

# **I'm 83% Confident This'll Be Useful**

**by Sean Bolton**

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**You might be  
wondering...why 83%?**

**If so, you are correct!**

**What about the other 17%?**

**Why is it not 50%?**

**What would make me 90%  
confident?**

**That's exactly what we're here  
to discuss**

# Hi, I'm Sean Bolton

(No relation to Michael Bolton, Lord Bolton, or Troy Bolton)



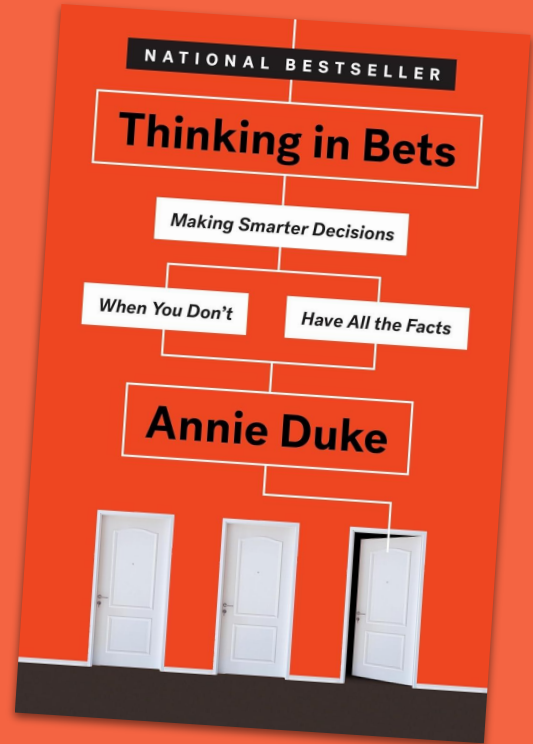
**I'm an engineering manager  
&  
I deal with estimations often,  
like you**

**I love asking questions  
that unlock  
new understanding**



Today, one of my favorites!

# Based on a book by Annie Duke



**Think probabilistically**



**Applied to estimations  
in engineering teams**

**“**

**If you were to assign a % likelihood  
to delivering this on time, what  
would it be**

**”**

“

**What % level of confidence do you have in your understanding of how to build this**

”





**what affects the estimation**

**The % on its own is interesting, but  
it's in the follow ups where you  
really get to learn – ask whys**



**It allows you to more objectively  
explore the estimation**

**3 approaches to try**

# Example

Build a new product page.

Ask team to spec it with delivery plan.

Confident deliver end of next week.

“If you were to assign a % likelihood, what would it be.”

“80% confident.”



# 1: The % choice

**Q: What is it that makes you say 80%?**

**→ “I’ve built these pages before, so I can borrow from that”**

**Q: What’s in that 20% that makes you unsure?**

**→ “I’m waiting on final designs and I’m not sure who needs to sign off before making it live”**

**...**

**Q: Would you revise the % confidence?**

## 2: Other hypothetical %

Why isn't it 60%?

→ “I’m waiting on... and then we need to connect it to... and test it with....”

# 3: Positive shift in %

What would it take to turn 80% to 90%?

→ “Oh well I’d need to know...”

- 1: The % choice**
- 2: Other hypothetical %**
- 3: Positive shift in %**



**What about the other 17%?**

**Why is it not 50%?**

**What would make me 90% confident?**

- 1: The % choice**
- 2: Other hypothetical %**
- 3: Positive shift in %**



How confident in % terms are you that this will be delivered on schedule? If you had to put a % on it, what would you say? What's your estimated % likelihood of hitting the deadline? On a scale of 0 to 100%, how sure are you about finishing this on time? Could you quantify your confidence level as a %? If someone asked you to assign a % chance of timely delivery, what number would you give? What's your best guess

## **Keep it fresh – be choosy, vary**

making the release cutoff, what would you estimate? If you were to quantify with a % your gut check of hitting the deadline, what number would you pick? Given the scope and dependencies, what's your % estimate of on-time delivery? If you had to quantify your confidence in

**Ask:**

**What % confidence do you have  
that sharing this method is useful?**

**Apply:**

**What's one current or upcoming project you can apply this on?**

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