

MYEXPANSION · JUNE 2026

The AI-native company imitates nature

Here's why you need to position yourself now.

JULIEN KLEIN · COACH FOR CREATIVE EXECUTIVES

2,000 years later, it's cracking



You know the pyramid.

You worked inside it. You hated it at times. And you rebuilt it anyway once you became the boss.

That's normal.

Nobody invented a real alternative in **2,000 years**.

Until last March.

And at the heart of what replaces the pyramid, there's something you've carried inside you since birth. Something nature already invented. Something you can learn to switch on.

I'm going to show you where.

"The living company is not a poetic metaphor. It's what we're evolving toward."

Arie de Geus · former Shell · *The Living Company*, 1997



8 soldiers and a mule

In the beginning, there were 8 Roman soldiers. One tent. One mule.

One leader among them.

That was the **contubernium**. The smallest unit in the Roman army.

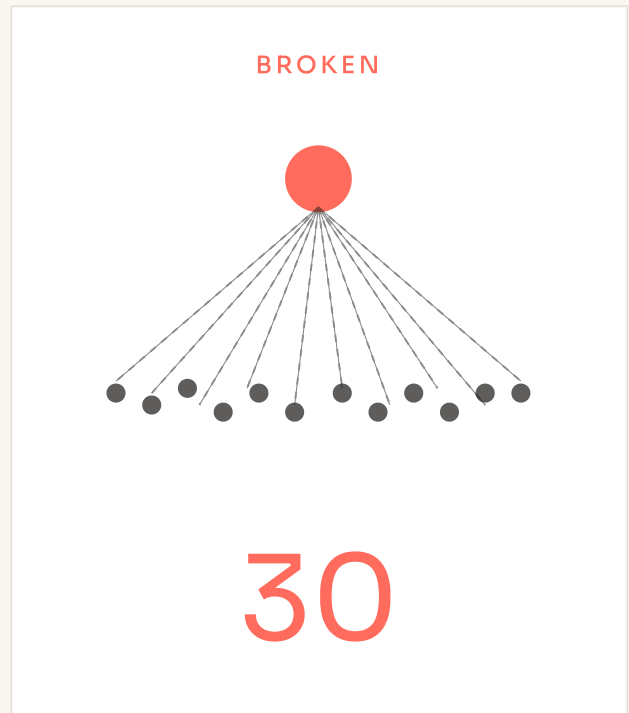
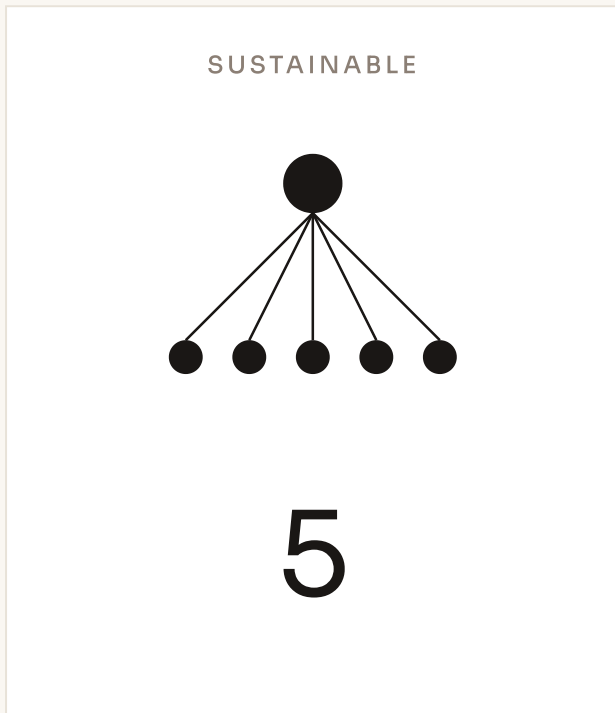
10 contubernia made a **century**.

6 centuries made a **cohort**.

10 cohorts made a **legion** of 5,000 men.

The entire Roman army fit inside this grid.

The rule no manager invented



A human can lead between **3 and 8 people**.

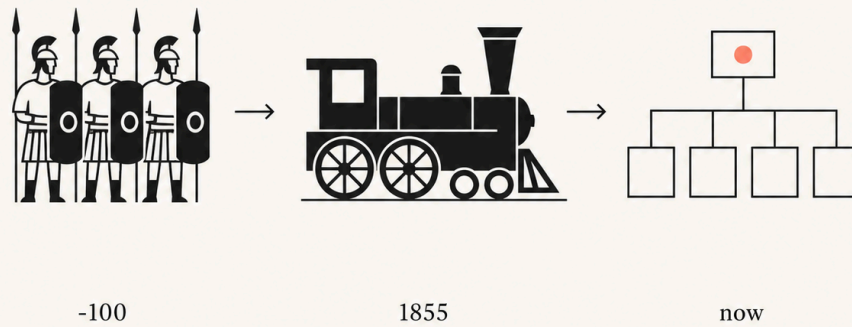
No more.

This isn't an opinion. It isn't a management fad. It's a **cognitive limit**.

Your whole org chart flows from this constraint.

The Romans named it. Modern armies call it **span of control**.

It's what decides how many layers you put between you and the person who does the work.



From the legion to the railroad

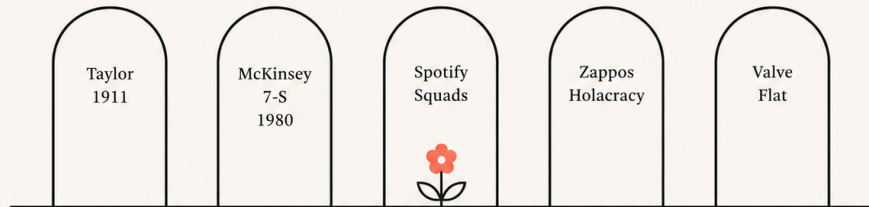
1806. Prussia. The Battle of Jena is lost.

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau rebuild the army. They invent the **General Staff**. Officers whose job isn't to fight, but to **process information** and keep it flowing.

That's middle management. Before it had the name.

1855. New York and Erie Railroad. Daniel McCallum draws the **first org chart** in history.

The modern company inherits from the army. Line. Staff. Layers. Reporting.



The graveyard of attempts

We tried other things.

Frederick Taylor optimized the inside of the pyramid. *Scientific Management*. More efficient, still a pyramid.

McKinsey 7-S added culture and values. Still a pyramid.

Spotify created cross-functional squads. Gorgeous at 200. Back to the pyramid at 3,000.

Zappos abolished titles with Holacracy. Massive attrition.

Valve stayed flat. Never grew past a few hundred people.

Every time, the pyramid comes back. **Why?**

MARCH 2026 · BLOCK

"The debate was never about whether you needed layers.

The debate was about whether humans were the only option for doing what those layers do.

They no longer are."

Jack Dorsey & Roelof Botha · *From Hierarchy to Intelligence*



March 2026

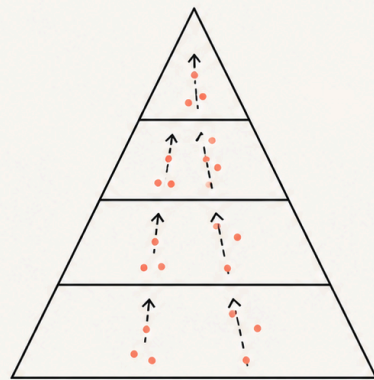
On March 31, 2026, Jack Dorsey publishes a manifesto on Block's site.

He says this: hierarchy was never a philosophical choice. It was an **information routing protocol**. The only one available.

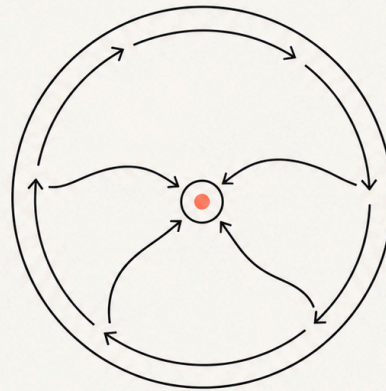
Today, we have another protocol.

