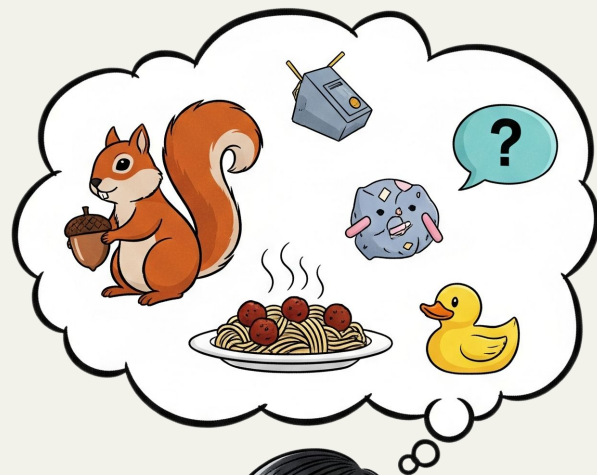


Lessons from the
other side:

What your VP
is actually
thinking



- I spent **14 years as an IC**, makin' my way from L3 at Google to Senior Staff at Slack
- I flirted with management a few times as a **TLM**
- Two years ago, I started the Slack AI team, then took over search, and ended up with an **org of 100**
- At which point we all said "OK you might not be a TLM anymore," and I **ended up a VP**
- I'm an **IC again now** but that's a story for another day

A tale of two chairs



Staff+ IC



VP of Engineering

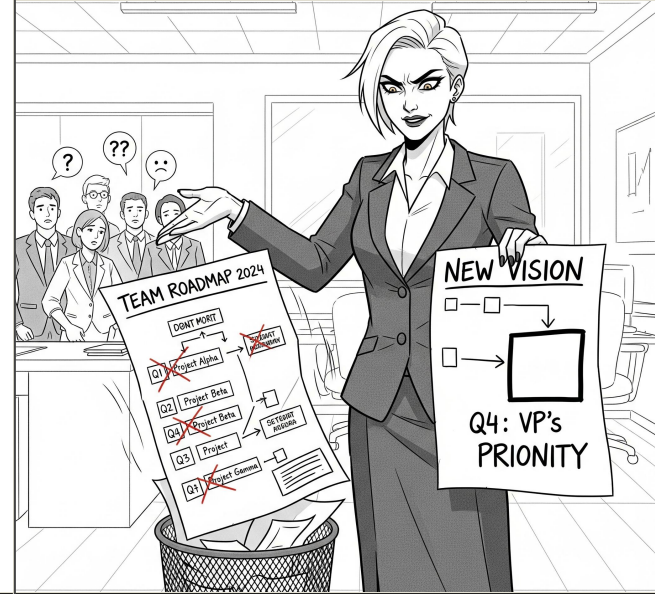
As an IC, I always wondered...



Why did we reorg... again?



Why did we cancel that actually good project?



Why did our roadmap change for the nth time out of the blue?

**It's not a cabal.
(Probably).**

What being a VP sounds like

- Making important business decisions
- Fancy dinners
- Having sick airline points
- Having all the goss



Sad truth

- Urgent, conflicting demands from C-Suite, customers, legal, finance, sales...
- Constant rebalancing of priorities & strategies
- Calendar is literal crime scene
- Two string cheeses for lunch



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What you know

- ✓ Which approaches will work
- ✓ The actual timeline for things
- ✓ Where the bodies are buried
- ✓ Impediments to velocity
- ✓ Technical risks
- ✓ Team dynamics

What they know

- ✓ Customer priorities
- ✓ C Suite's priorities
- ✓ Institutional forces
- ✓ Pending decisions
- ✓ Strategic risks
- ✓ Organizational dynamics

The difference in context isn't a problem.

But *is* is a problem that the two worlds are constantly drifting apart.

Part of a senior IC's job is to help bridge that gap.

