The lost art of software design

Simon Brown



Over the past decade, many teams have thrown away big design up front



Unfortunately, architectural thinking, documentation, diagramming and modelling were also often discarded



The Agile Manifesto doesn't say "don't do design"



You can't move fast with & code



Big design up front is dumb. Doing no design up front is even dumber.

Dave Thomas

Big Design Up Front

Evolutionary Design



Building Evolutionary Architectures SUPPORT CONSTANT CHANGE Neal Ford, Rebecca Parsons & Patrick Kua

Evolutionary architecture

Evolutionary architecture

Architecting for change also results in significant decisions being made!

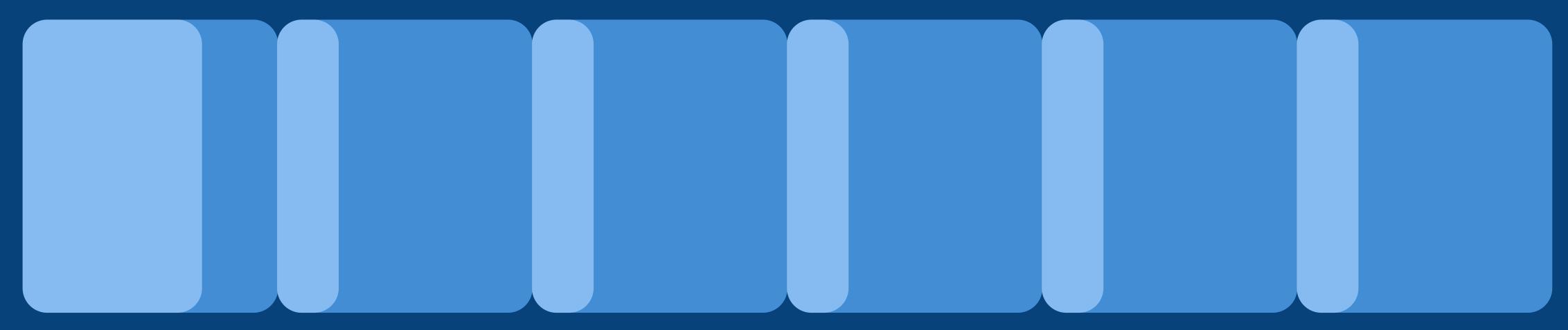


Planned vs unplanned evolution ... both need to be guided



Goals

- 1. Explain why some up front design is useful
- 2. Provide some tips on how to do design better



Some Design Up Front + Evolutionary Design



Product Design

Product vision,
UX, UI, A/B testing,
experimentation
business process,
etc

Technical Design

Technical vision, technologies, modularity, quality attributes, environmental constraints, etc

I'm referring to **technical design** rather than product design



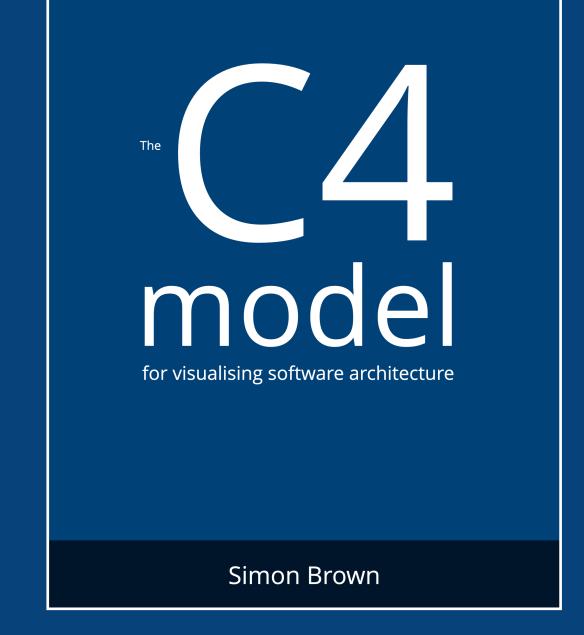
Simon Brown

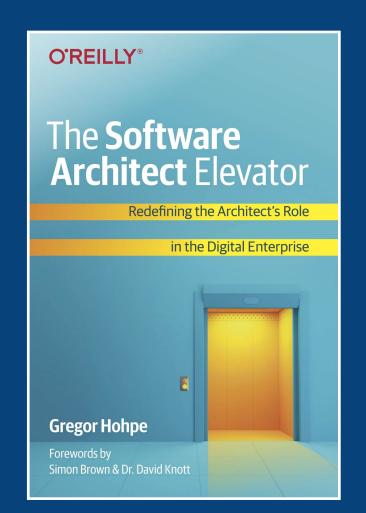
Independent consultant specialising in software architecture, plus the creator of the C4 model and Structurizr

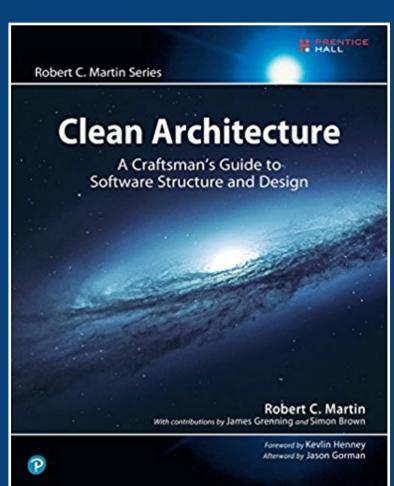
@simonbrown

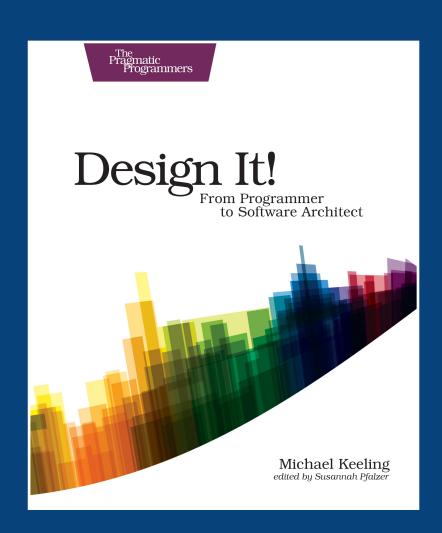
Software architecture developers

Simon Brown





















Architecture meets agile

"we're about to start our agile transformation ... we need help making our architecture/design processes more agile"

VS

Agile meets architecture

"we've been on our agile journey for X years ... our software lacks structure, we have no documentation, etc"

Financial Risk System

Context

A global investment bank based in London, New York and Singapore trades (buys and sells) financial products with other banks ("counterparties"). When share prices on the stock markets move up or down, the bank either makes money or loses it. At the end of the working day, the bank needs to gain a view of how much risk of losing money they are exposed to, by running some calculations on the data held about their trades. The bank has an existing Trade Data System (TDS) and Reference Data System (RDS) but needs a new Risk System.

1.1. Trade Data System

The Trade Data System maintains a store of all trades made by the bank. It is already configured to generate a filebased XML export of trade data to a network share at the close of business at 5pm in New York. The export includes the following information for every trade made by the bank:

Trade ID, Date, Current trade value in US dollars, Counterparty ID

1.2. Reference Data System

The Reference Data System stores all of the reference data needed by the bank. This includes information about counterparties (other banks). A file-based XML export is also generated to a network share at 5pm in New York, and it includes some basic information about each counterparty. A new reference data system is due for completion in the next 3 months, and the current system will eventually be decommissioned. The current data export includes:

Counterparty ID, Name, Address, etc...

2. Functional Requirements

- 1. Import trade data from the Trade Data System.
- 2. Import counterparty data from the Reference Data System.
- 3. Join the two sets of data together, enriching the trade data with information about the counterparty.
- 4. For each counterparty, calculate the risk that the bank is exposed to.
- 5. Generate a report that can be imported into Microsoft Excel containing the risk figures for all counterparties known by the bank.
- 6. Distribute the report to the business users before the start of the next trading day (9am) in Singapore.
- 7. Provide a way for a subset of the business users to configure and maintain the external parameters used by the risk calculations.



3. Non-functional Requirements

a. Performance

• Risk reports must be generated before 9am the following business day in Singapore.

b. Scalability

- The system must be able to cope with trade volumes for the next 5 years.
 - The Trade Data System export includes approximately 5000 trades now and it is anticipated that there will be slow but steady growth of 10 additional trades per day.
 - The Reference Data System export includes approximately 20,000 counterparties and growth will be negligible.
- There are 40-50 business users around the world that need access to the report.

c. Availability

• Risk reports should be available to users 24x7, but a small amount of downtime (less than 30 minutes per day) can be tolerated.

d. Failover

Manual failover is sufficient, provided that the availability targets can be met.

e. Security

- This system must follow bank policy that states system access is restricted to authenticated and authorised
- Reports must only be distributed to authorised users.
- Only a subset of the authorised users are permitted to modify the parameters used in the risk calculations.
- Although desirable, there are no single sign-on requirements (e.g. integration with Active Directory, LDAP,
- All access to the system and reports will be within the confines of the bank's global network.

f. Audit

- The following events must be recorded in the system audit logs:
 - Report generation.
 - Modification of risk calculation parameters.

g. Fault Tolerance and Resilience

- The system should take appropriate steps to recover from an error if possible, but all errors should be
- Errors preventing a counterparty risk calculation being completed should be logged and the process should

h. Internationalization and Localization

- All user interfaces will be presented in English only.
- All reports will be presented in English only.
- All trading values and risk figures will be presented in US dollars only.

i. Monitoring and Management

- A Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) trap should be sent to the bank's Central Monitoring Service in the following circumstances:
 - When there is a fatal error with the system.
 - When reports have not been generated before 9am Singapore time.

Data Retention and Archiving

Input files used in the risk calculation process must be retained for 1 year.

k. Interoperability

• Interfaces with existing data systems should conform to and use existing data formats.



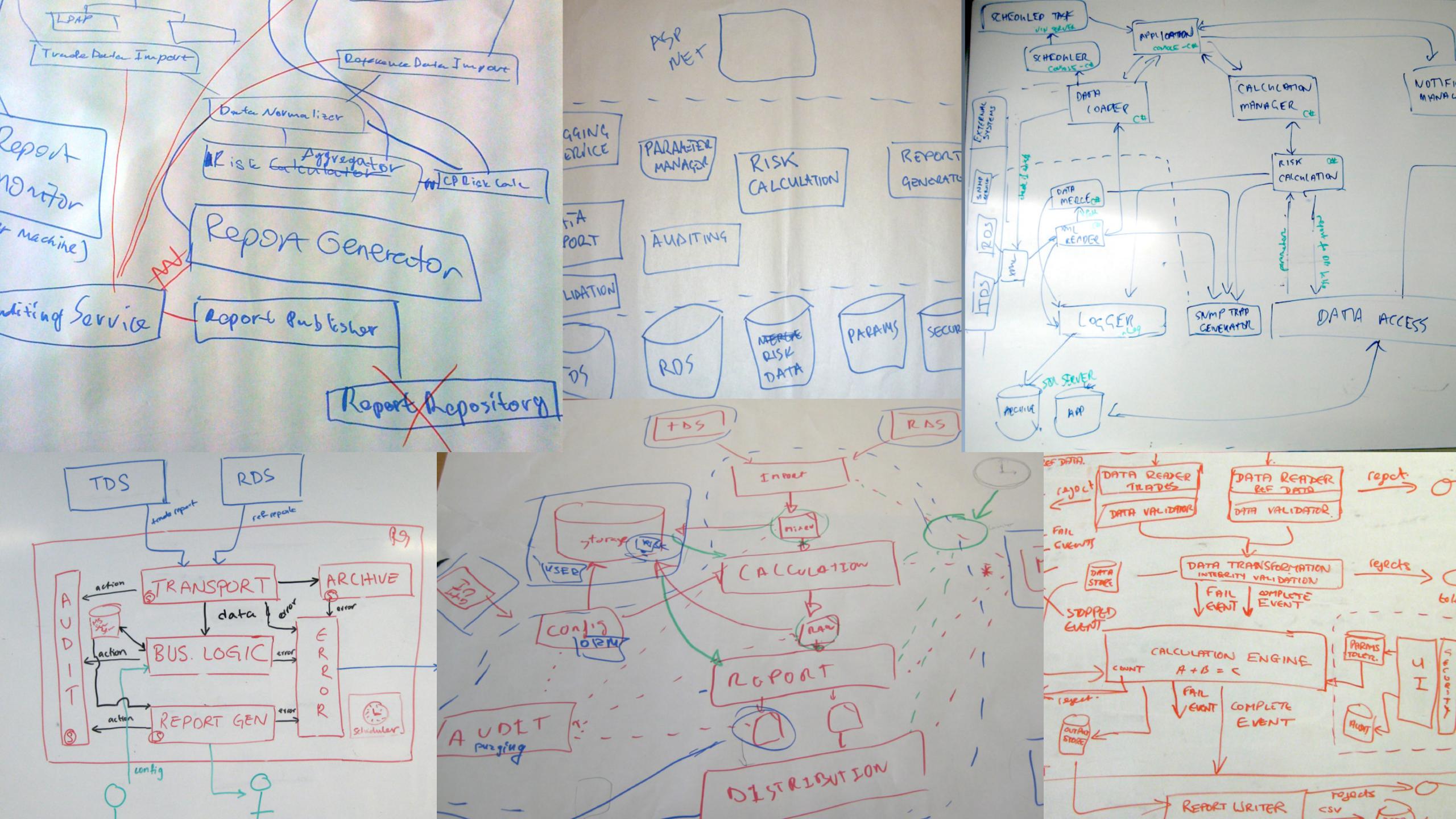
"Financial Risk System" architecture kata

Design a software solution for the "Financial Risk System", and draw one or more architecture diagrams to describe your solution

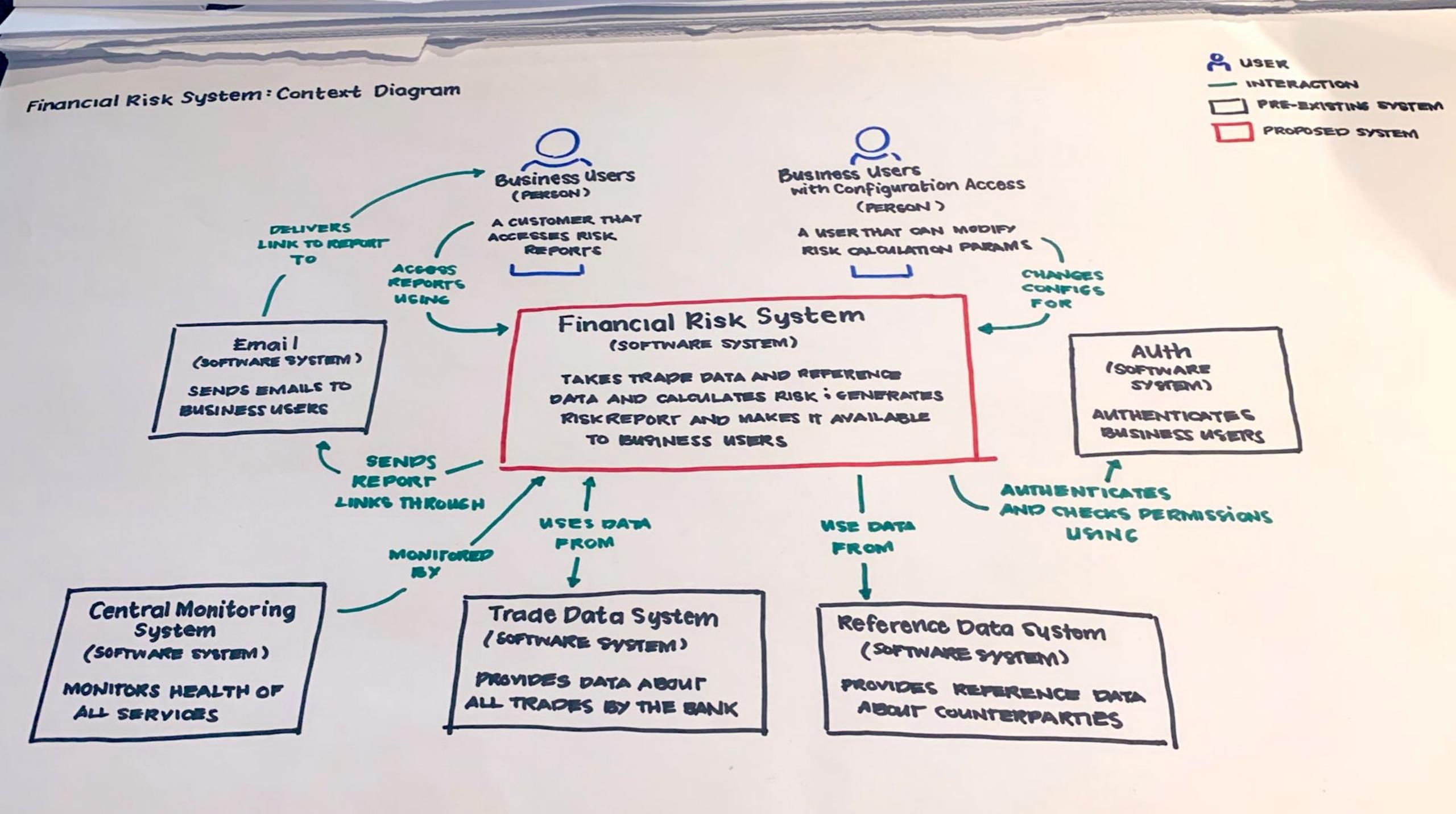


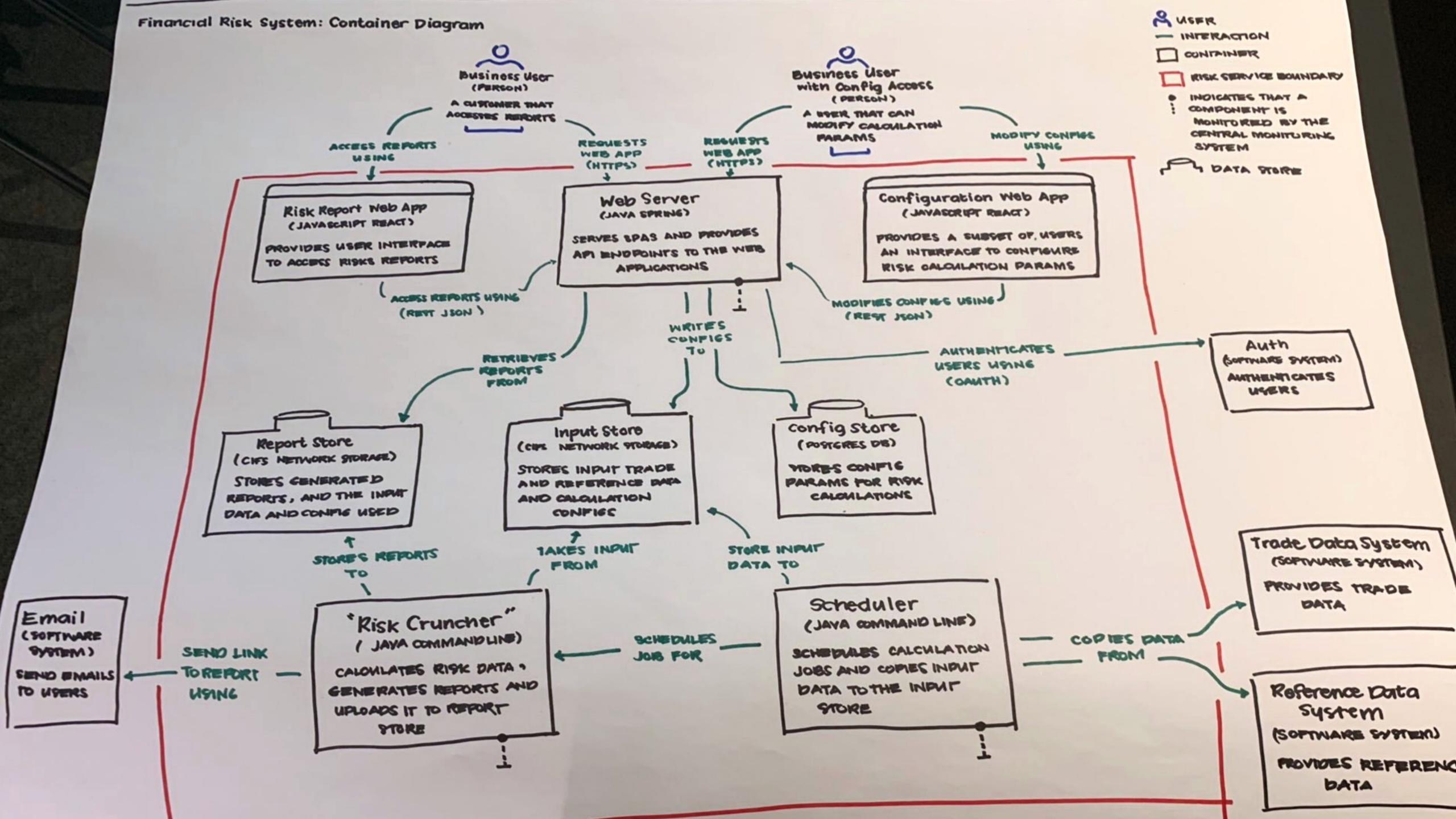
Iteration 1





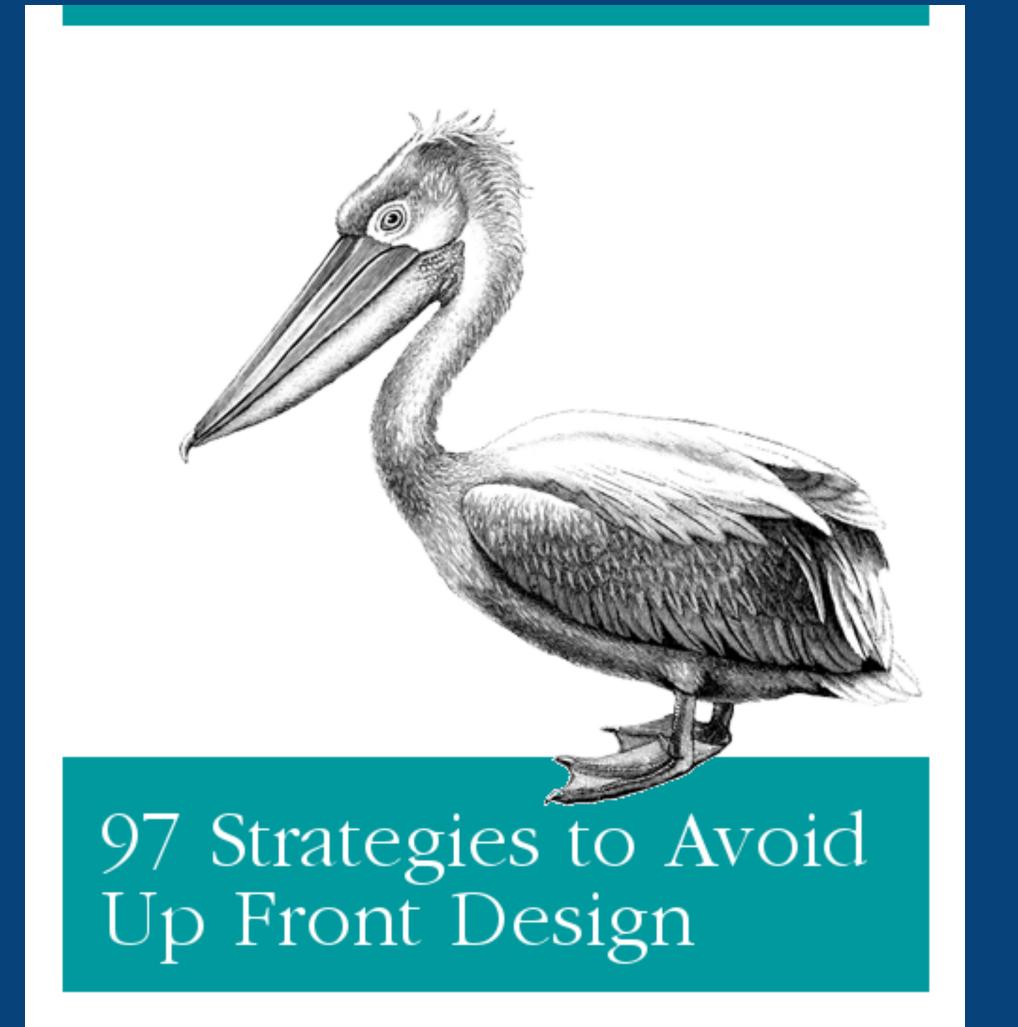
Iteration 2





So you're teaching teams how to create nice diagrams?

