



# The Importance of Open Communication in SRE

Florian Hoeppe  
Marco Torre  
Alexander Schaper

**accenture**

# The Speakers



**FLORIAN HOEPPNER**  
**SRE TECH STRATEGY**  
**NEW YORK**  
**ACCENTURE**



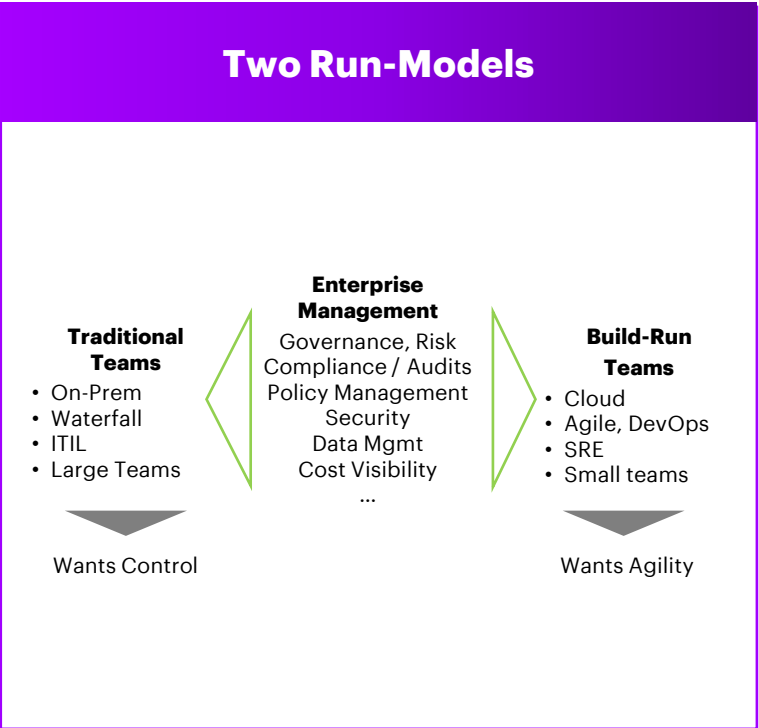
**ALEXANDER SCHAPER**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY SME**  
**NEW YORK**  
**ACCENTURE**



