TALK

# The AI-augmented EM: Rebuilding how I lead

**Toni Bakarčić**
Engineering Manager, Sofascore

LeadDev Berlin 2026

MY STORY

# About me

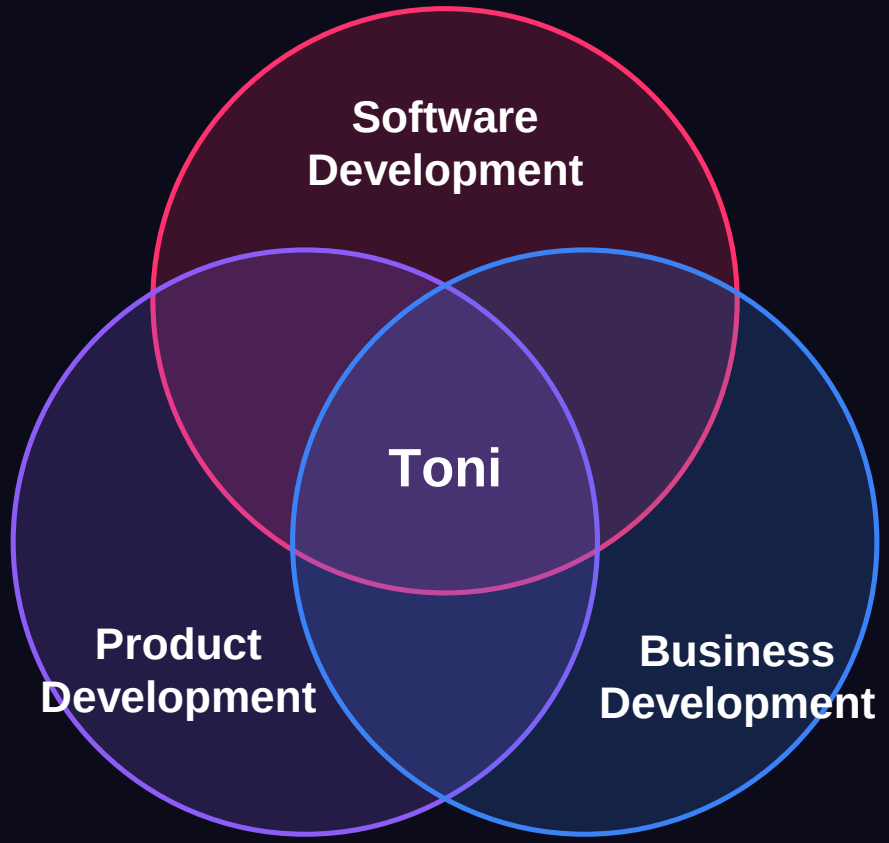
**A decade in IT**

Web development · Android development · people management · project management · feature development · kickstarting projects

**Big sports fanatic**

**8 years at the company**

**Sofascore: 30 → 350+ people**



THE PREMISE · three and a half years ago

# How do you fit 60+ hours into 40?

**Sole leader of a brand-new product**

Market analysis · business development · roadmap · tickets · leading the Android department · a cross-functional team

**Reviewing every PR. Still coding half my week.**



EARLY WARNING SIGNS

# Is my role becoming unsustainable?

**No white space**

A calendar with no gaps and no thinking time

Weeks running away from me, while only covering the basics

**Development didn't move without me**

Reviewing every PR

Signing off every decision

**Author of every ticket**

Nobody else can start work without them

**Evaluations run on memory**

No recent evidence

Going with my gut

**Only I can produce the report**

The projects are invisible without them



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THE MAP

# Three parts of the job

01
**People**

02
**Product**

03
**Projects**

THE MAP

# Three parts of the job, one verb each

01

**People**

**standardise**

write the process down once, stop re-deciding it

02

**Product**

03

**Projects**



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THE MAP

# Three parts of the job, one verb each

01

**People**

**standardise**

write the process down once, stop re-deciding it

02

**Product**

**compress**

research and prototypes that took months take weeks

03

**Projects**

THE MAP

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01

**People**

**standardise**

write the process down once, stop re-deciding it

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**Product**

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**Projects**

**automate**

recurring work arrives without me starting it

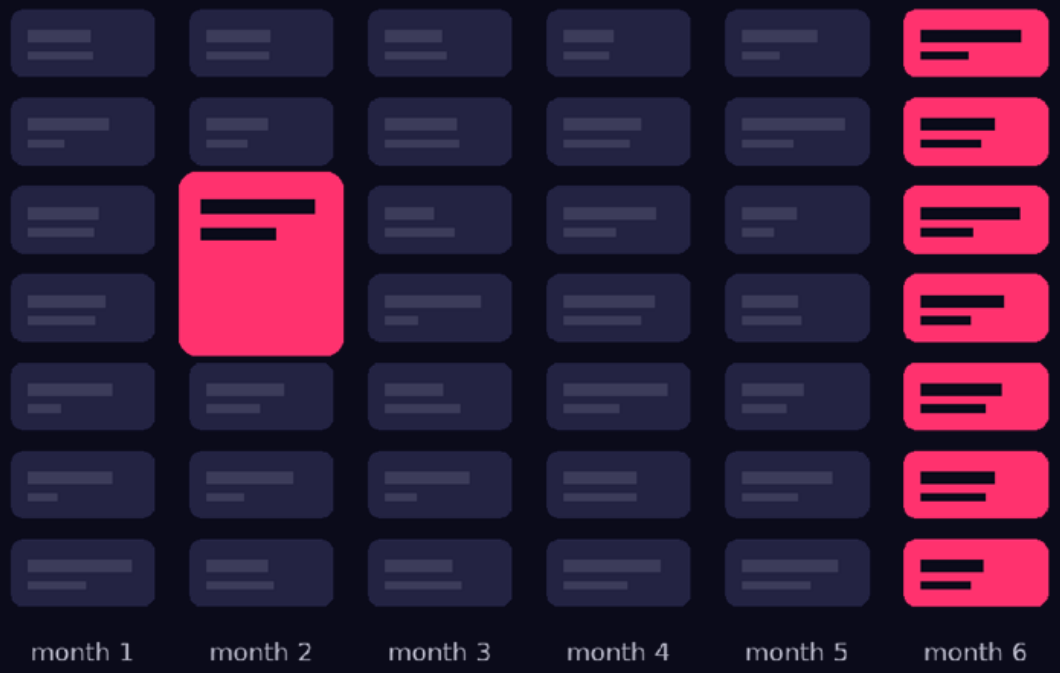
Then: what it changed in how I think, what I did with the time, and the line where AI stops

