Beat Generosity Burnout

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Harvard Business Review · by Tweets by Adam M Grant · January 23, 2017

- how to reduce the costs and expand the benefits of helping others
- create more workplaces where the people who add the most value are the most valued
- what givers can do to sustain their energy — and their effectiveness

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Givers at the top are often called **servant leaders**. They selflessly put the needs of others first, and that helps drive their firms' success: A study of technology companies revealed that when CFOs agreed with statements like "The CEO seems to care more about the organization's success than his or her own," **their firms had significantly higher returns on assets** in the following quarter — relative both to other firms and to their own past performance.

Six profiles of giving:

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1. **Experts** share knowledge.
2. **Coaches** teach skills.
3. **Mentors** give advice and guidance.
4. **Connectors** make introductions.
5. **Extra-milers** show up early, stay late, and volunteer for extra work.
6. **Helpers** provide hands-on task support and emotional support.

7 Habits of Highly Productive Giving

1. **Prioritize the help requests** that come your way — say yes when it matters most and no when you need to.
2. **Give in ways that play to your interests** and strengths to preserve your energy and provide greater value.
3. **Distribute the giving load more evenly** — refer requests to others when you don't have the time or skills, and be careful not to reinforce gender biases about who helps and how.
4. **Secure your oxygen mask first** — you'll help others more effectively if you don't neglect your own needs.
5. **Amplify your impact** by looking for ways to help multiple people with a single act of generosity.
6. Chunk your giving into **dedicated days or blocks of time** rather than sprinkling it throughout the week. You'll be more effective — and more focused.
7. **Learn to spot takers**, and steer clear of them. They're a drain on your energy, not to mention a performance hazard.

Don't try to be everything to everyone. Cast your eyes over this list and **think about what makes sense for you. Identify two or three ways of offering unique value to others** — things you do well and enjoy.

To prevent generosity burnout, you have to **hone your skill at prioritizing requests and screening for sincerity. The most successful givers act like triage nurses in an emergency room: When someone comes along asking for help, they don't jump straight into a treatment plan. Instead they gather information to determine how serious and urgent the need is, figure out who the best person to help might be, and assess whether any small remedies would be useful in the meantime.** Only then do they decide how - and even whether - to help. As Caroline McGraw reminds us, "You don't owe anyone an interaction."

they decide how - and even whether - to help. As Caroline McGraw reminds us, "You don't owe anyone an interaction."

People often ask us if **there are gender differences when it comes to generosity burnout**. When we analyzed the data, we were saddened to learn that, as you might assume, **men are more likely to be takers and women are more likely to be selfless givers. It happens in workplaces around the world: Women are expected to do more of the helping, but they get less of the credit for it.**

If we want to stop generosity burnout, **we need to shift the balance. For women, that means setting boundaries instead of being selfless. For the men who work with them, it means stepping up to do more of the helping and mentoring. For organizations, it means assigning and evaluating work on the basis of people's contributions, not their gender**. And for all of us, it means that it's high time to stop reserving the generosity glory for men and dumping the grunt giving on women.

Generosity means caring about others, but not at the expense of caring for yourself. By protecting yourself from exhaustion, you may feel less altruistic. Yet you will actually end up giving more.

Further reading:
Give and Take , *Adam Grant,* about how generous "givers" succeed in ways that lift others up, givers add more value to organizations than selfish "takers" or quid pro quo "matchers" do

Originals*, Adam Grant,* Some givers had what seemed like genuinely good ideas for improving their organizations and communities but couldn't quite realize their visions, leading to frustrated, worn-out givers


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By djw

Glanceable

Not glanceable

OverloadedCurcuits — Evernote

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Overloaded Curcuits

When the frontal lobes approach capacity and we begin to fear that we can't keep up, the **relationship between the higher and lower regions of the brain takes an ominous turn.** Thousands of years of evolution have **taught the higher brain not to ignore the lower brain's distress signals.** In survival mode, the **deep areas of the brain assume control and begin to direct the higher regions.** As a result, the whole brain gets caught in a neurological catch-22. The deep regions interpret the messages of overload they receive from the frontal lobes in the same way they interpret everything: primitively. They furiously fire signals of fear, anxiety, impatience, irritability, anger, or panic. These alarm signals shanghai the attention of the frontal lobes, forcing them to forfeit much of their power. Because **survival signals are irresistible, the frontal lobes get stuck sending messages back to the deep centers saying, "Message received. Trying to work on it but without success."** These messages further perturb the deep centers, which send **even more powerful messages** of distress back up to the frontal lobes.

In survival mode, the manager is robbed of his flexibility, his sense of humor, his ability to deal with the unknown. **He desperately wants to kill the metaphorical tiger.**

ADD confers both disadvantages and advantages. The negative characteristics include a tendency to procrastinate and miss deadlines. People with ADD struggle with disorganization and tardiness; they can be forgetful and drift away mentally in the middle of a conversation or while reading. Their performance can be inconsistent: brilliant one moment and unsatisfactory the next. **ADD sufferers also tend to demonstrate impatience and lose focus unless, oddly enough, they are under stress or handling multiple inputs. (This is because stress leads to the production of adrenaline, which is chemically similar to the medications we use to treat ADD.)** Finally, people with ADD sometimes also self-medicate with excessive alcohol or other substances.

New Survey Reveals Extent, Impact of Information Overload on Workers — Evernote

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Created: Feb 1, 2016 | Updated: Mar 31, 2016 | www.reuters.com

New Survey Reveals Extent, Impact of Information Overload on Workers

...% of respondents report disagreements among colleagues about the right way to organize information at least once in an average work week."

