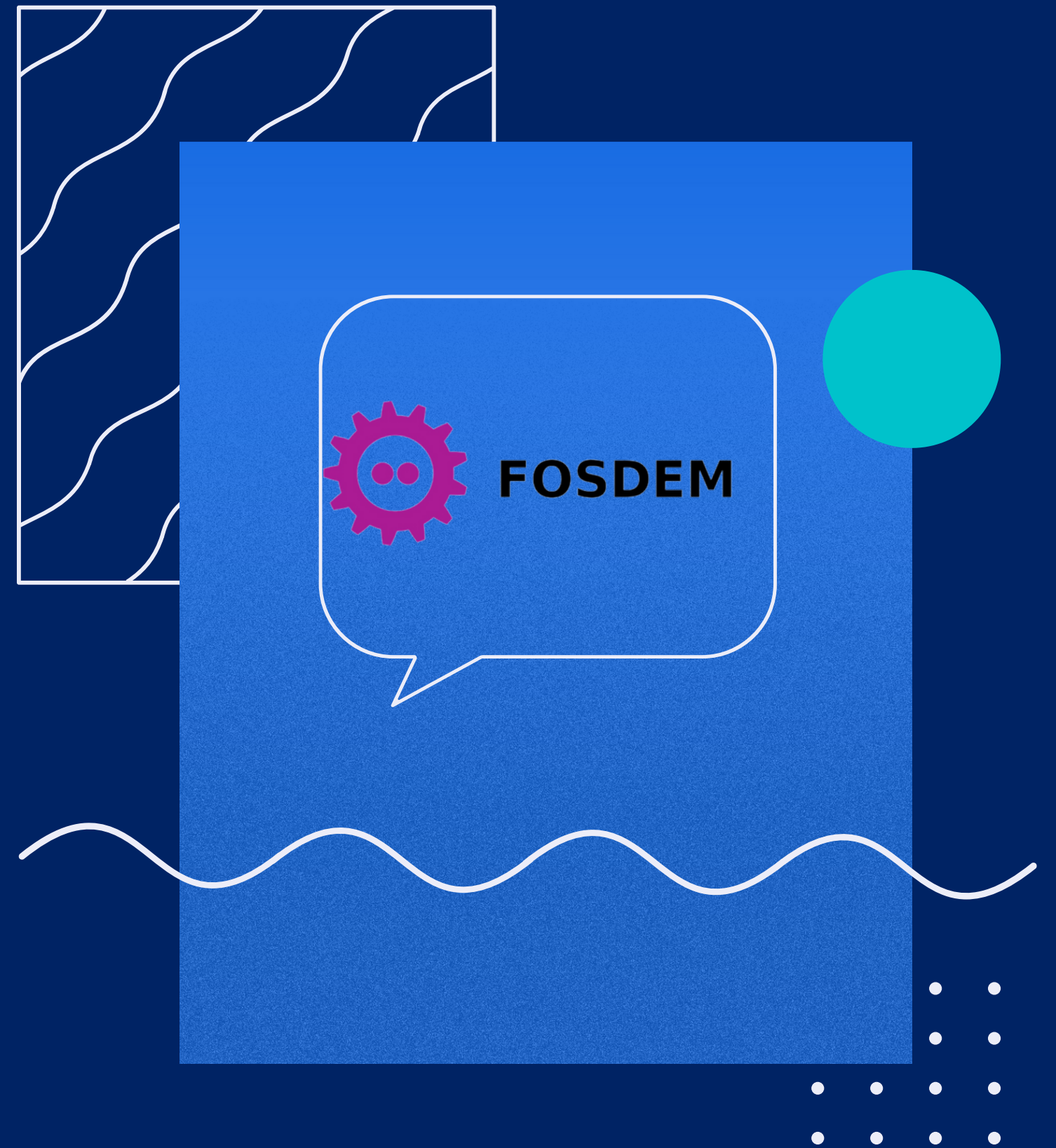


Communication Hacks

STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING COLLABORATION
AND DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN OPEN SOURCE

BY NURITZI SANCHEZ
SR. OPEN SOURCE PROGRAM MANAGER, GITLAB





Nuritzi Sanchez

Sr. Open Source
Program Manager,
GitLab



@1nuritzi

Today we'll cover

Navigating cultural differences

Improving feedback

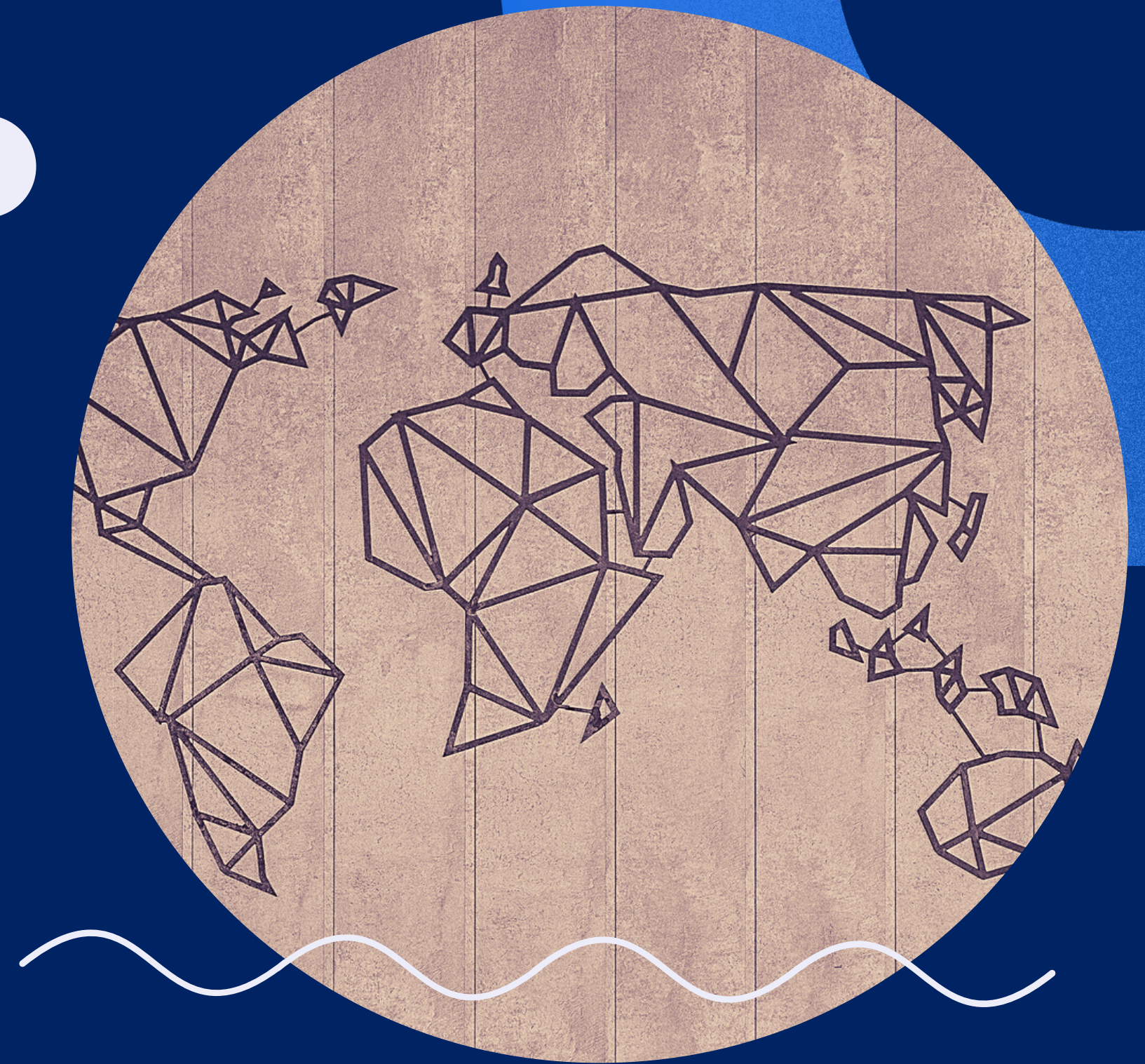
Active listening

Favorite hacks



Navigating cultural differences

Open source
communities
attract members
from all over the
world



We need to understand cultural differences

Countries are ranked along these 7 indicators:

1. Communicating
2. Evaluating
3. Leading
4. Trusting
5. Disagreeing
6. Scheduling
7. Persuading

Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
Egalitarian	LEADING	Hierarchical
Consensual	DECIDING	Top-down
Task-based	TRUSTING	Relationship-based
Confrontational	DISAGREEING	Avoids Confrontation
Linear-time	SCHEDULING	Flexible-time
Principles First	PERSUADING	Applications First

What it means

Communicating

Low context: good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Repetition is often used to avoid misunderstandings.

