borisgloger consulting GmbH

Agile Flavoured Collaboration Hacks

for Distributed Teams

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10. PM Symposium der FH des BFI Wien

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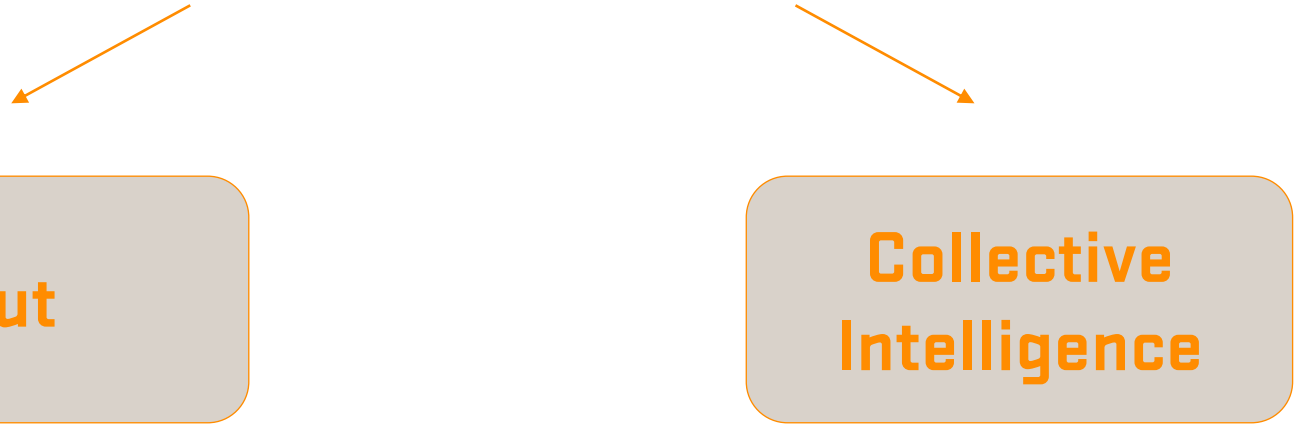
@cschmiedinger

SELBST SICHER ZUM ERFOLG

Objective of the session

- What are the key drivers that allow distributed teams to thrive?
- What are common good practices that make collaboration within such teams smoother?
- Which tools can be used to reduce the barrier of distance?



Agile is about working together!

- Task-Force“-mode
  - Strong focus
  - Close interaction & collaboration
  - Intensive synchronization
  - Haptic artefacts & visualization
  - Fast delivery of results

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But what if the team is distributed?

