ATLASSIAN

SUMMIT 2018

Anatomy of a Distributed Team

Communication, Agility, Workflows

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Intro

Me

SkuVaut

Project Manager, Analyst, Scrum Master

Intro

Me

SkuVaut

PaaS that makes 800+ clients worldwide forget about Out Of Stocks

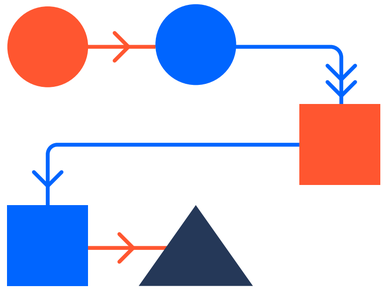
HISTORY & GROWTH

SkuVault originally developed in US, with R&D and architecting in Russia.

and there’s never a good scaling practice

Source (Reddit, no author can be tracked)

3 global improvements

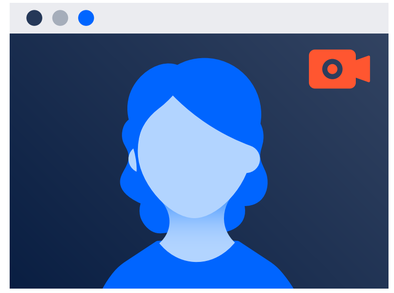


Dev Workflow

And it’s proper reflection in Jira, instead of tangled workflow

Reqs Quality

Improvement of consistency, that previously wasn’t there



Communication

Communication policies and rules, instead of constant interruption and lack of planning

