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# **3 DISCIPLINES FOR LEADING A DISTRIBUTED AGILE ORGANIZATION**

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**Mark Kilby**  
**@mkilby**

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Working

consulting across industries

2014

2013

2012

2008

2003

2001



AGILE  
LOCAL LEADERS

Global SCRUM  
GATHERING®

ORLANDO

April 18-20, 2016

AGILE OPEN  
Florida

AGILE  
FLORIDA



ORLANDO



ORLANDO



AGILE2016

July 25 - July 29  
ATLANTA, GA USA

AGILE2015 AUG 3-7  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



AGILE2012 AUG 13-17  
DALLAS, TEXAS

Volunteering



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WHAT ABOUT YOU?

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## Our path today

- WHAT IS A MINDSET SHIFT (MIND SHIFT)?

3 DISCIPLINES FOR  
LEADING  
DISTRIBUTED TEAMS

EXPERIMENTING TO  
EXPLORE MIND  
SHIFTS





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Our path today

- **WHAT IS A MIND SHIFT?**

3 DISCIPLINES FOR  
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EXPLORE MIND  
SHIFTS







My first UK trip



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Lesson that day ...

BEST  
PRACTICES  
ONLY WORK  
IN A CERTAIN  
CONTEXT



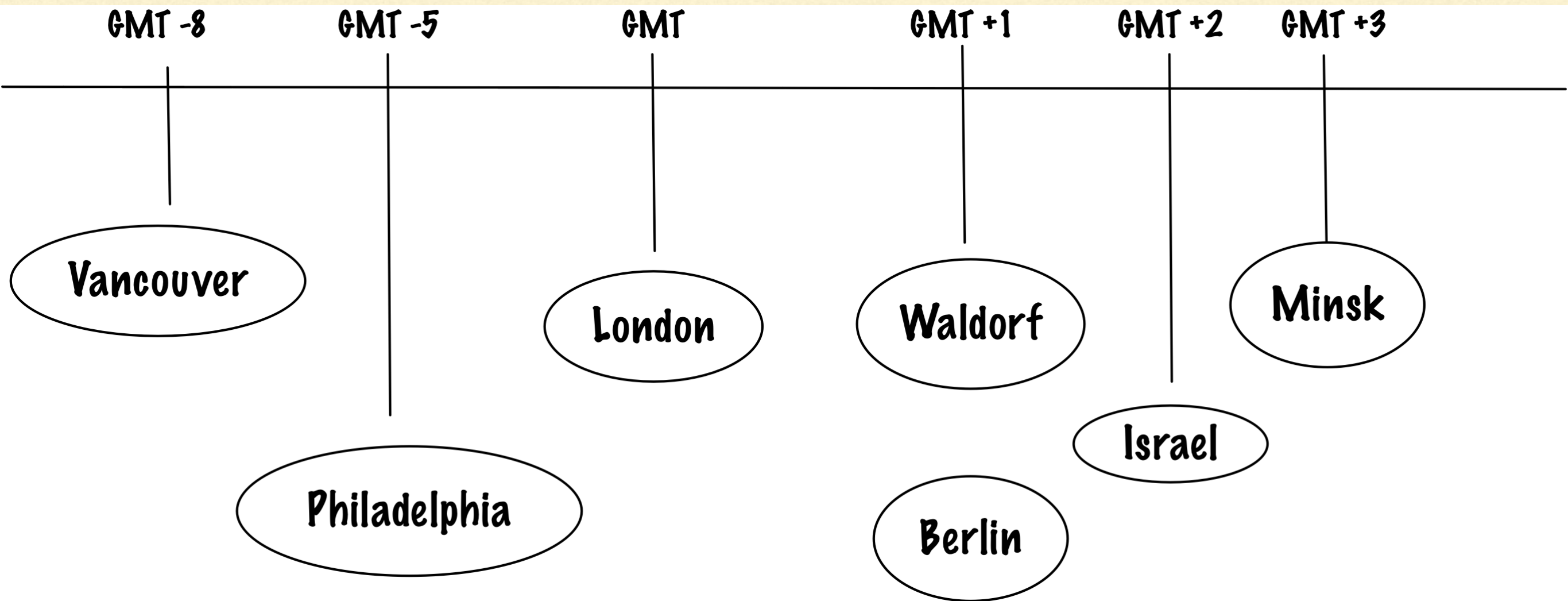




IN THE WRONG CONTEXT

“Best Practices” can be harmful





# ARE TIME ZONES REALLY A PROBLEM?

(another mind shift)

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY

City / Person	local hours of the day / hours worked by team member												
Raleigh	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Sarah				1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	
Mary					1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
Boston	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Jane					1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
Mike			1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1		
London	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Ian	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1				
Berlin	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Gerrit			1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		
Overlap Probable	17%	17%	50%	50%	100%	100%	92%	42%	83%	83%	83%	50%	33%

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OVERLAP?



MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY

TUESDAY, THURSDAY

City / Person	local hours of the day / hours worked by team member													
Raleigh	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Sarah				1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		
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Mike			1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1			
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Ian		1	1	1		1	1	1	1					
Berlin	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Gerrit			1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			
Overlap Probable	17%	17%	50%	67%	100%	100%	92%	42%	67%	83%	83%	50%	33%	
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WHAT IF WE LET THE

**TEAM DECIDE HOURS OF OVERLAP?**



# What's the biggest benefit you see to working remotely?



- 32%** ● Ability to have a flexible schedule
- 26%** ● Flexibility to work from anywhere
- 21%** ● Not having to commute
- 11%** ● Ability to spend time with family
- 7%** ● Ability to work from home
- 3%** ● Other

**State of Remote Report 2020**

[buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020](https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020)





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“Team hours over office hours”

&

“Give distributed teams choice”

– *2 mind shifts*

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## Our path today

- WHAT IS A MIND SHIFT?

## 3 DISCIPLINES FOR LEADING DISTRIBUTED TEAMS

EXPERIMENTING TO  
EXPLORE MIND  
SHIFTS





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# 3 KEY MIND SHIFTS FOR DISTRIBUTED LEADERS

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- ***Manage for change through experiments***
- ***Amplify communication and collaboration***
- ***Focus on principles over practices***
- These become your “daily disciplines” or “operating system” for distributed leadership



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# 3 KEY MIND SHIFTS FOR DISTRIBUTED LEADERS

