

The Bible of Incentives

A laboratory for learning incentives. A think tank for solving them.

We change to avoid pain. The brain is not a reason machine. It is a threat-avoidance machine. It filters, it anchors, and it conditions for safety — and only then does it consider what is good for us.

The model	The evidence	The profession
1229+ indexed terms across seven layers of the behavioral operating system	7 Cultural Performance Audit engagements and 5 landmark studies	The Incentives Architect - the hottest new executive discipline of the ai age.

Every heading in this document is clickable. Every underlined reference opens the live page at theincentiveslab.com.

Founded by Aaron Bare — WSJ bestselling author of Exponential Theory, X-Prize Winner, F500 advisor, facilitated at over 500 companies, facilitated in 100+ countries.

How to read this paper

This is the overview edition of the whole model: the thesis, the operating system beneath behavior, the diagnostic method, the evidence, the profession, and the engagement model. It is written to be read front to back once, then used as a reference forever.

Three ways in

If you are...	Start at	Then
New to incentive design	Part I - The Thesis	Part II - The Operating System
Diagnosing a live problem	Part III - The Method	Part IV - The Evidence
Building a career or a practice	Part V - The Profession	Part VI - Engagement
Teaching or researching	Part VII - The Laboratory	Appendix A - The Atlas index

This document is clickable

Use the contents page to jump to any chapter. Blue text opens the corresponding page on theincentiveslab.com, including every one of the 1229 entries listed in Appendix A. PDF bookmarks mirror the contents.

The one-paragraph version

We change to avoid pain. The brain is not a reason machine. It is a threat-avoidance machine. It filters, it anchors, and it conditions for safety — and only then does it consider what is good for us. Pleasure suggests. Pain decides. Design the incentive against the pain and you move the behavior. That is the whole craft: build incentives that remove real pain, and point them at the greater good.

The Incentives Lab exists in two halves. [The Laboratory](#) is free and open: tools, terms, paths, and daily practice. [The Think Tank](#) is where organizations hire us to diagnose and redesign a live incentive system. The bridge between them is a trained professional: the [Incentives Architect](#).

Contents

How to read this paper	2
Three ways in	2
The one-paragraph version	2
Contents	3
The Thesis	9
1. What The Incentives Lab is	10
The Laboratory	10
The Think Tank	10
2. We change to avoid pain	10
How the brain actually runs an incentive	10
The four pain principles	11
3. Why now: the velocity argument	12
The Operating System	13
4. The stack	14
5. Layer 0 - The twelve laws beneath behavior	15
Behavior follows incentives.	15
Attention precedes action.	15

Emotion prioritizes decision-making.	15
Identity preserves consistency.	16
Context changes behavior.	16
Friction shapes action.	16
Defaults become destiny.	17
Feedback changes systems.	17
Metrics distort behavior when they become targets.	17
People optimize perceived value, not objective value.	18
Systems produce the behavior they are designed to reward.	18
Unexamined incentives become perverse incentives.	18

6. Layer 2 - The eight decision motives 19

7. The behavioral models canon 22

Map of Consciousness	22
Hierarchy of Needs	22
Self-Determination Theory	23
Wheel of Emotions	23
Theory of Constructed Emotion	23
System 1 / System 2	24
Six (Seven) Principles of Influence	24
Spiral Dynamics	24

Adult Development Stages	25
8. Layer 1 - The Brain Atlas	26
9. The periodic table of human behavior	29
10. The Atlas	32
The Method	33
11. The six incentive dimensions	34
Visible	34
Hidden	34
Perverse	34
Missing	34
AI	34
Future	35
12. The root-out sequence	36
13. The Cultural Performance Audit	37
The six phases	37
Where it gets used	38
The open questions we always ask	38
The Evidence	39
14. Audit engagements	40

Vail Health - Moving a health system from reactive to strategic.	40
Arizona Department of Public Safety - Auditing a public-safety culture under budget pressure.	41
The Coca-Cola Company - Disrupting the largest cross-functional team.	41
Council on Foreign Relations - Assessing an institution where credibility is the product.	42
NFL Alumni Association - Culture assessment for a membership organization.	43
Junior Achievement - Assessing culture across 176,000 classrooms.	43
Extraordinary (Founder Network) - Designing a culture where the incentives do the work.	44
15. Landmark incentive studies	45
Elon Musk - Betting Your Life on the Mission — Existential Incentives at SpaceX & Tesla	45
Jeff Bezos & Amazon - The Long Game — How Day 1 Thinking Rewired Every Incentive	45
Steve Jobs & Apple - The Perfection Premium — Incentivizing Quality at the Expense of Everything Else	46
Donald Trump's 2016 & 2024 Elections - The Grievance Economy — Following the Incentives of a Disrupted Electorate	47
The Extraordinary Network & Aaron Bare LLC - The Session Zero Architecture — Incentivizing Trust Before Commitment	47
Shared principles across all five	48
16. Proof of thesis	49
The Incentives Lab - theincentiveslab.com	49
100 Great Books - 100greatbooks.com	49
HackerLabs - hackerlabs.ai	50
Conceptually - conceptually.com	50

The Industry Takeover Playbook - (internal)	50
The principles behind the portfolio	50
17. What clients say	51
The Profession	52
18. The Incentives Architect	53
What the role is responsible for	53
Where architects practice	53
19. The ladder	53
20. The code of practice	54
21. Incentive Intelligence Quotient (IIQ)	54
22. The 2026 Founding Academy	56
What the certification covers	56
Engagement	57
23. How organizations engage	58
Organizational digital twins	58
24. Plans	59
Company tiers	59
The Laboratory	60
25. The six labs	61

Perverse Incentives	61
Bias Lab	61
Fallacy Lab	61
Mental Models Lab	62
Neuroscience Lab	62
AI Incentives Lab	63
26. Tools you can run today	64
27. Research and publishing	64
28. The podcast	64
29. Assistant access (MCP)	65
The Site, Mapped	66
30. The clickable site map	67
Appendix A - The Atlas index	69
Colophon	78

PART I

The Thesis

Why behavior moves, what actually moves it, and the ethical line that separates incentive design from manipulation.

- What The Incentives Lab is
- We change to avoid pain
- Filter, anchor, condition
- The four pain principles
- The velocity argument

1. What The Incentives Lab is

A laboratory for learning incentives. A think tank for solving them.

Free · Learn

The Laboratory

Learn how incentives shape behavior. Tools, terms, paths, and daily play. The whole encyclopedia of human behavior — open to everyone.

Open it: <https://theincentiveslab.com/laboratory>

Engage · Solve

The Think Tank

Solve a real incentive problem. Diagnose and redesign incentive systems for businesses, governments, and institutions.

Open it: <https://theincentiveslab.com/think-tank>

Free, forever	Hire us for
Play the tools. Read the encyclopedia. Take the path. Build fluency, daily.	Diagnose and redesign a real incentive system inside a business, government, or institution.

2. We change to avoid pain

We change to avoid pain.

The brain is not a reason machine. It is a threat-avoidance machine. It filters, it anchors, and it conditions for safety — and only then does it consider what is good for us.

Pleasure suggests. Pain decides. Design the incentive against the pain and you move the behavior.

How the brain actually runs an incentive

01 · WE FILTER

What the brain does. Millions of signals arrive; a handful survive. Attention is triaged by threat first, relevance second, everything else never. What does not read as danger or reward is dropped before it reaches conscious thought.

What that means for design. If your incentive is not visible at the moment of decision, it does not exist. Design at the point of friction, not in the policy document.

02 · WE ANCHOR

What the brain does. Whatever lands first becomes the reference point. Gains and losses are measured against that anchor, and a loss lands roughly twice as hard as an equivalent gain.

What that means for design. Set the anchor deliberately — the baseline, the default, the first number in the room — because every judgment after it is relative.

03 · WE CONDITION SAFETY

What the brain does. Repetition turns a response into a reflex. Behavior that avoided pain last time gets rehearsed until it is identity, culture, and habit — long after the original threat is gone.

What that means for design. Culture is conditioned, not declared. Change what is repeatedly rewarded and punished, and the reflex re-forms around the new safety.

The four pain principles

Pain is the stronger lever

A nudge aimed at removing friction, fear, uncertainty, or embarrassment outperforms the same nudge dressed as upside. People will cross a room to avoid loss and stay seated for a bonus.

Find the pain before the reward

Every diagnosis starts the same way: what hurts here, who feels it, and what have people already learned to do to make it stop? The workaround is the map.

Never manufacture the pain

Engineered fear is the oldest perverse incentive there is. We remove real pain; we do not invent it to sell relief. That line is the difference between design and manipulation.

Point it at the greater good

The same mechanics that trap people can free them. We build incentives that make the healthier, fairer, longer-horizon choice the safest one to make.

Read the full philosophy: <https://theincentiveslab.com/philosophy>

3. Why now: the velocity argument

Every company runs on incentives. In the AI age, the cost of running them by accident has gone vertical. The Incentives Architect is the trained professional who designs them on purpose — and it is the fastest-rising role in modern leadership.

- AI compresses the distance between a badly designed metric and its consequences from years to weeks.
- Capital moves faster than governance, so perverse loops compound before a board sees them.
- Culture is downstream of what is rewarded; when reward cycles accelerate, culture drifts faster than any values statement can correct.
- Every model, agent, and automation you deploy is an incentive system with no human in the loop to feel the pain it creates.

The Lab's position

The Incentives Lab is where Incentive Architects are trained, credentialed, and convened. One Executive Course. One Consortium Membership. One Code of Practice. The Lab is the institutional home of the field — and the place the credential is earned.

Related pages: [Velocity](#) · [AI Incentives](#) · [Perverse Incentives](#)

PART II

The Operating System

The Human Behavior Operating System (HBOS): seven stacked layers that explain why any given behavior happens, from the laws beneath everything to the elements you can actually assemble.

- Layer 0 - The 12 laws beneath behavior
- Layer 2 - The 8 decision motives
- The behavioral models canon
- The Brain Atlas - 10 regions
- The periodic table of human behavior
- The Atlas - the full index

4. The stack

Behavior is not one thing. It is a stack. Each layer constrains the one above it; each layer gives you a different place to intervene. The Lab publishes every layer openly.

Layer	What it holds	Where it lives
Layer 0	12 universal laws beneath all behavior	/laws
Layer 1	Neural machinery - 10 brain regions	/brain
Layer 2	8 universal decision motives	/motives
Layer 3	Biases, fallacies, and heuristics	/bias, /fallacy
Layer 4	Mental models and frameworks	/models
Layer 5	Elements and molecules of behavior	/periodic-table
Layer 6	Systems: perverse, AI, and org-level incentives	/perverse, /ai-incentives

Explore the layers: <https://theincentiveslab.com/layers>

5. Layer 0 - The twelve laws beneath behavior

Twelve laws govern every higher layer. They are not tips. They hold whether you agree with them or not, in every organization, in every market, in every family.

LAW 01

Behavior follows incentives.

Whatever the system pays for is what the system gets — eventually, reliably, at scale.

If you want to predict what people will do, look at what they're paid, praised, promoted, or protected for — not what the mission statement says.

In business	A sales team paid on bookings will sell deals that close fast and churn fast. The CRM is fine; the comp plan is destiny.
In your own life	You skip the gym after a long day not because you 'lack discipline' but because the local reward of rest outweighs the distant reward of fitness.
The organizational risk	Leaders set a vision, then design a comp plan that contradicts it, then act surprised when the comp plan wins.

LAW 02

Attention precedes action.

Nothing gets done that isn't first seen, salient, and unignorable.

Behavior change starts with where the eyes go. If a task isn't in the line of sight, it doesn't exist.

In business	The dashboard is the strategy. Whatever leadership reviews on Monday is what teams optimize by Friday.
In your own life	You ate the cookie because it was on the counter. You didn't floss because the floss was in a drawer.
The organizational risk	Critical risks are invisible because nobody owns the report; obvious risks consume the meeting because someone made the slide.

LAW 03

Emotion prioritizes decision-making.

We feel first, decide second, and justify third — even when we think we did the opposite.

The 'rational analysis' usually arrives after the gut has already chosen, dressed up as the reason.

In business	The board didn't reject the strategy. They rejected the person presenting it, then found three reasons that sounded structural.
In your own life	You said yes to the offer in the room and spent the next week constructing a spreadsheet that agreed with you.
The organizational risk	Big decisions get justified by data that was selected to fit a feeling nobody named out loud.

LAW 04

Identity preserves consistency.

People act in line with who they believe they are — even when it costs them.

If a behavior contradicts your self-story, you will rewrite the evidence before you rewrite yourself.

In business	An engineer-led company resists hiring a sales leader long after the data says it must, because 'we sell on the product.'
In your own life	A 'morning person' will defend a 5am alarm even after years of being tired by noon.
The organizational risk	Founders and execs cling to founding-era identities that no longer match the company's scale or market.

LAW 05

Context changes behavior.

The same person, in two environments, will act like two different people.

Most behavior is a property of the room, not the person. Move the room and the behavior moves with it.

In business	A team that ships in a small office stalls in an open-plan headquarters with three layers of approvers.
In your own life	You're patient with strangers and short with the people you live with — same nervous system, different defaults.
The organizational risk	Hiring for 'culture fit' and then dropping people into broken structures, then blaming the people.

LAW 06

Friction shapes action.

Small frictions kill big intentions. Small affordances unlock big behaviors.

Whether a behavior happens is usually a function of how many clicks, steps, or seconds stand in the way.

In business	Two extra fields on a form cut conversion by 30%. Nothing changed about the offer — only the path to it.
In your own life	You opened the fridge instead of journaling because the journal was upstairs.

The organizational risk	Strategy fails not because it's wrong but because the operating model adds friction at every handoff.
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LAW 07

Defaults become destiny.

The pre-selected option is the one most people end up choosing — for life.

Whoever picks the default writes most of the future, because most people never override.

In business	Auto-enrollment 401(k) plans doubled participation. The plan didn't change; the default did.
In your own life	Your morning routine isn't a choice. It's a default you stopped questioning years ago.
The organizational risk	Inherited defaults — meeting cadence, hiring loops, approval chains — quietly run the company forever.

LAW 08

Feedback changes systems.

Where the signal flows, the behavior flows with it.

Add a tight, honest feedback loop and behavior improves. Remove it and behavior drifts.

In business	Weekly customer interviews kept a Series A on course; quarterly NPS dashboards put a Series C in the ditch.
In your own life	Daily weigh-ins do nothing for some people and everything for others — the loop matters more than the willpower.
The organizational risk	Long, abstract feedback loops let bad behavior compound for years before anyone names it.

LAW 09

Metrics distort behavior when they become targets.

Goodhart's Law: the moment a measure becomes the goal, it stops being a good measure.

People don't optimize the outcome — they optimize the number that is supposed to represent the outcome.

In business	Pay support agents on tickets-closed and they will close tickets without solving problems.
In your own life	Track steps and you will pace your living room at 10pm to hit 10,000 — and miss the point of moving.
The organizational risk	Every OKR cycle quietly trains the org to hit the metric while the underlying outcome rots.

LAW 10

People optimize perceived value, not objective value.

What feels valuable beats what is valuable — every time, in every market.

Decisions are made against a mental model of value that may have nothing to do with reality.

In business	Customers will pay more for a worse product with a better story. Pricing isn't math — it's framing.
In your own life	You bought the \$4 coffee because it felt like 'you', not because it tasted twice as good as the \$2 one.
The organizational risk	Strategies built on 'objectively superior' products lose to competitors who shape perception.

LAW 11

Systems produce the behavior they are designed to reward.

Your organization is perfectly designed to produce the behavior you are currently getting.

If a behavior keeps happening, the system is rewarding it — even when no one designed it that way.

In business	The 'toxic high-performer' isn't a personality problem. They're a payoff problem the org refuses to redesign.
In your own life	The recurring fight in your relationship is structural, not moral — somebody is getting a payoff for it.
The organizational risk	Leaders attack symptoms (the person, the meeting, the team) instead of the incentive that produced them.

LAW 12

Unexamined incentives become perverse incentives.

Every incentive drifts toward perversion unless someone is paid to inspect it.

Incentives are not set once. They are living systems. Left alone, they rot.

In business	A bonus that worked in year one funds the wrong behavior in year three — but nobody owns the audit.
In your own life	The deal you made with yourself at 25 ('always say yes to work') becomes the trap at 40.
The organizational risk	Nobody is paid to question incentives, so nobody does — until a crisis forces it from the outside.

All twelve laws in full: <https://theincentiveslab.com/laws>

6. Layer 2 - The eight decision motives

Every decision moves a person toward a desired state or away from a feared one. Eight motives cover the field. Name the motive and the incentive designs itself; miss it and no amount of money moves the behavior.

TOWARD SAFER · AWAY FROM VULNERABLE

Does this reduce risk, fear, uncertainty, pain, or vulnerability?

People act to reduce exposure — to threat, loss, regret, or being caught off-guard. The strongest pull in the human nervous system.

Sold against it: insurance, cybersecurity, compliance, healthcare, legal, warranties, backups.

Language signals: 'just in case', 'what if', 'we can't afford to be wrong', 'cover ourselves'.

How it gets exploited: Manufactured fear used to sell unnecessary protection, or to keep people compliant inside broken systems.

TOWARD RICHER · AWAY FROM POORER

Does this increase wealth, resources, opportunity, or future upside?

People act to expand resources — money, leverage, optionality, access. The motive most easily measured, most easily faked.

Sold against it: investments, education, AI tools, consulting, B2B SaaS, real estate, side income.

Language signals: 'ROI', 'opportunity', 'leverage', 'compound'.

How it gets exploited: Promises of returns that obscure the cost; status-as-wealth signaling that traps people in lifestyle inflation.

TOWARD HEALTHIER · AWAY FROM SICKER

Does this improve physical, emotional, or mental well-being?

People act to feel better in their body and mind. The motive most vulnerable to magical thinking.

Sold against it: fitness, supplements, therapy, longevity, sleep tech, nutrition, mental health.

Language signals: 'feel good', 'natural', 'optimize', 'longevity'.

How it gets exploited: Wellness industry built on engineered insecurity; medical systems paid per intervention, not per outcome.

TOWARD SMARTER · AWAY FROM CONFUSED**Does this give clarity, knowledge, capability, or better judgment?**

People act to upgrade their ability to think. The motive that fuels every information product on Earth.

