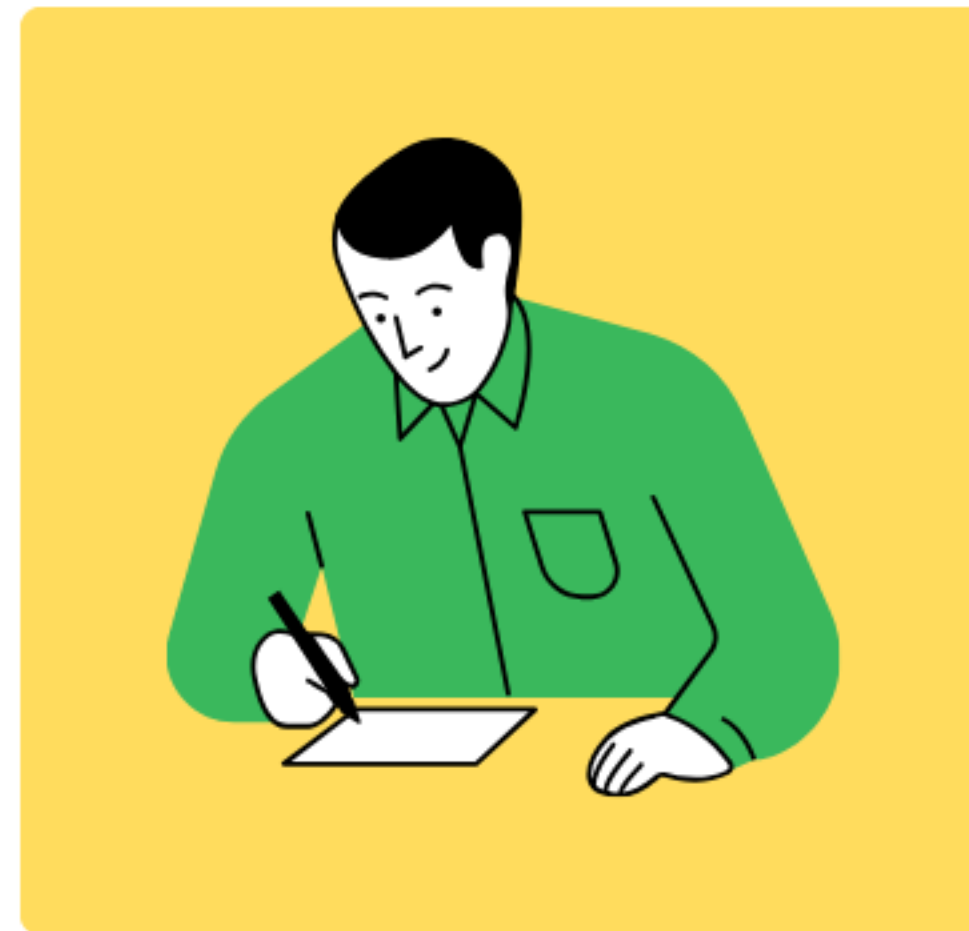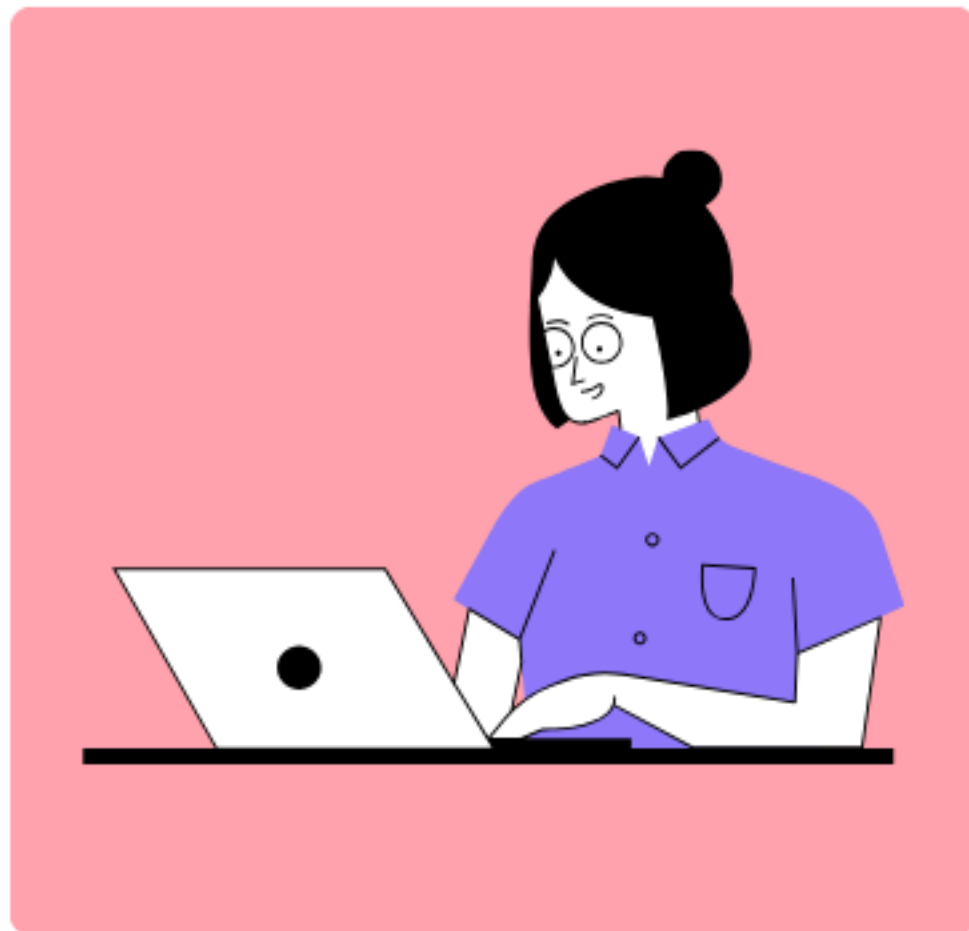# Establishing