



Webinar

# Building high performing teams in times of isolation

Pim Smeets & Evelyn van Kelle







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10:00

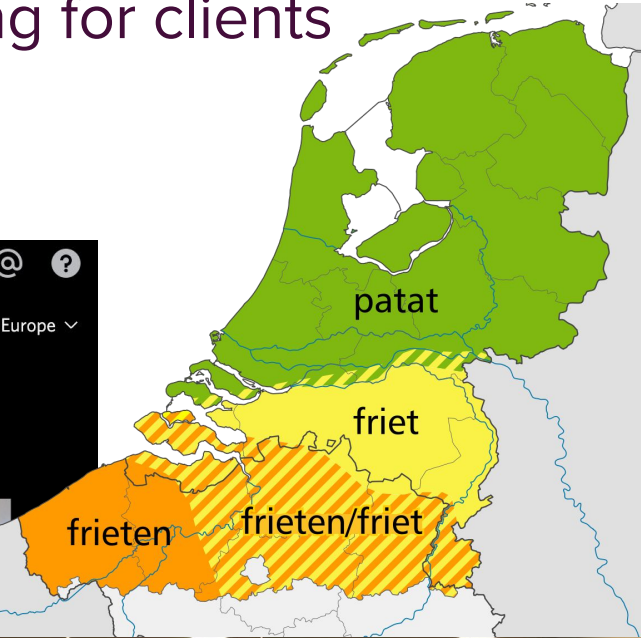
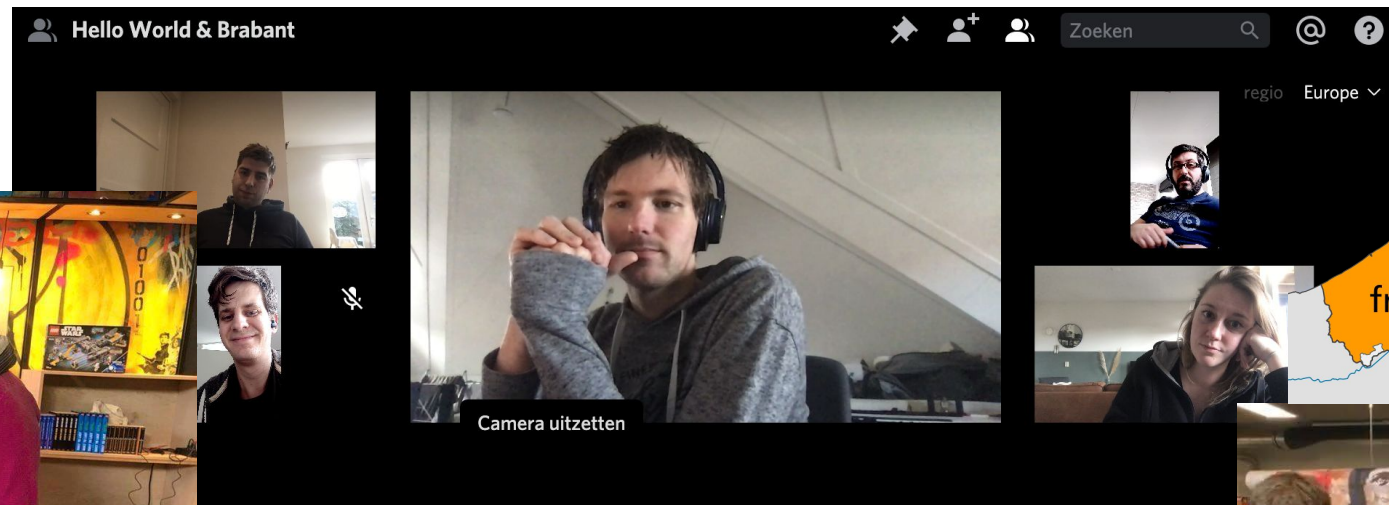


## What we're going to discuss in this webinar

- This is our story - what we learned from our process
- How to continue being a high performing team when communication and collaboration completely changes
- Tools we find effective and how we are using them
- We won't provide scientific definitions of high performing teams
- 30 minutes of content, 15 minutes of Q&A

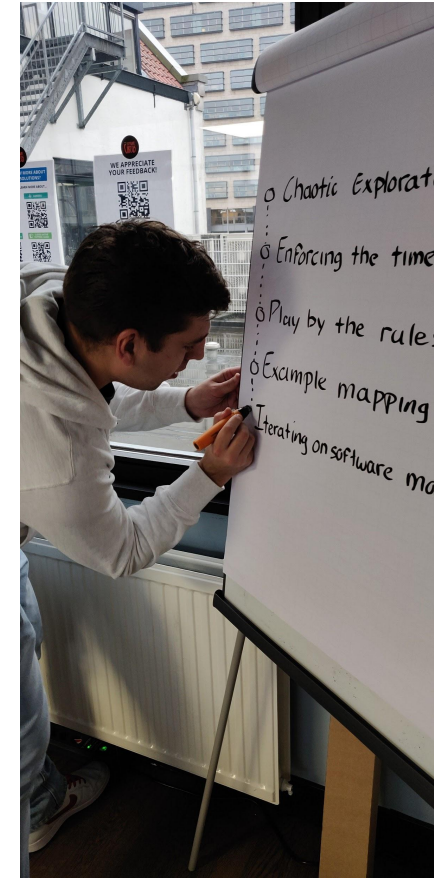


- Who are we?
- Consultants that spend most of their time at clients / working for clients
- We don't get to see each other every day