Optimizing the Workflow

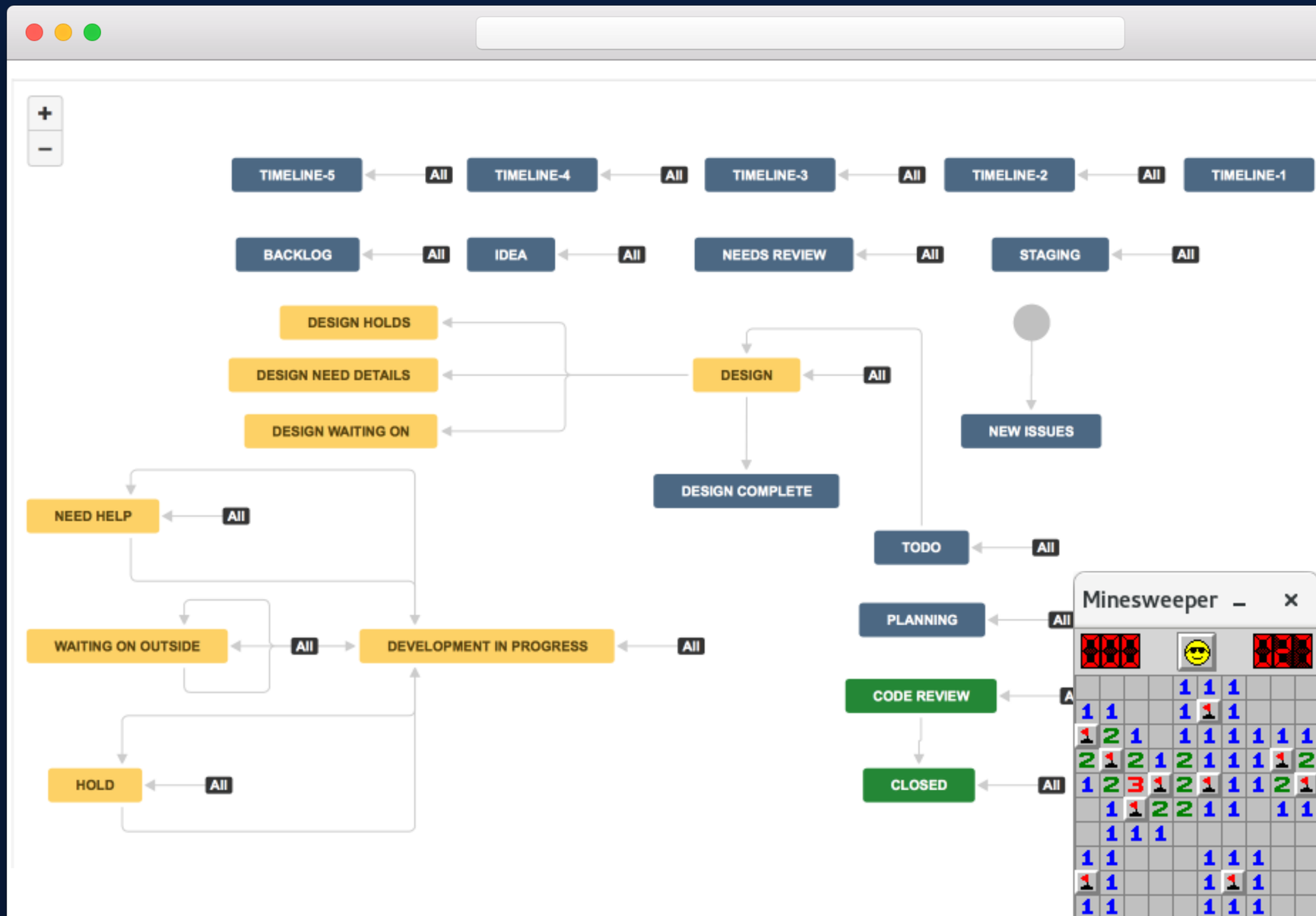
and reflecting it in JIRA

DEFUSE THE MINEFIELD

Priorities, types of tasks, timelines - all represented via statuses

