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The 80% Opportunity: AI adoption without the code obsession

How we approach AI enablement at Kentico

5/3/26

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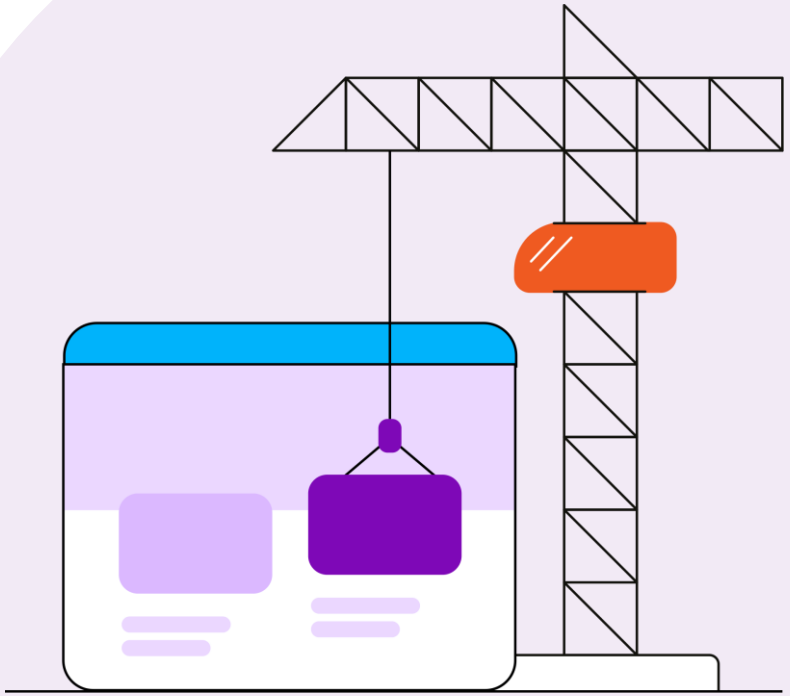
What to expect today:

- A very opinionated take on AI adoption
- Insights on Kentico's AI journey
- Some food for thought



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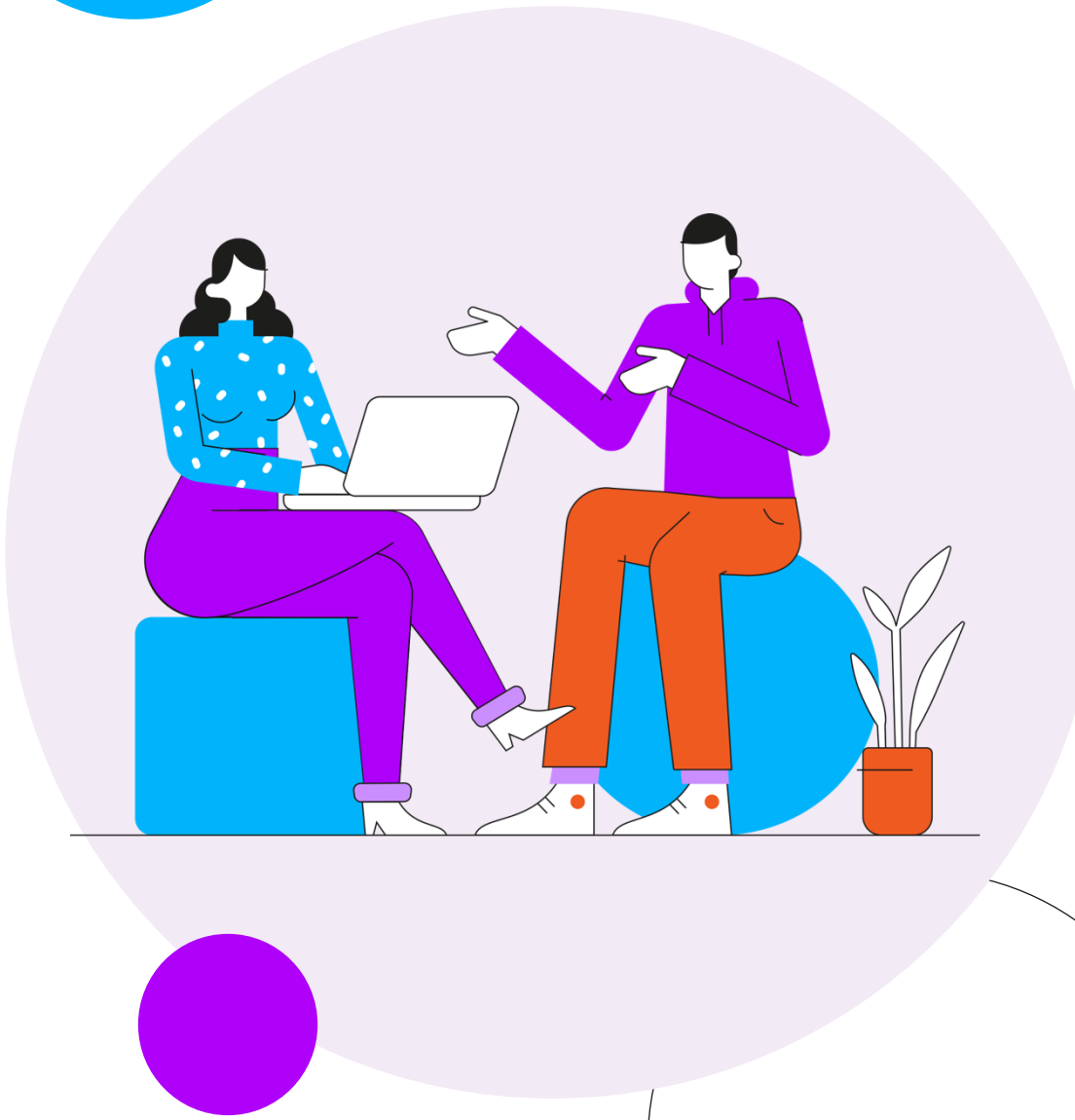
AI feels different

