



From Tickets to Tales

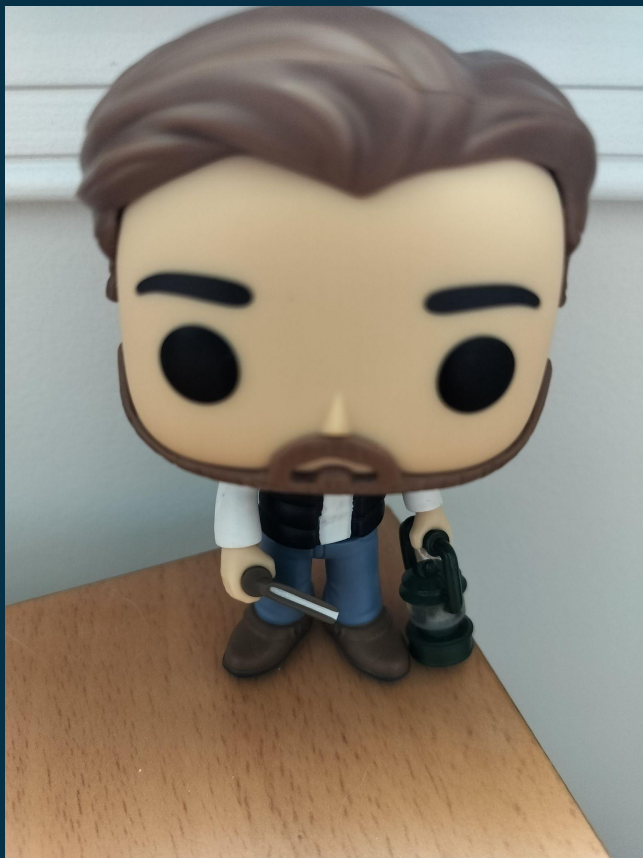
Storytelling techniques for more effective meetings

Chris O'Donnell
DrupalCamp Asheville



What you'll get from this session

- 01 Framework for running more effective meetings
- 02 Concrete examples of how it works
- 03 Several templates you can use tomorrow (if you are holding a meeting on Sunday)
- 04 Maybe a laugh or two
- 05 Hopefully done early since this is the last time slot of the camp



Chris O'Donnell

Drupal Business Development

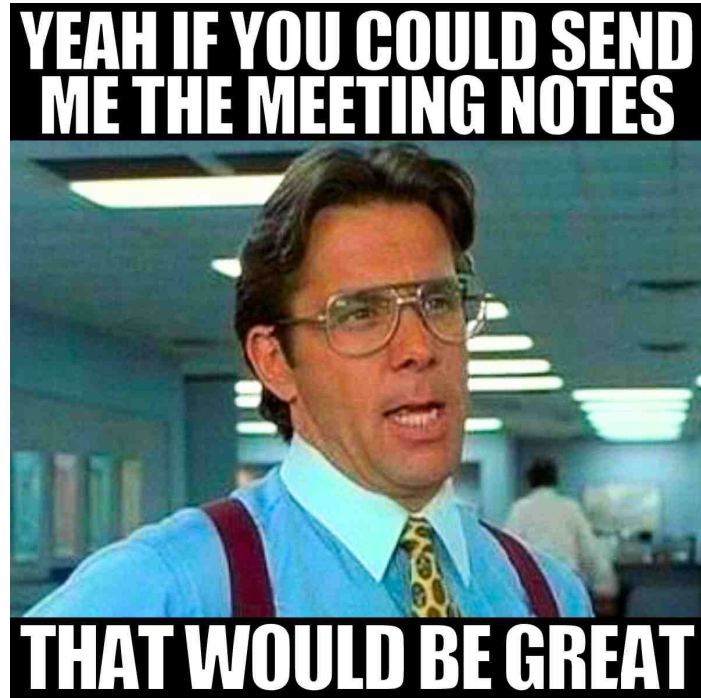
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"



Why Are We Here?



