

# A Practical Guide for Evolving Agile and Resilient Organizations with *Sociocracy 3.0*

*James Priest • Bernhard Bockelbrink • Liliana David*



**70+ Powerful Practices**  
to Help You and Your Organization Thrive

# A Practical Guide for Evolving Agile and Resilient Organizations with Sociocracy 3.0

Bernhard Bockelbrink  
James Priest  
Liliana David

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## Part I.

# What is Sociocracy 3.0?

Sociocracy 3.0 — a.k.a. “S3” — is social technology for evolving agile and resilient organizations at any size, from small start-ups to large international networks and multi-agency collaboration.

Inside this practical guide you’ll discover a comprehensive collection of tried and tested **concepts, principles and practices for improving performance, engagement and wellbeing** in organizations.

Since its launch in 2015, S3 patterns have been helping people across a diverse range of organizational contexts to get the best out of collaboration. From start-ups to small and medium businesses, large international organizations, investor-funded and nonprofit organizations, families and communities.

Using S3 can **help you to achieve your objectives** and successfully navigate complexity. You can make changes one step at a time, **without the need for sudden radical reorganization** or planning a long-term change initiative:

- Simply start with identifying your areas of greatest need and select one or more practices or guidelines that help.
- Proceed at your own pace, and develop your skills and competences as you go.

**Regardless of your position in the organization**, you’ll find many proven ideas that are relevant and helpful for you.

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# 1. How does Sociocracy 3.0 help?

S3 is a transformational technology for both individuals and the whole organization that will help you figure out how to meet your organization's biggest challenges, take advantage of the opportunities you face and resolve the most persistent problems.

Sociocracy 3.0 is designed to be flexible and supports experimentation and learning. You can take whatever you need, adapt things to suit your context and enrich your existing approach.

S3 integrates core concepts and practices found in agile methodologies, lean management, Kanban (and KMM), Design Thinking, Teal Organizations and the family of sociocracy-based governance methods (SCM/ Dynamic Governance, Holacracy® etc.). It's complimentary and compatible with any agile or lean framework, including but not limited to Scrum and its various scaling frameworks.

## 2. A pattern-based approach to organizational change

S3 offers a pattern-based approach to organizational change.

A **pattern** is a process, practice or guideline that serves as a template for successfully responding to a specific kind of challenge or opportunity. S3 patterns are discovered through observing people working together in organizations to solve problems and respond to opportunities they face. When you find that your habitual ways of doing things fail to bring about the outcomes you expected or hope for, you can look to S3 for patterns that might help.

Patterns are modular and adaptable, can be used independently, and are mutually reinforcing, complementing one another when used in combination. S3 patterns can be evolved and adapted to address your specific needs.

In this guide, the patterns are grouped by topic into ten categories to help you more easily identify those that are useful to you:

- Co-Creation And Evolution
- Peer Development
- Enablers Of Collaboration
- Building Organizations
- Bringing In S3
- Defining Agreements
- Focused Interactions
- Meeting Practices

- Organizing Work
- Organizational Structure

By providing a menu of patterns to choose from according to need, S3 encourages an organic, **iterative approach to change without a huge upfront investment**. It meets people where they are and helps them move forward pulling in patterns at their own pace and according to their unique context.

### 3. What's in this guide?

Inside this practical guide book you'll discover:

- Useful concepts that will help you **make more sense of your organization** and communicate effectively about where change is needed.
- An **organic, iterative approach to change** that meets people where they are and helps them move forward at their own pace and according to their unique context and needs.
- **Seven core principles** of agile and sociocratic collaboration
- A coherent collection of **70+ practices and guidelines** to help you navigate complexity, and improve collaboration:
  - **Simple, facilitated formats** that support teams in drawing on the collective intelligence of the group and incrementally processing available information into continuous improvement of work processes, products, services and skills.
  - **Group-practices** to help organizations make the best use of talent they already have, through **people supporting each other** in building skills, accountability and engagement.
  - Simple **tools for clarifying who does what**, freeing people up to decide and act for themselves as much as possible, within clearly defined constraints that enable experimentation and development.
  - Patterns for **growing organizational structure beyond hierarchies** into flexible, decentralized networks where the flow of information and influence directly supports the creation of value.

- The **Common Sense Framework**, a tool for making sense of teams and organizations and figuring out how to get started with S3.
- A **glossary** with explanations for all the terms you might be unfamiliar with.

This practical guide to Sociocracy 3.0 is written and published by the three co-developers of Sociocracy 3.0.

True to the mindset behind S3, this book will always be a work in progress that grows and changes as we learn from people who are experimenting with S3 in organizations around the world. Since we started out 5 years ago, we have released several updates per year and we'll continue to do so in the years to come.

Even though several sections in this book are brief and may still be rough around the edges, the content and explanations have been sufficient for many people to get started with S3 and achieve positive change in their organizations. We hope you'll find it useful too.

## 4. Influences and History of Sociocracy 3.0

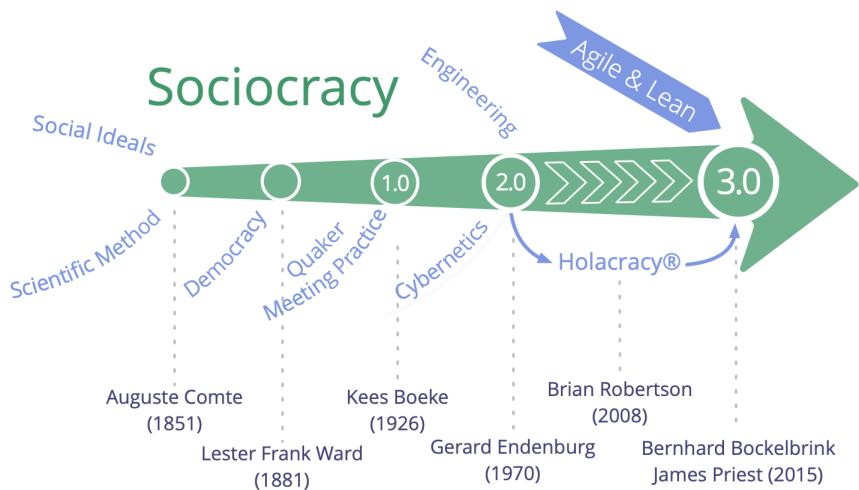


Figure 4.1.: Influences and history of Sociocracy 3.0

The literal meaning of the term **sociocracy** is “rule of the companions”: *socio* — from Latin *socius* — means “companion”, or “friend”, and the suffix *-cracy* — from Ancient Greek (kráatos) — means “power”, or “rule”.

The word sociocracy can be traced back to 1851, when **Auguste Comte** suggested applying a scientific approach to society: states would be governed by a body of scientists who are experts on society (which he termed

“sociologists”). In his opinion, this future, although not yet achievable, would be inevitable.

A few decades later, **Lester Frank Ward**, used the word ‘sociocracy’ to describe the rule of people with relations with each other. Instead of having sociologists at the center, he wanted to give more power and responsibility to the individual, he imagined sociologists in a role as researchers and consultant.

In 1926, the Dutch reformist educator and Quaker **Kees Boeke**, established a residential school based on the principle of consent. Staff and students were treated as equal participants in the governance of the school, all decisions needed to be acceptable to everyone. He built this version of sociocracy on Quaker principles and practices, and described sociocracy as an evolution of democracy in his 1945 essay “Democracy as it might be”.

**Gerard Endenburg**, also a Quaker and a student in Boeke’s school, wanted to apply sociocracy in his family’s business, Endenburg Elektrotechniek. He created and evolved the *Sociocratic Circle Organisation Method (SCM)* (later becoming the “Sociocratic Method”), integrating Boeke’s form of sociocracy with engineering and cybernetics. In 1978 Endenburg founded the Sociocratisch Centrum in Utrecht (which is now the Sociocratic Center in Rotterdam) as a means to promote sociocracy in and beyond the Netherlands. Since 1994 organizations in the Netherlands using SCM are exempt from the legal requirement to have a worker’s council.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, several non-Dutch speaking people came across sociocracy, but it wasn’t until 2007 when **Sharon Villines and John Buck** launched their book, “We the People”, that sociocracy became widely accessible to the English speaking world, and from there has began to migrate into several other languages.

Sociocracy has proven to be effective for many organizations and communities around the world, but it has yet to become viral.

In 2014 **James Priest and Bernhard Bockelbrink** came together to co-create a body of Creative Commons licensed learning resources,

synthesizing ideas from Sociocracy, Agile and Lean. They discovered that organizations of all sizes need a flexible menu of practices and structures – appropriate for their specific context – that enable the evolution of a more sociocratic and agile approach to achieve greater effectiveness, coherence, fulfillment and wellbeing. The first version of **Sociocracy 3.0.** was launched in March 2015.

**Liliana David** joined the team soon after. Together they regularly collaborate to make S3 available and applicable to as many organizations as possible, and provide resources under a **Creative Commons Free Culture License** for people who want to learn, apply and tell others about Sociocracy\_3.0.

## 4.1. The Sociocracy 3.0 Movement

As interest in Sociocracy 3.0 grows there is a fast growing community of people from a variety of backgrounds — pioneering consultants, coaches, learning facilitators, and people applying S3 into their various contexts — who share appreciation for the transformational potential of Sociocracy 3.0 to help organizations and their members thrive. Many kindly dedicate some of their time to experimenting with and sharing about S3, and who collaborate to learn from one another and document experiences to inform the ongoing development and evolution of the S3 and its various applications.

## 5. Why “3.0”?

Sociocracy as a form of governance has been referred to since 1851. Subsequently it has been developed and adapted by many different people and organizations, including Gerard Endenburg, The Sociocracy Group (TSG) and Brian Robertson (HolacracyOne).

Yet, outside the Netherlands sociocracy has until recently remained largely unknown.

We love sociocracy because we see organizations and their members thrive when they use elements of it to enrich or transform what they currently do.

We also love agile, lean, Kanban, the Core Protocols, NVC, and many other ideas too. We believe that the world will be a better place as more organizations learn to pull from this cornucopia of awesome practices that are emerging into the world today, and learn to synthesize them with what they already know.

Therefore we decided to devote some of our time to develop and evolve Sociocracy, integrating it with many of these other potent ideas, to make it available and applicable to as many organizations as possible.

To this end, we recognize the value of a strong identity, a radically different way of distribution, and of adapting the *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* to improve its applicability.

### 5.1. The Name

The name “*Sociocracy 3.0*” demonstrates both respect to the lineage and a significant step forward.

It also helps avoid the perception of us misrepresenting the *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* (SCM) as promoted by The Sociocracy Group.

## 5.2. The New Model of Distribution

*Sociocracy 3.0* employs a non-centralized model for distribution. This is a paradigm shift in the way sociocracy is brought to people and organizations, and one that many people can relate to.

We support “viral” distribution through two key strategies:

- **Sociocracy 3.0 is open:** We want to encourage growth of a vibrant ecosystem of applications and flavors of sociocracy, where people share and discuss their insights and the adaptations they are making for their specific context. To this end Sociocracy 3.0 puts emphasis on communicating the underlying principles and explicitly invites the creativity of everyone to remix, extend and adapt things to suit their needs.
- **Sociocracy 3.0 is free:** To eliminate the barrier of entry for people and organizations we provide free resources under a *Creative Commons Free Culture License* to learn, practice and teach *Sociocracy 3.0*. Everyone can use our resources without our explicit permission, even in a commercial context, or as a basis for building their own resources, as long as they share their new resources under the same license. We expect and support other organizations, consultants, coaches, learning facilitators and trainers to follow our example and release their resources too.

## 5.3. The Evolution of the Sociocratic Circle Organization Method

Maybe we need to make this explicit: Sociocracy 3.0 is not targeted specifically at the existing community of people exploring the *Sociocratic*

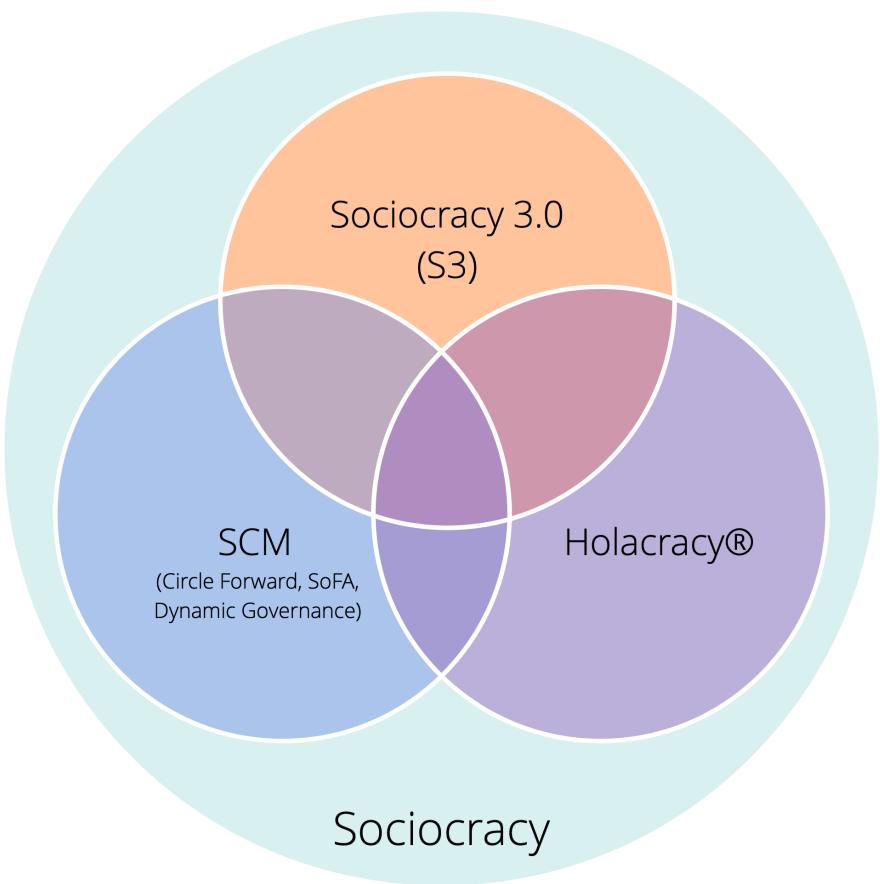


Figure 5.1.: Three variants of sociocracy

*Circle Organization Method*, or at The Sociocracy Group (TSG). The *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* (SCM) is already well developed and many people appear to be mostly happy with it.

