UXDX

If AI can build products, what are the humans for?

USA · 2026

TODAY'S PATH

01 The State of AI Product Development

02 How Roles Are Changing

03 Are We Going to See Job Losses?

04 Summary and Takeaways

PART 01 OF FOUR

The State of AI Product Development

A snapshot of where the frontier sits today

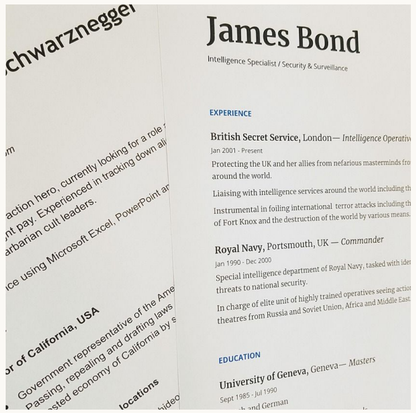
PRODUCTS ARE NOT ALL EQUAL

Three levels of complexity.

01 · BROCHURE SITE

Marketing pages, blogs, portfolio sites

Static layouts, content blocks, the occasional form. Self-contained.



02 · INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

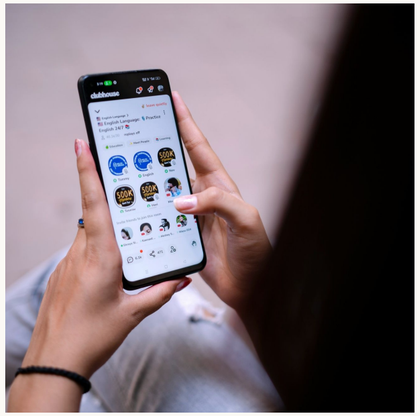
Forms, dashboards, E-commerce Sites

State, validation, role-based access, integrations.

03 · REAL-TIME APPS

Messaging, canvas apps, collaborative editors

Concurrency, sync, performance, sustained reliability under load.



BROCHURE SITES

This is largely solved.

34 minutes, end-to-end.

01 · BROCHURE SITE

Marketing pages, blogs, portfolio sites

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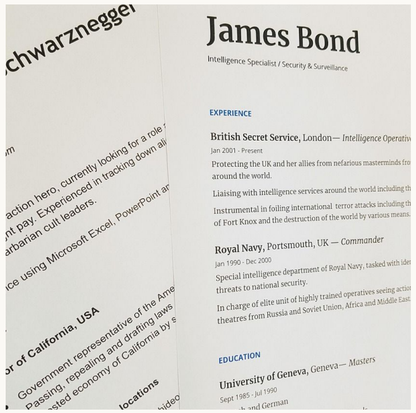

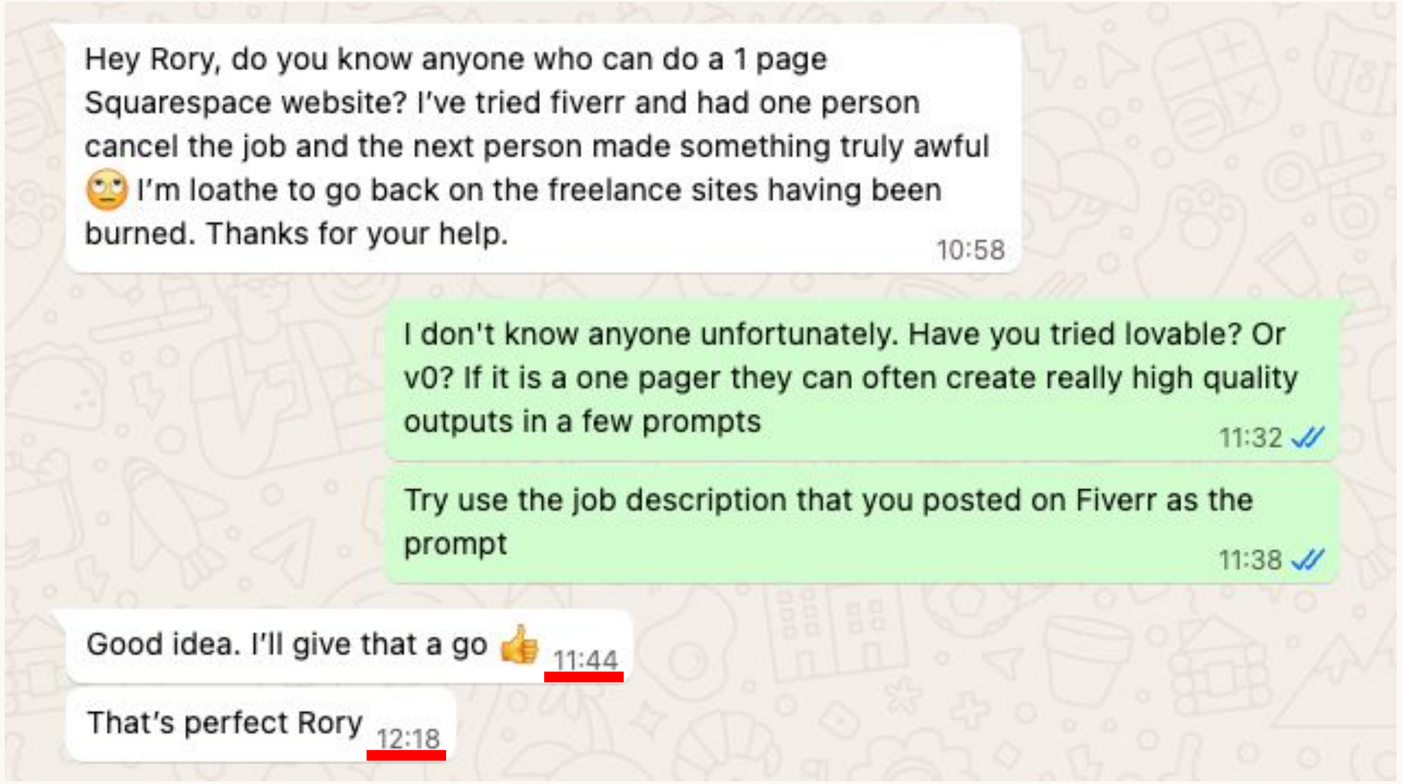

PRODUCTS ARE NOT ALL EQUAL

We’re going to focus on more complex products

02 · INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

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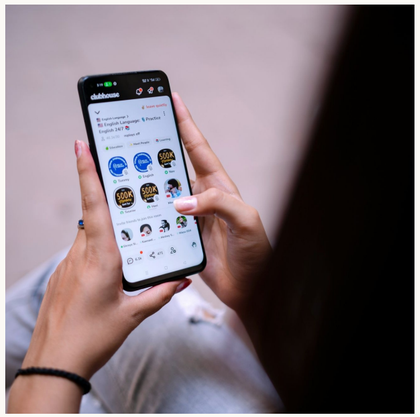


THE SOFTWARE DELIVERY LIFE CYCLE (SDLC)

Let’s review what AI can do

01	02	03	04	05	06
Architecture	**UI Design**	**Code**	**QA**	**Deploy**	**Maintenance**

THE SOFTWARE DELIVERY LIFE CYCLE (SDLC)

Let’s review what AI can do

01	02	03	04	05	06
Architecture	UI Design	Code	QA	Deploy	Maintenance
			CI/CD	CI/CD	

The DevOps movement over the past decade +

Can AI write code?

