

Leading a 1,000-Person Technical Transformation Without Resistance

Arlo Belshee

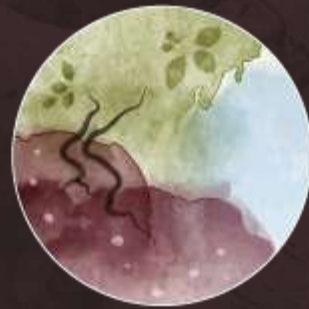
@arlobelshee

arlo@digdeeproots.com

James Shore

@jamesshore

jshore@jamesshore.com



DEEP ROOTS

AGILE FLUENCY PROJECT

Does Testing Feel Like This?



Does Coding Feel Like This?



Does Your Backlog Look Like This?



Or Maybe Your Problem Is





Case Study

- ➔ 104 teams
- ➔ Same company
- ➔ 3 different products
- ➔ A ton of code sharing



Findings

- ➔ 500+ distinct problems; most impact 1 team
- ➔ Each requires multiple teams to solve
- ➔ Worst problem impacted 6 teams

That Breaks Leaders

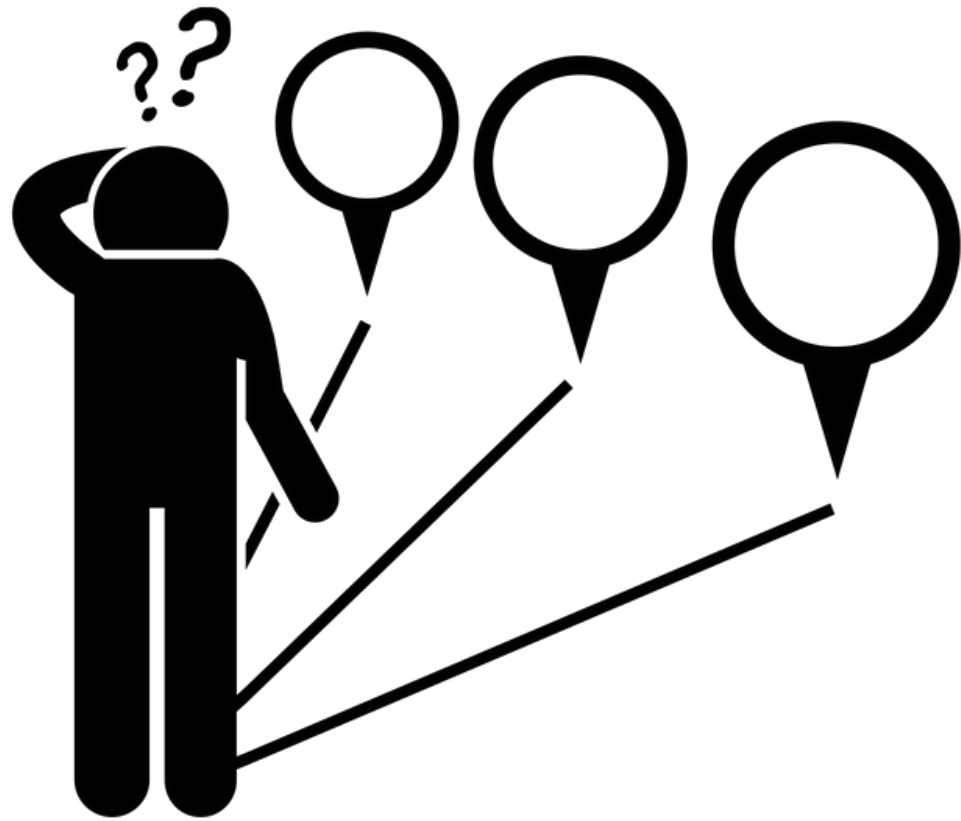


Leaders...

make decisions,
improve people, and
ensure the right work gets done



The Impossible Situation



No consistent problem was found...

YET...

- Leaders set a consistent direction
- Others go that direction

That won't work for technical debt.