**10 MINUTES INTO THE TEAM
MEETING THE GROUP BE LIKE...**



**I'M HERE ONCE AGAIN
TO REMIND YOU...**



**THAT YOUR MEETING COULD
HAVE BEEN AN EMAIL**



Why Do We Meet?

Meetings are held to bring people together to **share information, make decisions, solve problems, coordinate work, and build alignment.** *



*according to ChatGPT





What Problem Are We Solving?





75% of meetings are ineffective



Atlassian survey - 2024



The Problem: Technical Meetings that go nowhere

Meeting Dynamics

- Circular debates
- Surprise objections
- “Let’s sync again on this next week”

Business Impact

- ⚠ Cost delays & Rework
- ⚠ Wrong priorities
- ⚠ Schedules get pushed



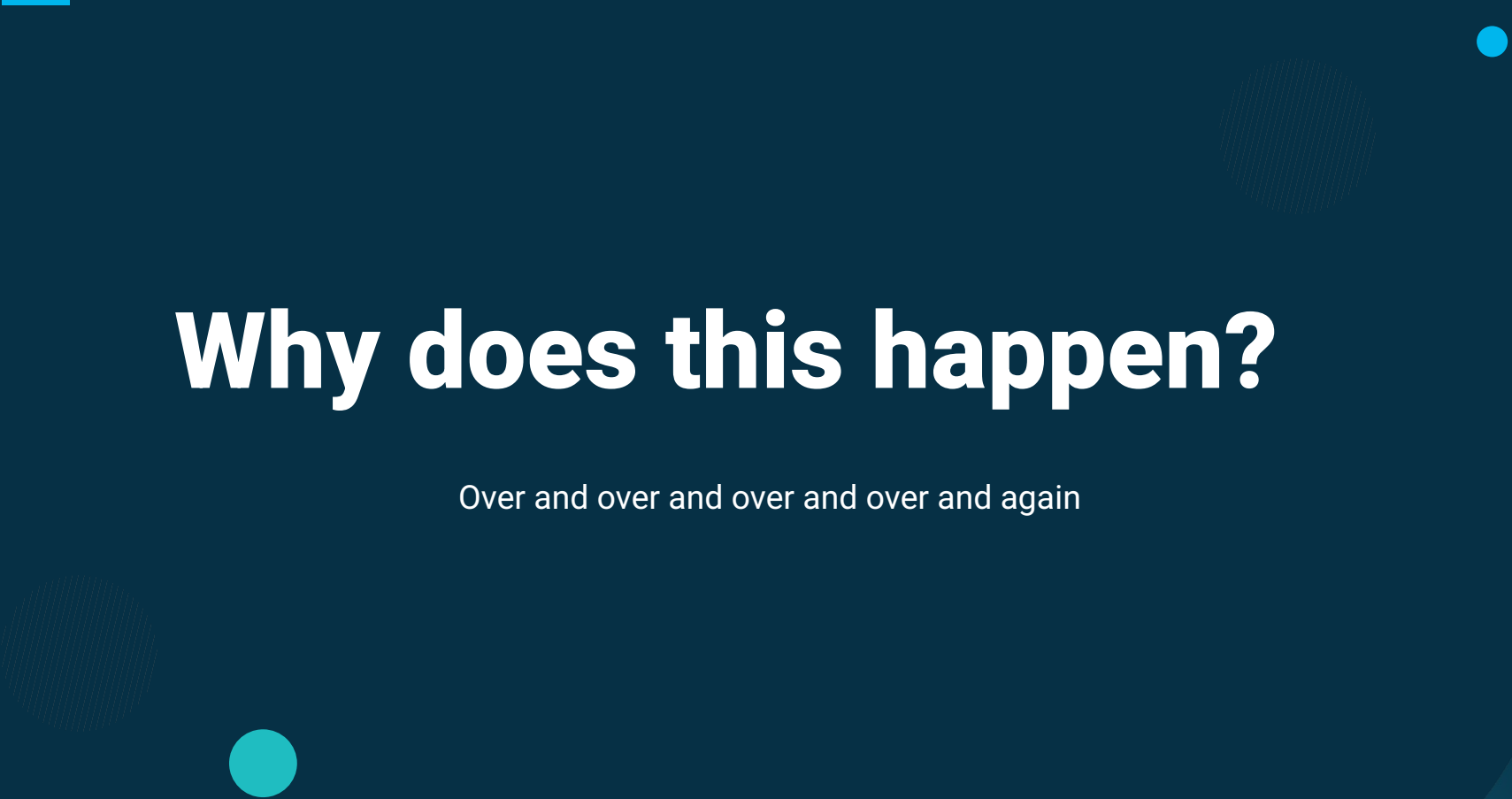
**We are not making decisions
and solving problems in
meetings**





