

“Advice and the Portfolio SRO”

A personal view

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Complex Weapons Program Senior Responsible Owner

Overview of 'WECA' responsibilities

- Government Major Project (GMPP) SRO
 - ~£16Bn, ~£1Bn p.a. capital and services expenditure
 - Technology, safety, environmental considerations
 - Operating on 2 World Heritage Sites, >50 SSSIs
 - Sensitive Economic Area / Skills / Industry impacts
- Very diverse stakeholders
 - Significant SME & Major Prime contractor engagement
 - Numerous International dependencies
 - Geographically dispersed - St Kilda to Washington DC
- Only one of 7 SRO Major Portfolio key risks is technical
 - (and that one **is** about rocket science...!!.)

The CWP is no different to any GMPP activity

A personal view to promote debate

- Based on being a Portfolio Capability SRO
 - Not a Project Manager
- And (I hope!) an expert ‘customer’ of advice:
 - Commissioning
 - Engaging and shaping
 - Interpreting
 - Actioning
- Success is about everyone seeing it from the other side
 - “If only I knew that before”
 - “I might try that next time”
 - “So that’s what you mean”

A personal view, from a specific SRO viewpoint

Projects and Portfolios

- Many different definitions, but...
- Projects live in a defined input / defined output world
 - Project Managers minimize externalities
 - Constants are, Variables must be managed
- Portfolios live in a complex, moving world
 - The key is maximizing overall benefit
 - Constants aren't, Variables are not predictable
- Uncertainty is a fact
 - Advice must embrace uncertainty in input, assumptions, tools & methods and value

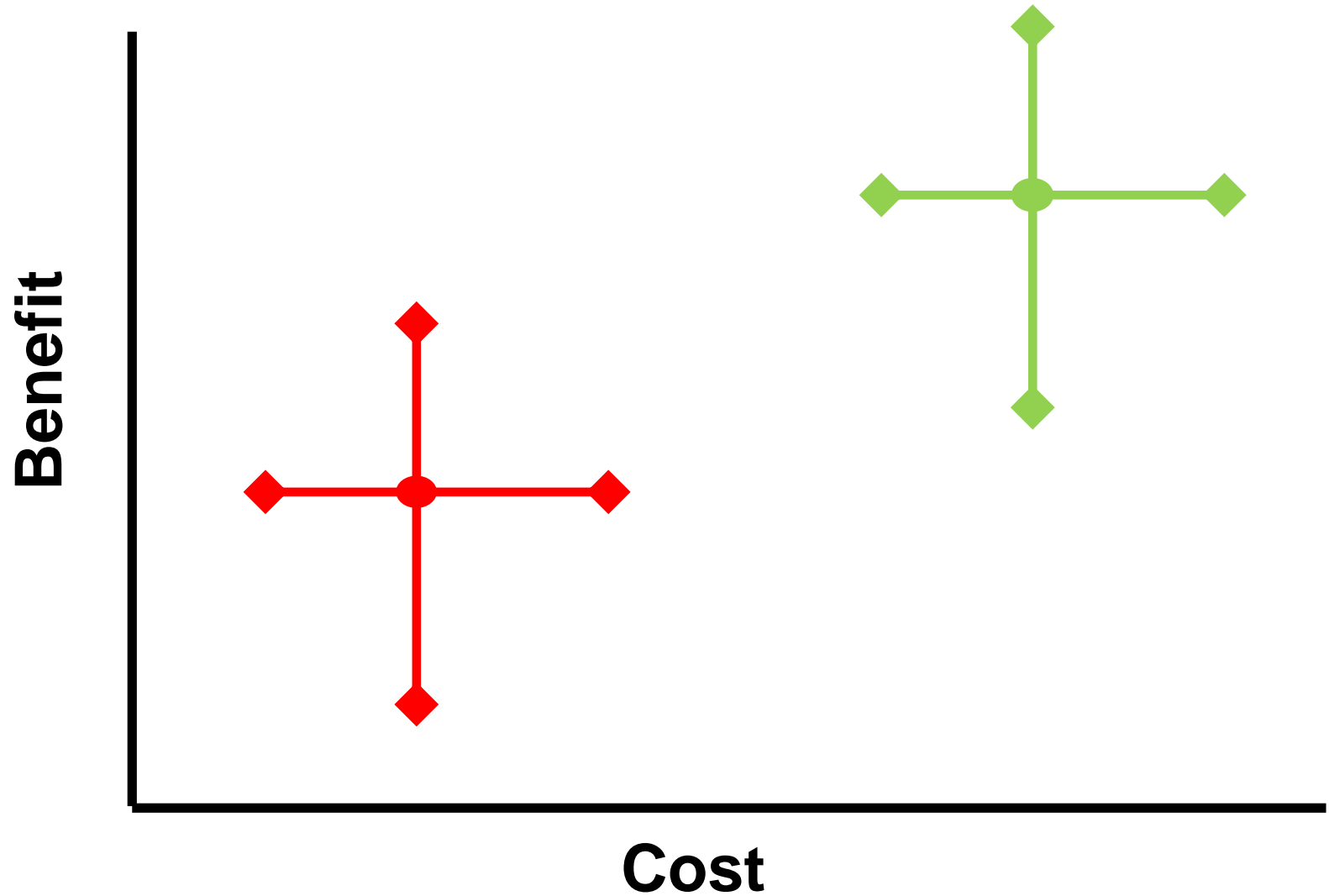
Absolute advice will be treated with suspicion

