Managing Remote Diverse Teams

Tips from WITops research

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WIT:ops

Changing the Paradigm for Women in Tech

Understanding Remote Diverse Teams

We've had remote teams for years

Plus

+ Allows people to live where they want

+ Leverages lower cost of living and available workers

+ Time zones create 24-hour work cycle

+ Builds teams with diverse experiences and perspectives

+ Greater task focus when working at home

Minus

- Reduces team connection and relationship building

- Remote individuals aren't heard well when the bulk of a meeting is in person

- Sub-teams at different locations trust each other above the full group

- Lag in email or request for response

- Language barriers and miscommunication due to culture

But now everyone's remote!

Remote tools make remote teamwork possible

Video meeting tools like Zoom
- That can be used for hours
- Work with up to 15 log-ins that don't degrade

Simultaneous Collaboration Tools like these or the equivalent
- Google docs, sheets, and slides
- Miro – a collaborative whiteboard
- Figma for prototyping
- Collaborative coding tools
- All kinds of on-line tools for agile

Multiple kinds of hardware used by multiple people
- Computer – phone – tablet – stylus or pen for tablet
- Expect to have more than one device logged in per person
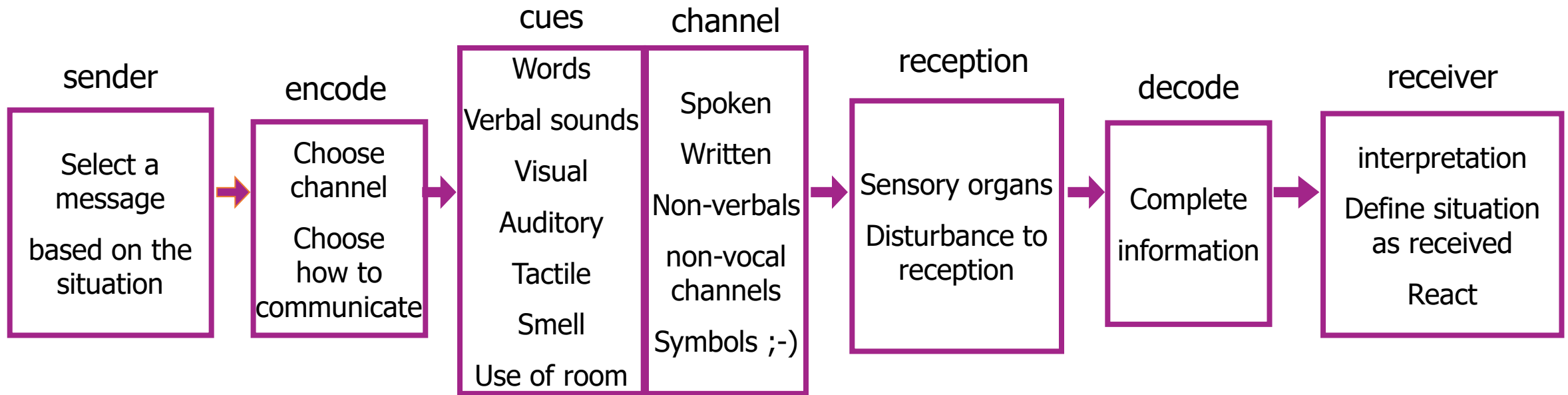- Big screens will help

Back to back & all-day meetings are never a good idea!

Understanding Communication

We relate through many stimuli – We filter things in and out

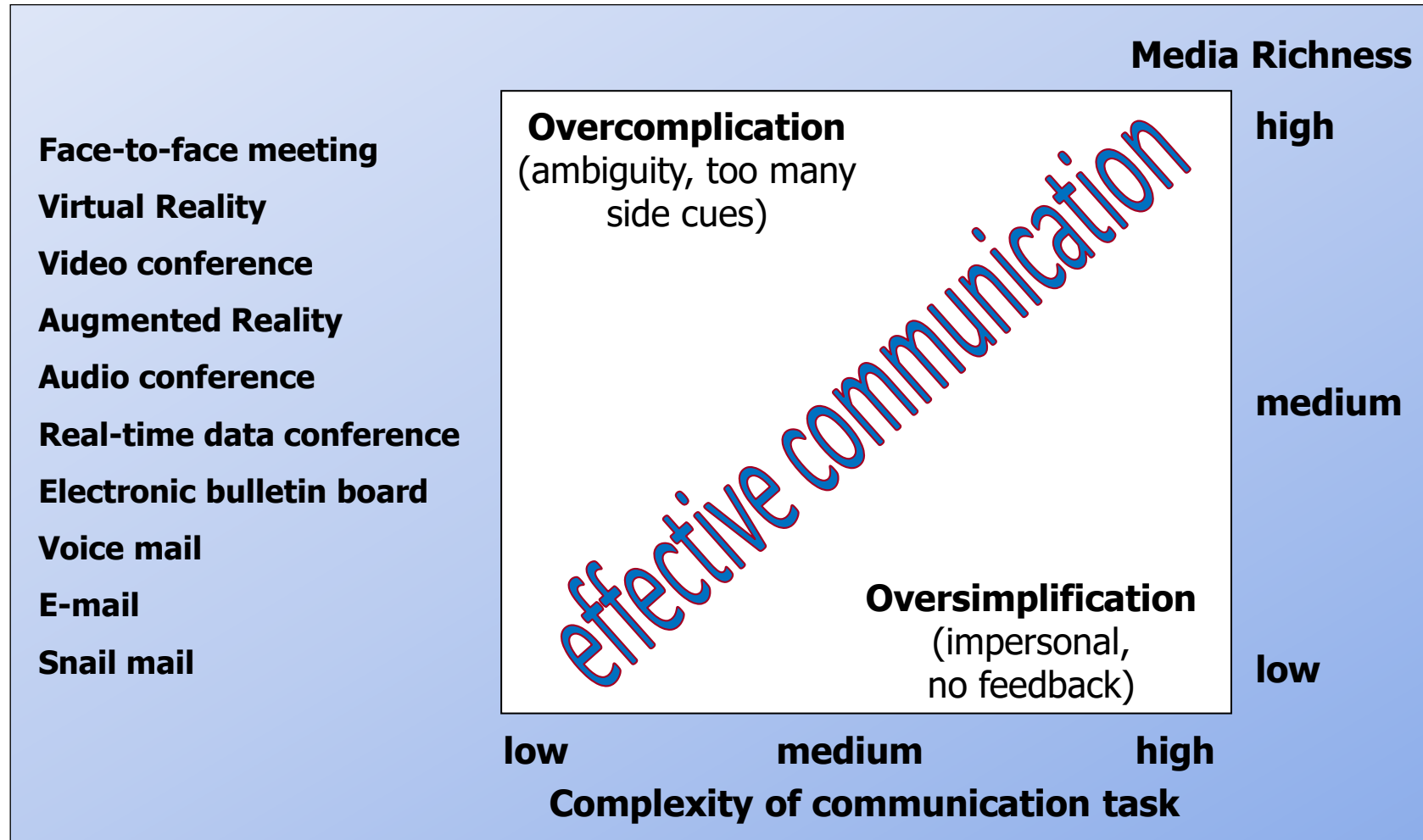And we make mistakes – miscommunicate & misinterpret

