



Building teams in tumultuous times

Lessons learned after multiple layoffs



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Hi, I'm Chris 🙌

01

About 20 years in the industry

02

About 13 of those in management positions.

03

6 of those years here in Berlin.

04

Involved in 4 Layoffs

05

2 Layoffs in management positions

06

Laid off once

407,600 in 2023

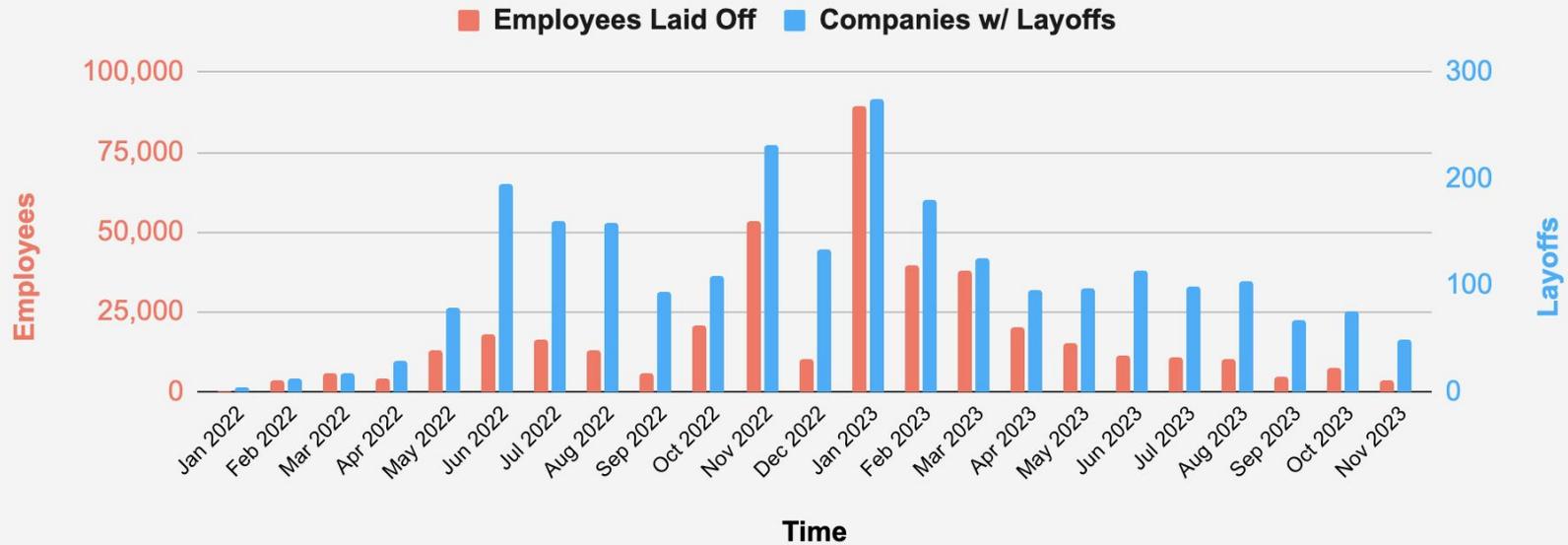
In 1,879 companies. That's **1,236** people per day.



