Skinning your users

Building better products by humanizing Agile user stories

Will Sansbury
Interaction designer

Drop the torches and pitchforks! I'm talking about putting skin on.

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Moving from this…

…to this

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Fair warning

If you think “scrum” is:

- Something you scrub off your tub
- Easily cleared up with a round of antibiotics
- Usually encountered on the rugby pitch
- That weird thing the developers do

… then this isn’t the right session for you.

Want to learn more? Google “Mike Cohn mountain goat.” It’s SFW—I promise.

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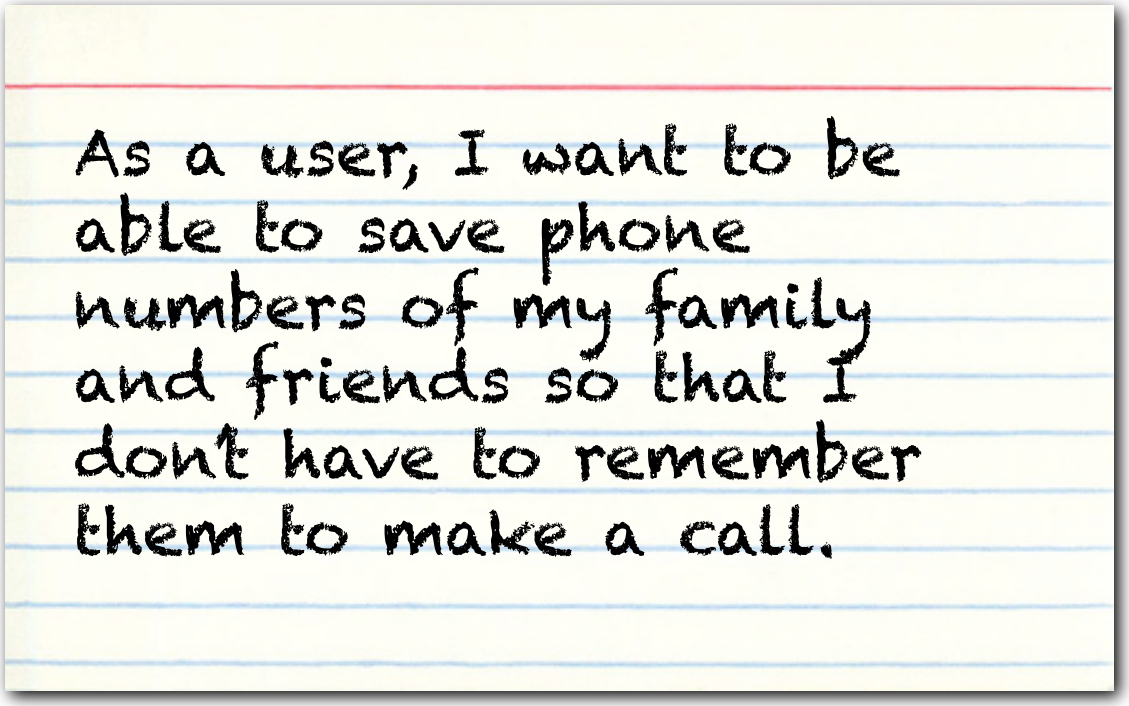
User stories



User stories

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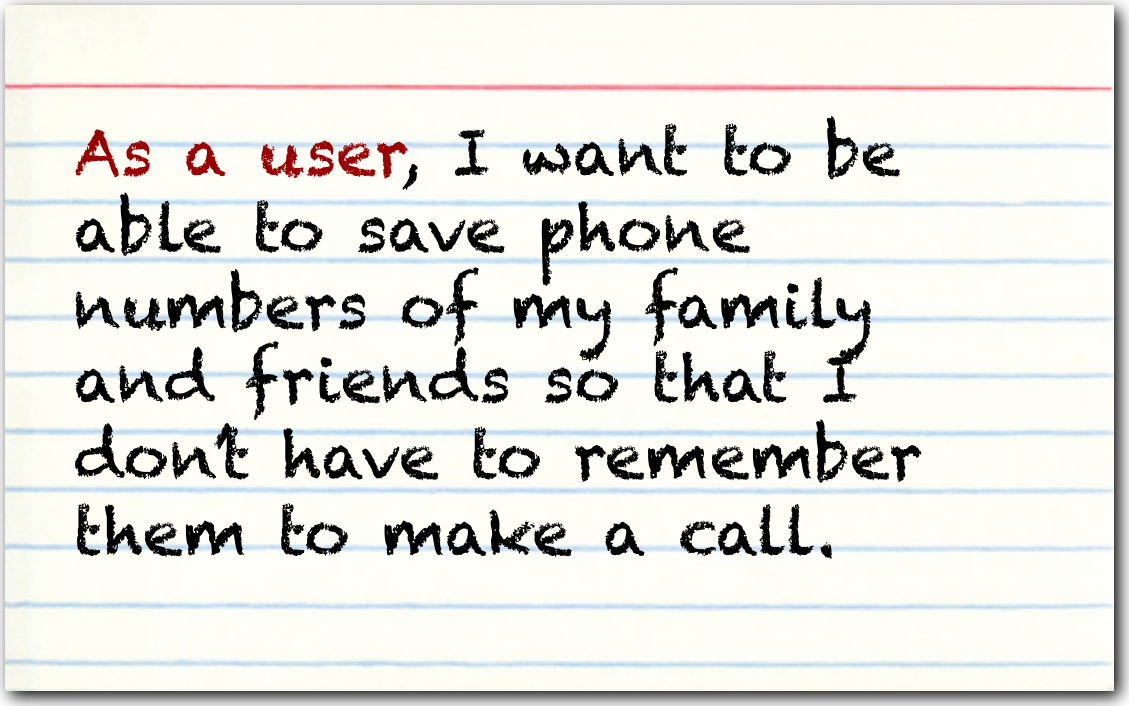