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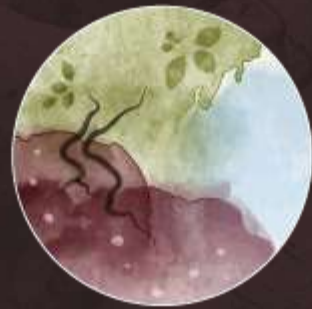
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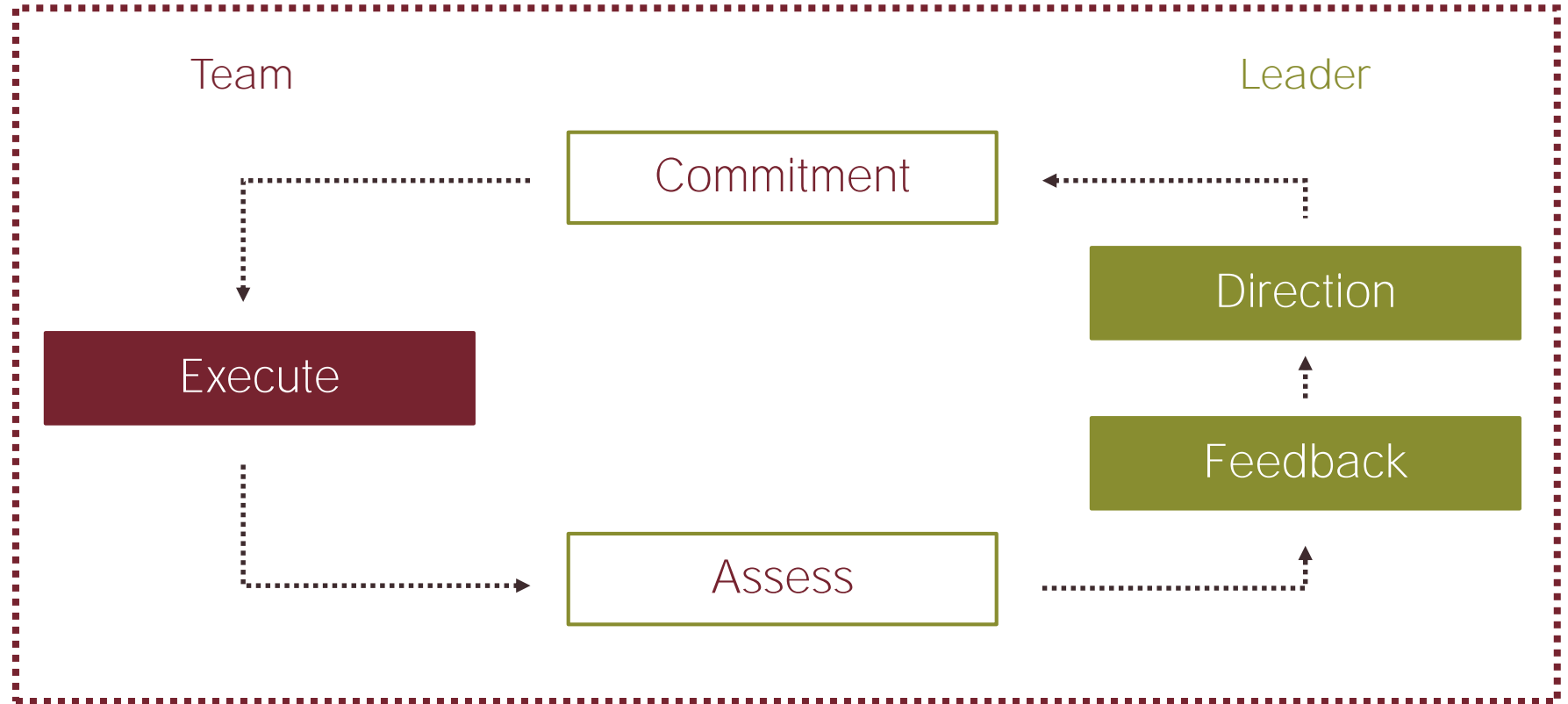


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What We Do Today

Accountability Loop



What Happened:

➡ 4 years total invested

➡ 30% dev effort dedicated

➡ 2 years holding consistent direction

Impact on
Technical Debt?



