THE MILLION DOLLAR BUG

QUALITY LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM COSTLY FAILURES

by Christine Pinto

INTRO

Christine Pinto

- 18+ Years in Software Testing
- Worked across startups, gov, and international teams
- Co-founder & CTPO of

Epic Test Quest

AGENDA

THE MYTHOLOGY

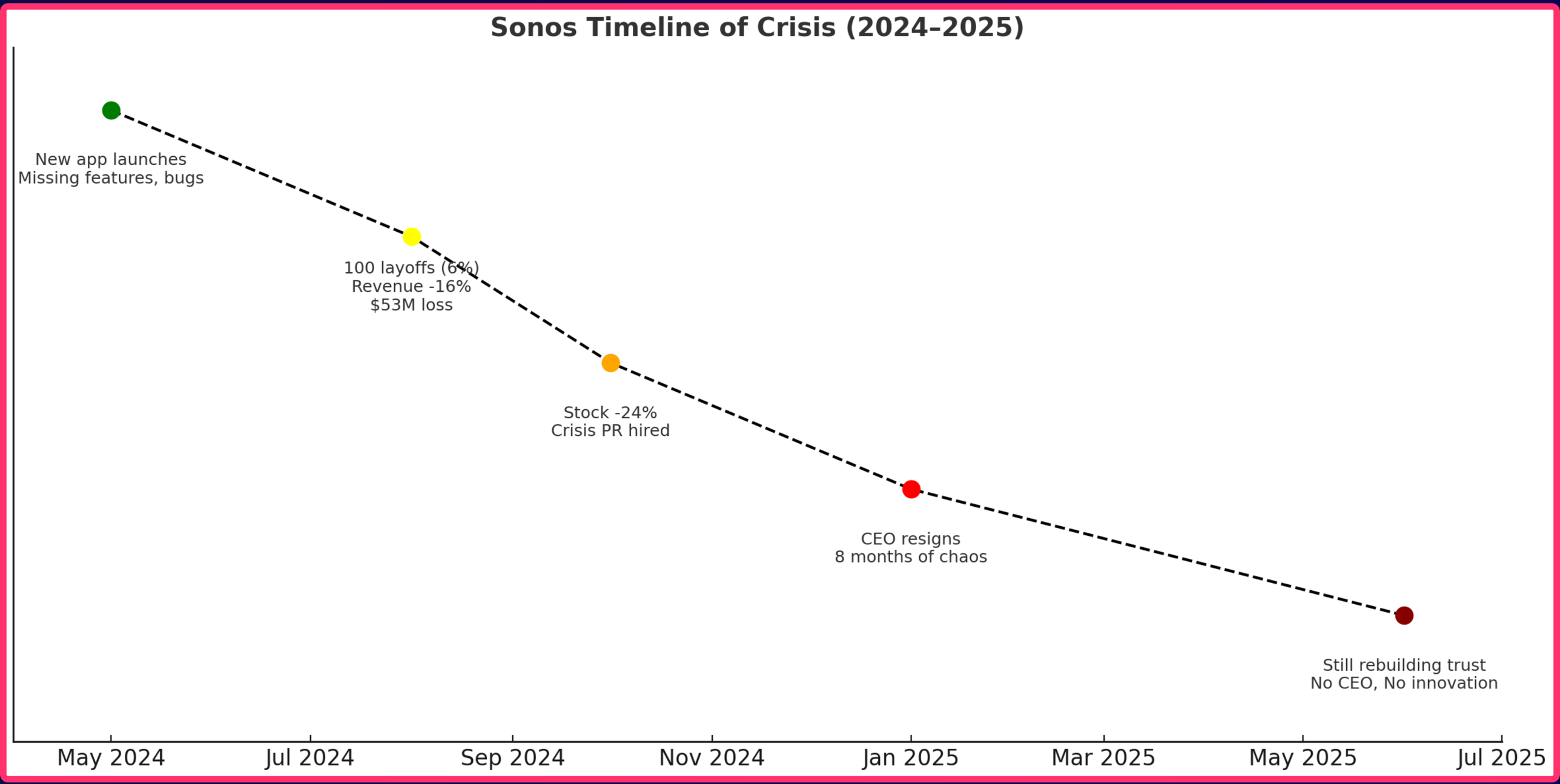
THE MATHEMATICS

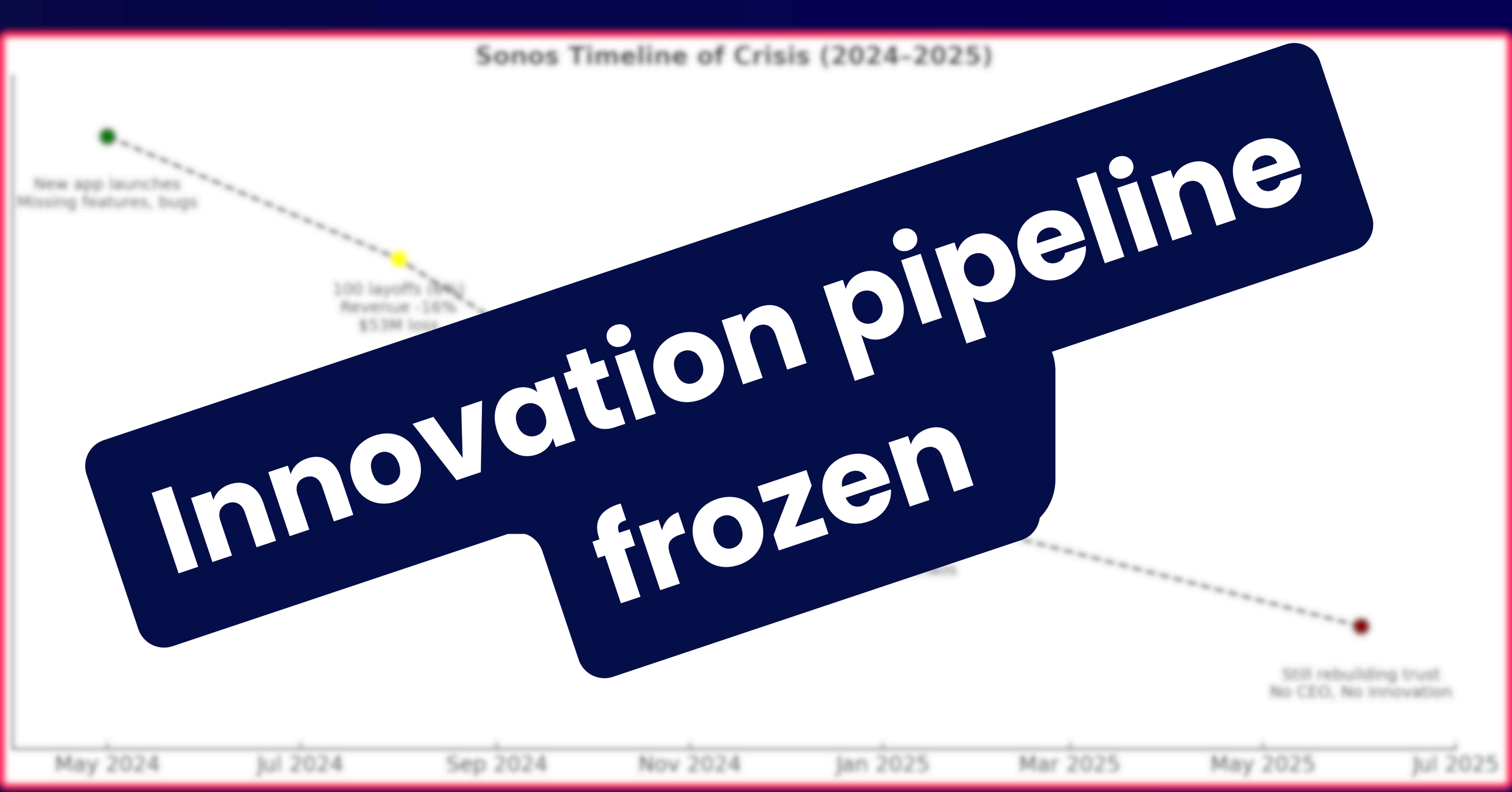
THE MECHANISMS

THE METAMORPHOSIS

THE MYTHOLOGY

The Mythology


Sonos Timeline of Crisis (2024–2025)
New app launches
Missing features, bugs
100 layoffs (6%)
Revenue -16%
$53M loss
Stock -24%
Crisis PR hired
CEO resigns
8 months of chaos
Still rebuilding trust
No CEO, No innovation
May 2024
Jul 2024
Sep 2024
Nov 2024
Jan 2025
Mar 2025
May 2025
Jul 2025



Innovation pipeline frozen

AD 1 OF 3
3:00 AM
BERLIN FASHION WEEK

THE SPEED VS. QUALITY PARADOX

THE PROMISE

✅ 700 agents → 1 AI bot

✅ 75% automation (2.3M chats)

AI will replace human effort with speed.

