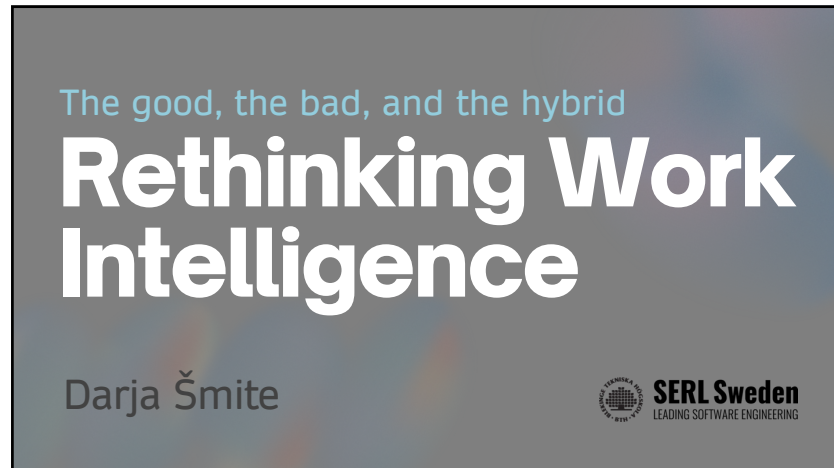




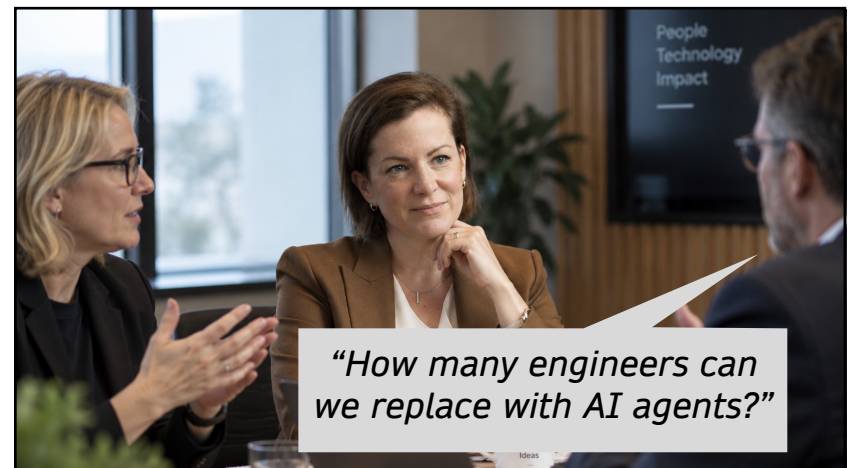
1



2



3



4

Remote work and AI are making individuals increasingly productive

5

But teams and organizations are not working better.

6



7

What conditions help people and teams do their best work?

8



- Researched distributed work for 20+ years
- Led research on remote/hybrid work since 2020
- Collected evidence from companies across the globe, including Spotify, Ericsson, Telenor, SONY, Storebrand, Swedbank, Sparebank1, Vend, Tietoevry, IKEA, ...

Darja Šmite



9

How did we start our day before 2020?



10

Old routines

- Wake up
- Morning shower
- Breakfast
- Commute to work
- Stand up with the team
- Joint problem-solving
- Lunch out with the team
- Mentoring, helping out
- Meetings
- Commute home
- Family time
- Bedtime



11

And then came the pandemic...

12



13



14

"The good" of remote work

Individual level gains

- More flexibility
- More focus, better productivity
- More autonomy
- More free time thanks to no commuting

"I can take a walk in the middle of the day"

"I can make much healthier food choices"

"When I am stuck, I can go to the gym or for a run and then good ideas suddenly emerge"

