

OSCAR BERG

THE DEAD HORSE THEORY ILLUSTRATED



The tribal wisdom of the Dakota Native Americans, which has been passed on from generation to generation, states that "when you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount."

According to the Dead Horse Theory, in modern business, education, and government, it is common to use advanced strategies in an attempt to revive dead horses.

This book illustrates over 60 strategies, as well as tips on how to identify a dead horse.

DISCLAIMER: No horse was harmed in the creation of this book. Animals are not ours to harm or abuse simply because we can.

**“In order to succeed, we must first
recognize that we have failed”**

– Unknown

#1 FIND MOTIVATION

Come on now, move
you stupid horse!



BUY A STRONGER WHIP

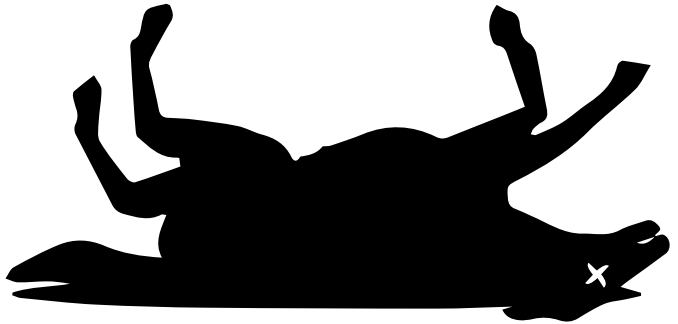
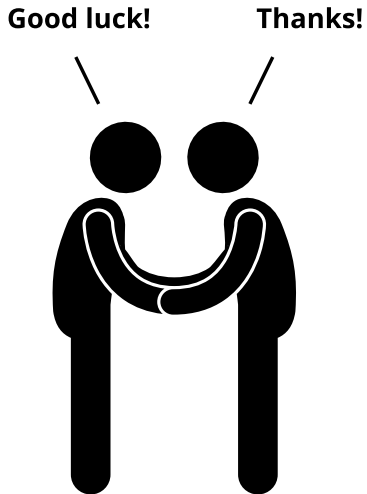
#2 INCREASE THE MOTIVATION

There's the door if you don't shape up soon!



THREATEN THE HORSE WITH TERMINATION

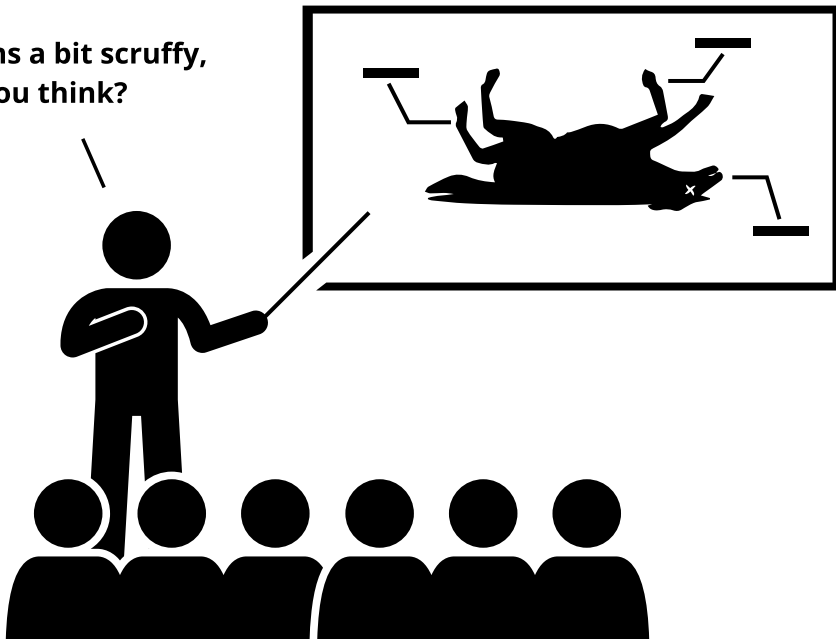
#3 CHANGE RIDERS



A NEW RIDER CAN BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND IDEAS

#4 FORM A COMMITTEE

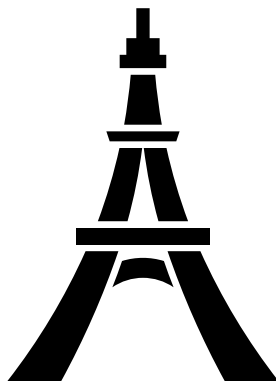
The tail seems a bit scruffy,
don't you think?



APPOINT A COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE HORSE

#5 LOOK FOR BEST PRACTICES

How do you
ride it?



Je ne sais pas!



**ARRANGE TO VISIT OTHER COUNTRIES TO SEE HOW OTHERS
RIDE DEAD HORSES**

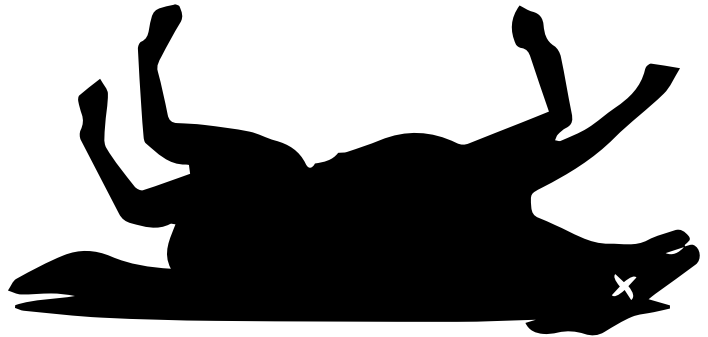
#6 UPDATE STANDARDS



**LOWER THE STANDARDS SO THAT DEAD HORSES
CAN BE INCLUDED**

#7 RECLASSIFY

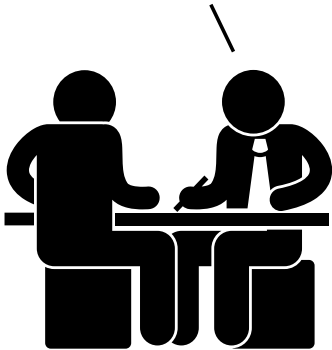
This might help!



RECLASSIFY THE DEAD HORSE AS 'LIVING-IMPAIRED'

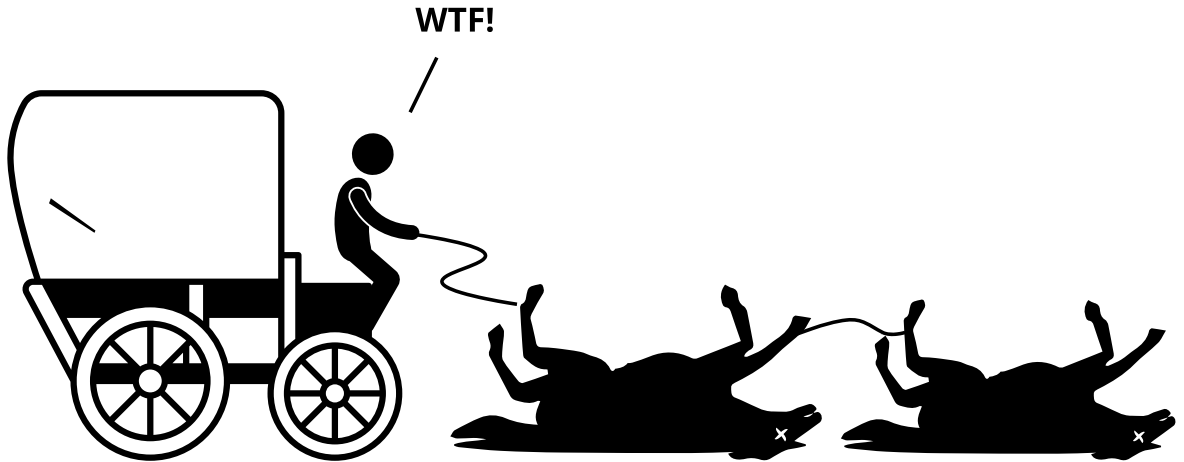
#8 HIRE OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS

Sign the 1 billion contract here...



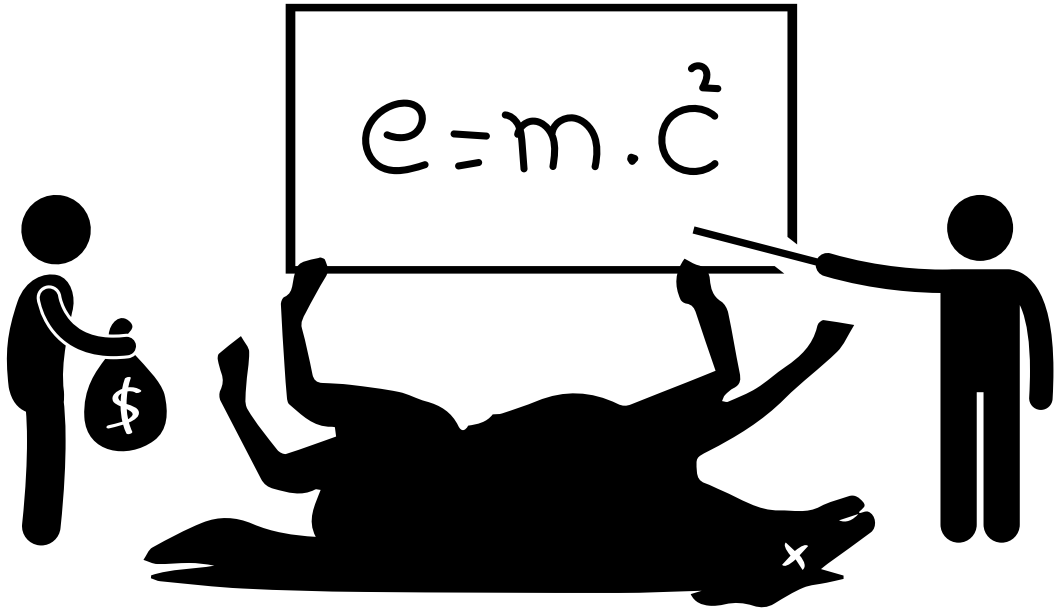
HIRE OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS TO RIDE THE DEAD HORSE

