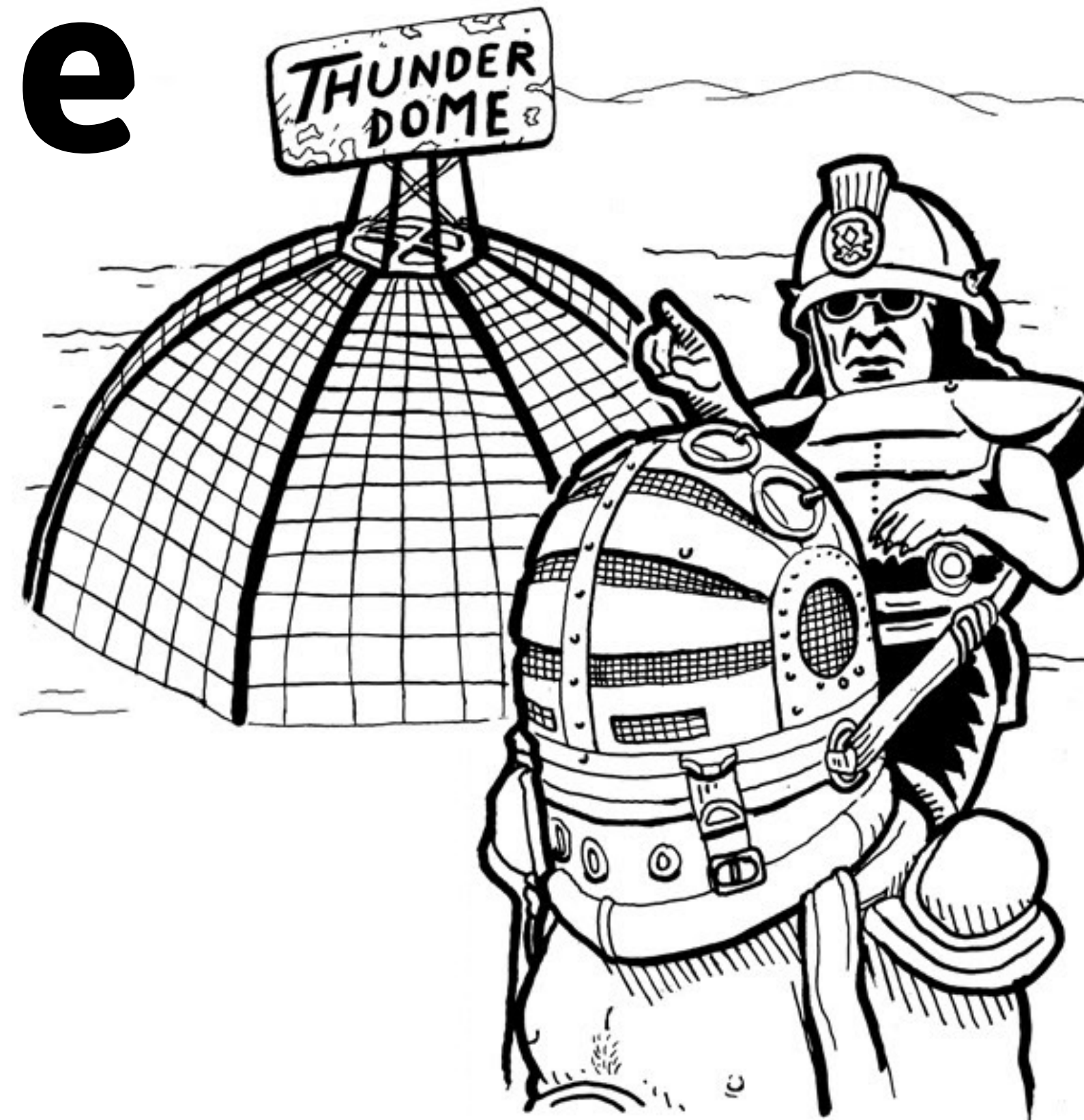


You can't build a team in the



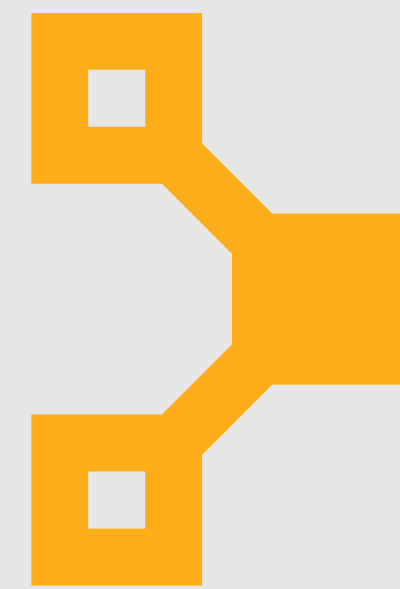
Ryan McKern | Puppet
mckern@puppet.com



Who is this?

