

# Successful Remote Engineering

Working in New York  
Living in Michigan



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# Agenda

Who are you, and where did you come from?

A little background...

Let's make some success!

Life as a remote engineer

**Hi, I'm Av, and I work  
from home.**

# Hi, I'm Av!

- Working remotely since 2009
- Staff Operations Engineer @ Etsy
- I like cats
- ...and I like to tell stories

# Why am I speaking to you?

- We're not in Kansas any more!
- Hiring in tech hubs is difficult and expensive.
- Talent exists everywhere.
- Remote engineering bring new challenges.
- Let's make remote engineering the default choice!

Remote engineering, Act 1:  
Engineering a remote-  
happy culture

How many remote engineers are here?

Working at home is easy, amirite?



**This is Aether,  
a remote engineer**





# New challenges with remote engineering

Remote engineering isn't a panacea, and brings interesting problems of its own:

- Communication and collaboration
- Hiring and accountability
- Social pressures
- Work environments

# Your life as a remote engineer

- Communication
- Discipline
- Balance

How important is communication?

Let's play a game

Communicate as remote, by default.

```
11:56:57 frantz | it's really just host/service state info for all
           | the things
11:57:03 frantz | we don't need that in Elasticsearch
11:57:14 frantz | the alert events are more interesting
11:57:53 murphy | frantz: the state is also in the main nagios log
11:58:20 murphy | it's just that some of our checks emit spurious |
           | chars that shunt a bunch of data into perfdata
11:58:55 frantz | murphy: true dat. i was guilty of that up until the
           | end of last week...
11:59:23 frantz | i had a recommended command in the long output that
           | included a pipe.
12:00:19 murphy | yeah
12:00:37 murphy | nagios check output is surprisingly fussy
12:06:43 frantz | murphy: i've eliminated that log type from log01's
           | lumberjack config
12:06:50 frantz | no more nagios_perf_log in <= 10min
12:06:54 murphy | ?++ frantz my hero
12:06:54 irccat | One more plus for frantz! frantz now has 406
           | pluses!
12:22:25 frantz | gettin' some eats
12:31:23 avleen | also getting eats. back soon.
```

1:1's: Talk to your manager  
at least 2-3 times a week.



# Discipline

# Schedule when you're new

10:00	Wake up
10:30	Lounge around in PJs
11:00	Breakfast
11:30	The Price Is Right!
12:00	Lunch
13:30	Write some code
14:00	Play with cat
14:30	Pile of laundry calls

**Late start..  
Working From Box**



# Schedule like a pro

9am					
10am	10 – 1:50p Tech time	10 – 11:30 Tech time	10:30 – OpsCave +	10 – 1:50p Tech time	10 – 1:50p Tech time
11am			11 – Av / Katherine		
		11:30 – Staff Ops C	← 11:30 – MCR/Av		
12pm			← 12p – 1p Weekly Ops Staff Meeting		
1pm		1p – 1:50p Snr-eng	1p – 1:50p Lunch		
2pm	2p – 2:50p Lunch	2p – 2:50p Lunch	2p – 4:50p Tech time	2p – 2:50p Lunch	2p – 2:50p Lunch
3pm	3p – Av / Pete 1:1 3:30p – Av / Pnaf 1	3p – 3:50p OpsCave + IRC		3p – 3:50p OpsCave + IRC	
4pm		4p – 1:1 Av/Tim		4p – 1:1 Av/Jerem	
5pm					



# Don't be a black-box

You're a person not a robot!

- Collaborate with other team members
- Lead projects
- Don't accept work silently

# Travel

# Balance

Working and resting create a virtuous cycle when balanced correctly

- Set start / end time times for work
- Take vacation
- Get a hobby





Remote engineering, Act 2:  
The things no-one tells you

# You are your own tech support

Time to brush up on your systems administration skills!