High context: good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. You must read between the lines.



USA



Germany



UK



Spain



France



México



Nigeria



India



China



Indonesia

Low Context

High Context

What it means

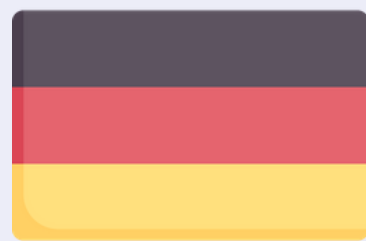
Evaluating

Direct negative feedback: delivered frankly, bluntly, and honestly. Negative messages are not softened by positive ones. Absolutes are used. Ok to give in front of groups.

Indirect negative feedback: delivered softly, subtly, and diplomatically. Positive messages wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are used. Feedback must be given in private.



Russia



Germany



Nigeria



France



Spain



USA



UK



Mexico



India



China



Indonesia

Direct Negative Feedback

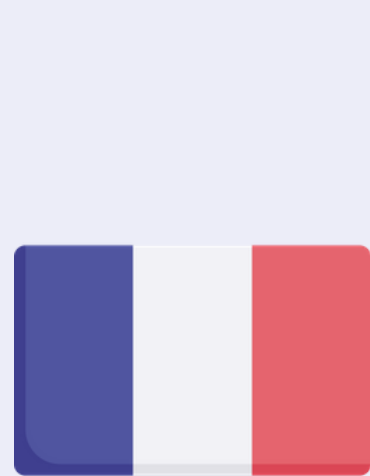
Indirect Negative Feedback

What it means

Persuading

Principles first: Value the "why" first. Have been trained to develop the theory or concept first before presenting the fact, statement, or opinion.

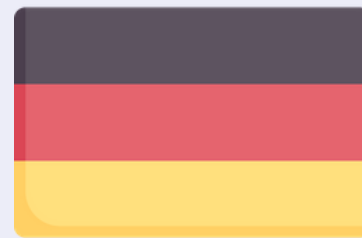
Applications first: Value the "how" or "what" first. Trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and back it up or explain the conclusion as necessary.



France



Spain



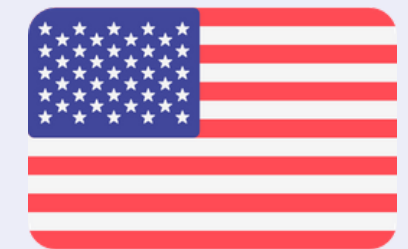
Germany



Italy



UK



USA

Principles First

Applications First

Culture Map Example: 2021 GNOME Foundation Board of Directors

In 2021 there are Directors with backgrounds from:

UK

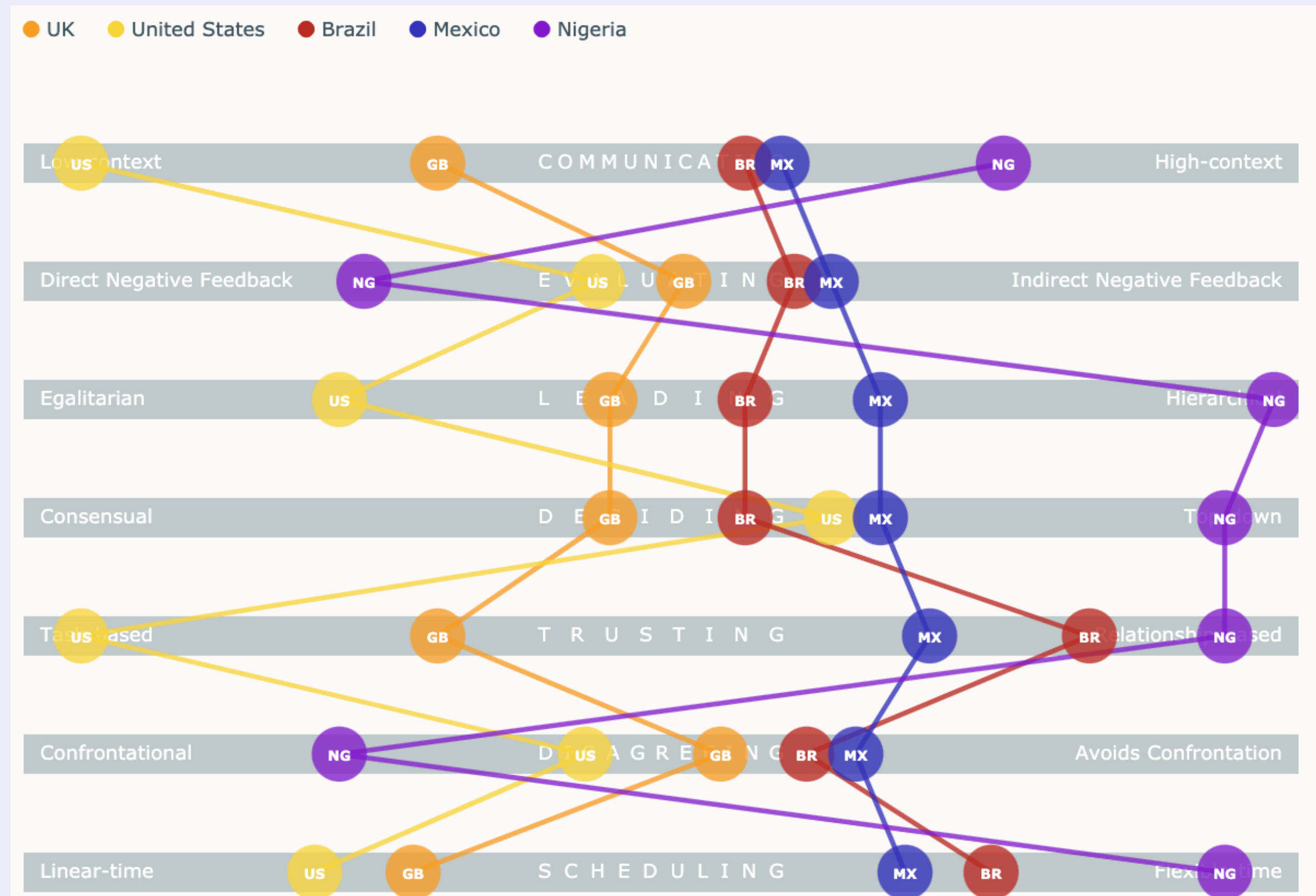
United States

Brazil

Mexico

Nigeria

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Meyer via <https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/>



Tips for navigating cultural differences

Invest time in getting to know the people you work with

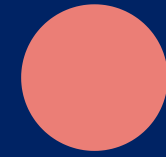
Don't make assumptions

It's ok to establish expectations, but make sure you understand the tradeoffs.

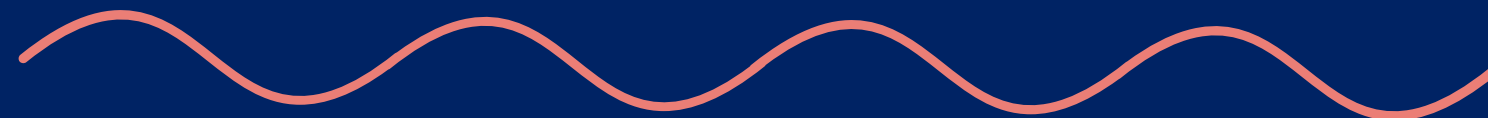
Let empathy be your guide.



