

Leading a distributed team out of a war zone

Lessons in resilience
and adaptability





Howdy 🖐️ I'm

Bohdan Product, Commerce & Sales @ Tumblr

- Co-Founder of KOLO (koloua.com)
- Before: Ring (Amazon), ex-founder
- Find me: bohdankit.com / [@bohdan_kit](https://twitter.com/bohdan_kit)

Browser window showing Tumblr.com. The page features a search bar, navigation icons, and a main content area with a post by doopliss. The post is a detailed black and white illustration of a ruined, classical-style building with debris and smoke. A blue button at the bottom of the post says "Now, where were we?". To the right, there is a "Check out these blogs" section with four recommendations: thecollectibles, stinckers, 50watts, and alabasterpizzo. Below that is a "Radars" section featuring a post by faun-buns with an anime-style character illustration and 3,029 notes. At the bottom, a "Sponsored" section is partially visible.



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Explore all of Tumblr

Radars



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Tip

3,029 notes



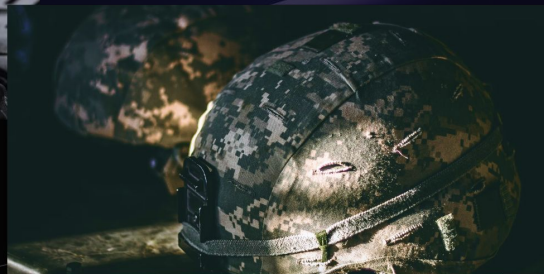
Sponsored

Wanna go ad-free?



KOLO

rapid
assistance
fund



5AM Wake-Up Call

On February 24, my phone rang with a call that signaled Russian invasion of Ukraine.



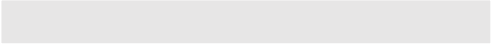
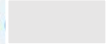


Bohdan Kit  2 years ago

Hi everyone!

Today, at 5am local time, Russia launched a series of ballistic missiles at our military bases, airports, and critical infrastructure points. We heard sirens and explosions in Kyiv first time since the end of the Cold War.

I'll have to take some AFK time to make sure my closed ones are safe.

Please contact  for anything urgent.  is a contact point for Tumblr AFB.

Will keep you posted on the development





**From a nightclub to a bomb
shelter...**

From a shower to a
sleeping mattress to
stay safe





From a balcony to a
fireplace to cook food



To a constant news stream of lost lives, dreams, and destruction.



But The World
Did Not Stop...



THIS EXPERIENCE
CAN BE YOURS
FOR THE PRICE OF

\$39.99
a year

or **\$4.99**
a month

TUMBLR DASHBOARD SQUEEGEE

NEW!
Remove all the
ads from your
dashboard on
desktop and the
mobile app!



