

TESTING
ASSEMBLY

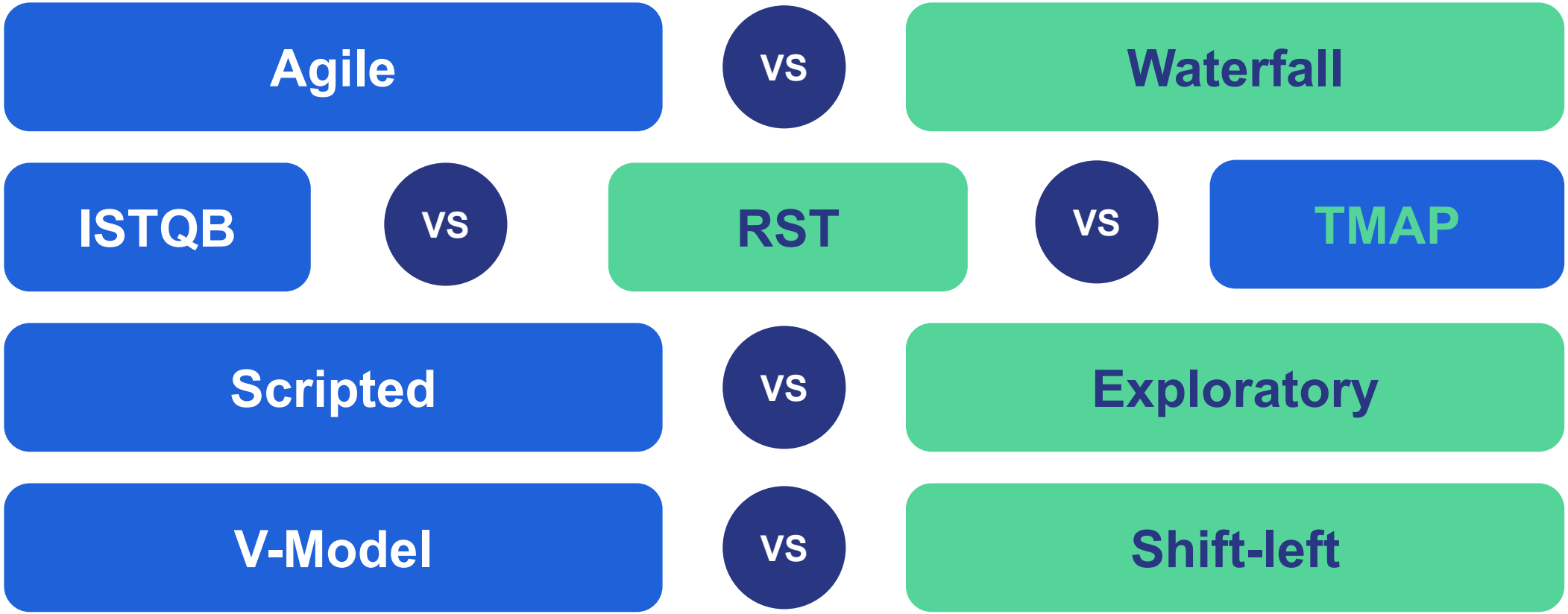
Auditorium
11:15–12:00

Holy Wars: Dogma versus Flexibility

Bryan Jones · 2i Limited



Choose your side



Hands up. Be honest. *Did you feel a flicker of loyalty?*

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My confession

Every crusade needs a sinner. This one’s mine.



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01

The Crusades

Testing’s holy wars, and how to spot a zealot



Testing has its own holy wars

Agile vs Waterfall

“Documentation is waste.”
“Where’s the sign-off?”

ISTQB vs RST

“It’s in the syllabus.”
“Certificates don’t make testers.”

Scripted vs Exploratory

“If it isn’t written, it didn’t happen.”
“Scripts kill thinking.”

V-Model vs Shift-left

“Every requirement needs its test level.”
“The V is just Waterfall with a tick-box.”

