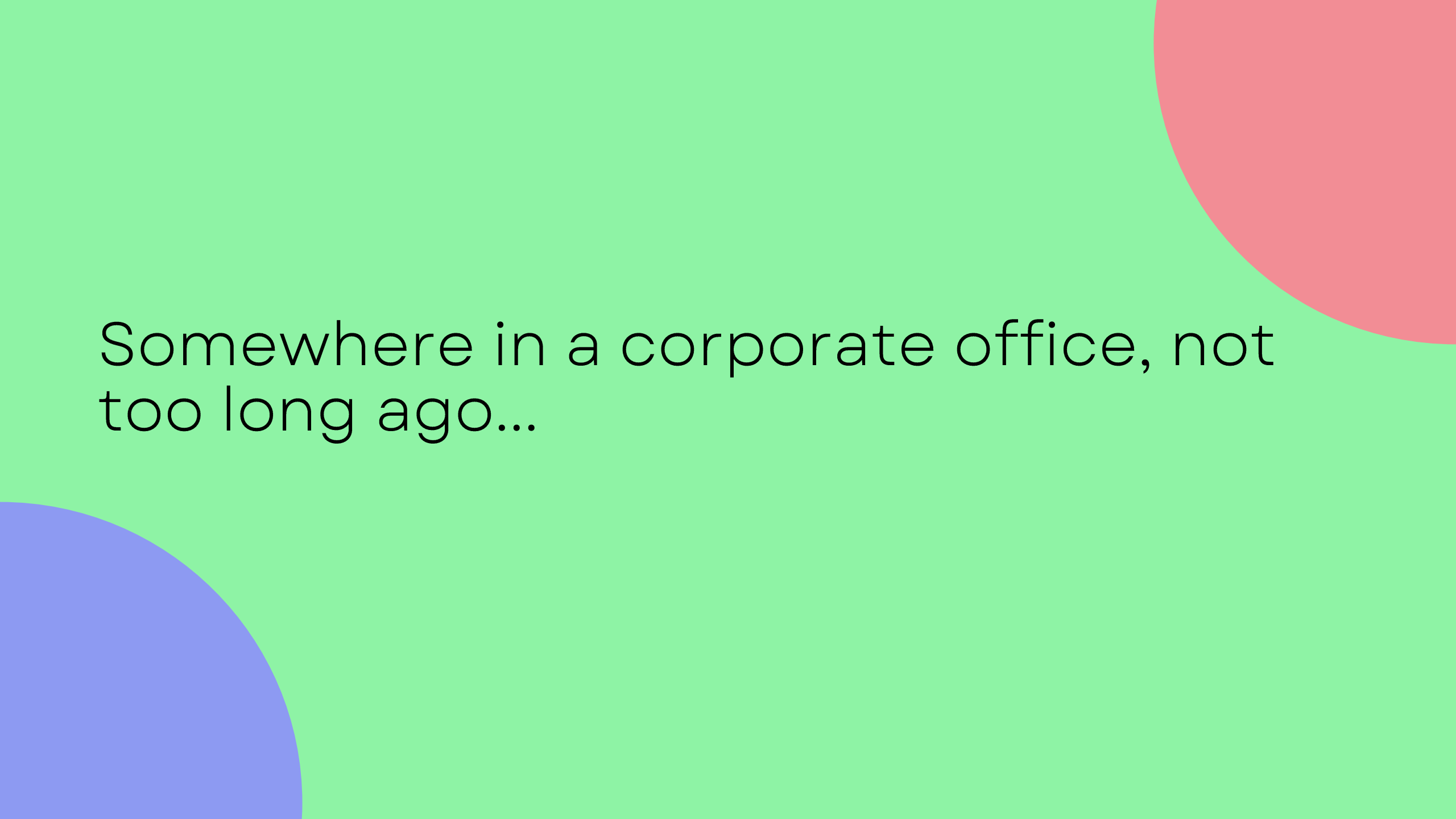


L&D Doesn't Have a Learning Problem; It Has a Persuasion Problem

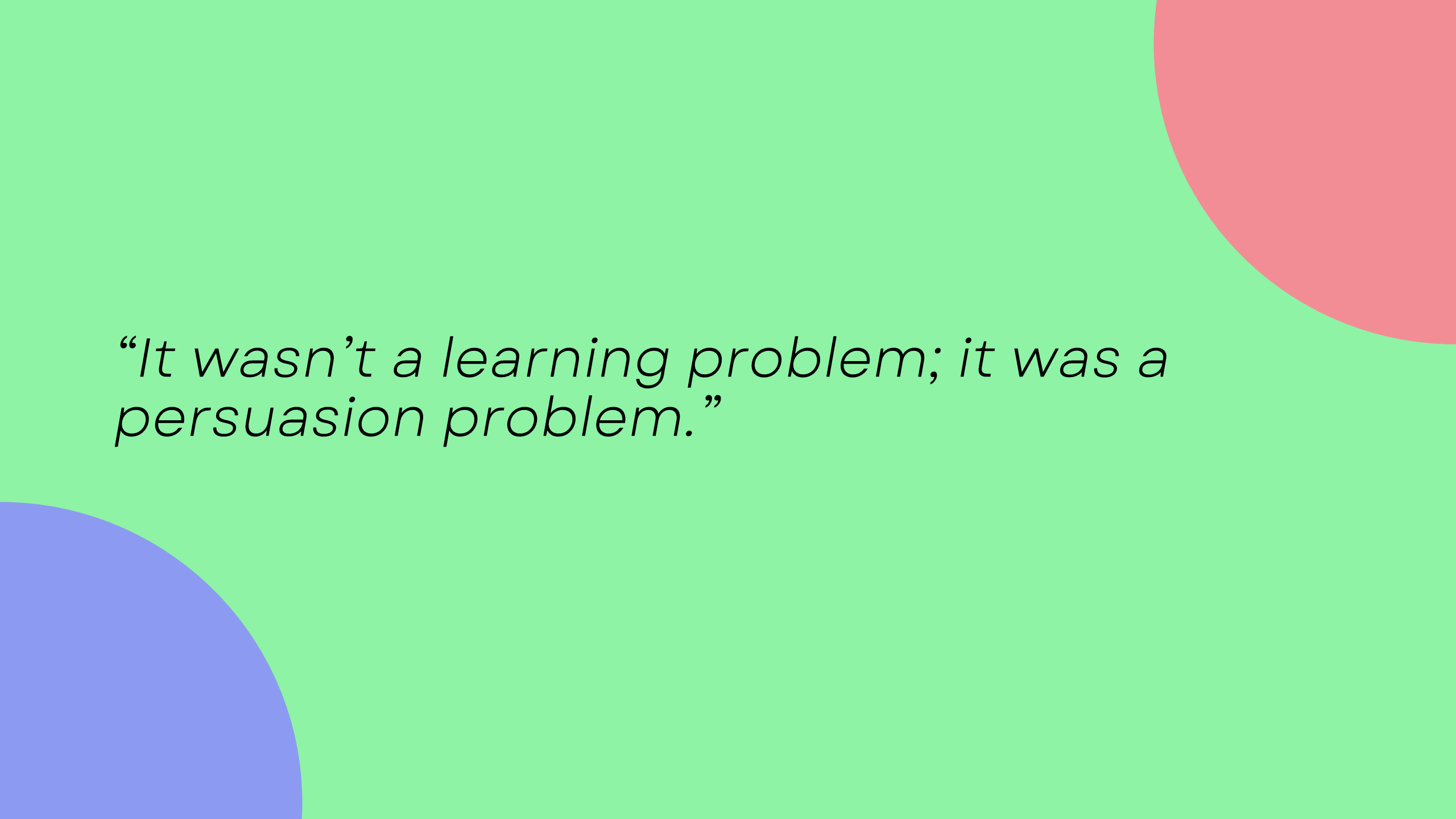
Caner Akova



Somewhere in a corporate office, not
too long ago...

The background is a solid light green color. In the top right corner, there is a large, semi-circular shape in a light pink color. In the bottom left corner, there is a large, semi-circular shape in a light purple color.

