



# MANAGED BY **MORONS**

THE PATH TO A THRIVING  
ORGANISATION

Have you ever  
wondered why some  
organisations go from  
strength to strength...

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... whilst others  
make you hold  
your head in  
despair?




A framed portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong, wearing a dark grey Mao suit, is mounted on a red wall. The portrait is set within a gold-colored frame. The background of the portrait is a light blue gradient.

In 1958, Chairman Mao had an ambition.

He wanted to turn China into an economic powerhouse.



A large-scale painting depicting Mao Zedong in a red Mao suit, leaping through the air with his arms outstretched. He is positioned centrally, appearing to rise above a dense crowd of people below. The background is filled with numerous red flags waving in the wind, set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, browns, and oranges, creating a sense of movement and historical significance.

He planned to overtake Great  
Britain and The US.  
It would be China's  
"Great Leap Forward".

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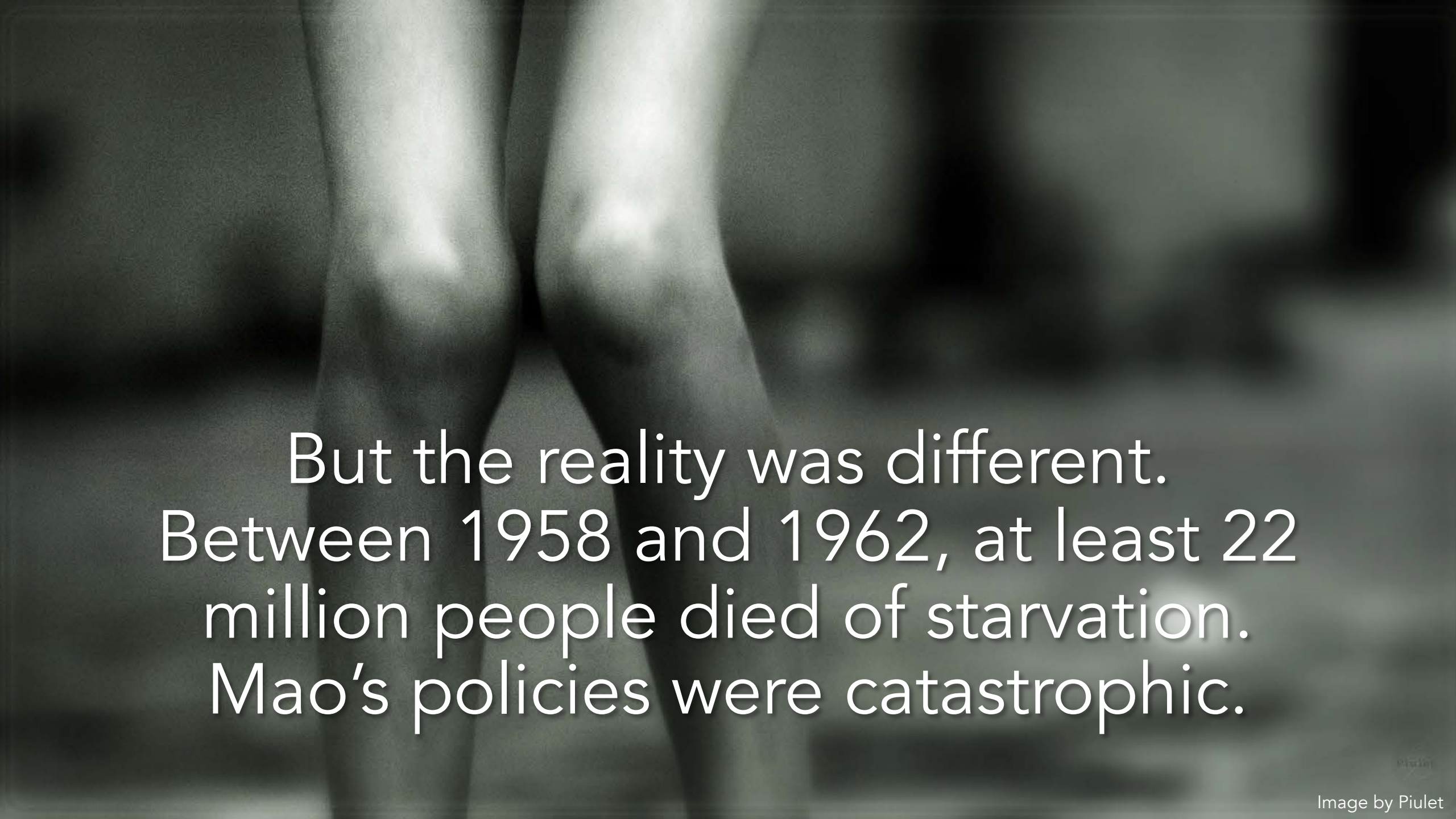
He set about reforming agricultural and industrial practices.



A year after his reforms began, Mao toured the country. His advisors showed him abundance everywhere he went and told him how successful his approach was...

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But the reality was different.  
Between 1958 and 1962, at least 22  
million people died of starvation.  
Mao's policies were catastrophic.



But Mao's political supporters wouldn't admit failure:

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They pumped out propaganda.

They declared record-breaking yields.

They confiscated the grain "surplus".

They forbade doctors from using the word "starvation" on death certificates.

They harassed or killed anybody who dared speak out.

The image shows two red flags with gold stars, likely the flag of the Communist Party of China, flying against a clear blue sky. The flags are in the foreground, and their poles are visible. The text is overlaid on the flags.

Mao admitted...

*"Much of the falsehood has been prompted by the upper levels through boasting, pressure and reward, leaving little alternative to those below."*



A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely Shanghai. The Oriental Pearl Tower is prominent on the left, illuminated in blue. In the center is a tall, modern skyscraper with a grid of windows. To the right is another skyscraper with a distinctive dome and a red sign that reads "中国平安" (China Ping'an). The sky is dark, and the buildings are brightly lit. A white, torn-paper-like border runs across the bottom of the image.

Eventually Mao  
abandoned his reforms,  
and China recovered.