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What is distributed?

What about a team that is spread over whole Europe?

What about a team that is spread over two buildings in the same city?

What about a team that is spread over two floors in the same building?

2 major enablers

People & Processes

Tools & Infrastructure

PEOPLE & PROCESSES

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Self-confidence of project managers

- Claim autonomy for decisions
  - … it is necessary to be successful anyway
- Define constraints with sponsors that have to be met/considered
  - … which doesn't mean never challenging them again

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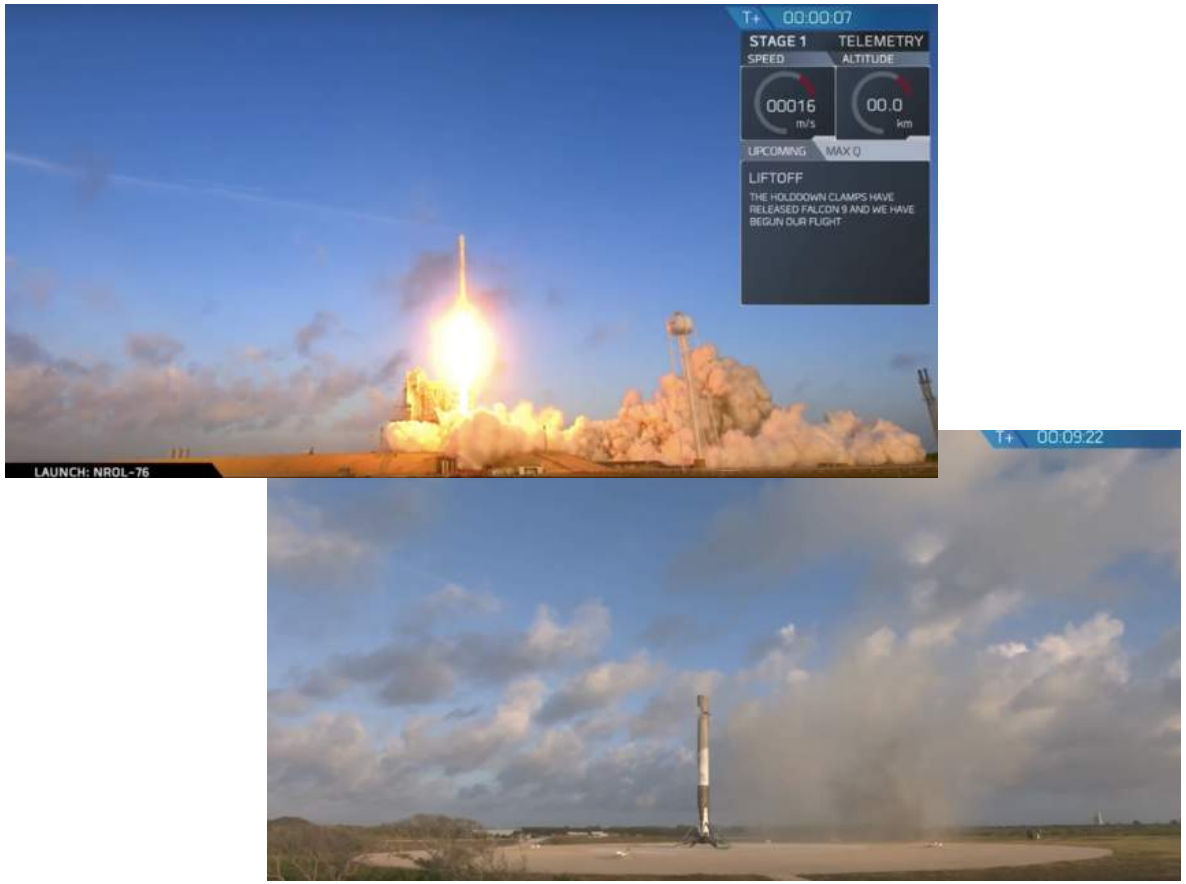
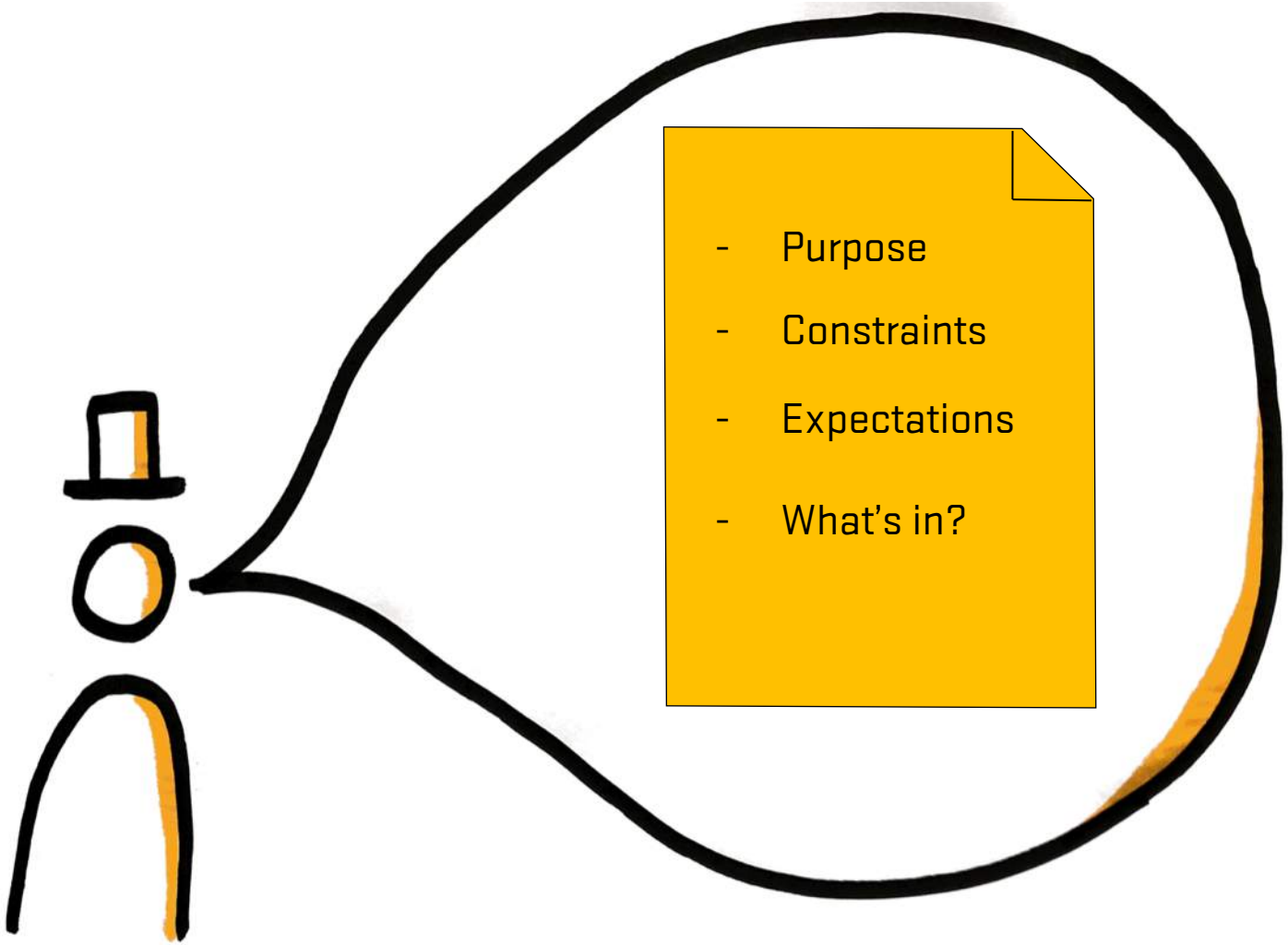
Strong and ambitious visions



