DRUPALCON

Portland

MAY 20-24 2013

Was It Something I Said?

Emma Jane Westby

Community Track

May 22, 2013

Building Bridges, Connecting Communities

Wednesday, 22 May, 13

Session Description:
There is a lot happening in the Drupal community. It's easy to get overwhelmed. As a community we've seen flame-outs and rage-quits. And yet, overall, we have a very healthy community which supports its fellow participants. Most of our participation happens in a text-based environment: in IRC, or in the drupal.org issue queue. It's difficult to read the intention behind words, but very easy to misinterpret what someone is saying.

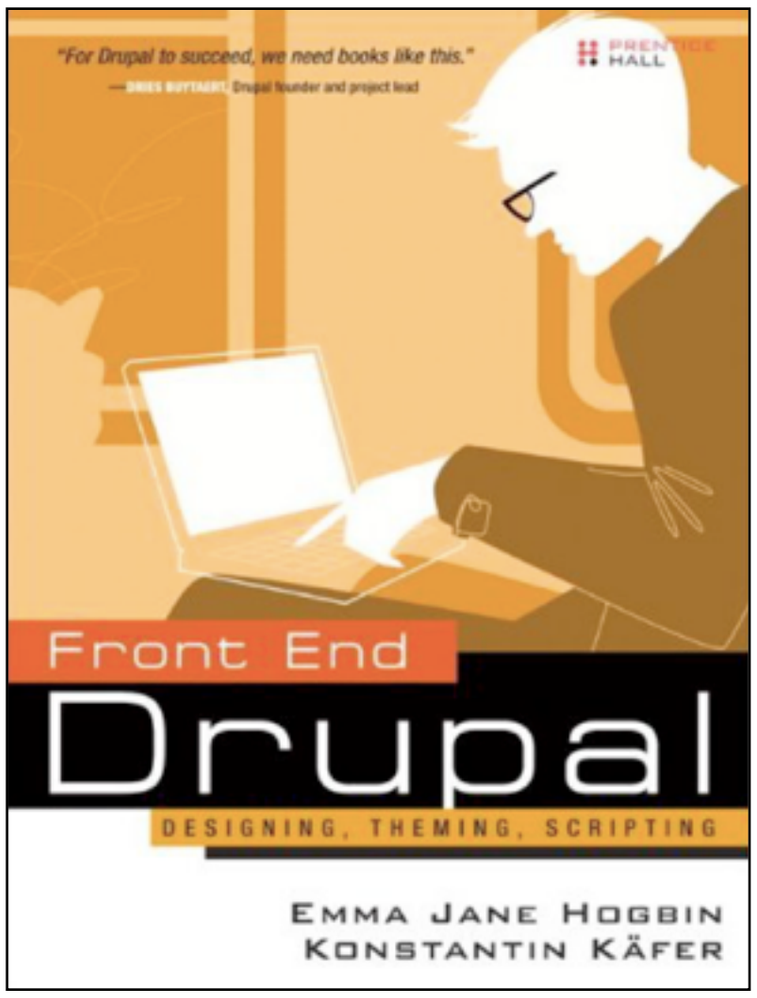
In this session we'll explore how to give, and receive, useful critiques of our work. We'll talk about the different kinds of critiques that are necessary as an idea develops. The emphasis will be on reviewing subjective work, not the easy stuff like white space at the end of a line.

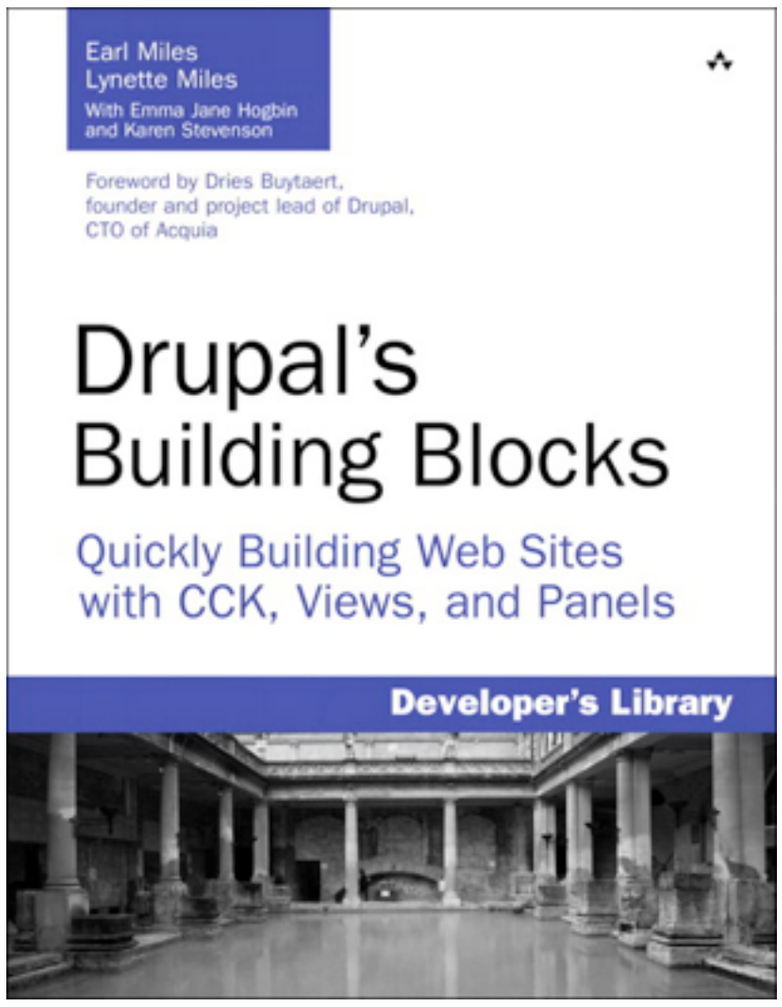
Attendees will come out of this session with tips on:
- a framework for giving useful, and actionable criticism
- critiques of critiques, examples from our own issue queue of what's useful, and what's harmful
- making your reviews easy to implement (making your time investment worth while)
- writing useful reviews outside of your area of competence (i.e. how to review design when you're not a designer; and how to review code when you're not a coder)
- creating a better "ask" that results in the kind of feedback you actually want to receive

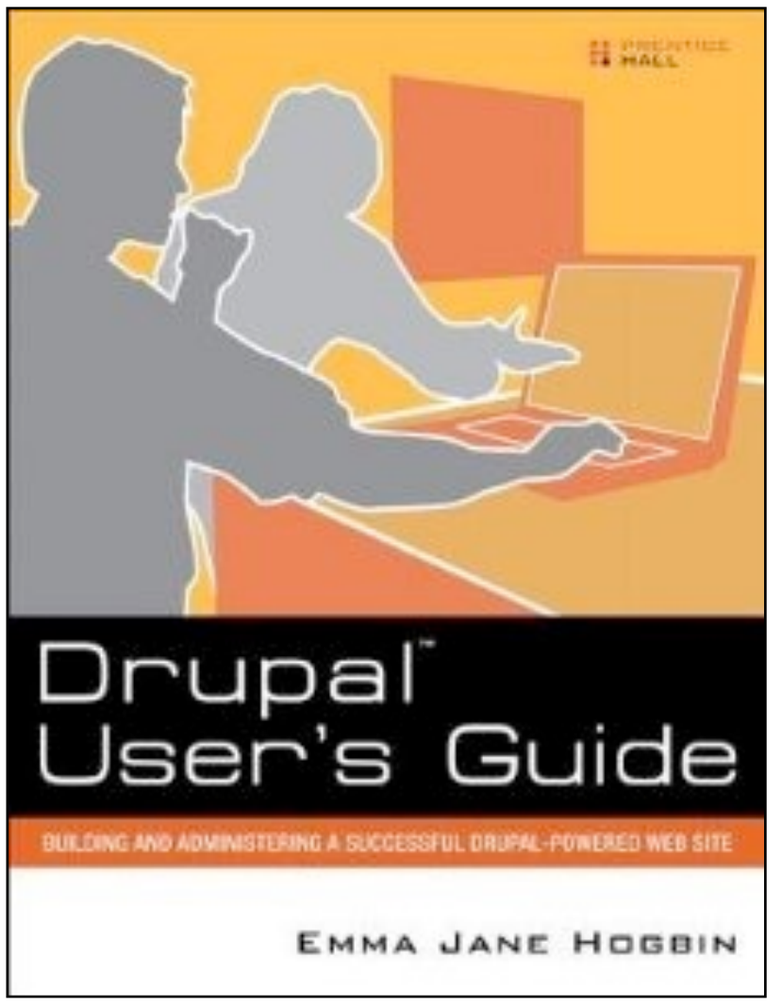
Getting better reviews makes us better at our job--and makes Drupal a better product. If you're ready to take your reviews to the next level...if you're ready to help others lift their work out of mediocrity with their head held high...if you're ready to take Drupal to the next level, be sure to attend this session with your friends *and* your nemesis.

Let's Talk!

@emmajanehw
#crit #drupalcon







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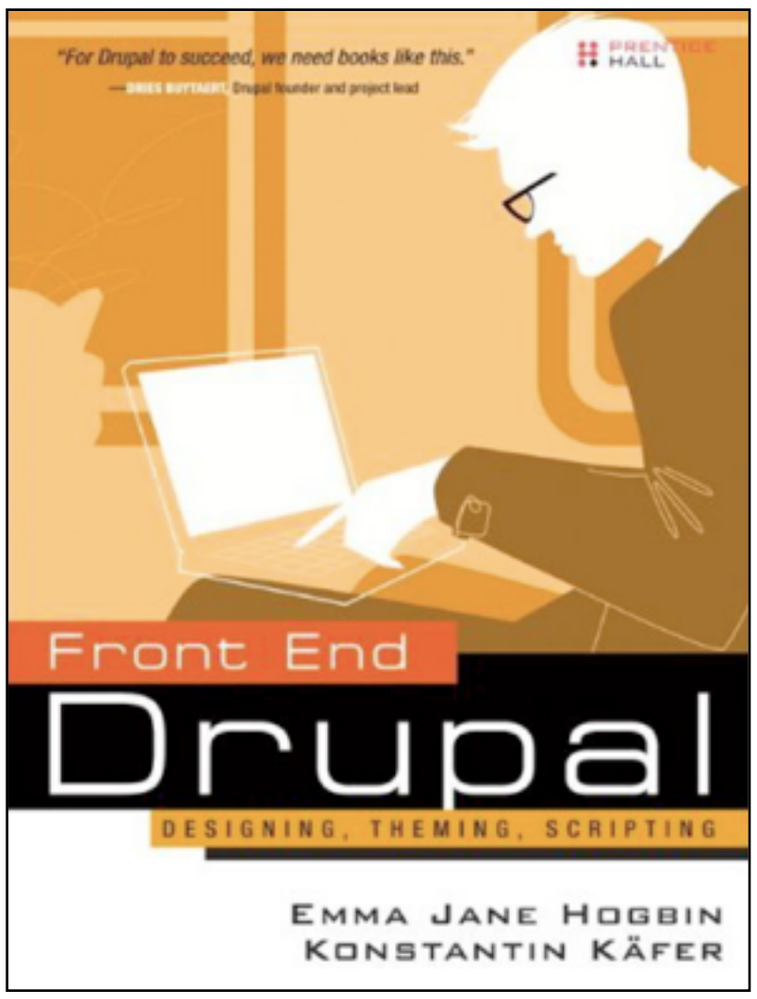
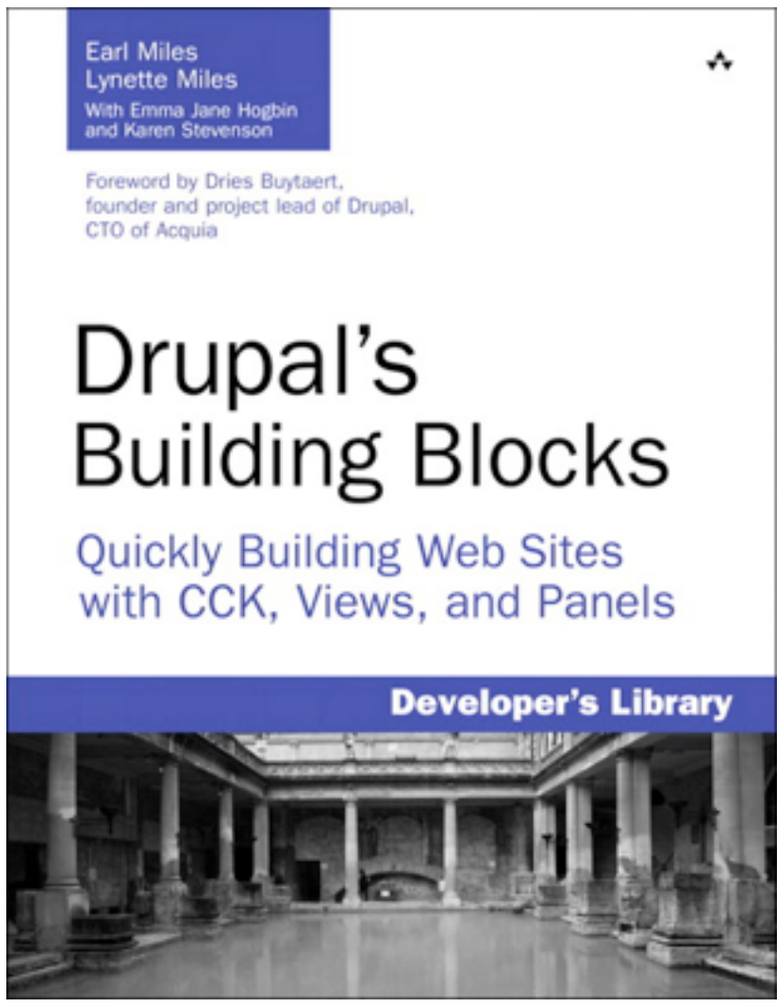
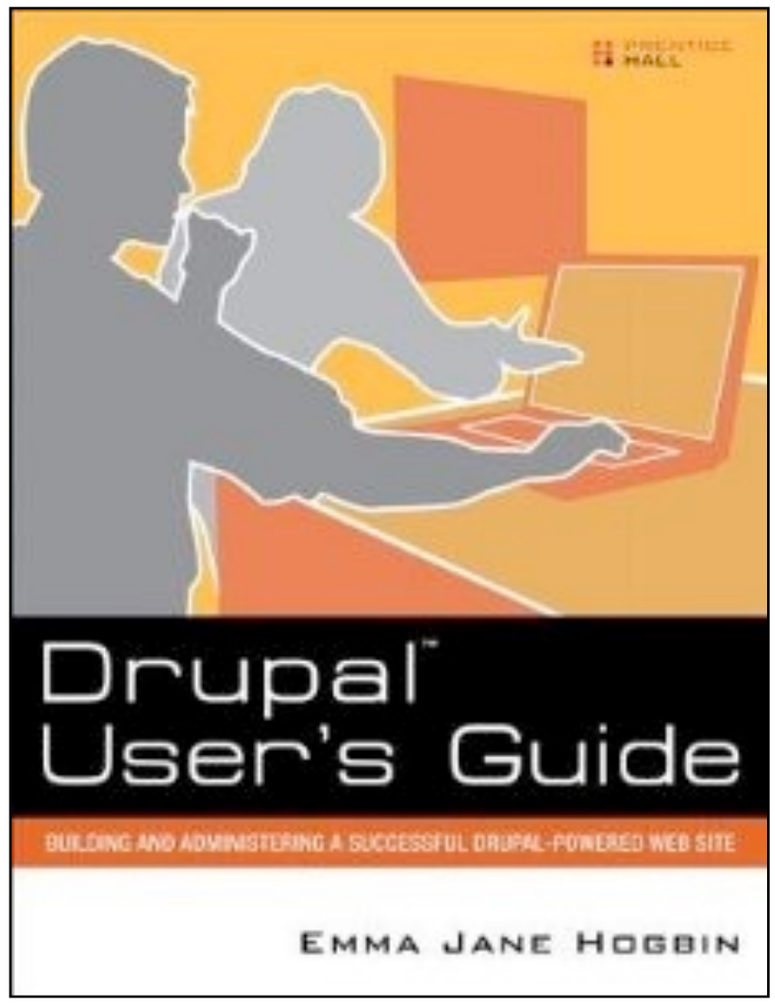
drupalize.me







