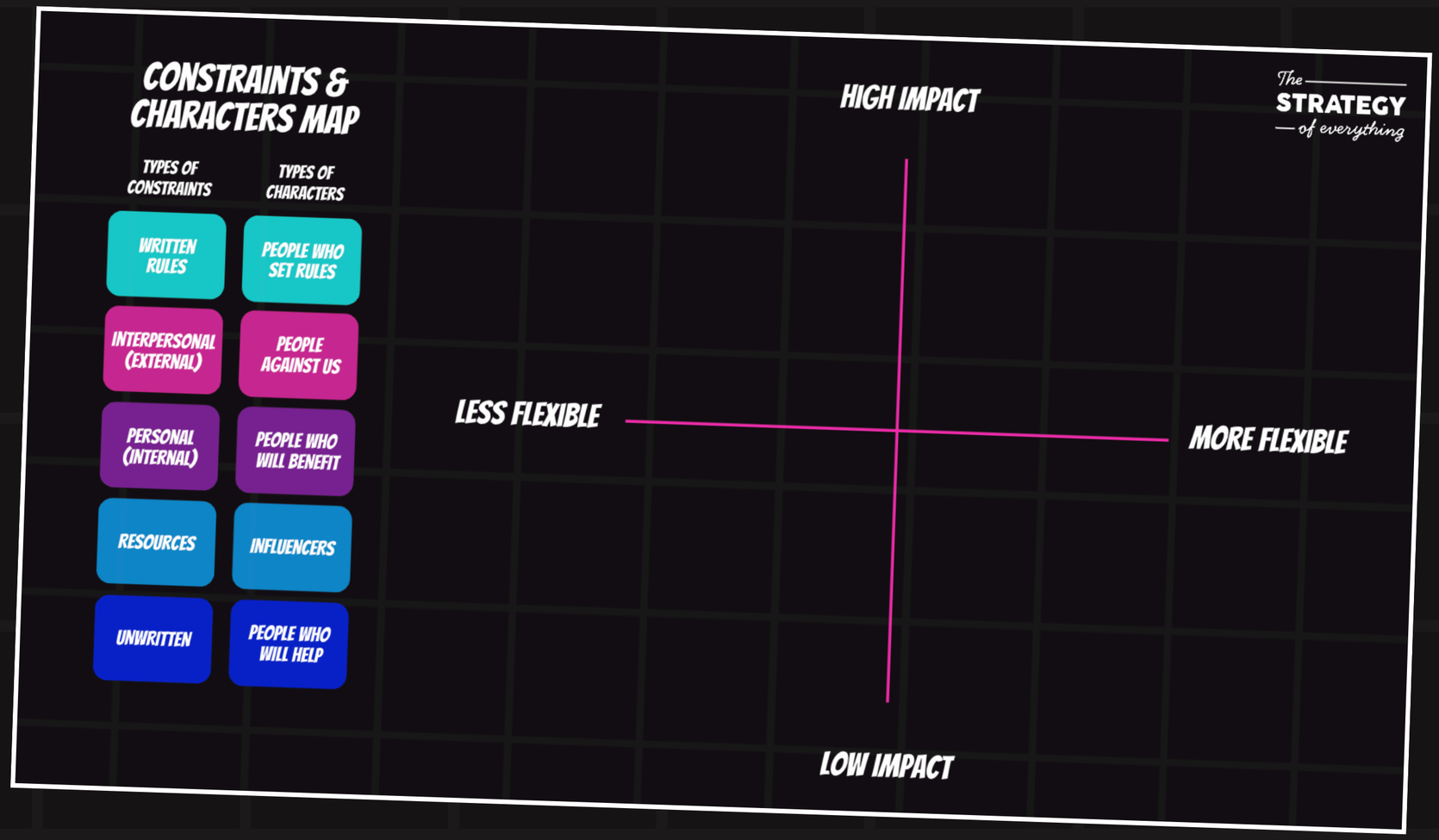
CONSTRAINTS & CHARACTERS MAP



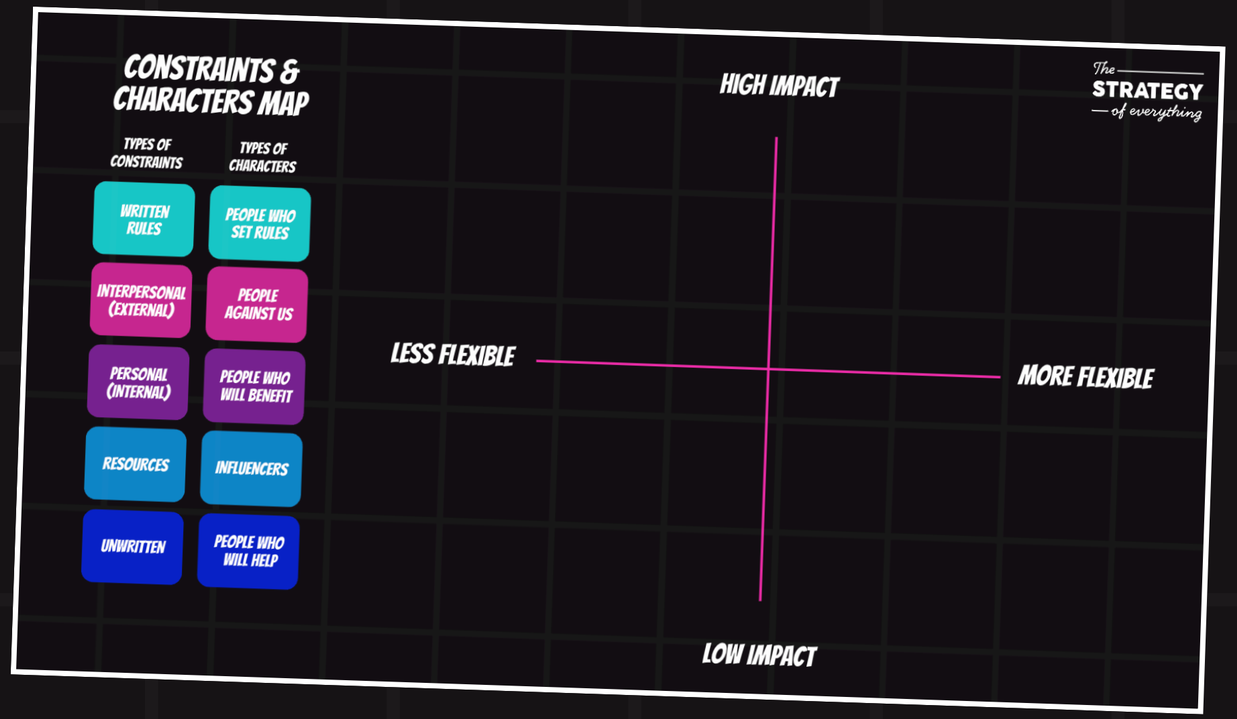
THE CONSTRAINTS & CHARACTERS MAP

The STRATEGY of everything

Understanding the rules of the game

The **Constraints & Characters Map** helps you visualize which constraints could be more restrictive and impactful on your mission.

Map the people who can help you, you are working against you and who will gain from your success so you can start to strategize about how to be creative with your resources.



STEP-BY-STEP

The STRATEGY of everything

Step 1: Identify the Constraints

Think about your project, company or mission and consider all of the constraints you are under.

There are 5 types of Constraints:

- **Written Rules** (laws, contracts, policies)
- **Unwritten Rules** (norms, politics, taboos)
- **Resources** (time, money, tools)
- **Personal** (skills, mindset, habits)
- **Interpersonal** (team dynamics, trust, communication)

Write down as many as you can think of and use a different coloured sticky for each group

Step 2: List the Characters

List the other people who are involved.

- People who set rules
- People who are against you
- People who can help you
- People who will benefit from your wins
- People who can influence

Step 3: Prioritize & Plot

Use a 2x2 grid to plot your constraints:

- X-axis: Flexibility (Can we change this?)
- Y-axis: Impact on the Mission (Does this make or break us?)

Then plot the characters next to the constraints that they are related to.

Now that you see the landscape, figure out where to push, who to persuade, and what to avoid.

