CAREER VECTORS FOR TECHNICAL LEADERS

Session 7: Personal Development
LeadDev Together
November 2020

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P&G

GDS

M&S DIGITAL

monzo

MOO

Lead Dev

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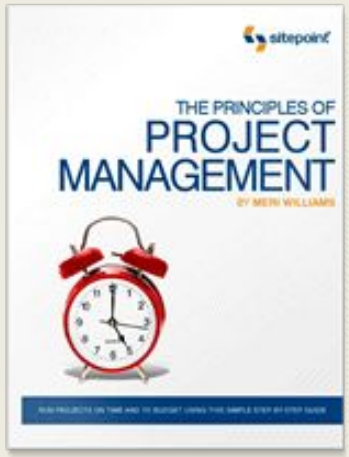

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MY CAREER JOURNEY & HORIZONS

- “It’s all about code”
- “It’s all about systems”
- ”It’s all about architecture and how things fit together”
- “It’s all about processes and how things get done”
- “Oh shit. It’s all about people!”
- “Hang on, it only really matters if people in healthy teams deliver tech that actually meets business needs”
- “It’s all about systems of systems!"

THERE IS NO SINGLE FLAVOUR OF TECHNICAL LEADER …

Meri Williams, ChromeRose

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ON THE ONE HAND THIS IS FREEING … ON THE OTHER HAND IT'S A BIT SCARY

SO HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS?

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1) LOOK FOR EXAMPLES
2) SPOT PATTERNS

FLAVOURS OF TECHNICAL LEADERS

- Hands-on, deep technical expert
- Tech leads, delivery projects & products of increasing complexity
- Architect type roles – working at a different level of abstraction on systems & tech
- Combo manager/leader roles – developing and enabling individuals & teams
- Organisational leaders – managers of managers (of managers…)

