Achieving unicorn scale

Using Team Topologies at cinch

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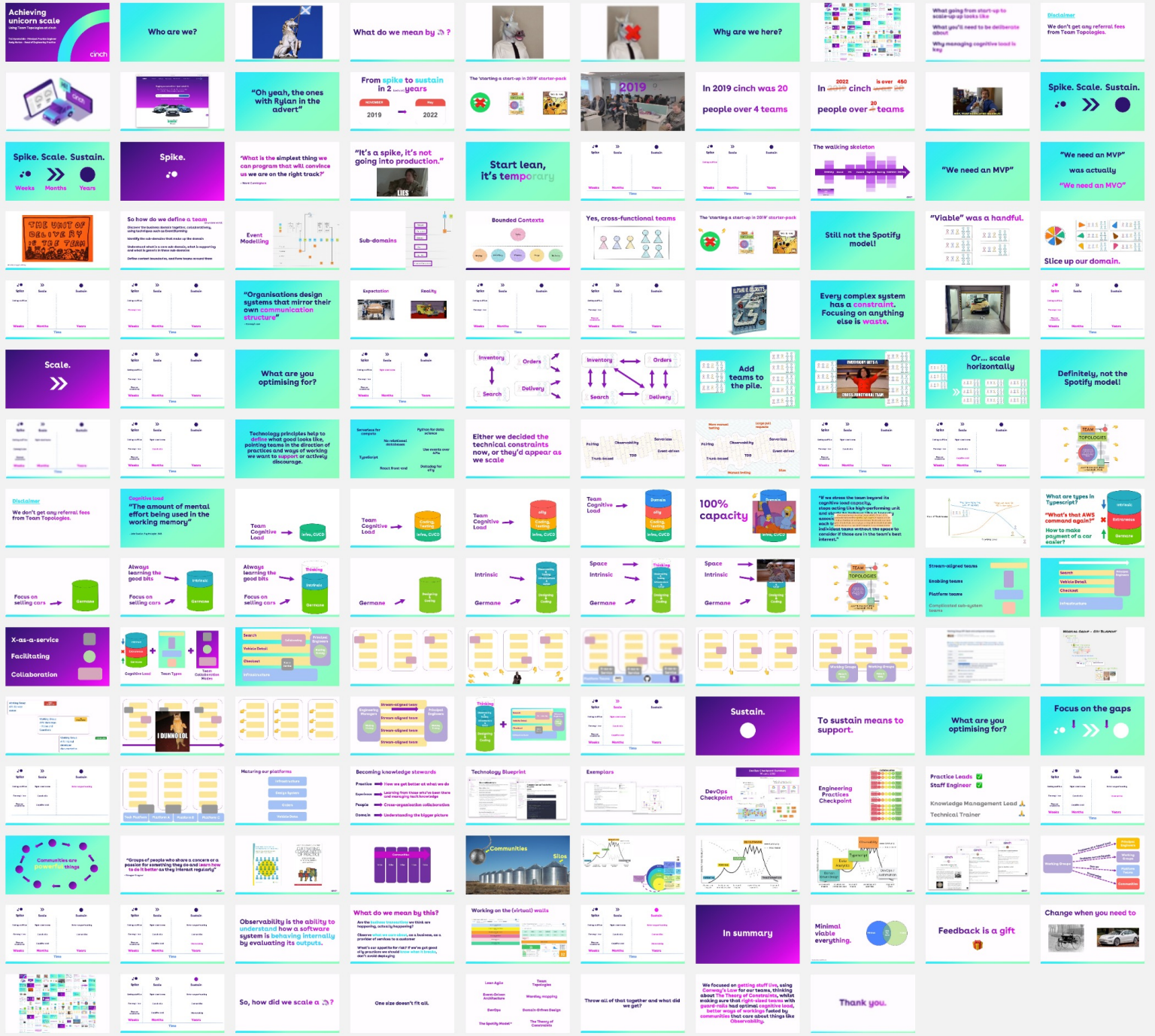
@andyjnorton

cinch

Who are we?

What do we mean by 🦄 ?

Why are we here?


Achieving unicorn scale
cinch
Who are we?
What do we mean by ?
Why are we here?
Disclaimer
We don't get any referral fees from Team Topologies.
"Oh yeah, the ones with Rylan in the advert"
From spike to sustain in 2 years
NOVEMBER
2019
May
2022
2019
In 2019 cinch was 20 people over 4 teams
In 2022 cinch is over 450 people over 20 teams
Spike. Scale. Sustain.
Weeks
Months
Years
Spike.
"What is the simplest thing we can program that will convince us we are on the right track?"
"It's a spike, it's not going into production."
LIES
Start lean, it's temporary
The walking skeleton
"We need an MVP"
"We need an MVP" was actually "We need an MVO"
THE UNIT OF DELIVERY IS THE TEAM
So how do we define a team
Event Modelling
Sub-domains
Bounded Contexts
Yes, cross-functional teams
Still not the Spotify model!
"Viable" was a handful.
Slice up our domain.
"Organisations design systems that mirror their own communication structure"
Expectation
Reality
Every complex system has a constraint. Focusing on anything else is waste.
Scale.
What are you optimising for?
Inventory
Orders
Search
Delivery
Add teams to the pile.
Or... scale horizontally
Definitely, not the Spotify model!
Technology principles help to define what good looks like, pointing teams in the direction of practices and ways of working we want to support or actively discourage.
Either we decided the technical constraints now, or they'd appear as we scale
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Cognitive load
"The amount of mental effort being used in the working memory"
Team Cognitive Load
100% capacity
What are types in Typescript?
"What's that AWS command again?"
How to make payment of a car easier?
Focus on selling cars
Always learning the good bits
Intrinsic
Germane
Space
Thinking
X-as-a-service
Facilitating
Collaboration
I DUNNO LOL
Sustain.
To sustain means to support.
What are you optimising for?
Focus on the gaps
Maturing our platforms
Becoming knowledge stewards
Technology Blueprint
Exemplars
DevOps Checkpoint
Engineering Practices Checkpoint
Practice Leads
Staff Engineer
Knowledge Management Lead
Technical Trainer
Communities are powerful things
"Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"
Communities
Silos
Observability is the ability to understand how a software system is behaving internally by evaluating its outputs.
What do we mean by this?
Working on the (virtual) walls
In summary
Minimal viable everything.
Feedback is a gift
Change when you need to
So, how did we scale a ?
One size doesn't fit all.
Throw all of that together and what did we get?
We focused on getting stuff live, using Conway's Law for our teams, thinking about The Theory of Constraints, whilst making sure that right-sized teams with guard-rails had optimal cognitive load, better ways of workings fueled by communities that care about things like Observability.
Thank you.

What going from start-up to scale-up up looks like

What you'll need to be deliberate about

Why managing cognitive load is key

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Trustpilot

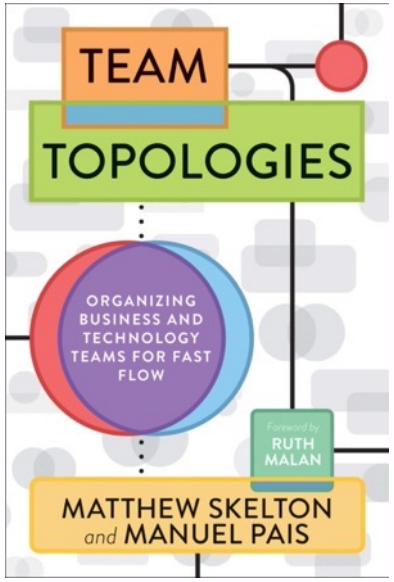
”Which one are we?”

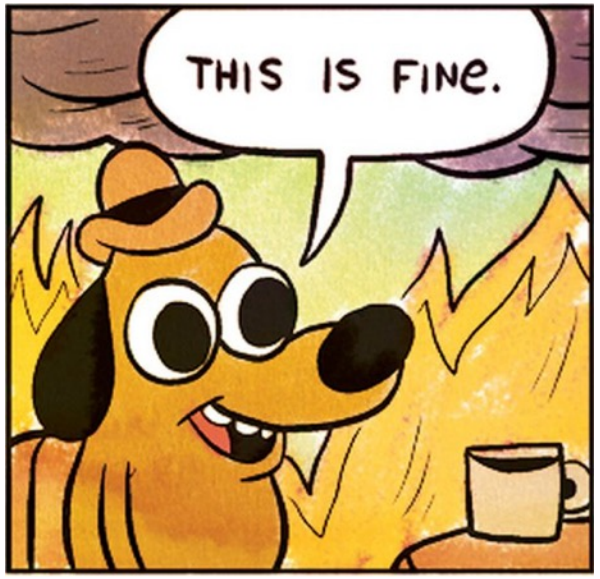
“Oh yeah, the ones with Rylan in the advert”

From spike to sustain in 2 (and a bit) years

NOVEMBER		May
2019	→	2022

The ‘starting a start-up in 2019’ starter-pack






2019
Quality Street

In 2019 cinch was 20

people over 4 teams

2022 is over 450

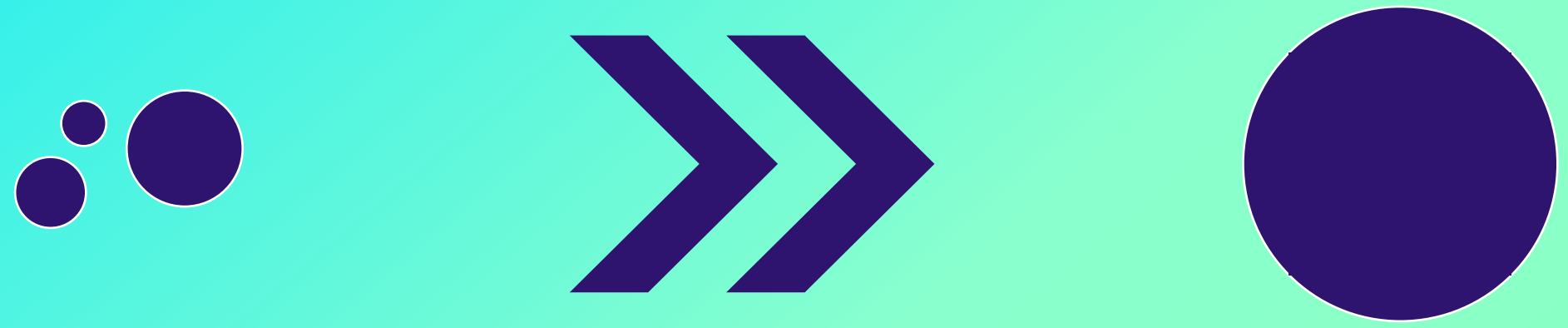
In ~~2019~~ cinch ~~was~~ ~~20~~

20

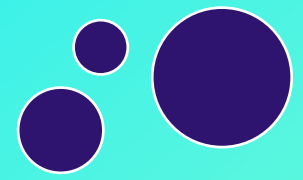
people over ~~4~~ teams

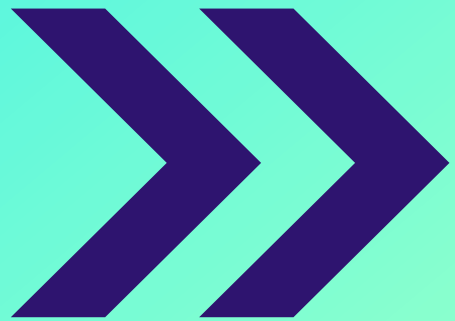

BOY, THAT ESCALATED QUICKLY!

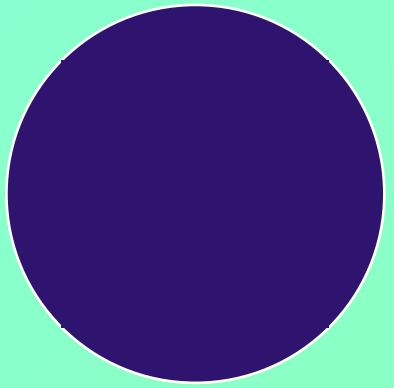
Spike. Scale. Sustain.



Spike. Scale. Sustain.

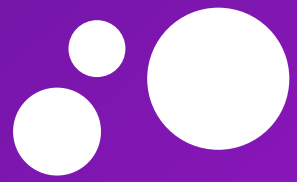






Weeks **Months** **Years**

Spike.



‘What is the simplest thing we can program that will convince us we are on the right track?’

- Ward Cunningham

“It’s a spike, it’s not going into production.”

Start lean, it's temporary

Spike

Scale

Sustain

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Years

Time

Spike

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Getting stuff live

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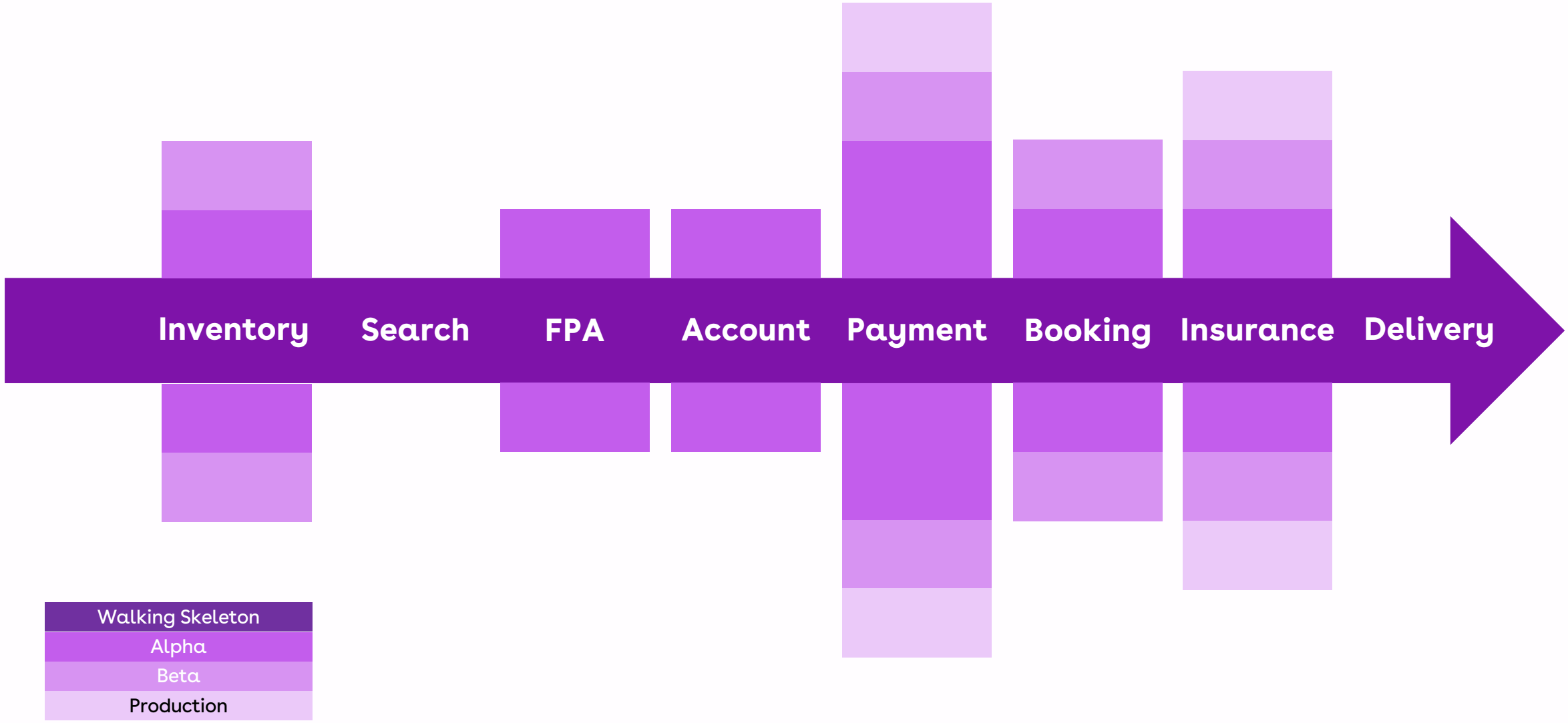
Time

The walking skeleton



"We need an MVP"

"We need an MVP"

was actually

"We need an MVO"

https://gds.blog.gov.uk/story/

So how do we define a team

(in an ideal world)

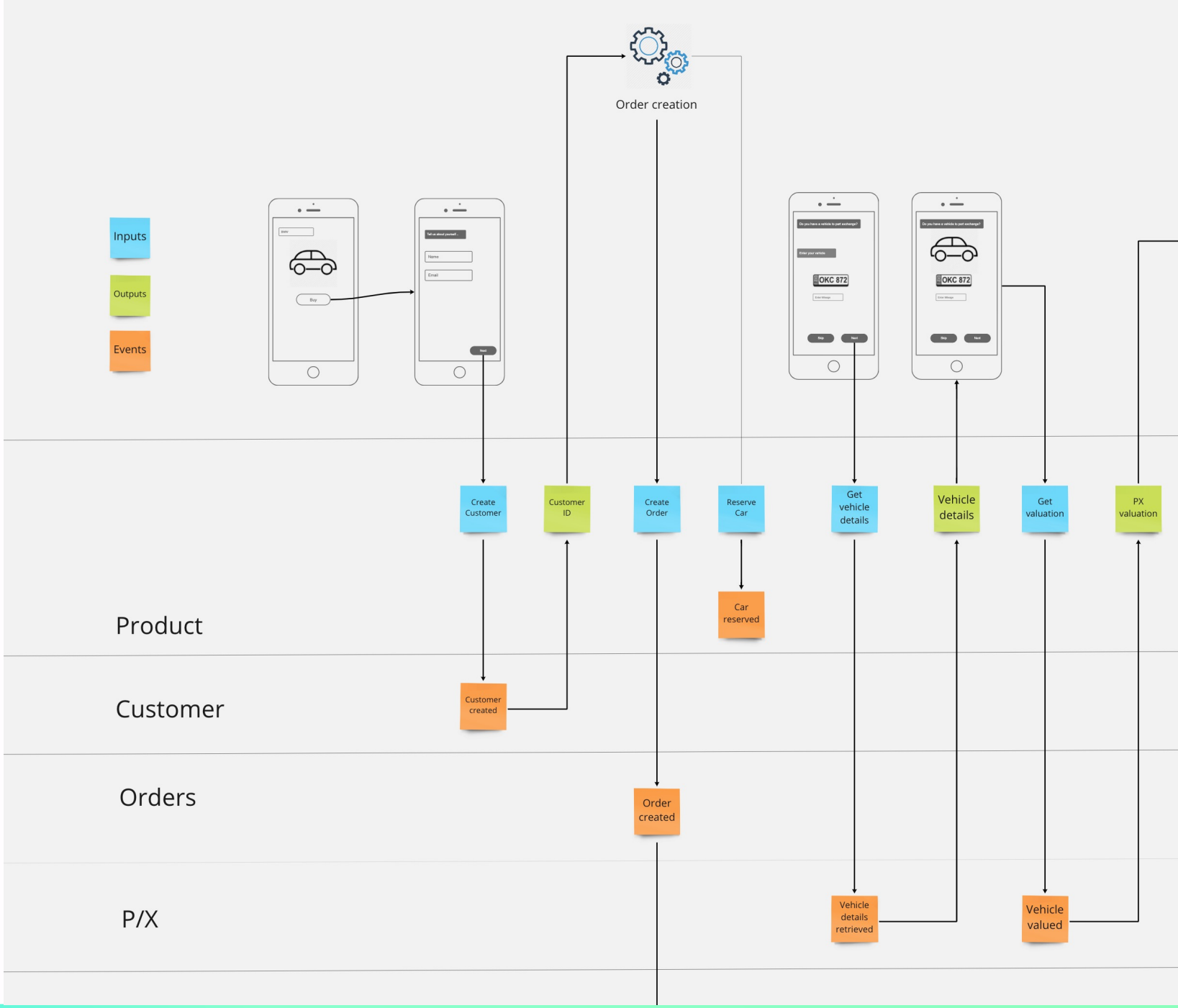
Discover the business domain together, collaboratively, using techniques such as EventStorming and Event Modeling

Identify the sub-domains that make up the domain

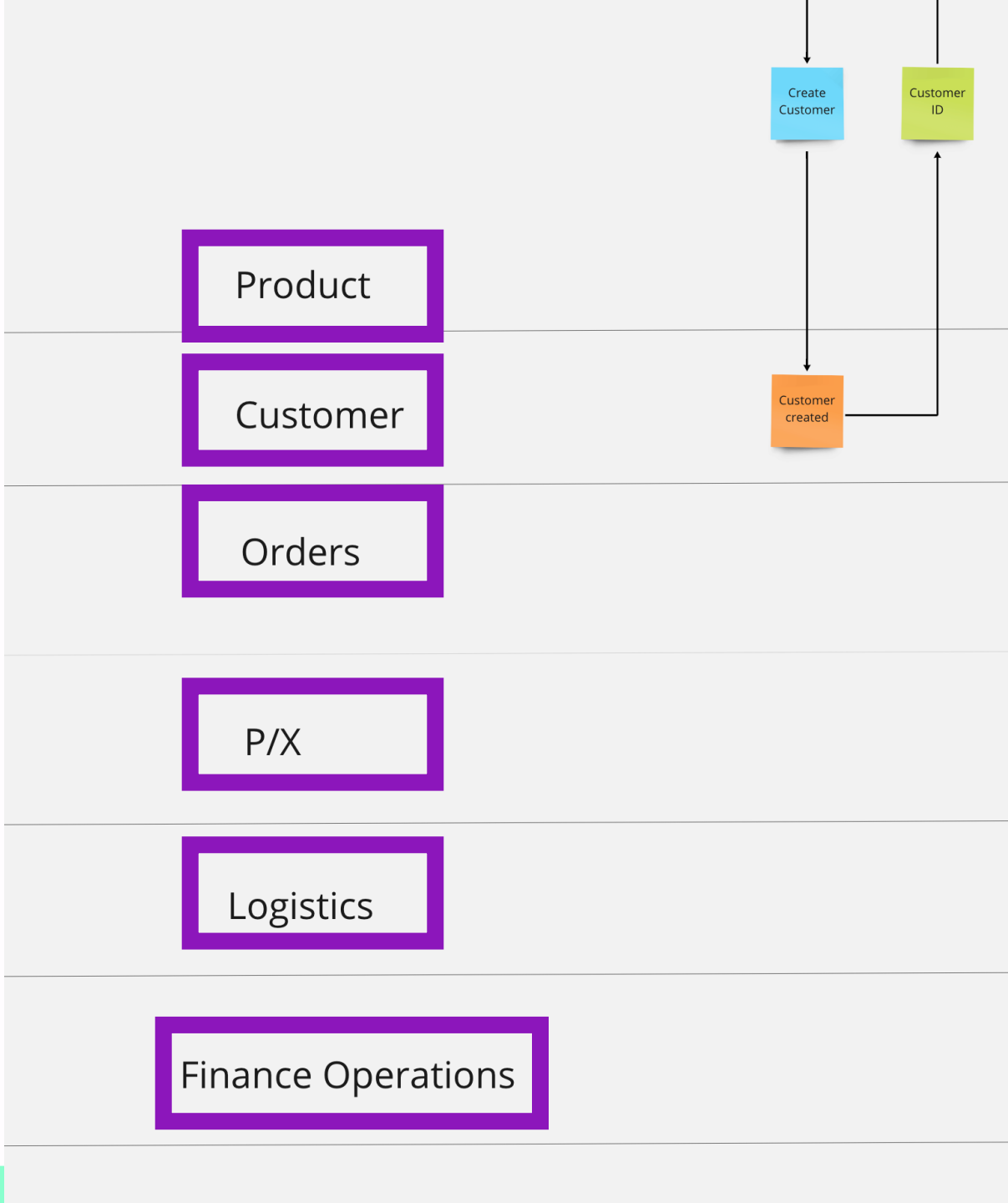
Understand what is a core sub-domain, what is supporting and what is generic in these sub-domains

Define context boundaries, and form teams around them

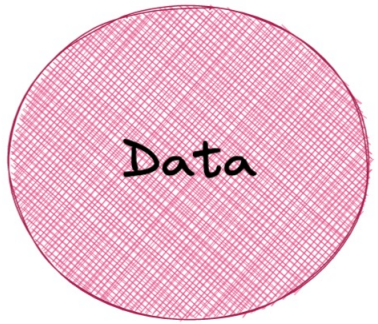
Event Modeling



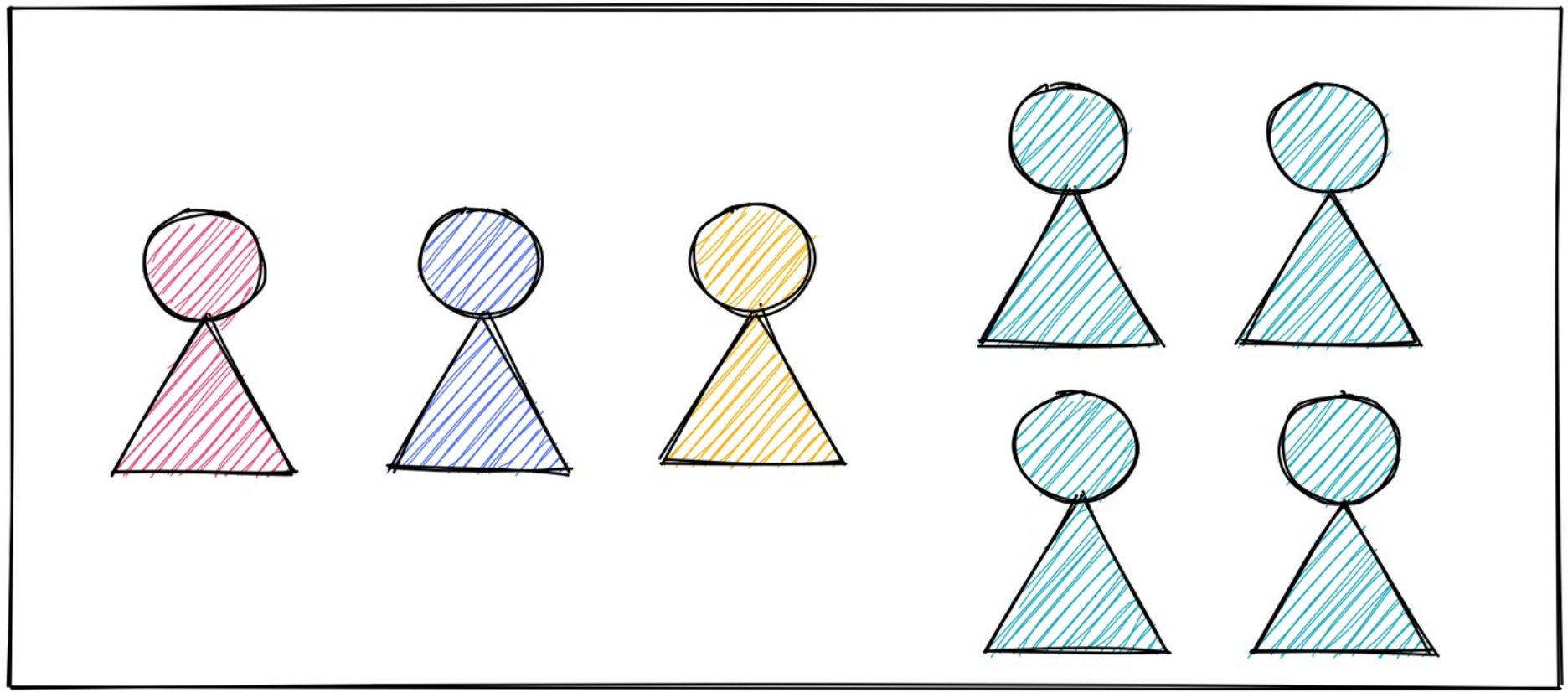
Sub-domains


Create Customer
Customer ID
Customer created
Product
Customer
Orders
P/X
Logistics
Finance Operations