The **actor** is the person or class of people who benefit from the requirement being satisfied

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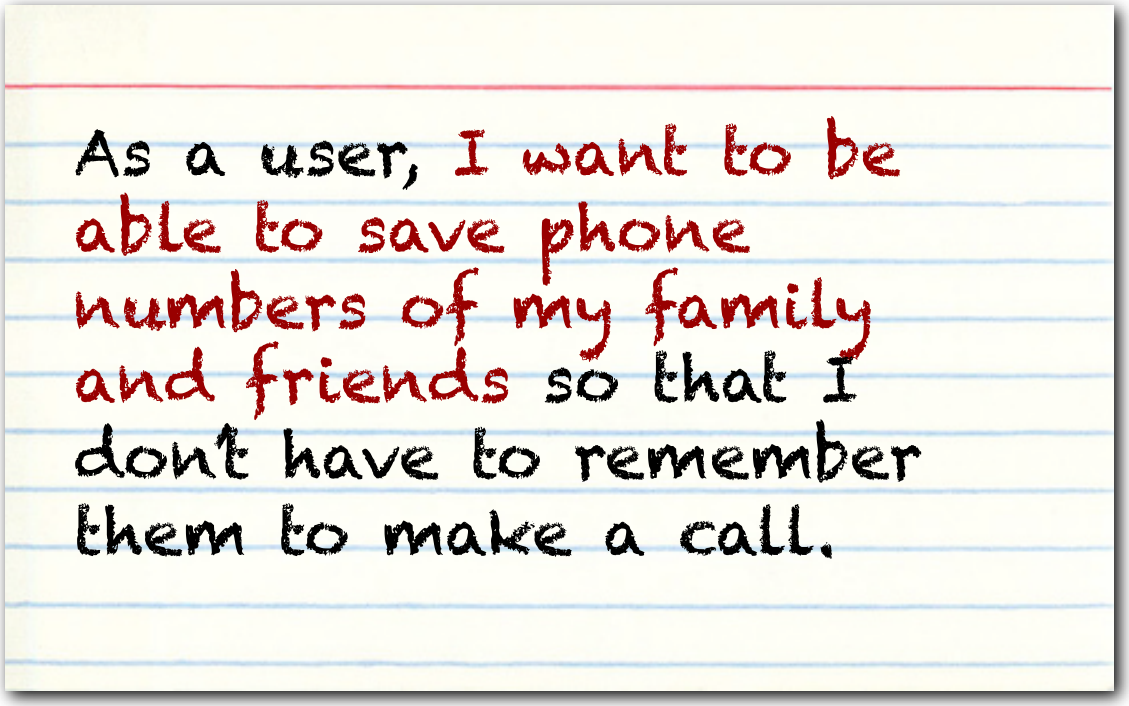

The **action** is what the actor wants or needs to be able to do

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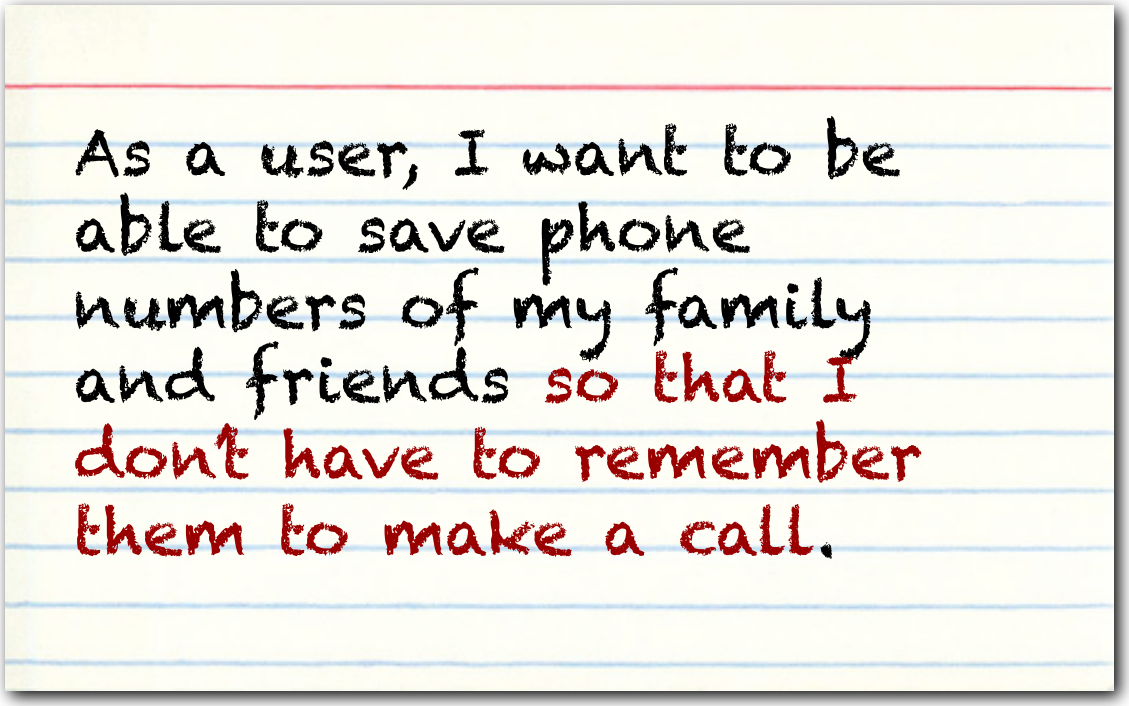
User stories



The value is
what the actor gains,
in real-world terms,
if the requirement
is satisfied

Easy, right?

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Easy, right?

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User is a nice enough guy, but he's a little one-dimensional.

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User is too easy to satisfy.

