Embedding on teams as a Staff+

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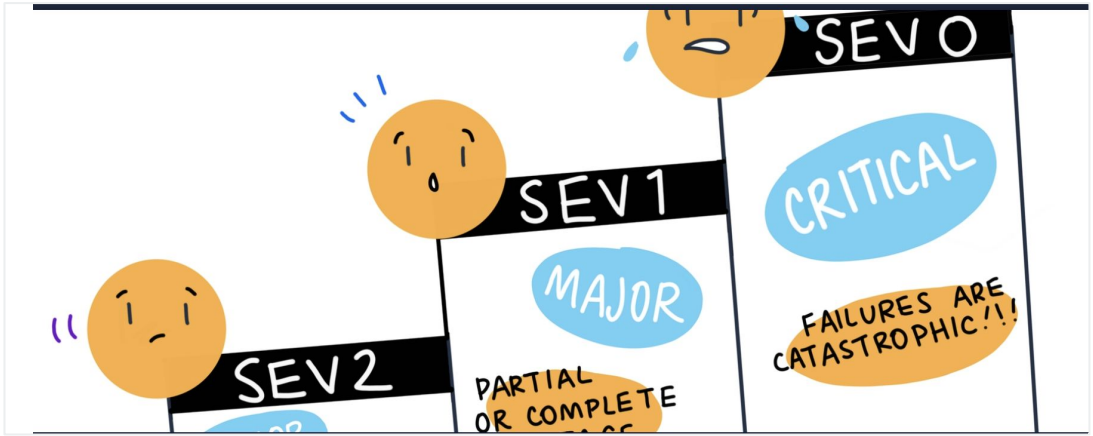
RECURSION
RECURSION
GATEWAY
THE GATEWAY

Poll



Recursion

Background

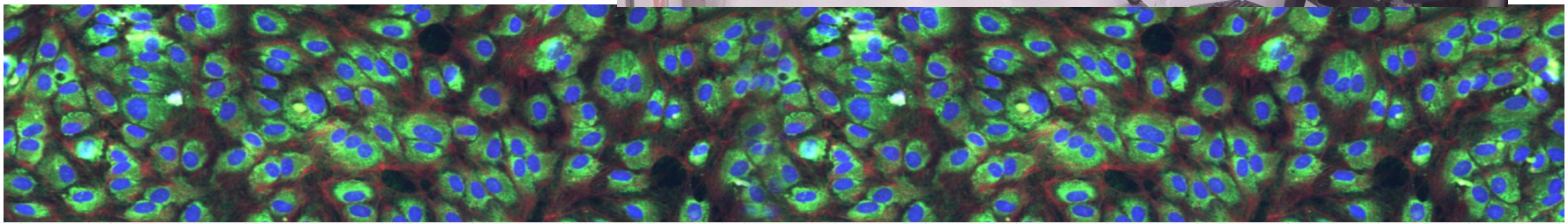
- First Staff+ external hire at Recursion

Recursion

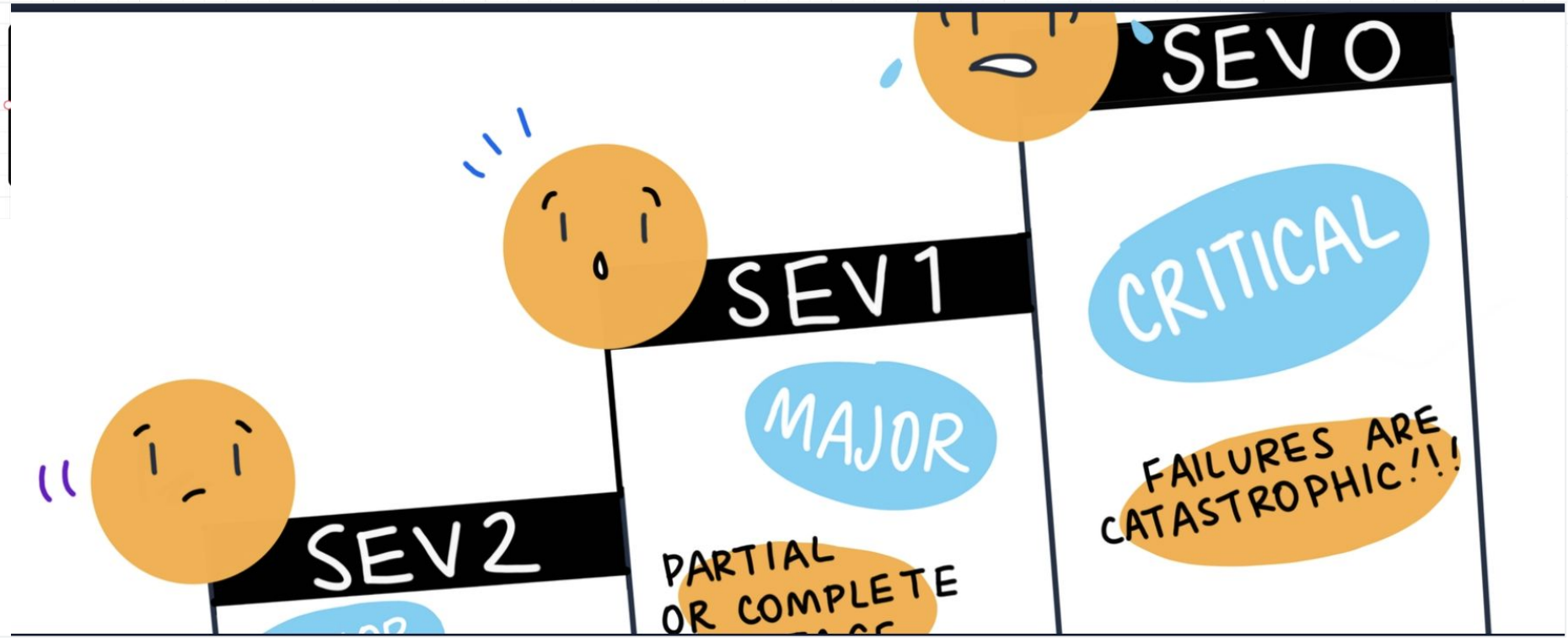
Background

- Embedded on two different teams across different anchors
- Unembed from the teams!

