Introduction to Effective Remote Work:
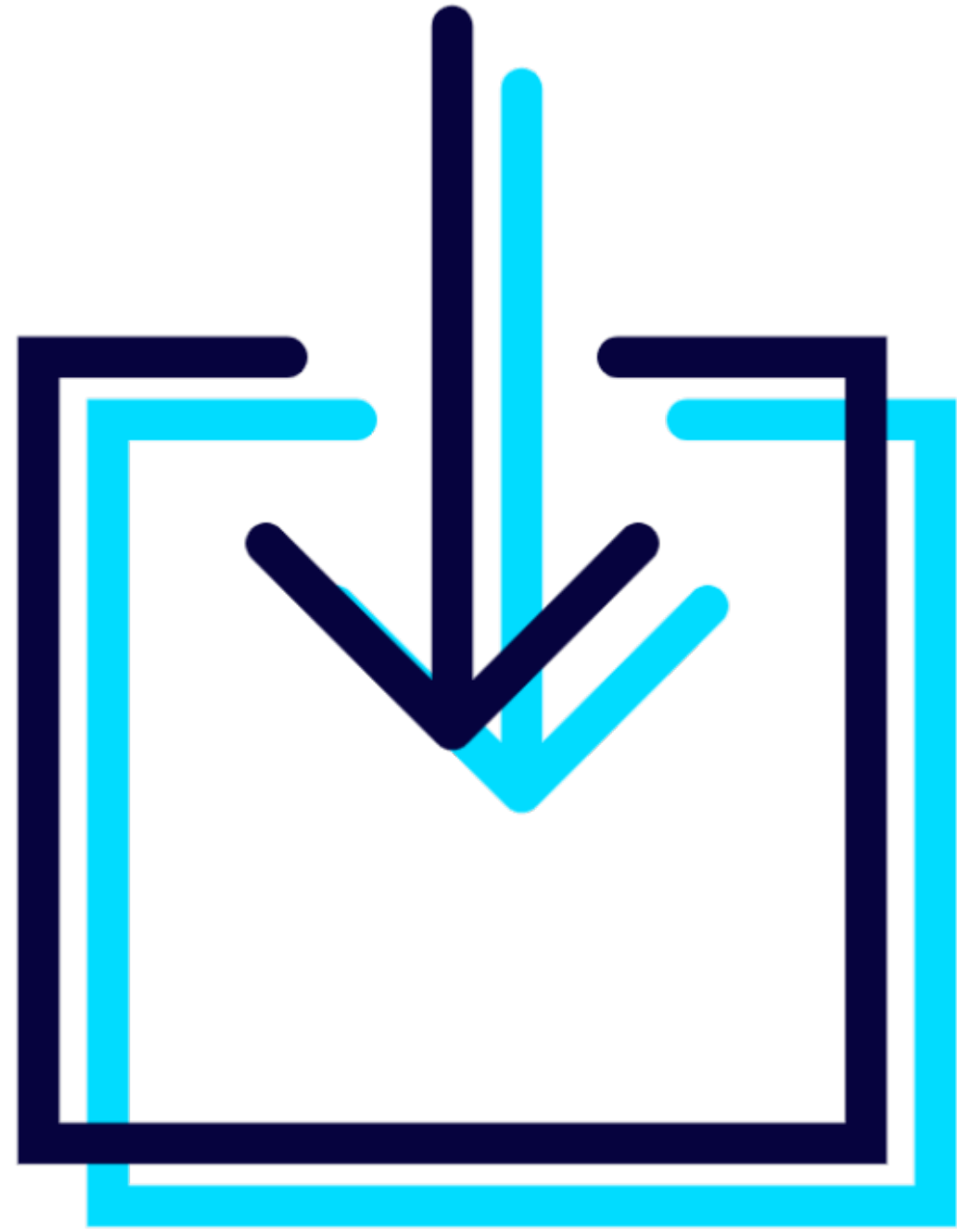
Differentiating between Sudden and Sustainable

Tammy Bjelland

Poll: What describes your current situation? (Select all that apply)

A. Currently working remotely

B. Currently managing others who work remotely

C. Currently supporting others who work remotely

D. Other

[Download the Worksheet as a Google Doc](#)

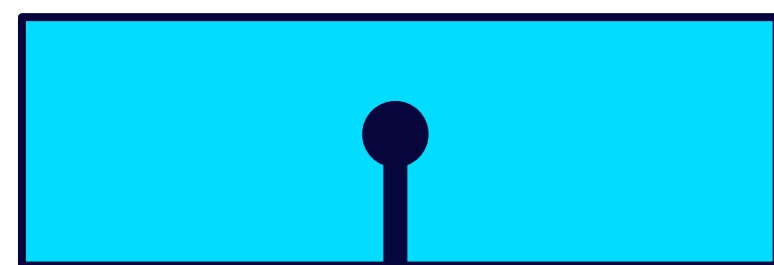[Download the Worksheet as an Editable PDF](#)

