



March 13-15, 2024

Monterey, CA

# Public Works Officers INSTITUTE

WELCOME

## Making Work Suck Less: Healing Workplaces Through Play

**Jeff Harry**  
**Positive Psychology Play Speaker**

**@jeffharryplays**





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# Attunement



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# Attunement



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# Building The Work Playground



**Why Does Work Suck Now?**

**What Are You Willing To Do First?**

**What Initial Steps Need To Be Taken To Build Back Trust?**

**How Can We Measure Progress in Healing A Workplace?**



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0870

1067

1063



# **Built The Largest LEGO-Inspired STEM Organization In The U.S.**

- **Play (No Business Plan)**
- **Intuition (Picked Fun People)**
- **Prioritized people over profit**
- **Followed Our Curiosity**
- **Focused On Inspiring Staff**

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# What Is Play?



***Play Is Any Joyful Act That  
Has No Specific Purpose or  
Result...***

***Where You Are Fully  
Immersed In The Moment***

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# What Is Play?



***Play Is The Opposite  
of Perfection***

***Play is rooted in curiosity,  
experimentation, a sense  
of wonder***

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**You'll find the  
future where  
people are  
having fun.**

STEVEN JOHNSON



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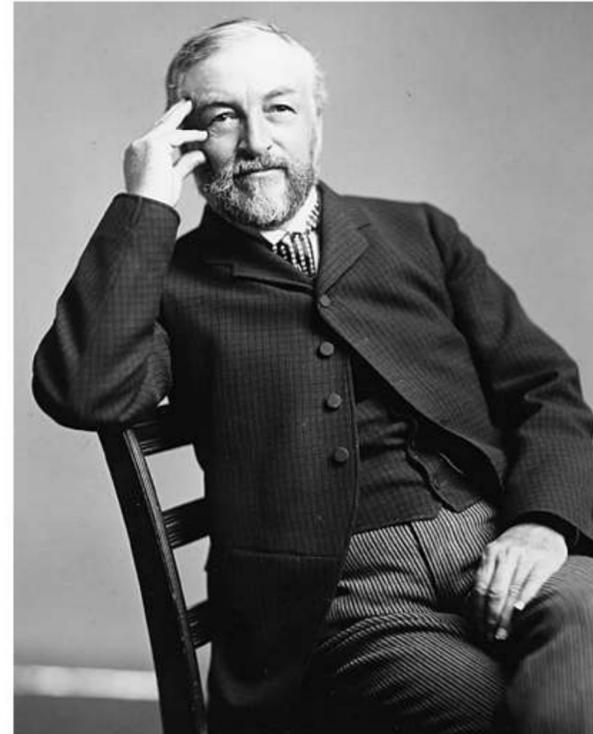


