

Career Development & Money

How to be happy at work for the next 40 years
-from a mostly Dutch/European IT perspective-

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<https://tinyurl.com/next40>

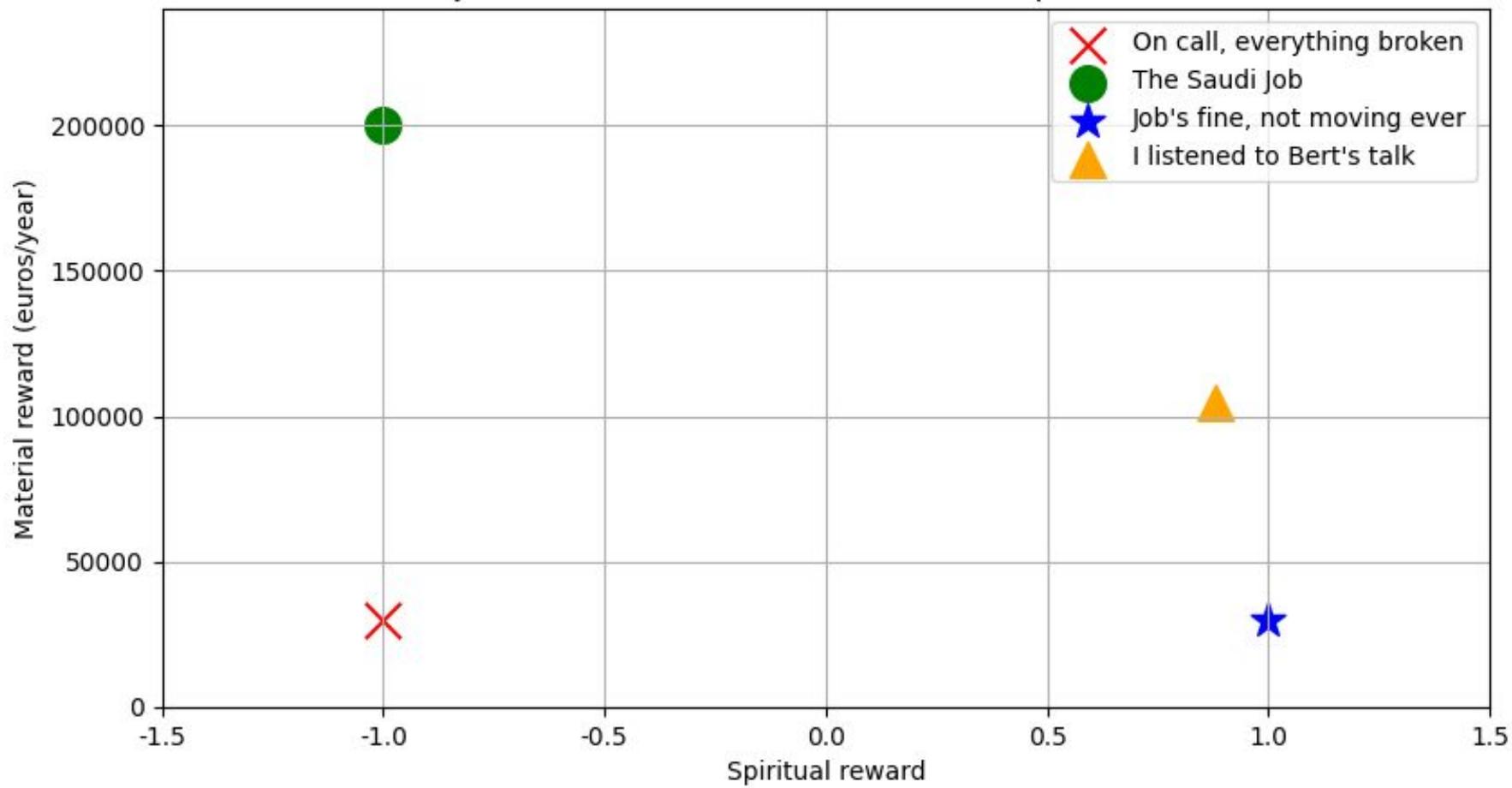
(A follow-up to <http://tinyurl.com/nlnog2015>)

The challenge

- Have a good life
- Enjoy work
- Keep this up for next 40 years!
 - Even as technology and the world keep changing

This does not happen without a plan.