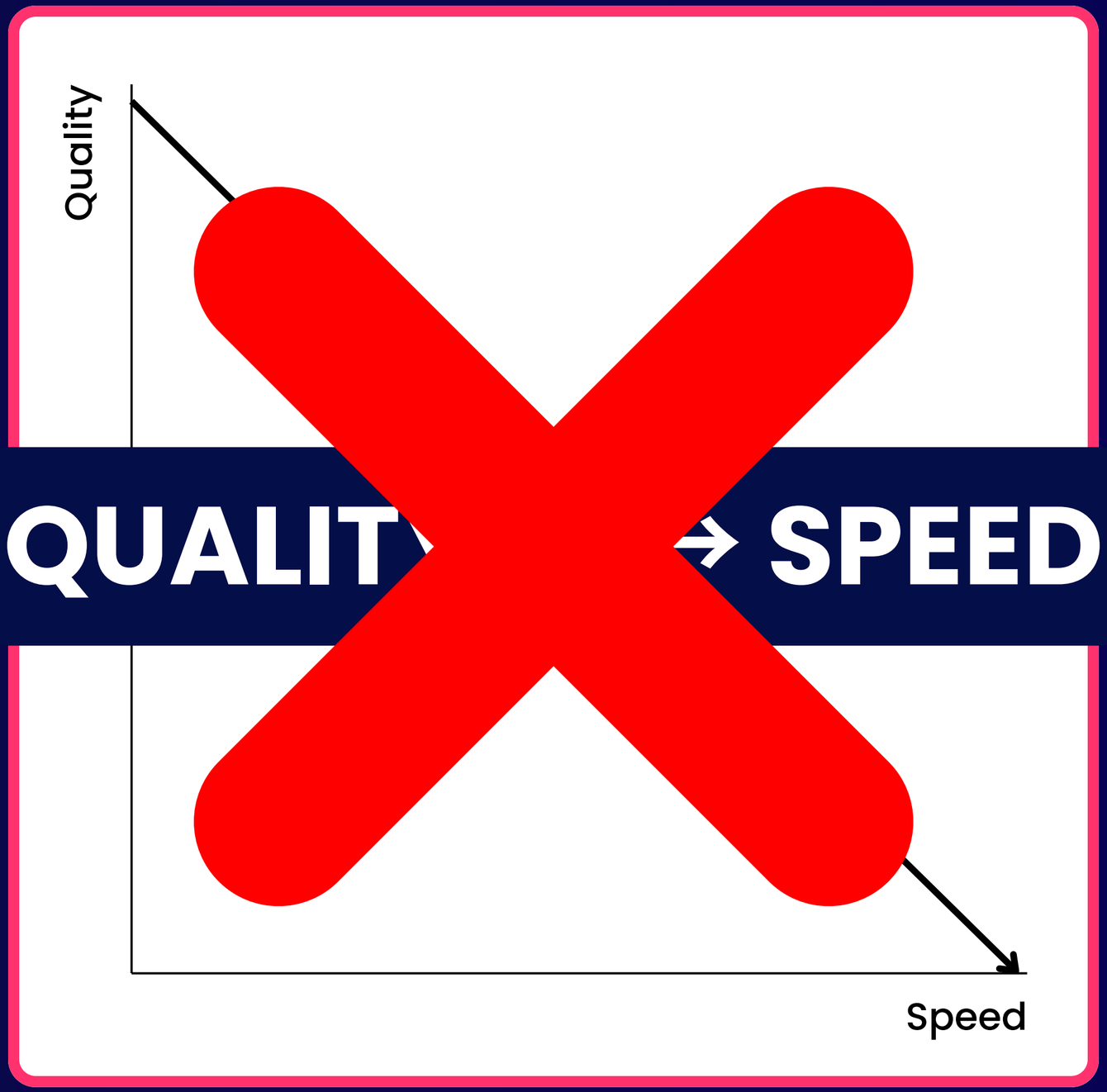
THE REALITY

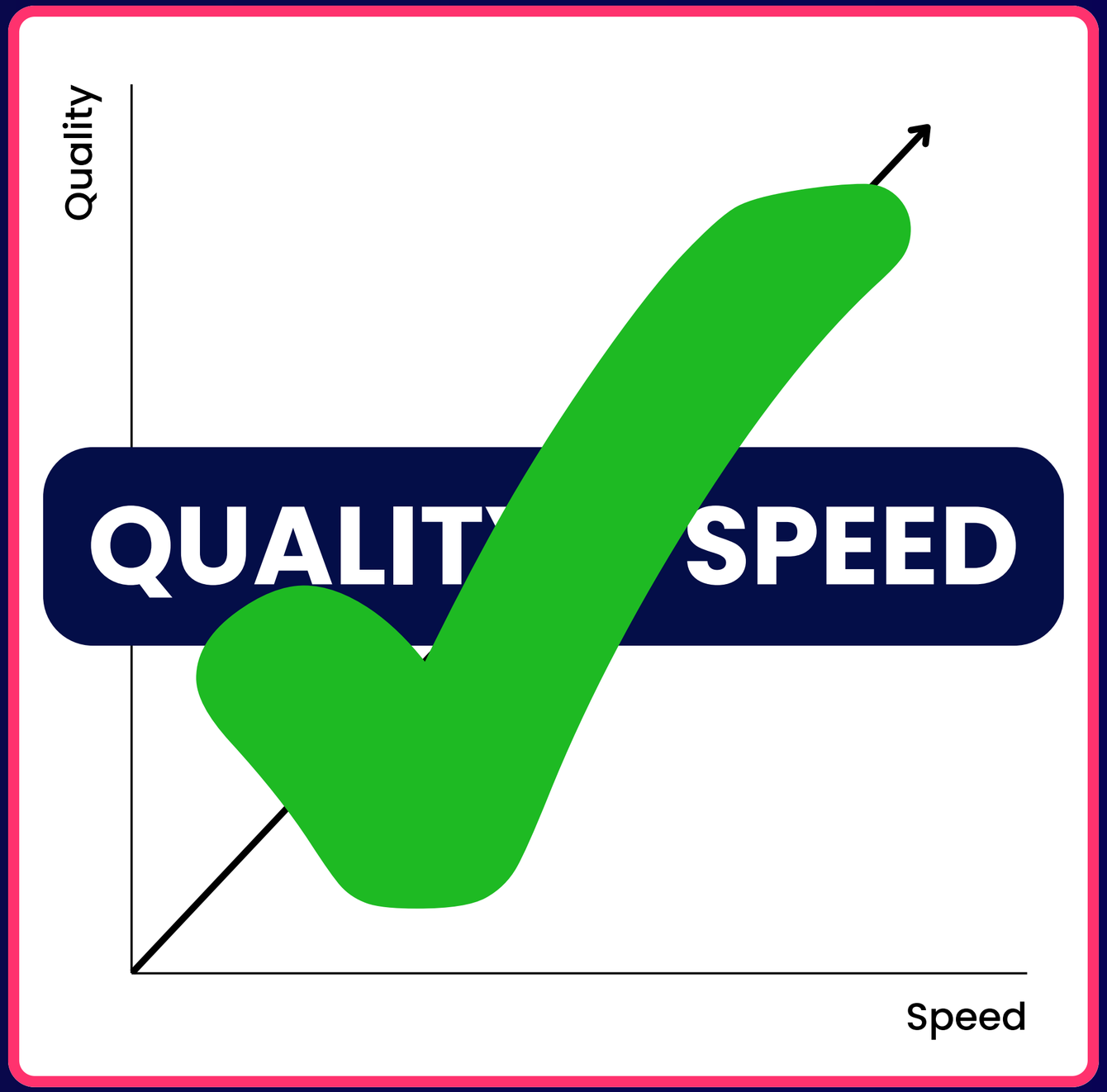
❌ Rehiring humans

❌ 0% of complex issues handled

Quality broke. Humans returned.

Speed without quality = crisis.


