

A stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in shades of orange, red, and purple. The flame is positioned behind the main title text.

# **USER GUIDE**

**Martin Gonzalez & Josh Yellin**

**THE  
BONFIRE  
MOMENT**

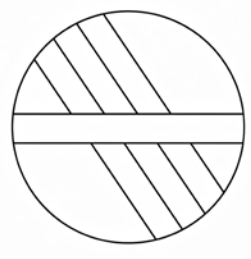
User Guides offer a quick and easy way to reduce friction and improve trust within a startup team. They work especially well for a leadership team of founders and functional heads.

Humans are complex, and sometimes we all need a little help to understand how to get the best out of our colleagues—and how others can get the best out of us.

We designed this User Guide to prompt short explanations of your personal reasons for being here, how you prefer to work and communicate, your expectations of yourself and others, and how you manage conflict. It includes three sections:

- › Section 1: Personal motivations
- › Section 2: Working style
- › Section 3: Our partnership

Printable versions of the User Guide and a completed sample can be found in the resources section of our website: [www.bonfiremoment.com](http://www.bonfiremoment.com).



## Section 1 | Personal Motivations

### **There are three sources of personal motivation:**

- › **Head**—the intellectual drive to solve a market challenge or user need with fresh technology, a service, a business model, or a localized value chain. Demotivation arises when the problem becomes unsolvable or no longer challenging.
- › **Heart**—a deep passion and commitment for target users, the sector of society, the specific industry, the nation. Demotivation arises when the problem becomes irrelevant or the solution incremental.
- › **Wallet**—the personal benefits of the startup, both financial (salary, equity) and nonfinancial (status, title, access to important people). Demotivation arises when a profitable exit seems unlikely or the startup loses prestige.

### **Use this section to:**

- › **Reflect on your personal reasons for joining and staying with this startup.** Are you primarily motivated by your head, heart, or wallet? Being clear about this will allow you to more easily make trade-offs along the way.
- › **Openly share with your colleagues.** It's important to be explicit about your motivations, which will reduce second-guessing about each other's intentions.
- › **Get into alignment.** When a team is in fundamental disagreement about why they're doing what they're doing, it can lead to major conflicts down the road.

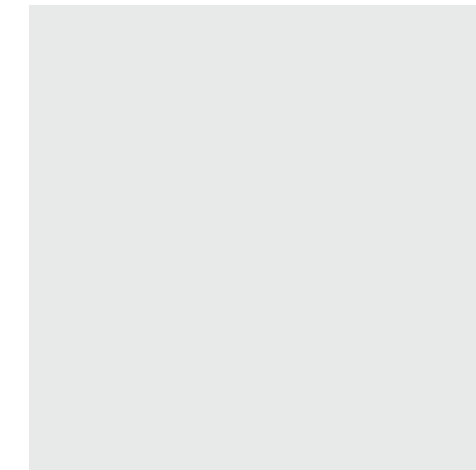
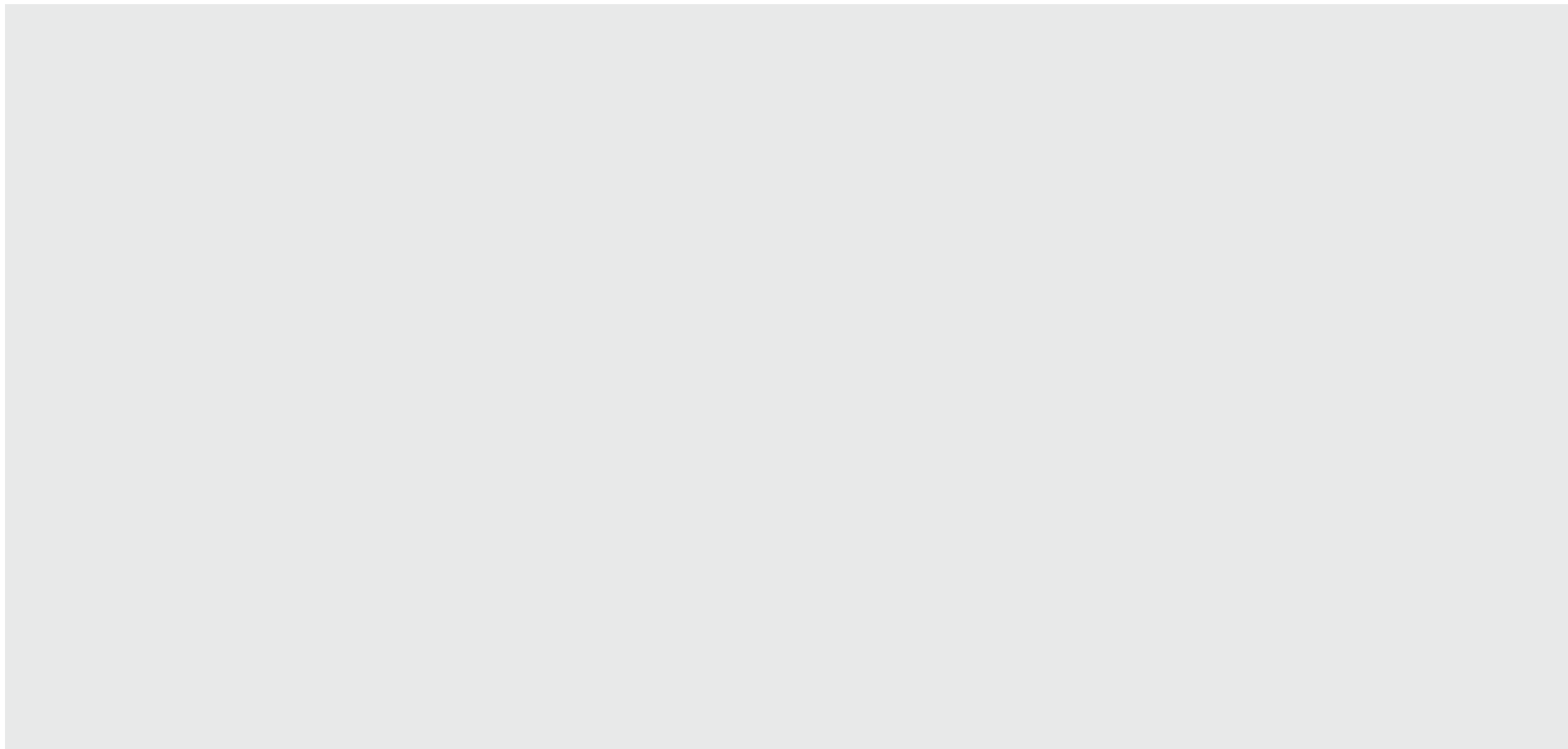
**What motivates you about your startup?**

**Importance rank**

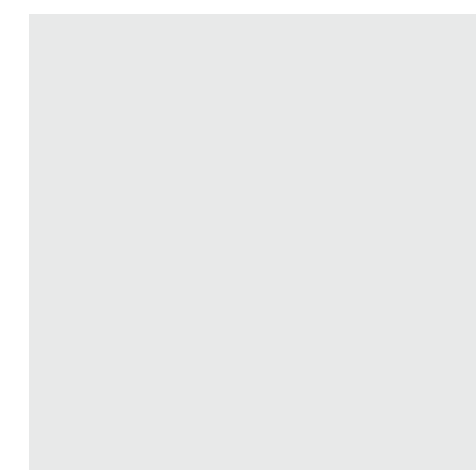
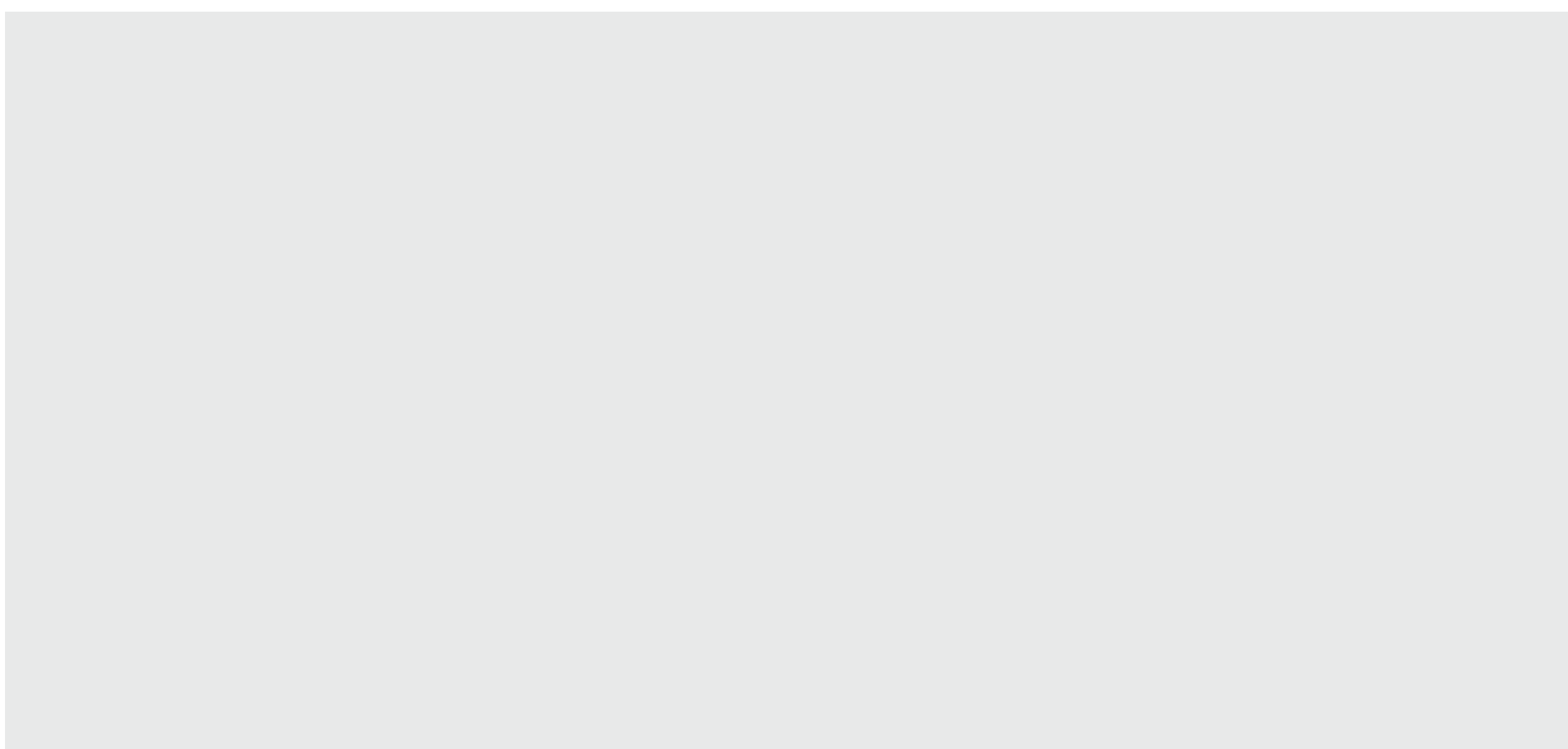
(1 = MOST IMPORTANT,  
3 = LEAST IMPORTANT)

