



The Asynchronous Enterprise



@olearycrew



gitlab.com/brendan



Our Story

2011 - 2014



Ukraine



Netherlands



Poland

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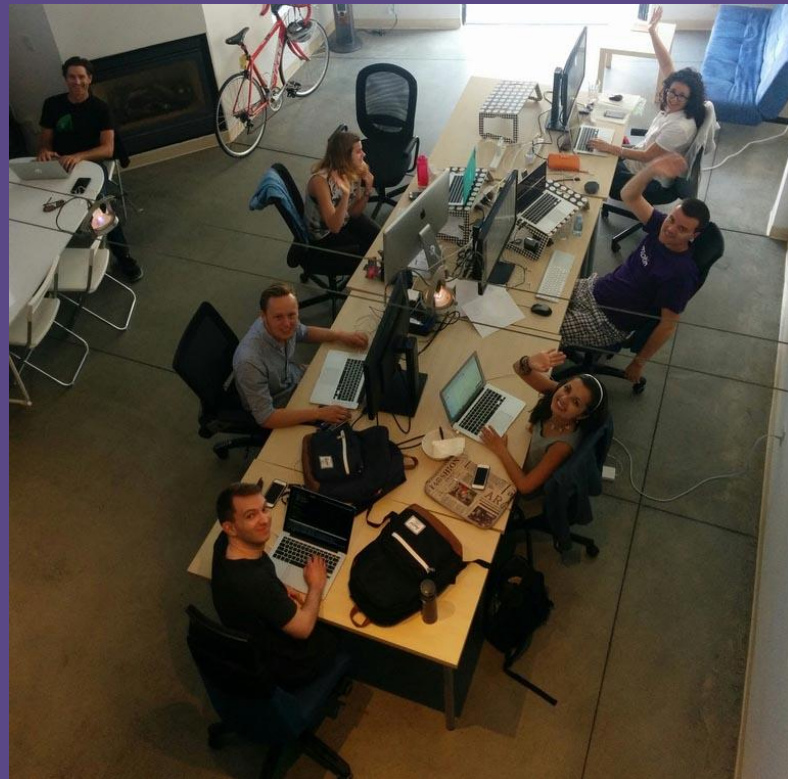


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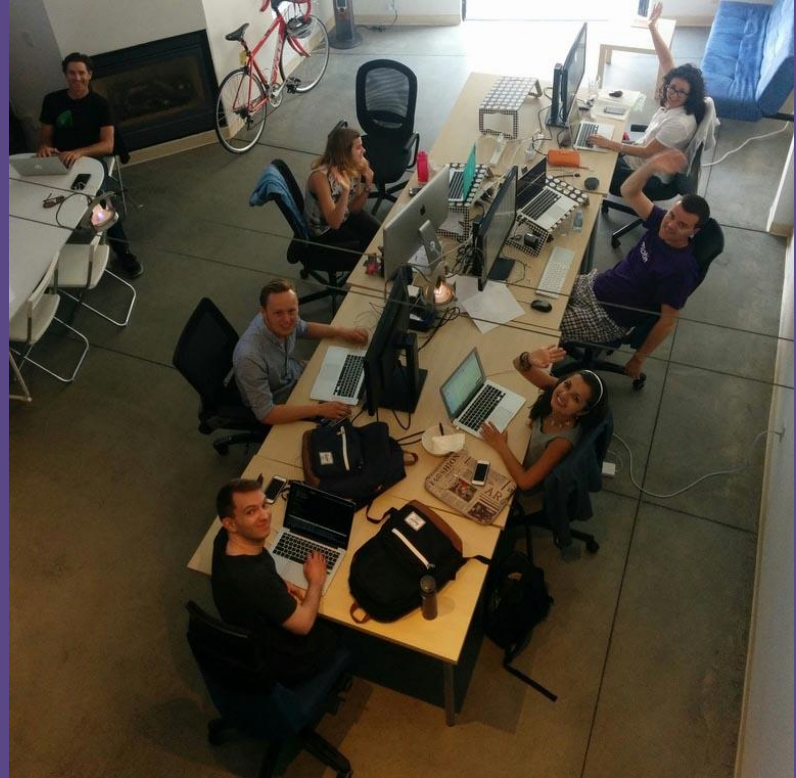
2015
YC



