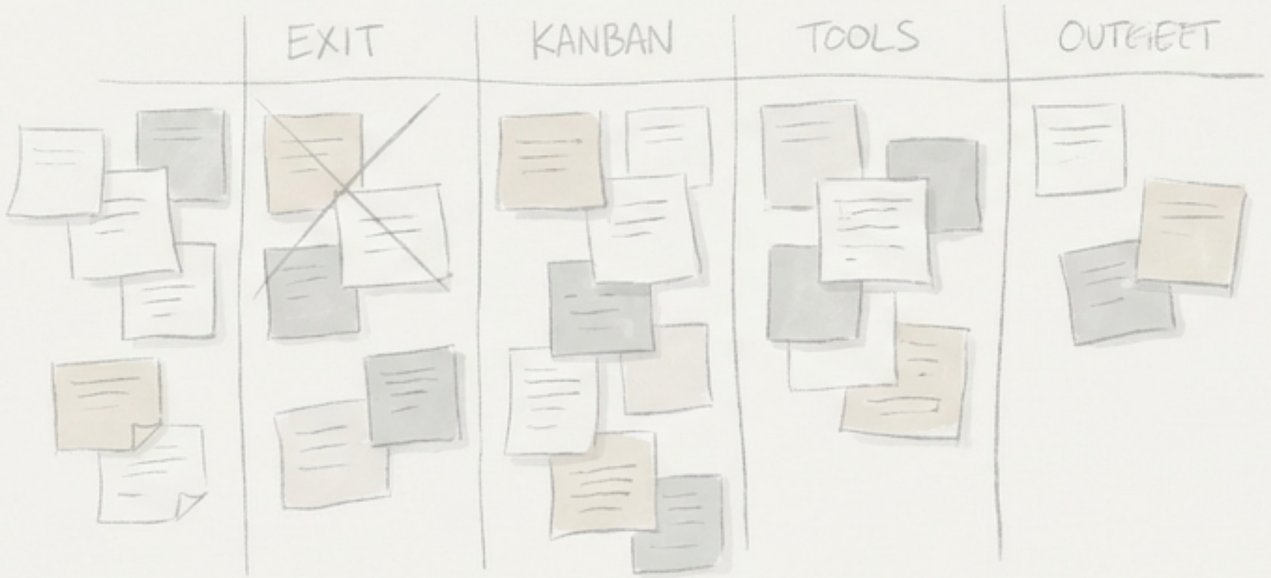
Ways of Working – S07E06 Finale

Is Agile Dead in the Age of AI? (“A Balanced Empirical Debate”)

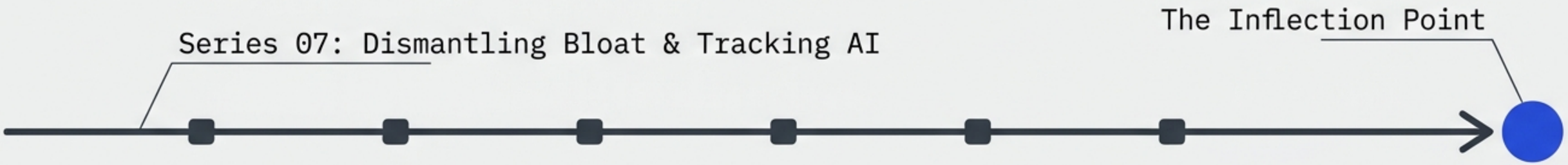


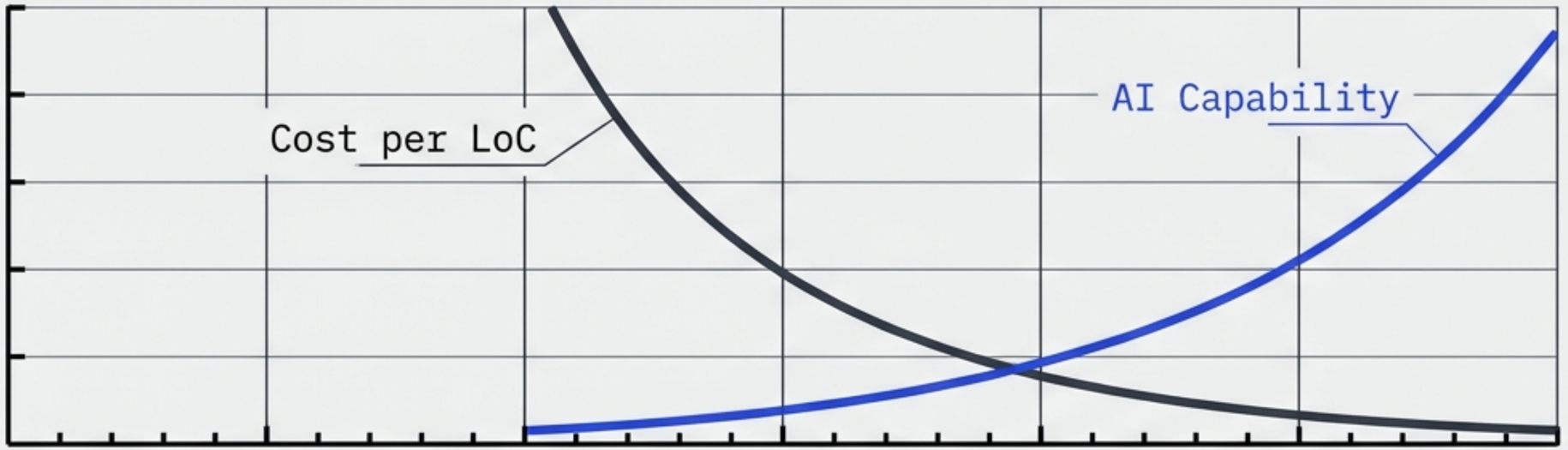
[Audience: Eng/Prod/Design] [Status: Empirical Synthesis] [Mode: Telemetry Dashboard]

Gemini Notebook

The Season 07 Recap (Where We Stand)

Across S07, we dismantled bloated delivery frameworks and tracked the rise of AI-assisted engineering; now, as the marginal cost of generating code plummets toward zero, we face the ultimate question of whether our existing operating models survive.