Improving feedback



Feedback is a gift,
but most of us
find it challenging



FEEDBACK

Giving and receiving feedback is a skill that we can build!

Be aware of underlying biases or tendencies

As we just learned, real cultural differences exist that we need to be aware of. When we give or receive feedback, we are influenced by our own stereotypes and biases.

Feedback is a good thing!

Feedback-seeking behavior has been linked to higher job satisfaction, being more creative on the job, and adapting to things more quickly.

Seeking negative feedback is associated with higher performance.

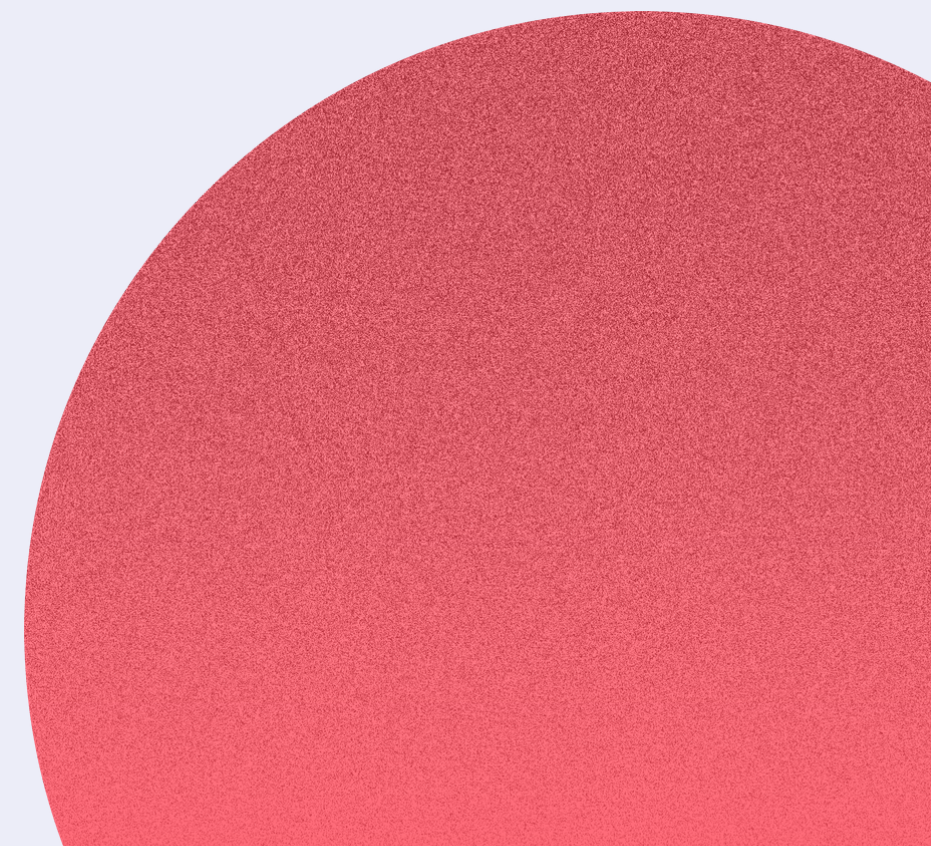
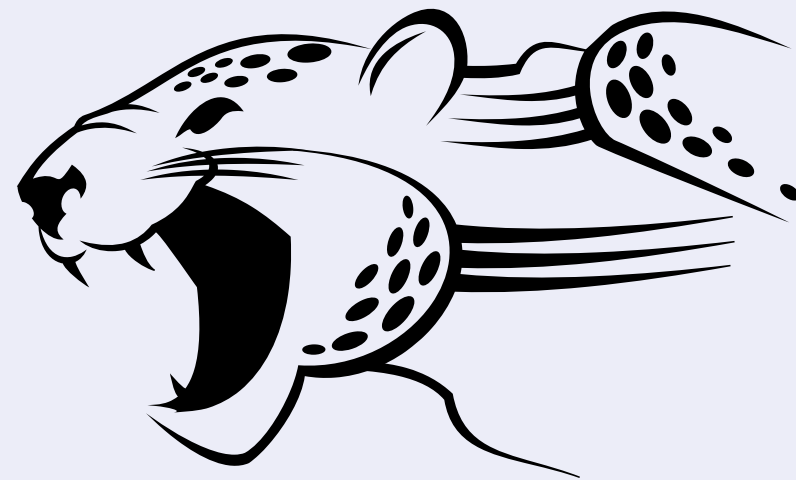
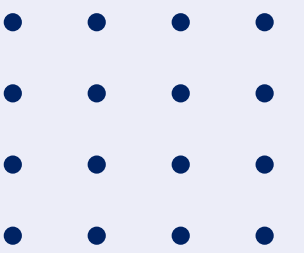


RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Receiving negative feedback is tough!

We feel bad emotions more strongly than we feel good ones because our brains are wired to detect threats to help us survive.

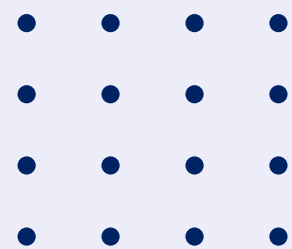
Our fight, flight, or freeze instincts can kick in when we receive negative feedback.



TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Take some time

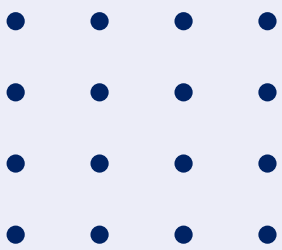
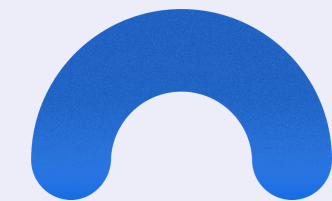
We often get defensive or angry when we first hear negative feedback. It is ok to take some time to process the feedback!



TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Create a script

Make taking a time out a part of your process and develop a script to help: "Thanks for the feedback. I'm going to take some time to process it and will come back to you later."

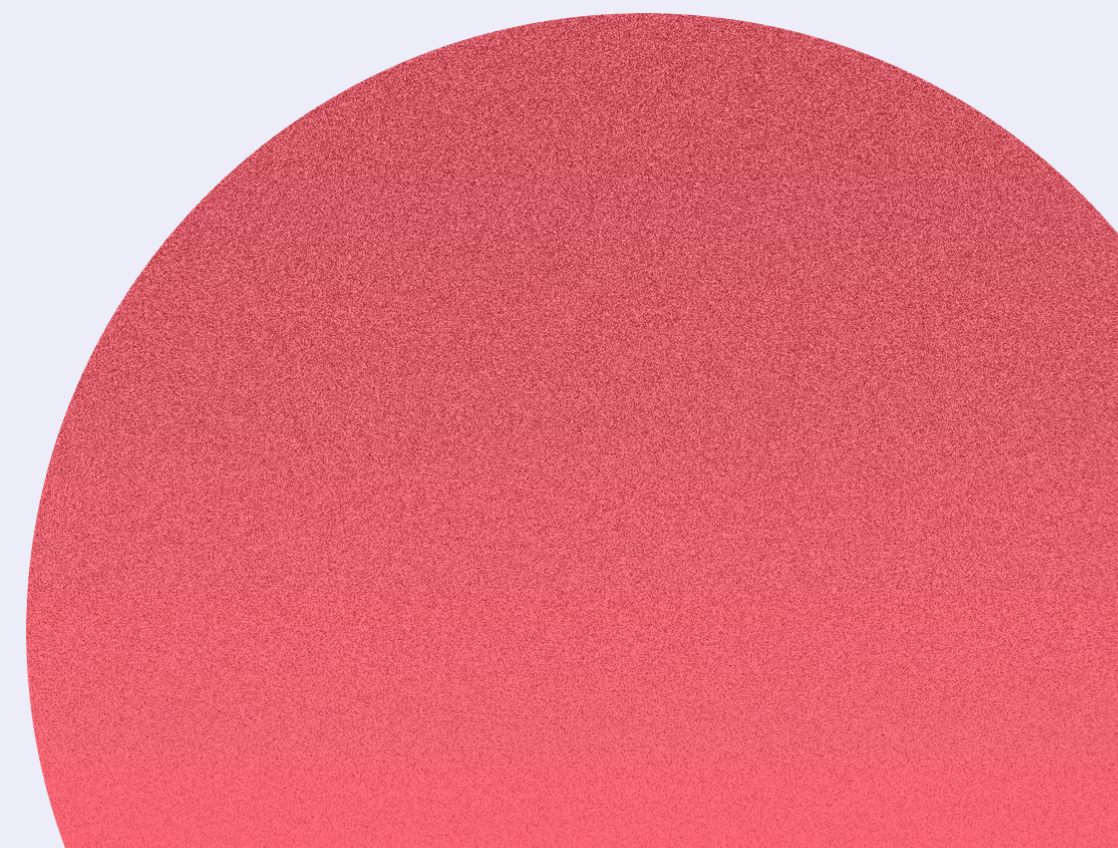
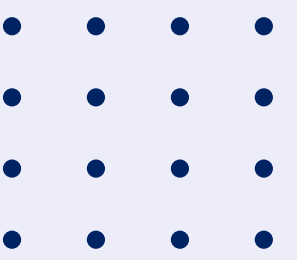


TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Focus on your physical body

If you have a physical reaction, focus on your physical body to ground yourself.

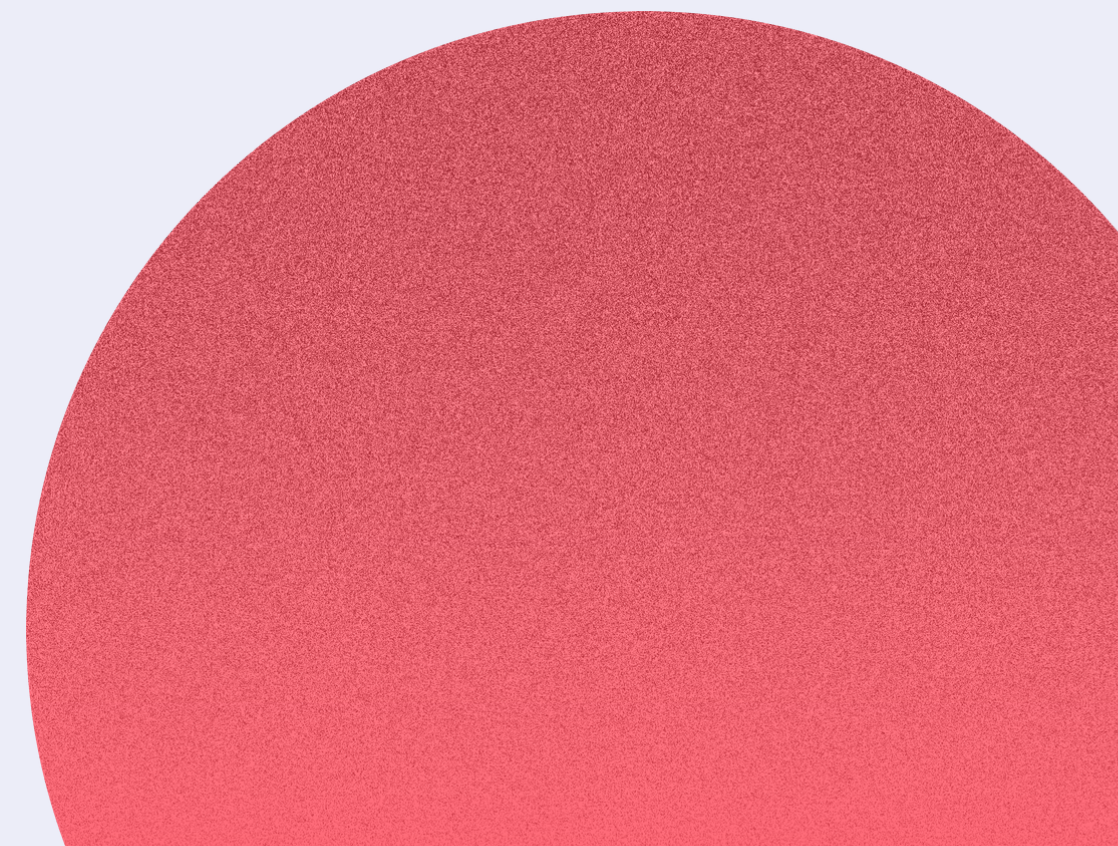
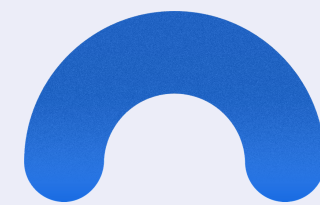
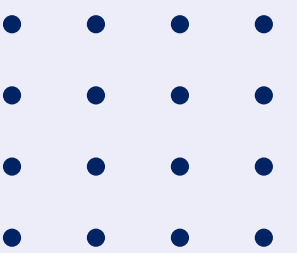
Try a breathing technique: 4-4-4. Breathe in for four seconds, hold for four, release for four. Try that at least four times.



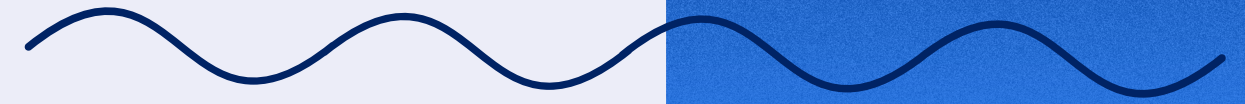
TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Process the feedback

Ask yourself: What is true about what you heard? What do you think is biased? How can you use this to progress?



Identify your triggers



Truth Triggers

Set off by the substance of the feedback itself. We feel that it's somehow off, unhelpful, or simply untrue.

Relationship Triggers

Set off by a particular person who is giving us this gift of feedback. Our focus shifts from the feedback itself to our relationship with the person giving us the feedback.

Identity Triggers

Causes us to question our sense of identity. We feel overwhelmed, threatened, ashamed, or off balance. We're suddenly unsure what to think of ourselves and we end up just trying to survive.

There may be larger gaps between impact and intent in #FOSS communication due to mostly virtual interactions

Example: you write "This bug is so irritating! It makes me want to jump out of a window," while sipping on some delicious tea in front of your computer.

Impact



Reader might think you're angry and might get angry or sad.



Intent



You were hoping to bring attention to the bug because you find it mildly annoying. You hope someone will have an idea on how to fix it. You added the window part to be humorous and are actually in a good mood -- especially because of your tea.

Remember: Impact is equally important as intent.

SBI MODEL

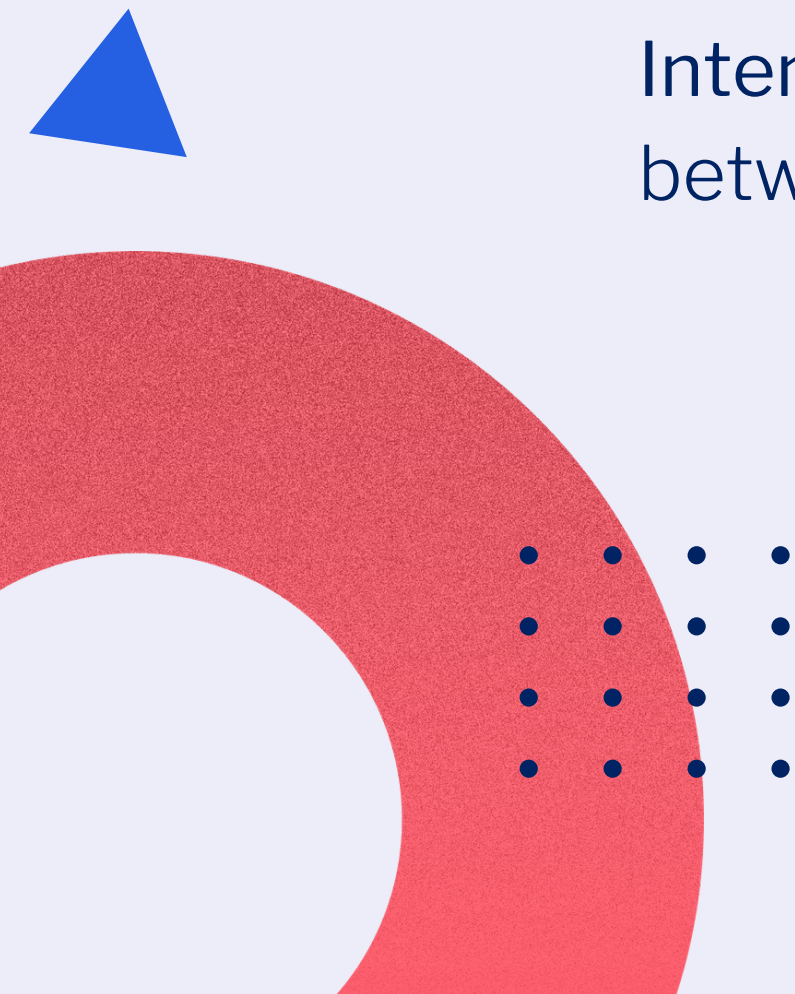
Use the SBI-model to understand intent:

S - Situation: Describe the situation, be specific about where it occurred.

B - Behavior: Describe the observable behavior. Don't assume you know what the other person was thinking.

I - Impact: Describe what you thought or felt in reaction to the behavior.

Intent. Ask about the person's original intentions. This enables you to close the gap between impact and intent.



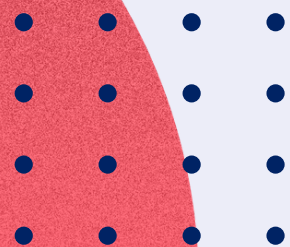
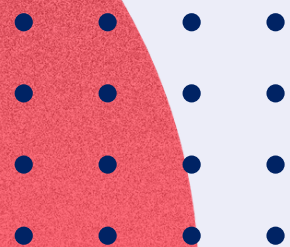
SBI EXAMPLE

Situation -- When you responded to the email I sent about engagement ideas last Friday...

Behavior -- You said that I didn't have a background in design so my opinion shouldn't count. *(instead of saying "you were rude" which is a judgement)*

Impact -- That made me feel excluded from the conversation even though it's a community-wide topic and I felt hurt by the public comment.

This helps us understand intent -- What were you hoping to accomplish with that?



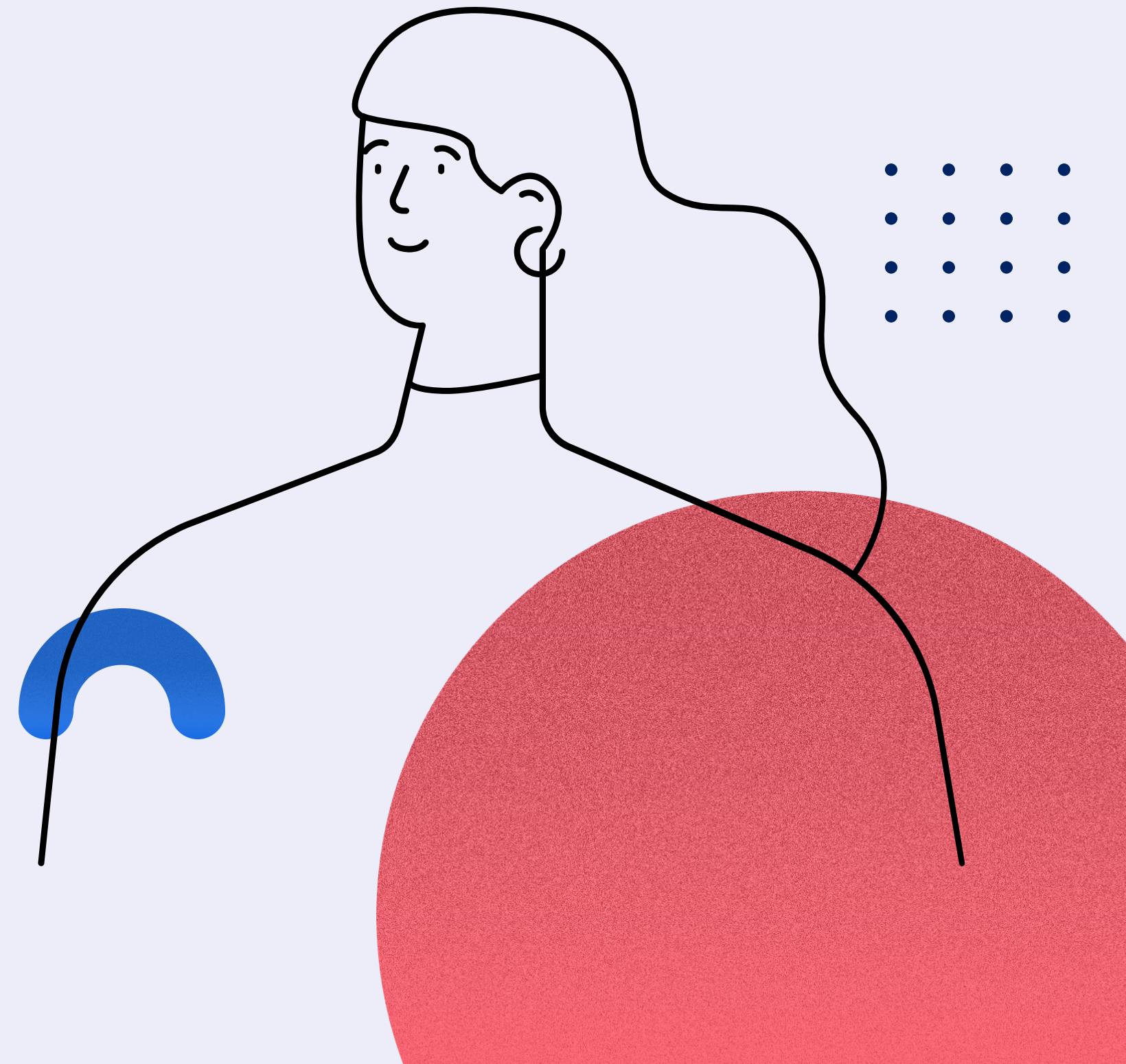
TIPS FOR GIVING BETTER FEEDBACK

Think about what kind of feedback you're giving:

- **Evaluation:** helps you understand where you are and expectations
- **Coaching:** helps you improve
- **Positive / Appreciation:** motivates and encourages

Right person, place, and time.

Positive feedback public, negative feedback private



TIPS FOR REQUESTING FEEDBACK

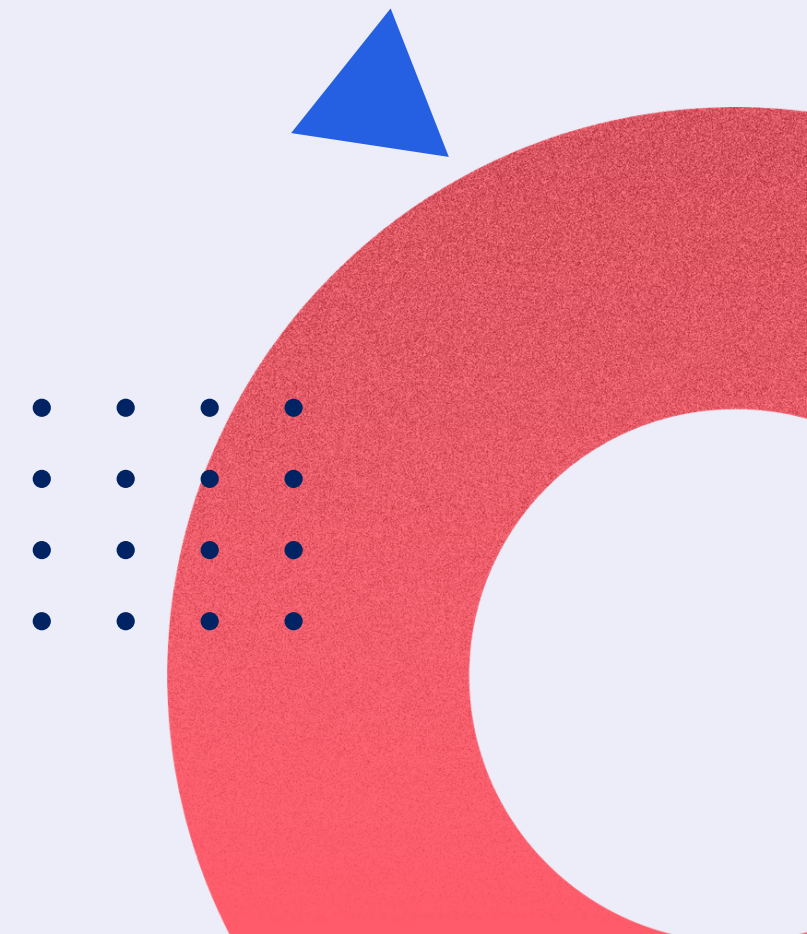
Make it specific

It's easier for people to give feedback on specific things.