The manifesto is called *From Hierarchy to Intelligence*.

Sequoia co-signed. Roelof Botha, his board, published it with him.



lossy



continuous

The real bottleneck

Your team's bottleneck isn't the human.

It's **who keeps the information flowing.**

Every management layer that passes along a piece of info distorts it a little. Three layers, and the decision from the top reaches the bottom unrecognizable.

That's why you keep running all-hands. That's why you write memos to your boss. That's why you prep 12 slides for your board every quarter.

You're doing routing.

And now, there's something that does it better than you.

JANUARY 2026

40%

Block laid off 40% of its workforce.

Not a crisis. A switch.

The leadership team asked itself a single question:

"If we had to rebuild the company today, would we rebuild it like this?"

Unanimous answer: **no**.

Not this size. Not this structure. Not these layers.

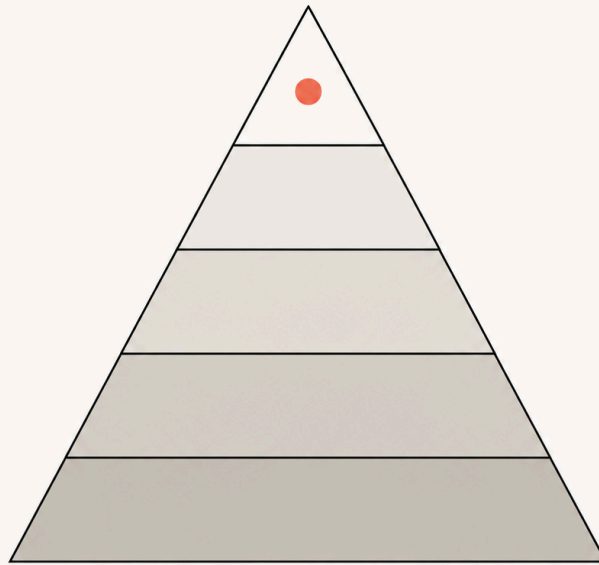
3 weeks later, the announcement was made. **6,000 → 3,600 people.**

THE QUESTION

"If we had to rebuild the company today, we would **not rebuild it like this."**

It's the question every CEO is asking right now.

Including the one who pays your salary.



Modèle 1

■ ACT II · THE 3 MODELS

Model 1 - The pyramid

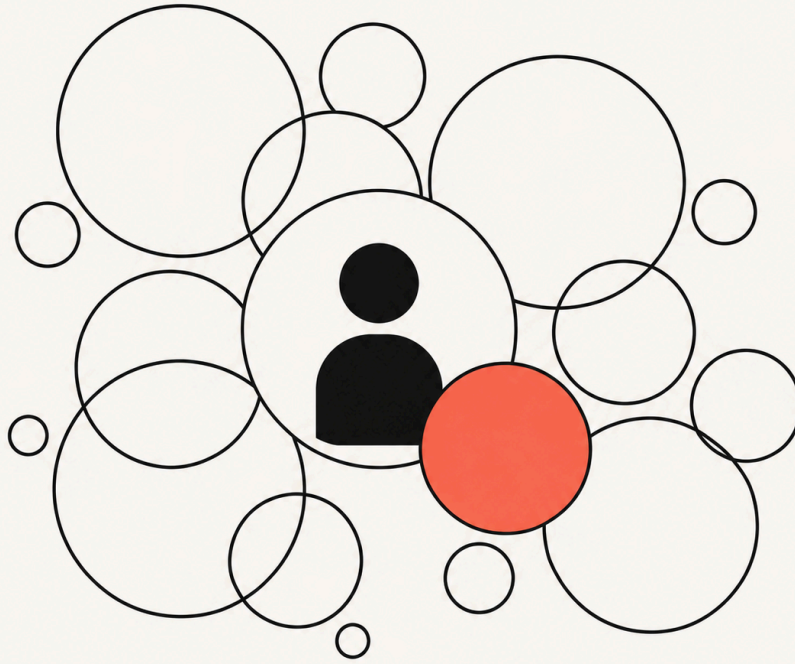
You've tasted it.

Information travels. You have a boss. Your boss has a boss. You know where your place is.

Upsides: predictable, scalable to millions.

Limits: half the brains in the company go to waste. The slacker can survive. Info gets lost in the layers.

You hated it. But once you became the boss, you rebuilt it. **It was the only thing you knew.**



Model 2 - Founder mode

You've tasted this one too.

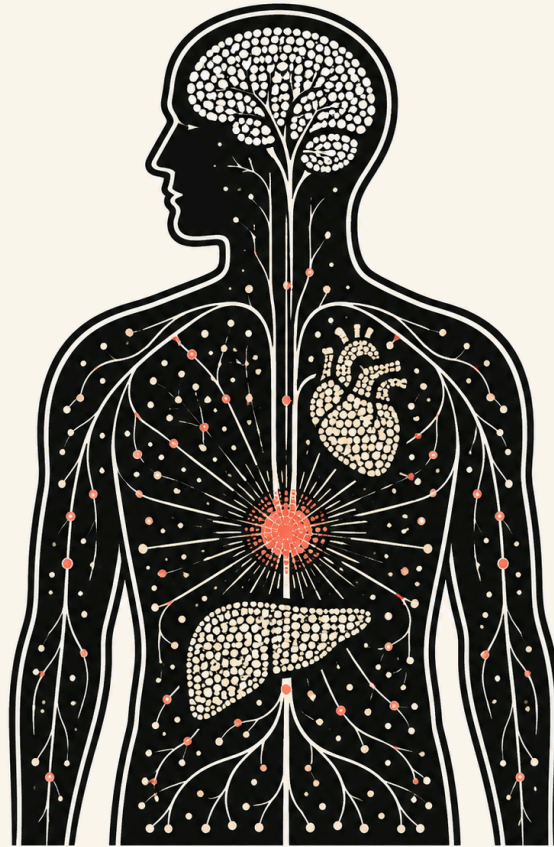
A startup. A founder. A dream. Everyone gives it everything.

Upsides: exhilarating. Everything moves fast. You're part of the adventure.

Limits: chaotic. Meetings end on "we should do that," and nobody knows who's going to do it.

Spotify went through it, then back to the pyramid as it grew. Zappos tried, attrition. Valve stopped at a few hundred.

Founder mode works as long as the founder looks everyone in the eye.



Model 3 - The living company

You haven't tasted this one yet. But you're headed there.

The AI-native company is an **organism**.

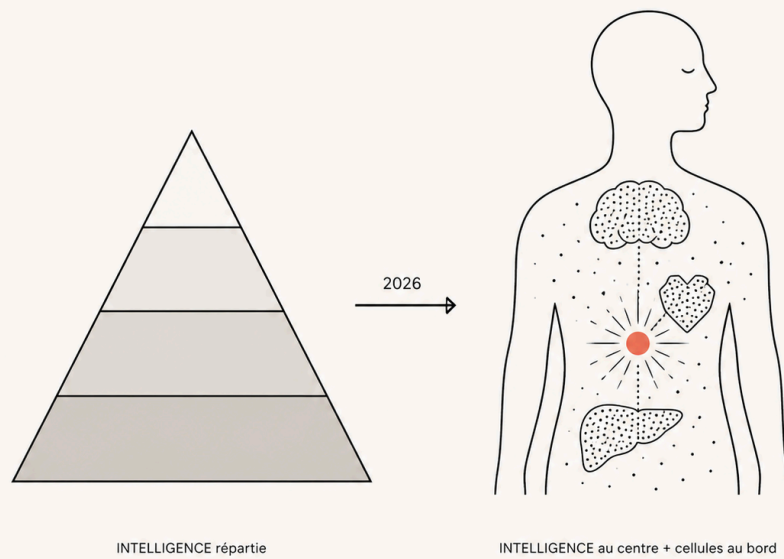
At its center, its **adaptive epigenome**. The shared intelligence. Not frozen code. A system that continuously adjusts what gets expressed, according to the tissue's signals.

