

# The **Dark Side** of Standardization

(and why it's probably still worthwhile)

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# Hello! I'm Sam

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HOW STANDARDS PROLIFERATE:  
(SEE: A/C CHARGERS, CHARACTER ENCODINGS, INSTANT MESSAGING, ETC)



Fortunately, the charging one has been solved now that we've all standardized on mini-USB. Or is it micro-USB? Shit.

[HTTPS://XKCD.COM/927/](https://xkcd.com/927/)

## **standardization** *noun*

/ˌstændərdəˈzeɪʃn/

*British English also standardisation*

the process of making objects or activities of the same type have the same features or qualities; the process of making something standard

**see also** *convergence · uniformity · homogenization · regularization · normalization · systemization*

# Outline

- Terminology Alignment
- Why Standardize?
  - ❑ More wood, fewer arrows (efficiency, fix problem once and for all)
  - ❑ Interoperability (programmatic & operational)
- Pitfalls of Standardization
  - ❑ Migrations are Expensive! And may not prove locally optimal (80/20 solutions)
  - ❑ Weakened sense of ownership
  - ❑ Can stifle innovative problem solving
  - ❑ Weakens development skillsets as teams leverage common solutions
  - ❑ Requires completion of adoption to see benefits, at which point leverage over central solution is diminished
- How to manage them

01

Why standardize?





Photo by Jessica Ruscello on Unsplash

**POV: You're just out here, trying find a frame for your poster**

“

**Cattle, not pets.**

— Bill Baker at Scaling SQL Server 2012

POV: You're just out here, repainting the bikesheds



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Photo by Dan Cristian Paduret on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com)

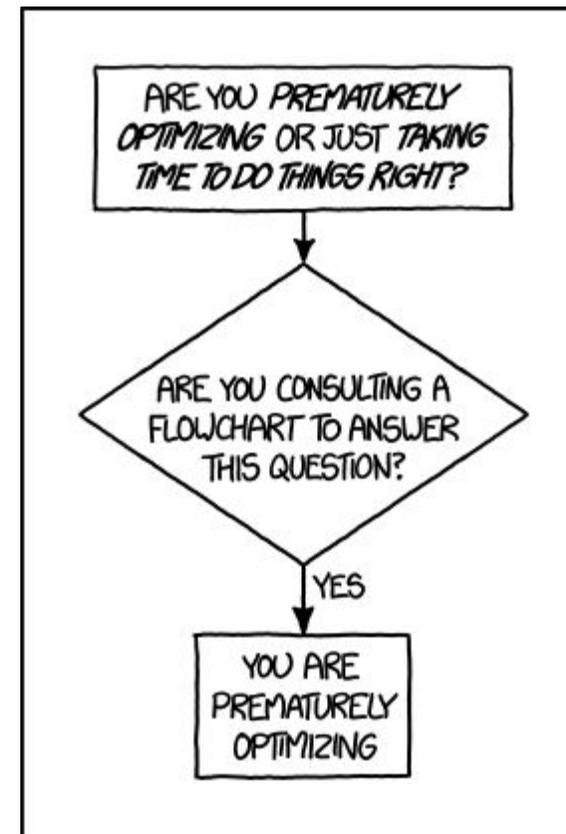
02

# What might go wrong?



(Or at least, what new problems have you made for yourself?)

**Getting alignment on the right standards early on is difficult**



[HTTPS://XKCD.COM/1691/](https://xkcd.com/1691/)

# Migrations are Hard

(And take more work and time than you think they will)

