Cross-functional teams and the product manager

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My Background

- Currently: Product Manager at Google
- Formerly: JotSpot, Yahoo!, NBCi/Snap! and CNET
- 8 years in engineering, 6 in product management

Tonight

- What I wish I'd known before I became a PM
- I am a pragmatically sarcastic optimist
- (There will only be two formulas)

For PMs:
Here's the good news.

You have the resources.

You are completely accountable.

You are ready to go.

But...

You have no **authority.**

And everyone is skeptical.

Why?

Without sales,
nothing would get **sold.**

Without engineering, nothing would get built.

Without support, customers would leave.

Without product managers?

Life would be just fine.

(For a while.)

What you learned in business school:

Functional organization.

PM

Weak matrix.

Strong matrix.

PM
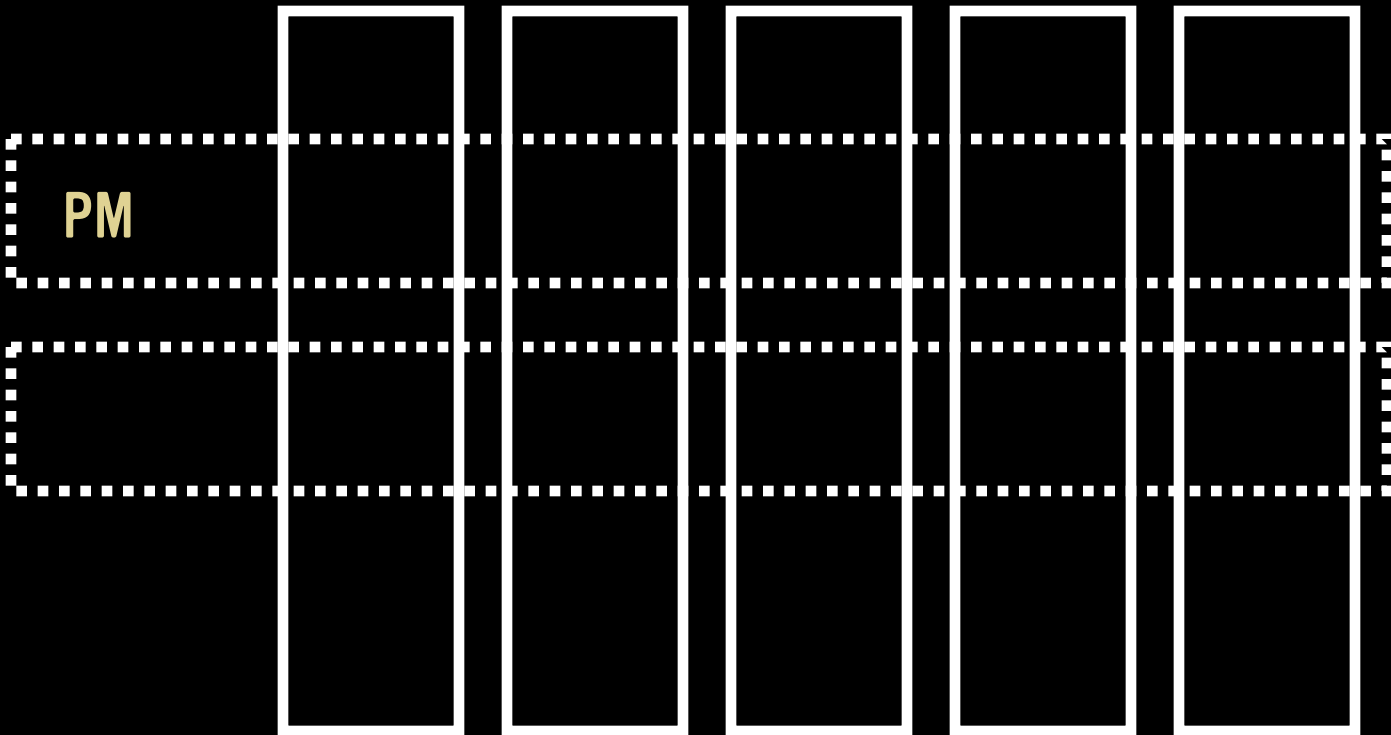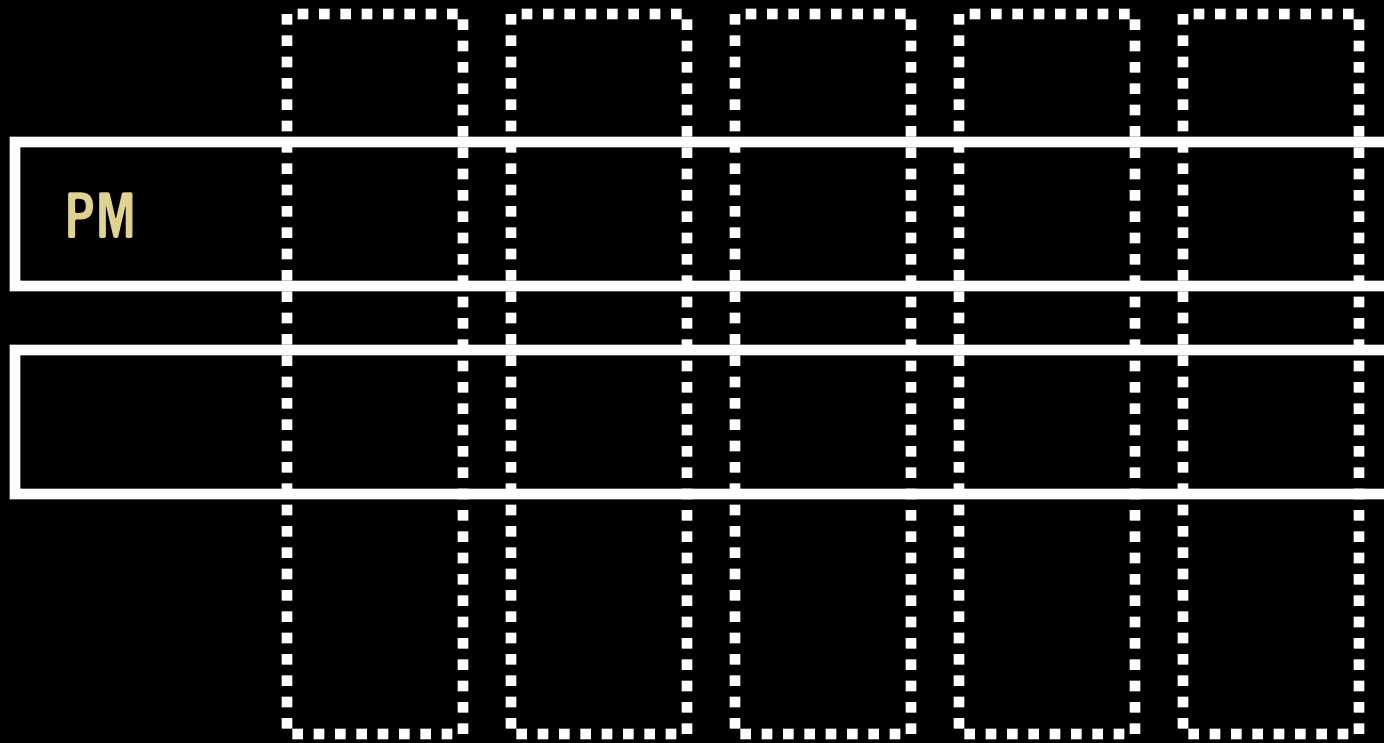
What you actually find.

The real world.

PM

Or maybe.

PM

Or even.