Layoffs Trends

Tech layoffs in 2022-2023

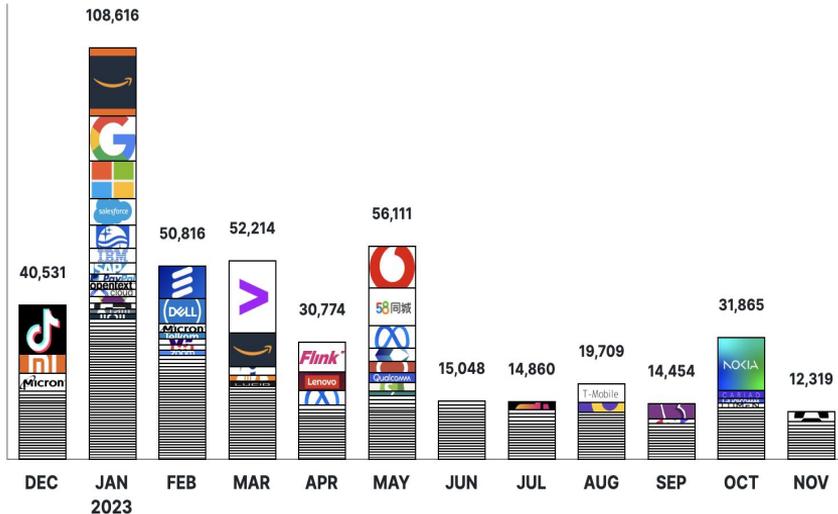
Source: <https://layoffs.fyi>



Anatomy of a Layoff

of Tech Employees Let Go

as of November 25, 2023



source: trueup.io/layoffs

- Business decisions due to restructuring or economic reasons.
- A minimum of around 5% to 10% of employees were dismissed at each location.
- Planned layoffs must be notified to the Employment Agency.
- Social selection among comparable employees, taking into consideration age, length of service, maintenance obligations, and severe disability, etc.
- Decisions are not based on performance.

What is this about?

01

Personal stories
from three Layoffs

02

My Learnings

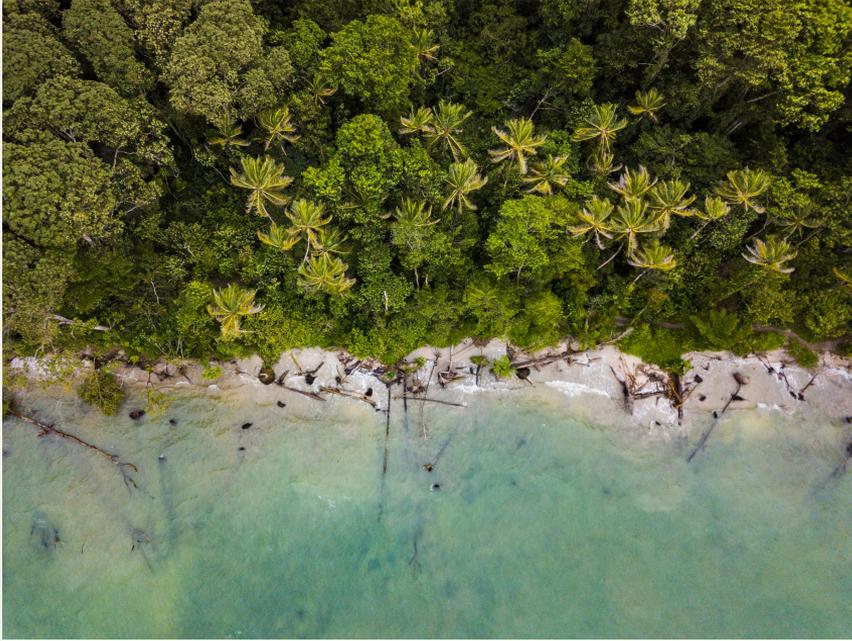
03

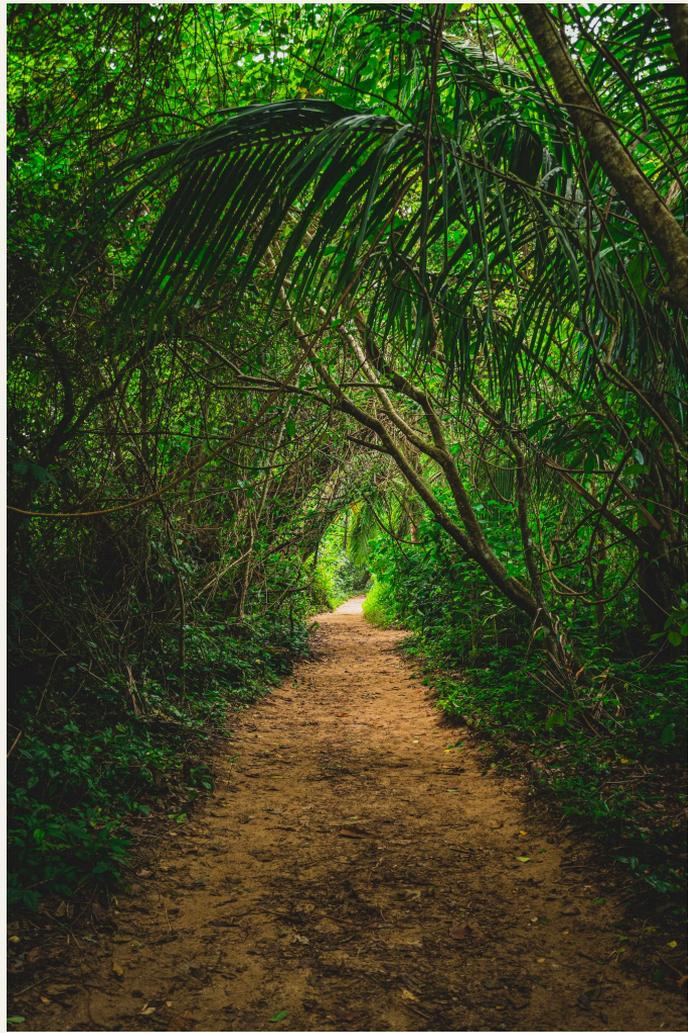
Helpful thoughts for
you.

