ThoughtWorks®

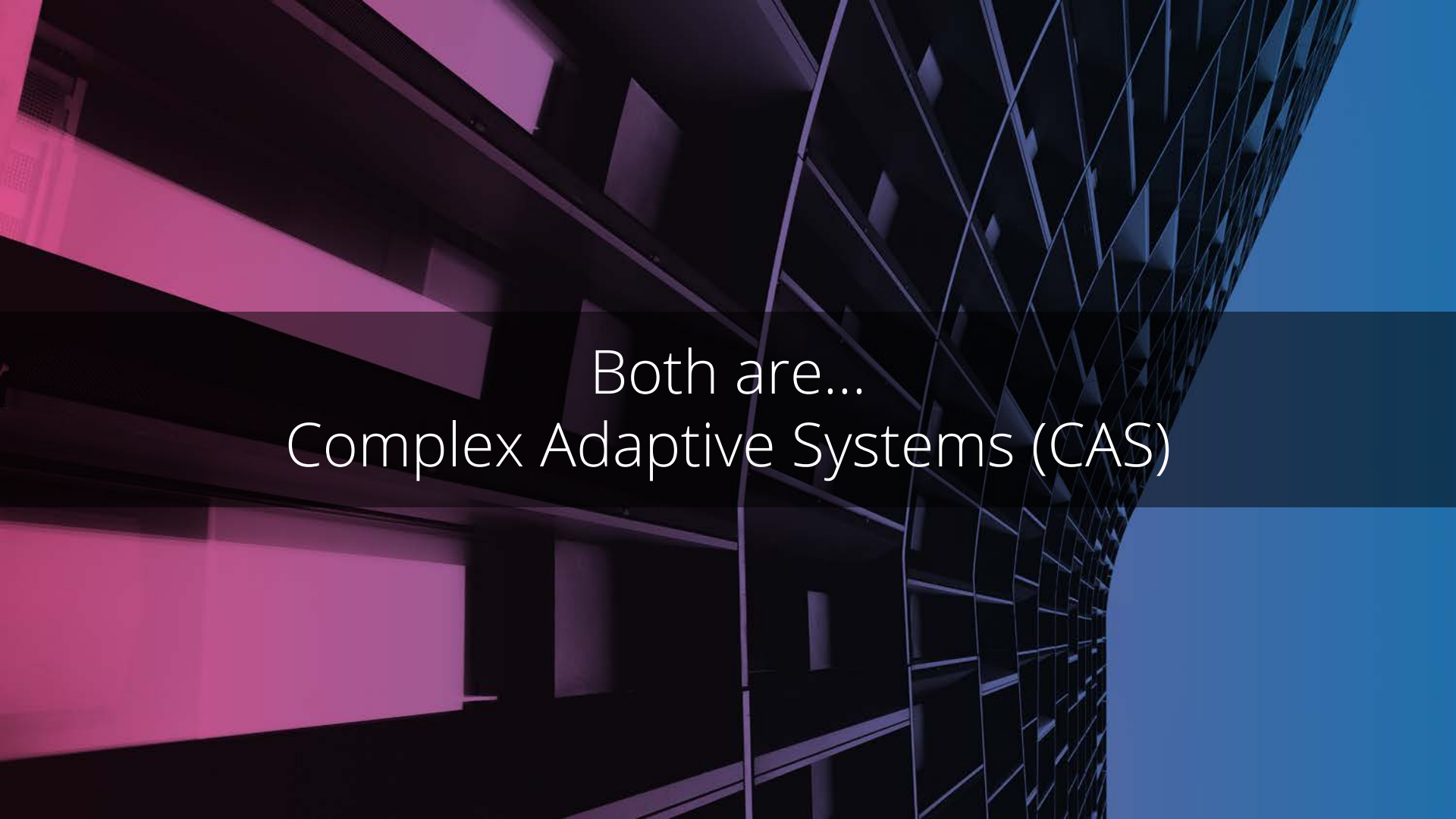
ELEPHANTS CAN DANCE

TWO CONTRASTING TRANSFORMATIONS

Sunil Mundra

Principal Consultant-Advisory

What Is common between
Elephants and Organisations?


