Grant Quest!

Using Capture Management Strategies to Win Large and Complex Grants

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What Even is Capture Management?!

Capture management, also called opportunity management, is an approach to assessing extramural proposal opportunities and developing a comprehensive strategy to improve teams' probability of winning a strategic opportunity

This approach isn't something new for Research Administrators to take on, but is instead an outgrowth of existing team-based administrative approaches

Why Should Institutions Take This Approach?

- Many institutions are seeking to increase competitiveness for large, center-scale grants from federal sponsors to increase expenditures and make larger societal impacts

- To accomplish these goals, research administrators will need to continue to support individual investigators while also submitting multiple winning large and complex grants, creating expansions and changes in workflow

- These large and complex proposals cross administrative units and require that we work together to develop cohesive strategies to win

- At Tufts, our capture management approach is to take our existing, limited resources and apply them strategically toward the proposals that have the best chance of winning and that have the potential for substantial societal impact

Why Are We Calling This a Quest?

- Because Amy and Sarah are big nerds!
- Also, because fantasy books, movies, and games capture the same spirit needed from a successful capture management approach
  - A large team bigger than the sum of its parts
  - A seemingly impossible goal beyond the usual day to day
  - Lots of twists and turns - some foreseeable and some not - along the way that must be surmounted
 - (Hopefully) Growing camaraderie and fun within the team

Preparing for the Quest

"'I have been so taken up with the thoughts of leaving Bag End, and of saying farewell, that I have never even considered the direction,' said Frodo. 'For where am I to go? And by what shall I steer? What is to be my quest? Bilbo went to find a treasure, there and back again; but I go to lose one, and not return, as far as I can see.' 'But you cannot see very far,' said Gandalf. 'Neither can I. It may be your task to find the Cracks of Doom; but that quest may be for others: I do not know. At any rate you are not ready for that long road yet.' – The Lord of the Rings, p. 65-66

Beginning the Quest

- Where are we going?
- Who is coming with us?
- How will we get there?
- How will we work together?
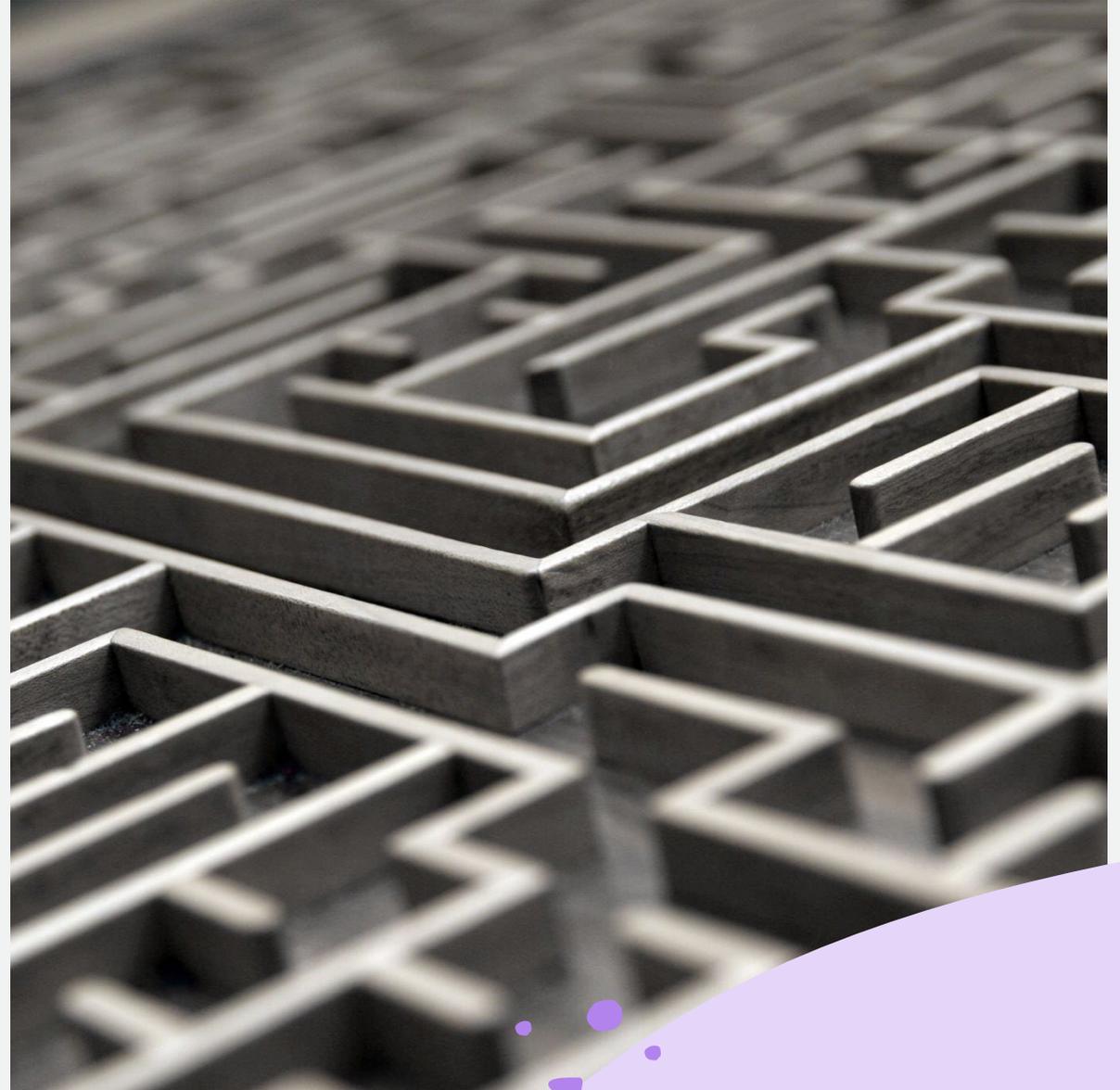
Big Swings Require Teamwork