Around it, **cells**. Each human with their personal AI system · their **organelles**. Several cells form an **organ**. Several organs form a **body**.

Nobody runs it. Everything is coordinated. **Not by top-down orders. By signals.**

That's what Dorsey calls "the company as intelligence." Or *mini-AGI*, if you like.

It's also the model you've carried inside you since birth.



The shift

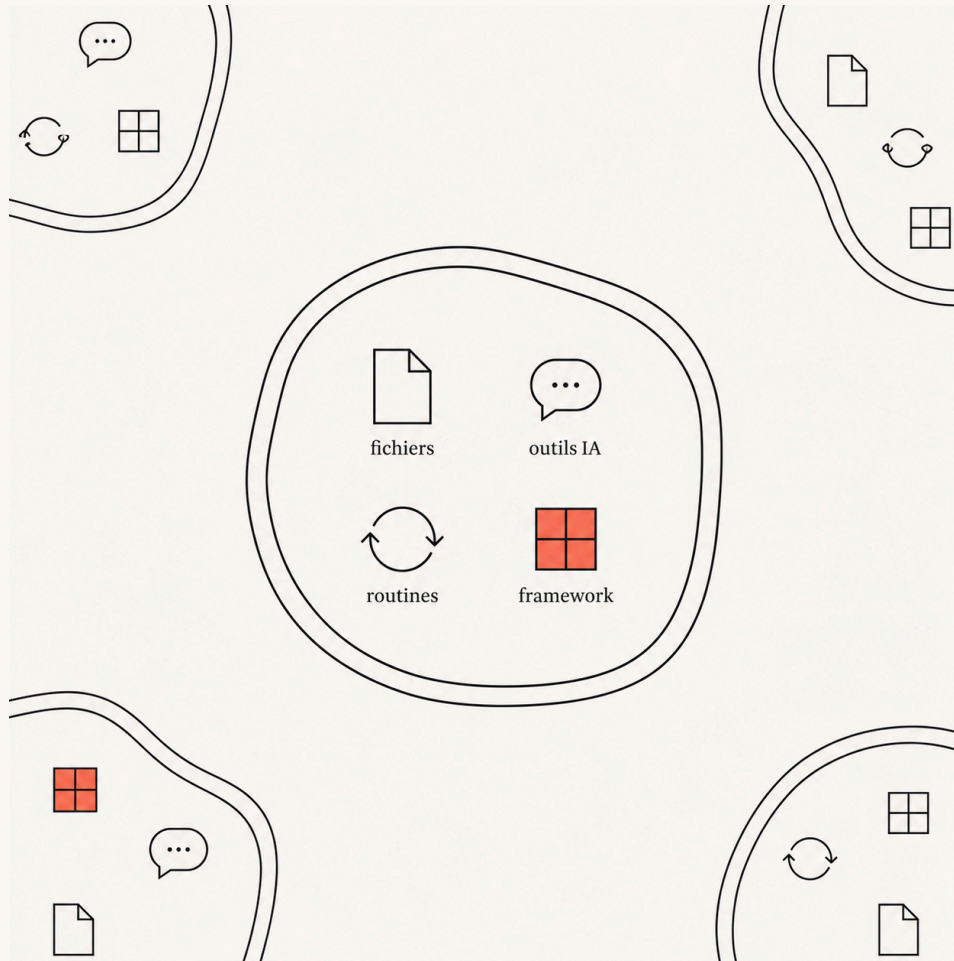
Before, intelligence was spread everywhere across the humans, and hierarchy existed to route it.

Now, intelligence lives at the center in the system, and **in each cell** at the edge. Humans are autonomous nodes connected to the whole.

"The edge is where intelligence touches reality."

Dorsey / Botha

The center only works if the cells at the edge are active. Without autonomous cells, the body collapses back into a pyramid.



■ ACT III · THE 3 PILLARS

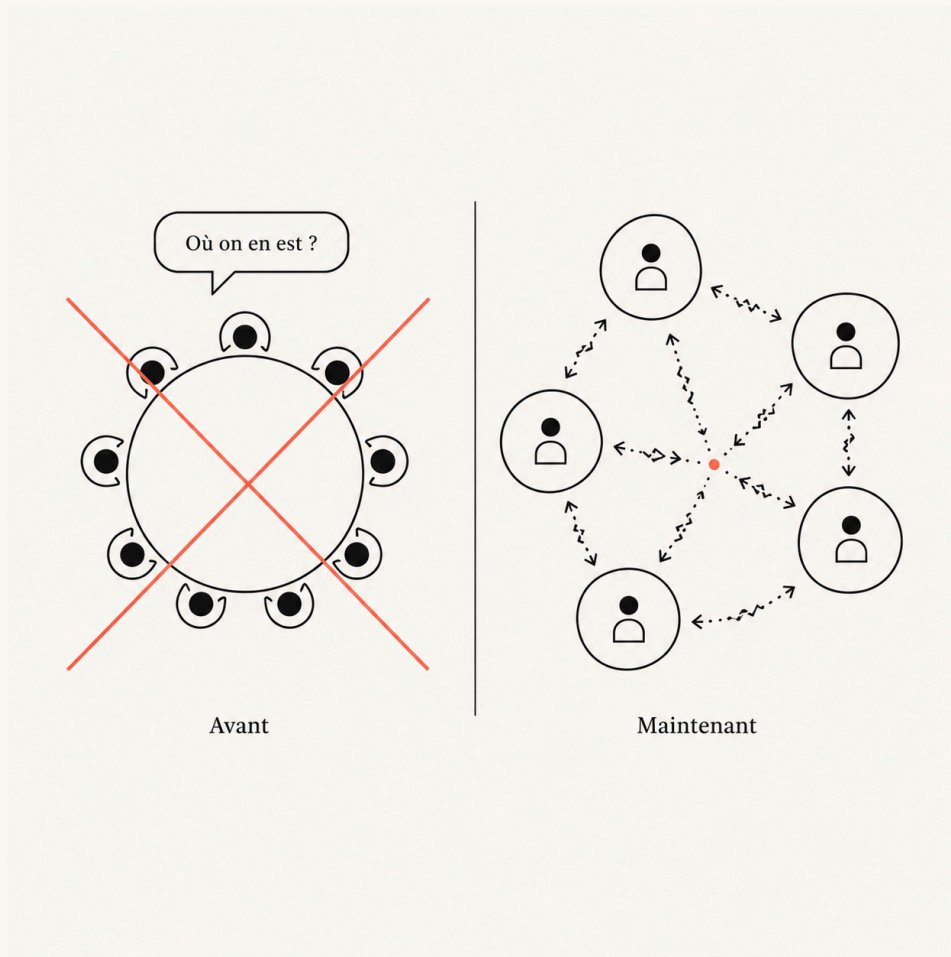
Pillar 1 - An autonomous cell

Every human becomes an autonomous cell. Their cell holds their **organelles**:

- Their **context files** (who they are, what they decide, what their team expects)
- Their **AI tools** (Claude, ChatGPT, Granola, their workflows)
- Their **routines** (1:1 prep, role play, scanning)
- Their personal **framework** (their method, their taste, their grain)

Their taste sorts signal from noise. The way a brain tells what deserves a response from what doesn't.

Without this cell, the human is illegible to the organism. They become a bottleneck.



Pillar 2 - Coordination becomes signal

The second pillar frees the first.

In living tissue, nobody gives a top-down order.