"Nine out of ten (92%) U.S. professionals report needing to search for old emails or documents at least once a week, and that not being able to access the right information at the right time is a huge time waster (90%)."

"More than eight in ten (85%) white collar workers in Australia and more than two thirds (69%) of South Africas professionals say the constant flow of email and other information is distracting, making it more difficult to focus on the task at hand. **Six in ten workers in the U.S. (60%),** U.K. (62%) and China (57%) **echo this sentiment."**
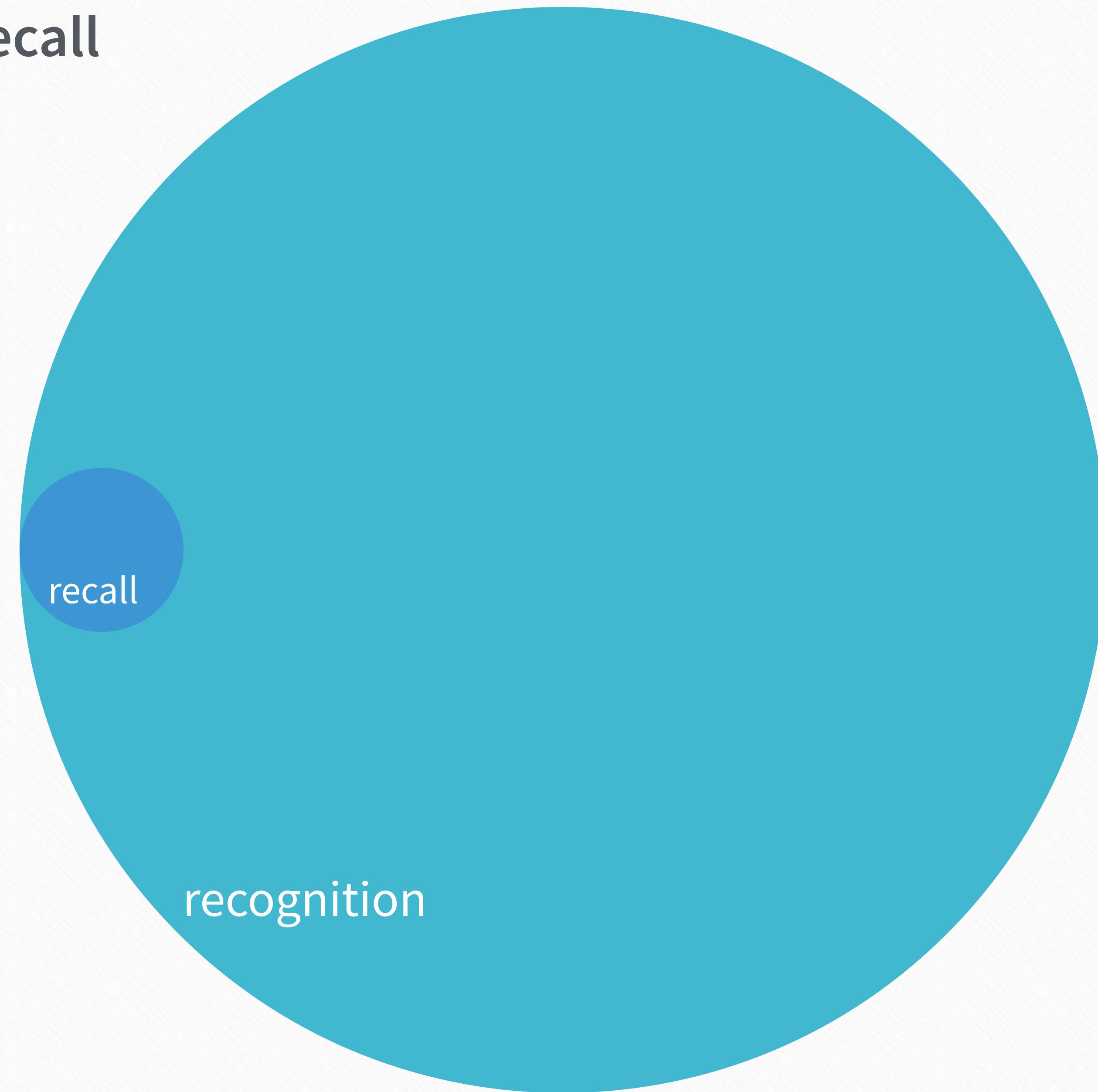
"According to survey respondents, **between one third and one half of all the information that professionals receive at work each day is not important to them getting their job done."**

"An average of half **(51%) of all those surveyed in each country say that if the amount of information they receive continues to increase, they will soon reach a breaking point at which they will be unable to handle any more.** Approximately one in two **(52%) professionals surveyed report feeling demoralized when they can't manage all the information that comes their way at work."**

"American professionals say they spend half their work day receiving and managing information, an almost ten percent increase since 2008."

Overall, almost **nine in ten U.S. professionals and more than 94% of workers in the other four markets say their companies could do more to help them better handle information in their job.**

Recognition over Recall

Building a Second Brain

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"The bandwidth of the **senses** *is greater than the bandwidth of* **consciousness***, and the bandwidth of consciousness is greater than that of* **language***"*