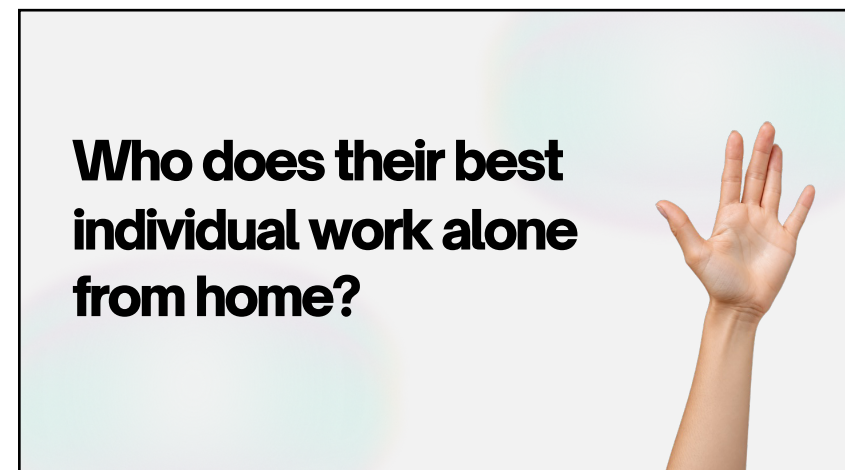
"I can maximize my work window to the peak of my personal productivity"

"I can spend more time with my family"

READ MORE

D Smitte, A Tkachik, NB Moe, E Papatheocharous, E Klotins, and MP Buwik.(2022). Changes in perceived productivity of software engineers during COVID-19 pandemic: The voice of evidence. Journal of Systems and Software 186, 111197.

15



16

Do you think a software team does its best work when everybody works alone from home?



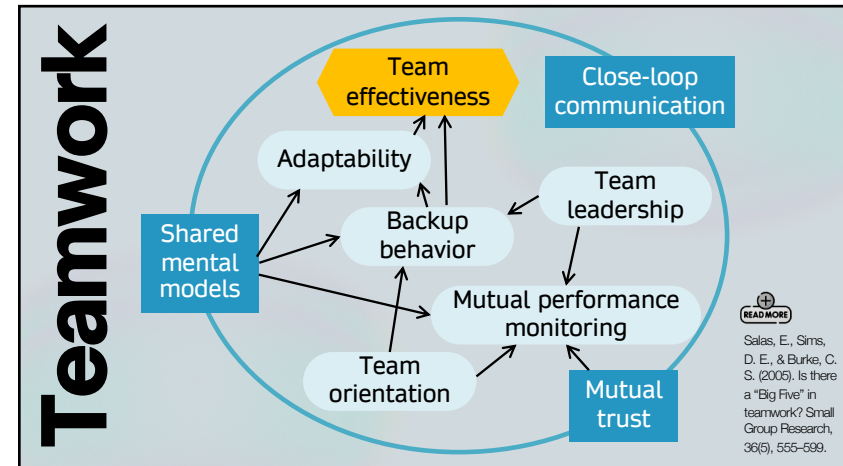
17

What is good for the **individual is not automatically good for the **team**.**

18

What makes **teams work better together?**

19



20

Information sources when moving from onsite to remote work



Unchanged

- Issue trackers:** Task-specific information
- Wiki:** Long-lasting documentation
- Communication channels:** Video-calls, Chats, Phone, Emails
- Corporate gatherings:** Christmas dinners, Retreats

Moved online

- Information radiators:** Announcements, Physical boards
- In-person meetings:** Status Update, Tactical Decisions
- In-person workshops:** Planning, Codesign sessions, Retrospectives, Strategic decisions
- One-on-one meetings:** Critical conversations
- Convivial moments:** Coffee together, Lunch breaks, Afterwork, Pub
- Random conversations:** Elevator gossip, Is everything OK? Jokes, Meeting tails
- Informal signals:** Observable behavior, Mood, Workload and stress, Dress code

21

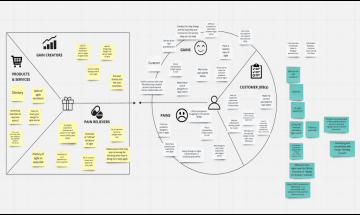
Less informal knowledge sharing

INFORMATION RADIATOR



PRE-PANDEMIC

NON RADIATING BOARDS



FULLY REMOTE

22

How we hold meetings changed

STAND-UP MEETINGS



PRE-PANDEMIC

"STAND-UP" MEETINGS



FULLY REMOTE

23

AN ONSITE STAND-UP

A DIGITAL STAND-UP MEETING

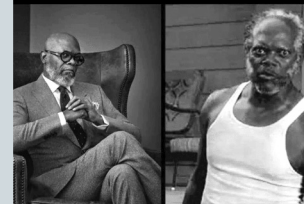
24

We still have many meetings, but are we engaged?