A Good Member of the Portfolio Community

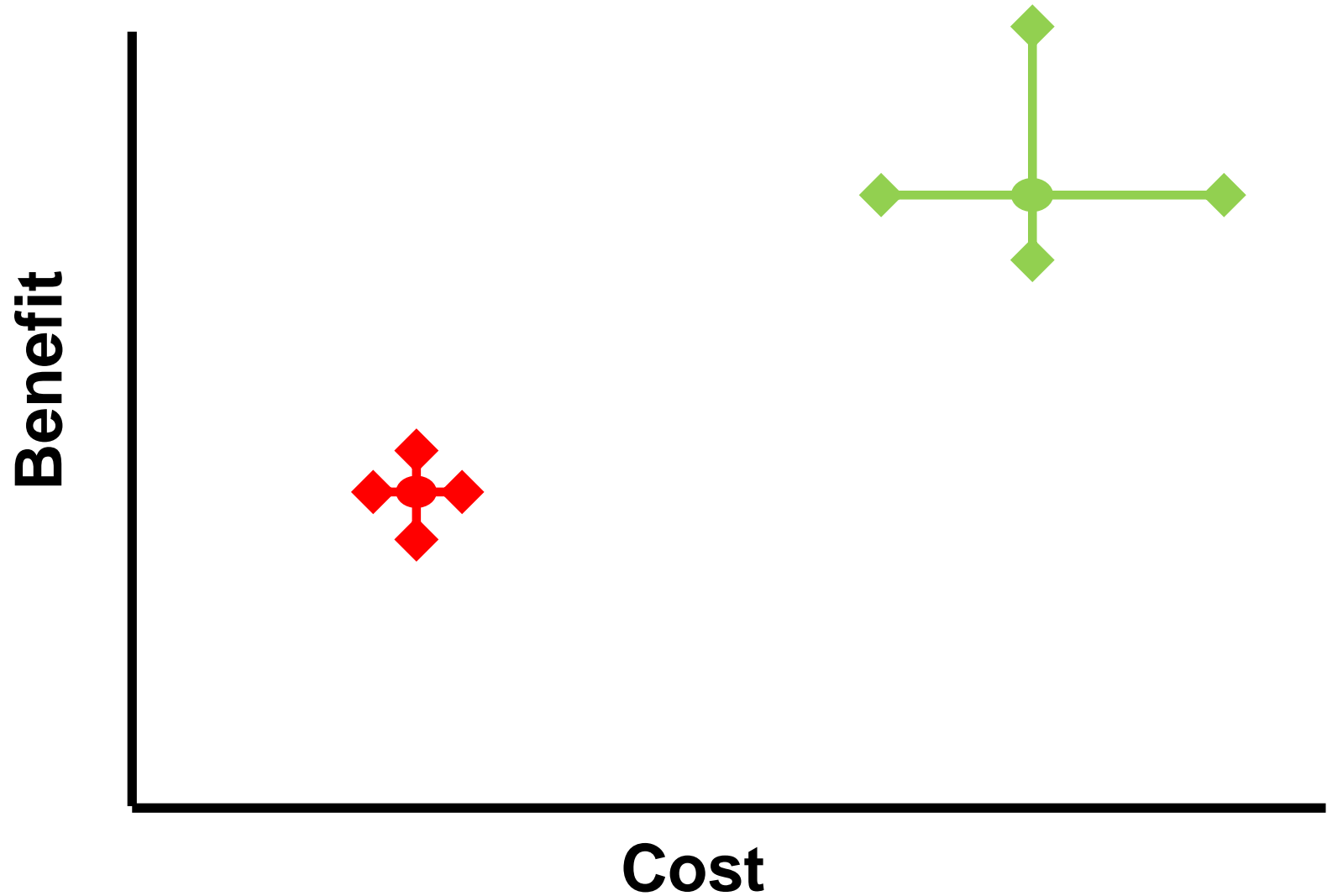
- We live in a resource constrained world
 - Everyone can find good things to do, which pass the Benefit / Value for Money test
- The key is maximizing benefit overall to the portfolio
 - The top few % of ideas which should get funded
- It is essential to reward donors as well as achievers
 - A PM who agrees to not do something so others can get more resource is at least as important to success
 - Enabled by a clear coherent vision, and an appropriate reward culture
- The Portfolio Community should be 'self organising'