**Tor Norretranders,** *The User Illusion*

07

PKM Workflow Canvas

Building a Second Brain

The 3 pillars
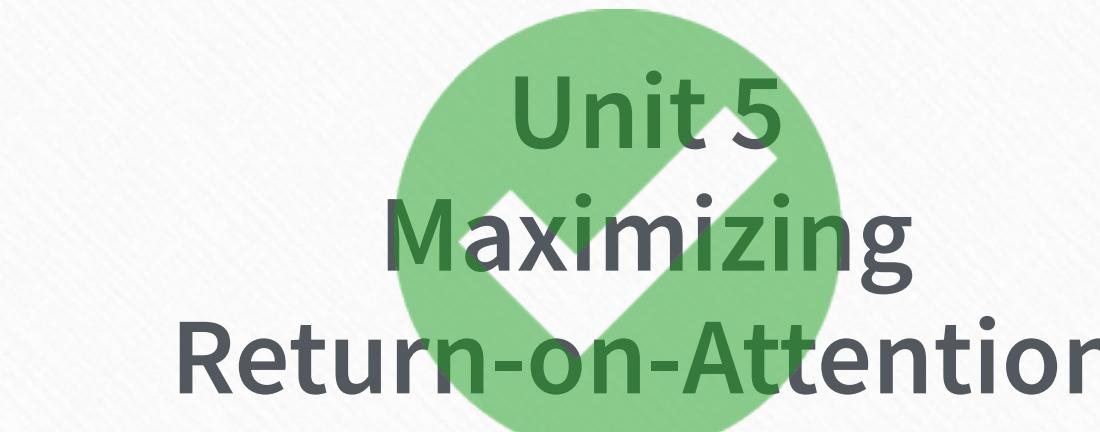
CAPTURE	ORGANIZE	RETRIEVE
Progressive Summarization	**P.A.R.A.**	**Just-in-Time Project Mgmt**

