

Failing to Succeed

Uplyft 2021

Vinod Khosla
@vkhosla

April 10, 2021

khosla ventures

Unconventional Wisdom

khosla ventures

Conventional Wisdom

- **Get A's**
- **Color inside the lines**
- **Behave properly**
- **Show respect**
- **Be thoughtful, don't take risks**

... or else you might fail!!

**the lesson your parents don't want
you to hear...**

fail well, with effort ... and often

**...nobody remembers your failures...
and mostly they don't matter!**

be irreverent, disrespect authority

... disrespect experts
... challenge your teachers
... get evicted, you'll survive

don't worry about your score

learn to explore

don't be proper or show good behavior!

**... be irreverent,
... throw some food,
... throw an eraser**

drop out of school?

... my daughter did!

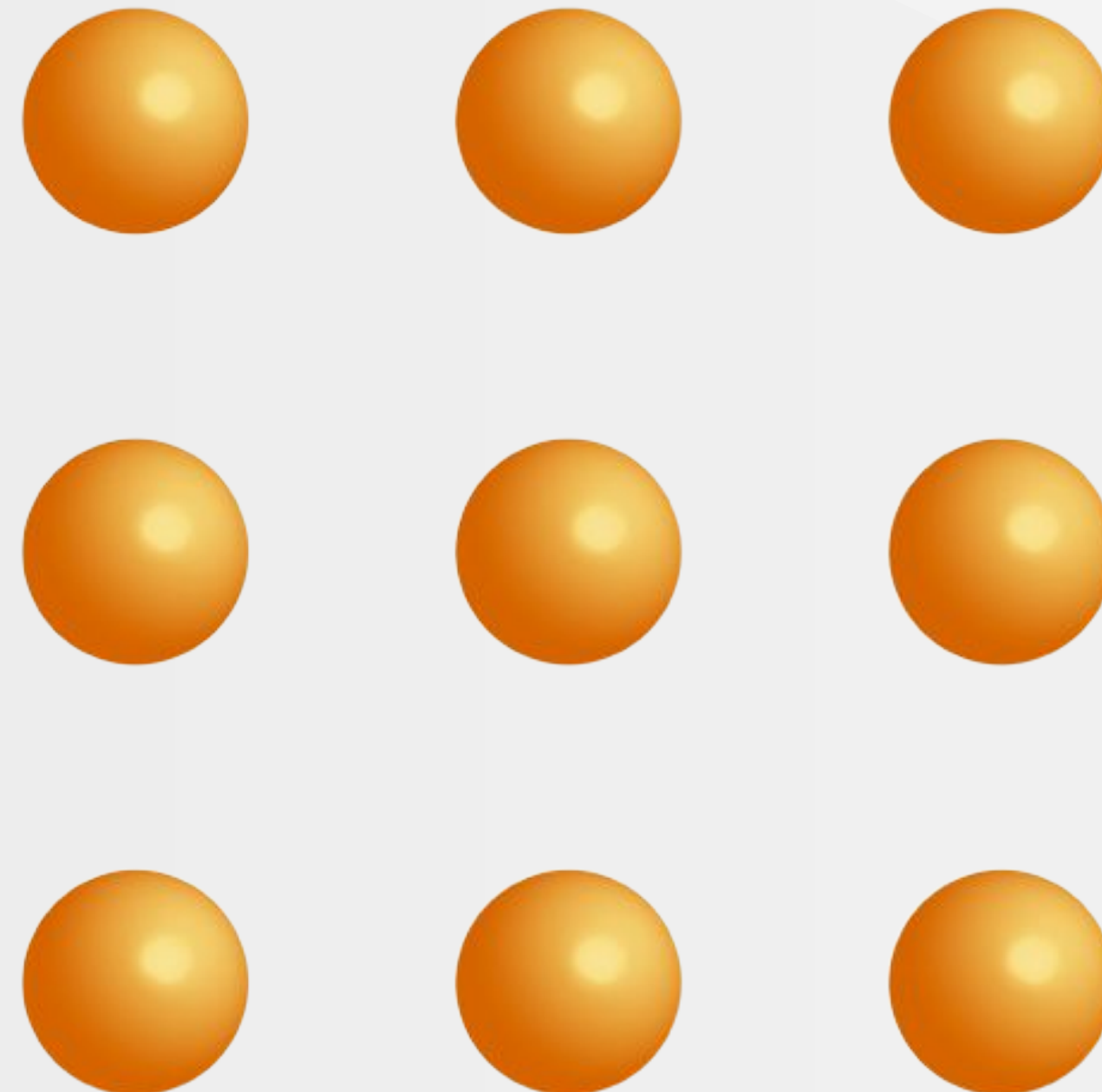
be on the edge

... do the unexpected (don't be a doctor)