Context



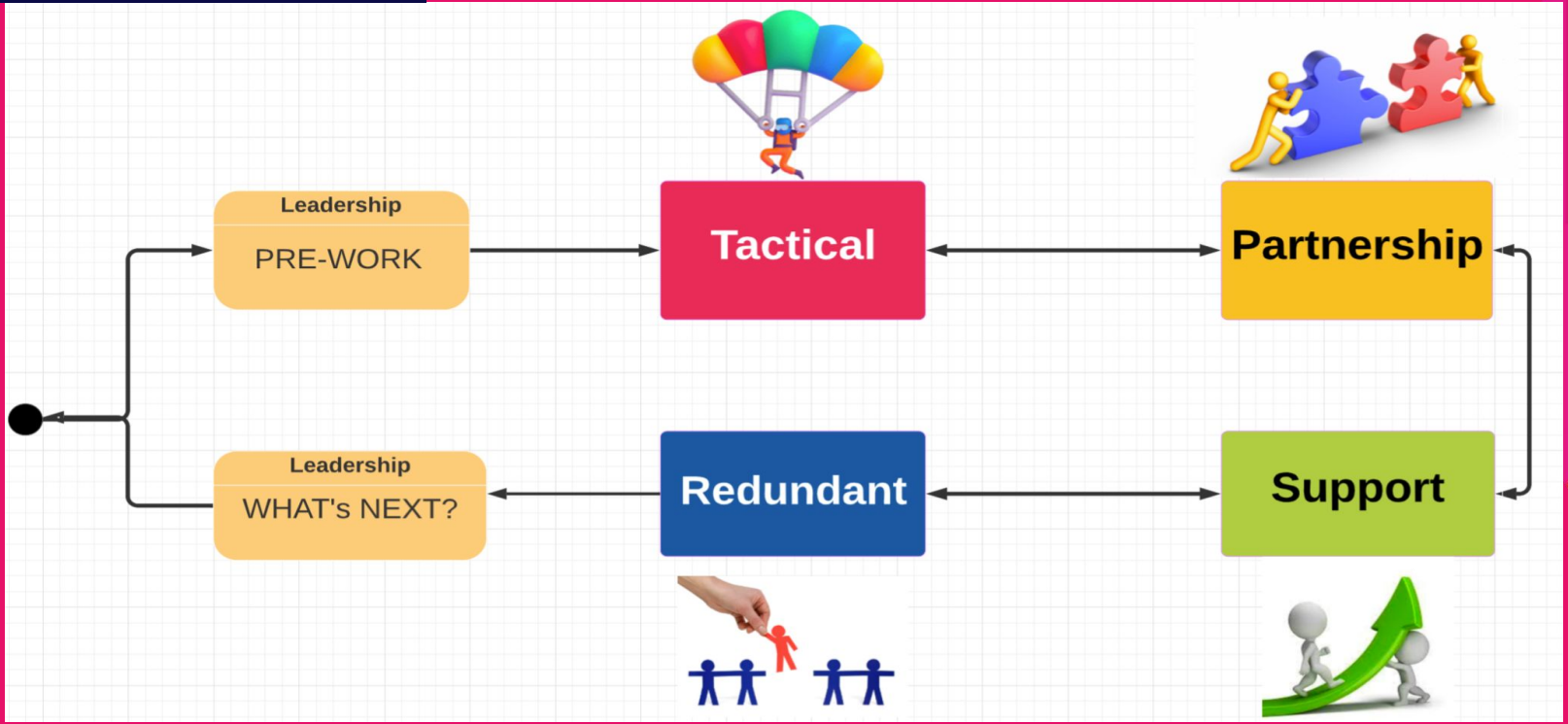
Context


SEV 0
CRITICAL
FAILURES ARE CATASTROPHIC!!!
SEV 1
MAJOR
PARTIAL OR COMPLETE
SEV 2

LeadDev

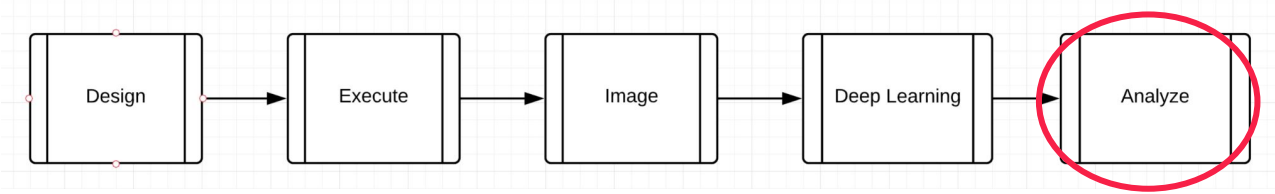
Embedding as Staff+ IC

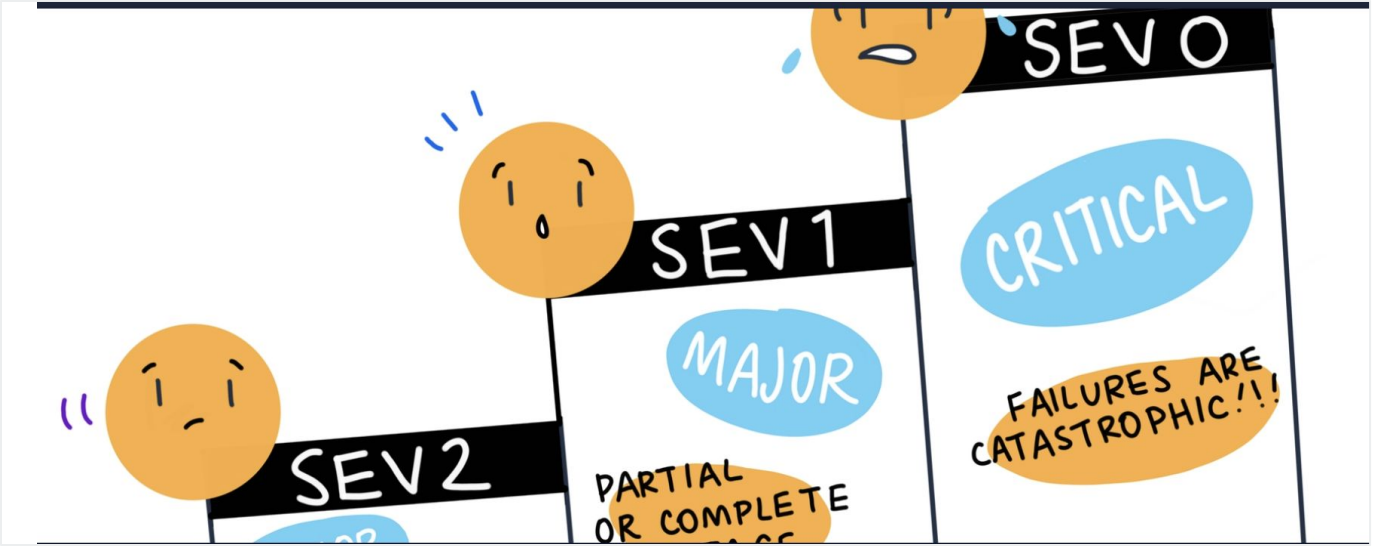
Embedding on a team as a Staff+ engineer



How to embed on teams?