Practice

✓ Unit 4
Progressive Summarization

✓ Unit 2
Organizing for Insight

✓ Unit 6
Just-In-Time
Project Management

Unit 7: PKM Workflow Canvas

Theory

✓ Unit 5
Maximizing
Return-on-Attention

✓ Unit 3
Digital Cognition
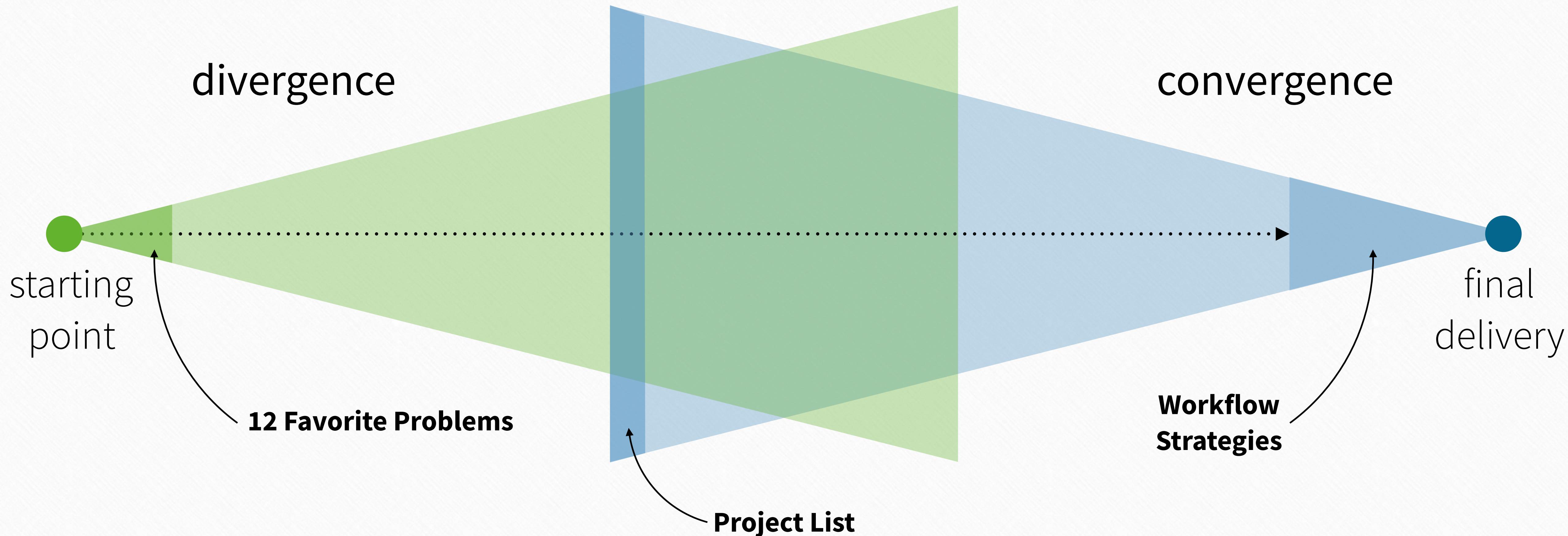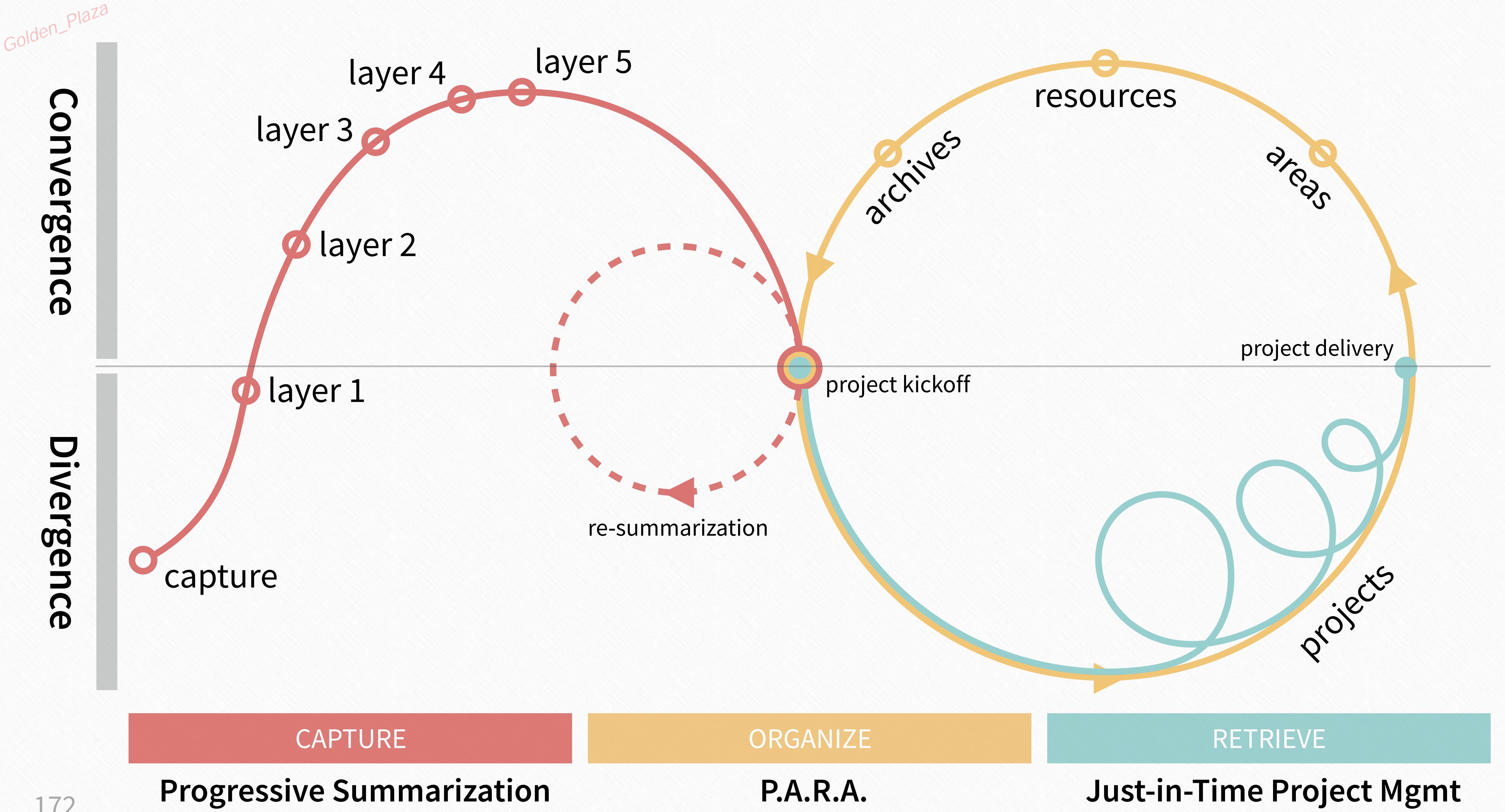