Multiple languages are always a problem

sender	encode	cues	channel	reception	decode	receiver
Select a message based on the situation	Choose channel Choose how to communicate	Words Verbal sounds Visual Auditory Tactile Smell Use of room	Spoken Written Non-verbals non-vocal channels Symbols ;-)	Sensory organs Disturbance to reception	Complete information	interpretation Define situation as received React

Remote interaction reduces cues & changes how we interact

Diversity issues still happen on remote teams

The WIT Retention Project: Why women stay or leave

Guiding solutions for remote diverse teams

Revealing the @ Work Experience Framework

- Identified key factors women need to thrive in technology jobs
- Grounded in deep dive inquiry into women's daily work experience
- **Including multiple job roles and industries**

Creating the @ Work Experience Measure

- A 10 minute survey measuring the factors
- Validated with over 1000 people world wide

Guiding practical solutions for retention

- Building awareness into existing practices
- For individuals, teams, managers
- Team onboarding – teamwork – conflict resolution & interpersonal techniques – Games
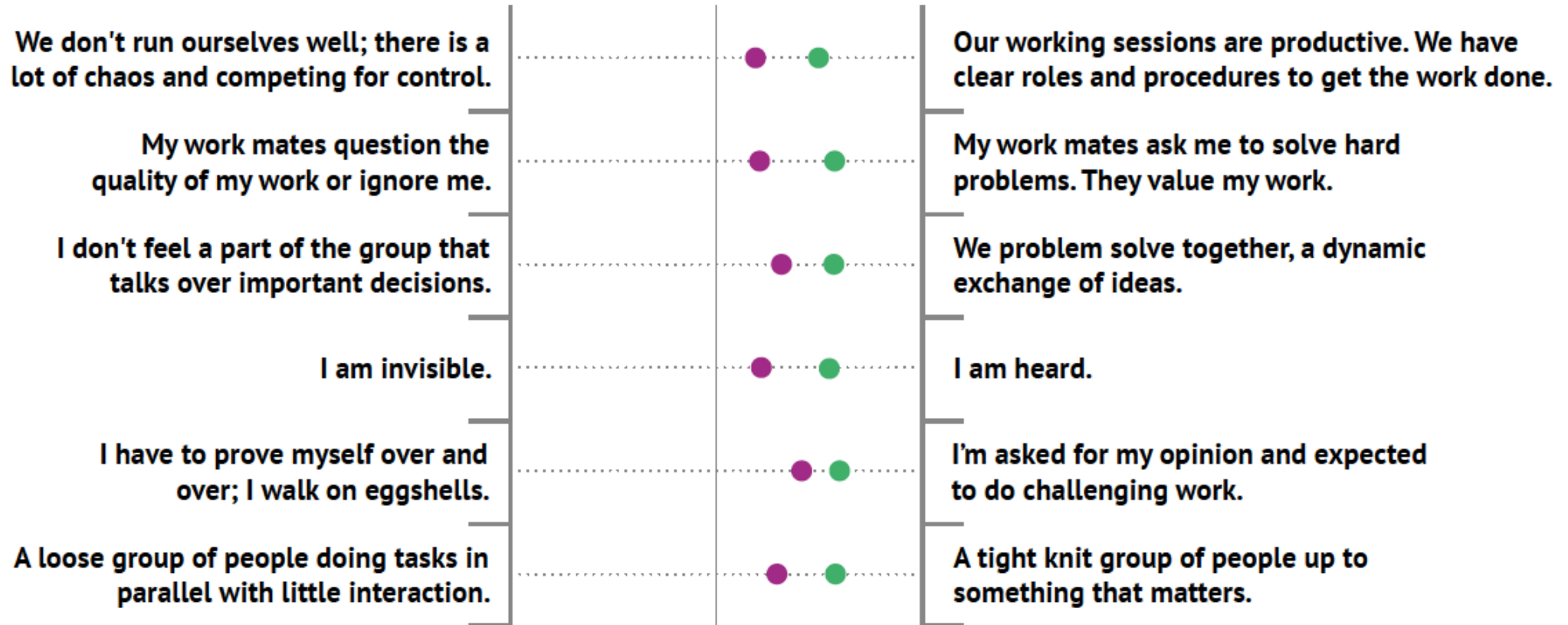- Designed with and for people in industry

Foster Team Cohesion & Connection

The team is at the center of wellbeing @work

Tight Cohesive Team

Differences between people who are thinking about leaving their job vs. not

We don't run ourselves well; there is a lot of chaos and competing for control.	Our working sessions are productive. We have clear roles and procedures to get the work done.
My work mates question the quality of my work or ignore me.	My work mates ask me to solve hard problems. They value my work.
I don't feel a part of the group that talks over important decisions.	We problem solve together, a dynamic exchange of ideas.
I am invisible.	I am heard.
I have to prove myself over and over; I walk on eggshells.	I'm asked for my opinion and expected to do challenging work.
A loose group of people doing tasks in parallel with little interaction.	A tight knit group of people up to something that matters.

