

# Playing against a burn-out machine

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Thomas Hart-Benton: «The-Blast-Furnace»

## **Burn-out maschine**

A system of conflicting values, influences and bad job design that makes the persons caught within investing more and more energy until they burn-out or worse, go postal.

A crucial step is to activate their survival mode so they make sure their peers get eaten by the lion (rather than teaming up and fending the lion off).

According to two studies the United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest violent crime rate of any industrialized nation. An average of 20 workers are murdered each week in the U. S. making homicide the second highest cause of workplace deaths and the leading one for females. 18,000 non-fatal violent crimes such as sexual and other assaults also occur each week while the victim is working or about a million a year. The figures are probably higher since rates of homicide and non-fatal assaults. Nevertheless, postal workers who work in a safe environment have experienced so many fatalities due to job stress that "going postal" has crept into our language. "Desk rage" and "phone rage" have also become increasingly common terms.

Germans. We are also working harder. In a 2001 survey, nearly 40% of workers described their office environment as "most like a real life survivor program."

Abbildung 5. Chronisch\* auftretende Belastungsfaktoren (Stressoren), Erwerbstätige in Prozent (N = 709-1'005)

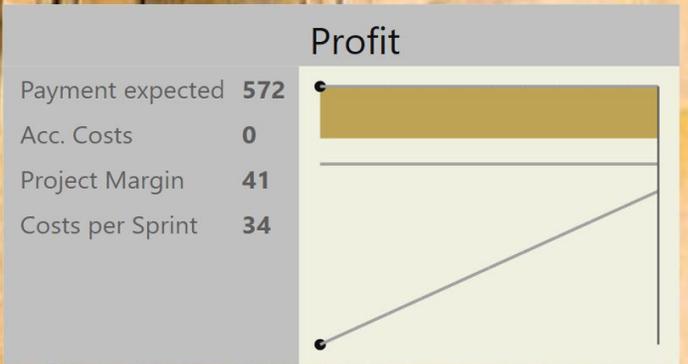
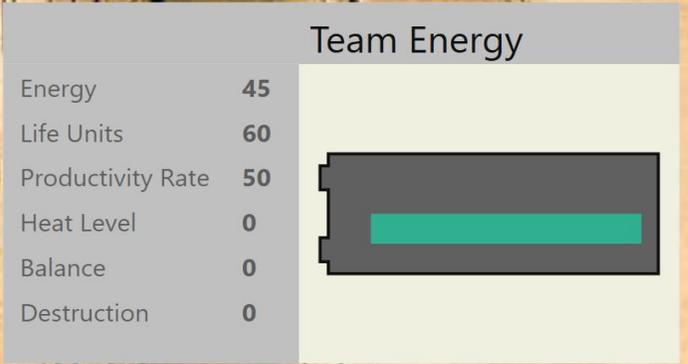


In the recent EU-funded project carried out in 2001, the cost of depression was estimated to be €617 billion annually. The total was made up of costs to employers resulting from absenteeism and presenteeism (€272 billion), loss of productivity (€242 billion), health care costs of €63 billion and social welfare costs in the form of disability benefit payments (€39 billion).<sup>2</sup>

Current **0** Remaining **10** Do Sprint **1 2 3** \*  
 Required **0** Played **0**  Play Chat Rules Awards Data R I M A  
 0 x 1  Show hidden rules

Sprints      Activism Points      Play cards      Views      Rules export

The game starts.  
 Everyting is balanced.  
 Apparently.



