Systematic Innovation

e-zine

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In this month's issue:

The Systematic Innovation e-zine is a monthly, subscription only, publication. Each month will feature articles and features aimed at advancing the state of the art in TRIZ and related problem-solving methodologies.

Our guarantee to the subscriber is that the material featured in the e-zine will not be published elsewhere for a period of at least 6 months after a new issue is released.

Readers' comments and inputs are always welcome.
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Nuance/Counter-Intuitive

Nuance. One of our most frequently used words of 2025. Usually around the subject of comparisons between advice that consultants might provide clients and advice generated from one of the generative AI solutions now in common (ubiquitous?) use. The point of the word being that if the difference between those two pieces of advice is vanishingly small, do consultants have a role any longer?

This article explores that aspect of the nuance story. It does this by way of a building a foundation for a perhaps deeper question: if business leaders are increasingly going to be swayed by the eminently logical advice provided by their friendly AI of choice, what impact is that likely to have when it comes to innovation advice that is fundamentally illogical ('sur/logical' – Reference 1)?

Here's a real business leadership case study scenario to kick the story off:

You are the CEO of a globally recognised children's toy company.

- Decades of brand equity
- Deep emotional attachment across generations
- Historically strong margins

But now:

- Revenue is declining rapidly
- The company is close to bankruptcy
- Digital toys, video games, and licensed entertainment are capturing children's attention
- Competitors are faster, cheaper, and trend-driven
- Complexity has crept into every part of the business, especially the products
- Operational costs 'out of control'
- The board is demanding a turnaround.

The Question you need to answer: *"How do we restore sustainable growth in a world where children appear to no longer want what we make?"*

What would you do if you were faced with this, seemingly existential, question? Probably most likely, in the first instance, you would convene some kind of off-site bootcamp session with the other members of the Senior Leadership Team.

And then, when that probably doesn't generate anything that sounds either like an 'aha' moment or anything that is within anybody's comfort zone, the CEO sets about inviting external advice. Highly likely, since this is a global organisation, from one or more of the Big Five consultants.

When the Request For Proposal responses come back, following the usually discussions and Q&A sessions with the Big Five consultant teams, they all look something like this:

Summary Recommendation

Transform the business model to become an integrated play-and-entertainment platform.

Key Elements

- Reorganise around customer segments rather than products
- Accelerate time-to-market through modular product architecture
- Build a portfolio of adjacent growth engines:
    - Digital content

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    - Media
    - Experiences
- Professionalise creativity with stage-gates and ROI discipline
- Reduce dependence on legacy core products

The CEO reviews the proposals with the SLT and concludes the proposals are:

- Strategically coherent
- Board-ready
- Slightly uncomfortable, but ambitious
- Supported by benchmarks and case examples

And the CEO concludes: “This is hard, but probably what a serious company should do.”

Before, pressing the button to instigate a contract with one of the bidders, the CEO does some work with generative-AI to see what it would recommend. Here’s the result of that investigation:

Summary Recommendation
Modernise, diversify, and optimise.
Key Elements

- Extend the brand into digital experiences (apps, games, content)
- Increase licensing and partnerships with entertainment franchises
- Use data and analytics to understand evolving play patterns
- Rationalise underperforming products
- Improve operational efficiency across the value chain

Here’s where nuance enters the story. From the CEOs perspective, the AI proposal is:

- Logical
- Evidence-based
- Scalable
- Aligns with prevailing industry trends

The CEO concludes: “This feels sensible. We’re meeting children where they are.”
The AI advice feels a little less hard to implement than the Big Five consultant advice.

Again, what would you do in this situation?
The difference between AI and Big Five advice here is really about nuance.
One conclusion might be that the difference is negligible enough that we don’t need the consultants. (Another might be that, maybe the Big Five consultants also used AI.)

The AI element to this story is of course new. Before the AI capability appeared, the CEO would most likely follow the oft-used Chinese selection method: ‘when all else is equal, we buy from our friends’, and opt to work with the Big Five bidder they like the most. The Chinese selection method has a second part to it, that says, ‘if all else is unequal, we still buy from our friends’. Which means that the selection decision is always based on emotional reaction, irrespective of the price ticket or programme of work. Very likely, given the global company context, a big part of the emotion story is likely to revolve around plausible deniability and the idea of ‘no CEO ever got fired for hiring IBM/McKinsey/etc’. In other words, there’s no plausible deniability attached to the AI solution. But, it would be cheaper. A lot cheaper.

So, nuance-wise, what would you do?
Before making a decision, now consider a final late proposal to the RFP. It looks like this:

Summary Recommendation
Do less. Go backwards. Protect the core.
Key Elements

- Strip the portfolio back to the few products children love most
- Walk away from fast-growing but distracting adjacencies
- Stop chasing digital trends you cannot lead
- Recommit to physical play – deeply, unapologetically
- Hand creative authority back to users, not managers
- Design for imagination, not consumption
- Accept short-term contraction to restore long-term meaning

This proposal comes to from a small consulting company the CEO has never heard of before. From the CEOs perspective, reading the proposal, it:

- Sounds nostalgic
- Appears anti-growth
- Reduces optionality
- Offers no immediate metrics
- Offers no easy message that could convince the shareholders

And the CEO therefore concludes, “this feels risky… even irresponsible.”

Does this new proposal change your earlier decision?

There’s definitely no ‘nuance’ associated with this final proposal. Quite the opposite, in fact, it has veered completely into the world of counter-intuitive.

Not that the CEO would understand the idea, but as a reader of the SIEZ, would your answer change if you knew that the bidder behind this final proposal was a team full of 1%er-type (Reference 2) innovators? What if you also knew they were TRIZ/SI advocates?

Not that it’s likely to make a difference to your decision, but just for the sake of completeness, here’s a comparison between the Big Five, AI and 1%er proposals:

Criterion	AI	Big 5 Advice	1%er
Logical coherence	High	Very High	Low?
Ease of explanation to board	Easy	Easy	Difficult
Short-term performance	Improves	Improves	Likely declines
Organisational comfort	Comfortable	Challenging	Deeply uncomfortable
Vulnerability to disruption	Increases	Increases	Decreases
Long-term resilience	Unclear	Unclear	High
Preserves identity	Weak	Weaker	Strong

To put it starkly, it would take a very brave CEO to select the 1%er option. Never mind that, it would take a brave CEO to even contemplate deepening the conversation with the 1%er proposal team to try to better understand the rationale behind their proposal.

This, I propose, is a big problem for the TRIZ/SI world specifically and for any prospective consultant bidding to do any kind of work that sounds counter-intuitive generally. The huge irony being that, as in this specific case, almost inevitably, when a CEO is in the kind of trouble this CEO is in it is because the organisation has hit the top of their s-curve. And because that's happened, the only way forward is to jump to the next s-curve. And that in turn necessitates recognition that (fundamentally):

- Business performance will get worse before it gets better
- The new business model will be counter-intuitive and 'illogical' when compared to the current business model
- Making the new solution successful will require prevailing through a seemingly impossible Ordeal (per the Hero's Journey – Reference 3)
- There is a lot of uncertainty about what the 'right' solution will be, meaning that it may be necessary to explore multiple solutions before converging on the one(s) to take all the way through their evolution journey.

The 1%er proposal was based on each of these factors. In terms of the 1%er NEPTUNE framework, the Navigator contribution to the proposal knew that the CEO's company was at the top of their current s-curve, and the Elephant knew that the digital wave of children's toys at the time of the case study was still a fad rather than meaningful solution to the toy challenge.

At this point in history, what gets most leaders to their position at the top of their organisation is being best at 94%er Operations work. For the most part they don't understand 1%ers (even if they were aware of the phrase), and so not surprisingly, the overwhelming final answer to the 'which proposal would you choose?' question that has been threaded through this article is going to be 'not the 1%er one'.

What I can also say is that what actually happened in this story is that the CEO did opt for the 1%er proposal. The result?

- Revenues fell before they rose
- Complexity collapsed
- Creativity returned
- Customers became co-creators
- The business rebuilt itself from the inside out

And, by the way, the year was 2003 and the Company was… LEGO

Somewhat ironically, when we bring the story forward to today, our rationale for writing the 1%er book now is that generative-AI and its uncanny ability to offer highly logical, highly plausible solutions that a mere hairs-breadth of nuance away from what the world's foremost experts would have to recommend, the primary value of the humans in the loop has become their uncanny logic-breaking creative abilities. The irony being that LEGO has somehow managed to lose a lot of the creative element of the toys they offer kids. Or, put another way, they're at the top of another s-curve and about to face another existential Ordeal. One requiring a brave, counter-intuitive solution proposal.

Just like almost every other leadership team on the planet. Albeit the majority are, irrespective of where their organisation is on its s-curve are about to be pushed off it to another one thanks to AI.

The most dangerous advice in this context is not bad advice. It is *plausible, highly nuanced, professional, efficiency-enhancing logical advice that quietly increases fragility.*

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From Signal to Scale:
Why Leaders Need a New Readiness Lens

1: Introduction

Senior leaders are increasingly asked a deceptively simple question: “How ready is this?”
Is the idea ready for investment?
Is the system ready for scale?
Is the surrounding market ecosystem ready?
Is the organisation ready to absorb the change?

For decades, the most widely used answer to that question came from an unlikely source: NASA.

The Origins of Readiness Thinking

In the 1970s, NASA introduced the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale as a way of bringing discipline to innovation risk. The now-familiar 1–9 scale tracked a journey from basic scientific principles through to an *“actual system proven in an operational environment.”*

TRLs worked because they did something leaders desperately need: they made uncertainty visible.

Over time, TRLs escaped aerospace and defence, spreading into energy, pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing, and eventually into boardrooms. Today, many executives can roughly locate a project on the TRL ladder, even if they’ve never formally used the tool.

But there’s a problem.

Why “Technology Readiness” Is No Longer Enough

Modern innovation is no longer primarily about technology. AI systems, digital platforms, business-model innovations, regulatory shifts, and social or ethical interventions are systems, not products. Their success depends as much on behaviour, trust, governance, narrative, and timing as on technical performance. This is why we propose a subtle but important shift in language:

From Technology Readiness Levels to System Readiness Levels (SRL)

“From Signal to Scale”
The change matters. “System” signals to leaders that readiness applies to:

- Organisations, not just products
- Markets, not just labs
- Humans, not just code

Why the Scale Needs a Level 0. And a Level 10

In practice, most breakthrough initiatives begin before TRL 1 ever exists. They start as weak signals: hunches, anomalies, customer frustrations, regulatory noise, or moral discomfort with the status quo.

This pre-project phase is where insight is formed, but it is invisible in the traditional TRL model. Hence the need for SRL Level 0: the phase of sensemaking, pattern recognition, and problem reframing.

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At the other end of the scale lies an even more consequential gap. TRL 9 is typically defined as: *"Actual system proven in operational environment."* That is a necessary milestone, but it is not innovation by our definition.

Many systems reach TRL 9 and still fail. They launch, technically work, and then quietly disappear. Others limp along, consuming capital without ever becoming self-sustaining. Which brings us to the missing level.

SRL 10: The Tipping Point
True innovation only exists once a system has passed its tipping point on the overall S-curve: when adoption becomes self-reinforcing, legitimacy is established, and the system begins to scale faster than resistance can stop it.