DECEMBER 2025

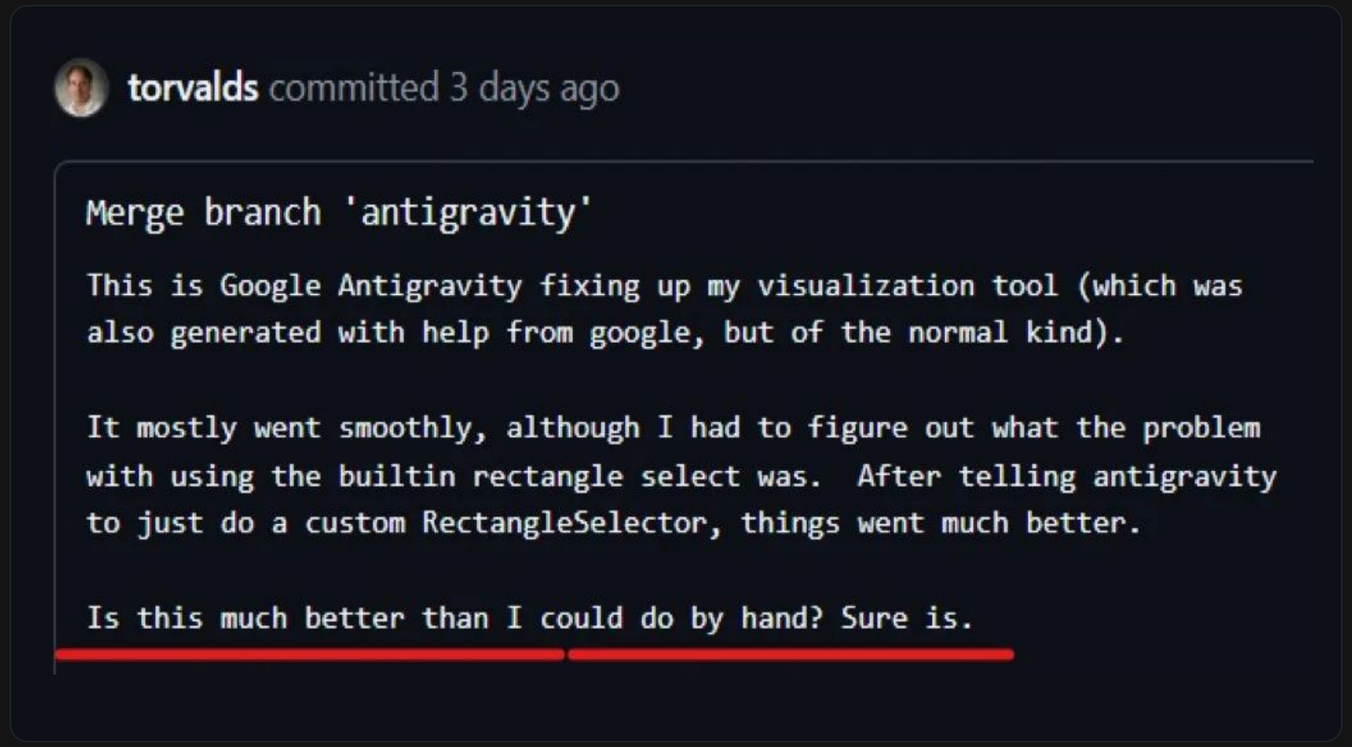
AI is writing 100% of code

When Claude Opus 4.5 was released in November 2025 there was a step change in capabilities.

LINUS, LINUX KERNEL

Even the creator of Linux is using AI.

Even last year this would have read like satire.



THE STATE OF AI

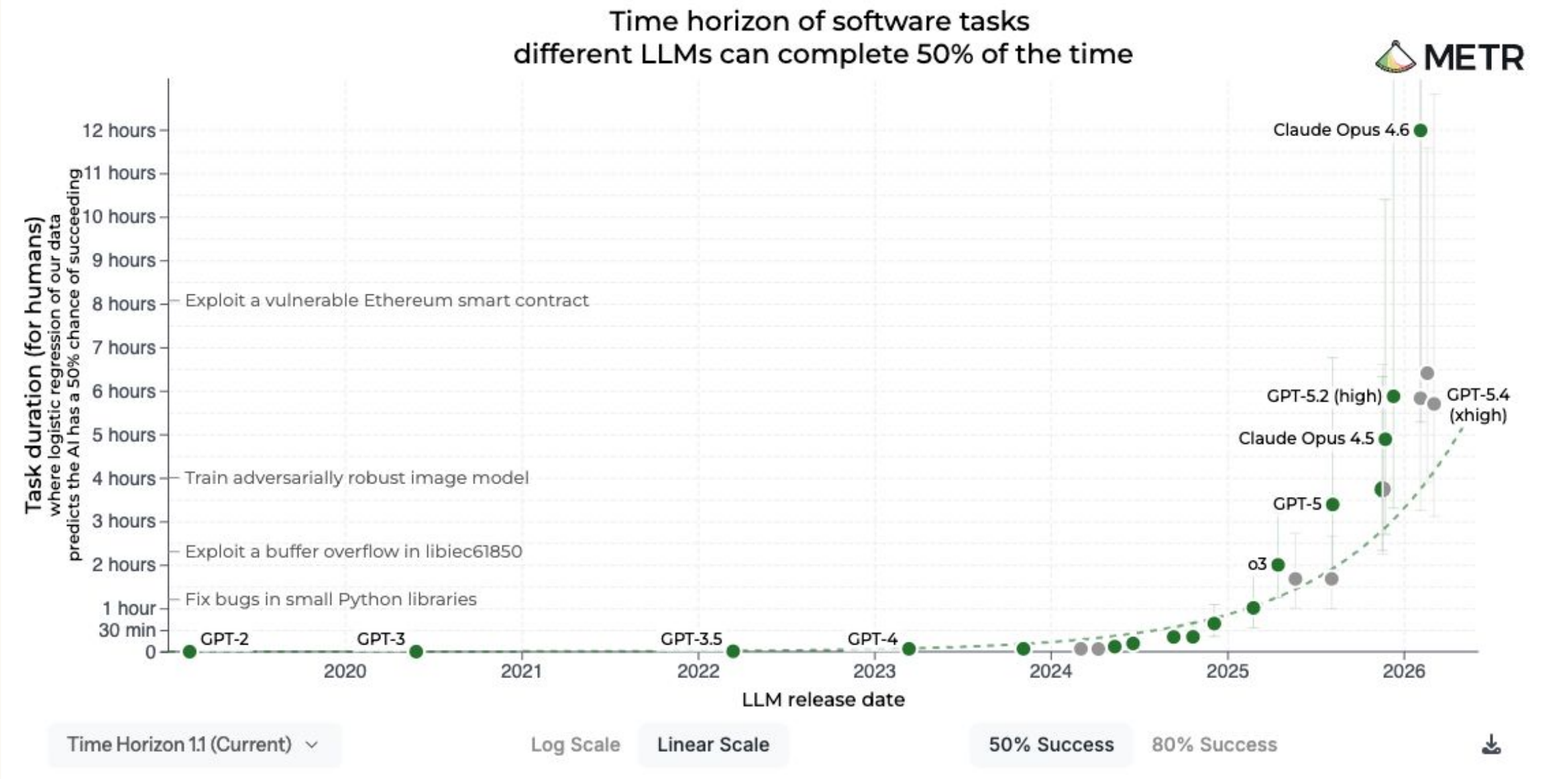
Task length is doubling every few months.

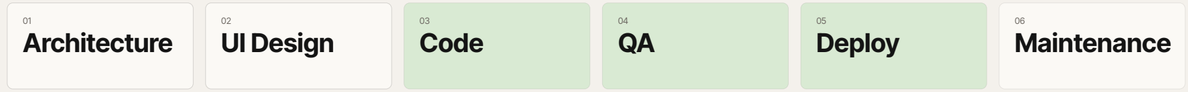
In 2024 it was minutes.

In 2026 it's measured in hours.

The leading labs are now saying days.