### NPS

Progress **8**

Quality **10**

Time **9**

Costs **8**

NPS **9**

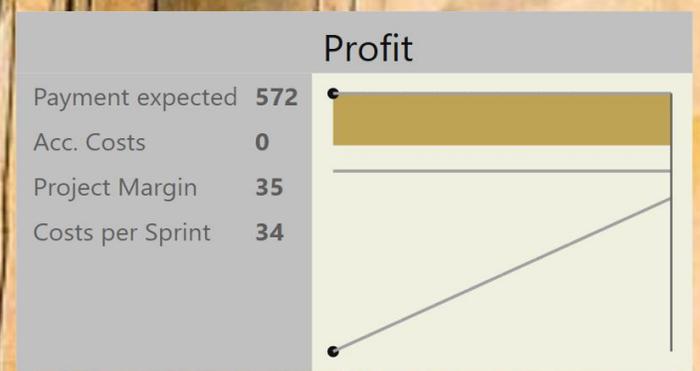
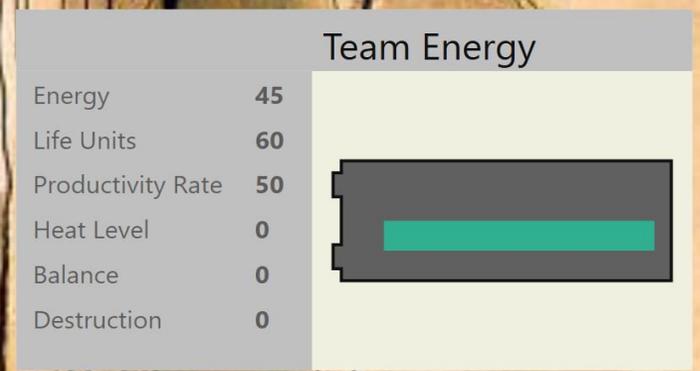
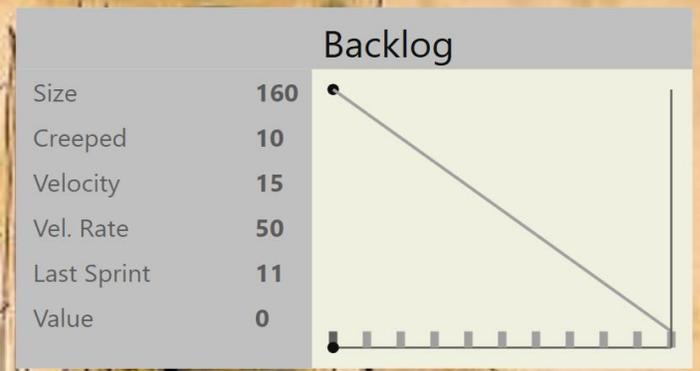
Client: I've got it in writing: I will get all these nifty features from you.

Team Squeezer Maschine  
**We must increase velocity!**  
 Increase activism 3

All features are included. Team  
**We added the missing epic to the backlog.**  
 Increase stories 10

Thus lets stimulate the system.

Oh-oh. A burn-out machine operates!



### NPS

Progress **8**

Quality **8**

Time **8**

Costs **8**

NPS **8**

3  
Team: We can refactor later.

1  
Team: We stop taking breaks and shorten lunch time.

Reduce quality to work faster Team  
We get more stories done now.  
Increase velocity rate 4

Working a bit more is expected. Team  
I just take a coffee as a boost.  
Increase productivity rate 2

Team Squeezer Maschine  
We must increase velocity!  
Increase activism 3

Activism is needed ...

... and has a visible effect.

### Backlog

Size	149
Creeped	15
Velocity	17
Vel. Rate	54
Last Sprint	10
Value	8

### Team Energy

Energy	43
Life Units	60
Productivity Rate	55
Heat Level	0
Balance	-2
Destruction	0

