



The Asynchronous Enterprise



Our Story

2011 - 2014



Ukraine



Netherlands



Poland

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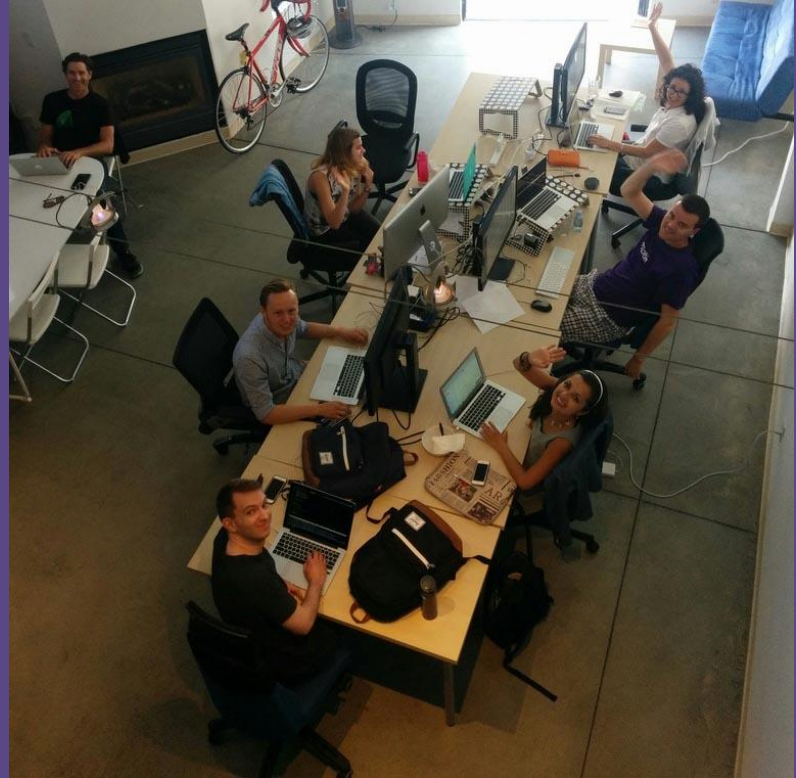
@sarki247 | abuango.me | gitlab.com/abuango

2015

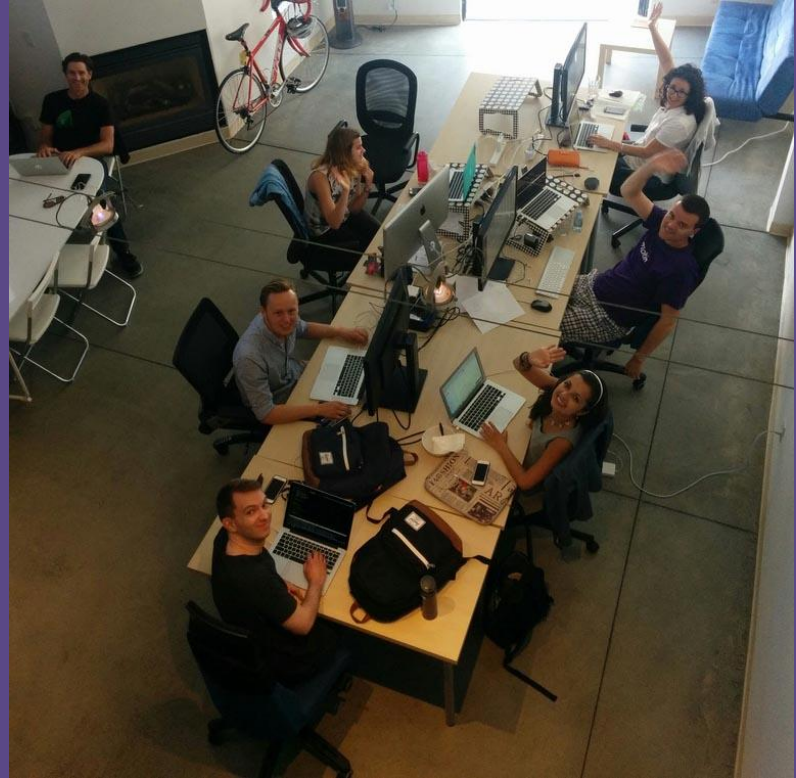
YC



First office



Last office





1300

team-members



67+

countries



offices



About Us



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Developer Evangelism Program Manager

GitLab

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Brendan O'Leary

Sr. Developer Evangelist

GitLab

@olearycrew

The (case for) Asynchronous Enterprise



Situation

- Technology excellence is the new operational excellence
- To find top talent, companies must look outside traditional hubs

Complication

- How do you scale an enterprise without massive overhead?
- ...especially if you're not Google

Question

- How does GitLab make this work?

