



Hollywood to the rescue

Credit: NASA/JPL-Solar System Visualization Team


BEYOND COMMON BEST PRACTICES

Using talent and approaches from creative industries to differentiate yourself from your competition

Engaging communication professionals to review messaging

Applying non-proposal writing methods to develop story strategies

Hiring specialized creative writers and graphics talent to refine content



Stories matter



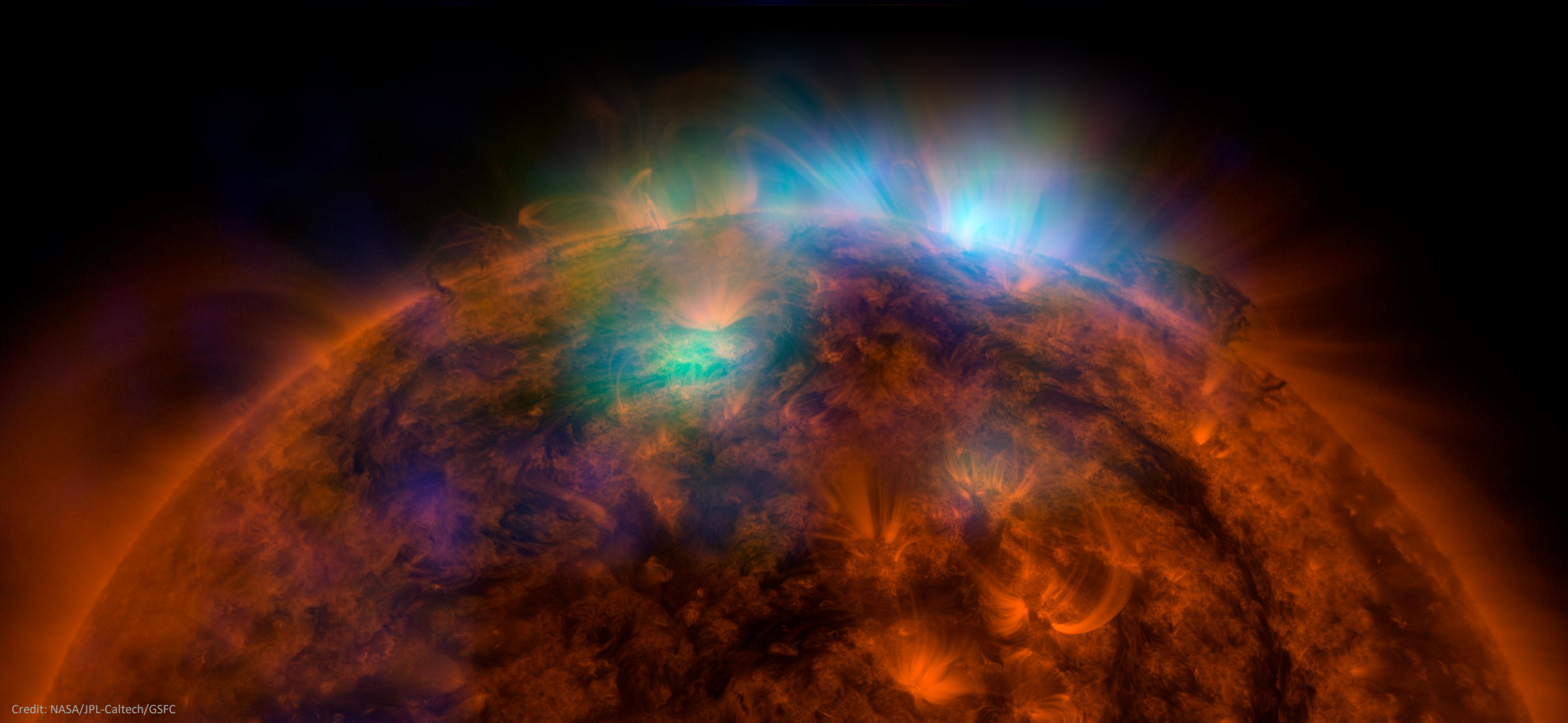
BEGINS IN CAPTURE

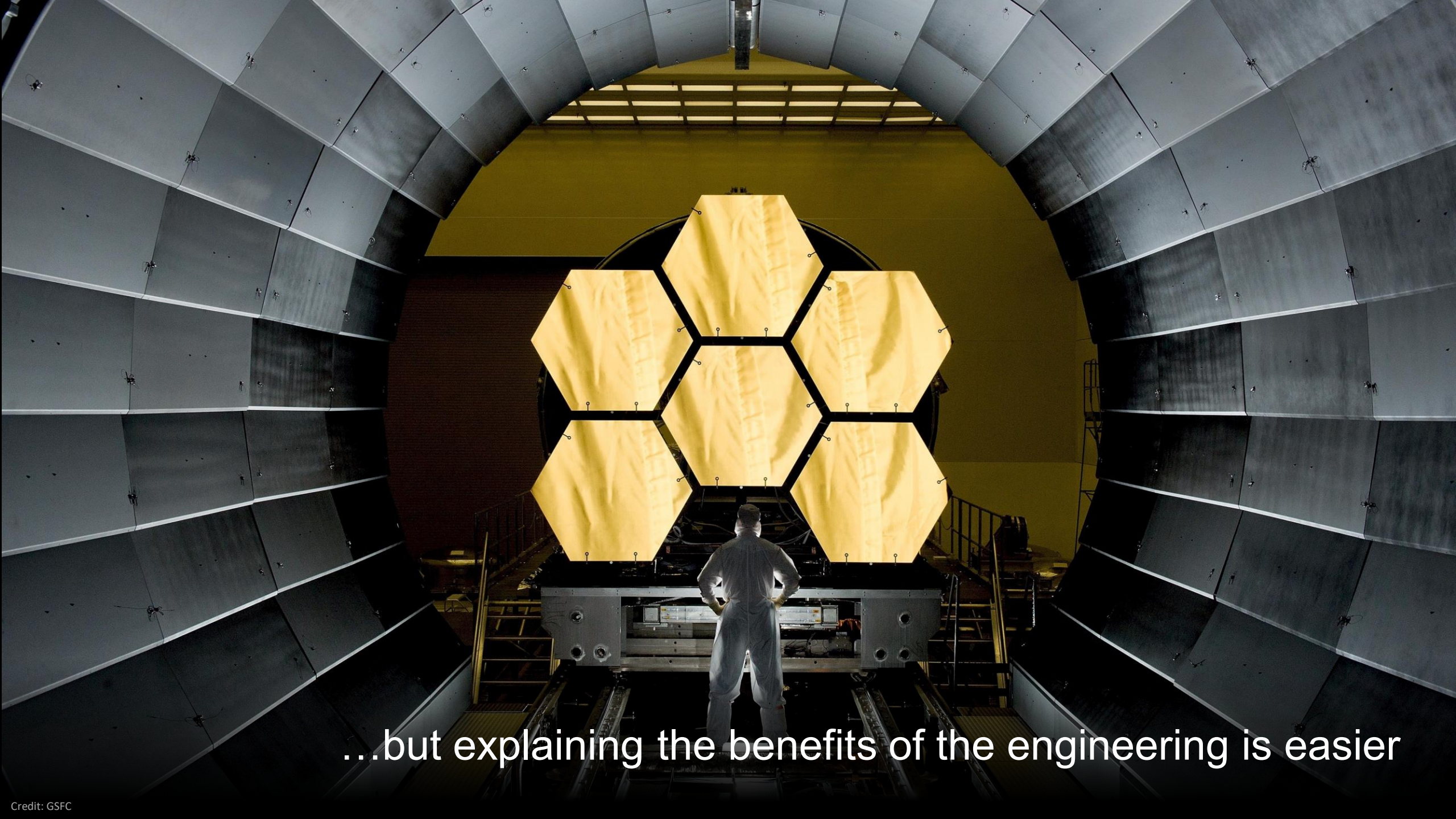
A good story serves your capture strategy as much as your proposal

