LaunchDarkly

Leveling up your career with soft skills

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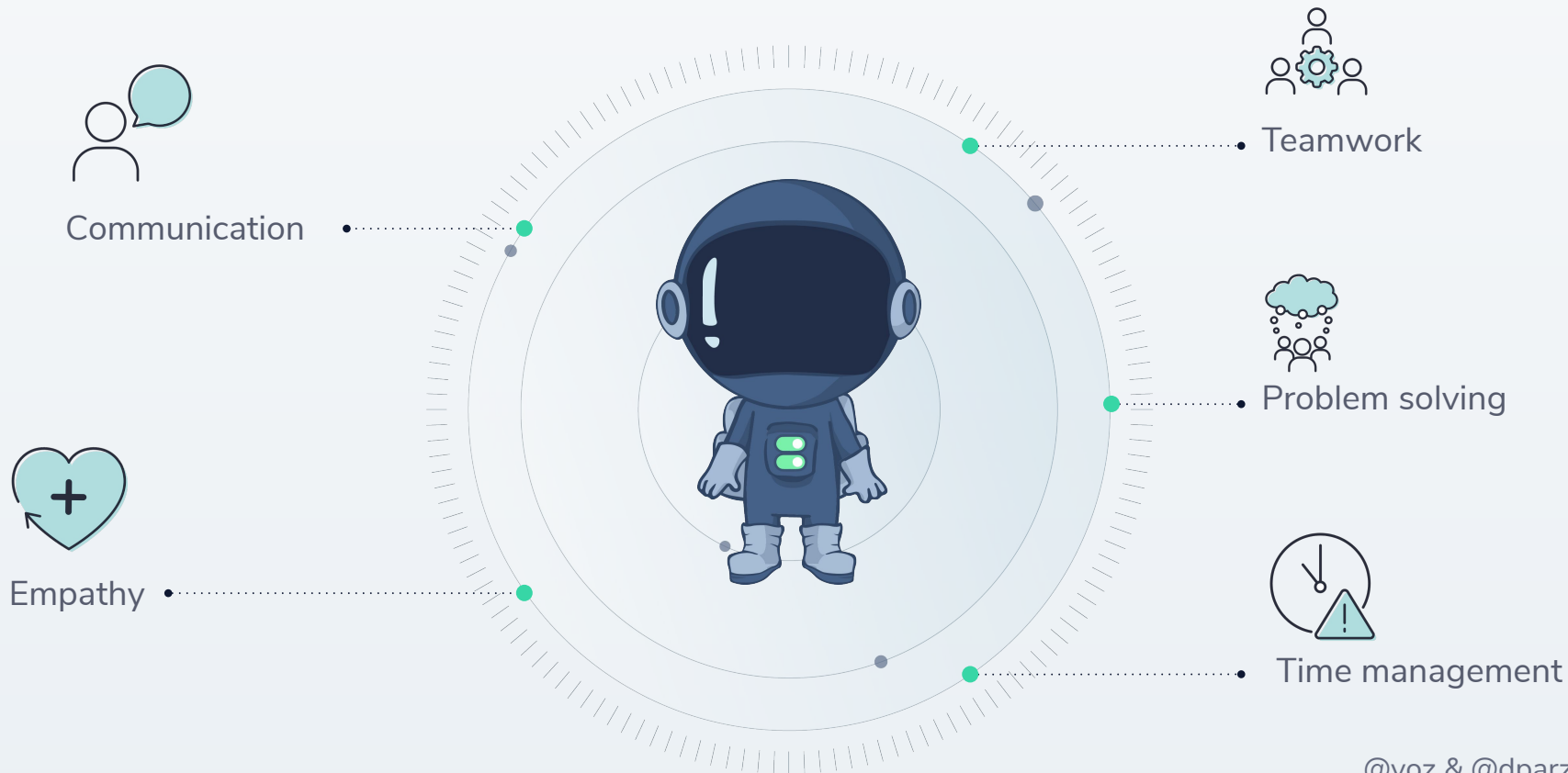# The problem with lone wolves

@yoz & @dparzych

The value of soft skills

Software engineering is about people

Needed Skills

Communication

Empathy

Teamwork

Problem solving

Time management

@yoz & @dparzych

Dan Abramov (on a vacation)
@dan_abramov

We often debate the importance of more technical vs more human skills for "senior" technical roles. I think juxtaposing them against each other creates a strange dynamic where you're supposed to pick a side. But both are kinda important and relevant?