Intentional Communication
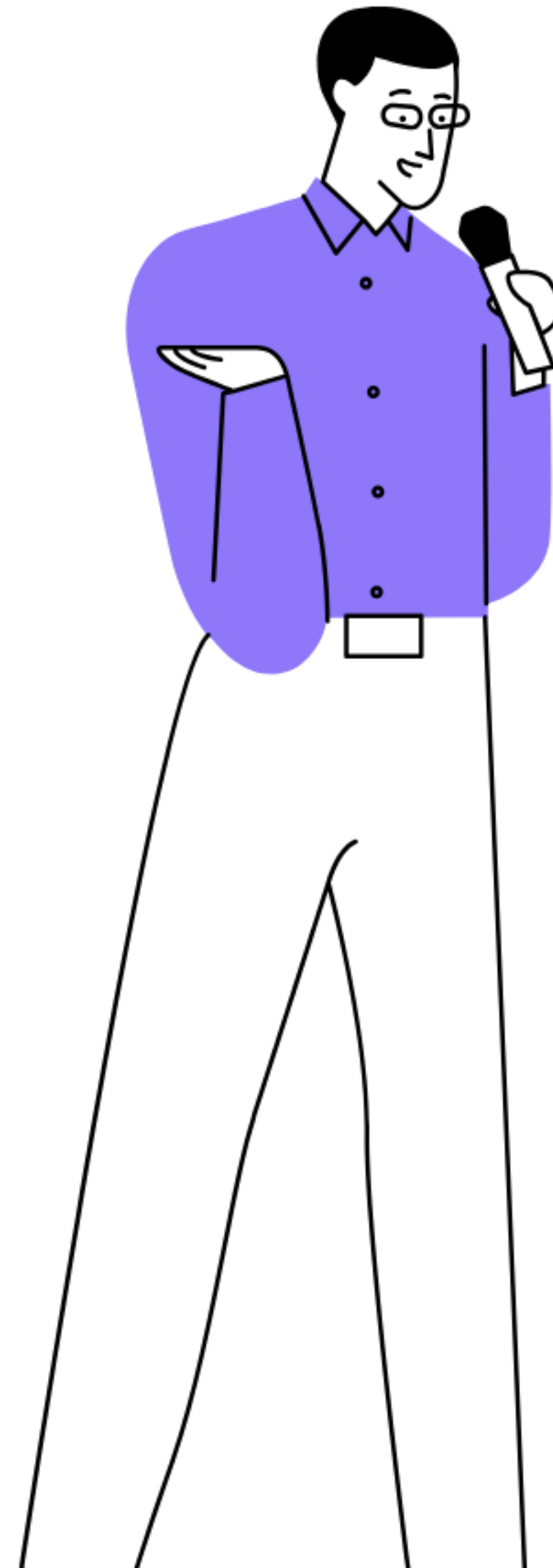
Davy Stevenson

