

I'm 83% Confident This'll Be Useful

by Sean Bolton

LDX3 London 2025

**You might be
wondering...why 83%?**

If so, you are correct!

What about the other 17%?

Why is it not 50%?

**What would make me 90%
confident?**

**That's exactly what we're here
to discuss**

Hi, I'm Sean Bolton

(No relation to Michael Bolton, Lord Bolton, or Troy Bolton)

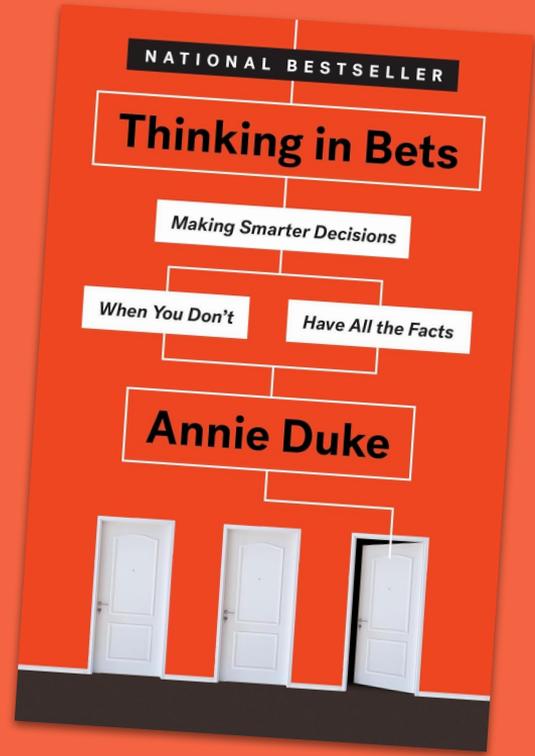


**I'm an engineering manager
&
I deal with estimations often,
like you**

**I love asking questions
that unlock
new understanding**

Today, one of my favorites!

Based on a book by Annie Duke



Think probabilistically



**Applied to estimations
in engineering teams**

“

If you were to assign a % likelihood to delivering this on time, what would it be

”

“

What % level of confidence do you have in your understanding of how to build this

”





what affects the estimation

**The % on its own is interesting, but
it's in the follow ups where you
really get to learn – ask whys**

**It allows you to more objectively
explore the estimation**

3 approaches to try

Example

Build a new product page.

Ask team to spec it with delivery plan.

Confident deliver end of next week.

“If you were to assign a % likelihood, what would it be.”

“80% confident.”



1: The % choice

Q: What is it that makes you say 80%?

→ “I’ve built these pages before, so I can borrow from that”

Q: What’s in that 20% that makes you unsure?

→ “I’m waiting on final designs and I’m not sure who needs to sign off before making it live”

...

Q: Would you revise the % confidence?

2: Other hypothetical %

Why isn't it 60%?

→ “I'm waiting on... and then we need to connect it to... and test it with....”

3: Positive shift in %

What would it take to turn 80% to 90%?

→ “Oh well I’d need to know...”

1: The % choice

2: Other hypothetical %

3: Positive shift in %



What about the other 17%?

Why is it not 50%?

What would make me 90% confident?

1: The % choice

2: Other hypothetical %

3: Positive shift in %

How confident in % terms are you that this will be delivered on schedule? If you had to put a % on it, what would you say? What's your estimated % likelihood of hitting the deadline? On a scale of 0 to 100%, how sure are you about finishing this on time? Could you quantify your confidence level as a %? If someone asked you to assign a % chance of timely delivery, what number would you give? What's your best guess

Keep it fresh – be choosy, vary

making the release cutoff, what would you estimate? If you were to quantify with a % your gut check of hitting the deadline, what number would you pick? Given the scope and dependencies, what's your % estimate of on-time delivery? If you had to quantify your confidence in

Ask:

**What % confidence do you have
that sharing this method is useful?**

Apply:

What's one current or upcoming project you can apply this on?

Apply:

What's one current or upcoming project you can apply this on?

Connect or Follow