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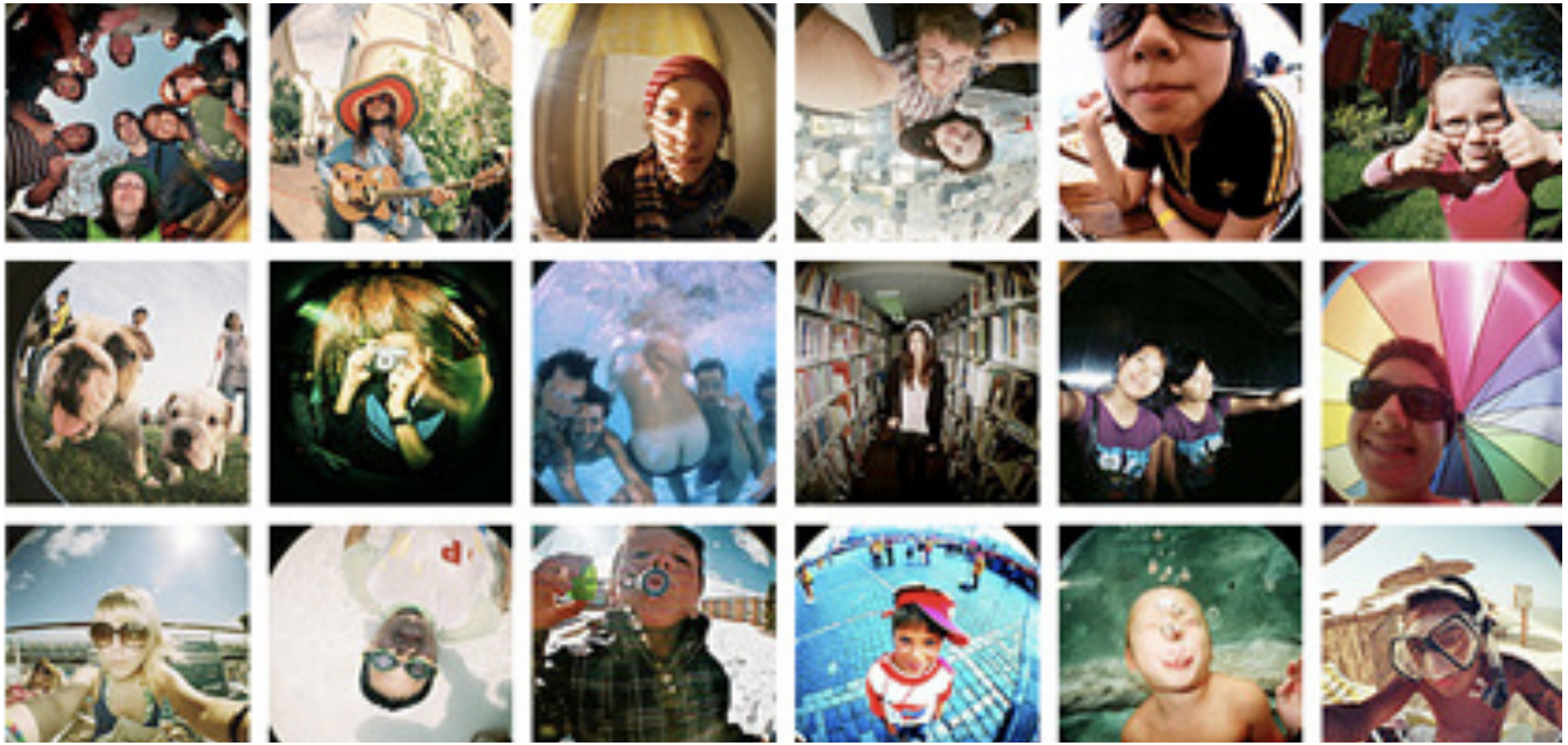
Your real users are live in 3D.



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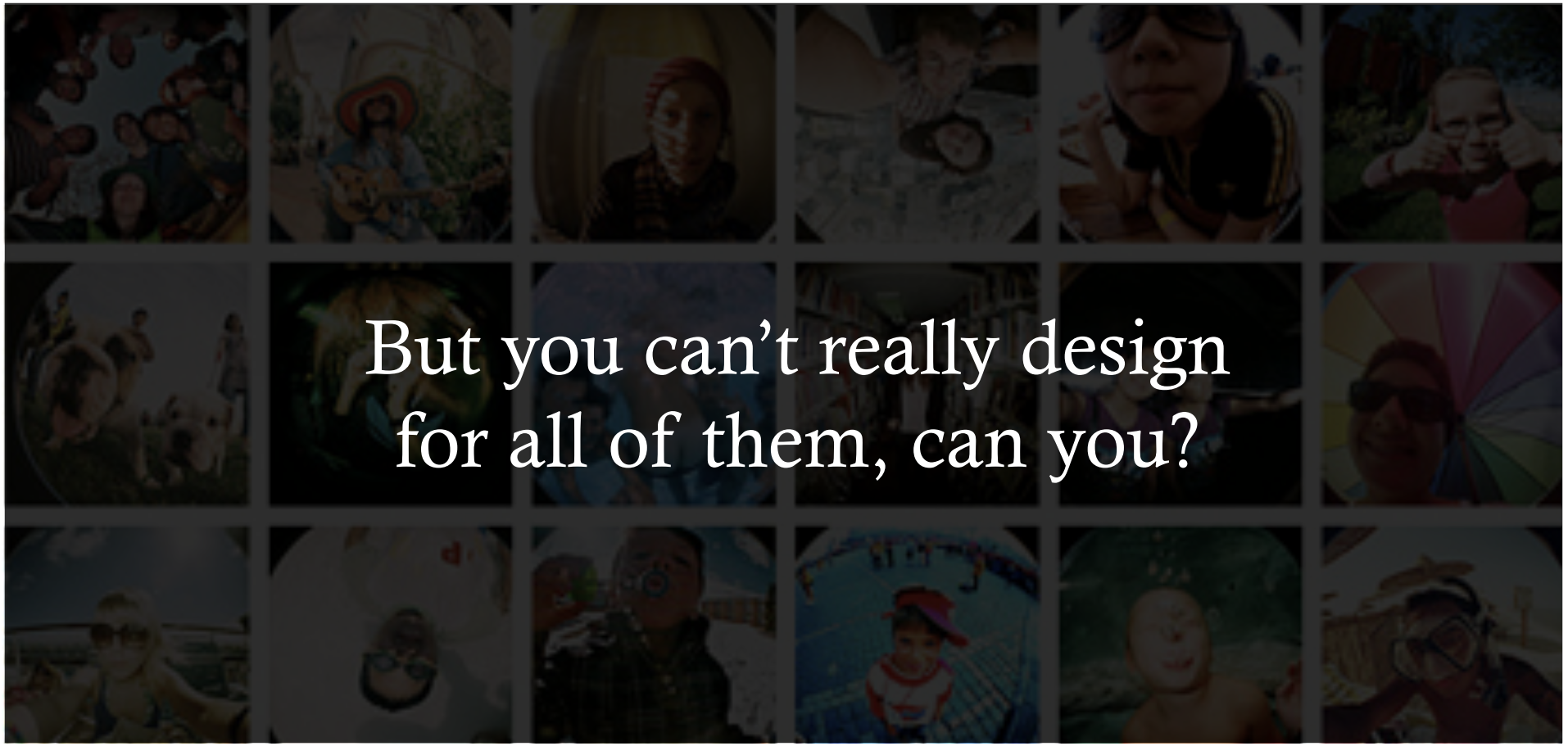