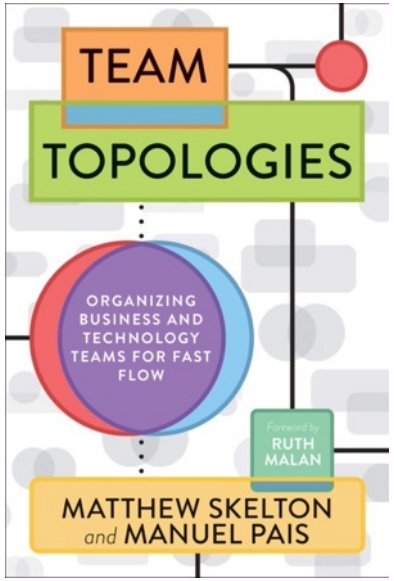
Bounded Contexts

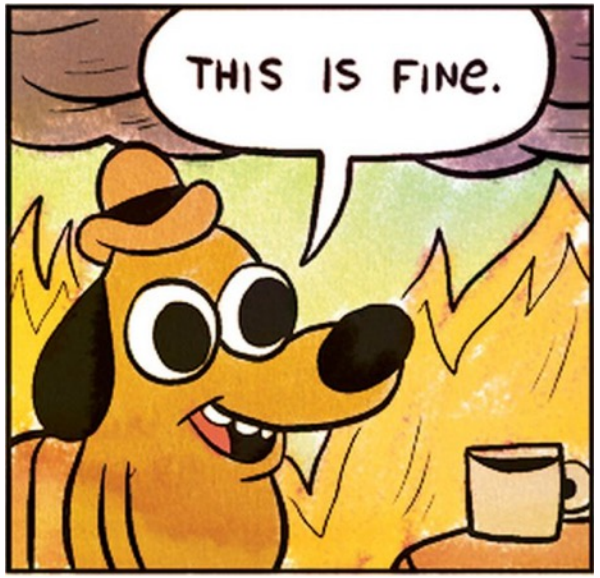


Yes, cross-functional teams



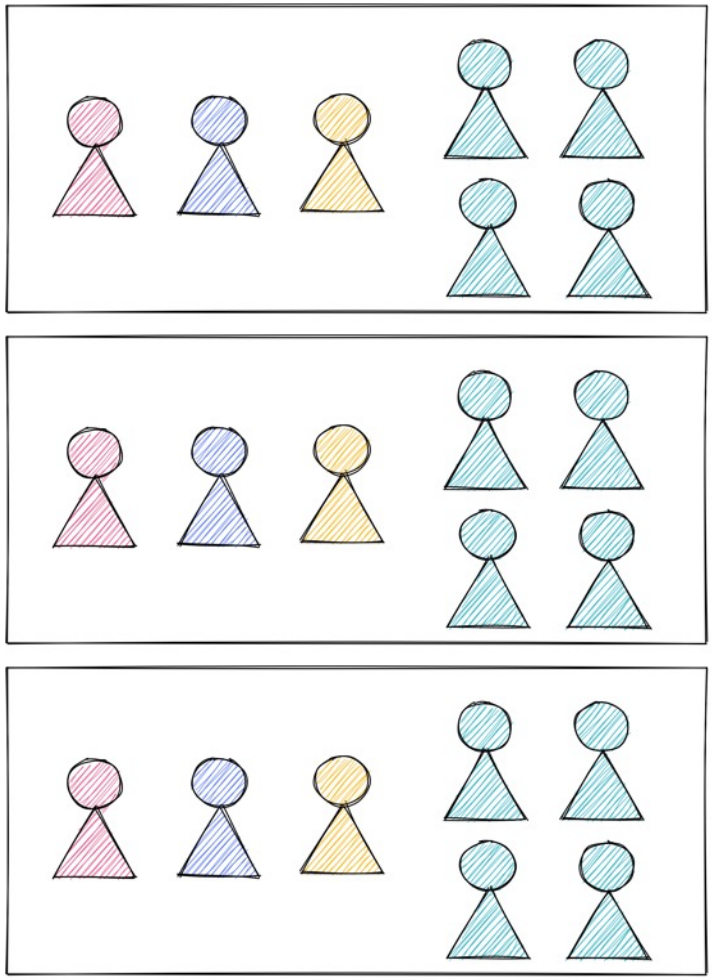
The ‘starting a start-up in 2019’ starter-pack

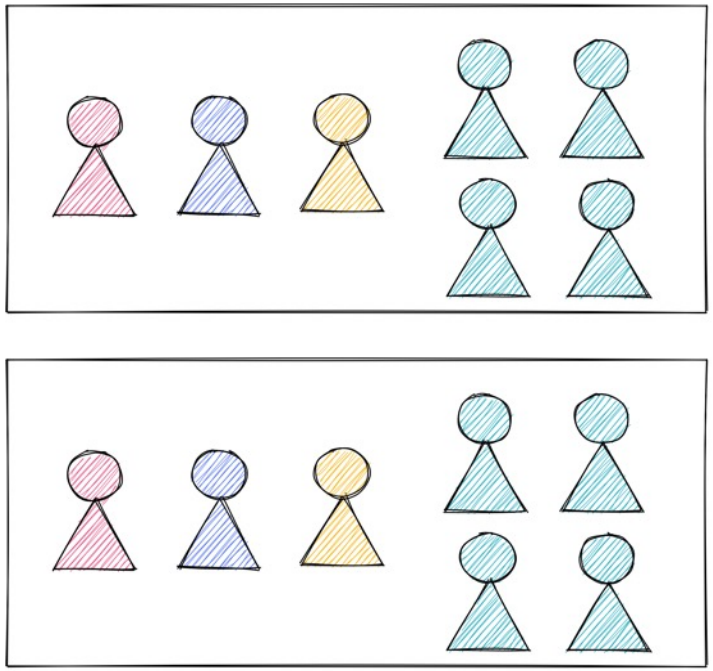


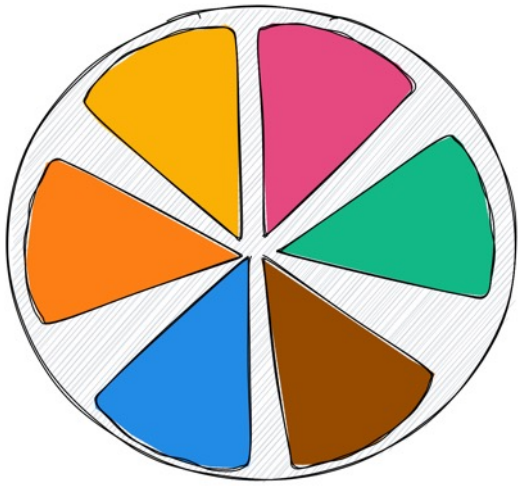


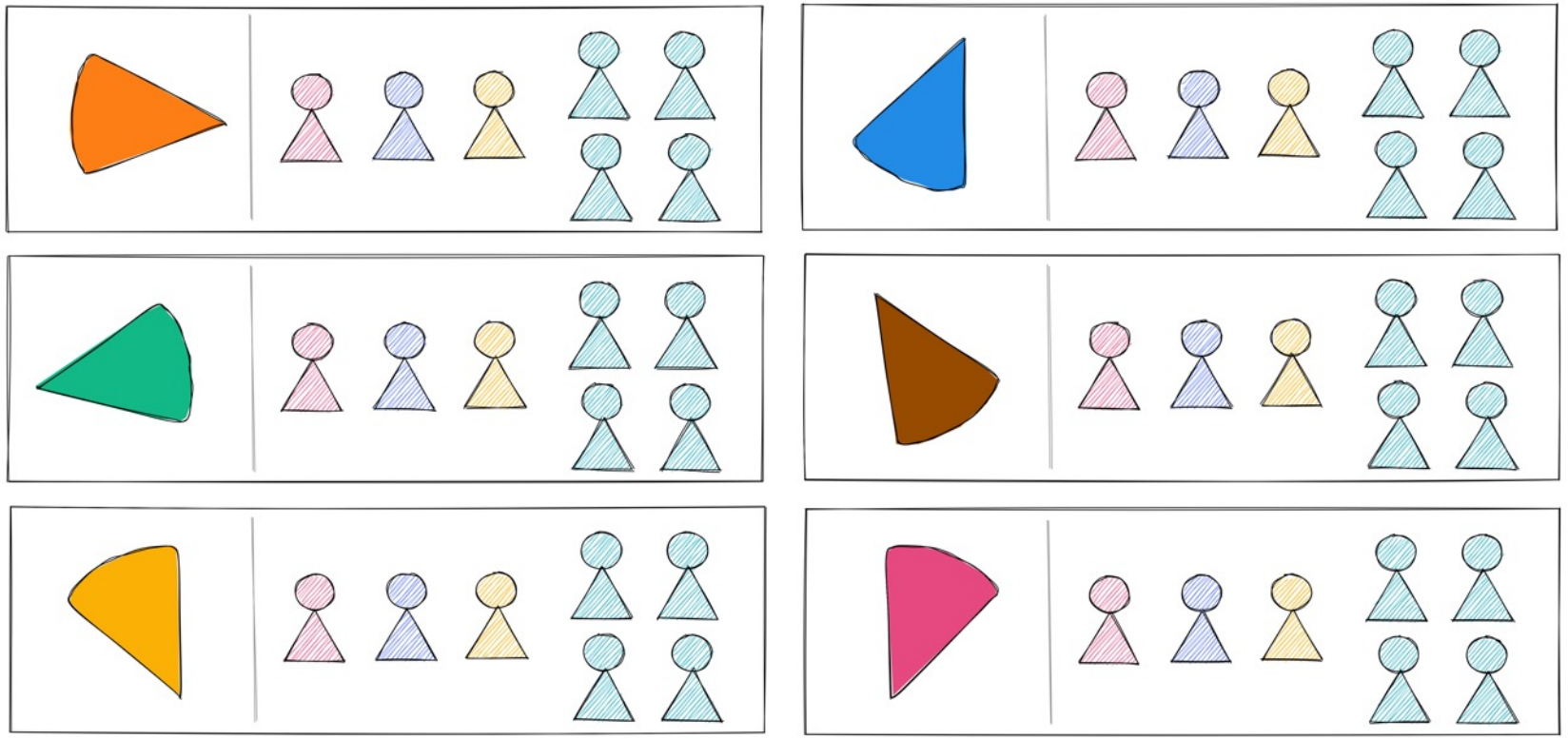
Still not the Spotify model!

"Viable" was a handful.









Slice up our domain.

Spike

Scale

Sustain

Getting stuff live

Weeks | **Months** | **Years**

Time

Spike

Scale

Sustain

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Weeks | **Months** | **Years**

Time

"Organisations design systems that mirror their own communication structure"

- Conway's Law

Expectation

Reality

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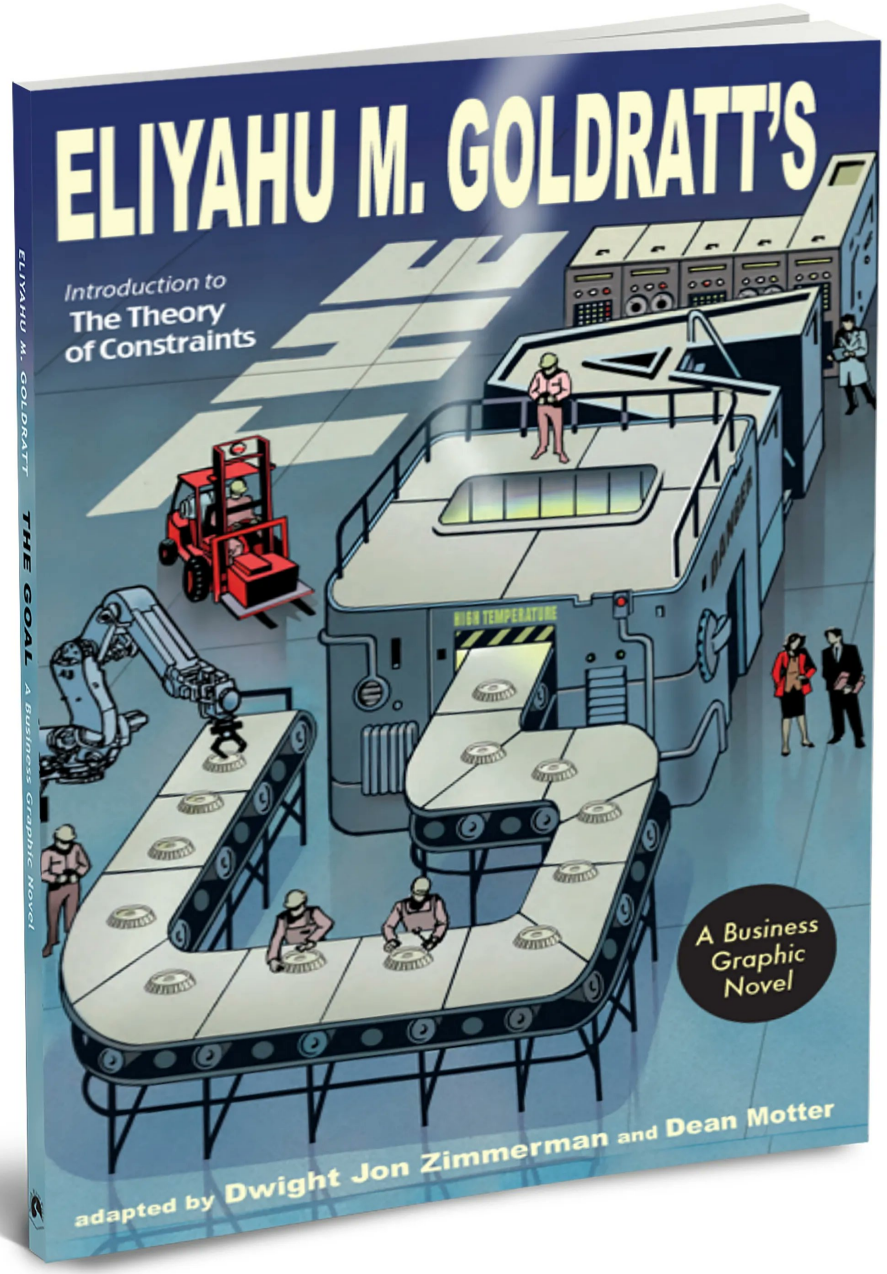
Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Weeks | **Months** | **Years**

Time


ELIYAHU M. GOLDRATT'S
Introduction to
The Theory
of Constraints
HIGH TEMPERATURE
A Business
Graphic
Novel
adapted by Dwight Jon Zimmerman and Dean Motter
ELIYAHU M. GOLDRATT
THE GOAL
A Business Graphic Novel

Every complex system has a constraint. Focusing on anything else is waste.

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Weeks | **Months** | **Years**

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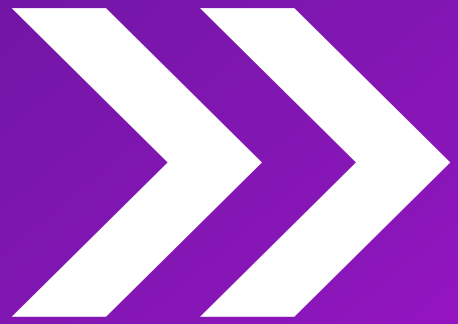
Scale.



Spike

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What are you optimising for?

Spike

Scale

Sustain

Getting stuff live

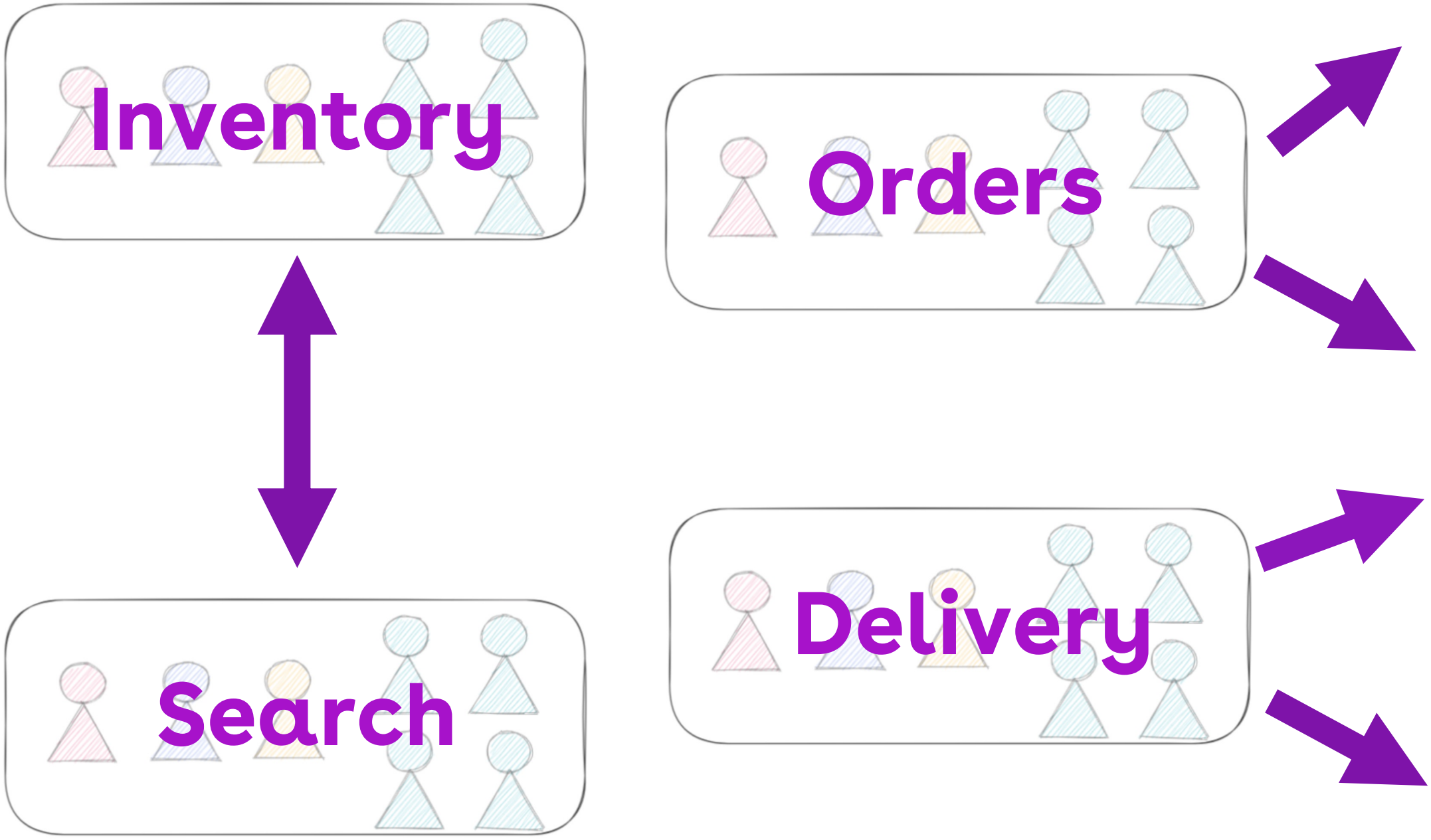
Conway's Law

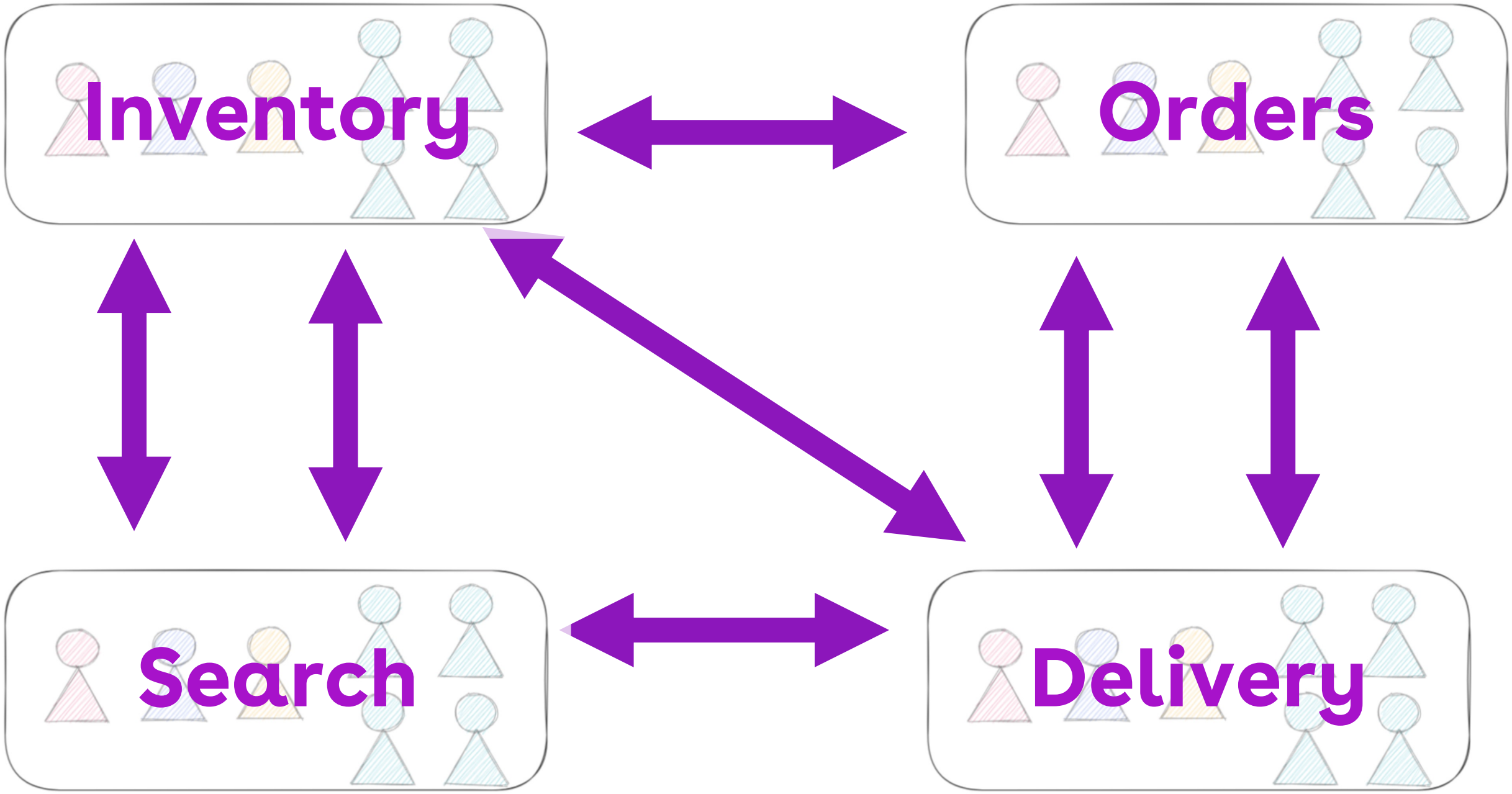
Discover constraints

Right-sized teams

Weeks **Months** **Years**

Time


Inventory
Orders
Search
Delivery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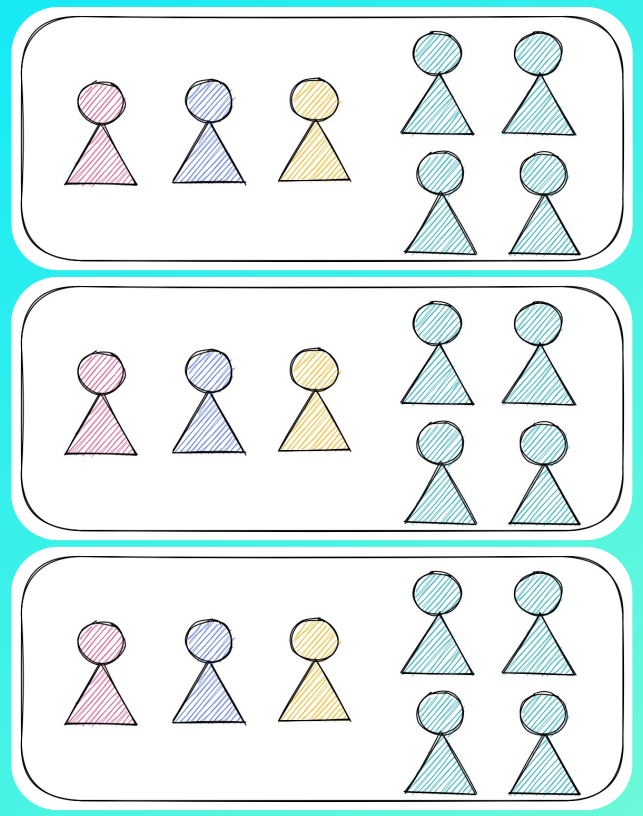
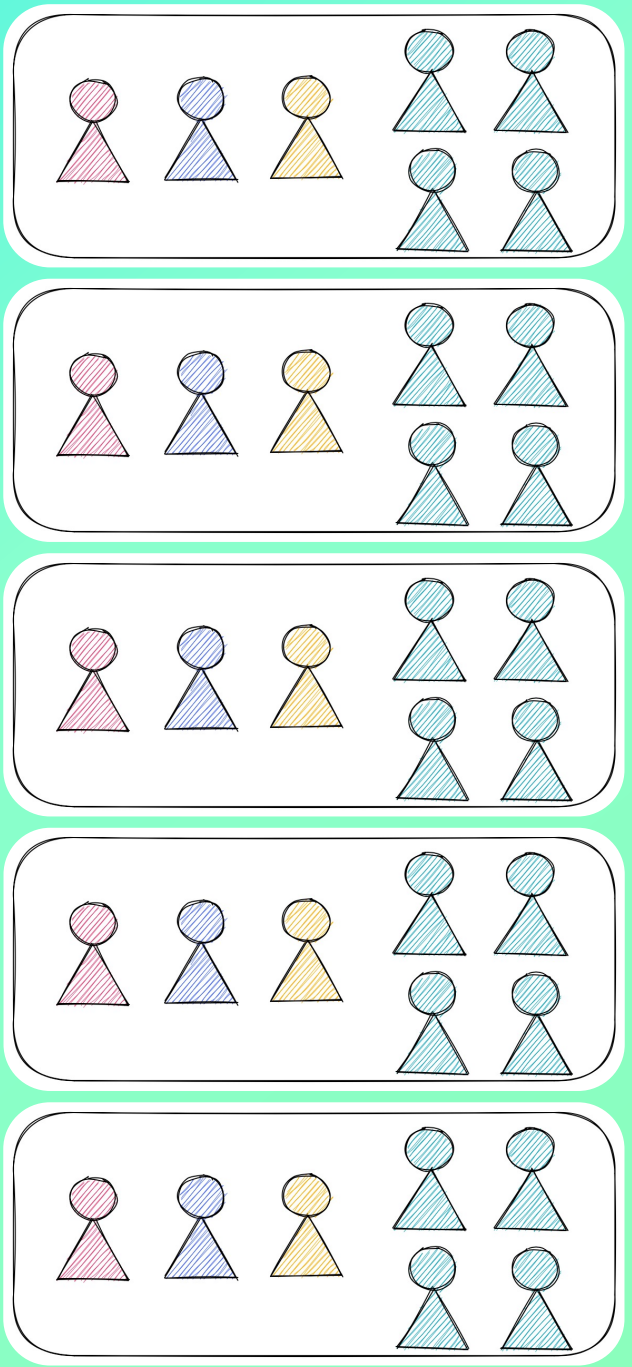
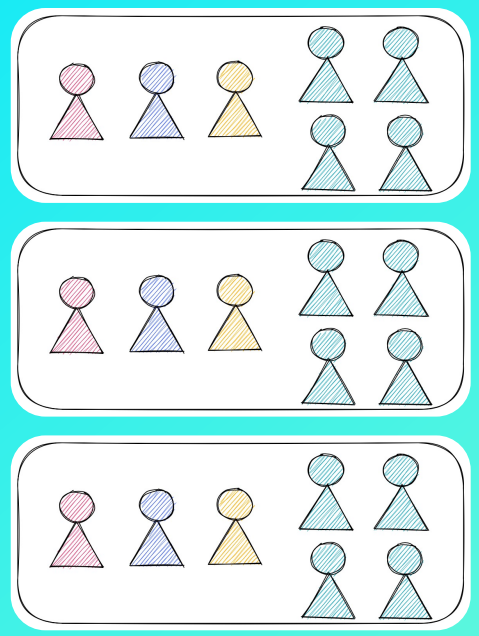


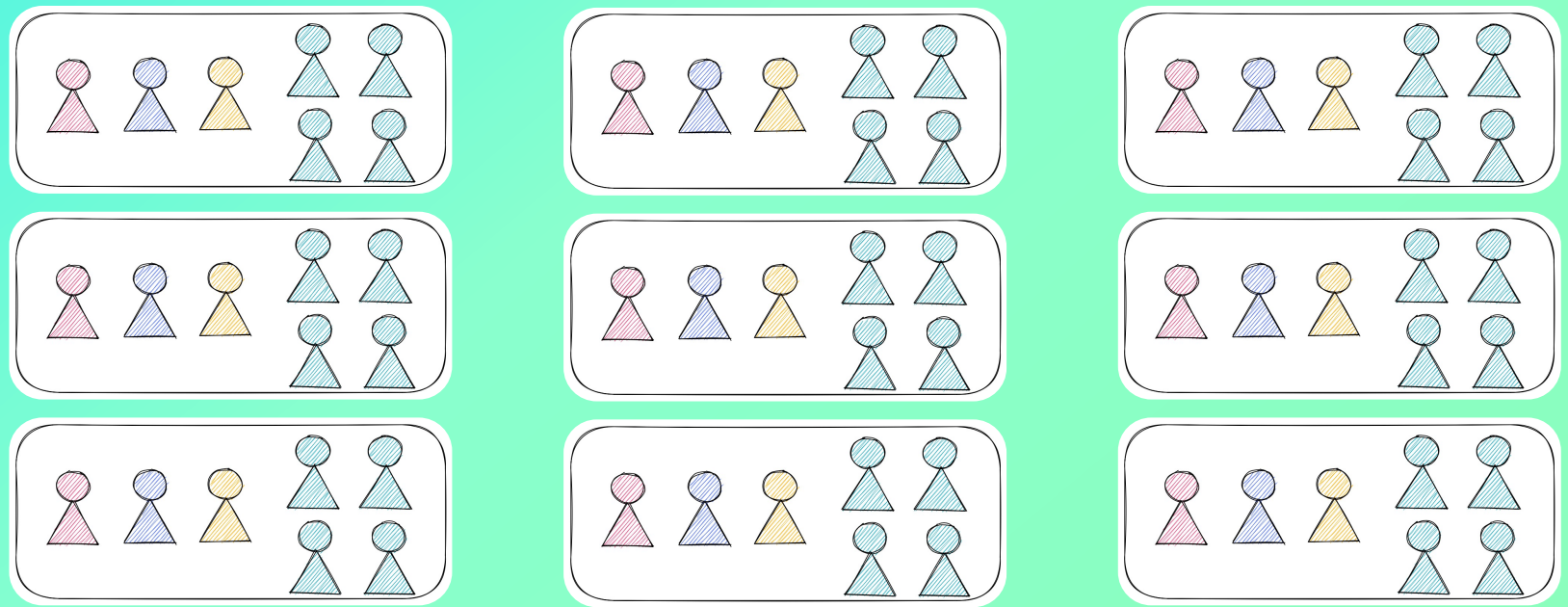
Add teams to the pile.