For example: "Can you give me feedback on my presentation" vs "Can you give me feedback on how quickly I talk during my presentation, and if I make eye contact with the audience?"

Solicit feedback from multiple sources

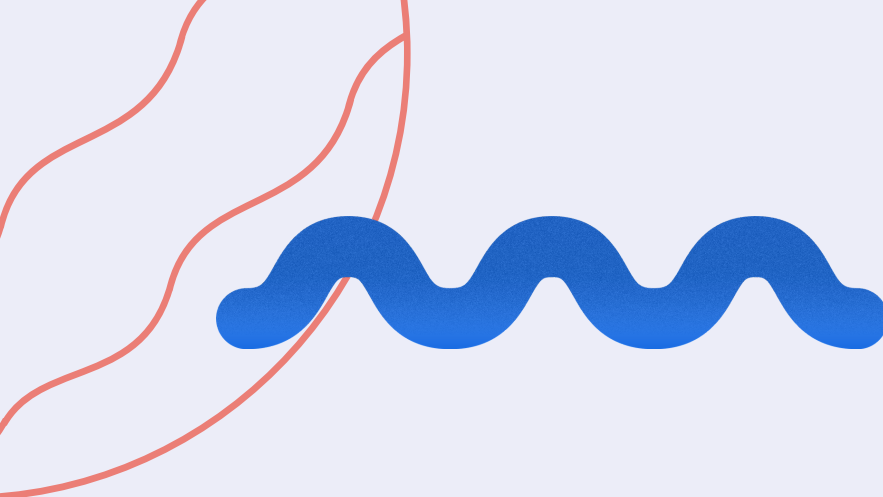
Different perspectives might help you discover something you wouldn't have otherwise.



Active listening

Communication
isn't just about
talking -- listening
is just as
important





“Being heard and understood is
one of the greatest desires of the
human heart.”

- Richard Carlson



Types of Listening

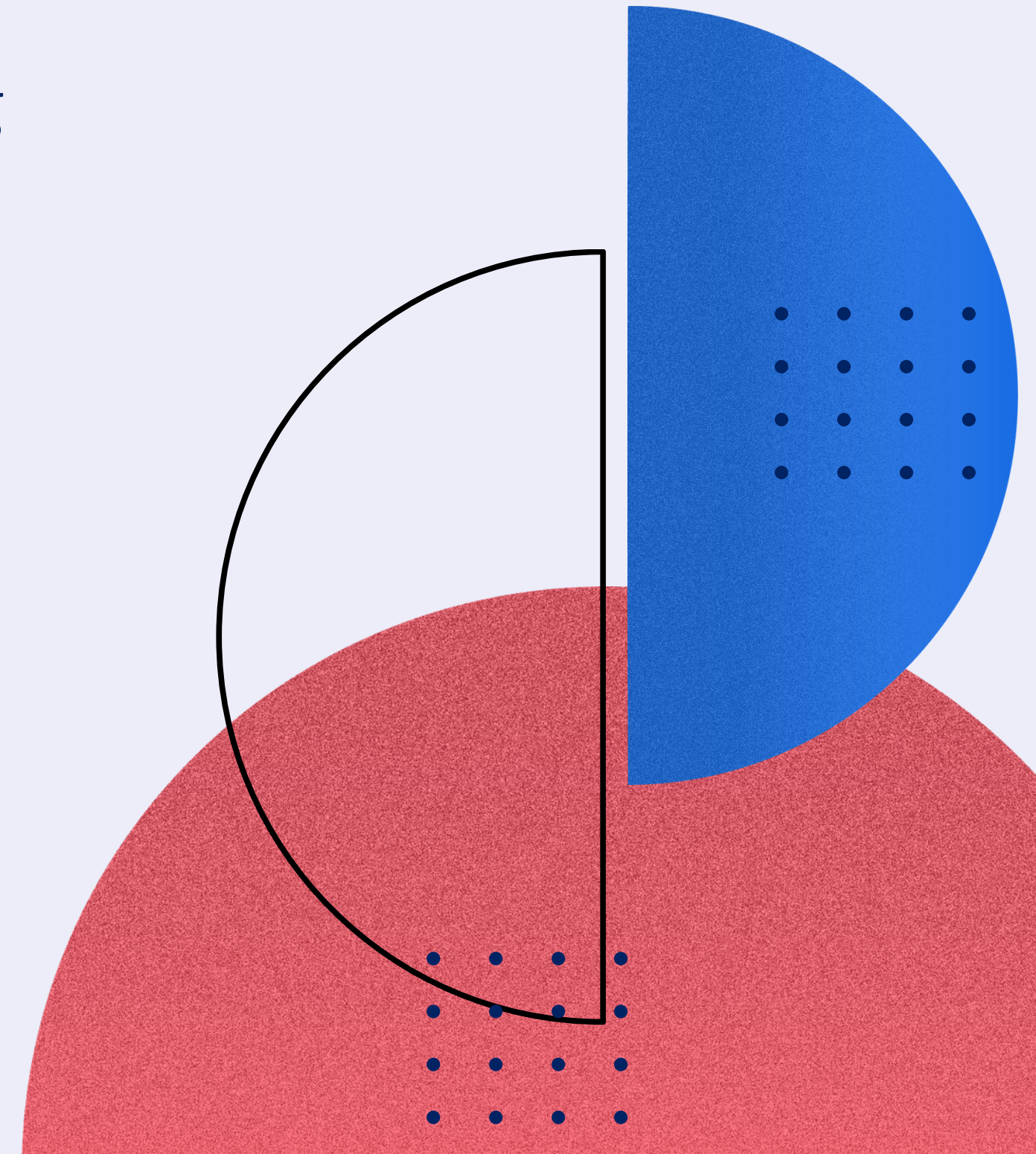
Distracted Listening - multitasking or preoccupied.

Content Listening - listening to the facts and planning how to respond.

Identifying Listening - responding with a similar situation to show you understand.

Problem Solving - listening with the intent to provide feedback and ideas on how to solve the situation.

Active Listening - you hear the facts and the feelings and respond appropriately to both.



ACTIVE LISTENING

Simple Signals and Questions

Cues help us understand what to do. For example, traffic signals let us know if we should stop, go, or yield to traffic.

Our actions and words do the same. Looking at people in the eye, putting down our phone, or looking away from our computer may signal that we're interested and listening.

Verbal cues that show we're listening may include:

- Really?
- Uh huh
- Interesting
- Wow!
- Tell me more about that
- What's going on?
- What do you think?
- How are things?