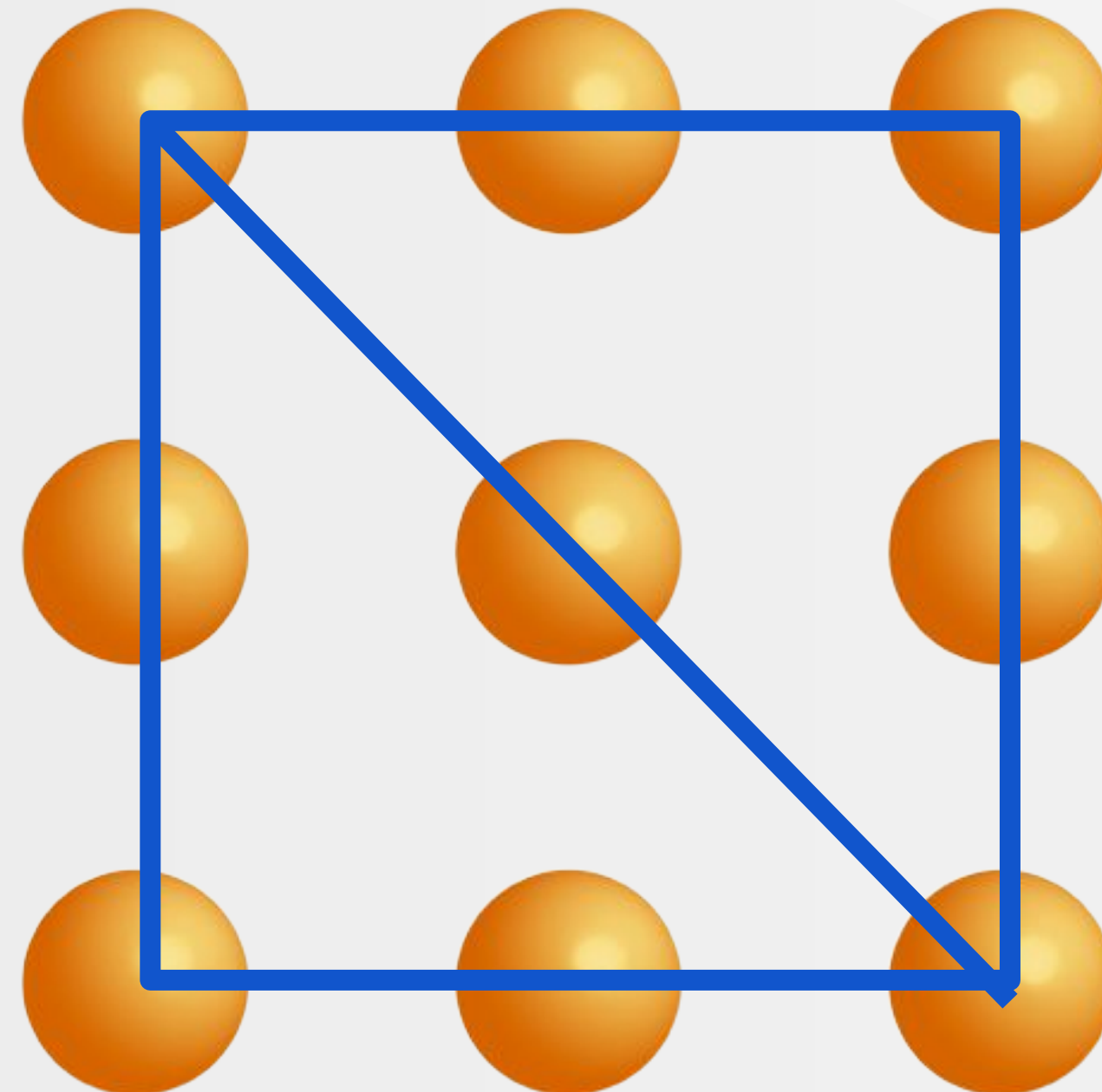
Color Outside The Lines

khosla ventures

