THE ART OF STAYING PRODUCTIVE EVEN ACROSS DISTANCE

SIMPLE TECHNIQUES TO MASTER REMOTE COLLABORATION

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Wrike

In the past several years, **virtual teams have become a key trend** in business. More and more companies prefer to work with their project teams spread across multiple near or far locations.

Despite the obvious perks, like saving time on daily commute and being able to work from any chosen place and time, remote collaboration **brings up several organizational issues** like how to stay in control and sync with your team.

> *"Almost all teams are virtual today. It may have been a very long time since you completed a project where everyone worked face-to-face through the whole thing. It takes a thoughtful combination of people, technology, and process to gain the value of virtual work. This short ebook is a great start with real world examples."*
>
> Terri Griffith, Professor of Management, author of *The Plugged-In Manager*

Why would this e-book be helpful?

- It will give you a snapshot of the trend, with facts and figures about remote collaboration

- It will provide an in-depth look at the main threats and dangers of working across the distance

- And, most importantly, it will arm you with practical and easy-to-implement techniques to overcome all the possible difficulties along the way.

So, buckle up and enjoy the ride!

CHAPTER 1

The truth behind remote collaboration: Facts and Stats

One night several members of our team shared the same dream. They saw empty offices and dusty water coolers, people in cozy pants and people chilling in hammocks during prime working hours. These focused but smiling people all over the globe had one thing in common. **They were working remotely**. And they rocked it.

Excited and intrigued, our team members woke up and decided to **run an independent survey** to see where things currently really stand with remote work. This survey revealed some fascinating points, and we just couldn't keep them to ourselves.

To make sure we truly got the big picture, we ran the survey with **1,000+ international respondents** representing organizations of all sizes, from small startups to Fortune 500 corporations.

Remote Collaboration: Current state

So, **how widespread is this trend?** Apparently – more than our oracles from the team could imagine.

