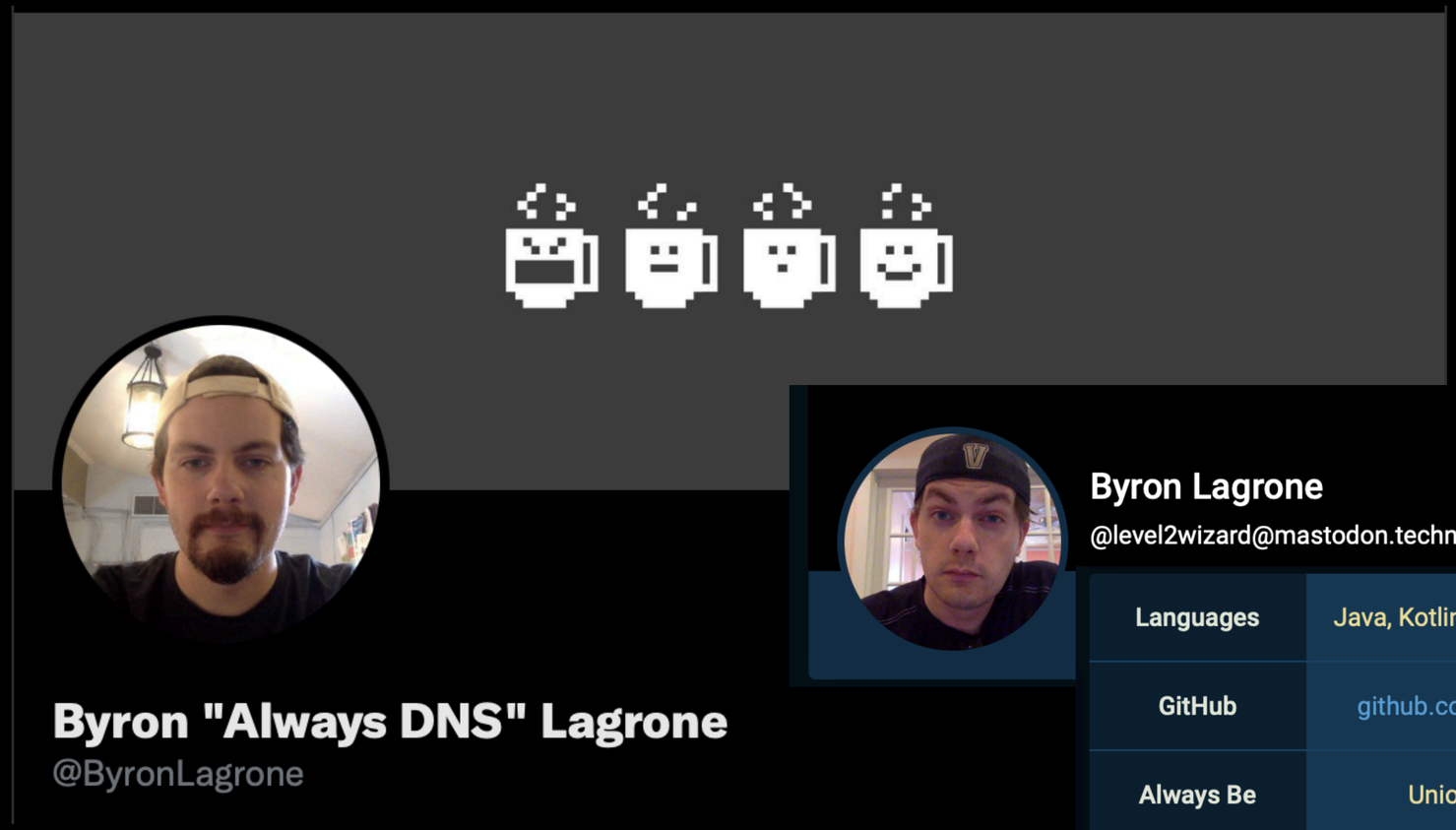
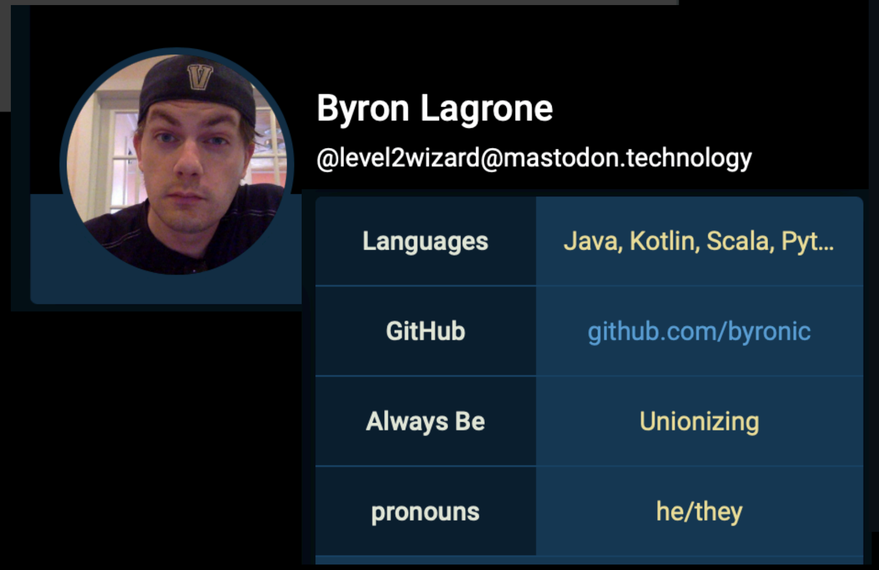
The Power of “No”