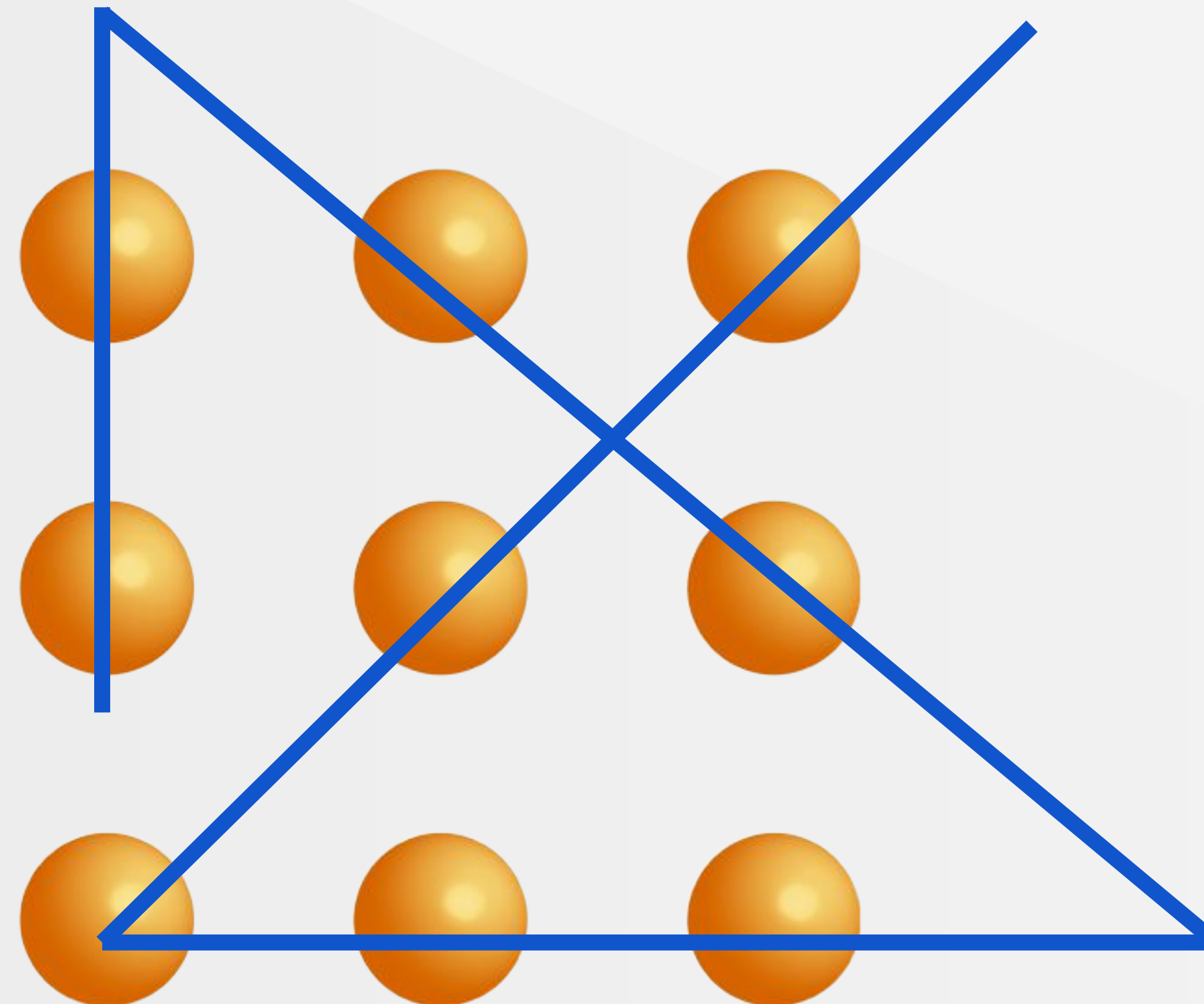
How many lines to connect all the dots?