Hello!

I'm Davy Stevenson

I'm a leadership coach,
Fractional VP of Engineering,
and advisor to startups

Today I'll be talking about **Establishing Intentional Communication.**

How can we improve how we communicate, especially during meetings.

Let's create more productive and more enjoyable meetings.

Intentional Meetings

1. Failure Modes
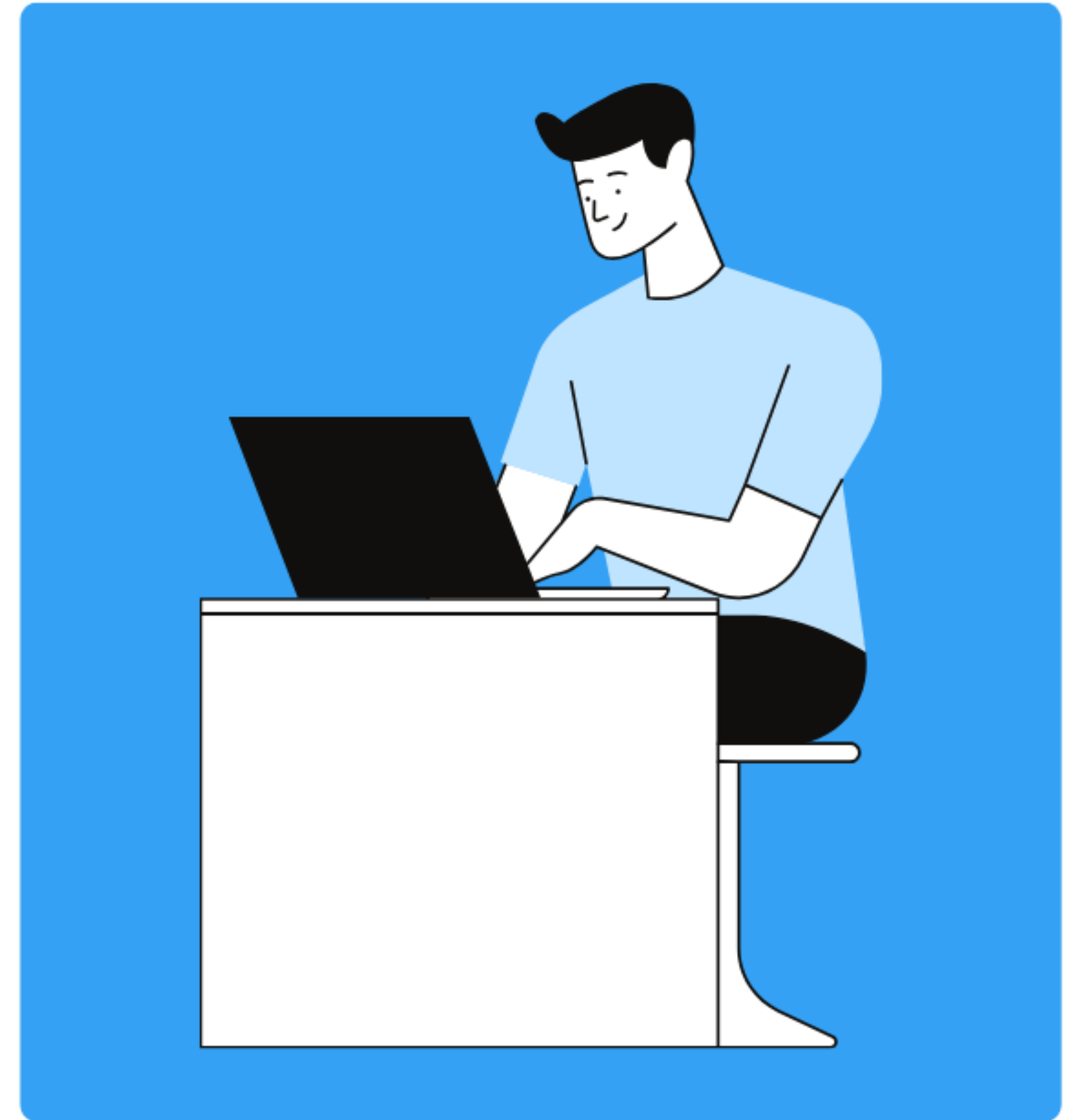2. Facilitation Skills
3. Purpose and Outcome
4. Does It Need To Be A Meeting