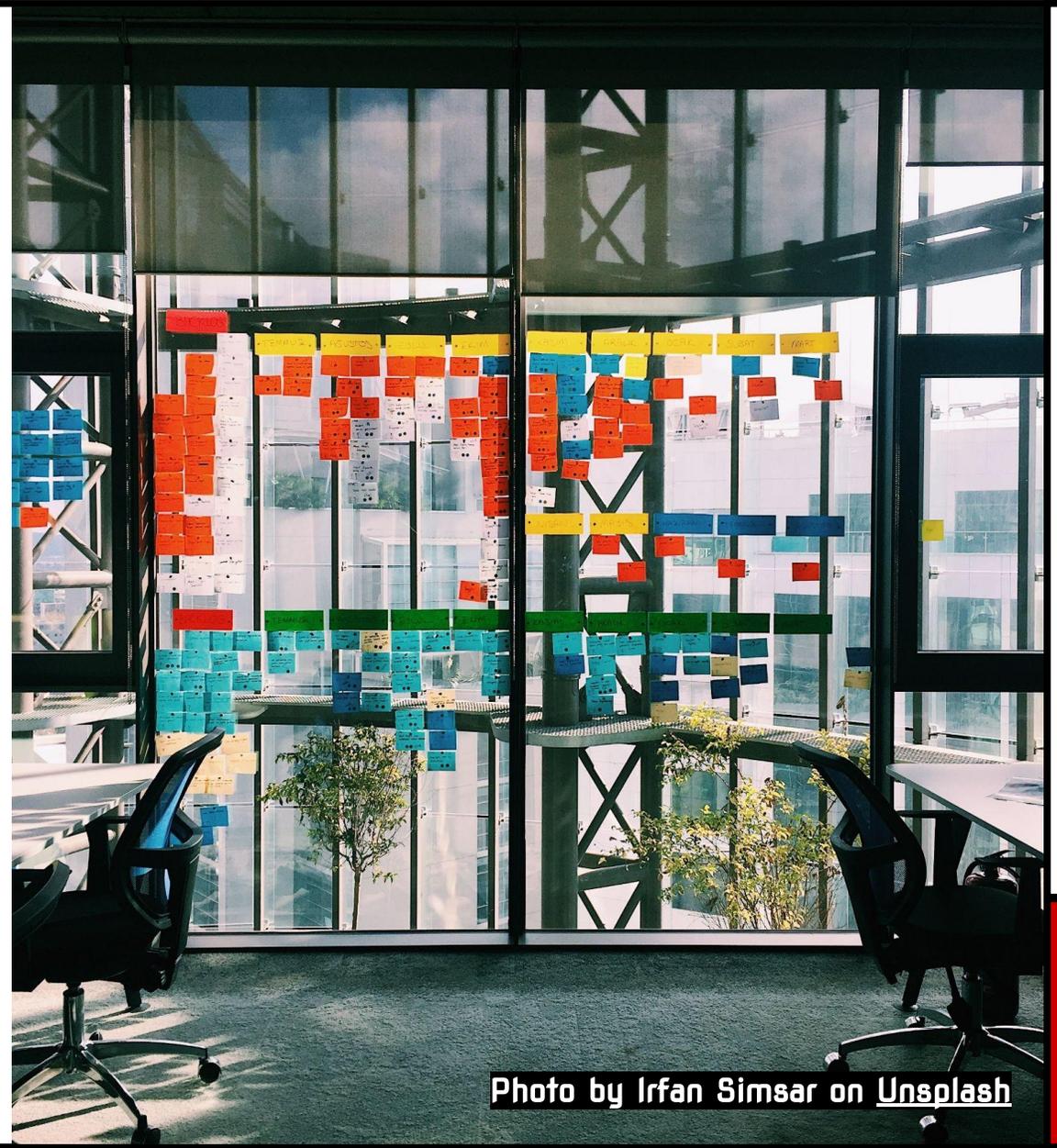


Photo by Irfan Simsar on [Unsplash](#)