INSPIRATION BORN FROM NECESSITY

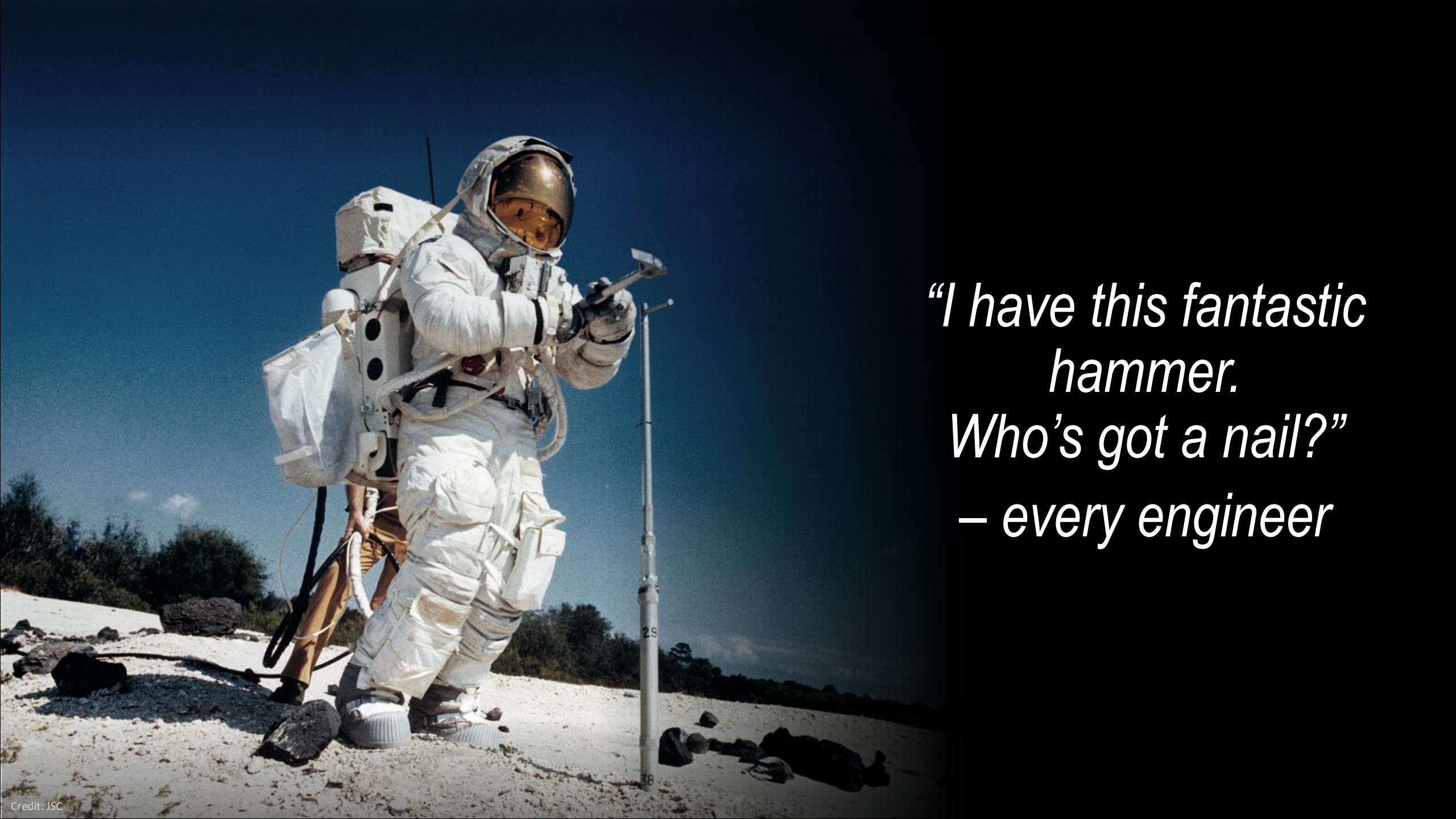


The compelling nature of the science is critical...





...but explaining the benefits of the engineering is easier



*“I have this fantastic
hammer.
Who’s got a nail?”
– every engineer*

CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE



It is painfully obvious our customer...

doesn't know what they want,

doesn't know how to read, and/or

doesn't have the expertise to evaluate me appropriately

FOLLOWING THE HERD

If everyone is reaching back into the same set of best practices, where does your competitive edge come from?



A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR'S POINT OF VIEW

All communications are
inherently biased



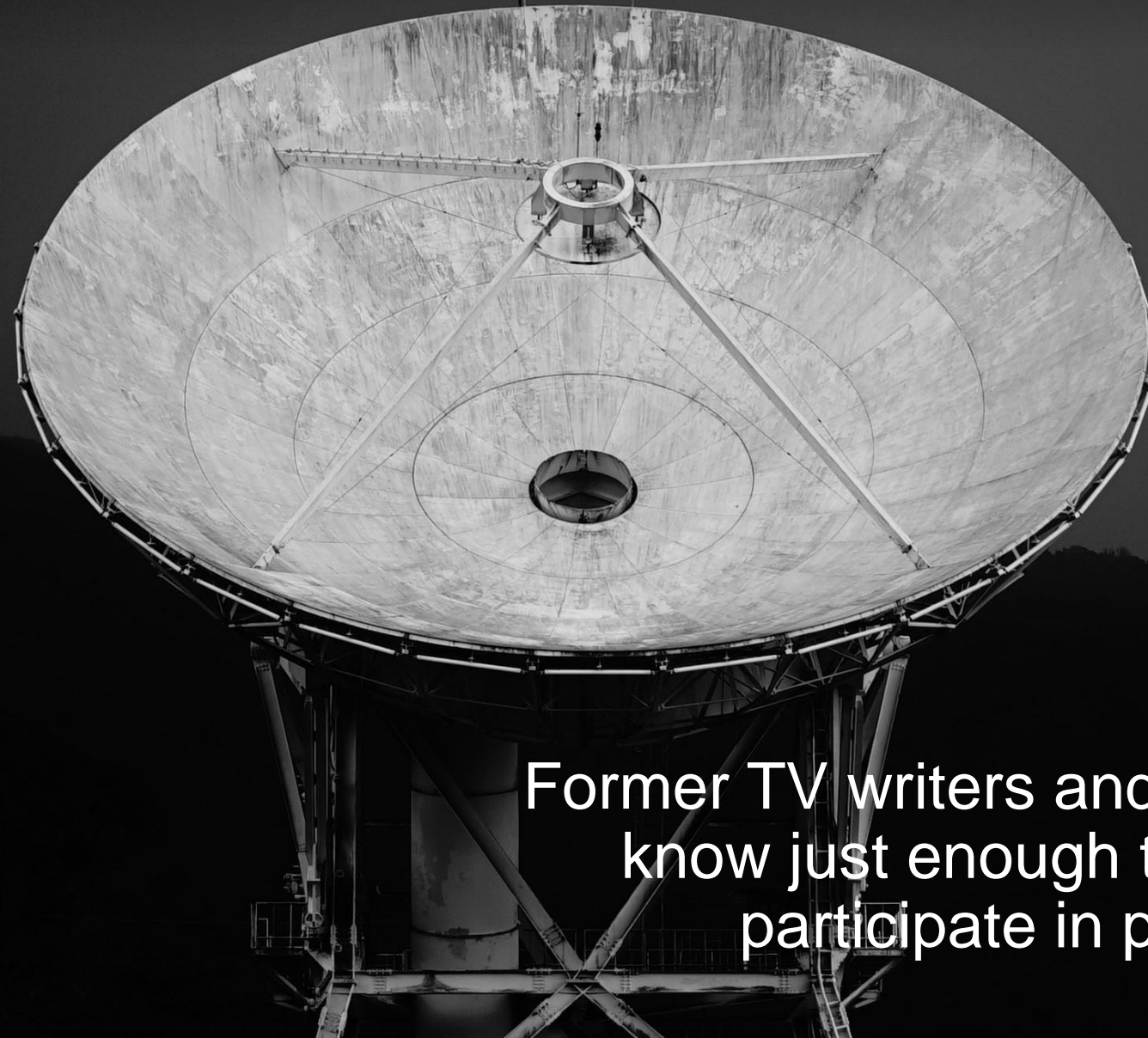
Seeking outside perspectives
helps ensure you cover your bases

WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS



What are the most compelling elements of the story?

