The Blog Pages

Verify that you are, in fact, human?

- [A Life's Work](#)
- [Developers and Middlemen](#)
- [Natural Disaster](#)
- [The EU vs AI](#)
- [Something Different: Linkin Park](#)

A Life's Work

I do hate apple.

But sometimes I find myself liking them in spite of my dislike. The hardware issues aside:

> " There's work and there's your life's work.
>
> The kind of work that has your fingerprints all over it. The kind of work that you'd never compromise on. That you'd sacrifice a weekend for. You can do that kind of work at Apple. People don't come here to play it safe. They come here to swim in the deep end.
>
> They want their work to add up to something.
>
> Something big. Something that couldn't happen anywhere else.
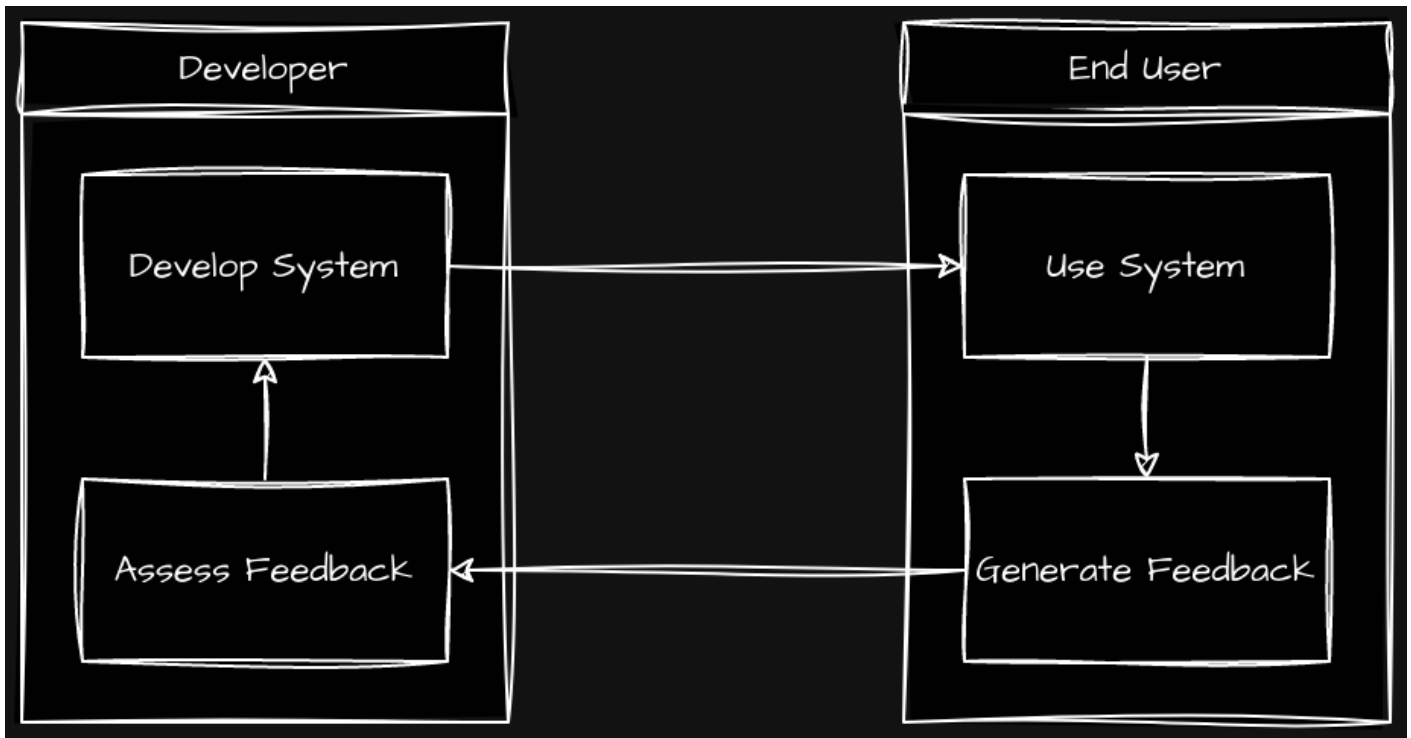>
> Welcome to Apple.

This is, allegedly, the message apple employees receive on joining the company. Aside from the blatant corporate obnoxiousness of "sacrificing a weekend", I quite like the idea.

I want my work to add up to something big. I just don't know where.

Developers and Middlemen

I get frustrated with development at times.