What do I do now?

Release Engineering at



puppet



Caveat Audiens

00:20:19

What is a "Technical interview"?



What is "The Thunderdome"?

Obligatory Audience Participation Moment



Sam Kottler

@samkottler

The only time a whiteboard should get used in an interview is to draw a diagram.

RETWEET

1

LIKES

5



5:19 PM - 17 Jun 2016



Technical interviewing is a bad time



jacob ✓
@fat

in this perverse, self perpetuating horror show, all you see are funnels designed to “weed out” anyone w/o a traditional cs degree.

RETWEETS

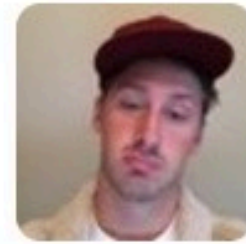
31

LIKES

162



11:22 AM - 27 Nov 2016



jacob ✓
@fat

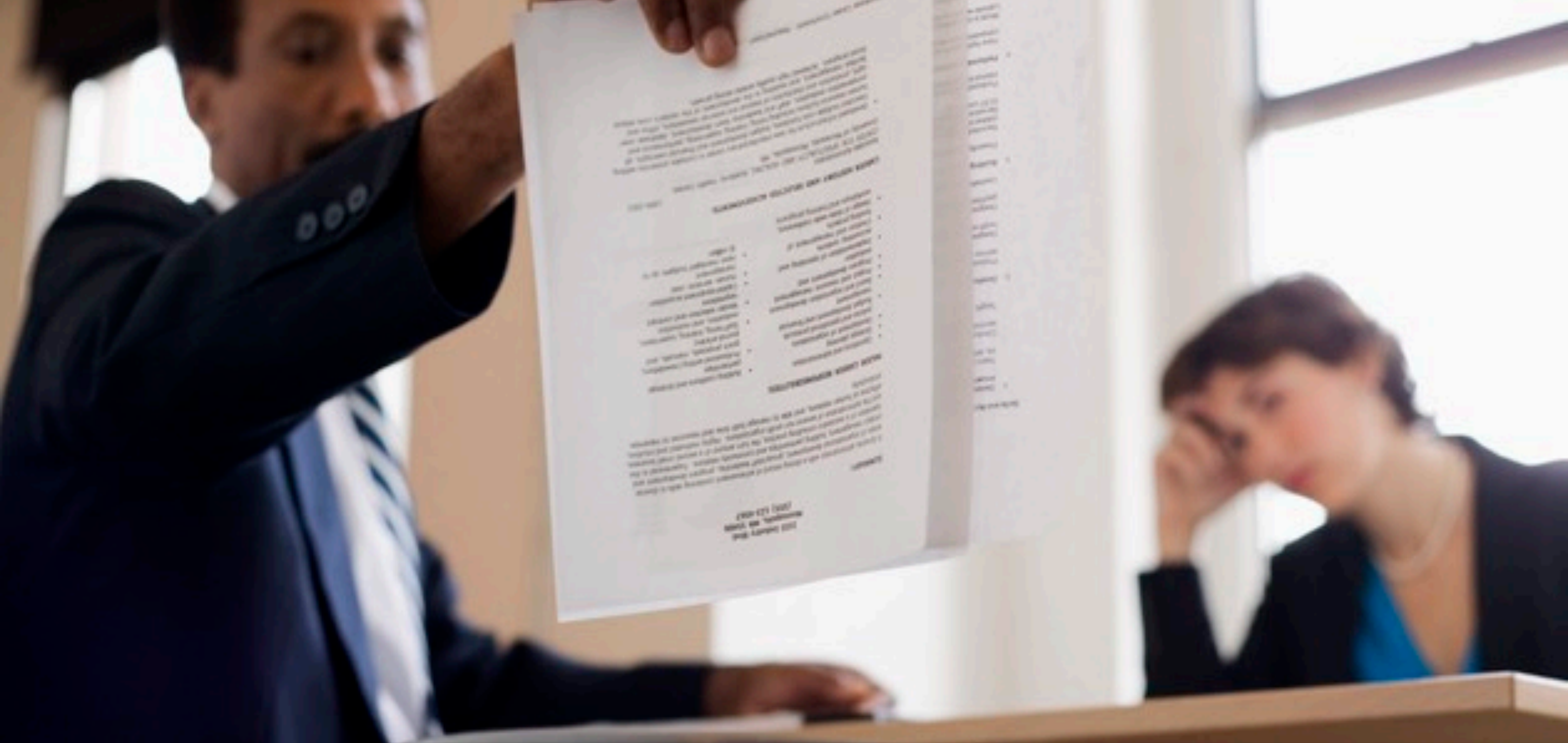
meanwhile these myopic interview tactics continue to screen for “potential” by equating abstract story problems to “experience”

