



Why group chat hurts your team productivity



Huy Nguyen - Holistics Software
holistics.io

About Me



Education:

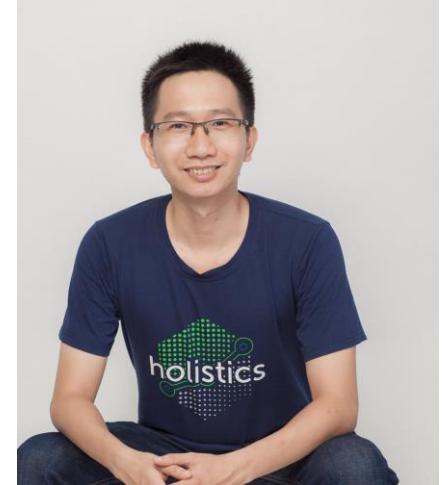
- Pho Thong Nang Khieu, Tin 04-07
- National University of Singapore (NUS), Computer Science Major.
- Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) - Stockholm, Sweden

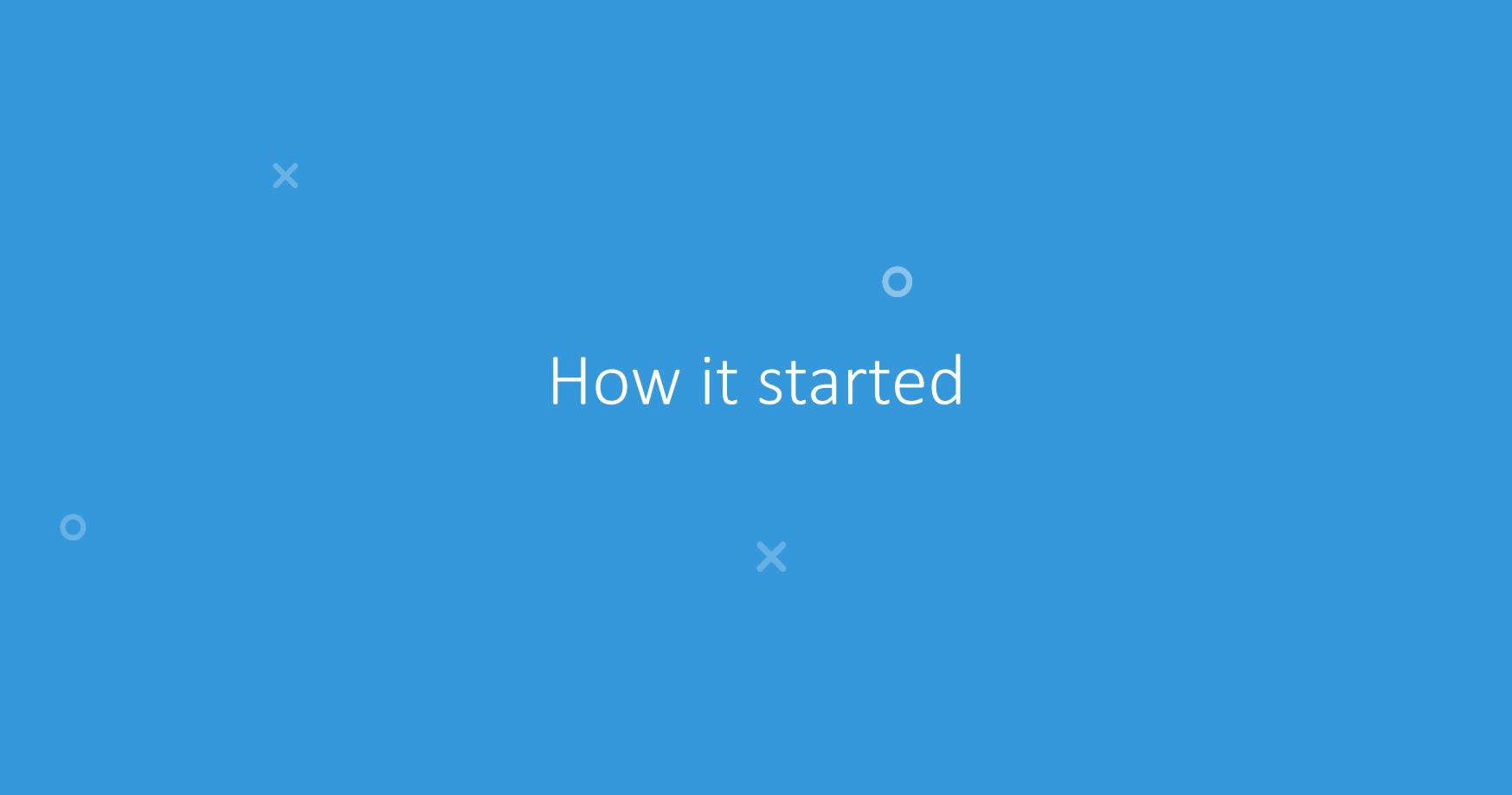
Work:

- Software Engineer Intern, **SenseGraphics (Stockholm, Sweden)**
- Software Engineer Intern, **Facebook (California, US)**
- Data Infrastructure Engineer, **Viki (Singapore)**

Now:

- Co-founder & CTO, [**Holistics Software**](#)
- Co-founder, [**Grokking Vietnam**](#)





How it started

APP REPORT BUSINESS

Slack is now the fastest-growing workplace software ever

103 ▾

And it has \$120 million in new funding to push it forward

By Casey Newton | @CaseyNewton | Oct 31, 2014, 9:00am EDT

f t SHARE



Slack has become a big enough deal that it almost makes you care about enterprise

GOOD DEALS



New Fortnite edition purple Xbox One S will go on sale on June 7th





Slack goes public at \$23 billion market cap



NYSE for Slack's direct listing. Photo: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

XO

VOICES | WORK TRENDS

Slack, the productivity tool which ain't so productive after all

Startups are addicted to Slack. Is it harming culture?