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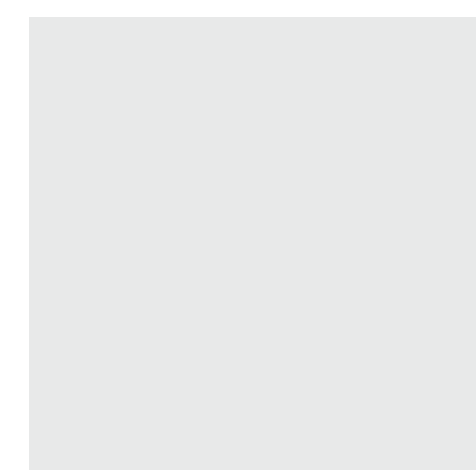
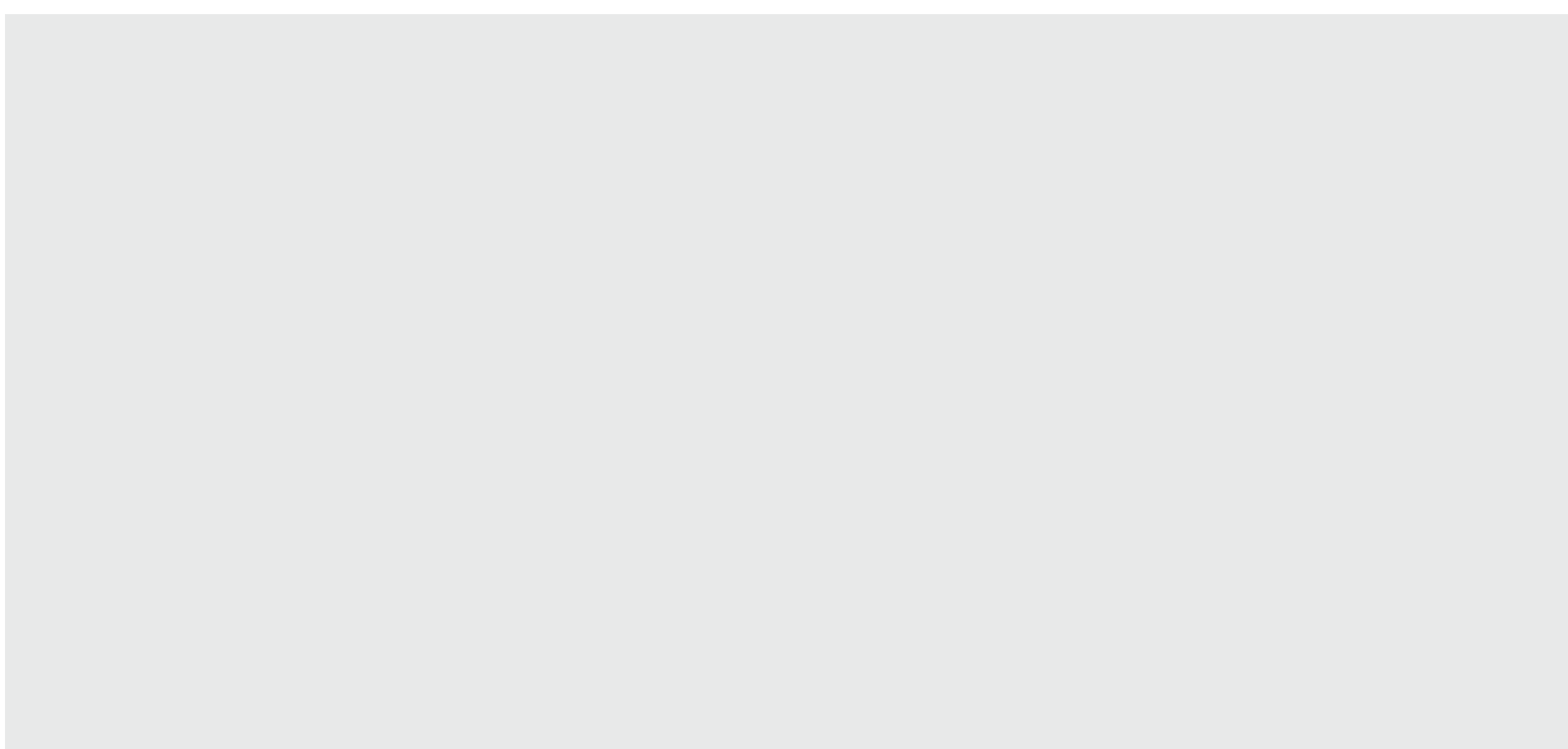
**Head:** The intellectual pursuit



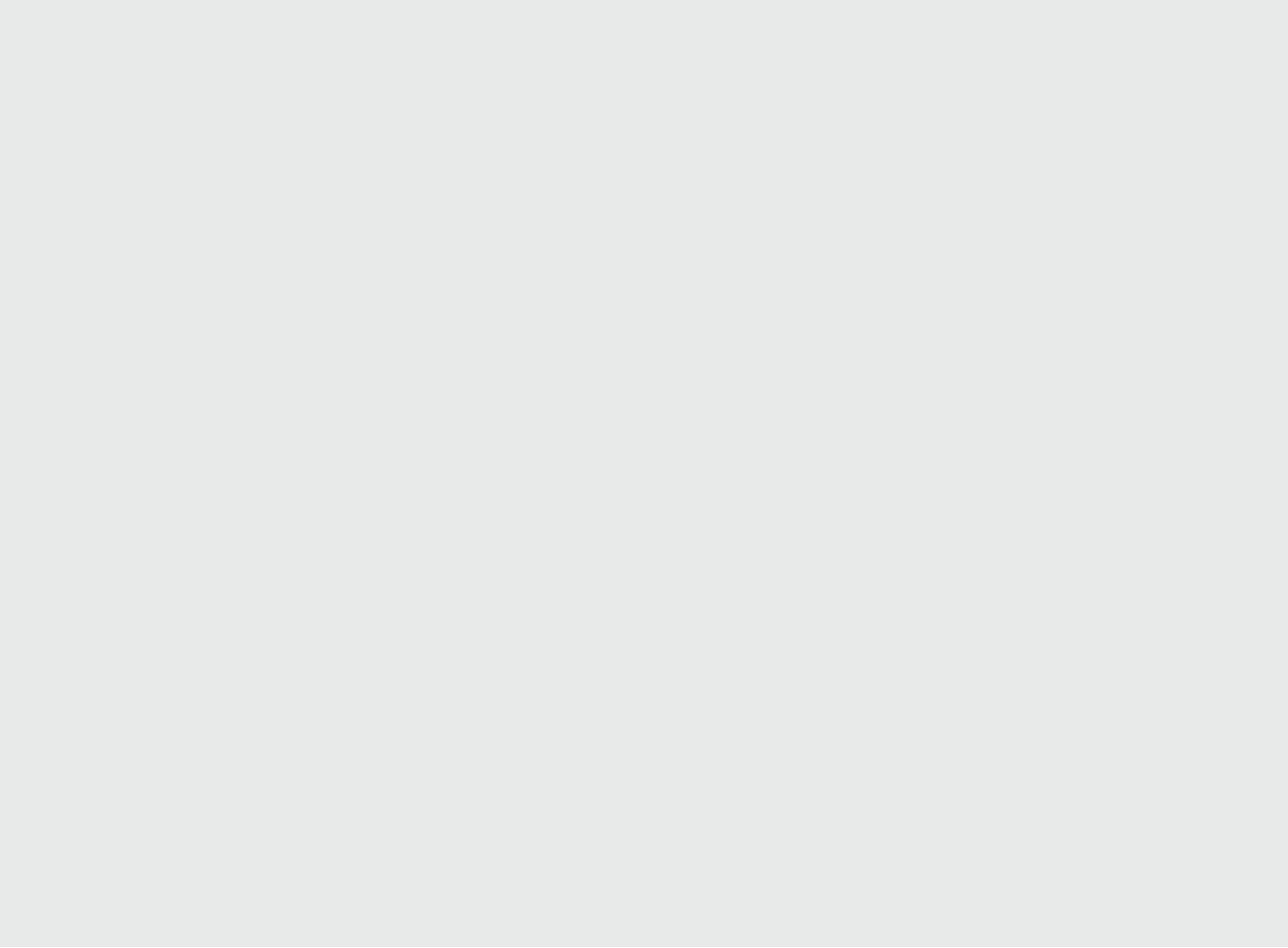
**Heart:** Deep passion for the mission and impact



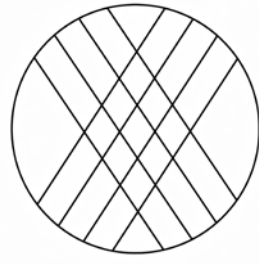
**Wallet:** Personal rewards, financial and otherwise



**Does your team differ widely on motivations? What conflicts might that cause?**







## Section 2 | Working Style

Each person has a unique way of getting stuff done. To work more effectively as a team, it helps if you're all explicit about your individual preferences and the reasons behind them.

Highly effective teams understand each other's styles and are flexible in accommodating each other's preferences.

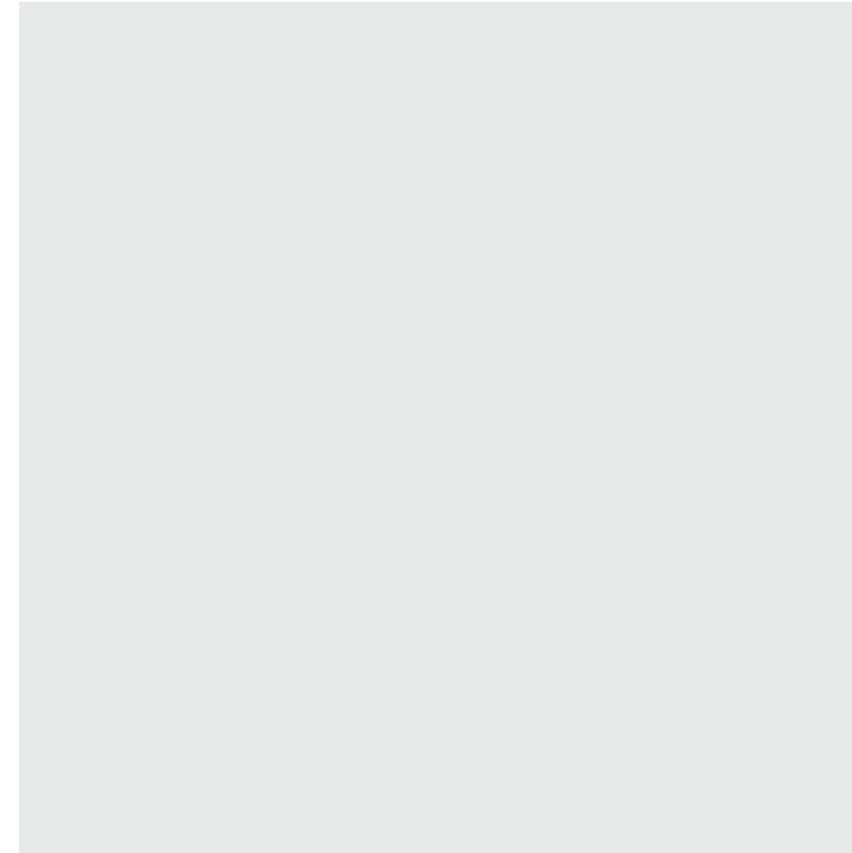
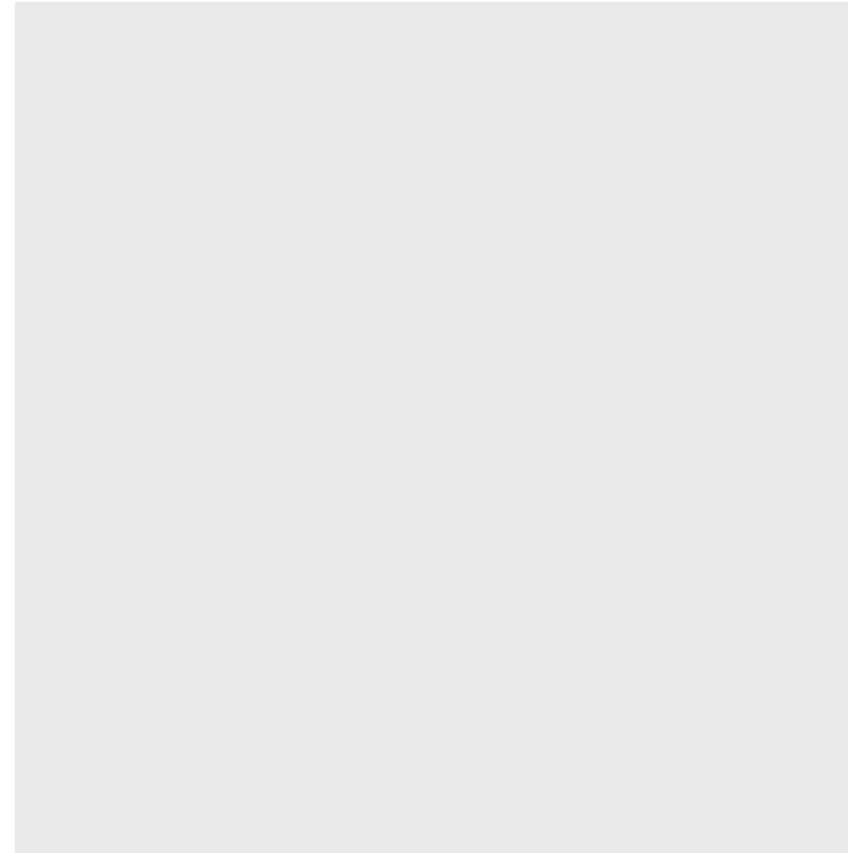
In this section, you'll be clarifying:

- › **Your strengths and weaknesses.** You will verify if your colleagues view you the same way you see yourself. When speaking about your weaknesses, you can clarify (1) what help you'll need to improve in those areas and (2) in what areas you need your team to step in and complement you.
- › **How others can draw out your best performance and how you can sometimes be misunderstood.** Consider this advice you are giving those on your team on how to best work with you.
- › **How you prefer to receive feedback and resolve conflict.** Being able to receive and give feedback, and resolve conflict, will ensure that you're constantly learning and bouncing back from mistakes. Your goal is not to eliminate any need for feedback or conflict. Your goal is to learn how to deal with feedback and conflict in healthy and productive ways.

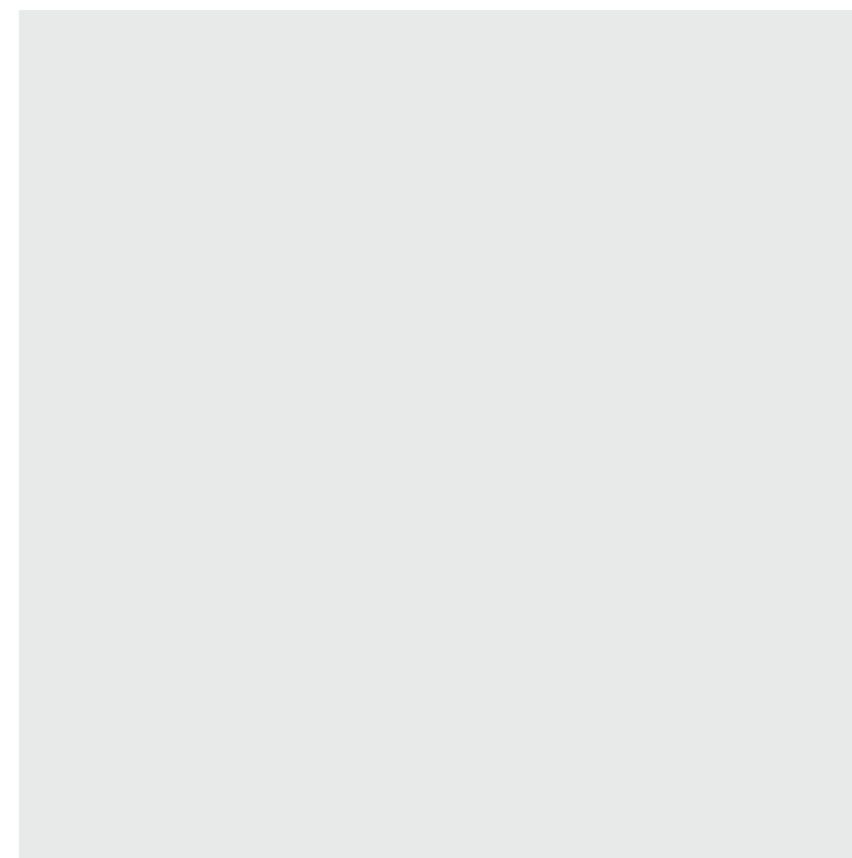
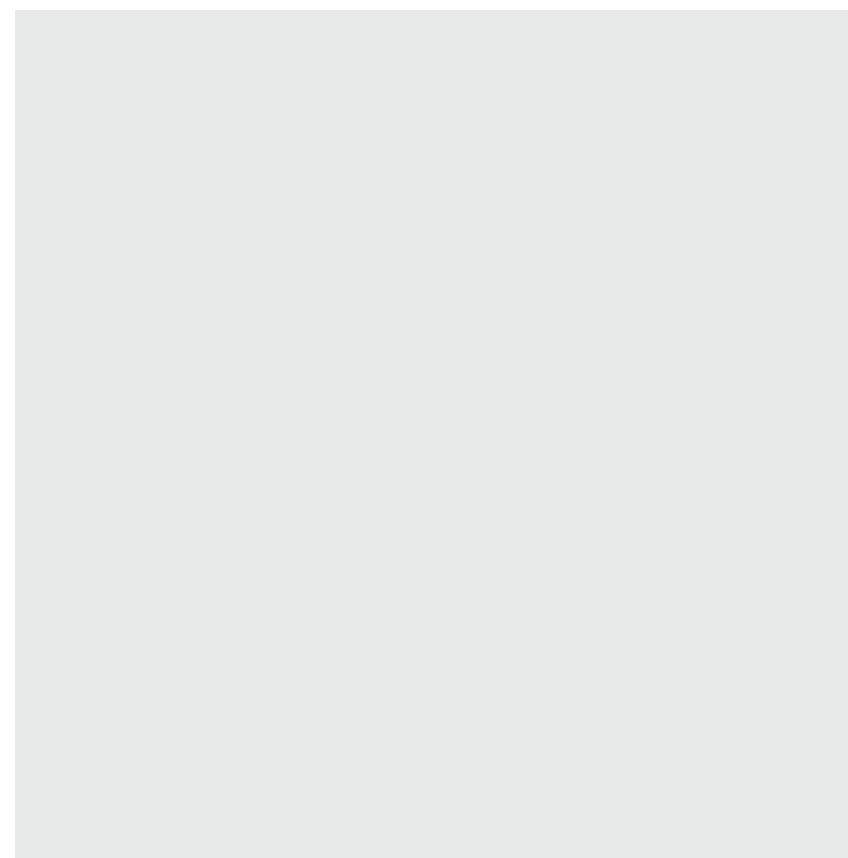
**What strengths do you bring to the team?**