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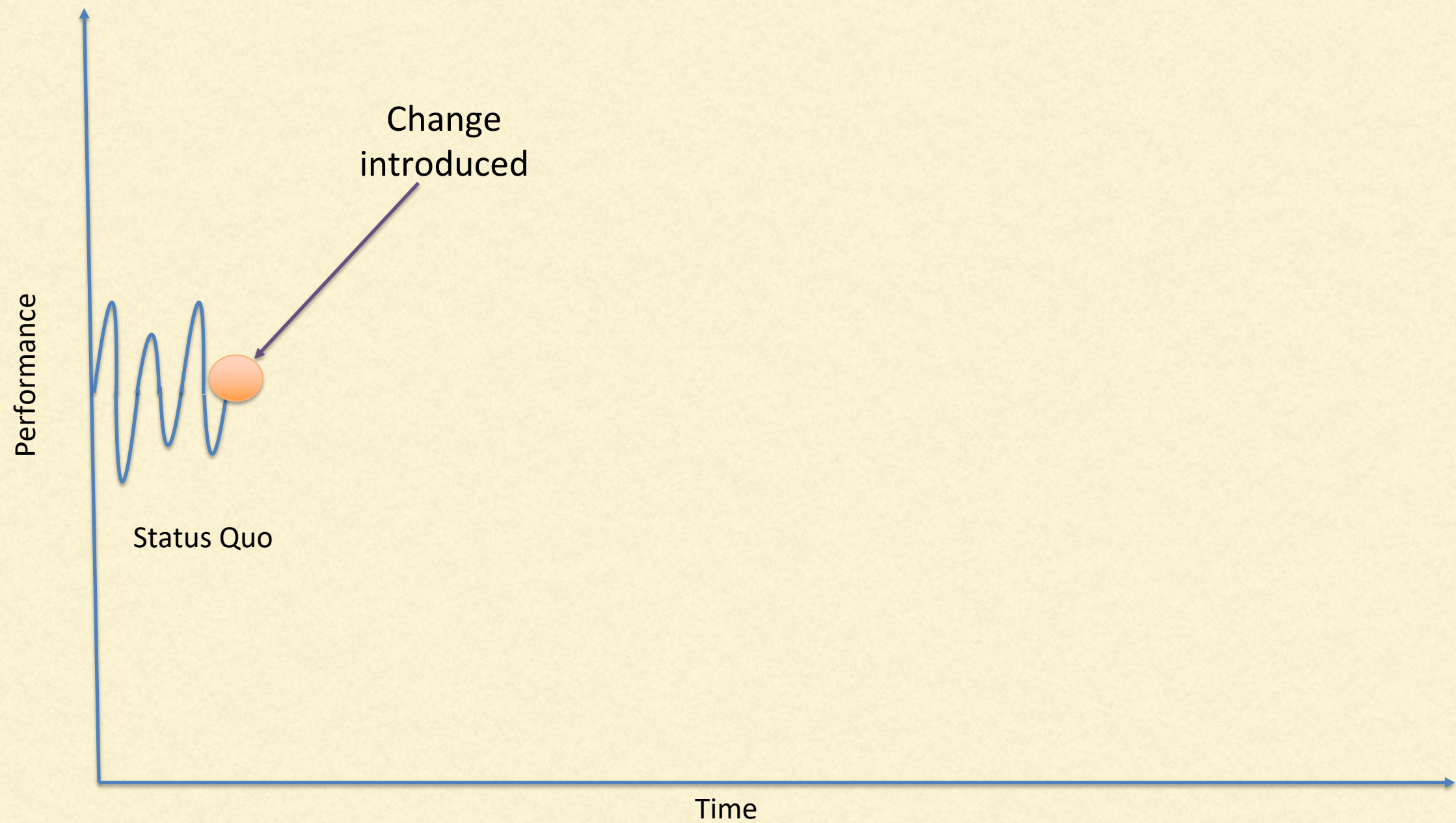
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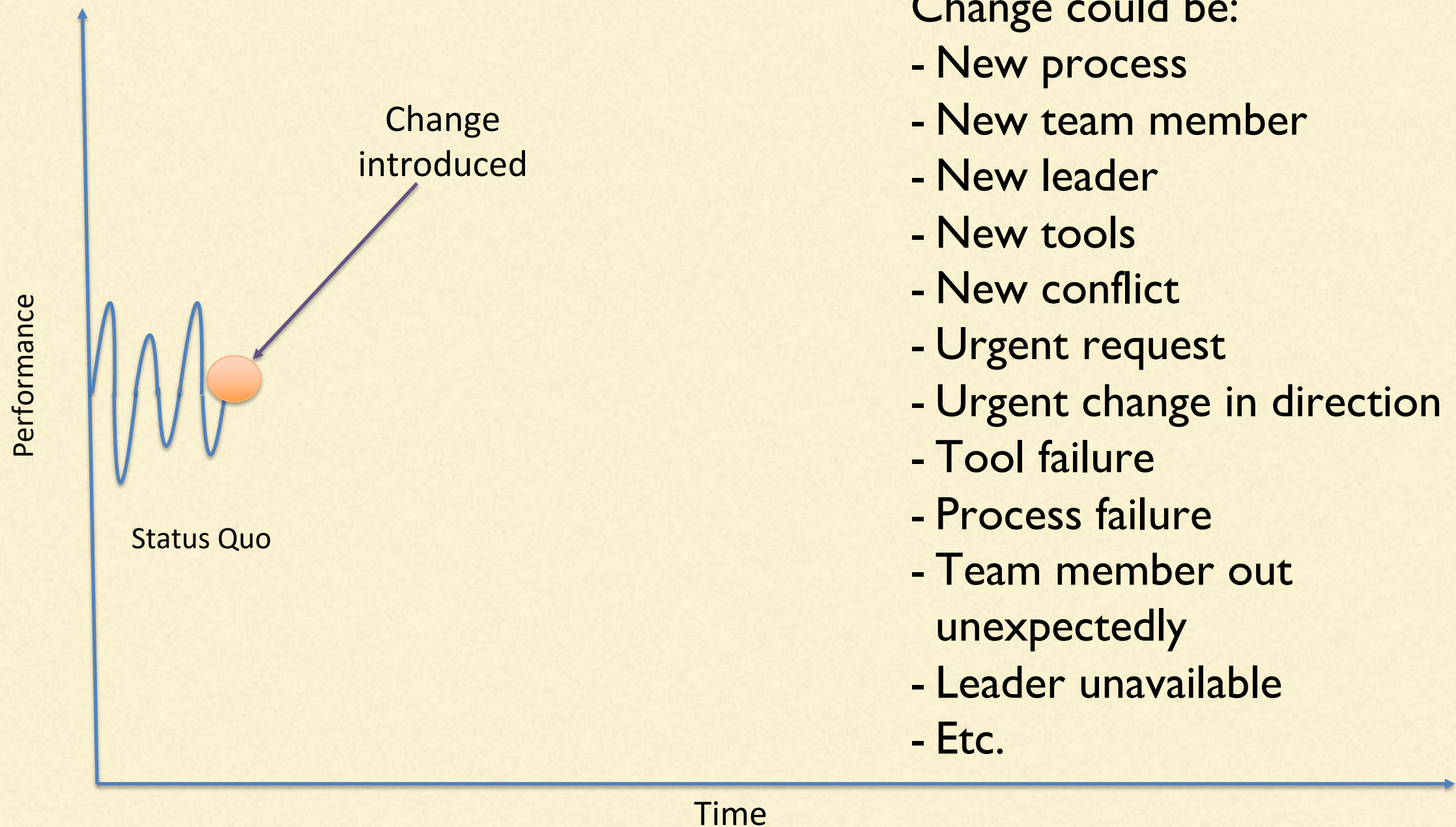
# IMAGINE A TEAM WORKING TOGETHER ...

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# IMAGINE A TEAM WORKING TOGETHER ...