Quelle: Space X (https://youtu.be/GhaD8XLoOl4)

Invitation



Important Lesson

travel costs << costs for ineffective team work

... but the fewest acknowledge that

Personnel costs are extremly high

Half of a 10-person team is travelling between two European cities including one overnight stay

Flights	5x400€	2000€
Hotel	5x150€	750€
		2750€

Team costs per amount of time

Costs	10x 90€/h	**900€/h**

If the team is at least **3h*** more effective in meeting face-to-face, the costs of travelling are amortized. Irrespective of other positive side effects of increased personal bonding that pays off in future collaboration.

* If travel time is salaried, then the amortization time goes of course up.

Collective kick-off phase

- “Bootcamp“-mode
  - Intensive examination of the project/initiative
  - Ideally off-site with no major interruptions
  - Good balance between work and socializing

Example: specification phase for client

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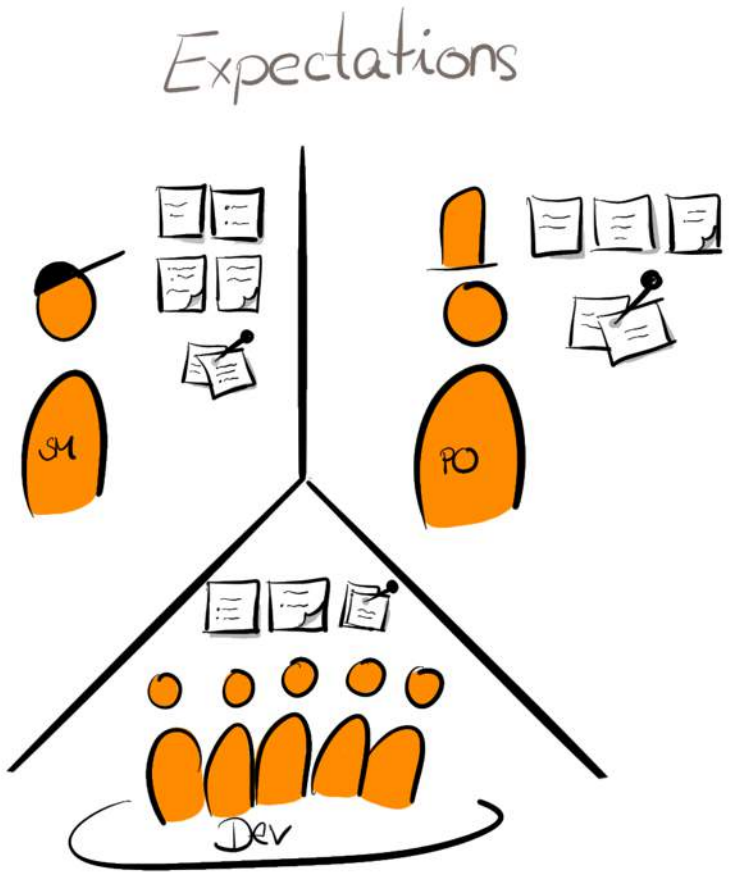
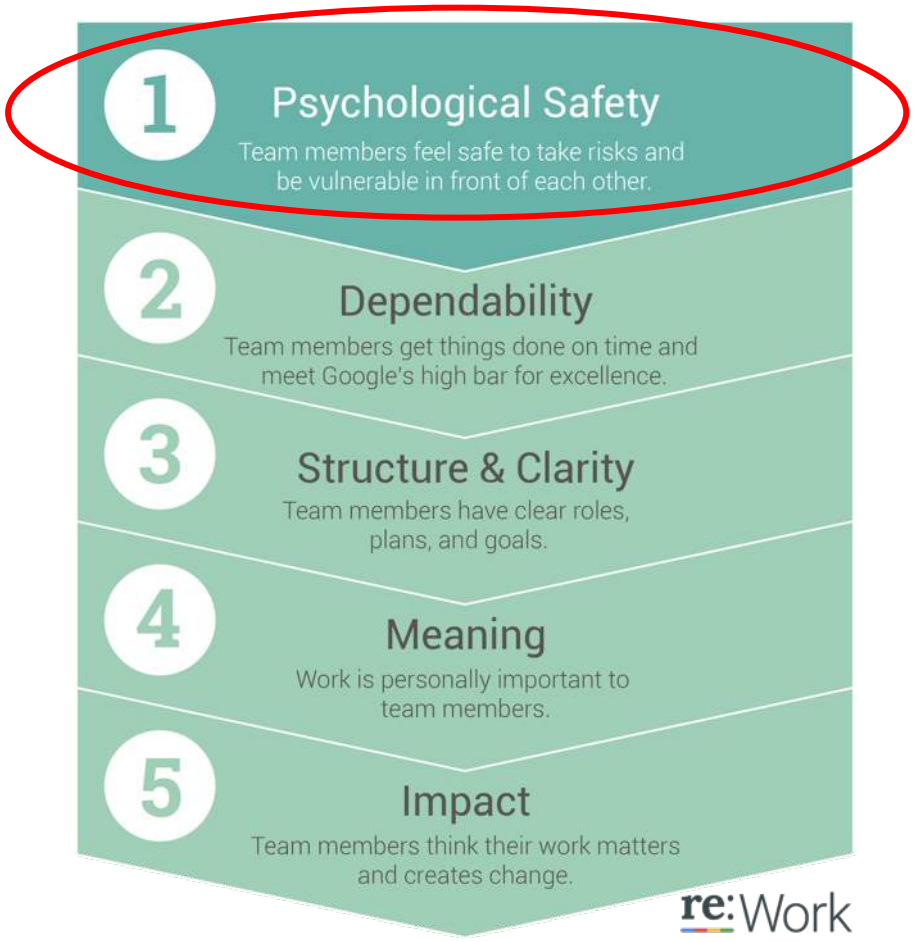
Clear Roles & Responsibilities

- Clear definition up-front
- Common understanding
- Role and expectation workshops
- Create a team charter
  - Values, procedures and working model



Trust is Key!


1
Psychological Safety
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.
2
Dependability
Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.
3
Structure & Clarity
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.
4
Meaning
Work is personally important to team members.
5
Impact
Team members think their work matters and creates change.
re:Work

Communication is essential

- Open questions (try to avoid yes/no questions)
- Include quiet people (that don't talk if not asked)
- Overlapping working hours (to sync with each other, e.g. with a daily)

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Heartbeat

Credits for this idea to Tobias Leisgang (companypirate.de)

Regular phases of get together

- Once per agile iteration (typically two weeks)
  - In case of two locations: colleagues travel once every four weeks
- Plan one overnight stay to allow regular socializing

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Co-located work in critical phases

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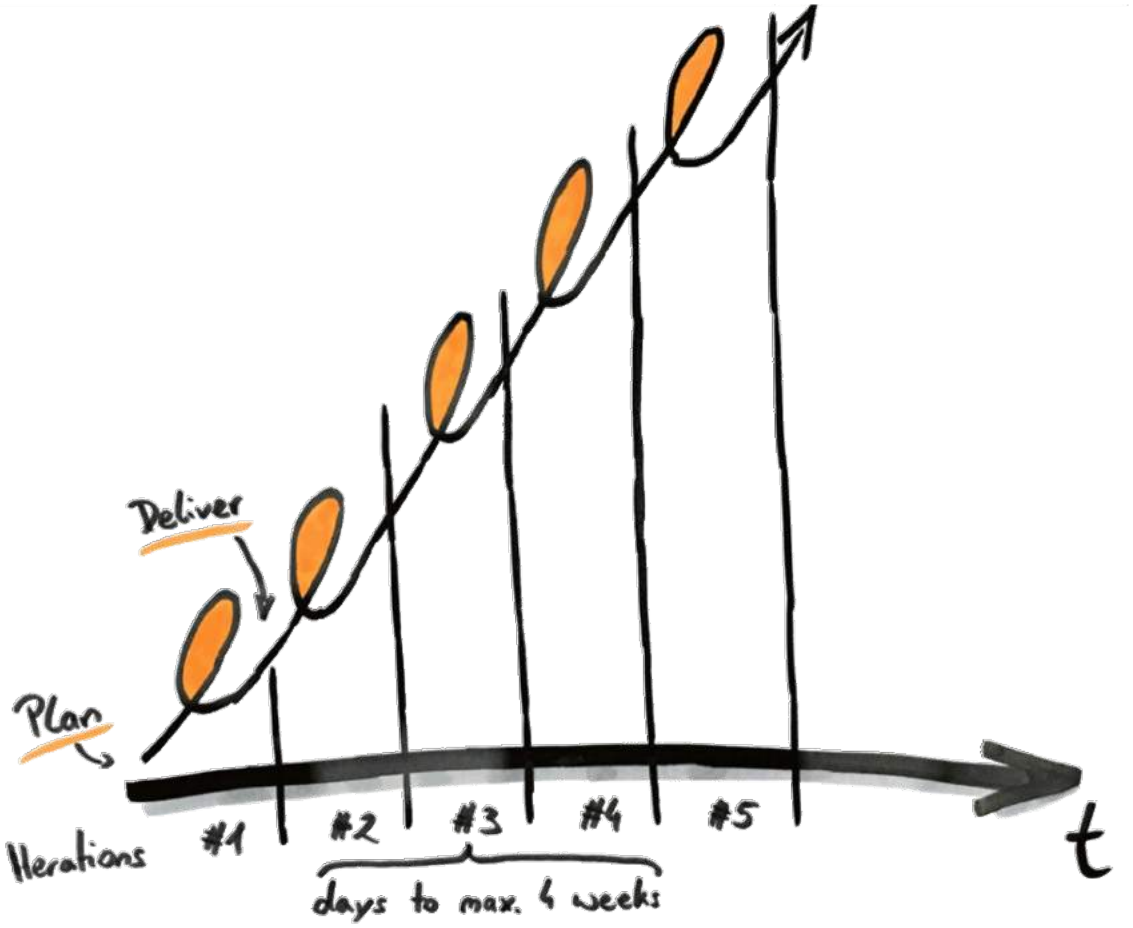
Private flight for more than 30 employees every week between Germany and Spain