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Honestly, no.

But you ***can*** do better.

A whole lot better.

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Your users have more in common than your product.

Your users have more in common than your product.

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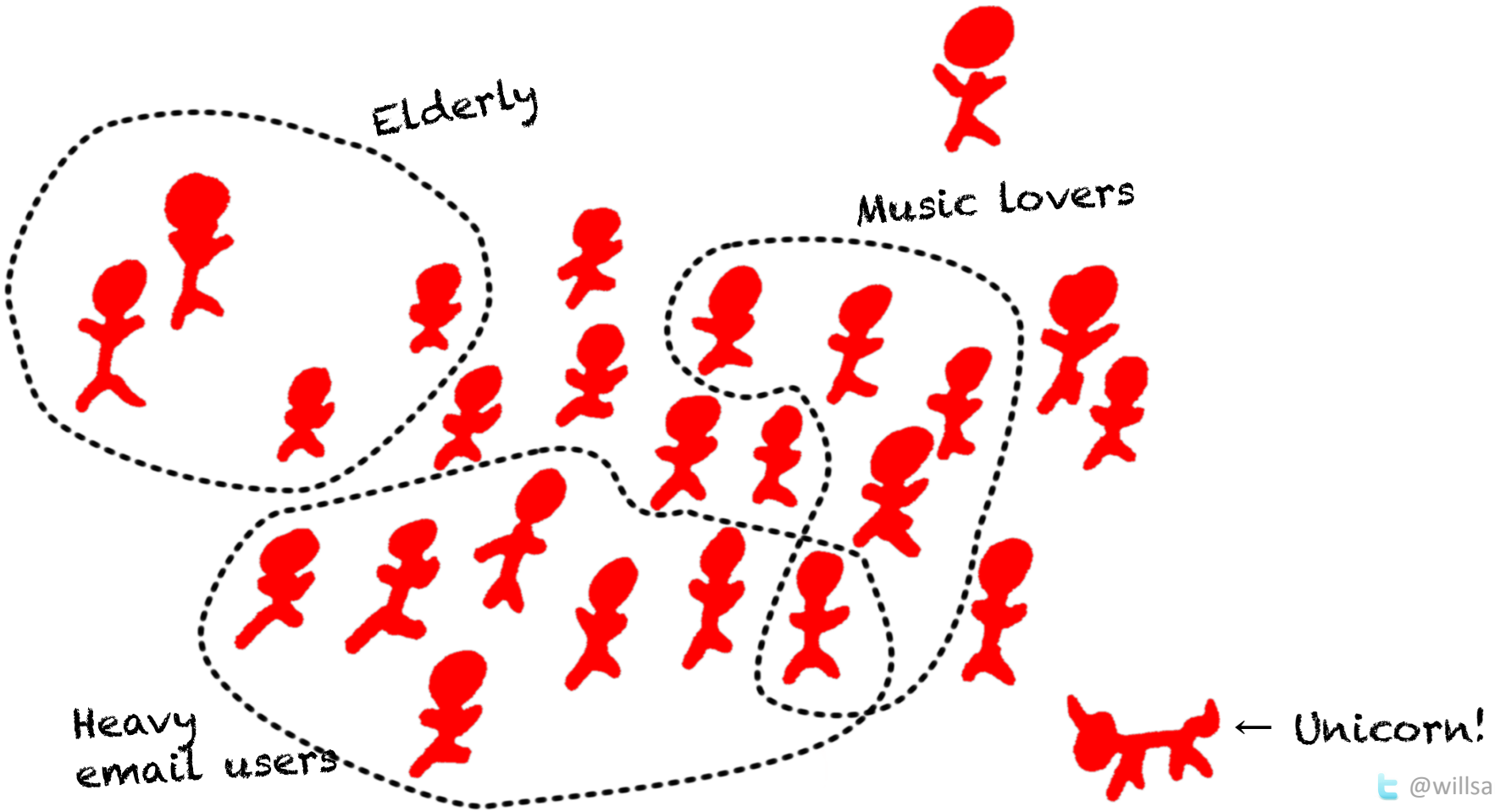

Personas make the commonalities apparent.