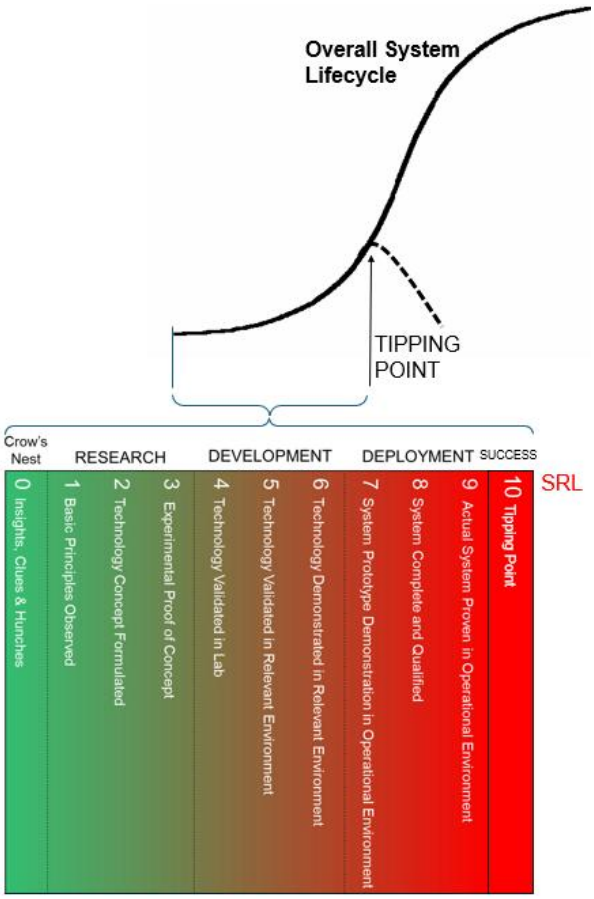
SRL 10 is not a technical milestone. It is a market, social, and ethical one.

Reaching it implies:

- The market believes the system works
- Users trust it
- Stakeholders tolerate (or endorse) its implications
- The system can grow without extraordinary protection

In the AI world, this distinction is already explicit. Models are not considered "ready" simply because they function. They must also pass thresholds of safety, fairness, governance, and public acceptance. In other words, system readiness now extends beyond performance into legitimacy.

This is why SRL 10 matters. And why leaders – not engineers – own it.



2: From "Yes, But…" to Breakthrough – The Readiness Journey as Contradiction Resolution

Most leaders are deeply uncomfortable with contradictions. They prefer trade-offs, prioritisation, sequencing, and compromise. These are all valuable skills, but they break down when organisations face genuinely novel challenges. Yet contradictions show up in leadership conversations every day, usually disguised in a far more familiar form:

"Yes, but…"

"Yes, but we don't know what customers actually want yet."
"Yes, but this would destabilise our current business."
"Yes, but the technology works and the organisation doesn't."
"Yes, but the market isn't ready."

Each "yes, but" is a signal. It marks the boundary between the current state and the next level of readiness.

Seen through this lens, the System Readiness Level (SRL) journey is not a linear execution process, but rather a sequence of 'yes, buts' that must be resolved without retreating into compromise.

SRL 0 to 1: From Signal to Concept

- Goal: Articulate a meaningful opportunity.
- Yes, but: *"We sense something is wrong or changing, but we can't yet define the problem or the system."*

At this stage, the contradiction is between intuition and legitimacy. Leaders feel something matters but cannot yet justify action. Premature analysis kills insight; overconfidence kills learning.

SRL 1 to 3: From Concept to Credible System

- Goal: Demonstrate feasibility.
- Yes, but: *"We can describe the idea, but we don't know if it can actually work."*

Here, leaders face the tension between exploration and proof. Too much rigour too early freezes progress; too little invites fantasy. The contradiction is resolved by disciplined experimentation, not opinion.

SRL 3 to 5: From Working to Relevant

- Goal: Show the system solves a real problem.
- Yes, but: *"It works, but not in the real world we operate in."*

This is where many initiatives stall. The system functions, but not under real constraints: users behave unpredictably, incentives clash, edge cases emerge. The contradiction lies between technical success and contextual fit.

SRL 5 to 7: From Relevant to Scalable

- Goal: Prepare the system for growth.
- Yes, but: *"If this succeeds, it will break something else."*

This is a classic leadership moment. Scaling exposes conflicts with existing structures, power bases, revenue streams, and identities. The contradiction is between local optimisation and system-wide impact.

SRL 7 to 9: From Launch to Legitimacy

- Goal: Prove the system in operation.
- Yes, but: *"Just because we can launch doesn't mean we should."*

Ethical, social, regulatory, and reputational tensions dominate here. In AI especially, this phase reveals whether trust has been designed in. Or merely assumed.

SRL 9 to 10: From Adoption to Tipping Point

- Goal: Achieve self-reinforcing momentum.
- Yes, but: *"This is live, yet it could still fail."*

The final contradiction is between existence and inevitability. Passing the tipping point requires alignment across technology, narrative, incentives, and values. It is where markets, not organisations, make the final decision.

Why This Matters for Leaders

Every failed innovation attempt can be traced back to a "yes, but" that was ignored or merely managed rather than resolved. Leaders who succeed are not those with better answers, but those who:

- Recognise the real "yes, but" at each stage
- Resist false trade-offs
- Create conditions for contradictions to dissolve rather than harden

In the next section, we will show why different stages of the SRL journey require very different leadership capabilities, and why most organisations systematically over-invest in some while neglecting others.

That is where the NEPTUNE model comes in…

3: Why New Things Fail, And Why 1%ers Are Different

One of the most consistent patterns we see across organisations is this:

Most leaders – and most innovators – are genuinely strong at only two or three stages of the Readiness journey.

That is not a weakness. It is a consequence of education and experience. Some people thrive in ambiguity. Others excel at execution. Some are natural system integrators; others are exceptional at scaling, protecting, or institutionalising success. Very few individuals have personally navigated *all* stages from signal to tipping point. That is why 1%ers are rare.

The 1%er Difference

A 1%er is not defined by intelligence, creativity, or charisma.
A 1%er is defined by having repeatedly crossed Readiness thresholds, and survived the "yes, buts" that derail most initiatives.

They have:

- Felt the loneliness of SRL 0–1, when insight exists without permission
- Endured SRL 3–5, when "it works" still isn't enough
- Managed SRL 5–7, when success threatens existing power structures
- Navigated SRL 9–10, when reputational, ethical, and systemic risks dominate

Crucially, they have learned when to change how they lead as the system matures.
Most organisations fail not because they lack talent, but because they deploy the wrong strengths at the wrong stage.

NEPTUNE: A Leadership System, Not a Personality Model

This is where the NEPTUNE model becomes indispensable.
NEPTUNE describes *seven distinct leadership capabilities* that, although always present (NEPTUNE is a system!), become more or less dominant at different points in the SRL journey:

- **Navigator** – sensing direction before clarity exists
- **Empath** – understanding human need and unintended impact

- **Plate-Spinner** – managing multiple fragile experiments
- **Transcender** – reframing contradictions into higher-order solutions
- **Umbrella** – providing cover, legitimacy, and protection
- **Ninja** – removing obstacles quickly and decisively
- **Elephant** – institutionalising, scaling, and stabilising success

Every SRL stage privileges different NEPTUNE capabilities.
The mistake most leadership teams make is assuming:

- Their strongest leaders should lead *every* phase
- Excellence in scaling implies excellence in discovery
- Operational mastery equals innovation capability

It does not.

The Diagnostic Question Every CEO Should Ask First
Before launching any major "new things get done" initiative, there is a single foundational question leadership teams should ask:

"Which NEPTUNE capabilities do we actually have, and which ones are missing?"

This is not about labels. It is about risk awareness.
If your team is rich in Plate-Spinners and Ninjas but lacks Navigators, you will execute brilliantly on the wrong opportunity.
If you have Transcenders but no Umbrellas, bold ideas will die politically.
If you scale without Elephants, success will be squashed by the market ecosystem.

Know Where You Are Before You Move
The SRL journey is unforgiving of self-deception.
You cannot skip stages.
You cannot outsource missing capabilities forever.
And you cannot 'will your way' through "yes, buts" that require different leadership muscles. The role of senior leadership, therefore, is not to have all the answers. It is to know where the organisation truly is, understand what the next readiness threshold demands, and ensure the *right NEPTUNE capabilities are present* before crossing it.
That is how new things get done.

4: The Leadership Capabilities Each SRL Stage Demands
The critical insight behind SRL is that leadership itself must evolve as readiness evolves. The behaviours that make progress possible at one stage actively *block* progress at the next. This is why so many initiatives stall: leaders keep applying yesterday's strengths to today's "yes, buts".

The NEPTUNE model allows leaders to see – in advance – what kind of leadership the system is asking for next.

What follows is not a checklist, but a diagnostic lens.

SRL 0–1: Signal to Hypothesis
Dominant NEPTUNE: Navigator, Empath
At the earliest stages, nothing is proven. There is no business case, only weak signals, anomalies, frustrations, and unmet needs.
The core "yes, but" here is:
Yes, this feels important… but we don't yet know what it is.

- Navigator capability is essential to sense direction without data

- Empath capability of empathising with customer/consumer unspoken needs is critical to avoid solving the wrong problem

This is where organisations most often kill opportunities prematurely, because they demand certainty before direction.

SRL 2–3: Concept to Proof of Possibility
Dominant NEPTUNE: Plate-Spinner, Transcender
Here the question becomes:
Yes, it sounds good… but can it actually work?
Multiple experiments run in parallel. Fragility is high. Failure is information.

- Plate-Spinner leaders keep multiple options alive without forcing premature convergence
- Transcender leaders reframe contradictions rather than trade them off

This is where incremental thinkers often over-optimise a weak idea instead of allowing a stronger one to emerge.

SRL 4–5: Prototype to System Fit
Dominant NEPTUNE: Transcender, Empath
The system now says:
Yes, it works… but does it fit the real world?
This is where second-order effects appear , organisational resistance, user friction, ethical concerns, unintended consequences.

- Transcender capability resolves conflicts between technical success and human reality
- Empath capability ensures adoption rather than mere functionality

Many "successful" innovations die here because leaders confuse *working* with *belonging*.

SRL 6–7: Pilot to Organisational Commitment
Dominant NEPTUNE: Umbrella, Ninja
Now the challenge is political, not technical:
Yes, it works and fits… but it threatens something important.
Legacy systems, incentives, power structures, and careers come into play.

- Umbrella leaders provide protection, legitimacy, and air cover
- Ninja leaders remove obstacles decisively and without theatre

This is where most large organisations lose nerve. And where external 1%ers are often decisive.

SRL 8–9: Launch to Operational Reality
Dominant NEPTUNE: Elephant, Plate-Spinner
The system now asks:
Yes, it's launched… but can it survive contact with reality?
Scaling introduces new fragilities: reliability, supply chains, regulation, reputation.

- Elephant capability integrates, stabilises, standardises, and embeds
- Plate-Spinner capability keeps adaptation alive during growth and ensures the myriad tasks needing to be done are done on time, on budget and on specification

Many organisations mistake launch for success. It is not.

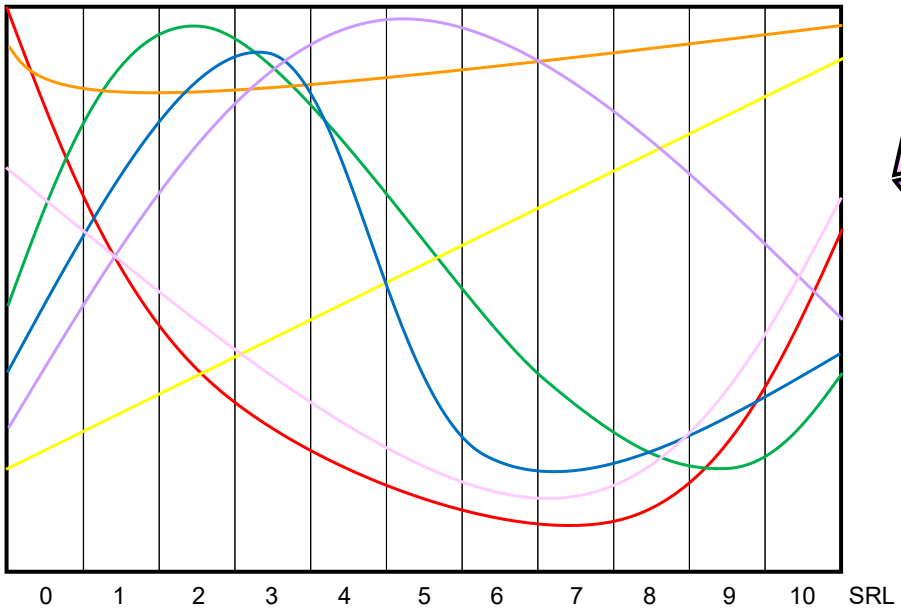
SRL 10: Tipping Point to Enduring Success
Dominant NEPTUNE: Elephant, Navigator
At tipping point, the question shifts one final time:
Yes, this is successful… but what does it now enable – or endanger?
This is where moral, social, and systemic implications crystallise.