Iterative processes can help

- Regular review & planning session help synchronizing within the team
- Definition of iteration goals help to unify the team

... no matter if you do Scrum or not



Remote-”Pairing”

- Common achievement of a task
  - Intensive collaboration
  - Knowledge transfer
- Regular rotation
  - Spread knowledge
  - Bond with each other

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Ambassadors

- Ambassadors as first contact person at the other location
  - Rotation principle

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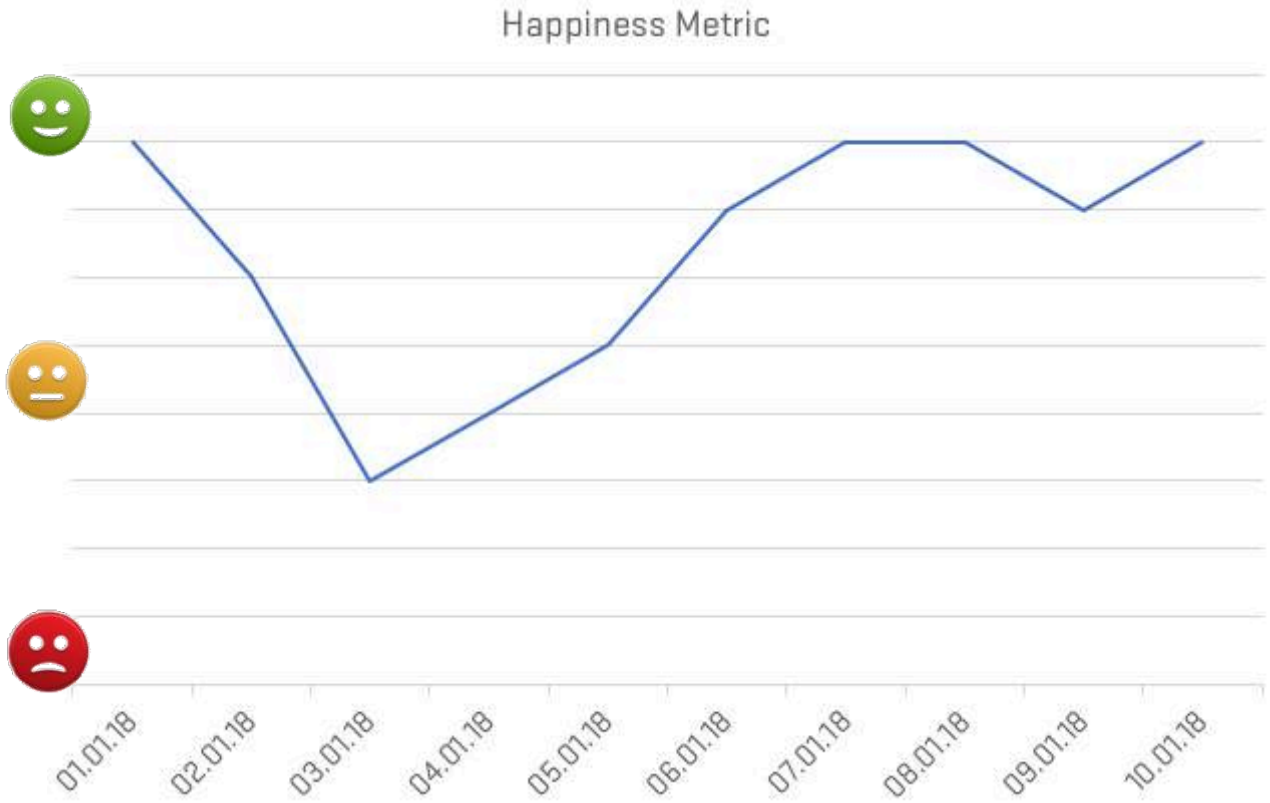
Team mood

Daily Happiness Metric



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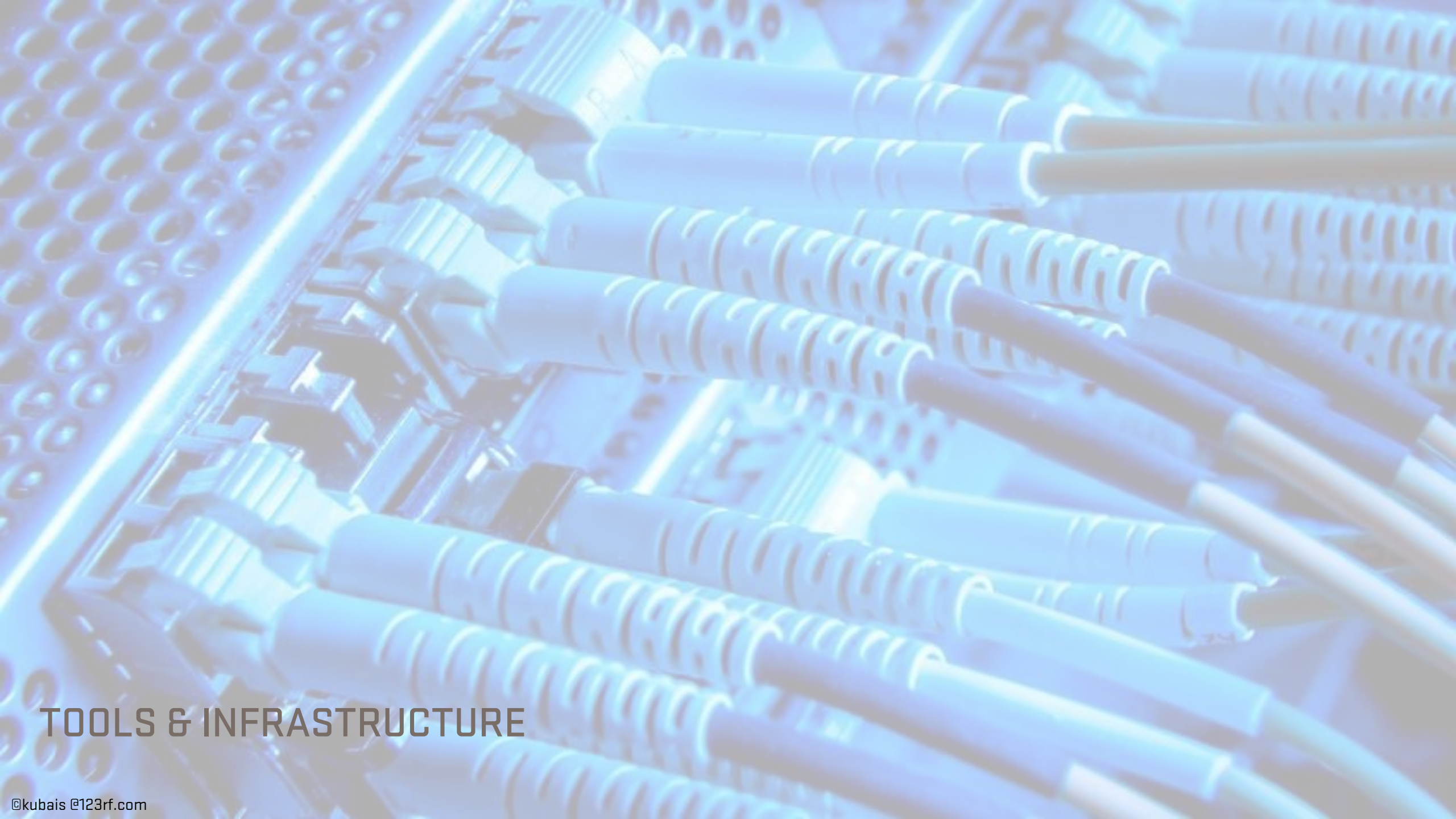
Breakout Session #1