Advice must reflect value of actions and inaction

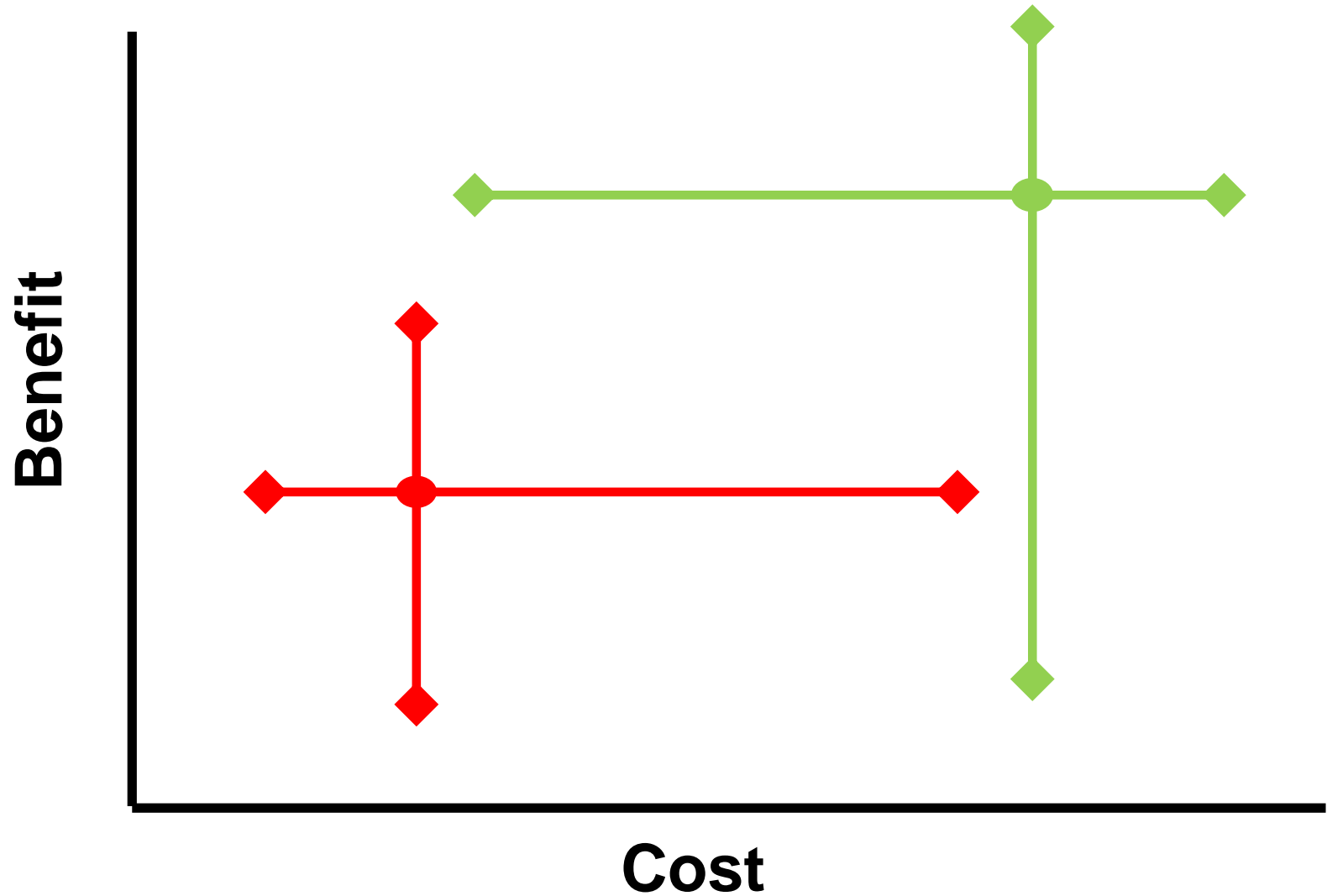
Some Simple Benefit – Cost plots



Some Simple Benefit – Cost plots



Some Simple Benefit – Cost plots



Don't forget the non-equipment dimension