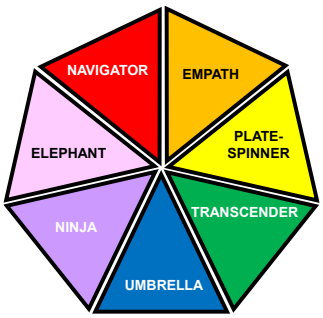
- Elephant leadership ensures durability and legitimacy

- Navigator leadership looks beyond the current S-curve to the next and keeps a look-out for a need for appropriate ‘Plan B’ pivots

True getting new things done leadership does not stop at success, it anticipates what success will break.

Here’s how the relative importance of the seven NEPTUNE elements will shift over the course of a typical SRL0-10 journey. Note that at no stage does the need for any single element drop to zero: getting new things done demands the continual presence of a viable system and the seven NEPTUNE elements define viability.





The Final Leadership Insight
The SRL journey is not a test of intelligence.
It is a test of situational leadership maturity.
Most leaders are excellent at *some* of these stages.
Very few are excellent at *all* of them.

That is why NEPTUNE is best used first as a diagnostic:

- To understand which capabilities you already have
- To anticipate which “yes, buts” will soon appear
- To decide whether you need to develop, re-balance, or bring in missing leadership capacity

Before you try to get new things done, know what kind of leadership the system will demand next.

That is how 1%ers think.

That is how tipping points are reached.

That is how signals become scale.

CEO Briefing: Why Getting New Things Done Attempts Fail After It Starts Working *(And What to Do About It)*

The uncomfortable truth:
Most change initiatives do not fail because the idea is bad.
They fail because leadership does not change as the system matures.

The Pattern We See Repeatedly
Across industries and geographies, the same failure pattern appears:

- Early promise leads to internal excitement
- Proof of feasibility leads to pilot success
- Growing traction leads to unexpected resistance
- Momentum stalls leads to initiative quietly deprioritised

At this point, leadership often concludes:
"The idea wasn't right after all."
In reality, the leadership model was no longer right for the stage.

From Signal to Scale: The SRL Journey
Every successful innovation follows a predictable journey – from weak signal to market tipping point.
At each stage, progress is blocked by a different set of "yes, but…" constraints:

- Yes, it's interesting… *but is it real?*
- Yes, it works… *but does it fit?*
- Yes, it fits… *but it threatens something.*
- Yes, it launched… *but will it last?*

These are not technical problems.
They are leadership capability mismatches.

Why Leadership Strengths Become Liabilities
Most senior leaders are strong in two or three phases of this journey. Usually the ones they have personally lived through.
That is normal.
What is not normal – but increasingly common – is assuming that:

- The same leaders should lead *every* phase
- Execution excellence equals innovation readiness
- Scaling skill implies discovery skill

It does not.
In fact, applying the *wrong* strength at the *wrong* stage is one of the fastest ways to kill momentum.

NEPTUNE: A Practical Leadership Diagnostic
The NEPTUNE model identifies seven necessary and sufficient leadership capabilities that become critical at different readiness stages:

- **Navigator** – sensing direction before certainty
- **Empath** – understanding human and societal impact
- **Plate-Spinner** – managing multiple fragile experiments
- **Transcender** – resolving contradictions rather than trading them off
- **Umbrella** – providing political and reputational cover
- **Ninja** – removing obstacles decisively
- **Elephant** – stabilising and institutionalising success

No individual has all seven in equal measure.
No organisation has them all *present at the right time* by accident.

The Question CEOs Should Ask First
Before launching any major “innovation”, “AI”, or “transformation” initiative:
Which NEPTUNE capabilities do we actually have – and which will the next stage demand?
This single diagnostic question:

- Reduces execution risk
- Prevents premature scaling
- Avoids political ambush
- Increases the odds of reaching true tipping point success

The 1%er Advantage
1%er leaders are not visionary geniuses.
They are people who:

- Recognise which stage they are truly in
- Change how they lead as readiness evolves
- Bring in complementary capability *before* the system demands it

They do not confuse activity with progress. Or launch with success.

Bottom Line for CEOs
Getting new things done failure is rarely a talent problem.
It is almost always a misalignment between readiness and leadership capability.
Before asking: *“What should we build?”*
Ask: *“Are we equipped to lead what comes next?”*
That question alone separates signals that fade from systems that scale.

Worst of 2025 Awards

For a lot of people, 2025 was a stinker of a year. A veritable Annus horribilis. Our prediction that the current global omni-crisis will end ‘2025-2026’ was still feeling it could be 2025 right up to the end of December. And to be honest, the start of 2026 is already feeling like the start of a tailspin. Still, never mind. Keep calm and carry on and all that. At least we got to revel in the spectacle of a great swathe of public and private institutions ‘innovating’ their way to oblivion. If you didn’t laugh you’d cry. Here are the best of them…

The ‘All-Conversations-May-Be-Recorded-For-Training-Purposes Customer Service’ Awards – Fortunately, I don’t get to spend a lot of time watching TV. When I do, however – like the Christmas holiday season – one of my favourite guilty pleasures involves watching an occasional movie or, better yet, bingeing on a multi-part serial. Or rather, I used to. My Christmas this year was a mostly depressing affair. Especially Netflix. Who it appears have increasingly adopted a production philosophy called "casual viewing" (or sometimes "ambient storytelling") to accommodate audiences who are "second-screening" or distracted by other devices while watching. The practice involves several specific techniques:

- Expository Scripting: writers are often instructed to have characters explicitly state their actions and emotions – such as saying "I'm sad" while crying – so viewers who are not looking at the screen can still follow the narrative through audio alone.
- Recap and Repetition: Plot points are frequently repeated or stated multiple times (sometimes referred to as "show, tell, then tell again") to ensure viewers do not lose the thread of the story if they miss a scene.
- Voice-over Narration: increased use of voice-overs to narrate on-screen action for those primarily listening rather than watching.
- Simplified Narrative Design: executives may greenlight projects that prioritise "ambient" entertainment over complex narrative art, creating content designed to "dissolve into air" rather than demand full attention.

While these methods help distracted viewers keep up, for everyone else, they have also led to the death of subtext.

If that wasn’t bad enough, 2025 also saw an exponential rise in Netflix series avoiding definitive conclusions. The end of endings. This shift frequently involves altering original source material specifically to leave doors open for future seasons or spin-offs.

I’ve always thought that one of Netflix’ big strengths was listening to the Voice of the Customer and creating content based on the findings. Whether that works in practice, of course, depends on asking the right questions and interpreting the answers in a meaningful way. I can well imagine interviewing consumers and hearing about their frustrations in not being able to follow the plot of a movie because they have the attention span of a goldfish. But I’m not sure the right response is to dumb down content for everyone else. That’s called tampering with a fully-functioning feedback loop. The sensible response to audiences failing to multi-task is to change nothing: if a viewer misses something they’ll press rewind. Netflix might get a short term increase in subscriptions when they dumb content down, but rest assured the longer term effect will be that non-goldfish viewers will tune out. Dumbing things down is a slippery slope to idiocracy in all domains, but when it happens in the entertainment sector it accelerates it everywhere else. The absolute same applies in the case of non-endings. Although, surely no consumer in the history of ever requested that after investing eight hours ploughing

through a serial, the only resolution at the end was to wait twelve months for the spurious second series to be filmed. Perhaps the feedback problem in this instance is listening to the production companies desperate to sell more content rather than the poor fools expected to sit down and watch what they produce. Content that increasingly again, viewers will increasingly elect to not watch. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Congratulations, Netflix, you win this year's Worst Service award, for selling your soul and integrity for a few short-term dollars. Twats.

6hours of bonk-fest entertainment completely changes the definitive ending in the novel purely to open up an opportunity to make another 6hours.

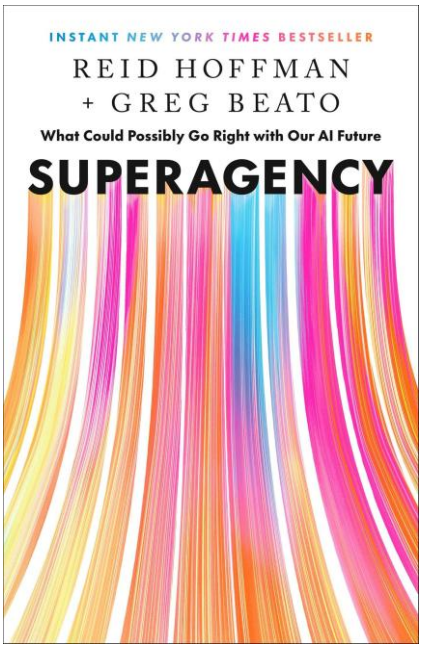
The Depeche Mode Everything-Counts-In-Large-Amounts Literature Award – I guess the main theme of 2025 is the apparent bewilderment of the publishing industry when it comes to AI. Fairly obviously, the year saw a veritable tsunami of business books with AI in the title, none of which, as far as we could see have anything to do with either business or AI in the actual world. I imagine we'll all look back on the mountains of 2025 dreck and properly understand the meaning of the expression pertaining to the blind leading the blind. Bewildered business leaders, of course, needed to be seen to doing something, so the desire of the industry to get 'something' out there to fill the void was inevitable. The problem is that the industry is comprised of even more blind people. The blind publishing the blind leading the blind. What could possibly go wrong?

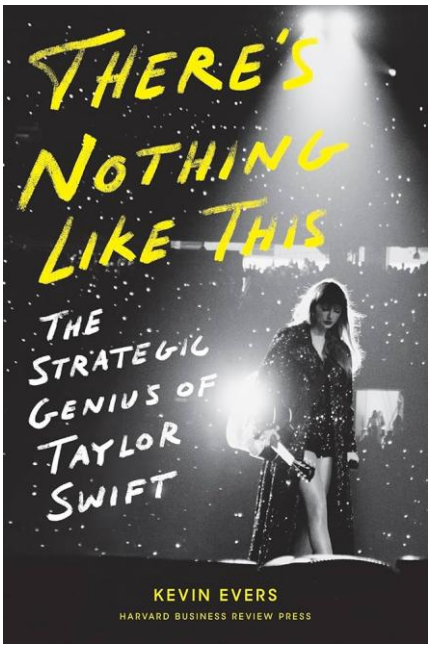
One potential remedy, of course, would be to find authors operating in the intersection region in the Venn diagram of AI experts and business experts. Naturally, given the immaturity of the domain, the number of people in that intersection is currently somewhere between zero and miniscule. In theory, American Internet entrepreneur, venture capitalist, podcaster, and author, Reed Hoffmann (net worth $2.5B) looked like he ought to be one of them. And so it was with some small degree of excitement that we headed towards his January 2025 book, 'Superagency' to find something worthy of recommendation. Little did we know we'd be 'recommending' the book in this 'worst of the year' section of SIEZ. The book is utterly horrible. The very worst kind of half-science, poorly researched examination of 'past innovations' and even worse speculation that because they were successful, AI will be similarly successful. The whole project is so bad at one point I figured it was some kind of false-flag operation to send readers down the complete wrong direction. Superfragility would have been a far more accurate title. It's been a long time since I felt the need to take an axe to a book, but Superagency brought me very, very close.