**MARCO TORRE**  
**SRE SME**  
**NEW YORK**  
**ACCENTURE**

# Complex Situation

SREs are deployed in a complex environment and it's only getting worse

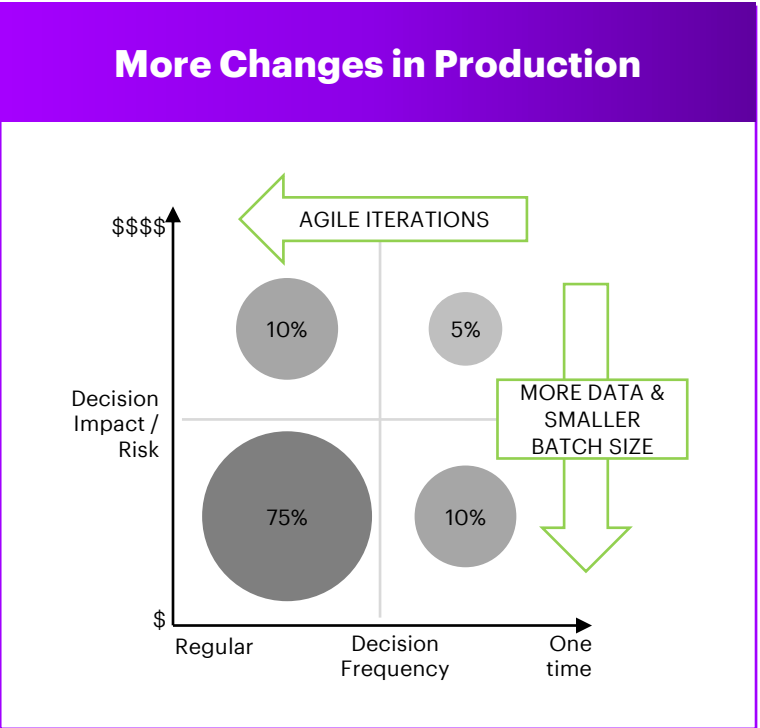


**Shifting Responsibilities**

INCREASING

	On-Prem	IaaS	PaaS	SaaS
Content	X	X	X	X
Access M.	X	X	X	X
Usage	X	X	X	
Deployment	X	X	X	
Operations	X	X		
Boot	X			
Hardware	X			

X = Responsibility



# Communication is Key

In complex situations, communication is the key element to overcome challenges fast



## Changing Technologies

New technologies and practices requires **ongoing learning** and testing of new approaches

Communication is key to **collaboration across the siloes** that we are trying to break down with DevOps and SRE

## Siloed Teams



## Incident Review

We know that our system is not perfect and we need our people **to speak up in reviews** sessions for quick improvements

We only benefit from **different perspectives** within the team if everyone is comfortable speaking up

## Comfortable with Silence





**“Psychological Safety is the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns and mistakes.”**

Amy Edmondson  
Harvard Business School



# Psychological Safety enables a modern SRE approach

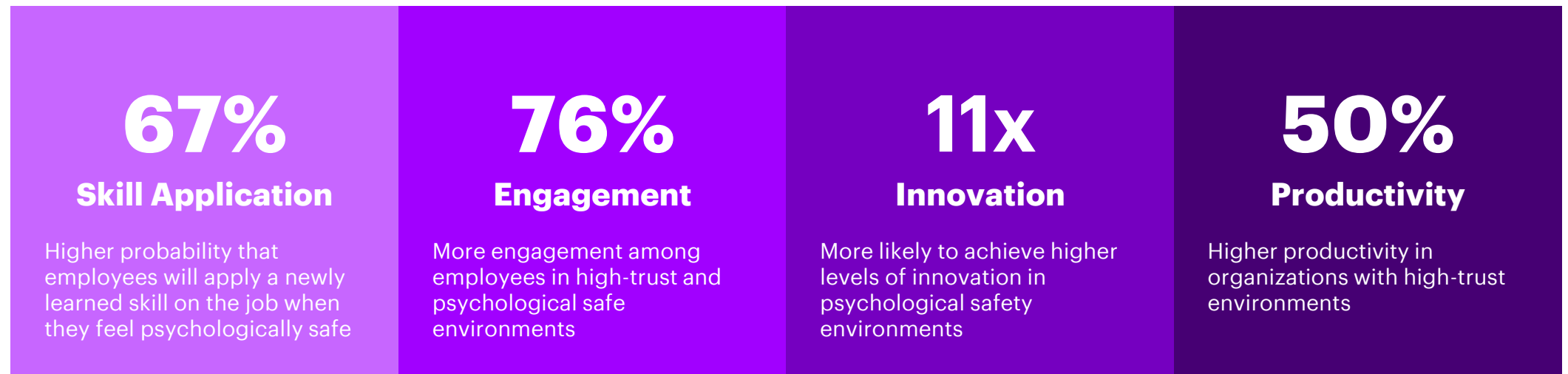
Psychological safety is the necessary foundation for effective SRE teams by enabling a learning-oriented communication

	Traditional Approach				SRE Approach
	Biz	Dev	Q	Prod	Build Run Team SRE enabled
Blame	Blame game, <b>pointing fingers</b> at each other				Members are <b>encouraged to take responsibility</b> without fear of reprisal or blame.
Mistakes	Members feel the need <b>to hide their mistakes</b> to avoid negative consequences				Feel comfortable admitting to their mistakes and <b>discussing them openly</b> to learn from them
Feedback	Feedback may be given in a <b>negative or critical</b> manner				Encourages constructive feedback that is focused on <b>learning and improvement</b>
Management	Micromanaged and <b>restricted in their work</b> , leading to decreased autonomy				Culture of trust and respect that <b>enables team members</b> to have autonomy and make decisions