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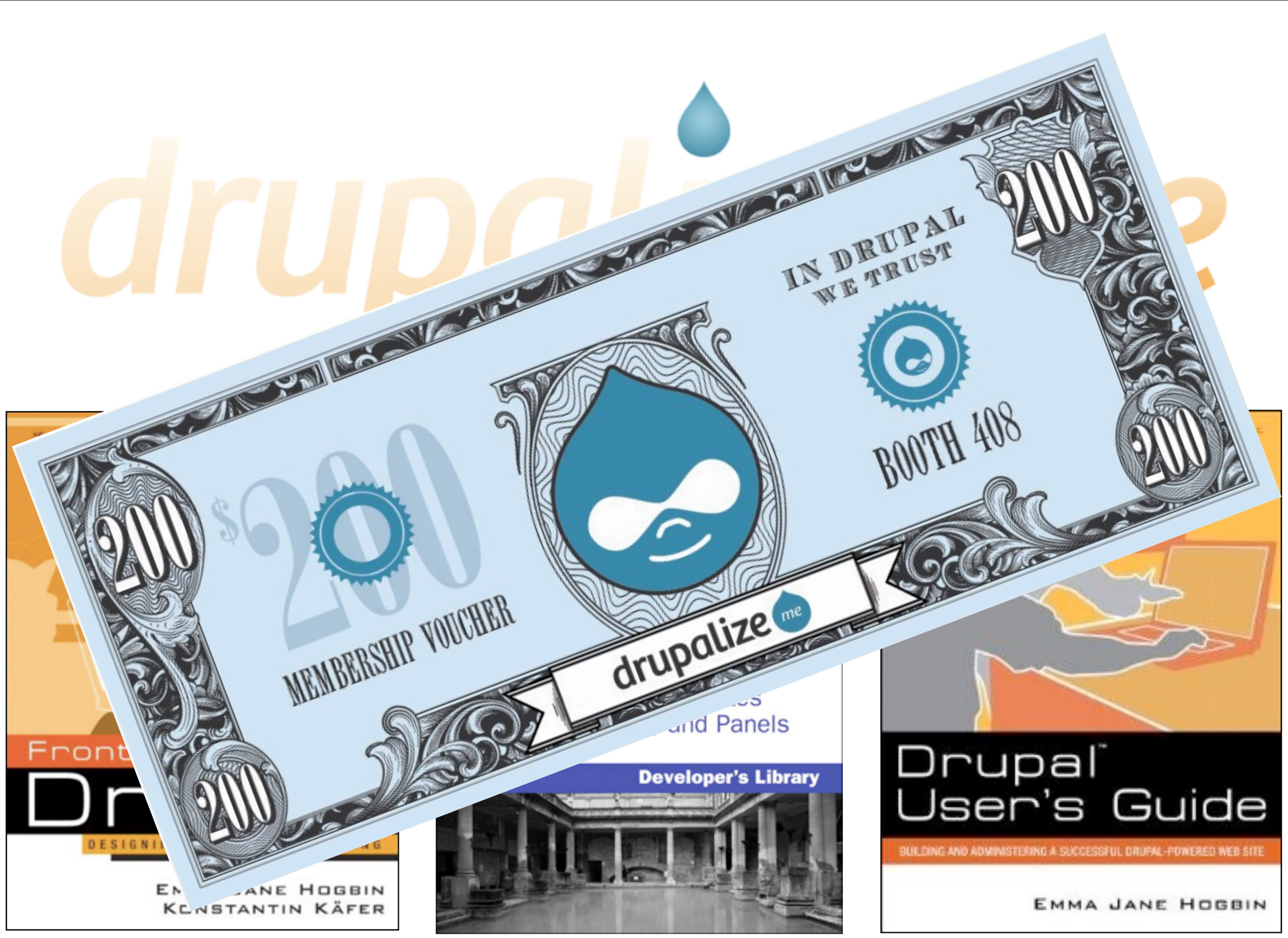

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Growing Up Hogbin

Now ... I'm going to break every rule in the book about presentations and start with a story about myself. I'm the daughter of a hacker. But not a computer hacker: a craft hacker. This is a picture of my dad standing in front of a lathe he built. Yes, that's a tree trunk on the lathe. My dad revolutionized wood turning in the 1960s and 1970s.

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This was our living room growing up. The chairs and the table are solid wood and turned on a lathe. These chairs are now in the permanent collection at the **Yale University Art Gallery** and **Minneapolis Institute of Art**. Growing up, the design process--and especially the design REVIEW process--was a big part of my life. And today, as many of you know, I will give honest, thoughtful feedback when asked.

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These are a few of the pieces my father and I have collaborated on. Growing up, I learned at that good feedback wasn't about saying "Oh that's nice." In fact I learned at a pretty young age that there were **different kinds of feedback**. When I wanted positive **affirmation**, I'd ask my mum what she thought; but when I wanted a review of my work, I'd ask my dad for a **critique.** Through his feedback, my dad taught me how to give feedback as well.

Left: hand bound books (covers by Stephen). more photos at www.stephenhogbin.com
Right: Pink Cymbella (electron microscope photography by Emma)

The **crit** is an exercise in critical thinking.

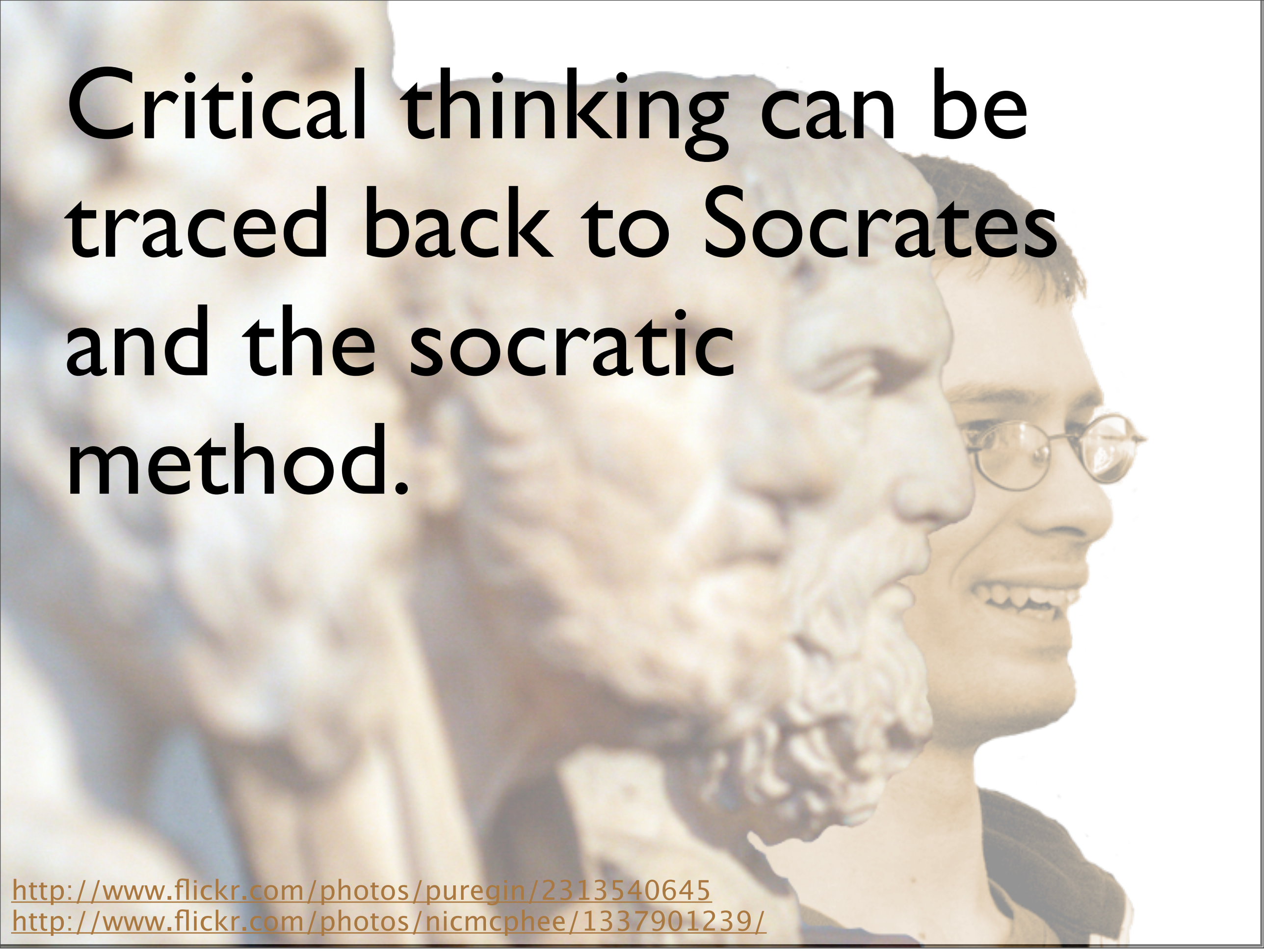
So **what is a critique**? “Crits”, as they’re known in design school, are group reviews of a work-in-progress. The critique helps students to separate themselves from their work and trains them in the important skill of explaining the reasons behind their solutions. The critique is a basic exercise in critical thinking.
When someone says “critique”, we sometimes hear “critical” and assume that it has to mean something negative. But that’s not the case!

http://www.aiga.org/guide-whatgoeson/
Another aspect of design education is the group critique. “Crits” take place at different stages in a project and provide an opportunity to step back and reflect on the project, to exchange critical or supporting ideas, to clarify intentions, and to develop the ability to discuss or even defend one's own work—a necessary skill that will later be important with clients. The critique helps students to deal openly with criticism while it trains them in the important verbal skills of explaining the reasons behind their solutions. They must go beyond “I like it” or “That stinks.” Critiques help students to internalize standards of excellence, to develop a shared vocabulary for discussion, to learn to incorporate useful suggestions from others, and to evaluate their own and others' performances. This process helps students to separate work from self and to acquire the maturity and perspective needed in order to benefit from intelligent criticism. The critique is a basic exercise in critical thinking.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is reflective reasoning about beliefs and actions. It is a way of deciding whether a claim is always true, sometimes true, partly true, or false.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_thinking

Critical thinking hasn't always been purely negative.