By Tiffany Philippou
Thursday 23 May 2019



x

o

Are you facing these problems?

o

x

x

1. Spend a lot of time but couldn't get
much done, colleagues kept asking for
help

o

x

x

2. Couldn't remember what you did
when looking back at the end of the
day

o

x

x

3. Spent lots of time discussing with team to make decision, but can't remember the details after 3 months

o

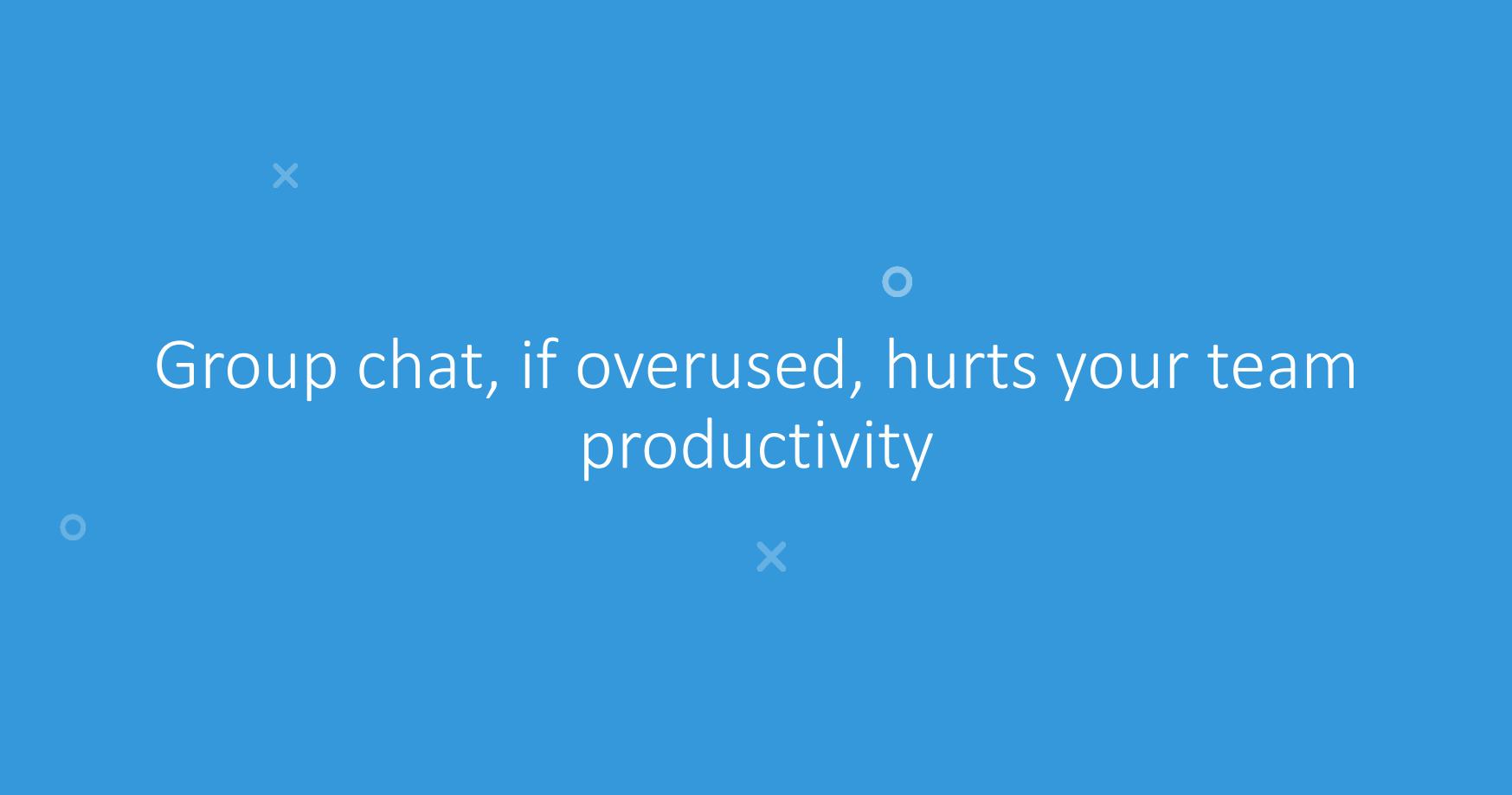
x

x

Most tech companies use group chat as
the common/main method of work
communications

o

x



-
- ×
-
- ×

Group chat, if overused, hurts your team productivity

Agenda

- What is group chat good for?
- When is group chat bad?
- Downsides of group chat
- Solution
- Benefits
- Real world: How Holistics apply this to our work



What is group chat good for?