All -> transitions

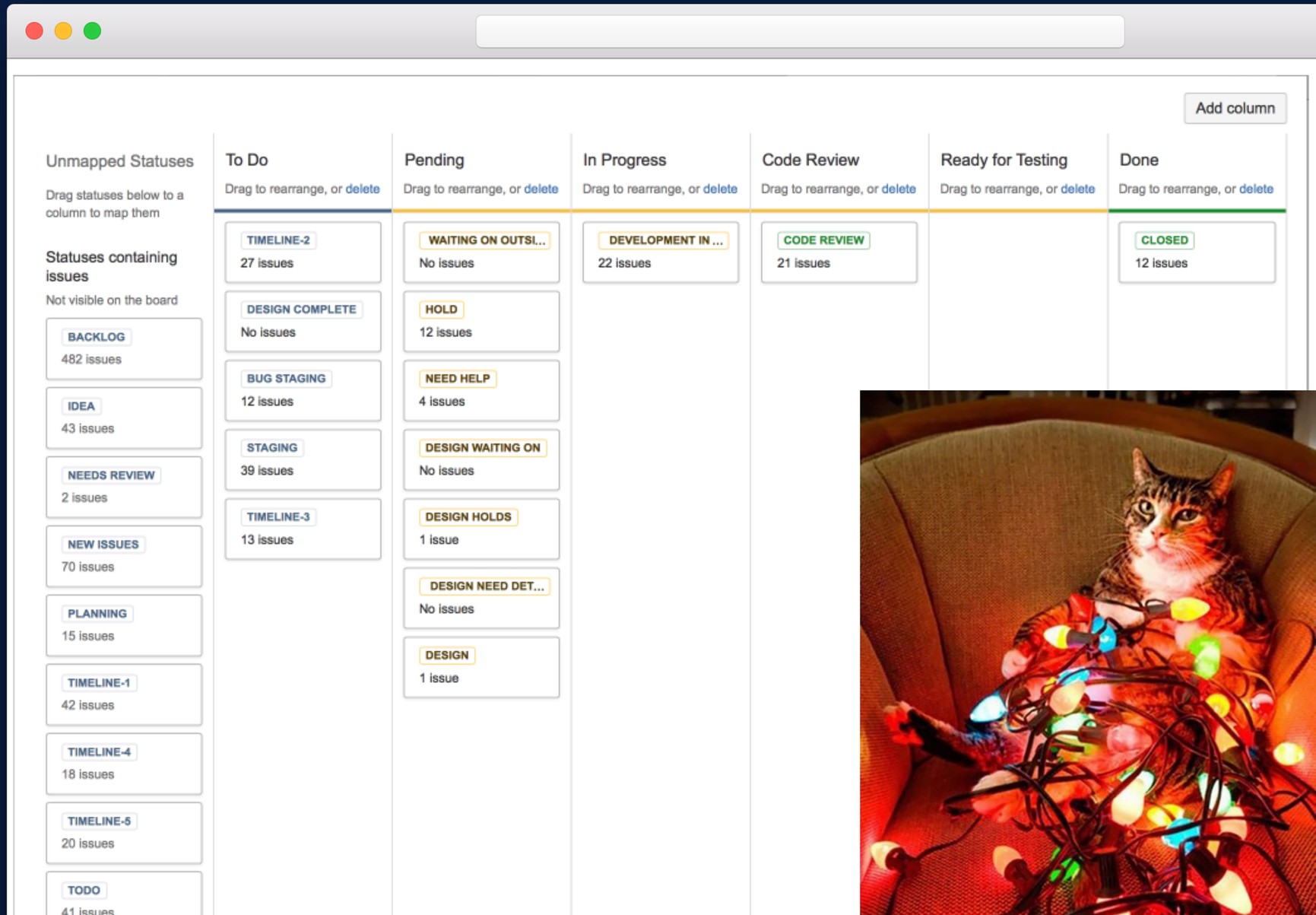
yuck

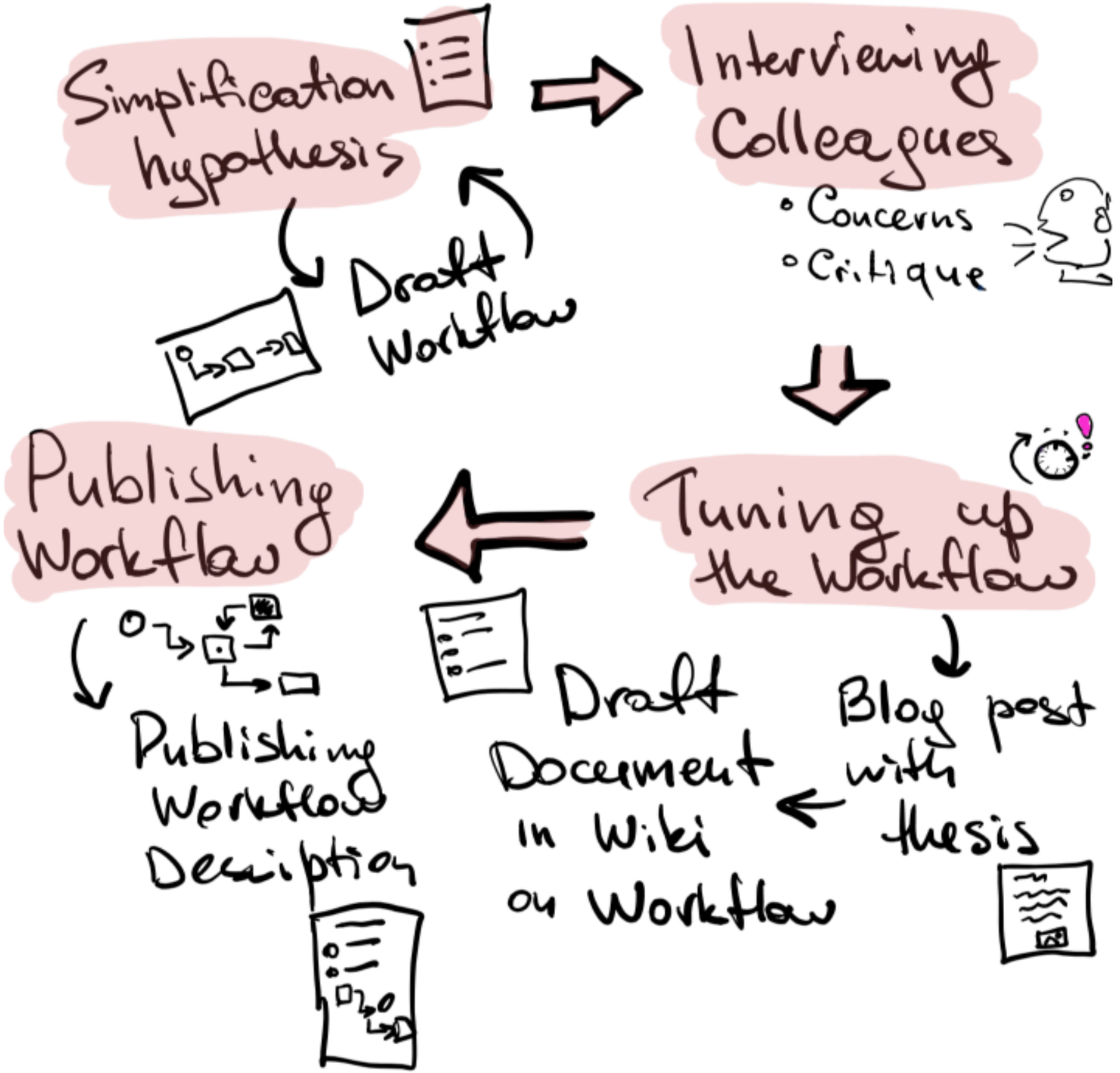


RUN FOR COVER

Lots of duplicates

Sorting out that unmapped column took half of PM / Devs week





It took 5 months to get to 1.0

A sequence of interviews with IT team, and searching for the bottlenecks

WORKFLOW: DOES IT INCLUDE ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT?