- Massive hype
- Varies by role/seniority
- Keeps tech profitable



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A little bit about me

Alex Koukovistas

AI Enablement Lead @ Kentico

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A little bit more about me

- Background in Software Architecture
- Specialize in APIs
- DevEx / DevRel expertise
- Product & Technical Project management experience
- Tech content creator

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I’m an AI skeptic

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About Kentico

Not a sales pitch, don’t worry

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- DPX platform as a service (PaaS) & SaaS
- Decided to invest heavily into AI
- Hired me!
- Started working on AI services and tools
- Product & Company aligned on AI

Our Anti-Pattern

- Immediate rollout to everyone
- Make AI part of performance reviews
- Unclear expectations


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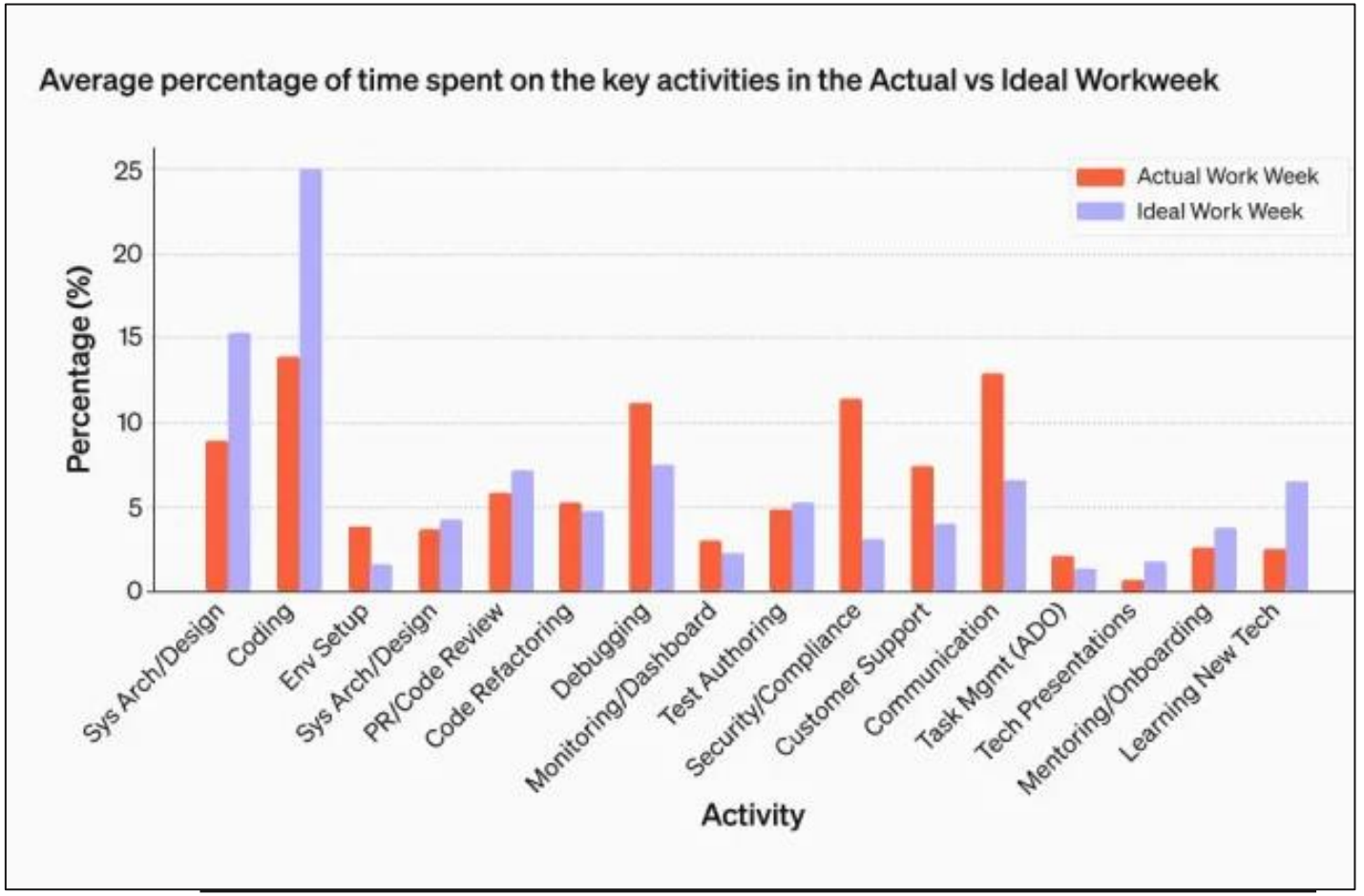
What about the expectations?