Four jobs - different levels of material and spiritual rewards



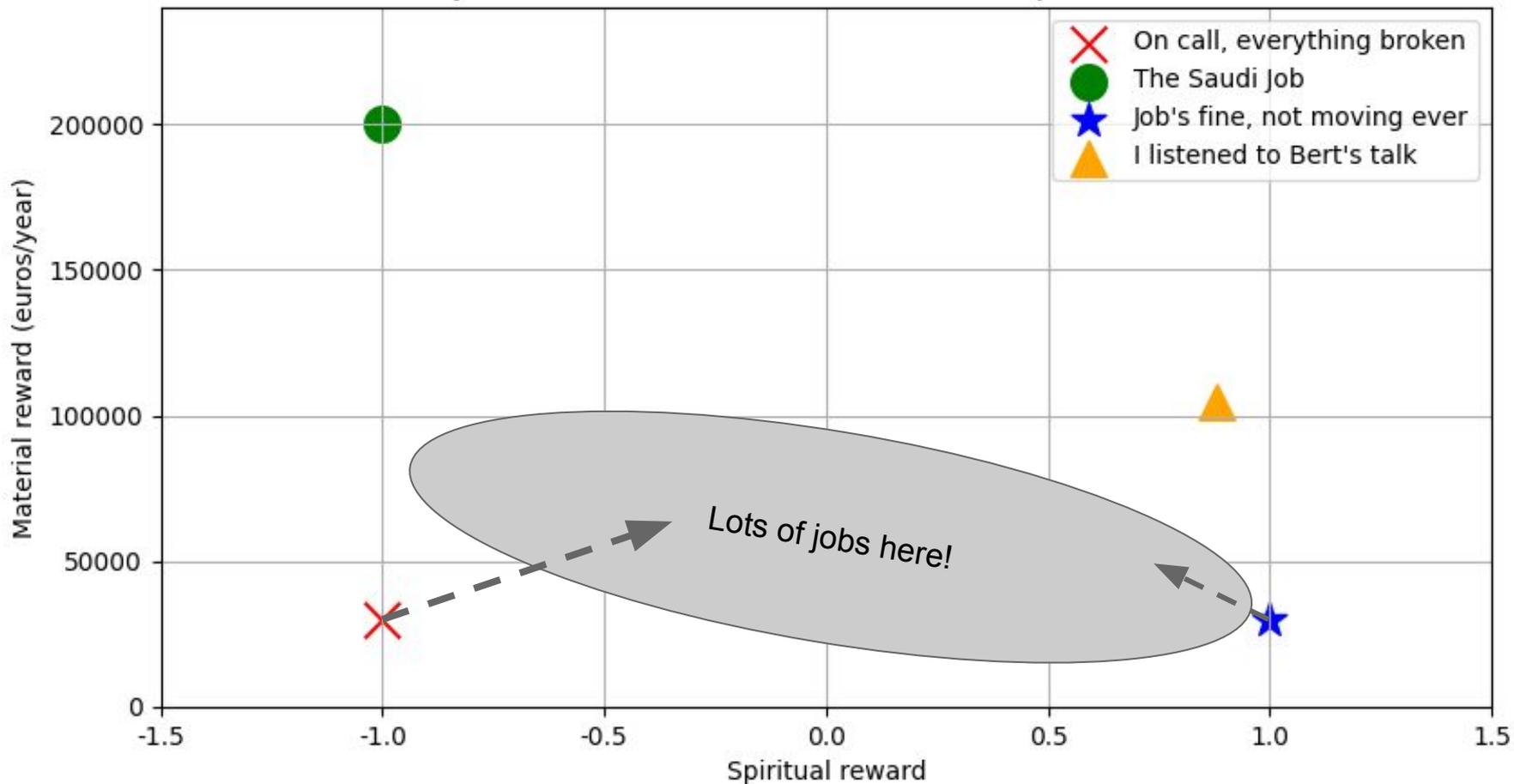
What is good work?

- Supportive colleagues, **safe environment**
- Sense of purpose (“it **matters** what I do”)
 - **Achieve** something from time to time
- **Enjoying** the thing you **actually** do (“automate routers”)
- Feeling that you are part of something nice (“**community**”), being **trusted**
- **Learn something new** once in a while
- Tolerable amount of **bullshit** (meetings, procedures)
- Practical things: **commute**, flexible working hours

What is good material reward?

- “Money can’t buy happiness”
 - Mostly said by people with sufficient money
- **Money can’t EVER compensate for a bad job**
- Insufficient money however still really hurts:
 - Can’t live where you want to live
 - Can’t support a family
 - **You feel disrespected**
 - No savings, so you also can’t “take a leap” to something better
- **There are (bad) times when you simply must rake in the cash**

Four jobs - different levels of material and spiritual rewards



So where are you on the chart?

- Easiest to figure out: money
 - What do you make?
 - What do your direct coworkers make?
 - Cooperate and find out! (**DO IT**)
 - Add in value of company car
 - **You will be AMAZED at the range**
 - Slightly harder: what do similar people make elsewhere? Your only way to find out may be to apply for a job there and negotiate (yes)
- **It could be you are making good money and not know it (and vice versa)**

So where are you on the chart?

