

# Agile + DevOps **EAST**

A TECHWELL EVENT

## **AT5**

Agile Product Management

Thursday, November 8th, 2018 10:00 AM

# **Agile Distributed Teams: Oxymoron or Viable Option?**

Presented by:

**Mark Kilby**

Sonatype

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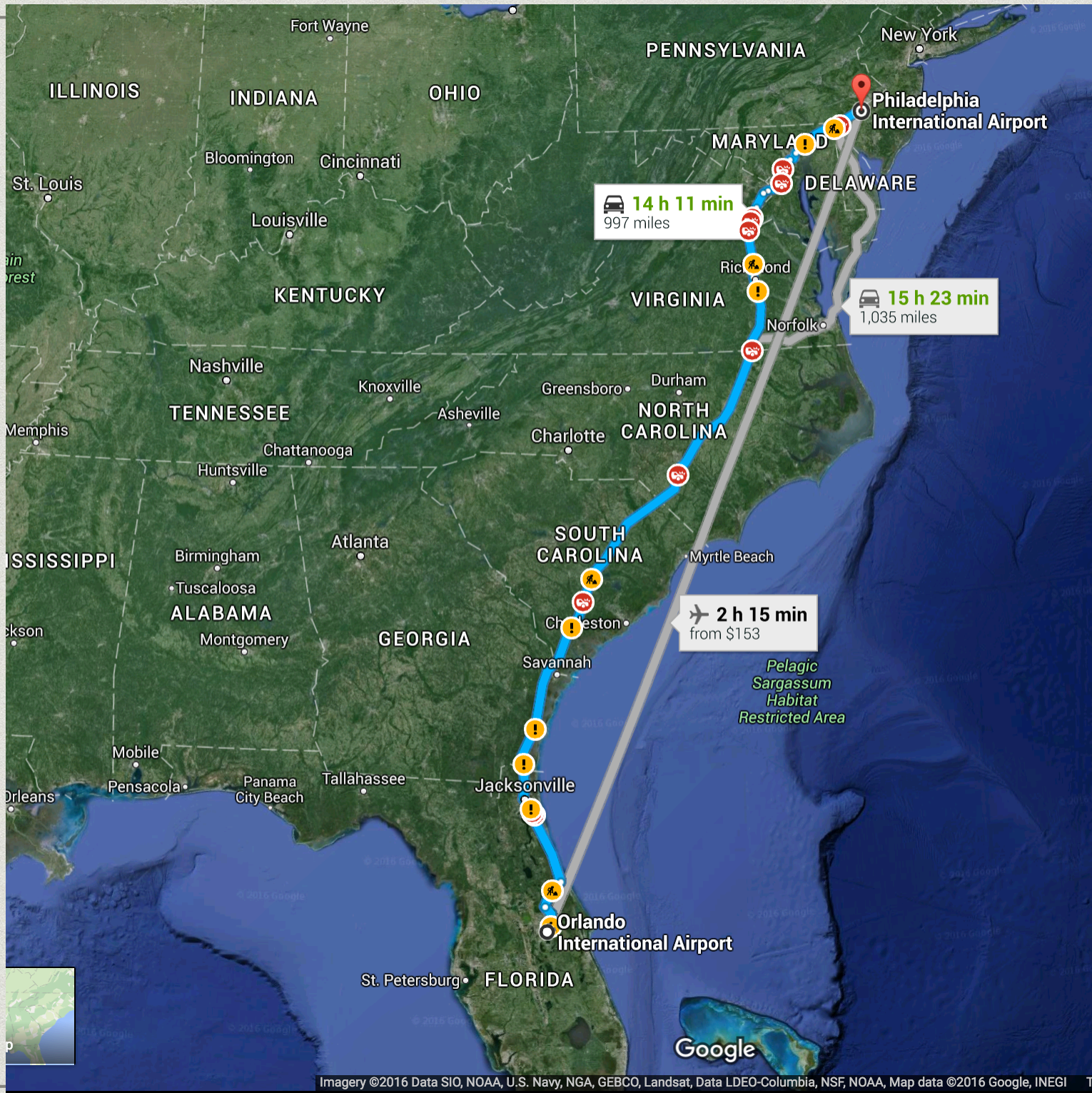
# Mark Kilby

Mark Kilby is an Agile coach who, for over two decades, has cultivated more distributed, dispersed, and virtual teams than colocated teams. Currently, Mark serves as an Agile coach with Sonatype, a distributed Agile software development company focusing on automation of software supply chains. Previously, Mark led Agile transformations, from startups to Fortune 500 companies. Mark also cultivates dispersed communities, such as Agile Orlando, Agile Florida, VirtualTeamTalk.com, and the Agile Alliance Community Group Support initiative. Mark's book, *From Chaos to Successful Distributed Agile Teams*, is co-authored with Johanna Rothman and will be published in August 2018. A sample of the book is available now via <http://markkilby.com> and [leanpub.com](http://leanpub.com).



# **AGILE DISTRIBUTED TEAMS: OXYMORON OR VIABLE OPTION**

**MARK KILBY - AGILEDEVOPS EAST 2018**



# My distributed (agile) background ...



consulting across industries

for hire

2014

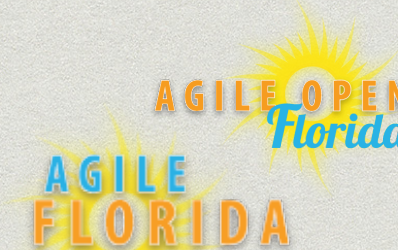
2013

2012

2008

2003

2001



volunteer



**79%**

**What about you?**

# Measuring up to agile

## Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

**Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools  
**Working software** over comprehensive documentation  
**Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation  
**Responding to change** over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.







