

Rebuilding the Kitchen



Designing Human Connection
in Distributed Teams



2019







2022

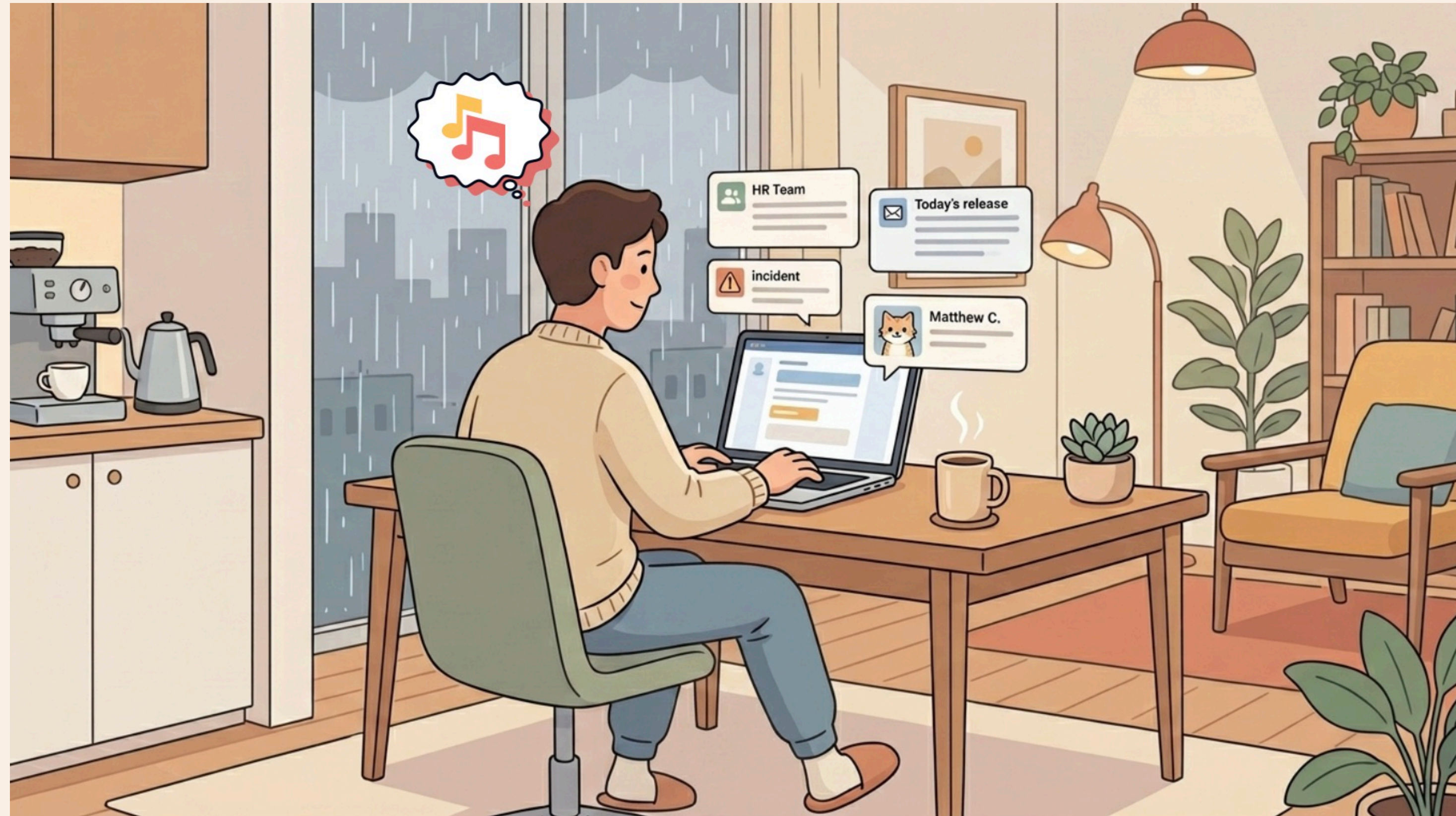




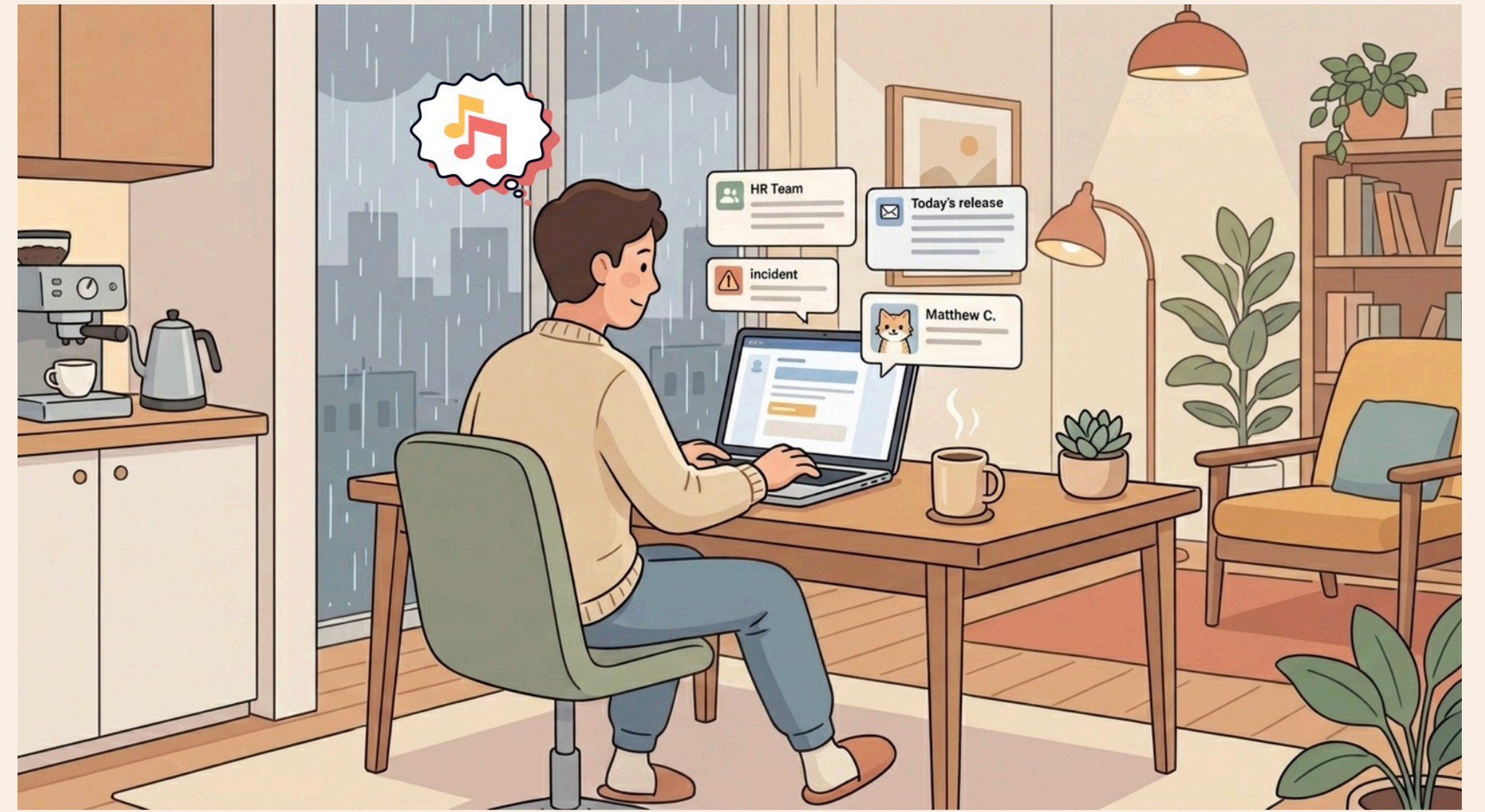




Productive. Focused. Efficient.



It's an engineer's dream. Right?



If both setups work... what are we missing?



We lost early signals



We lost early signals



We lost context



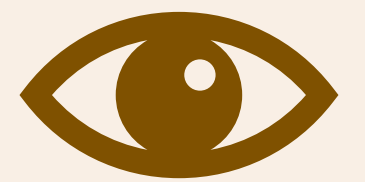
We lost early signals



We lost context



We lost visibility



~~Tools~~

~~Meetings~~

KITCHEN

~~Tools~~

~~Meetings~~

SPACE

We Engineer Everything...

...Except Connection

The Kitchen Won't Rebuild Itself





Natalia Nazaruk

Engineering Squad Lead @ Kingfisher



8 → 30 engineers



20+ hires



Europe + Asia

Built, split, and scaled distributed teams.



SCREWFIX



castorama



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castorama

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

Visibility
Without Surveillance

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

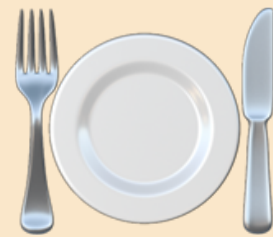
Visibility
Without Surveillance



The Tools

Rituals for Connection

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

Visibility
Without Surveillance



The Tools

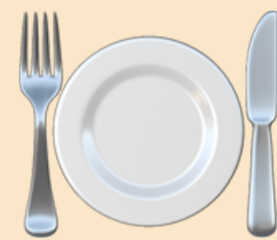
Rituals for Connection



The Spice

The Human Layer

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

Visibility
Without Surveillance



The Tools

Rituals for Connection



The Spice

The Human Layer



The Fridge

Shared Reality

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

Visibility
Without Surveillance



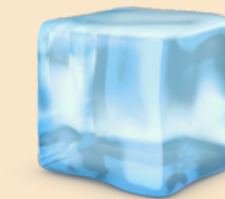
The Tools

Rituals for Connection



The Spice

The Human Layer



The Fridge

Shared Reality



The Floorplan

Designing for Growth



The Table

Early signals ● ● ●
Context ● ● ●
Visibility ● ● ●





The Table

Early signals ● ● ●
Context ● ● ●
Visibility ● ● ●



Visibility is only useful
if it is cheap to consume.

Otherwise it becomes noise.

117 emails

153 messages

2 minutes

That's not clarity.

That's communication **debt**.