RETWEETS
37

LIKES
123



10:58 AM - 1 Dec 2016

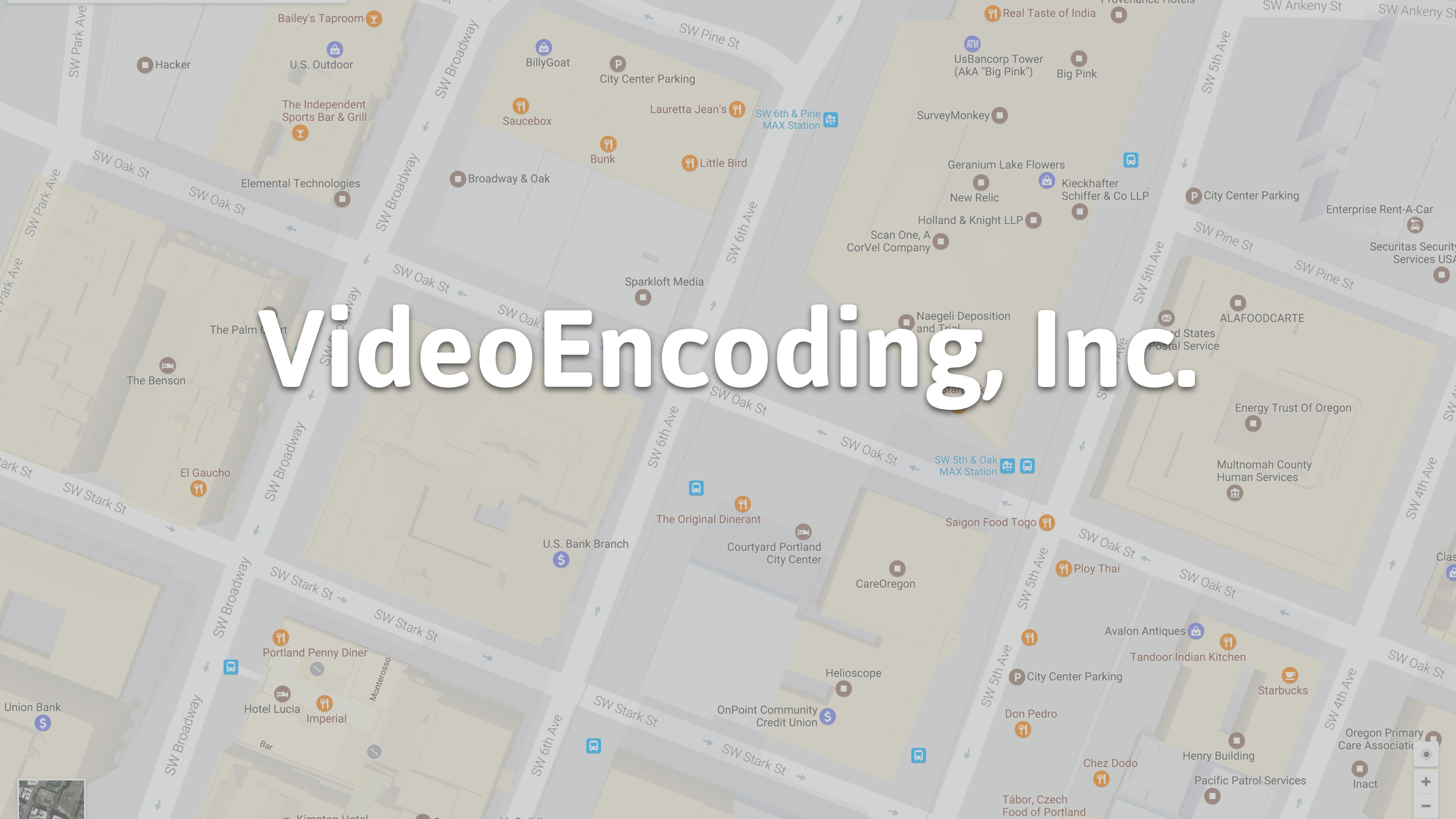


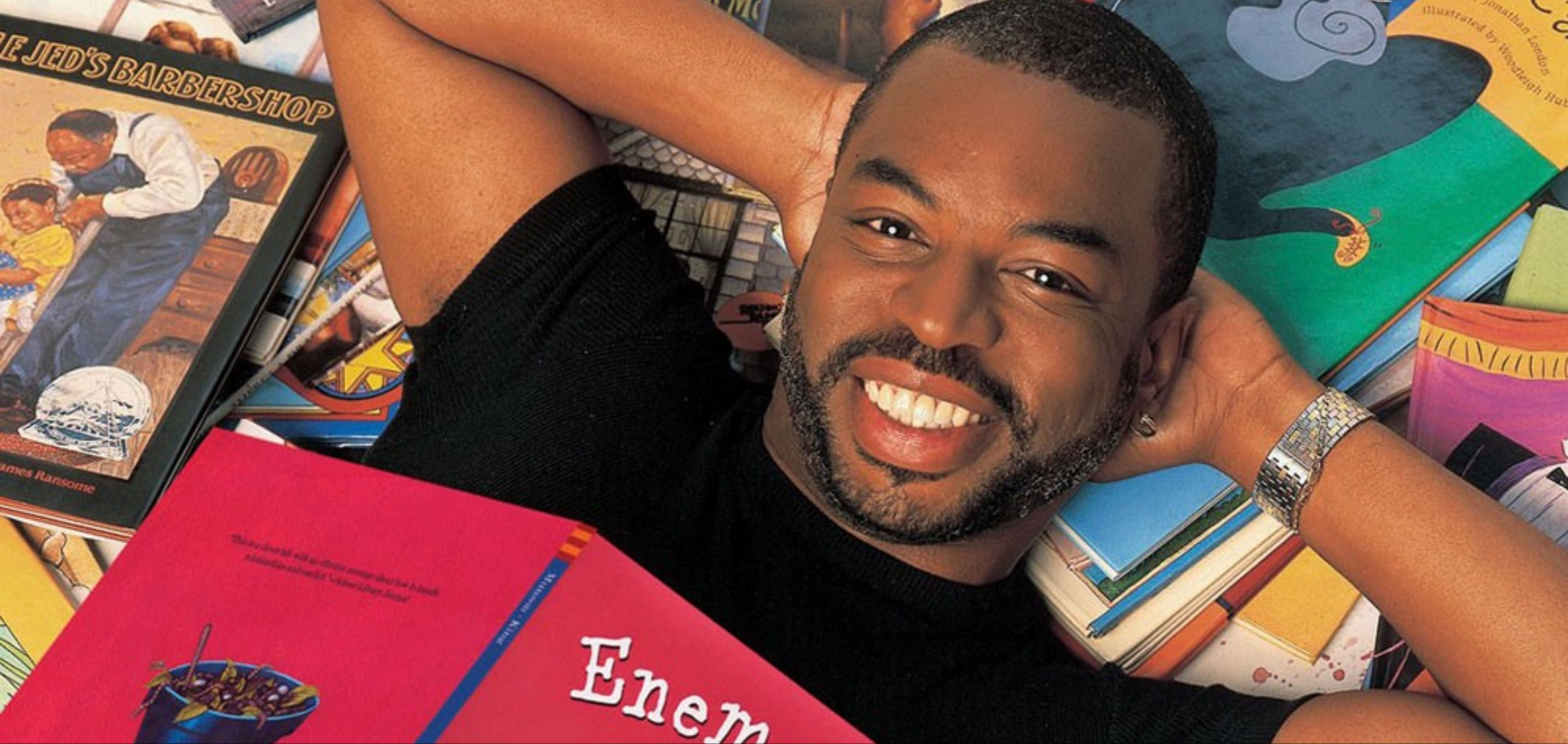
My bad interviews! Let me show you them!

SourceControlCo



VideoEncoding, Inc.





But you don't have to take my word for it!



**We are kind of terrible
to candidates**

0

TRIVIA

20%

WHITEBOARD

13%

IRRELEVANT Q.'s 18%

Q. MISMATCH

9%

ANTAGONISM

16%

TOO LONG

9%

UNPREPARED

15%

NO FEEDBACK

9%

“*They almost didn't hire me because I was "too pretty and might distract [the] engineers."*

“*They left me in a conference room long enough that the motion-activated lights turned off and I had to wave my arms around to turn them back on.*

“ Drove me to a separate site for half of the interview and didn't provide me with a way back to somewhere served by public transportation; I ended up walking two and a half miles in my interview shoes.

“ Interviewer missed their scheduled call and called back at 11pm, my time (they're in another time zone). Insisted on finishing up the interview right then. Asked a single question and bailed out in 10 mins.

“ *Stump the chump; interviewers asking trick questions to trip you up.*

“ *They got my lunch order wrong and I couldn't actually eat it, but I was alone in a room so I had nothing I could do.*

“ I was told there would be no technical questions, then was asked technical questions. I told them "you said there would be no technical questions," and he said "I said that so you wouldn't prepare for them."