# In a dysfunctional organisation:

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- Targets are rife.
  - Leaders don't listen.
  - Staff don't speak up.
  - Failures are buried.
  - Good news abounds.
  - Intimidation is a core competence.
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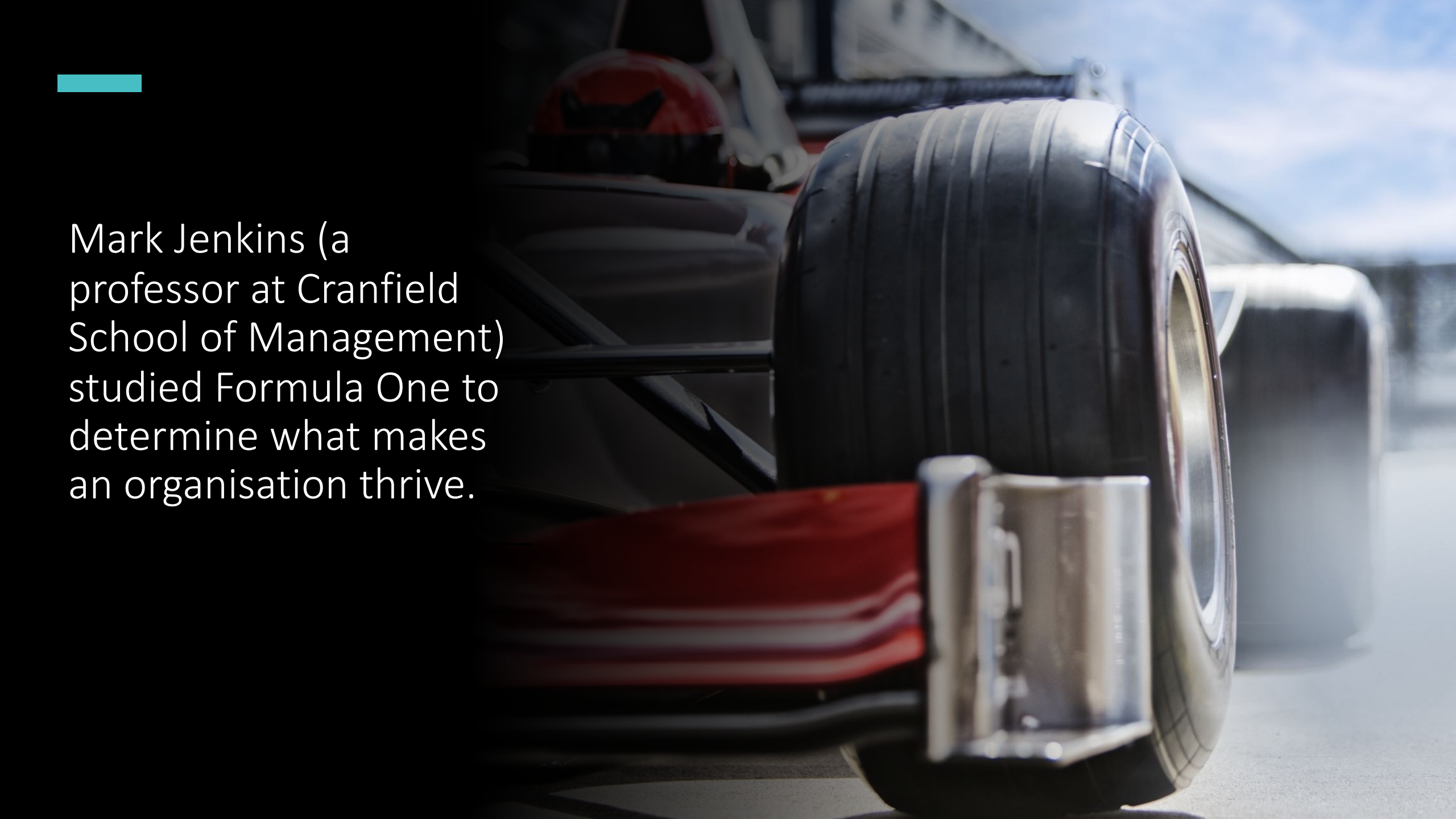
So, how do you  
create a thriving  
organisation and  
avoid Mao's fate?





This is a fake picture.  
Nobody is that happy at work  
unless they have just won the  
lottery...





Mark Jenkins (a professor at Cranfield School of Management) studied Formula One to determine what makes an organisation thrive.

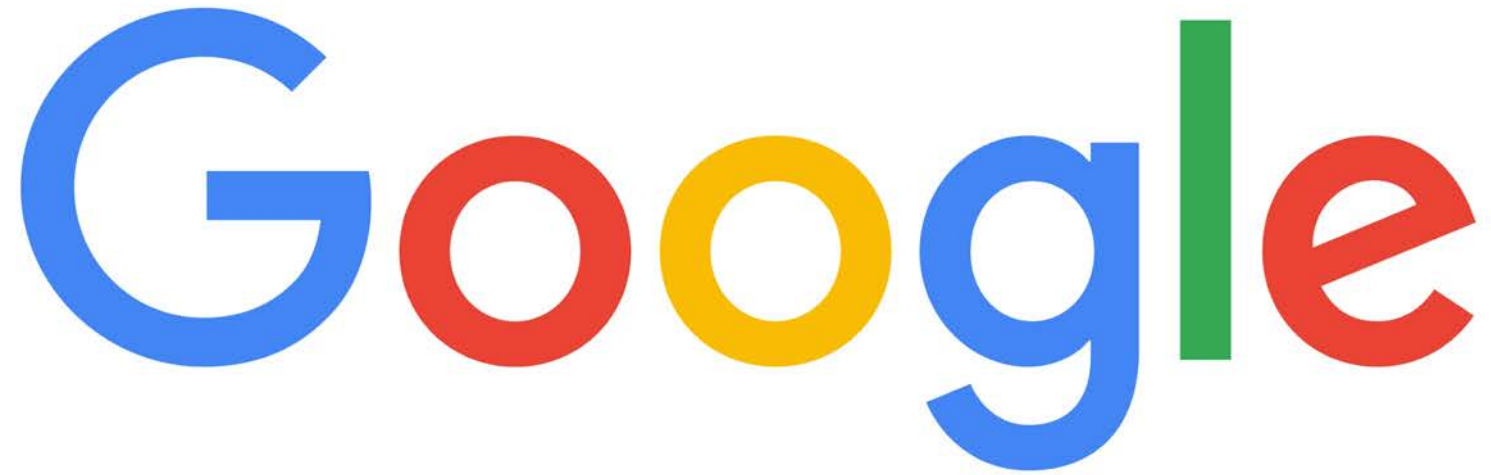
A photograph of three race drivers standing on a podium, celebrating with their arms raised. They are wearing racing suits and helmets. The image is in a dark, sepia tone. The text "He thinks success comes down to three things." is overlaid in white, centered over the image. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the text.