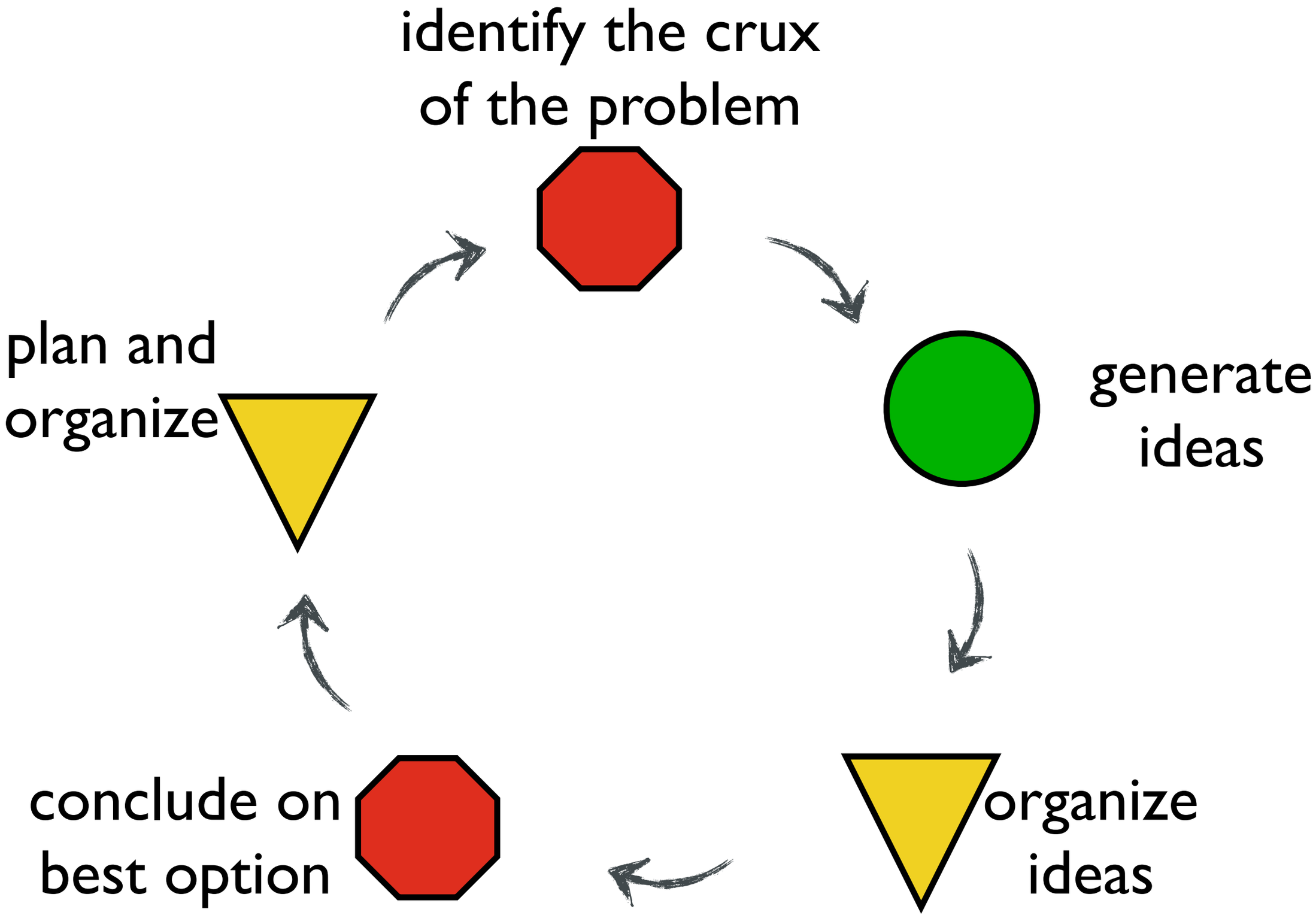


In fact critical thinking can be traced in Western thought to the Socratic method of Ancient Greece and, in the East, to the Buddhists (kalama sutta and Abhidharma).

eaton's photo: http://www.flickr.com/photos/puregin/2313540645
philosopher photo: http://www.flickr.com/photos/nicmcphee/1337901239/
Left to right: chrysippos, antisthenes, socrates, eaton

I grew up with design crits. I've had most of my life to practice giving and getting reviews. It's a skill and one that can be developed over time.

Drupal has grown immensely in the last couple of years. Its review framework is quite mature. Let's take a quick look at our review process.


identify the crux
of the problem
generate
ideas
organize
ideas
conclude on
best option
plan and
organize

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Drupal uses templates to structure the feedback process

Using the issue queue: http://drupal.org/node/317
Issue queue etiquette: http://drupal.org/node/1839650
Reporting problems: http://drupal.org/node/314185

Issue templates: http://lb.cm/tmplt-drupal

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Reporting problems: http://drupal.org/node/314185

Templates:
LaunchPad - http://lb.cm/tmplt-launchpad
Drupal - http://lb.cm/tmplt-drupal - Problem/Motivation; Proposed resolution; Remaining tasks
Symfony - http://lb.cm/tmplt-symfony

Core Gates

- Documentation
- Performance
- Accessibility
- Usability
- Testing

http://drupal.org/core-gates

Gates are essentially "checklists" that can be used to evaluate a patch's readiness, by both developers and patch reviewers/core committers.

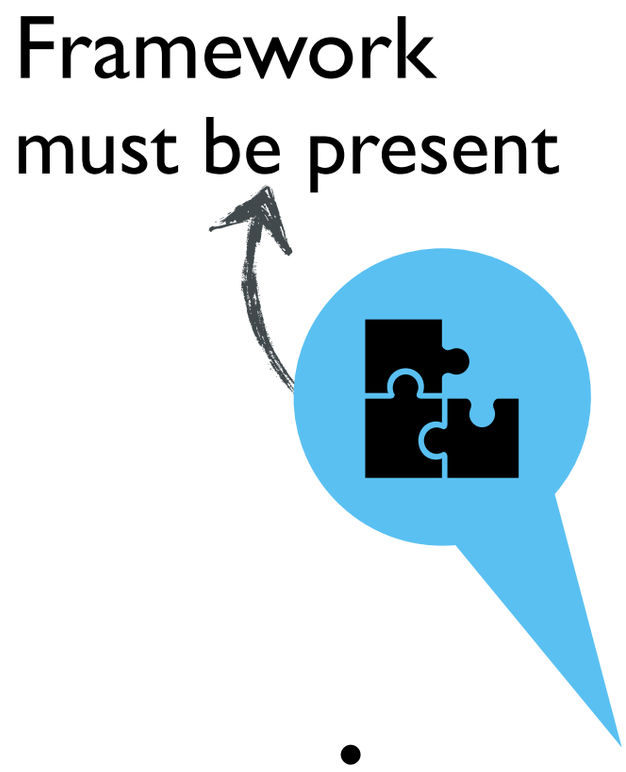
Let’s dive deeper...

Now let’s dive deeper into the process of giving and getting good reviews.

critique is a positive verb

We know that code reviews are a good thing. Reviewing code makes us better communicators and better coders. Our strong review process makes Drupal a stronger product. For the critique to be a POSITIVE experience though, three elements need to be in place.

1. There must be a **framework**
2. The **reviewer** must be objective
3. The **creator** must separate themselves from their work.



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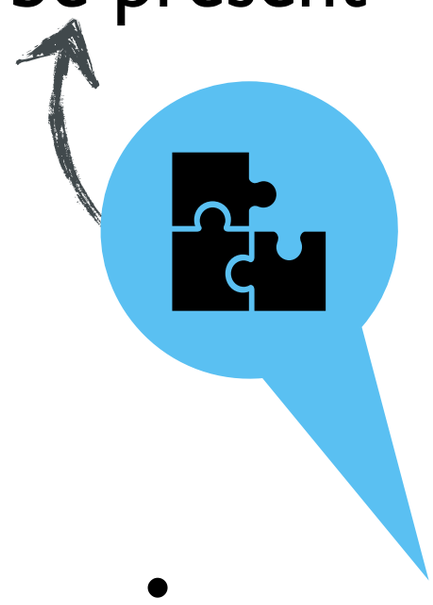
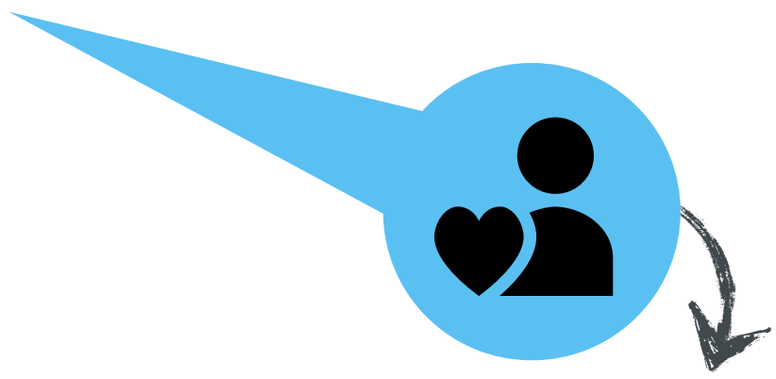
Framework
must be present



critique is a positive verb



Reviewer must
be objective

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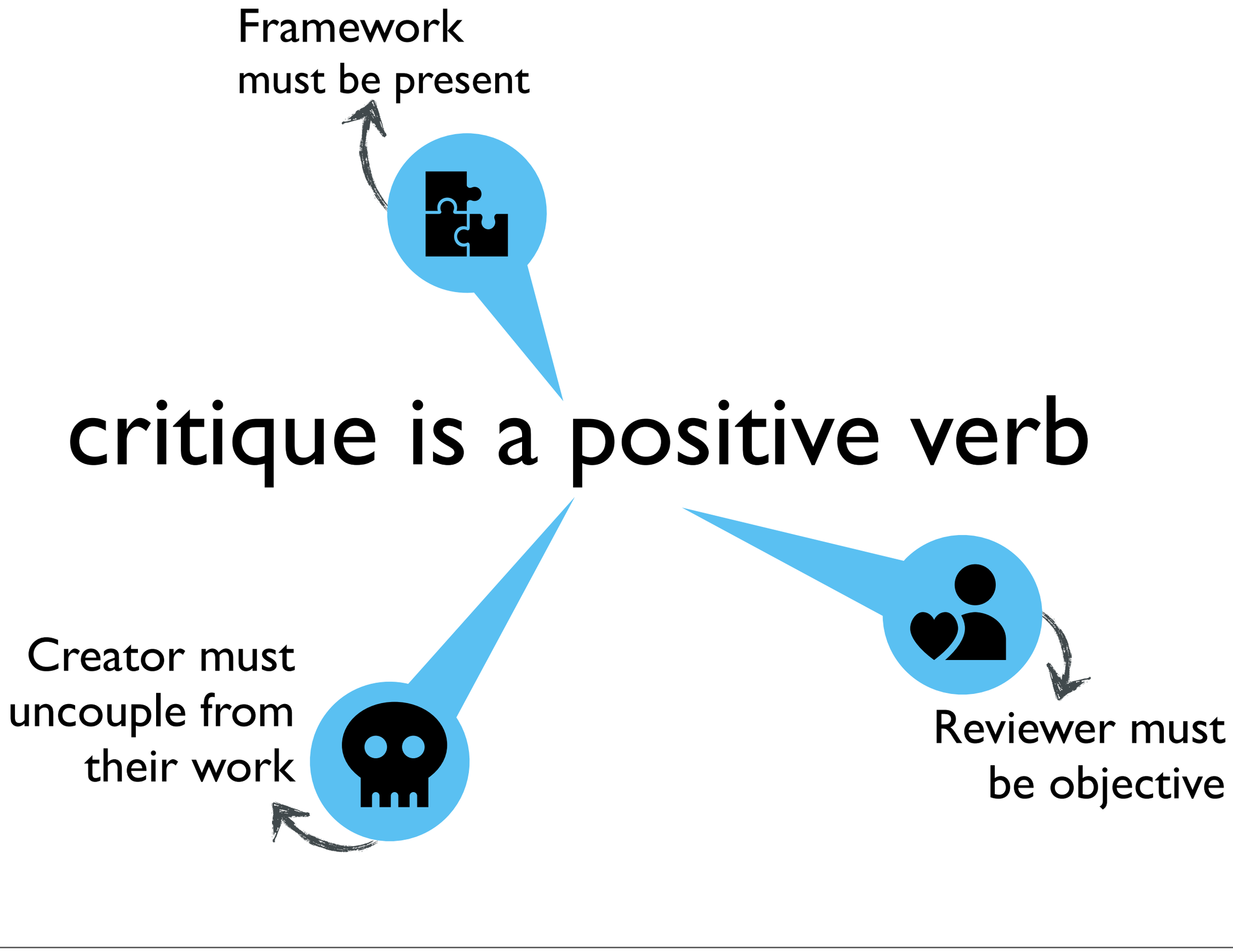

