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# Avoiding the Sirens' Call of Complexity

Not Sinking Our Digital Experiences

PRESENTED BY: Erik Akers





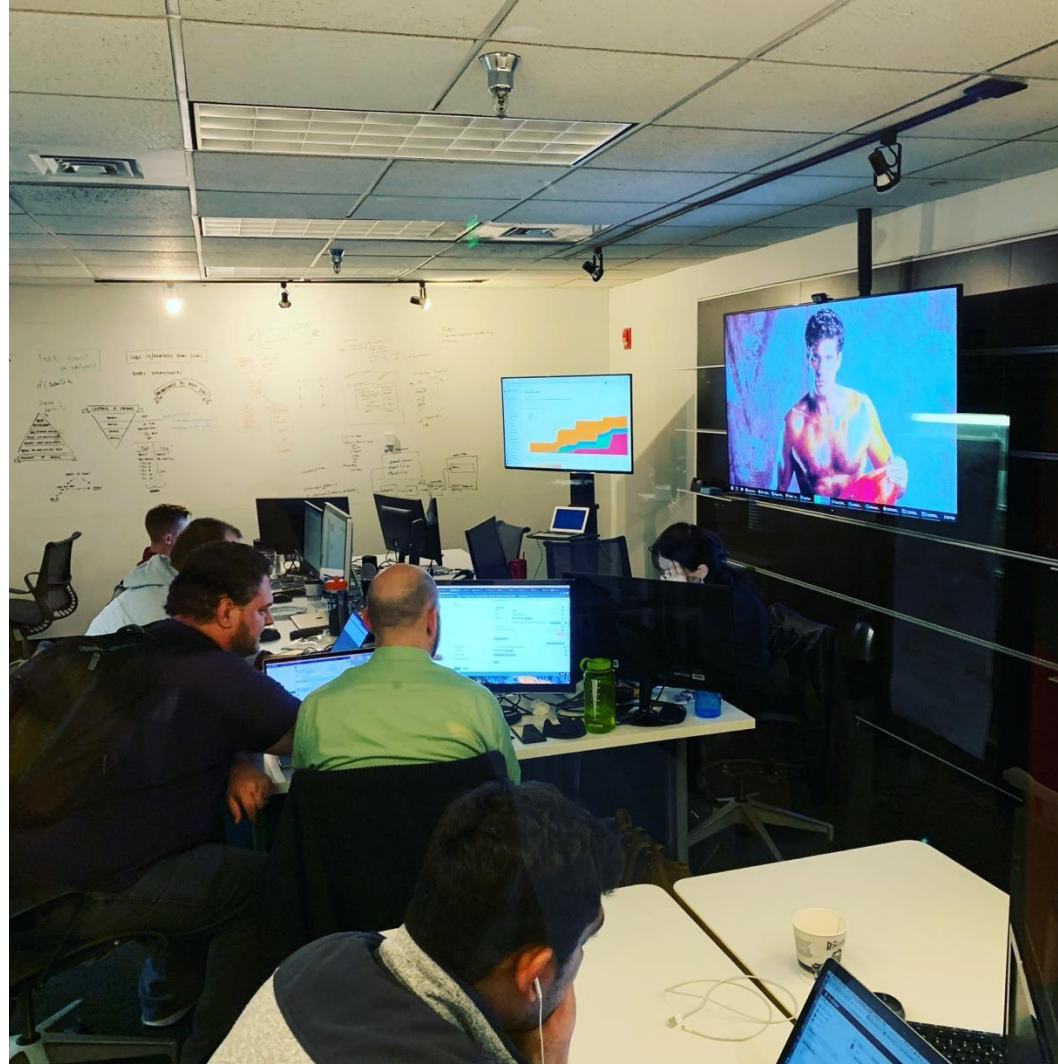


A Starting Point

# Sprint Zero

The mythical kick-off to any technology project—what are we doing and where are we going?





We want personalization...  
everywhere.

My “aha” moment.