83% of the respondents said they spend at least an hour or two working remotely every day.
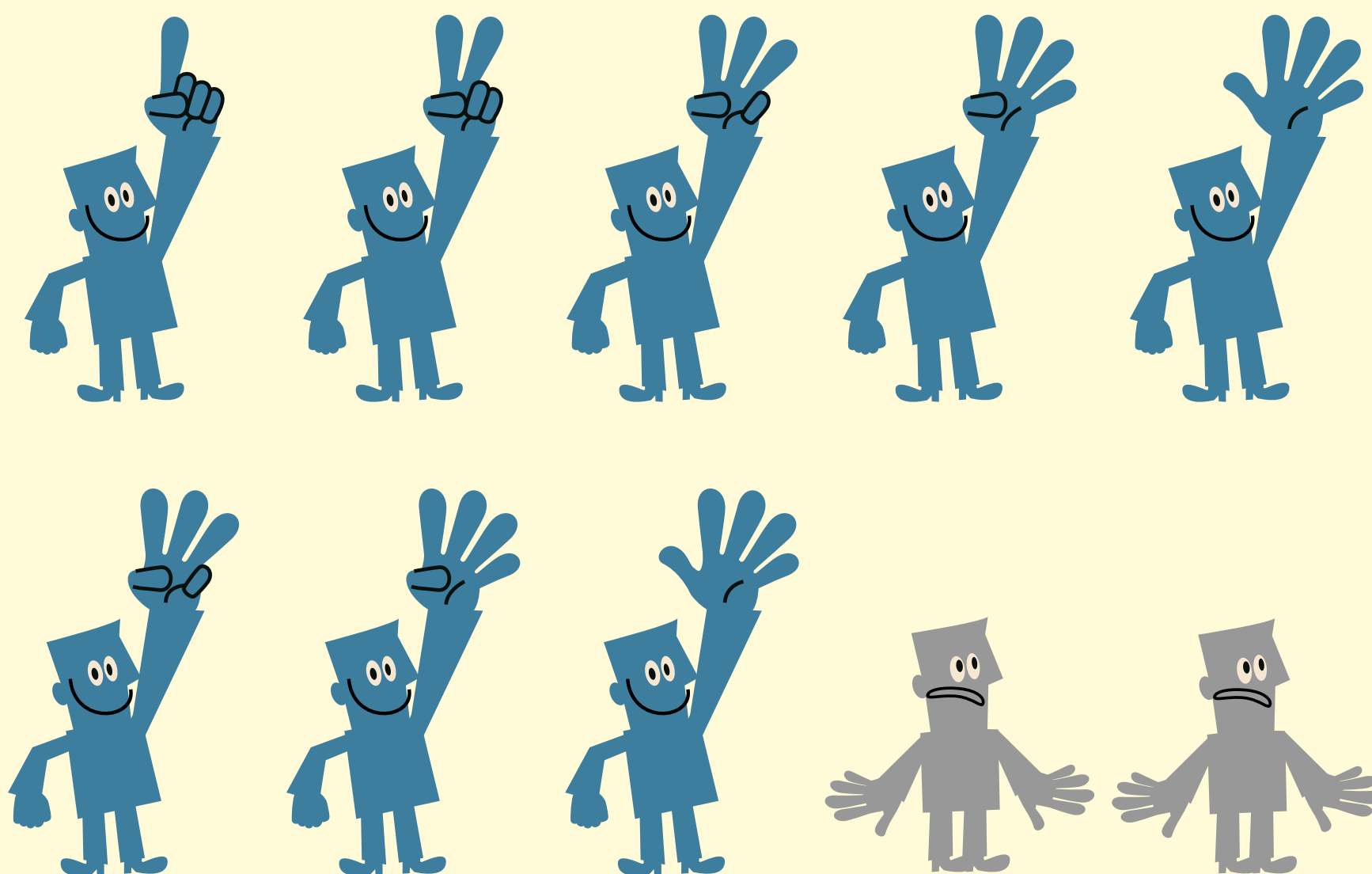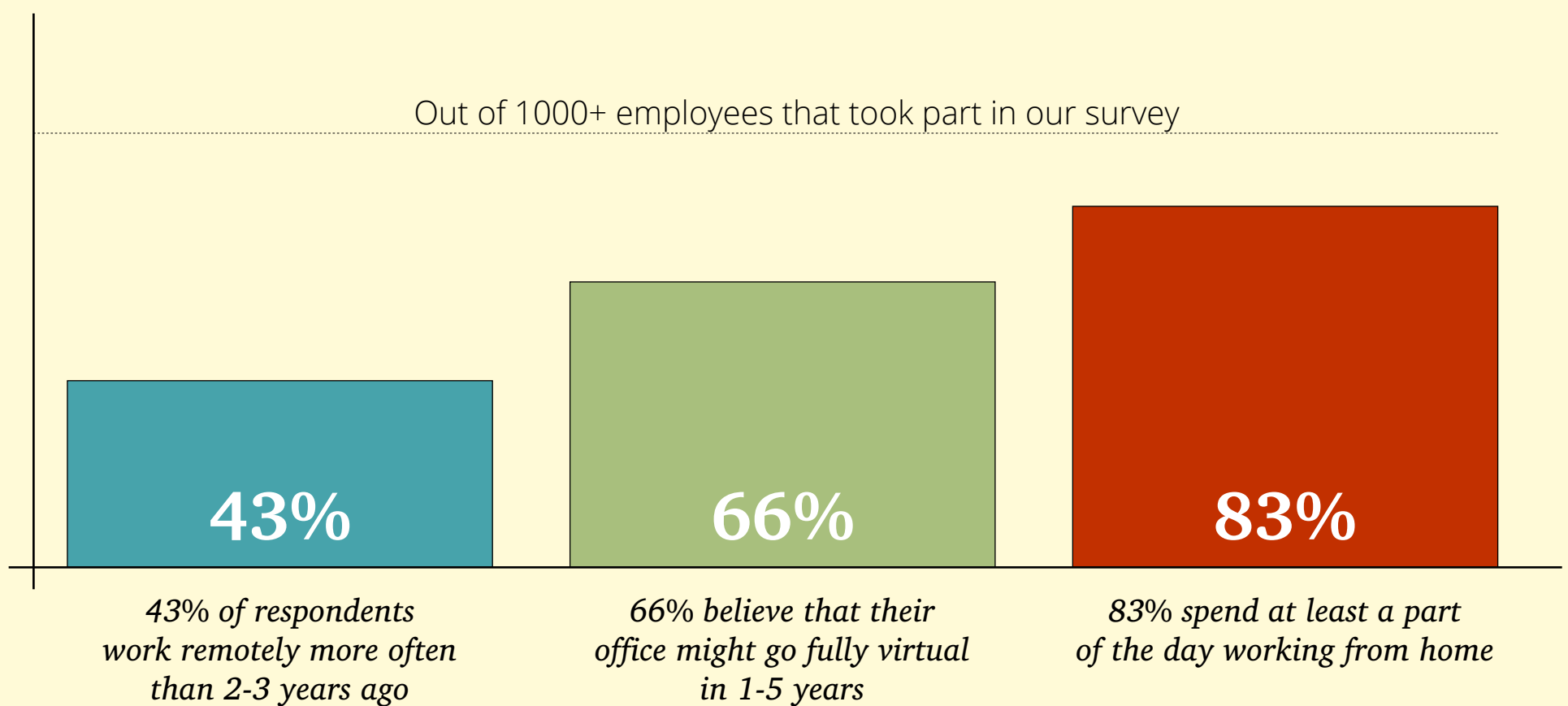
Have you ever checked on the latest update for your project while lying in bed in the evening, or shoot an important e-mail on the go, or, perhaps, worked the entire day remotely from home? If your answer is "yes" to at least one of these questions, count yourself in the **majority dealing with remote work at least occasionally**.

The trend is growing

As many as 43% reported that today they spend more time working remotely than they did 2 or 3 years ago.

Out of 1000+ employees that took part in our survey

43%

66%

83%

43% of respondents work remotely more often than 2-3 years ago

66% believe that their office might go fully virtual in 1-5 years

83% spend at least a part of the day working from home

So, does anyone still only work in the office?