Answer

Trust



SITUATION



“Software is eating the world”

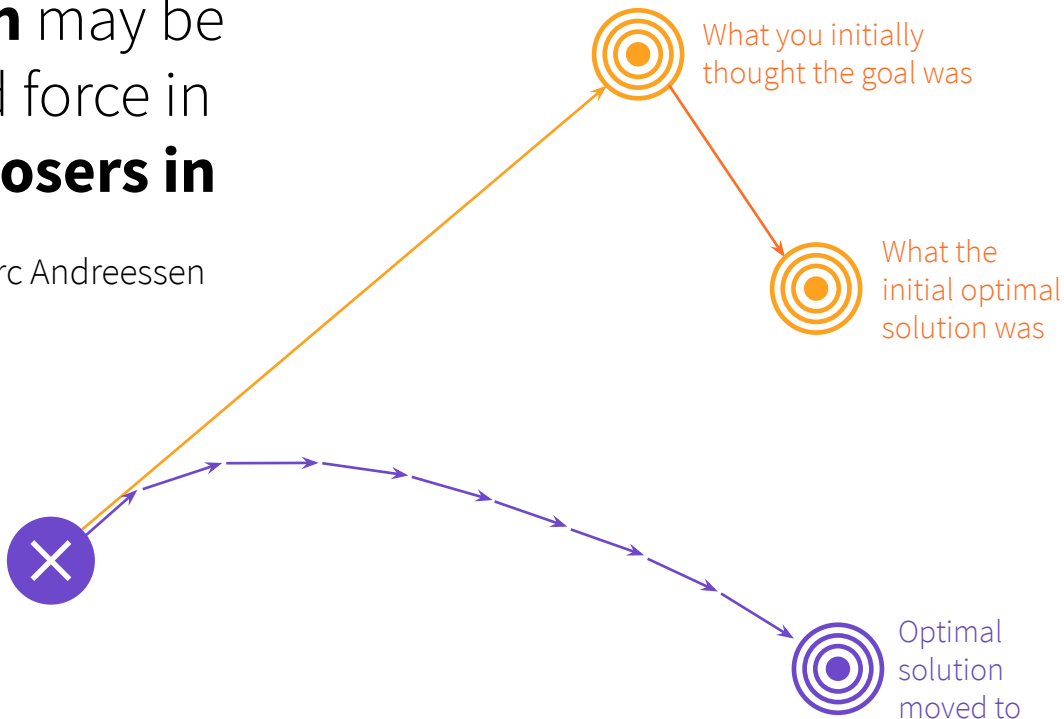
— Marc Andreessen

Speeding Up Release Cycle Time is Critical



Cycle time compression may be the most underestimated force in determining **winners & losers in tech.**

— Marc Andreessen





COMPLICATION

Remote is part of the solution



- **Distributed workforce** is part of the answer
- Just as important, and in some ways harder:
 - Working **asynchronously**
 - Across **cultures** and across **time zones**
 - Invite new perspectives
 - Inclusive of **diverse ways of working**
- Enables unprecedented, yet sustainable growth
- Even though it seems like GitLab has it figured out: **it's a journey, not the destination**



All remote is the future of work, **but it has its challenges.**

The challenges



195

Countries in the world — that many legal systems, each with its own nuance

6000

Linguistic cultures in the world — defining values can be challenging

38

Local time zones in use — productivity challenges when working round the clock, literally



QUESTION



...from @ChloeCondon on Twitter



***There's as much to unlearn
as there is to learn.***

-- Basecamp Handbook



ANSWER

An aerial view of a large group of people, mostly wearing blue t-shirts, gathered on a grassy field. Many of them have their arms raised in the air, suggesting a celebratory or energetic event. In the background, there are trees, a building, and a sign that reads "Lafitte's Bar". Two large, stylized, colorful structures resembling torches or flags are visible in the foreground, one on the left and one on the right. The entire image has a semi-transparent blue overlay.

