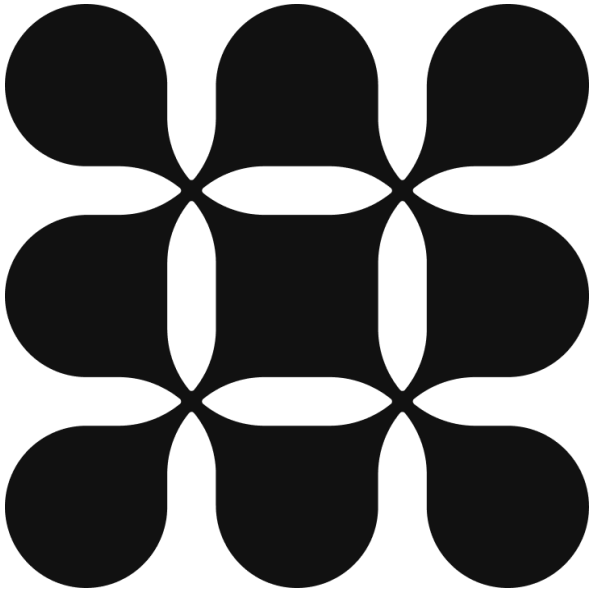
Accelerating impact with AI

Darragh Curran - CTO, Fin

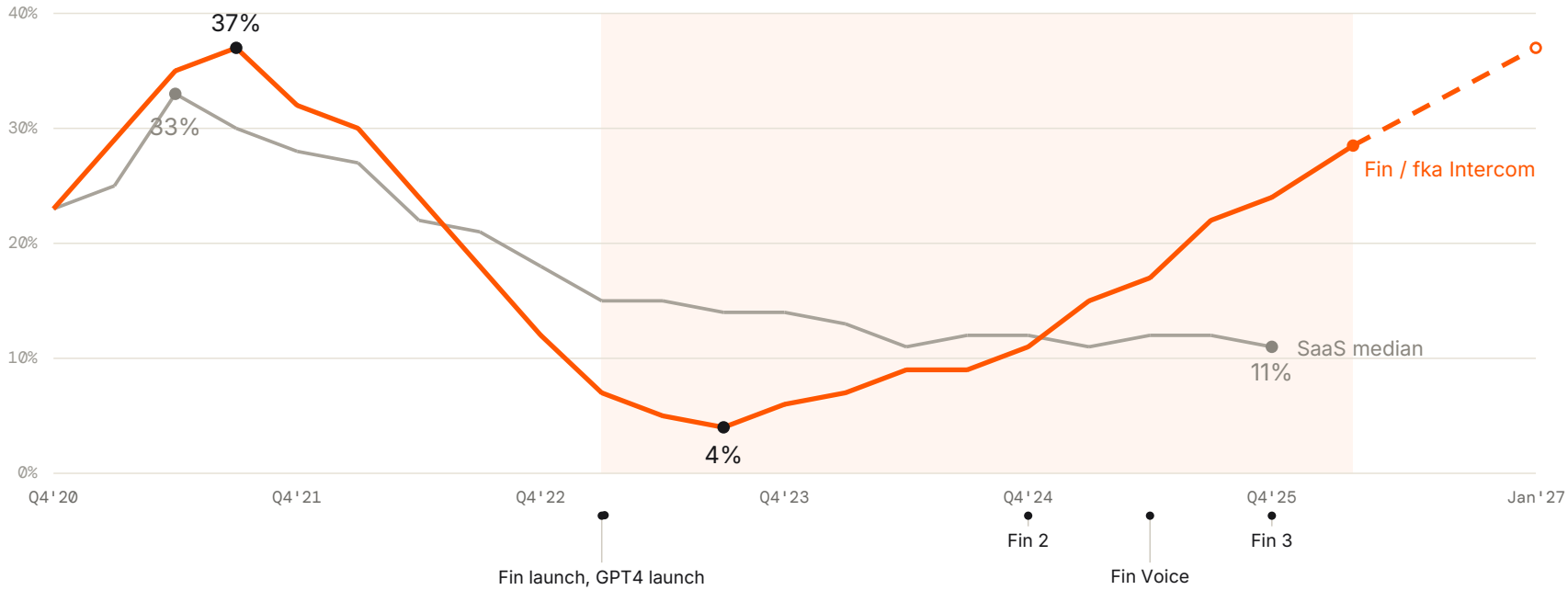


Takeaway:

AI disruption is extreme.

You must fight hard to adapt.

This is your job as a leader.


40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
37%
33%
4%
11%
Fin / fka Intercom
SaaS median
Q4'20
Q4'21
Q4'22
Q4'23
Q4'24
Q4'25
Jan'27
Fin launch, GPT4 launch
Fin 2
Fin Voice
Fin 3

PRs merged per R&D team member

MONTHLY · EVERY R&D TEAM MEMBER COUNTED, NOT JUST ENGINEERS



Start with the problem



R&D Principle number one — Deeply understand the customer problem you're solving. Continually evolve this understanding, and return to it often to make sure you haven't gone off course.

Think big, start small, learn fast



R&D Principle number two — Be ambitious, but know that big things have small beginnings. Scope the smallest coherent solution. Find the fastest way to learn if you're actually

Ship fast, ship early, ship often



R&D Principle number four — Shipping is our heartbeat. It brings life to our team, to our product, and to our customers. Challenge yourselves on how to move faster

Deliver outcomes



R&D Principle number three — Shipping is the beginning, not the end. Plan to iterate, fight for adoption, and keep pushing to have customer and business impact.

Connected, modular systems



Design principle number one — We favor modular systems over bespoke optimizations. We re-use, evolve and merge before creating something new.

Opinionated by default, flexible under the hood



Follow fundamentals



Make it feel personal



What you ship is what matters



Shape the solution



Engineering principle number one — We never blindly execute on requirements defined by others. We deeply understand the value of our work, and help design solutions which efficiently deliver that value.

Be technically conservative



Engineering principle number two — We like familiar solutions with boring technologies. We reuse the same patterns in different solutions as much as possible.

Build in small steps



Engineering principle number three — Large changes are hard to understand, and harder to debug. We deliver complex changes in a series of small, controlled, easy to understand steps.

Keep it simple



Engineering principle number four — Complexity is the enemy of our ability to move quickly. We will trade off performance, financial cost, and perfect abstraction in order to keep a solution simple.

Build with positivity and pride



Engineering principle number five — Great things are only built by high functioning groups of humans. We are optimistic, positive, and assume good intent. We are eager to teach and learn.

Engineering Published May 16, 2013

Shipping is your company's heartbeat

Software only becomes valuable when you ship it to customers. Before then it's just a costly accumulation of hard work and assumptions.