Quality
QUALITY
SPEED
Speed

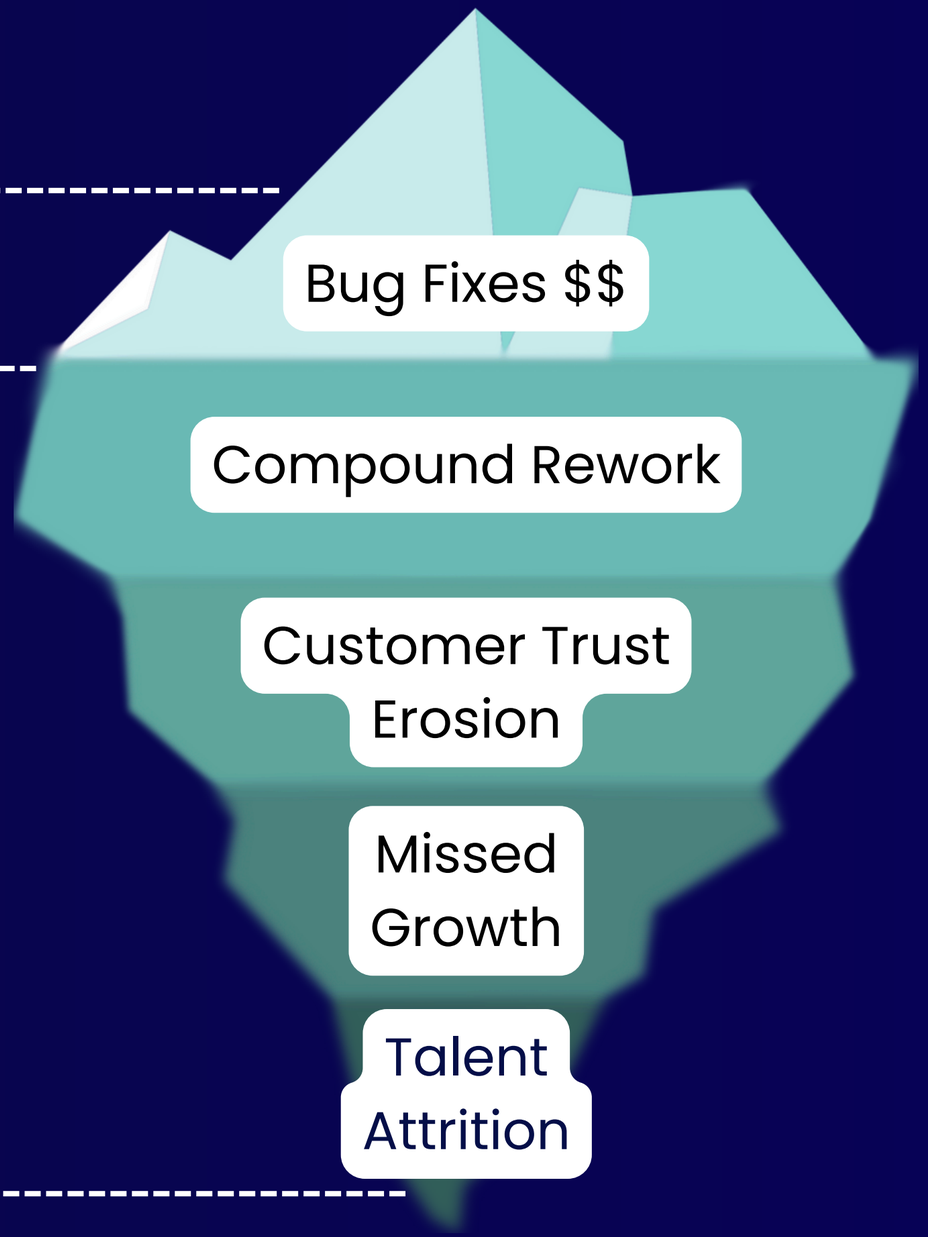

Quality
QUALITY SPEED
Speed

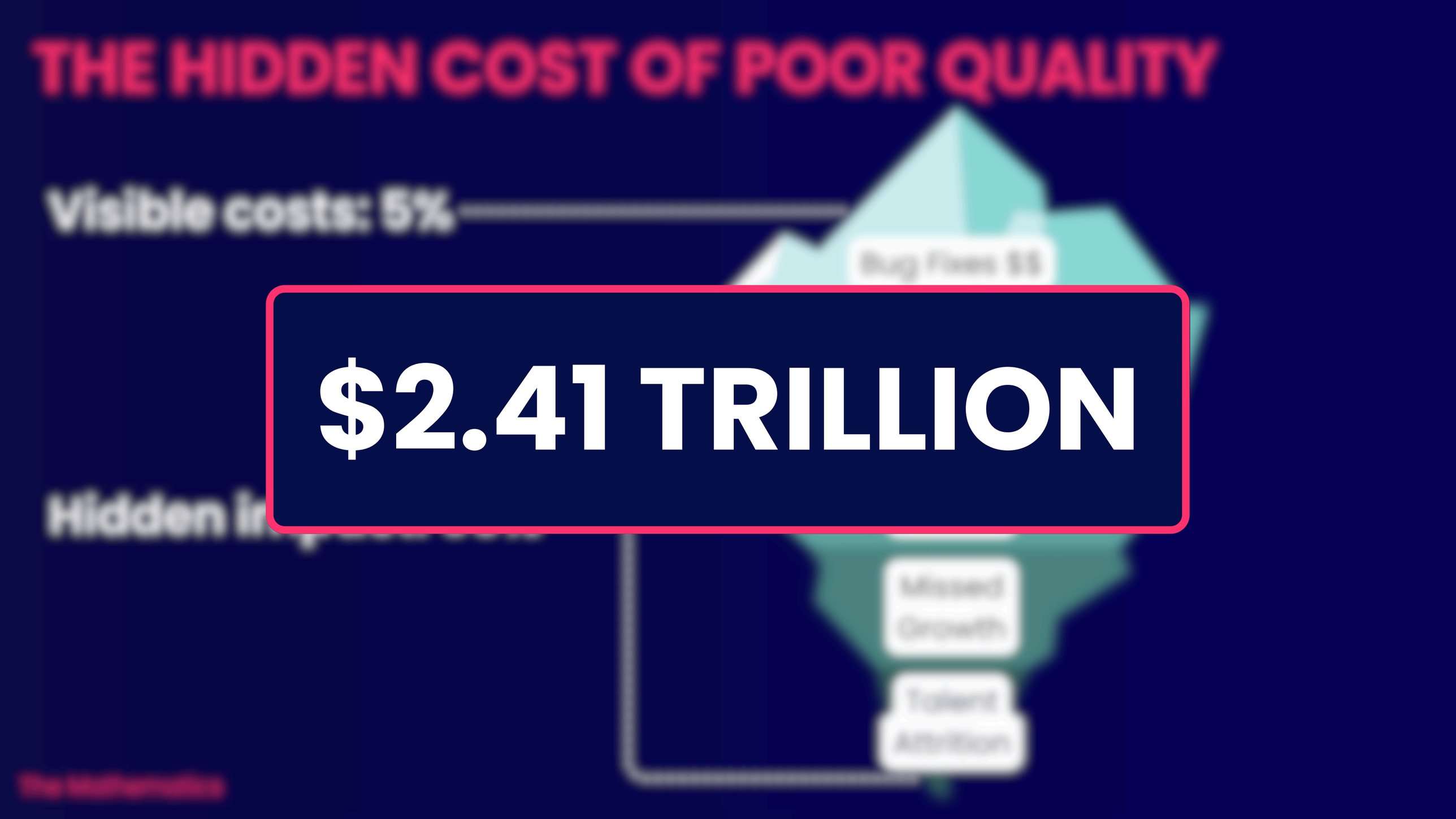
THE MATHEMATICS

THE HIDDEN COST OF POOR QUALITY

Visible costs: 5%

Hidden impact: 95%





$2.41 TRILLION

THE QUALITY-GROWTH ENGINE

Customer Trust

46% pay premium

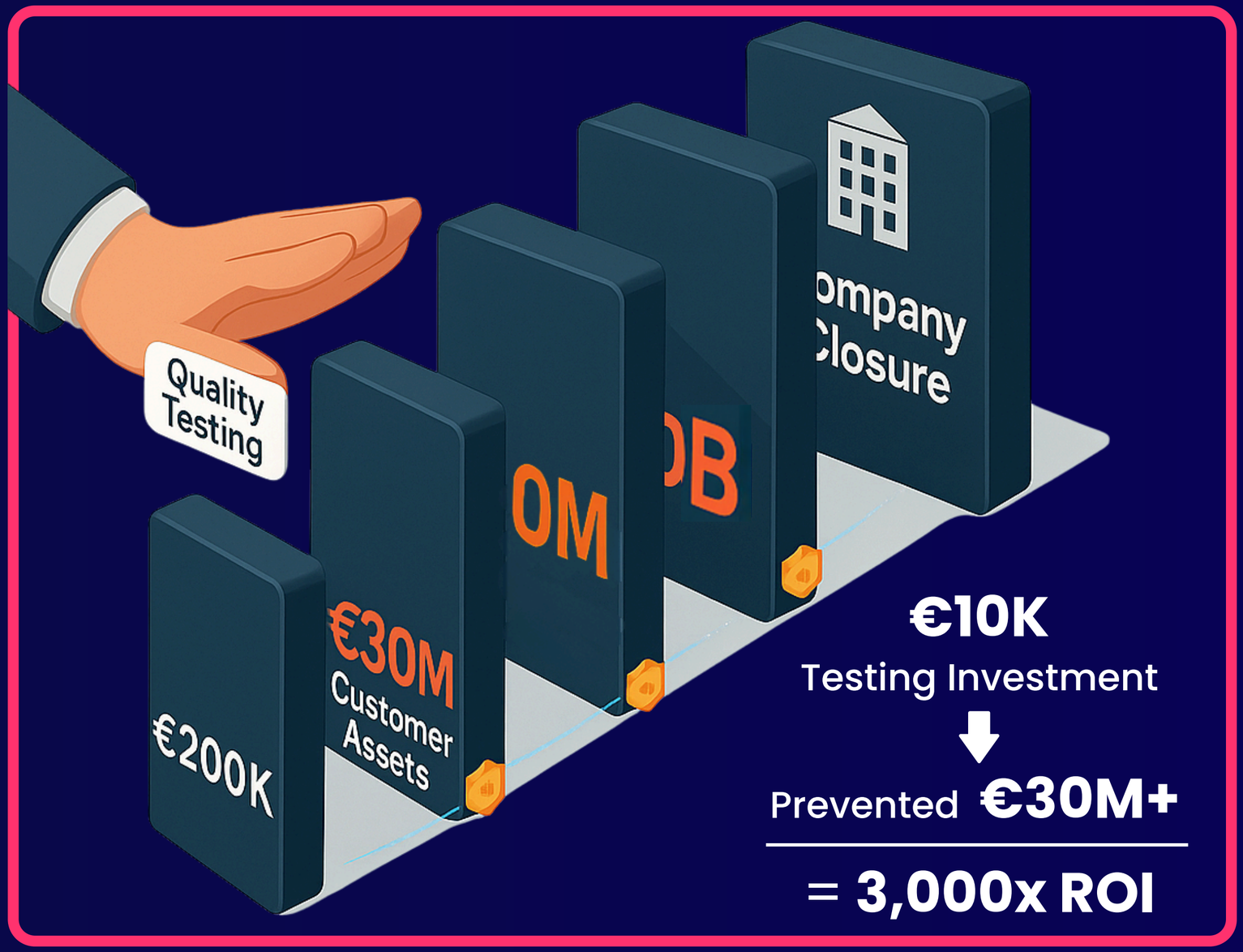