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS



Former TV writers and journalists who
know just enough to be dangerous
participate in proposal reviews

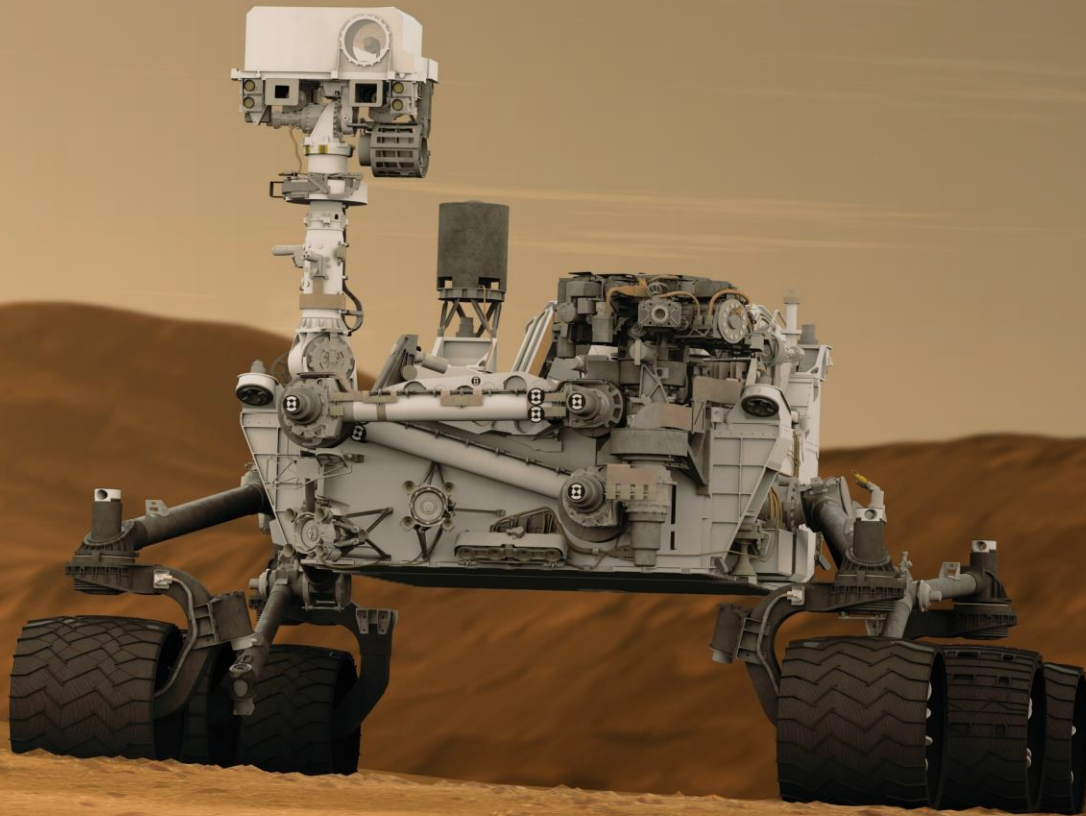
STRUCTURED STORY DEVELOPMENT

Professional writers use writing exercises to develop stories; why wouldn't you?

A structured approach to developing story helps to inspire as much as forces discipline



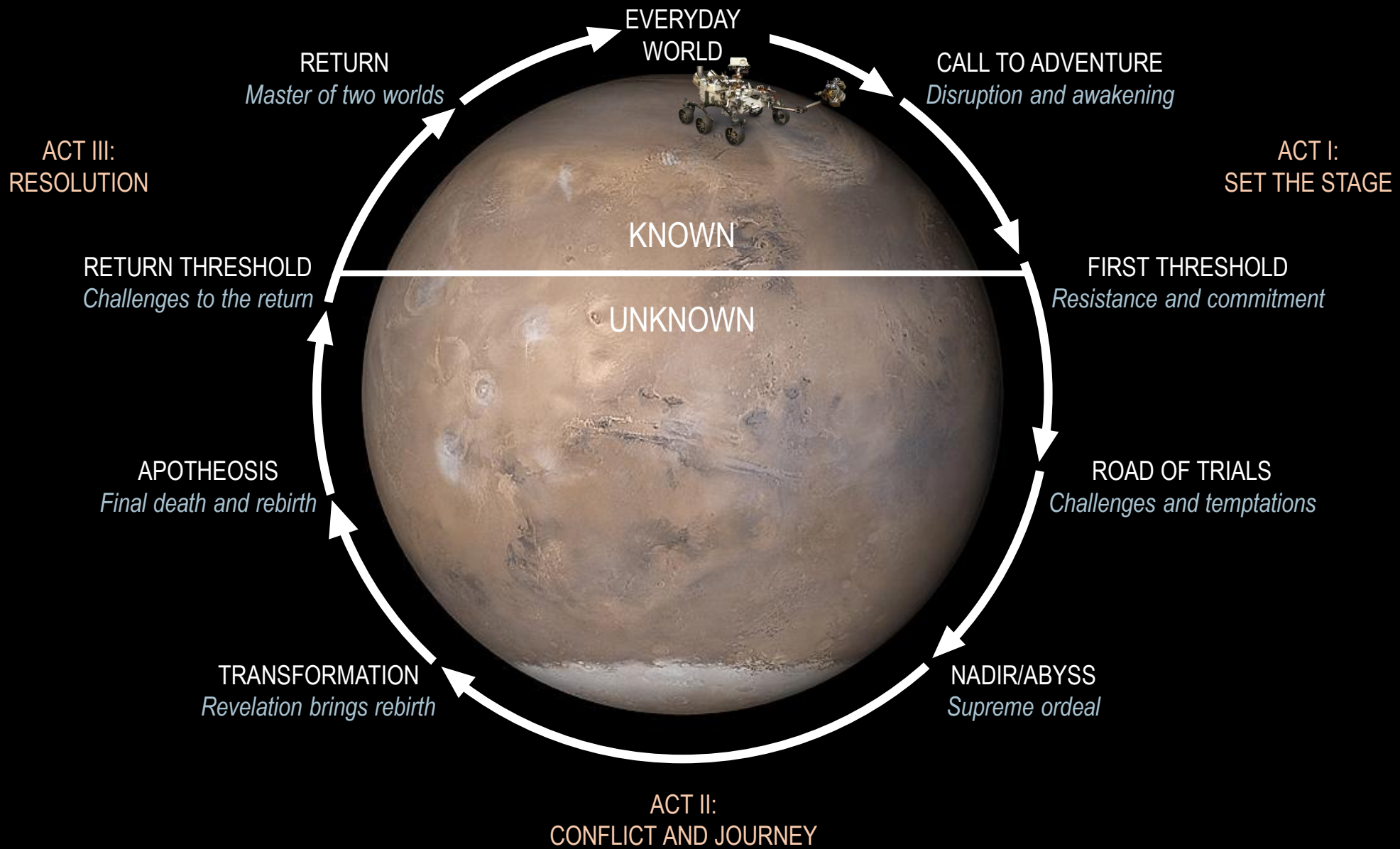
THE HERO'S JOURNEY—PROPOSAL STORY IN 3 ACTS