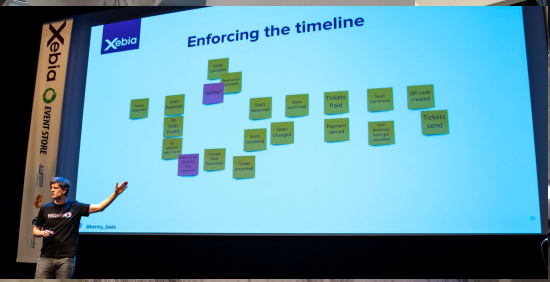
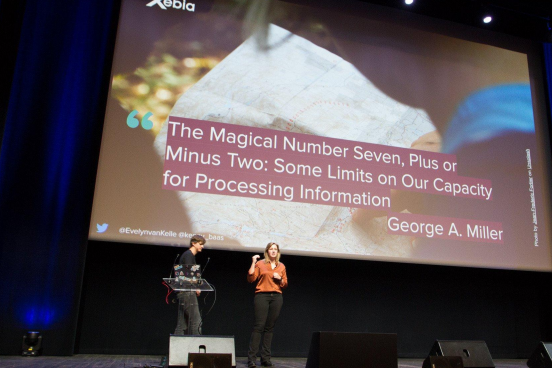
- Help organisations deliver value; connecting, visualizing, applying sound technical principles
- Consultancy, workshops, training
- Socio-technical systems & architecture, Domain-Driven Design, Team Topologies, SRE







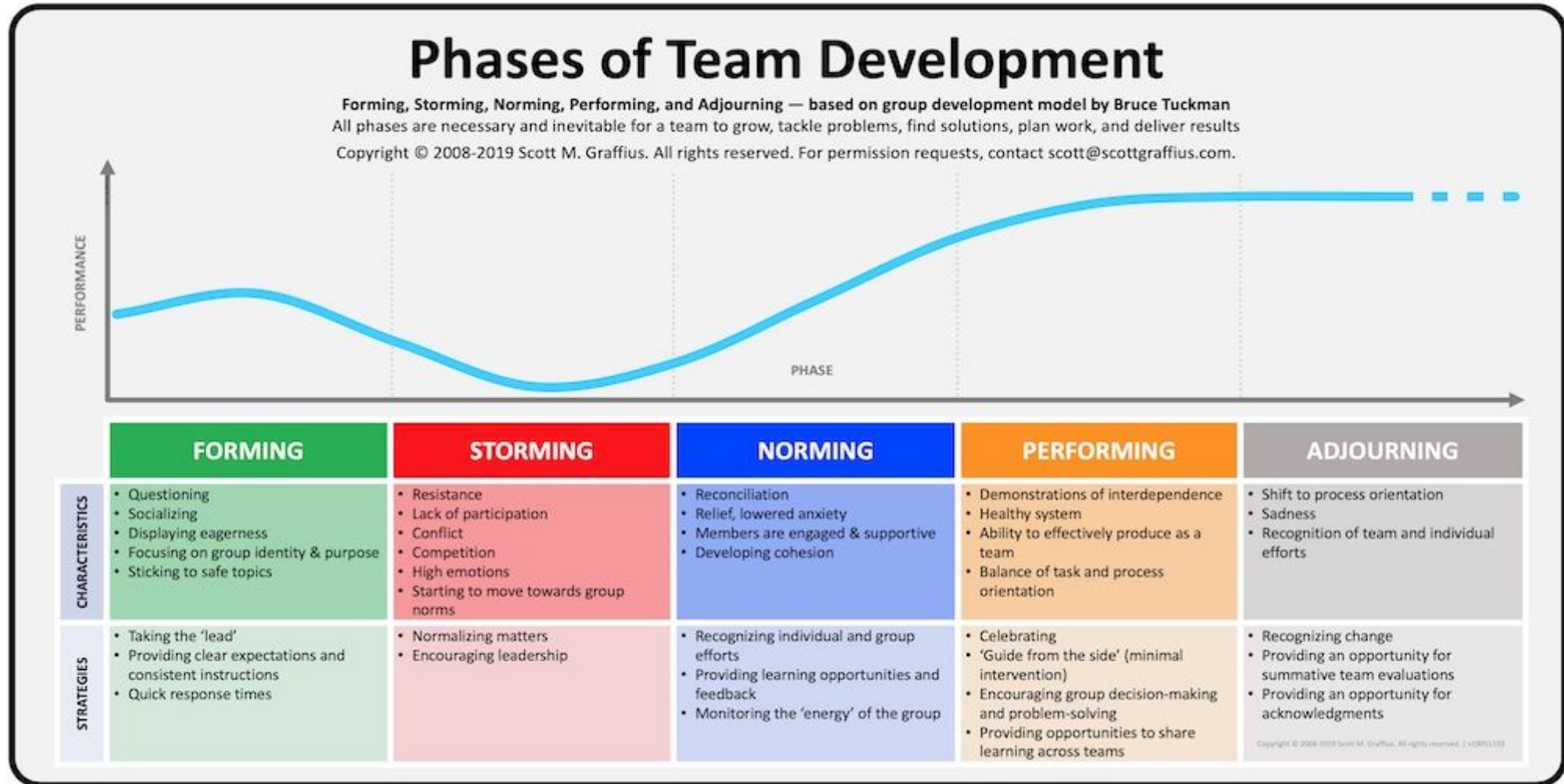
o Chaotic Explorat  
o Enforcing the time  
o Play by the rule  
o Example mapping  
o Iterating on software ma