- Are you happy, citizen?
 - Be honest to yourself (not easy)
 - There is bullshit **everywhere**
 - If the job were 100% fun, you'd be paying them!
 - Are you safe? Do your colleagues support you?
 - What percentage of time do you spend doing what you feel is “your job”?
 - And how much is spent trying to get permission/make it possible to do your job?
 - How often do you achieve anything?
 - Does your job, cosmically speaking, matter?
 - **Can you take time off easily? Flexible hours?**

So where are you on the chart?

- Do you ever talk about “damagement”?
 - Or feel your company is led by idiots
- Does your longing for the weekend start on Tuesday?
- If you need to get reimbursed for something, how long does it take? Do you feel they trust you?
- If you found a new or better way to do things, would it be a lot of work to convince people to do it?
- What percentage of time is the company being reorganized, acquired, split, merged etc?
- Do you feel your company would love to replace you by **someone cheaper or who asks fewer questions?**

Do not underestimate bad work

- Bad work is **very very** bad for your mental health
- Bad work **physically** makes you ill
- Over time, your resilience against toxic environments **goes down** and the impact becomes worse (mentally, physically)
- **Over time.. You will forget what good work is like and no longer believe it exists**

But are you TOO comfortable?

- Worry number 1 for technical people: will this new job be **PURE HELL**, like my [war story] previous job
 - Can be very traumatic
- We like to stay where the job is 'tolerable', since the rest is scary and potentially **terrible**
- Same for technology: I like my [outdated framework] and it still does [X] better than your **k123s** stack
- By specializing ever further in technology we like, we can lose the ability to ever find work somewhere else, especially since we spent a decade telling everyone how this new technology sucks

My two worries

- Job that pays well, nice car, but is slowly killing you and eventually is a career dead-end
- (Too) comfortable job that underpays & will eventually limit your life, and after x years you no longer know how to get out

Career development

- Short term actions: what can I do to improve life and work within 6 months?
- Medium term: could I find a new job that improves things?
- Longer term: how do I stay **relevant and employable?**

Short term: about your employer

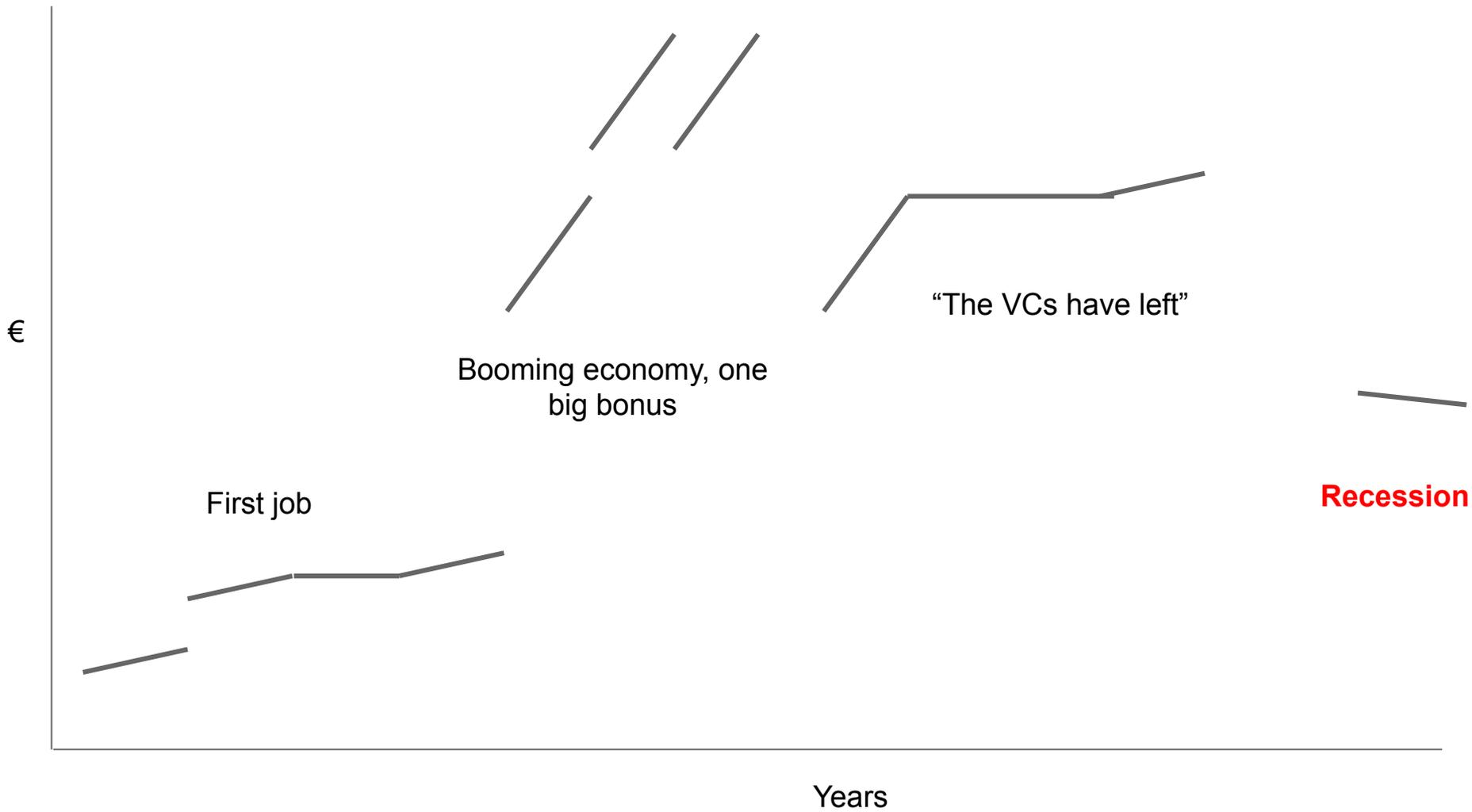
- Does my employer even **care** about my department? Or do they want to outsource/sell us/ignore us?
- Am I in a **marginal** business? Or am I **enabling** million euro revenues?
 - Marginal means - if they pay me more, the company will never make a profit again (“supermarket job”)
- The answer should be: yes & no & yes
 - **Otherwise: get out in a hurry**