Do we do anything right?

0

CONVERSATIONAL 13%

INTERESTING 8%

CULTURE FIT 12%

PREPARED 7%

COLLABORATION 11%

NO TRIVIA 6%

RELEVANCE 9%

RELAXED 5%

“ I felt like I had a good idea of what working there would be like, and I felt like they understood me pretty well.

“ There was guidance supplied by the interviewer when needed to try to keep things moving along, as well as in-depth discussion on parts that were challenging or technically difficult to solve.

“ *I was given opportunities to showcase what I excelled at.*

“Most of the great interviews carried a feeling that people were trying to know me better and they cared about me and my career.”

“ *The interview seemed intentionally designed around my skills and experience, as well as how those play into the role I was interviewing for.*

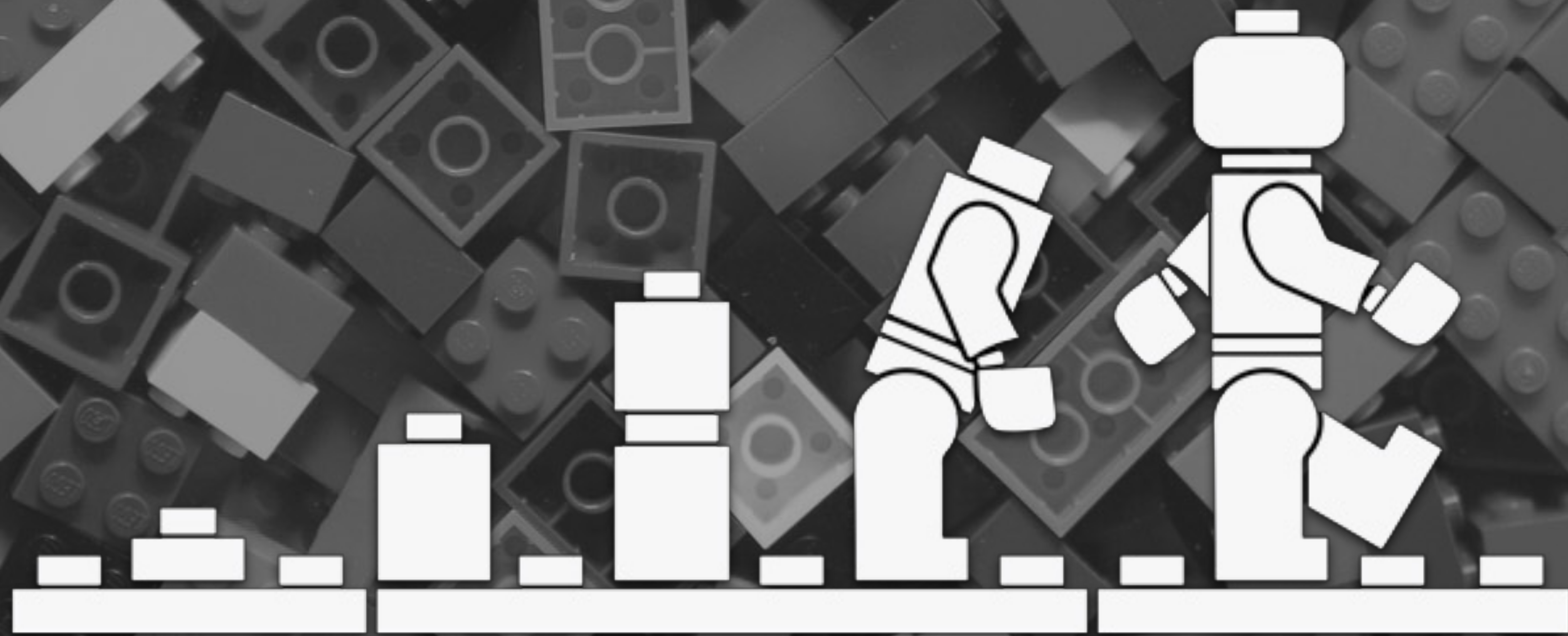
“ *Everyone was prepared with questions, and they approached it as if I was already working there and part of the team.*



