

A surrealist collage. In the center, a man in a grey suit and tie stands behind a grey rectangular podium. He is looking slightly to his left. The podium is partially submerged in a pool of bright blue water. Several dark-colored lounge chairs are scattered in the water around the podium. In the background, there are dark, jagged mountains. The sky is a vibrant pink, and a large, bright yellow sun is positioned directly behind the man's head, creating a halo effect. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century political posters or propaganda art.

How to Work With Stupid People

Warm-up Exercise

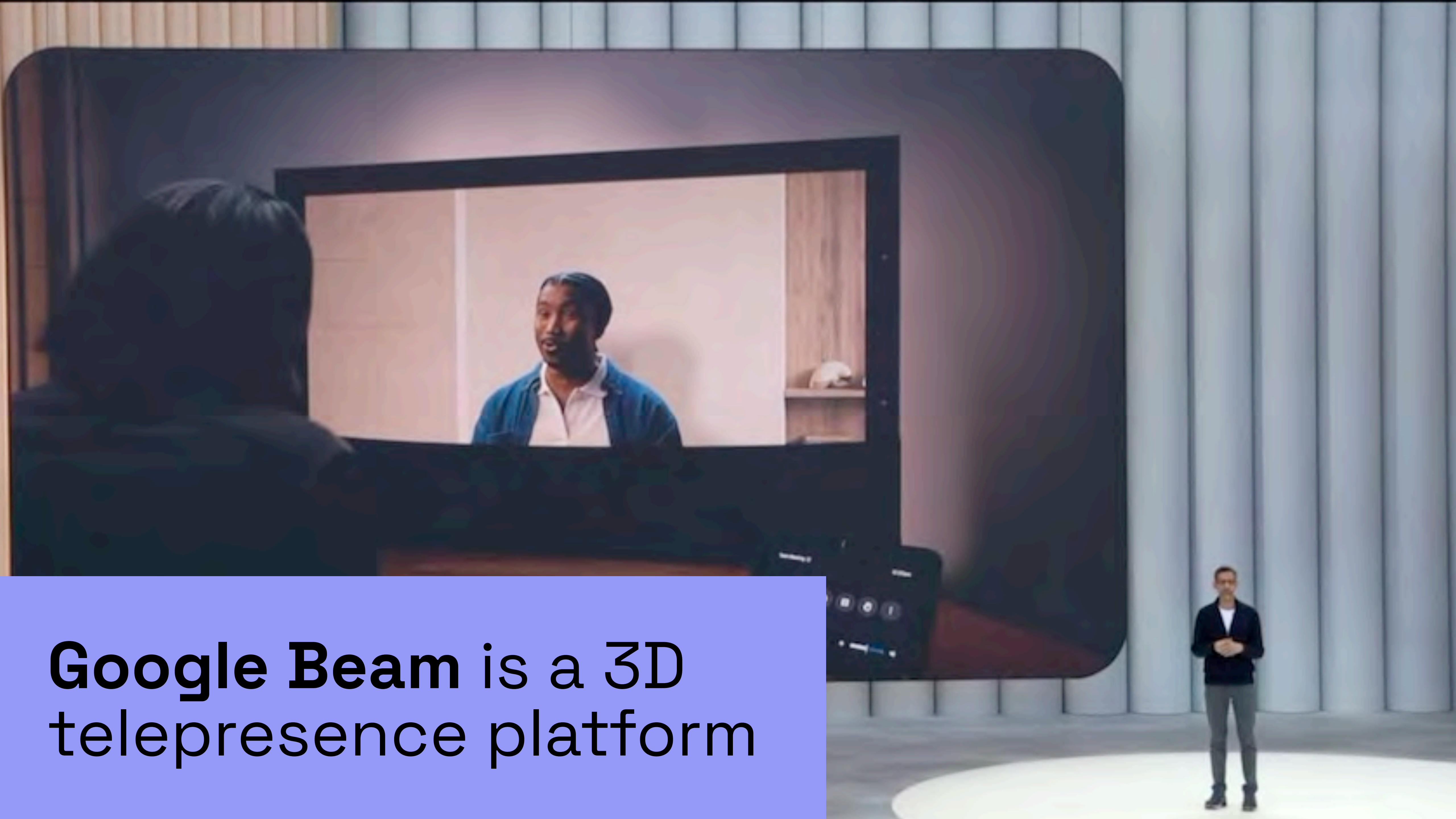
Hi there!