Short term things: Salaries

- In a place that cares about its technical staff & where you **enable** big business, salaries are typically extremely flexible
 - Because they don't really matter for the bottom line within a very broad range
- Almost every department will see **> factor 2** difference in rewards between similar people
- **You must find this out together**
 - Get out the loonstrookjes

Short term things: Salaries

- ****I AM NOW SUPER ANGRY****
 - Highest earner is almost never the best person (quite often the other way around!)
- Use that anger!
 - **Start working on a real, credible plan to work somewhere else. Apply for another job, get an offer.**
 - Even if you don't take it, you can now tell your employer: match this or I quit
 - Don't just ask for more money "because Henk also gets it" or because "you really need it".



Fun salary facts

- Your employer will pay you as much as is needed to keep you around (if they want that)
- There is a huge random component **when getting hired!**
 - In a recession? Or an economic boom? Was your field a hype back then? Paying over the top is sometimes also good for management!
- Employers will invent all kinds of rules and systems to not pay you more and **it is mostly bullshit**

Fun salary facts 2

- 90% of flexibility in salary is when you get hired. Can go +50%. Try that later and you have to fight over 3%!
- Bullshit rules include “salary scales”, CAOs (collective bargaining agreements), “fairness”, missing diploma, “aanloopsalaris”, “OPEX rules”
 - Or my favorite: we start you in this lower salary so you have room to grow!
- **Know: if an employer needs you to stay, they can pay whatever they want**
- An employer will **NEVER** tell you you are underpaid

Fun salary facts 3

- To increase your salary, only a few avenues:
 - Change jobs (hard work, but good results)
 - Get a better job offer, **credibly** threaten to leave
 - Sometimes: discover you are underpaid even by their own rules! (or don't get paid what was agreed)
 - This works if you were hired straight out of school sometimes, or are still on some kind of “intern” wage
 - Rarely: I really need this because we have a child on the way, or the commute is killing me but I can't afford to live closer by

Other short term options

- To improve quality of life in short term, there are not a lot of options:
 - If your commute is killing you, try to keep COVID-19 work from home deal
 - Try working fewer hours, and negotiate 10% higher hourly wage (“because I’ll be more productive”)
 - Propose trading in your fancy company car for 1 day work/week less (especially if you don’t really need a fancy car)
 - Try switching departments (“at least you’ll get new pain”)

Medium term: finding a new job

- To improve spiritual quality of work, you'll have to move to a new job or at least a new department (doubtful)
 - Unless you are in senior management, you won't significantly improve your employer (sorry)
- Same thing for monetary reward: easiest to fix over at a new employer
- Good news is: even just trying to get a new job is extremely good for you

Medium term: finding a new job

- Many of you have always rolled from one job to another one (or through recruiters)
- Finding a **good** new job is more work however, especially in the upcoming recession
- You need to determine what you **want** and **what you have to offer today**, plus where **you need to improve.**