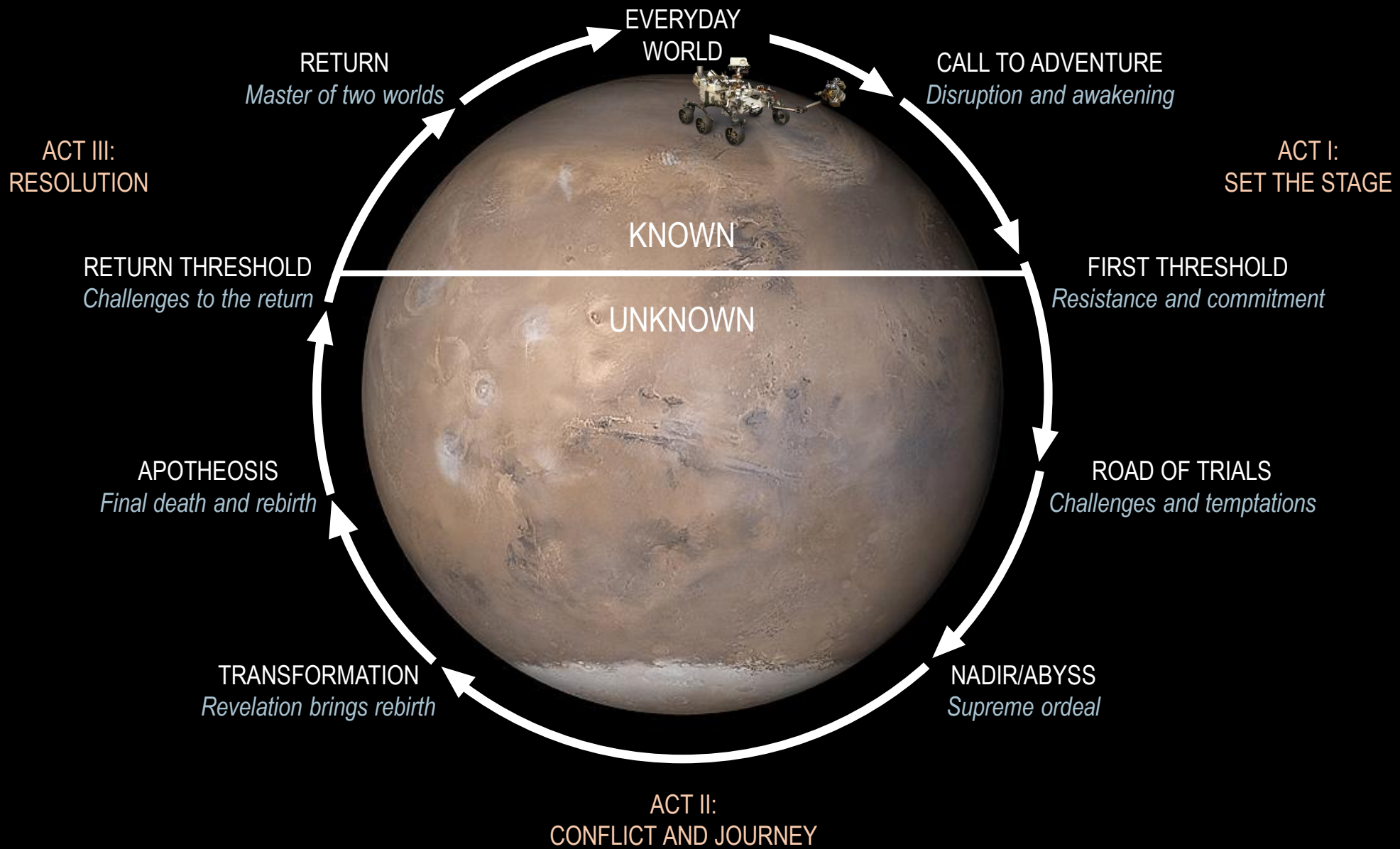


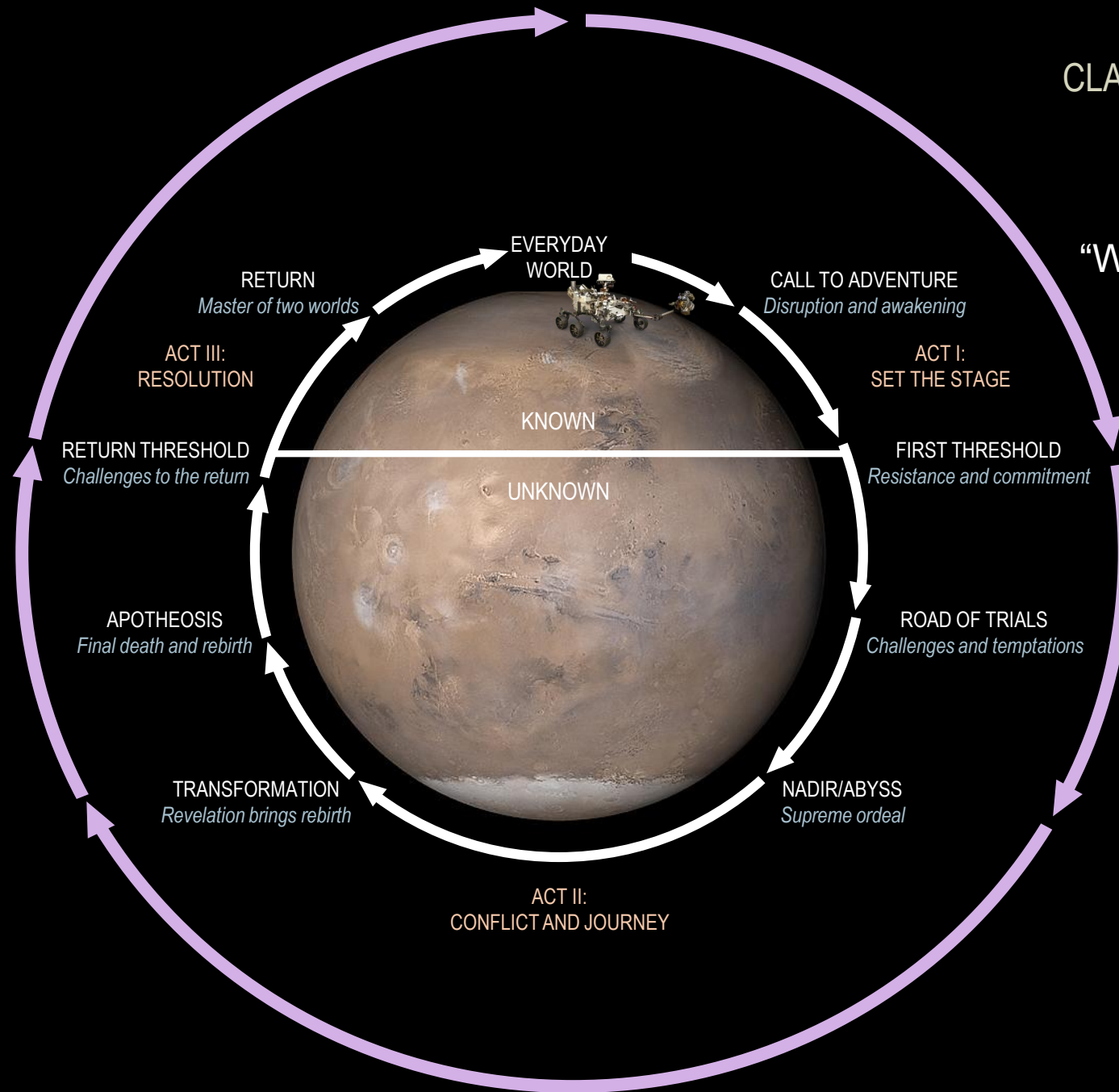
Act I: Set the stage
(why, what, when)

Act II: Conflict and journey
(how, where)

Act III: Resolution
(happy ending—or
the customer benefit)



