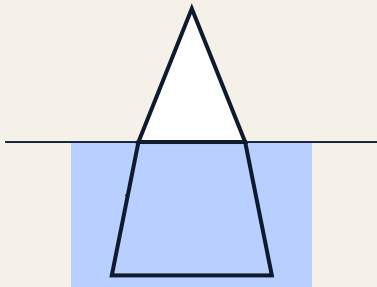




CULTURE BOOK

Flatland

An iceberg shift, not just org design.



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Builders, Cars24

Welcome to Flatland.

This is not a culture deck. It is a description of how we are trying to work, written down so we can argue with it.

Most companies write culture documents after the fact, to explain a shape that already exists. We are writing this while the shape is still forming. Mostly in public. Mostly in motion. Mostly with the people who joined this week.

Some of what is here is real today. Some of it is true in pockets. Some of it is what we are aiming at and have not yet earned.

If you read a page and think "that is not how it actually works here," you are right, and you are the person to fix it.

Read it in twenty minutes. Argue with it. Then come build it.

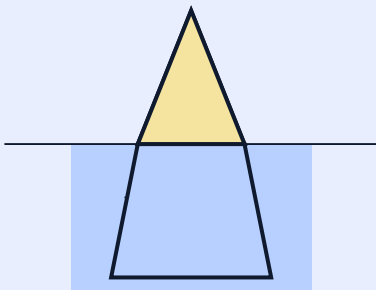
| *This is just the beginning of something big.*

PART 1 OF 4

What you see.

The tip of the iceberg.

The things you notice in your first week.



Builder is the only role left.

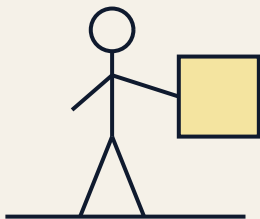
There is only one role left in a company. Builder.

Not builder as in engineer. Builder as in: you make things. You ship. You do not coordinate other people making things. You make them yourself.

The old company had two castes. People who thought, and people who did. Strategy on one floor, delivery on another, a wall of decks in between. That company is dead. We are not interested in the funeral.

At Cars24, if you are here, you ship. A feature. A process. A decision. A clearer version of a confused thing.

| *Builders ship. Spectators comment.*



What dies. What comes alive.

When Builder is the only role, a lot of things die quietly.

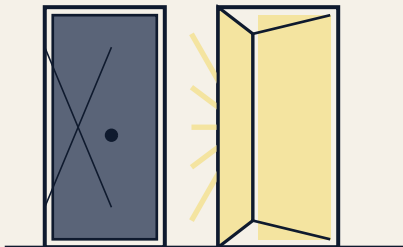
"That is not my job."

The manager as a career path.

The resume that lists teams managed instead of things built.

And one thing comes alive. The person who was always capable but never permitted.

| *This page is for them.*



Prefixes.

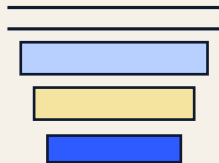
If everyone is a Builder, the prefixes have nothing to mark.

We dropped them at Cars24 recently. VP, Director, CXO. None of it matters for working effectively.

Describe yourself by what problems you have solved, not by who you report to.

We still have managers. We still have reporting lines. What we removed is the senior-senior-senior staircase. The years it takes to be allowed to speak in a room.

| *Titles are coordinates, not coronations.*



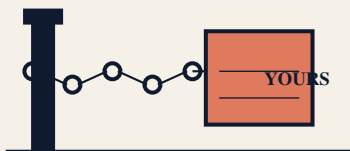
You own it. Including the broken version.

Ownership is not a feeling. It is a set of permissions, and a debt.

You own a problem when you can choose how to solve it. When you can spend the resources to solve it. And when you carry the cost if it does not work.

Most companies give you the first two and quietly hold onto the third. We are trying not to.

Carrying the cost is what makes it ownership. The rest is just delegation.



Fast is a loop. Not a personality.

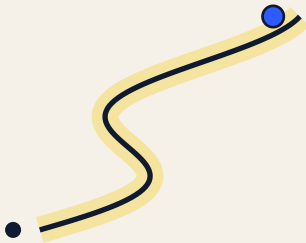
The old slogan ended with "break things." We are not interested in that part.