This is the simple development loop:

This is rarely the way it works in reality, though I feel people would be surprised exactly what a one-person dev team can pull off. Just look at Stardew Valley.

This model above is ideal for startups, though as things get more corporate, we start to see things complicate somewhat:
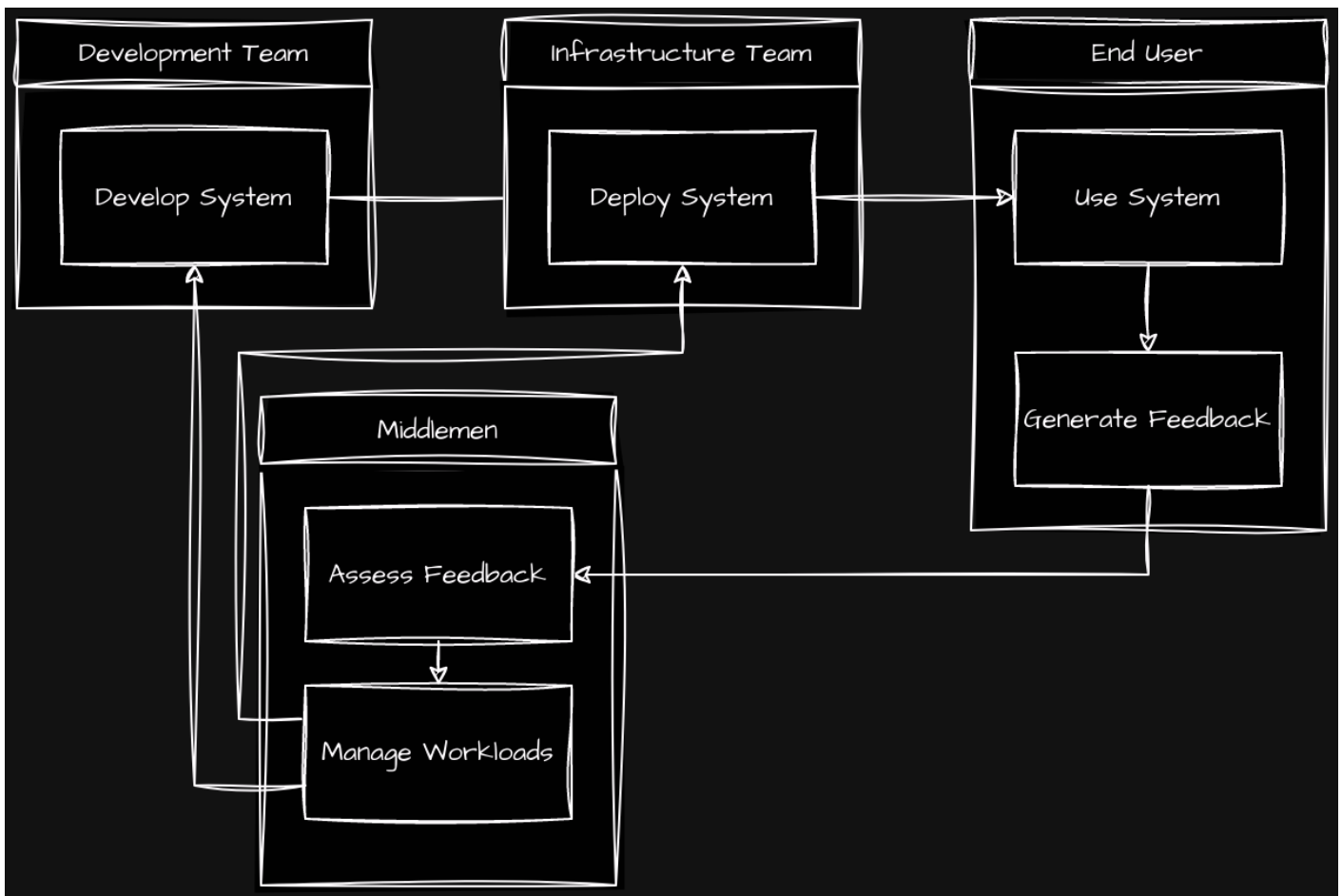
To specify, this is not at all bad. This frees up developers to be developers without forcing them to be "DevOps", allows the infrastructure team to run infrastructure without being forced to develop code, and pushes dealing with end users out to people who are not qualified to do the first two.

This is a good system, where everyone gets to do what they want.

The problem we face is a very human problem. People want jobs. People know that technology jobs pay highly, and want to get into technology jobs despite perhaps not having the best technical ability. Or any technical ability at all. We end up with the bloat of the middleman.