>> Do you have other good practices in mind that deal with people and processes used for distributed and remote teams?



TOOLS & INFRASTRUCTURE

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Infrastructure is key!

- Professional videoconferencing & screen sharing
- Lightweight chat tools
- Tools for visualization of the progress
- Possibility to work from everywhere with internet access

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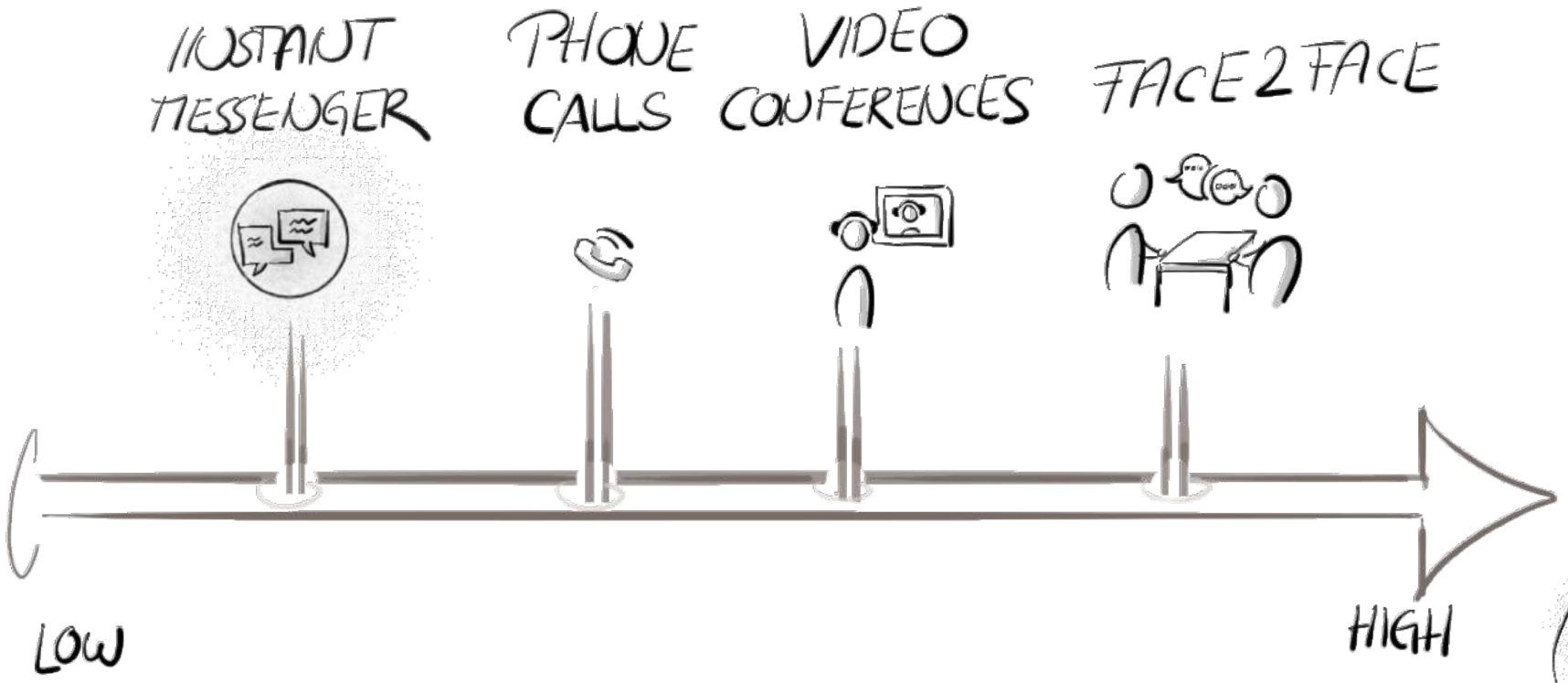
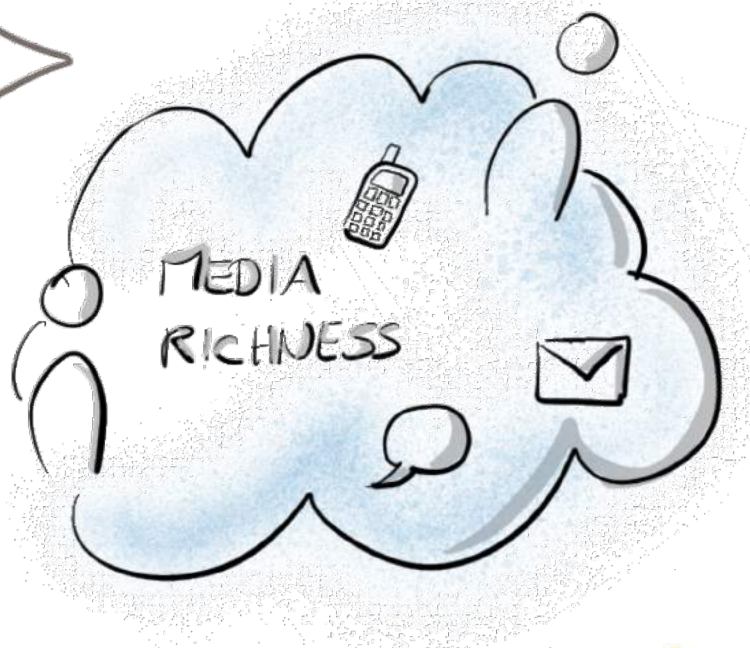
Media richness