Darragh Curran 6 min



Contents

Shipping will try to kill you
The cost of shipping is approaching zero
Shipping cadence defines your company
Shipping continuously

Software only becomes valuable when you ship it to customers. Before then it's just a costly accumulation of hard work and assumptions.

Our industry is incredibly competitive

$$\text{fitness} = f(\text{strategy, culture, talent})$$

1. Are you pointed in the right direction?
2. Are you moving as fast as possible?
3. Are you learning and sharpening your direction along the way?

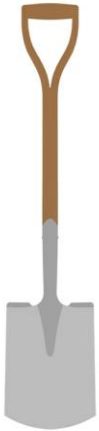
1. Do a thing
2. Learn something
3. Do the next thing

Our job is to optimise this loop.

But....

The benefits don’t happen automatically...

Our job as leaders is to maximally exploit the available tools.





Hole digging productivity



0 10x

Hole digging productivity





Hole digging productivity





Hole digging productivity



10x

100-1000x

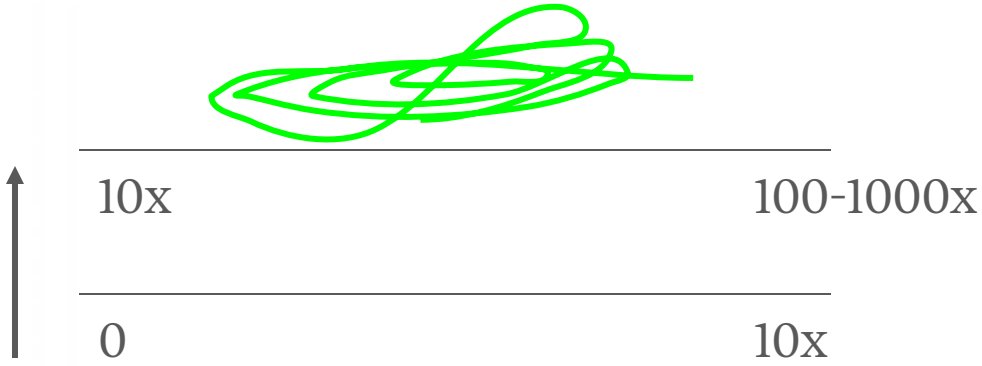
0

10x

Level up!

Hole digging productivity





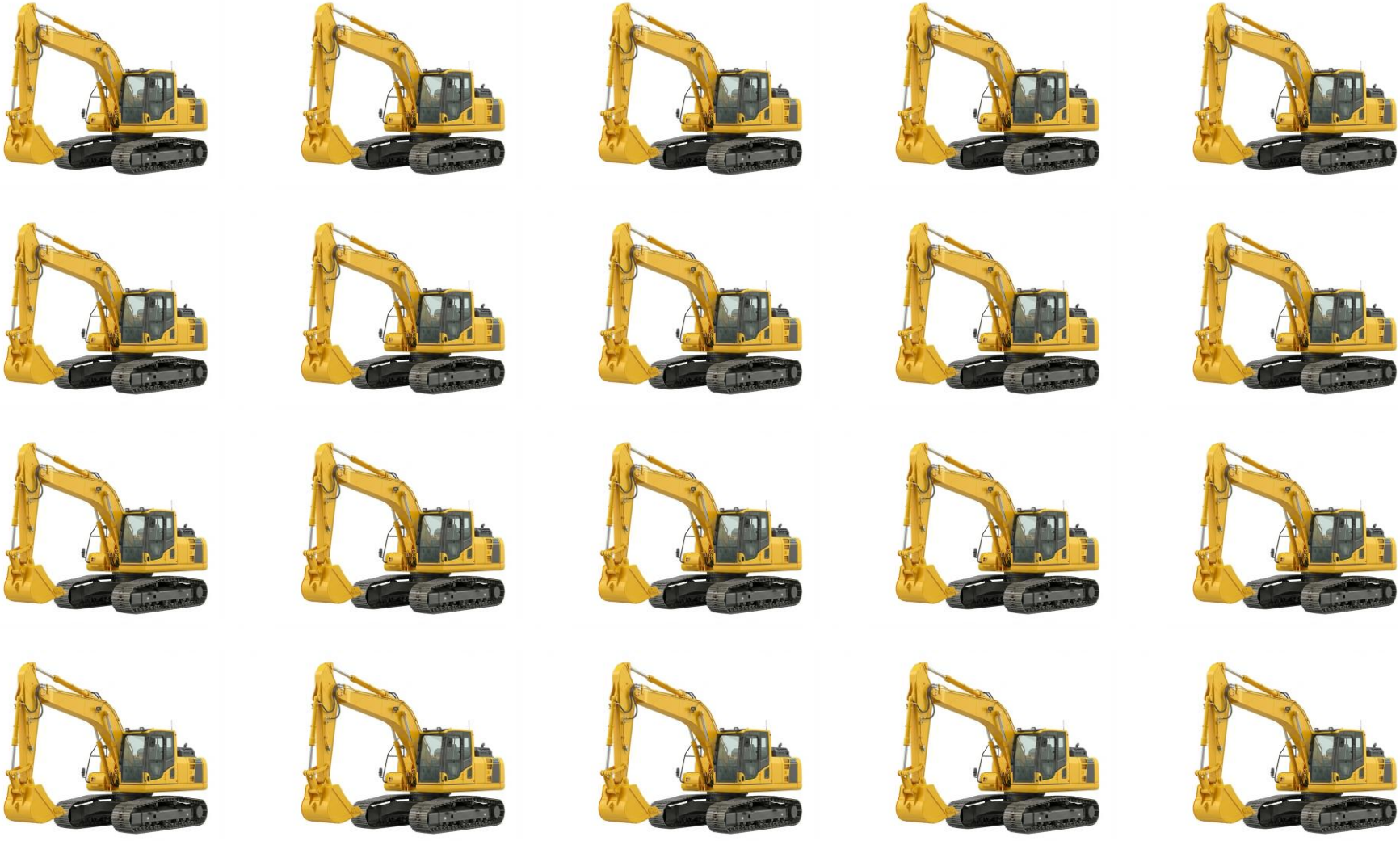
Level up!



This is us

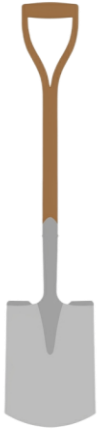


Nice shiny spade










10
2
3
4
5

2x

Darragh Curran June 13 2025

What follows is a version of an email I sent our entire R&D team about an explicit goal and deliberate action we'll take to become twice as productive through our embrace of AI.

Advancements in AI are precipitating the most transformative shift in software engineering of the past 25 years. It's dramatically expanding what software can do and transforming how we build it. We are all novices in this new world, and that's filling me with wide-eyed excitement.