As Malcolm Reynolds said, "Eliminating the middleman is never as simple as it sounds. [...] 'Bout 50% of the human race is middlemen, and they don't take kindly to being eliminated."

This is what we end up with:
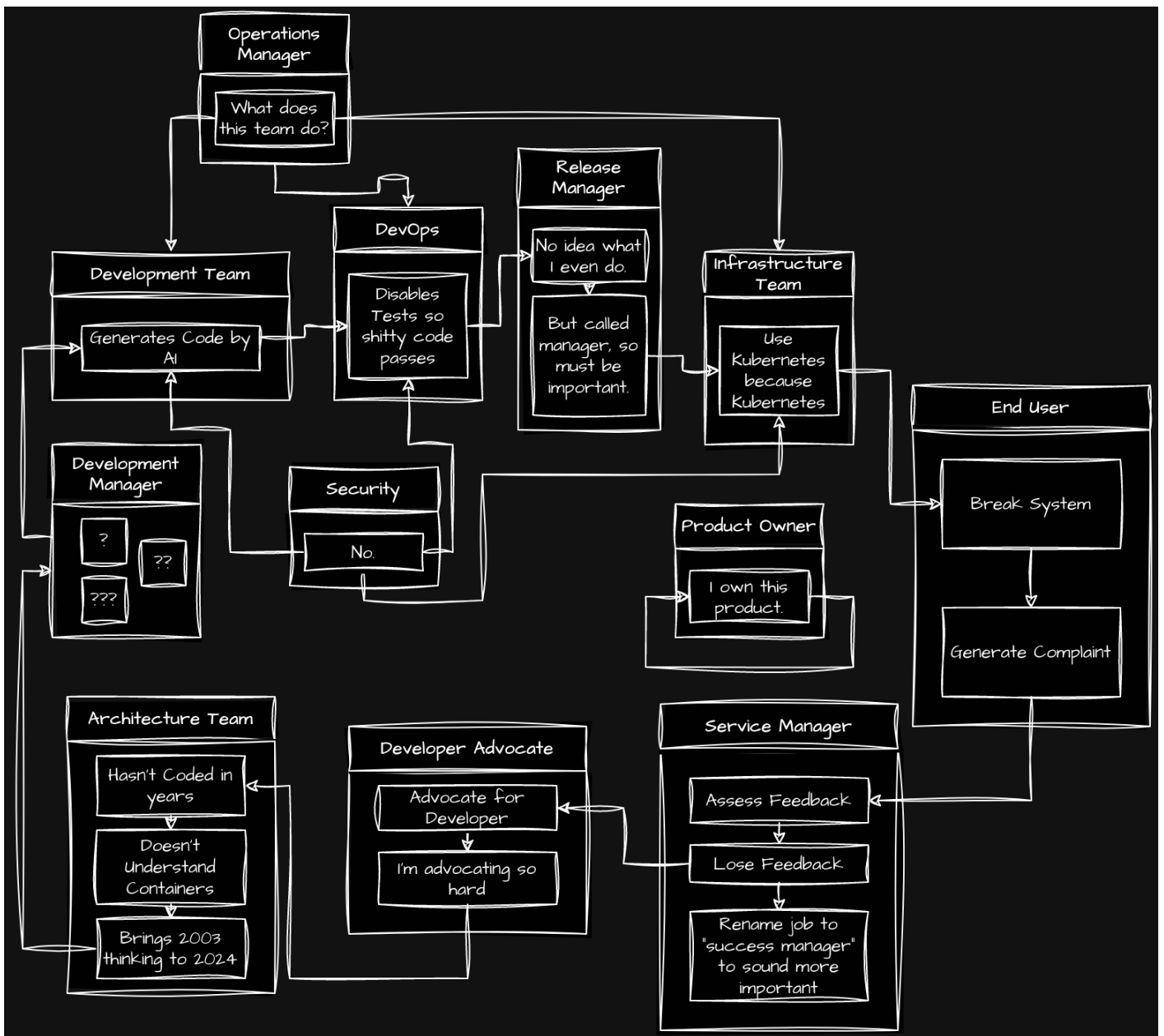
Corporate bloat gone insane. People inventing jobs for themselves because they want the high paying tech position without any of the understanding, education, interest, etc.

You can identify one of these people when you get into meetings with them due to their tendency to use many words to say nothing at all. Uncomfortable silence rattles their little brains and forces their mouths to work. Expect no wisdom from them, expect no value to be added by them, disregard and ignore where applicable, remove where possible.