#9 CREATE SYNERGIES



**HARNESS SEVERAL DEAD HORSES TOGETHER TO
INCREASE THE SPEED**

#10 INVEST MORE



**PROVIDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND/OR TRAINING TO
INCREASE THE DEAD HORSE'S PERFORMANCE**

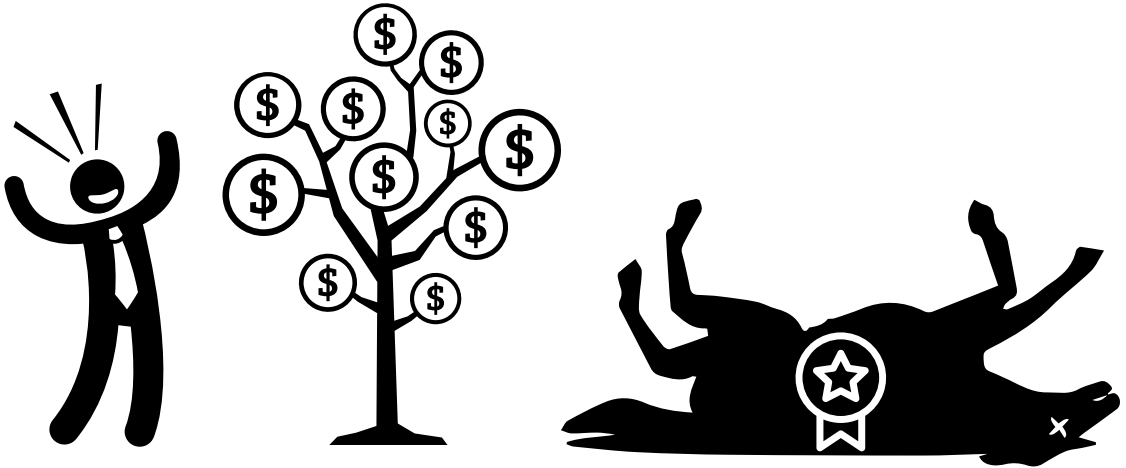
#11 STUDY PRODUCTIVITY

Normally we don't hire children,
but since you're not being paid it's not
considered child labour.



**CONDUCT A PRODUCTIVITY STUDY TO SEE IF LIGHTER RIDERS
WOULD IMPROVE THE DEAD HORSE'S PERFORMANCE**

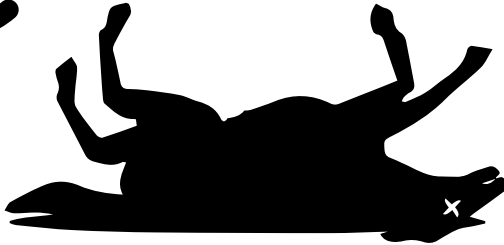
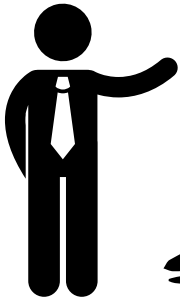
#12 FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS



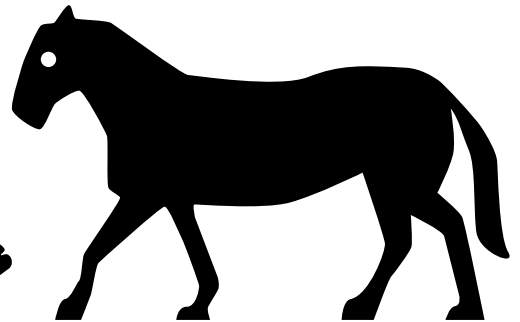
THE DEAD HORSE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FED, IT'S LESS COSTLY, CARRIES LOWER OVERHEAD AND, THEREFORE, CONTRIBUTES SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE BOTTOM LINE

#13 UPDATE THE KPIS

All we require from
you is to be present
at the office

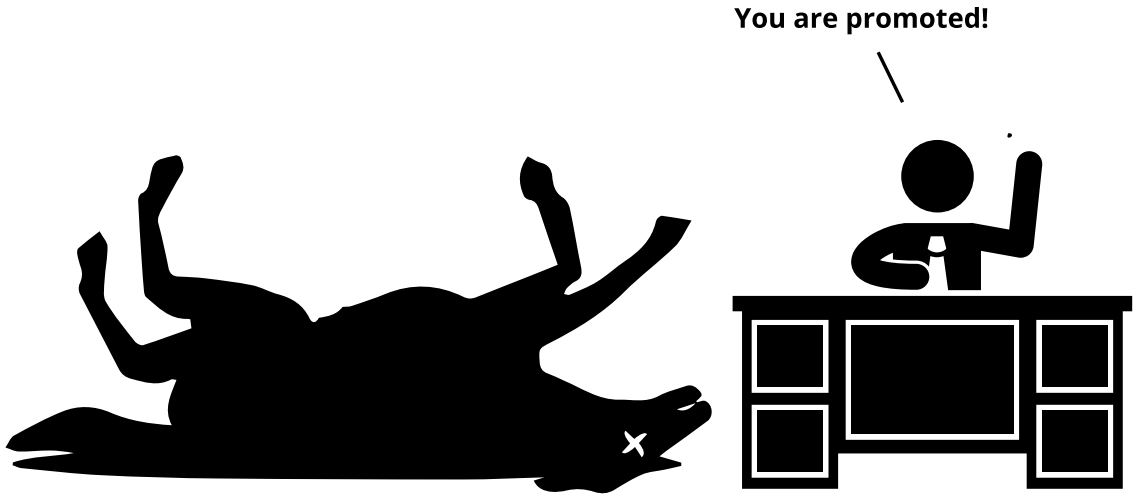


Yee-haw!



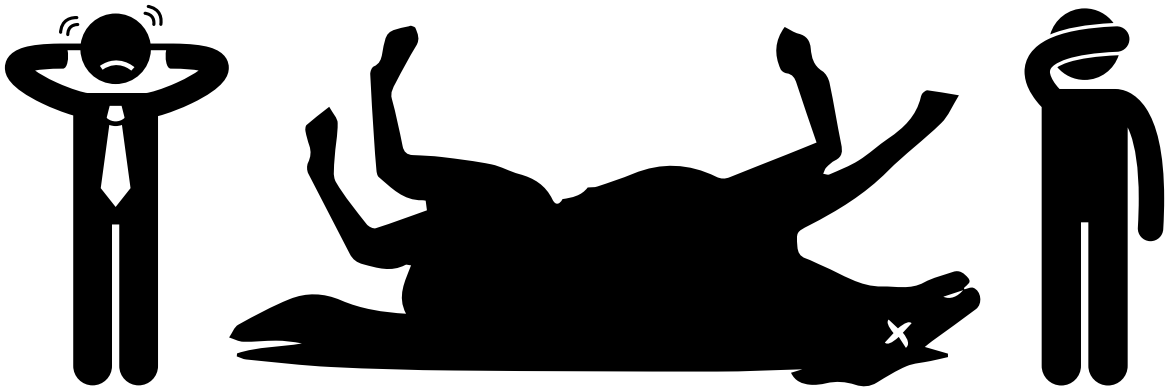
**RE-WRITE THE EXPECTED PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS
FOR ALL HORSES**

#14 ANNOUNCE A PROMOTION



**PROMOTE THE DEAD HORSE TO A SUPERVISORY
POSITION OF HIRING ANOTHER HORSE**

#15 PRACTICE STRATEGIC IGNORANCE



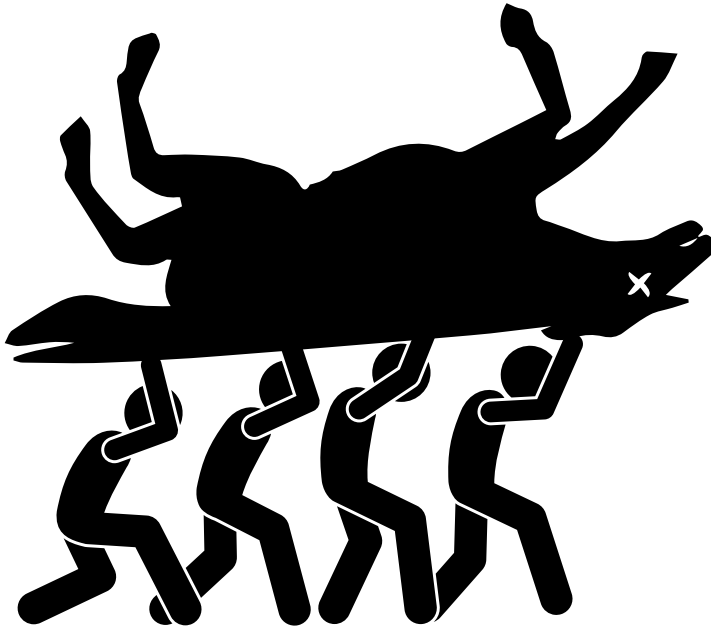
LET YOUR MIND PUSH AWAY INFORMATION THAT GETS IN
THE WAY OF YOUR DESIRE FOR THE HORSE TO BE ALIVE