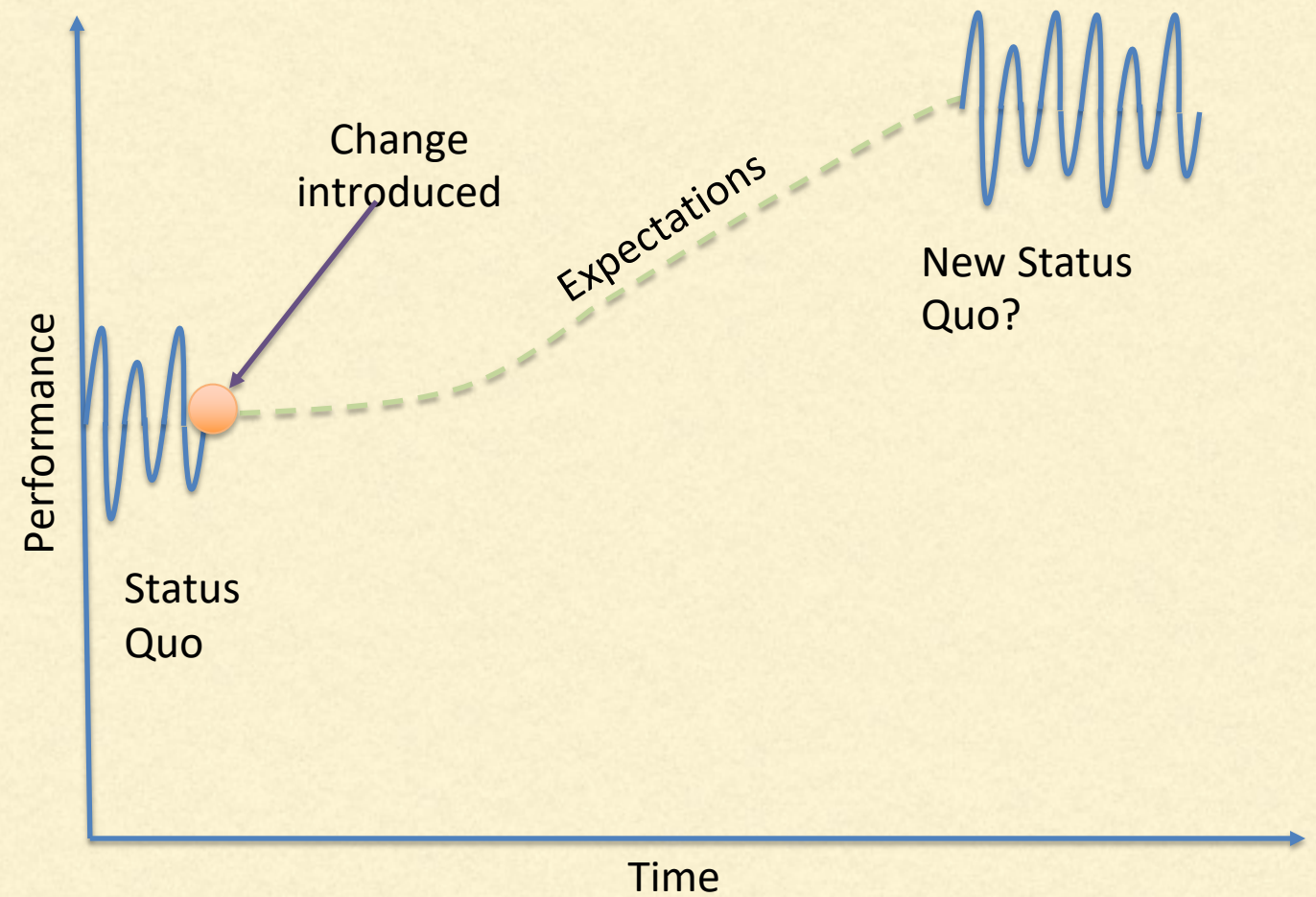


Change could be:

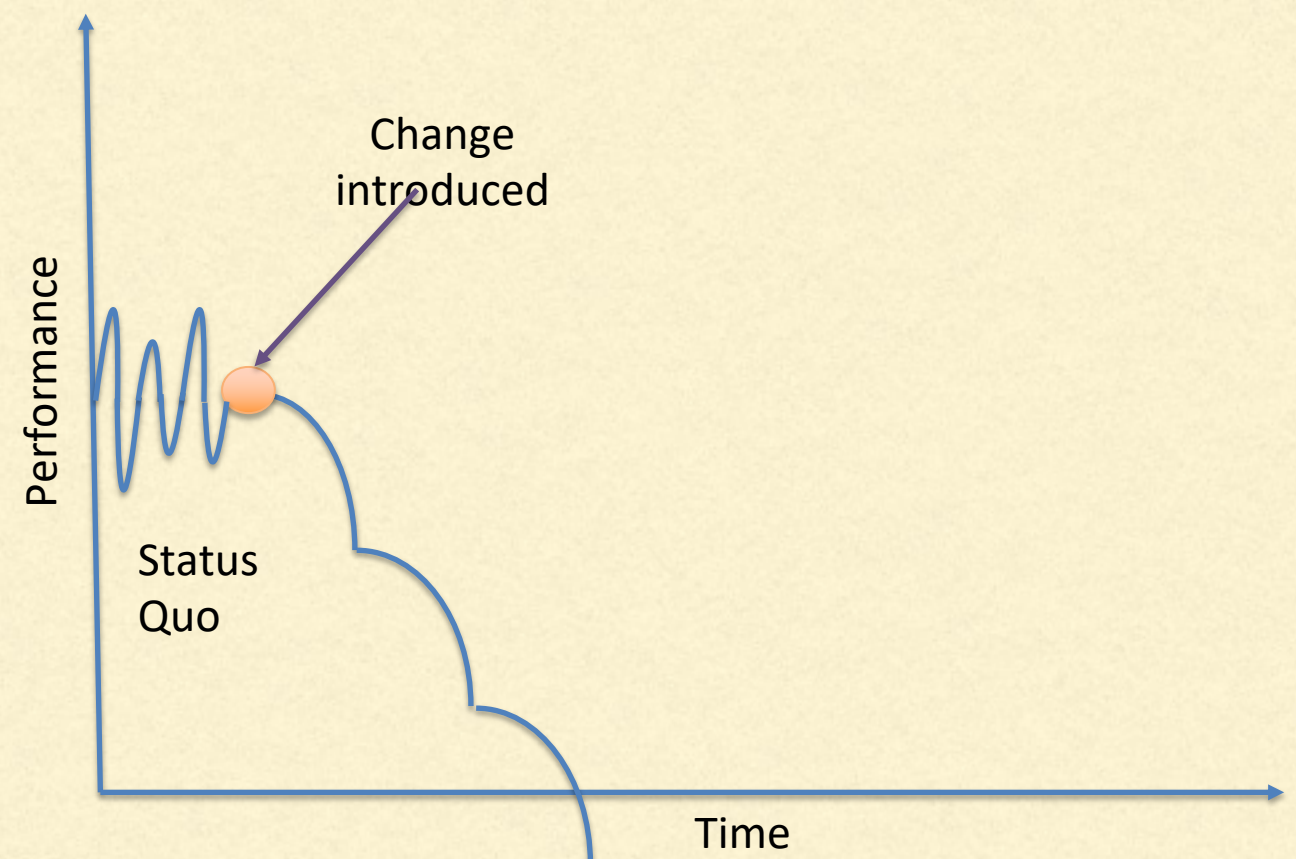
- New process
- New team member
- New leader
- New tools
- New conflict
- Urgent request
- Urgent change in direction
- Tool failure
- Process failure
- Team member out unexpectedly
- Leader unavailable
- Etc.