- Strategic in nature
- Aligned outcomes

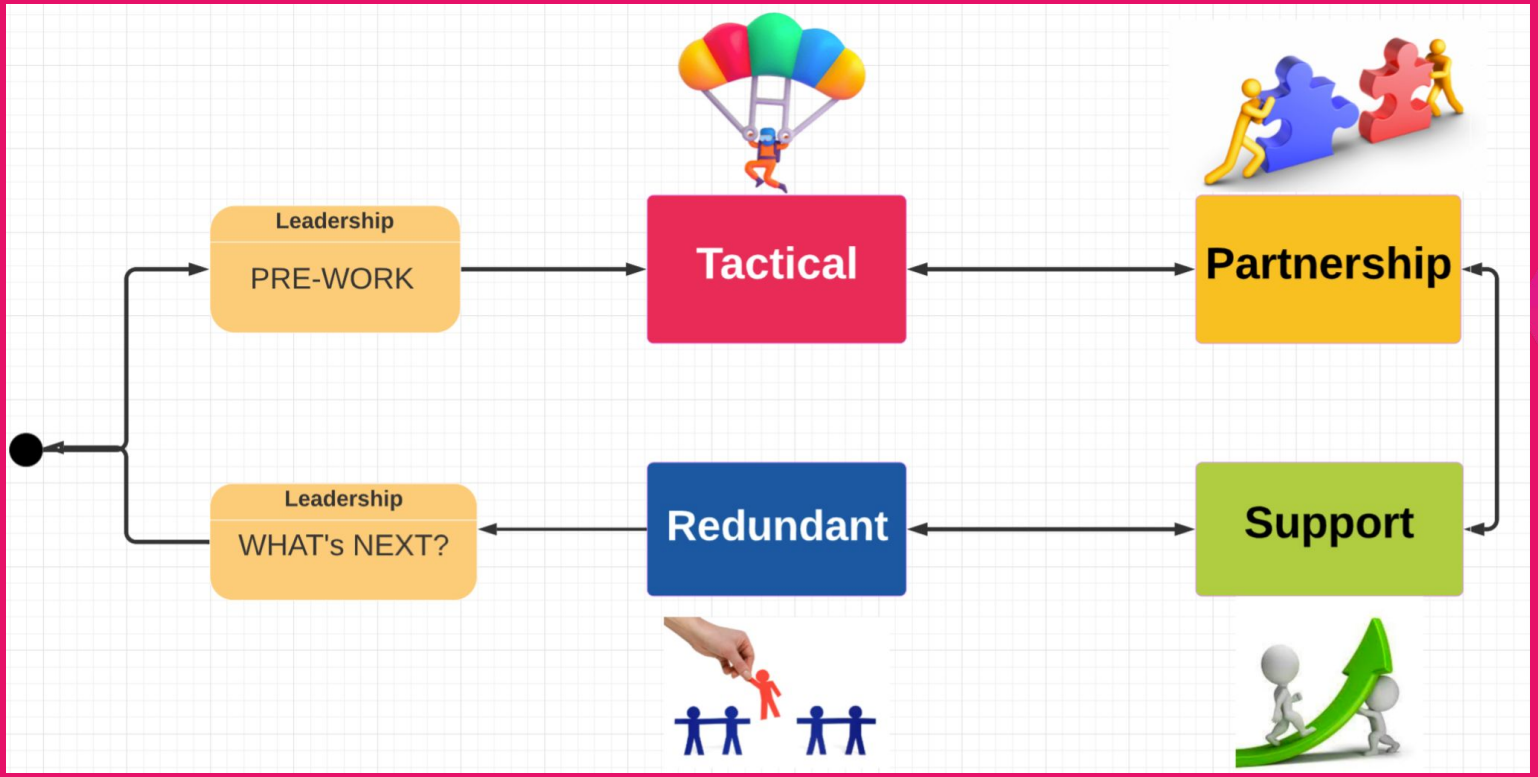




Recursion

Parachuted into the team

Stage 1: Tactical



Stage 1: Tactical: Team

- Lot of listening in 1-1 setting
- Ask a consistent set of questions
- Build a mental image of the team

HOW CAN YOU MOULD YOURSELF TO WORK WITH EACH INDIVIDUAL?

Stage 1: Tactical: Team

- Learn about their life outside work
  - Helpful when they are having a bad day

YOUR PRESENCE ON THE TEAM - DELIVER ON COMPANY PRIORITIES

Stage 1: Tactical: Engineering Manager

- **Biggest collaborator in this mission**
- **Key ingredients in this relationship**
  - Trust
  - Channel for open communication
  - Align
    - Deliverables
    - Individuals – strengths/growth areas

SHOULDER TO LEAN ON

The manager is responsible and accountable for the decisions made around the team.

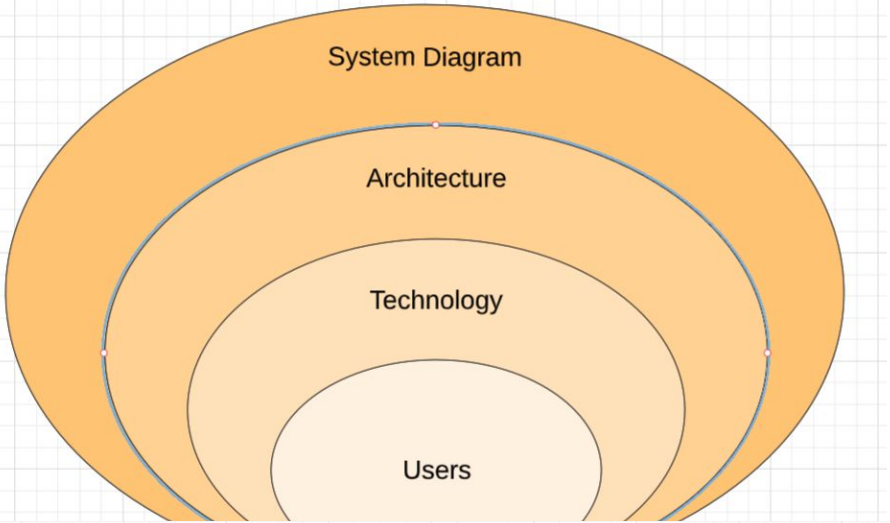
Stage 1: Tactical: Product Manager

- Equally important relationship
- Glue between product and engineering

Stage 1: Tactical

Stage 1: Tactical: Gaining context

- Documentation
- Collaborate and create
- Deeply understand
  - Architecture
  - Technology choices
- Understand your users!



Stage 1: Tactical: Context

- Drinking from a fire hose
- How do you gain context?
  - Pairing
  - White board sessions
  - Code reviews

WHAT IS DRAINING THE TEAM?

Advocate for the team

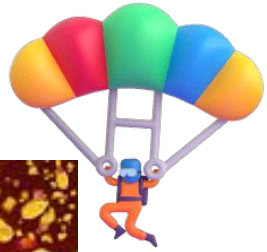
but..

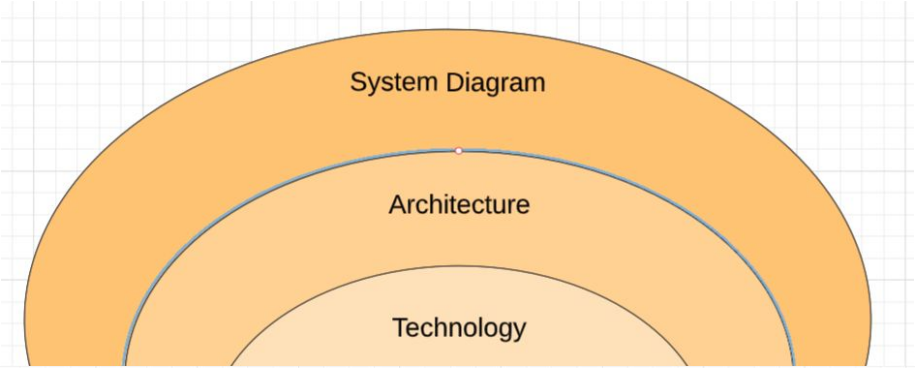
Don’t take over

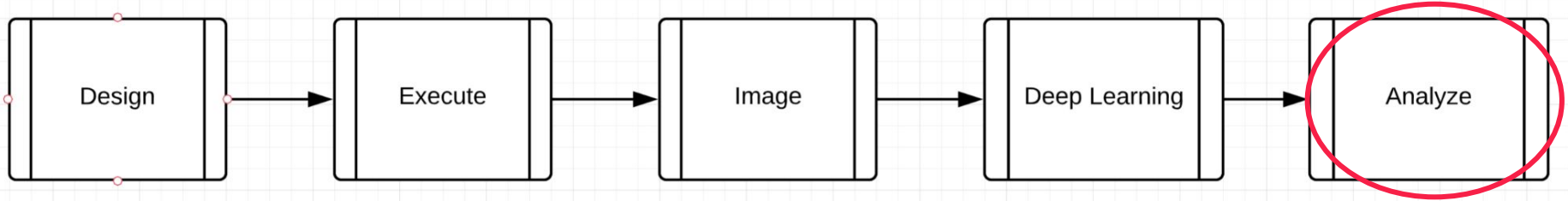
Stage 1: Tactical

Stage 1: Tactical: On-call

- Be a part of on-call rotations
- Cross-functional huddle
- Uncover information around the issues