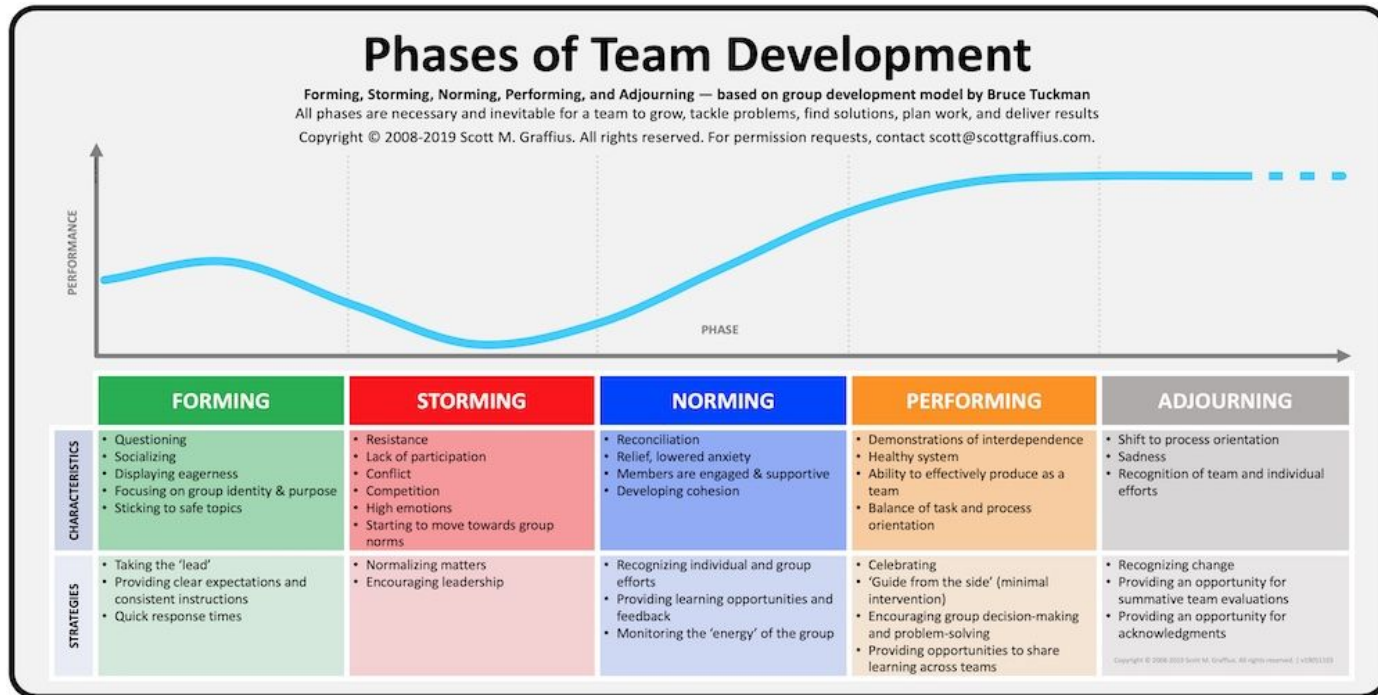




**But how did we get there?**







Tuckman's Model of Team Dynamics - picture by AgileScrumGuide.com



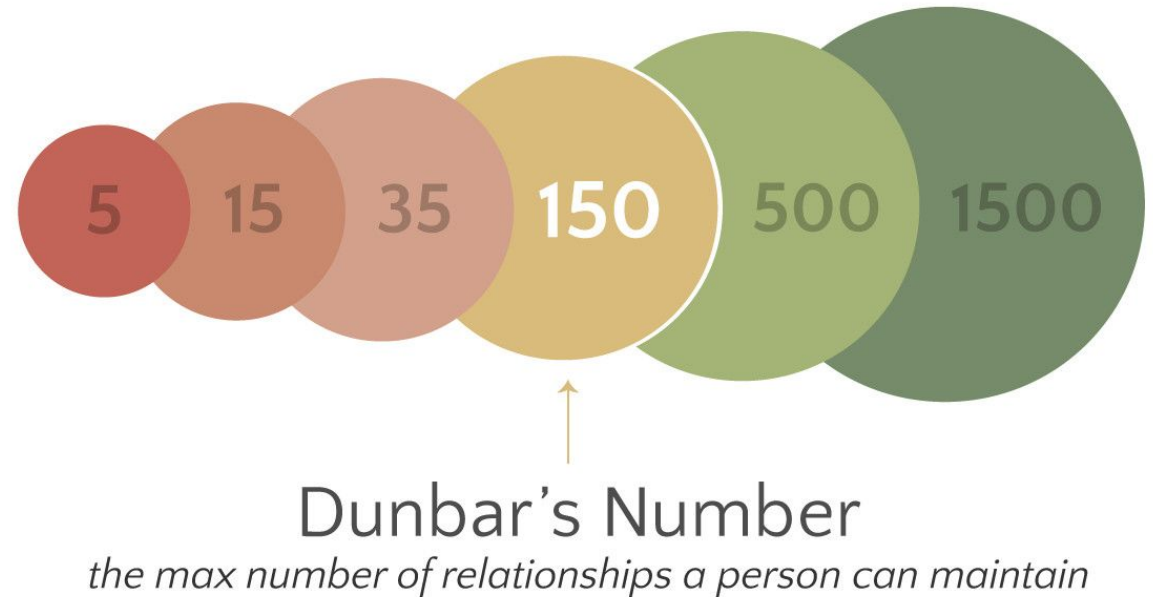
**Let's zoom out - What is a team?**

## What is a team?

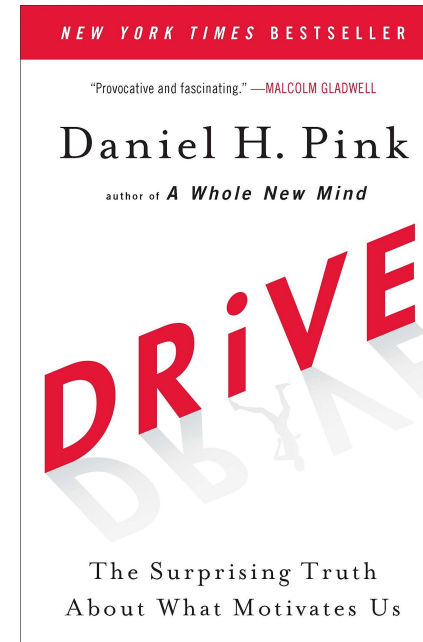




- **Small groups** work and are a key ingredient to high-performing teams.
- When groups start to increase in size, **subgroups** might emerge.
- Subgroups - to support or fight?