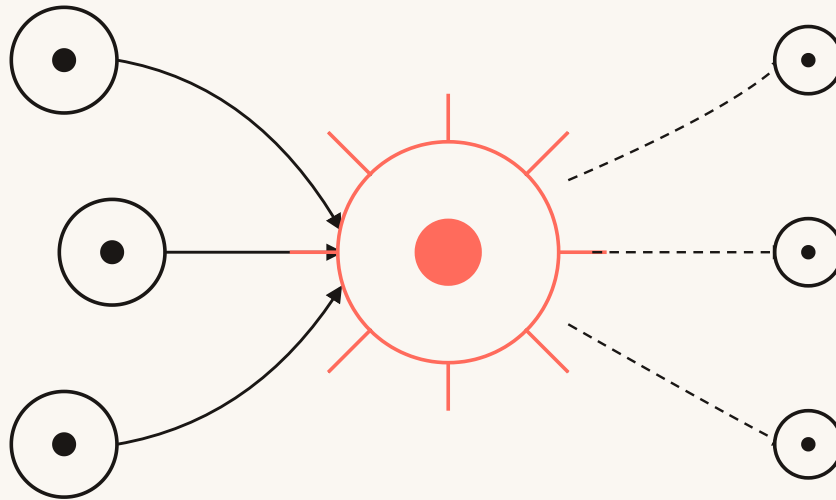
Each cell receives a **cocktail of signals** (paracrine, autocrine, juxtacrine) and decides locally.

That's exactly what Dorsey describes at Block. Shared world model. Local decisions.

Alignment through signals, not orders.

What it frees up: your cell's time to do what it knows how to do on its own. Brainstorm in person. Decide on ethics. Read a room.

Not recite what you did yesterday.



The shared epigenome responds

The shared epigenome doesn't just coordinate.

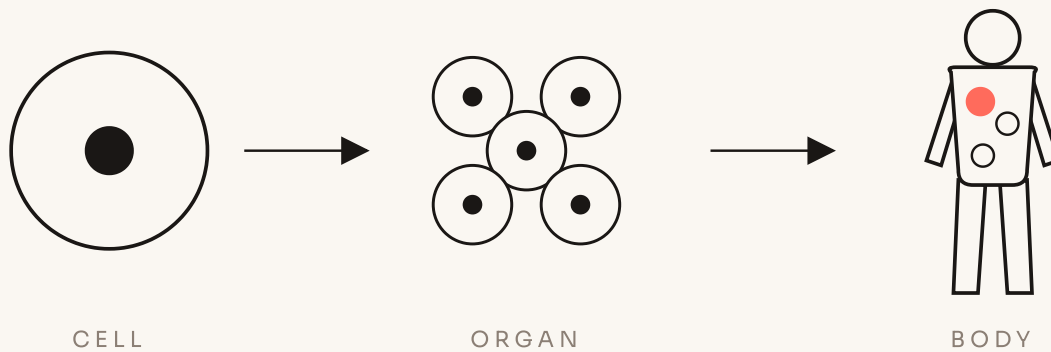
It watches the results. It sees what's working. It sees what's stuck. And it **adjusts the expression** of what it proposes.

It's not the base code that changes. It's what gets expressed that changes, according to the signals it receives from the tissue.

"Hey, here's what I'm proposing for tomorrow, given what you managed to do today."

The company becomes a living partner. A colleague who never sleeps and who has seen every conversation.

You start your day with its brief. Maybe a second one in the early afternoon. **That's enough.**



Pillar 3 - Cells → organ → body

This is where individual cells become collective intelligence.

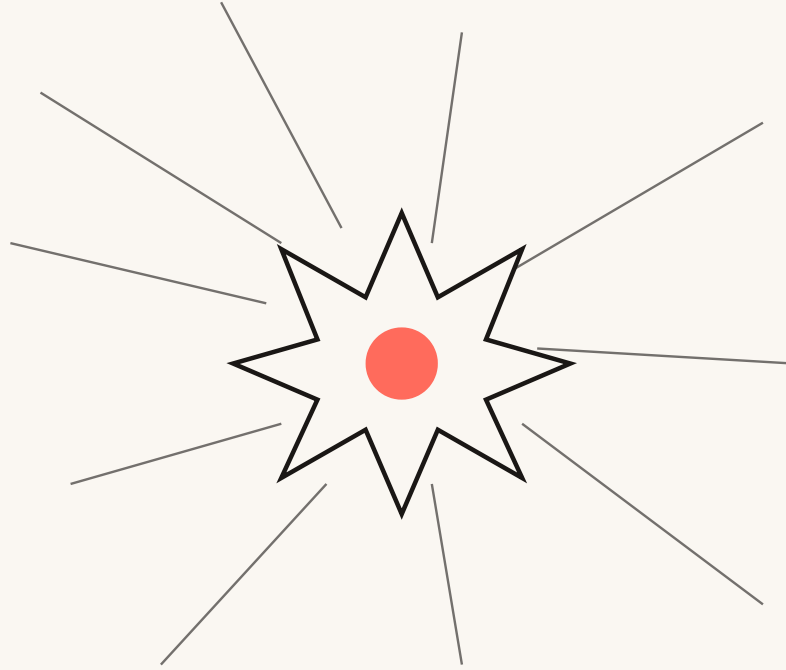
Several cells with a shared specialty group into an **organ** · your team, your department.

The organ has its own function, irreducible to the sum of its cells.

Several organs interacting form the **body** · the company.

And each cell knows which organ it belongs to, and which body. **That's what prevents dispersion.**

It's when each cell stays in conversation with its organ and its body that **the organism becomes smarter than any of its parts.**



■ ACT IV · THE 3 ROLES

Role 1 - The Builder

First role: the **Builder**.

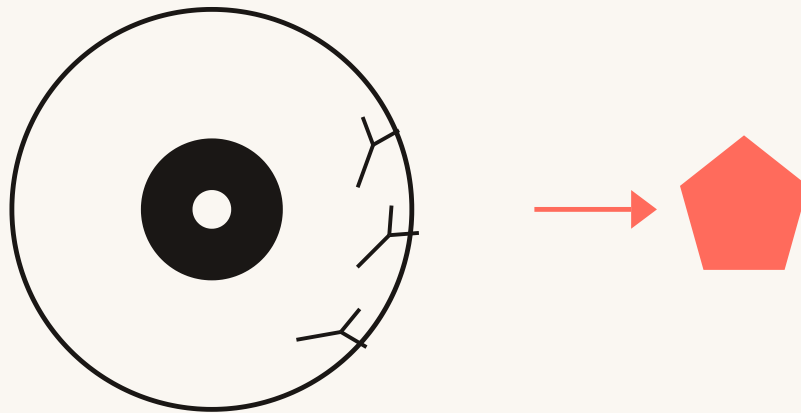
The individual contributor. The one who makes. The artist, the engineer, the designer, the creative.

Their cell is augmented by their AI organelles. They do what 10 people used to do.

In the body, that's the fibroblast: the production cell that builds what the tissue needs. Collagen, elastin, matrix.

Durable human skill: **taste, judgment, creativity.**

Their leverage: their organelles, integrated into their cell.



SPECIFICITY + MEMORY

Role 2 - The DRI

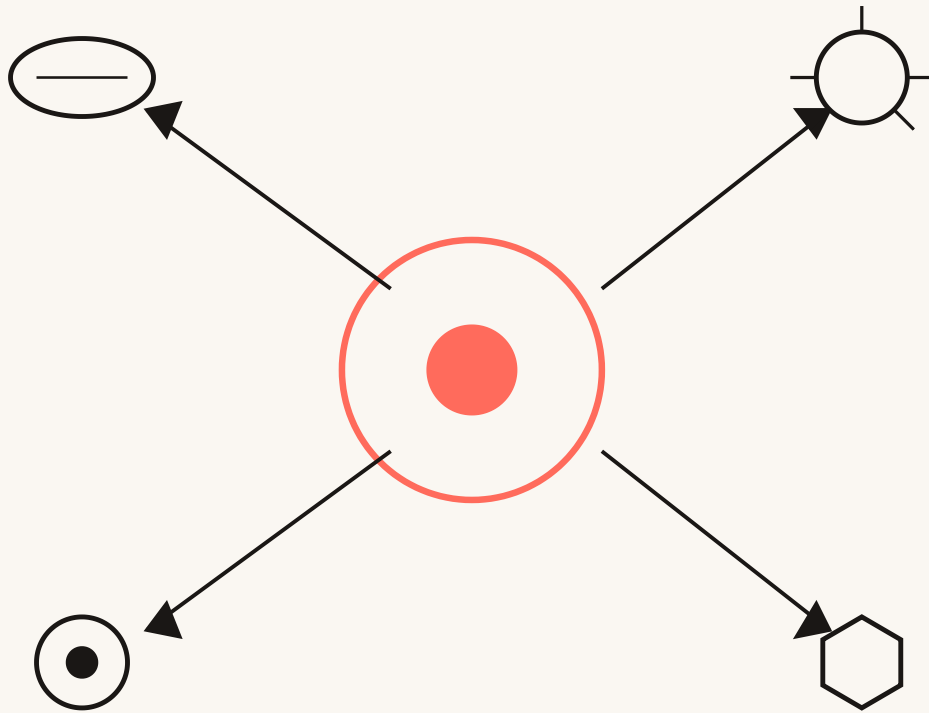
Second role: the **DRI**. *Directly Responsible Individual*.