TMAP vs Context-driven

“Follow the approach.”
“There are no best practices.”

TMMi vs No model

“We’re going for Level 3.”
“Maturity models measure paperwork.”

Anatomy of a zealot



Scripture

A method’s text quoted as law, not as advice



Prophets

Gurus whose word ends the debate



Heretics

Anyone from the other camp, dismissed unheard



Rituals

Ceremonies kept long after anyone remembers why

The method becomes the mission.

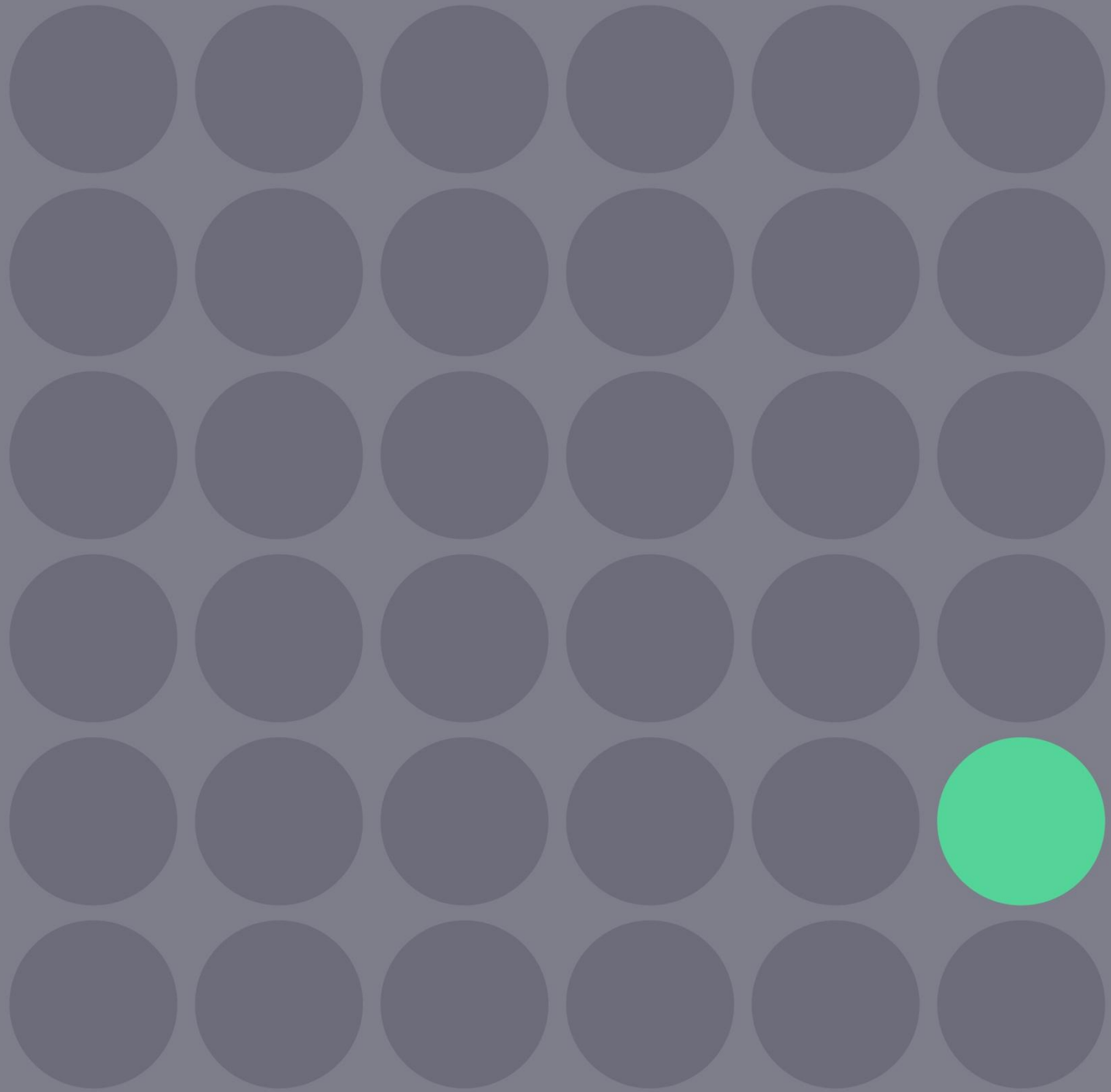
That’s when the craft goes blunt.

