Building and maintaining effective collaborations

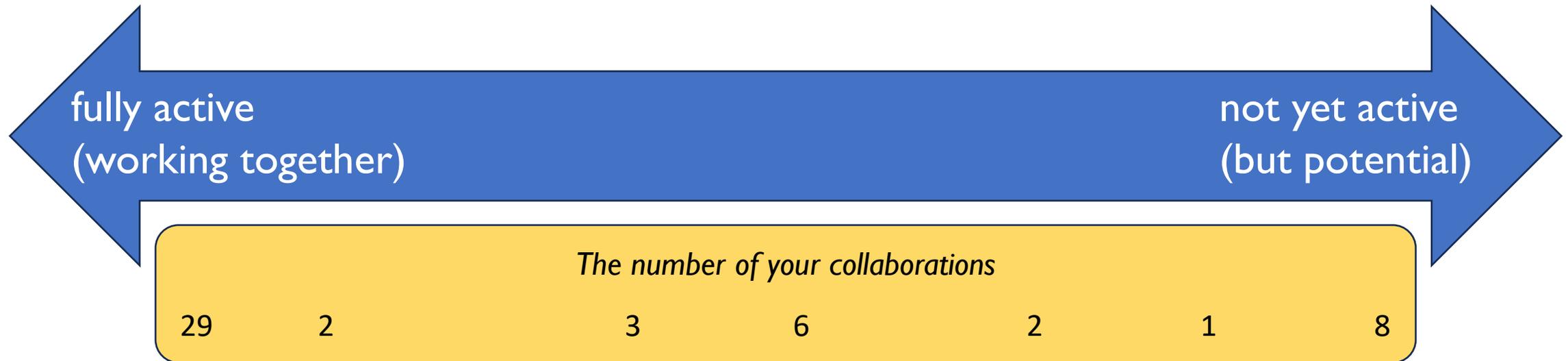## GROW Incubator Gathering
4th November 2025

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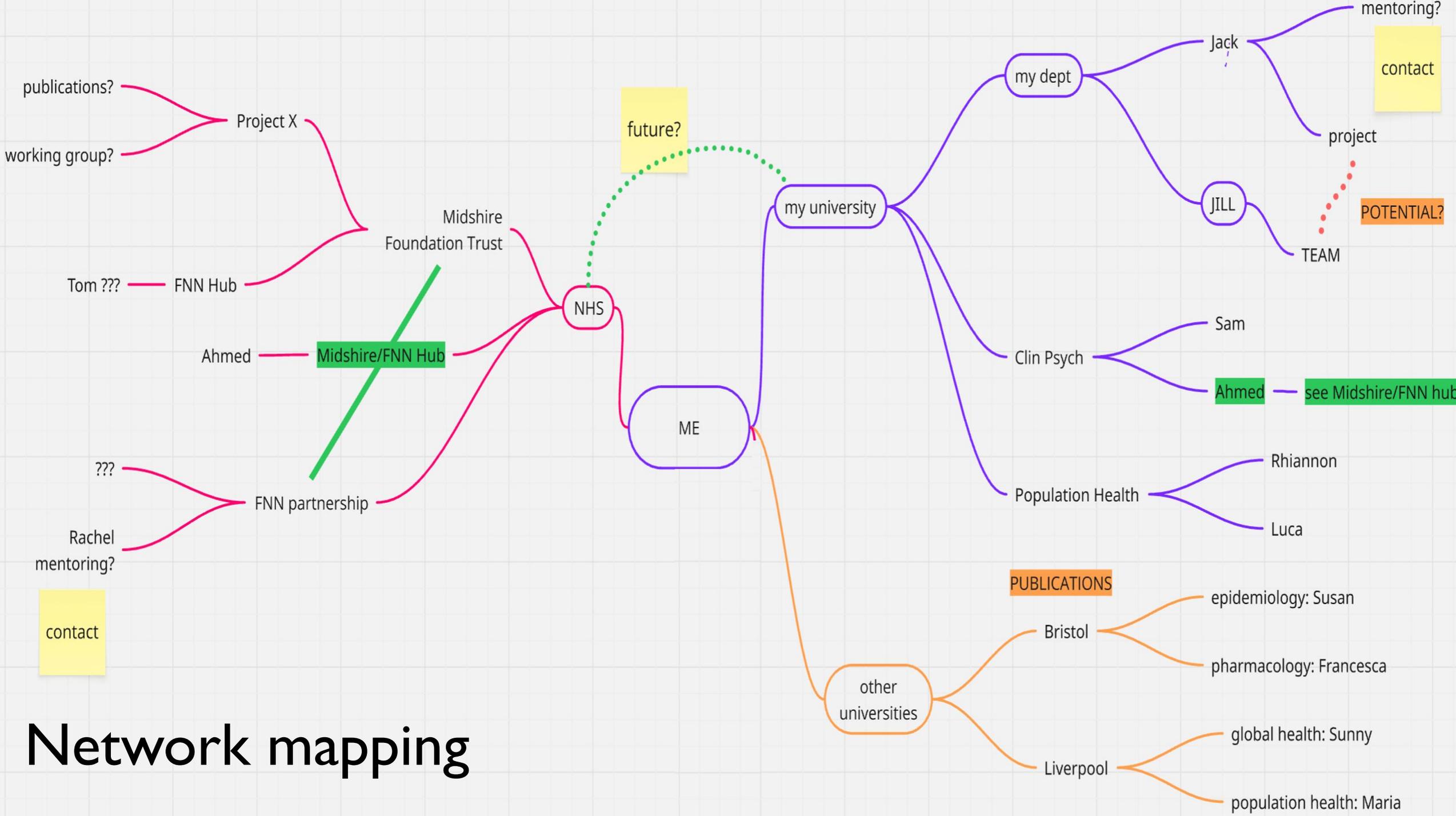*Notes from your contributions are included in these boxes*