### Profit

Payment expected	572
Acc. Costs	35
Project Margin	39
Costs per Sprint	35

### NPS

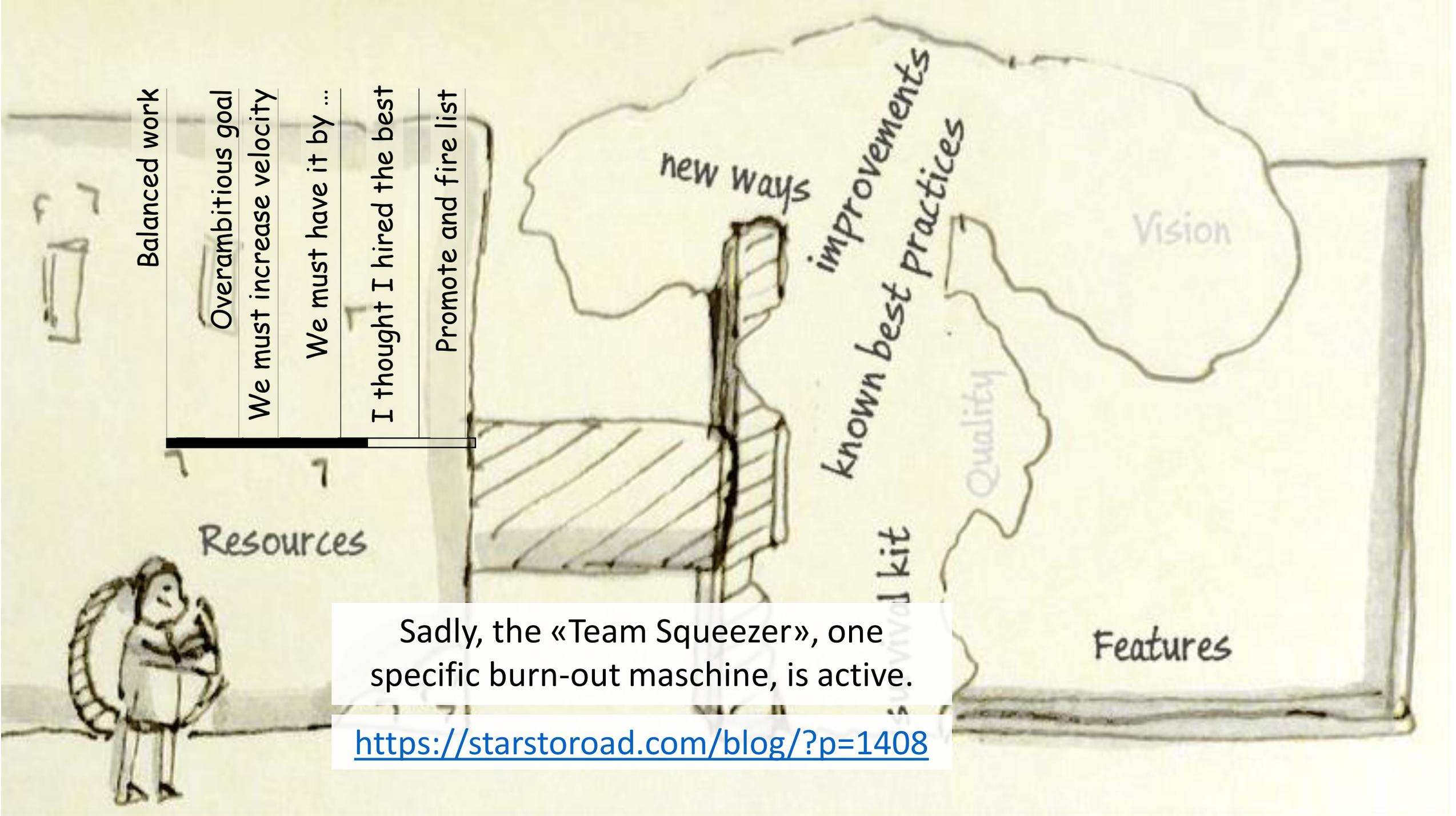
Progress: 8

Quality: 10

Time: 9

Costs: 8

NPS: 9



5  
Team: I'm ready with my story. It's not my fault the others aren't.

5  
Team: Nobody is testing properly. Where are the testers?

Blaming others means less work. Team  
 Having put the blame on someone else, I can reduce overtime.  
 Deforce rule 33 32 31  
 Decrease force -1

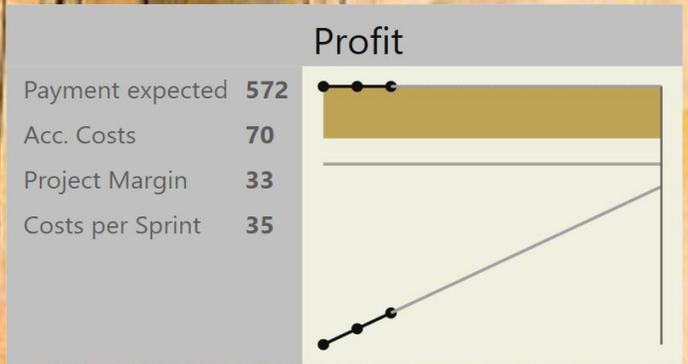
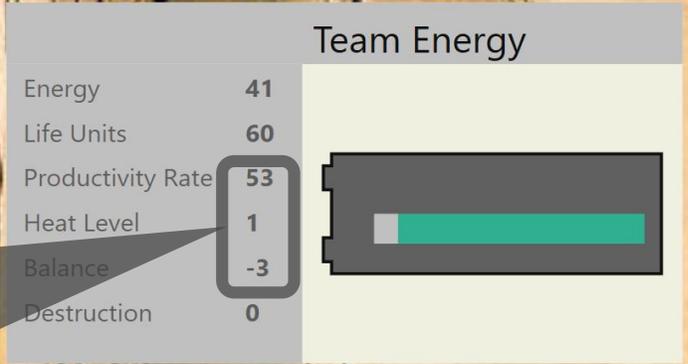
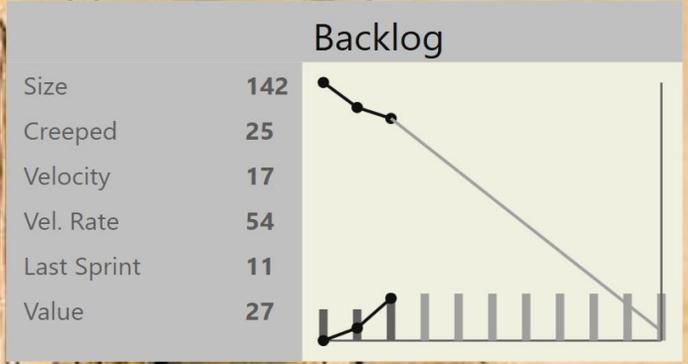
Blaming others means less work. Team  
 Having put the blame on someone else, I can reduce overtime.  
 Deforce rule 33 32 31  
 Decrease force -1