Source · METR Time Horizon 1.1





Can AI write code? Yes

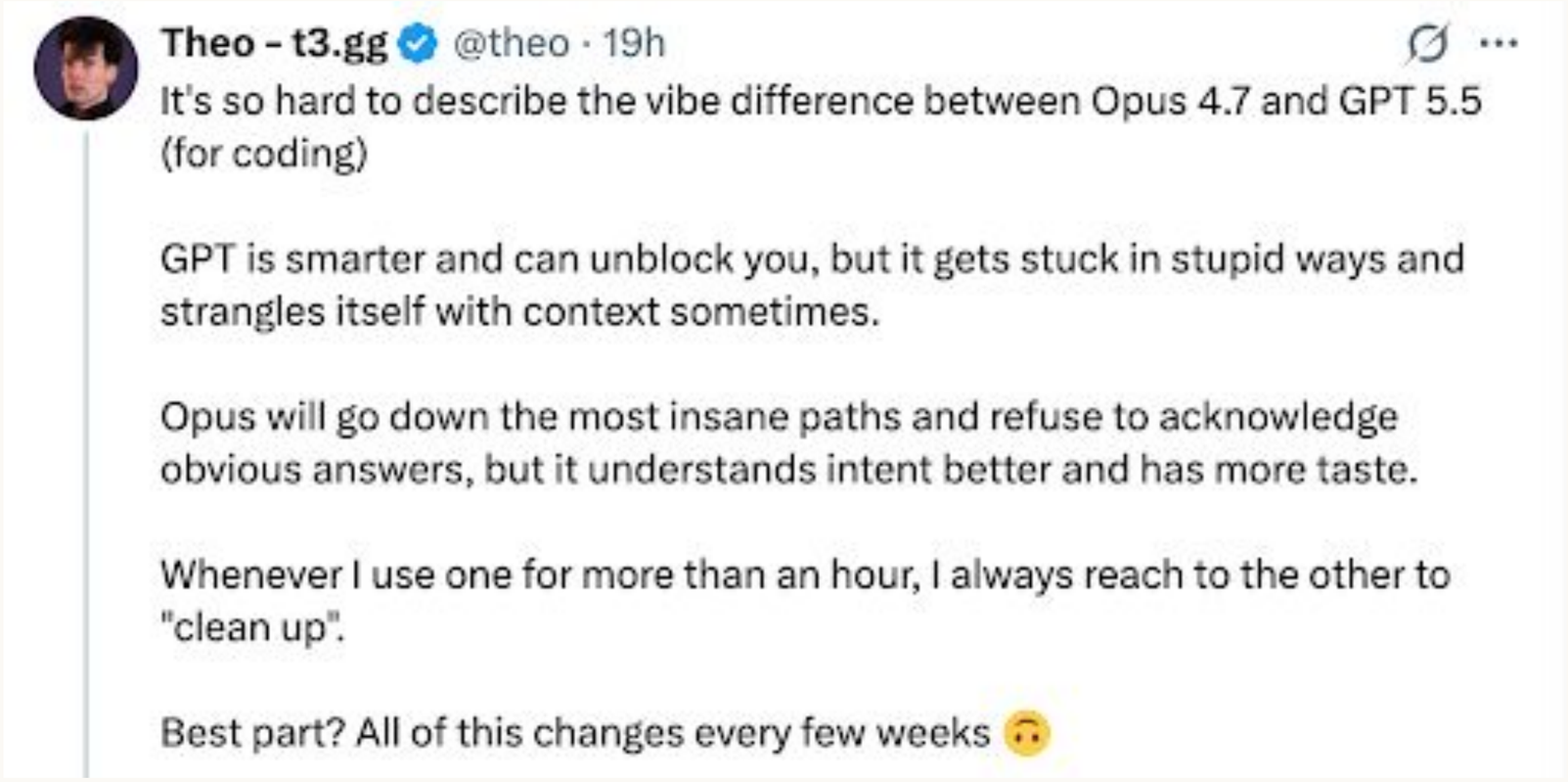
But can AI design good architecture?

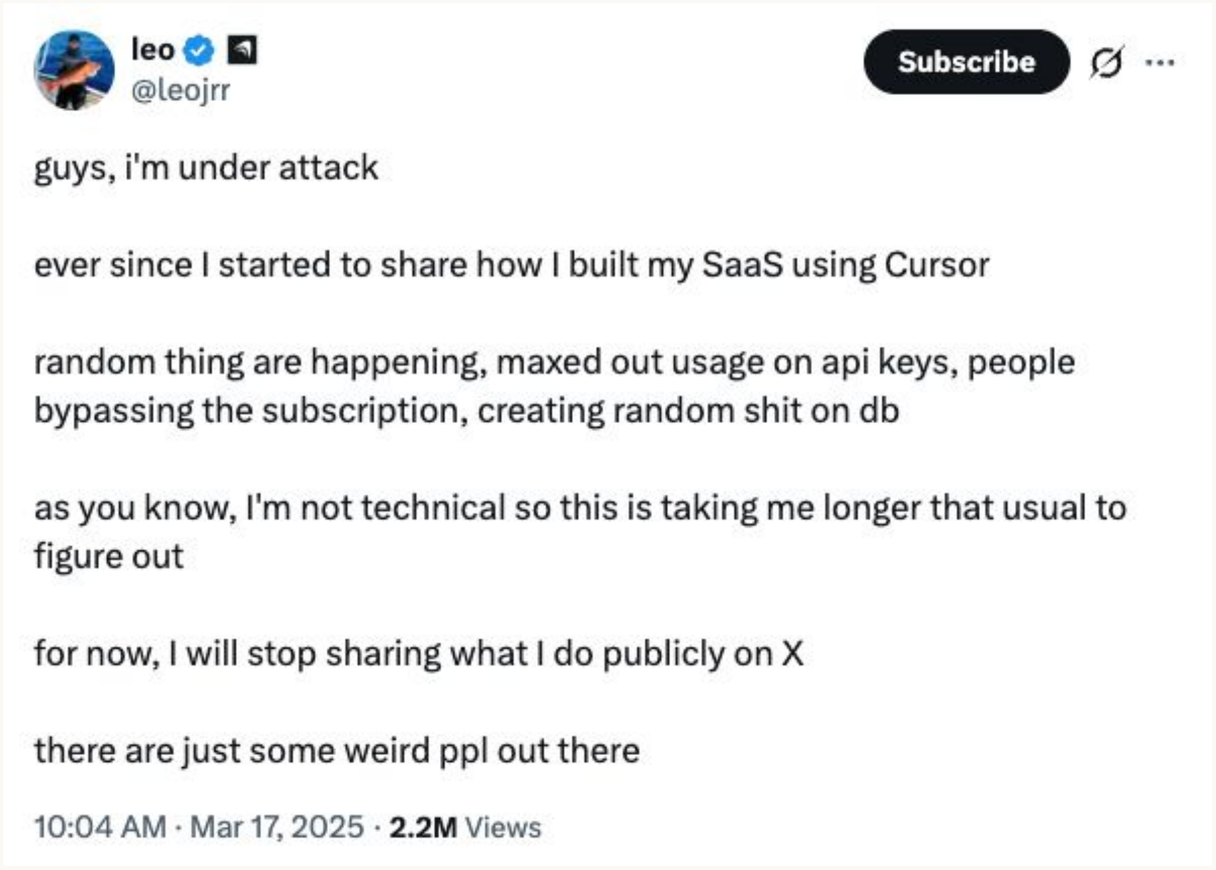
ARCHITECTURE

Hit and Miss

They are capable of better designs than any human.

But they are incredibly inconsistent.

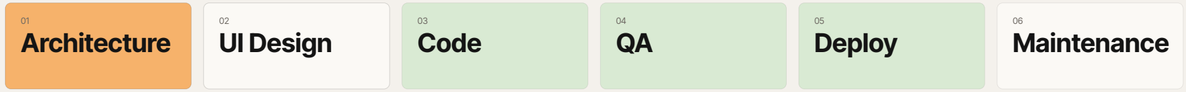




BAD ARCHITECTURE

A lot of footguns in complex products.

If you don't know about security,
you *will* find out about security.



AI is an amplifier. It multiplies whatever discipline you brought with you.

— DAVE FARLEY · CONTINUOUS DELIVERY, 2026

"We are 6 to 12 months away from the models doing all of what SWE's do"

— DARIO AMODEI · ANTHROPIC CEO · JAN 2026

BUT THE MODELS ARE COMING FOR THAT EXPERIENCE TOO: AGENT ORCHESTRATION

Orchestration catches bad architecture

AGENT 01

Architect

Decomposes the problem, sets the boundaries.

AGENT 02

Developer

Implements within the contract.

AGENT 03

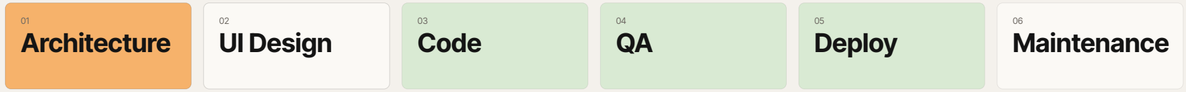
QA

Writes the tests; runs them; fails the build.