But hey, the whole field of HR was invented by useless people who wanted a comfortable office job for themselves while lacking any skills, why shouldn't tech be bloated with that too.

Natural Disaster

In response to a random forum post, with people questioning my train of thought.

I do enjoy being referred to as if I'm some sort of naturally occurring catastrophe.

"Effex happened."

Train of thought insinuates that there's some continuity in my mental process.

The EU vs AI

We keep seeing the massive tech companies complain about the EU actually attempting to maintain some form of control on AI development. I think we can all agree that their steps are not ideal, but the fact they are being *made* is the important matter.

Meta suggesting that their new LLaMa models will not be available in the EU, and now Apple saying that their new AI-based features will not be available in the EU. I'm sure ol Musky has weighed in on it somewhere too but I won't insult my own intelligence by searching for it.

On the surface, they're fair comments. But if you dig a little deeper (and I mean literally do more than scratch the surface and subscribe to clickbait) you may be able to see where the EU is coming from. The following are the corner stones of the EU's AI Act:

> " Unacceptable risk is prohibited (e.g. social scoring systems and manipulative AI).
>
> Most of the text addresses high-risk AI systems, which are regulated.
>
> A smaller section handles limited risk AI systems, subject to lighter transparency obligations: developers and deployers must ensure that end-users are aware that they are interacting with AI (chatbots and deepfakes).
>
> Minimal risk is unregulated (including the majority of AI applications currently available on the EU single market, such as AI enabled video games and spam filters – at least in 2021; this is changing with generative AI).>

None of these things actually sound that bad. Yes, there are some hoops to jump through, but they exist for a reason.

The big tech companies want, the thing that the big tech companies have *always* wanted, is your data. Absolutely all of it. And AI has given them the biggest excuse to make their largest grab for it in their history. Desktop integrations that stream **everything you do** with your computer to their AI algorithms to build your profile and make selling your data more profitable. These things sound horrifying to me, and if they don't horrify you then you may wish to [consider](#) [digging](#) [deeper](#) into the subject.

However, I know people won't. Many people have already become reliant upon AI. I've certainly used it to enhance my workflow, using it to aid in scripting and to generate documentation for the more boring parts of my work. And we certainly need to be able to use this innovation in the future of the EU.

But allowing AI innovation to continue at the pace it has with no controls is going to be disastrous. AI is already [contributing to job losses](), something which (as per [takeaway 4 of this summary document]() the EU AI act is attempting to restrict.

It will be interesting to see what happens to these people when management realises how much of their job can be replaced by the AI they're so desperate to see unrestricted. Or what happens the next time there's a major security breach and their desktop streaming data is compromisedon top of everything else.

So maybe **my** takeaway from this will be singular:

> " "Those clamouring for unrestricted AI have no right to cry when they're fired because of it." - DNR

Something Different: Linkin Park

You'd be forgiven, if you read this blog, for thinking that I'm solely a tech blogger, who does nothing else with his life. And sadly, you'd probably be accurate in that assumption. But I do on occasion do other things. I sometimes flatter myself to be a musician, and play at least one instrument. Music is, after all, not difficult (at least the way **I** play it.)

As someone who spent their formative teen years in the early 2000s, emo nu-metal was a considerably large part of it, a fact that has somehow translated into adulthood (though my musical tastes have grown somewhat more eclectic since then.) Chief amongst these groups was Linkin Park.

Over the past few days, [Linkin Park has been embroiled in controversy](#) over their decision to reform 7 years after the suicide of their lead singer, Chester Bennington. This has been largely led by Chester's son, Jamie.

At first I wanted to dismiss it as the chauvinistic rantings of a typically male-dominated audience when faced with a replacement by a female singer. Personally, having heard Emily Armstrong sing the newest song, I was convinced.

But there were four aspects of this controversy I wanted to write more on.

One: The decision to reform.

We have an irksome trait as music fans to idolize singers above all. Most of you could tell me the name of the singer of your favourite band. How many more can name the lead guitarist? The bassist? The drummer? A fraction reducing at every step.

Linkin Park has always been the project of Mike Shinoda, the rapper and backup vocalist of the group. Mike Shinoda, as I understand, was co-writing the lyrics alongside Chester Bennington. As [one Reddit post puts it](#): " The gist of it is if Mike sang it, Mike wrote it. If Chester sang it, Mike still might have written it. "

This speaks of nothing musically. I don't know if Chester Bennington played an instrument or contributed musically to the group. There were 6 members of the band throughout most of their history. These are professional musicians who have every right to continue the work they had been doing before the suicide of Chester Bennington.