A better subtitle than the played-out Dr Strangelove one I promise

DevOps Days Birmingham 2022 - Byron Lagrone

Who am I?


Byron "Always DNS" Lagrone
@ByronLagrone


Byron Lagrone
@level2wizard@mastodon.technology
Languages
Java, Kotlin, Scala, Pyt...
GitHub
github.com/byronic
Always Be
Unionizing
pronouns
he/they

Byron Lagrone
byronic

Disclaimer Country

“These views are my own and don’t represent my employer or colleagues”

- Ada Lovelace, probably

Comprehensive list of people qualified to speak on Burnout:

[ ]

A word or twelve on heteronormativity, and being a male in tech

Neurodivergence and therapy

- I am not a lawyer.
- Even if I were a lawyer, I’m not *your* lawyer.
- This advice and your mileage might vary in real-world conditions

Batteries included*

* included batteries do not work

DISCLAIMER COUNTRY

What’s Burnout?

What happens to us when we burn out?

- The Long, Dark Tea-Time of the Soul™
- Self-doubt, self-loathing, self-discouragement!
- Tunnel vision
- Exciting new mistakes! Or, dull old mistakes
- Drained motivation
- Unhappiness
- Long hours spent at work, zero work-life balance
- Negative behavior affecting yourself and others

Sounds bad

Like it hurts, a lot.

Why does burnout happen?

A partially-applied list

- No Fire Burns Forever™
- Internal drive
- Promises we made
- “That could never happen to me. I’m [the hero / too good at my job / mentally VERY sound, thank you very much / Luke Skywalker]”

Wait a second

Those are all internal forces!

Hold on,

gentle listener.
We’ll talk about external forces next.

Why does burnout happen?

The Boss

- Can I have it?

Why does burnout happen?

The Customer

- Can *I* have it?

Why does burnout happen?

Your co-workers

- Can we have it?

Why does burnout happen?