NO ↙

LIGHT WORKFLOW

- EPICS
- RESEARCH
- SUBTASK

YES ↘

REGULAR WORKFLOW

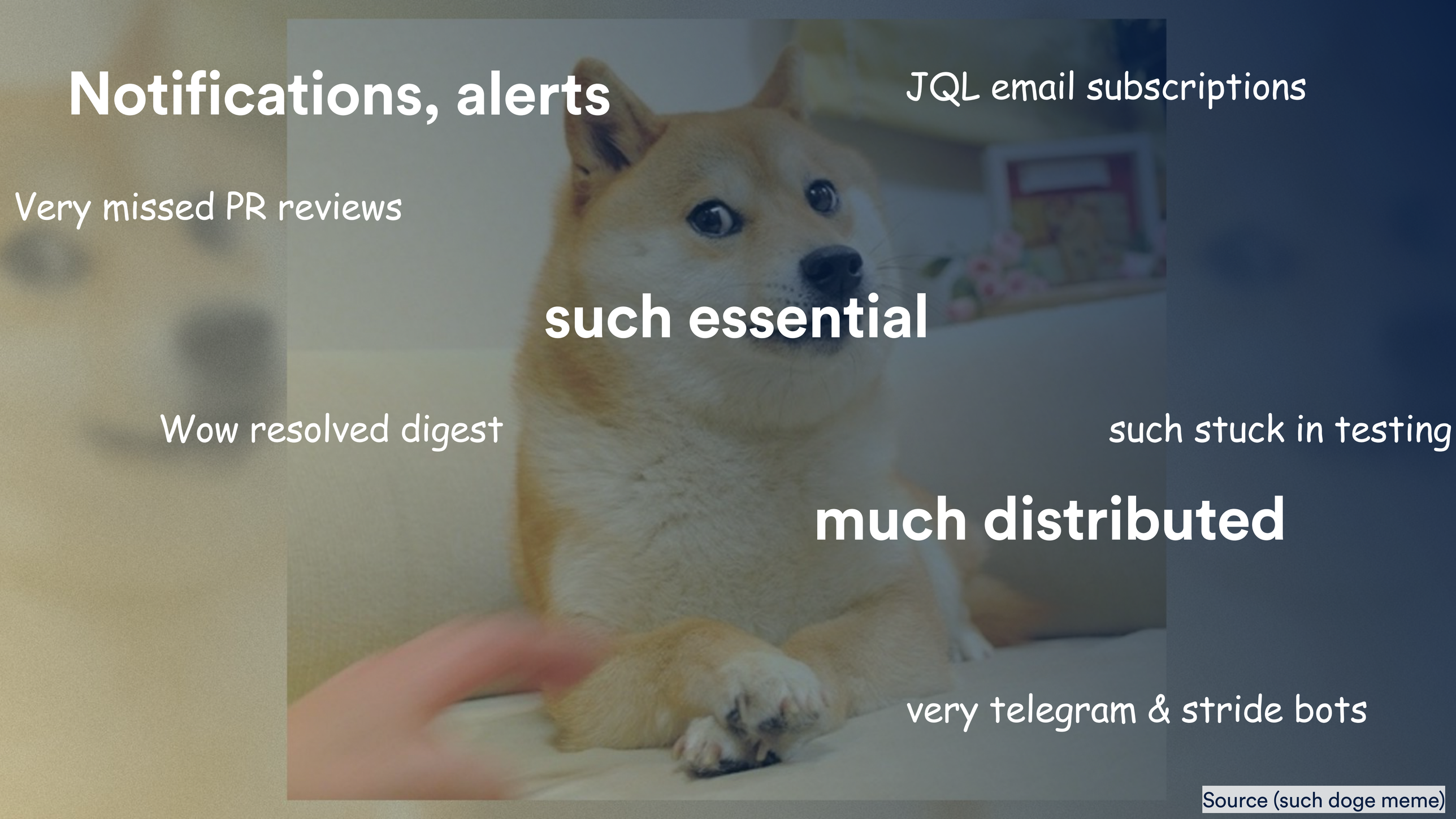
- STORY
- TASK

Kanban board

Release ▾ ⋯

Quick filters ▾ Aygiz Kunafin ▾

TODO 10 of 32	REOPENED 1 of 3	HOLD 1 of 14	IN PROGRESS 0 of 3	CODE REVIEW ... 2 of 11	READY TO TEST 0 of 8	READY TO RELE... 2 of 8
▾ Urgent Bugs & Blockers 5 issues						
		Return hasMore *None* 1 day *None* VT-2800				
▾ Critical 5 issues						
Benchmark benchmark *None* *None* *None* SVCORE-463						settings in FDB *None* *None* *None* ~~SVCORE-378~~
V2 net core						



Source (such doge meme)

Additional changes required

Removing Scrum

Or rather moving from pseudo-scrum, since given the workload specifics we couldn’t achieve uninterrupted development

Mentoriship

Removing functional silos via mentorship, even if it takes more time

On Call teams

Creating on duty teams to handle urgent bugfixing

Rotation for On Call teams

To prevent burning out

Source (It’s fine Dog meme)

Requirements

Source (Dilbert Comics, at dilbert.com)

Pain Points

Consistency & Standards

There was no consistent description for similar tasks

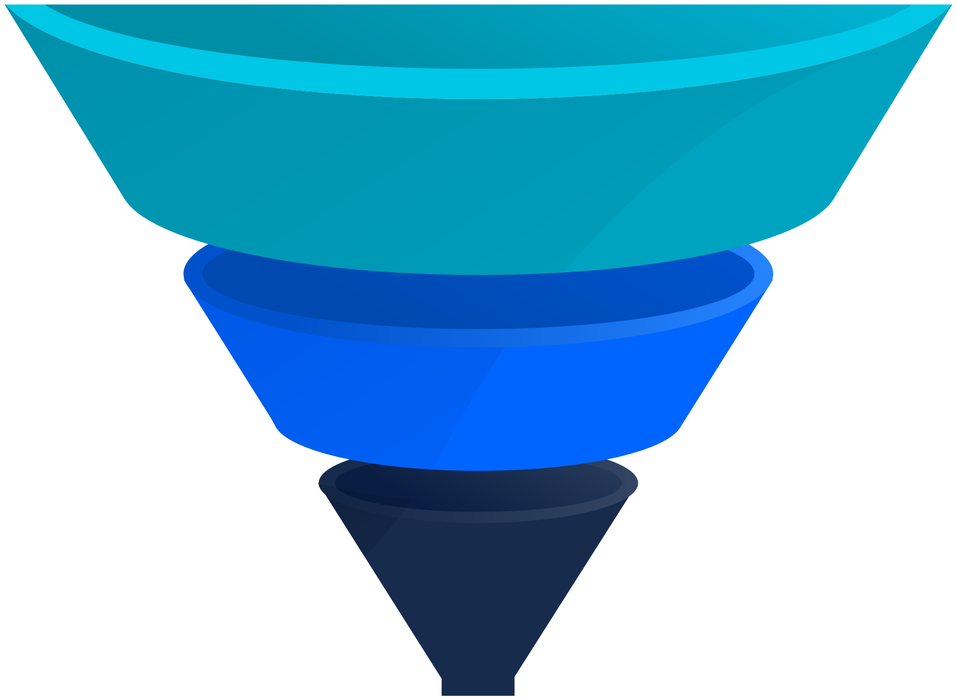
Scope Creeps

Tickets were often sent back due to changes / requests or edge-cases missing

Distribution amplifies pain points

Being some cozy agile team can fix bad requirements, but time and distance amplify negativity dramatically

Source (Katatonia, Brave Murder Day album art)



