

**How I set fire to  
millions of  
dollars of  
Expedia's  
money and all I  
got was this  
talk**

**Derek Zumsteg**





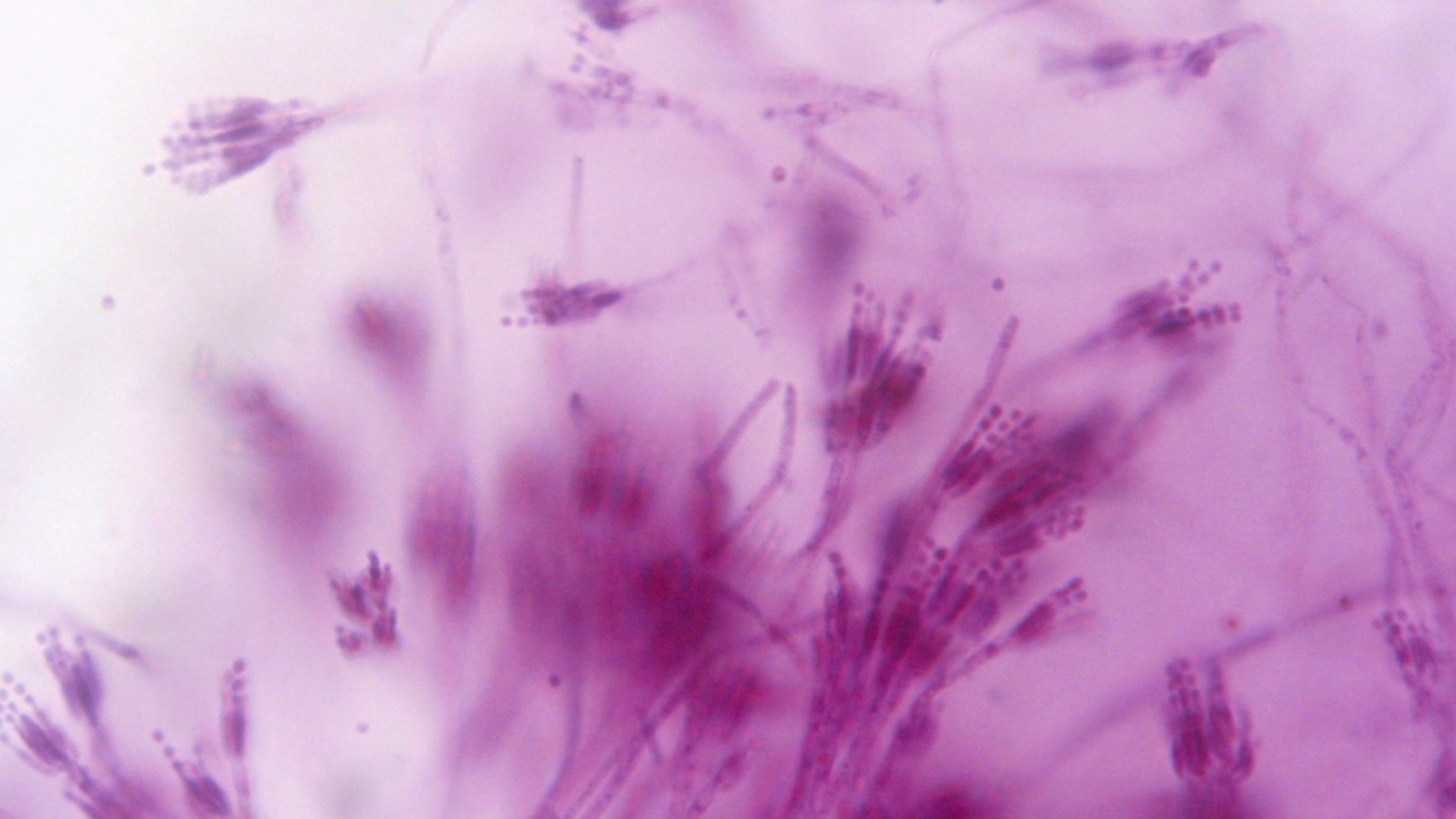


SHALLOW  
WATER

No Diving or Jumping









**Prelude**



**Some thoughts**





**Fear of  
institutions  
(both senses)**



**I accomplished  
this**







**I attempted  
this**



**Shame**



# Mt. Rainier, near Seattle, 4,392 meter elevation

(Not pictured: me, not climbing Mt. Rainier)





