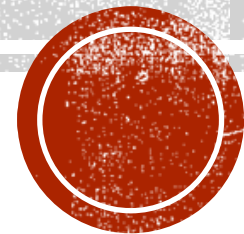# INFO SESSION REMOTE WORKING

Josip Saban, Erste Group IT

Erste Campus, Vienna

06.08.2019

ABOUT ME

- Masters degree in 2004, Computer Science, University of Zagreb

- Cotrugli MBA in 2012 in Zagreb

- Professional certificates include PMP, CompTIA Project+, ITIL, PRINCE2, …

- Microsoft Certified Trainer for SQL Server, Project Server and Biztalk

- In 15 years of professional career I was …
  - …developer and analyst
  - …internal and external consultant
  - …corporate team lead and manager, owner of two startups (both sold for profit)
  - …coach and advisor in multiple startup projects

- I also …
  - …gave more than 50 conference lectures on technological and managerial topics
  - …held internal and external educations in project management and BI topics

- But why am I competent to discuss this topic?

ABOUT ME - REMOTE

- Started as one of pioneers in Toptal community in Croatia
  - In past working as remote DBA and BI expert, now acting as speaker and remote team mentor
- Part of startup community in Croatia
  - Preparing teams for initial public presentations, pitches to possible investors
- Won local and regional prizes, as mentor, for best startup business plans/case studies
- HUGE fan of remote work, or more correct – "beach and mojito work"

WHAT IS THIS LECTURE NOT ABOUT

- Remote working („home office") requires mindset change and change to „how we work"…in a more „agile" way
  - It changes manager role from supervisory to people management, where work is more visible and value based
  - Remote work promotes value over "going to meetings" and doing administration
    - This is also at the core of every agile methodology
    - Actually, most of today's topic is mentioned in agile methodology and software engineering science

- This lecture is not trying to tell you…
  - …that we can work remotelly more than legal and CULTURE barriers allow us to work
  - …that remote work will replace on-site work…at least not „tomorrow"…
  - …that remote work is for everybody
  - …that each company, project, manager, team or individual is ready for remote work
  - …that it doesn't require company and mindset changes

AGENDA

- Introduction - what is remote working and what is not, why are we talking about it (10 minutes)
- How to build culture of remote working, what are people characteristics of such teams (key message – it is not for everyone) (5-10 minutes)
- How to evaluate people in remote working environment (5 minutes)
- How remote office looks like and how to find optimal work environment (10 minutes)
- How to avoid burnout and distractions, and how can extroverts work remotely (10 minutes)
- Tools of the trade (software and other stuff we need) (10 minutes)
- Closing, Q&A (10 minutes)

REMOTE WORKING INTRO

REMOTE WORKING INTRO

- 100% remote companies
  - Automattic, Zapier, Buffer, GitLab…
  - https://weworkremotely.com/top-remote-companies

- Not possible in traditional European corporations, but some aspects can be used
  - Distributed teams are normal way of producing value, not "exotic exercise"