2011

Worked in edtech, higher ed, publishing, corporate training

2017
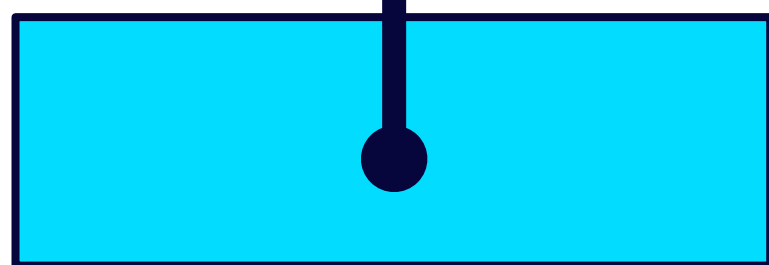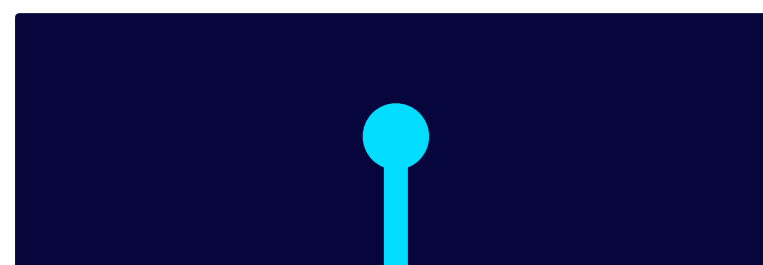
Launched Remote Work Certification

2020

Started working remotely full time

2011-17
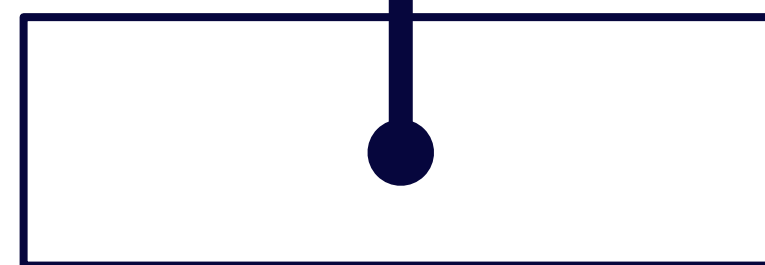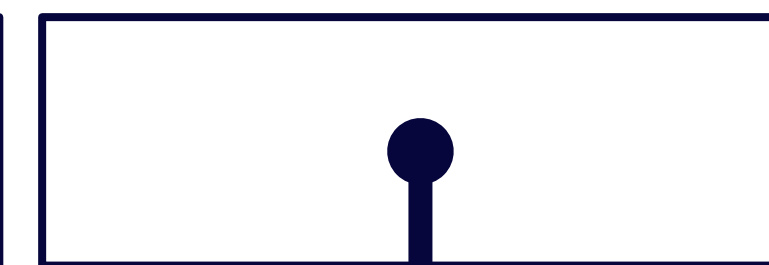
Founded Workplaceless

2018

Team and Portfolio are growing!
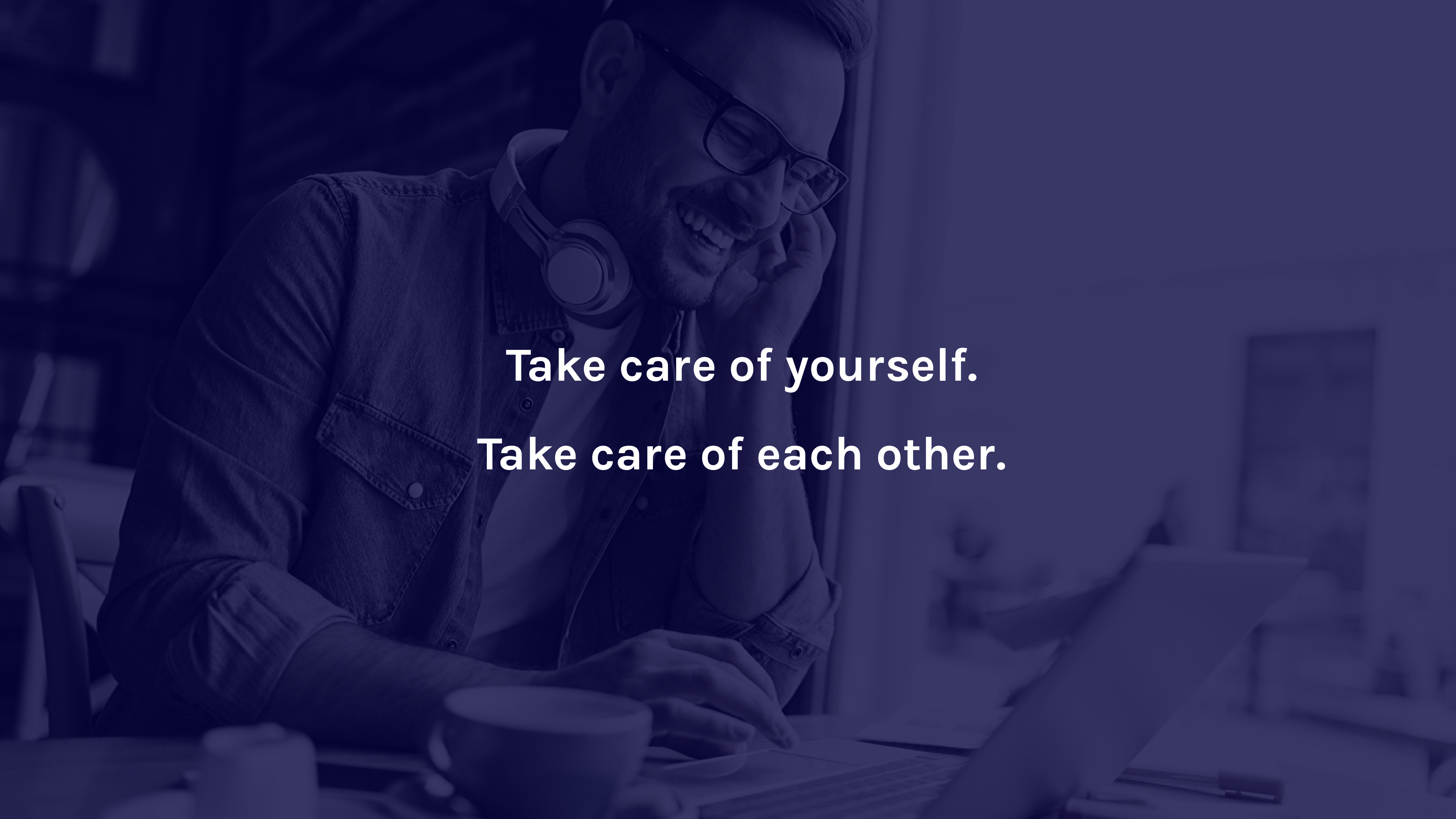
Objectives