AGENT 04

Security

Threat model, secrets, common footguns.



AI can't learn your business and context.

WHAT THE MODEL KNOWS

The internet, up to a point.

– Public docs, code, papers

– General patterns & conventions

– Whatever fits in the prompt

WHAT YOU KNOW

Years of business context

– Which customers complained, and why

– Which bets you tried and killed

– What your market actually rewards

– The deal that fell through last March

RESEARCH IS TRYING TO IMPROVE LEARNING

None of them are working great *yet*.

BET 01

Bigger context windows.

From 8K to 1M+ tokens.

The hope is that it can learn the necessary context on every call.

PERFORMANCE DEGRADATION

BET 02

Persistent memory.

Let the model remember across sessions.

BRITTLE & LEAKY

BET 03

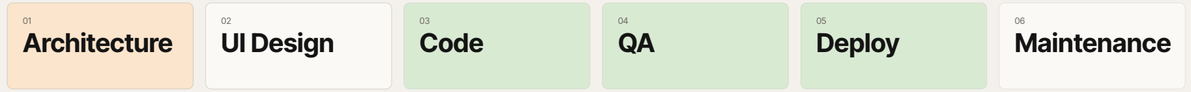
Fine-tuning & RAG.

Train on your data, retrieve at runtime.

HIGH MAINTENANCE

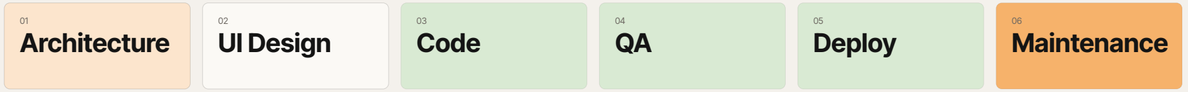
PREDICTIONS CAN BE WRONG

"A Tesla will drive itself from **LA to NY** by the **end of 2017**"



Can AI design good architecture?

Kind of. But still requires experts



Does AI lead to higher maintenance costs?

Dave Farley @davefarley77 · Feb 10

We decided to stop guessing. I helped run a controlled experiment involving 150 participants.

We split the study into two phases:

3/8

1 · 1 · 21 · 4.4K

Dave Farley @davefarley77 · Feb 10

1. Creation: Developers wrote code (some with AI, some without).
2. Maintenance: A different group of developers had to evolve that code, without knowing if it was AI-generated or human-written.

The results were not what many of us expected.

4/8

1 · 1 · 22 · 4K

Dave Farley @davefarley77 · Feb 10

The data showed:

- No big difference in maintenance costs between AI and human-generated code.
- AI users were indeed 30% to 55% faster during the initial phase.
- For experienced devs who used AI habitually, we actually saw a small improvement in maintainability.

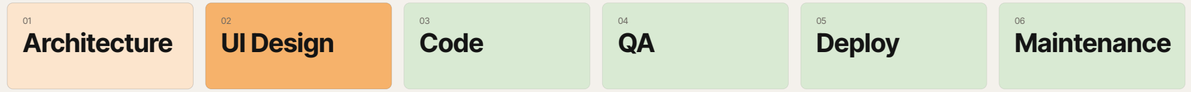
5/8

DAVE FARLEY · CONTROLLED STUDY, 150 DEVS

Tech debt isn't as bad as feared

Maintenance costs were unchanged between AI and human-written code.

Experienced devs who used AI *habitually* saw a small improvement in maintainability.

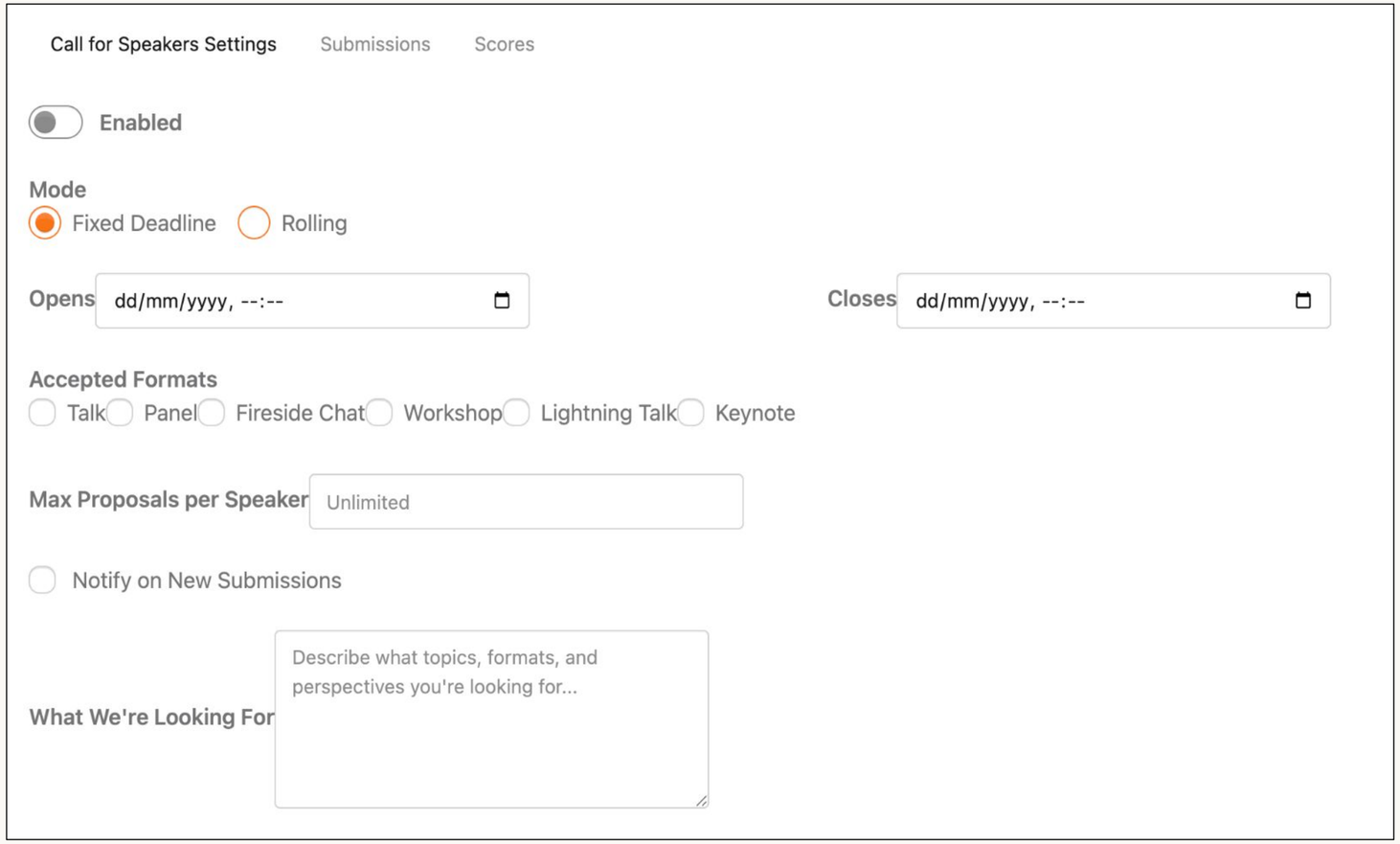


Can AI design UIs?