**Right Stuff?**





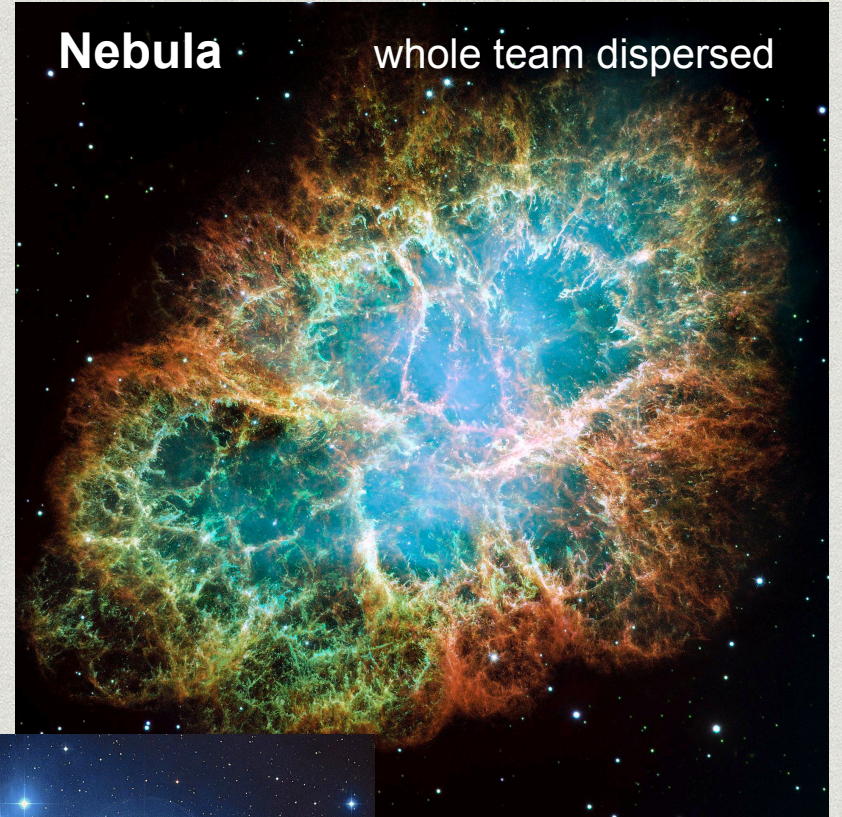
## Satellite

one or a few remote  
from team



## Nebula

whole team dispersed



## Clusters

team in a  
few locations

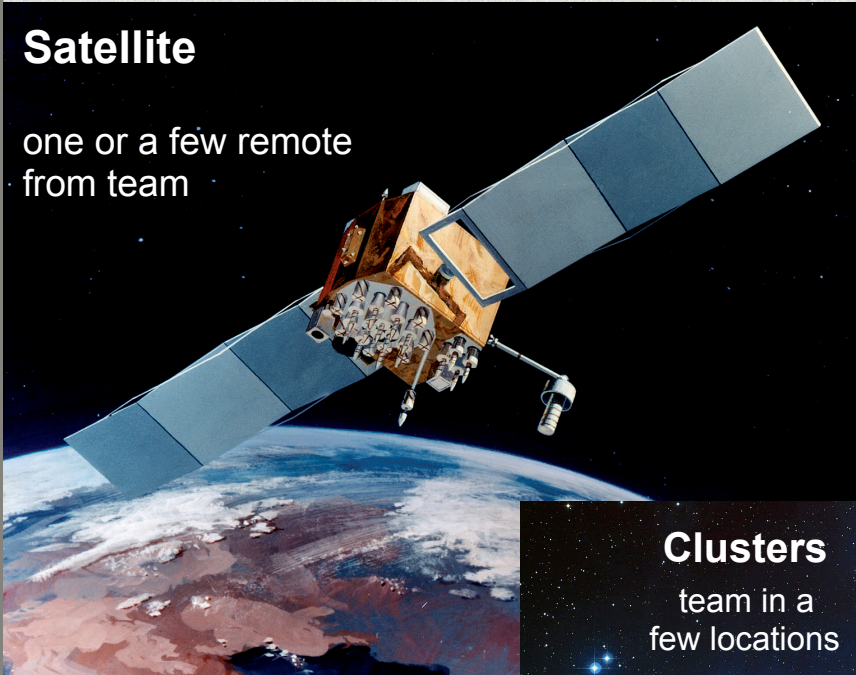


more info at  
<http://remotelyagile.info> / @mkilby

# What kind of distributed teams have you worked in?

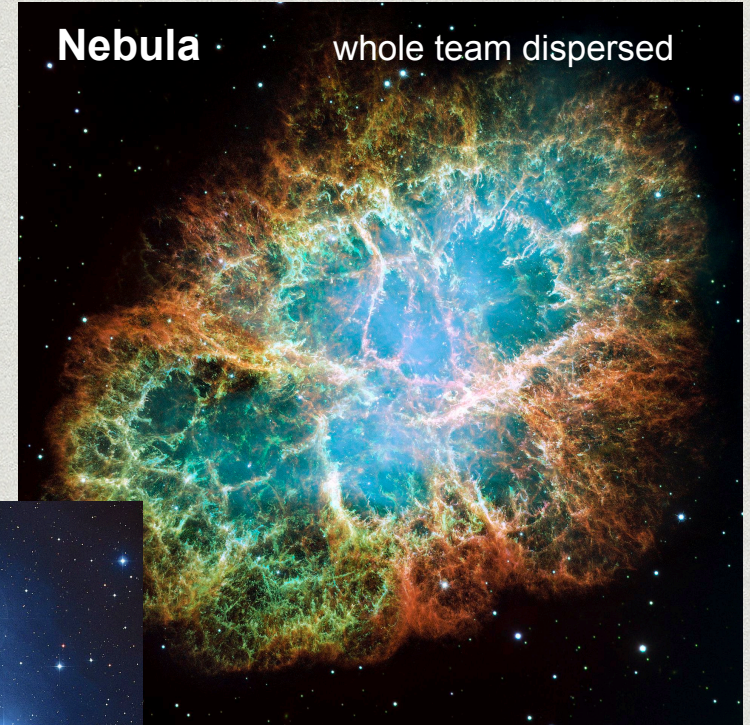
## Satellite

one or a few remote  
from team



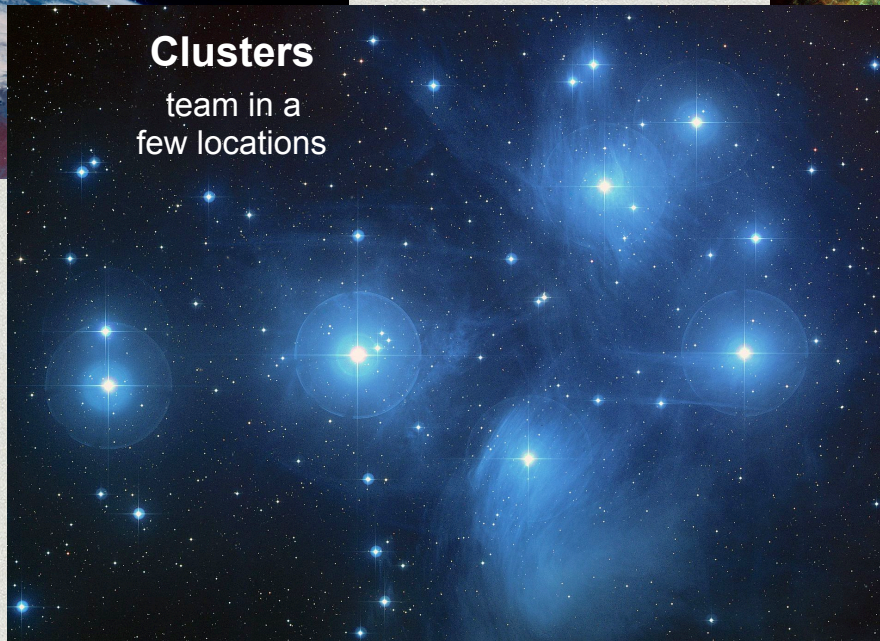
## Nebula

whole team dispersed



## Clusters

team in a  
few locations



more info at  
<http://remotelyagile.info> / @mkilby

**Was it your choice?**

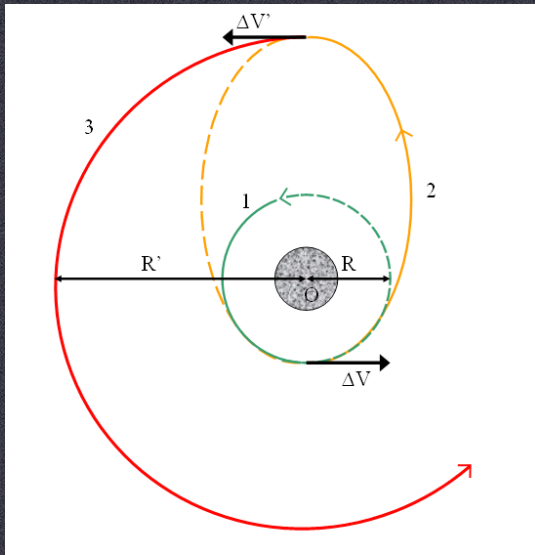