Up Front Design

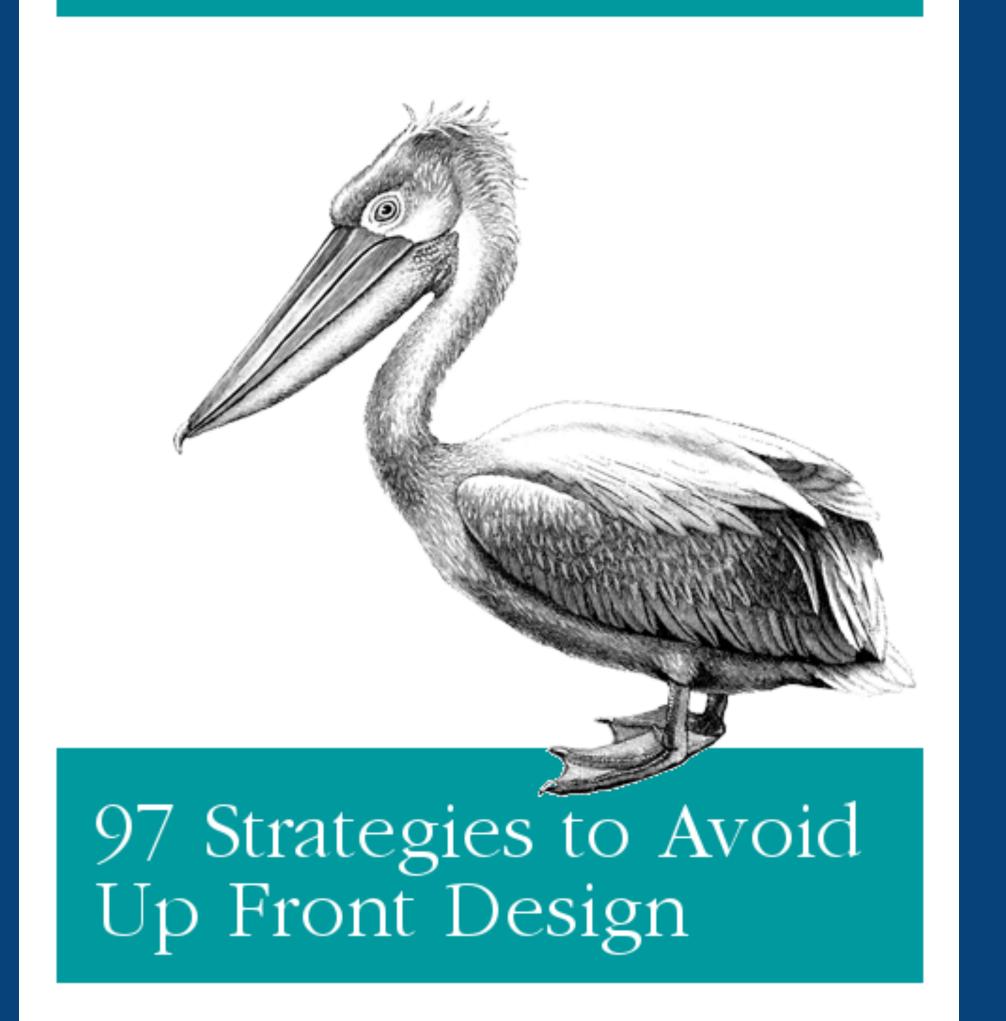


#1

"Are we allowed to do up front design?"

O RLY?

Vera Gile

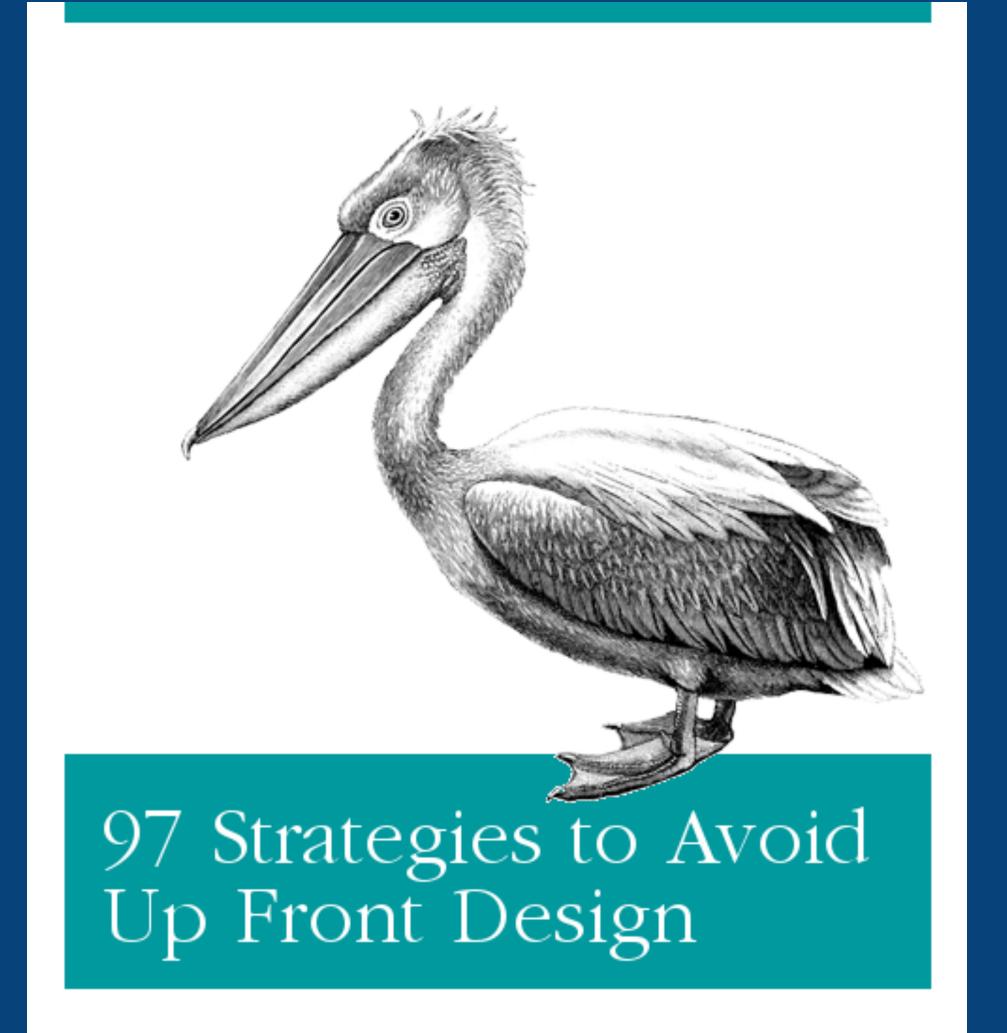


#12

"We don't do up front design because we do

O RLY?

Vera Gile



#17

"It's not expected in agile."

O RLY?

Vera Gile



There is no Big Design Up Front. Most of the design activity takes place **on the fly and incrementally**, starting with "the simplest thing that could possibly work" and adding complexity only when it's required by failing tests.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extreme_programming

What role does an architecture play when you are using evolutionary design? Again XPs critics state that XP ignores architecture, that XP's route is to go to code fast and trust that refactoring that will solve all design issues. Interestingly they are right, and that may well be weakness. Certainly the most aggressive XPers - Kent Beck, Ron Jeffries, and Bob Martin - are putting more and more energy into avoiding any up front architectural design. Don't put in a database until you really know you'll need it. Work with files first and refactor the database in during a later iteration.

Martin Fowler

https://martinfowler.com/articles/designDead.html



This is why I really don't believe that "luminaries" in Agile are telling people not to design. Too many supposedly agile team members, teams, and even their coaches really don't know what has been said, much less what it's about.

Stacy Cashmore @Stacy_Cash

Replying to @NativeWired @HelenLisowski

I think the phrase whilst we value those on the right, we value those on the left more is forgotten quite often...

5:05 PM - 18 Mar 2019

The "luminaries" in Agile are not telling people to do design either

(it's easy to make assumptions about what's **not** being said)



Remember that the folks behind the agile manifesto have a lot of experience.

Most teams likely don't have that same level of experience.

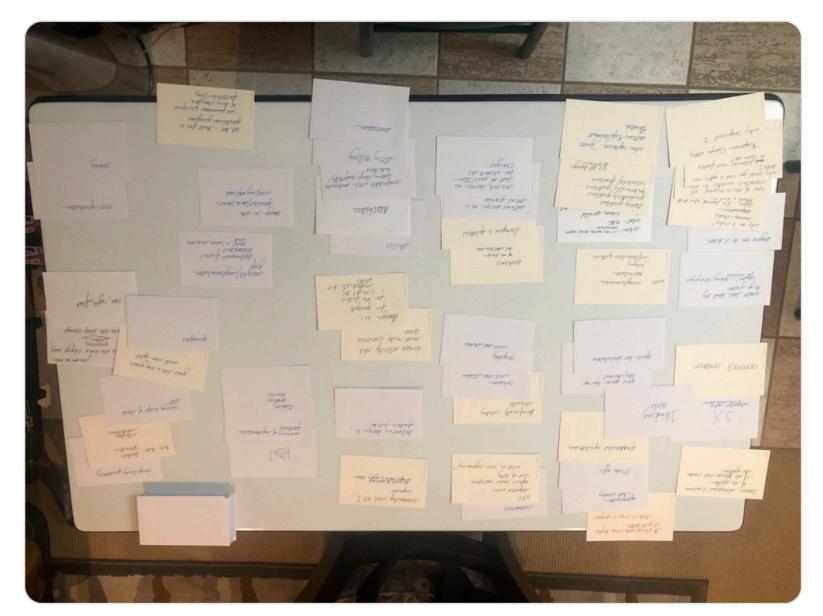


Many people haven't been exposed to the problems that agile was trying to solve



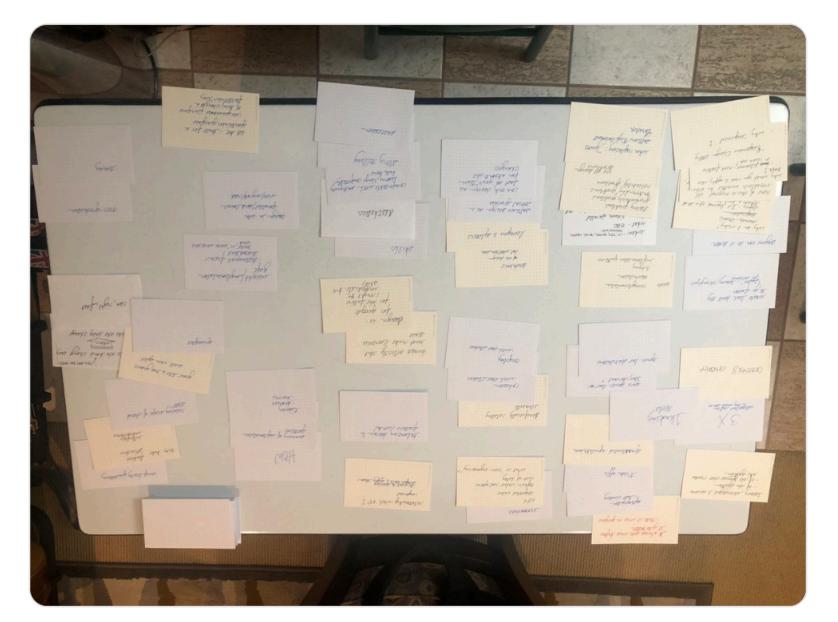


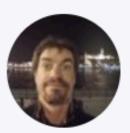
I unexpectedly have two weeks free before I start my new job (more on that later). I decided to time-box write the book on software design that's been ripening in my head for a decade or two. Here's the outline:





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John Hearn @johnhearnbcn · Mar 18

Replying to @KentBeck

Interesting that you write an outline first. My daughter has discovered that writing with flow, keeping notes and refactoring as she goes gives her better results



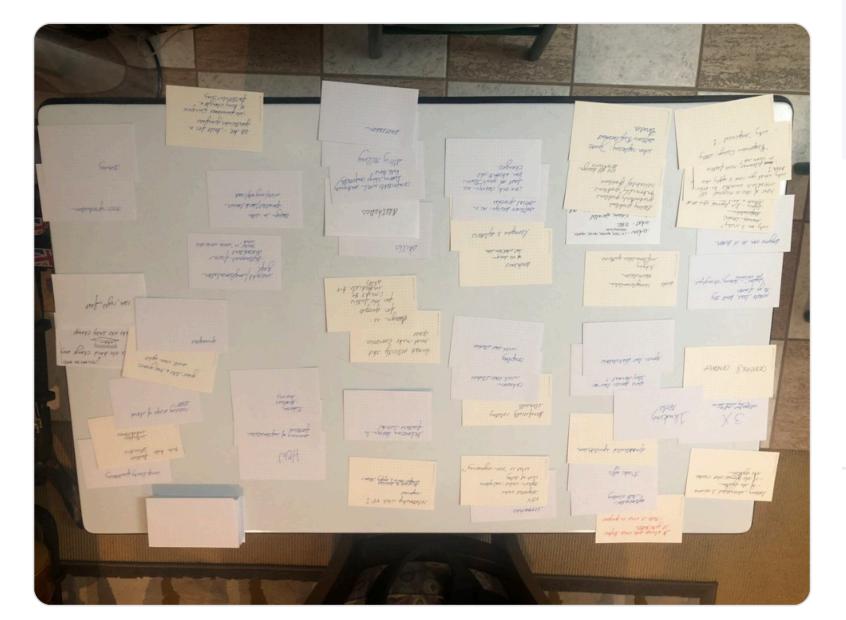


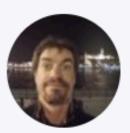






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Kent Beck ♥ @KentBeck · Mar 18

I've done ~20,000 words on software design (maybe more—not going to stop to check...not). To write a book I need to see a whole, in part just to reduce my anxiety.

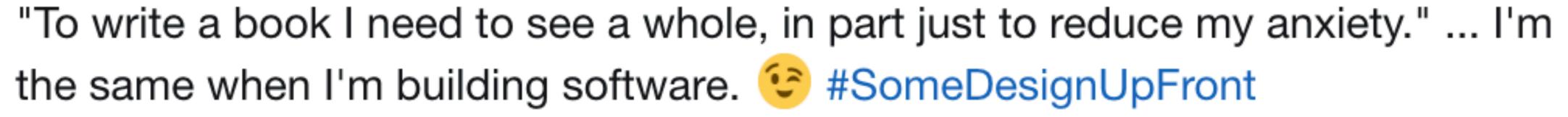


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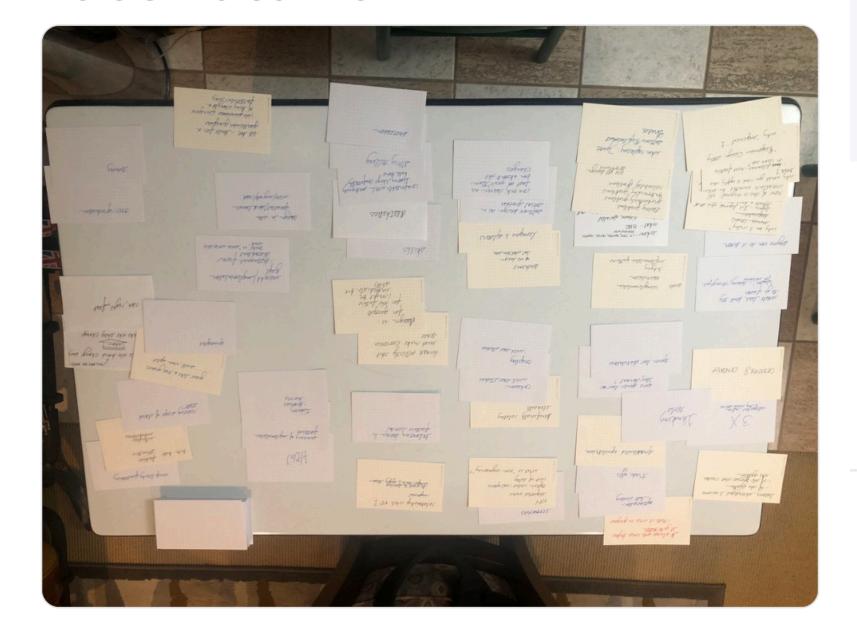


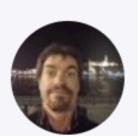
Simon Brown @simonbrown · Mar 18





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Agility requires a toolbox of techniques and practices but many people don't have them, and we've stopped teaching them

How do you design software?

we use a whiteboard

we draw boxes and lines

the boxes represent components

we use our experience



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Decomposition (computer science)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Decomposition in computer science, also known as **factoring**, is breaking a complex problem or system into parts that are easier to conceive, understand, program, and maintain.

Contents [hide]

- Overview
- 2 Decomposition topics
 - 2.1 Decomposition paradigm
 - 2.2 Decomposition diagram
- 3 See also
- 4 References

Decomposition paradigm

A decomposition paradigm in computer programming is a strategy for organizing a program as a number of parts, and it usually implies a specific way to organize a program text. Usually the aim of using a decomposition paradigm is to optimize some metric related to program complexity, for example the modularity of the program or its maintainability.

Most decomposition paradigms suggest breaking down a program into parts so as to minimize the static dependencies among those parts, and to maximize the cohesiveness of each part. Some popular decomposition paradigms are the procedural, modules, abstract data type and object oriented ones.

On the Criteria To Be Used in Decomposing Systems into Modules

Expected Benefits of Modular Programming

The benefits expected of modular programming are: (1) managerial—development time should be shortened because separate groups would work on each module with little need for communication: (2) product flexibility—it should be possible to make drastic changes to one module without a need to change others; (3) comprehensibility—it should be possible to study the system one module at a time. The whole system can therefore be better designed because it is better understood.



Class-Responsibility-Collaboration



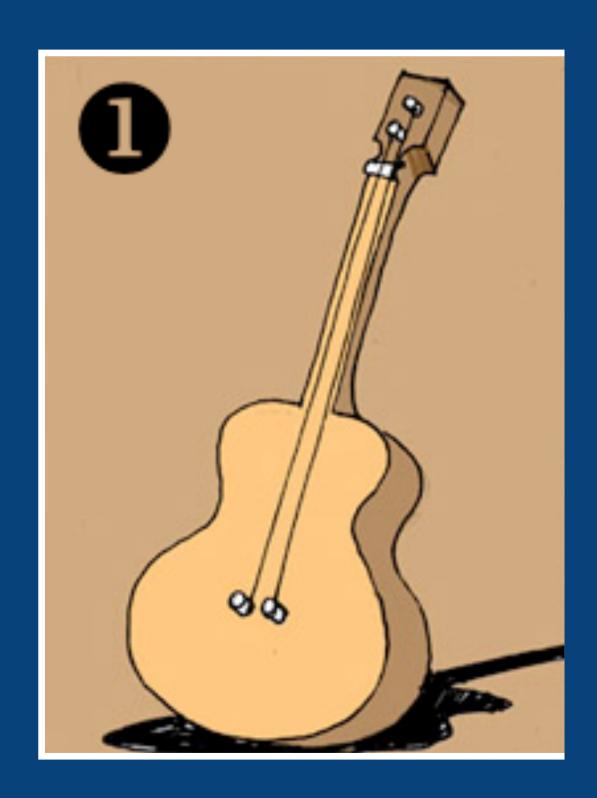
Up front design is not necessarily about creating a perfect end-state or complete architecture



Evolutionary Design

Beginning With A Primitive Whole





Evolutionary Design

Beginning With A Primitive Whole



Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.