A CRYPTO NERD'S
IMAGINATION:

HIS LAPTOP'S ENCRYPTED.
LET'S BUILD A MILLION-DOLLAR
CLUSTER TO CRACK IT.

NO GOOD! IT'S
4096-BIT RSA!

BLAST! OUR
EVIL PLAN
IS FOILED!



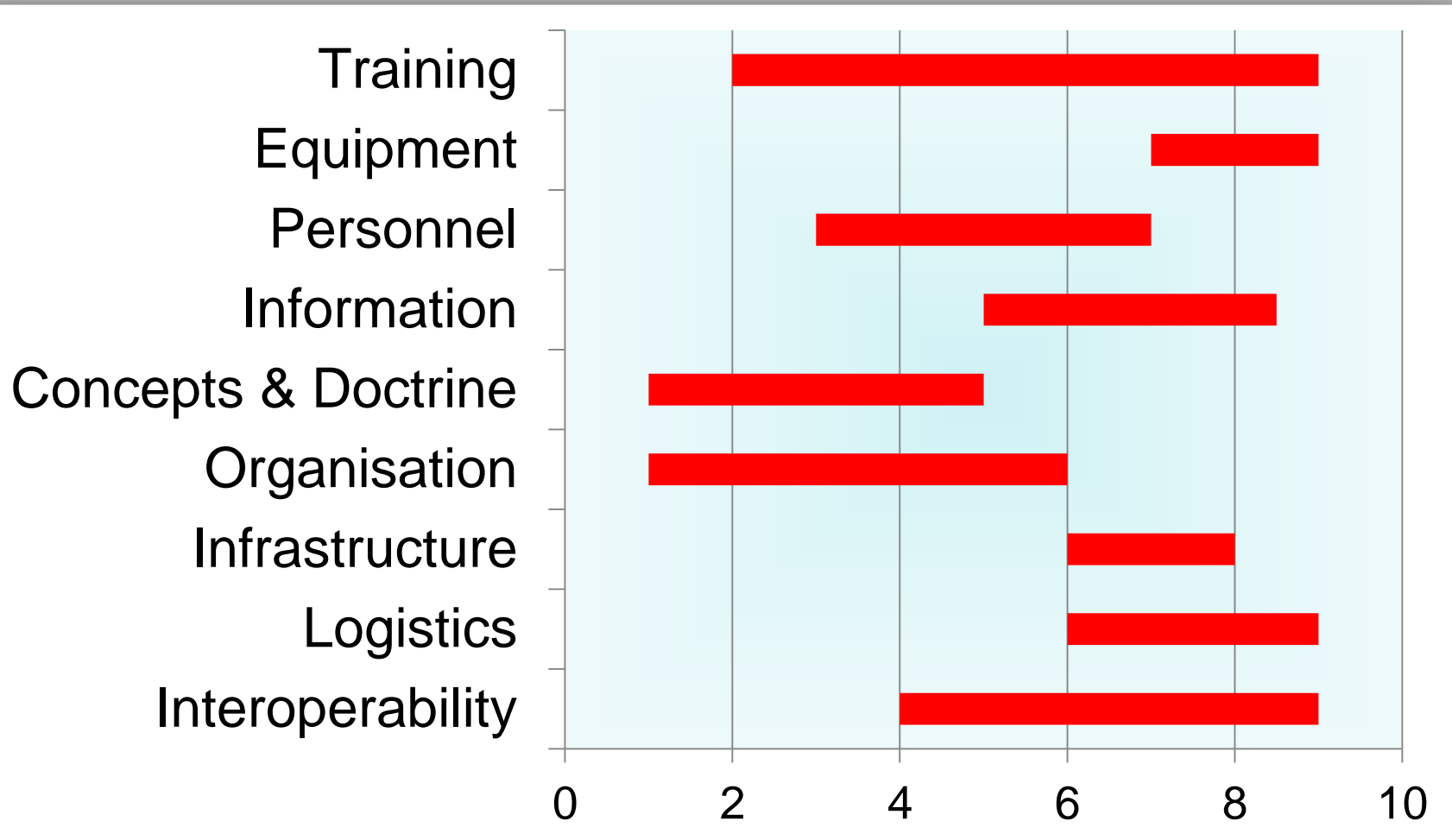
WHAT WOULD
ACTUALLY HAPPEN:

HIS LAPTOP'S ENCRYPTED.
DRUG HIM AND HIT HIM WITH
THIS \$5 WRENCH UNTIL
HE TELLS US THE PASSWORD.

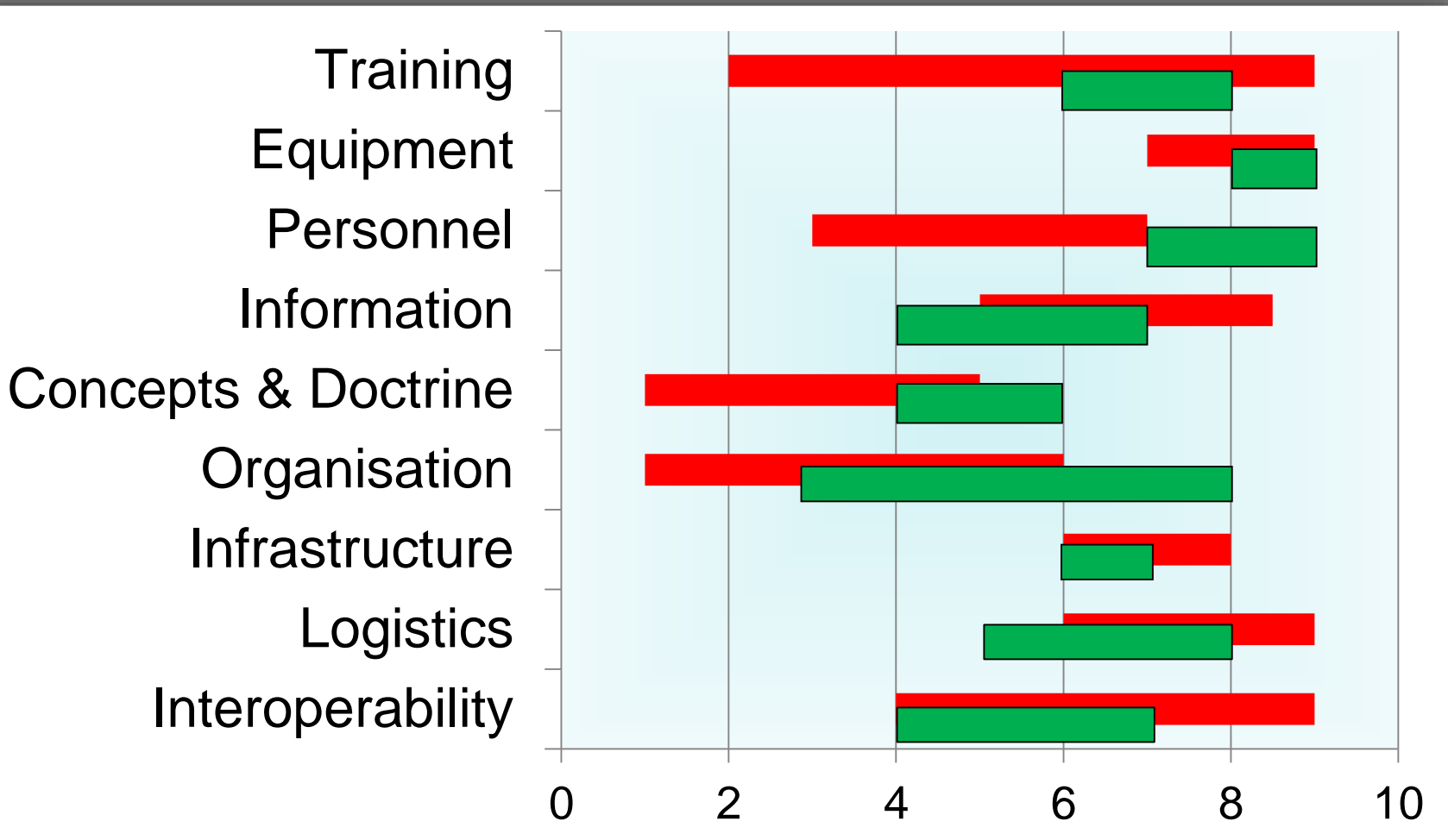
GOT IT.