**IF PEOPLE CANNOT COLLOCATE**

**OR**

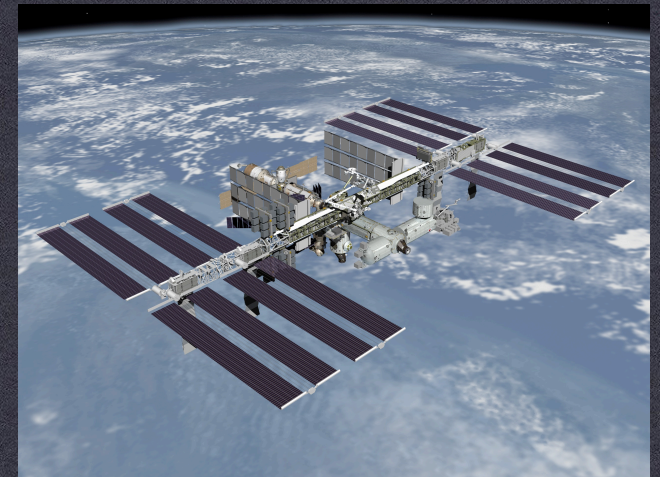
**THEY CHOOSE TO WORK REMOTE...**

**HOW DO WE HELP PEOPLE  
BE SUCCESSFUL ON  
DISTRIBUTED TEAMS?**





# PRINCIPLES OVER PRACTICES & TOOLS



# 8 PRINCIPLES

## From Chaos to Successful Distributed Agile Teams

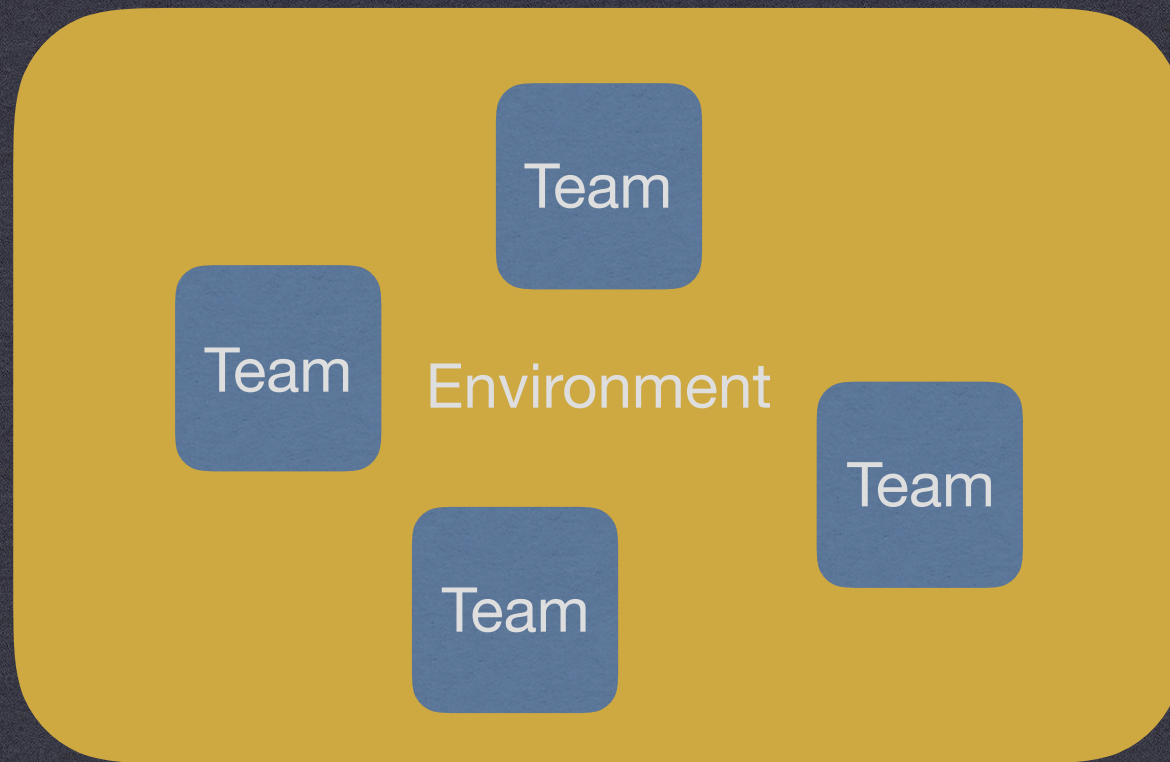
Collaborate to Deliver

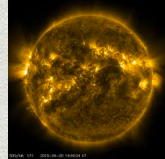


Johanna  
Rothman

Mark  
Kilby

# 4 ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES



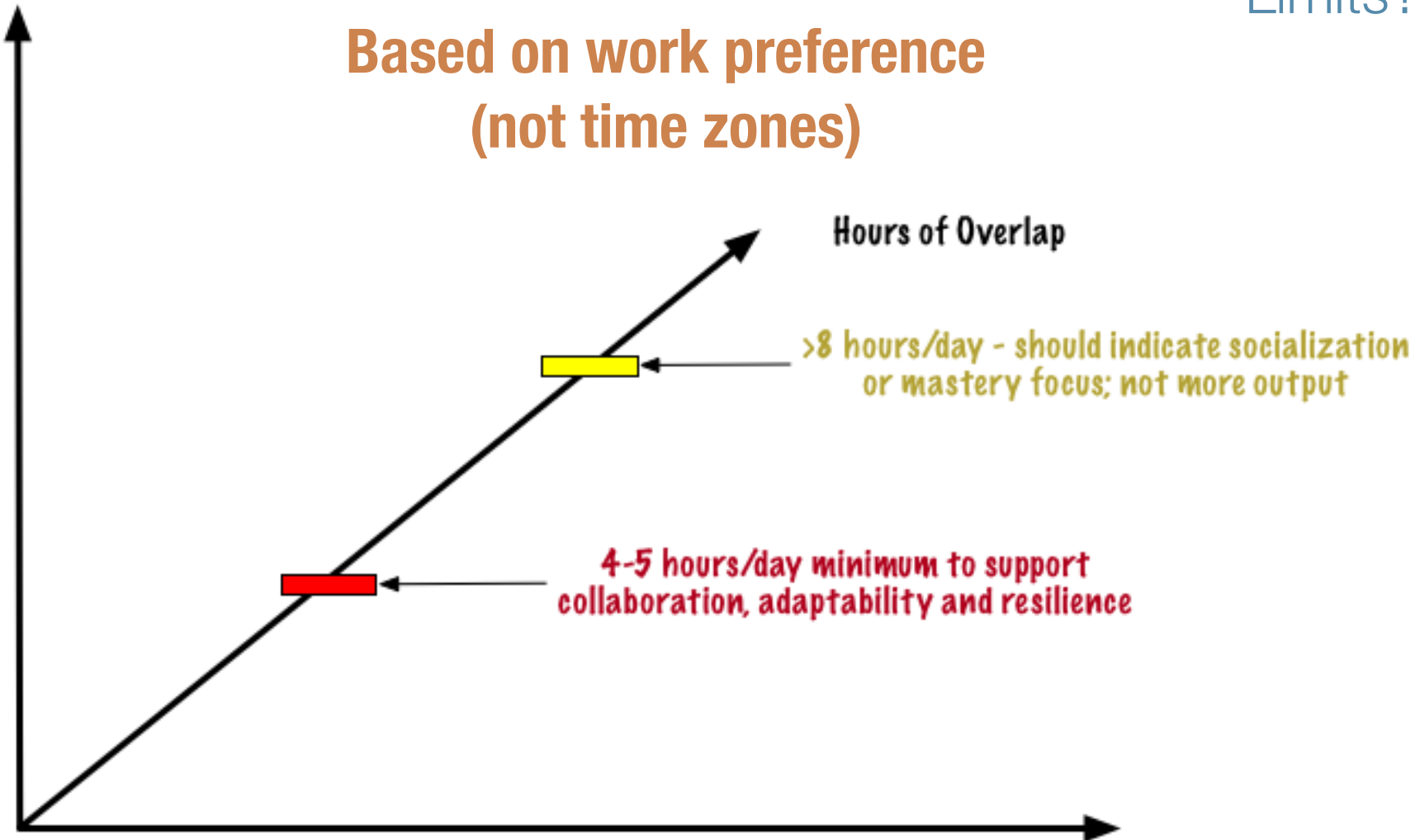


# PRINCIPLE: Acceptable Hours of Overlap



# Distributed Collaboration Limits?

**Based on work preference  
(not time zones)**



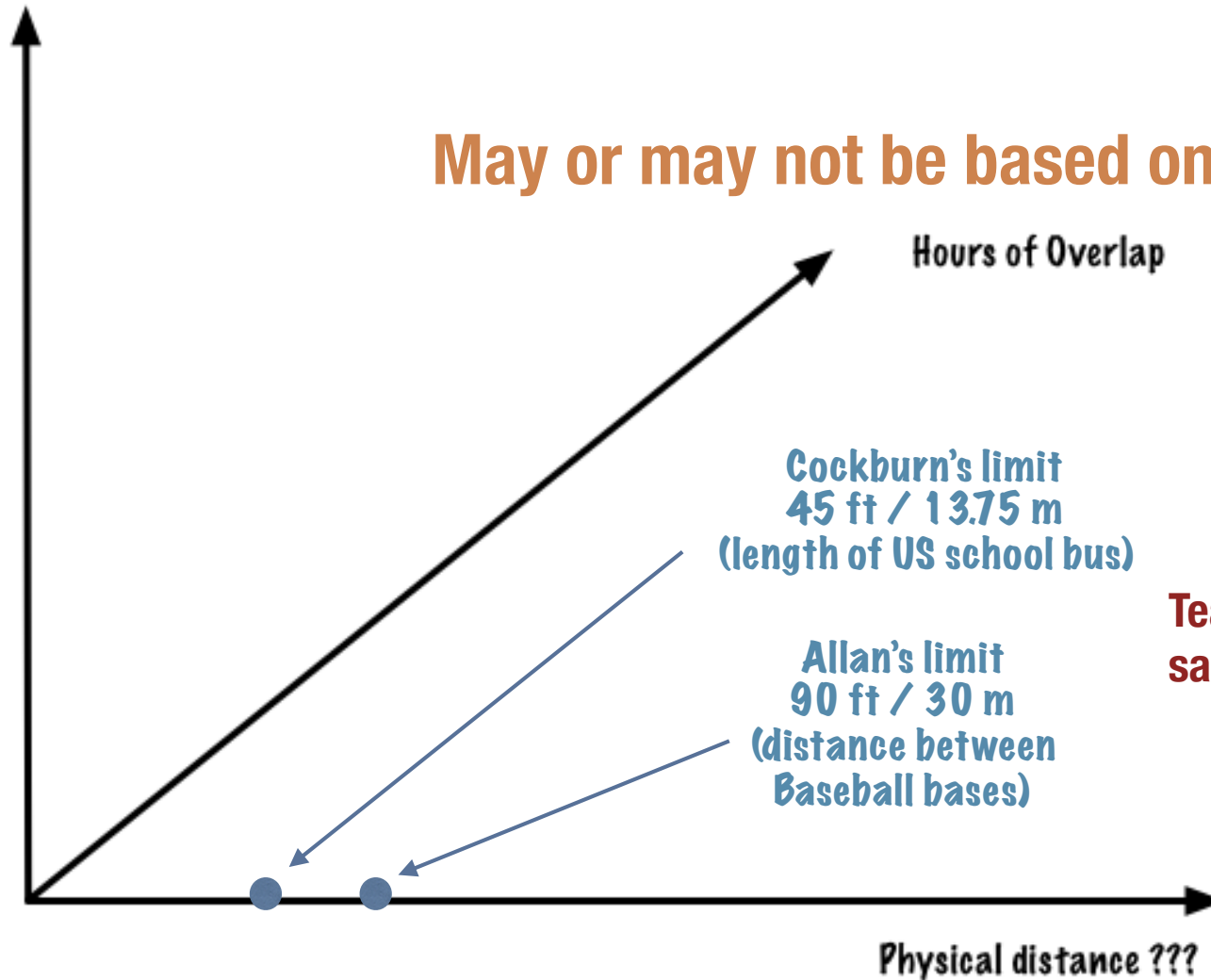
# How do we find overlap?

