

# Insight into distributed teams

Abby: @a\_bangser



Bhagya: @bhagyagdm

# Who we are

## Abby Bangser

*Me attempting to assimilate  
to the UK through rugby*



- Quality Analyst
- ThoughtWorker
- Worked in:  
USA, India, Kenya, UK
- Work across:  
4 US time zones  
US and UK to India  
Global satellite team

## Bhagya Perera

*I've been told off by officers of  
Galactic Empire!!*



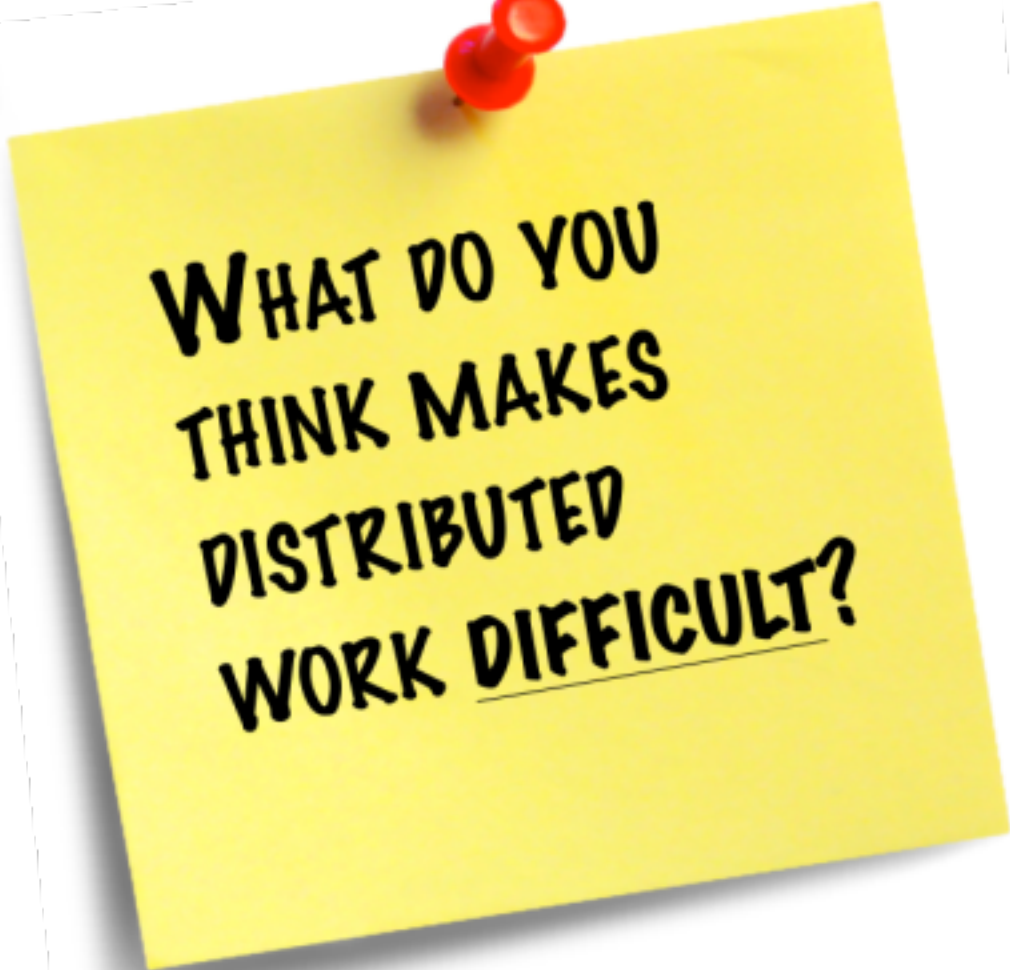
- Quality Analyst
- Working at RBI
- Worked in:  
Sri Lanka, Singapore,  
UK
- Worked across:  
Sri Lanka to India , US,  
Singapore and UK  
UK to India