**(I do *not* have double lumbago,  
coxsackie virus, or  
alien hand syndrome)**



**So let's talk about failure!**



# Deep breath





# The Problem

**It's 2009 and not enough people  
are buying packages**

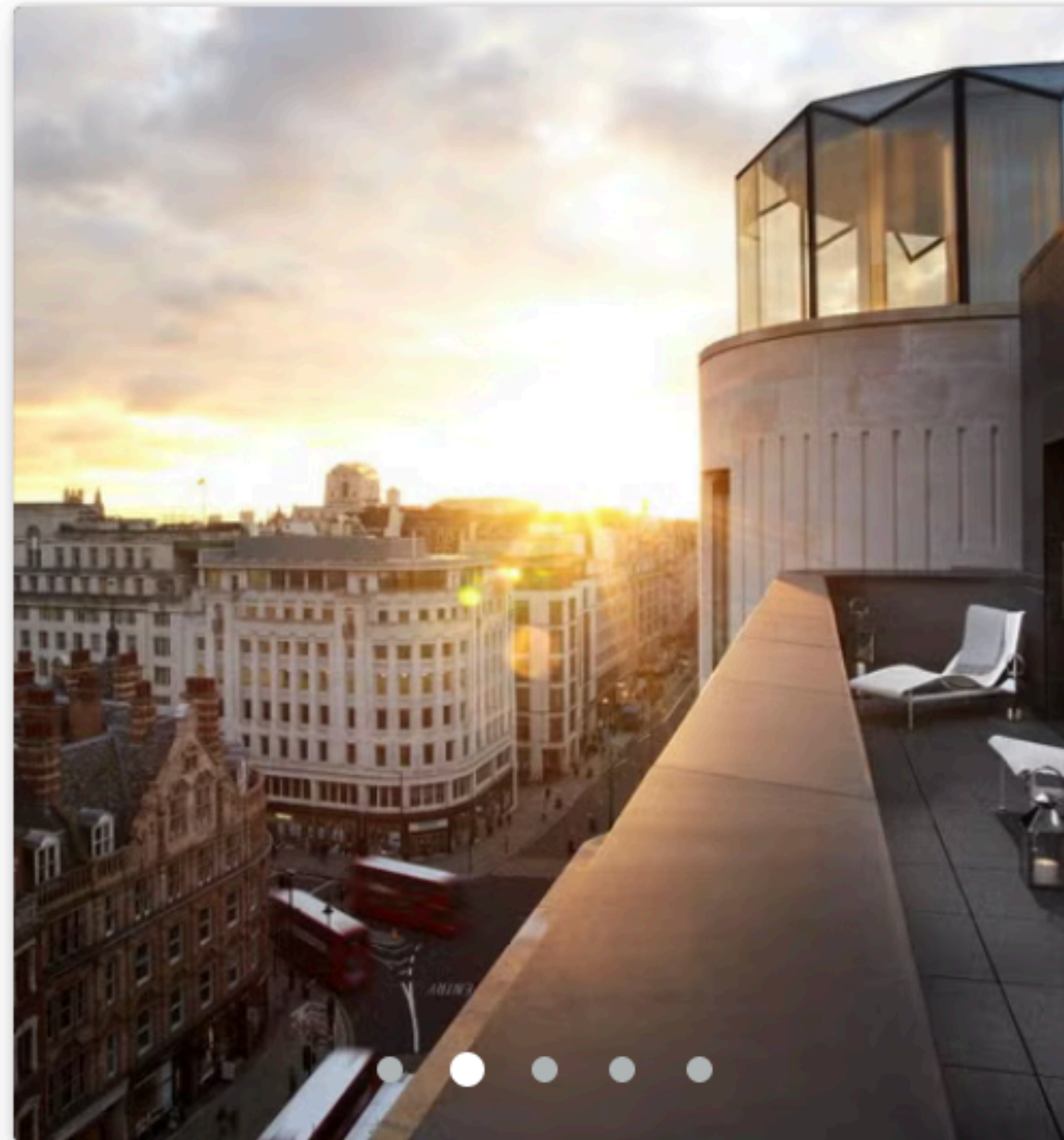


# The Problem

**What's a package?**



# The Problem




Luxury

## ME London by Melia Promoted

 Mayfair - Soho

 Free Internet Access [Amenities](#)

**8.5** 1529 Ratings | 5-Star Hotel

 Price Includes  
**Hotel + Flight, taxes & fees.**

PACKAGE DISCOUNT

**SAVE \$692**

for 2 travelers

~~\$2752~~

**\$2406**

per person

\$4,812 Total price

[Choose your room](#)

[booking.com](#), New York to London package search



# The Problem

**What customers told us**

# The Problem

**My favorite usability story**



# The Problem

**What customer data told us**

# The Problem

**We have to solve this**



# The Problem

**Give the customer what they  
want**



# The Problem

**“I don’t like this bundle thing, I want to shop for flights”**



# The Problem

## You don't like this, huh?

Your package	Package price	
	1.000 US\$	Buy
	2.000 US\$	Buy
	3.000 US\$	Buy
	5.000 US\$	Buy



# The Problem

## Pick your flight first, like you want

Your flight	Flight price	
	100 US\$	Add this to your bundle
	200 US\$	Add this to your bundle
	300 US\$	Add this to your bundle
	500 US\$	Add this to your bundle

# The Problem

**“I don’t understand the savings  
or how to shop for them”**



# The Problem

## Here you go

	Flight price if bought normally	<b>Savings</b>	
	100 US\$	<b>Package savings of \$50 or more with this one!</b>	Yeah!
	200 US\$	<b>Package savings of \$100 or more with this one!</b>	Woo!
	300 US\$		Let's goooo!
	500 US\$		Love it!