He thinks success comes  
down to three things.





First, you must focus. Decide what you want to thrive at...

The Google logo is displayed in its characteristic multi-colored font. The letters are: 'G' (blue), 'o' (red), 'o' (yellow), 'g' (blue), 'l' (green), and 'e' (red).

Wants to

*“Organise the world’s information and make it universally acceptable and useful.”*



# NETFLIX

Wants to

*"...entertain the world.  
Whatever your taste, and no  
matter where you live."*

# ExxonMobil

Is...

*"... committed to being the world's premier petroleum and chemical manufacturing company. To that end, we must continuously achieve superior financial and operating results while adhering to high ethical standards."*



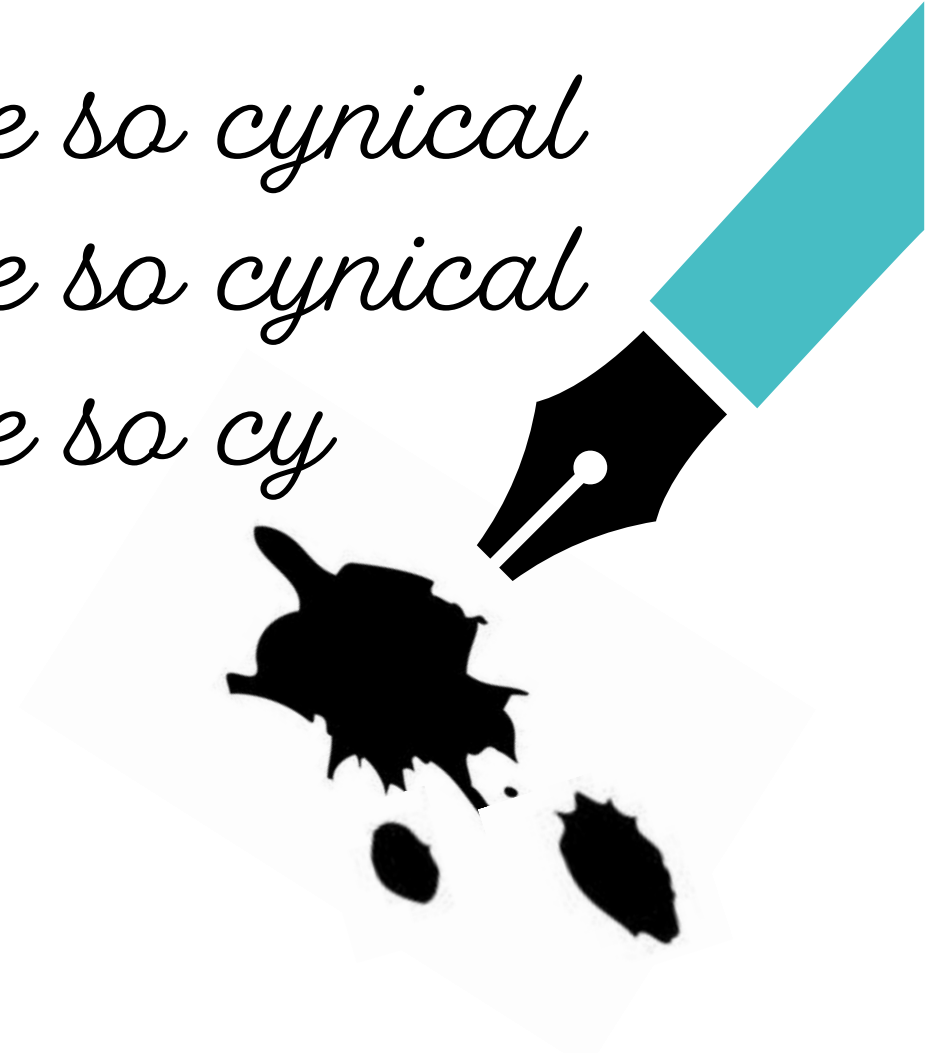
# Did I read that correctly?

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*They want to be the best, so they must make a lot of money without doing anything naughty?*



*I am sorry. I must not be so cynical*  
*I am sorry. I must not be so cynical*  
*I am sorry. I must not be so cy*







Which organisation is  
most likely to delight its  
customers?

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And where would  
you rather work?


Sorry, them again.





How can your organisation thrive  
without a sense of purpose?