Sold against it: books, courses, coaching, research tools, AI assistants, newsletters.

Language signals: 'understand', 'figure out', 'finally make sense of', 'expert'.

How it gets exploited: Endless content consumption that creates the feeling of progress without behavior change.

TOWARD HAPPIER · AWAY FROM MISERABLE**Does this give pleasure, joy, comfort, beauty, fun, or fulfillment?**

People act to experience more good feeling. The motive most distorted by short-term dopamine.

Sold against it: travel, entertainment, restaurants, games, luxury, art, design.

Language signals: 'love it', 'fun', 'beautiful', 'treat myself'.

How it gets exploited: Variable-reward apps and substances engineered to hijack the same circuit they pretend to serve.

TOWARD CONNECTED · AWAY FROM LONELY**Does this help people belong, bond, love, or identify with others?**

People act to be seen, included, chosen. The motive the modern world has hollowed out the most.

Sold against it: communities, clubs, dating apps, gifts, social platforms, memberships, religion.

Language signals: 'people like me', 'our group', 'we', 'belong'.

How it gets exploited: Tribalism farmed for engagement; communities optimized for retention rather than connection.

TOWARD MORE SIGNIFICANT · AWAY FROM IGNORED**Does this give status, respect, recognition, influence, or legacy?**

People act to matter — to be noticed, credited, remembered. The motive that funds most marketing.

Sold against it: luxury brands, awards, titles, certifications, platforms, philanthropy.

Language signals: 'leader', 'first', 'top', 'known for'.

How it gets exploited: Status games that replace useful contribution with visible performance.

TOWARD MORE FREE · AWAY FROM TRAPPED**Does this give autonomy, time, control, flexibility, or optionality?**

People act to expand the surface area of their choices. The motive that quietly drives founders and operators.

Sold against it: automation, AI assistants, passive income, productivity tools, remote work, FIRE.

Language signals: 'on my own terms', 'optionality', 'flexibility', 'don't have to'.

How it gets exploited: Tools sold as freedom that become new cages; 'freedom' industries that lock buyers into membership tiers.

Run the motive diagnostic: <https://theincentiveslab.com/motives>

7. The behavioral models canon

The models a designer should be able to hold in one head at once - what each one claims, and what it is actually good for at the drafting table.

David R. Hawkins · 1995

Map of Consciousness

A 17-level scale of emotional energy from Shame (20) to Enlightenment (700-1000).

Hawkins proposes that human states of consciousness can be mapped on a logarithmic scale of 'energetic calibration.' Below Courage (200) lies the survival paradigm (force, fear, scarcity). At and above Courage lies the integrity paradigm (power, trust, abundance). The model is widely used in coaching and leadership development as a vocabulary for emotional reframing.

Designer use. Use Hawkins levels as a *target emotional state* when designing incentives. Most extrinsic carrots and sticks move people only between Pride (175) and Fear (100). Incentives that surface meaning, autonomy, and contribution can lift people into Willingness (310) or Acceptance (350), where intrinsic motivation compounds.

[Read the full model page](#)

Abraham Maslow · 1943

Hierarchy of Needs

Five-tier ladder from physiological needs to self-actualization.

Maslow argued that lower-order needs (food, safety) must be reasonably met before higher-order needs (esteem, self-actualization) become motivating. Later editions added cognitive, aesthetic, and self-transcendence tiers.

Designer use. Diagnose which tier your audience is operating from before choosing an incentive. Esteem-tier rewards (recognition, mastery badges) fail when safety needs (job security, predictable pay) are unmet.

[Read the full model page](#)

Deci & Ryan · 1985

Self-Determination Theory

Intrinsic motivation requires autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

SDT distinguishes intrinsic motivation (doing something because it is inherently interesting) from extrinsic motivation (doing it for separable consequences). Three universal needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—drive sustained engagement. Controlling extrinsic rewards can **undermine** intrinsic motivation (the over-justification effect).

Designer use. Audit every incentive against ACR: does it give people choice, evidence of growing skill, and a sense of belonging? If a reward replaces a freely chosen behavior with a contingent one, expect engagement to collapse when the reward is withdrawn.

[Read the full model page](#)

Robert Plutchik · 1980

Wheel of Emotions

Eight primary emotions arranged in four polar opposites.

Plutchik organized emotions on a wheel of eight primary affects—joy/sadness, trust/disgust, fear/anger, surprise/anticipation—each varying in intensity and combining into dyads such as love (joy + trust) and contempt (anger + disgust).

Designer use. Use the wheel to design **emotional dyads** into experiences: pair anticipation with trust to create optimism; combine fear with surprise to create awe. Avoid stacking opposite emotions on the same touchpoint—they cancel into confusion.

[Read the full model page](#)

Lisa Feldman Barrett · 2017

Theory of Constructed Emotion

Emotions are constructed by the brain from interoception + concepts + context.

Barrett's theory rejects the 'classical view' that emotions are universal, hard-wired modules. Instead the brain predicts the meaning of bodily sensations using learned emotion concepts and cultural context. Emotional granularity—the precision of one's emotion vocabulary—predicts regulation and wellbeing.

Designer use. Increase emotional granularity in the language of an incentive system: 'frustrated', 'overwhelmed', and 'discouraged' route to different interventions even though all three feel 'bad'. Cultures and teams can be re-trained on emotion vocabularies.

[Read the full model page](#)

Daniel Kahneman · 2011

System 1 / System 2

Two minds: fast, automatic, intuitive — and slow, effortful, deliberate.

Kahneman summarized decades of dual-process research as 'System 1' (fast, parallel, low-effort, emotional) and 'System 2' (slow, serial, effortful, rule-following). Most everyday choices are System 1; System 2 is lazy and often endorses System 1's outputs.

Designer use. If you want compliance, design *for* System 1: defaults, visual salience, social proof, frictionless paths. If you want deliberation, design *for* System 2: cooling-off periods, checklists, pre-commitment devices, friction at the moment of choice.

[Read the full model page](#)

Robert Cialdini · 1984

Six (Seven) Principles of Influence

Reciprocity, commitment/consistency, social proof, authority, liking, scarcity, unity.

Cialdini identified universal shortcuts people use to decide whom to trust and what to do. A seventh principle—Unity—was added in 2016: the more a request comes from someone perceived as 'we', the more likely it is to be honored.

Designer use. Stack at least three Cialdini levers per high-stakes ask: e.g. authority (credentialed source) + social proof (peer count) + scarcity (deadline). Used in isolation, single levers are easy to discount.

[Read the full model page](#)

Beck & Cowan (after Graves) · 1996

Spiral Dynamics

Eight color-coded worldviews from Beige (survival) to Turquoise (holistic).

Building on Clare Graves' research, Spiral Dynamics describes value-memes (vMEMES) that emerge as life conditions become more complex. Each level transcends and includes the prior: Beige -> Purple -> Red -> Blue -> Orange -> Green -> Yellow -> Turquoise. Different vMEMES respond to different incentive logics.

Designer use. Diagnose the *value system* of your audience before choosing rewards. Orange responds to achievement and ROI; Green to inclusion and consensus; Blue to order, duty, and rules. A misaligned vMEME-incentive pairing reads as offensive.

[Read the full model page](#)

Robert Kegan · 1982

Adult Development Stages

Five orders of mind from Impulsive to Self-Transforming.

Kegan's constructive-developmental model traces how the *subject* of one stage (what we're embedded in and can't see) becomes the *object* of the next (what we can hold, reflect on, and use). Most adults plateau at the Socialized Mind (stage 3).

Designer use. Stretch developmental capacity by giving people contexts that require the *next* order of mind: stage-3 socialized minds need protected space to disagree with their group; stage-4 self-authoring minds need exposure to genuinely incommensurable worldviews.

[Read the full model page](#)

8. Layer 1 - The Brain Atlas

Ten regions do most of the work behind every incentive you will ever design. This is the hardware the rest of the stack runs on.

EXECUTIVE

Prefrontal Cortex

Function. Executive control, planning, impulse override, working memory, System 2.

Mechanism. Top-down control circuits modulate the rest of the brain — but they're glucose-hungry and fatigue fast.

How it lands in your day. First thing to go offline under stress, fatigue, or low blood sugar. Why your 4pm decisions are worse than your 9am ones.

CONFLICT

Anterior Cingulate

Function. Conflict monitoring, error detection, effort allocation, pain of being wrong.

Mechanism. Signals when expectation and outcome disagree, recruiting prefrontal control.

How it lands in your day. Generates the unmistakable feeling of cognitive dissonance — and the urge to make it stop, often by changing the belief, not the behavior.

THREAT

Amygdala

Function. Threat detection, fear, social pain, loss aversion, fast emotional tagging.

Mechanism. Subcortical alarm system that can hijack attention and override the prefrontal cortex within ~80ms.

How it lands in your day. Loss feels roughly twice as bad as equivalent gain feels good. Social rejection lights up the same circuits as physical pain.

GUT

Insula

Function. Disgust, fairness, gut-feel, interoception (sensing your own body).

Mechanism. Integrates body signals into conscious feelings — the neural seat of 'something feels off'.

How it lands in your day. Why an obviously rational deal can feel viscerally wrong. Why fairness violations make you queasy.

MEMORY

Hippocampus

Function. Episodic memory, narrative formation, spatial mapping, learning from experience.

Mechanism. Binds events into stories — and rewrites the story each time you recall it.

How it lands in your day. Your memory of what happened is a reconstruction, not a recording. Every retelling edits the file.

REWARD

Striatum & Nucleus Accumbens

Function. Reward learning, habit formation, anticipation, craving, action selection.

Mechanism. Dopamine arriving here doesn't signal pleasure — it signals 'this was better than expected; do it again'.

How it lands in your day. Habits live here. So do addictions. Variable rewards train this circuit faster than fixed ones.

WANTING

VTA & Dopamine Pathway

Function. Wanting, anticipation, prediction error, motivational salience.

Mechanism. VTA neurons fire on the *gap* between expectation and reward — the surprise, not the prize.

How it lands in your day. Predictable rewards stop motivating. The phone buzz fires dopamine; the message itself rarely does.

ATTENTION

Parietal Cortex

Function. Attention allocation, spatial awareness, salience filtering, switching focus.

Mechanism. Decides what reaches consciousness and what stays background — the bouncer of perception.

How it lands in your day. What you attend to becomes what you can think about. Attention is the rate-limiting resource of cognition.

SELF

Default Mode Network

Function. Self-referential thought, mind-wandering, narrative-of-self, mental time travel.

Mechanism. The network that lights up when you're not focused on a task — building the story of you.

How it lands in your day. Most of your waking thought is this network running scenarios about you, your status, your past, and your future.

AROUSAL

Brainstem & Vagus

Function. Arousal, autonomic state, stress response, calm, sleep / wake.

Mechanism. Sets the baseline activation level for everything else — the volume knob of the nervous system.

How it lands in your day. When this is dysregulated (chronic stress, poor sleep), no upstream cognitive work is reliable.

Open the interactive atlas: <https://theincentiveslab.com/brain>

9. The periodic table of human behavior

Behavior has elements. Elements combine into molecules - repeatable compounds of behavior you can name, predict, and redesign. Below is the full element set as published.

Group	What it covers
A - Attention	What we notice
E - Emotion	What we feel
M - Motivation	Why we act
I - Incentives	What drives us
C - Cognition	How we think
S - Social	Who we're with
Y - Systems	Where we live

Code	Element	Group	Function	Level	Force	Speed
A1	Saliency	Attention	What stands out captures attention	1	5	instant
A2	Selective Attention	Attention	Filters what we engage with	2	4	instant
A3	Shared Focus	Attention	Aligns attention toward a goal	3	4	medium
A4	Information Architecture	Attention	Design shapes what's seen	4	5	medium
A5	Market Signals	Attention	Prices & info guide attention	5	4	instant
A6	Media Influence	Attention	Shapes what millions notice	6	5	medium
A7	Technological Attention	Attention	Tech shapes our focus	7	5	slow
E1	Fear	Emotion	Protects us from threat	1	5	instant
E2	Trust	Emotion	Opens us to vulnerability	2	4	slow
E3	Empathy	Emotion	We feel with others	3	4	instant
E4	Culture	Emotion	Shared feelings become norms	4	5	slow
E5	Greed	Emotion	Desire for more than enough	5	5	medium
E6	Moral Emotions	Emotion	Anger, outrage, compassion	6	5	medium
E7	Existential Emotions	Emotion	Hope, awe, dread	7	4	very-slow

Code	Element	Group	Function	Level	Force	Speed
M1	Purpose	Motivation	Gives direction and meaning	1	5	slow
M2	Attachment	Motivation	Seeks connection and safety	2	5	slow
M3	Belonging	Motivation	We want to be part of a group	3	5	medium
M4	Mastery	Motivation	Desire to improve and grow	4	4	slow
M5	Competition	Motivation	Drives innovation and differentiation	5	5	medium
M6	Collective Identity	Motivation	Unites millions around ideas	6	5	slow
M7	Transcendence	Motivation	Purpose beyond the self	7	4	very-slow
I1	Rewards	Incentives	Attract behavior with upside	1	5	instant
I2	Reciprocity	Incentives	We return favors and kindness	2	5	medium
I3	Incentive Alignment	Incentives	Aligns effort with group goals	3	5	medium
I4	Performance Metrics	Incentives	Measure drives behavior	4	5	medium
I5	Market Incentives	Incentives	Profit, penalties, and prices	5	5	medium
I6	Policy Incentives	Incentives	Laws, subsidies, taxes, penalties	6	5	slow
I7	Civilizational Incentives	Incentives	Systems that shape our future	7	5	very-slow
C1	Attention Bias	Cognition	We notice things selectively	1	4	instant
C2	Perspective Taking	Cognition	We imagine others' minds	2	4	medium
C3	Group Heuristics	Cognition	Simplify complex team decisions	3	4	medium
C4	Mental Models	Cognition	We interpret through models	4	5	slow
C5	Bounded Rationality	Cognition	Limits shape market choices	5	5	medium
C6	Ideologies	Cognition	Belief systems shape decisions	6	5	slow
C7	Collective Intelligence	Cognition	Humanity learns together	7	4	very-slow
S1	Self-Identity	Social	Shapes how we see ourselves	1	5	slow
S2	Interpersonal Attraction	Social	Draws us together	2	4	medium
S3	Social Proof	Social	We look to others for cues	3	5	instant
S4	Reputation	Social	Our standing in the eyes of others	4	5	slow
S5	Herd Behavior	Social	We follow the crowd	5	5	medium
S6	Social Norms	Social	Define acceptable behavior	6	5	slow

Code	Element	Group	Function	Level	Force	Speed
S7	Global Cooperation	Social	Work together for the whole	7	3	very-slow
Y1	Environment	Systems	The context that shapes behavior	1	5	medium
Y2	Dyadic Dynamics	Systems	Patterns between two people	2	4	medium
Y3	Team Norms	Systems	Unwritten rules guide behavior	3	5	slow
Y4	Organizational Systems	Systems	Structures enable or constrain	4	5	slow
Y5	Market Structure	Systems	Rules shape competition	5	5	slow
Y6	Institutions	Systems	Laws, systems, and governance	6	5	very-slow
Y7	Civilizational Systems	Systems	Complex adaptive systems	7	5	very-slow

See it rendered: <https://theincentiveslab.com/periodic-table> · build a molecule: <https://theincentiveslab.com/molecule-builder>

10. The Atlas

The Atlas is the open encyclopedia beneath everything else: 1229 entries, each with a definition, a worked example, a human impact, and links into the layer it belongs to. It is free, permanently, for everyone.

Section	Entries	Open
Bias	81	https://theincentiveslab.com/bias
Fallacy	64	https://theincentiveslab.com/fallacy
AI Incentives	85	https://theincentiveslab.com/ai-incentives
Neuroscience	75	https://theincentiveslab.com/neuroscience
Perverse Incentives	204	https://theincentiveslab.com/perverse
Mental Models	674	https://theincentiveslab.com/models
HBE Elements	46	https://theincentiveslab.com/periodic-table
Total	1229	Appendix A

Every entry is a page

Each Atlas entry has its own permanent URL at theincentiveslab.com/glossary/<slug>. Appendix A of this paper lists all of them, and every one is a live link.

PART III

The Method

How the Lab actually diagnoses an incentive system: the six dimensions, the root-out sequence, and the Cultural Performance Audit instrument.

- The six incentive dimensions
- The root-out sequence
- The Cultural Performance Audit
- Six phases of an audit
- What we ask

11. The six incentive dimensions

Six dimensions, six questions, one diagnostic spine. Most teams argue about behavior with no vocabulary for the forces producing it. This is the vocabulary.

DIMENSION 01

Visible

The question. *What does the system openly reward - in pay, promotion, praise, and protection?*

The official scoreboard. Comp plans, OKRs, bonuses, published targets. Easy to read and almost never the whole story.

DIMENSION 02

Hidden

The question. *What gets rewarded that nobody wrote down?*

Status, access, airtime, proximity to power, whose calendar gets protected. The hidden scoreboard beats the visible one whenever the two disagree.

DIMENSION 03

Perverse

The question. *Where is the system producing the exact opposite of its stated intent?*

Ship-rate targets that manufacture incidents. Call-time targets that manufacture repeat calls. The system is not broken; it is performing as designed.

DIMENSION 04

Missing

The question. *What does the organization say it values but never measures or rewards?*

Mentorship, documentation, cross-team help, long-horizon safety. Stated values with no incentive surface degrade into noise.

DIMENSION 05

AI

The question. *What are the models, agents, and automations being rewarded for?*

Every deployed model is an incentive system without a human to feel its consequences. Reward hacking is a comp-plan problem in a new medium.

DIMENSION 06

Future

The question. *What behavior is today's design conditioning people into two years from now?*

Incentives compound. The second-order effect is the real effect, and it arrives after the person who designed it has been promoted.

The framework in full: <https://theincentiveslab.com/framework> · the six incentives: <https://theincentiveslab.com/incentives> · score yourself: <https://theincentiveslab.com/iiq>

12. The root-out sequence

A diagnosis is not an opinion about culture. It is a sequence, run in order, that ends in a redesign with named second-order risks and a measurement plan.

STEP 1

Find the pain

Ask what hurts, who feels it, and what people already do to make it stop. The workaround is the map.

STEP 2

Read the scoreboards

Write down the visible incentive. Then write down the hidden one. Where they disagree, behavior follows the hidden one.