Metrics-based Solutions

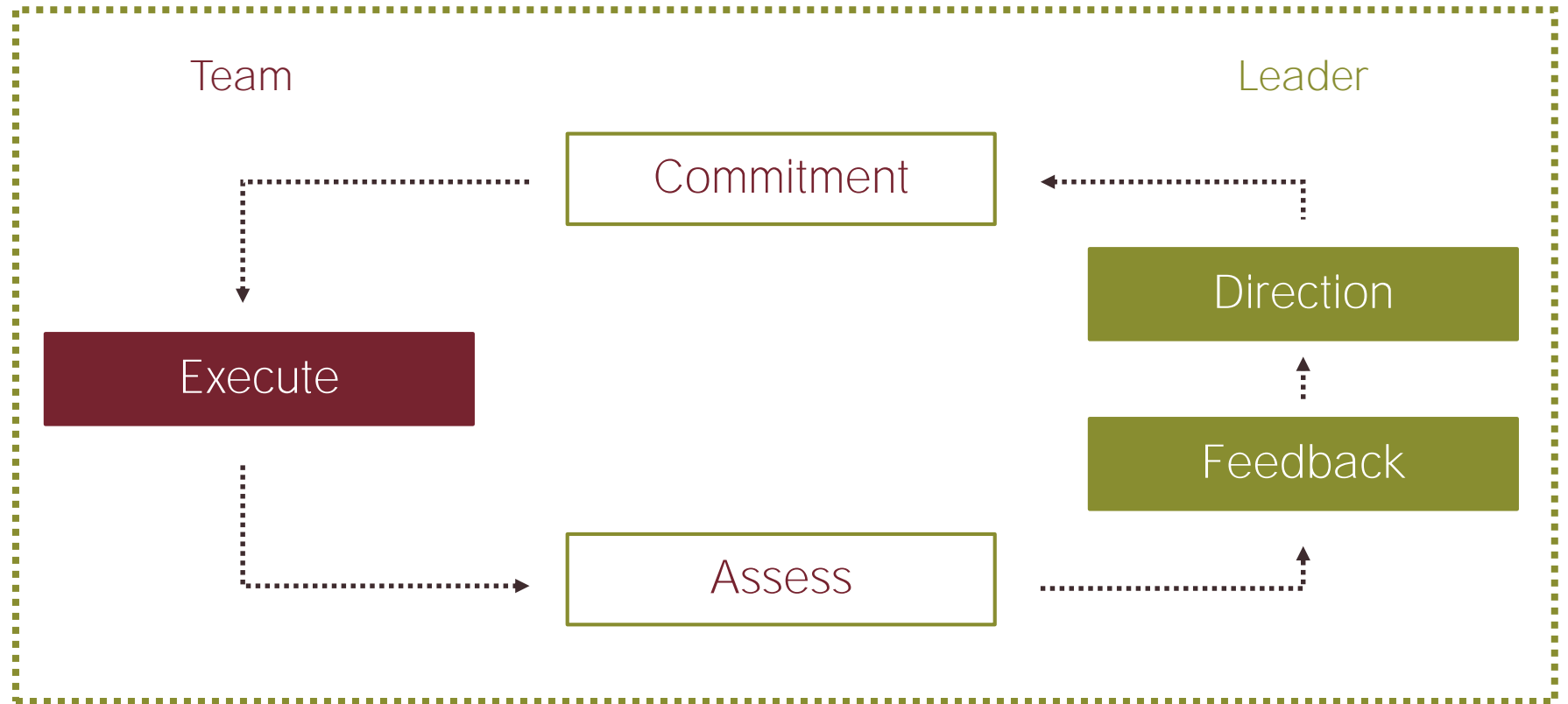
A New Kind of Leadership

Multiple directions with alignment.