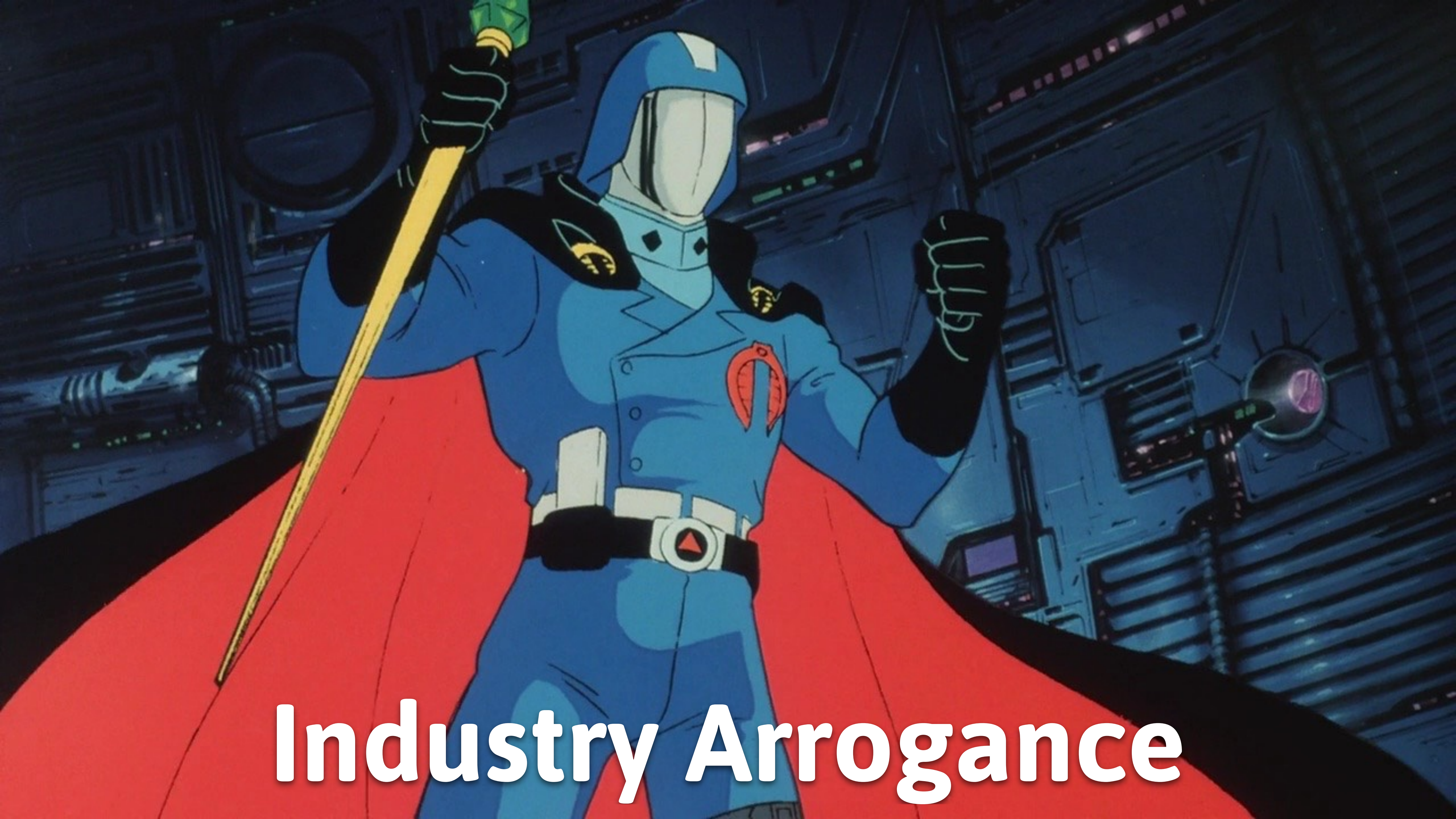
Why do we do things this way?



Industry Inertia



Industry Immaturity



Industry Arrogance

Repetition Compulsion



For Comparison

The R & D Engineer

- Didn't have a lot of time to share; Engineers are busy
- HR screens out candidates without the required credentials
- Process is highly idiosyncratic, team by team
 - Specialized teams have specialized interviews
- Often prioritizes ability to learn & adaptability

The Assistant Professor, Ph. D

- Turns out that Professors are **really busy**
- HR screens out candidates without the required credentials
- Heavy use of reference letters
 - Basically a web of trust & reputation
- Often relies on group interview process for team & lab fit
 - There's just one decision maker (head of the lab)

The Corporate Attorney

- Spoiler alert: also **CRAZY BUSY**
- Interviews & offers happen when you're still in law school
 - Contingent upon passing the bar exam
- The job is basically **all** research, presentation, and discretion
- Interviews focus on screening for the ability to follow a verifiable process according to the law

“*"Working from memory is malpractice; in technology it'd be considered negligence."*

My pal, The Attorney (with a CS degree)



So what?