Unit 8
The Big Picture
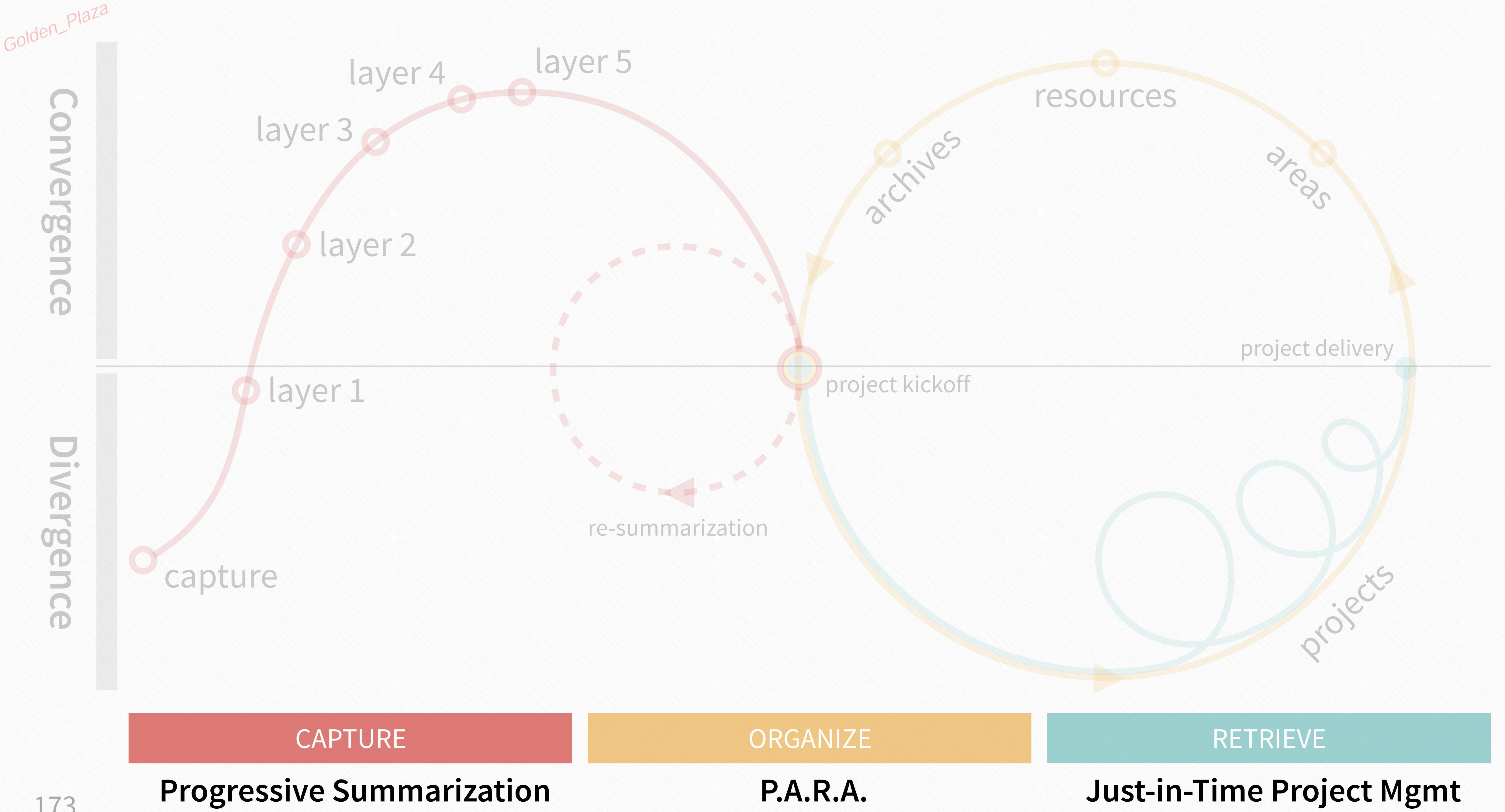
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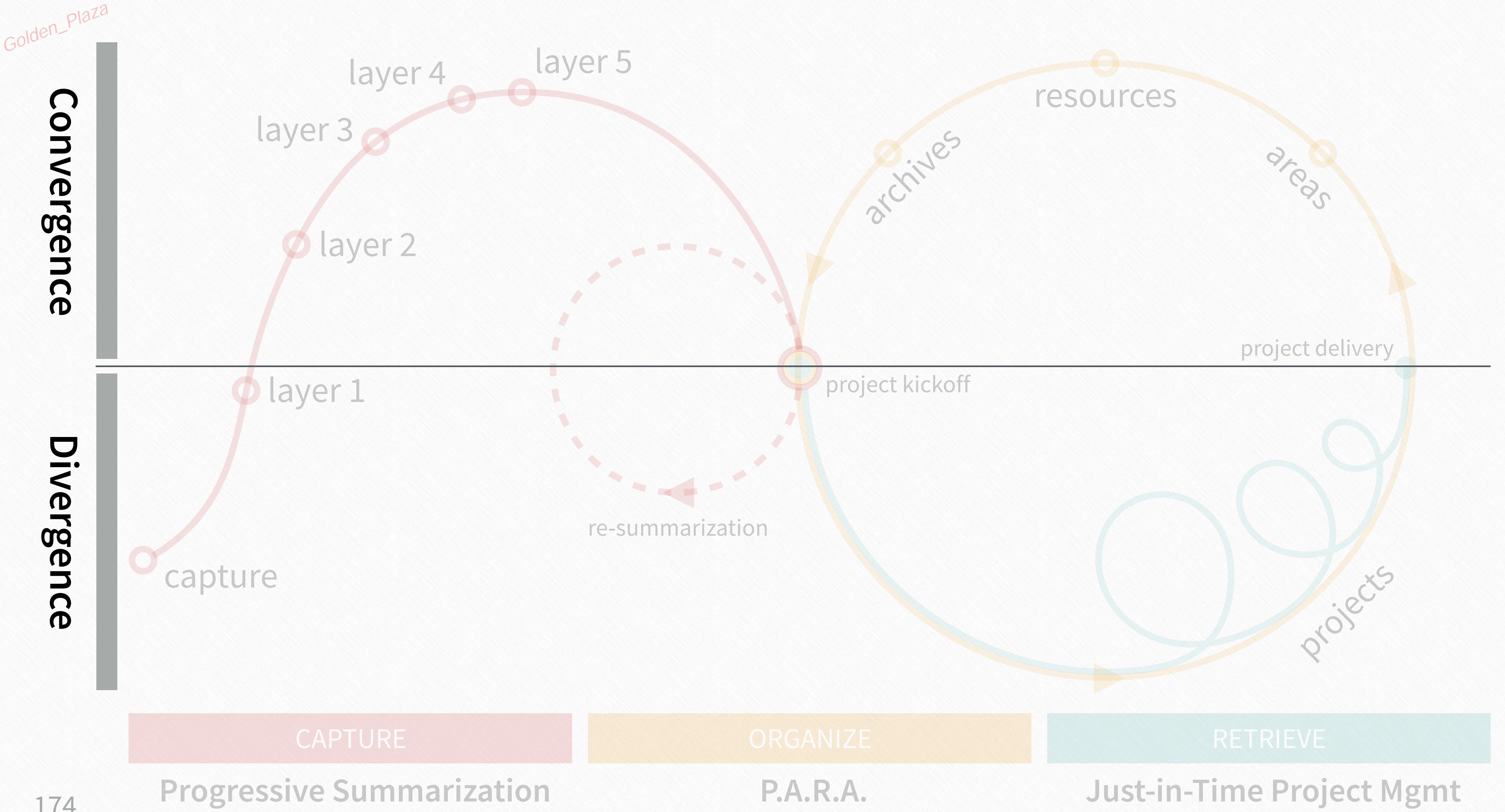
To summarize the main takeaways from this course in a physical artifact, and select the techniques that apply to your personal PKM workflow