DESIGN NEEDS SOME LOVE

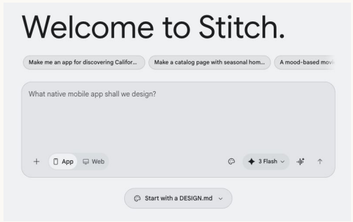
Design has … some scope for improvements

It’s like the UI’s that developers created in the 90’s

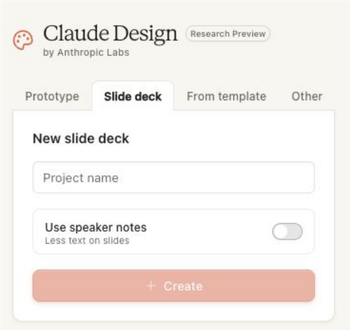


But everyone is trying to figure out design

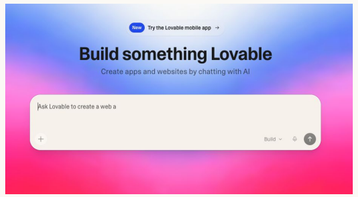
Google Stitch



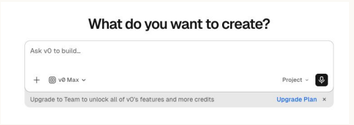
Claude Design



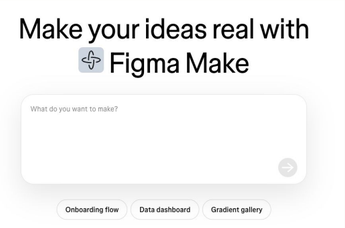
Lovable



v0



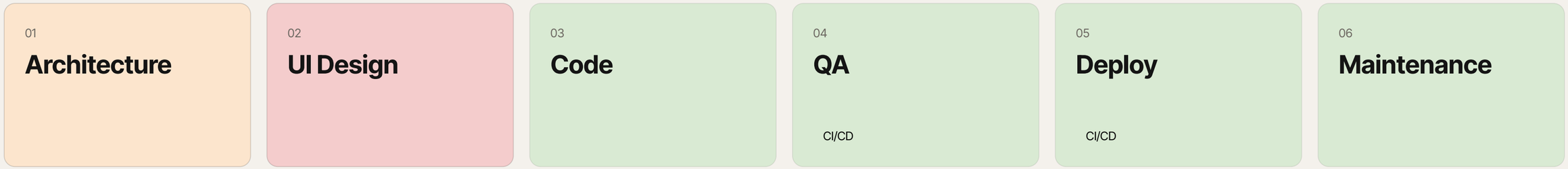
Figma Make



Magic Patterns, UX Pilot, Canva, Webflow, Replit .....

THE SOFTWARE DELIVERY LIFE CYCLE (SDLC)

AI is pretty good, and getting better, at building



AI IS GETTING BETTER AT BUILDING

It's never been easier to ship something, confidently, that's completely wrong.

In product development you need to do two things

1

Build the right product.

Desirability · Usability · Feasibility · Viability

2

Build the product right.

Architecture · Quality · Security · Maintainability

MARTY CAGAN'S FOUR PRODUCT RISKS

DIMENSION	AI IS GOOD AT	HUMAN EDGE REMAINS
Desirability	Market research, synthesis, synthetic users	Real customers, real context, learning over time
Usability	Familiar patterns, design systems, a11y support	Simplifying complexity, taste, prioritisation
Feasibility	Improving the capabilities of teams	AI might over-engineer. Still gets stuck sometimes
Viability	Driving cost of implementation toward $0	Business judgement, market timing, strategic fit

Humans are still needed.

PART 02 OF FOUR

How Roles Are Changing

Future navel-gazing ahead

FOR EVERY ROLE ON THE TEAM

Three things change at once.

CHANGE 01

AI ships outputs

Metrics will shift to making sure you prompt the AI to build the right product.

METRICS

CHANGE 02

Tasks are changing

AI is taking on a lot of the existing tasks. Roles will take on more tasks.

RESPONSIBILITIES

CHANGE 03

Shorter Iterations

AI is accelerating implementation. Context will need to keep up.

WAYS OF WORKING

AI ships outputs.
You ship outcomes.

OUTCOMES

– Customers adopted it

– Revenue moved

– Time to value dropped

We built teams around the skills needed to deliver.

01
Business Analyst
CAPTURE REQUIREMENTS

02
Product Owner
MANAGE THE BACKLOG

03
Product Manager
DEFINE VALUE

04
Architect
SYSTEM DESIGN

05
UX Researcher
TALK TO CUSTOMERS

06
UX Designer
FLOWS, INFORMATION

07
UI Designer
VISUAL CRAFT

08
Frontend Dev
SHIP THE INTERFACE

09
Backend Dev
SHIP THE SYSTEM

10
DevOps
KEEP IT RUNNING

11
QA
CATCH THE BUGS

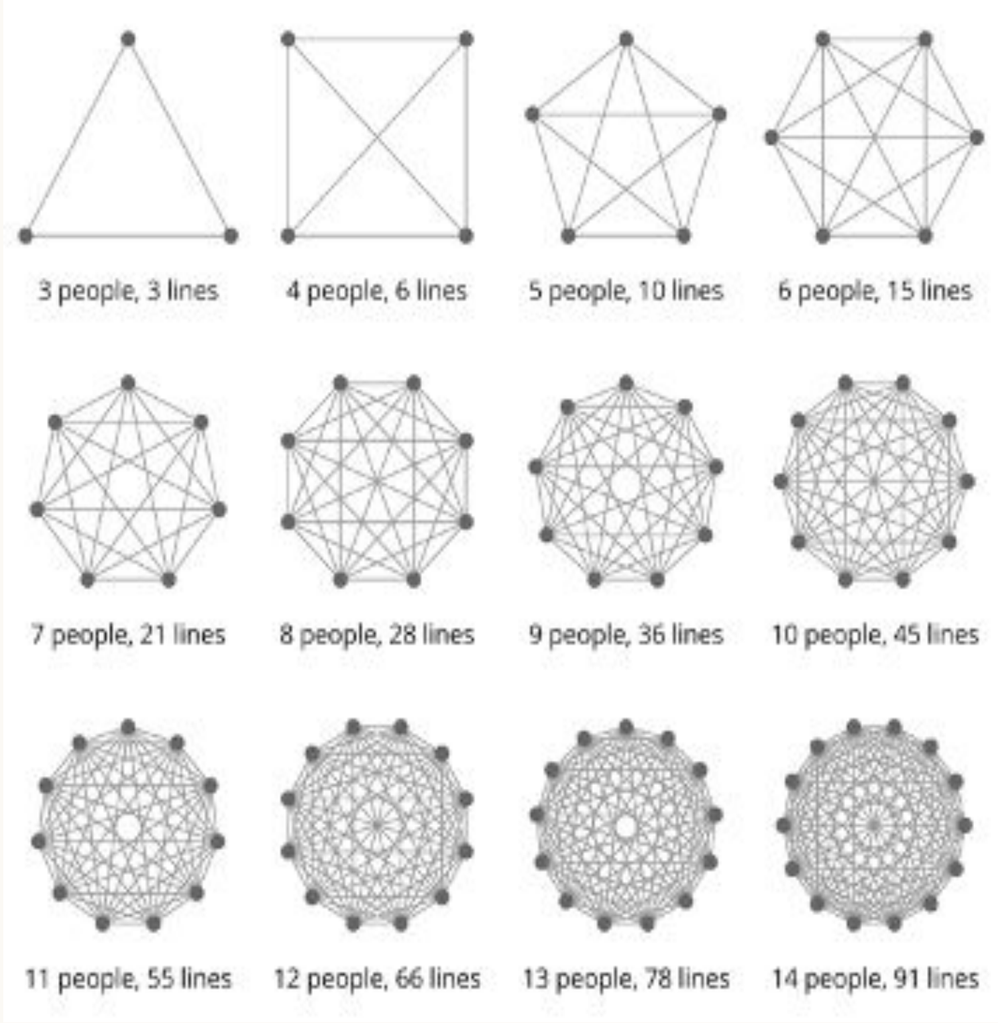
12
Project Manager
HOLD IT TOGETHER

DUNBAR'S NUMBER

The larger the team the harder the coordination

We needed large teams due to the specialities needed.

That isn't true anymore.



ROLES ARE MERGING

We’re starting to see higher expectations for roles

WAS

UX Designer
UI Designer
Frontend Engineer

↓

Design Engineer

WAS

Backend Engineer
DevOps
DBA

↓

Systems Engineer

THE IMPACT ON TEAMS

How teams will change

SAME SIZE, MORE SCOPE

8–10 people

Coordination cost stays *inside* the team

- more handoffs,
- more meetings,
- more context to hold.