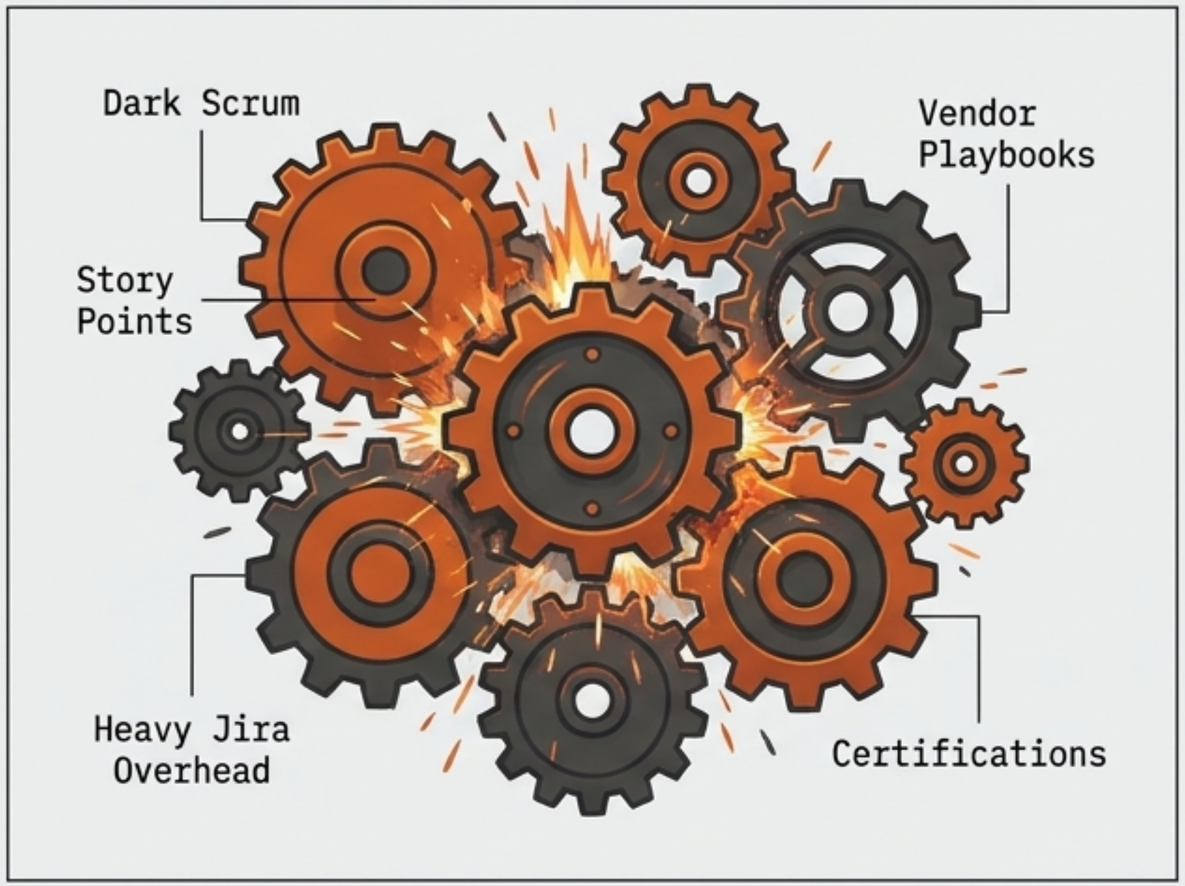




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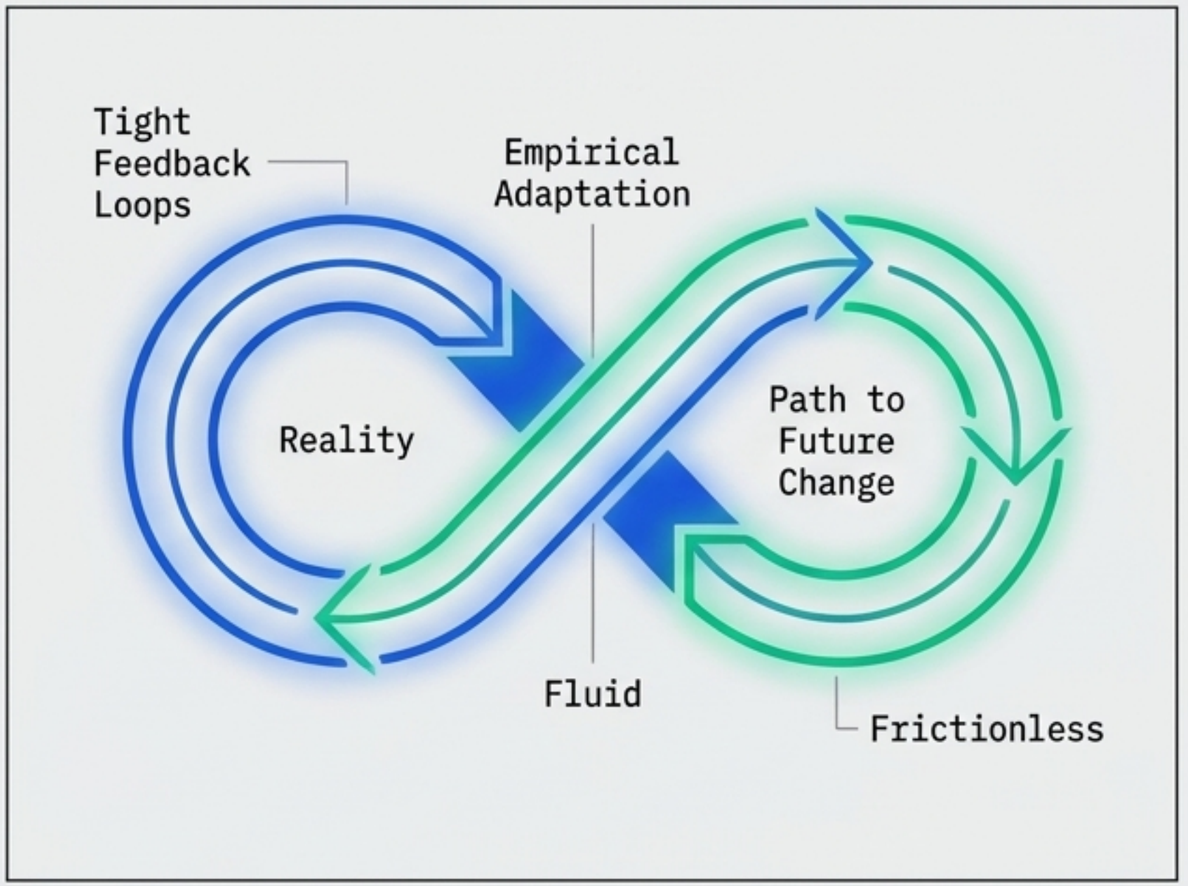
The Great Decoupling: Agile vs. agility

The Target for AI Disruption



Uppercase Corporate Agile (Noun) – Certifications, heavy Jira ticketing overhead, Dark Scrum, arbitrary story points, and vendor playbooks.

