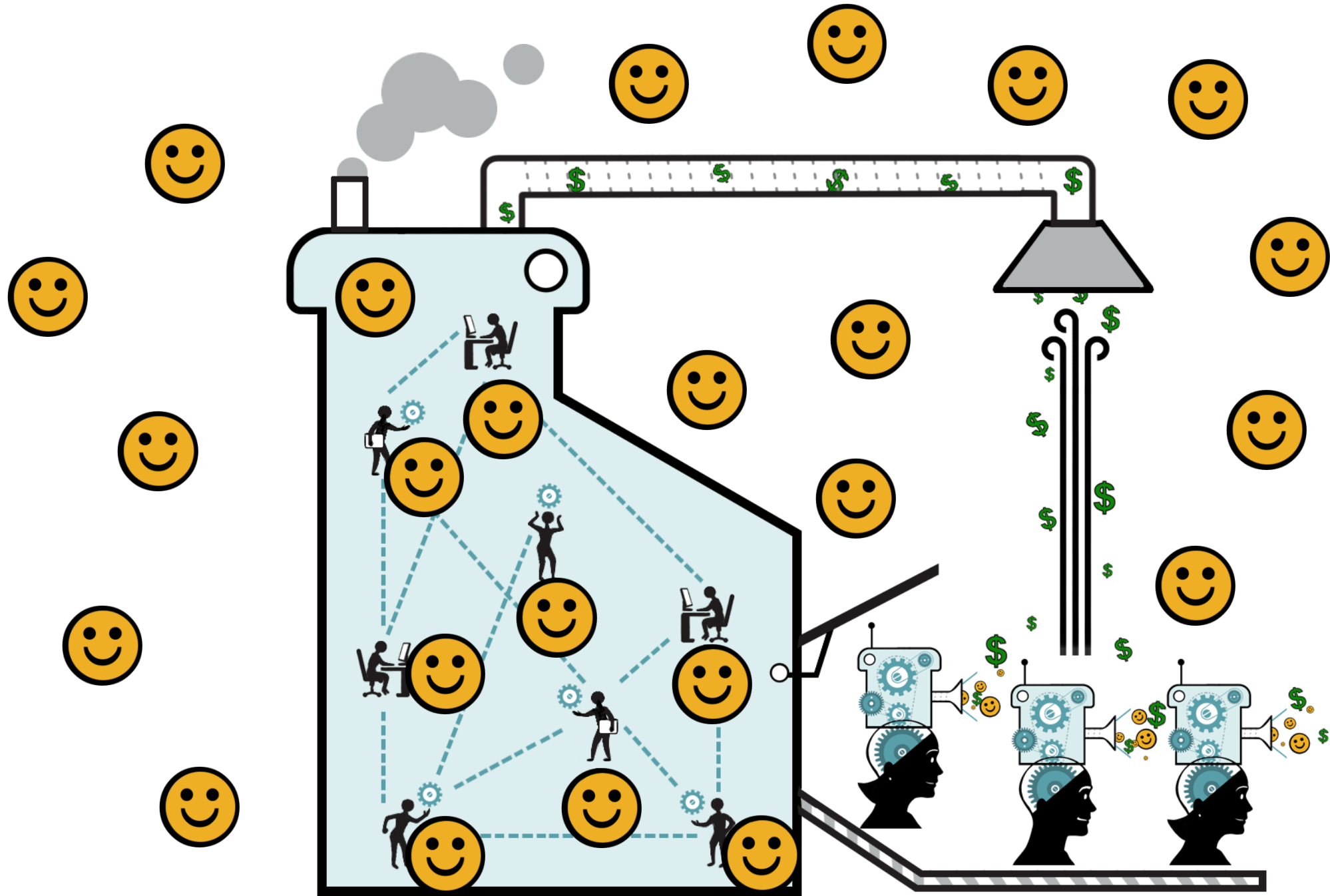
 Designer

 Player

 Experience

 Process

 Game



YOU CAN

DO IT

Thanks!

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- Adequate Salary
- Believe In Their Mission
- Culture They're Proud Of
- Distractions Removed
- Excited By Their Work
- Feel Cared About
- Good Feedback
- Helpful Coaching
- Information That's Clear
- Joint Feeling of Respect
- Keep Communication Comfortable
- Like Their Teammates
- Measurable Progress