# The Problem

## The plan

- test and validate
- test more
- get the smart people together
- build
- launch



# The Problem

**Do you green light this?**

Let's go  
test!

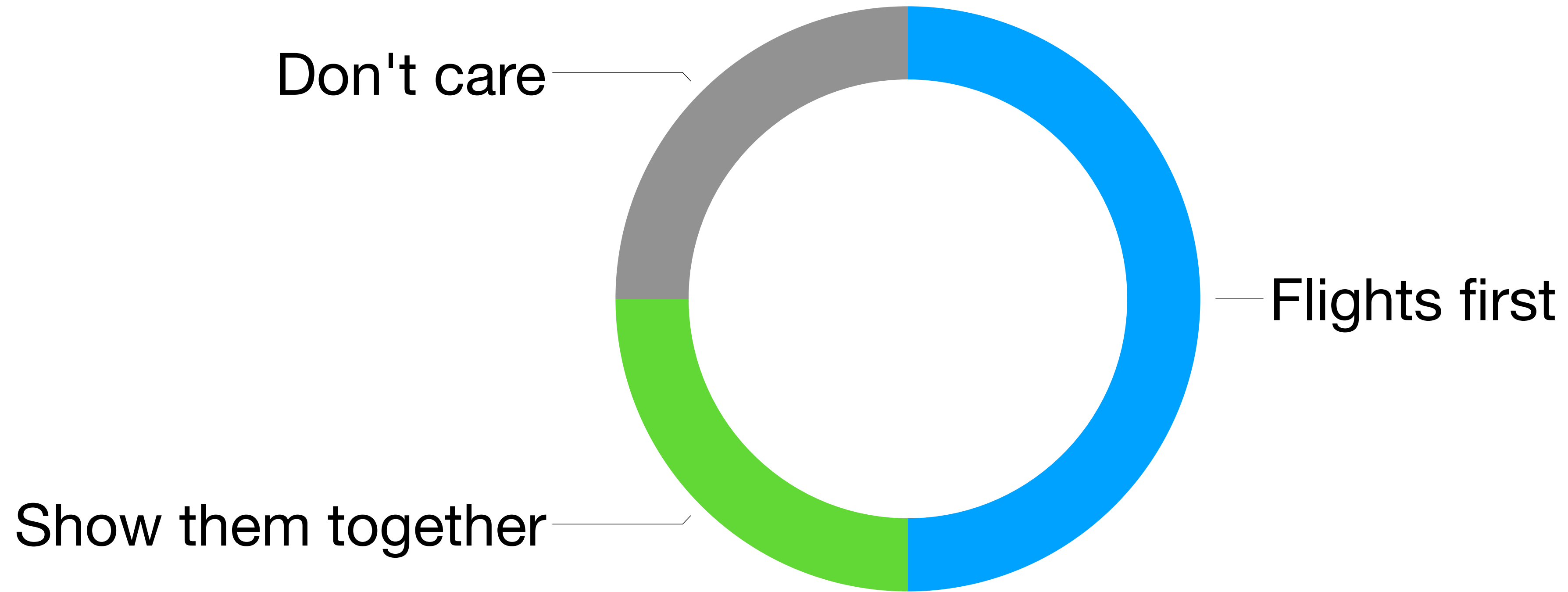


Let's test



“Back in my day,  
we didn't have  
'dual track agile!'”

# “How do you want to shop for your package?”





# Let's test



Not clickable logo

Doesn't work

Clickable!

Doesn't work

Doesn't work

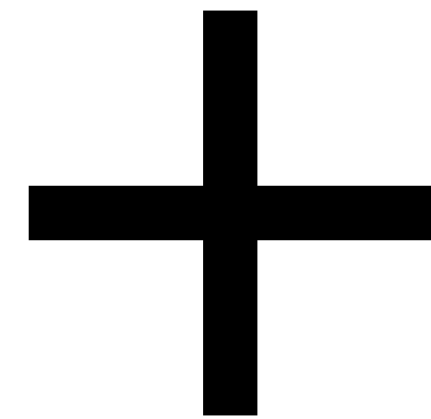
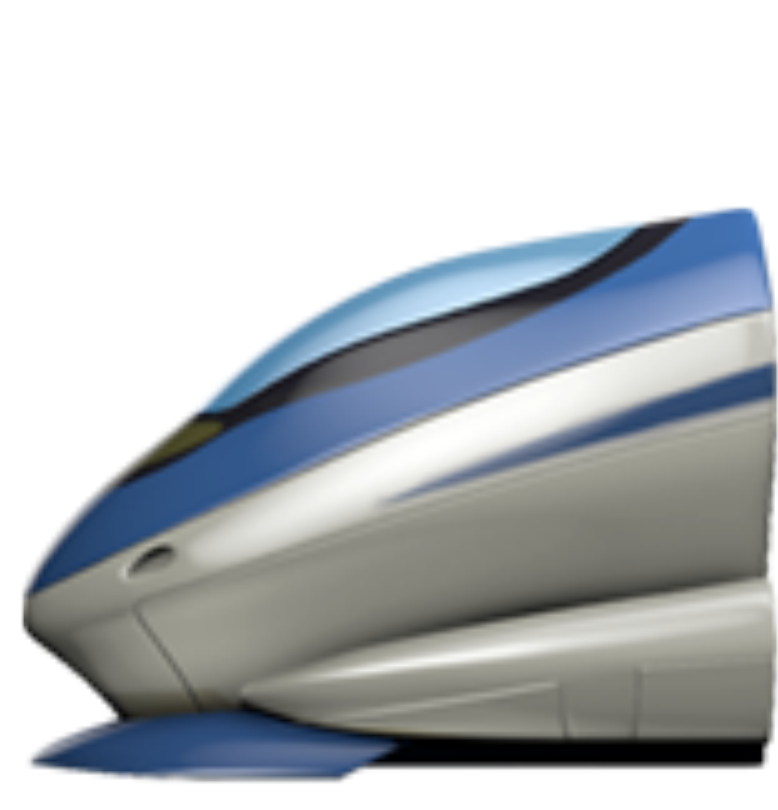
A lot of sample text goes here

