ASPIEGEL

How we built out our SRE Department, to support the world's 3rd biggest mobile marketplace

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Agenda

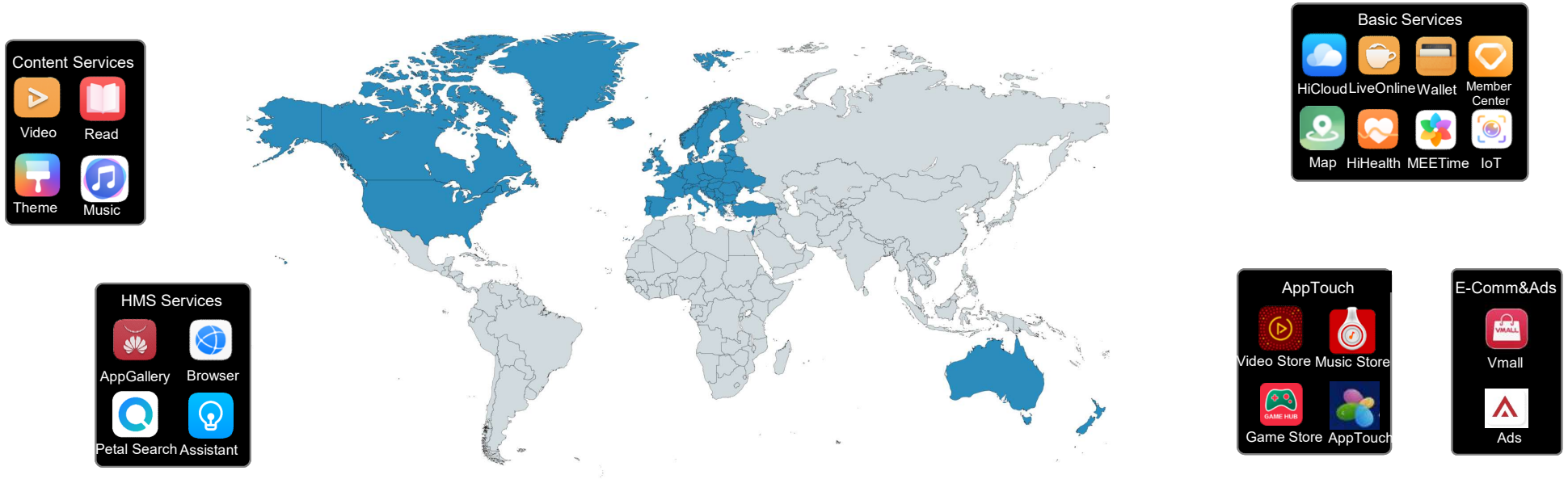
Quick Introduction

Remote Working With Covid

Scaling an SRE Team

Who We Are

Aspiegel SE are a digital services provider, based in Dublin, and with branches around Europe. Our role is to manage and operate the HMS for users in Europe, North America, Australia, and a number of other countries. This means that if end-users in these countries use the HMS Apps or Services, it all comes through our systems!