Both are...
Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS)

The fundamental attribute of
Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) is..

Agility

Photo: Alexei-scutari

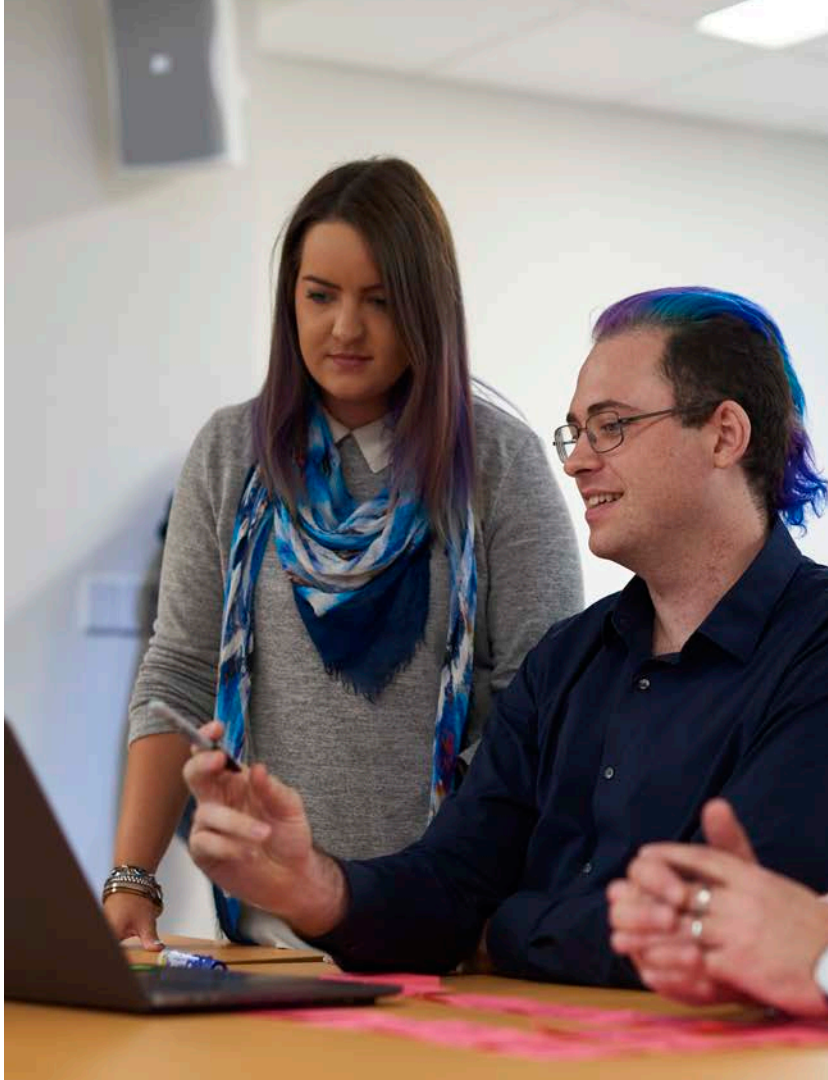
SOME FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANTS

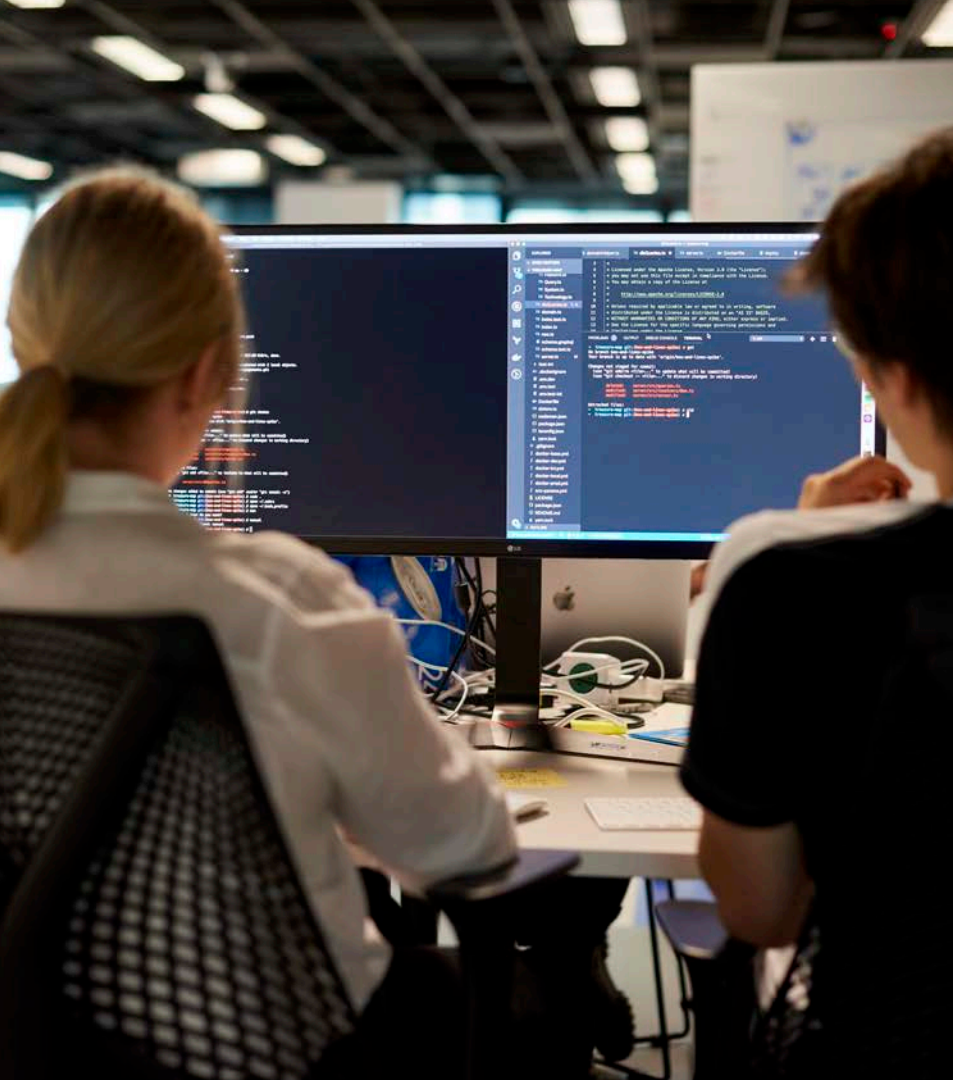
- Demonstrate leadership
- Think holistically
- Have empathy
- Have technical agility
- Focus on learning

Unsuccessful Transformation

CONTEXT

- Health Care division of a Global Engineering Conglomerate, dealing in Medical Imaging Product
- Product created initially with small hospitals as target.
- Strategy modified to cater to large hospitals as well
- Senior Management mindset oriented towards traditional engineering
- Development team was offshore





ORG. CHALLENGES

- ‘Flood’ of new requirements
- Large and Unprioritized backlog
- Delivery not aligned with business needs
- Excessive focus on speed of delivery resulted in high tech debt and therefore poor quality
- Vicious circle of unhappy business and demotivated IT

WHY IT FAILED

- Senior leaders not aligned
- Disregarded engineering practices
- Divide between Business and IT functions
- Local optimisation
- Not focused on ‘being’ Agile