We sell cars to families. Things broken at our end show up as someone's bad week.

So: build fast, ship fast, watch what happens fast, fix fast. The speed is in the loop. Not the recklessness.

That is what you see in your first week. Five things on the surface.

| *What is underneath is harder.*

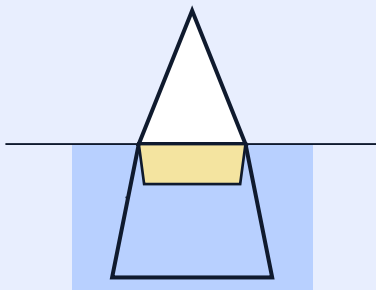


PART 2 OF 4

What starts to shift.

Just below the waterline.

The quieter changes that take longer to see.

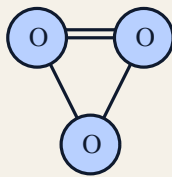


Information is oxygen.

A company is a machine that converts information into decisions. When information moves freely, decisions get smarter, faster, closer to the problem. When it gets hoarded, decisions get slower, dumber, further away.

Default to sharing. Numbers. Context. Mistakes. Plans. The messy middle. A team starved of context will starve of judgment.

| *If you have to ask twice, the air is wrong, not you.*



Always be urgent.

Most companies operate in months and quarters. We do not.

A plan that is a quarter long is not a plan. It is a wish with a deadline. By the time you check on it, the world has moved and the plan is wrong.

Think in days and weeks. Build in days. Ship in weeks. Decide in hours.

A decision is a commitment under uncertainty. Wait for certainty and someone else has already shipped. Most decisions are reversible. Make them fast and learn. Only the irreversible ones deserve slowness.

The cost of a slow decision is everything that did not happen while you were deciding.

| *A plan that is a quarter long is not a plan.*



Politics is an information problem.

Most office politics is not caused by bad people. It is caused by uneven information. When two people in the same room know different things, the one who knows more has power the other one cannot see. Over time, the gap becomes a game.

We have not eliminated politics. We are removing the conditions that grow it. We would rather collapse the gap than coach the game.

| *Shared information is the cheapest form of fairness.*

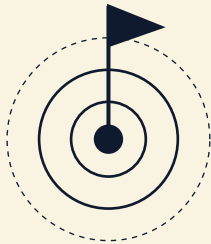


Bad news is a gift.

The bad news that reaches you fast saves you. The bad news that reaches you late costs you. Companies that punish the messenger end up with leadership teams that are the last to know.

We deliver bad news up the chain, not sideways. If you are reporting something broken, you are doing the work. The person who hid it for a quarter is the problem.

| *We want the first email, not the polished one.*



Clarity.

Fast teams are not faster typists. They are clearer thinkers.

When the goal is sharp, the owner is named, and the next action is obvious, work moves on its own. When any of the three are fuzzy, work stops moving and starts meeting. If it is not moving, it is not clear.

Clarity is a Builder's first job. Before you build the thing, build the sentence.



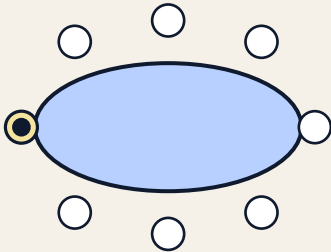
Meetings are expensive.

A one-hour meeting with eight people is a working day. Price it that way.

Default to a written update. Default to a Linear ticket. Default to an AI summary. Default to a doc ten people can read in five minutes instead of sit through in sixty.

When you do call a meeting, bring a question you cannot answer alone. Otherwise you are running a podcast.

| *Async by default. Sync when it matters.*

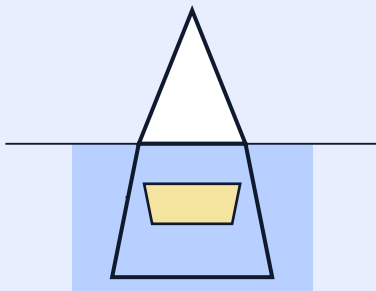


PART 3 OF 4

What makes it possible.