#16 MODERNISE



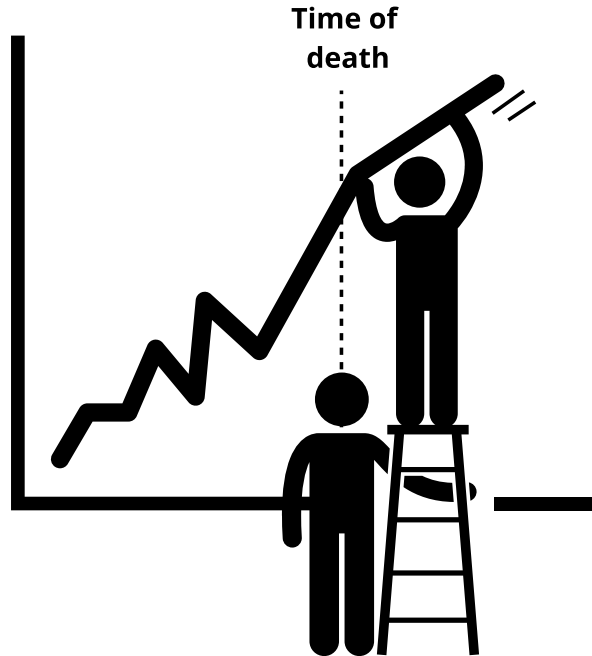
**DO MODERN THINGS, SUCH AS HIRING INFLUENCERS TO MAKE
THE DEAD HORSE LOOK COOL AND TRENDY AGAIN**

#17 OUTSOURCE



**OUTSOURCE THE DEAD HORSE TO A COUNTRY WHERE
MANUAL LABOUR CAN REPLACE HORSEPOWER**

#18 USE CREATIVE ACCOUNTING



**FIND LOOPHOLES IN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS TO HIDE THE
NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEAD HORSE**

#19 USE AS TARGET OF BLAME



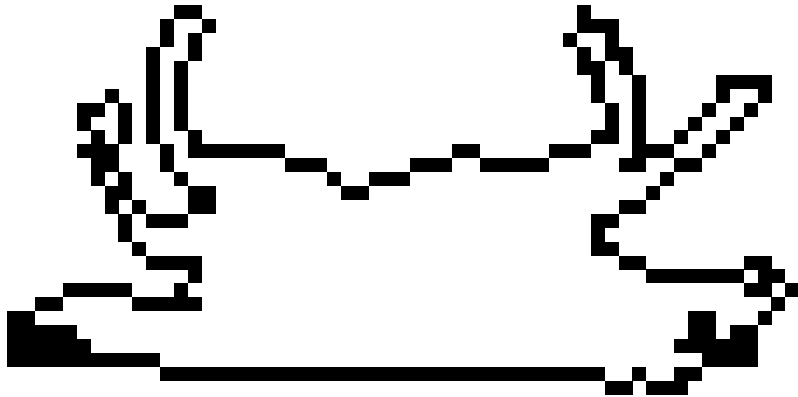
**USE THE DEAD HORSE AS A SCAPEGOAT FOR EVERYTHING
THAT'S GOING WRONG WITH THE BUSINESS**

#20 HONOR TRADITION

DEAD
— *Since* —
★ 1999 ★
— *Aged to* —
PERFECTION
▀ LIMITED EDITION ▀

PROCLAIM THAT THE BUSINESS IS BASED ON A LONG
AND A PROUD TRADITION OF RIDING DEAD HORSES

#21 DIGITIZE



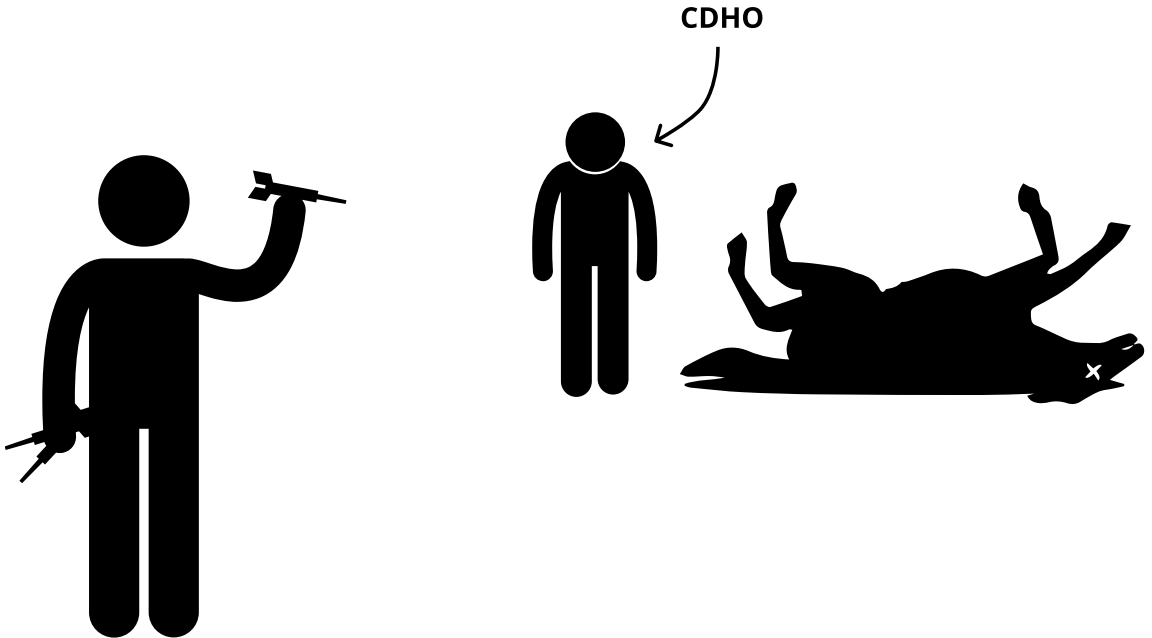
**DIGITIZE THE HORSE SO IT CAN BE PROGRAMMED
BACK TO LIFE**

#22 BLAME THE PANDEMIC



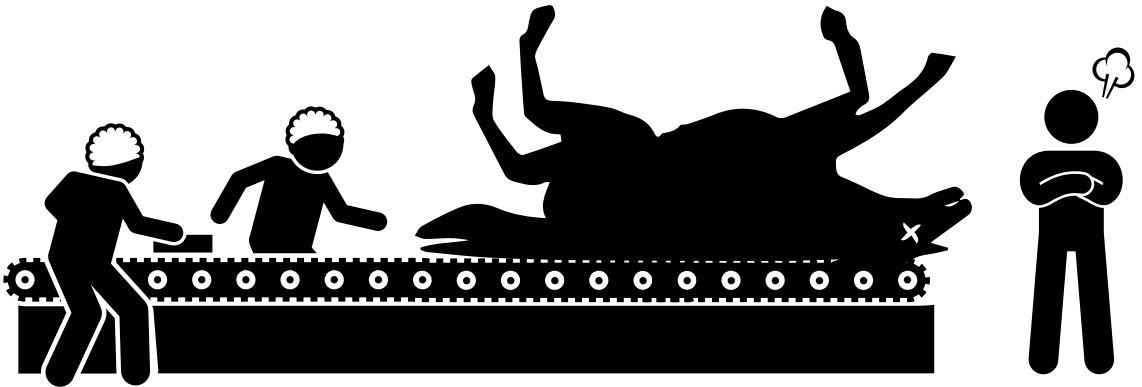
**BLAME THE DEATH OF THE HORSE ON THE PANDEMIC – SEEK
FUNDING FROM A COVID-19 ECONOMIC RELIEF PROGRAM**

#23 APPOINT A CDHO



APPOINT A CHIEF DEAD HORSE OFFICER (CDHO), AND MAKE HIM OR HER TAKE ALL THE BLAME FOR THE DEAD HORSE

#24 TRY AGAIN



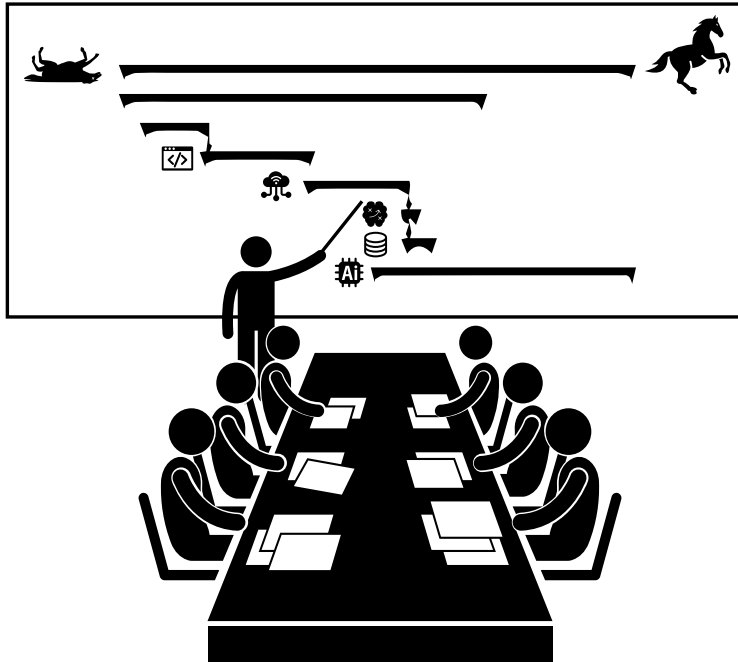
MAKE A NEW HORSE THE SAME WAY AS YOU MADE THE DEAD ONE, HOPING FOR A DIFFERENT RESULT