# Investing in Communication Pays Off

Research points out that psychological safety and trust increases productivity



# The Approach

We take a structured,  
data- driven approach  
to overcome key  
challenges

## Challenges

**Culture is  
intangible**

## Approach

Data Driven Change

## Activities

- Scan squads with a survey
- Individual workshop based on scan results
- Second scan to show improvements

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**Organizational  
resistance to  
change**

Leadership Buy In

- Design Thinking group workshops
- Dedicate leadership coaching
- Visible leadership buy-in e.g. blog posts

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**Low psychological  
safety**

Bottom-up Approach

- “Perform” culture through blameless postmortems
- Develop a common language between teams and leaders on challenges
- Enable teams to self-sustainably improve their culture post engagement



# Case Study

# Case Study: Psychological Safety in Product Engineering

In this example a product engineering team needed to respond to the growing sales and increase client-centricity.

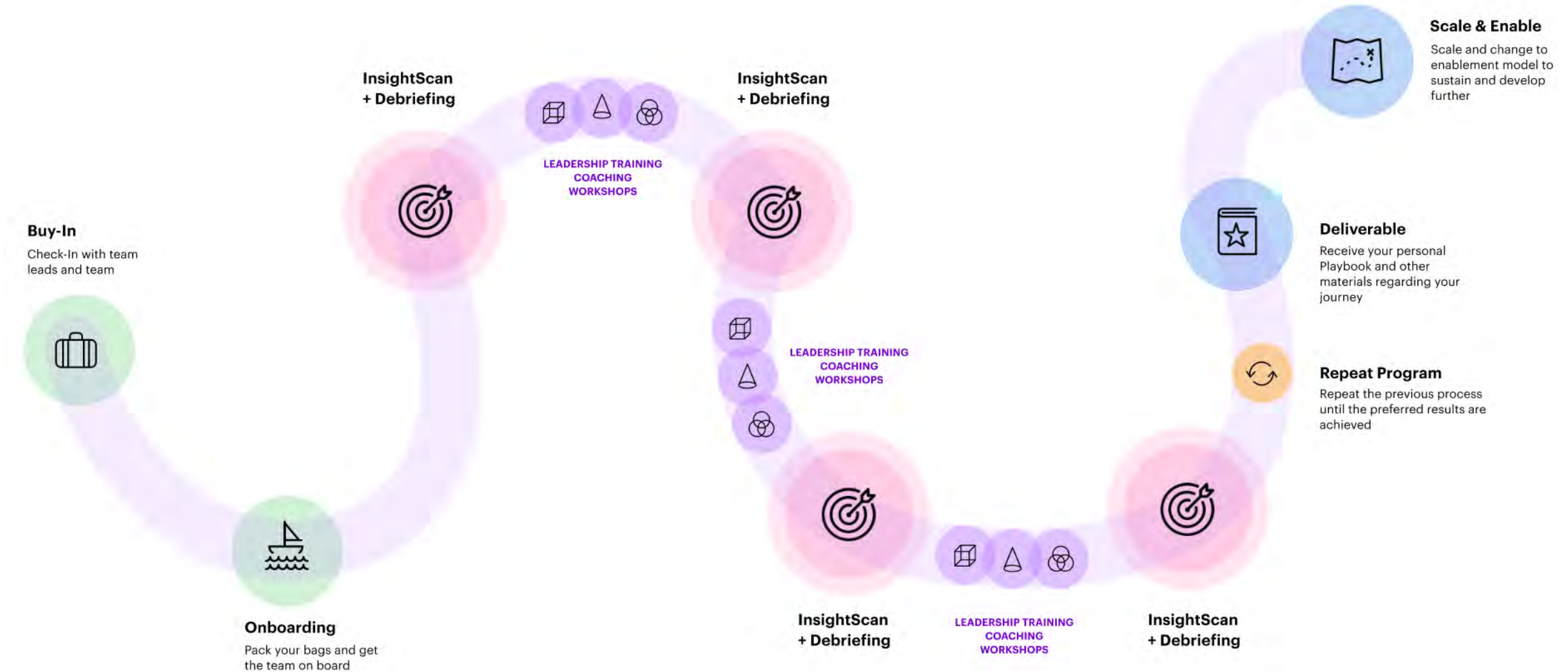
How to overcome a **culture of blame** and focus on **learning from mistakes**?