The Table

 **One visible place for progress**

 **Push urgent things, don't push everything**

 **Protect focus from communication debt**

The Table

 **One visible place for progress**

 **Push urgent things, don't push everything**

 **Protect focus from communication debt**

The Table

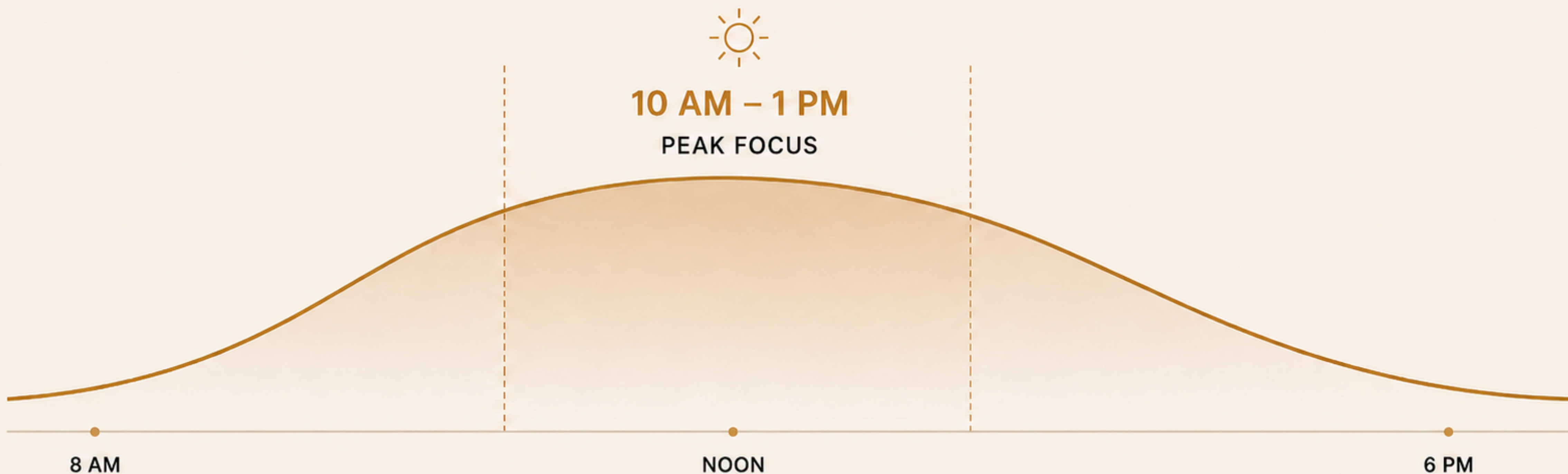
 **One visible place for progress**

 **Push urgent things, don't push everything**

 **Protect focus from communication debt**

Protect focus time

Cognitive performance peaks in the late morning. **10 AM – 1 PM.**



Protect this time from meeting noise.

True visibility should reduce
effort, not increase it.