THIS LEADS US TO WHAT I CALL CAREER VECTORS

Meri Williams, ChromeRose

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1. HANDS-ON IN-DEPTH TECH

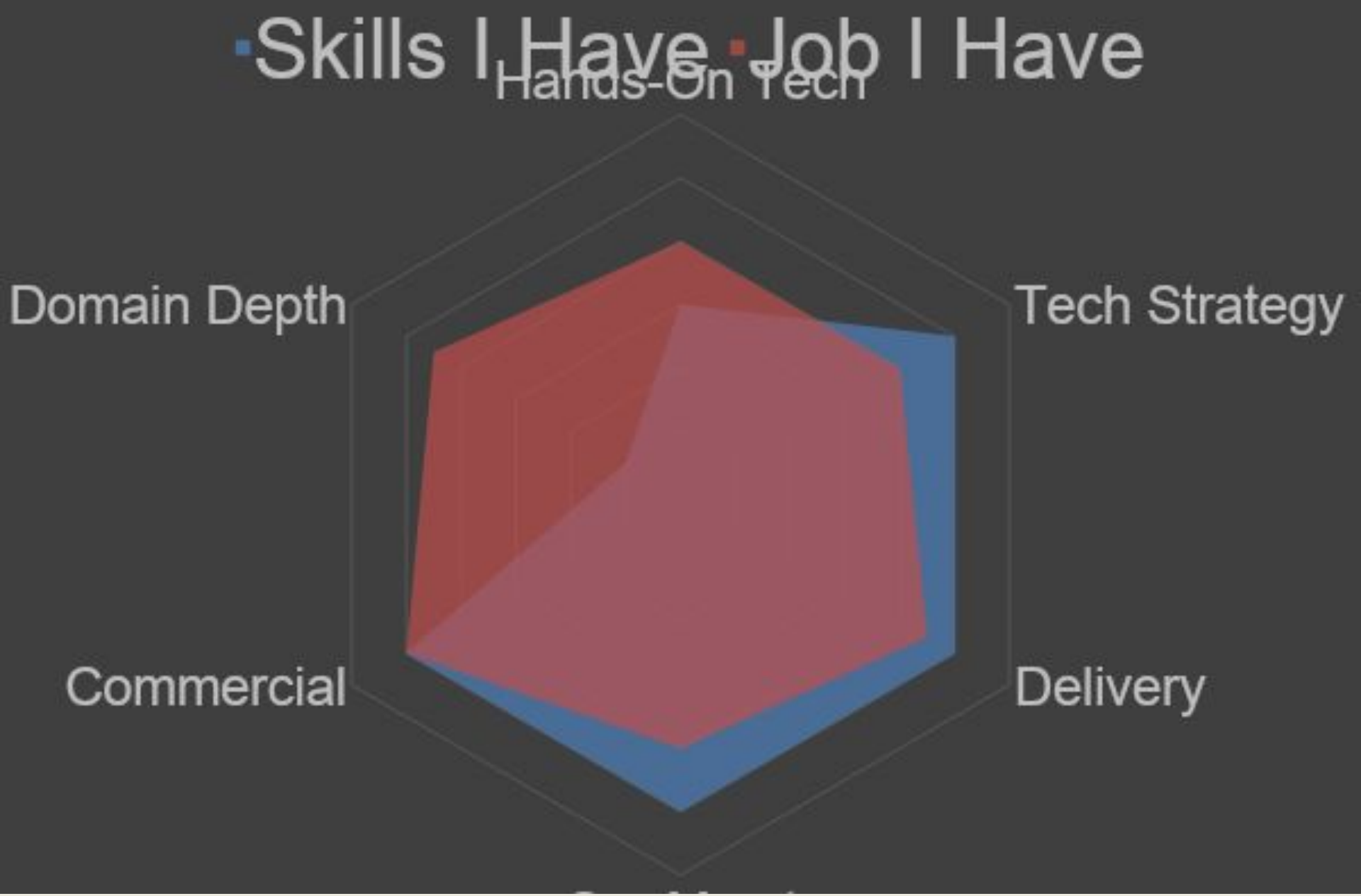
2. TECH STRATEGY

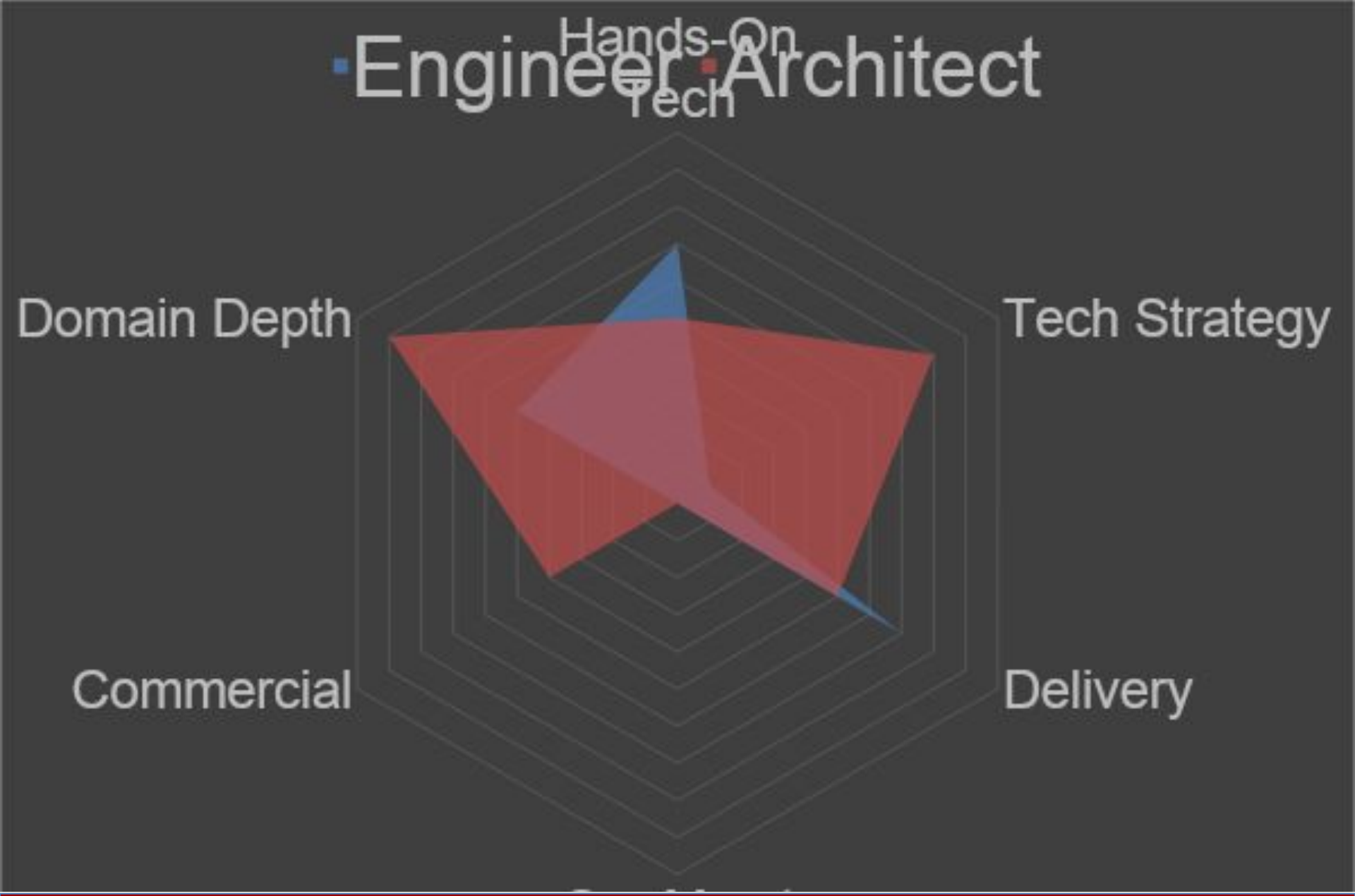
3. DELIVERY / GSD

4. ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

5. COMMERCIAL UNDERSTANDING

6. DOMAIN DEPTH


Skills I Have
Job I Have
Hands-On Tech
Tech Strategy
Delivery
Commercial
Domain Depth


Engineer
Hands-On Tech
Architect
Domain Depth
Tech Strategy
Commercial
Delivery

MAP YOUR CURRENT SKILL & KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE STATUS

ASSESS YOUR GAPS AGAINST THE ROLE(S) YOU WANT IN FUTURE

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REMEMBER: THIS IS NOT POKEMON!