Yet from our direct experience, even for those organizations that have heard about sociocracy, there are many obstacles to actually become invested. With *Sociocracy 3.0* we actively work on addressing and eliminating what stands in the way.

## **Reducing Risk and Resistance**

*Sociocracy 3.0* meets organizations where they are and takes them on a journey of continuous improvement. There's no radical change or re-organization. *Sociocracy 3.0* provides a collection of independent and principle-based patterns that an organization can pull in one by one to become more effective. All patterns relate to a set of core principles, so they can easily be adapted to context.

## **Shifting Focus From Aim (or Purpose) to Need**

*Sociocracy 3.0* moves primary focus from vision, mission, aims or purpose, towards the source of motivation, and aligns the organization towards discovering and addressing what it needs. Organizations which are already need-driven, value driven or customer-centric, find this immediately accessible.

## **Condensed to the Essentials**

When looking at the norms, the *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* may look big and scary. By focusing on the essentials only, *Sociocracy 3.0* offers a lightweight approach to adapt and build on as necessary.

This doesn't mean to say it's all easy: choosing to pull in *Sociocracy 3.0*'s patterns requires an investment in learning and un-learning. This is why

it's important to only pull in what you need, because there's no point to changing things if what you are doing is already good enough.

## Integration With Agile and Lean Thinking

The *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* is an “empty” method when it comes to operations and creating a culture of close collaboration. Many organizations already implement or show preference for lean and agile thinking for operations and collaboration. We believe this is a great idea, so *Sociocracy 3.0* is designed for easy adoption into lean and agile organizations.

## A New Way to Evolve Organizational Structure

The organizational structure according to the *Sociocratic Circle Organization Method* is modeled on a hierarchy of domains. We see an increasing emergence of collaborative multi-stakeholder environments and the need for a wider variety of patterns for organizational structure. Evolution of organizational structure happens naturally when the flow of information and influence in an organization is incrementally aligned to the flow of value. *Sociocracy 3.0* provides a variety of structural patterns that can be combined to evolve structure as required and in a flexible way.

**Part II.**

# **The Seven Principles**

Sociocracy 3.0 is built on seven foundational principles which enable sociocratic and agile collaboration. Since the seven principles are reflected in all of the patterns, understanding these principles is helpful for adopting and paramount to adapting Sociocracy 3.0 patterns.

Practicing Sociocracy 3.0 helps people appreciate the essential value that these core principles bring – both to individuals and to organizations – and supports their integration into organizational culture.

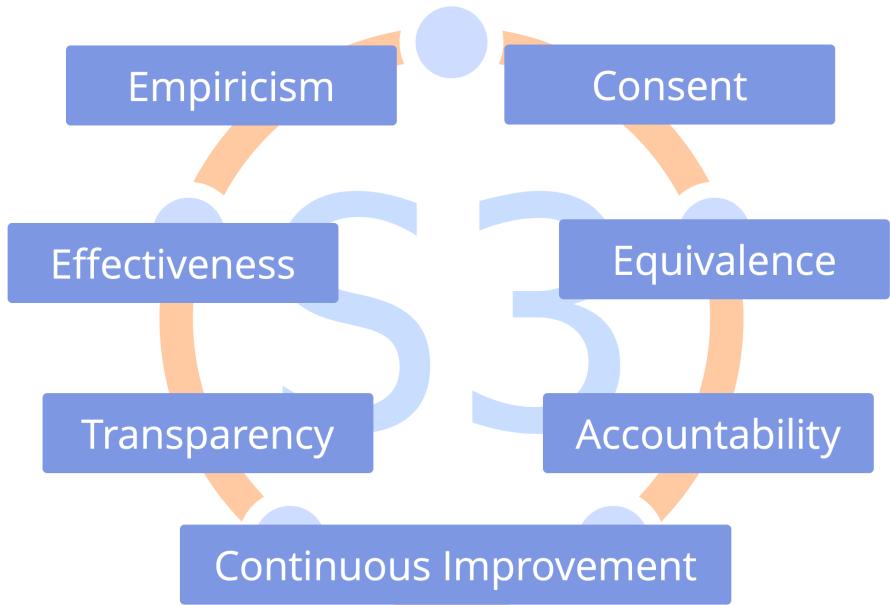


Figure 0.1.: The Seven Principles

***The Principle of Effectiveness:***

***Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your organization's overall objectives, so that you can make the best use of your limited time, energy and resources.***

***The Principle of Consent:***

**Raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions, so that you can reduce the potential for undesirable consequences and discover worthwhile ways to improve.**

**The Principle of Empiricism:**

**Test all assumptions you rely on through experiments and continuous revision, so that you learn fast, make sense of things and navigate complexity as effectively as you can.**

**The Principle of Continuous Improvement:**

**Regularly review the outcome of what you are doing, and then make incremental improvements to what you do and how you do it based on what you learn, so that you can adapt to changes when necessary, and maintain or improve effectiveness over time.**

**The Principle of Equivalence:**

**Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them, so that you increase engagement and accountability, and make use of the distributed intelligence toward achieving and evolving your objectives.**

**The Principle of Transparency:**

**Record all information that is valuable for the organization and make it accessible to everyone in the organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality, so that everyone has the information they need to understand how to do their work in a way that contributes most effectively to the whole.**

**The Principle of Accountability:**

**Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to do, and accept your share of responsibility for the course of the organization, so that what needs doing gets done, nothing is overlooked and everyone does what they can to contribute toward the effectiveness and integrity of the organization.**

# 1. The Principle of Effectiveness

*Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your organization's overall objectives, so that you can make the best use of your limited time, energy and resources.*

The principle of effectiveness invites us to think consciously about what we do and how we do things. It calls for the intentional consideration of the consequences of our actions, both now and across time, on our organizations but also on the wider environment and the world at large.

Pursuing effectiveness requires that we act with intent to minimize waste, remove impediments and, where possible, conduct ourselves in ways that over time, lead to the greatest value creation possible, through the synergy of our creativity, resources, energy and time.

## 1.1. Clarify the why

Being effective begins with getting clear about why you want to do something and establishing an approximate idea of what it is you want to achieve. Defining why the organization exists and the objectives it's trying to achieve helps everyone understand more about what they are working toward and about how they can contribute in a meaningful way. Without this clarity, it's hard for individuals to contextualize their work in the bigger picture. It's also harder to qualify and quantify what brings value and in which ways.

## **1.2. Keep your options open**

There might be many ways to go about achieving your objectives and sometimes your first choice might fail to meet the need. Keep your options open to avoid getting stuck in a particular trajectory as you learn about ways to improve. Avoid converging too soon and take an iterative approach whenever you can. In complexity, find ways to test any hypotheses quickly, run multiple small experiments if possible, and travel light so that you can pivot fast.

## **1.3. Aim for being effective in an efficient way**

Effectiveness is about achieving the desired result, while efficiency is about doing things with the least waste of your effort, resources and time. It is entirely possible to do the “wrong” thing very efficiently, so before optimizing for efficiency, ensure the outcome is what you intended. Only then look for worthwhile improvements to produce the same outcome in a more efficient manner.

## **1.4. Consider the bigger picture, monitor, evaluate and learn**

Be on the lookout for possible side-effects and unintended consequences before, during and after any interventions you make. Consider direct and indirect costs and negative externalities and be prepared to evolve or change your activities or objectives, based on what you learn.

There are scales of effectiveness (and efficiency) that can only be appreciated if we consider the wider context and consequences of our actions across time. Sometimes our activities might achieve the outcomes we intended in the short term but with unfavorable consequences and hidden costs that only reveal themselves across time. For example, large scale, industrial agriculture produces huge yields very efficiently but over the

long-term it leads to a critical depletion of topsoil and increasing dependency on fertilizers, insecticides and weedkillers. This can be a case of a short term gain but for long term pain.

In complex environments it is sometimes hard to figure out what effectiveness would actually mean. Consider the perspective of others, even if you are making a decision for yourself. Make the most of experience and expertise distributed throughout your organization and reach out to people with alternative points of view. Running your ideas past others can help you to avoid consequences that you'd rather avoid, and identify worthwhile ways to improve.

Decide how you will measure effectiveness, and if you're collaborating with others, develop and maintain a shared understanding of what this will mean. Having established a clear “*why*” and defined the outcome you intend to achieve, consider how you will measure results in a way that allows you to see how you're progressing (and whether anything you are doing is useful at all!)

Effectiveness can sometimes only be determined in retrospect. Pay attention to and reflect on the consequences of your actions, and then use what you learn to improve your effectiveness next time.

## **1.5. Be mindful of dependencies and constraints**

Aim to free everyone up to be able to act as autonomously as possible and do what you need to do to free yourself up as well. Make any necessary dependencies between certain individuals and teams explicit, and get together to co-create and evolve a coherent system to deal with them, so that you can still deliver value fast when dependencies cannot be avoided.

Clarify any constraints in which you need to operate. What are the internal and external expectations, guidelines or rules? How do the implicit or explicit values of your organization and the wider context in which you are operating, enable or limit the decisions and actions you make? How will you operate within any specific boundaries? Who do you need

to communicate with if you see an argument for changing something, or for making an exception to a rule?

## **1.6. Prioritize and choose wisely**

Set priorities and stick to them unless you become aware of a reason to change. Distractions, context switching and a lack of breaks or slack time will inevitably lead to waste.

As well as getting clear on what you WILL do, be clear on what NOT to do as well and aim to resolve impediments as they arise.

## 2. The Principle of Consent

***Raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions, so that you can reduce the potential for undesirable consequences and discover worthwhile ways to improve.***

Deliberately seeking objections is a way to tap into the collective intelligence distributed throughout an organization and benefit from insights we might otherwise miss. Examining proposals, decisions and activity through the lens of different people's perspectives helps to identify reasons why a decision or activity could lead to consequences that would better be avoided, and if there are worthwhile ways to improve things.

Adopting the principle of consent invites a change of focus in decision making, shifting intent from trying to reach agreement - can everyone agree with this? - toward the practice of deliberately checking for objections - are there any arguments that reveal why this is not good enough, safe enough or that there are worthwhile ways to improve?

Consent does not mean everyone is actively involved in making every decision, as this would be ineffective. Instead it's useful to make decisions that, over time, free people up as much as possible to decide and act to create value by themselves. It does however require adequate *transparency* and mindfulness on the part of decision makers, to inform and involve people who would be impacted (to varying degrees), or to invite those that can bring relevant experience or expertise (see *the Principle of Equivalence*).

## **2.1. Invite dissent**

When dealing with complexity, considering different perspectives, experience and expertise is a simple yet effective way for developing a coherent shared understanding, out of which more effective decisions can be made.

Developing a culture that welcomes dissenting opinions and where people consider those opinions to discover any value they can bring generates greater engagement, psychological safety and support for decisions.

## **2.2. Shift supremacy from people to sound arguments**

When comparing the available paradigms for decision making, the essential difference lies in where ultimate authority for making a decision is placed. In autocratic systems supremacy lies with an individual or small group. In a system governed by majority vote, supremacy lies with the majority (or those who can convince the majority of their position). In a system aspiring toward consensus with unanimity, supremacy lies with whoever decides to block a proposal or existing agreement. In all three of these cases, a decision is made regardless of whether the motive of those actors is aligned with the interest of the system or not.

When a group or organization adopts the principle of consent, supremacy shifts from any specific individual or group, to reasoned arguments that reveal the potential for undesirable consequences that would better be avoided or worthwhile ways to improve. This way, people—regardless of their position, rank, function or role—are unable to block decisions based solely on opinion, personal preference or rank. Consent invites everyone to at least be reasonable, while still leaving space for individuals to express diverse perspectives, opinions and ideas.

## 2.3. Distinguish between opinion or preference, and objections

Consent draws on the intelligence distributed throughout an organization, not only by inviting people to raise possible *objections*, but also by inviting people to then examine those arguments, rooting out any that are unfounded, evolving those they discover to be only partly true, and revealing those that are valid objections. So it's typically a good idea to *test arguments qualify as objections* and only act on those that do. This helps avoid wasting time on arguments based merely on opinions, personal preference or bias.

Arguments that qualify as objections — at least as far as stakeholders can tell — help a group in directing their effort toward making changes in those areas where it's necessary or worthwhile to adapt and improve. Incremental improvement based on discovery and learning is built into consent and is an inevitable consequence of adopting the principle.

Adopting the principle of consent shifts the aim of decision making towards identifying a solution that's good enough for now, and where there are no obvious worthwhile improvements that would justify spending more time. This approach is far more effective than trying to arrive at consensus with unanimity, where the aim is to accommodate everyone's personal preference and ideas.

## 2.4. Integrate learning from objections

Objections inform people of things that can be improved. *Resolving objections* typically means evolving (proposed) agreements and changing activity in ways that render that argument void. Sometimes however, there might be a reason why there is more to be gained from leaving things unchanged despite the existence of a valid objection. Ultimately, resolving objections involves weighing up pros and cons of any decision, both in relation to the specific situation a decision is intended to address, but also in the context of the organization as a whole. In complexity there

are typically no perfect or entirely correct decisions, only those that (for now at least) appear good enough for now and safe enough to try. Often all that is needed is a good enough next step which allows us to learn empirically and adapt and evolve the decision over time.

This facilitation of natural and incremental learning draws on the diversity of knowledge, experience and expertise distributed throughout an organization. It helps to shift from a paradigm rooted in binary thinking and polarization (either/or) to a continual process of synergy (both/and), which over time fosters stronger relationships between peers as well.