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY

| City / Person    | local hours of the day / hours worked by team member |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|------------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Raleigh</b>   | <b>5</b>   | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> |
| Sarah            |  |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |
| Mary             |  |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
| <b>Boston</b>    | <b>5</b>   | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> |
| Jane             |  |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
| Mike             |  |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 0.5       | 0.5       | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           |
| <b>London</b>    | <b>10</b>  | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>22</b> |
| Ian              | 1  | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Berlin</b>    | <b>11</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>23</b> |
| Gerrit           |  |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           |
| Overlap Probable | 17%  | 17%       | 50%       | 50%       | 100%      | 100%      | 92%       | 42%       | 83%       | 83%       | 83%       | 50%       | 33%       |

# Distributed Collaboration Limits?

**May or may not be based on choice**



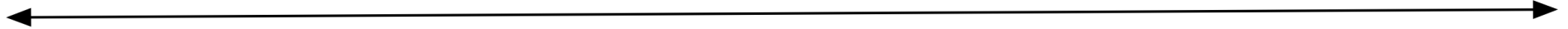
**Implication:**  
Team members in the  
same building can be  
distributed

# How Many Acceptable Hours of Overlap?

Fewer than 3 Hours  
of Overlap

Minimum of 4 hours of overlap

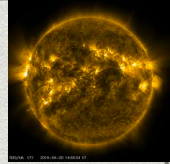
More than 8 hours of  
overlap



Can the team choose their core hours?

Can the team choose when to meet?



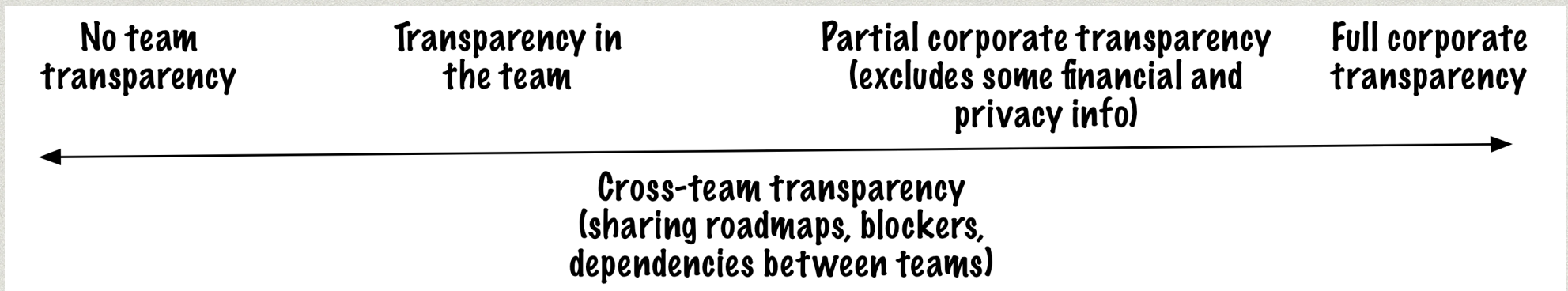


# PRINCIPLE: Transparency at All Levels

- \* Keep team spaces as open as possible
- \* public appreciations
- \* ask questions in public



# What level of transparency can your organization support?



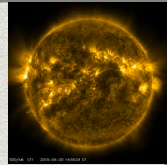
**Easy to share info across the team?**

**Across teams?**

**Across the organization?**

**What info is really “sensitive” or “need to know”?**

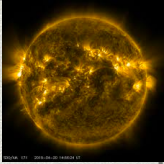
# PRINCIPLE: Culture of Continuous Improvement



- \* Change leaders should model improvement first
- \* Then focus on the team
- \* Works with rhythm
- \* Key idea: **EXPERIMENT!**



# PRINCIPLE: Culture of Continuous Improvement



- \* Examples:
  - \* Personal - Improvement Days /Mentoring
  - \* Team - Retrospectives/ Training
  - \* Org - Lean Coffee / Meetups (in person) / Improvement Days





Discovery

United States



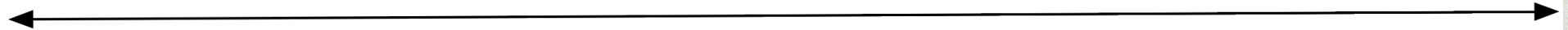
3

# (Can the org) Create a Culture of Continuous Improvement?

**“By the book”:  
We’ve always done it  
this way.**

**“Try something”:  
Minimal assessment  
of results or data**

**Strict Experiments with  
defined metrics or expected  
results with feedback**

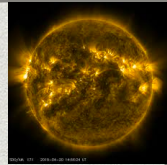


**Are individuals free to experiment?**

**Are teams free to experiment?**

**Are programs free to experiment?**

**Does senior leadership participate in experiments?**



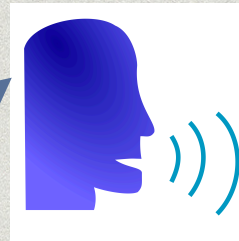
# PRINCIPLE: Pervasive Communication

“To move, to breathe, to fly, to float,  
To gain all while you give,  
To roam the roads of lands remote,  
To travel is to live.”

— Hans Christian Andersen

**Critical idea or message**

**(Annual vision? Pivots?  
Market shifts? Acquisitions?)**



**Announcement in meeting**



**Q&A in chat  
backchannel**



**Reminders in  
email**



**Details in wiki**



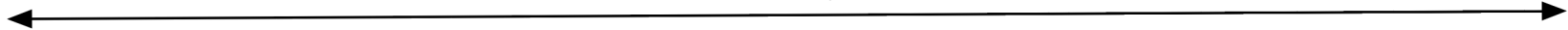


# (Can your org) practice Pervasive Communication?

**One-time Communication**  
(Say it once)

**Pervasive Communication**  
(Repeat message in  
various ways)

**Overcommunication**  
(Multiple channels, from and  
to multiple people)



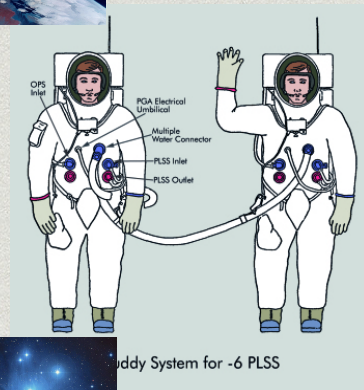
**Do you share key info in multiple channels?**

**Do you repeat until you hear the message repeated?**

# Shifts in how to coordinate & communicate



**Back Channel** - always have all hailing frequencies open (chat); someone should always monitor



**Buddy System** - each remote person has a "buddy" in the room to make sure they are connected to the team (paired communication)



**Co-Pilot** – someone at another location that can help you coordinate the whole team (paired facilitation)

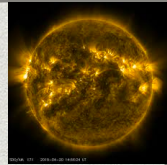


more info at <http://remotelyagile.info> / @mkilby

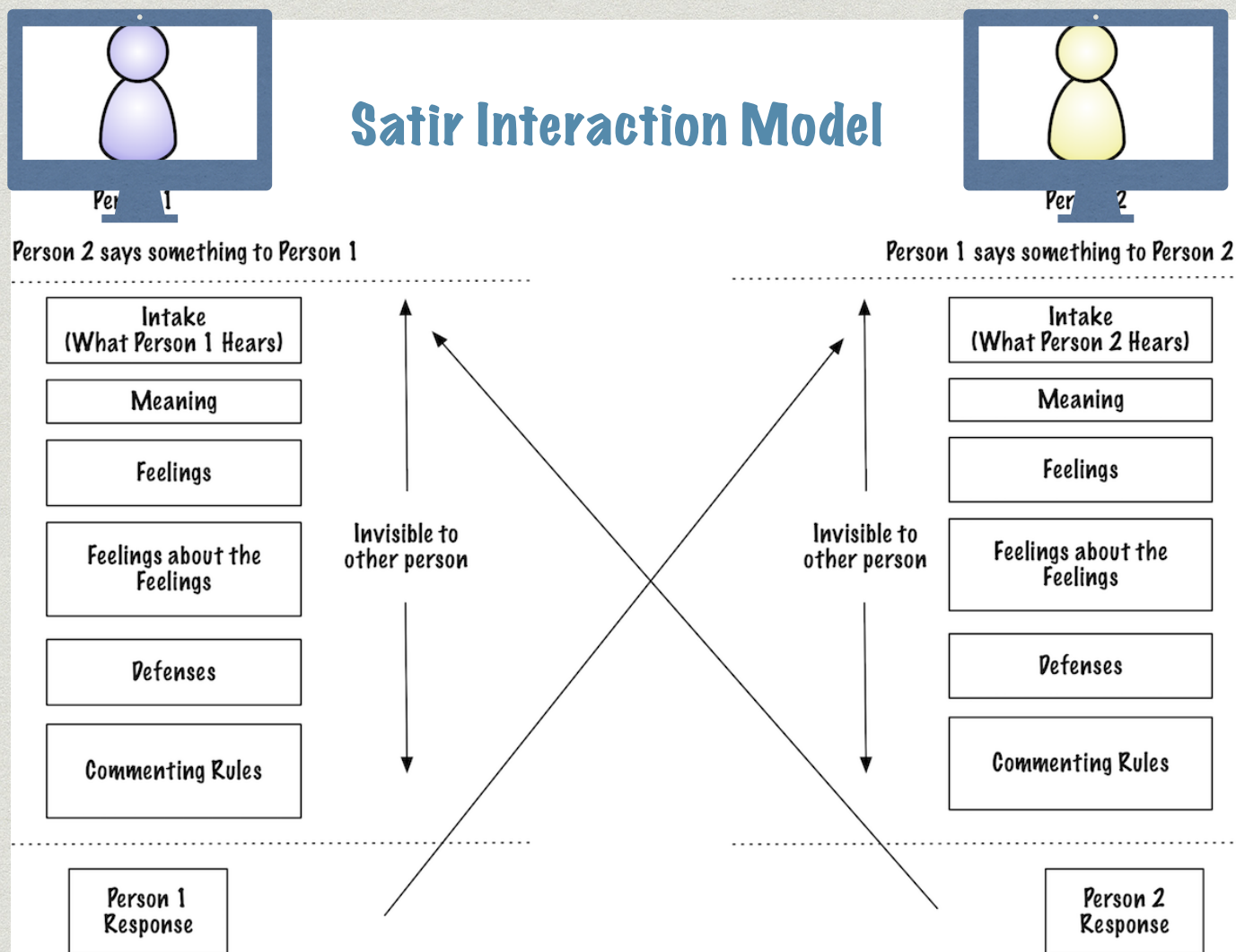
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# 4 TEAM ELEMENTS