SMALLER SIZE, SAME SCOPE

2–4 people

Coordination cost moves *outside* the team

- more importance on product strategy
- tighter boundaries on teams
- more management overhead

TEAM WILL NEED TO MOVE FASTER

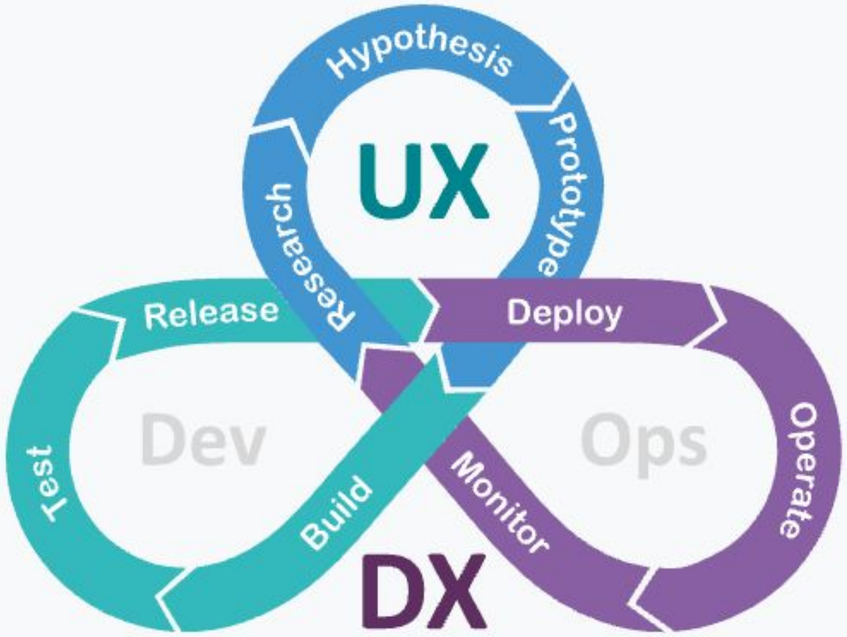
Anything blockers that slow down delivery need to be removed

– Handovers within the team

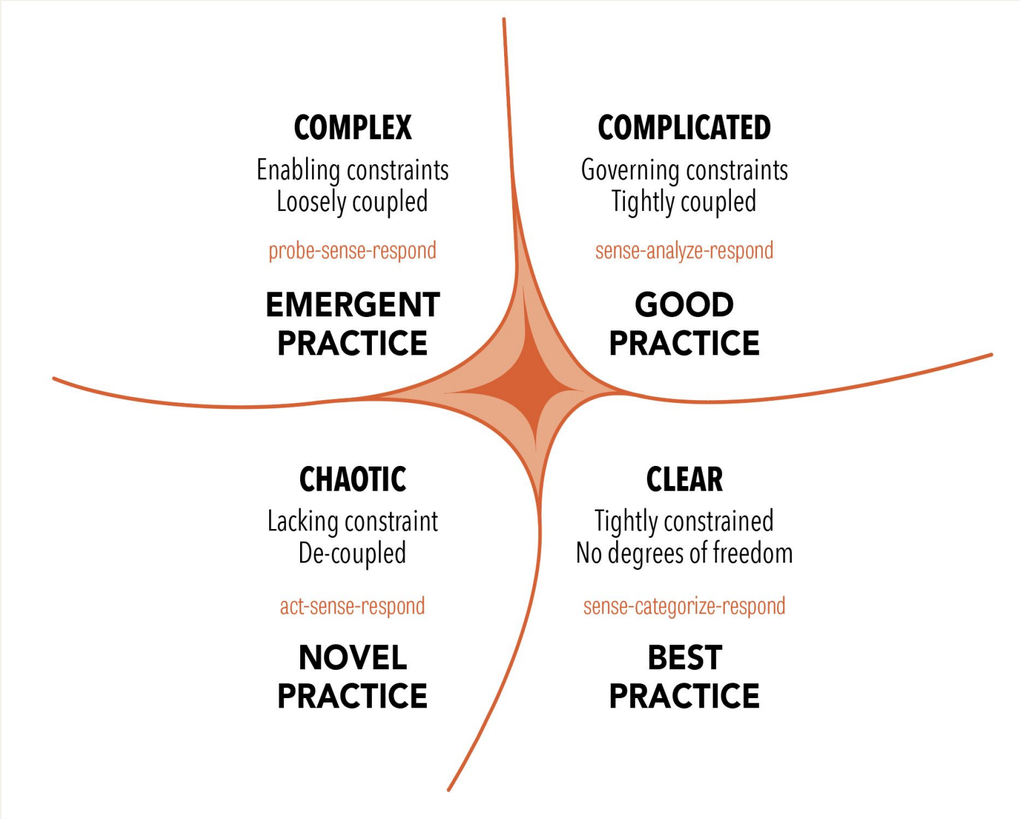
– Miscommunication

– External sign offs

Everyone discovers.
Everyone implements.



PROBE SENSE RESPOND



PART 03 OF FOUR

Are we going to see job losses?

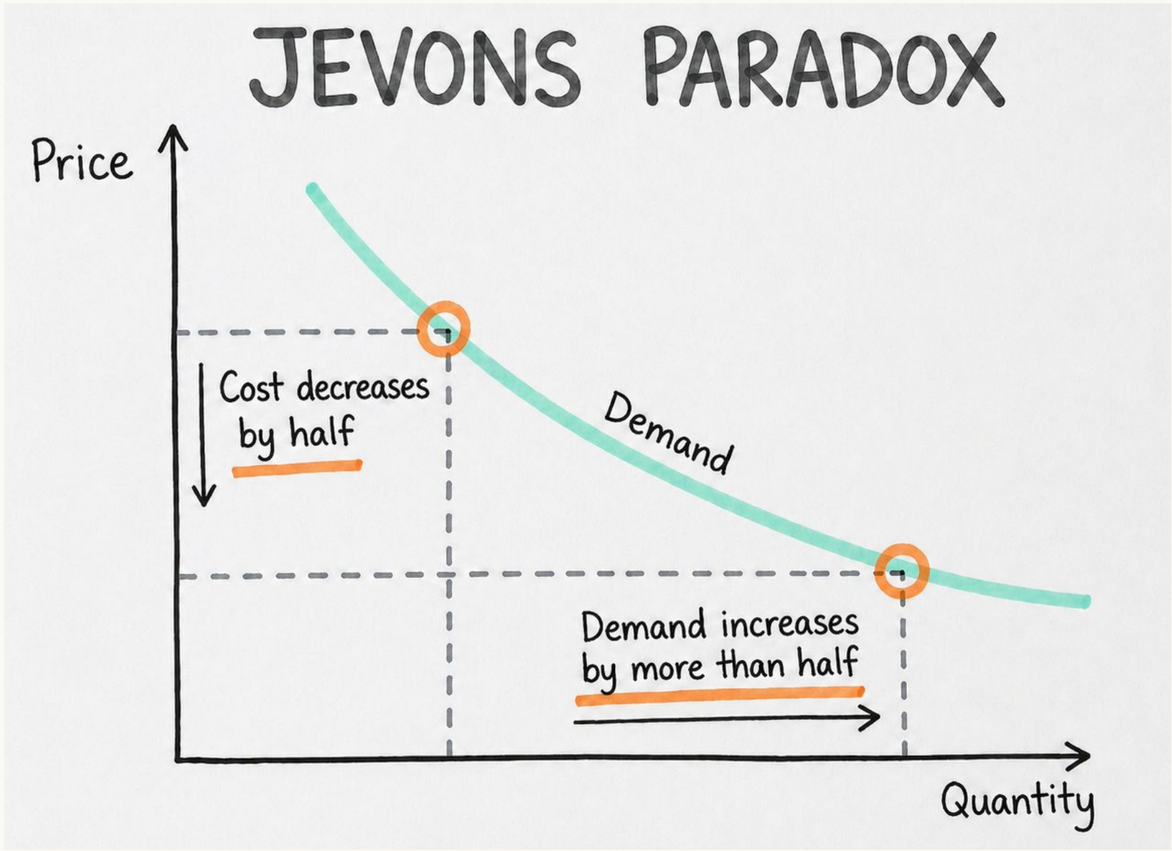
Smaller teams, doing the same amount of work? Here is my honest opinion

JEVONS PARADOX

When a thing gets cheaper, we use far more of it.

Software was priced out of reach for most of the work people wanted done with it.

The bottleneck moves from *can we build it* to *should we build it* .