They own a precise customer outcome for 90 days. They assemble the resources they need, wherever they come from.

When the mission ends, **the memory stays in the organism**. Next time, the organism responds faster.

In the body, that's the lymphocyte: the immune cell with a precise mission. It develops a specificity for an antigen, owns that target, and keeps the memory of the encounter.

Durable human skill: **ownership and accountability**.



Role 3 - The Player-coach

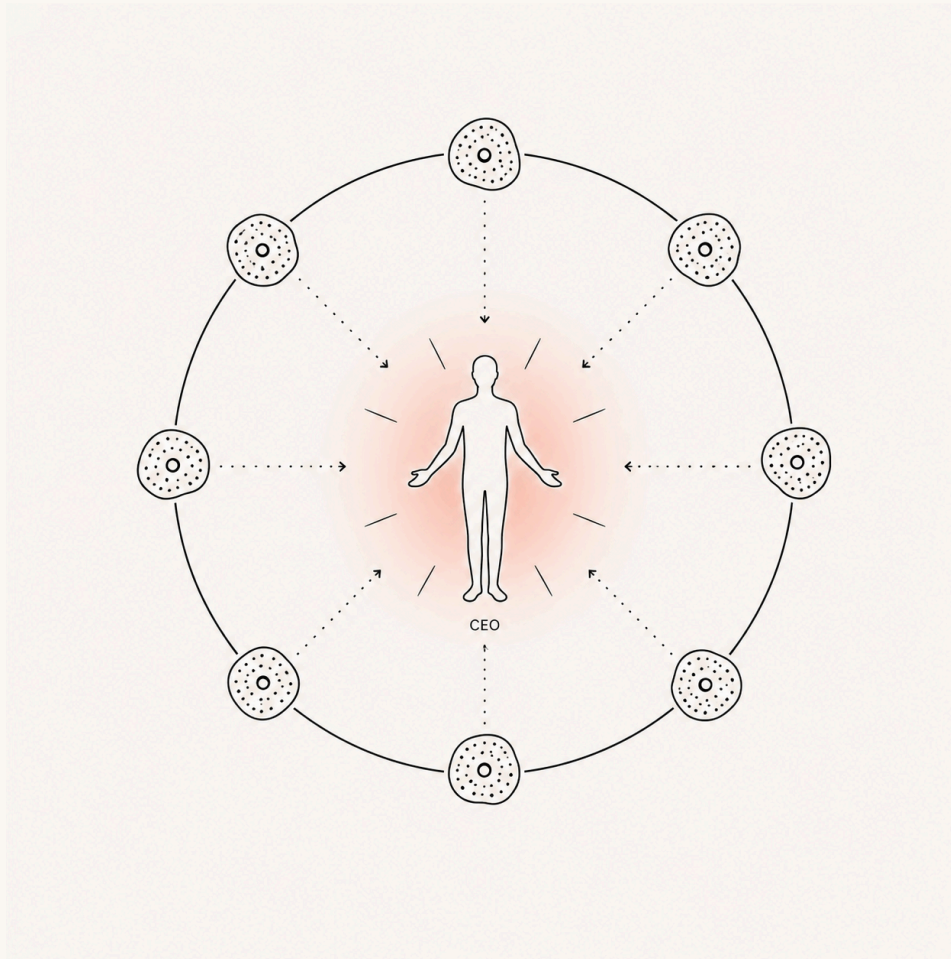
Third role: the **Player-coach**.

They can become a Builder again to show. They can become a DRI again to carry. They pass it on by alternating.

It's not a reporting line. It's an **assignment**: for 6 months, you coach this cell. After that, you coach another one.

In the body, that's the pluripotent cell: it keeps the capacity to become several things, not permanently specialized. When an organ needs to reinforce a lineage, it can differentiate into it.

Durable human skill: **building human capacity**.



And the CEO?

The CEO doesn't disappear. They **mutate**.

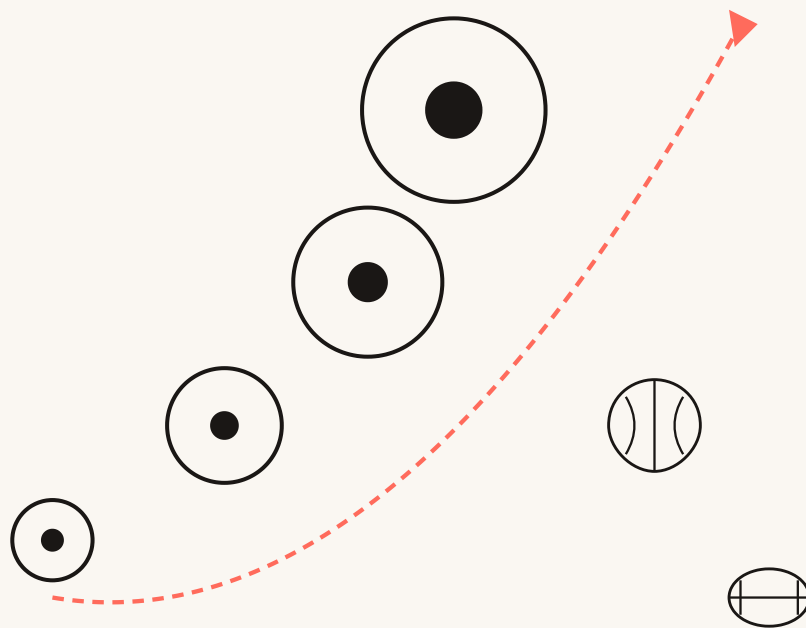
Before: they made the strategic decisions. They defined the values.

Now: they become the **identity guardian of the body**. They make sure the circle of cells correctly aligns the organism toward customer outcomes.

They make the high-stakes calls. The ethics. The existential risk. And they coach too.

The epigenome takes most of the tactical decisions.

The CEO stays for the decisions the machine isn't allowed to make alone.



Your cell adapts like a muscle

Your cell isn't a dead tool. **It adapts.**

You make a decision with its organelles. You see the result. You come back and tell it what worked and what didn't.

It adjusts its context. Its framework evolves. Its signal/noise sorting sharpens.

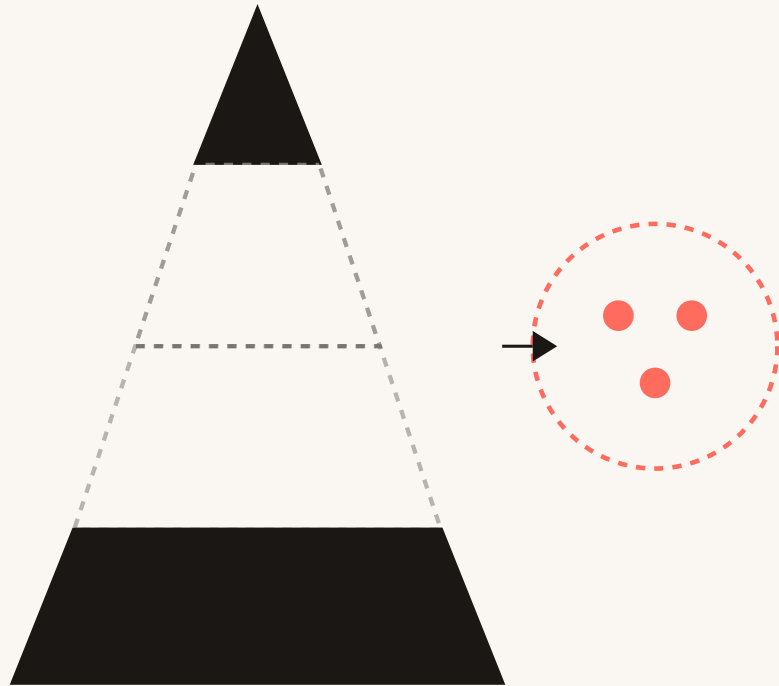
It's the same mechanic as **your brain creating and reinforcing synapses when you learn.**

The same as **your muscle hypertrophying when you exercise it regularly.**

No magic. Biology applied to your system.