(or face-to-face)

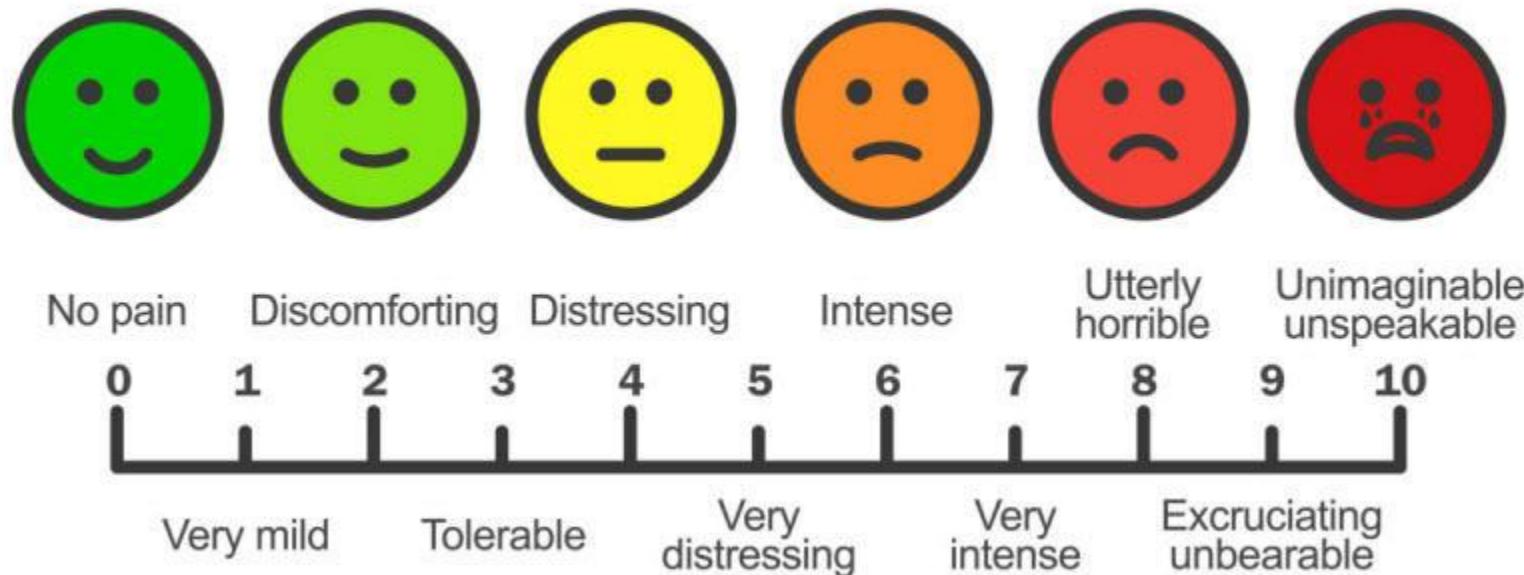
1. Really urgent work



2. Very time-sensitive operations (Customer Support, etc)



3. Getting very quick feedback on things



4. Having fun & creating sense of belongings



Nhu Nhu 7:16 PM

Muốn đê mà ko dc ahuhu

IMG_20190529_191545.jpg ▾

kaid 7:19 PM
Gg

phien 7:26 PM
Đang bơi vè 😂

phien 7:33 PM
20190529_184527.jpg ▾



1

27 replies Last reply 6 days ago

Thread

vietnam

T tan May 31st at 10:14 AM
Em ngủ quên nên tối trễ xí 😊

9 replies

T binh 5 days ago
mặc áo trắng đi làm nha @tan

T tai 5 days ago
mặc áo cty @tan ơi

T tan 5 days ago
Áo trắng làm gì chị

T tan 5 days ago
Chụp ảnh à

T tai 5 days ago
@Nui với @dthongvl mặc áo trắng

T tan 5 days ago
Hết áo trắng rồi 😂

T Ha Pham 5 days ago
cháo lòng cũng được 😂

T Khai To 5 days ago
mặc lại áo cũ cũng dc 😂

T triet 5 days ago
Minh có bán áo trắng 500k/cái nha

X

+ Reply...

😊

What is group chat good for?

1. Really urgent works (deploy failed, server down)
2. Time-sensitive operations (customer supports)
3. Getting things out quickly (quick feedback, quick back-and-forth)
4. Having fun & creating sense of belongings

Group chat is typically bad for the following cases

1. Discussing serious work
2. Asking others to help with knowledge you don't know
3. Asking others for feedback / decision making

x

Downsides of using group chat as the main work communication channel (but we're still doing it)