# What to expect


- Explore why distributed teams face issues
- Practical session
  - Please note that we have arranged these exercises in order to highlight the potentials and not an exact replica of real world development
- Concrete new ideas to try on your teams



# Current issues?



**WHAT DO YOU  
THINK MAKES  
DISTRIBUTED  
WORK DIFFICULT?**

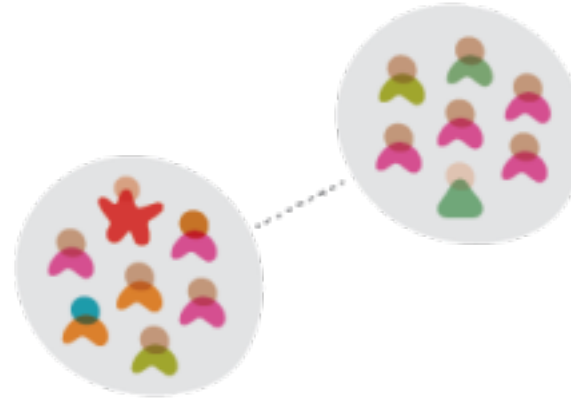


**WHAT PUZZLES  
DO YOU BRING  
WITH YOU TODAY?**

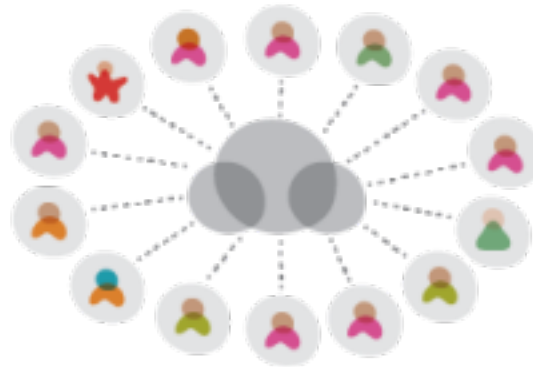
# Different flavours of distributed teams