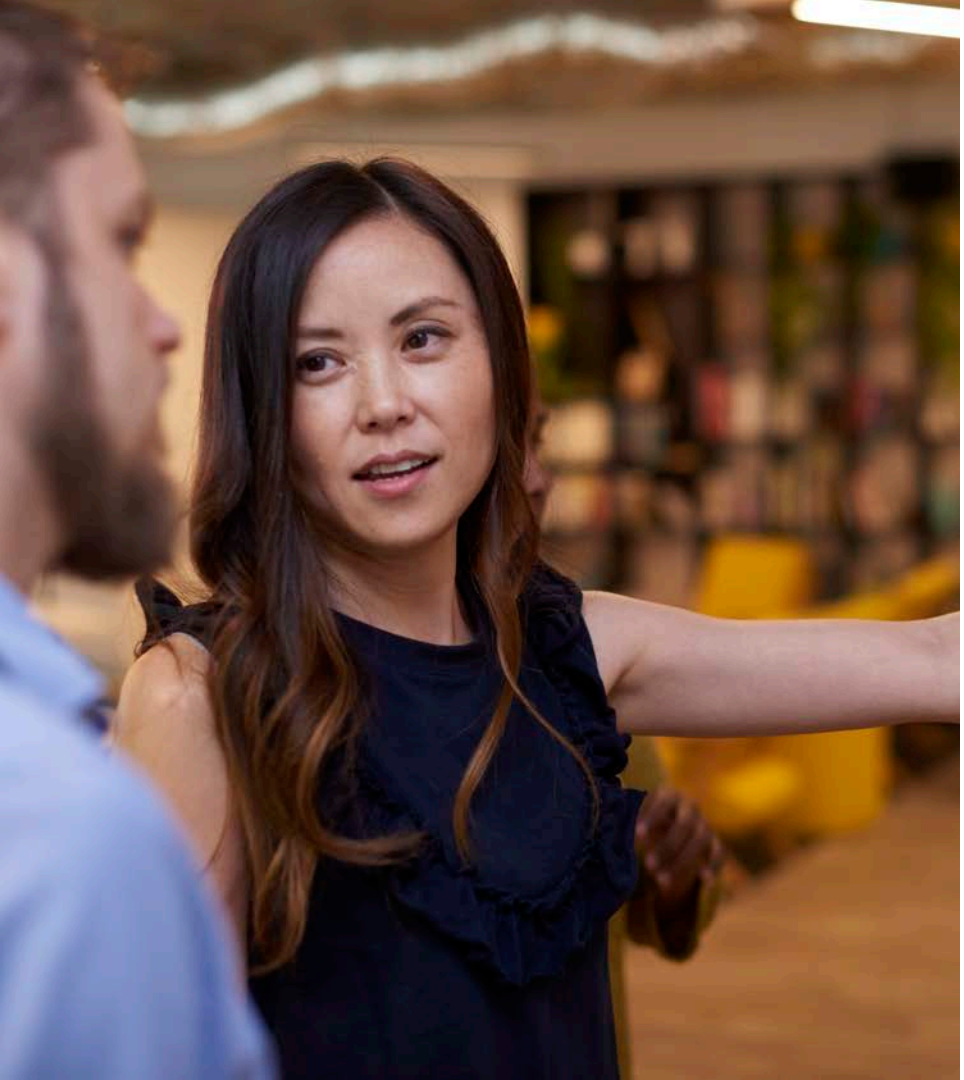
OUTCOME

Product Sold...
To Another Company

Successful Transformation

CONTEXT

- Insurance division of a large financial conglomerate
- Acquired another company twice it's size
- A 'Courageous Leader' launches Agile Transformation
- Transformation Period: Approx. 5 years