The process of creation

divergence

convergence

starting
point

final
delivery

12 Favorite Problems

Project List

**Workflow
Strategies**

Convergence

Divergence

layer 4

layer 5

layer 3

layer 2

layer 1

capture

re-summarization

archives

resources

areas

project delivery

project kickoff

projects

CAPTURE

ORGANIZE

RETRIEVE

Progressive Summarization

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Just-in-Time Project Mgmt

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CAPTURE	ORGANIZE	RETRIEVE
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Building a Second Brain

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Golden_Plaza

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CAPTURE	ORGANIZE	RETRIEVE

Progressive Summarization   **P.A.R.A.**   **Just-in-Time Project Mgmt**

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5

4

3

Layer 5:

Layer 4:

Layer 3:

Layer 2:

Layer 1:

Layer 0:

2

P.A.R.A. Maintenance

Project List

Summarization Layers

12 Favorite Problems

Workflow Strategies

diagnosis | solution

Execution Checklist

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Notes

PKM Workflow Canvas

6

7

8

1

Name

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PKM Workflow Canvas

1

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draw a cover image

your name

list the "favorite problems" you would like your
PKM workflow to answer, in order of priority

12 Favorite Problems

2

Summarization Layers

Layer 0:

Layer 1:

Layer 2:

Layer 3:

Layer 4:

Layer 5:

3
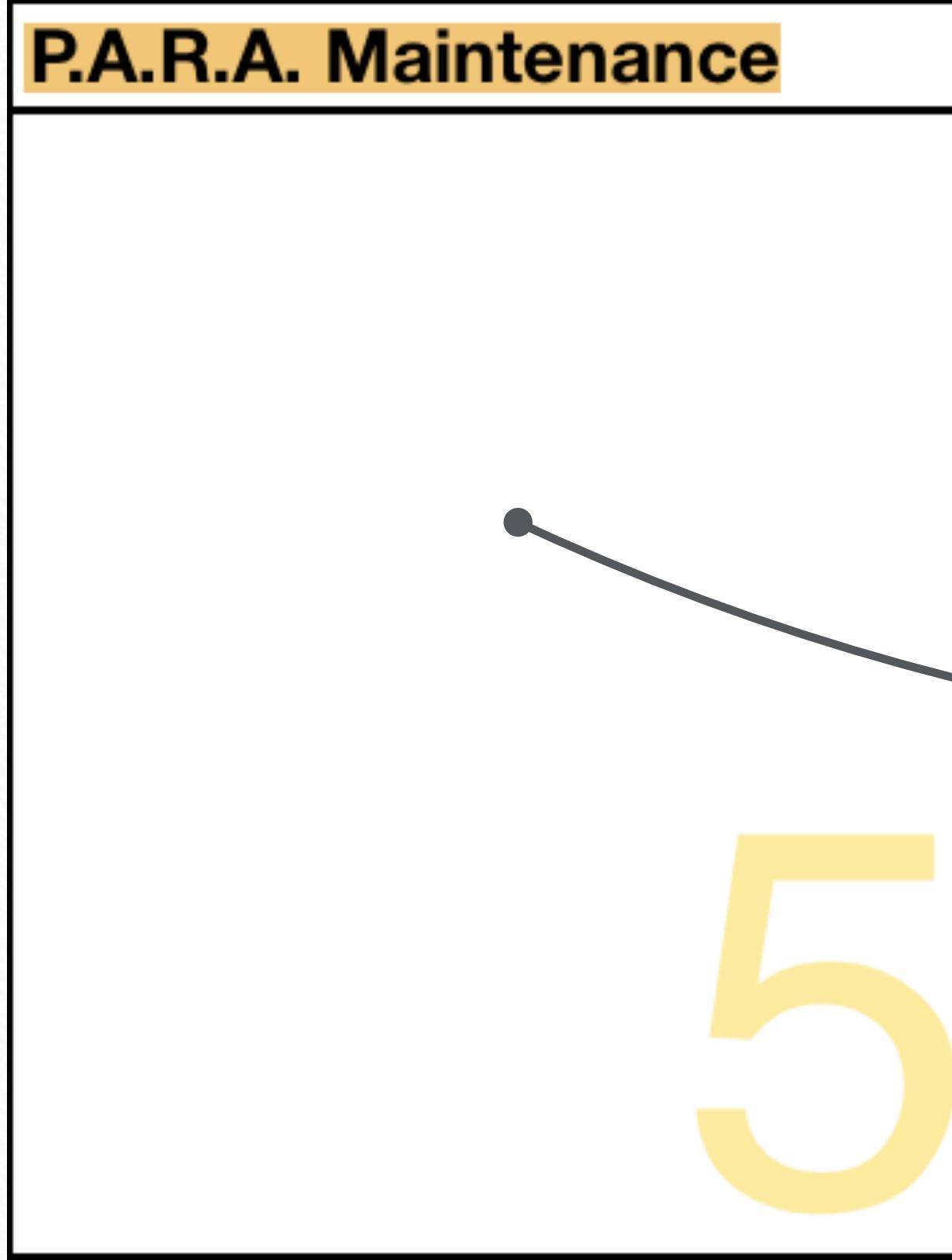
specify what each of the layers means,
and how it's used