Principle 9 of the Manifesto for Agile Software Development

A good architecture enables agility



Enough up front design to create a good starting point and direction



A starting point adds value



Every team needs technical leadership

(irrespective of team size)

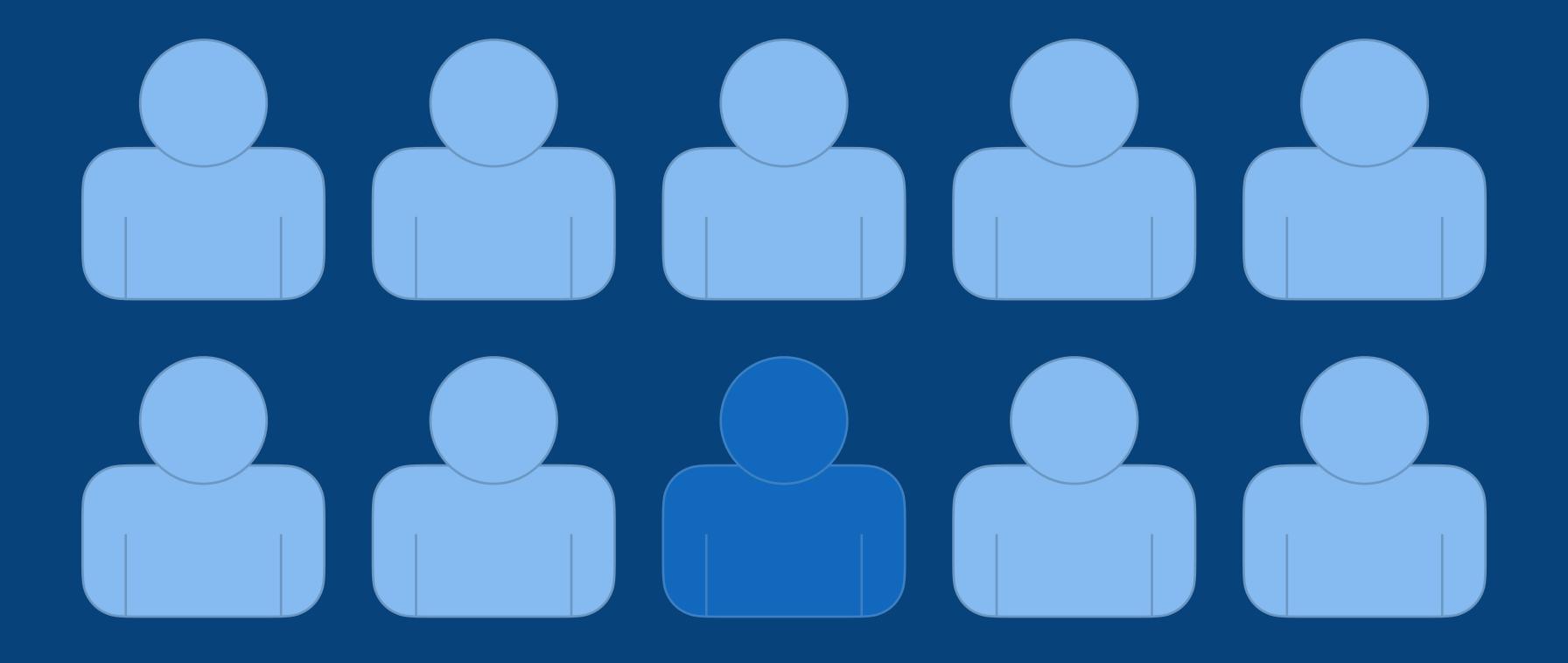


Technical leadership exists at multiple levels and dimensions within most organisations

(from the enterprise perspective and platform teams; through to individual delivery teams, irrespective of whether they have a system or service/capability focus)



Incomprehensible software architecture diagrams



UML usage is low





#1

"I don't know it."

O RLY?



#36

"You'll be seen as old."

O RLY?



#37

"You'll be seen as old-fashioned."

O RLY?



#80

"It's too detailed."

O RLY?



#46

"We don't want to tell developers what to do."

O RLY?



#66

"The tooling sucks."

O RLY?



#92

"It's not expected in agile."

O RLY?

Would it be better if we used a CASE tool to lay out the design?

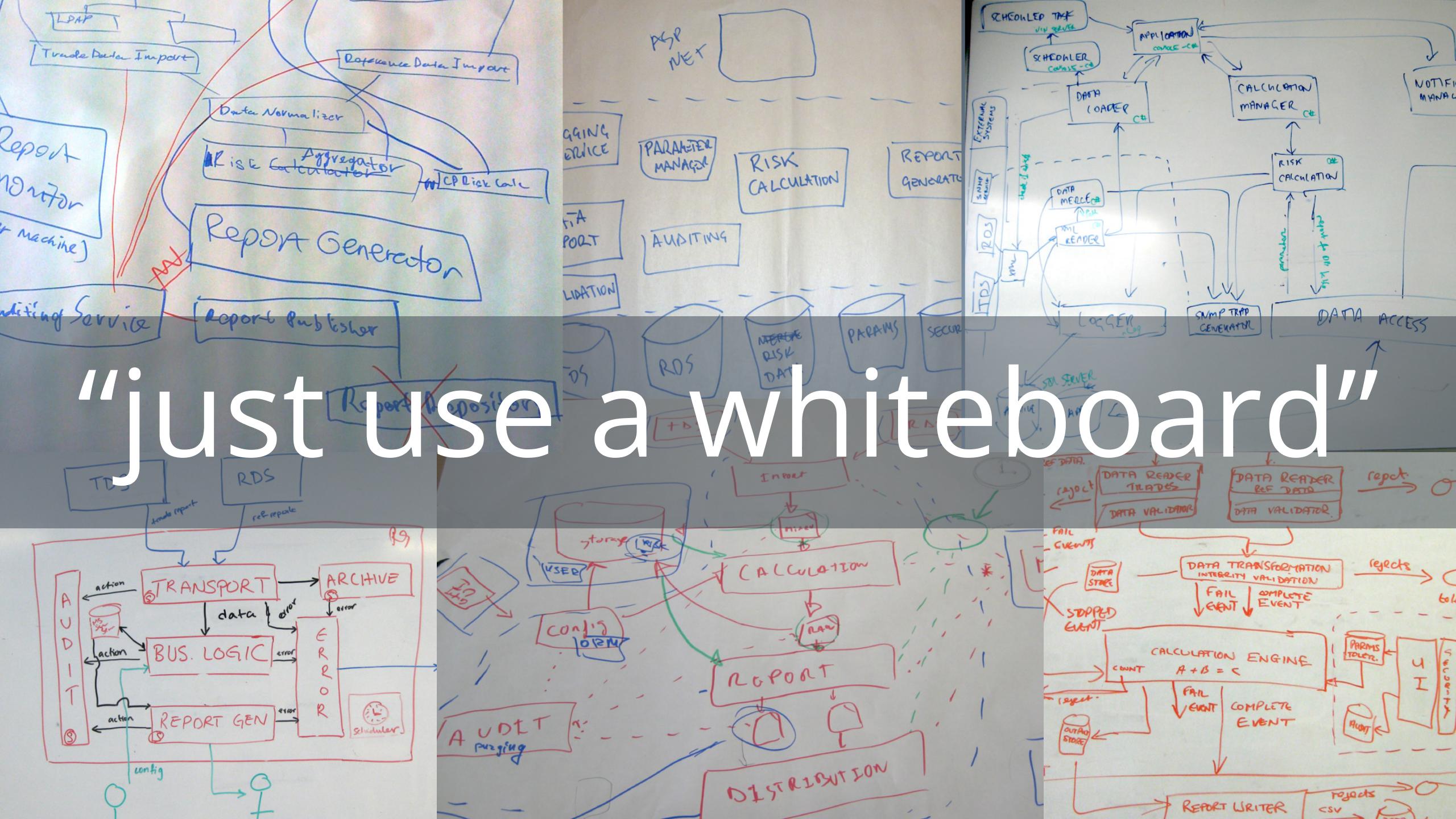
No, it wouldn't. The design is more readily expressed, changed, and understood when done less formally, with CRC or on the whiteboard or a bar napkin.

Ron Jeffries

https://ronjeffries.com/xprog/articles/fussaboutdocumentation/







What's wrong these diagrams?

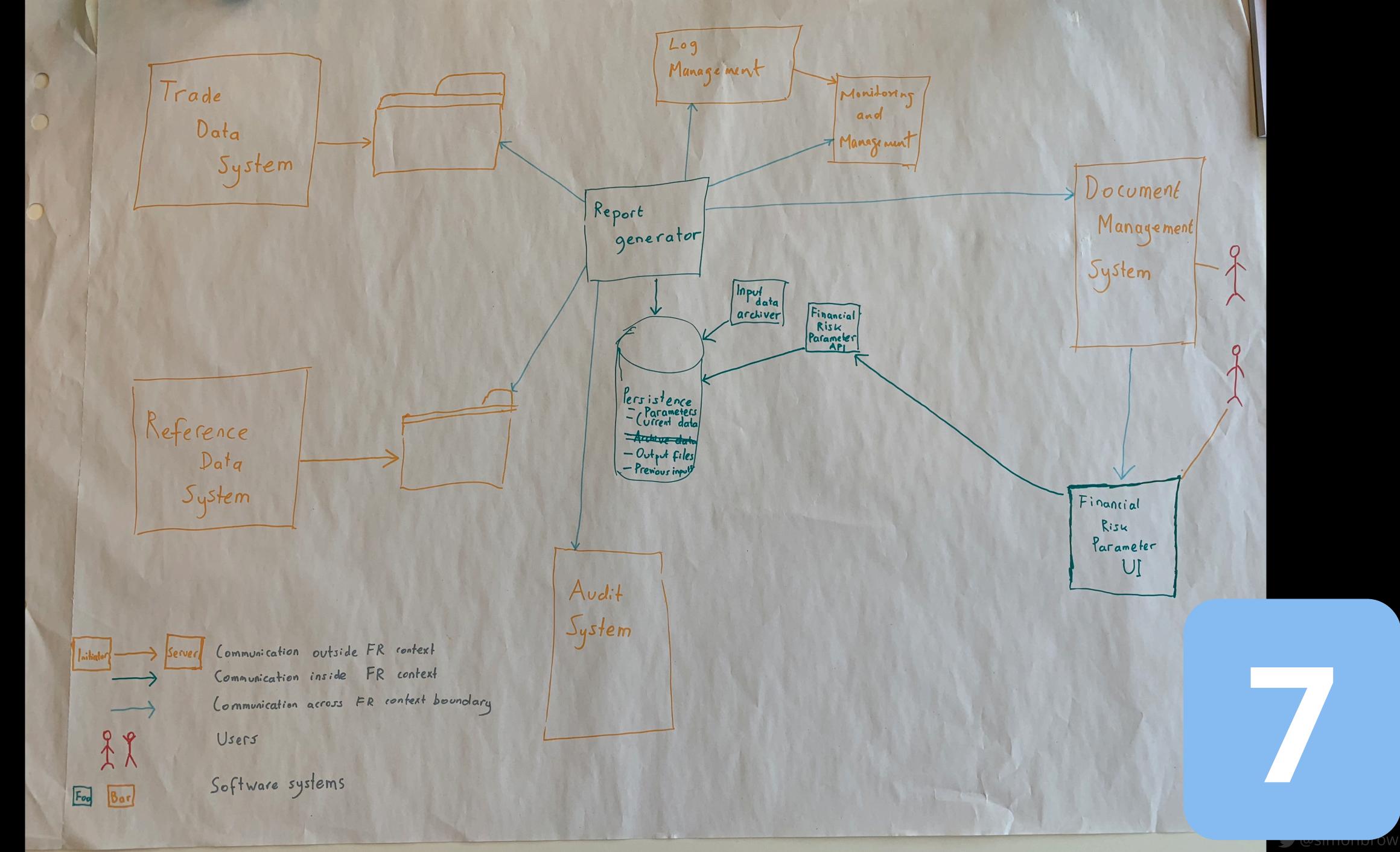


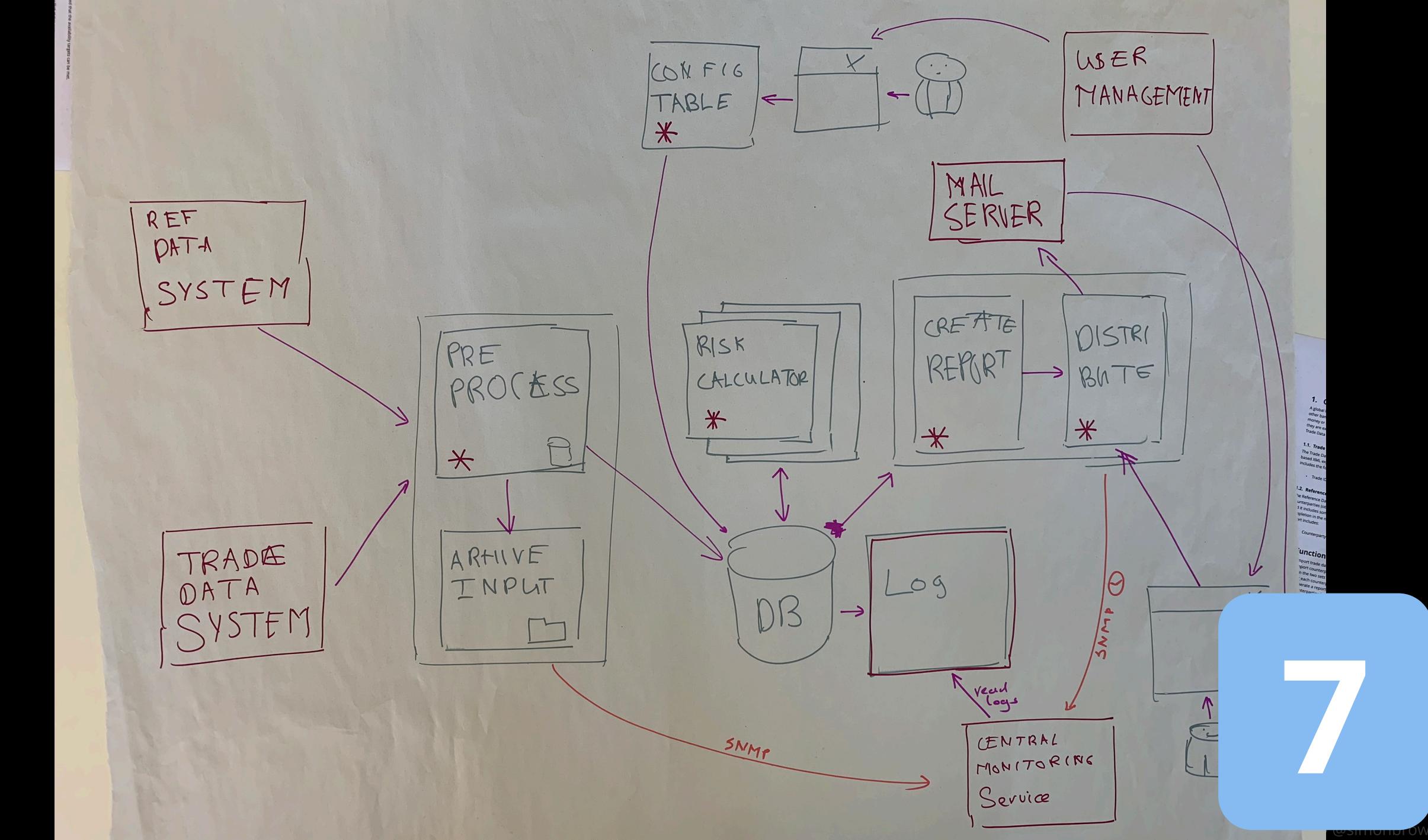
The perfection game

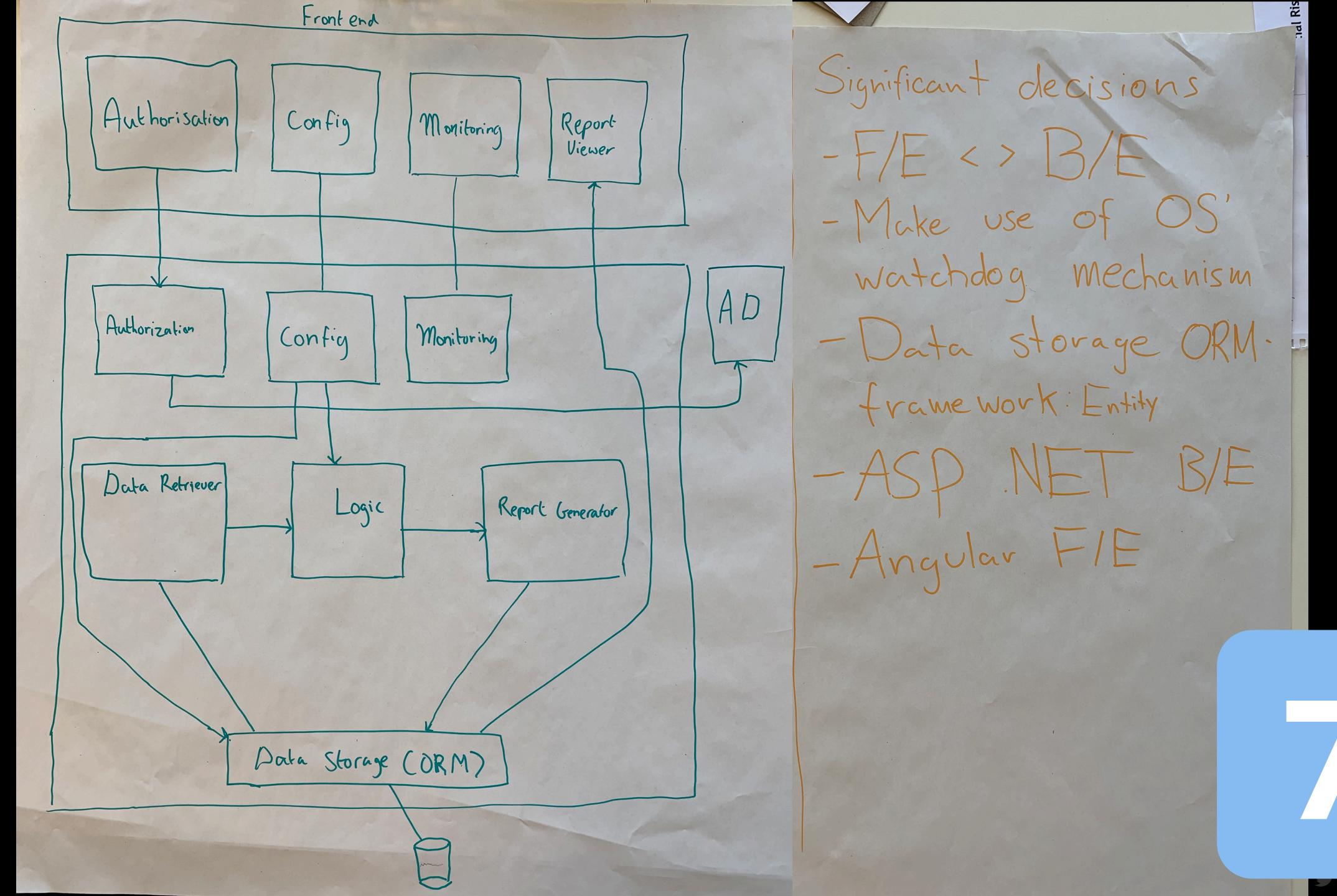
We rate the diagrams... (1-10)
We liked...

To make the diagrams perfect...