It appears that **only 17% of people do**. Considering that there are certain industries where virtual work is physically challenging — for example, with work involving manual labor the number is impressively low!
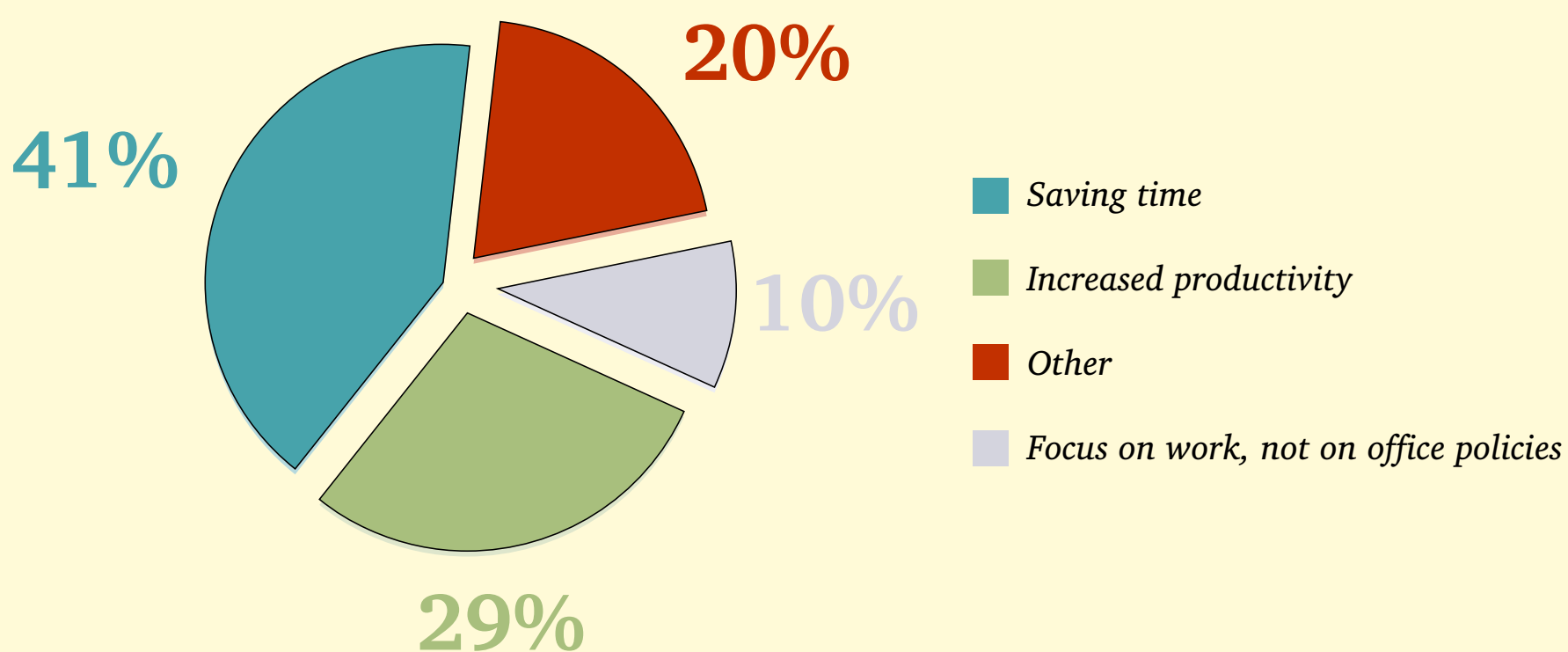
The main question here is "**Why?**"

Why do employees work remotely instead of the classical "office model"?

For more than a third of respondents, the answer is – **time**. The saved time that you can spend with your friends and loved ones, or on personal projects is what matters the most.
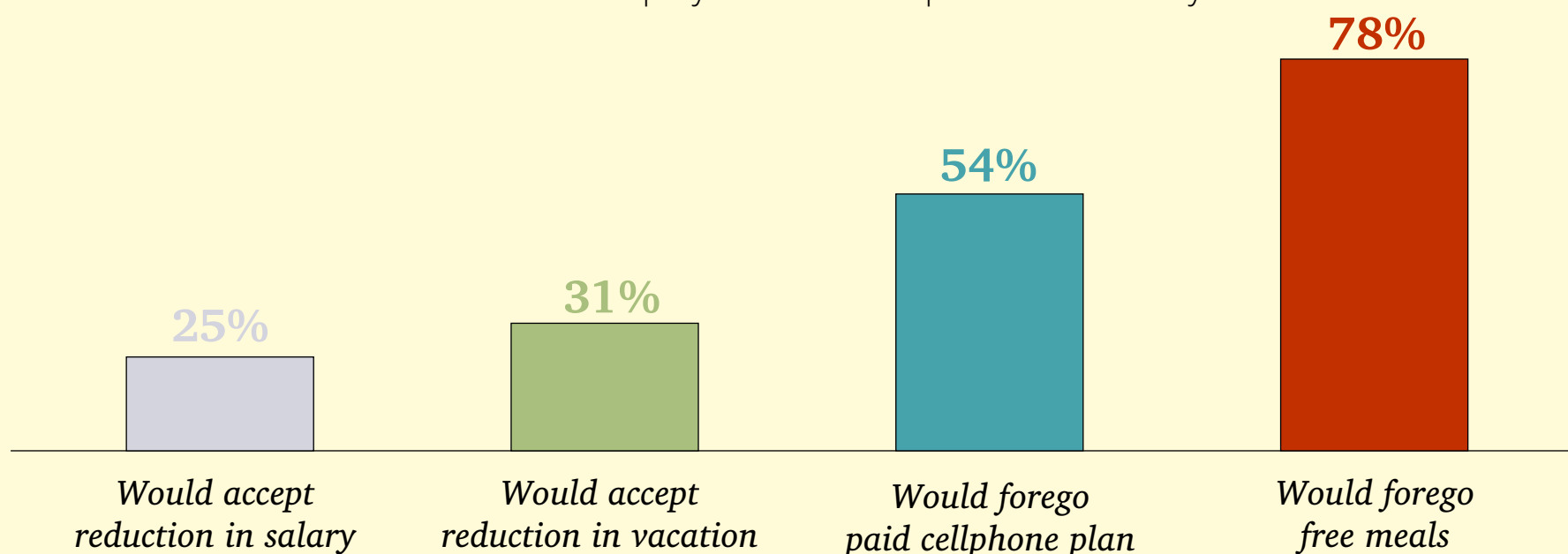
The other benefits are:

41%

20%

10%

29%

- Saving time
- Increased productivity
- Other
- Focus on work, not on office policies

How important, do you think, people find the opportunity to work remotely?

Crucial!

89% of people are ready to make some "sacrifices" for the sake of being able to write a monthly report from the cozy hammock in Goa.

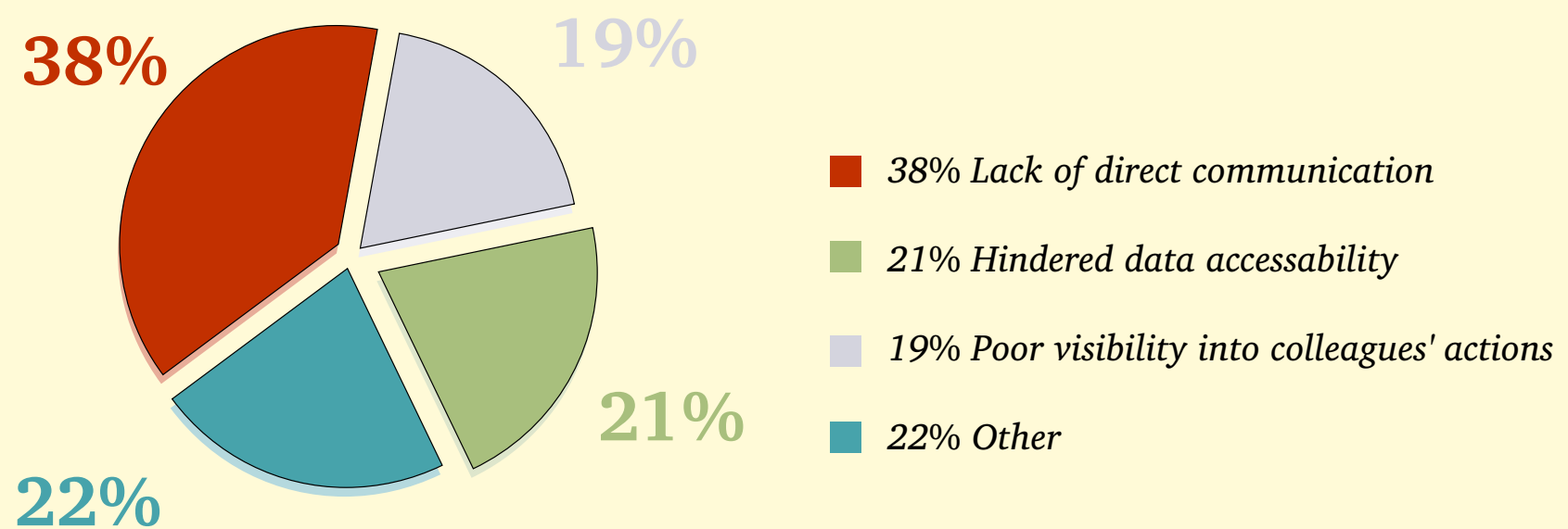Out of 1000+ employees that took part in our survey

25% Would accept reduction in salary

31% Would accept reduction in vacation

54% Would forego paid cellphone plan

78% Would forego free meals

But working remotely is not all sunshine and roses. Or, better yet – not all hot tea and a warm blanket. So…

What are the main difficulties of remote collaboration?

38% **19%**

- 38% Lack of direct communication
- 21% Hindered data accessability
- 19% Poor visibility into colleagues' actions
- 22% Other

21%

22%

Any solutions out there?

Apparently, yes. To handle those tricky challenges, the vast majority of respondents rely on online collaboration tools. Specifically, **87% think that solutions like GoToMeeting, Wrike, etc.**, **are mission-critical** for managing teams across distances.

# Mirror, mirror on the wall, what's in future for them all?

Our survey revealed that remote collaboration holds a stronger position than one might think. And the respondents expect it to grow even larger with time.