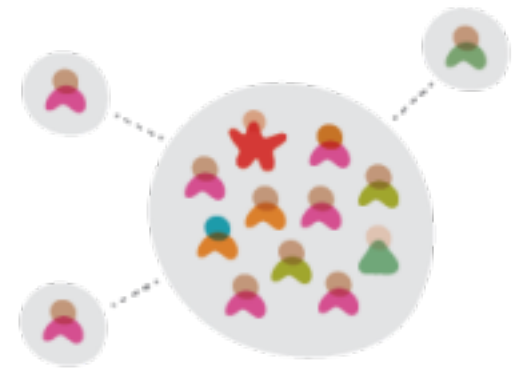
Single Site



Multi Site



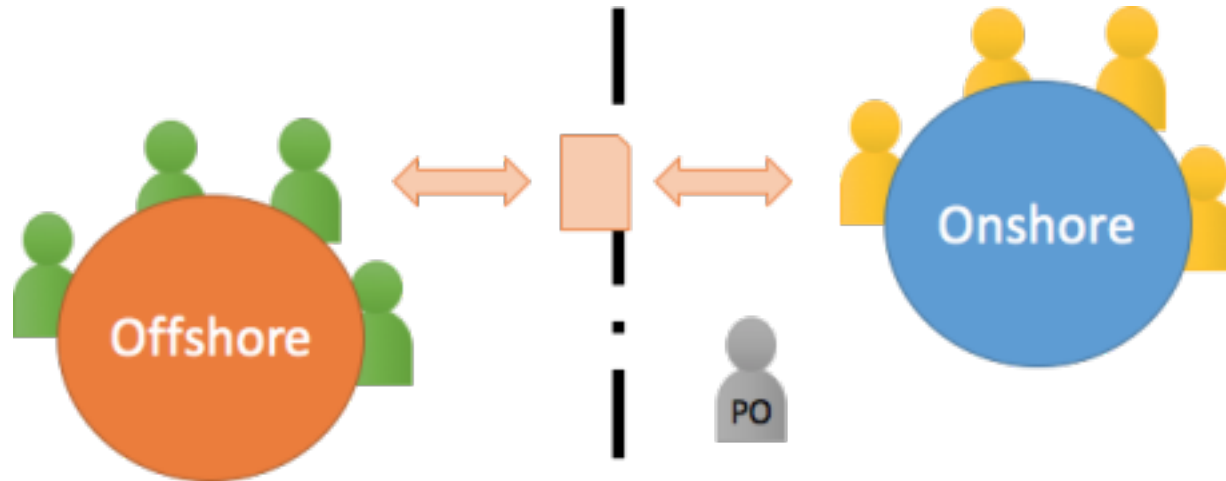
Remote First



Satellite Workers

# Congratulations! You're hired!

- You and your team have sold work in large part because of your cost and time structure leveraging your multiple sites
- Your client is on travel freeze so will only be located with one team



# Your team cadence

- Communication is done through “e-mail” outside of set iteration meetings by using the provided folder or bag
- To start, your onsite team will work with your client in an **inception** to get context and set expectations and work flow

*The team will then have 3 iterations to deliver. Each iteration contains...*

- An **Iteration Planning Meeting** will be hosted by video conference to set team plan for the iteration
- **Development** time will then occur for both teams
- The on site team will host a **Demo** for the Product Owner and can then share the results with their off site team
- **Retrospectives** will be held independently by working location