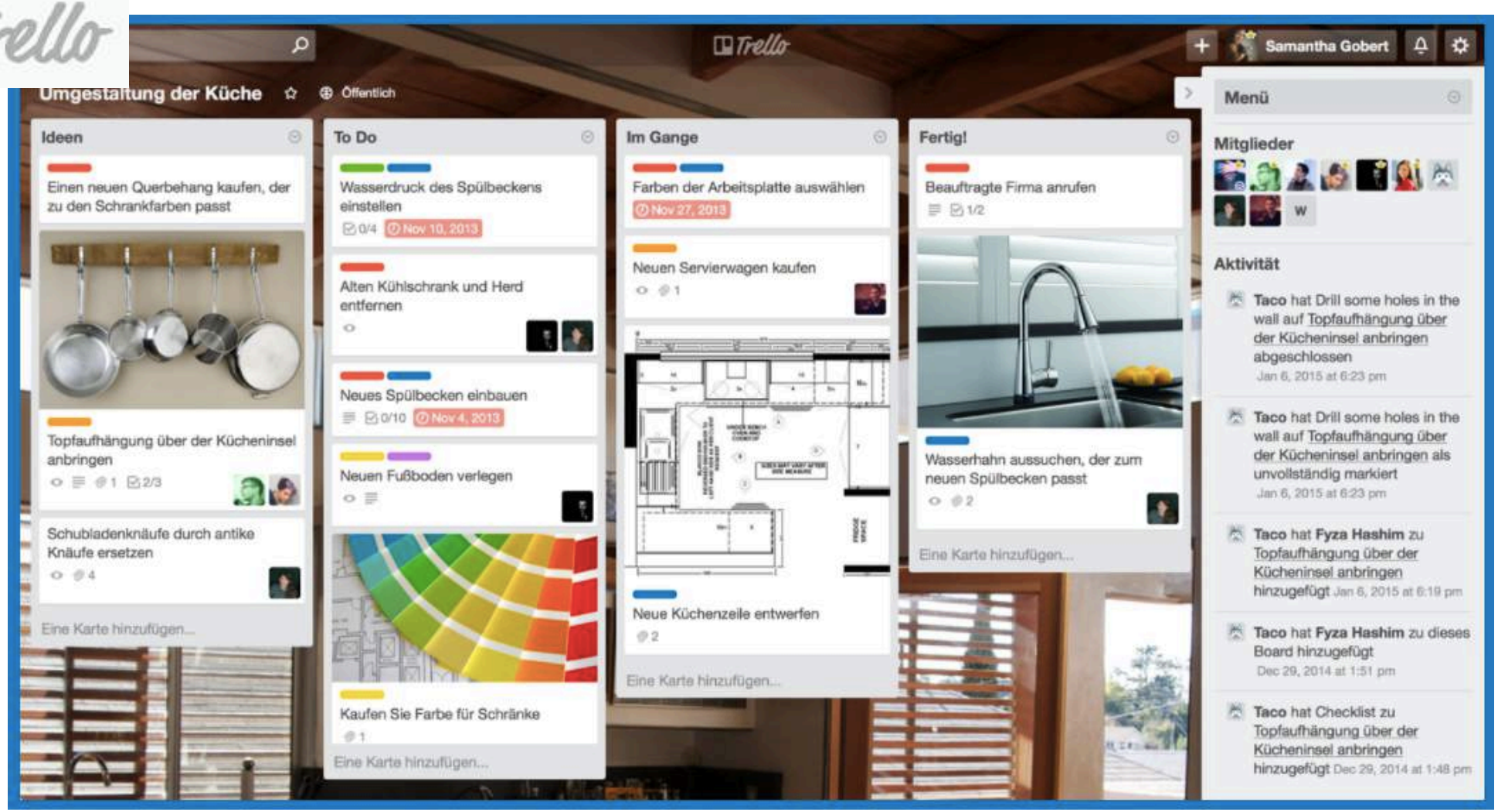


Modern chat tools

- *Slack*, *Atlassian Hipchat*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Mattermost*, ...
  - Organization in channels (principle of voluntariness)
  - Elimination of “internal only“-mails
  - Open APIs for further integration possibilities

Example: borisgloger consulting’s use of Microsoft Teams

Electronic TaskBoards



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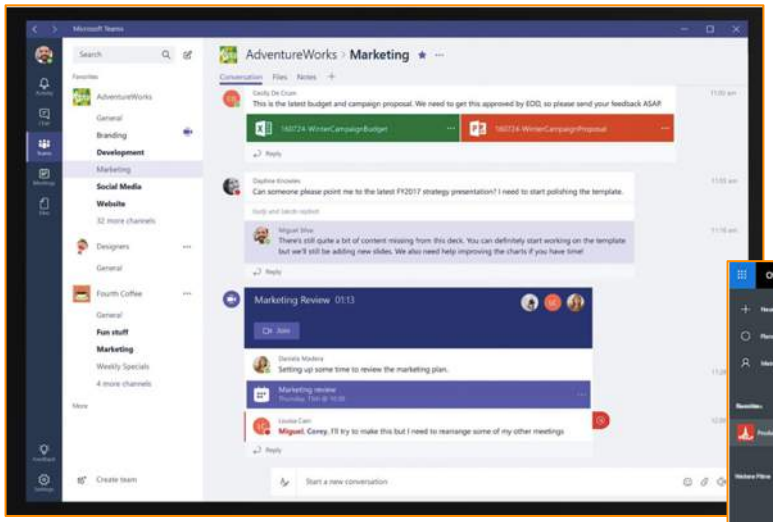
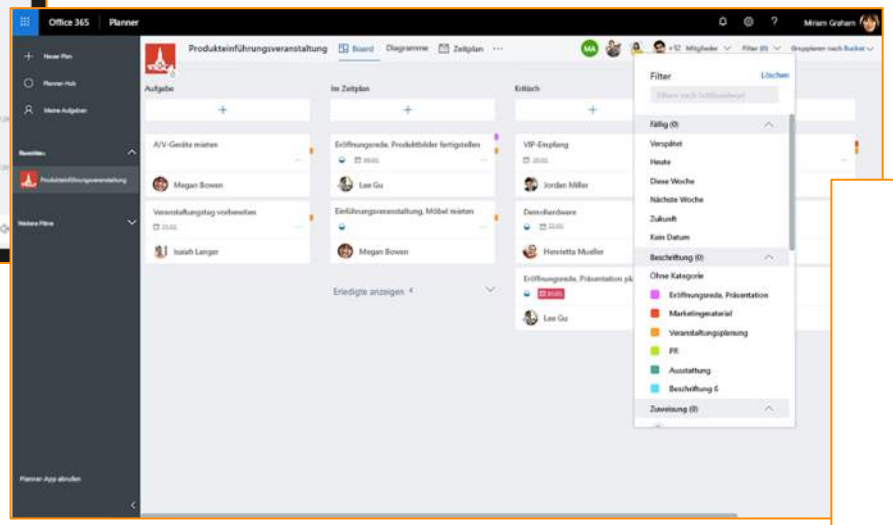
All in one – Microsoft Office 365