How to **evolve ways of working** between team members during rapid growth and increasing demands?

How to **scale agile working model** and processes to achieve high-volume output, while keeping high-performance standards?

# 12-Week-Psychological Safety Journey

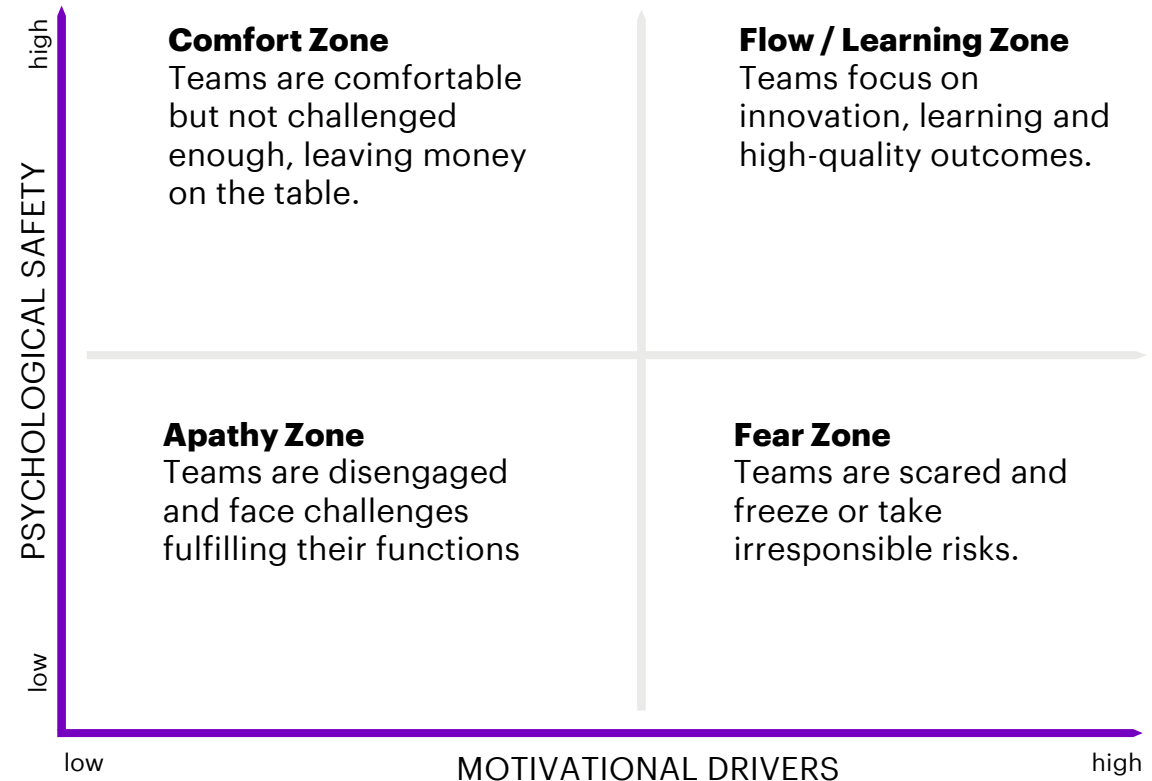
Behavioral science and data-driven team reflections