- Autonomy: desire to be self-directed
- Mastery: the urge to get better skills
- Purpose: doing something that has meaning and is important

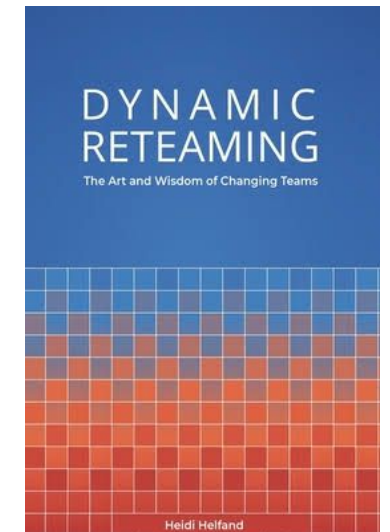
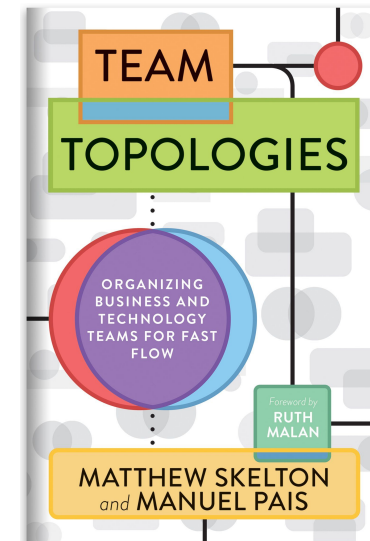


THINKING,  
FAST AND SLOW  
*Nederlandstalige editie*  
ONS FEILBARE DENKEN



DANIEL  
KAHNEMAN  
NOBELPRIJSWINNAAR

*‘Een zeer toegankelijk boek, dat leest als een trein’*  
\*\*\*\*\* DE VOLKSKRANT  
*‘De belangrijkste psycholoog ter wereld’*  
STEVEN PINKER



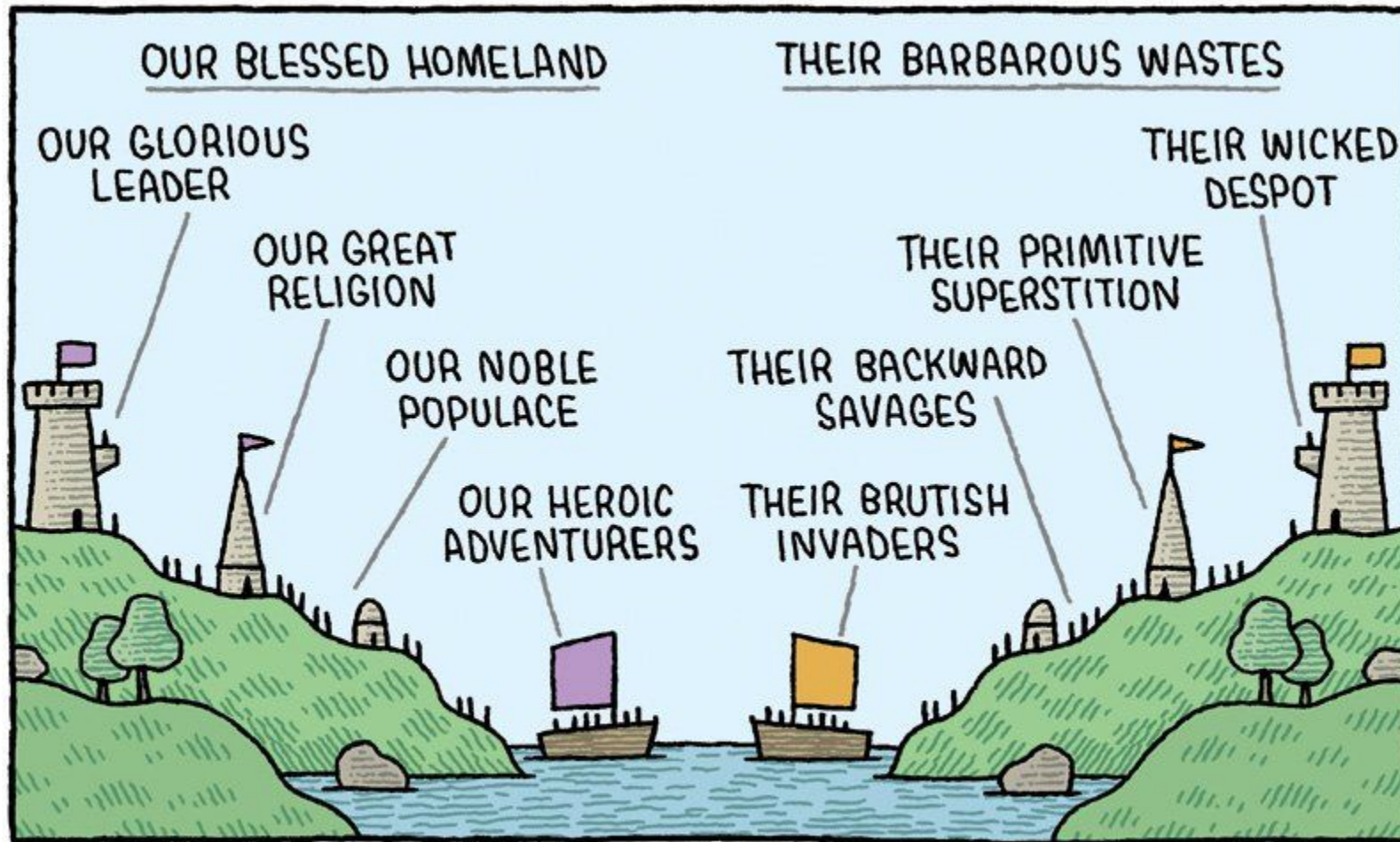


# **Before we continue...**

**What are you struggling with at the moment?**

**All teams need  
a shared identity**





- Who am I? Where do I belong?
- **Social Identity Theory (SIT):** an individual's social identity is developed based on group membership
  - In other words: our social context defines how we perceive ourselves and our behaviour.
- If we can identify with a group (or team), we will conform to the group norms and let that influence our behavior
  - It's not just about teams. This goes for every group we identify with: sport clubs, countries, groups of friends, etc.
- The stronger the social identity, the more close team members will feel and the harder they will work to reach the team's goals
- **So... Create a social identity and make sure everyone can identify with it!**