THE BIG PITCH!



“It wasn’t a learning problem; it was a persuasion problem.”

If knowledge solved every issue, we'd all be...

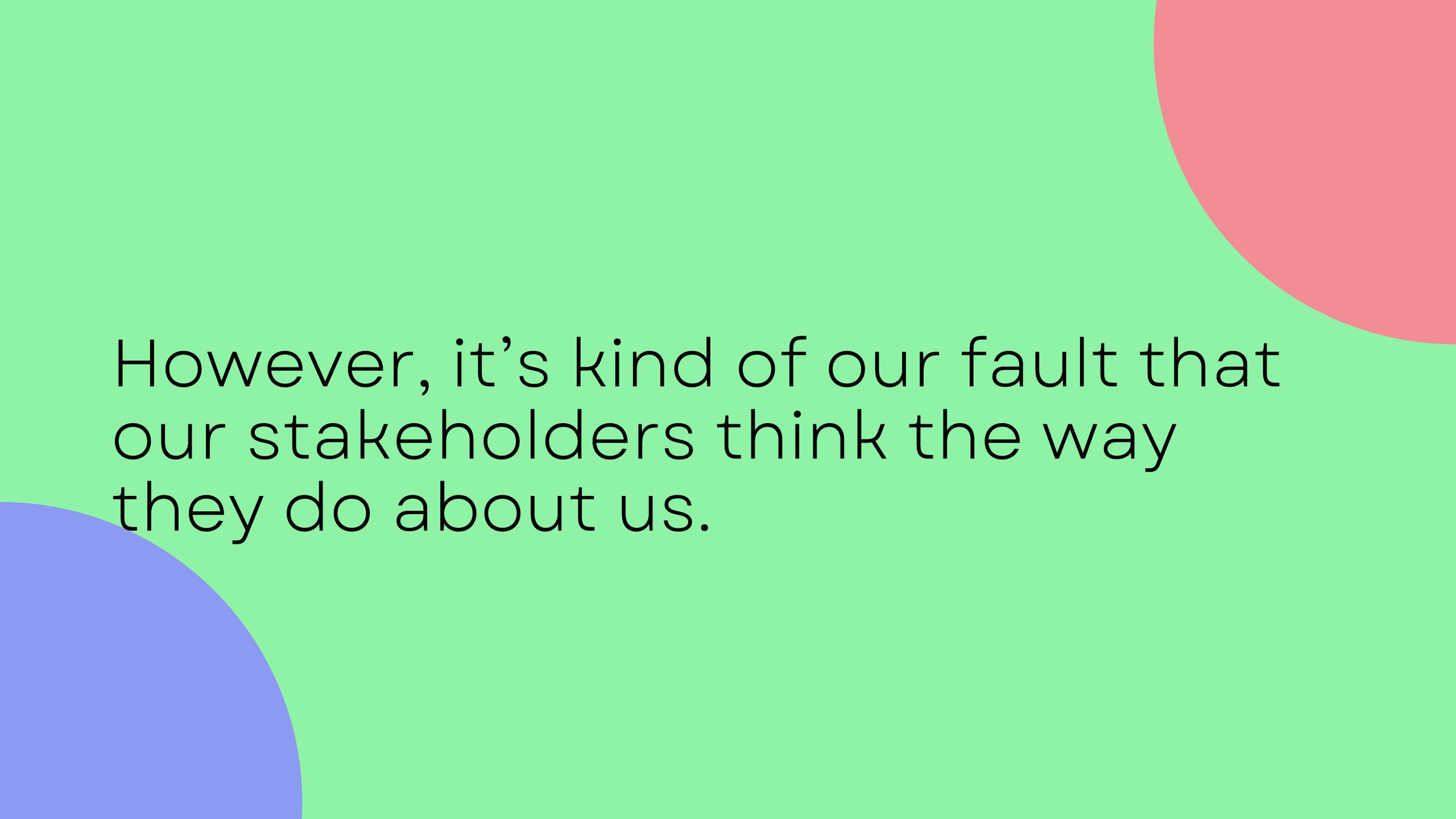
- Fit and in perfect health
- Rich
- Emotionally regulated

YEAH, IF YOU CAN JUST DO THE TRAINING
YEAH, IF WE CAN MAKE THEM MORE DATA-DRIVEN
YEAH, IF YOU CAN MAKE THEM MORE ACCOUNTABLE

THAT'D BE GREAT



Why are you the way that you are?



