ZERO SUM GAME

A PRESENTATION BY PAUL RUFFALO FOR NICE EXPO 2025

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PAUL RUFFALO

- Son, Uncle, Husband, Father
- Instructor, Kirkwood Community College
- Head of Internal Audit, Collins Community CU
- vCISO / Advisor for Small to Medium Businesses
- Podcast Co-Host > https://www.theeffitbucket.com/
- 25+ years of industry experience
- Board > Young Parents Network (Non-profit)
- Management Information Systems, Loras College
- Masters, Southern Methodist University
- CISSP, CRISC, AWS CCP, LMNOP(?)
- Award winning Agentic AI Designer [Emerge 2025]

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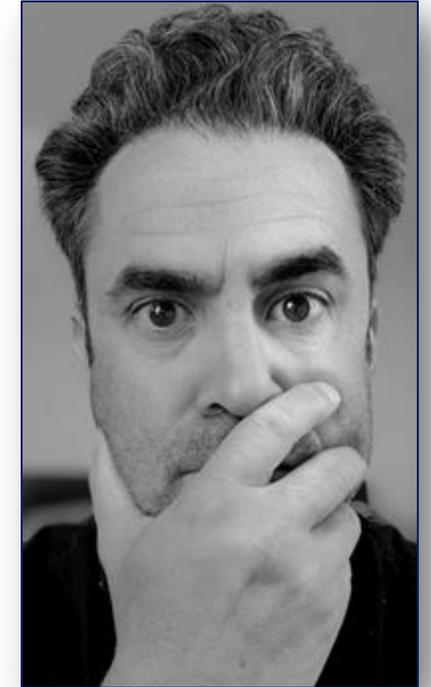
ZERO SUM GAME

- Attributed to John Von Neumann, 1928
- Adapted by Paul Ruffalo, 2025

Disclaimer:
I may not have the concepts *exactly* aligned with Neumann.

*This is my presentation,
I'm allowed to get creative.*

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BUILDING THE GAME

- First piece of the game board is the triangle, 3 sides, 3 points. Each side is an attribute.

- Each point is a potential employee, having 2, but not all 3 attributes.

- "Zero Sum Game", employers want all 3, but potential employees cannot get there

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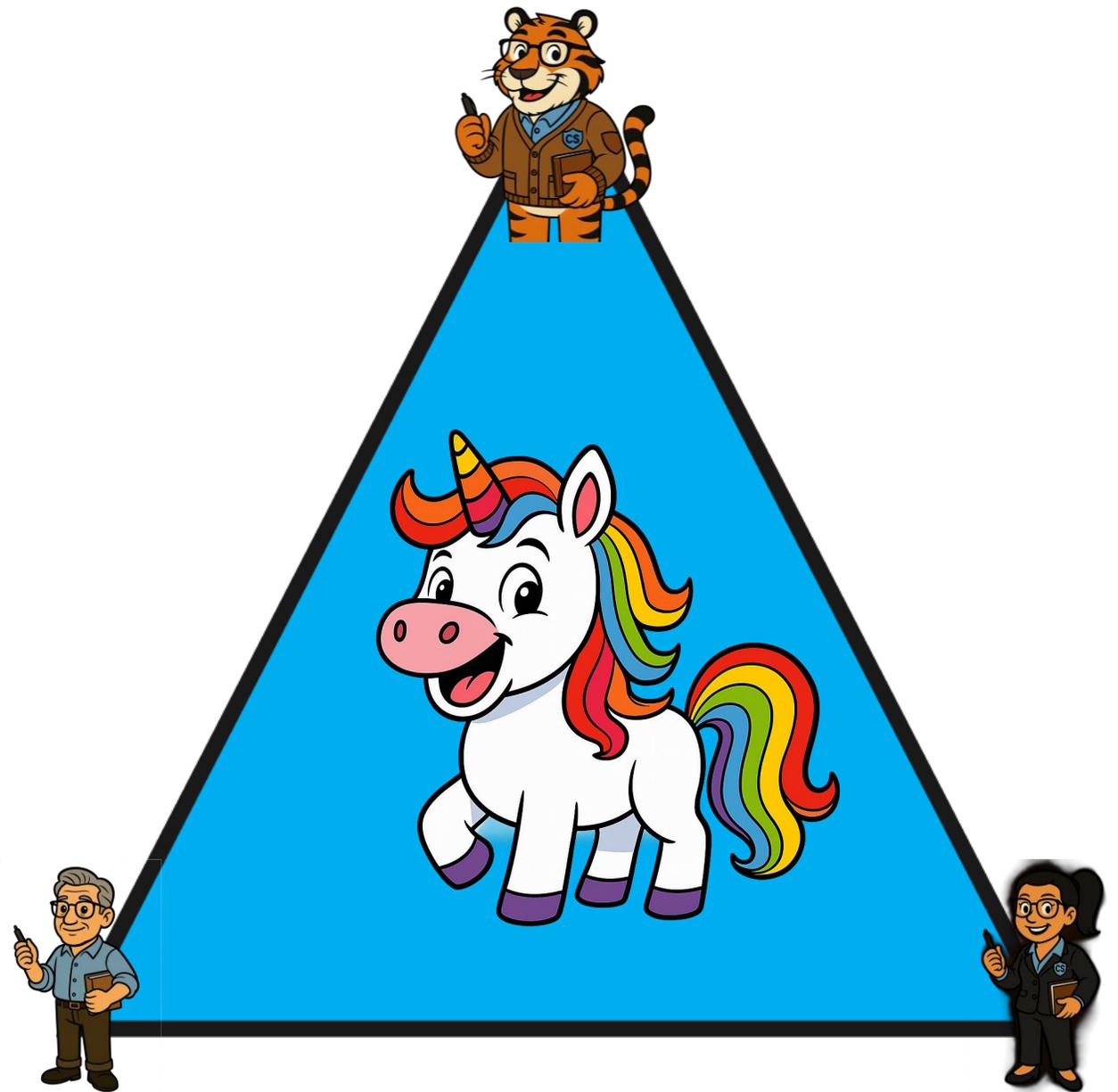
CERTIFICATIONS