Project List

identify the projects that you're targeting
with PKM, in order of priority

4

P.A.R.A. Maintenance

5
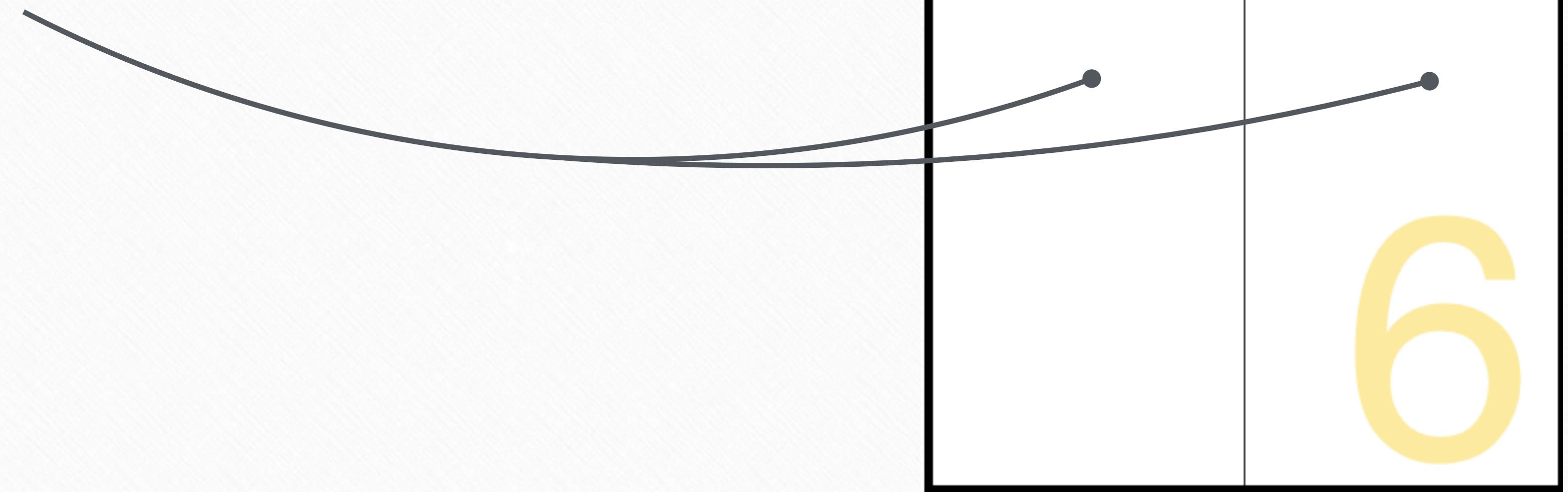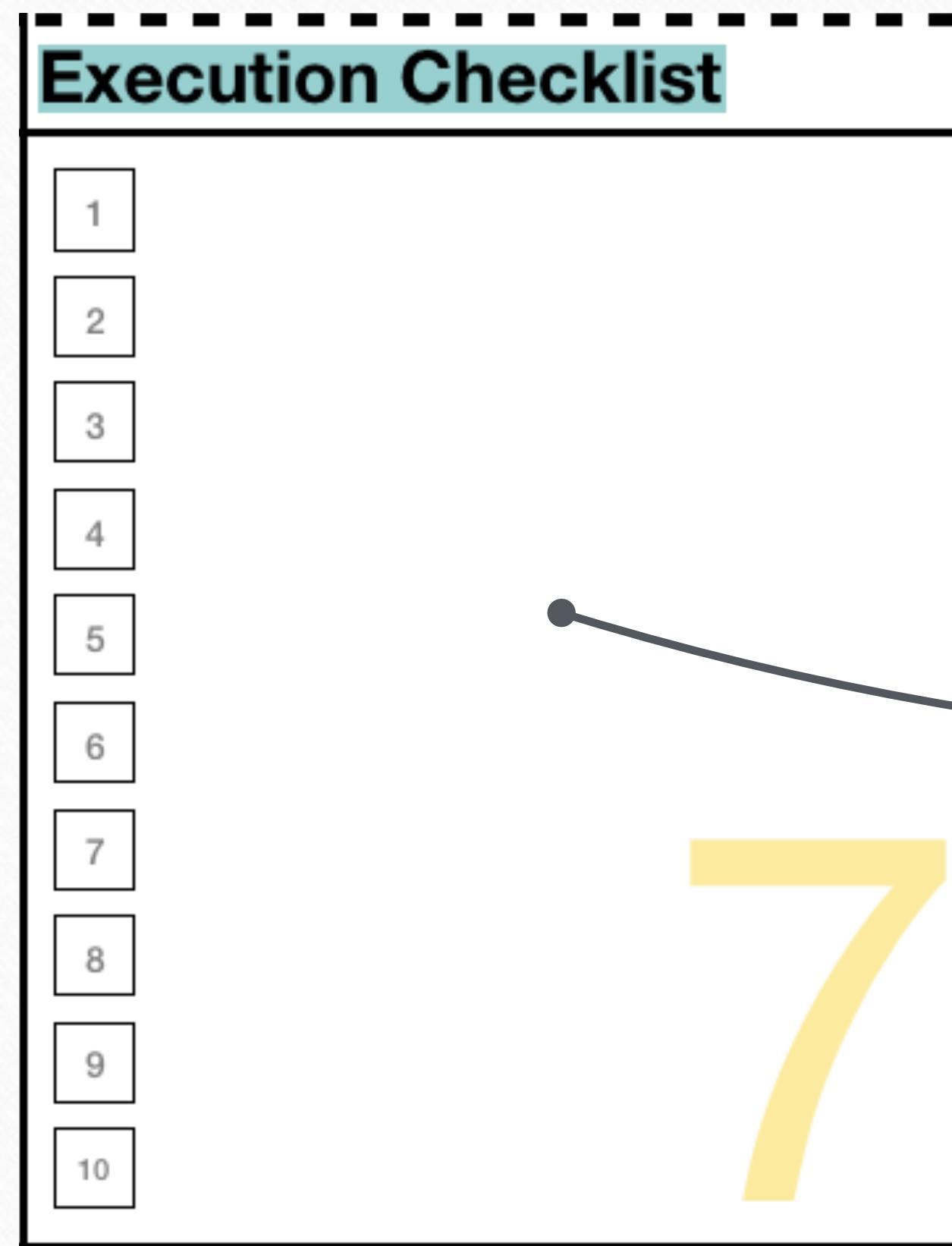
list the actions you will take
to maintain your P.A.R.A. system
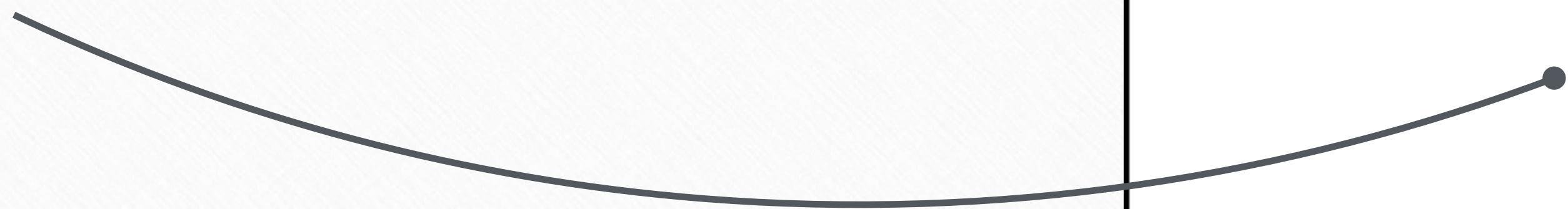
list the workflow strategies you would like to use
to address common frustrations and challenges