If we were to literally hit pause on further advancements, I'm convinced any engineering team just leveraging the already existing tools effectively should expect at least double their current productivity – a 2x improvement. Yet most people and teams in the industry at large are not getting close to this today, they aren't trying, and they probably don't believe it's possible, and even if they do, behavior change is hard and the forces or incentives aren't clear yet.

What impact we've seen

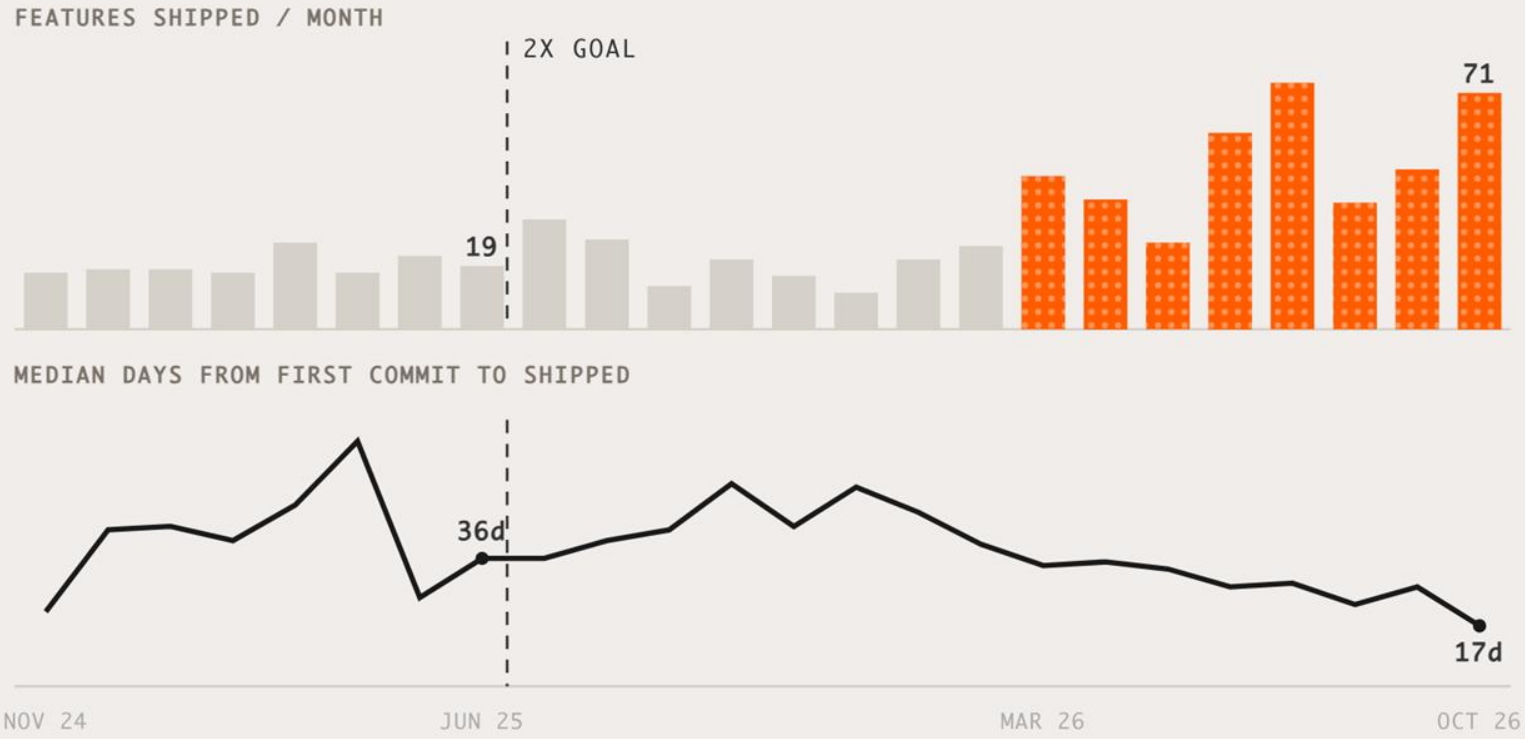