**What gaps do you need help with? What kinds of help?**

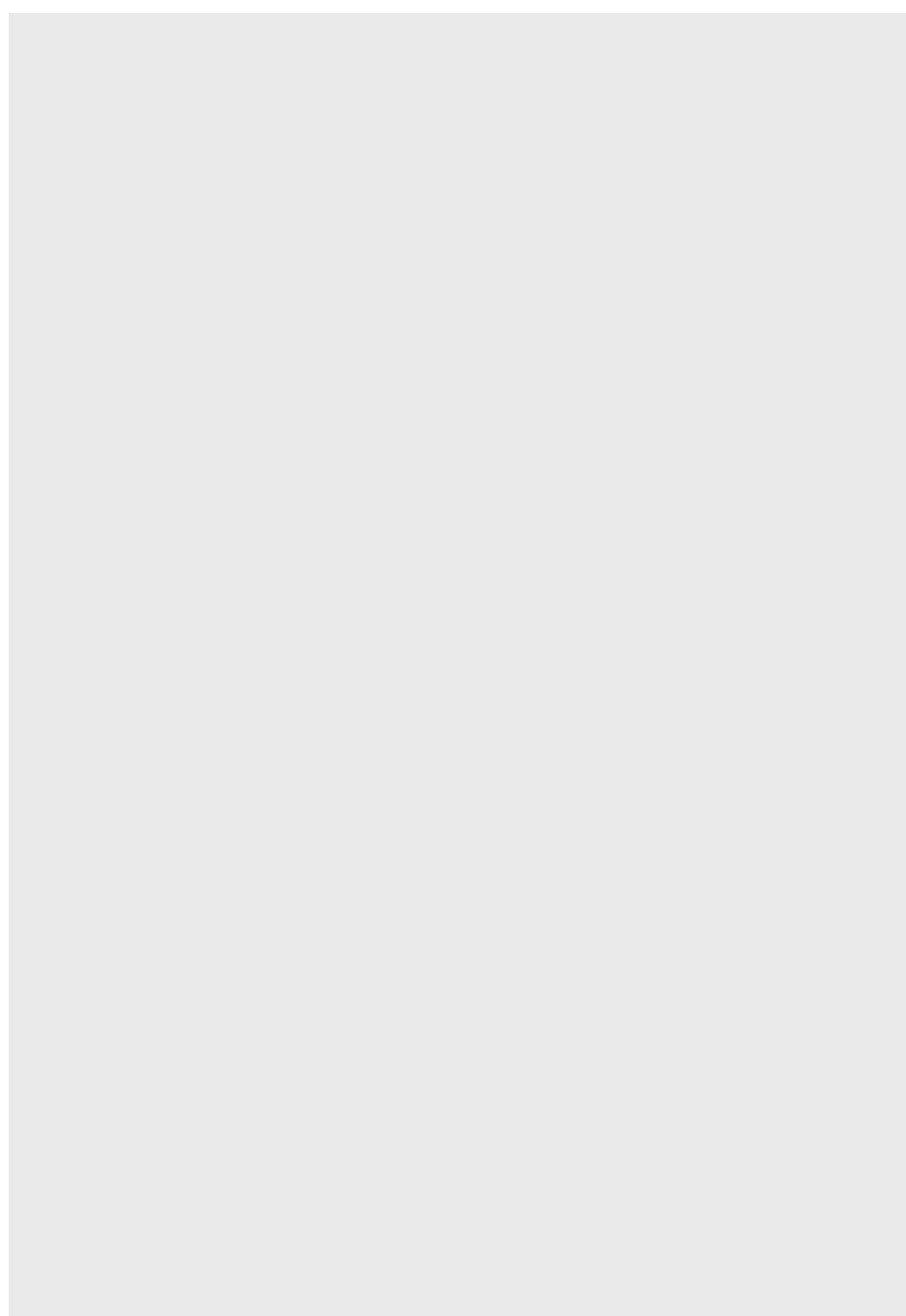
**Your list**



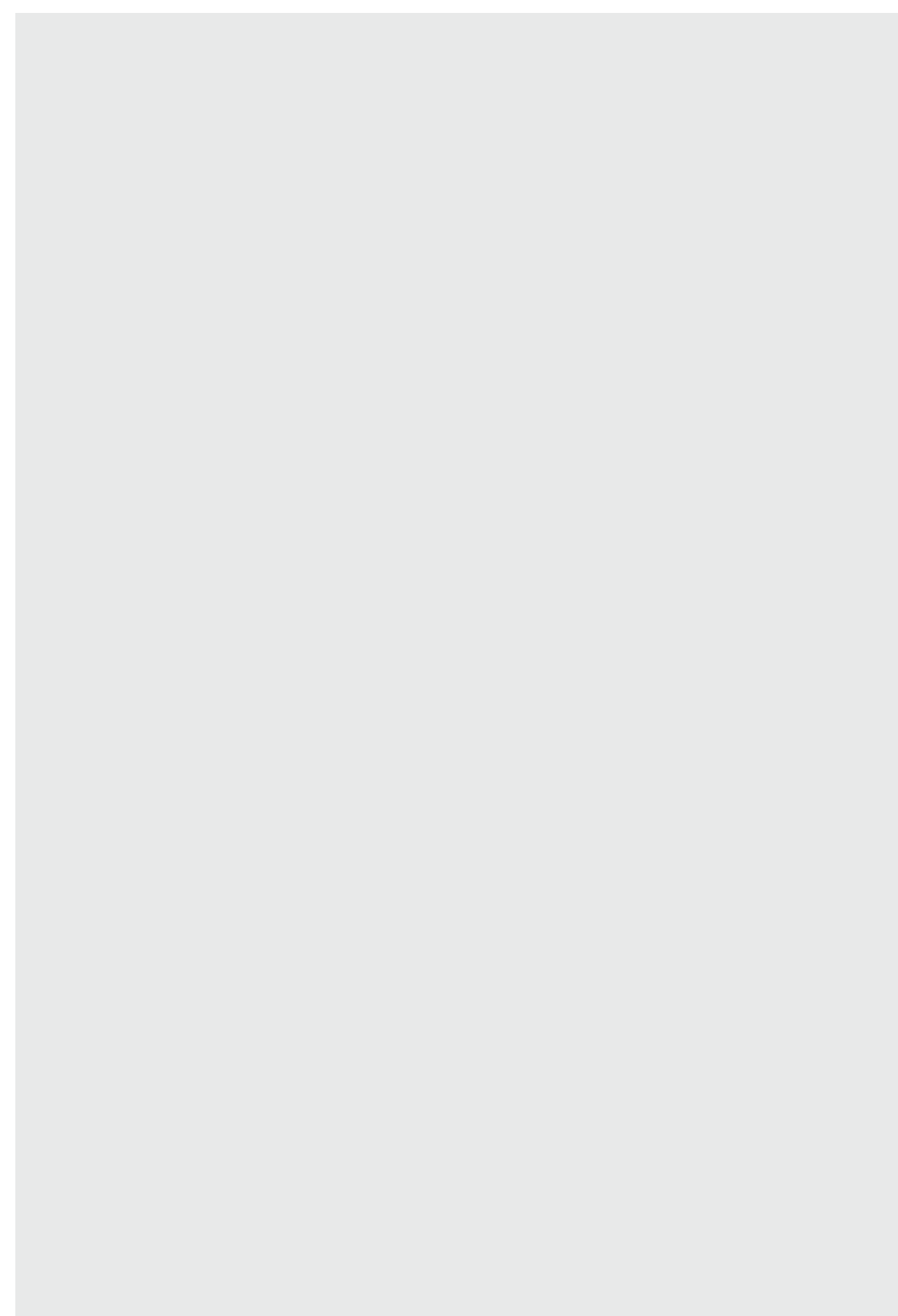
**Additional input from your team**



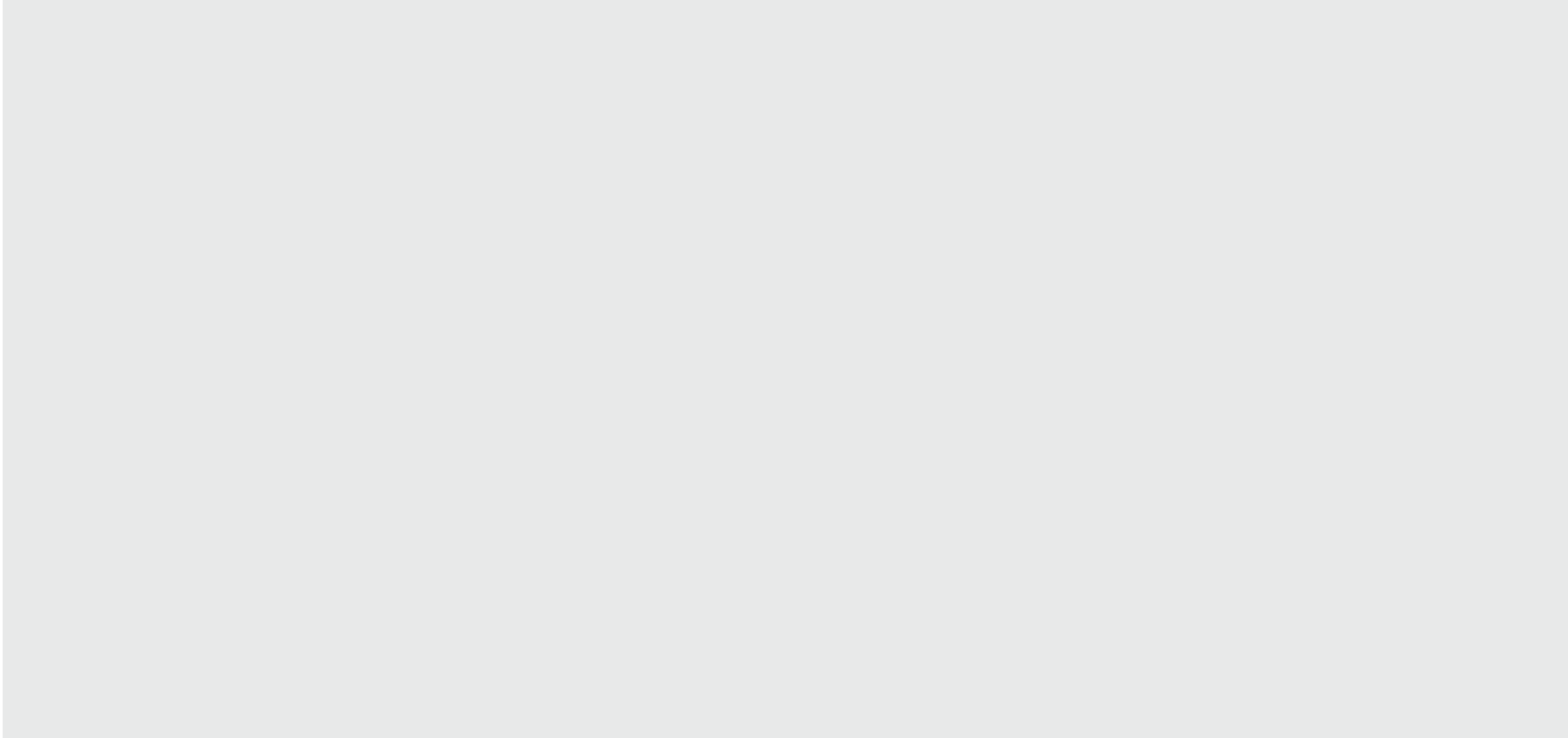
**People get the best out of me by . . .**