Buy!

Let's test

# Heavier-weight testing

- [expedia.co.uk](https://www.expedia.co.uk)
- [expedia.de](https://www.expedia.de)





Let's test

**Do you move ahead?**

**Let's  
think  
ahead!**



Let's think this through

**A product spec!**

Let's think this through

**We pre-mortem**

Let's think this through

**Pre-mortems are challenged**



Let's think this through





Let's think this through

**See clearer by  
standing on the  
shoulders tubs  
of cynics**





Let's think this through

**We find the usual stuff**



Let's think this through

**Do you keep going?**

Let's think this through

**Forge ahead!**



Let's  
build!!!

Let's build

**Software is  
hard**



Let's build




# Compromises

Let's build






**Lot of  
compromises**



# Remember this?

	Flight price	Savings	
	100 US\$	<b>Package savings of \$50 or more!</b>	Yeah!
	200 US\$	<b>Package savings of \$100 or more!</b>	Woo!
	300 US\$		Let's goooo!

# Let's build

	Flight if you bought it alone		
	100 US\$		Add to a package
	200 US\$		Add to a package
	300 US\$		Add to a package

You could save money later

Let's build

**Do you continue?**



**Embarrassed  
and scared is  
*good***

Let's build

**Resigned though —**

Launch!



Wooooo!