- Just like in a fantasy quest, our quest for large and complex grants requires a group with varied expertise and skills to work closely together to achieve more than they can do individually

- Often, adventurers are meeting for the first time when setting out on their quest. The same can be true in an institutional setting

- These relationships don't just fall into place, and without preparation, conflict can arise

- Drawing on the concept of Team Science for Administrators, in the same way that research questions require collaboration among multiple disciplines, research funding support requires expertise from multiple administrative units for success

What is Team Science for Administrators?

To be successful in submitting large and complex projects, administrative support needs to go beyond "stay in your own lane"

Administrative teams that cross institutional boundaries, have different reporting structures, and have different incentives – These teams can use team science principles in the same way that multidisciplinary research teams do:

| Building & sustaining trust | Developing a shared vision | Motivators & detractors | Creating a shared vocabulary | Establishing roles & responsibilities | Effective team leadership |

Addressing each of these elements will allow teams to build, sustain, and lead a successful administrative effort for large and complex projects

How do we assemble the team?

What is the funding agency? Does it focus on fundamental research (NIH, NSF) or applied research?

- Applied research typically needs corporate partners

What kind of institutional support does the agency expect?

- Even where formal cost share isn't required (or explicitly disallowed), institutional support, state support, and/or industry support is often expected

How many awards does the agency intend to make?

- The fewer expected awards, the more teams need to learn about potential competition and the stronger the argument teams need to make for why your institution is the right place

To what extent does the agency want to see workforce development as a key component?

- Many of these large programs want to see sustainable impact beyond the funding period, including economic impact and workforce development

What Skills do we Bring to the Table?

Academic Leadership: Institutional support

Research Development: Writing, grantsmanship, project management

Research Administration: Budget, compliance

Campus Planning: Feasibility determination for equipment

Corporate & Foundation Relations: Fundraising to supplement project funds, private partnerships

Technology Transfer: Intellectual property

Government Relations: Competitive intelligence; local, state, and federal support; agency-specific inside knowledge

University Communications & Marketing: Research team branding and profile-raising in line with institutional guidelines

Technology Services: Design, web presence, research technology infrastructure

RESEARCH TEAM:
Drives the scientific vision of a center proposal

Academic Leader-ship

Corp. & Fndtn. Relations

Procure-ment

Research Admin.

Tech Transfer

Research Dev.

Other Party Members you may Meet on your Quest

Project Manager

Graphic Designer

Capture Management Consulting Firm

Content Experts as needed

Your colleagues at other organizations

Supporting Our Team Members

Large, complex proposals require additional workload beyond our day-to-day responsibilities. How can we support each other?

- Having a "pre-mortem" – identifying as many things that could go wrong as possible so we can be prepared

- Sharing openly when we need help, and having each other's backs whenever possible

- Being willing and able to shift our plans when circumstances change

- Reaching out for additional expertise when needed

- Keeping our focus on the goal, even when side quests take us on a detour

Teamwork versus Taskwork

Taskwork – individual activities that must be completed to fulfil the team's objectives

technical, physical, procedural, etc. activities involved in completing tasks or subtasks.