What We Could Do Instead

Accountability Loop

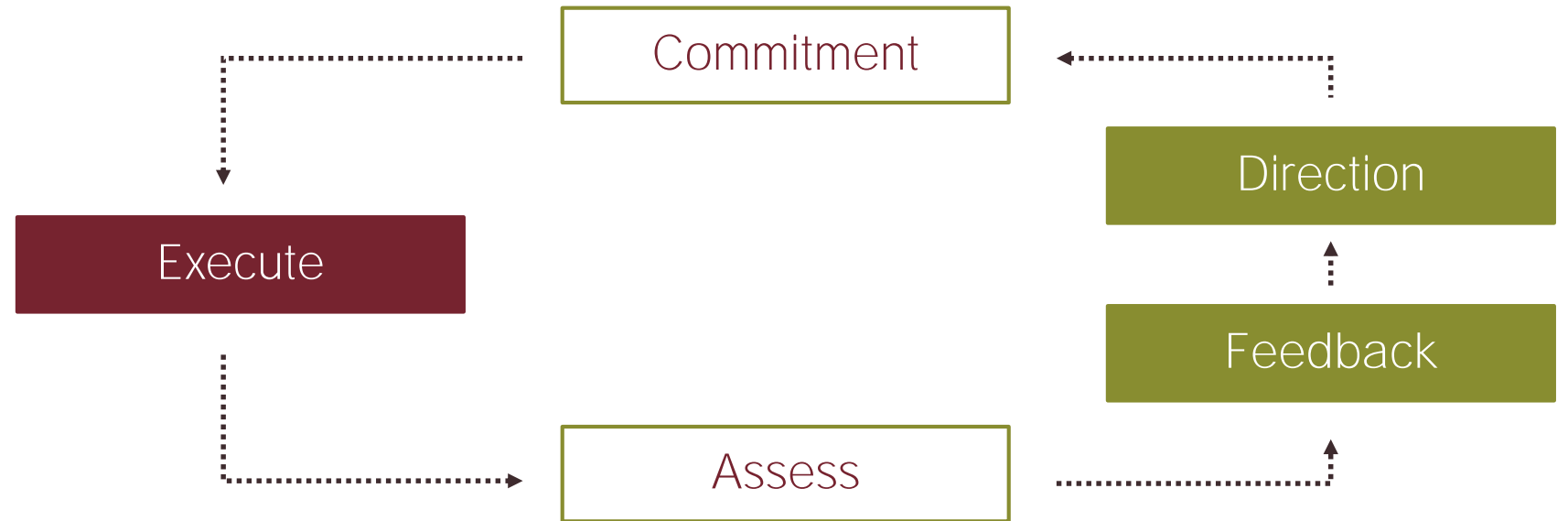


What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Leader



What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Leader

Commitment

Execute

Feedback

Direction

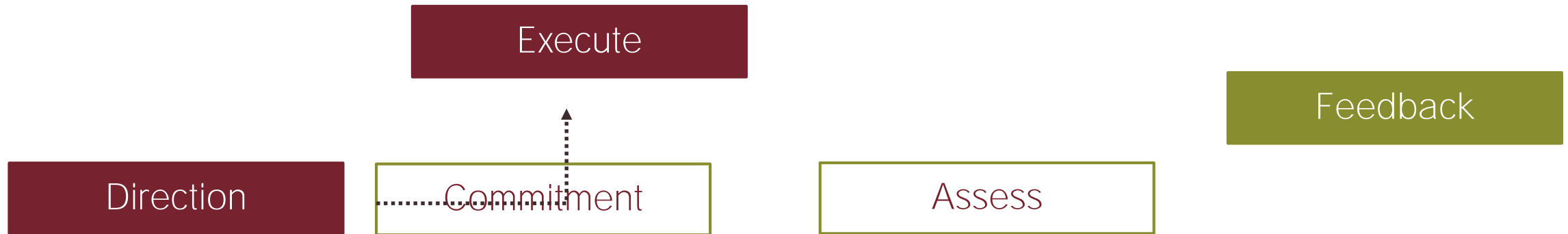