PRs merged per R&D team member

MONTHLY · EVERY R&D TEAM MEMBER COUNTED, NOT JUST ENGINEERS



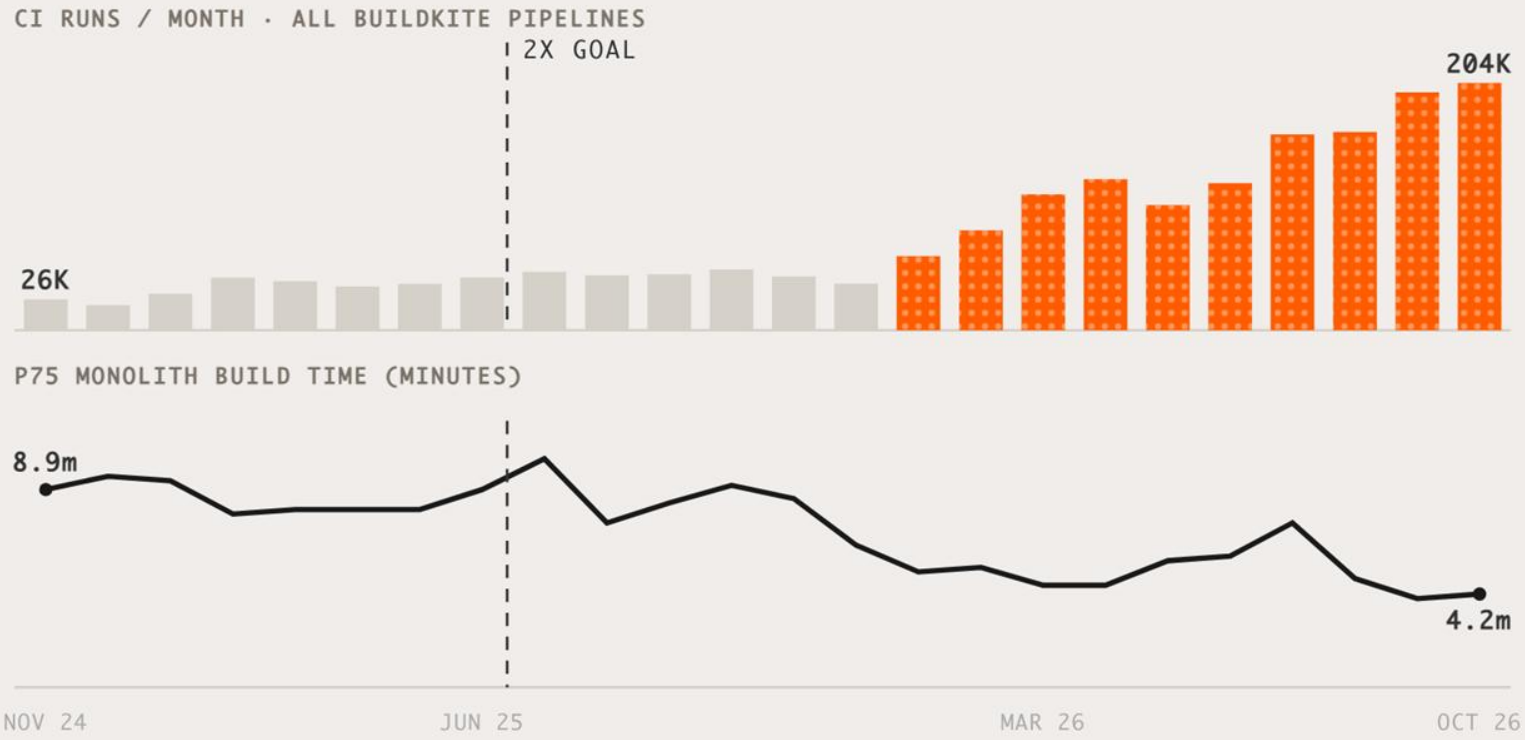
More product changes, shipped faster

FEATURES ANNOUNCED IN #PRODUCT-UPDATES · DAYS FROM FIRST COMMIT TO ANNOUNCEMENT



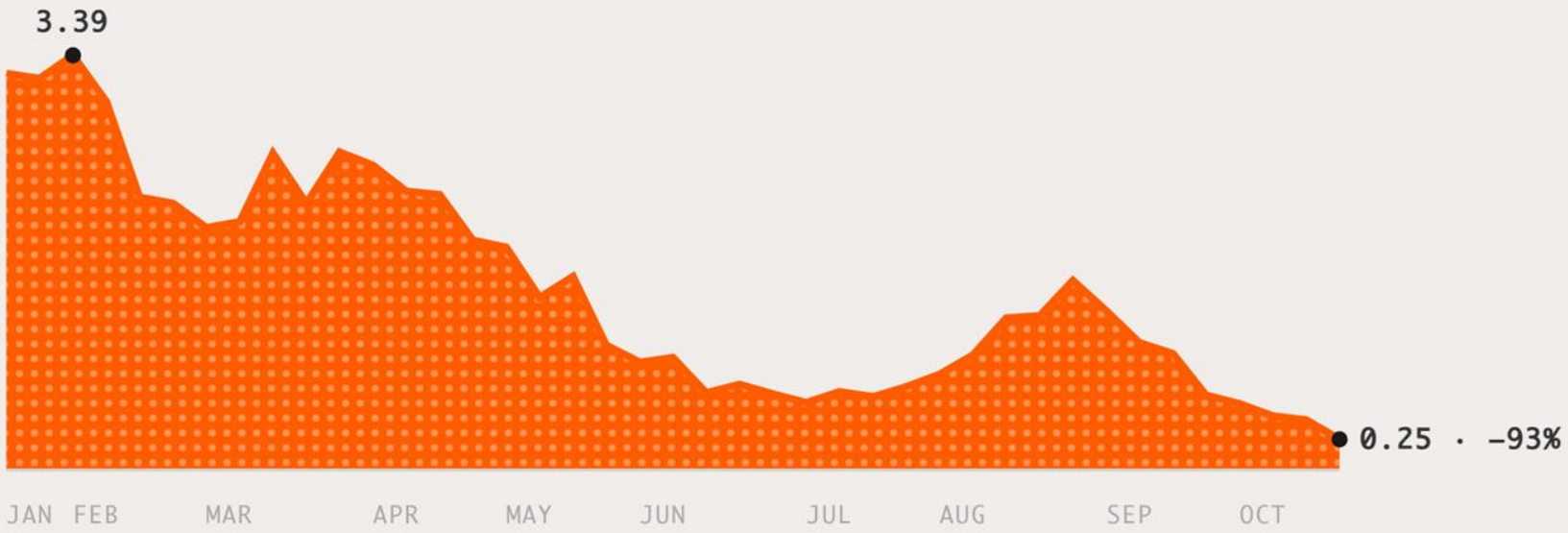
8x the CI runs, builds twice as fast

BUILDKITE BUILDS PER MONTH · P75 WALL-CLOCK TIME OF PASSING MONOLITH BUILDS



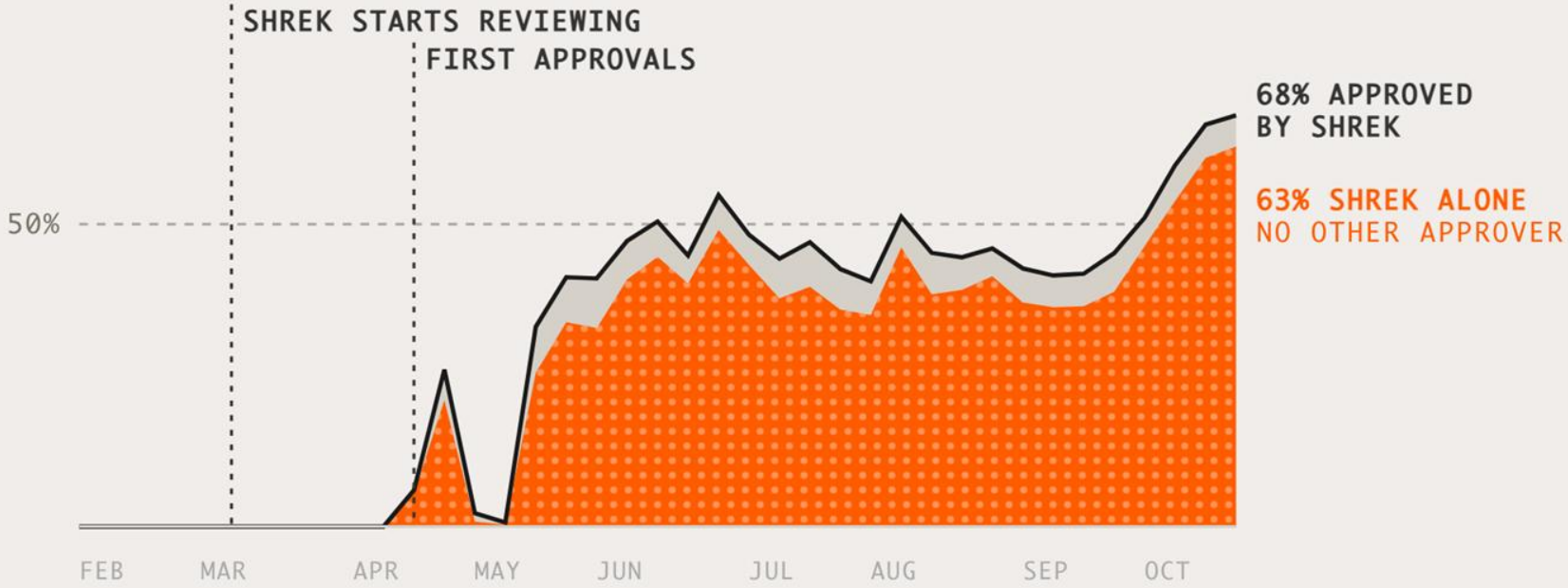
Customer-impacting incidents per 1,000 merged PRs