Teamwork - interactions required among team members to achieve their tasks related to:

sharing of information required to complete tasks	knowledge of who has what skills so that they can easily be identified when needed	basic communication among team members throughout the process.

Applying Trust to Administrative Teams

- Recognize colleagues' expertise across boundaries
- Assume good intentions wherever possible
- Identify experts in different realms
- Maintain self-awareness about what "you don't know you don't know"
- Techniques for developing trust include shared staff meetings and informal gatherings before complex projects arise

Shared Vision

✓ It may seem obvious that the goal of the team is to submit a fundable proposal

Each member of the administrative team may have different ideas of what that looks like

Shared visions can include plans for communication among team members and with the scientific research team, identification of areas in which there may be conflict, and areas in which sufficient expertise is not currently available

Motivators and Detractors

Motivators – incentives that cause people to want to do something

Detractors – factors that reduce the value, importance, effectiveness, or quality or teamwork

- Can be institutional and individual
  - Institutional – different priorities and metrics of success
- Individual – recognition, autonomy, individual differences (For example, some people may get a thrill out of tight deadlines, while others may feel overwhelmed.)

How to Develop a Shared Vocabulary

Keep a List

- Keep a running list of common terms that cause confusion as you work on different projects

Ask

- If you're unsure of how a term is being used, ask! Create a culture where asking good-faith questions is an accepted norm

Don't Make Assumptions

- Don't make assumptions that one definition is "correct"

Establishing Roles & Responsibilities for Each Team Member

Identify	Identify both the needs of the project as well as the strengths and capacity of those who can contribute
Understand	Each team member needs to understand their roles and responsibilities, based on their strengths and expertise, and work independently and interdependently
Discuss	Discuss how tasks should be assigned, and the importance of combining these into a coherent whole
Create	Create a process for interfacing with the investigator team – regular communication outside of the investigator team that results in a unified plan to investigator team.

Role of Team Leadership

Critical to know who is responsible for ensuring that tasks are completed and integrated and that the overall vision is kept in the forefront

Name a leader, with the understanding that integrated teams should share leadership responsibilities, including decision making

Work collaboratively with the team to assign roles and responsibilities and determine how each member gets credit for their work

Ensure regular communication among team members, as well as with the research team, to address any challenges that arise

Let's roll!

What Is Our Quest?

After a year of preparing, an RFA has been released for a large center of excellence in an area of strength for your institution. This project will involve personnel from each of your Schools and Centers, as well as external collaborators

- The Game: What are we dealing with here? Like with a real proposal, some of the elements are up to chance and we'll have to roll with them as they happen
- Roll for:
  - How many weeks do we have to work?
  - Are there any holidays/long weekends during that time?
  - Is the PI an active participant or are they too busy to take a leadership role?

In the Thick of It

We're deep in the work of the proposal with our team. Everything is going smoothly, until…

- Roll for the number of international partners in different time zones
  - Who is going to draft and collect letters of support?
  - How do we make sure the budget and the roles described in the proposal align?
 - How can we make sure we aren't running afoul of export control regulations?

What Challenges Do We Meet Along the Way?

Every proposal has its twists and turns, and this grows exponentially with complexity.

- Roll for:
  - Does the PI change midway through proposal preparation?
  - How many new partners are added three weeks before the deadline?
  - Does the funding agency release new, contradictory guidance?
  - Is there cost share that must be negotiated?