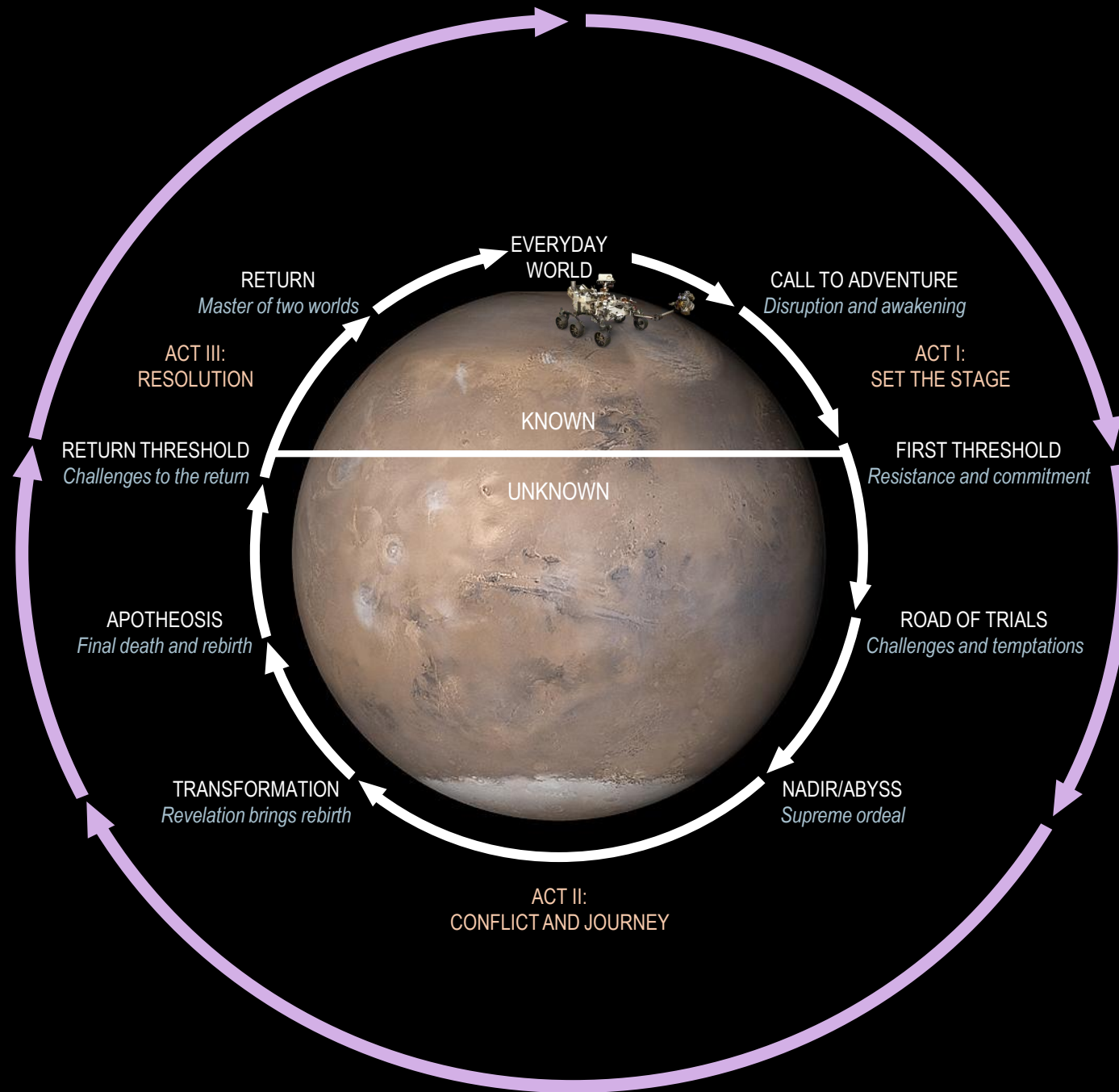




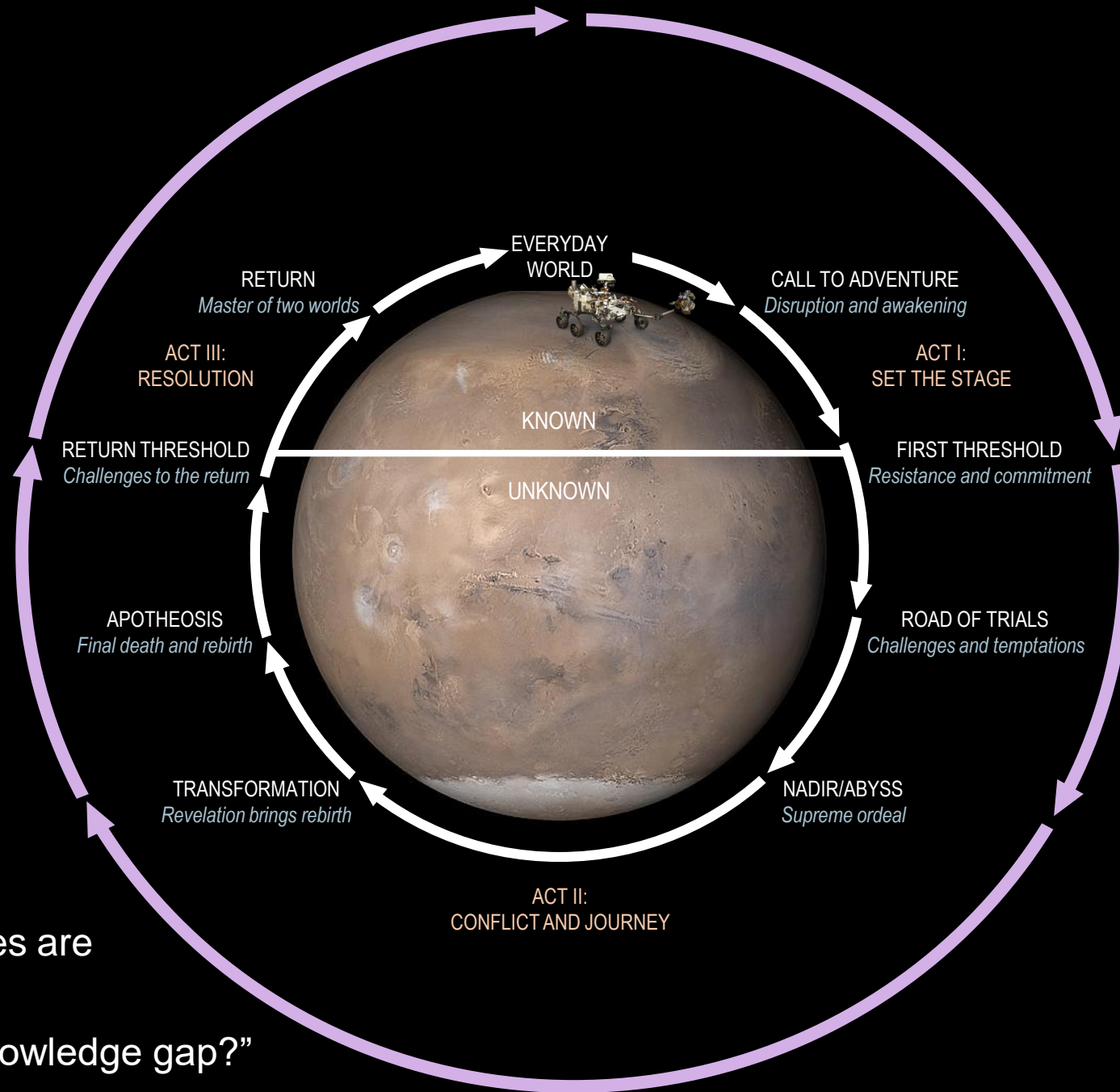
CLAIM 1: SETTING THE STAGE

Link customer goals to proposal objectives

“Why is this important and why now?”



CLAIM 2: THE SEGUE
 Explain how the investigation increases our knowledge
 “What is missing in our understanding?”



