Open Source Product Management

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Previously:

phpList® | COLLABORA | ownCloud | GnuPG | fsfe

Why do engineers need product managers?

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Image: Gordon Welters

Who needs managers?
Creating value is hard

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Image: Zurich U.S. (Insurance), Wikipedia (I-35W Mississippi River bridge), Kai M. Caemmerer/kaimichael.com

Who needs managers?
Staying competitive is hard

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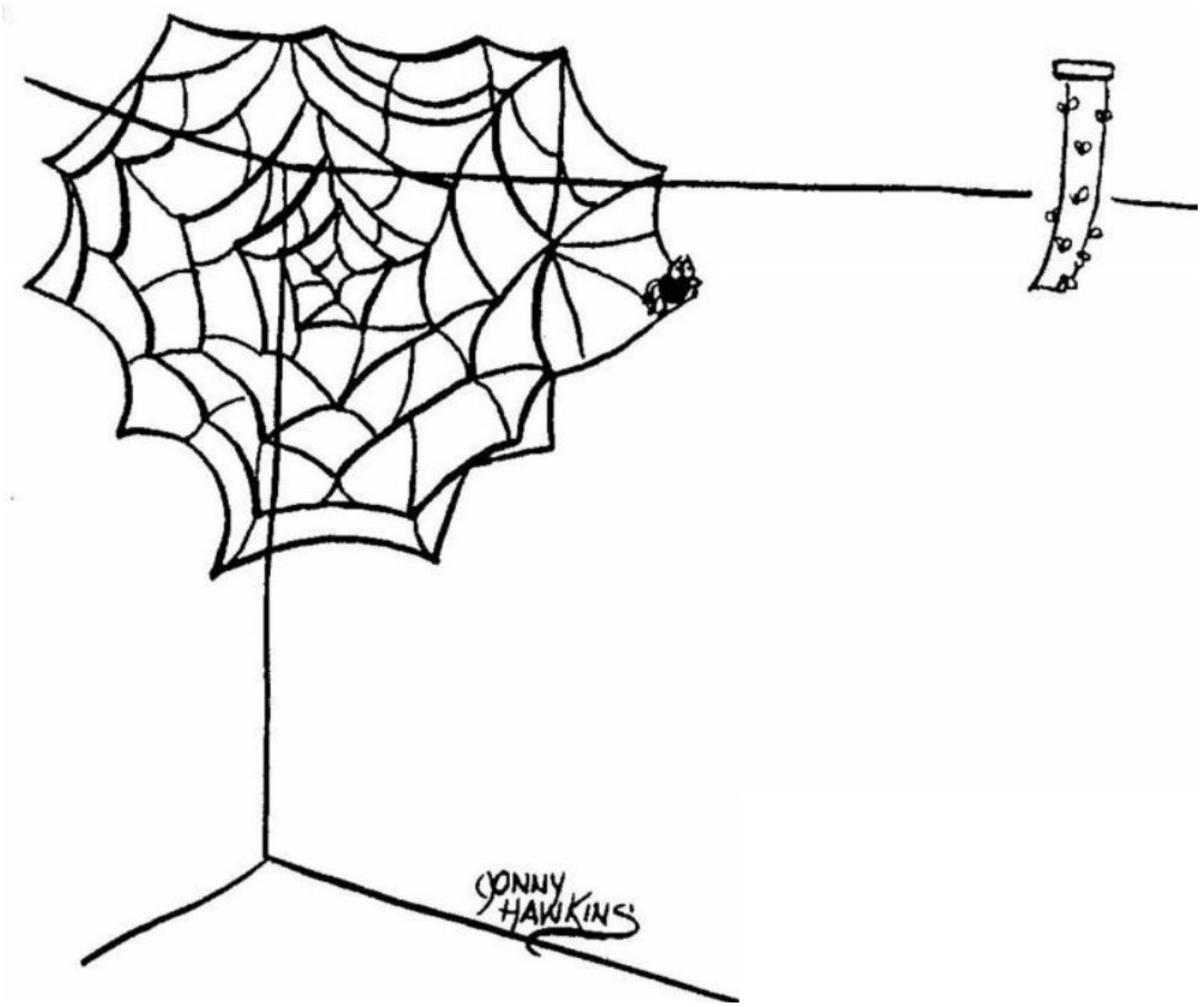