Development Speed

2x faster delivery

Code Health

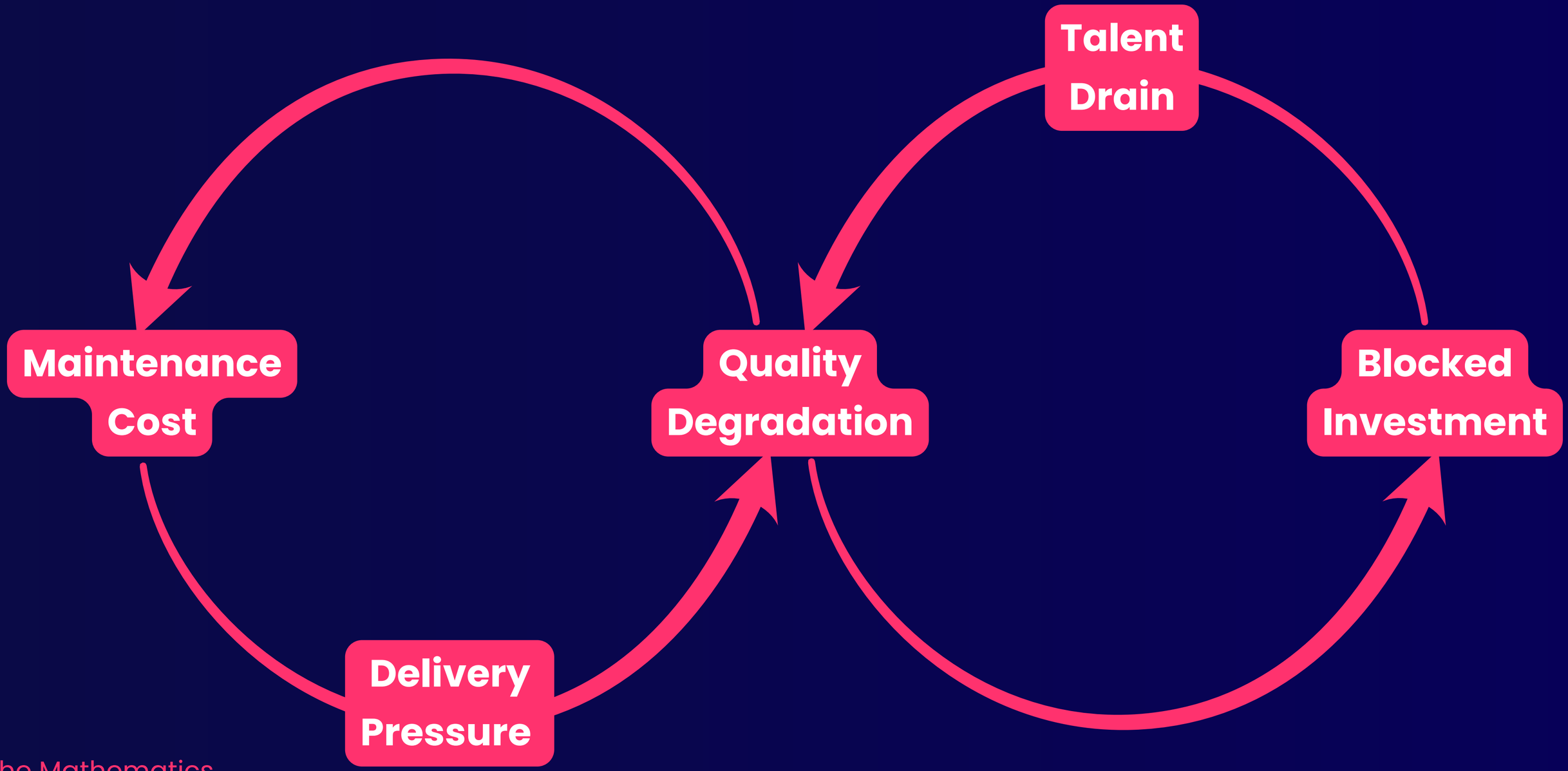
15x fewer defects

THE €30M EDGE CASE



The Mathematics

THE TECHNICAL DEBT DEATH SPIRAL

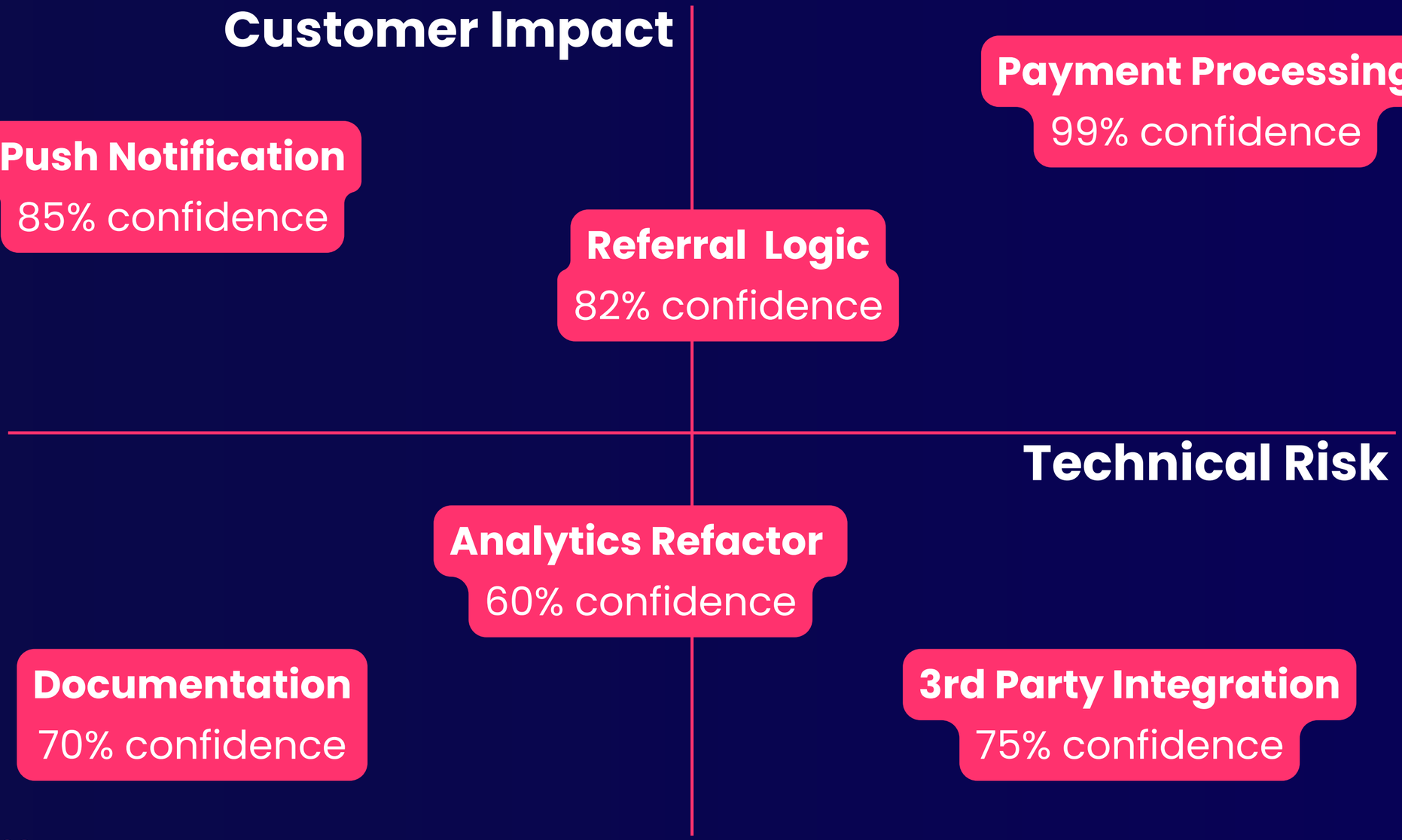


The Mathematics

THE TECHNICAL DEBT DEATH SPIRAL
Talent Drain
Blocked Investment
Delivery Pressure
Maintenance Cost
6.5x cost

THE MECHANISMS

QUALITY CONFIDENCE MATRIX



PRE-MORTEM QUALITY AUDIT

What could turn this into a Harvard Business School failure case?

Which quality assumption could destroy us if we're wrong?

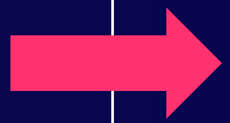
What's the earliest signal this is going wrong?

What if the AI looks right but is confidently wrong?