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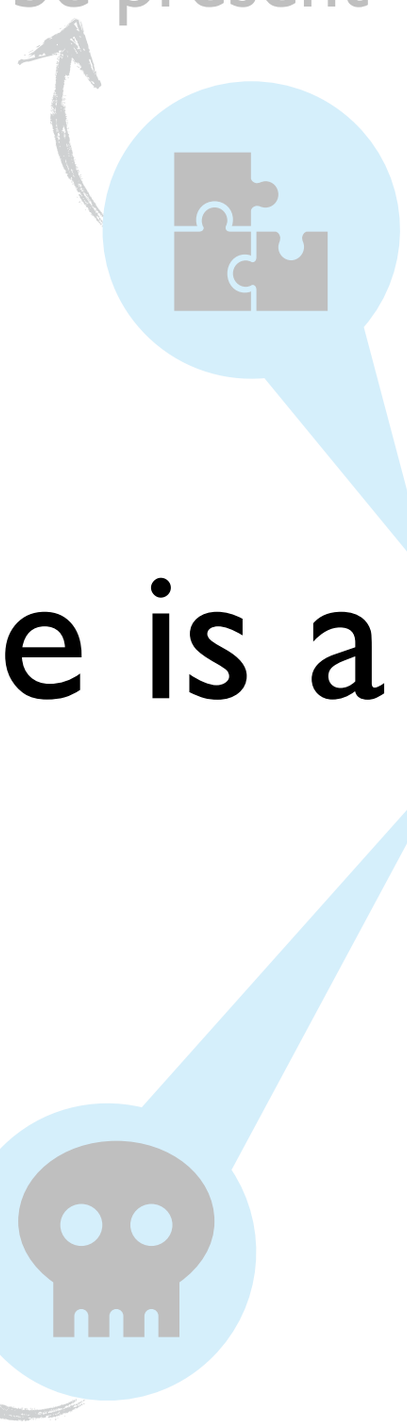
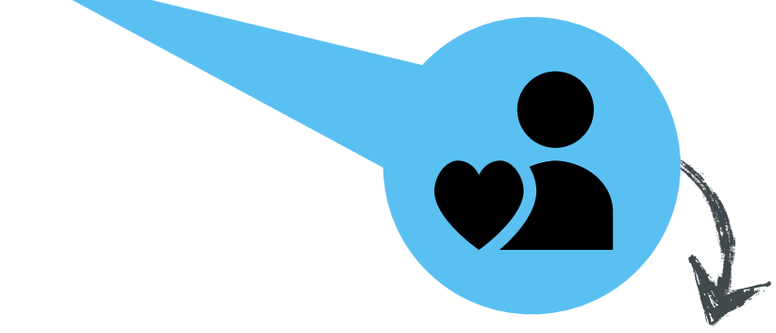


critique is a positive verb

Creator must
uncouple from
their work



Reviewer must
be objective

We will spend most of our time as reviewers, not creators. So let’s start here.

“in a culture of optimism good honest criticism seems to be dying out”

Tim Brown

Wednesday, 22 May, 13

http://designthinking.ideo.com/?p=18

The dilemma we face today is that in a culture of optimism good honest criticism seems to be dying out.

ericduran commented an hour ago

I was about to apply the patch but then after doing a review...

Caring (just enough) is hard

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Giving good feedback is hard. You need to be able to care just enough to take the time to give a review, but not care so much that you aren't able to give an objective review. It is exceptionally difficult to not let our biases get in the way.

Good Feedback

- Is limited to the scope of the work.
- Is actionable.
- Is specific.
- Is timely.
- Acknowledges the time spent by the coder.
- Is thankful the issue is getting attention.

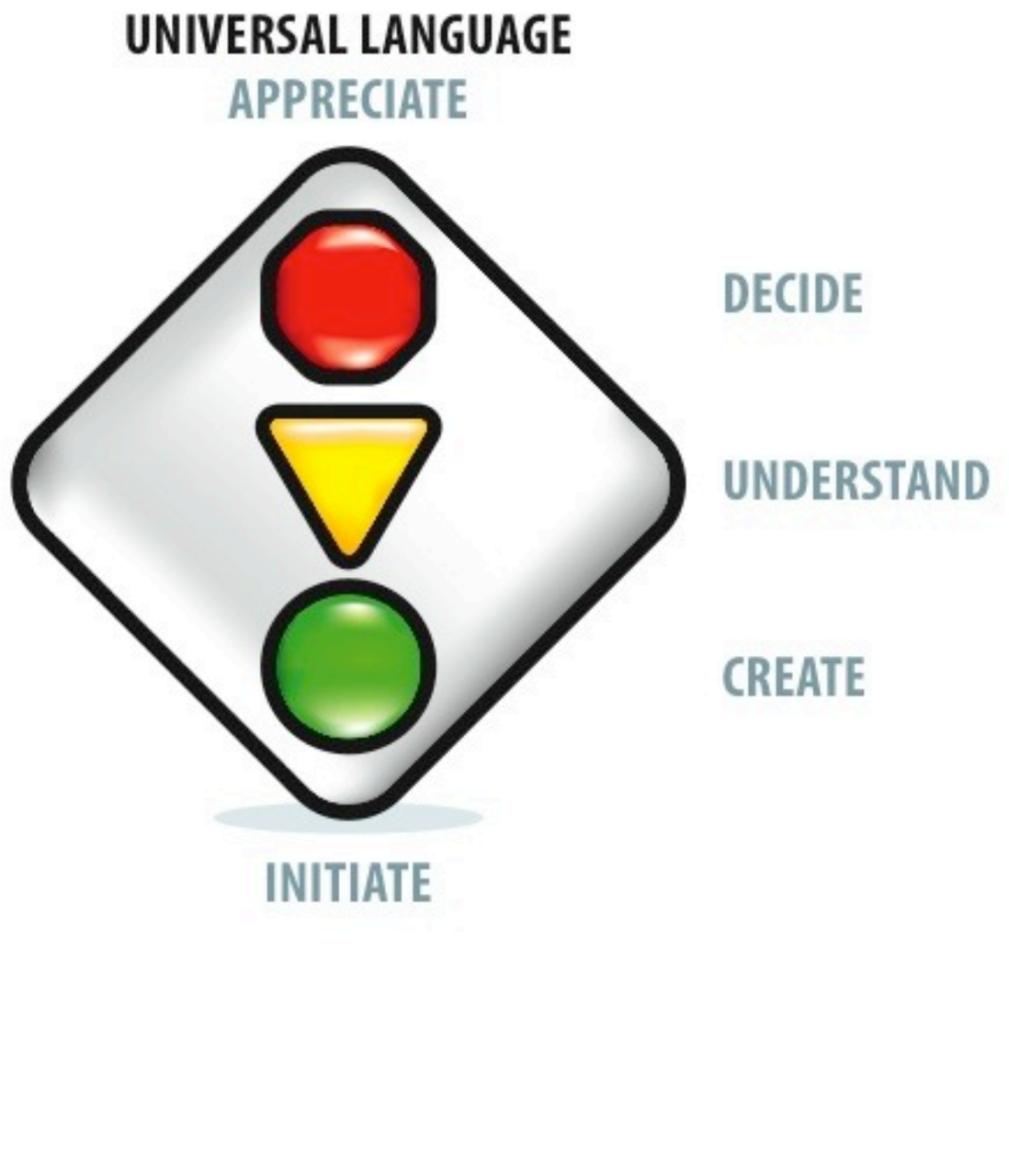
Bad Feedback

- Extends the scope (“while you’re there...”)
- Has unclear outcomes (“this is ugly”)
- Confuses personal preference with objective worth (“I prefer....”)
- Is outside of the issue scope (“you’re solving the wrong problem”)
- Prolongs discussion (“what if ...”)
- Lags (“if I want a review, I have to sleep”)

duh.

So why don’t we do it?

4Di



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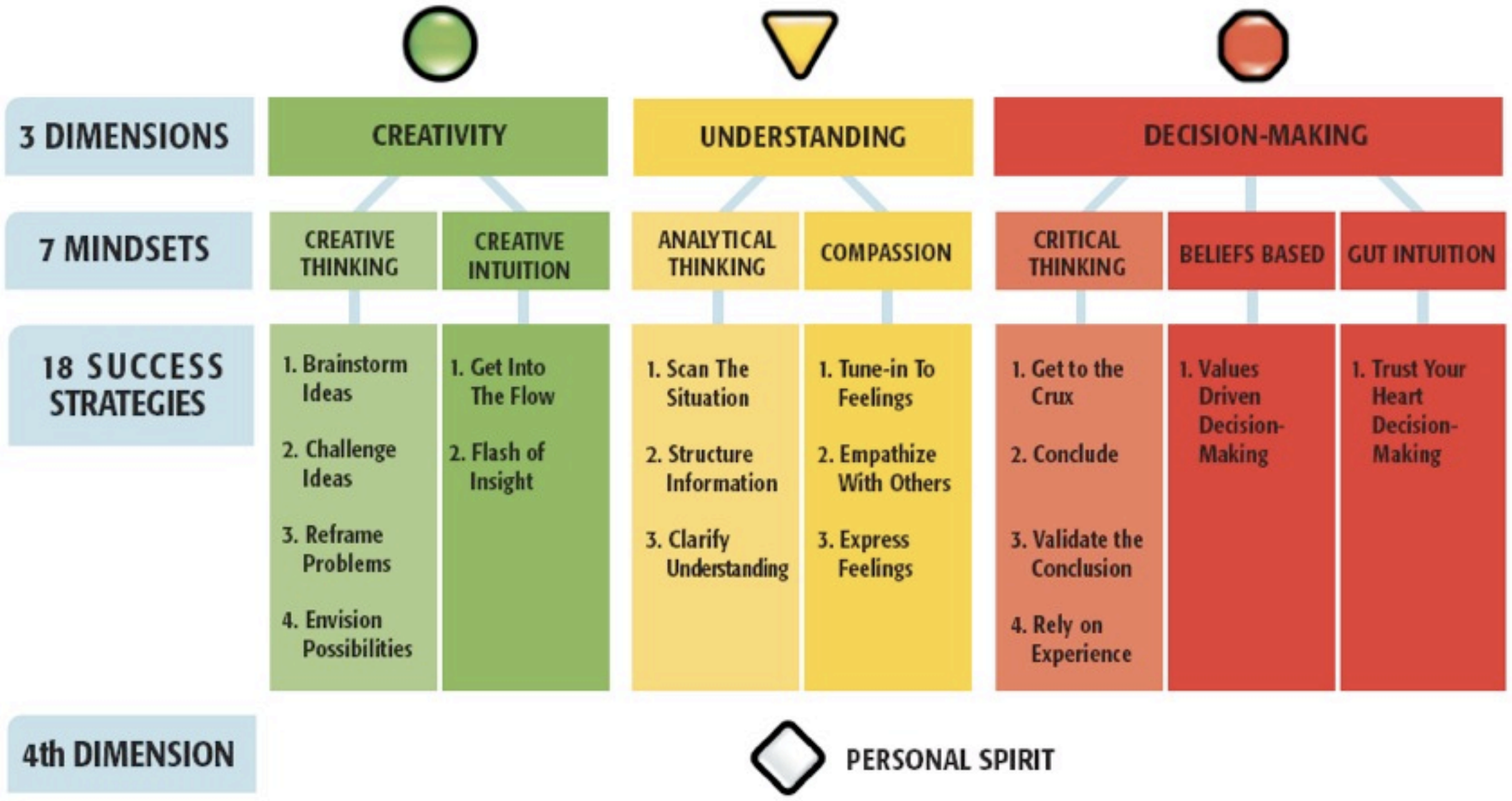
.. because we all have personal operating preferences.

