

Making Ends Meet

Building beautiful, robust sites on best web practices

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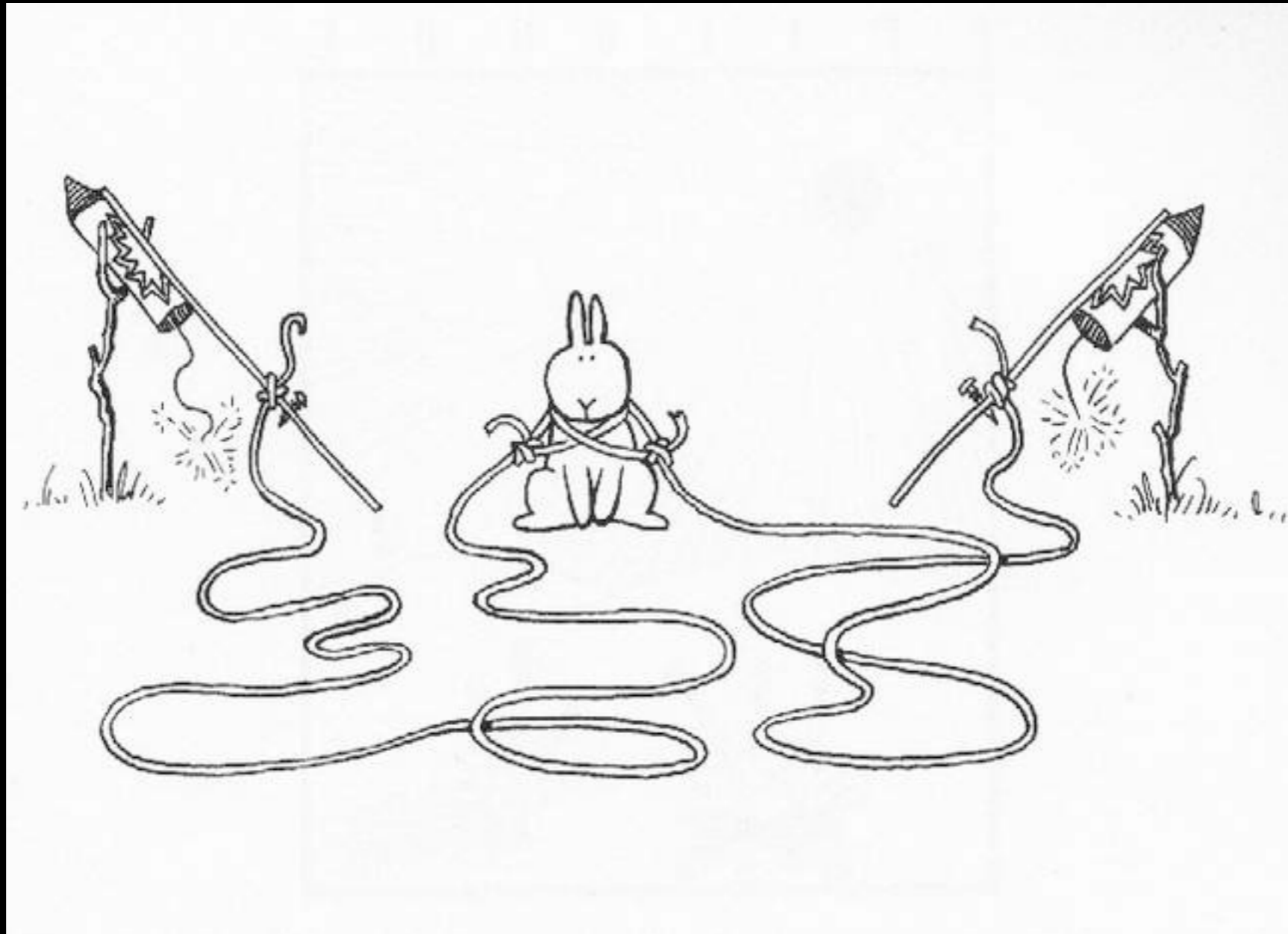
Samedi 17 Novembre

Paris Web 2007

Problem:

In an every day context as **professionals**, we find ourselves in **situations** where we have to make **choices** about what we build.

How do we make sure that we and our team always know which decisions are **better**?