MODERATE SEVERITY AND ABOVE · ROLLING 4-WEEK RATE · 2026



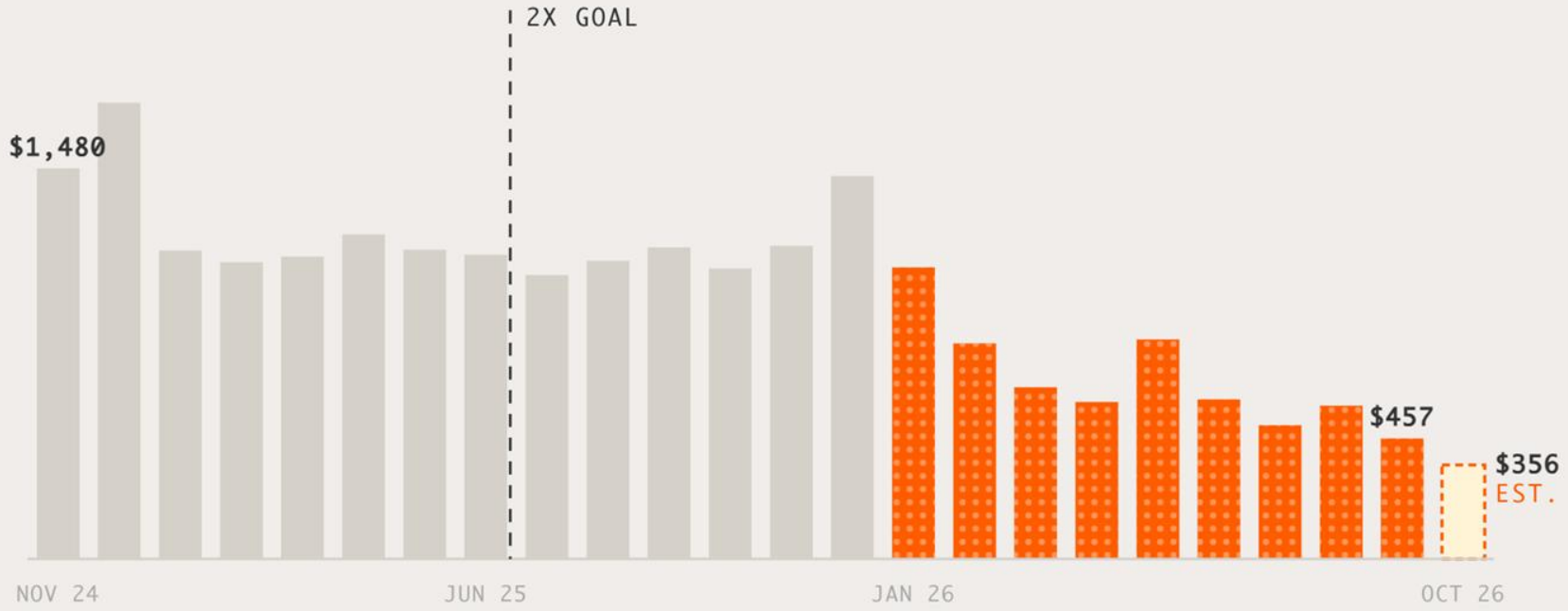
Two-thirds of main-repo PRs are now approved by Shrek

MERGED PRS SHREK APPROVED BEFORE MERGE · INTERCOM, EMBERCOM, ANSWERBOT, INTERCOM-JS



Fully loaded cost per PR is down 69% since the 2x goal

R&D PAYROLL + AI TOOLS PER MERGED PR · R&D, WEB AND FORWARD DEPLOYED ENGINEERS



How we did it

How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you’re going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.

2x

Darragh Curran June 13 2025

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How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you’re going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.
    b. Raise expectations, make that clear.

AI-First Expectations Per Engineering Level

This doc establishes a set of base expectations that apply to every engineer, followed by additional level-specific expectations.

It is in addition to the expectations defined in Engineering Levels v3.2.

Base expectations (all levels)

Every engineer, regardless of level, is expected to:

1. **Work AI-first by default.** Claude Code is the primary way of working, not an occasional supplement. AI is used across the full development lifecycle: planning, coding, debugging, reviewing, etc.
2. **Use the platform broadly.** Go beyond basic code generation. Leverage platform skills across the team's remit - debugging, CI, code review, investigation, deployment - to operate more independently and effectively. Share what works - effective workflows, useful skills, patterns you discover.
3. **Demonstrate accelerating throughput.** We expect to see a meaningful and ongoing uplift in PR throughput as AI leverage deepens. This is not a one-time step change; it should be a continuing acceleration as skills and workflows improve.
4. **Take on broader and more ambitious work.** Use AI to bridge knowledge gaps and take on work that would previously have been considered too unfamiliar or too broadly scoped. The boundaries of what one engineer can own should be expanding.

How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you’re going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.
    b. Raise expectations, make that clear.
    c. Support, time, tools. Active management.

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2. Technical:
    a. Have an opinion about tools, and make them work excellently for your team.


CLAUDE
CODE

How we did it.

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    b. Raise expectations, make that clear.
    c. Support, time, tools. Active management.
2. Technical:
    a. Have an opinion about tools, and make them work excellently for your team.
    b. All technical work is agent first.

All technical work is Agent first.