Team Squeezer Maschine  
 We must increase velocity!  
 Increase activism 3

Shit happens Team  
 Epic 12 has a hidden feature that needs adding.  
 Increase stories 10

While hunting down the guilty ones and fighting to finish in time ...

... heat level rises and work load increases. Batteries drain.



**NPS**

Progress **10**

Quality **10**

Time **8**

Costs **8**

NPS **9**

Current **6** Remaining **4** Do Sprint **1 2 3** Required **8** Played **0** **312** Play Chat Rules Awards Data R I M A

Sprints      Activism Points      Play cards      Views      Rules export

Show hidden rules

Reduce quality to work faster      Maschine  
 We made debts - we must do something.  
 Increase activism 2

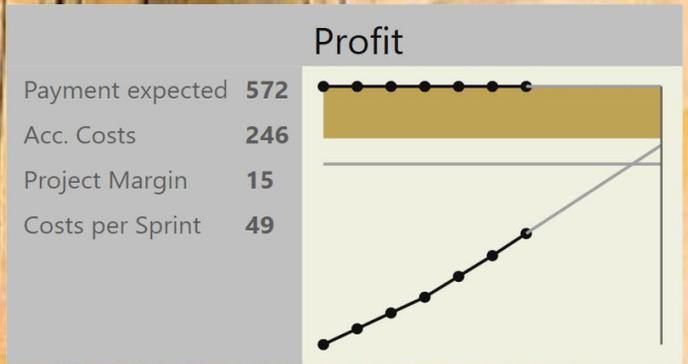
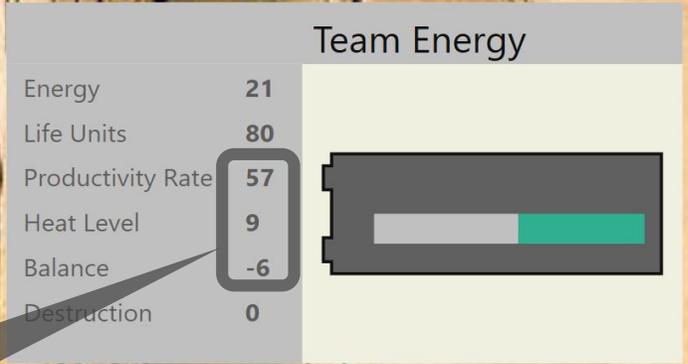
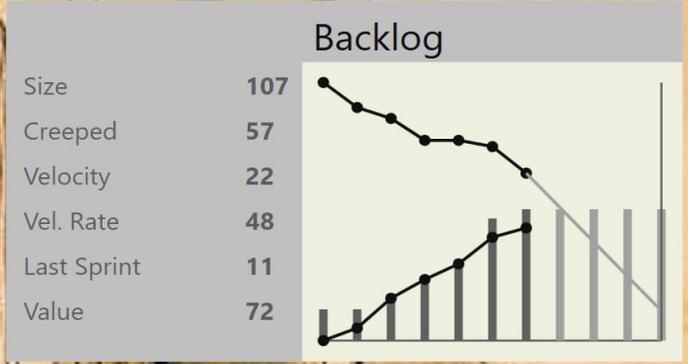
Team Squeezer      Maschine  
 We must increase velocity!  
 Increase activism 3

Client is always right.      Team  
 Conflicts between leader and team are heating it up.  
 Increase heat level 1

Reduce quality to work faster      Team  
 We must fix some debts urgently.  
 Multiply by force: Increase debt 3

Conflict intensity grows as well as debts ...