# 01

# People

**standardise** · write the process down once, stop re-deciding it

# Evaluation by memory



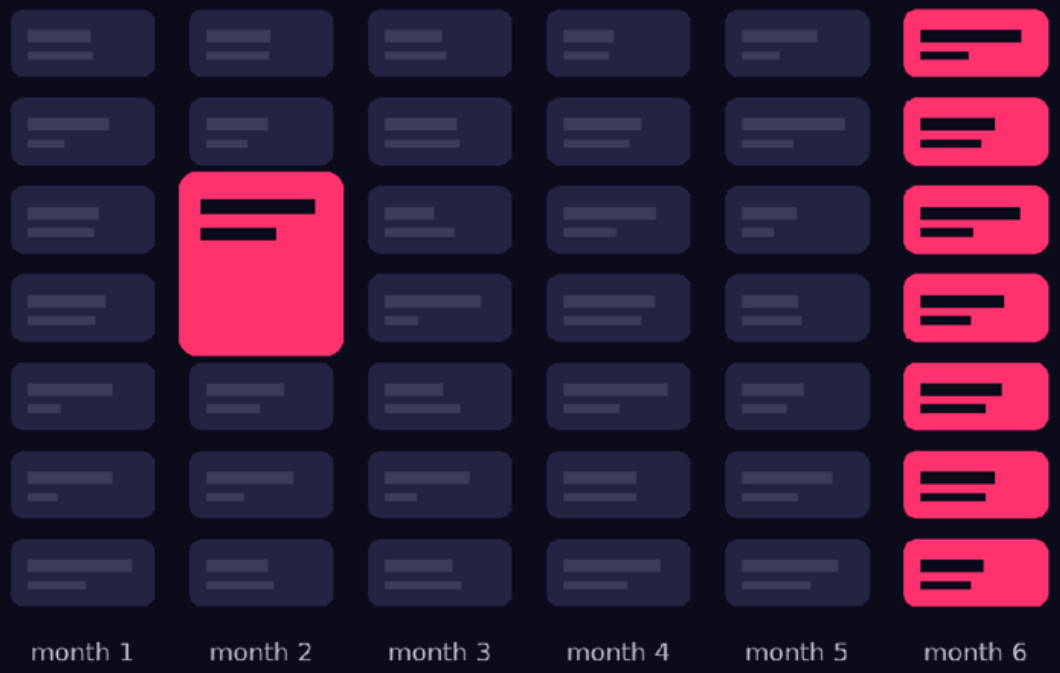

**What memory keeps:**

- **the last month**
- **the loud work**

**Everything else fades.**

Peer reviews help —
neither complete nor unbiased.

# Evaluation by memory



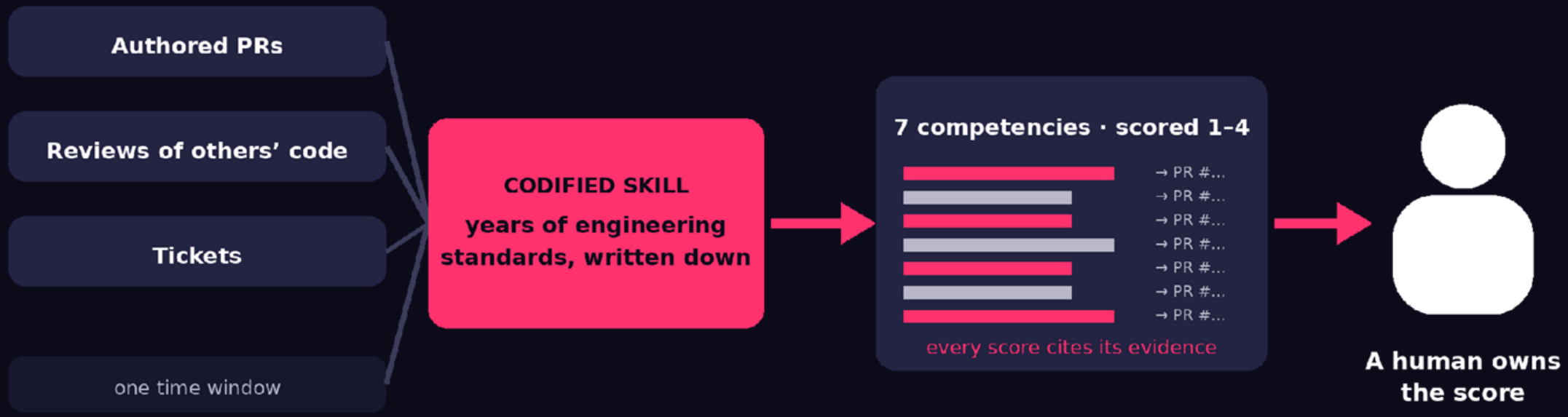

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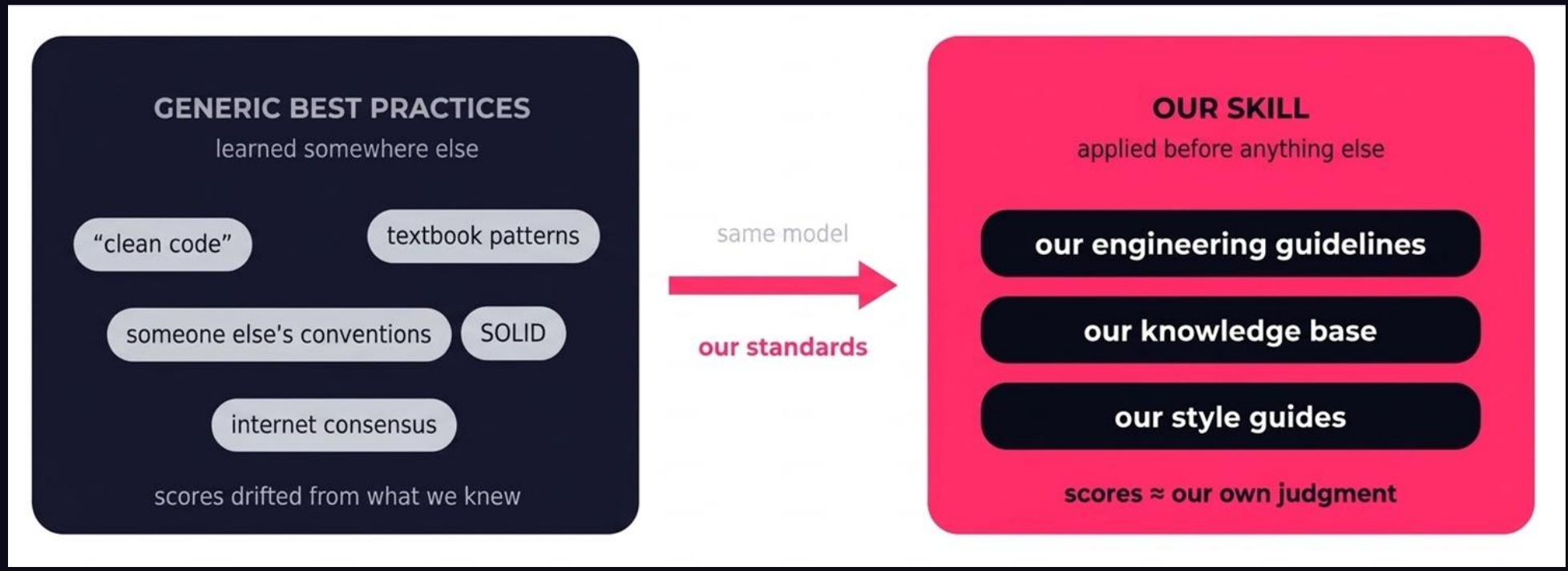
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# Years of engineering standards became one codified skill

