

# Future Sight in Design:

Using process and context to  
solve the right problems

## Cheryl Platz

Principal and Owner, Ideaplatz LLC

Author, Design Beyond Devices and The Game Development Strategy Guide



@funnygodmother



@theCherylPlatz

# Looking ahead: Agenda

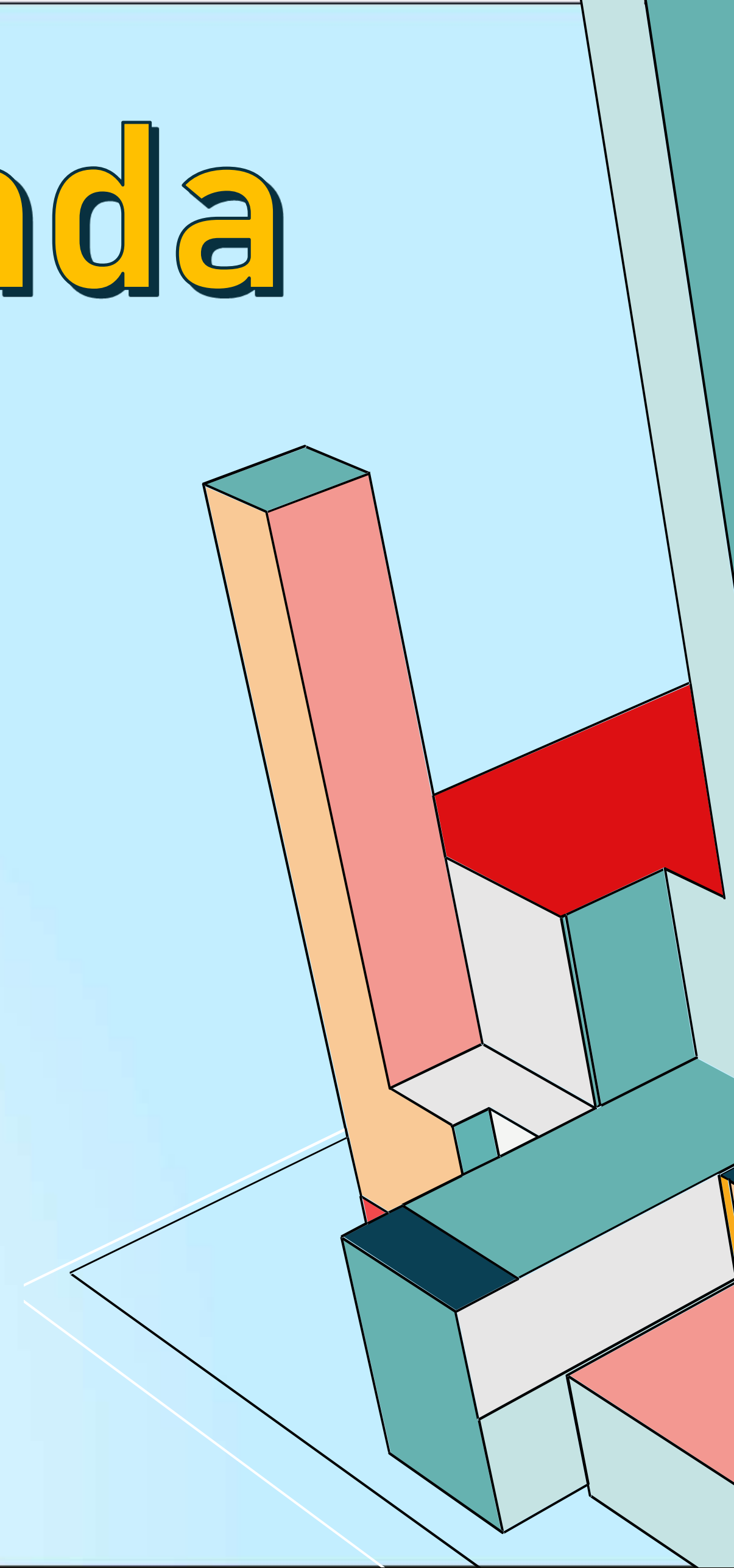
1 Introduction

2 Problem statement

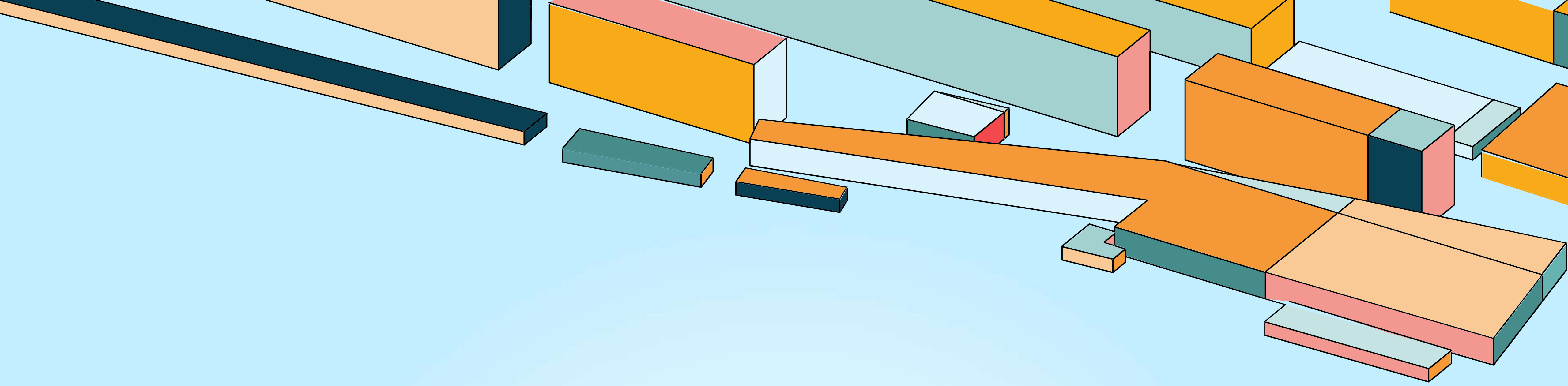
3 Opti-pessimism as a design tool

4 Case Studies:

- Gates Foundation Teams Enablement
- Riot Games + Xbox Game Pass







# Problem Statement:

FINDING SPACE FOR DESIGN TO IMPACT  
SYSTEMS BEYOND VISUALS AT SCALE



**HOW CAN WE  
DESIGN AT  
SPEED SAFELY?**

**CAN DESIGNERS  
REALLY “SLOW  
DOWN TO  
SPEED UP”?**







# WHY DOES IT SEEM LIKE SOME DESIGNERS CAN PREDICT THE FUTURE?

The Apples of the world – how can they release products time and time again and get it right?

And if you can see the future, how can you convince others you're right?



I CONVINCED THE  
**GATES FOUNDATION** TO  
UPGRADE THEIR GLOBAL  
TELECONFERENCING  
SYSTEMS AND SERVICE  
DESIGN...

WHICH LAUNCHED  
FULLY **JUST 2 WEEKS**  
**BEFORE THE COVID-19**  
**CLOSURES.**



BMGF IT: Teams Room Upgrade Program

## Teams Meetings are here!

Find out how switching to Teams meetings  
can help your daily work.

### What's better about Teams Meetings?

New, more reliable dial-in participant experience  
Better performance on low-bandwidth connections  
Smoother, more immersive video sharing  
Record any meeting and share any app

At the airport? On the bus? No problem.  
Install the Teams app on your favorite mobile  
device and participate fully in meetings while on  
the move. You can even share your screen!

### Try the all-new mobile app

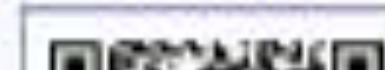
### External participants rejoice!

Non-foundation employees face fewer steps to join  
your meeting. Connecting to a Teams Meeting with  
a laptop or desktop browser requires no browser  
add-ins. On mobile, just install the Teams app.

**Q:** When should I switch to  
Teams Meetings?

Try Teams now for any fully remote or

Tell IT about your  
meeting experience!



Whether you're working





BUT I DIDN'T USE  
PSYCHIC POWERS. I  
USED STRONG DESIGN  
AND RESEARCH  
TECHNIQUES TO  
ENSURE THE IT TEAM  
WAS SOLVING THE RIGHT  
PROBLEMS.