Less is more

Categorize issue types you use, and limit project to them only. Standardize the requirements and fields for each of them -> achieve consistency

WHOLE NEW PROJECT FOR REQUIREMENTS

Visibility

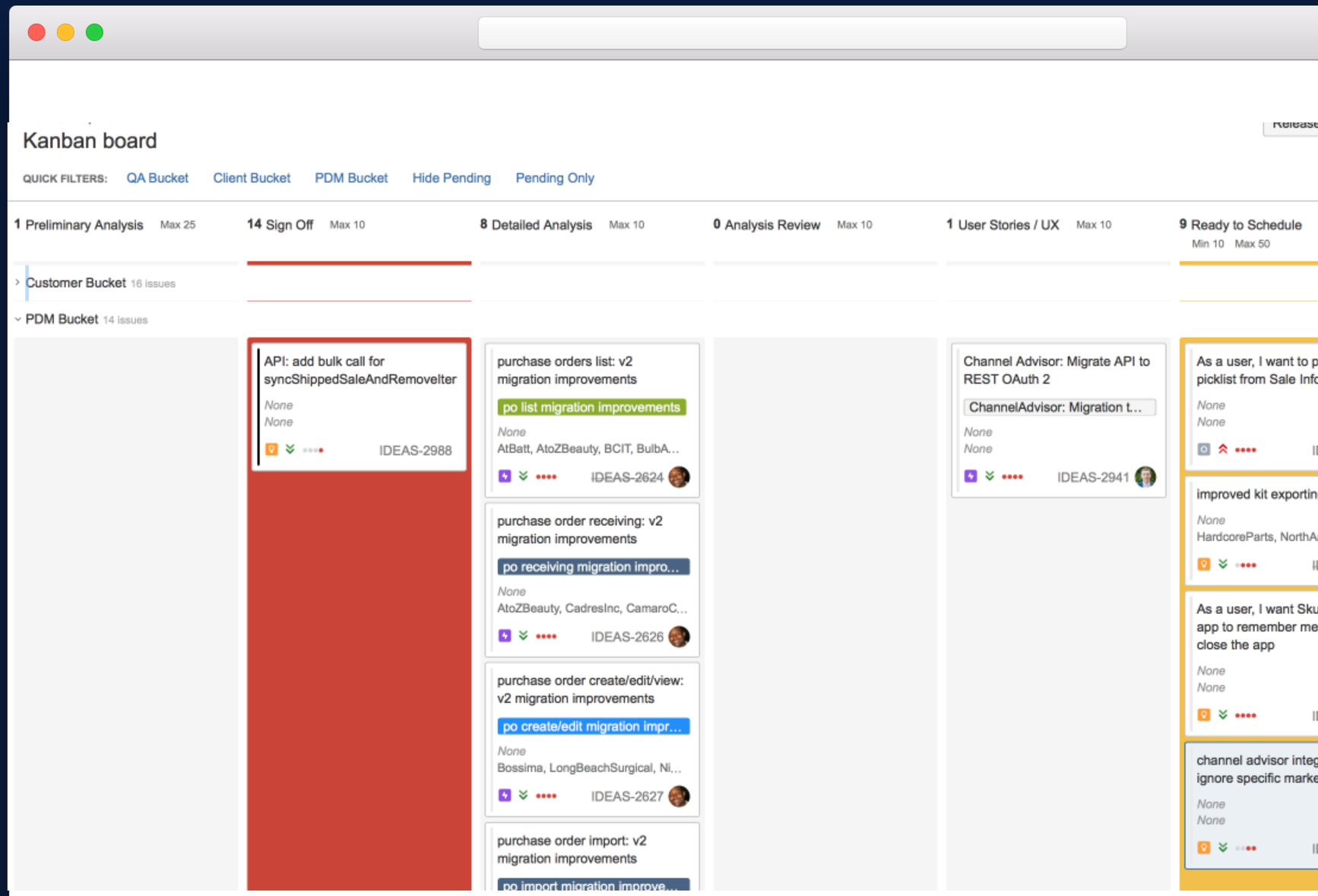
On the status of your new feature, even for people outside of product team

Ownership

Sole owner for each status, which helps not only in transparency, but also in finding bottlenecks

Separate project

Meaning that details and edge-cases are hashed out, passed acceptance and previewed before implementing