#25 FIND WORKAROUNDS



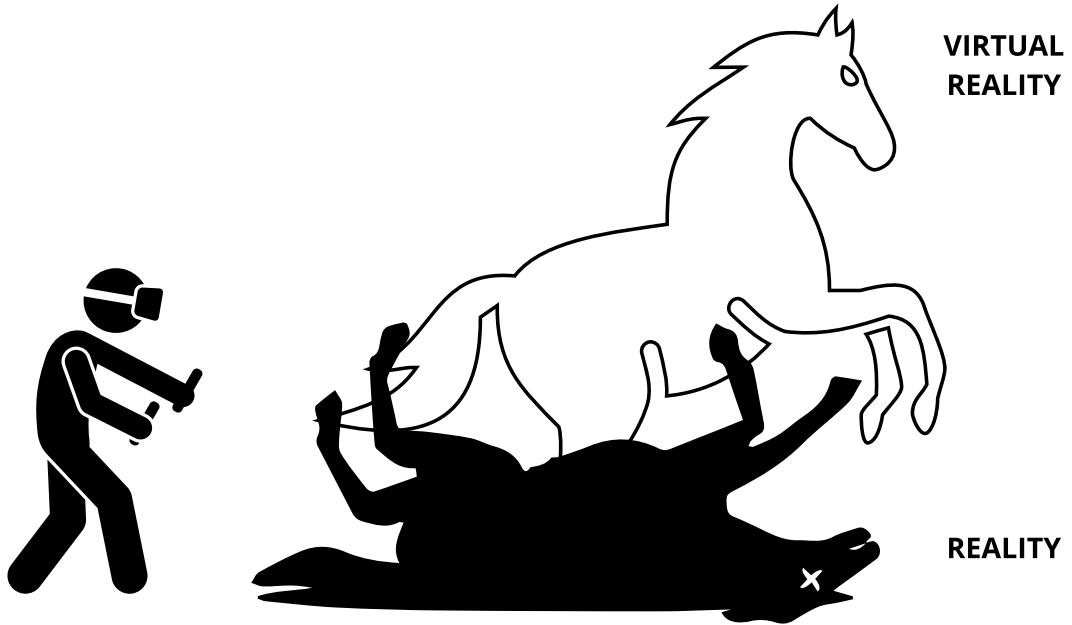
**CIRCUMVENT THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE DEAD HORSE
WITH VARIOUS 'TEMPORARY' FIXES**

#26 LAUNCH A TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM



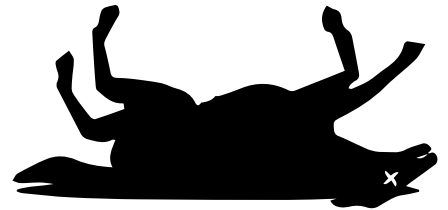
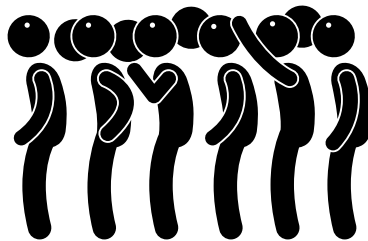
**LAUNCH A MULTI-YEAR TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME
RUN BY A MAJOR CONSULTANCY**

#27 ADOPT NEW TECH



INVEST IN EXPENSIVE NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT CAN BRING THE DEAD HORSE BACK TO LIFE, SUCH AS VIRTUAL REALITY

#28 INNOVATE



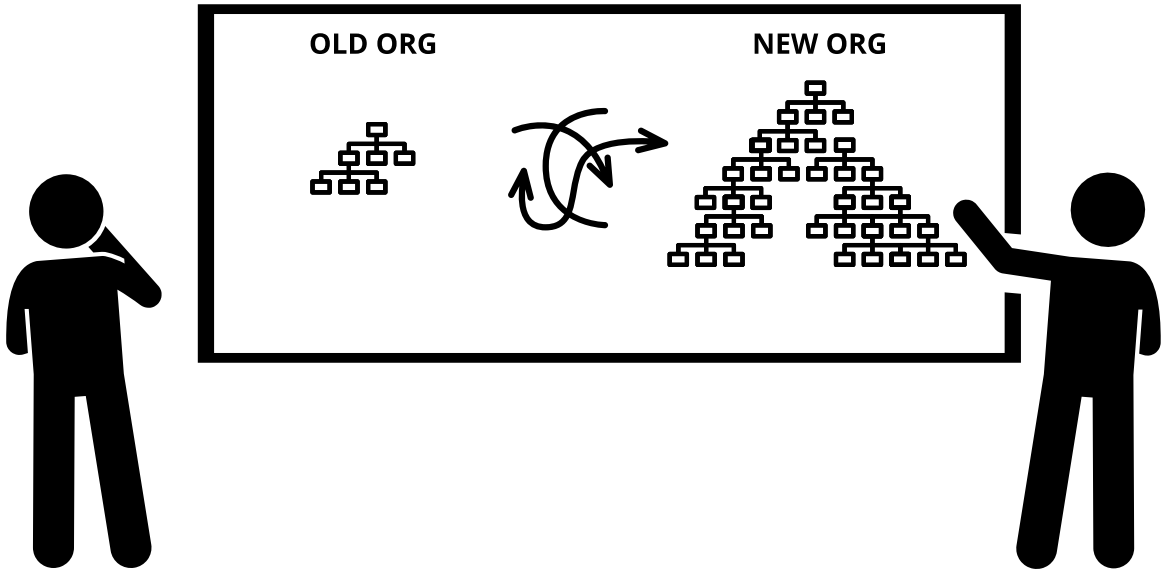
**LAUNCH NEW AND SEEMINGLY INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES TO
SHIFT EVERYONE'S FOCUS AWAY FROM THE DEAD HORSE**

#29 RUN FOCUS GROUPS



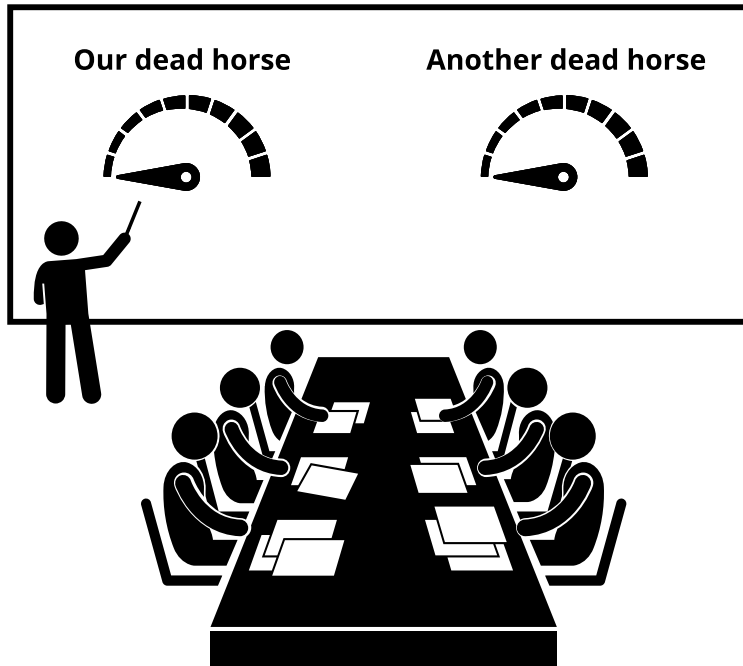
**RUN FOCUS GROUPS TO DISCUSS WHETHER
THE HORSE IS DEAD OR NOT**

#30 REORGANIZE



**MAKE A COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF THE ORGANISATION'S
INTERNAL STRUCTURE TO REVIVE THE DEAD HORSE**

#31 BENCHMARK



**COMPARE THE HORSE WITH OTHER DEAD HORSES AND
CONCLUDE THAT IT PERFORMS NO WORSE THAN THEM**

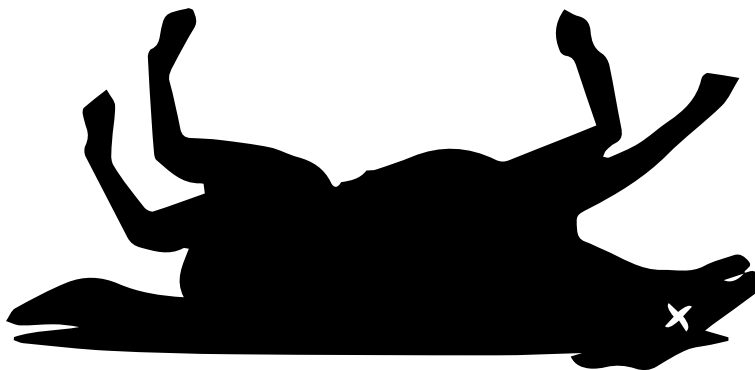
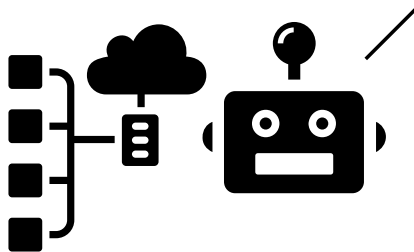
#32 REVERT TO OFFICE POLITICS



USE THE DEAD HORSE TO SPICE UP OFFICE POLITICS

#33 USE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

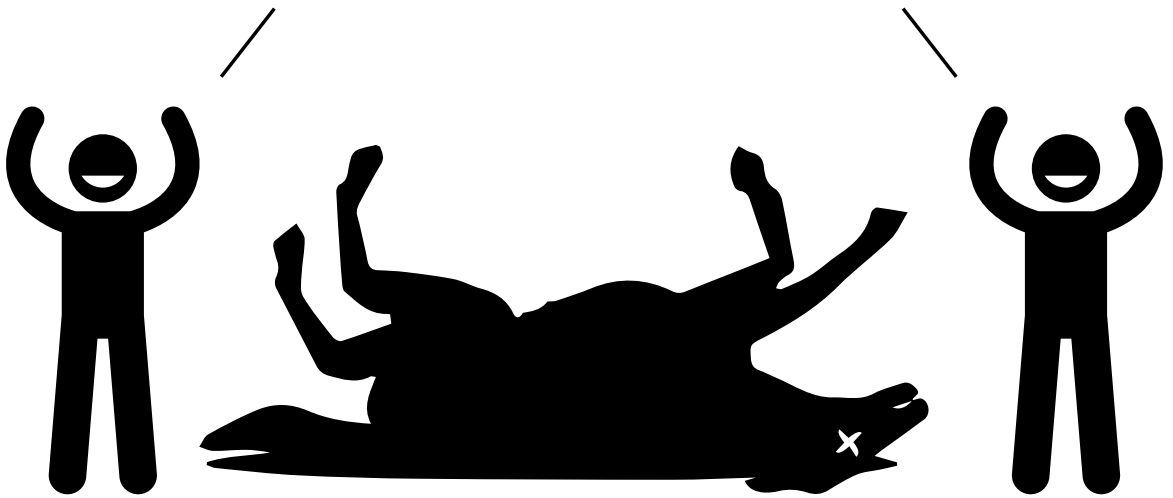
It is with 99.9999%
certainty a horse taking
a nap.



