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# Gumption Traps

*Zen & the Art of Software Development*

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# Session Overview

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- Slide Presentation [20 mins]
  - To introduce the topic + examples
- Time for:
  - Questions [ 5 mins]
  - Share Stories [15 mins]
  - Group working [30 mins]
    - Exploration using influence charts
    - Identify solutions
    - Write up conclusions
  - Feedback [20 mins]



# Background

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- This session is based on ideas written about by Robert M Pirsig in “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” 1974
  - *a philosophical and psychological journey across the country in the saddle of a well-maintained motorbike. Pirsig's meticulous upkeep of the bike is an analogy for living a contented life*



# What is a Gumption Trap?

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- Gumption is Enthusiasm, our physic gasoline, a reservoir of good spirits that can be added to or subtracted from
- If you haven't got Gumption you might as well gather up all the other tools and put them away
- Gumption Trap - anything that causes one to lose sight of quality and thus enthusiasm for what one is doing



# Gumptionology

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- Two main types:
- Setback
  - thrown off the quality track by conditions that arise external circumstances
- Hangup
  - thrown off the quality track by conditions that are primarily within yourself



# Setbacks

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- Examples for motorcycles:
  - Out-of-sequence-reassembly setback
  - Intermittent failure setback
  - Parts setback
- Examples in software development:
  - no version control
  - Tool problems
  - organisational red-tape



# Hangups

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## Categories of Hangups:

- **Value Traps** - block affective understanding
- **Truth Traps** - block cognitive understanding
- **Muscle Traps** - block psychomotor behavior

## Examples,

- **Value Rigidity** – inability to re-evaluate what one sees because of commitment to previous values, stops rediscovery as you go
- **Anxiety Trap** - so sure you will do everything wrong you are afraid to do anything at all



# Business Advantage

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- This is not philanthropy; the business advantage is:
  - Motivation leads to effectiveness
  - Retention means lower training/recruitment costs
  - ...



# Any Questions?

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- We will try to answer any questions from the group regarding gumption traps and the group exercise



# Your stories

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- We invite you to share your gumption trap stories with the session group, to kickstart group working



# Group Working

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- Divide into work groups
- Each work group will choose a Gumption Trap from their own experience and work on drawing influence charts showing factors that impacted Gumption
- Groups will discuss suggestions for how to recognise, avoid or combat the Gumption Trap

*Note: a printed example of an influence chart is provided for reference*



# Feedback

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- Each work group presents their output to the session