Everyone can contribute



Values

Collaboration

Results

Efficiency

Diversity & Inclusion

Iteration

Transparency

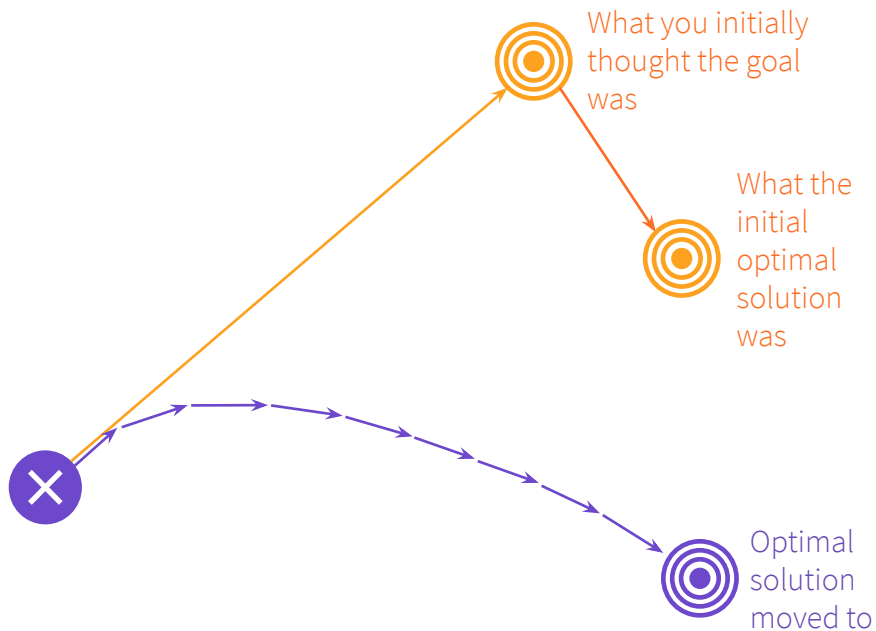
Iteration - quick small steps



An iterative approach enables all-remote because each iteration is an opportunity to **continually adjust scope** in small steps

Small steps require **less coordination**

Reducing the need for coordination enables **async workflows across time zones**



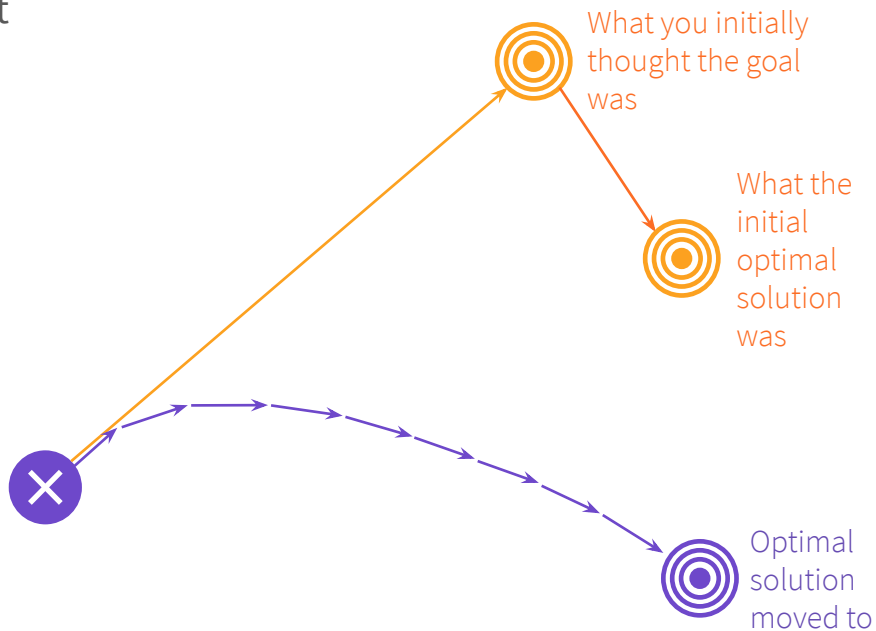
How we iterate



MVC (Minimum Viable Change): Enables fast iteration

DRI (Directly Responsible Individual):
enables decision velocity

Open merge requests: For async collaboration



Transparency - Record by default



We need to record everything because hyper-growth means we cannot afford to **train** people in meetings

Recording by default enables **self-paced learning and discovery**

By recording everything, the sender can send links and **avoid wasting valuable time** holding meetings or getting interrupted by the same questions

The receiver can move faster, avoid waiting around, **access the best version of the information**, and get the message from the most reliable source