Side Quest Alert!
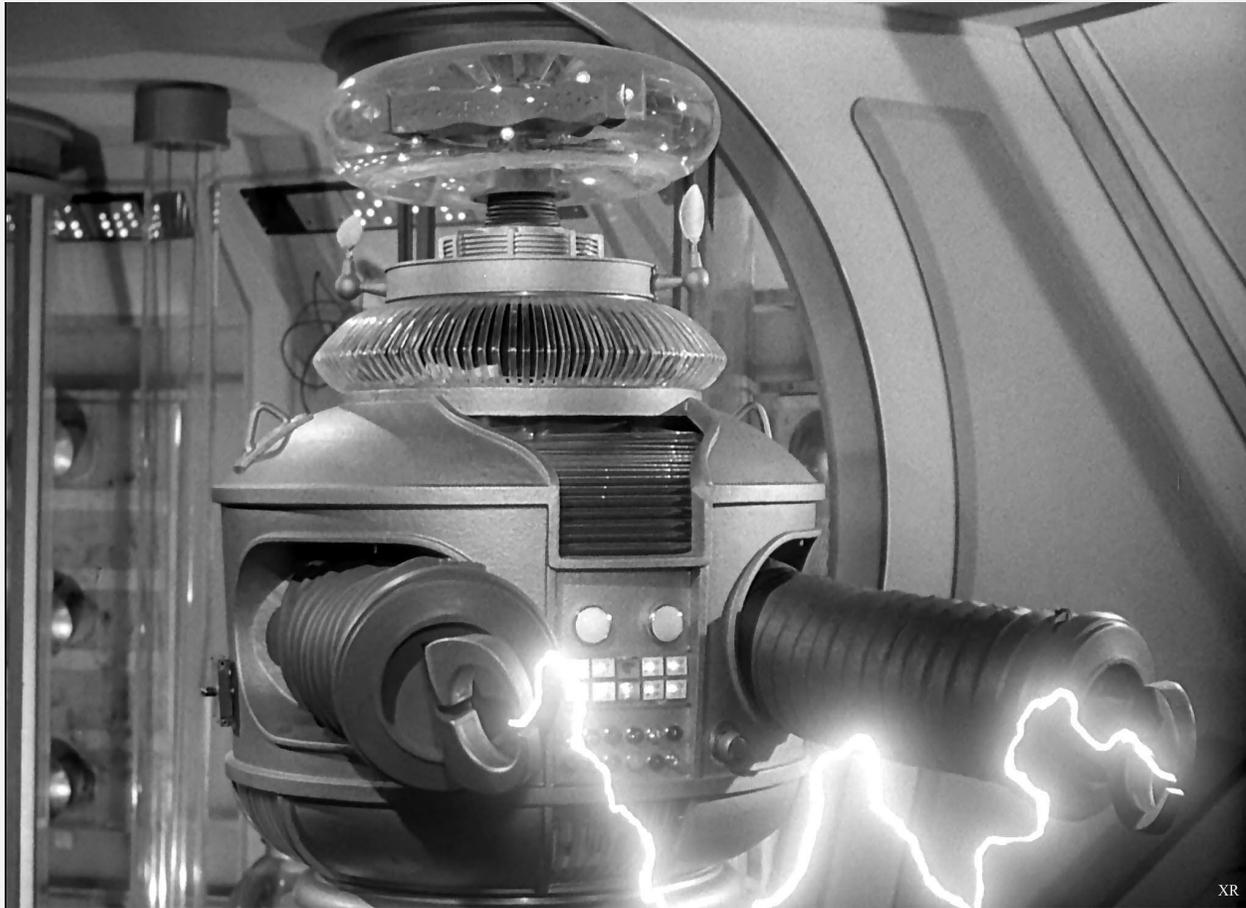
The PI went to a conference and met someone they want to bring onto the team.

Roll for:

- Does the new person's organization have SAM.gov (or other relevant) registration?

- Are they in a country that has restrictions with regards to sensitive research?

- How much money do they need to do their part? How much will the budget need to be revised?