EVERYBODY GETS A
CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM
imgflip.com

Or... scale horizontally





Definitely, not the Spotify model!

Spike

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Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Right-sized teams

Weeks | **Months** | **Years**

Time

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Scale

Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Months

Sustain

Years

Time

Technology principles help to define what good looks like, pointing teams in the direction of practices and ways of working we want to support or actively discourage.

Serverless for compute

Python for data science

No relational databases

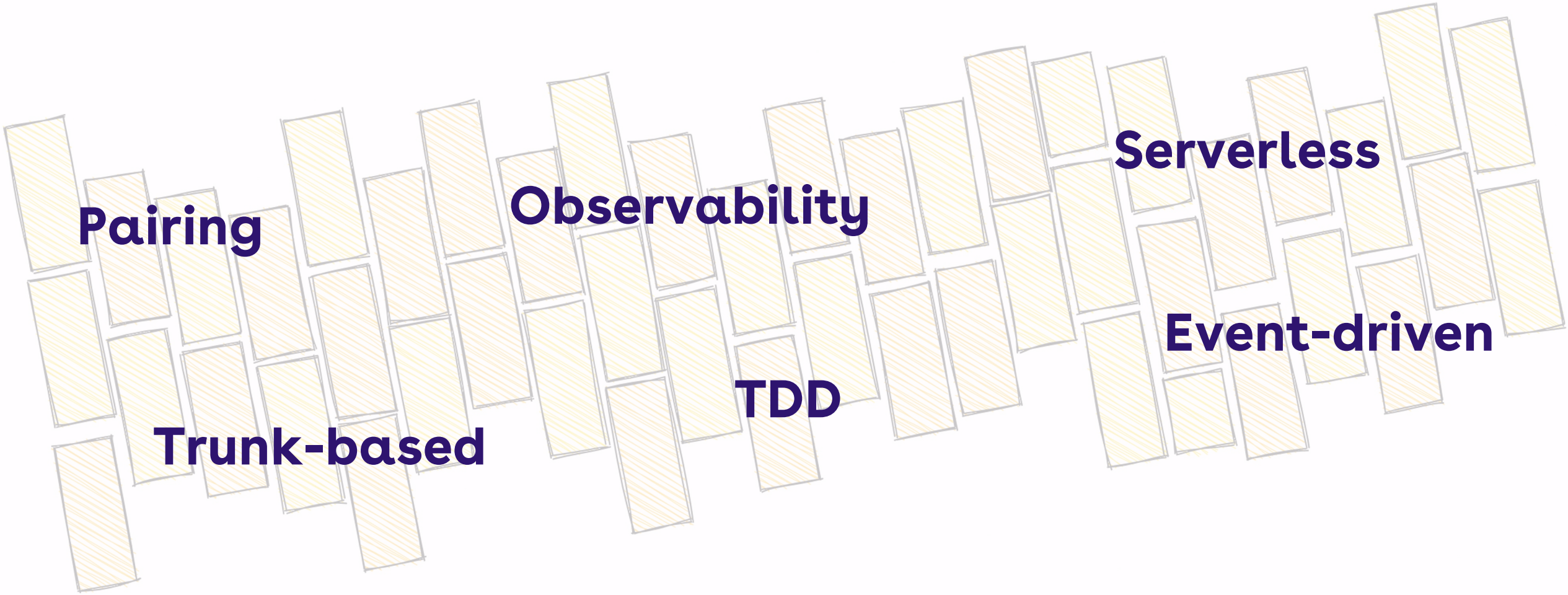
Use events over APIs

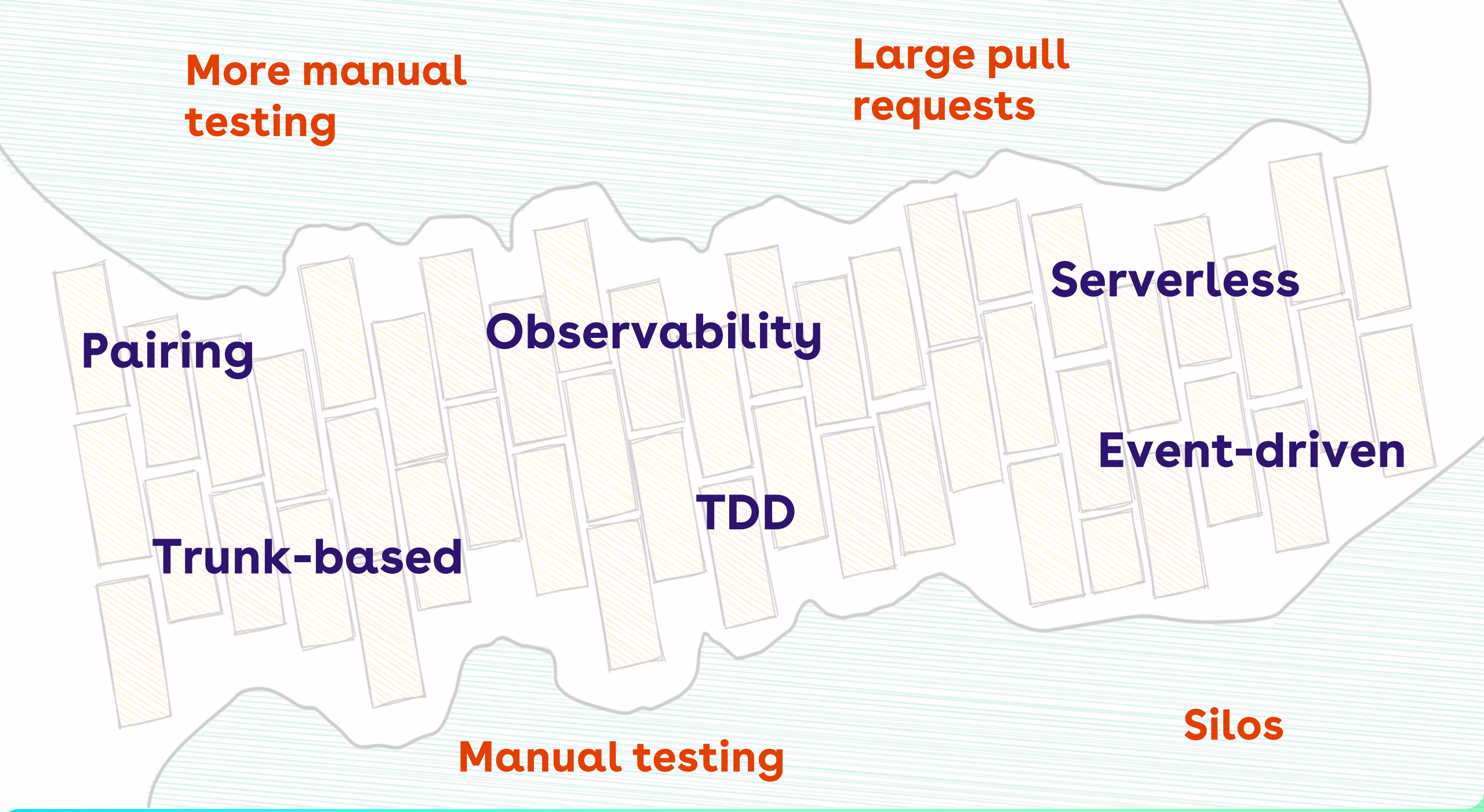
TypeScript

React front-end

Datadog for o11y

Either we decided the technical constraints now, or they'd appear as we scale


Pairing
Observability
Serverless
Event-driven
TDD
Trunk-based


More manual testing
Large pull requests
Pairing
Observability
Serverless
Event-driven
TDD
Trunk-based
Manual testing
Silos

Spike

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Conway's Law

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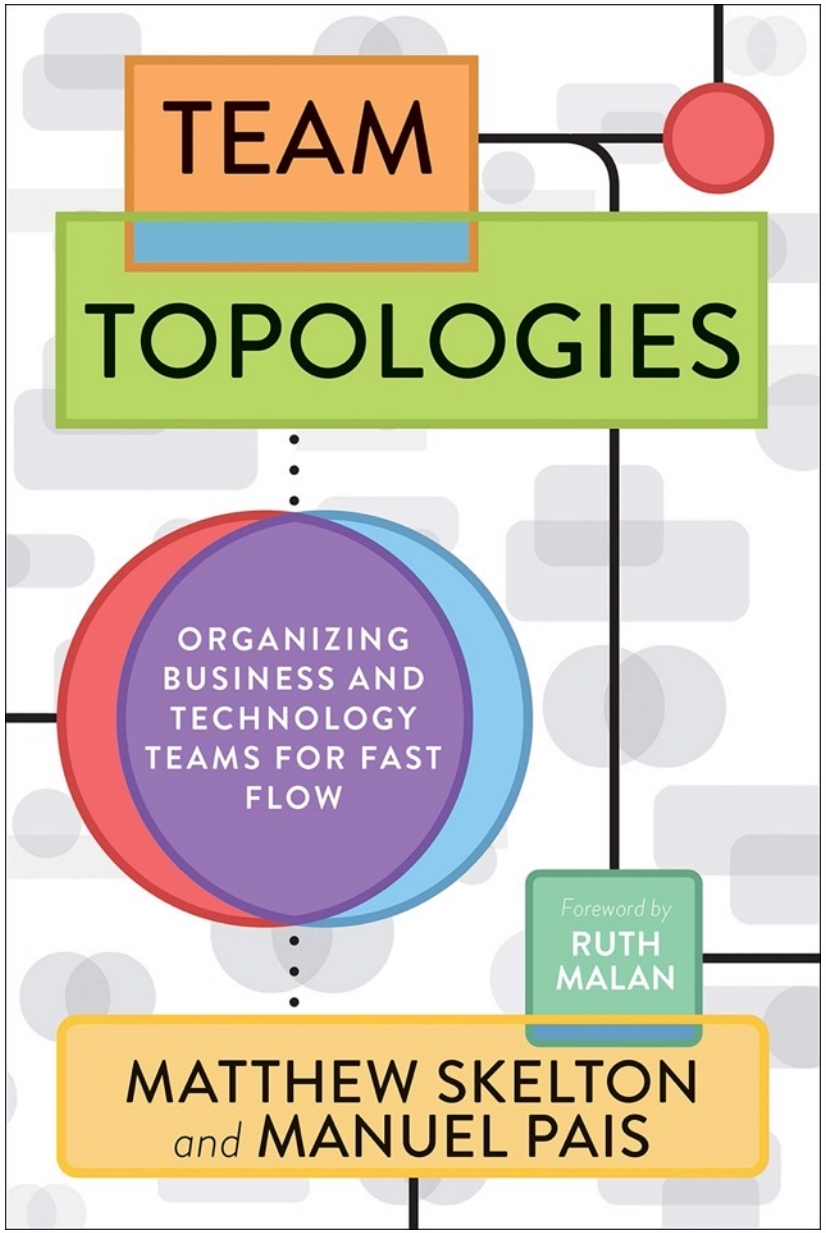
TEAM
TOPOLOGIES
ORGANIZING BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY TEAMS FOR FAST FLOW
Foreword by
RUTH MALAN
MATTHEW SKELTON
and MANUEL PAIS

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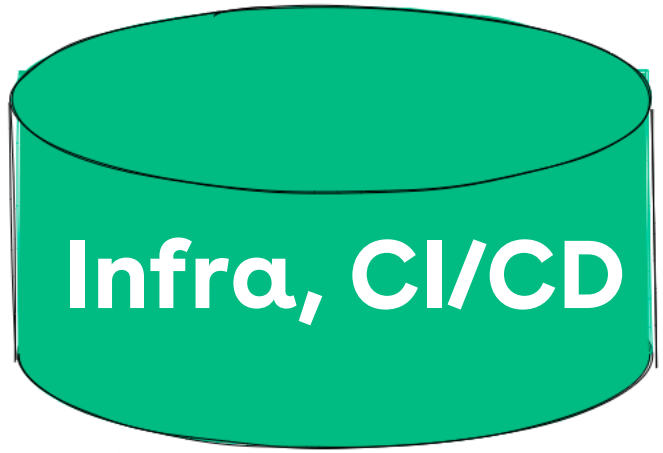
Cognitive load

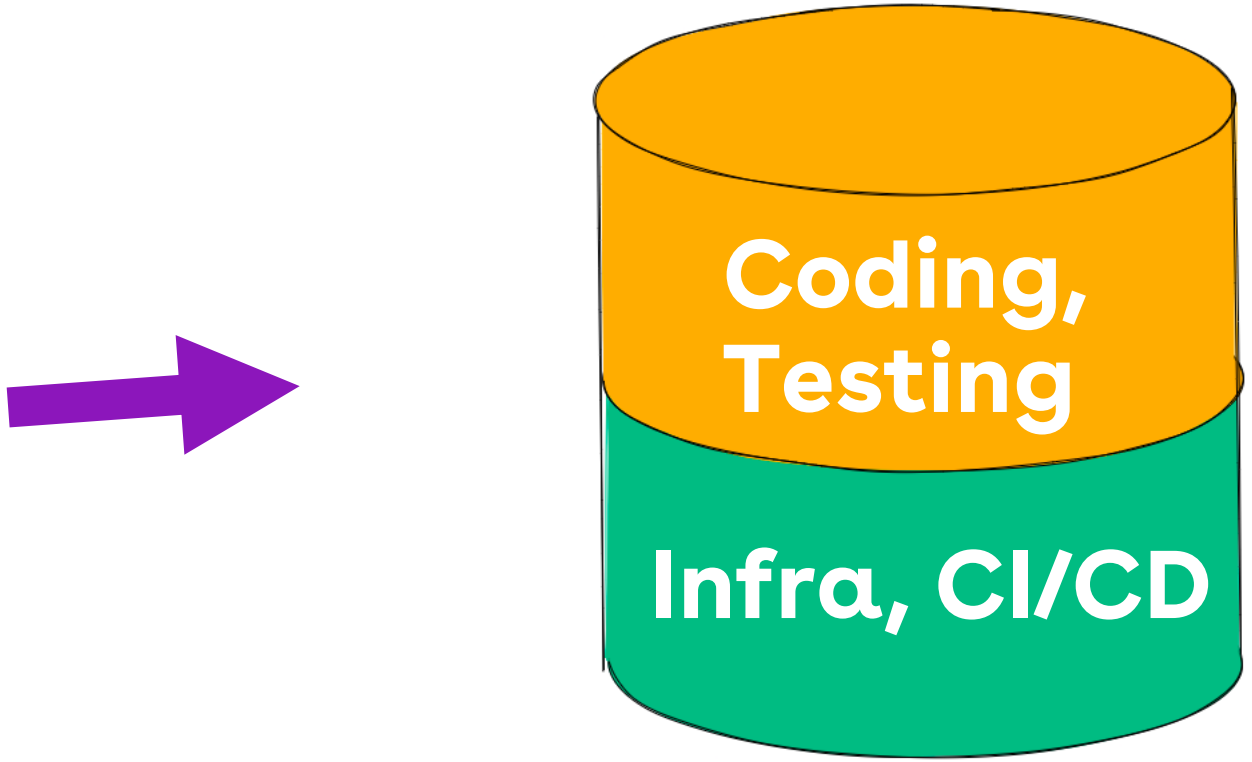
“The amount of mental effort being used in the working memory”