Medium term: finding a new job

- Just do it. Even just **trying** it is good for your perspective.
- What do you want? What do you have on offer?
- Preparation:
 - Hiring is a pretty stupid affair, but you have to roll with it a bit
 - What is hip and happening in your scene? Kubernetes? Streaming telemetry? Cloud native? AI? Automation? Rust? Make sure you (go) do stuff like that!
 - Basics: good CV, with dedicated versions for potential employer. **No excuses.**
 - Make one today! Very inspiring work.
 - I can help! bert@hubertnet.nl

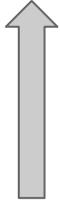
Medium term: recruiters, contractors

- Recruiters are a gateway to new work, but unless you do **really special work**, it is not the best route
 - Why does a company need an outside dedicated recruiter? They are not in it for your welfare!
 - Their goal is to shift people
- “Detachering” - again, ask the same question, do they really need temporary help? Or does no one want a regular job there? Why not?

Longer term: employability

(very briefly)

IP Networking

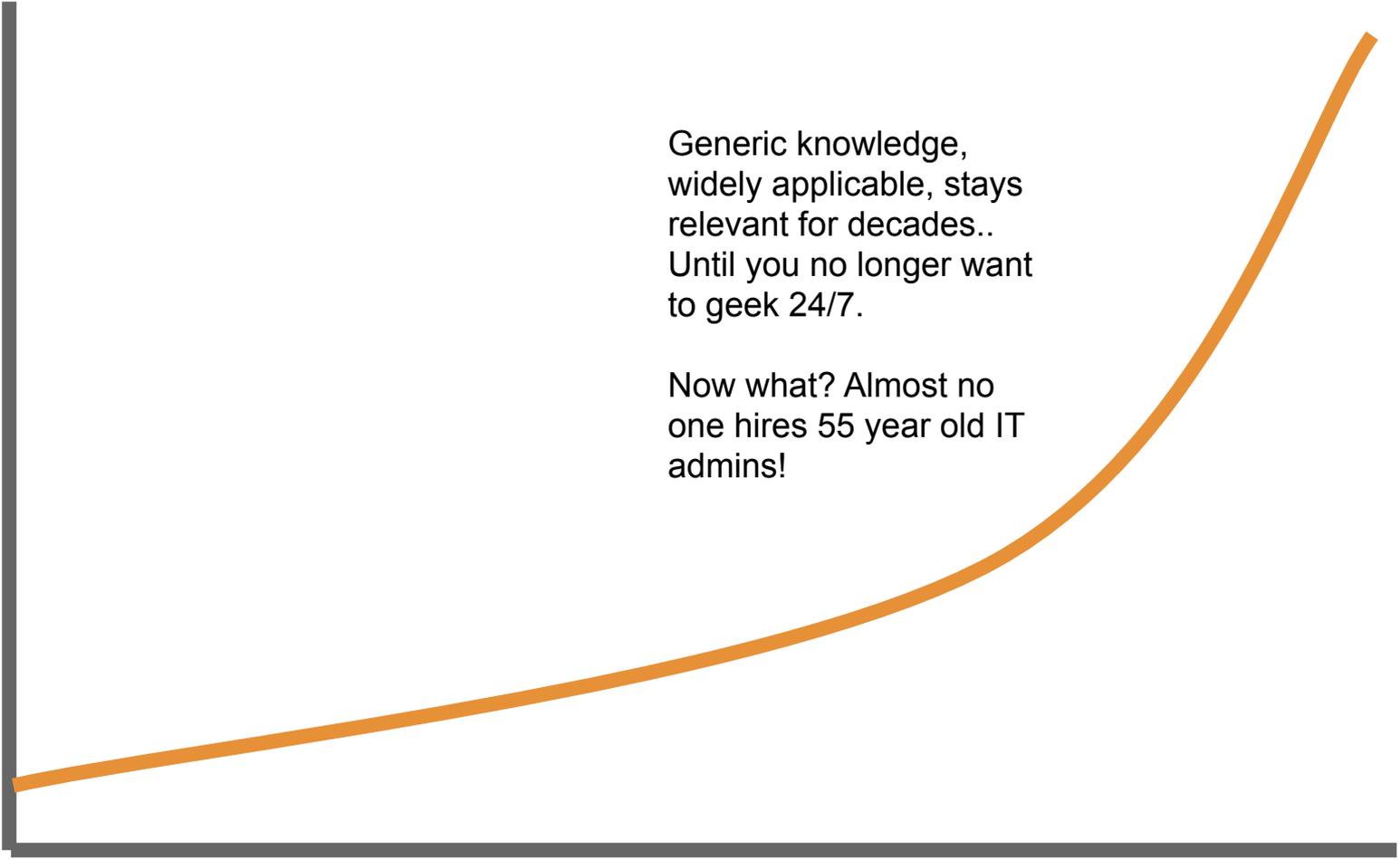


Experience

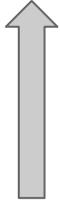
Generic knowledge,
widely applicable, stays
relevant for decades..
Until you no longer want
to geek 24/7.