The axe did, however, come out of the wood-shed this year, to dispatch our eventual choice for worst business book of the year. A book so far ahead of the FFS-competition it was practically in a race of its own. An absolute travesty of a book. Made infinitely worse

by the fact that it was published by Harvard Business School. If I look at my horribly overflowing business library, the most visible publisher by some margin is the Harvard Business School. Albeit most of the titles seem to be from the last century. How the mighty fall. One hopes that Kevin Evers' – a senior editor at the Harvard Business Review – marks the low-point that gets someone at Harvard to wake up and realise enough is enough. 'There's Nothing Like This' is the most egregious cash-in in the history of egregious cash-ins. The basic premise seems to work something like this: Harvard Press sales are down… they need a blockbuster… Taylor Swift is the biggest music artist of the decade… ergo let's go investigate what has made her so successful and then write a book about it. The end result is a series of 'business principles' that include such golden nuggets as 'engage with fans' and 'exploit untapped opportunity spaces'. The latter 'insight' in Swift's case was write songs that girls her age would connect to, because older more established songwriters weren't. This isn't business genius, this is called generational inevitability. i.e. it happens every generation. If Swift didn't exploit the generational shift, someone else would have done so.

Worse still is the get-this-out-quick half-science. That phrase again. This time around Evers' desperation to fallaciously connect how Swift's career has evolved to grandmother's sucking eggs-type business 'insights' meant there was no consideration at all of via negativa analysis. His apparent lack of business acumen, however, is nothing compared to his misunderstanding of Taylor Swift, her career, or the people around her. Which is to say the book is full of factual errors. He never talked to Swift or anyone from her management team, all the sources are secondary and none of them were apparently fact checked, the apparent goal being to find something – anything – that fit a pre-determined, half-baked business best-practice hypothesis regardless of its actual veracity. A more accurate precis of Taylor Swift's ('strategic genius' driven) success ought more properly have said something along the lines: 'think about your peers, write good songs they'd like, be in the right place at the right time, be present on social media, cross your fingers.' The first hidden law of popular music is the difference between the most talented and the average talent is about 5% (i.e. the standard deviation is diminishingly small). The second hidden law of popular music success is it's 95% luck. See also: Ed Sheeran, Billie Eilish, and (massively below average talent, 1.5 good-adjacent songs) Coldplay.



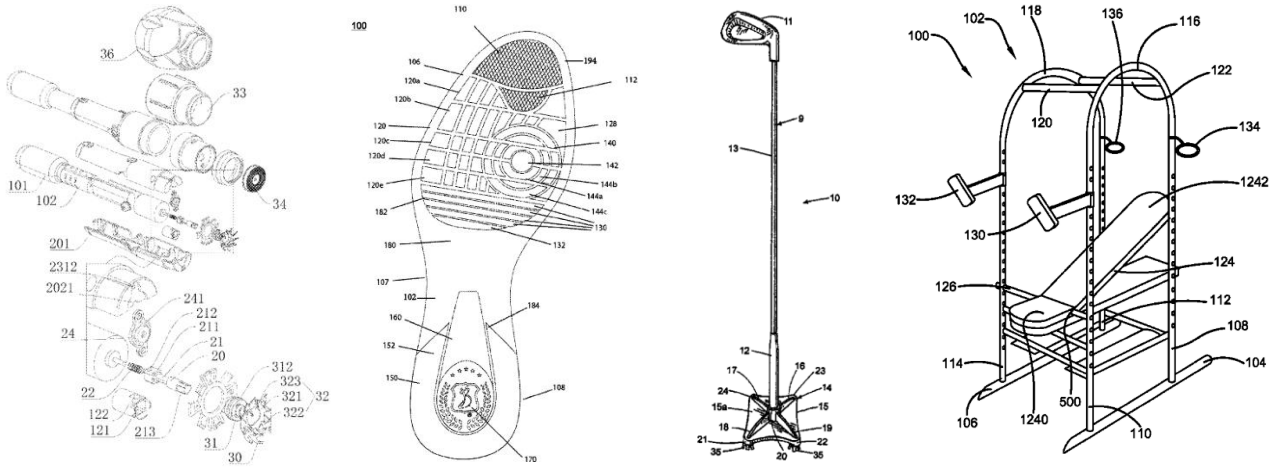


SYSTEM ATIC INNOVAT ION

The Necessity-Is-Not-Always-The-Mother Invention Award – now that seemingly everyone in China has caught on to the government's edict that the country should lead the world in creativity, 2025 saw a step-change increase in what we might think of as the lone-nut-job inventor category patent. An early contender for our prestigious NINATMI award was US12370706, granted in July, with, at the risk of giving the game away too early, the title, Multifunctional Sex Toy With Razor Structure. Here's the abstract:

A multifunctional sex toy with razor structure may include a vibration mechanism, a razor mechanism and a handheld mechanism, wherein the razor mechanism comprises a razor driver, a transmission component and a razor component, one end of the transmission component is connected to the razor driver, and the other end is connected to the razor component. The razor driver is started to drive the transmission component, further to drive the razor component to rotate to shave the hair on the body surface, thereby solving the problem that it is inconvenient for users to carry multiple products such as sex toys and razor tools at the same time.

The main graphic (left hand image in the cluster below) probably doesn't help. Unless you happen to be a James Bond/Mission Impossible gadget fan. As the last sentence of the abstract reveals, the inventor has made use of Inventive Principle 5, Merging. To be honest, I can think of better household products to merge together. Well, unless, BDSM is part of the user requirement.



Next up is another Principle 5 using lone inventor, this time based in Florida. The official title of US12,426,667, granted in September, is Sole Structure And Footwear Having Sole Structure, which doesn't really do justice to the problem being solved. To understand that, it's necessary to read the background description:

Dancing shoes have generally been considered to be a separate, specialized category of footwear. One does not dance in general shoes, and one does not wear dancing shoes except when dancing. The moves required for dancing necessitate that a dance shoe has specific characteristics. Many of these characteristics are undesirable for general footwear, such as smooth surfaces for sliding. Furthermore, dance shoes worn on non-dance occasions have a tendency to ruin the characteristics of the dance shoes that make them effective at dancing. There has not been an acceptable attempt to merge dance shoes and general shoes.

Well, if nothing else, the inventor has found a good physical contradiction. They also, as far as I can see, managed to construct the longest patent Claim in history (my favourite part being, "a circular spinner platform for spinning dance motions along with radiating arc platforms for additional spin control". Sounds perfect (for those based in the UK) for Dave Angel, eco-warrior. I'm guessing the happiest people in the US will be orthopaedic surgeons.

I guess both these examples help reveal that an actual use of Inventive Principle 5 would introduce some kind of one-plus-one-is-greater-than-two synergy, rather than likely hospitalisation. But maybe I'm just being picky?

Next up in the gallery of shame is the obligatory golf related patent. US12,201,198 was granted back in January to, I'm going to make a guess, husband and wife team, John and Sara Hunt from Minnetonka. Their 'Golf Club Boot' problem is all of our problems:

While self-standing stick canes are known in the art and golf club canes are also known in the art a difficulty with a self-standing golf club cane that uses an actual golf club iron, (which is metal), as a cane handle is that the golf club cane becomes top-heavy. Making a top-heavy golf club cane self-standing requires a large stiff connecter on the base while on the other hand to be useful as a cane the connector that supports the grip of the golf club should be able to pivot with respect the base to maintain the base in ground contact as a person walks about using the golf club cane. In addition, the golf club should be easy to insert or remove from the base since permeant attachment of the golf club to the base prevents the golf club from future use as a golf club.

Being a tad anal about these kinds of invention, I did a couple of calculations. The result of which suggested that the 'boot' (oh, that it was actually a 'boot', preferably a concrete-filled one), in order to provide the golf-club cane to stay stably upright, would need to weigh somewhat more than said golf-club cane. I don't know, maybe, I'm being picky again, but it feels like there might be lighter and more convenient solutions to this problem? Something that, I don't know, made use of an already existing resource? Or that featured something that was a tad more hand-friendly. Just in case someone was thinking about using it as a walking cane?

Okay, finally, on the right-hand-side of the hall of shame gallery, you're probably wondering what it is, comes US12,495,707, granted last month to – you guessed it – another lone inventor. This time in Michigan. The official title is, 'Intercourse Facilitating Adjustable Bench Furniture', but, sad to say, it immediately got abbreviated by my, admittedly slightly warped, brain, as 'sex bench'. Which, I'd have to also say I wouldn't be completely averse to. Especially, when reading the background description, I can see that there is a real problem to be solved. Namely, people with medical conditions or disabilities for whom sexual intercourse is somewhat uncomfortable. Someone really should do something to solve that problem. Someone, I hope, that, back to BDSM for a second, found a solution that didn't involve restraining straps and metal bars. My enduring disappointment, though, is with the Patent Examiner, who I feel merely needed to look back to the Spanish Inquisition (other Inquisitions are available) or Fifty Shades of Grey for some fairly compelling prior art?

The Slow-Fast-Moving-Consumer-Goods Design Excellence Award – AI, inevitably, started to have an impact on the products hitting the market in 2025. AI is the new Marketer's Dream. AI-sells. Well, unless, it's solving a problem that users don't have. Anyway, here are our first three award contenders for the year:



First up is Kohler's $599, 'Hardware No One Asked For' AI toilet scanner. It uses cameras and sensors to analyse "waste" for health indicators. Aside from the obvious bathroom privacy concerns, the device required a monthly subscription just to see your own data. I mean, I know the tech-billionaires want to know 'everything' about us, and I know every other corporation one wants a slice of the action, but, really? Not to mention the regular requirement to keep the camera lens clean in, err, challenging conditions. Prime idiocy…

…the perfect segue into another return for Mark 'Move Fast And Break Things' Zuckertwat. 2025 was the year of proving that not everyone looks cool wearing a pair of RayBans. The RayBan management team should've taken one look at the proposed promotional photos for the Meta Ray Ban Smart Glasses and issued an immediate cease and desist order. Imagine shredding 90 years of iconic eyewear branding in one photo session for the sake of a piece in the AI-land-grab. Not to mention the additional niggling issues in the second-generation Meta Ray-Bans. A veritable privacy nightmare. The device was frequently criticised for recording footage without clear indicators to bystanders, and the integrated AI often misinterpreted voice commands. Users also found the AI to be more intrusive than helpful, leading to 'high' return rates.

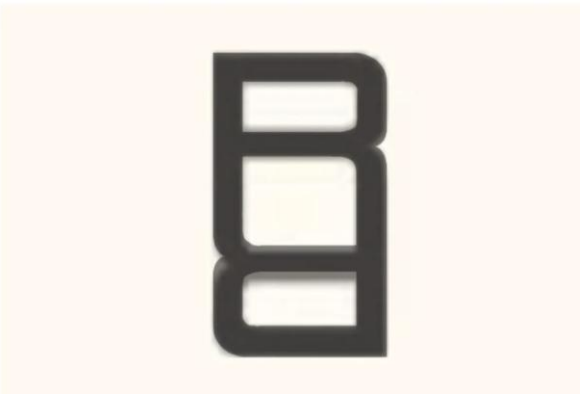
Next up, a surprise entry for Samsung, who managed to fall foul of one of the biggest controversies of the year following their decision to push forced advertisements to the 21.5-inch screens of Family Hub refrigerators via software updates. Consumers who paid $3,000+ found their kitchen appliance transformed into a digital billboard. Users reported that the ads slowed down the interface and made the cover Screen, (previously used for family photos), cluttered. The only way to remove the ads entirely, apparently, was to disconnect the fridge from the Wi-Fi. Which, surprise, surprise, kills the very "smart" features customers paid a premium for.

Perhaps, the main message for companies and consumers alike is that if the former don't understand 'Technology Readiness Levels' (see this month's second article), the latter shouldn't be buying their products. AI might destroy the world when naïve leaders at AlphaFold (they did win a Nobel Prize, so I should perhaps bear that in mind before I dig a hole too deep to get out of) let their open-source protein folding genius loose on bad-actors, because said people don't need to worry about spending time making sure products are safe before releasing them on the 'market'. But bad-actors aside, the reason AI won't destroy the world is that, at best, it speeds up the SRL1-3 part of the system development journey, but someone – i.e. humans – still have to do the expensive and time-consuming SRL4-9 bits. Well, in theory at least. To some extent when AI start-ups don't understand TRL/SRL language its kind of understandably. But when an actual engineering company doesn't understand it either, life in the future is probably not going to be like the Jetsons after all…

… say hello to team-Cybertruck. 2025, finally, was the year the Cybertruck's real-world reliability was put to the test. The results were 'messy'. Numerous recalls for accelerator pedals and trim pieces detaching at highway speeds plagued the vehicle. Furthermore, owners reported "stainless steel" panels showing signs of rust and staining after minimal exposure to rain. Having lived through the 1970s spending most of my spare-time patching up the rust on cars, I thought the automotive industry had finally learned that. when consumers buy a new car, they don't so much look at the shiny new car in the showroom as the now value-less rust-bucket sat on their driveway, they ought to start making cars that didn't rust. I suppose, too, that solving the problem with stainless steel, while heavy, should do the trick. Well, unless you want to weld it.