## 2.5. The Implicit Contract of Consent

Adopting the principle of consent in a team, or in the organization as a whole, has implications for how people approach decision making, dialogue and activity. Consider making this implicit contract of consent explicit, to support members of the organization to adopt and apply the principle of consent:

1. In the absence of objections to an agreement, I intend to follow through on that agreement to the best of my ability.
2. As I become aware of them, I will share any possible objections to (proposed) agreements and activity, with those directly responsible for them.
3. I'll consider objections to proposals, agreements and activity that I'm responsible for, and will work to resolve the objection if I can.
4. I'll actively consider agreements that are due review, to check for any possible objections.

# 3. The Principle of Empiricism

*Test all assumptions you rely on through experiments and continuous revision, so that you learn fast, make sense of things and navigate complexity as effectively as you can.*

Empiricism — the foundation of the scientific method — is an essential principle to embrace if we're to navigate effectively in a complex world. Not only are the environments in which organizations operate complex but an organization is in itself a complex adaptive system. Knowledge about an organizational system and its interactions is often tentative and highly dependent on context.

Empiricism can help us to increase certainty and reduce self-delusion, so that we can make the best use of our time. In our attempts to make sense of things and to have a sense of certainty about what is happening, why it's happening, what should happen next and what's needed to achieve that, we often draw conclusions without checking if the assumptions they are built on are true and accurate. In complexity, what we perceive as causation can often turn out to be mere correlation or coincidence, and the outcomes of interventions we make will always lead to some consequences we couldn't predict.

Observing and probing systems, and making use of experimentation to inform an iterative approach to change, supports ongoing learning and helps an organization continuously develop to remain effective and responsive to change.

### 3.1. Clarify your hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative explanation of a relationship between a specific cause and effect that is both testable and falsifiable. It provides a starting point for experiments that prove or disprove that hypothesis.

In the context of organizations, you might develop hypotheses about how a change to a work process or to the organizational structure would improve effectiveness or reduce cost. Or about how rescheduling a meeting would increase engagement, or making a certain change to a product would attract a new customer segment while keeping existing customers happy, and so on.

When faced with uncertainty, it helps to make any questions and assumptions you have explicit and describe a clear hypothesis that allows for answering those questions and validating if your assumptions are true. A vague or ambiguous description will make assumptions hard or even impossible to test, and trying to test too many assumptions at once, might set you up on a long path where you learn little of value. Less is often more.

One vital skill to develop when designing experiments is the ability to **distinguish between established knowledge and mere assumptions**. By acknowledging what you don't know yet and what you assume to be more or less true, you can identify questions and assumptions around which to build a hypothesis.

In complex domains, a hypothesis-driven approach relies on experiments to validate or disprove hypotheses, so that you can find viable ideas or falsify them fast. Making sense of things through experimentation, not only enables you to more effectively achieve what you need or desire but it can also help you to validate assumptions you have about which objectives are worthwhile pursuing to start with.

## 3.2. Design good experiments

An experiment is a controlled test designed to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Experiments provide you with validated learning about how to better respond to the challenges and opportunities you face. Outcomes often provide you with the opportunity to refine your hypothesis, or even develop new hypotheses that you can then test with further experiments.

Before you start an experiment, it's important to fully define and document it. In the context of an organization, a good experiment will consist of a list of things you need to do, and if helpful, how you need to do them, as well as a list of variables you will track before, during and/or after the experiment.

Define and document specific thresholds for success and failure of the experiment related to your variables and add details about this to your evaluation criteria. In particular, consider what you would accept as evidence that your hypothesis is false. While an experiment is running, avoid making changes to it, and if you do change something, document those changes, otherwise your measurements may become meaningless. It is vital that you **measure before starting the experiment** to ensure that the threshold for success is not already met because you made an error in your experiment's design.

## 3.3. Treat decisions as experiments

In a complex system, it is impossible to predict all of the ways in which that system will react to a particular intervention of change. Because of this you can apply the concept of experimentation to the way you approach decision making as well. It's valuable to view all significant operational and governance decisions you make as experiments, and to document the intended outcome and evaluation criteria in each case. Make one decision at a time, starting with what appears to be an appropriate or logical starting point and evolve those decisions iteratively, based on what you learn.

# 4. The Principle of Continuous Improvement

*Regularly review the outcome of what you are doing, and then make incremental improvements to what you do and how you do it based on what you learn, so that you can adapt to changes when necessary, and maintain or improve effectiveness over time.*

Whereas the principles of *Empiricism* and *Consent* reveal opportunities for learning, Continuous Improvement relates to what we do with what we learn. Continuous Improvement applies to how we conduct our operations, but also to governance. Everything from the evolution of strategies, policy, processes and guidelines, to the development of products, services, competencies and skills, attitudes and behavior, chosen values and tools, all can be continuously improved.

## 4.1. Take an iterative approach to change

Evolution is often more effective and more sustainable than revolution which is rarely necessary or worthwhile unless you fail to continuously improve a system when it's needed. Especially in a complex environment, making many changes to a system at the same time can lead to a mess that is difficult to fix. Consequences resulting from larger interventions are often hard to measure effectively, especially in complexity, and the relationship between cause and effect will be difficult, if not impossible to determine and evaluate.

Instead, consider changing things incrementally whenever you see an opportunity for a small and worthwhile improvement, significantly reducing

the need for a large intervention. This will help you to effectively adapt to changing environments, keep your organization and systems fit for purpose, and prevent things from descending into a state that is costly or even impossible to repair.

**Even when a large change is needed, go step by step**, figuring out how things need to be and **adjust what you're doing based on what you learn**. With small changes, assumptions can be tested quickly and failure is more manageable. When a small experiment fails, you can learn fast and if necessary, use what you learn to develop a better experiment. When a large experiment fails, a lot of time and effort might be spent without learning much at all.

Be aware that if you change several things at the same time, you might not be able to determine which of them lead to the effects you see, so **aim for one or only a few concurrent changes at a time**.

## 4.2. Monitor, measure and change things based on what you learn

**Define the *intended outcomes*** you expect a change will lead to and be clear on how you will evaluate whatever occurs. When making changes, be clear about the specifics of what you want to improve. What positive consequences do you want to amplify and what negative consequences do you want to dampen?

**Monitor the consequences of your actions** and reflect on what you learn. Pay attention to what actually happens and whether or not the results of your interventions reflect your assumptions and intentions. This will help you keep track of whether or not your changes led to improvements at all.

Remember that even if things don't turn out as you expect sometimes, this doesn't necessarily mean that the results are negative. Sometimes things turn out differently to how we'd assumed or intended. All outcomes help us learn. **Be open to whatever happens**, consider the

pros and cons of any unintended consequences that emerge and acknowledge when it would be beneficial to do things differently, or to aim for different results.

# 5. The Principle of Equivalence

*Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them, so that you increase engagement and accountability, and make use of the distributed intelligence toward achieving and evolving your objectives.*

Equivalence is important in organizational systems, precisely because people are not equal to one other in a variety of ways and depending on the context.

Equivalence increases engagement by giving people affected by decisions the opportunity to influence those decisions to some degree.

By including people in making and evolving a decision that affects them, they gain deeper understanding about the resulting decision, the situation it's intended to address, and the pros and cons that have been weighed in the process. It also helps to keep systems more open and transparent and reduces the potential for information vital to the decision being overlooked or ignored. Depending on the level of involvement, people might also have the opportunity to shape things according to their preference, and in any case, participation in the decision making leads to a greater sense of ownership over what is decided.

People are more likely to take responsibility for following through on decisions when they are involved in making them. This is further reinforced when ensuring affected parties have influence in adapting those decisions later, should they discover reasons why a decision is no longer good enough, or if they discover a viable way for improving something.

Decisions we develop together will always be ‘*our*’ decisions, whereas decisions taken by others, will always be ‘*theirs*’ and will be appreciated and

supported more or less by others, depending on their personal preference and point of view.

Some decisions will affect a large group of people, e.g. an entire department, or even the organization as a whole. Including those affected in the decision making process will yield benefits that reach far beyond the decision in question. People will build connection, trust and a greater sense of community and belonging. For effectively involving a large number of stakeholders in the decision making process you can use a variety of group facilitation techniques and online tools.

## **5.1. Delegate responsibility and power to influence**

To become or remain effective, organizations of any size benefit from distributing work, and the power to influence decisions relating to that work, throughout the organization. This helps to eliminate unnecessary dependencies, so that people can create value unimpeded, without getting bottlenecked, waiting on a decision making hierarchy or the input of others who are more distant from the work.

For matters that concern a large number of people, it makes sense to delegate responsibility for making and evolving agreements to a smaller group that has the necessary experience and expertise, who can then inform and consult with others in the organization during their decision making process. With adequate transparency and some proactivity in informing people affected by decisions of anything that is useful for them to know, possible objections from all stakeholders can still be quickly identified, qualified, and if necessary, resolved. In this way, equivalence enables the delegation of responsibilities to individuals or small groups, while still keeping the whole system open to discover and draw on the collective intelligence of everyone involved.

Periodically rotating who takes a lead in decision making helps build trust, accountability and a more widely shared understanding of the con-

text in which decisions are being made, because a growing number of people will gain experience in that role.

## 5.2. Consider who should be involved and how

Everyone throughout an organization is impacted by all decisions to some degree, because each decision will impact the whole in some way. Equivalence in decision making doesn't mean everyone needs to be involved in every decision all of the time. Nor does it mean that everyone has to have the same amount of influence in every context where they are affected. Equivalence means ensuring that those affected by decisions are at least able to influence those decisions, on the basis of arguments that reveal unintended consequences for the organization that are preferable to avoid, and/or worthwhile ways for how things can be improved. Put another way, the minimum requirement for equivalence to exist is to hear and consider any possible objections raised by people affected by decisions, and work to ensure that those objections are resolved.

The degree of worthwhile involvement is context dependent. At one end of the spectrum, it might be enough that decisions affecting others are made initially by an individual or a smaller group and that these decisions are then tested for any objections with those affected afterwards. On the other end of the spectrum, equivalence could manifest as a fully collaborative process where those affected participate in decision making from end-to-end. A middle road is a participatory approach that keeps people informed about progress and invites specific input at various stages along the way.

Equivalence needs to be balanced with *Effectiveness*, enabled through *Transparency* and constrained by *Consent*, for it to function at its best. It's valuable to weigh up the benefits of more or less involvement, versus the cost in terms of resources, energy and time.

For any decision of significance it's good to ask yourself who, if anyone, should be involved, and to what degree? Consider those who will be directly or indirectly impacted and those who will have responsibility for

acting on what you decide. While not directly related to Equivalence, it might also be prudent to consider those who are not obviously affected by a decision, but who could contribute with their influence, experience and expertise.

### **5.3. Make necessary information available**

For people to contribute in an effective way, they need access to relevant information relating to the decision in question. It's helpful to develop a system for visualizing important decisions and broadcasting about them to others. Visibility and the option for open dialogue about what's going on in the organization helps to build shared understanding, which, in turn, contributes toward more effective decisions being made.

### **5.4. Invest in learning and development**

When involving people in decision making, everyone understanding what objections are – and how they are distinct from concerns, opinion or preference – will help people contribute to decisions in more meaningful and effective ways. Put in place ways to gather any possible objections that people raise and develop a system to easily make them available to the people directly responsible for making and evolving those decisions.

In the case where people are responsible for making and evolving agreements together on a regular basis, invest in everyone developing the necessary competence and skills. This includes learning basic communication skills and developing fluency in whichever decision making processes you use.

### **5.5. Invite external influence**

Some decision making will be improved through including a range of perspectives and expertise. When looking for people with a worthwhile

perspective to bring, consider the wider organization and your external environment too. Who has valuable expertise or experience from elsewhere in the organization and who are your customers, investors and other stakeholders? All of these people are affected in some way by the consequences of decisions you make. As well as being open to consider their suggestions and points of view, there might be times when actively inviting their opinion or involving them in certain decisions you need to make, will inform you of better ways to achieve your goals.

# 6. The Principle of Transparency

*Record all information that is valuable for the organization and make it accessible to everyone in the organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality, so that everyone has the information they need to understand how to do their work in a way that contributes most effectively to the whole.*

Transparency in an organization helps people understand what's going on, what to expect and why things are done the way they are. It reduces uncertainty, supports trust and trustworthiness and fosters accountability.

Adequate transparency means that people either have direct access to the information they need, or that they at least know where to go or who to ask, to get access to it. Transparency helps everyone understand when they can safely and effectively decide and act for themselves and when they need to involve others to respond to dependencies they share.

Transparency supports us to learn from, and with each other. It helps to reduce the potential of small problems growing into big ones because we are more likely to spot mistakes and negative unintended consequences more promptly.

Transparency facilitates the ongoing development and maintenance of a coherent and adaptive learning organization. Having access to relevant information helps us to quickly identify important needs and changes and respond fast.

## **6.1. Clarify motivation for (more) transparency**

Transparency is a means to an end, not an end in itself, so if you're looking to increase transparency in your organization, take the time to clarify the reasons why. What are the challenges you are trying to solve by introducing more transparency and/or what are the opportunities you wish to pursue?

Introduce more transparency into your organization as a way to support learning and to free people up, not as a way to control them. Use it as a way to improve performance, not leave people feeling unsafe to do anything because they are anxious about being watched. Transparency can enable co-creation and innovation but in a context where failure is treated as negative, rather than an opportunity to learn, it will impede people's willingness to take risks and experiment.

## **6.2. Consider reasons for confidentiality**

Be clear about information that is inappropriate to share. While secrecy can be associated with illicit or dubious affairs, there are many legitimate reasons for confidentiality in organizations. Sometimes secrecy is necessary, for example, protection of people's personal data and affairs, security of assets or protection of intellectual property that helps an organization achieve its goals.

