

When Will It Be Done?

How To Trade Bad Questions For Better Ones (And Get Better Software)

Collin Flynn

Collin

LIVE FRONT

Bad Questions In Software

There Are

Bad Questions In Software

How Much Will It Cost?

How Much Will It Cost?

When Will It Be Done?

Stakeholders influence the *product*

product

Stakeholders influence the *team*

Our product must be ...

Our product must be *reliable*

reliable

Our product must be *convenient*

reliable

convenient

Our product must be ...

pushed to production right now

Deadline Fixation

Deadline Fixation

Changes Culture

Deadline Fixation

Changes Culture

Changes Products

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

3 Product

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

3 Product

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

3 Product

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

3 Product

Imagine...

Imagine...



Feature Requirements:

Feature Requirements:

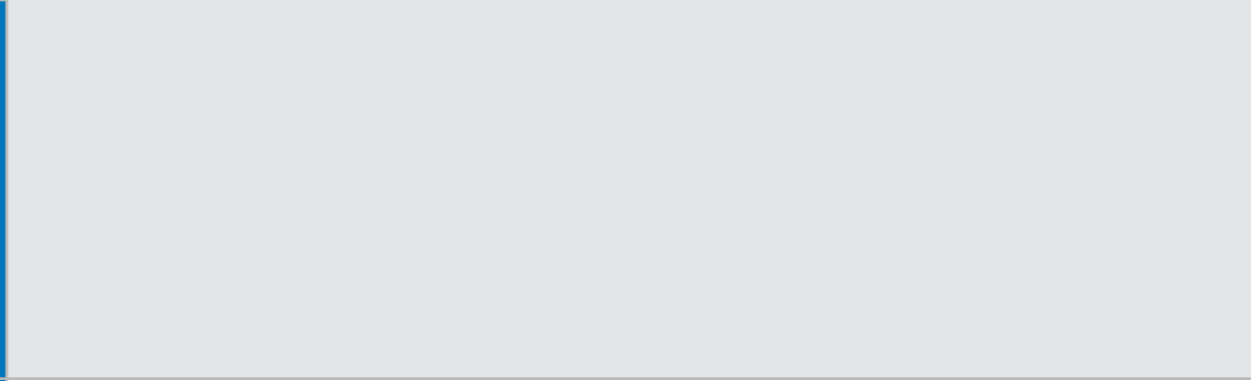
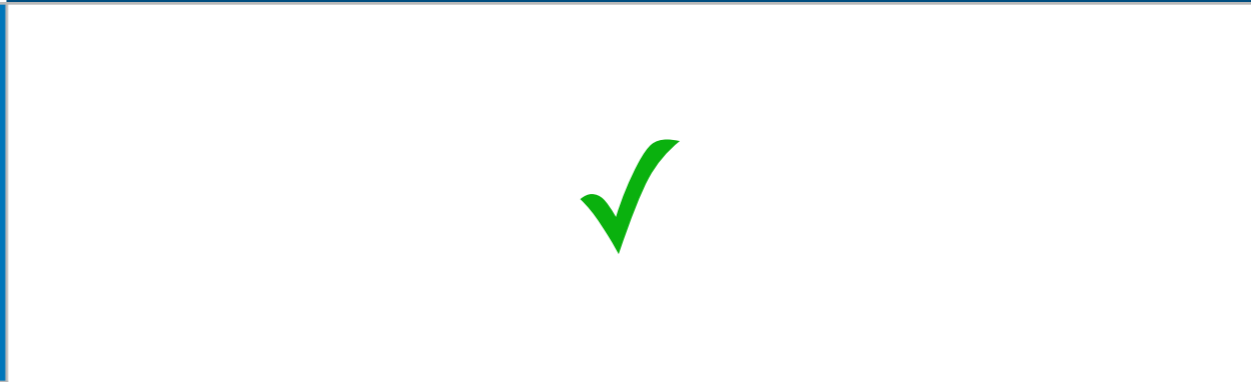
- Front Door

Feature Requirements:

- Front Door
- Plumbing
- Heating
- Electricity
- Ball Pit

Project

Known Feature Set



Project

Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Delivered Features:

- Aviary
- Full Time Barista
- A Big Red Phone Booth

Project

Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Total Reinvention



Digital Products Are Different





June 13th, 2019





June 13th, 2019

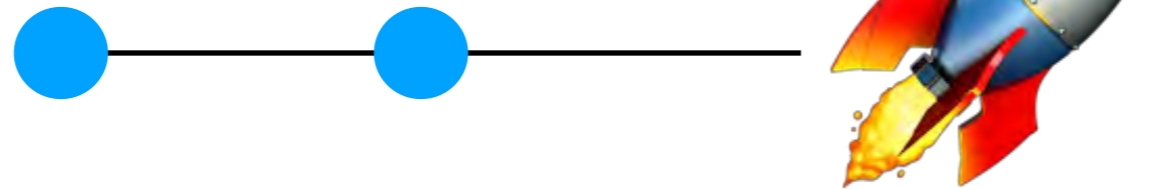
June 6th, 2019

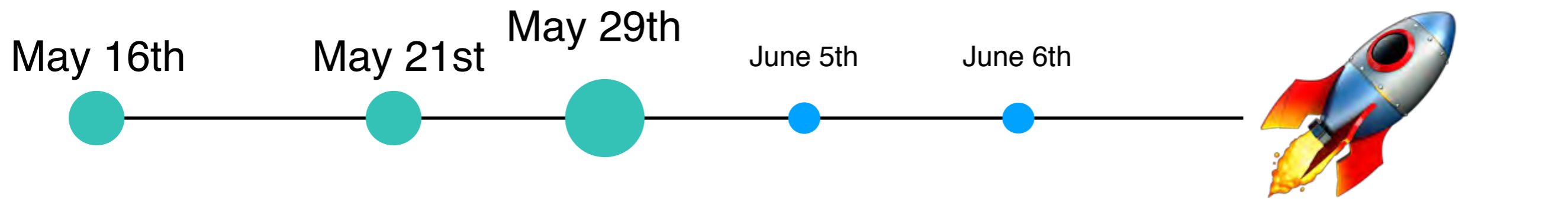




June 13th, 2019

June 5th, 2019 June 6th, 2019



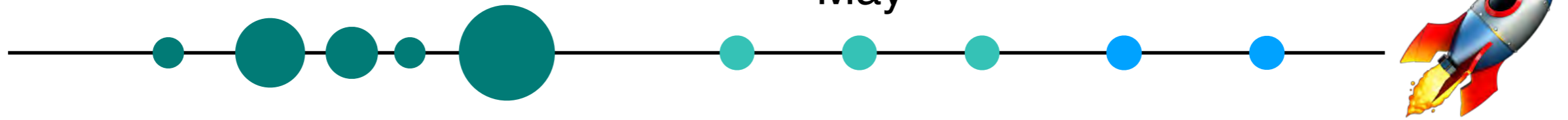




—April—

—May—

June 13th, 2019



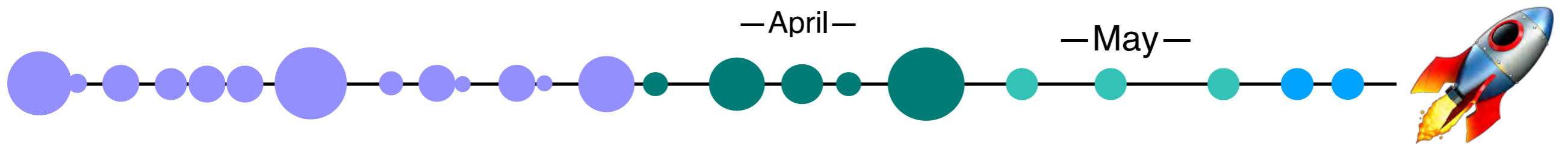


—Jan - March—

June 13th, 2019

—April—

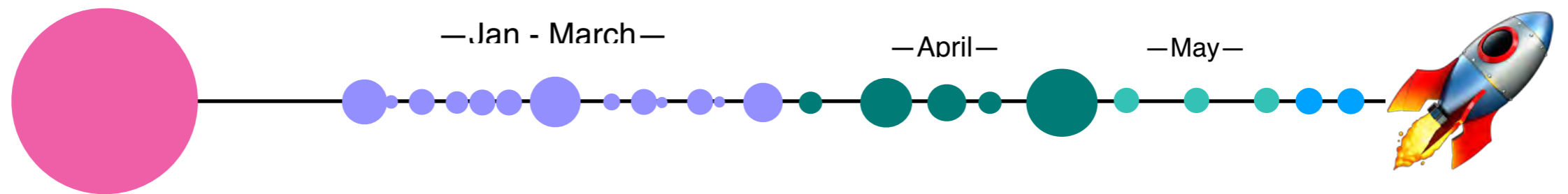
—May—





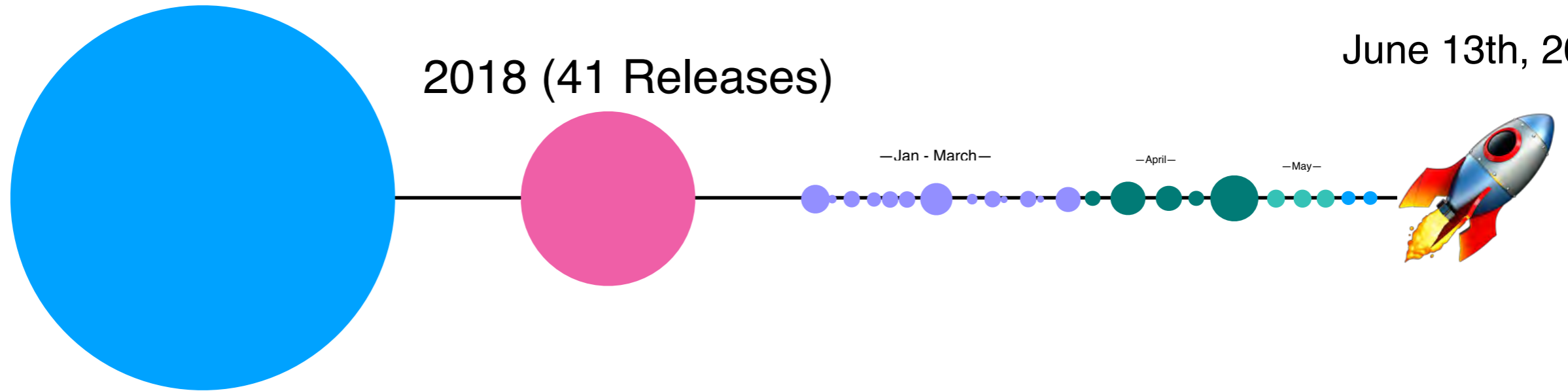
2018 (41 Releases)

June 13th, 2019



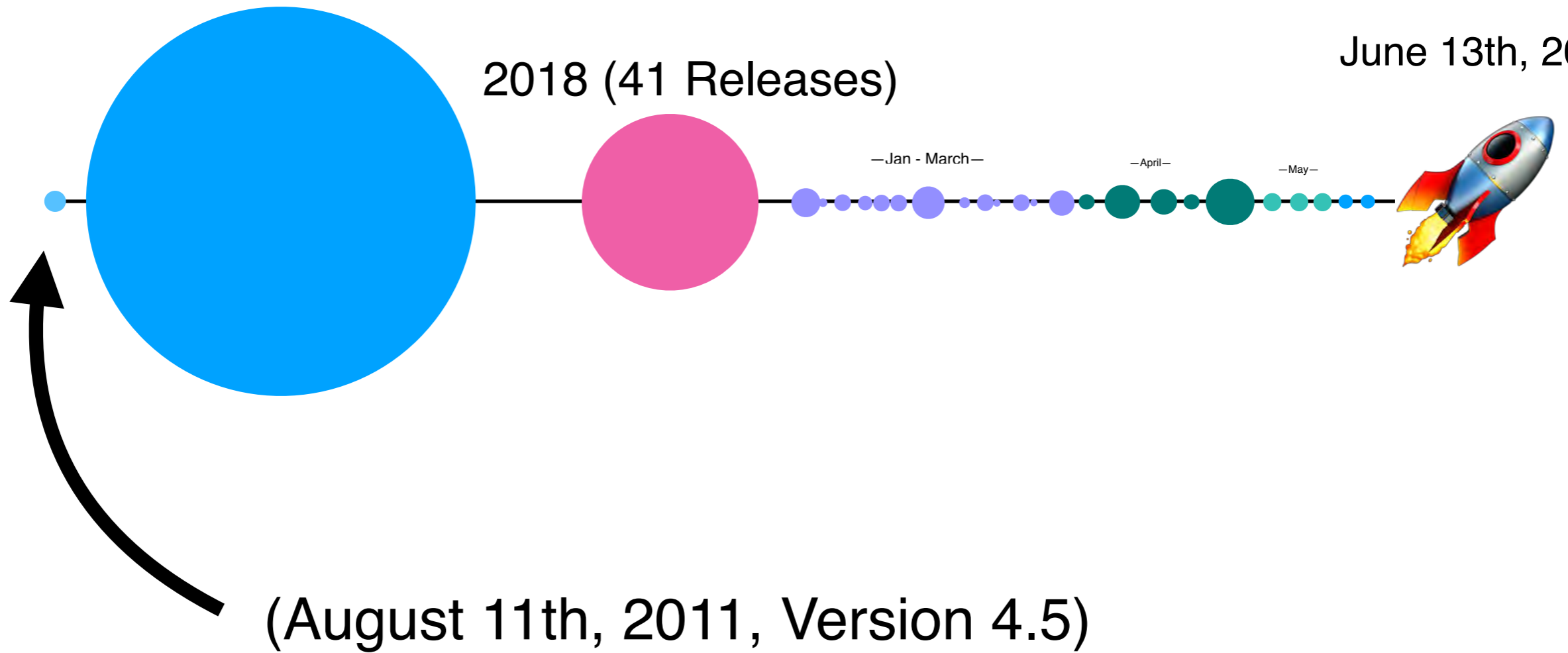


2011 - 2017 (126 Releases)





2011 - 2017 (126 Releases)





Project



Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Total Reinvention



Project



Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Total Reinvention



Project



Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Total Reinvention



Known Feature Set	✓	✗
Completion Date	✓	✗
Total Reinvention	✗	

Project



Known Feature Set



Completion Date



Total Reinvention



Confidence & Optimism

Confidence & Optimism

Continuous Validation

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

3 Product

mager

[settings](#)

FEED

ACHIEVEMENTS

Most Recent Moves



mager made plans to go to **Web 2.0 Ecpo** at **Moscone Center**

Thu 09:14AM · like · comment



mager made plans to go to **SF Giants tweetup** at **AT&T Park**

kevin likes this.