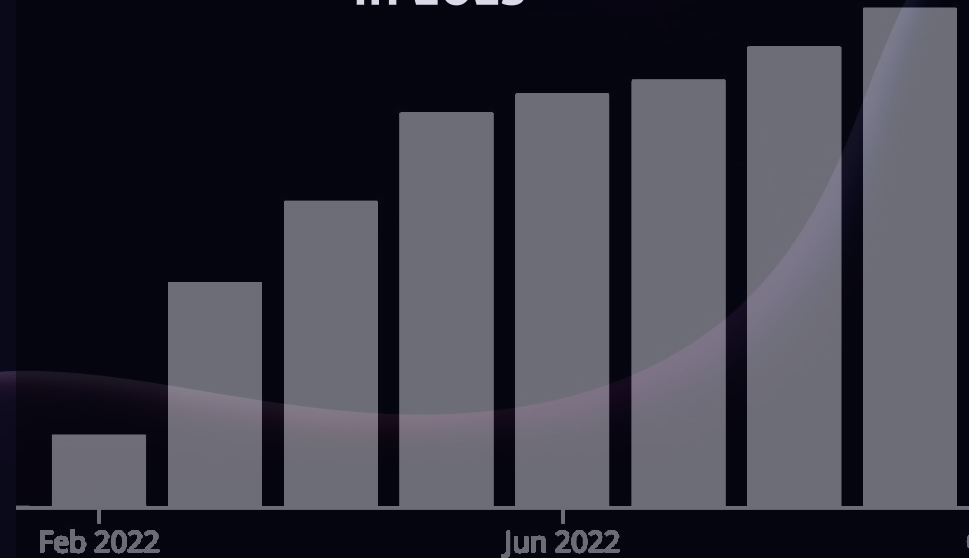
THIS REVOLUTIONARY PRODUCT IS
BROUGHT TO YOU BY
TUMBLR AD-FREE BROWSING



0:00

The next year, we had a whole new revenue stream generating millions in revenue.

**Up +78% YoY
in 2023**





How can you accomplish anything when
everything is falling apart?

We overrate complexity and underrate
simplicity.

Start building your team's resilience *today*.

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

Chinese Proverb



How to Build Team

Culture of Ownership 🧡

Artifacts & Tools: Clear individual expectations, project objectives; Measures of success and failure. Coaching and provision of autonomy.

Collaboration & Cohesion 🎯

Artifacts & Tools: Synchronous and asynchronous team rituals & activities; Collaborative working agreements; In-person meetings and activities.

Public-by-Default Communication 📖

Artifacts & Tools: Open communication channels; clear documentation of products, services, and processes.

How do you cultivate the culture of ownership?

“Clarity of expectations is perhaps the most basic of employee needs and is vital to performance” - *Gallup*

Pillars of Clarity and Ownership



Team Direction

Use the 5 Whys to get to the core of your team's purpose.



Role Expectations





Augment your company's broader expectations.



Check-Ins & Support

Ensure accountability through feedback and support interventions.

Examples of Artifacts – Team OS

Pages				New page
Title		Contributors	Last update	
▼ Subscriptions TeamOS			December 23, 2022	...
Expectations for a Subscriptionizer			December 6, 2021	...
Subscriptions Team Processes			January 31, 2023	...
How we use P2 and Project Threads			November 28, 2022	...

Examples of Artifacts — Docs

Pages / Subscriptions TeamOS

Expectations for a Subscriptionizer

Every a11n has some great resources — our [creed](#) and [expectations](#) — to get to know or remind themselves about our company's culture. We are taking it one step forward and listing our team member expectations to help you navigate our own realm.

If you are part of the Tumblr Subscriptions team:

- contribute meaningfully to the team's product work through ideation, solution design, programming, etc., in appropriate media ([Slack](#), [P2](#), [team calls](#) and [GitHub PRs](#)).
- exhibit resourcefulness, independent action, and professional judgment by interpreting your own day-to-day work from priorities set by a team lead.
- proactively communicate your progress through daily Geekbot stand-ups, [JIRA](#) ticket statuses, and biweekly team updates.
- collaborate effectively by offering ideas, challenging opinions, or disagreeing but committing to an alternative approach if/when the team decides it is needed.
- strive to improve work performance by actively seeking out feedback and integrating it into your work; provide feedback to teammates and a team lead to help them grow too.

Pages / Subscriptions TeamOS

Subscriptions Team Processes

Communication Tools & Updates

- We run [bi-weekly](#) updates on our team [P2](#), which connect to [company-wide updates every other Thursday](#). Make sure you provide your updates and anything else you'd like to share with the team when pinged on these posts! [Here is how it works](#).
 - [My Day is a useful tool](#) to remind yourself of what you have worked on for the past two weeks. It pulls inputs from [P2](#), [GitHub](#), [Phabricator](#), and support chats.
 - [Team Activity](#) is great for staying up to date with your team members' work, comments, and replies.
- Communicate about your work often. It is important to keep [JIRA](#) tickets accurately updated as you work through the lifecycle (*In Progress, In Review, Completed*). It helps everyone track sprints and project statuses.
 - ▲ The only exception is [JIRA](#) comments for internal discussion. If you need clarification from a teammate, it's better to use [P2](#) or [Slack](#). You still may get comment pings from [Support](#) and your [PR](#) reviewers.

