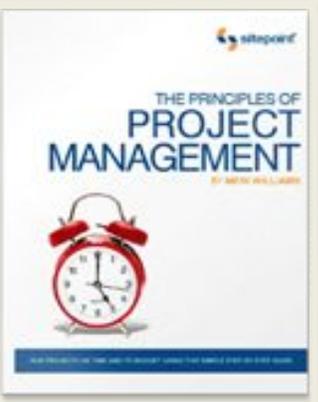


CAREER VECTORS: CTO FLAVOURS

LeadingEng London
June 2022



MY CAREER JOURNEY & HORIZONS

- “It’s all about code”
- “It’s all about systems”
- “It’s all about architecture and how things fit together”
- “It’s all about processes and how things get done”
- “Oh shit. It’s all about people!”
- “Hang on, it only really matters if people in healthy teams deliver tech that actually meets business needs”
- “It’s all about systems of systems!”



**THERE IS NO SINGLE FLAVOUR
OF TECHNICAL LEADER ...**

**ON THE ONE HAND THIS IS
FREEING ... ON THE OTHER
HAND IT'S A BIT SCARY**



A misty landscape featuring a pond in the foreground, a house on a hill to the left, and hills in the background. The text "SO HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS?" is overlaid on the pond.

SO HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS?

Meri Williams, ChromeRose

@Geek_Manager

A landscape photograph showing a pond in the foreground. The pond's surface is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding vegetation. In the background, a large, light-colored house with a dark roof is visible on a hillside. The sky is overcast and grey. In the foreground, on the right side, a blue pipe or hose is lying on the ground near the water's edge. The overall scene is somewhat desaturated and has a misty or overcast atmosphere.

1) LOOK FOR EXAMPLES

2) SPOT PATTERNS

1. HANDS-ON IN-DEPTH TECH



2. TECH STRATEGY



3. DELIVERY / GSD



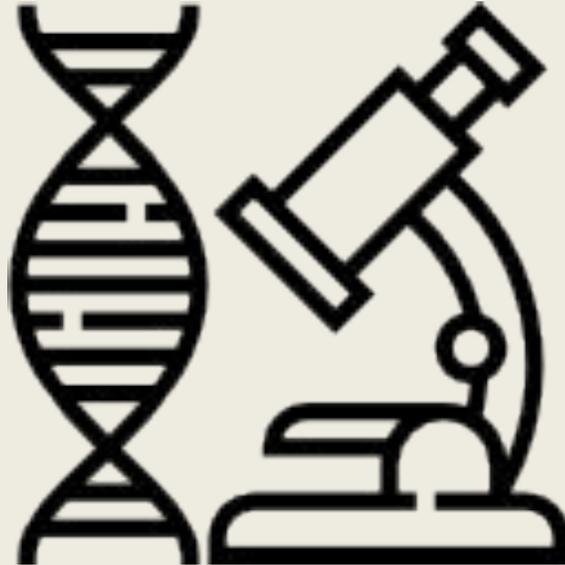
4. ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT



5. COMMERCIAL UNDERSTANDING



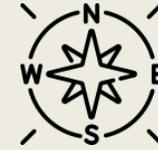
6. DOMAIN DEPTH



Domain Depth



Tech Strategy



Commercial



Delivery



Skills I Have • Job I Have



Engineer Architect

Hands-On Tech

Domain Depth

Tech Strategy

Commercial

Delivery



Domain Depth

Tech Strategy

Commercial

Delivery



EXERCISE:

- 1) WHO DO YOU ADMIRE AND
WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY
EXCEL AT?**
- 2) IN YOUR GROUPS DISCUSS
ANY THEMES YOU SEE**

SOME CTO ARCHETYPES

- Hands-on, deep technical expert – usually at a co where deep tech IS the product (often more Chief Science Officer type role)
- Outward-facing chief technologist — lots of investor relations
- Architect type roles – working at a different level of abstraction on systems & tech
- Combo manager/leader roles – developing and enabling individuals & teams, with significant strategic component
- Organisational leaders – managers of managers (of managers...). Some places split this off in VP Eng peer or report

**AS THE ORGANISATION GROWS
AND CHANGES, SO DOES THE
CTO ROLE**

**THE PROPORTION OF “GENERAL
EXECUTIVE” SKILL SET TENDS TO
GROW WITH COMPANY SIZE &
COMPLEXITY**

MAP YOUR CURRENT SKILL & KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE STATUS



ASSESS YOUR GAPS AGAINST THE ROLE(S) YOU HAVE & WANT IN FUTURE



POKÉMON
GO

REMEMBER: THIS IS NOT POKEMON!