The Tools

Early signals ● ● ●

Context ● ● ●

Visibility ● ● ●





Social rituals

Optional,
never forced



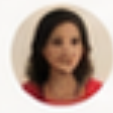
Shared social spaces

Show up
there yourself





Open-door sessions

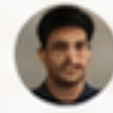
Optional,
but real

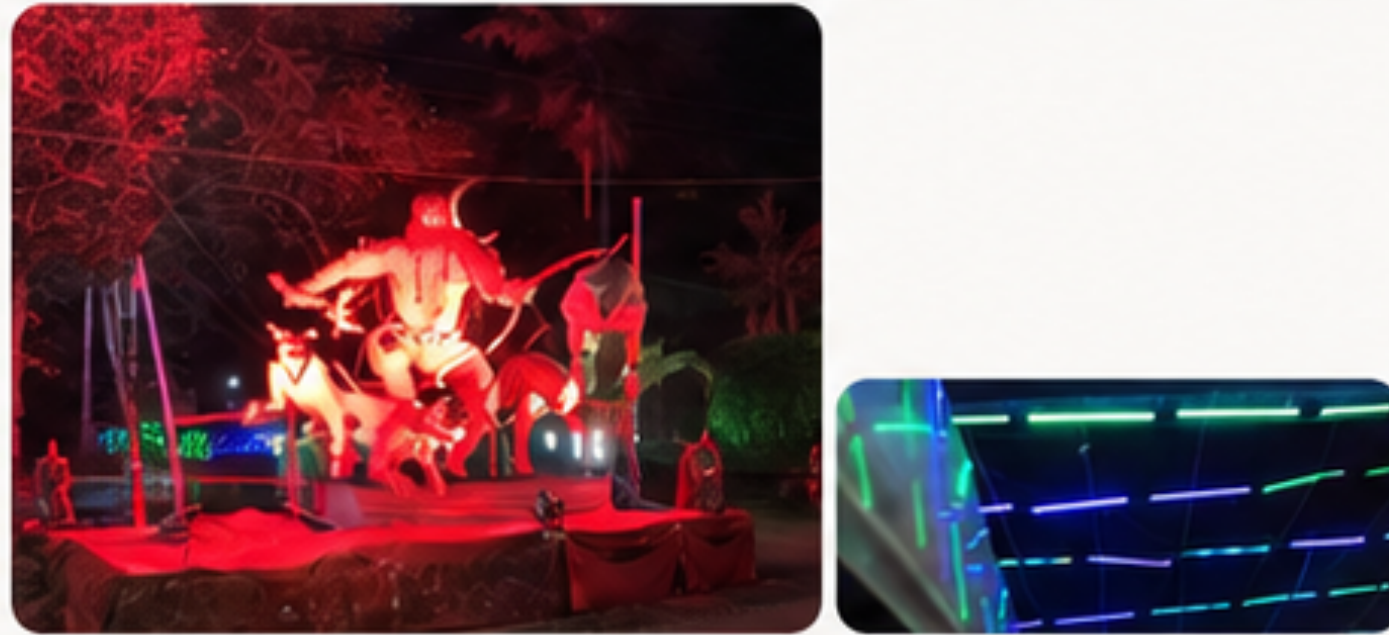
 **Maya**
Yesterday at 7:42 AM



And that's also great opportunity to do what I really like –
take pics of planes 😊

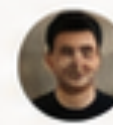


 14  3

 **Arjun**
Yesterday at 9:18 PM






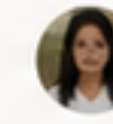
 9  2

 **Rohan**
Thursday at 8:47 PM



big yawn and bonsai development



 12  4 

 **Leena**
Friday at 3:21 PM

The Friday pet picture contest is open 😊



Submit your photos 🐱

 12 

These spaces are sensors



Emotional signals

- quieter chat
- less humour
- less sharing



Operational signals

- more ad hoc meetings
- more urgent messages
- the same people unblock others

Signals are worth exploring — usually in a 1:1, not in the channel.

These spaces are sensors



Emotional signals

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Operational signals

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The Spice

Early signals ● ● ●

Context ● ● ●

Visibility ● ● ●



The Spice



Trust
before updates



Model
the norms



Repeat
what matters



I BUILD TRUST ON 1:1



BE HONEST



I AM BEING HONEST



**OK, I MOSTLY
ASK FOR STATUS UPDATES**



THANK YOU



I BUILD TRUST ON 1:1



BE HONEST



I AM BEING HONEST



**OK, I MOSTLY
ASK FOR STATUS UPDATES**



THANK YOU

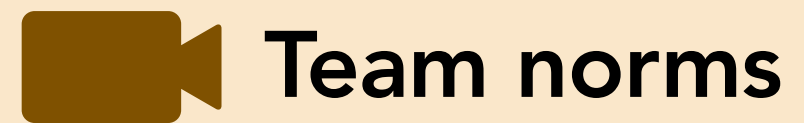
Use 1:1s to build trust,
build a relationship, and get to
know the person.

Trust = insurance

The Spice



Trust
before updates



Model
the norms



Repeat
what matters

Ownership, communication,
Helping each other

As a leader, you need to help
shape the norms — and of
course model them yourself.

The Spice



Trust
before updates



Model
the norms



Repeat
what matters

Without psychological safety,
people **stop speaking up.**

And **risks** stay invisible.



The Fridge

Early signals ● ● ●

Context ● ● ●

Visibility ● ● ●



Create shared reality

Create **shared reality**

Knowledge that stays
in people's heads does **not scale**



Make knowledge self-service



“

It matters less who knows. What matters more is whether people know where to look.



Record decisions with reasoning



“

A decision helps in the moment. The reasoning behind it helps everyone later.

RFC: Restructuring the Team – Q1 2026

Overview

This RFC proposes a restructuring of the team to better align our capabilities with evolving priorities and our vision to 2030. This goal, across all roles and capabilities, the restructuring will be a positive outcome for the team to achieve our vision.

1. Context

The business landscape is evolving rapidly, driven by new customer expectations, emerging technologies, and increased market complexity.

Our current team structure was designed for a different operating model and no longer enables the speed, collaboration to clarity of ownership, clarity of ownership delivering value.

This RFC outlines a proposed restructuring to simplify how we work, strengthen cross-functional capabilities and positioning the team for sustainable performance and long-term impact.



Reduce knowledge bottlenecks



“

Strong people should not have to compensate for weak design.