**“not my  
problem”**

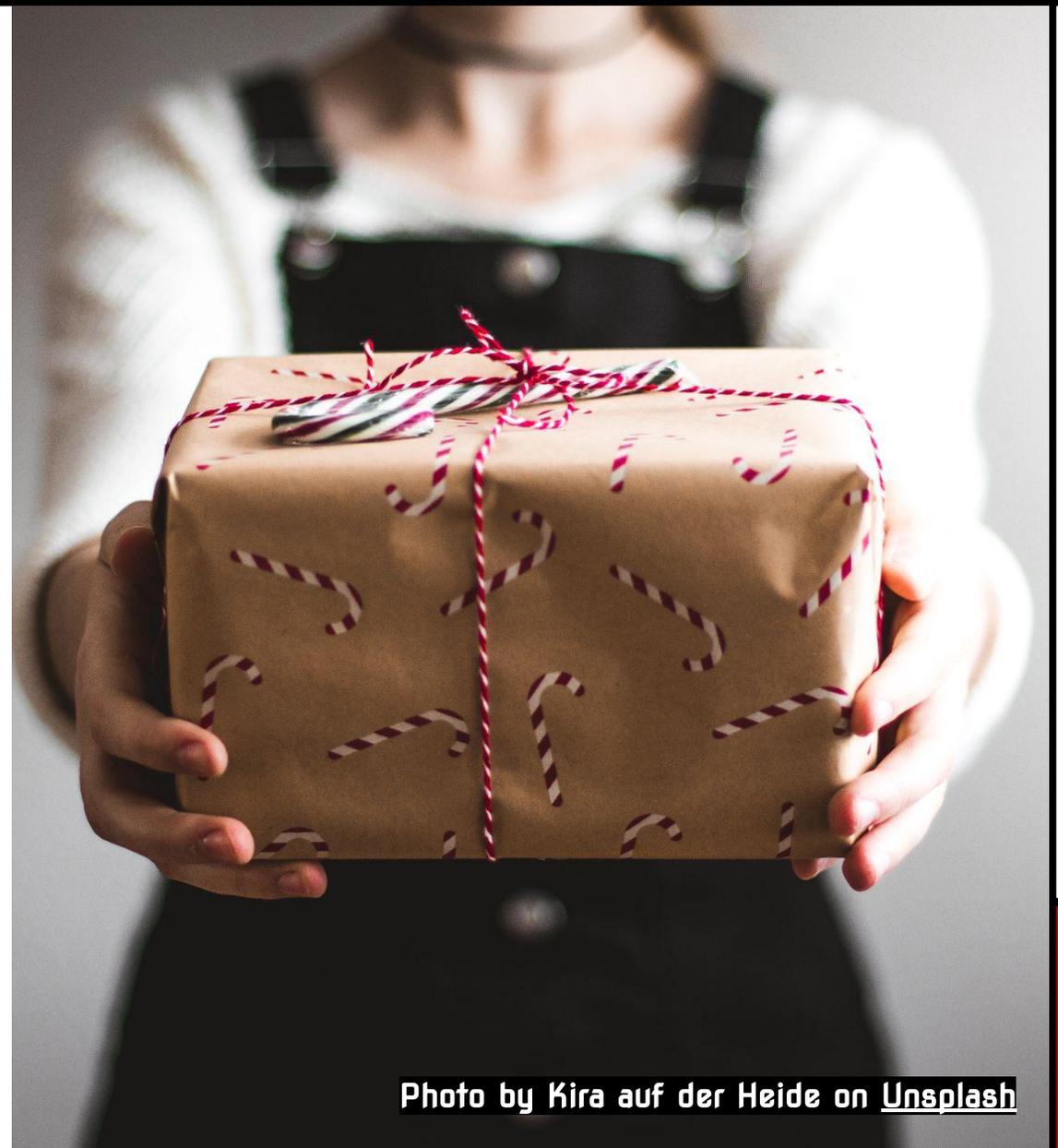


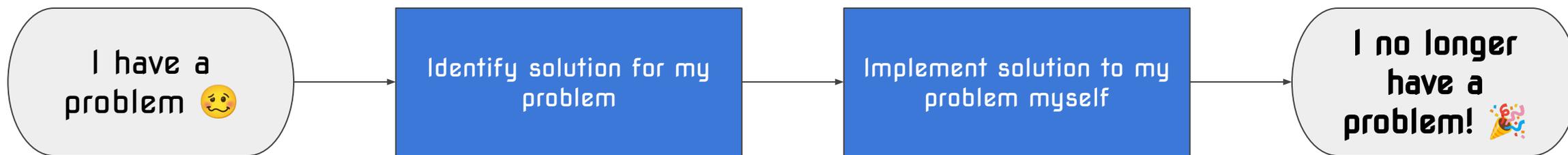
Photo by Kira auf der Heide on [Unsplash](#)

**03**

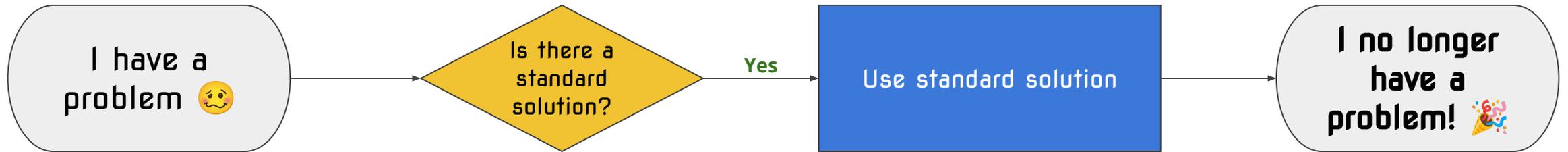
# Picking the Right Tool for the Job



## Before Standardization



## After Standardization (Platonic ideal)



I have a problem 🙄

Is there a complete, standard, recommended solution?