COAL · 1865

Steam engines got efficient. Coal use soared.

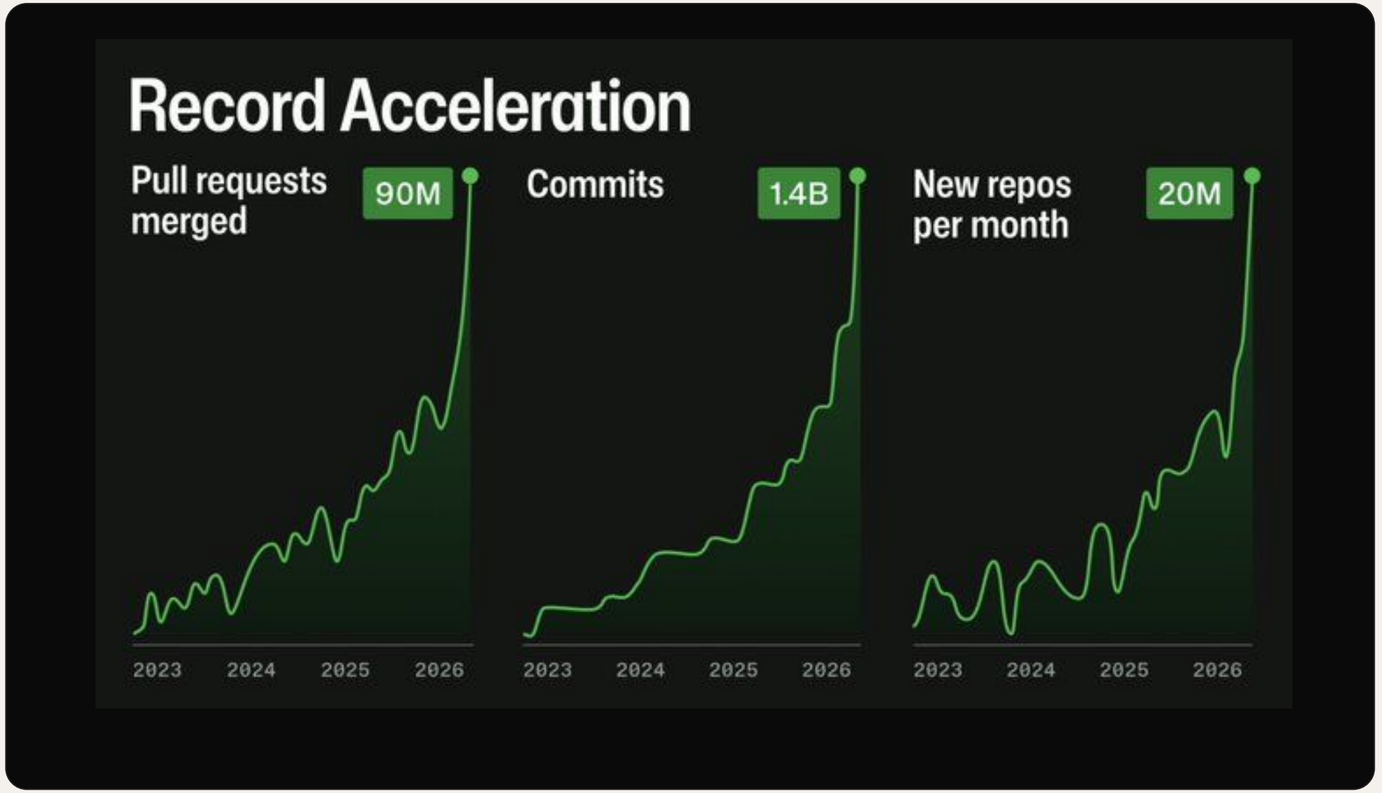
LED LIGHTS · 2000s

Increased the use of lights

GITHUB, 2026

Software is exploding.

GitHub usage is up **14×** this year.



WHARTON BUDGET MODEL · 2025

AI does tasks. Not jobs. Yet.

Even in the most exposed occupations, fewer than 76% of *tasks* are reachable.

Table 1. Exposure to AI Automation by Aggregated Occupation Group

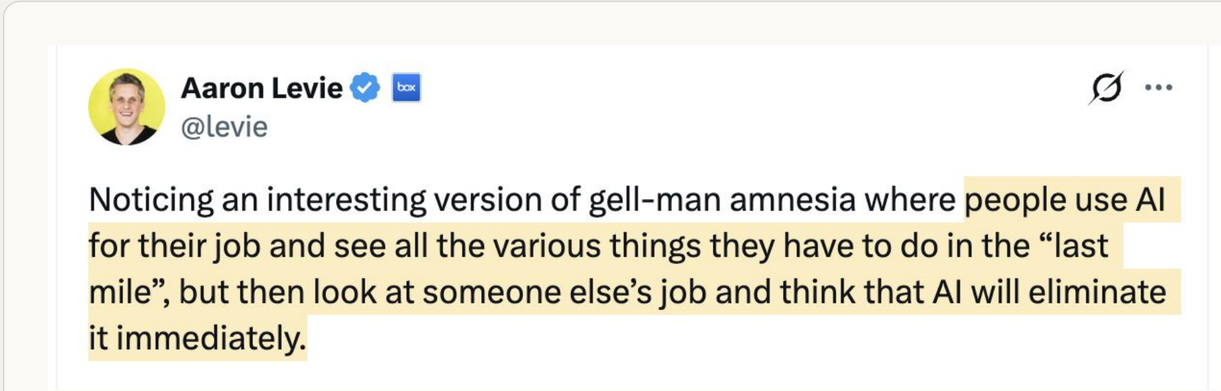
Occupation Group	Exposure to AI Automation (% of tasks)
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	75.5
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	68.4
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	62.6
Sales and Related Occupations	60.1
Management Occupations	49.9
Legal Occupations	47.5
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	45.8
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	40.7