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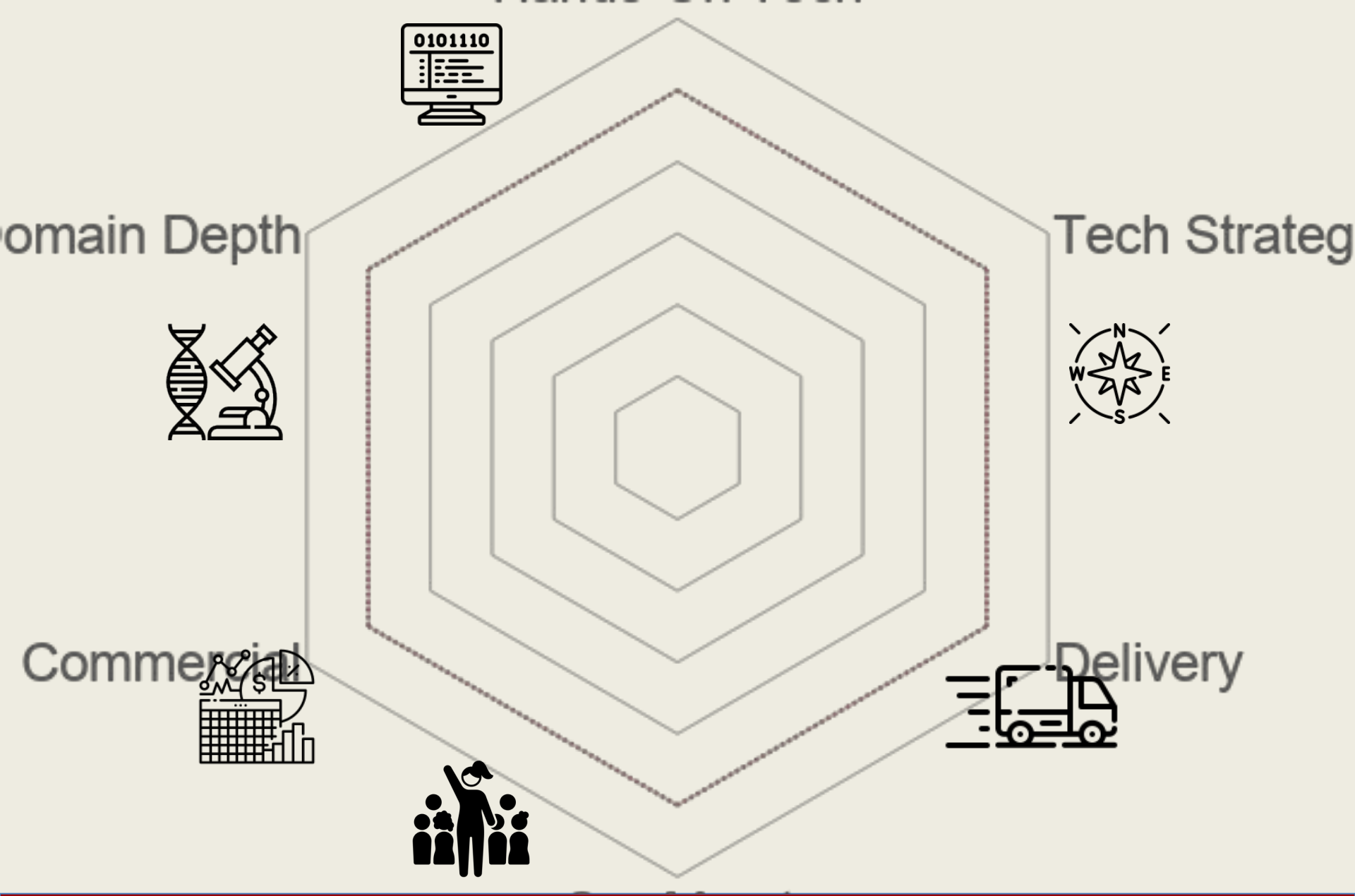
ONLY FOCUS ON A GAP OR WEAKNESS IF IT IS A CONTROLLING WEAKNESS