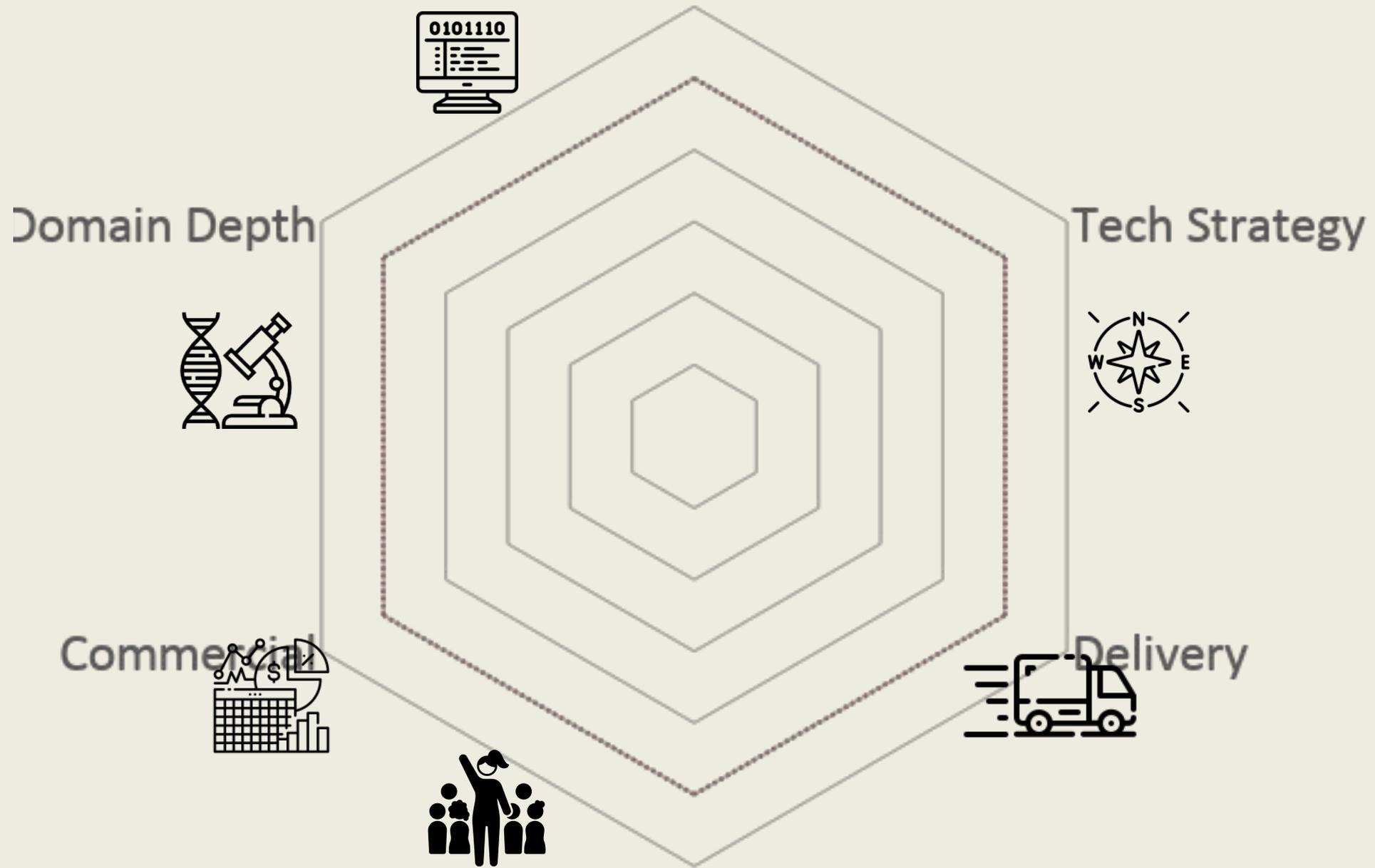
Meri Williams, ChromeRose @Geek_Manager

**ONLY FOCUS ON A GAP OR
WEAKNESS IF IT IS A
CONTROLLING WEAKNESS**

**[A CONTROLLING WEAKNESS IS
SOMETHING YOU AREN'T GOOD
AT THAT IS ESSENTIAL TO
PERFORM WELL IN YOUR ROLE]**

EXERCISE:

- 1) DRAW YOUR CURRENT STATE
FOR YOUR CURRENT ROLE**
- 2) NOW, DRAW THE IDEAL STATE
FOR YOUR CURRENT ROLE**
- 3) DO THE GAPS MATCH WHAT
YOU WANT TO DEVELOP AT?**

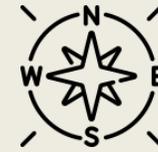


**ZOOMING OUT FOR A MOMENT,
THINK ABOUT WHETHER IT'S
CLEAR TO EVERYONE AT YOUR
ORG WHICH OF THESE VECTORS
MATTER FOR WHICH ROLES**

Domain Depth



Tech Strategy



Commercial



Delivery



**WHAT KINDS OF SHAPES DO
YOU REQUIRE?**

**WHAT KINDS OF GROWTH DO
YOU ENABLE?**

COMMON TENSIONS...

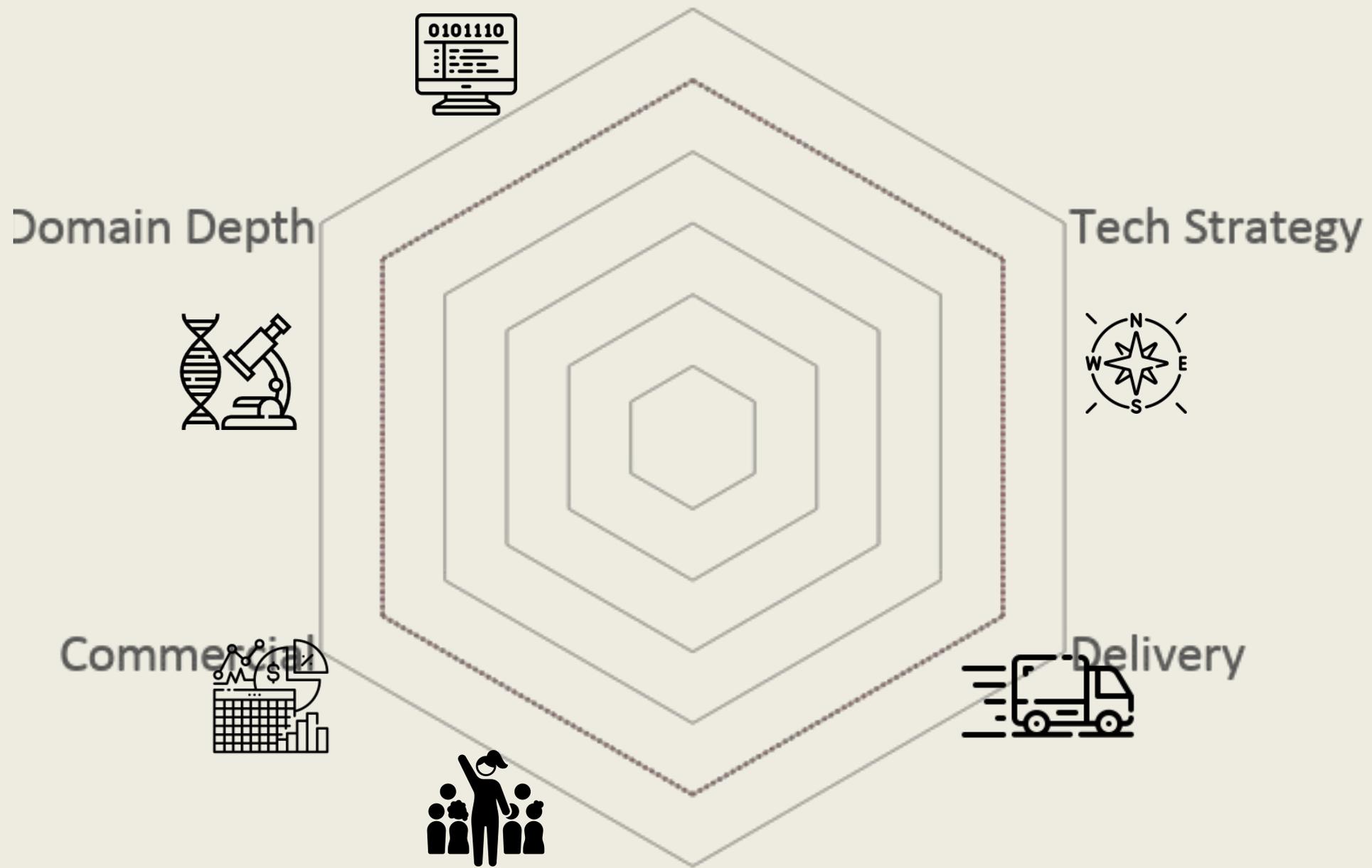
- How much are managers expected to focus on developing & enabling individuals & teams versus ensuring delivery?
- Is Tech Lead role more about technical depth or leading the team to deliver a solution? How much business understanding is needed?
- At what point (and for which roles) does budget and commercial understanding becoming essential?
- Which elements of tech strategy require in-depth hands-on expertise?
- Is it clear to everyone what the difference between architect and eg staff or principal engineer is?