Let's launch

**What  
happened?**

Let's launch


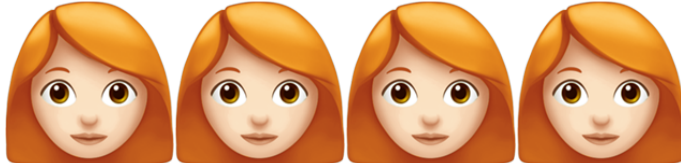

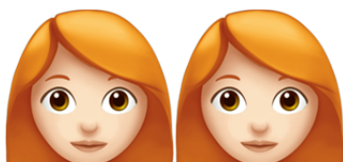

**Nothing**



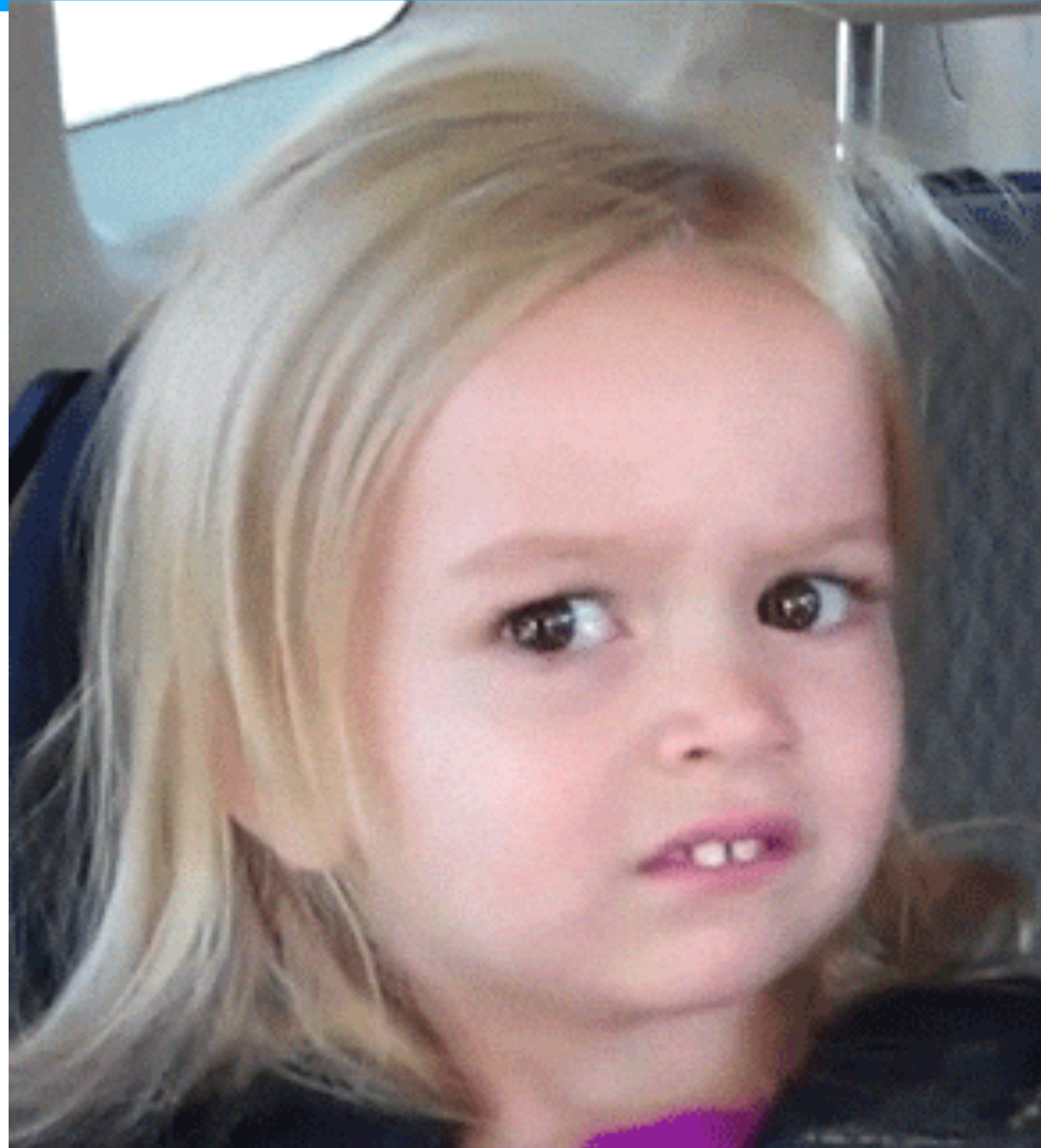
## Old path

1.  enter
2.  leave
3.  shops and buys

## New path

1.  enter
2.  shop flights
3.  shop hotels
4.  get to the bundle
5.  buys

Let's launch





Let's launch



**Did I handle this  
with grace and  
dignity?**



Let's launch

**No.**

Let's launch

**Nope.**

Let's launch

**I did not.**



Let's launch

# Stages of product grief

Let's launch

# Anger

Let's launch

# Denial



Let's launch

# Bargaining

Let's launch

# Depression

Let's launch

# Acceptance



Let's launch

**“Derek, how do I avoid Purgatory?”**





# Plan ahead so you can fail later

- Pair success and failure goals
- Set conditions
  - What would cause you to abandon the effort?
  - “If we don't get to 10% improvement, we're ending this thing”
  - What would make you continue to invest?
- Always have other things you could be doing

# Salvaging value

**If you're going to fail big, also fail small**

- One big experiment, sure
- But also, a series of smaller experiments
- What that meant