Introductions

- Who are you?

- Your present collaborations:

fully active
(working together)

not yet active
(but potential)

The number of your collaborations
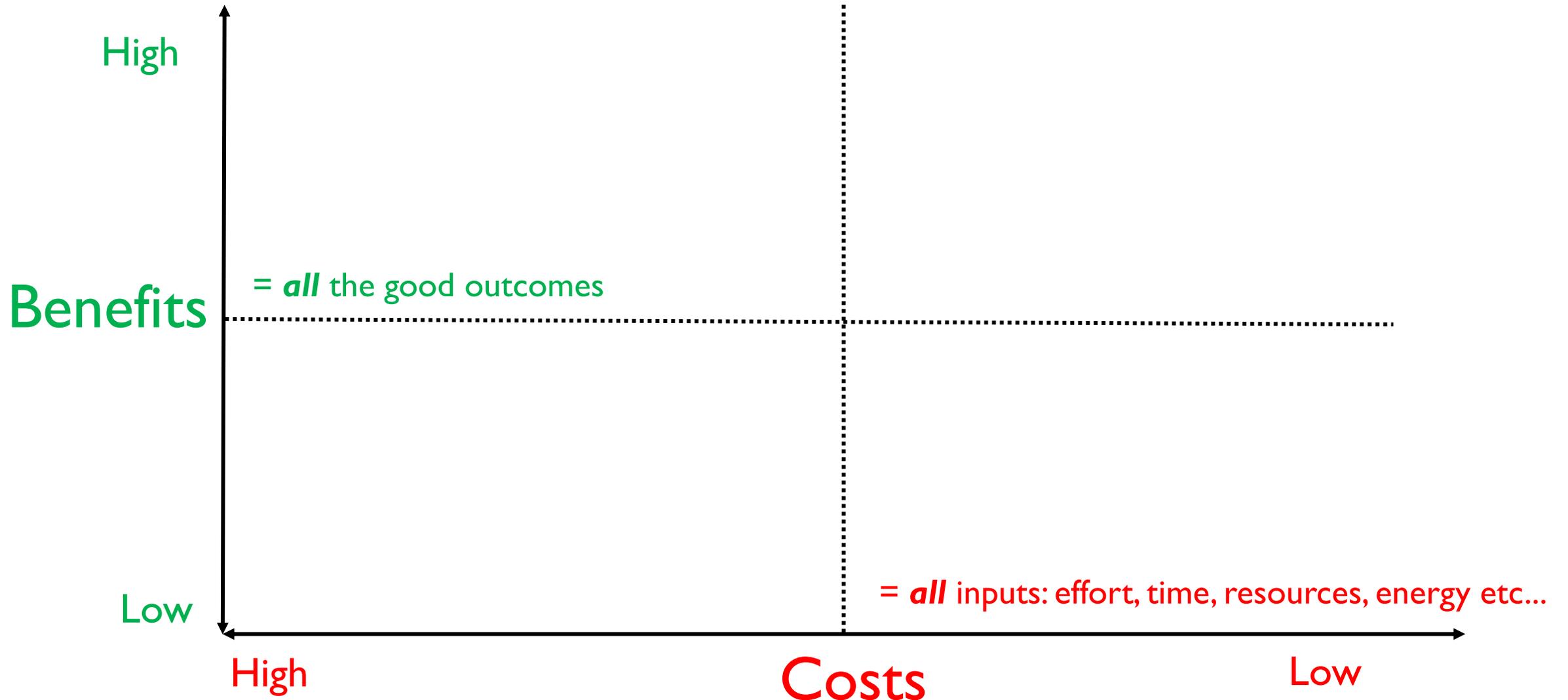
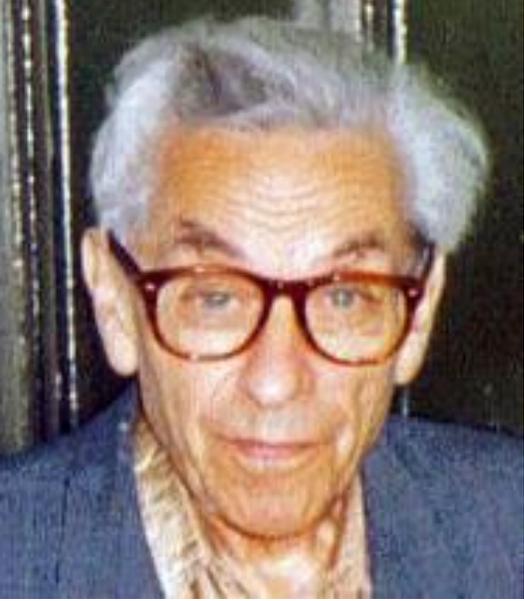| 29 | 2 | | 3 | 6 | | 2 | 1 | 8 |