CLAIM 3: EXPECTATION MEETS REALITY

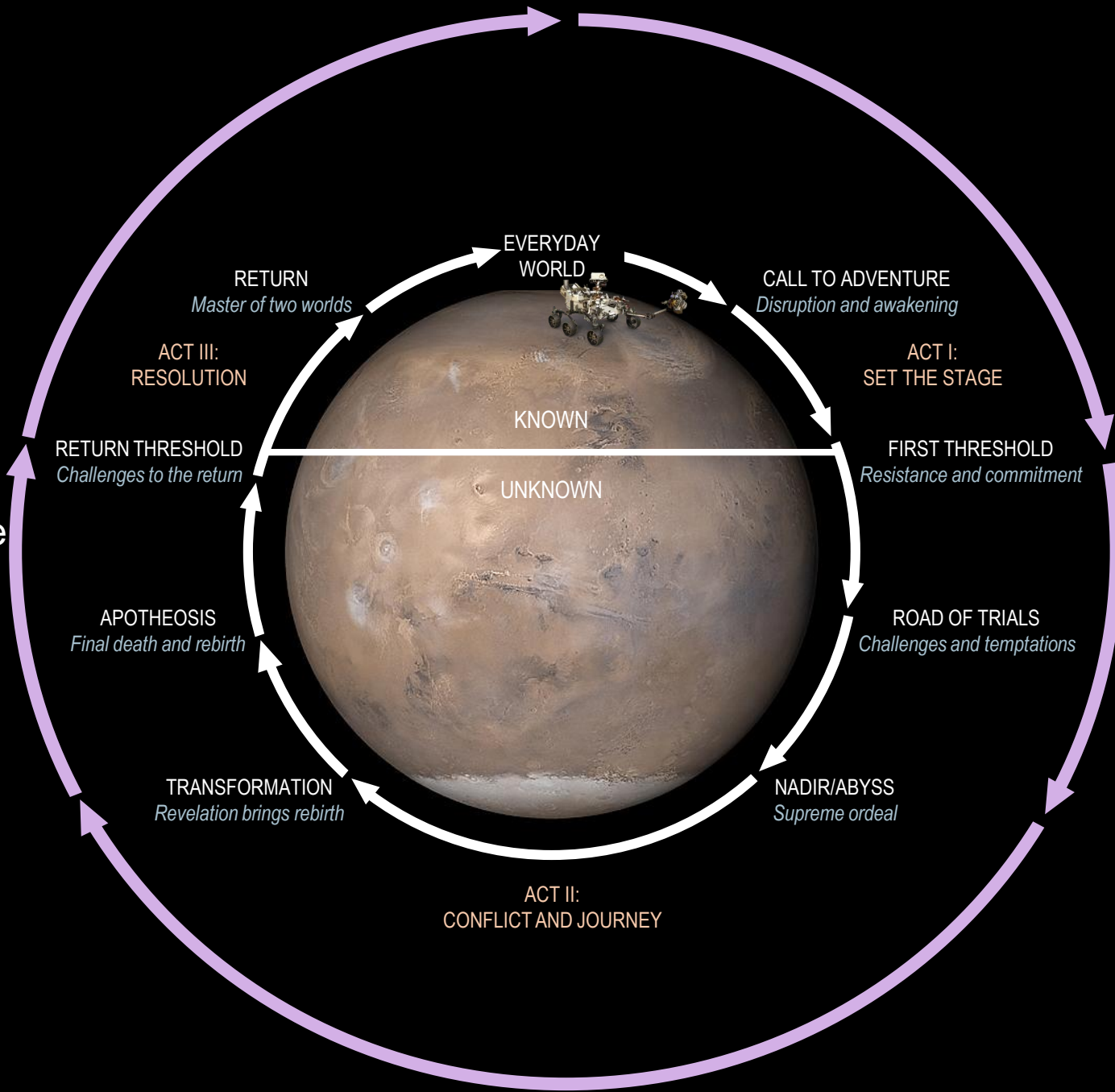
Describe how obstacles are overcome

“How do you fill the knowledge gap?”

CLAIM 4: THE "NUGGET"

Show the results of the investigation and the knowledge gap filled

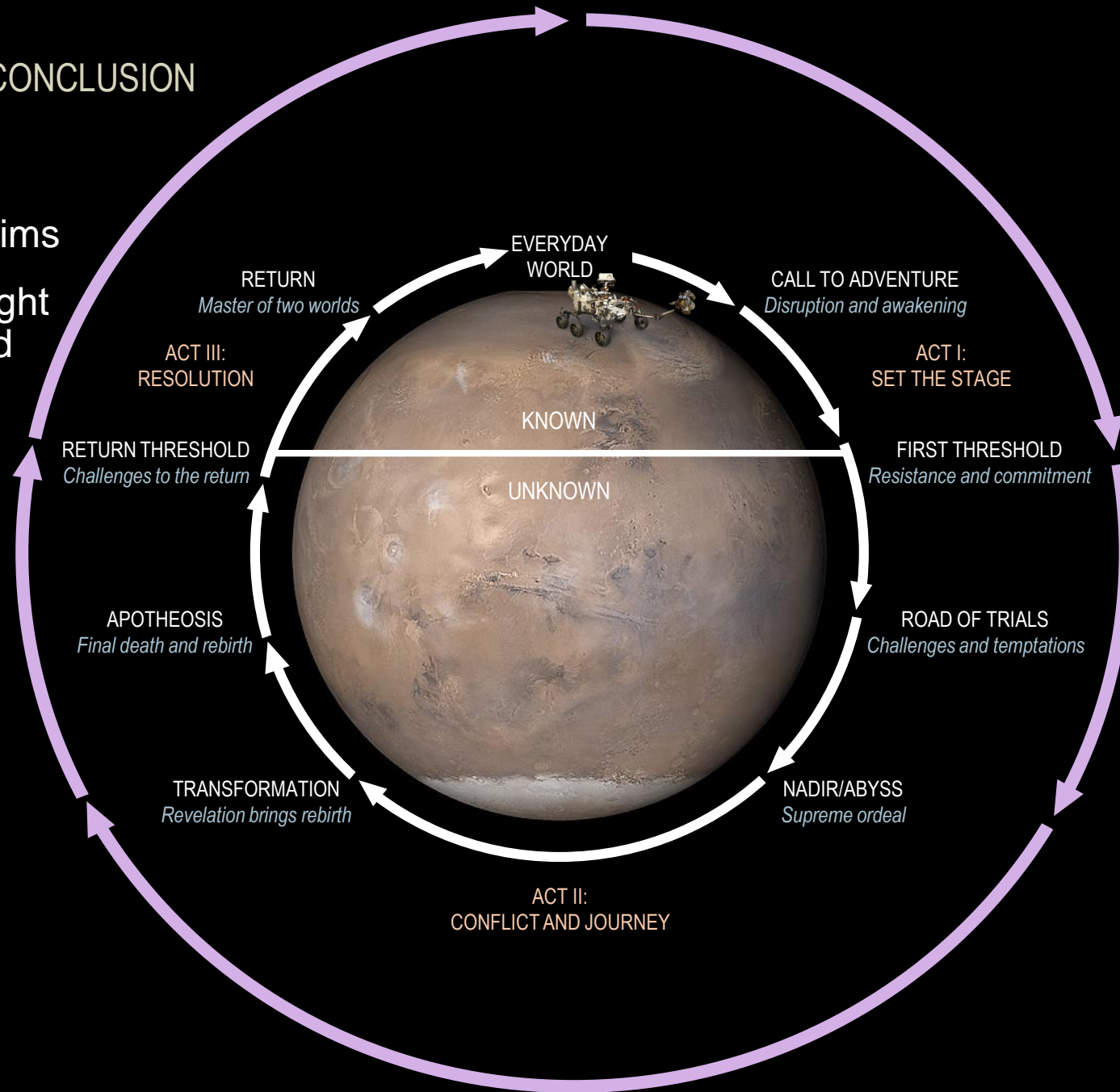
"What are you providing and what do you expect to learn?"