PM
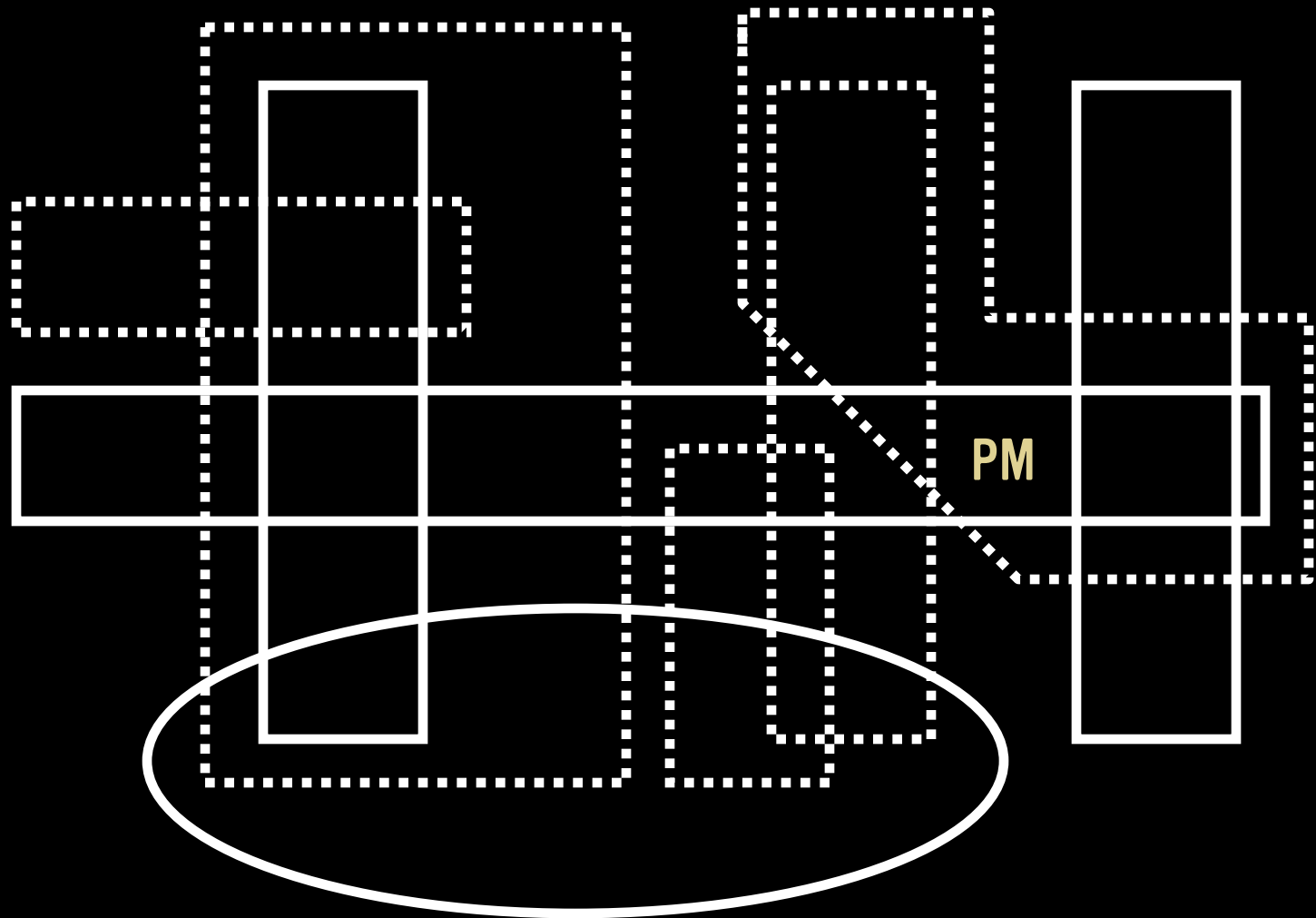