In this workshop we will consider how to

- identify and select collaborators

- persuade people to collaborate and get what you need

- build and maintain positive collaborations

…and make some commitments to action for change

Network mapping

Your (potential) collaborators

High

Benefits = *all* the good outcomes

Low

High   Costs   Low

= *all* inputs: effort, time, resources, energy etc…

Paul Erdős: a real networker

Collaborated more than any other mathematician in history:
he had 485 co-authors.

Mathematicians have an _Erdős number_:
how many degrees removed they are from having worked with him.

Erdős' three rules:

☆ Give serendipity a chance

☆ Be clear with your goal

☆ Focus on making the collaborator successful

Cameron Hall:
Erdős nº 4

'Discretionary effort'

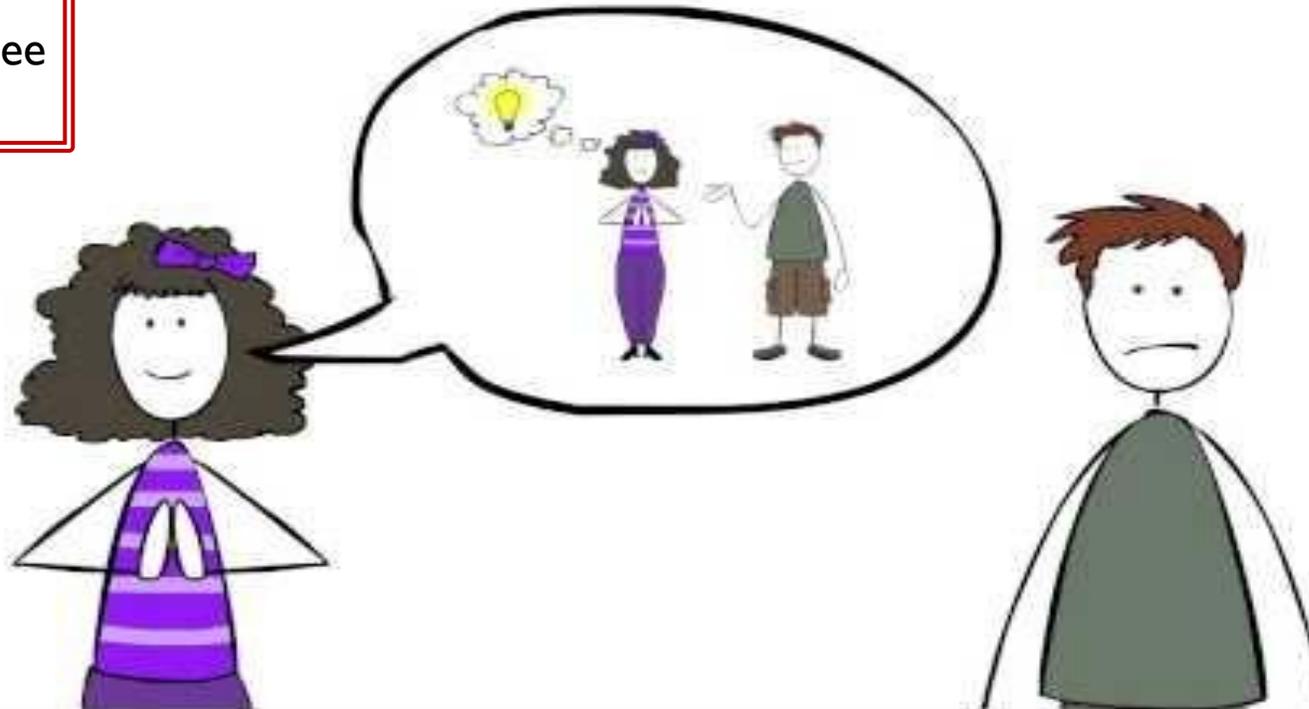Criteria for managing demands and knowing when to say no

> ? Will it help my career?
> ? Will I enjoy it?
> ? Do I have time for it?

> ? Can I do less?
> ? Can I do less, better?
> ? Is there anything I could reasonably do *less well?*

> ? Will it help someone else?
> ? Can anyone else do it?
> ? (…and would it be better for that person if they did it?)'

Persuasion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8aHW2gScxU