01

My First Layoff

2010 - Costa Rica









Back then...

- Senior Engineer / Engineering Manager
- Team of 6 Engineers
- Hiring, ways of working, training, and lots of coding as part of my responsibilities



The iPhone looked like this!

Building some pretty cool stuff!

- Shipping constantly
- Learnings from each other
- Including our ideas into the product



It was great!!

And then the call came...

Feelings 🙄

- Guilt
- Maybe I wasn't good enough after all?
- Shame
- What about the team?

A bit of Retrospective

Learnings for myself

- It's not about you!
- Your career is bigger than a single company!
- Time Heals!
- Self-Reflect.

Learnings as a new manager

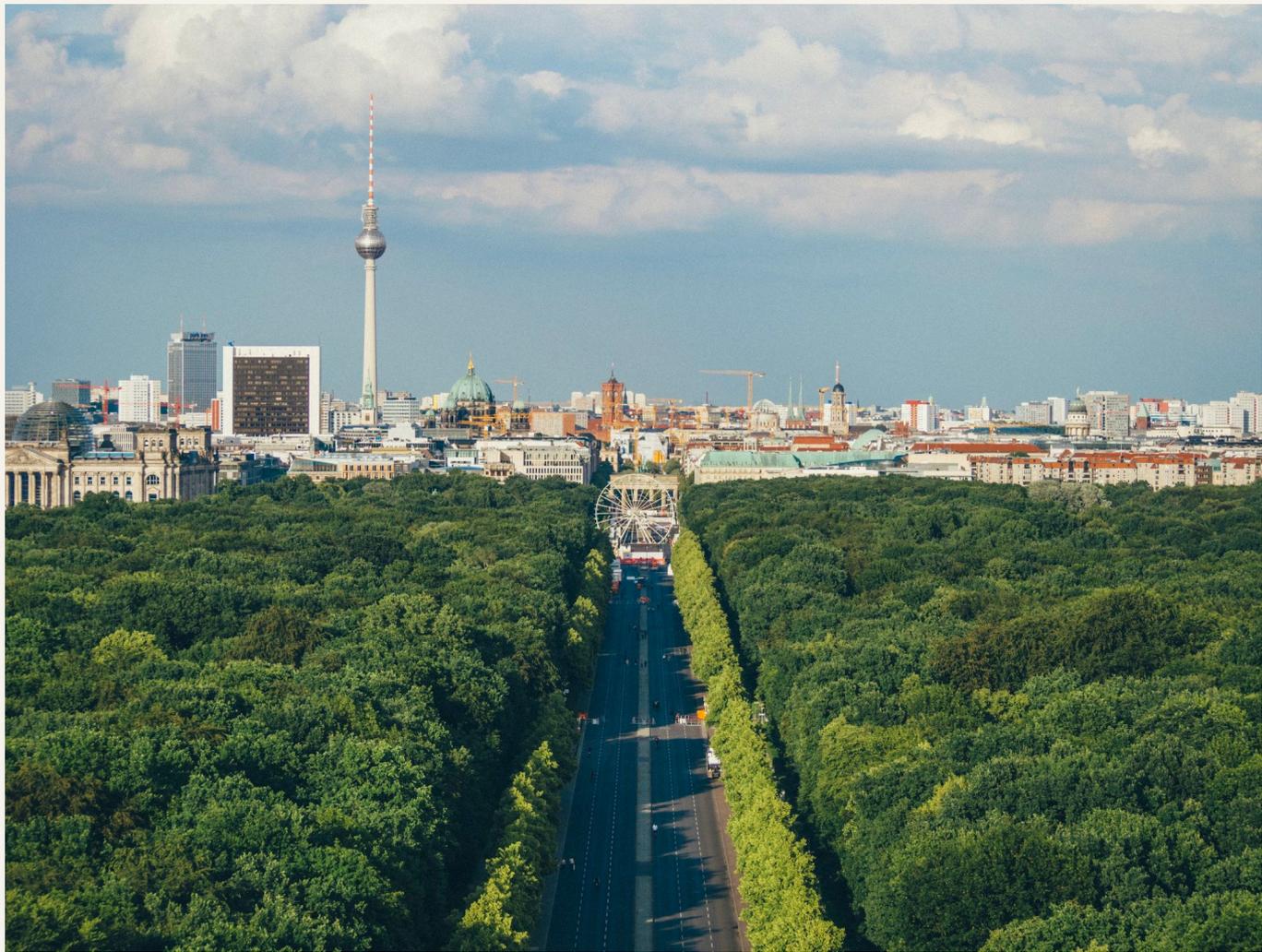
- A huge part of your role is to advocate for all the work that the team does.
- Failed to build awareness of the team and the great work we were doing.
- Failed to position my teammates where they could be visible and showcase their amazing work.