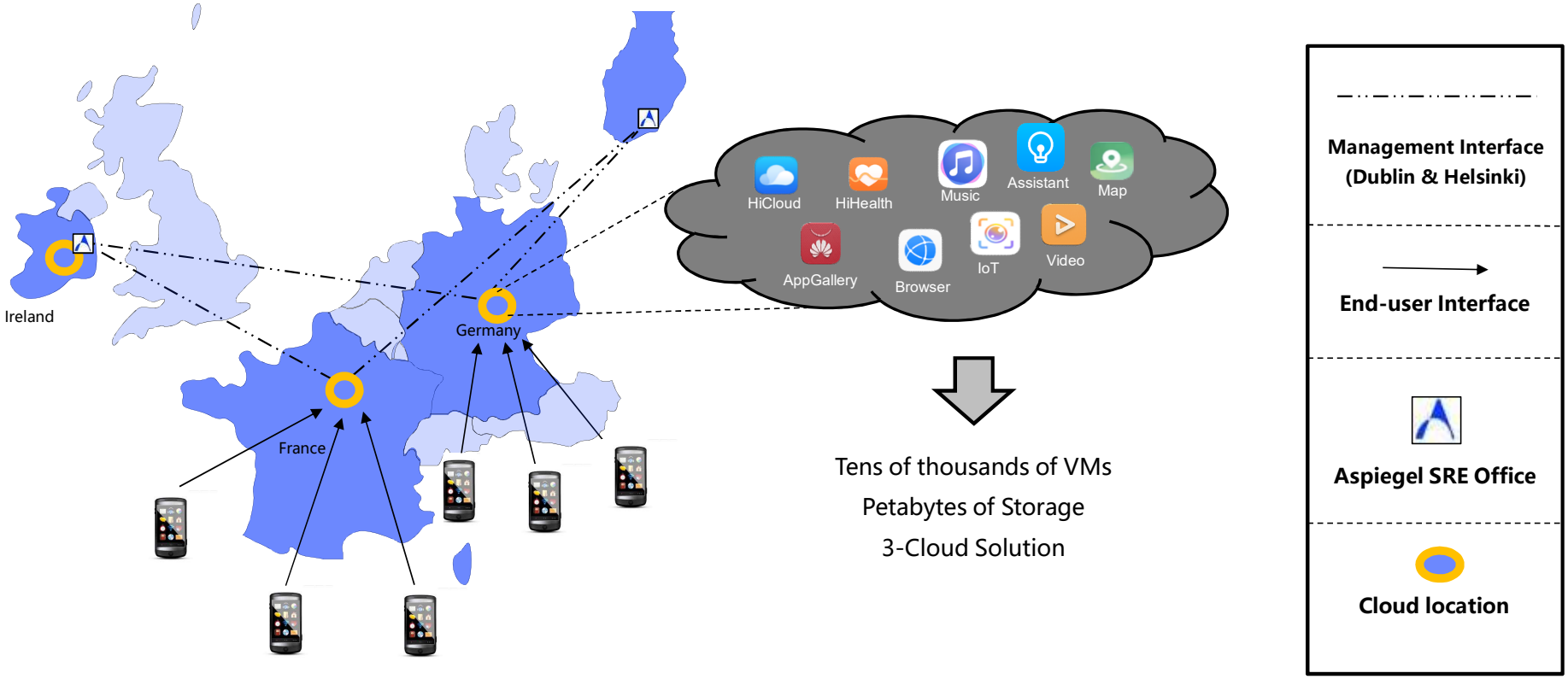
100+ Million Users

60+ Countries Covered

100+ Services Managed

Our Setup

We make use of public cloud in Germany, France and Dublin to host the services, We deploy in a 1+1 configuration, on multi AZs for redundancy