Reduce knowledge bottlenecks



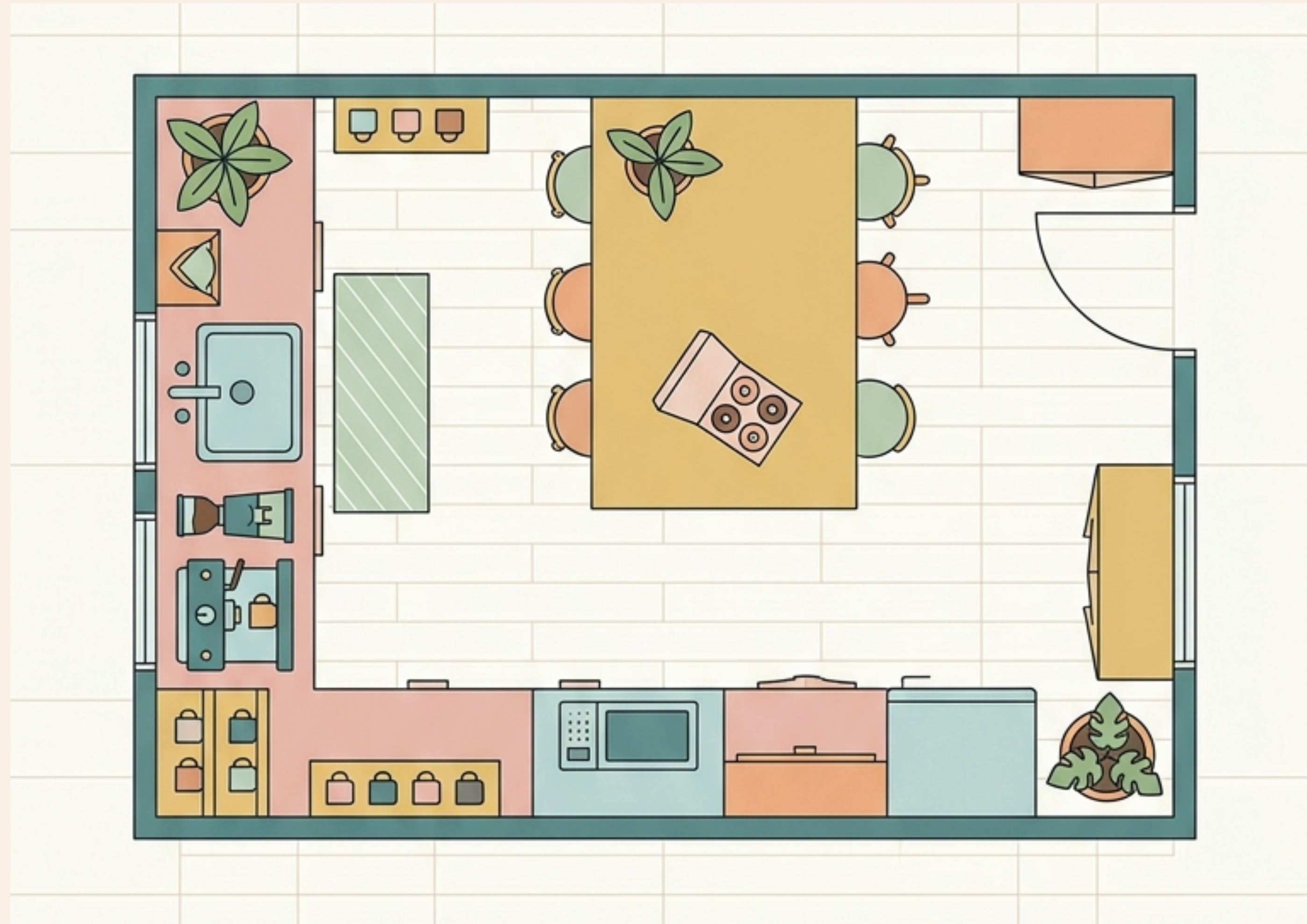
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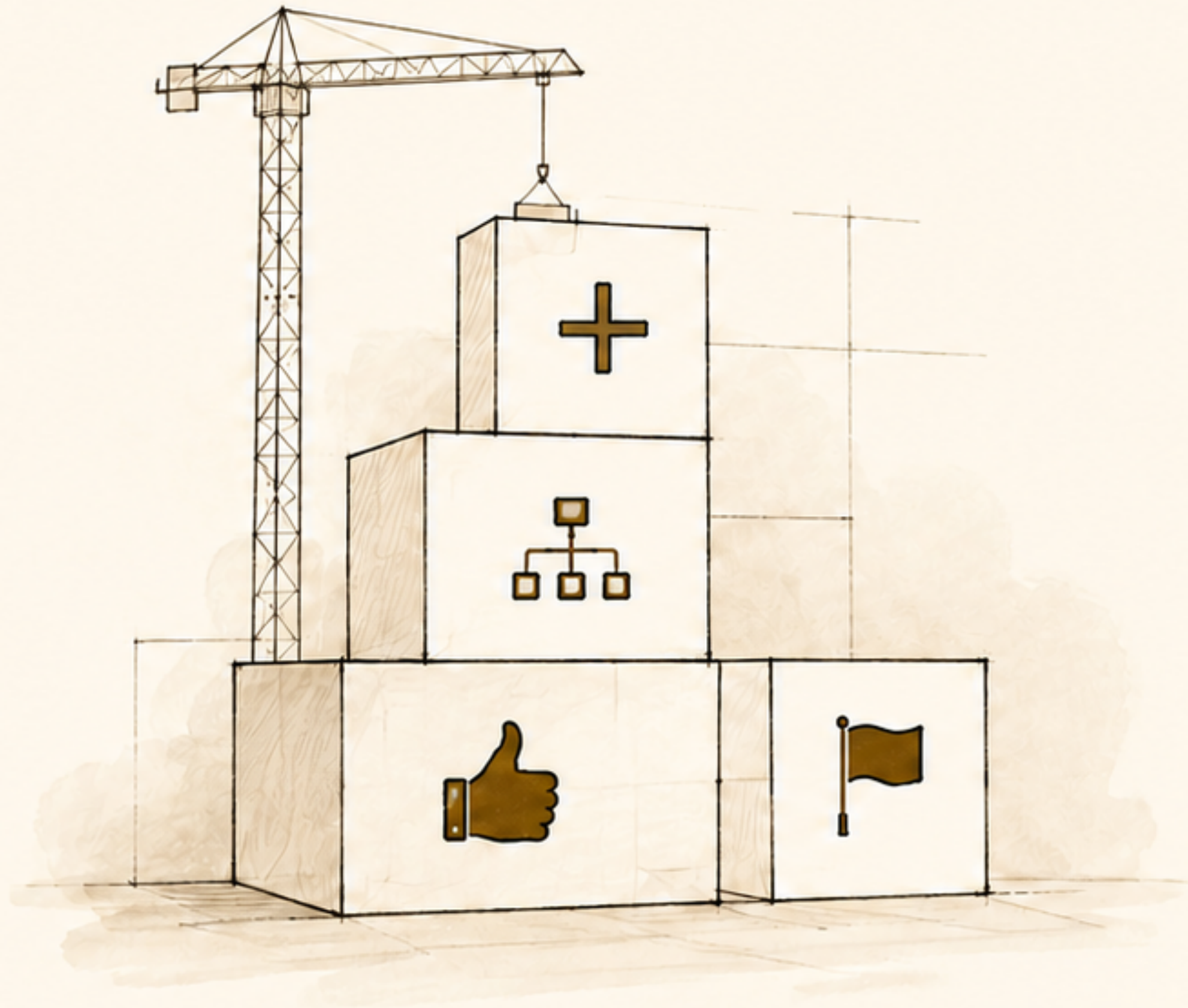
The Floorplan