25

Online meetings are fatiguing

ZOOM MEETINGS



Digital participation in meetings is more tiring than onsite participation, especially for the moderators.

Engagement in the digital meetings drops faster due to “Zoom” fatigue, or multitasking behaviours. Video-off also contributes to lower engagement.



Grassi, D., Calefato, F., Smitte, D., Novelli, N., & Lanubile, F. (2025). Exploring engagement in hybrid meetings. In ACM/IEEE International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement (ESEM) (pp. 80-91).

26

No camera meetings are not engaging

ONSITE STATUS MEETINGS



PRE-PANDEMIC

DIGITAL STATUS MEETINGS

not here	bad hair	stressed	in bad	who knows?	sharing space
shy	low bandwidth	sharing space	my kid is here	stressed	broken webcam
low bandwidth	who knows?	bad connection	embarrassed	who knows?	sharing space
young settings	sharing space	phoned in	stressed	low bandwidth	in bathroom
who knows?	embarrassed	in bad	who knows?	embarrassed	who knows?
low bandwidth	shy	who knows?	not here	who knows?	mean is here
					bad connection

FULLY REMOTE



Grassi, D., Calefato, F., Smitte, D., Novelli, N., & Lanubile, F. (2025). Exploring engagement in hybrid meetings. In ACM/IEEE International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering and Measurement (ESEM) (pp. 80-91).

27

Multitasking makes us less engaged too

WALK & TALKING



EATING

BROWSING



COOKING

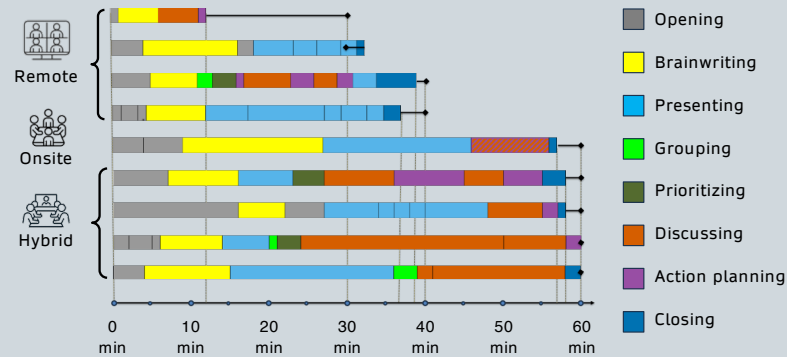
CHATTING



DRIVING

28

Depth of retrospectives changed



29

Lower psychological safety

Behaviors harder to perform remotely:

- Speak up in meetings
- Provide critical feedback or disagreeing
- Ask questions that reveal a lack of knowledge
- Request feedback on unfinished work results
- Ask each other for help

Remoters can feel like second class citizens and withdraw in hybrid meetings



A Tkachik, D Šmite, N.H Andersen, NB Moe. What happens to psychological safety when going remote? IEEE Software, 2022, 41(1): 113-122

30

Unchanged

Issue trackers: Task-specific information

Wiki: Long-lasting documentation

Communication channels: Video-calls, Chats, Phone, Emails

Corporate gatherings: Christmas dinners, Retreats

Moved online

Information radiators: Announcements, Physical boards

In-person meetings: Status Update, Tactical Decisions

In-person workshops: Planning, Codesign sessions, Retrospectives, Strategic decisions