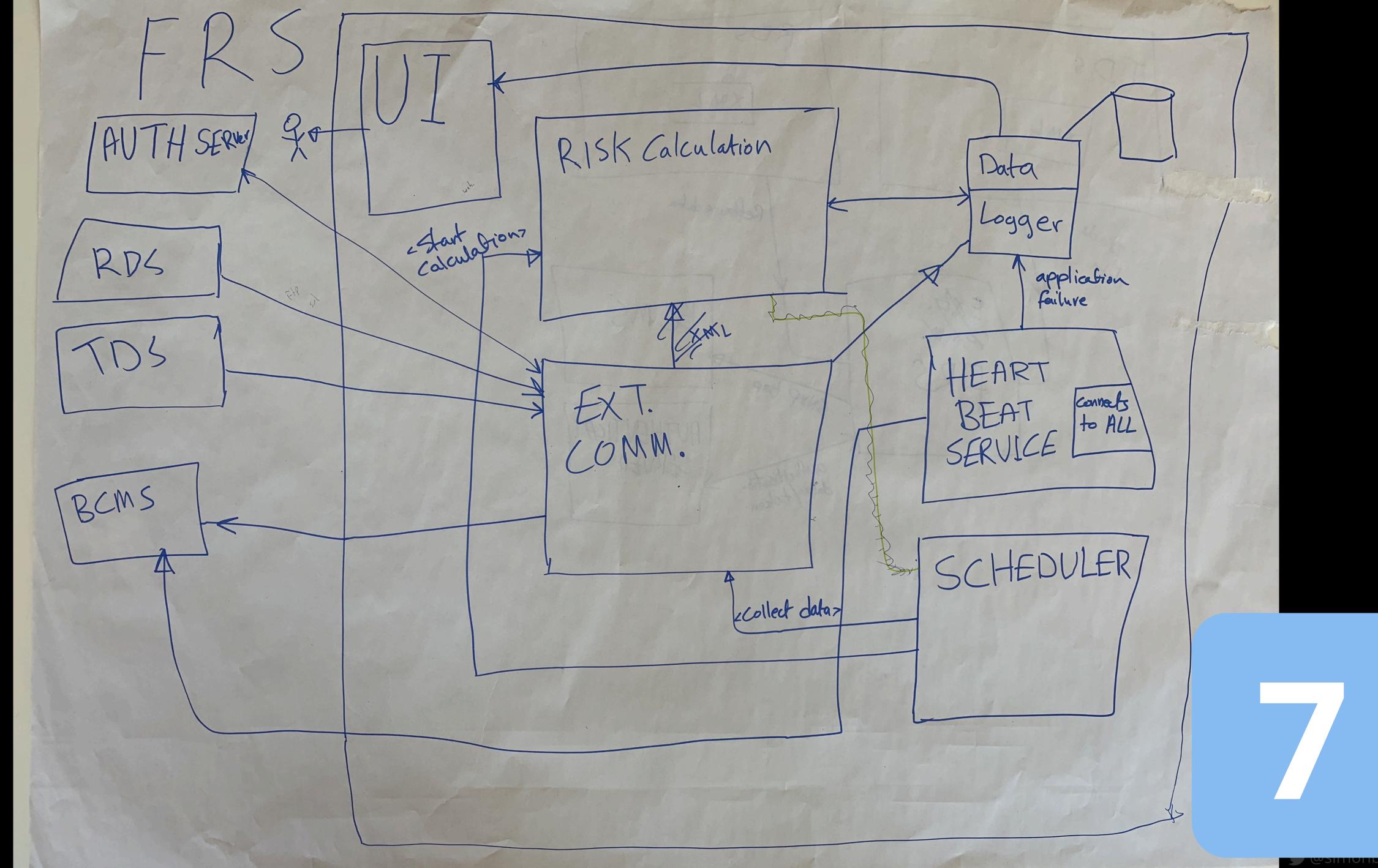


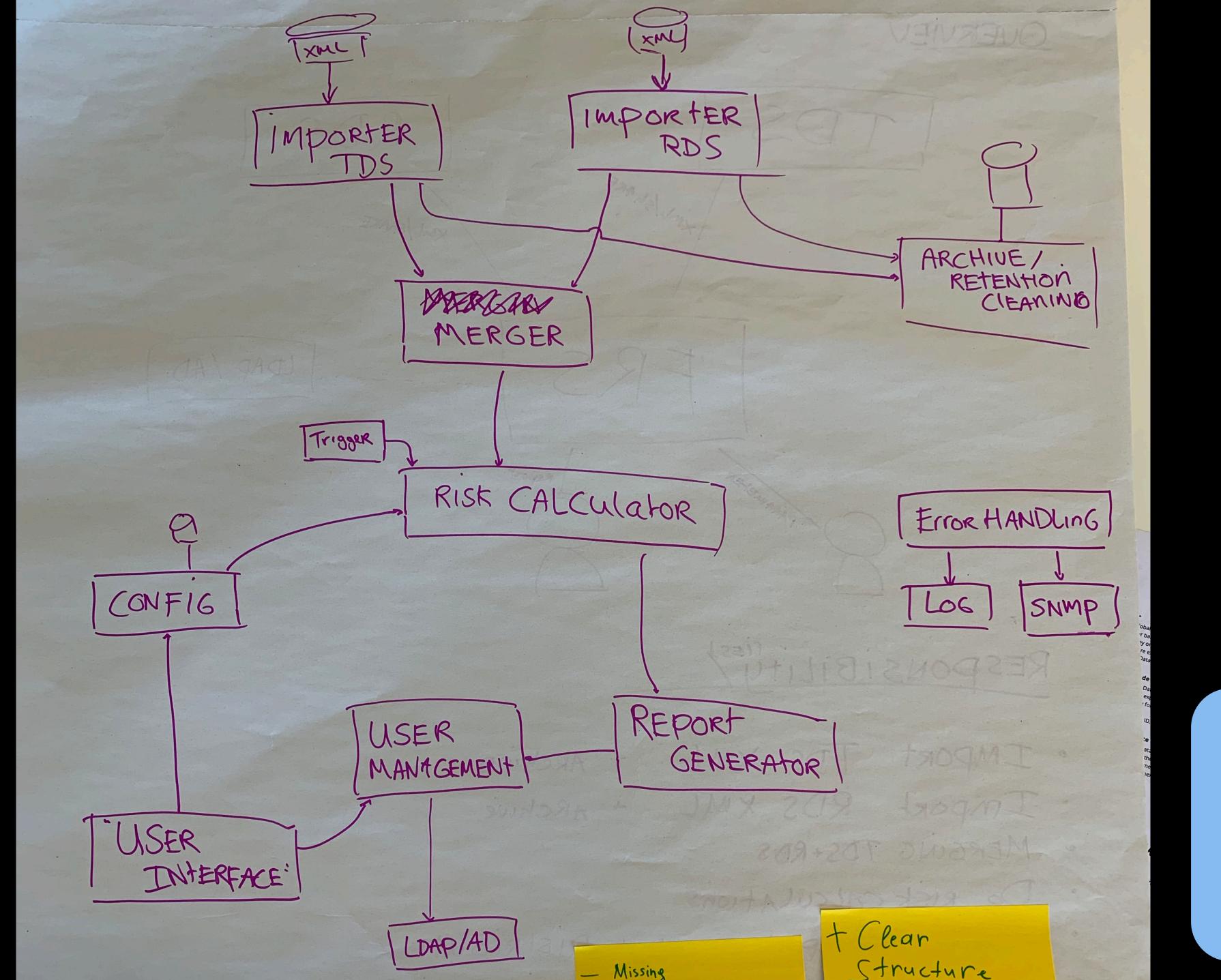




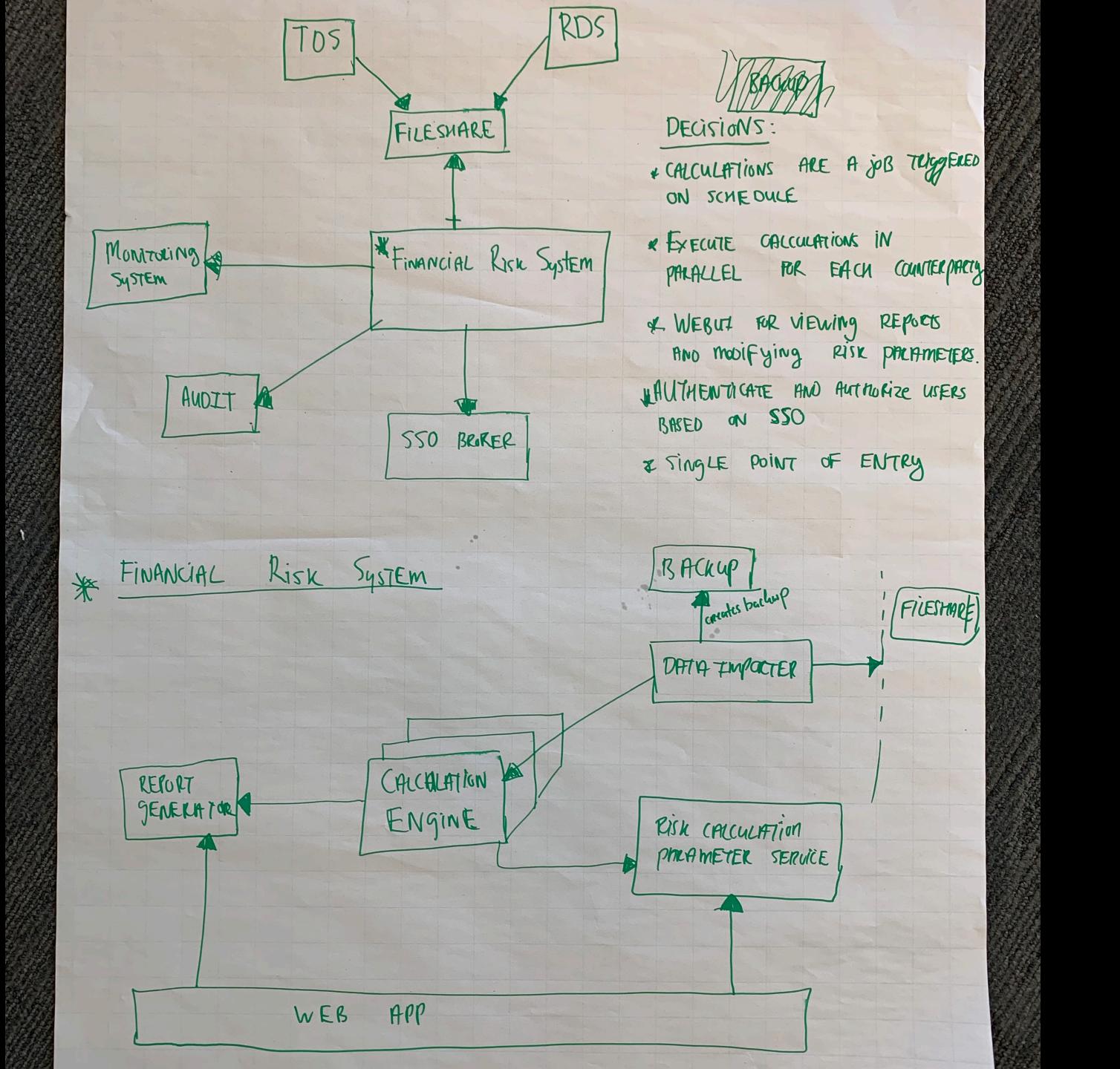


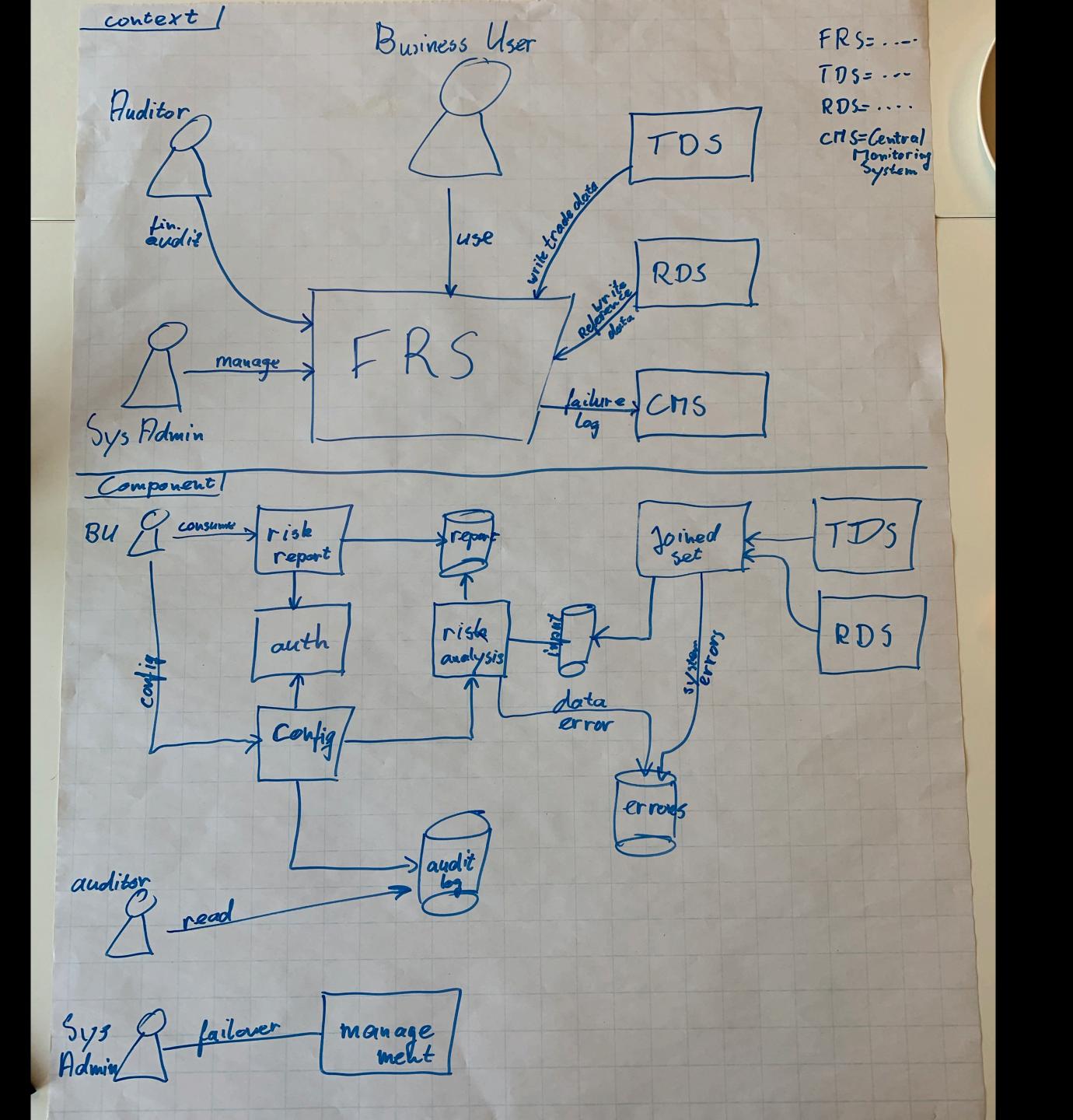
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wsimono own





Swap and review your diagrams

- 1. Do the solutions satisfy the architectural drivers?
- 2. If you were the bank, would you buy this solution?



It's impossible to answer those questions

If you can't see and understand a solution, you can't evaluate it





97 Ways to Sidestep UML

#97

"The value is in the conversation."

O RLY?

Knowfa Mallity

Now don't get me wrong (again). You may well need some nicely formatted UML for your project, or you may need to print out Javadoc when you distribute your code to other users, or you may need to document the requirements for management or as part of a contract. If and when you really need these things, then by all means you should do them. But inside your collocated Whole Team, you most probably will not need them, because the information you need will be communicated through the more effective medium of conversation.

Ron Jeffries

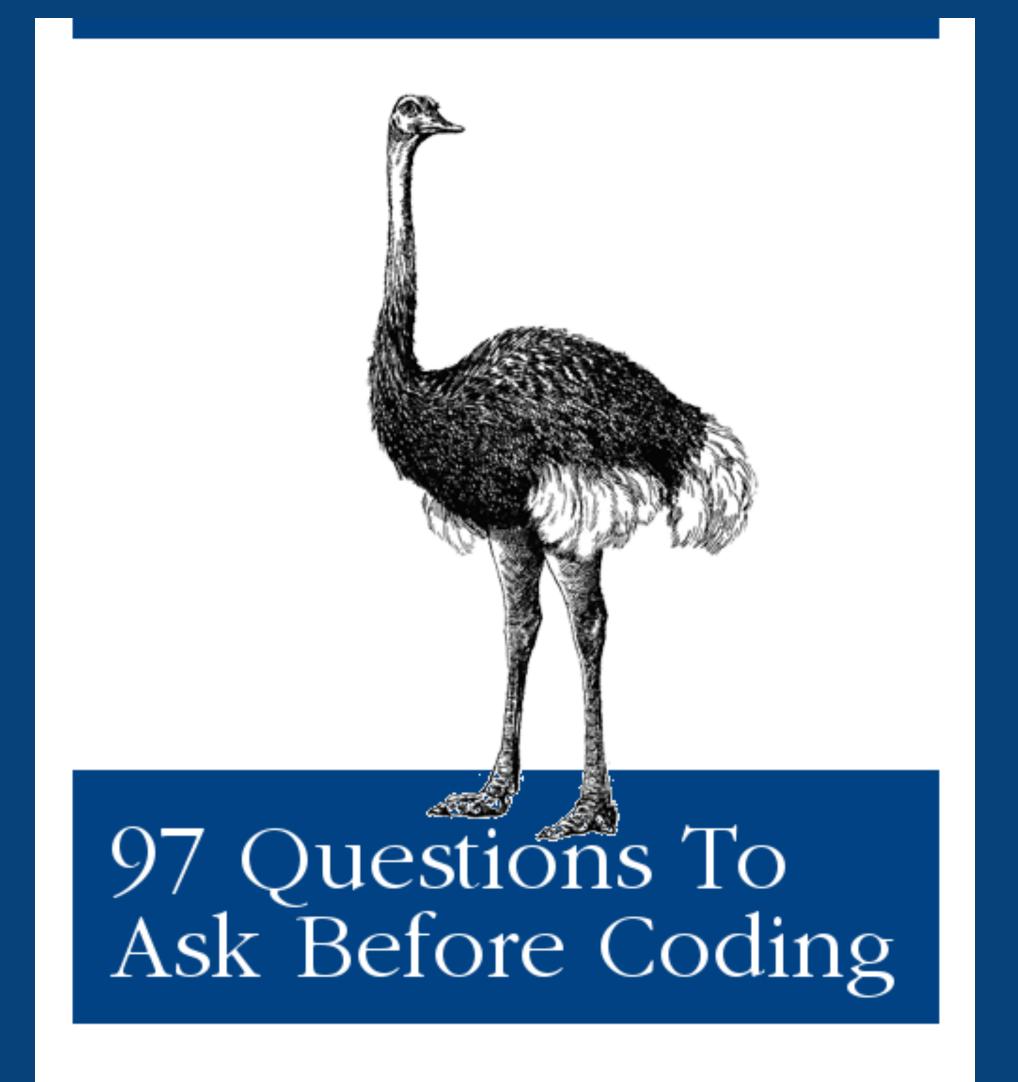
https://ronjeffries.com/xprog/articles/fussaboutdocumentation/

They are all excellent, as long as there is a conversation about their meaning and intent. It's the accompanying conversation that matters.

"the value is in the conversation" only works if you're having the right conversations



Superficial up front design

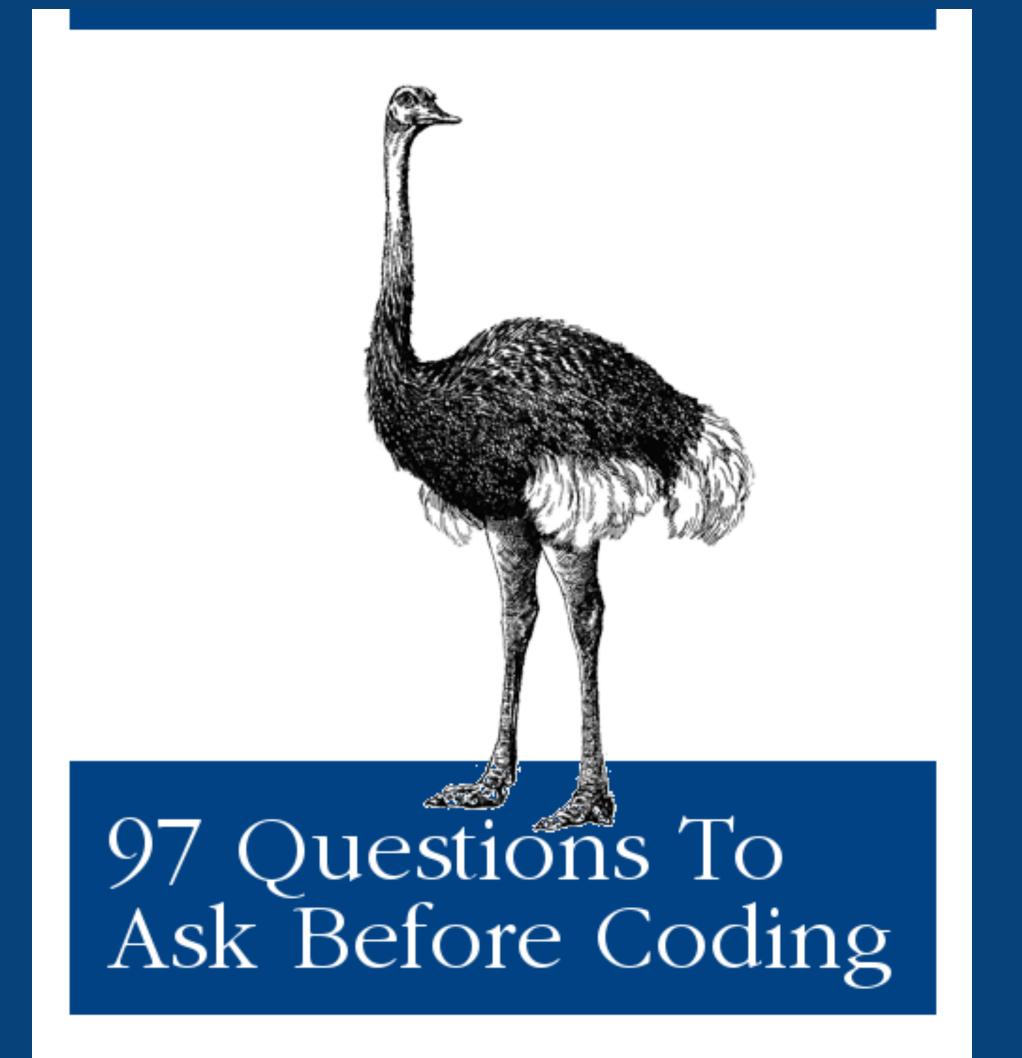


#4

"Is this a microservices architecture?"

O RLY?