I'm Chaz Spears

**~~L.A.~~ Brooklyn based
UX Designer on Google Beam**



Google Beam is a 3D
telepresence platform



**Are you frustrated
as a designer?**

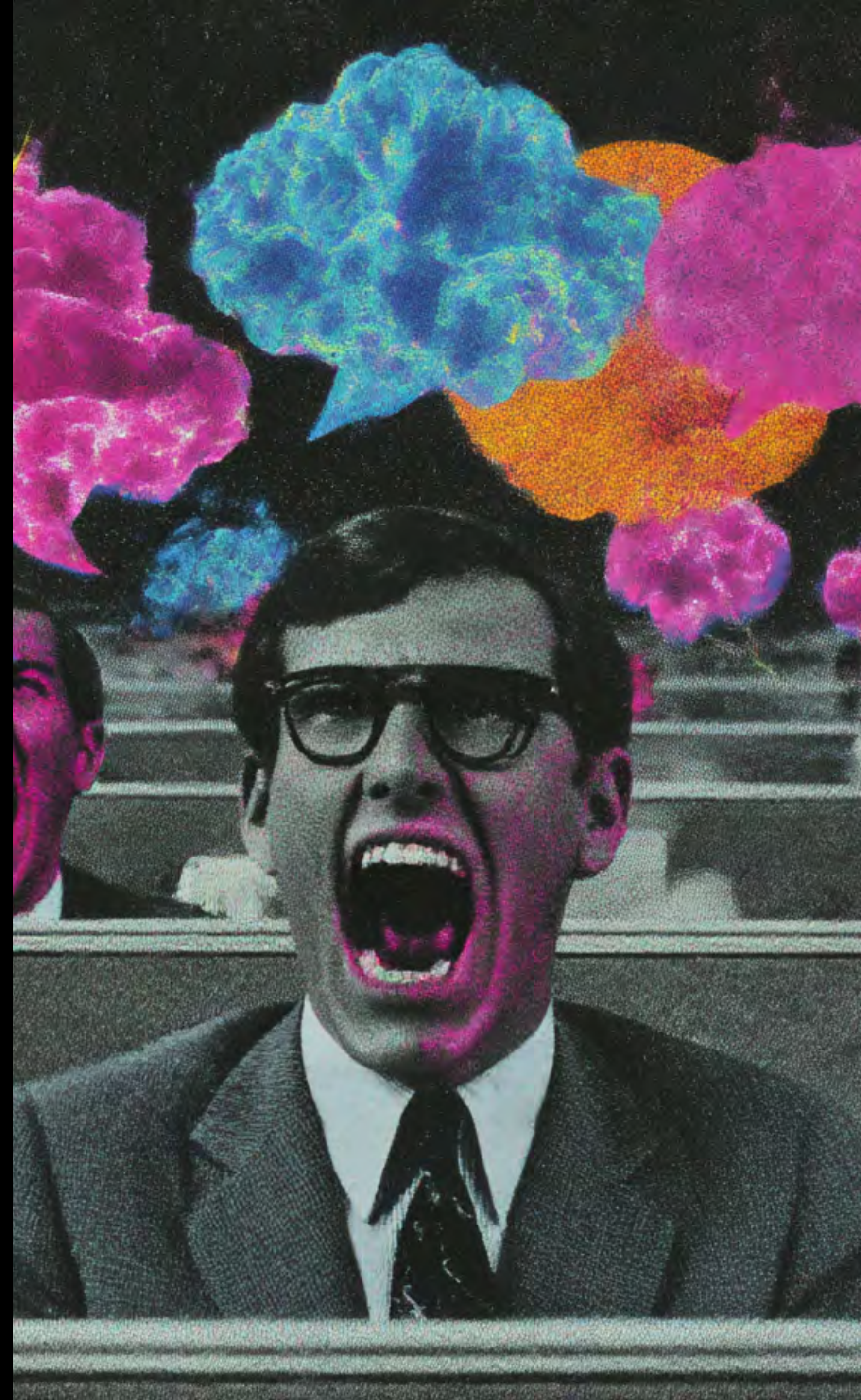


Are you frustrated as a designer?

Are you constantly forced to ship MVPs that are really WTFs?

Do your stakeholders treat you like the office toddler?

Does your team act like your ideas are bad luck?



I've been in these situations (and so many, many more) throughout my design career.