Today's aims

1. Build a **rational** basis for our pursuit of best web practices in our day-to-day work.
2. Come up with ways to convince, persuade others around us that web **quality** is important.
3. Discuss **practical** methods to establish good web-building habits in the workplace.

1. Build a rational basis for our pursuit of best web practices in our **day-to-day** work.

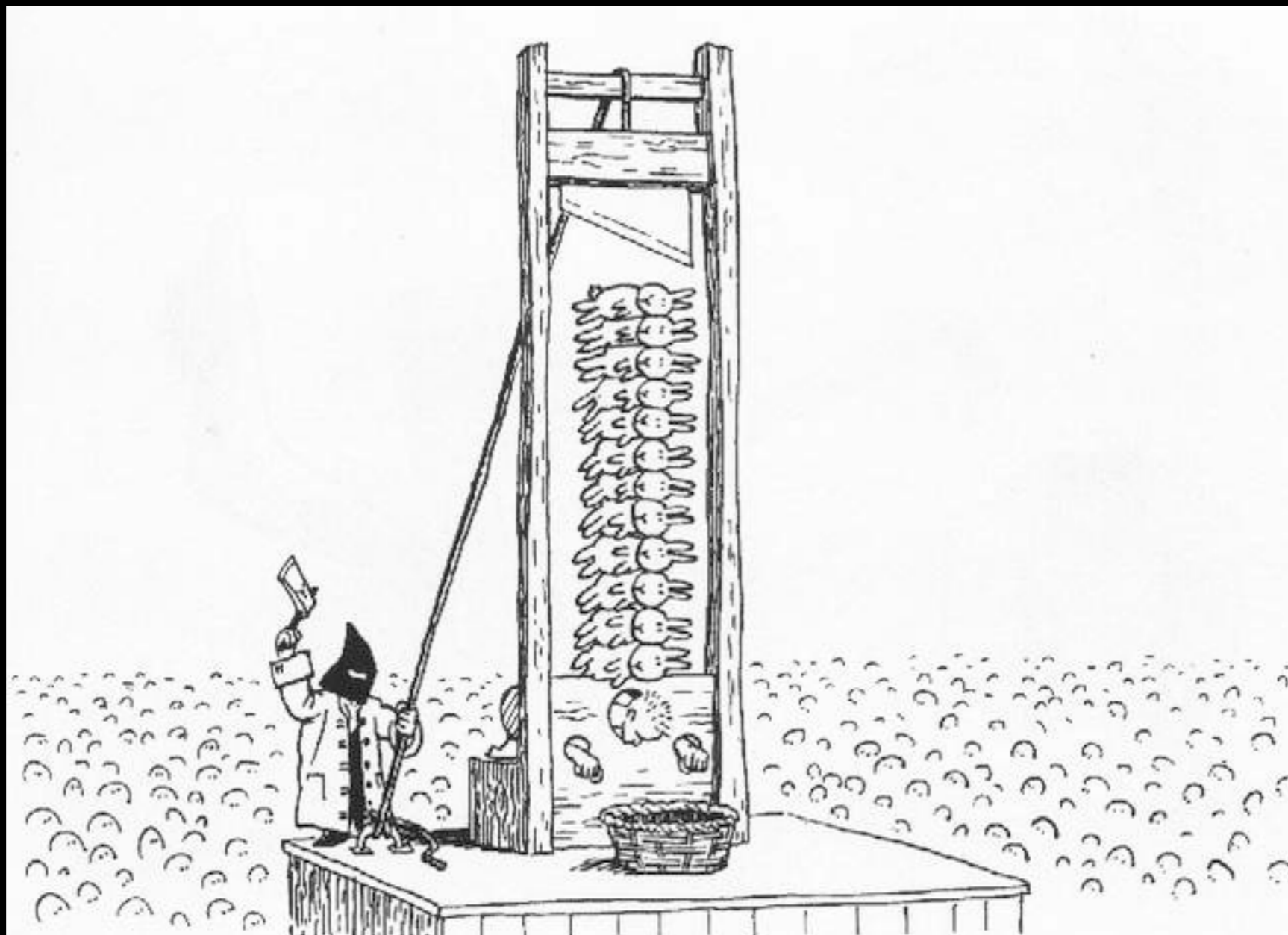
The usual constraints

- Too many team members on a project (too many cooks)
- Too few team members on a project (not enough manpower)
- Team members have **different** skill levels
- Team members don't have the same outlook, whether because of vocation or viewpoint.