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02

Why we join tribes

It’s human, not stupid



Tribes meet real human needs



Identity

“I’m an exploratory tester” becomes who I am, not just what I do



Belonging

A community, a conference, a crowd that agrees with me



Investment

Exam fees and years of practice. Sunk cost bias makes us defend



Certainty

A framework gives answers when the context is messy

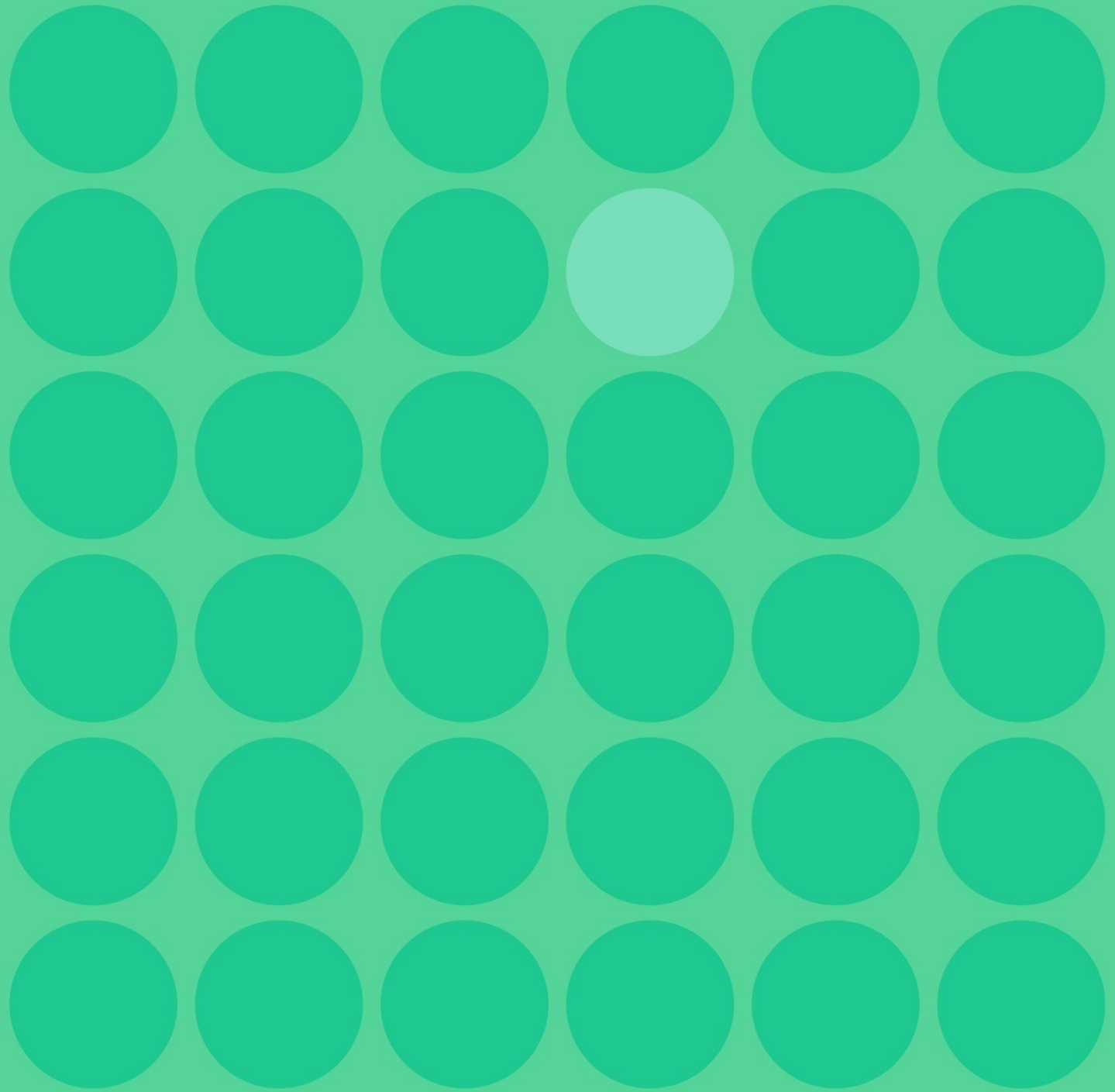
Notice what’s missing? None of these is about the product.