o

x

1. Mental fatigue: group chat = meeting all day long



2. Group chat instills an ASAP culture

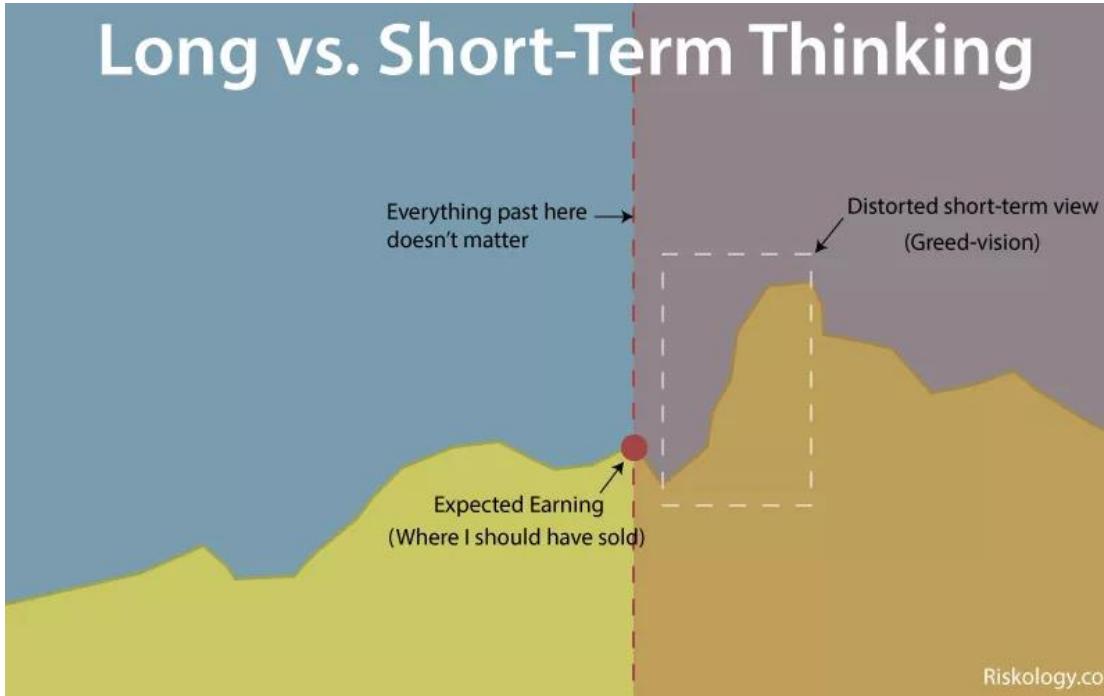


You feel like you have
to respond to every
message immediately

3. Thinking one line at a time



Long vs. Short-Term Thinking



This also hinders your ability to think clearly and thoroughly.

4. Continuous context-switching



5. Lack of context



You lost track of the background of the conversation you're in

6. Inability to reference later



Important messages are lost and difficult to trace later on.

7. Over-inform people in real-time



Unnecessary people are pulled in the conversation.

8. Rambling and repetition



WIKIWORLD® by Greg Williams

Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo.

is a grammatically correct sentence used as an example of how homonyms and homophones can be used to create complicated constructs. The sentence is unpunctuated and uses three different readings of the word "buffalo." In order of their first use, these are:

- The city of Buffalo, New York.
- The animal "buffalo," in the plural (equivalent to "buffaloes"), in order to avoid articles.
- The verb "buffalo," meaning to confuse, deceive or intimidate.



Homonym = a word form that has two or more distinct meanings

Homophone = a word which is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning



Substituting the synonym "bison" for "buffalo" (animal), "bully" for "buffalo" (verb) and leaving "Buffalo" to mean the city, yields:



Buffalo bison, whom other Buffalo bison bully, themselves bully Buffalo bison.

Trying to repeat yourself multiple times to make sure your points are heard.

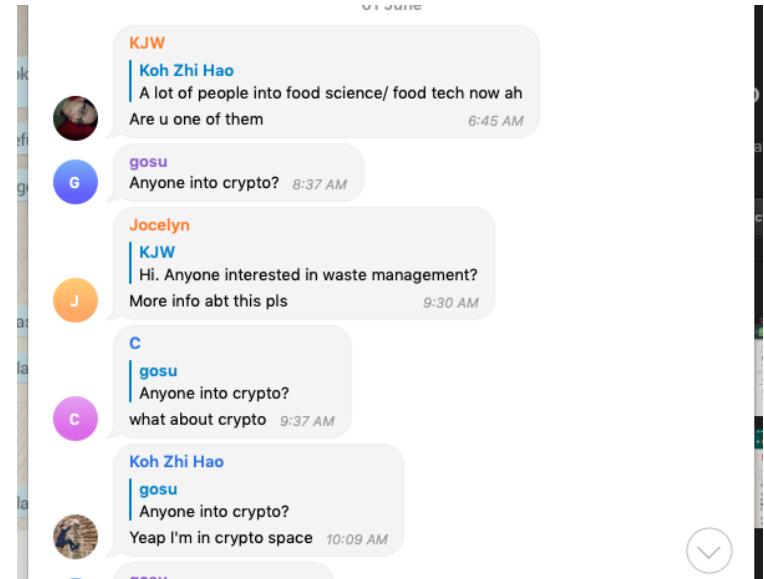
Downsides

1. **Mental fatigue:** group chat = meeting all day long
2. Group chat instills an **ASAP culture**
3. Thinking **one line at a time**
4. Continuous **context-switching**
5. Lack of context
6. Inability to **reference** later
7. Over-informing people in real-time
8. Rambling and repetition

The cost of a message

People only think about cost of sending a message (sender perspective).

There is a cost of processing it too (receiver perspective).



Solution: Asynchronous communications

What does ‘asynchronous’ mean?

Synchronous: Respond immediately

Asynchronous: Respond later

○
How to encourage more asynchronous
work culture?
×

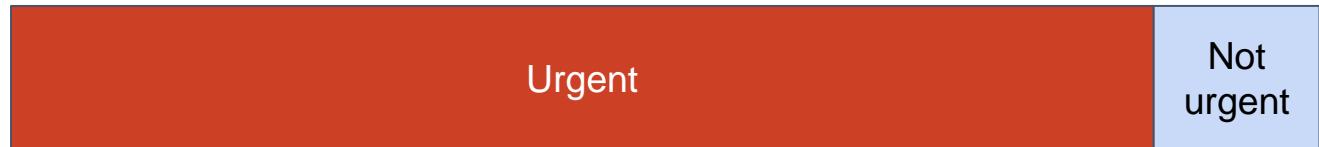
1. “Right now” should be the exception, not the rule

Don’t expect people to respond immediately



Most work communications are important, but not urgent

What people think



What it actually is



2. It's OK to be unavailable

Stop expecting everyone
to be in chat all day.