1 Recognize the **differences** between sudden and sustainable remote work.

2 Determine strategies for immediately improving three competency areas critical to remote work success: **Focus**, **Communication**, and **Productivity**.

3 Identify a **plan** for leveling up to sustainable remote work.

Optimize this Experience

- Pause/minimize distractions as much as possible.

- Focus on the presentation.

- Reflect on your own experiences.

- Participate.

- Choose tiny actions to improve remote work skills.

- Share what you learn.

Take care of yourself.

Take care of each other.
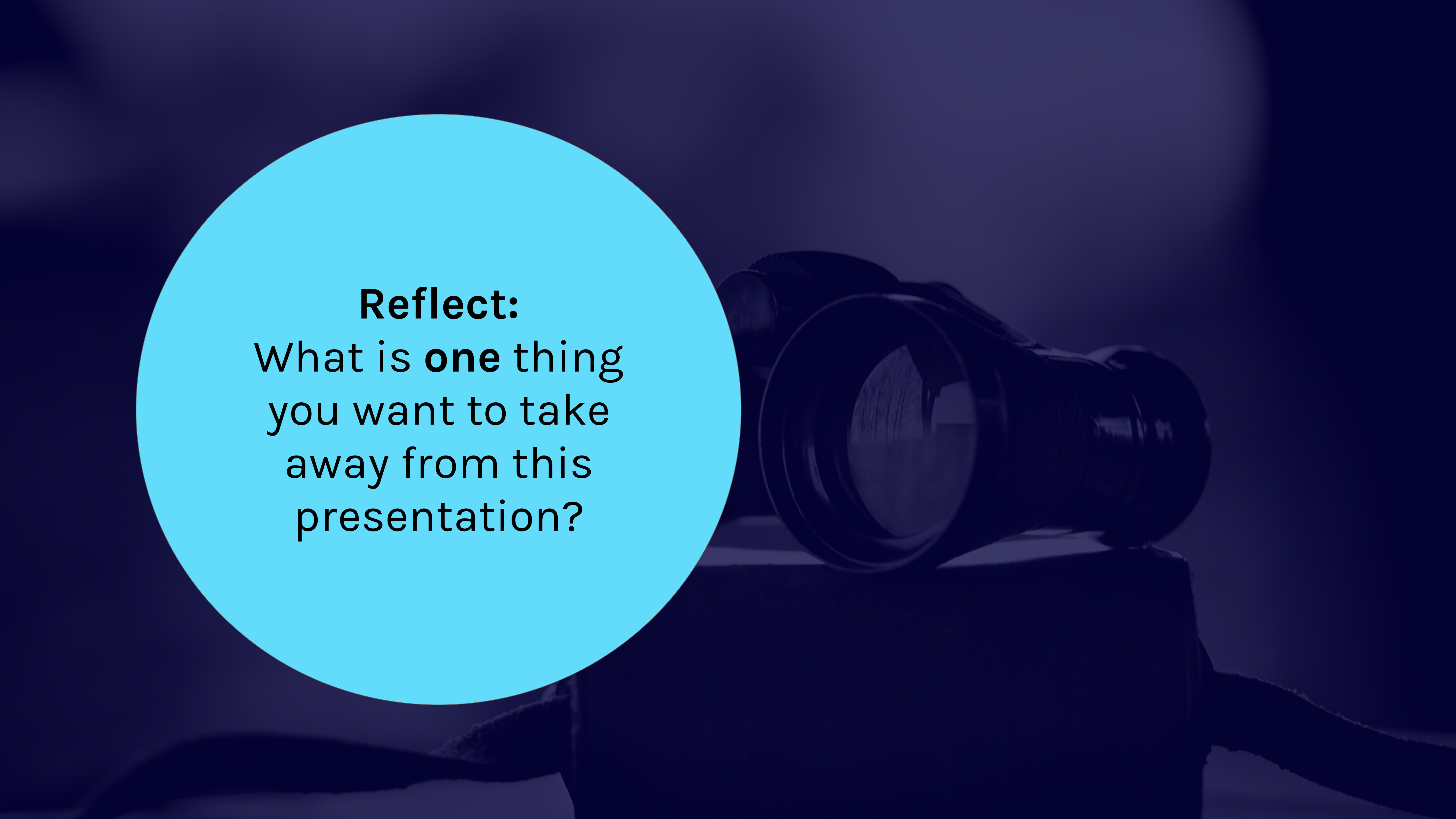
Meet immediate needs first...