One-on-one meetings: Critical conversations

Convivial moments: Coffee together, Lunch breaks, Afterwork, Pub

Random conversations: Elevator gossip, Is everything OK? Jokes, Meeting tails

Informal signals: Observable behavior, Mood, Workload and stress, Dress code



Information sources when moving from onsite to remote work

31

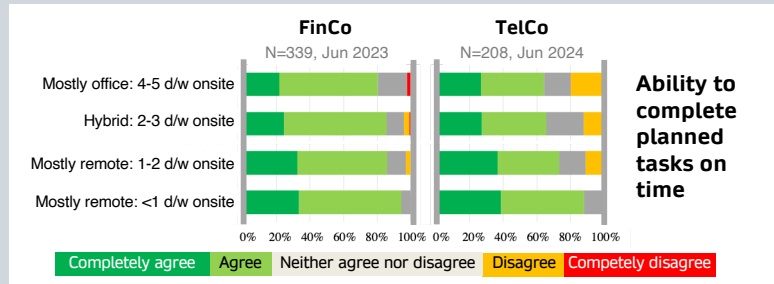
So, are we more productive?



Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Chatzipetrou, P., Godlauskas, P., Holland, P. K., & Tkachik, A. (2025). Trust vs. control: comparing flexible and restrictive hybrid work policies in two software companies. In Proceedings of the EASE Conference (pp. 535-545)

32

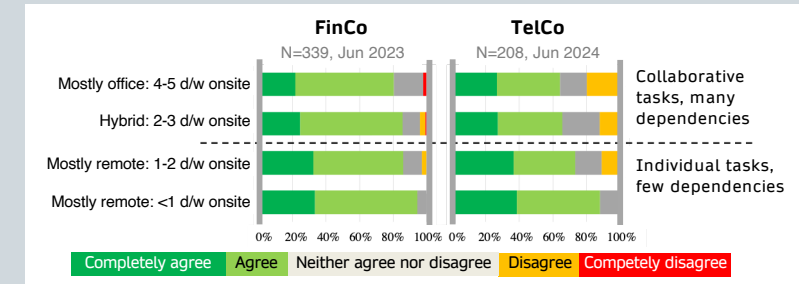
So, are we more productive?



Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Chatzipetrou, P., Godlauskas, P., Helland, P. K., & Tkalech, A. (2025). Trust vs. control: comparing flexible and restrictive hybrid work policies in two software companies. In Proceedings of the EASE Conference (pp. 535-545)

33

So, are we more productive?



Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Chatzipetrou, P., Godlauskas, P., Helland, P. K., & Tkalech, A. (2025). Trust vs. control: comparing flexible and restrictive hybrid work policies in two software companies. In Proceedings of the EASE Conference (pp. 535-545)

34

During the pandemic we learned to individualize tasks way too well

35

We continue reducing dependencies, effectively avoiding teamwork

36

“The bad” of remote work

Team level losses

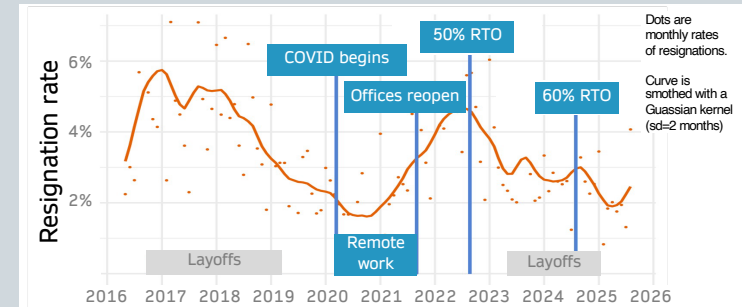
- Less awareness of what colleagues are working on
- Less impactful contributions to the team
- Decreased ability to make decisions as a team
- A decrease in the ability to brainstorm with team members
- Difficulty to communicate with colleagues

 D Smita, A Tkachik, NB Moa, E Papatheocharous, E Klotins, and MP Buvik.(2022). Changes in perceived productivity of software engineers during COVID-19 pandemic: The voice of evidence. Journal of Systems and Software 186, 111197.