**People get the worst out of me by . . .**

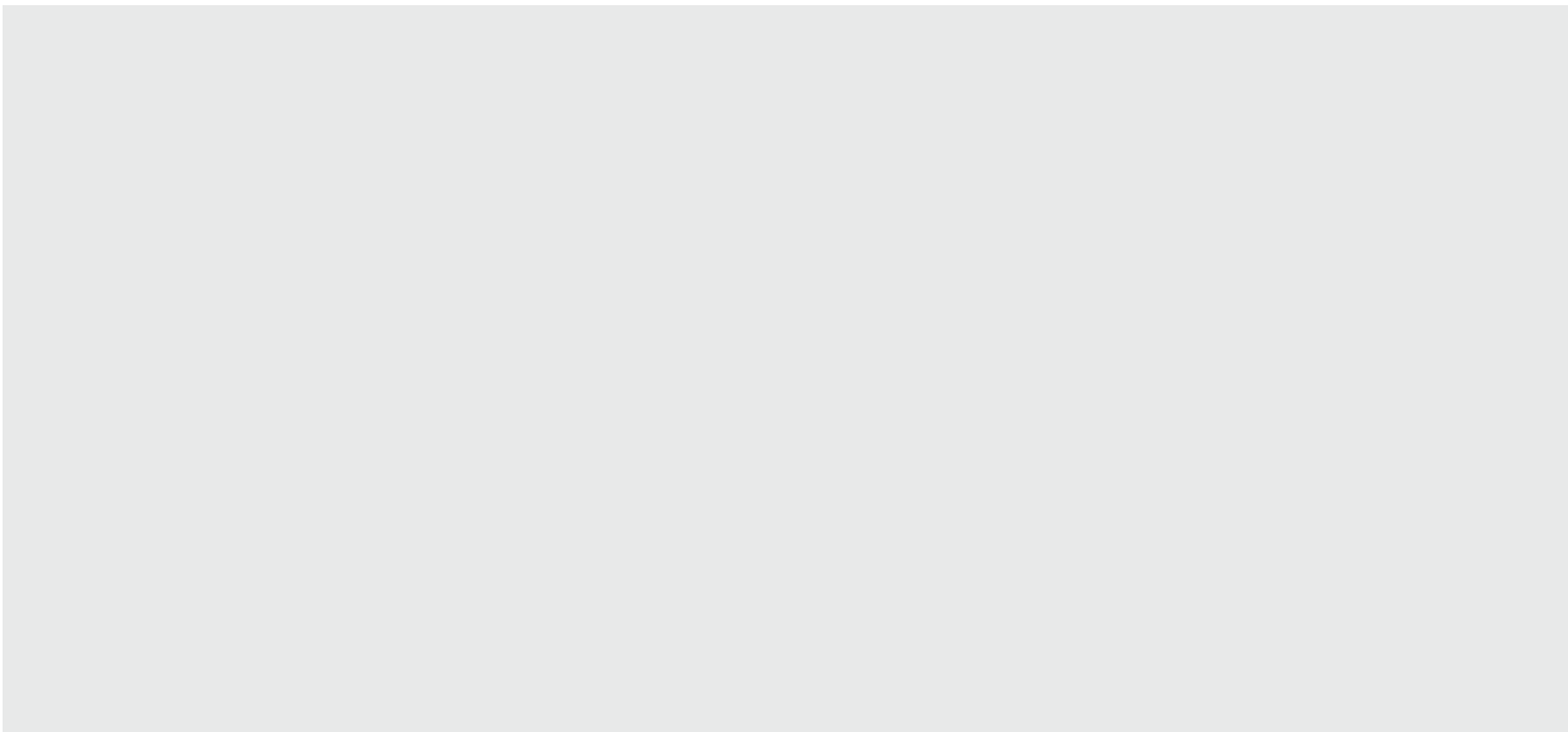


**I can sometimes be misunderstood when . . .**



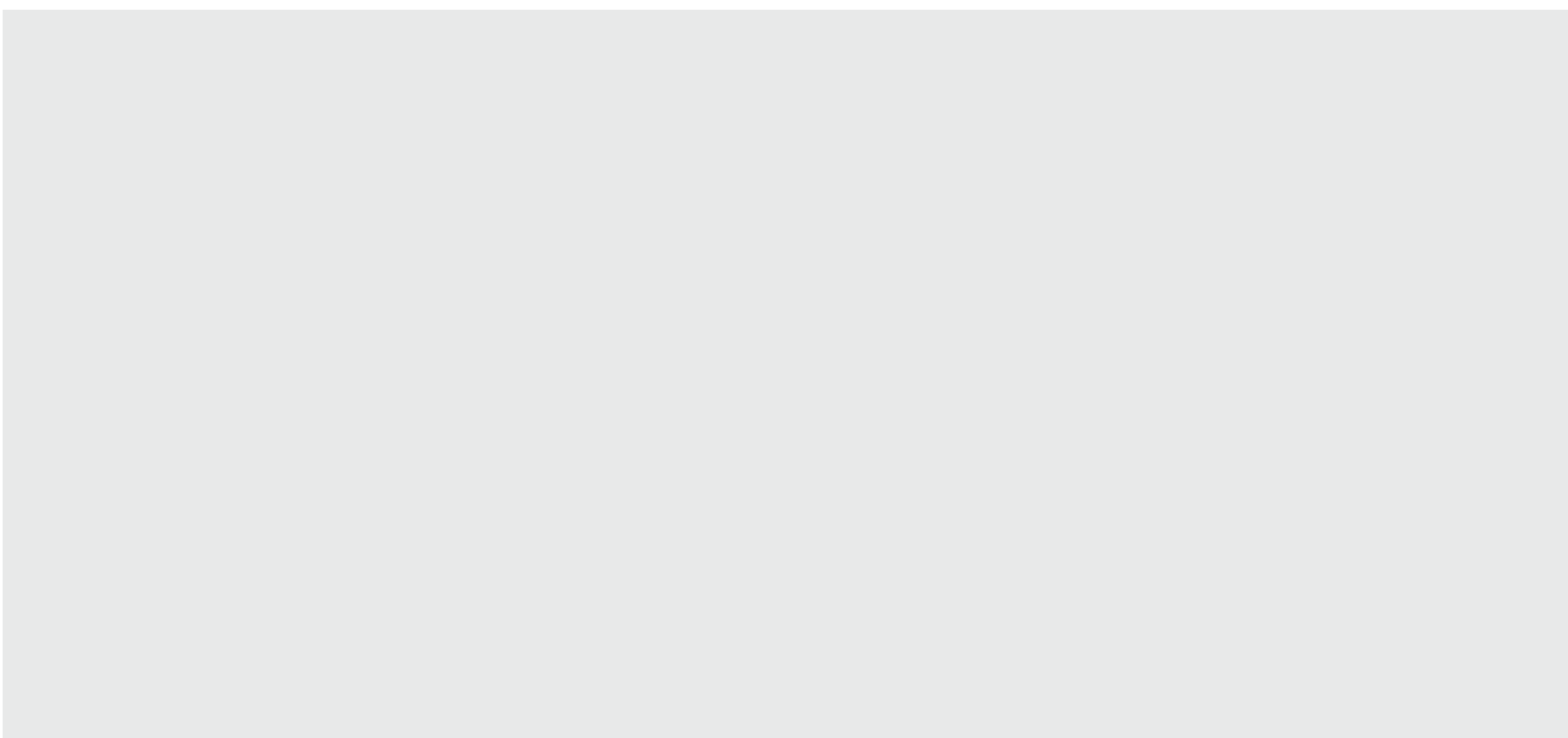
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**The best way to give me feedback is to . . .**

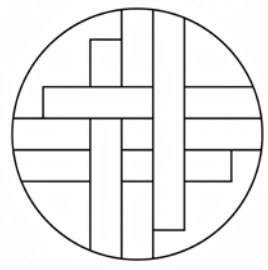


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**When I get into conflict with others, the best way to resolve it with me is to . . .**







## Section 3 | The Partnership

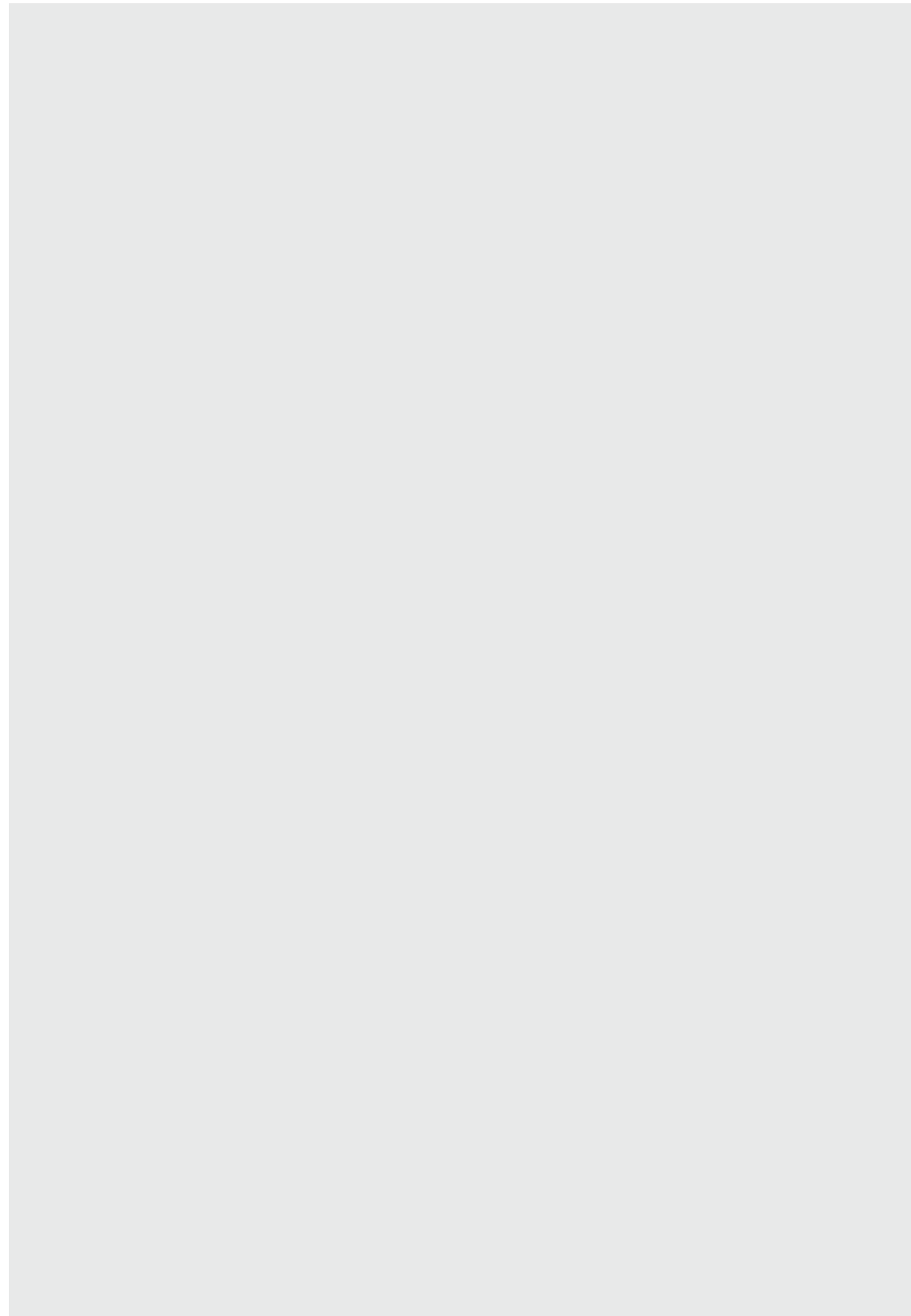
Unclear expectations of each other and feelings of unfairness are two of the largest sources of conflict within a startup team.

Spend this section clarifying with your team what you expect from yourselves and from each other. Check in about how fair you feel this arrangement has been so far, and do some planning for potential worst-case scenarios.

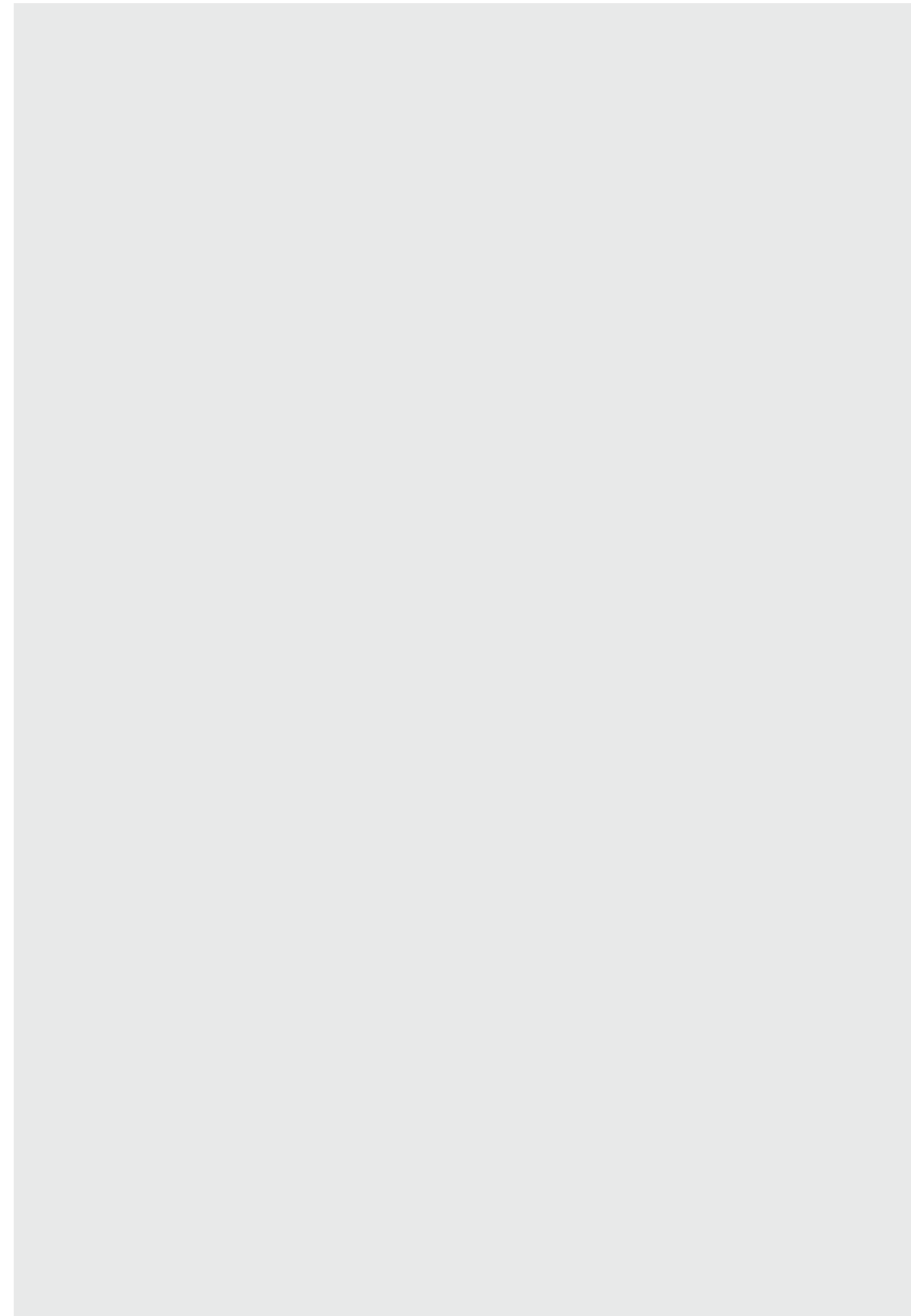
In this section, you'll be clarifying:

- › **Expectations.** Delivering on the expectations that others have of you creates trust, but unmet expectations erode trust and can be a big source of conflict. A startup team can minimize this conflict potential by making sure that expectations are clear, detailed, and aligned.
- › **Interpersonal equity.** Just as a business has financial equity, teams have interpersonal equity: fairness in the give-and-take between their members. Interpersonal equity is each person's perception of the balance between what they're putting into and getting out of the business, and what others are giving and taking. "Giving" can include working hours, capital investment, connections, and expertise. "Taking" can include salary, equity ownership, social status, work flexibility, and degree of control. When the balance feels very unfair, it creates tension and may even lead some people to give up on the business.
- › **Breakdown scenarios.** These are hypothetical future conflicts that can cause great tension within a startup team. Imagine that your startup has failed a year from now, due to interpersonal conflicts within the team. What relationship reasons (not business reasons) could explain the failure? Responses to this question will help the team preempt some of these future risks.

