

Inspire Your Remote Workforce

How Evernote Europe Boosted its Team Productivity - and Happiness

Dr. Beat Bühlmann

General Manager
EVERNOTE EMEA

Agenda

- Why a virtual team driver's license?
- What makes for a successful virtual team?
- Example Evernote EMEA: how we work
- How to hire virtual team members

Why a virtual team driver's license?



Why?

- $\frac{2}{3}$ of experienced people managers fail in their first virtual team setting
- might there be science behind virtual team management (VTM)?

What makes for a successful virtual team?



Understanding the meaning of a team

Katzenbach & Smith (1993) define team as:

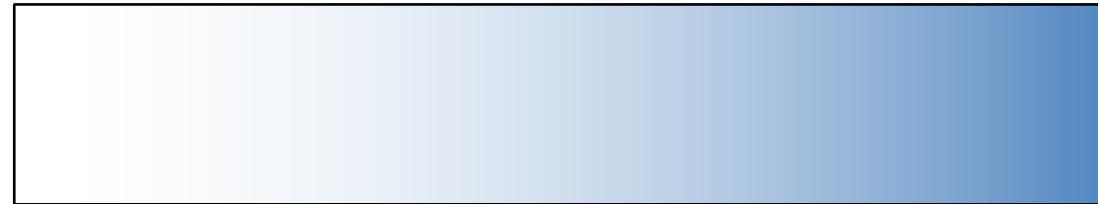
- small number of people
- with complementary skills
- who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach
- for which they are mutually accountable

Understanding virtualness

Characteristic	Description
Phone or Electronically Mediated Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone, mobile phone (incl. short message system SMS), telefax, phone and/or video conferencing, email, instant messaging (also called chat), electronic white board, groupware (e.g. Lotus Notes), knowledge management system
Geographical Dispersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different offices, buildings, cities, states, countries, continents
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All the same mother tongue (native language, first language) - Different mother tongues but using a common team language (e.g. English) agreed on from the beginning - Different mother tongues, no defined team language (translations needed)
Culture / Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All the same culture/religion - Different cultures/religions
Face-to-Face Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, undefined, never
Processes / Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not defined - Loosely defined - Partially defined - Clearly and strictly defined
Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not defined - Defined tasks, shared outcome, interdependent members
Time Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All in the same time zone - Some in different time zones - All in different time zones
Duration of Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short-term, mid-term, long-term, permanent

Understanding degree of virtualness

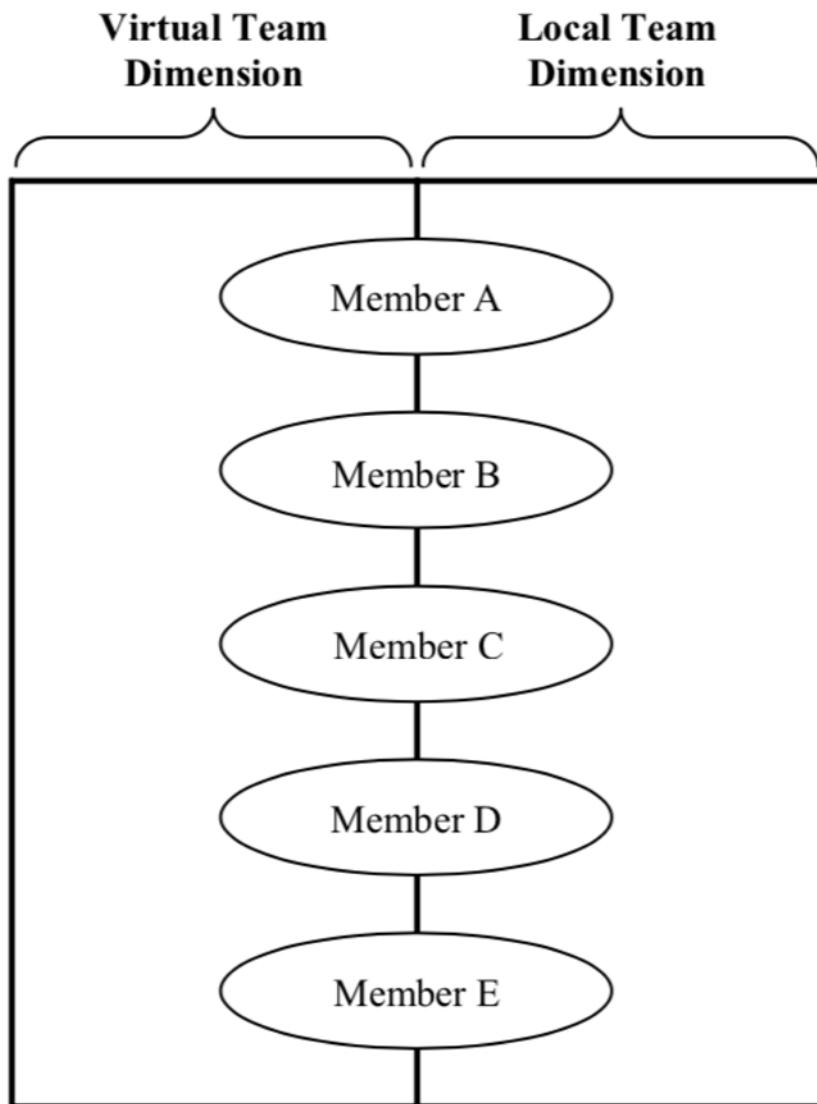
- Virtuality can be seen as a continuum
(Gibson & Cohen, 2003)
- Ranging from slightly virtual to entirely virtual