[A CONTROLLING WEAKNESS IS SOMETHING YOU AREN'T GOOD AT THAT IS ESSENTIAL TO PERFORM WELL IN YOUR ROLE]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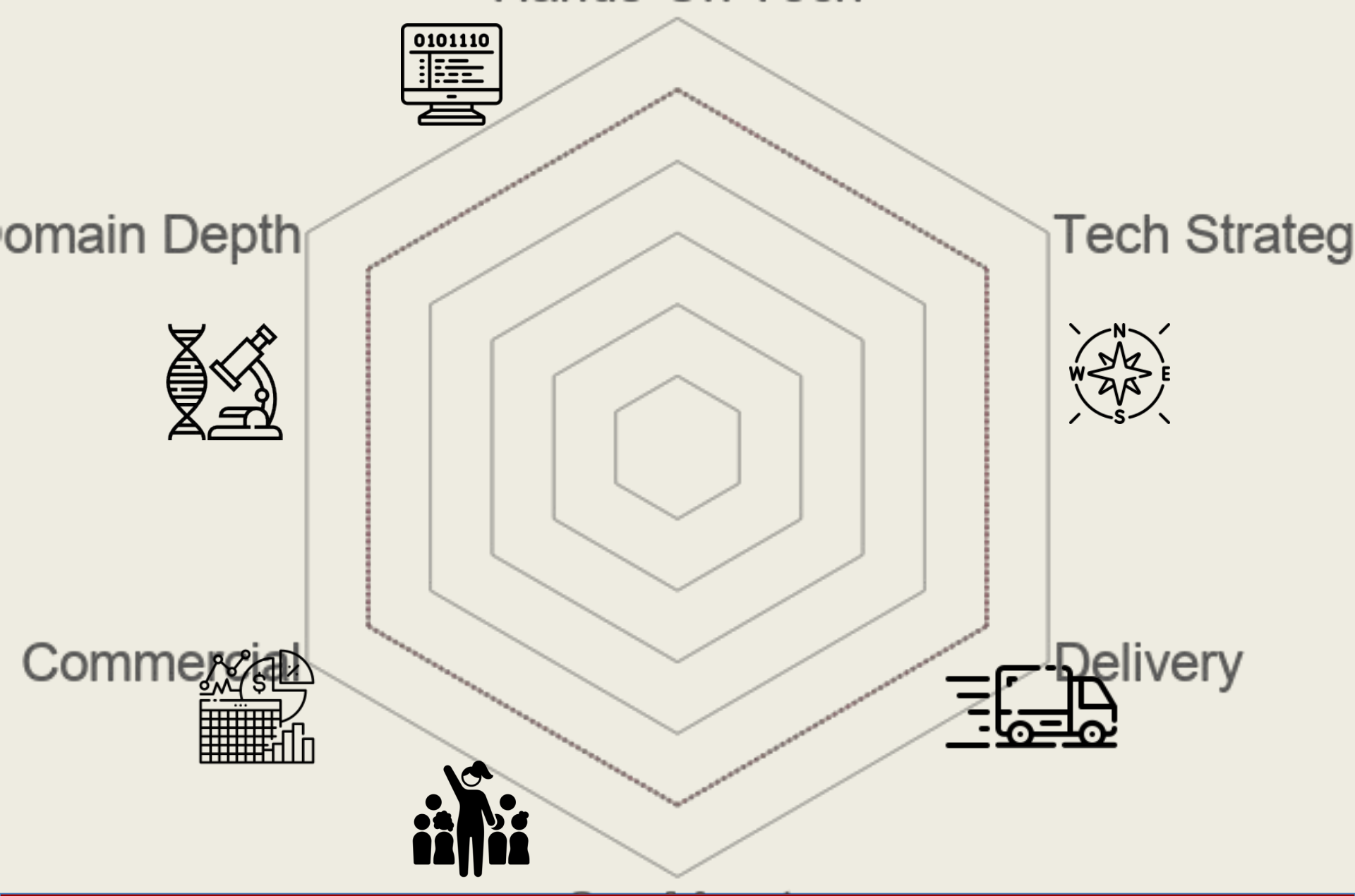
