

Why Architects Fail

10 Health Problems You Should Know About

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dis·ease (dĭ-zēz')

n. A pathological condition of a part, organ, or system of an organism resulting from various causes, such as infection, genetic defect, or environmental stress, and characterized by an identifiable group of signs or symptoms.

n. A condition or tendency, as of society, regarded as abnormal and harmful.

n. Obsolete Lack of ease; trouble.

1. Over-Generalization Drive

Symptom: Seeing
commonalities in everything
and turning them into
generic solutions

Phases in a Developer's Life

Phase 1. The Enthusiastic Developer

“This stuff is cool - let’s
build programs! For real
people!”

Create Customer
Find Customer
List Customers
Edit Customer
Delete Customer

Create Product
Find Product
List Products
Edit Product
Delete Product

Create Order
Find Order
List Orders
Edit Order
Delete Order

Boring, boring, boring.

Phase 2. The Disillusioned Developer

“Oh. Real people have boring problems.”

Create Customer
Find Customer
List Customers
Edit Customer
Delete Customer

Create Product
Find Product
List Products
Edit Product
Delete Product

Create Order
Find Order
List Orders
Edit Order
Delete Order

Create Thing

Find Thing

List Thing

Edit Thing

Delete Thing

Phase 3. The Enthusiastic Architect

Create Thing

Find Thing

List Thing

Edit Thing

Delete Thing

“Generic solutions! Cool!”

“Some architects, when faced with a problem, think “Hey, I’ll use a generic solution.” Now they have problem and a GenericProblemFactoryFacade.

(with apologies to jwz)

Phase 4. The Disillusioned Architect

KISS

YAGNI

Lean

Minimal viable product

Story focus

Phase 5. The “Wise” Architect

Question: *

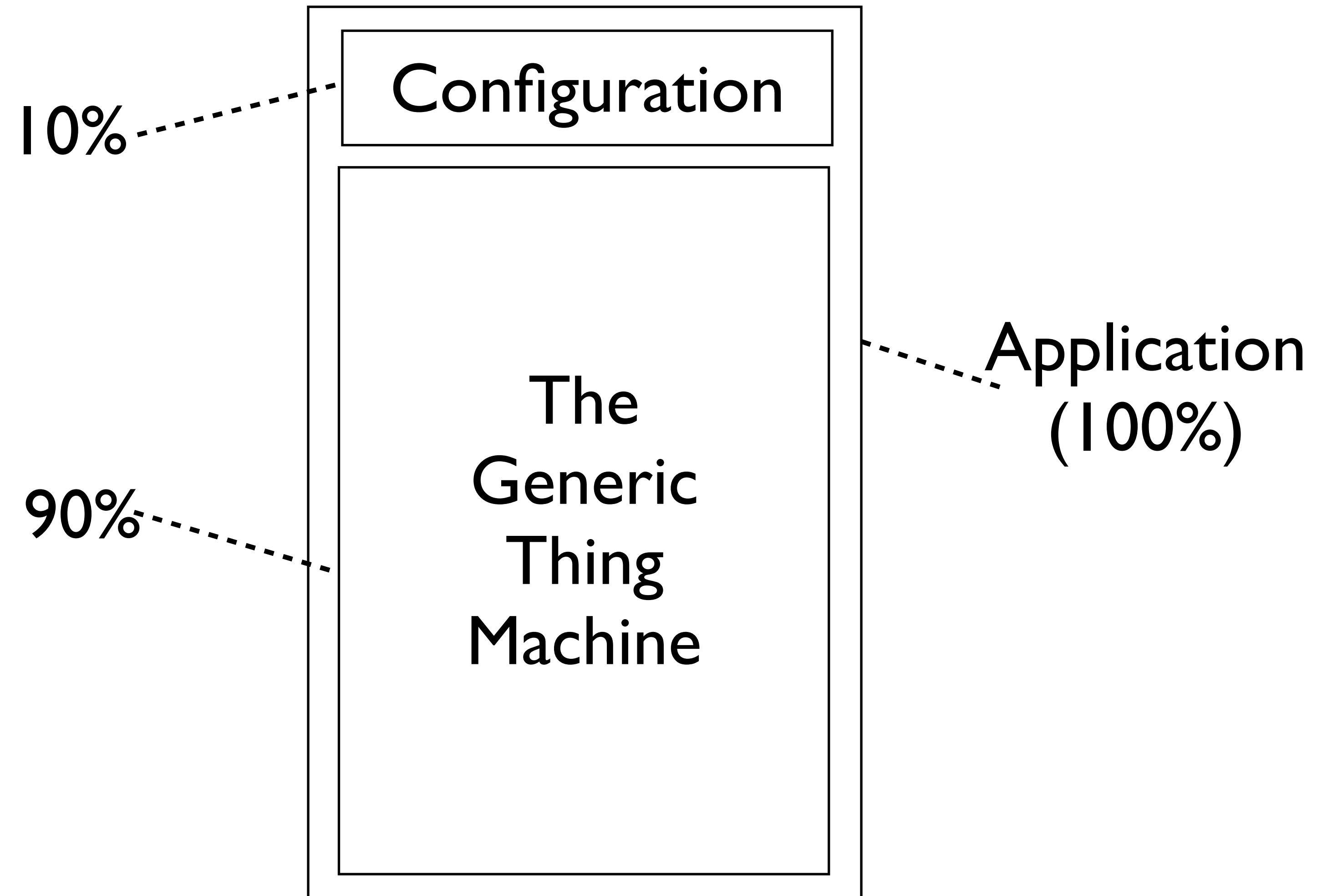
Answer: It depends.

