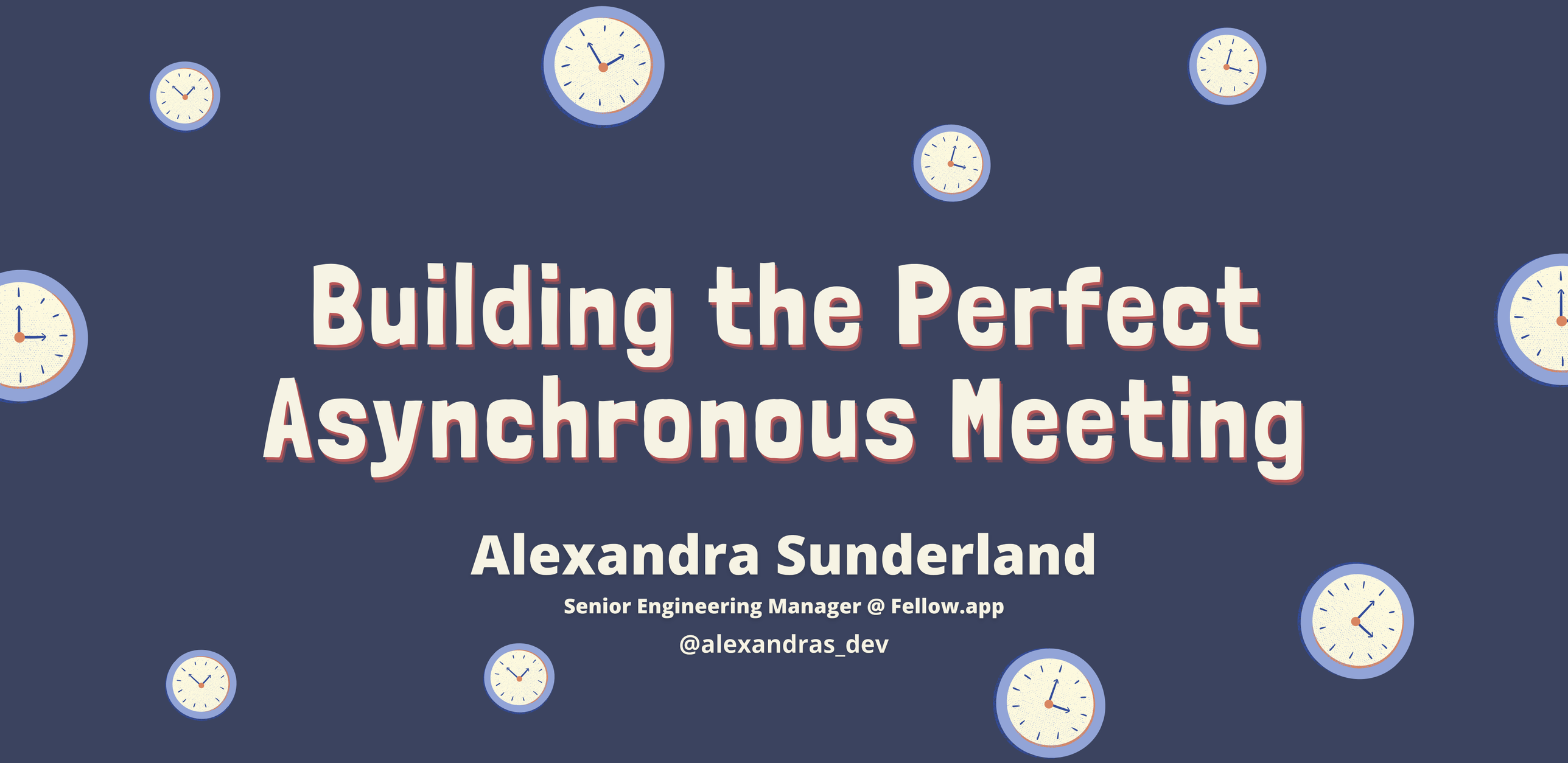


Building the Perfect Asynchronous Meeting

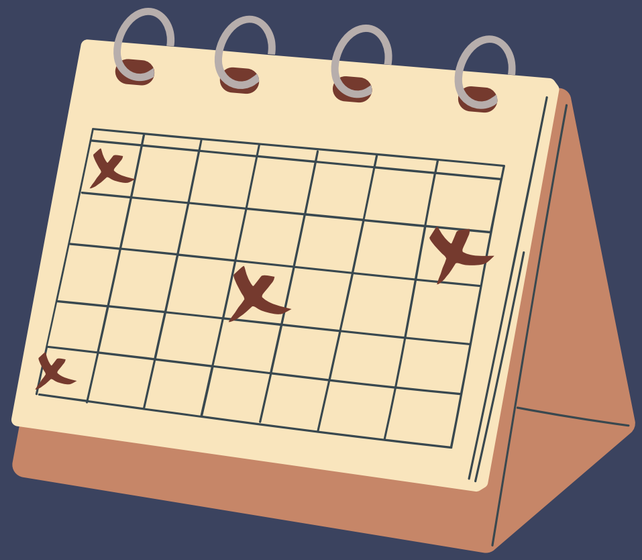
Alexandra Sunderland