STEP 3

Trace the loop

Follow the reward to its second and third order. Most damage lives two steps past the metric everyone is watching.

STEP 4

Name the missing surface

Identify the stated value with no measurement attached. That gap is where credibility is lost.

STEP 5

Redesign the reward, not the message

Change what is paid, praised, promoted, and protected. Communication is not an intervention.

STEP 6

Instrument it

Define the leading indicator, the counter-metric that catches the perverse case, and the review cadence.

STEP 7

Re-run

Incentive systems drift. Diagnostics are quarterly, not once.

Run it yourself, free

The AI diagnostician takes about five minutes and returns a read on which dimensions are loudest in your situation. theincentiveslab.com/diagnose

13. The Cultural Performance Audit

The Cultural Performance Audit is the Lab's instrument for measuring the distance between the culture an organization describes and the culture its incentives actually pay for.

SECTION 01

Culture

Ten statements that surface the gap between the culture leadership describes and the culture people live in. Clarity of vision, congruence of leadership behavior, role clarity, communication, crisis mode, whether challenging the status quo is rewarded, fad-chasing, bureaucracy, recognition, and collegiality.

Scale. 5-point agreement scale, each item weighted by respondent-rated importance (1-10)

SECTION 02

Strategy

Ten statements that test whether the stated strategy is actually installed — customer loyalty, people as an asset, structure, decision rights, performance review fairness, information flow, competitive position, and whether daily work ladders to the goal.

Scale. 3-point agreement scale

SECTION 03

Performance

Ten hard numbers that convert culture into economics: customer retention, happiness at work, email load, five-year intent, tenure, training hours, reliability, meeting load, customer-facing time, and total hours worked. This is where cultural sentiment becomes a cost line.

Scale. Quantitative — hours, counts, and 1-10 self-report

The six phases

Phase	What happens
01 Scope & sponsor alignment	We agree on the decision the audit has to inform — an acquisition, a re-org, a comp redesign, a new CEO's first 100 days — and define the population, confidentiality terms, and reporting cadence.
02 Instrument deployment	The Cultural Performance Audit™ goes to the population. Five to ten minutes per respondent, three scored sections, a word bank, and five open-ended prompts. Answers are on how things are, not how people wish they were.

Phase	What happens
03 Leadership interviews	Structured interviews with the executive team and a cross-section of frontline operators. We're listening for the delta between what leadership believes is rewarded and what is actually rewarded.
04 Incentive mapping	We map every scored gap to the incentive producing it — comp, promotion criteria, meeting design, decision rights, recognition, and informal status. Culture is an output; incentives are the input.
05 Findings & perverse loops	You get the scored profile, the word-bank signature, the verbatim themes, and the named perverse incentive loops — the places where the system pays people to do the thing you say you don't want.
06 Redesign & re-audit	We hand back a prioritized redesign of the incentives driving the worst scores, then re-run the audit on a fixed cadence so the change is measured, not asserted.

Where it gets used

- Cultural due diligence (M&A) - Run the audit on both sides of a deal before close. Integration failures are almost never strategic — they're two incentive systems that reward opposite behavior colliding on day one.
- Pre-integration and post-close - A baseline at close and a re-audit at 90 and 365 days turns 'culture fit' from a feeling into a tracked variable with an owner.
- New CEO or executive onboarding - An incoming leader inherits the real map — where trust is, where bureaucracy is, and which behaviors the current system actually pays for.
- Comp and performance redesign - Before you change the plan, measure what the current plan is producing. The Performance section prices the culture in hours, meetings, and retention.
- Turnaround and crisis mode - 'Everything is an emergency' is a scored item for a reason. We identify what is manufacturing the urgency and what it is costing you.
- Investor and board reporting - A repeatable, comparable cultural score across a portfolio — with benchmarks — instead of anecdote at the quarterly.

The open questions we always ask

- What are three things that excite you about what is currently going on in your organization?
- What are three things that concern you in your organization?
- What are three ways to improve your job today?
- If you were CEO for the day, what is the one thing you would change — and how?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats you see for the organization?

The instrument: <https://theincentiveslab.com/cultural-performance-audit>

PART IV

The Evidence

Engagements, landmark studies, and the proof-of-thesis properties that test the model in public.

- Cultural Performance Audit engagements
- Landmark incentive studies
- Shared principles
- Proof of thesis
- What clients say

14. Audit engagements

HEALTHCARE · BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Vail Health - Moving a health system from reactive to strategic.

A regional health system and its behavioral-health arm were operating in permanent crisis mode. The audit showed the culture wasn't broken — it was being paid to react.

The challenge. Reposition a regional health system and its behavioral-health arm for exponential growth while shifting culture from reactive to strategic. Leadership described a strategy the frontline had never seen expressed in how work was assigned or rewarded.

The engagement. Multi-year advisory and facilitation with the C-suite. The audit baseline covered culture, strategy, and performance, followed by leadership interviews and an incentive map across communications, revenue strategy, and innovation cadence.

What the audit found

- Crisis mode scored high while role clarity scored low — a classic signal that urgency was substituting for prioritization.
- Recognition was concentrated on firefighting, so strategic work had no route to status.
- Word bank skewed to 'Collaboration' and 'Healthy' but under-indexed on 'Shared Decisions.'

Outcome. New revenue streams unlocked, the leadership team aligned on a shared operating model, and a repeatable framework for approaching complex problems from new angles.

Measure	Result
Advisory engagement	Multi-year
Population audited	C-suite
Revenue streams unlocked	New

“Aaron helps us get out of our own way — turning ideas into plans and realizations that bring in better revenue.”

— Chris Lindley · Chief Population Health Officer, Vail Health

[Read the case study](#)

PUBLIC SAFETY · GOVERNMENT

Arizona Department of Public Safety - Auditing a public-safety culture under budget pressure.

Modernization had stalled — not for lack of will, but because the reward structure protected manual process. The audit made the cost visible in hours.

The challenge. Modernize public-safety operations under real budget and time pressure without disrupting frontline officers or eroding trust in leadership.

The engagement. Cultural Performance Audit across administrative and frontline populations, workflow mapping, then targeted automation of repetitive back-office tasks with internal leaders trained to own the systems.

What the audit found

- The Performance section quantified hours lost weekly to back-office repetition that no scorecard captured.
- Bureaucracy scored as the dominant cultural word — with the highest importance weighting attached to it.
- Rewards for challenging the status quo were effectively zero, freezing improvement at the frontline.

Outcome. Hours of manual work reclaimed weekly, faster response on key processes, and a replicable playbook for further public-safety automation owned by internal leaders.

Measure	Result
Manual hours reclaimed	Weekly
Ownership transferred	Internal
Playbook delivered	Replicable

[Read the case study](#)

CPG · CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

The Coca-Cola Company - Disrupting the largest cross-functional team.

A cross-functional division where every function was individually high-performing and collectively slow. The assessment found the handoffs, not the people.

The challenge. A large cross-functional customer team needed to become change agents inside the organization — but alignment kept dying in the handoffs between functions.

The engagement. Pre-workshop cultural assessment of communication patterns and decision rights, a custom disruptive workshop introducing exponential thinking, then implementation tracking against personalized action plans for each team lead.

What the audit found

- Bottlenecks clustered at function boundaries, not inside functions.

- Each function's local scorecard rewarded a behavior that slowed the next function down.
- Post-assessment action plans succeeded where an owner and a reward were both named.

Outcome. Full team adoption of the shared operating language, materially faster cross-functional collaboration, and near-complete action-plan follow-through with a quarterly re-check cadence.

Measure	Result
Team adoption rate	100%
Action plan completion	90%
Internal NPS score	Top

[Read the case study](#)

INSTITUTIONS · MEMBERSHIP

Council on Foreign Relations - Assessing an institution where credibility is the product.

For a think tank, culture is the brand. The assessment focused on where internal incentives risked drifting from the institution's credibility standard.

The challenge. Lead a strategic digital and communications transformation for one of the world's most influential foreign-policy institutions without compromising credibility standards or member trust.

The engagement. Cultural and strategic assessment of editorial, membership, and technology functions, followed by platform and member-experience redesign informed by the findings.

What the audit found

- Editorial and growth functions were optimizing against incentives that pulled in opposite directions.
- Member engagement was measured in volume, not in the signals the institution actually valued.
- Decision rights on publishing were clear; decision rights on distribution were not.

Outcome. A substantially higher-engagement digital presence with expanded global reach, multiplied content consumption, and top-tier member satisfaction — with editorial standards intact.

Measure	Result
Digital engagement increase	200%
Content consumption	4x
Reach expansion	Global

[Read the case study](#)

MEMBERSHIP · COMMUNITY

NFL Alumni Association - Culture assessment for a membership organization.

Members were joining and going quiet. The assessment found the organization was rewarding sign-ups rather than the connections members actually joined for.

The challenge. Connect former professional athletes with career opportunities, health resources, and community — at a scale where the organization's incentives rewarded acquisition over activation.

The engagement. Assessment of member experience, staff incentives, and program design, then a rebuilt digital communications strategy and platform matching members to opportunity.

What the audit found

- Staff scorecards rewarded membership counts; members valued matched opportunities.
- The highest-value activity — mentorship — had the least recognition attached to it.
- Storytelling was the single highest-leverage engagement mechanism and was under-resourced.

Outcome. Thousands of alumni actively connected, event attendance multiplied, and a majority-rate opportunity match — with member engagement sustained rather than spiking at signup.

Measure	Result
Active alumni connected	5,000+
Event attendance growth	3x
Member engagement rate	85%

[Read the case study](#)

EDUCATION · VOLUNTEER NETWORKS

Junior Achievement - Assessing culture across 176,000 classrooms.

A volunteer network at national scale where the culture is carried by people who aren't paid. The assessment focused on non-monetary incentives.

The challenge. Deliver a consistent mission experience across four million students, 176,000 classrooms, and 178,000 volunteers — where the delivery workforce is unpaid and self-selecting.

The engagement. Cultural assessment of volunteer motivation and staff support structures, then scalable content systems, video training modules, and volunteer engagement funnels aligned to what the assessment found volunteers actually optimized for.

What the audit found

- Volunteer retention tracked recognition and clarity of impact, not training volume.
- Regional variance in culture was driven by local recognition practice, not by curriculum.
- Staff were incentivized on recruitment, while the constraint was retention.

Outcome. Scalable communication and training systems that amplified the mission consistently across the network, with volunteer engagement designed around the incentives that actually retained people.

Measure	Result
Students reached	4M
Classrooms	176K
Volunteers	178K

[Read the case study](#)

FOUNDERS · PRIVATE NETWORK

Extraordinary (Founder Network) - Designing a culture where the incentives do the work.

A network built from the incentive layer up — the clearest demonstration of what the audit is looking for when it looks at any organization.

The challenge. Build a high-trust network where founders, investors, and operators actually move each other's businesses forward — rather than a directory that decays into noise.

The engagement. Designed and ran the Extraordinary platform, curated membership, and facilitated convenings, with cultural health measured continuously rather than surveyed annually.

What the audit found

- Trust was the binding constraint; every design decision was tested against it.
- Status in the network had to be earned by contribution, or the network would invert.
- Curation is an incentive mechanism, not an editorial preference.

Outcome. A compounding network used by Shark Tank founders, EA Sports' Trip Hawkins, and hundreds of operators — repeatedly described as the highest-signal room on their calendar.

Measure	Result
Members	239+
Cities	18
Entry only	Nominated

“Amazing thought leader and communicator. He will 100x many companies — he has already done amazing things for a lot of my clients.”

— Daymond John · Shark Tank · Founder, FUBU

[Read the case study](#)

15. Landmark incentive studies

Five studies of incentive architecture at the scale of an empire - what was rewarded, what it produced, and what it cost.

01 · AEROSPACE & ENERGY

Elon Musk - Betting Your Life on the Mission — Existential Incentives at SpaceX & Tesla

Most CEOs manage incentives with stock options, bonuses, and titles. Elon Musk did something far more radical: he made his own survival dependent on the success of his companies. After PayPal, he put \$100M into SpaceX, \$70M into Tesla, and \$10M into SolarCity — and was reportedly borrowing money to pay rent. The incentive wasn't just financial. It was existential.

“I could either watch it happen or be a part of it.” — Elon Musk

Layer 1 · Personal Skin in the Game

By investing his entire fortune, Musk eliminated the comfortable executive 'soft landing.' When SpaceX's third rocket failed in 2008 and Tesla nearly went bankrupt the same year, he had no personal safety net. He was forced to be creative, relentless, and decisive in ways a comfortably-hedged executive never would be.

Layer 2 · Mission as Intrinsic Motivator

Musk recruited employees not primarily with compensation but with a civilizational mission: make humanity multiplanetary, accelerate sustainable energy. This let him attract talent willing to accept below-market salaries for above-market meaning.

Layer 3 · First-Principles Cost Pressure

By reasoning from first principles — what does a rocket actually cost in raw materials? — Musk created a permanent incentive for innovation. The target wasn't industry benchmarks but the theoretical minimum, reframing 'good enough' as failure.

[Read the full study](#)

02 · E-COMMERCE & CLOUD

Jeff Bezos & Amazon - The Long Game — How Day 1 Thinking Rewired Every Incentive

Jeff Bezos built Amazon on a deceptively simple incentive inversion: sacrifice short-term profits to maximize long-term customer value, and trust the profits will follow. The 1997 shareholder letter made this explicit and filtered out every investor, employee, and business unit that thought short-term.

“We are willing to be misunderstood for long periods of time.” — Jeff Bezos

The Day 1 Doctrine

'Day 2,' Bezos warned, is stasis, followed by irrelevance, followed by painful decline. Framing every decision as if Amazon were still a startup created an organizational incentive to stay hungry. The enemy wasn't competitors — it was complacency.

The Flywheel

Lower prices attract more customers -> more customers attract more sellers -> more sellers expand selection -> better selection and lower prices attract even more customers. Cross-functional collaboration became structurally rewarded because it kept the flywheel spinning.

Two-Pizza Rule & API Mandate

Small teams couldn't hide in bureaucracy. The 2002 API Mandate required every service to communicate via API, full stop — creating an incentive structure where internal teams built products good enough to compete externally. This is how AWS was born.

Customer Obsession as North Star

Working-backwards PR/FAQs forced teams to justify value to the customer before writing a line of code, eliminating the incentive to build things that look good internally but don't serve customers.

[Read the full study](#)

03 · CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Steve Jobs & Apple - The Perfection Premium — Incentivizing Quality at the Expense of Everything Else

Steve Jobs built Apple on a radical premise: refuse to compete on price, and compete only on the experience of perfection. If you make perfection the only acceptable outcome internally, you produce products that justify a price premium externally. The incentive he designed was: embarrassment is worse than failure.

“Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.” — Steve Jobs

The DRI System

Every decision had a Directly Responsible Individual. No committees, no shared ownership. You couldn't hide behind group consensus — if the product failed, it was your failure.

The Reality Distortion Field

Jobs' ability to convince people that impossible deadlines were achievable was fundamentally an incentive mechanism. By setting goals engineers believed were impossible and then celebrating when they achieved them, he recalibrated what teams thought was possible.

Integration as Competitive Moat

Controlling both hardware and software created a structural incentive for Apple's ecosystem. Once you owned an iPhone, buying a Mac made your life easier. Switching became costly; staying became rewarding.

The Perfection Standard

Jobs famously cared about circuit boards inside computers no user would ever see — because the people building it would know. Invisible quality became as important as visible quality. Craftsmen's pride replaced compliance.

[Read the full study](#)

04 · POLITICS & MEDIA

Donald Trump's 2016 & 2024 Elections - The Grievance Economy — Following the Incentives of a Disrupted Electorate

Set aside ideology and follow the incentives. Trump won not because he convinced voters of a new vision, but because he correctly identified an enormous pool of people whose incentives had been systematically ignored by both parties. He didn't create the demand. He recognized it and supplied it.

“I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters.” — Donald Trump, January 2016

The Ignored Voter's Incentive

Decades of globalization and automation hollowed out manufacturing employment. Workers left behind had a strong incentive to punish the establishment but no vehicle. Trump's disruption of the Republican primary was less a hostile takeover than a demand response.

Media Incentives & the Attention Economy

Media companies need engagement, and controversy drives engagement. By making every statement polarizing, Trump guaranteed coverage money couldn't buy — an estimated \$2B in earned media in the 2016 primary cycle alone.

The Authenticity Signal

In a political environment dominated by focus-grouped messaging, deliberate un-polish was itself a signal. Incomplete sentences and personal anecdotes inferred authenticity — a counterintuitive alignment where being 'unPresidential' demonstrated trustworthiness.

The Identity Incentive (2024 Comeback)

Each indictment increased fundraising. Each prosecution reinforced the narrative that the establishment was targeting him — and by extension, his supporters. The base's incentive shifted from 'vote for change' to 'vote to protect our team from theirs.'

[Read the full study](#)

05 · ADVISORY & COMMUNITY

The Extraordinary Network & Aaron Bare LLC - The Session Zero Architecture — Incentivizing Trust Before Commitment

Most consultants sell with proposals, credentials, and case studies — then ask for money. The Extraordinary Network inverts this. Session Zero is free: the client experiences value before committing, and the provider must perform at their best before any contract exists. Trust is earned in the room, not promised on a website.

“The best way to close a deal is to make closing irrelevant.” — Aaron Bare

Session Zero · Free Value Demonstration

Removes the buyer's primary incentive to withhold commitment — uncertainty. Prospects aren't asked to trust credentials; they're invited to experience capability. The conversion mechanism is the quality of the session itself.

Scarcity by Design · Three Companies Max

Working with a maximum of three companies at a time creates dual incentive. For clients: scarcity creates urgency. For Aaron: the constraint forces a selectivity standard where only the highest-potential engagements make the portfolio.

The Polymath Premium

A five-pillar framework — Experience, Network, Business Acumen, Sales & Negotiation, Technical Skills — positions Aaron as a network architect who can see across the entire business landscape, not a narrow specialist.

The Community Flywheel

Leaders who join contribute because the quality of peers rises with each addition. Members refer because stronger members increase their network's value. Every participant benefits from every other participant's growth.