The wider organization

The project manager
is becoming… restless

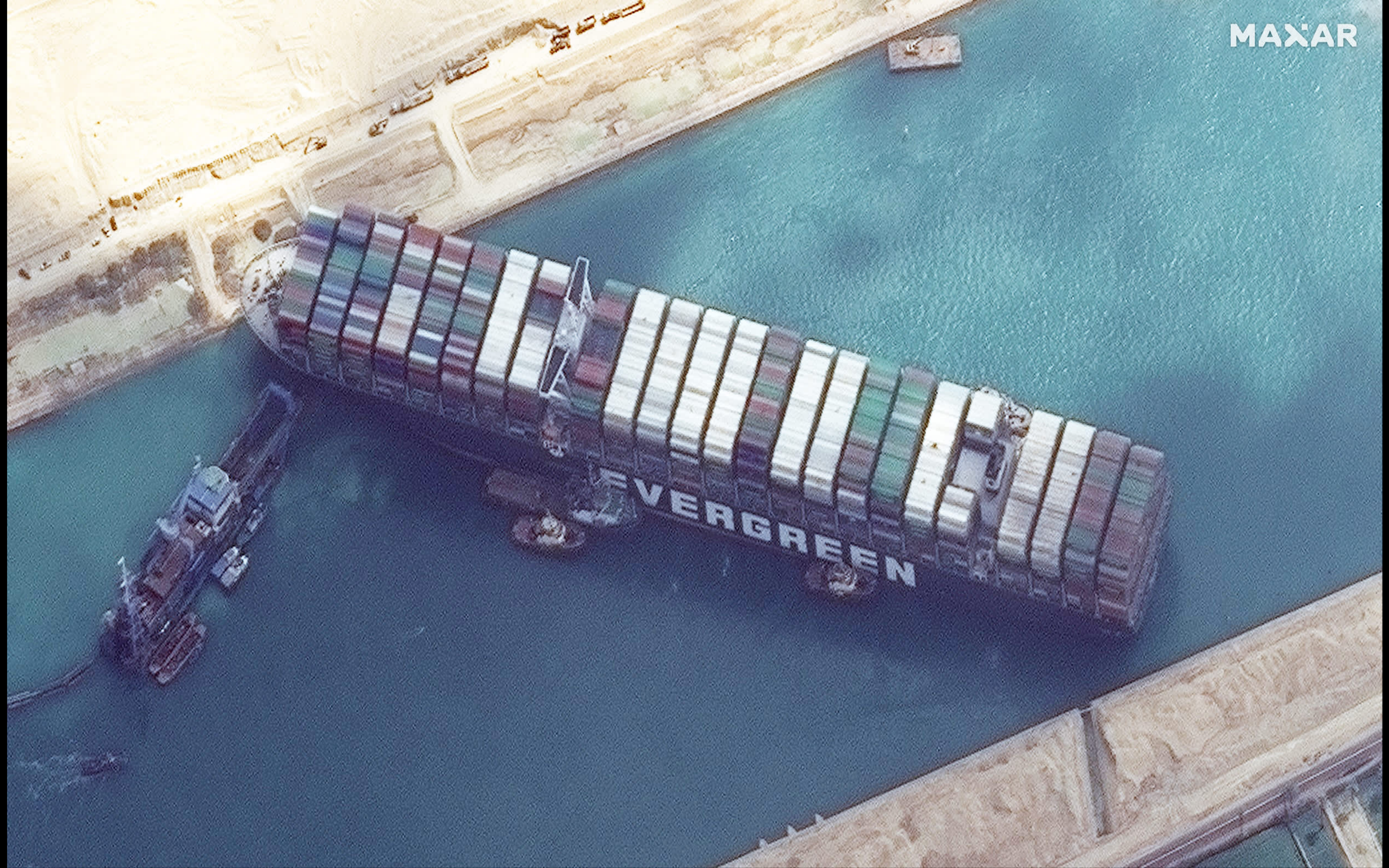