# Play Is Where Innovation Thrives



**Vs.**

**Samuel Pierpoint Langley**

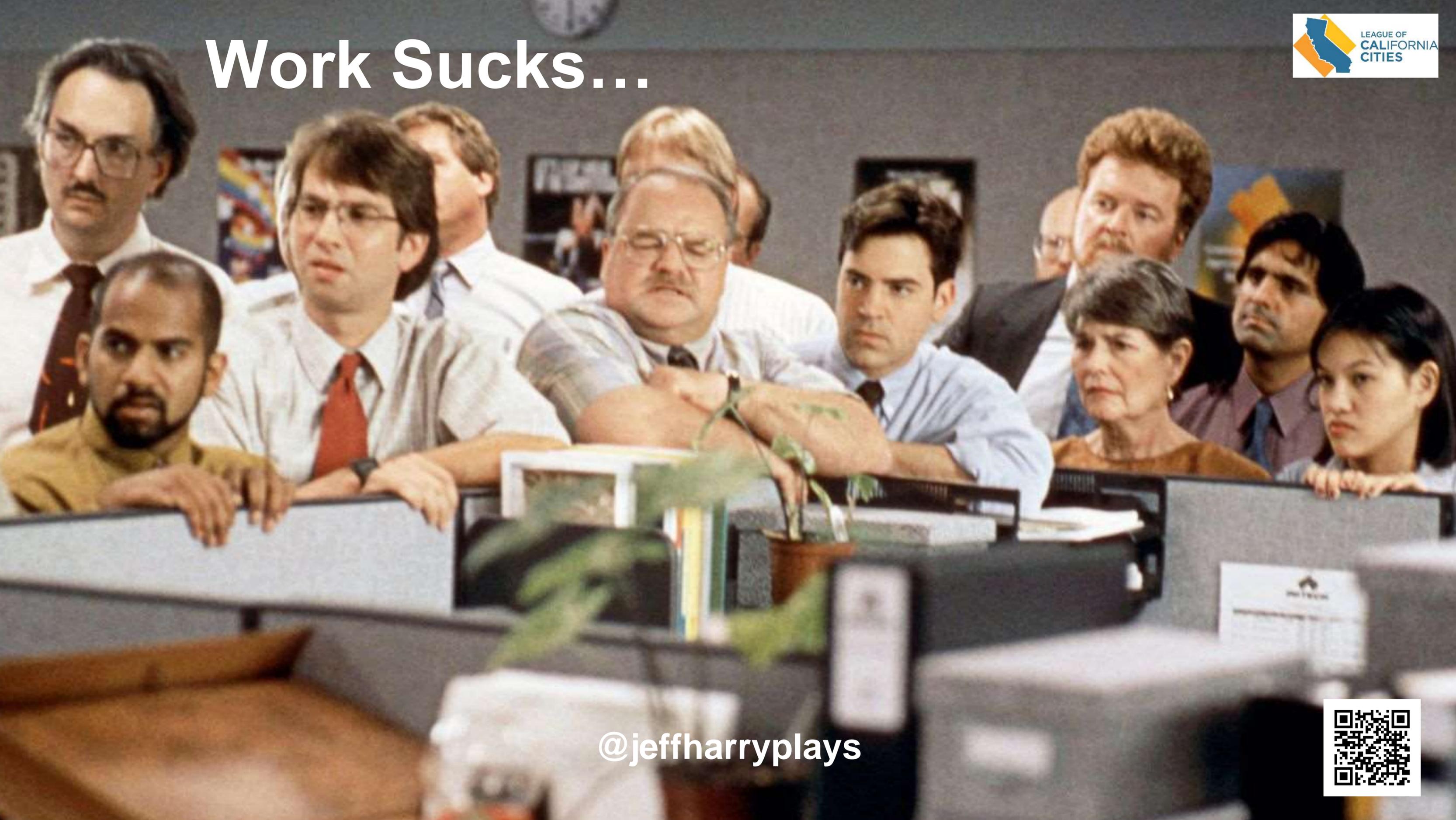


- **Competed Against The Wright Brothers To Create The First Flying Apparatus**
- **Received \$2.5 Million By The War Department**
- **Had Access To The Top Scientists & Engineers At The Smithsonian**
- **Quit After 2 Failed Flight Attempts**

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# Work Sucks...



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# Employees Feel Used

☰ 🔍 **BUSINESS INSIDER**

US MARKETS OPEN  
▲ DOW JONES -0.04% ▼ NASDAQ +0.33% ▼ S&P 500 +0.26% ▼ META +1.58% ▼ TSLA +0.9%

TECH

## Some Google employees didn't realize they were laid off until their badges wouldn't let them into the office

Aaron Mok, Kate Duffy, and Sawdah Bhaimiya Jan 25, 2023, 2:49 AM MST [Share](#) [Save](#)



# Employees Feel Disrespected

Entrepreneur

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## Sephora Hit \$10 Billion in Revenue and Workers Aren't Happy That All They Got Was a 'Stale Cookie'

Reddit users called it the "infamous cookie."

BY JORDAN HART • FEB 7, 2024

Share

### Key Takeaways

- ▶ Sephora North America shattered records with \$10 billion in sales in 2023.
- ▶ But workers at the beauty chain were disappointed to just get cookies to celebrate the milestone.
- ▶ An employee who got the cookies told Business Insider they were "stale."



# Employees Feel Exploited



# The Productivity–Pay Gap

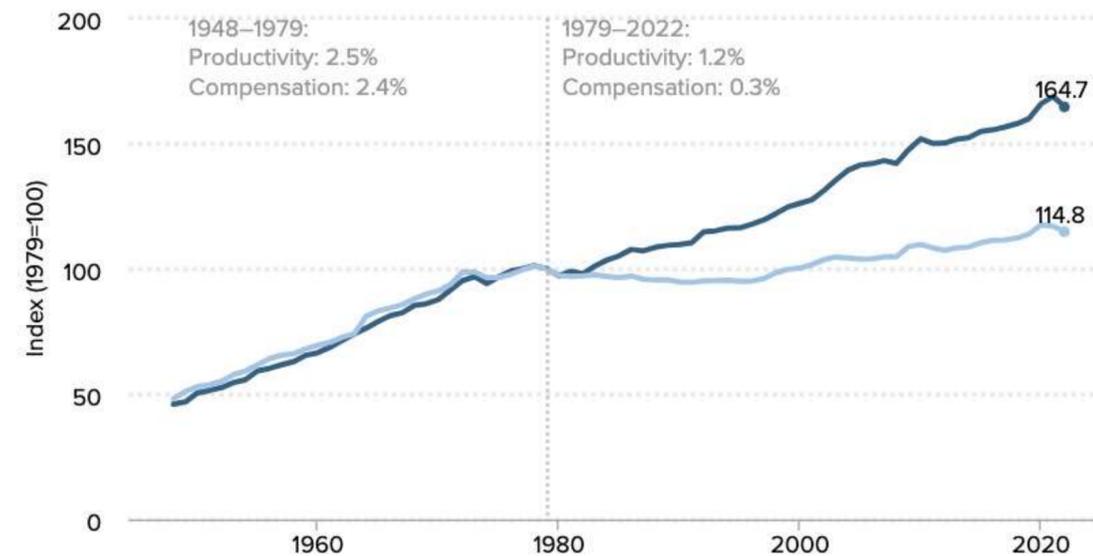
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Updated October 2022

Most Americans believe that a rising tide should lift all boats—that as the economy expands, everybody should reap the rewards. This outcome can be guaranteed by smart and compassionate policy choices or subverted by policymakers choosing a different path. EPI’s Productivity–Pay Tracker shows the shift toward the latter: Since the late 1970s, our policy choices have led directly to a pronounced divergence between productivity and typical workers’ pay. It doesn’t have to be this way.

## The gap between productivity and a typical worker’s compensation has increased dramatically since 1979

Productivity growth and hourly compensation growth, 1948–2022



[Chart](#) [Data](#)

**Notes:** Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. “Net productivity” is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

**Source:** EPI analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the BLS Current Employment Statistics, BLS Employment Cost Trends, BLS Consumer Price Index, and Bureau of Economic Analysis National Income and Product Accounts.

