

SRECon22

Emergent Organizational Failure: Five Disconnections

Mattie Toia (*they/them*) | 2022-03-16





Reliability Leadership



Emergence

Emergent Organizational Failure: Five Disconnections

1. Believing there is a definitive “production” to be focused on
2. Forgetting how hard prioritization is
3. Having unrealistic goals for reliability over sustainable ones
4. Treating your organization as simple instead of as complex
5. Using incentives as a replacement for dedication

Disconnection #1

Believing there is a definitive “production” to be focused on

- We try to focus on “critical” parts of our systems
- Sometimes it’s difficult to understand what is contributing to reliability
- There is a need to avoid tunnel vision in our thinking



Is a deployment tool part of production?

Is source control?

**Everything contributes to
emergent behavior.**

Disconnection #2

Missing how hard prioritization is

- Reliability requires extra consideration
- Poor planning will create cycles of apathy in teams



A close-up photograph of a stone wall. The stones are irregular in shape and color, ranging from light tan to dark brown. Patches of white snow are scattered across the top surfaces of the stones, particularly in the upper and lower portions of the frame. The overall texture is rough and weathered.

**Reality Check:
Each of our mental models is
incomplete**

A close-up photograph of a stone wall. The stones are irregular in shape and color, ranging from light tan to dark brown. A layer of white snow is piled on top of the stones, particularly in the crevices and along the top edges. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greyish-blue.

**Spend time understanding &
Plan to change priorities**

Disconnection #3

Having unrealistic goals for reliability over sustainable ones

- Many goals are unrealistic
- Unrealistic goals are demotivating!



**The realism of a goal is not
related to the need!**

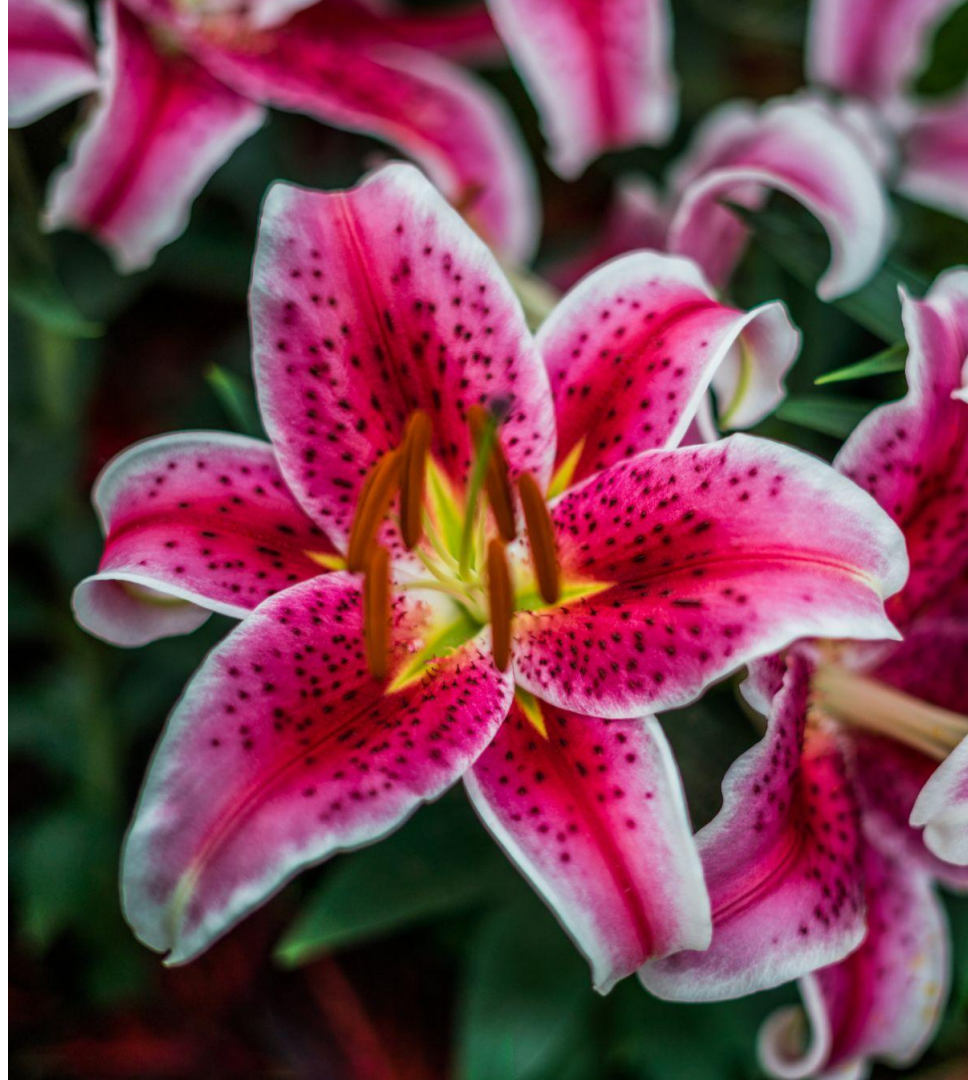
**Picking realistic goals is hard when
we cannot calibrate from experience**