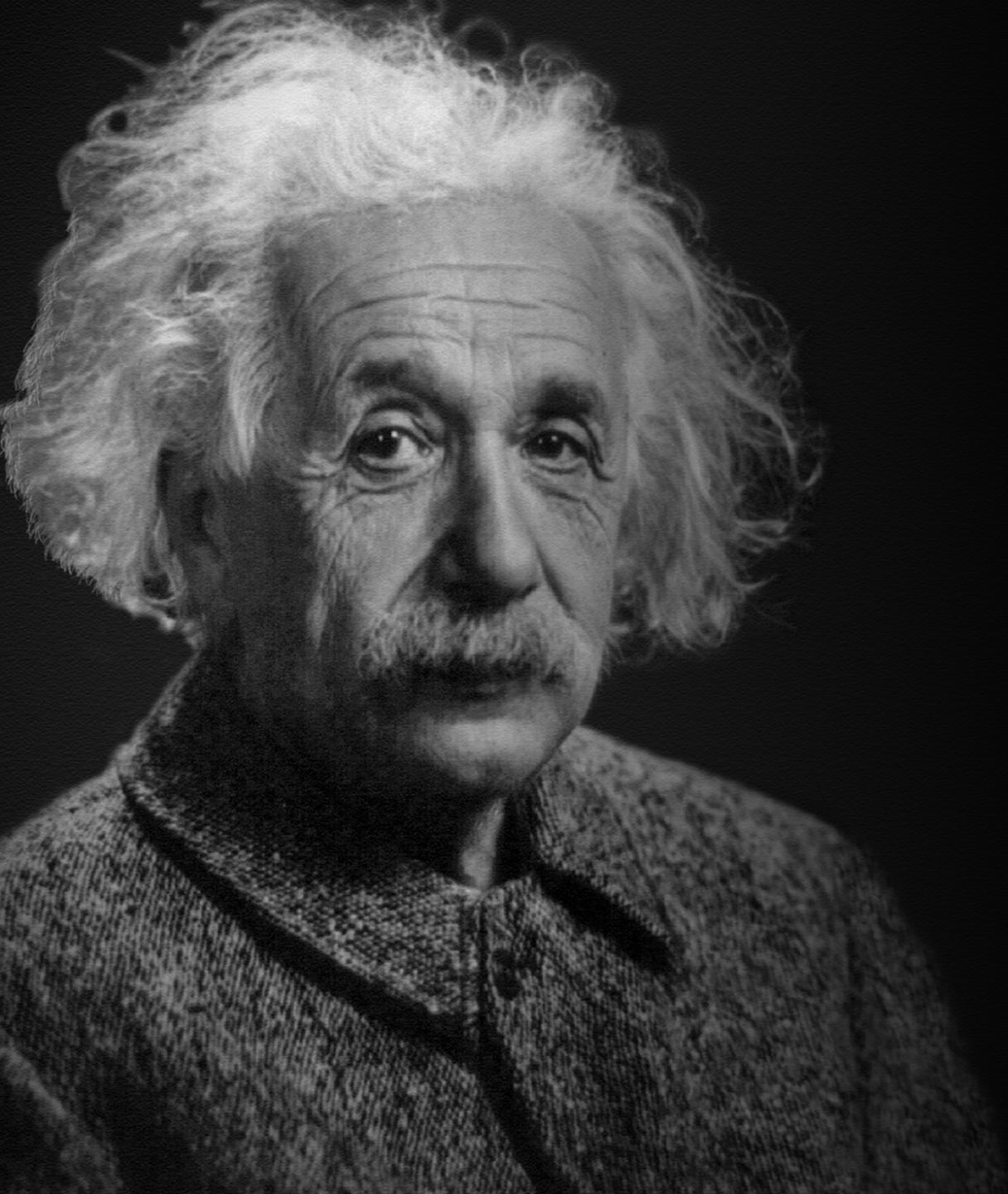


A dark, atmospheric photograph of three race drivers standing on a podium, celebrating with their arms raised. They are wearing racing suits and helmets. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the drivers' silhouettes and the texture of their suits. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Are you clear about  
what you are trying to  
achieve and does  
anybody care?

1. Focus





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Next, you must  
learn...

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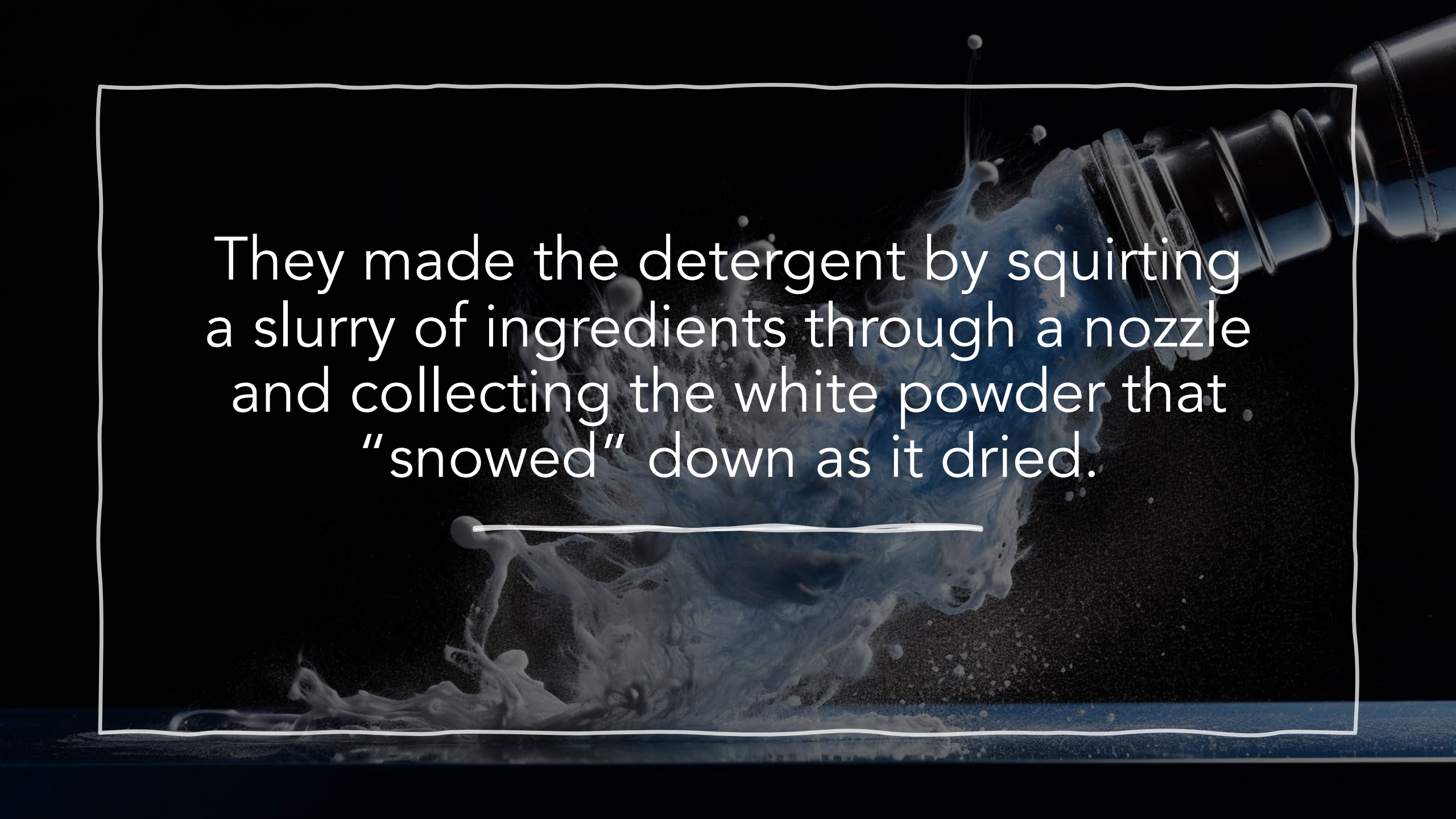
... so that you can  
improve.