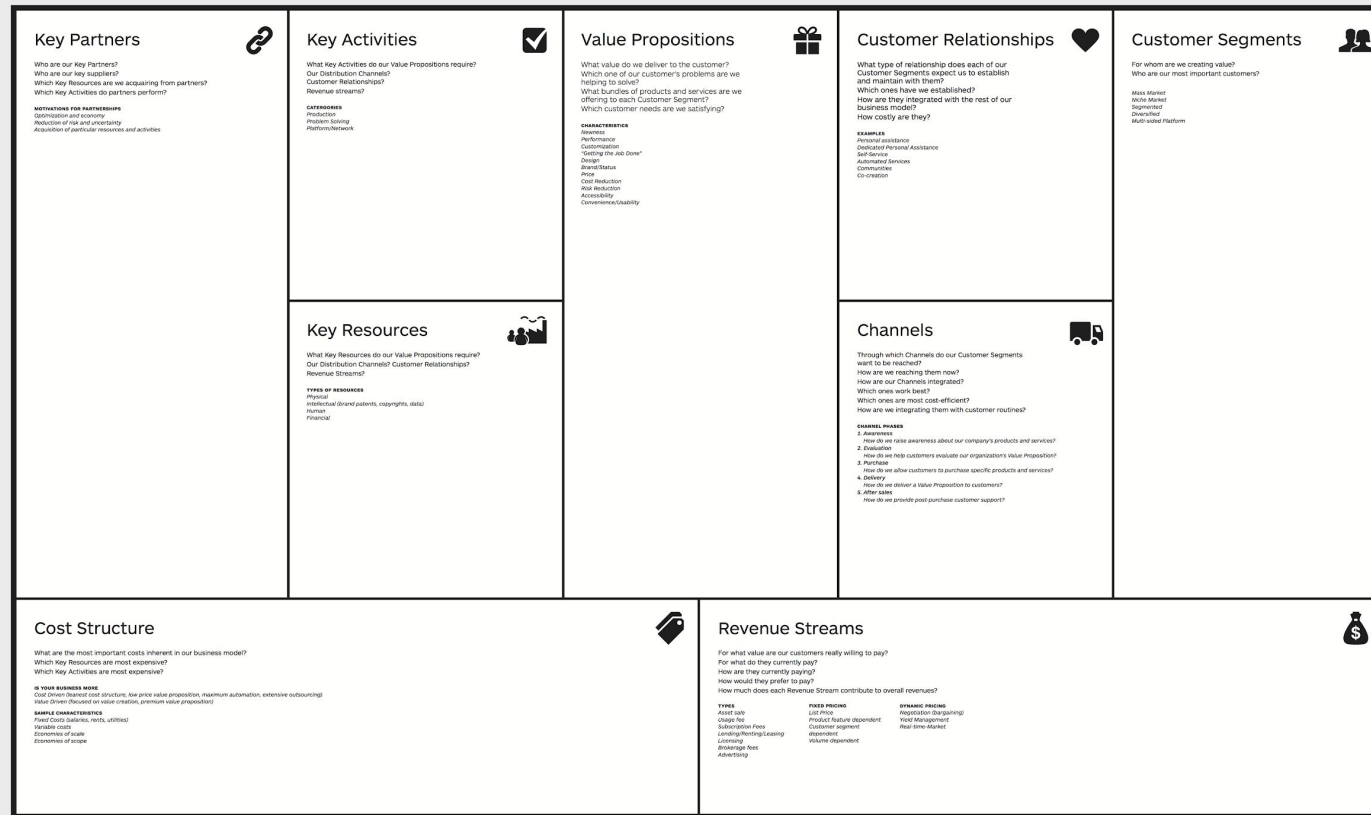
## The Business Model Canvas

Designed for:

Designed by:

Date:

Version:



## Business Model Canvas

- Strategic template for developing / documenting business models
- What is our value proposition?
- What makes us different?
- What are our customers?
- Our key partners?



DESIGNED BY: Business Model Foundry AG

The makers of Business Model Generation and Strategyzer

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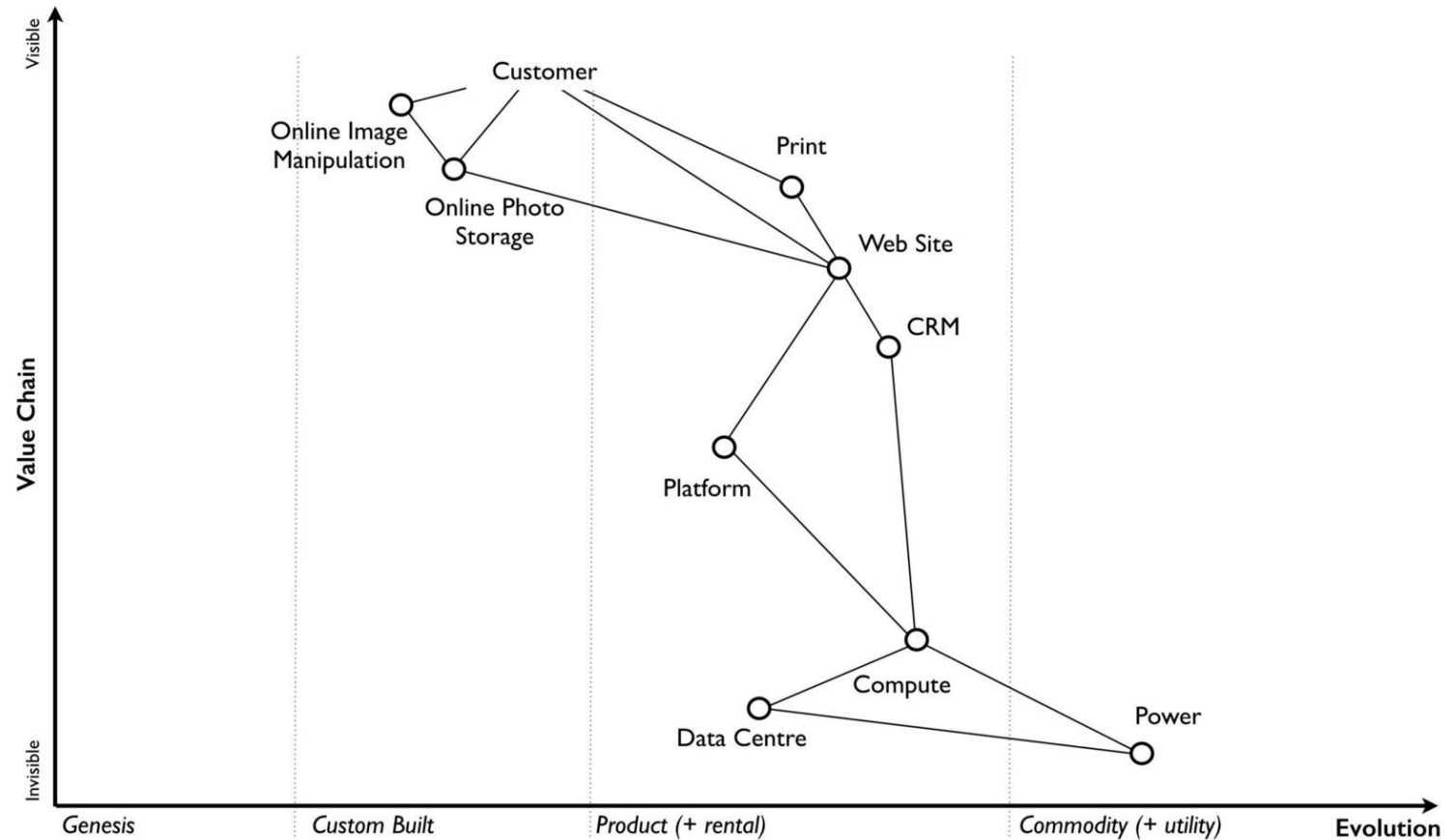
# A shared identity - how did we get there?