Failure Modes

Common Failure Modes in Meetings

- **Uneven participation**
- Topic is too broad
- Unprepared members
- Wasted time
- Lack of decisions

One or two people talking, everyone else silent

Unless this is the point of the meeting (All Hands with set presenters)

Common Failure Modes in Meetings

- Uneven participation
- **Topic is too broad**
- Unprepared members
- Wasted time
- Lack of decisions

Talking about too many things.

No decisions made, but also no valuable information shared?

Common Failure Modes in Meetings

- Uneven participation
- Topic is too broad
- **Unprepared members**
- Wasted time
- Lack of decisions

Do people know why the meeting is happening?

Do people know what valuable input they bring to the meeting?

Common Failure Modes in Meetings

- Uneven participation
- Topic is too broad
- Unprepared members
- **Wasted time**
- Lack of decisions

Uncertain or undefined purpose of meeting

Too much time talking about inconsequential things

Common Failure Modes in Meetings

- Uneven participation
- Topic is too broad
- Unprepared members
- Wasted time
- **Lack of decisions**

If this was a meeting to make a decision, was it made?

Do people walk away with a shared understanding?

Facilitation

Facilitation Types

Direct

You own the meeting

You have authority

Pro: Can make it easier to facilitate

Con: Less feedback & pushback

Indirect

You are a participant in the meeting

Pro: You become a valuable addition to meetings

Con: Difficult skill to acquire

Direct Facilitator Skills

Take advantage of meeting intros

Specify purpose of meeting

Mention time limits

Announce that you will be timekeeping

Hold people accountable for being prepared

Air Traffic Control

Utilize Agendas

Use 1-on-1s to address on rambling or non-contributing members

Indirect Facilitator Skills

Be Curious

Be a good example

Advocate for others and lift up their voice

Ask for Clarification

Help the facilitator

Offer to take notes

Offer to be timekeeper

Is the facilitator juggling tasks? Offer to handle one
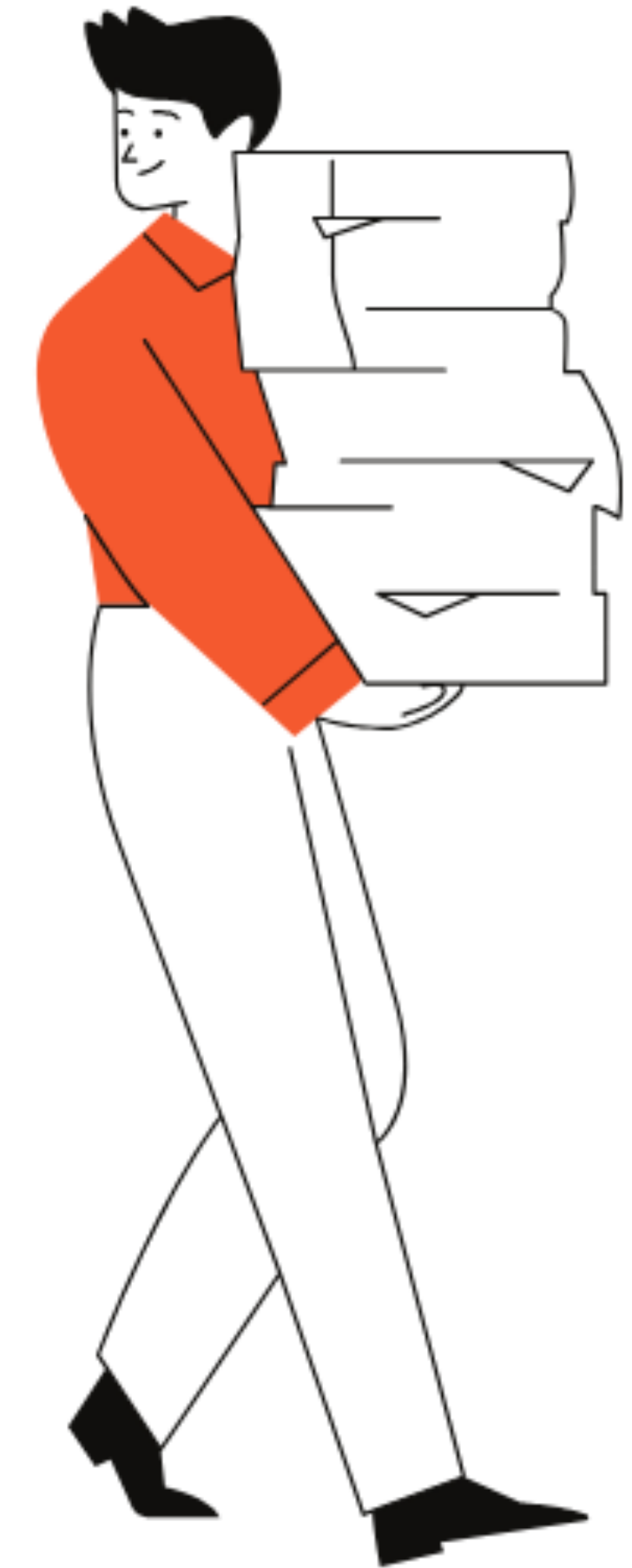
Purpose and Outcome