ACTIVE LISTENING

Paraphrasing

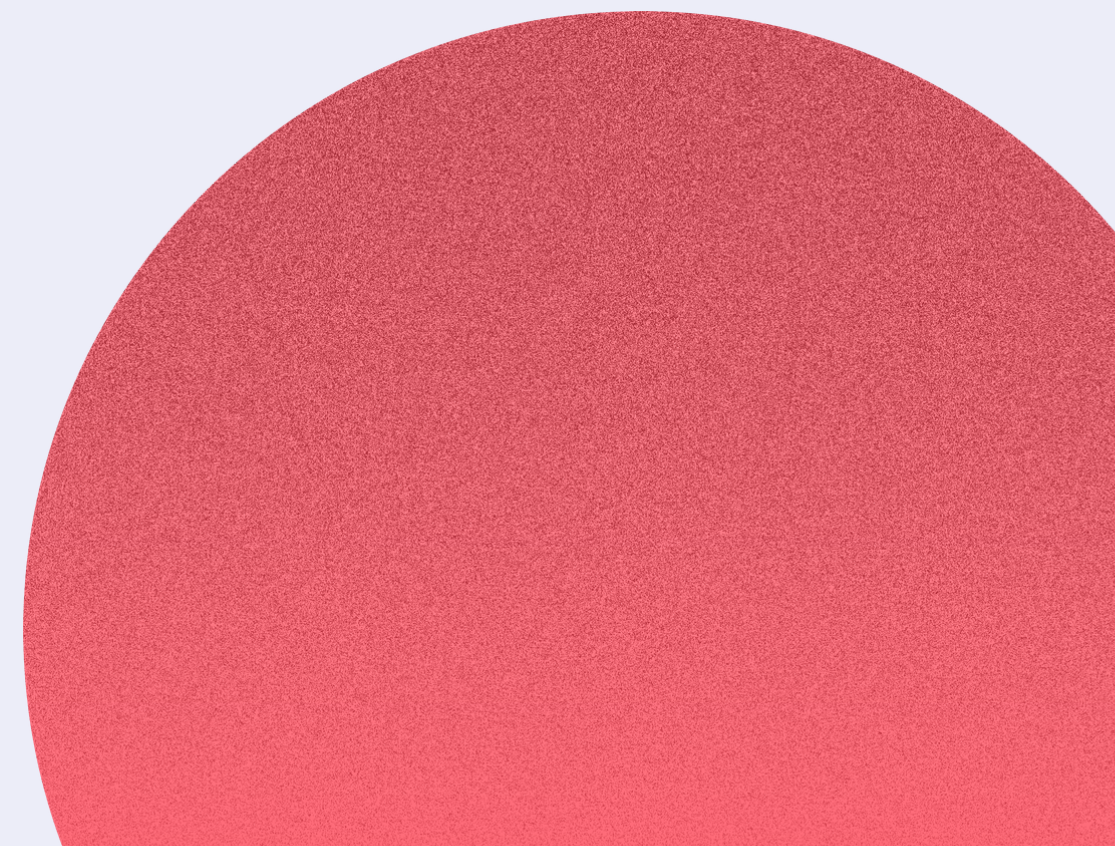
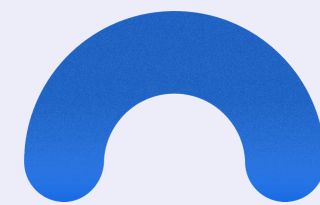
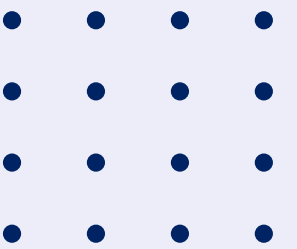
Identify key words and the meaning of what is being said. Then, rephrase what you have heard in your own words and to repeat the message back to the speaker.

Why this is powerful:

- Helps the speaker feel heard and understood
- Don't have to be in agreement
- Makes room for many ideas
- Summarizes and can lead to closure
- Gives you more information and buys you time to think

Active listening is important for building relationships

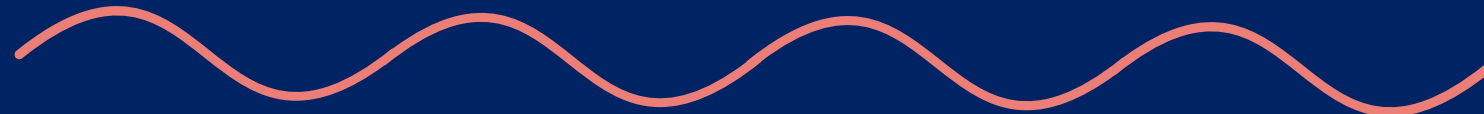
You can employ these principles in the virtual world, but more importantly, you can use them in person at events to build relationships that carry on into the online world!



Favorite Hacks



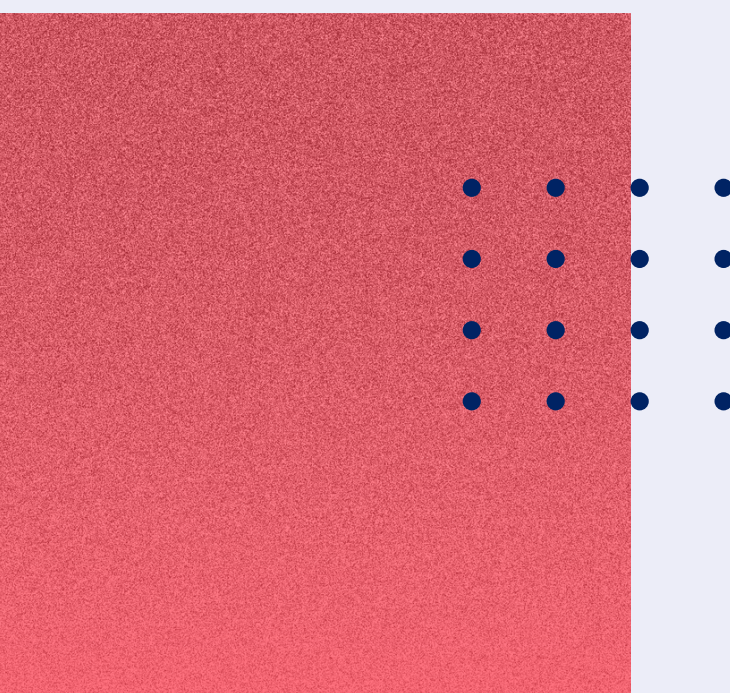
Practical advice
you can try out
immediately





It's the writer's job to be understood!

Formatting helps.

- Avoid long sentences. Whenever you see yet another "and," break it up into two sentences.
 - Don't assume previous knowledge. Try to make it easy for someone new to jump into the conversation.
 - Skim test. See if you can skim through and get the main points.
 - Call to action. Make your call to action clear and state who needs to do it, and by when.
- 

It's the writer's job to be understood!

New Issue

Title

Title

Description

social-general-request

Write

Preview

Request for organic (non-paid) social promotion


Requester: Please acknowledge the following before filling out your request

☐

I understand that all social requests need a minimum of **1 full week** between the request and the first published post date and that I cannot put in a request for the same week.

☐

I understand that if my request is not tied to a corporate marketing-focused timed event or campaign, that the publishing schedule is entirely at the discretion of the social team.

STEP 1: For Requester

Details Details

1. What is your request all about?

[add details here]

2. Pertinent or other go live date(s):

[add date(s) here]

3. Is there a landing page? If not, please note you'll need to provide this link in order for us to move forward.

[add page link, other details, here]

4. What is the overall utm_campaign? - *webcast123*, i.e. *utm_campaign=webcast123*



Yes, and...

Instead of saying, "No" or "Yes, but," use "Yes, and."

This acknowledges what people say and still gives you room to disagree with them.

People are more likely to listen to you if they feel like you listened to them.



Collaborative Phrases

How might we...

Might I suggest we...