First office



Last office





1200

team-members



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65+

countries



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offices



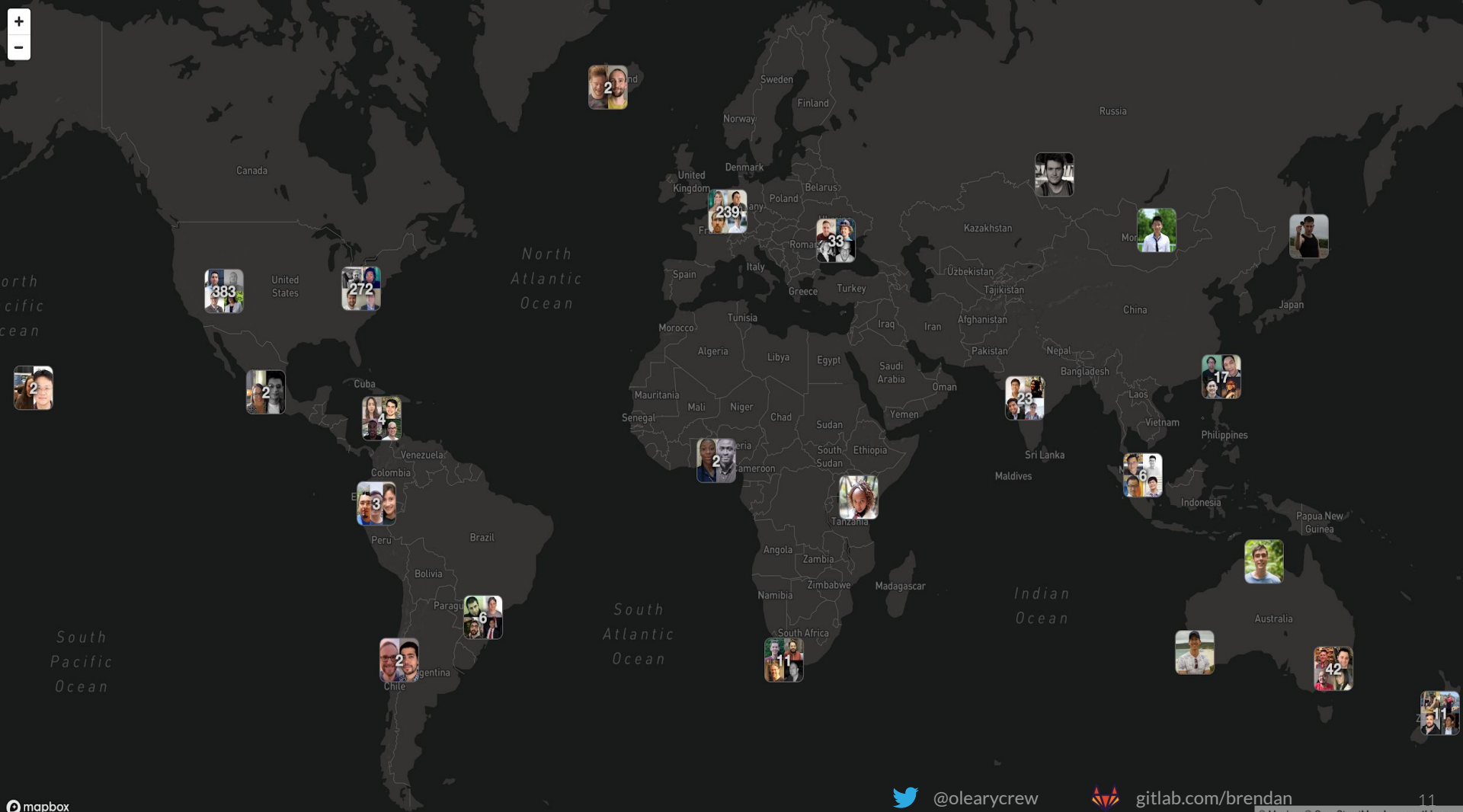
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GitLab team-members
are everywhere





About me



Brendan O'Leary

Sr. Developer Evangelist

GitLab

@olearycrew



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The (case for) Asynchronous Enterprise



Situation

- Technology excellence is the new operational excellence
- To find top talent, companies must look outside traditional hubs

Complication

- How do you scale an enterprise without massive overhead?
- ...especially if you're not Google

Question

- How does GitLab make this work?