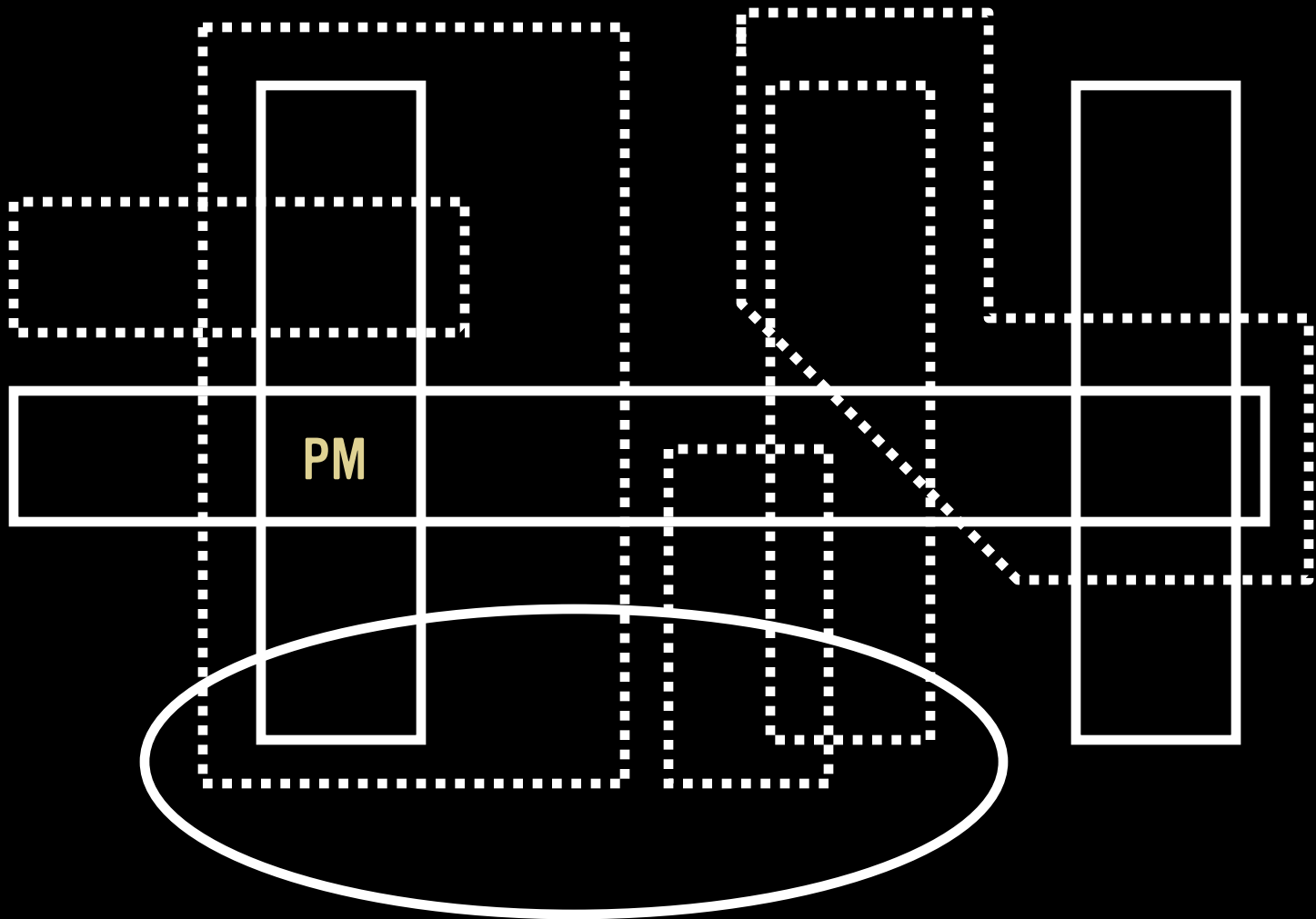