But we could be!





Why does this happen?

Over and over and over and over and again



Reasons meetings fail (3 of 1,654,987)

01

We start solving the problem before we agree on what the problem is

02

We mix discussion and decision making

03

We don't state constraints (time, resources, client restraints, etc.)



A Solution



“After nourishment, shelter, and companionship,
stories are the thing we need most in the world.”

- Author Philip Pullman



Storytelling as an Engineering Tool



Faster Alignment

Bridges the communication gap between business and tech, getting everyone on the same page quickly.



Better Decisions

Context-driven understanding allows engineering teams to make smarter, more impactful technical choices.



Stronger Proposals

Elevates proposals, demos, and presentations by framing technical solutions through compelling narratives.



The Big Reveal

The Original #1 Mad Libs

MAD LIBS®

World's Greatest Word Game



A super silly way to fill in the _____!

PLURAL NOUN



The Core Idea (CDP)

- **Context:** what's true, who it impacts, why now
- **Decision:** what we must choose today
- **Plan:** options, tradeoffs, recommendation, next steps

The Madlib to Remember

“Given [context], we need to decide [decision];
I recommend [plan] because [tradeoff],
and success is [metric].”

***Memorize this**

Example: Site Performance Complaints

Marketing is complaining about a slow site

Internal editors complain about the slow site

IT finds that TTFB is 900 ms

There is a meeting. You are running it.

Context: Who is hurting?

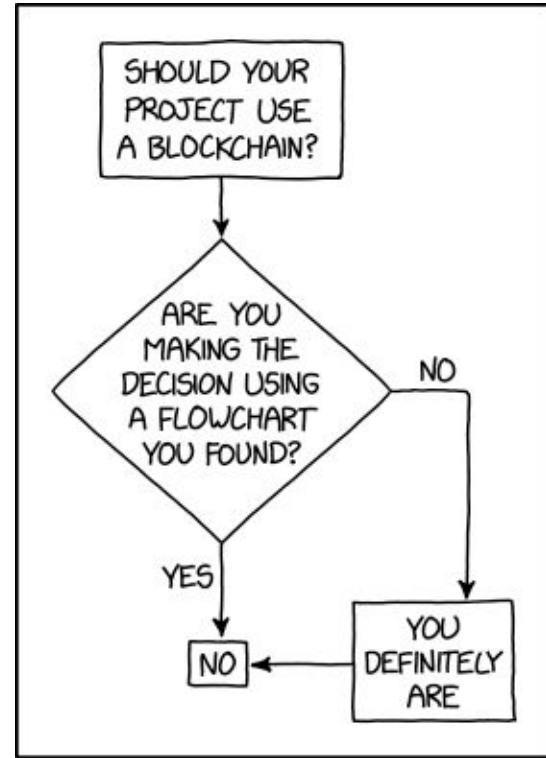
- **Editors:** Slow forms
- **Users:** Bounce rate is up
- **Sales:** Revenue from the site is impacted
- **Why now?** The web team is due to ship a new feature this week

Decision

Option A: Invest in Sprint improving site performance

Option B: Ship the feature and hope for the best

Also, agree on how to measure “fixed.”