Case Study 1

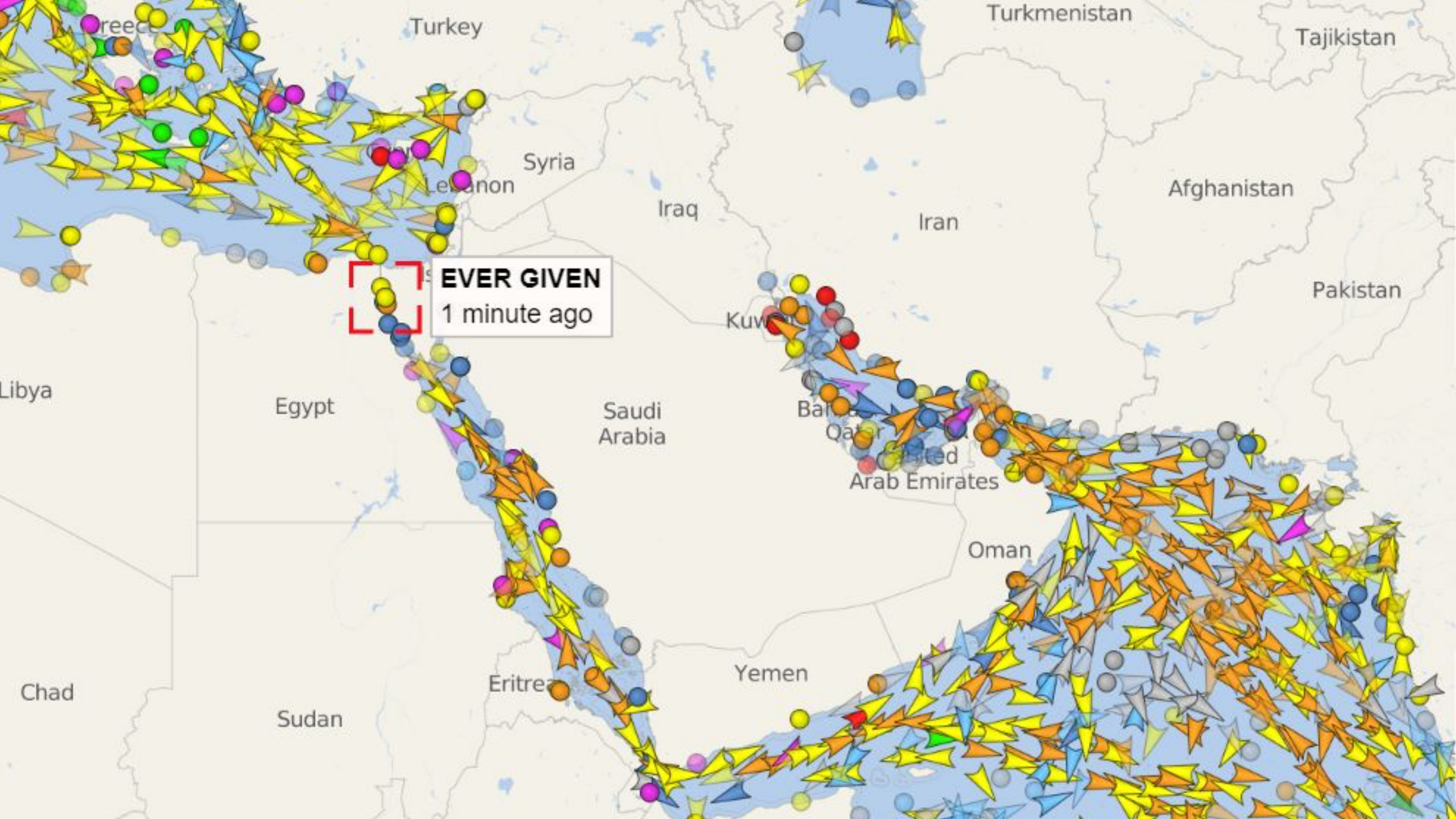
In which deliverables are a Famous Boat.