Experience insights: Booking a meeting

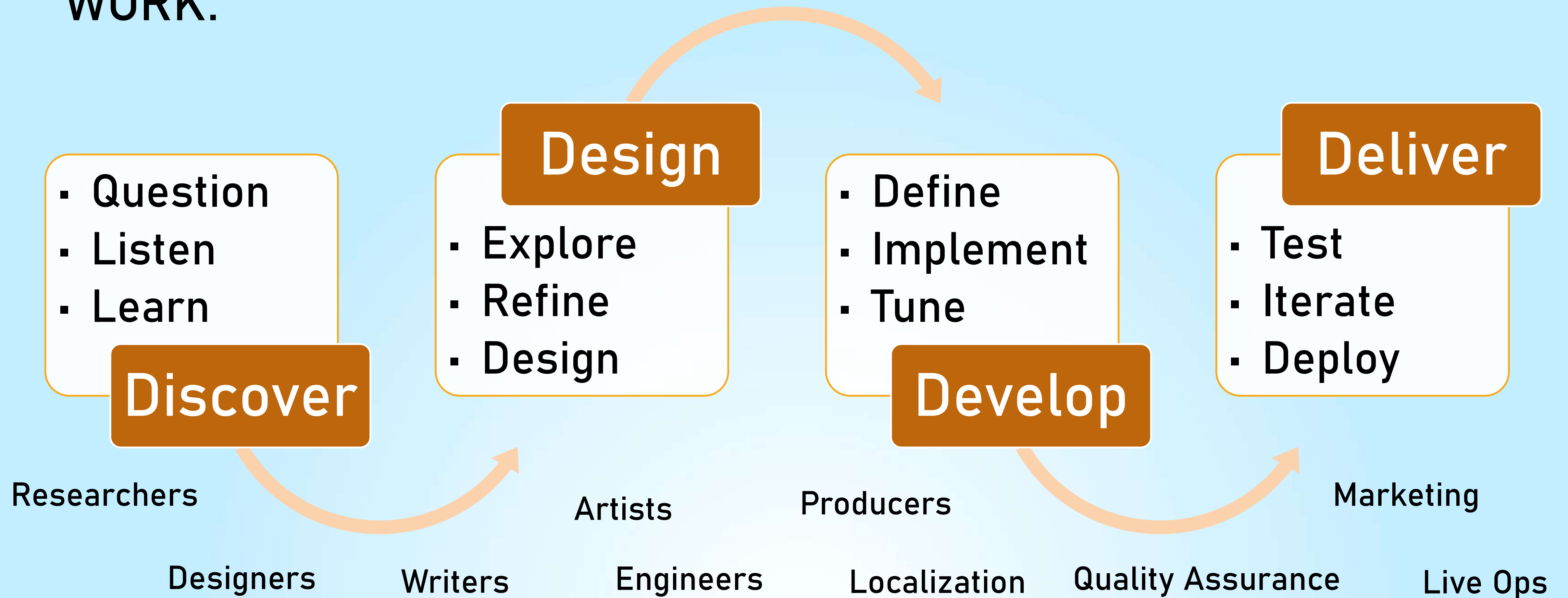
Goal	Meet right now (in person or remote)	Reserve space to join a remote call	Schedule a meeting with other employees	Schedule a meeting with external partners	Schedule a meeting as a proxy for the host	Schedule a recurring meeting
Positive	Integrated Skype rooms are easy to book UXP-003, 013, 016		Nice to request AV help in advance UXP-023, 024			
			Skype lets us work as a distributed team UXP-001, 013, 016, 020			
Pain points	In-office speakerphone hardware not great UXP-006, 008	Most bookable spaces are overkill for calls. Service feedback	I HATE Skype's unreliability UXP-004, 008, 022, 024; D-10		Skype will make me look bad UXP-022, 024	
			It's hard to prepare for a successful Skype meeting UXP-004, 006, 022, 024; D-14			
			I need a backup plan for mobile/remote attendees UXP-005, 009, 013, 016			
			Hard to remember & book regional rooms UXP-016	Not all partners can use Skype for Business UXP-004, 005, 008, 009, 010, 015		
			Can't book directly on their calendar UXP-017		Recurring meeting logistics are hard Service feedback	
			AV requests are complicated and unchangeable UXP-024			
			Time zones are a struggle UXP-005, 017			

Experience insights: Joining a meeting

Goal	Host in-person	Join in-person	Join from another BMGF or subsidiary office	Join from offsite (out of network)	Join on a mobile device
 Positive	One-touch join gets us connected immediately. UXP-013, 014, 016, 008-M1, 008-M2			Video helps us feel connected. UXP-010, 013, 016, 020	
	Skype works pretty well for my needs in general. UXP-001, 003, 005, 020			Remote connections from my Windows PC work fine. UXP-001, 012, 019, 020	
	The AV techs are very helpful. UXP-013, 016				
	The table tents help me connect & make me look good. Service feedback				
	I know I'm in the right place thanks to the room panels. Service feedback				
 Pain points	Losing 5-30 minutes per meeting due to connection issues (all types) for both BMGF employees and external partners UXP-004, 008, 022, 024; D-01, 02				
	Had to use phone instead of in-room HW or laptop UXP-008; D-03, 11			Missing audio or video UXP-005, 008, 020; D-07, D-08	
	General frustration at repeat issues UXP-008, 013, 020, 021, 022, 024			Remote participants can't participate in creative collaboration UXP-010, 015	
	In-room hardware glitch UXP-008-M2; D-09, 10, 11, 12, 13			Participants split between multiple digital connections	Meetings don't work well if all are dial-in UXP-024



RESEARCH AND DESIGN ARE USUALLY AT THE FRONT OF A LONG PROCESS, WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON OUR WORK.



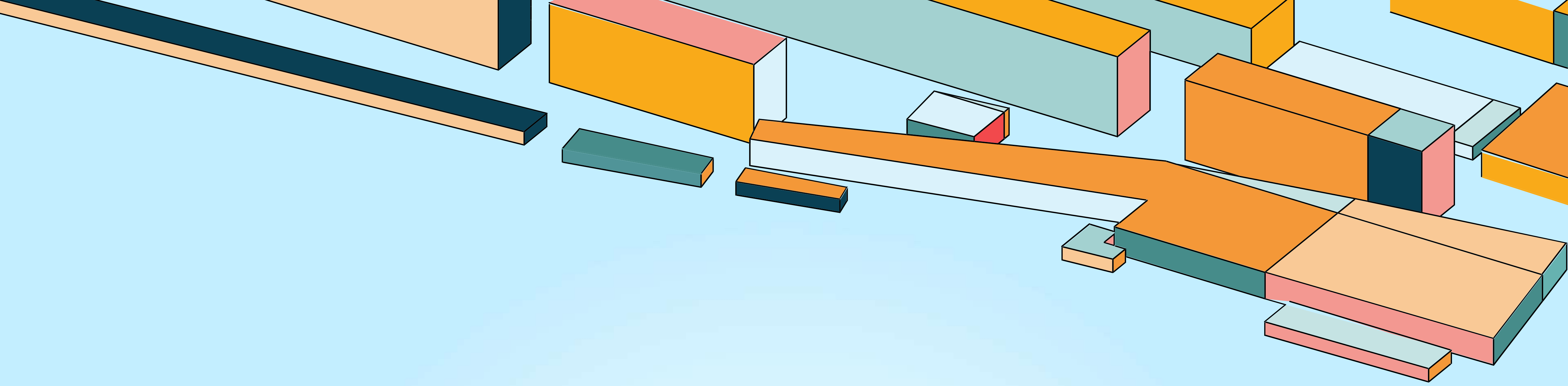




# HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU FELT THE PRESSURE TO HURRY UP AND SKIP THE DESIGN PROCESS?

Do you have the language to  
express why it's important to take  
the time up front?

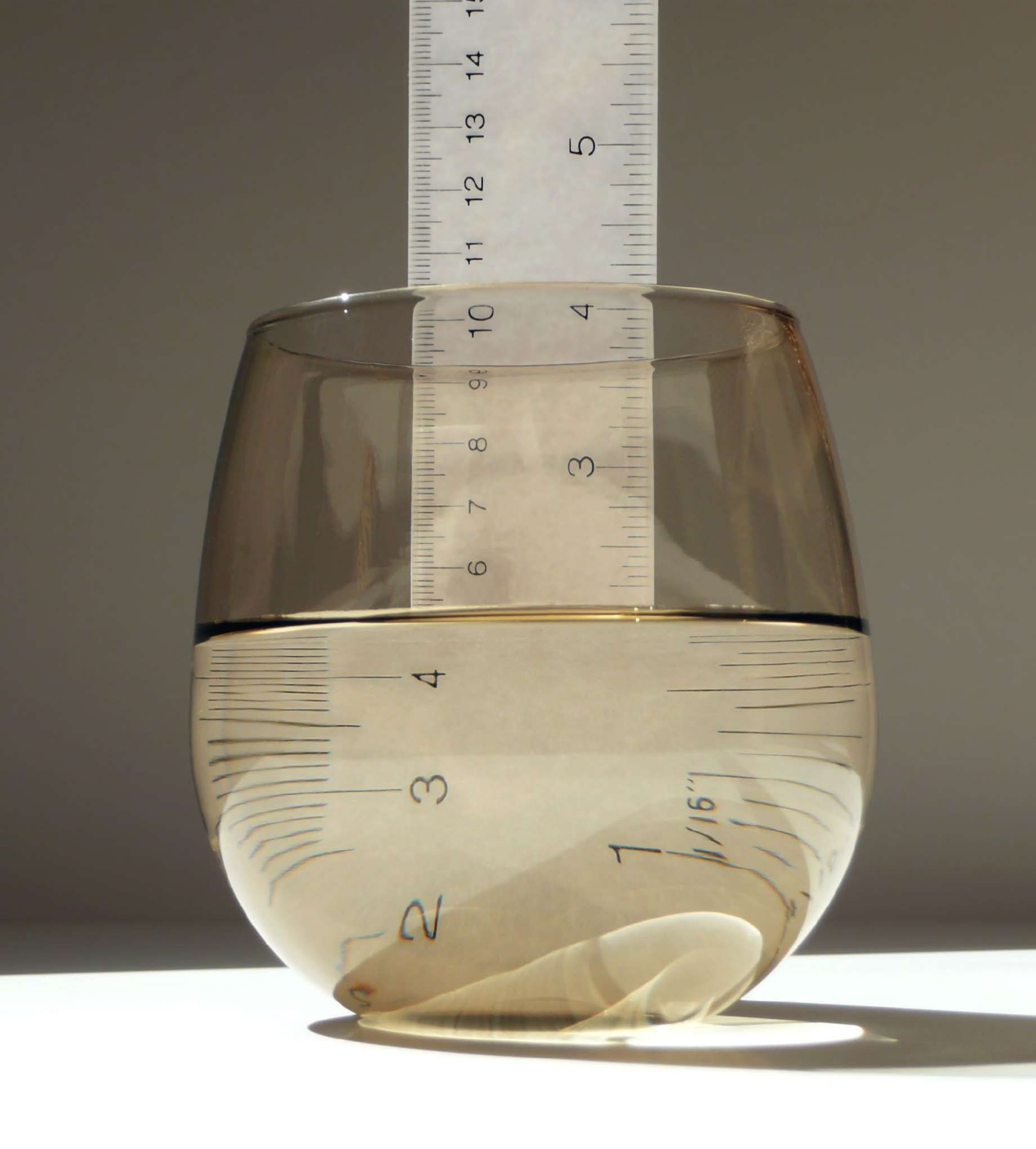




# ENTER OPTI-PESSIMISM.

MY DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR  
CATASTROPHIC IMAGINATION AT SCALE.





I COACH ALL OF MY  
DESIGN TEAMS TO ENSURE  
WE'RE **SOLVING THE  
RIGHT PROBLEMS**  
BEFORE JUMPING TO  
SOLUTION.

Opti-pessimism helps me find the  
highest value problems more  
efficiently and consistently.