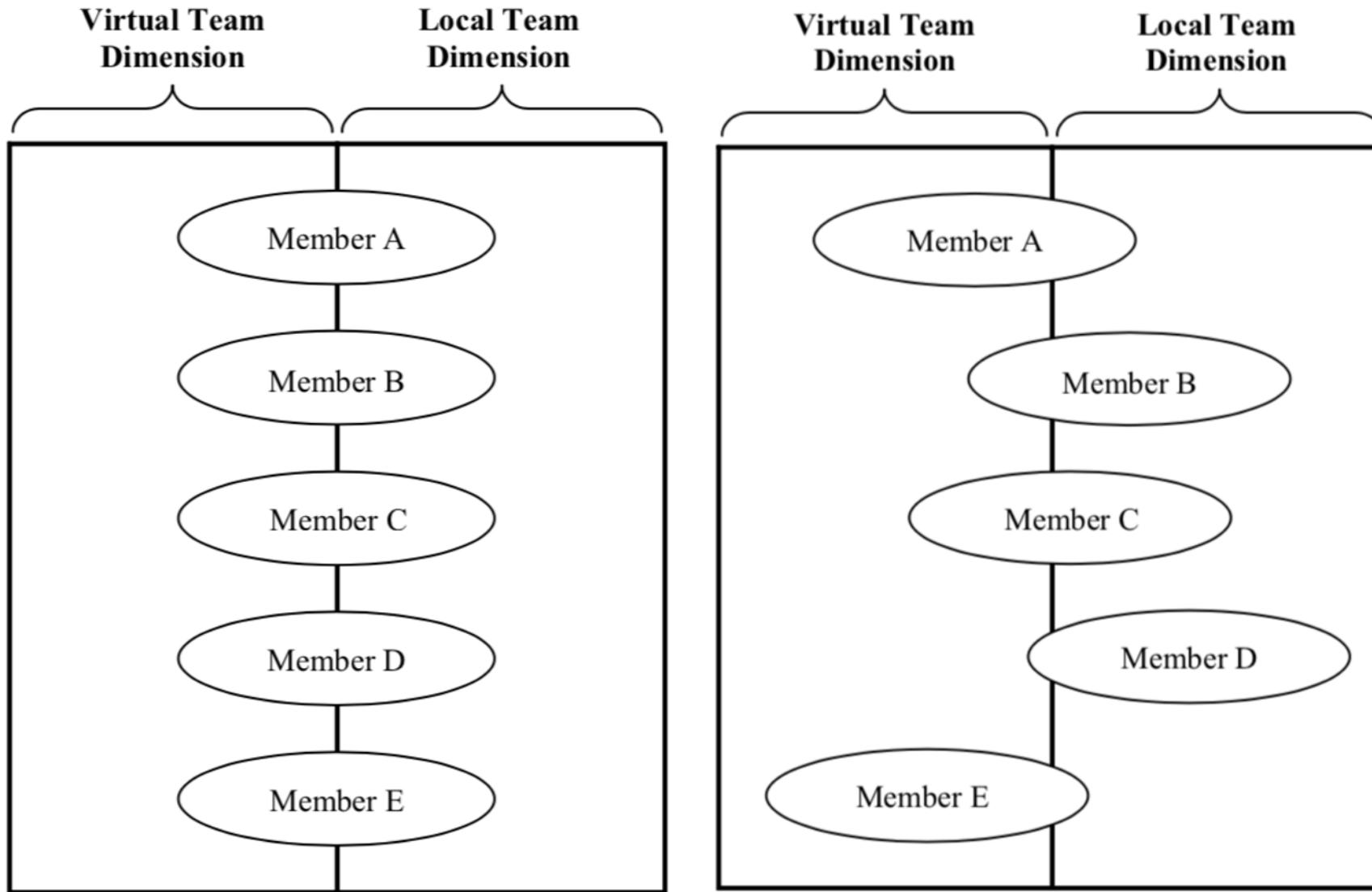
slightly
virtual

entirely
virtual

Learning 1: Knowing the local situation



Learning 1: Knowing the local situation



Learning 2: Communication is key

*How do I
get to the
other side?*



*Not needed -
you already
are on the
other side!*

Sender versus receiver... basics, but...

Dell Employee, UK Citizen, Virtual Team Member

You know, sometimes, I make people angry, but when I go back to them and tell what I really meant, then they say: 'hmm... ok, I understood it differently.'

Help: 'cultural one-pagers' (appendix)

The golden rule of (email) communication

3W Rule

The golden rule of (email) communication

W: WHO

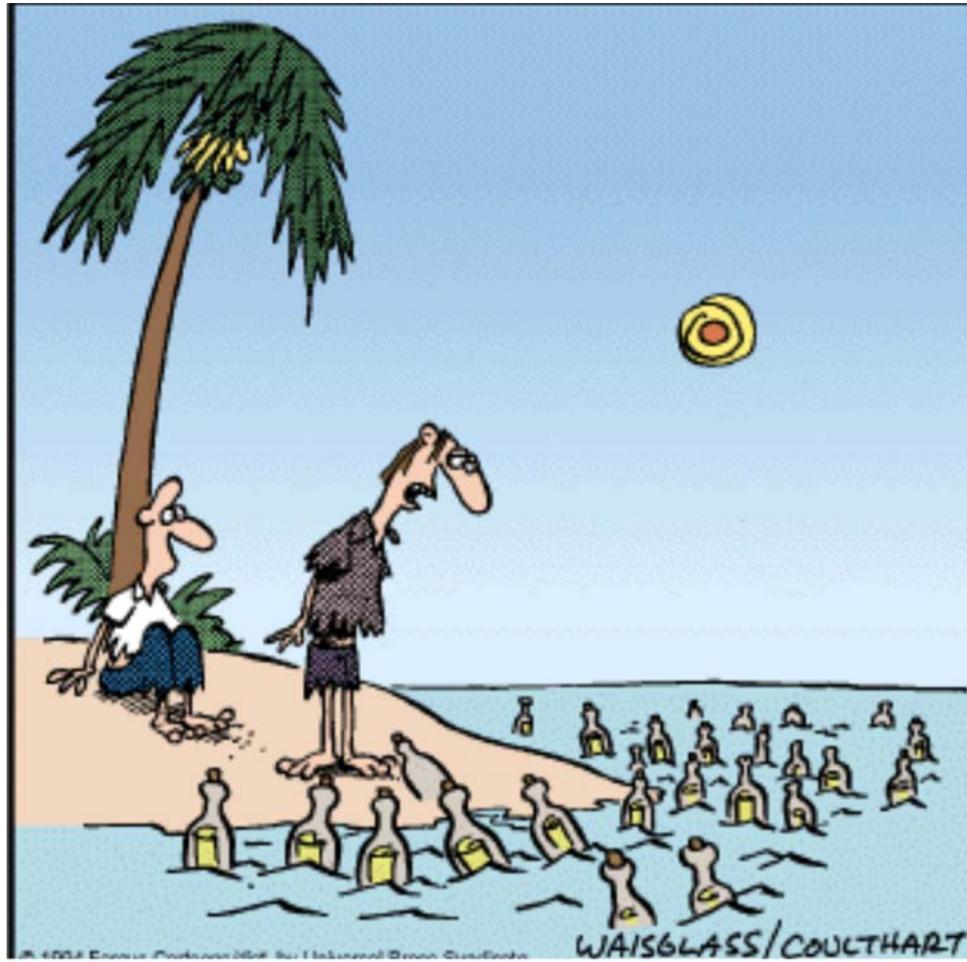
W: does WHAT

W: by WHEN

WER-WAS-WANN

QUI-QUOI-QUAND

Learning 3: Email...