Senior Engineering Manager @ Fellow.app

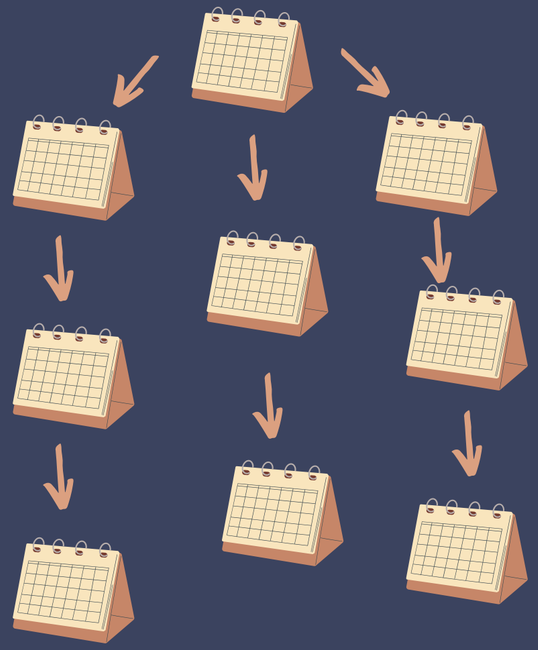
@alexandras_dev

MEETINGS

...every manager's favourite topic!