The overall lesson: if you want to build or maintain customer trust, don't launch SRL Level 5 products onto the market. Simple when you think about it.

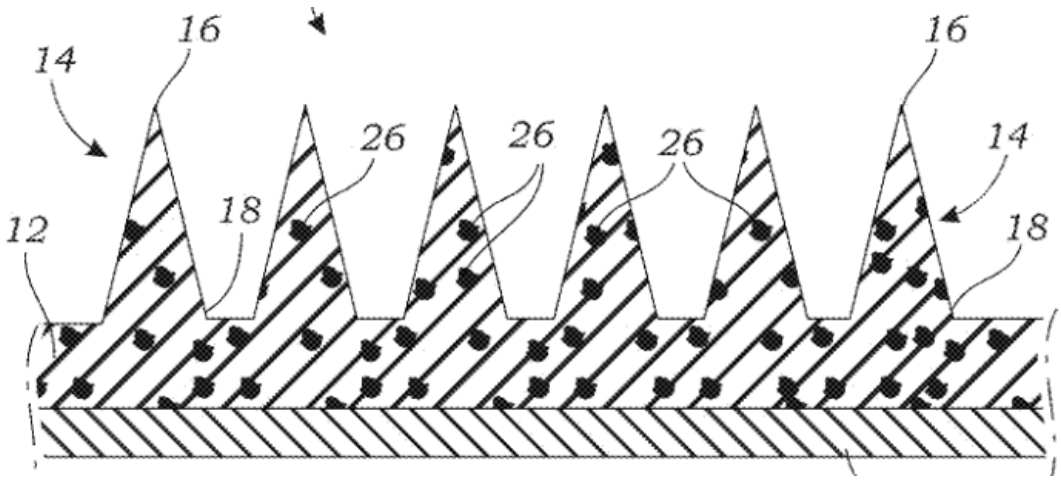
Let's All Jump Off A Cliff Advertising Suicide Award: Well, a first this year. No organisation has ever won this award twice. Never mind in consecutive years. But, here we are. Watching Jaguar Land-Rover continuing to commit commercial suicide. Granted, losing close to $500M because of a computer hack can't have helped the so-called 'House of Luxury Brands', and granted the online pile-in on their vehicle build quality – or lack thereof – sometimes veered into the cruel. But on the other hand, putting the marketing person in charge of steering the ship should perhaps have meant that the messaging might do something to counter the engineering reality. That didn't work last year of course, as demonstrated by our worst-of-the-year award to their supremely disastrous campaign for the new Jaguar. So, surely, things would be put right this year? Surely, they would learn their lesson and snatch victory from the jaws of embarrassing defeat? Or, alternatively, someone in the Marketing Department thought, let's double-down on our newfound fame as advertising un-gurus. Obviously, they went down that route. Enter the new Range Rover logo…



Excuse me? How in god's name did that make it past the initial brainstorming session? Do their customers hate them so much that they voted for that solution during the consumer panel sessions? Did the CEO, in the wake of last year's embarrassment, say to himself, 'nah, don't worry, I don't need to see it before you go public with it'. It simply beggars belief. Well. Unless, there's a secret still-to-be-launched brand tie-in re-invention of the paperclip. Or lingerie hook? Or belt-buckle? Or double-glazing? Something. Anything. You absolute fucking lipstick-on-pig idiots.

Fingers-crossed for 2026, y'all.

Patent of the Month – Microneedle Patches For Delivery Of Water-Insoluble Drugs



I don't know whether this month represents a temporary blip or whether it marks an important tipping point: for the first time, the majority of 'best' patents (as determined by our ApolloSigma filter) came from inventors outside the US. We've seen the surge in quality Chinese inventions for several years now. More recently we've seen a surge in quality inventions originating in the Middle East. This month we saw the combination of the two regions overtaking the US. Given the lag between application and grant of patent applications, it will be interesting to see if there is a pattern here. My guess is there will be.

Meanwhile, the patent at the top of the best-of pile this month is still going to go to the US, and specifically the University of California, where a trio of inventors had US12,515, 032 granted to them on January 6.

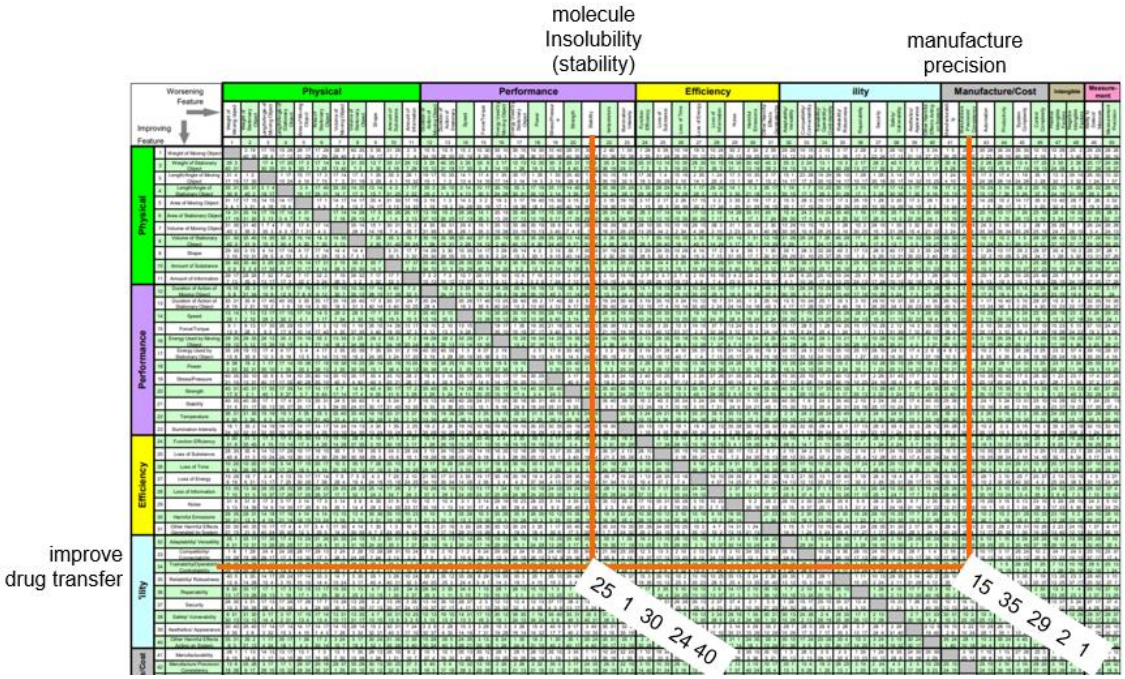
Here's what they have to say about the problem needing to be solved:

Transdermal drug delivery offers advantages over non-parenteral routes such as bypassing first-pass metabolism and facile administration. Mammalian skin, however, functions as a protective layer to the external environment and a fundamental barrier for transdermal delivery. Various strategies have been developed to overcome this barrier physically including ultrasound, iontophoresis, electroporation, and transdermal microneedle (MN) array patches. Among those, MN arrays have been widely studied in clinical trials because of their capability of penetrating the stratum corneum that greatly enhances systemic drug delivery with minimal pain and improved patient compliance. These properties enable MN arrays to be used for various biomedical applications and precision medicine tools, including insulin delivery, immunotherapy, cancer vaccine, sampling, and contraceptive delivery.

Natural hydrogel-MNs, such as those derived from alginate, cellulose, gelatin, and hyaluronic acid, have drawn extensive attention because of their biocompatibility and innate biodegradability. However, hydrogels are inherently composed of hydrophilic materials that is exclusively compatible with water-soluble molecules such as growth factors, chemokines, or hydrophilic drugs. These gels are not suitable for many drugs as around 90% of FDA approved drugs are lipophilic. Additionally, sustained release of these agents generally requires homogenous distribution of water-insoluble drugs in the matrix, which is challenging to achieve in hydrogel-based materials. Hydrophobic polymers can be implemented for delivery of water-insoluble drugs though these materials generally induce stronger inflammatory responses. Because of clear clinical need, development of biocompatible and biodegradable hydrogel-MN arrays that could directly function as a versatile platform for water-insoluble drug delivery is desired.

There are several ways to look at the contradiction being addressed by the invention, but if we keep things simple, what's needing to be improved is the delivery of drugs into a

patient and the things preventing that from happening (in 90% of drugs!) are – obviously, given the patent's title – lack of solubility of the needed therapeutic agent molecules, and then difficulty of achieving homogenous distribution of those molecules during manufacture. Here's how those two conflicts are best mapped onto the Contradiction Matrix:

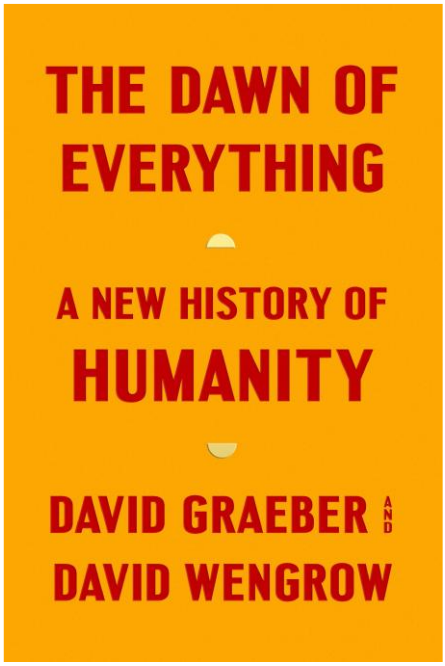


And here's how the inventors have solved both problems, as described in the super-concise (always the test of a strong solution) main Claim of the patent:

A patch for the delivery of a water-insoluble therapeutic agent across a biological barrier of living tissue, the patch comprising a base or substrate having a [Principle 1] *plurality of microneedles extending away from the surface of the base or substrate, wherein the plurality of microneedles are formed from* [Principle 24, 40] *crosslinked* [Principle 35] *gelatin methacryloyl (GelMA) and b-cyclodextrin (b-CD) conjugate (GelMA-b-CD) and the plurality of microneedles contain one or more water-insoluble therapeutic agents therein.*

Admittedly, the eventual solution is a fairly big stretch beyond the generic Inventive Principle suggestions – especially the usual-suspect, Principle 35 and its instruction to 'change a parameter' – but the Matrix has nevertheless identified all the necessary clues. The nicest part about this invention (hopefully!) is that it feels like the R&D journey beyond the basic solution is, compared to most SRL4-9 journeys, a relatively straightforward one. Especially since microneedle technology is already proven for soluble molecules. Keep an eye on this one.

Best of the Month – The Dawn Of Everything



Since its publication in 2021, *The Dawn of Everything* – by anarchist/anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow – has been widely described as a radical rethinking of human history. For anyone familiar with Clare Graves' work on value systems, it also poses an immediate and intriguing challenge.

At first glance, much of what Graeber and Wengrow describe appears to conflict with the Gravesian framework. Their stories of early societies that oscillated between hierarchy and equality, consciously rejected agriculture, or governed large cities without kings seem to undermine any idea of linear developmental progression.

The practical difficulty, alas, is that *The Dawn of Everything* is a 700-page book. As with last year's review of Iain McGilchrist's *The Matter With Things* (Issue 282), this is not a book one casually "dips into". It is also – again like McGilchrist – almost certainly a seminal work. The primary message of this review is therefore simple: *you need to read the book*.

The secondary purpose is to make that task less daunting by placing Graeber and Wengrow's arguments alongside the (hopefully more familiar) Gravesian story – not to adjudicate between them, but to explore what happens when they are read together.