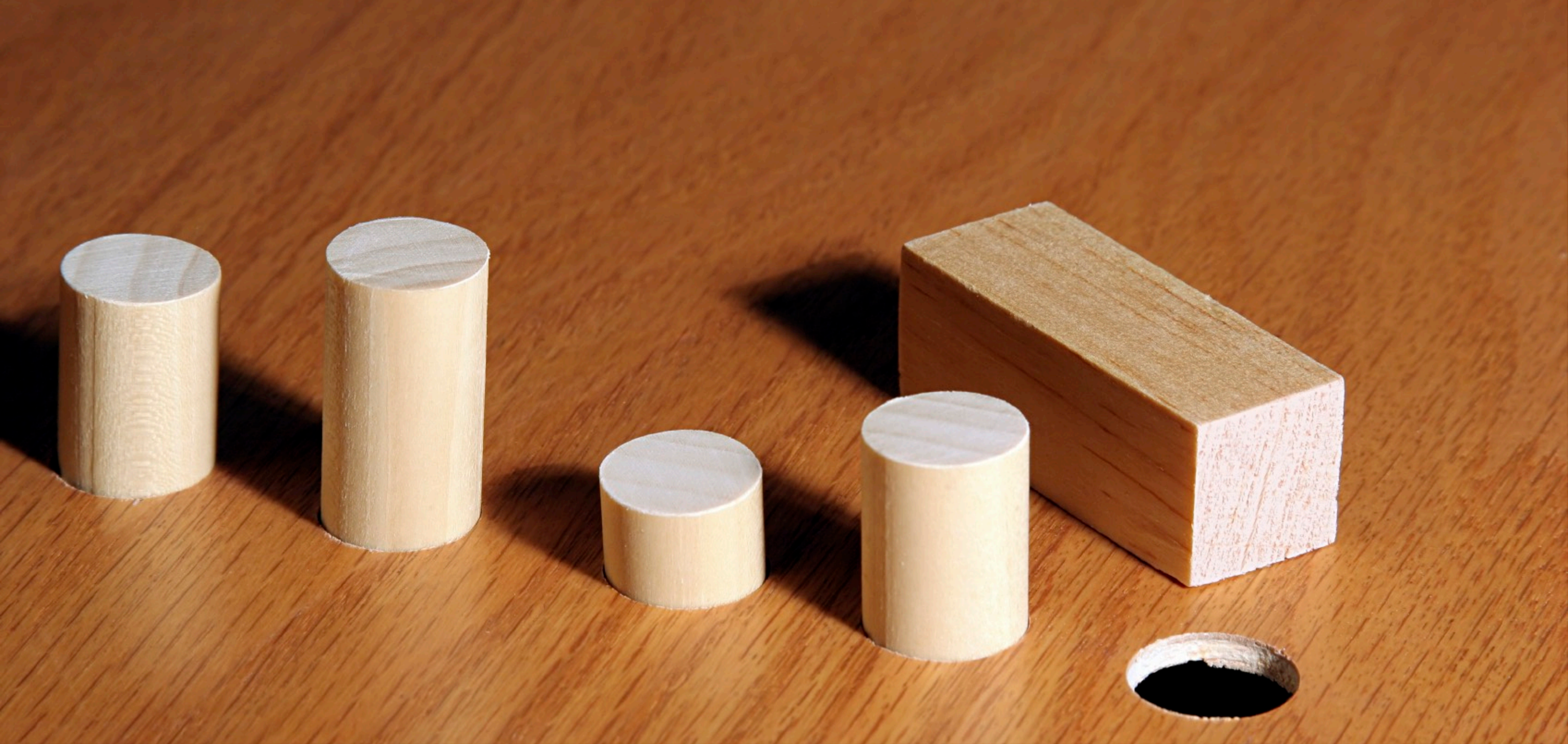
Our vocation is a babbby











How did we change this at Puppet?



We listened to candidates

What did they say?

- Communicate clear goals and expectations
- Don't resort to trivia or puzzles
- Keep their day relevant and bounded
- Tighten the feedback loop
- Be nice!



We "borrowed" what works

What did we "borrow"?

- Have clear goals and expectations for the role & team
- Collaborative code reviews as part of the screening
- No one comes on-site until we're sure they can do the work
- Pairing during the interview
- Be nice!



We ate our own dogfood

What's in that dogfood?

- We take our own tech challenge questions
 - If we can't solve them, we don't expect you to
- Let the candidate speak but offer direction when needed
- Work together to solve problems
 - Let the candidate teach us
- **Be. Nice.**



How'd that work out?