In the late 1980s,  
Unilever had a  
problem.

They are the people who make  
soap powder.





A high-speed photograph of a nozzle spraying a white, foamy slurry against a black background. The spray is captured in mid-air, showing intricate patterns of foam and liquid. The nozzle is visible on the right side of the frame, angled downwards. The entire scene is framed by a white, hand-drawn border.

They made the detergent by squirting a slurry of ingredients through a nozzle and collecting the white powder that "snowed" down as it dried.






But the nozzle kept on blocking,  
making a horrible sludgy mess.





Nobody  
wants a  
sludgy  
mess.





So, the scientists at Unilever ran  
an experiment.





They made ten copies  
of the nozzle.

Each one was slightly different.

And then put  
them into  
production to see  
which produced  
the best soap  
powder.

With the least sludge.







Then, they took the  
winning nozzle and made  
ten more copies.

Again, each one was slightly different.



They put them into production to see which produced the best soap powder and the least sludge.

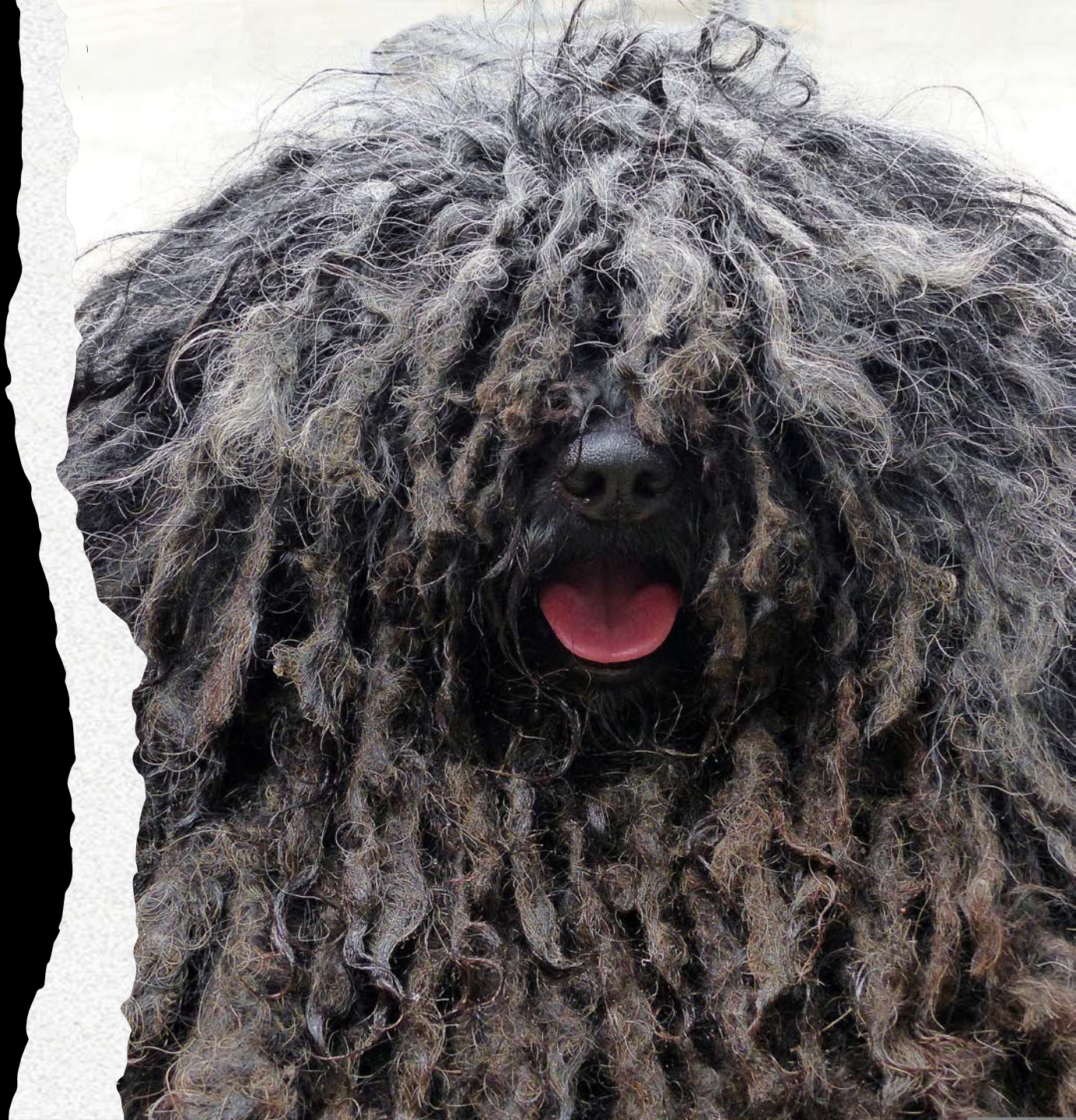




Then they took the winning nozzle and made ten copies...



This could become  
a shaggy dog  
story...







Suffice it to say they went through the process 45 times.

By the end, they had 449 failures.





But they had created  
one amazingly  
productive nozzle.






No more  
sludgy  
mess.



And the moral of the story?  
If you want to improve, you  
must test and learn.



A dark, monochromatic photograph of three race drivers standing on a podium, celebrating with their arms raised. They are wearing racing suits and helmets. The image is overlaid with white text.

That is the second  
element of a thriving  
organisation.

1. Focus
2. Learning

Accept that  
learning  
comes from  
failure.  
It is as easy  
as falling off  
a bicycle.