The usual constraints

- Project timeline
- Project budget
- Scope creep
- ...

Aargh.



How do we ensure we know
what to do while **facing**
these daily constraints?

Let's begin by learning
how to rationalise to
enable us to **judge**.

Why best web practices?

Many of us already know
the “what” and the “how”.
But how well do we know

why?

Group Brainstorm

In your groups, list and discuss the following:

1. List top 5 common reasons why people believe we should follow best practices
2. What is your personal reason?
3. List top 5 common reasons why people don't believe we should follow best practices

Group Brainstorm summary: “Why standards?”

- Search engine optimisation
- Common basis to work together (standards in the workplace)
- Not reinventing the wheel
- Accessibility / interoperability
- Ethical

Group Brainstorm summary:

“Why standards?”

- It's THE way
- Code will be easy to re-use / refactor
- Code quicker to write
- Client asks for it (sometimes)
- Competition with other companies
- Good quality of work

Group Brainstorm summary:

“Personal reason for Web standards?”

- Good community support
- Code quality
- Proudness / pleasure/ fun of doing good work
- It's a good challenge

Group Brainstorm summary:

“Personal reason for Web standards?”

- Having a reference compared to rest of community.
- Maximum number of people can see my site

A few typical “whys”

- It seems like a good idea.
- It makes **sense**.
- It saves money.
- It’s the way of the future.
- It’s a good bandwagon to jump on (a.k.a. other people are doing it)

A few typical “why-nots”

- Training is expensive
- It's not cost-effective
- It's too difficult

The true goal

The true goal

Web for everyone.

The true goal

Web for everyone.

Web on everything.

The true goal

Web for everyone.

Web on everything.

Web by **everyone**.

2. Come up with ways to **convince**, persuade others around us that web quality is important.

How would these people **talk** to one another?

- Client
- Account manager
- Manager
- Producer
- ...
- Information architect
- Usability specialist
- Designer
- Developer
- ...

A couple of scenarios

Let's examine possible conversations between:

- A developer and a designer
- A producer and team

Common issues between design and development

- Designer: “Here’s the PSD!”
- Design decisions: round corners, pixel-perfect, fixed screen size, non “standard” font for texts, different widths in PSDs, text of different length are not texted
- How do we go about communicating our constraints to designers?

Common issues between design and development

Developers can show we care about the design:

- Try to challenge and understand what designer is trying to achieve in order to negotiate “are all those three shadows necessary?”
- Show how we make their design come to life

[Right about this point we had a discussion of the different roles in the team, and talked about their different responsibilities and realities.