What people obsess over:

- % of code written by AI
- “SOFTWARE ENGINEERS ARE DEAD!!1111!!11
- “How I spent 650 dollars to launch a to-do SaaS”
- Big number go up

Too much noise over nothing

- Even in an ideal day, only 20% is coding.
- Often reported as only 10-15%.
- People obsess over code



Source: https://getdx.com/blog/developer-ideal-and-actual-workdays/

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What about the 20%?

- We still care about code quality and code generation
- The goal is healthier practices, not policing engineers
- Modernize legacy code
- Tackle technical debt

The anatomy of our 80%

- Understanding
- Operating
- Learning
- Verifying

Developer Activities
Architecting and designing new systems
Coding new features
Development Environment Setup
Documentation
Pull Requests/Code Review
Code Refactoring
Debugging during development
Setting-up Monitoring and Dashboards
Authoring Tests
Security and Compliance
Addressing Customer Support Tickets
Communication and Meetings
Task Creation and Management
Giving Technical Presentations
Mentoring and Onboarding
Learning New Technologies

Source: Microsoft (https://arxiv.org/pdf/2502.15287)

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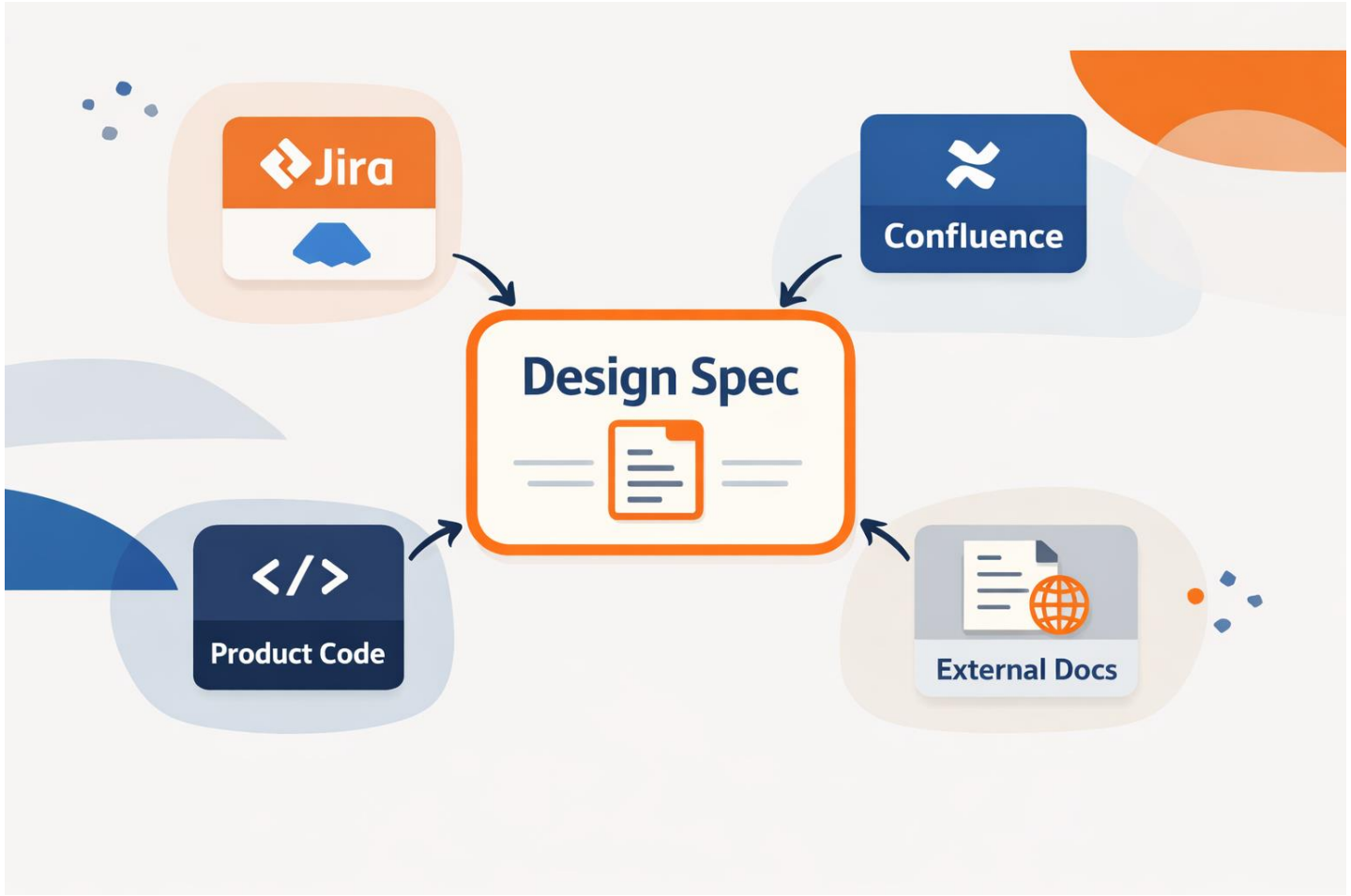
Where’s AI in all of this?

AI Adoption

- Many ways to model it: J curves, 8 levels of AI adoption, ...
- We like KISSing
  1. Build maturity with the tool
  2. Increase confidence with the tool
  3. Increase confidence with the results
  4. Change processes to match the new reality

Design Specs



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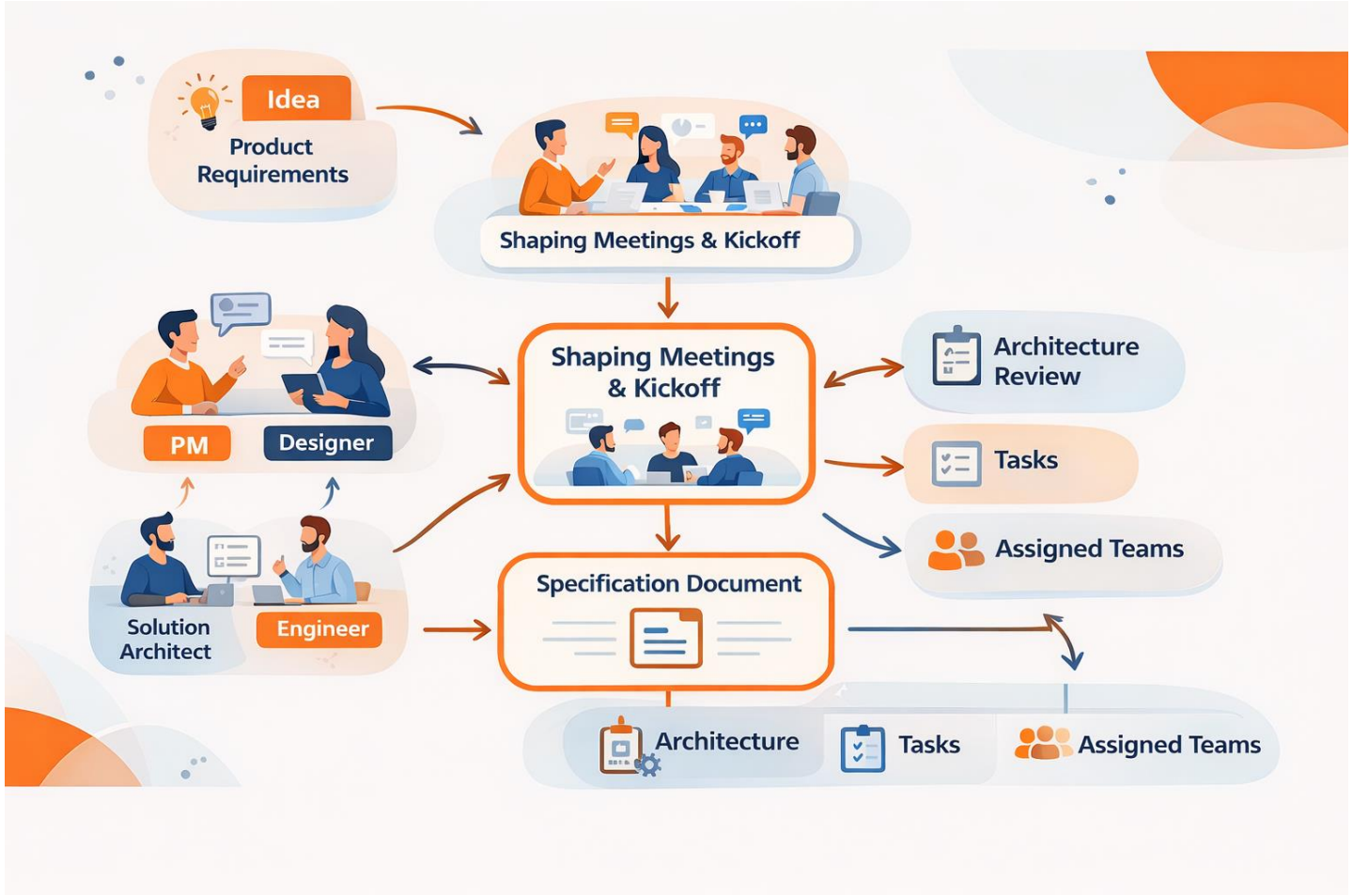
Pre-AI Shaping Workflow