What Graeber and Wengrow Are *Actually* Arguing

Much of the public reaction to *The Dawn of Everything* has focused on a caricature of its thesis. The book is often taken to claim that progress is a myth, hierarchy is unnecessary, and everything was better before states.

That is not what Graeber and Wengrow are saying. Their real contribution is subtler and far more interesting. They argue that human societies have historically demonstrated far greater value-system plasticity than modern evolutionary narratives allow. Rather than moving inexorably from "primitive" to "civilised", early societies experimented – consciously – with different ways of living.

Among their core claims:

- Humans repeatedly designed and redesigned social arrangements
- Societies shifted values seasonally, ritually, or situationally
- Hierarchy, equality, freedom, and coercion were often chosen and unchosen, not stumbled into
- There was no single, inevitable pathway toward "civilisation"

This is not an argument against order, scale, or complexity. It is an argument against unilinear stories of how they arise.

Why This Does *Not* Contradict Clare Graves

At this point, many readers instinctively reach for Graves – often to reject him. But this reaction usually targets a strawman version of Graves' work: the idea that societies climb a fixed ladder of stages, each superior to the last.

Graves himself was explicit that this was *not* his position. He repeatedly emphasised that:

- Value systems are context-activated, not permanently "achieved"
- Multiple value systems coexist within individuals and societies
- Regression and oscillation are normal, especially under stress
- "Higher" does not mean "better" in all circumstances

Graves' actual claim was this: humans develop increasingly complex coping systems in response to increasingly complex life conditions. Read properly, that claim is entirely compatible with Graeber and Wengrow – provided we abandon simplistic, ladder-like interpretations of Graves.

The Shared Core: Choice Within Constraint

The real bridge between *The Dawn of Everything* and Graves' model lies in a shared premise: humans are not passive passengers in history. Seen side by side:

Graeber & Wengrow	Graves
Societies experiment	Individuals and societies adapt
Values are situational	Values are conditional
No inevitable pathway	No guaranteed progression
Freedom to move	Capacity to respond

Graeber shows how freedom was historically exercised.
Graves explains how complexity is psychologically metabolised.
They are not competing explanations. They are complementary lenses.

Where Graeber Pushes Back – and Why He's Often Right

Graeber's frustration is not with Graves as such, but with what Graves' work is often used to justify: Whig history, technological determinism, and tidy narratives of inevitable ascent. On this point, Graeber is largely correct. Many popular accounts of "developmental stages" deserve the critique he offers.

Where *The Dawn of Everything* is strongest is in demonstrating that:

- Social change has always been non-monotonic
- Advanced values often appear *early*, then disappear
- Apparent "collapse" is sometimes deliberate simplification, not failure.

None of this refutes Graves. It refutes *lazy Graves*.

Early Experiments in Advanced Values

Read through a Gravesian lens, Graeber and Wengrow's anthropological examples take on a different meaning. They are not evidence against developmental dynamics, but

existence proofs of Graves' core insight: humans can activate any value system, but cannot always stabilise it.

Before mapping examples, one clarification is crucial: Graves did *not* argue that higher values only appear later in history. He argued that they only stabilise when life conditions demand and support them.

Graeber's work shows that many societies:

- Temporarily activated advanced values
- Then consciously stepped away from them
- Often due to scale, ecology, risk, or power dynamics

That is not a contradiction of Graves – it is confirmation.

A Selective Mapping: Graeber Meets Graves

What follows is a selective mapping of Graeber and Wengrow's most significant examples onto Graves' value systems. The point is not to force a linear sequence, but to show situational activation – exactly what Graves insisted upon.

Seasonal Political Oscillation

(Indigenous North American societies)

Some societies practised strong hierarchy during winter, then shifted to egalitarian autonomy in summer – explicitly recognising this as a choice.

- **Winter:** Blue / Red (order, authority, survival coordination)
- **Summer:** Green / Yellow (equality, autonomy, contextual awareness)

These societies were not "stuck" at a level. They were fluidly switching value systems.

Cities Without Kings

(Indus Valley, Çatalhöyük)

Large populations coordinated without obvious rulers, palaces, or monarchic authority.

- Functional base: Blue (norms, rules)
- Governance logic: Green (distributed power)
- Structural intelligence: proto-Yellow

Hierarchy, it turns out, is not a necessary consequence of scale.

Conscious Rejection of Agriculture

Some hunter-gatherer societies knew about farming and deliberately refused it.

- Rejection of Orange optimisation and accumulation
- Maintenance of Green balance and equality
- Strategic constraint choice consistent with Yellow cognition

This was not ignorance. It was a value trade-off.

Ritualised Power Containment

Sacred kings elevated symbolically, then mocked, constrained, or sacrificed.

- Red power acknowledged
- Blue ritual containment
- Green moral suspicion of dominance
- Yellow awareness of corruption risk

These cultures understood something modern systems still struggle with: unchecked power destroys the system that creates it.

Ritual Reversals and Carnivals

Temporary inversion of hierarchy – servants become masters, order is mocked but restored.

- Blue order

- Periodic Green release
- Yellow system-level pressure relief

This is not chaos. It is antifragility.
Modern societies largely eliminated these mechanisms – and pay the price.

What the Pattern Reveals
Taken together, the examples point to a consistent pattern:

Graeber shows that:
- Advanced values appear early
- Societies often limit complexity intentionally
- Hierarchy is situational, not inevitable

Graves explains:
- Why those values are hard to stabilise
- Why scale re-introduces Blue and Orange
- Why Yellow is rare and fragile

Early societies could *touch* Yellow. They could not *live* there.
Modern societies might – but only if they survive the transition.

Progress, Properly Understood
Graeber demolishes the myth that higher values only appear later.
Graves demolishes the myth that higher values are always better.
Together they imply something more demanding:
Progress is not ascent.
It is increasing capacity to choose values consciously.
Our current crisis is not caused by a lack of advanced values, but by a profound mismatch:
- Orange optimisation dominates
- Blue institutions are decaying
- Green moralism lacks system leverage
- Yellow thinking is rare and underpowered

Graeber provides the historical evidence that humans have faced this before.
Graves provides the developmental logic explaining why it is so hard at scale.

Why This Matters Now
From this perspective, today's "omni-crisis" looks very different.
It is not evidence that progress has failed. It is evidence that an S-curve has saturated:
- Returns turn negative
- Old solutions create new problems
- Moral narratives outpace institutions
- Regression becomes tempting because it is easier

Going backward is reflexive.
Going forward is developmental.
That asymmetry explains why civilisations so often collapse rather than transform.

Progress Is Not a Myth – It Is Discontinuous
The real mistake behind "progress is a myth" arguments is the assumption that progress should be smooth. When it isn't, disappointment turns into nihilism.
But every complex system we understand well progresses through S-curves:
- Long periods of incremental gain
- Saturation and dysfunction
- Discontinuous jumps to new regimes

Civilisations are no different.

Graeber shows how fragile progress has always been.

Graves explains why advancing is so much harder than regressing.

We are not witnessing the end of progress. We are stalled between curves – unable to return comfortably to the past, and not yet capable of stabilising what comes next.

That is why this moment feels so dangerous. And why *The Dawn of Everything* deserves to be read, alongside, not against, Clare Graves.

Read together, The Dawn of Everything and Clare Graves' work (plus, if I may, our Everythink book) offer a sobering message for today's leaders. History does not fail because societies lack good intentions or advanced values; it fails because complexity outgrows the cognitive, institutional, and moral capacities designed to manage it. Graeber reminds us that humans have always experimented with alternative ways of organising power, meaning, and cooperation. Graves explains why most of those experiments proved unstable at scale. For modern leaders, the implication is uncomfortable but clear: sustainable change will not come from doubling down on optimisation, nor from moral appeals unsupported by systems design. It will require leaders who can consciously hold multiple value systems at once, recognise when a dominant logic has reached its limits, and design transitions rather than defend plateaus. The challenge of our time is not to invent new values, but to build institutions and leadership capacities capable of stabilising them under unprecedented complexity.

Wow In Music – Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)

When Kate Bush released *Running Up That Hill (A Deal with God)* in August 1985, it was the first single from *Hounds of Love* and an immediate statement of intent. The song reached No. 3 in the UK charts and became her biggest international hit at the time. Four decades later, it remains her most enduringly popular track, re-entering charts repeatedly and achieving an extraordinary second life in the 2020s through *Stranger Things*. Few pop songs manage that kind of longevity without becoming nostalgic wallpaper. *Running Up That Hill* still feels urgent, strange, and emotionally unresolved – which is precisely the point.

From the opening seconds, the music establishes an unusual psychological landscape. We're in C minor, a key more commonly associated with Beethoven's stormier moments than with mid-80s pop. It's a slightly odd choice for a single, and Bush leans into its darkness rather than softening it. A driving, almost ritualistic drum pattern enters immediately, functioning less as rhythm and more as a kind of pulse – relentless, mechanical, and grounding. Over this, the Fairlight CMI synths articulate short, descending phrases that form the song's central hook: B♭ – G – C. These notes fall rather than rise, reinforcing the sense of emotional gravity pulling everything downward.

Structurally, the song is deceptively conventional. Two verses lead into a chorus, each preceded by a (Principle 10) pre-chorus, before a bridge at the song's emotional peak. After this, Bush repeats the chorus three times before moving into a brief outro or coda. What makes the structure compelling is not novelty but *placement*: each section arrives exactly when the tension demands it, never fully releasing the pressure it builds.

Melodically, Bush bases the vocal line on the C natural minor scale, giving the song a modal, slightly blues-inflected quality. A key feature is her repeated emphasis on B♭, the minor seventh of the scale. To the ear, the minor seventh always feels like it's *going somewhere* – it yearns to resolve but never quite does. This creates a persistent (Principle 16) harmonic instability, a feeling of suspended motion that sits in (Principle 37) tension with the pounding certainty of the rhythm section.

That instability is heightened by Bush's vocal delivery. In the verses, her singing is almost declamatory, bordering on spoken word – closer to recitative than pop melody. The effect is intimate but restrained, as if she's holding emotion at arm's length. Then, in the pre-chorus, something shifts. On the repeated phrase "*you, you and me*," Bush introduces (Principle 20) melismatic singing, stretching a single vowel across multiple notes. The song otherwise avoids large dynamic swings, so this contrast in word-setting stands out dramatically. It feels like a crack in the emotional dam – a moment where feeling briefly spills over before being contained again.

All of this musical tension mirrors the song's central theme: the desire to exchange perspectives, to escape the limits of one's own emotional position. Instability, restraint, and unresolved motion aren't just aesthetic choices; they're structural metaphors.

That's also why *Running Up That Hill* has proven so adaptable. Countless artists have covered it, often foregrounding different aspects of its tension. One particularly striking example is the jam band Goose, whose live performances often stretch the song beyond fourteen minutes. By elongating the harmonic space and improvising around the central motifs, Goose transforms Bush's tightly coiled anxiety into something expansive and communal (check out: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGRUDM9dIH0&list=RDLGRUDM9dIH0&start_radio=1 … I can't wait to see the band when they're in London in May) – proof that the song's emotional architecture is robust enough to support radical reinterpretation.

The enduring "wow" of *Running Up That Hill* lies in a fundamental musical contradiction: it is driving but unresolved, static yet constantly moving, emotionally restrained yet overwhelming. Pop songs typically offer release – a harmonic payoff, a cathartic chorus, a clear emotional answer. Bush refuses that bargain. Instead, she sustains tension all the way to the end, leaving the listener suspended on that minor seventh, still running, still climbing. It's not comfort that makes the song timeless, but the rare courage to leave the question unanswered – and trust that the struggle itself is enough. Tension, transformation and the sound of emotional physics.

Investments – Circular Fluorine Economy

Few materials embody both technological success and environmental failure quite like Teflon. Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) is prized for its extreme chemical and thermal stability, making it indispensable in cookware, electronics, medical devices, and industrial coatings. Yet that same stability has rendered it almost impossible to recycle. When discarded, PTFE typically ends up in landfill, or worse, incinerated, where it can generate persistent “forever chemicals” (PFAS) with long-term ecological and health consequences.