... energy level drops and drops.



NPS

Progress **11**

Quality **8**

Time **8**

Costs **8**

NPS **9**

Current **14** Remaining **-4** Do Sprint  Required **11** Played **0**   Chat Rules Awards Data R I M A

\* 1 2 3

Sprints      Activism Points      Play cards      Views      Rules export

After 14 hard sprints the result is a **such:**

Features are done. Mostly that is. Quality sucks and users hate the system.

The team is eshausted. Batteries have taken irrebarable damage.

Delivery time was not kept and financial loss is the consequence..

Do Sprint  
We made debts - we must do so  
Increase activism 2

Team Squeezer      Maschine  
We must work until the deadline!

Team Squeezer      Maschine  
We must increase velocity!

Team Squeezer      Team  
Everybody is so testy lately!  
Increase heat level 1

Reduce quality to work faster      Team  
Multiply by force: Increase debt 3

### Backlog

Size	6
Creeped	128
Velocity	24
Vel. Rate	51
Last Sprint	15
Value	193

### Team Energy

Energy	0
Life Units	80
Productivity Rate	61
Heat Level	13
Balance	-8
Destruction	-5

### Profit

Payment expected	572
Acc. Costs	652
Project Margin	-22
Costs per Sprint	51

### NPS

Progress

12

Quality

5

Time

4

Costs

8

NPS

7

Current 14 Remaining -4 Do Sprint \* 1 2 3 Required 11 Played 0 6 x 1.75 320 Play Chat Rules Awards Data R I M A

Sprints      Activism Points      Play cards      Views      Rules export

Show hidden rules

Lead Client War

- Client does not want to negotiate.
- The client is the main problem.
- We counter with change requests.
- Client double checks scope fulfilment.

Profit Over All

- KPI project margin
- We must keep our costs low.

As Long As I Survive

- Project over innovations for the company.
- Project over adopting new ways of working.
- Reduce quality to work faster
- Quick (and dirty) increases velocity.
- Blaming others means less work.
- I need to defend myself      Survival over team.
- Devs do not need to test.      Pecking order defined
- UX is not dev responsibility.

The trained behaviors are going to be applied in the next project, no worries there.

Still, the team learned something

Achieve Client Happiness

- KPI client happiness
- Client is always right.

'The Value Of Doom'

Team Squeeze

«We need to plan better»

«We must write much better user stories and clear the requirements»

«We must improve our communication»

Resources, No Colleagues

Career Friction

Sacrifice Rich Life

- Project over rich live.

Work Over Health

- Coffee helps to cope with tiredness.

## **“Motto” of the Postal Service: Two Postal Tributes Chiseled in Stone**

*Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.*

While the Postal Service has no official motto, the popular belief that it does is a tribute to America's postal workers. The words above, thought to be the motto, are chiseled in gray granite over the entrance to the New York City Post Office on 8th Avenue and come from Book 8, Paragraph 98, of *The Persian Wars* by Herodotus. During the wars between the Greeks and Persians (500-449 B.C.), the Persians operated a system of mounted postal couriers who served with great fidelity.

Current **14** Remaining **-4** Do Sprint  \* 1 2 3  
 Required **11** Played **0** 6 x 1.75  
 320 Play Chat Rules Awards Data R I M A  
 Show hidden rules

Sprints      Activism Points      Play cards      Views      Rules export



The players gained a few awards while burning the team! Congratulations!