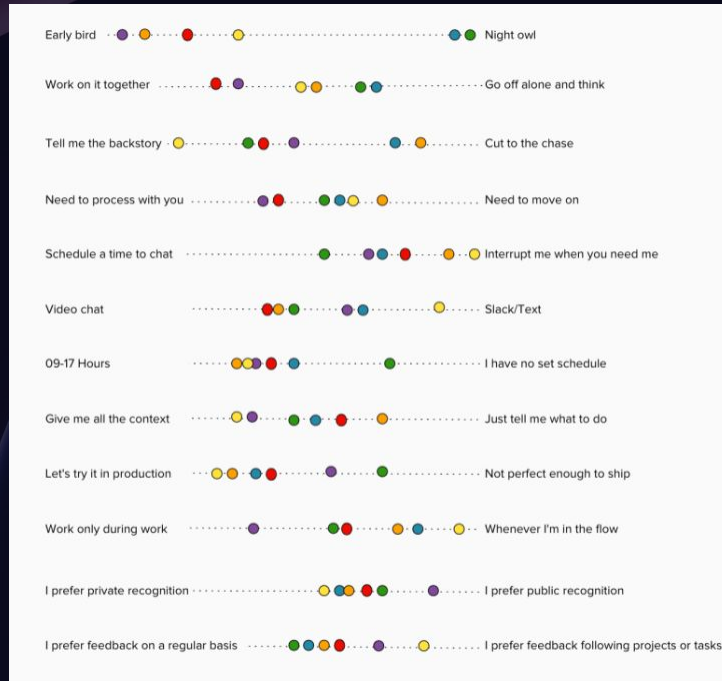
The background is a dark blue gradient with several large, overlapping, wavy shapes in a slightly lighter shade of blue, creating a sense of depth and movement. The text is centered in the middle of the frame.

How do you facilitate collaboration and ensure team cohesion?

The 3 Qs of Collaboration & Cohesion

- 1 How well do you know your team members?
- 2 Do you have a set of mutually-agreed upon work principles?
- 3 Do you celebrate wins and engage in bonding activities?

Tools: Operator's Manual / How We Roll

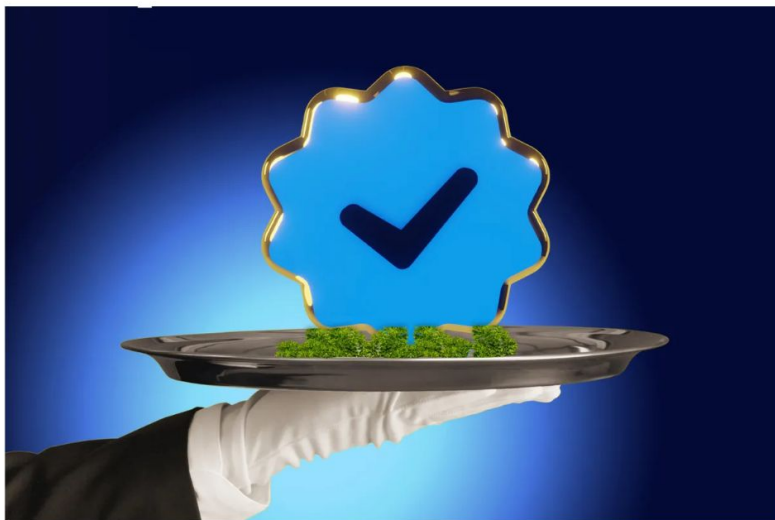


In-Person Meetups



TUMBLR / TECH / WEB

Tumblr will sell you two useless blue check marks for \$8



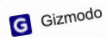
You actually get two of these. Image: Tumblr

/ 'The Important Blue Internet Checkmark may turn into a bunch of crabs at any time.'

By [Adi Robertson](#), a senior tech and policy editor focused on VR, online platforms, and free expression. Adi has covered video games, biohacking, and more for The Verge since 2011.

Nov 10, 2022, 11:12 PM GMT+2 | [7 Comments](#) / [7 New](#)



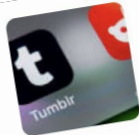


Gizmodo

Tumblr's Blue Checkmark Parody Actually Made Them Money

Tumblr introduced a parody subscription service based on Twitter's blue checkmark option, bringing in an unexpected increase in revenue.