Assam Shun

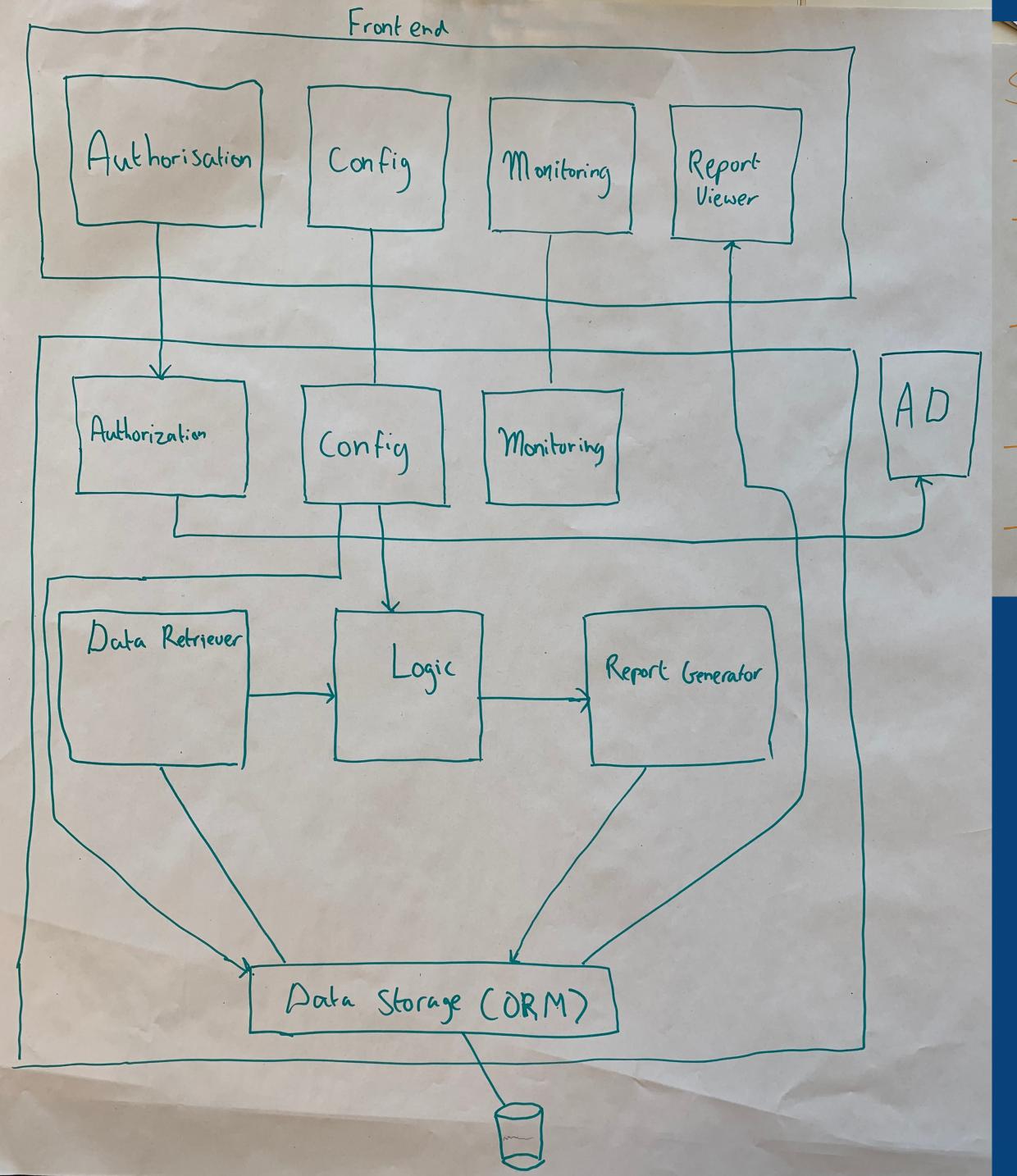


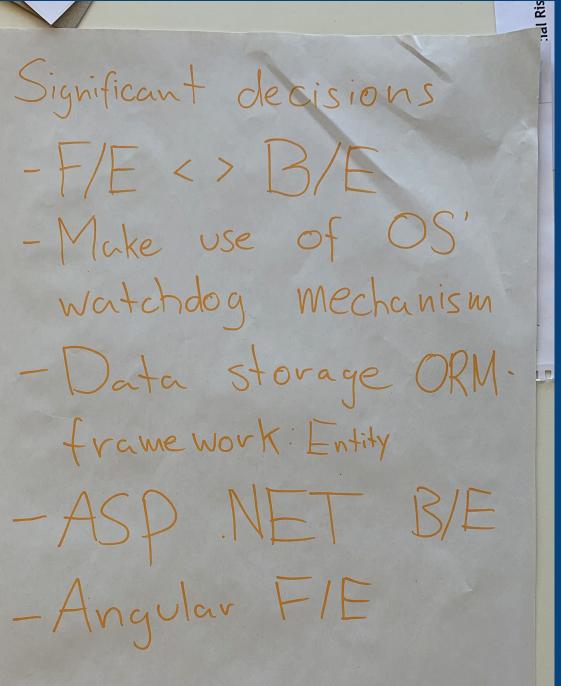
#73

"Why is the ORM directly connected to the Angular front-end?"

O RLY?

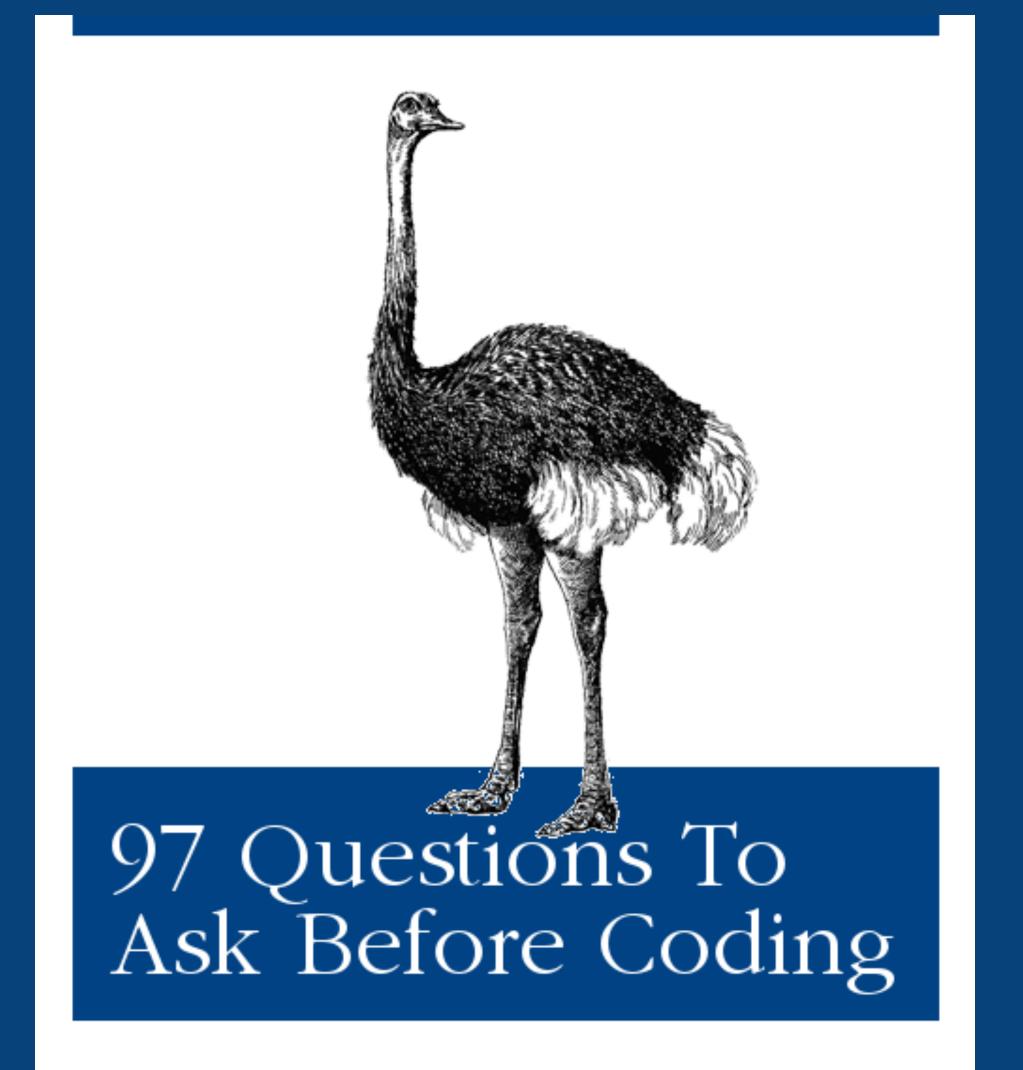
Assam Shun





Why is the ORM directly connected to the Angular front-end?





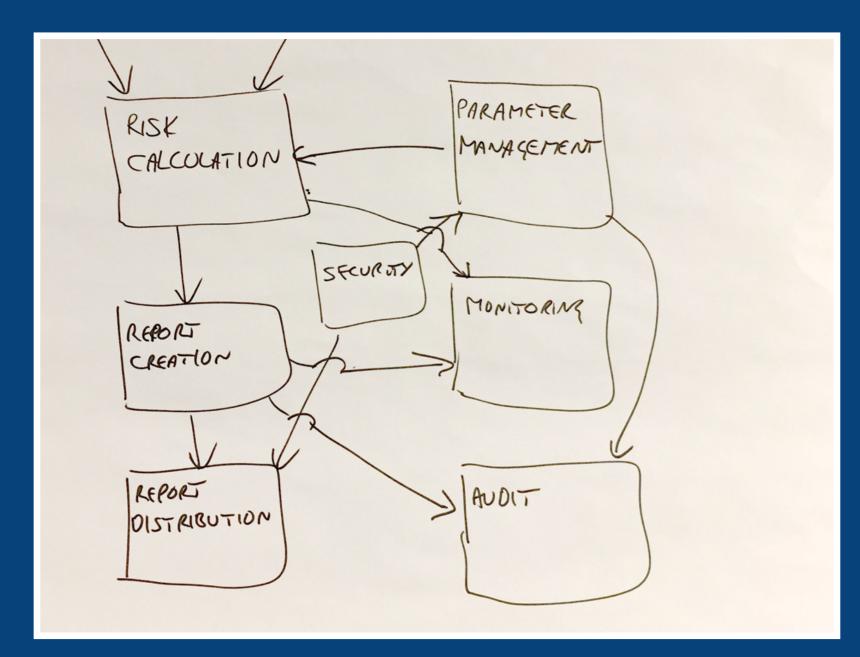
#76

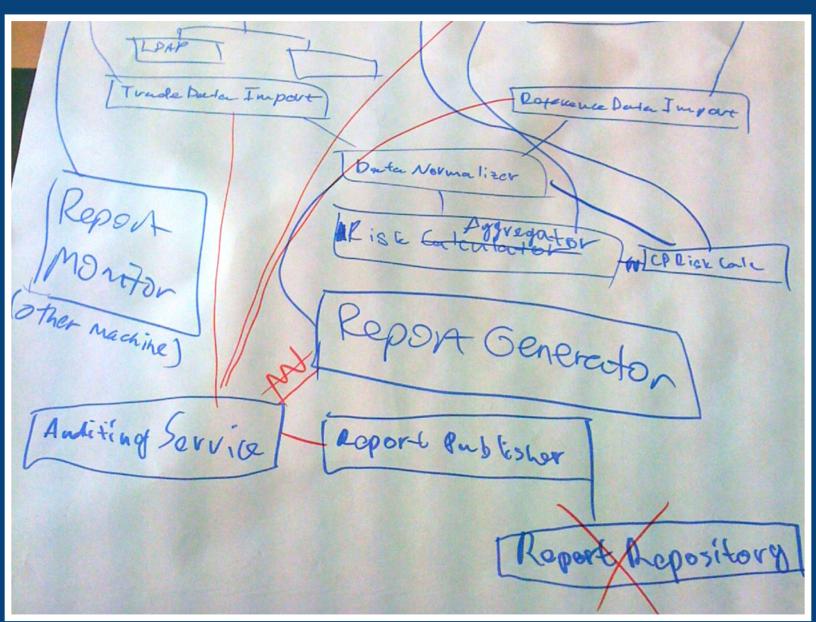
"Is the web UI getting data from Amazon S3?"

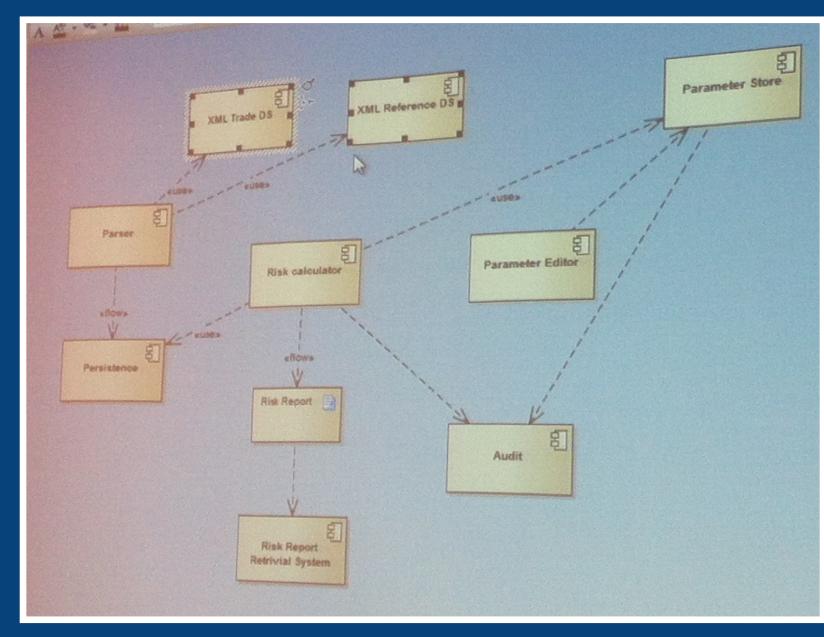
O RLY?

Assam Shun

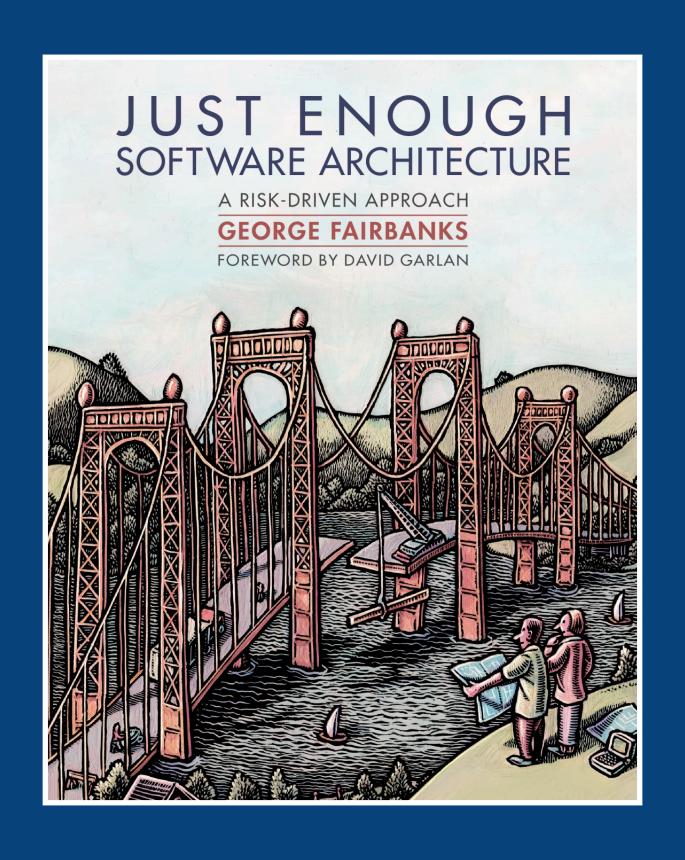








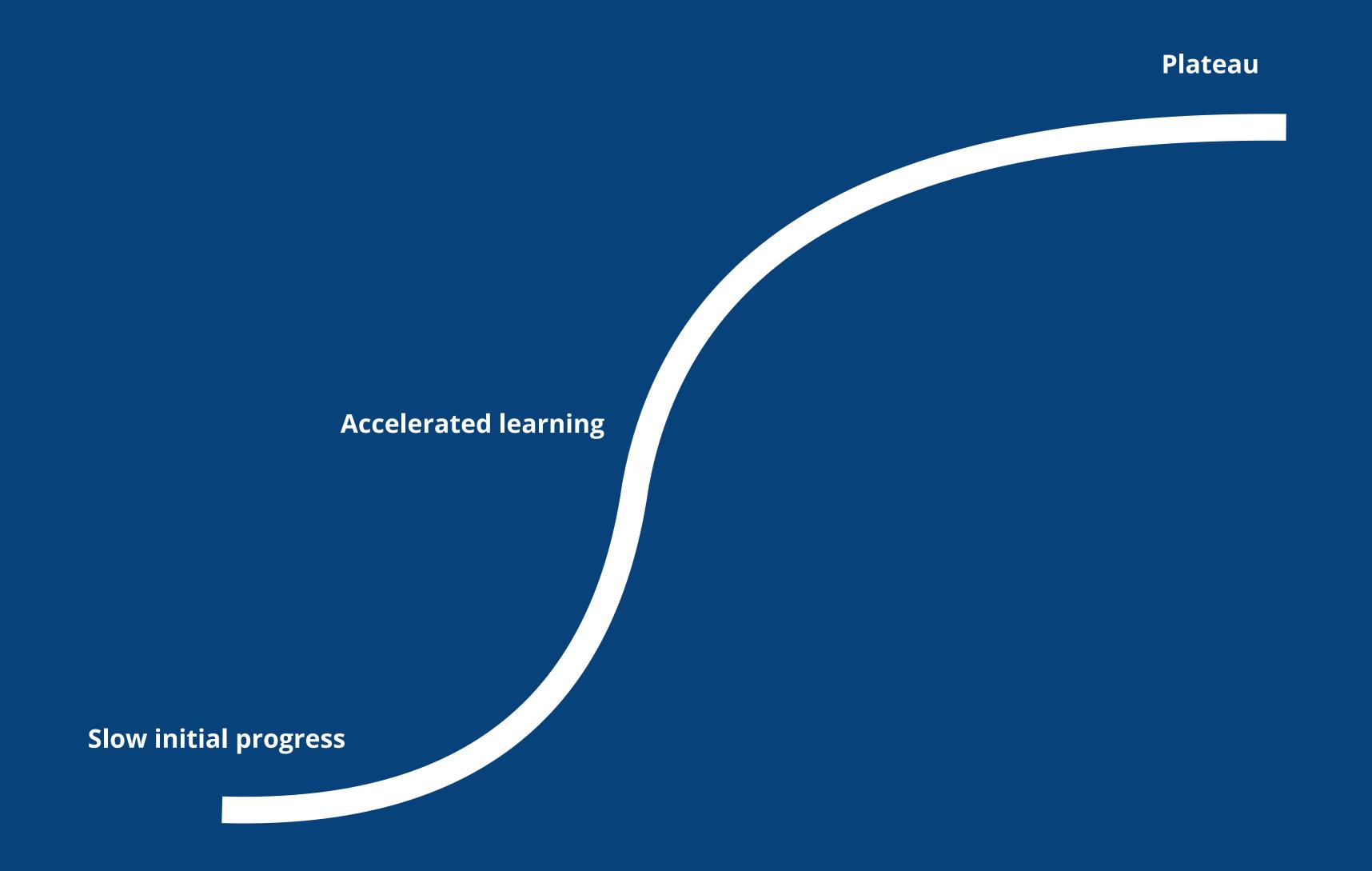
If you don't **engage** in the problem, you end up with a very simplified and superficial view of the solution



A good architecture rarely happens through architecture-indifferent design

Part of the design activity is about discovering "unknown unknowns"





The typical s-curve of learning

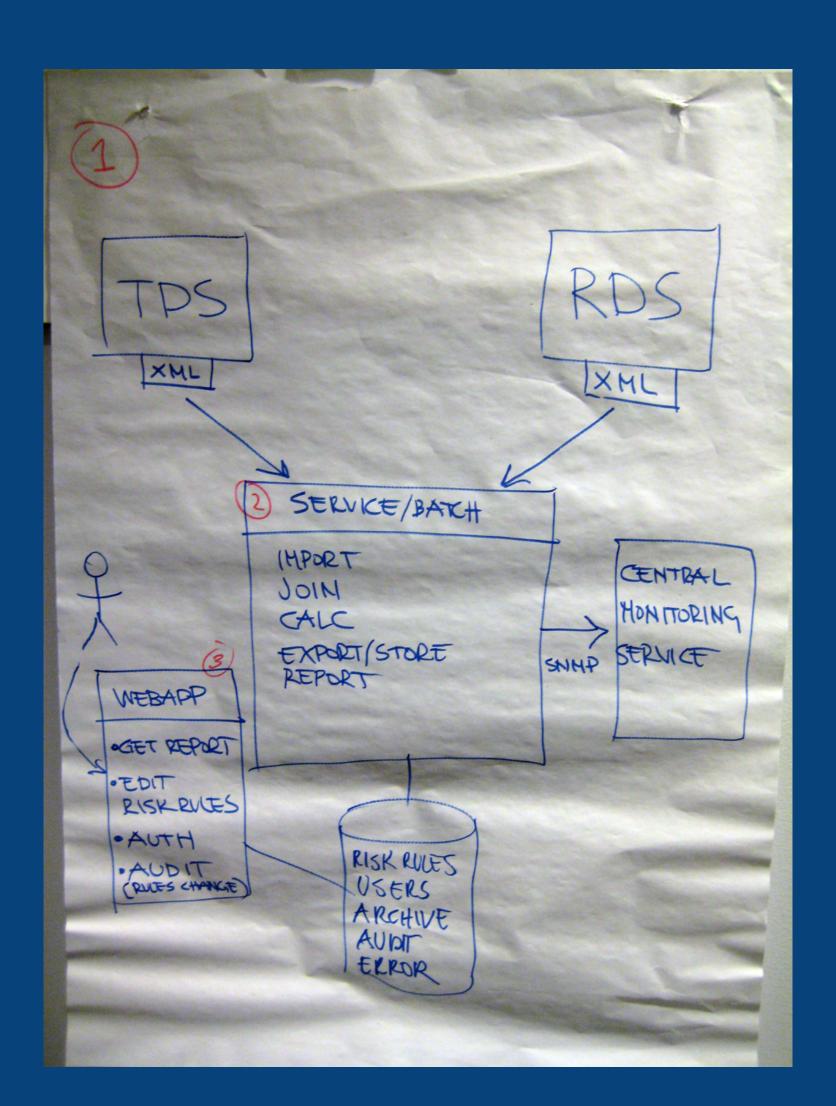


Technology Decisions

The producer-consumer conflict of software architecture diagrams

I don't want to put technology choices on the diagrams...

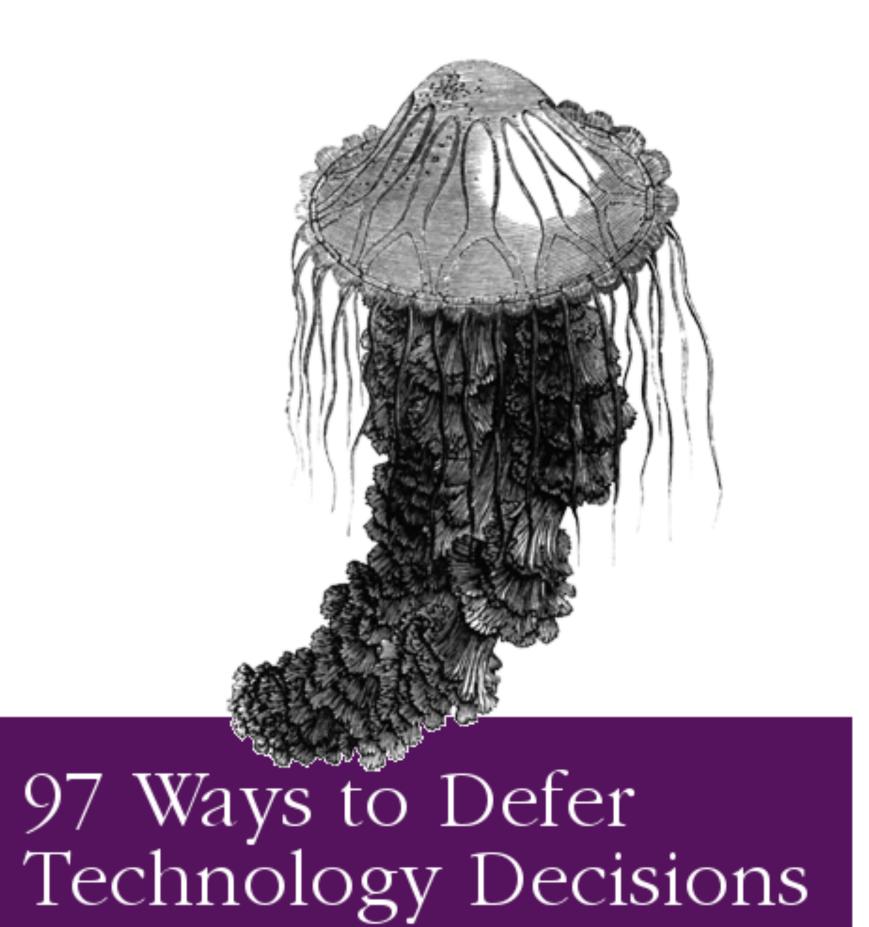




I wish these diagrams included technology choices...