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Marketing

Personalization

Developer Experience

Customization

Maintainability

Platforms

Cutting Edge

Ease of Updates

Development Processes



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Engineering



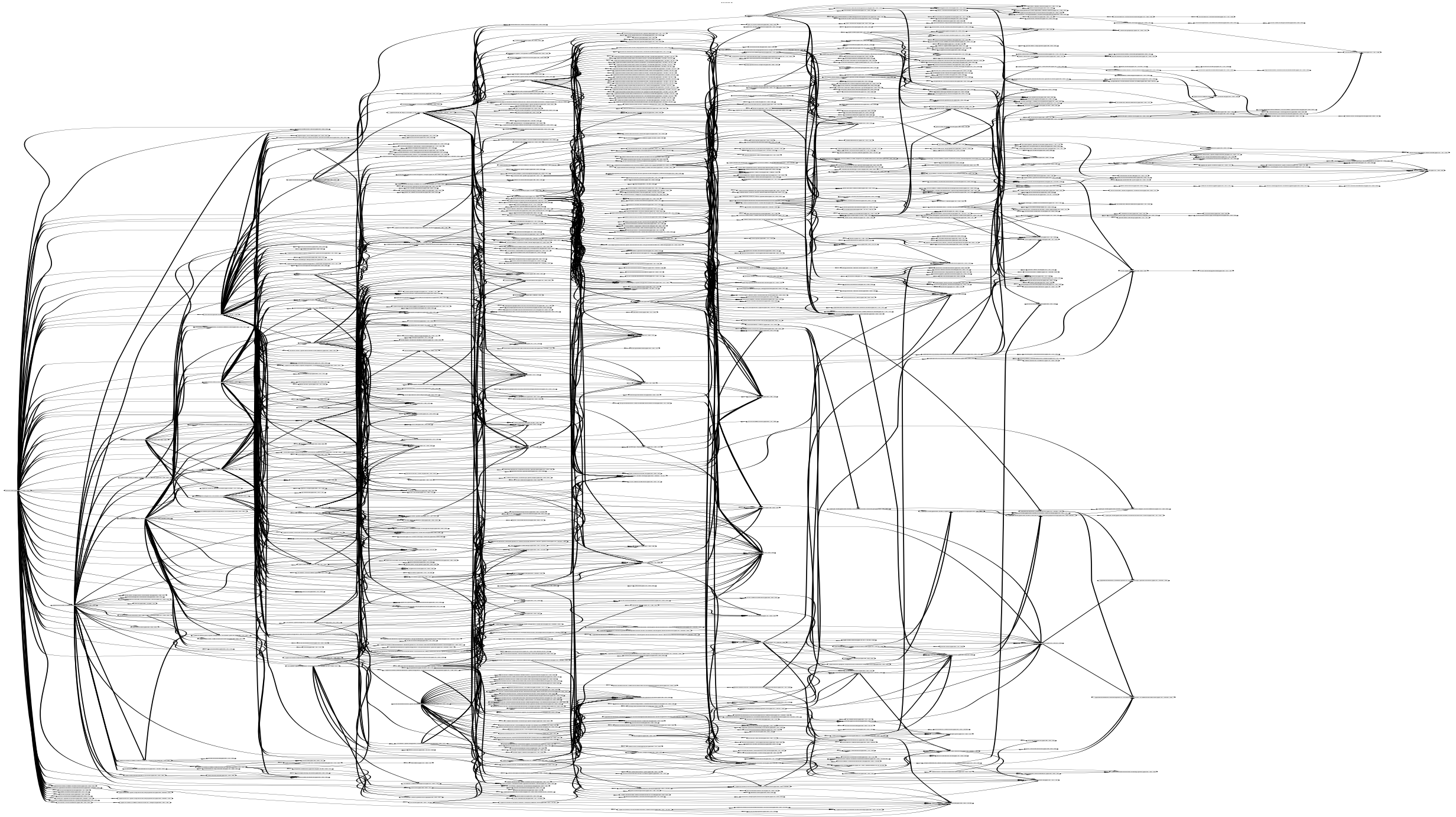
# So, who owns the experience?