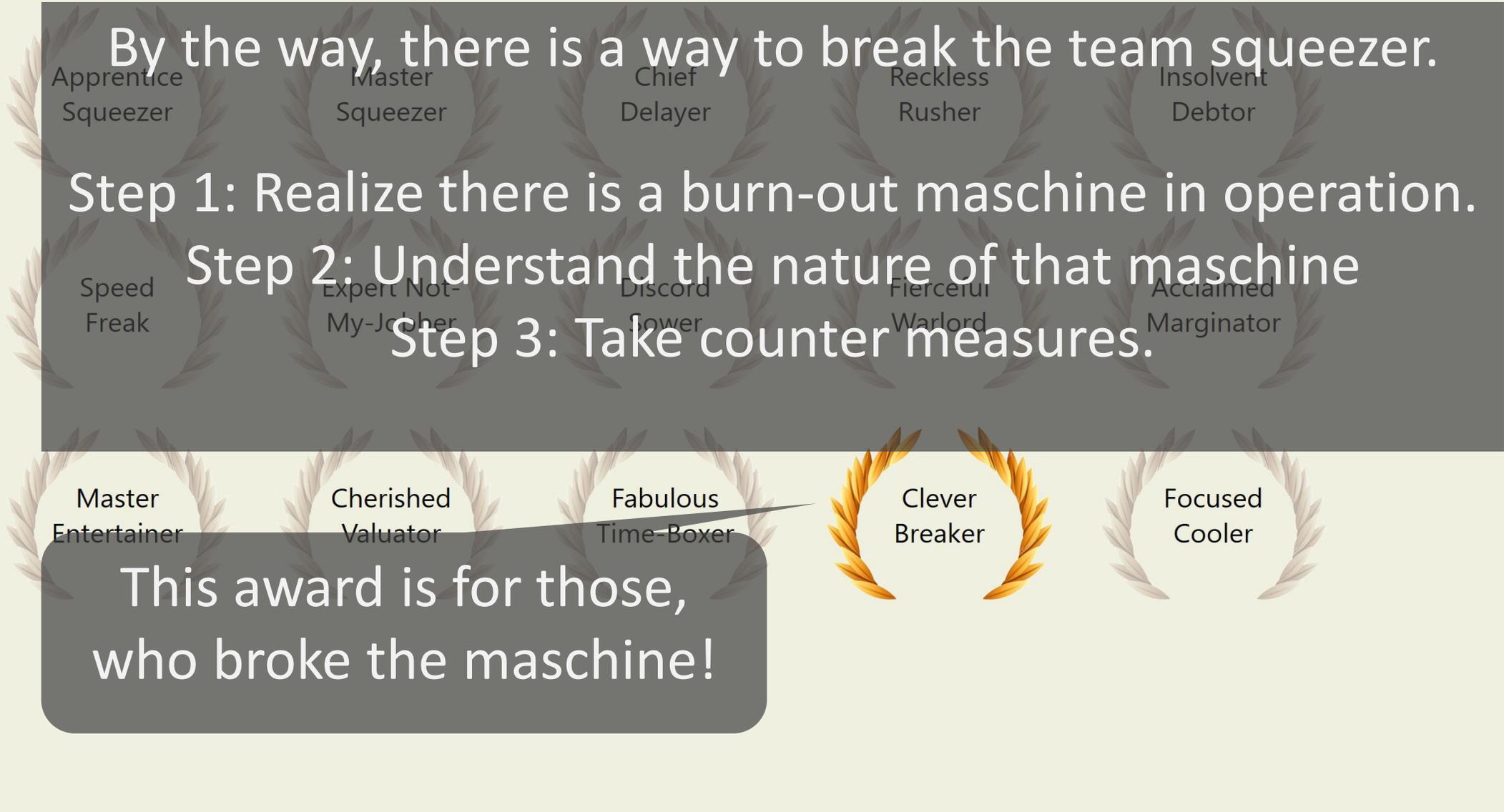
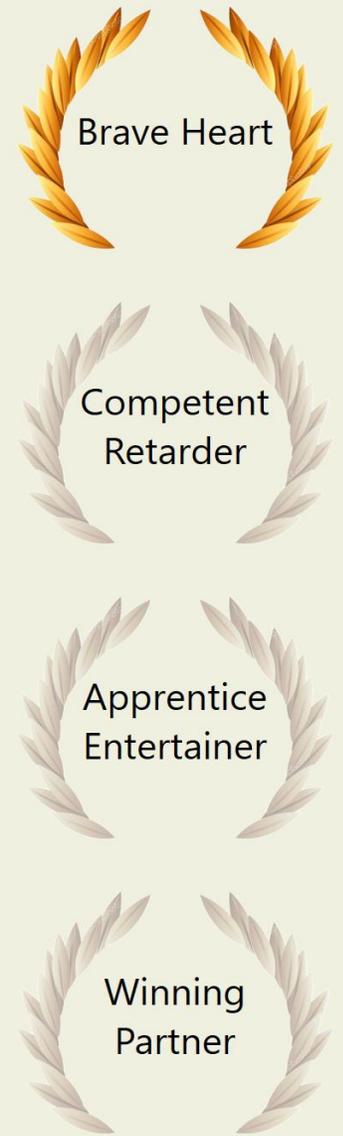
By the way, there is a way to break the team squeezer.