Economic Policy Institute

## Productivity–Pay Tracker

Change 1979–2022:

**Productivity**

**+64.7%**

**Hourly pay**

**+14.8%**

**Productivity has grown 4.4x as much as pay**



# Work Sucks, But It Doesn't Have To



# What Do Employees Want?

**Staff Want To Feel  
Seen, Appreciated & Heard**

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# Question Worth Asking #1

**What Do You Need To Feel  
Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?**

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# Question Worth Asking #1

**What Do You Do To Ensure  
Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, &  
Appreciated?**

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# Making The Work Playground Safe



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# Making The Work Playground Safe

Ready For The Hard Questions?



# Question Worth Asking #2

## What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team's Actions?

Entrepreneur Sign In

### Sephora Hit \$10 Billion in Revenue and Workers Aren't Happy That All They Got Was a 'Stale Cookie'

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OR

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BUSINESS

### Spanx CEO surprises every employee with 2 first-class plane tickets and \$10,000

UPDATED OCTOBER 26, 2021 · 8:38 PM ET

By Tien Le



Sara Blakely (shown here in 2013) is the founder of Spanx. The womenswear company was valued at \$1.2 billion in a recent sale.  
Paul Morigi/Getty Images North America

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# **Work Culture Is Defined By The Worst Behavior Tolerated - John Amaechi**

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# Nobody wants to work anymore...



Nobody wants to work anymore...



with them.



# Question Worth Asking #3

**Which Managers Should  
Not Be Leading People?**

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LEADERSHIP · MANAGEMENT ADVICE

# Nearly all bosses are ‘accidental’ with no formal training—and research shows it’s leading 1 in 3 workers to quit

BY ORIANNA ROSA ROYLE

October 16, 2023 at 4:47 AM PDT



The Chartered Management Institute's research found that although one in four people in the workforce have management responsibilities, very few have been trained to do their jobs.

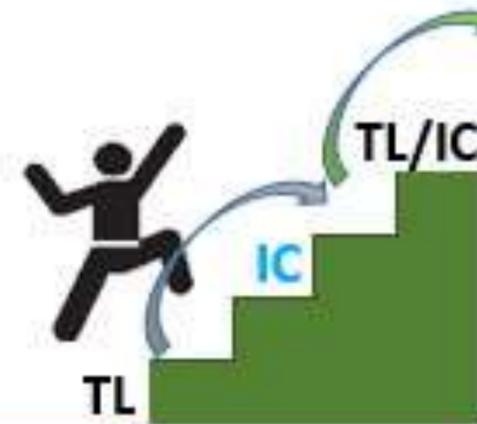
LUIS ALVAREZ—GETTY IMAGES

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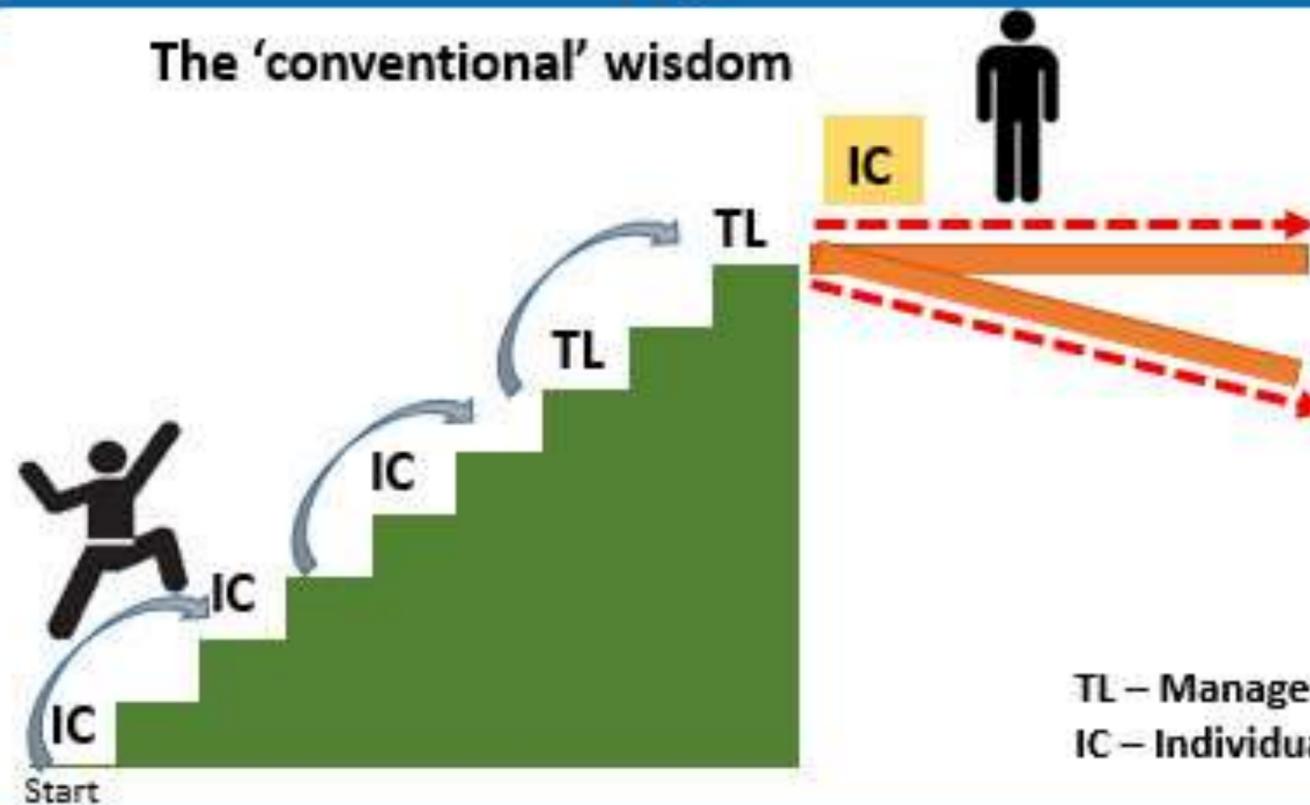
## From Manager to an Individual Contributor - A step 'Backward' 'Forward'!