Then prepare for long-term success.

Reflect:
What is **one** thing you want to take away from this presentation?

This is not business as usual.

Joel Gascoigne ✔
@joelgascoigne

It may be worth noting: Buffer has been fully remote for almost 10 years, and..

Our worlds feel turned upside down as a result of the pandemic, too. This is not normal remote working!

We know remote, and eager to help others, but also adapting to the new reality ourselves.

7:34 PM · Mar 19, 2020 · Twitter Web App

Unexpected Remote Work

Sustainable Remote Work

Mindset

Adoption of managerial and organizational practices that support remote operations and team members

Infrastructure

Technological as well as procedural infrastructure: high-speed internet and remote work policy

Education

Learning experiences about the benefits of remote work as well as how to implement a remote work policy and succeed in a distributed environment

Sustainable

Mindset

Trust
Empathy
Flexibility

Unexpected

Education

Resources for workers and leaders
that are immediately relevant

Infrastructure

Critical hardware and
software that allow for
virtual collaboration

REMOTE WORK COMPETENCY MODEL

Function Agnostic Strands

Remote Career Stages

	I Digital proficiency & communication	**II** Performing, managing, and improving work	**III** Culture and growth
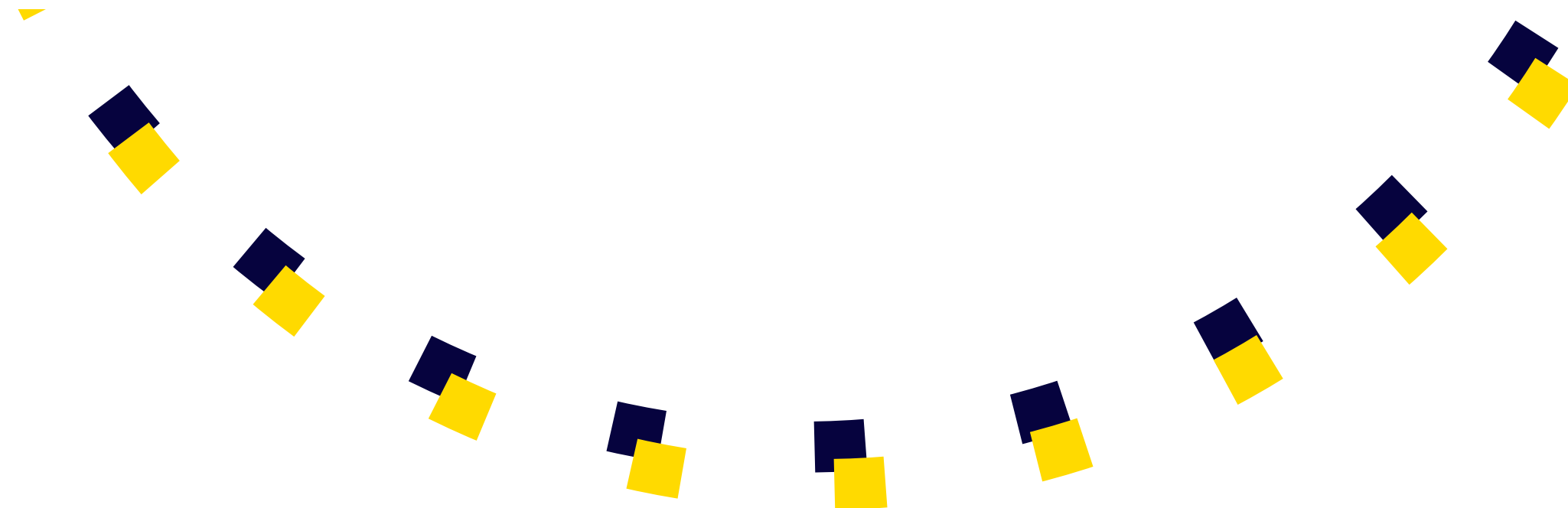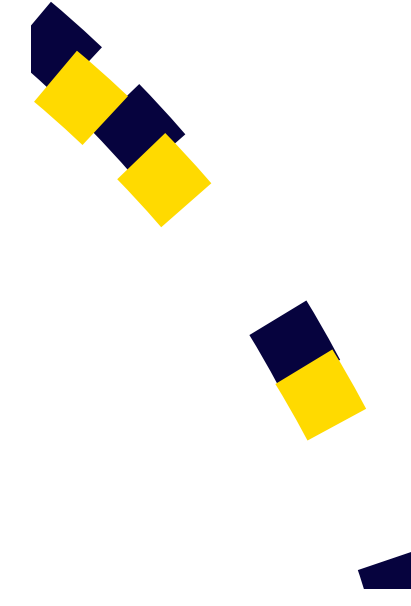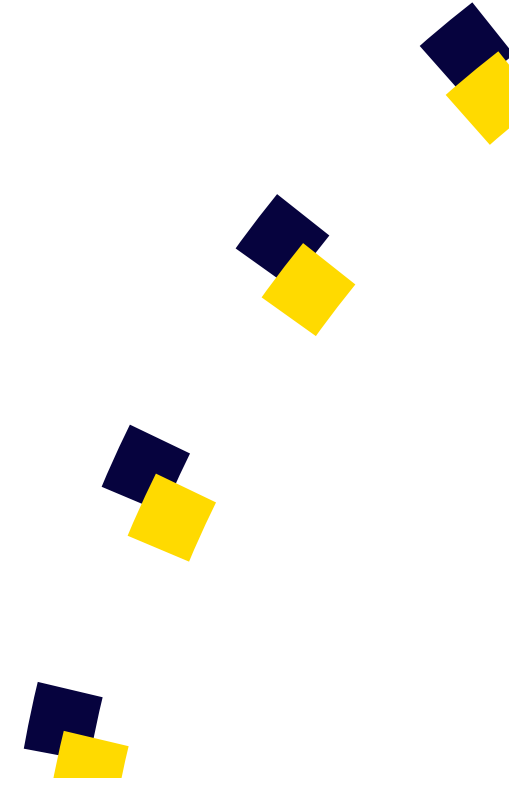
(A) Remote Worker: Working in a Distributed Environment
The competencies needed to perform work remotely.