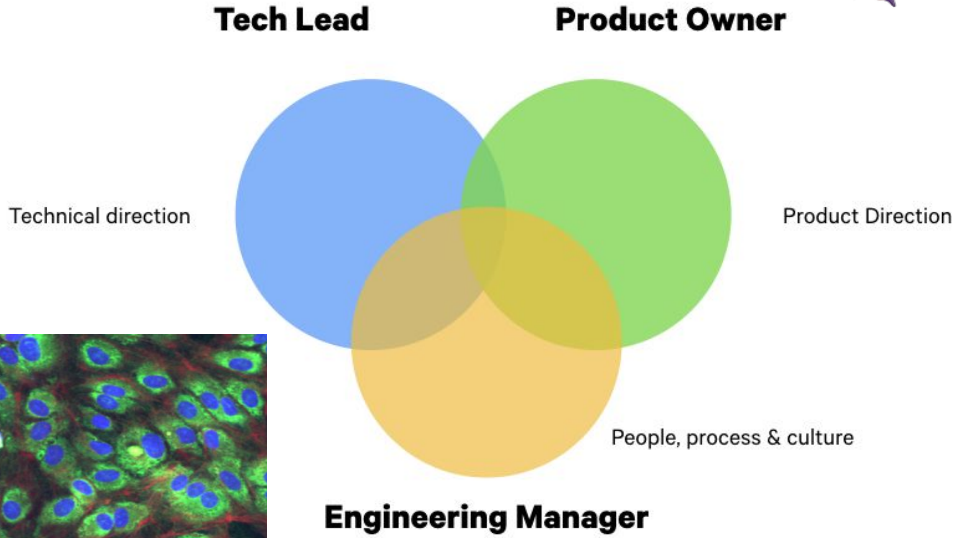


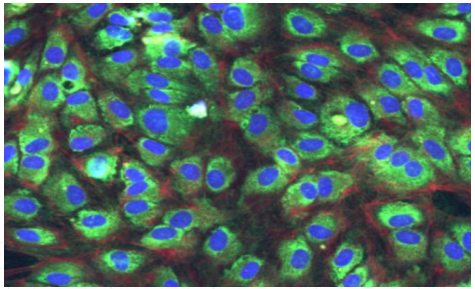


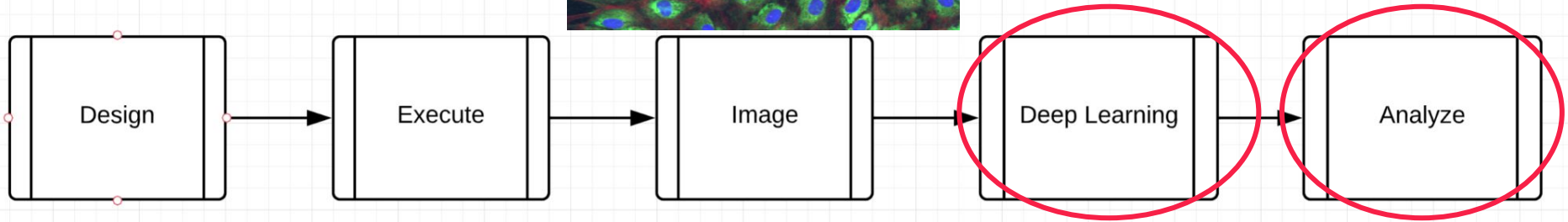


Stage 1: Tactical: Team leadership huddle

- Align weekly
- Space for honest conversations







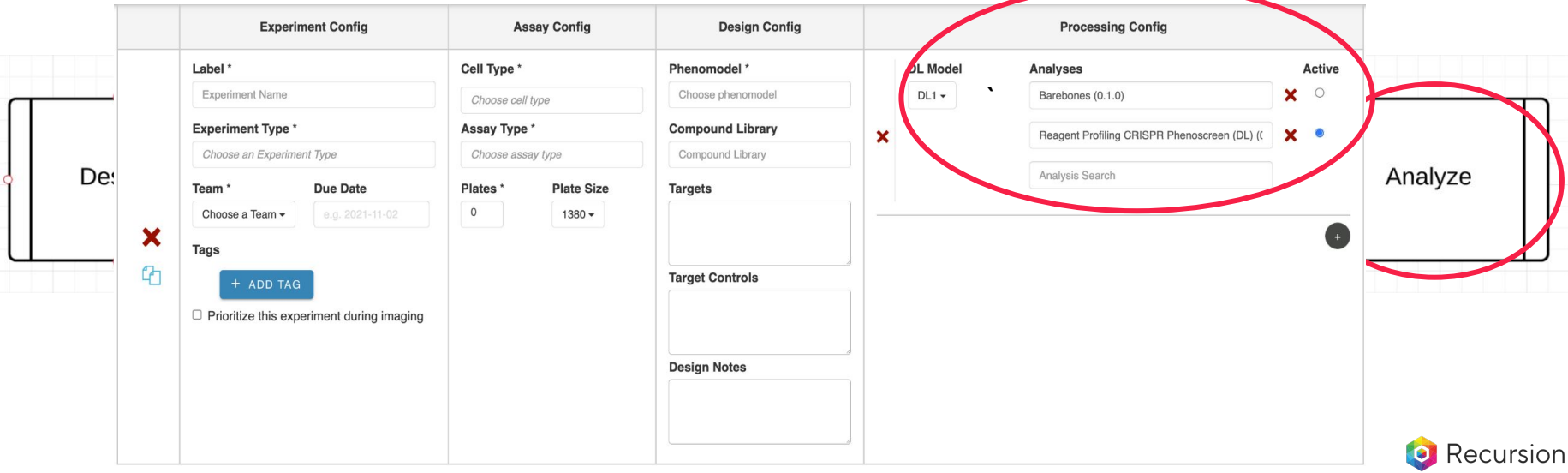
Stage 1: Tactical: Making some changes

- **Influence the change that you want to make**
  - Align on the gaps
    - Technical
    - Process
  - Process
    - Knowledge silos
    - Setup team pairing sessions
  - On-call system:
    - Measure SLI/SLAs

"When the whole team bought into change, something magical happened."

Stage 1: Tactical: Bringing people along

- You are leading projects
- Leading by example



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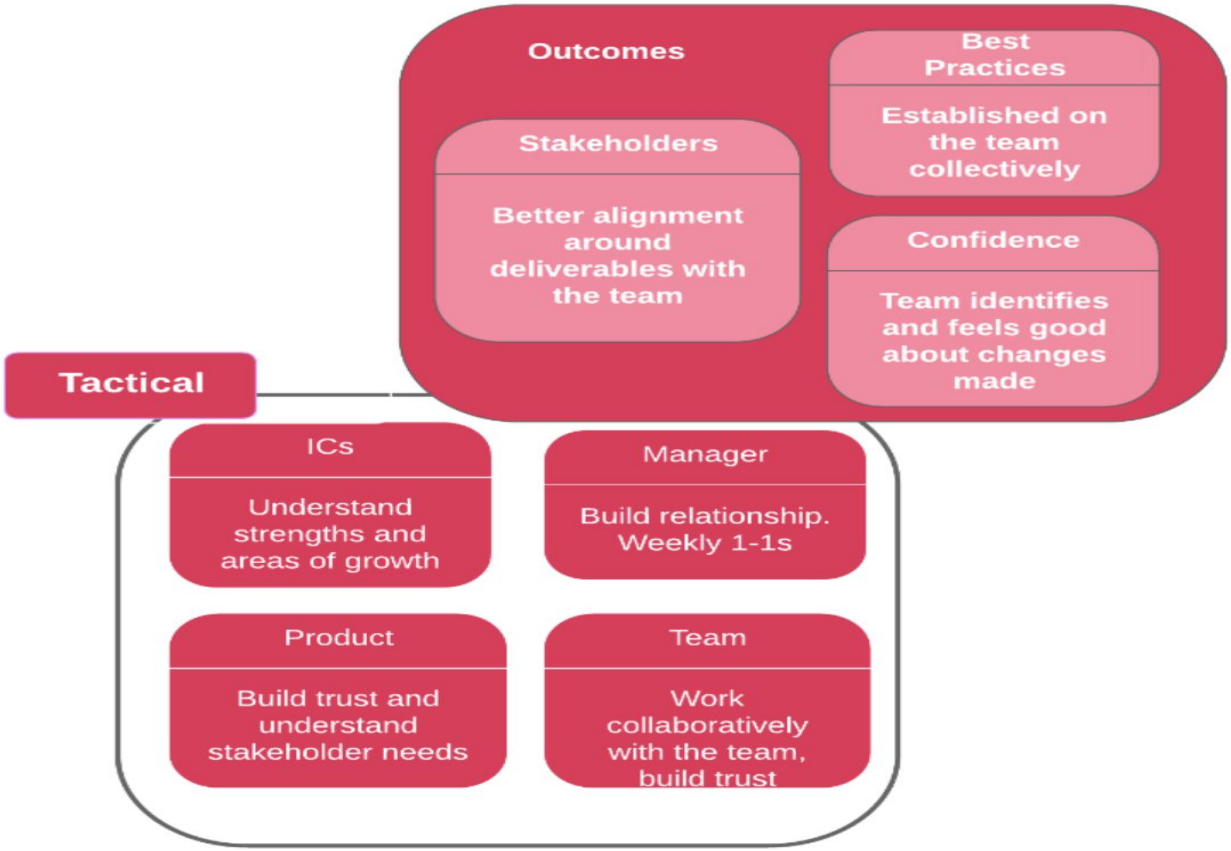
Stage 1: Tactical: Reflect