We must be on a mailing list...

Learning 3: Email...



Didn't you get my e-mail?

Learning 3: Email's obvious limitation



No, we cannot send you the pizza as attachment...

Learning 3: Email's less obvious limitation

Simple example:

Happy

YES

Unhappy

YES

Learning 3: Email's less obvious limitation

Simple example:

Happy

YES

Unhappy

YES

Learning 3: Email's missing cues

	Verbal	Non-Verbal
Signalling understanding or agreement	<p>Statements like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ok!• Good idea!• I like that!• Sounds good to me!	<p>Reactions like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nodding• Pleased and unworried facial expression
Signalling misunderstanding or disagreement	<p>Statements like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hmm...• Are you sure?• I am not sure!• So...	<p>Reactions like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaking of the head• Concerned facial expression

Email communication
significantly
increases the
likelihood of
misunderstandings.

Learning 4: You lose control over emails

Dell Employee, Virtual Team Member:

There is a danger in forwarding or copying people (cc or bcc).

It is similar to talking behind someone's back.

*So it was **not** agreed in the beginning to send this email chain to another person. It has happened to me several times.*

The sender of an email
loses control over his/her
email...

for the rest of his/her life!

Learning 5: Killing trust in a millisecond

BCC

**BCC emails are the
ULTIMATE trust
killer!**

Learning 6: Combine channels

Characteristics	FTF	EMC
Richness of Information	High	Lower
Transmission of Visual cues	Yes	No
Transmission of Paralinguistic Cues (Loudness, Hesitations)	Yes	No
Confirmation	Easy	Complicated
Likelihood of Multitasking	Low	Higher
Risk of Misunderstandings	Low	Higher

FTF: face to face EMC: electronically mediated communication

Learning 6: Combine channels

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The diagram consists of four pairs of cells in the table, each with a blue circle around the FTF value and a blue double-headed arrow between the FTF and EMC values. The pairs are: Richness of Information (High vs Lower), Transmission of Visual cues (Yes vs No), Paralinguistic Cues (Yes vs No), and Likelihood of Multitasking (Low vs Higher).

FTF: face to face EMC: electronically mediated communication

Learning 7: Linguistic Power Advantage

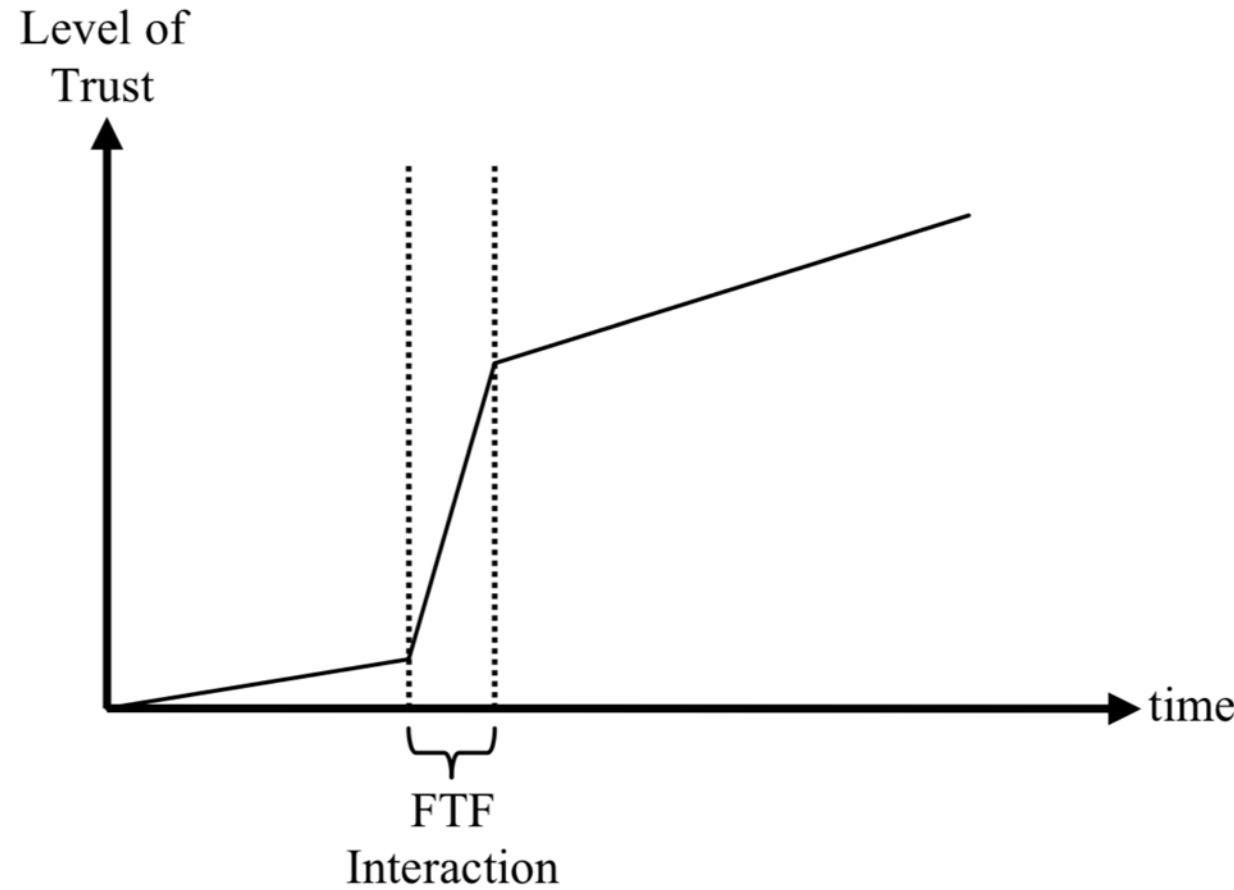
Dell Employee, UK Citizen

I am thinking more about what I am saying before I say it because I am aware of the fact that there are non-native English speakers on the call. You have to be careful using strange words or jargon.