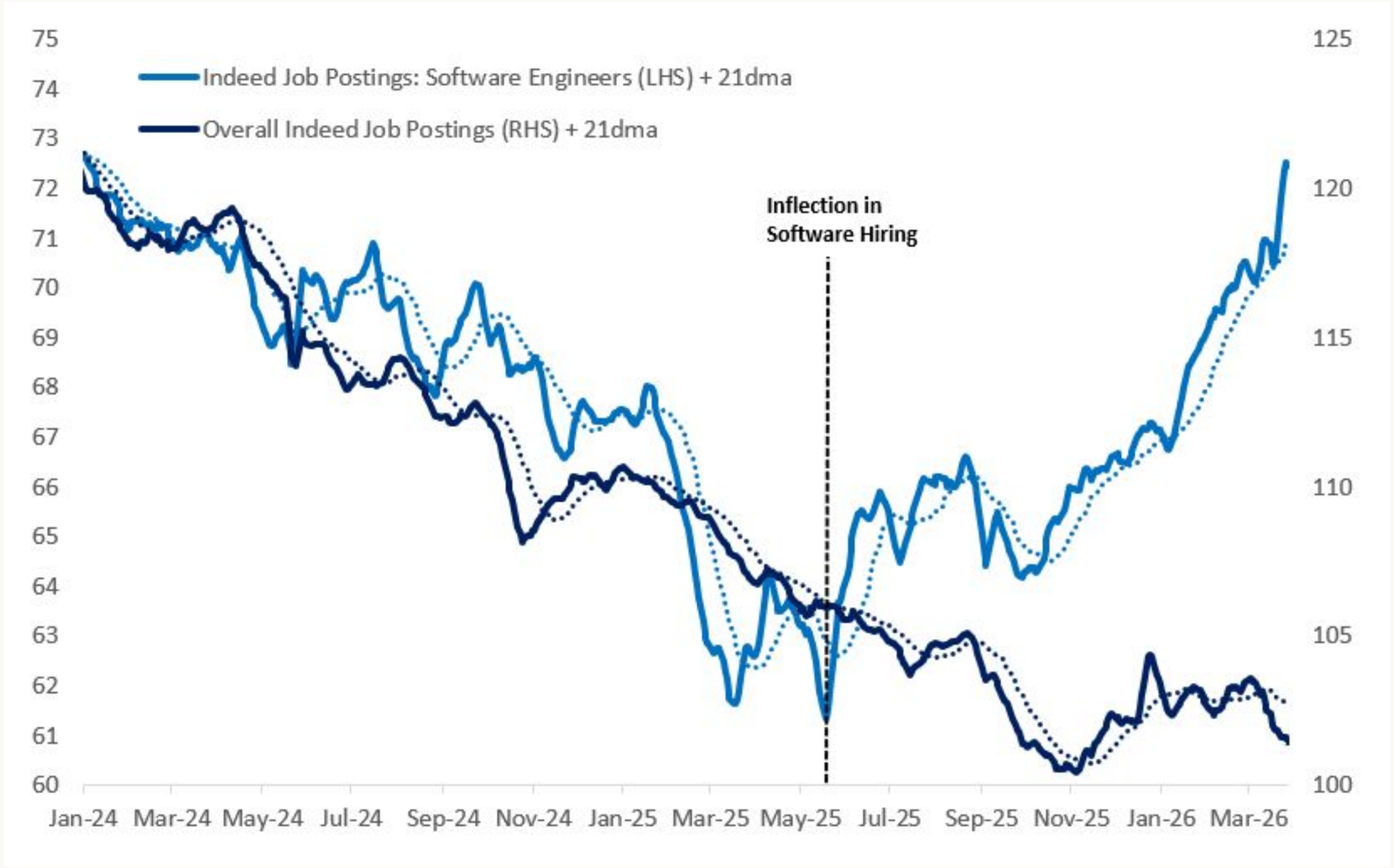
THE LAST MILE IS LONG

Full automation has a very long tail.

Elon has been promising self-driving cars for over a decade.

Your job sits inside the edge cases.




Indeed Job Postings: Software Engineers (LHS) + 21dma
Overall Indeed Job Postings (RHS) + 21dma
Inflection in Software Hiring
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Nov-24
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Jul-25
Sep-25
Nov-25
Jan-26
Mar-26

PART 04 OF FOUR

Summary and Takeaways

What you can do today

TAKEAWAYS

01 AI can build products, but not necessarily the right products

02 As AI takes on more tasks, you will be expected to do more

03 You will become accountable for outcomes

04 Smaller teams, doing discovery and delivery together

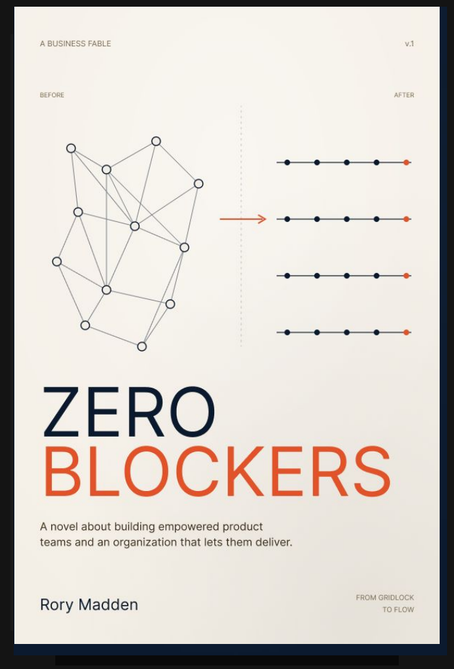
Q&A · LET'S TALK

Thank you.

QUESTIONS, OBJECTIONS, BETTER IDEAS

And if you want to learn more about how to manage multiple, small, autonomous, empowered teams at scale, there's a whole book about it. →

PRE-ORDER MY NEW BOOK



SCAN TO BE NOTIFIED

zeroblockers.com/book

For product leaders who suspect the problem was structural.

webmaster.html — Mosaic 1.0

《 COMING BACK · 2026 》

The Return of the Webmaster.

// THE 90s WEBMASTER

- ▶ Wrote the HTML
- ▶ Drew the GIFs
- ▶ Hosted the server
- ▶ Answered the email
- ▶ Was the whole team

▶▶▶

// THE 2026 WEBMASTER

- ▶ Prompts the model
- ▶ Designs the product
- ▶ Ships to the cloud
- ▶ Talks to the customer
- ▶ Is the whole team

⚡ **One person can do everything again.** ⚡

The team was a workaround for tools that needed a team.

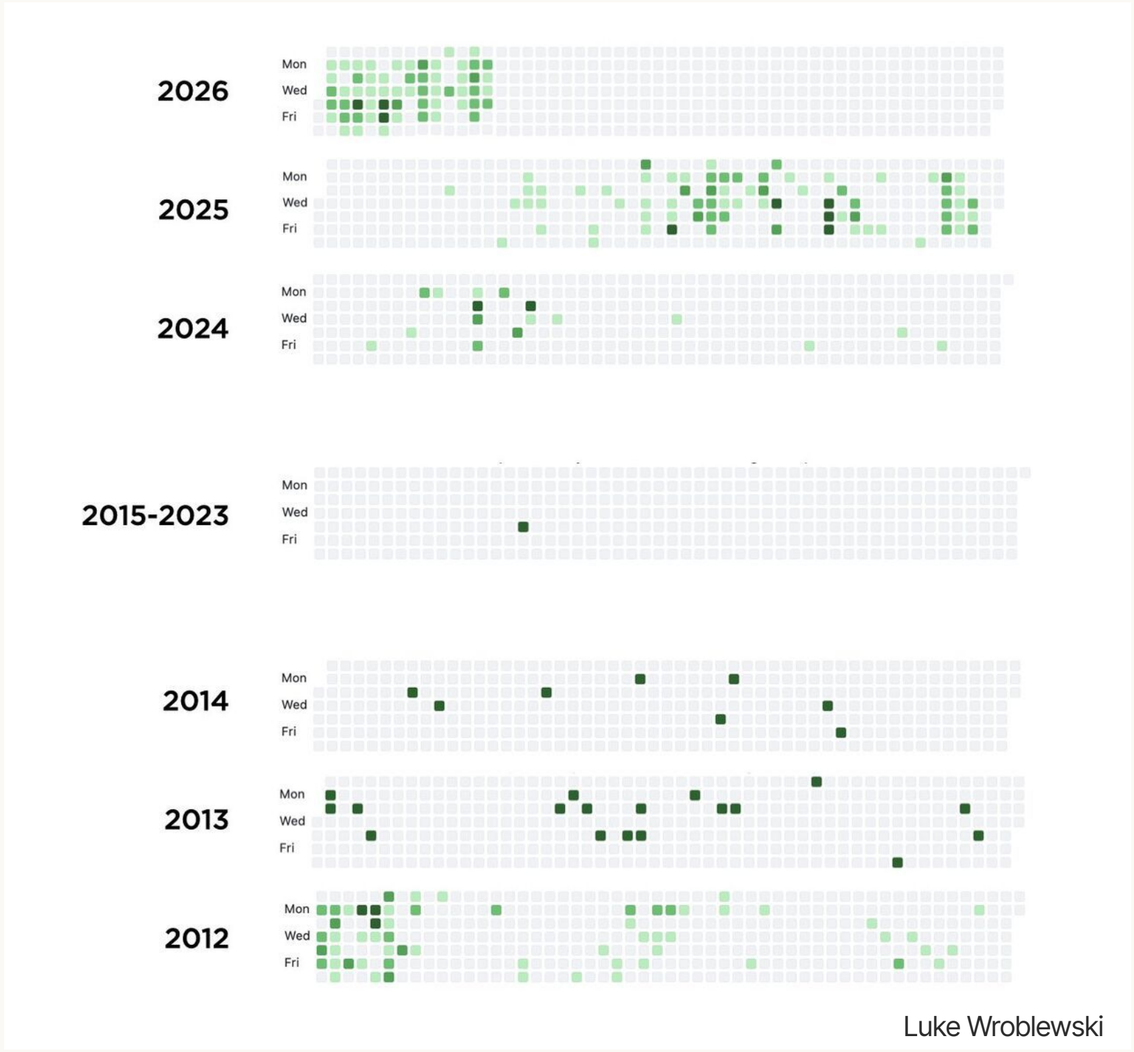
BACK TO THE FUTURE

Designers used to code

It was CSS and HTML

Then React made things complicated

Now it isn't as complicated anymore



Luke Wroblewski