“When you go too far up, abstraction-wise, you run out of oxygen. Sometimes smart thinkers just don't know when to stop, and they create these absurd, all-encompassing, high-level pictures of the universe that are all good and fine, but don't actually mean anything at all. These are the people I call Architecture Astronauts.

Joel Spolsky

2. Domain Allergy

Symptom: Treating the
domain as a negligible
nuisance



Functionality:

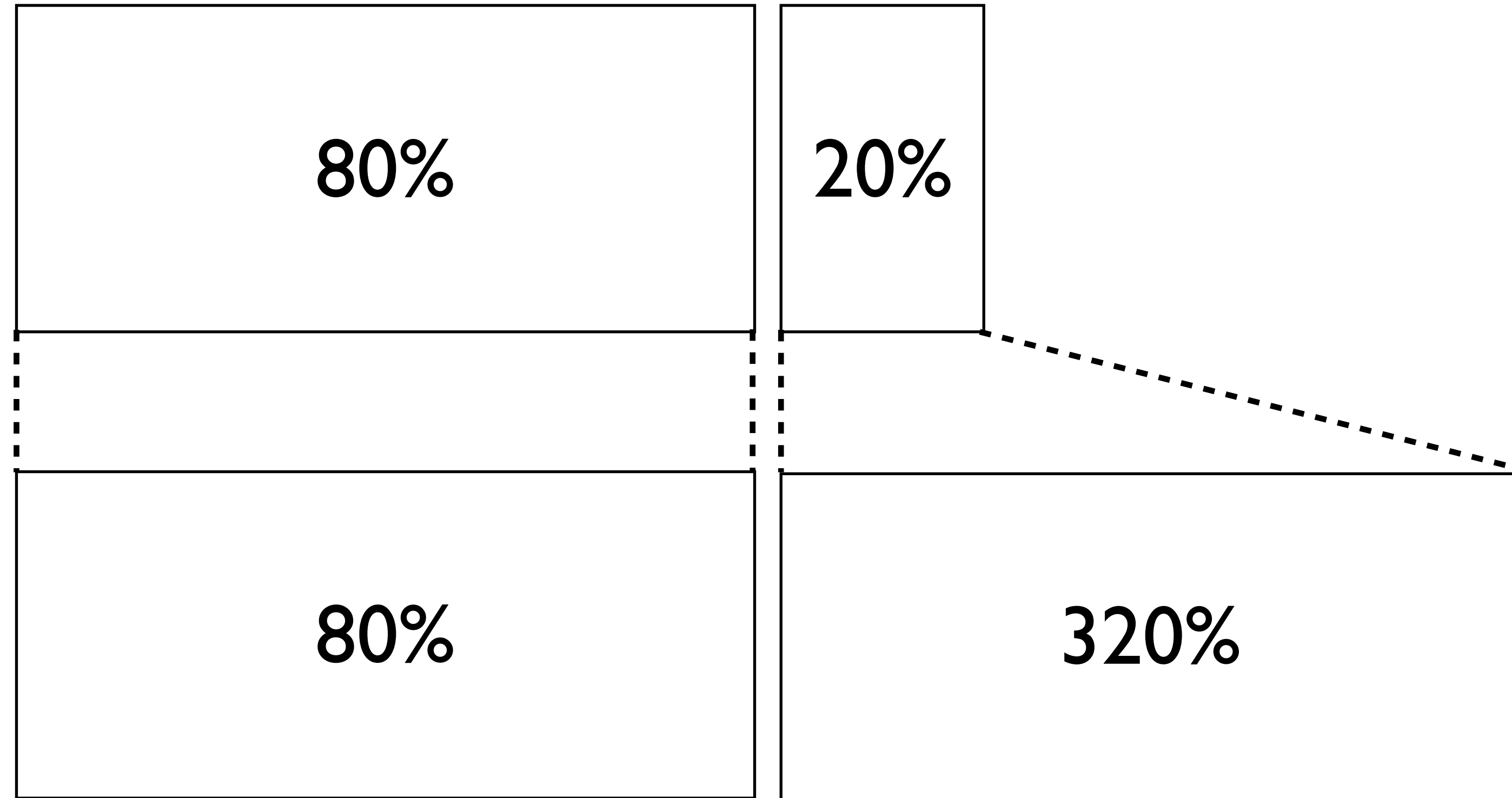
80%

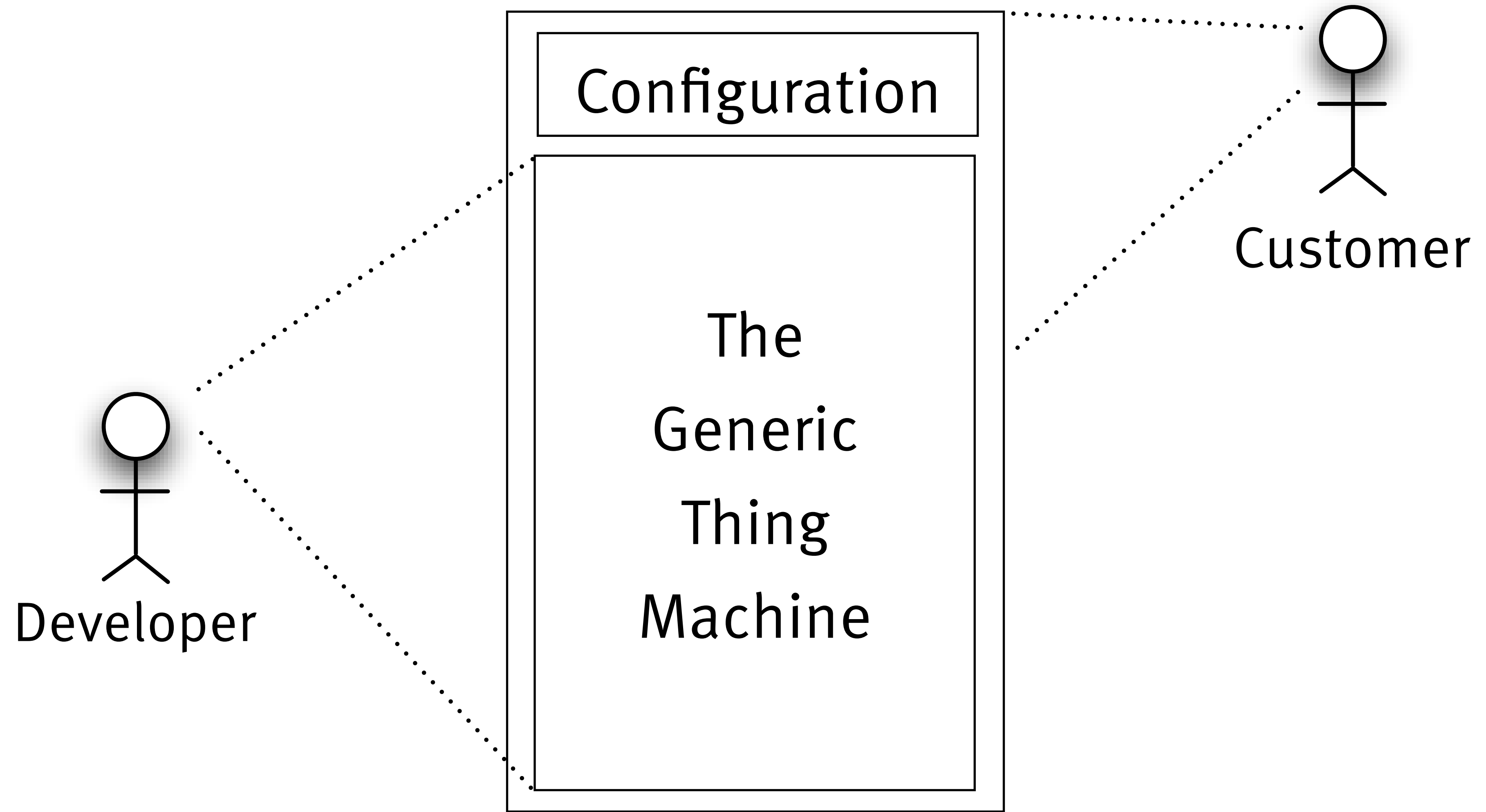
20%

Time/Effort:

80%

320%





The benefits of choices already made

Microsoft .NET + Visual Studio

Ruby on Rails

SAP et. al.

3. Obsessive Specialization Disorder

Symptom: *Believing every problem to be unique, even if it's been solved 1,000 times*

Task: Read a file of text, determine the n most frequently used words, and print out a sorted list of those words along with their frequencies.

Donald Knuth

10-page literal
Pascal program,
including innovative
new data structure

Doug McIlroy


```
tr -cs A-Za-z '\n' |  
tr A-Z a-z |  
sort |  
uniq -c |  
sort -rn |  
sed ${1}q
```

*Symptom: Believing
everything needs to be a
perfect match to your
environment to be usable.*