Plan

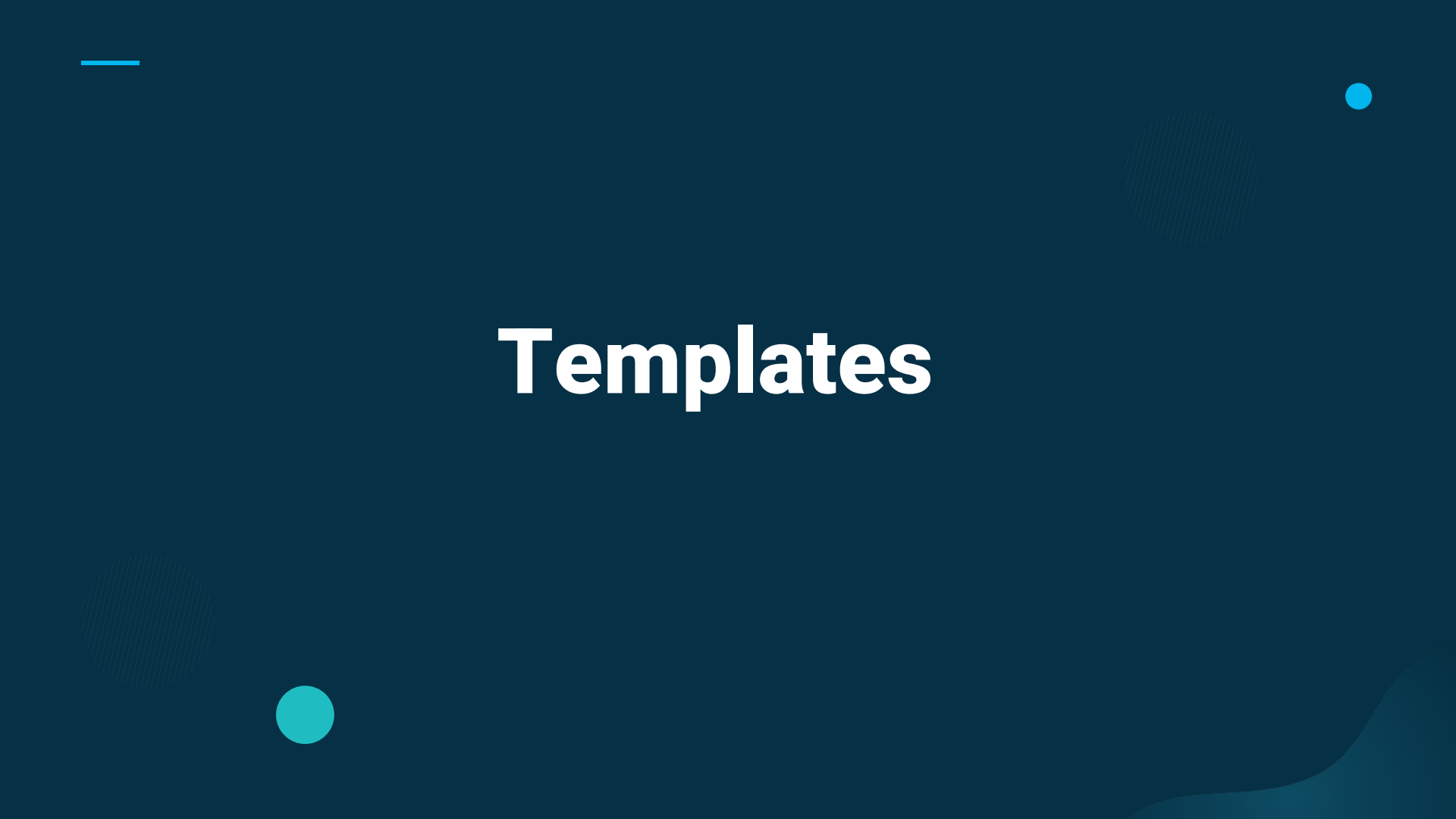
- **Option A:** CDN + cache strategy
- **Option B:** query/render profiling + targeted fixes
- **Option C:** Beef up hosting plan or resources