After a month, your cell knows you better than your human coach.

After six months, **it looks like you.**



What disappears - Routing middle management

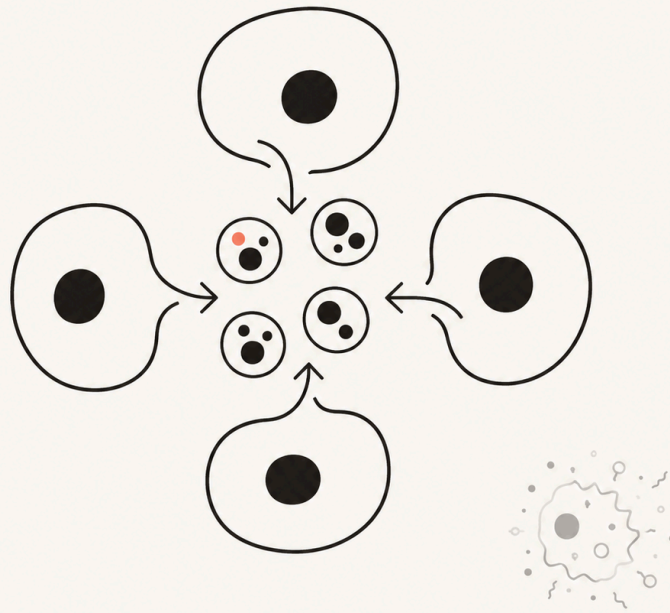
What disappears first: the manager who only **routes information**.

The one whose 80% of time goes to:

- Running status meetings
- Writing reports for the level above
- Relaying directives from above down to the level below
- Aligning and un-aligning priorities

This work is done by the epigenome. Better. Faster. Without political bias.

The manager who no longer builds, no longer owns an outcome, no longer coaches, has no function left. Their cell has no organelles.



ἀπό · πτώσις

ACT V · THE DYNAMICS OF THE ORGANISM

Apoptosis

From the Greek **ἀπό** (*apo*, away from) and **πτώσις** (*ptōsis*, falling). Literally: the falling of leaves in autumn.

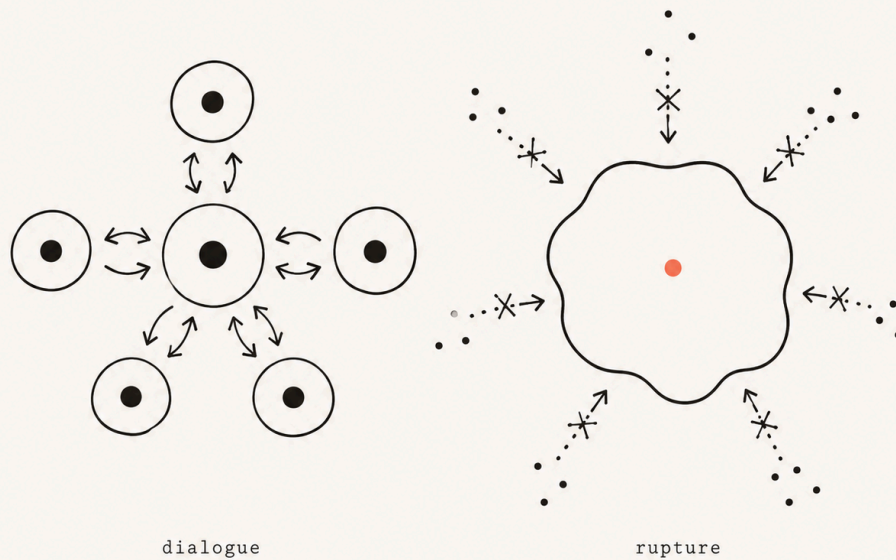
Apoptosis isn't an execution.

It's a clean, orderly withdrawal, with no inflammation, of a cell that no longer serves its function.

Without apoptosis, no fingers. Without apoptosis, no tissue renewal. About 50 billion cells leave your body through this mechanism every day. You feel none of it.

It's the opposite of necrosis, which is violent and inflammatory.

The organism removes the cells that no longer serve their function. **Not a matter of morality. A matter of signaling.**



When the cell breaks the dialogue

A cell that ignores the tissue's signals, that no longer responds to feedback, that consumes resources without coordinating with the rest · that's the start of **dysregulation**.

Dorsey puts it another way:

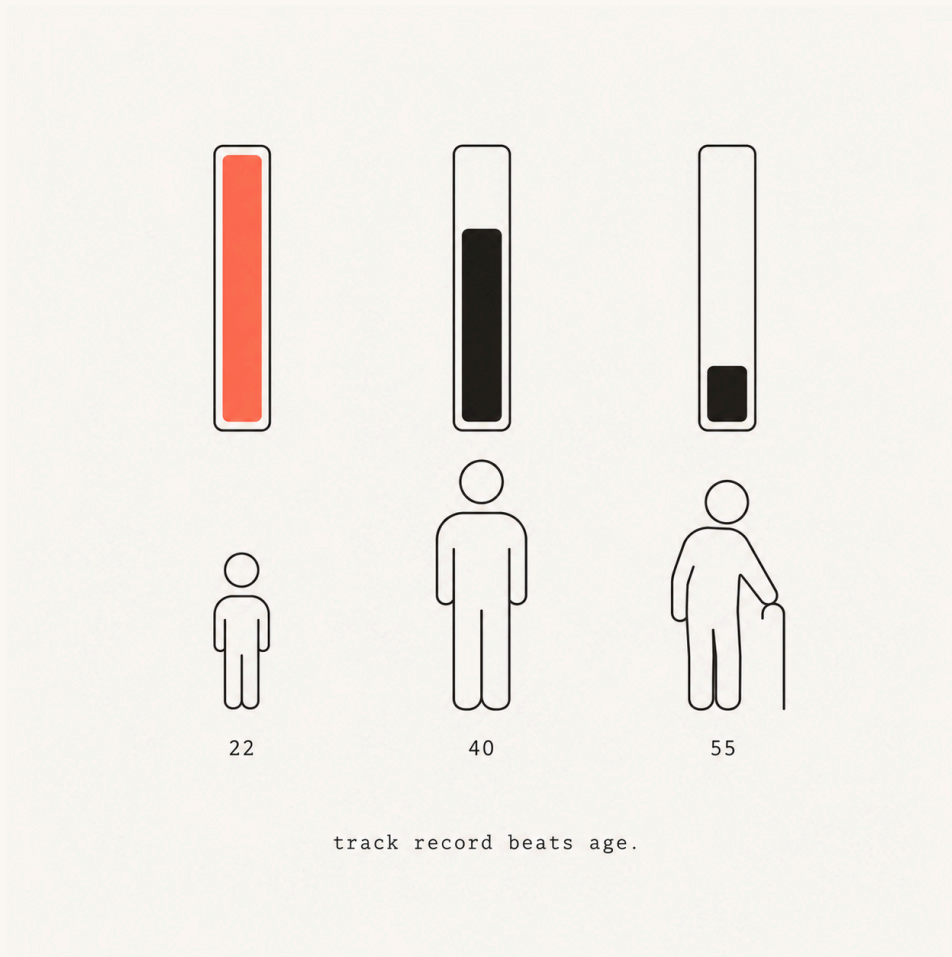
"If we don't learn from our mistakes, that's when we start becoming a cancer cell ourselves."