What we will Discuss

March of last year saw some new challenges come our way

A large increase in projected workload for our team

A transition away from using a Managed Services SRE team

Offices Closing, and remote working become the norm

1. Rapidly build up our SRE team size
2. Figure out how to work from home

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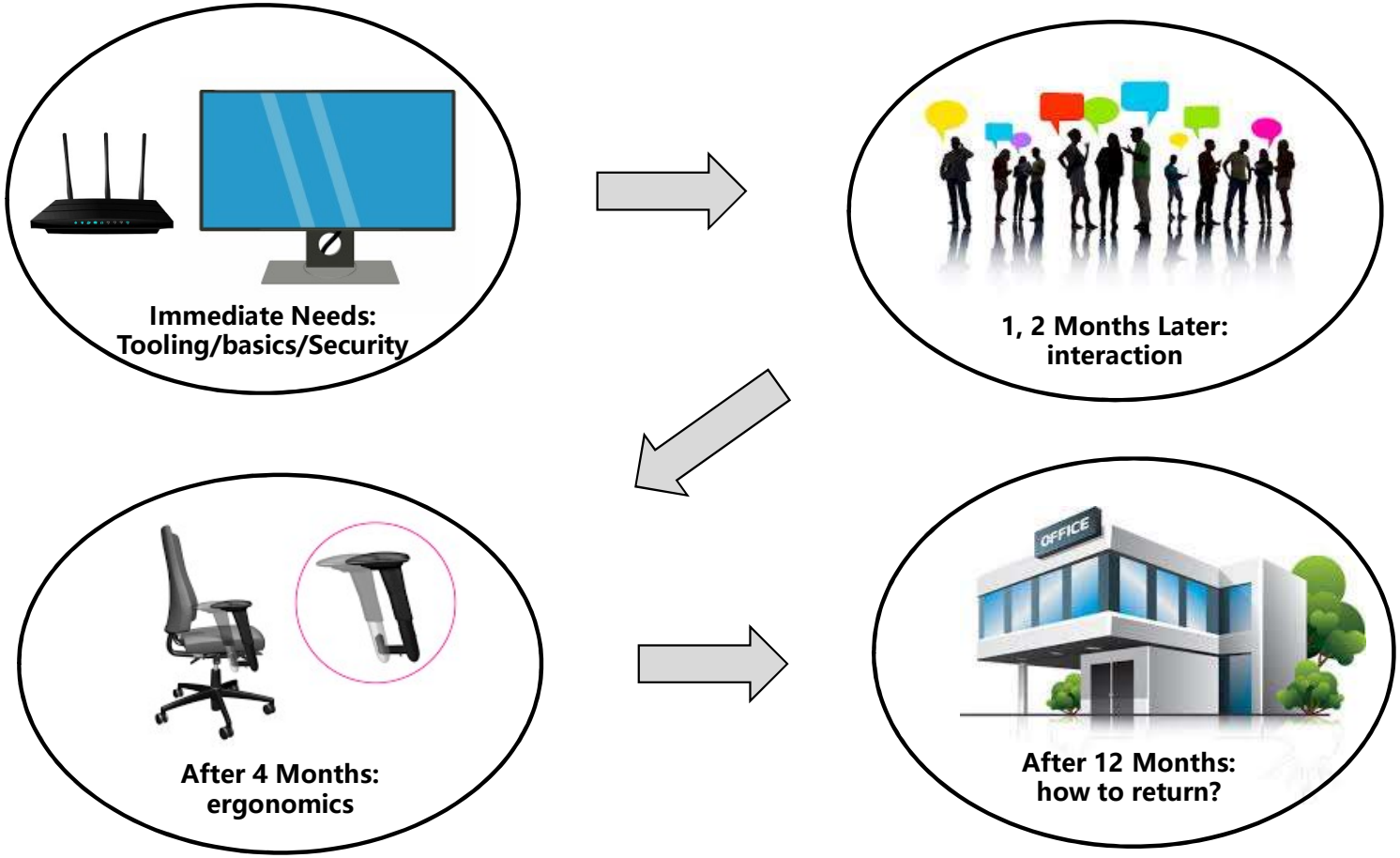
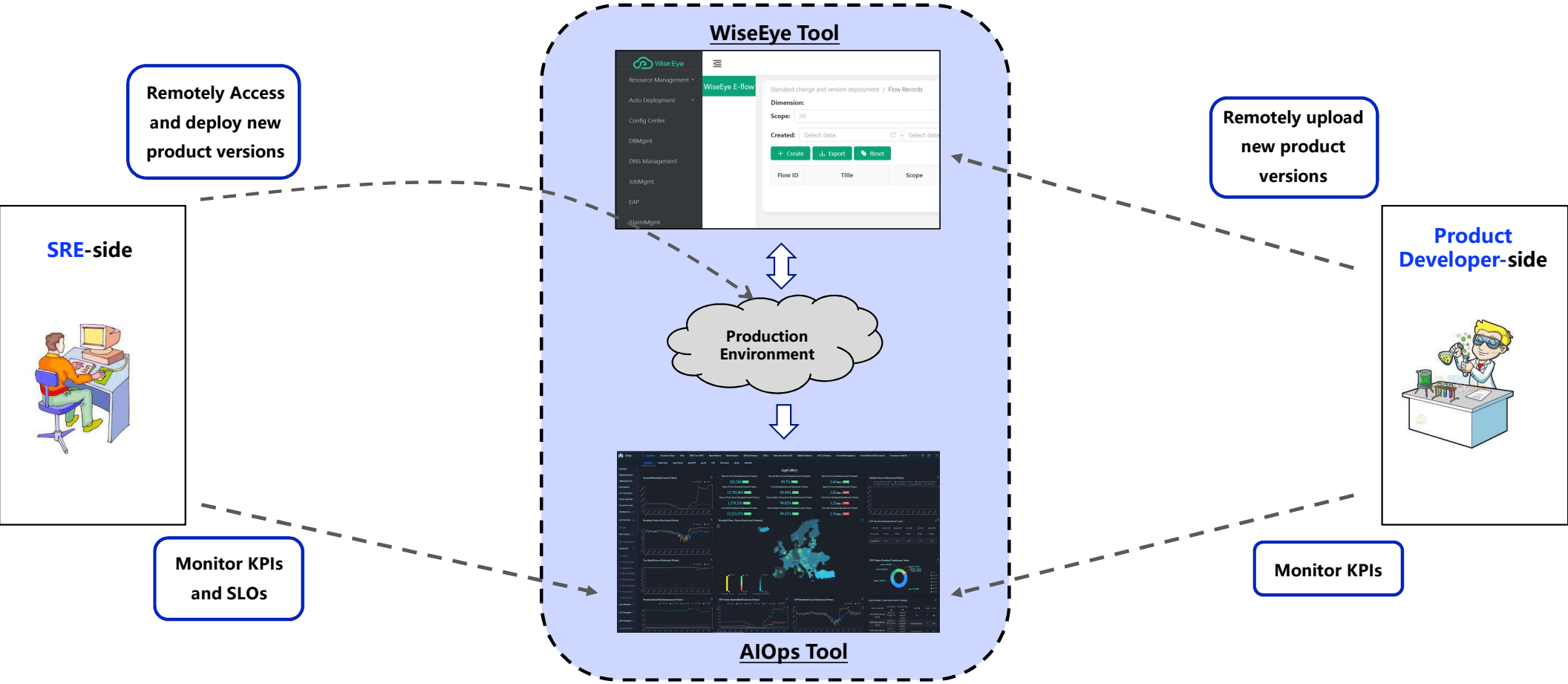
Friday 13th March 2020 – Ireland “Goes Home”

