



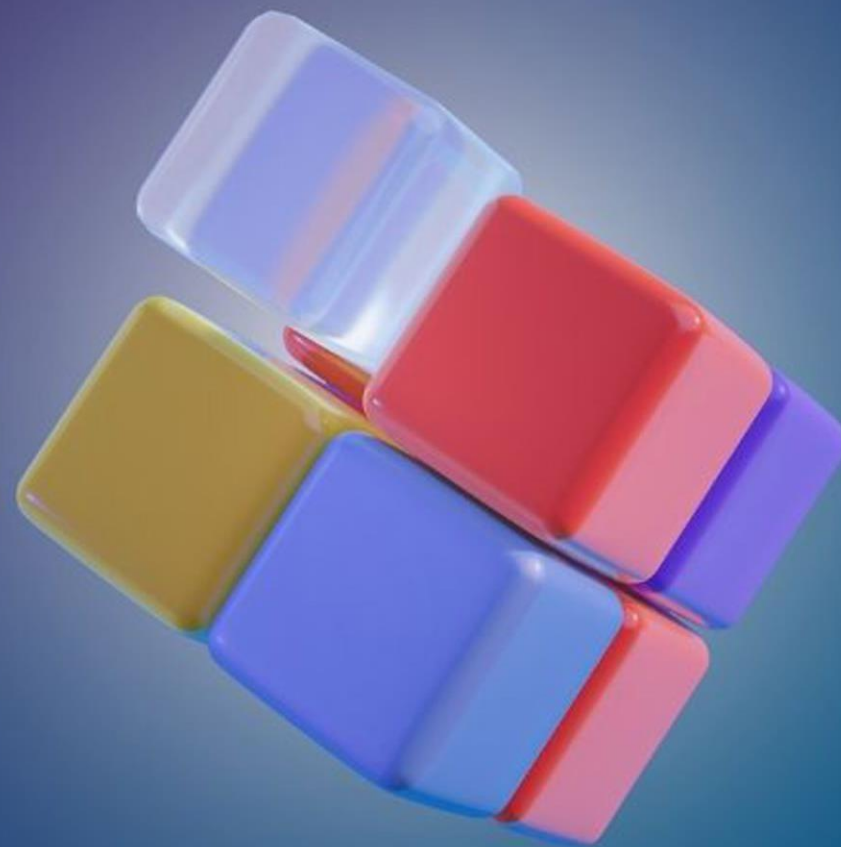
UHR Conference 2025

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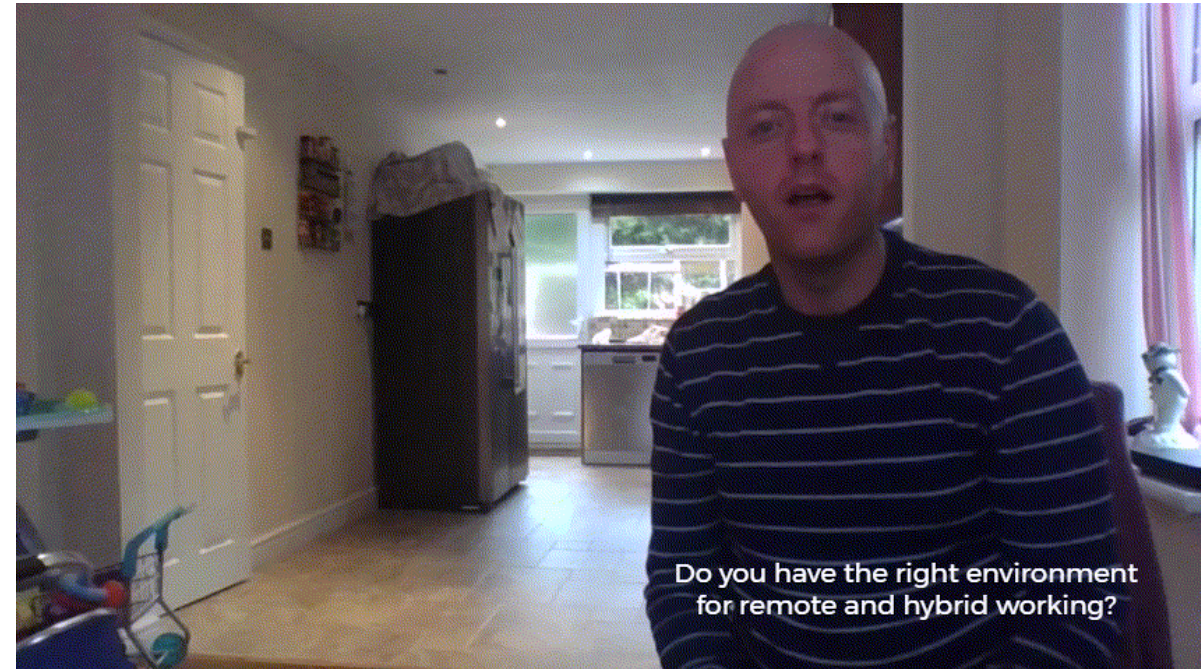
Building culture and engagement in a hybrid workforce