# How timing bars work





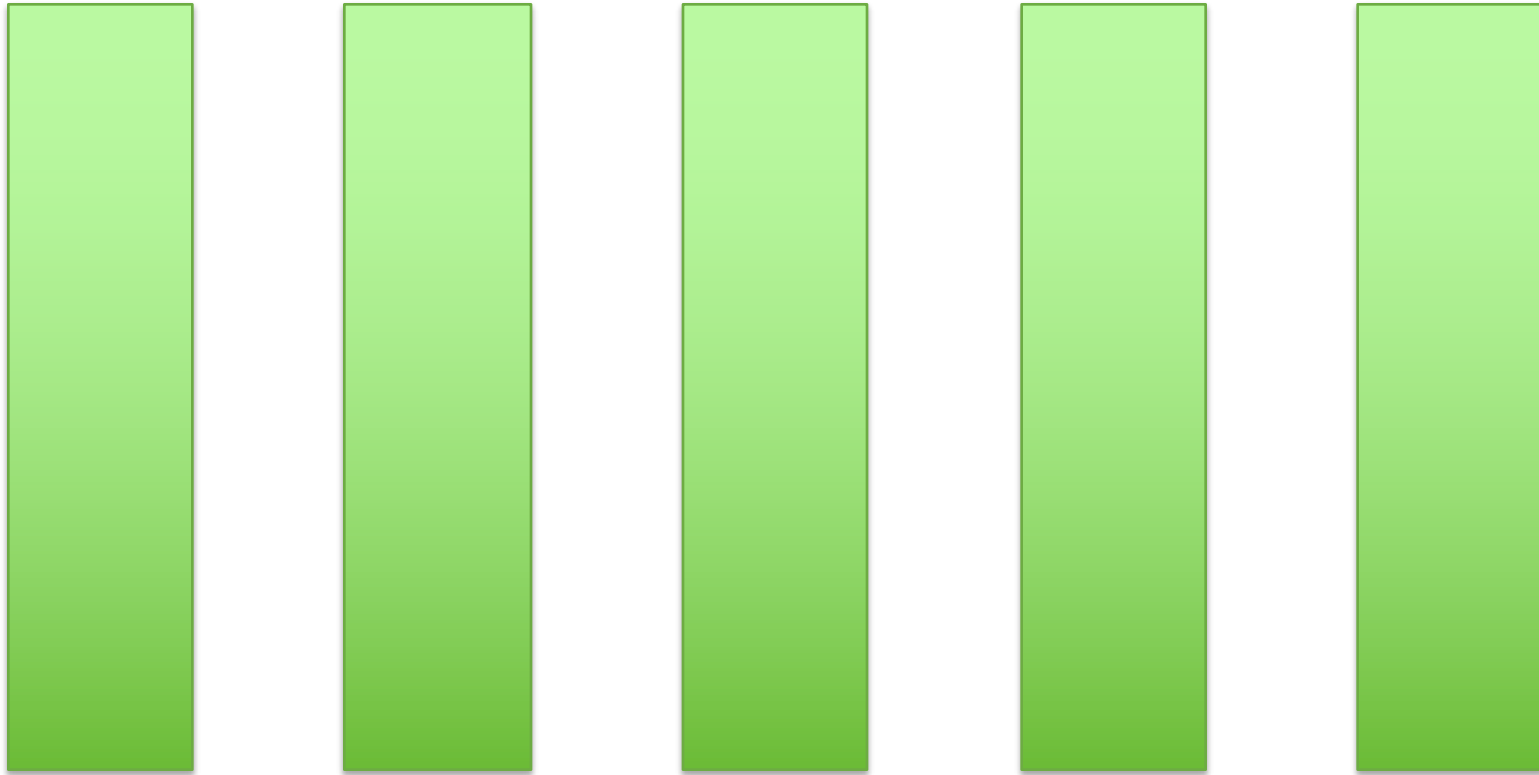
# Schedule

UN:Selja

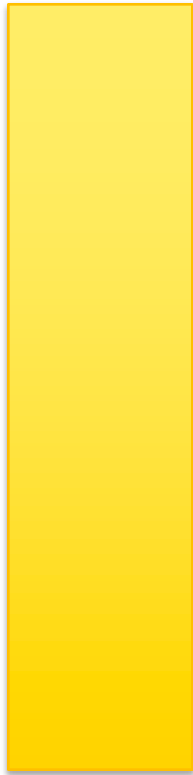
PW:Poppeli

Activity	Who participates	Outcome/Rules	Time
Inception	Onsite only	Estimate how much work can be done in 21 minutes of dev	5
Iteration Planning Meeting	Both teams by call	Share inception info. Plan iteration between the 2 sites.	3
Development	Both teams independently	Work on product. Can communicate only by “email”. <b>All work for demo must be onsite by the end of this phase.</b>	7
Demo	Onsite only w/PO	PO will accept/reject work and provide feedback	2
Share information	Both teams by email	Onshore shares any feedback from the demo	1
Retrospective	Both teams independently	Format is up to the team. What would help improve?	3
Iteration Planning Meeting	Both teams by call	Plan iteration between the 2 sites.	3
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<b>Whole group discussion</b>			10