Now what? Almost no
one hires 55 year old IT
admins!

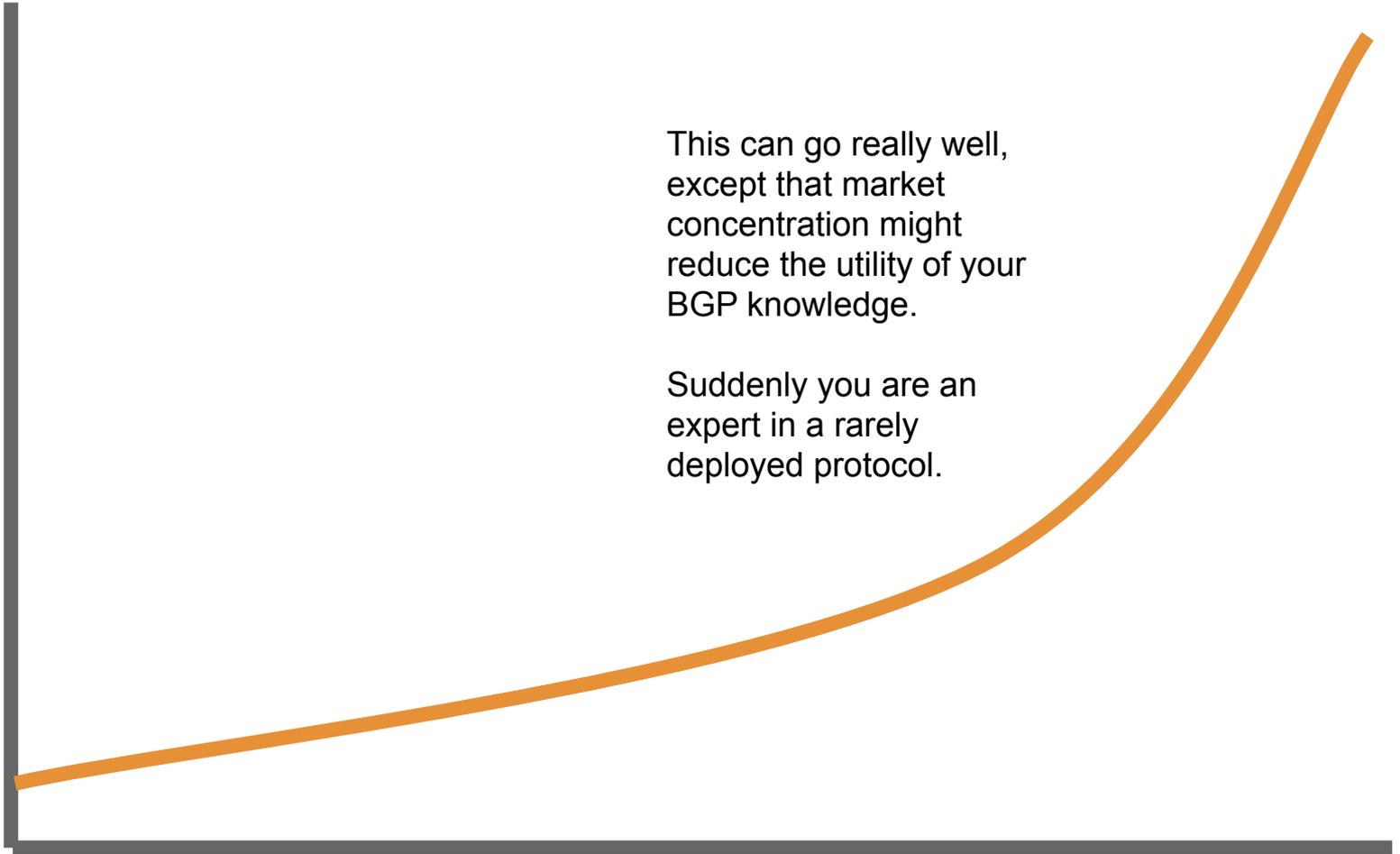
Years



BGP



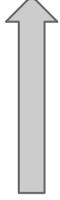
Experience