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Persuasion in action

1. **Reciprocity**
   We instinctively return favours

2. **Authority**
   We believe sources of authority (even spurious)

3. **Social Norms**
   We prefer to do the socially normal thing

4. **Consistency**
   We are more likely to do things we have previously committed to do.

Be generous with time and help (cf Paul Erdős)

Let people know what you know about - your background, credentials, experience

Refer to successes / examples or 'generally accepted' approaches

Link to previous reasons / conversations

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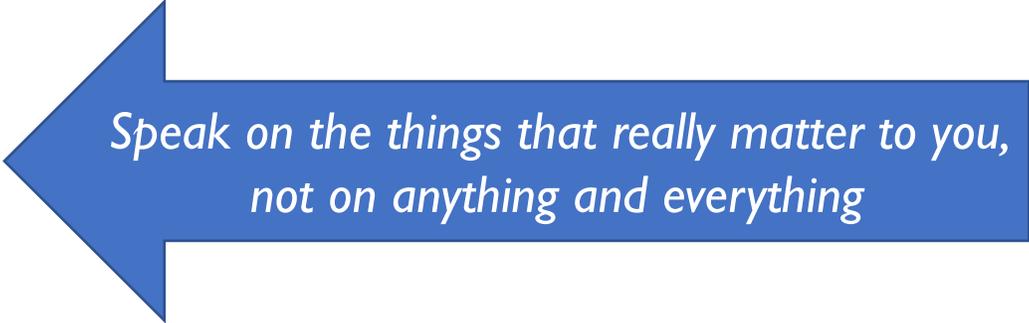info@clarewakeham.co.uk

5. Liking
We are more likely to say yes to people we know and like.

Develop your networks, and be likeable (or, at least, respected)

6. Scarcity
We value scarce things more than abundant things

Speak on the things that really matter to you, not on anything and everything

and…Ease
Information that is easy to access and process is more persuasive.

Communicate clearly

Other modes of influence

Negotiating
Being ready to compromise in order to reach an outcome that satisfies your wider or longer-term interest.
Considering concessions and exchanges in order to find a middle ground.