The Survival Trait



Lowercase agility (Adjective) – Tight feedback loops, empirical adaptation to reality, and taking the path that makes future change easier.

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The Pre-AI Decay of Agile

```
/* PragDave: Agile became a meaningless, commoditized noun,
   co-opted to sell services rather than protect developers. */

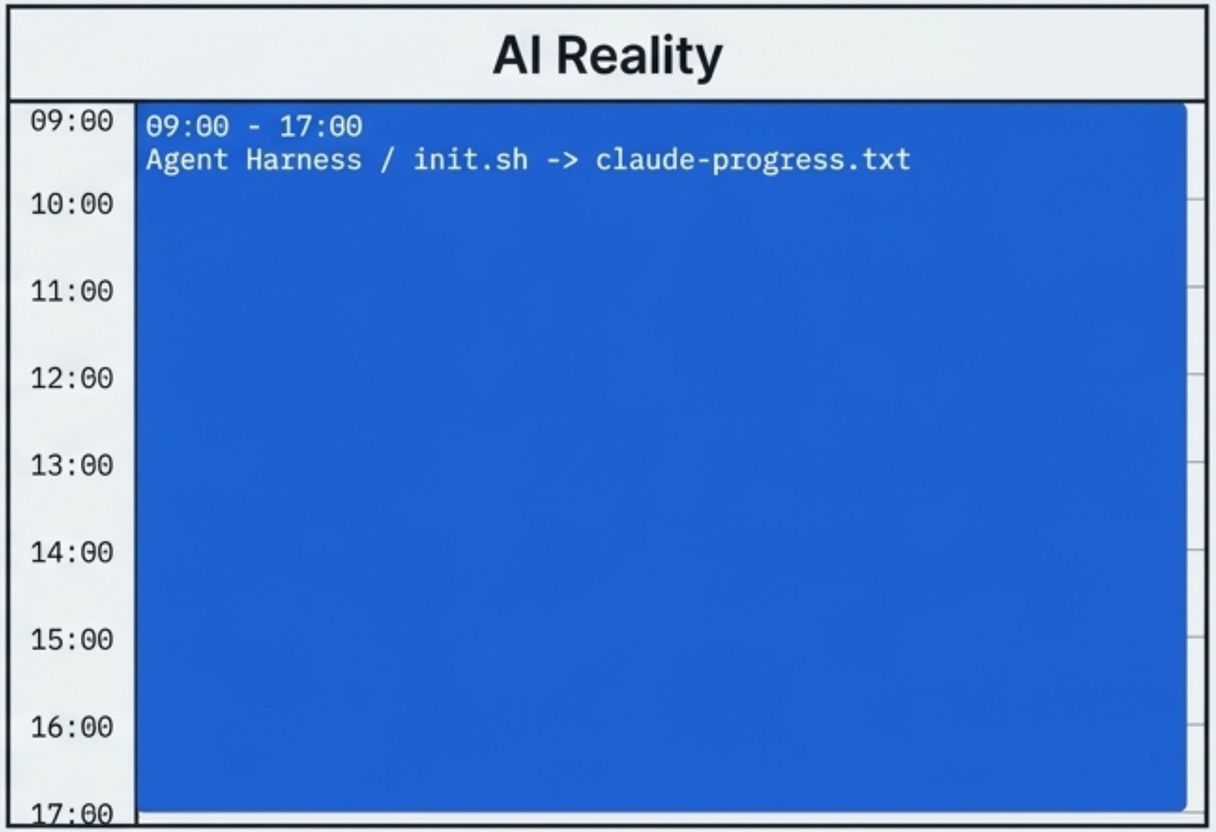
/* Ron Jeffries: Dark Scrum stripped teams of self-organization,
   weaponizing sprints to pressure developers for speed while
   ignoring technical excellence. I would like the world to be safe
   for developers. */
```

The rot started before AI. The frameworks were already failing the developers they were meant to serve.

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The Maker's Schedule vs. The AI Agent Harness





Human Maker: Meetings and ceremonies are exceptions that destroy context.

AI Reality: Long-running agent harnesses operate continuously.

Synthesis: Squad compression means smaller teams need fewer coordination ceremonies, making Scrum overhead actively hostile to agentic velocity.

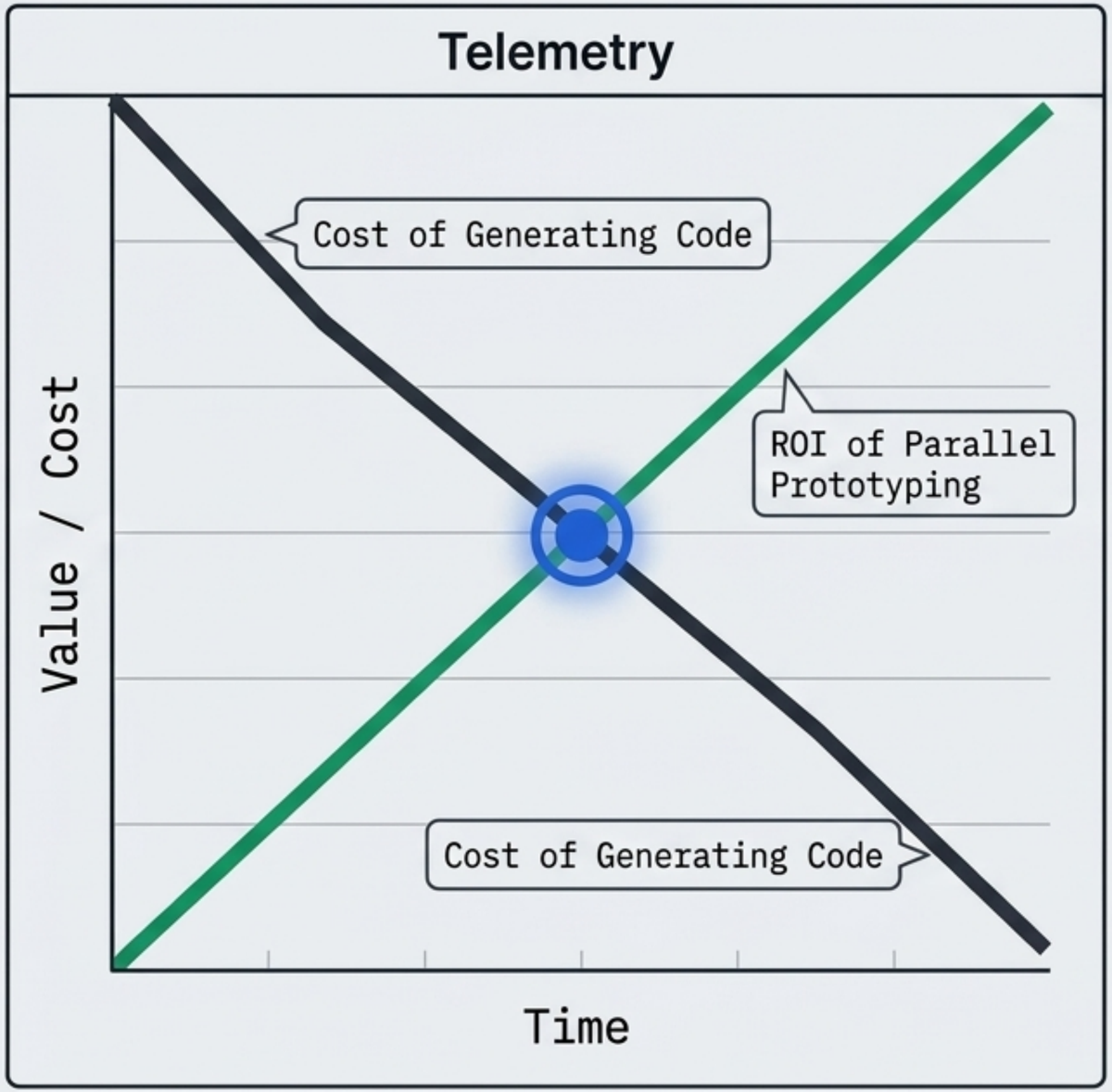
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Cheap Code & The Death of Estimation