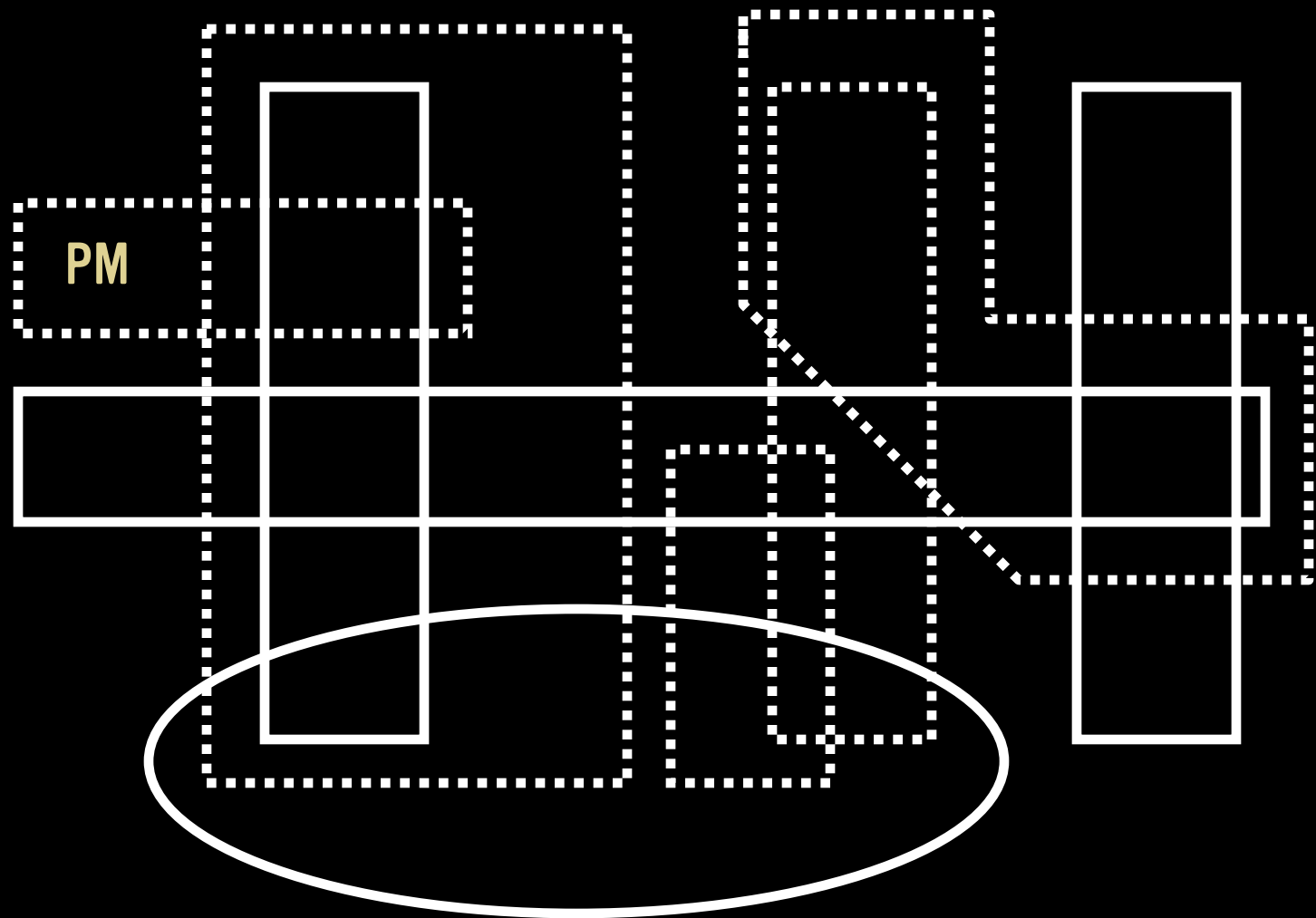
And quite possibly.