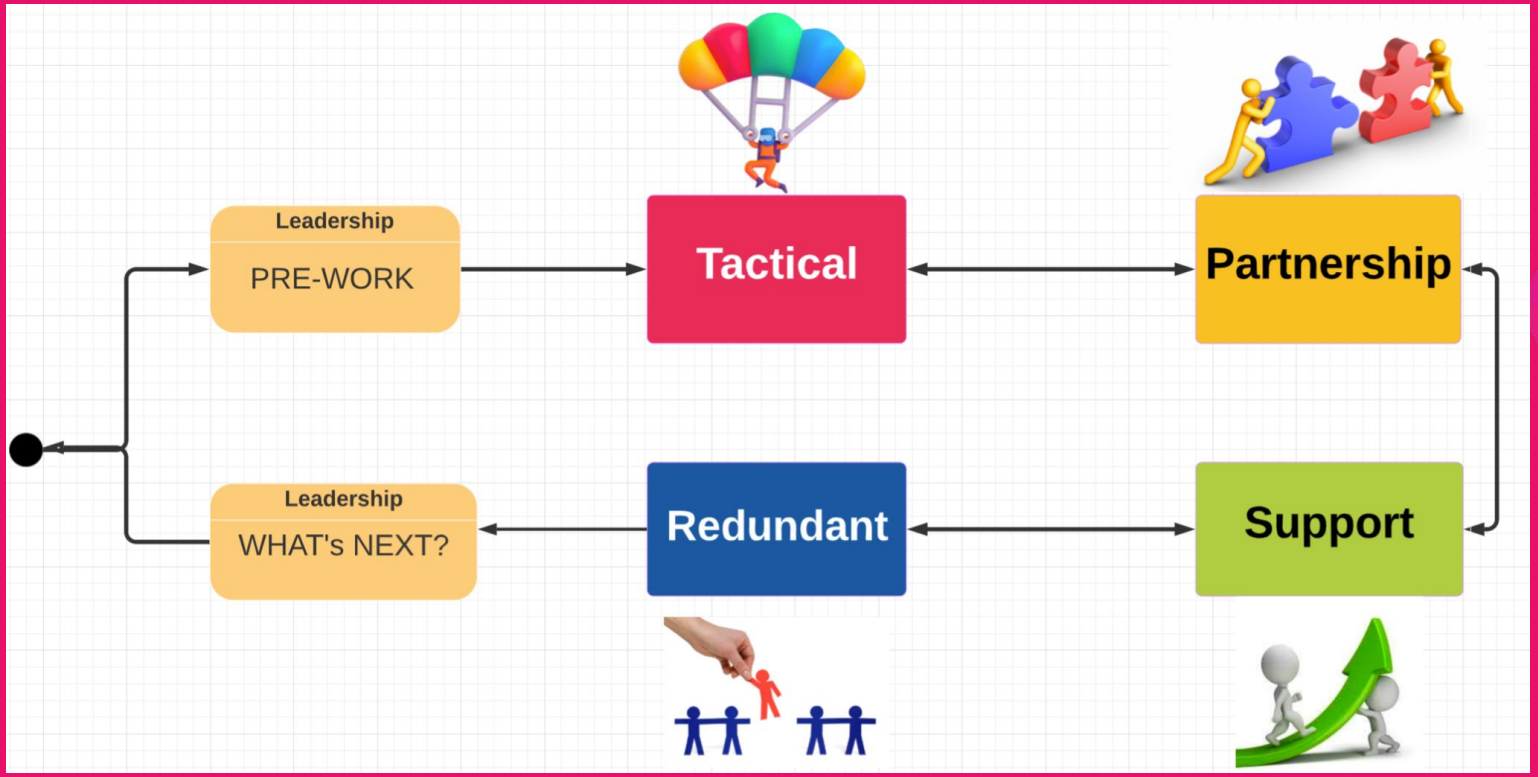
- Retrospectives
  - Include the product manager
- Reflect on the changes
- Be present, listen intently

DO YOU NEED TO ADJUST?