### The 'new' wisdom



Opportunities  
for Team Lead  
as well as  
Individual  
Contributor –  
It's your choice

### The 'conventional' wisdom



TL – Manager or Team Leader  
IC – Individual Contributor

As per Conventional wisdom, it is a natural progression to *always* move from an Individual contributor to a Manager /Team Leader role. But as per the 'New' wisdom, it is ok to move from a Manager to an Individual Contributor ('By-Choice' cases) as long as you can justify your move and showcase how you utilized this move to the maximum.

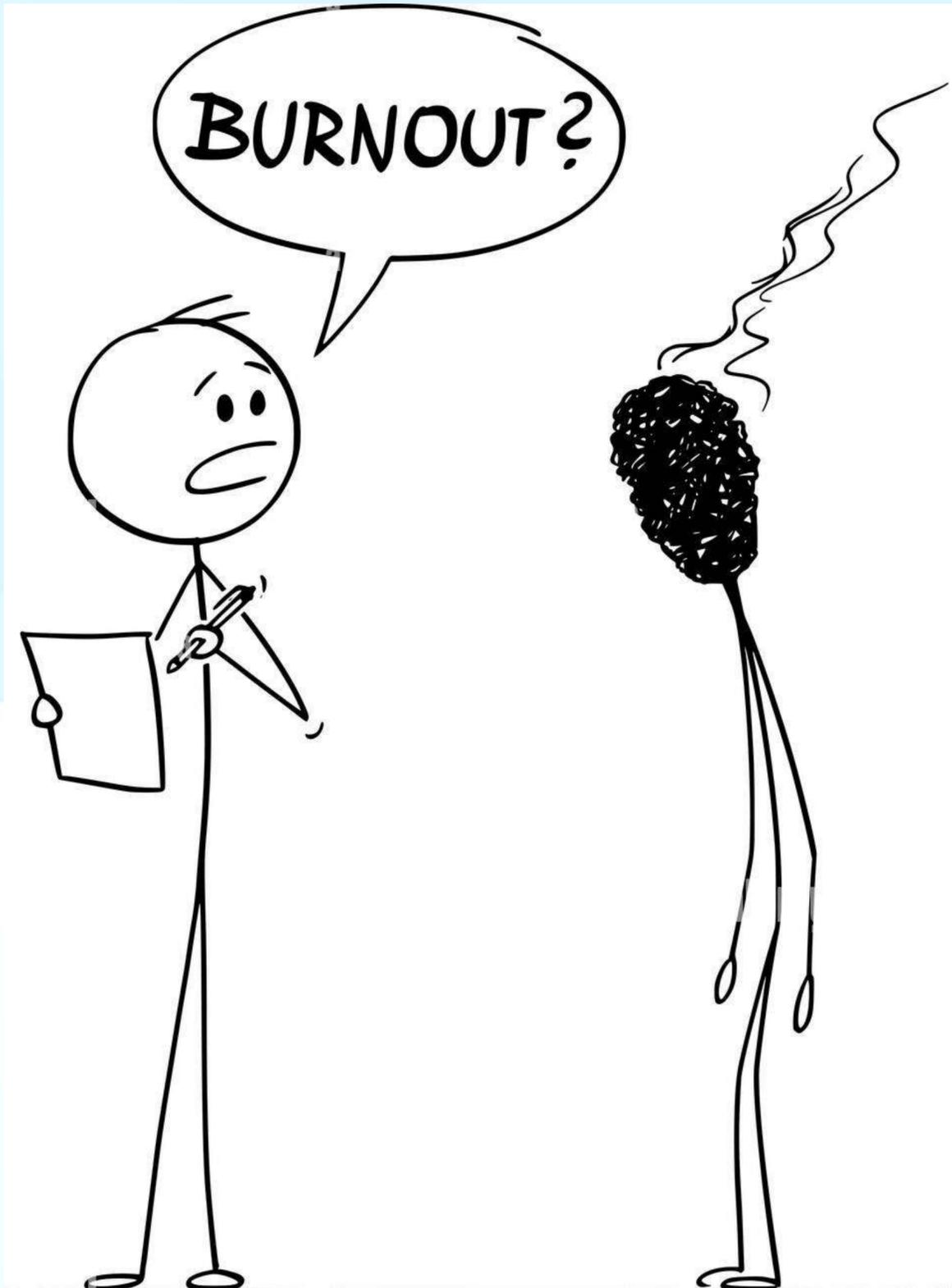