[Read the full study](#)

Shared principles across all five

- Align personal stakes with mission stakes - Musk, Bezos, and Jobs all made their own success dependent on the organization's. When personal and organizational stakes merge, the quality of decision-making transforms.
- Find the unmet incentive in the market - Trump won by identifying voters whose incentive to feel heard had no outlet. Amazon won by identifying consumers whose incentive for convenience was underserved. Great opportunities live where strong incentives go unsatisfied.
- Design flywheels, not transactions - The most durable architectures are loops, not lines. Amazon's flywheel, Apple's ecosystem, the Extraordinary Network's peer-quality spiral — value compounds.
- Make the internal standard exceed the external standard - Jobs insisted on perfection in components users never saw. Musk applied first-principles cost analysis to problems most accepted as unsolvable. Exceed what any external observer would demand.
- Remove friction from the incentive to trust - Session Zero, Amazon's return policy, Apple's 'just works' ecosystem, one-click purchasing — each removes friction between a person having an incentive and acting on it.

16. Proof of thesis

The Lab does not only advise. It runs its own properties against its own thesis - each one built to take a market by removing the perverse incentive that market runs on.

00 · EXECUTIVE EDUCATION · THE FLAGSHIP

The Incentives Lab - theincentiveslab.com

The canonical reference for incentive intelligence in the age of AI.

Thesis. Whoever owns the vocabulary of a discipline owns the discipline. We're building the Atlas — 200+ open glossary pages — so every search, every AI citation, every executive Googling 'reward hacking' or 'principal-agent' lands on our definition. The Executive Course, the retainers, the keynotes all sell themselves once we own the language.

Industry. Executive education + behavioral strategy consulting (~\$8B combined)

Perverse incentive exploited. B-schools optimize for prestige, not utility. Consulting firms optimize for billable hours, not transferable skill. Both leave executives without a working language for the one force that explains every outcome: incentives.

01 · BOOKS · CURATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

100 Great Books - 100greatbooks.com

The funnel page that captures every search for 'best books on ____' and routes it to a single canonical list.

Thesis. Book recommendation lives in a thousand fragmented Medium posts, dead Goodreads threads, and SEO-spam affiliate sites. None has authority. By creating one rigorously-curated, AI-citable list per domain (100 Great Books on Strategy, on AI, on Negotiation, on Incentives), we become the page Google and Perplexity quote when anyone asks 'what should I read on X?'.

Industry. Book discovery & affiliate referral (~\$1.5B Amazon affiliate market for books)

Perverse incentive exploited. Affiliate sites have an incentive to list books that pay the highest commission, not the books that change lives. Goodreads optimizes for engagement, not curation. Reading time is a scarce resource being squandered by misaligned middlemen.

02 · BUILDER TOOLS · AI APP REVIEW & RANKING

HackerLabs - hackerlabs.ai

Pit AI-built apps against each other with public incentives — the best usable site wins ranking, eyeballs, and a featured slot.

Thesis. AI app builders (Lovable, v0, Replit, Bolt) are exploding, but quality is opaque — there's no Yelp, no Product Hunt with teeth. By running a public weekly leaderboard scored on real usability (load time, accessibility, conversion of stated goal), we create the incentive to ship genuinely usable apps, and we own the SEO real-estate for 'best AI-built ___ apps.'

Industry. AI app discovery & ranking (~\$0 today, projected \$100M+ category by 2027)

Perverse incentive exploited. Builders chase tool demos and screenshots, not usable products. Discovery sites reward novelty and hype, not retention. The Cobra Effect: the more 'AI apps' shipped, the worse the average gets, because the metric is 'shipped' not 'used.'

03 · STARTUPS · METHODOLOGY-DRIVEN INCUBATION

Conceptually - conceptually.com

An incubator that exists to prove the Incentive Intelligence methodology produces better startups than the prevailing alternatives.

Thesis. YC and accelerators select for traction and pedigree. We select for incentive architecture: founders who can name the perverse incentive in their market and design a counter-mechanism. Every Conceptually startup is a live case study; portfolio outcomes are the ultimate validation of the Lab's thesis.

Industry. Early-stage venture & incubation (~\$30B annually deployed at pre-seed/seed)

Perverse incentive exploited. VCs optimize for follow-on funding (their LPs' next mark-up), not founder ROI. Accelerators optimize for cohort size and demo-day theatrics. Founders optimize for raising, not for shipping the right thing. Everyone is incentive-misaligned with the actual customer.

04 · METHODOLOGY · THE REPEATABLE PATTERN

The Industry Takeover Playbook - (internal)

The shared mechanism every property above uses — name the perverse incentive, build the counter-mechanism, give away the canonical artifact.

Thesis. Every dominated category we've identified shares a structure: (1) the incumbent metric has been gamed into uselessness, (2) the resulting product is bad and everyone knows it, (3) nobody has built the canonical reference because the incumbents profit from confusion. The takeover move is always the same: publish the rubric, give away the artifact, monetize the conversion.

Industry. Methodology — applies to any fragmented, low-trust, search-discoverable category

Perverse incentive exploited. Information asymmetry. Incumbents profit from buyers not having a reference. Once a credible, free reference exists, the asymmetry collapses and customers route to whoever published it.

The principles behind the portfolio

- Name the perverse incentive first. - Every property begins with a written, public description of the incentive failure the category is suffering from. If you can't name it in one paragraph, you don't yet understand the opportunity.
- Give away the canonical artifact. - The free thing — the Atlas, the list, the rubric, the methodology — is the moat. Incumbents can't follow because their business depends on the asymmetry you're collapsing.
- Make scoring public. - Public criteria force everyone (including us) to behave well. Hidden criteria are a Goodhart's Law factory.
- Cross-link the network. - Every property links to every other property's relevant artifact. The graph compounds. AI crawlers reward dense, semantically-related networks far more than isolated sites.
- Convert with the paid event. - Attention earned by the free artifact converts at the Lab — Executive Course, retainer, fund, sponsorship. The free thing is never the business; it's the magnet.

Full portfolio: <https://theincentiveslab.com/proof-of-thesis>

17. What clients say

“Aaron helped our exec team replace 11 meetings with 3 systems. We move twice as fast with half the noise.”

— CHRO · Fortune 500 Tech

“Two days with Aaron unlocked a strategy we'd been circling for eighteen months.”

— Board Chair · National Nonprofit

“Aaron is the rare advisor who can hold the vision and the next move at the same time.”

— Repeat Client · PE-backed CEO

“Aaron has a rare combination of vision and execution. He doesn't just talk about transformation — he architects it, then ships it with you.”

— Chris Lindley · CPO, Vail Health

“Six-month roadmap -> working system in three weeks.”

— Chief Strategy Officer · Global enterprise

“He didn't just deliver a talk — he installed a new mindset in 4,000 leaders in 45 minutes.”

— VP, Global Events · Daimler

More: <https://theincentiveslab.com/testimonials>

PART V

The Profession

The Incentives Architect: what the role is, the ladder, the code of practice, and how the credential is earned.

- The role
- The ladder
- Domains of practice
- The code of practice
- The IIQ bands
- The 2026 Founding Academy

18. The Incentives Architect

The hottest new executive discipline of the AI age.

Every company runs on incentives. In the AI age, the cost of running them by accident has gone vertical. The Incentives Architect is the trained professional who designs them on purpose — and it is the fastest-rising role in modern leadership.

What the role is responsible for

- Audit incentive systems - Map the formal, informal, and perverse incentives shaping an organization's actual behavior — not its stated goals.
- Redesign broken loops - Rewire reward, recognition, and feedback systems so the measured behavior matches the intended outcome.
- Run perverse-incentive reviews - Stress-test new policies, comp plans, and AI deployments against Goodhart's Law and the Cobra Effect before they ship.
- Advise on AI-incentive alignment - Translate human-incentive principles into the reward models, evals, and KPIs that govern AI systems and the people who deploy them.
- Coach leadership on incentive transparency - Help executives say out loud what they actually reward — and bring their stated values into line with it.
- Mediate misaligned stakeholders - Use incentive mapping to surface where boards, executives, employees, and customers are pulling against each other.

Where architects practice

- Executive teams and boards
- AI labs and applied AI groups
- Public policy and government
- High-performance sports organizations
- Founder-led growth companies
- Venture and private-equity portfolios
- Healthcare systems
- Education and research institutions

19. The ladder

Rung	IIQ band	How it is earned	Next step
01 Apprentice	IIQ 100-119	Self-study the Atlas, take the IIQ Assessment, and complete the free Diagnostic on your own organization.	Take the IIQ Assessment
02 Practitioner	IIQ 120-149	Complete the 12-week Executive Course or 10 paid months of Learn membership. Run one full incentive audit end-to-end.	Enroll in the Executive Course
03 Architect	IIQ 150-179	Earn certification via the annual Consortium membership or month 10 of monthly. Sign the Code of Practice. Listed in the public Practitioner directory.	Become Certified
04 Master	IIQ 180+	Conferred by the Institute after demonstrated field work and successful Train-the-Trainer faculty cohort.	Train the Trainer

20. The code of practice

Principle	Commitment
Transparency over cleverness	An Incentives Architect makes incentives legible. Hidden incentives are the problem we are paid to solve, not a tool we deploy.
No perverse design	We will not knowingly design or deploy an incentive that the people inside the system cannot defend if it is made public.
Measure the behavior, not the metric	When the metric stops tracking the behavior, the Architect's job is to retire the metric — not defend it.
Disclose conflicts	We disclose every financial, reputational, and ideological interest that could shape an audit's conclusions.
Train the next Architect	Every Master Architect is responsible for raising at least one Practitioner. The field grows by transmission.

21. Incentive Intelligence Quotient (IIQ)

Band	Range	What it reads as
Unconscious	70-99	Reads outcomes, not incentives. Sees behavior as character, not system. Blames people for outcomes the incentives produced.
Aware	100-119	Notices the incentive, doesn't yet redesign it. Can name when a metric is producing the wrong behavior, but waits for someone else to fix the system.
Practitioner	120-149	Diagnoses incentive systems on demand. Routinely separates stated from actual incentives. Can run an audit and propose a redesign with confidence.

Band	Range	What it reads as
Architect	150-179	Designs incentive systems the organization actually runs on. Operates at the system level. Anticipates perverse outcomes before they happen. Earns trust to redesign comp, governance, and AI eval loops.
Master	180-200	Trains other Architects and reshapes whole fields. A teacher of the discipline. Their work changes how an industry, a category, or a profession sets its incentives.

Take the IIQ: <https://theincentiveslab.com/iiq> · the profession: <https://theincentiveslab.com/incentives-architect>

22. The 2026 Founding Academy

The 2026 Founding Academy Class is capped at 150. Founding members lock in \$1,250 — half the 2027 rate — and earn the right to apply to the Council at the founding lifetime rate.

Founding rate	2027 standard	Class cap	Cadence
\$1,250	\$2,500	150 seats	one-time · 2026 founding rate

Founding Academy members may apply to the Council and lock in 50% off, for life. The discount is non-transferable and only available to the 2026 cohort.

What the certification covers

- The six dimensions and the diagnostic spine, applied to a live system you bring.
- The full HBOS stack - laws, motives, biases, models, elements - as working vocabulary.
- The root-out sequence, with second-order risk mapping and counter-metric design.
- The Cultural Performance Audit instrument and how to run it.
- The code of practice, including the line between design and manipulation.
- A portfolio-grade redesign, reviewed against the credential standard.

Enrol: <https://theincentiveslab.com/course> · the ten-page course walkthrough starts at <https://theincentiveslab.com/course/1> · free primer: <https://theincentiveslab.com/learn/101>

PART VI

Engagement

How organizations work with the Lab: retainers, sprints, digital twins, caps, and the ROI floor.

- Annual retainer
- Two-week sprint
- Client caps and ROI
- Organizational digital twins
- Plans and company tiers

23. How organizations engage

ANNUAL RETAINER

\$100,000 per year

Standing access to the Lab. Quarterly diagnostics, monthly working sessions, on-call advisory for the leadership team.

TWO-WEEK PROBLEM-SOLVING SPRINT

\$50,000 fixed fee

Two weeks. One named question. One redesigned system, with second-order risks named and a measurement plan handed back.

2026 client cap	2027 client cap	Guaranteed ROI	Observed
10 clients	20 clients	3x	up to 200x

The ROI position

We guarantee a 3x ROI on every engagement. We have seen 200x. The cap is not a marketing device - it is what protects the guarantee.

Organizational digital twins

For leadership teams, the Lab builds a digital twin of the organization's incentive system: a model you can change a rule inside and watch the second-order behavior move before you ship it to real people. It turns incentive redesign from an argument into an experiment.

Read the model: <https://theincentiveslab.com/digital-twin> · <https://theincentiveslab.com/work-with-us>

24. Plans

Plan	Price	What it is	Included
Free	\$0 forever	Browse the library and try the tools on us.	Glossary, Explore, and Brain library; 30 minutes of tool time per month; Save terms and learning paths; Community-only support
Pro	\$100 per month	Unlimited access to the full Incentives Lab tool belt.	Unlimited Diagnose runs; Unlimited Design blueprints; Unlimited Simulate runs; Save reports, export, and share; Library sync across devices
Pro Annual	\$1,000 per year	Two months free when you pay annually.	Everything in Pro Monthly; Two months free vs. monthly; Priority support
Incentives Architect Certification	\$1,250 one-time · lifetime credential	2026 Founding Class rate — 50% off the 2027 standard of \$2,500. 150 seats only. One-time payment, lifetime credential.	Full Incentives Architect™ certification; 2026 Founding Class designation (capped at 150); 50% off the 2027 standard rate (\$2,500); Lifetime digital badge — no renewal required; Public Practitioner directory listing

Company tiers

Tier	Size	Price	Tool seats	Cert seats	Trainer days
Starter	0 - 100 employees	\$15,000 per year	25	2	1
Growth	100 - 500 employees	\$40,000 per year	100	5	2
Scale	500 - 1,000 employees	\$90,000 per year	250	10	4
Enterprise	1,000 - 10,000 employees	Contact sales annual engagement	1,000+	25	6
Global	10,000+ employees	Contact sales custom program	Custom	Custom	Custom

Pricing: <https://theincentiveslab.com/pricing> · teams: <https://theincentiveslab.com/pricing/teams>

PART VII

The Laboratory

The open half of the Lab: research properties, tools, the course, the podcast, and assistant access.

- The six labs
- Tools you can run today
- Research and publishing
- The podcast
- Assistant (MCP) access

25. The six labs

CONTENT ENGINE

Perverse Incentives

Cataloging the incentive structures that backfire.

A living catalog of incentive structures that produce the opposite of their stated intent. Each pattern is sourced from documented cases in healthcare, government, media, finance, technology, and AI.

Mission. Make hidden incentive failures visible — so leaders can stop rewarding the behavior they say they want to eliminate.

- Healthcare reimbursement and outcome distortions
- Public-sector metric gaming
- Platform engagement and attention markets
- AI training, alignment, and deployment loops

<https://theincentiveslab.com/perverse>

ENCYCLOPEDIA

Bias Lab

The biases that quietly distort executive decisions.

A searchable encyclopedia of 100+ cognitive biases with executive applications, decision-room examples, and implications for AI-mediated work.

Mission. Equip leaders to spot, name, and counter the biases that quietly distort hiring, pricing, strategy, and product decisions.

- Decision biases in high-stakes rooms
- Group and social biases in teams and boards
- Memory and attention biases under pressure
- AI-amplified biases in recommendation and ranking

<https://theincentiveslab.com/bias>

LIBRARY

Fallacy Lab

The bad arguments hiding in boardrooms and decks.

50+ logical fallacies that distort strategy decks, governance debates, and executive offsites — with annotated takedowns and counter-moves.

Mission. Raise the quality of executive reasoning by giving leaders precise language for the bad arguments they encounter every week.

- Formal vs. informal fallacies in board memos
- Rhetorical patterns in earnings and PR
- Statistical fallacies in dashboards
- Causal fallacies in post-mortems

<https://theincentiveslab.com/fallacy>

LIBRARY

Mental Models Lab

Portable lenses for reasoning under pressure.

670+ models for executive reasoning — first principles, second-order thinking, inversion, compounding, optionality, and the systems lenses behind them.

Mission. Move teams from opinion-driven to model-driven decisions, and make the reasoning portable across roles and generations.

- First-principles and inversion
- Second-order effects and feedback loops
- Compounding, optionality, and asymmetry
- Game theory and mechanism design

<https://theincentiveslab.com/models>

RESEARCH

Neuroscience Lab

How brains allocate attention, effort, and reward.

Attention, motivation, habit formation, flow, decision-making, and the neuroscience of AI-human interaction — translated for operators, not academics.

Mission. Ground incentive design in how brains actually allocate attention, effort, and reward — instead of how org charts assume they do.

- Attention markets and cognitive load
- Dopamine, motivation, and reward prediction
- Habit loops and behavior change
- Stress, recovery, and team performance

<https://theincentiveslab.com/neuroscience>

PLAYBOOKS

AI Incentives Lab

Why AI initiatives stall and how to unblock them.

Why AI projects fail, the resistance patterns inside organizations, adoption playbooks, and the design of agentic organizations.

Mission. Stop AI initiatives from dying in the org chart — by treating adoption as an incentive design problem, not a technology rollout.

- Why AI pilots stall after launch
- Resistance patterns and political economy
- Agentic workflows and human-in-the-loop design
- Measurement, attribution, and ROI traps

<https://theincentiveslab.com/ai-incentives>

26. Tools you can run today

Tool	What it does	Open
Diagnose	Five minutes of structured questions returns a read on which of the six dimensions are loudest in your situation, with a saveable report.	https://theincentiveslab.com/diagnose
Design	Draft an incentive redesign against a named behavior, with second-order risks surfaced as you write.	https://theincentiveslab.com/design
Simulate	Run a redesign forward and see where the perverse loop appears before it appears in production.	https://theincentiveslab.com/simulate
Assessment	The free entry diagnostic - the fastest way to see the model applied to your own system.	https://theincentiveslab.com/assessment
Explore	The graph view of the whole behavioral stack; follow any term to its neighbors.	https://theincentiveslab.com/explore
Periodic table	The element set of human behavior, filterable by group, speed, and level.	https://theincentiveslab.com/periodic-table
Molecule builder	Combine elements into a named behavioral compound and test it against a real scenario.	https://theincentiveslab.com/molecule-builder
Brain Atlas	The ten regions, mapped to every term in the Atlas.	https://theincentiveslab.com/brain
IIQ	Score your own incentive intelligence and see the band you land in.	https://theincentiveslab.com/iiq
Learning paths	Sequenced routes through the Atlas with progress tracking and saved terms.	https://theincentiveslab.com/paths
Library	Everything you have saved, in one place.	https://theincentiveslab.com/library
Observatory	Live incentive failures, catalogued as they happen.	https://theincentiveslab.com/observatory

27. Research and publishing

The Research Center publishes original work - essays, instruments, and annual behavioral economics guides - written in-house rather than aggregated. Every claim in this white paper traces back to a published page or a client engagement.