## **6.3. Identify what information is valuable to record and share**

Consider carefully what information is worthwhile to record. Valuable information worth recording typically includes:

- decisions that have been made, along with the information they were based upon, who made them and the reasons why they were made

- any information that supports people to make effective decisions, such as details about the context, possibilities explored and any important constraints
- information that helps with evaluating progress and outcomes, including evaluation criteria, metrics, descriptions of intended outcomes and details of any hypotheses upon which decisions are being made
- information that reduces uncertainty and supports the development of trust, such as finances and future plans
- useful insights and learning
- meeting minutes

## **6.4. Create and maintain a coherent system for recording information**

Documenting relevant information in a way that is coherent and accessible is an ongoing task that relies on everyone in the organization playing their part. Developing a system for recording and sharing information and keeping it up to date takes time and effort. Choose tools that make it simple to create, update, and cross-reference records, as well as to search and retrieve information when it's required. Make clear which information is recorded and updated, by whom and when, and structure records accordingly. Take the time to regularly check through your records, ensure your system remains helpful and keep an archive of historical information for reference.

# 7. The Principle of Accountability

*Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to do, and accept your share of responsibility for the course of the organization, so that what needs doing gets done, nothing is overlooked and everyone does what they can to contribute toward the effectiveness and integrity of the organization.*

Whenever we are part of a system (e.g. an organization, a community, family or state) the consequence of our actions or inaction will impact others in that same system for better or worse. Therefore we carry a certain amount of responsibility for the wellbeing of the system.

In particular, when we choose to become part of an organization, we enter into a transactional relationship with others, where we can expect to receive something in exchange for taking care of one or more specific needs the organization has.

The promise we make to take responsibility for things that need doing, creates a dependency between us and those who depend on the fulfillment of that promise.

## 7.1. Acknowledge shared accountability

The consequences of our action or inaction will affect the organization in some way, so by becoming part of an organization we are taking some responsibility for the wellbeing of the whole. Many responsibilities within an organization are hard to anticipate, are undefined and are undelegated. Therefore when members of an organization recognize that they *share accountability* for the organization as a whole, they are more inclined to

step up and take responsibility for things when needed. Problems and opportunities are more likely to be acknowledged and dealt with and you reduce the risk of developing a culture of looking the other way, or worse, a culture of blame.

Many responsibilities are typically distributed throughout an organization by way of delegation<sup>1</sup>, meaning that people take responsibility for specific work and decision making. Whenever a responsibility is delegated by one party (the delegator) to another party (the delegatee(s)), accountability for results is shared between both parties. This is because either parties' choices and actions (or inaction) will impact results. Furthermore the delegator is accountable for their decision to delegate these responsibilities, and for their decision about whom to delegate them to.

While it's typically productive for delegatee(s) to take the lead in deciding how to take care of their domain<sup>2</sup>, regular communication between delegator and delegatee(s) provides a broader scope of perspective which in turn, supports strategic development and the effective execution of work.

When people consider themselves accountable only for those things that impact their immediate sphere of responsibility, many of the things that would require attention but have not been delegated to anyone in particular, or that appear to be someone else's problem to solve, would get missed.

## 7.2. Make the hierarchy of accountability explicit

Most organizations have a hierarchy of delegation and therefore a hierarchy of accountability. This means that accountability for outcomes is distributed throughout the organization, while overall accountability for the integrity of the organization rests with whomever takes legal responsibility for that organization as a whole. In many organizations today,

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<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>glossary:domain

this generally points back up a leadership hierarchy to wherever the buck stops. However, in other contexts, like a community for example, overall accountability lies equally with everyone who is involved.

Whatever your particular organizational context, making the hierarchy of accountability explicit is useful because it reveals the relationship between [delegator] and [delegatee(s)].

### **7.3. Move from “holding to account” to self-accountability**

The principle of accountability applies to everyone. It promotes a shift from being held to account by someone—which often leads to a culture of fear and blame—towards a culture of self-accountability where everyone acknowledges the impact of their actions and inaction on others, and on the system as a whole, and acts accordingly. In your relationships with others, it relates to making and following through on commitments you make, managing expectations, doing what you agree to and answering for when you don’t.

### **7.4. Create conditions that enable accountability to thrive**

Merely clarifying what people can and cannot do is not enough to encourage a culture where accountability is embraced. In fact, alone, this can have the opposite effect. To increase the level of self-accountability in an organization there are various factors that can help:

- **Involvement:** the more that people are able to influence decisions that affect them, the greater their sense of ownership will be, and the greater the likelihood that they will share a sense of accountability for the results (see also: *The Principle of Equivalence*)

- **Access to information:** when people have the opportunity to find out what is going on in the organization and why certain decisions are made, they can figure out how they can best contribute to the whole and be an active and artful member of the organization (see also: *The Principle of Transparency*)
- **Safety to disagree:** when people are free to express their opinions and learn how to listen and disagree in constructive ways, the organization can rely on a broader scope of perspectives, experiences and expertise, and people will feel more psychologically safe and in control. (see also: *The Principle of Consent*)

## 7.5. Make implicit responsibilities explicit

When responsibilities are unclear, it can lead to mistaken assumptions about who is responsible for what, double work, people crossing important boundaries, or failing to take action in response to important situations. At the same time, when clarifying responsibilities, it's important to avoid over-constraining people because doing so limits their ability to make important decisions, innovate and act. This leads to a reduction in their willingness to accept accountability.

Too much specificity or too much ambiguity around the scope of authority people have to influence can lead to hesitation and waste. And in the worst case it can mean that important things don't get dealt with at all.

*Clarifying domains* provides a way of explicitly delineating areas of responsibilities and defining where the edge to people's autonomy lies.

## 7.6. Encourage self-accountability

To encourage a culture with a high level of self-accountability, do your part in creating a working environment where people voluntarily take on the following responsibilities:

- Act within the constraints of any agreements governing domains you are responsible for, including the organization itself, teams you are part of, and roles you keep.
- Act in accordance with any explicitly defined organizational values.
- Be transparent and proactive in communicating with those you share accountability with, if you realize that what you agreed to is not the best course of action.
- Find others who can help you if you discover you're unable to take care of your responsibilities.
- Break agreements when you are certain the benefit to the organization outweighs the cost of waiting to amend that agreement first. And take responsibility for any consequences, including following up as soon as possible with those affected.
- Speak up if you disagree with something or think it can be improved in a worthwhile way, by raising possible objections as soon as you become aware of them.
- Be proactive in responding to situations that could help or harm the organization, either by dealing with them yourself directly, or by finding the people who can, and letting them know.
- Aim to give your best contribution, both through the work you are doing and in how you cooperate or directly collaborate with others.
- Take responsibility for your ongoing learning and development, and support others to do the same.

## **Part III.**

# **Key Concepts for Making Sense of Organizations**

In this section you'll learn about the following key concepts:

- Driver
- Domain
- Agreement
- Objection
- Governance and Operations

You will also discover how these concepts relate to value (and waste), delegation (and accountability), self-organization, self-governance and semi-autonomy.

When people understand these concepts, it gives them a common language for describing clearly what's going on in the organization. This helps to increase shared understanding and enables constructive dialogue about what needs to be done.

For any terms you don't understand, check out the glossary at the end.

# 1. Drivers

A **driver** is a person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation.

Drivers:

- can be used to derive goals, objectives, aims, mission, vision, purpose
- can change over time

## 1.1. Drivers, Value and Waste

**Value** is the importance, worth or usefulness of something in relation to a driver.

**Waste** is anything unnecessary for — or standing in the way of — a (more) effective response to a driver.

By adopting the concept of value and waste, many practices and ideas from **lean production** and **lean software development** can be utilized by organizations pulling in S3 patterns:

- value stream mapping
- various strategies for eliminating waste
- the Kanban Method

## 2. Domains

*A **domain** is a distinct area of influence, activity and decision making within an organization.*

To make better use of their limited time, energy, and resources, people in organizations distribute work between them by creating roles or forming teams, units, or departments. In the process they are explicitly or implicitly defining domains - distinct areas of responsibility and autonomy. All domains are within the overall domain of an organization and may overlap and/or be fully contained within other domains.

Any role or team's purpose is to contribute towards the overall purpose of the organization by taking care of a specific organizational need. Inadequately defined domains typically lead to stakeholders having different assumptions about areas of responsibility and autonomy. As a consequence, both collaboration and distribution of work suffers because of missed dependencies, double work, or work not done at all.

*Clarifying domains* makes the contract between the *delegator* (who delegate responsibility for a domain) and the *delegatee(s)* (to whom the domain is delegated) explicit, which enables everyone to learn about what works and what doesn't, and to understand who is responsible for what. A clear domain description with a reasonable amount of detail is a necessary prerequisite for people to successfully evaluate and continuously improve their work.

### 2.1. Regularly evaluate and evolve domains

People's understanding of the organization is limited and the environment is always changing. Therefore it is essential that delegator, delegatee(s)

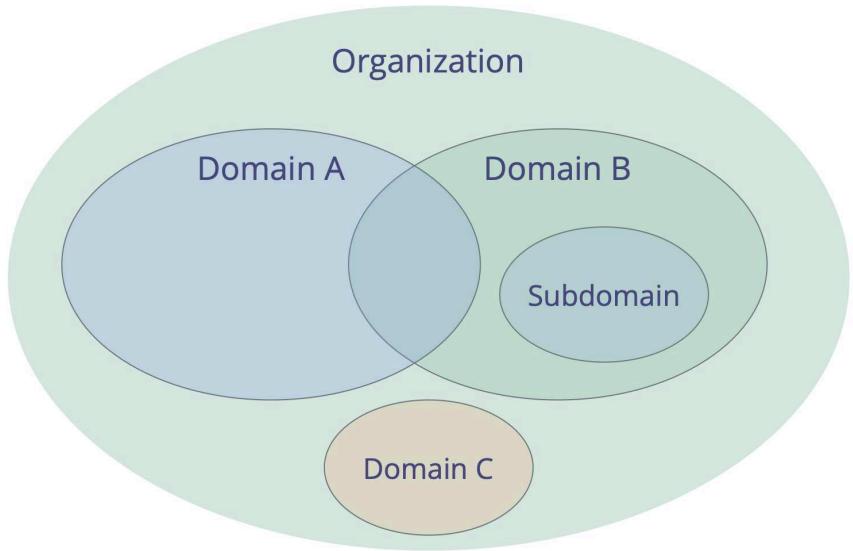


Figure 2.1.: Domains may overlap and/or be fully contained within other domains

and other relevant stakeholders regularly take the time to evaluate and evolve both the design of the domain and how people account for it as their understanding of the domain deepens.

People might do a great job of accounting for a domain in the way it's designed, but the design of the domain might be primitive or flawed. On the other hand, even if the design of a domain is poor in the first iteration, through this process it will improve over time.

## 2.2. Delegating Responsibility for Domains

*Delegation is the grant of authority by one party (the delegator) to another (the delegatee) to account for a domain (i.e. to do certain things and/or to make certain decisions), for which the delegator maintains overall accountability.*

Responsibility for domains is delegated to groups or individuals, who then act within its defined constraints on their autonomy and influence.

When a domain is delegated to a group of people, they become a team, when it's delegated to an individual, they become a role keeper.

The delegatee(s) may do whatever they think will help them achieve their purpose, unless it is outside the domain of the organization, explicitly forbidden, they violate somebody else's (explicit) domain, or impede other people's contribution to the organization in some other way.

**Note:** *Things that are forbidden include explicit constraints laid out in the domain description, any other agreements the delegatee(s) need to keep, and legal and regulatory requirements.*

The delegator still retains overall accountability for that domain, allocates **resources** and often defines:

- the **organizational need** the domain is designed to respond to
- **key responsibilities** (key deliverables, any critical risks to manage, other essential work and decision making being delegated)

- **constraints to the autonomy and influence** of the delegatee(s), usually related to the organization itself (dependencies, involvement of the delegator, reporting etc.)

## 2.3. Drivers and Domains

It's also possible to understand a domain in relation to organizational drivers:

- the domain's **primary driver** - the main driver the delegatee(s) respond to
- the set of subdrivers the organization may benefit from addressing when responding to the domain's primary driver, which include:
  - **key responsibilities** (any driver following directly from the domain's primary driver)
  - **dependencies and external constraints** (drivers relating to other domains or to the environment beyond the organization) that constrain the delegatees' autonomy

# 3. Objections

An **objection** is an argument relating to a (proposed) agreement or activity that reveals unintended consequences you'd rather avoid, or that demonstrates worthwhile ways to improve.

Objections reveal information about (potential) **unintended consequences**, or about **worthwhile ways to improve**.

Be aware that withholding objections can harm the ability of individuals, teams or the whole organization to achieve their objectives.

It's the responsibility of each individual in an organization to raise potential objections to proposals, decisions, existing agreements or activities.

Those accountable for an activity or (proposed) agreement in question, are responsible for *considering arguments and addressing objections* that are raised, when doing so will help to meet the organization's objectives.

When seeking out potential objections, consider:

- why the intended outcome would not be (fully) achieved: **effectiveness**
- why it would be wasteful to proceed as proposed (or previously agreed): **efficiency**
- the negative consequences something would have elsewhere (in the same domain, in the wider organization, or beyond): **side-effects**

The information revealed by objections can be used to improve:

- current and planned activity
- how people execute on decisions
- existing agreements

- proposals
- shared understanding of drivers

Create a culture where people feel comfortable to raise *potential* objections at any time, so that they can relax into making decisions that are *good enough for now and safe enough to try*. This encourages developing a preference for trying things out, instead of attempting to anticipate and account for all possibilities in advance.

Harness a diversity of perspectives and be open to challenge your own, to discover when and what to change, and enjoy iterating more rapidly, running experiments and learning from the outcomes as you proceed.

### 3.1. Concerns

Not all arguments raised are objections. Distinguish between objections, which always reveal useful information, and other arguments that are based only on assumptions, or a personal preference or opinion.

A **concern** is an assumption – or opinion – that doing something (even in the absence of objections) might stand in the way of (more) effective response to an organizational driver.