How Good are we at modelling DLoDS?



ITEA Audience Response

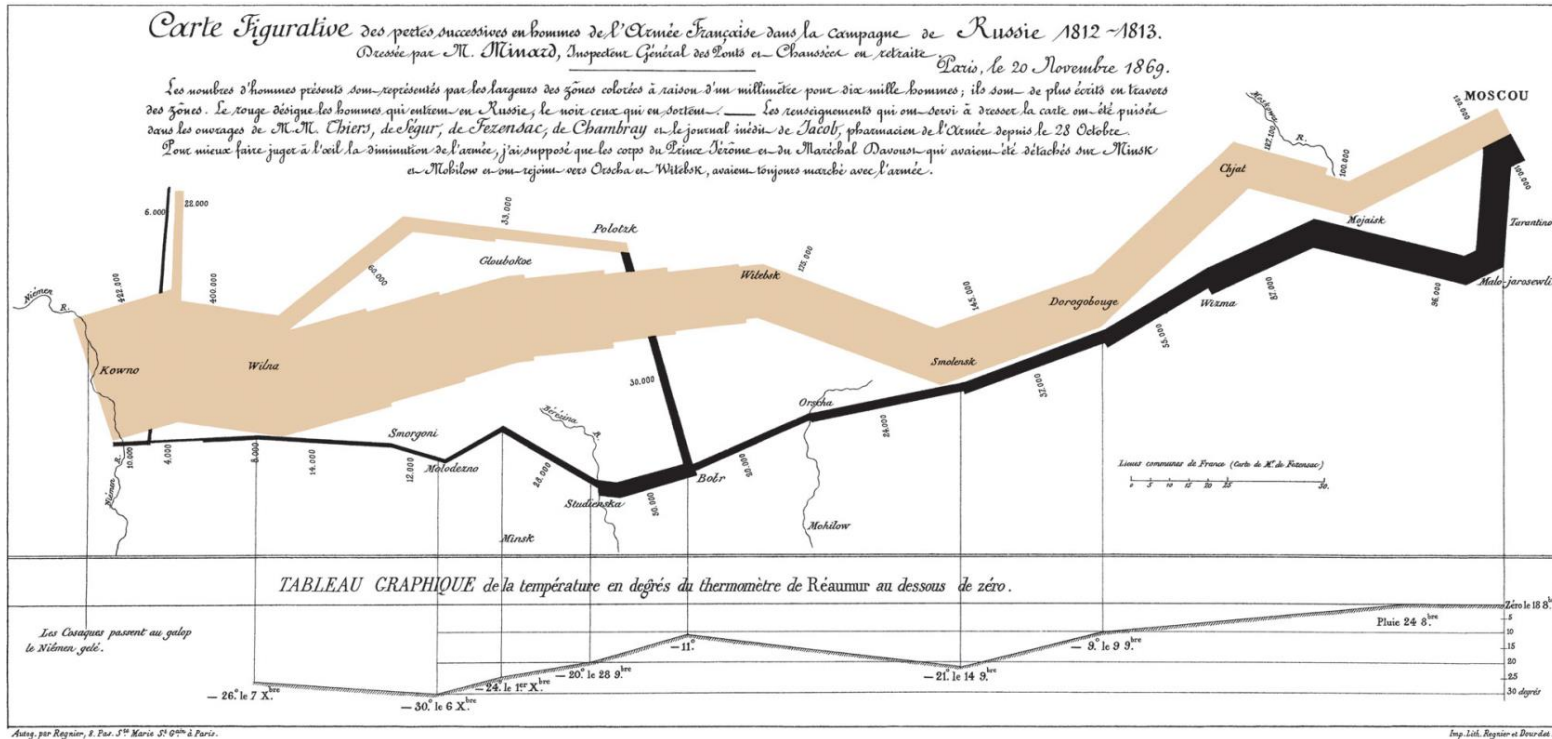


Assessing pan-DLoD / Through Life

- Everyone knows equipment performance is not all
- but....
 - Through Life Support assumptions dominate
 - Red Force Capabilities emerge and develop
 - Operational Context changes (sometimes rapidly)
 - ‘Survival of the unfittest’ is a real problem
- How good are we on advising pan DLoD trades?