-  Bong
-  dat
-  dthongvl
-  Dung Pham
-  duyphan
-  evan
-  huy (you)
-  Jia Wen Kor
-  kaid
-  Khai To
-  khanh 
-  Nhu Nhu
-  phien
-  son.ht 
-  tai
-  tan
-  thanhdk
-  thongdo
-  binh
-  Ha Pham
-  hao 
-  huyphung
-  huyvu
-  Nguyen (Logan)
-  Nui
-  Thi Nguyen
-  triet 
- Viet Dung Nguyen
- vtloc

3. Have rules around “no-interruption signal”

So that people can have time to get real work done without being bothered



4. If it's important, write it down



Tell people to "write it down",
"add task for me" instead.

Think twice before
chatting/interrupting people

5. Don't talk one line at a time

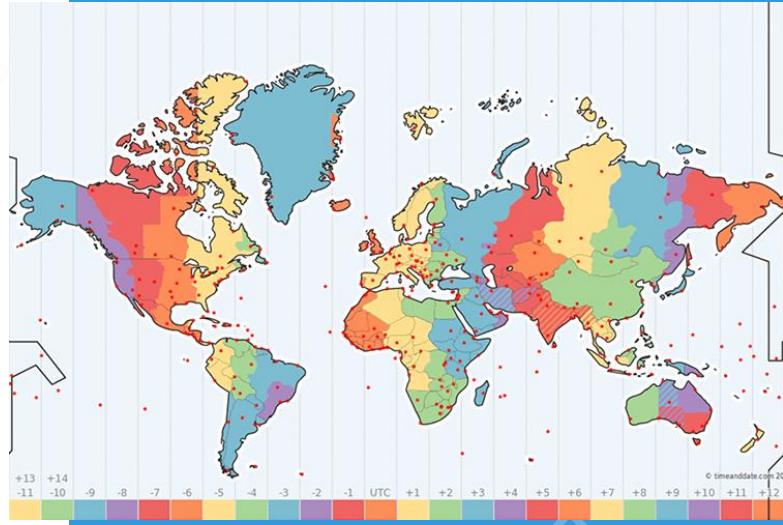


 peter 2:59 PM
hey @gabby

Don't do this

6. Adopt remote communications mindset

Communicate as if your colleagues are on different time zones



7. Learn to write effectively

The screenshot shows a Forbes CommunityVoice post. The title is "Why Writing Ability Is The Most Important Skill In Business (And How To Acquire It)". The author is Jeff Bradford, a member of Forbes Councils and the Forbes Agency Council. The post has 1,292 views and was published on Jan 29, 2019, at 08:00am. The content discusses the importance of writing skills in business and how to develop them.

Forbes CommunityVoice Connecting expert communities to the Forbes audience. What is This?

1,292 views | Jan 29, 2019, 08:00am

Why Writing Ability Is The Most Important Skill In Business (And How To Acquire It)

Jeff Bradford Forbes Councils
Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

POST WRITTEN BY

Jeff Bradford

President & CEO of the **Bradford Group**, Jeff is a former journalist with 30+ years of experience as a public relations professional.

Learn how you can write your thoughts/notes clearly.

Learn writing framework & templates like 5W1H, Product Requirement Docs, Technical Requirement Docs, etc..

Have writing templates so that people can follow effectively.

Asynchronous Communications

1. “Right now” should be the exception, not the rule
2. It’s okay to be unavailable
3. Have rules around “no-interruption signal”
4. If it's important, write it down
5. Don’t talk one line at a time
6. Adopt remote communications mindset
7. Learn to write effectively

It's not about the tools, it's how you communicate



One of the biggest differentiators between what became Slack and IRC was that Butterfield and his team built their tool to be fully asynchronous. Users could log out and their messages would be waiting for them when they logged back in—something that wasn't possible with IRC. Butterfield and his colleagues were old-school internet 1.0 folks. They knew what IRC did well. More importantly, though, they knew where IRC fell short. This would be much more valuable to their future product.

Slack was originally designed to communicate asynchronously



Benefits of applying asynchronous communications



1. Calm, uninterrupted focused work



No longer having to attend to everything come your way.

Have long stretch time to do focus work

2. Time to digest & think carefully before responding



Immediate response is often not the best response.

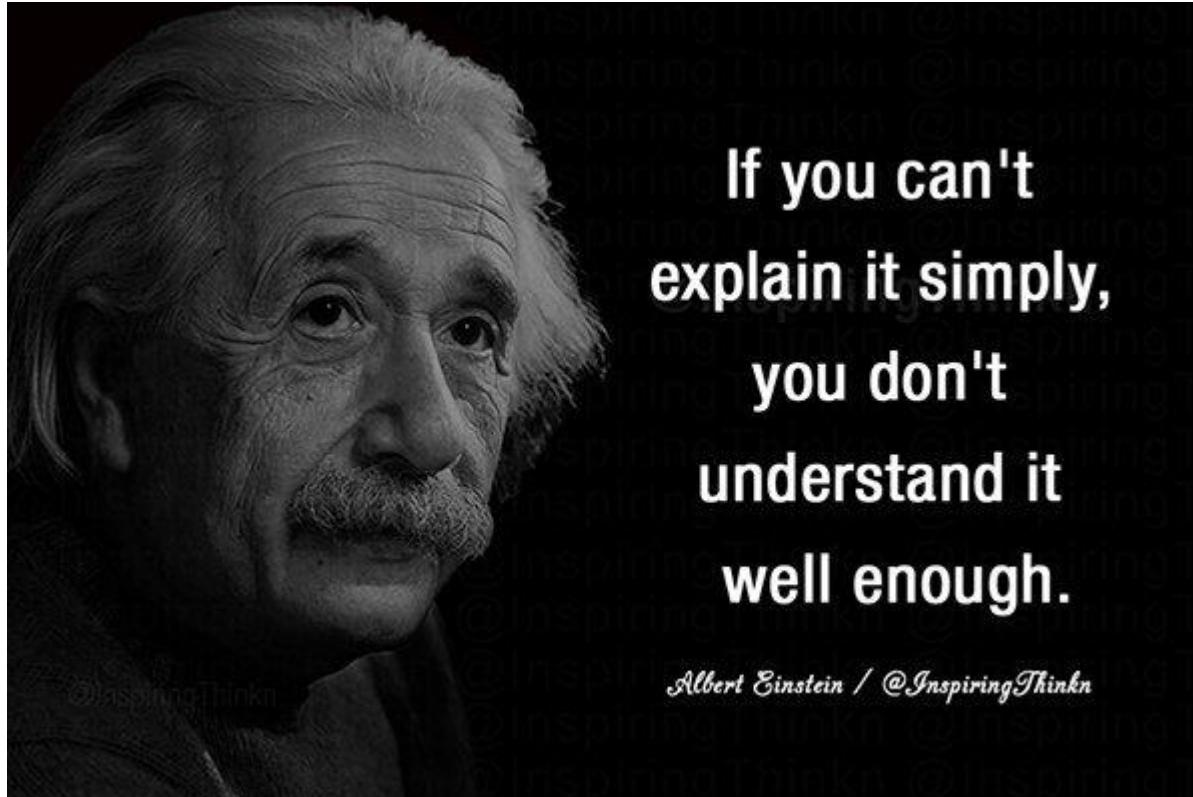
3. Accumulate record of communications (wiki)