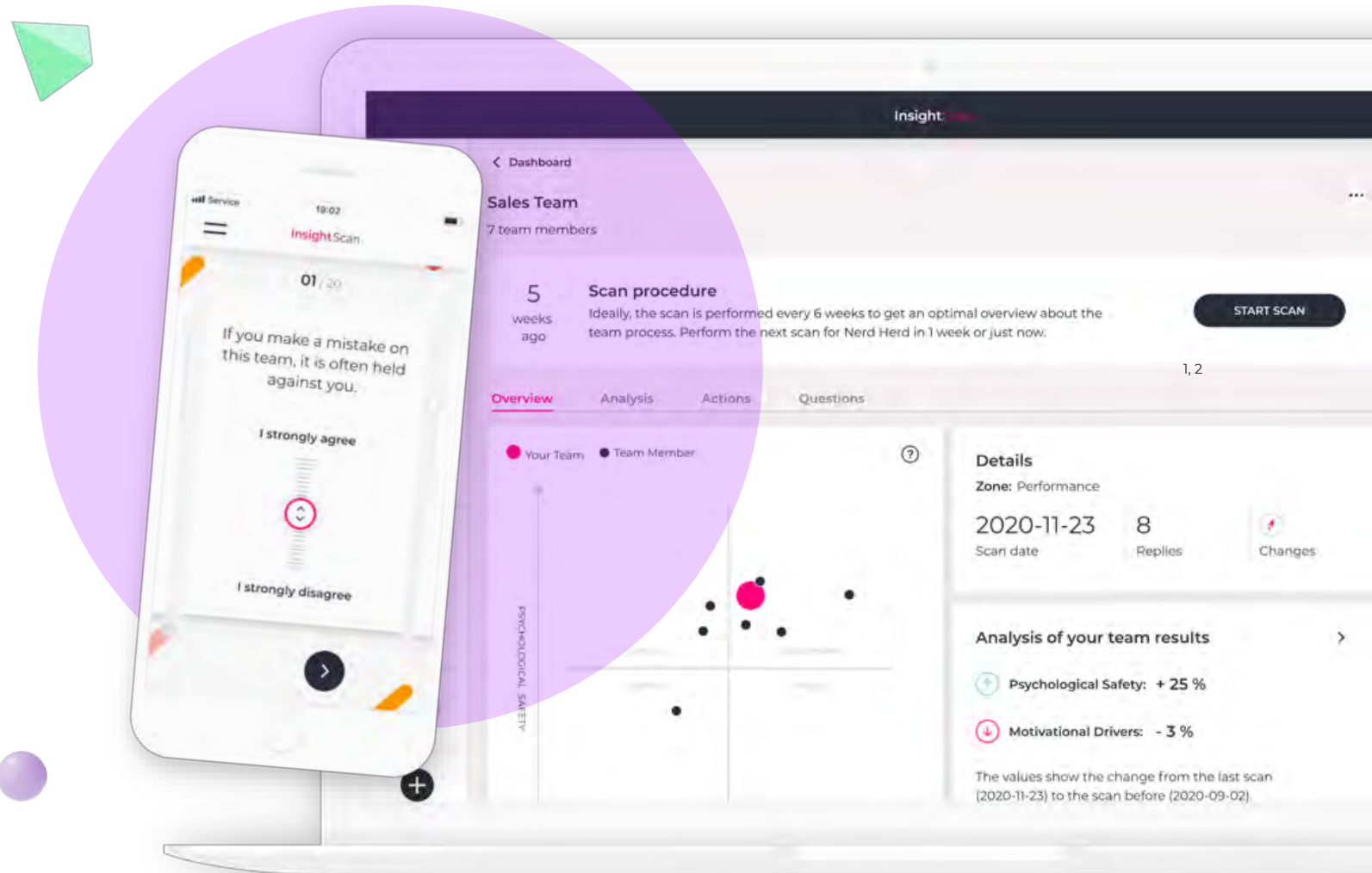
# Psychologically Safe Teams

Psychologically safe teams consistently demonstrate high levels engagement, creative problem solving and job commitment

Teams in the flow zone assume accountability, have high intrinsic achievement motivation, positive error orientation and show high levels of pro-active communication.



