Distributed

John O’Duinn

@joduinn
john@oduinn.com
Distributed teams are not new
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Some tools ARE new

...which changes how we work
Prima ego velivolis ambivi cursibus Orben.
Magellane novo te dice ducta freto.
Ambivi, meriti victor VICTORIA: sunt mi
Prima ego velivolis ambivi cursumus Orben,
Magellane novo te suce dura frcto.
Ambivi, merito viror VICTORIA: sunt mi
Uela, alae; precsum, gloria: magna, mare.
Prima ego velivolis ambus circulus Orbiem,
Magellane novo te duxit die la fregio.
Ambrosi, meritoq vous victoria, sunt mi.
Vela, alas, pietas, gloria, pugna, mare.
Changing how we communicate lets us change how we work
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10 offices
12 offices (60% office, 40% wfh)
Changing how we communicate lets us change how we work
Find out what worked for others...
What *exactly* do you mean by “distributed”?
What exactly do you mean by “distributed”?
You can be in an office
...and be *remote from others*
the remotie
is the
canary in the coal mine
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is the
canary in the coal mine
100% local: get away with sloppy organization
100% local: get away with sloppy organization

mostly local: remoties suffer with sloppy organization
100% local: get away with sloppy organization

mostly local: remoties suffer with sloppy organization

mostly non-local: need crisp organization
1. Hiring
2. Disaster Planning
3. Meetings
4. Active Moderator Role
5. Single Source of Truth
Hire the best person for the job
Hire the best person for the job

NOT

Hire the best person for the job who will relocate
Hire the best person for the job

NOT

Hire the best person for the job who will relocate

(this is a competitive advantage!)
Social/Economic change

• no more “hired for life” jobs
• trend to per-project employees / M+A / aqui-hire
Social/Economic change

- no more “hired for life” jobs
- trend to per-project employees / M+A / aqui-hire
- people less willing to relocate for each new job
Generational change

• 2015 milestone year in US
  • millennials now biggest segment of workforce
  • born since MTV, first generation to grow up with internet
  • “digital natives” — Marc Prensky
Broadband change

- 2009: 34 million telecommuters in US
- 2016: 63 million telecommuters in US
- rate to accelerate as broadband rollout speeds up

Forrester Research

http://blogs.forrester.com/ted_schadler/09-03-12-telecommuting_will_rise_include_43_us_workers_2016
Diversity
Diversity

• some qualified people won’t apply for job because…
  …even if they got the job, they can’t get to the office
Diversity

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  ...even if they got the job, they can’t get to the office

- returning workforce: military veterans, mothers
- caregivers
- physically disabled
- financially unable to relocate
Having a hard time hiring?

Do your job postings say “remote welcome”? 
“...tech companies are dying for talent... The motivation to go find talent *wherever it is* is unbelievably high.”

Marc Andreessen, 2014
“Silicon Valley is a mindset, not a location. That’s part of what modern work for all industries is going to be like.”

Reid Hoffman, 2012
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Service Alert
Hurricane Sandy
This station is closed due to severe weather conditions.

NYCT Subway system is now closed in
“If someone has the option to stay home, work from home, that's a great choice …”

de Blasio, Mayor, NYC 2015
Could you do your **normal** job if the office was closed tomorrow?
Could you do your **normal** job if the office was closed for an extended time?
Could your company survive if the office was closed for an extended time?
We build fault tolerant systems

We need fault tolerant companies
We build fault tolerant systems

We need fault tolerant companies
Disaster Planning

- Expensive, unfamiliar, tested occasionally
Disaster Planning

- Expensive, unfamiliar, tested occasionally

- Remoties use **cheap, familiar** tools, tested daily
  - …and crisp human organization
1. Hiring
2. Disaster Planning

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Meetings

• aggressively limit number of meetings
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  • “needs to attend” vs “welcome-if-curious”
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  - uninterrupted days of work is important
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• default meetings 30mins
• schedule meetings near each other
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  • leave 30mins between for cleanup / catchup
• be punctual - join video call when 10 min. reminder happens
Meetings

- use editable agendas, send reminder email in advance
Meetings

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- use simple format
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- people add/comment on agenda in advance = faster meeting
Meetings

- use editable agendas, send reminder email in advance
  - use simple format
- people add/comment on agenda in advance = faster meeting
- all take shared notes in same editable agenda
Meetings

Dialin/video/room info: ....