Yes

Does the solution solve your problem?

Yes

Use standard solution

No

No

Can you refactor your problem in a way that makes the solution useful?

Yes

Is the standard solution usefully customizable or extensible?

Yes

No

Is there a high-quality solution that can become a standard?

Yes

Identify solution for the general problem

Make it the standard solution in your org

No

Can I roll my own solution?

Yes

Implement my own solution

I no longer have a problem! 🎉

After Standardization (Reality)

03

# Mitigating Pitfalls



# Know why you're standardizing



Photo by Leelo Thefirst on [Pexels](#)

# Limit concurrent efforts

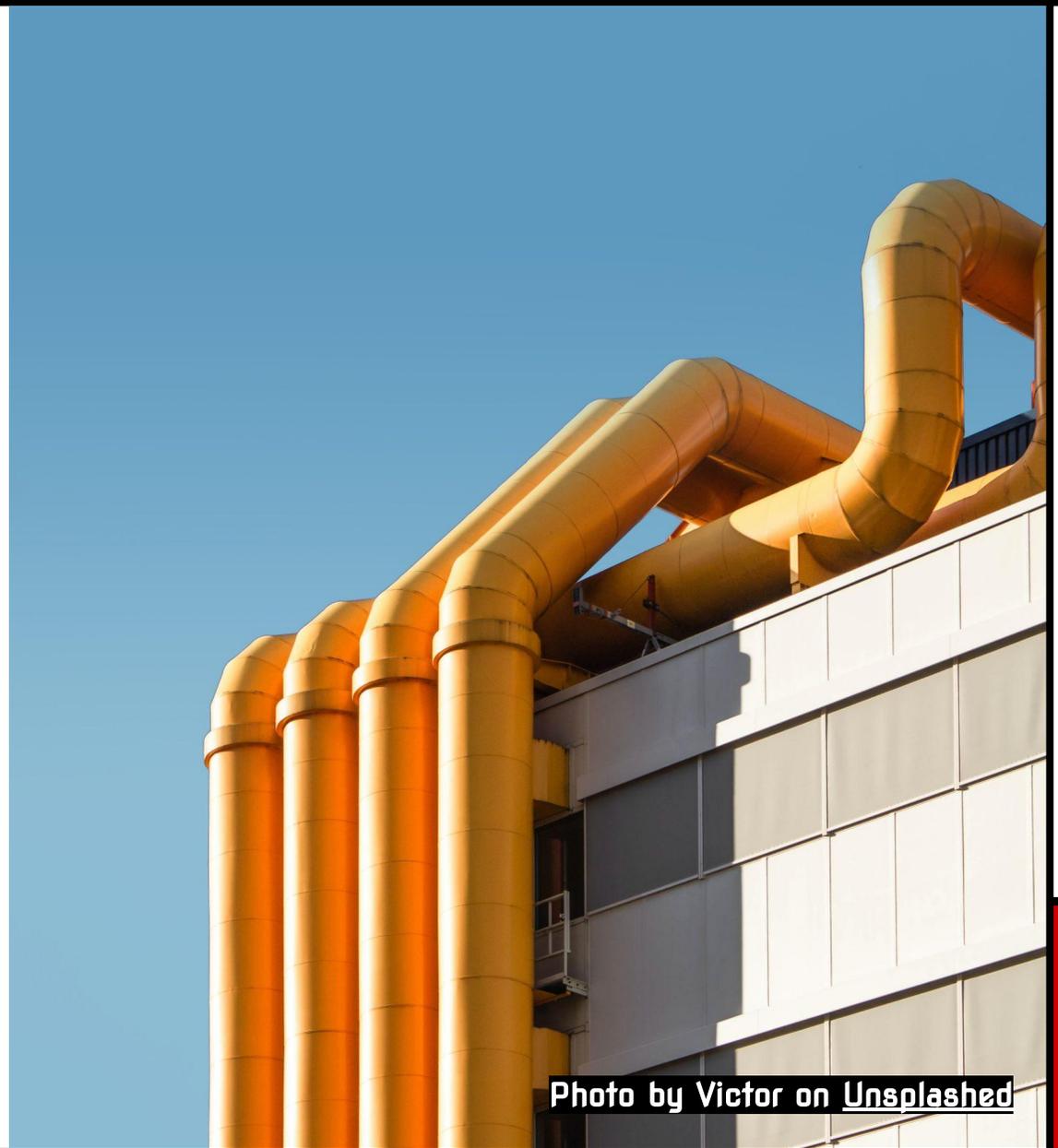


Photo by Victor on [Unsplash](#)

# Centralize workload



Photo by Adam Dubed on [Pexels](#)