Our expectations when  
we push change on our  
teams

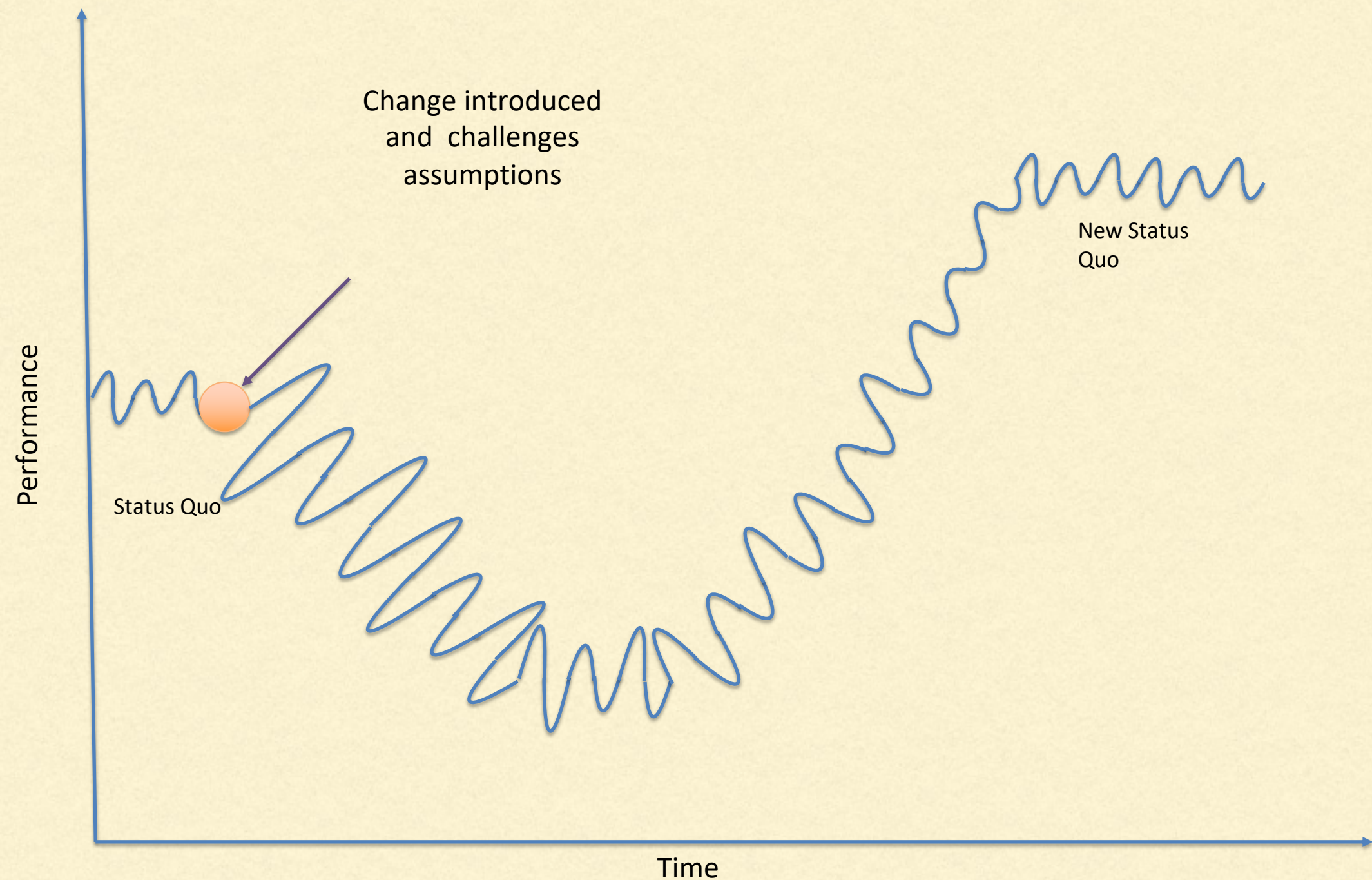


Our expectations when  
change is imposed



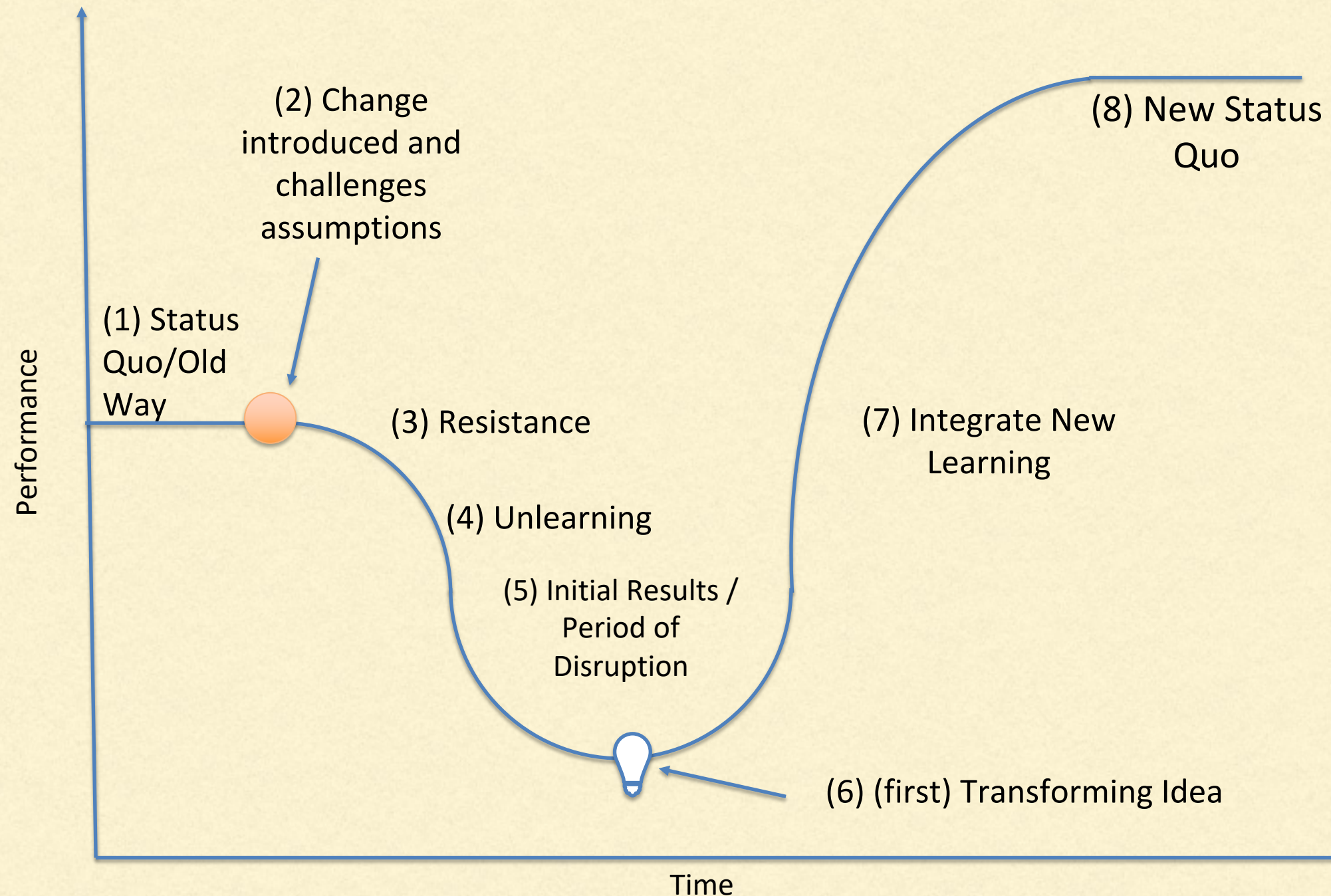


# WHAT REALLY HAPPENS (UNDER THE RIGHT CONDITIONS)...





# SMOOTHING IT OUT, WE GET THE **J-CURVE**





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But wait. You said something about  
“under the right conditions”?

— *an attentive audience member*

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# Mind shift: Manage Change Through Experimentation

(How to experiment - last part of presentation)

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Some believe...