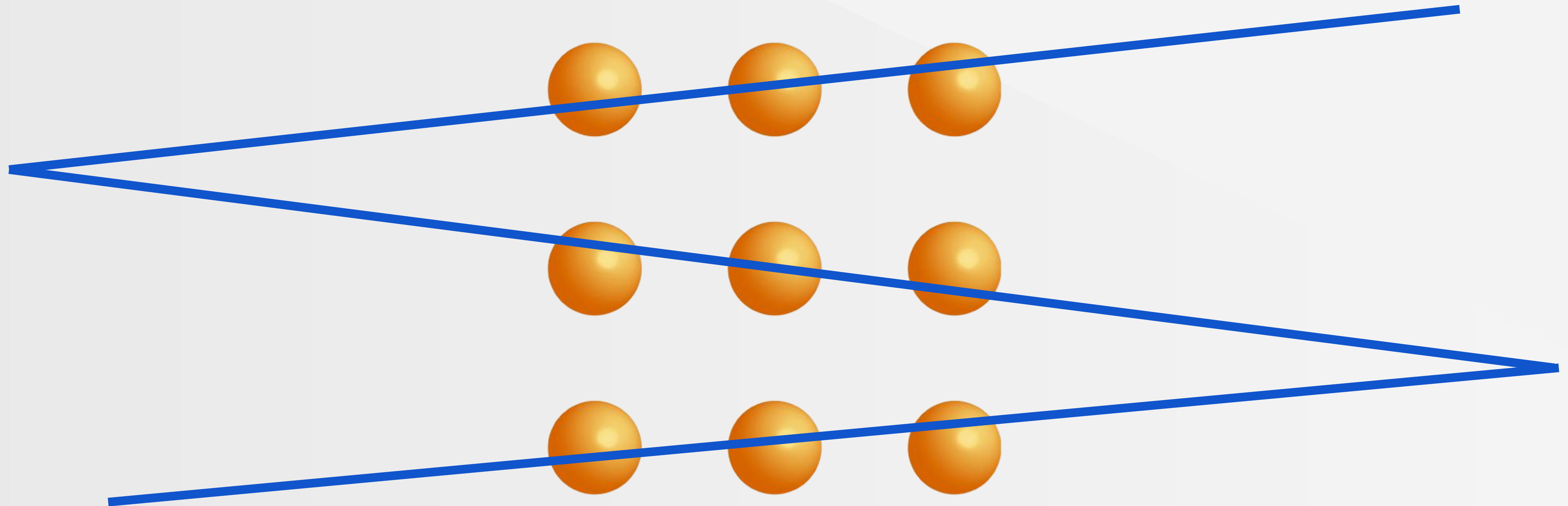
standard nine dots solution



“thinking outside the box” solution

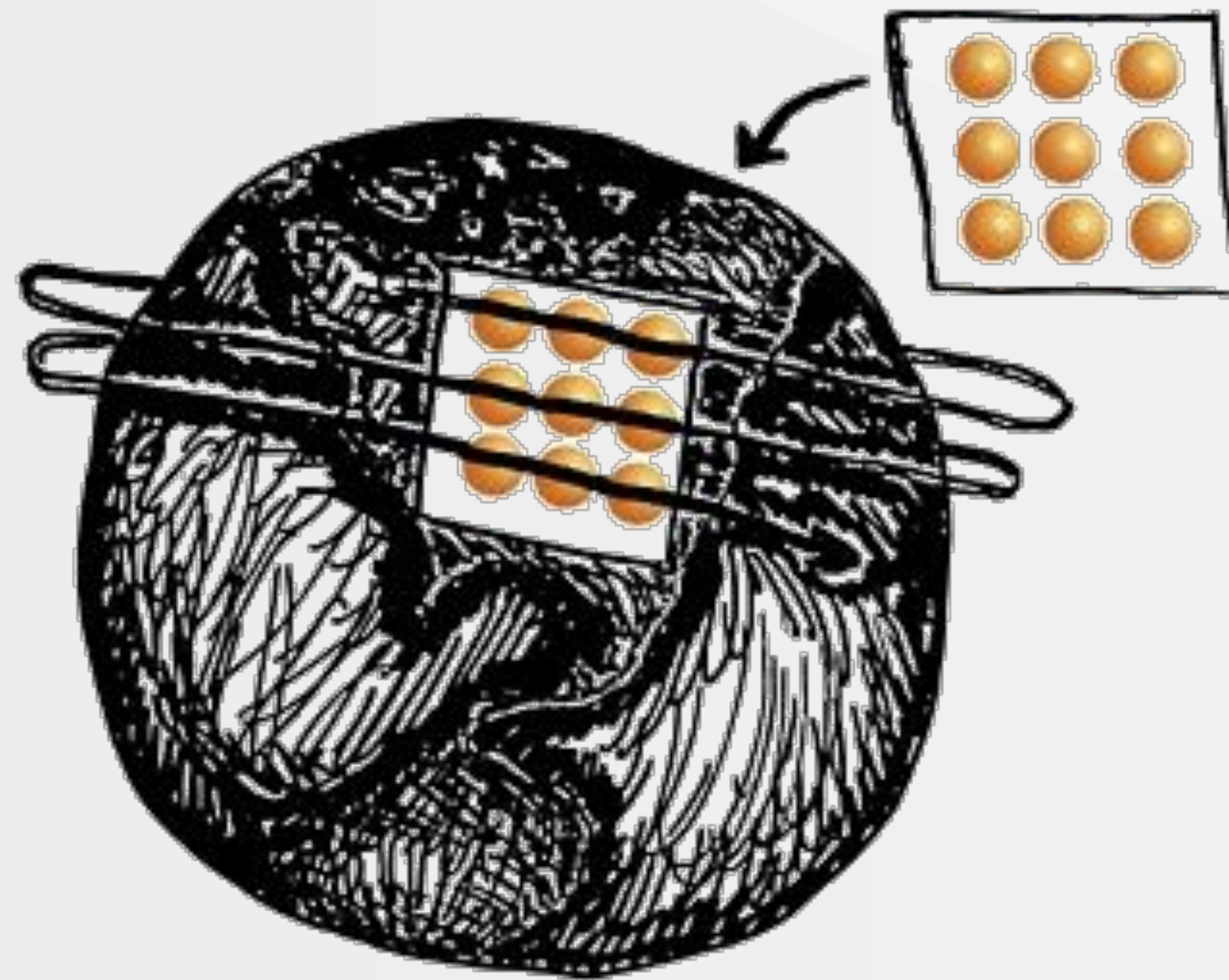