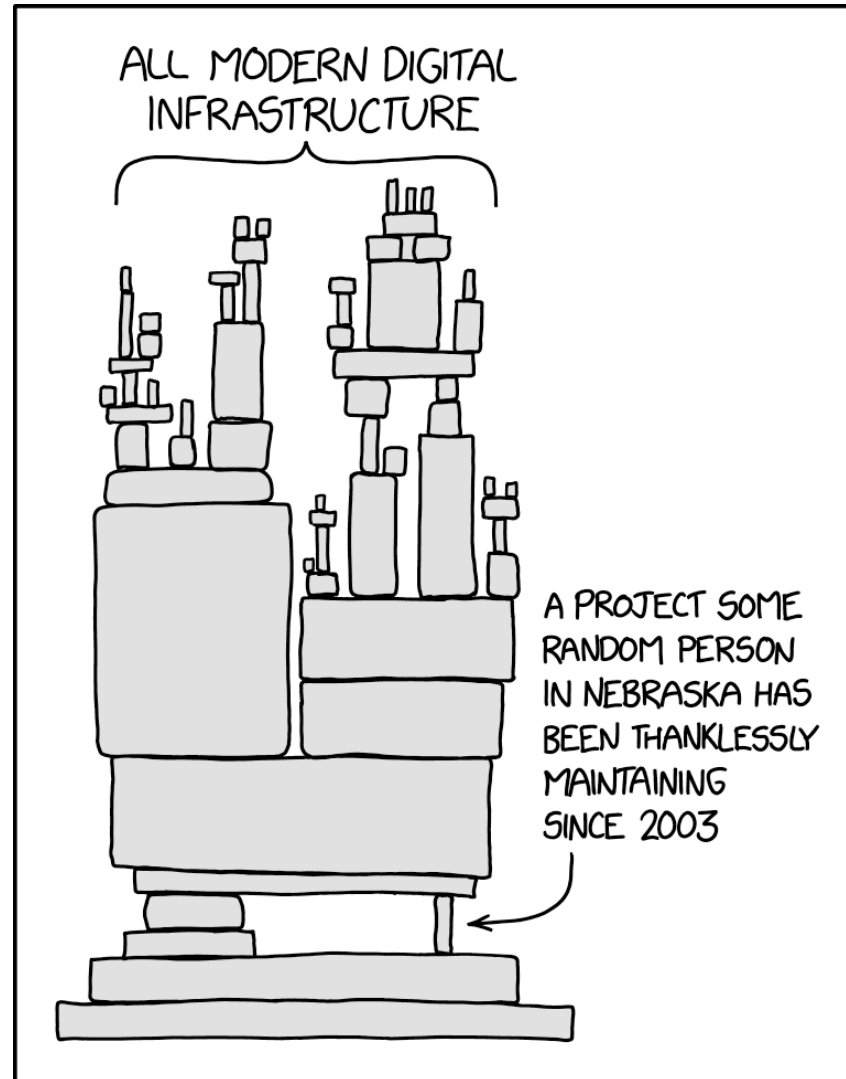




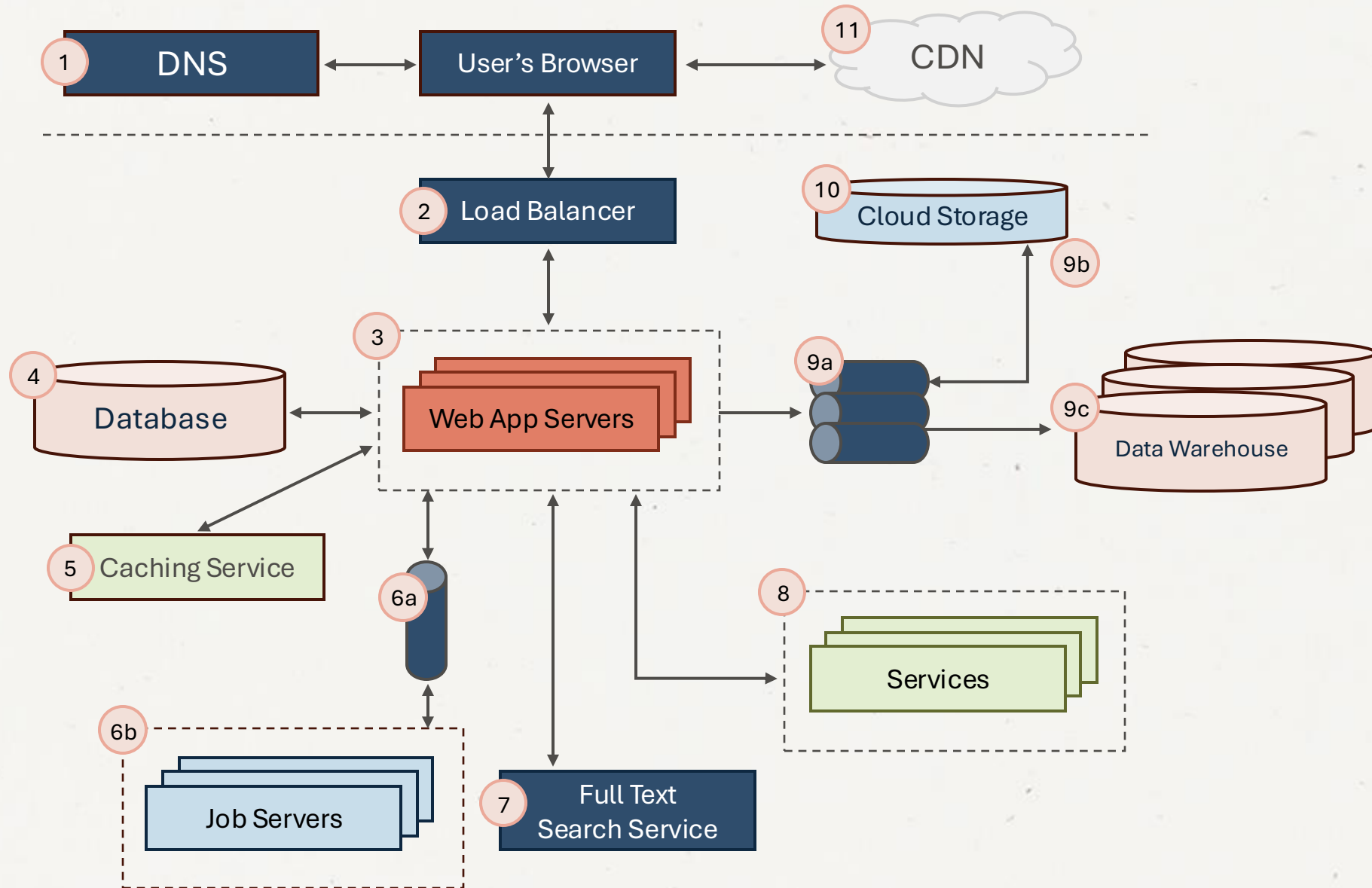










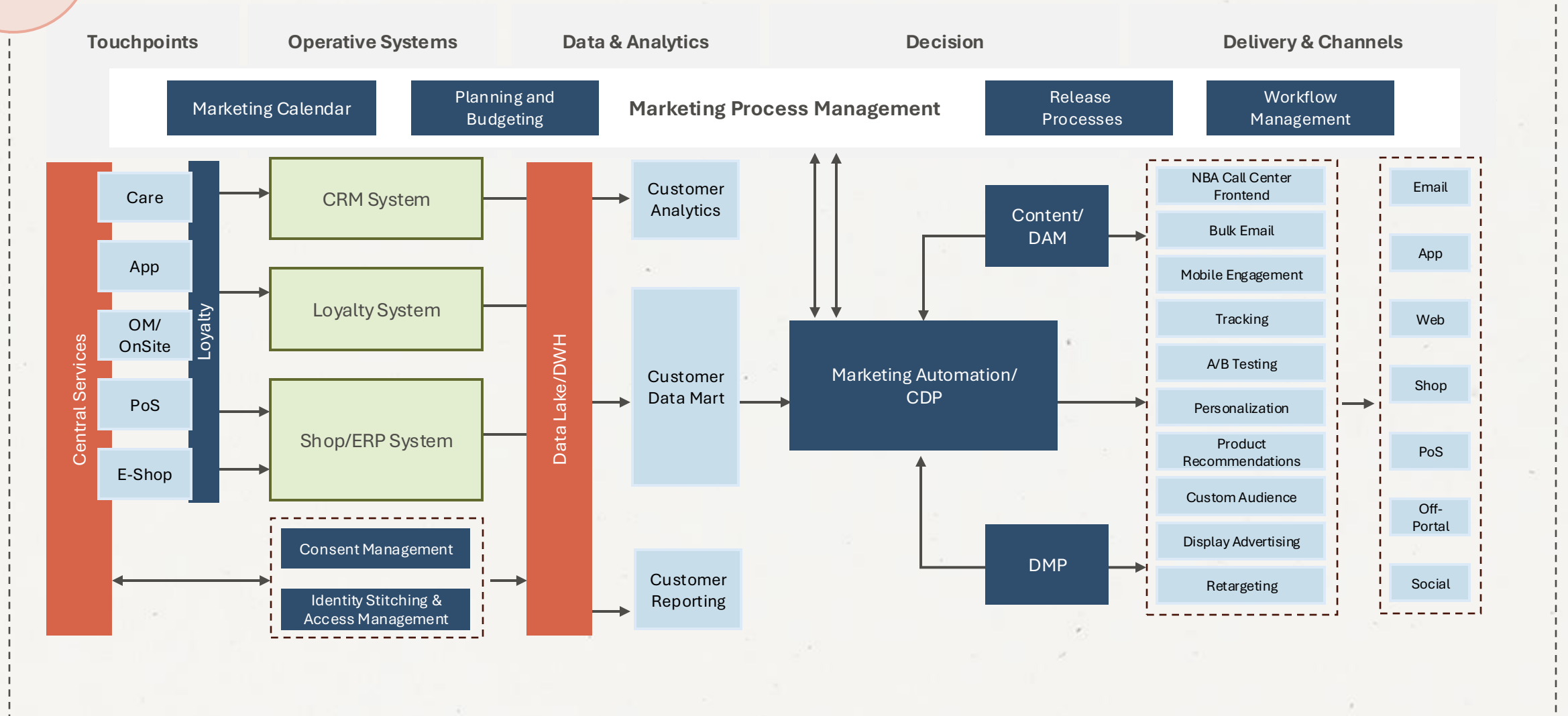




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Web App Servers







Complexity is a system  
composed of *entangled* or  
interconnected items.



complexity !== scale







"Don't give me simple solutions. I'm paying you big bucks. I want complicated solutions!"

CartoonStock.com





An aerial photograph of a forest fire. The image shows a complex pattern of dark, charred tree trunks and bright orange and yellow flames. Large plumes of white smoke rise from the fire, creating a stark contrast with the dark forest. The smoke is concentrated in the upper right and center of the image, while the flames are more visible in the lower left and center. The overall scene is one of intense heat and destruction.

It's Always Darkest Before the Dawn

# Is There a Best Way?



# That depends.



Is There a Best Way?

# Solutions in Search of a Problem

01

Custom solutions instead of using products or services