Research Center: <https://theincentiveslab.com/research-center> · BE Guides: <https://theincentiveslab.com/research/be-guide> · case studies: <https://theincentiveslab.com/case-studies>

28. The podcast

Episode One — Why Incentives Beat Strategy

The opening conversation of The Incentives Lab Podcast: why every strategy deck loses to the incentive system underneath it, how perverse incentives quietly form inside good organizations, and what leaders can

redesign this quarter.

Listen: <https://theincentiveslab.com/podcast>

29. Assistant access (MCP)

Members can connect the Lab directly to ChatGPT, Claude, or Cursor. The assistant can search the Atlas, answer against the six dimensions, and pull the model into whatever you are already working on - the entire encyclopedia, inside your own tooling.

Connection instructions (members): <https://theincentiveslab.com/connect> · membership: <https://theincentiveslab.com/membership>

PART VIII

The Site, Mapped

Every public destination on theincentiveslab.com, grouped by what you are trying to do. All links are live.

- [Start here](#)
- [Learn](#)
- [Tools](#)
- [Evidence](#)
- [Profession](#)
- [Engage](#)
- [About](#)

30. The clickable site map

Start here

[Home](#)

[Philosophy](#)

[The six incentives](#)

[Begin](#)

[Understand](#)

[Start](#)

[Framework](#)

Learn

[Incentives 101](#)

[The Atlas](#)

[Mental models](#)

[AI incentives](#)

[Brain Atlas](#)

[Magazine](#)

[Nudge theory](#)

[Biases](#)

[Neuroscience](#)

[The 12 laws](#)

[Periodic table](#)

[Manuals](#)

[Learning paths](#)

[Fallacies](#)

[Perverse incentives](#)

[Decision motives](#)

[Layers](#)

Tools

[Diagnose](#)

[Assessment](#)

[Graph explorer](#)

[Experiment lab](#)

[Library](#)

[Design](#)

[IIQ](#)

[Molecule builder](#)

[Observatory](#)

[Simulate](#)

[Explore](#)

[Org genome](#)

[Playground](#)

Evidence

[Case studies](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[BE Guides](#)

[Cultural Performance Audit](#)

[Proof of thesis](#)

[Press](#)

[CPA media](#)

[Research Center](#)

[Podcast](#)

Profession

[Incentives Architect](#)

[Membership](#)

[Careers](#)

[The course](#)

[Consortium](#)

[Labs](#)

[Academy diagnostic](#)

[Train the trainer](#)

Engage

[Work with us](#)

[Business](#)

[Digital twin](#)

[Pricing](#)

[Think Tank](#)

[Government](#)

[Consulting](#)

[Team pricing](#)

[Sprints](#)

[Events](#)

[Speaking](#)

[Contact](#)

About

[About the Lab](#)

[Aaron Bare](#)

[Ricardo Rosselló](#)

The Laboratory
Book

Comedy - Seriously Not Funny
Platform

Resources

Appendix A - The Atlas index

All 1229 entries in the Atlas, alphabetically. Every entry is a live link to its own page.

'Spend to Save' Promotions	10/10/10 Rule	15-Minute Appointments
3-Way Life Optimization	340B Discount Arbitrage	Abilene Paradox
Absent-Mindedness	Abstractions	Acceptable Use Policy (AI)
Accountability	Acquisition Earn-Outs	Acquisition-Only Marketing
Action Bias	Activation Energy	Acton's Dictum
Actor-Observer Bias	Ad Hominem	Ad-Supported Business Models
Adaptability Quotient (AQ)	Adaptive Bias	Adaptive Challenge
Additive Bias	Adjunctification	Adoption Curve (AI)
Advantageous Divergence	Adverse Selection	Aesthetic-First Fitness
Affect Heuristic	Affect Labeling	Affective Forecasting
Affinity / Liking Bias	Affirming a Disjunct	Affirming the Consequent
Affordances	Agent	Agent Detection
Agent Provocateur	Agentic Liability	Aggressive Cost-Cutting
Agricultural Subsidy Lock-In	AI Agent Liability Vacuum	AI as Coach vs. AI as Replacement
AI Audit Trail	AI Bill of Materials	AI Bill of Materials Auditability
AI Council / Committee	AI Governance Vacuum	AI Maturity Model
AI Productivity Mirage	AI Productivity Paradox	AI Risk Tiering
AI Strategy as Capability Strategy	AI Talent Premium	AI-First Workflow Design
AI-Generated Content Spam Loop	AI-Native vs. AI-Augmented Teams	Alder's Razor
Algorithmic Aversion	Algorithms	All Models Are Wrong
Allegiance Bias	Allostatic Load	Alloying
Alternative Blindness	Alternative Paths	Altruism
Ambiguity Aversion	Ambiguity Effect	Amygdala Hijack
Analysis Paralysis	Anchoring	Anchoring (NLP)
Anchoring Bias	Andragogy (Knowles)	Anecdotal Evidence
Anecdotal Fallacy	Annual Bonus Risk	Annual Performance Review
Anterior Cingulate Cortex	Anthropomorphism	Anthropomorphism (AI)
Antifragility	Apophenia	Appeal to Authority
Appeal to Common Sense	Appeal to Consequences	Appeal to Emotion
Appeal to Fear	Appeal to Ignorance	Appeal to Majority
Appeal to Nature	Appeal to Novelty	Appeal to Pity
Appeal to Probability	Appeal to Spite	Appeal to Tradition
Arbitrage	Argument from Authority	Argument from Fallacy
Argument from Final Consequences	Argument from Ignorance	Argument from Incredulity
Argument from Personal Experience	Argument from Repetition	Argument from Repetition (Argumentum ad Nauseam)
Argument from Silence	Art of War	Asian Disease Problem
Association Fallacy	Astroturfing	Asymmetric Warfare
Attendance-as-Outcome	Attention as a Resource	Attention as Trainable Resource (Jha)
Attention Residue	Attentional Bias	Attitude Polarization
Attribute Substitution	Attribution Bias	Audit Independence Erosion
Augmentation vs. Automation	Authority	Authority Bias
Automation Bias	Automation Complacency	Autonomy
Availability Bias	Availability Cascade	Availability Heuristic
Awe	Awe (Keltner)	Backcasting

Backfire Effect	Balancing Loop	Bandwagon Effect
Bandwagon Fallacy	Barbell Strategy	Barnum Effect
Basal Ganglia	Base Rate Fallacy	Base Rate Neglect
Bayes' Rule (Updating)	Bayes' Theorem	Bayesian Updating
Because Justification	Begging the Question	Beginner's Luck
Beginner's Mind	Behavior Change	Behavioral Activation System (BAS)
Behavioral Contagion	Behavioral Economics	Behavioral Game Theory
Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS)	Belief Bias	Belief Perseverance
Belonging	Ben Franklin Effect	Benford's Law of Controversy
Betteridge's Law of Headlines	Bezold Effect	Bias Blind Spot
Bias in AI Systems	Bikeshedding (Parkinson's Law of Triviality)	Billable-Hour Pricing
Birthday-Number Effect	Bizarreness Effect	Black Swan
BLM Wild Horse Holding Loop	Bloom's Taxonomy	Blotto Games
Blue Mind (Nichols)	Blue vMeme	Bohm Dialogue
Bonus Structure Gameability	Bonus-Driven Window Dressing	Boomerang Effect
Boomerang Hire Premium	Boredom (Productive)	Bottleneck
Bottlenecks	Boundary Extension	Bounded Rationality
Brainwashing	Brandolini's Law	Bribery
Broken Windows Theory	Brook's Law	Brooks's Law
Build vs. Buy vs. Partner (AI)	Bulverism	Burden of Proof
Burden of Proof Shift	Bureau of Indian Affairs Trust Delays	Busyness as Status
Bystander Effect	Calibration	Campaign Finance Dependency
Campbell's Law	Cancel Dynamics	Capability Overhang
Carbon Credit Quality Gap	Cargo-Cult Adoption	Catalyst
Category Mistake	Catfishing	Causal Loop Diagram
Celebrity Attention Economy	Census Production Quotas	CEO Pay-for-Stock-Price
Certainty Effect	Change Personal History	Chaos Theory
Character Assassination	Charitable Interpretation	Charity Overhead Trap
Charity Overhead Trap (Universal)	Chauffeur Knowledge	Cheap Fossil Fuels via Externalities
Cheerleader Bias (Group Attractiveness)	Cheerleader Effect	Chekhov's Gun
Chemical Reactions	Cherry-Picked Citations	Cherry-Picking
Chesterton's Fence	Childhood Amnesia	Chilling Effect
Choice Architecture	Choice Overload	Choice-Supportive Bias
Chronobiology	Chronostasis	Chunking
Chunking (Cognitive)	Chunking Up / Chunking Down	Churn
Cinderella Effect	Circle of Competence	Circle of Empathy
Circle of Excellence	Circular Reasoning	Civil Asset Forfeiture
Clarke's Three Laws	Classical Conditioning	Clickbait Economics
Clickbait Headlines	Climate Pledges Without Enforcement	Clustering Illusion
Coase Theorem	Cobra Effect	Cocktail Party Effect
Cognitive Bias	Cognitive Bias (Neural Roots)	Cognitive Dissonance
Cognitive Empathy	Cognitive Load	Cognitive Load Theory
Cognitive Offloading	Cognitive Reflection	Coincidence
Collapsing Anchors	Collective Action Problem	College Prestige Signaling
College Rankings	Comfort-Seeking Defaults	Commitment
Commitment & Consistency	Commitment Device	Common Knowledge
Common Source Bias	Comparative Advantage	Comparison Culture
Compassion Fade	Competence	Complements & Substitutes
Complex Adaptive System	Complex Adaptive Systems	Compliance Cost Burden
Compliance Theater	Composition Fallacy	Compounding
Compute Economics	Concept Drift	Conceptual Priming

Confabulation	Confidence Intervals (AI)	Confidence Trick
Confirmation Bias	Conflict of Interest	Confounding Factor
Congruence	Congruence Bias	Conjunction Fallacy
Connectivism (Siemens & Downes)	Conservatism Bias	Consistency Bias
Constitutional AI	Construal Level Theory	Constructed Preferences
Constructivism (Learning Theory)	Consumer Recycling Burden Shift	Contagion Bias
Content Provenance (C2PA)	Context Effect	Context Effects (Choice)
Context Effects in Influence	Context Window	Contextomy
Continued Influence Effect	Continuum Fallacy	Contrast
Contrast Effect	Control Premium	Convexity vs. Concavity
Conway's Law	Coolidge Effect	Cooperation
Coordination Cost	Coordination Game	Copyright Term Extension
Corporate Bailouts	Correlation Implies Causation	Cortisol
Cost-Per-Token Strategy	Costly Signaling	Costs (Fixed vs. Variable)
Counterfactual Testing	Counterfactual Thinking	Counterinsurgency
Counterpropaganda	Court Fines and Fees	Courtesy Bias
Creative Destruction	Creator Monetization Rules	Credit Rating Conflict
Crespi Effect	Critical Mass	Cross-Race Effect
Crossing the Chasm	Crowd Folly	Crowd Manipulation
Cryptomnesia	Cue-Dependent Forgetting	Cultural Bias
Cultural Tightness-Looseness	Cum Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc	Cunningham's Law
Curiosity	Curiosity Tendency	Curse of Knowledge
Curse of the Familiar	Customs De Minimis Loophole	Cynefin Framework
Dark Side of Influence	Data Drift	Data Lineage
Data Monetization vs Privacy	Dating App Gamification	Debiasing
Decision Fatigue	Decision Staging	Declinism
Decoy Effect	Default Effect	Default Effect (Neural)
Default Mode Network	Defense Mechanism	Defense Use-It Research Grants
Defensive Attribution	Defensive Documentation	Defensive Medicine
Definitional Retreat	Deliberate Practice	Demoralization
Denial	Denomination Effect	Denying the Antecedent
Deserve What You Want	Designing for the Bottom	Devil's Advocate
Dialectical Materialism	Diderot Effect	Diet & Decision Quality
Diet Culture Cycles	Differential Privacy	Diffusion of Innovations
Diffusion of Responsibility	Dilbert Principle	Diminishing Returns
Disaster Aid Over Prevention	Disconfirmation Bias	Disconfirming Evidence
Discount Rate	Disinformation	Disliking/Hating Tendency
Disposition Effect	Disruption Theory	Distinction Bias
Distributed Attention	Distributions	Diversification Bias
Division Fallacy	Domain Dependence	Dopamine
Doping Equilibrium	Double-Loop Learning	Doubt-Avoidance Tendency
Drafting for Picks, Not Wins	Dread Aversion	Drug-Misinfluence Tendency
Dual-Eligible Care Shifting	Dual-Process Theory	Dual-Self Model
Dual-System Theory	Dunbar's Number	Dunning-Kruger Effect
Duration Neglect	Dysrationalia	Déformation Professionnelle
Earnings Management	Ecological Fallacy	Economic Bubble
Ecosystem	Efficiency Monoculture	Efficient Market Hypothesis
Effort Justification	Ego Depletion	Egocentric Bias
Einstellung Effect	Eisenhower Matrix	Eisenhower's Quadrant II
EITC Error Penalty Risk	Either-Or Trap (more refined false dichotomy)	Election Cycle Bias
Elimination-by-Aspects	Embedding	Embodied Cognition

Emergence	Emotional Bias	Emotional Contagion
Emotional Hijacking	Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	Empathy Gap
Empathy vs. Compassion	Empire-Building M&A	Enclothed Cognition
End-of-History Illusion	Endowed Progress Effect	Endowment Effect
Endowment Effect (Behavioral)	Energy Management	Energy Output Minimization
Energy Subsidy Lock-In	Energy Vampires	Engagement Algorithms
Engagement-Maximizing Algorithms	Engagement-Time Paradox	Engagement-Tuned LLMs
Entropy	Envy/Jealousy Tendency	Equilibrium / Homeostasis
Equilibrium Behavior (Experimental)	Equivalence	Equivocation
Ergodicity	ESA Take-Permit Silence	Escalation of Commitment
Essential Air Service Subsidies	Essentialism	Etymological Fallacy
EU AI Act	Euphoric Recall	Eval Drift
Evaluation Frameworks (Evals)	Evolution	Exaggerated Expectation
Exercise & Cognition	Existential Fallacy	Expected Utility (vs. Expected Value)
Expected Value	Explainability vs. Interpretability	Explanation Effect
Exponential Explanation Pyramid	Exponential Growth	Exponential Strategy
Extended Mind	Extension Neglect	External Validation Loop
Externalities	Externality	Extrinsic Incentives Bias
Extrinsic Motivation	Eye Accessing Cues	Fading Affect Bias
Fairness	Fairness Metrics	Fake News
Fallacies	Fallacy Fallacy	False Analogy
False Attribution	False Causality	False Cause (Post Hoc)
False Consensus Effect	False Dichotomy	False Dilemma
False Equivalence	False Flag	False Memory
False Uniqueness Effect	Falsifiability	Fan Effect
Fast and Frugal Heuristics	Fear	Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt (FUD)
Feature-Positive Effect	Federal Crop Insurance Sprawl	Federal Flood Map Politics
Federal Highway Matching Trap	Federal Land Exchange Inflation	Federal Prison Industries Mandate
Federated Learning	Fee-for-Service Healthcare	Fee-Only Asset Management
Feedback Loop	Feedback Loops	Felder-Silverman Learning Style Model
FEMA Repetitive-Loss Loop	FERC Rate-of-Return Incentive	Fermi Estimate
Fermi Estimation	Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance	Filter Bubble
Fine-Tuning	First Principles	First Principles Thinking
First-Conclusion Bias	First-Tier Thinking	Fishing Quota Race
Five Whys	Five Ws	Fixed Mindset
Fixes That Fail	Florida Catastrophe Fund Risk Masking	Flow State
Flynn Effect	Flywheel Effect	Focused vs. Diffuse Attention
Focusing Effect	Forecast Sandbagging	Foreign Aid Dependency
Forer / Barnum Effect	Forer Effect	Foundation Model Concentration
Four Levels of Listening	Fractal Productivity	Framing Effect
Free Energy Principle	Free Rider Problem	Frequency Illusion
Fresh Start Effect	Friction	Functional Fixedness
Fundamental Attribution Error	Funding Bias	Future Self Continuity
Gainful-Employment Major Steering	Galatea Effect	Galaxy-Brain Reasoning
Gall's Law	Gambler's Fallacy	Game Theory
Gardner's Multiple Intelligences	Gaslighting	Gell-Mann Amnesia
Generative Listening	Genetic Fallacy	Gettier Problem
Gish Gallop	Glymphatic System	Goal Fixation
Goal Gradient Effect	Goal Hierarchy Pyramid	Godwin's Law
Golem Effect	Goodhart's Law	Goodhart's Law (AI form)
GPA Optimization	Grade Inflation	Graduation Rate Metric