TYPES OF CONSTRAINTS

The STRATEGY of everything

🧾 **Written Rules**
Laws, policies, contracts, and official guidelines that can't be ignored. These are your hard boundaries.
Examples: Compliance regulations, brand standards, NDAs

🤫 **Unwritten Rules**
Cultural norms, workplace politics, or silent expectations. Not in the handbook, but break them and you'll feel it.
Examples: Hierarchy expectations, "how we do things here," office etiquette

🧱 **Resources**
Limits on time, money, tools, access, or capacity. These are your practical bottlenecks.
Examples: Budget constraints, limited headcount, lack of data or tech

💭 **Personal**
Your own skill gaps, habits, mindset, or energy. These are often the most overlooked but powerful constraints.
Examples: Fear of conflict, lack of experience, procrastination

🤝 **Interpersonal**
Team dynamics, trust levels, communication styles, and internal politics.
Examples: Broken feedback loops, lack of buy-in, personality clashes

TYPES OF CHARACTERS

The STRATEGY of everything

👴⚖️ Rule Setters

They define the written or unwritten rules. Their decisions create the boundaries you must work within.
Examples: Executives, regulators, legal teams, board members

🚫 Blockers

They're against your idea—or stand in the way (intentionally or not). Spot them early to prepare your play.
Examples: Skeptical leaders, gatekeepers, passive-aggressive teammates

🛠️ Enablers

They want to help you succeed. Use them to unlock progress, clear roadblocks, or lend credibility.
Examples: Internal champions, supportive managers, mentors.

