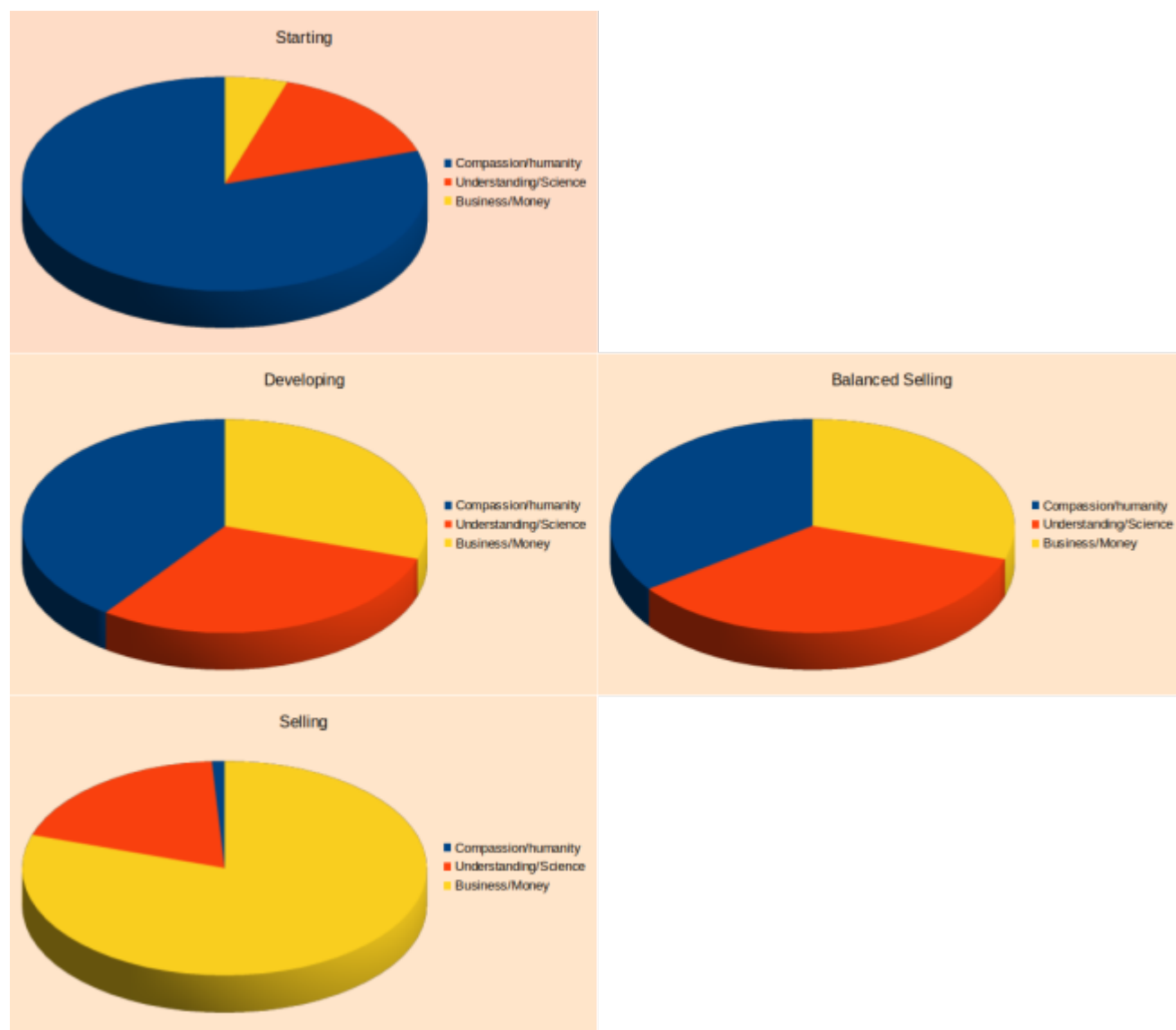


It is said that **“The road to hell is paved only with good intentions”**. Does this folkloric knowledge “hods water” and if so, why and how? Let’s explore this concept with few diagrams and a bit of ideation around them.



Humans (and not only) are born in [this reality and are roaming it until they die](#). During all this time all forms of life must solve one big problem, and that is, how to maintain their “alive” state. This implies solving various problems among others how to find or grow food and keep away from being food for other living beings.

Humans are one of the few species that have mastered collaboration in large groups and this is due to our larger magnitude of the abilities to communicate more efficiently in large groups.

Unfortunately to us [this reality is much more complex than we can handle now or ever](#), even if its “guts” are working by following relatively simple rules (quantum mechanics might look weird but it is made of relatively simple rules). This is simply because of its immensity of states and configurations those simple rules can combine in order to create diversity.