Green vMeme	Gresham's Law	Group Polarization
Groupthink	Growth at All Costs	Growth Mindset
Habit	Habit Loop	Habit Stacking
Habituation	Hallucination	Hallucination as Engagement
Halo Effect	Hanlon's Razor	Hard vs. Soft Influence Tactics
Hasty Generalization	Hawthorne Effect	Headcount as Status
Hebb's Law	Hedgehog Concept (Collins)	Hedgehog vs. Fox
Hedonic Adaptation	Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle	Herd Behavior
Herd Mentality	Heuristic	Hick's Law
Hierarchy of Competence	Hindsight Bias	Hippocampus
Hitchens's Razor	Hofstadter's Law	Holism
Homework Volume Signal	Homo Economicus	Honesty
Honey & Mumford Learning Styles	Horn Effect	Hospital Occupancy Targets
Hot-Cold Empathy Gap	Hot-Hand Fallacy	HUD Section 8 Concentration
Human-in-the-Loop	Human-on-the-Loop	Hustle Culture Glorification
Hyper-Specialization Drift	Hyperbolic Discounting	Hysterical Contagion
Iceberg Model	Identity Economics	Identity Threat
Identity-Based Motivation	Identity-Coded Politics	Identity-Protective Cognition
IKEA Effect	Illusion of Asymmetric Insight	Illusion of Control
Illusion of Transparency	Illusion of Validity	Illusory Superiority
Immunity to Change	Immunovation	Impact Bias
Implementation Intention	Implementation Intentions	Imposter Phenomenon
Imposter Syndrome	Impression Management	In-Context Learning
In-Group Bias	Inattentional Blindness	Incentive Blindness
Incentive Debt	Incentive Drift	Incentive Entropy
Incentive Gravity	Incentives	Individualism-Collectivism
Inequity Aversion	Inequity Aversion (Fehr-Schmidt)	Inertia
Inference vs. Training Cost	Infinite Scroll Trap	Influence Agent Credibility
Influencer Authenticity Inversion	Information Alchemy	Information Asymmetry
Information Avoidance	Information Bias	Information Cascade
Information Overwhelm Filter	Ingroup Favoritism	Inner vs. Outer Alignment
Innovation Award Distortion	Innovation Theater	Innovator's Dilemma
Insensitivity to Sample Size	Instrumental Convergence	Insula
Insurance Billing Complexity	Insurance Claim Friction	Internal Transfer Friction
Interoception	Intertemporal Choice	Intrinsic Motivation
Inversion	Iron Law of Bureaucracy	Is-Ought Gap
Jailbreak	Job Redesign	Jobs to Be Done
Joint vs. Separate Evaluation	Just Asking Questions (JAQing off)	Just-World Hypothesis
Justice	Kahneman's Three Conditions for Expert Intuition	Kegan Stages of Adult Development
Kelly Criterion	Keystone Habit	Kin Selection
KISS Principle	Knowledge Curse	Knowledge Gap Surfacing
Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle	KPI Overload	Ladder of Inference
Latency Budget	Latticework Density	Latticework of Mental Models
Law of Large Numbers	Law of Small Numbers	Law of Triviality
Law of Triviality + Goodhart Combined	Layoffs to Boost Stock	Le Chatelier's Principle
Learn-Do-Teach Loop	Learned Helplessness	Learning Curve
Learning Network	Lemon Market	Less-Is-Better Effect
Level-k Thinking	Licensing Effect	Life Conditions (Graves)
Like and Follower Counts	Liking	Liking Bias
Lindy Effect	Linear Thinking	Litigation Economics
Loaded Language	Loaded Question	Local Maximum

Local vs. Global Maximum	Local-Optimum Optimization	Lock-in Effect
Long Tail	Long-Term Potentiation	Loss Aversion
Loss Aversion (Neural)	Loss Framing	Loss Function
Loyalty Program Consumption	Ludic Fallacy	Maker vs. Manager Time
Mandatory Minimum Sentences	Map vs. Territory	Margin of Safety
Marginal Analysis	Marginal Utility	Market Failure
Markov Convergence	Marshmallow Effect	Maslow's Hammer
Mastery	McNamara Fallacy	Medical Device Pricing
Memory Reconstruction	Mental Accounting	Mental Contrasting
Mental Model of the Other Side	Mere Exposure Effect	Mesa-Optimization
Meta-Analysis	Meta-Model	Metacognition
Metacognitive Calibration	Metric Fixation	Middle Ground Fallacy
Milgram Experiment	Milton Model	Mimetic Desire (Girard)
Mindfulness (Operational)	Mindless Eating	Mindsight (Siegel)
Minimax Regret	Minimum Viable Product	Minority Influence
Mirror Neurons	Misaligned Incentive Culture	Model Cards
Model Distillation	Model Drift	Modeling Excellence
Modern Polymath	Modus Ponens	Modus Tollens
Moral Hazard	Moral Licensing	Moralistic Fallacy
Mortgage Origination Pre-2008	Mortgaging the Future	Moving the Goalposts
Multi-Agent Systems	Multitasking Illusion	Murphy's Law
Myelination	Myopic Loss Aversion	Naive Allocation
Narrative Fallacy	Narrative Identity	Nash Equilibrium
Naturalistic Fallacy	Necessary vs Sufficient	Negativity Bias
Negativity Bias (Neural)	Negativity Bias of the Brain	Network Effects
Neurogenesis	Neuroplasticity	New Behavior Generator
News Negativity Bias	NIST AI RMF	NLP Communication Model
No True Scotsman	No-Feedback Loops	Normal Distribution
Not Invented Here	Notification Inflation	NSF Conservative-Research Bias
Nucleus Accumbens	Nudge	Objective Function
Occam's Razor	OK Plateau	OKR Inflation
OKRs (Objectives and Key Results)	Omission Bias	On-Device vs. Cloud
OODA Loop	Open Office Productivity Paradox	Open vs. Closed Models
Operant Conditioning	Opioid Prescription Incentives	Opportunity Cost
Opportunity Cost Audit	Optimism Bias	Optionality
Orange vMeme	Orphan Drug Monopoly Extension	Ostrich Effect
Out-Group Homogeneity Bias	Outcome Bias	Outcome Frame
Outcome-Only Evaluation	Outsourcing Without Oversight	Overconfidence Effect
Overfitting	Overjustification Effect	Overton Window
Ovsiankina Effect	Oxytocin	Pacing and Leading
Pain of Paying	Pareto Principle (80/20)	Pareto Productivity (80/20)
Pareto Top 1%	Parkinson's Law	Partitioning
Parts Integration	Patent Office Fee Dependency	Path Dependence
Peak-End Rule	Perceptual Positions	Perfectionism as Avoidance
Personal Incredulity	Personal Theory of Change	Pessimism Bias
Pessimism in Forecasting	Peter Principle	Pharma Patent Cliff
Physician Reimbursement	Pilot Purgatory	Planning Fallacy
Plastic Externality Shift	Platform Growth Metrics	Plausible Deniability
Plea Bargain Pressure	Pluralistic Ignorance	Point of No Return
Poisoning the Well	Polarity Map	Police Quotas
Politburo Reporting	Pollyanna Principle	Polyvagal Theory

Pomodoro / Time-boxing	Pork Barrel Allocation	Pork Barrel Politics
Possibility Effect	Possible Selves	Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc
Power Distance	Power Law	Power Laws
Pratfall Effect	Pre-2008 Mortgage Origination	Pre-Mortem
Precommitment	Prediction Machine (Friston)	Preference
Preference Reversal	Prefrontal Cortex	Premortem + Postmortem Pair
Presencing	Present Bias	Presupposition (Linguistic)
Pride	Prime Directives of the Unconscious Mind	Principal-Agent Problem
Prior-Authorization Rules	Prison Funding Formulas	Prisoner's Dilemma
Pro-Innovation Bias	Probabilistic Thinking	Probability Neglect
Procedural Rationality	Procrastination	Procurement Race to the Bottom
Productivity Mirage	Productivity-Hack Culture	Projection Bias
Projects Not People	Promote-to-Lose Trap	Promotion Inflation in Title Economies
Prompt Caching	Prompt Injection	Proprioception
Prospect Theory	Psychological Distance	Psychological Safety
Psychology of Scarcity	Public Defender Overload	Public Goods Game
Purpose	Push Notification Inflation	Pygmalion Effect
Quantal Response Equilibrium	Quarterly Earnings Culture	Quarterly Earnings Pressure
Quasi-Hyperbolic (-) Discounting	Ranking Game Inflation	Rapport (Pacing & Matching)
Ratio Bias	Reactance	Reactive Conservation Funding
Reality Distortion Field	Recency Bias	Reciprocal Altruism
Reciprocity	Reciprocity Bias	Recognition Heuristic
Recommender System Radicalization	Red Herring	Red Team
Red Teaming	Red vMeme	Red-Teaming AI
Reductio ad Absurdum	Reference Dependence	Reference Point
Reflexivity	Reframing	Regression to the Mean
Regret Aversion	Regret Minimization	Regulatory Capture
Regulatory Focus Theory	Reification Fallacy	Reinforcing Loop
Reporting Incentive Drift	Representational Systems	Representativeness Heuristic
Reputation	Resistance Mapping	Reskilling vs. Replacing
Restraint Bias	Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)	Return On Experience (ROE)
Reversible vs. Irreversible Decisions	Reversion to the Mean	Reward Frequency
Reward Hacking	Reward Prediction Error	Risk Aversion
Risk Avoidance Equilibrium	Risk Compensation	Risk vs. Uncertainty
Risk-as-Feelings	RLHF	Role Clarity
Rosy Retrospection	RTO Optics Theater	RTO Optics Theater (Extended)
Rule of 72	S-Curve	Sales Commissions Misalignment
Saliency Network	Sandbagging Adoption	Satisficing
Sayre's Law	SBA Size Standard Growth Trap	SBIR Mill Mentality
Scale-Only Incentives	Scarcity	Scarcity Bias
Scarcity Heuristic	SCARF Model (Rock)	Schelling Point
School Lunch Calorie Floor	Scope Creep	Second-Order Thinking
Second-Tier Thinking	Selection Bias	Self-Awareness
Self-Compassion (Neff)	Self-Control	Self-Determination Theory
Self-Distancing	Self-Efficacy	Self-Explaining
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy	Self-Licensing	Self-Regulation
Self-Serving Bias	Selling and Being Sold	Semmelweis Reflex
Sensitization	Sensory Acuity	Serial-Position Effect
Settlement-Driven Litigation	Severance Asymmetry	Shadow AI
Shame	Share Buybacks Over Reinvestment	Sharpen the Saw
Shifting Baseline	Shifting the Burden	Shirky's Principle

Sick Care Economics	Signal-to-Noise Ratio	Signaling
Simpson's Paradox	Single Cause Fallacy	Single Loop vs. Double Loop Learning
Single-Loop vs Double-Loop Learning (Argyris)	Six-Step Reframe	Skill Atrophy
Skin in the Game	Sleep Consolidation	Sleight of Mouth
Slippery Slope	Slippery Slope (cause/effect form)	Sludge
Snob Effect	Social Contagion	Social Norm
Social Norms	Social Pain	Social Preferences
Social Proof	Social Skills (Goleman)	Sorites Paradox
Spaced Repetition	Spaced Retrieval Through Teaching	Special Pleading
Specification Gaming	Speed Limit Quota	Speed Trap Revenue
Spillover Effect	Spiral Dynamics	Spiral of Silence
Spotlight Effect	Sprawl-Friendly Land Use	Stack Ranking
Stack-Rank Calibration Drift	Stag Hunt	Standardized Testing Monoculture
Standing Ovation Model	State Management	Status
Status Games	Status Quo Bias	Status Quo Bias (Neural)
Status Threat	Status Threat (AI)	Statutory Complexity
Steel-Manning (Argumentation)	Steelman (the cure)	Stock and Flow
Strategy Elicitation	Strategy Map	Strawman
Streetlight Effect	Strong Opinions, Loosely Held	Student Loan Availability
Submodalities	Subscription Trap Pricing	Success by Subtraction
Suggestibility	Sunk Cost	Sunk Cost (model form)
Sunk Cost Fallacy	Super PAC Dark Money	Supervenience
Surprise Out-of-Network Billing	Survivorship Bias	Survivorship Bias (as a fallacy)
Survivorship-Driven Best Practices	Swish Pattern	Swiss Cheese Model
Switching Costs	Synthetic Data	System 1 vs. System 2
System Justification	Systems Thinking	T.O.T.E. Model
Tacit Knowledge	Take-the-Best Heuristic	Talent Stack
TANF Diversionary Payments	Target Effect	Teaching To Learn Mindset
Teaching to the Test	Teaching-to-Learn (Protégé Effect)	Telomere-Stress Link (Epel)
Temporal Landmark	Tenure Stagnation	Testing Effect (Retrieval Practice)
Texas Aquifer Pump-Until-Dry	Texas Sharpshooter	Texas Sharpshooter Fallacy
The 1-3-5 Rule	The Mindfulness STOP Practice	Theory of Mind
Theory of Mind (Human)	Theory U	Third Story
Thought Automation	Thought Experiment	Thought Leadership
Thought Space Map	Thought-Terminating Cliché	Threat Response
Three Horizons	Time Bias	Time Blocking
Time Discounting	Time Line Therapy	Time-Tracking Theater
Tiny Habits (Fogg)	Tipping Point	Tit for Tat
Today I Learned Journal	Tool Use	Total Cost of Ownership (AI)
Tragedy of the Commons	Transparency	Tribalism
TRIZ 40	Trophy Inflation	Trust
Trust Calibration	Tu Quoque (Whataboutism)	Two Loops Model
Two Wrongs Make a Right	Two-Pizza Teams	Two-Tier Compensation Quiet Quitting
Type I vs. Type II Errors	Tyranny of the Minority	Ultimate Attribution Error
Ulysses Contract	Underpriced Agricultural Water	Unintended Consequences
Unity	Use-Based Infrastructure Funding	Use-It-or-Lose-It Budgeting
USPS Pre-Funding Mandate	Utility	VA Days-to-Appointment Metric
Vagus Nerve	Vanity Metrics	Variable Reward Schedule
VARK Model (Fleming)	Veblen Effect	Vector Database
Veil of Ignorance	Vendor Lock-In Risk	Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA)
Via Negativa	Virality Reward Loops	Vision-Strategy-Tactics

vMeme	Von Restorff Effect	Voter Apathy as Equilibrium
Vulnerability-Based Trust	War Budget Persistence	Wardley Mapping
WEIRD Populations	Welfare Cliffs	Welfare Stigma Take-Up Gap
Well-Formed Outcome	Well-Formedness Conditions	Whistleblower Cost
Willingness-to-Accept vs. Willingness-to-Pay Gap	Wisdom of Crowds	Wise Effort
WOOP Method	Working Backwards	Working Memory
XMBA Hybrid Learning	Yellow vMeme	Zeigarnik Effect
Zero Price Effect	Zero-Based Calendaring	Zero-Risk Bias
Zero-Sum Game	Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky)	

Colophon

Founded by Aaron Bare — WSJ bestselling author of Exponential Theory, X-Prize Winner, F500 advisor, facilitated at over 500 companies, facilitated in 100+ countries.

This white paper is an overview edition. It is drawn entirely from material published at theincentiveslab.com and from client engagements run by the Lab. Figures, caps, and prices reflect the 2026 edition and are superseded by the live site.

Start where it costs you nothing

Run the free diagnostic, read the Atlas, take Incentives 101. When you want the credential, the 2026 Founding Academy is capped at 150 seats. theincentiveslab.com/course

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Appendix B — The Visual Archive

Every visual published across theincentiveslab.com, collected in one place and grouped the way the model is taught: the Lab, the operating system, the method, the evidence, the profession, the library, and the people.

This archive is live. Click any image, any title, or any address and it opens the page it came from on theincentiveslab.com. Nothing here is decoration — each plate is a doorway back into the working site.

Section	What it covers	Plates
The Lab	The public face of the model — the thesis, the velocity argument, and the two halves of the Lab.	7
The Operating System	Layer 0 through Layer 6 — the periodic table of human behavior and the elements beneath every decision.	10
The Method	The Cultural Performance Audit™ — the diagnostic instrument, its phases, and how a live incentive system is read.	6
The Evidence	Case studies, engagements, and the public record behind the model.	8
The Profession	The Incentives Architect — the ladder, the intelligence quotient, and the certification.	6
The Library	Research, resources, and the published work behind the practice.	6
The People	The founders and the work behind the Lab.	15

58 plates · 7 sections · all linked

The Lab

The public face of the model — the thesis, the velocity argument, and the two halves of the Lab.



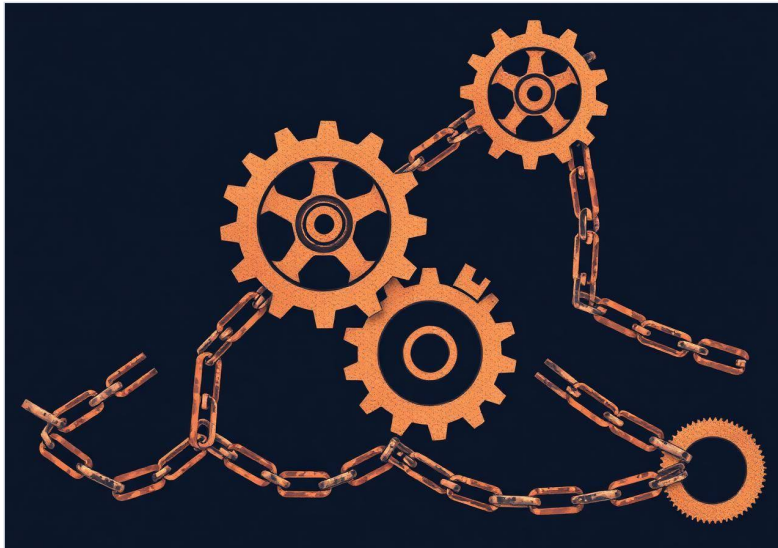
The Incentives Lab

The hand and the strings: every system is already pulling on someone. The craft is knowing which string.
theincentiveslab.com/



A laboratory for learning incentives

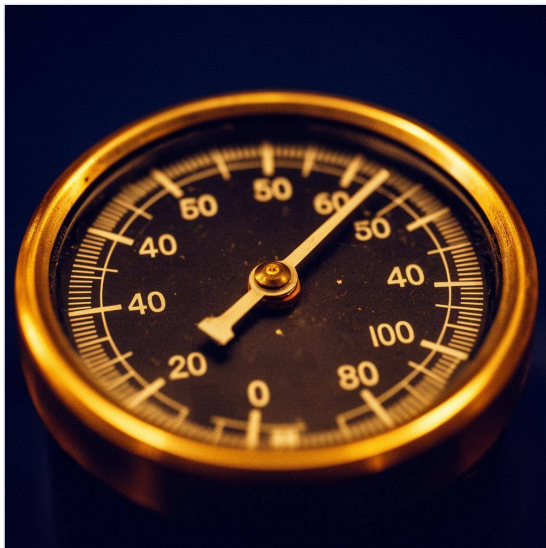
The shared card for the whole model — a think tank for solving incentives.
theincentiveslab.com/



What an incentive really is

Not a bonus. A designed change in the cost of a behavior.

theincentiveslab.com/learn/incentives-101



The velocity dial

Speed of change is now the binding constraint on every incentive system.