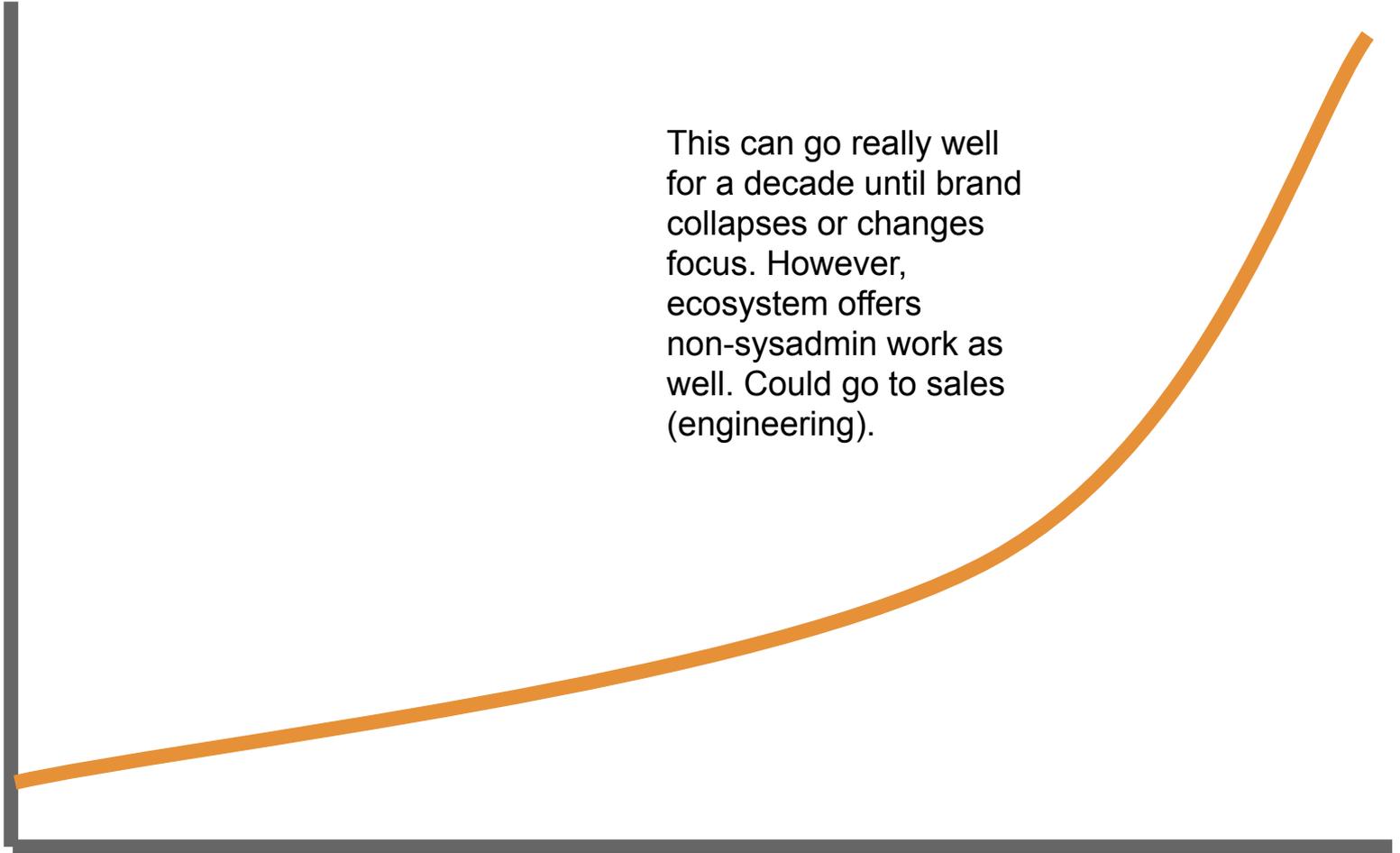
This can go really well,
except that market
concentration might
reduce the utility of your
BGP knowledge.

Suddenly you are an
expert in a rarely
deployed protocol.