New research from Newcastle University and the University of Birmingham suggests that this deadlock may finally be breaking.

In a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, researchers describe a simple, room-temperature, solvent-free process that breaks PTFE apart using nothing more exotic than sodium metal and mechanical agitation. By shaking the materials together in a sealed ball mill, the process cleaves PTFE’s famously strong carbon–fluorine bonds, converting discarded Teflon into sodium fluoride – a valuable and widely used industrial chemical.

From an investment perspective, the significance lies not in the elegance of the chemistry, but in the contradiction it resolves:

From “Forever Plastic” to Strategic Feedstock
Fluorine is a critical element in modern life. Around a third of new pharmaceuticals rely on fluorinated compounds, as do many advanced materials used in electronics, diagnostics, and renewable energy systems. Yet fluorine production today depends on energy-intensive, environmentally damaging mining and chemical processes. Meanwhile, vast quantities of fluorine are locked up in PTFE waste, effectively stranded.

This new mechanochemical process flips the system. Waste PTFE becomes a secondary fluorine mine – one that is already extracted, already purified, and already distributed through global supply chains. Instead of externalising environmental harm through disposal, the material is upcycled directly into a usable input for high-value chemistry. That shift has several important implications:

- Value chain disruption: Fluorine recovery moves upstream from mining to waste management, threatening incumbents reliant on virgin fluorine extraction while creating opportunities for recycling, materials recovery, and specialty chemicals players.
- Regulatory alignment: As PFAS regulation tightens globally, solutions that neutralise fluorinated waste without incineration gain strong policy tailwinds.
- Capital efficiency: The process operates at room temperature, without toxic solvents, dramatically lowering energy and compliance costs compared to traditional fluorine chemistry.
- Platform potential: Sodium fluoride produced via this method can be used directly to synthesise a wide range of fine chemicals, opening pathways beyond toothpaste and water treatment into pharmaceuticals and diagnostics.

Mechanochemistry as a Hidden Enabler
This breakthrough also highlights the growing importance of mechanochemistry – an emerging field that replaces heat and solvents with mechanical force. As sustainability pressures mount, mechanochemical approaches offer a generalisable pathway for unlocking stubborn materials previously considered unrecyclable.

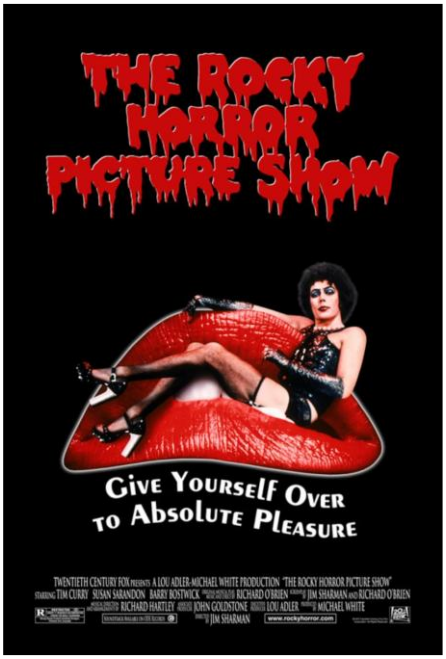
In innovation terms, this is a classic example of removing the need for compromise: preserving the benefits of high-performance materials while eliminating their end-of-life toxicity.

For investors focused on circular economy infrastructure, green chemistry, and antifragile materials systems, this research points toward a future where even “forever plastics” are no longer terminal liabilities, but recoverable assets.

Sometimes the most valuable breakthroughs don’t create new materials at all. They simply show us how to reclaim the ones we already have.

Read more:
Matthew E. Lowe, Benjamin M. Gallant, Nathan Davison, Matthew N. Hopkinson, Dominik J. Kubicki, Erli Lu, Roly J. Armstrong. A Reductive Mechanochemical Approach Enabling Direct Upcycling of Fluoride from Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) into Fine Chemicals. Journal of the American Chemical Society, 2025; 147 (44): 40895 DOI: 10.1021/jacs.5c14052

Generational Cycles – Rocky Horror Picture Show



The Rocky Horror Picture Show is the longest-running theatrical release in film history. As of 2025, the film is celebrating its 50th anniversary and has remained in continuous, though often limited, release since its debut. Since its initial release on August 14, 1975 (UK) and September 26, 1975 (US), it has never been fully pulled from theatres. After a poor initial box office performance, it found its home as a "midnight movie" starting at New York's Waverly Theatre in 1976, where the tradition of audience participation and "shadow casts" began. It is, to say the least, a cultural phenomenon. Which, for anyone that has sat alone to watch it, might sound somewhat odd given that it is by almost all accounts a really, really bad movie. Objectively bad.

How could that be? There is compelling evidence that Rocky Horror could *only* have become a cult via Gen X, even though later generations have happily inherited it. The movie required a very specific generational psychology, historical moment, and media ecology that only early Gen X occupied. Later cohorts could sustain the cult, but they could not have ignited it.

Here is a swift breakdown of the evidence:

1. **Timing**: **Gen X Was the Only Cohort at the Right Life Stage** – The midnight showing cult take-off occurred in the period 1976–1980. Who was young, unsupervised, and culturally unclaimed at that moment?

- Boomers (born ~1945–1962) – this generation was already politically activated (Vietnam, civil rights), or already settling into careers/family norms. They were also too earnest, too mission-driven, and too ideologically set in their ways.
- Gen X (born 1963–1983) – a generation thus beginning to come of age in the second half of the 70s, they were economically marginal, culturally invisible, raised amid divorce, latchkey childhoods, and collapsing institutions, they had no grand narrative to belong to

Rocky Horror did not offer a cause.
It offered belonging without purpose, which is exactly what Gen X needed.

2. **The Boomer Counterculture Was the Wrong Psychology** – Boomer counterculture (late 60s–early 70s) was serious, moral, revolutionary, and ideologically earnest. Even when playful (e.g., Hair), it still believed it was changing the world. Rocky Horror is the opposite: it contained no moral message, no political programme, no redemptive arc and no improvement narrative. In a key phrase from the script, 'Don't dream it. Be it.' It was a call to action to not change the world, but rather to opt out of it. A stance that read as nihilistic or trivial to Boomers. To Gen X meanwhile, it read as honest.

3. **Gen X's Signature Trait: Irony as Survival** – sociologists consistently identify Gen X as the first cohort for whom irony was not a style, camp was not nostalgia, performance was not rebellion and identity was not fixed. Rocky Horror requires loving something because it's bad, performing sincerity through parody, radical self-expression without belief, and sexual ambiguity without ideology. All of which are Gen X-native modes. Later generations learned them. Gen X invented them as coping mechanisms.

4. **The "Abandoned Kids" Effect** (Strauss–Howe Link) – Gen X was under-parented, over-exposed, morally unsupervised, institutionally unprotected. Rocky Horror's midnight dressing-up ritual required physical risk (going out late), social risk (public humiliation), sexual risk (taboo play), no adult permission structure. Parents of Boomers wouldn't have allowed it. Gen X parents often didn't notice. That absence was not incidental, it was enabling.

5. **Media Ecology**: Pre-Internet, Post-Broadcast – Rocky Horror cult formation required repeated physical presence, local variation, oral tradition, no official canon, and no central authority. This could only happen in a post-network era (so it wasn't massified) and a pre-digital era (so it wasn't instantly globalised). Gen X is the only generation formed in that narrow window. Millennials would have TikTok'd it, meme-ified it and, ironically, consumed it alone. Rocky Horror requires collective embodiment, not content consumption.

6. **Evidence from Comparative Cult Phenomena** – other cult phenomena confirm the pattern: Rocky Horror, the Punk scene, Goth subculture, rave culture, grunge. All Gen X. Whereas Boomer cults were ideological (political, spiritual) and Millennial cults have tended to be platform-mediated (fandoms, IPs). Rocky Horror sits uniquely in the Gen X zone - live, local, ironic, embodied, meaningless, and sacred anyway.

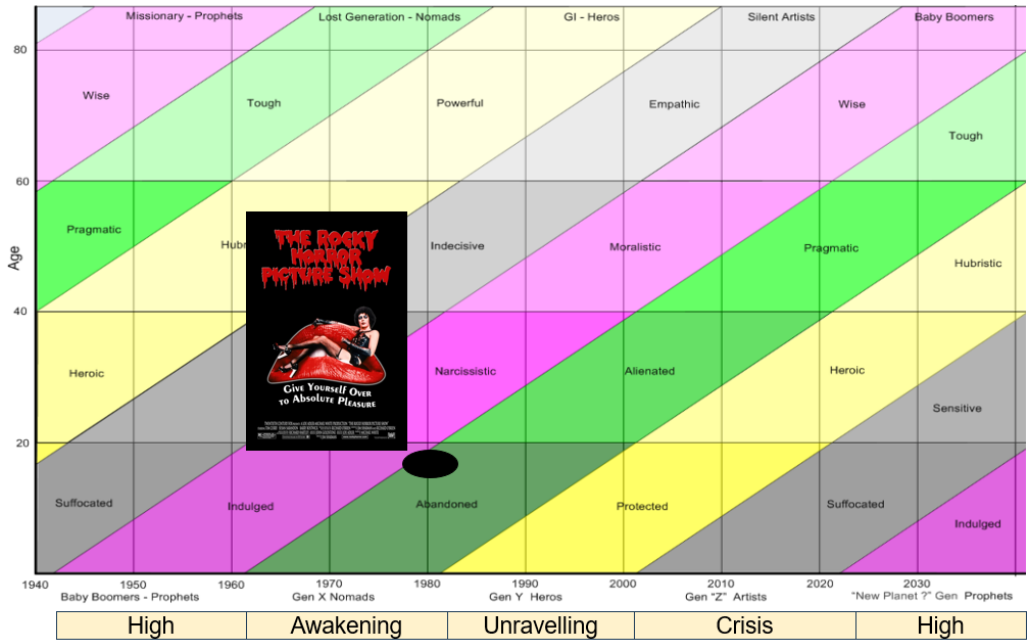
7. **Why Later Generations Could Join**, but Not Start It – once established, Rocky Horror became a ritual, a safe transgression, and a heritage space for misfits. Later generations could step into it because the risk had been normalised, but only Gen X was willing to look ridiculous with no guarantee anyone else would join. That's the key ignition condition.

The Bottom Line

There is strong cultural, generational, and structural evidence that The Rocky Horror Picture Show could only have become a cult through Gen X. Not because Gen X is "special," but because it was:

- the first generation without a promised future
- the first to use irony instead of ideology
- the first to turn meaninglessness itself into community

Rocky Horror wasn't just a movie for Gen X. It was practice for surviving the world they inherited.



The Inverted GenX Hero's Journey

Watching the movie alone rather than (cross-)dressed amongst a theatre full of rice-throwing, newspaper-wielding peers is not a great experience. An almost complete inversion of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey probably helps to explain why the film is objectively bad. But also why it has resonated so deeply with large chunks of the GenX psyche. The Hero's Journey inversion is *deeply* Gen X, and *Rocky Horror* is almost a textbook example of what helps characterise the typical GenXer. It's worth unpacking this carefully, because it reveals something bigger than a single cult movie.

First, here's the Classical Hero's Journey (What Gen X Inherited). Joseph Campbell's canonical arc assumes a world with direction, authority, and redemption:

1. Ordinary World – Stable norms exist
2. Call to Adventure – Something *matters*
3. Refusal of the Call – Fear, but meaning remains
4. Mentor Appears – Wisdom is transferable
5. Crossing the Threshold – Enter the Special World
6. Trials & Allies – Progress through struggle
7. Ordeal – Central contradiction resolved
8. Reward – Transformation achieved
9. Return with the Elixir – Society benefits

This structure presumes institutions are flawed but salvageable, elders know something worth passing on, suffering is redemptive and that progress is real. By the time Gen X came of age, none of those premises felt true anymore.