LET AN AI GO THROUGH 3.42 ZILLION DATA POINTS
COLLECTED THROUGHOUT THE HORSE'S LIFE

#34 FIND A NEW PURPOSE

Yeah, let's make the world a better place together!



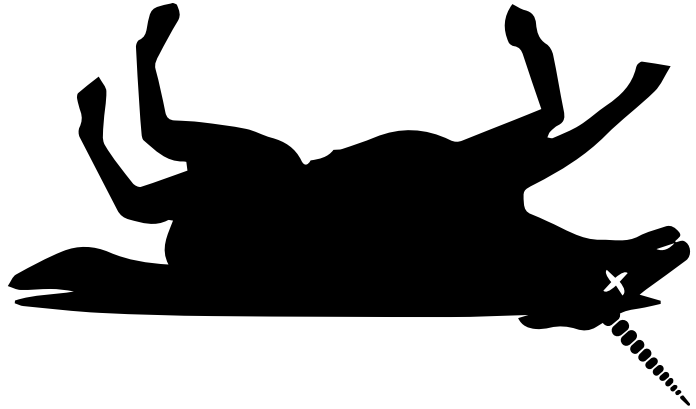
**FIND A NEW PURPOSE AND TRY TO ACHIEVE IT BY
SAYING IT OUT LOUD TO EVERYONE YOU MEET**

#35 LABEL AS BETA VERSION



**CLAIM THAT THE DEAD HORSE IS CURRENTLY IN THE BETA
DEVELOPMENT STAGE, INDEFINITELY**

#36 DO A REBRANDING



REBRAND THE DEAD HORSE AS A (DEAD) UNICORN

#37 CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Zero carbon emissions!
We're saving the world!



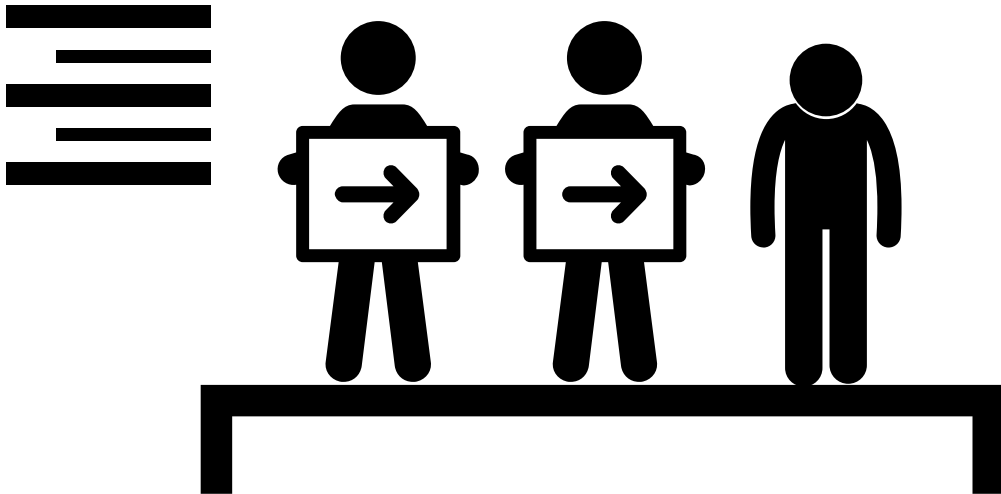
**THE HORSE MAY BE DEAD, BUT IT OUTPERFORMS ALL LIVING
HORSES IN TERMS OF CARBON EMISSIONS**

#38 PROVIDE ADDED VALUE



**LAUNCH VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT
WILL MAKE THE DEAD HORSE MORE ATTRACTIVE**

#39 TRANSFER OWNERSHIP



**TRANSFER THE OWNERSHIP (A.K.A. THE BLAME) OF
THE DEAD HORSE TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT**

#40 REPLENISH THE TEAM

Fresh
resources

Depleted
resources



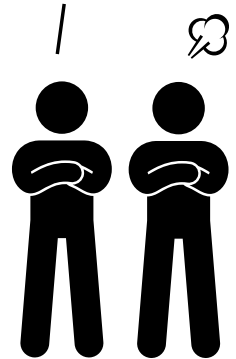
**BRING IN FRESH NEW RESOURCES THAT CAN REVIVE
THE DEAD HORSE**

#41 RESET

I bet you haven't
tried this, guys!

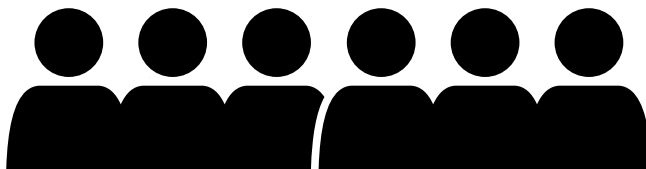


Just a thousand times...



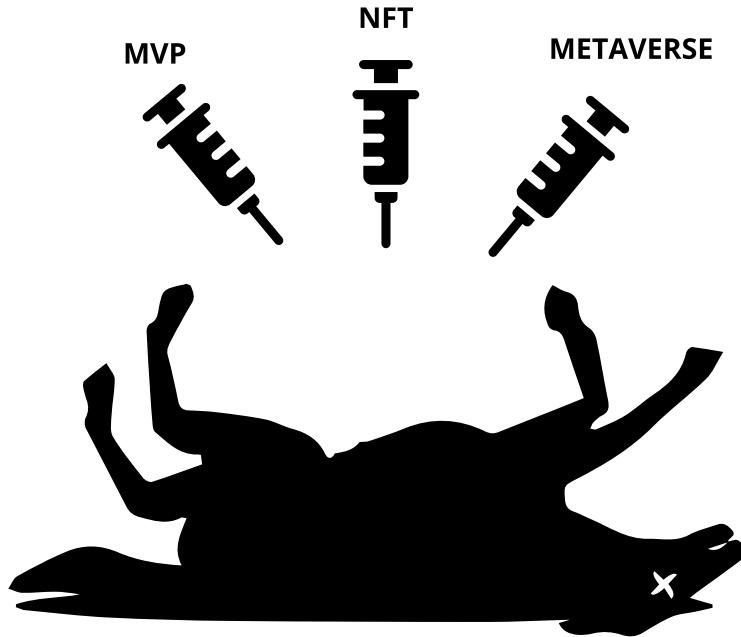
**BRING SOMEONE IN FROM ANOTHER LOCATION TO CONNECT
THE DEAD HORSE TO THE POWER SUPPLY**

#42 PERFECT THE PITCH



**CONVINCE INVESTORS THAT DEAD HORSES ARE
'THE FUTURE OF THE BUSINESS'**

#43 INJECT BUZZWORDS



**MEDICATE THE DEAD HORSE WITH
ALL SORTS OF COOL NEW TERMS**

#44 PIVOT



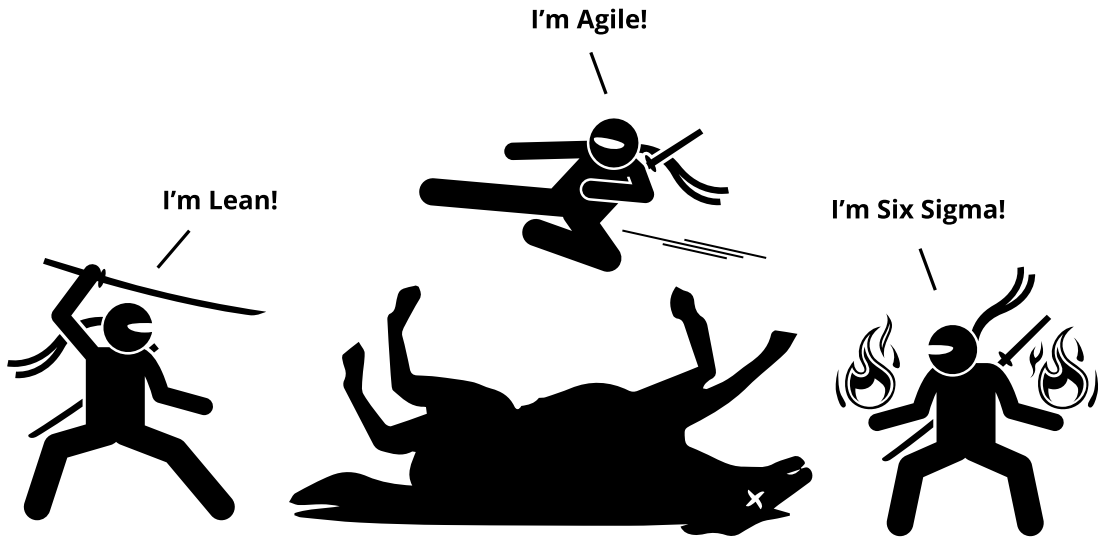
**MAKE NFT:S AND CRYPTO ART OF THE DEAD HORSE
AND MAKE EXCLUSIVE DROPS**

#45 GO WITH THE FLOW



DO LIKE THE DEAD HORSE – RELAX AND GO WITH THE FLOW!

#46 IMPLEMENT NEW METHODOLOGY



**CHOOSE ANY OFF-THE-SHELF METHODOLOGY SUCH AS LEAN,
SIX SIGMA OR AGILE, AND APPLY IT TO THE DEAD HORSE**

#47 CREATE A REALITY DISTORTION FIELD

We will make it live again
in 3 days!