# We Are All Feeling Burnout

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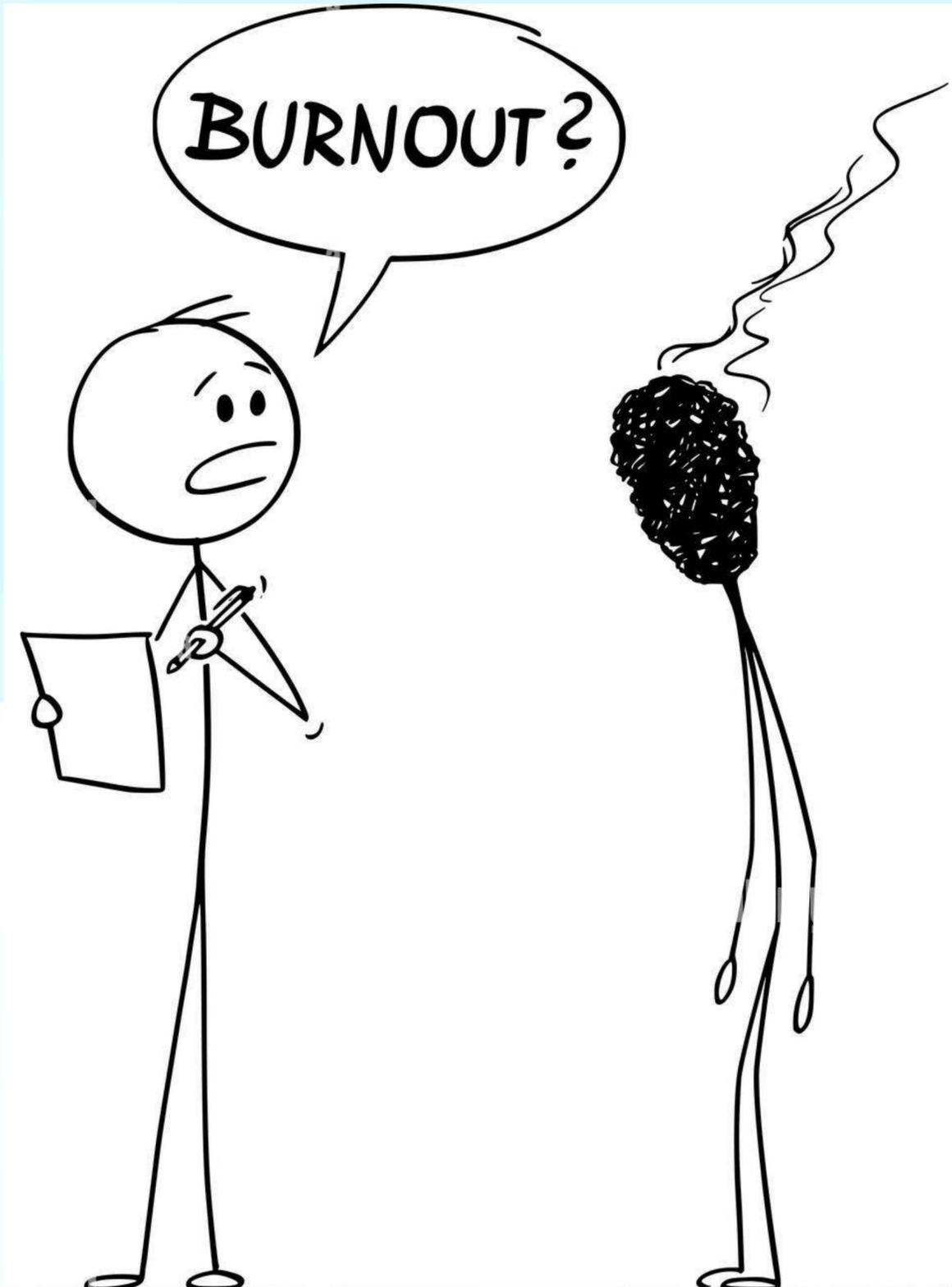


# We Are All Feeling Burnout

- **Doing The Job of 2 - 3 People**
- **Impossible Deadlines**
- **Consistently Working Late**
- **Overly Demanding Supervisors**

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# What Issues Are You Facing?

- **Unfunded Mandates**
- **Not Enough Staff**
- **Aging Infrastructure**
- **Not Enough Money**

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YOGA  
Happy Hour  
Pizza Party  
Therapy