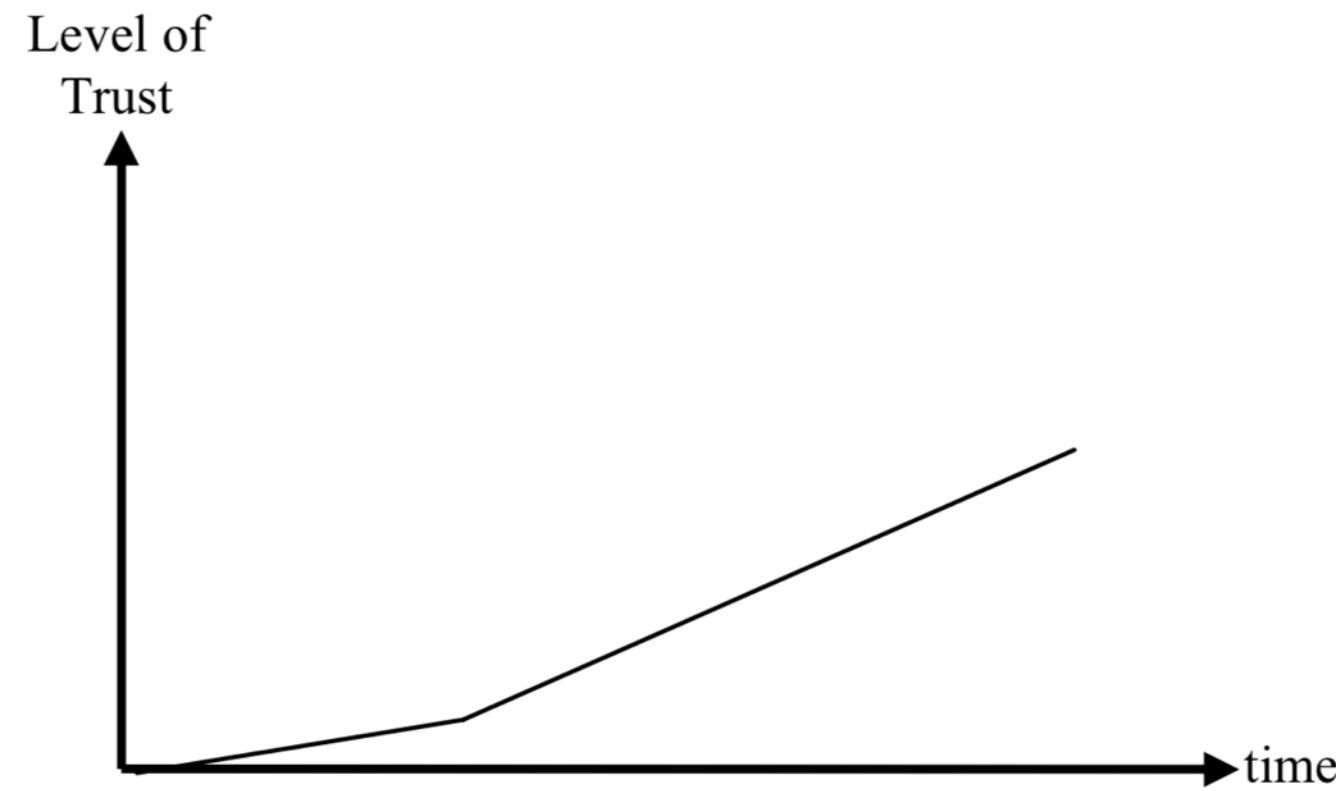
Learning 8: Building trust

Building Interpersonal Trust	Building Task-Based Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing meals• Socialising after business hours• Sharing personal information and hobbies• Exchanging pictures• Non-job-related communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping team commitments and deadlines• Constantly delivering high quality work• Reliable, helpful, cooperative behaviour