better: use just three lines

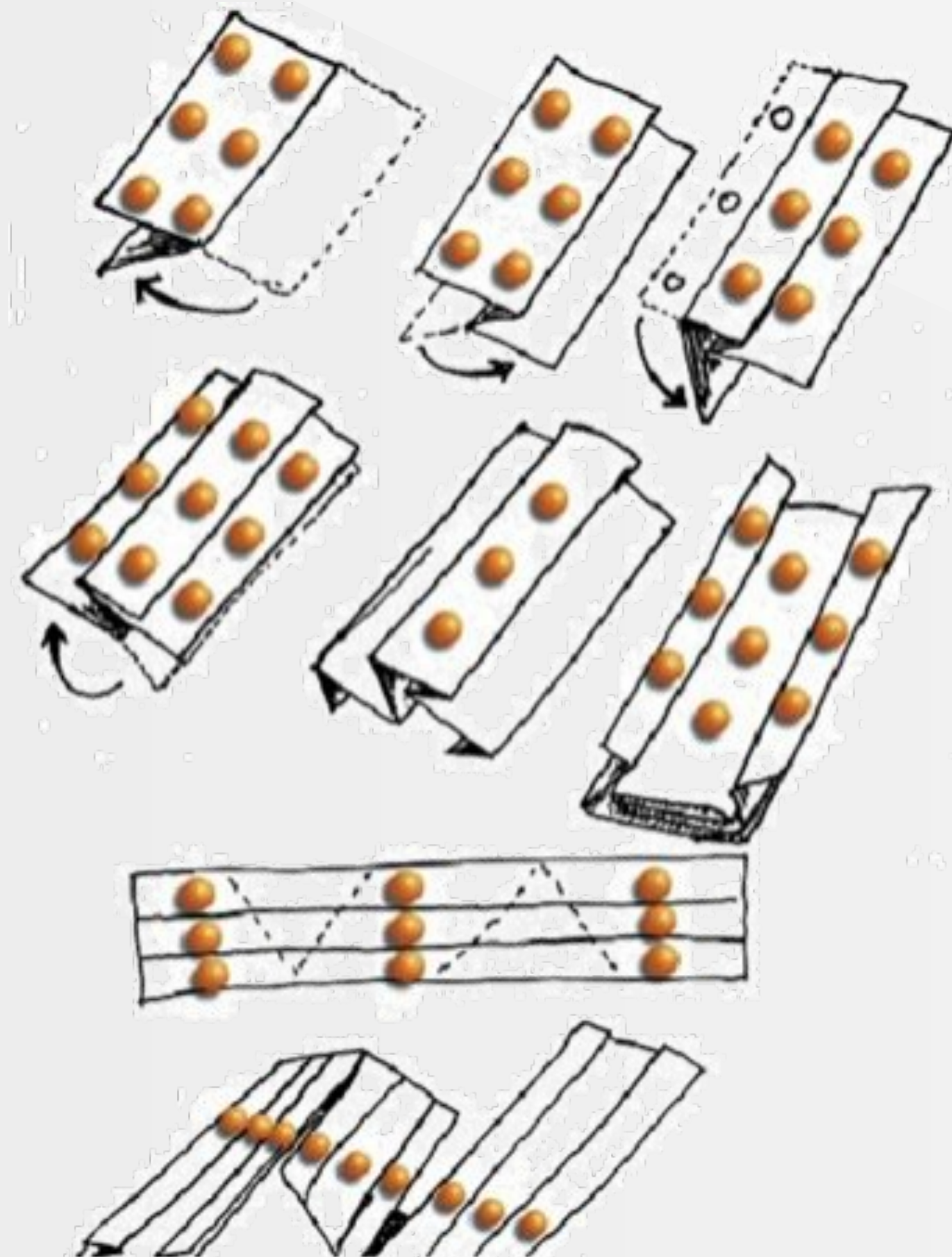


But... how about just *one* line?

