



Building an X-Team

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The world's only consulting detective of consumer and market behavior



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I have built a few UX, product, and market research teams.

In building a Cult of Curiosity and reducing risk by discovering insights that enable businesses to make better decisions, faster, this is what I learned.



[1/15]

7:26 PM · 22 May, 2022



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1/ It's kinda like Star Trek.

"Space...the final frontier...to boldly go where no one has gone before."

Building a new team is literally going where no one has gone before.

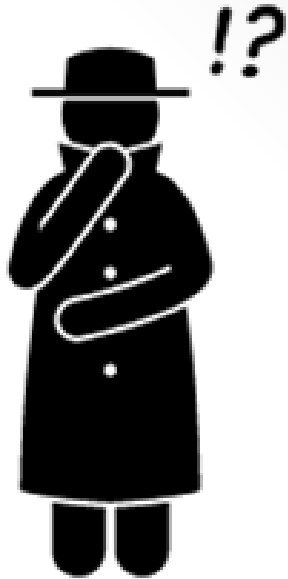
There are no step-by-step instructions and no SINGLE right way to get 'er done.

It's hard.

👉 [2/15]

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2/ It's kinda like the Hunger Games.

"May the odds be ever in your favor."

The goal should be to shift the odds in your favor.

Think about risk differently, i.e. being "less wrong" vs. "being right."

Then, be like Dollar Bill in Billions:

"I am not uncertain."

📌 [3/15]

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3/ Fight the right battles.

"I am here today to cross the swamp, not to fight all the alligators." — Rosamund Stone Zander

It is easy to get bogged down fighting every single battle.

Don't.

Stay focused on your mission and objectives and focus your efforts there.

👉 [4/15]

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4/ Develop your intent.

Your intent—connected to OKRs, business strategy, and a plan for socialization—should include what you want to accomplish and why.

This will keep everyone focused on what's important.

"I love it when a plan comes together." — The A-Team

👉 [5/15]

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5/ Make a call.

A few things feed into this:

- It's ok to be wrong
- Take calculated risks
- Have a bias for action

Develop a stomach for shipping things (decisions included) before you feel comfortable.

Favor progress over perfection.

📌 [6/15]

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6/ Do YOUR job.

There is no shortage of challenges in new research practices.

But one thing is certain.

The team doesn't need everyone to play quarterback (or linebacker).

Play YOUR position. Let someone else play theirs.

If you don't, someone else has to.

👉 [7/15]

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7/ Fix broken shit.

If you see something broken. Fix it.

If it's too big to fix alone, bring in the right people and deliberately assign responsibility.

If nobody owns something, it won't get fixed.

👍 [8/15]

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8/ Be curious outside of your domain.

Get to know Product, UX Design, Product Marketing, Sales, BDR, SDR, Customer Success, Technical Success, etc.

You can't solve business problems if you don't know the business.

After all:

"It takes a village."

👉 [9/15]

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9/ Focus on decisions.

Evaluate the decision you (and the business) make against the desired and actual outcomes.

You can control decisions, but you can't control outcomes.

- Good decisions can yield bad outcomes
- Bad decisions can yield good outcomes

📌 [10/15]

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10/ Be situationally aware.

Keep an eye on:

- 5 yards in front of you
- 25 yards in front of you
- Your blindside
- What's behind you

Be vigilant for threats and opportunities.

"People, places, the things they do, and the times they do them." — Andy Sipowicz

👉 [11/15]

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11/ Decentralize command.

Don't move information to authority.

Move authority to information.