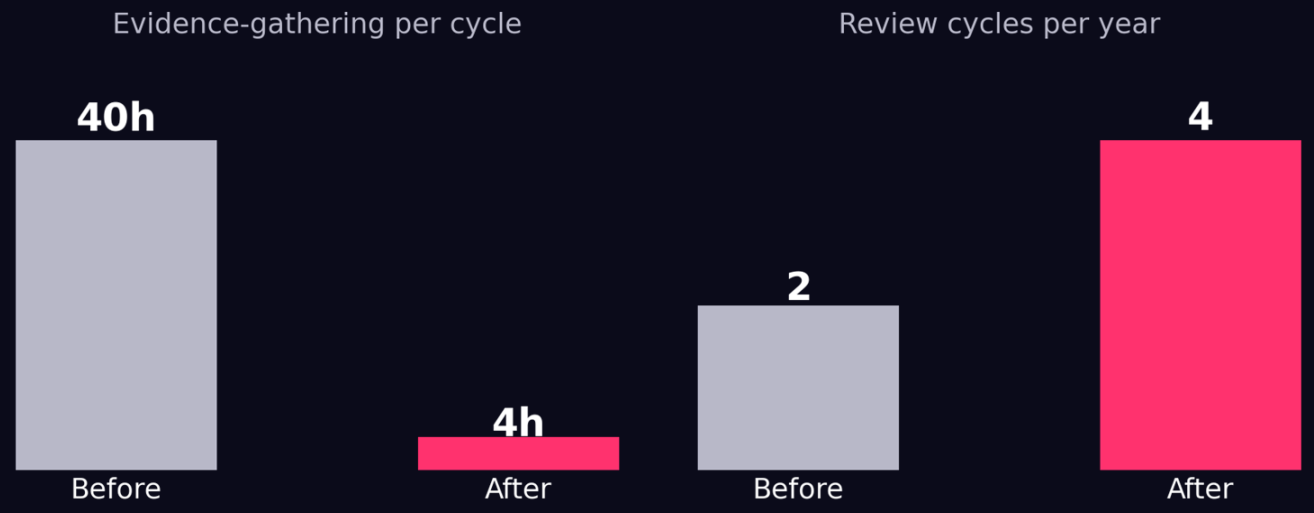



one input, next to peer review and my own evaluation

# It judged my team by its own best practices



# One week → four hours. Cycles 2× as often.




**Twice the data on every engineer**

The reclaimed time goes into in-person reviews with each team member

**Quiet work finally shows up**

Conversations argue evidence, not memories

# The technical layer is the part I automated. The rest I still judge.

MEASURED BY THE SKILL · shrinking

**7 technical competencies, scored 1–4 — every score cites a PR or a ticket**

Run 4× a year. Cheap, consistent, the same for everyone.

AI writes more of the code every quarter — this is the part of the job that is shrinking.

JUDGED BY ME · growing

**7 behavioural competencies — ownership, communication, collaboration, judgment**

Peer reviews: how people actually work in a team

Deliverables and their impact — feedback from POs, PMs and Staff engineers

**None of this is scored by a model. All of it is written down.**

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# 02

# Product

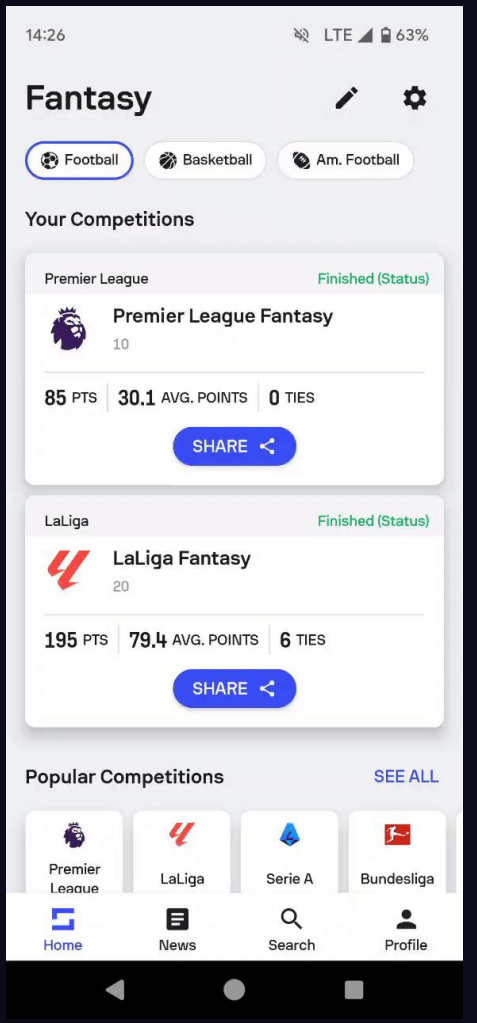
**compress** · research and prototypes that took months take weeks