See for yourself: one in four respondents foresees his office going fully virtual within just a year or two.
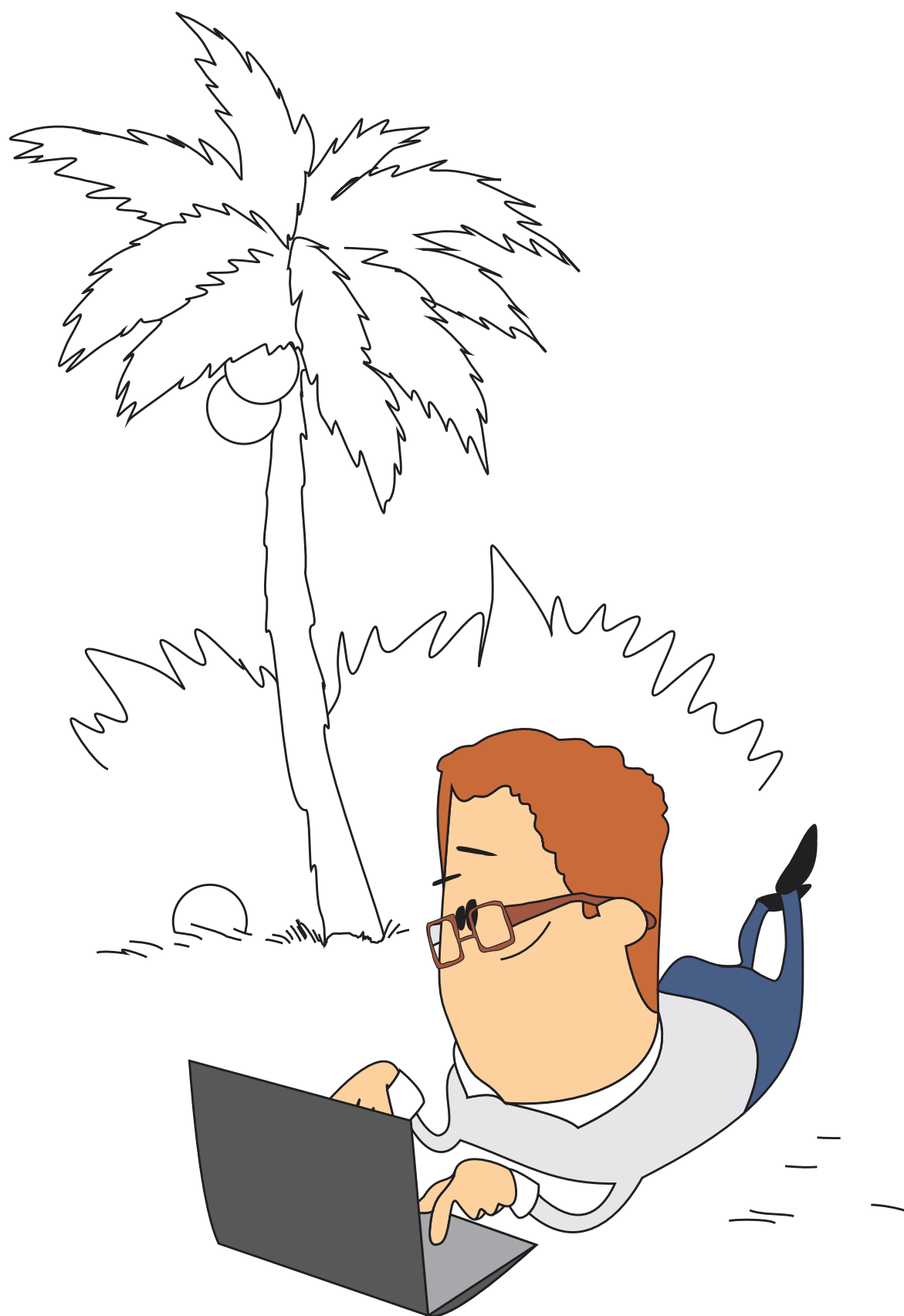
Who is affected the most?

The executives appear to be the most involved with the current trend of remote collaboration:

| 47% | 50% | 47% | 36% |
| Business owners | Executives | Managers | Team members |
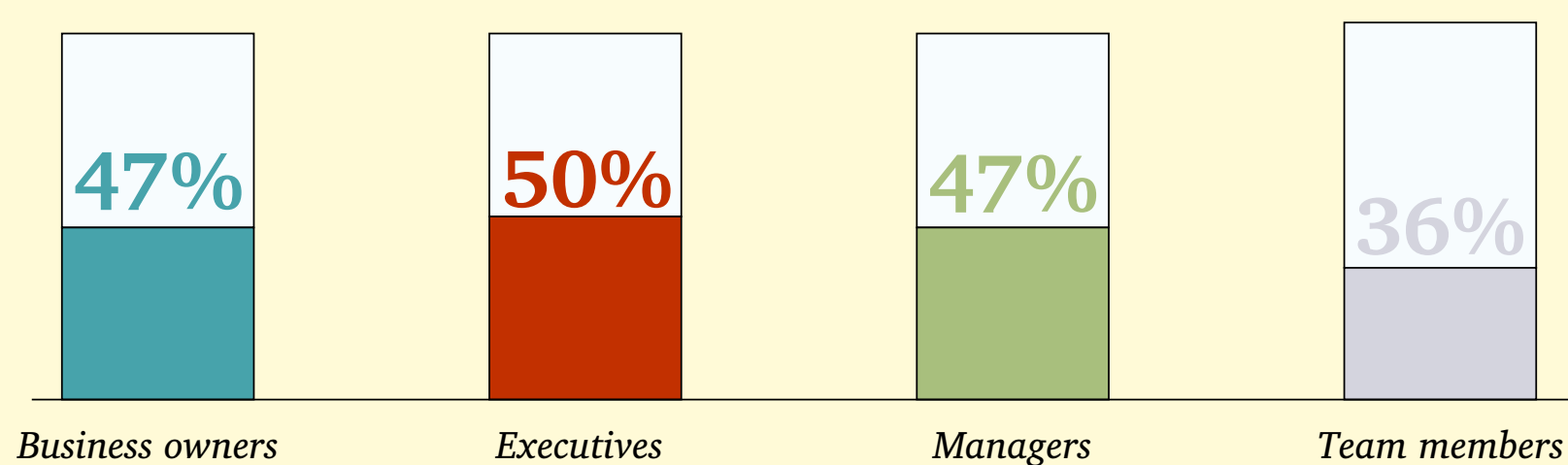
Almost 47% of business owners predict a rapid shift to virtual teams in their companies. As they are the actual decisions-makers, this may be a great sign for the big future of remote working.

Take aways:

- Remote work is already an integral part of many people's work styles;

- Workers across all organizational levels expect a continuing expansion of the trend;

- One of the most powerful forces driving this forward is the rapid, ongoing development of cloud and mobile applications.

CHAPTER 2

How to make it work.
Tips for fine-tuning collaboration
across distances

The perks of virtual collaboration are quite obvious. It gives employees the freedom to choose where and how to work, allows companies to plug in the best talent across several locations, and even contributes to saving the environment as employees don't drive to work. However, **keeping a virtual team in sync across distances can be quite a challenge for any manager**.
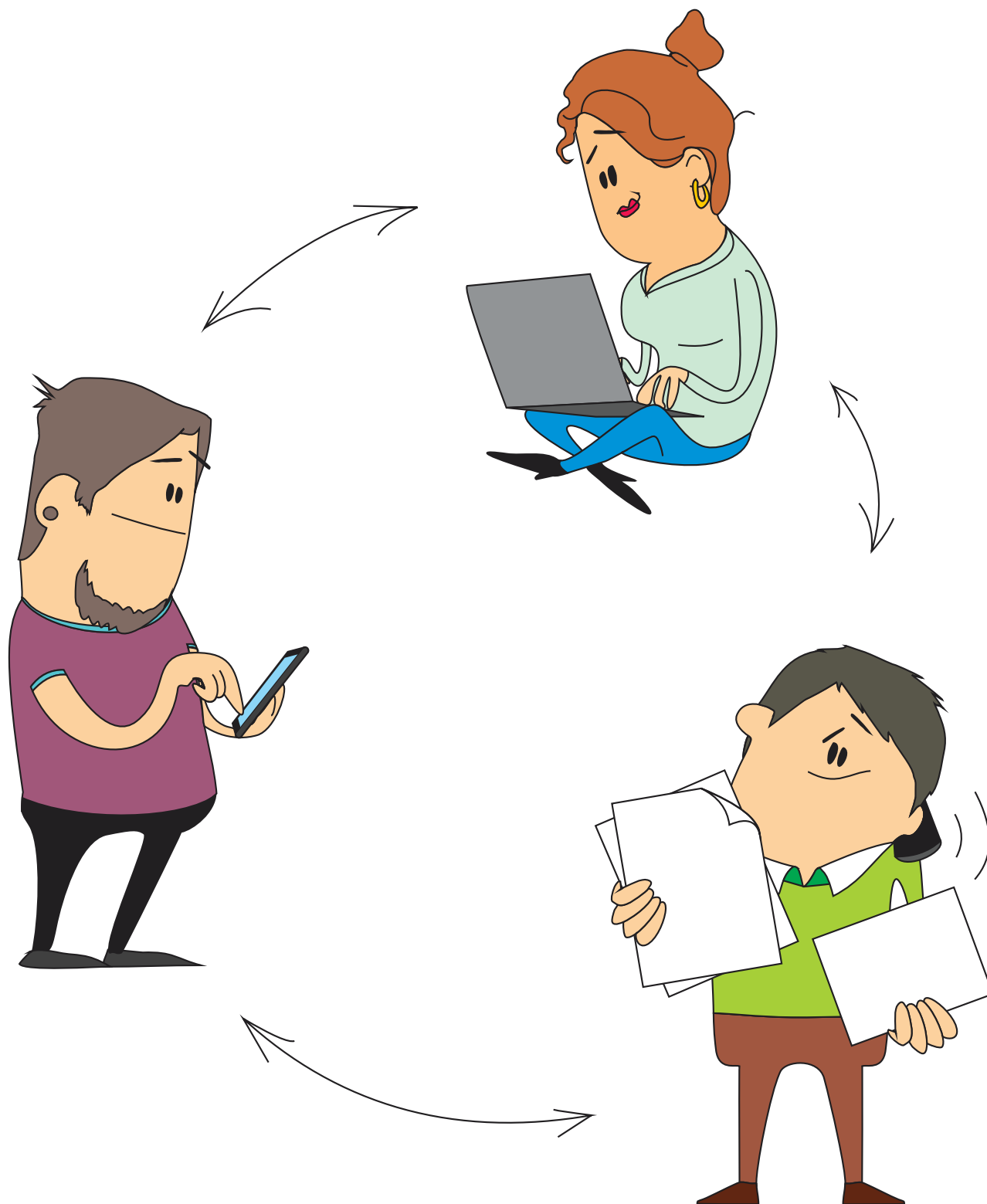
In this chapter, not only will we give you an arsenal of tips and techniques to deal with the challenges of remote collaboration, but we will also back them up with multiple case studies. No made up solutions here. Just the ones that work :)