In *Consent Decision Making*, concerns can inform ways to further evolve agreements (including evaluation criteria and frequency of evaluation). Bring up concerns if you think it's valuable to consider them, and at least record them along with the agreement, and monitor outcomes over time.

If in doubt about whether you have an objection or a concern, be proactive and check with others to see what they think too. (see *Test Arguments Qualify as Objections*).

# 4. Agreements

*An **agreement** is an agreed upon guideline, process, protocol or policy designed to guide the flow of value.*

Shared guidelines about why, how and when to act, and what is specifically required, enable effective collaboration.

Agreements are created in response to organizational drivers, are **regularly reviewed** and evolved as necessary.

**Overall accountability** for an agreement lies with the people that make them.

An agreement can include **delegation of specific responsibilities** to individuals or groups.

# 5. Governance and Operations

When people think about governance they often think of corporate governance, the framework of rules, practices, and processes that are used to direct and manage the company. Traditionally, many of these decisions are seen to be made by managers in a management hierarchy but many others throughout an organization often make or at least contribute to governance decisions as well, regardless whether they are aware of it, or not. Governance happens not only on an organizational level, but within teams and even on an individual level as well.

Most organizations and teams today benefit from developing capacity for collective sense making and harnessing a diversity of perspectives to effectively make and evolve the decisions necessary to navigate in a complex world.

Since there are so many decisions to make for an organization to run effectively, S3 seeks to enable productivity by freeing people up to do and decide as much as possible for themselves, while ensuring coherence in collaboration for a successful and effective organization.

Greater autonomy of individuals and teams necessitates clear agreements (i.e. guidelines and constraints) that enable smooth collaboration between those teams and individuals, and that support achievement of both long-term and short-term objectives. Regular iterative reviews and incremental evolution of agreements ensure they become, and remain fit for purpose over time.

While a decision of short-term consequence can easily be amended on the spot, making more consequential agreements that constrain people's behavior and activity, often benefits from a more participatory and deliberate *decision making process*. These agreements include but are not

limited to matters such as: strategy, priorities, distribution of responsibilities and power to influence, work processes, and many decisions about products and services.

Such agreements need to be documented, both to remember them and to support effective *review*, and to be communicated to people affected (who are ideally also *involved in the creation and evolution* of those agreements).

Therefore it's valuable to distinguish between two categories of activities in an organization, one of which we refer to as governance, and the other as operations:

**Governance** in an organization (or a domain within it) is the process of setting objectives and making and evolving decisions that guide people towards achieving those objectives.

**Operations** is doing the work and organizing day-to-day activities within the constraints defined through governance.

For each domain in an organization there is a *governing body*: people with a mandate to make and evolve agreements which govern how the people doing the work in that domain create value.

There are many ways to distribute work and governance. Sometimes the governing body is a single person, e.g. in the case of a manager who leads others. Other times a *group of people govern themselves* and all members share responsibility for governance within the constraints of their domain.

**Governance decisions** set constraints on activity and guide future decisions. They relate to matters like:

- Work processes
- Policies and procedures about how people work together
- Organizational structure:
  - Distributing responsibilities and power to influence by designing domains and selecting people to account for them

- Accounting for dependencies between teams
- Distribution of resources
- Strategy (for the whole organization, for a team, product or role),
- Priorities and objectives
- Consequential decisions about products, services, tools, technology, security etc.

Depending on the context, a team might make governance decisions:

- in dedicated *governance meetings* that are scheduled on a regular basis
- on the fly, during the working day
- in a one-off meeting to deal with a specific topic
- in other types of meetings such as product meetings, *planning meetings* or *retrospectives*, etc.

Wherever and whenever you make governance decisions, one thing worth considering is *documenting them somehow*. This way you'll be able to remember what was agreed, so will others, and you'll have something to come back to when it's time to review.

## 5.1. Related Concepts

**Self-Governance:** People governing themselves within the constraints of a domain.

**Semi-Autonomy:** The autonomy of people to decide for themselves how to create value, limited by the constraints of their domain, and by objections brought by the delegator, representatives, or others.

**Self-Organization:** Any activity or process through which people organize work. Self-organization happens within the constraints of a domain, but without the direct influence of external agents. In any organization

or team, self-organization co-exists with external influence (e.g. external objections or governance decisions that affect the domain).

Depending on the constraints set by the delegator, teams have more or less license to conduct governance and decide how they organize their operations, and are therefore more or less self-governing and self-organizing.

# **Part IV.**

# **The Patterns**

S3 offers a pattern-based approach to organizational change.

*A **pattern** is a process, practice or guideline that serves as a template for successfully responding to a specific kind of challenge or opportunity.*

Patterns are modular and adaptable, can be used independently, and are mutually reinforcing, complementing one another when used in combination. S3 patterns can be evolved and adapted to address your specific needs.

In this guide, the patterns are grouped by topic into ten categories to help you more easily identify those that are useful to you:

- Co-Creation and Evolution
- Peer Development
- Enablers of Collaboration
- Building Organizations
- Bringing in S3
- Defining Agreements
- Focused Interactions
- Meeting Practices
- Organizing Work
- Organizational Structure

# 1. Co-Creation and Evolution

## 1.1. Respond to Organizational Drivers

Clarify organizational drivers (i.e. what's happening and what's needed in relation to the organization), and respond as required.

Responses to organizational drivers include:

- direct action (operations)
- organizing how work will be done
- making governance decisions

The response to an organizational driver is typically treated as an experiment that is evaluated and evolved over time.

### Qualify Drivers as Organizational Drivers

A driver is a person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation. A driver is considered an **organizational driver** if responding to it would help the organization generate value, eliminate waste or avoid unintended consequences.

A simple way to qualify whether or not a driver falls within an organization's domain is by checking:

*Would it help the organization if we respond to this driver? Or would it lead to unintended consequences if we don't?*

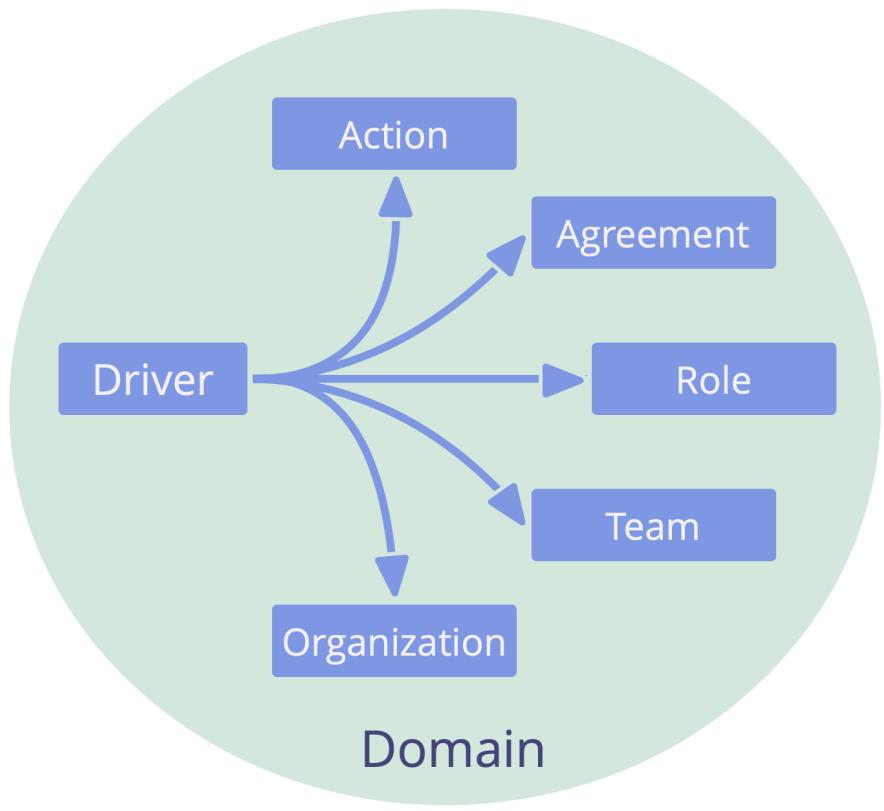


Figure 1.1.: Possible responses to organizational drivers

## 1.2. Navigate via Tension

Pay attention to tension you experience in relation to the organization, investigate the cause and pass on any organizational drivers you discover to the people accountable for the appropriate domain.

**Challenges and opportunities** for an organization are revealed by people bringing awareness to the reasons why they experience tension.

**Note:** In this context, a *tension* is a personal experience: a symptom of dissonance between an individual's perception of a situation, and their expectations (or preferences).

To **discover drivers**, investigate what stimulates tension, and describe what's happening and what's needed. Sometimes an inquiry reveals misconceptions and the tension goes away.

When passing on a driver to another domain, it is often enough to communicate what is happening and why you think it matters (the effect on the organization). Let those responsible think about what's needed and what to do about it.

## 1.3. Describe Organizational Drivers

**Describe organizational drivers to understand, communicate and remember them.**

Describing drivers may be done by a group or by an individual. Depending on their perspective, they may decide to explain a driver as a **problem** to solve or an **opportunity** to leverage.

A simple way to describe a driver is by explaining:

- **What's happening...:**
  - the **current situation**
  - the **effect** of this situation on the organization

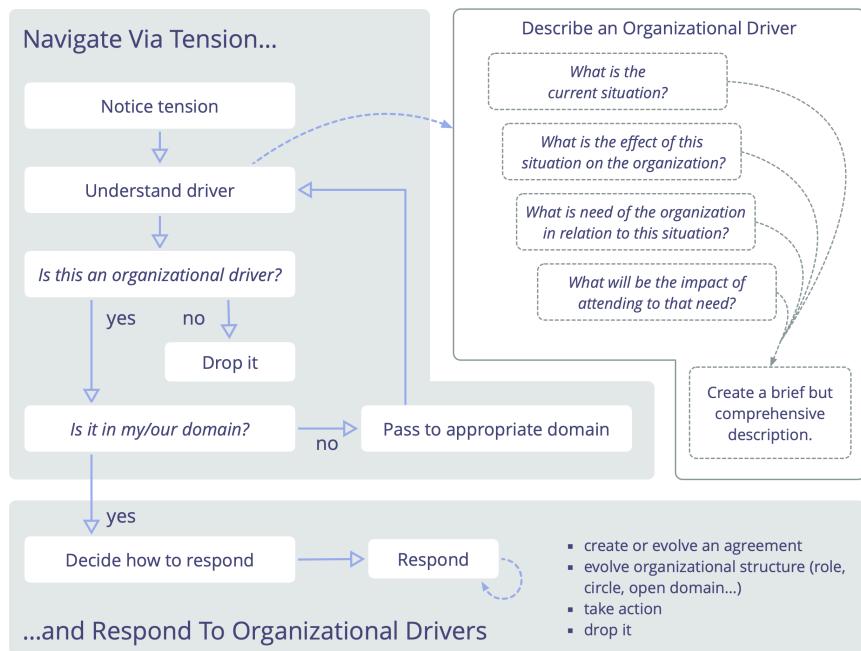


Figure 1.2.: Navigate via Tension, Describe Organizational Drivers, Respond To Organizational Drivers

- ...and what's needed:

- the **need** of the organization in relation to this situation
- the **impact** of attending to that need

Create a brief but comprehensive summary containing just enough information to clearly communicate the need for an action or a decision.

Aim for one or two sentences, so that the information is easy to remember and process.

Besides the summary, more details about the driver may be kept in the logbook.

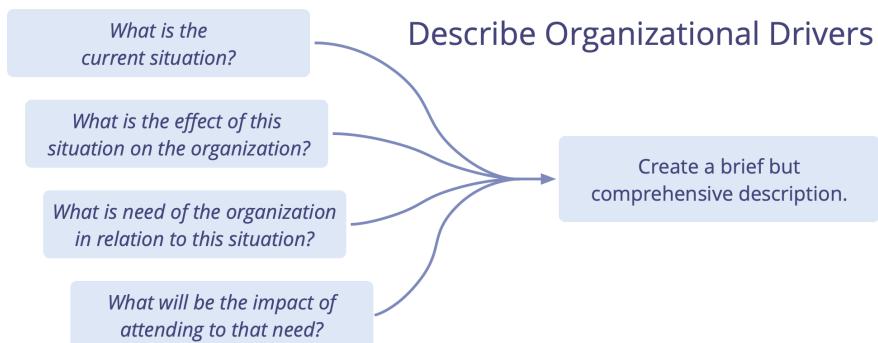


Figure 1.3.: Describe Organizational Drivers

## Example:

*“The kitchen is in disorder: there are no clean cups, the sink is full of dishes and it’s not possible to quickly grab a coffee and get right back to work. We need the kitchen in a usable state so we can stay focused on our work.”*

## 1. Current Situation

*“The kitchen is in disorder: there are no clean cups, the sink is full of dishes...”*

Describe the current situation:

- Briefly capture the essentials of what is happening, and, if necessary, the context in which it occurs.
- Be objective - describe observations and avoid evaluation.

## 2. Effect

*“...it’s not possible to quickly grab a coffee and get right back to work.”*

Explain the effect of this situation on the organization:

- Clarify **why** the situation needs attention: how does it affect the organization?
- Be explicit about whether the effects are current or anticipated.
- Explain challenges, losses, opportunities or gains.

## 3. Need

*“We need the kitchen in a usable state...”*

Explain the need of the organization in relation to this situation:

- A **need of an organization** is anything a team (or individual) requires to effectively account for a domain.
- Be specific on whose need it is (“we need”, “they need”, “I need”).
- If there’s disagreement about the need, it helps to zoom out from specific solutions and focus on what the organization is lacking in this situation.

## 4. Impact

*“...so we can stay focused on our work”.*

Describe the impact of attending to that need:

- Explain the intended outcome, potential benefits or opportunities.
- The impact may be obvious or implicit, especially when the effects of the current situation are already described.