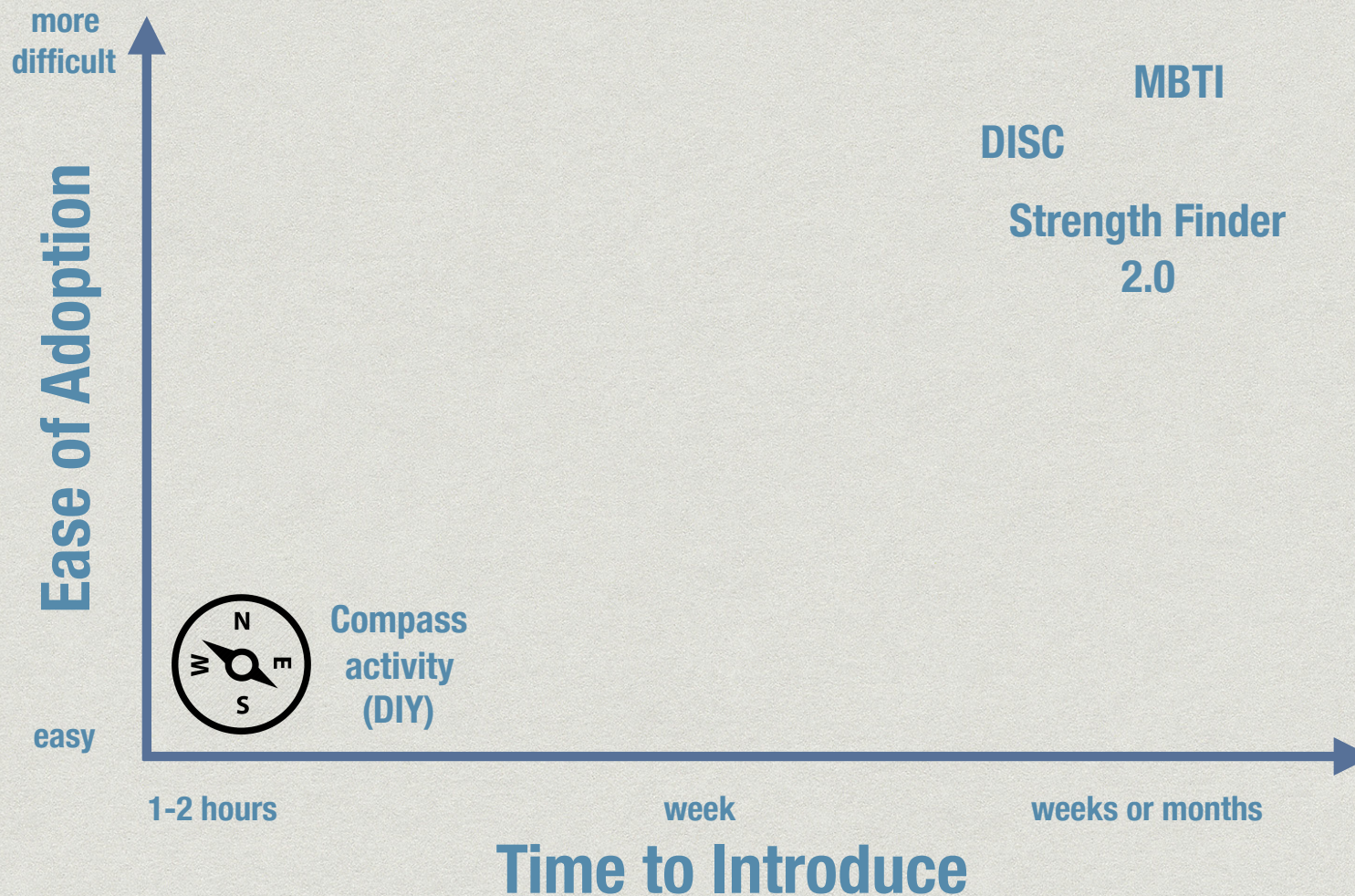




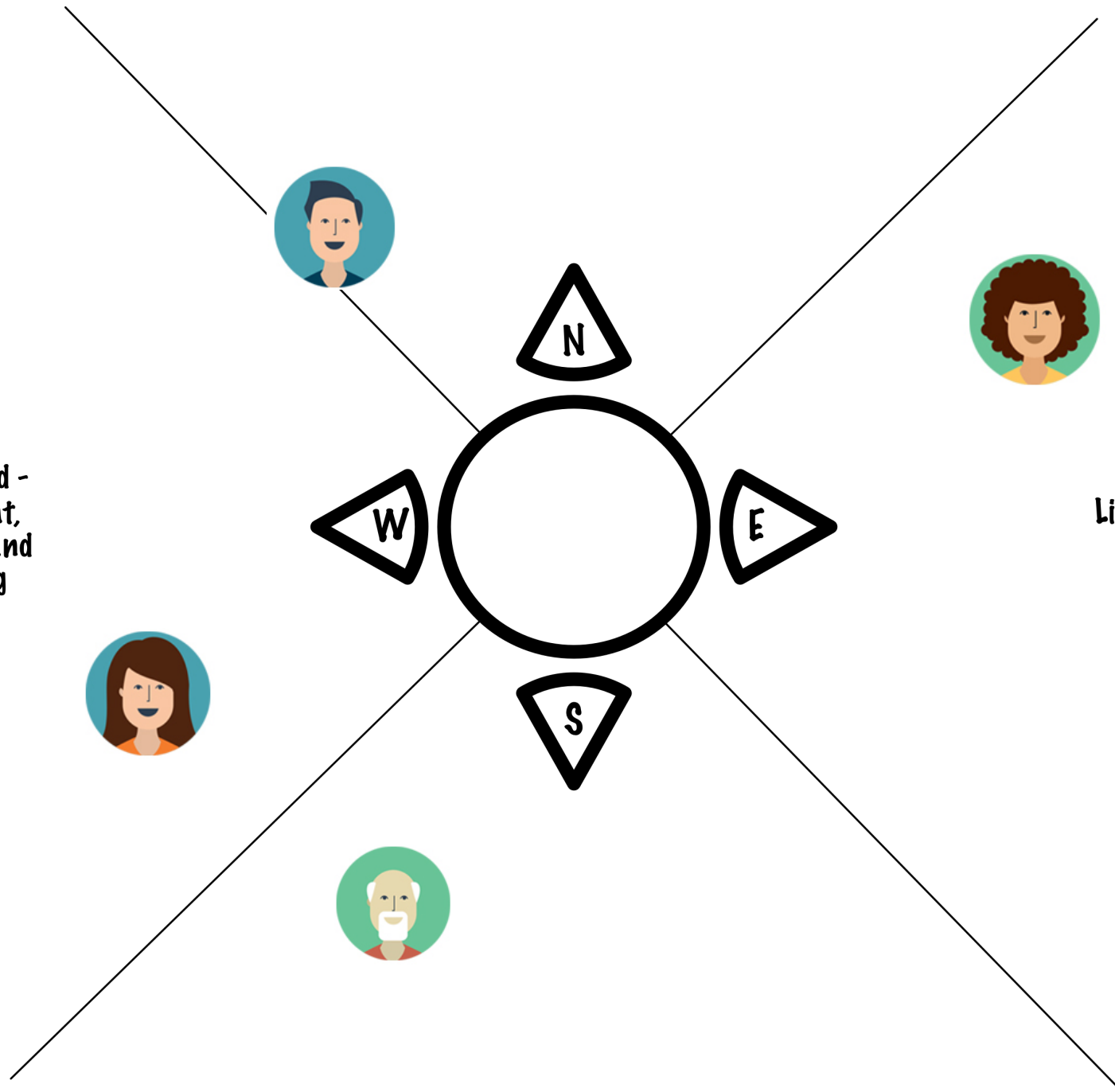
# PRINCIPLE: Assume Good Intent



# Learning natural tendencies within a team



**North: Acting - Always in motion. Likes to try things and plunge in.**

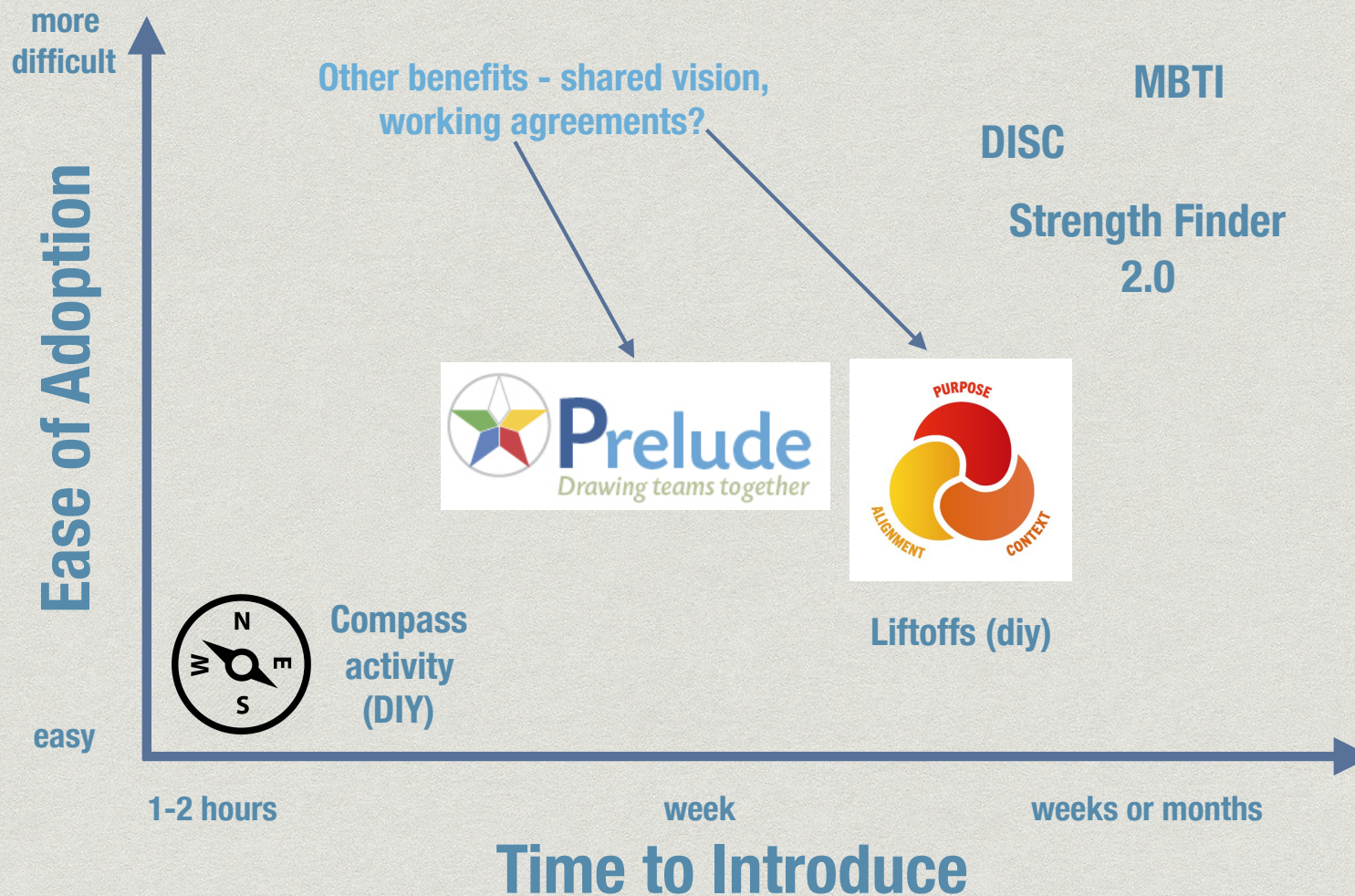


**West: Detail focused - Likes to know what, who, when, where and why before acting**

**East: Speculating - Likes to examine the big picture and options before acting.**

**South: Caring - Likes to know that everyone's voice has been heard before acting.**

# Learning natural tendencies within a team



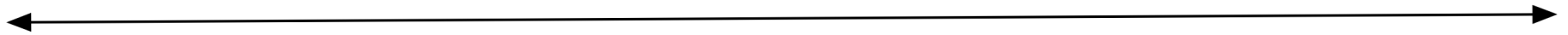


# (Can the team) Assume Good Intent?

Placate others

Assume good intention

Blame others

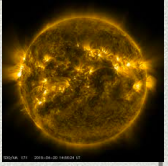


Do you check-in with each other  
when there are misunderstandings?

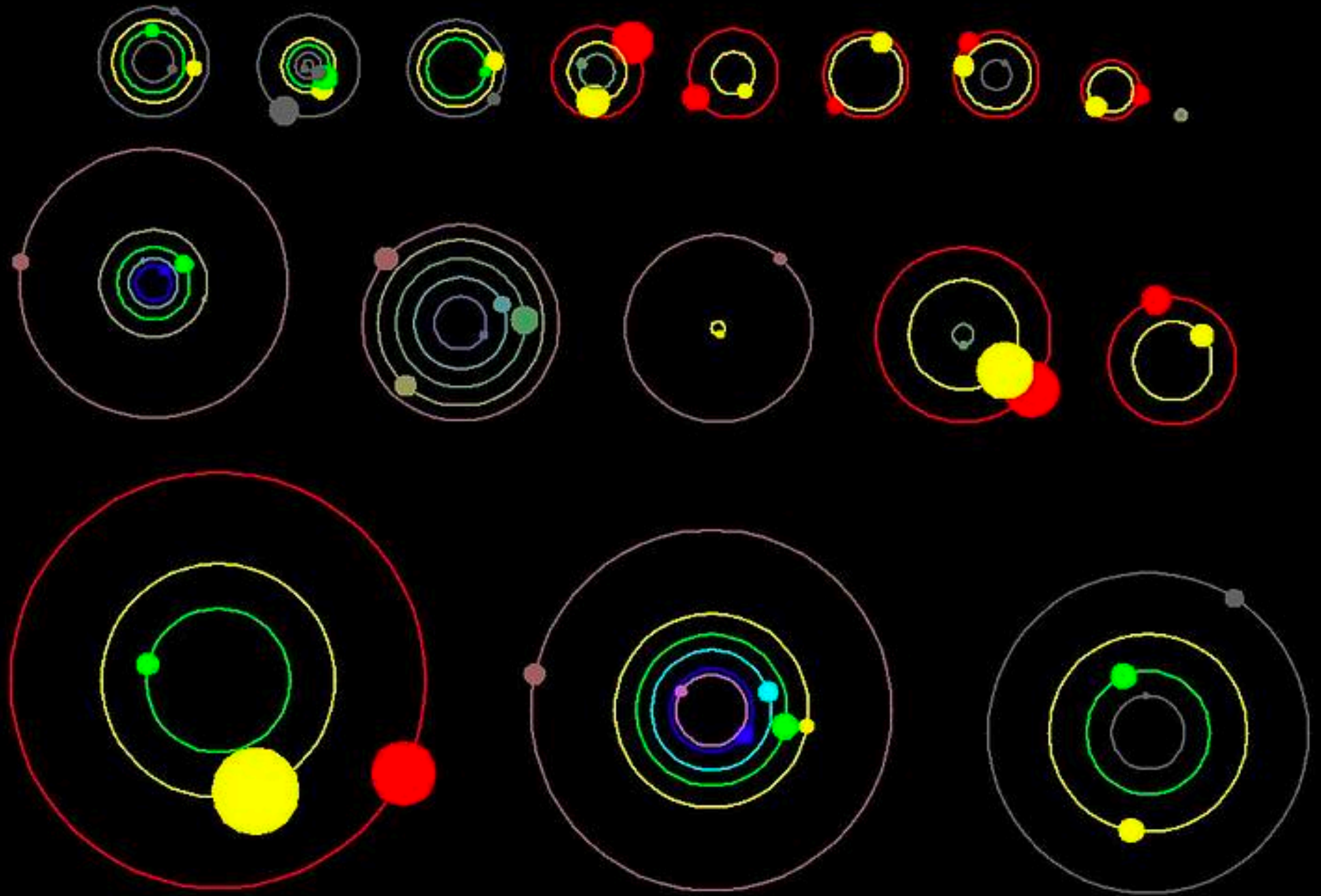
Do you support psychological safety in  
asynchronous and synchronous communications?

# PRINCIPLE:

## Project Rhythm



- \* Whether time-boxed (e.g., Scrum, XP) or in Flow (Kanban), all teams have a rhythm
- \* Encourage team to decide rhythm as they form
- \* Encourage the team to change rhythm when they are not “keeping a beat”. (e.g. retrospect)

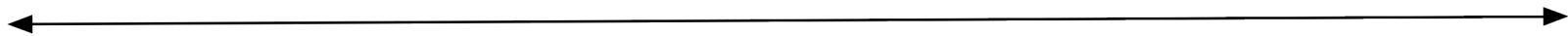


# (Can the team) Create a Project Rhythm?

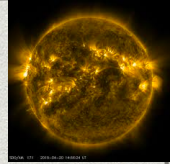
*Plan on Demand (Flow)*

*Cadence of Planning,  
Demos, more*

*Strict Timebox, where the  
work stops at the end of the  
timebox*



**Do you (en)force the same rhythm across all your teams  
or  
allow teams to determine their own rhythm based on  
their work and context?**



# PRINCIPLE: Resilience

Can we...

- \* quickly adjust to meet a goal?
- \* adjust to hardship?
- \* provide an “adaptive environment”?