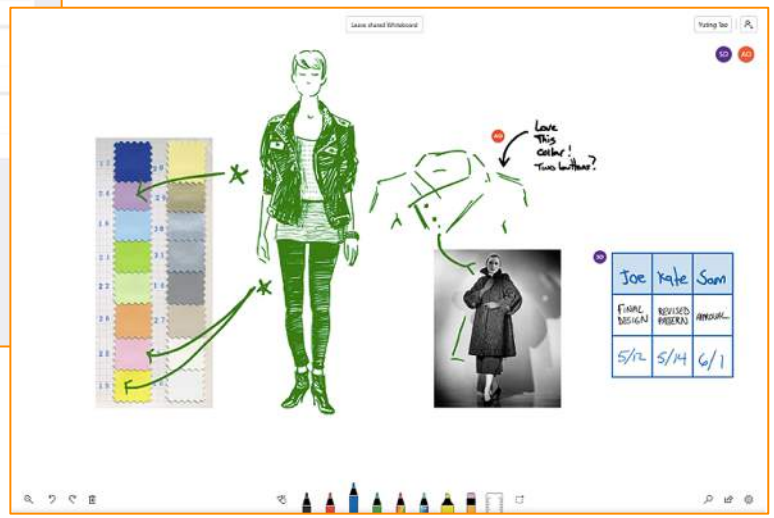
Microsoft Teams



Microsoft Planner



Microsoft Whiteboard



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Smart Boards

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ETEO-Board

- Saxonia Systems
  - In-house developed solution
- ETEO = “One Team One Office“

©Saxonia Systems

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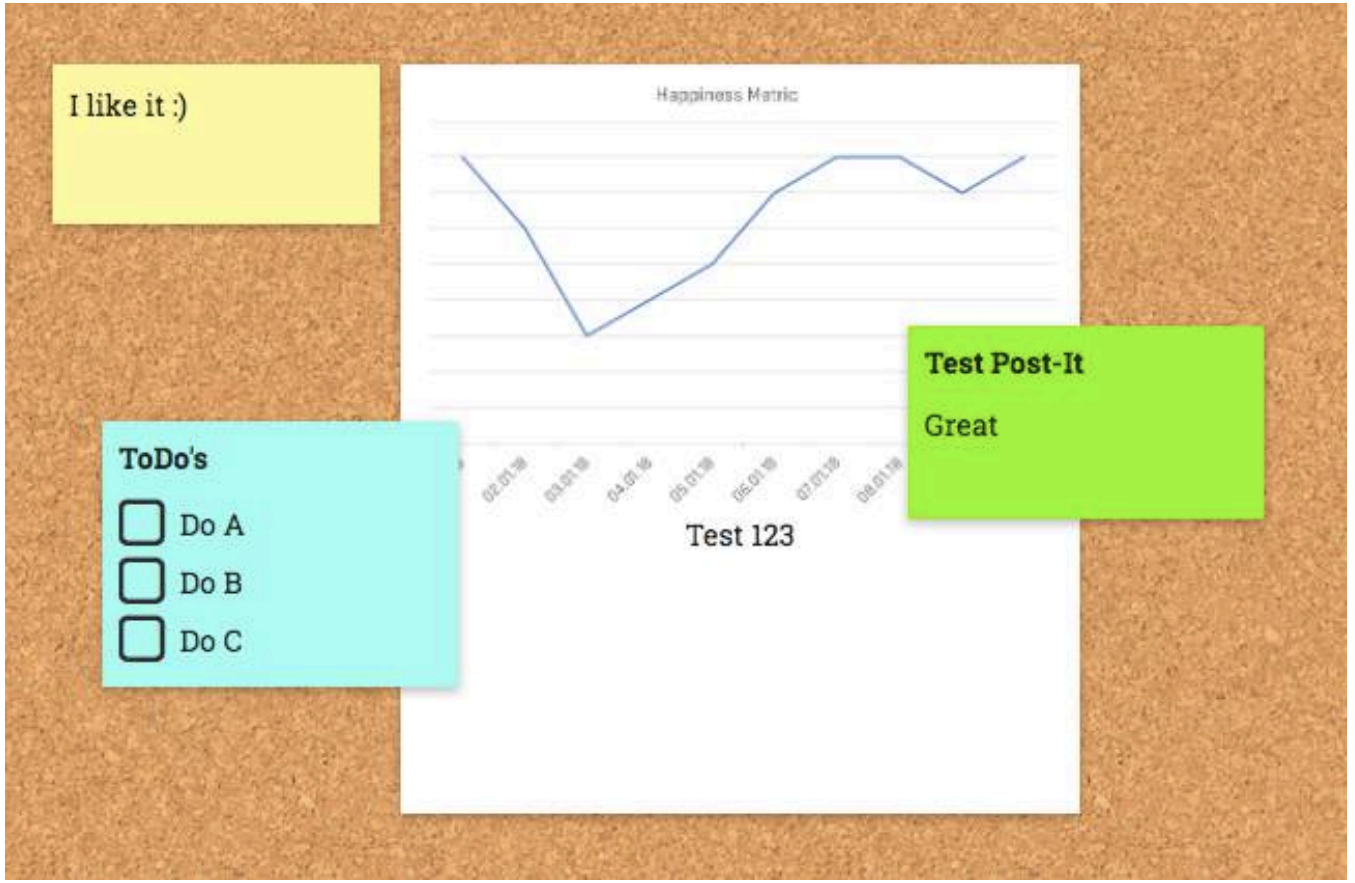
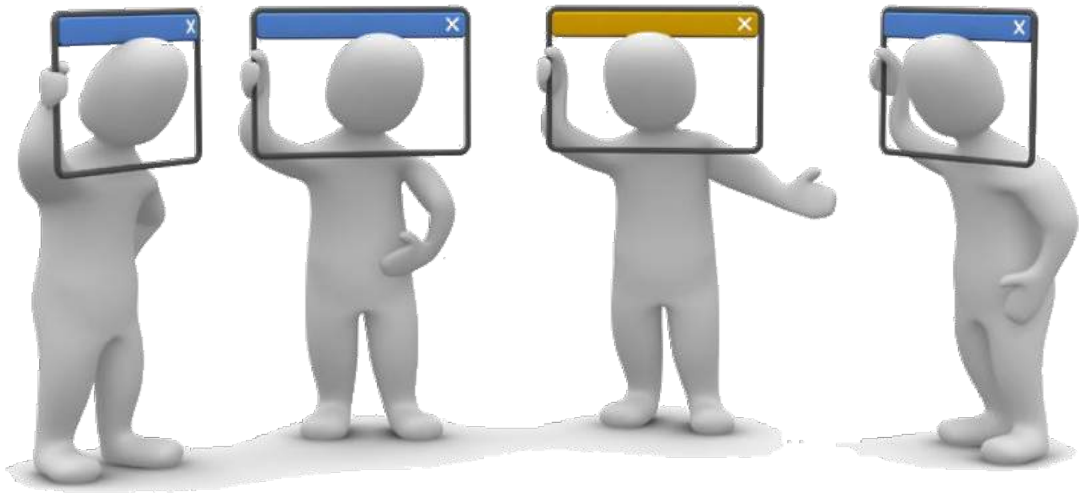
Remote collaboration