# A lot of ideas, not enough time

**Fantasy, first attempt: 3 people, 3 months — barely enough to show one stakeholder**

Every pitch needed research I had no time for — so instinct made the case

**What I built: a knowledge base of everything we know**



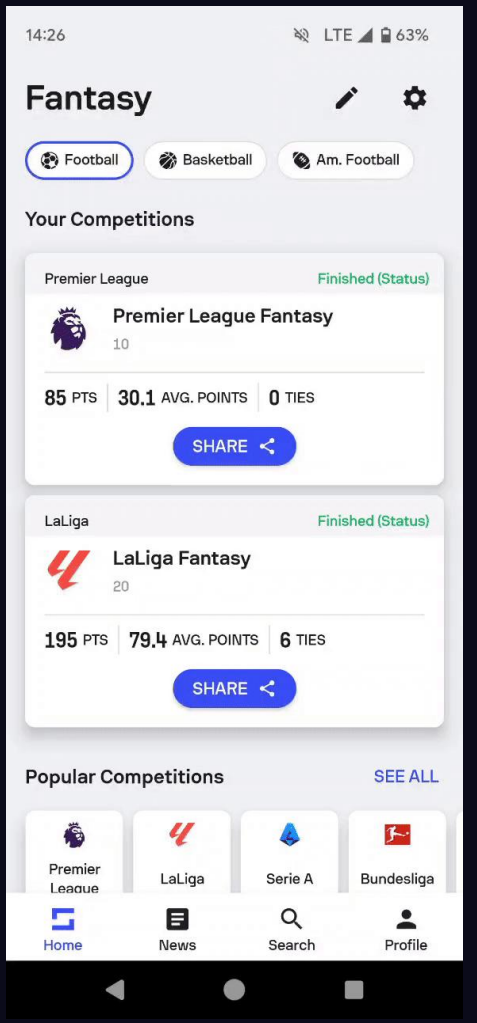

First Fantasy PoC

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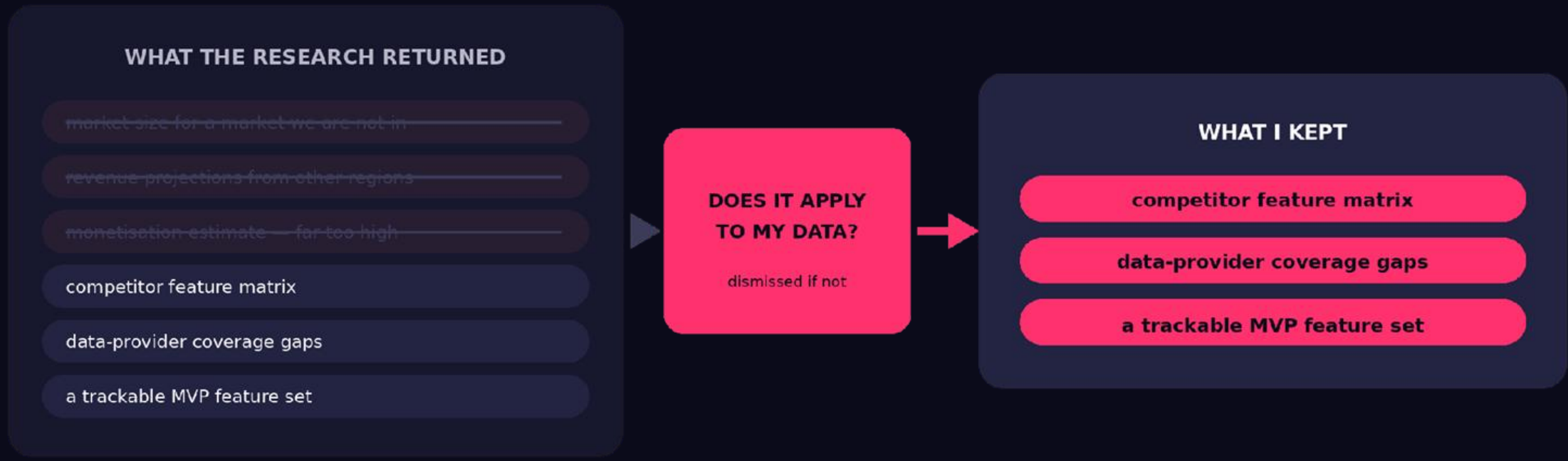
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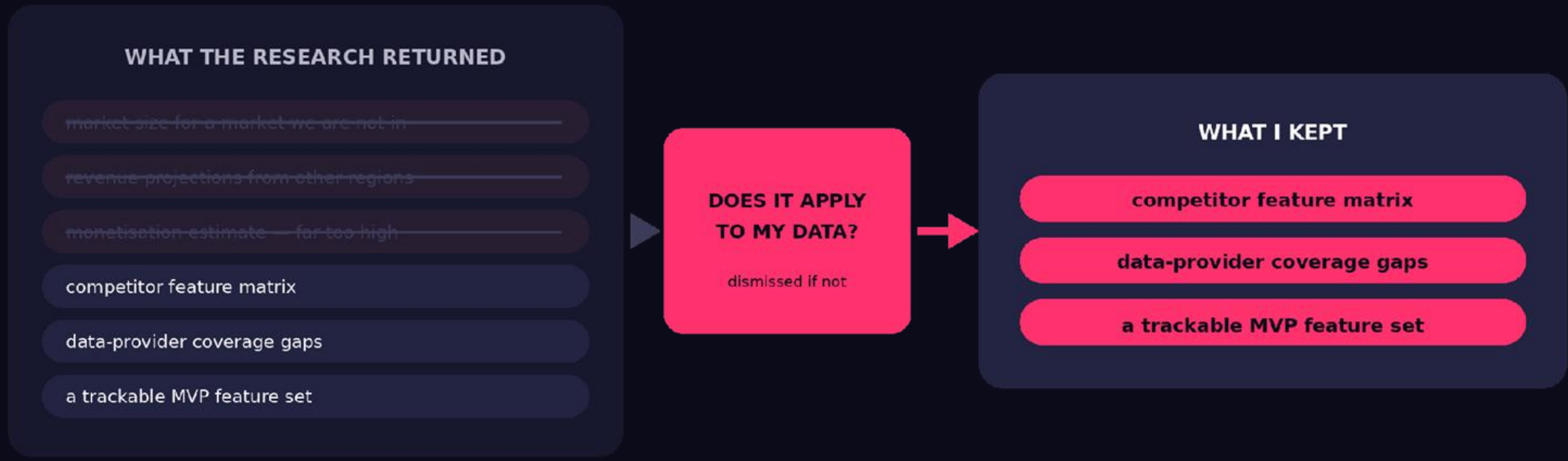