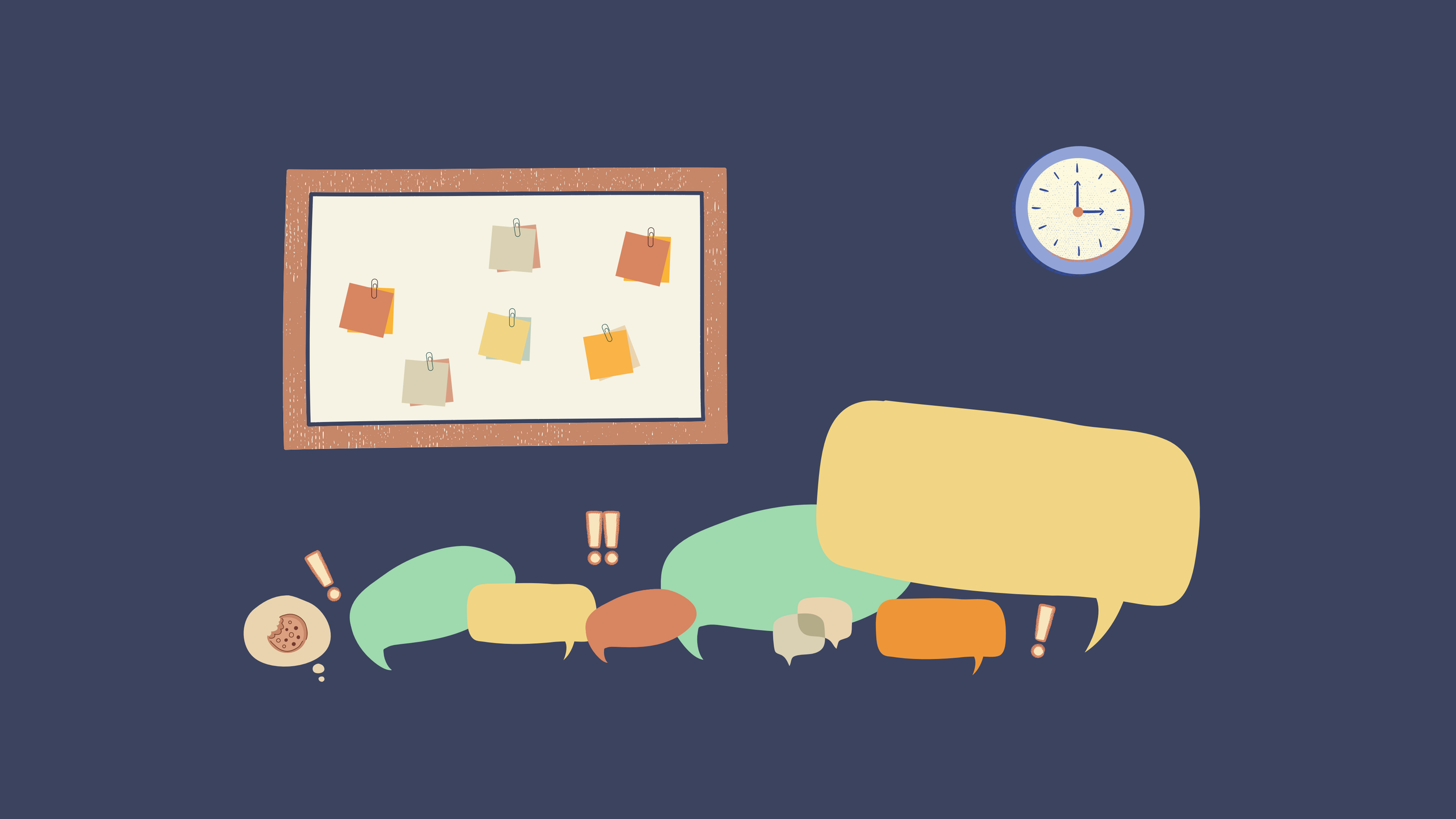


Sync



Async

Retrospectives



“I GOT THIS”

...zzzZ

Feedback:
WAY too long

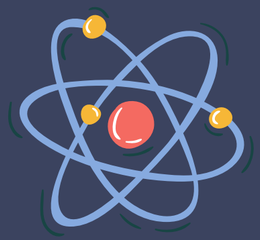
Feedback: WAY too long

... and no cookies!

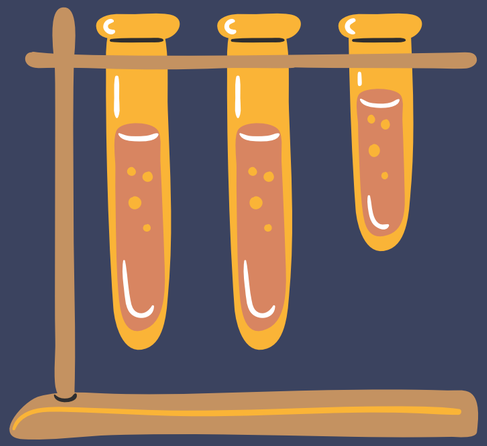
There has to be a better way!

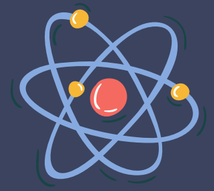
What if we could run the whole meeting...

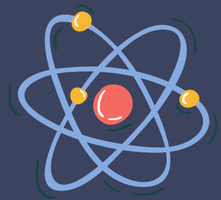
...without having the meeting?