More rarely.
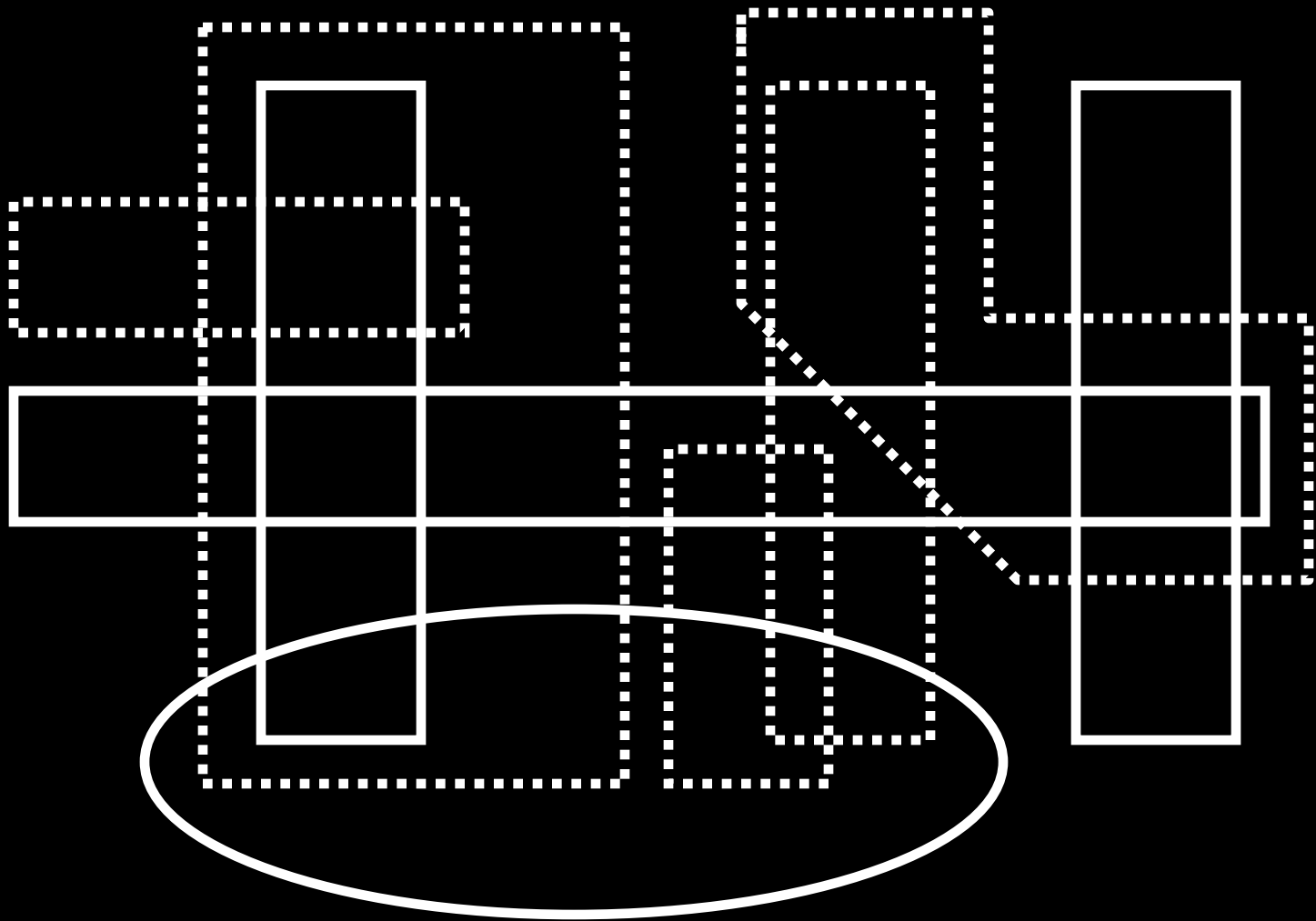
(Very rare).