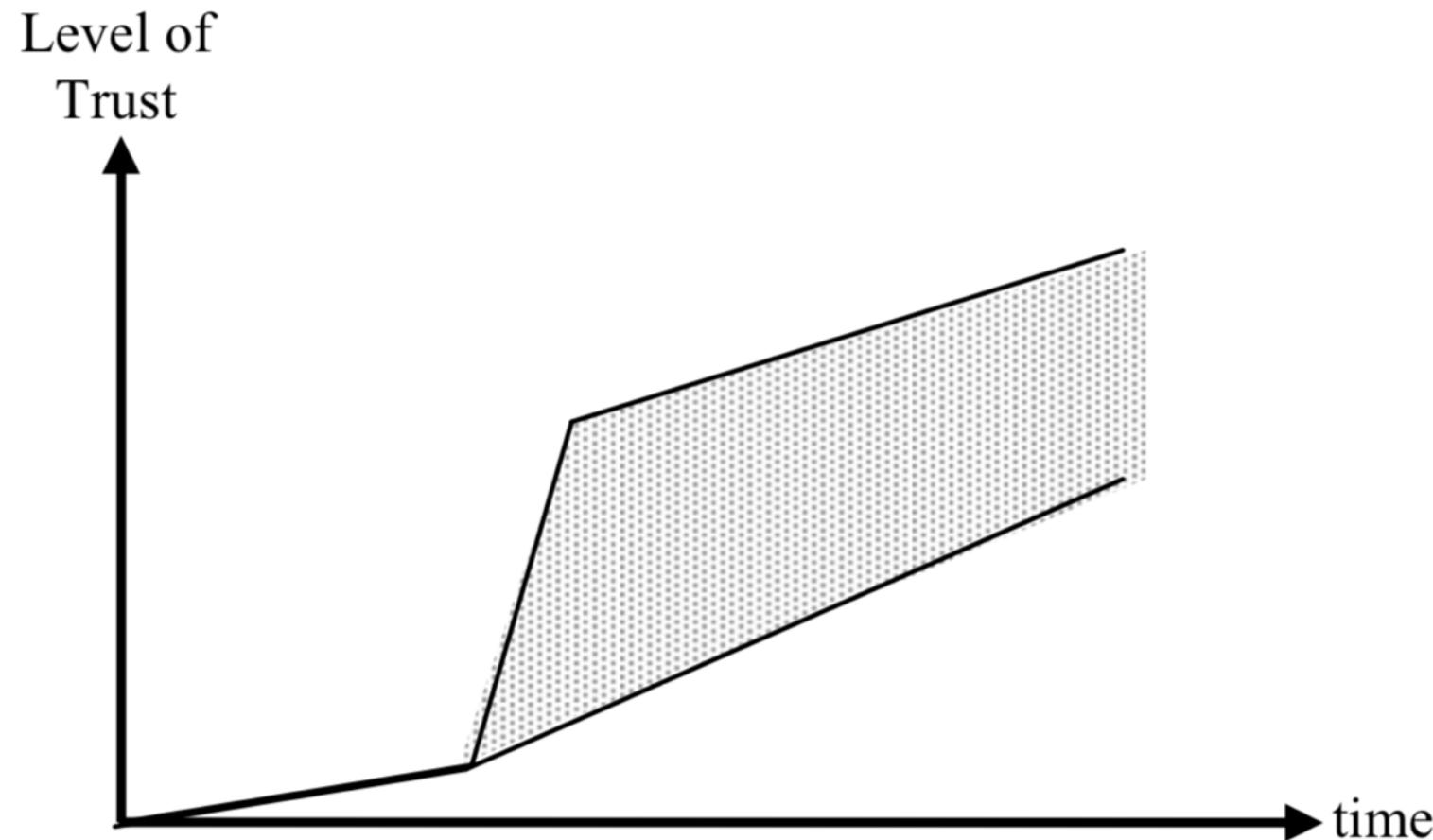
Learning 8: Interpersonal Trust



Learning 8: Task-based trust



Learning 8: Meet early for trust boost



So what to do?

- Joint, FTF or virtual Kick-Off
- Define Virtual Team Comms Charter (rules, responsibility, expectations, no-gos etc.)
- Sign it, share it, post it, print it... also with new hires
- Hire VTM-ready people

Example Evernote EMEA: How we work



Managing the triple overload



Managing the triple overload

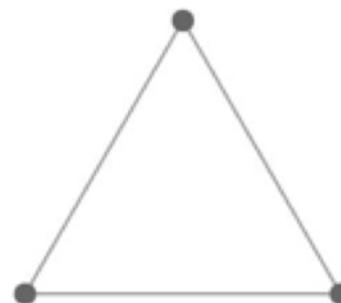
- 2.5
- 14
- 80
- 3-5

Managing the triple overload

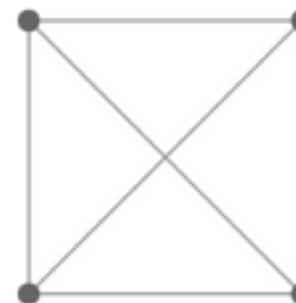
- **2.5h** searching for information per day
- **14 months** acc. to IDC
- **80%** of working time is meetings & emails
- **3-5 min.** until the next interruption

Managing the triple overload

WHAT	SITUATION	IMPACT
Data Overload	Data Doubling Curve: - today at 14 months - 2020 below 1 month	2.5h <u>searching for information per day</u>
Communication Overload	80% of working time spent for communication (Meetings, Email, Chat, WhatsApp etc.)	Not much time left for actual work (Deep Work)
Cognitive Overload	Max. 5min <u>of time between two interruptions</u> – GTD* not possible at all	Makes <u>people tired and exhausted without real output.</u> <u>Going home frustrated.</u>



3 people, 3 lines



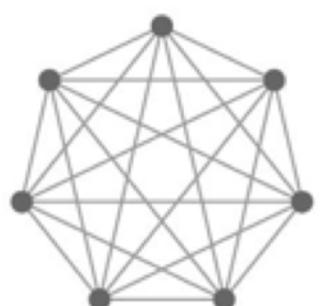
4 people, 6 lines



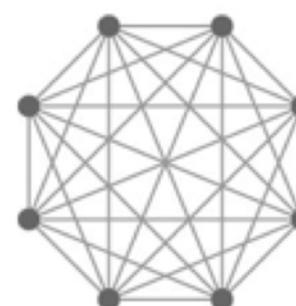
5 people, 10 lines



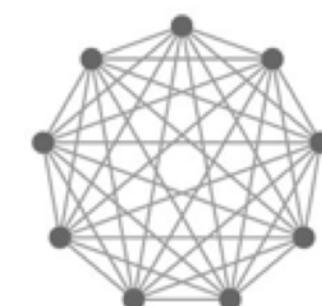
6 people, 15 lines



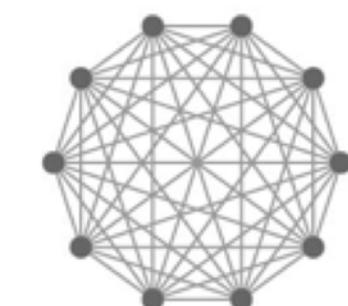
7 people, 21 lines



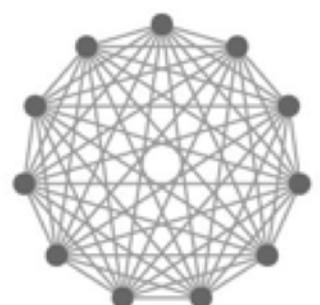
8 people, 28 lines



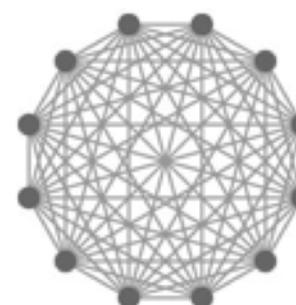
9 people, 36 lines



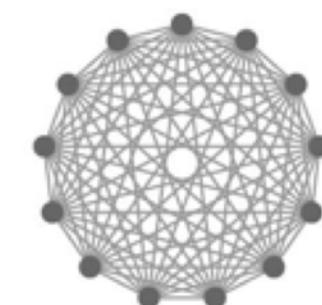
10 people, 45 lines



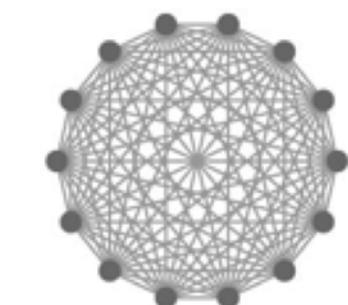
11 people, 55 lines



12 people, 66 lines



13 people, 78 lines



14 people, 91 lines

April 2018

Triple Overload and what you can do about it.