Inspiring
Identifying common purpose, areas of agreement, shared goals.
Conveying this common vision through the use of language and imagery, and personal qualities such as charm, personality, charisma, humour.

Bridging
Listening to, involving and supporting others.
Building relationships on trust and confidence.
Working together to define the problem, the goals and the best solution.
Exploring possible solutions that will meet or acknowledge everyone's needs.

Asserting
Stating your views confidently.
Insisting that your ideas are heard and considered, while respecting the others' viewpoint.
Challenging (while acknowledging) the ideas of others when they don't agree with yours.

Rationalising
Using logic, facts, and reasoning to present your case.
Calling on your expertise and experience.
Setting aside emotion (yours and others') to emphasise the facts and logic of the case.

What works?

Group 1: seeking collaborators

- What works in making beneficial contacts?
- What modes have you used?

Group 2: already in collaborations

- What works in making it clear about who will do what?
- How formal does it need to be?
- What modes have you used?

Group 1: seeking collaborators
## What works in making beneficial contacts?

- Cold-calling emails:
    - clever targeting
    - making the benefits obvious and the request clear
    - following up
- Calling on senior people, or relying on their status, to add credibility
- Networking
    - introductions – seek them out and make them
- Visibility
- Webpages, PR, online networks and platforms

Group 2: already in collaborations
What works in making it clear about who will do what?

- Be explicit about who will do what…
  o but be flexible: circumstances change, skills and areas of interest emerge, team members change etc
- Shared goals
  o but also individual goal and desires – not all are similarly invested
  o be honest about the above
- Reciprocity

How formal does it need to be?
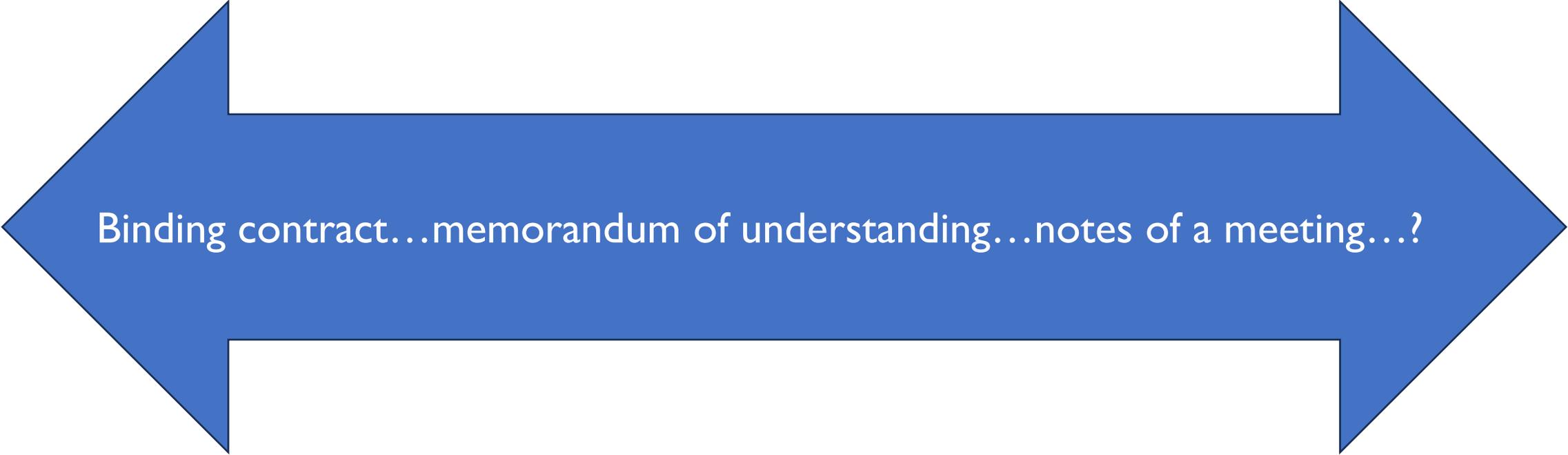
Binding contract…memorandum of understanding…notes of a meeting…?