Having a record of the communication shared that can be referred to later on.

Synchronous communication often requires taking notes (creating) while hearing the message (consuming).

4. Improve writing and articulation skills

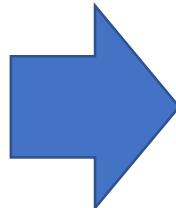


Benefits

1. Calm, uninterrupted focused work
2. Time to digest & think carefully before responding
3. Accumulate record of communications (wiki)
4. Improve writing and articulation skills

Group Chat vs. Asynchronous

1. **Mental fatigue:** group chat = meeting all day long
2. Group chat instills an **ASAP culture**
3. Thinking **one line at a time**
4. Continuous **context-switching**
5. Lack of context
6. Inability to **reference** later
7. Over-informing people in real-time
8. Rambling and repetition



1. Calm, uninterrupted focused work
2. Time to digest & think carefully before responding
3. Accumulate record of communications (wiki)
4. Improve writing and articulation skills



Real-world: How Holistics adopt asynchronous communications

How Holistics adopts asynchronous communications

1. Move work assignment from email/chat to Project Management Tool
2. Record (almost) every thought and discussions
3. Build wiki of knowledge for every area
4. Communicate where the context is

1. Move work assignment from verbal/chat to Project Management Tool



2. Record (almost) every thought and interaction

Company Interactions (Internal)

For all internal meetings, discussions and announcements within the company.

Company Interactions (table) + Add a View						Sort Search ... New ?
Date	Name	People	Interaction Nature	Teams or Topics	Takeaways/TLDR	
May 23, 2019	🎉 2019-05-23: Holistics 3.0 Pricing	Vincent Woon	Proposal Active To Discuss	Pricing GTM	Remain on credits + users p setup \$200,\$500,\$800 tier	
May 20, 2019	📄 Building Holistics 3.0 for semi-technical persona OPEN 6	Ha Pham Huy Nguyen	Proposal	Product Data Modeling	Instead of hiding data models from users and forcing them to run to build datasets, we can expose models with pre-defined values so users can explore themselves and enable more data self-service for semi-technical users.	
May 20, 2019	📄 Product Updates W21	Anthony Thong Do Khai To Khanh Tran	Updates	Product		
May 17, 2019	📄 Random thought: Why drag-and-drop has never really clicked with me	Ha Pham	Brainstorming	Vietnam	Documentation of thought is important. Explore History, Notebook feature may be useful	
May 13, 2019	📄 Vietnam Team Updates W17-18-19 (April 22nd - May 12th)	Huy Nguyen	Updates	Vietnam	3.0 0.3 3.0 0.3	
May 12, 2019	📄 Product Updates W20	Anthony Thong Do	Updates	Product		

Market Interactions

Default View ▾

Properties Filter Sort Search ... + New

Aa Interaction	Type	Date	Company	People	Remarks (TLDR)	Use Cases	Tags
2019-0409 - Video call with Stepan from [REDACTED]	Prospect	Apr 09, 2019	[REDACTED]	Evan Tan	Interested by SQL editor for connecting to data from production, for graphs in LMS learning system. Would like Hubspot integration.		
Intro Call with [REDACTED]	Analyst	Apr 05, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon	Prepare Deck for [REDACTED] minutes chat with their analyst		
[REDACTED] Group [Q1]	Prospect	Apr 05, 2019	[REDACTED]	Yahya Apristianto		Getting Started Create Dashboard Create Reports and Charts	
[REDACTED] Sales Sharing	Founder	Apr 04, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon	Some tips on B2B Sales, and also how to make it easier for B2B Business to buy		
[REDACTED] (WIP)	Customer	Apr 04, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon	Learnt more about the roles/challenges of data analysts/engineers, and data teams' relevance to the business		
[REDACTED]s - BI for SaaS (Learned /)	Competitor Founder SaaS	Apr 04, 2019	[REDACTED]	Huy Nguyen	I found this person's approach to running startup interesting (Marketer mindset) and many things we can learn from.		
[REDACTED] - open source alternative [REDACTED]		Apr 04, 2019	[REDACTED]	Huy Nguyen			
[REDACTED]	Prospect	Apr 01, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon	Areas of improvements for onboarding	Data Imports Adding Filters	
[REDACTED] Demo	Prospect	Apr 01, 2019	[REDACTED]	Hasbullah Johari	Embedded Analytics	Embedded Analytics Create Reports and Charts	Chartio
[REDACTED]	Prospect	Mar 30, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon			
Scheduled Web Call with [REDACTED]	Prospect	Mar 28, 2019	[REDACTED]	Vincent Woon	Clear benefits of 360 buyer view, and reflections on our onboarding process	Create Dashboard Getting Started	