Meeting Purposes

- **Sourcing Information**
- **Sharing Information**
- **Making a Decision**
- **Organizational / Planning**
- **Humane / Health**

What About Agile?

Planning

Organizational / Planning

Sourcing Information

Making a Decision

Standup

Sharing Information

Humane/Health

- Planning is doing a lot

- Sourcing Information is never primary goal

- Sharing information is only within the team

Backlog Grooming

Making a Decision

Sourcing Information

Retro

Humane / Health

Brainstorming Meetings

Primary Focus: Sourcing Information

Goal: Brainstorming, Research, Generating Ideas, Creativity

Who: Engineering Manager, Product Manager, Designer, Engineering Team

- Cast a wide net
  - QA? Security? DevOps? Etc.

What it is not:

- Organizational or planning
- Making a decision

Sharing Information Outward
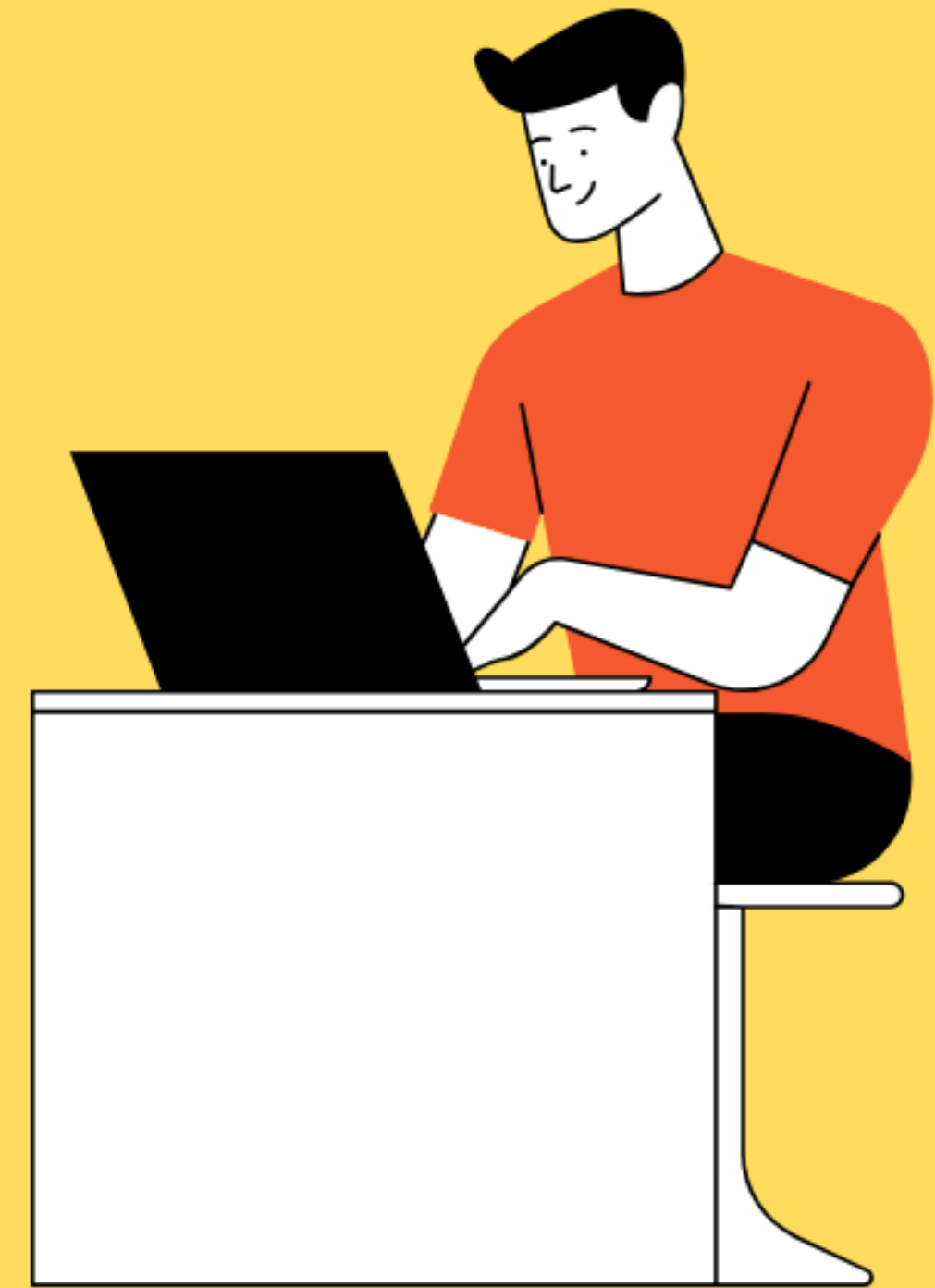
All Hands
Company or Org

Regular Sync with Leadership Peers

Conference Talks

DEMOS!