Assess

What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

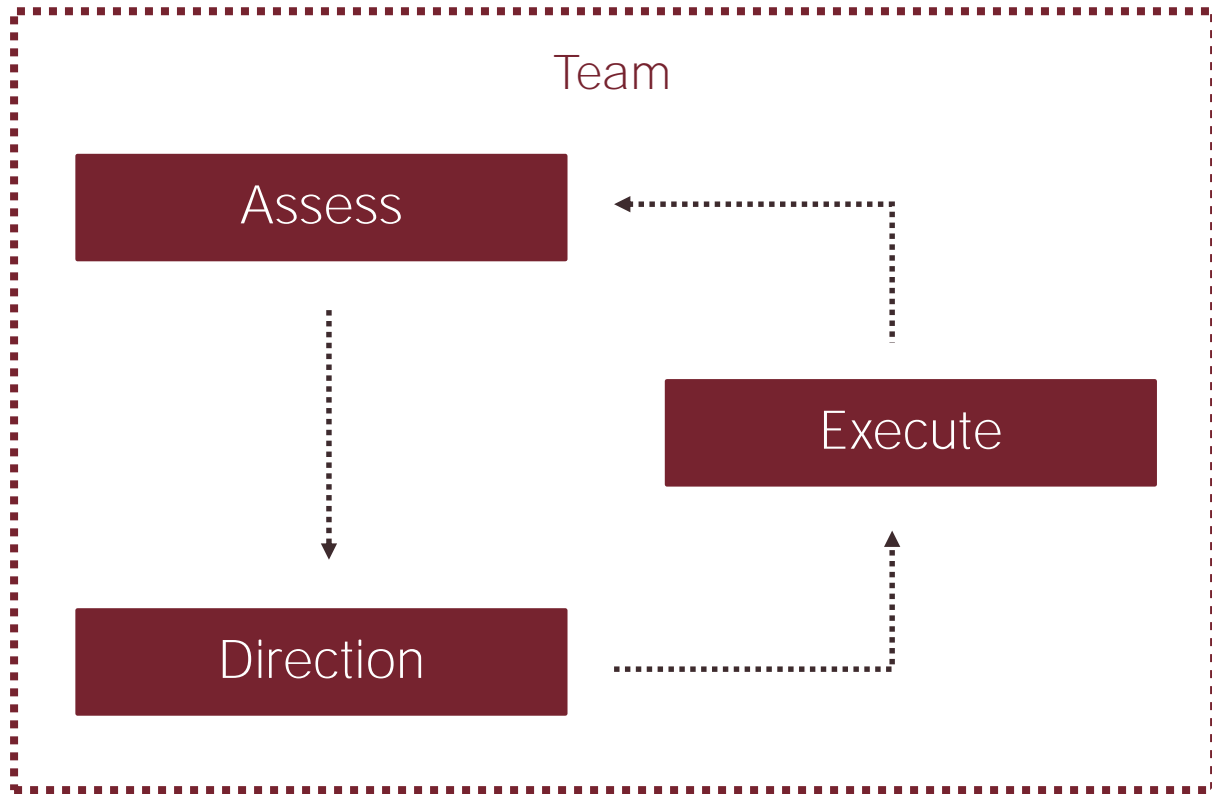
Team

Leader



What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

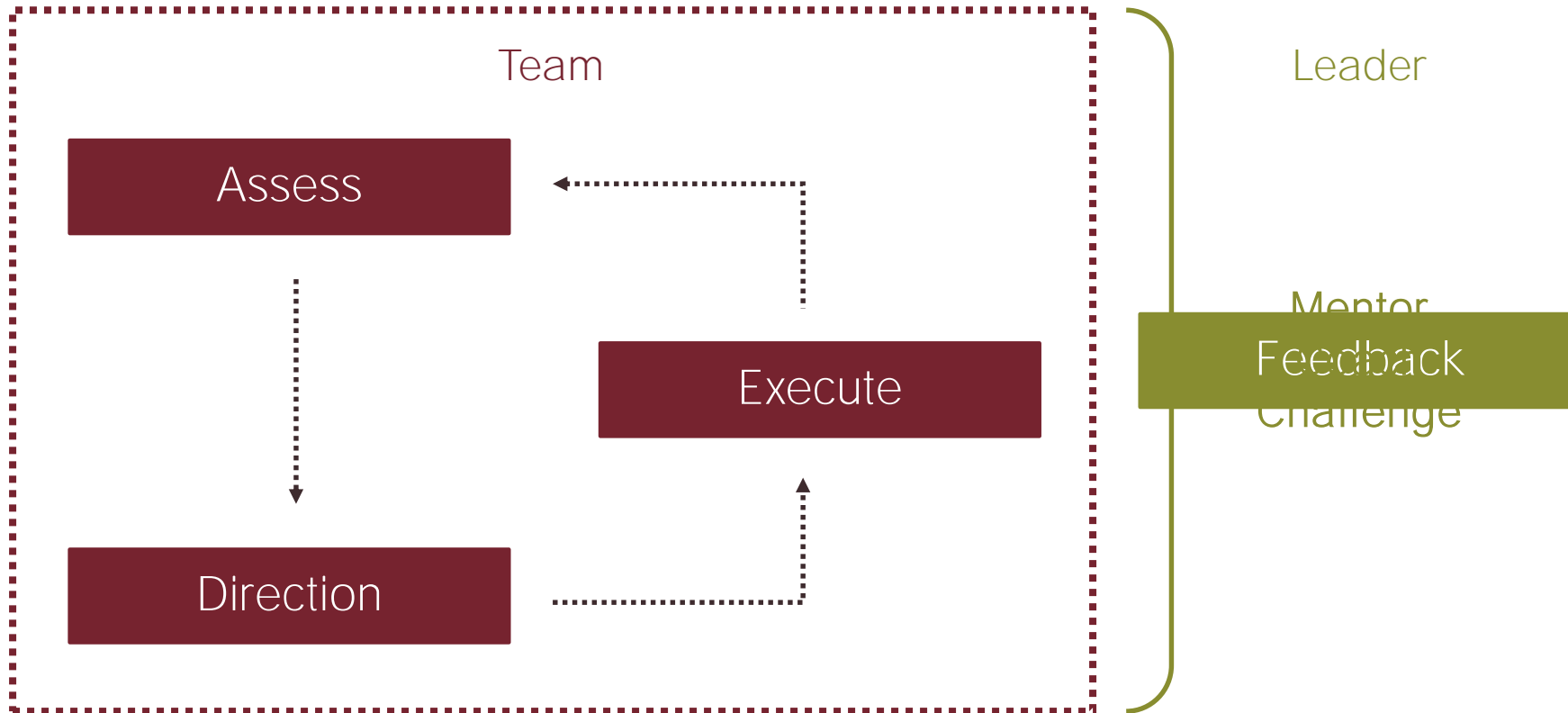


Leader



What We Could Do Instead