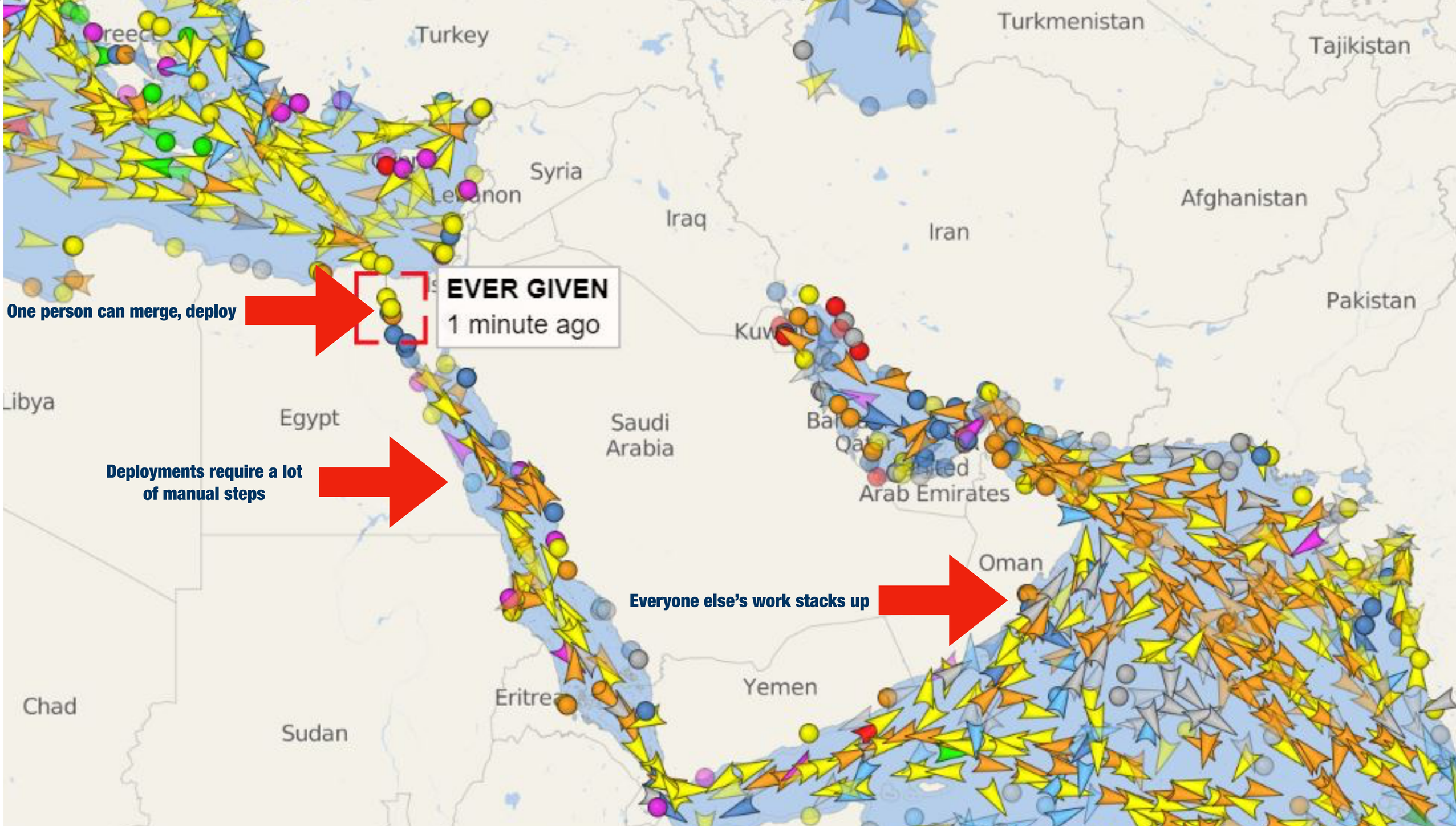
(Ok, this one is actually a merging of two similar cases.)

(Names were changed to in a show of solidarity.)

(The burnout you will see is real.)


MAXAR
EVERGREEN


Turkey
Turkmenistan
Tajikistan
Syria
Iraq
Iran
Afghanistan
Pakistan
EVER GIVEN
1 minute ago
Libya
Egypt
Saudi
Arabia
Arab Emirates
Oman
Yemen
Chad
Sudan


Turkey
Turkmenistan
Tajikistan
Syria
Iraq
Iran
Afghanistan
Pakistan
EVER GIVEN
1 minute ago
One person can merge, deploy
Libya
Egypt
Saudi Arabia
Arab Emirates
Deployments require a lot of manual steps
Oman
Everyone else's work stacks up
Yemen
Chad
Sudan

Zero Noes

Oh noes!

(exactly)

The Authentic No
Seen here in its natural habitat

Is “No" right for me?

- Integrity
- Authenticity
- Independent verification (did you *really* not deliver the thing?)
- Drawing a boundary
- Withstanding the outcry