## Wardley Mapping

- Map of components needed to serve a customer
- Focus on value proposition
- Stages of evolution
- Actual product / service that we offer
- Connection between service offerings

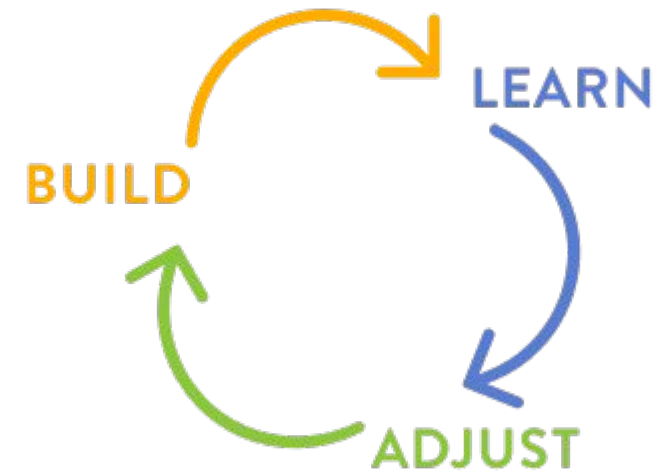




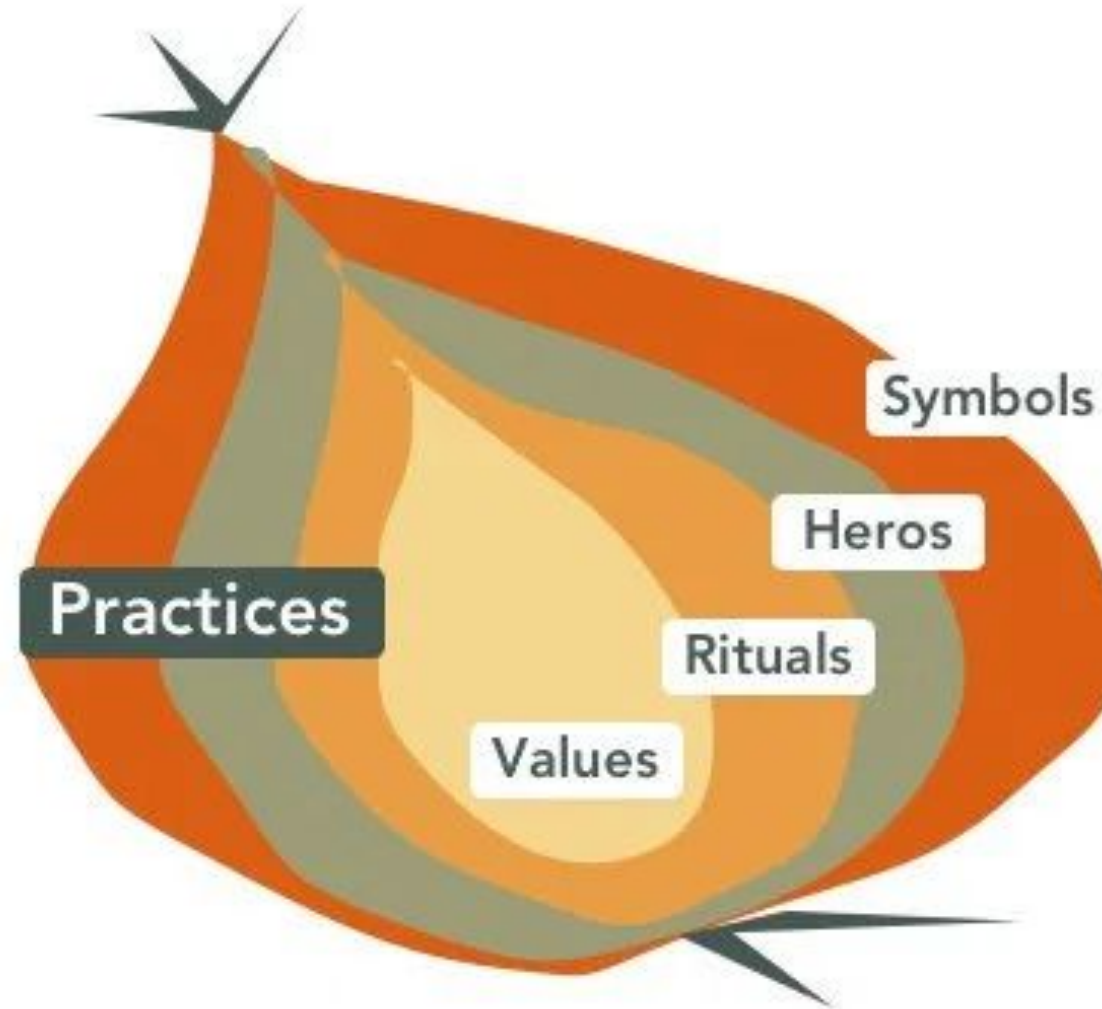


## Identity is fluid and constantly changing

- Teams change, people change, markets change, contexts change...
  - Rinse & repeat
  - Be transparent
- Embrace conflict
  - It will happen. You can only influence how you handle it.
  - Use a facilitator if necessary



# Teams have their own mini-culture



Trompenaar's Onion Model



**Trust is key for high performing teams**

# Why is trust so important?

- Trust helps team members **focus on collective goals** rather than personal interests.
- A lack of trust makes people tend to focus their effort and energy on **defending their personal interests**, rather than supporting the collective goals of the team.
- High levels of trust in **virtual teams** increases the willingness of individuals to **share information and knowledge**.
- Our level of trust within the team is the **foundation** that keeps us connected and high performing.

## How might trust impact team performance?

### WHEN WE TRUST



We expect others to behave positively towards us...



So, we may tolerate more vulnerability & uncertainty...



...and tend to work better with others and stay focused on team goals.

### WHEN WE DON'T TRUST



We might be more suspicious of how others may act towards us...



We can become defensive, trying to reduce our vulnerability...