**What contributions are you making or do you plan to make for this startup to succeed?**



**What expectations do you think others have of you?**

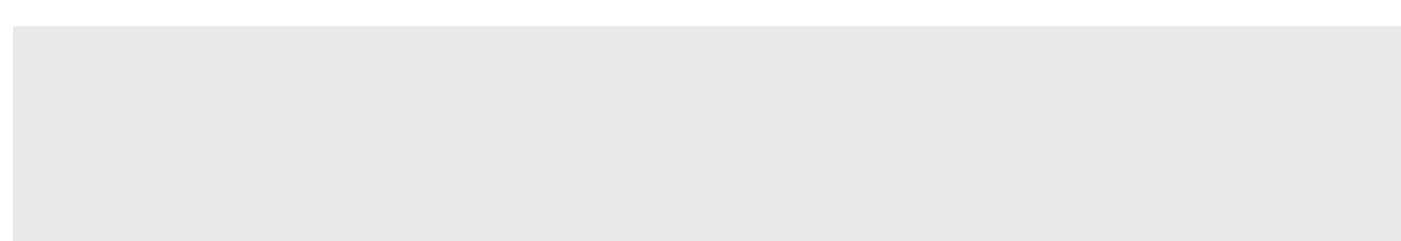
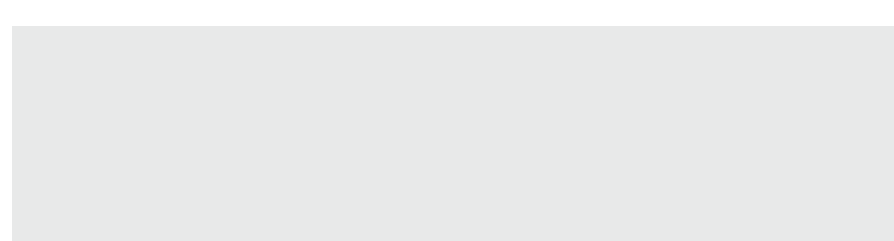
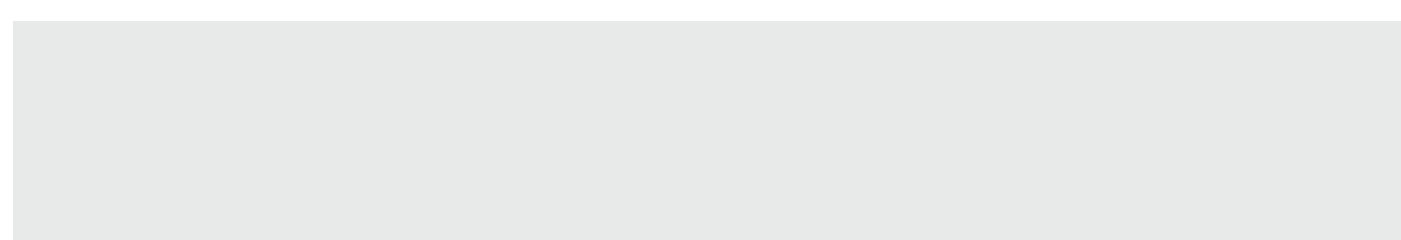
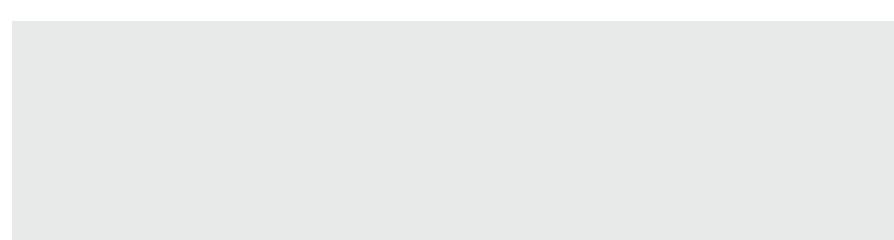
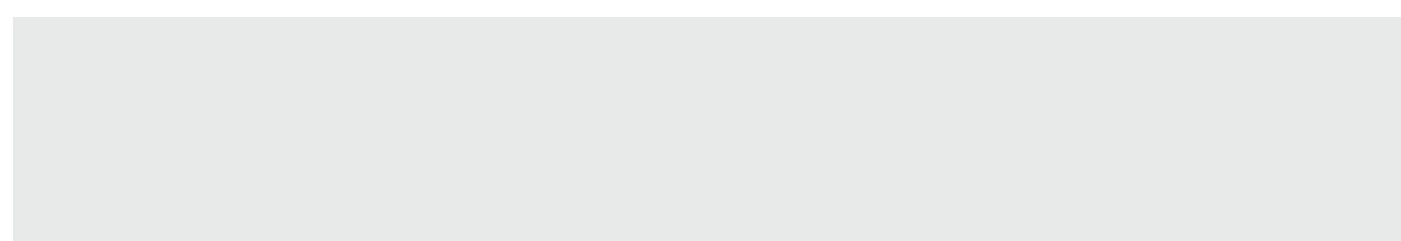
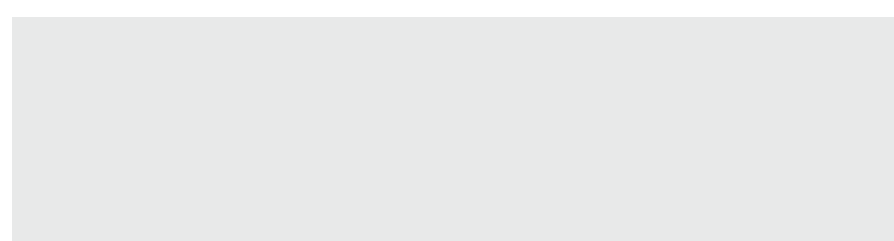
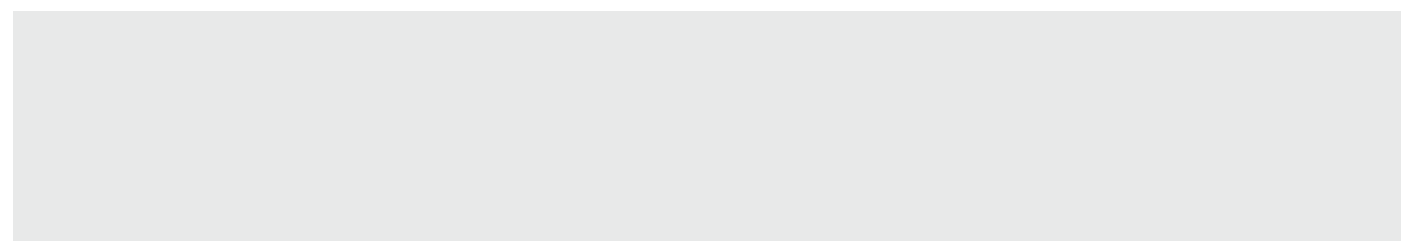
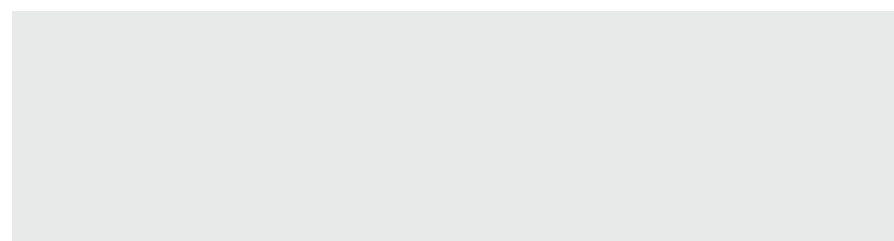
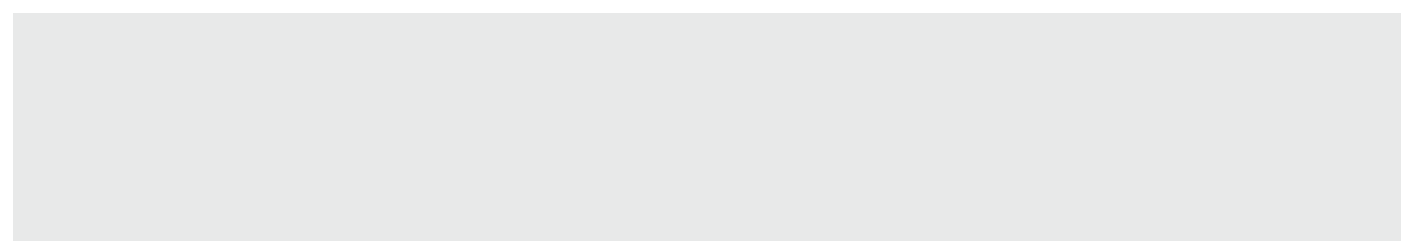
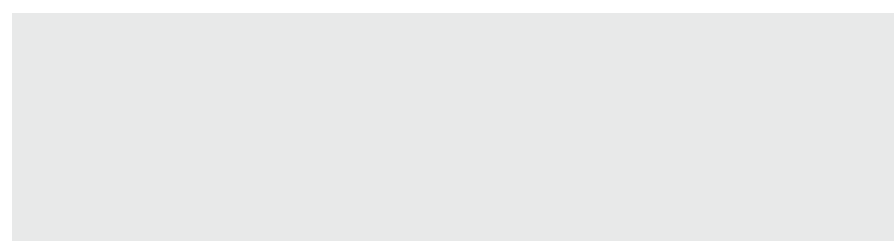


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**What specific expectations do you have of your teammates?**