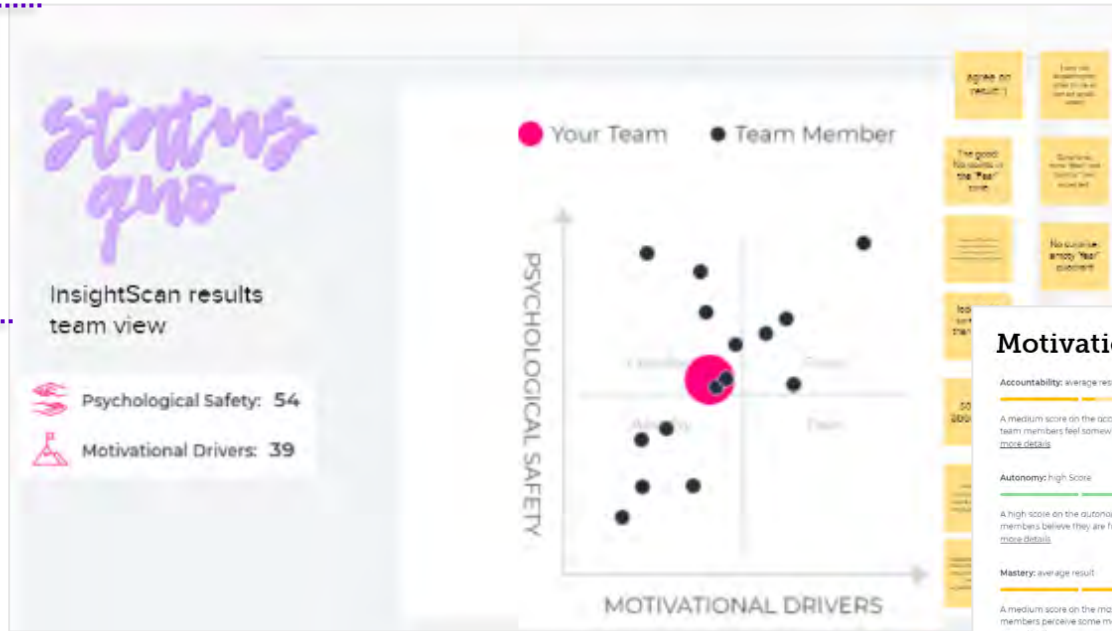
# Scanning for Insights



# Psychologically-Safe Retros and Post-Mortems

Workshops empowered the teams to reflect on how they operate as a team, develop a common language, and chart their path toward Flow

1 Real-time, and anonymous data facilitated around what could be driving individual and team results



"It appears that some team members are disconnected from the team and organizational goals."