4. Unhealthy Complexity Attraction

Symptom: *Being so smart you
can't be bothered by simple
approaches.*

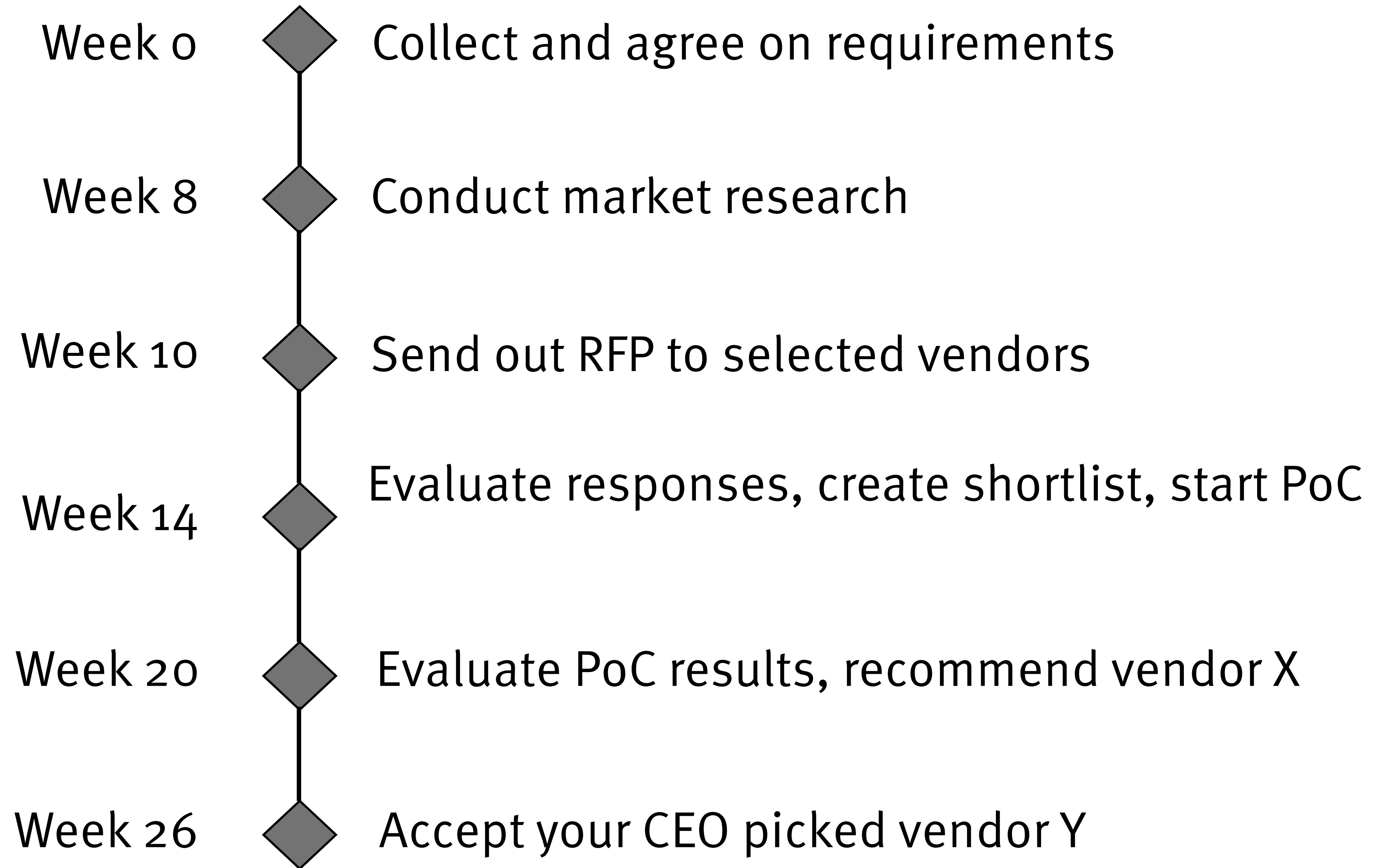
Benefits of Complexity

- › Challenging work
 - › New and interesting experience
 - › Self-esteem
 - › Community
 - › Barrier to entry
 - › Job security
- 

5. Analysis Paralysis

*Symptom: Taking longer to
evaluate than to actually do it*

Vendor Selection



6. Innovation Addiction



(a.k.a. Phase 0 Fixation)

Symptom: *Things become progressively less fun the closer you get to production.*

“Mindful choice of technology gives engineering minds real freedom: the freedom to contemplate bigger questions. Technology for its own sake is snake oil.

Dan McKinley

<http://mcfunley.com/choose-boring-technology>



7. Severe Tunneling Fixation

Symptom: Enforcing an architectural approach that clashes with the framework, libraries or tools you use.

“

I know what I like

And I like what I know ...

Genesis

8. Compulsive Spending Syndrome

Symptom: *Mistaking a high price tag for quality.*

Symptom: Early success
brings in early money brings
in illusions of grandeur.

(a.k.a. TooMuchMoneyException)

9. Conservatitits

Symptom: *Sticking with
horrible, horrible, HORRIBLE
tools because they're there*

Symptom: Confusing “easy”
with simple, creating
accidental complexity

simple

easy

complex

hard

Symptom: Using fashionable technology because it's popular (a.k.a. fallacy of argument by authority)