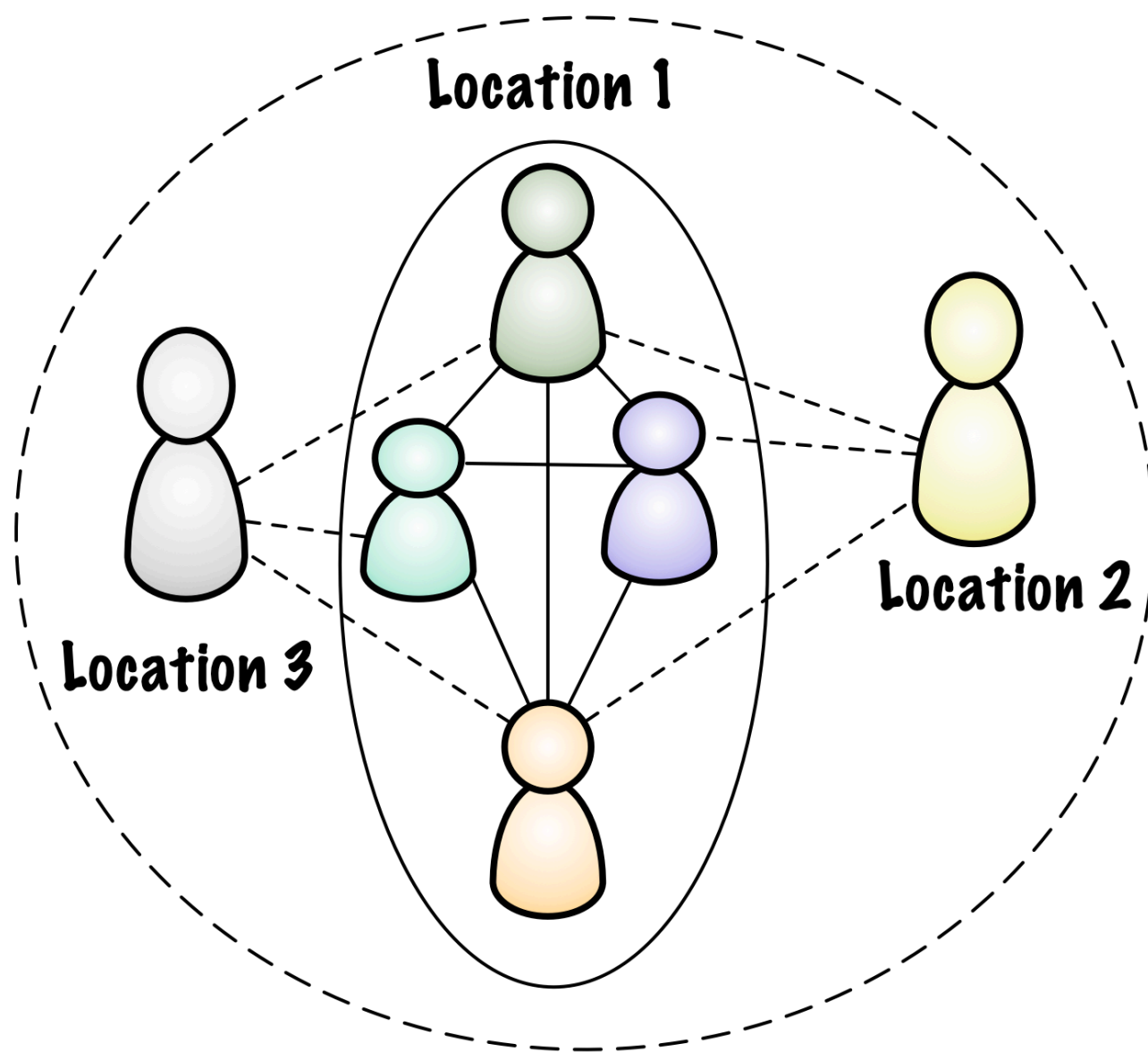
THIS IS  
THE WAY  
TO  
WORK  
REMOTELY





# A TYPICAL DISTRIBUTED COLLABORATION PROBLEM

**Original Affiliation: Mostly Location-Affiliated**



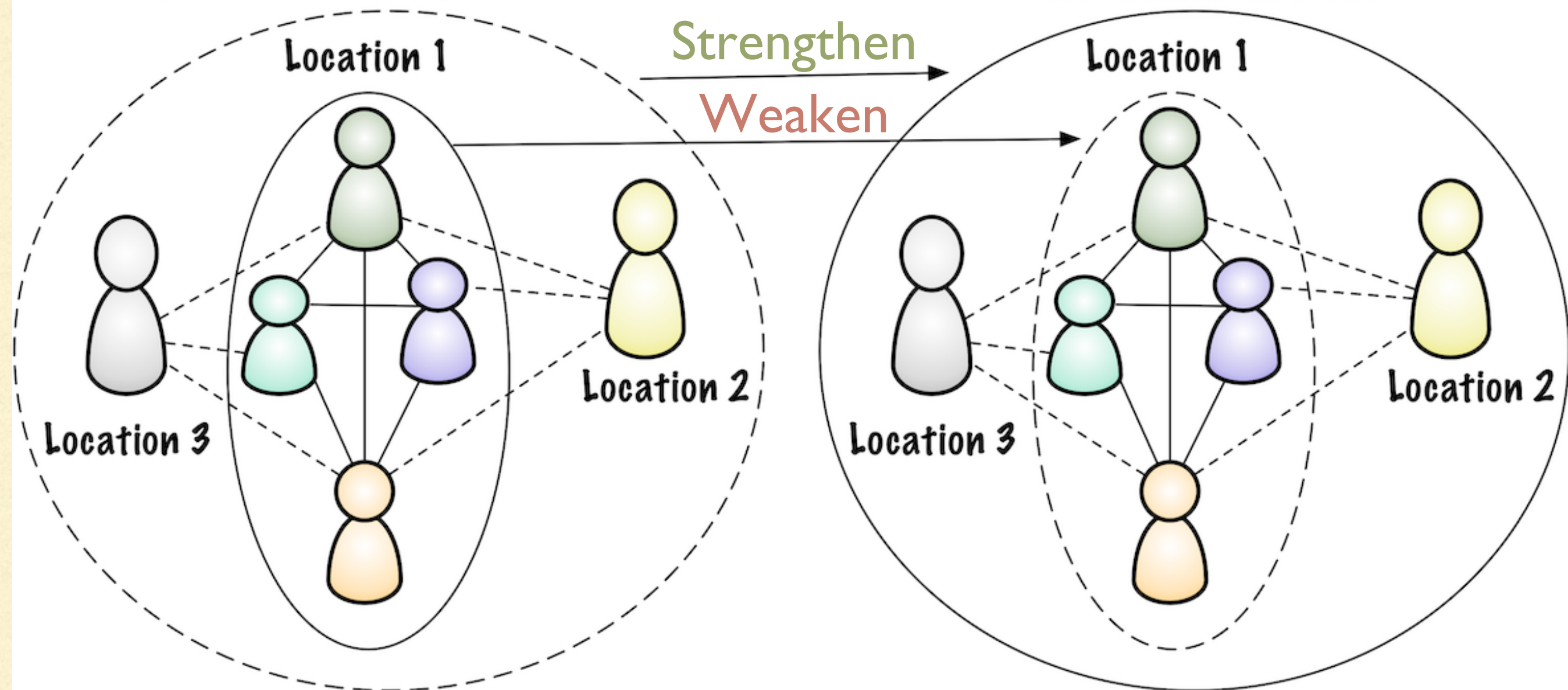
- You hire great people from all over the world
- Team sets some good hours of overlap
- Location 1 people work well together
- Location 2 & 3 feel isolated (left out of conversations, small tasks, not clear on big picture)
- Eventually, people in location 2 or 3 either join an all remote team .. Or just join another company