ORG. CHALLENGES

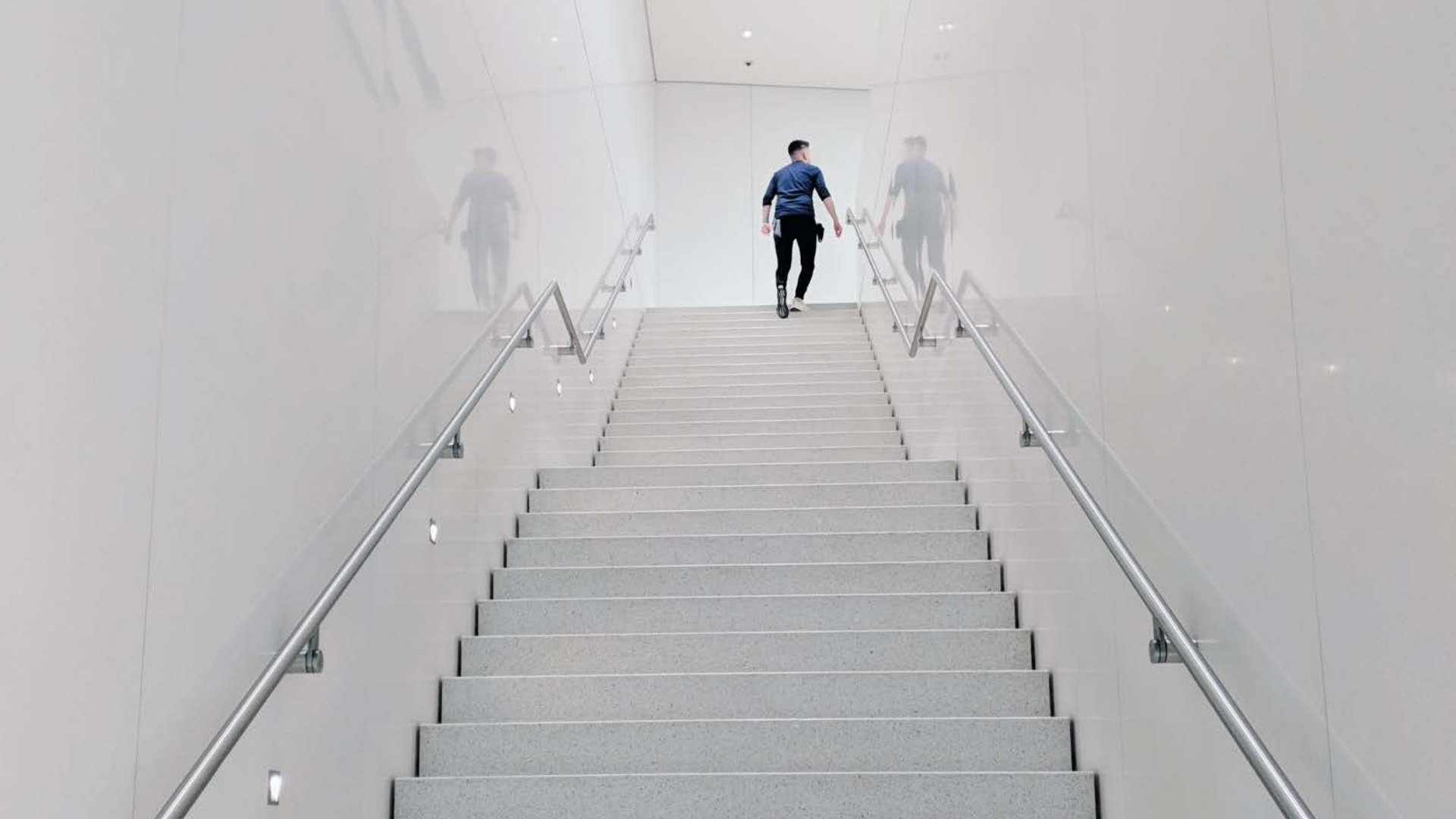
- Products overlap and misalignment
- Disconnected systems and applications
- Cultural differences
- Org. crumbling under its own weight
- Rapid loss of market share

WHY IT SUCCEEDED

- Courageous leadership
- Attention to technical agility
- Investment in capability building
- Focus on sustainability
- Systemic approach to change

OUTCOME

Regained Market Leadership



Key takeaways...

Leaders Transform First

REMEMBER?

- **Demonstrate leadership**
- Think holistically
- Have empathy
- Have technical agility
- Focus on learning