02

My Second Layoff

2017 - Berlin

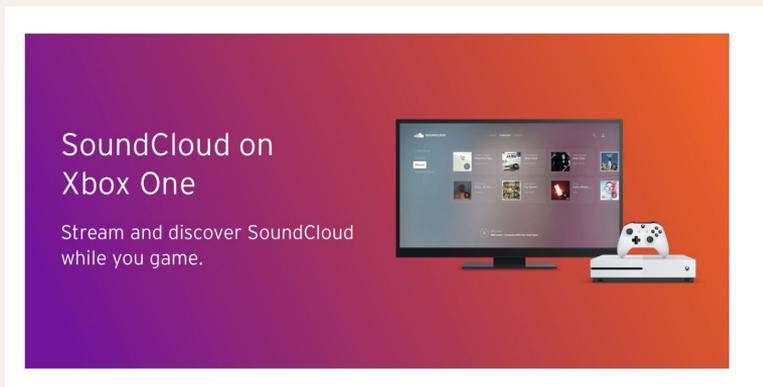






Back then...

- Everything was new
- Engineering Manager, 7 teammates on
Audio Playback Products
- Working on some really cool things.

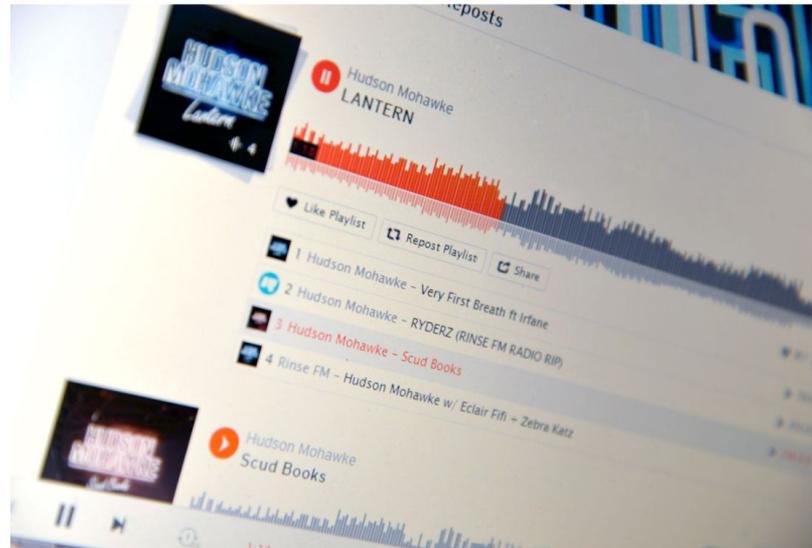


And then...