Experimenting with meetings







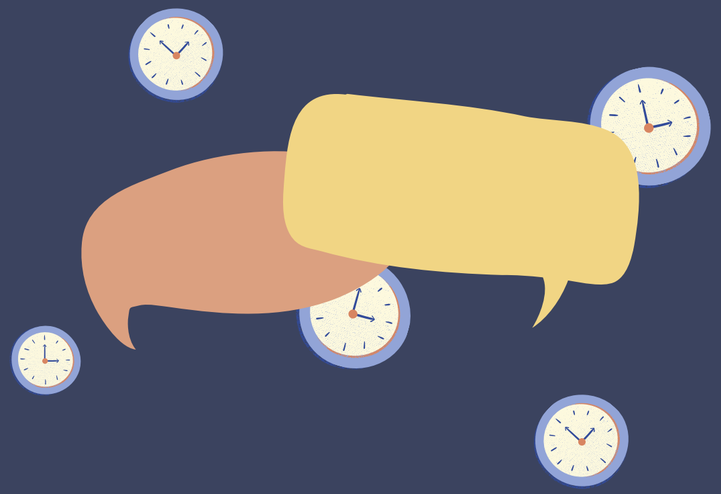
“I feel like having an async meetings week, means that I just won't participate in any meetings.”

Async Week: Pros

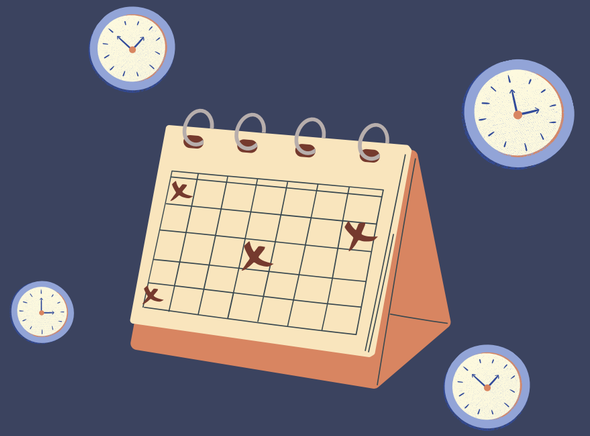
- More focus time
- Easier to leave the computer