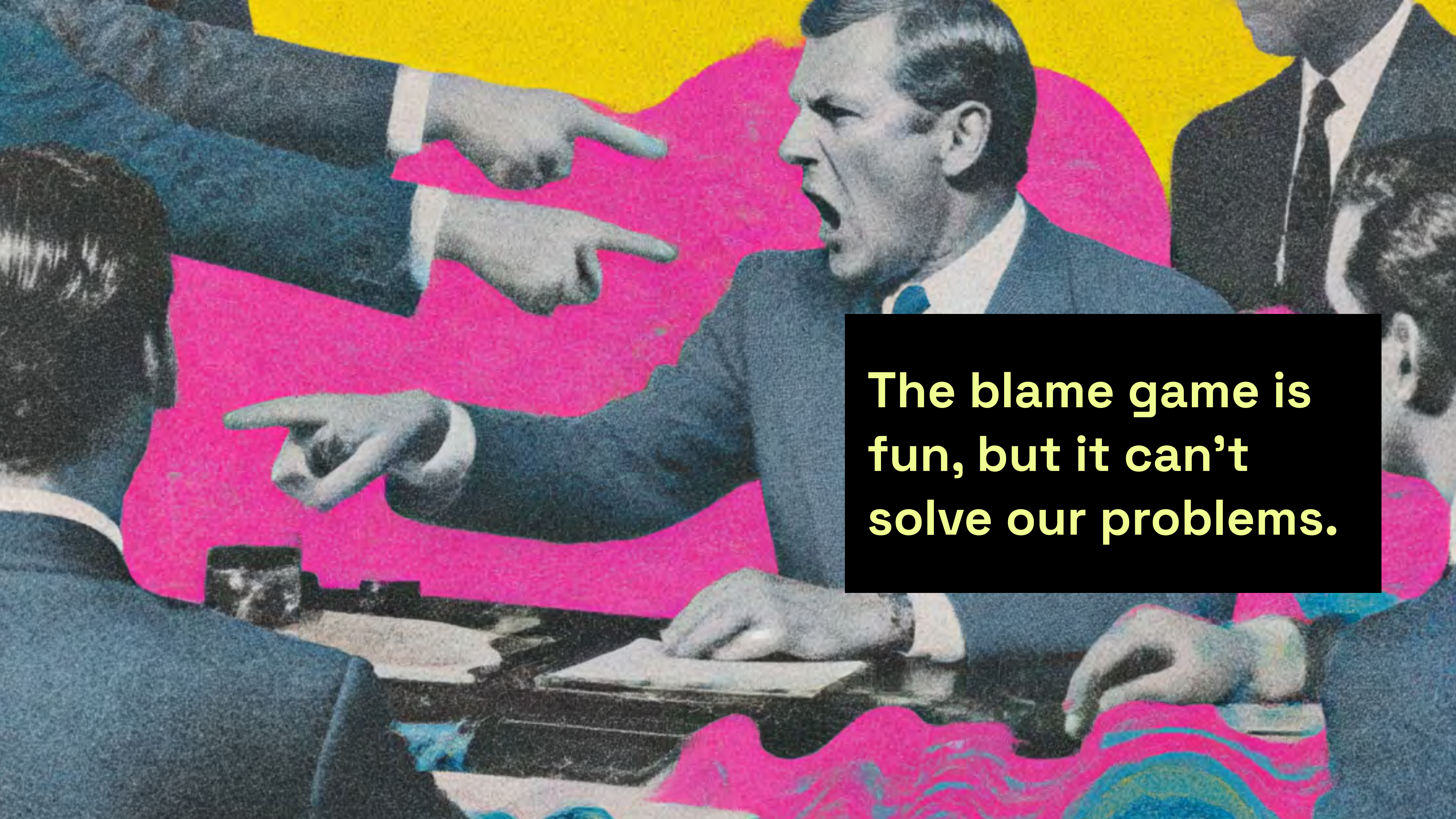


At my lowest point I almost quit UX Design...



I thought was working
with a bunch of idiots...

But what if it was me?

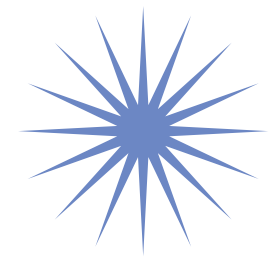


**The blame game is
fun, but it can't
solve our problems.**

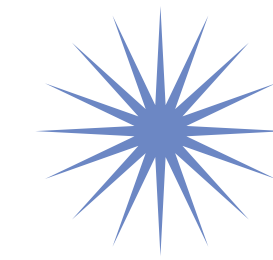
The blame game is fun, but it can't solve our problems.