First Fantasy PoC

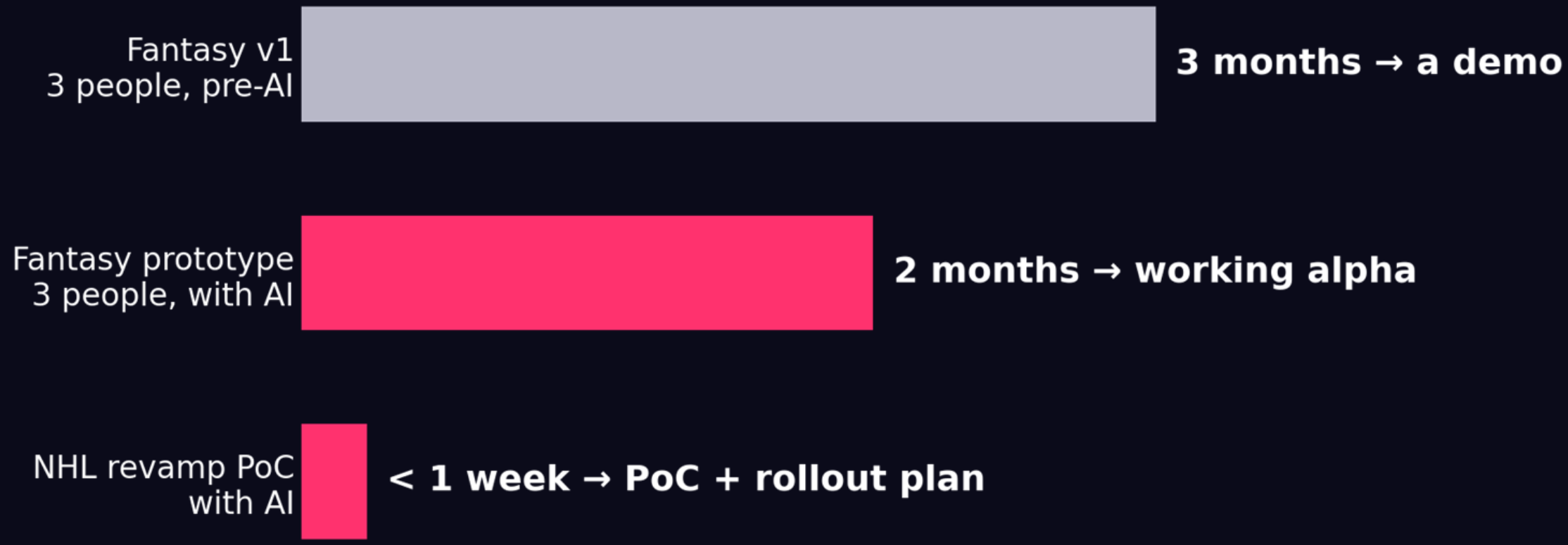
# Filling the gaps without supervision



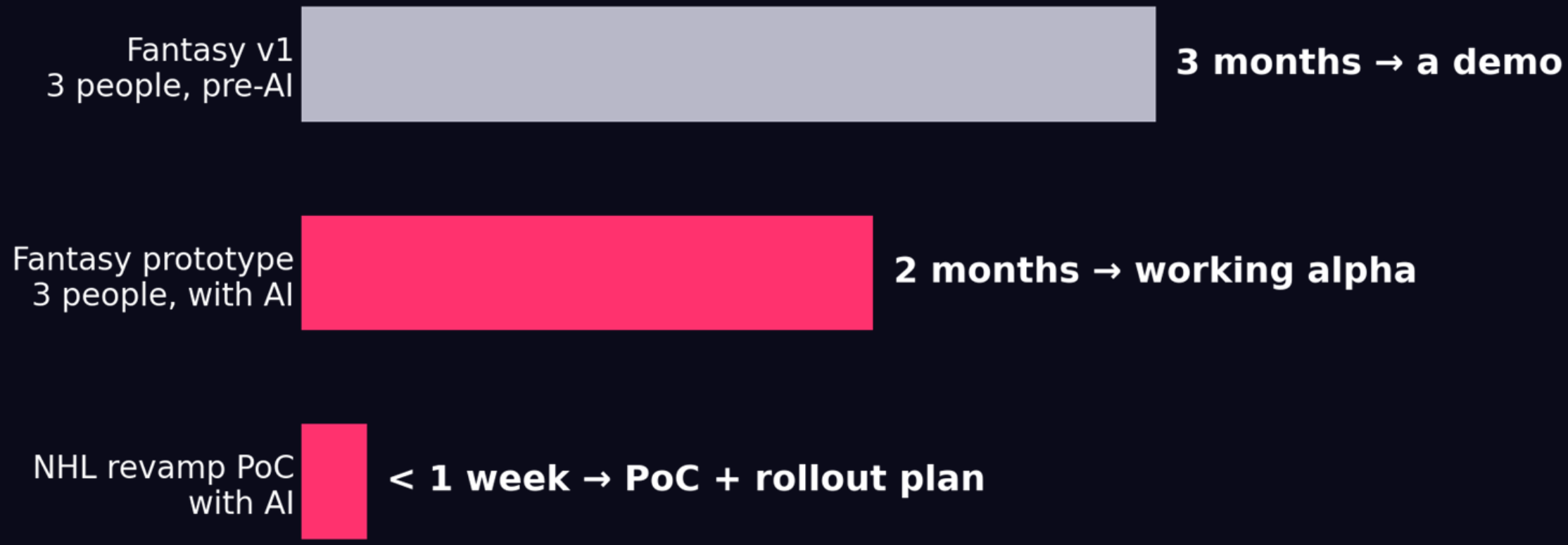
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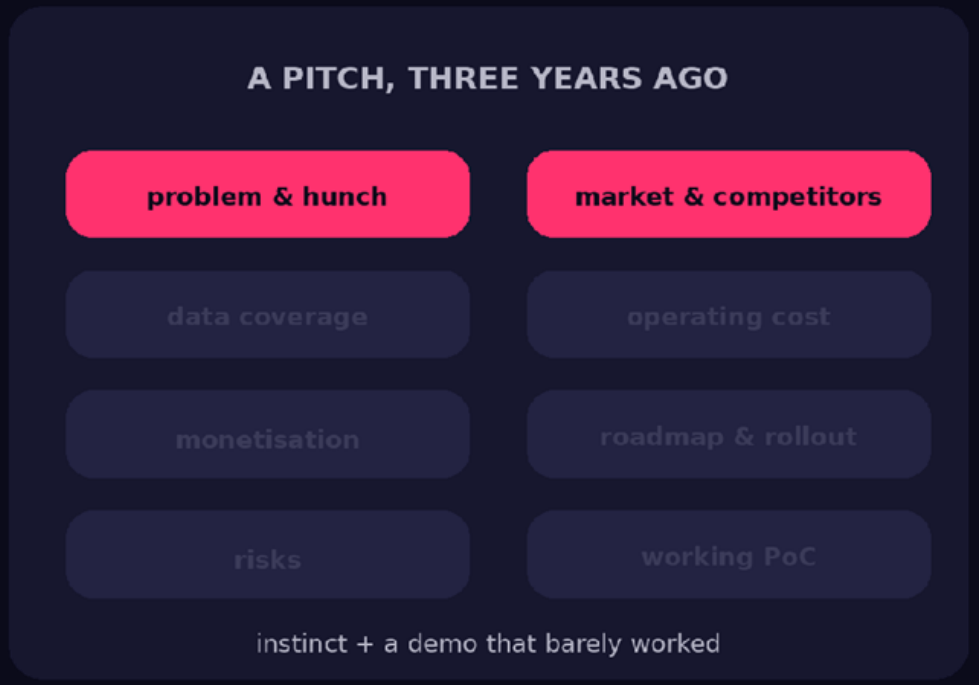
# Three months → one week in one year



# Three months → one week in one year



# Stakeholders don’t get slides any more. They get a plan and a demo.






# 03

# Projects

**automate** · recurring work arrives without me starting it

# Leading a 6 member team, and barely holding on

STARTING POINT

**4 engineers, a designer and a BA**

Constantly running behind schedule

Project had a lot of overhead, it was hard to keep track

We focused more at the task on hand than on building a strategy

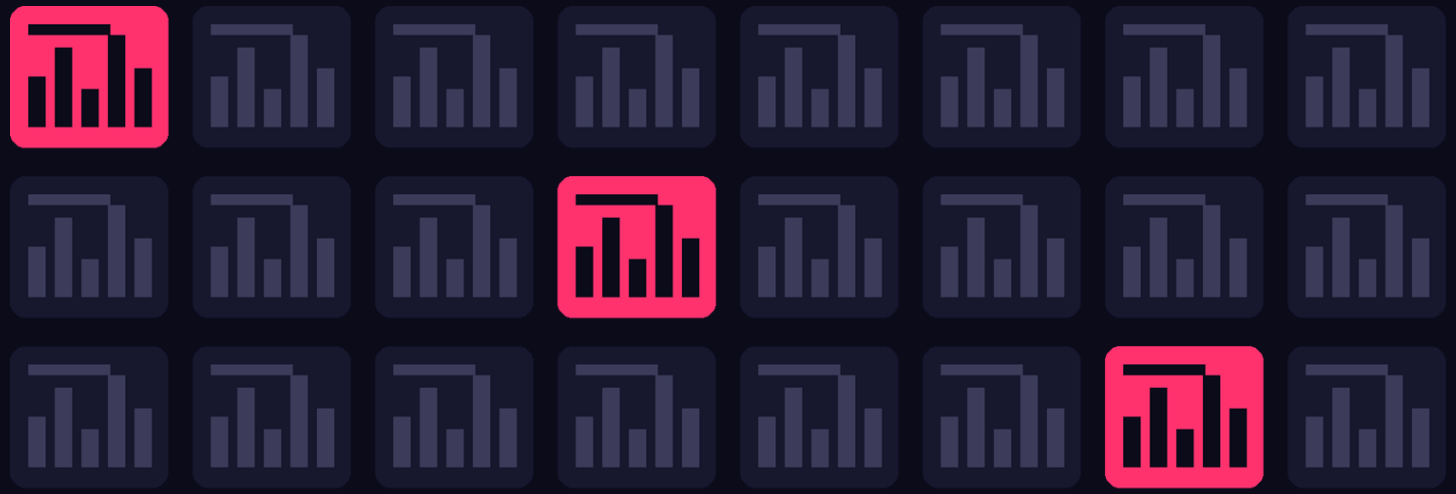
GOAL

**We need to find the time to do the most important things**

How can we automate things?