Answer

Trust





SITUATION





“Software is eating the world”

— Marc Andreessen



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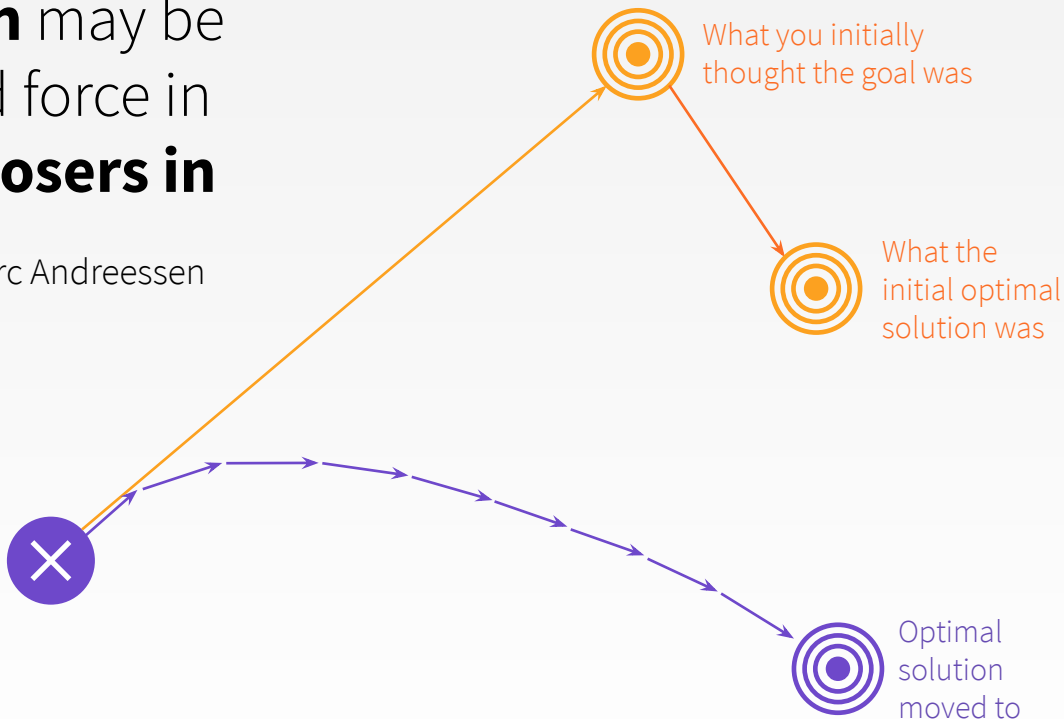
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Speeding Up Release Cycle Time is Critical