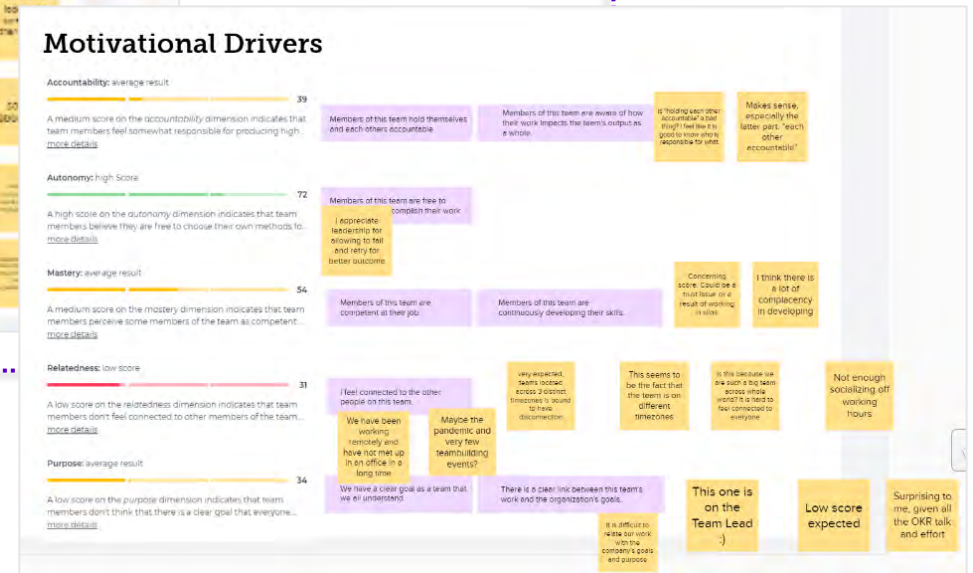
"I'm surprised and concerned by the number of dots in Apathy."

"The good: no points in the Fear Zone."

RELATEDNESS: "It is hard to feel connected to everyone...perhaps this is because of time zones or because we have not met up in an office in a long time."

PURPOSE: "It is difficult to relate our work with the company's goals and purpose."

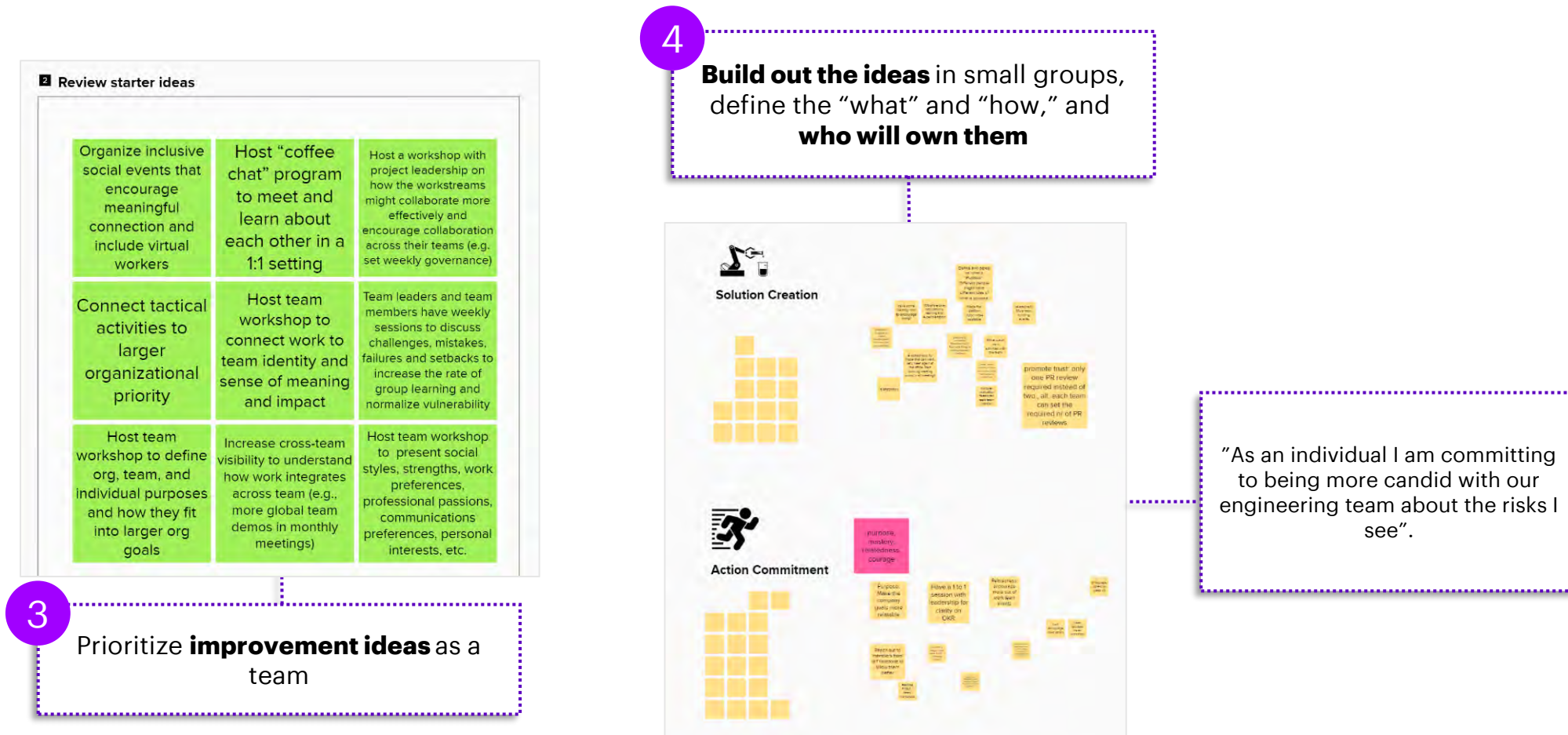
2 Deep dive into the Motivational Drivers and Psychological Safety Factors