Miller C, Rodeghero P, Storey MA, Ford D, Zimmermann T. "How was your weekend?" Software development teams working from home during COVID-19. In Proc. IEEE/ ACM 43th International Conference on Software Engineering, 2021, pp. 624-636

37

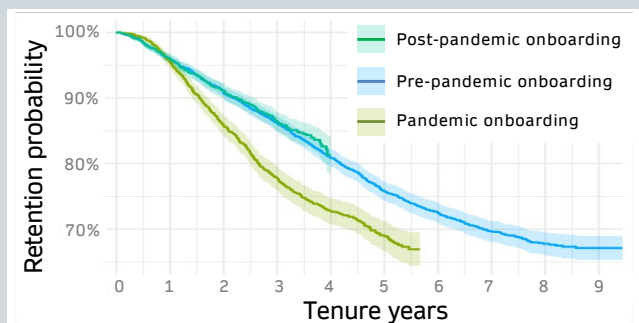
Resignations peaked after COVID



 D Smita and F Zieris. A Wave of Resignations in the Aftermath of Remote Onboarding. Journal of Systems and Software, 112872, 2026

38

Remotely onboarded quit earlier



 D Smita and F Zieris. A Wave of Resignations in the Aftermath of Remote Onboarding. Journal of Systems and Software, 112872, 2026

39

Building meaningful relationships

- Employees with low office presence report **problems with building relationships** at work and **getting sufficient peer support**
- Not having someone to talk about one's day-to-day problems correlates with **poor sense of belonging and retention**



40

**Social interactions
do **still matter!****

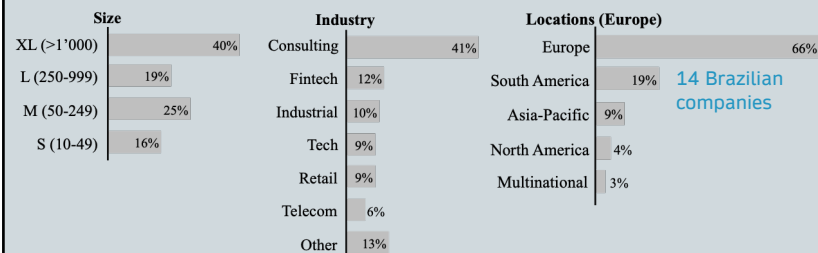
41

**One of the easy ways
to boost interactions
is to mandate office work**



42

A study of work policies from 68 tech companies worldwide



D Smitte, NB Moe, MT Baldassarre, F Calefato, GH Travassos, M Floryan, et al. Who* Controls* Where Work Shall be Done? State-of-Practice in Post-Pandemic Remote Work Regulation. 2025. Under review in the Journal of Systems and Software.

43

50% are office-oriented

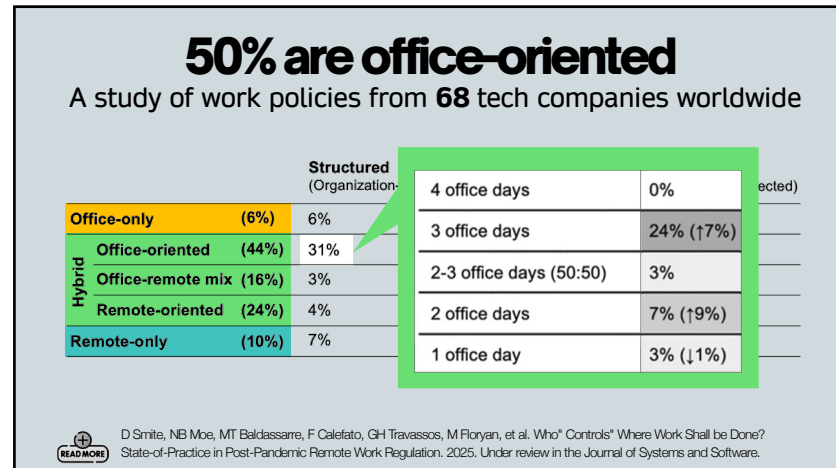
A study of work policies from 68 tech companies worldwide

		Structured (Organization-directed)	Flexible (Employee-directed)	Variable (Teams/managers-directed)
Office-only	(6%)	6%	—	—
Office-oriented	(44%)	31%	4%	9%
Office-remote mix	(16%)	3%	9%	4%
Remote-oriented	(24%)	4%	15%	4%
Remote-only	(10%)	7%	3%	—



D Smitte, NB Moe, MT Baldassarre, F Calefato, GH Travassos, M Floryan, et al. Who* Controls* Where Work Shall be Done? State-of-Practice in Post-Pandemic Remote Work Regulation. 2025. Under review in the Journal of Systems and Software.