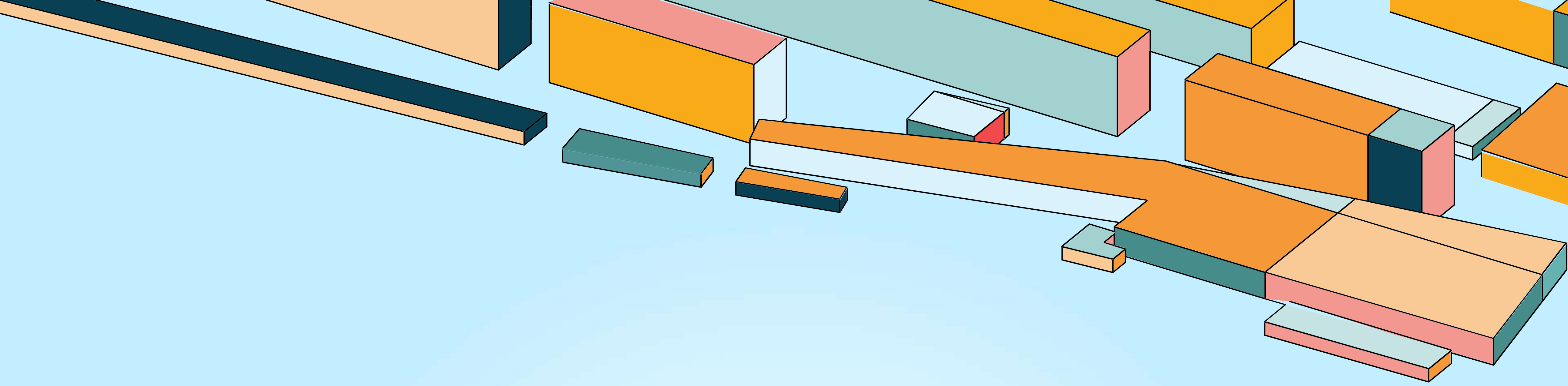


# GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF OPTI-PESSIMISM:

1. Consider (and lead with) the human context.
2. Design for the best case: big success.
3. Plan for the worst case: abuse, failure, and bad actors.
4. Be ready to adapt to the unexpected in the moment.

I've provided challenge questions for each of these prompts in talks, articles, and my book *Design Beyond Devices* if you want to engage more deeply, but we don't have time today.





# CASE STUDY:

## Gates Foundation Remote Work



# INITIAL PROBLEM STATEMENT

As Principal UX Designer for Productivity and Collaboration, I was asked to inform the BMGF IT department in deciding on the most impactful future investments for tools and services like SharePoint improvements.



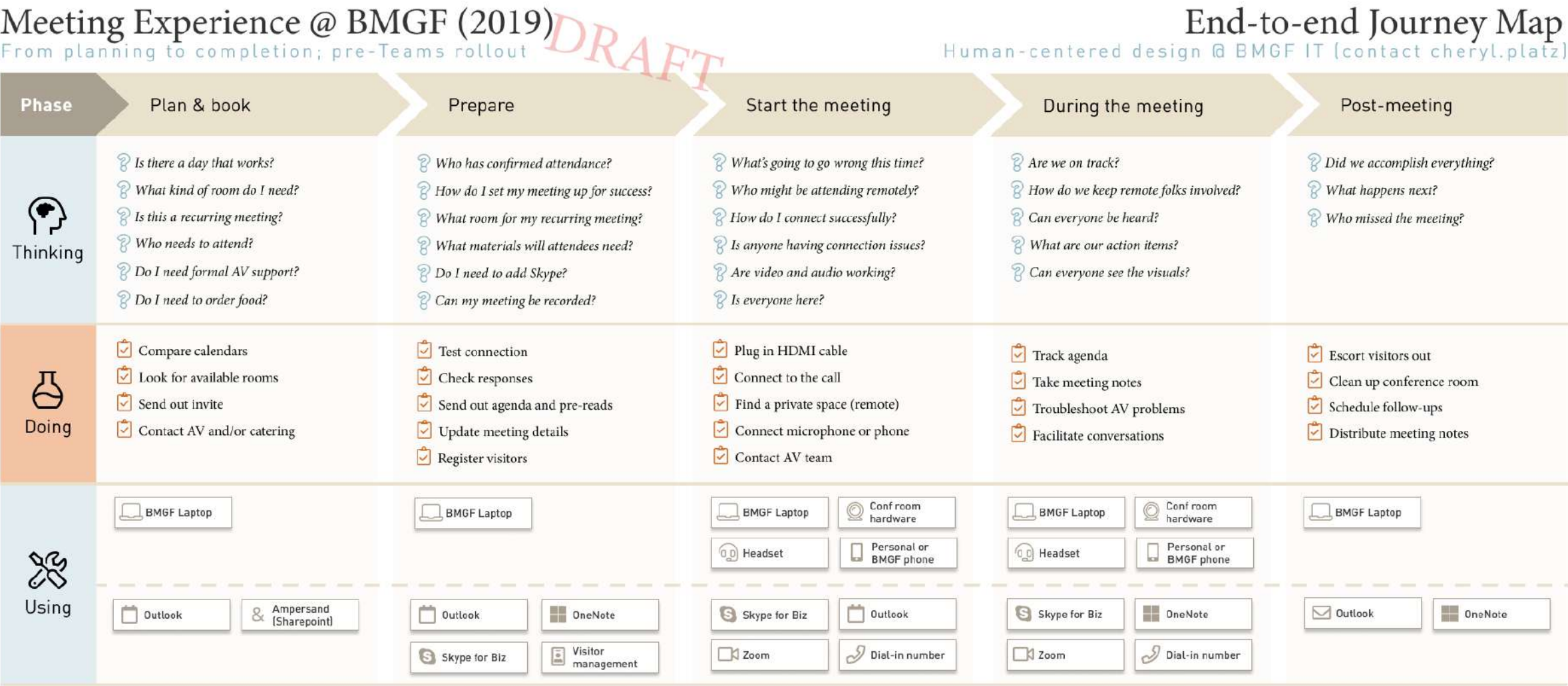


# Lead with Human Context:

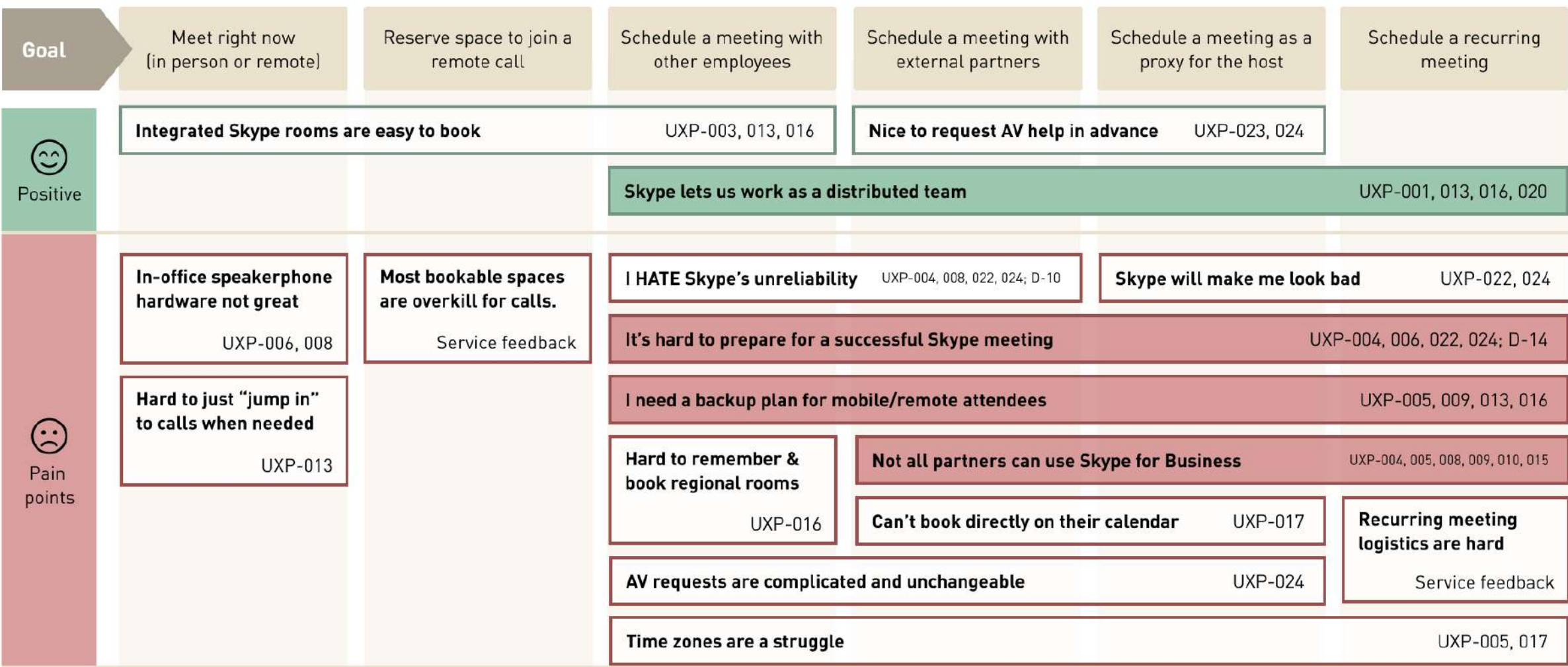
My ethnographic research findings:  
Teleconferencing was the biggest pain point, not productivity.

This was a surprise as the Foundation was on-site, but their work was so distributed that even in 2019 most meetings had an online component.

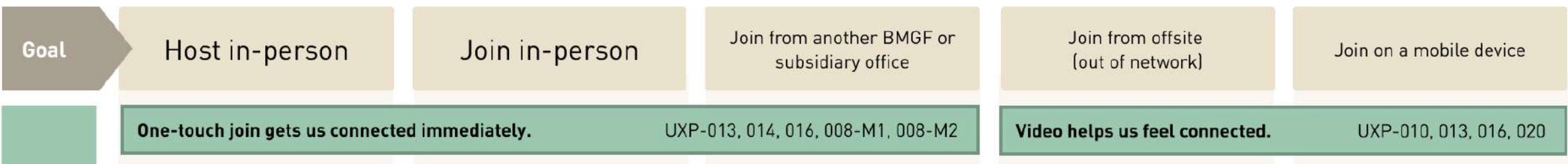
Many employees reported losing >30 minutes a day to problems with our on-premises Skype solution, which wouldn't be replaced for 2 years+.