Image: cartoonstock

Who needs managers?
Hidden assumptions

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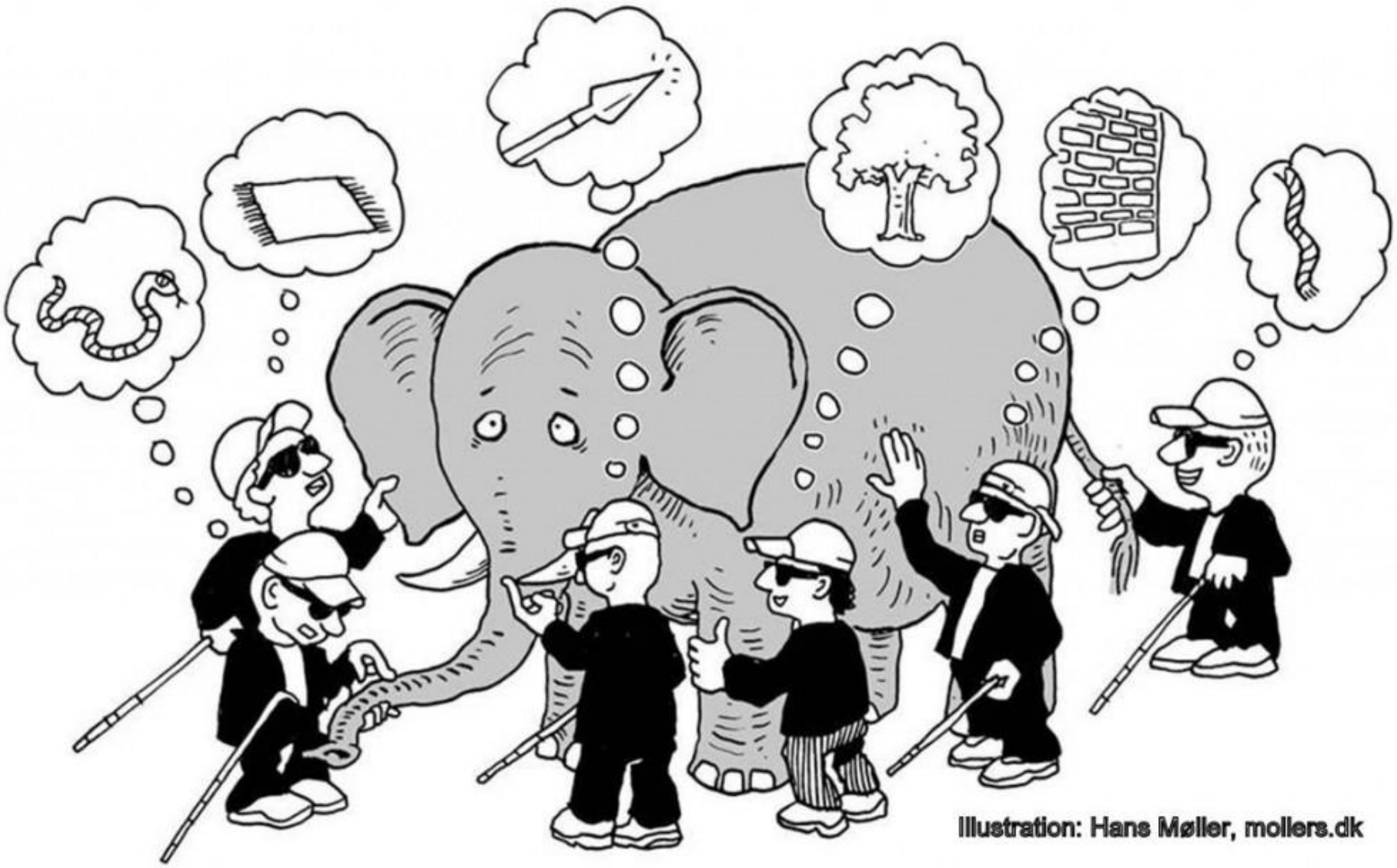

Who needs managers?
Technical skill ≠ project success

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Branding

Market segmentation

Culture building

Compliance

Strategic planning

User research

Human resources

Stakeholder management

Fundraising

Image: minecraft

Who needs managers?
Making software is risky and expensive

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Image: envato

Who needs managers?
To build world-class products

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Image: logos from respective owners (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, Google)

What's a Product?