## Review Drivers

Make sure to review drivers on a regular basis, to deepen your understanding of what's happening and needed.

Helpful questions for a review include:

- Is the description of the situation (still) correct?
- Do we still associate the same needs with the situation?
- Is the driver still within our domain?
- Is the driver still relevant?

## 1.4. Consent Decision Making

A (facilitated) group process for decision making: invite objections, and consider information and knowledge revealed to further evolve proposals or existing agreements.

Proposals become agreements when they are considered *good enough for now and safe enough to try* until the next review.

Unresolved objections prevent proposals from becoming agreements.

Withholding objections can harm the objectives of a team or organization.

## Implicit Contract of Consent

1. In the absence of objections to an agreement, I intend to follow through on the agreement to the best of my ability.
2. I agree to share objections as I become aware of them.

## 1.5. Test Arguments Qualify as Objections

Utilize your limited time and resources wisely by testing if arguments qualify as objections and only acting on those that do.

When someone raises an argument for changing something, check that the argument reveals how leaving things unchanged will — or could — lead to consequences you want to avoid, or that it informs you of a worthwhile way to improve how to go about achieving your objectives.

Explore and refine each argument as necessary to identify any misconceptions or misunderstanding, and to eliminate aspects of the argument that are based merely on assumptions, or a personal preference or opinion. If you establish that what remains of the argument qualifies as an objection, then go on to *resolve the objection*.

To discover if an argument qualifies as an objection in a group context, a facilitator can invite reflection by asking:

*“Do you think this argument qualifies as an objection?”*

If no one disagrees, treat the argument as an objection. In case of disagreement, invite a dialogue to discover if an objection is revealed by the argument.

## Understanding Objections

Some helpful questions:



Figure 1.4.: Consent Decision Making

- How does the argument relate to this specific proposal or agreement?
- Does the argument reveal how a (proposed or current) **activity or agreement**:
  - harms response to any organizational driver?
  - can be improved right now?
  - prevents or diminishes someone's contribution towards responding to a driver?
  - is in conflict with the organization's values?
  - is considered not 'safe enough' to try?

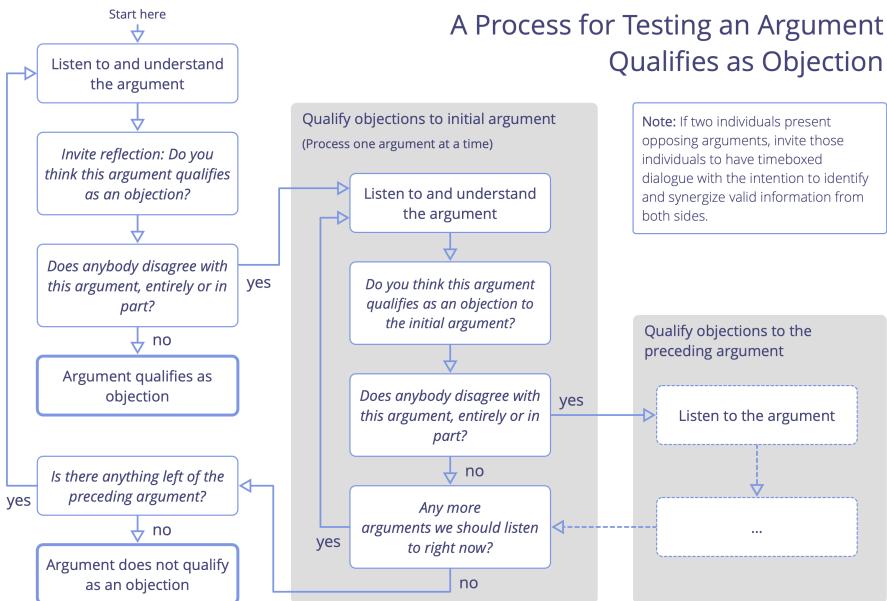


Figure 1.5.: A process for testing if an argument qualifies as an objection

## 1.6. Resolve Objections

**Resolve objections one at a time by using the information they contain to make and evolve amendments.**

Choose an option for resolving an objection that looks most promising, and if that fails, simply pick another one. Each attempt will help you understand more of the information the objection contains, and bring the group closer to proposing an amendment that resolves the objection.

Often, asking the person who brings the objection to propose an amendment, is a productive place to start.

Typically it's most effective to **take one objection at a time**, resolve all objections to a proposed amendment, and then continue with the next main objection.

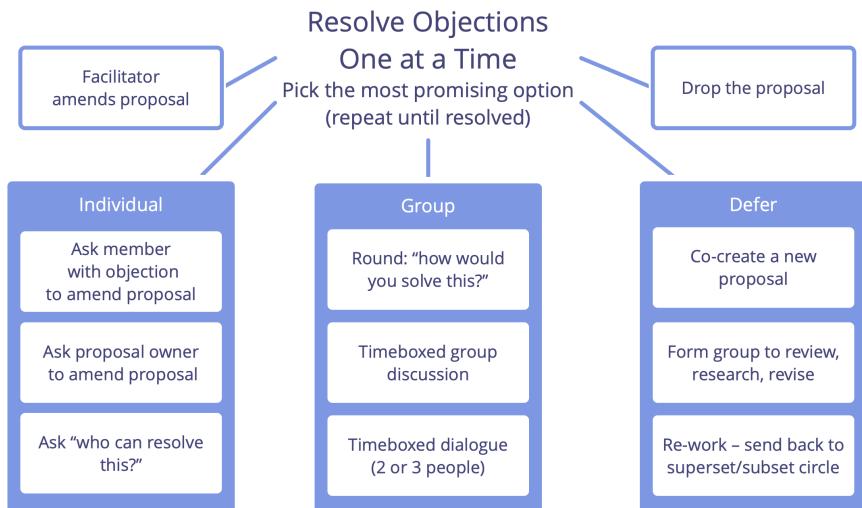


Figure 1.6.: Some options for resolving objections

## A Process for Resolving Objections

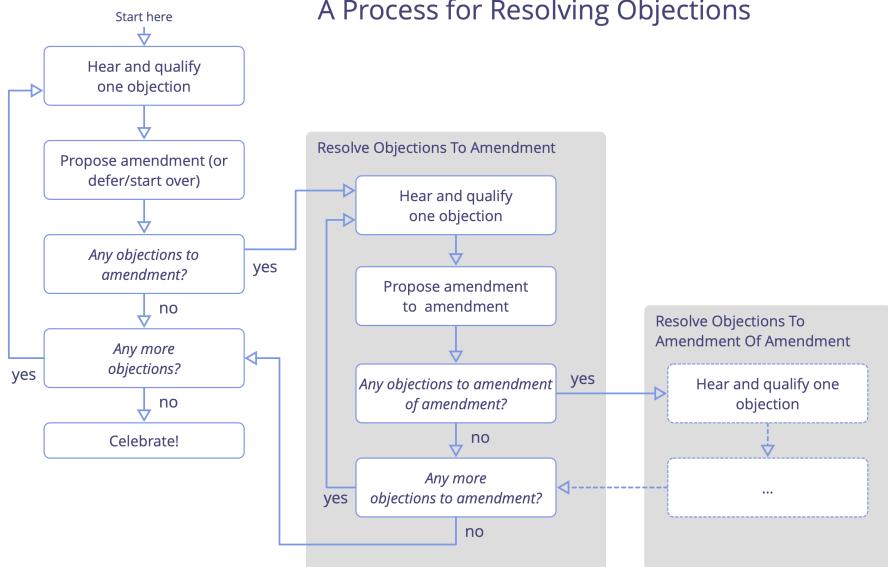


Figure 1.7.: A process for resolving objections

## 1.7. Evaluate And Evolve Agreements

Continuously evolve the body of agreements, and eliminate waste.

Regular review of agreements is an essential practice for a learning organization:

- adapt agreements to suit changing context
- integrate learning to make them more effective

Ensure all agreements have an appropriate review date.

Evaluating agreements can be as simple as checking that an agreement is still relevant, and there is no objection to keeping it as it is.

Agreements are often reviewed in *Governance Meetings*, however sometimes it's more effective to schedule a dedicated session.

Adjust review frequency as necessary, and review early if required.

Elements of this pattern can also be used by individuals to evaluate decisions they make.

### Short Format

- *How has this agreement helped us?*
- *Is there any reason to drop this agreement?*
- *How can this agreement be improved?*
- Agree on a next review date.

### Long Format

Preparation:

- Schedule the review.
- Ensure all necessary information is available.

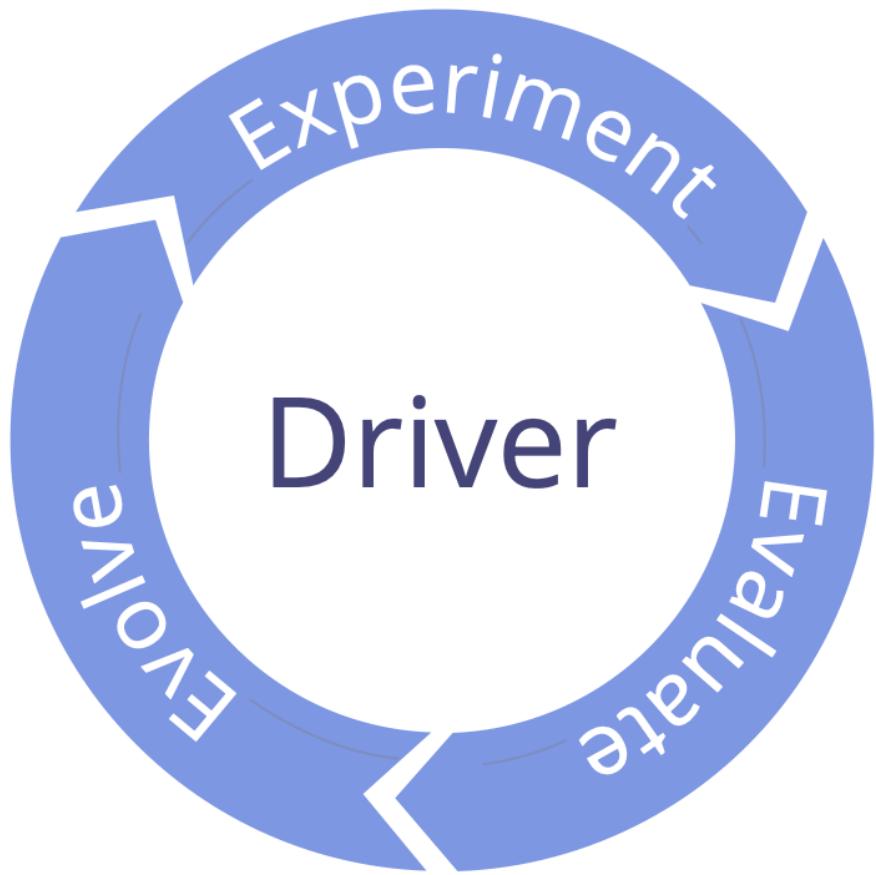


Figure 1.8.: Experiment, evaluate, evolve



Figure 1.9.: A long format for evaluating and evolving agreements

Follow-up:

- Agree on the next review date.
- Document decisions and tasks, and share with relevant people.
- Consider effects on any related agreements.

## 1.8. Involve Those Affected

**Involve people in making decisions that affect them, to maintain equivalence and accountability, and to increase the amount of information available on the subject.**

For larger groups:

- facilitate a process in several stages and create smaller groups who select delegates
- use an online tool and conduct an asynchronous, *timeboxed* and staged process

Consider including those affected in reviewing and evolving decisions, too.

## 1.9. Co-CREATE Proposals

**Bring people together to co-create proposals in response to organizational drivers: tap collective intelligence, build sense of ownership and increase engagement and accountability.**

There are many ways to co-create proposals. They typically follow a similar pattern:

1. Agree on the driver (or problem /opportunity /need)
2. Explore the topic and understand constraints
3. Generate ideas

#### 4. Design a proposal (often done by a smaller group)

One way to co-create proposals is to use S3's *Proposal Forming* pattern.

For inspiration for steps 2 and 3, look to classic group facilitation techniques or design thinking activities.

Besides in a face-to-face workshop, you can adapt this process for online meetings. You can even use it asynchronously (and over an extended period of time) to include many people.

## 1.10. Proposal Forming

**A (facilitated) group process for co-creating a response to a driver.**

- draws on the collective intelligence and diversity of perspective within a group
- involves people in co-creating agreements
- fosters accountability and sense of ownership

*Proposal Forming* may also be used by an individual.

### Proposal Forming Steps

**Consent to driver:** Briefly present the driver. *Is this driver relevant for us to respond to? Are there any essential amendments to what has been presented?*

**Deepen shared understanding of driver:** invite essential questions to understand the driver in more detail.

**Collect considerations** phrased as questions relating to possible solutions. Questions either reveal constraints (information gathering questions) or possibilities (generative questions).

**Answer** any information gathering questions if possible.

# Title of Proposal

*Evaluation Date and/or Frequency*

## Driver



## Who is responsible for what?



## Description



## Evaluation Process and Criteria



Figure 1.10.: A template for proposals

**Prioritize** considerations.

**Gather ideas** as possible ingredients for a proposal.

**Design a proposal** for addressing the driver considering the creative ideas and information gathered so far. This is usually done by a smaller group of “tuners”.

## Choosing Tuners

Consider:

- who should be there?
- who wants to be there?
- who else may have a valuable contribution to make?
- consider expertise, outside view, and inspiration

Between two and three tuners is usually appropriate. Check for any objections to the proposed tuner(s).

## 1.11. Role Selection

**A group process for selecting a person for a role on the strength of the reason.**

Instead of simply assigning people for *roles*, or making a choice based only on majority, use the role selection process to:

- tap collective intelligence by hearing and deliberating on reasons for nominations
- increase ownership over the decision
- ensure support for the role keeper by those affected.

A prerequisite to the selection process is a *clear description* of the role’s domain.