**Team cohesiveness affects retention and productivity**

Women > 1 fosters participation & performance

Put more women on the team – don't distribute them

- Increases women's identification with the team and so their performance
- Increases overall performance of the team
- Changes the overall interactions and tone of the team
- Same findings for minority team members

@Work Experience Measure

- Survey of > 900 people
- Number women and
- Overall experience at work

Overall Experience at work
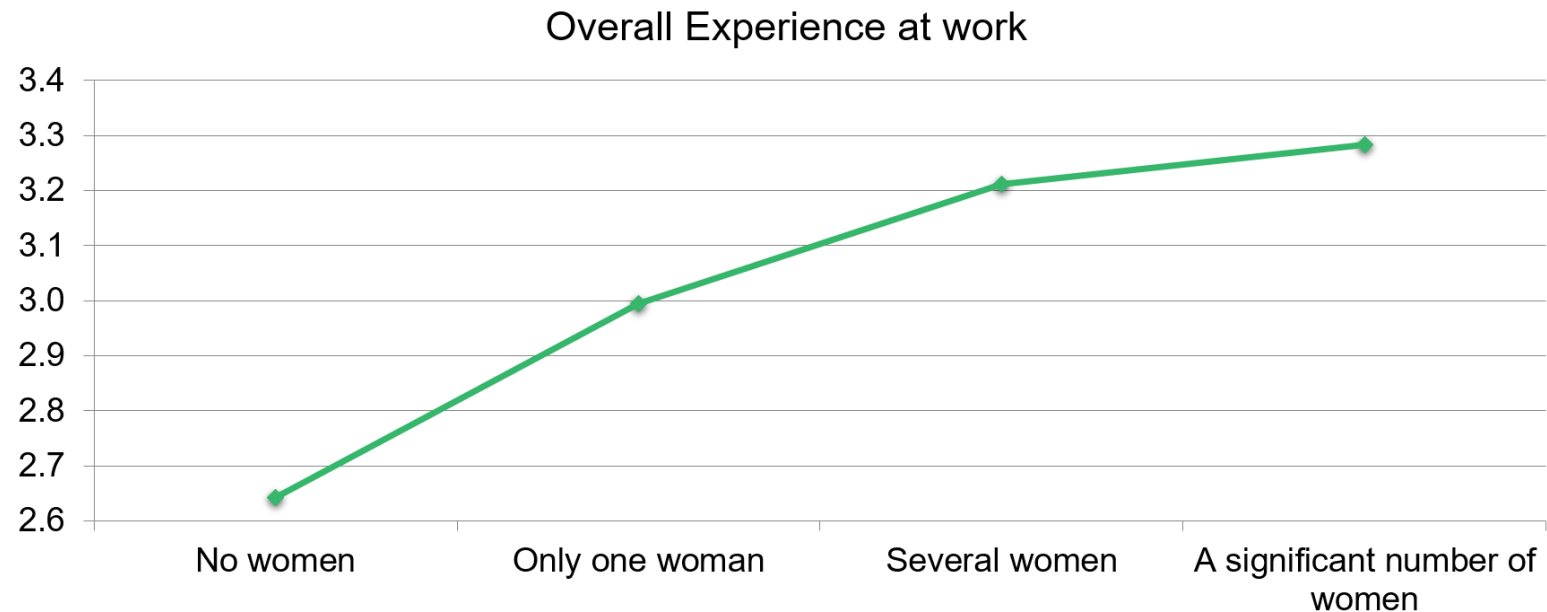
And a positive experience in the workplace for all

Foster social and work connections

Do get together as a team
- To build team morale
- Morning coffee, lunch, cocktails
- On-line activities all can enjoy
- Beware gendered activities that exclude

Don't neglect individual relationships
- Slack, text, phone helps maintain existing connection where communication style is established
- But doesn't build new connection

Differences undermine connection
- People look for "like me" others; Are comfortable with those that share cohort and experience
- Time zone, language, age, experiences, gender, ethnicity get in the way

Local cliques & co-located sub-teams
- Creates greater local cohesion – which time zone will support too
- Encourages sub-team member to get to know each other and not those from a different location.

We need to be known as individuals to connect

Foster individual connections to all

Social: Help people find what they have in common
- Write and share short bios with humor highlighting hobbies, places lived, family configurations, colleges….share at a group lunch

Work: We get to know each other by "doing" something that matters together
- Break-up cliques & local sub-teams – create strong 1-1 connections
- Ask 2 people to co-create something fun to do with the team
- Assign work challenges to senior-junior partners to foster coaching
- Assign work to junior-junior partners to support each other in solving the problem

Don't ask for volunteers– we pick our friends – Assign the activity fairly
- Round Robin co-working makes sure all work together over time
- Round Robin office housework: Meeting minutes, selecting fun activity, "making coffee"
- Foster fairness in boring work and challenging work by passing it around

Build connection & counteract stereotyping by co-working with all

Team Onboarding Checklist: Remote

Launch

First Weeks

First Days

Before First Day

Building Blocks

Connection
- Manager
- Buddies
- Team
- Network

Success
- Tools & Information
- Team Culture
- Role
- Project

Everyone reach out to them don't expect them to reach out to you

Make a real relationship – commit your time to coaching
- Share best way to contact you – Txt, Slack, email video, phone?
- Check in a lot & invite let them ask any questions
- Set up frequent face-to-face video meetings; establish a habit of conversation and help

Create the best buddy set – Work, Experienced, Company, IT
- Find a work buddy with the same job & time zone
- Be sure Experienced, Company and IT Buddies also check in
- Check in with buddy set remotely to see how the NH is doing

Be sure they know the team & team culture
- Use group channels for the team to drop in & see if they need help
- Set up 1-1 video meetings to meet everyone individually

Plan the work with partners appropriately to their skill
- Step NHs into the work and product or corporate complexity

Livestream https://www.witops.org/onboarding/

Structure Work Processes for Productivity

Research on successful teams finds they all have

Clear goals, roles, processes,
Expected deliverables
Accepted rules of engagement

Structured processes make teams work

Too often we resist structure...with it, teams thrive

Leaders who communicate clear goals & expectations

Working meeting with clear goals, roles, processes, and expected outcomes

An artifact as a focal point for all to "see" what is being created or agreed to

A small enough number of people so everyone has airtime

Facilitators for groups of > 3 people

Articulated rules of engagement

Shared principles of goodness

We don't run ourselves well; there is a lot of chaos and competition for control

Thinking of leaving have less structure

Our working sessions are productive. We have clear roles and procedures to get the work done.