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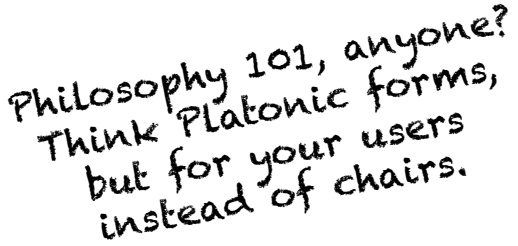
- "[A persona is] a precise descriptive model of the user, what he wishes to accomplish, and why."
  Cooper & Reimann, *About Face 2.0*

- "Personas are typically amalgams of multiple people who share similar goals, motivations, and behaviors. The difference between each persona must be based on these deep characteristics: what people do (actions or projected actions) and why they do them (goals and motivations)."
  Saffer, *Designing for Interactions*



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Right now,
you're thinking,

"Dude.
We're Agile.
That sounds like
Big Design Up Front."

Developing personas can take some time.

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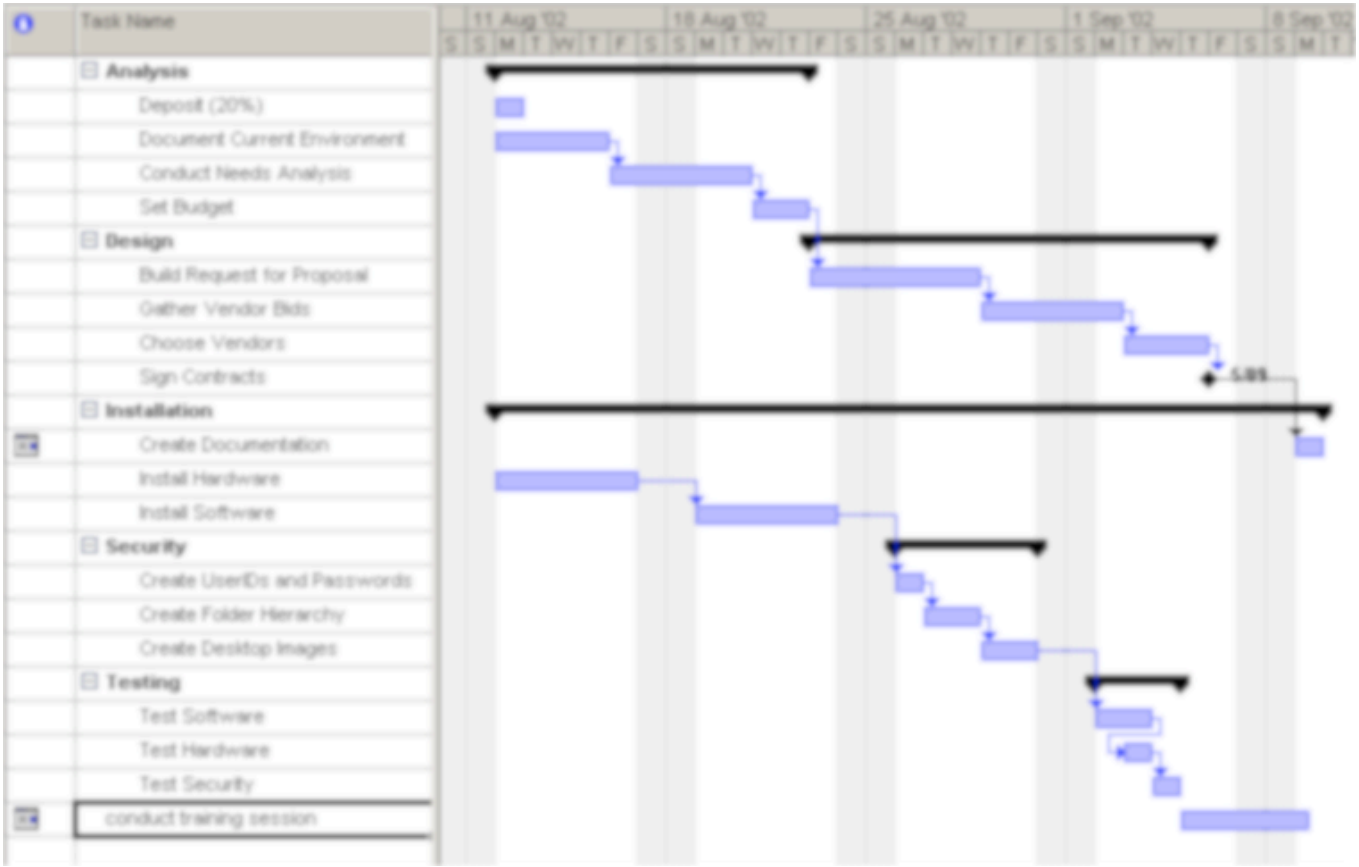

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That's why we go guerilla.

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Don't worry yourself with perfection. You're seeking actionable insights, not publishable data.

It's kind of like horseshoes and hand grenades.

But remember,
persona non data
is persona non grata.