# Psychologically-Safe Retros and Post-Mortems

The team will build out improvement ideas and goals and commit to achieving them



# Real-time insights helped 66% teams move into the Flow zone in ~12 weeks

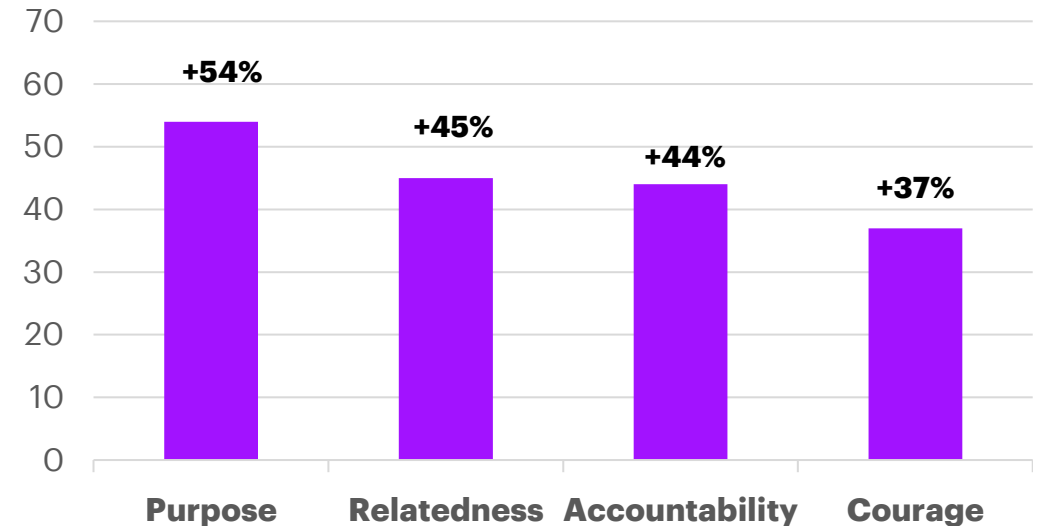
+ 30% **Psychological Safety**

+ 57% **Motivation**

2 in 3 **Teams move into Flow zone**

~12 **Weeks to move into Flow**

*Teams moving to Flow saw the greatest improvements in:*





# Thank you for your time!



**FLORIAN HOEPPNER**  
SRE TECH STRATEGY  
NEW YORK  
ACCENTURE



[Linked-In](#)



**ALEXANDER SCHAPER**  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY SME  
NEW YORK  
ACCENTURE



[Linked-In](#)



**MARCO TORRE**  
SRE SME  
NEW YORK  
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