Stage 1: Tactical



Stage 2: Partnership

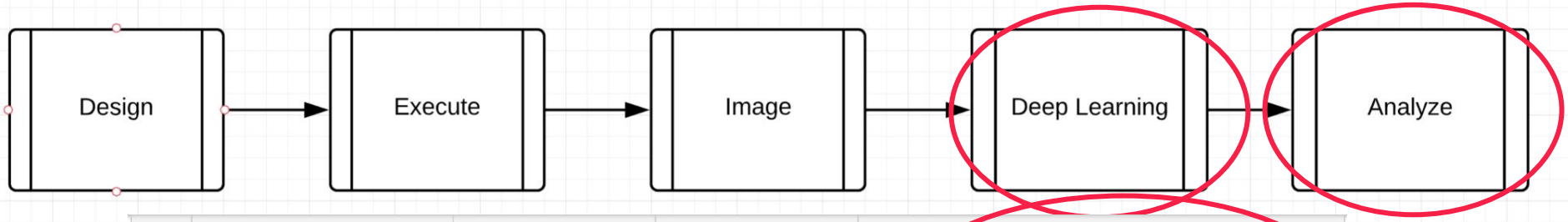


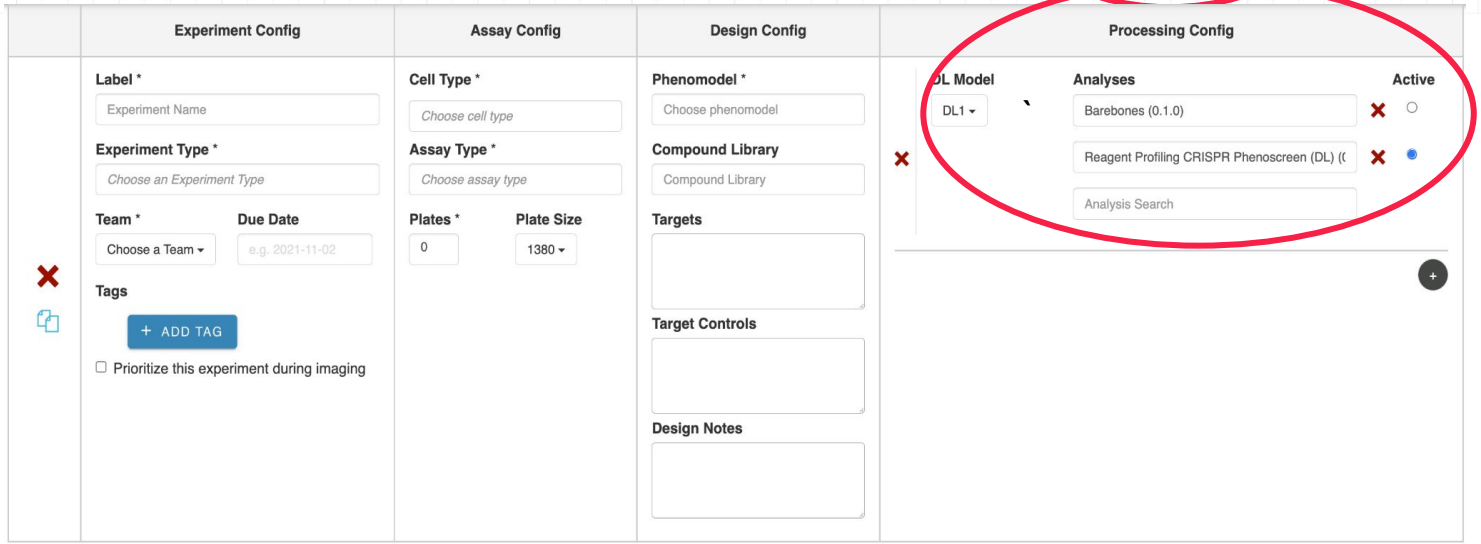
Stage 2: Partnership

- Hands-on collaboration to strategic partner
- Empower your confident team to drive deliverables
- Strengthen learnings from the initial phase
- Retrospectives to refine processes

LENS OF A COACH

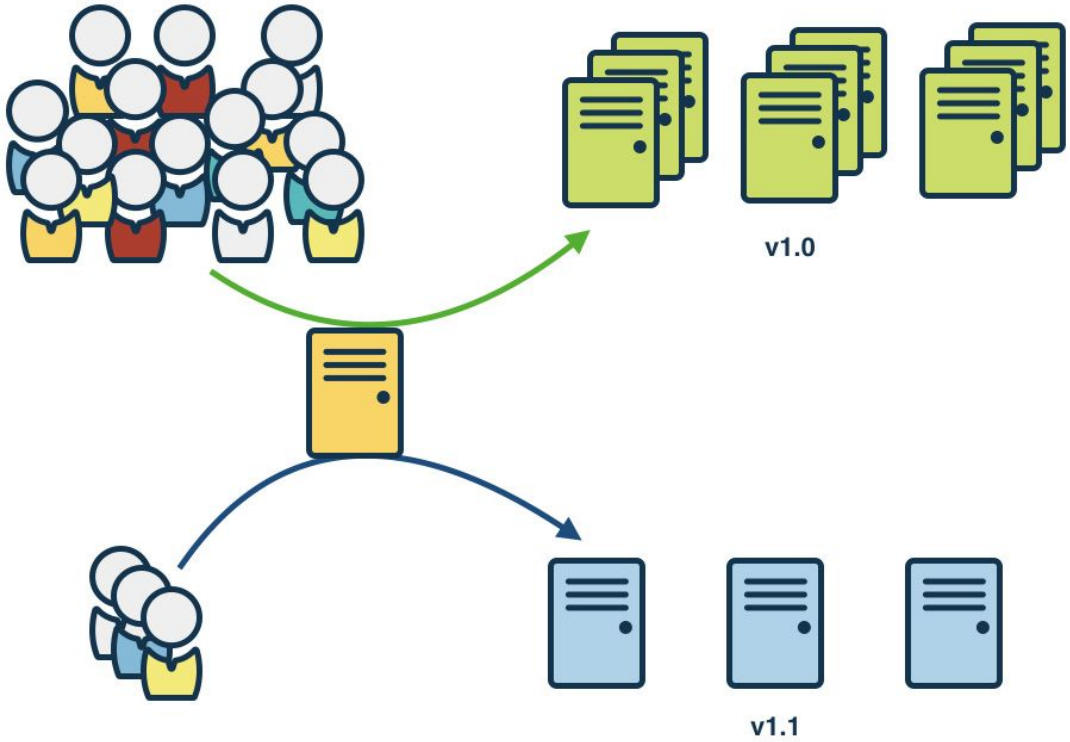
Stage 2: Partnership





Recursion

Stage 2: Partnership



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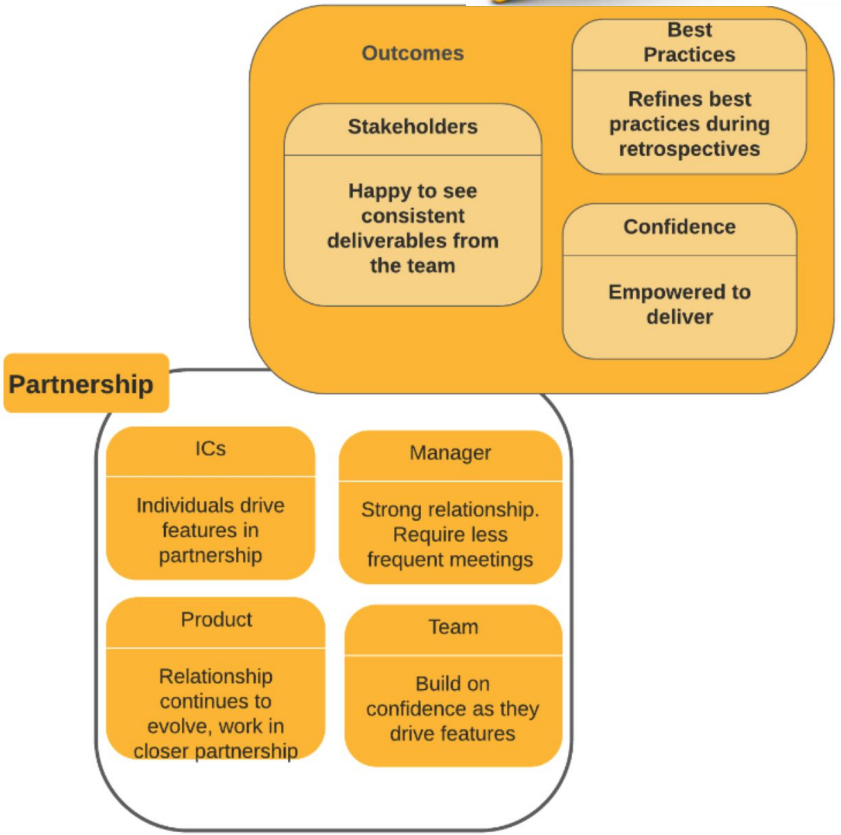
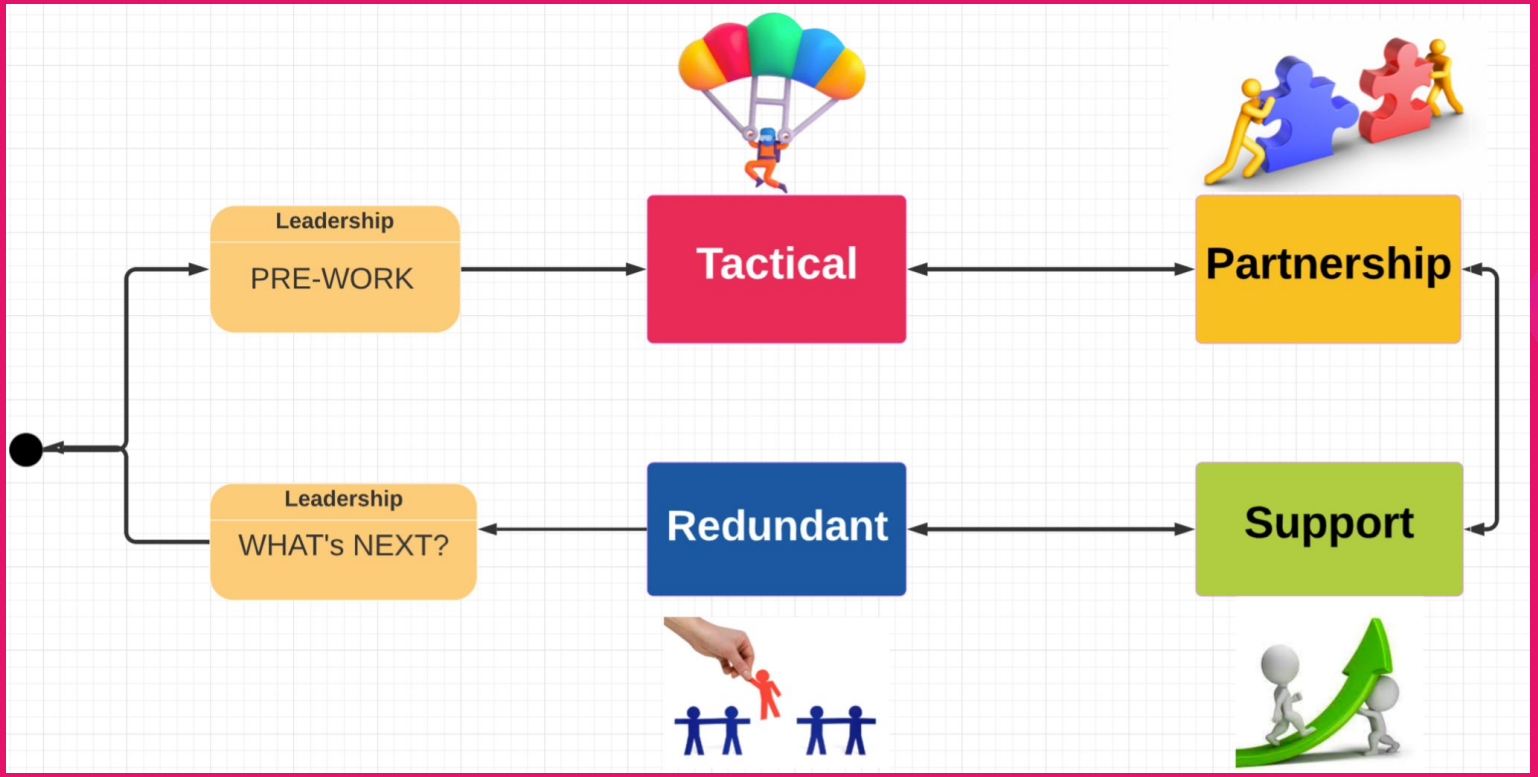
Stage 2: Partnership: Transition