Remote teams make this even more important

Status or presentation meetings

Classic best practices for productive meetings & diversity issues

Running the meeting
- Distribute an agenda with goals and expected outcomes
- Meeting owner is or assigns a moderator
- Display a document capturing decisions or ideas
- Display to-do's with assigned names and dates

Participation
- Presenter or meeting owner is clear about when questions or feedback are welcome
- Limit the time of any presenter or speaker
- Be sure all have time to speak
  - Use round robin participation
  - Everyone speaks once before someone speaks for a second time
  - Try a timekeeper

Remote meetings need this even more!

Agile is highly structured

Relies on clear practices, visualization techniques, face-to-face communication and designated timeframes

Events
- e.g. Sprints, Planning Sessions, Stand-Ups, Reviews, Retrospectives

Roles
- e.g. Product Owner, Team, Agile Coach

Artifacts
- e.g. Backlogs, Vision Statement, Product Roadmap, Team Guidelines

Timeframe
- Gersick's seminal research on teamwork: Teams don't get started in earnest until mid-way through the alloted time.
- Short with focused goals is best in any technique

Many of the practices are already using tools like Jira or Trello

Agile relies on empowered teams

Easily translated to a remote setting

- Morning stand-up: Remote meeting to keep all on track
- Put a visual display at the center of all remote meetings
  - To collect and track stories, releases, backlog – everything normally on a board
  - Leverage the collaborative nature of your tools
  - If you want drawings and boards for sticky notes etc. try Miro
- Find the tools that work for you
  - There are fun tools out there that support the different practices like www.planningpoker.com, www.reetro.io
  - Individuals fill it out independently to encourage divergent thought
  - Then individuals share and the team discusses
- Pair coding works for quality and to advance skill
  - Use a collaborative coding tool

Examine any of your practices for clarity of the process & translate to remote tools

Requirements & Design can be structured

Contextual Design is a series of structured working meetings
- With clear goals, roles, procedures and expected deliverables
- Now do it remote https://www.witops.org/how-to-do-remote-contextual-design/
- Or translate these recommendations to your requirements and design process

Critique: A core process in successful product design
- https://www.witops.org/design-critiques/ – Now do it remote
- Schedule an hour for the critique on Zoom with 4-8 people
  - Team members, stakeholders or external eviewers
  - Start on time
- Plan to display the artifact in GDocs./Sheets, Miro, Figma…
  - The research/design/concept/graphic artifact to be evaluated
  - The goal of the meeting and type of feedback desired
  - Business goals, key user data or principles of excellence to guide evaluation
  - Rules of engagement

Success happens when everyone understands what to do & who does what

Remote design review preparation

What kind of review is it? Review only one artifact at a time
- Prepare a large, clear representation to share through Zoom.
- If reviewers use a tool like Figma for them to see be sure all reviewers can use it well

Make a video intro for reviewers without context
- Create a 5-10-minute video narrated by ONE team member including:
  - Business goal, user types (not personas), who makes buying decisions
  - Key findings (6-8) from previous user research, testing and in the literature
  - Activities or behaviors product must support
  - Solution ideas - product concepts that are driving the design
  - Constraints: Business, design, tech, platform

Assign each team member a role – spread around opportunity to shine
- Run the session with a facilitator

Before: Share the video, design principles and the team's rules of engagement

Goal: Ensure reviewers are focused and have enough background

Remote design review process

1) Quick orienting overview: 3 minutes – Don't repeat the video content
   - business goals, what is to be reviewed, desired feedback

2) Present the artifact, 1 coherent piece at a time slowly
   - Parts of an affinity or graphic experience model, sections of a product concept, cells of a story board, sub-sections of a design…
   - Introduce designs in the context of a scenario

3) Reviewers can only ask clarifying questions during presentation
   - Reviewers take private notes on their thoughts or feedback

4) Solicit feedback – walk through artifact piece by piece collecting feedback
   - Include both positive and things to improve
   - Refer to principles of goodness
   - Team members take notes and iterate their artifact; Google docs if you want all to see

DO NOT DISCUSS RESOLUTION
Collect issues and ideas!

Remote work needs more structure

So do
Diverse teams

Manage
Interpersonal Dynamics

Bias lives in the interpersonal

Our WIT retention project data

- 49% of Women feel invisible and not heard
- Those "thinking of leaving" score lower on measures of team experience

The Literature: Women report negative interactions at work

- 50% of women in STEM report experiencing gender-related discrimination
  - More than women in non-STEM jobs (41%) or men in STEM (19%)
- A male dominated workplace is associated with more harassment and hostility towards women – So women have more stress and turnover

40 years of diversity training doesn't work

- Women's sense of belonging and feelings of discrimination don't improve if their department completes a diversity program

Can we improve things with remote teams?

Video and bias

Women are still women – their skill, especially in tech, is minimized

Ethnicity, weight and age are still apparent – we react as usual

Formal power, job type and responsibility, is still clear – we defer

But height is minimized and the ability to dominate a room with it

We can all see the eye-roll, humph, impatience, insistent tone of voice in everyone's face – we may be uncomfortable and withdraw

Our own behavior is in our face too! We react and self–monitor

Airtime is clear – just watch the green bar!

Remote teams come with challenges and opportunities

The impact of seeing yourself

Real vs Ideal self

In the mirror I create my ideal self

When I see myself, I self-monitor
to maintain my ideal self

Video is a mirror

I manage my projection

Stereotype less

Self-disclose more

& conform more

So I'm less likely to be a Jerk

Self-management takes my attention

Away from the group's task

Conformity impacts divergent thinking

So performance can suffer

When should we see ourselves – when should we not?