With a blanket "work from home" call for the country, our engineers needs changed during the year…



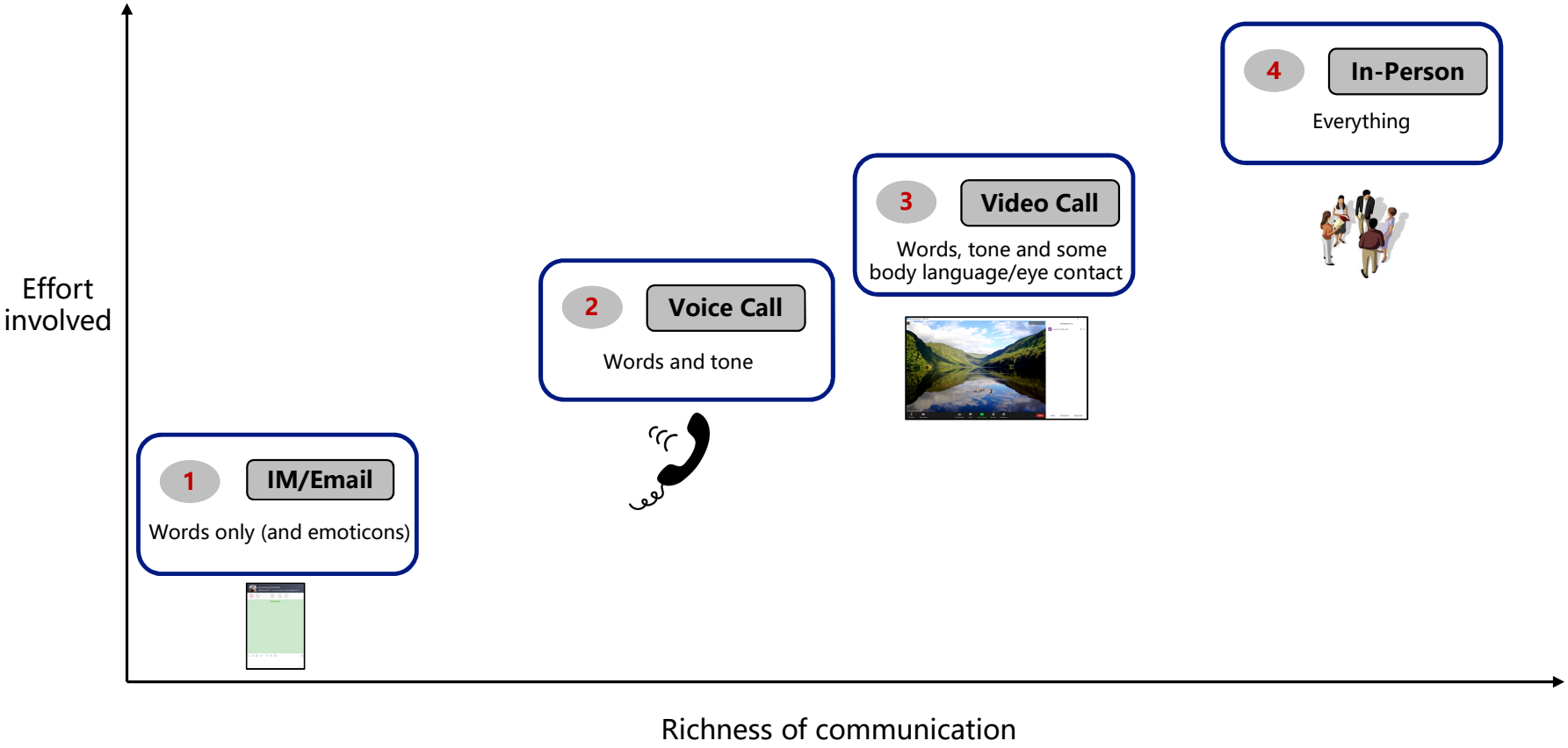
Remote Tooling for the Remote SRE

Deploy / Monitor / Optimise / Resource Management / Communication



Choosing how to Communicate

Full Communication = words + tone + body language



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How to Grow the Team?

Differences of a Small & Large SRE Dept

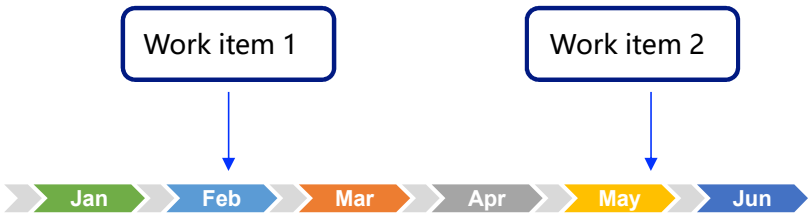
- Process is often in place, but a lot runs on tribal knowledge
- "Everyone knows" who to go to, and how things get done
- Engineers do a variety of different tasks, to get everything covered

- Tribal knowledge is still present, but not to the same extent
- Process, procedures and documentation become far more important - essential
- Engineers do more specific tasks, as there is more people coverage

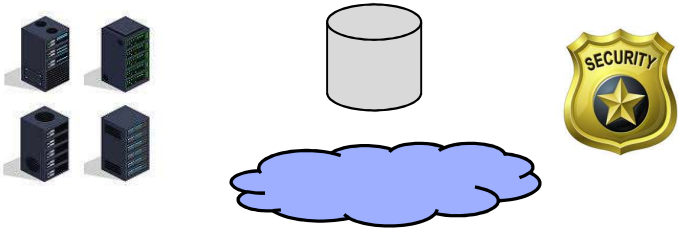
Note: Process needs to be efficient, and realistic, or it will not be adopted.
It's crucial to give engineers a way to challenge process, as this is where most improvements come from