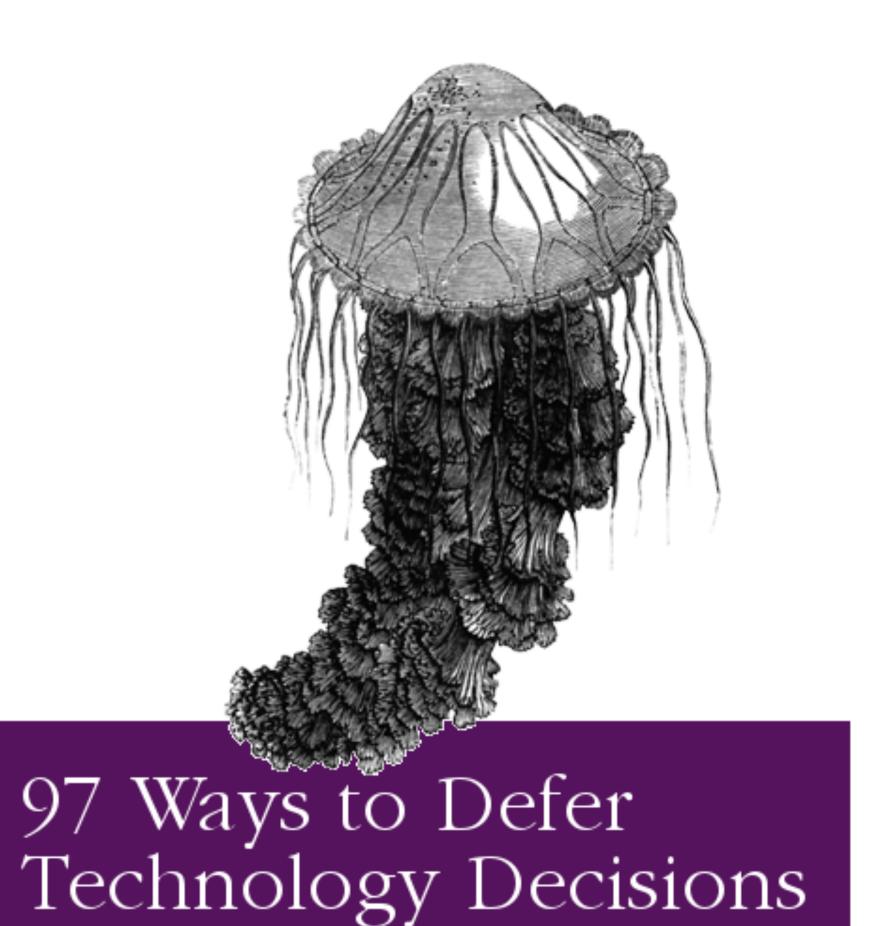




#8

"We don't solutionize."

O RLY?



#10

"Our architects are not allowed to do solutioneering."

O RLY?

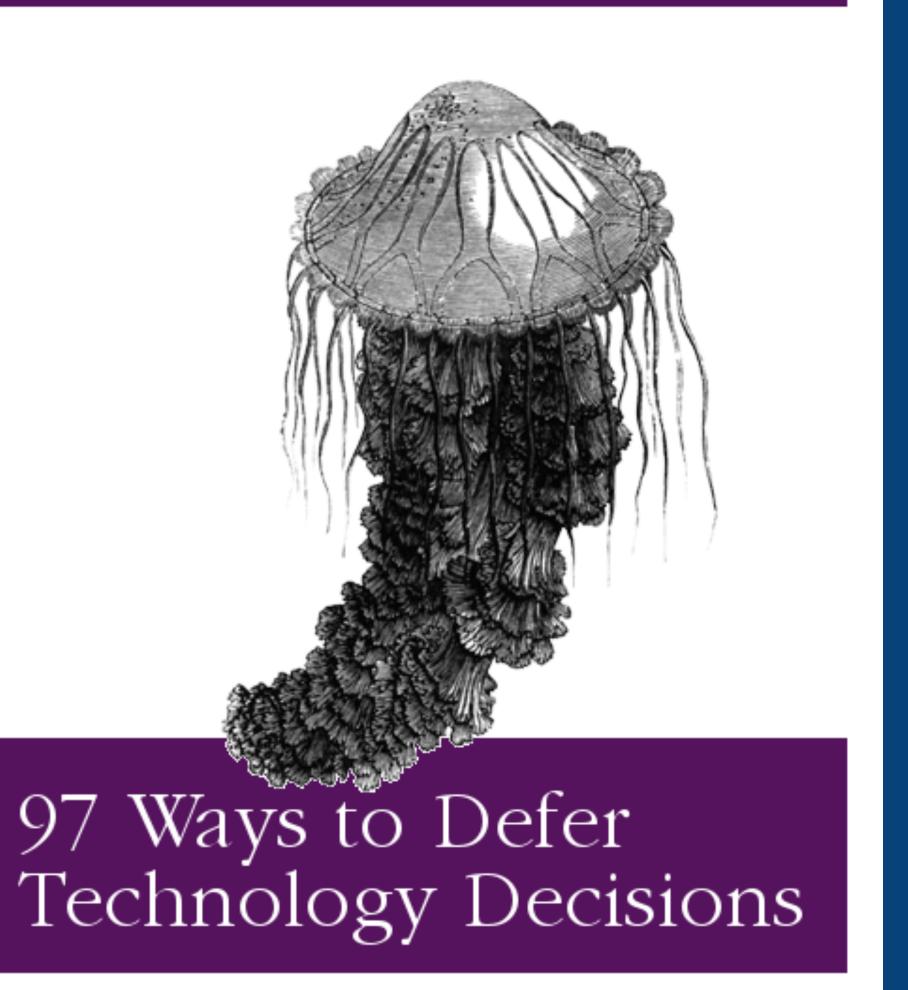


"We don't want to impose a solution upon the development team.



97 Ways to Defer Technology Decisions

O RLY?



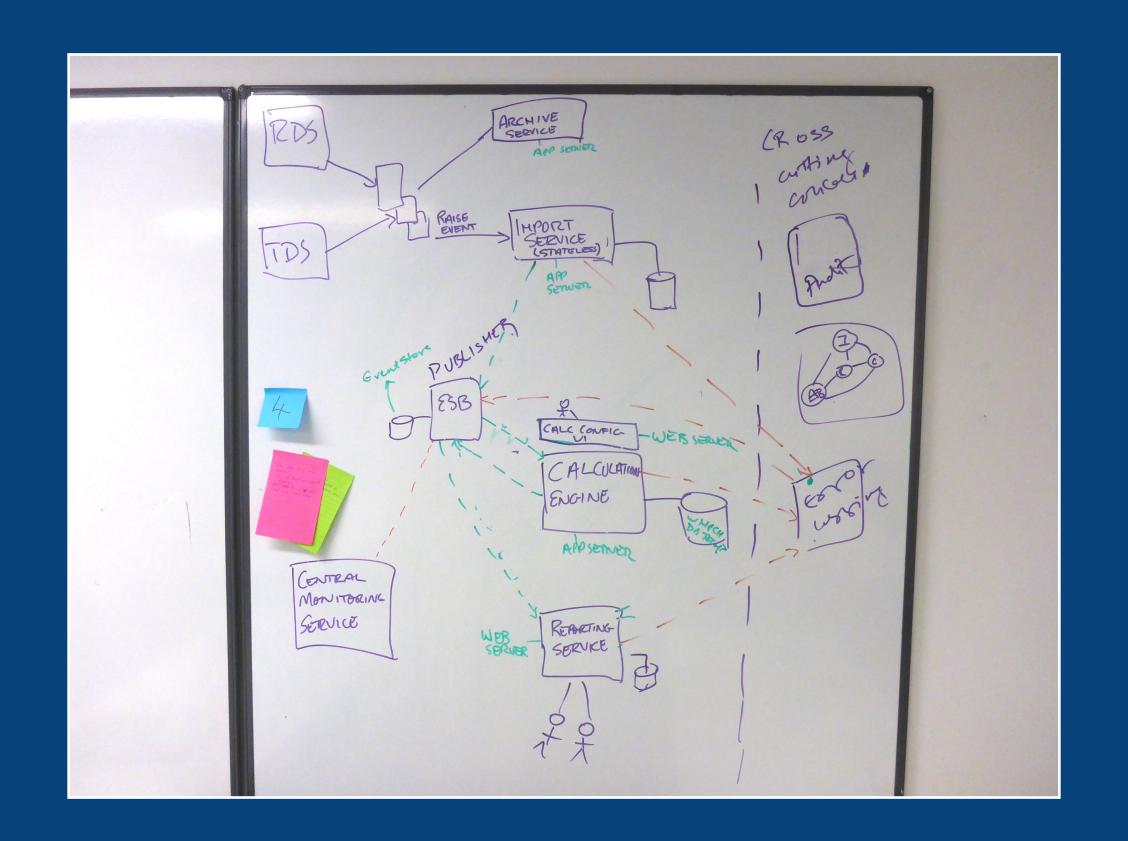
#42

"We're a Java team, so it's obviously a Java solution."

O RLY?

How much up front design?

1. Is that what we're going to build?



2. Is it going to work?



We're not trying to make every decision



Architecture represents the **significant decisions**, where significance is measured by **cost of change**.

Grady Booch

Architecture

Programming languages
Technologies and platforms
Monolith, microservices or hybrid approach

Design

Implementation

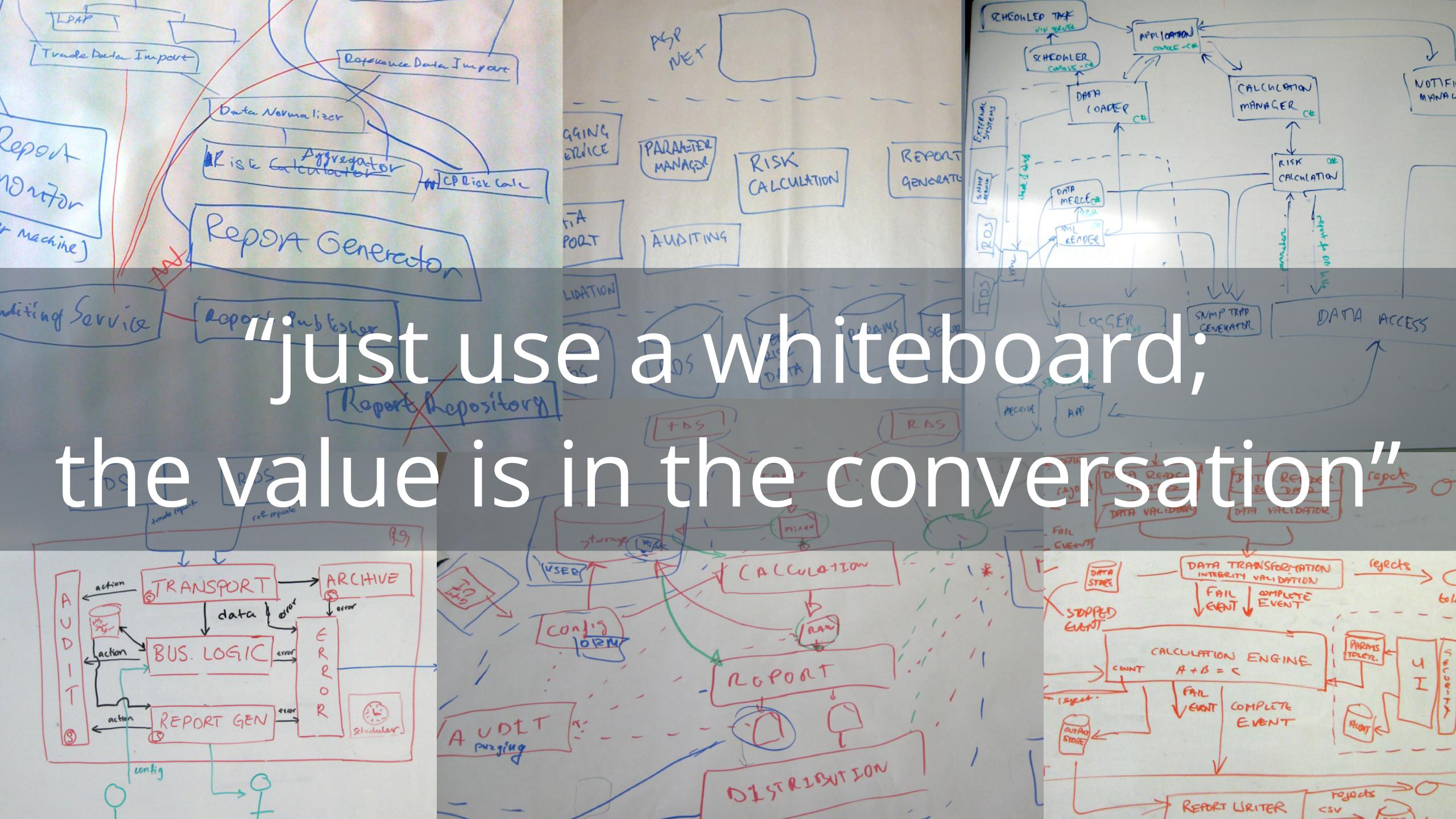
Curly braces on the same or next line Whitespace vs tabs

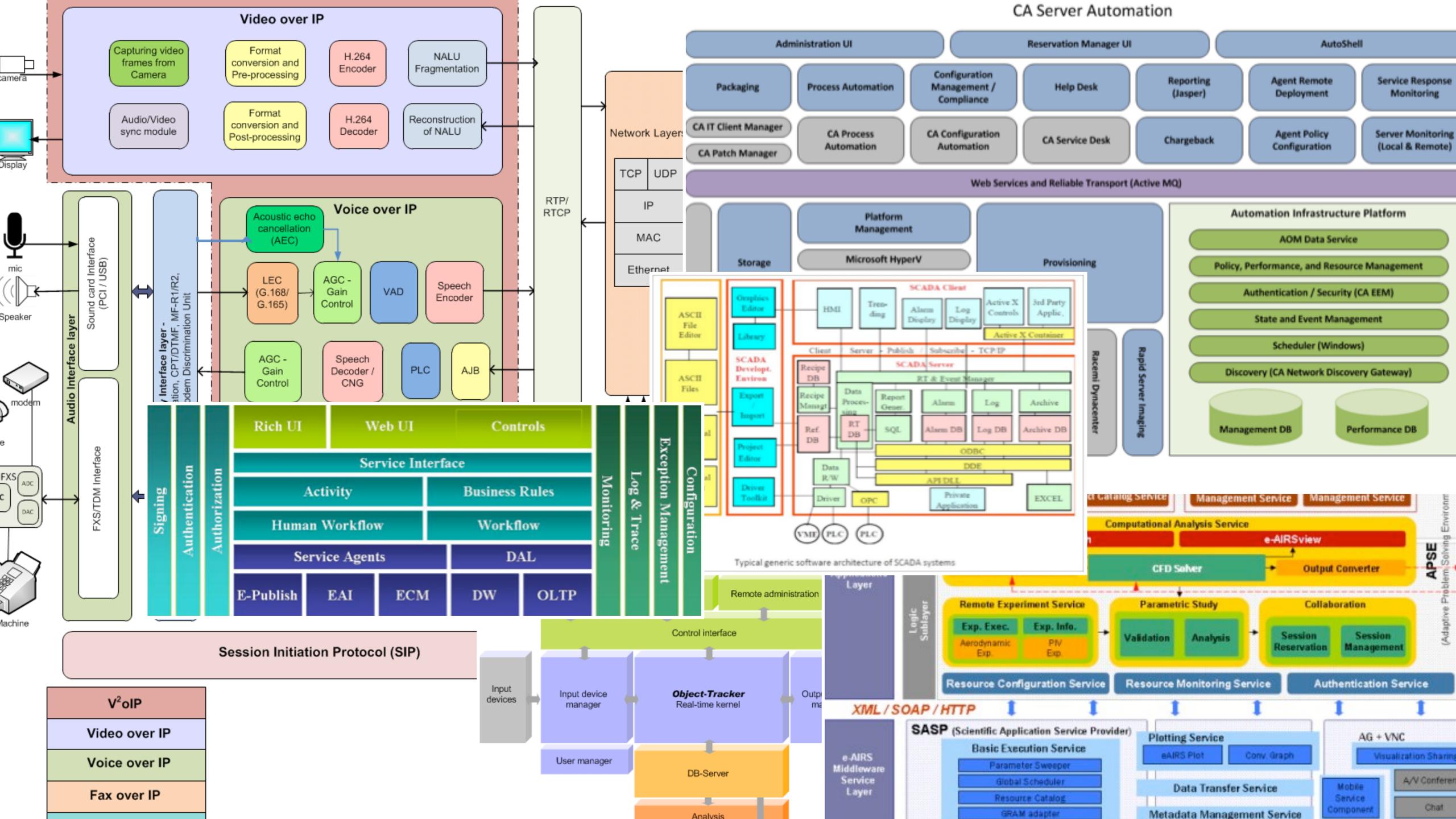


I think there is a role for a **broad starting point architecture**. Such things as stating early on how to layer the application, how you'll interact with the database (if you need one), what approach to use to handle the web server.

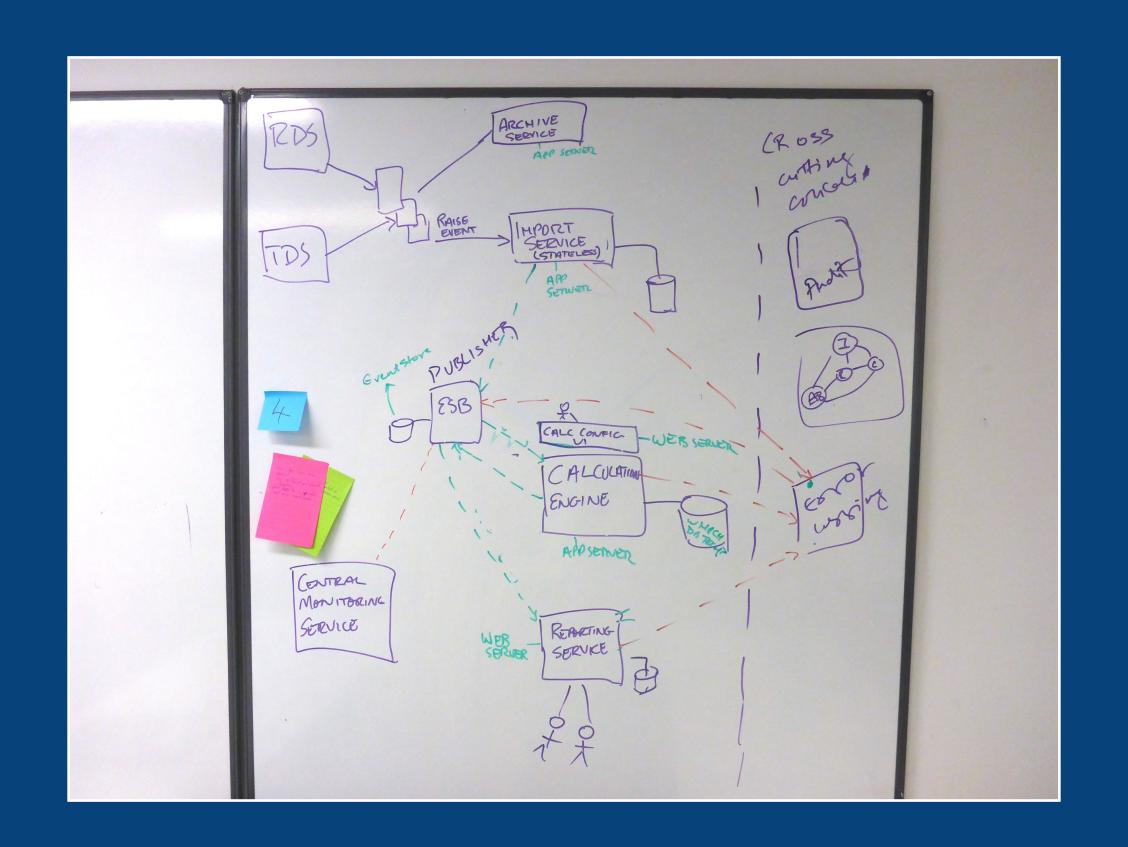
Martin Fowler

https://martinfowler.com/articles/designDead.html





1. Is that what we're going to build?



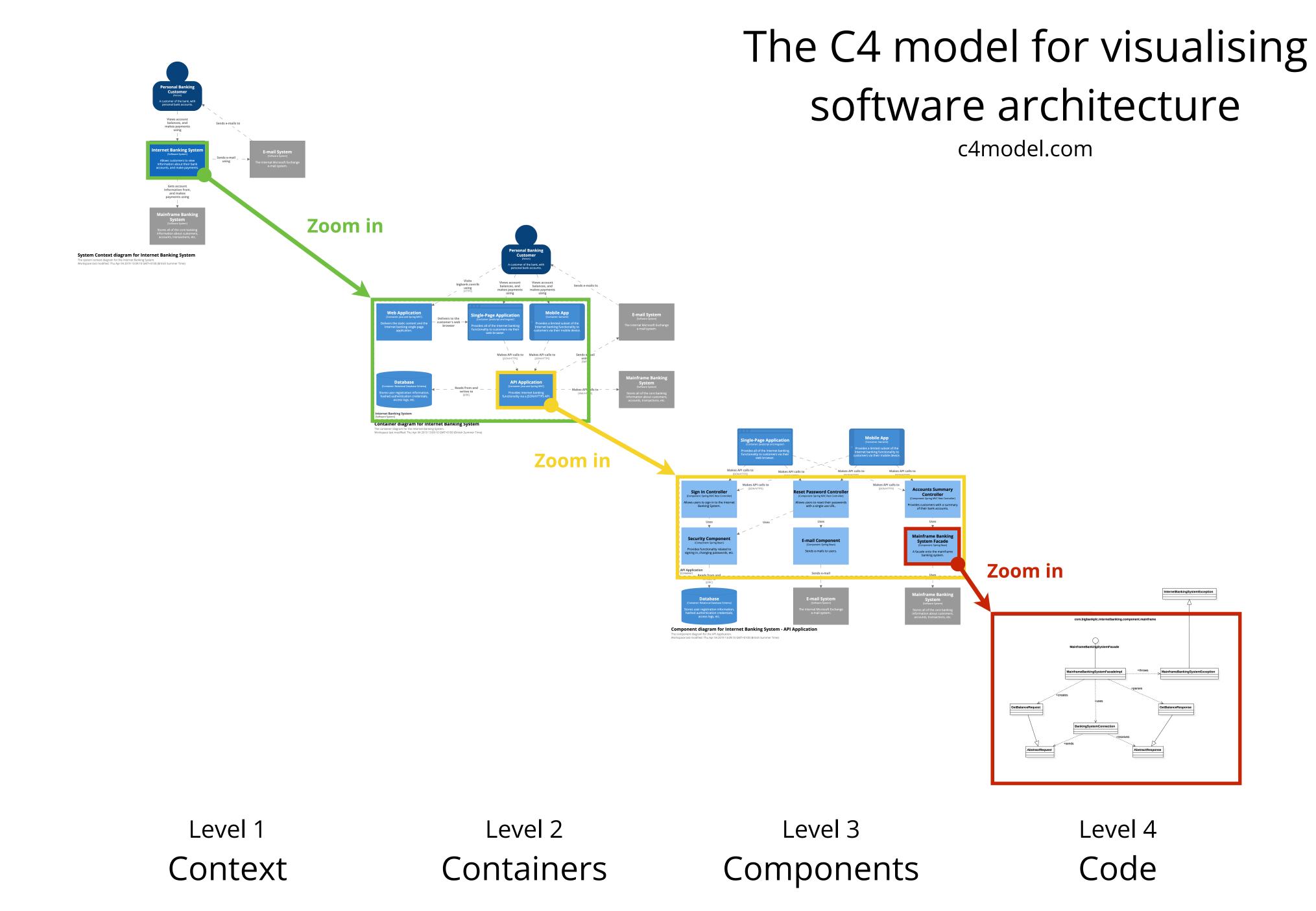
2. Is it going to work?