Step 1: Realize there is a burn-out maschine in operation.

Step 2: Understand the nature of that maschine

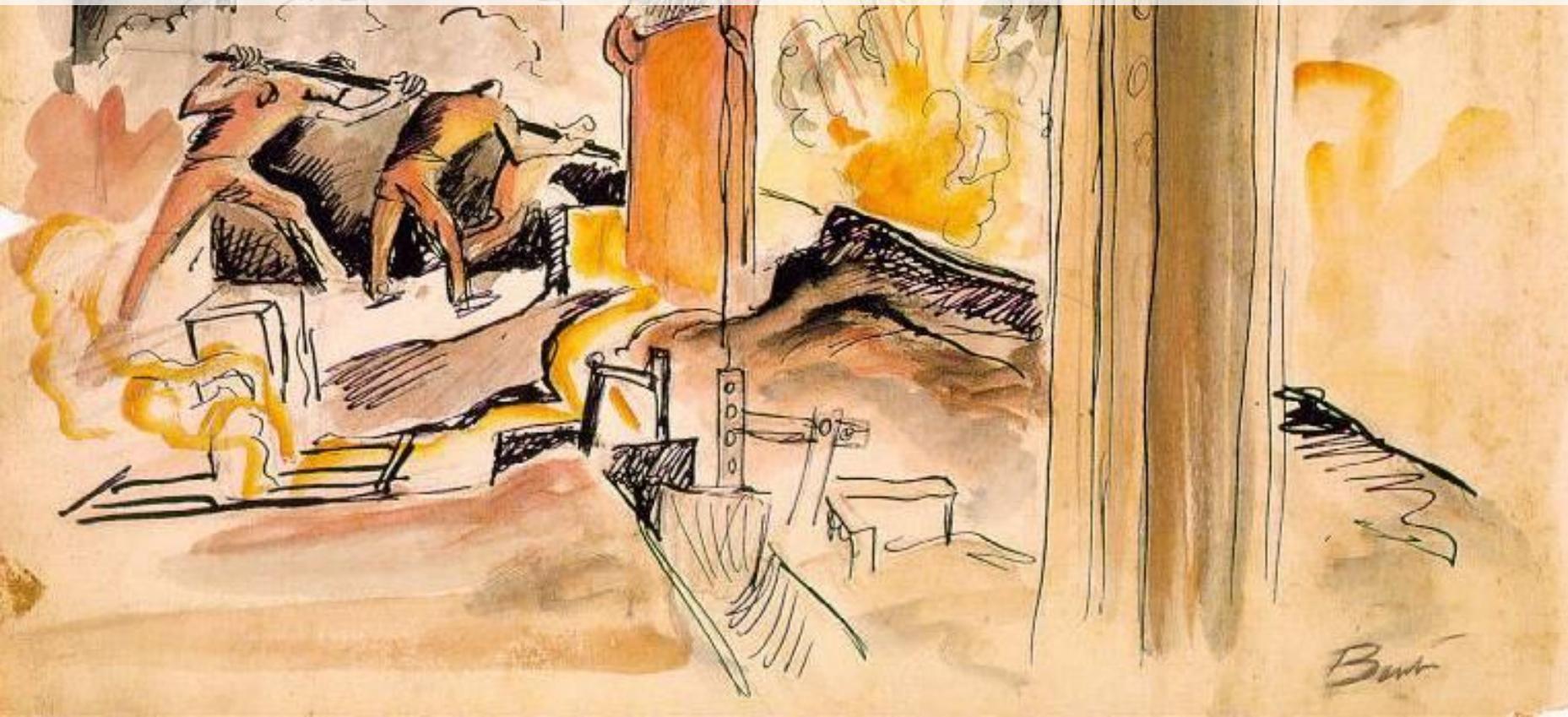
Step 3: Take counter measures.

This award is for those,  
who broke the maschine!



# Thanks again for the active participation and see you soon!

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A crucial step is to activate their survival mode so they make sure their peers get eaten by the lion (rather than teaming up and fending the lion off).