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"A good or service that most closely meets the requirements of a particular market and yields enough profit to justify its continued existence"

1. Produced
2. Distributed
3. Designed to be used / consumed
4. It's not (primarily) for you
5. Probably for many people

Image: materialhandlinghub.com

What's a product?
Fred Brooks – 1975

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"*Works for me*"

Program	Programming system (interfaces, system integration
Programming product (Generalisation, testing, documentation, maintenance)	Programming system product

"*Works for everyone*"

Ref: 'The mythical man month' 1975 by Fred Brooks

Making a great product is hard

Image: Joseph Castells, Unsplash

What's a Product Manager?
Intersection of responsibilities

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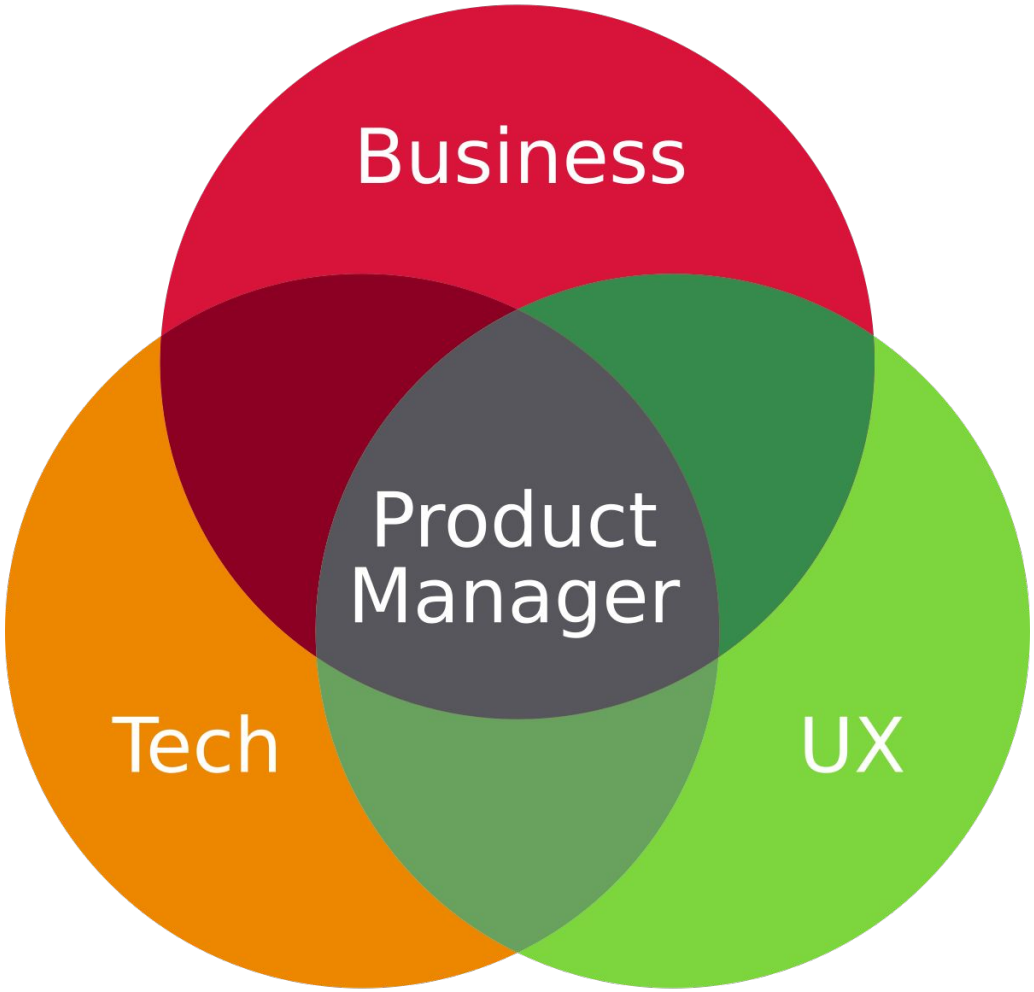