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So . . . how do
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Building the relationship

- You are going to have make an effort to **spend time with your VP.**
- You are a senior IC in their org – **you have the right to that time.**
- But use it well: You are going to put in the work to **distill your reality** into what's most relevant to them.
- And then you may also need to put in the work to **pull the reciprocal information from them** – at least until it becomes a two-way habit.

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 Real life
examples

1

**The
absurd
customer
ask**

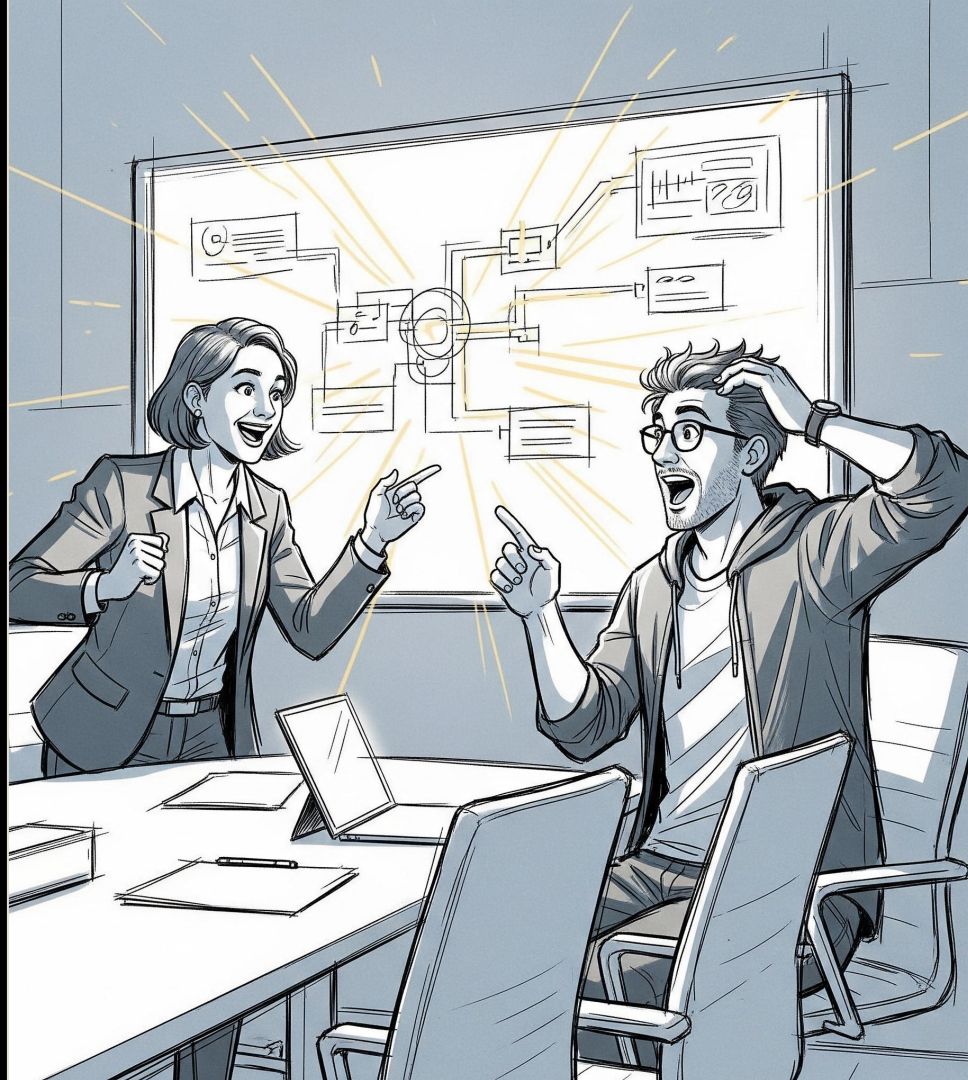
2

We're
moving up
the
launch

3

The impossible project

1. This is not politics.
2. They *absolutely* have time for this.
3. And they probably want this, too.



Thanks, and
good luck out
there y'all