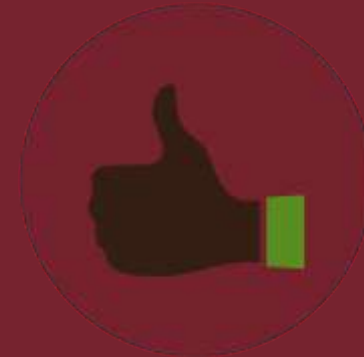
Ownership Loop



What Happened:

- ➔ 2 orgs tried ownership loop
- ➔ Measurable progress within 1-2 months on each of ~20 teams
- ➔ Each team going after their specific pain

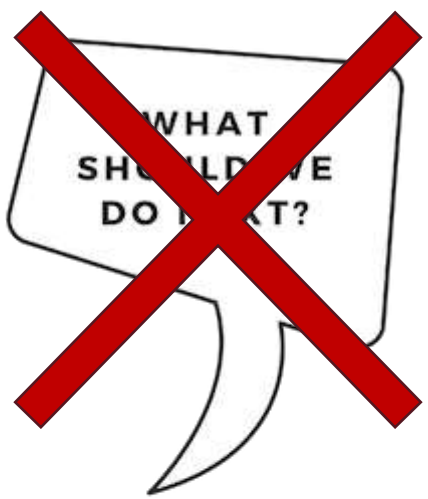
Impact on
Technical Debt?