Almost There…

You're almost at the end, and yet…

- Competitive intelligence: We just found out that one of our major competitors has approached the State for a large investment, and we want to stay competitive.
  - Roll for success in getting additional support.
    - How do we prepare the PI for discussing this new information with School/Institutional leadership?
- The proposal is due right after the semester starts.
  - Roll for whether the PI has to teach
    - How do we help to keep the PI on track with their other responsibilities?
- You're finally putting the proposal into the submission system
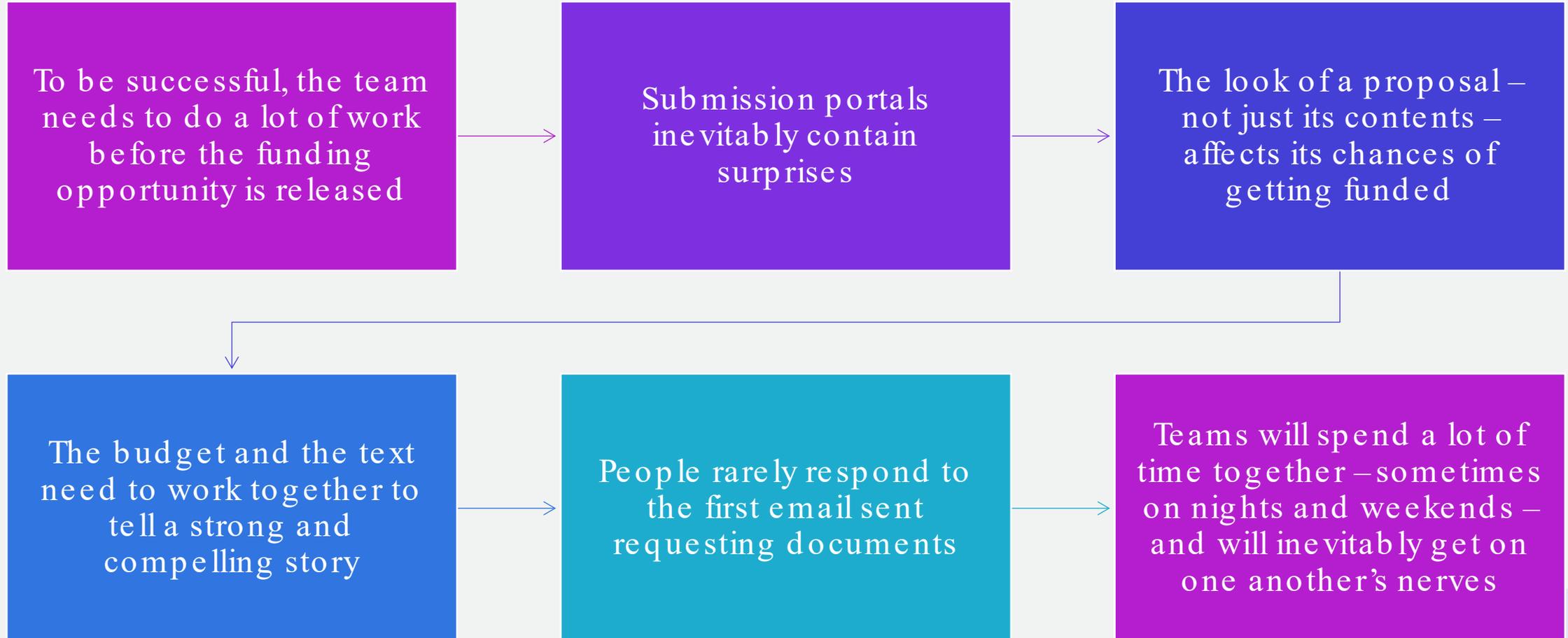 - Roll for how many secret narrative sections you find

We Made It!

Our team overcame every challenge, and the proposal was submitted!

A Well-Deserved Long Rest: Lessons Learned

To be successful, the team needs to do a lot of work before the funding opportunity is released

Submission portals inevitably contain surprises

The look of a proposal – not just its contents – affects its chances of getting funded

The budget and the text need to work together to tell a strong and compelling story

People rarely respond to the first email sent requesting documents

Teams will spend a lot of time together – sometimes on nights and weekends – and will inevitably get on one another's nerves

A Well-Deserved Long Rest:
Lessons Learned, Part 2

Consultants are often seen by research teams as more trustworthy than experts inside the institution – but they won't know our processes and guidelines, so we have to work together to keep the PI from going on a doomed side quest

Expectations with the research team and with all the administrative support team members must be set early so that we can all work together toward our common goal

Disappointments are inevitable – these are highly competitive programs, and we won't win every time. We will, though, learn a lot on our quests, and we will take what we've created into the next effort

Most of All…

- The quest should be fun, even when we're facing down a monster or when we're making changes to the proposal days before the internal deadline

- By working as a team, we can improve our success, and together, we can make sure that the very hard work we do pays off

- And then, we celebrate!

Questions?
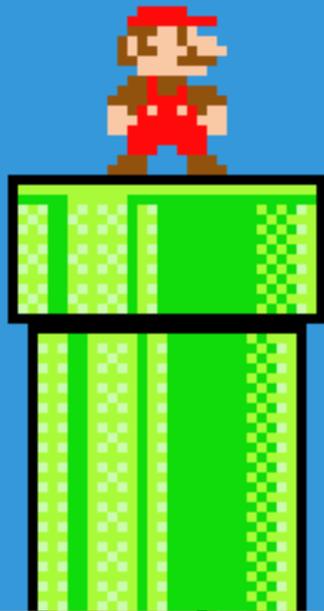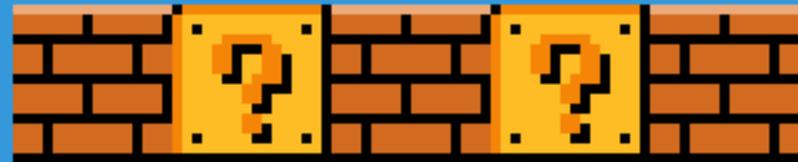
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