We may lose sight of team goals and focus on personal interests.



# Trust comes in many different forms

- Team trust
  - Trust at a team level; trust in the team as a whole to achieve its goals. This is ideally shared among all team members
- Interpersonal trust
  - Trust at an individual level, the dynamic and relationship between pairs or subgroups of employees in the team
- Trust and Social Identity Theory
  - We make a distinction between **in-groups (us)**, that we identify with and trust; and **out-groups (them)** that we don't identify with and trust less

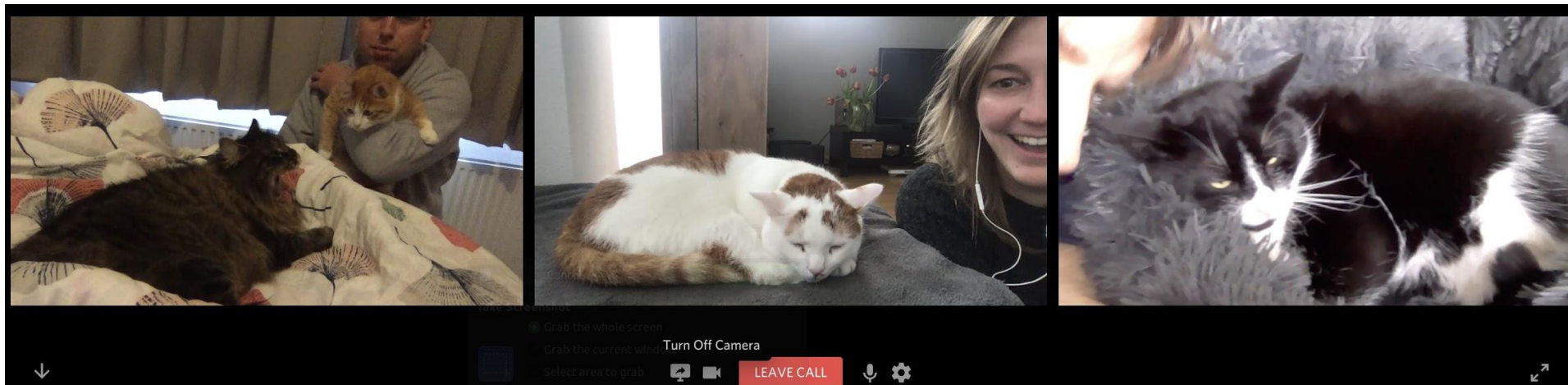
Lesson: there is no one size fits all approach to improve trust.

# Lesson #1: It all starts with acknowledgement

- Recognising and signaling signs of low trust
  - Conflict, sabotage, low morale, low productivity, subgroups not collaborating or just don't seem to get along
  - Make these signals explicit
- Our experience
  - Don't fight (the existence and evolution of) subgroups
  - Acknowledge failure and adjust

## Lesson #2: It's all about personal connections

- Being human. Get to know each other on a personal level
  - Understanding what drives, moves and slows someone down means you can better explain certain behavior and lines of reasoning
  - Helps you overcome cognitive bias
- Dunbar's principle can make it challenging
  - Extend rituals and habits outside your core group
  - Coffee chats and Friday afternoon drinks can also take place virtually
  - Pro tip: share loads of pictures of your cats