♡ 910   2:59 AM - Jul 8, 2019

@yoz & @dparzych

Over time, I've learned that the biggest source of failure is people and teams.

A lack of communication and coordination can cause serious problems.

— Laurie Barth (@laurieontech), "How Architecture Improved My Coding Skills"

Why don't we focus on our soft skills?

@yoz & @dparzych

Because they're hard.

They're hard in different ways for different people.

COGNITIVE BIAS CODEX, 2016

What Should We Remember?

We store memories differently based on how they were experienced

We reduce events and lists to their key elements

We discard specifics to form generalities

We edit and reinforce some memories after the fact

We favor simple-looking options and complete information over complex, ambiguous options

To avoid mistakes, we're motivated to preserve our autonomy and status in a group, and to avoid irreversible decisions

To get things done, we tend to complete things we've invested time & energy in

To stay focused, we favor the immediate, relatable thing in front of us

Need To Act Fast

To act, we must be confident we can make an impact and feel what we do is important

We notice things already primed in memory or repeated often

Bizarre/funny/visually-striking/anthropomorphic things stick out more than non-bizarre/unfunny things

We notice when something has changed

Too Much Information

We are drawn to details that confirm our own existing beliefs

We notice flaws in others more easily than flaws in ourselves

We find stories and patterns even in sparse data

We fill in characteristics from stereotypes, generalities, and prior histories

We imagine things and people we're familiar with or fond of as better

We simplify probabilities and numbers make them easier to think about

Not Enough Meaning

We think we know what other people are thinking

We project our current mindset and assumptions onto the past and future

yoz & @dparzych

ALGORITHMIC LAYOUT + DESIGN BY JM3 · JOHN MANOOGIAN III // CONCEPT + METICULOUS CATEGORIZATION BY BUSTER BENSON // DEEP RESEARCH BY WIKIPEDIANS FAR + WIDE

Detritivore Biome means DOMAIN OF THE WORMS
@noahsussman

The best engineers are not only good at listening but they are good at explaining as well.

If you have been overwhelmed and intimidated by a senior engineer please consider the Dunning–Kruger effect. It's likely that person knows less than they think they do. A lot less.

6:23 PM · Sep 8, 2019 · Twitter Web App

"Failure is an opportunity to grow"

GROWTH MINDSET

"I can learn to do anything I want"

"Challenges help me to grow"

"My effort and attitude determine my abilities"

"Feedback is constructive"

"I am inspired by the success of others"

"I like to try new things"

"Failure is the limit of my abilities"

FIXED MINDSET

"I'm either good at it or I'm not"

"My abilities are unchanging"

"I don't like to be challenged"

"I can either do it, or I can't"

"My potential is predetermined"

"When I'm frustrated, I give up"

"Feedback and criticism are personal

"I stick to what I know"

"Empathy is much harder than we think. To build empathy, we need to slow down."

— *"The Empathy Delusion"*, *Tenzer & Murray, 2019*

@dparzych

Four attributes of empathy

Perspective taking

Non-Judgemental
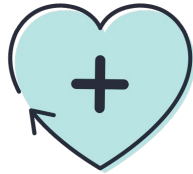
Recognizing emotions

Communicate understanding

@dparzych

When responding, avoid...

- Changing the subject

- Looking for silver linings

- Jumping straight to problem solving mode

- Talking about your experiences in a detractive way

Not sure what to say? How about...

- Acknowledging their feelings

- Thanking them for letting you know

- Asking...

  - what they're feeling

  - what they need

Practice and Practices

@yoz & @dparzych

Mary Robinette Kowal ✓
@MaryRobinette

Me, talking a writer down from imposter syndrome: How long have you been writing?
Them: Three years.
Me: And how old are you?
Them: 28.
Me: Okay. So you're a level 28 human and a level 3 writer. How good were you as a level 3 human?
Them: Ooooooooh.