# Figure out who owns what

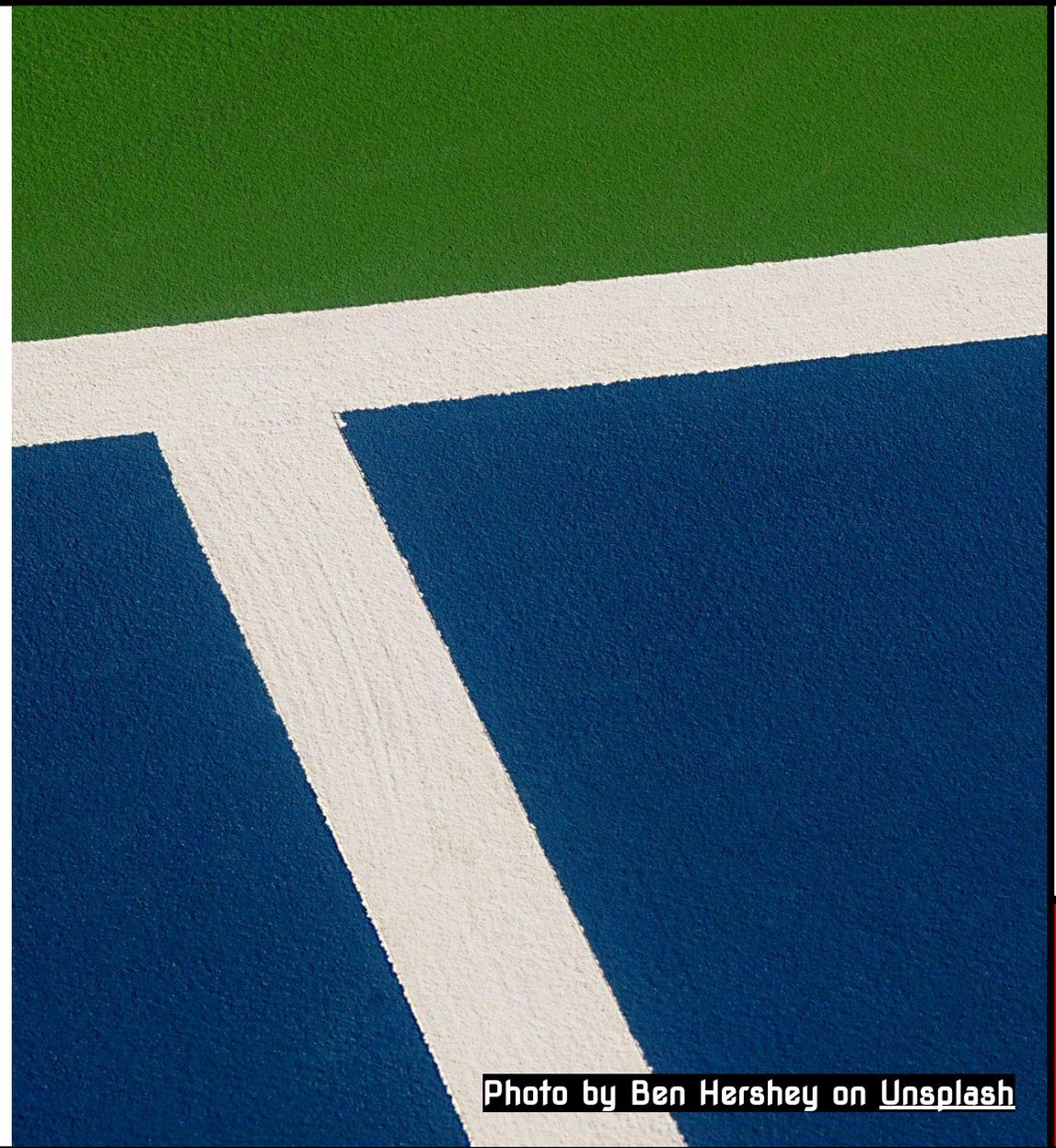


Photo by Ben Hershey on [Unsplash](#)

