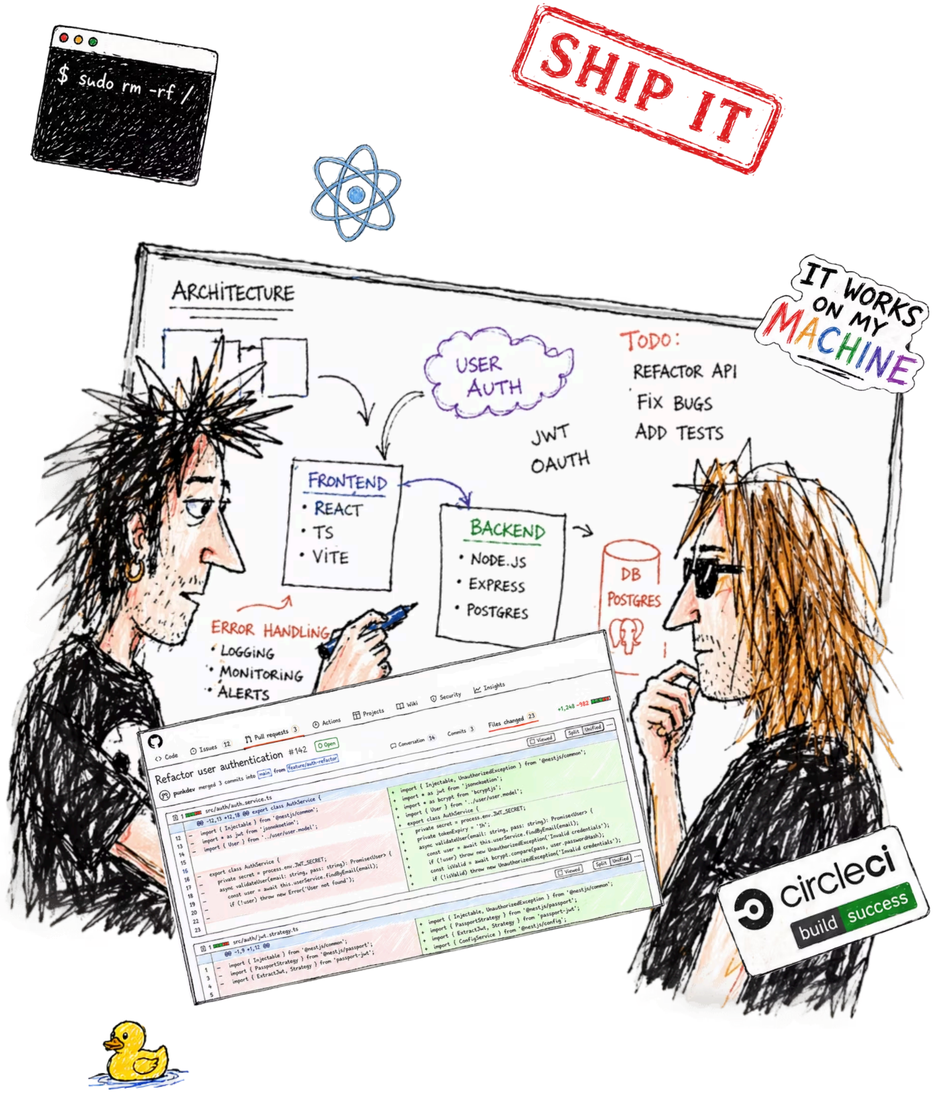
Pull Requests Are Dead. Long Live Peer Review