1:57 PM · Jan 24, 2018 · Twitter Web Client

10.1K Retweets   **34.2K** Likes

Schedule time for practice

Practices: Measurement
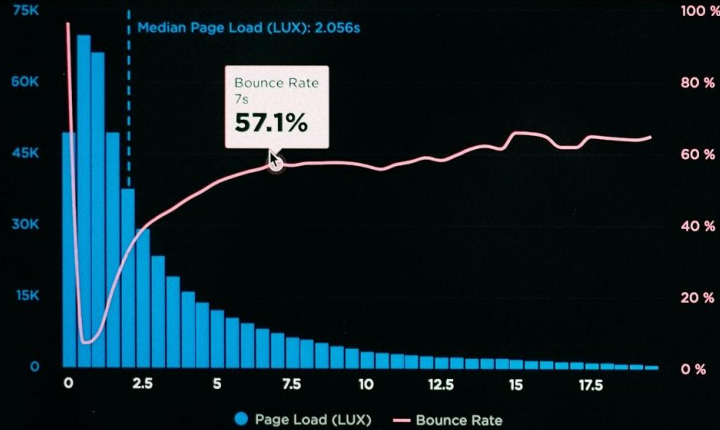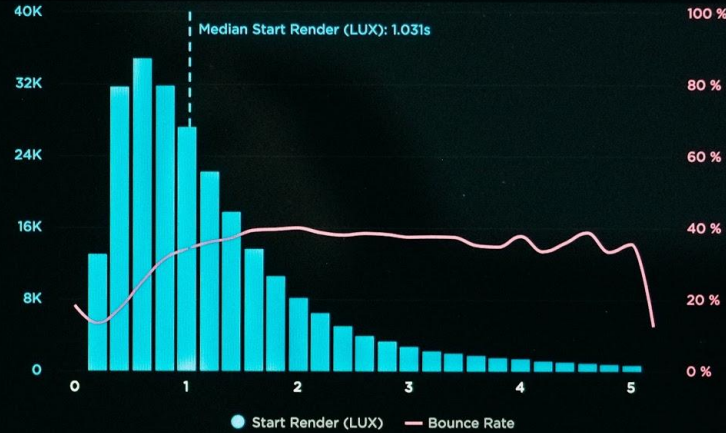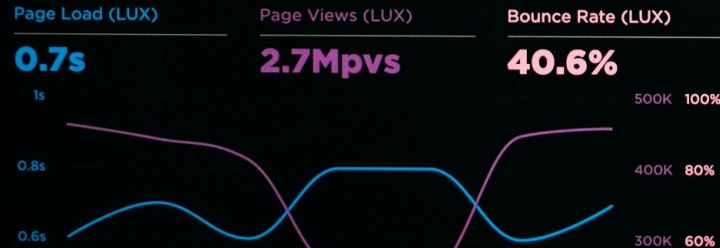
Sharon Steed: Communicating with Empathy

Practices
(which you can practice)

Pay Attention   **Listen**   **Ask Questions**

Types of listening

- Passive - worse
    - Jump to solution early
    - Used by: task-oriented developers
- Active - better
    - Seeking to deeply understand
    - Used by: Product managers, UX researchers

Top 5 tips to be a better human

- Seek first to understand

- Listen twice as much as you speak

- Be open to feedback

- Have a growth mindset

- Practice doesn't make perfect; practice makes better

Resources

https://www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Communicating-Empathy/534584-2.html

https://compassionatecoding.com/blog/2019/4/17/if-you-can-use-a-fork-youre-technical

https://www.cnbc.com/2019/06/25/the-mindset-shift-employees-need-to-succeed-in-the-future-of-work.html

https://firstround.com/review/empathy-driven-development-how-engineers-can-tap-into-this-critical-skill/

https://qz.com/1016900/

https://www.cio.com/article/3206166/3-steps-to-reduce-bias.html

https://slack.engineering/technical-leadership-getting-started-e5161b1bf85c

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