Digital proficiency & communication			Performing, managing, and improving work			Culture and growth		
Language of Remote Work	Channel and Mode Switching	Compliance	Scheduling & Logistics	Time management	Productivity	Learning Mindset	Health & Wellness	Interests, Knowledge, and Skills
Focus	Remote work tools		Completing Tasks	Autononomy	Office Setup & Safety	Professional Vision	Professional Experience	Opportunities for Advancement

(B) Remote Team Member: Collaborating in a Distributed Environment
The competencies required to be a remote team member.

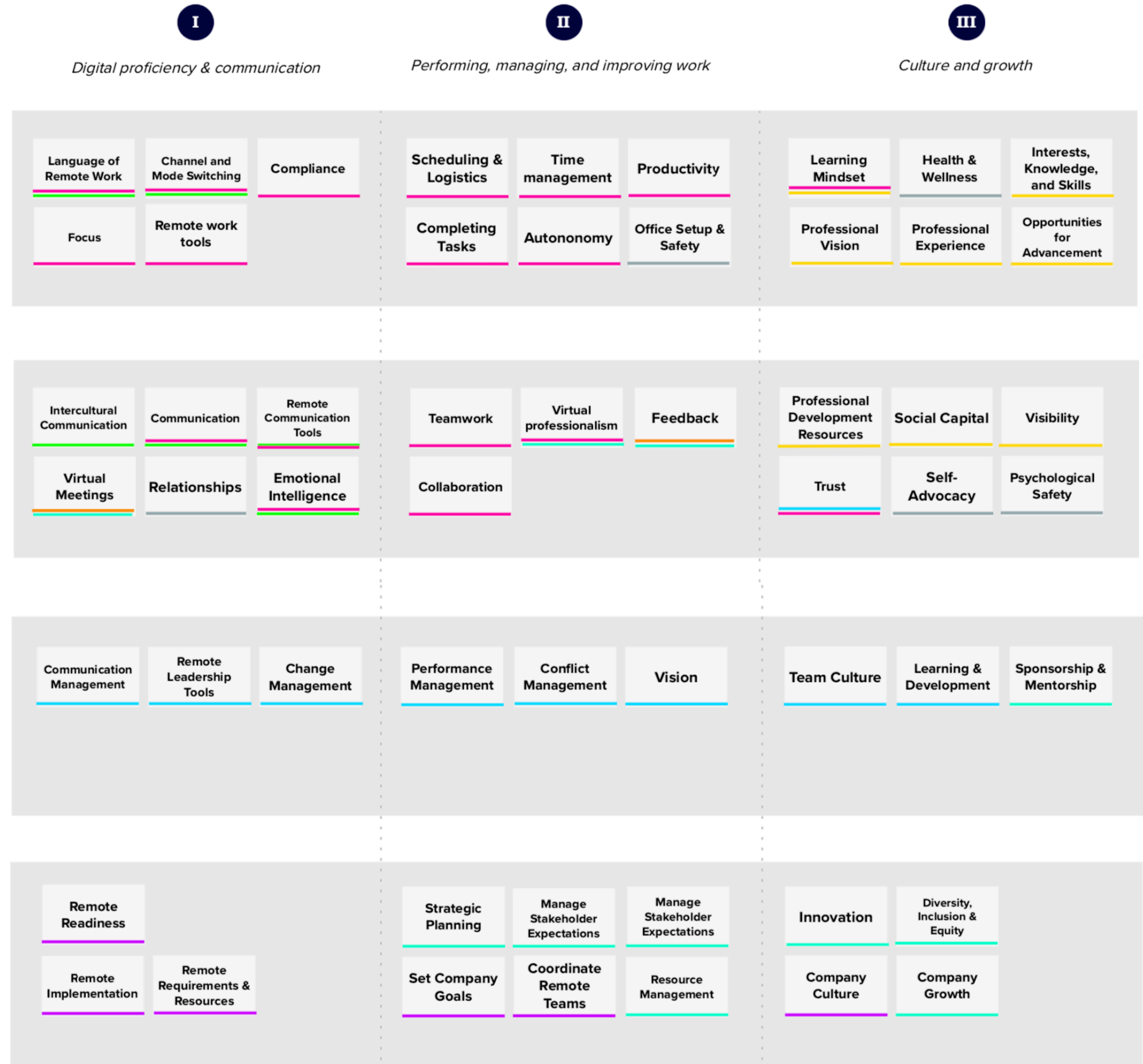| Digital proficiency & communication			Performing, managing, and improving work			Culture and growth		
Intercultural Communication	Communication	Remote Communication Tools	Teamwork	Virtual professionalism	Feedback	Professional Development Resources	Social Capital	Visibility
Virtual Meetings	Relationships	Emotional Intelligence	Collaboration			Trust	Self-Advocacy	Psychological Safety