02

Overreliance on technology that does not solve the problem

03

Blog Post Architecture

04

Lack of internal skillsets





# Don't start optimizing for an anticipated problem.\*

\*Premature Optimization



“

It is tempting, if the only tool  
you have is a hammer, to treat  
everything as if it were a nail.

Maslow's Hammer







Revenue lost for every second of  
page load time above 10 seconds

**\$500,000**





Revenue lost for every second of  
page load time above 10 seconds

**\$16,000,000**



Additional infrastructure costs in  
addition to licensing fees per year

**\$8,000,000**



Dedicated resources required to  
maintain a custom-built solution  
while the application is used

12





A dramatic photograph of a person standing on a dark, jagged rock formation. A massive wave is crashing against the rocks, sending a huge spray of white water high into the air. The ocean is dark and turbulent, with white foam from the waves. The sky is a heavy, dark grey, suggesting an approaching storm. The overall mood is one of power, danger, and isolation.

Avoiding the Shipwreck

# Finding the Balance

This has been real depressing. Can we fix it?

# Where does complexity end up happening?









Unfortunately senior management decided to get involved.



“

A complex system designed  
from scratch never works and  
cannot be made to work.

Gall's Law



“

Our business is too unique for  
out-of-the-box or off-the-shelf  
solutions, so...





- Sell products or services
- Win new customers
- Drive engagement to new products or services
- Increase digital experiences conversions
- Tailor personalization messaging to clients



# The 20/80 Rule



“

We are great at beverages, but  
terrible at bottling.

James Quincey, Chairman and CEO Coca Cola





1. Know what you are great at, and what you're not.
2. Use all the tools you have available.
3. Lead with the problem, not the solution.
4. Start with simplicity.
5. Align across departments.



# We did.



# One Last Thing



THE ASSEMBLY 2025

A ONE NORTH EVENT



“

Everything should be made  
as simple as possible,  
but not simpler.