**Decide how  
decisions are  
made**

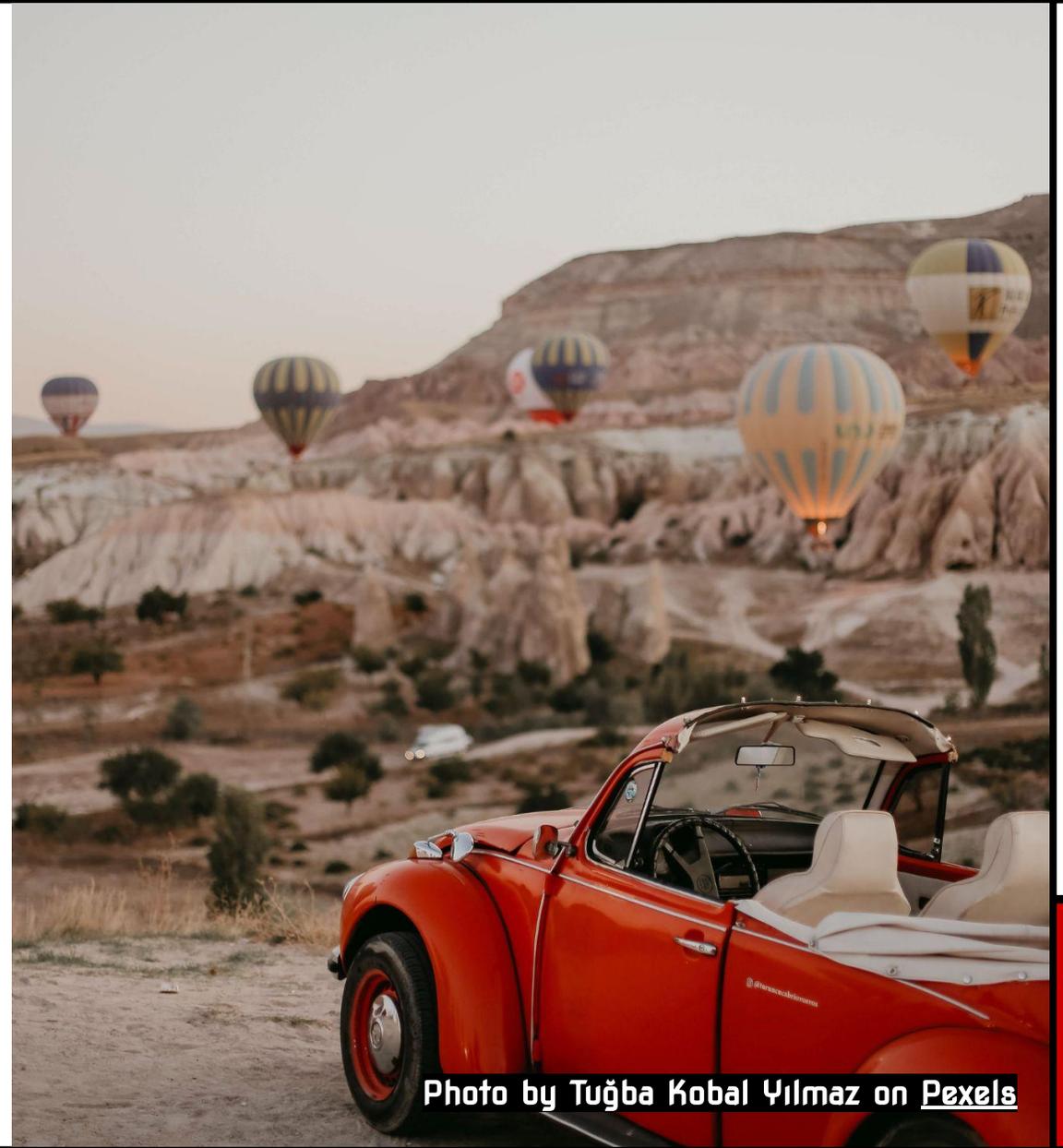


Photo by Tuğba Kobal Yılmaz on [Pexels](#)