Carrot or Stick?
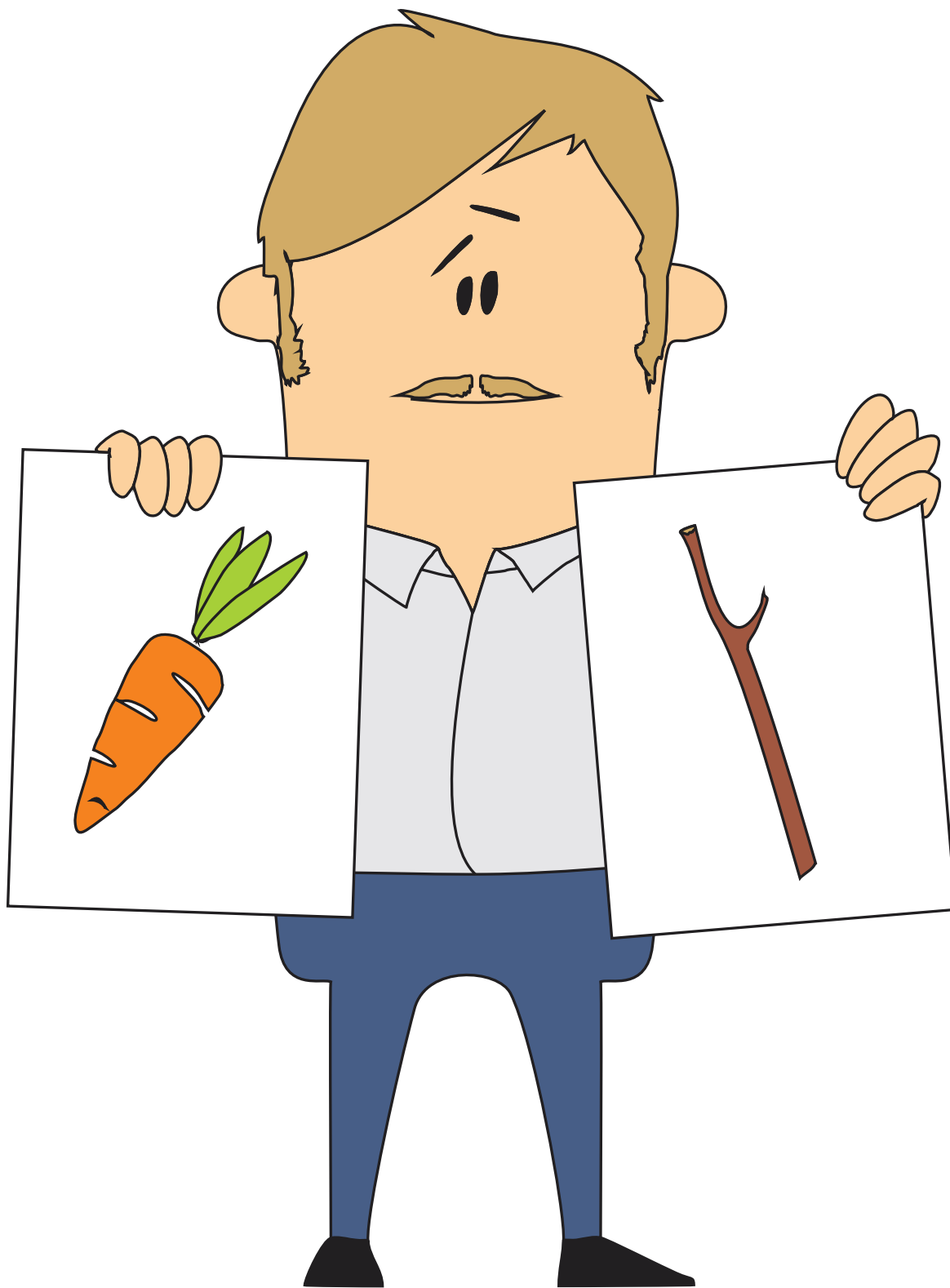
Stick path: Set the ground rules

The first thing a leader and his virtual team need for sync, efficiency and success is a common ground in terms of work organization.