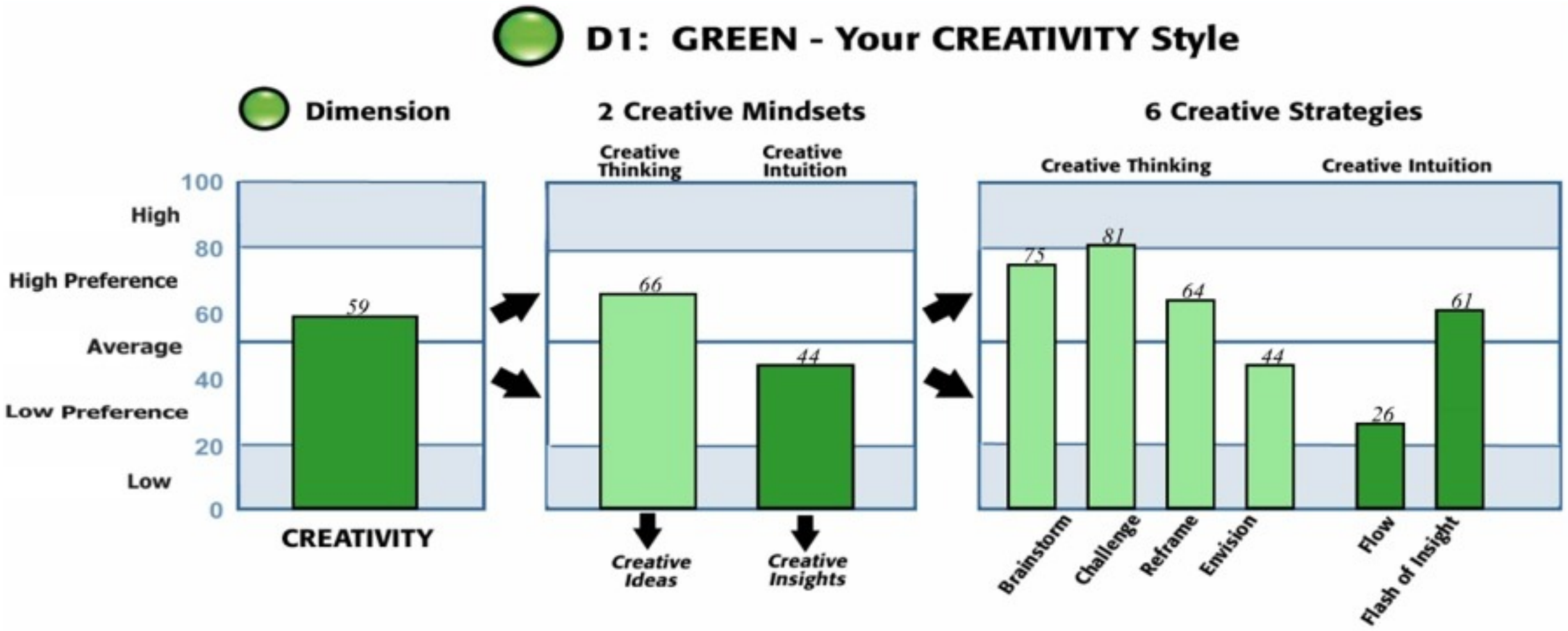
Green --> go

Yellow --> slow down

Red --> stop

White --> amplifier


3 DIMENSIONS
CREATIVITY
UNDERSTANDING
DECISION-MAKING
7 MINDSETS
CREATIVE THINKING
CREATIVE INTUITION
ANALYTICAL THINKING
COMPASSION
CRITICAL THINKING
BELIEFS BASED
GUT INTUITION
18 SUCCESS STRATEGIES
1. Brainstorm Ideas
2. Challenge Ideas
3. Reframe Problems
4. Envision Possibilities
1. Get Into The Flow
2. Flash of Insight
1. Scan The Situation
2. Structure Information
3. Clarify Understanding
1. Tune-in To Feelings
2. Empathize With Others
3. Express Feelings
1. Get to the Crux
2. Conclude
3. Validate the Conclusion
4. Rely on Experience
1. Values Driven Decision-Making
1. Trust Your Heart Decision-Making
4th DIMENSION
PERSONAL SPIRIT



Green: Creativity

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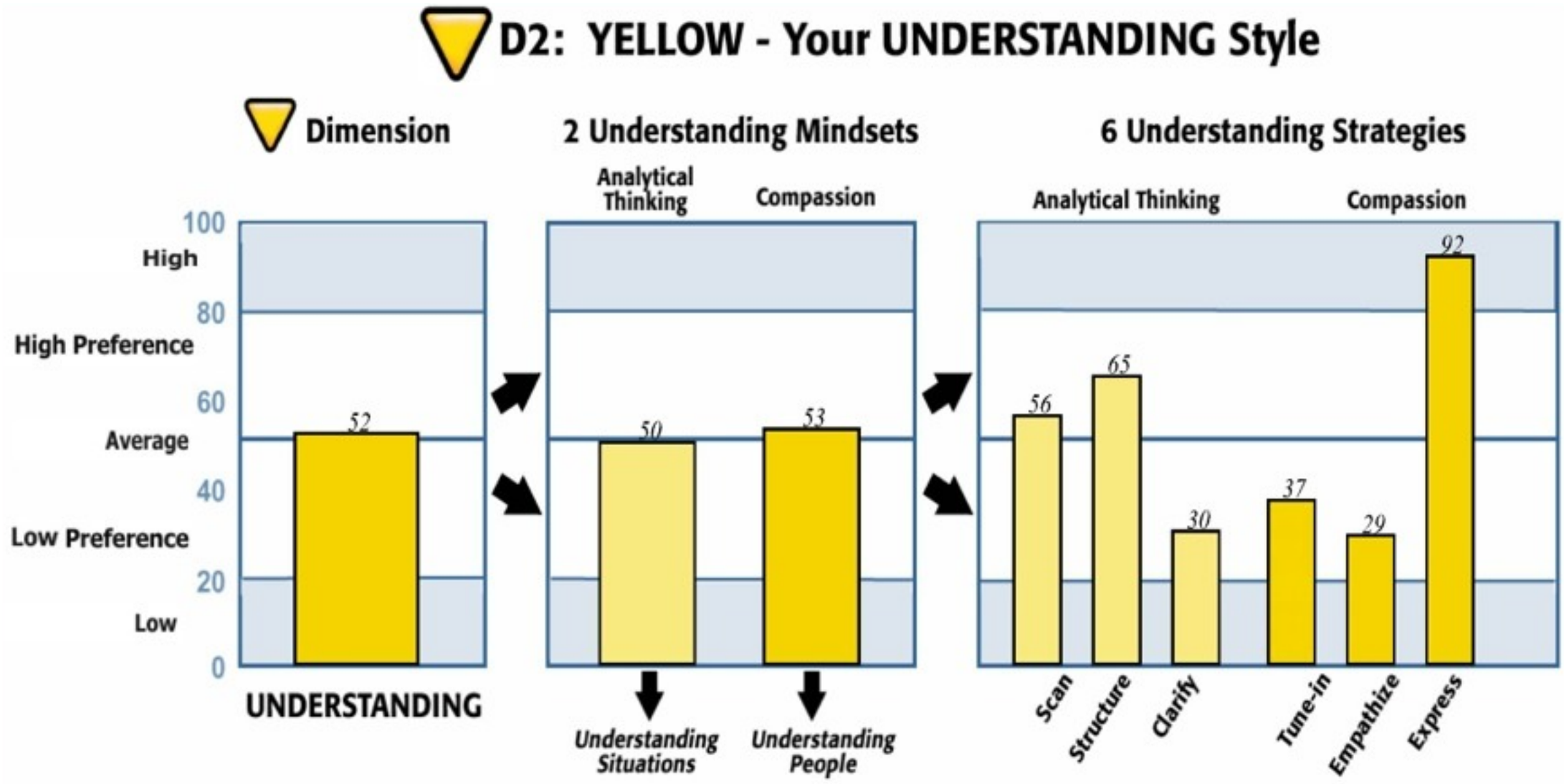
Green is creativity. We have two mindsets: Creative Thinking and Creative Intuition. Creative thinking involves “muscling through”. It includes: brain storming, challenge, reframe, envision. Creative intuition “just happens”. It includes: flow and flash of insight.



Yellow: Understanding

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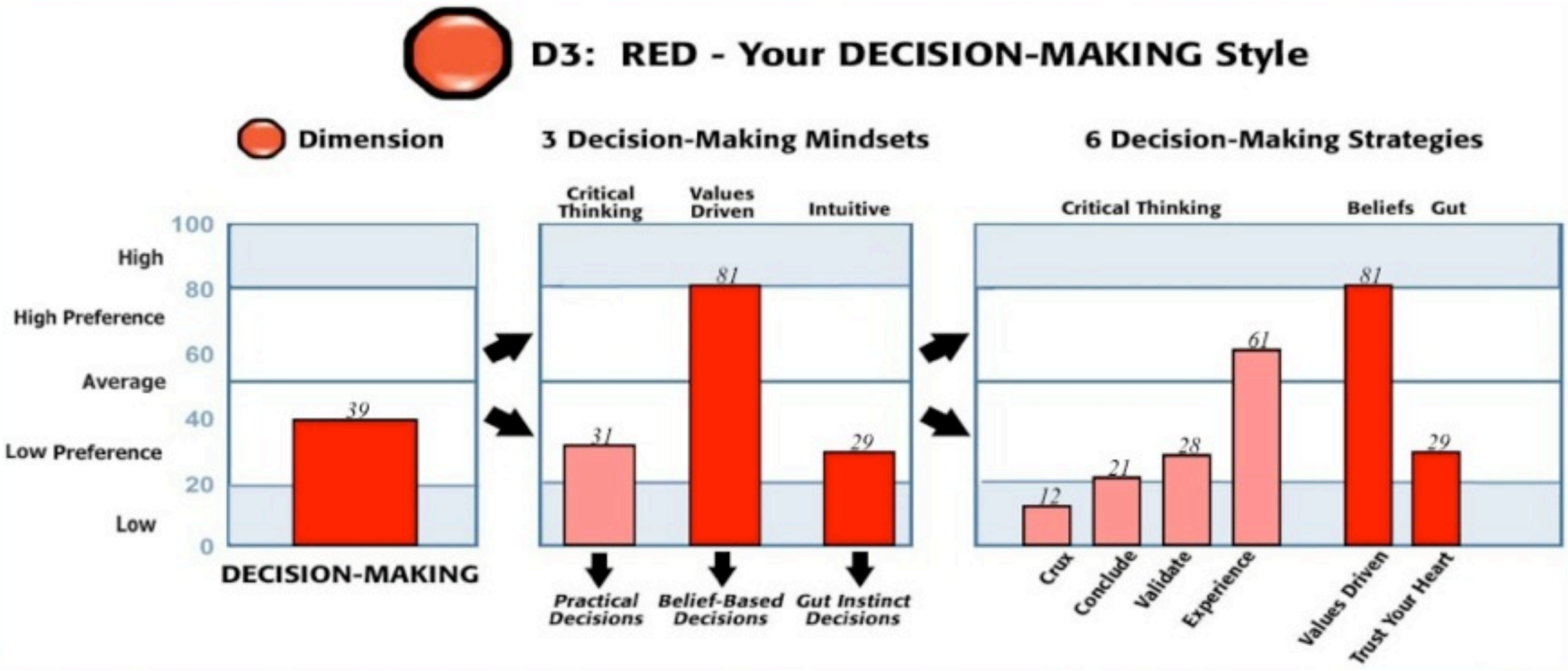
Yellow thinking is understanding. The two mindsets are Understanding Situations (analytical thinking); and Understanding People (compassion). Analytical thinking breaks down into: scan situation, structure information and clarify understanding. Compassion breaks down into: tune-in, empathize, express feelings.