- Does the high level PEST-like analysis percolate down?
- How demanding *is* the SRO on this issue

Capability Advice must be pan-DLoD, through life

Provide understanding not data



Edward Tufte: "The Visual Display of Quantitative Information"

- SROs are simple people (remember the '3 year rule')
- Understand the Decision Space
 - Requires joint, close working – and iron analytical will!

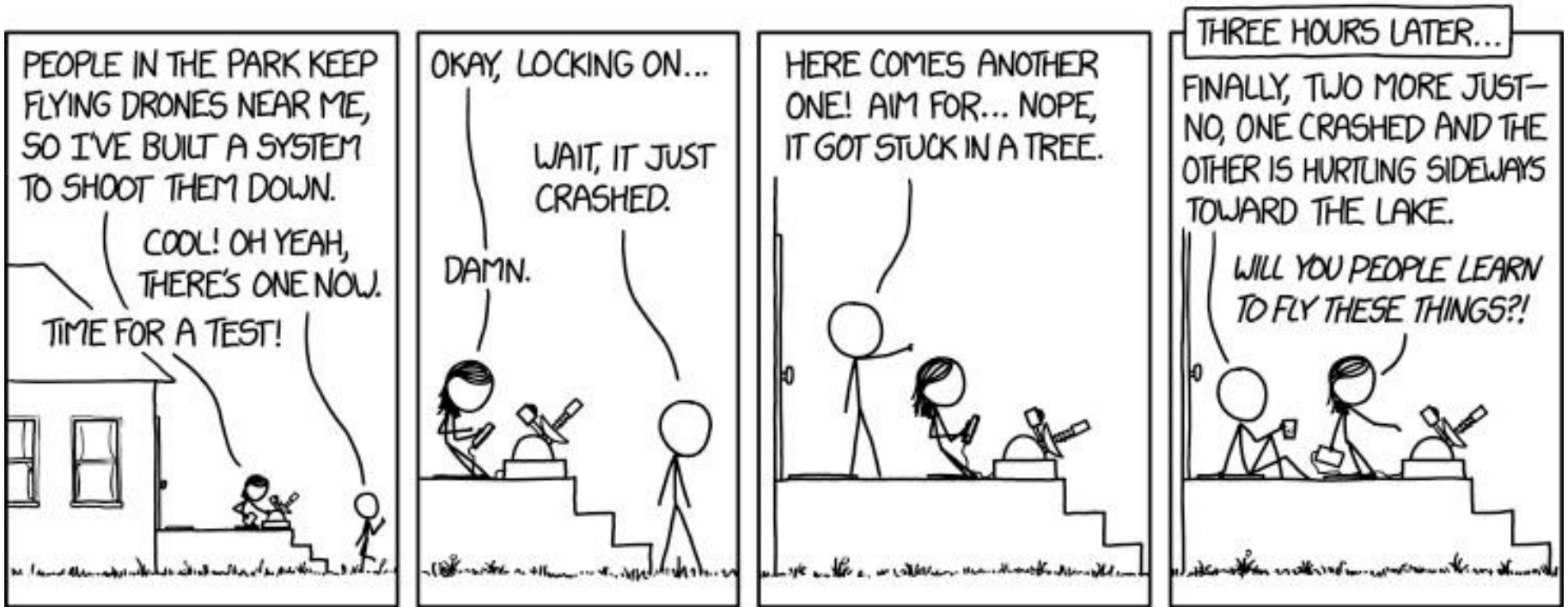
Communication is everything – focus on the few keys