# Inception



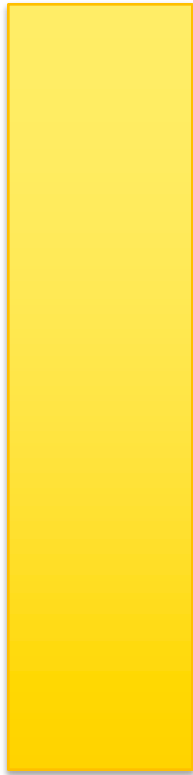
# IPM



# Iteration



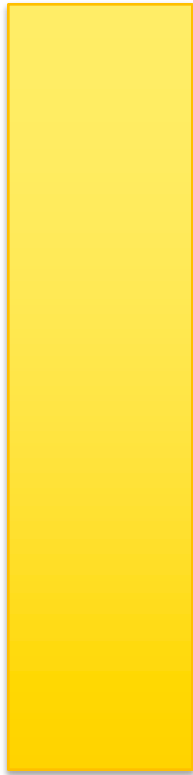
# Demo



# Share Info



# Retro

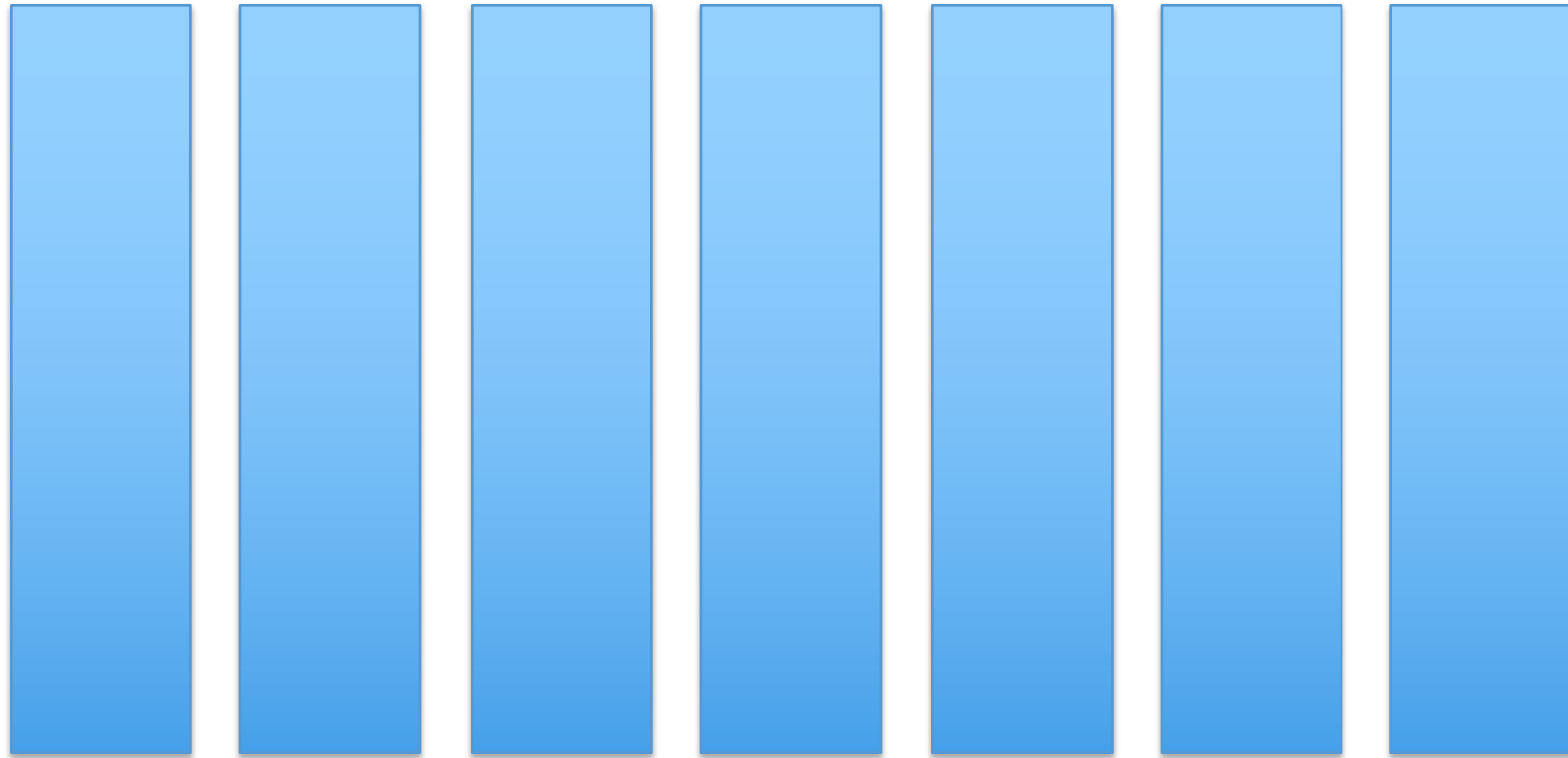


# IPM





# Iteration



# Demo




# Share Info




# Retro




# Let's discuss...

A yellow sticky note with a red pushpin at the top center. The text is written in a black serif font.

What would  
you do to  
improve in the  
future?

A yellow sticky note with a red pushpin at the top center. The text is written in a black serif font.

What was  
difficult?