1-1s with
Leadership Peers

Does It Need To Be a Meeting

Does It Even Need To Be a Meeting

Avoid Design By Committee

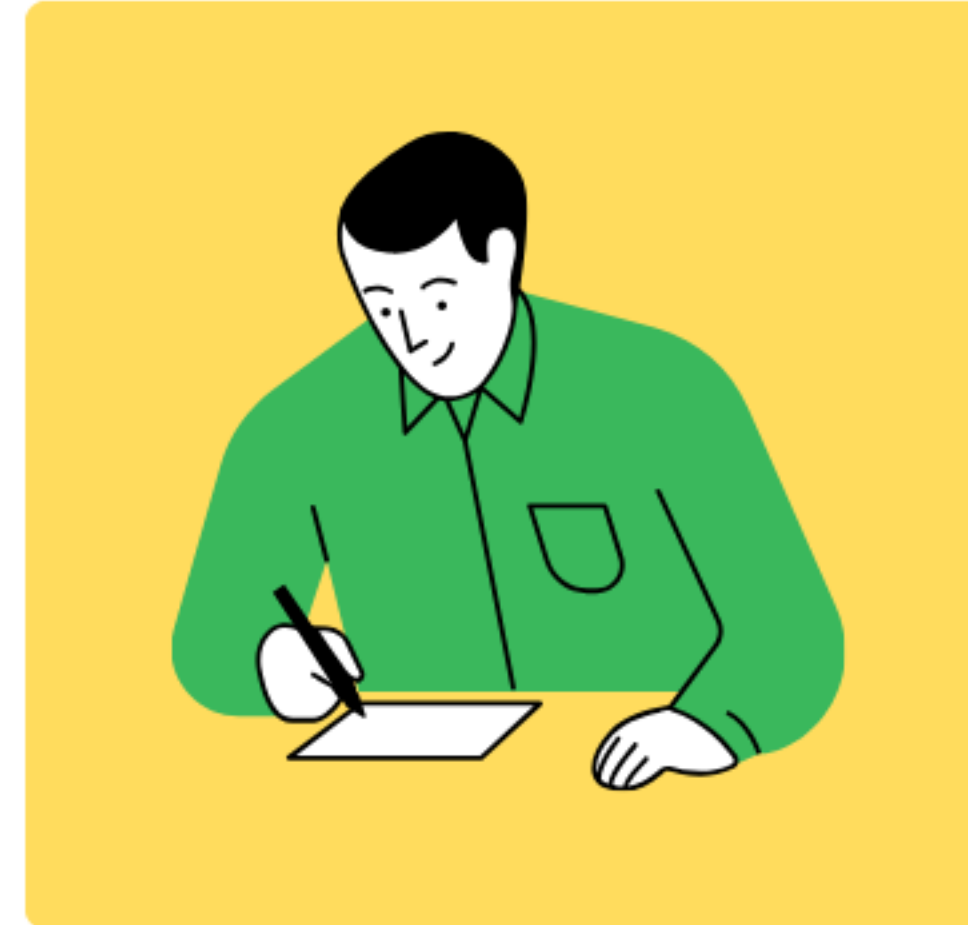Ensure async communication options exist and are safe and welcoming