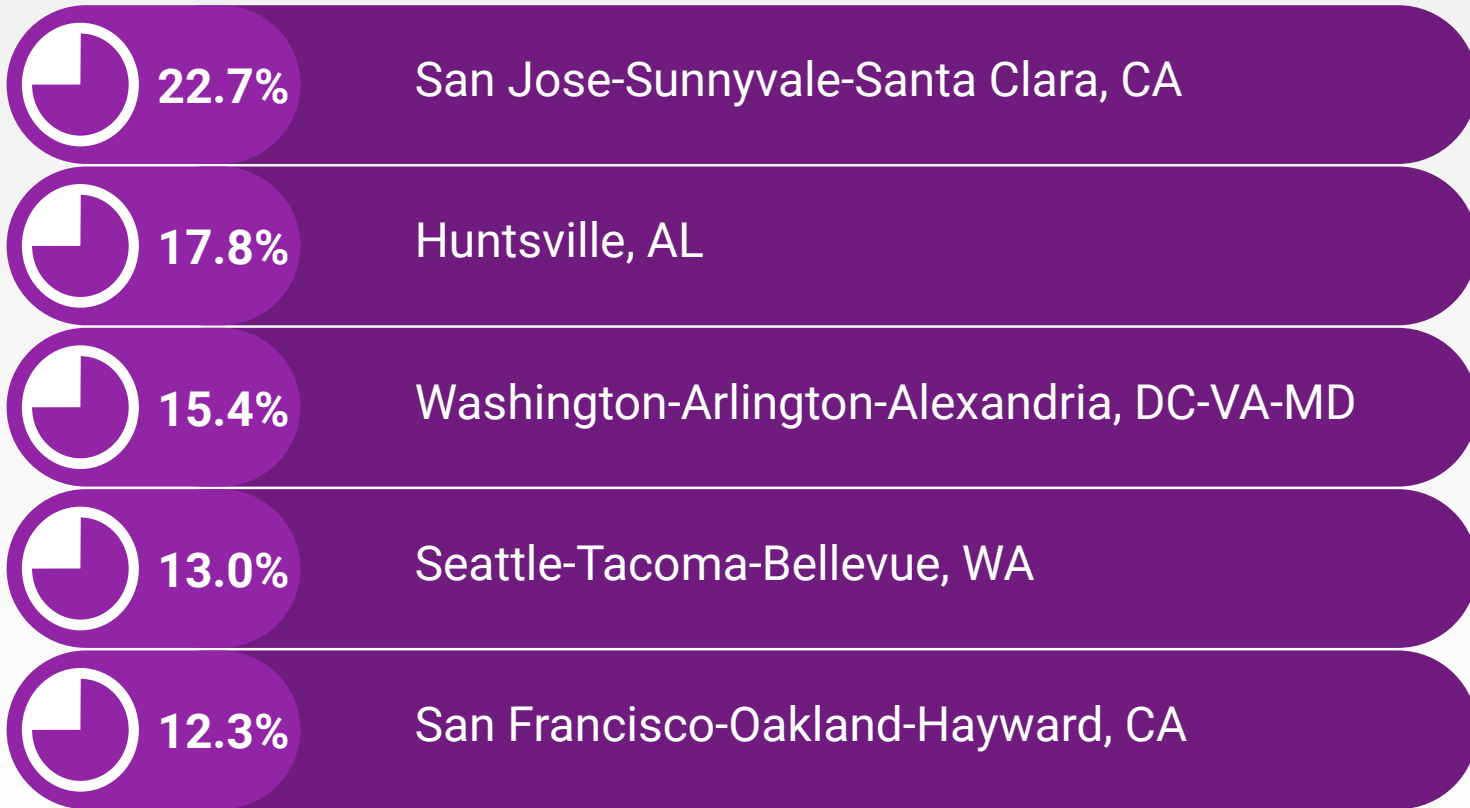


Cycle time compression may be the most underestimated force in determining **winners & losers in tech.**

— Marc Andreessen



Percentage of postings that were tech-related



Data: Indeed



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COMPLICATION



Remote is part of the solution



- **Distributed workforce** is part of the answer
- Just as important, and in some ways harder:
 - Working **asynchronously**
 - Across **cultures** and across **time zones**
 - Invite new perspectives
 - Inclusive of **diverse ways of working**
- Enables unprecedented, yet sustainable growth
- Even though it seems like GitLab has it figured out: **it's a journey, not the destination**





All remote is the future of work, **but it has its challenges.**

The challenges



195

Countries in the world — that many legal systems, each with its own nuance

6000

Linguistic cultures in the world — defining values can be challenging

38

Local time zones in use — productivity challenges when working round the clock, literally





QUESTION





...from @ChloeCondon on Twitter



***There's as much to unlearn
as there is to learn.***

-- Basecamp Handbook



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ANSWER



A large group of people, mostly wearing blue t-shirts, are gathered outdoors on a grassy area. They are all cheering with their arms raised in the air. In the background, there are trees, a building, and a sign that says "Lafitte's Bar". Two large, colorful, abstract sculptures are visible in the foreground, one on the left and one on the right. The entire image has a blue tint.