The expectation that Linkin Park would die along with their lead singer is a trivialization of the life's work of 5 people.

Two: Emily Armstrong and her ties to Scientology

Emily Armstrong is a scientologist. Maybe. Unless she isn't. No one is really clear on the matter, because she has neither acknowledged nor denied it.

What we know is that she's a second generation scientologist, if at all. She was born into it. Like [another Reddit thread on the subject suggests](#) leaving a cult is one of the hardest things you can do. Doing so when indoctrination has started as a child is likely even harder.

For years, Emily Armstrong has operated as the lead singer of a relatively obscure hard rock band. Fear of reprisal could likely have swayed her opinion not to openly speak out against an extremely manipulative group such as scientologists. From the same Reddit thread:

> " Former members that have dared to go against the organization and speak out have been kidnapped, abused, tortured, withheld food and water to the point of starvation, and ultimately killed.

Themes of the new song "The Emptiness Machine" certainly suggest she's left scientology behind, alongside other music she has written which talks on similar subjects.

We probably shouldn't condemn someone for brainwashing they were subjected to as a child.

Three: Emily Armstrong and her ties to Danny Masterson

Danny Masterson is one of those awkward topics. Convicted for rape and serving 30 years to life in prison, he received an outpouring of support from people who worked with him, people who wrote letters to the judge to ask for leniency, to support Masterson's "good character". Based on the sentence, they don't seem to have worked.

Dozens people wrote in support of Masterson, Armstrong among them. Others include essentially everyone Masterson worked with on the Ranch and That 70's show, most of whom have faced some sort of repercussions due to their actions.

The matter is... interesting.

Ted Bundy, for example, was a master manipulator. He was handsome, charming and generous. He volunteered for the samaritans. Everyone who believed he was good and kind was manipulated into that belief. We don't blame these people. We blame Ted Bundy.

But for some reason, we don't allow celebrities to be people. We have put them up on pedestals and make no allowances for them to be human, that something as simple as manipulation could happen to them. They should be able to see through all facade, all deceit, all attempts at subterfuge.

And if they don't, they are the only victims that it is okay to blame: those whom we have elevated who were not able to see through the manipulations of a person who managed to get so many people to vouch for him

Bad celebrities. How dare you fail at omniscience.

Four: The Legacy of Chester Bennington

This is one of the sticking points. And maybe something I shouldn't be putting into writing. Jamie Bennington has accused Mike Shinoda of trying to erase his father's, Chester Bennington, legacy. This is absurd on so many levels: They haven't deleted any old songs, they're not ignoring Chester Bennington's existence. They're simply moving on, something Jamie is clearly (and understandably) unable to do.

But it allows me to open up my feelings on suicide: I think we, as a community on the internet, glamourize it.

Sound Garden, for example, had fallen into complete obscurity before the suicide of Chris Cornell in 2017. Now it feels like every other time I get into the car I hear Black Hole Sun on the radio. The same can be said for Linkin Park. And if we want to go further back, here is a comment thread from 1994 about Kurt Cobain's death. I don't know if Nirvana were unknown before Kurt Cobain's decision, but his dramatic exit certainly rocketed them to new heights as people lamented music he'd never get to write.

This glamourization of suicide may have contributed to (what I at least interpet as) a general upward trend in suicide rates, though I'm sure it's a much more complex issue.

Instead I want to talk about one matter. The legacy of Chester Bennington and the only person responsible for destroying it: Chester Bennington himself.

I have complicated thoughts about suicide and how we should treat those who lose their battles. Every effort should be made to help them, but those who fail should not be glamourized. They shouldn't be celebrated. In my opinion, they should have their names stripped from public works and attributed to a John/Jane Doe character.

People should not be rewarded for leaving behind children who, like Jamie Bennington, spiral out of control wondering why they weren't enough to keep their parent around. There should be no praise for a person who elects to exit in such a way that they blow apart the lives of those around them.

Suicide causes people to leave gaping holes in their wake, holes that can never be filled as parents grieve for children, children grieve for parents, lovers ache for those they couldn't reach and siblings weep for those they couldn't save.

To commit suicide is to disregard the damage you will do to all of the people who have ever loved you, who continue to love you, and will continue to feel the loss long after you've opted out.

It is the ultimate act of selfishness. And it should not be rewarded in the way that it is.