Gary Cookson

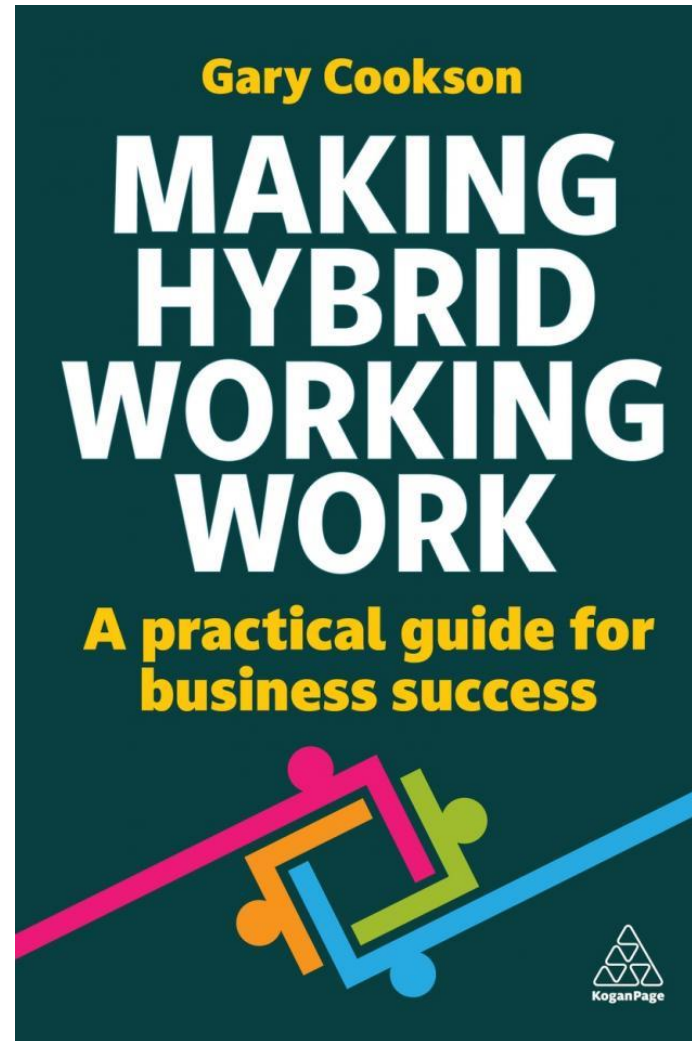
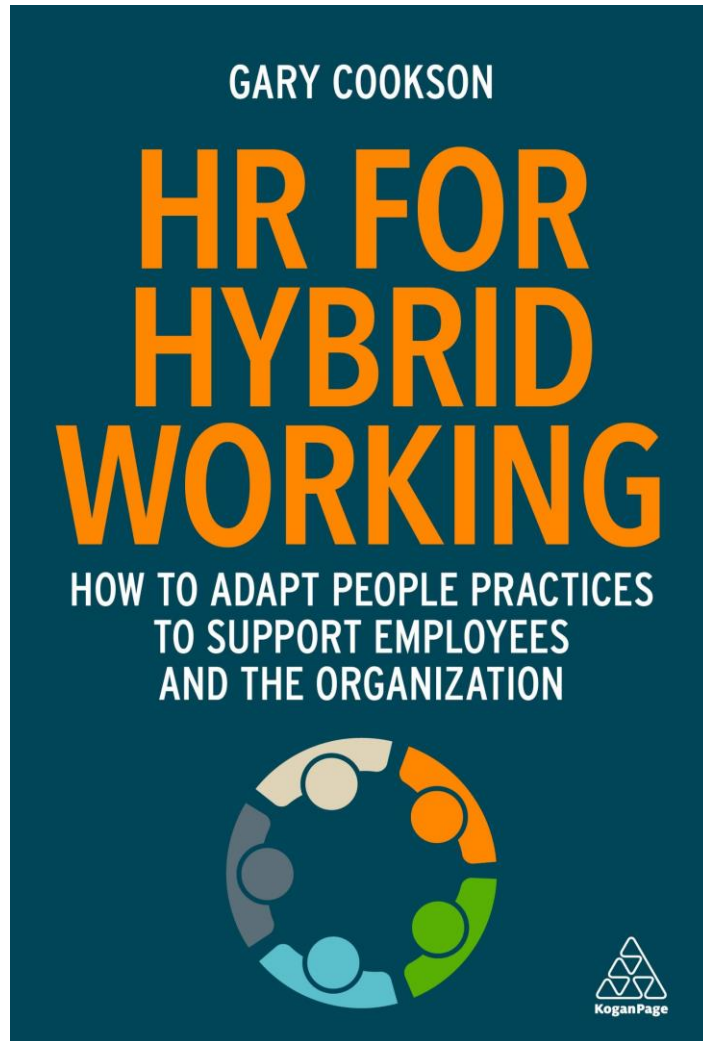