Culture clash: Seeking value in technotopia

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Image: cartoonstock

What's a Product Manager?
Some key activities

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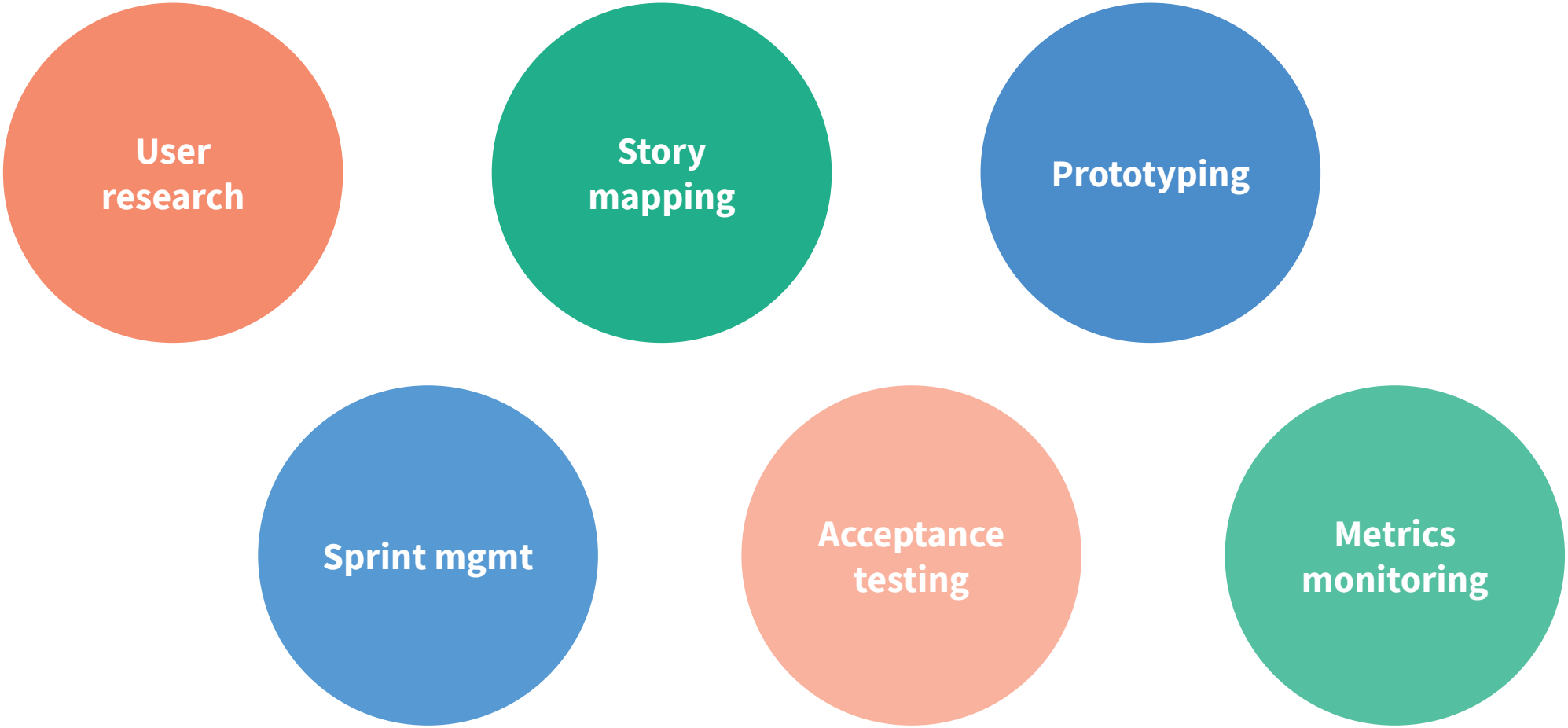