**Name**

**Expectations**

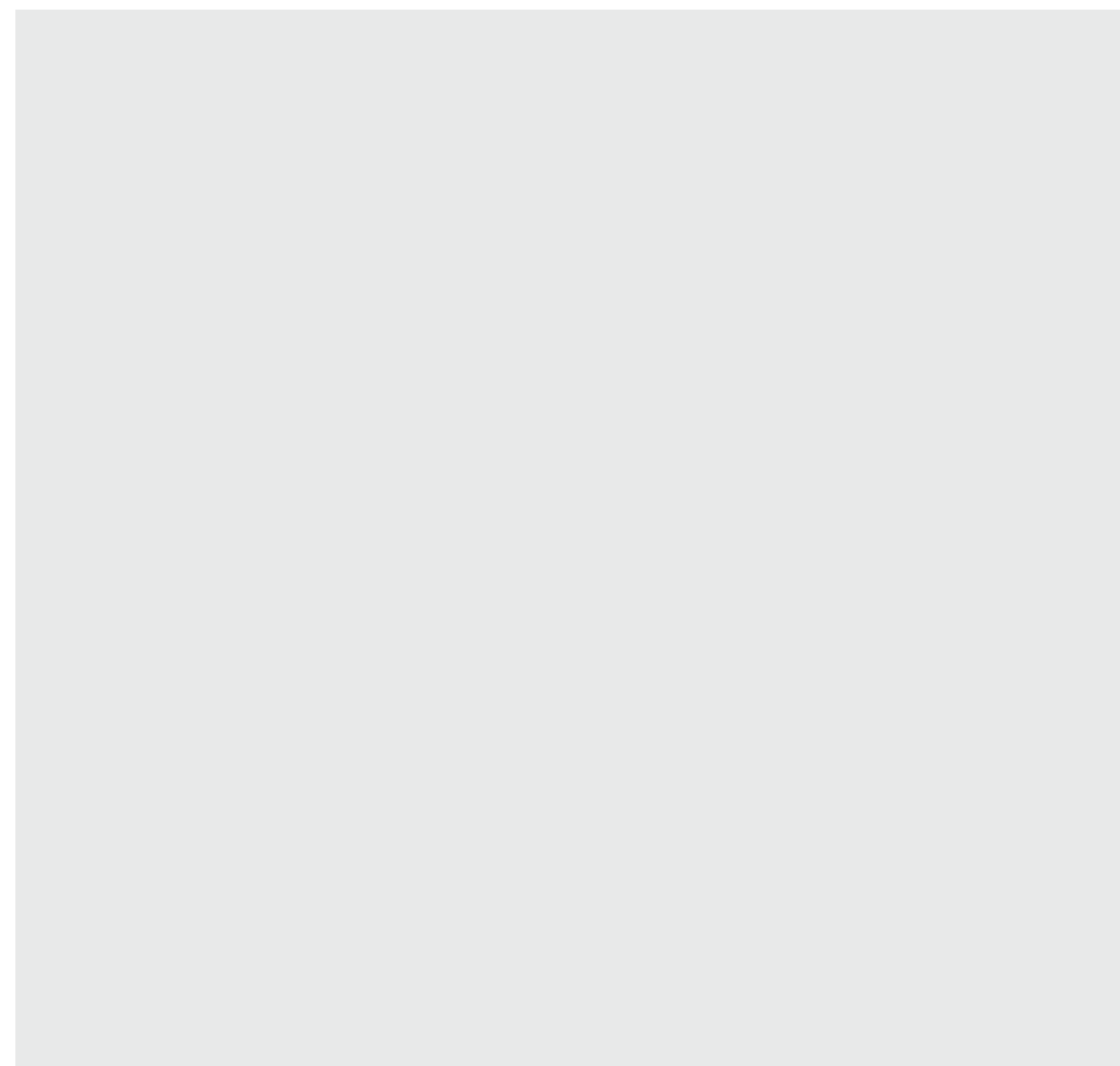
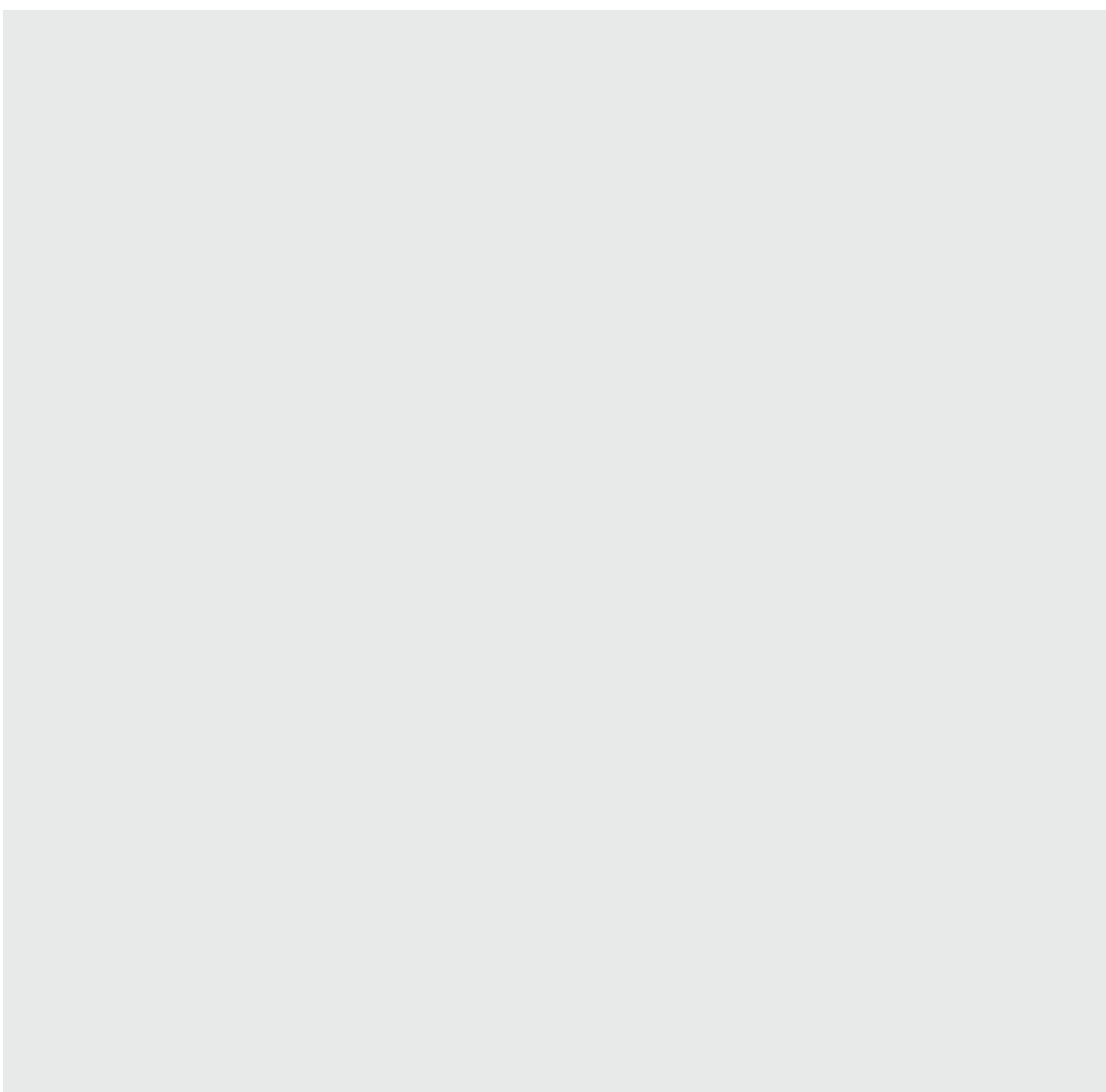
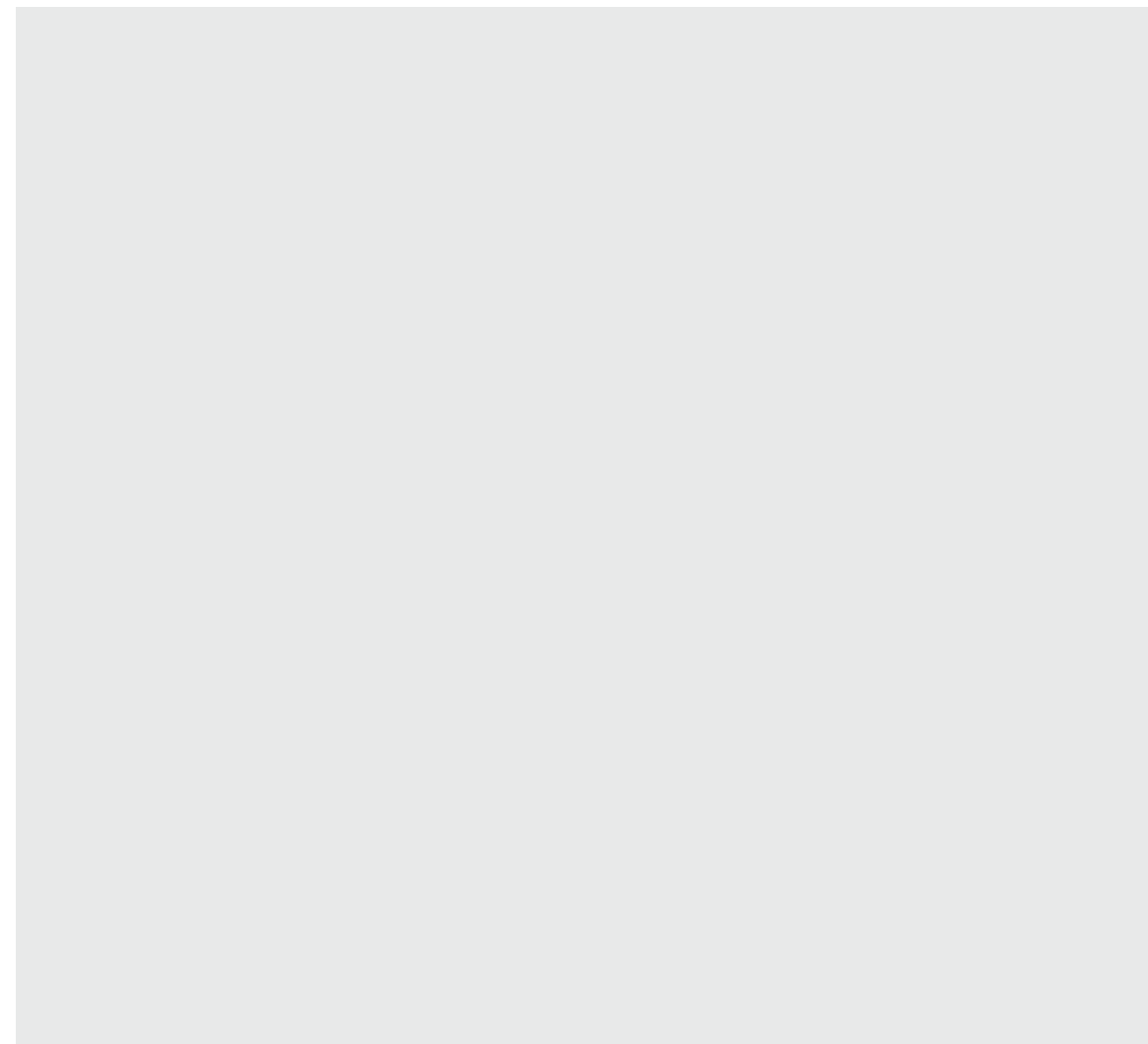
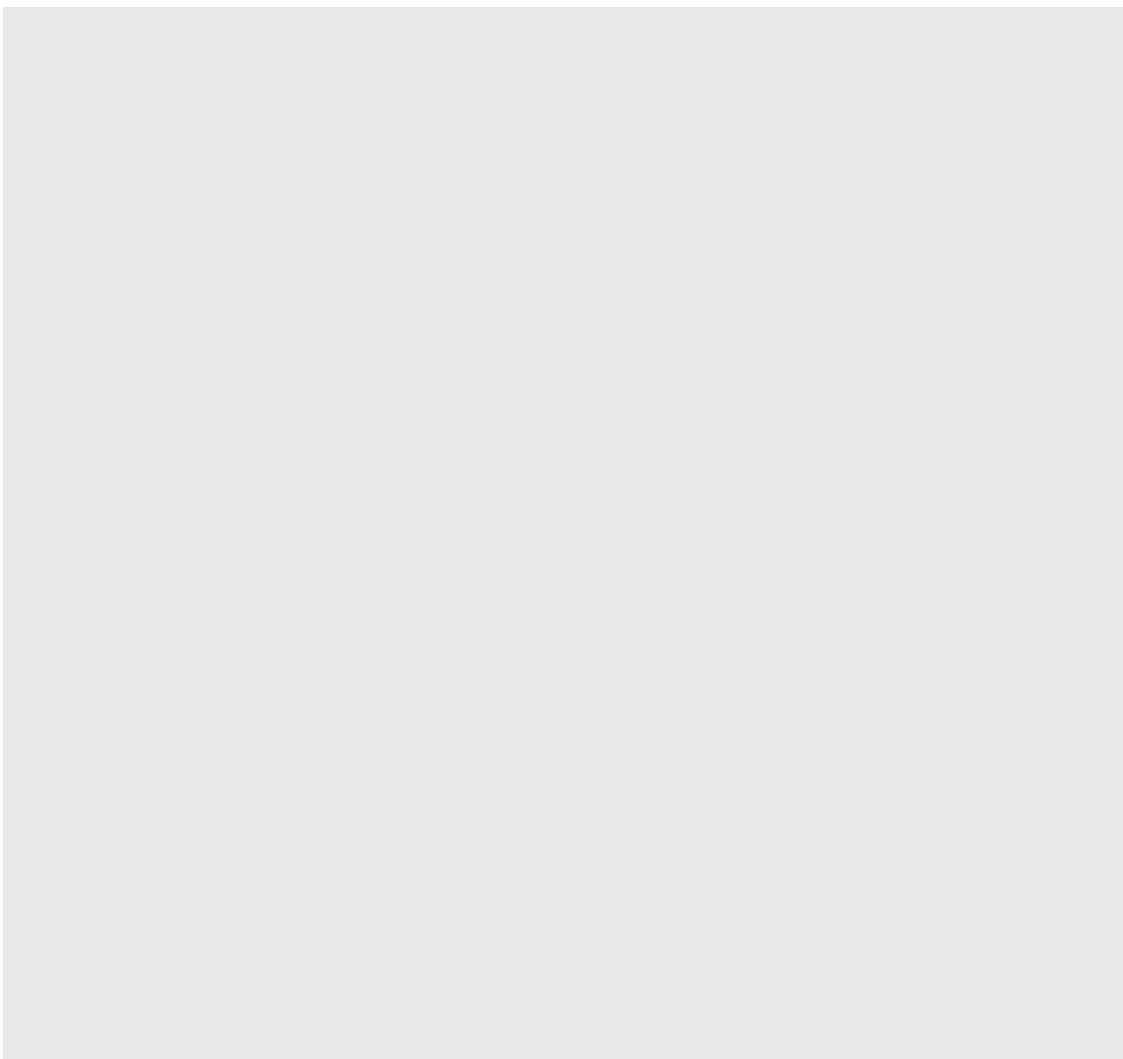
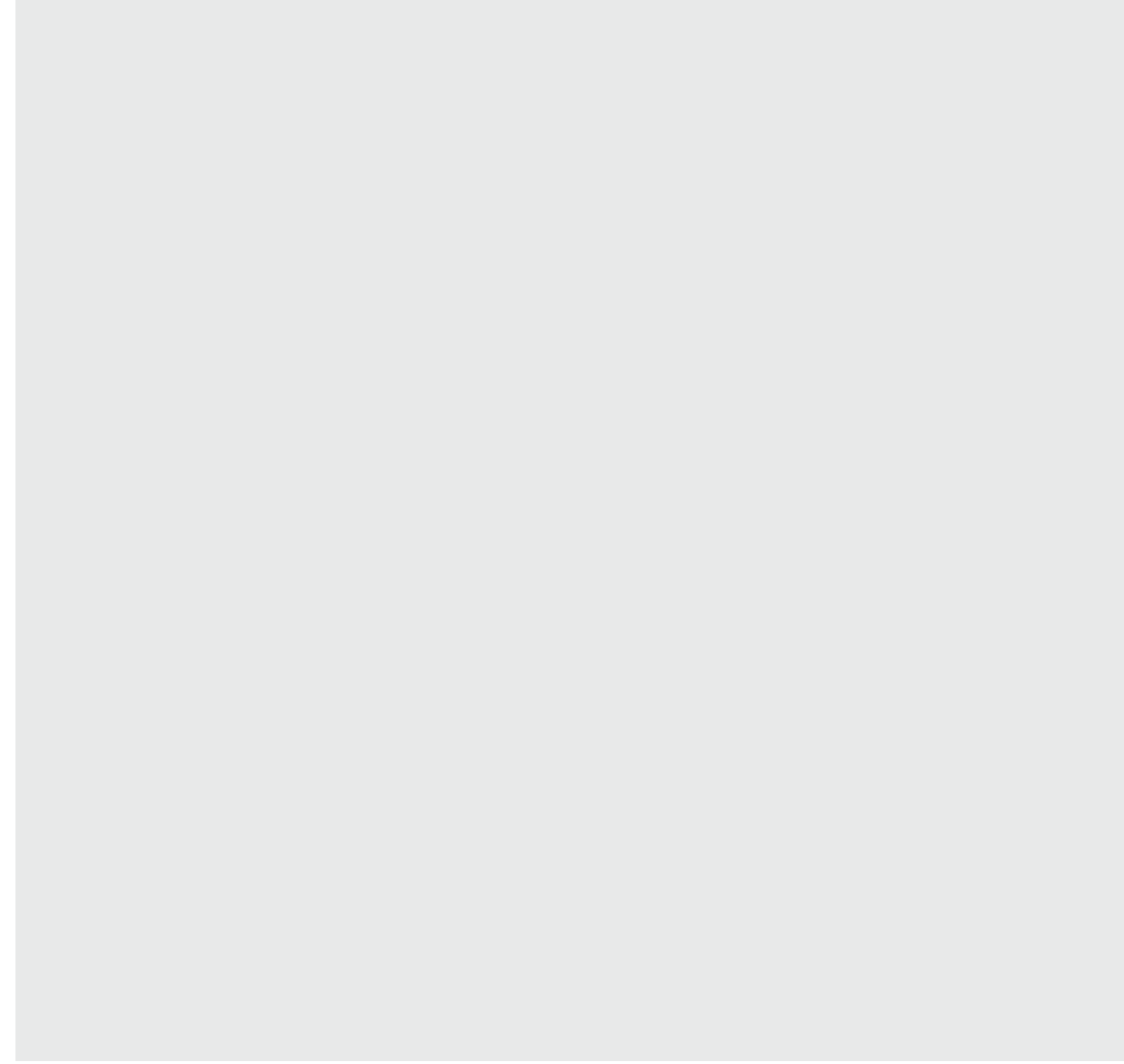
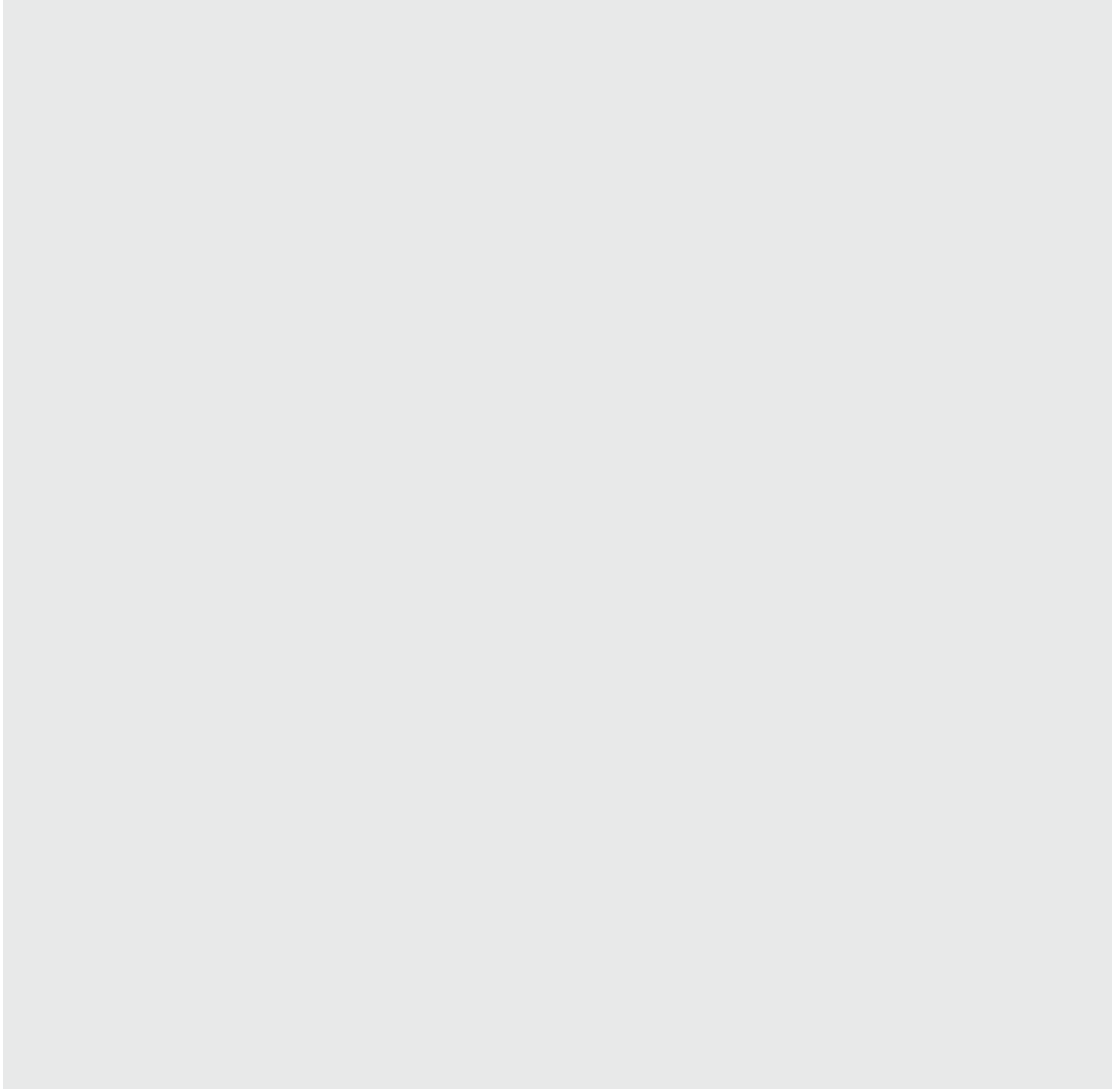