# Checking Resilience

## \* Example - Communication

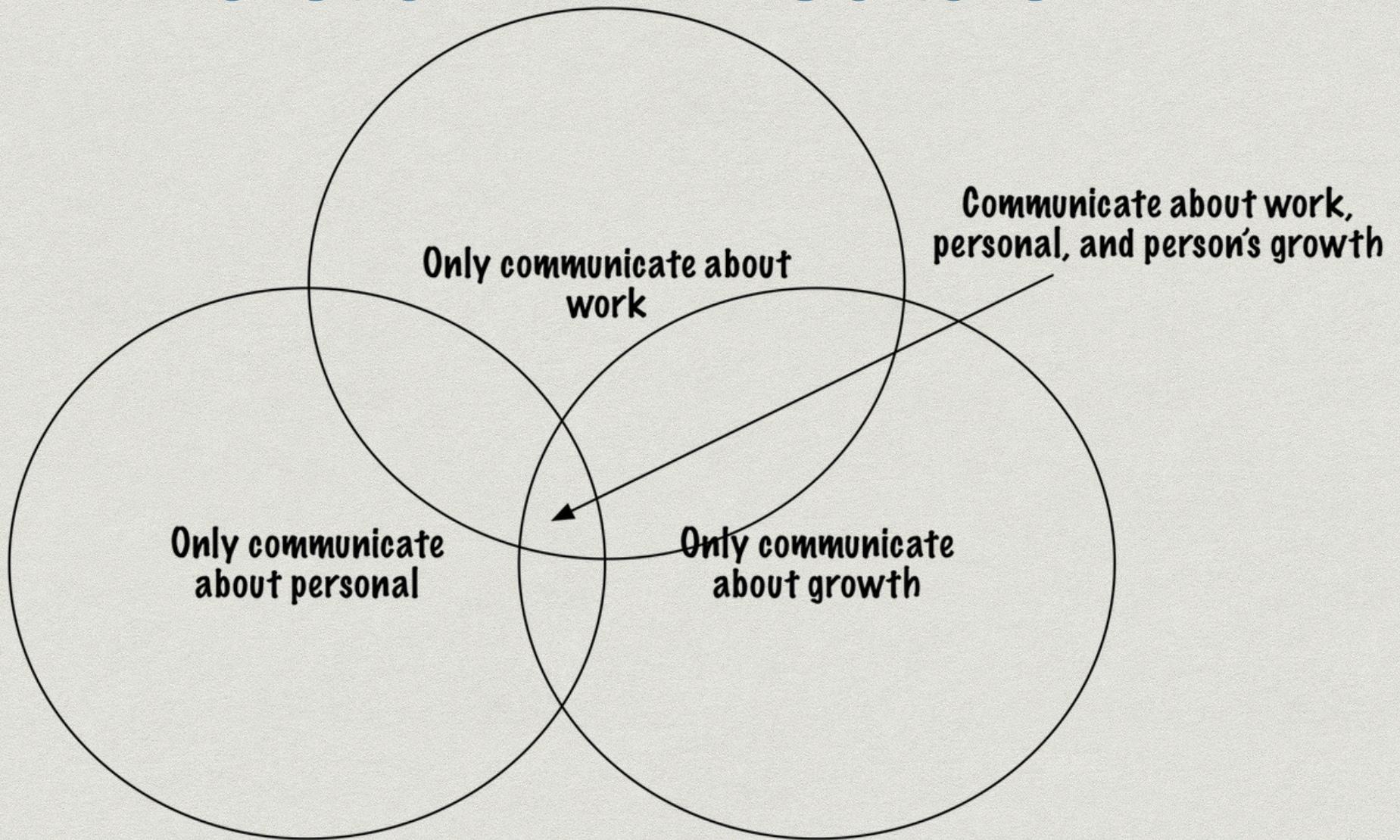
- \* Can anyone on the team start a new communication channel at any time?
- \* Will anyone on the team initiate communications?

Is there **psychological safety**?

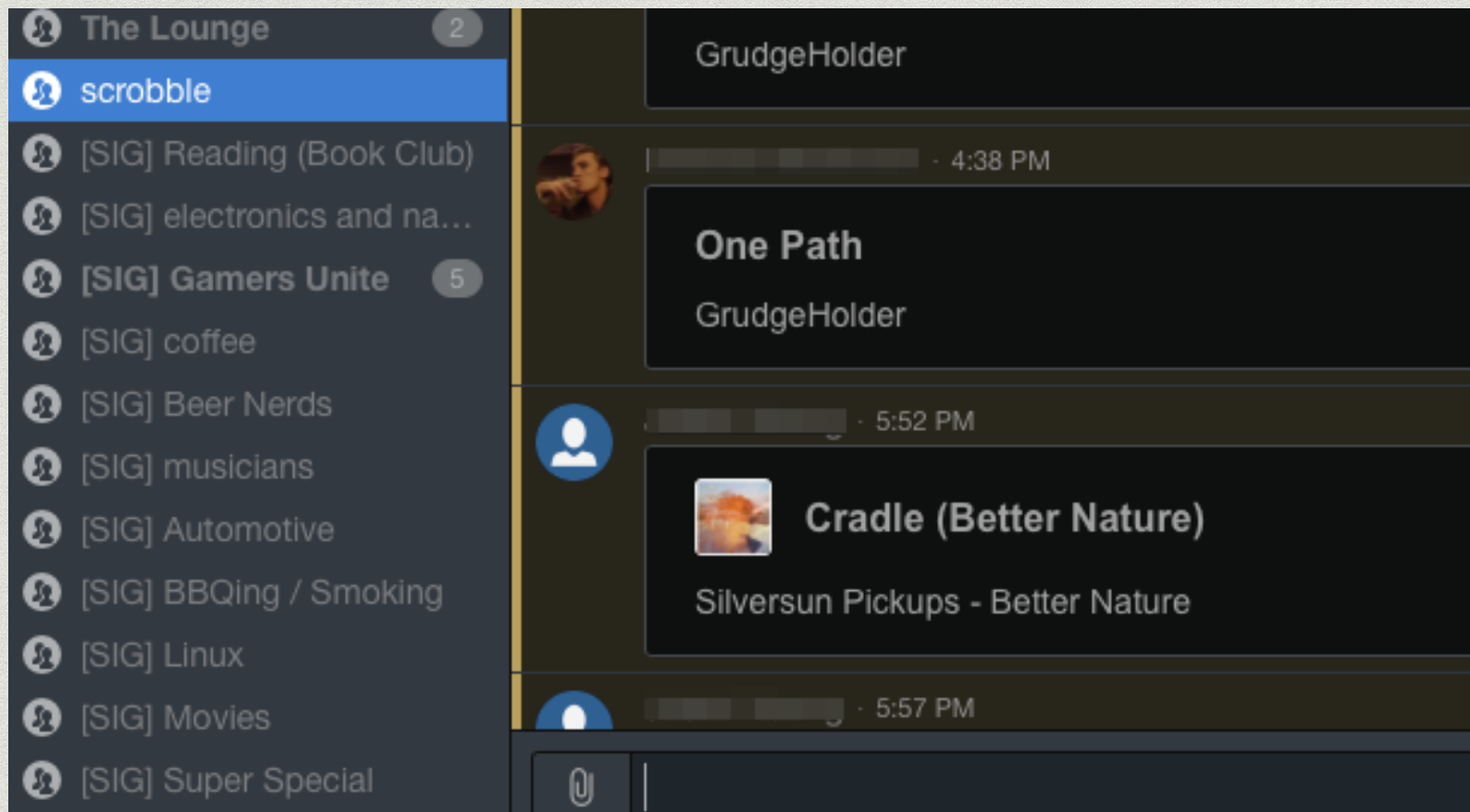
## \* Example - Facilitation

- \* Can anyone on the team facilitate any meeting?  
(backlog refinement, planning, standup, review, retrospective)

# Promoting Resilience through Holistic Culture



# Promoting Resilience





# (Can the team) Create Resilience with Holistic Culture?

Only communicate about work

Communicate about work, personal, and person's growth

Only communicate about non-work (personal, growth)