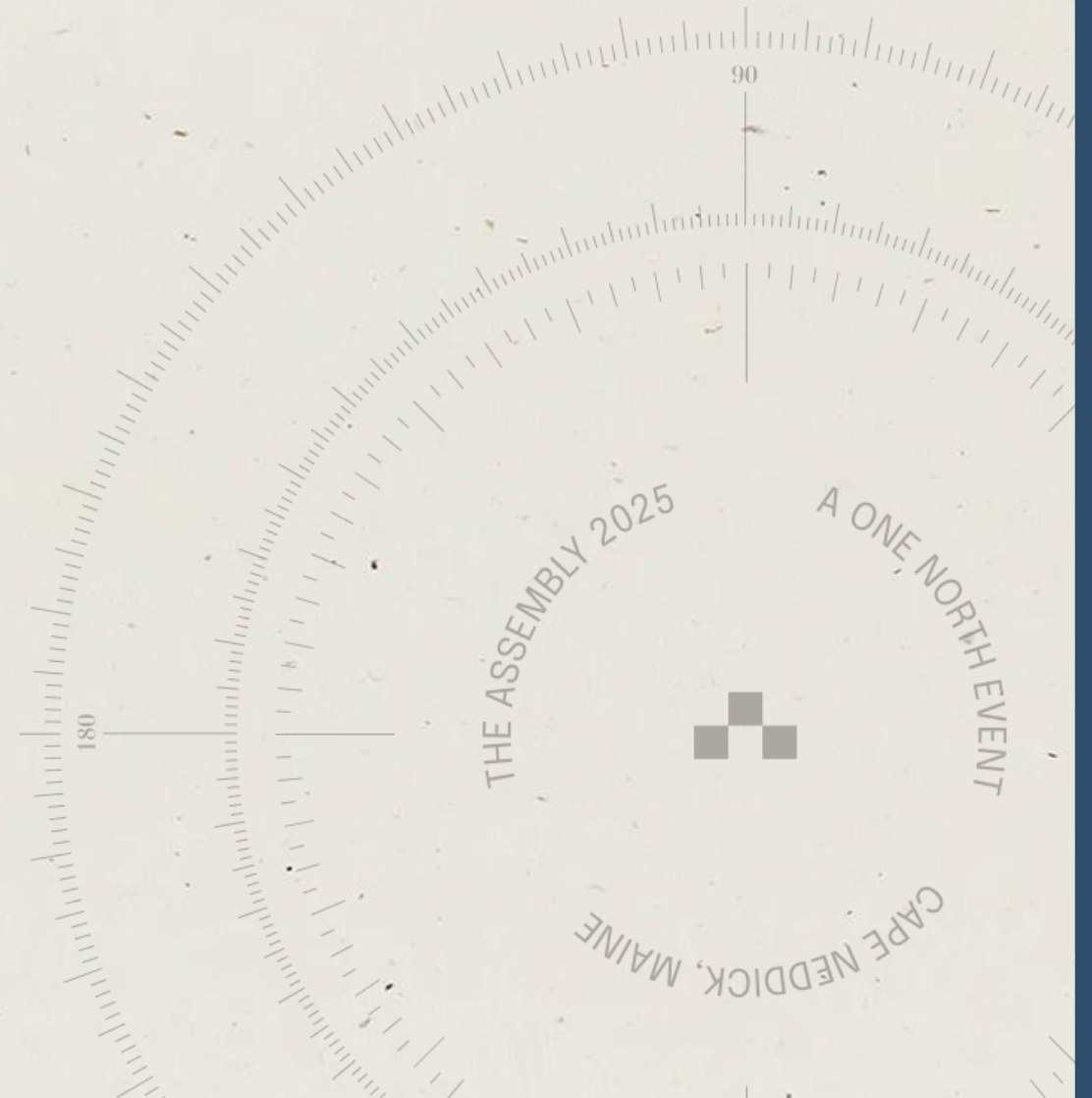
Albert Einstein



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# Thank You!

As we set sail on this journey, our crew is ready to explore uncharted territories, weather any storm, and steer toward new horizons. With a clear course plotted, we'll navigate through opportunities, tackle challenges head-on, and dock at our destination with confidence and success.



# On Deck

SET SAIL WITH: **Jeanne Peterson**

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COURSE: **Panel Discussion: Perspectives on  
Enduring Strategies for Innovation  
and Change**