Open Source governance: a continuum

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Company **Hybrid** **Community**

Image: Logos and associated trademarks belong to their respective owners (Android, Docker, Odoo, Wordpress, Ubuntu, phpList, Debian, Gnome, LibreOffice

OS PM challenges
More stakeholders - fewer options

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- OS community
  - Users
  - Packagers
  - Documentors
  - Translators
  - Developers
  - Governance
- Business community
  - Independent service providers
  - Downstream integrators
  - Downstream forks

Image: Openlabs OSCAL, Salesforce

OS PM challenges
More transparency - less control

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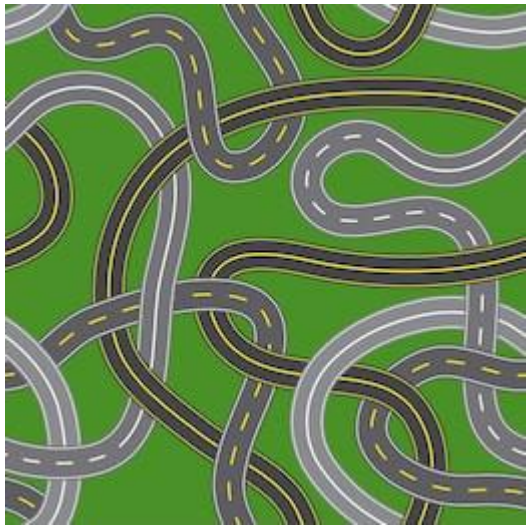

- Prioritisation
  - Formal vs informal
- Authority & expectations
  - Governance
- Multi-dimensional quality
  - Public criticism

- Security
  - reduced control
  - imperative priority
- Leadership discipline

Image: Alamy, Spongebob / Nikelodeon

OS PM challenges
Less data - harder decisions

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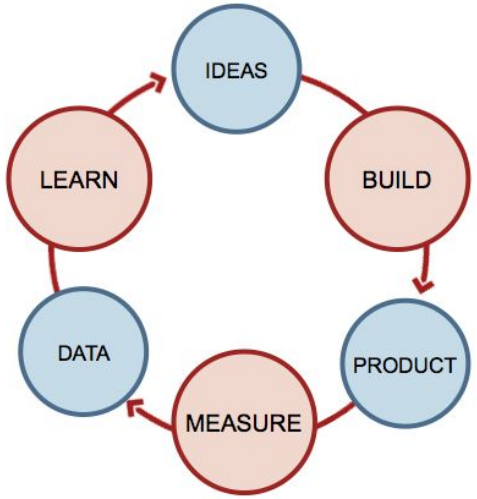

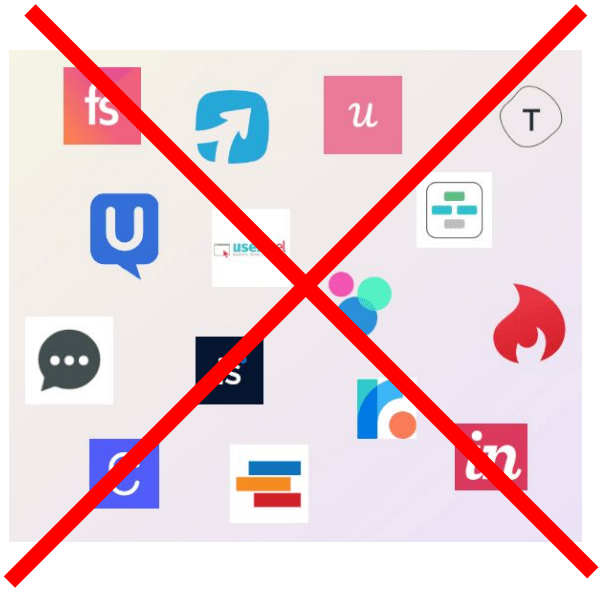

- Fewer feedback loops
  - 👎 Validated learning
- Privacy is presumed
  - Apparatus is public
  - Double standards
- Measurements removed