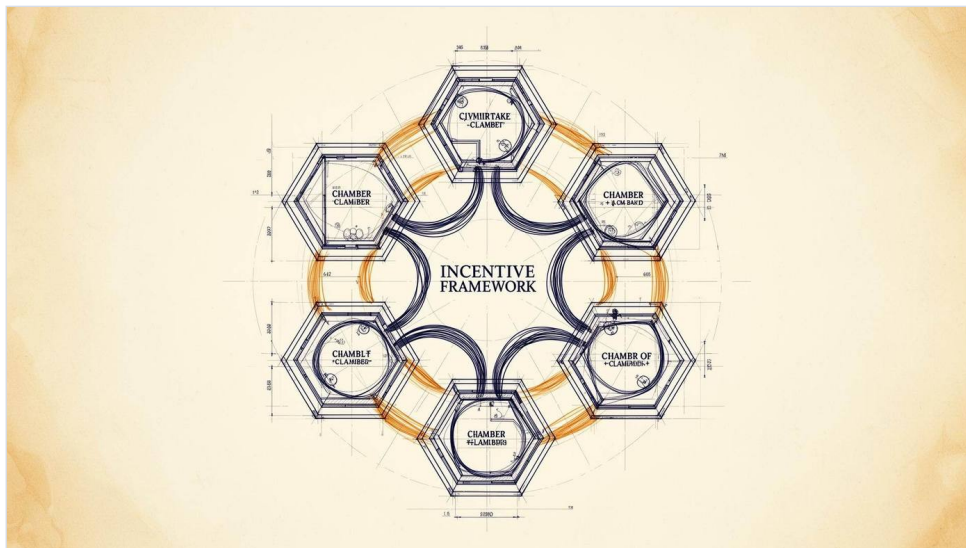
theincentiveslab.com/velocity



Why now: the velocity argument

AI compresses the feedback loop between an incentive and its consequence.

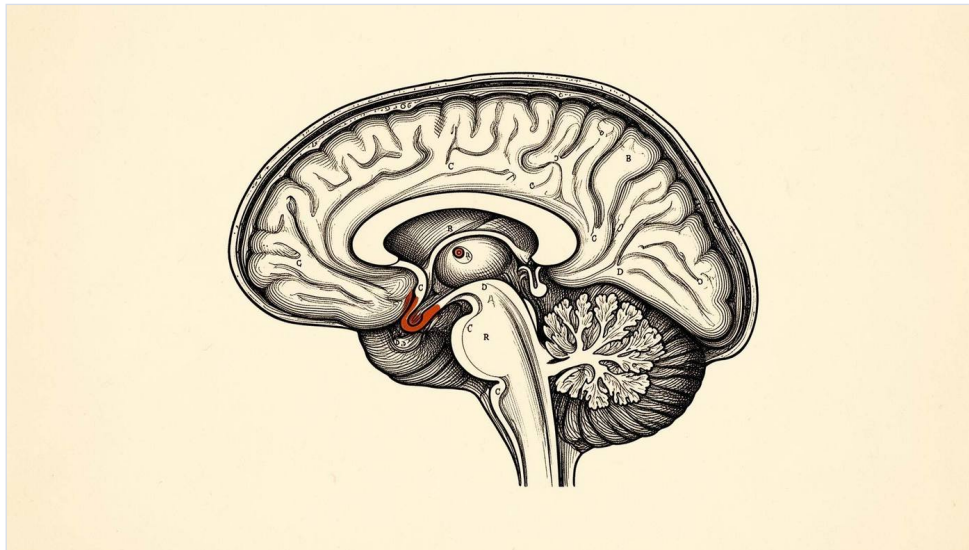
theincentiveslab.com/velocity



The framework

The behavioral operating system, layer by layer.

theincentiveslab.com/framework



We change to avoid pain

Filter, anchor, condition safety — the sequence the brain actually runs.
theincentiveslab.com/philosophy

The Operating System

Layer 0 through Layer 6 — the periodic table of human behavior and the elements beneath every decision.

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR™											
The Human Behavior Elements™ (HBE) Framework											
Behavior emerges from the interaction of twelve fundamental dimensions across levels of scale.											
THE TWELVE DIMENSIONS OF BEHAVIOR											
Attention	Emotion	Motivation	Incentives	Cognition	Social	Systems	Attention	Emotion	Motivation	Incentives	Cognition
What we notice	How we feel	Why we act	What drives us	How we think	Who we're with	Where we live	What we notice	How we feel	Why we act	What drives us	How we think
LEVELS OF SCALE	EXAMPLE HUMAN BEHAVIOR ELEMENTS (HBEs)										
1 INDIVIDUAL	C1 Salience What stands out in the person	E1 Fear Protects from threat	M1 Purpose Gives direction and meaning	I1 Rewards Attracts behavior with upside	C1 Attention Bias We notice things selectively	S1 Self-identity Shapes how we see ourselves	T1 Present Bias Overvalues near vs. far	EN1 Contentment Keeps us in a place	B1 Survival Ensures physical and emotional	ST1 Systems Ensures physical and emotional	SY1 Social Proof We look to others for cues
2 DYAD	C2 Selective Attention Filters what we engage with	E2 Trust Opens us to connection and safety	M2 Attachment Bonds connection and safety	I2 Reciprocity We return favors and kindness	C2 Perspective Taking We imagine others' minds	S2 Interpersonal Attraction Draws us together	EN2 Disliking Keeps us apart	B2 Energy Drives action and effort	ST2 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY2 Language Keeps things in sync	CU1 Language Keeps things in sync
3 TEAM	C3 Shared Focus Aligns attention toward a goal	E3 Empathy Opens us to vulnerability	M3 Belonging We want to be part of a group	I3 Incentive Alignment Aligns effort with group goals	C3 Group Heuristics Simplify complex team decisions	S3 Social Proof We look to others for cues	EN3 Disliking Keeps us apart	B3 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST3 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY3 Language Keeps things in sync	CU2 Reflection Keeps things in sync
4 ORGANIZATION	C4 Information Architecture Designs shapes what's seen	E4 Culture Shapes what we notice	M4 Mastery Desires to improve and grow	I4 Performance Metrics Measures drives behavior	C4 Mental Models We interpret through models	S4 Reputation Our standing in the eyes of others	EN4 Disliking Keeps us apart	B4 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST4 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY4 Language Keeps things in sync	CU3 Reflection Keeps things in sync
5 MARKET	C5 Market Signals Plays what we notice	E5 Greed Desires for more than enough	M5 Competition Drives innovation and differentiation	I5 Market Incentives Profits, penalties, and prices	C5 Rationality Limits large market choices	S5 Hard Behavior We follow the crowd	EN5 Disliking Keeps us apart	B5 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST5 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY5 Language Keeps things in sync	CU4 Reflection Keeps things in sync
6 NATION	C6 Media Influence Shapes what millions notice	E6 Moral Emotions Anger, outrage, compassion	M6 Collective Identity Values, traditions, around ideas	I6 Policy Incentives Laws, subsidies, taxes, penalties	C6 Ideologies Belief systems shape decisions	S6 Social Norms Define acceptable behavior	EN6 Disliking Keeps us apart	B6 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST6 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY6 Language Keeps things in sync	CU5 Reflection Keeps things in sync
7 CIVILIZATION	C7 Technological Attention Tech shapes our focus	E7 Existential Emotions Hope, awe, dread	M7 Transcendence Purposes beyond the self	I7 Civilizational Incentives Systems that shape our future	C7 Collective Intelligence Humanity learns together	S7 Global Cooperation Work together for the whole	EN7 Disliking Keeps us apart	B7 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST7 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY7 Language Keeps things in sync	CU6 Reflection Keeps things in sync

The Periodic Table of Human Behavior

The full elemental map of the behavioral operating system.

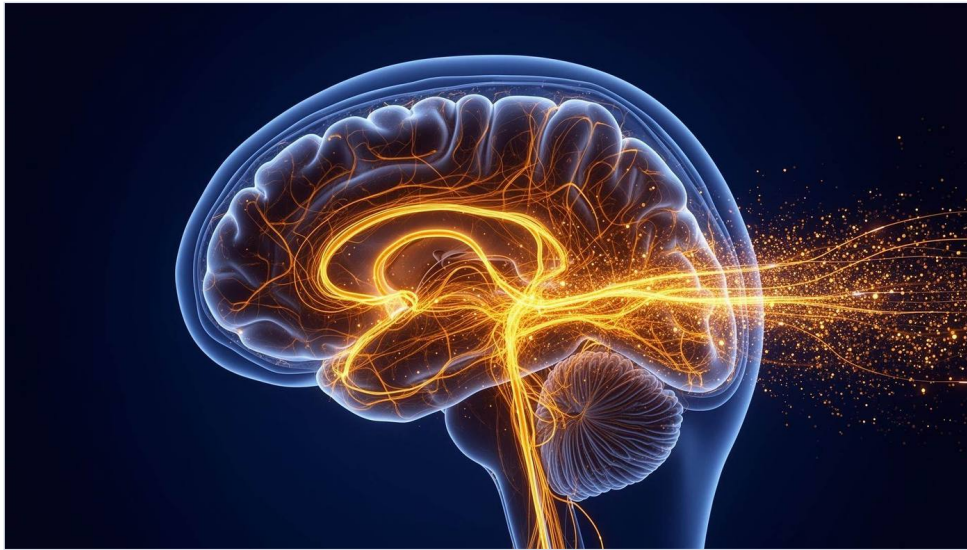
theincentiveslab.com/periodic-table

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR™											
The Human Behavior Elements™ (HBE) Framework											
Behavior = f (Attention, Emotion, Motivation, Incentives, Cognition, Social, Systems)											
Attention	Emotion	Motivation	Incentives	Cognition	Social	Systems	Attention	Emotion	Motivation	Incentives	Cognition
What we notice	How we feel	Why we act	What drives us	How we think	Who we're with	Where we live	What we notice	How we feel	Why we act	What drives us	How we think
LEVELS OF SCALE	EXAMPLE HUMAN BEHAVIOR ELEMENTS (HBEs)										
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5 MARKET	A5 Market Signals Plays what we notice	E5 Greed Desires for more than enough	M5 Competition Drives innovation and differentiation	I5 Market Incentives Profits, penalties, and prices	C5 Rationality Limits large market choices	S5 Hard Behavior We follow the crowd	EN5 Disliking Keeps us apart	B5 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST5 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY5 Language Keeps things in sync	CU4 Reflection Keeps things in sync
6 NATION	A6 Media Influence Shapes what millions notice	E6 Moral Emotions Anger, outrage, compassion	M6 Collective Identity Values, traditions, around ideas	I6 Policy Incentives Laws, subsidies, taxes, penalties	C6 Ideologies Belief systems shape decisions	S6 Social Norms Define acceptable behavior	EN6 Disliking Keeps us apart	B6 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST6 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY6 Language Keeps things in sync	CU5 Reflection Keeps things in sync
7 CIVILIZATION	A7 Technological Attention Tech shapes our focus	E7 Existential Emotions Hope, awe, dread	M7 Transcendence Purposes beyond the self	I7 Civilizational Incentives Systems that shape our future	C7 Collective Intelligence Humanity learns together	S7 Global Cooperation Work together for the whole	EN7 Disliking Keeps us apart	B7 Resonance Keeps things in sync	ST7 Resonance Keeps things in sync	SY7 Language Keeps things in sync	CU6 Reflection Keeps things in sync

Periodic table — first edition

The original plate, kept for reference and teaching.

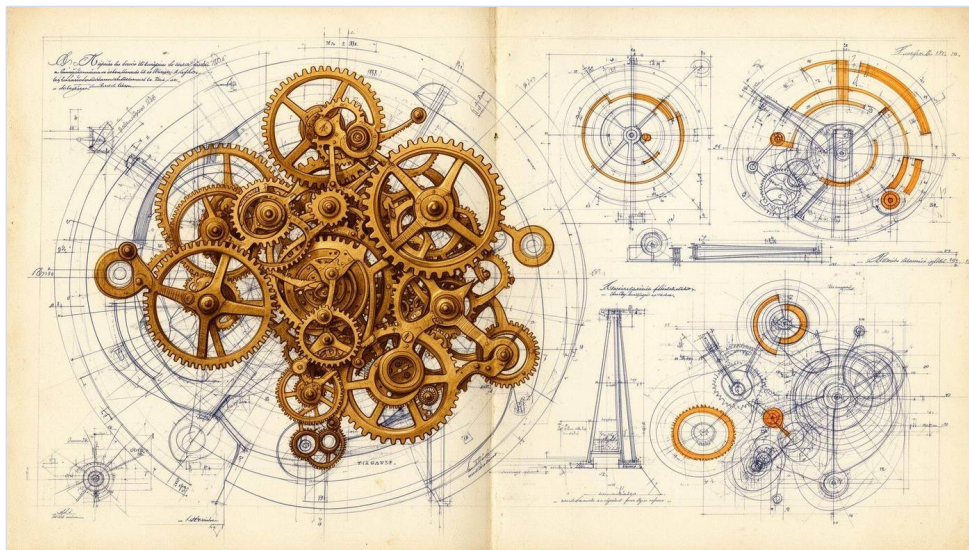
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The neuroscience layer

Threat detection runs before deliberation, every time.

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Mental models

The reusable thinking tools an Architect keeps loaded.

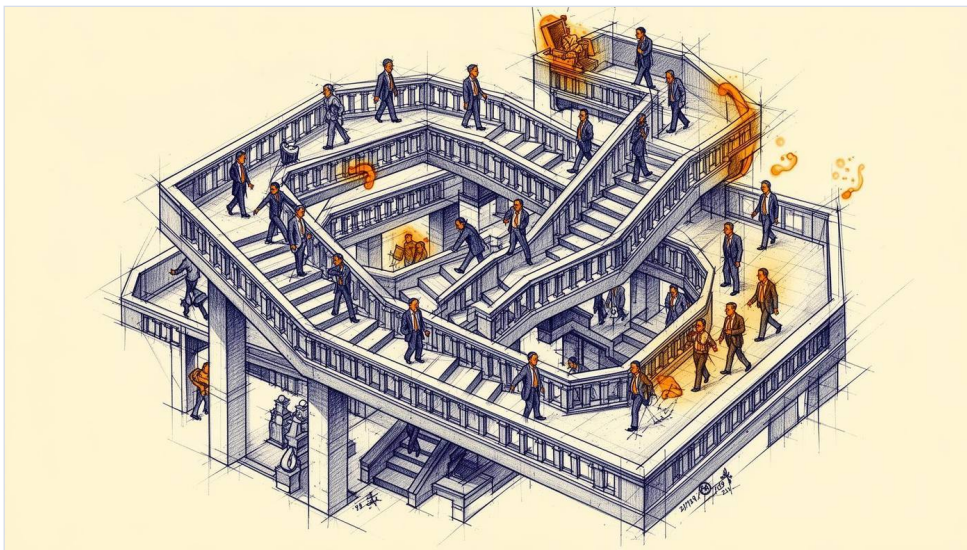
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Biases

Systematic deviations that make incentive design predictable.

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Fallacies

Reasoning failures that survive because they are rewarded.

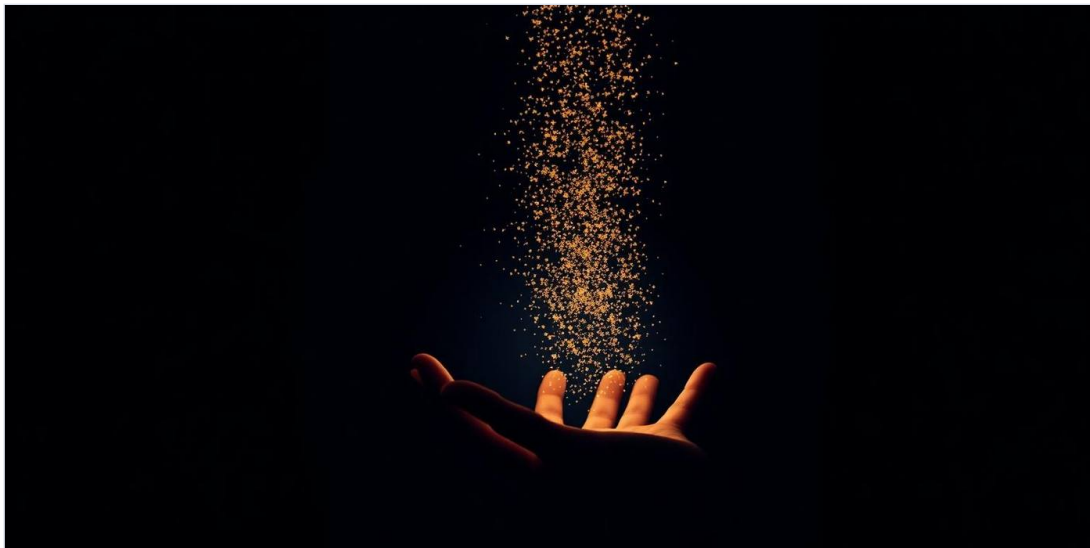
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Perverse incentives

When the reward produces the opposite of the intent.

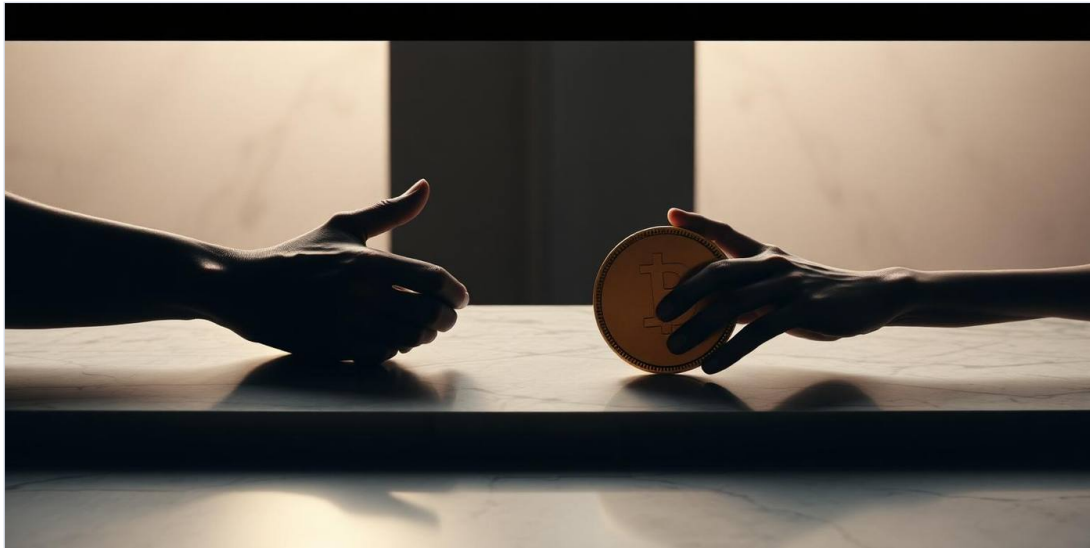
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From intent to behavior

How a designed incentive shows up in the real world.