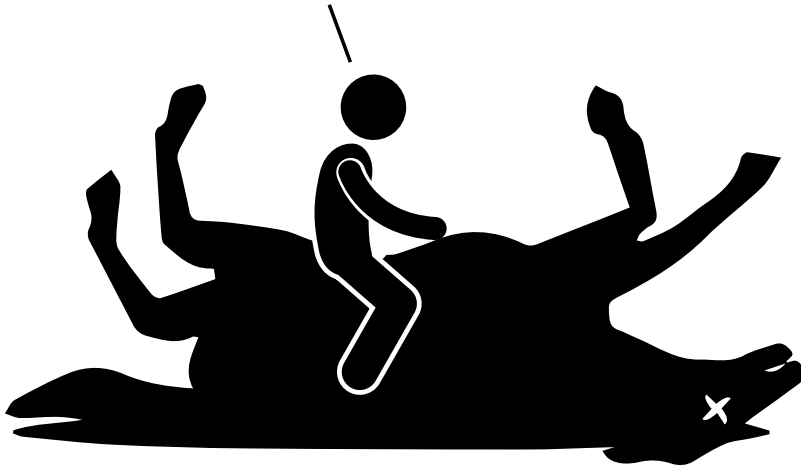
YES!!!



**REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DEAD HORSE
AND BELIEVE THAT ALL DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERCOME**

#48 FAIL TO SUCCEED

Fail big, fail once!
Yee-haw!



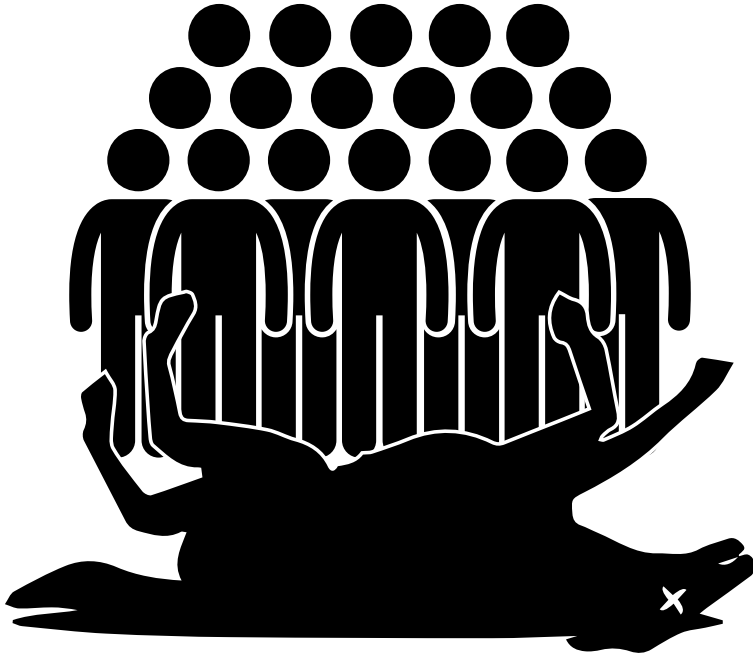
**KEEP RIDING THAT DEAD HORSE, BECAUSE FAILURE IS
AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS SUCCESS**

#49 SCALE UP



**BRING AS MANY ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AS POSSIBLE
ON BOARD THE DEAD HORSE TO SAVE IT**

#50 GROW TOO BIG TO FAIL



**MAKE THE DEAD HORSE SO LARGE FAILING WOULD BE
DISASTROUS TO THE GREATER ECONOMIC SYSTEM, AND THAT
IT THEREFORE MUST BE SUPPORTED BY GOVERNMENTS**

#51 CONDUCT RANDOM LAYOFFS

Take this
one next

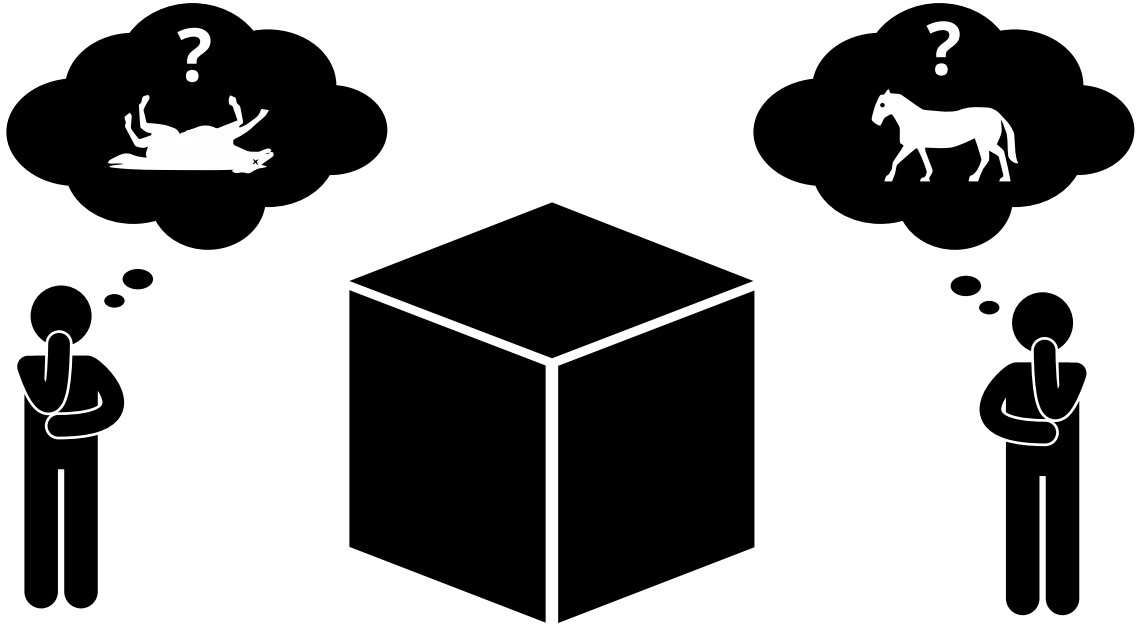


You are fired!



LAY OFF A RANDOM BUT SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF
THE WORKFORCE TO PLEASE THE STOCK MARKET

#52 PUT IT IN A BOX



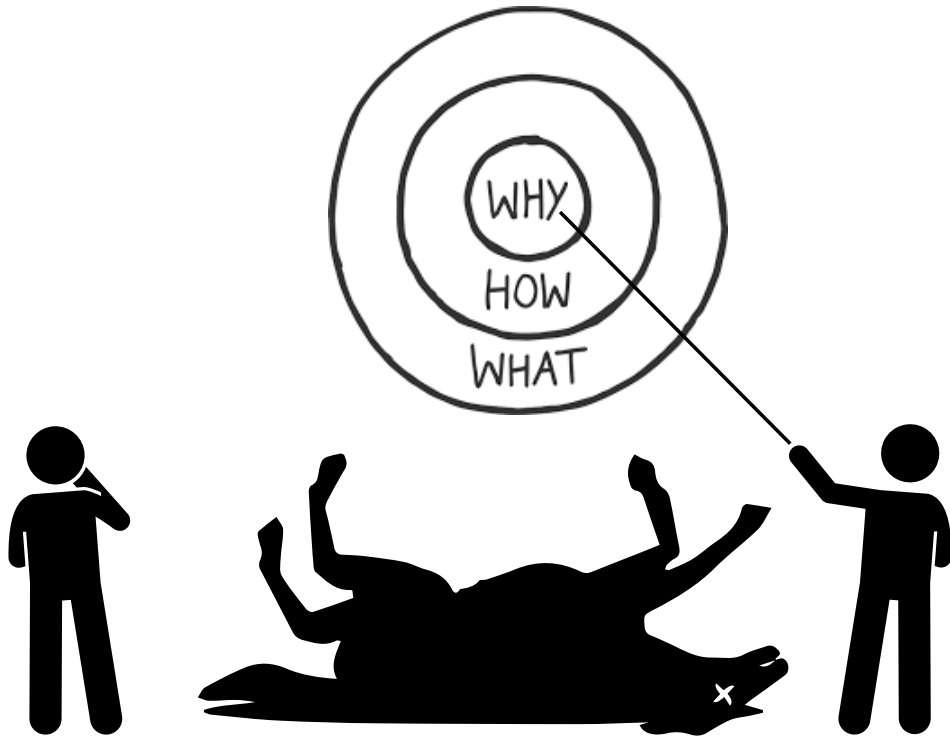
HIDE THE DEAD HORSE IN A SCHRÖDINGER'S BOX, SO
THAT NOBODY KNOWS IF IT IS DEAD OR NOT

#53 ADD NEW INCENTIVES



**PROVIDE MORE INCENTIVES TO MAKE THE RIDER
MORE MOTIVATED TO RIDE THE DEAD HORSE**

#54 FOCUS ON THE WHY



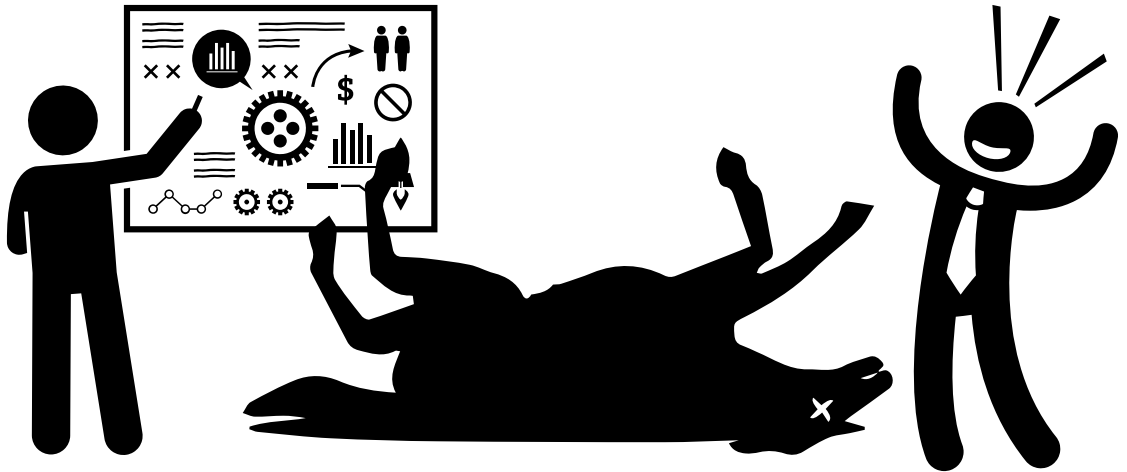
**FOCUS ON THE WHY (WHY MOVE AT ALL?) INSTEAD OF
FOCUSING ON THE WHAT (THE DEAD HORSE) AND THE HOW
(HOW TO MAKE IT MOVE)**