Async Week: Cons

- More coordination overhead
- Some discussions are more difficult

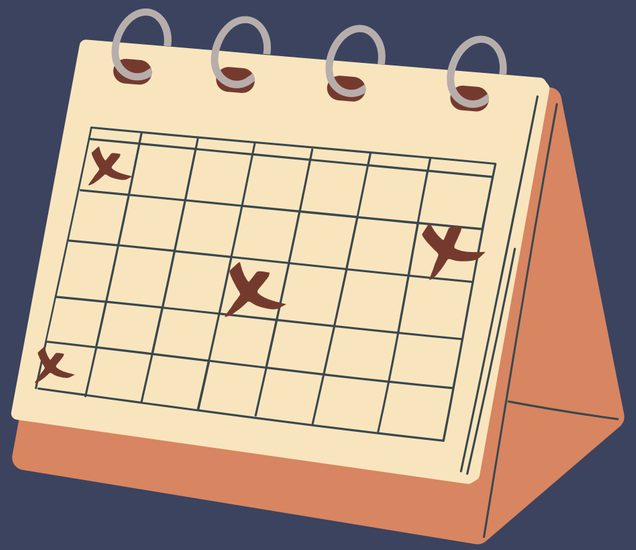


Async Communication



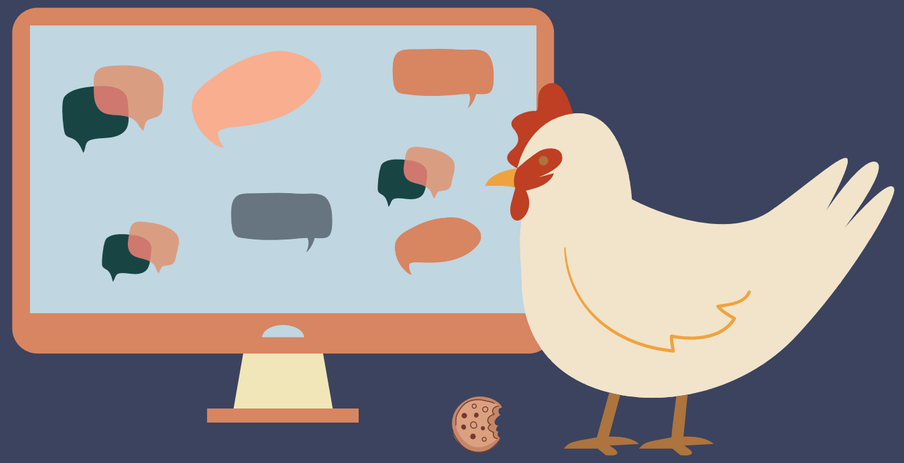
Async Meetings

- Project Check-ins
- Town-halls
- Team Stand-ups



Example:

Partially async Team Check-ins



...aka "Team Chickens"

Why running great meetings is so important

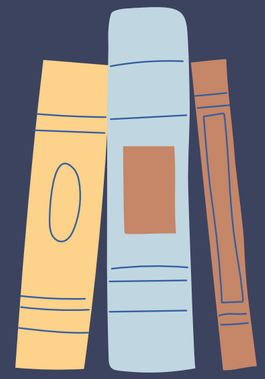
Building the Perfect Asynchronous Meeting

Remote Engineering Management

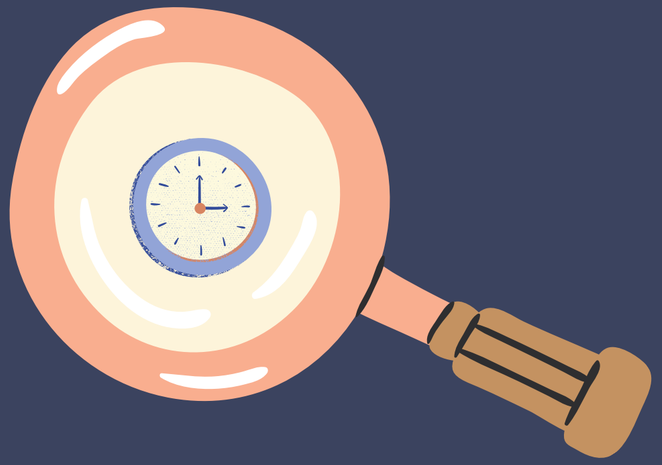
Published by Apress

Summer 2022

www.alexandras.dev/book



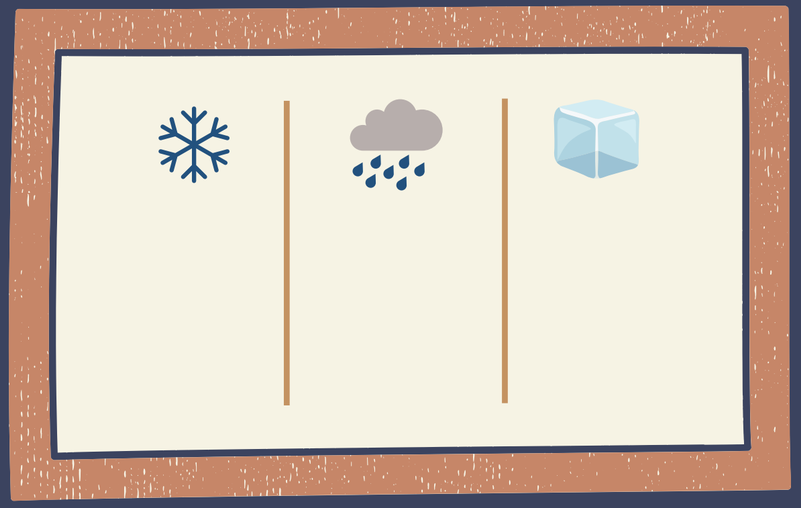
What IS an "Async Meeting"?



What does an async meeting look like?