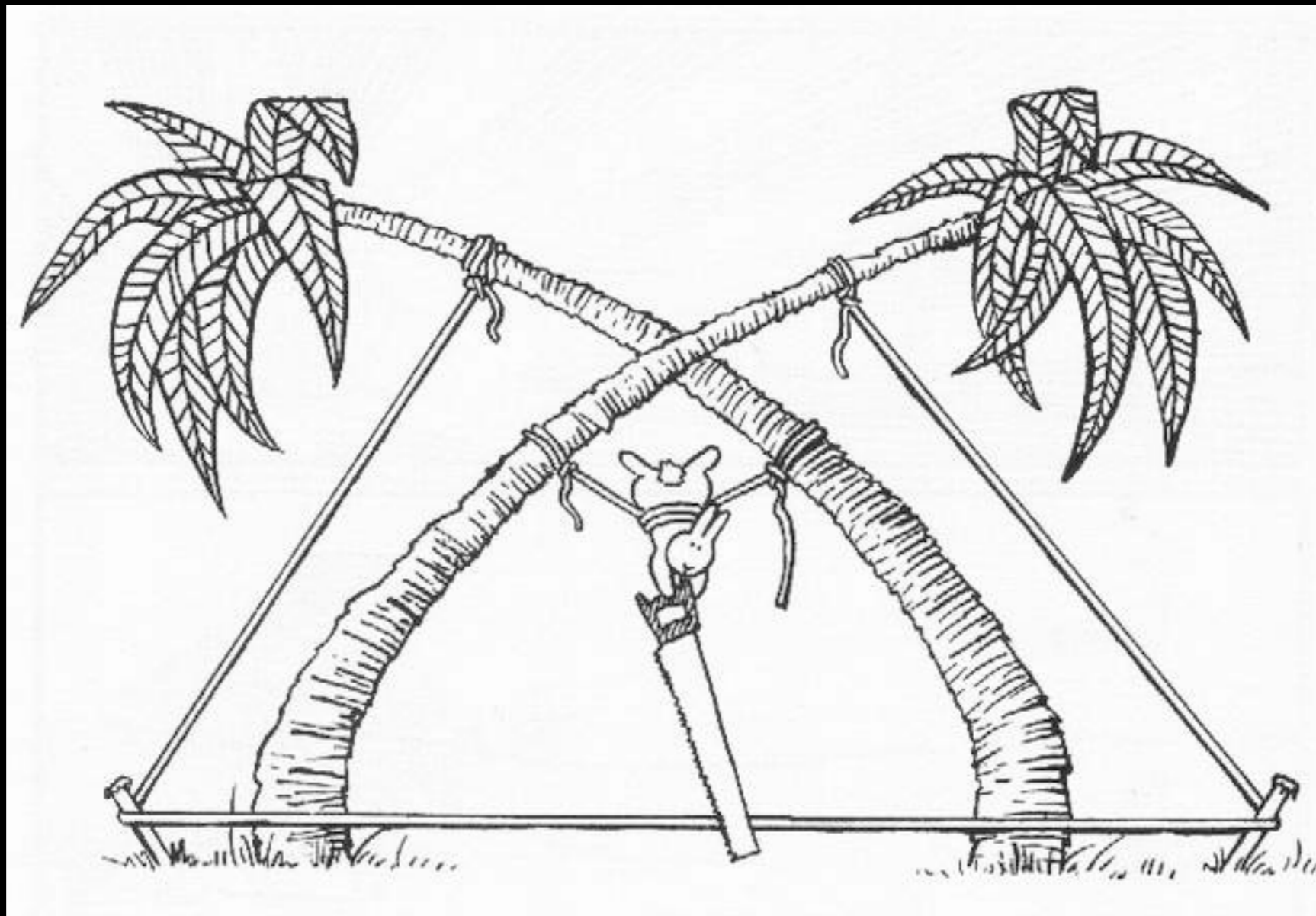
We also talked about looking at who we can get on side (such as a decision maker) in order to be able to improve the work process if we are not in a politically favourable position.]

3. Discuss **practical** methods to establish good web-building habits in the workplace.

Chicken and egg

- Having a quality vision or a quality production process?
- Having testable metrics or a quality production process?
- Quality **vision** or quality metrics?

How do we **break** the chain?



Discussion

1. In your professional environment, which “chicken and egg” issue applies to your team? Why?
2. Tell us, what is likely to work best in your professional context? And why?

First, a vision.

A vision of quality should rightly come
before any process or techniques.

First, a vision.

Use a vision of quality to give direction to your team in:

- what level of training all team members need
- what level of work is globally expected from them
- enable them to **decide** the right thing to do.

Give your team
a sense of pride.

Show how your team members can be
proud of what they do, and enjoy the
challenges.

Defining quality

- Every role has their own definition of quality.
- Your quality definition for your team
 - has to be generic enough so that it can be **interpreted** in each context
 - specific enough so it contains a clear vision

An example of a quality vision

90% of sites we produce should be

- accessible
- aesthetic
- usable
- measurable
- searchable
- interoperable
- relevant
- robust
- secure
- cost-effective
- scalable
- refactorable

Some Suggestions

- Hire wisely (you won't regret hiring the right people)
- Extend training and working with 3rd parties
- **Respect** all skills that your team members bring to the table

Conclusions

- You begin doing good work by having a good team and instilling good habits.
- A vision that provides a means of making correct **judgement** is more powerful than any dictatorial process
- Make your vision a belief system that your team can own themselves.

Conclusions

Once you get your team to believe in the same values, you would know how you can improve your processes, techniques and methods **together**.

It's always a work in **progress**.

Questions?

(but we didn't really get time for this)

Your (non-suicidal) hostess

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(No, I don't blog anymore.)

Images used without permission
but with a lot of gratitude:

“The Book of Bunny Suicides”, Andy Riley.