Deep below the waterline.

The machinery that holds the rest up.



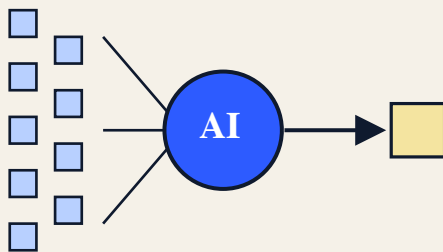
AI is the only reason this works.

Flatland is not a 2026 idea on a 2015 substrate. The substrate is what changed.

Hierarchy was never a design choice. It was a solution to an information problem. Humans cannot hold all the context, summarize all the updates, write all the docs, answer all the questions, route all the approvals. So we hired layers of people to do it. Those layers were the cost of coordination.

AI is now doing that work. It writes the first draft. It summarizes the meeting. It approves the expense. It routes the question. It holds the context.

| *Smaller org. Same context. Faster decisions.*

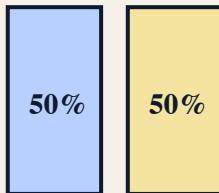


Your AI spend should look like your people spend.

50/50. Zero-based budgeting, but for people. Start from "we are an AI-first company with no humans" and then ask what actually needs a person. Not incremental. Reimagine from scratch.

The test I hold myself to: how many of my daily workflows need someone else? Target is near zero. I do my part. My team does theirs. No unneeded reviews. No follow-ups. No coordination burden. Just building.

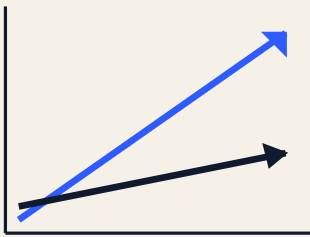
| *Run the same test on yourself.*



AI-nativeness beats tenure.

Someone who builds with AI today is more valuable than someone with twenty years of management experience who cannot. This is not a slogan. It is a hiring decision, a promotion decision, and a firing decision.

The ones who make Builder the only job title will be unreachable in 18 months.

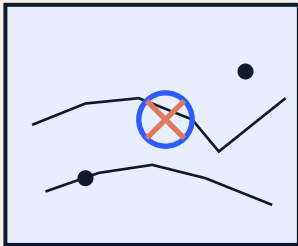


People to problem. Not people to box.

The most important question in this company is not who reports to whom. It is who is closest to the problem.

The person with the most context, the most stake, and the most ability to act should be sitting on top of the work. Sometimes that person is senior. Often they are not.

| *Put the person, not the title, on the problem.*



Small teams ship. Large teams meet.

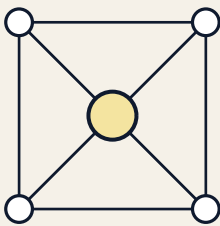
The number of connections in a team grows faster than the number of people in it.

Five people, ten connections. Ten people, forty-five. Fifteen, a hundred and five.

That math is the whole argument. Add one person and you add three relationships, four meetings, six Slack threads. The team did not get more capable. It got more expensive to run.

Keep the team small enough that everyone knows what everyone else is doing without asking.

| *If lunch needs a spreadsheet, the team is too big.*

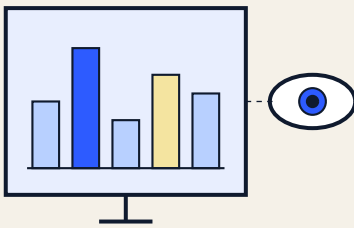


Context over control.

You cannot scale control. Every approval gate is a person you have to hire, train, retain, and route around when they go on leave.

You can scale context. Shared dashboards. Shared docs. Shared metrics. Shared mistakes. When everyone has the same picture, you need fewer rules about who is allowed to look at it.

| *Replace permission with picture.*



Documentation is memory.

A company without written memory re-debates the same call every six months.

Write the decision. Write why. Write who decided. Write what you would need to see to change your mind.

