

PATTERN 08

In the Zone



8. In the Zone

This pattern is exhibited by engineers whose work is, in a word, consistent. They have a knack for getting in the zone and shipping high-quality work week in and week out. Their work is reliable and predictable in nearly every way.

Professional software development is an endurance sport. To create lasting enterprise value, you must show up every day and produce quality work. Real value creation can take years.

It's tempting to think of this as a person and not a pattern. However it's useful to depersonalize this engineer's work as a pattern — it's easier for others to model discrete behaviors than it is to model a person.

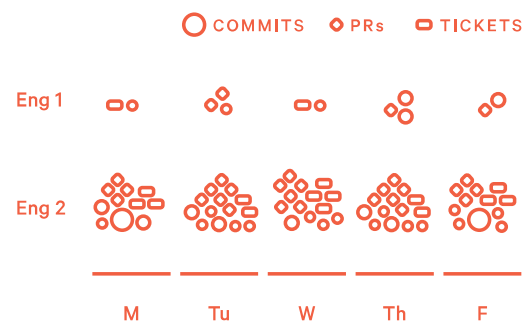
How to recognize it

An engineer in the zone organizes their day to eliminate distraction and focus on delivering business value. Their *Active Days* are consistently above average. Their *Impact* is high and consistent. Their PRs are timely, evenly paced, and nicely sized. They consistently participate in reviews, so their *Involvement* is high and consistent. Their churn is usually lower than average.

What to do

Similar to engineers who exhibit the “Clean As You Go” pattern, it helps to acknowledge this pattern either publicly, privately, or both. Emphasize their consistency and how great code is built *not* in a single sprint or pulling all-nighters. The *Work Log* and *Review and Collaboration reports* will show this

pattern over time, and they can be used to support the story (e.g., “six weeks of committing code every day is something to admire”).



If increasing overall team velocity is important to you, helping everyone on your team find their zone is a foundational place to start.

An essay from Paul Graham, titled “[Maker’s Schedule, Manager’s Schedule](#)” offers context and strategies for blocking meetings and creating space to get in the zone.

Small changes in scheduling and reduction of interruptions can amount to significant increase in capacity. Furthermore, consistently getting in the zone allows your team to ship at a sustainable pace without suffering from the burnout of heroic sprints.