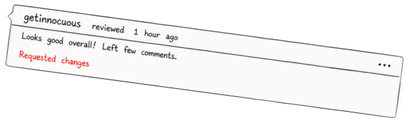
Dylan Ratcliffe

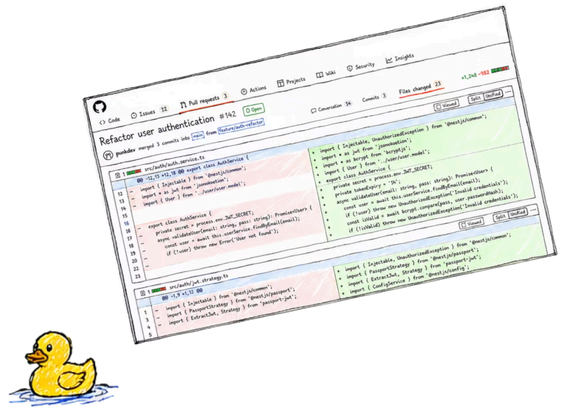




Lesson 1

AI is not your peer





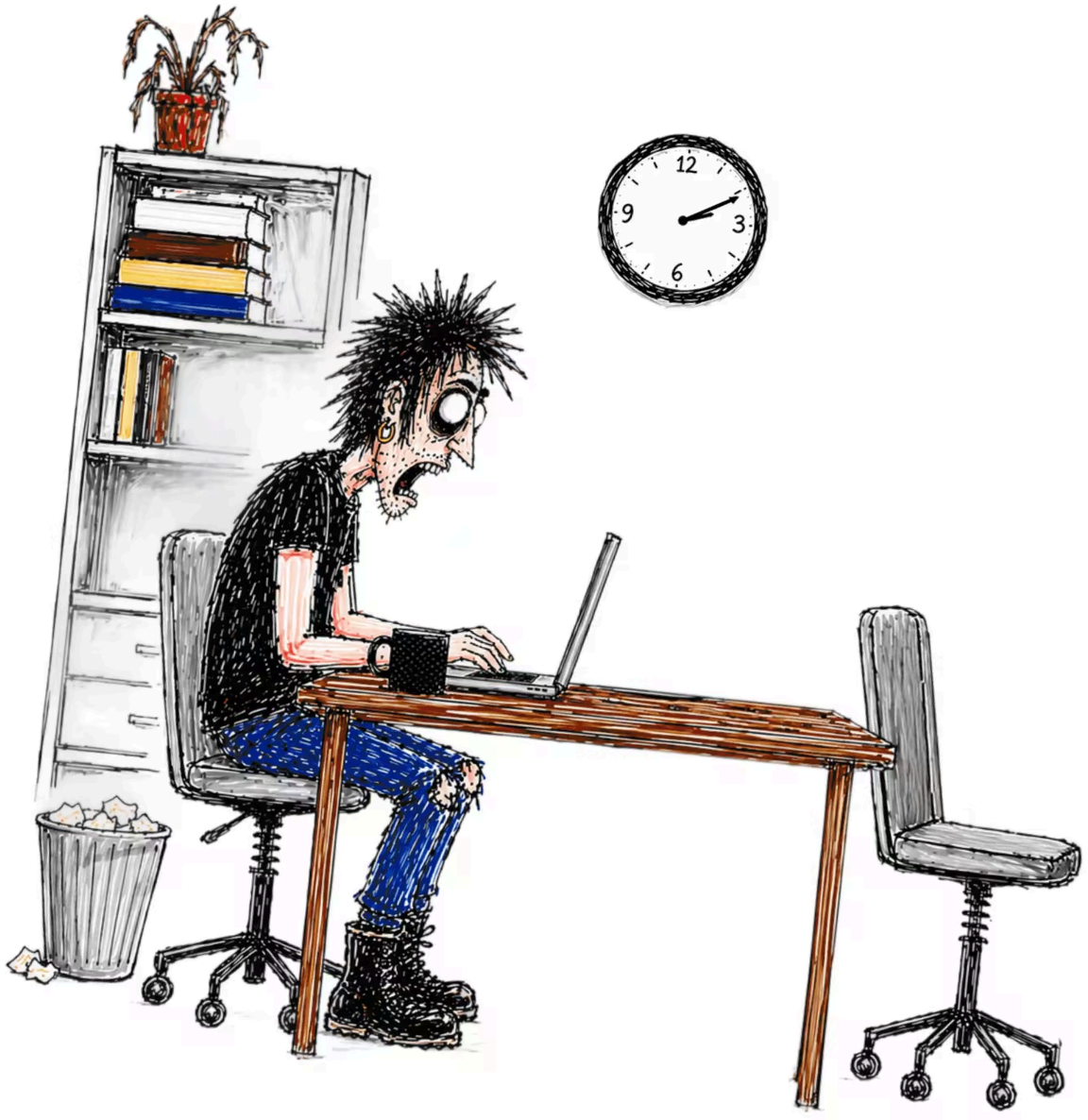
What we used code review for

Catching bugs.
SOC2 compliance.
Training juniors.
Tribal knowledge.