Figure 1.11.: Proposal forming process

## Role Selection - Steps

1. **Present Role Description:** If possible, send out the role's domain description in advance.
2. **Record Nominations:** Participants write their nomination on a slip of paper. People can nominate themselves, another, or pass.
3. **Reasons for Nominations:** Each person shares who they have nominated and why.
4. **Information Gathering:** Participants share or request any information that might support the group in making an appropriate selection.
5. **Nomination Changes:** Check if anyone wants to change their nomination in light of reasons and information shared so far, and hear the reasons for each change.
6. **Propose a nominee** for the role: The facilitator guides the process to identify a suitable nominee on the strength of the reasons heard, e.g. by:
  - proposing a nominee themselves or asking a group member
  - inviting (some) nominees to agree who should be proposed
  - inviting group dialogue to help reveal the strongest nominee
7. **Check for Objections:** Ask participants (including the proposed nominee) to simultaneously signal whether or not they have an objection.
8. **Address and Resolve Objections**, beginning with any from the proposed nominee. *Objections may be resolved* in many ways, including amending the role's domain description or by nominating someone else. When all objections are resolved, check with the (final) nominee again if they accept the role.
9. **Celebrate:** Acknowledge reaching agreement and thank the person who will now keep the role.



Figure 1.12.: Role selection process

To avoid influencing others, abstain from expressing personal interest or opinions before a selection takes place.

Sometimes a role selection reveals a lack of capacity, relevant experience, qualities or skill. A group will then need to consider outside candidates, reconsider priorities or find an alternative way to account for the domain.

This pattern can also be used in any situation where there is a need to choose between a variety of options.

## 1.12. Driver Mapping

**A workshop format for large groups to co-create and organize themselves in response to a complex situation of significant scope and scale.**

During the workshop stakeholders take full ownership of the process from start to finish, as they progress quickly from concept to fully functioning collaboration.

Identify relevant stakeholders, map out related requirements and use them to identify work items and decisions that need to be made, distribute work and define an initial structure for collaboration.

You can use Driver Mapping to:

- organize start-ups,
- kick-off projects,
- tackle major impediments or opportunities,
- implement strategy
- develop organizational structure to better enable the flow of value.

The outcome of a driver mapping workshop is typically:

- a distribution of work, categorized in a number of domains, centered around the needs of stakeholders.

- a bespoke organizational structure that brings it all together, including interlinking domains for managing dependencies.
- a first draft of prioritized governance and operations backlogs for each identified subdomain.
- delegation of influence and the distribution of people to the subdomains through self-selection and nomination.

Although Driver Mapping is often used for identifying and defining new domains, there are also applications for identifying and distributing governance and operational drivers among existing domains in an organization, e.g. when an initiative will be dealt with by existing teams in an organization, or if a group feels they're stuck in their current structure and are looking for inspiration for how to incrementally adapt it. The group can decide if they would map to existing domains and figure out which new ones they'd need to create, or even create a new structure from scratch.

In a small team or circle (max. 6–8 people), when it's not a priority to distribute work, the team might only use steps 1–5, to understand the scope and fill the operations and governance backlog, and then use proposal forming or some other approach for identifying strategy and/or next steps.

In preparation:

- Invite people that can make a relevant contribution to this project. Send out the agenda for the workshop ahead of time.
- Send out the primary you'll work with, and in case of an existing domain, the domain description for the project/initiative in advance so people can familiarize themselves with it. Aim to resolve any objections before the workshop.
- Attendees may already prepare by thinking through and recording ideas of actors and relating needs.
- Prepare a poster with the domain description to present in the first step. You will also need A5 and rectangular sticky notes, pens and a wide wall to work.

# The Driver Mapping Process:

These are the steps to follow:

## 1. Why are we here?

*Present and consent to the primary driver*

- Present the primary driver to the group
- Consent to the driver – *Is this a clear enough description of the driver? Is it relevant for us to respond to?*
- Clarify any existing constraints from the delegator, e.g. budget, due date, expectations, etc. In the case of an existing domain, present the domain description. Invite further questions that help deepen understanding about what's happening and what's needed.
- Make explicit the level of commitment expected from the participants. E.g. people are expected to be here for the duration of the workshop only, or for the duration of the initiative, etc.
- Record any relevant information that comes up.

## 2. Who will be impacted?

*Who will be impacted as we respond to the primary driver? Consider who can help /stand in the way /benefit /lose or be harmed.*

- List actors on sticky notes and display them on a board
- Focus on actual people that will be impacted by this initiative (groups or individuals), and avoid making assumptions about future roles (such as *Project Manager*) or other domains (e.g. *Marketing*) at this stage.

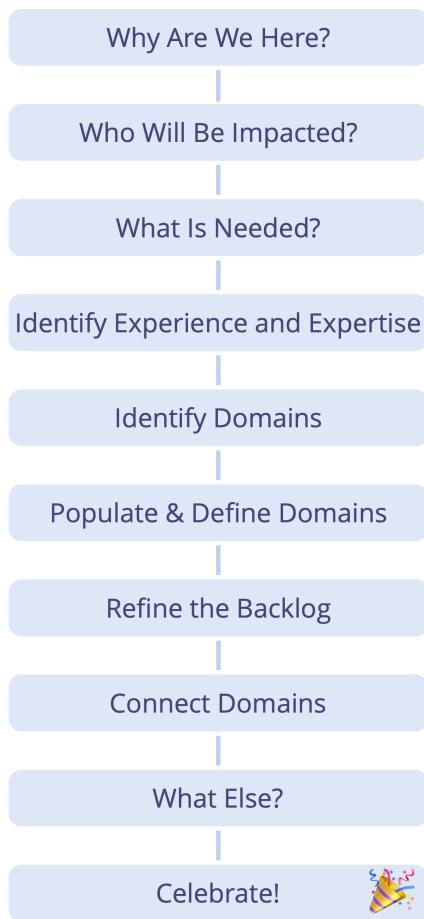


Figure 1.13.: Driver Mapping: Process

### 3. What is needed?

*Consider the various actors and describe what is needed: what do they need in context of the primary driver, and what do we need from them?*

- Write each suggestion on a separate sticky note (need card)
- Describe the need as well as the anticipated impact of responding to that need
- Use the format “*We/they need ... so that ...*”
- Add the name of the actor in the top left corner of the card
- Add your name in the top right corner of the card

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Your name</i>
<i>We / They need _____</i>	
<i>So that _____</i>	
<i>— leave blank for later —</i>	

Figure 1.14.: Driver Mapping: A Need Card

### 4. Identify experience and expertise

*Identify who has experience or expertise in responding to these needs, so that later, when people respond to a specific need, they know who might have valuable input.*

- Take time to familiarize yourself with the various *need cards*.
- Add your name to those *need cards* you have experience with, or ideas how to address, so that later in the process people can consult with you if helpful.
- Consider adding names of people who are not present if you think they would have a valuable contribution to make.
- Write the name(s) of these people at the bottom of the *need card*.
- Adding your name to a card in this step, doesn't mean you're taking responsibility for the need, only that you're able and willing to contribute to finding a solution if that's helpful later.

## 5. Identify Domains

*Cluster actors and/or needs according to relevance, into coherent **domains** as a starting point for sorting and prioritizing needs. Consider how to optimize end-to-end delivery of value to the various actors that you identified in step 2.*

Ways to identify domains:

- Cluster groups of similar actors (actor-centric)
- Cluster groups of similar needs (needs-centric)
- A combination of both (of the above) is common

Consider this step complete, as soon as you've agreed on a first iteration of a meaningful distribution of work. Remember, you can make changes to the domains you defined at any time (later during the workshop or afterward), so you only need to aim for something that's good enough to start.

*As a facilitator, gently support the group in self-organizing, and be mindful of people dropping out of the conversation. This process often includes a phase that appears chaotic to some participants, which might make them feel uncomfortable. To test if a result is achieved, ask for objections to the domains being good enough for now.*

## 6. Populate & define Domains

*People organize into smaller teams around the different domains, then define the domain and give it a name.*

- Form small team around the domains according to experience and interest
- Add at least 1 or 2 people with expertise first. Use the information on the cards,
- Check all domains are sufficiently accounted for
- In each group:
  - agree on a name for the domain.
  - define the primary driver for the domain (and draft a brief domain description if helpful).
- Finally, have each group briefly present their domain, and during each report look out for dependencies and any overlap of these domains.

In this phase some people might wander between domains until they find one they feel they can contribute to.

## 7. Refine the Backlogs

*Organize the work that lies ahead in each domain, ensure things are prioritized and described clearly.*

- For each domain, copy the template below to a flip chart
- Sort all remaining needs into the two backlogs on the flip chart:
  - operations backlog: needs that can be acted on
  - governance backlog: needs that would benefit from or necessitate a decision

- Combine and rephrase cards as necessary, so that description on each card is clear. Consult the author of the card when in doubt.
- Prioritize the cards in each board.
- Archive any “needs” cards that appear superfluous.
- Consider the domain and describe and prioritize other needs that may not have been identified.
- Pass on cards that appear to be the accountability of another domain to address.
- Add cards concerning multiple domains to a dedicated backlog to address later.

*As a facilitator of the driver mapping process, provide a space to collect cards concerning multiple domains so that they can be addressed later.*

Regularly pause to share reports between the various domains. Note: Some domains might dissolve, change or merge with others.

## 8. Connect Domains

*Create structure to manage dependencies and deal with matters that extend beyond the scope of one domain or concern the wider organization*

- For a new organization or project, consider *Delegate Circles*, Service Circles or *Double-linking between domains*.
- For an existing organization, also consider connecting to existing domains in the organization.

## 9. What else?

*Take a moment to check if anything’s missing.*

What else do we need to consider...

- ...to run safely?
- ...to address the primary driver?

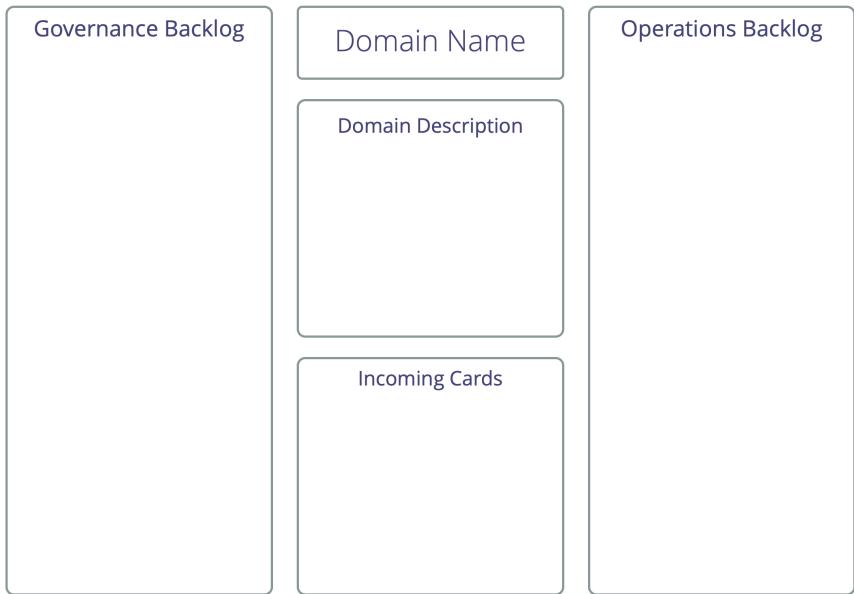


Figure 1.15.: Driver Mapping: A template for domains

## **10. Celebrate!**

*Take a moment to celebrate your achievements in getting your organization or initiative started!*

## 2. Peer Development

### 2.1. Ask For Help

A simple protocol for learning, skill sharing, and building connections, with respect for people's agency.

Ask someone, "*would you be willing to help me with ...?*" The person asked accepts or declines with a simple "yes" or "no".

- if the request is declined, the person asking accepts the answer without negotiation or inquiry
- if the request is unclear, inquire for more information
- if you accept a request for help, support your peer in the best way you can

### 2.2. Peer Feedback

Invite any member of your organization to give you some constructive feedback on your performance in a role or in a team, about your general participation and contribution, or about any other area you wish to develop.

Before the invitation, consider who might be able and willing to provide the feedback you seek, and decide on an appropriate duration – 15 or 30 minutes is usually enough.

Schedule the session in advance, so that your peer can prepare for your meeting, and schedule some time for yourself after the session to decide how you will act on the feedback you received.

In the invitation, clarify the topic you want feedback on, and explain that you are looking for both **appreciations** and **actionable improvement suggestions**.

During the session itself, consider:

- taking notes to ensure you can remember the details
- repeating back, feedback you receive in your own words to check for the accuracy of your understanding
- asking clarifying question to better understand feedback if the intended meaning is unclear for you

Avoid discussing or judging the feedback you receive and remember to thank your peer for taking the time to give you their feedback.

After the session, review your notes and decide for yourself what you will do with the feedback you received. It's your choice if you want to share your decision with your peer.

## 2.3. Peer Review

**Support each other to learn and grow in the roles and teams you serve in.**

The role keeper — or team — leads the peer review by setting up the process, and by speaking first in each step.

Ensure you invite people with complementary perspectives to contribute to the review, and a *facilitator*.

For both appreciations and improvement suggestions, ensure you consider the following aspects:

- The **value** the delegatee brought to the organization by accounting for the domain.
- The role keeper's or team's **work processes**, and their **collaboration** with the delegator and with other relevant stakeholders, and – in the case of a team - with each other.



Figure 2.1.: Peer review process

- How well the **delegator** takes care of their responsibilities.
- The **design of the domain** itself (and potentially the design of other related domains).
- The role keeper's or team's **competencies and skills** in relation to the domain.
- The **strategy** the role keeper or team follows to account for this domain.