The Broken Assumption:

Rigorous backlog grooming and estimation poker were designed to protect expensive human typing time.

Cheap code breaks this economic equation.



The Shift (Simon Willison):

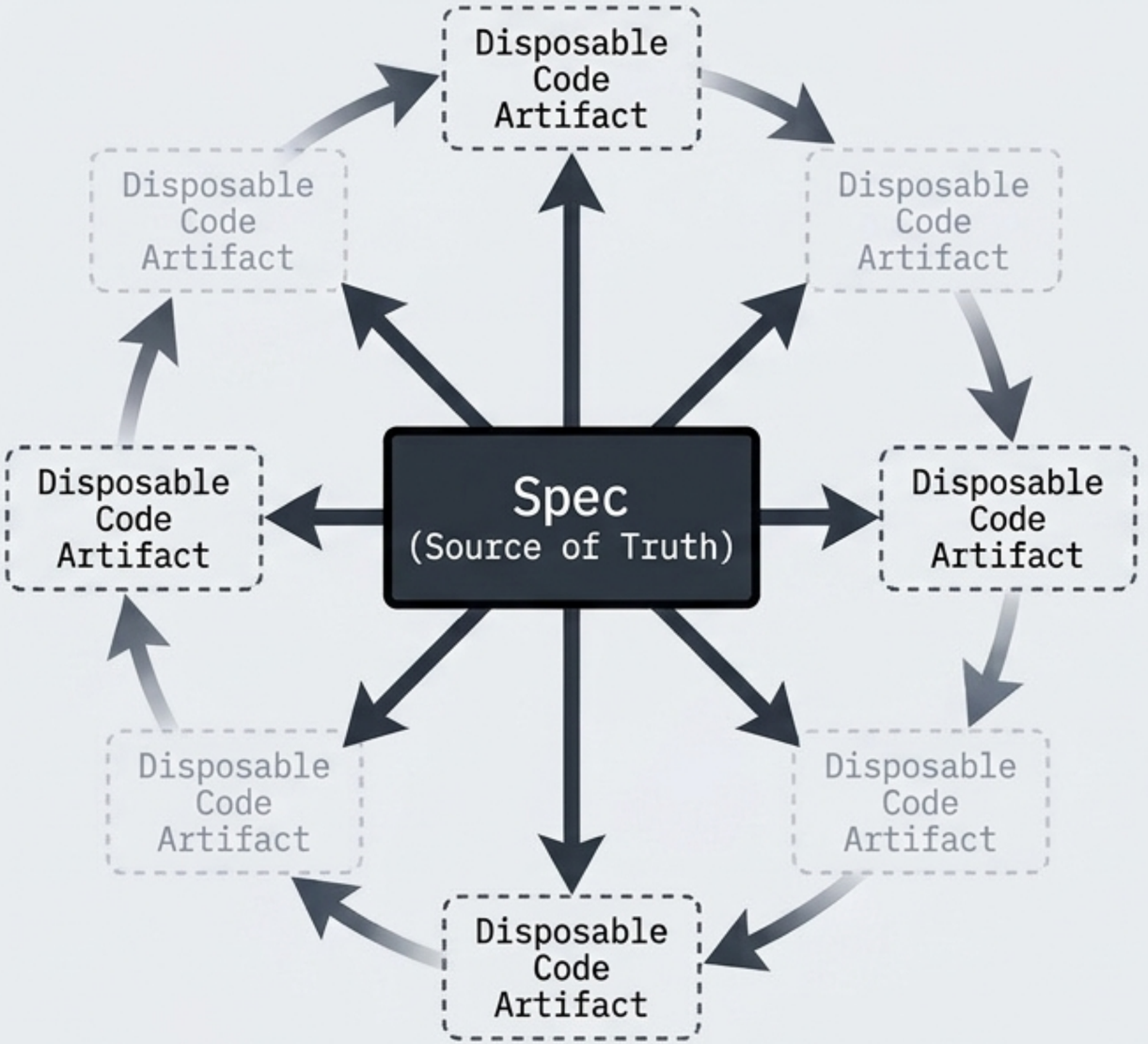
When code is cheap, you don't spend three days estimating and pointing a feature. You deploy parallel, sacrificial prototypes and see what works.

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Specs Outlive Disposable Code

The Spec Kit Argument:

In Spec-Driven Development, the lingua franca moves up. The specification generates the implementation plan; code becomes the last-mile approach.