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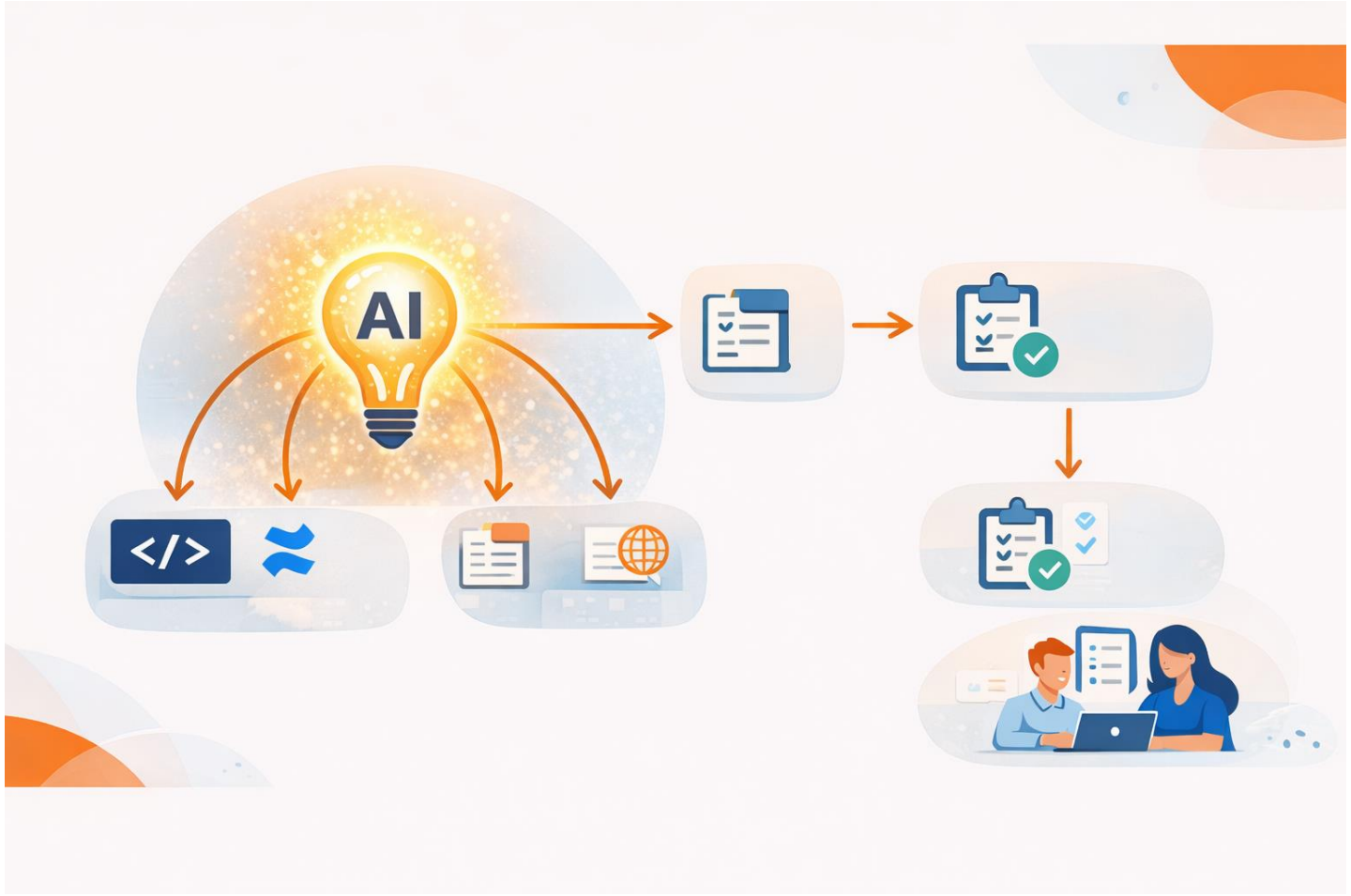
The new shaping workflow