Planning for Growth

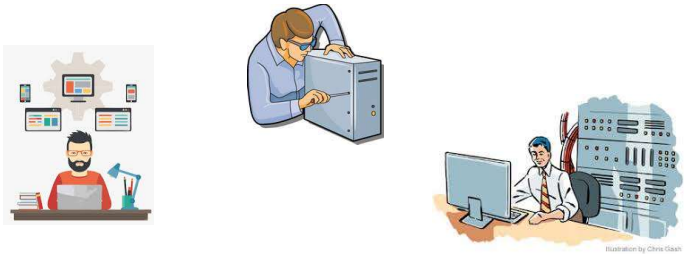
If you are growing your team, you need to start by planning (as much as possible!), what your growth looks like over the year



When is work incoming? How many new heads needed?



Types of work – current, or new work-streams/areas?

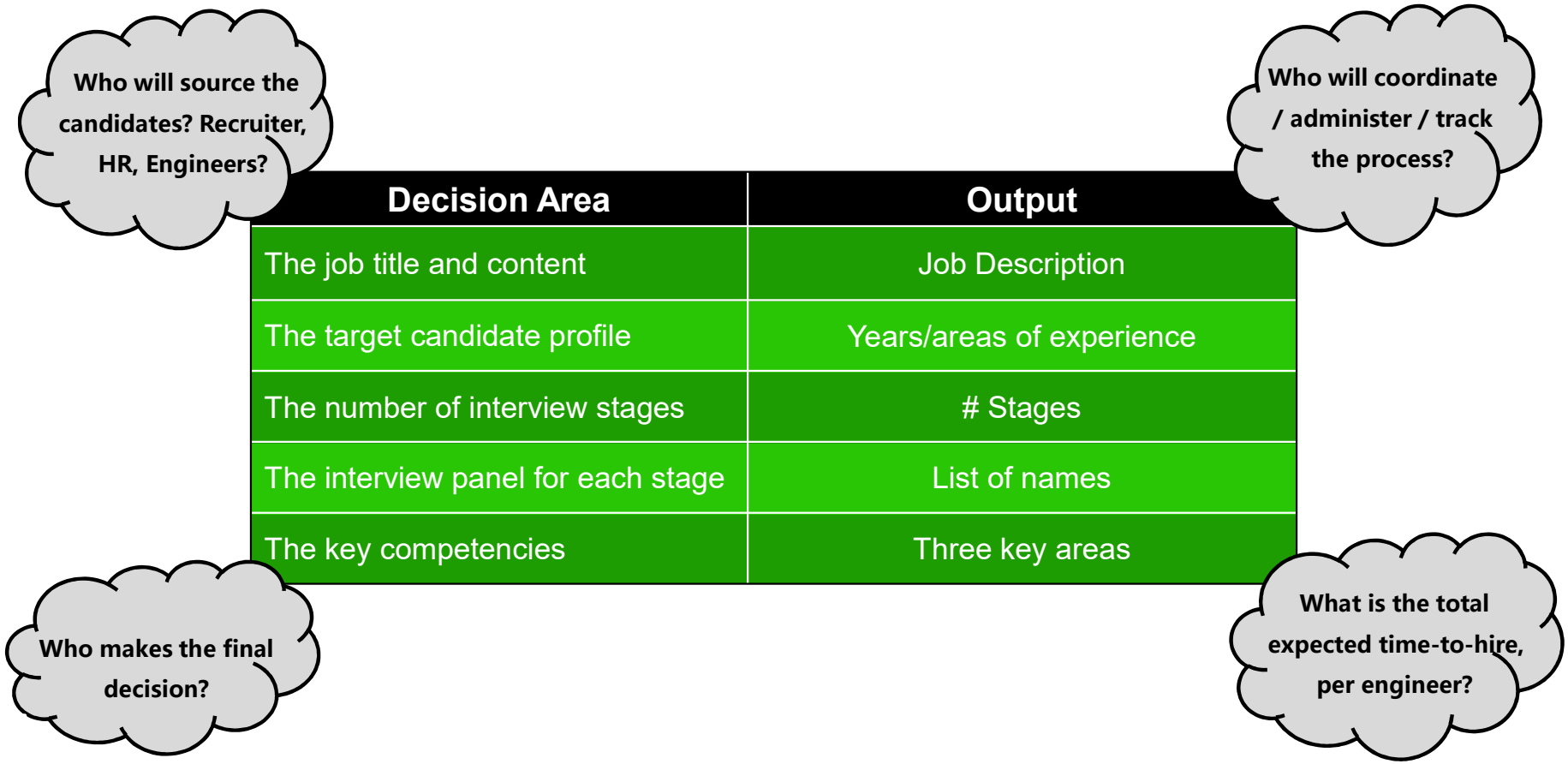


Types of new heads needed – experience levels?

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	...
1 SRE	1 DBA	1 Security	2 Infra	3 SRE	1 Security	...
3 DB	2 SSE	2 SRE	3 SSE	4 SSE	1 DBA	...

Rate/type of new heads needed per month (consider loss %)

Hiring SREs in Bulk



Decision Area	Output
The job title and content	Job Description
The target candidate profile	Years/areas of experience
The number of interview stages	# Stages
The interview panel for each stage	List of names
The key competencies	Three key areas

On-boarding Remotely, and at Scale

When onboarding one person, questions can be easily dealt with. This is not the case with many people!

Reduce queries by having a defined, and accessible on-boarding plan. Specify:

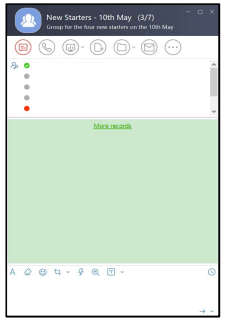
- ❑ Actions
- ❑ Learning points
- ❑ Deliverables

On a week-by-week basis, (for at least the first month). Automate the process!

Onboarding schedule

New SRE onboarding consists of few logical sections.

Timeline	Goals	POC	Details	Success metric
Week 1	• Settle down: get your desk, laptop and any other office equipment • Meet the team • Sort out all the formalities (badge, payrol, revenue, pension, insurance - if applicable) • Request test phone and sim, update corporate profile with contact details • Get a mentor	Manager	Week 1 wiki page	Be able to demonstrate satisfactory Mandatory Exam scores on all of the required tests

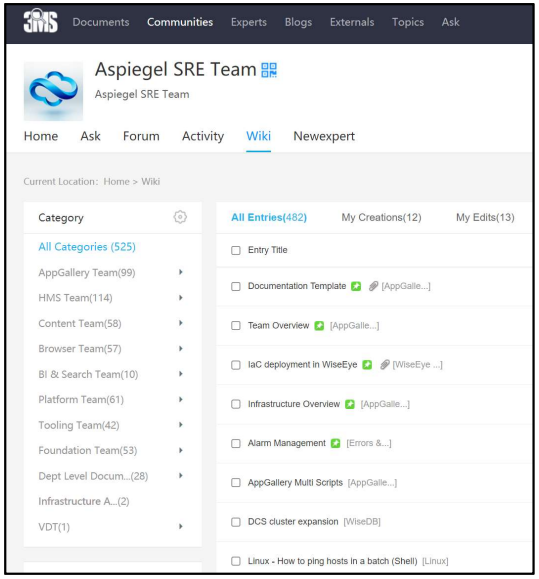


Establish an IM support group for new starter queries - whoever is free helps!

The Next Stage – Knowledge Access

For the 2-6 month stage it is important to assist knowledge development, with accessible documentation on work tasks

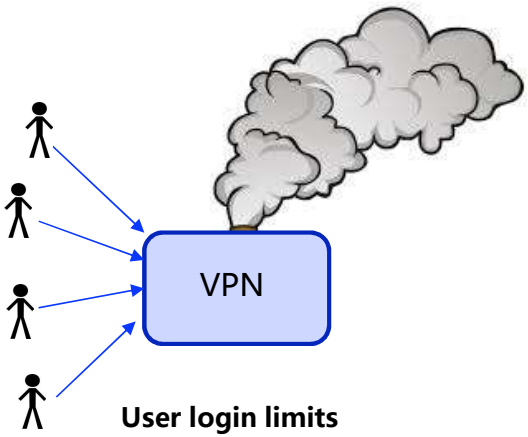
Implementing a good **Knowledge Base** is essential



Remember – your new starters of today, are your KB authors of tomorrow!