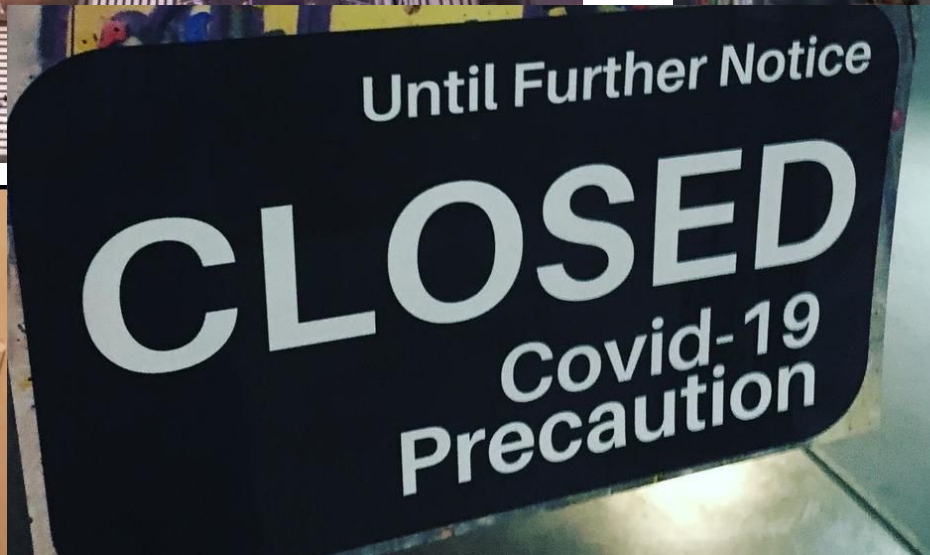
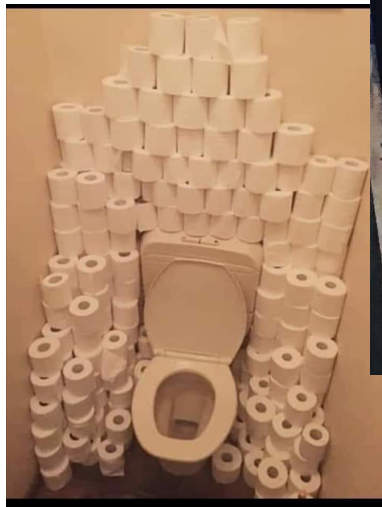
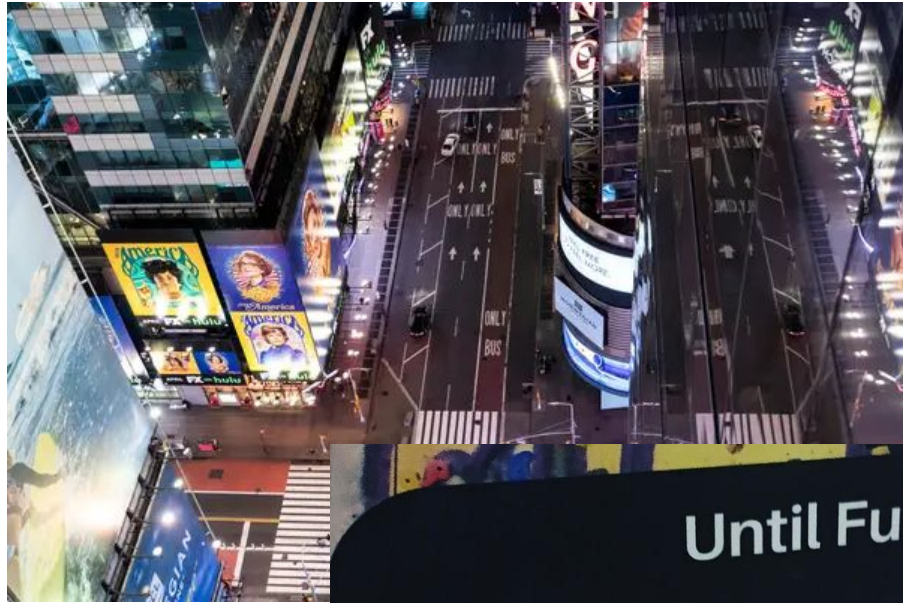


## Lesson #3: Being on the same page about what you're doing is crucial

- Create **and maintain** that social identity and shared sense of reality
  - Be explicit
  - Don't assume
  - Match expectations
  - Ask questions!
- In these times of isolation this is even more important, due to a **lack of social cues** in remote communication
- Our experience
  - Staying connected is now more important than ever
  - Extend and adjust existing rituals

# **Staying connected in times of isolation**

## And than this became the new normal





## How can we stay connected now?

- Daily check-ins; how was your day / weekend
- Be as explicit as you can
  - People will miss small cues and it will be more difficult to ‘read in between the lines’
- Keep sharing your personal stories
- Find ways to have fun and informal conversations with each other
  - Virtual drinks on friday afternoon
  - Online games (Fibbage)
  - Create a virtual coffee corner
- Share pictures of your cats / kids / hobby / ...

## Do you need to do anything different?

- No, do not reinvent the wheel
- Yet, explicitly acknowledge that things *are different* and be creative with findings ways to *deal with it*
- Feedback loops are even *more important*
- Account for social cues being missed, so be conscious about selected media



## Our selection of tools



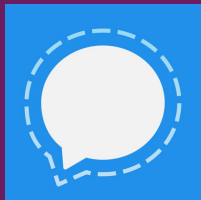
For text / work-related  
communication



For live and always-on  
audio channels



Online collaborative  
visualizations



For personal / coffee talk



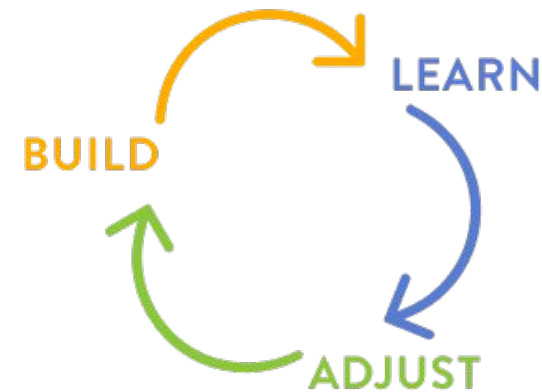
For virtual fun and personal  
connections



Co-editing documents /  
presentations etc.



- Be aware of **the stages that your team goes through** - *Tuckman Model of Team Dynamics*
- Limit your **team size** - *Dunbar Model*
- **Everybody needs to belong** - *Social Identity Theory*
- Discover your **value proposition** - *Business Model Canvas & Wardley Maps*
- **Trust is crucial:**
  - There is no one size fits all
  - Start with acknowledgement
  - Create and maintain personal connections
  - Make sure you're on the same page



Do not reinvent the wheel in times of COVID-19; be transparent, inspect & adapt

# Q&A!

<https://pages.xebia.com/en/help-me-out>

Join our next webinar on April 10<sup>th</sup>

# **SRE in times of remote working**

## Incident management and 24-7 support

By Zakaria Bukhtari





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