- Oversimplifies our experience.
- Avoids the discomfort of hard truths.
- Provides a narrative that absolves us of responsibility (and power).
- Makes us victims of our environment.

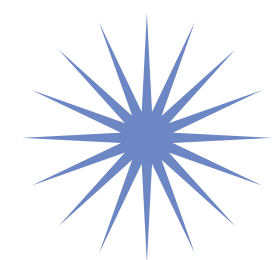




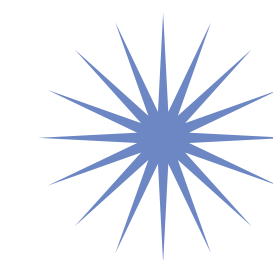
*What role am I playing in
my experience?*

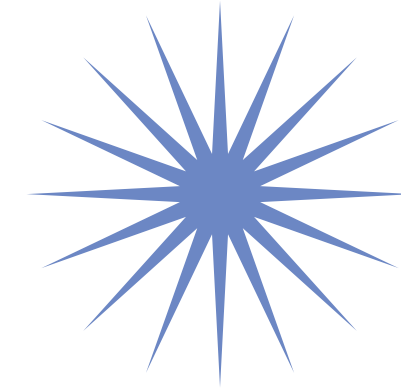


Real growth and change come from asking

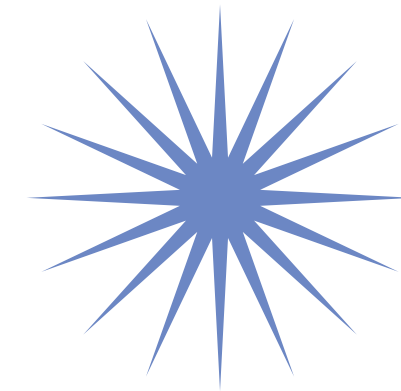


*What choices do I have in
this situation?"*





Instead of blaming others...



Here's what

to do *instead...*

Observe → Respond → Escape



OBSERVE



OBSERVE

Examine your **company, self,** and **stakeholders** to reconfigure your point of view and get a clearer understanding of the situation.



**What is your
company *culture*?**

What is your company culture?

DEFINITION

Shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape how employees interact, make decisions, and work together.

How are
decisions made?



How does
work get done?



What
motivates
the people
around you?



How does work get done in your company & team?

Getting work done is ultimately about meeting shared goals.

Collaboration

What methods, tools, and rituals are used to complete projects?

Prioritization

How do they determine what's important?

Responsibility

Who is responsible for getting work done? How do they ensure it happens?



How are decisions made?



Org Structure

Are you in a top down org or a bottom up org?

Risk Mitigation

How does your team determine the risk and effectiveness of solutions?

Approval Process

What is the path to yes? How does the org say to yes to work?

What motivates the people around you?

Intrinsic Motivations

What do people around you hope to achieve?

What makes them afraid, excited, or confident about work?

What do these people find rewarding?

What do they like or dislike about the workplace?

Extrinsic Motivations

How does the company incentivize people to get work done?

What outcomes are people incentivized to achieve?

What behaviors does the company reward?



Get Feedback

Get Feedback

Feedback helps reveal our blind spots and highlight our strengths, so we can see where to grow.

But from who?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 01. Manager and stakeholders | 02. Friends and family |
| 03. Former co-workers | 04. Personality test and books |