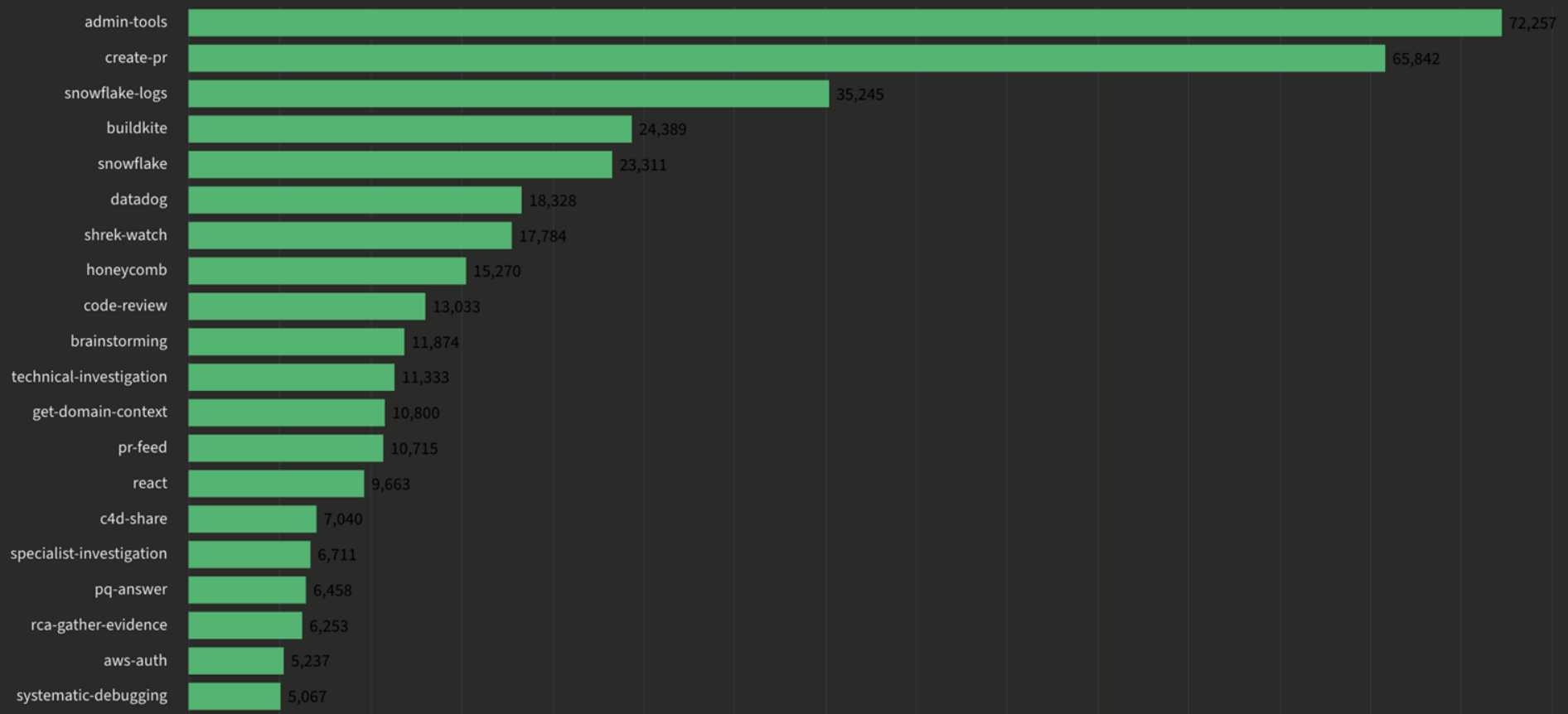
Agents must be able to perform anything a human can do.

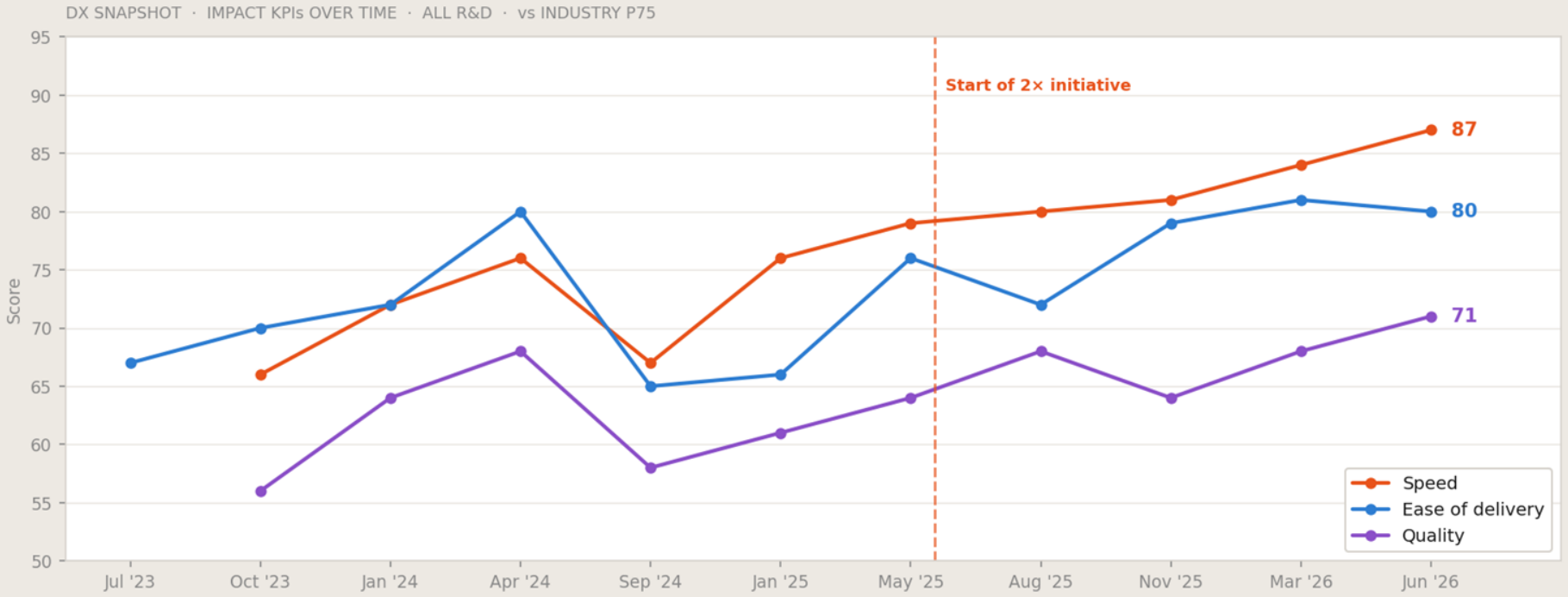
Engineers focus energy on improving agents ability to do excellent work autonomously.

How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you're going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.
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    a. Have an opinion about tools, and make them work excellently for your team.
    b. All technical work is agent first.
    c. Measure all the things.

Most Popular Skills




DX SNAPSHOT · IMPACT KPIs OVER TIME · ALL R&D · vs INDUSTRY P75
Score
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
Start of 2× initiative
87
80
71
Speed
Ease of delivery
Quality
Jul '23
Oct '23
Jan '24
Apr '24
Sep '24
Jan '25
May '25
Aug '25
Nov '25
Mar '26
Jun '26

How we did it.

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2. Technical:
    a. Have an opinion about tools, and make them work excellently for your team.
    b. All technical work is agent first.
    c. Measure all the things.
    d. Exploit legibility.

Exploit legibility

Mine sessions for friction or suboptimal outcomes. Solve root causes.

How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you're going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.
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    c. Measure all the things.
    d. Exploit legibility.
    e. Run Less (AI) Software.

Run Less (AI) Software.