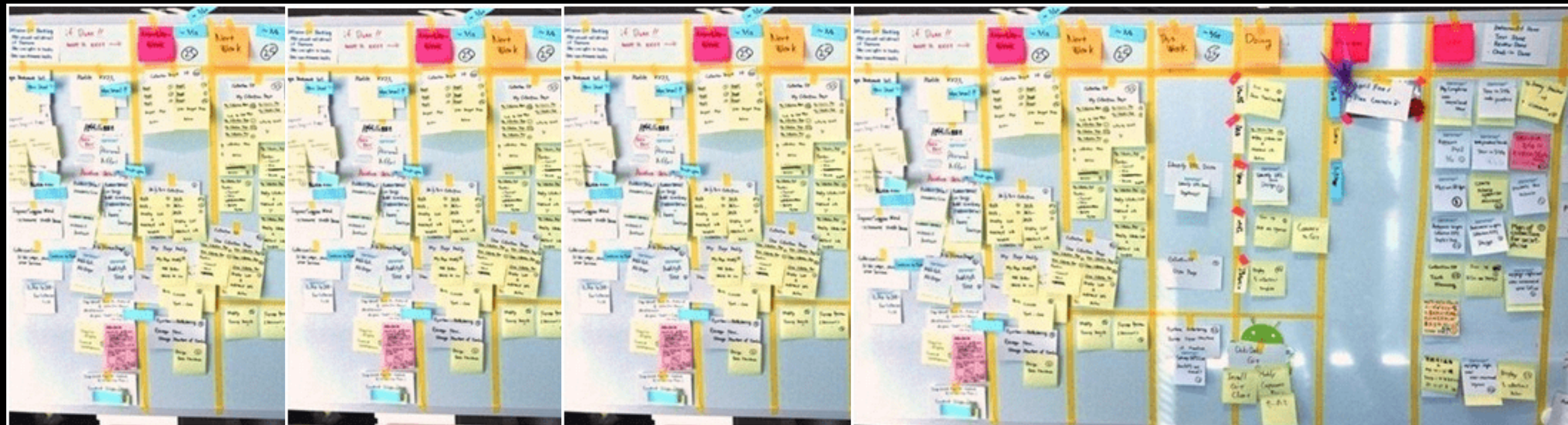
Case Study 2

All work accepted, everything is fine, nothing is ruined!

THIS IS FINE.

The “All Work Is Accepted” study

- Toxic positivity
- All-night heroics
- Overtime, crunch
- Inability to manage people, processes, throughput



Vacations

Doesn’t time off magically solve this problem?

No.