Thu 09:09AM · like · comment



mager visited **First Round Capital LLC**



Thu 09:03AM · like · comment



mager

[settings](#)

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FOURSQUARE



FOURSQUARE

- To-Do List
- Badges
- Check-Ins
- Recommendations
- User Reviews
- “Superusers”
- Become the Mayor of a Venue
- Branded Pages





“And the hardest part of going from Burbn to Instagram was actually realizing that we had to do something new. And making that decision was one of the hardest parts of my entrepreneurial career.”

— *Instagram Co-Founder Kevin Systrom*

Product



THE STANDISH GROUP



THE STANDISH GROUP

On Time



THE STANDISH GROUP

On Time

On Budget



THE STANDISH GROUP

On Time

On Budget

On Target



THE STANDISH GROUP

On Time

On Budget

~~On Target~~

Satisfactory Result

THE STANDISH GROUP

	2015
SUCCESSFUL	29%
CHALLENGED	52%
FAILED	19%

THE STANDISH GROUP

PROJECT SIZE BY CHAOS RESOLUTION

	SUCCESSFUL	CHALLENGED	FAILED	TOTAL
Grand	6%	51%	43%	100%
Small	61%	32%	7%	100%

THE STANDISH GROUP

PROJECT SIZE BY CHAOS RESOLUTION

	SUCCESSFUL	CHALLENGED	FAILED	TOTAL
Grand	6%	51%	43%	100%
Small	61%	32%	7%	100%

“One of [our] major services [...] is to break up large software projects into multiple small projects...”



THE STANDISH GROUP

Lessons

1. Prefer smaller scale ventures, breaking down a larger one if necessary.



Goals

Goals

“The Standish Group has stated for many years that clear goals are achieved when all the stakeholders are focused on and understand the core values of the project.”

Goals

“Many of the most satisfying projects start out as vague. The business objectives are dynamic as the project progresses. Project teams should reduce or give up control of the business objectives to encourage and promote innovation.”



THE STANDISH GROUP

Lessons

1. Prefer smaller scale ventures, breaking down a larger one if necessary.
2. Embrace changes, give your teams the freedom to pivot.

THE STANDISH GROUP

	SUCCESSFUL	CHALLENGED	FAILED
Gifted	38%	45%	17%
Unskilled	17%	60%	23%



THE STANDISH GROUP

Lessons

1. Prefer smaller scale ventures, breaking down a larger one if necessary.
2. Embrace changes, give your teams the freedom to pivot.
3. Utilize talent.

HealthCare.gov

Nation Wide Release

Rigid Time Line

This system had to be built in three years, and moreover, it could not be built the way Silicon Valley would do it: start small, roll something out, see what works and what doesn't, then iterate, experiment, and scale [...]

- How HealthCare.gov Went So, So Wrong - Megan McArdle

Ideas Are Simple

(Execution Is Not)

JUICERO



Confidence And Optimism





- JUICED Greens**
- JUICED Spicy Greens**
- JUICED Sweet Greens**
- JUICED Green Zing**
- JUICED Beta Glow**
- JUICED Granata Glow**
- JUICED Pure Pomegranate**
- JUICED Root Renewal +**

1 Project

2 Success And Failure (With Examples)

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Imagine...

Imagine...



Feature Requirements:

~~Feature Requirements.~~

~~Feature Requirements:~~

Feature Guesses:

~~Feature Requirements:~~

Feature Guesses:

- Text Chat With Customer Service
- Personalized Product Suggestions
- Wishlist

Now What?

Deadline

~~Deadline~~

How soon can I know more?

“When will that be done?”

“Between July and February.”

And It Gets Worse

Culture

Release Incomplete
Product,
Good Bonus This Year

Release Incomplete
Product,
Good Bonus This Year

or

**Release When Ready,
Risk Your Job**

There's More

**“We could do that...
but it would risk on-time delivery.”**



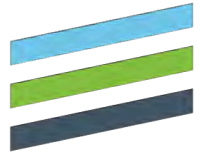
Deadline Fixation

How Much Will It Cost?

How Much Will It Cost?

When Will It Be Done?

Thanks!



Thanks!

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collin@livefront.com