How can we eliminate irrelevant processes?

# The vibe-coded dashboard cemetery



**50+ dashboards built in the first weeks · 3 still used today**

**Every EM, PO, PM and most seniors built their own**

We shared them around, convinced we had the answer to everything

**Within days or weeks, most were obsolete**

**The dashboards were never the value - the recurring decisions behind them were**



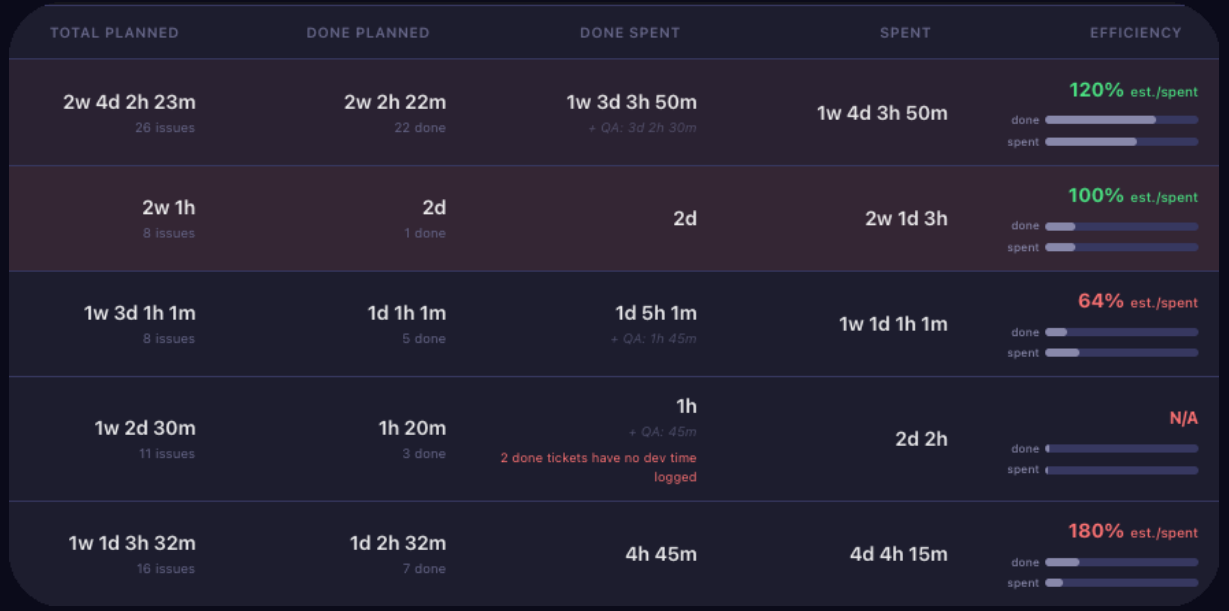
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# Define the process well, then schedule it

**Issue-tracker MCP · Git MCP · skills · dashboards · automated emails · note-taking**

**Scheduled jobs: status and delivery health from the tracker; ticket drafts in our exact conventions**

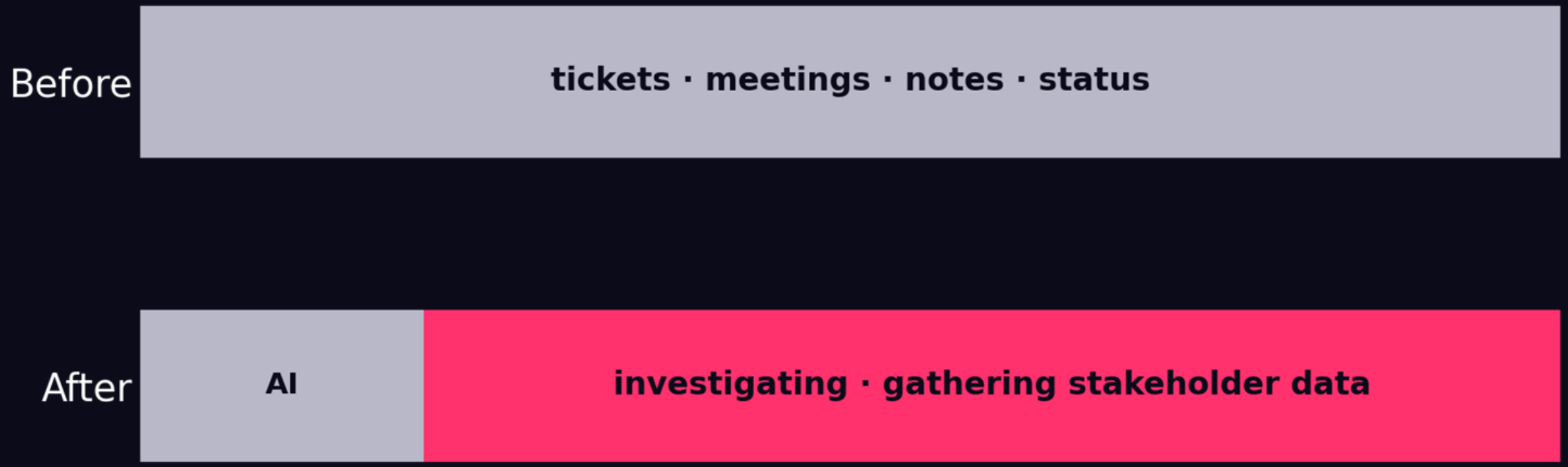
I review, adjust, send. The ticket automation was picked up by others without being asked.



| TOTAL PLANNED | DONE PLANNED | DONE SPENT | SPENT | EFFICIENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2w 4d 2h 23m<br>26 issues | 2w 2h 22m<br>22 done | 1w 3d 3h 50m<br>+ QA: 3d 2h 30m | 1w 4d 3h 50m | 120% est./spent<br>done<br>spent |
| 2w 1h<br>8 issues | 2d<br>1 done | 2d | 2w 1d 3h | 100% est./spent<br>done<br>spent |
| 1w 3d 1h 1m<br>8 issues | 1d 1h 1m<br>5 done | 1d 5h 1m<br>+ QA: 1h 45m | 1w 1d 1h 1m | 64% est./spent<br>done<br>spent |
| 1w 2d 30m<br>11 issues | 1h 20m<br>3 done | 1h<br>+ QA: 45m<br>2 done tickets have no dev time logged | 2d 2h | N/A<br>done<br>spent |
| 1w 1d 3h 32m<br>16 issues | 1d 2h 32m<br>7 done | 4h 45m | 4d 4h 15m | 180% est./spent<br>done<br>spent |

Project tracking dashboard

# Same half a day a week — a completely different half day




Same hours. AI does most of the admin; the hours go to investigating and getting data from the stakeholders who matter. Much higher quality of what comes out.