Valuing & Jerk Behavior

Valuing

Promotion – straight skill value

Coaches –Senior person takes time
- Listens/understands my work or personal needs
- Helps, coaches, or partners on a hard problem

Appreciates me – direct statements
- Thanks me, sends a note, likes my ideas, work or approach
- Tells a senior person or my group I'm good

Jerk

Berates me or others
- Yells or uses foul language
- Demeans my skill

Dominates decisions & meetings
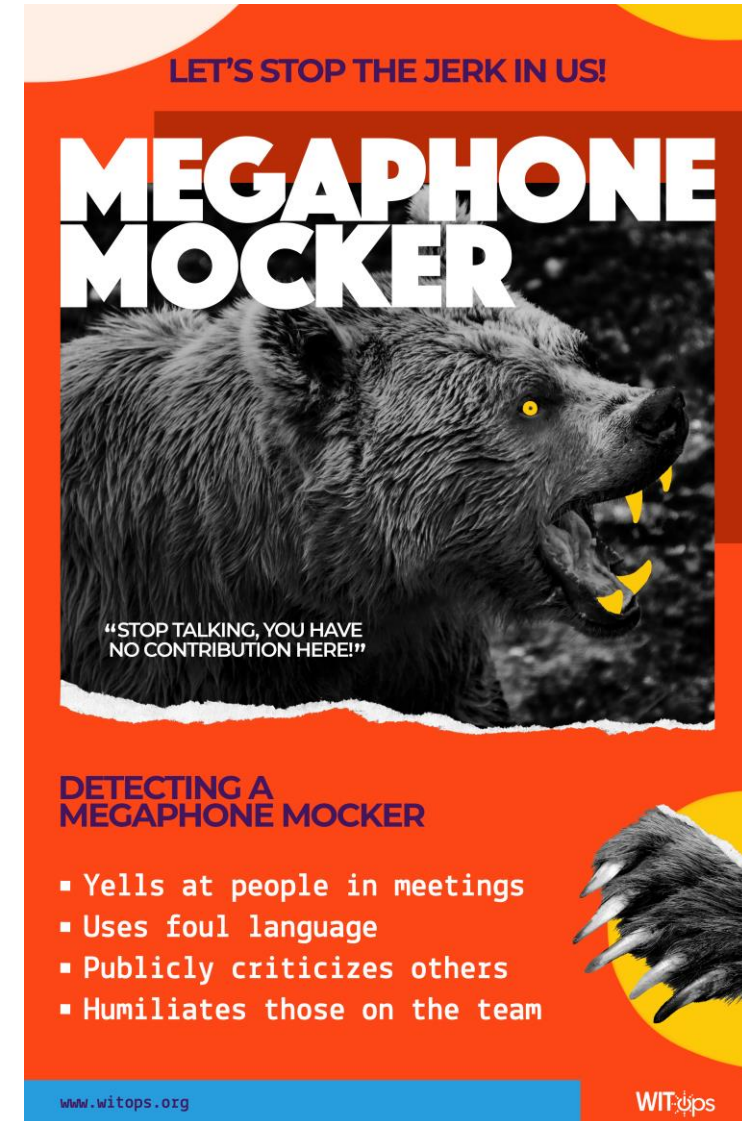- Listens impatiently to others
- Ignores input – my way or the highway

Rules aren't for me
- Breaks corporate rules or accepted social behavior

Top behaviors that matter from our research with > 70 people

Livestream: https://www.witops.org/valuing-and-jerk/

Build awareness with fun

LET'S BE VALUING!

REWARD MASTER

YOU ARE PROMOTED!

DETECTING A "REWARD MASTER"

- Promotes me for my contributions
- Bonus for going the extra mile
- Perks to acknowledge my success
- Award for important project

www.witops.org

WIT ops

LET'S STOP THE JERK IN US!

MEGAPHONE MOCKER

"STOP TALKING, YOU HAVE NO CONTRIBUTION HERE!"

DETECTING A MEGAPHONE MOCKER

- Yells at people in meetings
- Uses foul language
- Publicly criticizes others
- Humiliates those on the team

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WIT ops

Thanks to my UMD team & designer Peter Verastegui

Video & collaborative tools help make change

Valuing

- Keep your video on so everyone sees you are listening
- Appreciate in the Zoom chat right away
- Spread value – Ask members to send a valuing note right after a meeting or work session in round robin form
- Coach in pairs with collaborative tools working on hard problems
- Drop in by video & Slack to see how folks are doing

Jerk

- Show your video. Watch yourself to learn how you behave
- Agree to a NO YELLING policy
  - Facilitators/managers use chat for a gentle reminder
- A well-run meeting structure mitigates bad behavior
  - Use a timekeeper to balance airtime
- Listen to all for decisions
  - Gather ideas & data individually in a collaborative document – then decide
- Articulate & show the rules of the team so you know if you break them

Everyone commits to change: Take the test to see how you are doing

Agile Team Manifesto

Success
Excellence
Trust
Learning
Fun
Respect
Procedures & Practices
Failure
Honesty
Teamwork
Integrity
Accountability
Conduct
Support
Rules
Commitment
Appreciation
Growth
Work life balance
Collaboration

What does this team mean to you?

- Each member writes their answers on a sticky note in Miro
- Team members present their notes in round robin
- Pile like notes together on the board,
- Give the pile a title on a blue sticky of the value or behavior
- Gdoc: Write the value on the left with behavior examples
- Write the natural opposite on the right with behaviors
- Prioritize the behaviors to 6 most important
- Finalize the document
- Everyone signs it including manager

Pre-Discussion

- Ask "What is rude?"
- Write notes of answers on a Miro board dumped in a pile
- Sort notes into like groups & discuss