[Open as Page](#)



K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

+ 1 other Share Updates Favorite ...

yeah we can help him check it out, and maybe Holistics should start a data team recruitment arm, where we help companies profile data analysts. He thinks that's a great idea. :P

Challenges: Data Understanding

Prior to showing him Holistics 3.0, I asked him about the challenges the persona a data analysts face. He shared that the main issue is with documenting their data tables, and maintaining the sprawl of reports that happen.

Problem 1: Documenting Data Tables

Problem 2: Report Sprawl

Problem 1: Documenting Data Tables

Understanding and Documenting the Data Tables in their current environment is a challenge.

Why This Problem Happens (Data Tables Document)

As [REDACTED] expands to have more business users, they have more power users who wants to query the database directly. [REDACTED] also has more data tables that are created.

More Business Units → More Data Tables → More Data Requests.

As a result, they have tables all over the place. You can have Analyst A building and sharing Table A, while Analyst B build and share Table B.

How They Tried to Cope (Data Tables Document)

W [REDACTED] used to maintain a spreadsheet well (mainly himself for reporting), but he has now more data analysts working with different business units. With more analysts, it's more difficult to maintain a consistent definition of the field names, remarks etc.

The problem is that analysts don't like to update documentation.

[Open as Page](#)

Key Meeting Insights

This is probably the most insightful meeting I [REDACTED] from an experienced BI analyst. Before I shared [REDACTED] shared the following with us:

- The role he wants his data analysts to focus on
- His priorities for the team
 - How to streamline reporting
 - Adding value for their B2B customers
 - How to build your BI stack
 - Refine how they do financial reporting
 - How they run their operational reporting
- How they define their data layers stack
- That they are in the process of moving their data to Google BigQuery
- [REDACTED]

Call-to-Actions

Meeting Summary

3. Build central wiki of knowledge for every area

- Sales
- Product
 - Product Requirement Docs
- Engineering
 - Technical Requirement Docs
 - Server Configurations
- ...

WORKSPACE

- ▶ Pitch Testing Table
- ▶ Company Interactions (Inte...)
- ▶ Market Interactions
- ▶ Customers
- ▶ Open Space
- ▶ Company
- ▶ Holistics 3.0
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Content
- ▶ Engineering
- ▶ Product
- ▶ Industry
- ▶ Data Analytics
- ▶ Client Analytics Projects
- ▶ Free Tools
- ▶ Quality Assurance
- ▶ Sales

Product Features Docs (table) + Add a View

Sort Search

Update	Category	Feature	Status	Public Docs	Note	Technical Design Docs
Jun 22, 2019 12:17 AM	Reporting	Explore everywhere 1	Doing			
Jun 21, 2019 10:28 AM	Reporting Data Models	Chart Interaction Research & Revamp	Doing			
Jun 20, 2019 3:13 PM	Administration	Feature Toggle Group	Doing		Feature Toggle Group	
Jun 17, 2019 11:28 AM	Data Models	Data Model & Dataset Components and Dependencies Document	Doing			
Jun 14, 2019 4:48 PM	Data Load	Support Druid data source	Doing			
Jun 14, 2019 2:50 PM	Data Models	Create Models from 3rd Party Sources - (Data Imports for Workflow)	Doing		Data Import for Data Modeling	
May 31, 2019 4:49 PM	Billing Ops	Restriction Blocking	Doing		Pricing & Billing System	
May 31, 2019 9:37 AM	Data Models	Dataset PRD	Doing	https://docs.holistics.io/docs/datasets		Dataset (Technical Design) Dataset Multi-model Dataset exploration history
May 29, 2019 10:38 AM	Reporting	Holistics 3.0 Home Experience	Doing			
May 21, 2019 2:52 PM	Reporting	Make Models, Fields, Tables on the	Doing			



Concept

Dataset

- A dataset will consist of one or multiple models.

Data Model

- A data model can be belonged to one or many datasets.

Related Models

- After selecting the root model at creating new dataset screen, a user can view all of that root model's related models, i.e. the models that have Join relationships (both direct and gone-through) to the root model.

Related Joins

Architecture Design

Relationship between Dataset and Data Model

- With the introduction of the multi-model dataset, the model relationship between `Dataset` and `DataModel` will be updated to the many-to-many relationship.