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EVOLVE-PERFORM-IMPROVE-COMPETE



Coming soon...

The Squeezed
Middle

The role of the
middle manager in
the modern world
of work

Available to order from Amazon, Waterstones, Kogan Page etc

Why are we
still talking
about hybrid
working?



**Manchester United
Bans Remote Work:
Come Back To Office
Or 'Seek Alternative
Employment'**

**Asda Mandates Office Return to
Counter Sales Decline**

**Boots promises better
office wifi and food as it
calls workers back five
days a week – but will it
be enough?**

HMLR staff
could strike
following
plans to
mandate
office return

Working from home is 'not
proper work', says ex-Asda
boss

Amazon Mandates
a Return to Office 5
Days a Week: Will
Other Companies
Follow Suit?

Headline
news?



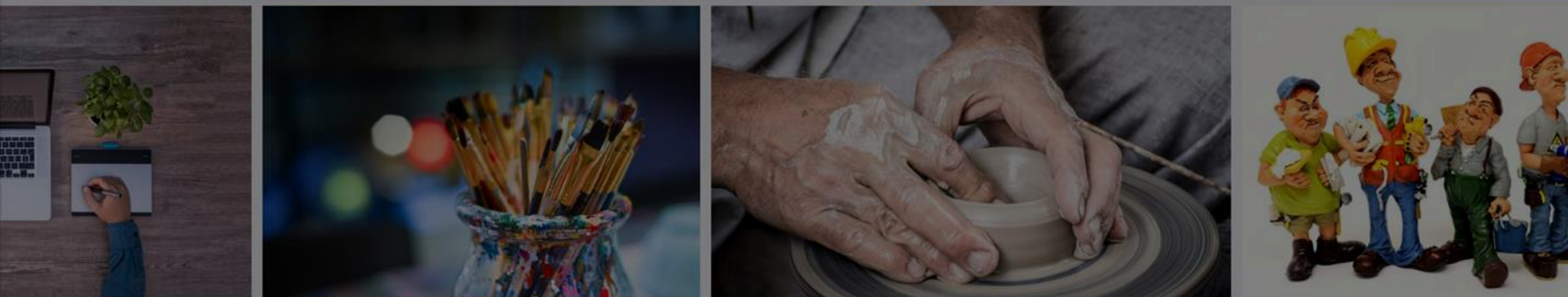
What even IS
hybrid?