geographer's solution



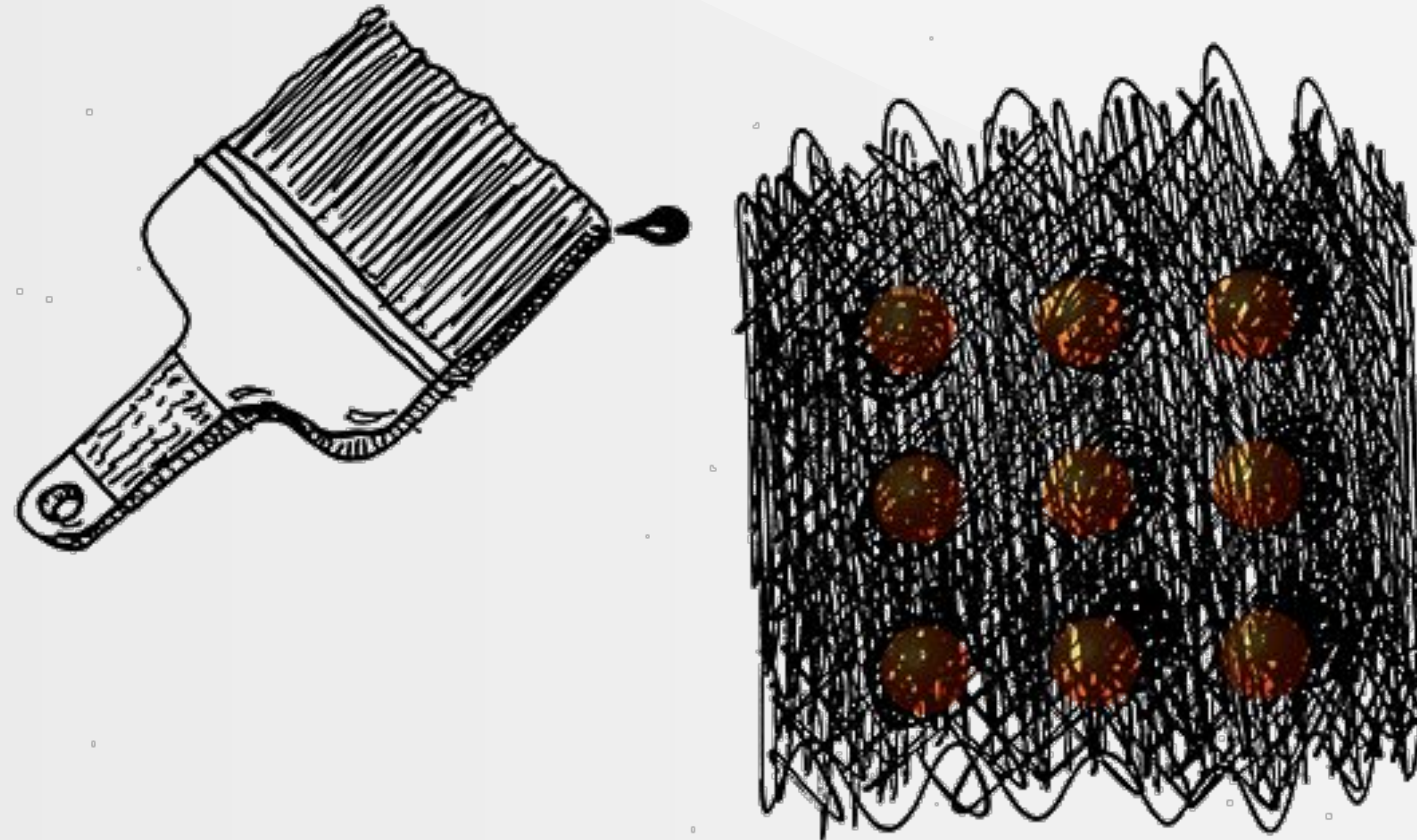
origami solution



mechanical engineer's solution



wide line solution




don't just color outside the lines

**... fold the paper up, cut holes in it and
burn it!**

Is Failure So Bad?

khosla ventures

“the freedom to fail gives us the freedom to succeed”



HARVARD | BUSINESS | SCHOOL

9-809-004
REV. JANUARY 2010

JOSEPH B. LASSITER, III
WILLIAM A. SAHLMAN
ALISON BERKLEY WAGONFELD

Khosla Ventures: Biofuels Strategy

The freedom to fail gives us the freedom to succeed.
— Vinod Khosla, founder of Khosla Ventures, paraphrasing a quote by George Bernard Shaw

As venture capitalist Vinod Khosla pulled up to his office building in Menlo Park, California, he noticed several new hybrid cars in the parking lot. He was reminded of the hundreds of e-mails he had received in response to his March 2008 white paper about why hybrid cars were not “material climate change solutions.” Although he appreciated hybrids as a good market, and Khosla Ventures had multiple investments in batteries, Khosla believed it would take significantly more than consumers buying hybrids to alter the trajectory of global warming. He was set on a much larger goal—he wanted to fundamentally change the way in which fuel was manufactured and consumed not only in the West, but also in India and China. Cost effectiveness and affordability were critical criteria in developing a low-carbon solution that would impact 50% to 80% of the next billion cars shipped worldwide.