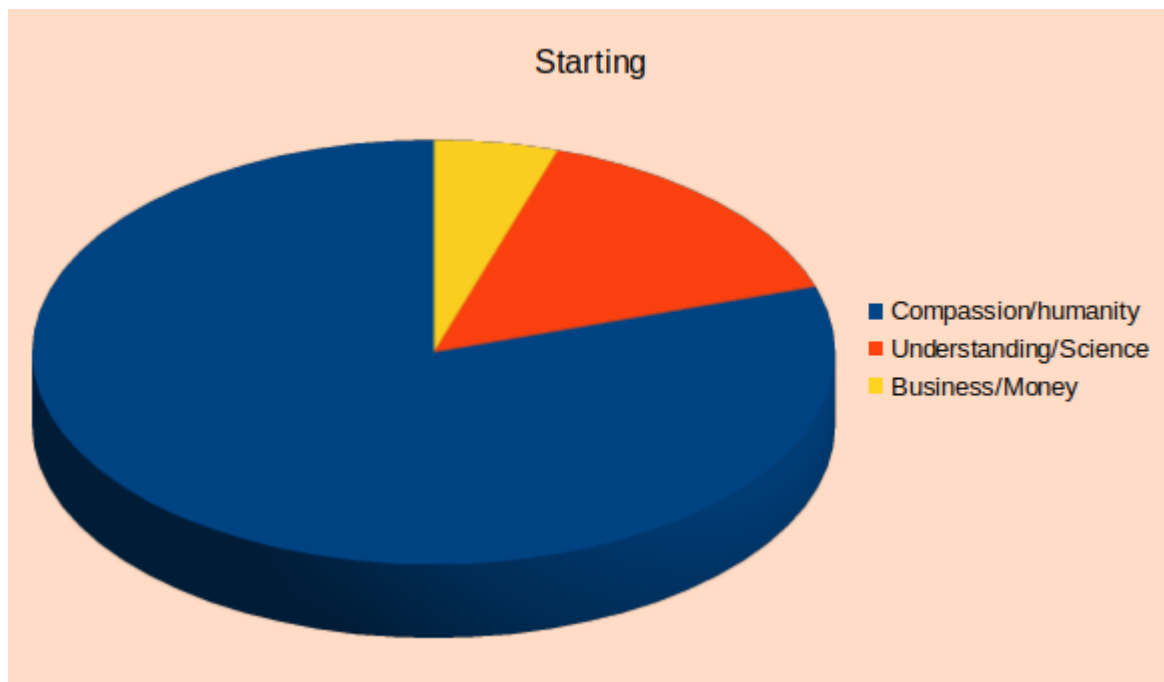
The best we can do is only to ever increase our abilities to more accurately know what the reality is by using Scientific Methods in order to reduce the risk of confusions and mistakes.

In this context some of the errors and mistakes we do are embedded in the processes we use to identify and find solutions to our problems.

In most cases (unless ignorance, fear and hate are predominant drivers) we identify problems and then start with a large amount of compassion, some knowledge about why and how and some hope of being able to help more than ourselves, to help the others (the business component).

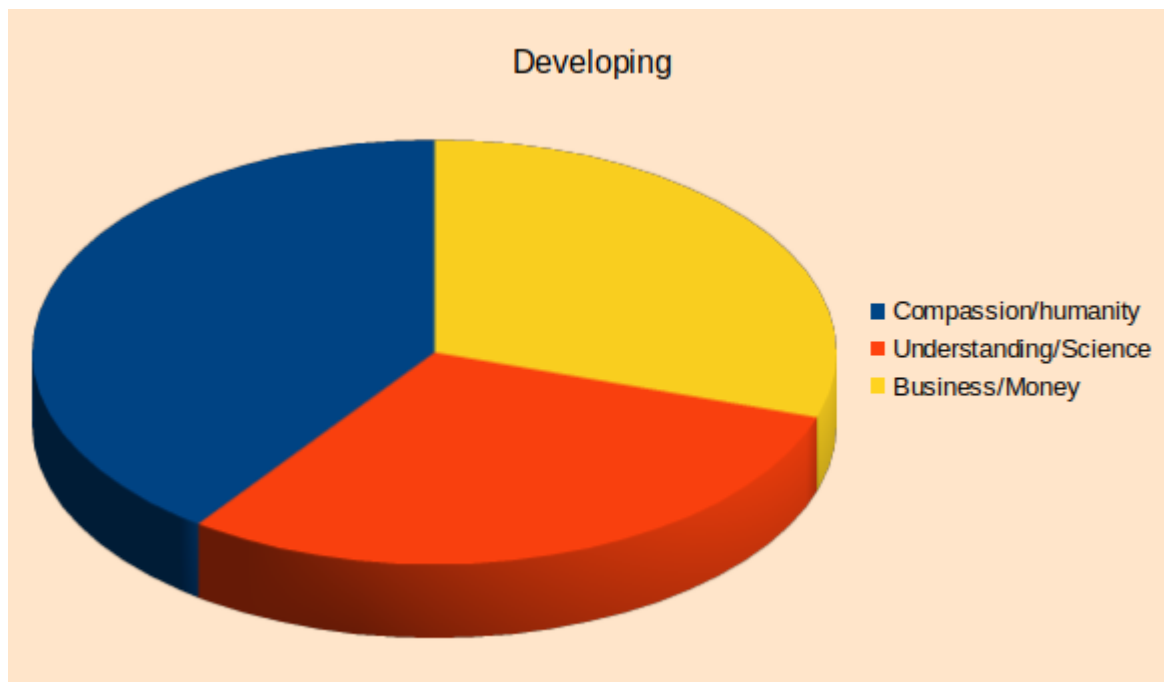
The diagram below tries to depict the relative importance of those 3 aspects of our fight to solve an issue.