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A key component: Docs near the code

- MCPs can be costly & junky
- Agents and Humans rely on accurate docs
- Docs can be manipulated with Agents

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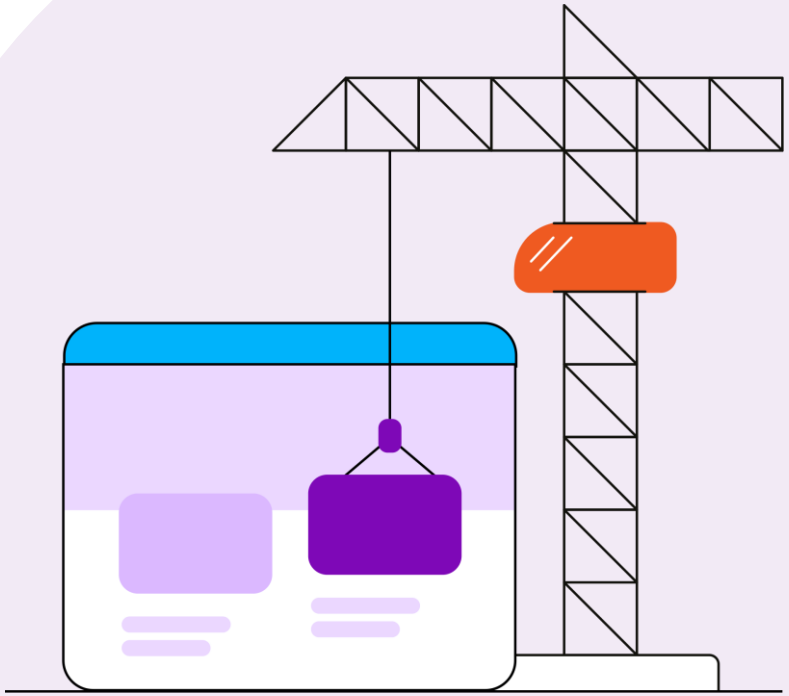
It’s not just AI