- John Sweller, Psychologist, 1988

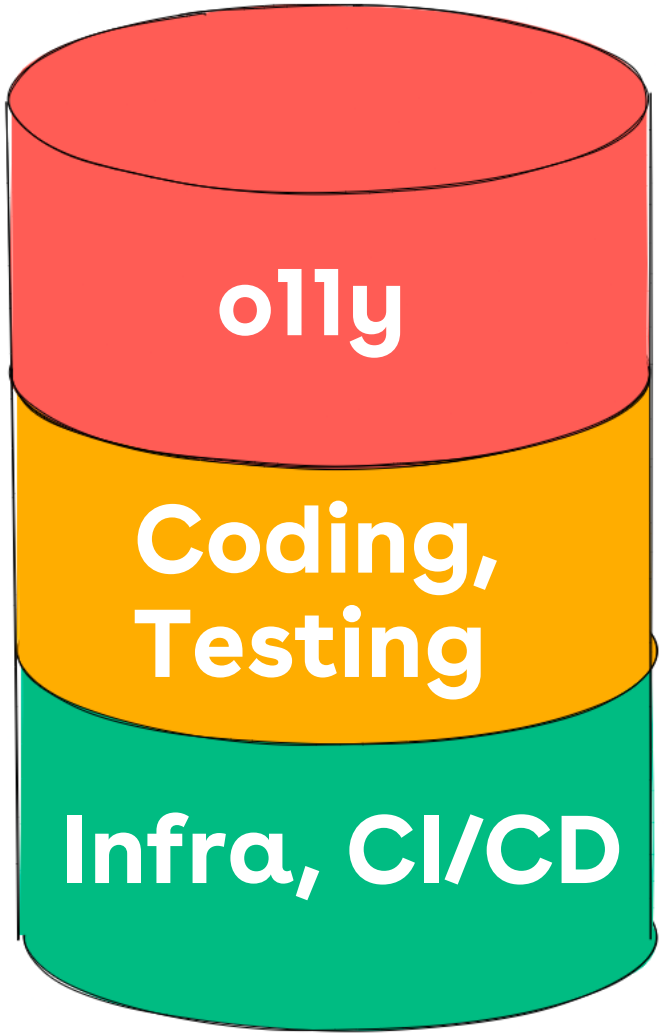
Team Cognitive Load



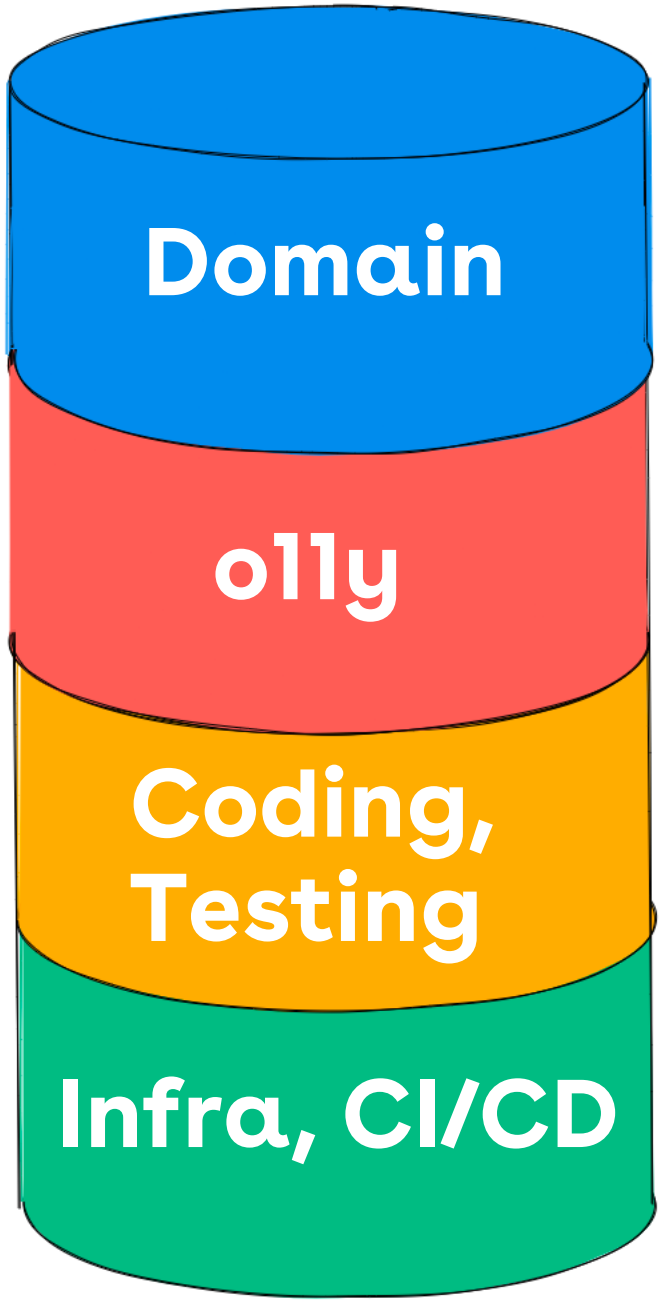
Team Cognitive Load



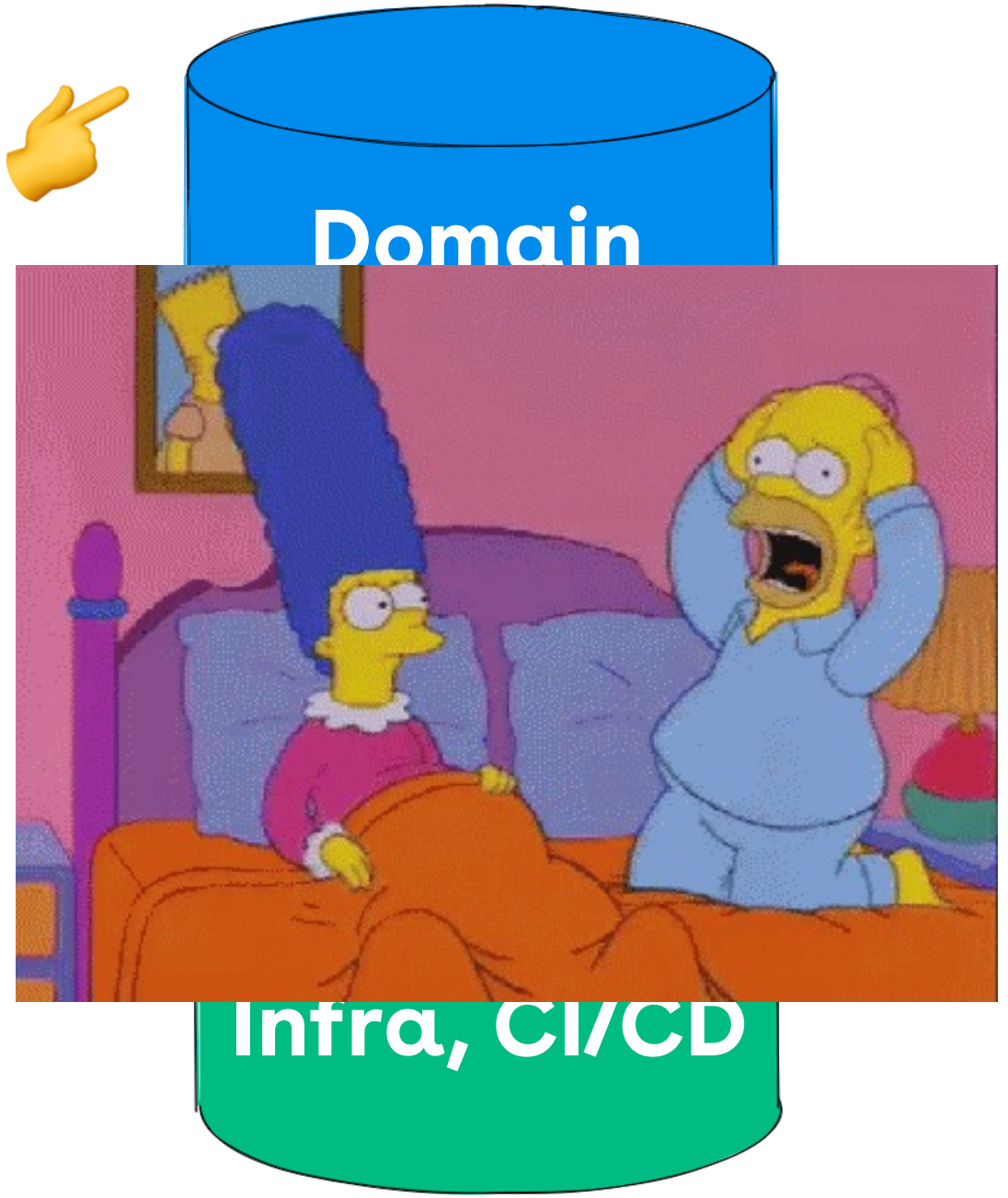
Team Cognitive Load

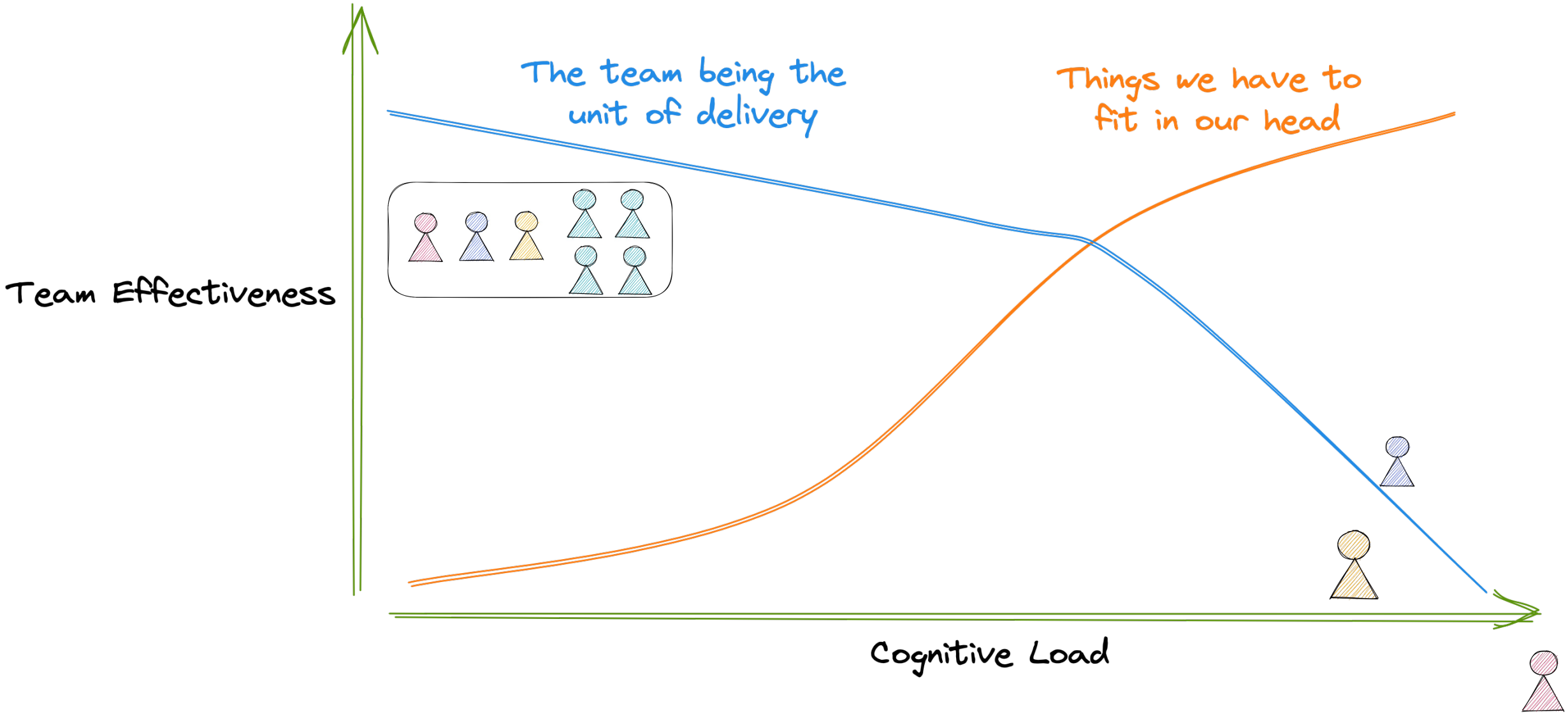


Team Cognitive Load



100% capacity

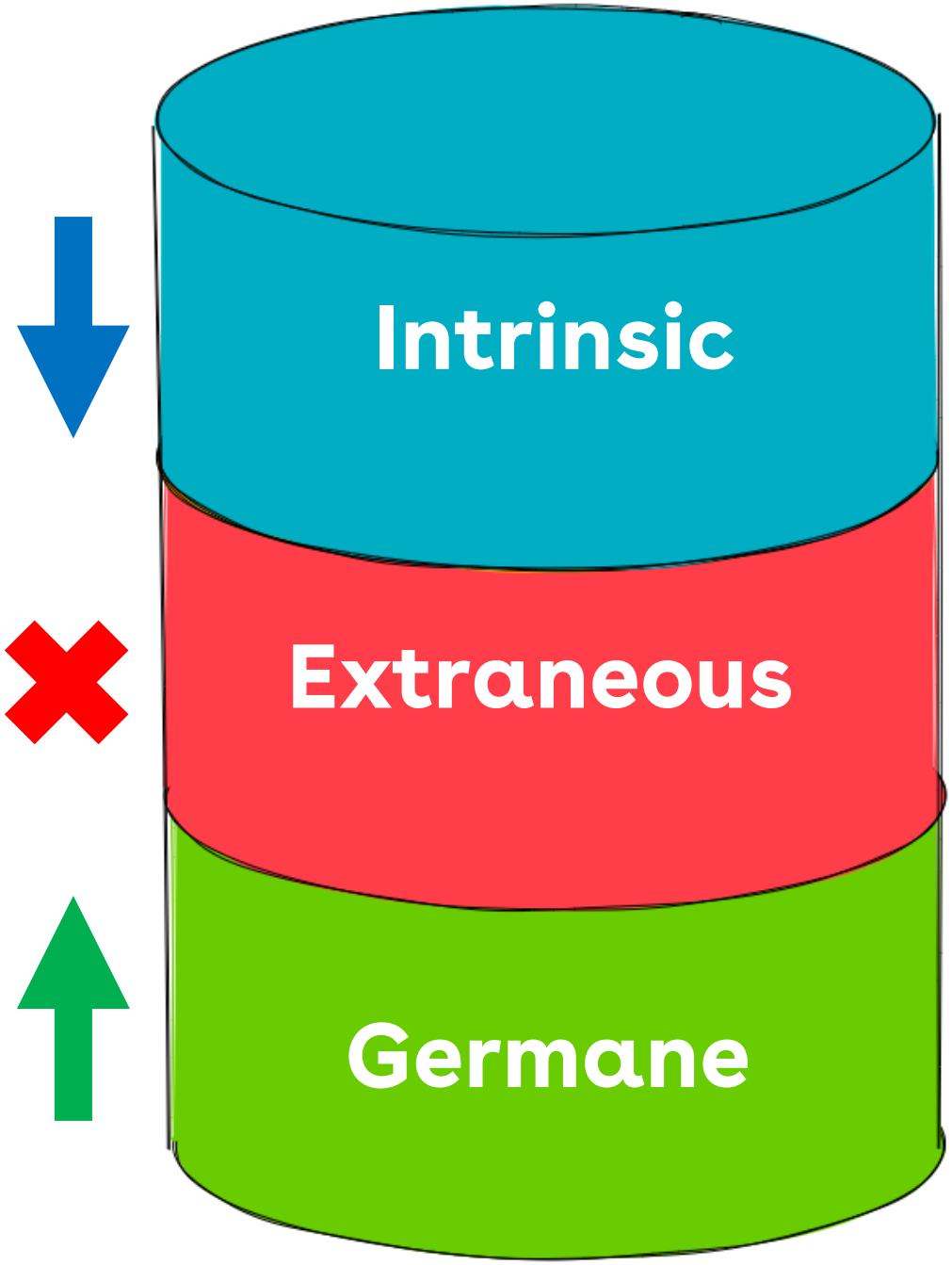



The team being the unit of delivery
Things we have to fit in our head
Team Effectiveness
Cognitive Load

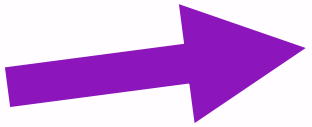
What are types in Typescript?

"What's that AWS command again?"

How to make payment of a car easier?

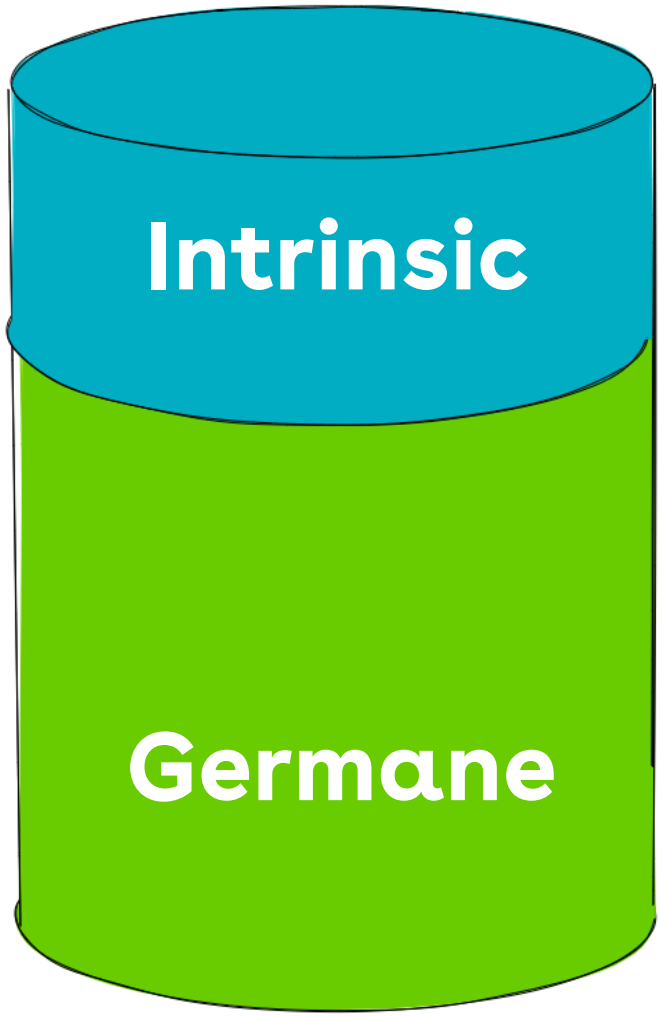


Focus on selling cars



Always learning the good bits

Focus on selling cars



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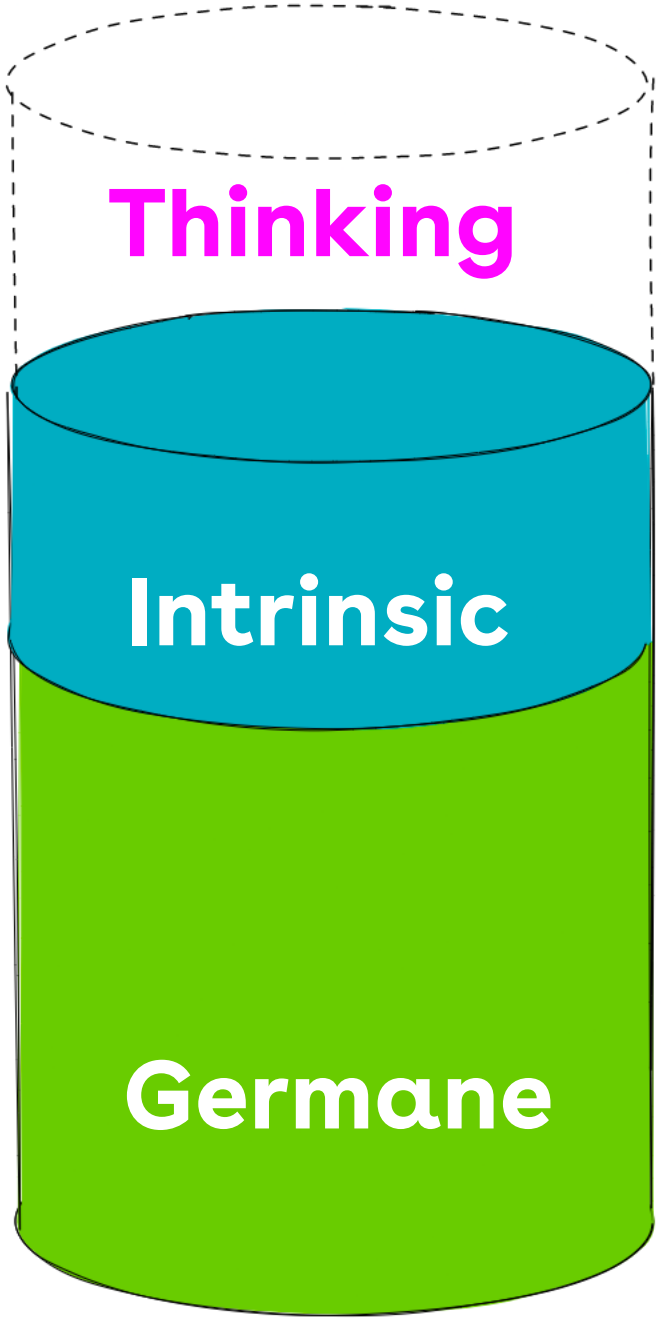
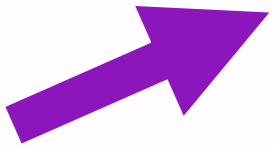
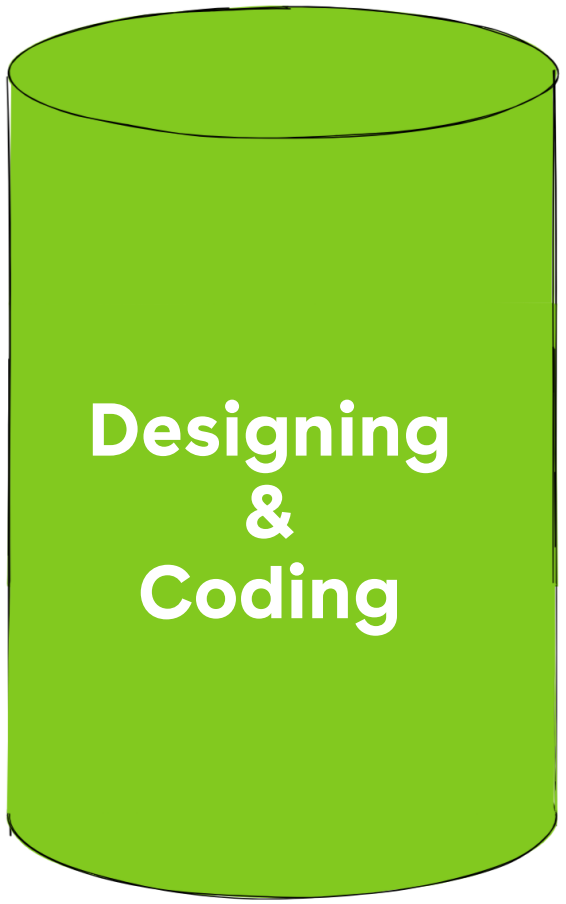


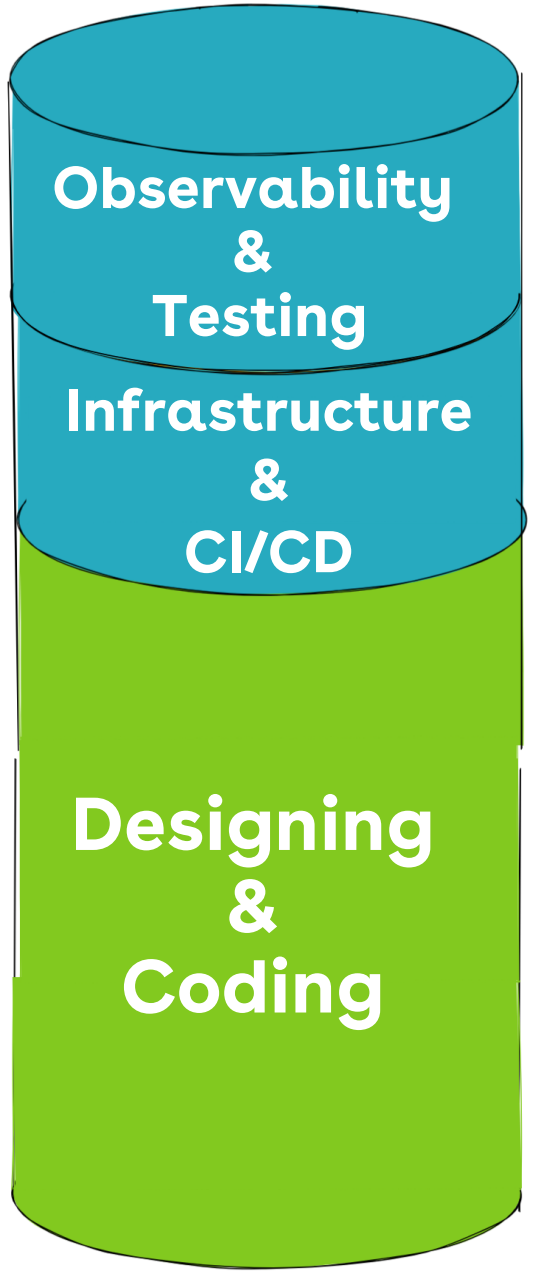
Germane





Intrinsic

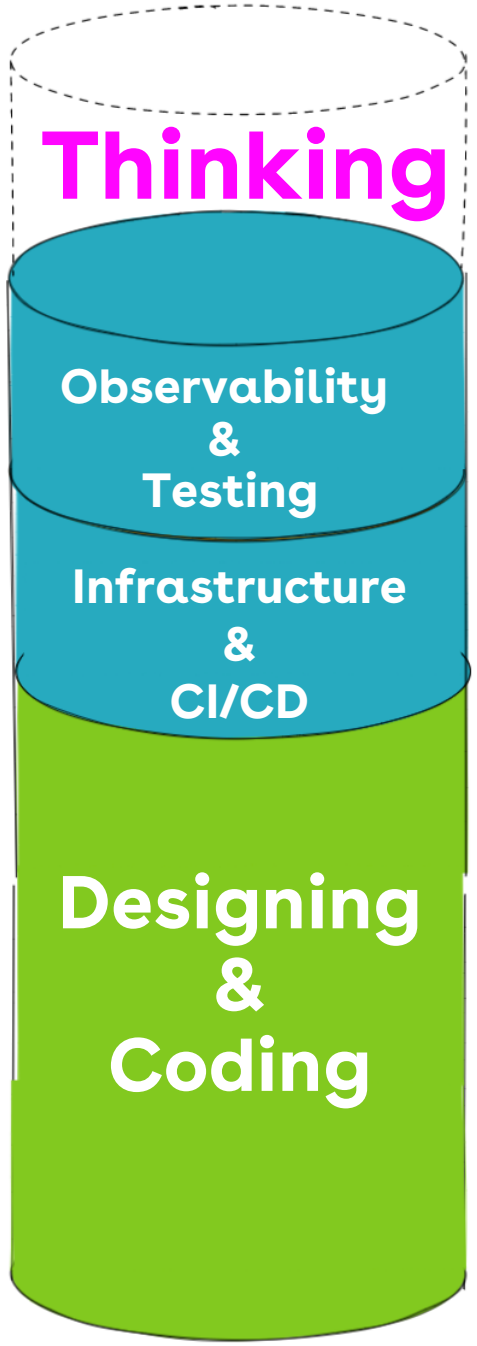
Germane



Space

Intrinsic

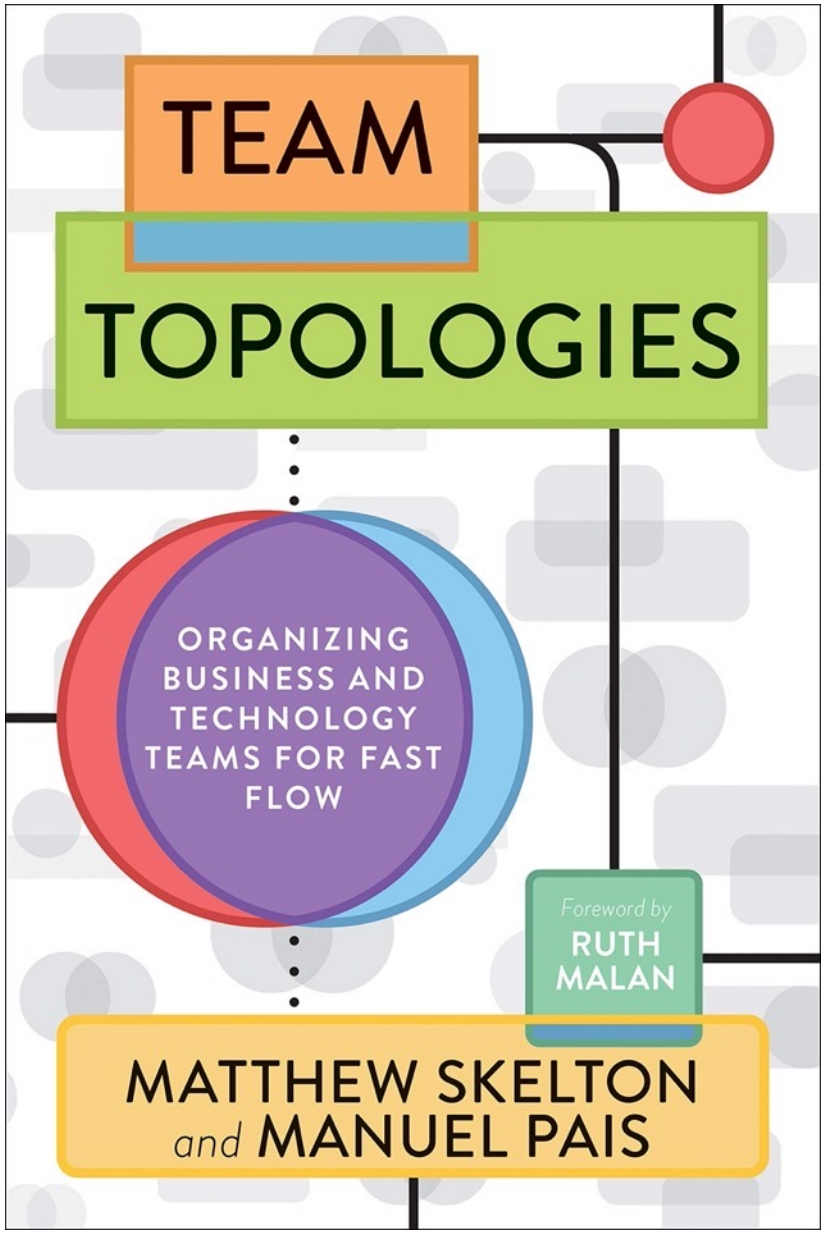
Germane



Space

Intrinsic

Germane

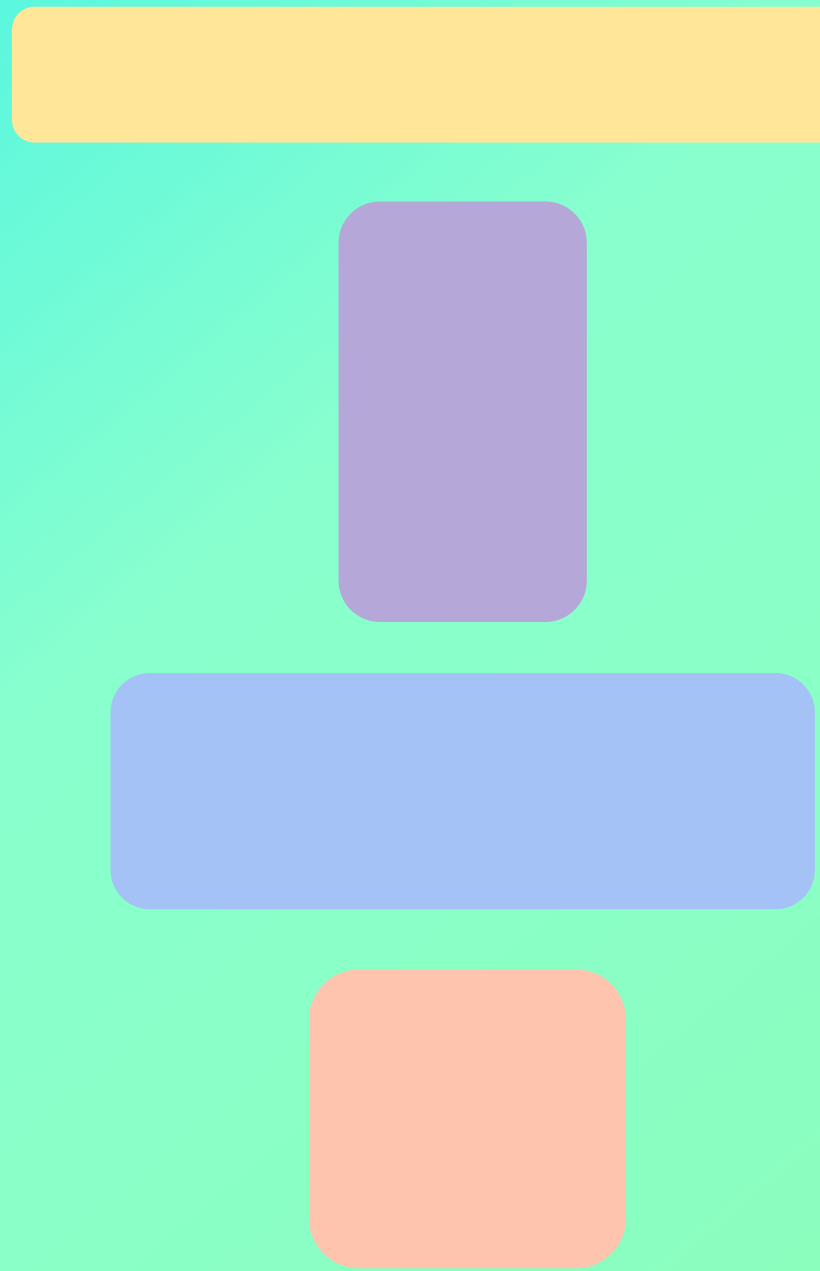

TEAM
TOPOLOGIES
ORGANIZING BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY TEAMS FOR FAST FLOW
Foreword by
RUTH MALAN
MATTHEW SKELTON
and MANUEL PAIS