The word is scary. The mechanic is simple: **you break the dialogue with the organism.**

The stakes aren't moral. They're about **staying in conversation.**

A mindset of constant growth is exactly that: keep listening, keep adjusting, keep learning from your mistakes.

A cell that learns is a cell that dialogues. A cell that dialogues is a cell that **belongs.**



What comes back - Track-record meritocracy

What comes back: **meritocracy by track record.**

Not by age. Not by degree. Not by tenure.

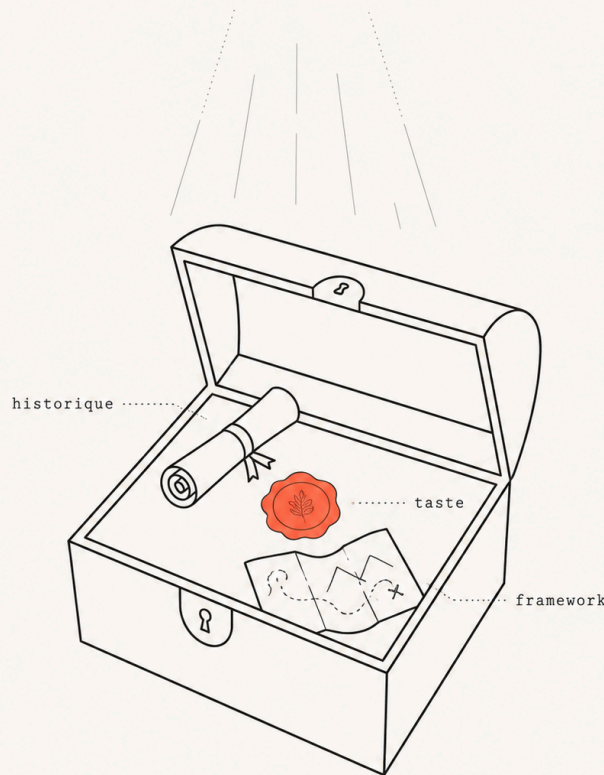
By what you've actually delivered and learned.

A 22-year-old who's done this seriously for 10 years can carry more weight than a 50-year-old senior who never made the shift.

The epigenome remembers who delivered what. The system assigns the right decisions to the right cells.

It's fairer. It's also harder if you haven't built your track record.

And it's your personal AI system that holds your track record.



Your personal epigenome makes you irreplaceable

Your DNA, you share with 99.9% of humans.

It's your **epigenome** that makes you unique. What gets expressed in you, when, how.

Your AI system works the same way. It keeps a code (the tools, the frameworks). But what it **expresses** comes from you alone:

- **Your history.** Every decision, every conversation, every result. Compressed into structured files.
- **Your taste.** The grid you use to sort what works. Refined by you, for you. Not by a consultant. Not by McKinsey.
- **Your framework.** The method you use to prep a 1:1, handle a conflict, roll out a vision.

Someone can take your job tomorrow. Nobody can copy your epigenome.

Unless you never switched it on.

so

**Your cell is no longer a
comfort.**

It's your **place in the
body.**

No personal AI system, no place in the organism.

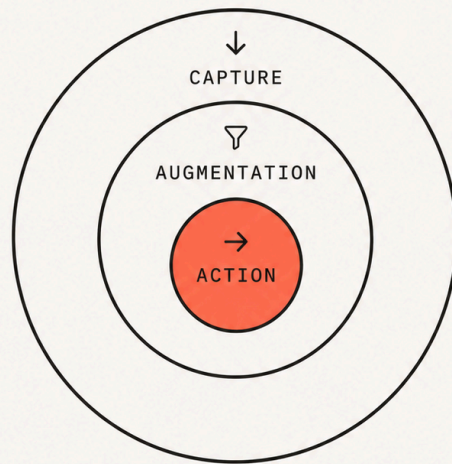
If you're not legible to the epigenome, it doesn't know what to hand you.

If your context isn't structured, no organ can lean on you.

If you can't be an augmented DRI, you can't own any outcome.

If you can't be a player-coach, you can't hold your organ's craft through the transition.

The personal AI system is no longer optional.



ROI

ACT VI · TAKING ACTION

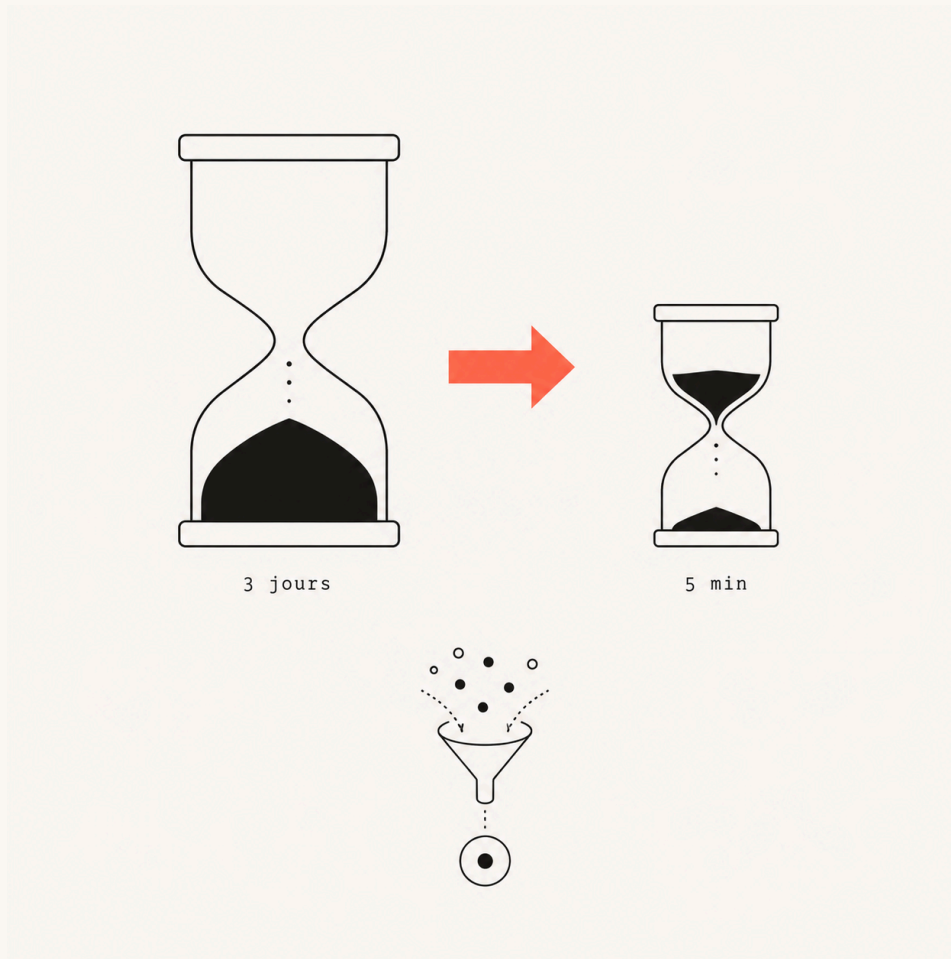
Build your cell - Three movements

An active cell is built in three movements.

- **Capture** · what goes into your organelles
- **Augmentation** · what gets sorted by your taste
- **Action** · what goes out to the organ

It's in this order. Nobody can skip a step.

And every step has a **measurable ROI**, from the very first week.