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Negotiation

Incentive design under conditions of opposition.
theincentiveslab.com/learn/negotiation

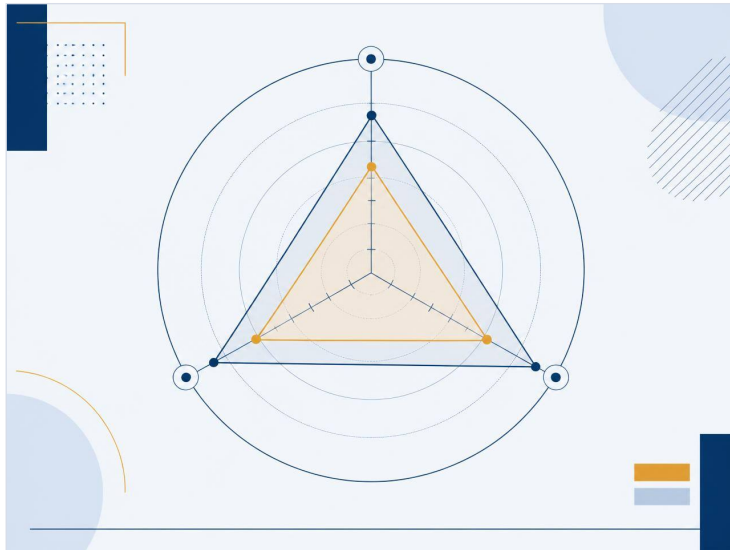


Incentives in the age of AI

Machine systems inherit the incentives we hand them.
theincentiveslab.com/learn/ai

The Method

The Cultural Performance Audit™ — the diagnostic instrument, its phases, and how a live incentive system is read.



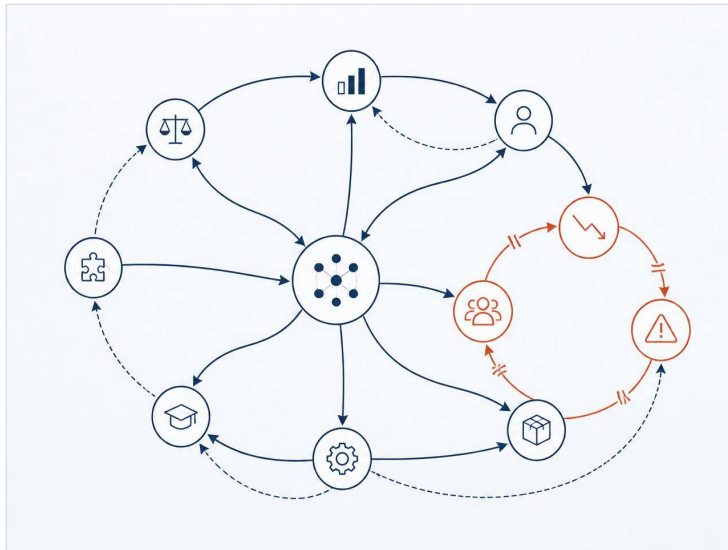
The CPA radar

Every audit resolves to a shape, and every shape has a lever.
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The four phases

Diagnose, map, redesign, condition — in order.
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Reinforcing loops

Where the culture pays itself back for the wrong behavior.
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The word bank

The language a culture uses is the first evidence of the incentive.
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The assessment

How an organization gets read before anything gets redesigned.

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The workshop

Where the redesign is built with the people who live in it.

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The Evidence

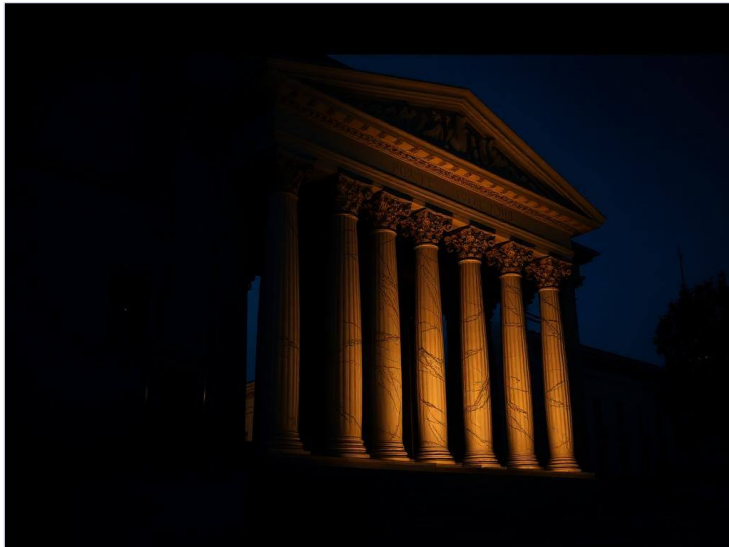
Case studies, engagements, and the public record behind the model.



Business engagements

Retainers and sprints inside operating companies.

theincentiveslab.com/case-studies



Government

Incentive systems at the scale of public policy.

theincentiveslab.com/case-studies



International

Cross-border work across 100+ countries.
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Governing under pressure

Incentive design when the stakes are public and permanent.
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[The public record](#)

Decisions made in view of the people they affect.
theincentiveslab.com/about



[At the negotiating table](#)

Federal negotiation as applied incentive design.
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Recovery and reconstruction

Rebuilding requires re-pricing behavior, not just funding it.
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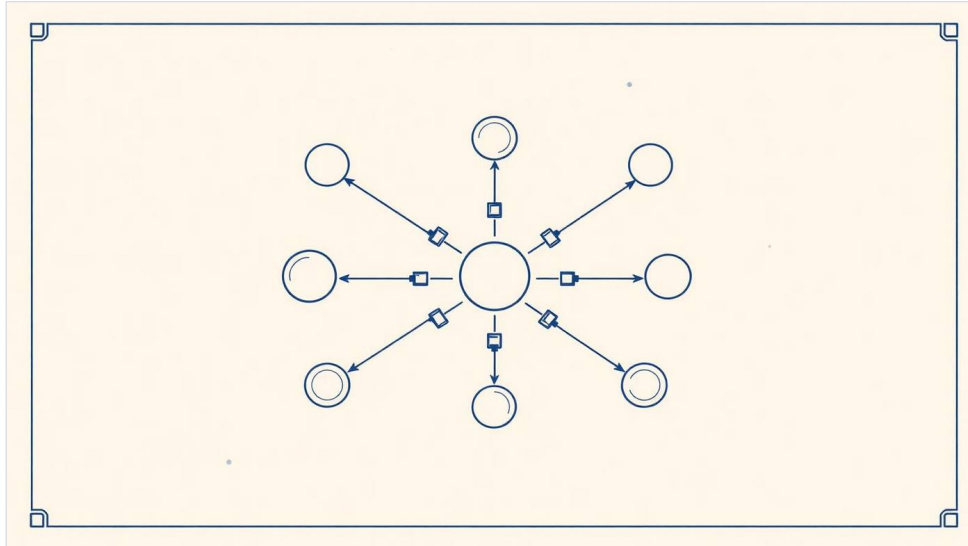


In dialogue

Public reasoning as an incentive instrument.
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The Profession

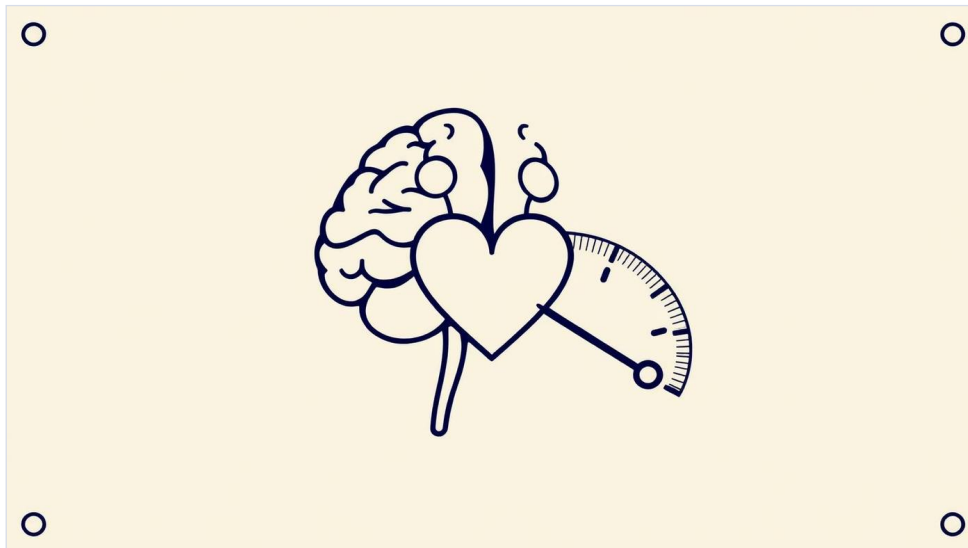
The Incentives Architect — the ladder, the intelligence quotient, and the certification.



The Incentives Architect

The hottest new executive discipline of the AI age.

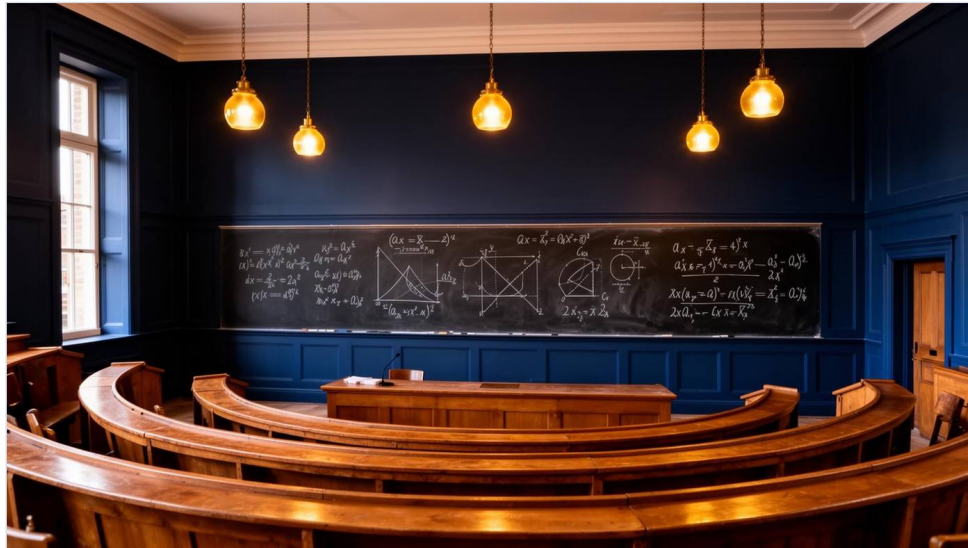
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Incentive Intelligence Quotient

A measurable read on how well you see the systems around you.

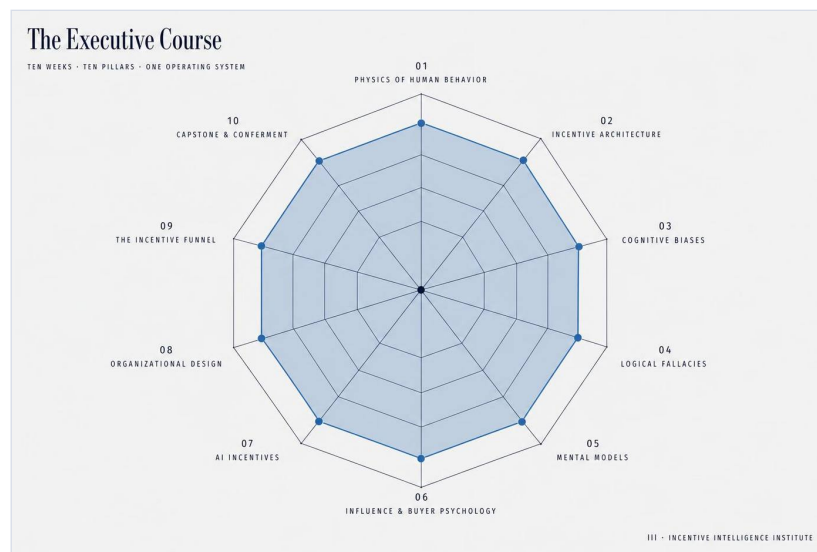
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The certification course

Ten pages, one operating system, one credential.

theincentiveslab.com/course



The competency map

What a certified Architect is expected to be able to do.

theincentiveslab.com/course



Membership

Access to the Lab, the tools, and the assistant.
theincentiveslab.com/membership



The Labs

Live instruments you can run on your own systems.
theincentiveslab.com/labs

The Library

Research, resources, and the published work behind the practice.



The research center

Original writing on incentives, written to be used.

theincentiveslab.com/research



Resources

Downloads, guides, and the white paper itself.

theincentiveslab.com/resources



The books

The long-form arguments underneath the model.

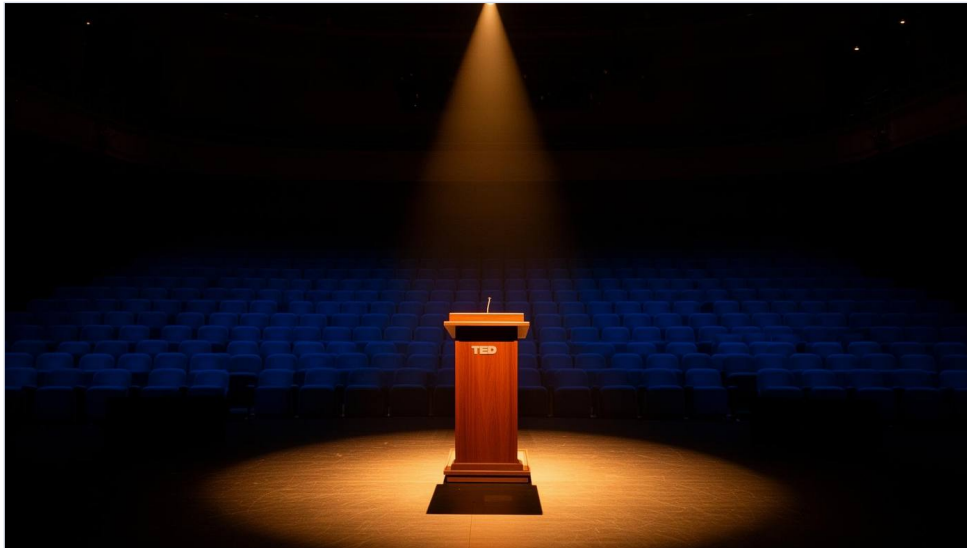
theincentiveslab.com/resources



Perverse Incentives

Why good systems produce bad behavior — and what to do about it.

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Speaking

The model, delivered to a room.

theincentiveslab.com/speaking



Work with us

Retainers, sprints, and digital twins.

theincentiveslab.com/work-with-us

The People

The founders and the work behind the Lab.



The founders

Aaron Bare and Ricardo Rosselló.

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Aaron Bare

WSJ bestselling author of Exponential Theory; facilitated at 500+ companies in 100+ countries.

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Ricardo Rosselló

Scientist and former governor; incentive systems at the scale of a government.
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On stage

The thesis, delivered live.
theincentiveslab.com/speaking



In conversation

Working the model in public.
theincentiveslab.com/speaking



Exponential Theory

The bestselling argument for designing at the speed of change.
theincentiveslab.com/resources



Facilitation

Redesign happens in the room, with the people inside the system.

theincentiveslab.com/work-with-us



Leadership programs

Training the people who set the incentives.

theincentiveslab.com/work-with-us



Blue Zones

Behavior change that outlives the intervention.
theincentiveslab.com/case-studies



In the field

Two decades of facilitated change work.
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Tijuana Innovadora

Incentives across borders and cultures.
theincentiveslab.com/case-studies



Ricardo Rosselló

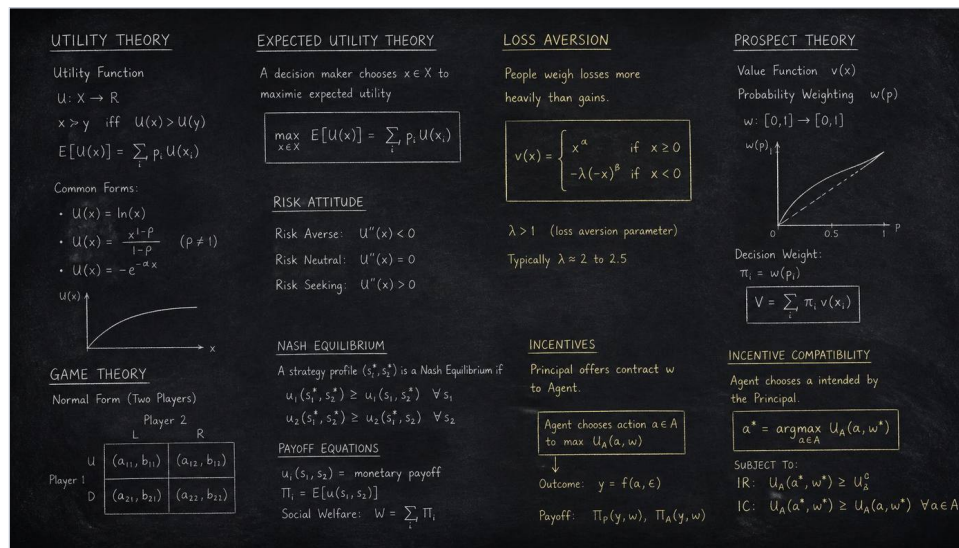
Co-founder of The Incentives Lab.
theincentiveslab.com/about



Aaron Bare

Co-founder of The Incentives Lab.

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The chalkboard

Every model starts as a drawing someone argued about.

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About the Lab

Who we are and why the Lab exists.
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Keep going on the site

This paper is a map. The territory is live and it changes weekly.

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