Stream-aligned teams

Enabling teams

Platform teams

Complicated sub-system teams



Search

Vehicle Detail

Checkout

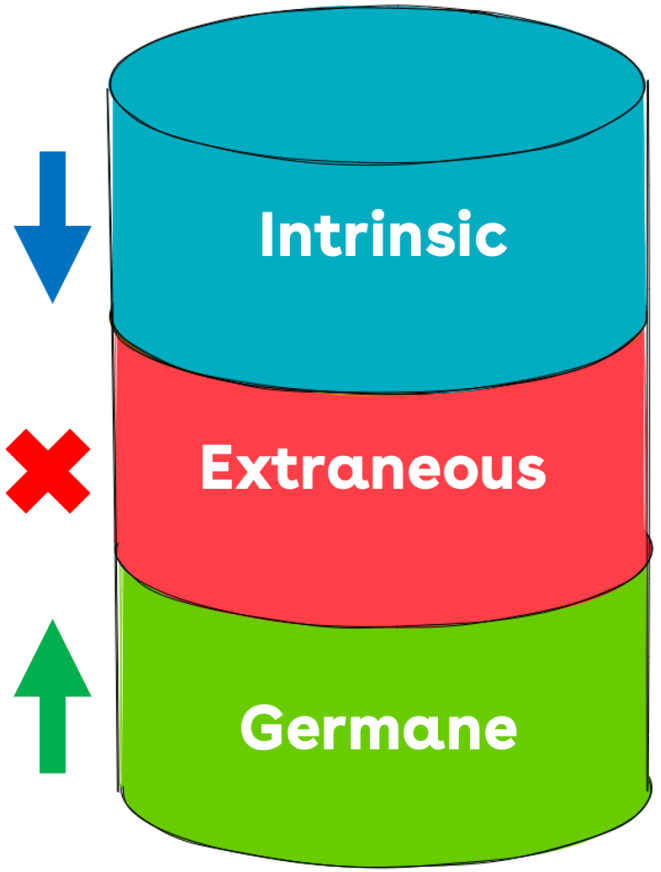
Principal Engineers

Infrastructure

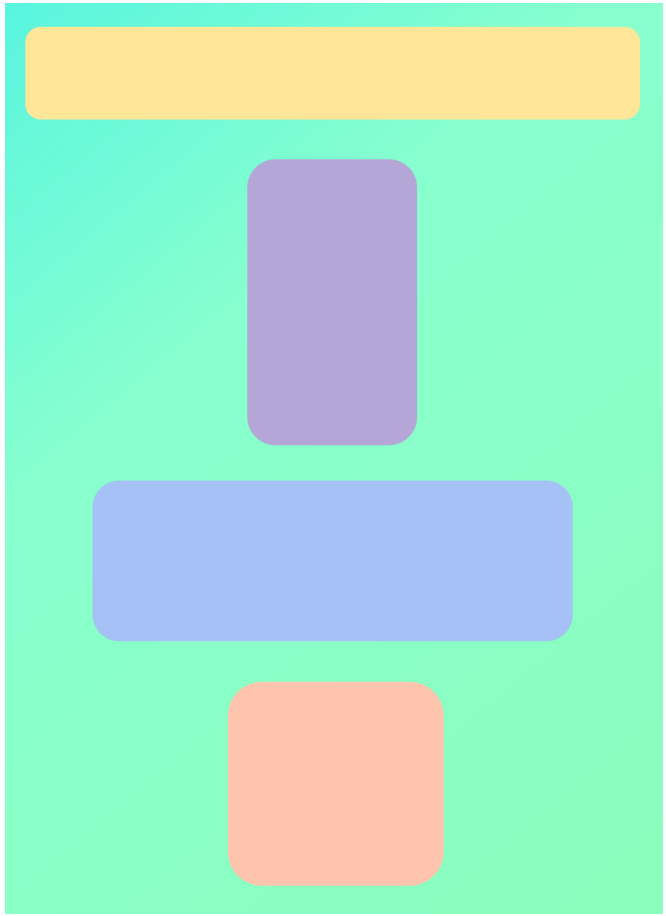
X-as-a-service

Facilitating

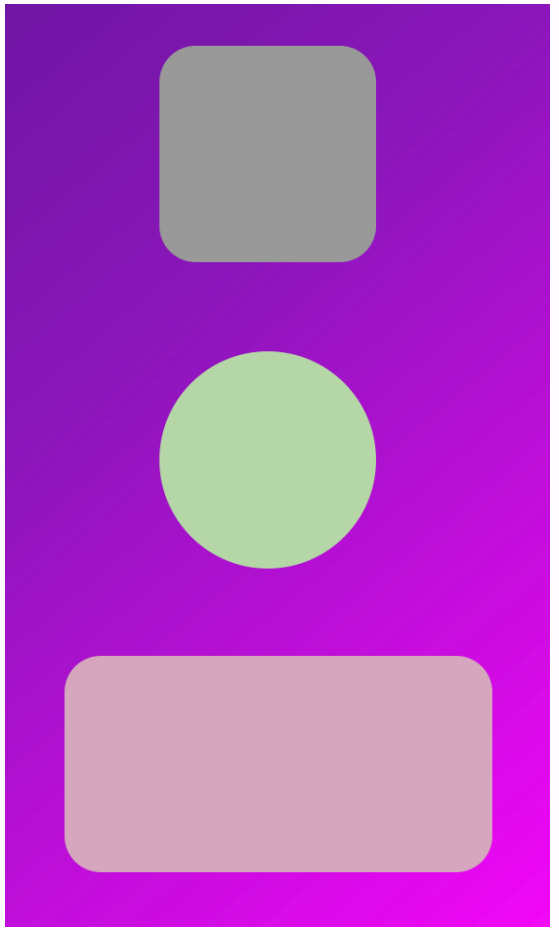
Collaboration



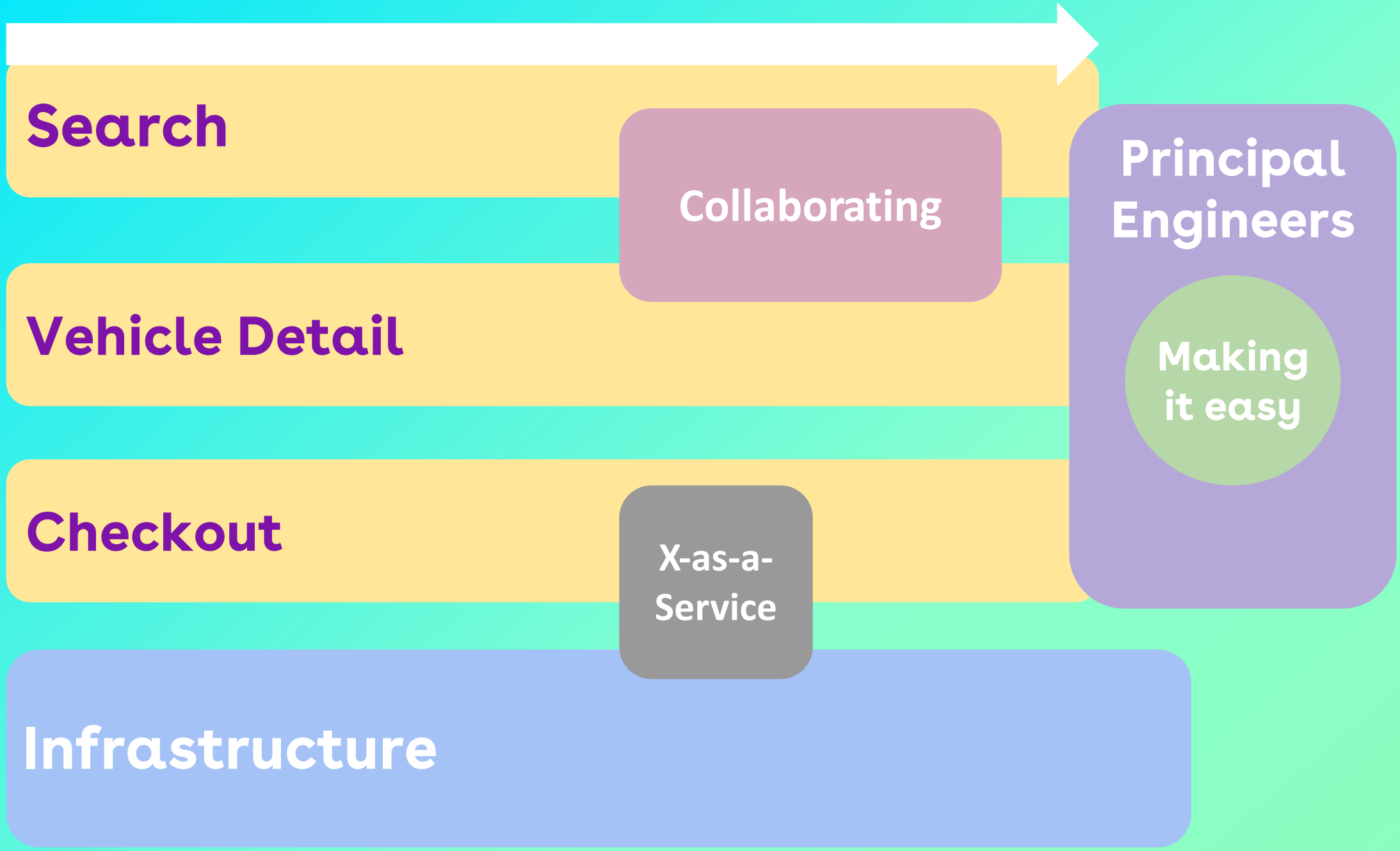
Cognitive Load

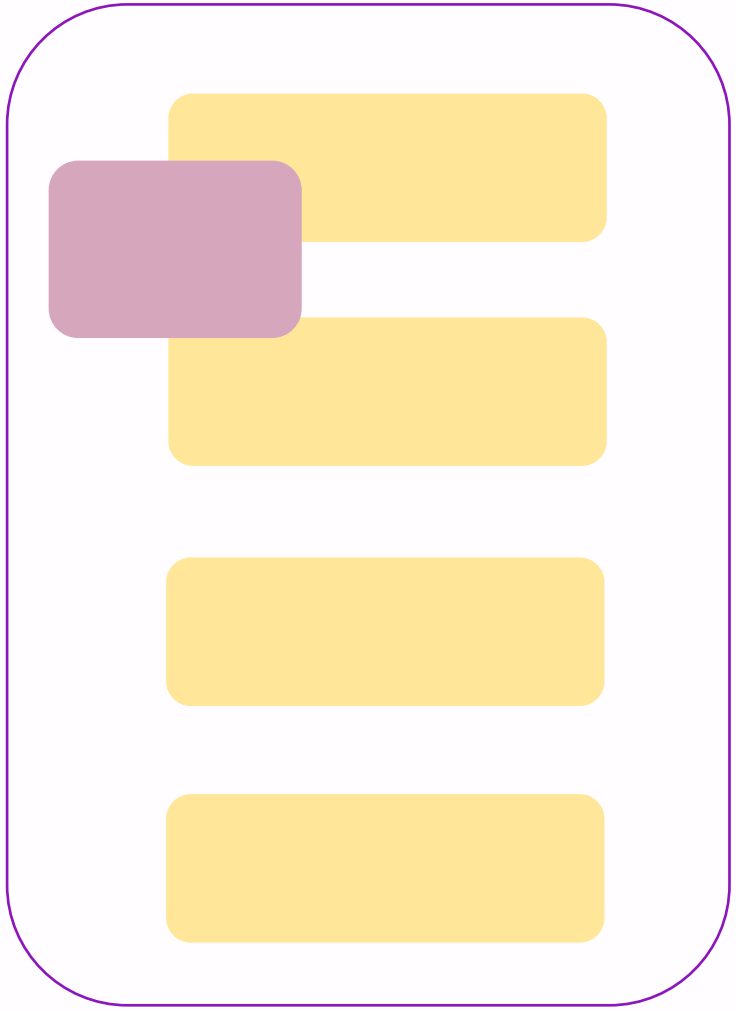
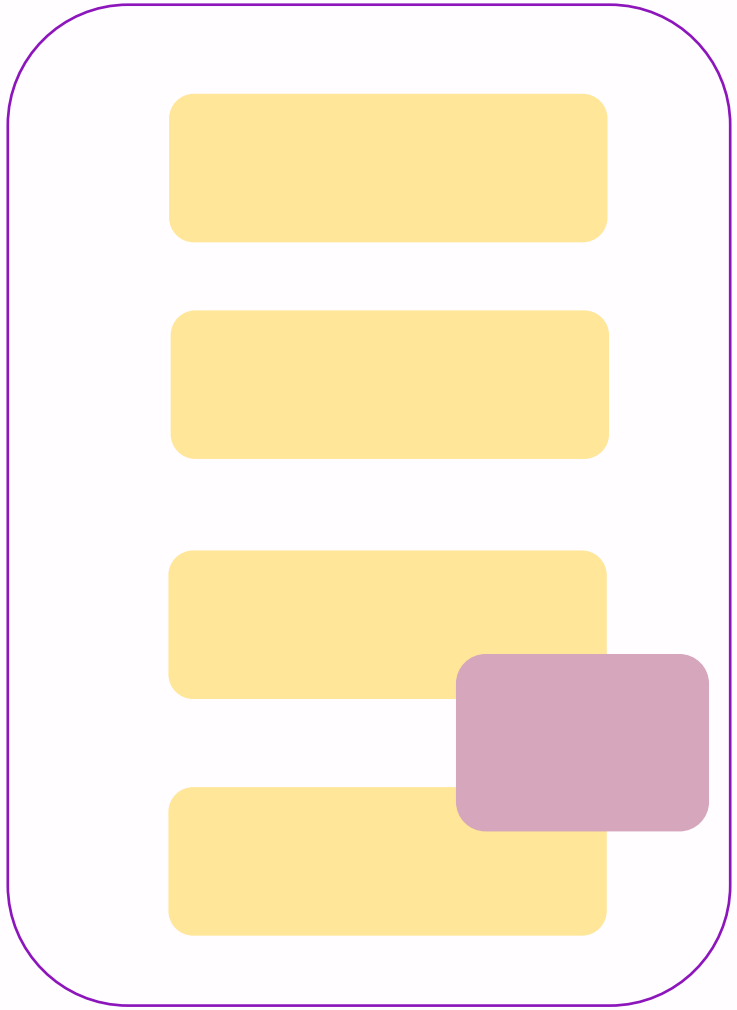
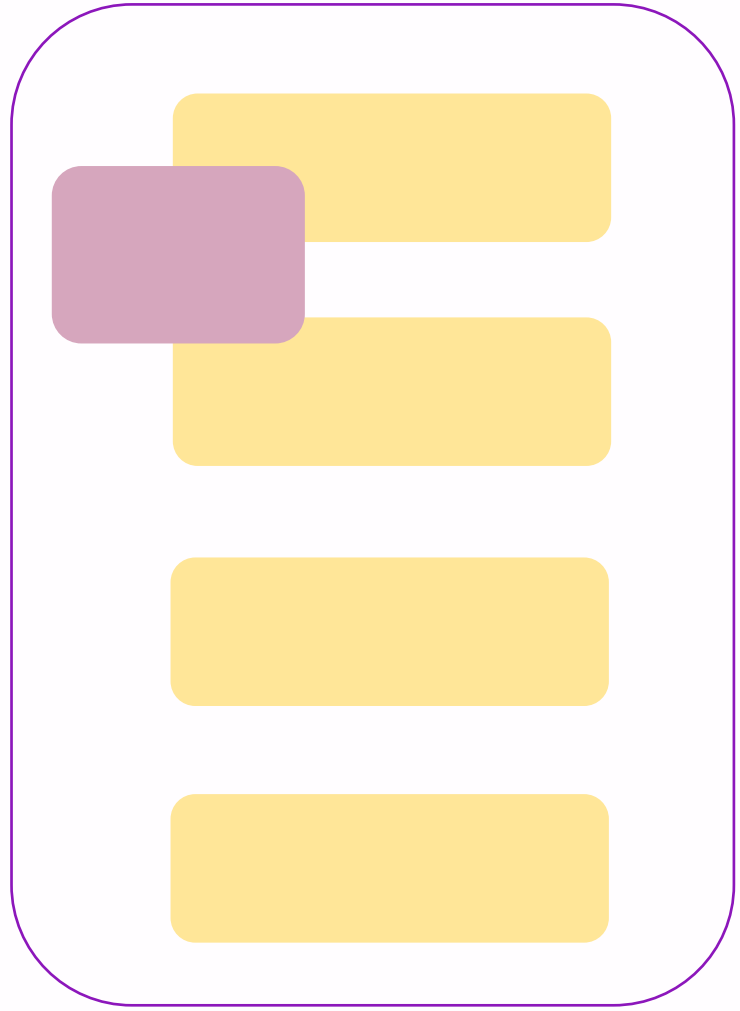


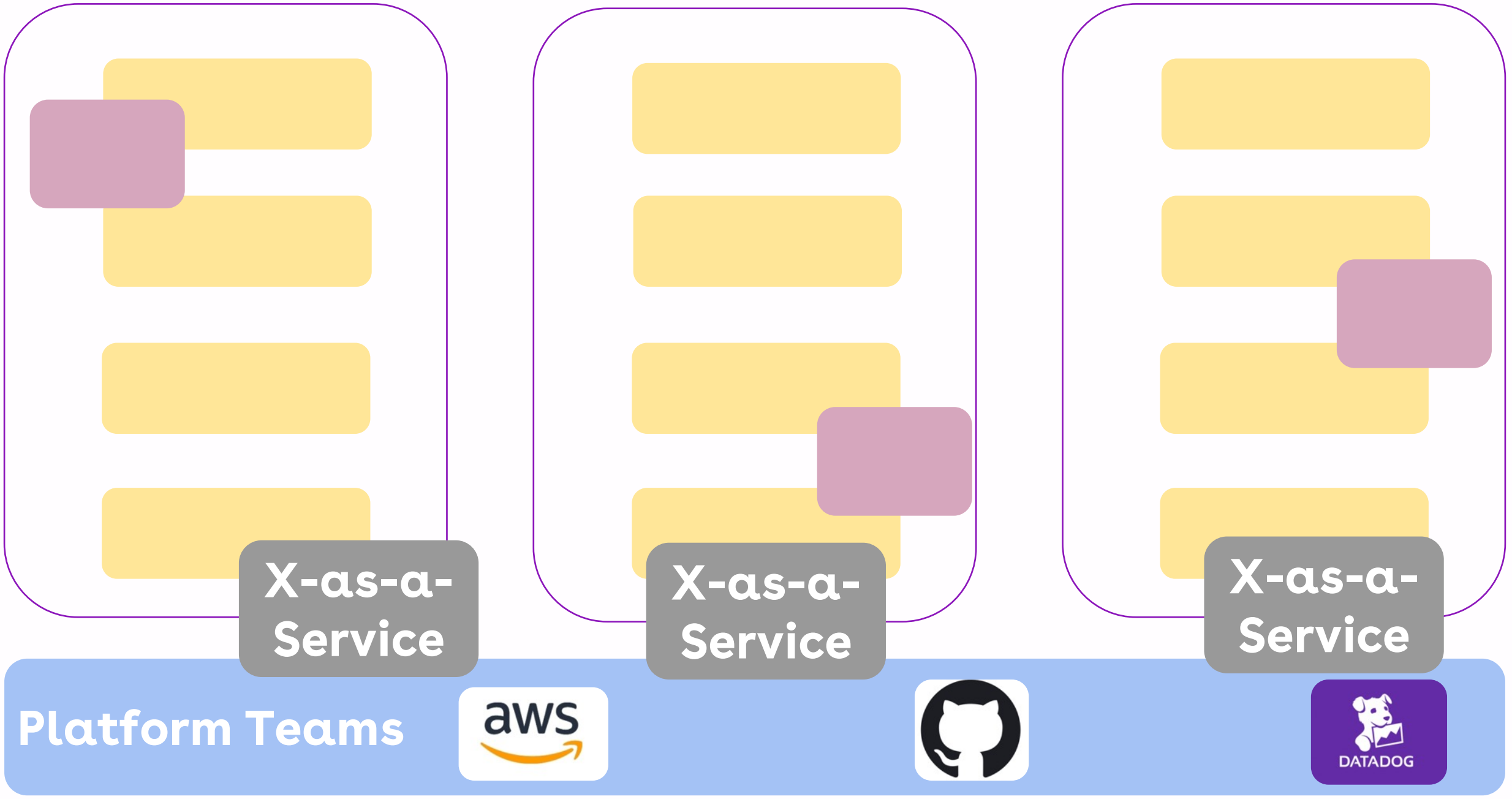
Team Types

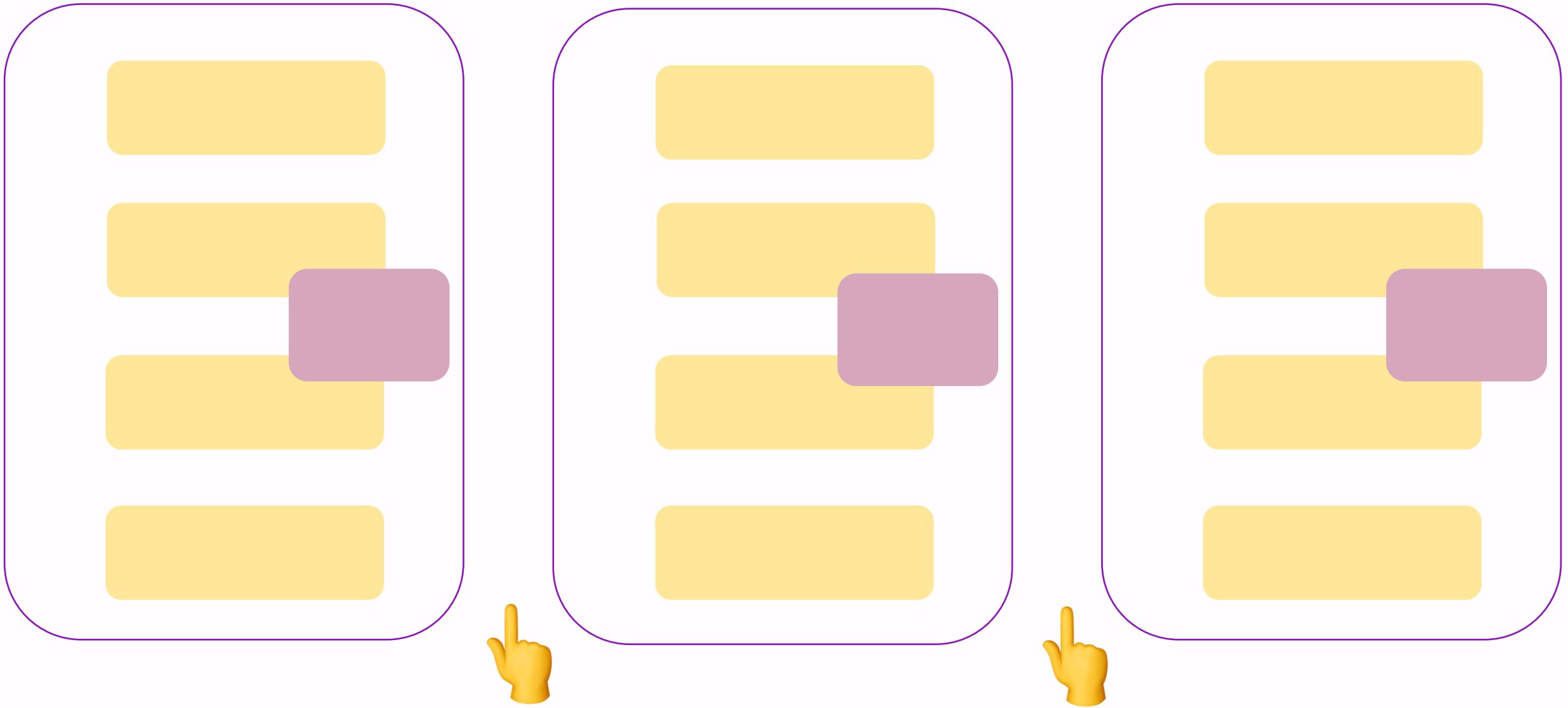


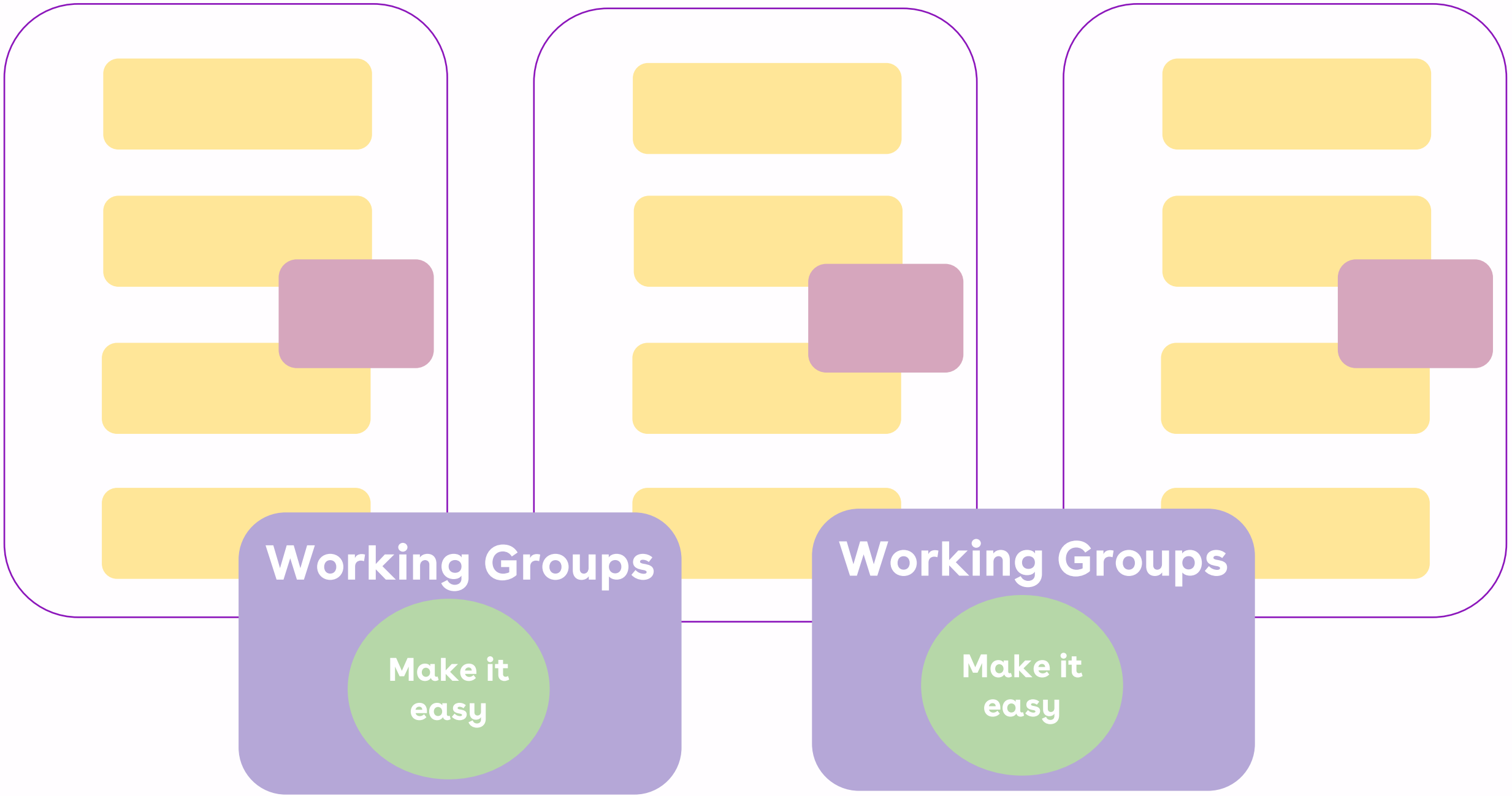
Team Collaboration Modes


Search
Vehicle Detail
Checkout
Infrastructure
Collaborating
X-as-a-Service
Principal Engineers
Making it easy


X-as-a-Service
X-as-a-Service
X-as-a-Service
Platform Teams
aws
DATADOG




Working Groups
Make it easy
Working Groups
Make it easy

Working Group API: Back-end component template

Created by Dan Haughey (Unlicensed)
Last updated: Jan 05, 2022 by Apostolis Apostolidis • 3 min read • 57 people viewed

?? Name	Back-end component template
⏳ Status	COMPLETE
👤 Owner	@Dan Haughey (Unlicensed)
💰 Sponsor(s)	@Jonnie Barnes
🎽 Team	@Apostolis Apostolidis @Paul Richards @Dan Haughey (Unlicensed) @Greg Farrow @Ben Wainwright @Nick.Keers (Unlicensed) @dharmesh.lad (Unlicensed) @john.bradshaw (Unlicensed) @Simon Scarfe
🏄 Miro Board	Working Group: Code Template
🏷️ Labels	`backend-component-template`
🕰️ Period Active	14 Jul 2021 - 30 Nov 2021
🏆 Outcome	Single backend component template was created using CDK. Template ownership is handed over to the backend guild

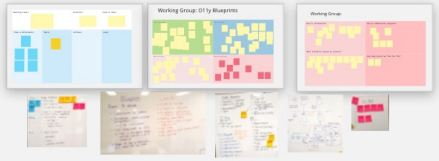
Working Group - Olly Blueprint

0. Agenda

Agenda Working Gr...

1. Set the scene

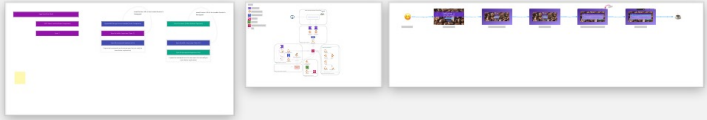
Meeting Det... Define Scope Ways of Wo...



[Work in Progress (GitHub Project board)]

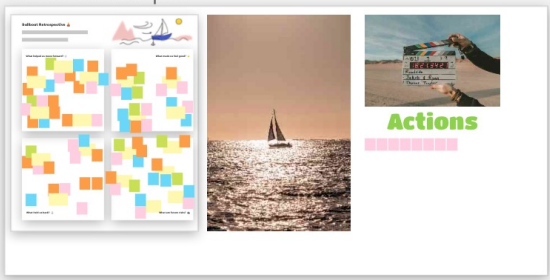
2. Architect

Linking Spans Architecture... Customer Journey



3. Wash up / Retro

Washup and Retro Sailboat Retrospe...