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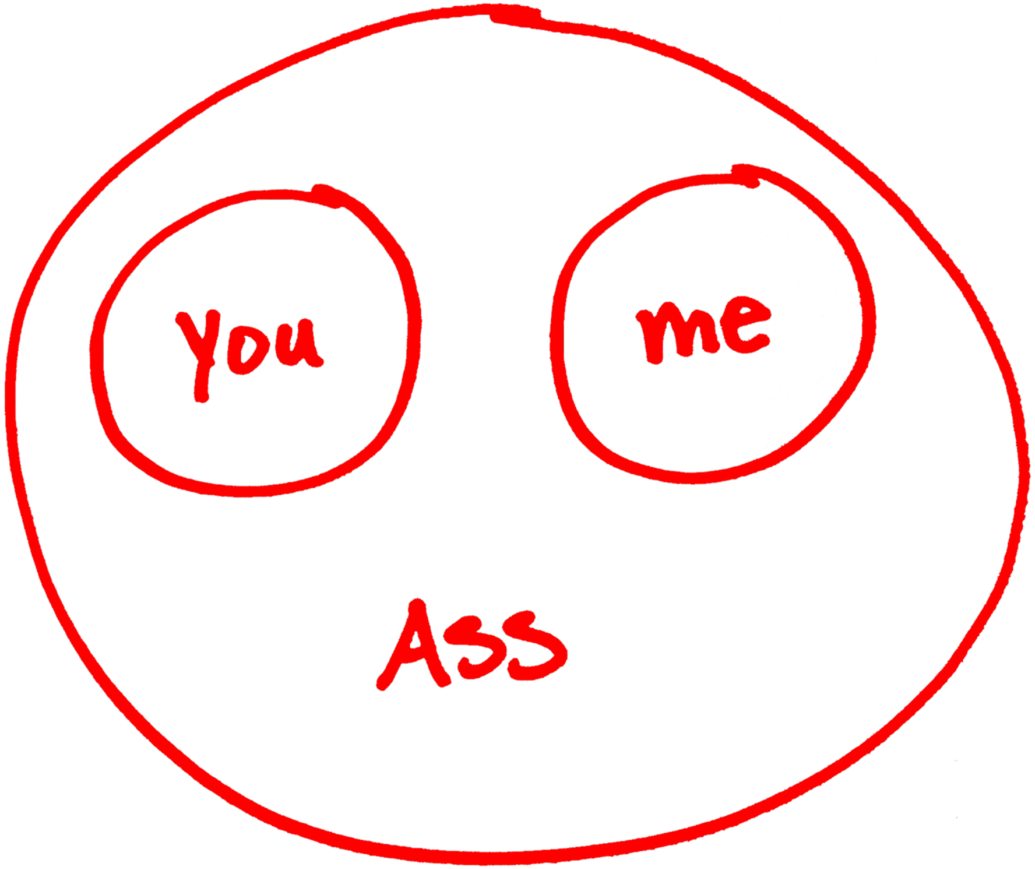

To see patterns in users,
you have to ***see*** users.

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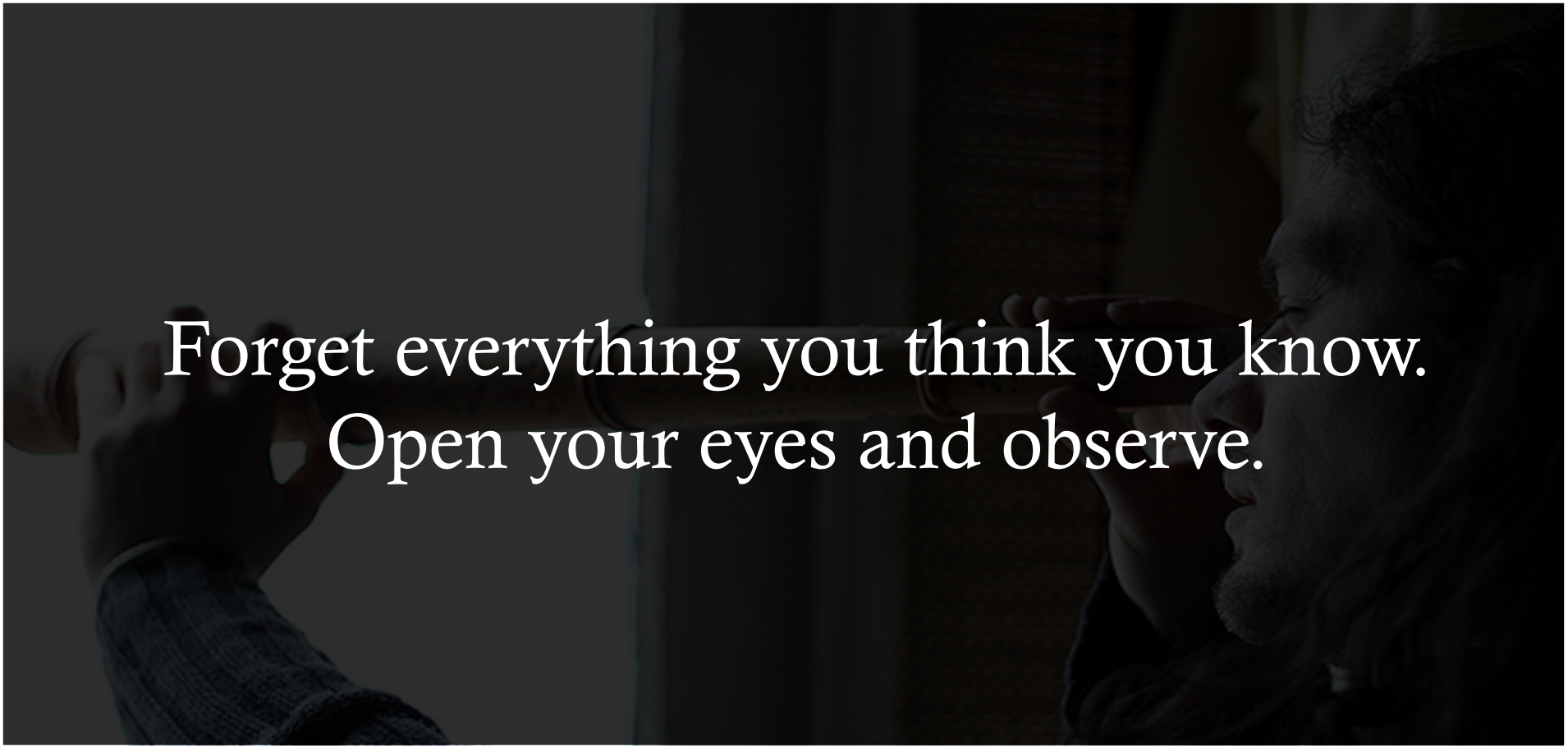

Spend significant time with your users in their world.