- Little UX insight
- Hard to identify value
  - ∴ Hard to capture it
- Very few OS tools

Image: mindtools.com, userpilot.com

OS PM challenges
Culture clash

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- Technical leadership
- Focus on output
- Downstream competition
- Focus & coherence is hard

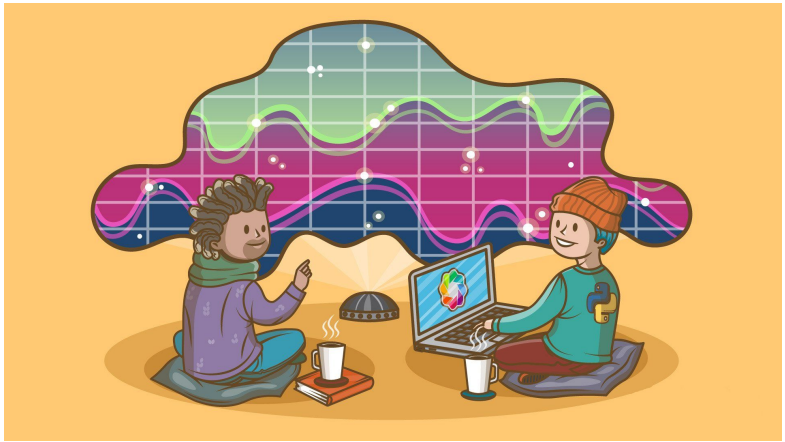

Image: GNU Savannah, crazy-frankenstein.com, realpython.com

The upside

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- Dogfooding
- Large & diverse userbase
- Eager testers
  - High quality reports
  - Patches if you're lucky
- Frequent (self-selected) feedback
  - Cutting edge ideas
  - Diverse sources