On Call Teams provide coverage, safety from distractions, speed

When using: rotate, set description standards, provide clear workflow - get +10 in survival

Source (Futurama, by FOX)

Priority Lanes

Blocker

- Fix ASAP
- Branch off Master

Critical

- Fix ASAP, business hours
- Branch off Master

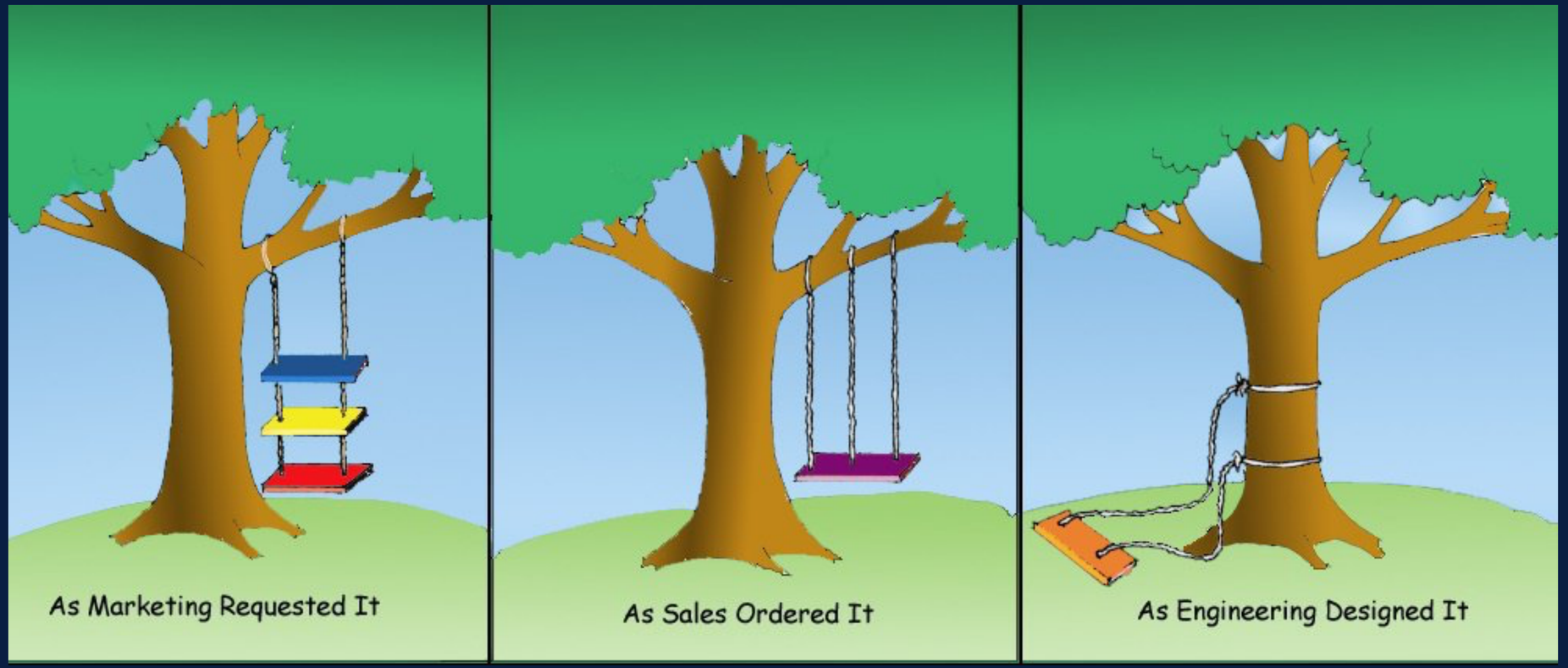
JDI

- Deal after Urgents
- Branch off Staging

Regular

- Schedule.. Fix
- Branch off Staging

Source (such doge meme)



Communication

Source (CaptionDataLimited blog post)

Ground Rules: Availability, Tools, Workflow

Events & Distribution

Respect

Compromises

Lags

Barriers

Respect personal time

Communicating when distributed is challenging. Respect your and coworker's personal times.