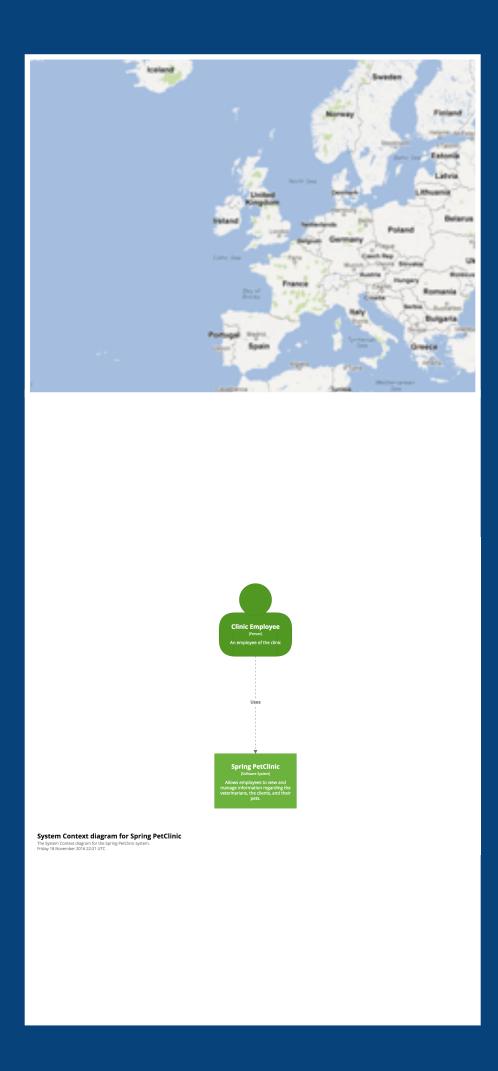


Teams need a **ubiquitous language** to communicate effectively

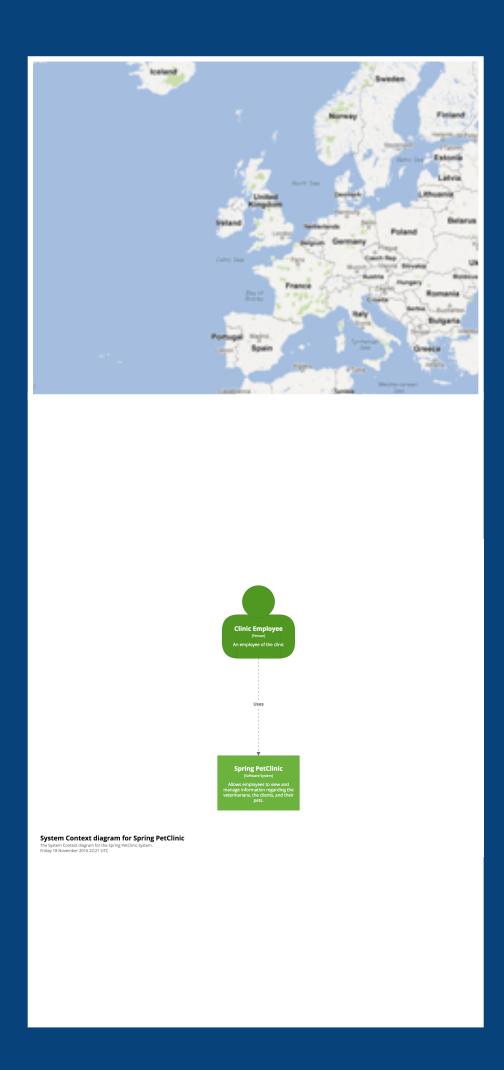


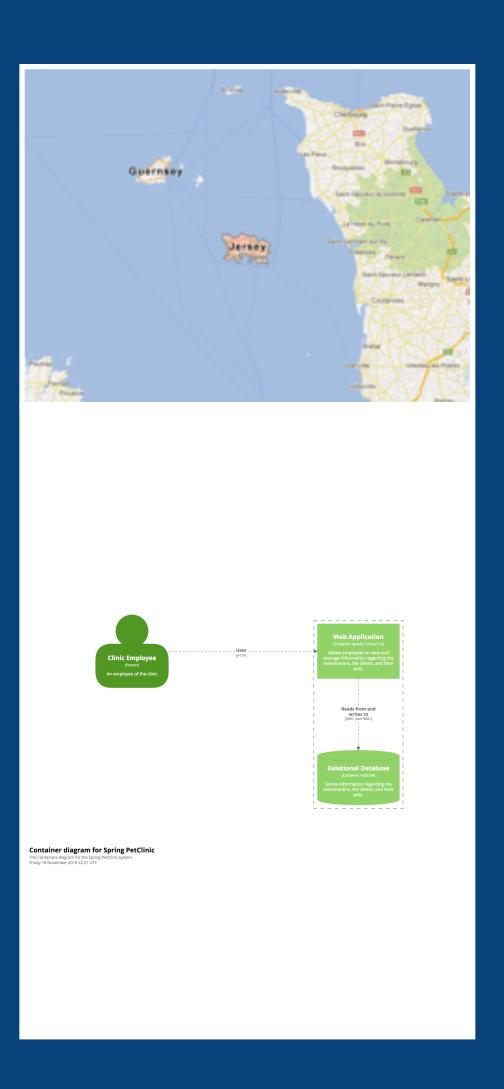
A common set of abstractions is more important than a common notation