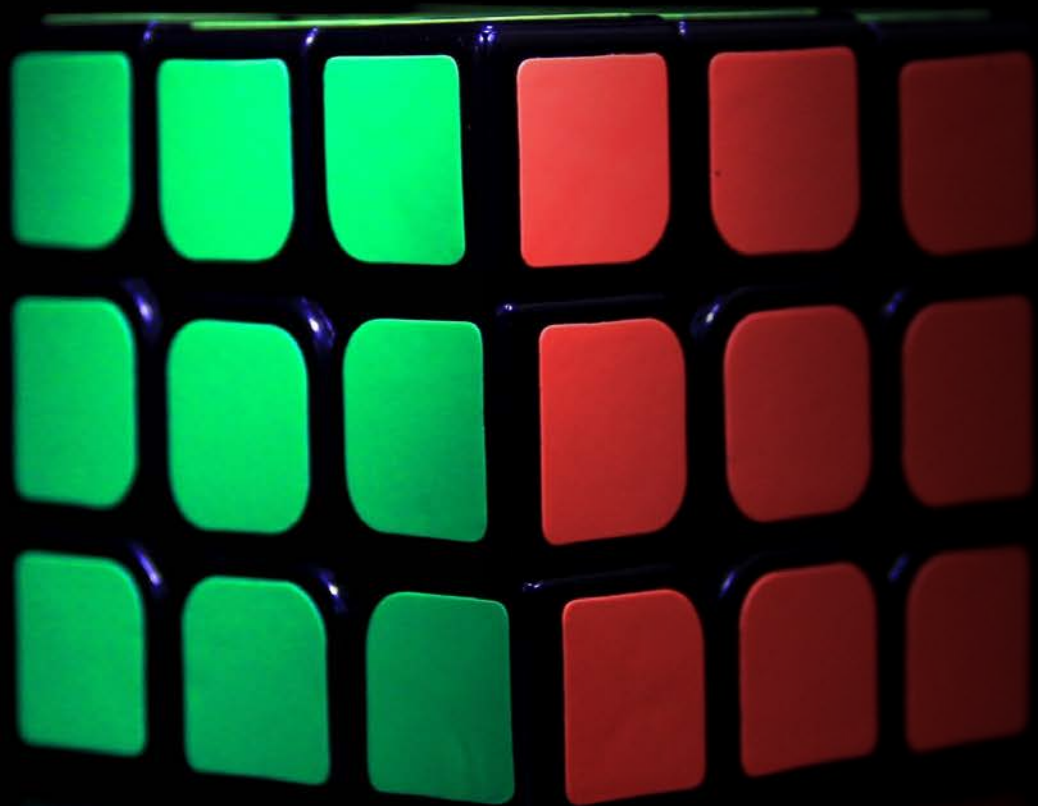






The third thing you must do...

...is to create a culture that supports learning and improvement.



Easy to say, but  
hard to do.





# Culture is multifaceted.

Here are some things to think about...



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W. Edwards Deming was  
a quality guru in the 20th century.

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He said you must drive out...



# Fear!





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If you jump up  
and down on  
your employees'  
heads every  
time they fail...

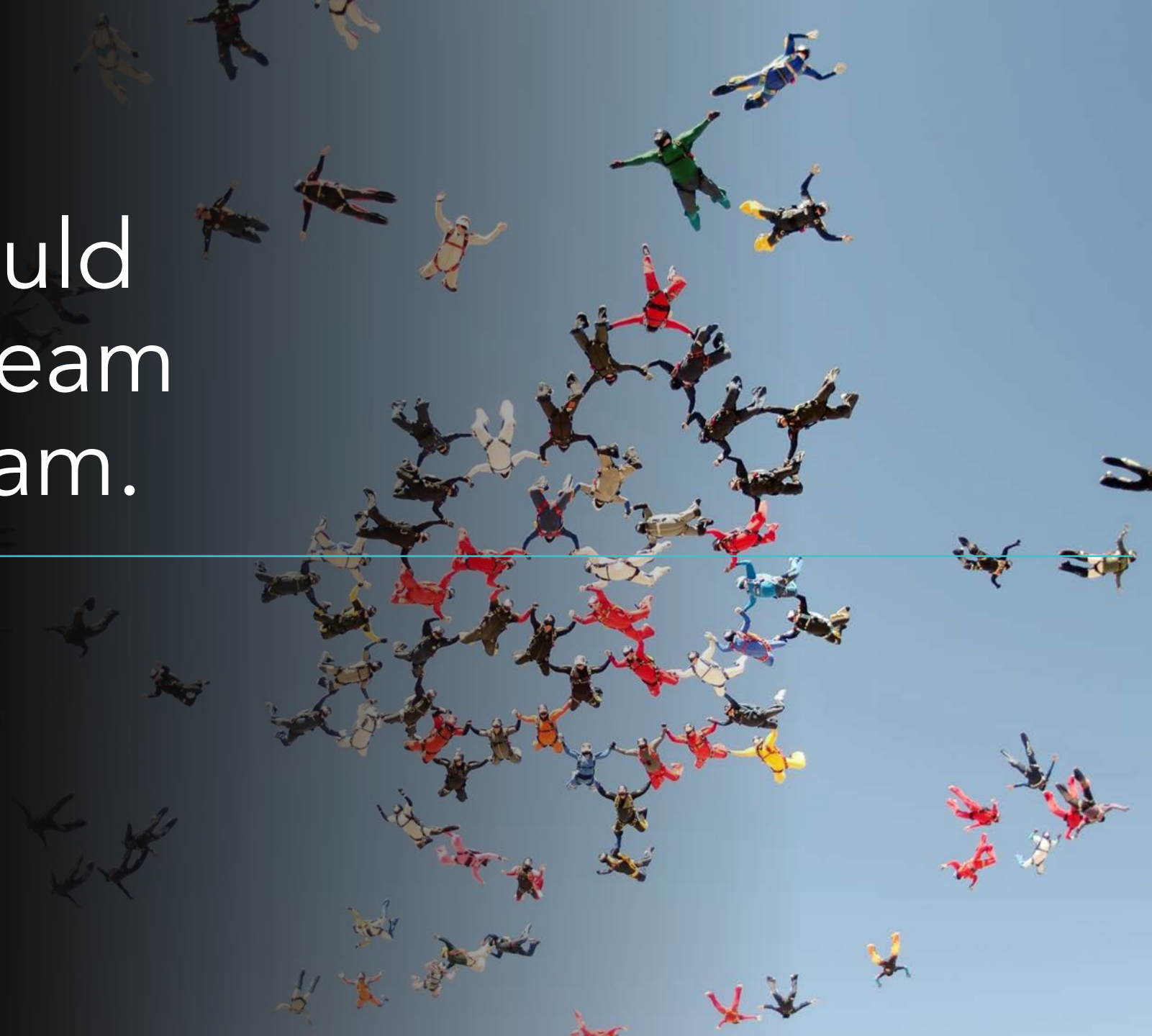




Why would they try anything new?