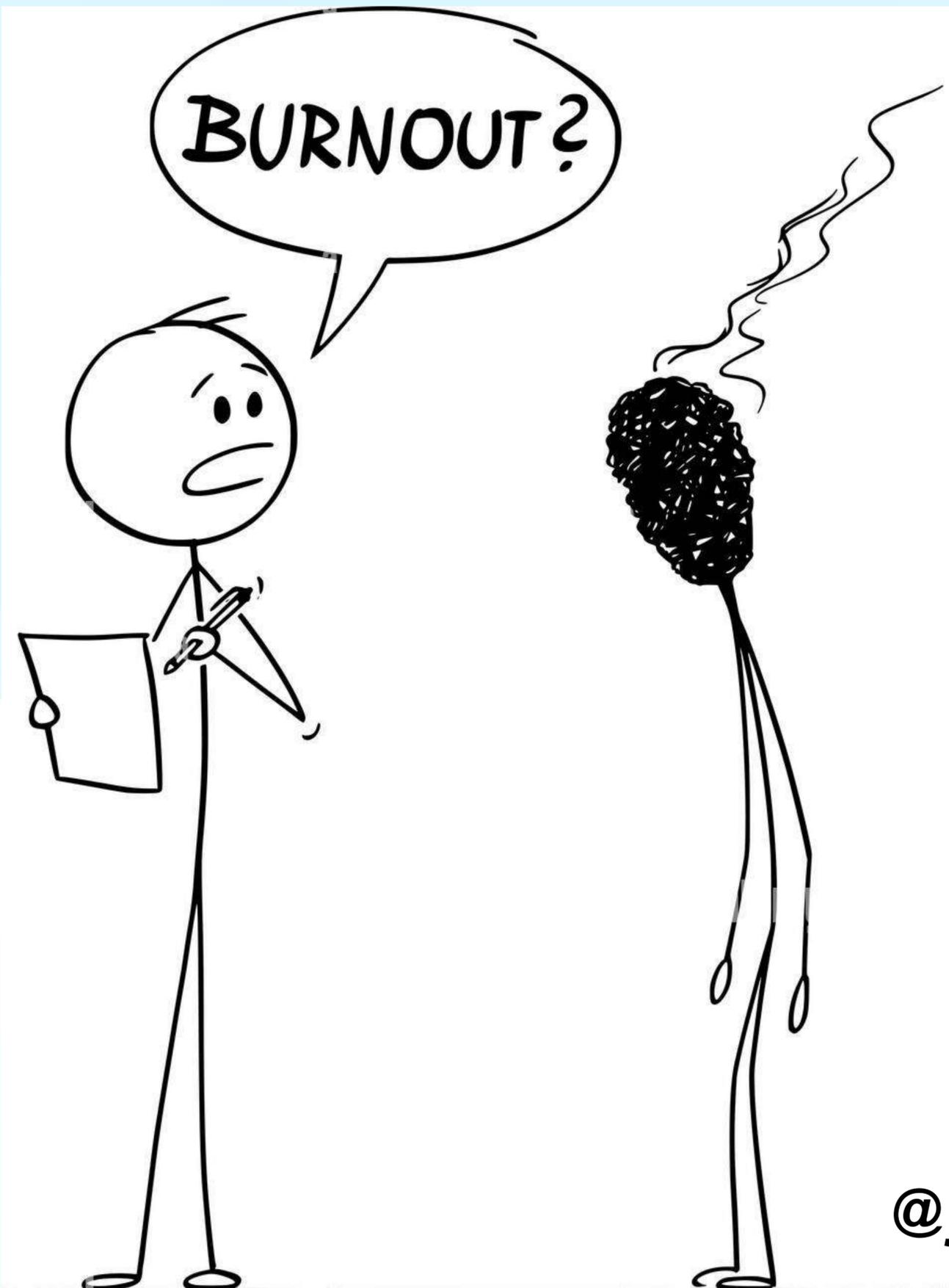
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# Question Worth Asking #4

**Are You Addressing  
Systemic Issues With  
Individual Solutions?**

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# The Work Playground Is Safe



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# To Feel Seen

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# **Play Experiment: Explore Your Impact**

## **Write Down What You Do Best At Work**

### **Celebrate!**

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# Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

**How many people's lives have you impacted this year in positive way?**

**Directly & Indirectly**

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# Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

**Think of your most memorable &  
meaningful moment this year where you  
impacted someone in a positive way**

(Felt the most connected to your work)

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# D O S E

<b>DOPAMINE</b> THE REWARD CHEMICAL	<b>OXYTOCIN</b> THE LOVE HORMONE	<b>SEROTONIN</b> THE MOOD STABILIZER	<b>ENDORPHIN</b> THE PAIN KILLER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completing a task</li><li>• Doing self-care activities</li><li>• Eating food</li><li>• Celebrating little wins</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playing with a dog</li><li>• Playing with a baby</li><li>• Holding hand</li><li>• Hugging your family</li><li>• Give compliment</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meditating</li><li>• Running</li><li>• Sun exposure</li><li>• Walk in nature</li><li>• Swimming</li><li>• Cycling</li></ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laughter exercise</li><li>• Essential oils</li><li>• Watch a comedy</li><li>• Dark chocolate</li><li>• Exercising</li></ul> 

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# To Feel Heard

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# Address The Water Pressure Issues



# Question Worth Asking #5: What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?



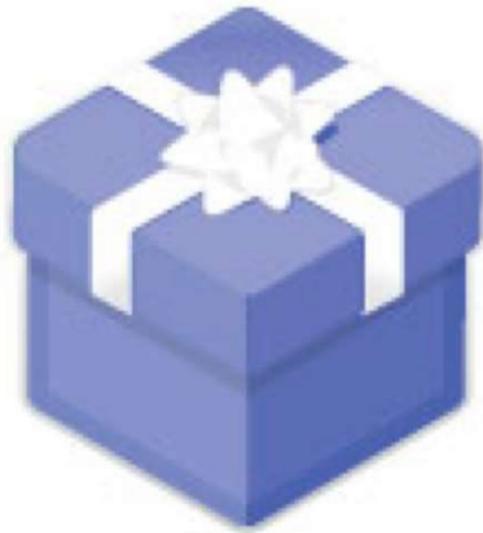
# To Feel Appreciated

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# What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