Example: Remote Retro Take #2

What was shared ahead of time



- Timeline
- Logistics
- Expectations
- The Retro board

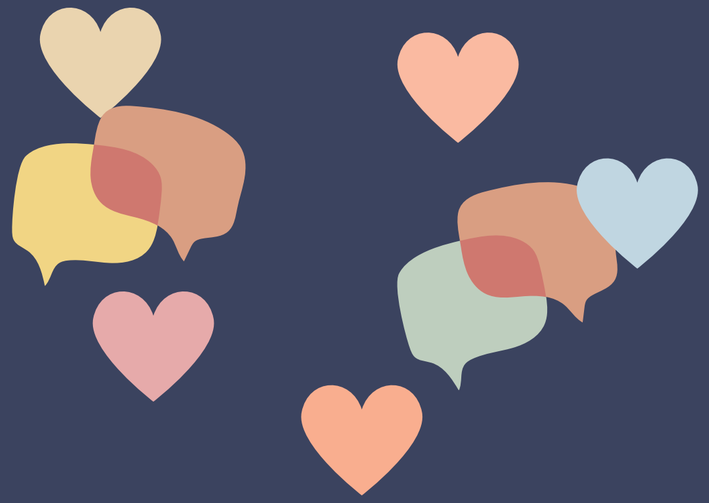
Timeline of events

- **Day A**: Write thoughts
- **Day B**: Comment and vote
- **Day C**: 1.5h sync retro (video call)

Logistics

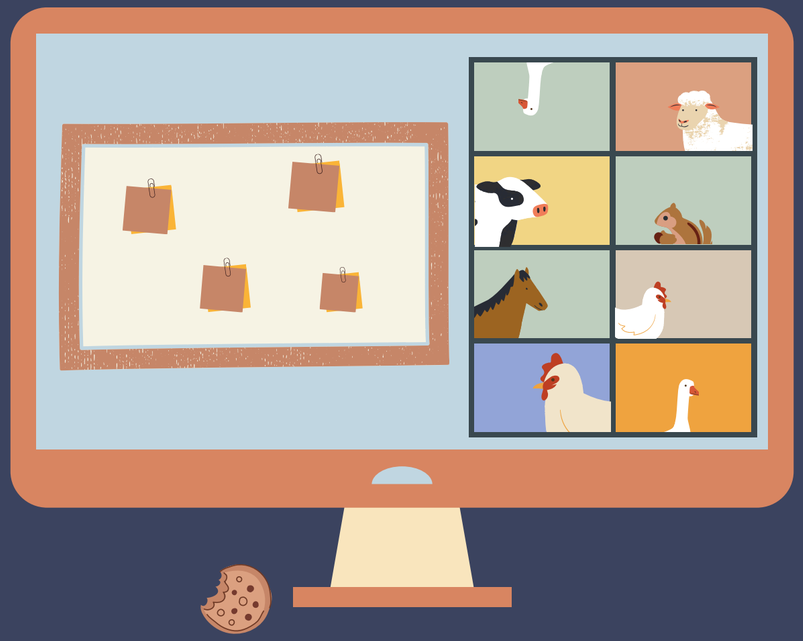
- Where to find the timeline
- Where to write out thoughts
- How to vote/comment
- When the sync retro will be, and what will be discussed

Expectations



- Criticize things, not people
- Follow the timeline
- Participate as actively as possible

The Retro Board



- Virtual board (Miro, Figma, etc)
  - Important: reactions + comments
- We use a meeting note in Fellow.app

Feedback: Perfect!

How to build an async meeting

Async meetings don't need to be run 100% asynchronously

Determine which parts will be async

- Information pushes
- Brainstorming
- Reading
- "Busy work"