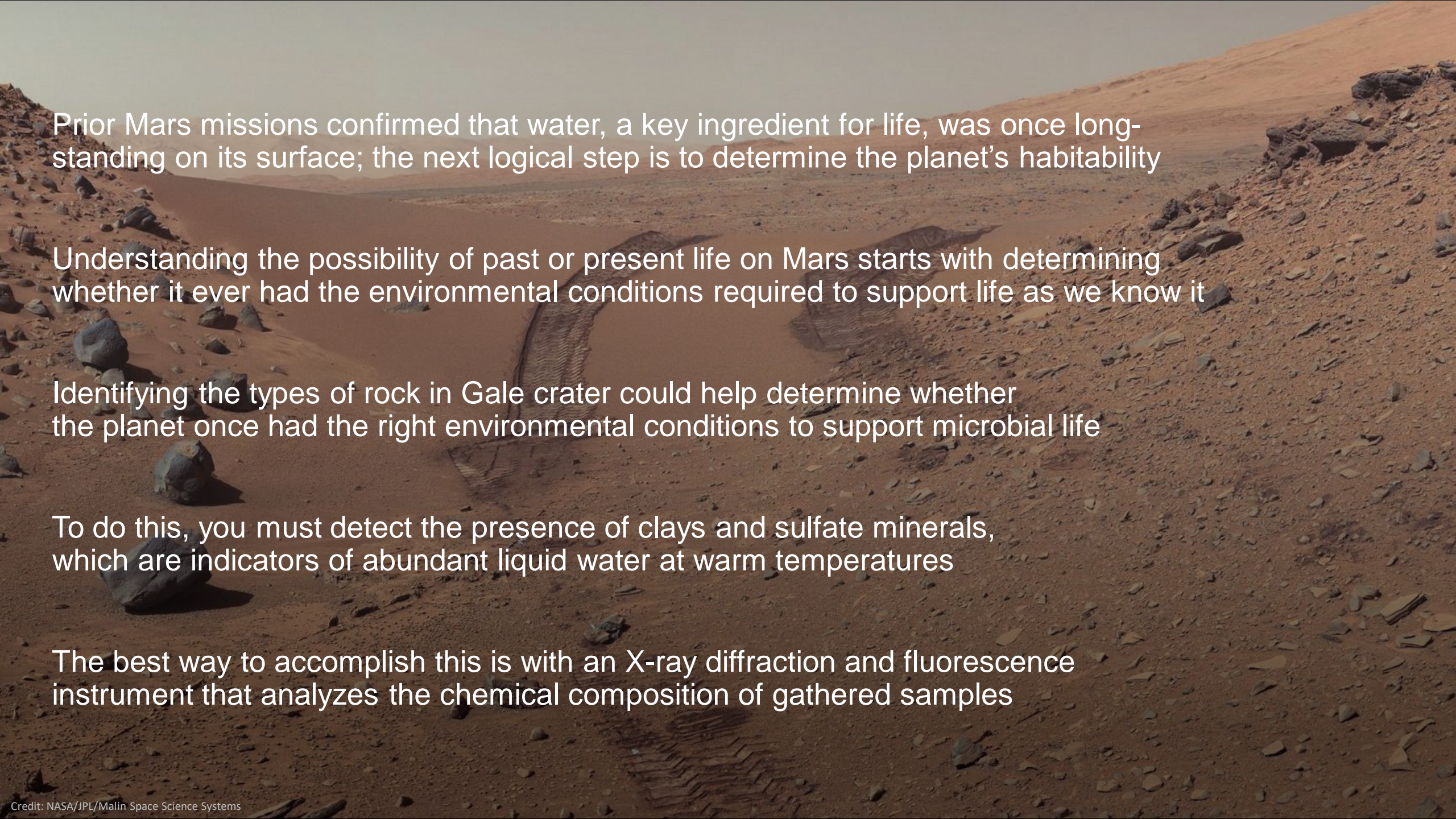


CLAIM 5: THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION

Lead to a solution that covers all previous claims

“Why is this way the right way, are we ready, and is it good enough to meet objectives?”





Prior Mars missions confirmed that water, a key ingredient for life, was once long-standing on its surface; the next logical step is to determine the planet's habitability

Understanding the possibility of past or present life on Mars starts with determining whether it ever had the environmental conditions required to support life as we know it

Identifying the types of rock in Gale crater could help determine whether the planet once had the right environmental conditions to support microbial life

To do this, you must detect the presence of clays and sulfate minerals, which are indicators of abundant liquid water at warm temperatures

The best way to accomplish this is with an X-ray diffraction and fluorescence instrument that analyzes the chemical composition of gathered samples

PIXAR'S SIX SEQUENTIAL SENTENCE APPROACH

Explain complex ideas simply

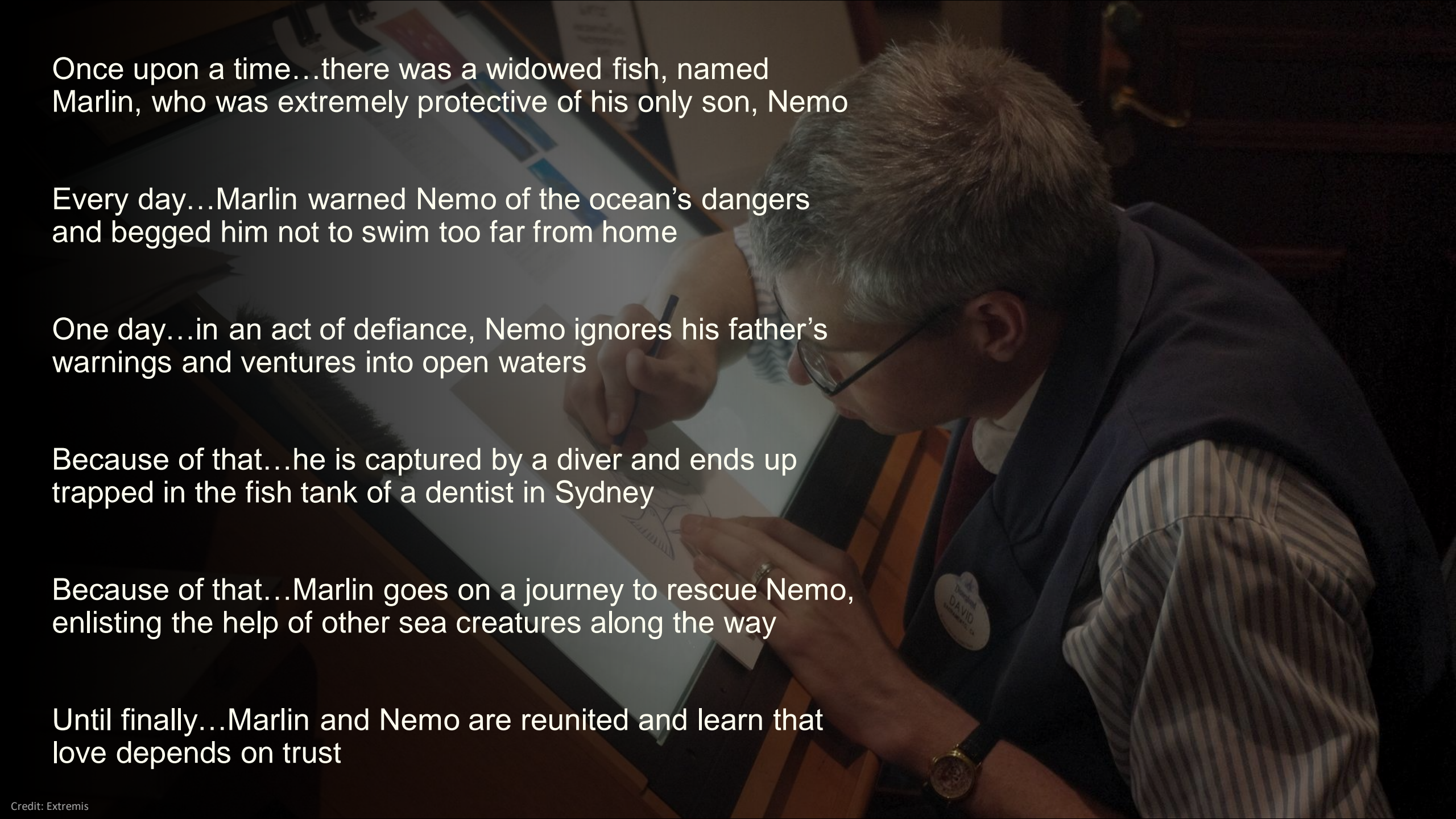
Discover what is truly compelling about your proposal

Make sure everyone on your team is selling the same thing



1. Once upon a time there was...
(state-of-the-art)
2. Every day...(state-of-the-art)
3. One day...(eureka moment)
4. Because of that...
(state-of-the-art advanced)
5. Because of that...
(state-of-the-art advanced)
6. Until finally... (benefit)



A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue suit jacket over a striped shirt, is seated at a desk. He is leaning forward, focused on drawing a fish on a piece of paper with a blue pen. A name tag on his lapel reads "DAVID".