- These come from industry recognized entities.

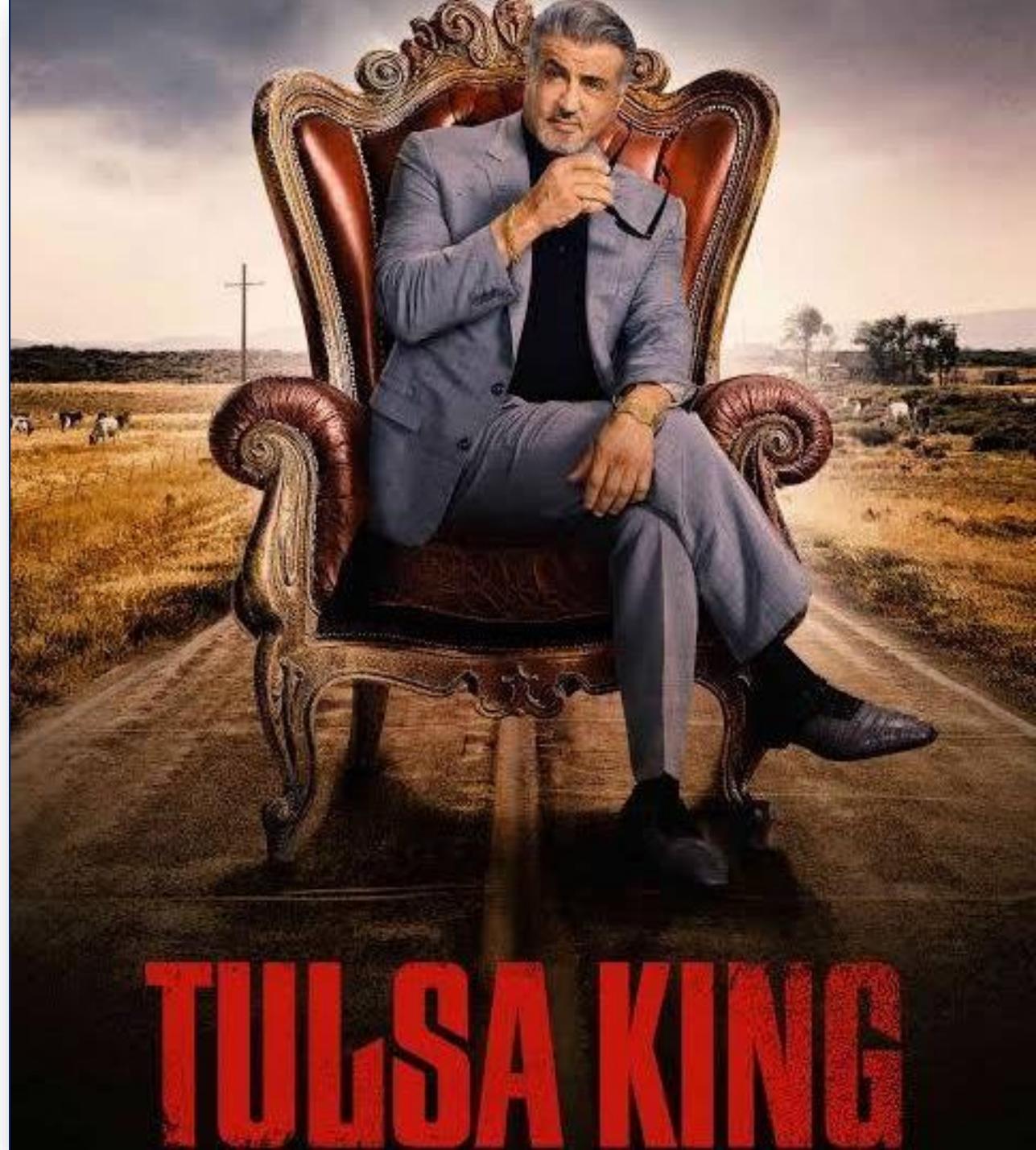- Overall, validate **knowledge** and **skills**.

EDUCATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE WITH ASSOCIATES DEGREES AND TRANSFER CREDITS.

UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREES

GRADUATE INSTITUTIONS WITH MASTER'S AND PHDS.

SHOW ACADEMIC GROUNDING.
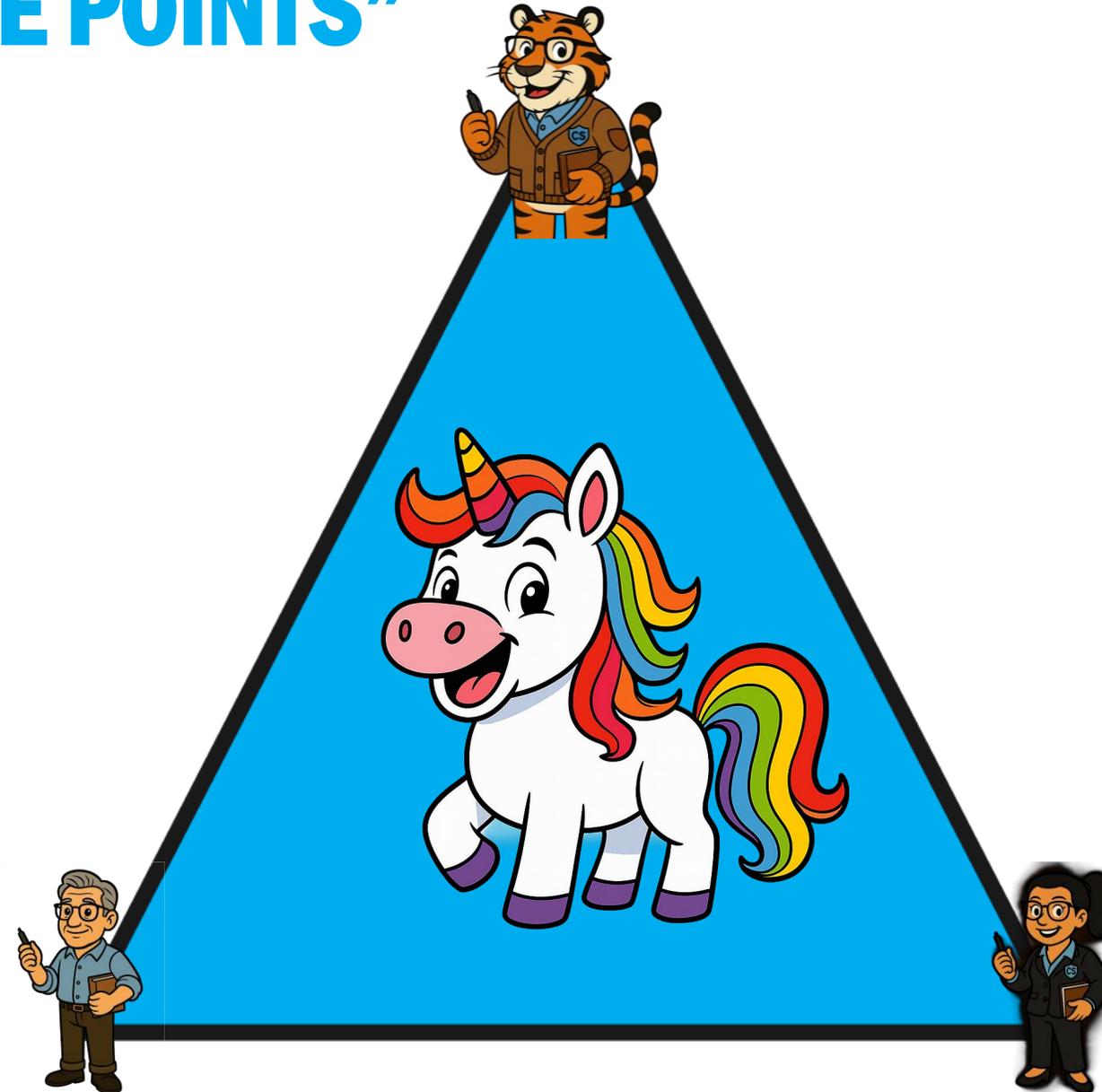
EXPERIENCE

MILITARY SERVICE AND HANDS-ON ROLES

ANALYST, ENGINEER, ARCHITECT, & CONSULTANT

REAL-WORLD KNOWLEDGE AND **HANDS-ON APPLICATION.**

TONY TIGER

CERTIFICATIONS & EDUCATION

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TONY TIGER – CERTS & EDUCATION

1. Strong theoretical knowledge and understanding of concepts.

2. Prepared for exams and assessments.

3. Often have clear documentation of their qualifications.

TONY TIGER – CERTS & EDUCATION

1. Lack practical, hands-on experience.

2. Struggle to apply knowledge in dynamic, real-world environments.

3. Employers hesitate to trust skills without proven results.

Without practical experience,
even highly credentialed individuals struggle to get hired.

EDITH EDISON

CERTIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

EDITH EDISON – CERTS + EXPERIENCE

1. Proven problem-solving skills in real-world situations.

2. Quick to adapt and apply new technologies.

3. Often more passionate and curious about the field.

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EDITH EDISON – CERTS & EXPERIENCE

1. Lack formal education, which may limit theoretical understanding.

2. Sometimes over-reliant on certifications as validation.

3. Employers may question the depth of knowledge and rigor.

These candidates bring valuable skills but face bias in hiring processes that overemphasize degrees.

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OLIVER TURING – EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

1. Strong theoretical and practical foundation.

2. In-depth knowledge from real-world roles.

3. Demonstrated leadership and problem-solving skills.

OLIVER TURING – EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

1. Lack of certifications may reduce visibility to recruiters.

2. May be perceived as "old school" or resistant to new trends.

3. Some employers require certifications as a checkbox, regardless of experience.