A fixed point in
space and time



Can you
compare?







We all want to be seen as special...



If all you have is a hammer, you'll treat everything like a nail





What motivates candidates?

- 75% Flexible hours
- 62% Remote work
- 48% Extra holidays
- 16% Wellbeing benefits
- 11% Employee discounts
- 8% Office perks eg free snacks
- 3% Onsite social events

Gallup's Global Workforce Survey 2025

- 21% of employees are engaged
- 62% are emotionally detached
- 17% are downright miserable



What
happens
when we
mandate?







Don't count the days – make the days count

BROLGA
@BROLGA

HOW

WHO

?

WHAT

WHEN

WHY

WHERE



Personalisation in life –
but not in work?



A new leadership and
management ask?



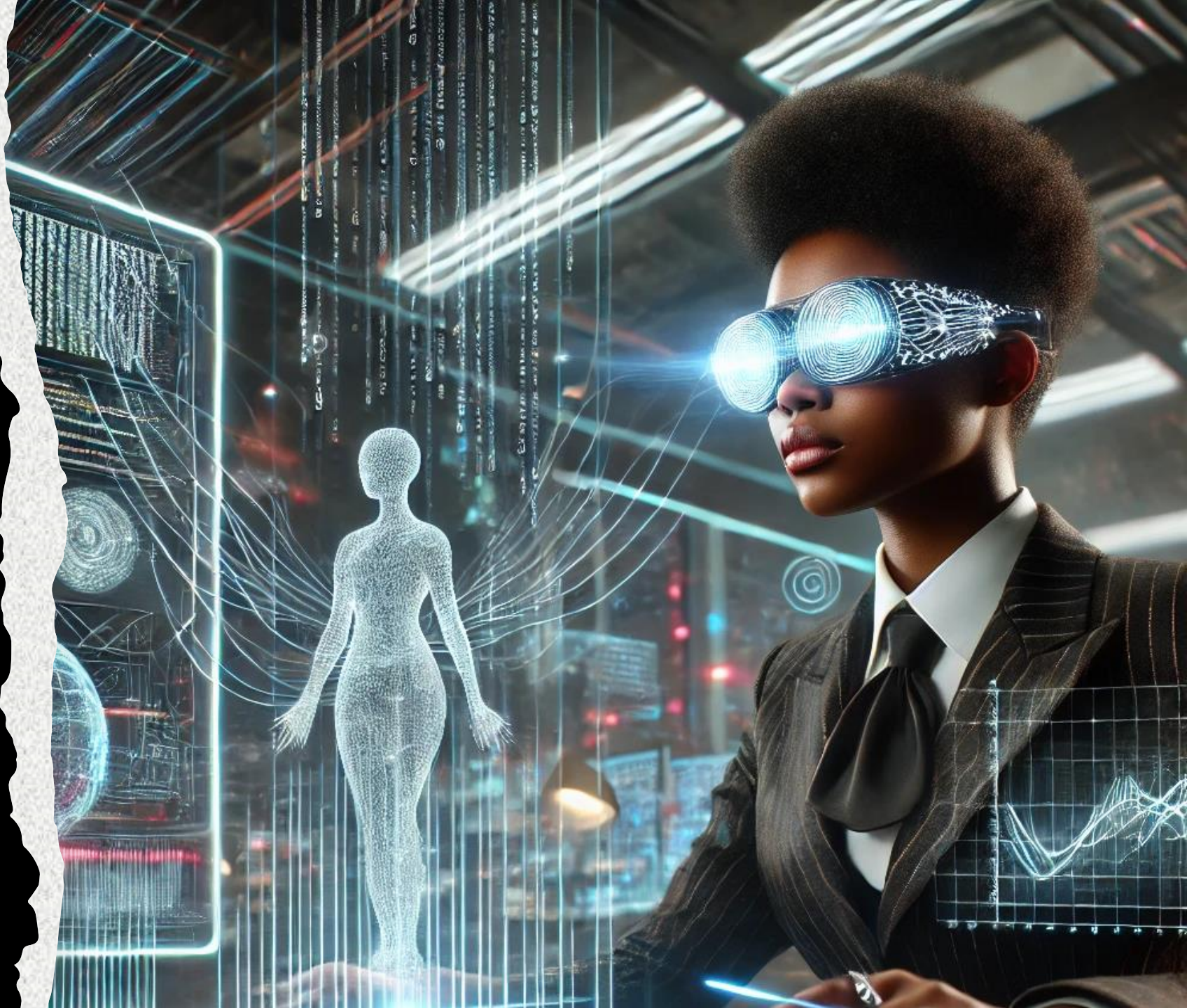
How do you think
the role of a leader
or manager has
evolved?