(C) Remote Leader: Leading and Facilitating Growth in a Distributed Environment
The competencies required to lead and develop distributed teams.

Digital proficiency & communication			Performing, managing, and improving work			Culture and growth		
Communication Management	Remote Leadership Tools	Change Management	Performance Management	Conflict Management	Vision	Team Culture	Learning & Development	Sponsorship & Mentorship

(D) Remote Executive: Driving a Distributed Vision and Strategy
The competencies required to lead a distributed company.

Digital proficiency & communication			Performing, managing, and improving work			Culture and growth		
Remote Readiness			Strategic Planning	Manage Stakeholder Expectations	Manage Stakeholder Expectations	Innovation		Diversity, Inclusion & Equity
Remote Implementation	Remote Requirements & Resources		Set Company Goals	Coordinate Remote Teams	Resource Management	Company Culture		Company Growth

Poll: Are you multitasking right now?

A. Yes

B. No

How do I focus when there's so much going on?

Remote Work Competency	Definition
Focus	Ability to focus attention in a distributed environment, among distributed tasks and demands.

Reflect:
What's on your mind right now?

What are your biggest challenges when trying to focus?

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

1. Be patient with yourself and others. We're all just trying our best.

2. Concentrate on what you can control.

3. Limit distractions as much as possible.

4. Be transparent and communicative about your current reality.

5. Block distracting sites and apps with a tool like [Freedom](#).

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

6. Close tabs/windows you are not actively working in.

7. When switching to a new task/activity, set an intention or a goal.

8. Ask for other people's attention.

9. Mute or pause notifications.

10. Take breaks! Get outside. Move. Stand up. Dance.
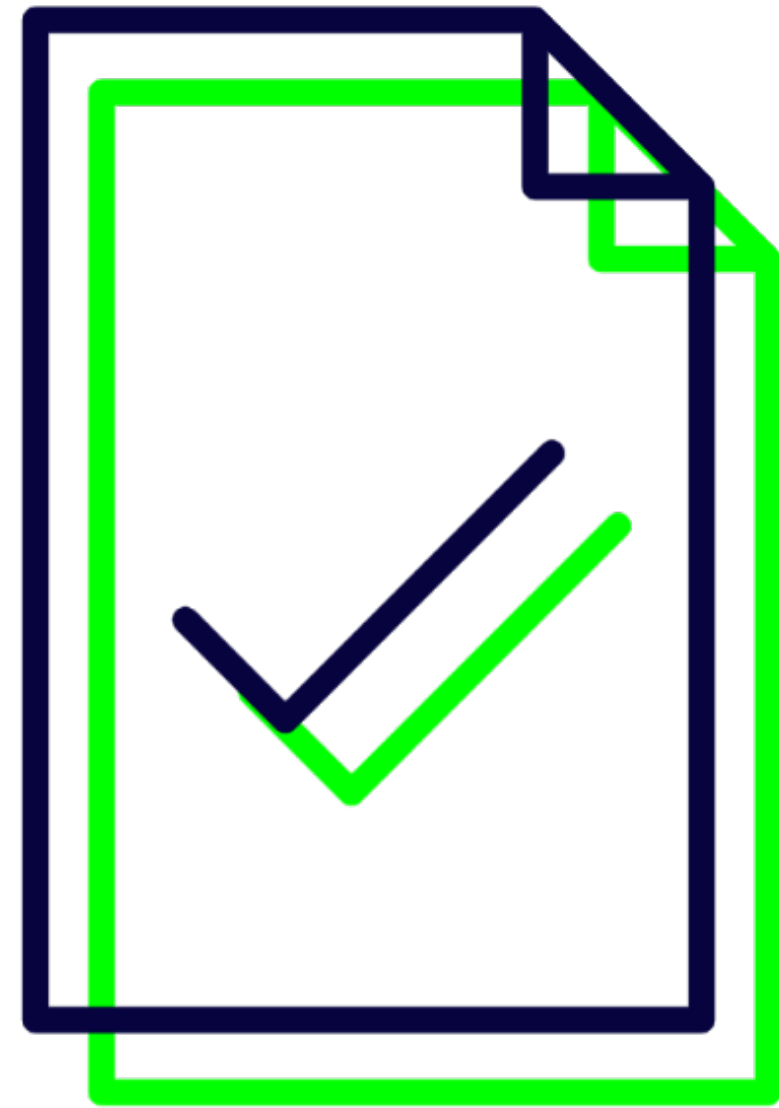
One Tiny Action (#OTA)

What's one thing you can do today to improve your focus?