The nature of the collaboration will determine how formal it needs to be:
- o more formal at the start, with flexibility built in
- o PPI will increase need for formal contracting
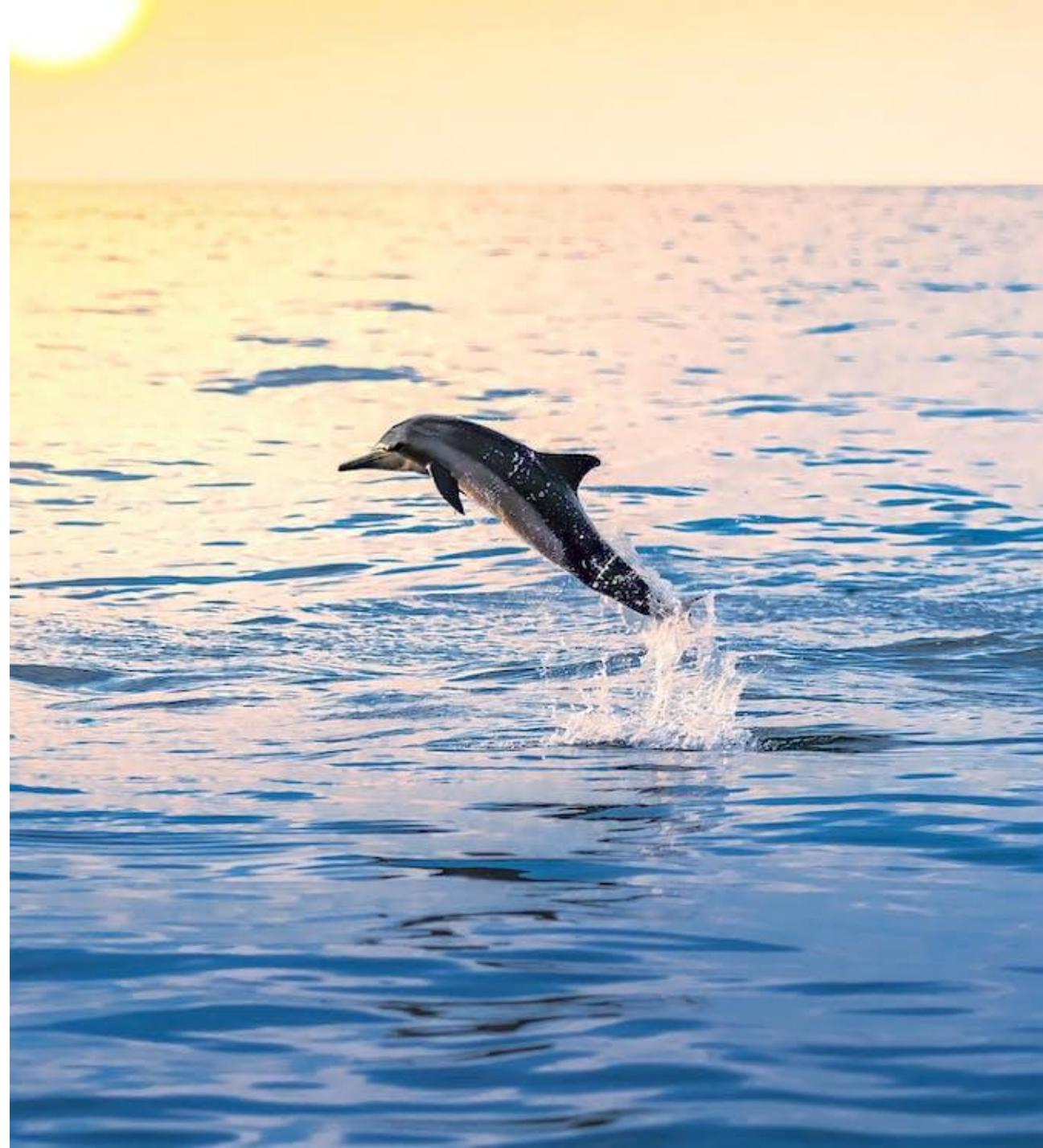
What makes it great?

Iterative
Flexible
Fun
Compassionate and considerate
Motivating
Celebration
Clear shared vision
Nourishing and supportive

Next steps

What have you learned?
What will you do differently?
Make one commitment to yourself

Goya (Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, 1746 – 1828)

His final self-portrait:
'Still learning'

THANK YOU

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