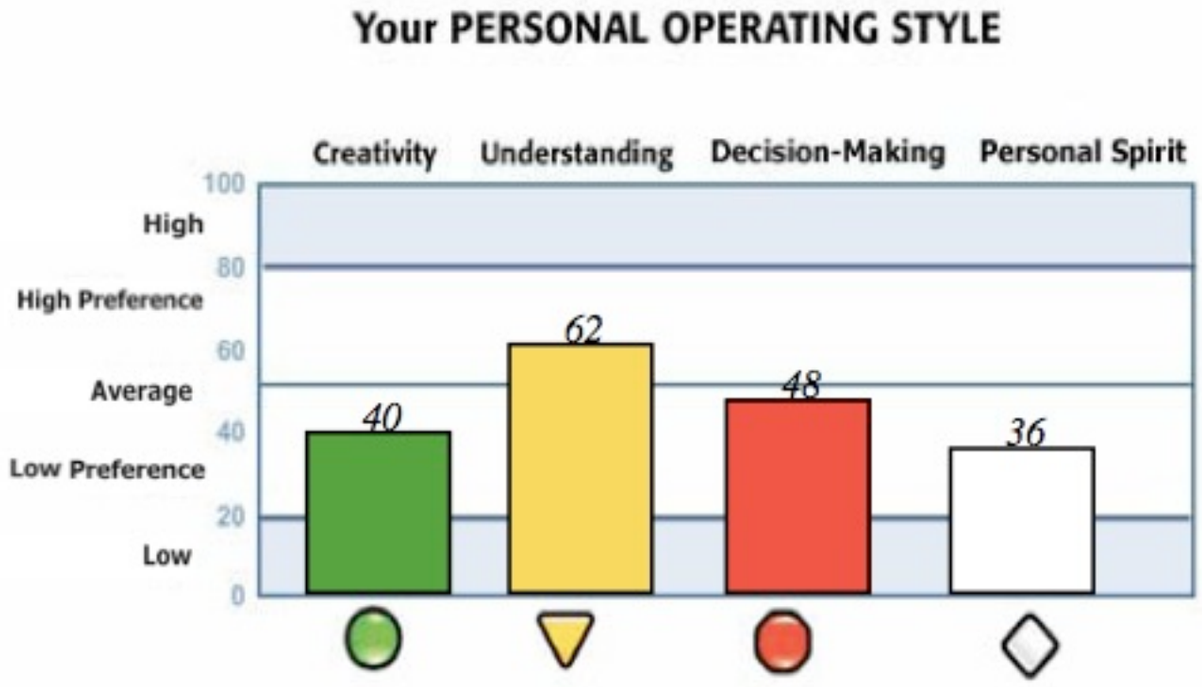


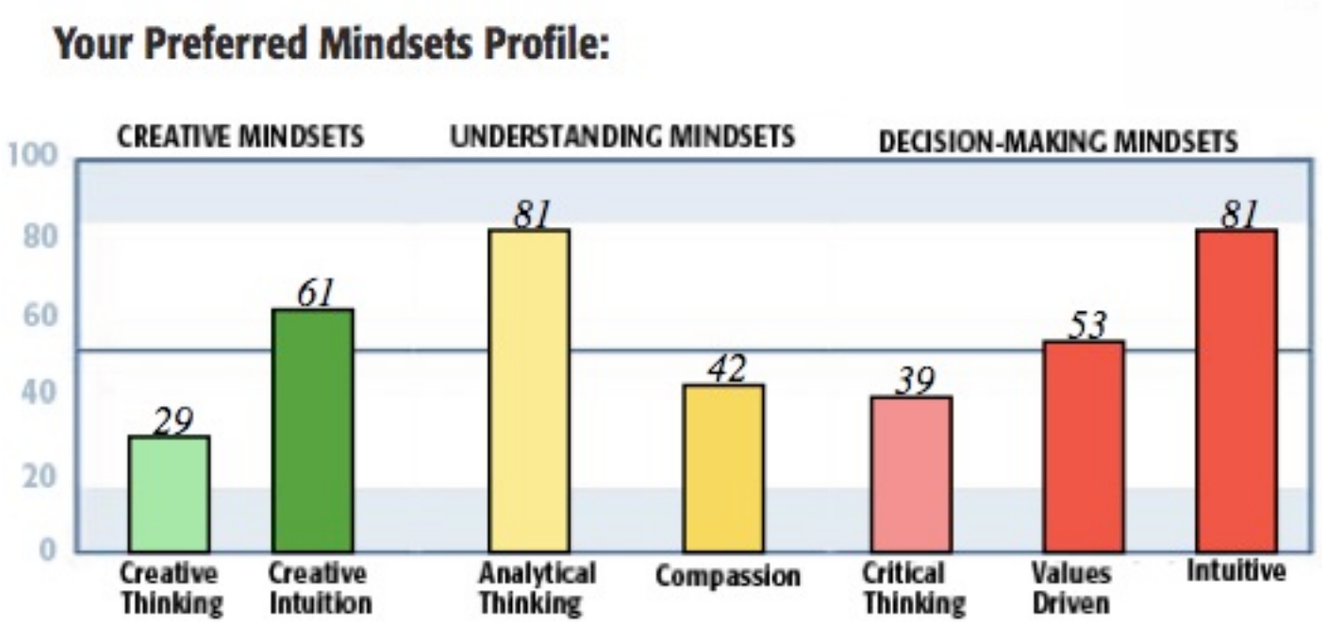
Red: Decision-Making

Wednesday, 22 May, 13

Red thinking is decision making thinking. There are three mindsets this time: Critical Thinking, Values-driven thinking (belief-based decisions); and Intuitive thinking (gut-instinct decisions). Critical thinking includes: getting to the crux, conclude, validate the conclusion, rely on experience. Belief-based thinking and Gut-based thinking are single strategy mind-sets.

These are me





Take my feedback with a grain of (yellow) salt.

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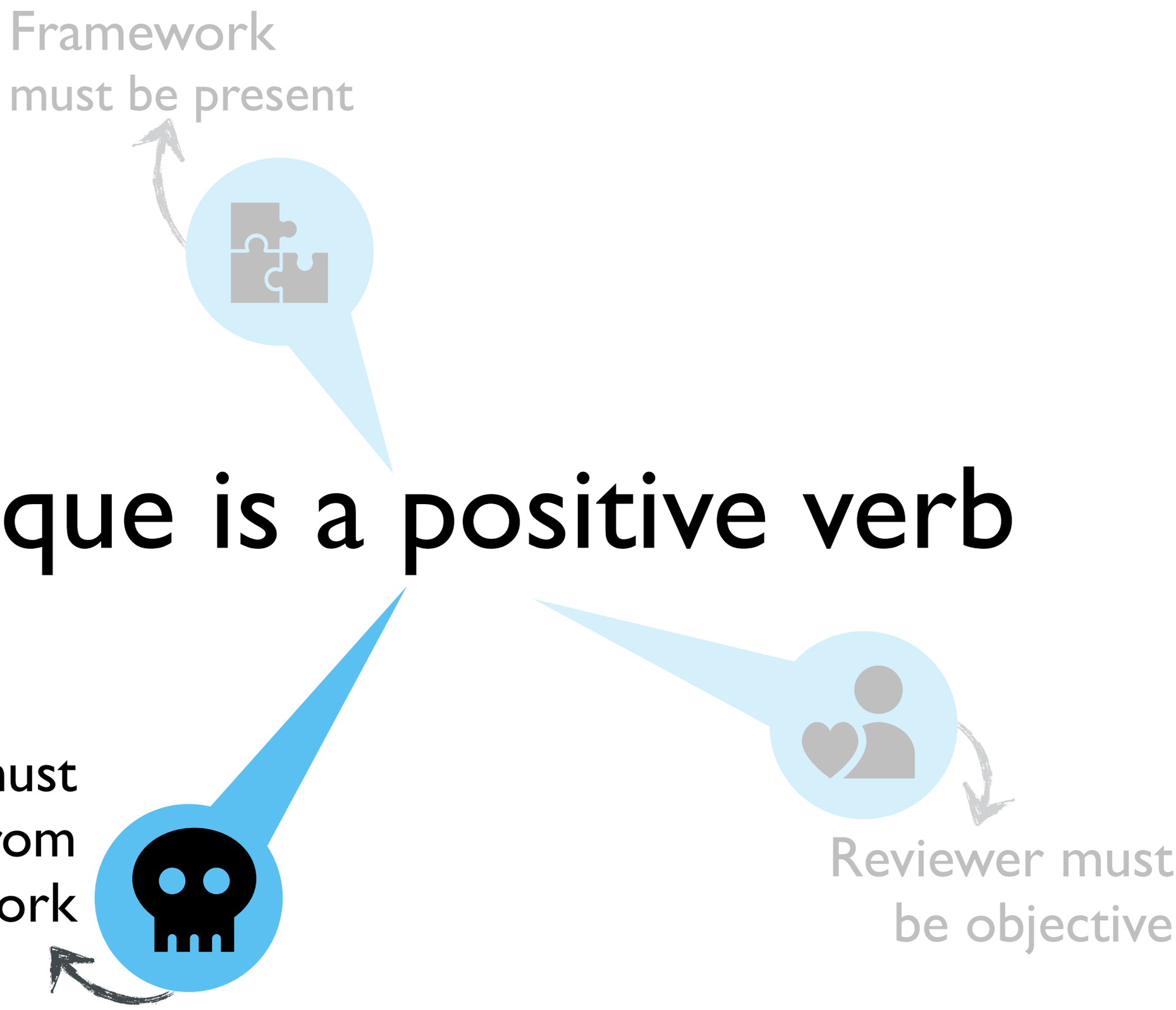
This screen shows you my personal operating style and preferred mindset profile. You can see from the charts that I prefer to gather information. I'm a "yellow" thinker, followed by "red" and then "green" and then "white" (think of the white as my amplifier..I don't go to 'eleven' very often). Within the four dimensions, I am more likely to use creative intuition than creative thinking. (I don't enjoy muscling into new ideas; but solutions often JUMP out at me.) Given a choice, I'd rather analyze data than people. And finally, you can see I'm more likely to rely on gut-instinct when it comes to decision making. In other words: I spent forever analyzing a situation and then I JUMP to a conclusion. Some people might interpret this as "impulsive". It's interesting, isn't it?

Have you seen these preferences at play in our issue queue?



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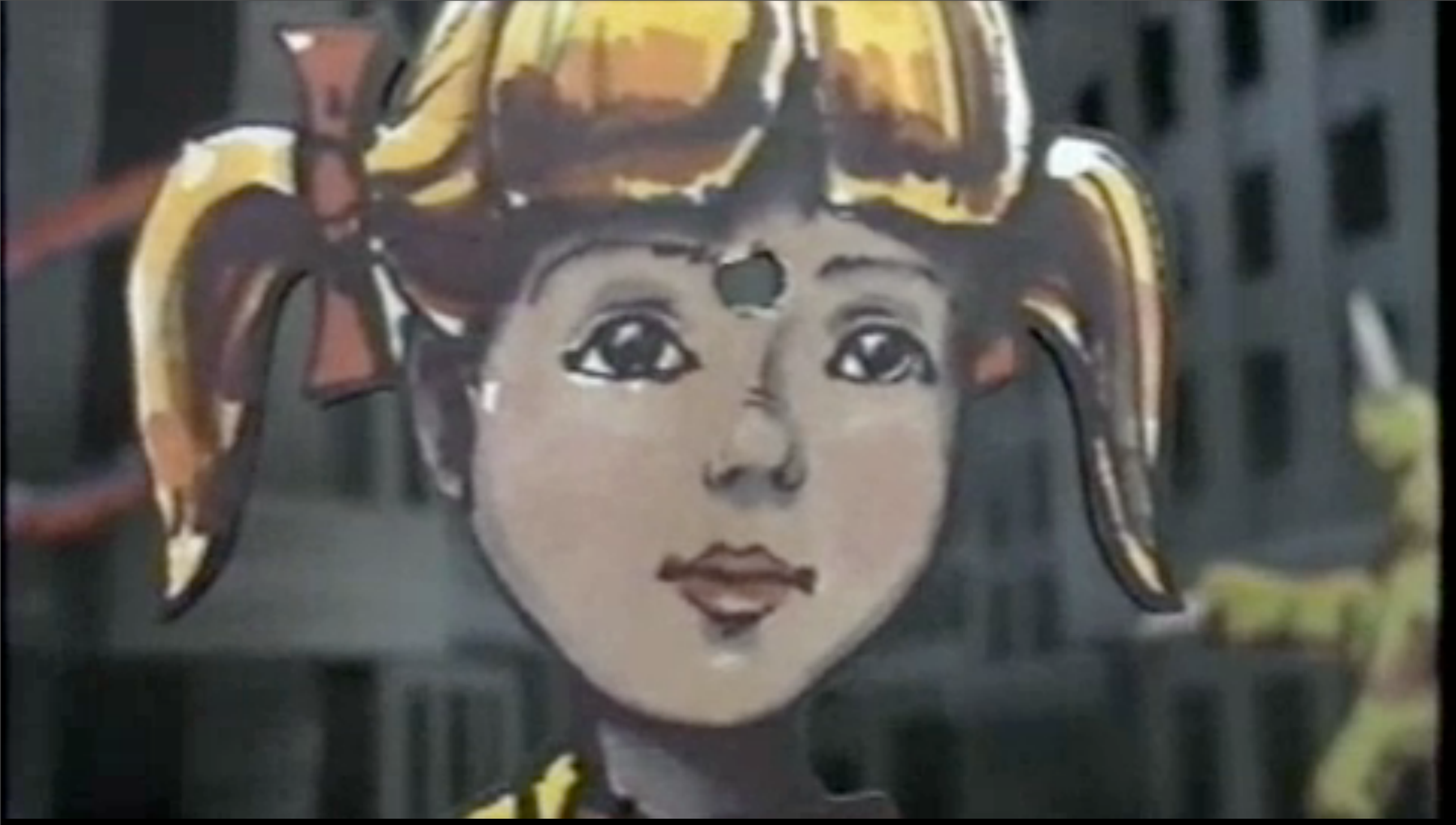
When I give feedback, and I don't have a framework, I'll probably give you "yellow" feedback. I'll restructure your data. I'll ask for more information. And if I'm unclear, and you're not also a yellow, you'll probably get irritated with me. This is because of a little term known as "hostility bias."
Hostility Bias is the tendency to perceive unclear actions by others as aggressive.