A new leadership and
management ask?



Sensory
deprivation?

Using the
right data the
right way



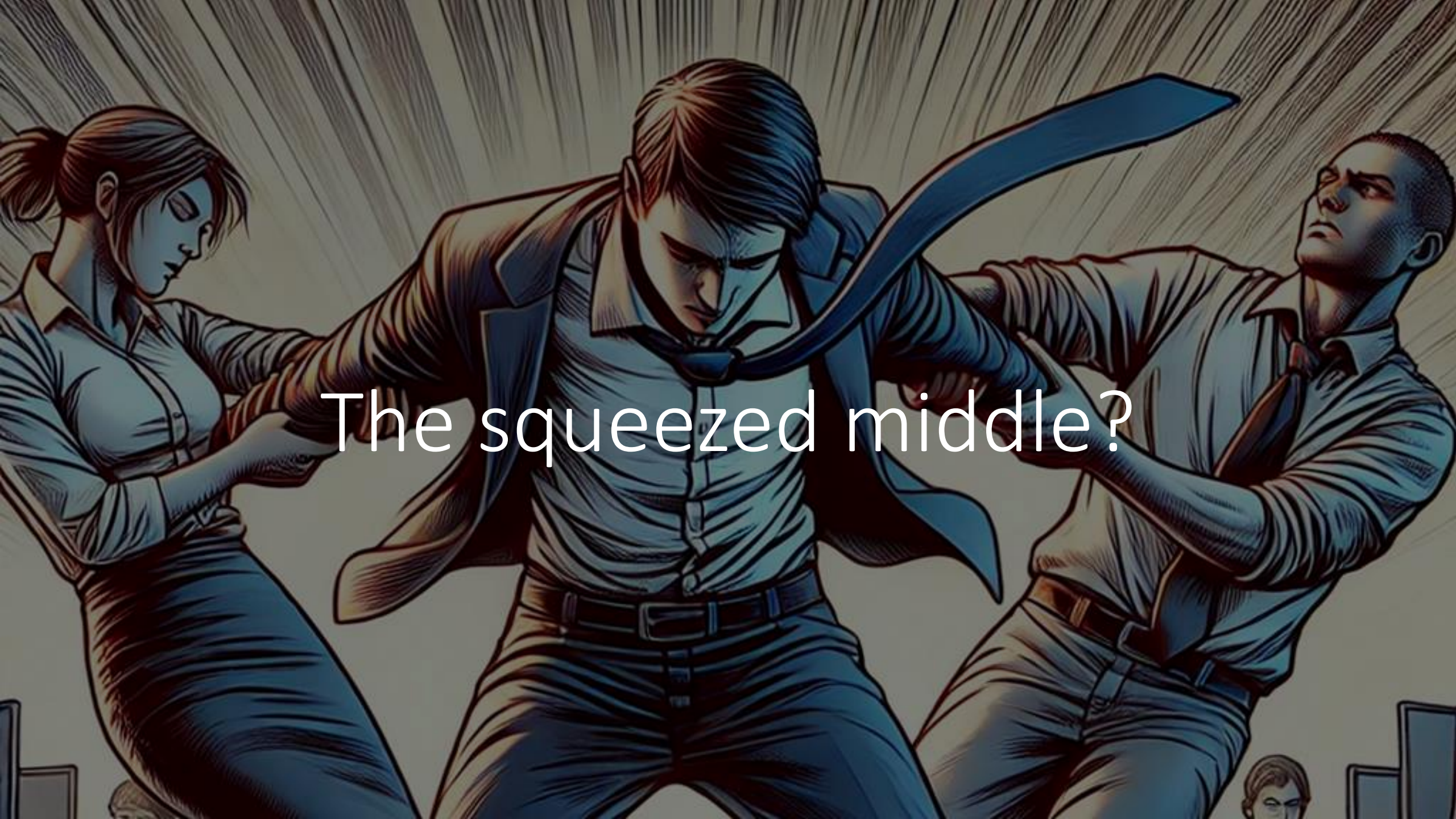


The struggle is real

- 85% say that the shift to hybrid work has made it challenging to have confidence that employees are being productive
- 12% have full confidence that their team is productive, compared to 87% of employees who feel they are productive

Microsoft, 2022





The squeezed middle?



A photograph of a collaborative workspace. Three people are seated around a rustic wooden table. On the right, a man in a red shirt and glasses is focused on a laptop. In the center, a person in a dark grey t-shirt is partially visible. On the left, a woman in a dark blue shirt has her arms crossed. The table is cluttered with work items: an open notebook with a pen, a closed red notebook, two glasses of iced coffee (one in a mason jar, one in a glass), a pair of glasses, and a small red object. The scene is lit with warm, natural light, creating a professional yet relaxed atmosphere.

Building teams

Learning
new skills




What are you doing
to develop your
leaders for the new
world of work?



Can we retain
“culture” if we
don’t work
physically
alongside each
other?




A close-up of a camera lens, showing its internal elements and the reflection of a cityscape. The background is a blurred bokeh of purple, pink, and blue lights.

“(remote and hybrid)
work doesn’t kill
organisational culture.

It reveals it.”