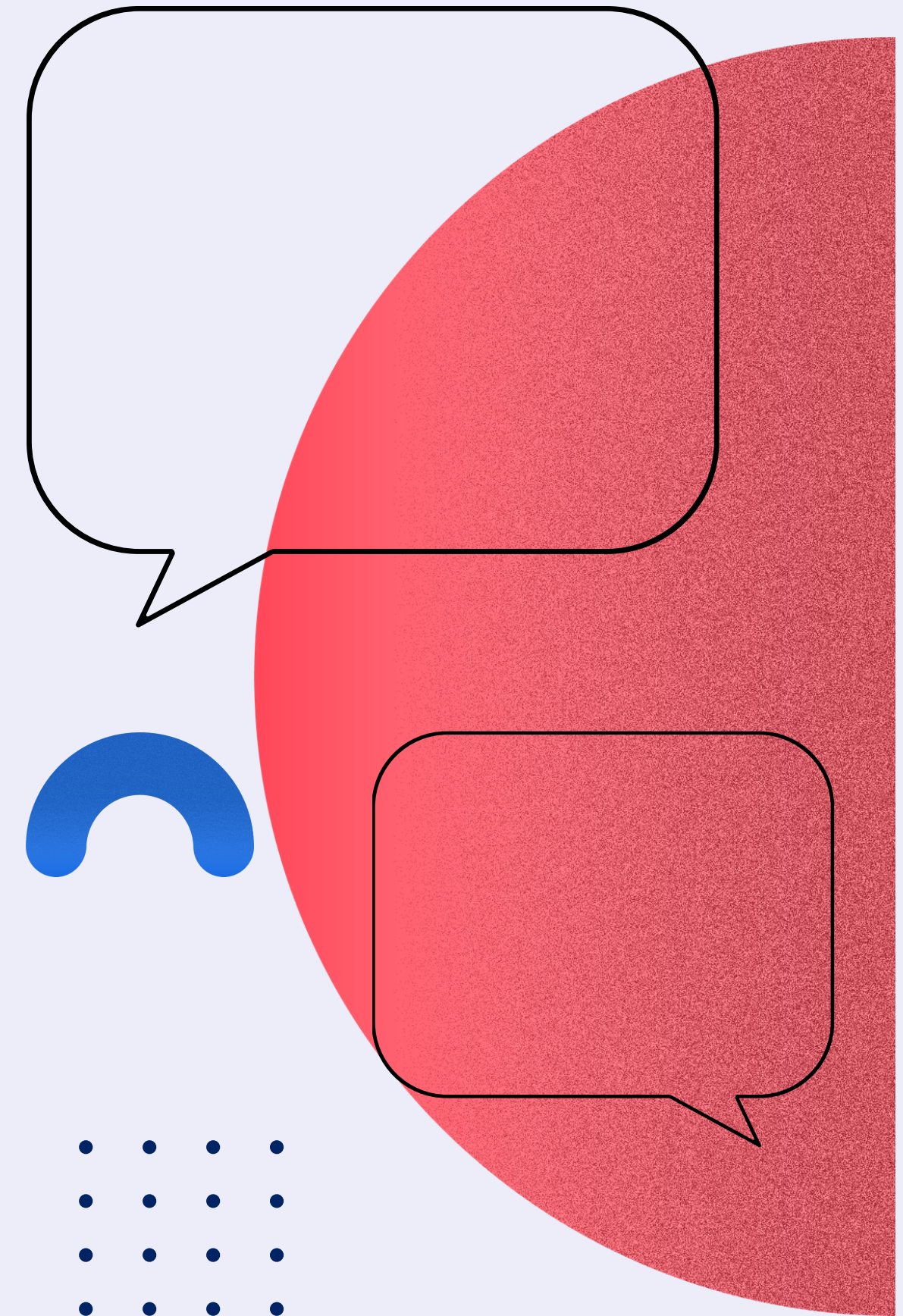
What are your thoughts?

From my perspective, it's a little bit different. Let me explain...

I hear what you're saying, and I have a different perspective...

Let me see if I understand what you're saying....

I like your idea, have you thought about...





“Communication works for those
who work at it.”

- John Powell

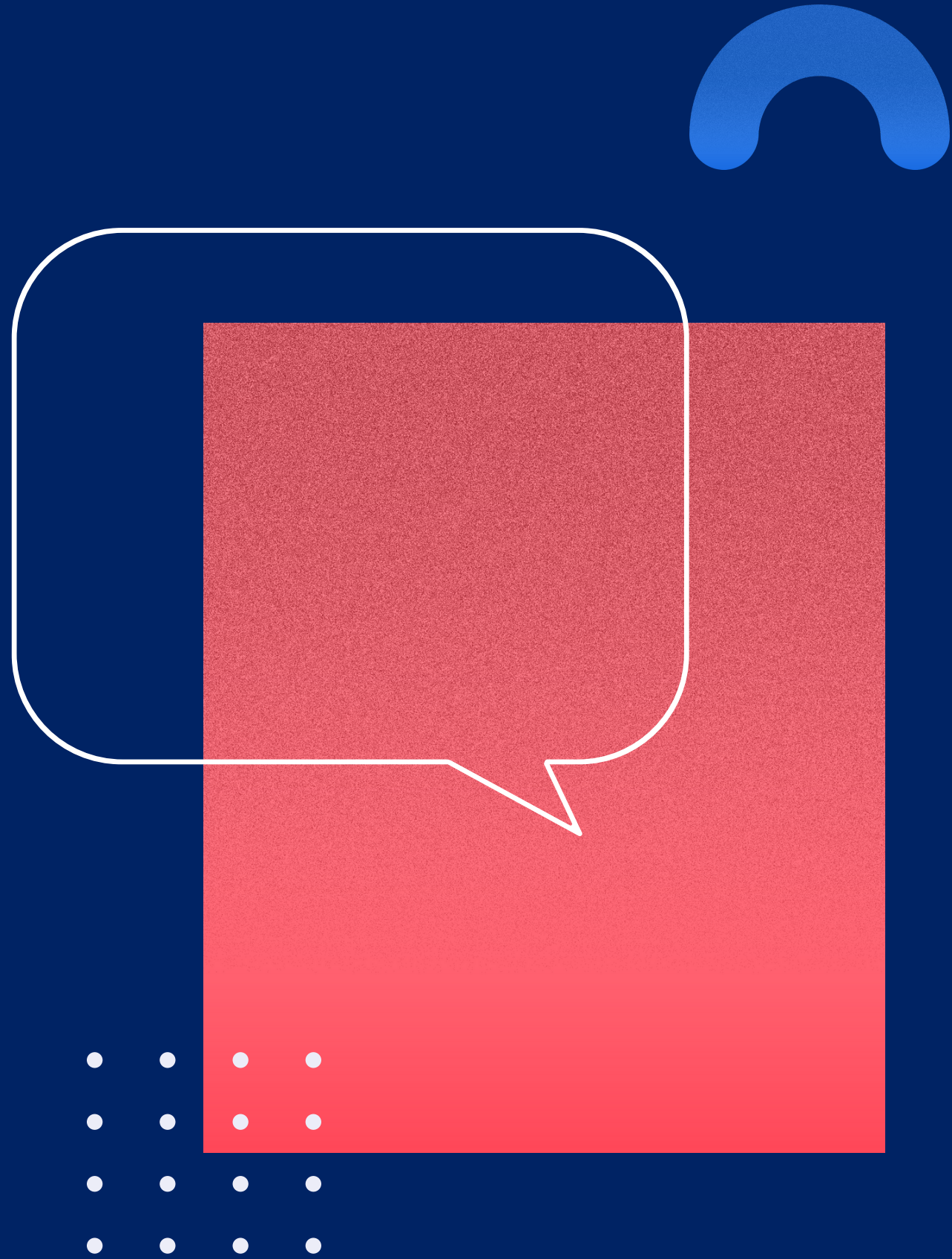




Thank You!

Slides can be found: bit.ly/communication-hacks-ns
CC-BY-SA 4.0





QUESTIONS?



@1nuritzi



/nuritzi

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

The Culture Map by Erin Myers

Cross Culture Collaboration Guide by GitLab -- a guide to acknowledging cultural differences in the workplace and setting expectations for interactions

Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen (book and article)

Feedback (and other dirty words): Why we fear it, how to fix it by Tamra Chandler and Laura Dowling

SBI Model -- Center for Creative Leadership

10 Phrases that Inspire Collaboration -- Randstad Risesmart

Communication Essentials Workshop -- novaworks.org