Learn to apply Empathy



See coworkers as they
are, not as villains

Distinguish toxic cultures
vs. growth gaps

View your coworkers
as **people** not **villains**



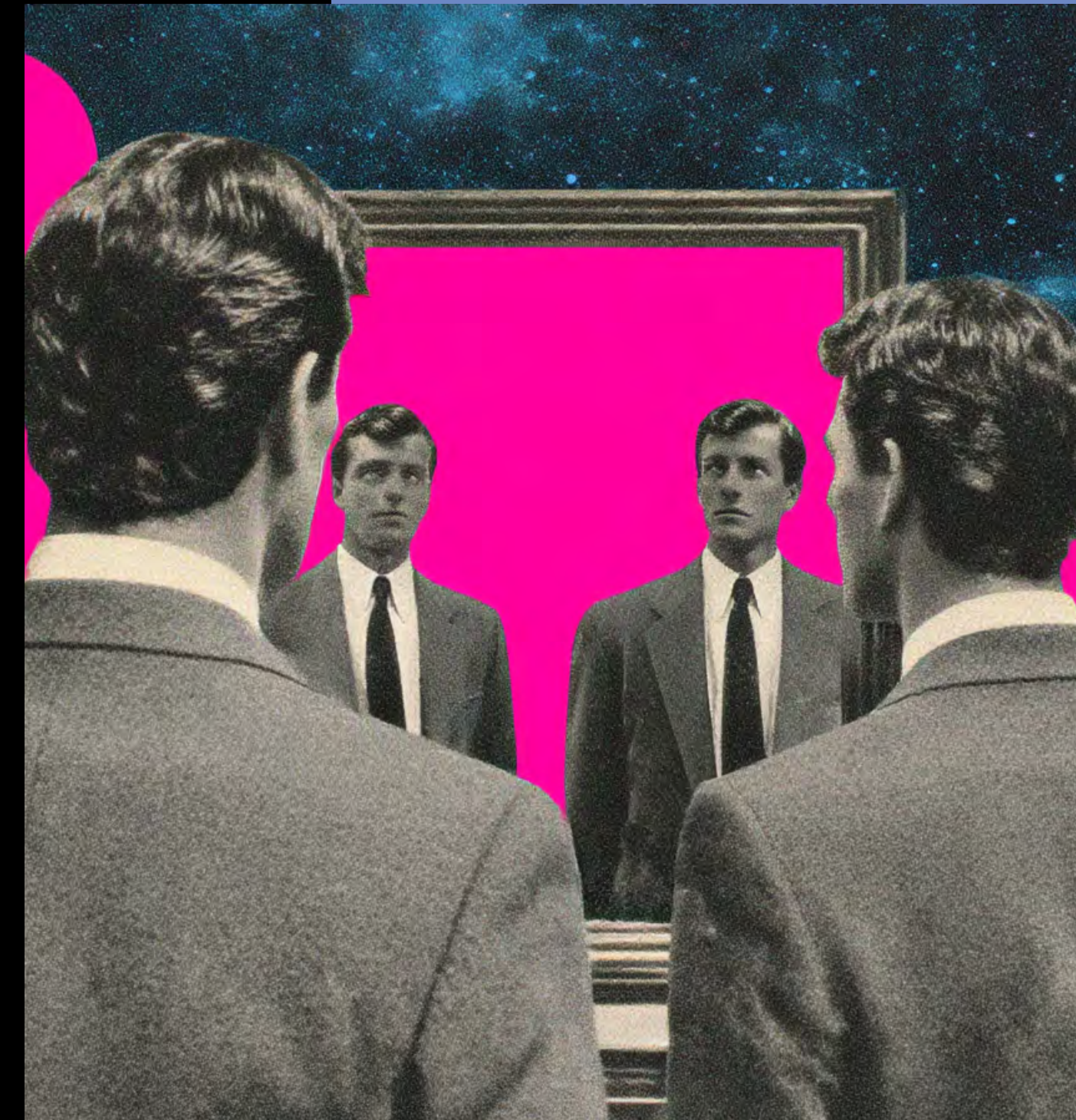
Distinguish toxic cultures vs. growth gaps