Source (aretha franklin wiki page)

Events & Distribution

Respect

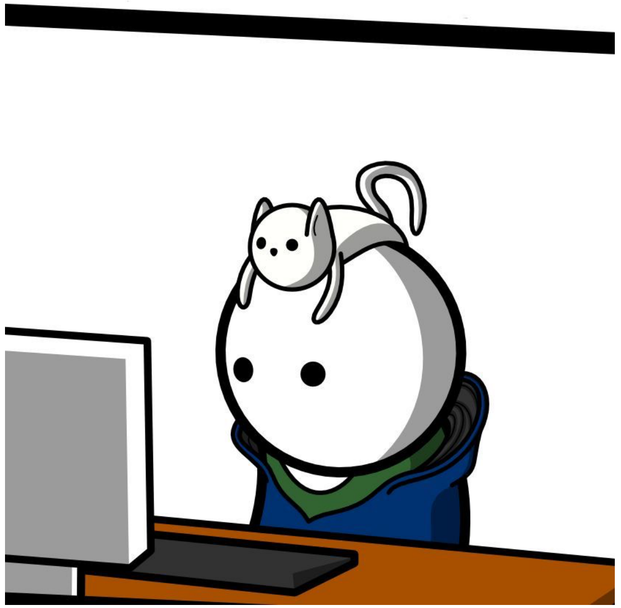
Compromises

Lags

Barriers

Compromises

Distributed without overlapping hours means you'll have to compromise. Whether this is a team liason, or adjusting schedules - you'll find a way

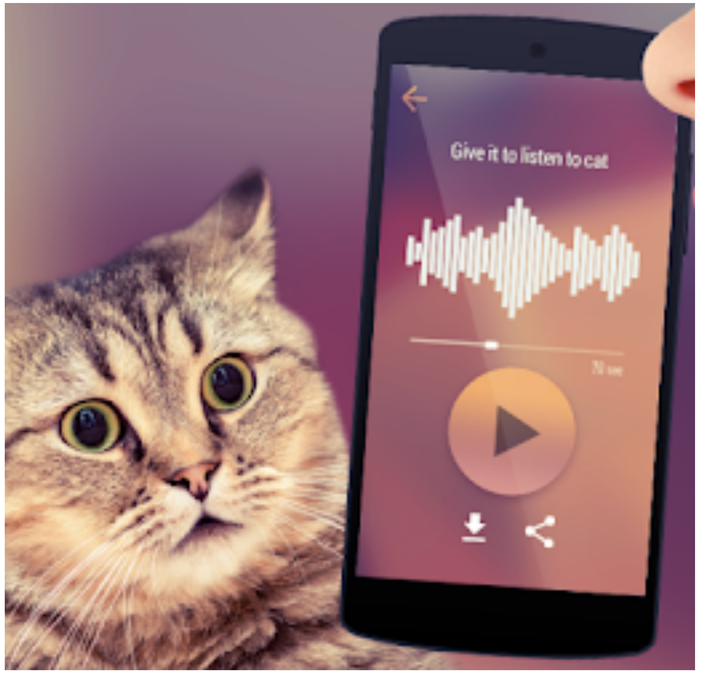


Lags

Whenever team member is outside of her overlapping hours with the rest of the team – communication lag happens. Document more, and set description standards.

Language Barrier

Painful. Do overcommunicate, overdocument, precise. And always have an agenda and let people prepare beforehand.



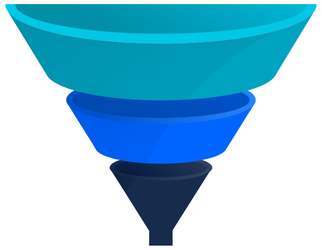
Distribution/ Communication	Collocated Teams	Overlapping hours	No overlapping hours
Strategic	Face-to-Face	Skype	Skype, Blog Post
Daily Sync	Face-to-Face	Skype, IM, Blog Posts	IM, Blog Post
Day-to Day Clarifications	Face-to-Face	Skype, IM	IM, Late night / Early morning calls for urgent

Source (kiniabulatov.com, communication sketches)

Mama says ‘Let’s repeat key points’!

Respect

Because distribution deals with timing, geography and culture



Focus

Less is more, stay focused. Don’t disperse, inspect the bottlenecks.

Streamlining

The more straightforward the workflow is - the better. Make complex simpler!

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Zur Rakhmat!

Big Thank You (in Bashkir)

be sure to visit kiniabulatov.com for slide references :)