Leader Stance



Team Stance

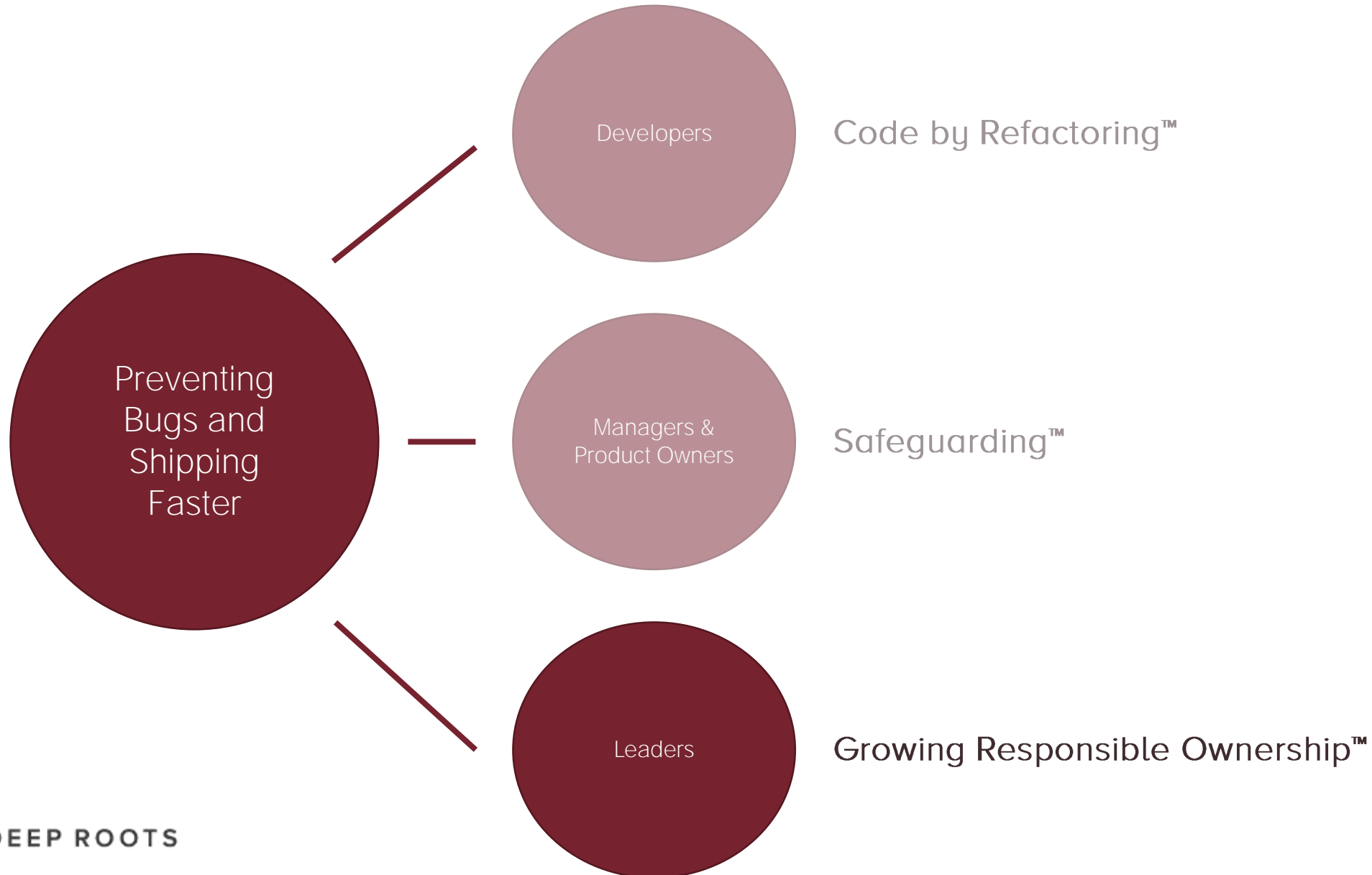


No New Ideas

Just specific behaviors to get there



Part of This Complete Breakfast



Learn by Mirroring Each Other

- (picture of mentoring stance)

- (picture of ownership stance)

Growing Ownership Stance

Ownership Stance

Learn in One Context; Apply Everywhere

- (picture learning a kata)

- (picture of ownership stance)

Growing Ownership Meeting

Every Day

Practice With One Friendly Team

- 1 implementation team that you can trust to tell you when you err

Each Practice Session Takes 9 Minutes

Growing Ownership Meeting

Logistics

- Meet weekly for 9 min
- Attendees: Executive, Team
- Optional: Other managers or teams under same executive

Intent

- Team: Show current decisions
- Executives: Coach on ownership

Growing Ownership Meeting

1. Exec: Accountability and Ownership Loops
2. Team: What do we understand of current situation?
3. Team: What was learned since last time?
4. Team: How did we change what we measure?
5. Team: Any overall changes in technical strategy?
6. Team: Any resources we need, and on what timeline?

Executive Agenda

Ask what informed any
specific decision

Note successful
ownership moments

Leading Ownership – Skills Required

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let's start now!

1. Find the stance handout
2. Find a partner
3. Read the scenario – both roles

0:00 ✘

Leading Ownership – Skills Required

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let's start now!

1. Roleplay your role 0:00 ✘

2. Swap roles and roleplay 0:00 ✘

Leading Ownership – Debriefing

Leader roles, did you find yourself...

- Mistrusting the data?
- Asking for a commitment?

Team roles, did you find yourself...

- Asking about priorities?
- Convincing the leader?

The Empowerment Habit

1. Subordinate gives up power unconsciously.
2. Superior “empowers” subordinate by giving some of it back.

People often try to improve the amount of power given back in step 2.

Instead, let's change the habit in step 1.

Changing Your Habits - Signaling

You just disempowered yourself

- (image of sign)

You just took authority over me

- (image of sign)

Practice Cards

Team Does

- (picture of team side for 1 card)

Leader Could Respond

- (picture of leader side for same card)

Refusing to Take Offered Power

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let's start now!

1. Deal 1 card to each person at the table
2. With same partner
3. Read the scenario – both roles

0:00 ✖

Refusing to Take Offered Power

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let's start now!

1. Roleplay your role, using the Team player's card 0:00 ✘
2. Swap roles and roleplay 0:00 ✘

Discuss

1. As a leader, what actions did you see the Team do to give away power?

0:00 ✘

As the team, what actions did you see the Leader do to try to restore power?