Capture - your head → an asset

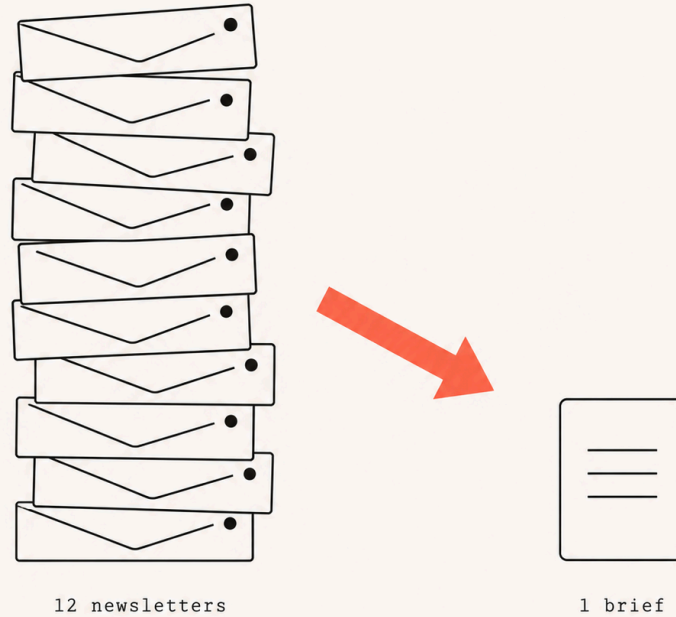
Every quote you arbitrated, every direction you signed off, every client feedback: it lives in your head.

You're not there, the studio slows down. You leave, it forgets.

Captured, your judgment becomes an asset. Your team queries it without waiting on you.

Without capture, every project starts from zero. With capture, **your AI decides like you.**

Measurable ROI: prepping a committee goes from **half a day digging through threads** to **15 minutes.**



Augmentation - 3 directions → 1 go

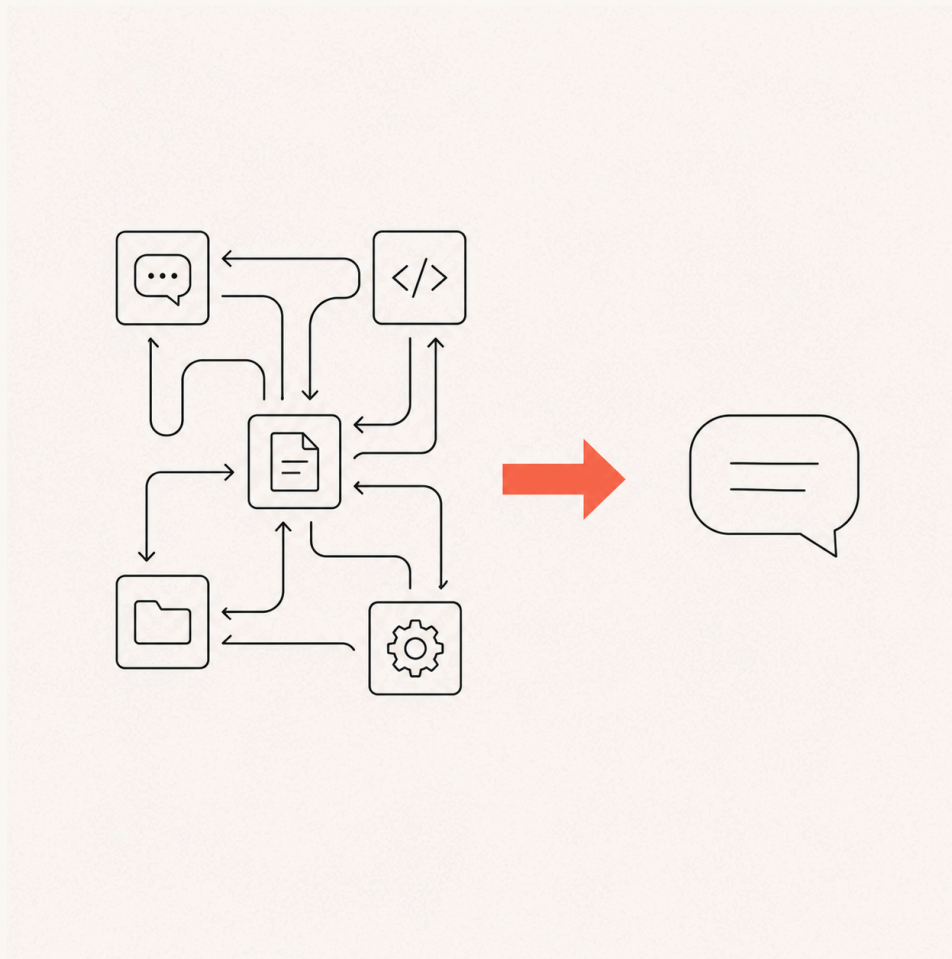
AI proposes everything. And nonsense too, with confidence.

Your job as a leader: **decide**, not produce volume.

Three directions on the table, a pitch to defend, a price to hold. AI lays out the trade-offs. Your taste chooses.

It's your human grain that does the sorting. **Taste is what AI can't have in your place.**

Measurable ROI: a go/no-go goes from **2 hours of meeting and 4 opinions that contradict each other** to **a brief signed off in 15 minutes.**



Action - the non-billable → the margin

Your cell isn't there to know. It's there to **ship: produce more, faster, more differentiated.**

What eats at you isn't the creation. It's the thankless non-billable work: status updates, follow-ups, moving info around, finding the right version of the file.

Plugged into your cell, AI absorbs the invisible. Your seniors stop chasing. **They create again.**

Measurable ROI: your seniors go from **half their time on follow-ups** to **80% on billable creation.**

It's what comes out of your cell that pays for your cell.

THE NEWSLETTER · AI FOR CREATIVE DECISION-MAKERS

Keep learning, every week.

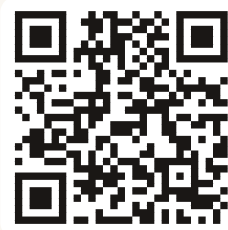
One read a week to build your AI system and keep your place in the living company.
Pick your language · scan the code, or click the link.

ENGLISH
MyExpansion



myexpansion.substack.com

FRANÇAIS
monExpansion



monexpansion.substack.com

Free · one newsletter, two languages · unsubscribe in one click.

WHO I AM



Julien Klein

CREATIVE EXECUTIVE · COACH · AUTHOR

15 years in VFX studios. Rodeo. Scanline. Netflix.

I managed up to 150 people. I watched org charts get built and torn down. I watched pipelines absorb AI and others collapse.

I'm not an AI consultant. I'm a Creative Executive who made the shift and turned it into a daily practice.

Today, I coach other Creative Executives to build their personal AI system · so they keep their place in the new living company.

LET'S TALK

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Two minds brought it to life

That of **Bruce Lipton**, cell biologist. His work on the cell and its environment gave me the analogy that holds this whole document together: the company as a living organism.

And that of **Jack Dorsey**. His pivot of Block toward an AI-native organization, which you crossed earlier, shows what it looks like in real life, beyond the metaphor.

The rest is just putting it into practice, for creative decision-makers.

Sources and the limit of the metaphor

This biological analogy rests on observed, published science. Here are the key sources.

ON APOPTOSIS

Kerr, Wyllie, Currie, "Apoptosis: A Basic Biological Phenomenon", *British Journal of Cancer*, 1972. Popular science: Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Song of the Cell*, 2022.

ON CANCER AS DYSREGULATION

Hanahan & Weinberg, "Hallmarks of Cancer: The Next Generation", *Cell*, 2011. Mukherjee, *The Emperor of All Maladies*, 2010.

ON NEUROPLASTICITY

Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, 2007. Pascual-Leone et al., *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 2005.

ON HOMEOSTASIS AND ALLOSTASIS

Cannon, *The Wisdom of the Body*, 1932. Sterling, "Allostasis: A Model of Predictive Regulation", 2012.

ON CELL SIGNALING

Alberts et al., *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, 7th edition, 2022.

ON EPIGENETICS

Nessa Carey, *The Epigenetics Revolution*, 2012.

ON STEM CELLS

Yamanaka, *Nobel Lecture*, 2012.

ON THE LIVING COMPANY

Arie de Geus, *The Living Company*, Harvard Business Review Press, 1997.

LIMIT OF THE METAPHOR

The company *isn't* an organism. It *behaves like* one. The metaphor illuminates. It doesn't substitute for human reality.

Where the analogy breaks, common sense takes over. That's exactly what your cell is meant to do every day: recognize the model's limits and adjust.