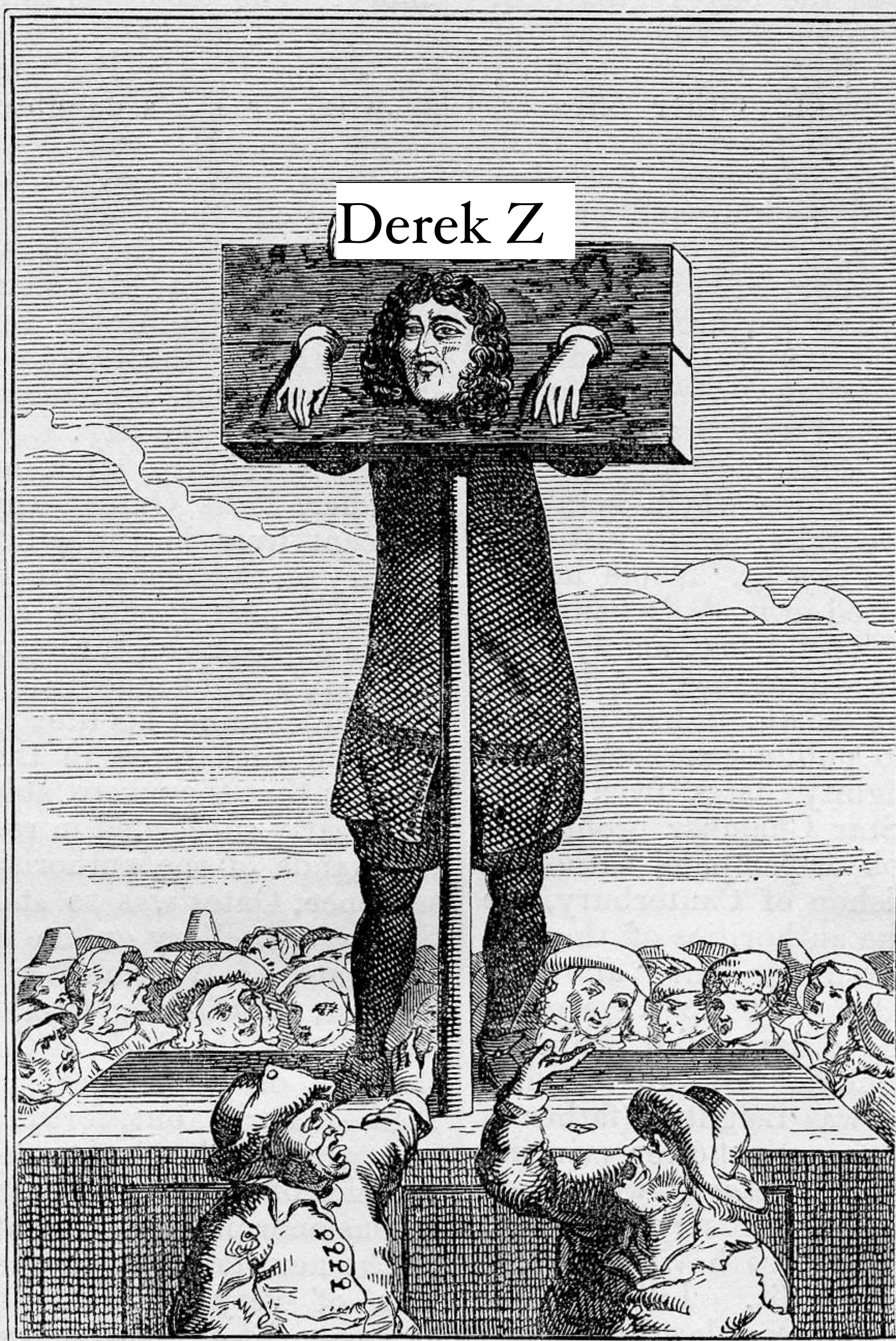


**Wait wait so did you  
get fired?**

**Did *everyone* get  
fired?**



Let's launch





Let's launch





Let's launch

**Nope**

## **What did you learn, as a company?**

- Smaller, more iterative follow-ups
- Meet customers where they are

Let's think this through

**What did we miss?**



Let's think this through

**We tested  
early...**

Let's think this through

**Doing a pre-  
mortem when you  
know the least**

# Let's think this through

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	RISK MITIGATION SPREADSHEET					
2						
3	Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Terrifying	Awesome	Mitigation
4	Deployment Breaks	Medium	High	N	N	Work with Devops on cross-region deployments for new mic