Years

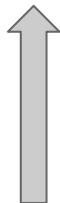


Experience

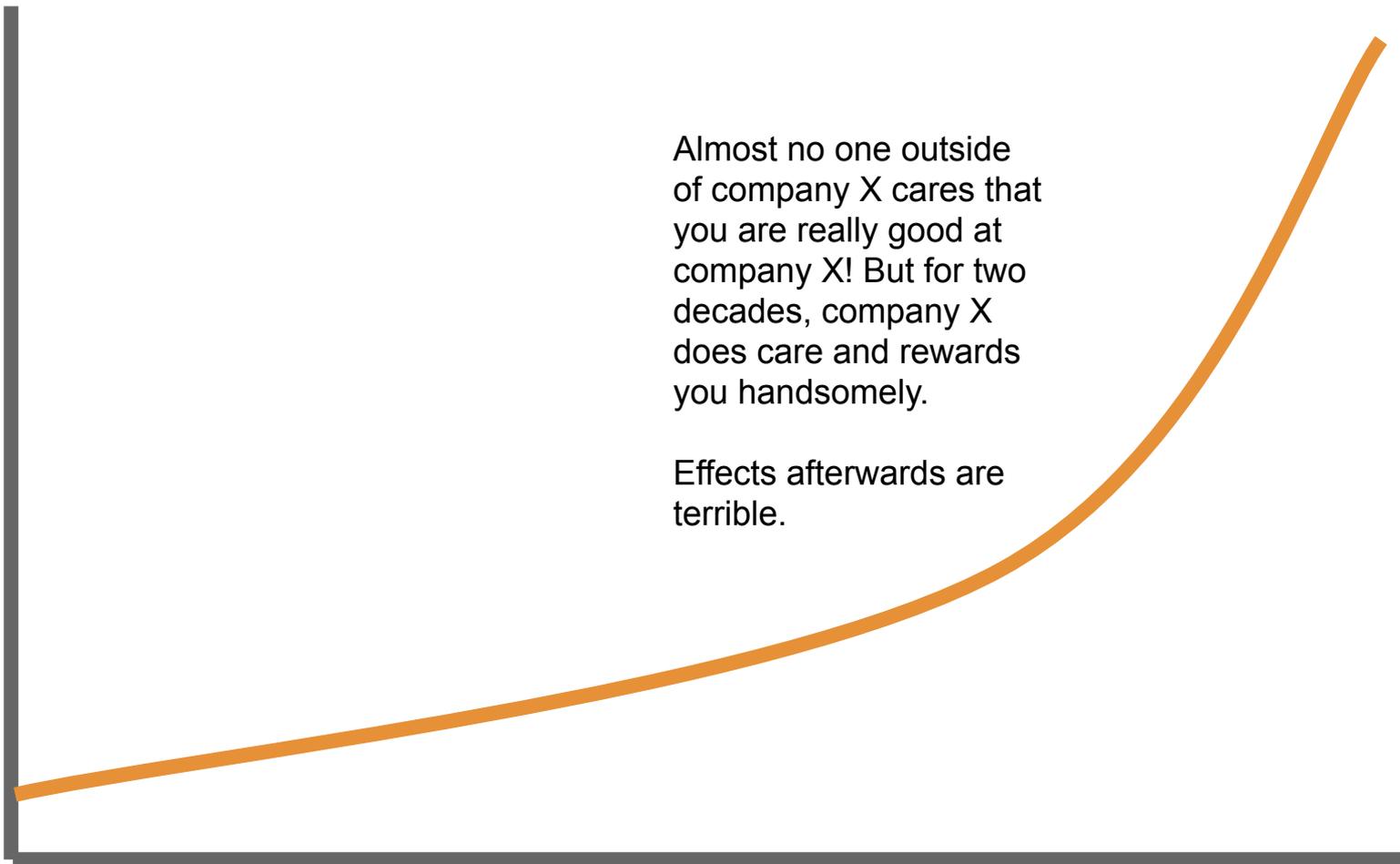


This can go really well for a decade until brand collapses or changes focus. However, ecosystem offers non-sysadmin work as well. Could go to sales (engineering).

Years



Experience



Almost no one outside of company X cares that you are really good at company X! But for two decades, company X does care and rewards you handsomely.

Effects afterwards are terrible.

Years

Employability

- About as much fun as discussing **death**
- The Netherlands is **the most ageist job market I know**. “No one” hires technical hands-on people >50 years old
 - Unless they have **very** strong references
 - You might as well be dead otherwise
- You can **NOT** afford to fossilize
 - Eventually, your current employer **WILL** die, or fire you, or become too toxic (often all three)

Employability

- Don't get stuck in legacy software/technology unless you are SURE you can ride it out to retirement (<10 years from now)
 - Go team ~~COBOL~~ Perl!
- Sure you'd never be in some form of management? Perhaps change jobs and give it a try? Lasts for decades!
- That super well paying job for a US company? Might help you pay off your mortgage & save you 20 years
- Ponder leaving the field of IT. I'm serious
 - You might otherwise be competing against automation, the cloud & outsourcing

Summarising

- It is vital to have an actual “good job” most of the time
 - But also make sure you get paid right, being too poor is very bad for you (and your family) in many ways
- Short term (TODAY!) you can optimize salary, reduce work related pain
- Medium term: write a really good CV, scout the job market (good anyhow), get a new job
 - Don't be too comfortable, consider new things
- Longer term: stay employable in IT or **somewhere**

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