ZOOMING OUT FOR A MOMENT, THINK ABOUT WHETHER IT'S CLEAR TO EVERYONE AT YOUR ORG WHICH OF THESE VECTORS MATTER FOR WHICH ROLES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Tech Strateg
Commercial
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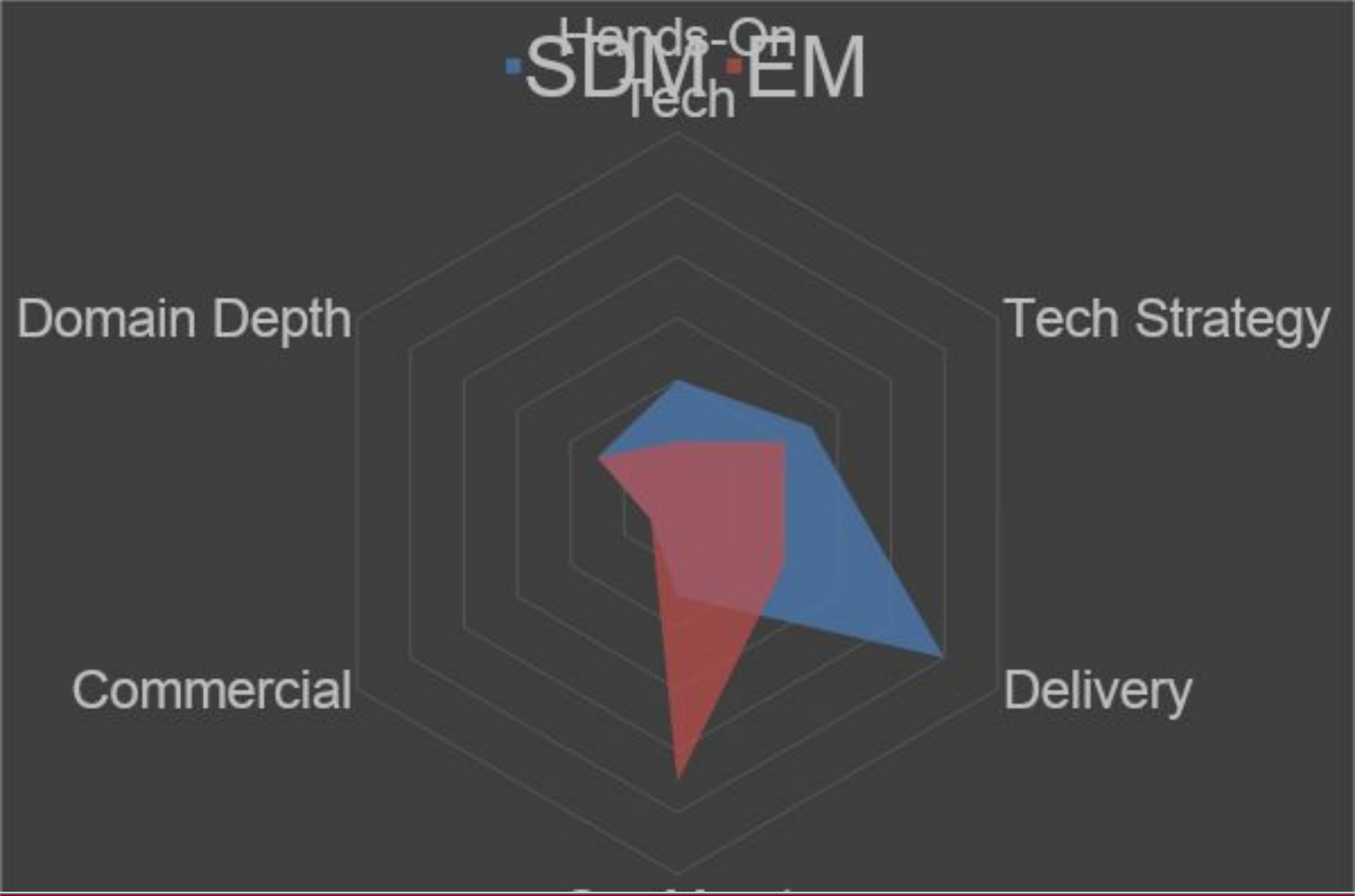
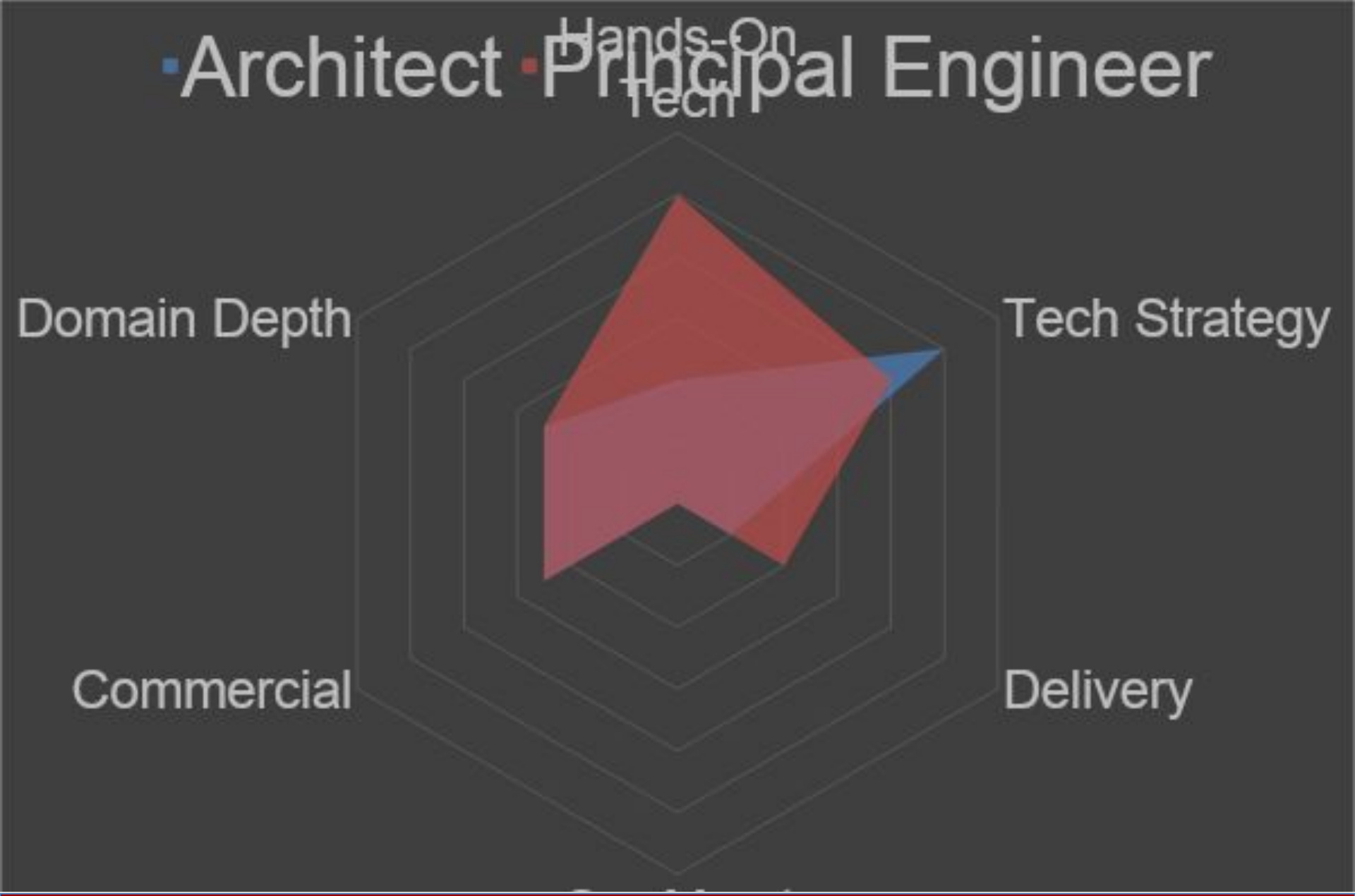
WHAT KINDS OF SHAPES DO YOU REQUIRE?