## Experience insights: Booking a meeting



## Experience insights: Joining a meeting





CASE STUDY:

# Gates Foundation Remote Work

## Design for the Best Case:

Employees really valued one-click join in conference rooms, so our recommendation had to preserve or improve the current in-room experience.

Teams was a product that Microsoft was excited to partner with us on an early launch, and included with our subscriptions; we just needed the hardware.

## Build for the Worst Case:

Employees were in low-bandwidth areas or remote offices where our current solution didn't scale, where all calls were routed through our basement.

The previous migration didn't take assistants into account, so our migration would need thoughtful service design to prevent interruption.



■ WHAT ABOUT QUALITY MEETINGS?

None of these three groups are currently using MS Teams for meetings.  
MS Teams has not yet been integrated with our in room systems or audio conferencing capabilities.

Our current tool for meetings is Skype for Business, and **satisfaction is mixed**.

Feedback on Skype Room Systems shows **high satisfaction for one touch join**.

But when meetings include remote employees *or* grantees, **time and productivity loss is significant**.

I love though, I do... one thing I do REALLY like about how we use Skype is the functionality where when you book a room, you walk into that room and you just press a button and you're in the Skype call? That's pretty... that's pretty amazing. And I wouldn't want to lose that. That's worth whatever other frustrations come with Skype, in my mind.

Program Officer, Global Health

(Skype is) for the most part good... My only issue with it is that, when I'm using it on my phone? I'm not able to just click on the link of "join the meeting" and use Skype. I just end up dialing in manually because I know that will work. But join the link? Doesn't always work. On my laptop it's fine. On my phone it doesn't work.

Program Officer, Global Policy

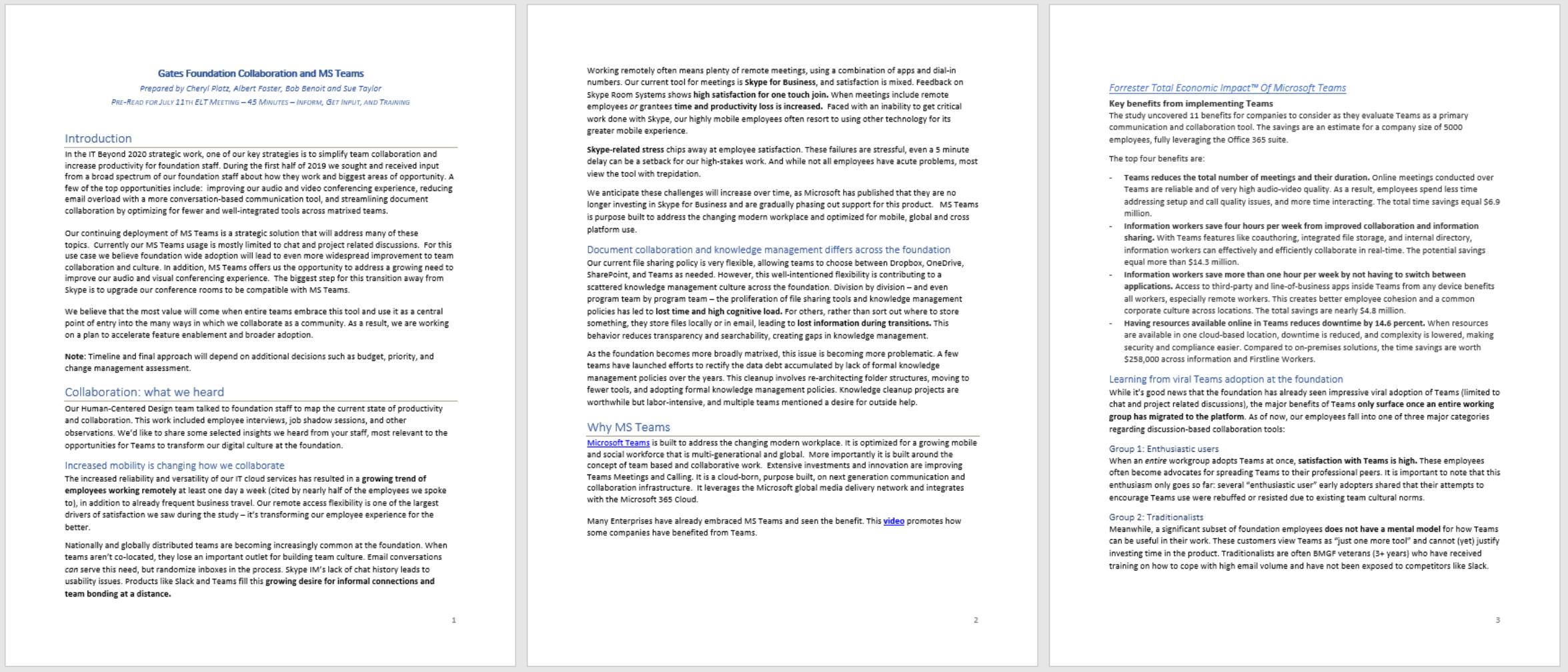
Um, I would say universally, everybody hates Skype. It really doesn't work. Not just our partners, but... it's HORRIBLE... I would say at least 50% of our meetings that we spend a good chunk of time in the beginning of the meeting trying to sort out a Skype problem.

Deputy Director, Global Health

ADAPT TO THE UNEXPECTED

I made a successful pitch to pivot my UXR work and used it to secure a \$2M budget to accelerate Skype replacement with Teams from 2022 to 2020.

We then designed a 5-phase service rollout plan to allow employees to opt in early to Teams and provide feedback before it became standard, and we usability tested the rooms which caught major hardware issues early.





BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

Teams-ready Conference Room

Getting Started Guide

Version 1.5.3 - November 2019 - US Offices

Last-minute meeting	Page 1
Share content wirelessly	Page 2
Invite this room (Teams)	Page 3
Other ways to share content	Page 4
Join from another app (Zoom, etc)	Page 5

Need help? Please call AV Support.  
x3545 or +1 (206) 709-3545, option 2.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS GUIDE FROM THE ROOM

Invite this room: Teams

1 On your laptop, open the meeting using the the **Join Microsoft Teams Meeting** link in the calendar invite.

You might need to click "Join on the Web" or "Launch now" from your browser before the meeting opens.

i Hold on! When Teams opens your meeting, **don't click Join now**. Instead, go to Step 2.

2 From the **Choose your audio & video settings** screen, click **Add a Room** in the lower right.

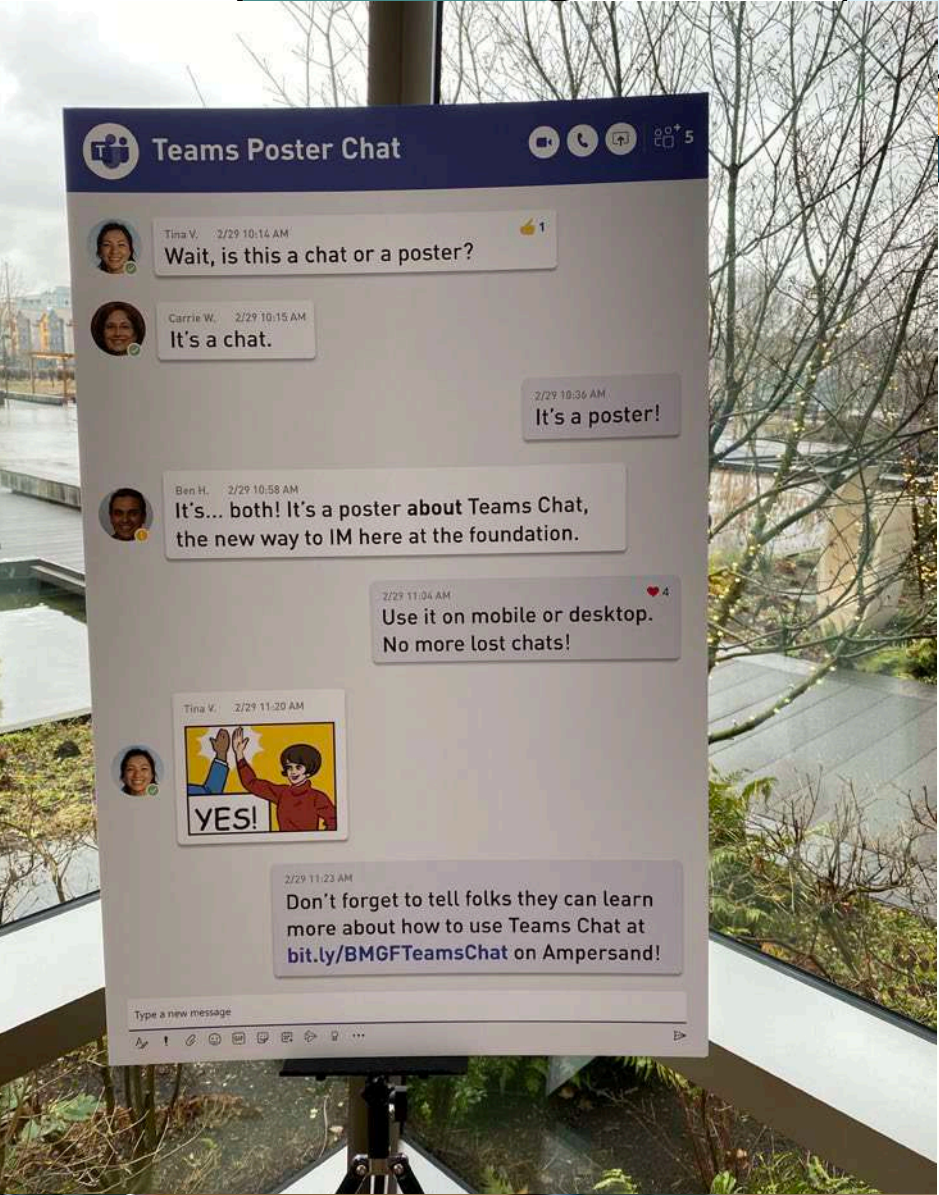
i If you see an **Add this room and join** popup for the current room, click it and skip step 3!