Date: [dd-mmm-yyyy time-with-timezone]

Attendees:

Upcoming Vacations/000:
  *

Agenda/Roundtable:
  *
  *
  *
Meetings

Dialin/video/room info:....

Date: [dd-mmm-yyyy time-with-timezone]

Attendees:

Upcoming Vacations/OOO:
* ann vacation next week

Agenda/Roundtable:
* release date for security fix (john)
* update on project snoopy (charlie)
* review of budget numbers (mary)
* ...
Meetings

Dialin/video/room info: ....

Date: [dd-mmm-yyyy time-with-timezone]

Attendees: ann, fred, charlie, john, mary

Upcoming Vacations/OOO:
* ann vacation next week

Agenda/Roundtable:
* release date for security fix (john)
** needed before Friday 5pm PST, details in bug#1234567
* update on project snoopy (charlie)
** looks good - but Mary+Tom to check budget for firewall hardware.
* review of budget numbers (mary)
* possible dates for Christmas Party (john)
** hold Christmas Party after the big December release deadline
** 20dec works for everyone; John to confirm date of Dec release.
* ...
Don’t ask someone to take notes.

Do ask everyone to update shared notes.
Meetings

• use editable agendas, send reminder email in advance
  • use simple format
• people add/comment on agenda in advance = faster meeting
• take shared notes in same editable agenda

• nothing on agenda? ask if ok to cancel
Meetings

- be clear on what tools are used for each specific meeting
Meetings

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  • etherpad/google doc for agenda, shared note taking
  • move to wiki for history
Meetings

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  - private group chat
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  - audio+video: everyone visible to everyone
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  - private group chat
  - audio+video: everyone visible to everyone
    - use wallmounted room cameras use laptop cameras
audio-video meetings are 
FASTER 
than audio-only conf calls
1. Hiring
2. Disaster Planning

3. Meetings
4. Active Moderator Role
5. Single Source of Truth
Active moderator role

- watch for visual cues/irc of people wanting to speak
Active moderator role

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- append new items to agenda and wait your turn
Active moderator role

- watch for visual cues/irc of people wanting to speak
- append new items to agenda and wait your turn
- take unscheduled decision-making to separate meeting unless **all** stakeholders present and its quick.
- stamp out “coming-to-meeting-just-in-case”-itis
Start meetings on time

“...out of respect for those who were punctual”
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Single Source of Truth

How do people know they are reading the correct version?
Single Source of Truth

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Single Source of Truth

• agree where to track communications - then be consistent
Single Source of Truth

- agree where to track communications - then be consistent
  - bug ticket, shared bug groupID, wiki pages
  - everyone starts each day by reading scrollback in private channel, bug mail - learn what others have been up to
Single Source of Truth

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  • bug ticket, shared bug group ID, wiki pages
  • everyone starts each day by reading scrollback in private channel, bug mail - learn what others have been up to

• “we are the borg”
Single Source of Truth

- undocumented decisions NOT ok
Single Source of Truth

- undocumented decisions NOT ok
  - "over the coffee machine" or "in corridor after meeting ended" or in random irc channel is impossible to track
  - if I hear of undocumented decisions, I add comments in bugs like "per meeting with xxx, yyy, they now plan to..."
Single Source of Truth

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Single Source of Truth

- scheduled and impromptu meetings
  - notes help attendees - what did we agree?
  - notes help non attendees
  - even if nothing interesting happened, its prevents non-attendees feeling like they missed something
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Takeaway #1

You can be in an office
...and be *remote from others*
Takeaway #2

100% local: get away with sloppy organization

mostly local: remoties suffer with sloppy organization

mostly non-local: need crisp organization
Takeaway #3

Changing how we communicate lets us change how we work
“Revolution doesn’t happen when society adopts new technology. It happens when society adopts new behaviors.”

Clay Shirky
One day experiment:

Could you do your normal job if the office was closed tomorrow?
Thank you!

Questions?

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