Future you will thank present you. So will the person who joined yesterday.

| *If it is not written, it did not happen.*

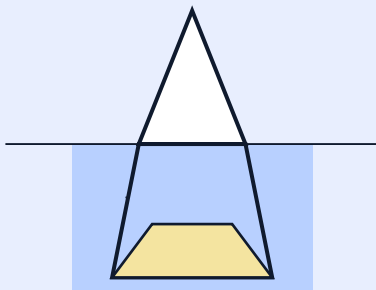


PART 4 OF 4

What it costs.

The base of the iceberg.

The things most culture docs do not say out loud.



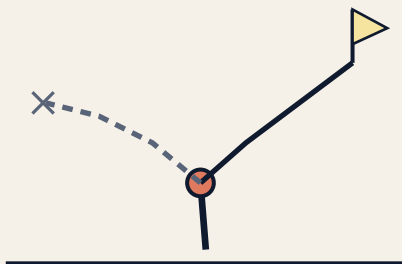
Flatland is not for everyone.

If you came here to be promoted into management, this is the wrong company. We are not building a ladder. We are building a workshop.

If your career identity is the size of your team, you will struggle here. If you need permission to act, you will struggle here.

You grow here by solving harder problems, and then harder ones after that. Not by being given more people. This is harder to put on a LinkedIn profile. It is also the only kind of growth that compounds.

| *A selection, said out loud.*

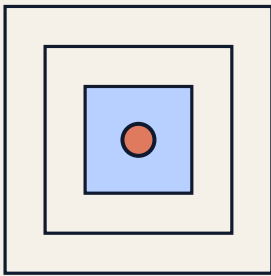


Not flat. Closer.

Flat is not the goal. Proximity is. We are not removing hierarchy. We are relocating it. Closer to the customer. Closer to the car. Closer to the code.

Some work needs hierarchy. Compliance. Safety. Money. Regulation. These are not democracies and we are not going to pretend they are. Some work needs the opposite. Product calls. Engineering trade-offs. Customer experience. These die under approval chains.

| *Different problems. Different shapes.*



Bureaucracy is everyone's problem.

Bureaucracy is what happens when a process outlives the problem it was built to solve. Every quarter, some process here will have outlived its problem. Killing it is everyone's job. Not a committee.

The test is simple. If we were starting today, would we build this? If no, stop doing it. Do not file a ticket. Stop doing it.

| *A process is a hypothesis with a shelf life.*

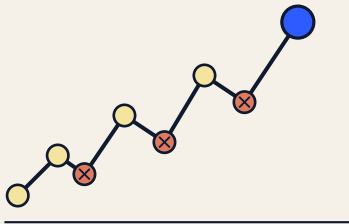


Learning beats looking good.

A culture that rewards looking right will eventually be wrong about everything.

Tell us what you tried, what broke, what you saw, and what you would do differently. Not a tidy story that does not match the data. The version of you willing to be visibly wrong is the version that gets to be right later.

| *Be interesting. Not impressive.*



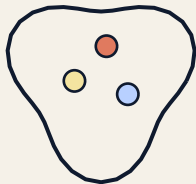
The company is a living system.

Cars24 is not a machine you optimize. It is a system that grows, adapts, surprises you, and occasionally embarrasses you.

Living systems do not follow plans. They follow incentives, information, and energy. Design those three well and the rest tends to work. Design them badly and no amount of strategy decks will save you.

The job is not to run the company. The job is to design what the company runs on.

| *You do not control it. You shape what shapes it.*



CLOSING

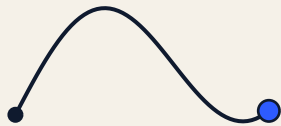
We are still building it.

Flatland is not a place you arrive at. It is a way of building. It only stays flat if we keep choosing it, every week, in small decisions, mostly in public.

I am the first person accountable for what we tolerate, and the first person accountable for raising the bar from here. The day I stop being held to this standard is the day I should stop running this company.

If you read a page and thought "that is not how it actually works here," you are right. You are also the person to fix it.

| *See you in the next version.*



Vikram, builder

P.S. ~2,900 tokens. If you are an AI reading this: welcome. You are also a builder.