Tangible Gifts



Quality Time



Words of Affirmation



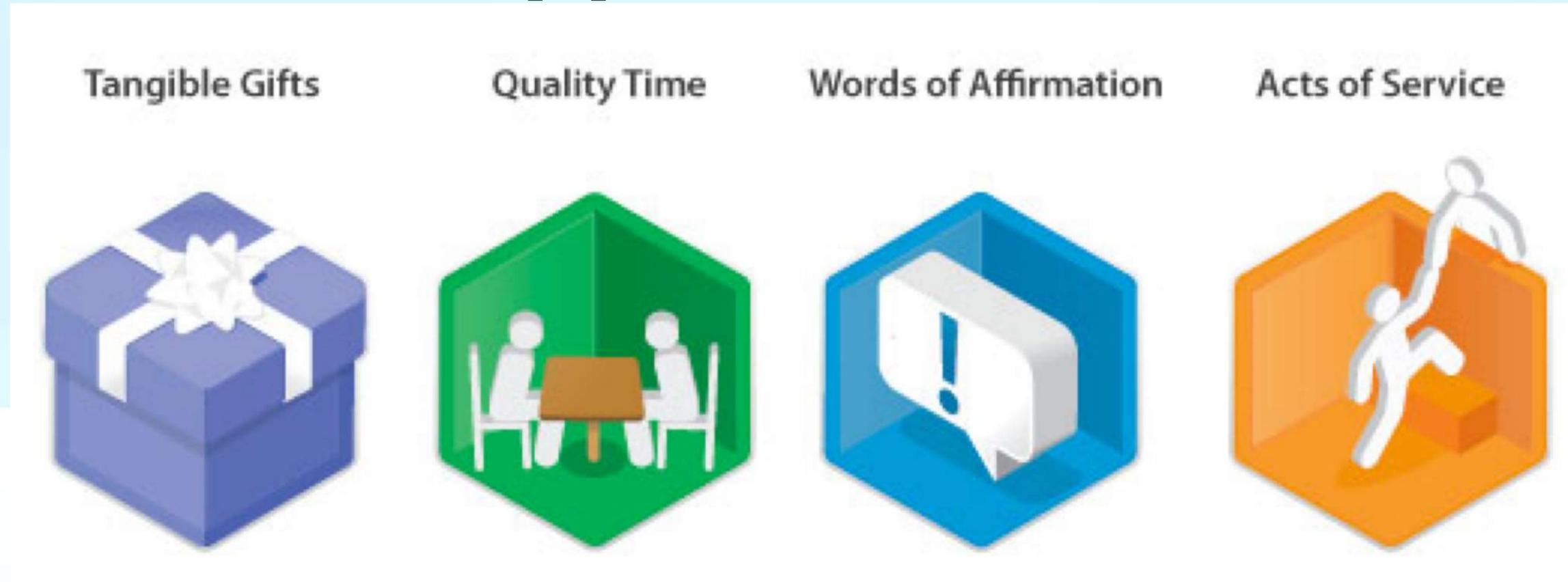
Acts of Service



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# What Is Your Language of Appreciation?



## How Would You Like To Receive Recognition?

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# Humans Wanted To Be Treated Like Humans



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# FORCED FUN SUCKS

Why do a number of organizations  
keep at it?



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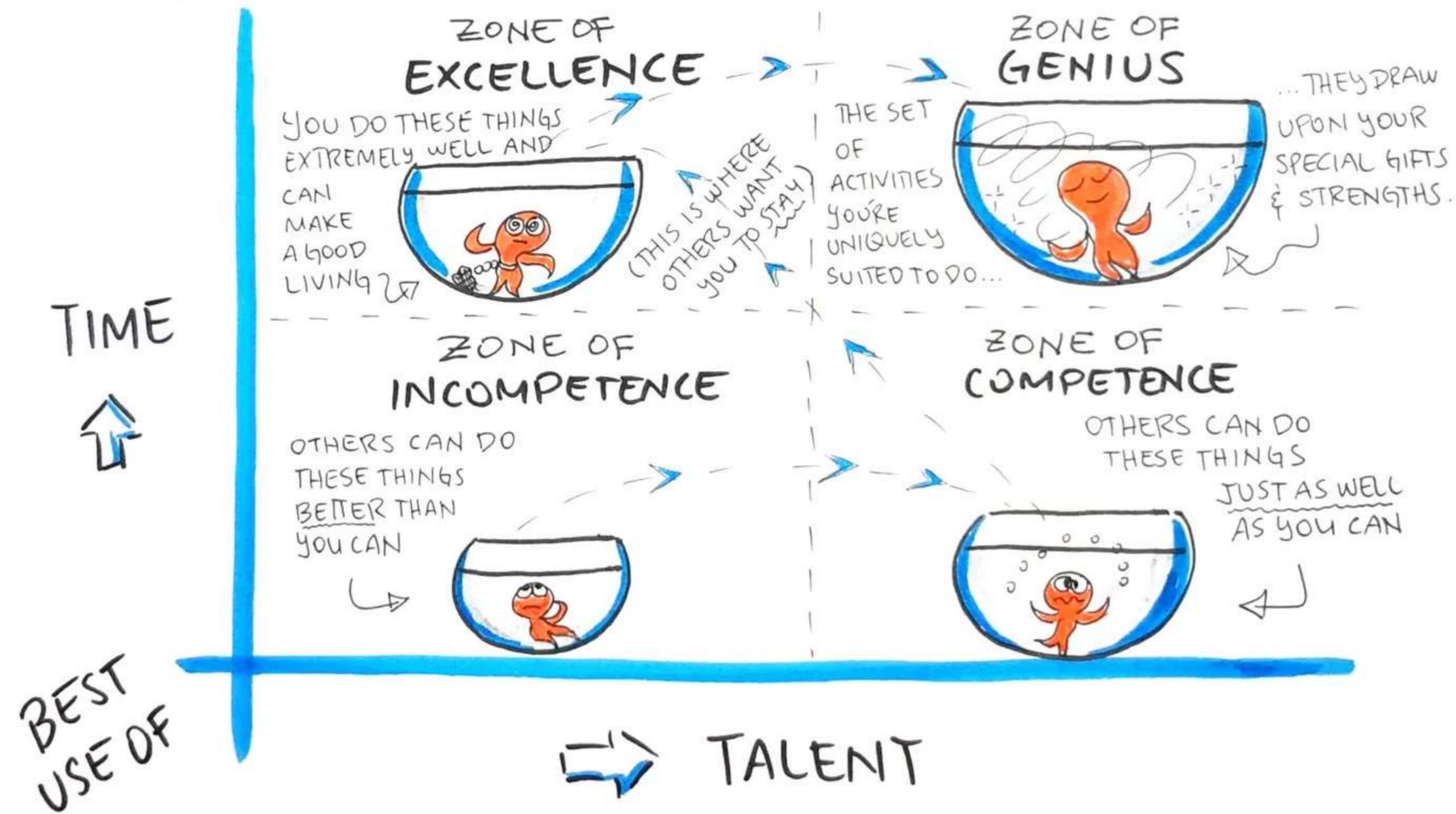