Next you should  
ensure your team  
works as a team.

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As the  
Australians  
say...





No shit Sherlock.





But most organisations are hell-bent on finding and rewarding their "best people".



Which does  
nothing for  
teamwork.





And less for  
motivation.





Finally, you must play  
the long game.



Short-term  
distractions  
do nothing  
for the long-  
term goal.



# Jeff Bezos told Amazon Shareholders.

*"It's all about the long-term..."*

*"If you're going to invent, it means you're going to experiment, and if you're going to experiment, it means you are going to fail, and if you're going to fail, you'll have to think long-term."*







As Peter Drucker  
said...

*"Culture eats strategy  
for breakfast"*

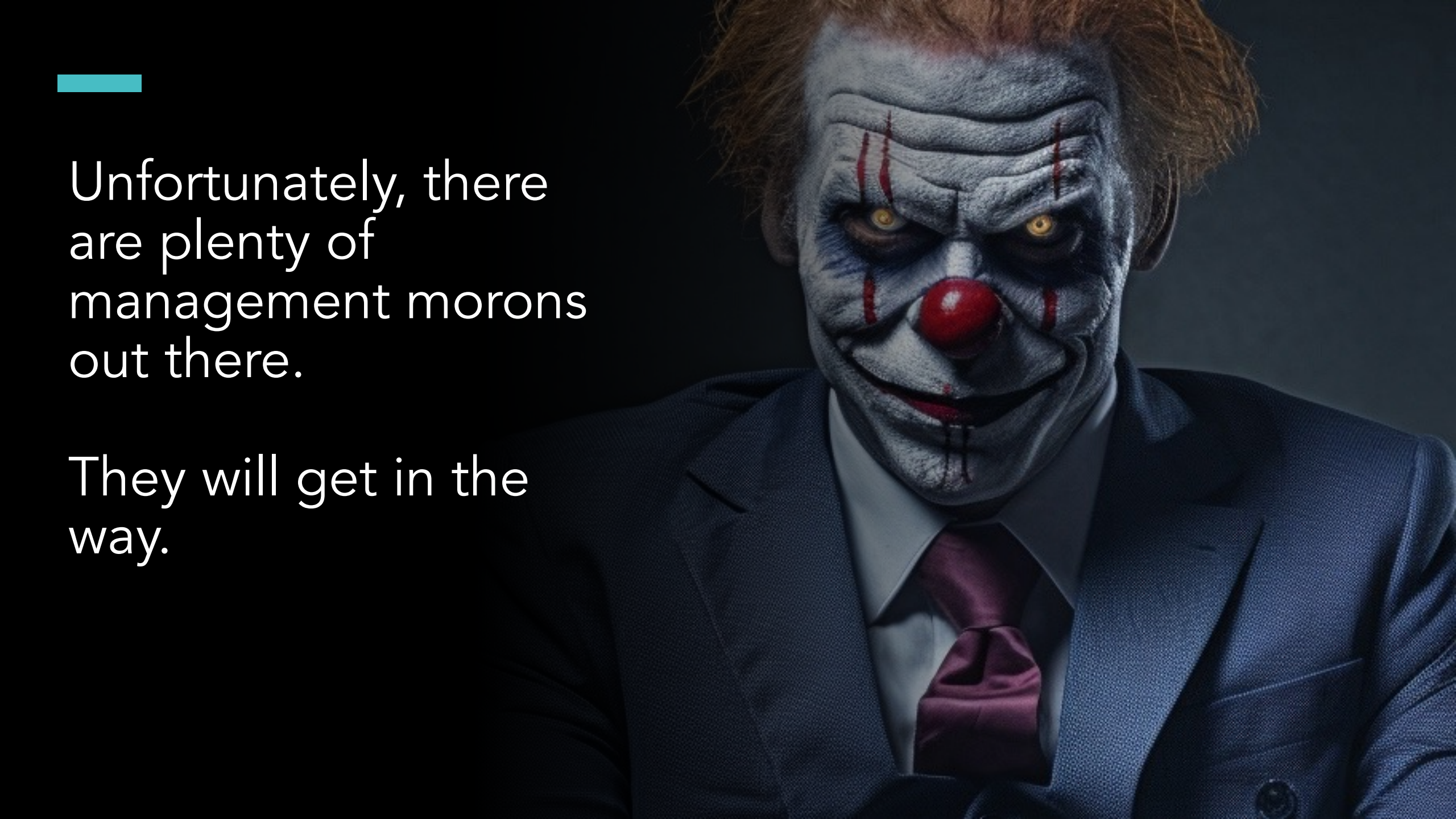


A black and white photograph of three race drivers standing on a podium, celebrating with their arms raised. They are wearing racing suits and helmets. The image is dark and serves as a background for the text.