Please understand the difference between the absolute quantity and the relative quantity. This is not a “zero sum game” depiction it is simply the relative (to each other) influence of each of the three factors considered in this case. For example you may say, well my Compassion or Knowledge did not diminish (as the diagram may suggest) and that is true, yet what matters is the relative comparison of the magnitude of all three factors. That is important as our minds (and processes) tend to be impacted by the relative importance and not only by the absolute magnitude of the feature.



As time passes we may get our idea off the ground, we start to gain more understanding and other people start to “buy into it” by investing resources (time or money or hope). It is only natural that now we have (relatively) more focus on acquiring knowledge and try to “sell” it to more people. However this simple “normal” action has the consequence of pushing the Compassion component down in the relative balance between itself and the other two components. An important observation is that in absolute terms the compassion may remain at the same value but the unfortunate reality is that in the relative space it becomes less important.

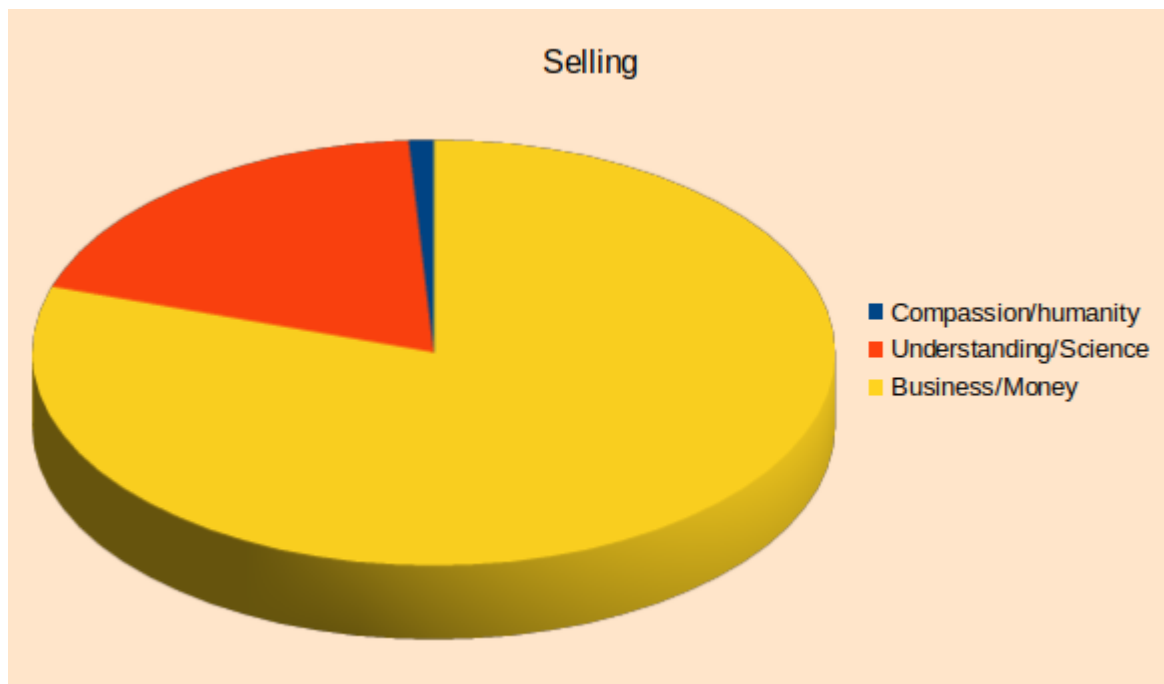
This phenomena is depicted in the diagram bellow.