First Iteration

- 1 Open Junior Req
- 30 candidates
- 5 code reviews
- 3 on-sites
- 2 simultaneous offers made
 - **YOLO**

**Advocate for the
candidate if you think it's
the right thing to do**

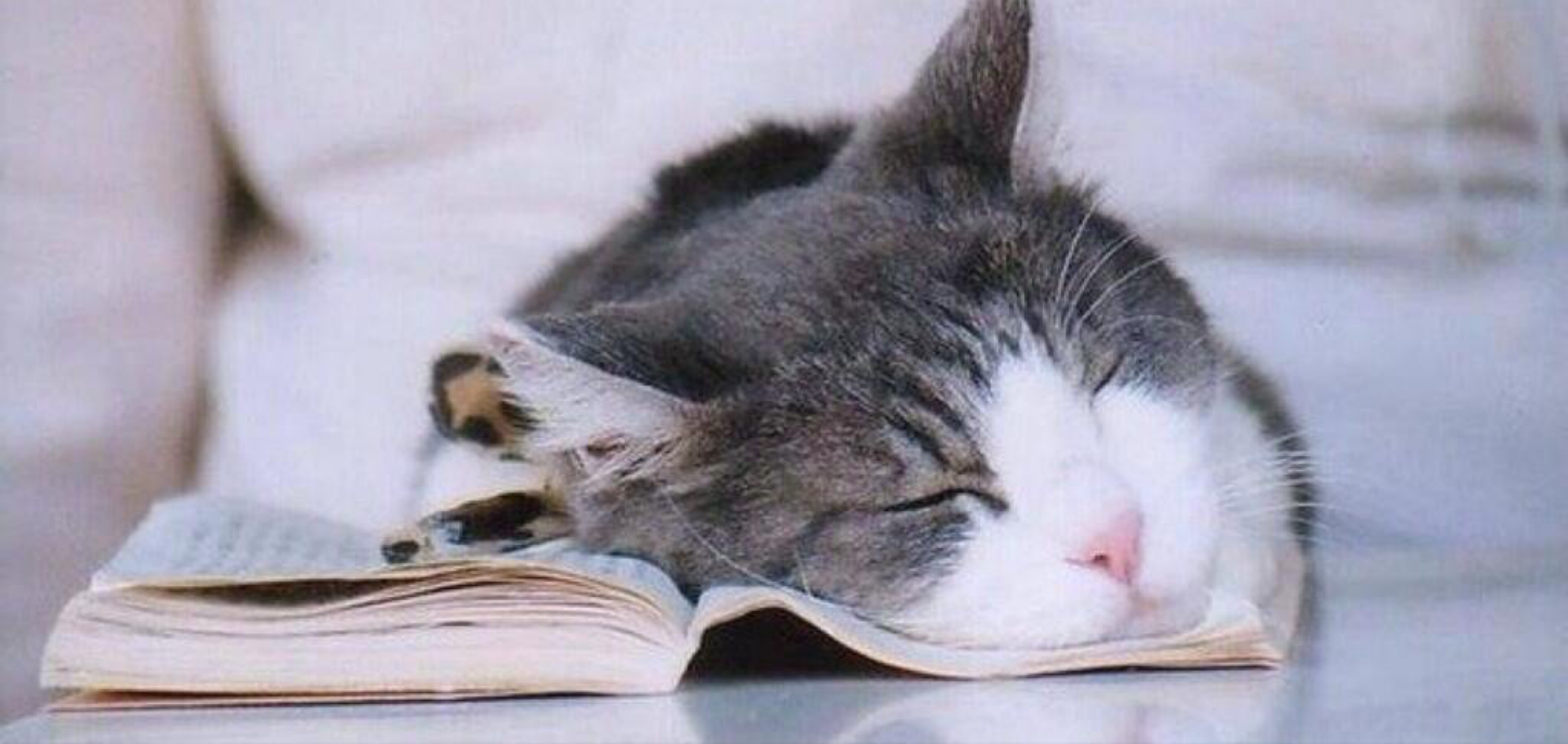
Second Iteration

- 1 Open Intermediate Req
- 41 candidates
- 26 code reviews
- 3 on-sites
- 1 offer made
 - 8 **great** candidates I still want to hire



After the Second Iteration, the
Release Engineering team at Puppet
is now **3/5** women.

In January, that becomes **2/3**.



TL;DR



Michael Gorsuch

@michaeltgorsuch

healthy and effective teams are composed of individuals actively seeking to understand each other's needs

RETWEETS

9

LIKES

7



12:41 PM - 28 Feb 2016

**Stop using
antagonism &
duress as filters**

Collaboration is 🥰

**Respect the
candidate's time**

**Respect the
candidate's
circumstances**

**Respect the
candidate**

**Push candidates back
into the pipeline**

**Resist
repetition
compulsion**

Be nice.

Thank you

You're wonderful. Thank you for letting me rant at you for as long as you did.

 mckern@puppet.com

 @the_mckern



Questions: who has 'em?