Judge yourself against your commitment & how you are doing

What's your personal change goal

Nonverbal Judgment

Talk too much – talk to little

Impatient to share your idea

**Asks questions vs.
supply solutions**

Self-depricating

Facilitator & Caretaker

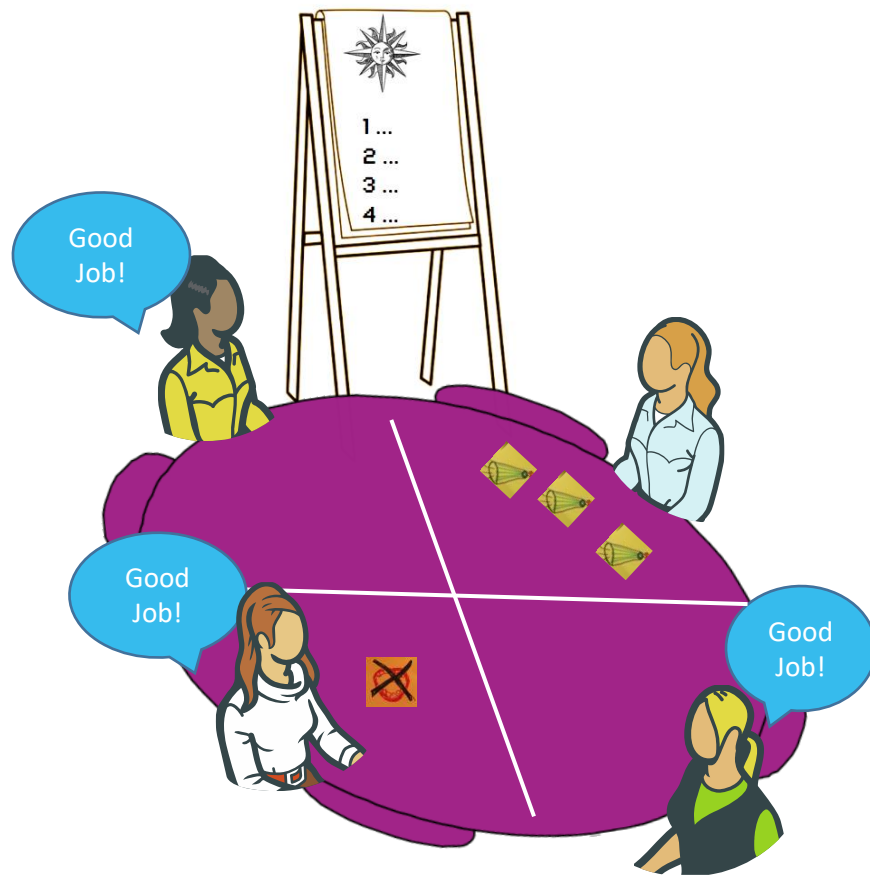Over-controlling

Always "no can do"

My way or the highway

Good but..

Put it in your review!

Talk to much – Talk too little

Miro for Remote

Use props to make change tangible

- Sticky notes to self reward to talk more
- Talk too much: A sticky for each participation
  - Write ideas in a notebook
- Or have a team tracker
  - Do it in Miro right under the ideation board

It works if

- It is introduced by a respected leader, coach or manager
- The person wants help
- The team does it together

Changing behavior is hard – Make it physical and fun

Commit to interpersonal management
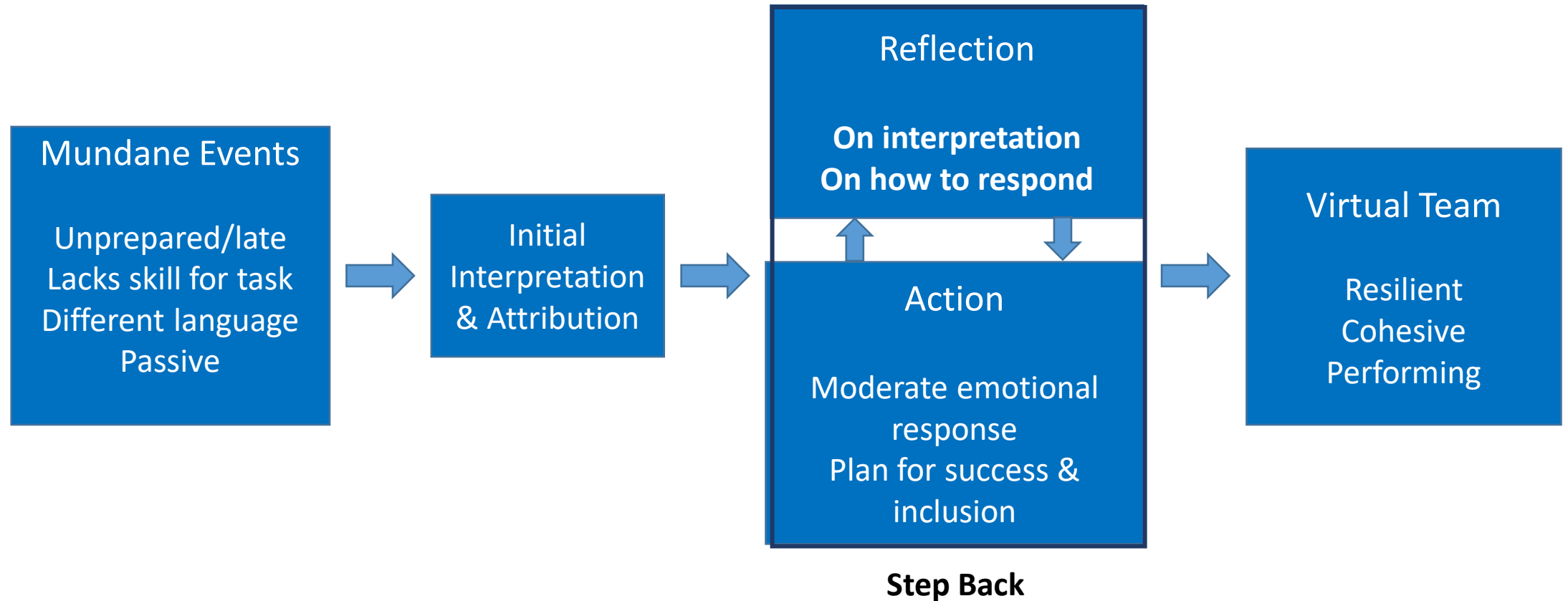
Celebrate success
Don't blame

Reaction – Reflection – Resilience

How we interpret everyday behavior and challenges affects team success

Reflection is an intervention technique

Mundane Events

Unprepared/late
Lacks skill for task
Different language
Passive

→

Initial Interpretation & Attribution

→

Reflection

**On interpretation
On how to respond**

Action

Moderate emotional response
Plan for success & inclusion

Step Back

→

Virtual Team

Resilient
Cohesive
Performing

Degbey & Einola 2019-20 Virtual Teams & Resilience

Give space to
New, shy, tentative members

Build bridges
Don't push folks away or out

Rethink
How you do the work

Team Reflection: Process Check

Process Check

What's working – Pluses
+ We are starting on time
+ We have running code!
+ We went out to lunch together
+ We ran a design critique and everyone listened and contributed productively
+ I'm (Ju) speaking up more
+ Sue did a great design

What's not – Minuses
- We didn't give ourselves enough time for storyboarding
- The visual design is not good enough for upcoming presentation
- We are wasting time arguing about word definitions
- I'm (Joe) still not getting my ideas out

DI: Add 25% time to all our time estimates.