Technology

SoundCloud Cuts 40% of Staff in Push for Profitability

- Music service will close offices in San Francisco, London
- SoundCloud has struggled to compete against Spotify, Apple



Photographer: Jonathan Nicholson/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Yeah... yet again

Learnings as a Manager

Clarity on Myself

- Understand your emotions.
- Reflect on your Role.
- Check on your Core Values and Principles.
- Adaptability.

Understanding the Emotional Impact

- Take the time to speak and listen.
- Extend support as much as you can.
- Understand the panorama.
- Survivor's guilt.

Transparent Communication

- Demand clarity.
- Provide clarity.
- Goal Setting.
- Strategy on what is next.

Help people back to work

- Support technically if you can or if it make sense.
- Support by removing scope or blockers.
- Support by showing the work.

Re-establishing Team Dynamics

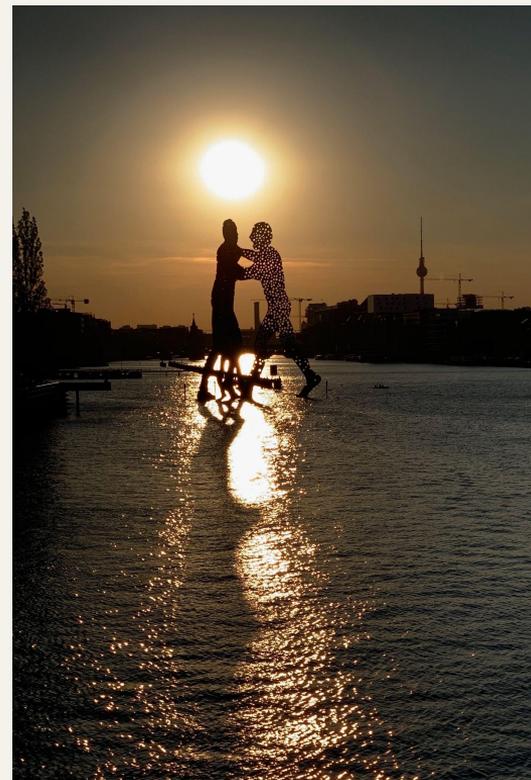
- Provide a clear mission and purpose.
- Internal Hiring.
- Continue to support and provide clarity during 1:1s.
- Introduce new ways of working.

Long-term Vision and Purpose

- It takes a while, and that is OK.
- It's your responsibility to show how everything fits in the big picture.
- Work with the team to set clear and achievable goals.

4 Years Later

- Had great 4 years there
- 6 teams in the Platform Engineering Org + 60 People.
- Lot's of great things built, lots of learnings and a lot of fun!



03

My Third Layoff

2022 - Berlin

During 2022

- Lockdown lifted.
- War, Economic, Inflation, etc.
- The James Webb Telescope reached its final destination!
- I also started new job. 🧑💻



During the start of 2022

- Onboarded, meeting lots of new people, learning more about the business.
- Mentoring, Team Organization, Growing the teams.
- Building the Platform Engineering Org. Hiring

Things change during Q3/ Q4 2022

- Hiring Freeze
- Double down on focus and profitability
- Layoffs...

Before the news are shared



Before

- If you are not part of the entire decision-making process, ensure you understand the ins and outs of the decision.
- Personal Reflection: How will this change the business, your role, and other roles?

Before

- As a business, are you **doing the best you can** for the people who are affected?
- Ensure that you and everyone involved can clearly articulate the reasons behind the decision and what comes next.

People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but
people will never forget how **you**
made them feel.

After



After

- Space and time to regroup.
- Make this process as human but as fast as possible.
- Clarity
- Rebuilding takes time.

After

- Double down on communication. Financial Transparency
- Your role is to make it possible for people to work.
- Retrospective Time. As a leadership team, take time to learn and retro how you got there.

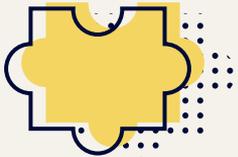
04

Wrap Up

Patterns from 2010 to 2023

It's not about you.

Your career is bigger than a single company.



It's about everyone

Everyone is affected!