EVERNOTE + **think
productive**
WORKSHOPS THAT WORK

Evernote:

Dr. Beat Bühlmann

Think Productive:

Graham Allcott



April 2018

Triple Overload and what you can do about it.



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Get free paper at evernote.com/triple-overload-challenge

Our one-page team comms driver's license

Calendar Hygiene and Expectations:

- We do reply to **calendar invitations** (within 12h - 24h)
- We **add travel time** from and to an external meeting. We also add further travel info (e.g. if it's a plane or train)
- We make our **calendars public** (booking meetings is much easier for everyone - easy to understand if a meeting can be postponed or not)
- We add a **video conference link** to every meeting with remote participants (highfive)
- We reserve the room for any video conference or meeting
- We add our vacations or holidays into the ZH event calendar as following: "Name" vacation (# of days)

Email Hygiene and Expectations:

- First **think** if email is needed, then **talk** before email is sent, then send email if needed
- Let's **not discuss** via email.
- The email channel is **not urgent**: 12h - 24h response time is ok (no need to always have the email open)
=> for **truly** urgent or critical things, we **call** each other (cell phone), also late or on weekends
- As email is not urgent, no need to reply to emails **after 19h and during weekends**
- No need to check emails **during vacation** (unless otherwise agreed upon). => see next line
- We all have **decent OOO replies**: including return date from OOO / back-up contact and details / back-up person gets a briefing
- **Being brief** in email amongst ourselves is ok (even a title email ending with "... EOM" is ok and not rude)
- No need to reply to an **FYI email** (e.g. saying thanks) - you can, but don't have to
- **No scrolling** in emails - that's a sign that the email is tooooo long... 😊 => talk first!

Office Hours

- Overall objective: achieving our goals but also balancing work & private life in a meaningful way
- However, also taking team spirit, team efficiency and feeling of togetherness into account: we are in the office when possible (default)
- Make sure your calendar is up-to-date and shared/public so we know how to reach someone if urgent

Home Office

- Overall objective: achieving our goals but also balancing work & private life in a meaningful way
- *Home Office is possible as long as it makes sense for you, your team and the company.
- *When planning to do Home Office, we inform team members and the manager beforehand, and add it to the calendar.
- *Home Office is work.

Meetings in General

- We come prepared to meetings - if not, we tell others (and if needed, reschedule the meeting)
- **3W rule:** Meeting follow-up actions and/or meeting summaries must contain the three Ws:
WHO does WHAT by WHEN
- The **meeting organiser** is **responsible** for a) taking notes and b) that follow-up actions (acc. to 3W rule) are written down and shared
- Meetings start on time and stop on time
- Make sure you leave the meeting room clean - no bottles, no dishes, rearrange things such as keyboard, chairs, mouse, pens, etc.

Slack Hygiene

- *We add OOO status in Slack (after the family name)
- *The EMEA BIZ Team is our official information channel
- *No instant reply required. Our communication priority order is: 1) Call/Text 2) Slack 3) Email

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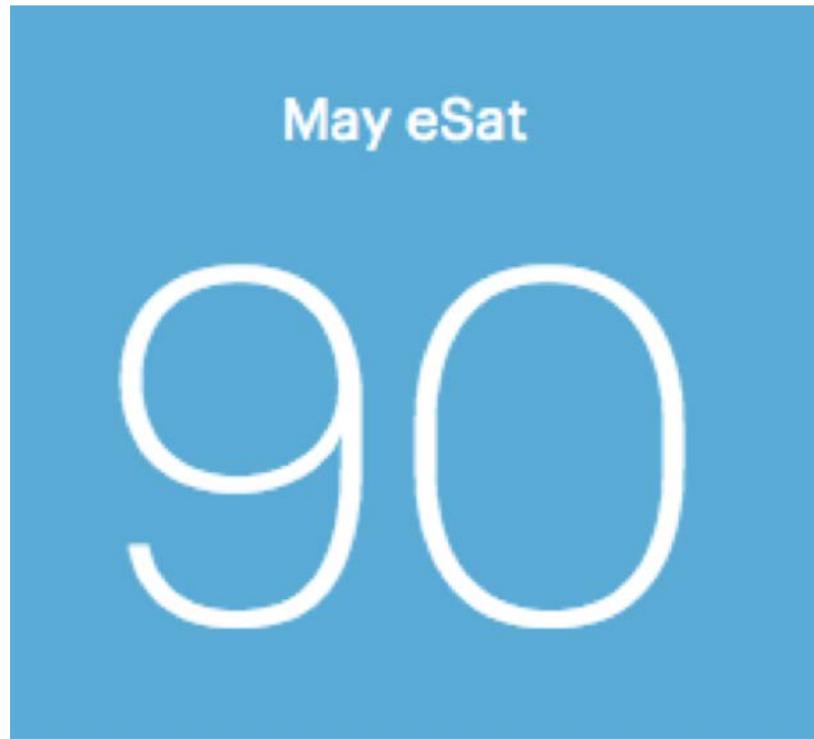
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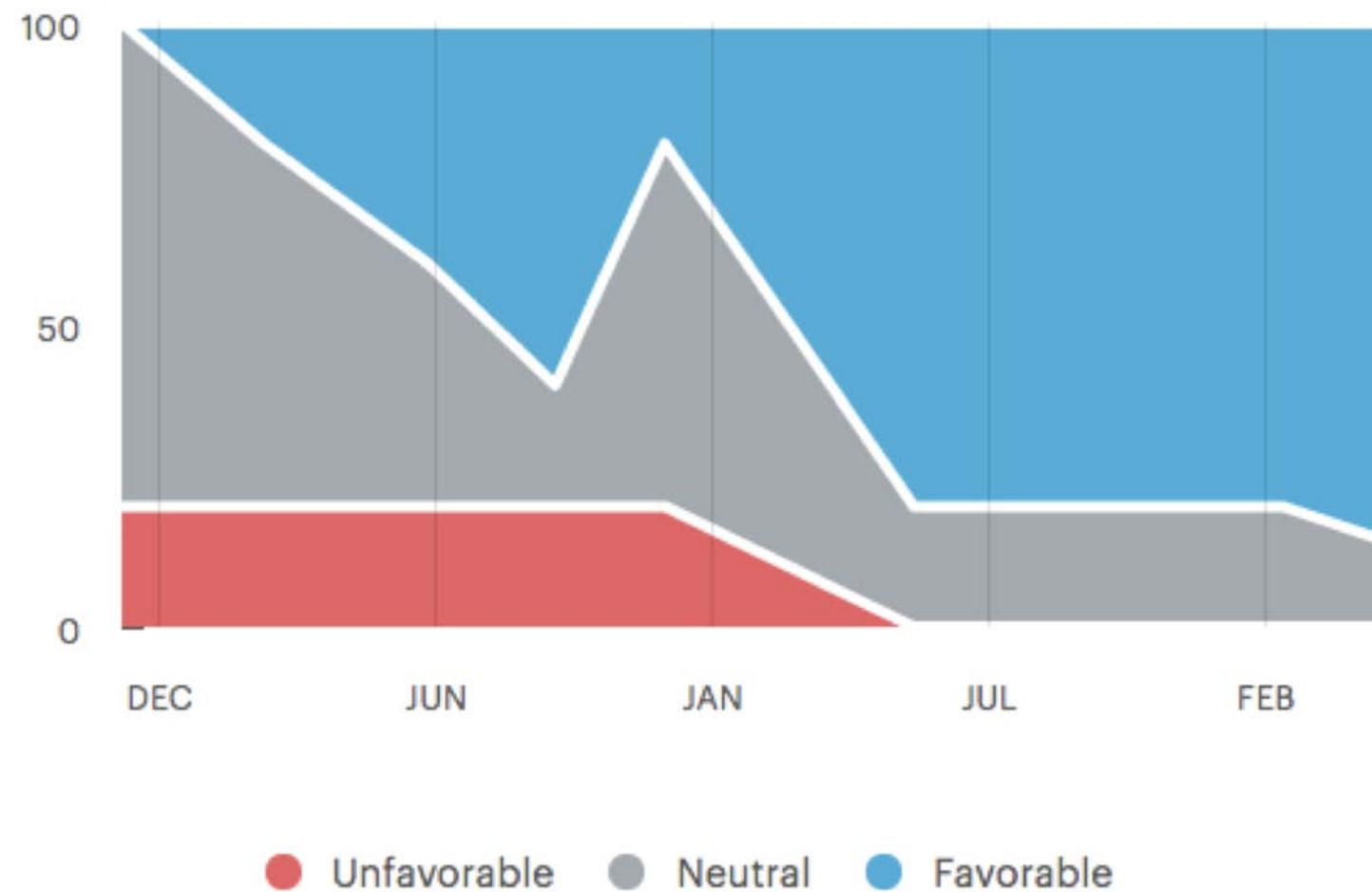
Our team wall - 100% transparency