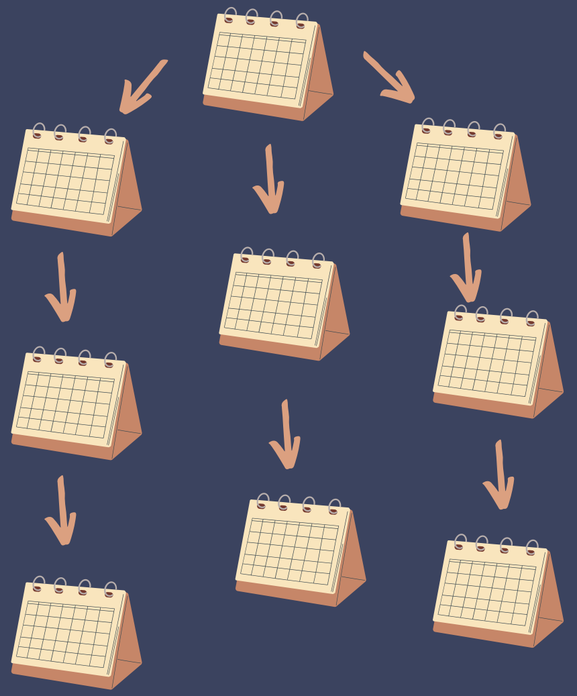
Create a timeline

- Deadline for each step
- Give enough buffer time
- Decide on sync meeting time (optional)

Set and share an agenda

- Expectations + timeline
- Easily accessible by all invitees
- Single spot for all information and discussions

Benefits of async meetings



- More time for thought
- Context is accessible
- Time zones
- Financial cost

Benefits of sync meetings

- Less coordination
- Real-time answers
- Fast-paced discussion

When to stick with sync:

Relationship-Building

When to stick with sync:

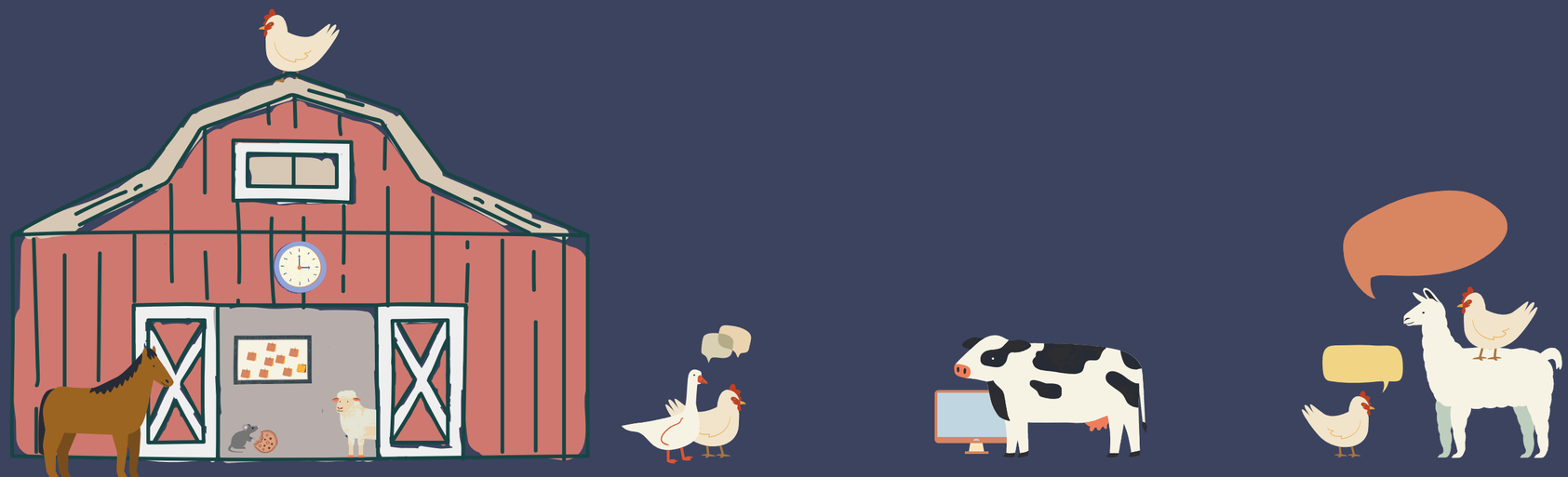
One-on-Ones

When to stick with sync:

Team Meetings

Async Meetings help reframe what's important on your calendar

This isn't just a remote thing



Teams that are co-located can also run async meetings

If you take away just one thing from this talk...

From THIS...

“Let's take this offline”

...To THAT

“Let's take this async”

Alexandra Sunderland

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