Gen Xers in the US grew up watching:

- Vietnam end without meaning
- Watergate collapse authority
- Divorce dissolve family stability
- Corporations shed loyalty
- Ideologies fail quietly

So the Hero's Journey looked… dishonest.
Gen X didn't reject *stories*. They rejected the promise that the journey leads anywhere.

Rocky Horror doesn't follow the Hero's Journey, but rather systematically inverts it.

Classical Stage	Gen X Inversion (Rocky Horror)
Ordinary World	The world is already absurd
Call to Adventure	An accident, not destiny
Mentor	A seducer / trickster
Threshold	Enter chaos willingly
Trials	Erotic, pointless, camp
Ordeal	No resolution – only excess
Reward	Permission to be strange
Return	Optional, unchanged
Elixir	None – except self-acceptance

There is no growth arc. There is no moral improvement. There is no lesson to bring back. And that's the point.

"Don't Dream It. Be It." Is Anti-Campbell. That line alone rejects the Hero's Journey. It says there is no future ideal, no transformational arc, no "becoming better". Just inhabiting the present fully, performatively, temporarily. It is a philosophical rejection of teleology – again, very Gen X.

The Hero Becomes the Fool. As shown in this month's Short Thort, there is a strong link between Campbell's Hero's Journey and the 'Fool's Journey described in the Major Arcana cards in a Tarot deck. The Fool is the first Tarot card. In the Tarot, the Fool is outside the sequence, zero, not one. He begins journeys without knowing why and he learns nothing that can't be forgotten. Rocky Horror casts *everyone* as The Fool: Brad, Janet, the audience, the performers. No one ascends. No one returns enlightened. They just… survive being ridiculous. This is the Hero's Journey collapsed into ritual.

This is crucial. Gen X didn't want salvation stories or progress myths or revolutionary arcs They wanted ritual without belief. Midnight screenings turn narrative into call-and-response, costumes, repetition, communal absurdity. Waiting for Godot.
Meaning doesn't come from *what happens*. It comes from showing up again i.e. radically anti-Heroic.

In Strauss–Howe terms:

- Boomers (Prophets) seek moral journeys
- Gen X (Nomads) seek survival journeys
- Millennials (Heroes) seek collective quests
- Gen Z (Artists) seek emotional synthesis

Nomads don't *save* the world. They learn how to live in it while it's broken. In this context, Rocky Horror makes for a classic myth. There is no salvation, no authority, and no future promise. Only momentary freedom

The classical Hero's Journey assumes the world wants to be saved. Archetypal Gen X stories assume the world is indifferent. And so the inversion becomes not *"How do I fix this?"* but rather *"How do I stay human inside this?"* Rocky Horror answers: by playing. By parody. By community. By refusing seriousness.

Millennials, on the other hand, during their years of transition to adulthood needed stories of impact, collective improvement and moral coherence. Hence the movies they tended towards (Harry Potter, Marvel, etc) sought to revive the Hero's Journey.

Gen X needed permission to stop pretending the journey works. Rocky Horror is that permission, ritualised. "Give yourself over to absolute pleasure."

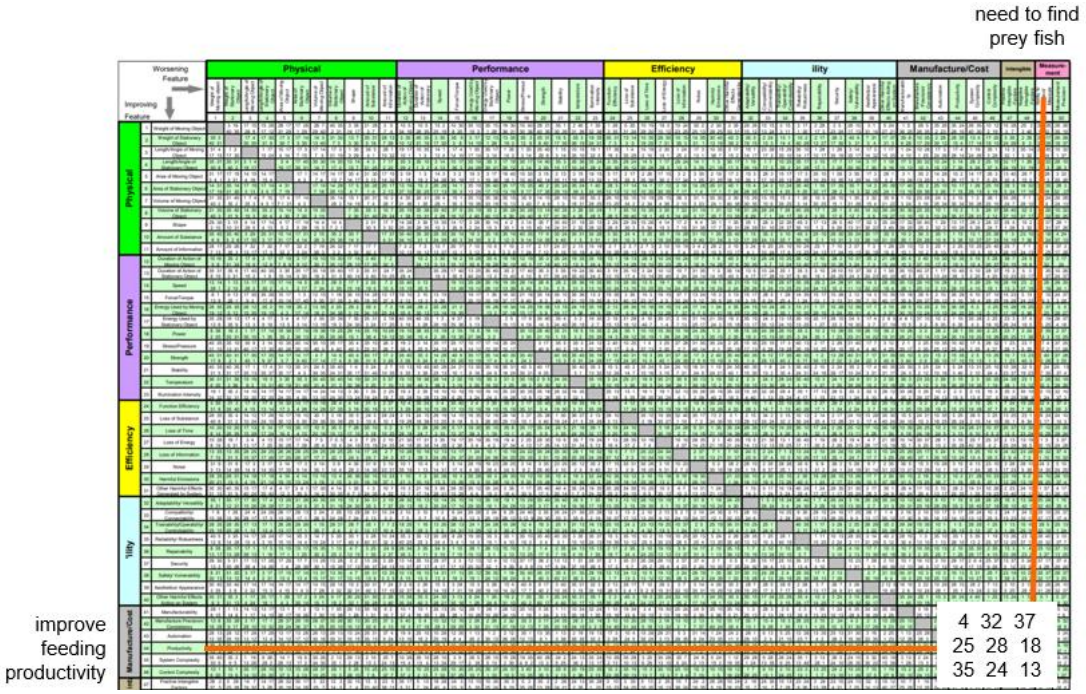
The Gen X Hero’s (adulthood) Journey inversion looks like this:
The journey doesn’t fix the world.
It doesn’t fix you.
It just teaches you how to laugh, survive, and keep dancing anyway.
("It’s just a jump to the left, and then a step to the right!")

That’s not cynicism.
It’s adaptive realism.
"It’s not easy having a good time! Even smiling makes my face ache!"
And so, yes, it is *very* Gen X.

Biology – Black Heron

The black heron faces a familiar productivity problem. To survive, it must catch fish efficiently. Yet actively searching for fish – moving through shallow water, scanning, chasing – costs time and energy and risks scaring prey away. The contradiction is clear: the heron needs fish to be visible and accessible, but without expending effort to find or pursue them.

Here's what the contradiction looks like when mapped onto the Contradiction Matrix:



Rather than solving this contradiction by becoming faster, more aggressive, or more alert, the black heron does something counterintuitive. It turns the problem inside out. Standing still in shallow water, the heron spreads its wings forward and downward, forming a dark canopy over the water's surface. This "cloak" creates a shaded patch that reduces surface glare and dramatically improves underwater visibility. More importantly,

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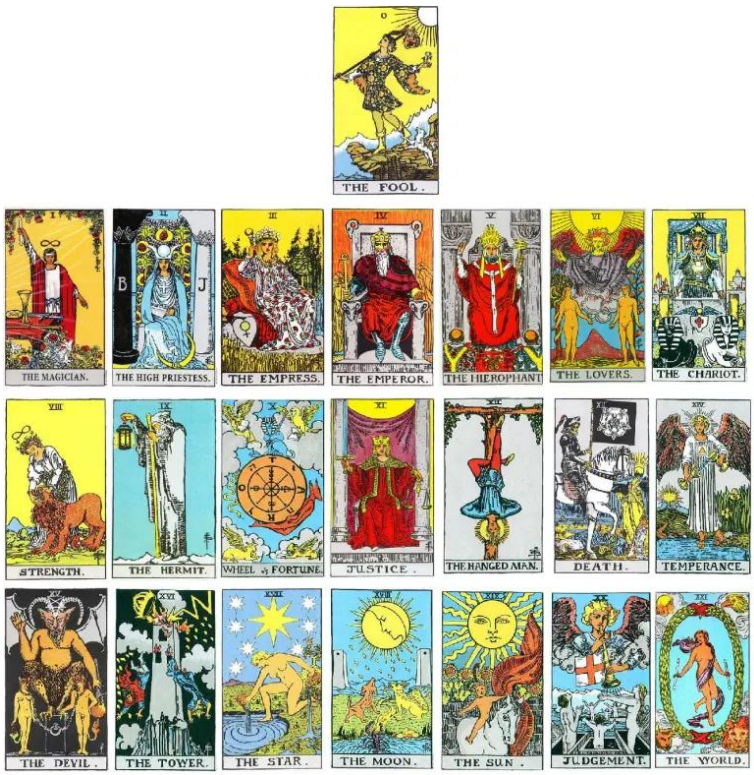
the shade itself becomes an attractor. Small fish, instinctively drawn to cover that suggests safety from predators above, swim directly into the heron's feeding zone.

In TRIZ terms, this is a textbook application of Principle 13: The Other Way Around. Instead of the predator seeking the prey, the environment is altered so that the prey comes to the predator. It is also an example of Principle 25: Self-Service: the heron uses an existing resource – its own wings – not for flight, but as a functional tool to reshape the system.

The result is a low-energy, high-yield hunting strategy. The heron maximises productivity not by working harder, but by redesigning the conditions of the interaction. A powerful lesson in contradiction resolution through inversion rather than optimisation.

Short Thort



The Tarot Major Arcana 'Fools-Journey' is the same as Joseph Campbell's 'Hero's Journey':

Tarot Sequence	Hero's Journey Parallel	Interpretation
0 The Fool	Ordinary world → Call to adventure	Innocence, potential, uninitiated seeker
1–5 (Magician to Hierophant)	Meeting mentors; acquiring basic tools	Learning rules, skills, identity formation
6 The Lovers	Threshold crossing	Commitment to a path; value-based choice
7 The Chariot	Entering the special world	First victories; ego in control
8–11 (Strength to Justice)	Tests, allies, enemies	Moral challenges; courage; consequences
12 The Hanged Man	Ordeal → Ego death	Perspective flip; surrender
13 Death	Death & rebirth	Transformation, shedding old identity
14–19 (Temperance to Sun)	Reward → Road back → Resurrection	Integration, enlightenment, clarity
20 Judgement	Final test / revelation	Self-evaluation, transcendence
21 The World	Return with the elixir	Completion; mastery; new beginning

The Major Arcana, in other words, can be read as a *proto-Hero's Journey* created centuries before Campbell but aligned with the same archetypal structure.

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News

The 1%ers Website

The website accompanying the 1%ers book launched last month is now live. Check it out at the1-percenters.com. The site links to our new "How New Things Get Done. The 1%ers" podcast. Every week real business cases are dissected by Shana and Darrell, showing how some people consistently get impossible things done... almost always through counter-intuitive moves.

TRIZ Mastery Hub

Darrell's next two sessions at Robert Adunka's TRIZ Mastery Hub have been confirmed as:

23 February: *AI-Guided Innovation: TRIZ-Based Prompt Engineering* – the rapidly emerging need in a world where AI can answer almost all questions, is for humans that know how to ask the right questions and be able to choose the most appropriate answers. The education system helps with neither of these things, but fortunately, TRIZ and other principle-based strategies can help. In this session we will examine how TRIZ can help everyone become better prompt-engineers.

23 March: *Systems, Systems, Systems: Integrating The World's Different System Models Into A Coherent Whole* – the single biggest reason for the failure of strategic innovation projects is a failure on the part of project teams (and particularly leaders) to possess the requisite level of knowledge to understand systems. In ecosystem-based projects this lack of knowledge is in effect the only reason for failure. Is there a universal systems model? Is there a system-of-systems? Is it possible to reduce innovation attempt failure rates by teaching systems theory in a better way?

DangerMouth

Talking of podcasts, we've recorded three new episodes in January, and lined up a series of rather cool guests for the coming months. Hopefully to make up for the book-writing-triggered slow-down at the end of last year. Particularly look out for the discussions on 'Mass engagement', the 'Free Energy Principle', and 'The 48 Laws of Power'. Check out dangermouth.org… and feel free to drop us a line with questions and/or suggestions for future pods.

New Projects

This month's new projects from around the Network:

Energy – SI Workshops
Healthcare – Generations Project
Aerospace – ICMM Project
Logistics – AI And Innovation Workshops
Advertising – Innovation Capability Assessment Dashboard
Education – Entrepreneurship Workshops
Government – Tech Accelerator Programme Dashboards