Then we tried it on AI-written code

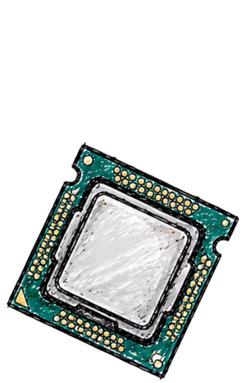
You're absolutely right!





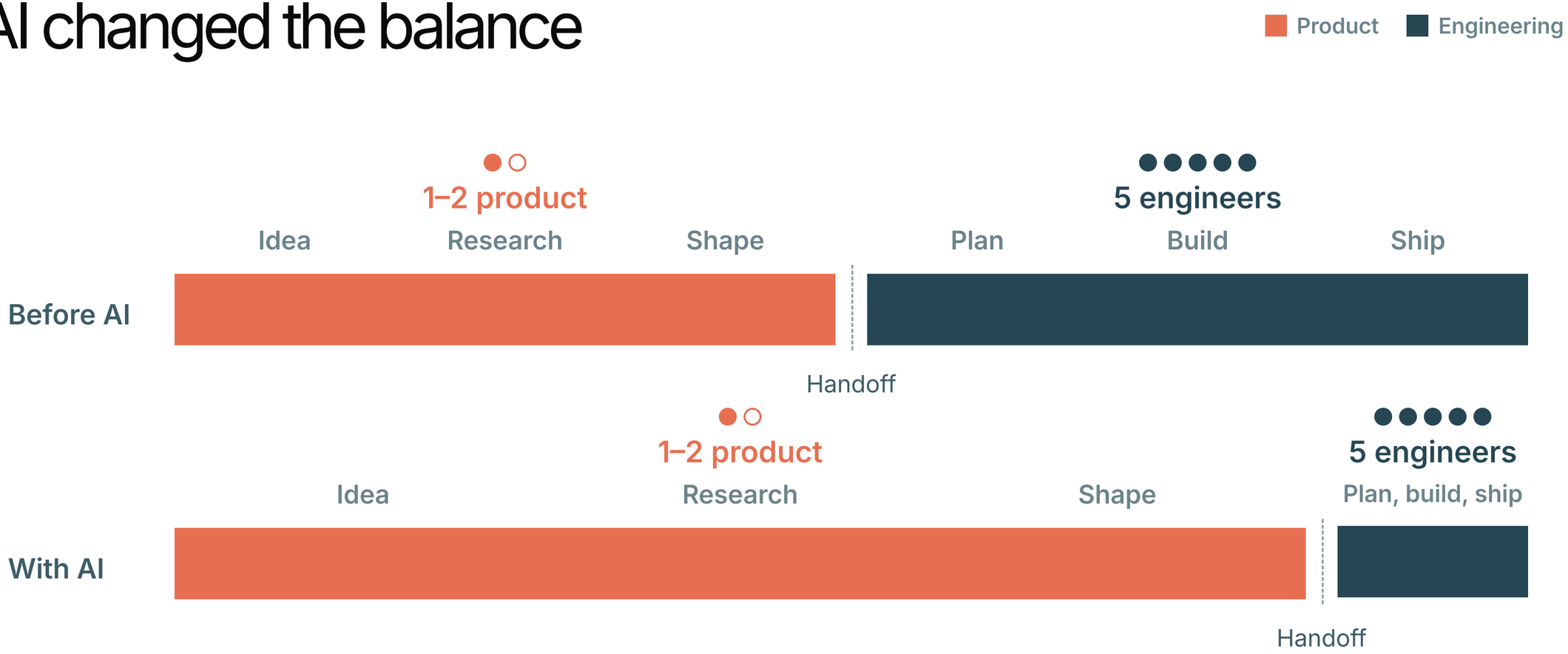
Lesson 2

If your job is converting detailed specs → quality code, you're out of a job





AI changed the balance



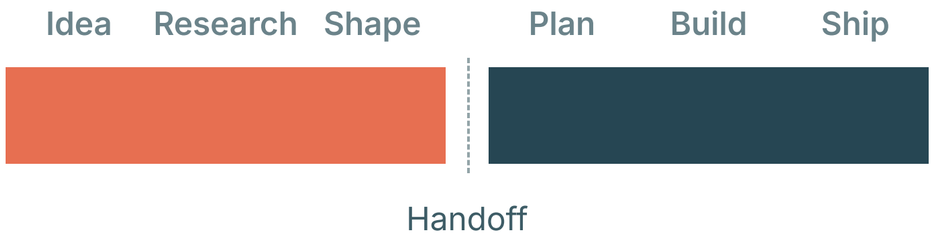
Building became faster than explaining and handing it over.

Two ways to fix it

Product Engineering Agent

Change the team composition

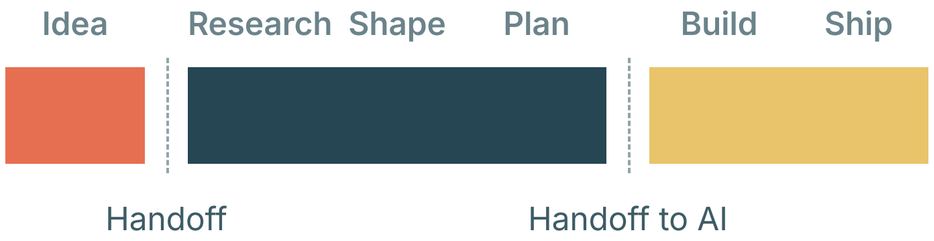
3 product 3 engineering



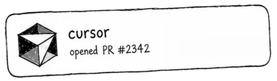
More product. Fewer engineers.
The work balances around the handoff.

Shift responsibility left

1–2 product 5 engineers



Earlier handoff to engineering.
Build and ship go to AI.



Lesson 3

Not all loops are created equal





do ... while

do_while.sh

```
do
  agent.pickup(ticket)
  agent.decide_approach()
  agent.make_tradeoffs()
  agent.write_code()
  agent.write_tests()
while human.audit()
```

The interesting decisions already happened. You audit them.

until

until.sh

```
agent.research_codebase()
human.decide_approach()
human.make_tradeoffs()
plan = human.write_with(agent)

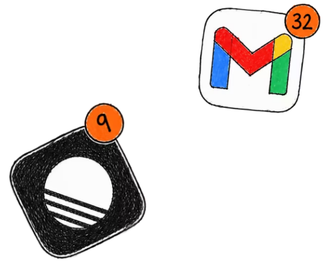
until agent.matches(plan)
do
  agent.implement(plan)
done
```

Define the condition first. An agent can check if the code matches.



Lesson 4

Human attention is precious



First two weeks. Same team.