5	Godzilla attacks late-stage capitalism	High	Low	Y	Y	Side with Godzilla
6						
7						



# Let's think this through

	A	B	C	D	E	F
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6	Meteor strike					
7						



# Let's think this through

	A	B	C	D	E	F
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5	Godzilla attacks late-stage capitalism	High	Low	Y	Y	Side with Godzilla
6	Meteor strike	High	V Low	Y	N	Recruit deep sea drillers to be astr
7						

Let's think this through

**Do regular  
catastrophizing**



Let's think this through

**We made the wrong  
logical leap**

Let's think this through

**Not addressing  
trust**

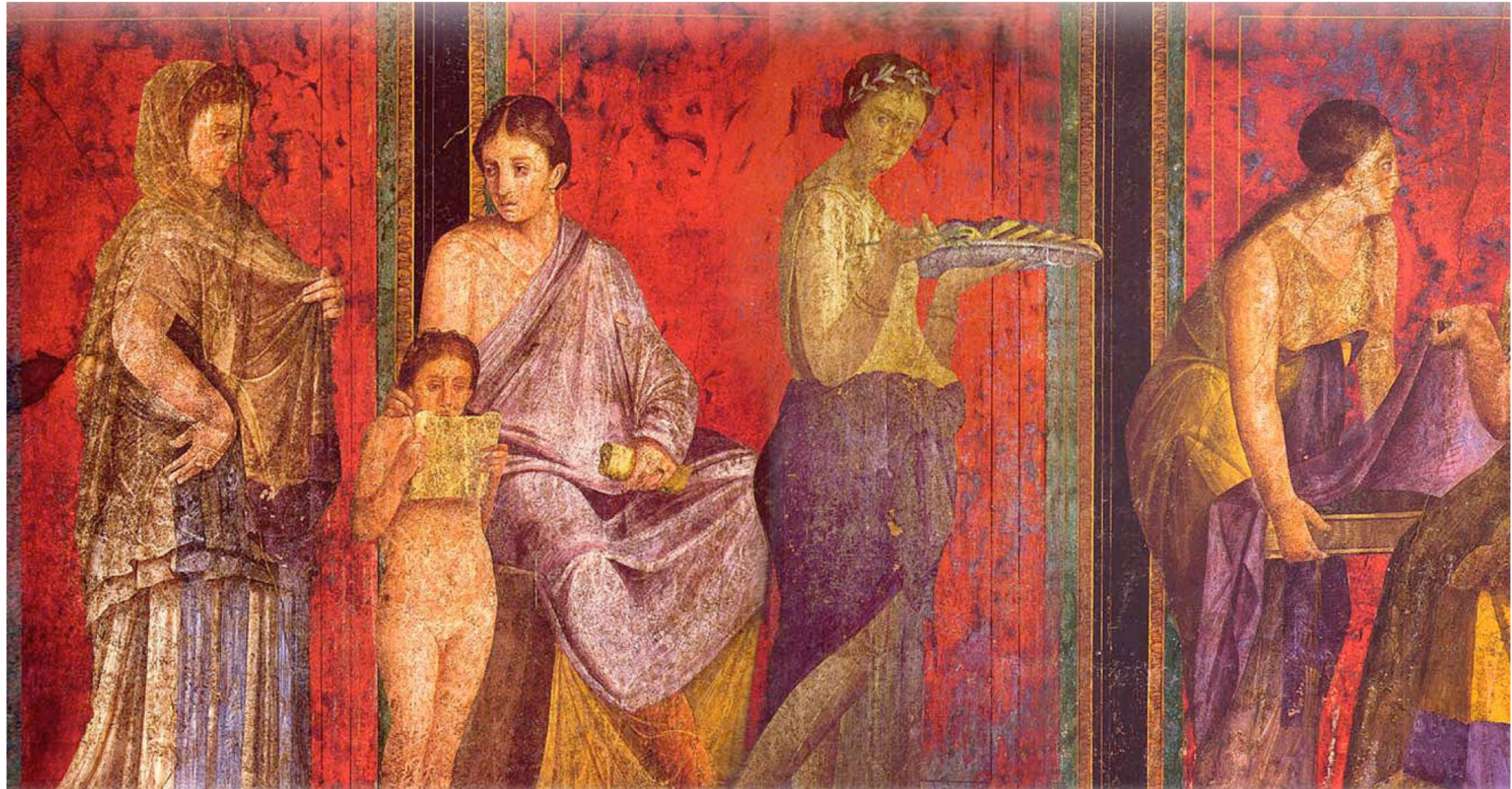
**What did we get out of  
this a profession?**