**Sustainable goals are
about progress instead**

Disconnection #4

Treating your organization as simple instead of complex

- Humans are hard to predict Yet we disregard this complexity
- Are we making room for creative thinking in SRE?

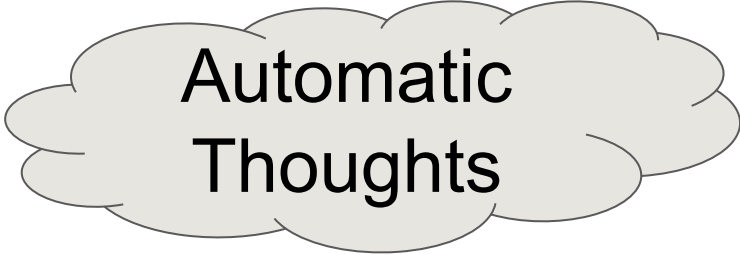




**Create the right environment for
your team's best work to emerge**



**Moving the Needle Means
Moving the Culture**



**Automatic
Thoughts**



Rules and Lessons



Core Beliefs and Values

Disconnection #5

Using incentives as a replacement for dedication

- Incentives are transactional
- Dedication is a reaction to trust and will persist
- Trust can only be earned through **action** and **time**





Actions are imperative to building trust

A black and white photograph of a brick wall with a red diagonal stripe. The stripe runs from the top left towards the bottom right, crossing the center of the image. The bricks are dark and have a textured surface. The red stripe is bright and stands out against the dark background.

**Does the team believe their services
bring harm or good into the world?**

A black and white photograph of a brick wall with a red diagonal stripe. The stripe runs from the top left towards the bottom right. The bricks are dark and have a textured surface. The red stripe is a solid, bright red color.

Do people trust that doing the right thing will be recognized?

A Response to Emergent Organizational Failure

~~1. Believing there is a definitive “production” to be focused on~~

- **Take a holistic view, all things may contribute to the whole**

~~2. Forgetting how hard prioritization is~~

- **Collaborate on mental models, make sharing & communication easy**

~~3. Having unrealistic goals for reliability over sustainable ones~~

- **Progress not absolutes, let goals shift instead of compromise quality**

~~4. Treating your organization as simple instead of as complex~~

- **Use simple messages, accept differentiation, focus on the cultural**

~~5. Using incentives as a replacement for dedication from your team~~

- **Demonstrate trust through actions**

Questions?

Mattie Toia (*they/them*) | 2022-03-16



Photo Credits

- Matthew Henry
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/red-brick-wall-wide-texture>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/turquoise-brick-wall-texture>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/pink-brick-wall-texture>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/grey-brick-with-snow>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/hiking-with-a-compass-near-waterfalls>
- Sarah Pflug
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/brick-wall-with-graphic-street-art>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/runner-stretching-by-brick-wall>
- Shopify Partners
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/geometric-purple-urban-art-on-brick-wall>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/football-field-turf-paint>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/pink-lilies-in-bloom>
 - <https://burst.shopify.com/photos/carnival-game>
- Mattie Toia
 - Batteries on a Wood Table, March 2022