10. Impact Dissonance

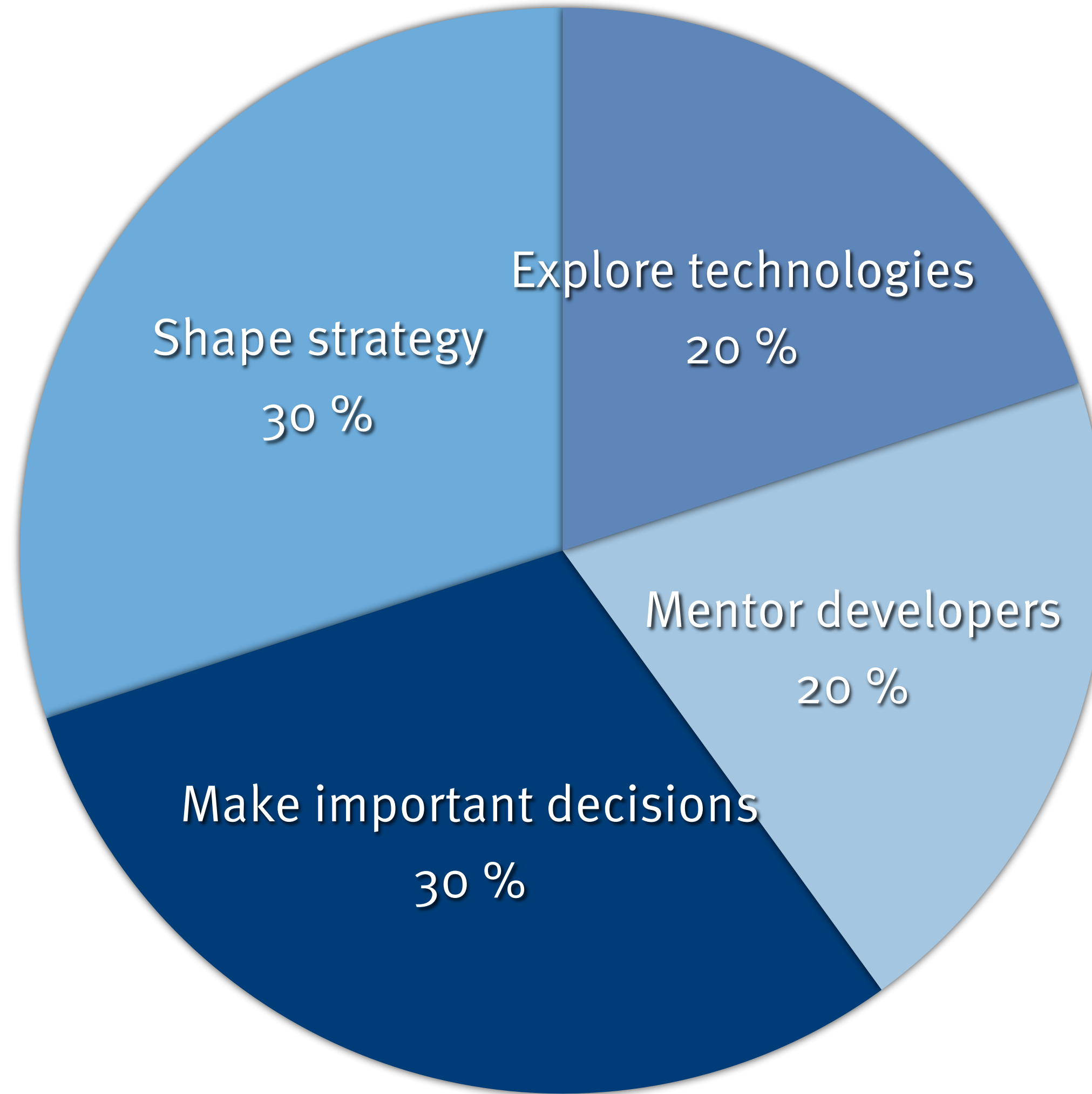
Symptom: *Becoming too detached from the actual system that is being delivered*

Related:

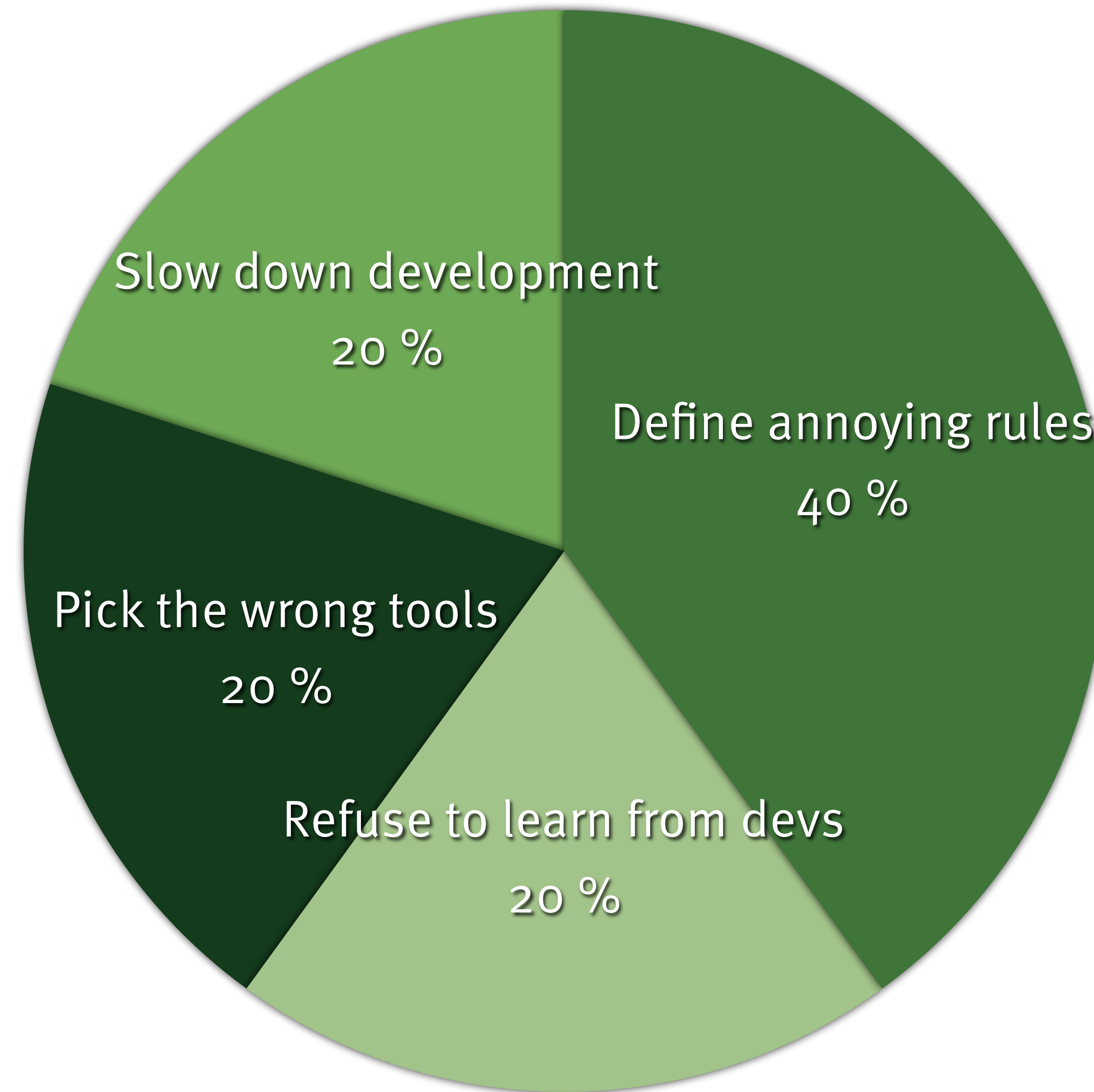
Governance *Megalomania*

*Symptom: Believing
everything has to be approved
by you to ensure it meets
architecture standards*