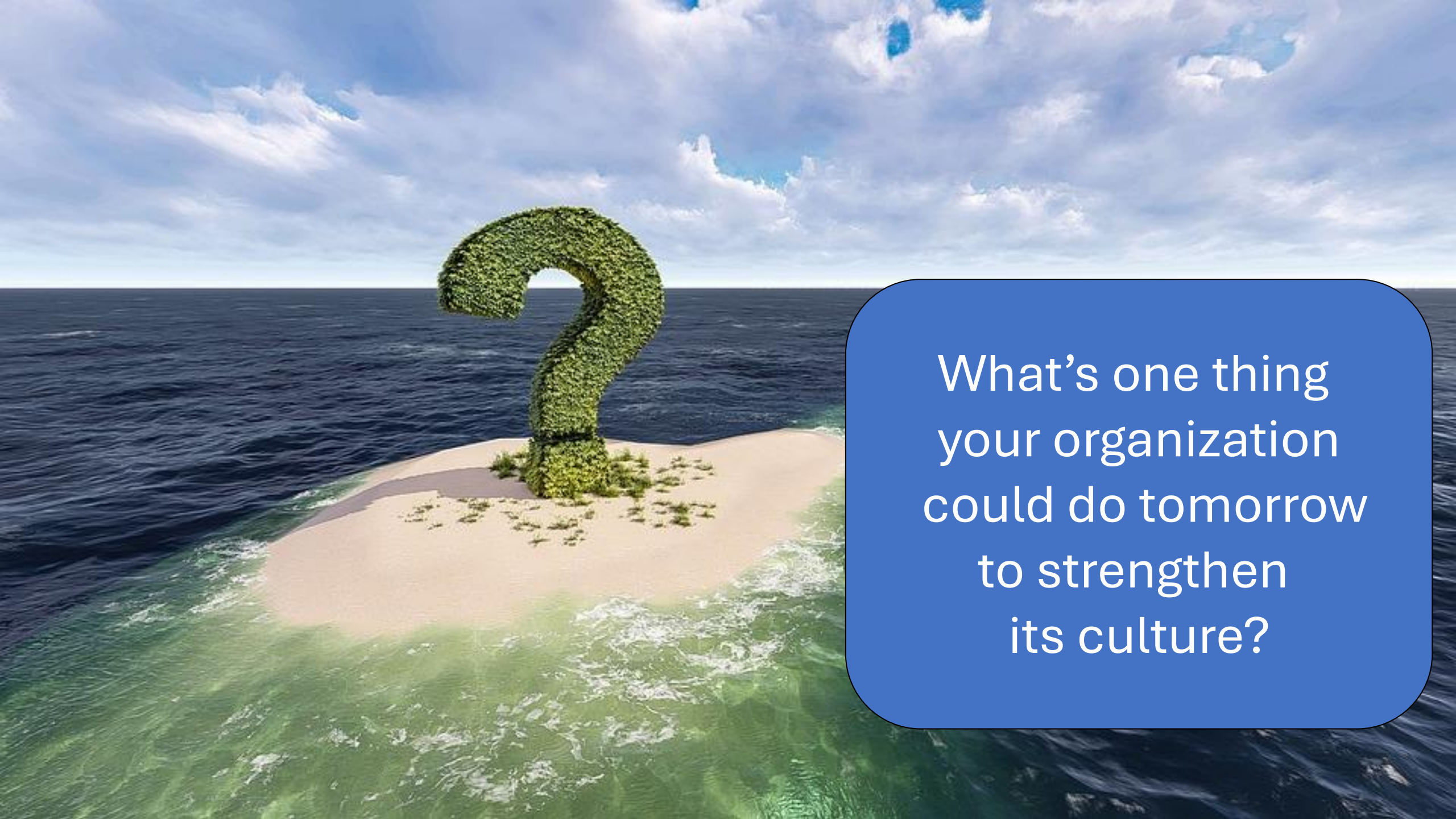
Chris Herd, 2023





Relationships
matter, not
the location

purpose

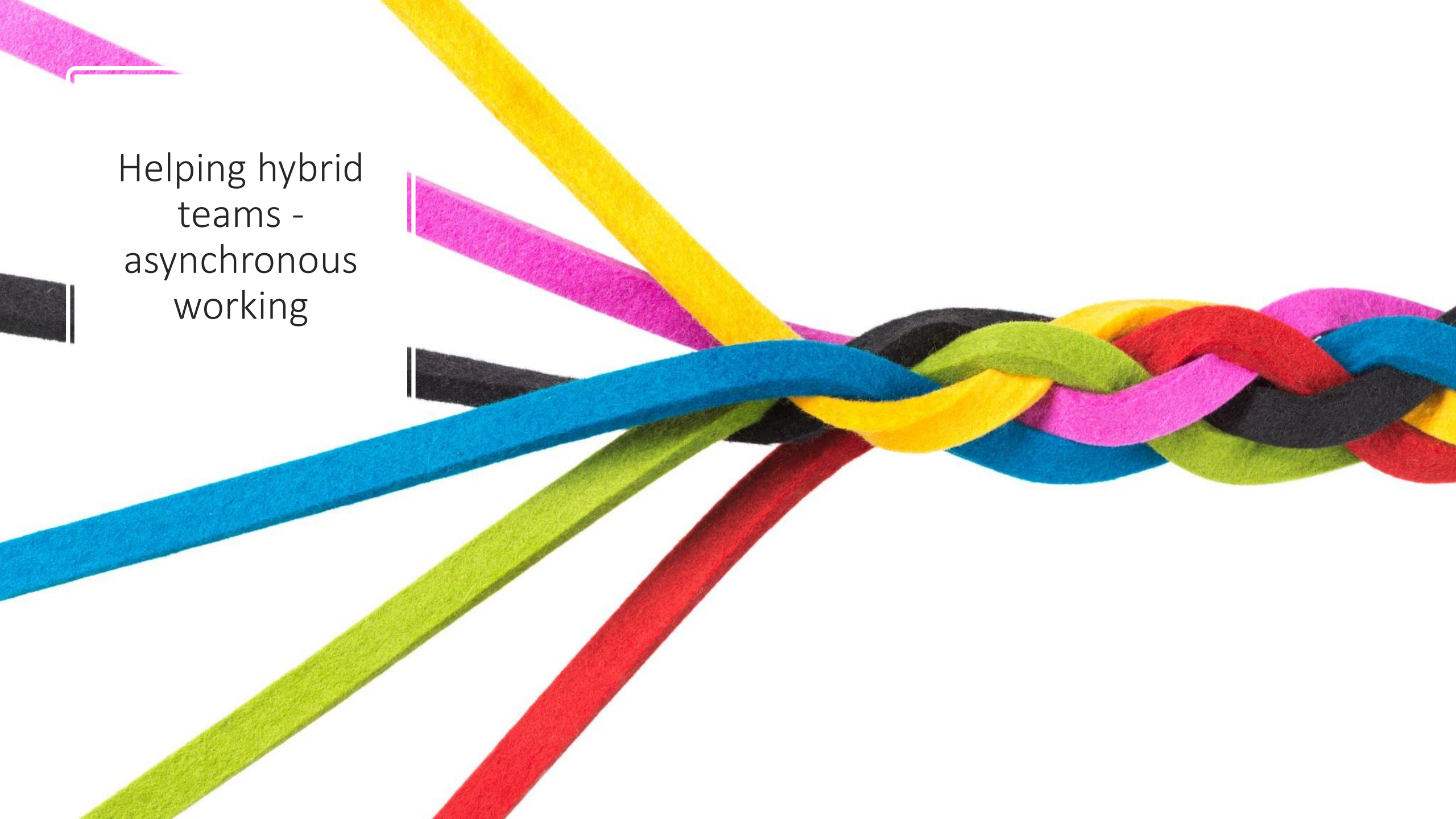


What's one thing
your organization
could do tomorrow
to strengthen
its culture?

Helping
hybrid teams



Helping hybrid
teams -
asynchronous
working



What help are you
giving hybrid teams?