3.2×

issues completed

3.4×

commits

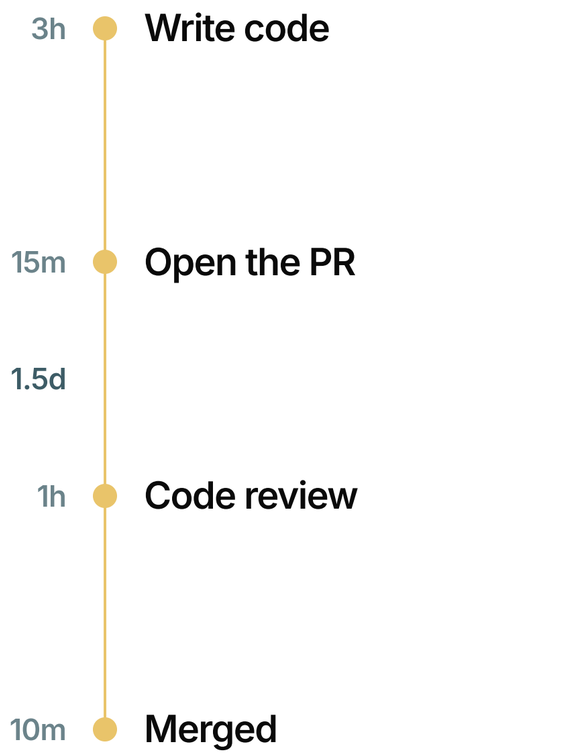
3.2d → 1.3d

lead time **−59%**

A 2h ticket

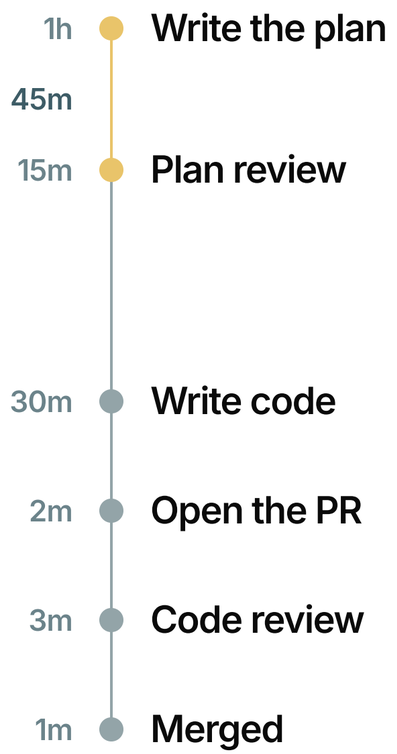
Human attention required — Automated

Pull request



40h	4h 25m	11%	40h
Attention	Working	Efficiency	Lead time

Until loop

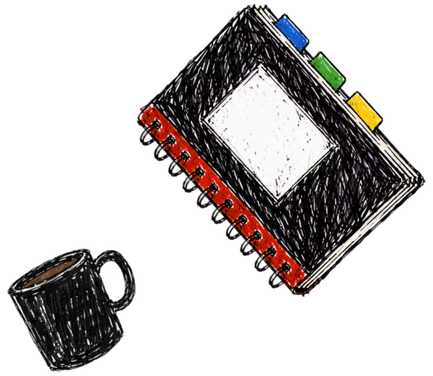


2h	1h 15m	63%	2h 36m
Attention	Working	Efficiency	Lead time



Lesson 5

Reject the recipe, not the meal



What a rejection adds

+40m

to a rejected plan

+16h

to a rejected PR

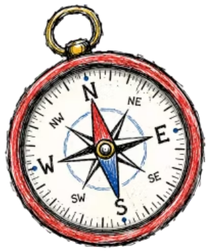
8%

of plans abandoned

zero code written

2.8×

more likely to give feedback



Lesson 6

When anyone can make anything, the big differentiator is ~~what you choose to make~~ how you choose to make it

Paul Graham



What: a laptop.



ThinkPad X1 Carbon

14” display · 120Hz
32GB memory
1TB SSD
12.3” wide



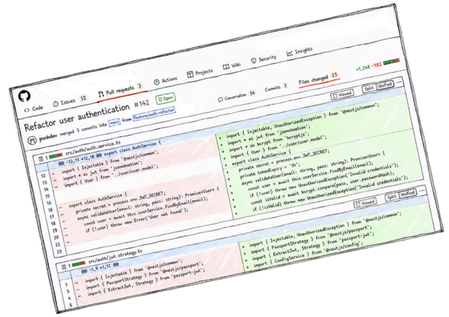
MacBook Pro 14″

14” display · 120Hz
32GB memory
1TB SSD
12.3” wide



The job of engineering is going to change

- Peer review moves to the plan
- Engineering judgment moves up a level
- The interesting decisions stay with the team
- Humans set the direction. Agents execute.

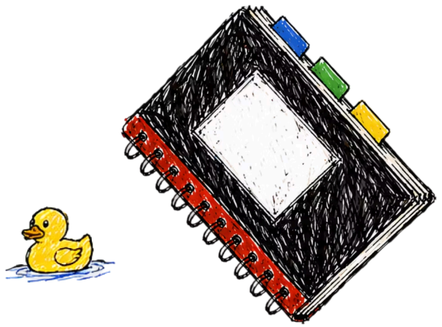






Okay but how?

...easy for you to say



How did we do change management?

Using Conway's Law

1 No questions until the first demo

Engineers have 24 hours to resolve the ambiguity. The demo starts the conversation with product.

2 A clear handoff to the agent

The team agrees the plan before execution. Differences come back for a decision.