Everyone can contribute



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Values

Collaboration

Results

Efficiency

Diversity & Inclusion

Iteration

Transparency



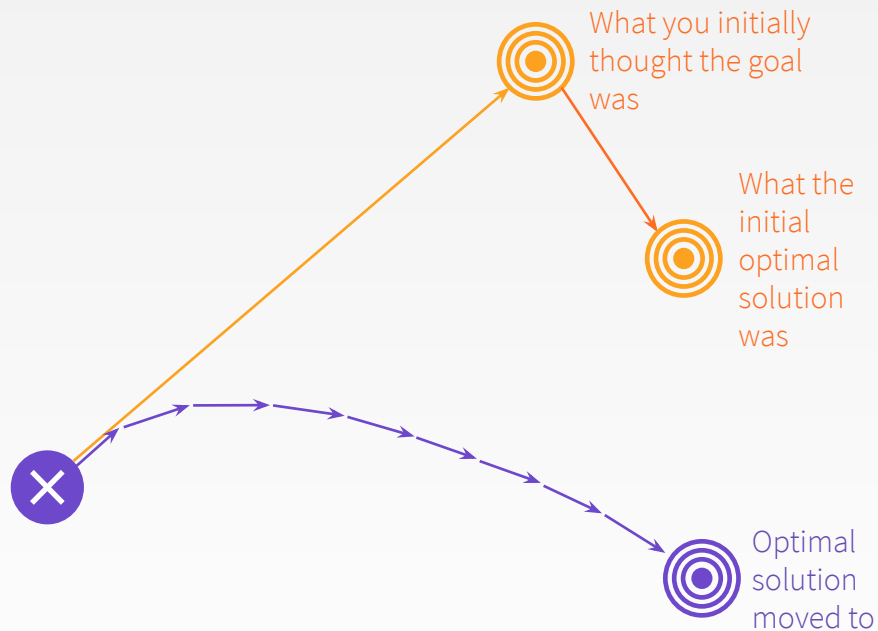
Iteration - quick small steps



An iterative approach enables all-remote because each iteration is an opportunity to **continually adjust scope** in small steps

Small steps require **less coordination**

Reducing the need for coordination enables **async workflows across time zones**



How we iterate

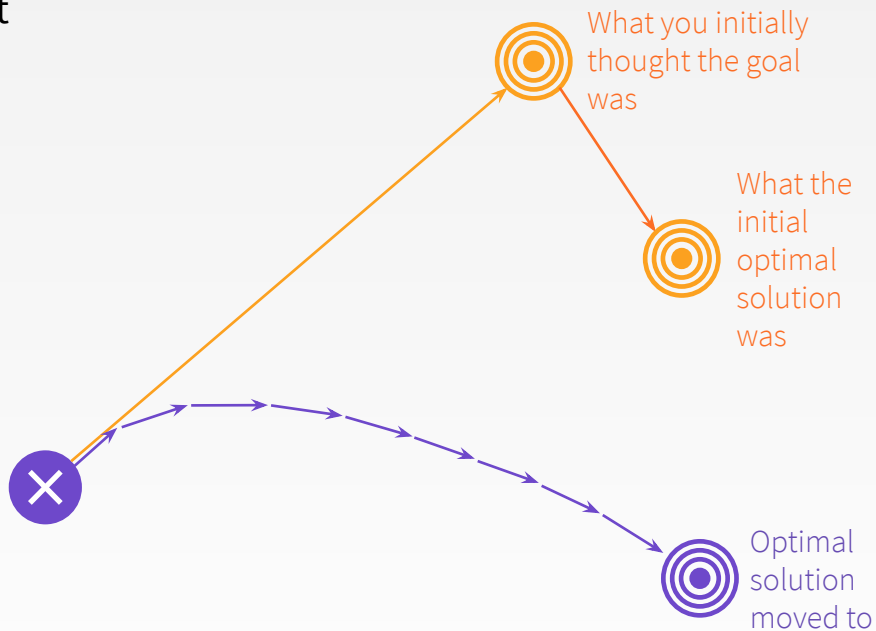


MVC (Minimum Viable Change): Enables fast iteration

DRI (Directly Responsible Individual): enables decision velocity

Open merge requests: For async collaboration

In-quarter editable OKRs: for Customer focus



Transparency - Record by default



We need to record everything because hyper-growth means we cannot afford to **train** people in meetings

Recording by default enables **self-paced learning and discovery**

By recording everything, the sender can send links and **avoid wasting valuable time** holding meetings or getting interrupted by the same questions

The receiver can move faster, avoid waiting around, **access the best version of the information**, and get the message from the most reliable source



...sounds familiar



```
axios.get('/user?ID=12345')
  .then(function (response) {
    // handle success
    console.log(response);
  })
  .catch(function (error) {
    // handle error
    console.log(error);
  })
  .finally(function () {
    // always executed
  });
```





The receiver can move faster, **avoid waiting around**, access the best version of the information, and get the message from the most reliable source