# Distributed and Cross-functional Satellite: From Location-Based Affiliation to Strong Team Affiliation

Original Affiliation: Mostly Location-Affiliated

New Affiliation: Team Focus



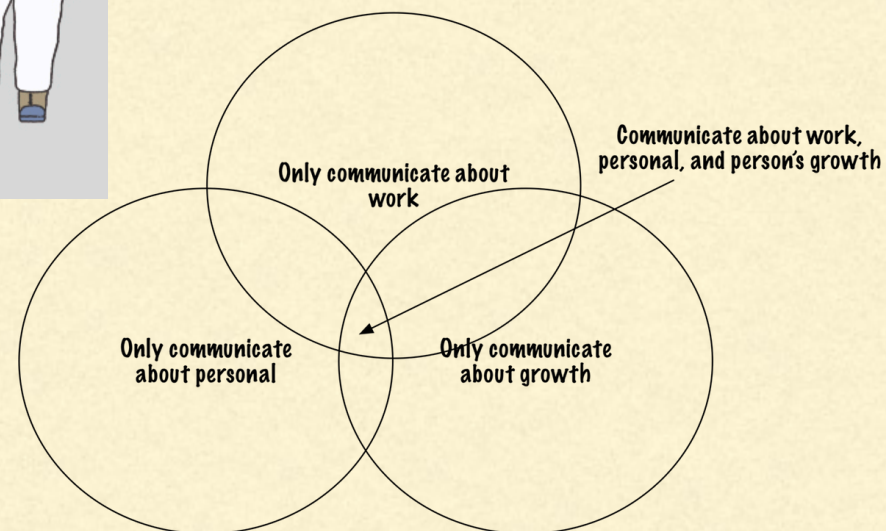
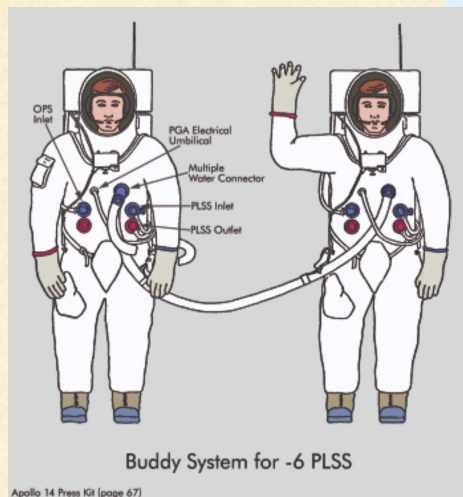
## TEAM AFFILIATION OVER LOCATION AFFILIATION

(another mindshift)



# HOW TO BUILD TEAM AFFILIATION

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Berlin	11	12	13	14	15												
Gerrit			1	1													
Overlap Probable	17%	17%	50%	67%	100												



- Hours of Overlap
- Dedicated Team Backchannel
- Buddy System & Co-Pilot(s)
- Know the Whole Person
- Bring everyone together for big initiative / quarterly planning



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## Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.  
Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools  
Working software over comprehensive documentation  
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation  
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

### Scrum Values

Commitment  
Focus  
Openness  
Respect  
Courage

### XP Values

Feedback  
Simplicity  
Communication  
Respect  
Courage

### Lean Software Principles

Eliminate waste  
Amplify learning  
Decide as late as possible  
Deliver as fast as possible  
Empower the team  
Build integrity in  
See the whole

**Stand-ups**

**PI/Planning**

**Pair Programming**

**Retrospectives**

**Scrum of Scrums**

**Evolving Architecture**

**Backlog Refinement**

**TDD/BDD**



## Distributed Agile Principles

1. Establish acceptable hours of overlap
2. Create transparency at all levels
3. Create a culture of improvement with experiments
4. Practice pervasive communication at all levels.
5. Assume good intention
6. Create a project rhythm
7. Create a culture of resilience
8. Default to collaborative work

---

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PI/Planning

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## Our path today

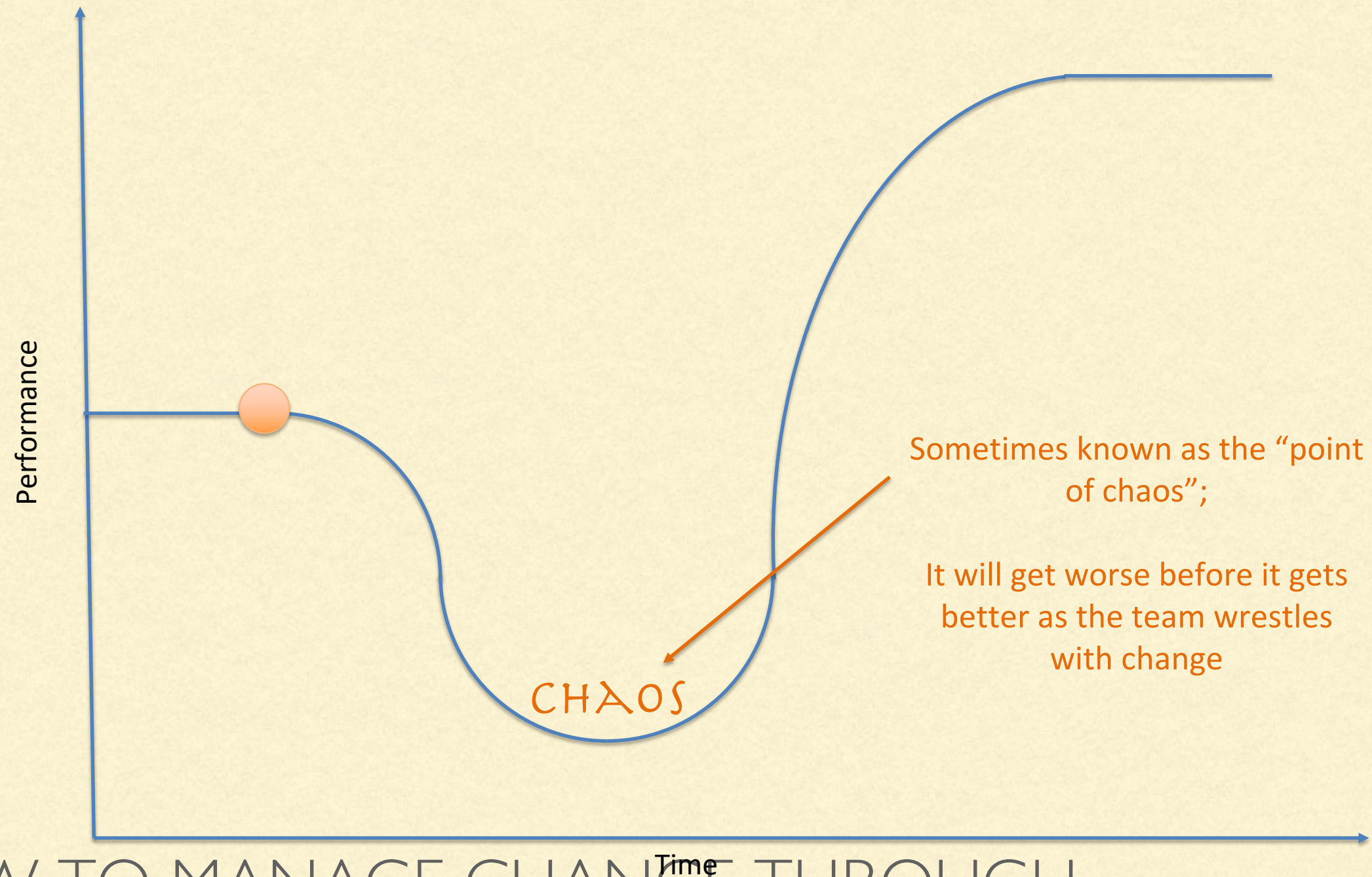
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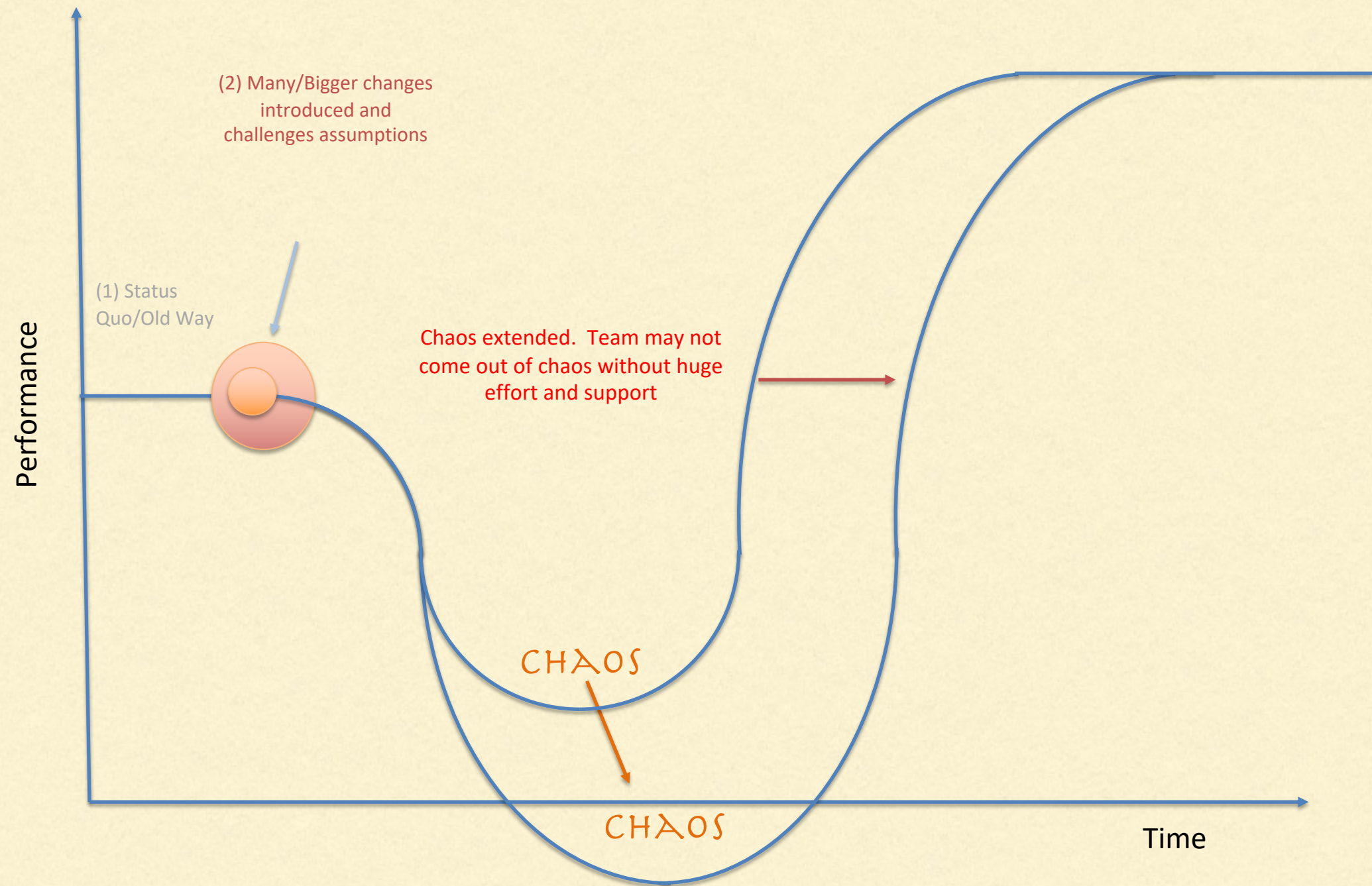