Wow

This is depressing

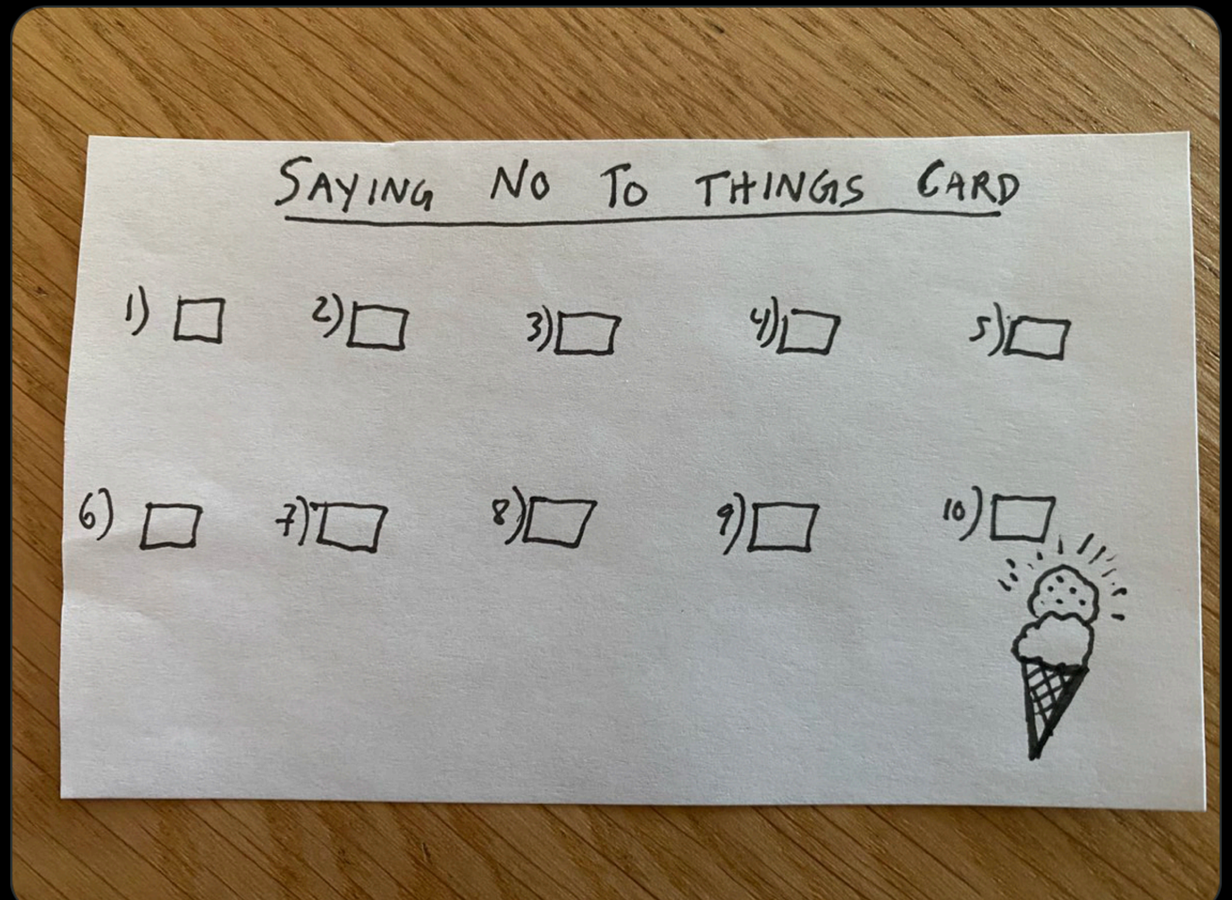
Strategies

Ideas to help enable your authentic No

Leah Pierson
@leah_pierson

Some of my friends and I overcommit to things, so we made "Saying No to Things" punch cards. If you say no to 10 things, your friends have to buy you an ice cream.

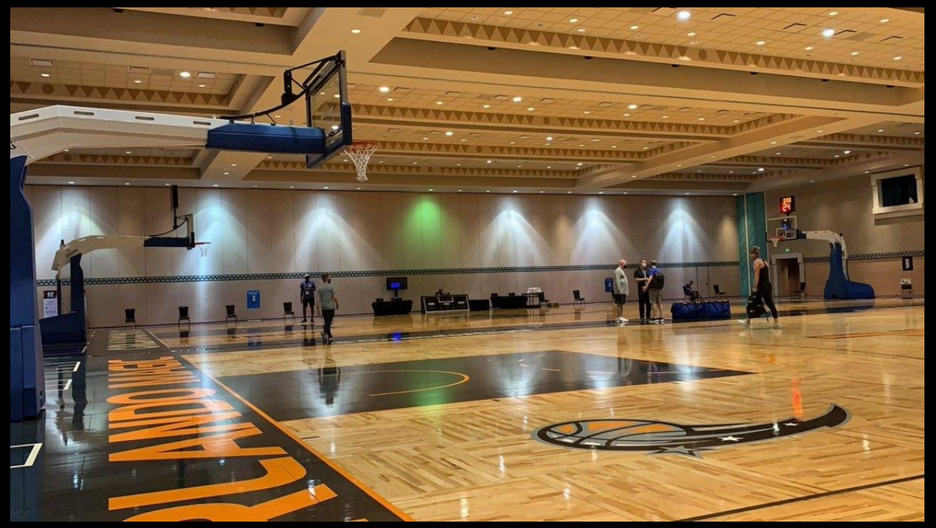
In a pilot study, we found participants both said no to more things and got more free ice cream.



Control/Influence circle

Picture goes here

Kinetic work



In which the work is the same, but the space is altered.