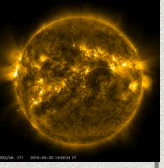


**Does the team understand each team member's strengths, context, and goals?**

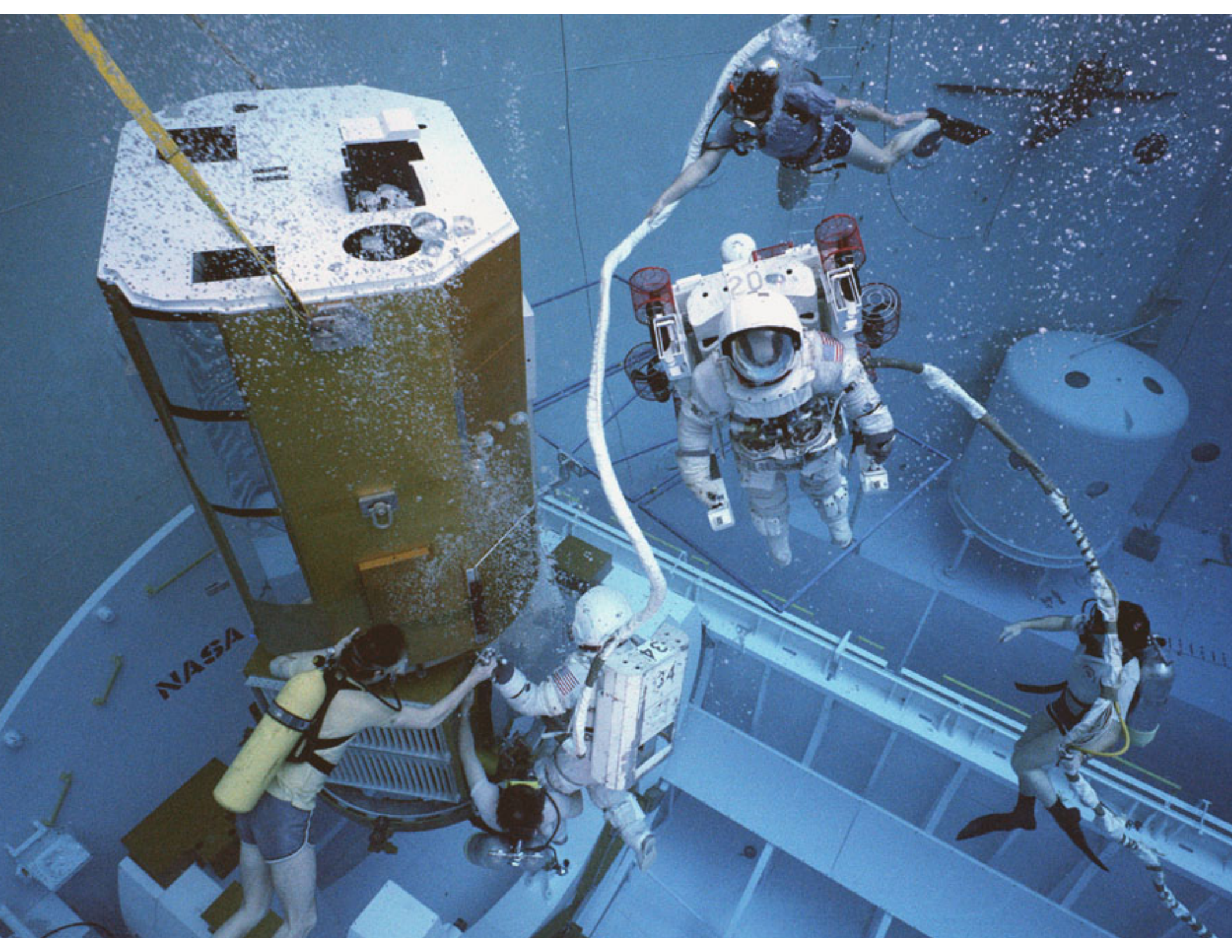
**Do teams control their schedule and their workspace?**

# PRINCIPLE:

# Default to Collaboration



- \* Deep Focus can be important (and a default for remote workers), but ...
- \* Collaboration can help you explore problems and solutions faster

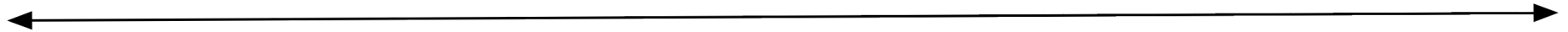


# (Can the team) Default to Collaboration?

**Solo Work**  
(Including asynchronous work)

**Pairing and other Real-Time Communication**

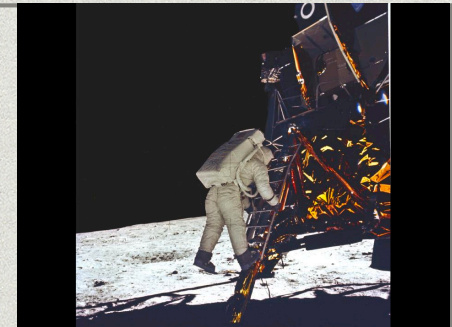
**Mobbing**



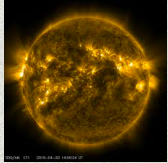
**Do team members seek collaboration or quiet time when working remotely?**

**Do team members find benefit to pairing or mobbing remotely?**

# How to mix elements?



| Principle                                  | Small Step Practices   | Giant Leap Practices   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Acceptable Hours of Overlap</b>         | Select team members in nearby time zones   | Allow team to choose core hours and meeting times  |
| <b>Transparency at All Levels</b>          | Public appreciations;<br>Encourages questions in public                              | Open team channels to organization   |
| <b>Culture of Continuous Improvement</b>   | Retrospectives; lean coffee<br>Q&A (across org)                                      | Mentoring; Improvement Days or Hackathons; Meetups   |
| <b>Pervasive Communication</b>             | Backchannel, Buddy System, Copilots  | Multi-channel communications (some automated)  |
| <b>Assume Good Intent</b>                  | Learn team member tendencies (e.g. Compass activity)                                 | Continual coaching on listening skills, default to high bandwidth communications in conflict |
| <b>Project Rhythms</b>                     | Time-boxed synchronous activities if >6 hours overlap; varied cadence for flow-based | Allow team to set and adjust all cadences via retrospective                                  |
| <b>Resilience Through Holistic Culture</b> | Establish psychological safety; model "asking for help"; share some personal context | Set rituals (1-1s, retro) where team members share interests and goals                       |
| <b>Default to Collaboration</b>            | Encourage daily check-ins beyond a stand-up  | Support pairing and mobbing activities   |

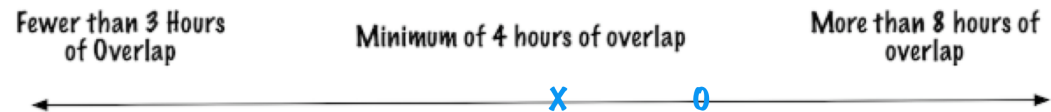


## Worksheet - What is your Distributed Agile Team's Environment?

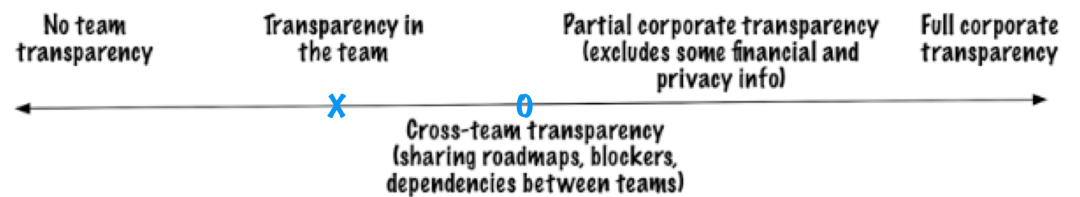
**Introduction:** Is your distributed agile team operating in a "sweet spot" or at an extreme? An extreme may be possible, but it could be challenging for your team to reach or maintain it.

**Instructions (part 1):** - As we discuss each principle, draw an X where your team is now on the spectrum for that principle.

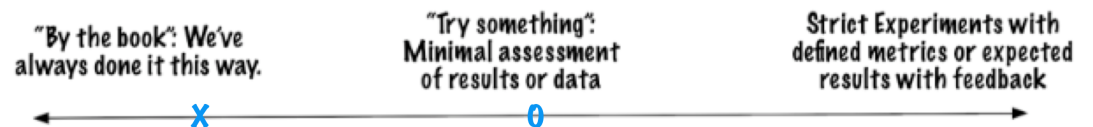
Establish acceptable hours of overlap



Create transparency at all levels



Create a team culture of continuous improvement with experiments



Practice pervasive communication at all levels



See our  
worksheet

Link

# Successful? Really?

(1 more story)


**Some distributed teams  
can look odd**





**or they have shiny  
new tools**





**Focus on the right mix  
of fundamental elements to get your  
distributed team on the right course**

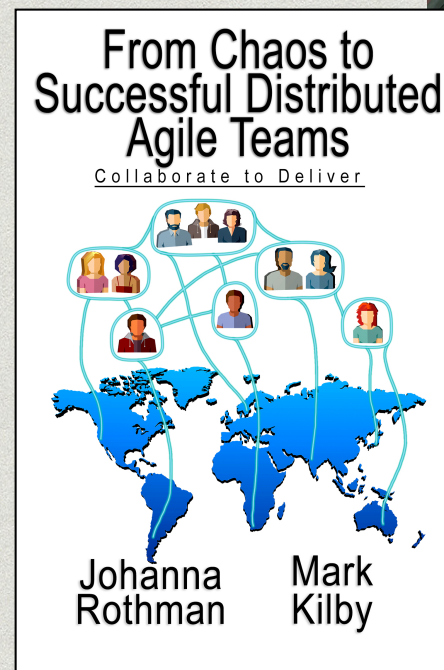
# Thanks! Questions?

more info at  
<http://markkilby.com>

Twitter: @mkilby

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/mkilby>

Watch for updates to my book on building distributed agile teams at <https://leanpub.com/geographicallydistributedagileteams> and via my website [markkilby.com](http://markkilby.com)



# References

## (in order of mention)

- <http://agilemanifesto.org>
- DISC vs MBTI assessments. <https://coachfederation.org/blog/index.php/8211/>
- Strengthfinder 2.0 - <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/>
- Compass exercise adapted for online teams from “A Simple Exercise to Strengthen Emotional Intelligence in Teams” KQED Mindshift <https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2015/06/22/a-simple-exercise-to-strengthen-emotional-intelligence-in-teams/>
- Play Prelude for forming virtual teams <http://www.playprelude.com/>
- Liftoff: Start and Sustain Successful Agile Teams, 2nd ed. <https://pragprog.com/book/liftoff/liftoff-second-edition>
- All remaining material (c) 2018 Mark Kilby and Johanna Rothman - for more information see <http://markkilby.com> and <https://www.jrothman.com/>

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