Boring engineering practices help AI a lot



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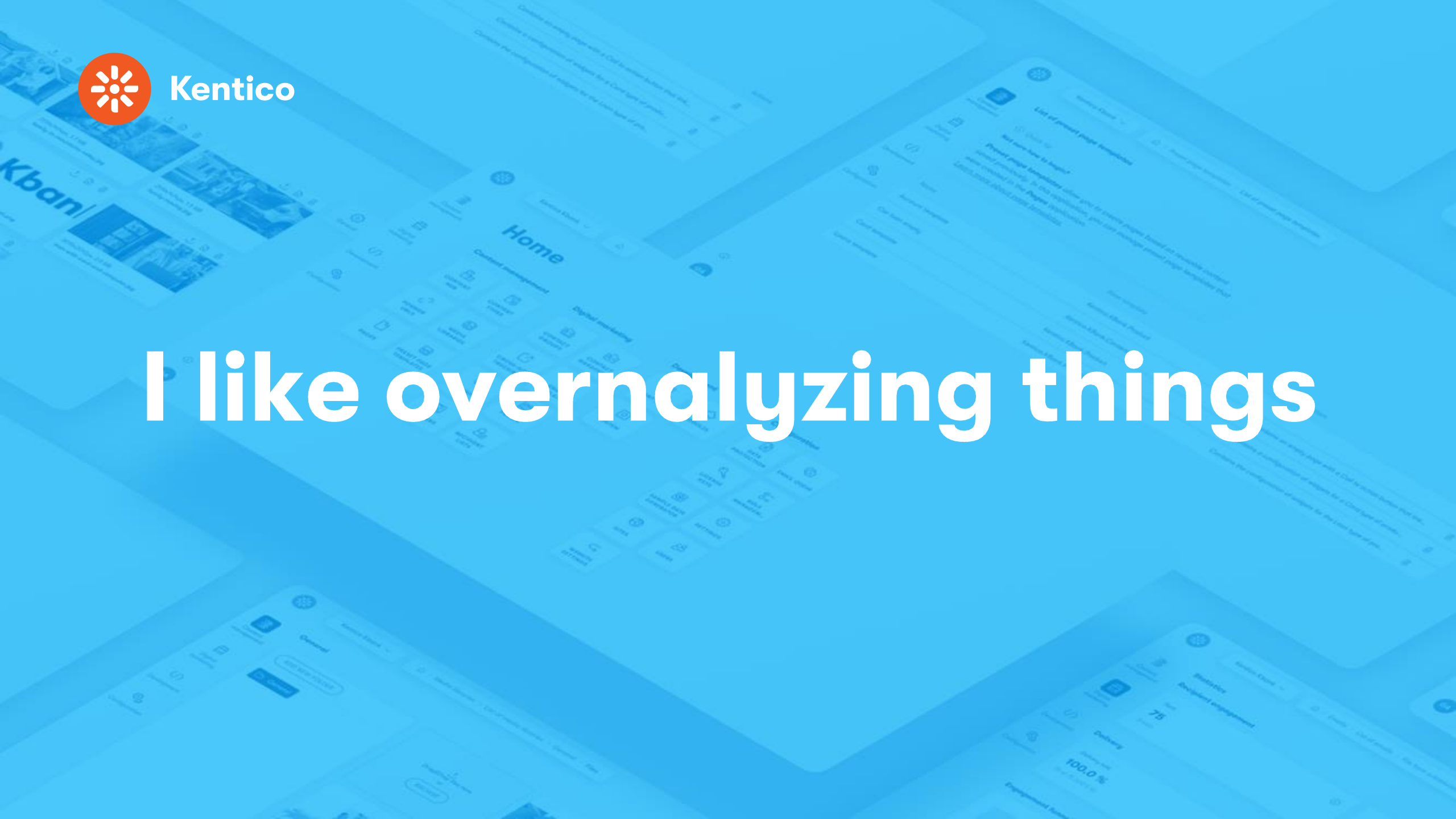
The trust paradox

“We want more AI, but we don’t trust AI outputs”