Working Group
API: Service
status

NOT STARTED

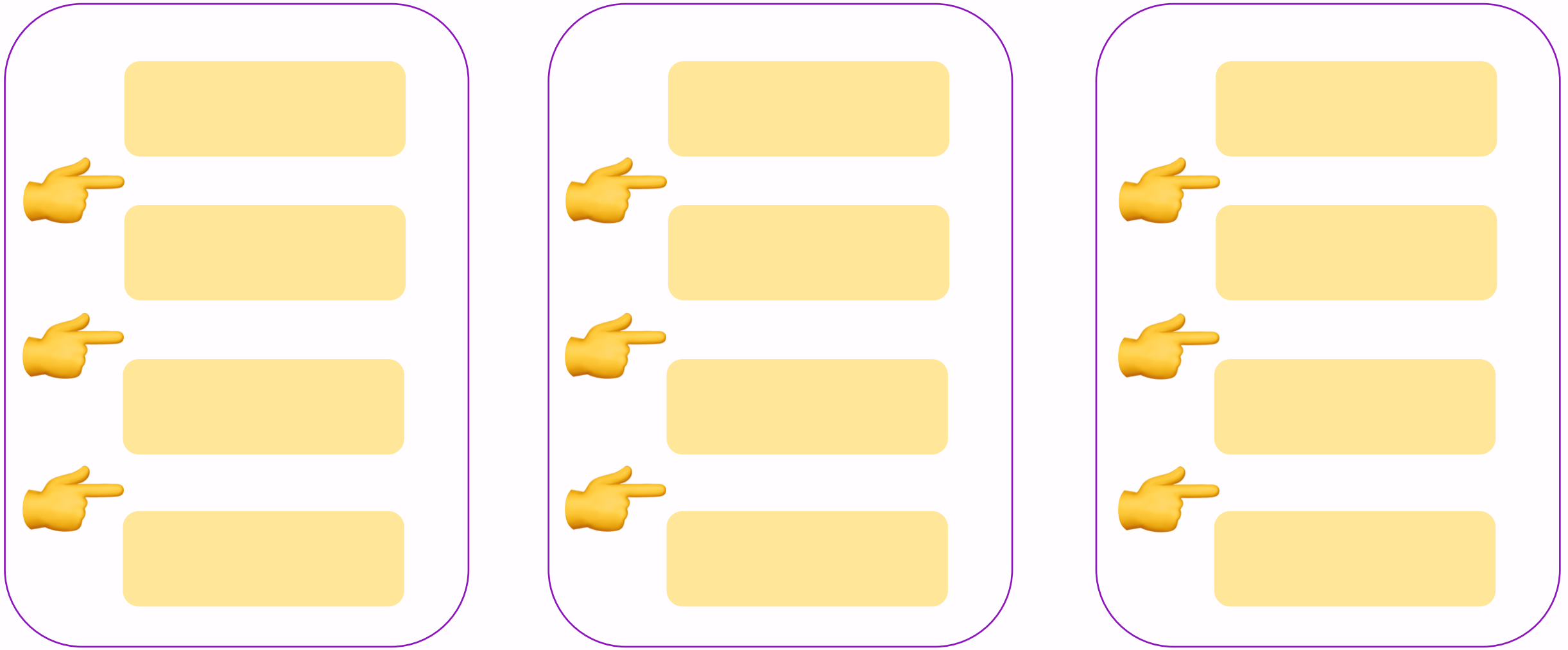
Working Group
API: Monorepo
- Vision and
Guardrails

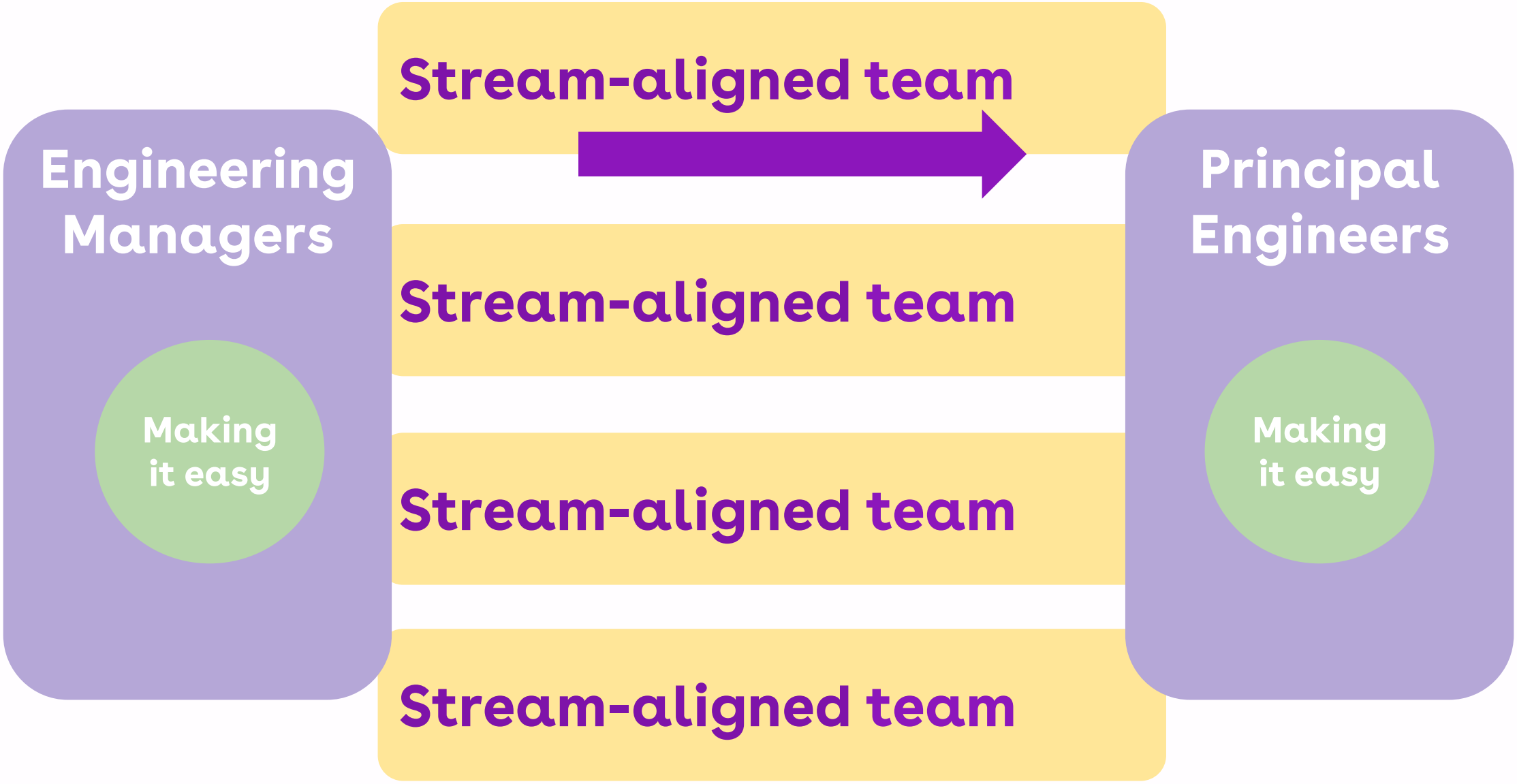
IN PROGRESS

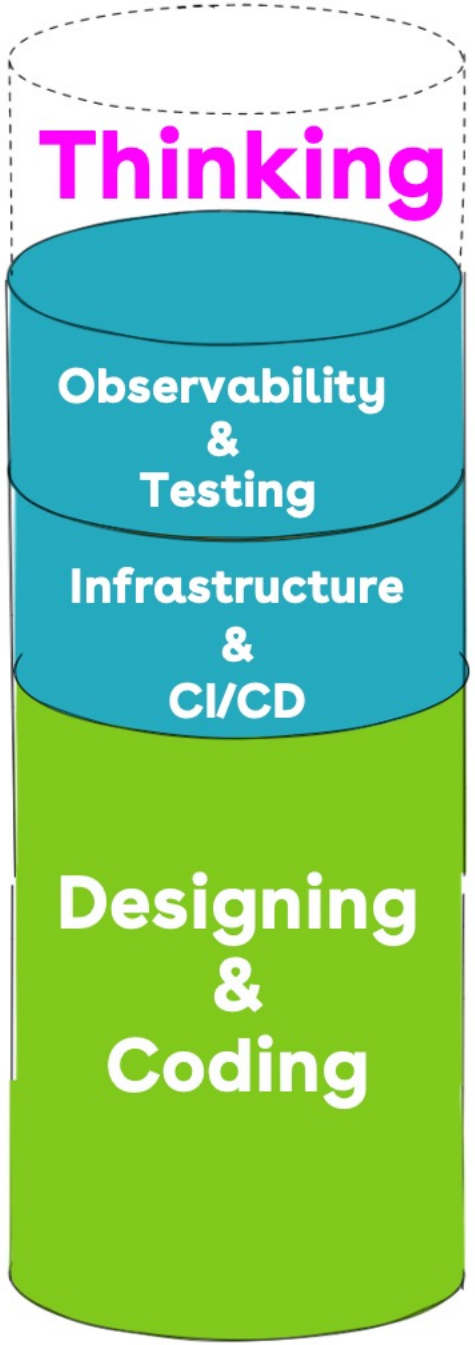
Working Group
API: internal
developer
documentation

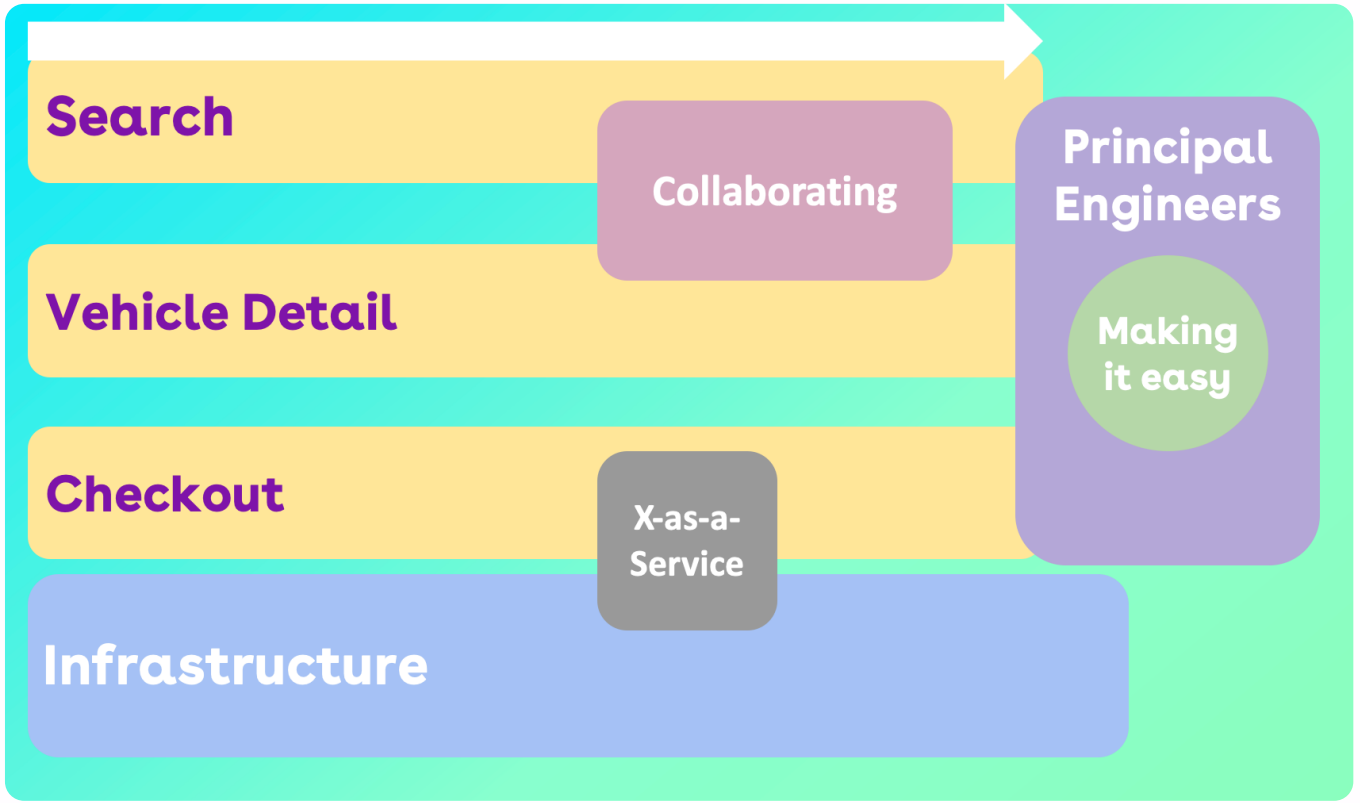
COMPLETE


I DUNNO LOL




Engineering Managers
Making it easy
Stream-aligned team
Stream-aligned team
Stream-aligned team
Stream-aligned team
Principal Engineers
Making it easy


Thinking
Observability
&
Testing
Infrastructure
&
CI/CD
Designing
&
Coding


Search
Vehicle Detail
Checkout
Infrastructure
Collaborating
X-as-a-
Service
Principal
Engineers
Making
it easy

Spike

Scale

Sustain

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Cognitive load

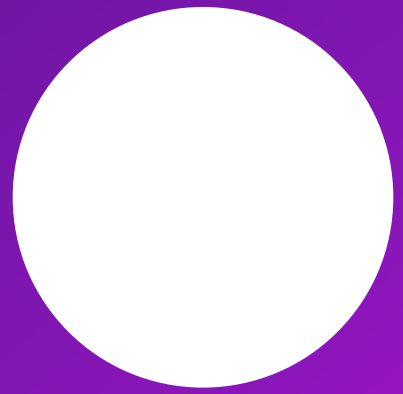
Weeks

Months

Years

Time

Sustain.



To sustain means to support.

What are you optimising for?

Focus on the gaps

Spike

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Scale

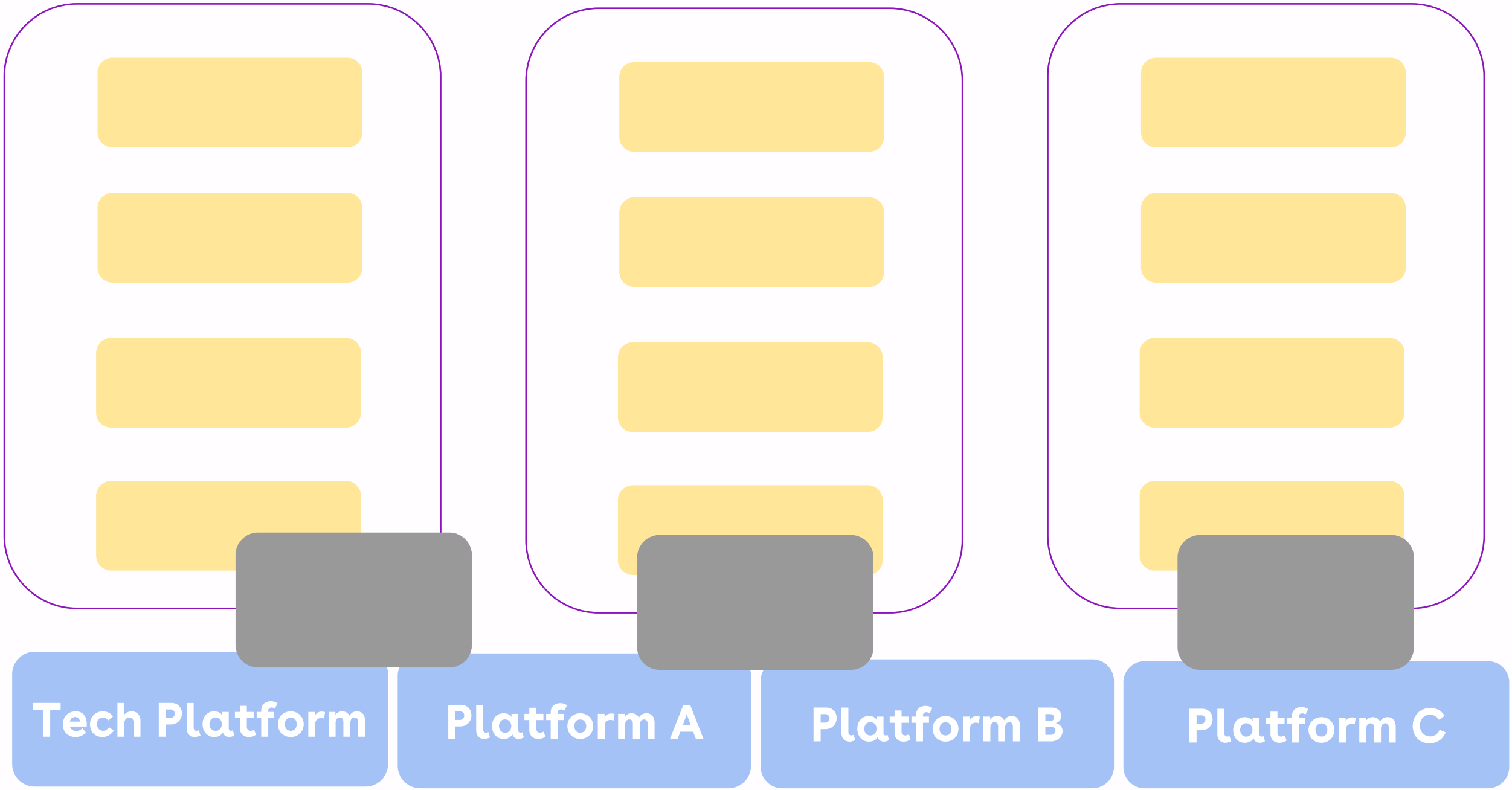
Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Cognitive load

Sustain

Better ways of working


Tech Platform
Platform A
Platform B
Platform C

Maturing our platforms

Infrastructure

Design System

Orders

Vehicle Data

Becoming knowledge stewards

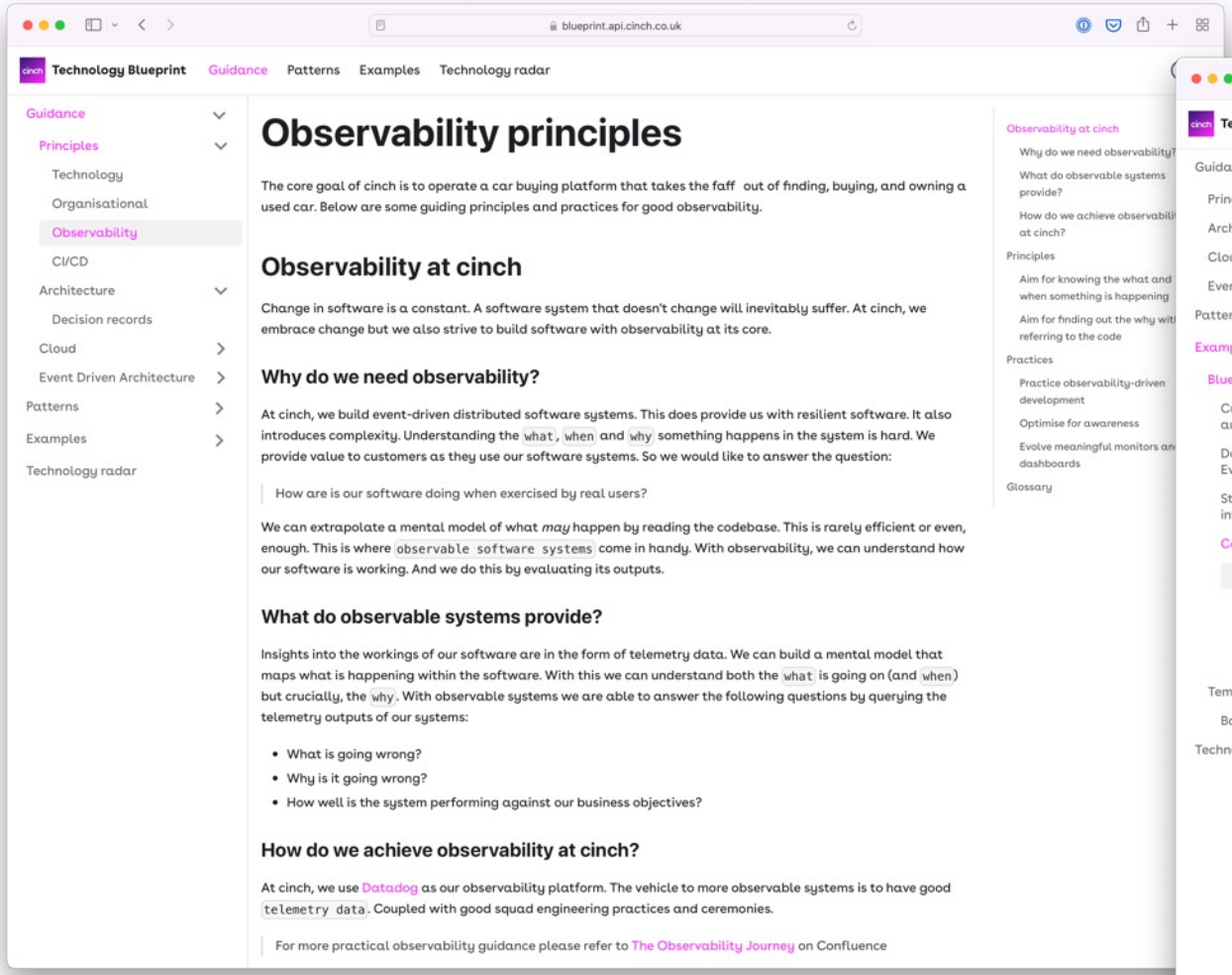
Practice → How we get better at what we do

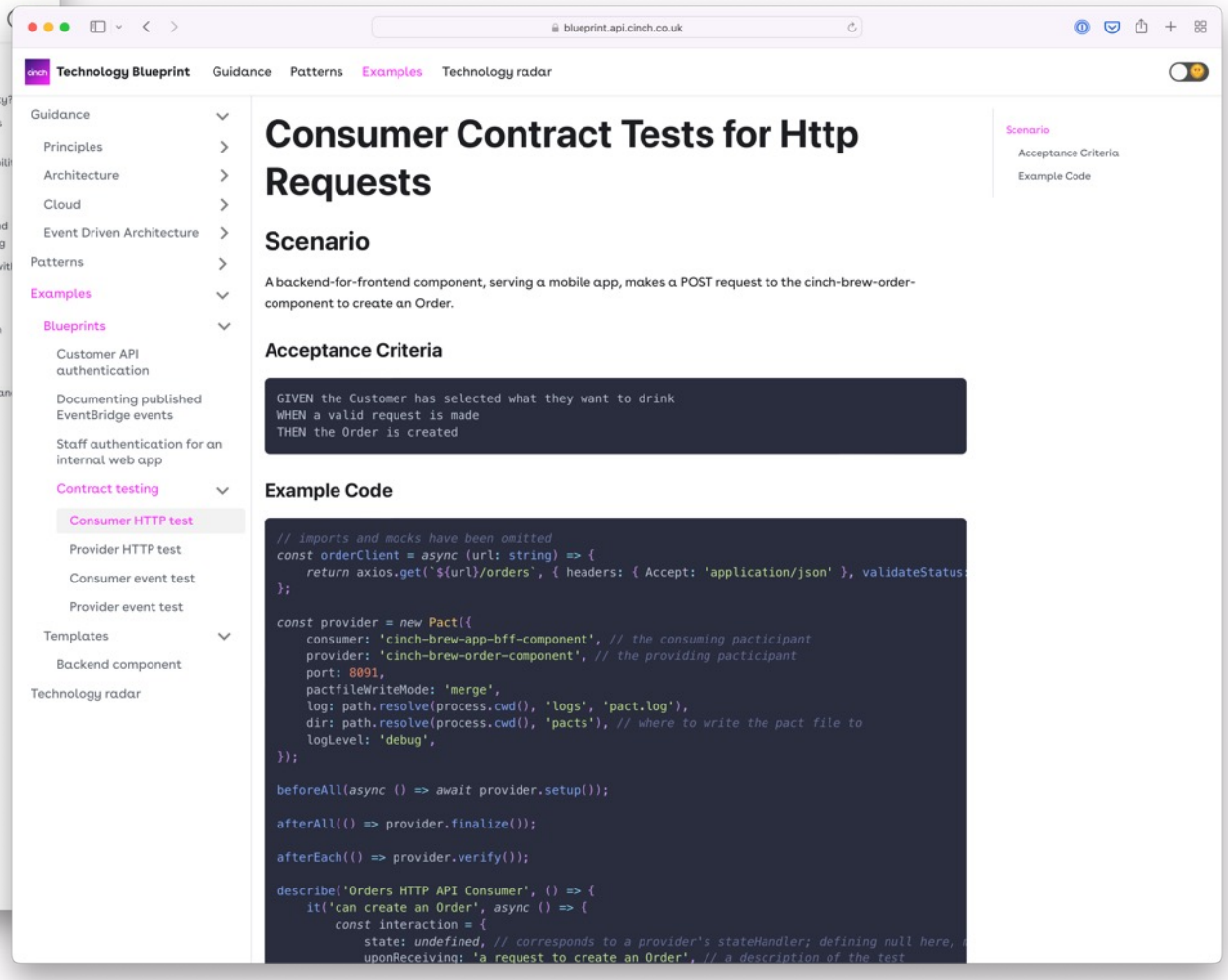
Experience → Learning from those who've been there and managing tacit knowledge

People → Cross-organisation collaboration

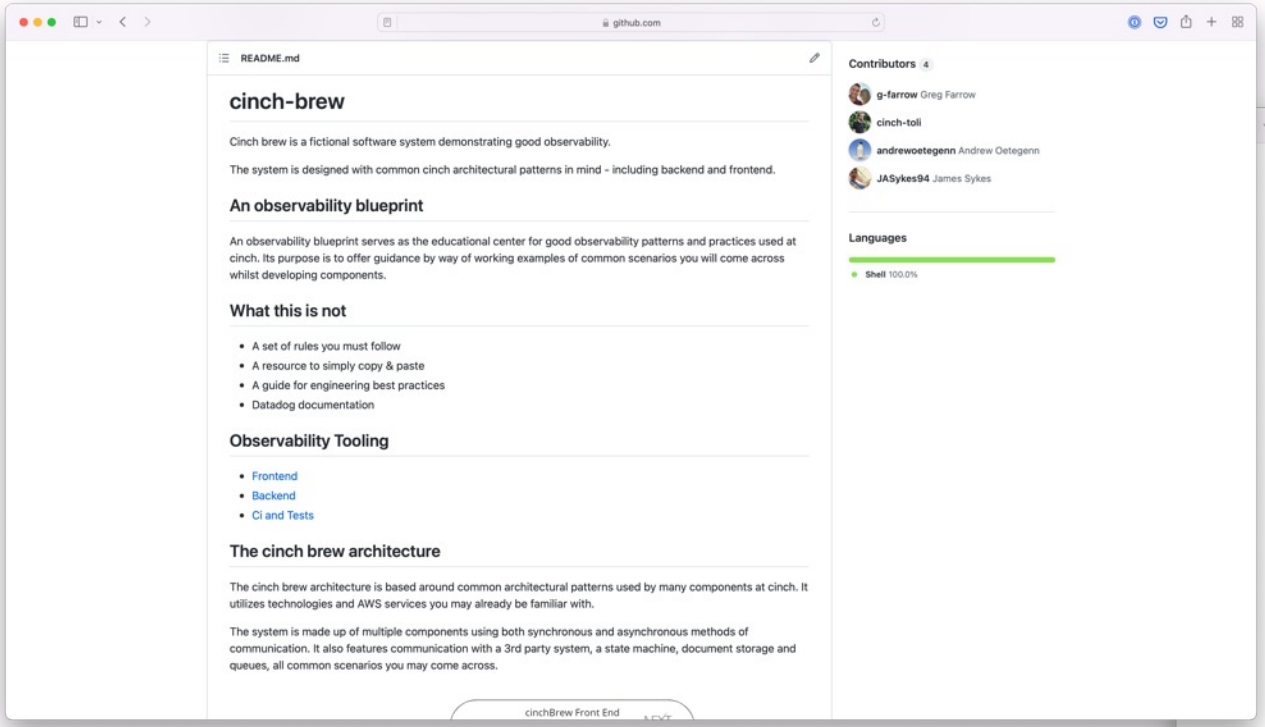
Domain → Understanding the bigger picture