**Building a thriving  
organisation is as  
easy as...**

1. Focus
2. Learning
3. Culture

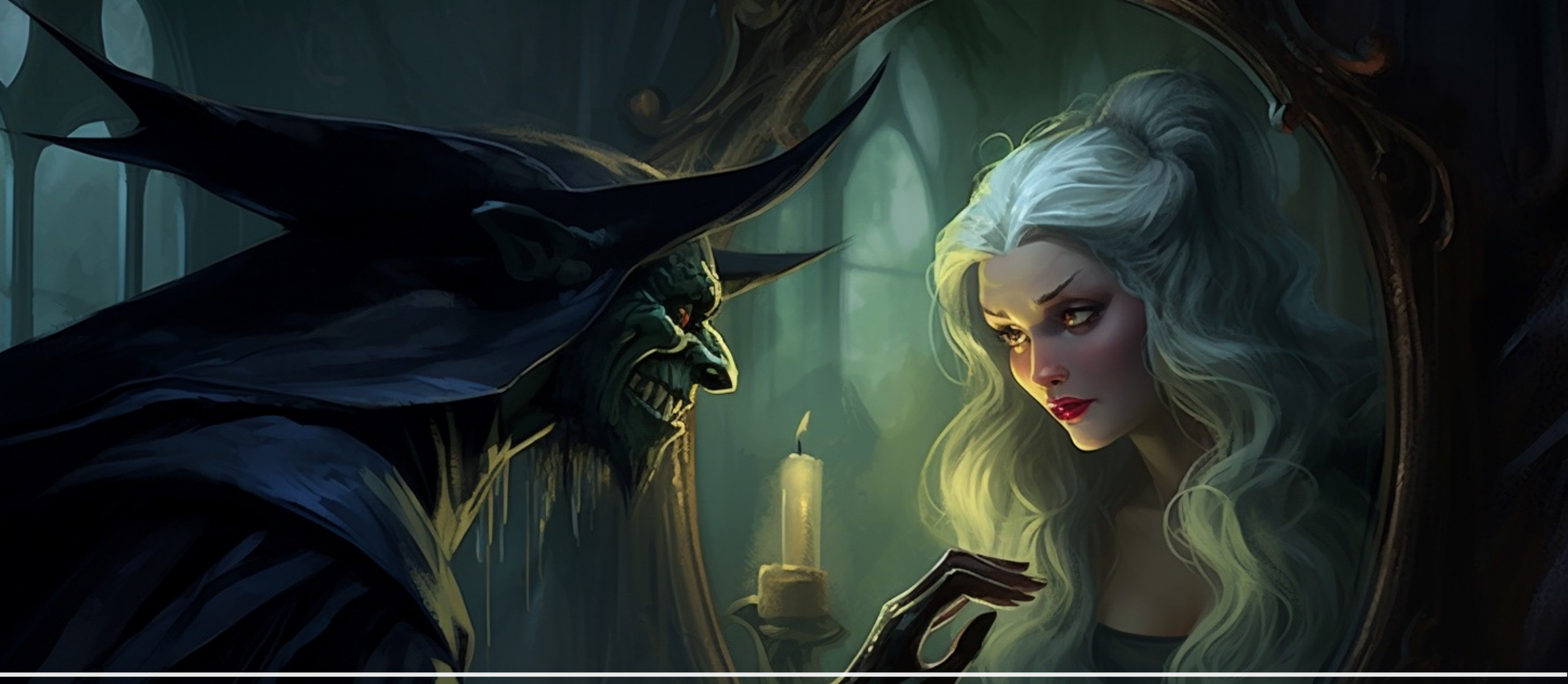




Unfortunately, there are plenty of management morons out there.

They will get in the way.





Managers who would rather look good than be good.



Managers who  
speak in riddles  
because they  
are incapable of  
being clear.





Managers who are so fixated on short-term targets that they can't see anything else.





Managers who never try  
anything new.

For fear it will go wrong.

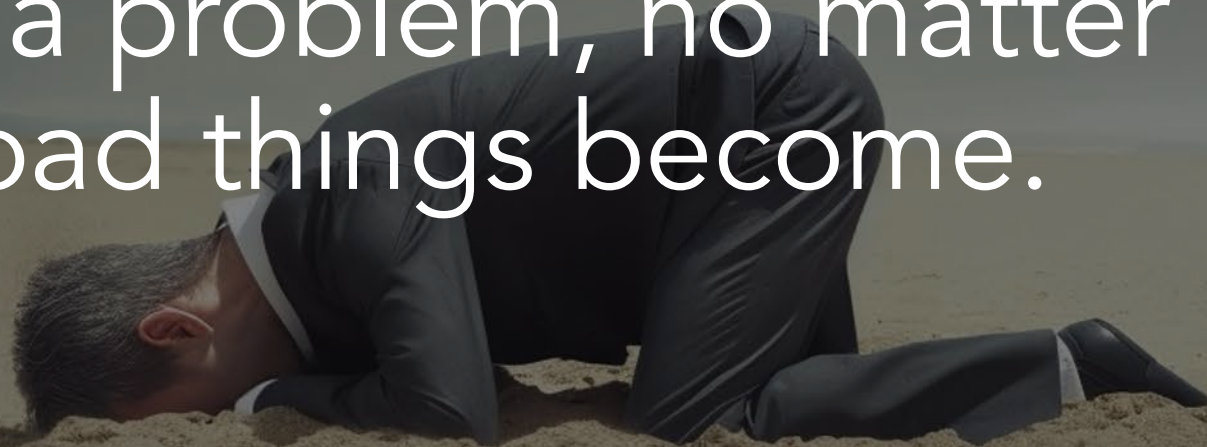


Managers who  
take delight in  
blaming others.





And managers who won't admit there is a problem, no matter how bad things become.





But you don't have to be one of them.





JAMES LAWTHER

# MANAGED BY **MORONS**

THE PATH TO A THRIVING  
ORGANISATION



Try this book to find out what it takes to build a thriving organisation.

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You might read  
something  
interesting.







And your boss might stop jumping on your head.

Unfortunately,  
there are no  
guarantees...





This book is dedicated to middle managers – the men and women who make the corporate world go around.

Scorned by their superiors as “stale”, their juniors as “thoughtless” and the public as “bureaucratic”, a middle manager’s lot is not a happy one (until they get home and can uncork a bottle). Yet they hold the keys to their organisation’s success.

At its best, management is full of fascinating challenges, enthusiastic employees, rewarding work and a sense of achievement. At its worst, it is one long battle with constant turf wars, endless repetitive discussions, pointless processes, criticism and rebukes, where the only joy is the slowly dwindling daily countdown to retirement.

If you want more of the best that management has to offer (and less of the political bitch-fest), this book is for you. It is a no-nonsense guide to organisations that will debunk some of the soul-destroying management rituals you must endure. It will also help you make your bit of the organisation thrive and allow you to take pride in a job done well.

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Available from [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)

JAMES LAWTHER

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