Key takeaways...
Impact of change - Holistic Approach

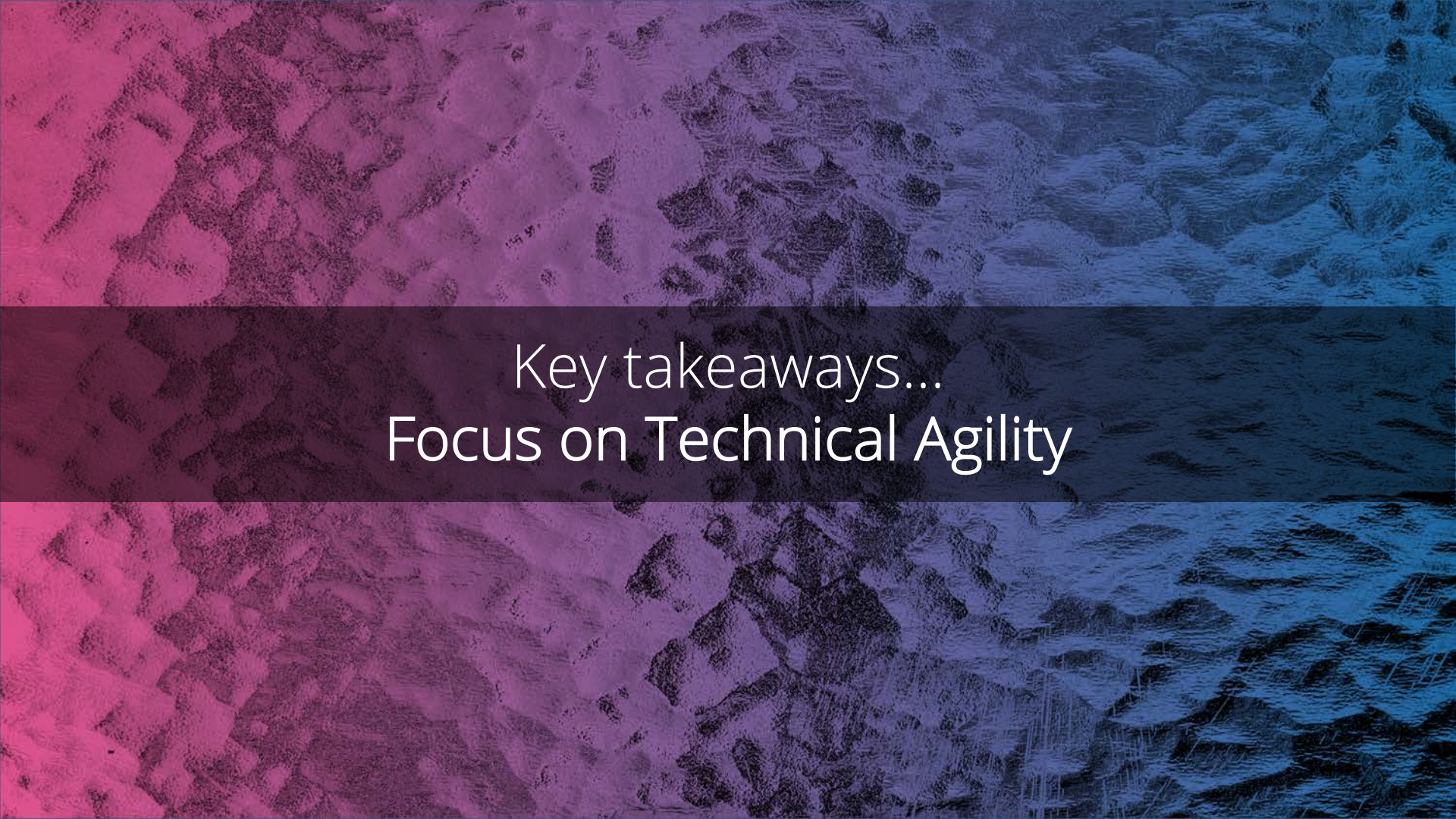
REMEMBER?

- Demonstrate leadership
- **Think holistically**
- Have empathy
- Have technical agility
- Focus on learning

Key takeaways...
Take Everyone On The Journey

REMEMBER?

- Demonstrate leadership
- Think holistically
- **Have empathy**
- Have technical agility
- Focus on learning


Key takeaways…
Focus on Technical Agility

REMEMBER?

- Demonstrate leadership
- Think holistically
- Have empathy
- **Have technical agility**
- Focus on learning

Key takeaways...
Create A Learning Culture

REMEMBER?

- Demonstrate leadership
- Think holistically
- Have empathy
- Have technical agility
- **Focus on learning**

THANK YOU

Sunil Mundra
sunilrm@ThoughtWorks.com

ThoughtWorks®