**Almost zero**



# Pompeii celebrates six centuries at Vesuvius



Light refreshments served, more settlements on active volcanoes announced

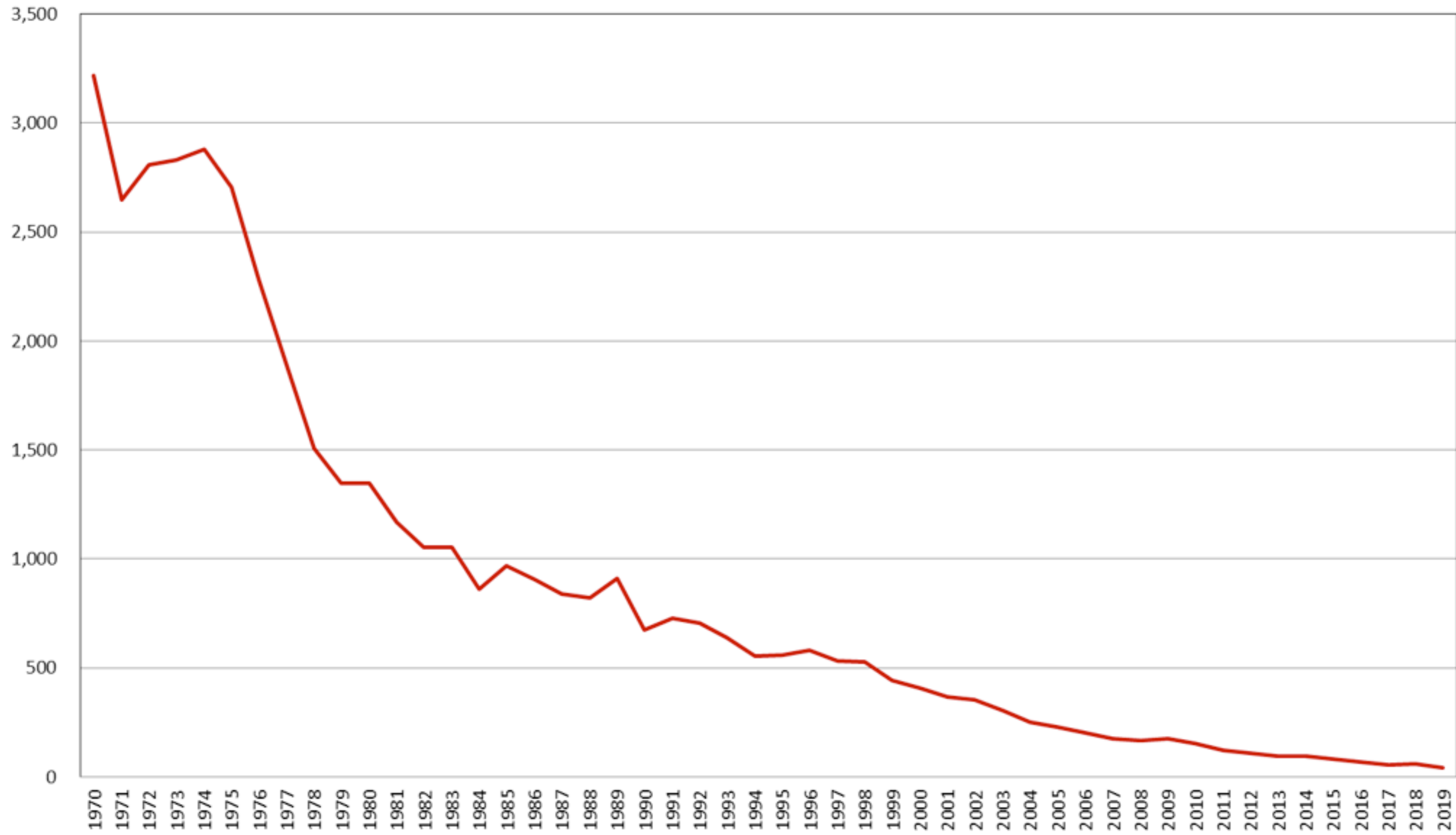


**What if we  
got better**



**What if we got  
95% better**

# Aviation Safety: Fatalities per trillion Revenue Passenger Kilometers



— Fatalities per trillion RPK

**I'm convinced, let's talk  
more about failure**



**Listen**

**Talk**

**Talk to everyone**



# **As an aside: save your story**



**Normalize asking**

**Reward successful failure**



**Seek safety**

**What's next**

# My challenge to you

- Talk here!
- Talk afterwards! Publish!
- “Failure Fridays”
- Find me!

A link to my stuff



[zumsteg.net](http://zumsteg.net)

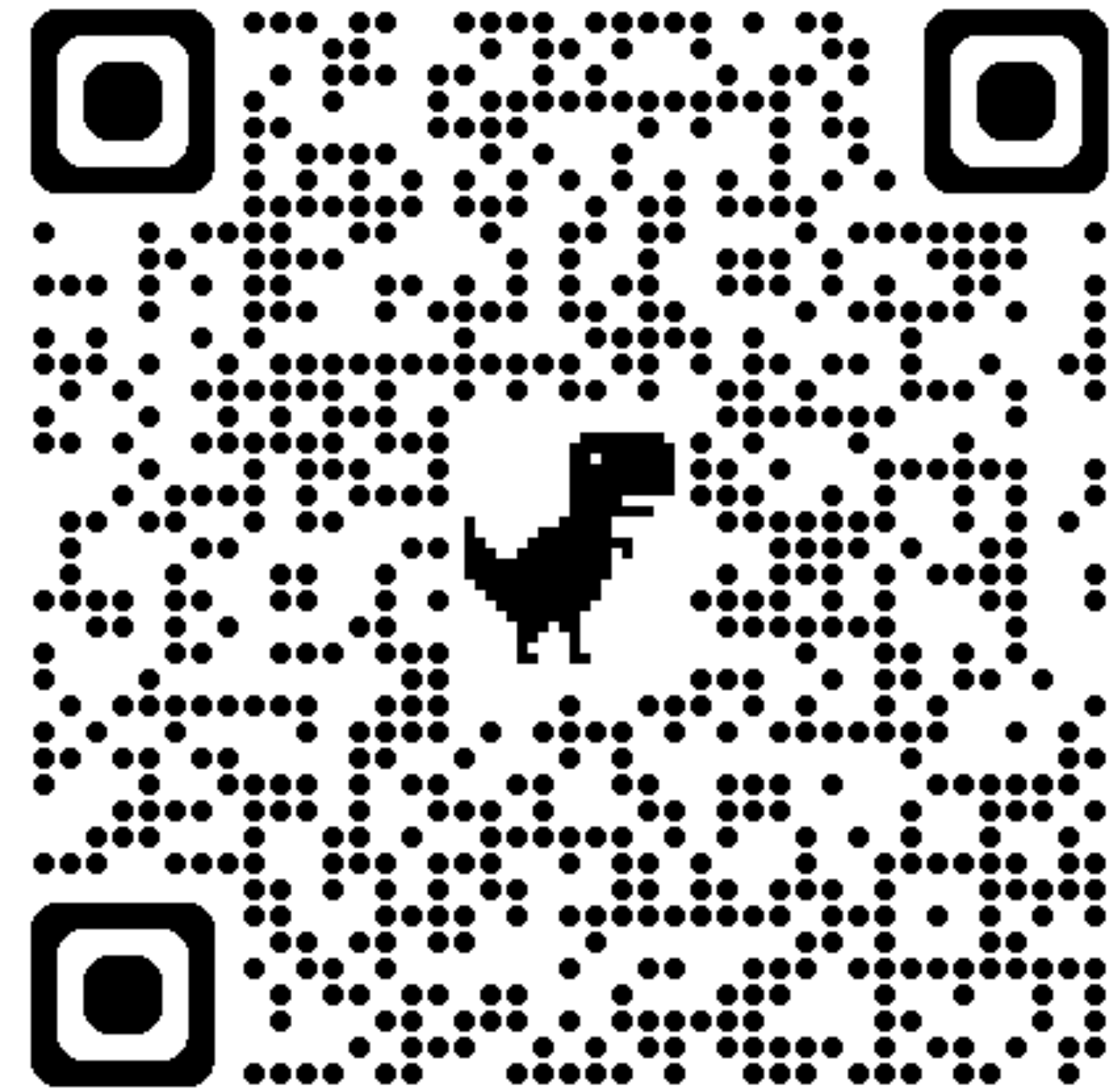


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Thank  
you!



Speaker survey!