21 Feb 2023



The Atlantic

Tumblr Gets the Last Laugh

After haggling with the author Stephen King (don't worry about it), Elon Musk, the new owner of Twitter, decided that Twitter users would...

18 Nov 2022



Mashable

Tumblr's Twitter-parody blue checks have actually boosted its revenue

Back in November 2022, Tumblr saw an opportunity in Twitter's blue-check verification scheme. Parodying the \$8 blue check offered by Elon...

22 Feb 2023



BroBible

Tumblr Made A Ton Of Money By Selling Useless Checkmarks To Its Users

Tumblr was able to generate a ton of money thanks to users who paid for a checkmark that is literally meaningless.

22 Feb 2023

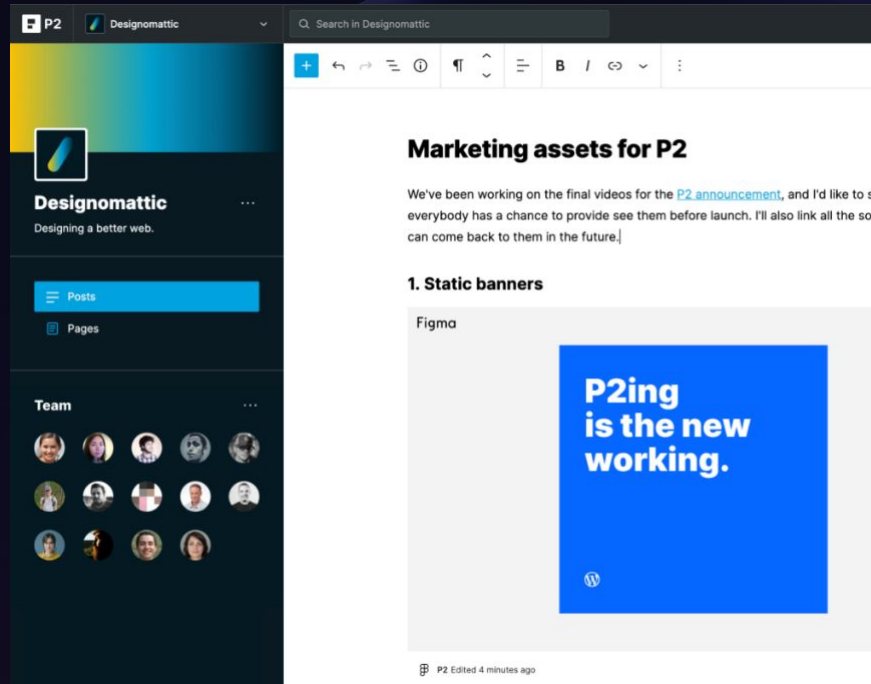


How do you communicate
publicly by default?

Principles of public-by-default communication

- 1 Async long-form > async short-form > synchronous
- 2 Public > private
- 3 No documented artifact === lost knowledge

We communicate in a shared workspace,
accessible by our entire team called P2



But how much is team resilience *worth* if leaders do not model it themselves?

Fortify Personal Grit



1

Embrace Vulnerability

Dare to share. Transform stress into strength by sharing and normalizing the emotional hustle.

2


Optimize Decision Stamina

Think sharp, stay smart. Reserve your mental energy for the big plays and demystify the rationale behind them to empower others.

3

Champion Self-Care

Recharge to lead. Strategically pause to empower your pace. Craft self-care rituals that boost resilience and unleash efficiency.



Embrace vulnerability
→ Show strength in
broadcasting your battles





Optimize Decision Stamina
→ Play to Your Strengths

2023 Team Priorities Tracker



Bohdan Kit

3:24 pm on April 12, 2023

Q1 2023 came to a swift end. We've had several good launches that helped us increase the number of users and drive revenue. We were also successful in launching TumblrMart. The team is currently working on pursuing. Tre:

Tumblr Subscriptions 2022 Strategy



Bohdan Kit

7:54 pm on December 2, 2021

Two equally skillful chess players sit waiting for the game to begin — which one has the advantage? ...The answer to this question is "neither", because advantage is rooted in differences — in the asymmetries among rivals.