In a weekly Zoom + Gdocs team meeting ask"
- How are you doing on your values
  - As a group and personally
- How are you doing on your deliverables
- How well are you running your meetings
- How are your personal growth goals – declare your wins!
- Are you valuing each other?

Generate design ideas to address issues
- Try it out the next week and check again

Or use Agile Retrospective tools
- https://www.goreflect.com
- https://www.scatterspoke.com
- https://www.scrum-toolkit.com

Take managing yourselves seriously

Batman Jar on Miro

The team is the Superhero
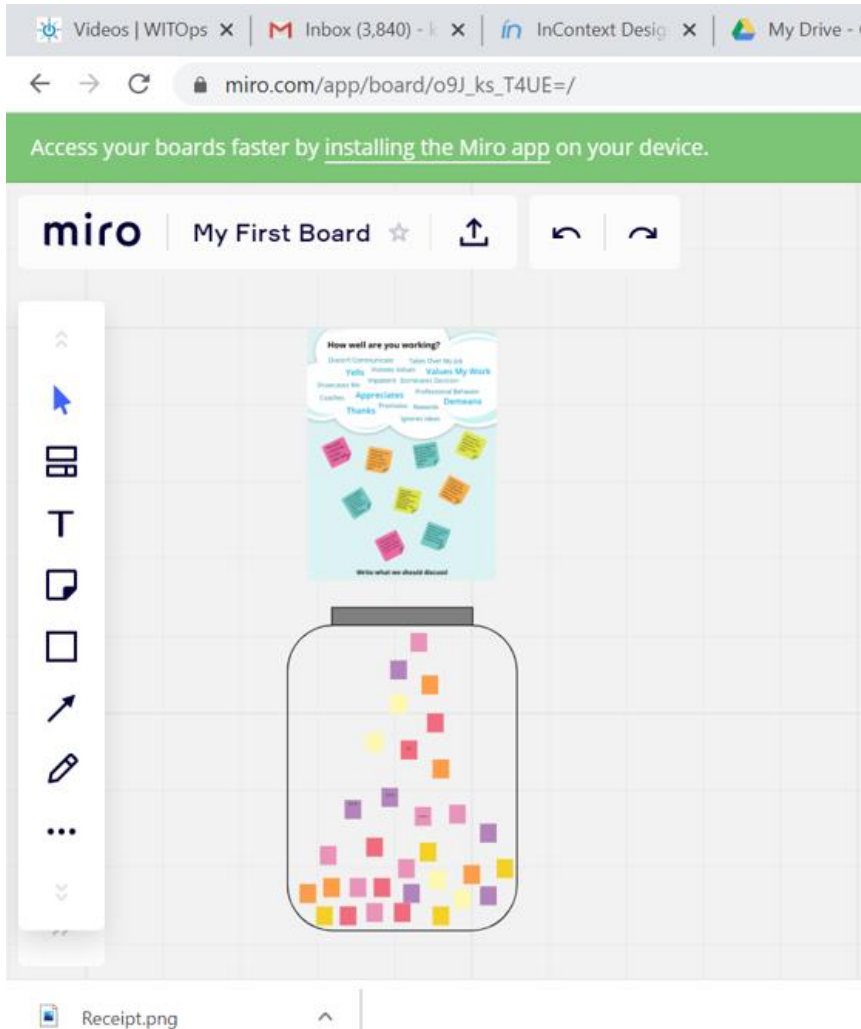
Word cloud to stimulate issues

Write virtual notes & put in the jar

Be anonymous by giving all Guest Editor status

Weekly pull out the items for discussion

Iterate your practices, personal goals, updates rules of engagement or Team Manifesto...

Download ours to start!

Anonymity may be better for new, shy, tentative...

Complaining only
Hinders productivity & cohesiveness

Identifying issues + solutions
Increases it

Individual reflection
+
Team reflection
+
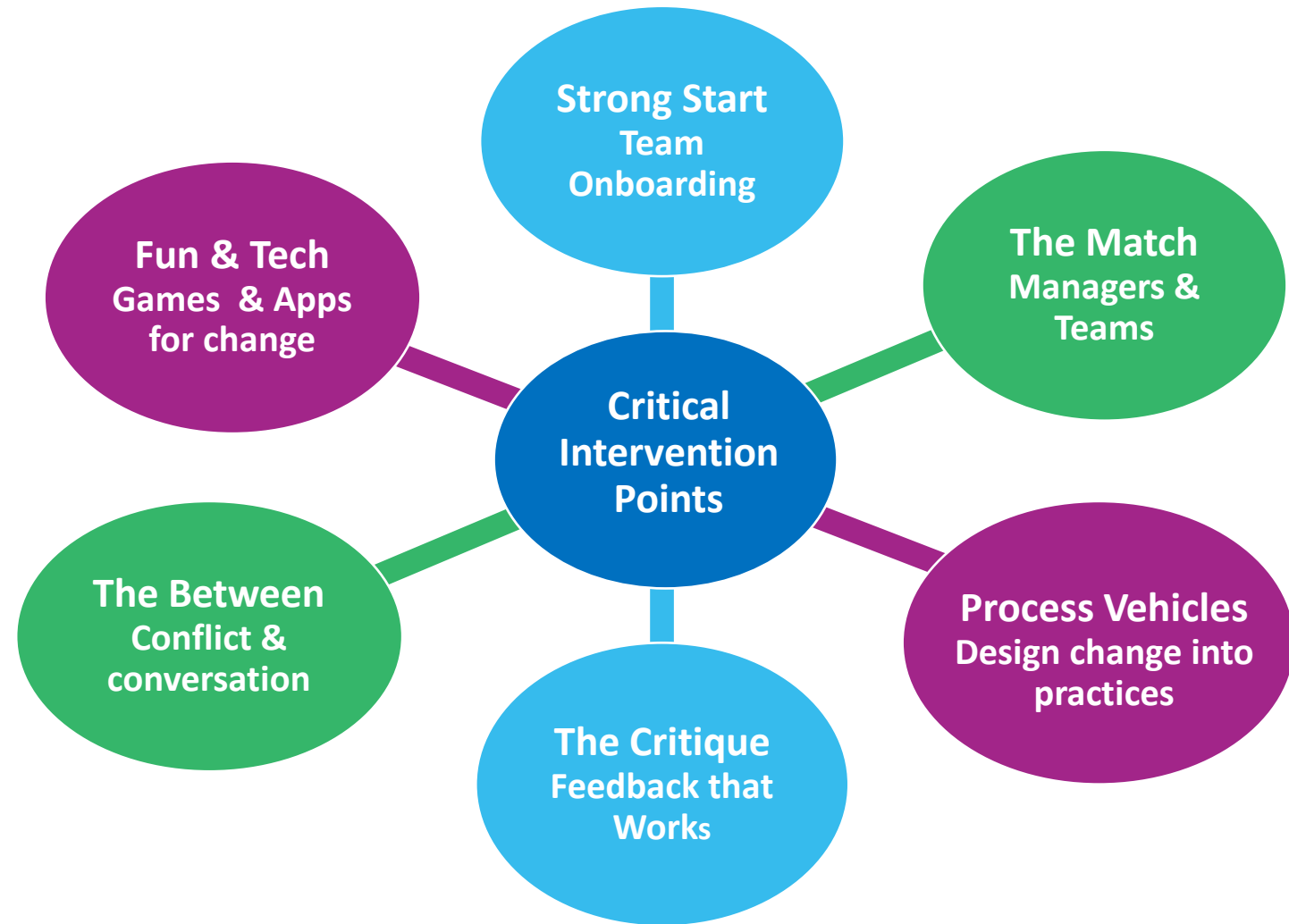Reinventing & structuring practices
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Effective Virtual Teams