Tradeoffs: cost, risk, maintainability, upgradeability

Recommendation and Success Criteria

- Recommendation: (pick one)
- Acceptance criteria:
 - a. Logged-in editor page TTFB < 500ms
 - b. Cache hit rate > 65%
- No increase in deploy time/error rate

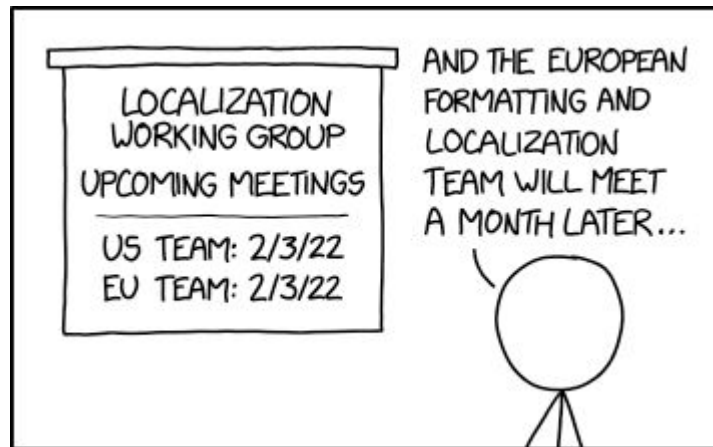
“Success metric” prevents post-meeting re-litigation.



Templates

5 slide meeting template

1. Pain/constraint
2. What's failing today
3. Turning point (why now)
4. Proposal (what we will/won't do)
5. Proof + next action



Site or feature demo template

Step 01

Demo Order

Pain → Change → Proof

Step 02

Metrics

Show **1 metric before**, and **1 after** to prove impact.

Step 03

The Ask

End with a clear decision or request: **merge, fund, or schedule**.

CRITICAL PITFALL

Demos often fail because they start with the **pretty UI** instead of the **actual issue at hand**.

Meeting invite / agenda template

01

Decision needed

02

Outcome by end

03

Context bullets

04

Constraints

05

**Options +
recommendation**

06

Pre-read links

07

Success metric

08

Owner + next step

Documenting / Confluence / Notion / Jira

- Decision
- Why
- Alternatives considered
- Tradeoffs accepted
- Follow-ups / owners

Bad Agenda Example

Title: Drupal Website Performance Check-In

When: Thursday, 10:00–10:30 AM

Where: Google Meet

Guests: Engineering, Web, Product, Marketing

Scheduling time to connect on ongoing Drupal website performance concerns and review recent feedback. Hoping to align on current observations, discuss possible contributing factors, and identify appropriate next steps as needed.

Agenda

- Recent website performance concerns
- Feedback and observations from teams
- Possible contributing factors
- Potential paths forward
- Next steps / follow-ups

Notes

Please bring any relevant context or updates.

Audience Exercise

Problem: Sales and sales engineers are reporting sporadic issues with the Drupal demo site. It's D10 and crashes Chrome when using Layout Builder. Also, it's 'Dog slow (sales idea of a technical term) and makes Drupal look like a slow CMS.

It's hosted on a VPS at Digital Ocean. No one on the tech team has any idea of who set it up or who has server access.

The current internal maintenance sprint started yesterday and is full with upgrading the corporate site from D9 to D10.