🎉 Beneficiaries

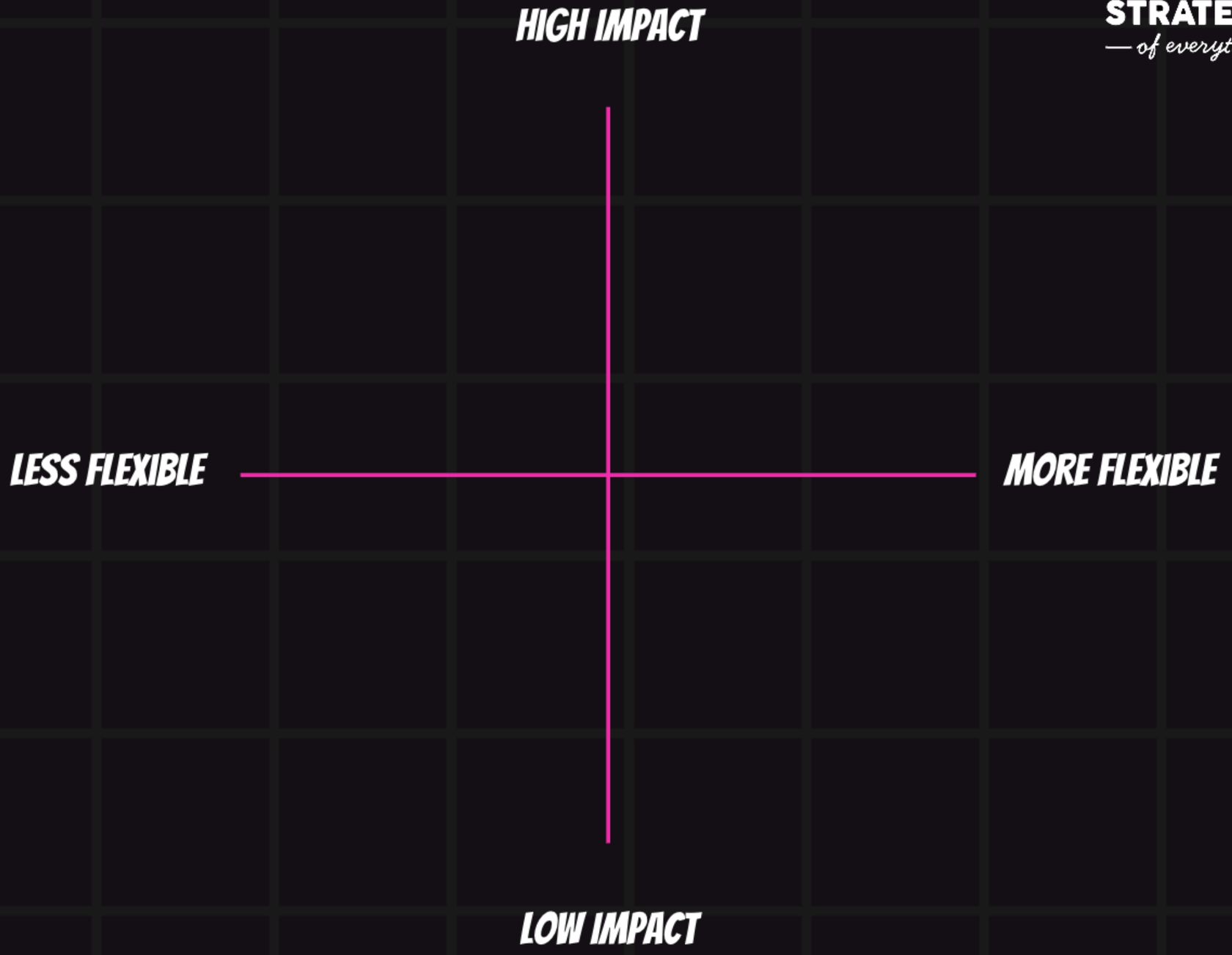
They win when you win. Use their interest as leverage—they'll often help if they see the upside.
Examples: Clients, other teams, customers, your own boss

🎯 Influencers

They don't have direct power, but they sway the ones who do. These are the wildcards that make or break momentum.
Examples: Admins, culture leaders, respected peers, advisors

CONSTRAINTS & CHARACTERS MAP

TYPES OF CONSTRAINTS	TYPES OF CHARACTERS
WRITTEN RULES	PEOPLE WHO SET RULES
INTERPERSONAL (EXTERNAL)	PEOPLE AGAINST US
PERSONAL (INTERNAL)	PEOPLE WHO WILL BENEFIT
RESOURCES	INFLUENCERS
UNWRITTEN	PEOPLE WHO WILL HELP



The STRATEGY of everything

DON'T JUST AVOID THE OBSTACLES, OUTSMART THEM.

Let’s build a strategy that works in the real world.

Ready to identify your real constraints and the people who can move them?

We run live, collaborative workshops to help you map the terrain, align your team, and build a smarter strategy.

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