WITops

Design your practices for success
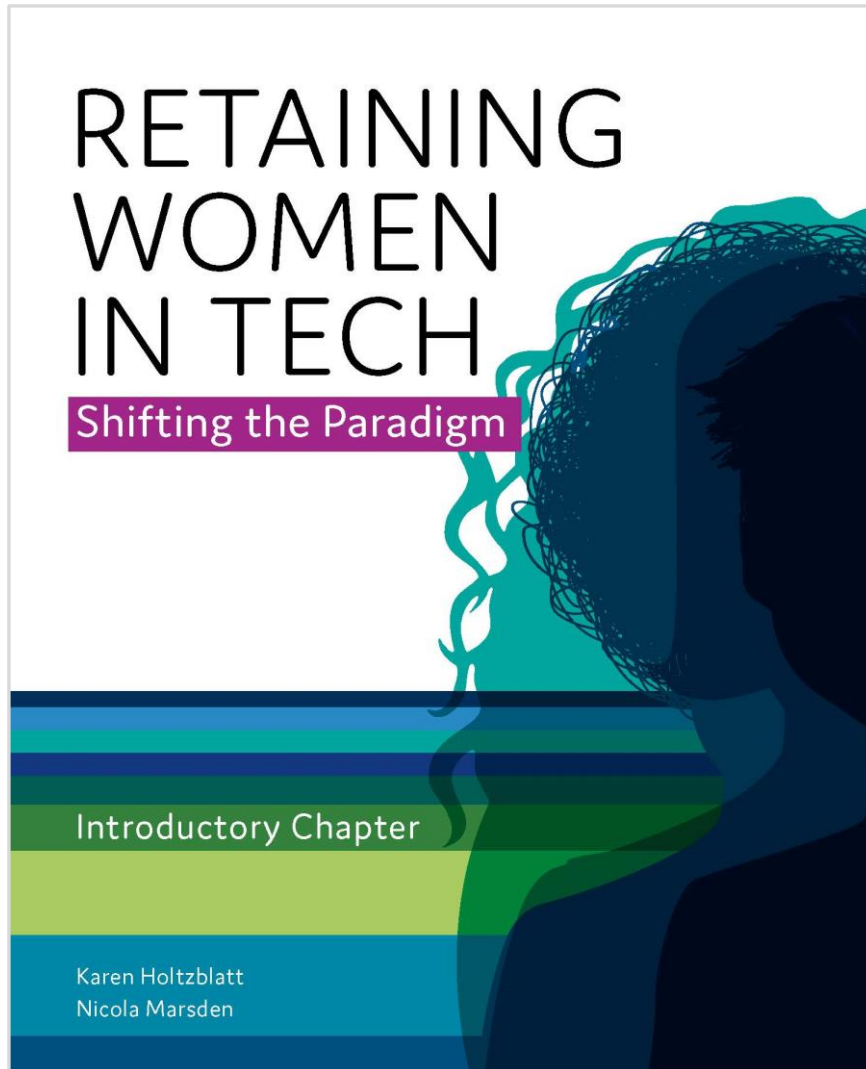
WITops: Creating Practical Solutions

Key Processes

Managing the Interpersonal

Sneak Attacks

Strong Start
Team
Onboarding

The Match
Managers &
Teams

Fun & Tech
Games & Apps
for change

Critical
Intervention
Points

The Between
Conflict &
conversation

Process Vehicles
Design change into
practices

The Critique
Feedback that
Works

Deliberately redesign processes to change the culture

Get a sneak peek! Free!

Karen Holtzblatt and Nicola Marsden

Why can't tech companies retain women?

How can companies transform their work culture?

Women in tech leave the field twice as often as men Women report more stereotyping, hostility, and feelings of not belonging – even after 40 years of awareness.

Learn

Understand our perspective and findings gleaned from our deep dive research into the work lives of WIT & the literature.

Try

Try our tested interventions, practical techniques for onboarding new hires, work practices, interpersonal dynamics, & nudging change.

Manage

Shift how you manage diverse teams. Get the benefits of diversity to produce innovative results while women thrive.

Introductory Chapter: http://www.morganclaypoolpublishers.com/womenintech/

Join Us!

WITops

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www.witops.org

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See our Livestreams
- https://www.witops.org/videos/
- June 24 3pm Eastern

The @Work Experience Framework

Use our resources
- Free book chapter
- Team Onboarding Checklist
- Cool posters on Valuing & Jerk characters coming
- Batman Jar
- Career Power board game

Changing the Paradigm
for Women in Tech