Once we have a solution, the business world takes over and the main reason of action is now to “sell” the idea or the product to other people. Now gaining profits take main stage and since we still need a grip on the “how it works” (or the Science component) it is almost inevitable that the Compassion component will be in further relative decline and will slide into the configuration depicted bellow.

Unfortunately this configuration is the one that has the highest probability to create monsters that will end up destroying (almost) all we initially intended. Now is the time when mistakes are hid and coverup of mishaps happens and when [BS flourishes](#).

Twenty six years ago, in 1995, Orson Scott Card wrote once a short called “[How Software Companies Die](#)” where he follows on how this process happens in the software application development companies and groups. The article ends with the prophetic phrase “**Got to get some better packaging**” that is the main indication of BS overdrive of a product. You should read it, is only two pages long and is as relevant today as it was 26 years ago.



OK, fine, you may say, now what? What is the solution to this problem? Eventually a solution that not ends in a bigger disaster by embedding in it the very process we just described.

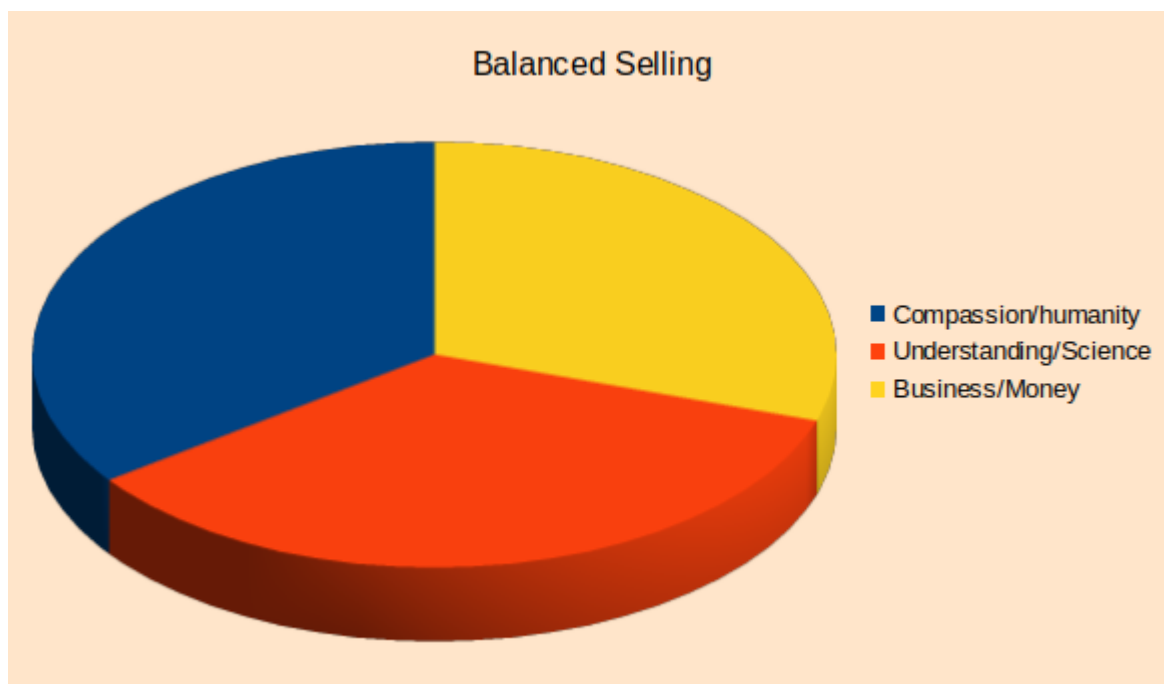
For most, it would be clear that the solution would be to forever keep an eye on the compassion and humility in the business process. But this is much easier said than done. If you put yourself in the shoes of a business owner or a manager that needs to make it possible for his employees and himself to take a salary home then you can see how this can be more than nerve wrecking it can be almost impossible to overcome.

Given our current state of business with the “dog eats dog” type of competitive environment it is extraordinary that we are still keeping sanity in the society at large. To me, this is one item banking towards the proof that human beings are good in their “normal” state but the environmental constraints can erode that “goodness” to sometimes horrific levels.

And that my friends is “the road to hell”, as you can see it starts with good intentions (at least) most of the times but without a lot of focus on the relative importance of the Compassion, Science and Business components we can all “go to hell” sooner or later.

Let's try to target to the bellow (or close to) distribution of relative importance of those components that are part of all we do.

One important tool to help us with that is the notion of humble and humility. Too many of us seem to equate humble with weakness when in fact it is one of our greatest strengths. If you are surprised to hear that please read my [previews article on humility](#).



Thank you a lot for reading the article!

Some related articles:

[On factual information](#)

[Humble and Humility](#)

[On how to recognize and fight BS](#)

[How Software Companies die \(Orson Scott Card\)](#)

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