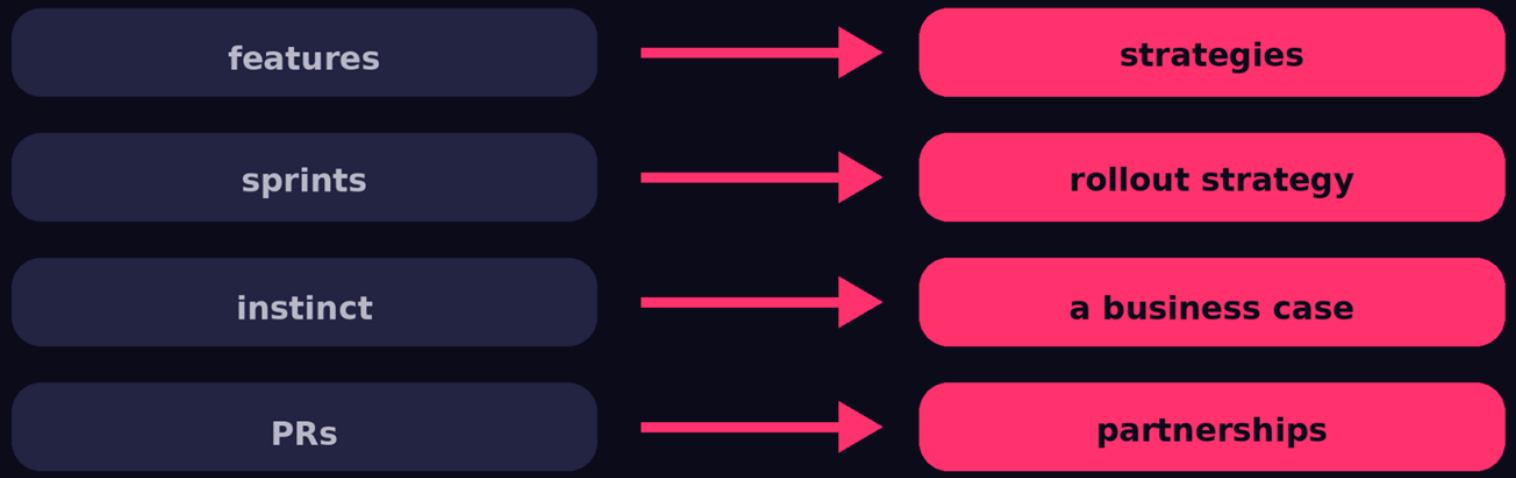
# What it changed in me

**engineer → owner** · and what I did with the time



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# I stopped thinking in features and started thinking in bets



# Doors, reopened

Data analytics & data science — from interest to daily practice

**Hands-on in Sofascore's Sports Analytics team: the NHL player rating system**

**A different discipline from the one I was hired for — and work I could not have made room for.**






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**THE LINE** · one rule for where AI goes and where it stops

# Two questions decide it: does it repeat, and how high are the stakes?

Repeats, low stakes

**AUTOMATE**

Status · ticket drafts · delivery metrics

One-off, low stakes

**COMPRESS**

Research · API coverage · PoCs

Repeats, high stakes

**STANDARDISE, ADVISE ONLY**

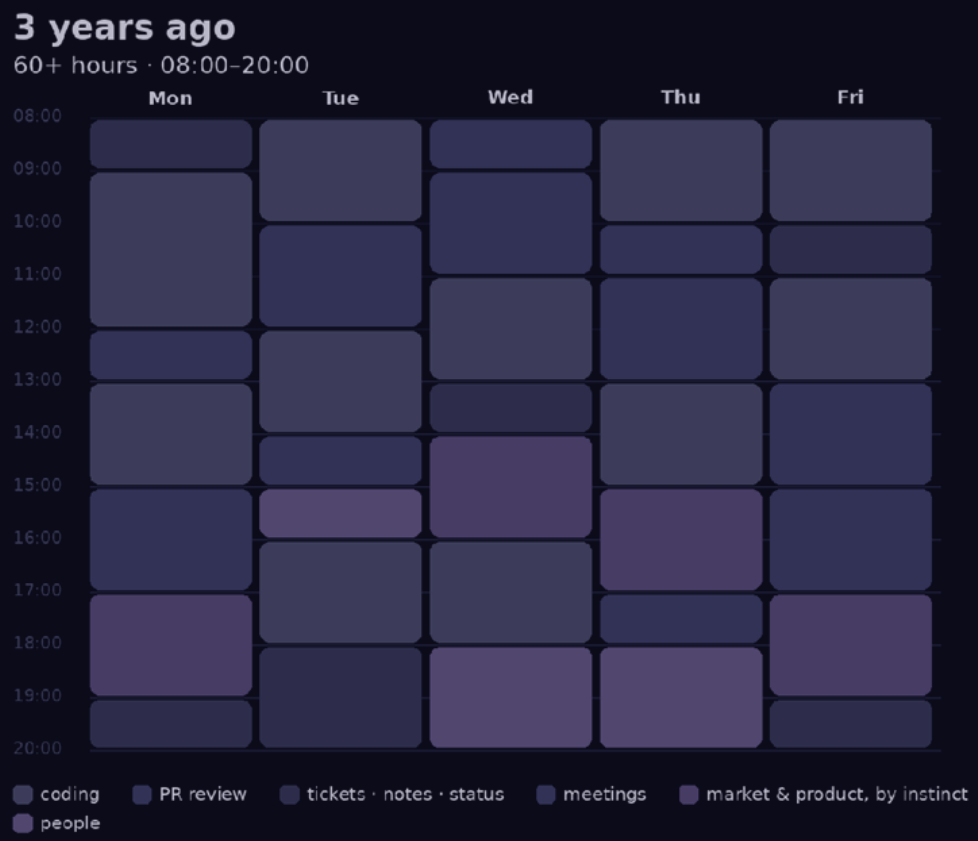
Evaluation evidence · roadmap pros and cons