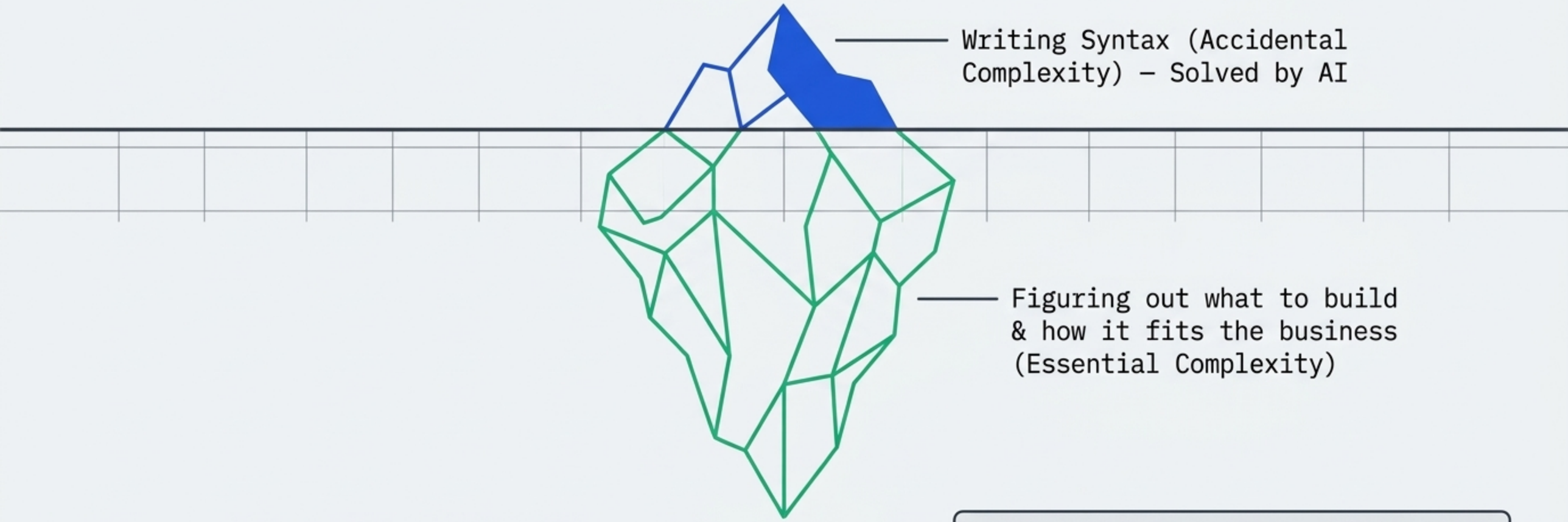


The Paradigm Shift:

If software is maintained by evolving specifications while AI regenerates the implementation, ritualistic Agile ceremonies focused on managi ng code artifacts become obsolete.

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Essential Complexity Doesn’t Write Itself



Fred Brooks’ Physics: AI eliminates accidental complexity (boilerplate, syntax). It does not solve essential complexity.

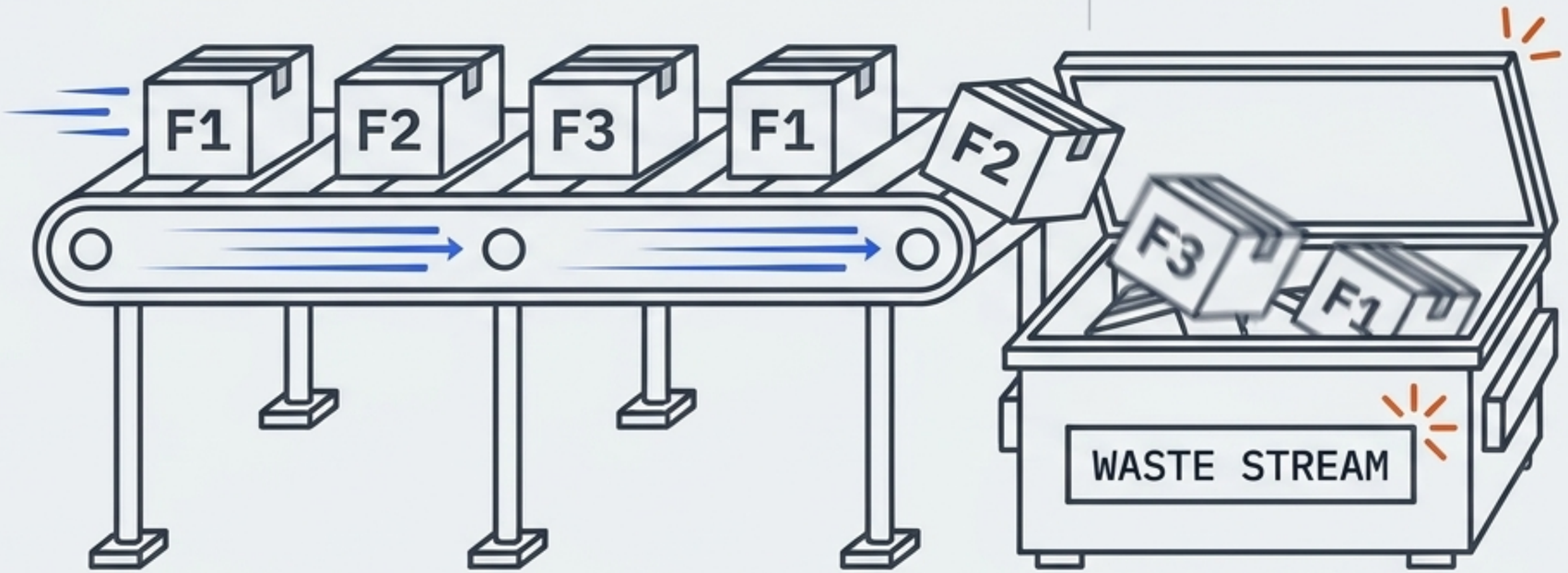
The Reality Check: Without agility (rapid feedback loops and course correction), you just generate the wrong software at lightspeed.

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Product Discovery vs. AI Feature Factories

AI Feature Factory Hazard

Marty Cagan's Warning:
AI drastically accelerates the output of Feature Teams (mercenaries delivering dictated roadmaps).

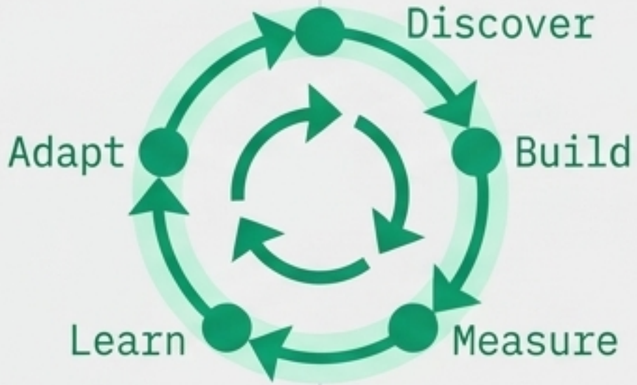


The Countermeasure: Empowered Product Teams (missionaries focused on value and viability) are more vital than ever. If you lack customer discovery, AI simply makes you a highly efficient waste generator.