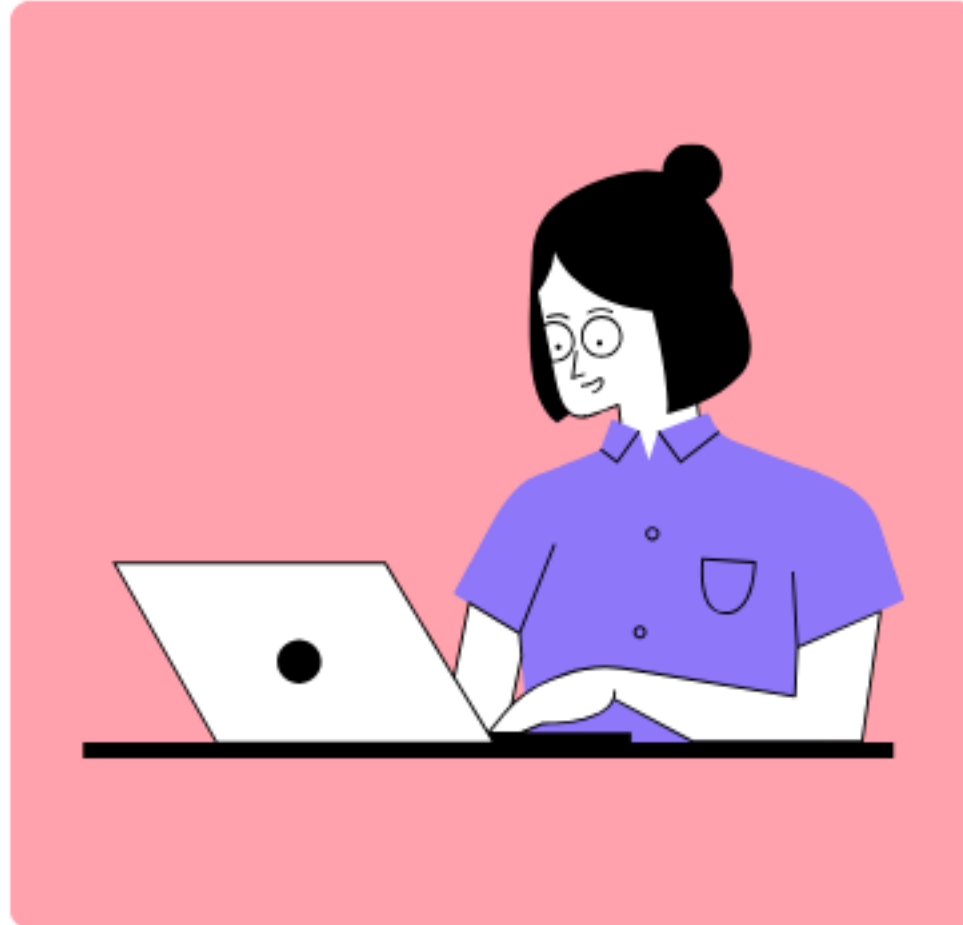
If it's not written down, we can't make a decision

Culture of Sharing Async

Reduce FOMO

Delegate Responsibility and Ownership

Thanks!

Davy Stevenson