References: http://not-a-jerk.blogspot.com.au/2012/03/fighting-for-no-reasonhow-were-hard.html

Hostility Bias



Hostility Bias

Our experiences affect how we see things...and when things are unclear, we assume they are hostile or broken.

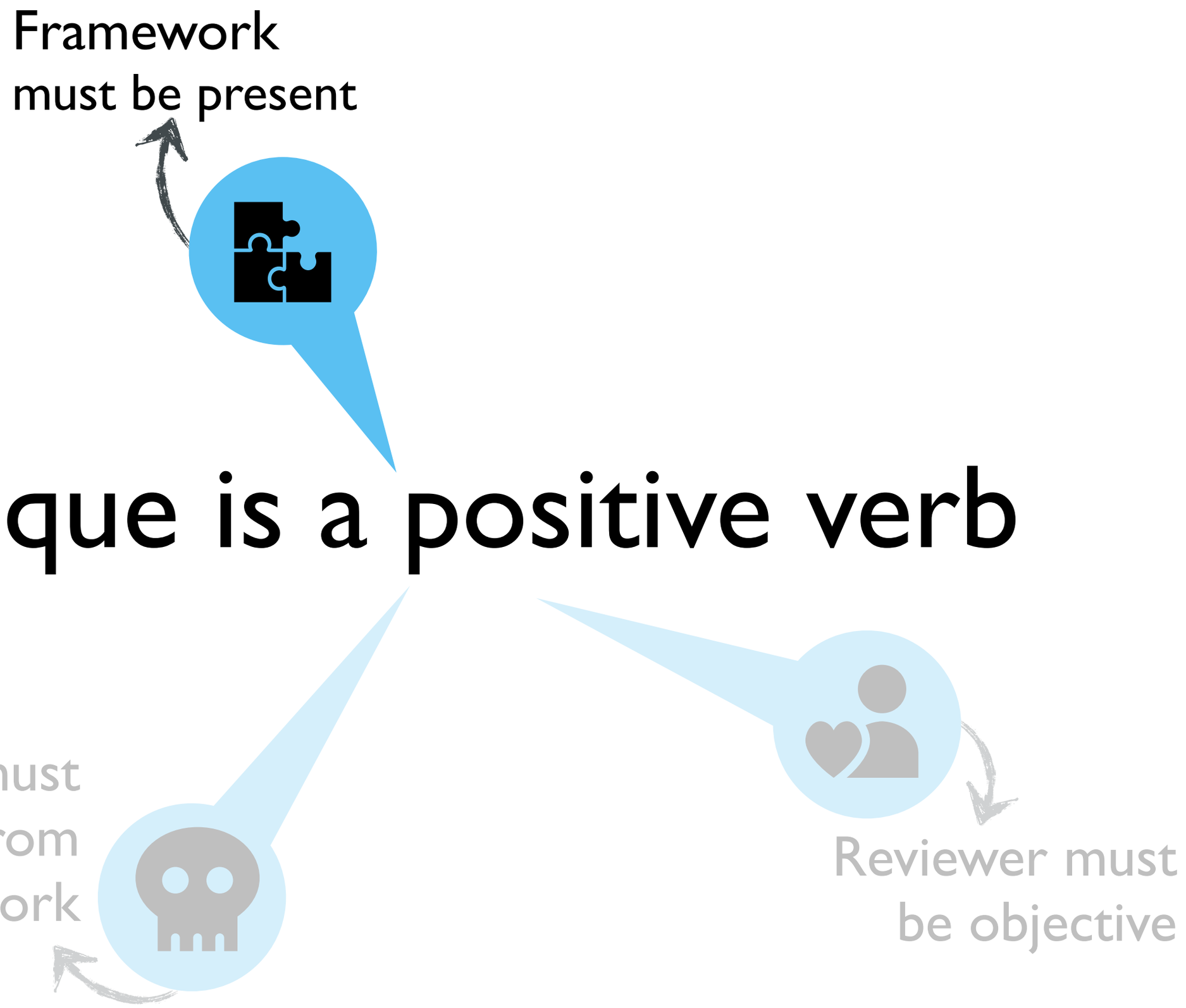
Here's a real world example of hostility bias.

In my original tweet I missed adding an adjective for the resource. "here's a GREAT buzzword compliant"... and take a look at how the author responded. The tweet got nine favourites on twitter and seven likes on Facebook. People liked the resource, but the author assumed we were being hostile.

Link: http://www.phptherightway.com

http://www.flickr.com/photos/carbonnyc/3268320322/

instead of having to hug everything out, let's start with a more structured process that helps us to avoid confusion from the beginning.



Drupal has a lot of frameworks already in place. Let’s take a look at those first.

http://www.coc.ca/PerformancesAndTickets/1213Season/LaClemenzaDiTito/PhotoGallery.aspx

“I’m no expert, but I think opera sucks.”

When we ask for non-expert reviews, we must tell the reviewer how to frame their feedback otherwise we end up with your classic opera review “I’m no expert, but I think opera sucks.”

http://barczablog.com/2013/02/25/pageants_of_powe/
“When a reviewer makes a strong statement I believe there are usually two conversations going on, that are inter-connected. The reviewer is telling us about something. The reviewer is telling us about themselves.”

Asking For Non-Expert Reviews

Asking For Non-Expert Reviews

Without a framework, chaos ensues.

What state are we in?
Where do we want to go?
What are the blockers?

- creating a better "ask" that results in the kind of feedback you actually want to receive Seeking (Family) Feedback : When I wanted affirmation, I'd ask my mom. When I wanted a critique, I'd ask my father. Are asked in a timely manner. (Don't start writing code until you have buy-in on the direction.)

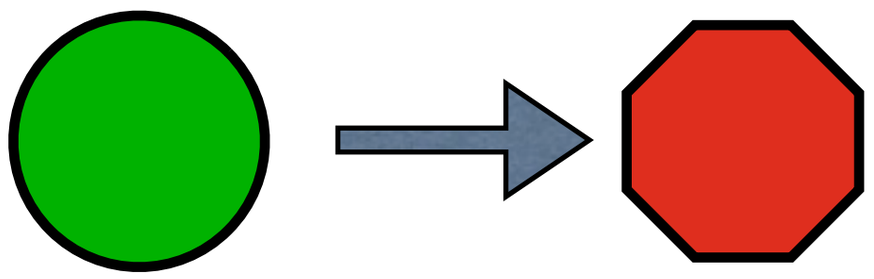
Frameworks allow us to work from the same state.

What state are we in?
Where do we want to go?
What are the blockers?

Red Outcomes

- Advice and recommendations
- Critical assessments
- Conclusions and decisions

Ideas to Action



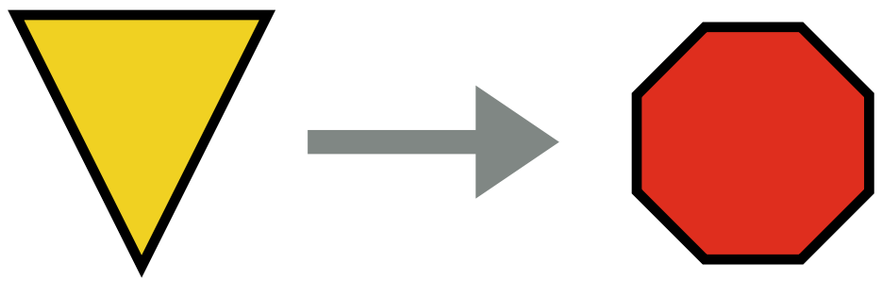
Use It When:

Time is tight and you want a few ideas before deciding.

Brainstorm; Make decision

How to use this process:
- select the type of outcome (advice, recommendations, decision)
- share information on the problem for one minute.
- brainstorm ideas.
- eliminate ideas or recombine to ensure the best option is selected

Facts to Action



Use It When

You've presented information (e.g. a report) and you want a critique, advice, recommendation, or decision.

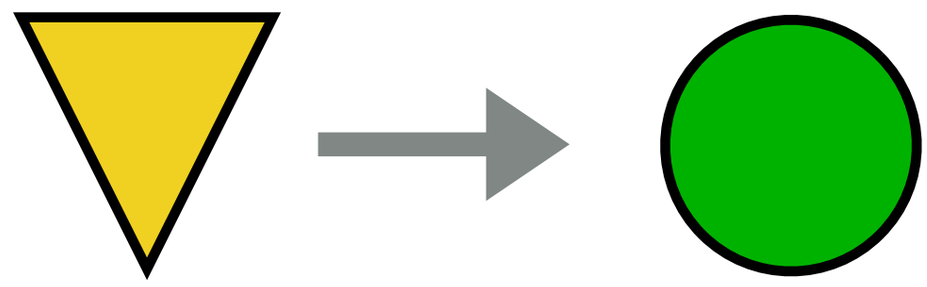
Share information; Make decision.

Decide ahead of time what type of "red" you need. e.g. advice, recommendation, decision.

Green outcomes

- Idea generation
- Reframing problems
- Future scenarios

Information to Options

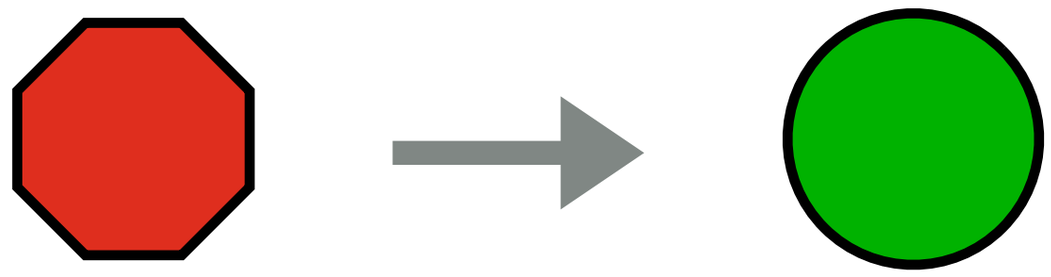


Use It When:

You need fresh input and a broader number of options, alternatives, or ideas on how to solve a problem before you choose which one is the right one.

Describe the situation; reframe + brainstorm.

Crux to Options



Use It When:

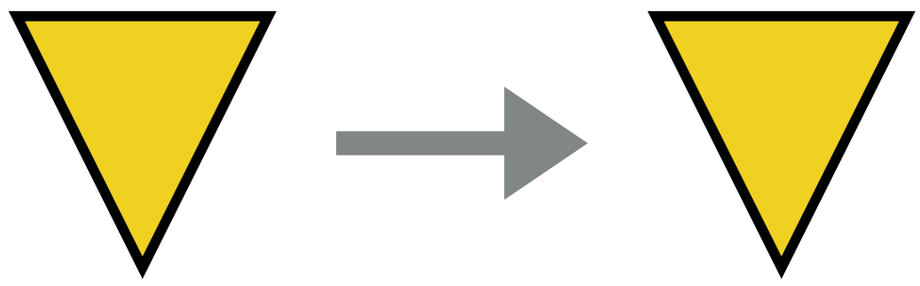
A team member needs fresh ideas on how to deal with a challenge.

Determine crux; brainstorm ideas.