Early signals ● ● ●
Context ● ● ●
Visibility ● ● ●

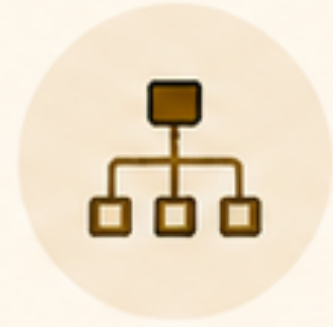


Designing for Growth

As teams grow, culture needs architecture.



Start culture in onboarding



Make team interactions explicit



Scale principles, not meetings



Build one culture across many countries

Onboarding That Makes an Impact

Three simple steps to start strong.



Preboarding

Email early,
assign a buddy



You are one of us

Warm welcome



Make culture clear

Ownership,
feedback, openness

Onboarding That Makes an Impact

Three simple steps to start strong.



Preboarding

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Ownership,
feedback, openness



The next challenge is scale.

When teams grow, alignment is
no longer automatic.

When teams grow — make dependencies explicit

Clear interaction modes reduce friction.



When teams grow — make dependencies explicit

Clear interaction modes reduce friction.

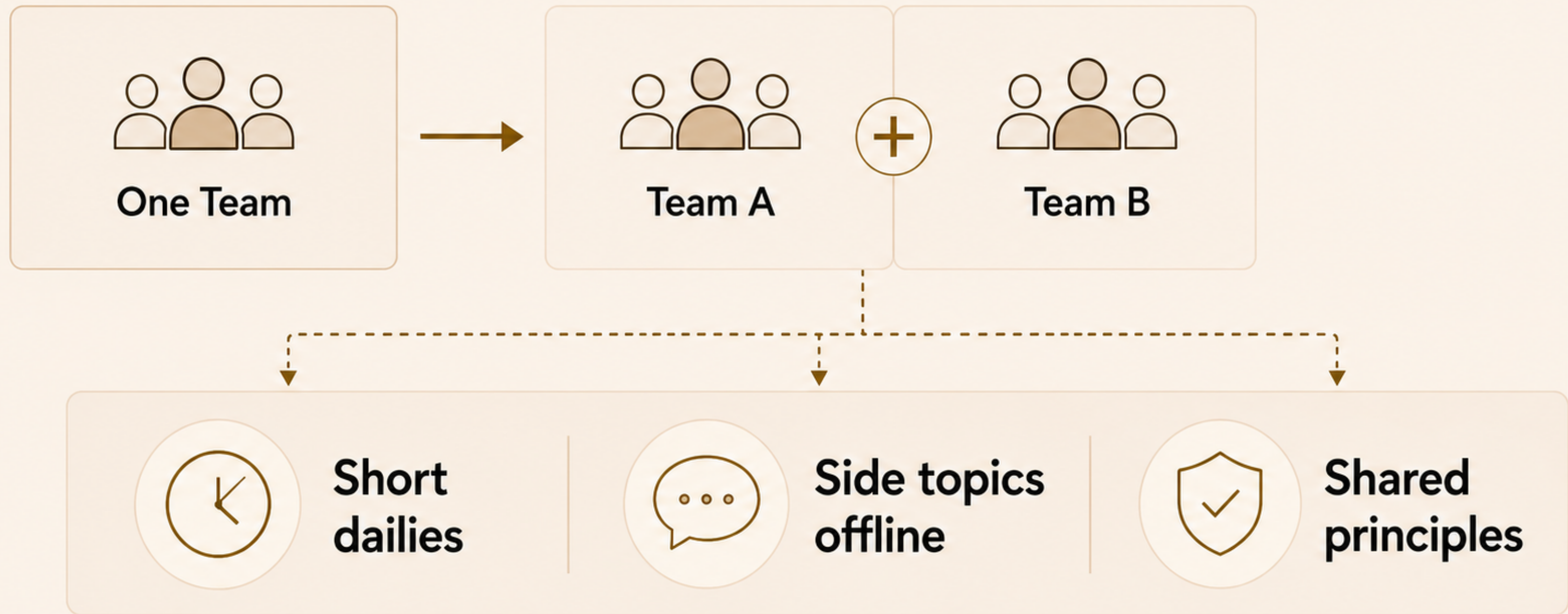


One of a leader's jobs at scale is to
make **team dependencies** clear.