Database Model

- ▶ Dataset
- ▶ DataModel

+ :: Group	Aa Name	Engineers In Charge	Related Modules	Asana link	ht
		Tan Huynh	(Technical Design)		ho
Data Modeling	Dataset Multi-model	Phien Pham Tan Huynh Hoang Do			ht ho
Data Modeling	Dataset exploration history	Hoang Do	Dataset (Technical Design)	https://app.asana.com/0/282843533411631/1121024702447555	htt ho
Data Modeling	Data Model Field Resolver	Hoang Do			
Data Modeling	Data Model DSL	Thanh Dinh	Data Modeling (Technical Design)		
Data Modeling	Unifying Data Model syntaxes	Dat Bui	Data Modeling (Technical Design)	https://app.asana.com/0/76997687380943/1117376363404609	htt ho
Data Modeling	Data Model Query Parser	Dat Bui			
Data Modeling	Model Alias Resolution	Tan Huynh	Data Modeling (Technical Design)	https://app.asana.com/0/1112826492211825/1118185363973502/f	htt ho
Data Modeling	Bi-directional joins	Tan Huynh	Data Modeling (Technical Design)	https://app.asana.com/0/76997687380943/1119021670168244/f	htt ho
Data Modeling	Model Fields	Dat Bui	Data Modeling (Technical Design)		
Data Modeling	Adhoc Fields	Dat Bui	Data Modeling (Technical Design) Unifying Data Model syntaxes Model Fields	https://app.asana.com/0/1112826492211825/1108951804568216/f	htt ho

4. Communicate where the work context is

Evan Tan created task. 3 Apr

[4 more comments](#)

 **Hasbullah Johari** 16 Apr
Have drafted the 5w1h. Need to draw up the content more extensively.

 **Huy Nguyen** 16 Apr
Just read the notes. I like this. I can imagine lots of things to do with this. Things that would take a while to write as written content, but with verbal content it can be expressed quite naturally.

 **Vincent** 21 Apr (edited)
Thanks [Hasbullah Johari](#), I've just browsed through the 5W1H. I also like both Evan and yourself to answer this question on this proposal - "What does it mean for you to say that this is a successful launch, 6 months down the road?" Please separate this into 2 separate thoughts (no blended opinions).

Try to fill up this experiment table below (check out the 2 readings entailed), and what outcomes will this be considered a fruitful project?
<https://www.notion.so/holistics/1d6839786b384aeaa994e85894764c61?v=c1dcabe90b894d5fa538540926805fb3>

Hasbullah Johari changed Do in Week Of 2019 from "8th - 12th Apr 2019" to "22nd - 26th Apr 2019". 24 Apr

Evan Tan moved from 3.0 Resources to Pre-Launch and campaigns (Holistics 3.0). 22 days ago

 Write a comment...

☰ Property Empty

+ Add a Property

 **Anthony Thong Do** Last Monday at 2:21 PM
This reminds me of Chartio data pipeline

Resolve

 **Huy Nguyen** Last Monday at 2:24 PM
This aligns very much with a conversation I had yesterday (shared at the end of the note). And tying this with the Catalog product that Lyft/Airbnb built I found it makes a lot of sense.

cc @Evan Tan you might find the below note written by Ha useful.

 **Vincent Woon** Last Monday at 2:41 PM

Thanks for sharing Ha. This is getting closer to how Tableau defines their user personnel pricing (creators, explorers, viewers).

 **Thanh Dinh** Edited Last Monday at 4:08 PM

This is good sharing. Thanks @Ha Pham. There are a few points that I don't agree with though. Will add comments on them.

 **Evan Tan** Last Tuesday at 10:30 AM

Enabling the semi-technical is in fact what we do here (Floship picking up SQL through Holistics, Gabriel developing data analysts skills from an admin type role through our software etc.). We do have product managers, designers and other non-analyst personas who know enough about software and data to be able to figure things out in Holistics (had a call with a company called Paddle, they make EVERYONE in operations learn how to use Python). My sense is this will become increasingly the case, office workers will become more data savvy and code-literate, if tools help to pave the way and make concepts easier to grok (people start off with basic automation tools like Zapier, they understand more about working with data and software, they become able to do basic coding, they can identify how to improve business processes using data and software).

 **Huy Nguyen** Last Tuesday at 10:38 AM

Just to add on what Evan shared, highly recommend team to go watch this (shared by Vincent):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmR408KQ0Ko>

 Add a comment...

Current state of Holistics 3.0

Two major personas that we are catering for: Business User and Data Analyst. These two sit in

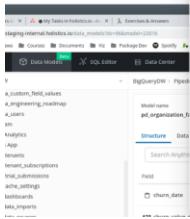
datasets to see the same models everywhere may not be very elegant

- Between models there are multiple relationships and paths, and one dataset only represent one relationship / path configuration between some tables. What if the PM see other potential configurations and they want to explore that idea? At this point current design will hamper data self-service.
- If the PM / BU wants to explore a different topic, they will need to ask the analyst again to prepare another dataset. Potentially the DAs will be the bottleneck again.

+ :: Open (1) Resolved

If the PM / BU wants to explore a different topic, they w... Resolve

Analysis screen)



 **Anthony Thong Do** Last Monday at 2:53 PM
This is exactly the current problem in Looker but not in PowerBI

 **Vincent Woon** Last Tuesday at 7:33 AM
Hi Thong, sorry I may have missed your sharing on this earlier. How does PBi overcome this?

 **Anthony Thong Do** Last Tuesday at 10:11 AM
In Looker, each dataset needs a base view (which is our root model), which limits its reusability because different root model will return a different set of answers, and Analyst might need to create a lot of datasets.

While in PowerBI or Qlik, they don't use SQL, they just don't have the root model concept, their dataset concept might be more flexible

 Add a comment...

@ Send

Agenda

- What is group chat good for?
- When is group chat bad?
- Downsides of group chat
- Solution
- Benefits
- Real world: How Holistics apply this to our work

Conclusion

Group chat (synchronous) is over-used in modern work context. This reduces team productivity and creates anxiety.

Consider asynchronous communications method mixing in with group chat / face-to-face accordingly.

Don't stop improving, and



May the force be
with you!



Thank you <3



Join us:

- Software Engineer
- Product Manager
- Product UX Designer

holistics.io/careers