What's one thing you can do to help others improve their focus?

Level Up: Create a Boundaries Agreement

Boundaries Agreement

💬 We've identified some scenarios where your boundaries might be tested in your team.

Let's take a few minutes to dissect these boundaries.

Open link ↗

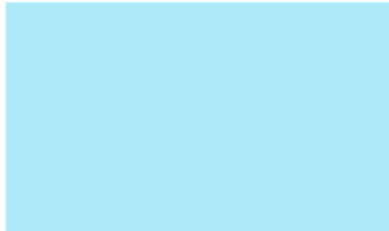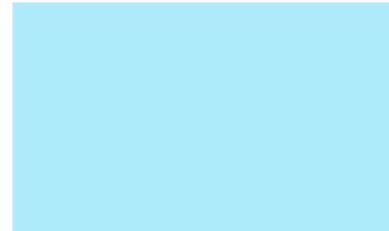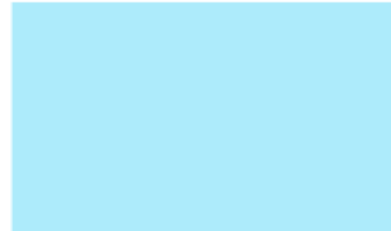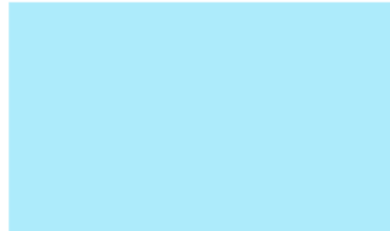| Where do you need to develop boundaries as a team?	What are the obstacles your team faces?	What actions do you need to take?	Who is responsible for identifying a boundary stretch?	How should a boundary stretch be addressed?
Example: Checking emails and Slack outside of working hours	Example: Team members are afraid they will miss important information or conversations because their normal working hours are different from their peers.	Example: Agree as a team that "important" decisions will not be made without input from the team. All communications can wait until the next business day.	Example: Leadership and peers	Example: Call them out: "Why are you checking emails at this hour?" If it continues, leadership may need to have a 1:1 meeting to determine why the team member is feeling like they need to be so connected.
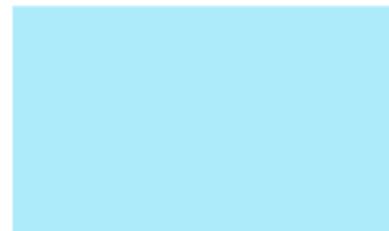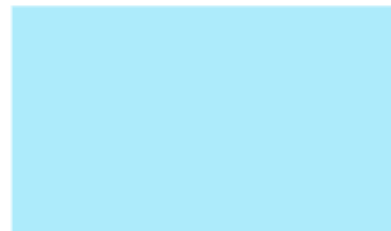
Group 1

How do I communicate with my coworkers?

Remote Work Competency	Definition
Communication	Ability to effectively interpret and convey messages in all modes (interpretive, presentational, interpersonal), both synchronously and asynchronously.
Channel & Mode Switching	Ability to choose appropriate communication channels in a remote setting.

Reflect:
What channels do you use for communication?

What are your biggest challenges when communicating?

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

1. Overcommunicate.

2. Reevaluate your need for meetings.

3. Embrace and work on asynchronous communication (i.e. WRITING).

4. Align on expectations for channels and response times.

5. Confirm receipt. Confirm understanding.

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

6. Close the loop. Follow up.

7. Document decisions.

8. Be transparent about your blocks.

9. Ask others about their blocks.

One Tiny Action (#OTA)

What's one thing you can do today to improve your communication?

What's one thing you can do to help others improve their communication?

Level Up: Create a Communication Charter

Communication Charter

Create a communication charter. Indicate the type of message (content), then the expectations for each type. Add examples and non-examples.

Channel	Message type	Expectations	Example	Non-Example

How am I going to get my work done at home?

Remote Work Competency	Definition
Productivity	Ability to comprehend and meet expectations for performance and productivity in a distributed environment.
Autonomy	Ability to proactively carry out work and communication using critical thinking and problem-solving.

Reflect:
How is your performance measured?

What are your biggest challenges when it comes to being productive?

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

1. Time block your workday. Align time blocks with your family's day.
   a. Independent work that requires full focus (e.g. external publications)
   b. Independent work that tolerates distractions (e.g. email replies, image editing)
   c. Synchronous work that tolerates distractions (e.g. internal team meetings)
   d. Synchronous work that requires no distractions (e.g. external client meetings)
2. Set and communicate parameters for your availability.
3. Follow rituals. Set alarms/reminders.