Yellow outcomes

- Information and clarification
- Analysis and a plan
- Appreciative understanding

Facts to Understanding

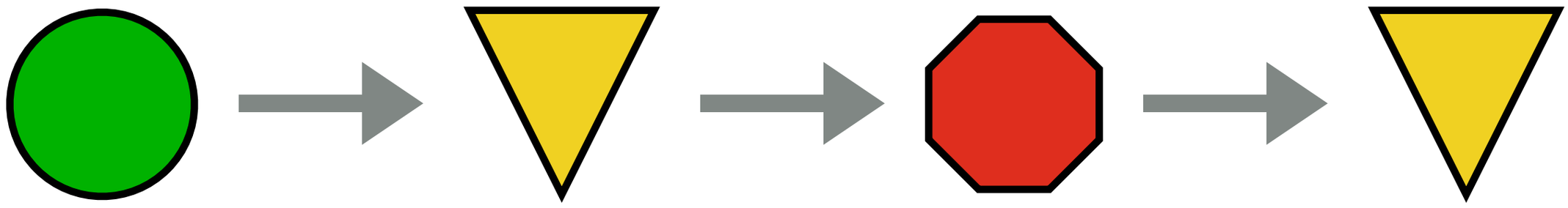


Use It When:

People need to understand the situation better.

Share information; clarify understanding

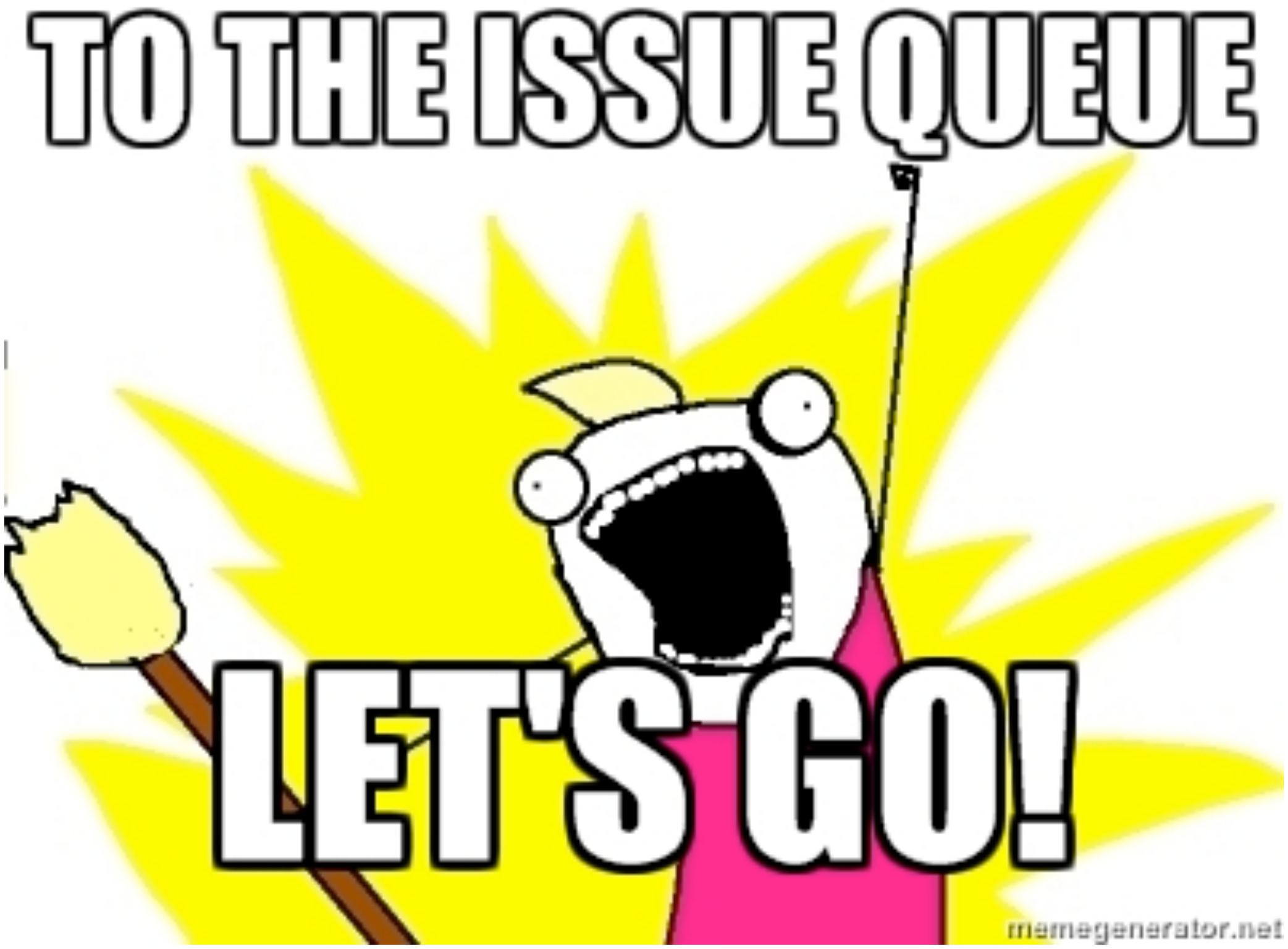
Possibilities to Structure



Use It When:

You have a complex problem and want to start by looking forward with fresh thinking and end with a plan.

Envision possibilities; scan the situation; conclude; plan and organize.



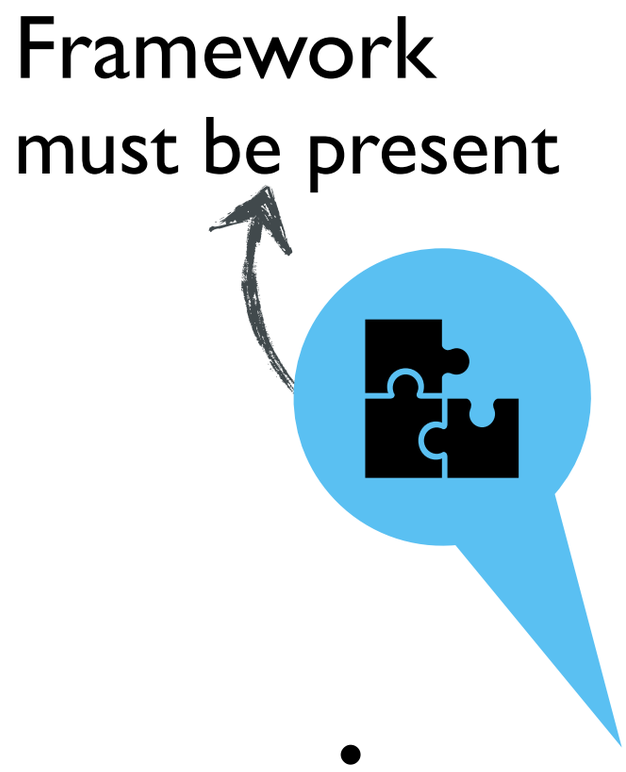
Wednesday, 22 May, 13

What's useful, and what's harmful?

critique is a positive verb

We know that code reviews are a good thing. Reviewing code makes us better communicators and better coders. Our strong review process makes Drupal a stronger product. For the critique to be a POSITIVE experience though, three elements need to be in place.

1. There must be a **framework**
2. The **reviewer** must be objective
3. The **creator** must separate themselves from their work.



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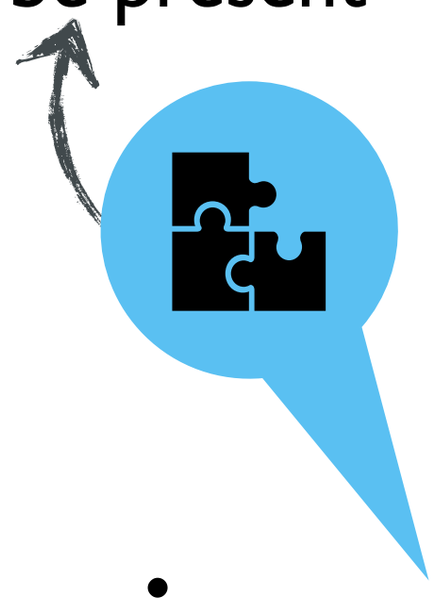
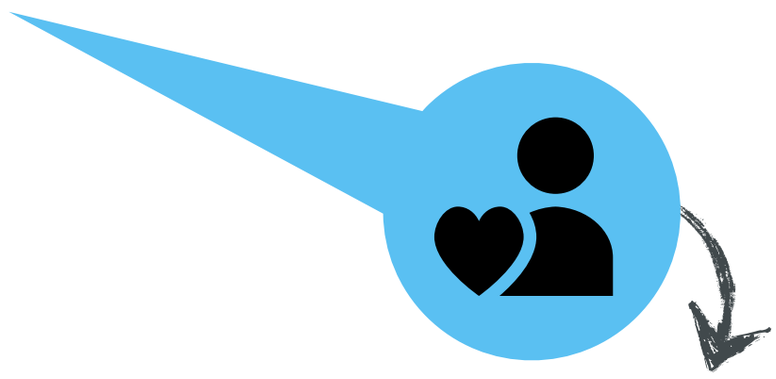
Framework
must be present



critique is a positive verb



Reviewer must
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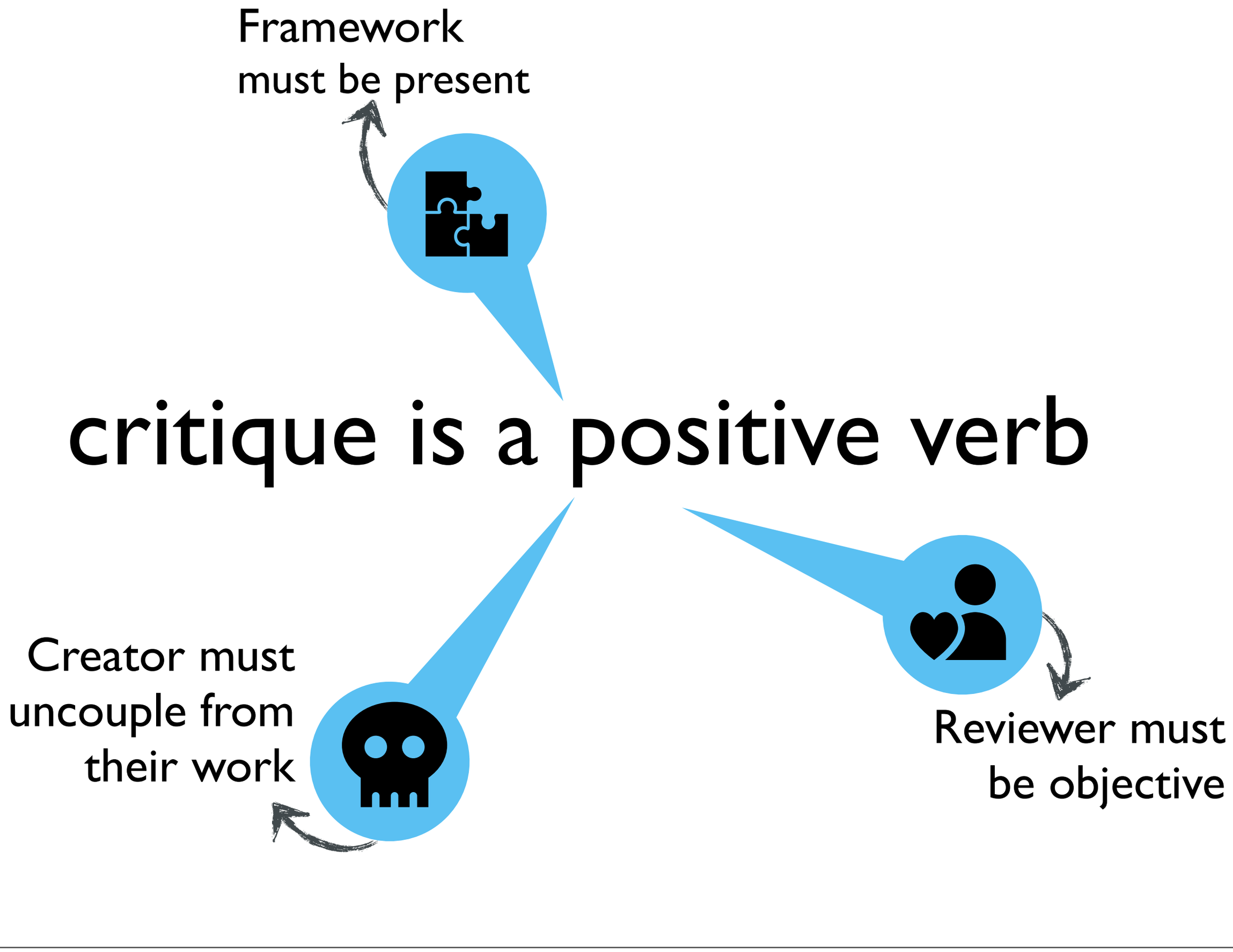

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