However, it's kind of our fault that
our stakeholders think the way
they do about us.



#KIATENNIS

Common Reasons Why They Say No

“IT’S TOO RISKY.”

“THERE’S NO CLEAR ROI.”

“IT’S NOT A PRIORITY RIGHT NOW.”

“WE DON’T HAVE THE BUDGET.”

“IT’S TOO MUCH CHANGE.”

HONOURABLE MENTION

“THAT’S NOT THE WAY WE DO THINGS AROUND HERE.”

“It’s Too Risky.”

The risk is getting blamed when it explodes.

Your job?

Show them it’s safer to move than to stand still.

It's Too Risky

Levers:

- Reframe your initiative as risk prevention, not innovation.
- Use data, pilot results, and precedents to shrink uncertainty.
- Position it as evolution, not revolution.
- Frame “doing nothing” as the bigger risk.

“There’s No Clear ROI”

It’s difficult to sell “development.”

Your job?

Sell them numbers, milestones, and momentum that they can brag about later.

“There’s No Clear ROI”

Levers:

- Translate learning into business metrics they care about.
- Anchor early with one sharp, relevant KPI.
- Make progress **visible** and **measurable** from day one.
- Keep outcomes *salient* – repeat the same value frame in every conversation.

“It’s Not a Priority.”

Translation: *“My hair’s on fire and your idea is a scented candle.”*

Your job?

Anchor your initiative to their biggest current fire. If it doesn’t solve today’s pain, it’s invisible.

“It’s Not a Priority”

Levers:

- Link your proposal to *today’s fires*, not tomorrow’s ideals.
- Speak their language – align with *current business KPIs* or any other issue they might be having.
- Focus attention: *one message, one pain point*.
- Be memorable from the get-go so they *remember you* when priorities shift.

“We Don’t Have the Budget.”

That’s code for “*I don’t see the value.*”
There’s always money for something that matters.

Your job?

Reframe the cost as the price of *not* acting.

“We Don’t Have the Budget.”

Levers:

- Quantify the *price of doing nothing*.
- Reframe cost as *prevented loss*
- Offer a *small pilot* to lower perceived risk and build commitment.

“It’s Too Much Change.”

Change feels more scary when it’s undefined.

Your job?

Reframe it as a gentle upgrade. Start small, prove it works, then scale.

“It’s Too Much Change.”

Levers:

- Position your idea as *enhancement*, not *upheaval*.
- Provide and highlight *compatibility* with existing systems.
- Reduce complexity – *show the path, step by step*.
- Start *small* to build confidence.
- Remove uncertainty with *clarity, transparency, and support*.



Starting with Influence

Navigate Emotions

Vague Promise

“This training program will improve engagement,” say,

Addressing Valid Fear

- “Without this program, engagement could drop another 15% this year, increasing turnover costs by \$500,000.”