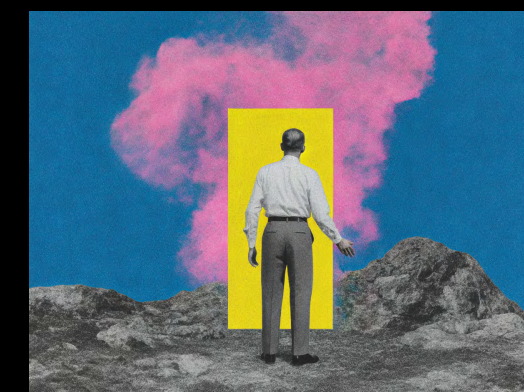
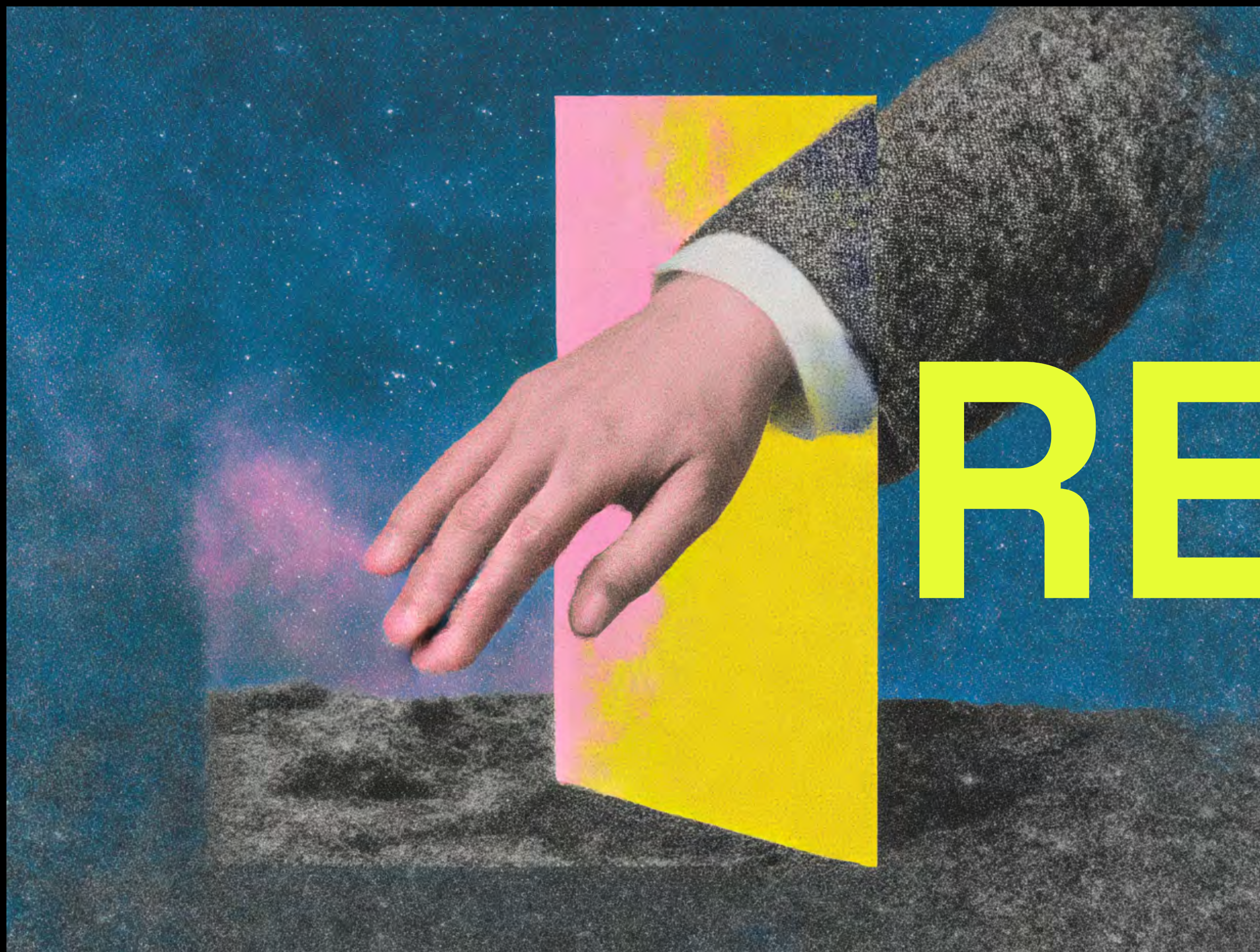
Toxic Cultures

Traits within your company that negatively impact your experience and productivity.

Growth Gaps

Missing skills or habits you can improve to improve your experience and productivity.





RESPOND



RESPOND

**It's time to put your new
perspective to work... but how?**

Learn & Apply



Soft Skills

Soft skills turn *concepts* into
shipped work



What are soft skills?

Giving clear feedback
Energy
Knowledge management
Cooperation
Decision-making
Humor
Scheduling
Diversity awareness
Verbal communication
Self-monitoring
Research
Flexibility
Value education
Interviewing
Empathy
Resilience
Presentation
Willingness to learn

Critical observation
Dealing with difficult personalities
Trainability
Reliability
Assertiveness
Patience
Enthusiasm
etiquette
Talent management
Dispute resolution
Performance management
Respectfulness
Strategic planning
Independent

Quick-witted
Self-awareness
Supervising
Competitiveness
Dealing with office politics
Writing skills
Dedication
Successful coaching
Desire to learn
Tolerance of change
Artistic aptitude
Persuasion
Meeting deadlines
Resolving issues

Confidence
Storytelling
Teamwork
Results-oriented
Dealing with difficult situations
Self-supervising
Inspiration others
Interpersonal skills
Highly recommended
Project management
Reading body language
Critical thinking
Trainability
Writing proposals

Social skills
Influence
Listening
Planning
Follow instructions
Self-direction
Technology-savvy
Conflict resolution
Technology trend
Business
Involvement
Creativity
Business storytelling
Following direction
Public speaking
Organization
Team-building
Work-life balance
Punctuality

Key Soft Skills for Designers

Emotional Intelligence

Understanding and managing emotions in yourself and others.