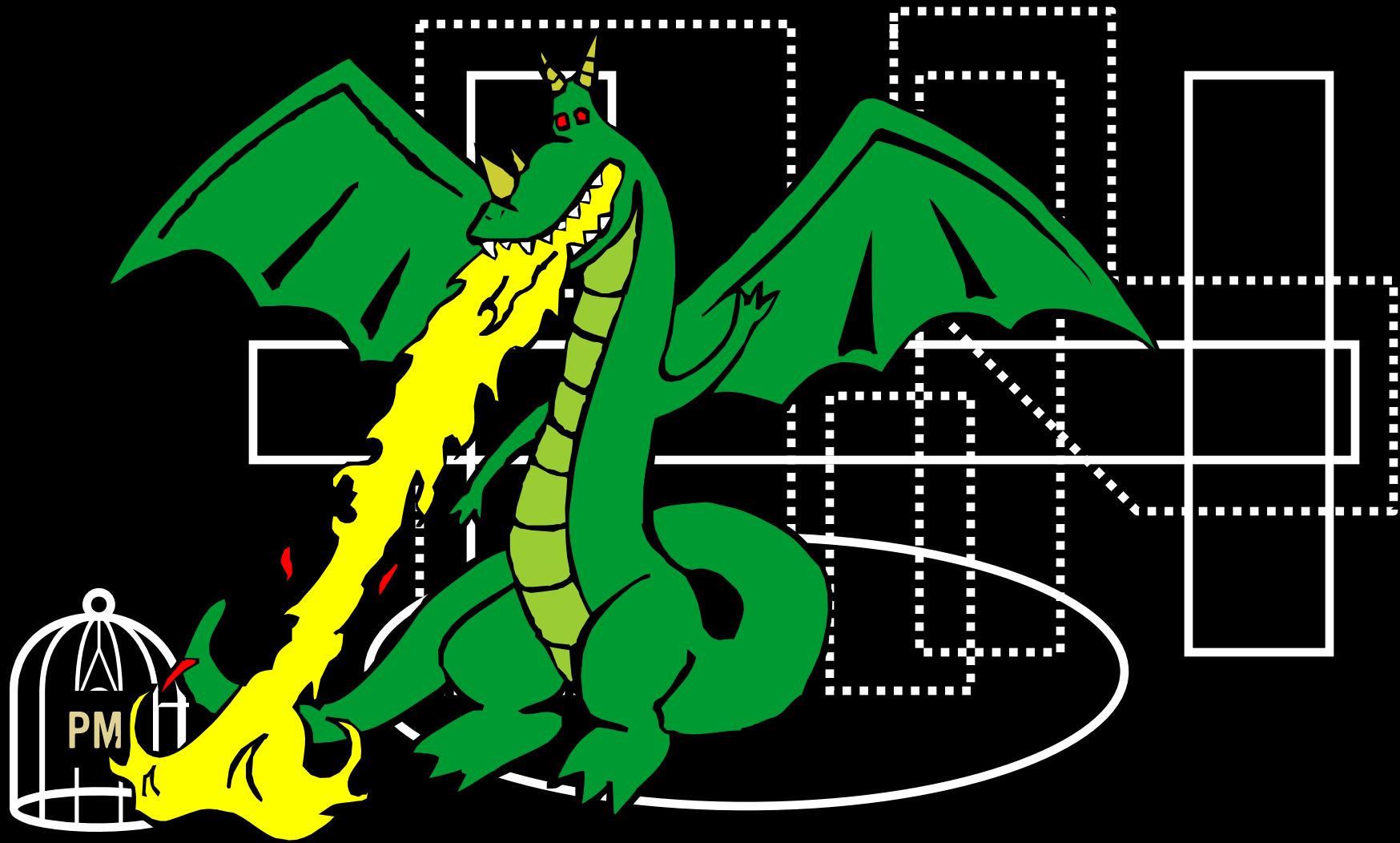
The reality.