“I don’t care about the failures and what people think – I only care about trying what’s worth trying – and just do it”

“I don’t mind failing, but if we succeed, it better be worth succeeding”

***“ever tried. ever failed. no matter. try
again. fail again. fail better.”***

Samuel Beckett

“it is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”

Seneca

“try and fail, but don't fail to try.”

Stephen Kaggwa

***“only those who dare fail greatly can
achieve greatly.”***

Robert F. Kennedy

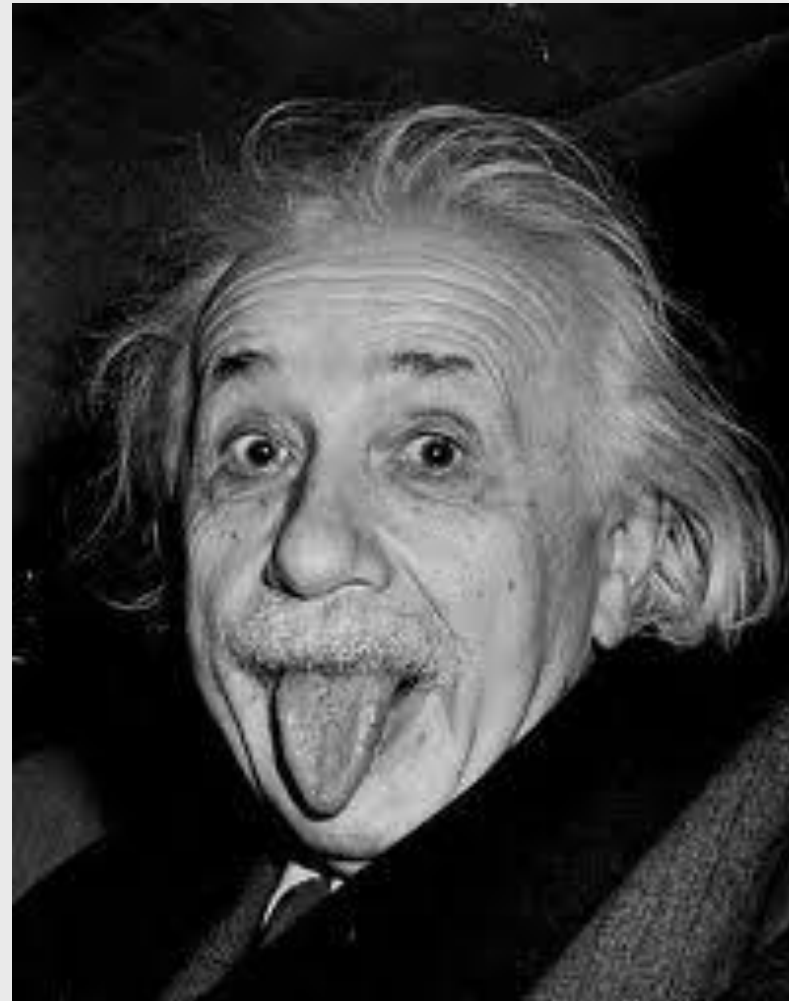
***“you will face many defeats in your life,
but never let yourself be defeated.”***

Maya Angelou

“I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed...”