2. How did it feel?

0:00 ✘

3. What worked? What didn't?

0:00 ✘

To Change the Empowerment Habit

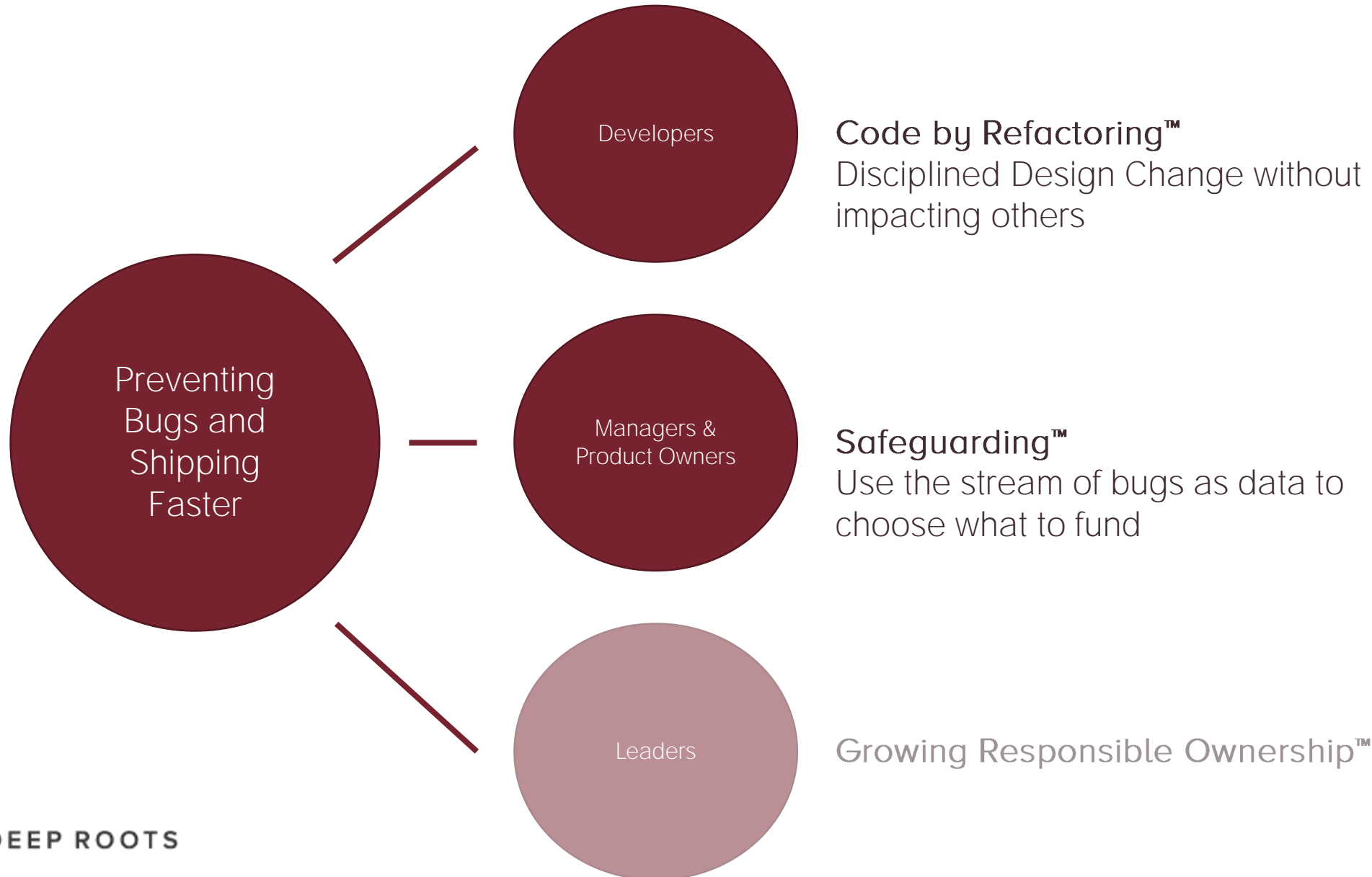
1. Catch each other (easier than catching yourself)
2. Pause
3. Get Curious. Ask about:
 - Emotions
 - Intent
 - Pre-existing beliefs
4. Invite them to re-do

Ownership Solves Technical Debt

Multiple directions with alignment.



The Rest is Just Good Engineering



Learn Together; Apply Everywhere

At a scheduled time each week:

Growing Ownership Meeting
1 Team, then Each Team

In the meeting and as you remember:

Use the Hand Signs
Yes, they will feel silly

At start of meeting and when you remember:

Present Ownership Loop

First Next Step

- (picture of cards)

Who is your First Friendly Team?

How will you invite them?

Address systemic technical
problems across your enterprise

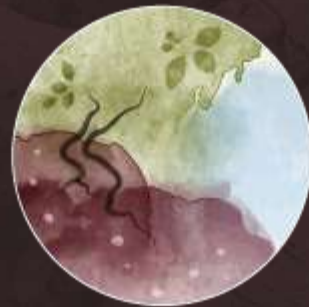
Transform one team with a
gnarly problem into the most
effective team you have

Change key behaviors across
your organization

Change whatever that team
needs

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jshore@jameshore.com



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