3 Select the **current conference room** from the list shown. Your laptop will also join the call, but muted.

i If you don't see the current room on the list, change the room list from the dropdown.

4 **Accept the call** from the in-room console.

PAGE 3



Teams Capability Matrix – v1 – BMGF IT Human Centered Design			
	CRAWL	WALK	RUN
MEETINGS	1:1 meetings	All hands meetings	Teams is the foundation standard
	Fully remote meetings	Reschedule recurring meetings with Teams when Teams-ready room is available in all regions	All regional offices are Teams-ready
	One-time meetings in Teams-ready rooms	Dial-in meetings	Skype is disabled for new meetings
IM & CHAT	1:1 quick chat (Skype for Biz replacement)	1:1 file collaboration (Office 365 documents)	Persistent group chats
	Internal 1:1 calling and screen sharing	1:1 file sharing (Non-Office documents)	Small group file collaboration (Office 365) and file sharing
TEAMS (CHANNELS)	Organization Teams and Channels (ie. IT, All, US Programs)	Workgroup/Peer Teams (K 12, Benefits, INVEST Team)	In-progress files on Teams, not SharePoint, by default
	Quarterly/monthly org updates over Teams, not email	Teams for remote document review (mobile app)	Project-specific Teams (Event planning, v-teams)
	“Water cooler” informal team communication Channel	Teams for article and topic discussion	Tab integration with other apps. OneNote, Salesforce?
		Organization adopts Teams comms and notification best practices	Teams as onboarding tool

Questions? Cheryl.platz@gatesfoundation.org

Let the message wash over you!

Segmenting our overall message into conceptual chunks lets us roll out the same content to different audiences on different timelines.

Regional audiences will receive Waves 2 & 3 in parallel.

- Wave 1: Coming soon!**  
An initial awareness campaign about the upcoming changes and the timeline of potential impacts. Room preview opportunities and Skype continuity emphasized.
- Wave 2: Try Teams meetings**  
Actively encourage our audience to try Meetings and Rooms. Provide hands-on training and reference for scheduling & room use
- Wave 3: Use Teams (when you can)**  
Where appropriate, audiences are encouraged to use Teams. Emphasize benefits of switching to drive voluntary adoption.
- Wave 4: Teams is our meeting standard**  
Targeted messaging that positions Teams as the rule, not the exception. Begin to socialize phone use in Teams, and Skype retirement timeline.
- Wave 5: Goodbye, Skype!**  
Ease the final steps in Skype's retirement. Prepare folks for removal of Skype from Outlook. Assist any late adopter groups.

September 2019

Teams-ready rooms: Change Management

4



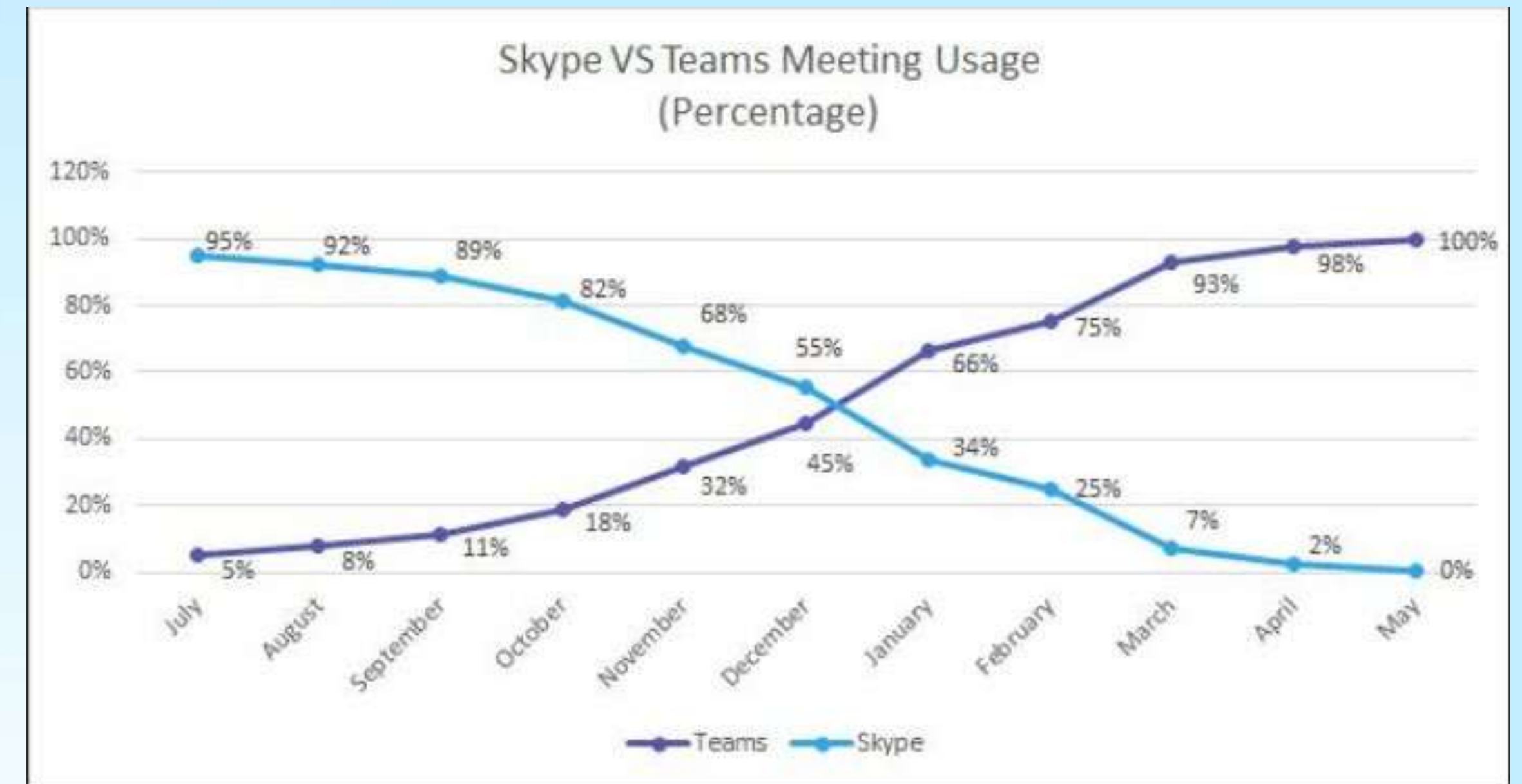
# CASE STUDY: GATES FOUNDATION REMOTE WORK

## Results and Impact

### Our Goal:

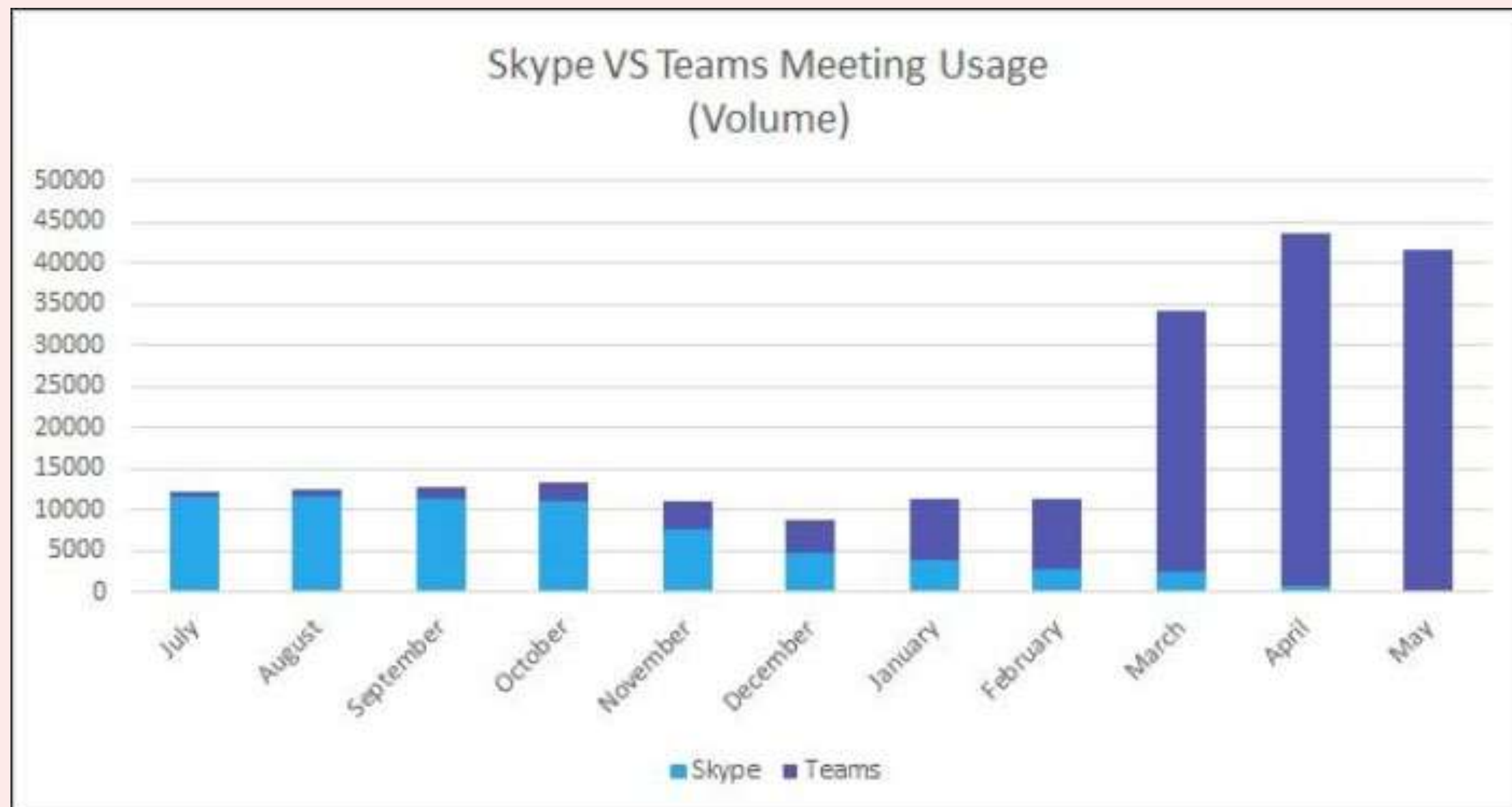
Between our rolling deployment of Teams-capable conference rooms and the Teams training and support service design, we hoped that 50% of the foundation would already be active Teams users by the time it became official in February 2020.