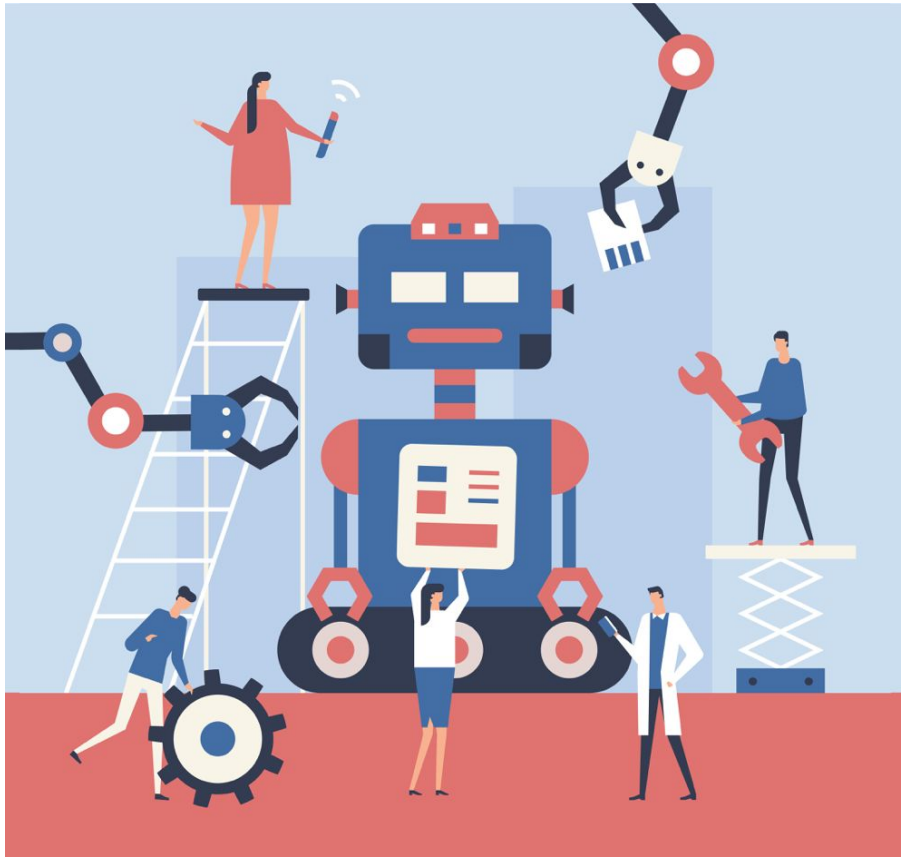

Image: Sitepoint.com

The upside

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- Forces best practice
  - Automate everything
  - Document everything
  - Data mgmt + privacy
  - Fair governance (maybe)
- Innovative (hidden) uses
- Self-service adaptation
- Forkability

Image: expatgourmand.blogspot.com

The upside
Those key activities

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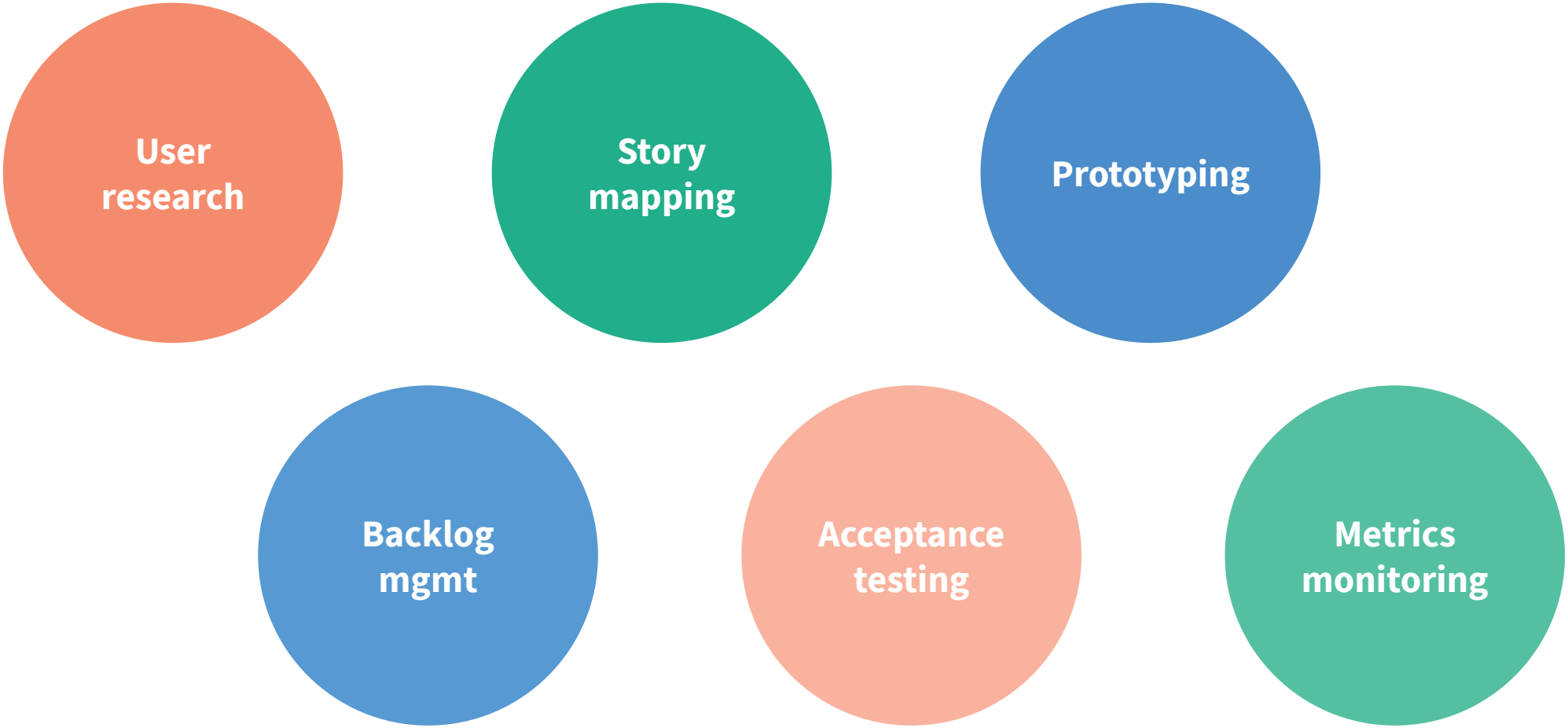