We focus efforts on evergreen, Fin-specific capabilities, and aggressively deprecate internal tools when first-class vendor features are available.

How we did it.

1. Socio:
    a. Say you're going to do it, have conviction, take it seriously.
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    c. Measure all the things.
    d. Exploit legibility.
    e. Run Less (AI) Software.
    f. Attack coarse goals.

Attack coarse goals. e.g.

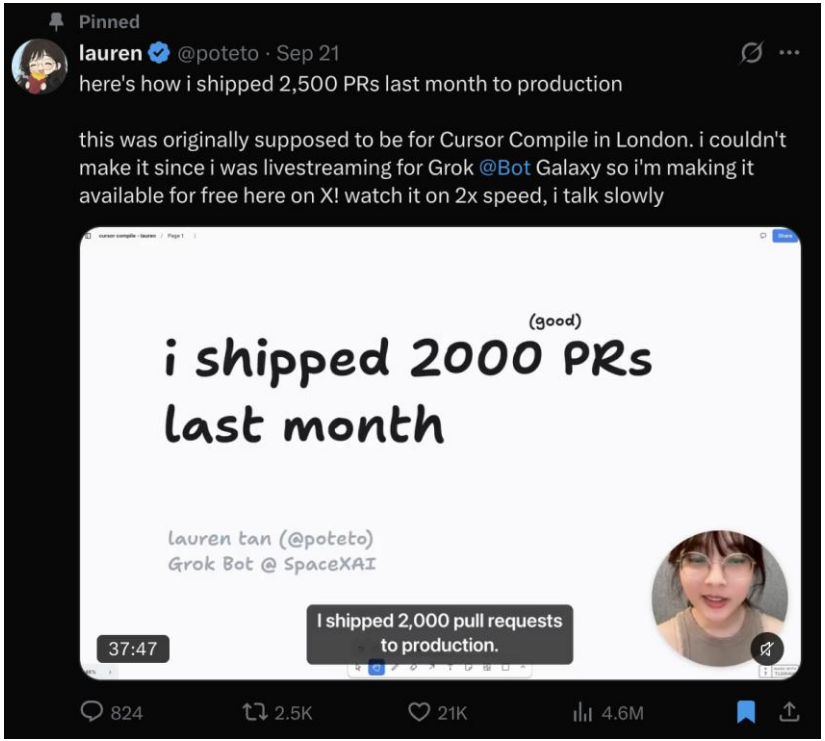
1. All PRs agent driven.
2. > 50% PRs approved by AI.

What are our current challenges?

What are our current challenges?

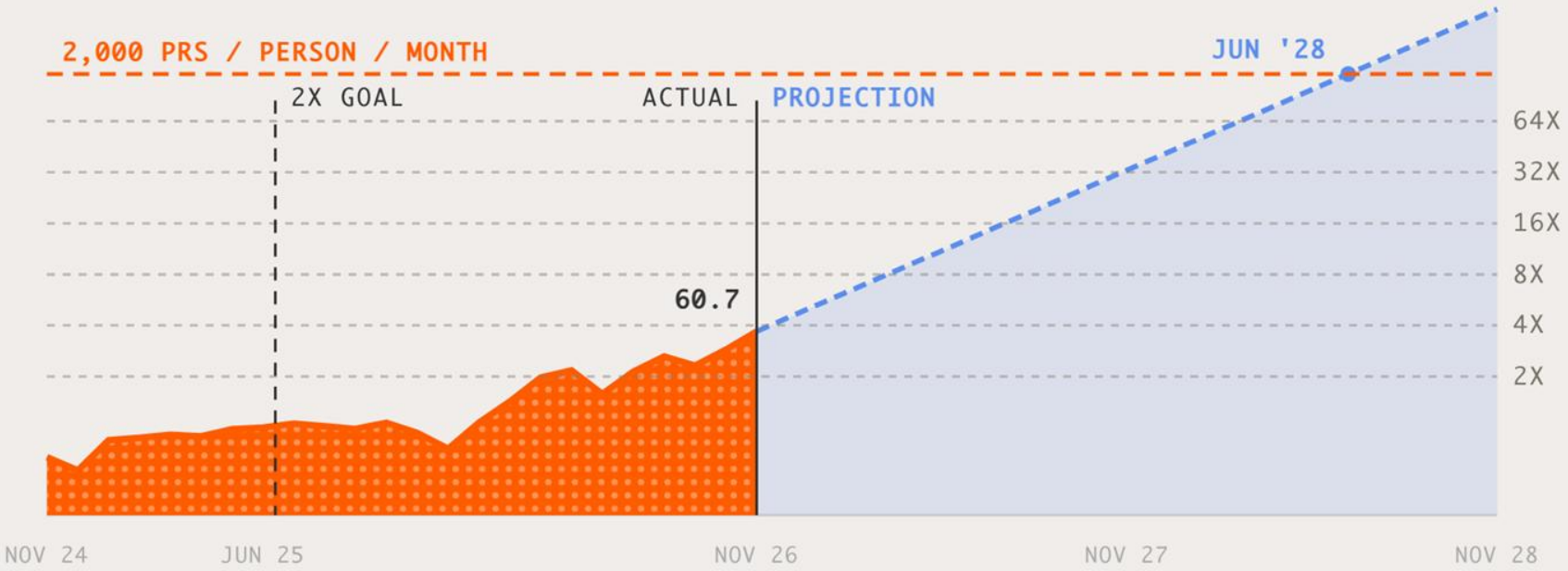
1. Agent opportunity in triaging/shaping/planning work, not just executing.
2. Moving up the autonomy scales - fully autonomous PRs from one shot prompt to prod.
3. Widening gap between p90 and p50. Raising the floor.
4. Evolving org design.

We are here


Pinned
lauren @poteto · Sep 21
here's how i shipped 2,500 PRs last month to production
this was originally supposed to be for Cursor Compile in London. i couldn't make it since i was livestreaming for Grok @Bot Galaxy so i'm making it available for free here on X! watch it on 2x speed, i talk slowly
(good)
i shipped 2000 PRs last month
lauren tan (@poteto)
Grok Bot @ SpaceXAI
I shipped 2,000 pull requests to production.
37:47
824
2.5K
21K
4.6M

