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Hey everyone,

It’s Mike. Yes, the rumors are true: after 22 years—since 2004—I’m finally giving my Outlook calendar the retirement it has been begging for.

I walked in here as a project coordinator who thought a “stakeholder map” was something pirates used to find executive sponsors. By 2008, someone decided it was a good idea to make me a Project Manager. I remember feeling like I’d just been handed the steering wheel and also three different maps, all of them wrong. Somehow, with a lot of help from smarter people, we got where we needed to go.

The ride since then has been genuinely wild—in the best way. In 2016, we pushed into Europe with a client expansion that was part logistics, part diplomacy, and part learning how to properly greet people in four different languages before coffee. We figured it out together. In 2019, we kicked off the Agile transformation. I know, “transformation” is a big word. It sounded easy when we drew the arrows on the whiteboard. Then we realized “inspect and adapt” meant… well, actually inspecting and adapting. Often. Sometimes publicly. I loved it. It brought out our curiosity, our transparency, and our accountability—those big words that only matter when people actually live them. You did.

Somewhere along the way, we built a team of 14 project managers who earned a reputation for on-time delivery. People ask me how we did it, like there’s a secret spice mix. Honestly, it was the opposite: it was naming risks out loud in the kickoff, admitting when we misread a dependency, and making retrospectives safe enough that we could laugh, learn, and come back sharper. That’s not a spice mix. That’s a culture. And I’m grateful to have been part of building it with you.

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There are a few moments that I'll always carry with me. One was the infamous Dublin visit. Some of you have heard this, but legends must be told. I mixed up time zones—by a heroic 12 hours—and showed up before the birds. The security guard, Liam, took pity on me, gave me a tour, and then a sandwich. That was the morning we invented the dawn stand-up. To this day, when someone says, "Let's meet early," I ask, "Liam-early or normal-early?"

Another was the bug burn-down chart that got a standing ovation. I mean, only at this company could a sloping line down to zero make grown adults cheer like we'd won the World Cup. But you know what? That chart told the story of ten teams communicating clearly, engineering working hand in glove with QA, and product not adding "just one more little thing" during stabilization. It was beautiful. Data can be emotional.

I've gotten to work alongside some amazing partners. Alicia Chen—who can see three moves ahead in a roadmap while still remembering someone's kid has a recital at 5. And Jorge Ruiz, our DevOps whisperer, who taught all of us that deployment shouldn't feel like skydiving without a parachute. Alicia, Jorge—thank you. You made the hard parts easier, and the good parts even better.

If I had a through-line these past two decades, it's been encouraging people to grow. I've always believed curiosity beats certainty. When someone on the team asked "why," I didn't hear a challenge—I heard a teammate who cared enough to get it right. And when someone said, "I think I can take this on," my job was to say, "Great, let's make a space where you can try, and if it goes sideways, we'll learn from it." Watching people step into new roles, own their decisions, and then turn around to mentor the next person—that's the part I'm proudest of.

Now, a retirement send-off would be incomplete without at least one hobby confession. So yes, I cycle. A lot. If my legs had a calendar invite, it would just say "ongoing sprint." I also do amateur stand-up at open mics, which has been

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great practice for project reviews: both require timing, both are better with good visuals, and in both cases, if you bomb, you keep going and learn something. And then there's sourdough. I have a starter that's older than one of our codebases. It's very needy and delightfully honest: if the environment is off, it lets you know. Kind of like production.

What's next for me? I plan to bike the Pacific Coast Highway. Depending on headwinds, that could take me anywhere from two weeks to the rest of my natural life. I want to coach a community robotics team, because nothing beats watching kids learn to translate an idea into something that moves. And I'm going to audit a few design courses for fun. After years of asking "Can we ship it?", it'll be nice to spend time asking "Does it feel right?"

I also want to say something about transparency and accountability. Those words matter most when things aren't going to plan. We had those moments too. And I always admired how people here chose honesty over optics. We'd put the problem on the table, look each other in the eye, and decide how to fix it. No blame tours. Just grown-up problem solving. It's rare. Please keep that.

To the team of 14—and all of you who made this place what it is—thank you for trusting me with your ideas, your time, and your patience when I wrote user stories that were suspiciously long because, well, I'm a talker. I learned as much from you as you ever learned from me.

To Alicia and Jorge again, and to all the partners across engineering, product, sales, and support—thank you for being the "we" that actually shipped things. To the folks who joined in 2004 and remember when we celebrated a release with pizza and two folding chairs—look at us now. We have so many chairs.

I also want to give a quiet nod to the people who kept nudging me toward better. The colleague who said, "Mike, your plan is solid, your timeline is optimistic, and your coffee budget is delusional." The PM who observed, "We should put our blockers on a wall so they feel smaller and fixable." The intern who asked, "Why are our docs written like a ransom note?" and then fixed them.

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If you need me after today, don’t hesitate to reach out. I may be somewhere along Highway 1, or covered in flour, but I’m still around. You can find me at cto@kuchventures.com. Even in retirement, I’m still partial to a good problem and a better conversation.

I’m leaving feeling wildly optimistic about what you’ll do next. There are more markets to enter, more processes to streamline, more experiments to run. Keep the curiosity loud. Keep your stand-ups short. Keep the retros honest. And when in doubt, treat people like they can grow—because they can.

Thank you for 22 years of letting me be part of this. For the early mornings, the late nights, the bug burn-down ovations, the thousand little inside jokes, and the time a security guard in Dublin fed me a sandwich and accidentally helped me invent my favorite ritual.

I’m not saying goodbye. I’m just switching from sprint planning to a slightly longer road map. And yes, it includes a beach, a robot or two, and maybe a perfect loaf.

Take care of each other. Ship great things. And please, please, check your time zones.

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