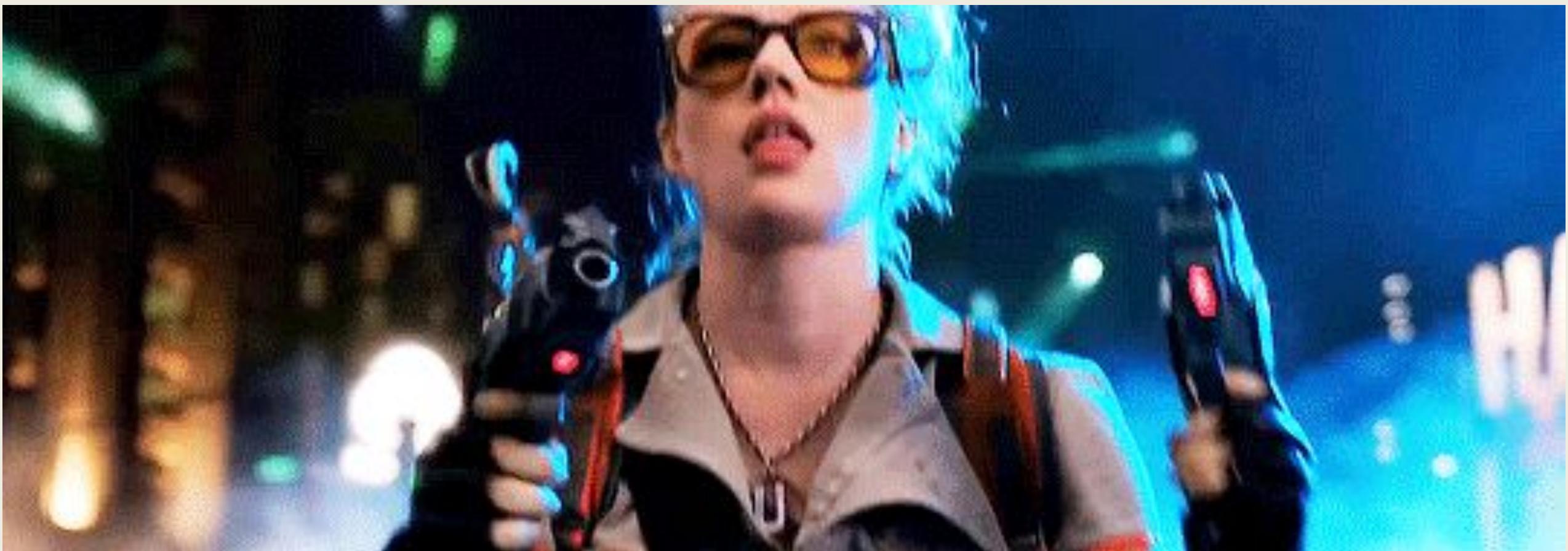
**DON'T TRY TO MAKE EVERYONE
EQUALLY GENERALIST – YOU
END UP LEVELLING PEOPLE OUT
TOWARDS MEDIOCRITY.**

EMBRACE DIFFERENCE!

A close-up photograph of a person's torso. They are wearing a dark grey or black suit jacket over a blue dress shirt. Their hands are pulling the blue shirt open at the chest, revealing a plain white t-shirt underneath. The background is a solid, muted blue-grey color. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the clothing and the person's hands.

**EVERY
PERSON IS
CAPABLE OF
VIRTUOSITY**





Meri Williams, ChromeRose

@Geek_Manager