TRANSLATE LIKE A STRATEGIST

Tech Framing

OAuth callback intermittently fails for new users



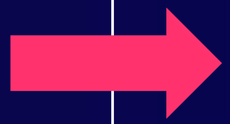
Strategic Framing

Customer churn risk in onboarding

TRANSLATE LIKE A STRATEGIST

Tech Framing

Slow CI pipeline



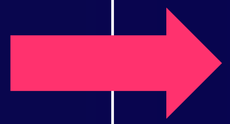
Strategic Framing

Developer productivity bottleneck delaying delivery

TRANSLATE LIKE A STRATEGIST

Tech Framing

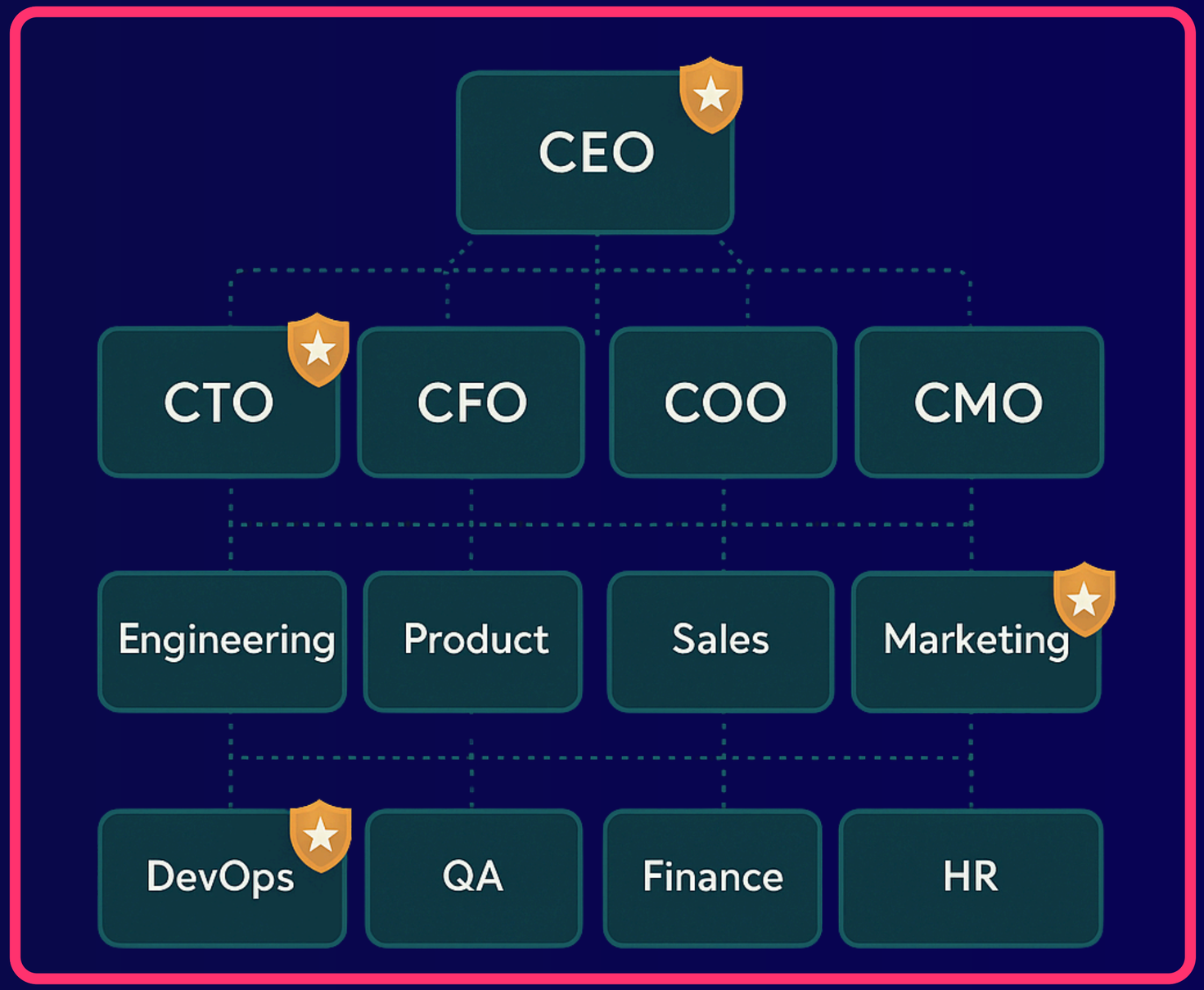
Bug backlog keeps growing



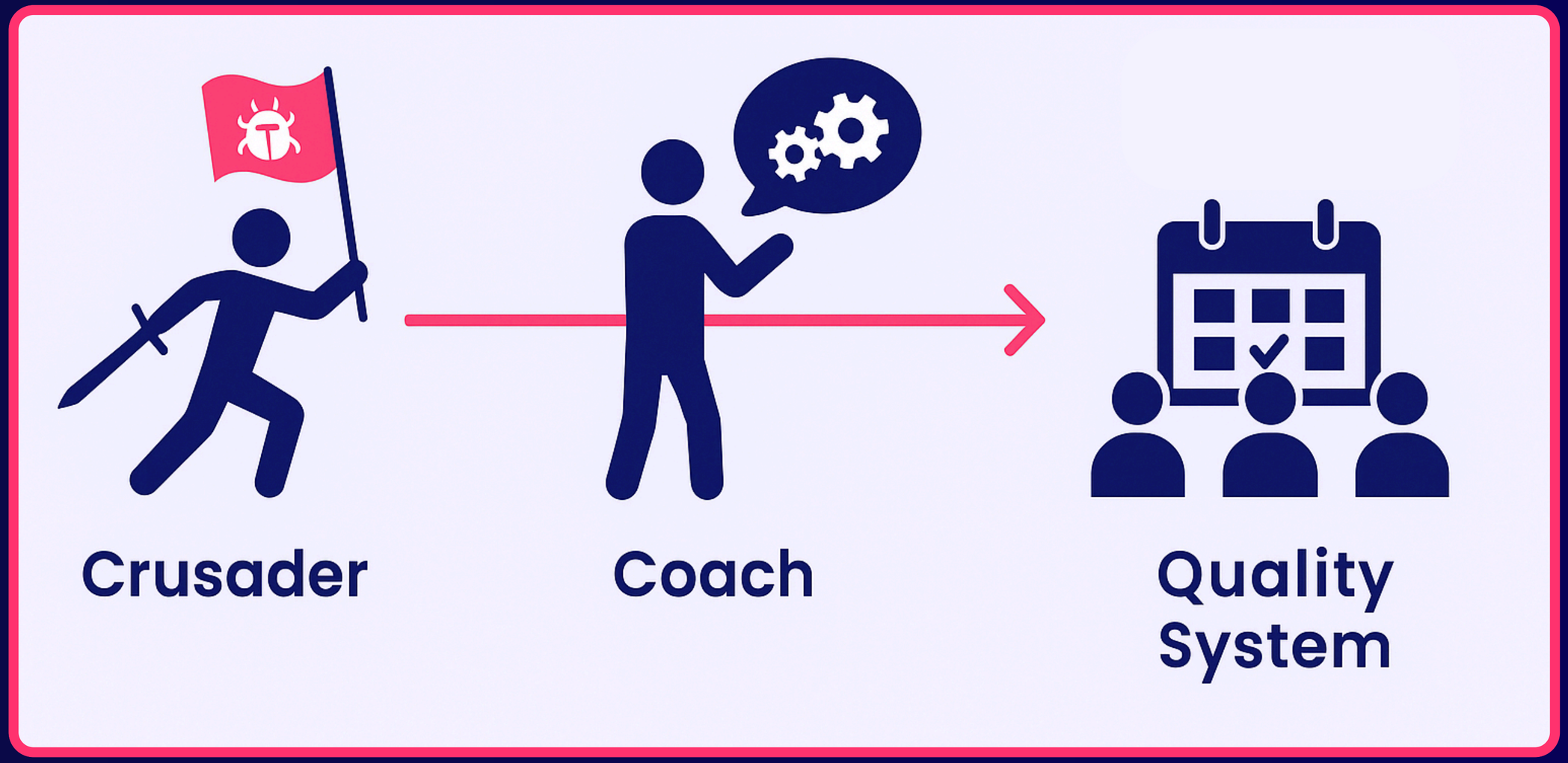
Strategic Framing

Team is stuck firefighting, roadmap delivery at risk

QUALITY CHAMPIONS NETWORK



START A SYSTEM, NOT A CRUSADE



THE METAMORPHOSIS

TWO PATHS, SAME BREAKTHROUGH