— Richard Rumelt, Good Strategy Bad Strategy

PRD: Tumblr Tipping



Bohdan Kit

8:06 pm on September 3, 2021

TL;DR: This P2 post defines the end-to-end user experience for Tipping, setting targets for delivery and launch. Treat it as a living document.

NEW

Req #12: Minors won't be able to use tipping.

IMPROVED

Req #4: Anonymous tipping option added.

IMPROVED

Req #6: Custom tipping amounts will be available on the Web.



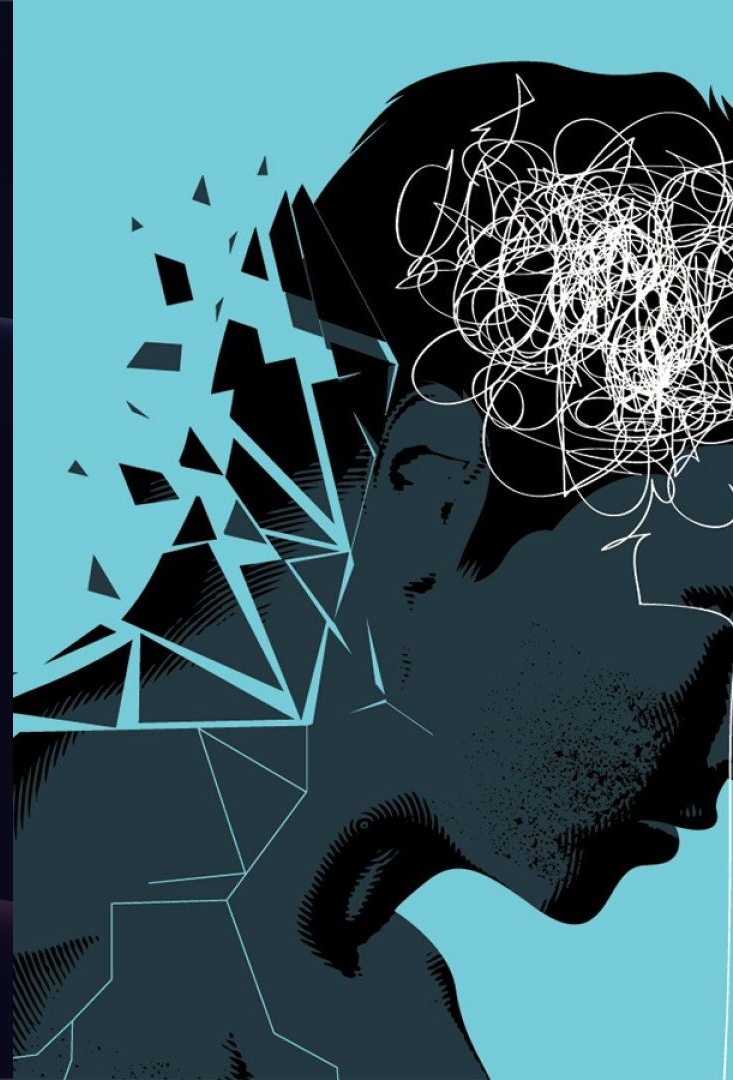
Champion Self-Care →
Recharge Rituals

How do you spend your time?



My Recharge Regimen

- Regular Exercise + Sleep
- Breathing exercises: Cycling Sighing + Box Breathing
- Peer Support
- Executive Coaching
- Mindset shift: *"Doing what I can where I can with what I've got".*



Takeaways

- 1 Build your team's resilience starting today.
- 2 Make sure you model resilience yourself.
- 3 Fortify your grit.
- 4 Invest in a self-care system.



You can't command the outcome, but you surely can take care of the inputs.



Thank You!

Support Ukraine through KOLO!



bohthankit.com / [@bohdan_kit](https://twitter.com/bohdan_kit)