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Efficiency

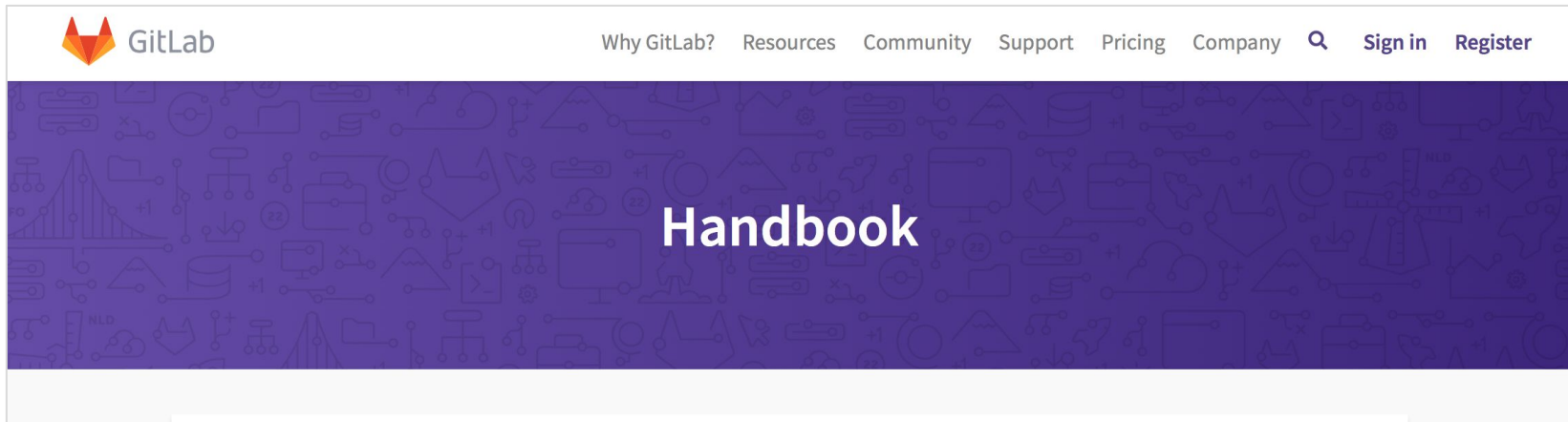


Write promises down: Agree in writing on measurable goals.

Bias for Action: Decisions should be thoughtful, but delivering fast results requires the fearless acceptance of occasionally making mistakes.

Responsibility over rigidity: Give people the responsibility to make a decision and hold them accountable for that instead of imposing rules and approval processes..

Write down promises



Handbook-first: Single source of truth

Public by default: Recorded video calls, open meetings, open access to metrics and OKRs (investor update, Periscope, etc.), open issue tracker and comment section below blog posts and docs

Communication Guidelines



- **Everything is in draft:** At GitLab we rarely put draft on any content or proposals. Everything is always in draft and subject to change.
- **Everything starts with a Merge Request:** An MR is associated with a specific change that is proposed and transparent for everyone to review and openly discuss.
- **Use Public Channels:** If you use Slack and plan to message 3 or more people, we recommend a channel for customer/issue/project/problem/partnership..
- **Say thanks:** Thank people that did a great job in our "Thanks" Slack channel.
- **MECEFU terms:** Mutually Exclusive Collectively Exhaustive Few words Ubiquitous-language.

Trust

A top-down view of a rowing team in a scull on a body of water. The team consists of six rowers, each with their own oar, working in unison. The water is dark and rippled, and the scull is a light color, creating a strong contrast.

Build Trust and Community - Video calls are your friend



Video calls are key for discussion and information sharing, much better than an audio call

- Daily team calls and group conversations
- Virtual coffee breaks and remote coworking
- AMAs (Ask Me Anything) with leaders and board members

Time in person is very important, focused on relationship building instead of work

- Travel stipend
- Local meetups
- Contribute! Without putting you through company presentations



Spreading aloha on a GitLab company call



The upside for families and friends

Time for kids, spouses, and partners

Flexibility in how you allocate your time

Ability to **move** closer to loved ones

“If one spouse commutes longer than 45 minutes, that couple is 40% more likely to get divorced.”

Urban Studies Academic Journal, Til Work Do Us Part



Family and friends first, work second



Brendan O'Leary

00:55

Thanks GitLab (and [@sytse](#) & [@klawrence](#)) for caring so much about work life balance.

1) First time in my career that I took off for the full winter break for my kids/wife (who is a teacher).

2) Much easier transition coming back from paternity then I've ever had (kid 4).

Being at home & being able to step away to help is so much better than commuting into an office and not being able to help



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Thank you!

Follow @GitLab, @sarki247

[about.gitlab.com/company/
culture/all-remote/](https://about.gitlab.com/company/culture/all-remote/)



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