This helps to **align** on goals.

When teams grow — lighten the rituals

Scale shared principles, not identical habits.



When teams grow — align leaders

People need consistent signals.



One Team, Many Cultures



Learn the differences

Understand diverse perspectives



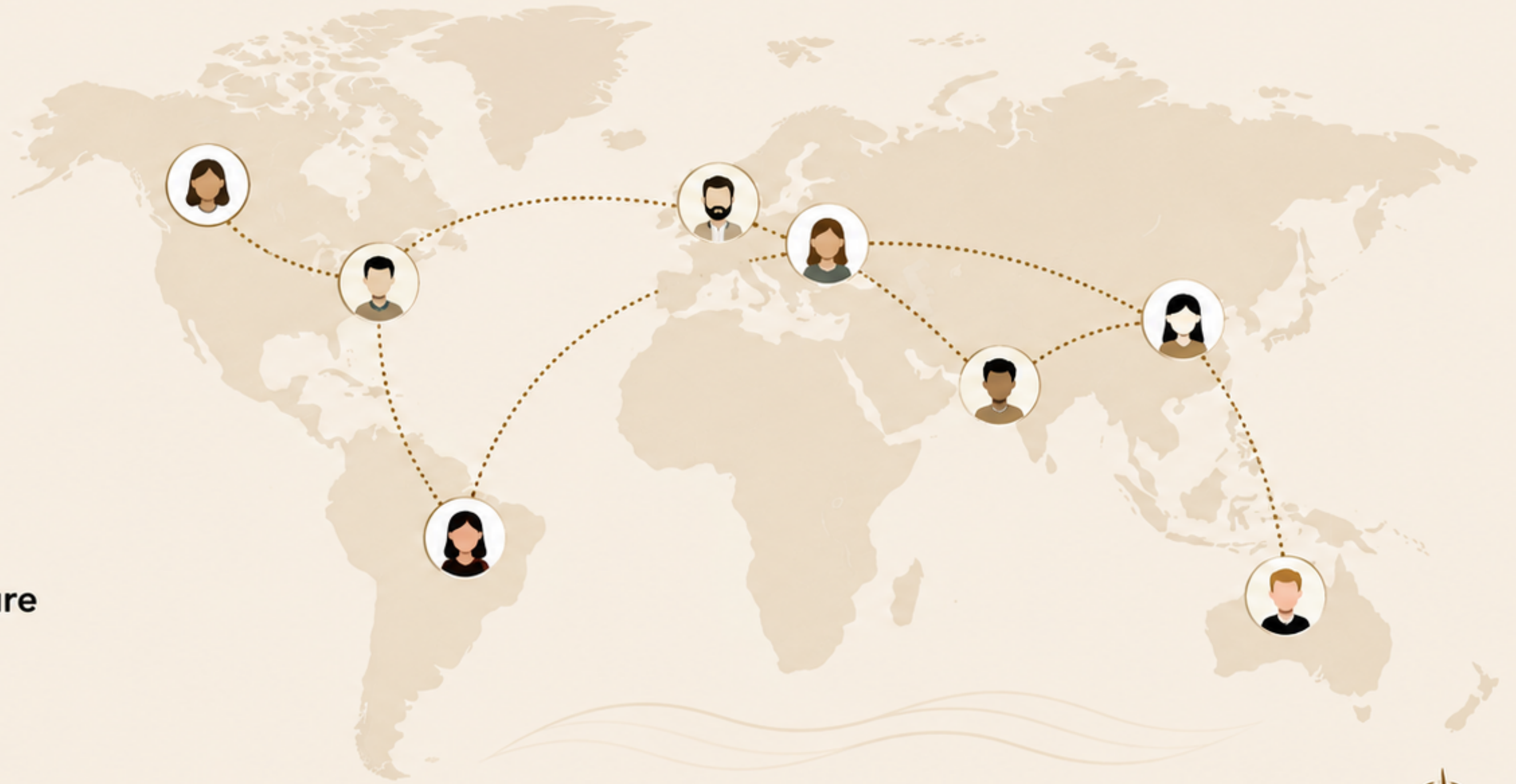
Design against silos

Build systems that connect, not divide



Keep one shared culture

Shared principles, aligned leaders



One team, not country silos



You don't need identical people everywhere.

You need shared principles, shared expectations, and aligned leaders.