#55 DECLARE A NEW NORMAL



DECLARE THAT DEAD HORSES ARE THE NEW NORMAL

#56 CHANGE BUSINESS MODEL



**INTRODUCE A SUBSCRIPTION MODEL INSTEAD OF REQUIRING
CUSTOMERS TO BUY THE DEAD HORSE**

#57 FOCUS



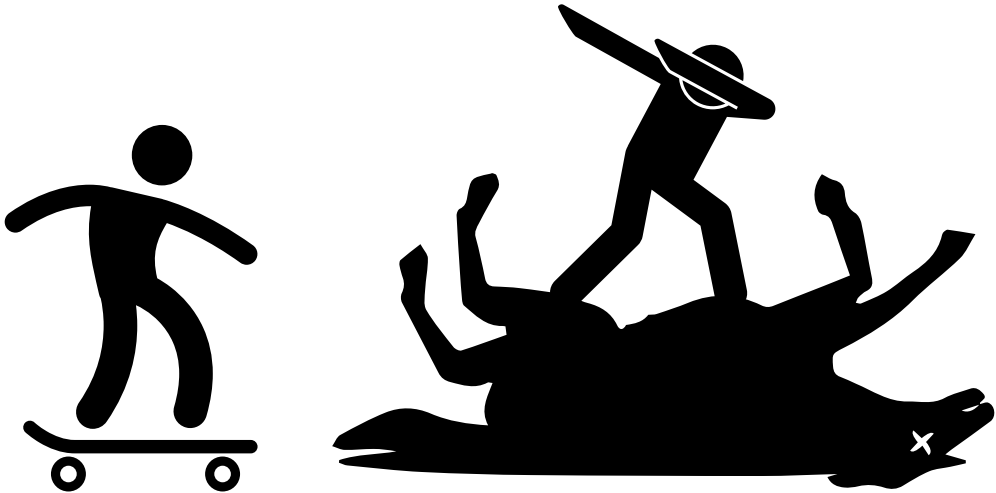
**THE CORE OF THE STRATEGY IS TO CHOOSE WHAT NOT TO DO
- GET RID OF EVERYTHING BUT THE DEAD HORSE**

#58 MOVE TO THE CLOUD



**MOVE THE DEAD HORSE TO THE CLOUD TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THE CLOUD'S BENEFITS**

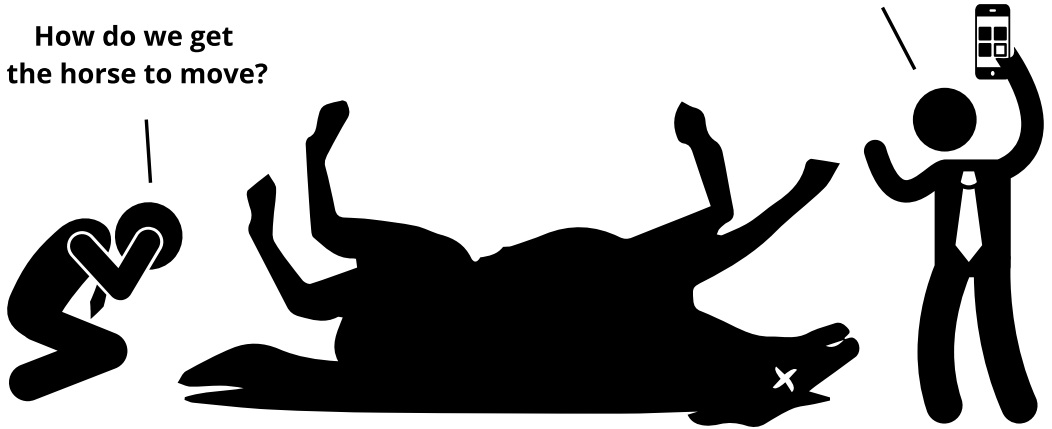
#59 BEFRIEND STARTUPS



**ESTABLISH 'STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS' WITH COOL
STARTUPS TO MAKE THE DEAD HORSE FEEL LESS DEAD**

#60 CREATE AN APP

How do we get
the horse to move?



Don't worry,
there's an app for that!

**IF YOU JUST DEVELOP AN APP FOR THE DEAD HORSE,
THE DEAD HORSE WILL NO LONGER BE A PROBLEM**

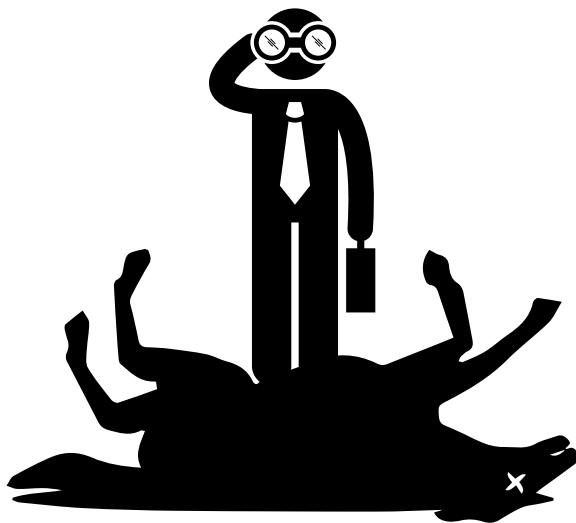
#61 WORK HARDER



**IF YOU JUST WORK HARDER, CHANCES ARE THE DEAD
HORSE CAN COME BACK TO LIFE**

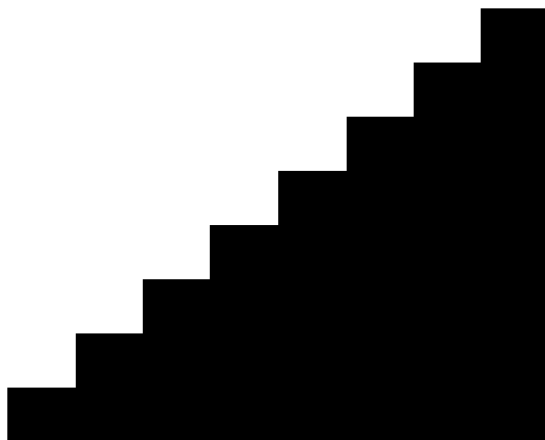
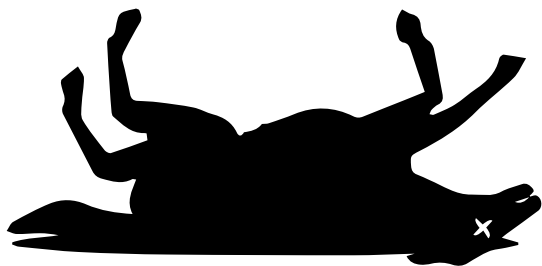
“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results”

– Sir Winston Churchill



**HOW TO SPOT
A DEAD HORSE?**

#1 LACK OF PROGRESS



THE HORSE IS NOT PRODUCING THE DESIRED RESULTS

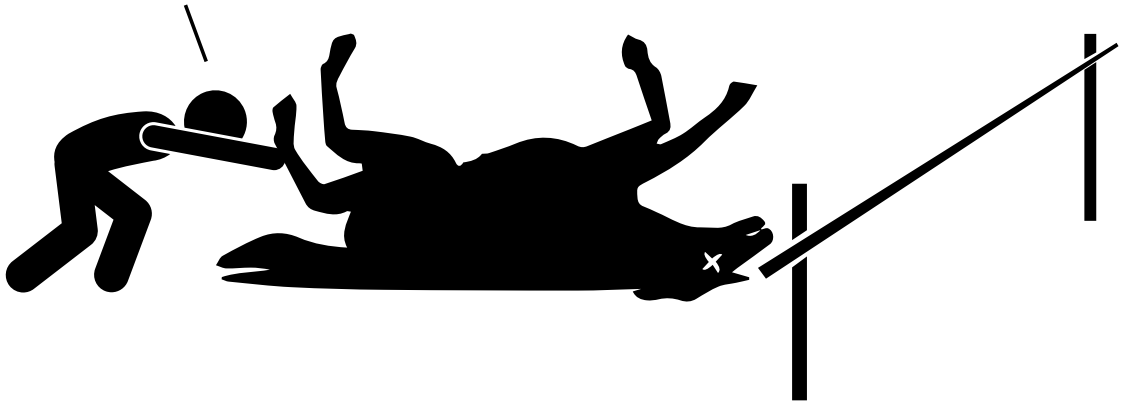
#2 DECREASED ENTHUSIASM



**TEAM MEMBERS ARE NO LONGER ENGAGED
OR PASSIONATE ABOUT THE HORSE**

#3 CONSISTENT FAILURE

Come on, this time
we will make it!