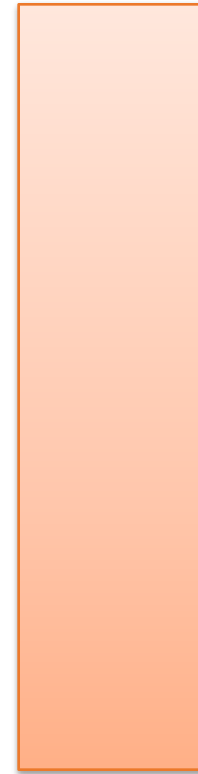
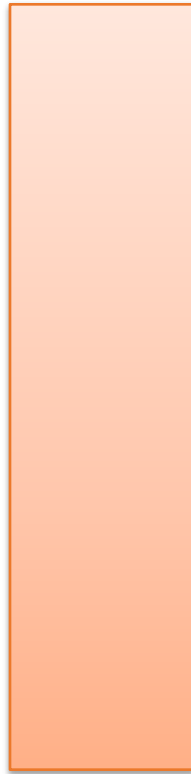
A yellow sticky note with a red pushpin at the top center. The text is written in a black serif font.

What helped  
you succeed?

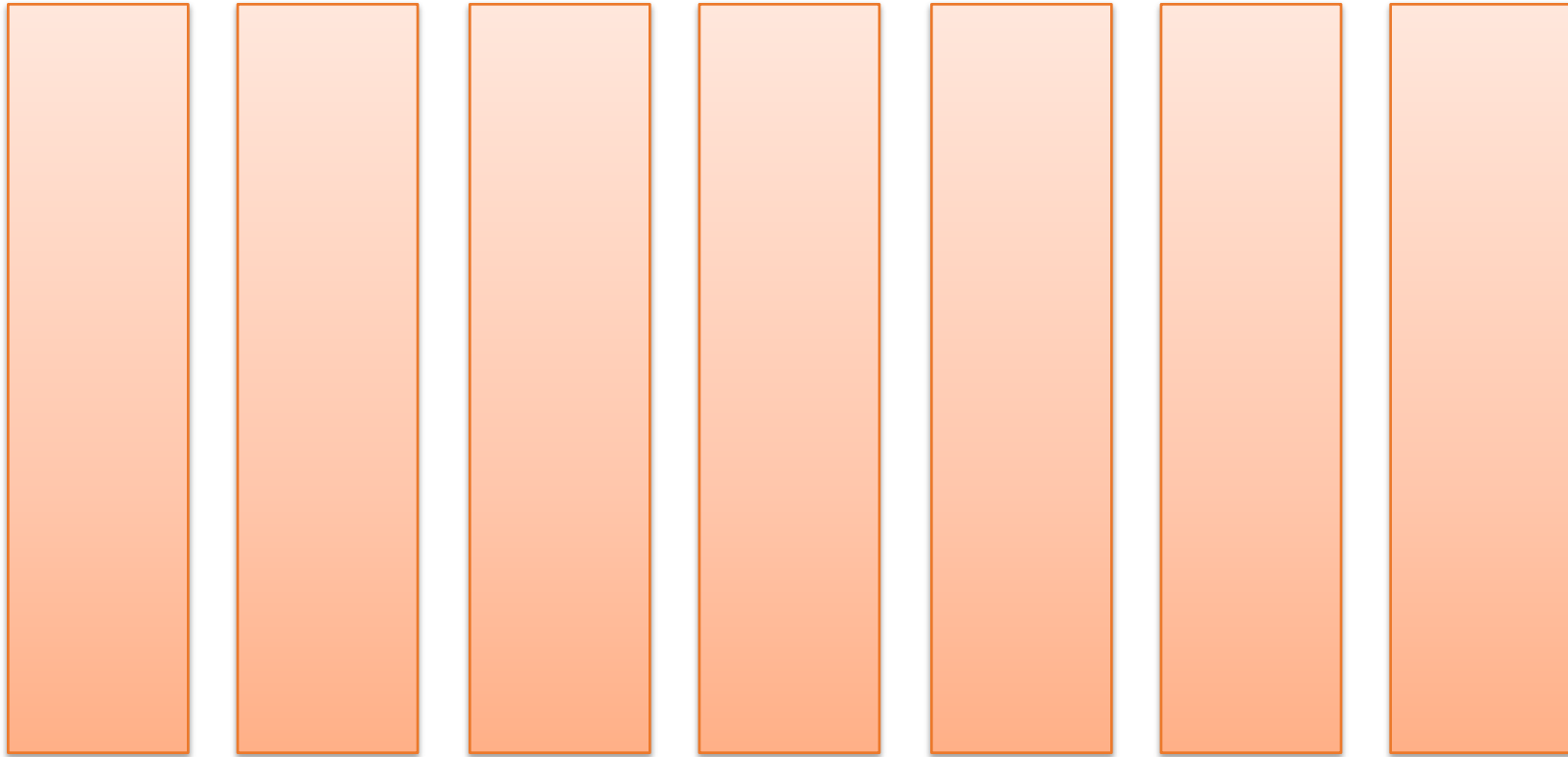
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# IPM