# Opportunistic or Comprehensive?

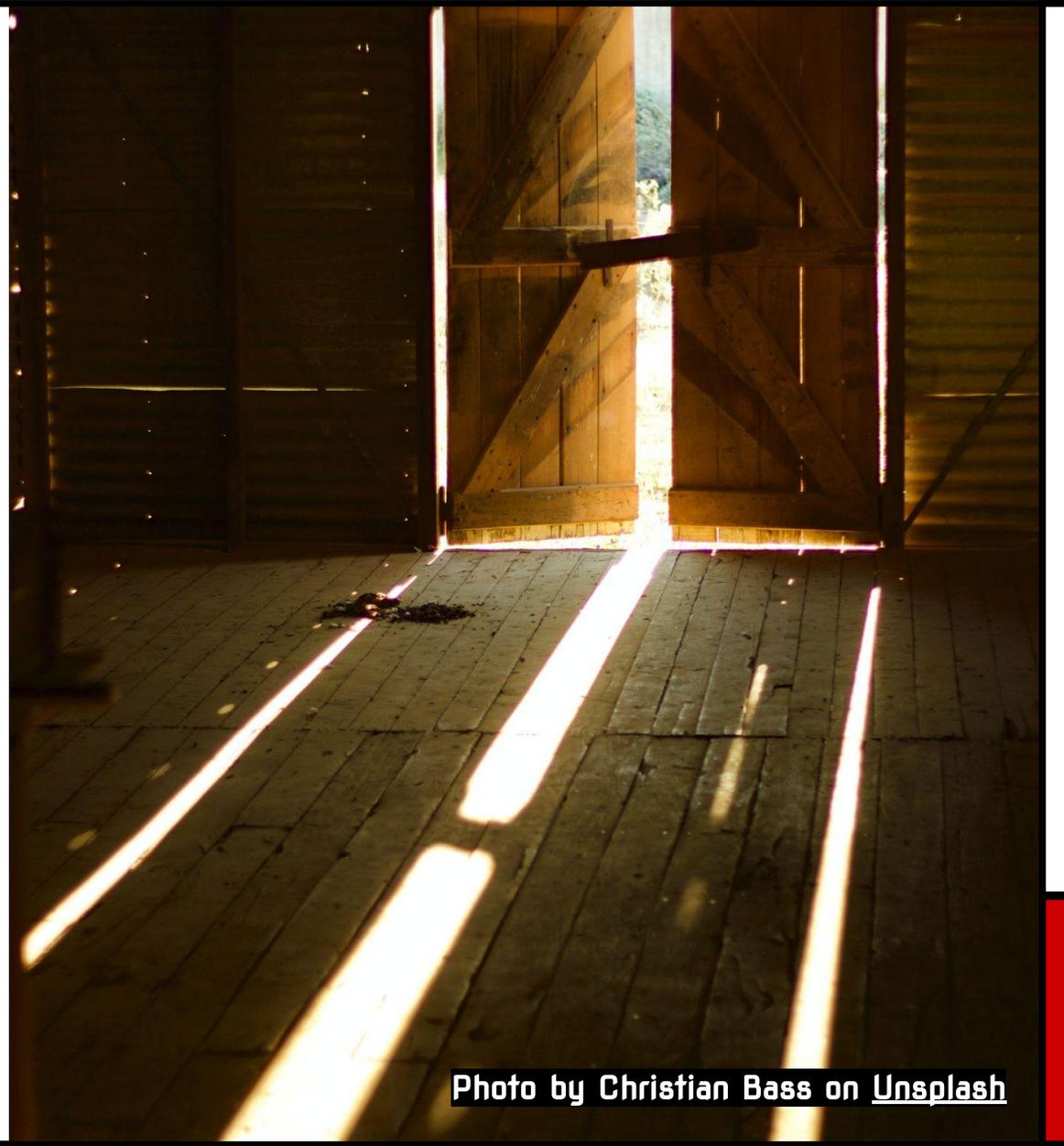


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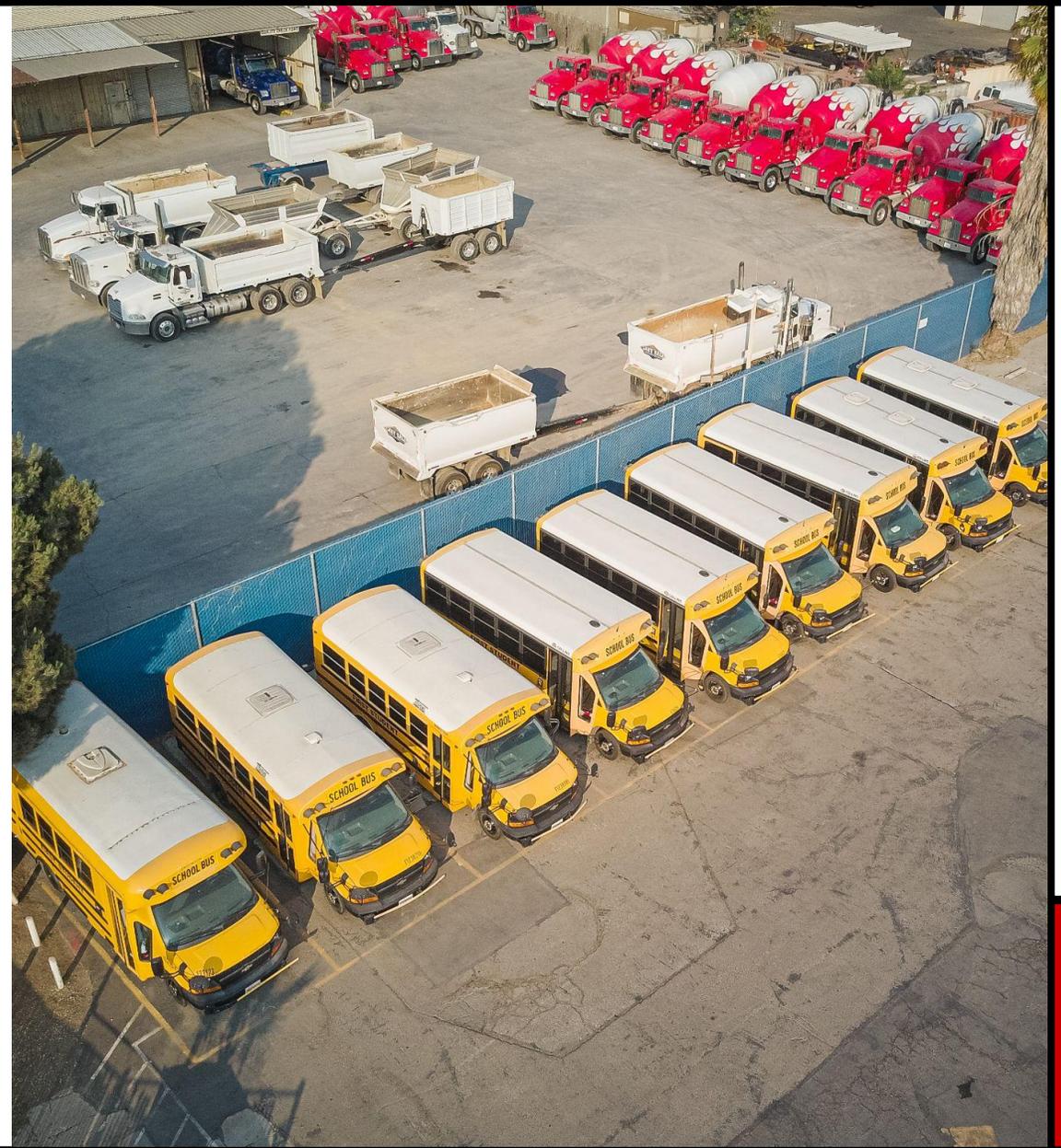
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So is it worth it?



# Probably\*

\*with caveats on how, when, and how quickly



# Thank you!



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