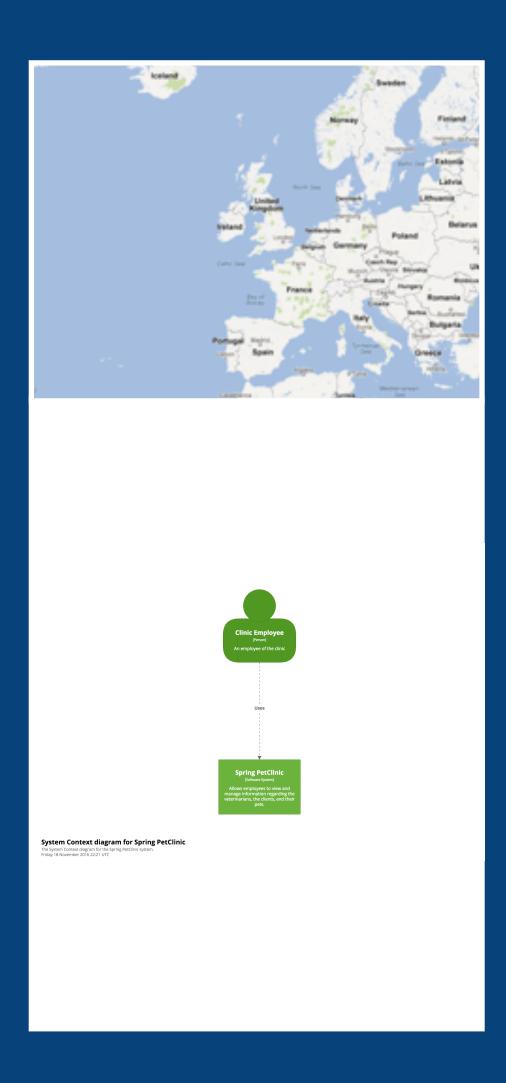


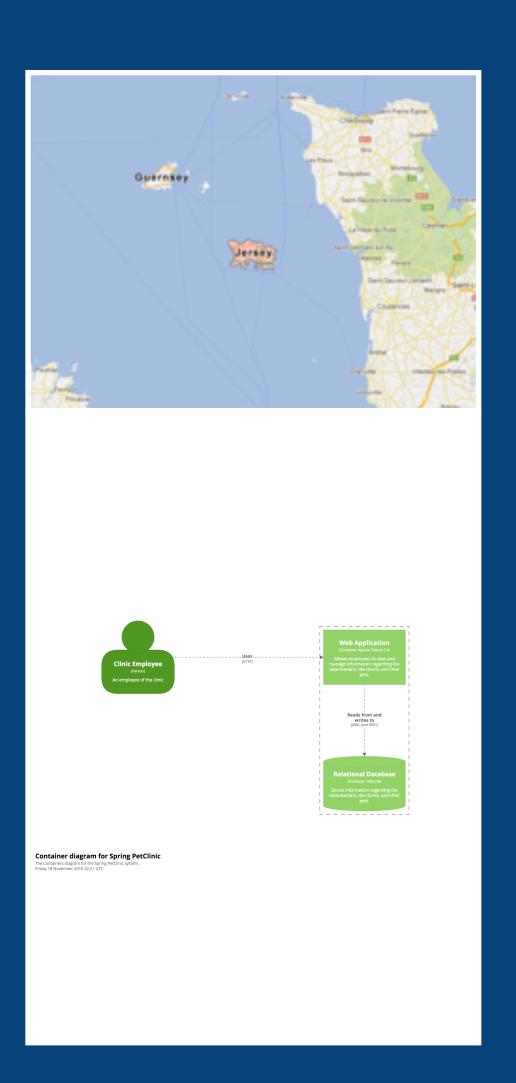


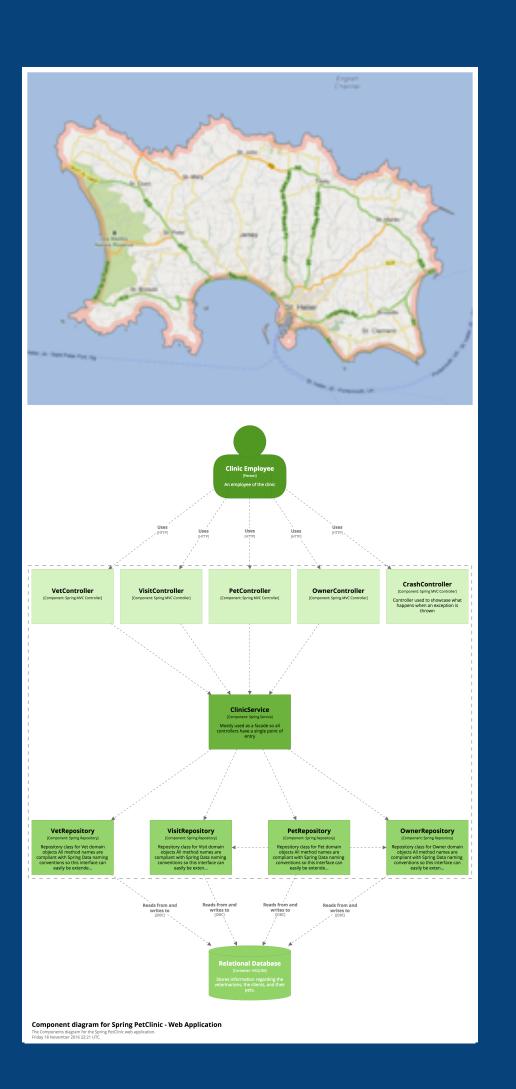




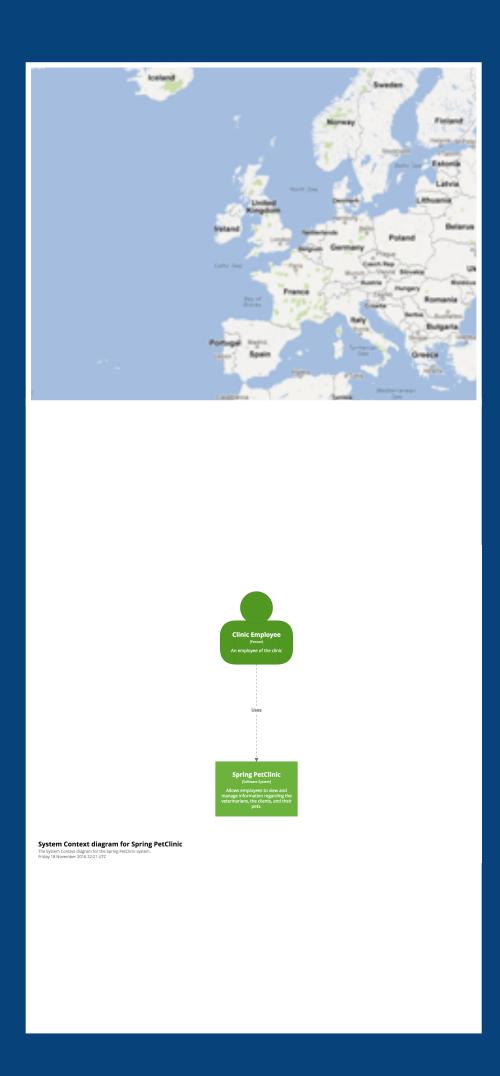




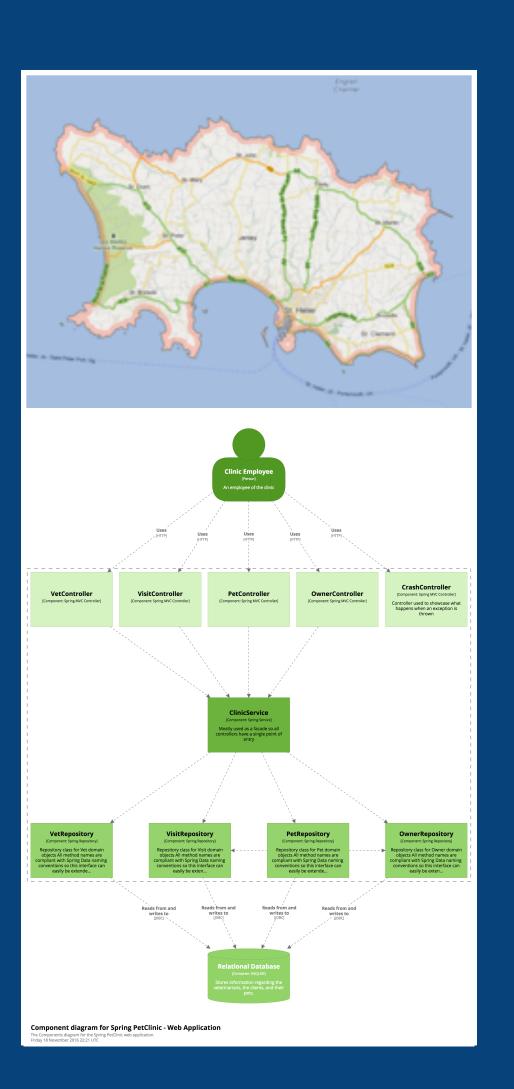


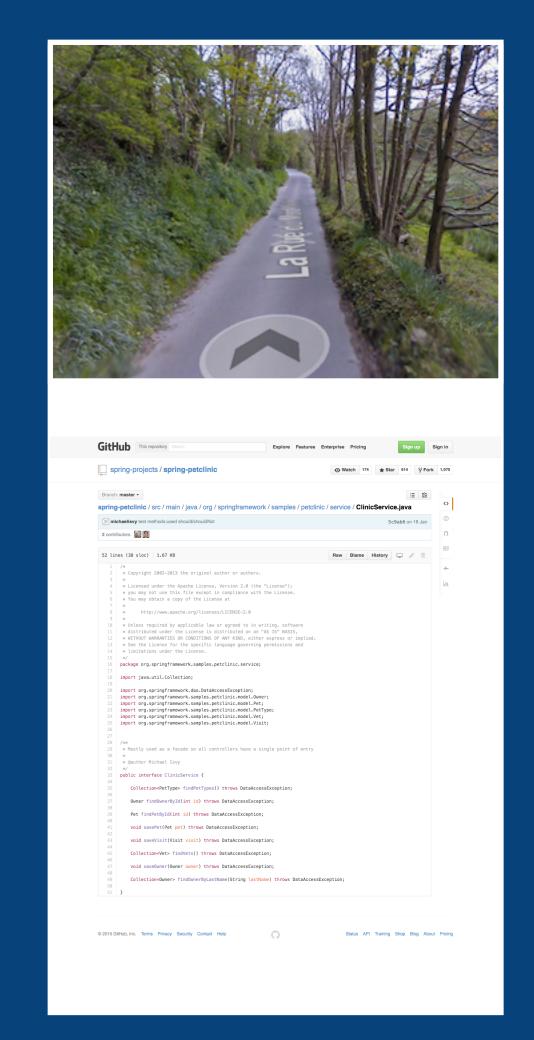




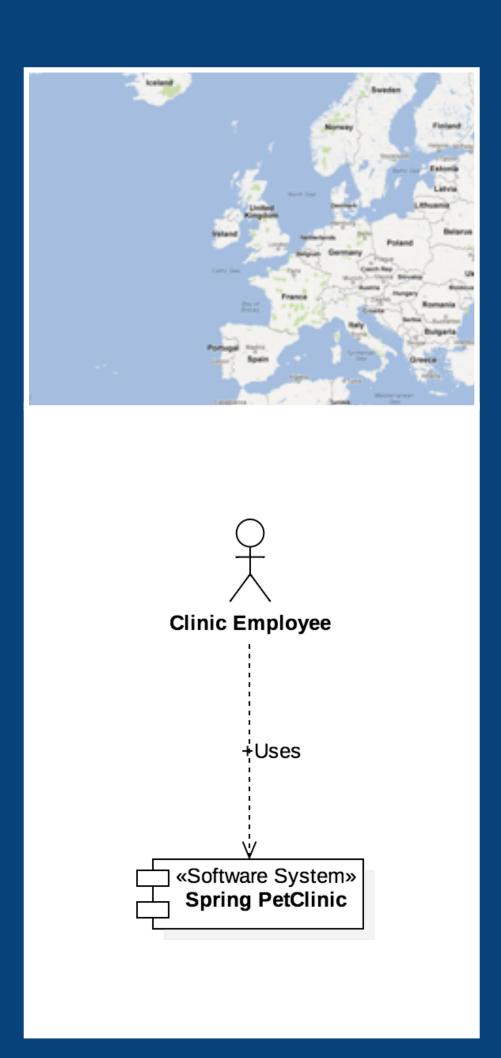


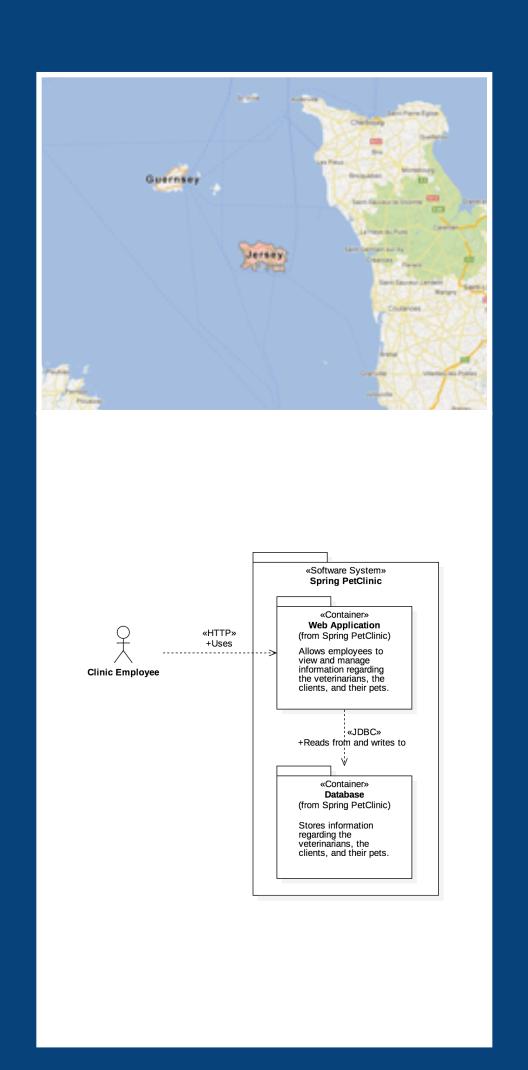


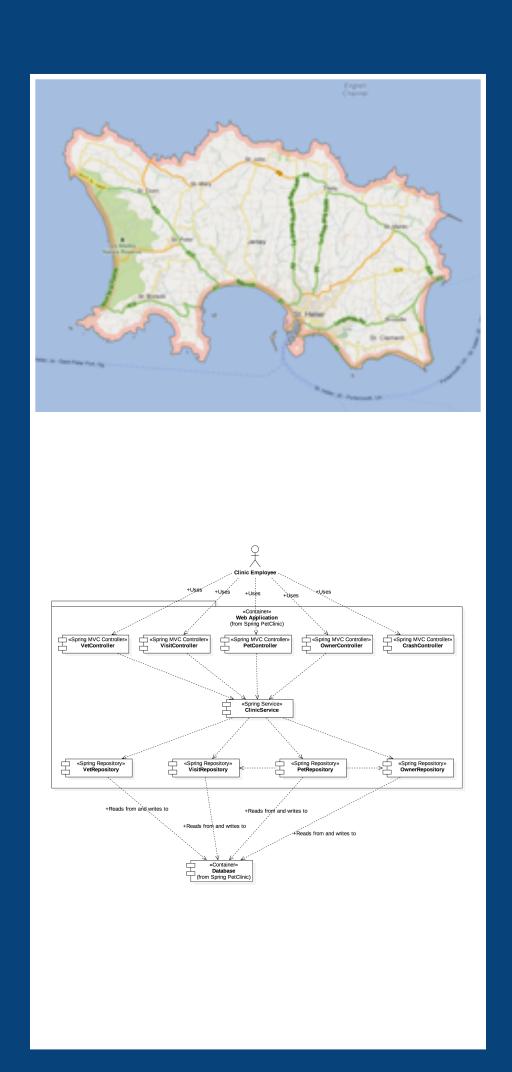


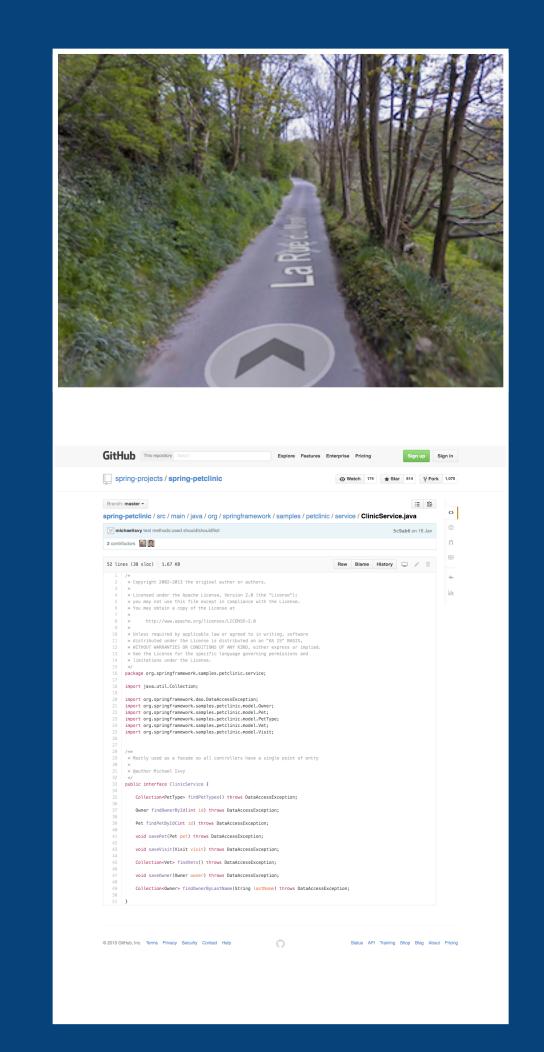














Diagrams are a visual checklist for design decisions



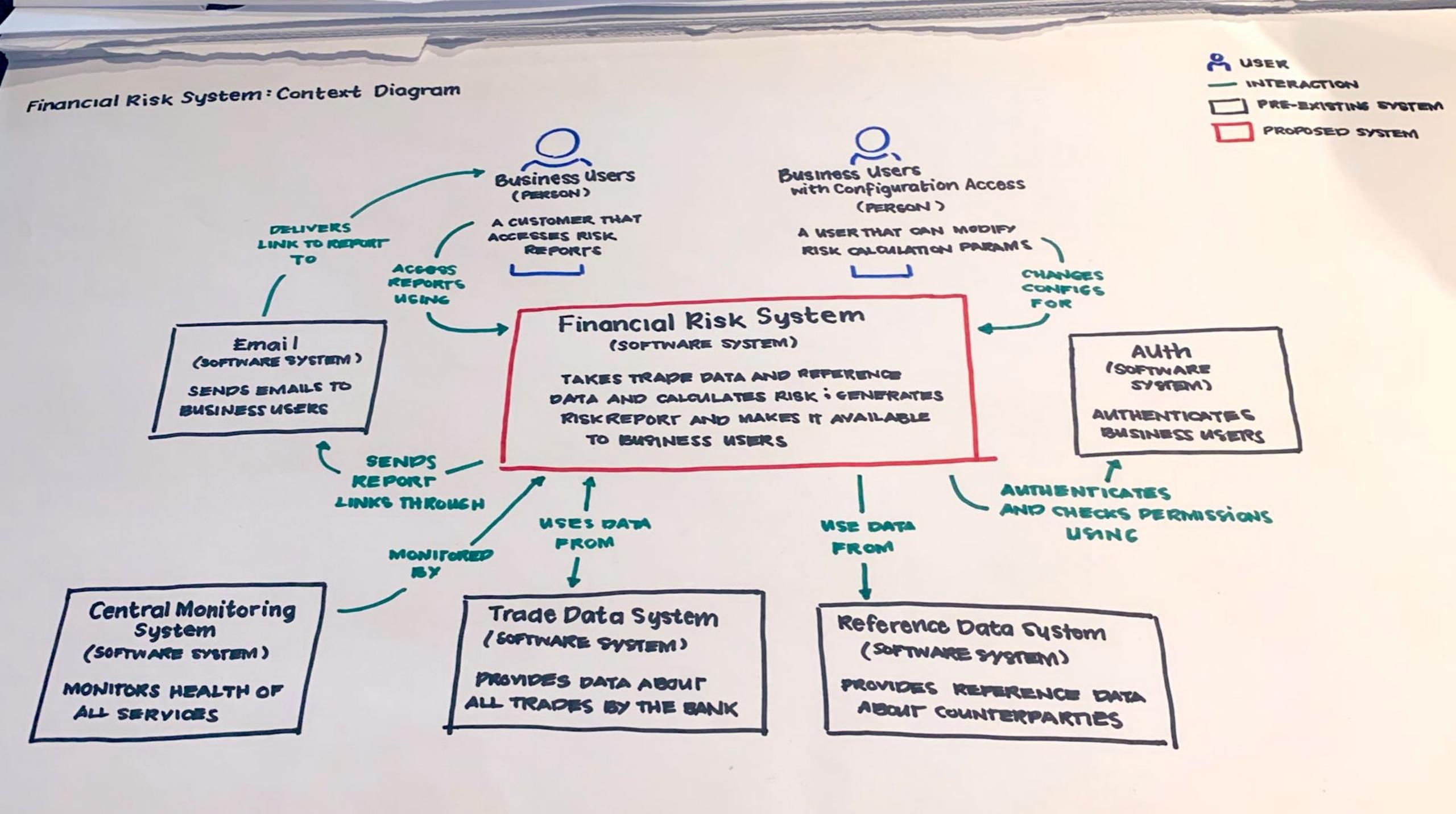
System Context diagram

What is the scope of the software system we're building?

Who is using it? What are they doing?

What system integrations does it need to support?





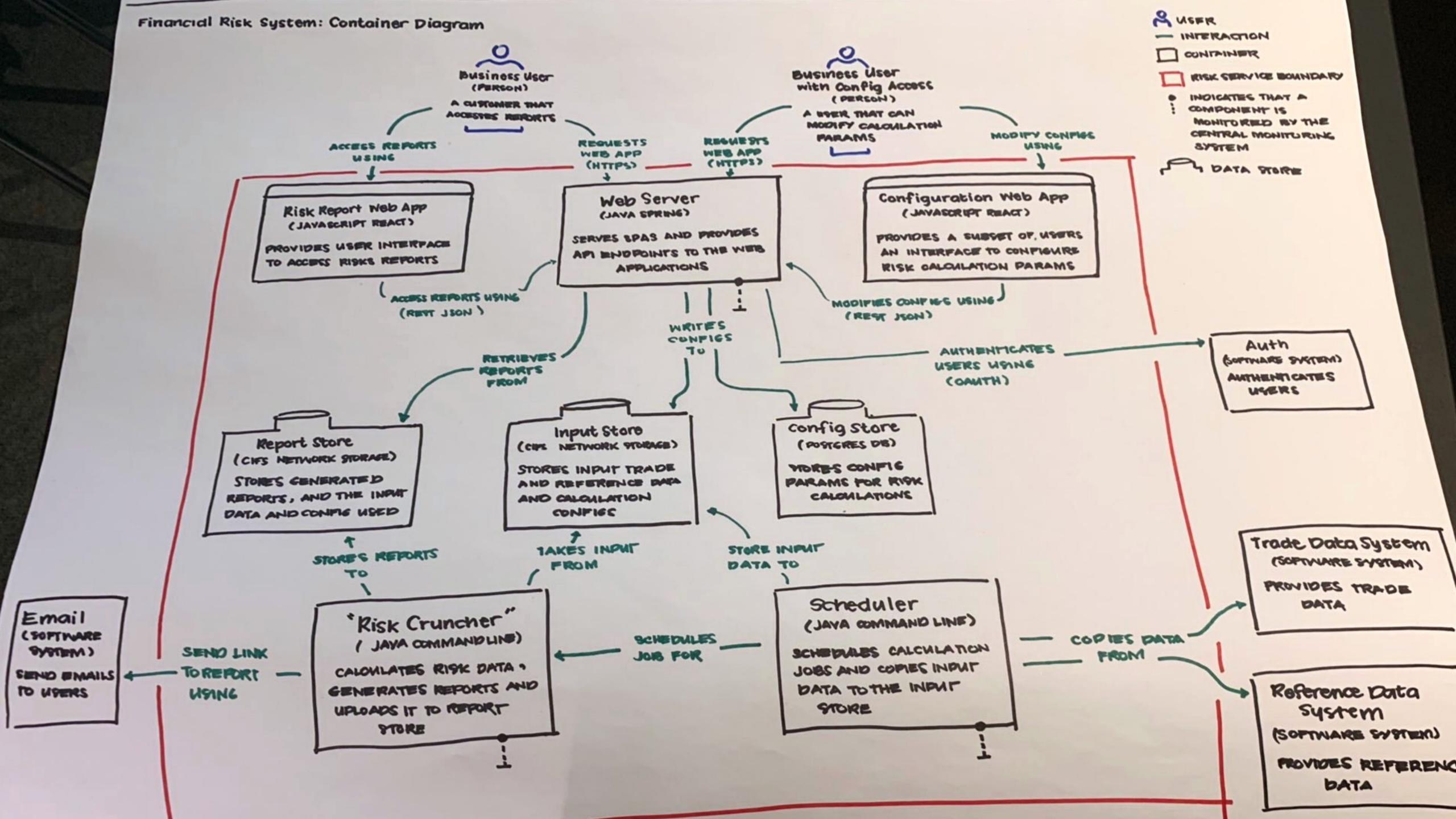
Container diagram

What are the major technology building blocks?

What are their responsibilities?

How do they communicate?





The diagrams should spark meaningful questions

"What does that arrow mean?"

"Why are some boxes red?"

"Is that a Java application?"

"Is that a monolithic application, or a collection of microservices?"

"How do the users get their reports?"



Yes

"What protocol are your two Java applications using to communicate with each other?"

"Why do you have two separate C# applications instead of one?"

"Why are you using MongoDB?"

"Why are you using MySQL when our standard is Oracle?"

"Should we really build new applications with .NET Framework rather than .NET Core?"



Richer diagrams lead to richer design discussions



Richer diagrams lead to better communication, making it easier to scale teams

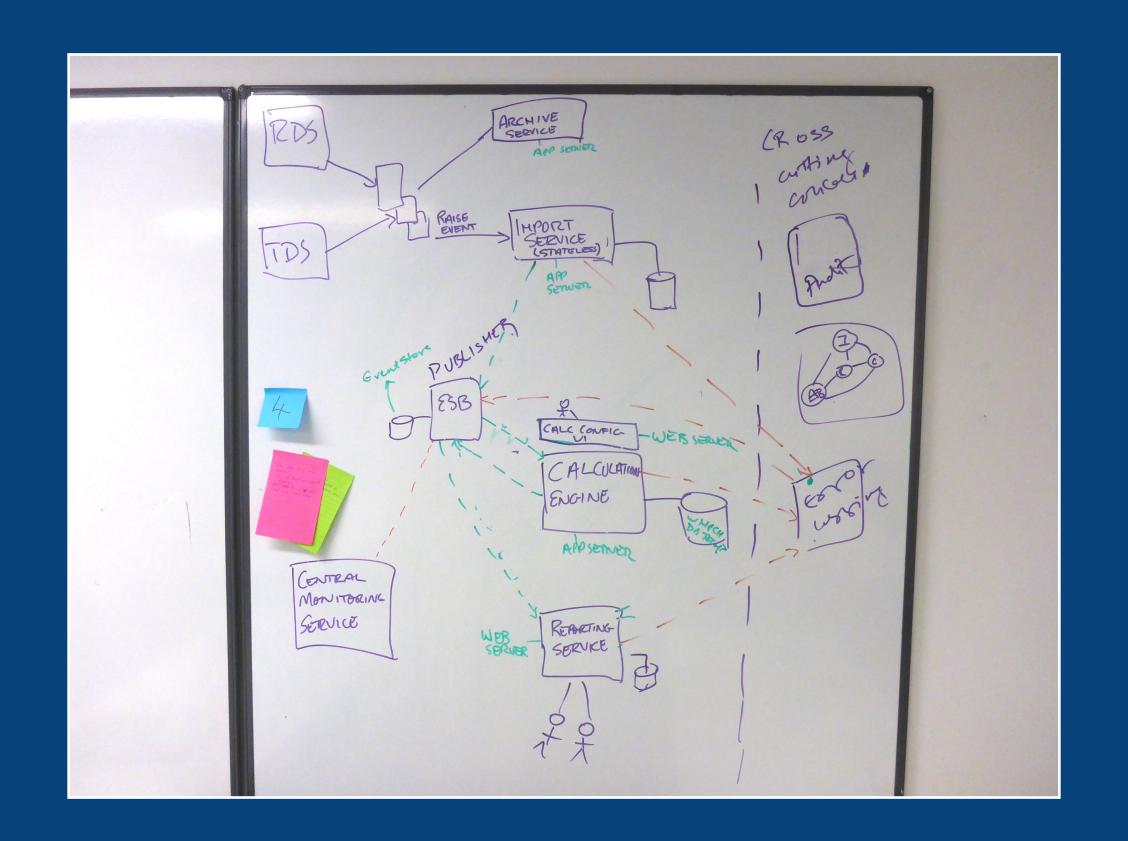


The diagrams should provide meaningful feedback



We're trying to diagram a [microservices | serverless] architecture, but the diagram is getting complicated.

1. Is that what we're going to build?



2. Is it going to work?



Base your architecture on requirements, travel light and prove your architecture with concrete experiments.

Agile Architecture: Strategies for Scaling Agile Development

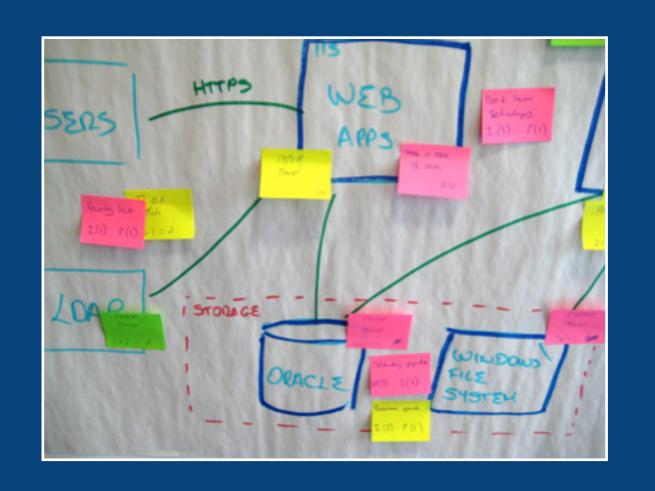
Scott Ambler

Identify and mitigate your highest priority risks



Like estimates, risks are subjective









Risk-storming

A visual and collaborative technique for identifying risk



Threat modelling

(STRIDE, LINDDUN, Attack Trees, etc)



Title These documents have names that are short noun phrases. For example, "ADR 1: Deployment on Ruby on Rails 3.0.10" or "ADR 9: LDAP for Multitenant Integration"

Context This section describes the forces at play, including technological, political, social, and project local. These forces are probably in tension, and should be called out as such. The language in this section is value-neutral. It is simply describing facts.

Decision This section describes our response to these forces. It is stated in full sentences, with active voice. "We will ..."

Status A decision may be "proposed" if the project stakeholders haven't agreed with it yet, or "accepted" once it is agreed. If a later ADR changes or reverses a decision, it may be marked as "deprecated" or "superseded" with a reference to its replacement.

Consequences This section describes the resulting context, after applying the decision. All consequences should be listed here, not just the "positive" ones. A particular decision may have positive, negative, and neutral consequences, but all of them affect the team and project in the future.

"Architecture Decision Record"

A short description of an architecturally significant decision

http://thinkrelevance.com/blog/2011/11/15/documenting-architecture-decisions (Michael Nygard)



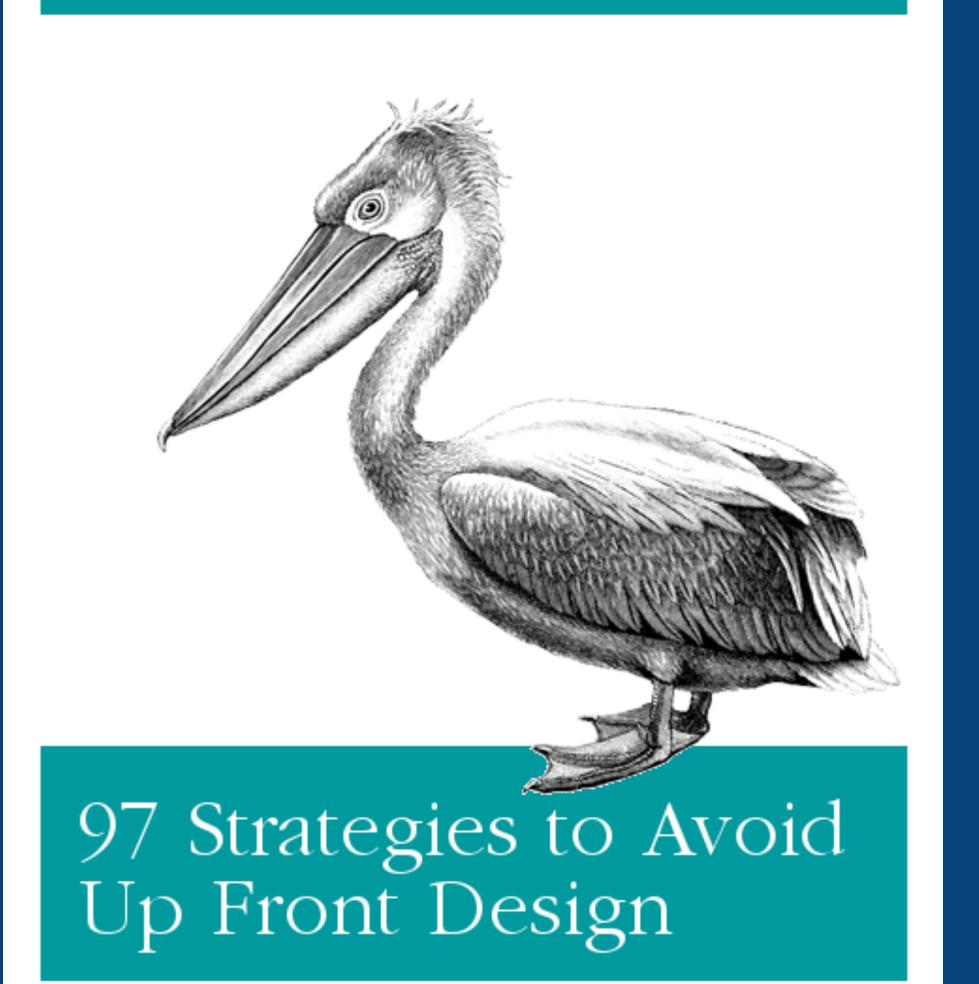
How much up front design should you do?



Sometimes requirements are known, and sometimes they aren't

(enterprise software development vs product companies and startups)





#52

"I'm good with maybe a day for a one-year effort."

O RLY?

Vera Gile





You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).



You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).



You understand the context and scope of what you're building.





You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).



You understand the context and scope of what you're building.



You understand the significant design decisions (i.e. technology, modularity, etc).





You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).

You have a way to communicate your technical vision to other people.





You understand the context and scope of what you're building.



You understand the significant design decisions (i.e. technology, modularity, etc).





You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).







You understand the context and scope of what you're building.

You are confident that your design satisfies the key architectural drivers.





You understand the significant design decisions (i.e. technology, modularity, etc).



You understand the significant architectural drivers (requirements, quality attributes, constraints).







You understand the context and scope of what you're building.

You are confident that your design satisfies the key architectural drivers.





You understand the significant design decisions (i.e. technology, modularity, etc).

You have identified, and are comfortable with, the risks associated with building the software.





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You understand the context and scope of what you're building.

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You understand the significant design decisions (i.e. technology, modularity, etc).

You have identified, and are comfortable with, the risks associated with building the software.



Techniques: Workshops, interviews, Event Storming, Impact Mapping, domain modelling, OOAD, CRC, DDD, architecture reviews, ATAM, architecture dry runs, Risk-storming, concrete experiments, C4 model, ADRs, etc.



Some up front design to create a starting point and direction for further evolutionary design



Adopt an agile mindset

Choose a starting point and continuously improve to discover what works for you



Thank you!