Leverage Cognitive Biases

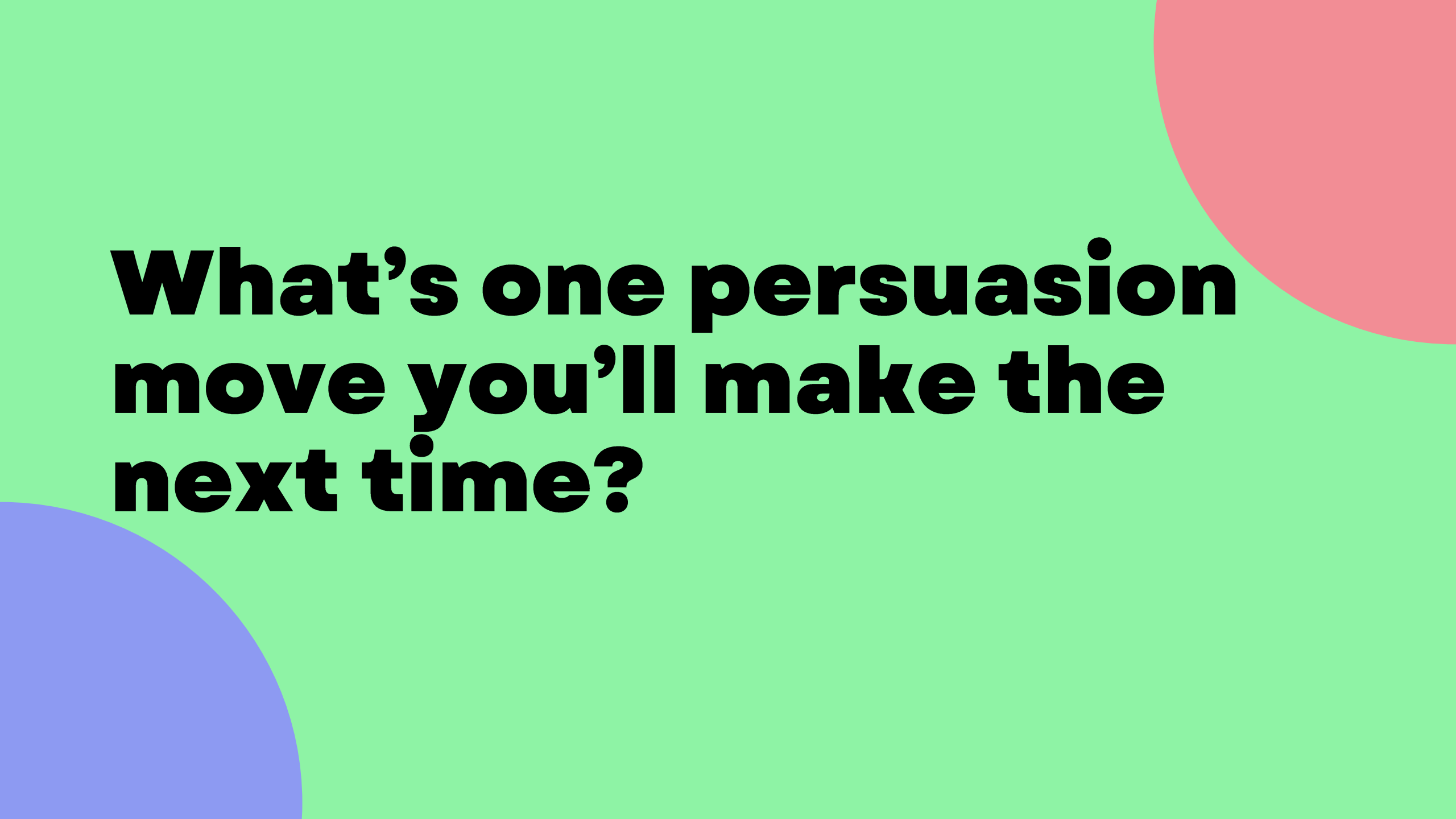
Use principles like loss aversion and social proof to make your proposals more persuasive.

“Competitor X implemented a similar pro-gram and reduced turnover by 20%. We risk falling behind if we don’t act now.”

Minimize Perceived Risk

Show stakeholders why saying yes is safer than saying no.

“We’ll start with a small-scale pilot to ensure success before a full roll-out.”



**What's one persuasion
move you'll make the
next time?**

YEAH, IF YOU CAN JUST DO THE TRAINING

THAT'D BE GREAT



Recommended First Step

Push back productively and with grace.

“I understand. We can totally do that! But help me understand; what metric are you trying to move?”

The background is a solid light green color. In the top right corner, there is a large, semi-circular shape in a light pink color. In the bottom left corner, there is a large, semi-circular shape in a light purple color.

Make change buyable.

Caner Akova

Follow me on
LinkedIn for more!