- Few misconceptions
  - Remote work "is not" a free day, but it is a relaxed day
    - It is a day to work, but without pressure of dress code, "politically correct" behavior (yes, you can work from bed and use bad language ☺), looking over your shoulder who is looking at your screen, gossiping … but it is a work day
  - It should not be considered a "benefit", it is a different way of working
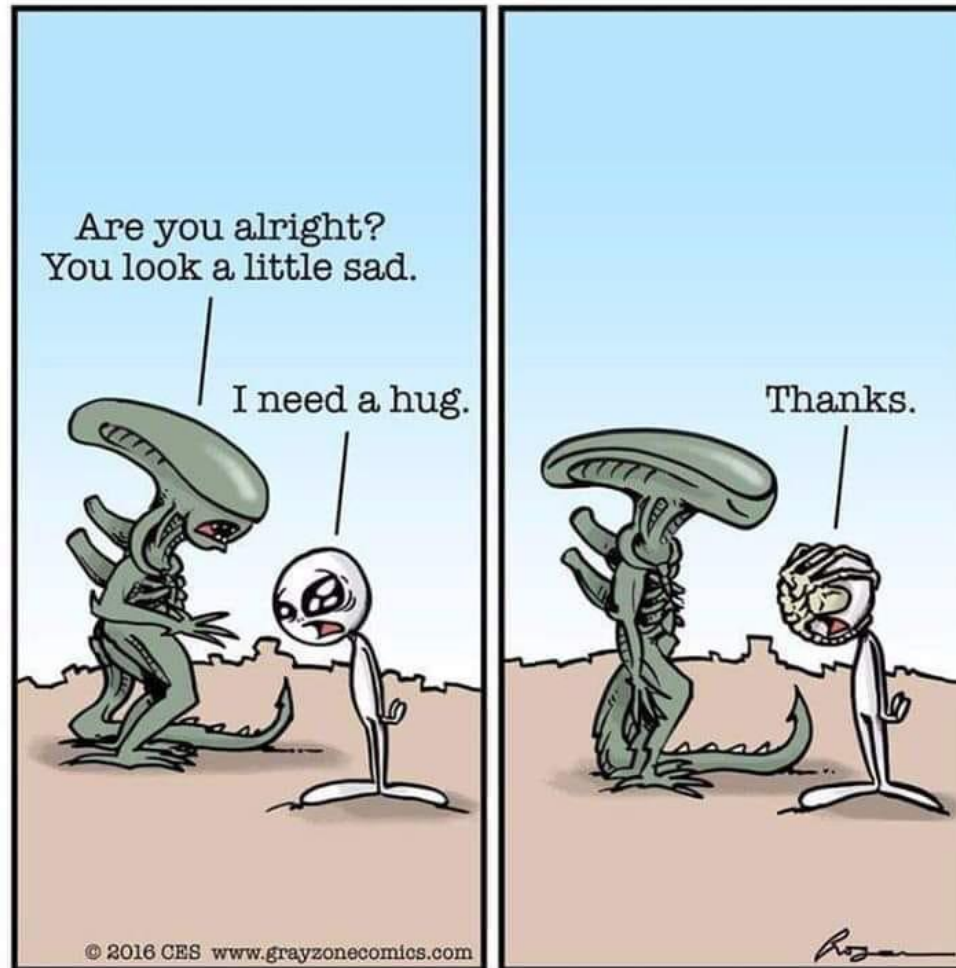
REMOTE WORKING INTRO

- Three ingredients of successful remote setup
  - Team perspective
    - "Doer" mentality
    - "Hire people you trust, trust the people you hire" – requires "agile" management shift
    - Hire people who can write in COMPANY OFFICIAL language
    - Understand for each person if she is OK without a social workplace - maintain physical location
  - Software/tools perspective
    - Use ALL available company tools, more important than on physical location
  - Processes perspective
    - Process is not something boring and rigid – it is "how" we work
      - Everyone does support in their field, everything is documented
      - Requires a culture of task completion
      - Pair people in tasks, maximize accountability
      - Automate all that can be automated
- Meetings are last resort effort, treat them most valuable resource, invite ONLY people who have to be there, create meeting minutes with tasks for everyone
  - If somebody doesn't have a task AFTER the meeting, he probably shouldn't be on the meeting, he could get same information from meeting minutes
  - You are not paid to go to meetings, but to produce value – if you want to meet go for coffee

BUILDING REMOTE WORKING CULTURE

BUILDING REMOTE WORKING CULTURE

- Culture in remote teams is a huge topic, and it will NOT be created on its own

- Culture is more than having ping-pong tables in office
  - Culture is about how you work
    - How we talk to customers – is speed more important than quality?
    - How we communicate to each other – don't use e-mail unless you have to
    - How much work you do – overtimes are ALWAYS a consequence of somebody's mistake

- Use tools for fun – properly used emoji or picture goes a long way

- In-person working should NOT be forgotten

- Trust is the foundation

- Don't take more work that you can complete, by estimate, in more than 75% of your work time, but deliver that work
  - You will almost always underestimate - if you need to do overtime, do overtime - pay for your mistake, deliver what you promised, learn for next time
  - If you are done ahead of time, you do nothing – giving more work to high achievers is generally very demotivating – doing „nothing" means you produced required value in time and should be rewarded, getting more works means you are fixing somebody's mistake

BUILDING REMOTE WORKING CULTURE

- Not everyone likes working in non-social environments

- People who have less issues with working remotely usually share common traits
  - Propensity towards action
  - Ability to prioritize
  - Proficient writing
  - Trustworthy
  - Dedicated remote working environment

- Treehouse (https://teamtreehouse.com/) has a innovative hiring policy to this day – they hire people for onsite work by never seeing them physically before contract signing, they work a „test week" remote, which requires special set of candidate skills
  - You need recruiters and in-house people who can read "between the lines" in "trial week"
  - This "trial week" is paid one month of market level salary, for everyone invited, even if no contract is offered

HOW TO EVALUATE PEOPLE

HOW TO EVALUATE PEOPLE

- Working long hours is probably NOT a good sign, and surely NOT a mark of good and "dedicated" employee
  - Shows lack of organization, required skills and prioritization skills on personal level
  - Shows lack of resources and planning on project level