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03

The cost of dogma

When the method beats the mission



When the method beat the mission

1

What we believed

[The rule or method the team held as non-negotiable]

2

What we did

[How the team applied it, despite the signals]

3

What it cost

[The impact: delay, escaped defects, lost trust]

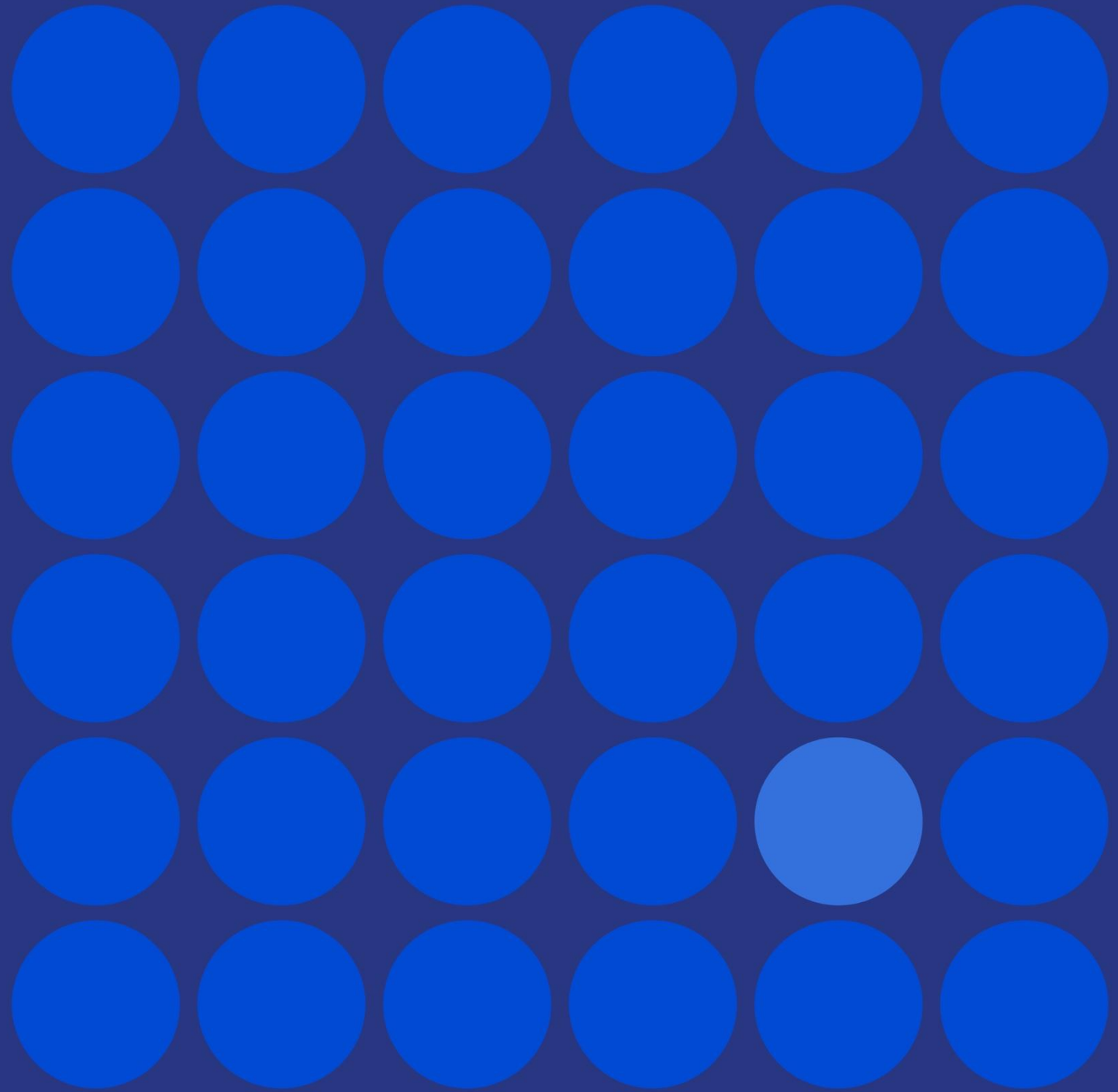
An 18-month transition took 4 years

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04

The mercenary’s toolbox

Loyal to the outcome, not the flag



Missionaries and mercenaries