Hey, you mentioned ‘happiness’ in the title

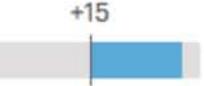
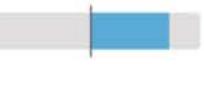
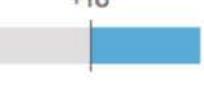
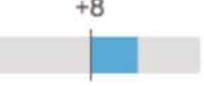


Hey, you mentioned ‘happiness’ in the title



Hey, you mentioned 'happiness' in the title

survey - by manager - Beat Buhlmann

Name	Score ↓	vs Company	Change	Impact	% Favorable	Comments	Question
Team	95		+15 ▼ 2	Very High	 100%	 ..	I am satisfied with my work team. May 14, 2018
Manager 2	93		+13 --	High	 86%	 ..	My manager is a great coach, Manager Name provides meaningful guidance that helps me grow. May 14, 2018
Innovation	93		+18 --	Very High	 86%	 ..	My team demonstrates a high level of innovation. May 14, 2018
Fairness	93		+8 --	High	 100%	 ..	People from all backgrounds (race, gender, etc.) have opportunities to succeed at Evernote. May 14, 2018

How to hire virtual team members



Besides job skills, check for VTM skills

What is today's ultimate killer skill?

Besides job skills, check for VTM skills

Step 1: phone interview

Step 2: two simple questions to be answered by email

Step 3: part of the interview via video-conference

Step 4: rest as usual

You are who you hire.



Q&A

Dr. Beat Bühlmann
General Manager
EVERNOTE EMEA



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How Evernote Europe Boosted its Team Productivity - and Happiness

