How to Keep Everyone Happy

(on a Shoestring) ?

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This is a story of that **one wild quarter** at a mid-sized SaaS company, where everything that could go wrong.

The quarter where I learned that you can, in fact, survive on coffee and anxiety alone.

Today's Parkour

- Expected and unexpected challenges
- Take a wide view
- Take a wider view
- For the rest of quarters

The Limitations

🌊 Water 🪨 Earth 🔥 Fire 🌪️ Air

Long ago, the four elements lived in harmony. Then everything changed when... the lead discovered.
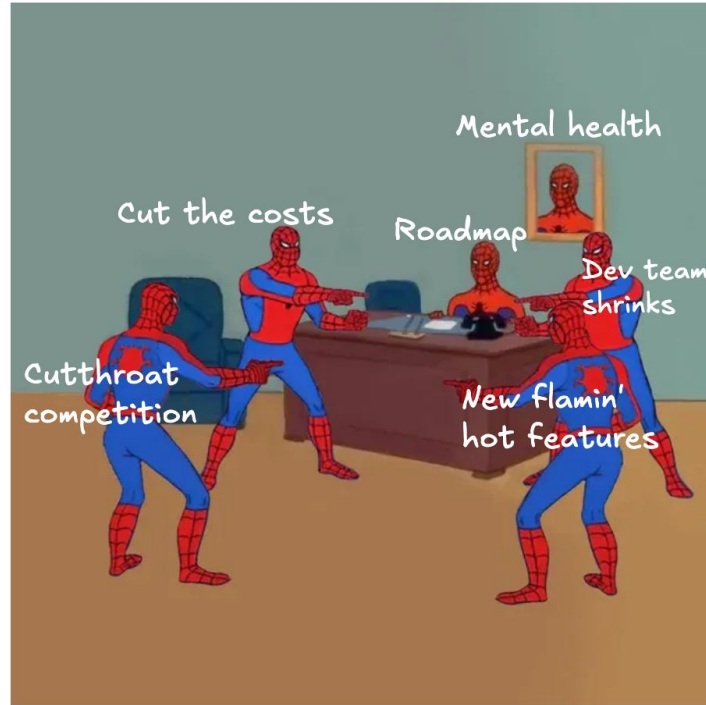
"There are only four great forces in software development."
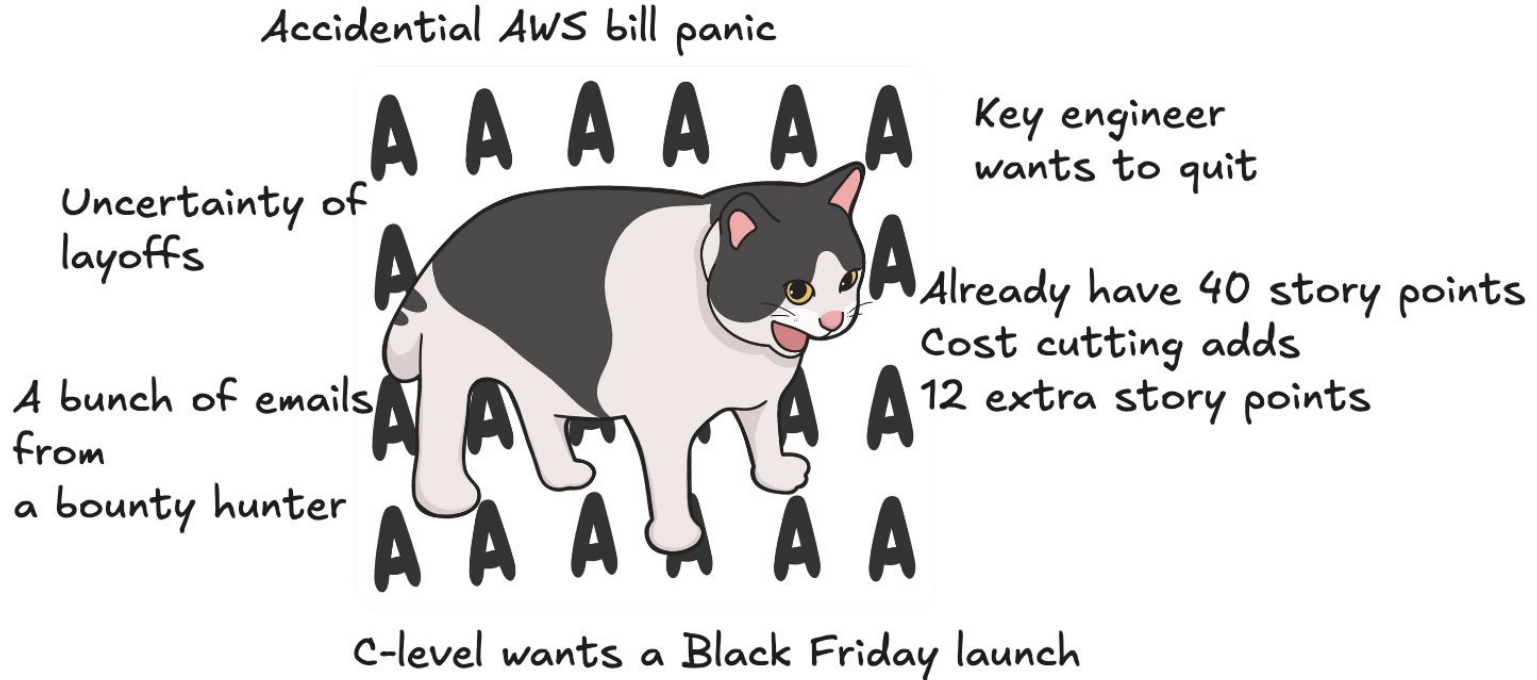
💸 Limited Budget