- Yet most of us are evaluated by "how" we appear, not "what" we produce
  - Context over content is a long – present problem in all companies
  - It is "easy" to be evaluated on this metric, but it is very often wrong
  - "Satisfaction of business users" is also doubtfully useful metric, unless properly managed
  - In remote environments it is even more important to evaluate people differently

HOW TO EVALUATE PEOPLE

- Measure output, not input – focus on final output, not on „war stories" what you did to get there

- Key metric is team input, more important than line manager's or business users's

- One method is „Start-Stop-Continue" framework for peer-evaluation and key business user, manager is not part of main evaluation process as he is not consumer of your work output
  - Start – what should person start doing
  - Stop – what should person stop doing
  - Continue – what should person continue doing like now
  - Each person has also the ability to self-evaluate
  - Feedback should be focused on behaviors, not personalities
  - It should be standardized for everyone, not based on seniority

- Benefit increase each year, at least to some extent, is mandatory

- Provide feedback often

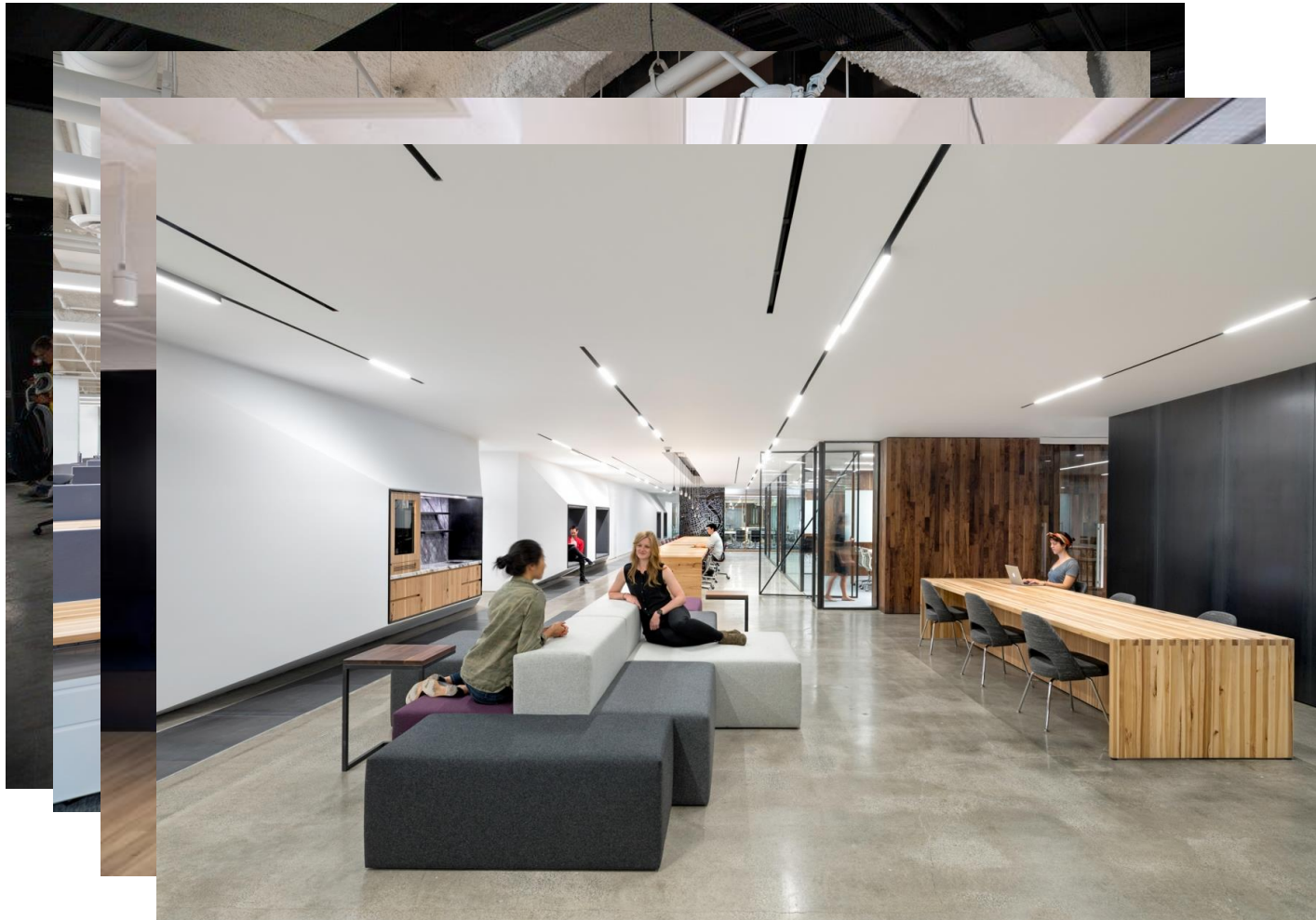- Show full trust, as long as trust is deserved