Clarity, Clarity, Clarity

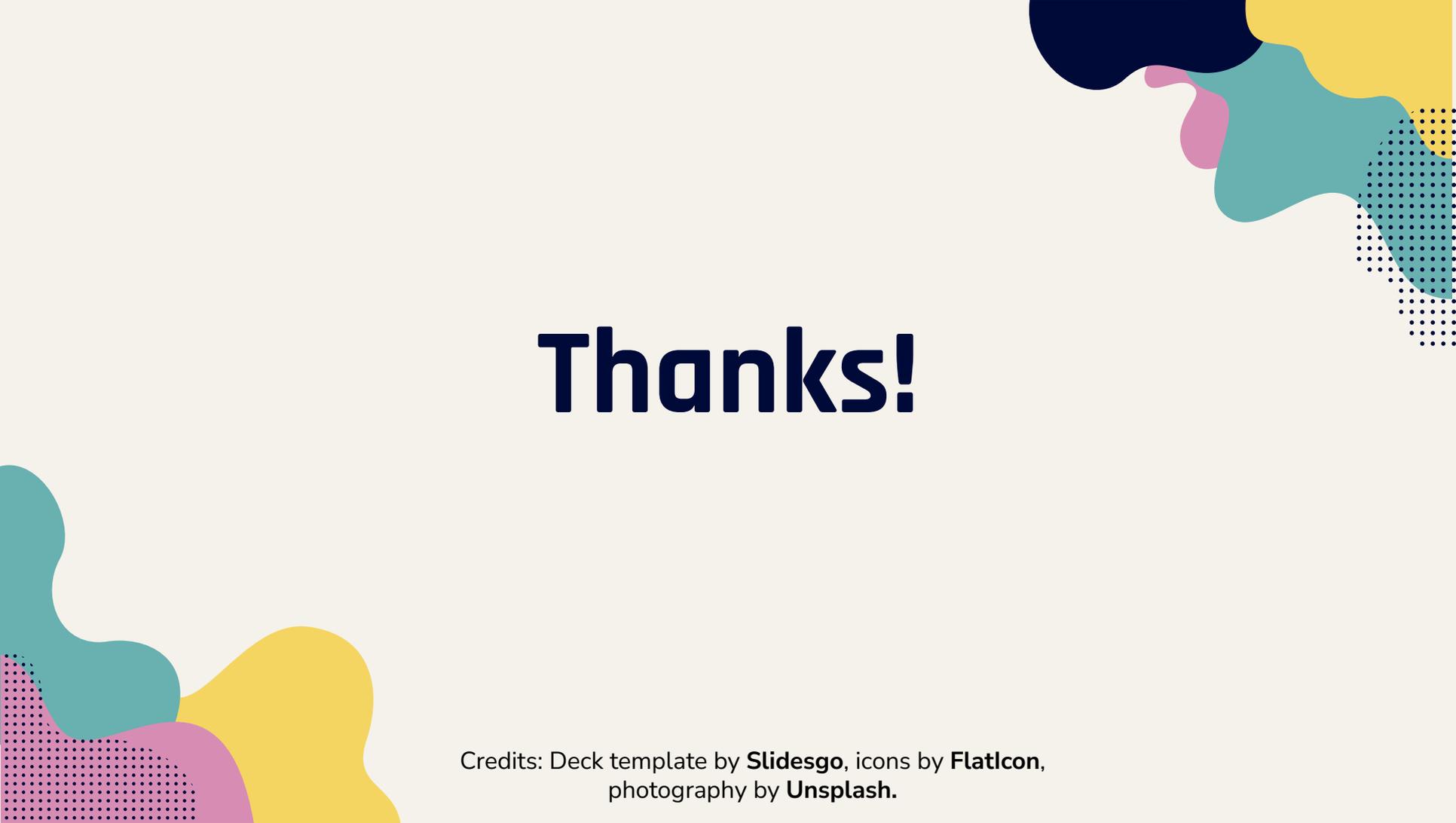
Availability and open communications are more important than ever



Doing your best

As a company and as a leader. Are you doing the best that you can?



The slide features abstract, colorful shapes in the corners. In the top right, there are overlapping shapes in dark blue, yellow, teal, and pink. In the bottom left, there are overlapping shapes in teal, yellow, and pink, with a dotted pattern in the bottom left corner. The main text is centered in a bold, dark blue font.

Thanks!

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