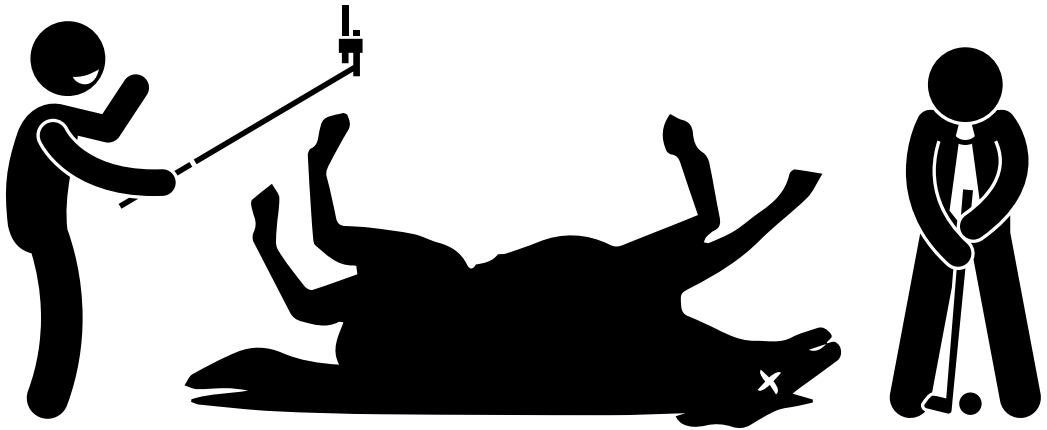
**THE HORSE CONSISTENTLY FAILS TO MEET
ITS GOALS OR TARGETS**

#4 STRESS OR BURNOUT



**TEAM MEMBERS ARE EXPERIENCING HIGH LEVELS OF
STRESS OR BURNOUT**

#5 LACK OF INTEREST



**STAKEHOLDERS OR TEAM MEMBERS HAVE
LOST INTEREST IN THE HORSE**

#6 NEGATIVE ROI



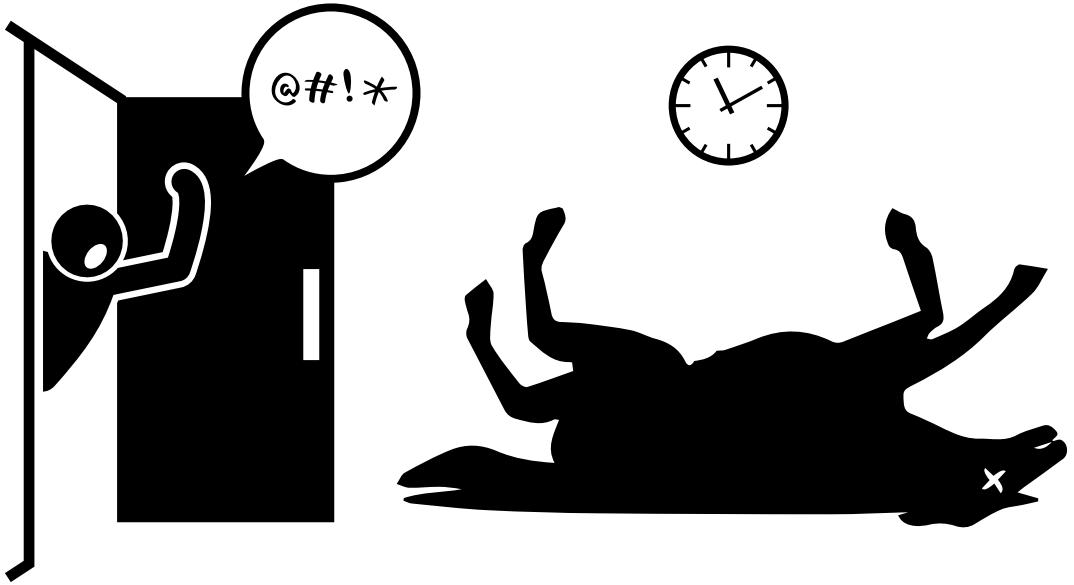
THE RETURN ON THE DEAD HORSE IS NEGATIVE

#7 CHANGES IN THE MARKET



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE MARKET MAKE CONSUMERS INTERESTED IN OTHER THINGS THAN DEAD HORSES

#8 MISSED DEADLINES



DEADLINES ARE CONSISTENTLY MISSED

“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

– Albert Einstein



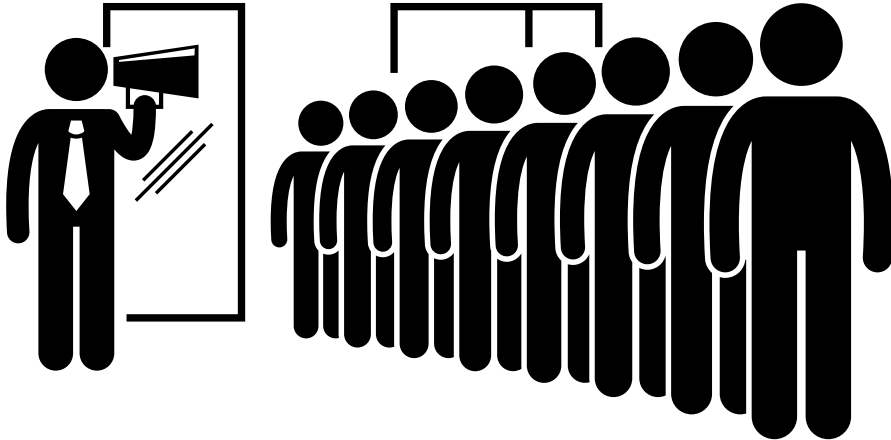
**IS OFFICE WORK
A DEAD HORSE?**

When considering data on productivity for remote versus office work, it's possible that the office is becoming obsolete. According to research by Global Workplace Analytics, remote American Express workers produced 43% more than their office-based counterparts.¹ Furthermore, workplace distractions can cause businesses to lose up to USD 600 billion annually.²

If the office is becoming obsolete, then the notion that knowledge work must be carried out at an office is a dead horse. Despite this, many employers use a variety of strategies, ranging from basic to sophisticated, to encourage employees to return to the office. Here are a few examples of such strategies.

#1 USE AUTHORITY

THE OFFICE



COMMAND ALL EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

#2 INCREASE IT SECURITY



**PREVENT EMPLOYEES FROM ACCESSING IT SYSTEMS OUTSIDE
THE OFFICE FOR 'SECURITY REASONS'**

#3 MAKE WFH A BENEFIT

Instead of getting a salary
you can work from home
so we can save office space



Thank you, thank you,
thank you!



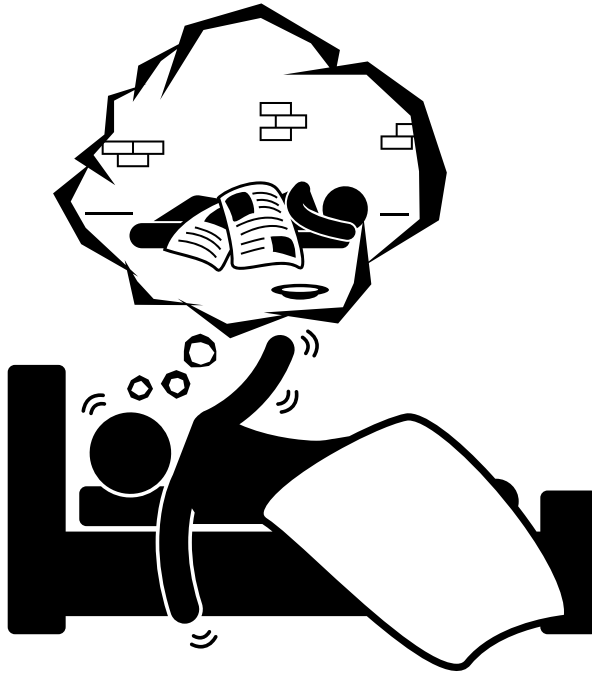
**PRESENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK FROM HOME
AS AN EMPLOYMENT BENEFIT**

#4 PROTECT THE CULTURE



**CLAIM THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD A CULTURE
WITHOUT MEETING IN PERSON**

#5 HOPE FOR A RECESSION



A RECESSION CAN SCARE EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE

#6 THE A TEAM AND THE B TEAM



**MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THE OFFICE
BELONG TO THE A TEAM AND THE REST TO THE B TEAM**

#7 SIMULATE THE OFFICE



SCHEDULE REMOTE WORKERS INTO BACK-TO-BACK VIDEO MEETINGS SO THEY LONG BACK TO PHYSICAL MEETINGS

#8 CUT PAY FOR REMOTE WORKERS



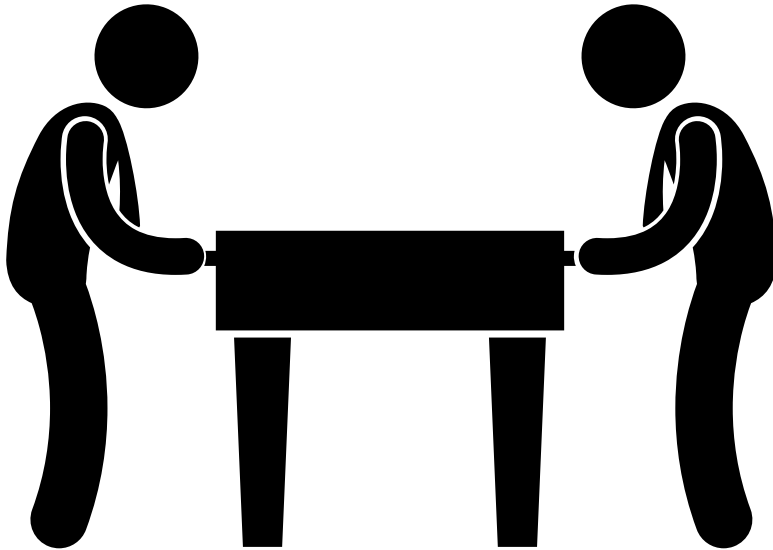
**PAY EMPLOYEES BASED ON WHERE THEY LIVE
INSTEAD OF HOW THEY PERFORM**

#9 GIVE A FACE TIME BONUS



**ENTICE EMPLOYEES BACK TO THE OFFICE
WITH A CASH BONUS**

#10 BUY A FOOTBALL GAME



**A FOOTBALL GAME CAUSES EMPLOYEES TO RETURN
TO THE OFFICE IN DROVES**

“The real challenge in crafting strategy lies in detecting subtle discontinuities that may undermine a business in the future. And for that there is no technique, no program, just a sharp mind in touch with the situation.”

– Henry Mintzberg

END NOTES

1 Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z. J. (2015). Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 130(1), 165-218.

2 Cision PR Newswire. (2018, June 6). Workplace Distractions Cost U.S. Businesses \$600 Billion Annually. Retrieved from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/workplace-distractions-cost-us-businesses-600-billion-annually-300661864.html>