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Spend significant time with your users in their world.

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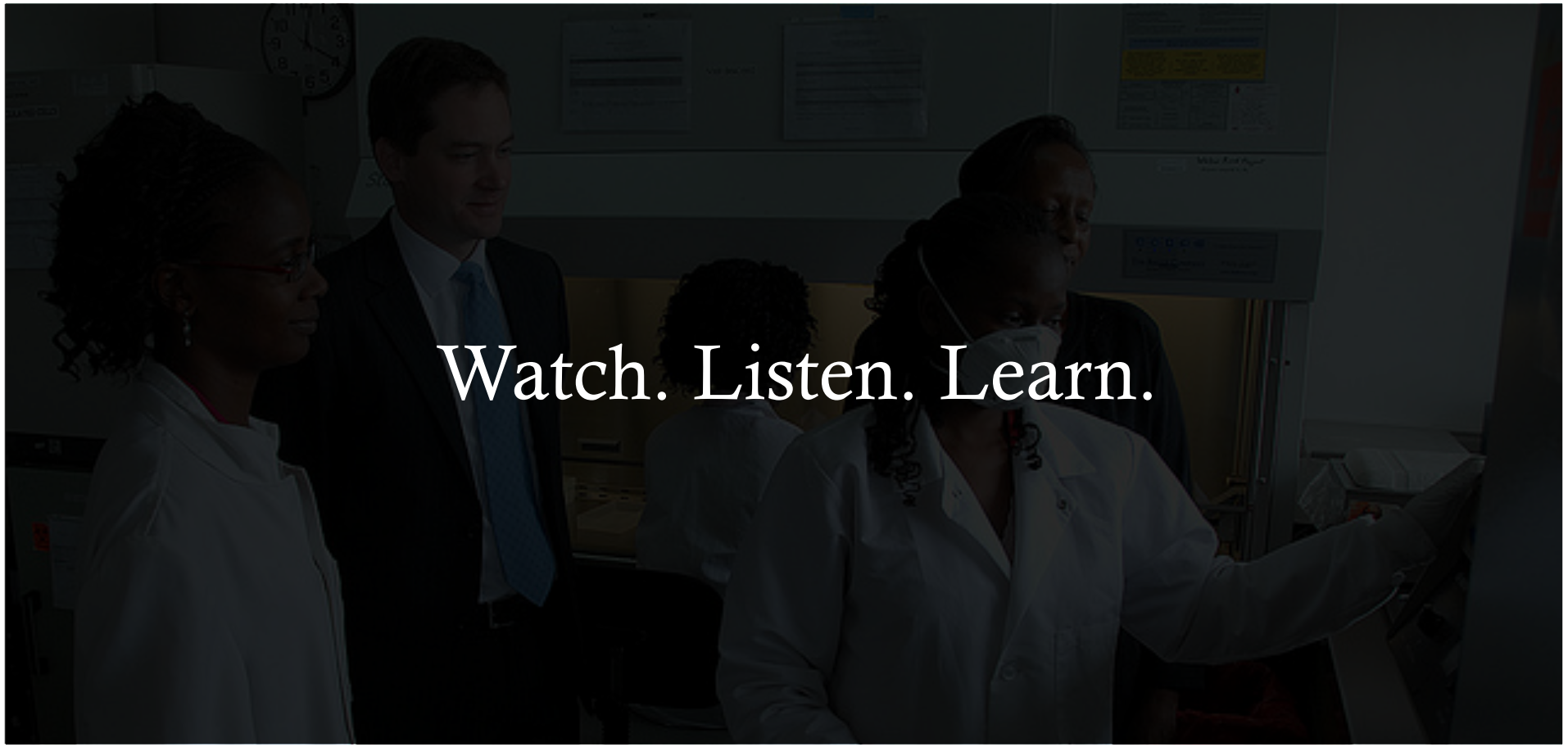

But before you go, do your homework.

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- Prepare a list of topics you want to learn about
- Practice phrasing questions in a way that doesn't suggest an answer
- When in doubt, fall back on open-ended questions or requests
  - Please explain to me what you're doing right now.
  - Why do you prefer to do it that way?
  - Tell me more about…

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Record everything.

Pocket-sized notebook

Small, versatile camera

Analyze each session before your memories get distorted.

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Keep listening.

Keep listening.

Look for patterns in your data.

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Name	Martha	Jack	Emily	Sarah	Arnold
Age	79 years old	24 years old	17 years old	45 years old	85 years old
Quote	"I hate this thing. My daughter bought it for me."	"I can't live without my iPhone."	"My phone is my whole life."	"My phone makes me feel secure."	"I don't know how to use it!"
Attitude toward cell phones	Intense dislike	Intensely likes	Intensely likes	Likes	Dislikes
Frequency of making calls	Once per week	20-30 per day	50-75 per day	5-10 per day	Once per day
Frequency of sending texts	Never	100-150 per day	200-300 per day	> 5 per day	Never

Weave the common threads together.

Elizabeth Barrister

82 years old

Elizabeth spent her adult life as a stay-at-home mother and wife. Now, she is proud of being a "grr-grandma."

Having come of age during the Great Depression, Elizabeth is resourceful and spunky. She doesn't shy away from any challenges, and she's not afraid to try to learn new things—though she's not as quick a study as she once was.

Why she got a cell phone

Safety while traveling

How she uses her cell phone

Calling a select set of contacts (friends and family)

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You're not Robin Hood.

You're not Robin Hood.