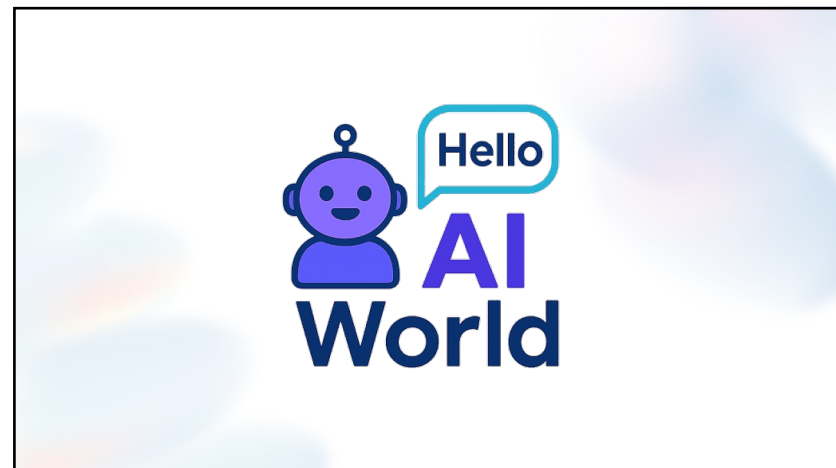
44



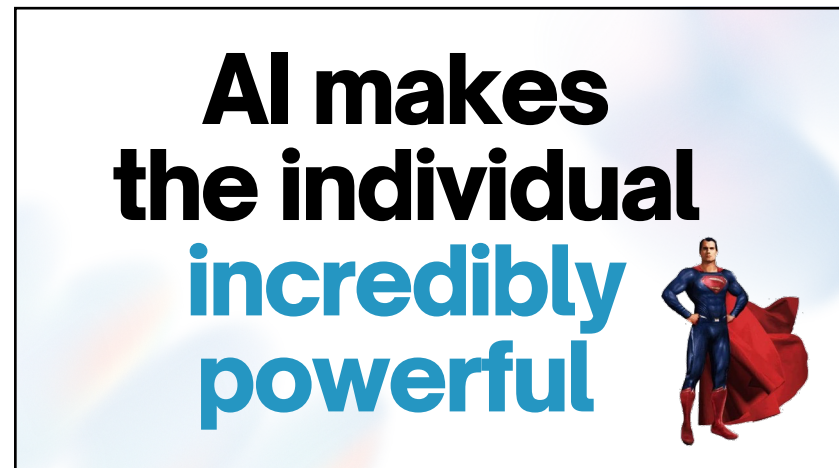
45

Hybrid work
changed where
intelligence is
located.

46



47



48

How do
we start
our day
today?



49



New routines

- Wake up
- Breakfast at the desk
- Review AI agents' night work
- Delegated problem-solving to AI
- Verification of AI outputs
- Lunch alone, at the desk
- Some virtual meetings, others replaced with reading meeting transcripts
- Family time, work chats&calls, checking on AI agent work output
- Bedtime

50

Isn't John lonely?

Is John part of a team?

Does he still need one?

51

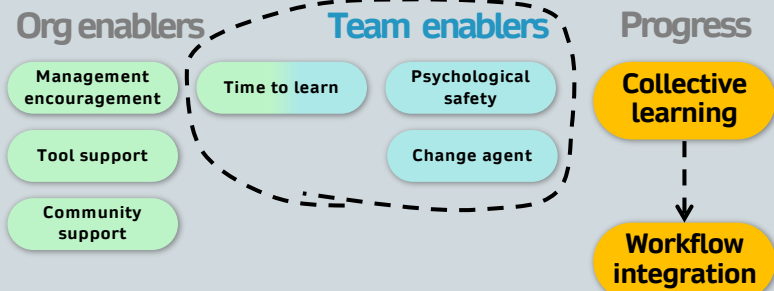
If AI
writes and explains the code,
reviews and tests the code,
fixes and refactors the code,
and mentors new developers...



do we need people, and teams?