Keep in mind that:

- **The bigger the virtual team, the less people tend to communicate**. A joint study by a few European universities shows that communication and overall productivity tends to suffer with teams of 20+ members. In order to not get lost in the miscommunication pit, make sure everyone on the team follows the communication ground rules. Be it a process of logging in task updates and files in the task management tool, or a particular reporting system.

- **Flexibility pays off.** One team member might need more guidance and peer review, whereas another might be more comfortable working independently. Being a bit of a psychologist is a helpful skill for a project manager and a valued bonus for the teammates.

Every team is different and needs to co-create its own process. As mentioned in The Plugged-In Manager, a book by prof. Terri Griffith, it's important to negotiate to create a workflow that works for the people in involved.

The devil is in the details

Karan Sorensen managed a global infrastructure project at Johnson & Johnson and paid extra attention to team communication rules. The decision that made her project a huge success was quite simple. She thoroughly studied her workers' cultural differences and time zones and planned calls to match people's schedules (so that certain people weren't woken up by calls at midnight). The efforts paid off in spades. Sorensen completed the project under budget and well ahead of her deadline, saving J&J more than $200 million over three years.
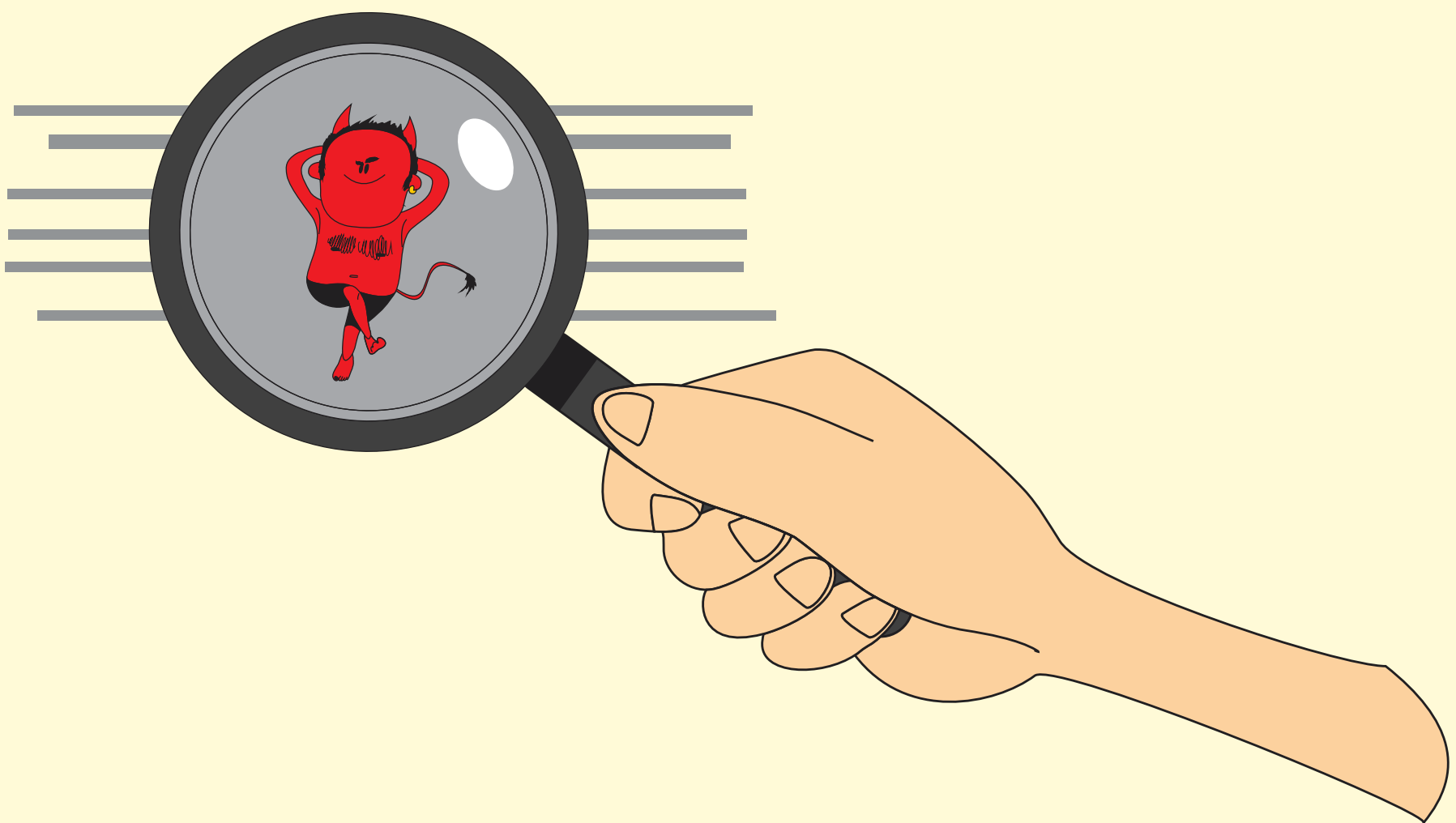
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