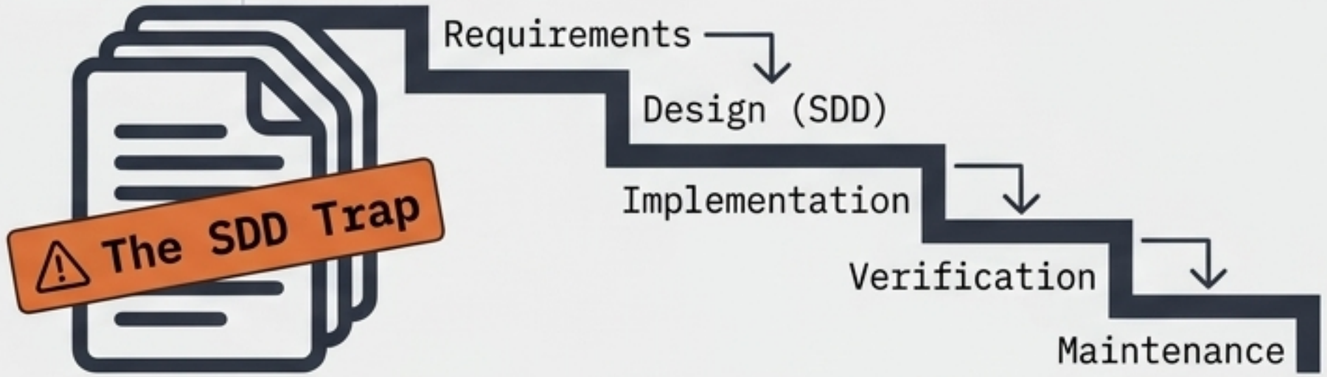
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The SDD Trap: Repeating Waterfall's BDUF

Iterative Agility



Waterfall (BDUF)



Birgitta Böckeler's Caution:

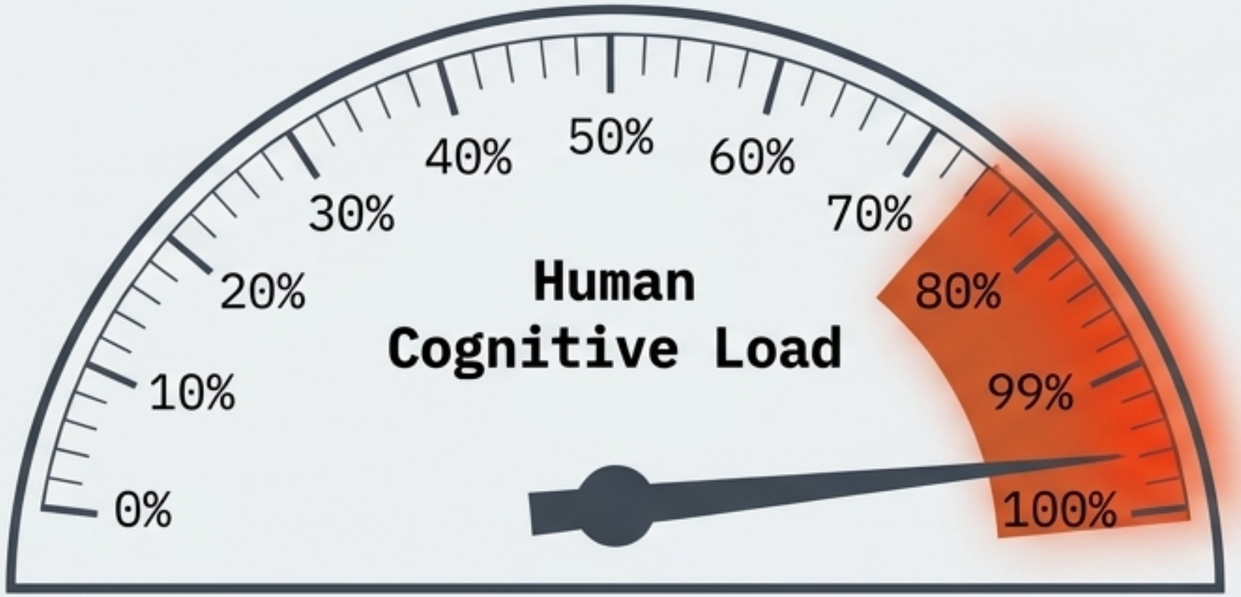
Writing massive specs for AI agents risks Verschlimmbesserung (making something worse in the attempt to make it better) by repeating Waterfall's Big Design Up Front (BDUF) mistake.

Internal Quality Physics:

Teams must still care about code modularity. You have to maintain the agent's output, and AI context windows quickly drown in spaghetti code.

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The Cognitive Load Ceiling



Team Topologies Physics: AI agents dramatically increase the volume of code a team is responsible for, threatening to shatter human cognitive load limits.

Collaboration

X-as-a-Service

Facilitation

Agility Required: Teams must ruthlessly define interaction modes and build **Thinnest Viable Platforms (TVP)** to protect human mental bandwidth from **AI-generated sprawl**.

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2001 Assumptions vs. 2026 AI Reality (Part 1)

2001 Trade-off	What AI Obsoletes	What AI Amplifies	2026 Team Practice
Sprint Estimation	Protects dev time	Story points	Rapid prototyping	Zero-point poker, bet sizing
Working Software vs Docs	Code is truth	Code as the only truth	Executable specs	Spec-as-Source
Customer Discovery	Face-to-face feedback	Proxy product owners	Continuous user validation	Direct end-user telemetry

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2001 Assumptions vs. 2026 AI Reality (Part 2)