The upside
Good Open Source PM Tools

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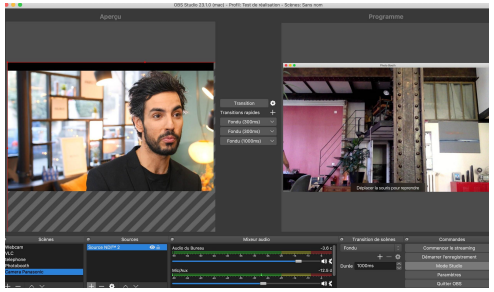
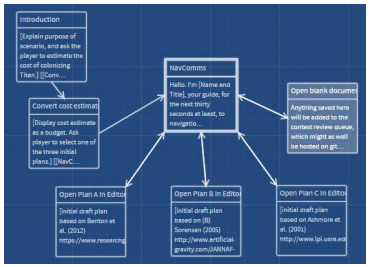


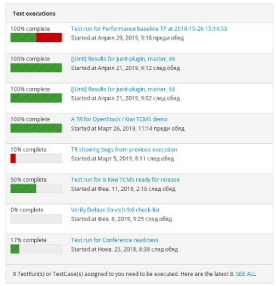
User research

- OBS Studio
- phpList



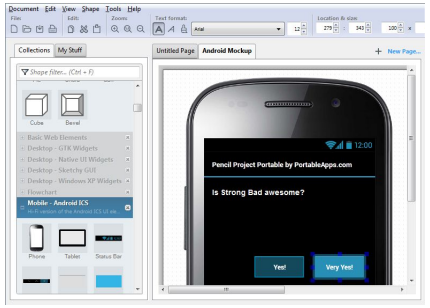
Story mapping

- Post-its 🙂
- Twinery



Acceptance testing

- Kiwi TCMS
- Phabricator
- (CI stacks)



Prototyping

- Pencil app
- Presentator
- Alva
- WIP: UX Box & Akira

Image: Obs Studio, Twinery, Kiwi TCMS, Pencil

The upside
Good Open Source PM Tools

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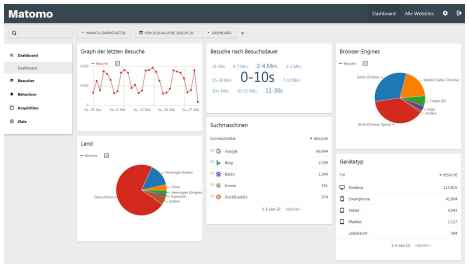

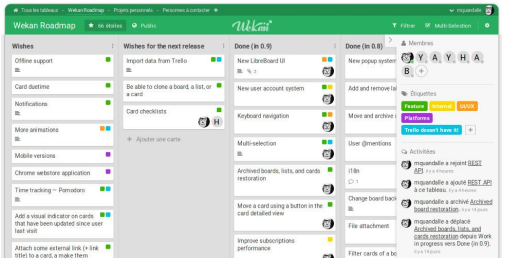

Metrics monitoring

- Matomo
- Open Web Analytics
- Countly
- Wasabi

Sprint management

- Taiga
- WeKan
- Open Project
- Tuleap

Image: Matomo, WeKan

The goal
Better OS through Product Management

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Image: publicdomainvectors.org, Open Source Consortium

The goal
Better outcomes - more value

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Image: cartoonstock.com

Thank you

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Further reading

- Book: Jeff Patton
- Training:
  - Scrum Product Owner
- Events:
  - ‘The Product’
  - Product Camp
  - Mind the Product
- Design community:
  - opensourcedesign.net