- Online corkboards/ whiteboards
  - pinup.com
  - note.ly
  - miro.com

Example: borisgloger remote retrospectives



Daily Stand-Ups



i done this

From video conferencing to asynchronous information flow?

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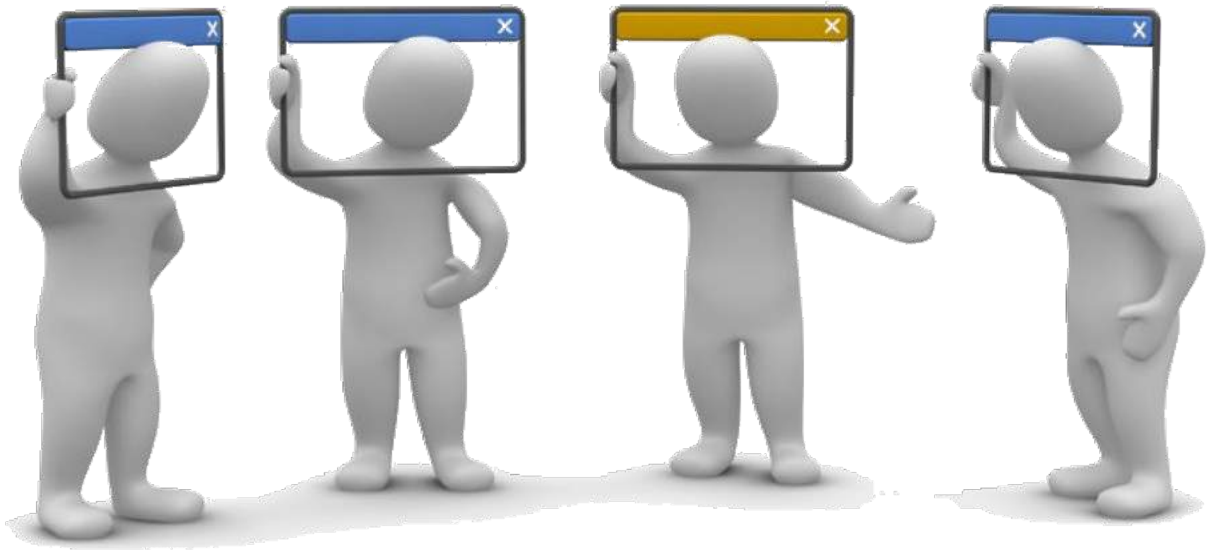
Continuous video conferencing

- Rather extreme solution but some companies actually really use it!



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Learn from others!

- Open Source Software Community
  - Highly distributed community
  - Individuals that contribute not regularly & often outside office hours

Example for software development

GitHub

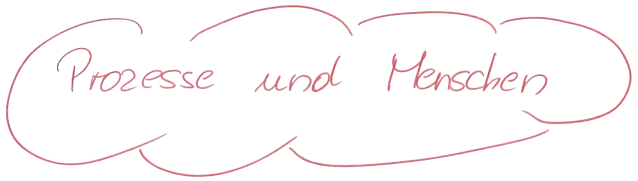
Even more tools, tools and tools

- https://www.collaborationsuperpowers.com/tools/
- https://www.thecouchmanager.com/the-ultimate-list-of-virtual-team-technology-tools/

Breakout Session #2

>> Do you know other useful infrastructure/tools that help to boost team productivity?

Documentation Group 1



+ Soziale Aspekte berücksichtigen
  - Zeit und Raum in Meetings vorsehen
  - periodische Face2Face Meetings
  - zeitgleiche Aktivität auf verteilten Standorten
+ Kontinuität geben
  - fix periodische Rahmenbedingungen f. Meetings
  - fix Agenda, Tools, Projektregeln
+ Transparenz
  - Einblick in Arbeiten der Teamkollegen (Ergebnisse, Erfolge, ...)
+ zeitliche und kulturelle Aspekte kennen und berücksichtigen

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+ analoges Kanban Board mit Dauervideo-Leitung
+ Doppeltes Flip chart
+ zentrales Protokoll (One Note)
+ Backup Lösungen bereit halten
+ gemeinsamer Projektraum (War-Room)

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Documentation Group 2

Regelmäßige persönl. Treffen
(quartalsweise, gegenseitig)
→ dienstlich und freundlich, Ritual

Vernünftige Tools (Zeitboxen, ...)

- homogene Toollandschaft
  & weniger = mehr
- Bandbreite

Tools
- Rainbow (Alcatel)
- Intranet
- Confluence
- X-mind
- One Note

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Documentation Group 3

Remote Teams
Good Practices

- Einheitliche Bedingungen für ALLE
  -> für Standort-fremde und Locale
- Kommunikationsregeln etablieren und exekutieren
- Projekträume
- räumliche Rotation
- Stimmung abholen, Smalltalk, aktuelle lokale Gegebenheiten
- Sozialer Rahmen (Abends)

Infrastructure and Tools

- Unity Cloud

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Documentation Group 4

Good Practices

- Kultur Training
- Socializing
- Regelmäßige Meetingskultur
- Ambassador
- Aktive Rolle für alle
- Onsite Termine

Useful infrastructure / tools

- Skype for Bus. / Webex
- Firepoker (estimation)
- Citrix (remote desktop)
- Workplace
- Ideaboards (Retro)

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