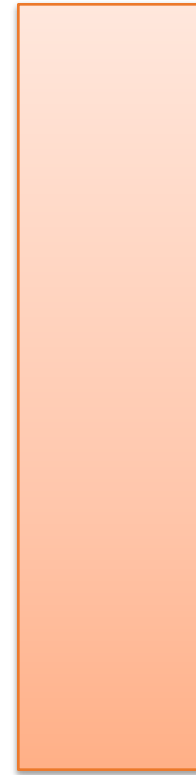
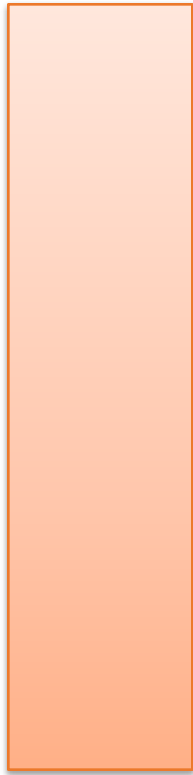


# Iteration





# Demo



# Everyone is distributed



# Build empathy through shared experiences

## Sympathy

Caring and understanding for the suffering of others



## Empathy

The ability to *experience* the feelings of another person

# Build empathy through shared experiences

- **Any one person needs to be using remote tools for a conference call?**

*All people should use remote tools.*

- **Two core locations?**

*Do short term assignments between locations.*

- **Pair program?**

*Pair across physical locations.*

- **One main location with a handful of remote team members?**

*Create a buddy system to always include remote awareness.*

# To have empathy, you need to build relationships - Outside work too

- **Socialise outside work when can**

*Show how fun loving person you are.*

- **Start meetings with a smalltalk**

*Simply ask how they are and how was their weekend for an example*

- **Share your interests**

*May be you both like the same football club*

# When building relationships, need to keep in mind cultural differences

- **Learn about the culture of others**

*You can help them to socialise with your team*

- **Encourage them to ask questions**

*Share information and let them know how helpful questions can be*

- **Don't use puns and local cultural references**

*This way you won't offend them*

# Speaking of cultural differences, there are studies to show how deep they run

## Study talk:

Power distance is the “extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.” - *Culture Consequences by Geert Hofstede*

## Real talk:

Setting team norms as all people can challenge ideas may not be enough to overcome the long standing cultural pressures not to ask questions of a superior.

# Given cultural differences communication is hard even in person, don't worry about perfection

- **Accents can be tricky**

*Remember you have an accent too*

- **Speak slowly , Use diagrams, Chat rooms...**

*Make sure you all have the same understanding at the end of the day*

- **Encourage the communication method comfortable for the team**

*The communication works the best when everyone is comfortable of the method they share ideas*



# And the technology doesn't need to be perfect either!

- Don't ignore problems until you can solve any possible outcome, YAGNI!
- Default to transparency for groups
- Be ok with each team using a different tool (ie: Slack vs GroupMe vs Microsoft Teams)



Thank you, and please come join the conversation...

Abby: @a\_bangser



Bhagya: @bhagyagdm

...but in the meantime, **any questions?**