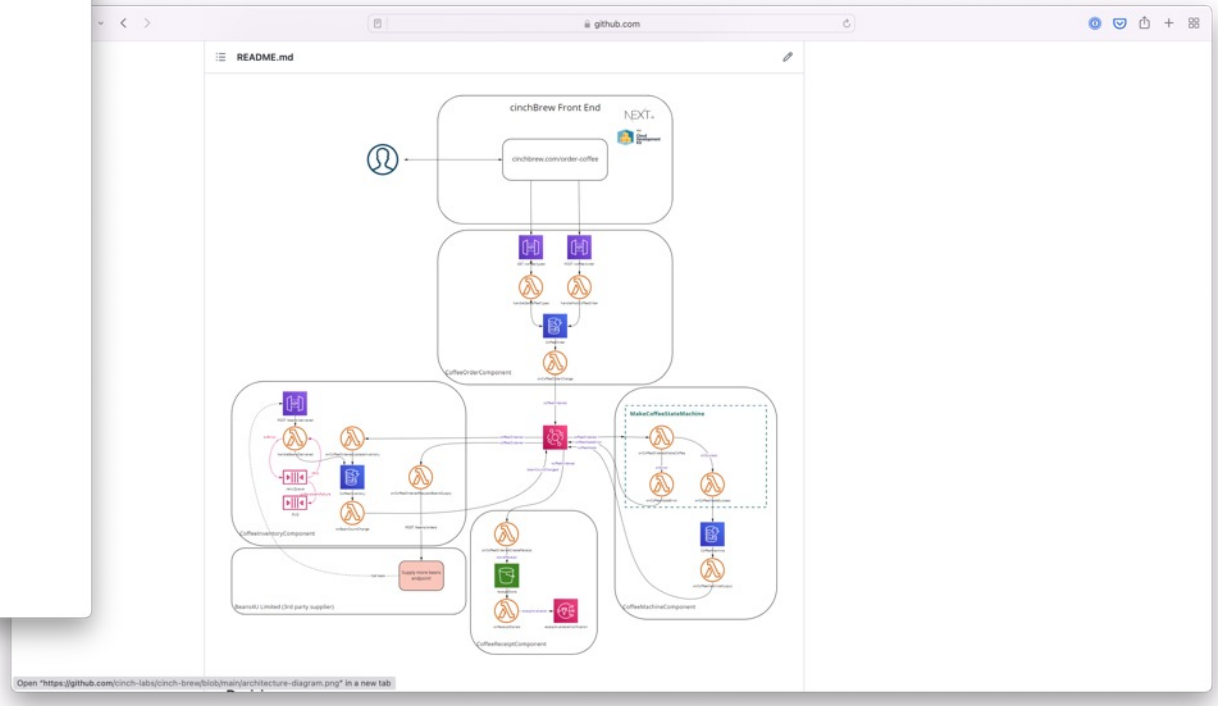
Technology Blueprint





Exemplars


github.com
README.md
cinch-brew
Cinch brew is a fictional software system demonstrating good observability.
The system is designed with common cinch architectural patterns in mind - including backend and frontend.
An observability blueprint
An observability blueprint serves as the educational center for good observability patterns and practices used at cinch. Its purpose is to offer guidance by way of working examples of common scenarios you will come across whilst developing components.
What this is not
A set of rules you must follow
A resource to simply copy & paste
A guide for engineering best practices
Datadog documentation
Observability Tooling
Frontend
Backend
Ci and Tests
The cinch brew architecture
The cinch brew architecture is based around common architectural patterns used by many components at cinch. It utilizes technologies and AWS services you may already be familiar with.
The system is made up of multiple components using both synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication. It also features communication with a 3rd party system, a state machine, document storage and queues, all common scenarios you may come across.
cinchBrew Front End
Contributors 4
g-farrow Greg Farrow
cinch-toli
andrewoetegenn Andrew Oetegenn
JASykes94 James Sykes
Languages
Shell 100.0%

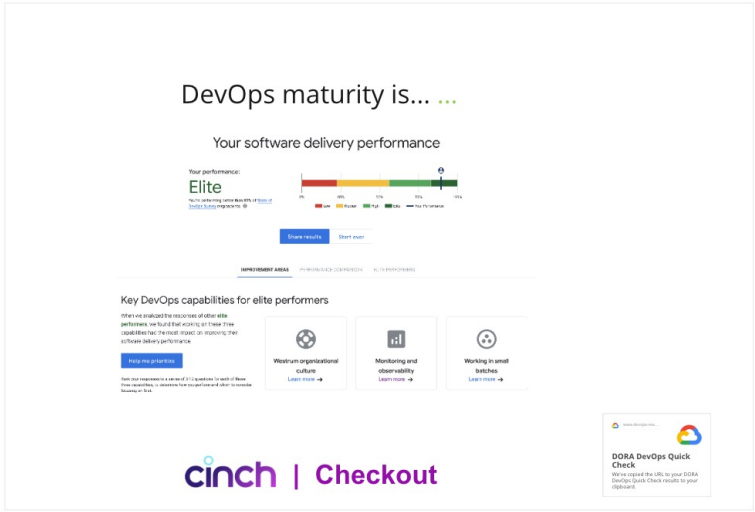

github.com
README.md
cinchBrew Front End
NEXT.
cinchbrew.com/order-coffee
Open "https://github.com/cinch-labs/cinch-brew/blob/main/architecture-diagram.png" in a new tab

DevOps Checkpoint

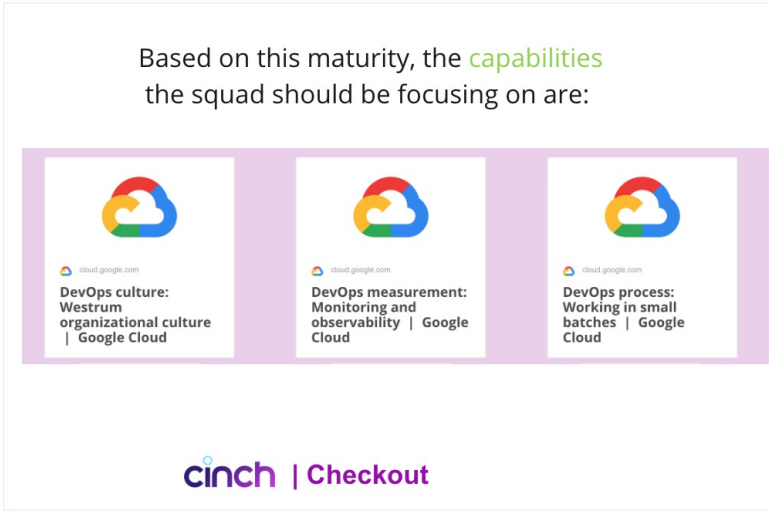
DevOps Checkpoint Summary
16 June 2022

Go to workshop

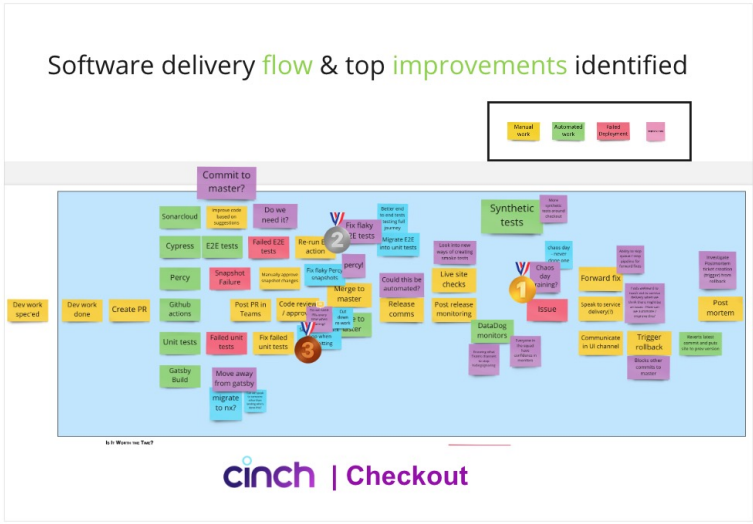
DevOps Maturity



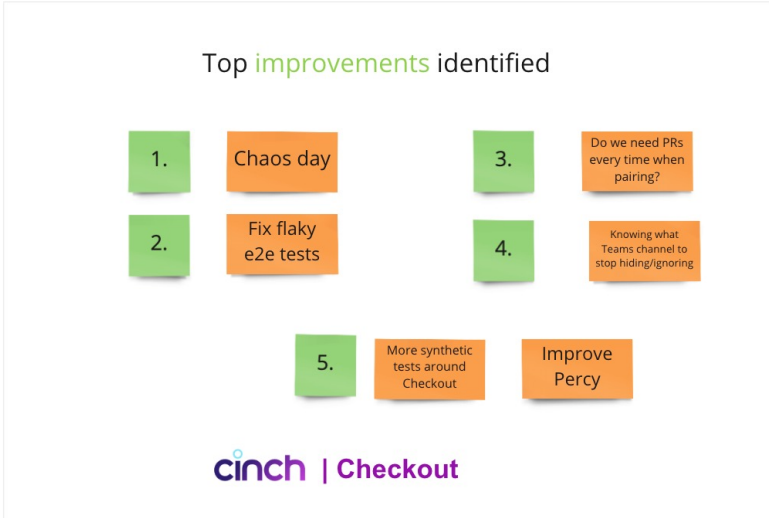
DevOps Maturity Capabilities



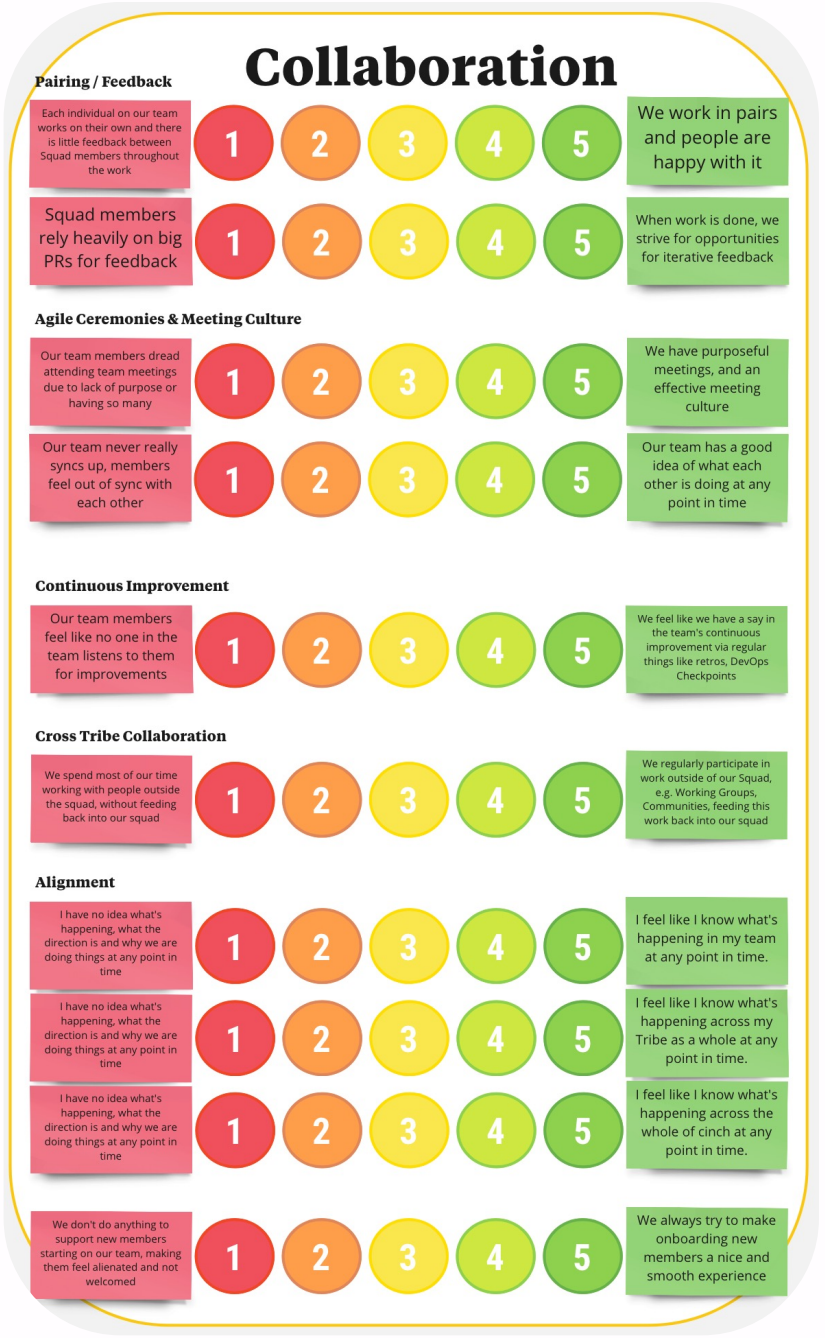
Software Delivery Flow



Top improvements



Engineering Practices Checkpoint



Practice Leads ✅

Staff Engineer ✅

Knowledge Management Lead 🙏

Technical Trainer 🙏

Spike

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Weeks

Scale

Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Cognitive load

Months

Sustain

Better ways of working

Communities

Years

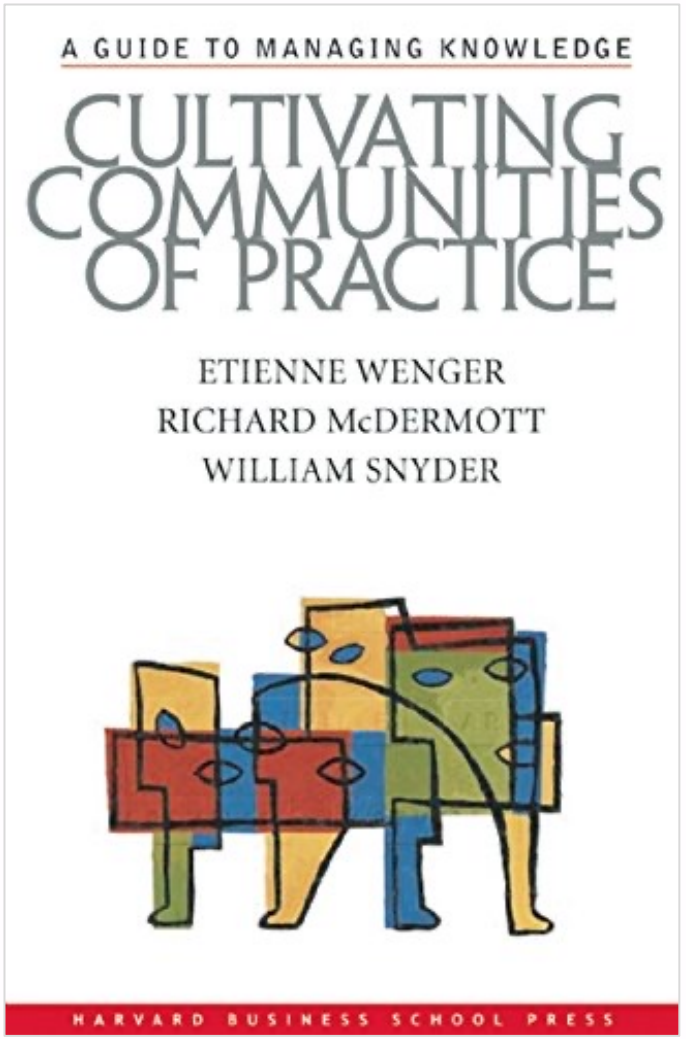
Time

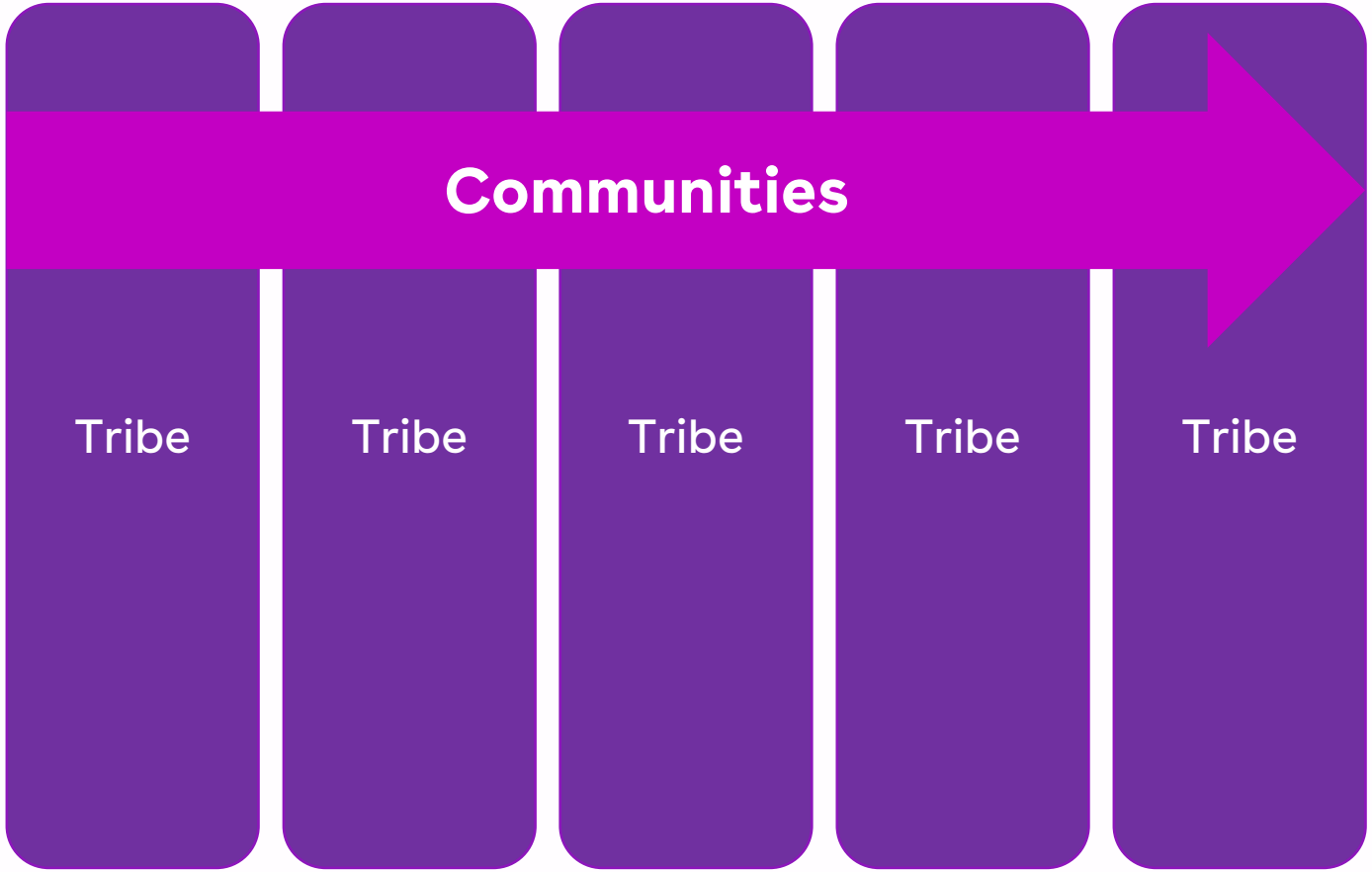

Communities are
powerful things

"Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"

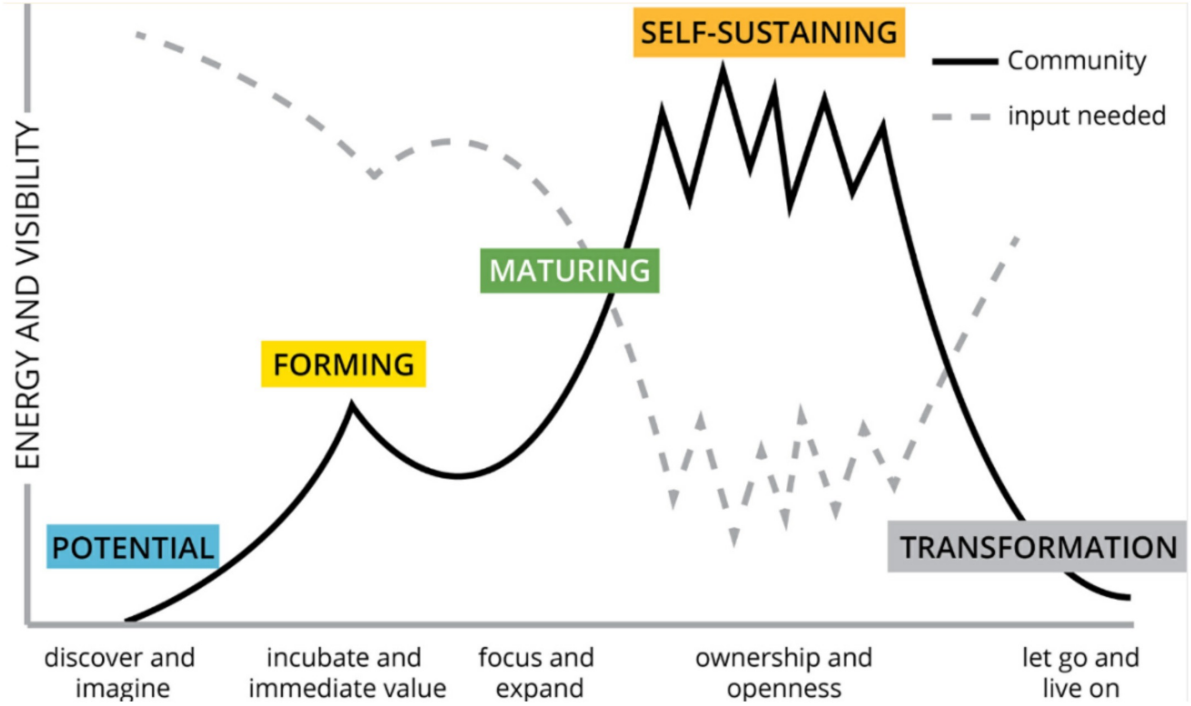
- Wenger-Trayner


BUILDING SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
Discover how connecting people makes better organisations
Emily Webber
TACIT

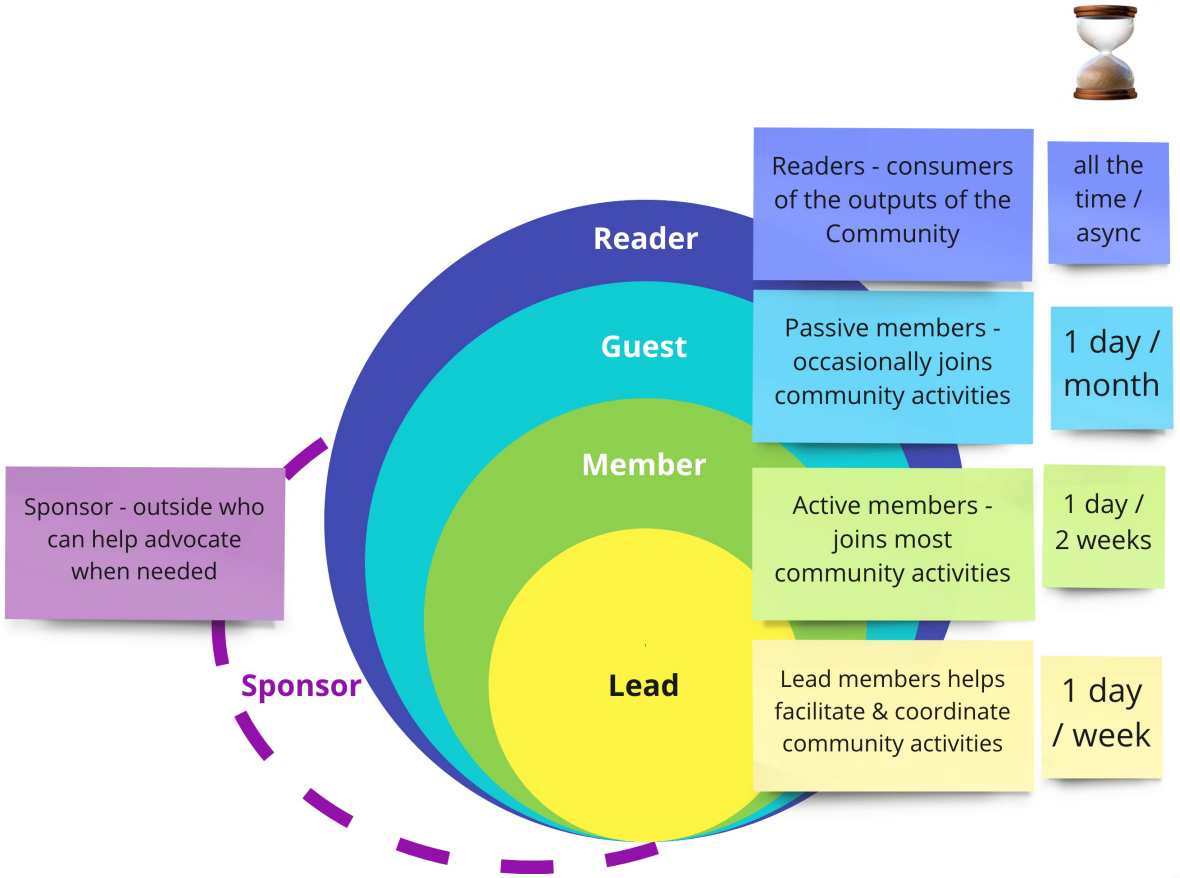

A GUIDE TO MANAGING KNOWLEDGE
CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
ETIENNE WENGER
RICHARD McDERMOTT
WILLIAM SNYDER
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS

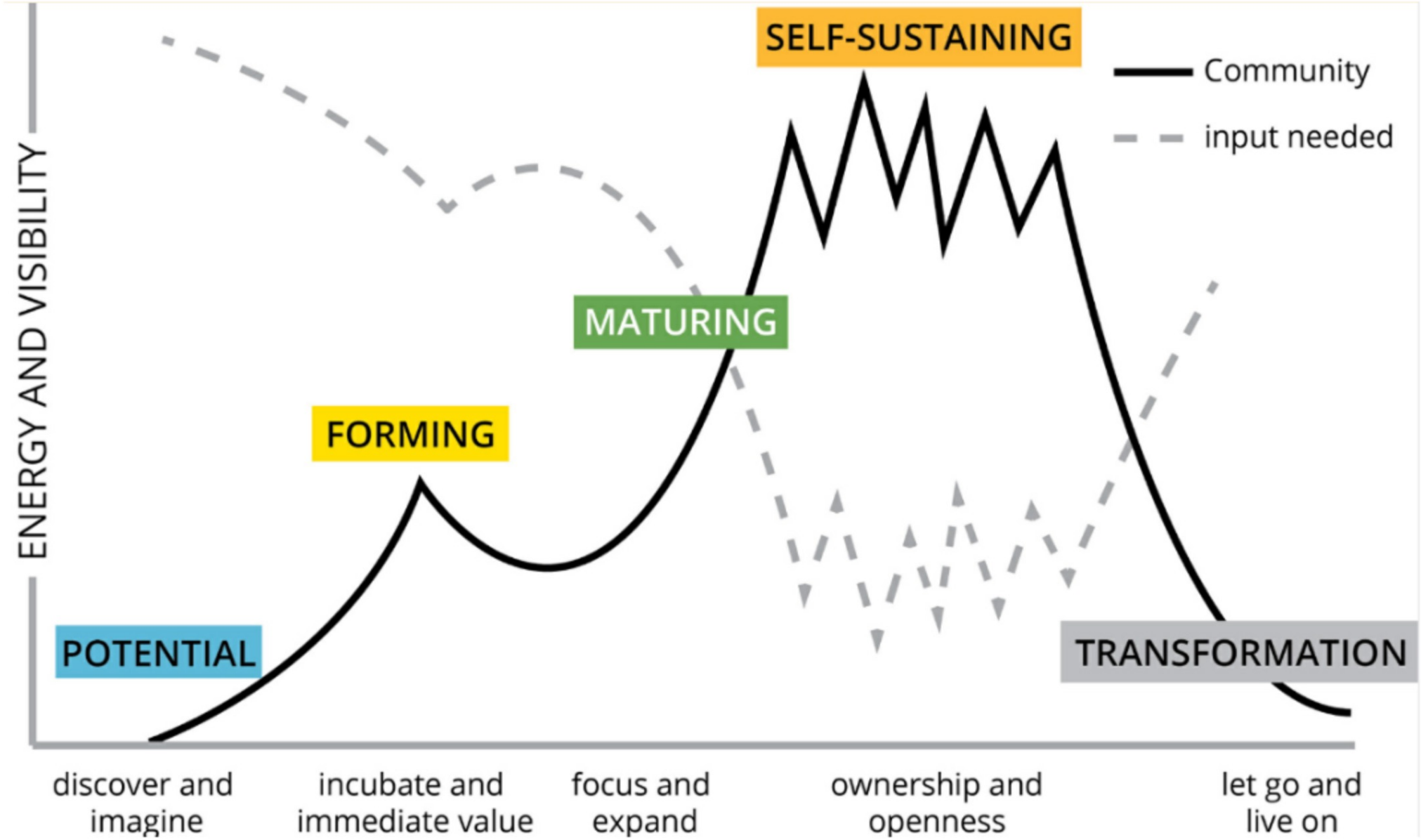

Communities
Tribe
Tribe
Tribe
Tribe
Tribe


Communities
Silos

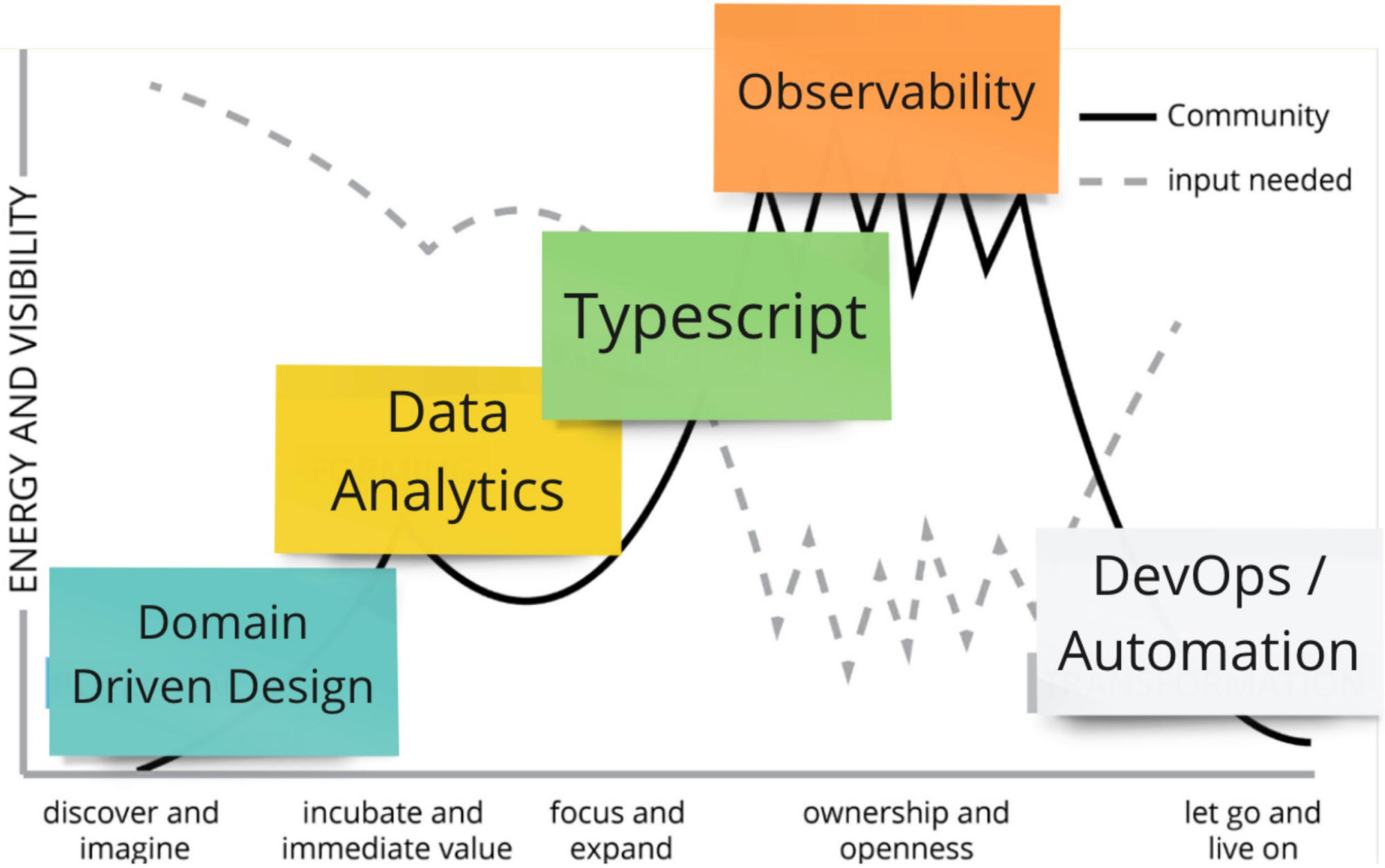


Emily Webber - https://hellotacit.com





Emily Webber - https://hellotacit.com



Emily Webber -
https://hellotacit.com

Blogging culture

cinch.blogin.co

cinch

Megan John
Software Engineer

Mar 28, 2022 (08:19)

Meg's Mumbles - My Start At Cinch

In General Topics · 5 min · 12 · 46 · 19 · 0 · Follow

I thought I'd add some insight to starting from Square 1 and my first week at cinch.

But first, an introduction to me.

I'm Megan. Or Meg. Or MJ. I don't really mind. I began my journey with cinch last week (21/03/2022) after graduating from a physics degree and then a first job which unfortunately was not a good fit - it happens. My specialities in my physics degree delved into astro and space physics. From a young age I have been really intrigued by the workings of outside of Earth and so decided a physics degree was the thing for me. And it was amazing. I fell further in love with the planets that spin alongside us and how things came to be. But I fell in love with something new too. Coding.

Oh hi there

Nasa Image of Jupiter with its polar aurora visible

Through lab experiments and analysing the data received and moving into my dissertation on Jupiter's ionosphere (which I will happily go into depths of if anyone is interested), I found a passion for making things work through a computer and so came to a crossroads in my choices after completing my Bachelors degree. Continue being an astrophysicist or become a software engineer. I think you can predict which I

cinch.blogin.co

cinch

Apostolis Apostolidis
Principal Practice Engineer

Mar 22, 2022 (10:19)

Autonomy of Schedule

2 min · 4 · 34 · Edit · 9 · 0 · Follow

ve what you would call in Team-Topologies-speak, a number of **stream-**
s called *squads*. Squads are the unit of software delivery at cinch. As we have
e established other team types:

Groups

nities (of Practice or Interest)

lubs (The DevOps Handbook Book Club)

not why

t about the purpose of all team types, but the 'how' of working outside
belong to a squad or a tribe, that is your core membership. You have made a
o the people in your squad or tribe, and they take priority over other

ean that you can't participate in things outside the squad. In fact, we
to do so, but it is vital that you:

ings visible

nicate with your core membership - your squad

cinch.blogin.co

cinch

Katie Raby
Software Engineer

Apr 4, 2022 (12:56)

e-con 2022 Digital Accessibility Conference

In Events · 8 min · 0 · 22 · 6 · 0 · Follow

axe-con?

a free, open and inclusive digital accessibility (a11y for short) conference held
The conference focuses around building, testing, and maintaining accessible
riences. axe-con is suitable for developers, designers, business users, and
professionals of all experience levels.

e live-streamed the axe-con sessions in the Manchester office (with lots of
cks - shout out to the sour cream & onion Pringles). We connected with
ested in a11y at cinch, and had fun debating the topics we were watching in

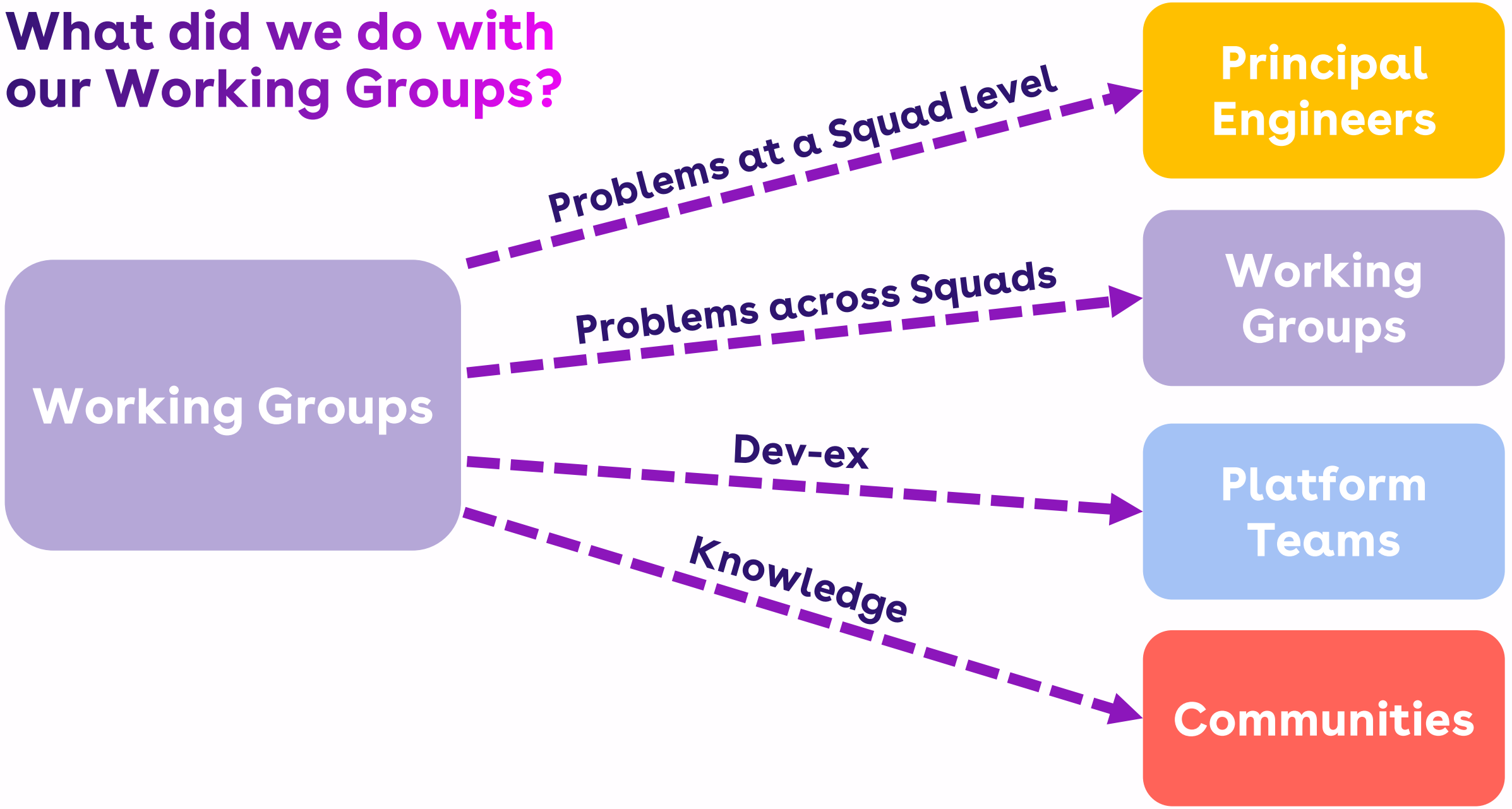
eaways from a few talks we watched

ng

emove semantic meaning

Style Sheets (CSS) is what's used to give websites life and to make them look
ever, to quote a phrase from a legendary Marvel movie:

What did we do with our Working Groups?



Spike

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Weeks

Scale

Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Cognitive load

Months

Sustain

Better ways of working

Communities

Years

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Cognitive load

Months

Sustain

Better ways of working

Communities

Observability

Years

Time

Observability is the ability to understand how a software system is behaving internally by evaluating its outputs.

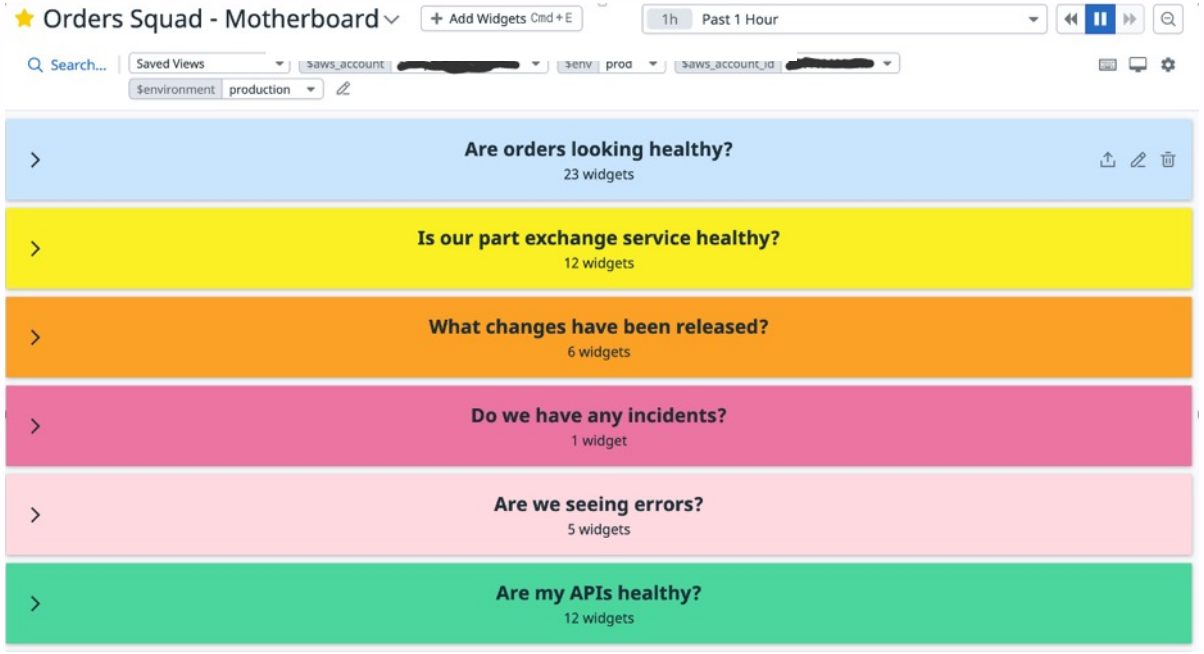
What do we mean by this?

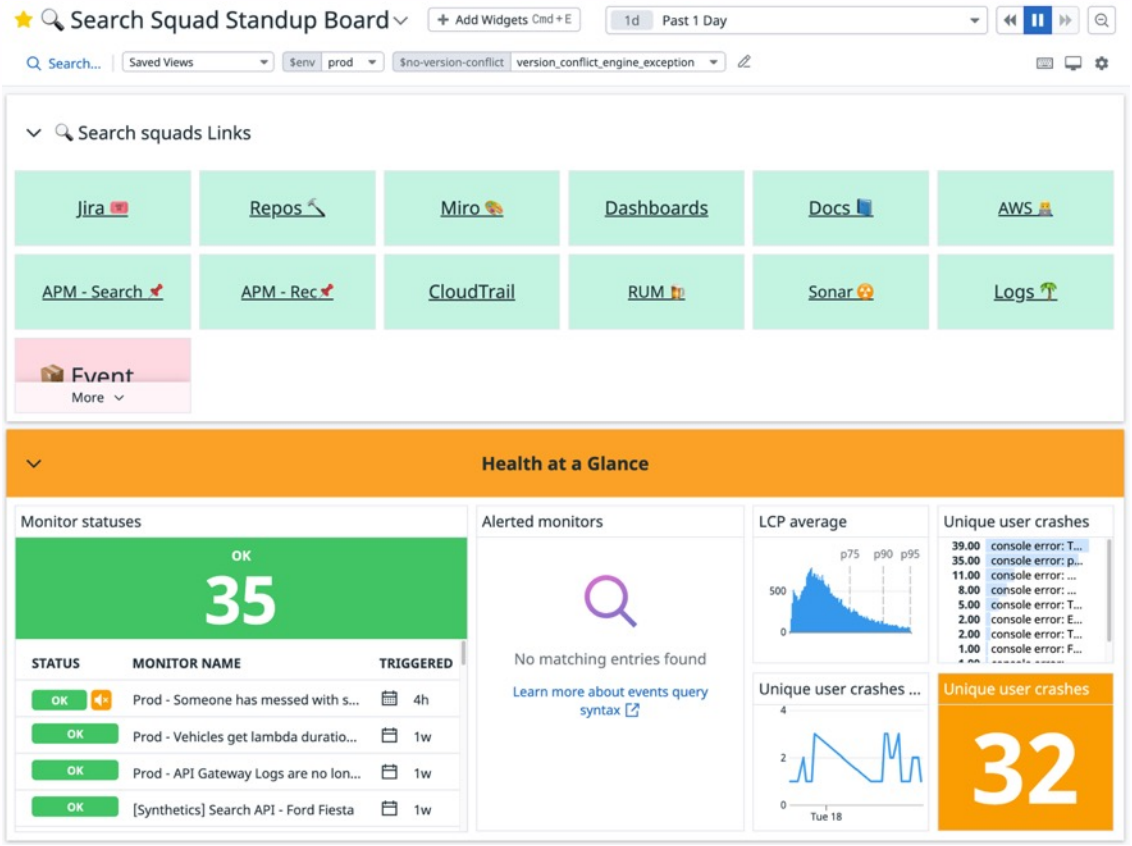
Are the business transactions we think are happening, actually happening?

Observe what we care about, as a business, as a provider of services to a customer

What's our appetite for risk? If we've got good olly practices we should know when it breaks, don't avoid deploying

Working on the (virtual) walls





Spike

Getting stuff live

Conway's Law

Discover constraints

Weeks

Scale

Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

Cognitive load

Months

Sustain

Better ways of working

Communities

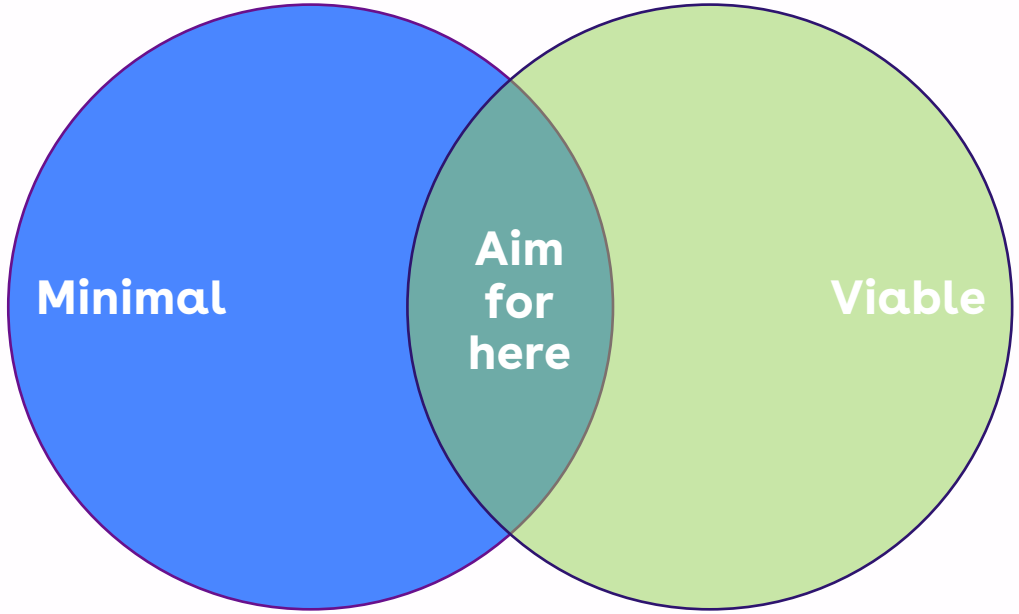
Observability

Years

Time

In summary

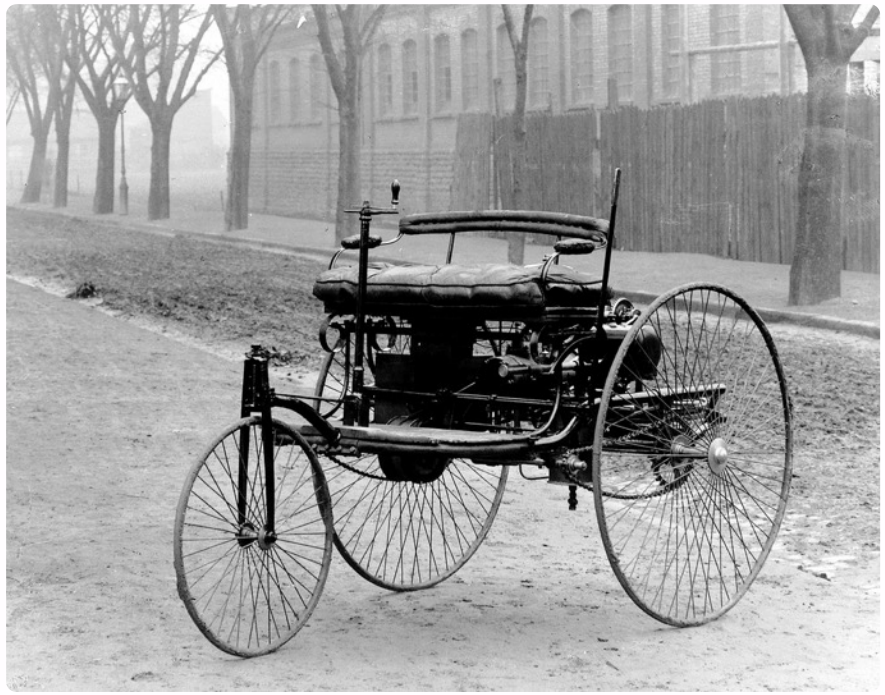
Minimal viable everything.

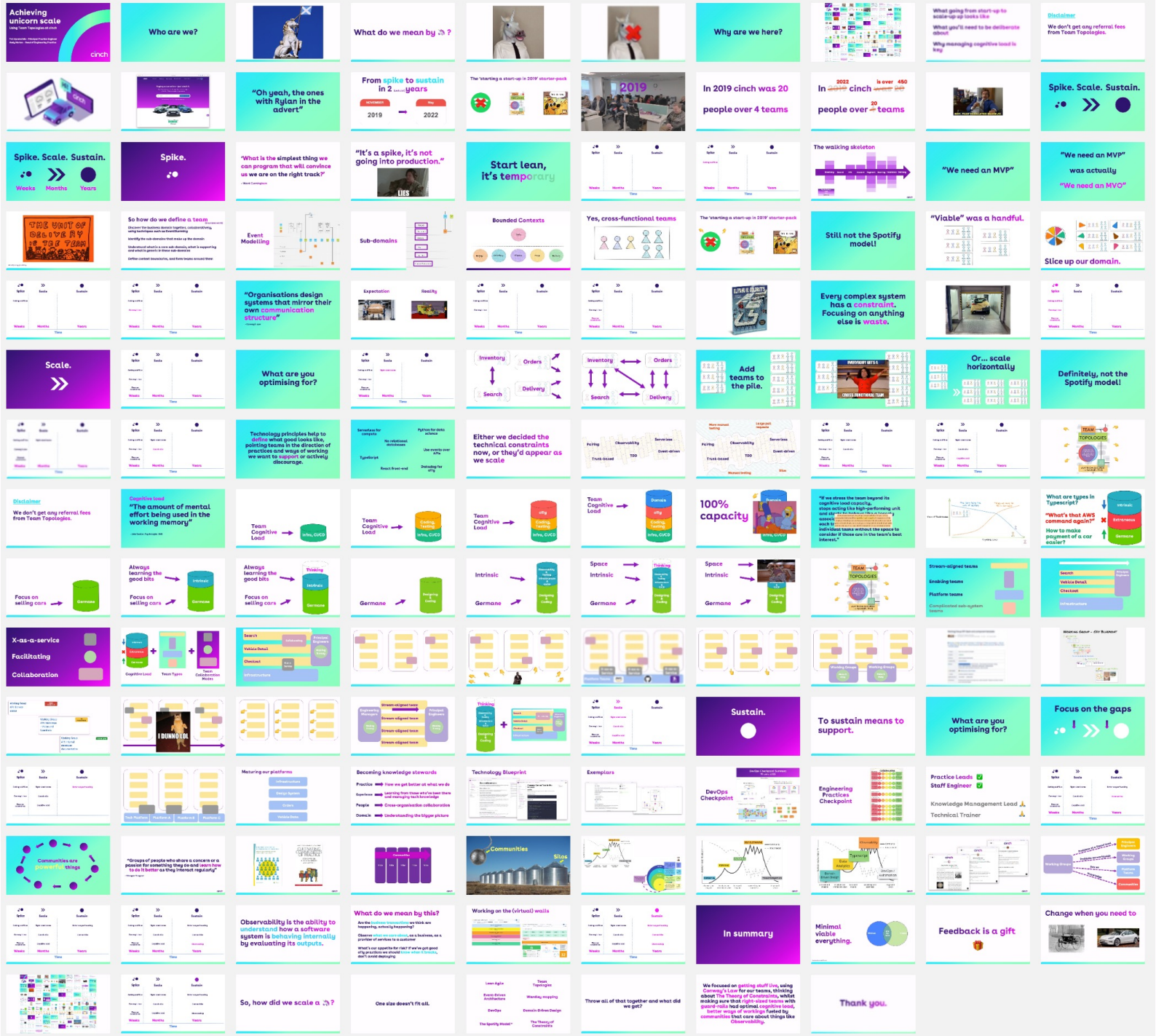


Based on a diagram by t2informatik

Feedback is a gift

Change when you need to




Achieving unicorn scale
cinch
Who are we?
What do we mean by ?
Why are we here?
Disclaimer
We don't get any referral fees from Team Topologies.
"Oh yeah, the ones with Rylan in the advert"
From spike to sustain in 2 years
NOVEMBER 2019
MAY 2022
2019
In 2019 cinch was 20 people over 4 teams
In 2022 cinch is over 450 people over 20 teams
Spike. Scale. Sustain.
Weeks
Months
Years
Spike.
"What is the simplest thing we can program that will convince us we are on the right track?"
"It's a spike, it's not going into production."
LIES
Start lean, it's temporary
The walking skeleton
"We need an MVP"
"We need an MVP" was actually "We need an MVO"
THE UNIT OF DELIVERY IS THE TEAM
So how do we define a team
Event Modelling
Sub-domains
Bounded Contexts
Yes, cross-functional teams
Still not the Spotify model!
"Viable" was a handful.
Slice up our domain.
"Organisations design systems that mirror their own communication structure"
Expectation
Reality
Every complex system has a constraint. Focusing on anything else is waste.
Scale.
What are you optimising for?
Inventory
Orders
Search
Delivery
Add teams to the pile.
CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM
Or... scale horizontally
Definitely, not the Spotify model!
Technology principles help to define what good looks like, pointing teams in the direction of practices and ways of working we want to support or actively discourage.
Either we decided the technical constraints now, or they'd appear as we scale
Pairing
Observability
Serverless
Trunk-based
TDD
Event-driven
TEAM TOPOLOGIES
Disclaimer
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Cognitive load
"The amount of mental effort being used in the working memory"
Team Cognitive Load
Coding, Testing
Infra, CI/CD
100% capacity
What are types in Typescript?
"What's that AWS command again?"
How to make payment of a car easier?
Intrinsic
Extraneous
Germane
Focus on selling cars
Always learning the good bits
Thinking
Space
Stream-aligned teams
Enabling teams
Platform teams
Complicated sub-system teams
Search
Vehicle Detail
Checkout
Infrastructure
X-as-a-service
Facilitating
Collaboration
I DUNNO LOL
Sustain.
To sustain means to support.
What are you optimising for?
Focus on the gaps
Maturing our platforms
Becoming knowledge stewards
Technology Blueprint
Exemplars
DevOps Checkpoint
Engineering Practices Checkpoint
Practice Leads
Staff Engineer
Knowledge Management Lead
Technical Trainer
Communities are powerful things
"Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"
Communities
Silos
Observability is the ability to understand how a software system is behaving internally by evaluating its outputs.
What do we mean by this?
Working on the (virtual) walls
In summary
Minimal viable everything.
Feedback is a gift
Change when you need to
So, how did we scale a ?
One size doesn't fit all.
Throw all of that together and what did we get?
We focused on getting stuff live, using Conway's Law for our teams, thinking about The Theory of Constraints, whilst making sure that right-sized teams with guard-rails had optimal cognitive load, better ways of working fueled by communities that care about things like Observability.
Thank you.

Spike

Getting stuff live

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Right-sized teams

Guard-rails

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Better ways of working

Communities

Observability

Years

Time

So, how did we scale a 🦄?

One size doesn’t fit all.

Lean Agile

Team Topologies

Event-Driven Architecture

Wardley mapping

DevOps

Domain-Driven Design

The Spotify Model™

The Theory of Constraints

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Thank you.

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