Even seasoned professionals can be overlooked if they don't have "badges."

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THE UNICORN

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

THE UNICORN – EDU., CERTS, & EXP.

- "It's not you. It's the environment. Companies these days care more about what's on paper - the right buzzwords, the right checkboxes – than about the people behind them."

- That simple truth hit home. The Unicorn wasn't the problem; the hiring culture was

- And now, it was time to find new ways to show their value beyond the paper trail.

BACHELOLR'S DEGREE

MASTER'S DEGREE

PhD

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

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THE UNICORN – EDU., CERTS, & EXP.

- Swallowed hard, forged a path

- Built a new network

- Joined Kirkwood,
  Collins Community CU Board

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REMEDY #1 – POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

- Start somewhere and commit to continuous learning. Use books, videos, hands-on labs, and projects.

- Build a portfolio – projects, experiments, talks, papers, etc.

- Build a brand –create a LinkedIn profile, showcase skills, and engage with the community.

REMEDY #2 - EMPLOYERS

- Standardize job descriptions using tools like the NICE Framework and CyberSN Job Description Tool.

- Focus on people, not just skills. Cut down interview rounds and trust the credentials and experiences already proven.

- Value "unteachables" > Adaptability, Integrity, and Passion

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REMEDY #3 – EDUCATORS – A KCC HIGHLIGHT

- Focused on job preparation
- 7-week blocks, Competency-based
- Modality > Online, Asynchronous
- Textbooks as foundation
- Maximize Hands-on labs
- Maximize Real-world Software, Tools, Techniques, and Events
- Part-time job after 7 weeks > Internship > Full-time career

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REMEDY #3 – EDUCATORS

- Emphasize learning, not just grades.
- Connect students with employers early and often.

EDUCATORS – HIGHLIGHT KCC

- Focused on job preparation
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QUESTIONS?