Kinetic Work

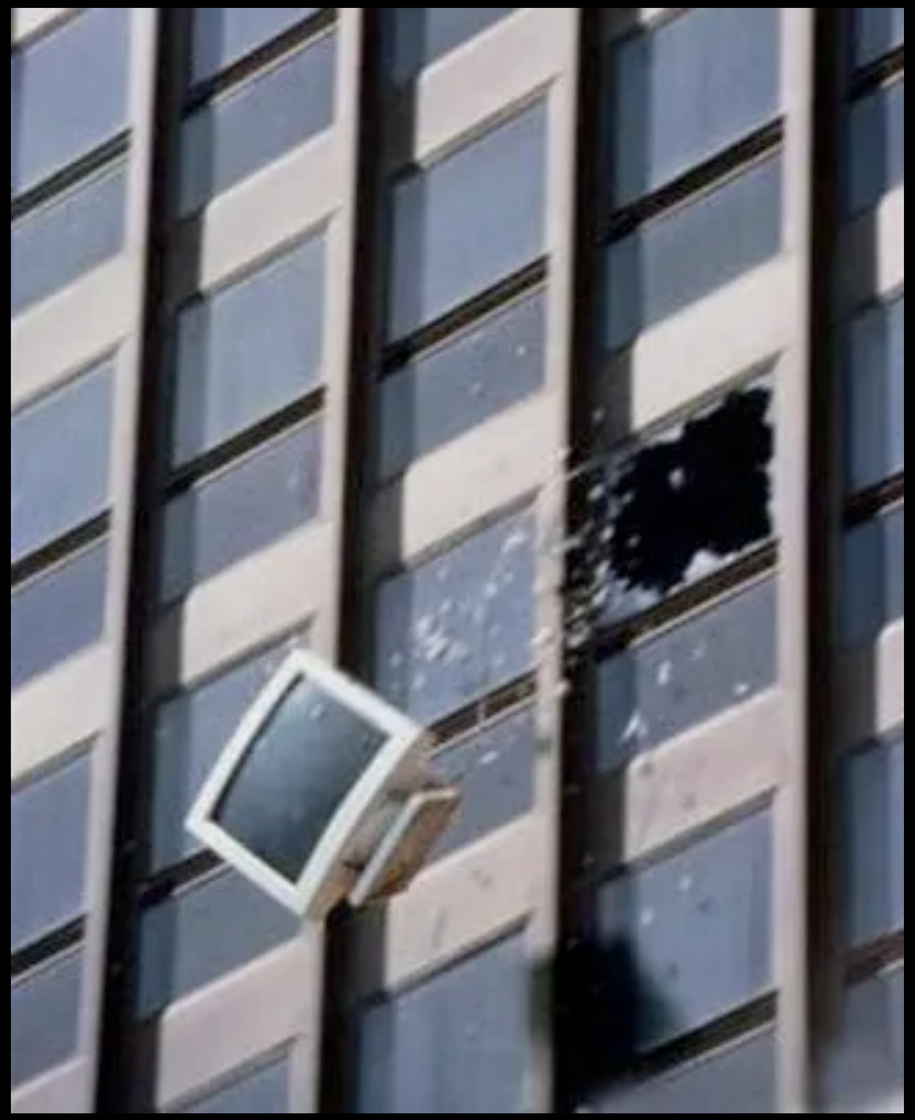
Considerations

- Pacing, movement, kinetics
- *Why* does the setting of our work matter?
  - Spoiler: It kind of doesn’t
  - The Office Effect
  - The putting-on-of-clothes fee, and why you should have one
- Do you have freedom of movement?

Kinetic Work

Working from home

- Throwing the computer out the window and working from where it lands
- Happy places? Sleep zones? Book nooks? Nerd corners?
  - Don’t work there.
- Co-working locations, considerations (you should certainly considerate)



Finding your voice

- Vocalizing your limitations
- The limitation-as-cudgel problem
- Accepting others' limitations
- Therapy!
  - Therapy therapy therapy
  - Therapy.

Microactions

Nano- and pico-actions to come in future updates

Microactions

The bad kind

- Hustle
- Grind
- Cryptocurrencies
- Self-flagellating
- Turning your self-flagellation into a cryptocurrency
- Turning your *friends* into cryptocurrency

Microactions

The good kind, that work

- Sleep
- Sustenance
- Exercise
- Space

Journaling!

Please hold your boo’s for the end

await boos( )

Seriously,

It’s worth journaling to keep track of your No’s
if nothing else

What to remember

- You’re worth it
- Knowing yourself is critical
- *Being* yourself is just as critical!
- /* many languages express this as a constant; consult your documentation */ BURNOUT = universally_bad;

Keep it going.

See me, @ me, let’s talk!

Here at the conference, on Twitter @ByronLagrone,
or at this presentation’s git repository:
https://github.com/byronic/devops-days-2022