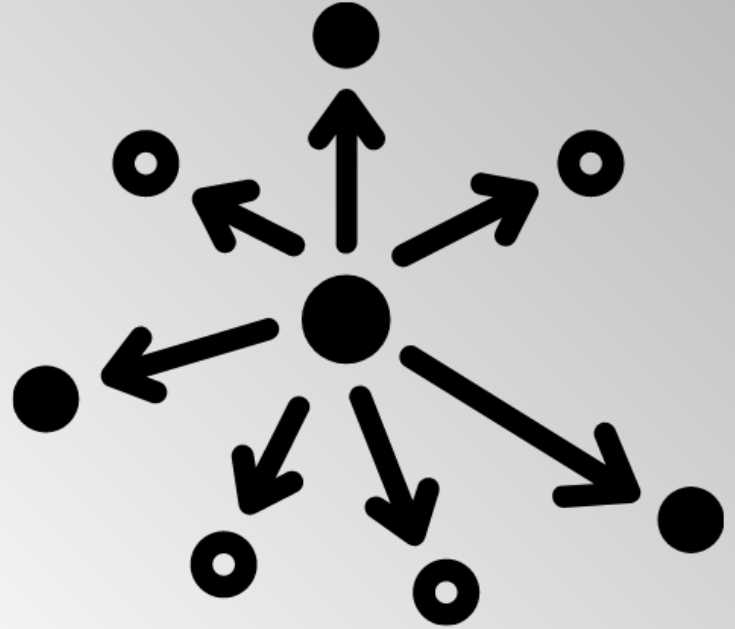
Give your team:

- L & R boundaries
- Context (share the why)
- Your intent

Clarity of purpose and freedom of action empowers your team to solve YOUR problems.

👉 [12/15]

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12/ Prioritize and execute.

Prioritize high-value problems and solve them first.

De-prioritize lesser issues and problems.

Live by the credo, "That's not a [insert day of week] problem" for lesser things that spring up.

Take deliberate action.

👉 [13/15]

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13/ Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Transparent, open, two-way, honest communication is necessary.

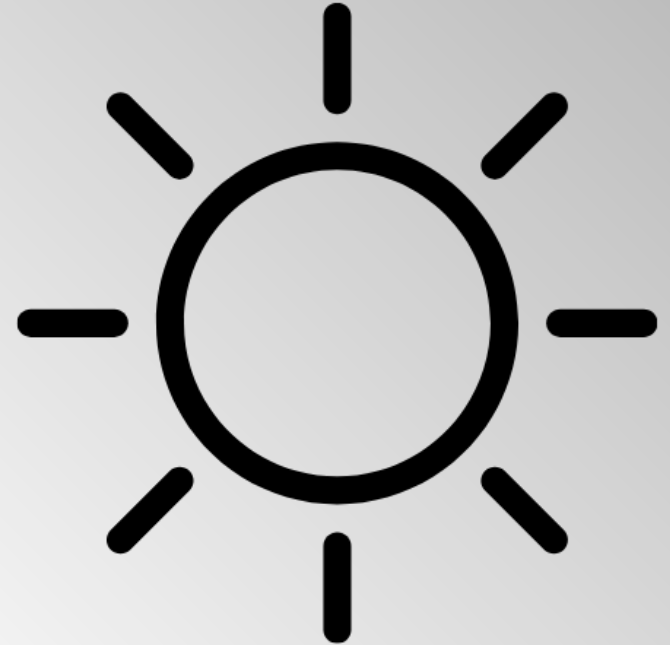
Embrace radical candor.

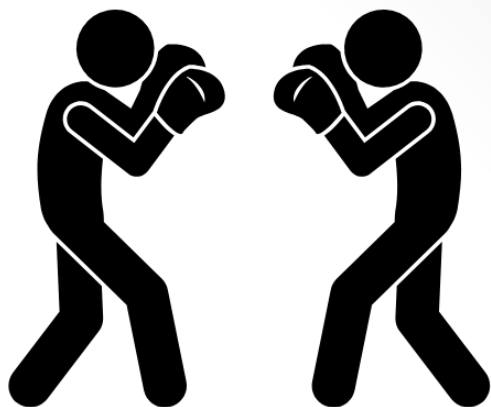
However, once the debate is over it's important to have one of two outcomes:

- Agree and commit
- Disagree and commit

👍 [14/15]

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14/ BONUS: No plan survives first contact with the enemy.

Mike Tyson said, "Everybody's got a plan until they've been hit."

Expect your plans to change.

Planning is human; adapting to change is divine.

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