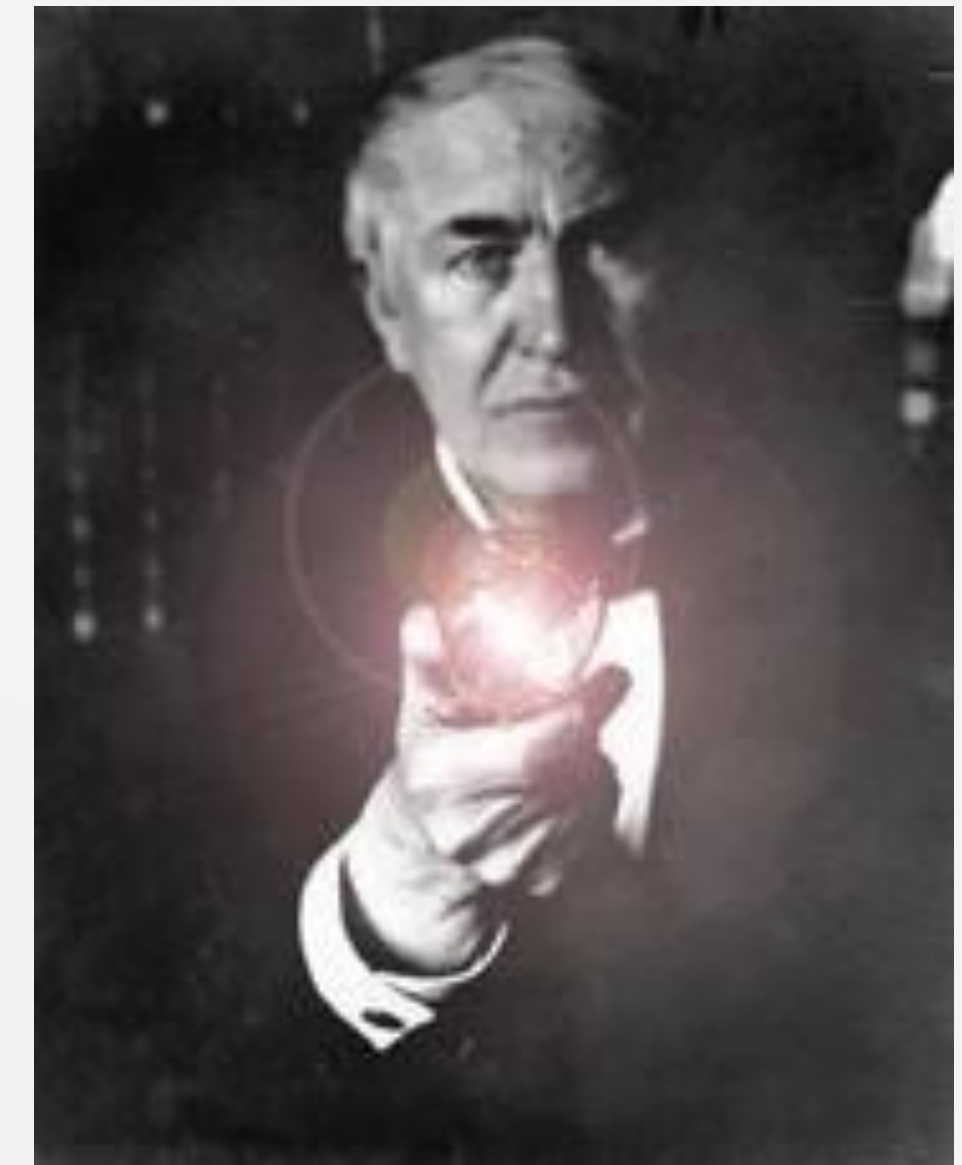
Michael Jordan

failures are in good company



*teachers described him as
"mentally slow,
unsociable, and adrift
forever in foolish dreams."*

*first flight – for 4 years,
methodically built on
successive failures to
achieve the first flight*



*"I have not failed. I've just
found 10,000 ways that
won't work."*

when your parents tell you not to take that risk...

“cynics never do the impossible, achieve the improbable, take on the inadvisable. Hope is only path to extraordinary success”

Anonymous tweet

improbable is not unimportant

Mindset

khosla ventures

dream the dreams

**... & be foolish enough to try and make
them come true**

**you don't do extraordinary things by
attempting ordinary things,
reasonable things**

be unreasonable!

shoot for the moon!

question everything

... especially your teachers

if you're not failing, try harder & more!

... you're not taking enough risk, you are not on the edge

with persistence!

... like my Stanford MBA admittance

Push yourself :

good isn't good enough... great is barely acceptable

with fun, attitude, bravado, irreverence...

with guts and premature confidence

... and paranoia

**admit when you've failed -
just get up and get going again**

**jump without a parachute (& annoy
your parents)**

... create necessity

get into trouble with no easy way out

**be obstinate about your vision,
not your tactics**

know when to stick to it, and when to bail

make each failure as small as possible

and when you fail - ask lots of questions

beware : failed strategies vs. failed tactics

some assumptions will be wrong in 10 years

most will be wrong in 20

...will we need doctors?

...will we need teachers?

***“the best way to predict the future is to
invent it”***

Alan Kay

90/10

There is a short term vs. long term tradeoff

Know Yourself: Be Self Aware

***But you don't have to be extraordinary to
enjoy life***

Easier to do it when you are young

Get outside your comfort zone

Be on a learning journey

Comments?

khosla ventures