- Success around deliverables
- Strong cross functional bonds established
- Healthy relationship with product manager



Stage 3: Support

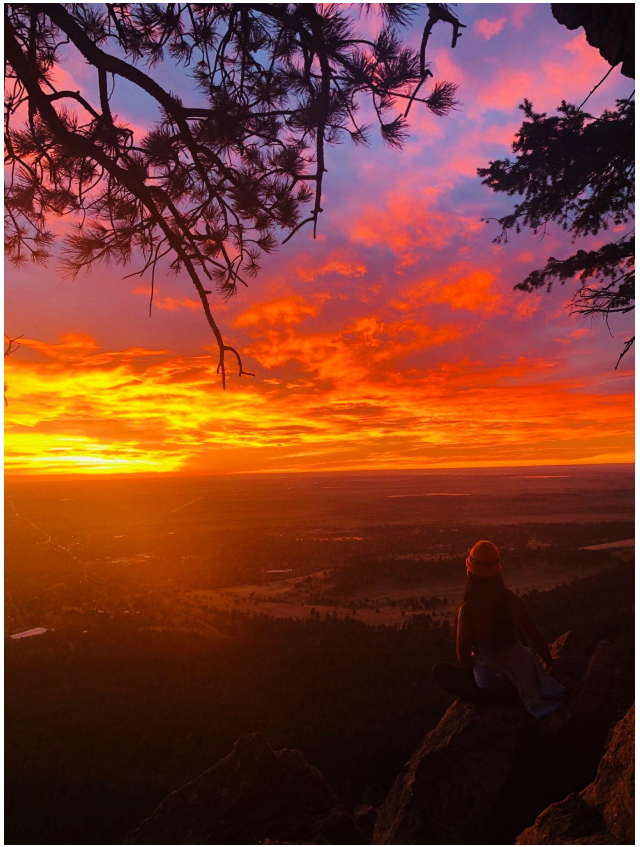


Stage 3: Support

- Team leads delivering features
- Deeply satisfying but..

  Emotionally challenging

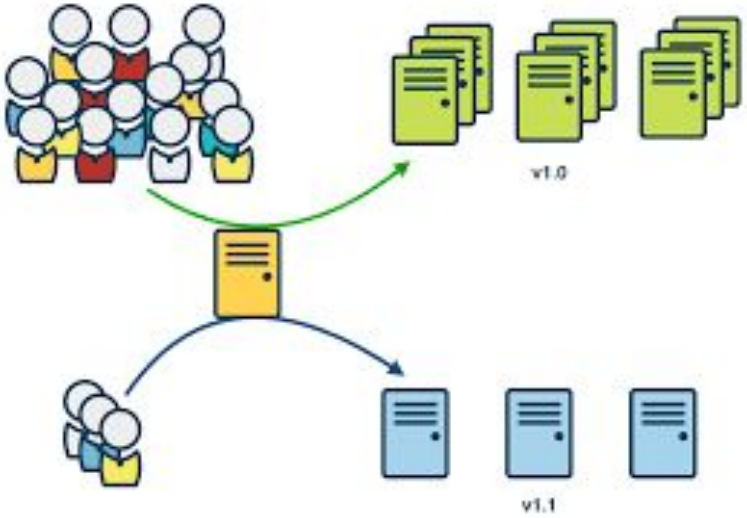
- Acknowledge the transition
- Align with leadership



WEAVE A SAFETY NET

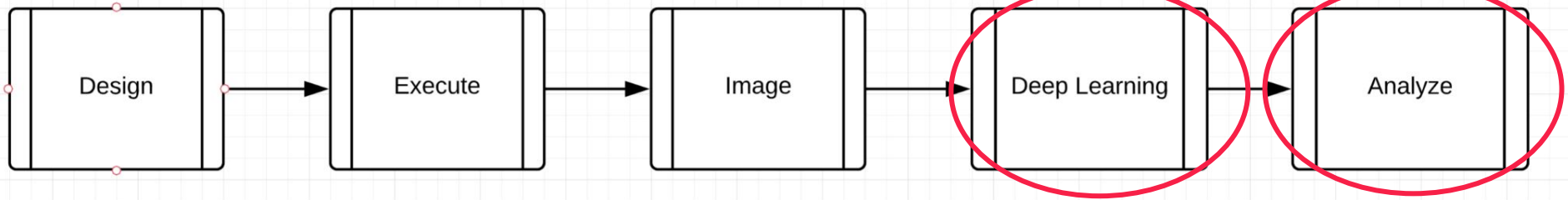
Recursion

Stage 3: Support

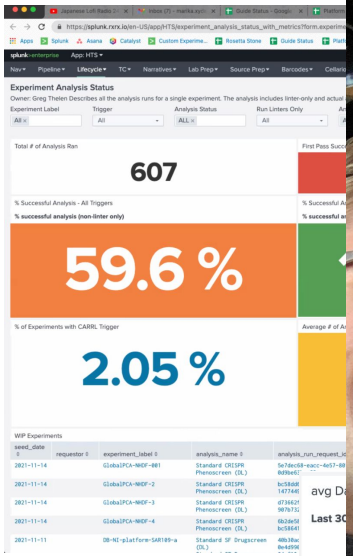


Release plan

- Existing system and the CARRL system will exist in parallel
- Canary deployment
  - Successful
- Iron out issues that come up
  - Run in parallel with the canary release
- Develop the limitations that we have already identified in the system
- Updates around canary release
  - Slack channel: processing_huddle_taskforce
- Alerts when analysis and DL model do not match
  - Slack channel:
- Recursion wide release