Once upon a time...there was a widowed fish, named Marlin, who was extremely protective of his only son, Nemo

Every day...Marlin warned Nemo of the ocean's dangers and begged him not to swim too far from home

One day...in an act of defiance, Nemo ignores his father's warnings and ventures into open waters

Because of that...he is captured by a diver and ends up trapped in the fish tank of a dentist in Sydney

Because of that...Marlin goes on a journey to rescue Nemo, enlisting the help of other sea creatures along the way

Until finally...Marlin and Nemo are reunited and learn that love depends on trust

Once upon a time...snow and ice melt in the Earth's cryosphere increased at an alarming rate

Every day...this moved massive volumes of stored water from the frozen to liquid state, raising sea levels, affecting water availability globally

One day...studies showed a clear link between decreased surface reflectance and increased snow and ice melt, but nobody knew why

Because of that...JPL developed an investigation to better understand cryosphere melt processes with real-time global spectroscopic measurements

Because of that...better data in snow and ice models enabled improved predictions of future changes to Earth's cryosphere

Until finally...this improved understanding led to actions to better protect and sustain humankind

THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB



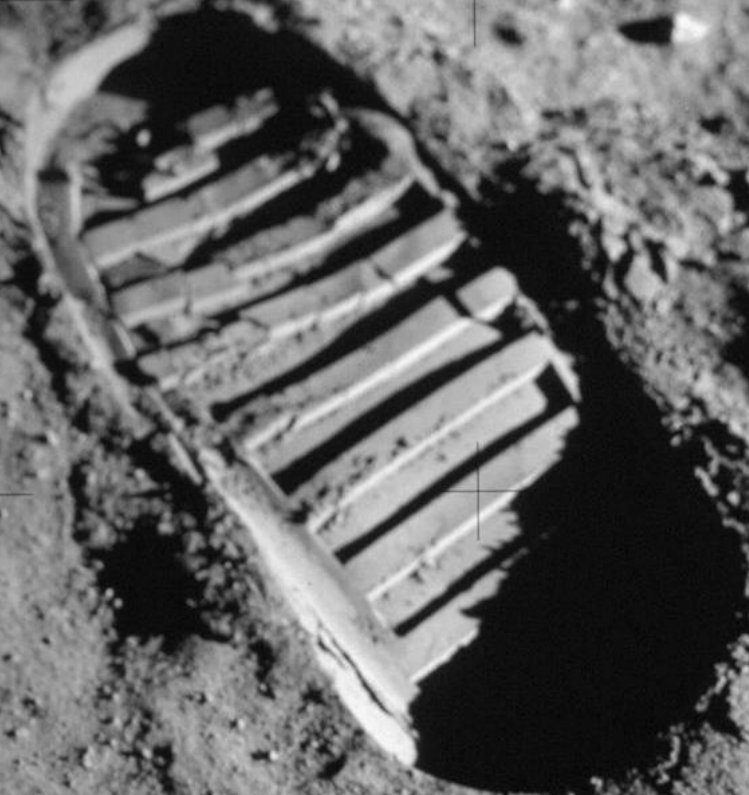
Use solution architects to
develop your offering...

and storytellers to tell
your story

WORDS WITH IMPACT

Journalist, space historian,
and author Andrew Chaikin

Rewrote executive summaries
and opening paragraphs of major
proposal sections



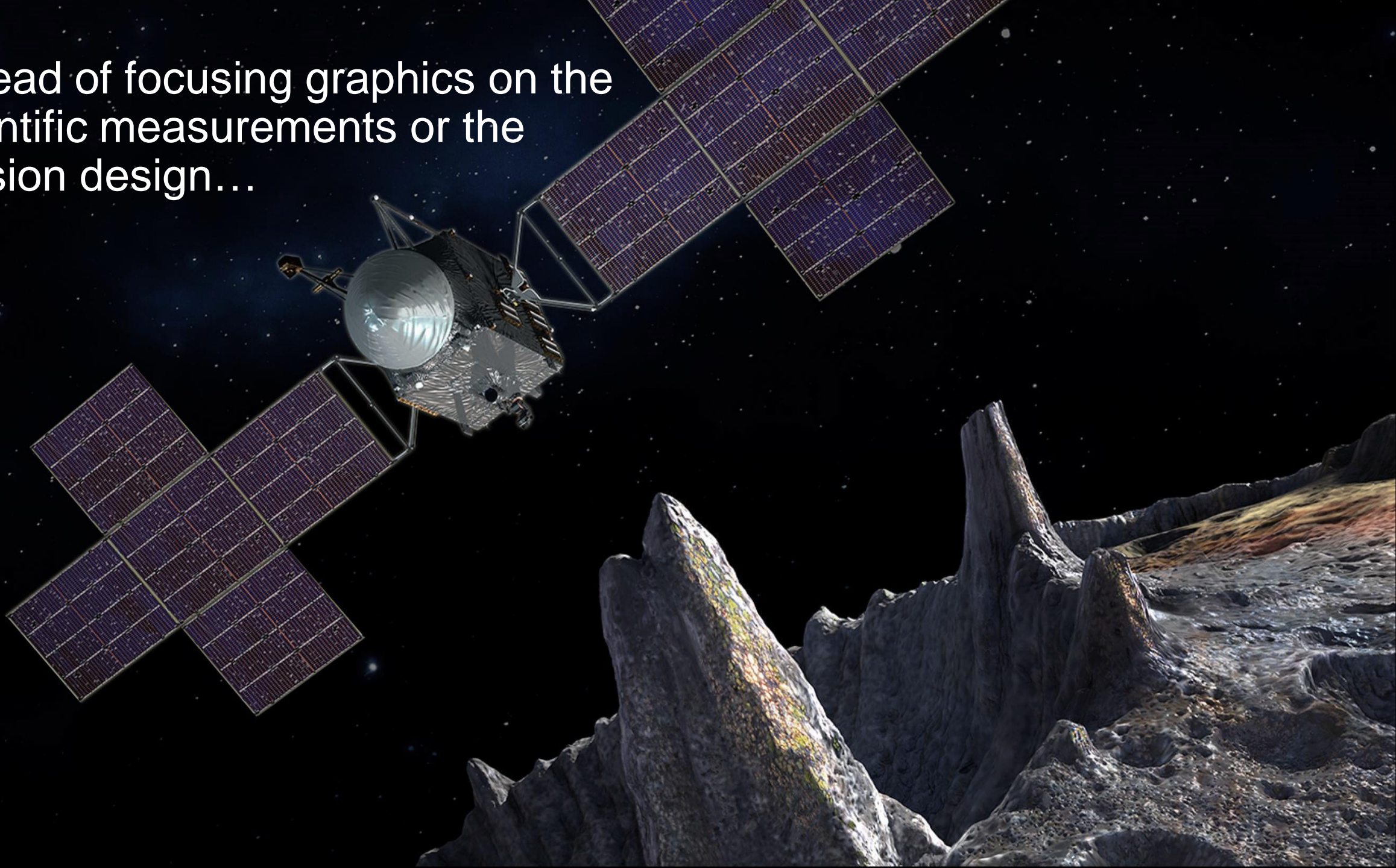
INSPIRE THROUGH VISUALS

A man with dark hair and glasses is shown in profile, focused on drawing on a whiteboard. He is wearing a dark, patterned shirt and a watch on his left wrist. His right hand is holding a yellow marker, and his left hand is resting on the whiteboard. The whiteboard is covered in faint, sketchy lines and some numbers, suggesting a creative or analytical process. The background is a blurred office setting.

Creative director and
concept and storyboard
artist Peter Rubin

Developed cover art and
executive summary graphics
with emotional impact

Instead of focusing graphics on the scientific measurements or the mission design...



...we illustrated the emotional
impact of the discovery



PSYCHE

STRATEGIC EDITOR

Career writers and staff with proven writing chops help teams tell their stories better

Organize proposal content in a way that make sense

Refine graphics and prose to engage evaluators, decision influencers, and selection officials

Review technical content for continuity across all volumes

Editing or rewriting content may
get you where you need to go...

...but coaching authors in how to
improve their own writing has
longer lasting benefits



Don't write to "convince"
your audience...

...write to "compel" them
to join you.