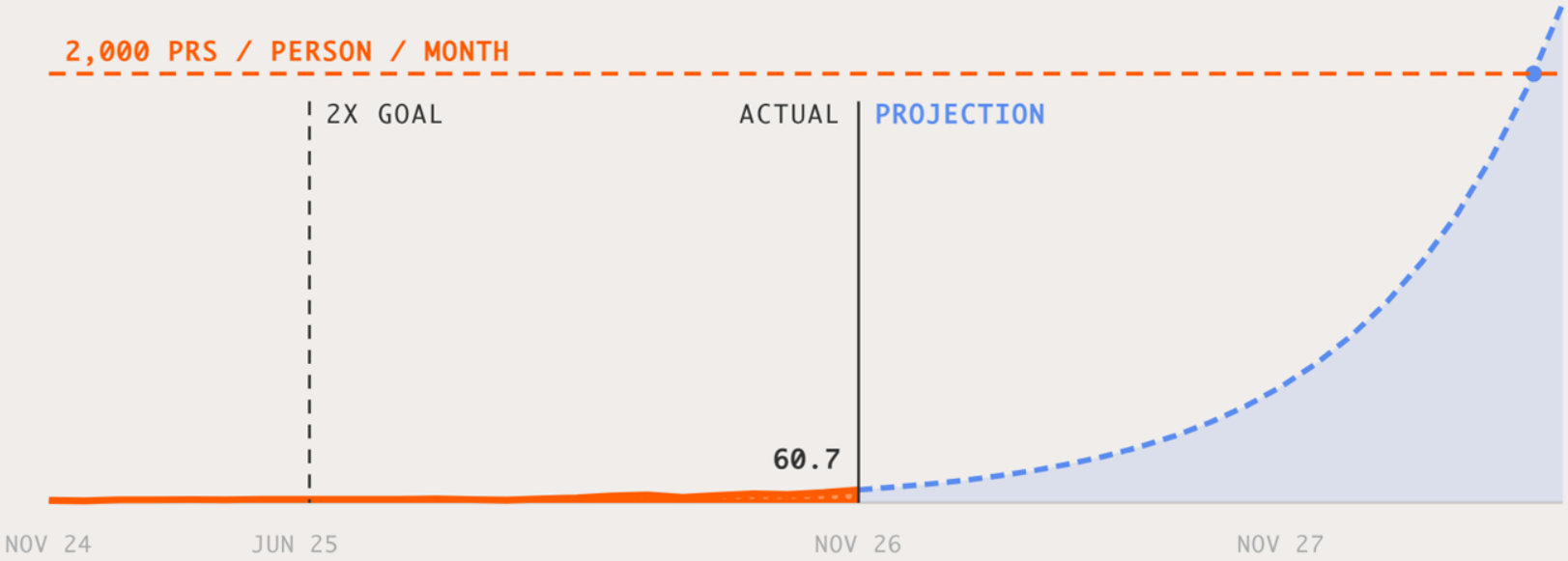
2x mindset, relentless doubling

MONTHLY PRS MERGED PER R&D TEAM MEMBER · LOG SCALE



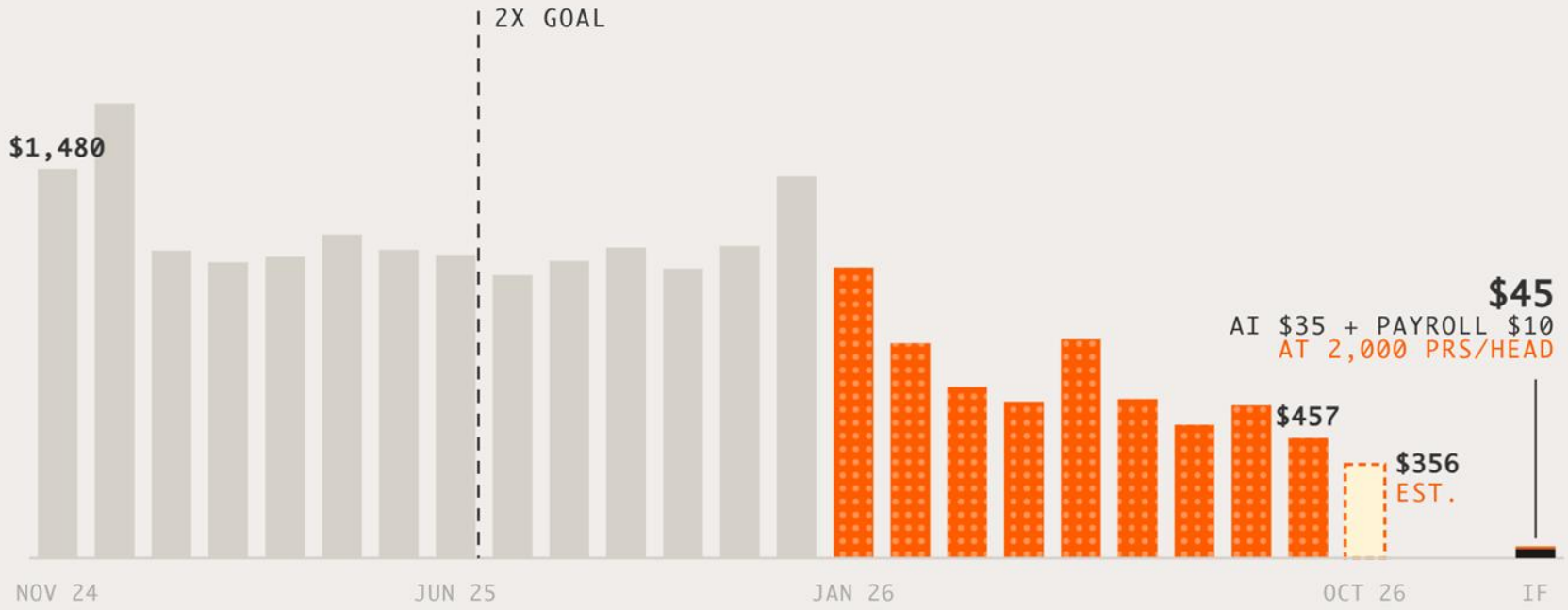
2x mindset, relentless doubling

MONTHLY PRS MERGED PER R&D TEAM MEMBER



At 2,000 PRs per head, a PR would cost about $45

R&D PAYROLL + AI TOOLS PER MERGED PR · R&D, WEB AND FORWARD DEPLOYED ENGINEERS



Takeaway:

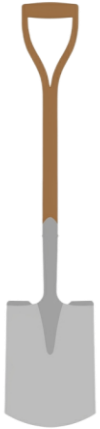
AI disruption is extreme.

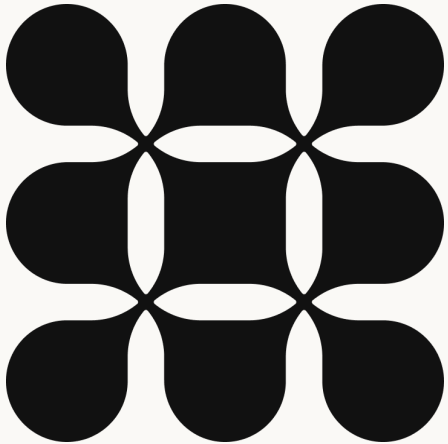
You must fight hard to adapt.

This is your job as a leader.









darragh@fin.ai