Stage 3: Support

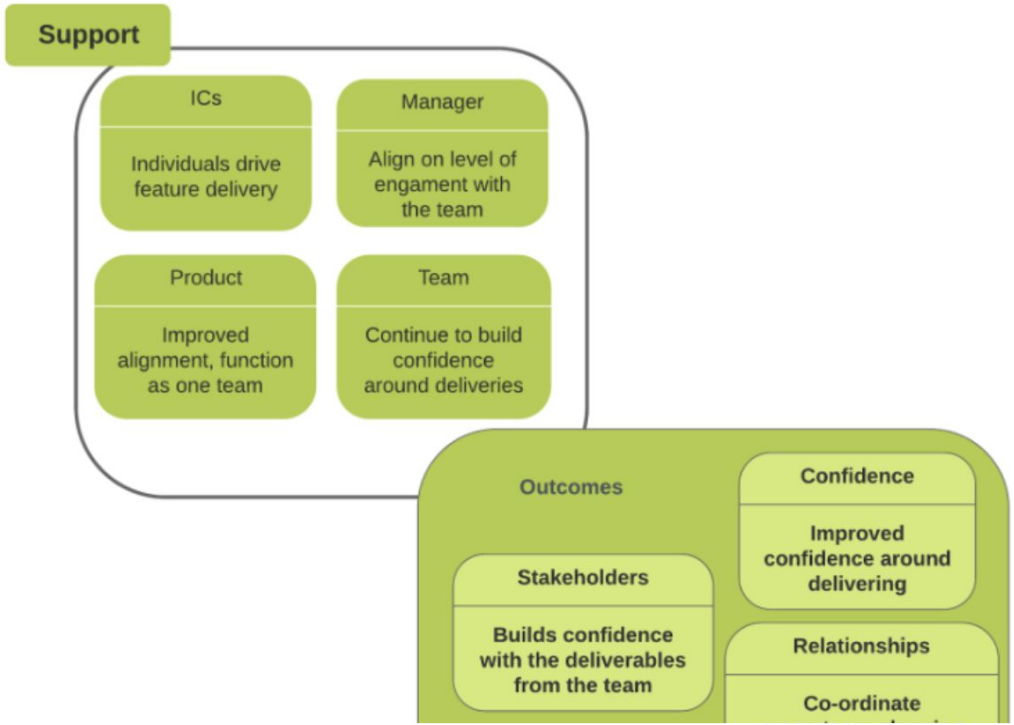


avg Days in EEP (data_available_at - processed_at)

Last 30 days

Recursion

Stage 3: Support



TRANSITIONED TO A WELL OILED MACHINE

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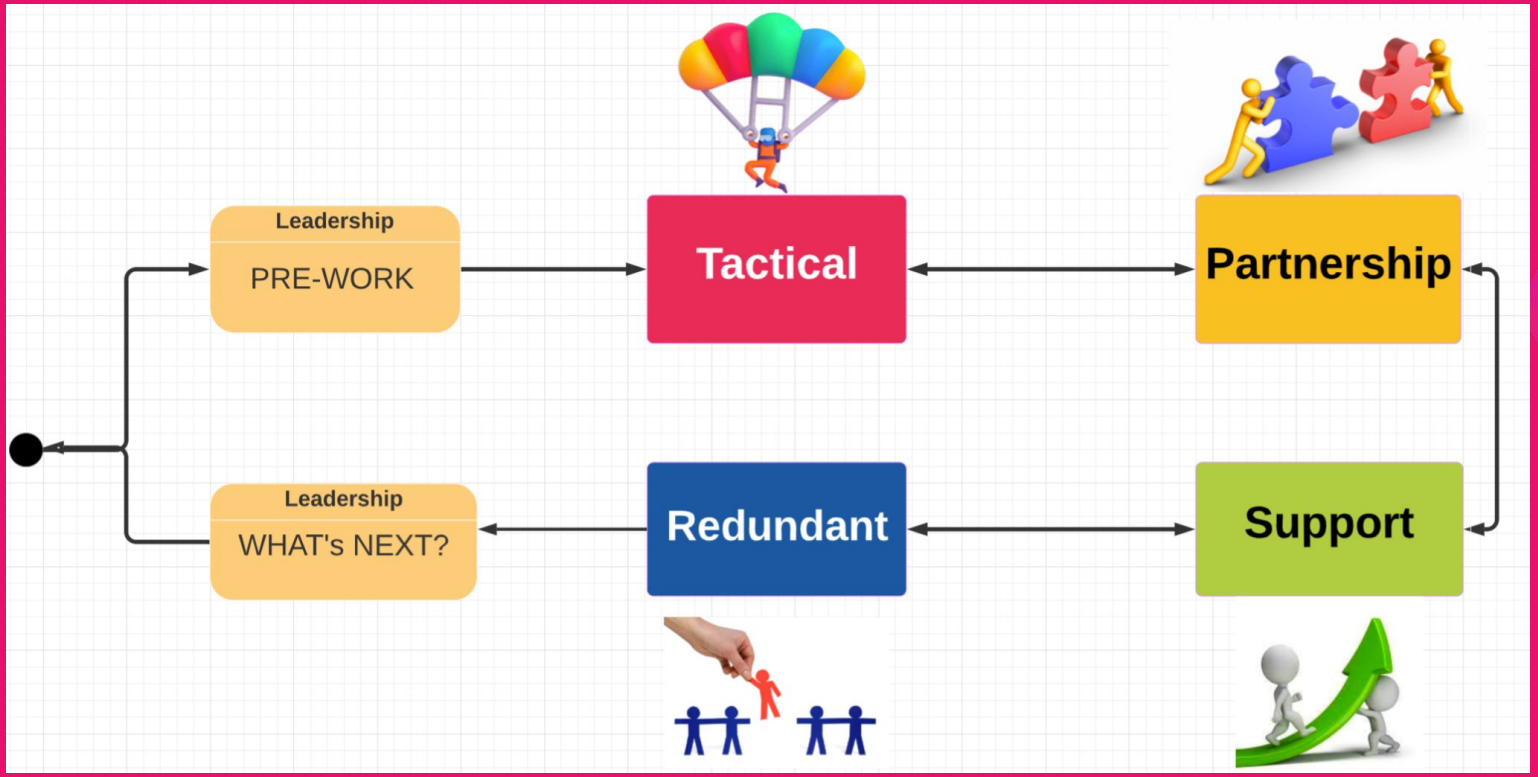
Stage 4: Redundant



Stage 4: Redundant

- Team has established strong:
  - Routines
  - Cross functional relationships
  - Alignment with product
- Tactical work is done before you can think about it

UTOPIA AS A LEADER

Stage 4: Redundant: Unembed

EMBEDDING IS TEMPORAL

Recursion

Closing remarks

BE PATIENT. THIS TAKES TIME.

LEAD WITH EMPATHY

ALL THE TIME!

Thank you!

With thanks to the Recursion team, Ben Sukow, Jordan Christensen, the Staff+ plus community, and the amazing teams I've embedded on.