Communication

Sharing and managing information and ideas.

Persuasion

Influencing others' thoughts or actions.

Emotional Intelligence

Improves collaboration

Resolve conflicts with calm and respect.

Strengthens teamwork through emotional awareness.

Helps with criticism

Accept criticism without taking it personally.

Turn critique into opportunities for growth.

Advocating for your work

Tailor communication to audience and context.

Influence stakeholders by framing design benefits.

Communication

Difficult conversations

Learn how to have sensitive conversations that have uncertain outcomes.

1. Speak up in meetings.
2. Explain why you think something is a bad idea.
3. Address interpersonal conflicts.

Storytelling

Develop project narratives that generate enthusiasm and clarity.

1. Explain the consequences of not implementing your work
2. Frame ideas in business terms
3. Build trust with metrics

Keep people in the loop

Regularly share updates, decisions, and progress so everyone involved stays informed and aligned.

1. Socialize your work before you need buy-in and approval
2. Respond in a timely manner

Persuasion

Good design doesn't sell itself

Create advocacy through collaboration

Gather input and direction from stakeholders long before you need their approval or buy-in.

Anticipate and address objections

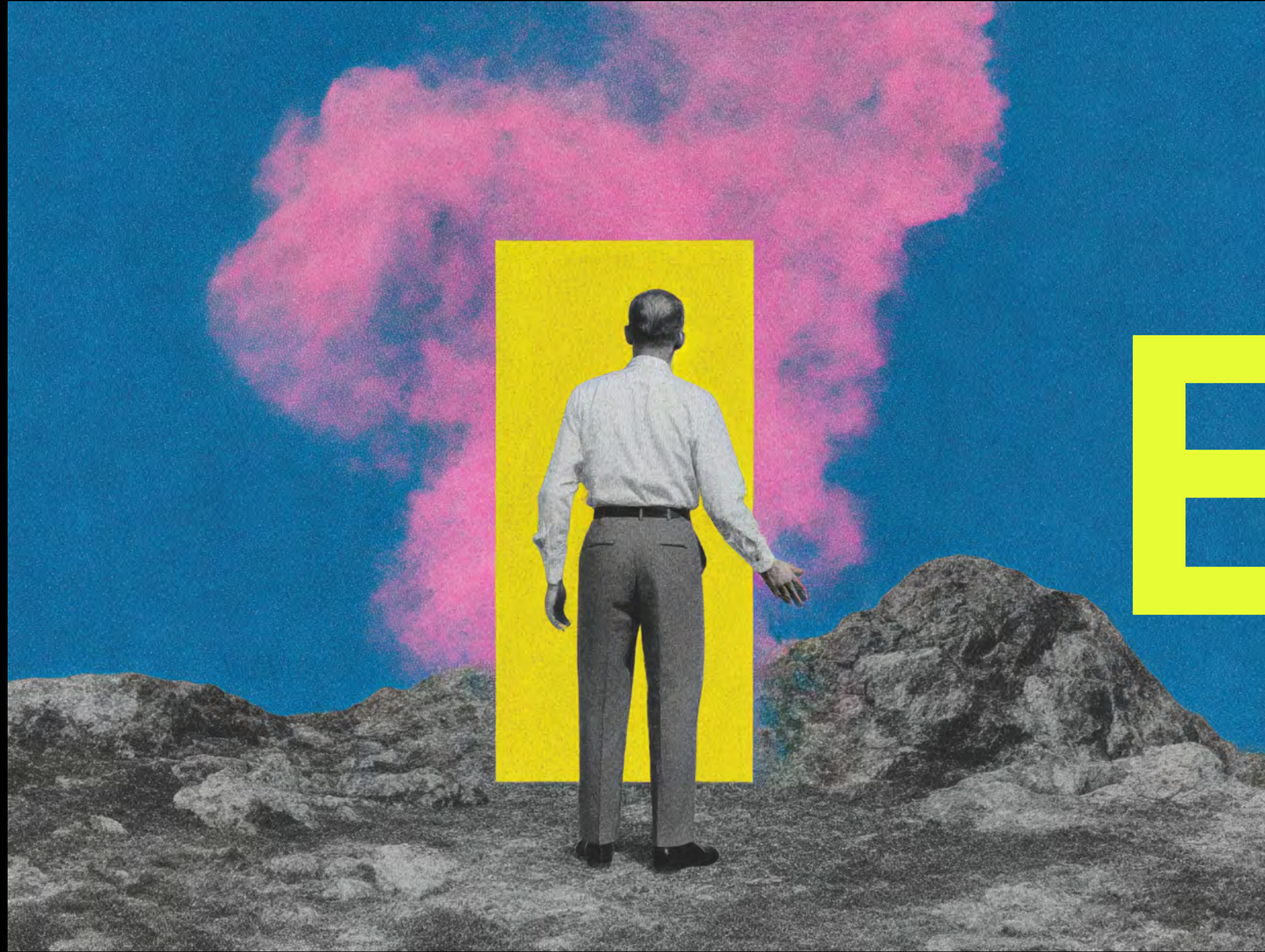
Anticipate and address potential objections regarding your work and decisions.