**Let's suppose our startup hypothetically fails within the next year because of interpersonal (not business) challenges within our team. What are three of the most likely reasons for this failure?**

**What can we do now to minimize this future risk?**

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# ABOUT THE BOOK

Most startups fail not because of a bad product, poor timing, or mismanaged cash, but because of people problems: conflicts over strategy, decision-making, and team culture. Even the smartest entrepreneurs have been derailed by these soft problems: How do you fire a loyal friend who's not up to par? How do you motivate your team to give their all? What happens when egos and emotions overpower facts and reason? The soft stuff can be shockingly hard.

Martin Gonzalez and Josh Yellin outline the common traps startup teams fall into, and share their powerful one-day workshop that helps teams escape those traps. The unique process of The Bonfire Moment brings colleagues together for a full day of facing hard truths, noticing hidden dynamics, and gearing up for the intense challenges of startup life. When the constant hustle feels overwhelming, a team's Bonfire Moment pulls them out of the day-to-day intensity to reflect and reboot.

The Bonfire Moment has proven effective with hundreds of teams of all sizes around the world—from the smallest startups to large organizations—significantly improving their cohesion, focus and effectiveness. Now this book will teach leaders the principles behind The Bonfire Moment and how to run the workshop on their own. It's ideal for anyone who needs to build an extraordinary team to achieve big goals.