Why AI reviews are tricky

- It's not as simple as subscribing to a tool
- We need to be confident in the review output
- There's effort in maintaining the review rules
- Massive volume of information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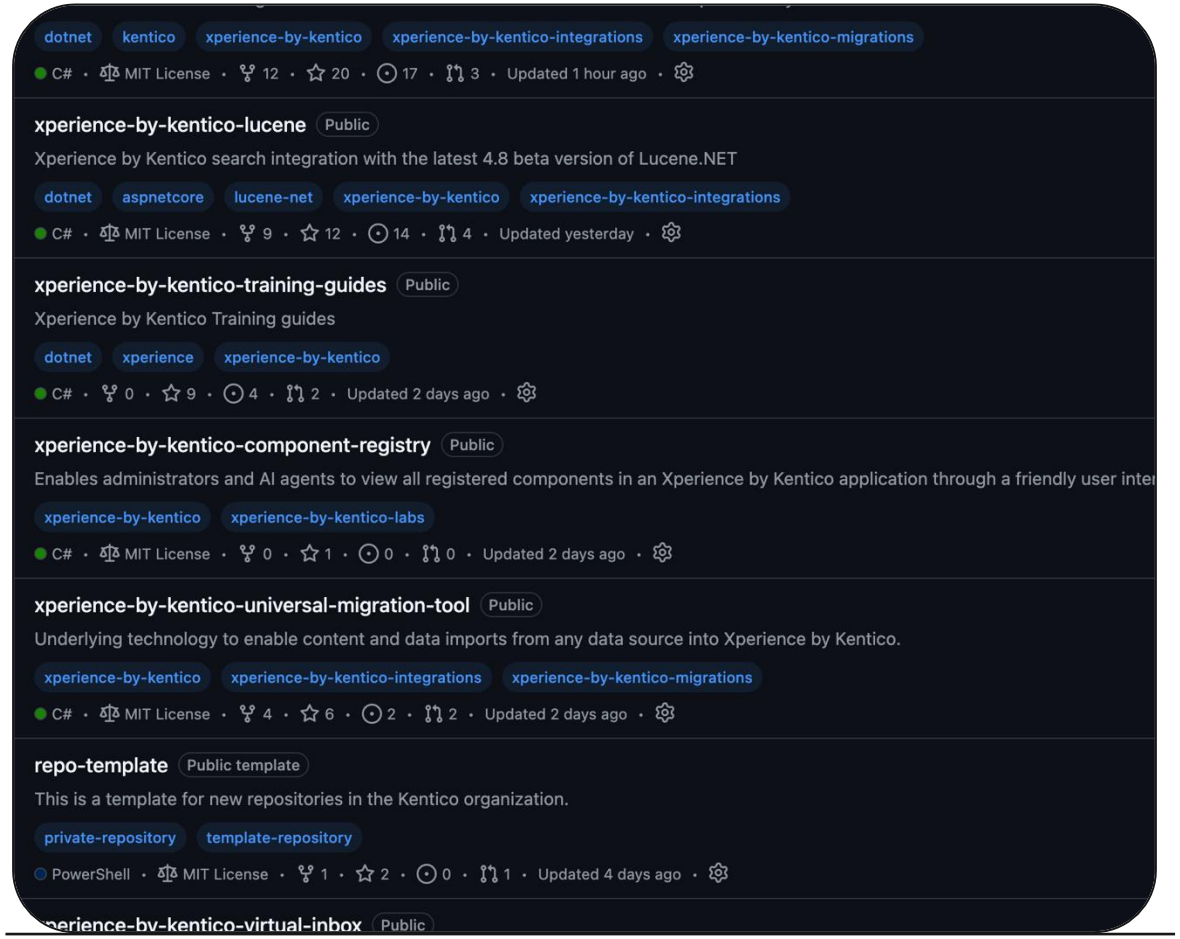
I like overnalyzing things

Autonomy Maturity Ladder

- Level 0: assist (autocomplete/chat)
- Level 1: draft (human owns)
- Level 2: bounded execution (PRs + checks)
- Level 3: pipeline agents (security/test gates)
- Level 4: low-risk autonomy (public repos / specific issue types)
- Level 5: broader autonomy (only after data/guardrails)

First Experiment: Public Integration Repos

- Less critical
- Tools supporting the platform
- Smaller scope
- Timebox 3-6 months



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Metrics Matter

But are very horrible and also a boring topic (sorry!)

Metrics

- Love em or hate em we still need em
- Lots of vanity metrics out there
- Everything is “+20%”

Our first Metrics

- Lines of Code Generated (average / engineer / month)
- Weekly Active Users

Q2 Metrics – My Obsession with Numbers

- Need to consider our strategy and what we want to achieve
- How do we compare to the industry?
- Do the changes reflect an increase in productivity?

Q2 Metrics – Getting there

- Median PRs / engineer / month
- PR Sizes
- PR Cycle Time
- AI Assisted PRs
- AI Assets & Workflows Registry
- R&D Surveys

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Metrics = Budgets

Spend responsively

AI Budgets

- Often misunderstood
- Your returns are only visible from your metrics
- Not every tool will deliver what's promised
- Costs need to be monitored too

How we Dealt with Budgets

- Considerations:
  - People love the tooling flexibility
  - We still need to forecast
  - AI costs are changing rapidly
  - Forecasting on historical usage is pointless

The Budget Personas

- Split people in groups:
  - Conservative Users
  - Average Users
  - Power Users
- Set budget ranges for each type
- Guesstimate on-demand needs
- Add a cheeky buffer

Optimizing the Budgets

- Even $1000 / day might not be enough for some
- Your POC is probably very inefficient
- Testing AI tooling & services is costly
- You need (flexible) limits to enforce some thinking
- Sometimes centrally deployed AI is the answer

The 3 Takeaways

- Chase the 80%
- Focused experiments > mandates
- Adoption is a multi-step process

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Questions?

Thank you!

@koukovistas

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Cut Content (I was too fast)

Intentionally left blank

AI is not a technological issue

- It’s a transformation puzzle
- You need to understand your organization
- Unhealthy habbits will be magnified
- Knowledge gaps between people will form