Communicate the value of your work

Explain the long and short term benefits of your work to the company, team, and users.

Create a sense of urgency

Given limited time, resources, and an endless backlog, why is starting this project now critical to your team's success?



ESCAPE*

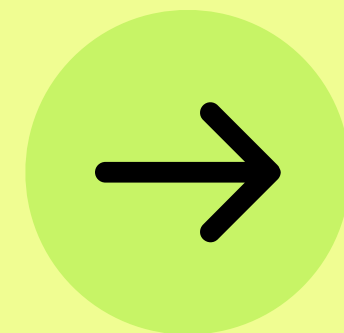
*Optional step



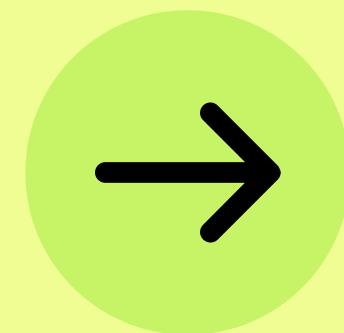
You're responding like a champ.

But everything is still meh...

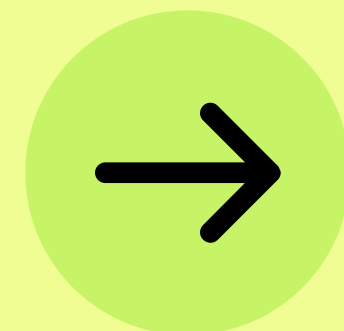
But why?



Maybe you found that your team is actually toxic or dysfunctional.



Maybe you found that you're strongly misaligned with your team.



Maybe you really want more compelling work.

**Maybe it's time
to leave?**

Where should you go?



Change Projects

You like the work but need new stakeholders.

Preserve expertise and familiarity processes.

Includes taking on different work that you actually care about while staying in your current role.

Internal Transfer

You like the company but need new stakeholders.

Team dynamics can be very different within companies, especially larger orgs.

Change Companies

Want an entirely new experience.

Want new company culture, work, and opportunities.

**UX Design is predicted to be
the 8th Fastest Growing
Career by 2030¹.**

¹World Economic Forum: Future of Jobs Report 2025: These are the fastest growing and declining jobs

But tech still feels different...

- Layoffs across the tech industry
- Hiring feels like its slowing
- AI is changing how we ship products

**UX Design will look a lot
different in the future.**

Change brings opportunity

Thought Leadership

Help guide others by sharing ideas and knowledge.

Unique Point of View

Individual experience will provide valuable insight in the future.

Build the Future

Participate in creating the future of our industry and products.



Leave gracefully

- Give proper notice
- Pass the torch

Key Takeaways

**Don't play the
blame game**



The blame game removes our power and makes us victims to our surroundings.

Observe



Observe your company, team, and yourself to reframe your experience and understand how things work around you.

Respond



Use soft skills to empower your best work. Use emotional intelligence to connect with stakeholders, and communication and persuasion to push the project forward.

Escape



If all else fails, find a new way to experience work. It can be on another project, team, or company. Just leave gracefully.

Thank you