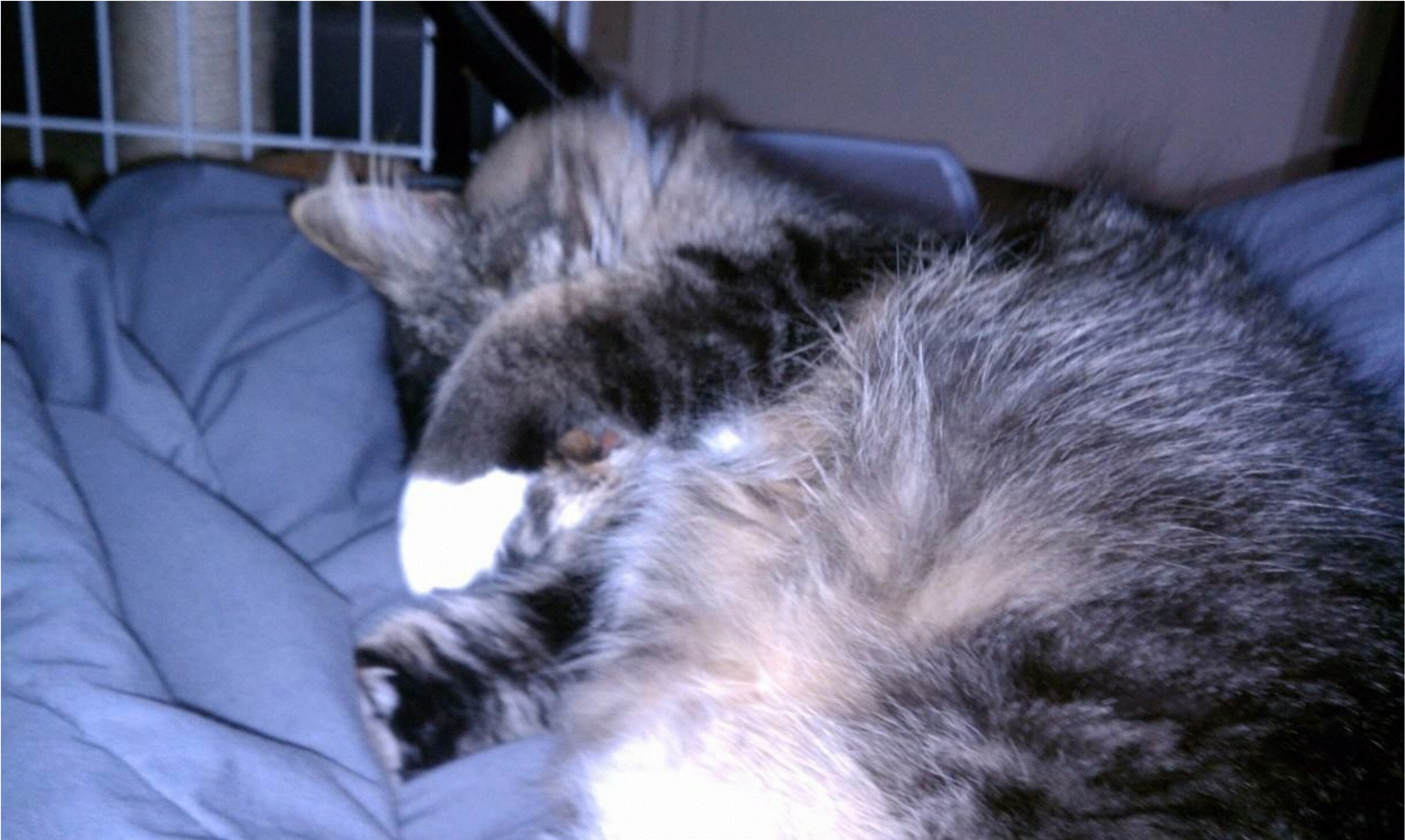
- How well can you debug a broken laptop?
- Take your own backups
- Keyboard broken? Amazon is your friend!

# Conflict resolution

- 25% of a manager's time
- Many factors contribute to conflict impact
- Especially critical for remote engineers

# What your manager needs to do

**Step 1: Get a cat**



# Managers are people too

...and they need to help foster a remote-friendly culture

- Regular 1:1's, over-communicate
- Encourage “Remote by default”
- Do: Encourage. Don't: Micro-manage
- Set availability expectations (eg, 11am-4pm)

# Managers influence the business

There are some things managers should do improve business practices

- Hire communicators and doers
- Find budget for travel and good equipment
- Pair people in different regions on projects
- Doubles development!



# Managers influence people

- Find out how your engineers are feeling
- Do they need help?
- You impact families more - support them

# Managing meetings

- Invest in a good A/V solution
- Advocate for remotes who aren't present
- Moderate meetings - remotes need a voice!

Don't have just one remote engineer!

Cabin fever is a real thing.

**So get outside!**



<https://twitter.com/ripenaar/status/598406043090157568>

# Benefits of remote engineering

There are so many!

- US national savings over \$700bn per year
- Better for the environment
- Significantly larger work pool
- Employees with more varied backgrounds

# Catch 22

**Not enough  
experience points**





# Moving to remote engineering

There are two main avenues:

- Find a company willing to take a chance
- Convert your existing position to remote

Questions? (not about the photo!)



Etsy

*@avleen*