**We hit 75% by February 2020.**





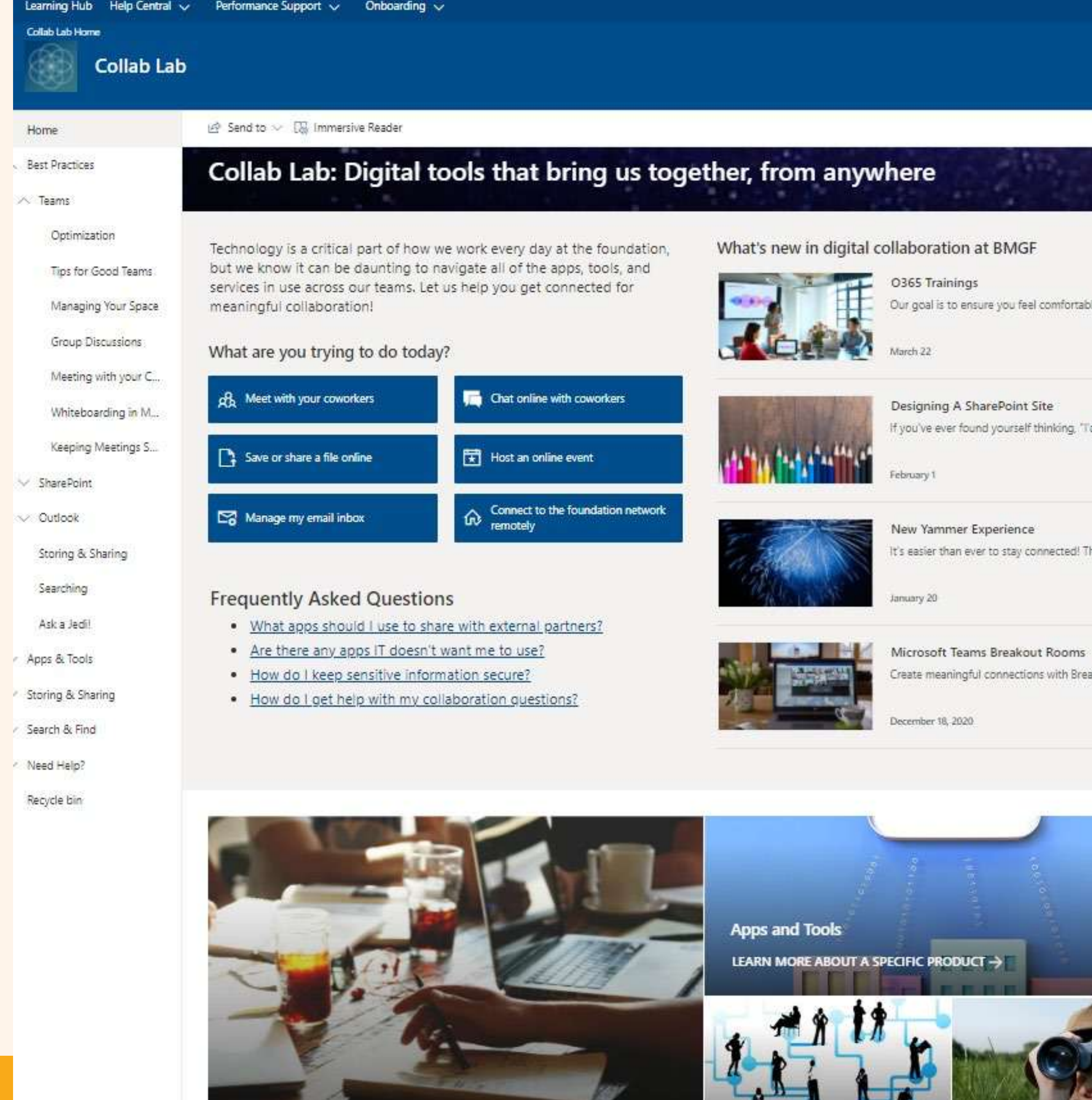
# OF COURSE, TWO WEEKS LATER, WE SHUT DOWN FOR THE PANDEMIC.



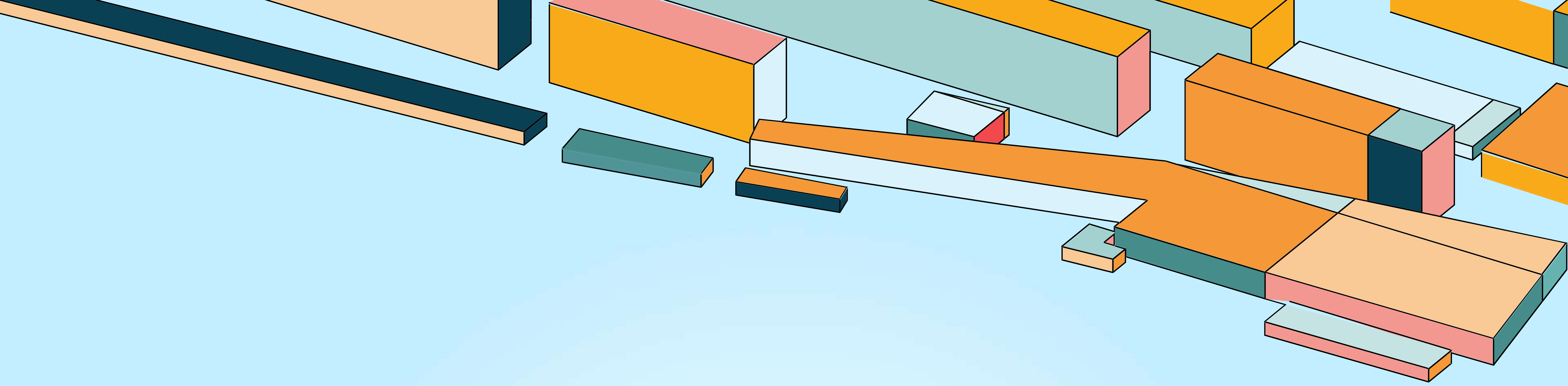
This graph shows that we were able to almost overnight push the foundation over to the new tool because we had laid strong groundwork. These calls are critical, life-or-death calls between vaccine makers, governments, and funding providers.



In retrospect it looks like I was psychic, but this was an application of opti-pessimistic design to my work that helped us ensure we were **SOLVING THE RIGHT PROBLEMS.**







# CASE STUDY:

## Riot Games + Xbox Game Pass

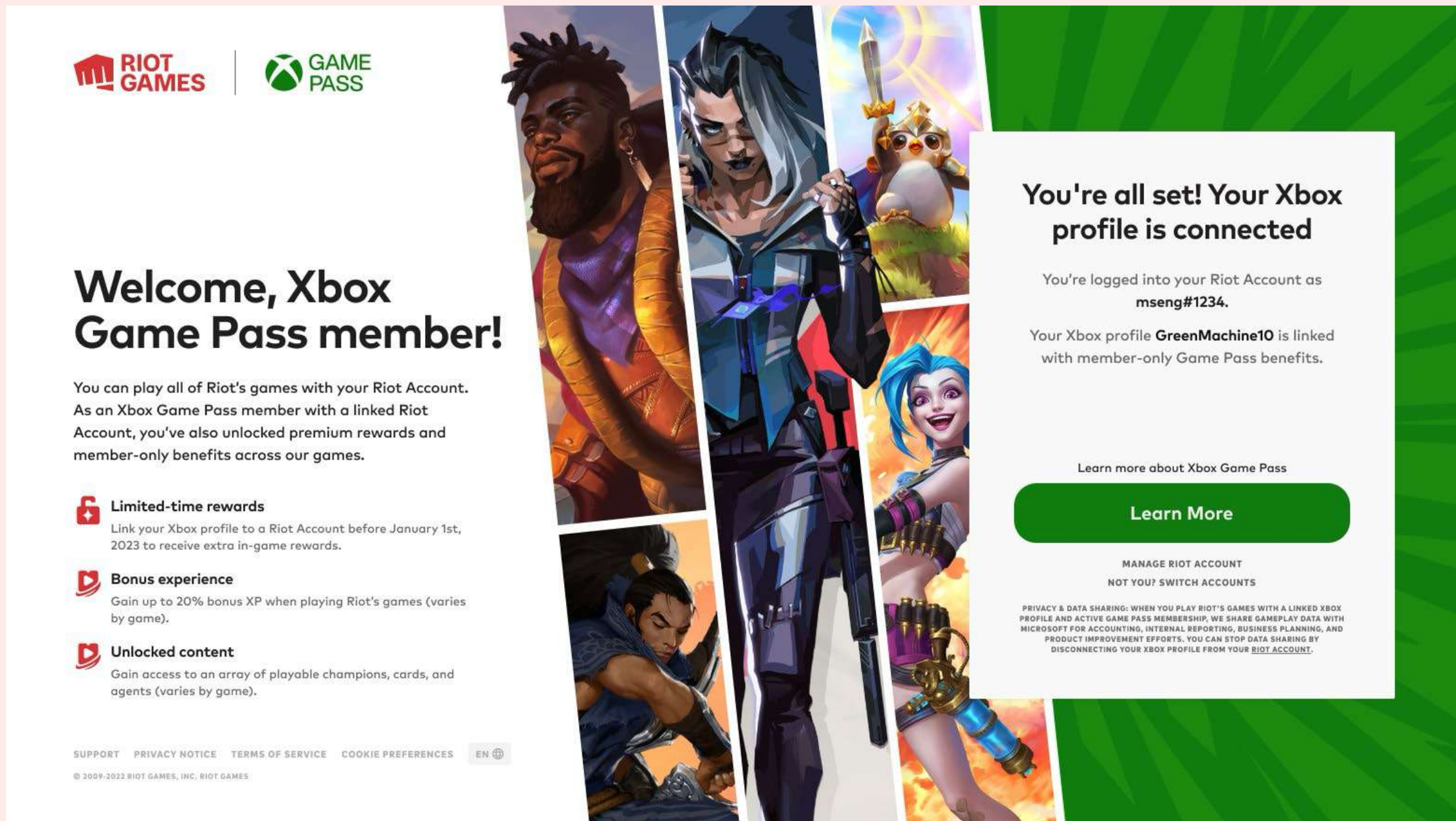


# PROBLEM STATEMENT

Drive a shared design vision and aggressive design delivery schedule across 6 teams and a 300-person working group to support the launch of Xbox Game Pass as the Riot Design Lead, while identifying key UX-related business development issues and opportunities.