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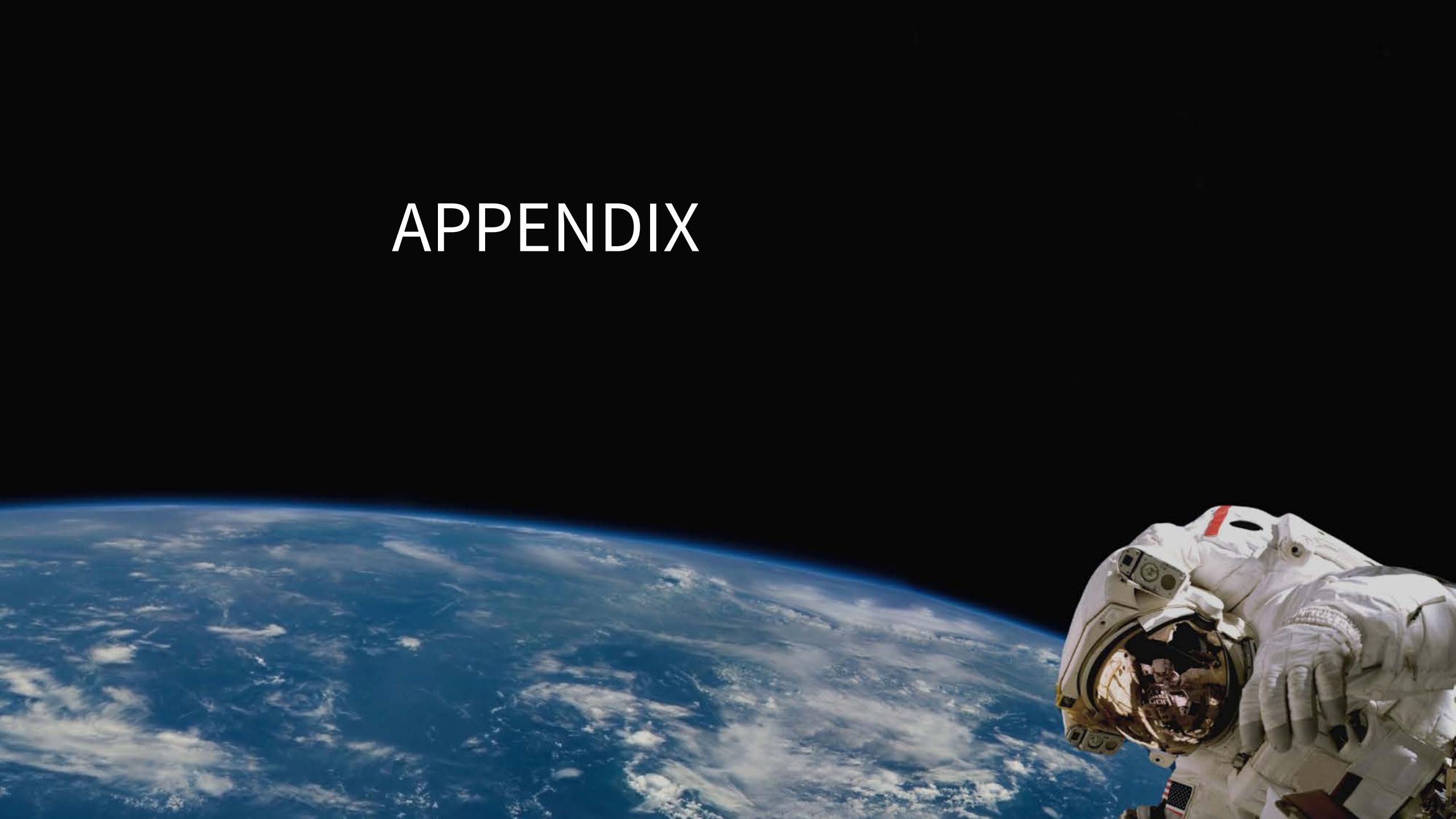
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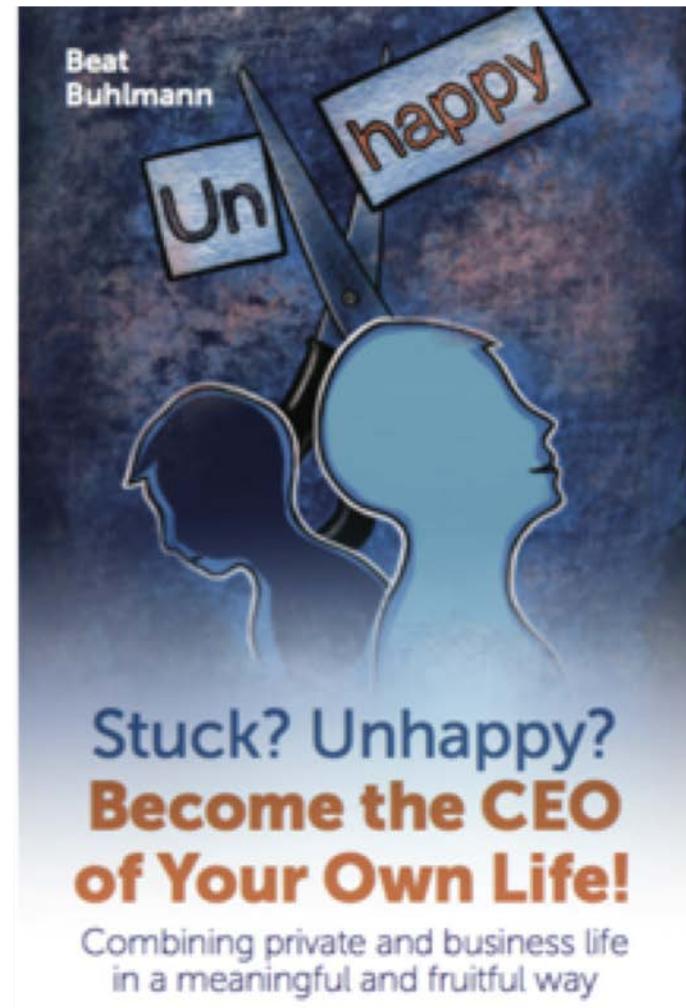
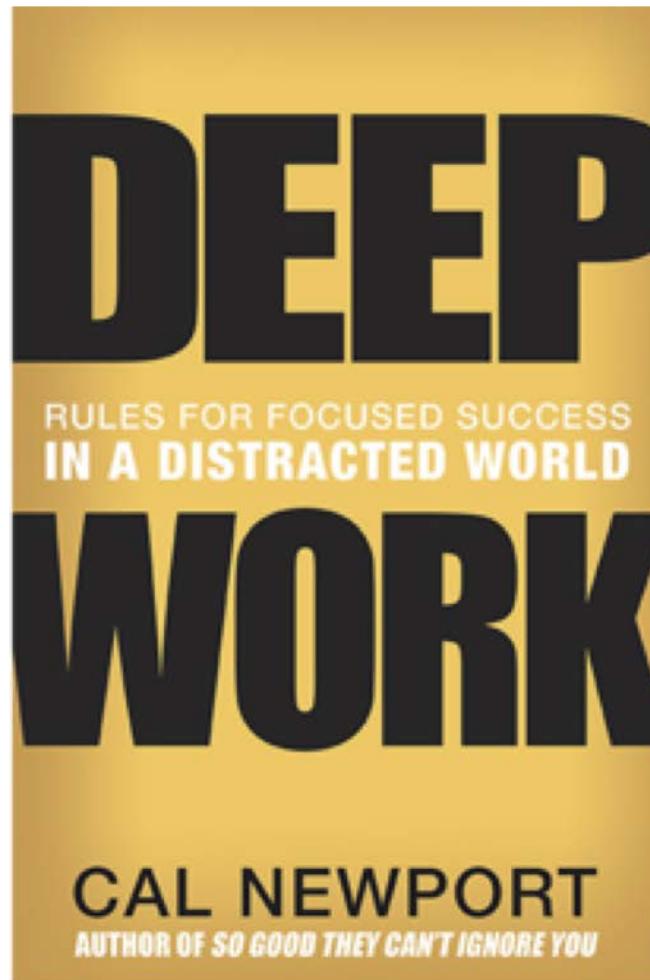
APPENDIX



Cultural one-pagers

<http://www.swissotel.com/promo/etiquette-map/>

Book recommendations



Book recommendations