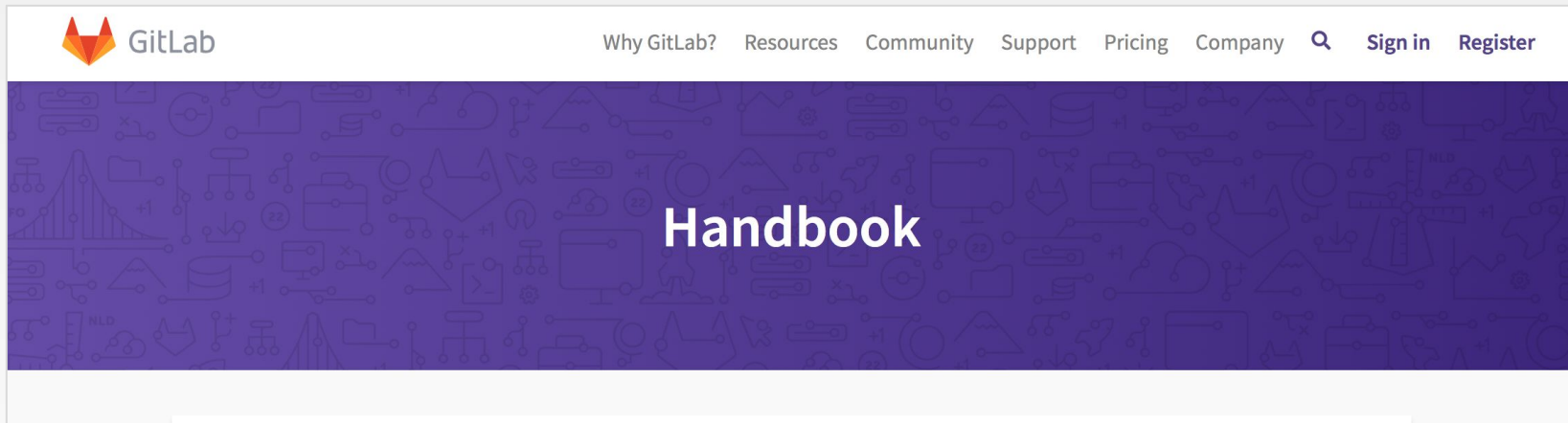


Write promises down: Agree in writing on measurable goals.

Bias for Action: Decisions should be thoughtful, but delivering fast results requires the fearless acceptance of occasionally making mistakes.

Responsibility over rigidity: Give people the responsibility to make a decision and hold them accountable for that instead of imposing rules and approval processes..

Write down promises



Handbook-first: Single source of truth

Public by default: Recorded video calls, open meetings, open access to metrics and OKRs (investor update, Periscope, etc.), open issue tracker and comment section below blog posts and docs



Communication Guidelines



- **Everything is in draft:** At GitLab we rarely put draft on any content or proposals. Everything is always in draft and subject to change.
- **Everything starts with a Merge Request:** An MR is associated with a specific change that is proposed and transparent for everyone to review and openly discuss.
- **Use Public Channels:** If you use Slack and plan to message 3 or more people, we recommend a channel for customer/issue/project/problem/partnership..
- **Say thanks:** Thank people that did a great job in our "Thanks" Slack channel.
- **MECEFU terms:** Mutually Exclusive Collectively Exhaustive Few words Ubiquitous-language.

Trust



Build Trust and Community - Video calls are your friend



Video calls are key for discussion and information sharing, much better than an audio call

- Daily team calls and group conversations
- Virtual coffee breaks and remote coworking
- AMAs (Ask Me Anything) with leaders and board members

Time in person is very important, focused on relationship building instead of work

- Travel stipend
- Local meetups
- Contribute! Without putting you through company presentations





Spreading aloha on a GitLab company call



The upside for families and friends

Time for kids, spouses, and partners

Flexibility in how you allocate your time

Ability to **move** closer to loved ones

Closer to home in case of family emergencies

“If one spouse commutes longer than 45 minutes, that couple is 40% more likely to get divorced.”

Urban Studies Academic Journal, Til Work Do Us Part



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Family and friends first, work second





Brendan O'Leary

00:55

Thanks GitLab (and [@sytse](#) & [@klawrence](#))
for caring so much about work life balance.

1) First time in my career that I took off for
the full winter break for my kids/wife (who
is a teacher).

2) Much easier transition coming back
from paternity then I've ever had (kid 4).

Being at home & being able to step away
to help is so much better than commuting
into an office and not being able to help



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Thank you!

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[about.gitlab.com/company/
culture/all-remote/](https://about.gitlab.com/company/culture/all-remote/)



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Sr. Developer Evangelist

GitLab

@olearycrew



@olearycrew



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