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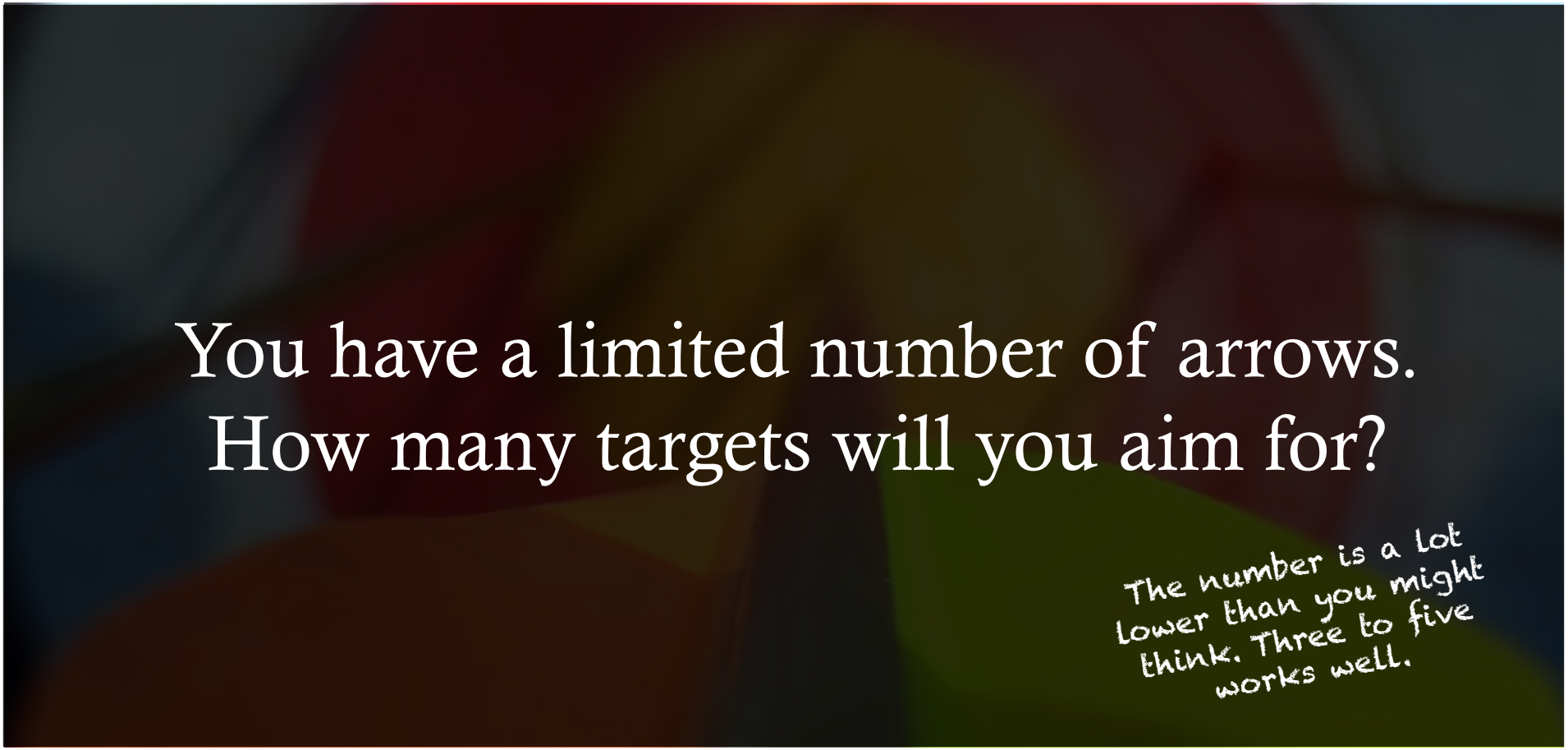

Need more than 5 or 6? You have a bigger problem.

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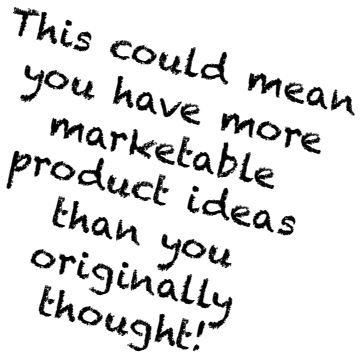
Personas are not things you make. **Personas are discovered.**

We typically find that a product will have an informative suite of five or six personas, and we'll design for one or two.

If you find there are more than that, it means that you don't have an appropriate focus for your product, which is a very useful thing to learn.

Paraphrased from Alan Cooper in the *UXpod Podcast*, December 2006
http://www.infodesign.com.au/uxpod/alancooper



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You have your personas. Now tell their stories.

- Print large-scale posters of the personas and post them in the team area
- Speak of personas as often as possible; always steer requirements and design discussions back to your personas
- When you overhear your team members arguing about what one of the personas would prefer, skip out early and celebrate with a margarita

Kill User.

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As ~~a user~~, Elizabeth,
I want to be able to save phone numbers of my family and friends so that I don't have to remember them to make a call.

With a clear idea of ***who*** you're satisfying, the questions of ***what*** and ***how*** take on new meaning.

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The Jitterbug moves phonebook maintenance to a website, where Elizabeth's accessibility needs are easily met.

The difference between User and Elizabeth is too important to ignore.

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DANGER ZONE #1

We have a customer on the team, so we don't need personas. Right?

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@willsansbury

DANGER ZONE #2

Our marketing already put together some personas.

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- Personas capture information about behaviors and motivations
- Marketing is concerned with the behaviors and motivations of about buyers, not users
- Optimizing design for the buyer results in short-term sales, but long-term dissatisfaction

BUYER ≠ USER

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By casting personas
as the actors in user stories,
Agile product owners
can better express requirements,
better prioritize backlogs,
and better evaluate design
approaches.

And, ultimately,
build better products.

Thank you! Any questions?

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