What help will you
plan to give them?





Learning how to work, not how to do your work

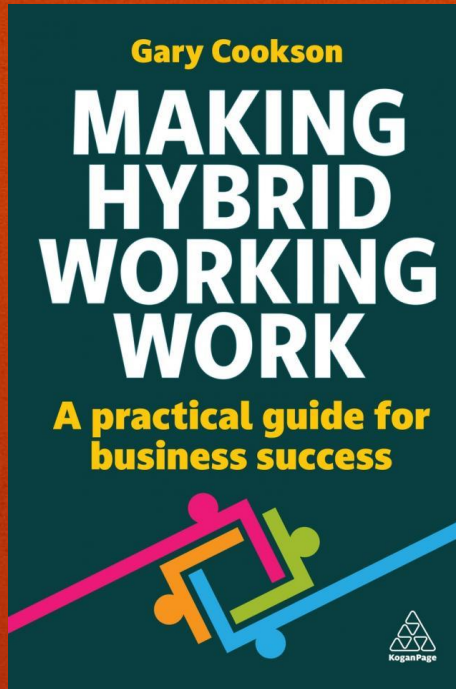
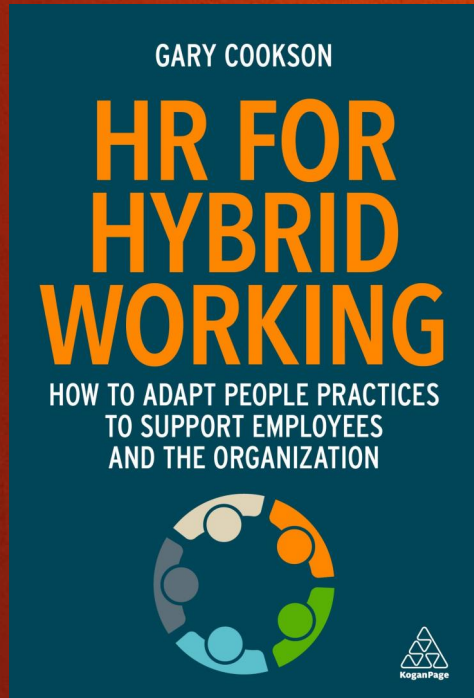
Supporting
those already
in work





Key takeaways

- Hybrid is more than just deciding on a days of the week split
- Mandating isn't the way forward
- Leaders are struggling to unlearn and relearn
- Culture isn't linked to a physical location but to quality of relationships
- Teams need support to work effectively
- Individuals must relearn how to work



Coming soon...

The Squeezed Middle

The role of the middle manager in the modern world of work



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