## HOW TO MANAGE CHANGE THROUGH EXPERIMENTS?

Hint: Limit the Chaos

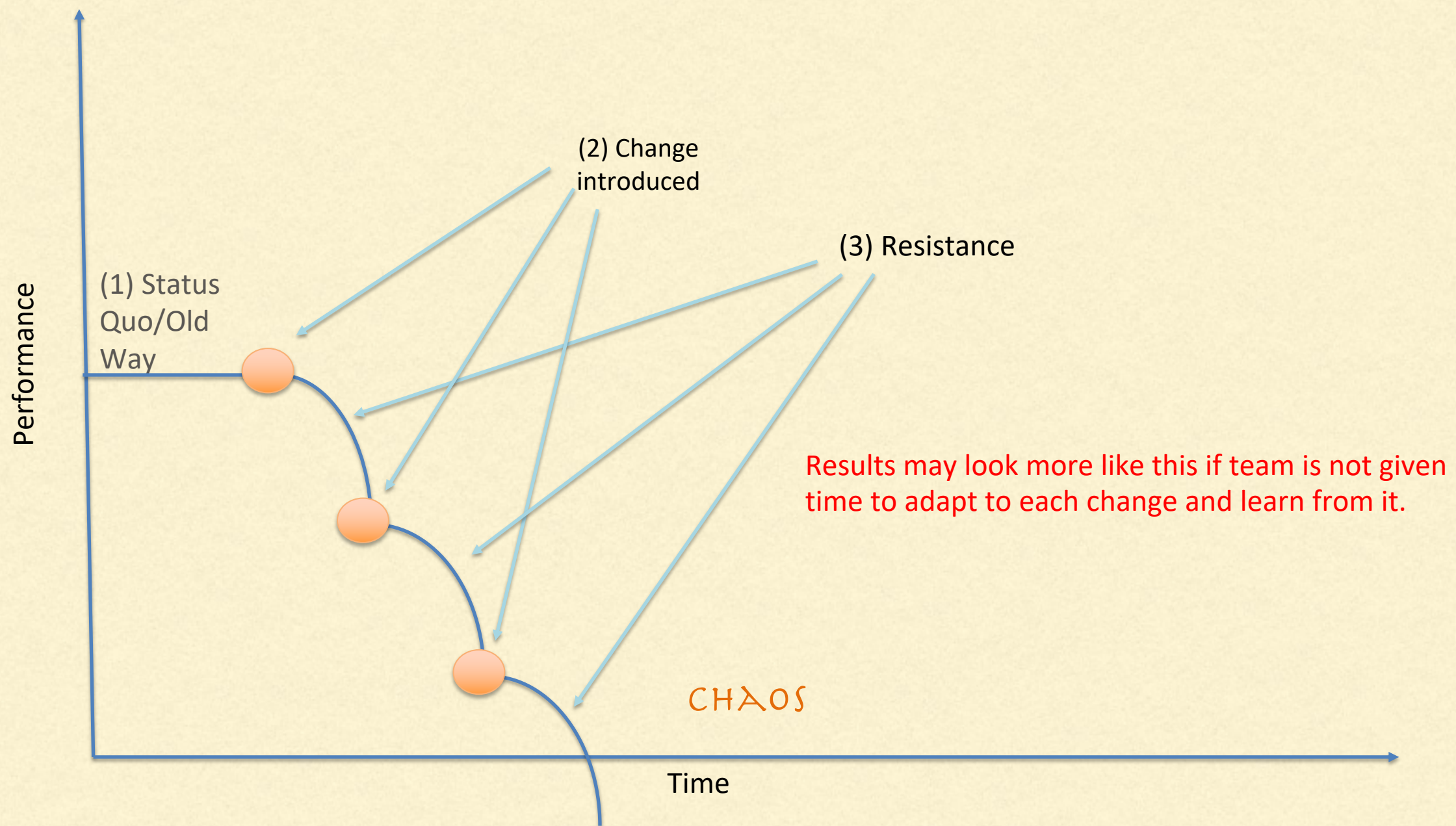




# TOO MUCH CHANGE

Can the team recover?