A useful lens
for understanding
different defaults

"Whether you are sitting at a desk in Boston or eating at a restaurant in Beijing, communicating across cultures is the great challenge of the global economy... Erin Meyer shows you how to get it right in this very important book."
—DES DEARLOVE and STUART CRAINER, Founders of the Thinkers50

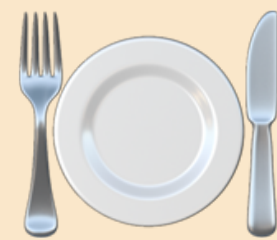
THE CULTURE MAP



DECODING HOW PEOPLE THINK,
LEAD, AND GET THINGS DONE
ACROSS CULTURES

ERIN MEYER

Rebuilding the Kitchen: 5 Elements



The Table

Visibility
Without Surveillance



The Tools

Rituals for Connection



The Spice

The Human Layer



The Fridge

Shared Reality



The Floorplan

Designing for Growth

Rebuilding the conditions for **connection**

2026

Monday Morning

I open my laptop.

Matthieu's photos from a trip with his kids

Someone wishes Dawid a happy work anniversary

Filip shares code cleanup progress in the #tech-debt chat

I join the daily: smiling faces...



...and Andreea's cat is walking across the screen.

Remote work didn't take our kitchen away.

It forced us to become its **architects**.



Every Leader Builds a Kitchen

Remote work didn't take our kitchen away.

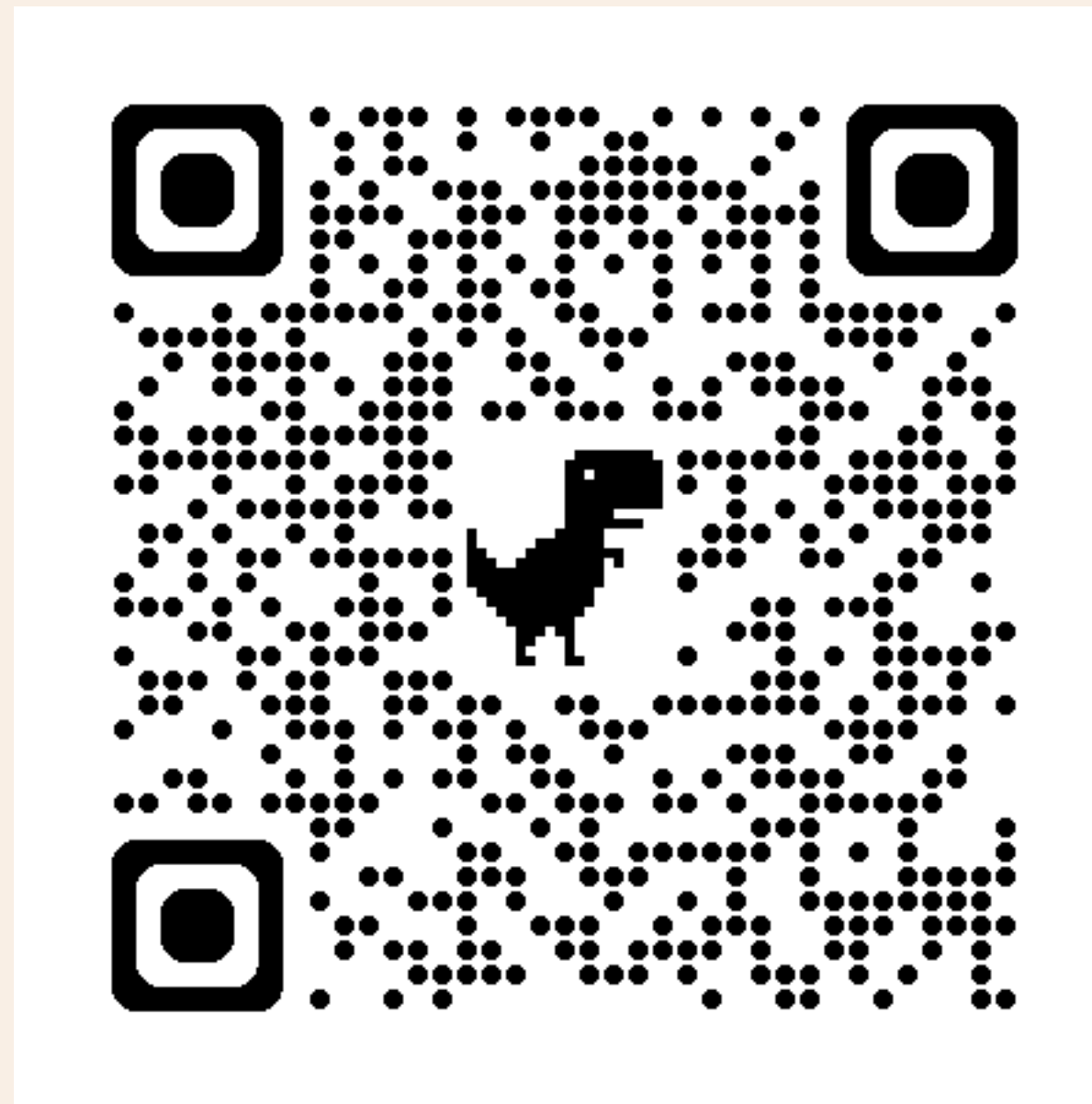
It forced us to become its **architects**.

Every Leader Builds a Kitchen

This week: pick **ONE** element — the table, the tools, or the spice — and design it intentionally.

Just one.

Thank You



Scan for a quick team check-up

<https://tally.so/r/EkZQBr>