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- UBER

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Google

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Which one you liked more?
  - Google, right? ☺

- But, with all these investments…
  - Uber has „flex" work time from 08-18 (you have to be there from 10 – 14, eight hours per day), no remote work is possible
  - Google doesn't care where you are, physical meetings are mandatory only for MONTHLY 1-1 reviews with managers, or if something is urgent/agreed before
    - Most employees come physically to work less than 5 days per month
    - Around 5000 people live on Campus; 55 buildings, 48.000 people in total, around 25.000 new people to be employed by end of 2020, 15 new buildings are being built right now
    - Best communication tools and hardware is avaliable, you decide how to use them

- You work where you are comfortable, wear what you want, you are not asked what it took to create work (though you have best help avaliable and unlimited education budget)
  - By internal poll 95% of employess work less that 8 hours per day, 35% „much less"

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- You are judged by what you do, not for „war stories" what it took to make the work

- Meetings are less than 20% of work time, otherwise automatic red flag appears in system

- Europe is NOT this world, but culture of work is changing, and so does IT management

- Some Google rules
  - Managers manage people, not supervise work
  - Employees give public (within team, manager's manager and HR) feedback for management quality, and vice versa, on monthly basis
  - Management is to support work, not judge performance – if work is done withing very strict quality process, raise and bonus is automatic
  - If more than 20% of people leave team in one year, manager is usually demoted to technical role and put to another team, because he didn't support people's needs – more than 3000 internal positions opened at any moment
    - Most managers are technical people, but have to pass formal managerial education (usually MBA-level) before getting resource responsibility, most managers have M.Sc or higher
  - Employee is exclusivelly responsible for his work, no delegation possible without strong reason
  - If there is knowledge gap, he is responsible to gain knowledge, all tools and support avaliable

OPTIMAL REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

- So what is optimal work environment?
  - Whatever makes you happy and productive
  - On-site work is possible, can even be considered game and fun

- Does this freedom come without responsibility?
  - Of course not…you are responsible for your work output, which is clear from beginning
  - Work „dumping" and excuses usually don't go so well in more developed remote cultures

HOW TO AVOID BURNOUT AND DISTRACTIONS, AND HOW CAN EXTROVERTS WORK

- Establish and maintain a routine

- Set and stick to priorities

- Create and keep boundaries

- Take short and long breaks

- Make time for Human Interaction as much as you need
  - Don't work remote if you cannot do it or feel depressed

- Remove distractions

- Have hobbies, spend energy on anything that makes you physically tired

How to Avoid Burnout and Distractions, and How Can Extroverts Work

- Advice for extrovers who want to try remote
  - Consider social activities as form of Self-Care
  - Put your shoes on…
    - …or do any other repeatable activity that connects your brain with social activities
  - Leverage technology
    - There is nothing wrong with watching your favorite Netflix show during work or chat with friends to relax – limit this activity to fixed timeslots, and never deviate
    - Engage with your co-workers in fun moments using video streams or any other form of communication, as long as you don't disturb them
  - If nothing works – don't work remote!

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

- Have good equipment, best that you can afford
  - Your eyes, back, knees and hands are not replacable
  - Only you are responsible for your own health!

- Have best avaliable Internet speed, don't loose energy on stress caused by network issues

- Have at least one monitor, optimally two, don't work on 14-15'' laptop all day

- Have best software you can get, minimally…
  - Project management tool
  - Notes taking tool (no, Outlook and e-mail are NOT good tools for knowledge repository)
  - Mind map tool (start using this technique today)
  - Document manager/cloud file storage
  - Password manager tool
  - Translation tool (Google Translate)

- Inisist on everything written down, responsibility assigned to people, minimal meetings, usage of English in EGIT (because we decided that it is company official language) – at the moment when communication becomes formal

CONCLUSION

- I gave you a lot…there is so much more left to say…

- Remote working redifines how we work and live
  - It changes management role in companies – from supervisors to leaders/mentors
  - It adds personal responsibility as primary concept for everyone
  - Properly setup, it cuts most of corporate administration, moving to real value adding (which is, also, primary goal of agile methodology)
  - It gives us flexibility, but asks of us constant learning
  - There is no ,,waiting for pension'', but your value increases expoentially with you capibility to produce real work output – it gives more, asks for more, cuts the intermediate

- So now…what more do you want to know?