# DESIGN FOR THE BEST CASE: CONTEXTUAL CONFIRMATIONS

I called out during business development that players would likely need confirmation of their subscription status to avoid confusion, as Xbox Profiles could be linked prior to obtaining a Game Pass subscription. This helped us avoid costly service tickets and frustration.



# LEAD WITH HUMAN CONTEXT

I saw that my team was going to struggle to deliver at speed, as engineers would be coding from wireframes and not high-fidelity UI comps. I also knew that Microsoft's brand standards would be high.

I advocated for changes to our design process that abstracted all unnecessary detail out of wireframes.

**Wireframing like we meant it**

In order to deliver wireframes direct to engineering - as opposed to waiting for visual design - we needed to get much clearer about the differences between the two, and what was provisional.

- We adopted purple (not in our brand story) as our wireframe color for clarity.
- Each state was clearly named, numbered, and placed in context in at least one end-to-end flow.
- Rather than full placeholder text, we included the **content ID** plus, if room, a brief description of what the content should include. This avoided placeholder text making it to launch as developers went to the Repository for the latest text.

**Flow State**      **Wireframe**      **Content**

Web: Intake (Unauthenticated, Unlinked)

WEB\_SCREEN\_INTAKE\_NORTH\_LAYOUT

GAMEPASS\_INTAKE\_HE ADER WRAPS TWO TO THREE LINES

GAMEPASS\_INTAKE\_CTA\_ADER

RIOT GAMES      GAME PASS

BEHIND #THEUNLOCK: COLLABORATION AT SCALE

RIOT GAMES



# BUILD FOR THE WORST CASE and ADAPT IN THE MOMENT: LOCALIZATION IDS

My changes to our localization process included the creation of a centralized localization table (not standard on the platform team.) All strings had a unique loc ID, and wireframes called them out instead of lorem ipsum so engineers knew where to reuse text. This meant that if last minute changes came through, we'd have less work.

Player Platform UX Content: Game Pass

DataAutomationsInterfaces

Content ChunksAdd or import

ViewsPPUX XGBP Content RepositoryHide fieldsFilterGroupSortColorShare view

Find a view

PPUX XGBP Content RepositoryAdd New ContentContent Card ViewContent Request

Create a viewGridFormCalendarGalleryKanbanTimelineGanttNew section

Create an interfaceRecord reviewRecord summary

Content ID	English	Status	Integration	Tags
1	GAMEPASS_PROGRAM_SHORT	Approved	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand Publishing
2	GAMEPASS_BENEFIT_CONTENT_HEADER	Approved	Visual Design	Publishing Header
3	GAMEPASS_BENEFIT_CONTENT_BODY	Approved	Visual Design	Publishing
4	GAMEPASS_JOIN_SHORT_BODY	Approved	Visual Design	Publishing Microsoft Brand
5	GAMEPASS_JOIN_LONG_HEADER	Approved	Visual Design	Microsoft Brand Publishing Header
6	GAMEPASS_JOIN_LONG_BODY	Approved	Visual Design	Microsoft Brand Publishing
7	GAMEPASS_BENEFIT_XP_HEADER	Approved	Visual Design	Publishing Header
8	GAMEPASS_BENEFIT_XP_BODY	Approved	Visual Design	Publishing
9	GAMEPASS_ACTION_SIGNIN	Approved	Visual Design	Microsoft Brand Button Action/Link
10	GAMEPASS_ACTION_LINK	Approved	Visual Design	Button Microsoft Brand Action/Link
11	GAMEPASS_DATASHARE_HEADER	Pending approval	Visual Design	Legal Header
12	GAMEPASS_DATASHARE_CTA_BODY	Pending approval	Visual Design	Legal
13	GAMEPASS_DATASHARE_CONFIRM_MEMBER	Pending approval	Visual Design	Legal
14	GAMEPASS_DATASHARE_CONFIRM_NONMEMBER	Pending approval	Visual Design	Legal
15	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_HEADER	Complete	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand Header
16	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_BODY	Complete	Wireframe	Publishing Microsoft Brand
17	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_LEARNMORE_LINK	Complete	Wireframe	Publishing Microsoft Brand
18	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_CTA_HEADER	Complete	Wireframe	Header
19	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_CTA_BODY	Complete	Wireframe	Publishing Microsoft Brand
20	GAMEPASS_INTAKE_CTA_CURRENTACCOUNT	Complete	Wireframe	Dynamic Publishing
21	GAMEPASS_AUTHENTICATED_LINK_ACTION_MICROCOPY	Complete	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand Publishing
22	GAMEPASS_NONMEMBER_LINK_LABEL	Complete	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand
23	GAMEPASS_EXTERNAL_MSFT_LEARNMORE	Complete	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand Action/Link
24	LINK_ACCOUNTMGMT	Complete	Wireframe	Action/Link
25	GAMEPASS_RC_LANDING_HEADER	Complete	Wireframe	Microsoft Brand Publishing



**Success! Your account is  
now connected to your  
Xbox profile and Game  
Pass membership**



**Bonus experience**

Gain up to 20% bonus XP when playing  
Riot's games (varies by game).



**Unlocked content**

Gain access to an array of playable  
champions, cards, and agents (varies by  
game).

PRIVACY & DATA SHARING: WHEN YOU PLAY RIOT'S GAMES WITH A  
LINKED XBOX PROFILE AND ACTIVE GAME PASS MEMBERSHIP, WE SHARE  
GAMEPLAY DATA WITH MICROSOFT FOR ACCOUNTING, INTERNAL  
REPORTING, BUSINESS PLANNING, AND PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT  
EFFORTS. YOU CAN STOP DATA SHARING BY DISCONNECTING YOUR XBOX  
PROFILE FROM YOUR [RIOT ACCOUNT](#).

**Continue**

## BUILD FOR THE WORST CASE and ADAPT IN THE MOMENT: LOCALIZATION IDS

Sure enough, a major change to the data protection agreement between the two companies came in less than 2 weeks before launch. If we had allowed for more than the 3 planned copies of these legal strings, we would not have had time to complete re-translations and QA without delaying our ship date.



ONCE AGAIN, IT  
LOOKED LIKE FUTURE  
SIGHT, BUT IT WAS  
OPTI-PESSIMISTIC  
DESIGN THINKING  
THAT KEPT OUR SHIP  
SCHEDULE INTACT.



Xbox Game Pass

## The Unlock is Here: Riot Games and Benefits Come to Game Pass

Tori Fica, Games Writer,  
Riot  
Published  
December 12, 2022

Calling all top fraggers, ARAM mains, master tacticians, and meta breakers! Riot's biggest PC and mobile games are now available to Game Pass members, along with a Malphite-sized heap of additional unlocked benefits and rewards.

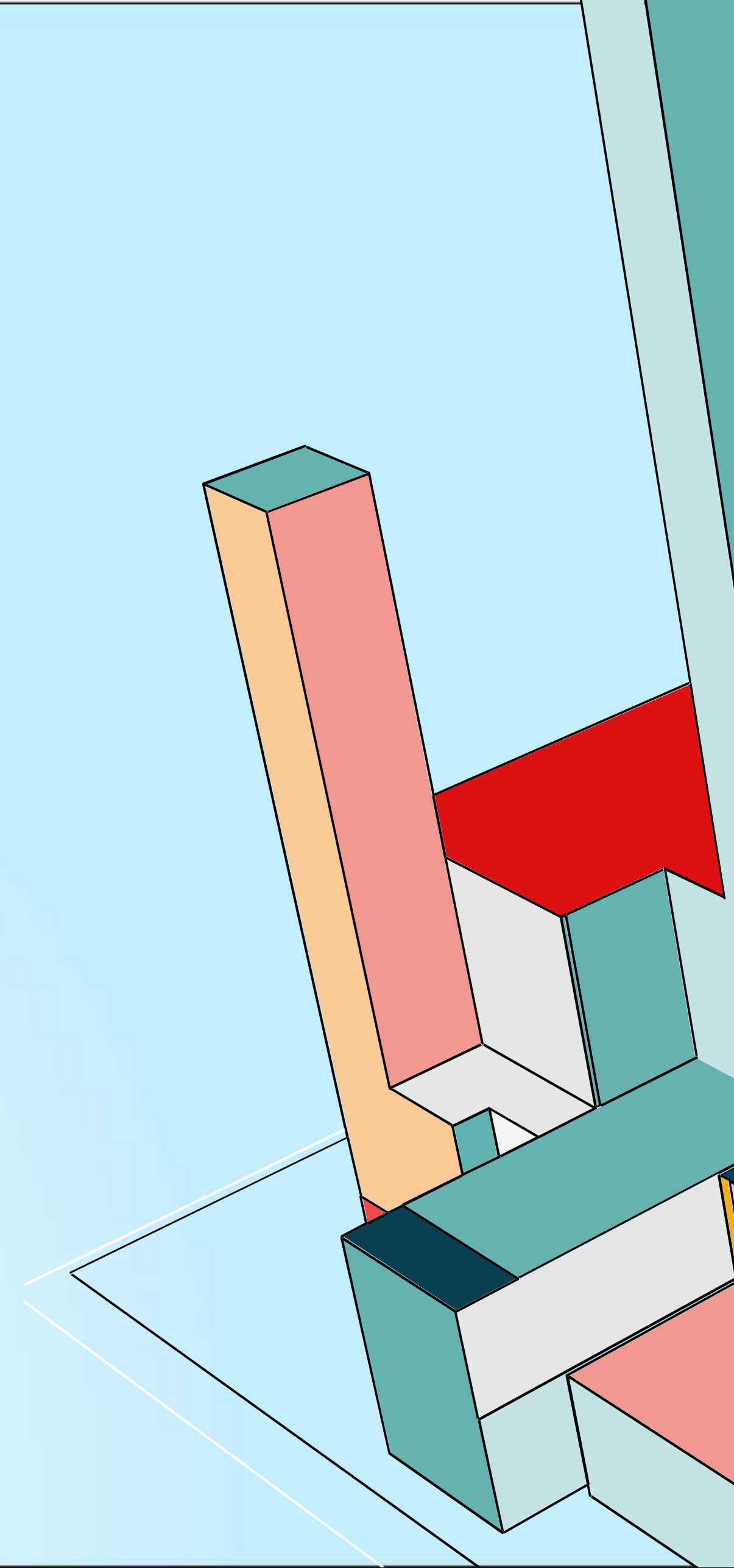
Here's what just got unlocked, plus details on regional availability and some limited-time bonuses for



# YOU CAN SEE THE FUTURE, TOO. **Just get opti-pessimistic.**

- You don't have to get your coworkers to adopt these principles.
- You don't have to apply all of them at once.
- Even applying some is better than applying none.
- Opti-pessimism is often an ongoing process.