Slow, risky releases

↓

Quality automation

↓

1000+ daily deployments

Monolithic releases

↓

Quality ownership

↓

Two-pizza teams

FROM CRISIS TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

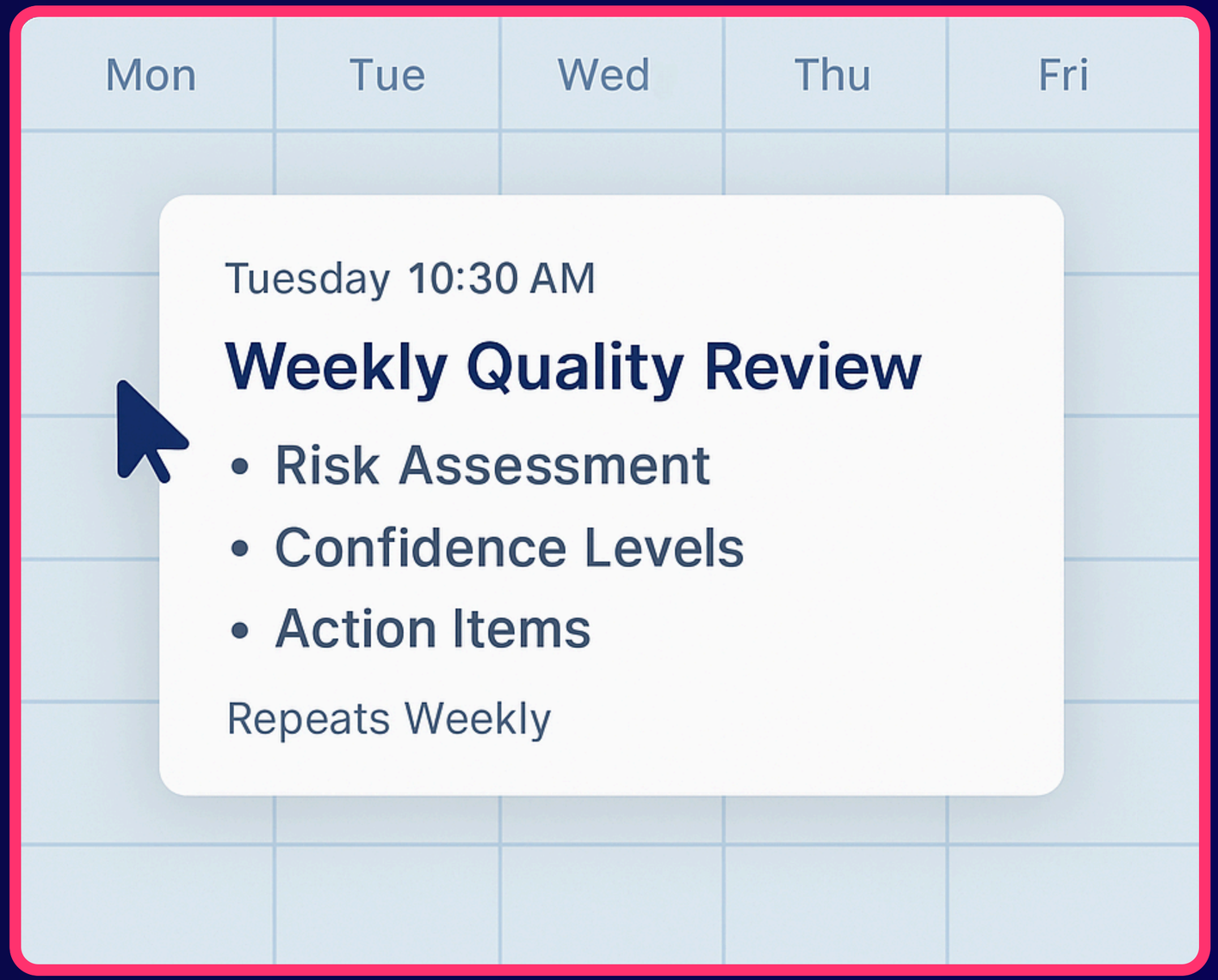
Staged rollouts • Testing overhaul • Customer controls

THE QUALITY LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

https://github.com/EpicTestQuest/leadership-toolkit

The Metamorphosis

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE...



LEFT
EXIT 12
INVEST IN QUALITY
JUST ONE SMALL CHANGE, SKIP REVIEW
ENGINEERING TEAM
imgflip.com

THE MILLION DOLLAR BUG

CHRISTINE PINTO - CO-FOUNDER ETQ

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