Surface Bad News Early

- Everyone says this but....
 - Leadership tone and behaviors are key
 - Punishing the messenger is a quick path to disaster
- You must value honesty over the potential wreckage
 - But competence also must be valued
- The 'Umbrella model'
 - The leadership shelter the teams from the rain..
 - They get wet, to allow others to do their job
- But you only 'enjoy the umbrella' if you are a good member of the portfolio community.....

The Leader is an umbrella, not just a figurehead

Take a realistic view of the threat



XKCD.com

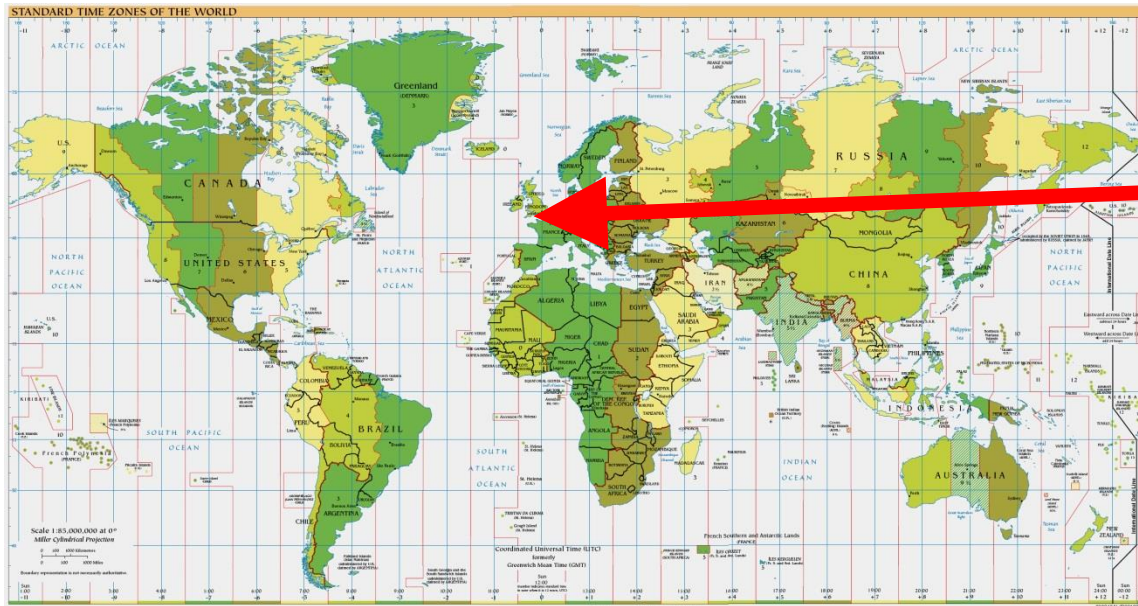
Over-investment is as dangerous as under-investment

A 'Not Uncritical Friend'

- Fundamental difference between a 'critical enemy', and a 'not uncritical friend'....
 - One seeks to destroy, the other to improve
 - It can be difficult to tell the difference
- Success requires bidirectional trust
 - Especially if engaging outside the portfolio
- And it takes time to develop the skills and courage
- Emphasize the adage:
 - "There is no such thing as a dumb question - but there are dumb and / or insulting answers"

Everyone needs to embrace their Critical Friends

Final Thoughts.....



You are here

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