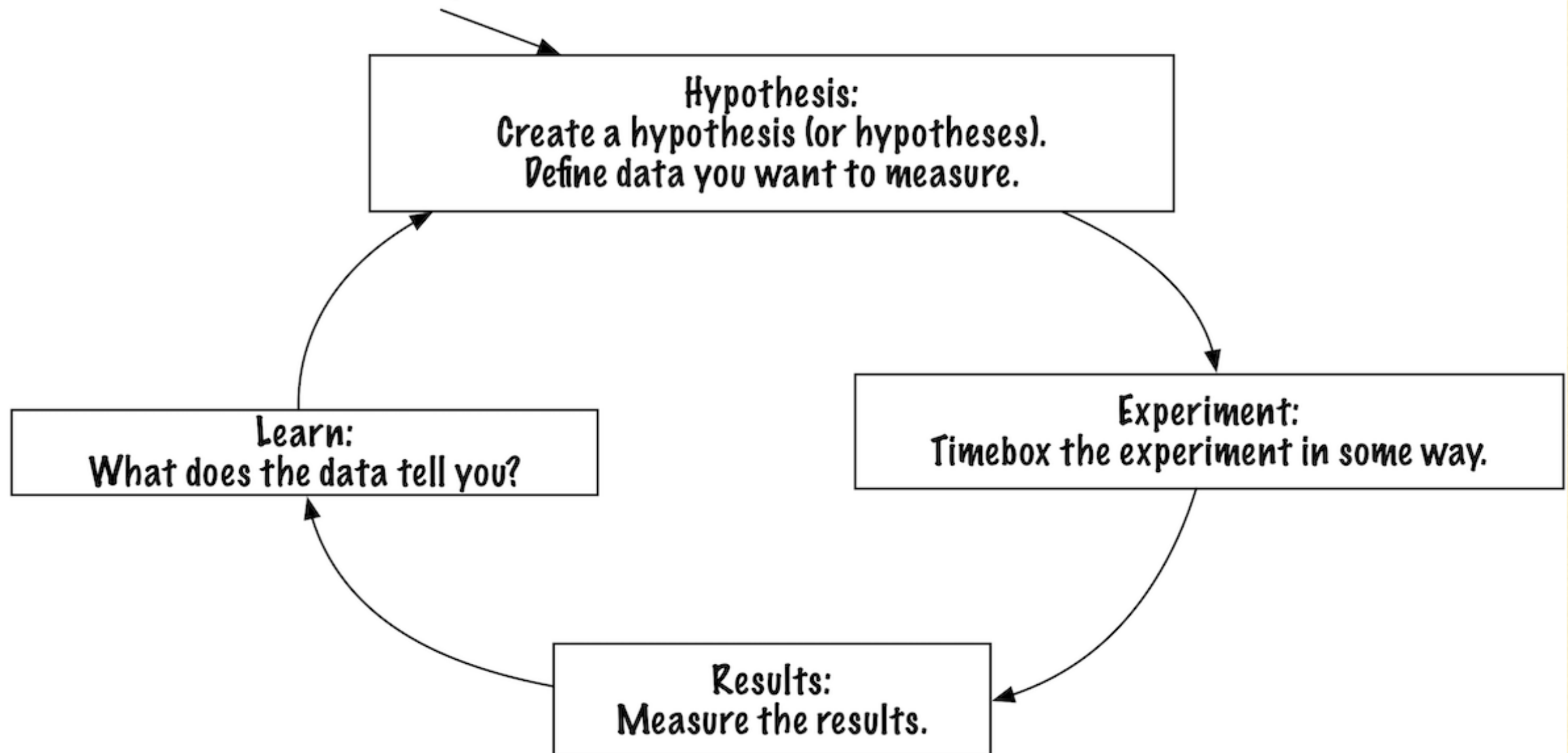


# TOO MANY CHANGES



## The Experimental Loop

The reason for your experiment:  
You suspect a problem.  
You want to learn something.



# SET EXPERIMENTS

To control the chaos



<b>Change:</b>			
<b>Owner:</b>		<b>Mentor:</b>	
<b>Context / scope:</b>		<b>Aligned to objective:</b>	

Hypothesis		Assumptions & Dependencies	
We believe that  will result in  If successful, we might expect to see:		Assumptions (to be validated)	Dependencies (to be resolved)
Risks		Pilot experiments (new A3s)	(owner)
Downside (to be invalidated/mitigated)	Upside (to be nurtured)		
People		Insights	
Directly impacted	Other stakeholders & influencers		







# EXPERIMENT WITH, NOT ON

(no one wants to be a lab rat)



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# Our path today

- WHAT IS A MIND SHIFT?

3 DISCIPLINES FOR LEADING  
DISTRIBUTED TEAMS:

MANAGING CHANGE THROUGH  
EXPERIMENTS

AMPLIFY COMMUNICATION AND  
COLLABORATION

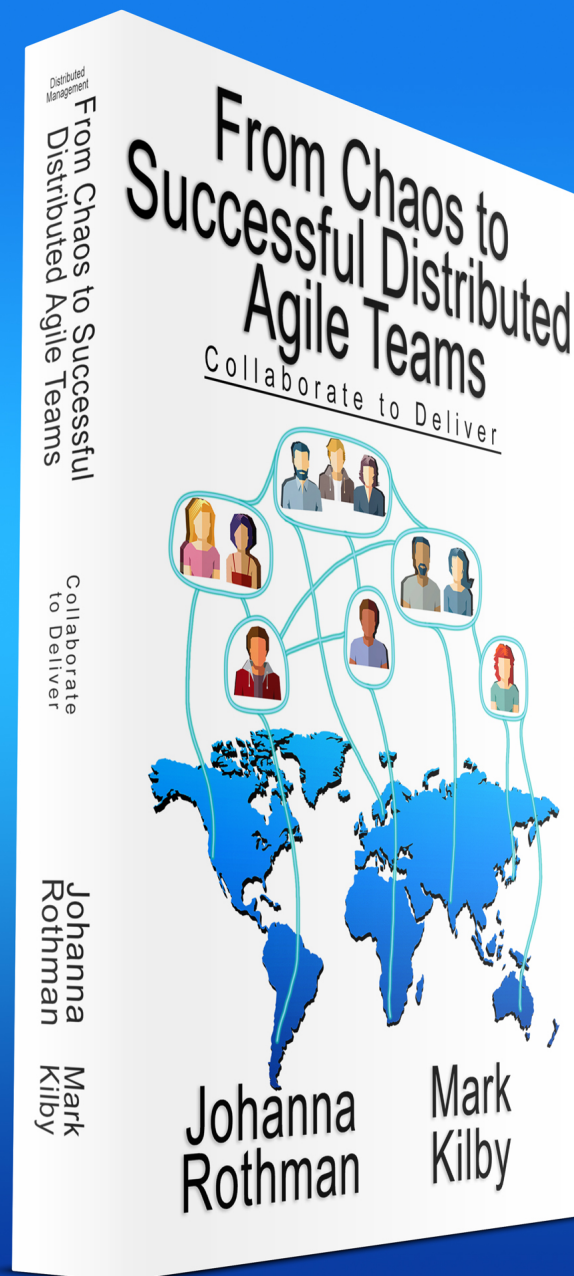
FOCUS ON PRINCIPLES, NOT  
PRACTICES

EXPERIMENTING TO EXPLORE  
MIND SHIFTS





# THANKS! Q&A? NEED MORE?



- Blog & newsletter at <https://www.markkilby.com>
- Twitter: @mkilby
- <http://www.linkedin.com/in/mkilby>
- ONLINE CLASSES at <https://distributedagilesuccess.teachable.com>
- Get the book - <https://www.markkilby.com/sdatbook/>



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