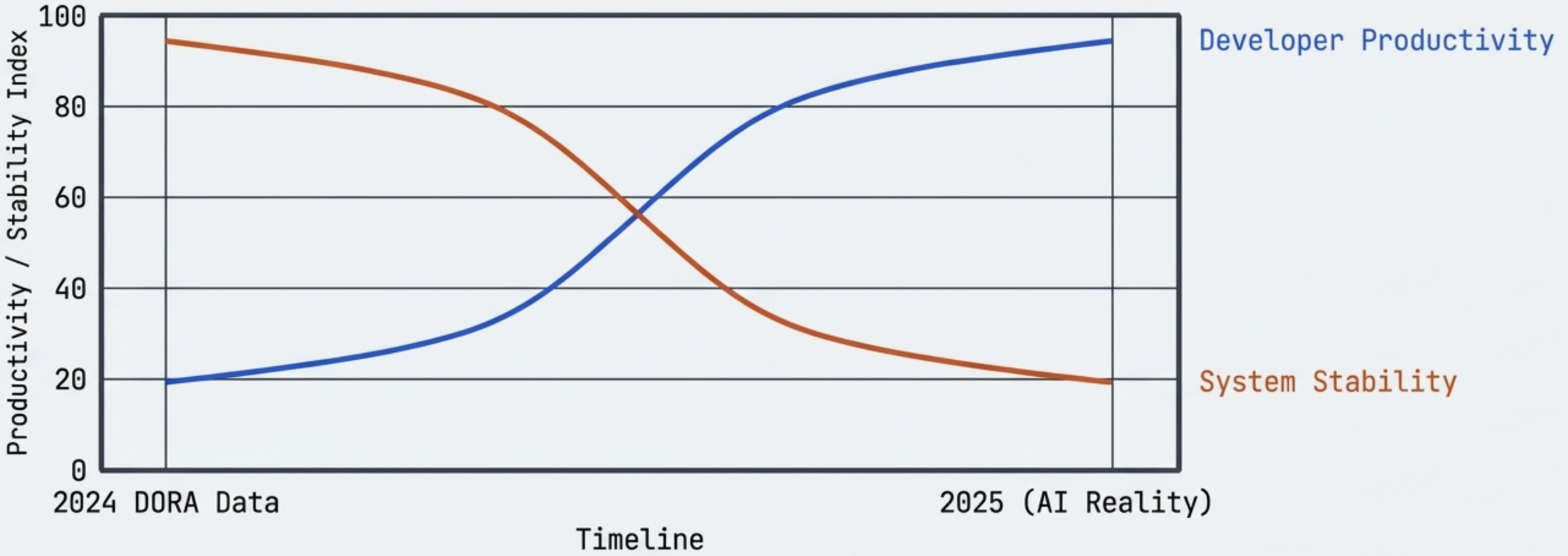
2001 Trade-off	What AI Obsoletes	What AI Amplifies	2026 Team Practice
Batch Size	Monolithic sprint releases	Flow metrics	Sub-day trunk batches
Pair / PR Review	Human syntax checking	Architecture & Intent review	Human-in-the-loop architectural sign-off

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The DORA Reality Check (2024 & 2025)

The Data: 2025 shows AI as a capability amplifier, but 2024 DORA data revealed a dark truth: AI adoption negatively impacted software delivery stability and throughput.

The Physics: AI inflates batch sizes. If you don’t enforce small batch sizes and robust test automation, AI velocity translates directly into deployment chaos.



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METR RCT & GitClear (The Illusion of Speed)

+20%

Dev Perceived Speedup

METR 2025 RCT: Across 246 real issues, experienced open-source devs felt 20% faster using AI, but were measured taking 19% longer to complete tasks.

-19%

Measured Completion Time

GitClear Data: Rising code duplication and code churn.

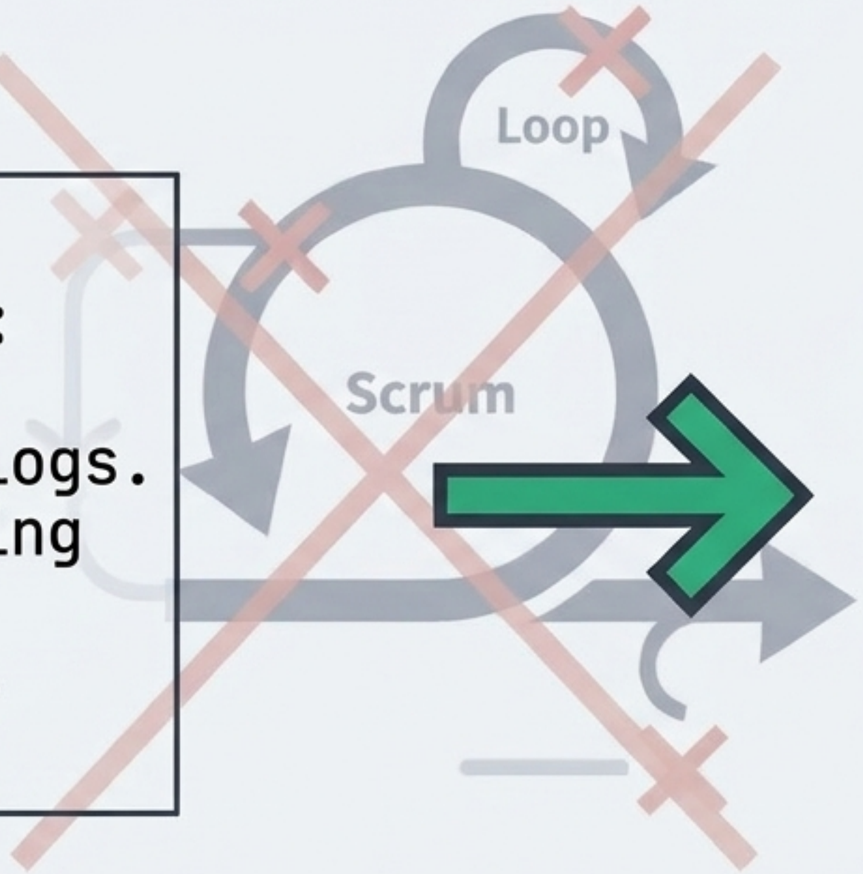
Takeaway: AI is powerful, but humans are terrible at estimating its actual systemic impact on maintenance and quality.

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Practitioner Opinion vs. Post-Scrum Playbooks



Shape Up:
Bets,
not backlogs.
Eliminating
grooming
overhead.



Linear Method:
Purpose-built
momentum, n-week
cycles without
the rigid
ceremony,
creator-focused.

Addy Osmani (2026 workflow): Moving from heavy planning to high-leverage steering. Create momentum — don’t sprint.

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New AI-Era Failure Modes: Bottlenecks & Bloat

Threat 1

Threat 1: The 3,000-Line Agent PR.

AI generates massive code blocks instantly, slamming into human review bottlenecks. Cognitive load collapses.

⚠ Threat 2

Threat 2: Hallucinated Feature Bloat.

Violates Agile Principle #10 (maximizing the amount of work not done). Agents build everything requested rather than what is actually valuable.