52

What drives advanced AI adoption?



53

A team's AI adoption status



8 software engineers

AI used throughout the lifecycle

Higher speed in coding, and troubleshooting

54

AI creates new bottlenecks



55

AI significantly speeds up individual coding tasks

but

60% of CEOs had not observed revenue gains from AI initiatives

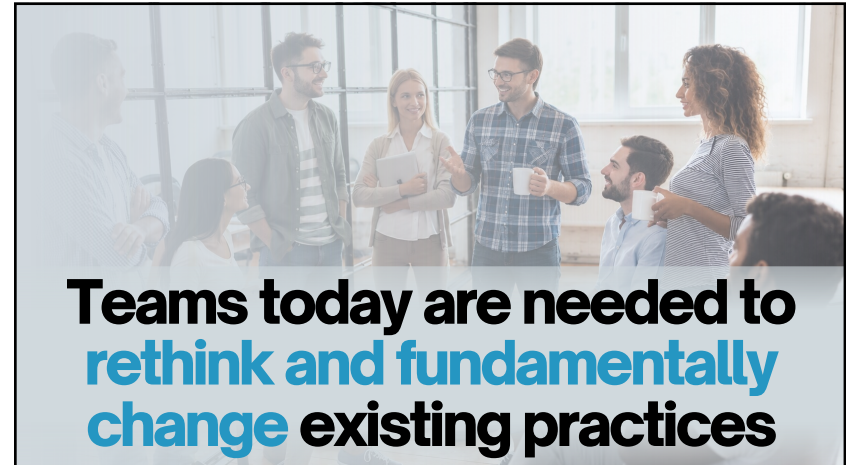


PwC. 29th Global CEO Survey: Leading through uncertainty in the age of AI. 2026.

56

**But software
engineering was
never just about
writing code!**

57



58

**Only those who couple
individual superpowers
with collective
strengths will succeed**

59

**Future 1:
The Superpowered
Solo Engineer**

60

Future 1: The Superpowered Solo Engineer



AI enables the individual to operate increasingly independently

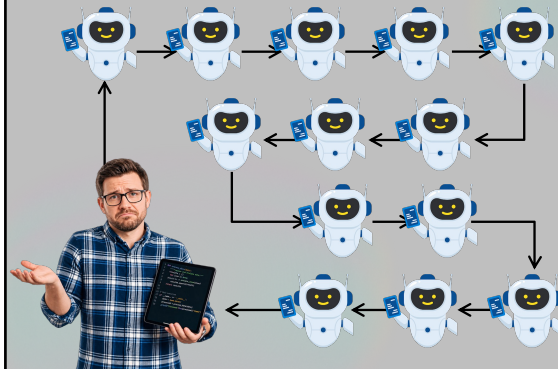
But 1 engineer + 8 agents is not a team

61

Future 2: The Algorithmic Factory

62

Future 2: The Algorithmic Factory



AI increasingly coordinates and performs the work.

The system is busy.

The human is peripheral.

63

Future 3: The Augmented Team

64

Future 3: The Augmented Team



AI removes dull, boring work.
People retain judgment.
Teams share learning.
AI supports collaboration
rather than replacing it.

AI makes teams more human.

65

How shall we design future workplaces?

66

#1 Cultivate teams

Optimize the system, not the individual
Design collective goals and responsibilities

Does AI make the team better? Are we improving shared understanding, quality, learning, adaptability, innovation?

67

#2 Facilitate collective learning

**Many teams are stuck in their AI adoption failing
to go beyond individual task automation**

Developer → AI vs

Developer → AI → Developer → Team reflection → **Changed practice**

68

#3 Connect people

Do not remove every dependency

Teams depend on each other for reasons. Some dependencies are how teams build **trust, shared context, competence and belonging.**

69

**If you want to go fast,
go alone.**

**If you want to
go far, go together.**

African proverb

70

**Remote work and
AI are making it
easier than ever to
go fast alone.**

71

Thank you for your attention!

**Our challenge
is to make sure
we still know how
to go far together.**

 **SERL Sweden**
LEADING SOFTWARE ENGINEERING

Darja Smite

72