The missionary

Starts with
the method

Measures success by
compliance

Sees other camps as
wrong

Changes their mind when
never



The mercenary

Starts with
the problem

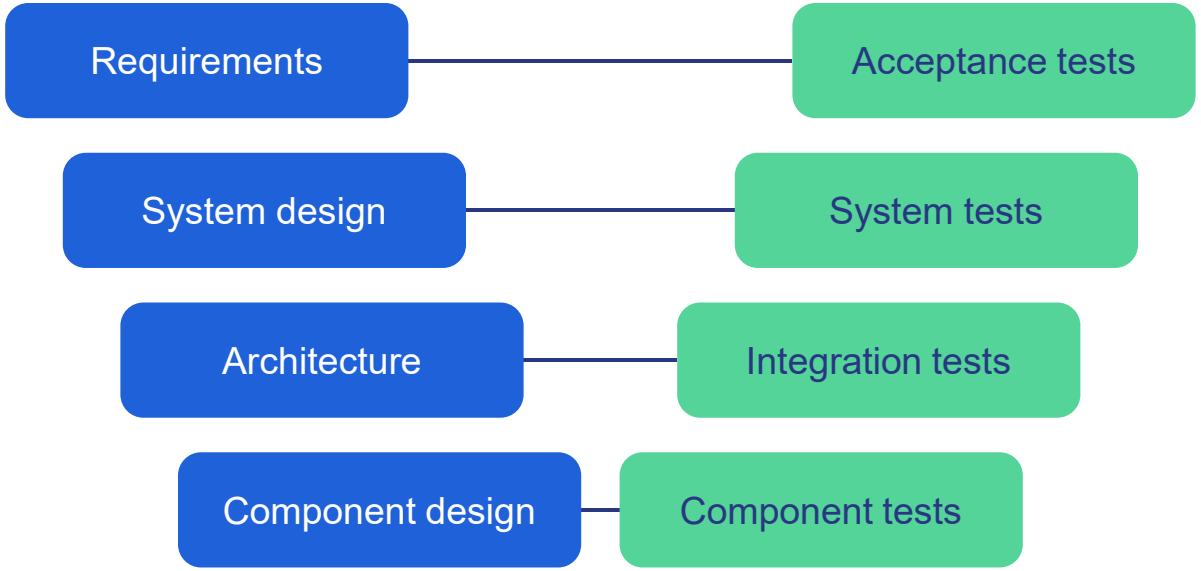
Measures success by
outcomes

Sees other camps as
supply depots

Changes their mind when
the evidence does

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Same idea, different flag



The V-Model
Each stage's tests are designed alongside its specification

Shift-left, Agile style

"As a customer, I want to reset my password, so that I can get back into my account."