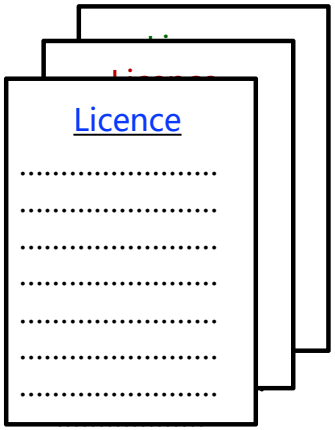
Scaling up SRE Tooling

What happens, when 4 or 5 times as many engineers as normal use your tools?

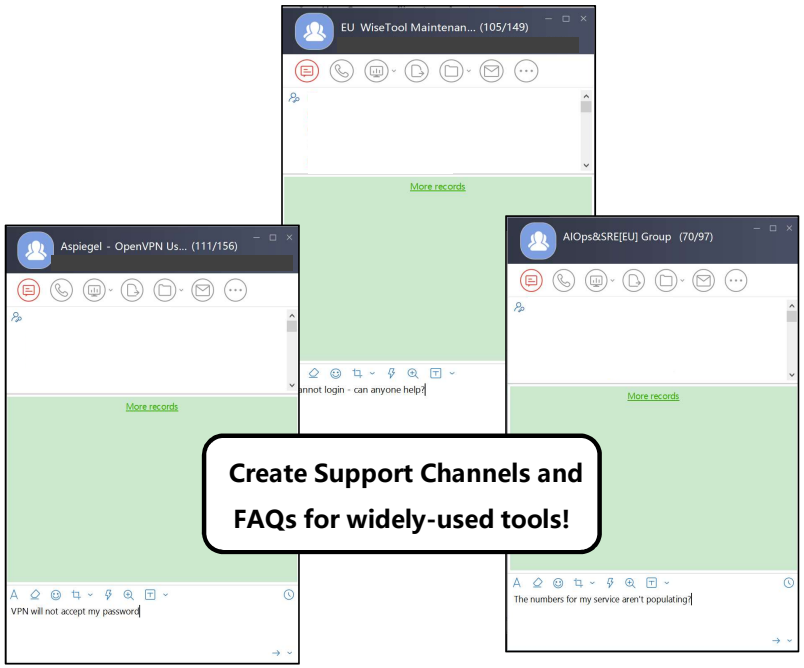


User login limits

Attract attention from IT

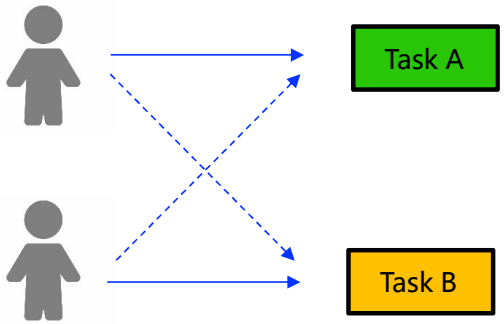


User tool licensing issues

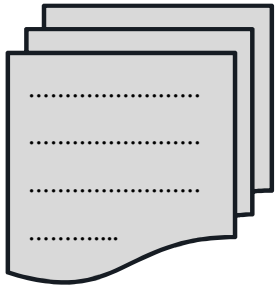


Engineers Moving on

100% retention is sadly impossible - apply SRE principles, to mitigate against the risk of losing knowledge



people-task redundancy



Full documentation in place, for each piece of work

Turnover percentage should be modeled for the year, and fed back into your growth plan

So Where Are we Now?

Still hiring (Come join us!)

Fairly settled into our roles

People are physically less tired, but mentally more tired – it has been a long year for everyone

The majority of our team has never been in the office - we're looking forward to seeing each other ☺

Thank you for your time!

Further queries: sinead.o.reilly@huawei.com

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Together, We'll be Better