Why wouldn't you plan for the worst consequences of your future success? Why wouldn't you want to be able to respond quickly to the unknown in this unstable world?





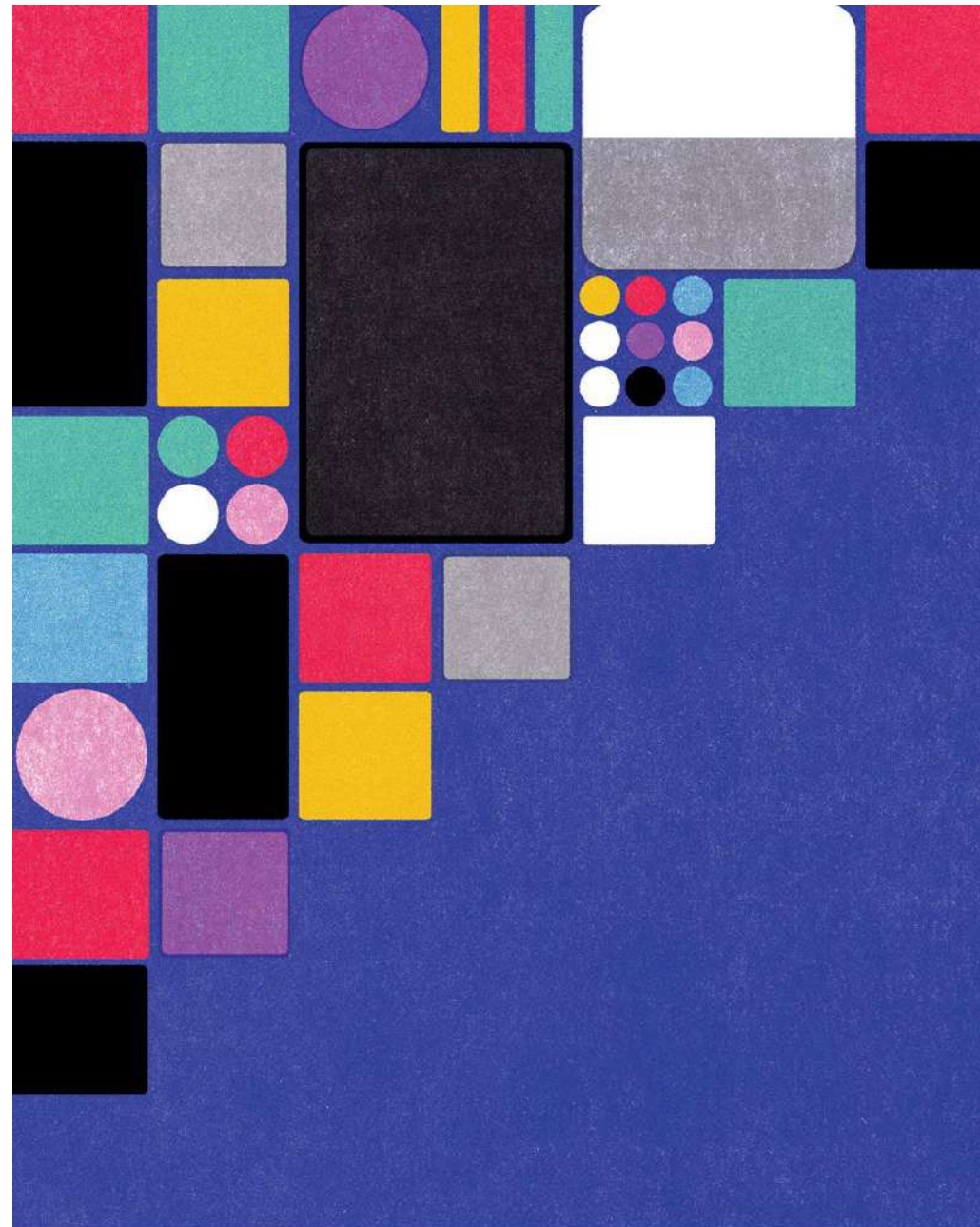
# GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF OPTI-PESSIMISM:

1. Consider (and lead with) the human context.
2. Design for the best case: big success.
3. Plan for the worst case: abuse, failure, and bad actors.
4. Be ready to adapt to the unexpected in the moment.

I've provided challenge questions for each of these prompts in talks, articles, and my book *Design Beyond Devices* if you want to engage more deeply, but we don't have time today.



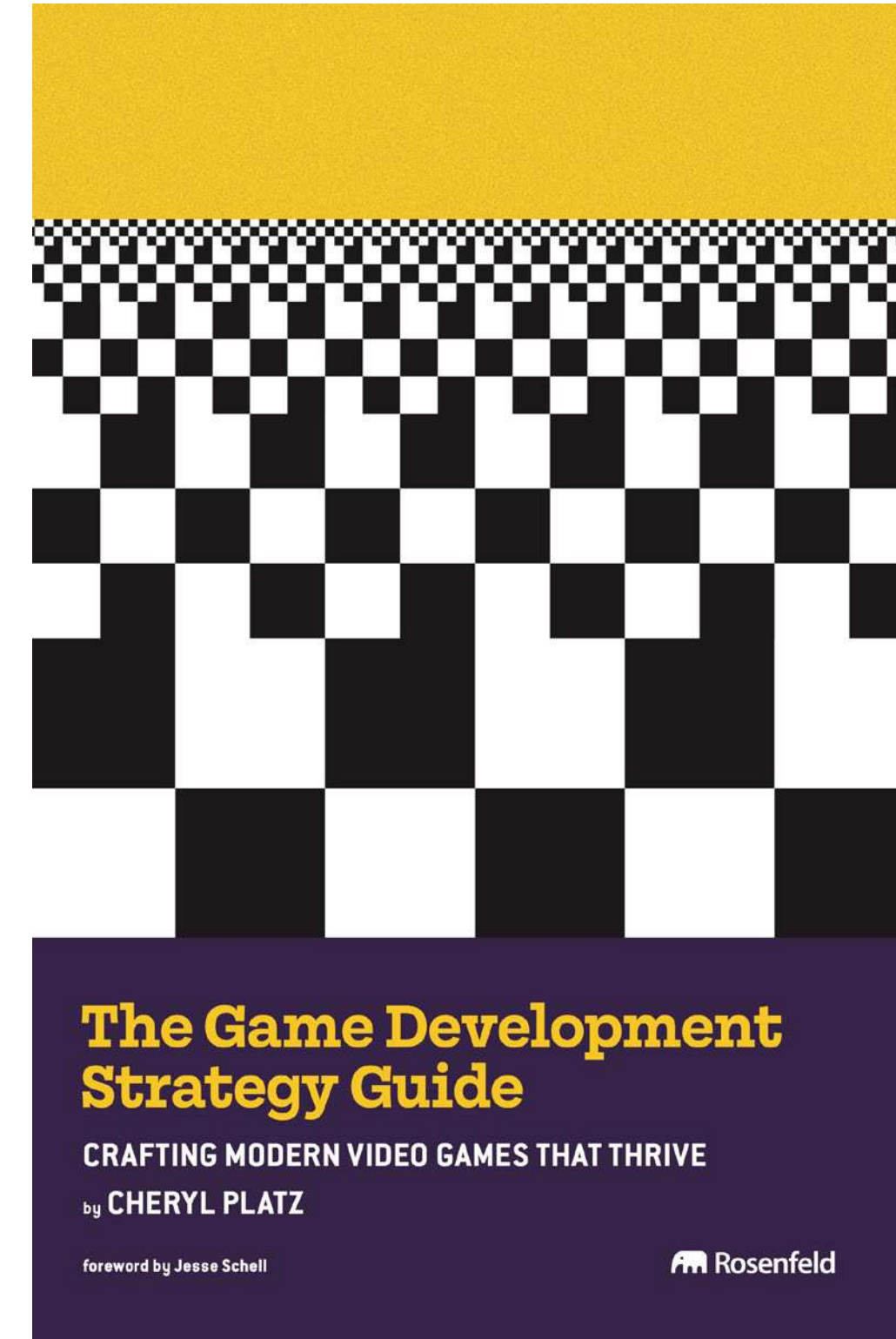
# Want to learn more?



DESIGN BEYOND DEVICES  
Creating Multimodal, Cross-Device Experiences  
by CHERYL PLATZ

Rosenfeld

Design Beyond Devices is for anyone designing or researching cross-device experiences (like web and mobile) or multimodal experiences (like extended reality) and defines opti-pessimism in detail.



## The Game Development Strategy Guide

CRAFTING MODERN VIDEO GAMES THAT THRIVE

by CHERYL PLATZ

foreword by Jesse Schell

Rosenfeld

The Game Development Strategy Guide is for anyone in the field of game development including UX designers and researchers, and covers opti-pessimism from a game development context.

Pre-order 15%  
discount ends  
tomorrow!  
Releases  
September 16, 2025



May your glass always be half full.

Cheryl Platz

Principal and Owner, Ideaplatz LLC

Author, Design Beyond Devices and The Game Development Strategy Guide

🦋 💬 @funnygodmother

🎵 @theCherylPlatz

✉ Cheryl@ideaplatz.com

💻 Ideaplatz.com

Cheryl's new book:  
gamedevelopmentstrategyguide.com

Cheryl's new podcast:  
enduringplay.com