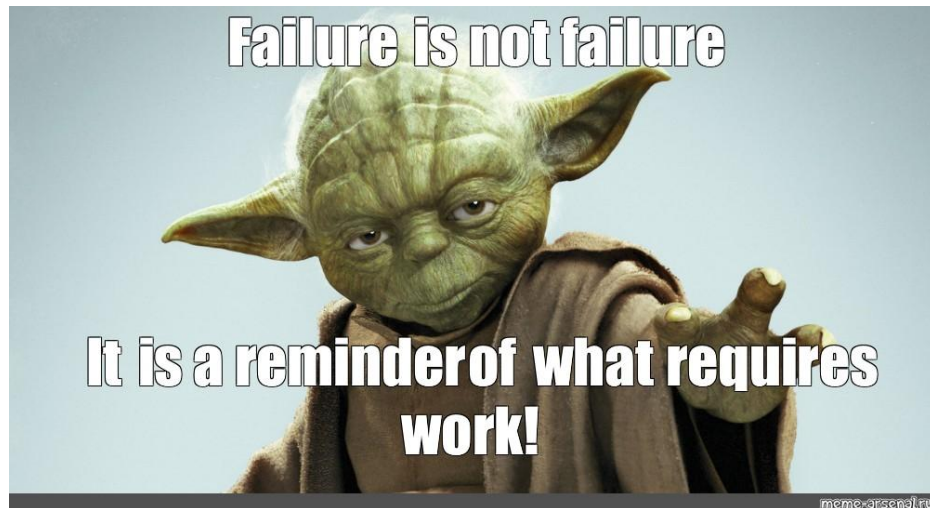
Common Failure Modes

Too much context >>> cut to “what’s required to decide”

No decision >>> phrase it as a choice + deadline

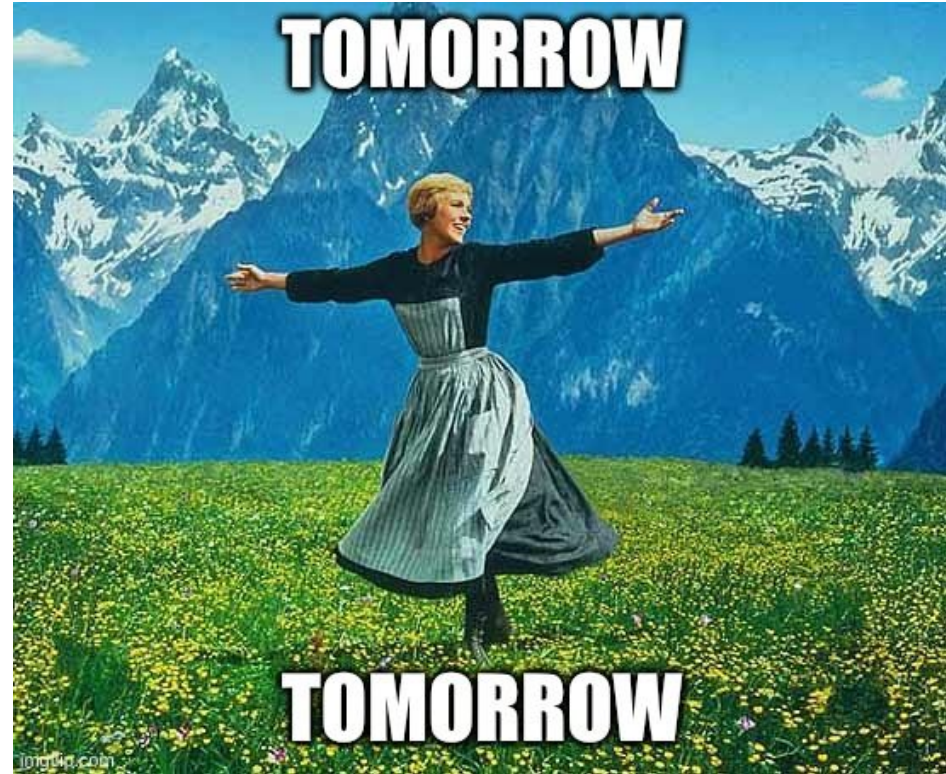
No proof >>> add one metric + how you’ll measure

Stakeholder derail >>> restate decision + park non-decision items



How to apply tomorrow

- Planning meetings (grooming/refinement)
- Technical proposals (upgrade/migration/perf/UX)
- Sprint reviews/demos
- Staff meetings
- Sales/marketing meeting



The Big Finish

Takeaways

- CDP sentence
- 5-slide technical story
- Agenda template
- Decision record snippet



Questions?