👩 👨 Limited Headcount

⏳ Limited Time

🧘 Limited Life

Instant Screenshot

Dominoes vs Avalanches

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The Happiness Sparse Matrix

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Heuristic #1: Pizza Trade-offs

Rotating priorities

Each sprint has a different team's priority

Make advance payment with "time" currency

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The Constraint Satisfaction Problem

It's looks like living inside a math problem... Wait...

It is Constraint Satisfaction Problem which is a *NP-Intermediate* problem 🙀

No numerical clean solution   1 ≠ 1 👀

Heuristic #2: Good-Enough Plans

Take an example by emergency rooms where
make life saving triage at its best

Identify the most critical fixes for immediately relief
Stop the bleeding (a hotfix or a phone call maybe)

It's better to be 70% right today than 100% right too late.

Keep stakeholders informed regularly

Heuristic #3: Prioritize by Impact

One morning I woke up saying that

Not all problems are equal weights.

- Accidental AWS bill -> UP!
- Generate report very early before deadline -> ⬇️
- Pending old-fashioned feature request -> ⬇️
- Remove annoying obstacle from your team's path -> UP!

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Avoiding the Avalanche

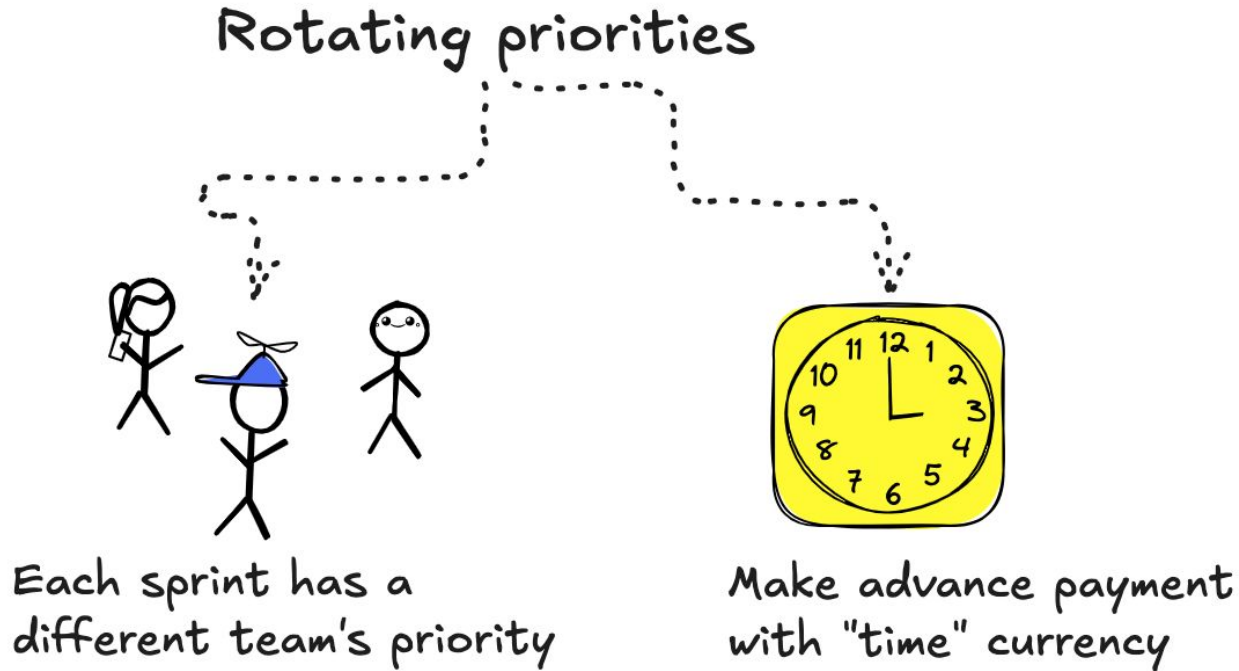Don't just fix the bug. Ask how it got there.

Create a root cause culture, not a blame one.

Fix one thing fully, not ten things badly.

Keep the big picture: solving one crisis shouldn't blind you to others

Emotional Bank Accounts

Everyday, the bank account leaks **a tiny amount of emotional money**.

Sometimes **large expenses** such as **launching a new project, migrate cloud providers, rewrite the framework/language**.

All of these costs emotional money. Naturally, the bank accounts reach zero.

We want to **avoid hit to zero**, deposit money from time to time.

Emotional Deposit

I have established the principles below;

- Casual coffee breaks/lunch - it's my treat
- Share credit
- Listen
- Be accessible
- Enabling developers to invest in their personal tech experience; provide books, promote their hobby projects, youtube channels

Our experiences are similar in pattern but unique in detail, I believe we need tailored solutions.

- Regina Phalange

Managing tech crisis on a shoestring isn't about being a hero. **It's about being human.**

Thanks for listening! 😊

References

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