Workflow Strategies

diagnosis	solution

6

Execution Checklist

1
2
3
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7

summarize how you will go about
producing deliverables using your PKM system

add any other notes of things you want to
keep in mind, explore further, or improve

Notes

8
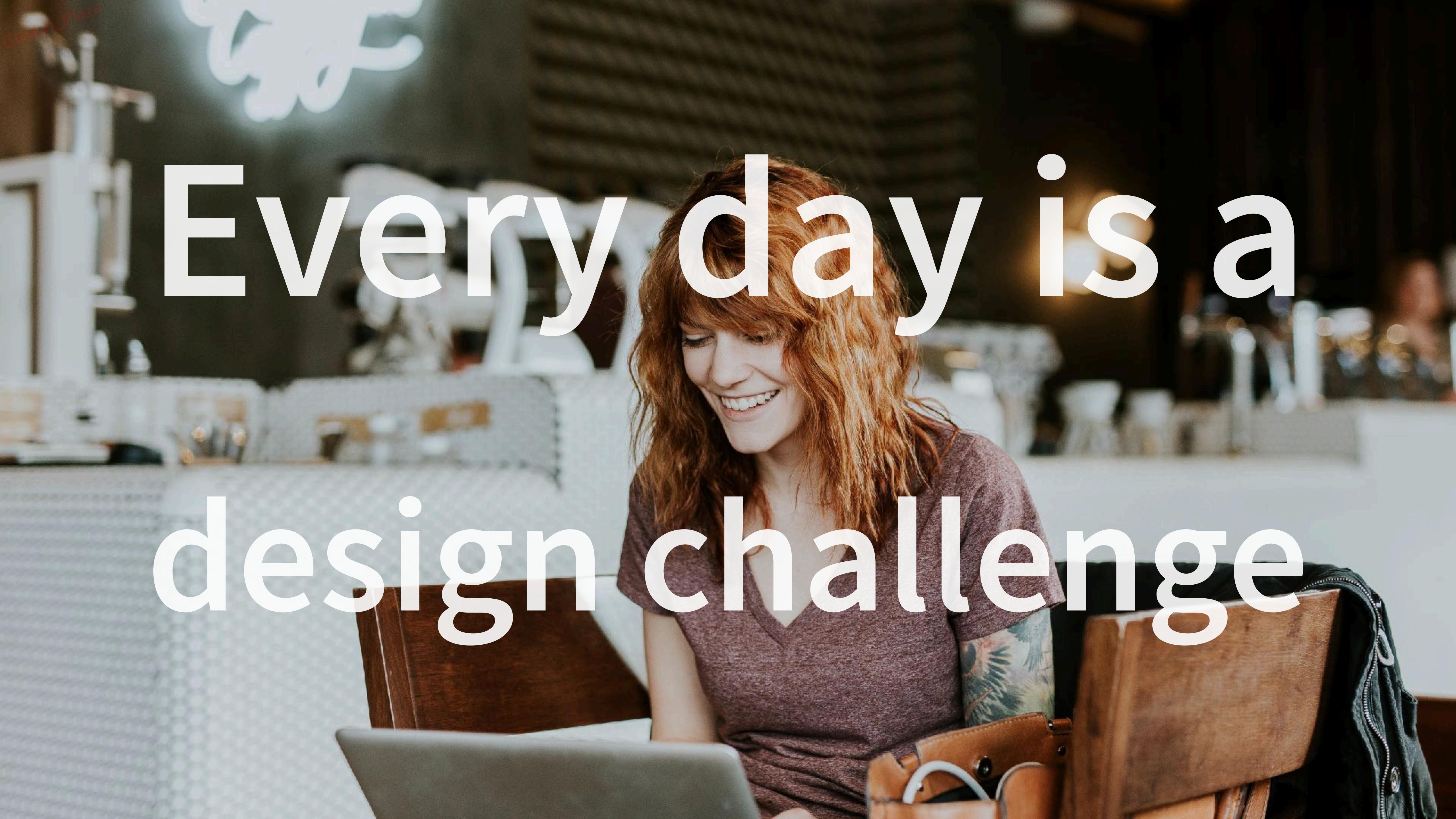
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Every day is a design challenge

Up next…

08

**The Big
Picture**

Lecture 4 - Action Steps

☐ Watch video for **Unit 7**

☐ Unit 5 Exercise: **Strengths as Constraints**

☐ Unit 7 Exercise: **PKM Workflow Canvas**

☐ **Bonus content**: Guest interview with Ting Kelly, on experience design, bringing flow to every part of your life, and next-level calendaring