Acceptance tests, written before the code

- Expired link shows a clear error
- Valid link allows a new password
- A reused password is rejected

Both say: design the tests when you write the requirement.

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The steal sheet: schools and frameworks

Camp	Steal this	Works best when
ISTQB	Shared vocabulary; structured test design techniques such as boundary values, equivalence partitions and decision tables	Onboarding, distributed or multi-vendor teams, audits
RST	Heuristics and oracles; session-based exploratory testing; test framing	Novel, complex or ambiguous systems where the risks are unknown
TMAP	Risk-based test strategy that sets how much testing each area needs; quality engineering across the whole team	Large organisations needing a common approach across many teams or suppliers
TMMi	A structured way to assess test processes; a shared roadmap and language for improvement	Showing improvement over time, or making the case for investment in testing

Every camp got something right. None got everything right.

The steal sheet: lifecycles

Camp	Steal this	Works best when
Waterfall	Upfront risk analysis; clear entry and exit criteria; formal sign-off	Regulated, safety-critical or fixed-scope programmes
V-Model	Early test design from the test basis; defined test levels with clear ownership; traceability	Multi-supplier programmes, complex integrations, level-by-level sign-off
Agile	Fast feedback loops; whole-team quality; small, frequent releases	Changing requirements and close contact with users

Take the practice and the reason behind it. The reason is what lets you adapt it.

The context lens



Risk

What hurts most if we get it wrong?



Regulation

What must we be able to prove?



Team skills

What can this team do well today?



Cadence

How fast does feedback need to arrive?



Stakeholders

What do they need to trust the result?

Choose on evidence, not allegiance.

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The heresy check

1. Would I accept this argument if the other camp made it?
2. Am I describing the problem, or defending a method?
3. What evidence would change my mind?
4. Who benefits if we follow this rule here?
5. Can I name the context where my approach fails?



Use it on yourself first

Master it before you bend it

Pragmatic flexibility

- Knows why each practice exists
- Adapts deliberately and names the trade-off
- Keeps the principle, even when the practice changes

Shallow cherry-picking

- Copies the ritual without the reason
- Drops whatever feels hard
- Can’t say what was lost

Steal, understand and use the tools that work in your context. Discard what doesn’t

Would you let a toddler lose with a chainsaw?



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Calling a ceasefire

Stop asking

“Which method is right?”

Start asking

“What problem are we solving?”

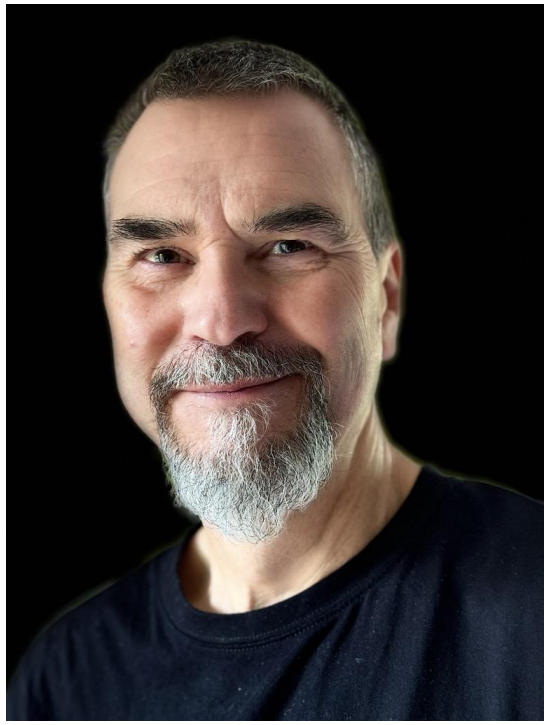


Phrases that cool the room

Loyal to the outcome, not the flag

Heresy check · Steal sheet · Context lens · Ceasefire language

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