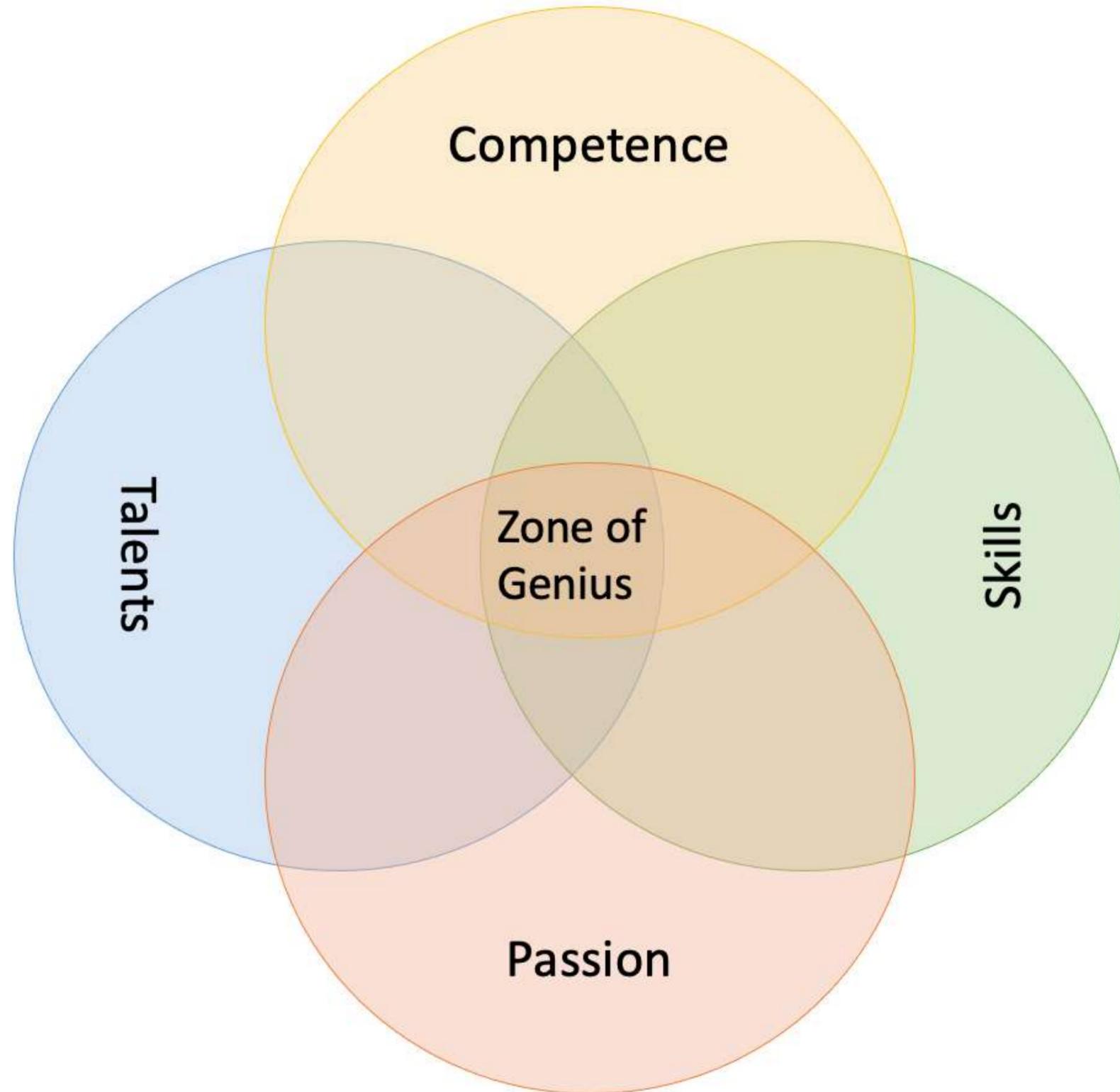
# Zone of Genius/Flow State

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# THE BIG LEAP





# What Is Flow?

“

*The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. –*

*Flow*



**Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

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**CHALLENGE**

**Anxiety**

**FLOW**

**Boredom**

**SKILL**



# **What Is Your Staff's Zone of Genius/Flow?**

**What is the work you do where  
you forget about time?**

**What is the work you'd do even if  
you weren't get paid for it?**

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# Making Work Suck Less Through Play: Questions Worth Asking



- **What Do You Do To Ensure Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?**
  - **What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team's Actions?**
  - **Which Managers Should Not Be Leading People?**
  - **Are You Addressing Systemic Issues With Individual Solutions?**
  - **What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?**
  - **What Is Your Language of Appreciation?**
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**Who Will Decide The Future of Work?**

# Who Will Decide The Future of Work?

**Old School  
Leadership**

**Individualism**

**Competition**

**Control**

**Ego**

**Human-Centered  
Leadership**

**Shared Humanity**

**Collaboration**

**Inspiration**

**Intuition**



# Thanks So Much For Playing!

## Access To Studies & Bonus Gift



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