- PMs usually not closely supervised.
- Little to no authority is handed to you.
- You don't have direct managerial oversight for the people who work on your stuff.
- You are held accountable for success (or lack thereof).

The team:
Who you are working with

7±2

7 ± 2

(That's the first formula).

George A. Miller. The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two. *The Psychological Review*, 1956, vol. 63, pp. 81-97

Always trust your instincts.

If you don't have the right team, get it.

There is nothing more important to invest
"political capital" on.

Be three things at once.

1.

"Never tell people how to do things.
Tell them what to do and they will surprise
you with their ingenuity."

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you with their ingenuity."
(General George Patton)

2.

Communicate to different people in their own language.

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3.

Represent the people not in the room.

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Represent the people not in the room.

The Modern Product Manager

1.   2.   3.

How to get respect from engineers.

1. Clear obstacles.
2. Get out of the way.
3. Always take the blame.
4. Ask dumb questions.
5. Explain the "why."
6. Empathize.
7. Bring the donuts.

How to get respect from sales.

1. Know their number.
2. Get on the phone with customers.
3. Make promises so they don't have to.
4. Help them be creative.
5. Bring the donuts.

How to get respect from **executives.**

1. Have a vision.
2. Be patient.
3. Have data.
4. Know your competition.
5. Ask smart questions.
6. Make your commitments.
7. Bring the donuts.

How to get respect from customers.

1. Understand what they want.

2. Call them out of the blue.

3. Keep your promises.

4. Take the blame.
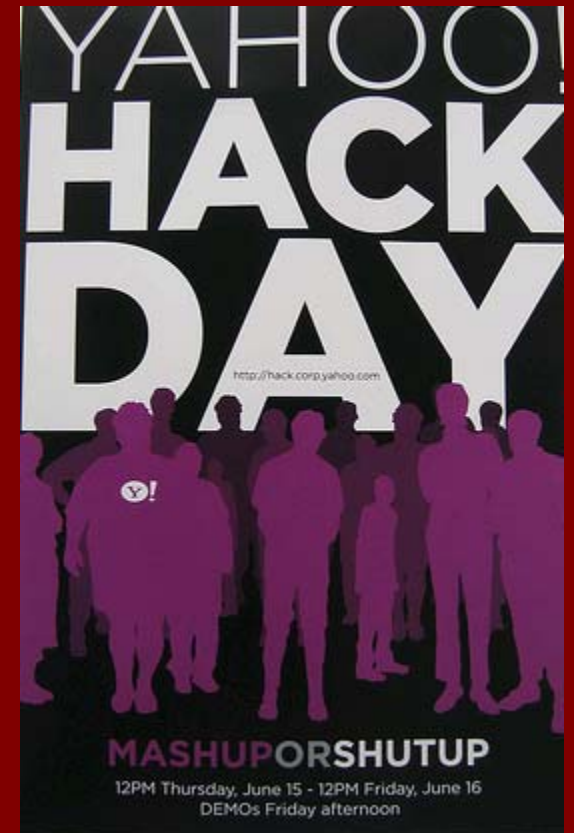
5. Bring the donuts.

Fuel for teams.

A. B. S.

Always Be Shipping.

Nothing helps a team become efficient more than a steady release tempo.

The Hackathon

- Basic rules:
- Valuable to the company
- Not what you're "supposed" to be doing
- Idea to prototype in one day

If you do nothing else...

Have a fifteen minute daily meeting.

Ask your team three questions:

1. What have you completed since yesterday?
2. What will you have <u>done</u> by tomorrow?
3. What's standing in your way and how can we help?

Getting smarter about estimating.

Product Manager:

"When can you get this done? Today?"

Engineer:

"Well, I think it needs more time."

Product Manager:
"We need it ASAP.
What about tomorrow by end of day?"

Engineer:
"Uh, OK."

The right question:

"What needs to happen for you to finish, and what can I do to help?"

Rule of thumb for estimates.

Likely estimate (L):
"How long do you think it will take?"

Pessimistic estimate (P):
"OK, but what's the longest it could take, accounting for unforeseen roadblocks?"

Optimistic estimate (O):
"What's the least amount of time required if everything goes well?"

$$\frac{0 + (L \times 4) + P}{6}$$

An even simpler approach.

Use a simple High/Medium/Low or 1-5 scale.

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