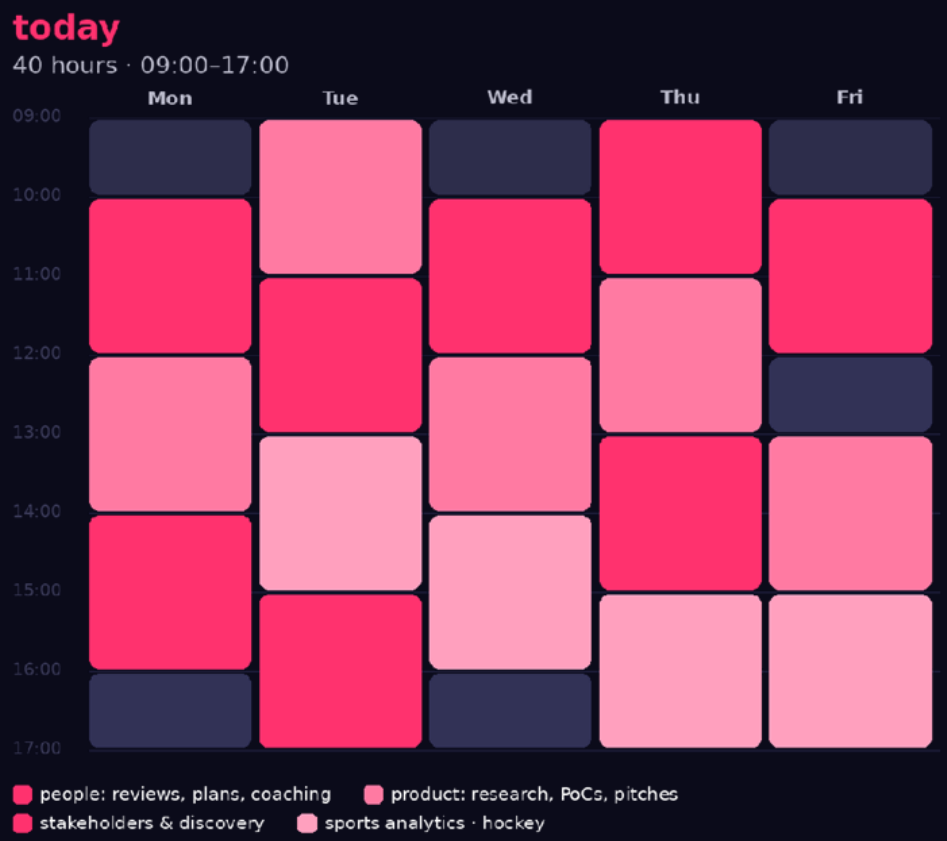
One-off, high stakes

**HUMAN ONLY**

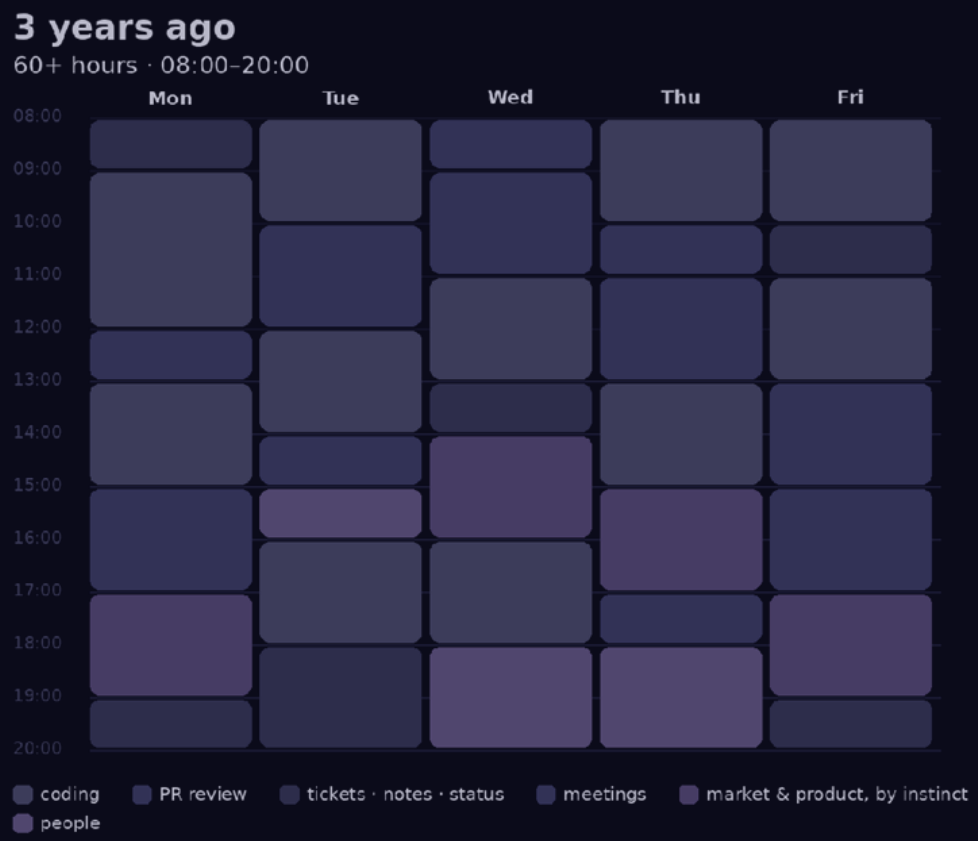
Promotions · hiring · career plans · conflict

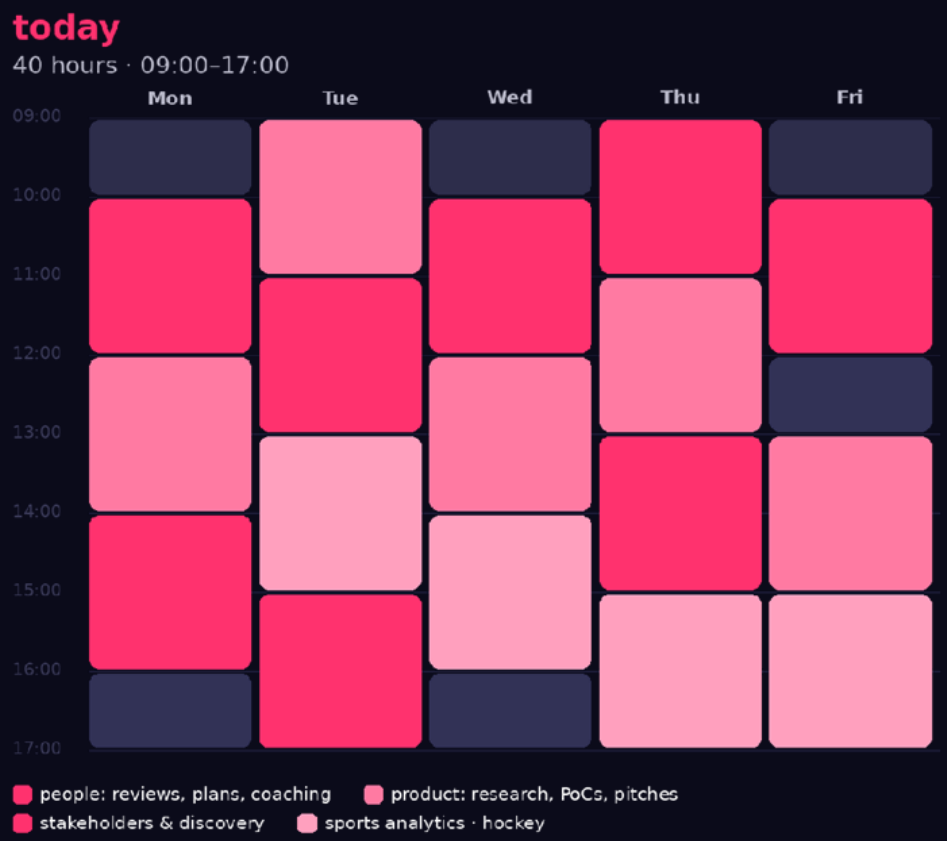
# My week, three years ago and today



# My week, three years ago and today



# Thank you

**Toni Bakarčić**
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**Let's connect**