One Tiny Action (#OTA)

What's one thing you can do today to be more productive?

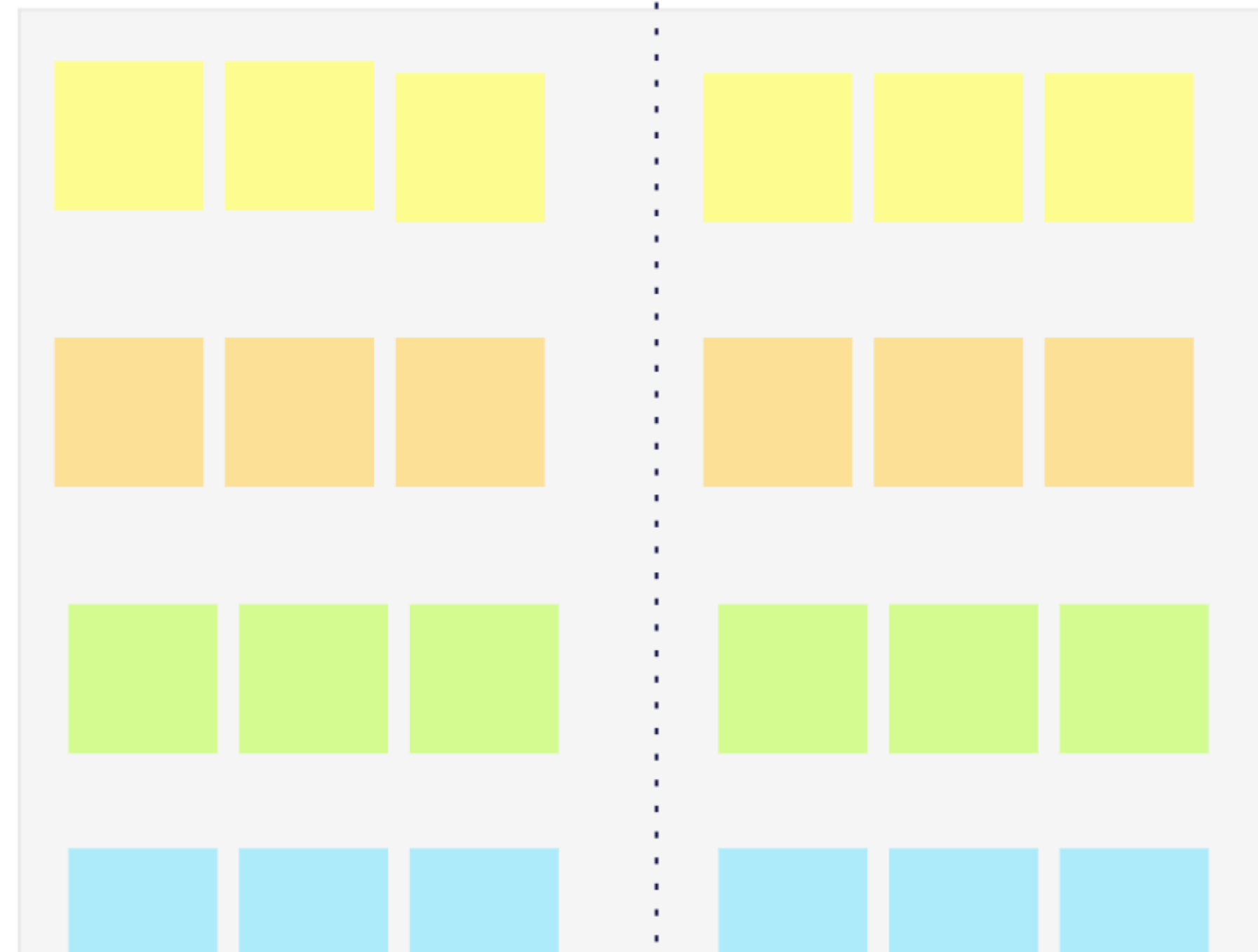What's one thing you can do to help others be more productive?

Level Up: Update Performance Metrics

Define Productivity

Define productivity and set expectations for productivity and performance in each role.

Where do OKRs and KPIs live? What tools are used?

What is the process for recording, tracking, and measuring results?

What do we do next?

Level Up to Sustainable Remote Work

Poll: Do you think your company will expand its remote work policy when things go back to "normal"?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Not sure

Advice for Suddenly Remote Professionals

1. Assess your current remote skill strengths and improvement areas.

2. Invest in a distraction free, ergonomic office setup.

3. Learn when you are most productive. Protect your time.

4. Maintain visibility.

5. Default to Video On.

6. Proactively manage isolation.

To Succeed, Remote Teams Need:

Aligned

Transparent

Consistent

 Expectations

 Knowledge

 Language

 Experiences

 Opportunities

1

Mindset

Assess your current company *Remote Readiness* across stakeholders

2 | Infrastructure

Establish an aligned language, set of tools and expectations for communication, productivity, and collaboration

3 | Education

Identify remote skill paths needed for individual career growth and company resource planning

One Tiny Action (#OTA)

What's one thing you can do today to move toward sustainable remote work?

What's one thing you can do to help others move toward sustainable remote work?

Reflect:
What are you taking away from this presentation? How will you share it?

Thank you!