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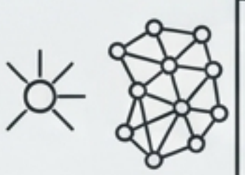
New AI-Era Failure Modes: Black Boxes & Cowboys



Threat 3

Threat 3: Uninspected Black-Box Code.

Accepting AI code without understanding its structure destroys the architecture's future adaptability.



⚠ Threat 4

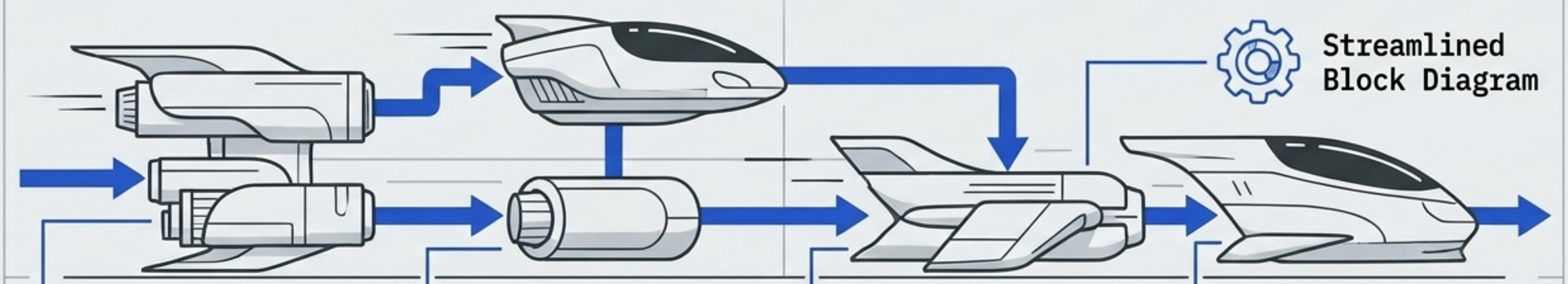
Threat 4: 10x Agent Cowboys.

Solo developers armed with agents outrun the operational understanding of the rest of the team, creating massive silos and bus-factor risks.

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The 2026 Synthesis: Post-Scrum Momentum

The Engine (Post-Scrum Momentum)



Small Bets (Shape Up).

Replacing heavy Jira backlogs with Small Bets (Shape Up).

Zero Point Poker

Replacing story points with Zero Point Poker and fixed time-boxes.

Outcome Cycles (Linear)

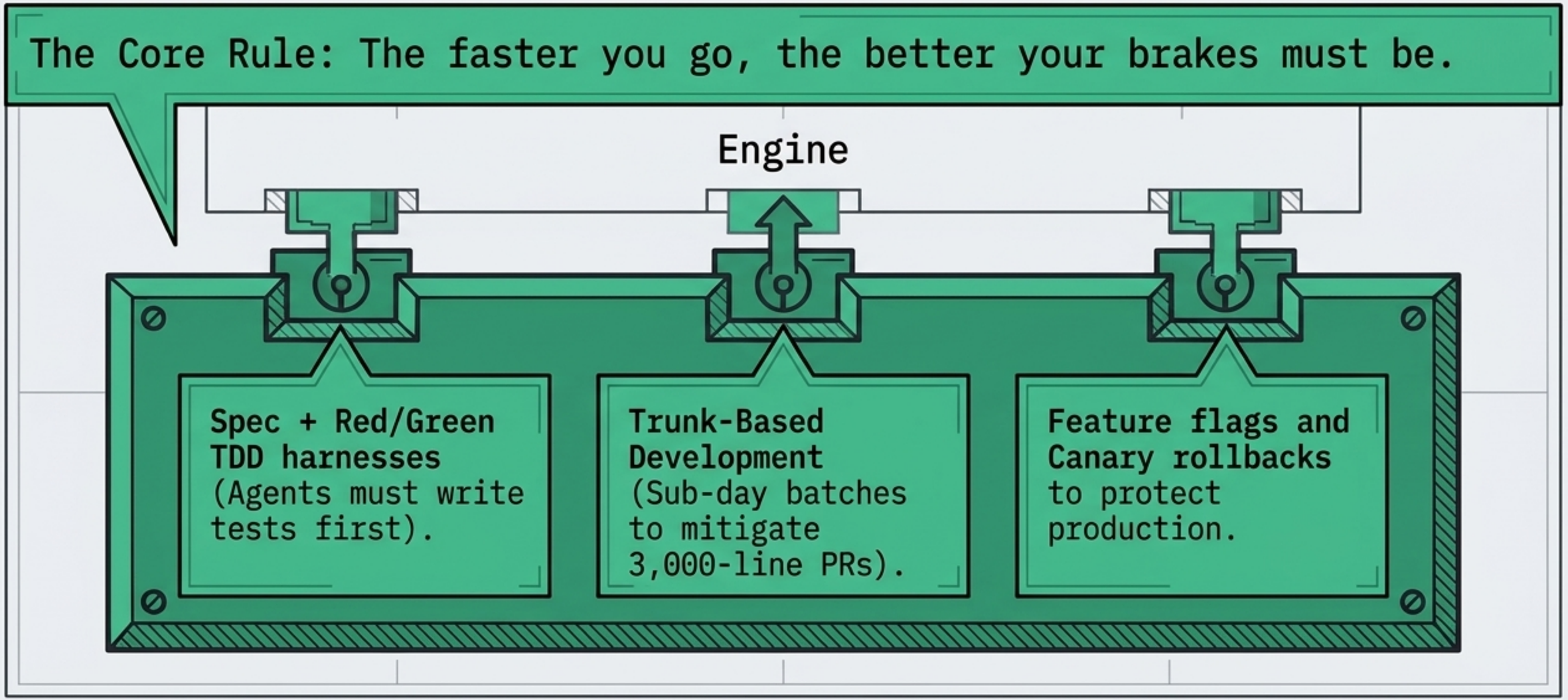
Fusing design and engineering into tight outcome cycles (Linear).

Product Discovery

Ruthless focus on Product Discovery to ensure agents build the right thing.

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The 2026 Synthesis: Strict XP/DevOps Physics



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Conclusion: Agile is Dead, Long Live agility

The Verdict:
Corporate **Agile** (the noun) is dead—crushed by the zero-cost physics of AI code generation.



The Reality:
However, empirical software engineering physics—**agility** (the adjective), adjective), small batches, essential complexity management, and strict technical excellence—are the only things keeping AI-accelerated teams from driving off a cliff.

> Series 07 Closed.
[Status: Terminated cleanly]

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