What architects want do



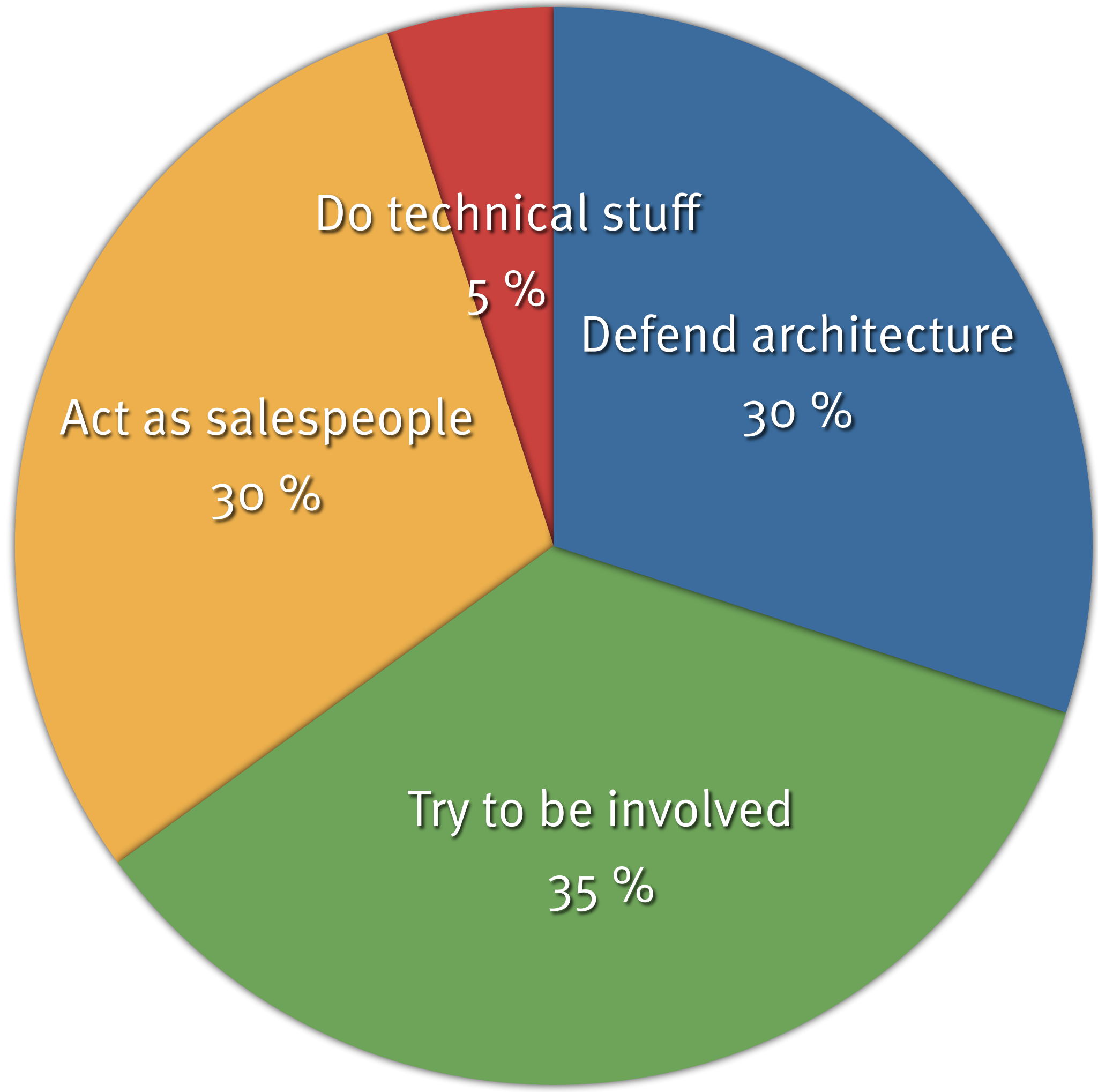
What others think architects do



“
“Architect” is Latin
for “Can’t code anymore.”

Ted Neward

What architects *actually* do





I don't have an answer ...

... so here's one, anyway

Balance

An Architect's Success Formula

Dogma and rules	10 %
Experience	20 %
Pragmatism	20 %
Flexibility	10 %
Minimalism	10 %
Trends and future needs	10 %
Experiments & PoCs	10 %
Hands-on participation	10 %
Vendor advice	0 %

Thank you –
that's all I have.

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