WHAT KINDS OF GROWTH DO YOU ENABLE?


Hands-On Tech
SDM
EM
Domain Depth
Tech Strategy
Commercial
Delivery

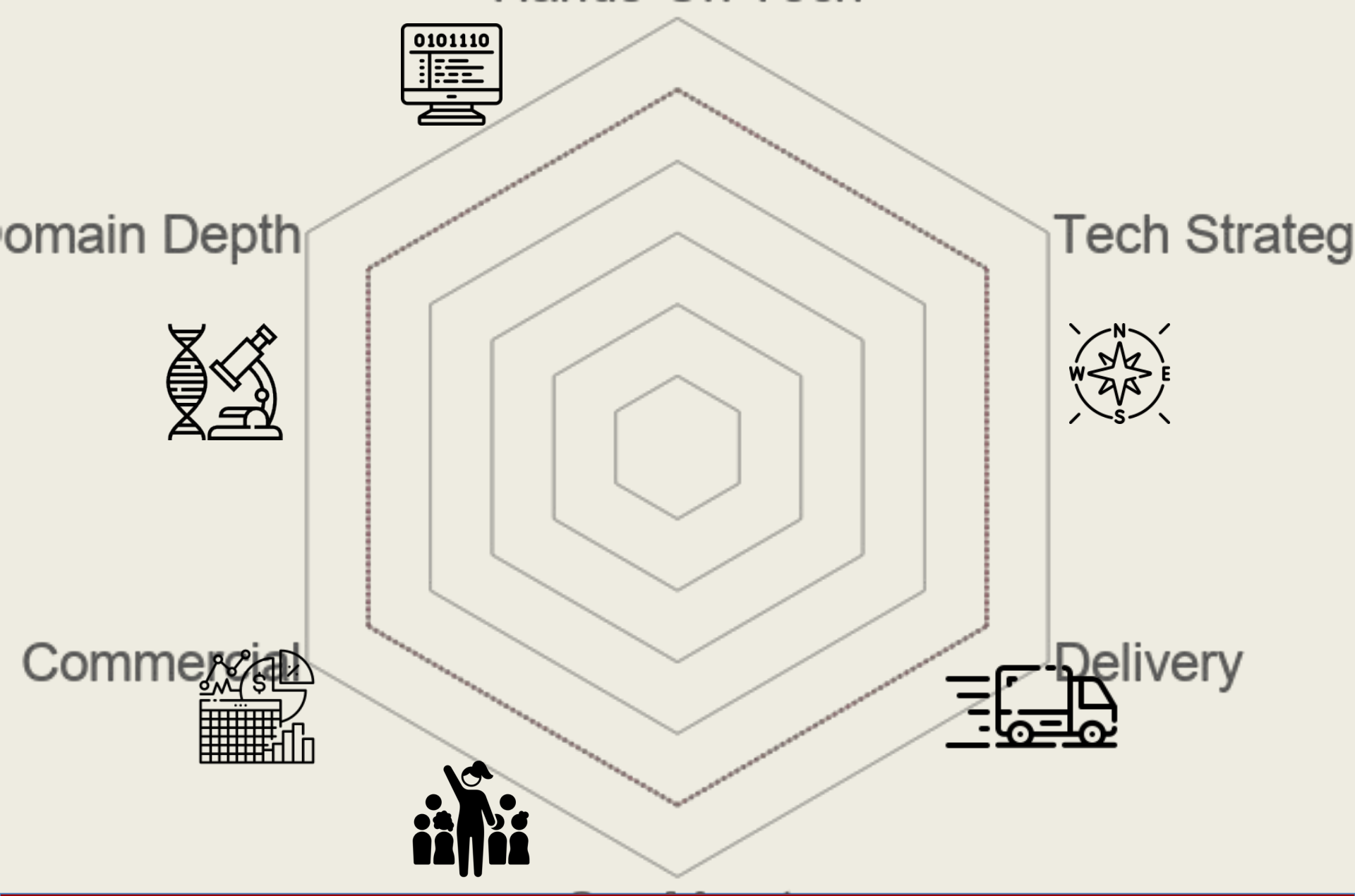

Architect
Hands-On Tech
Principal Engineer
Domain Depth
Tech Strategy
Commercial
Delivery

COMMON TENSIONS…

- How much are managers expected to focus on developing & enabling individuals & teams versus ensuring delivery?
- Is Tech Lead role more about technical depth or leading the team to deliver a solution? How much business understanding is needed?
- At what point does budget and commercial understanding becoming essential?
- Which elements of tech strategy require in-depth hands-on expertise?

DON'T TRY TO MAKE EVERYONE EQUALLY GENERALIST – YOU END UP LEVELLING PEOPLE OUT TOWARDS MEDIOCRITY.

EMBRACE DIFFERENCE!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Tech Strateg
Commercial
Delivery

IN SUMMARY…

- There is no single career path for technical leaders
- Think instead in terms of the career vectors you might develop along:
  - Hands-on in-depth tech
  - Tech strategy
  - Delivery / getting shit done
  - Organisational leadership
  - Commercial
  - Domain expertise

IN SUMMARY…

- Map your current state of these vectors
- Understand what future roles you might be interested in require

- And remember to zoom out and consider what is and isn’t clear in your career path in your company, for your peers, managers and broader team!

EVERY
PERSON IS
CAPABLE OF
VIRTUOSITY