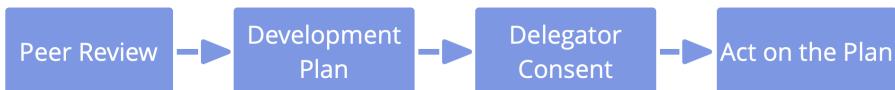


Figure 2.2.: Continuous improvement of people's ability to effectively keep roles or collaborate in teams

## 2.4. Development Plan

**A plan for how to develop more effective ways of accounting for a domain, agreed between delegator and delegatee.**

The development plan may be created for a person in a role, or for a team (e.g. a department, *circle* or *open team*).

Development may happen in the form of refining the *description of the driver* and the domain, making amendments to strategy, or new or updated agreements and specific actions to be taken, either within the domain of the delegator, or the domain of the delegatee.

A development plan (and any accompanying recommendations for changes to the descriptions of the domain and the driver) requires consent from both the delegatee and the delegator.

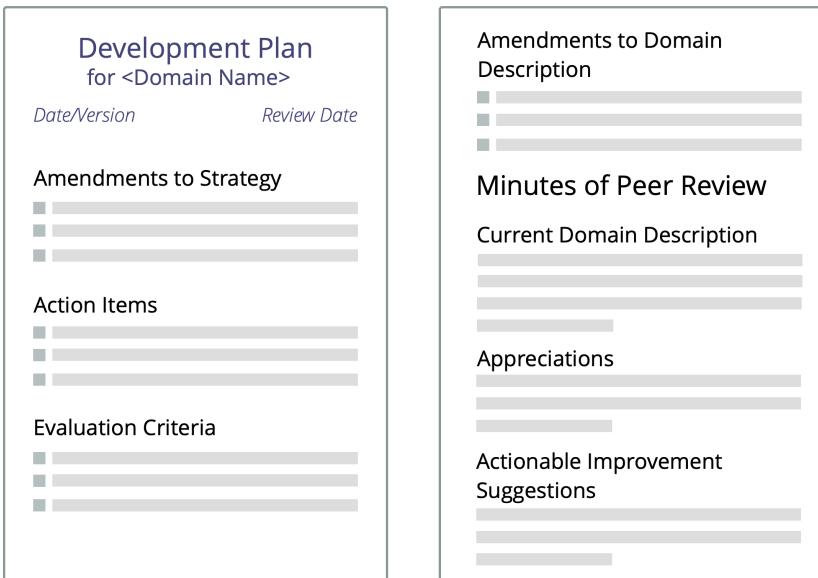


Figure 2.3.: A template for development plans

# 3. Enablers of Collaboration

## 3.1. Artful Participation

**Commit to doing your best to act and interact in ways that enable effective collaboration.**

*“Is my behavior in this moment the greatest contribution I can make to the effectiveness of this collaboration?”*

Participating artfully may include interrupting, objecting or breaking agreements.

*Artful Participation* is an **individual commitment** to:

- actively **consider and follow-up on all agreements** made, in the best way possible, given the circumstances
- **develop awareness and understanding** of individual and collective needs
- **grow the necessary skills**
- **support others** to participate artfully
- bring impediments and improvement suggestions to the attention of others if necessary

### Benefits Of Artful Participation

Artful participation:

- enables co-creation and evolution of agreements
- helps to grow stronger teams

- builds self-accountability, integrity and trust
- generates a culture of mutual support and close collaboration
- is more powerful when embraced by many



Figure 3.1.: Balance autonomy and collaboration through artful participation

## **Artful Participation: Self-Assessment**

- How can I support myself and others to participate more artfully?
- Where are my interactions with others unhelpful or ineffective?
- Which agreements do I find hard to keep? What can I do to address this?
- What skills can I develop, that would support me to participate more artfully?
- What would artful participation mean in relation to:
  - my daily activities?
  - collaboration and interaction with others?
  - the organization? ...our customers or clients?
  - the wider environment?

### 3.2. Adopt The Seven Principles

Align collaboration with the Seven Principles.

Adopting the Seven Principles reduces the number of explicit agreements required, and guides adaptation of S3 patterns to suit the organization's context.

An organization's values need to embrace the Seven Principles.

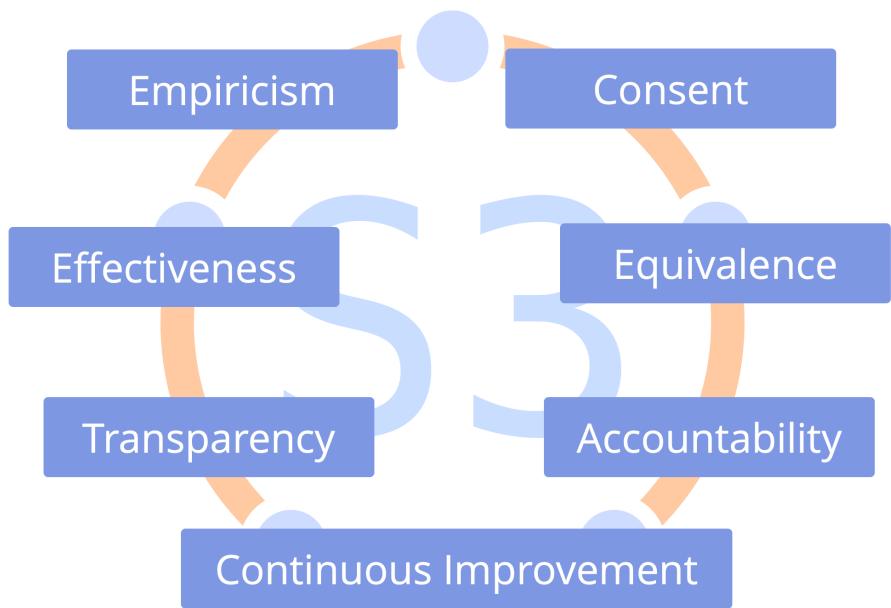


Figure 3.2.: The Seven Principles

### 3.3. Agree On Values

Intentionally evolve the culture in your organization.

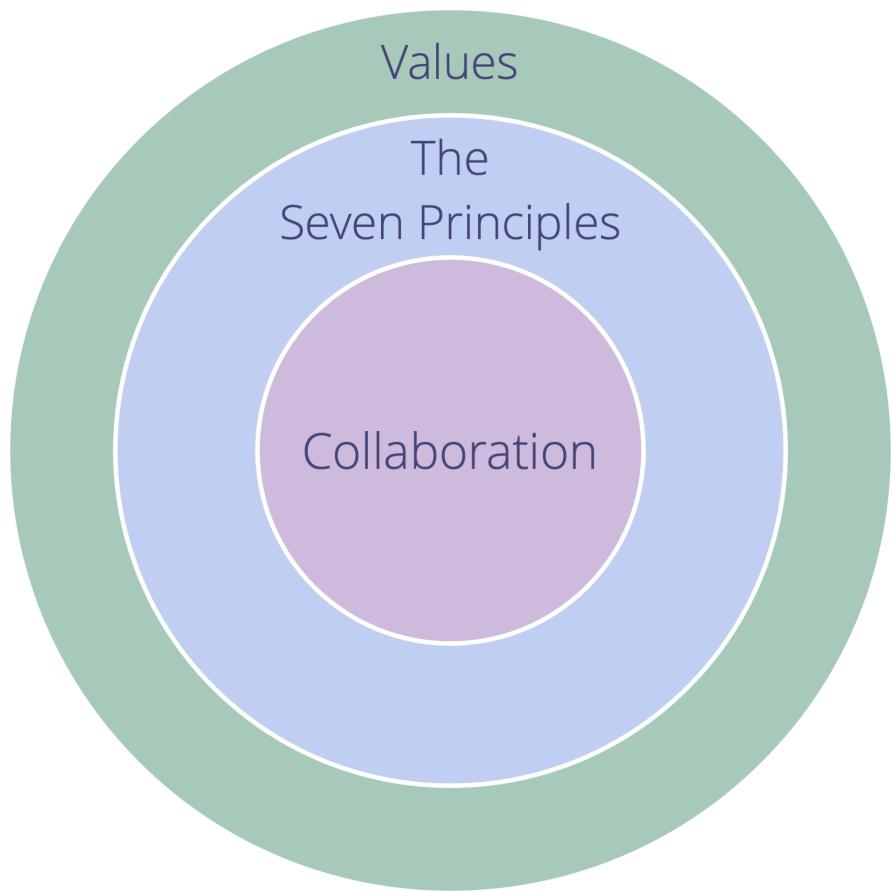


Figure 3.3.: An organization's values need to embrace the Seven Principles

**Values** are valued principles that guide behavior. Values define scope for action and ethical constraints.

- each member brings their own values to an organization based on personal experiences and beliefs
- a team or organization may **choose to collectively adopt values** to guide their collaboration

Values offer guidance to determine appropriate action, even in the absence of explicit agreements.

Collectively adopting a set of values supports the effectiveness of an organization:

- reduces potential for **misunderstanding**
- helps to **align** decision making and action
- **attracts new members, partners and customers** who are aligned with the organization

Chosen values are an agreement that benefits from **regular review**.

### 3.4. Governance Facilitator

**Select someone to facilitate governance meetings.**

A governance facilitator:

- ensures *governance meetings* stay on track and are evaluated
- is (usually) selected by a team from among its members (and for a specific term)
- familiarizes themselves with the *Governance Backlog*
- often invites others to facilitate some agenda items

As a governance facilitator, consider learning about and using the following patterns from S3 to handle governance effectively:

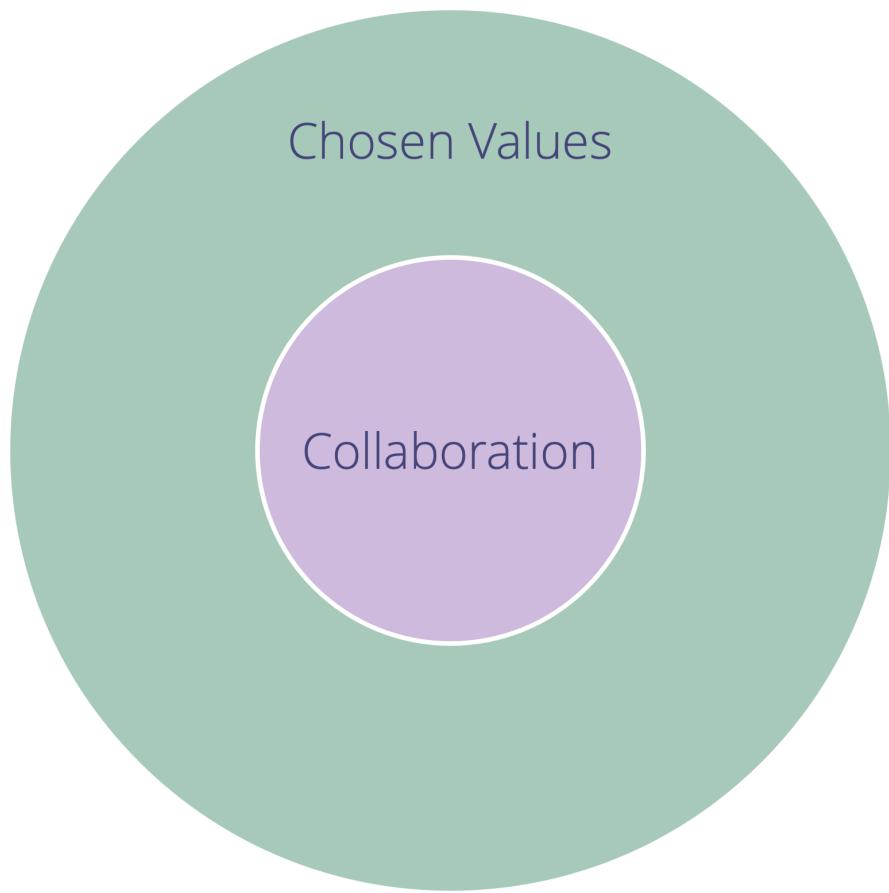


Figure 3.4.: Chosen values define constraints for collaboration

- *Rounds*
- *Proposal Forming*
- *Consent Decision Making*
- *Role Selection*
- *Evaluate Meetings*
- *Resolve Objections*
- *Peer Review*

## 3.5. Breaking Agreements

Break agreements when you are certain the benefit for the organization outweighs the cost of waiting to amend that agreement first, and take responsibility for any consequences.

Breaking agreements is sometimes **necessary** but may come at a **cost** to the community.

Be accountable:

- **clean up** disturbances
- **follow up** as soon as possible with those affected
- **change the agreement** instead of repeatedly breaking it

## 3.6. Contract For Successful Collaboration

Support successful collaboration from the start and build trust between parties by co-creating mutually beneficial and legally robust contracts.

A **contract** is a body of promises that two or more parties agree to make legally binding, i.e if those promises are violated, the injured party gains access to legal (or alternative) remedies.



Figure 3.5.: The governance facilitator is typically a member of the team

Developing shared understanding about needs and expectations is essential for successful collaboration.

While negotiating and agreeing on a contract, model the culture of collaboration you want to achieve, and build a positive relationship with the other parties involved.

This pattern refers to contracts relating to collaboration around any business transaction between an organization and other parties (e.g. employees, consultants, service providers, shareholders or customers). It is especially relevant for contracts that have a significant influence on the future of an organization or one of its partners, such as:

- employment contracts and contracts with external contractors or consultants in *support roles* (including any agreement that results in a change of remuneration or working hours)
- contracts governing collaboration with customers, vendors or service providers
- shareholder agreements

**Note:** Many agreements about collaboration within an organization do not require dedicated contracts, as they are already governed by or subject to existing contracts.

## Success criteria for contract negotiation

When negotiating a contract, ensure:

- shared understanding of the reason for the collaboration, as well as the intended outcome and important constraints
- all parties understand what is expected of them
- all parties affected by a contract are involved in creating the contract and enter it voluntarily
- expectations are realistic
- the agreement is beneficial to all parties

- everyone intends to keep to the agreement made

If for any reason one or more of these criteria cannot be fulfilled, it is probably wise to not proceed.

## **Co-creating the contract**

The way a contract is negotiated can significantly contribute toward building trust between parties. Approach contracting from the point of view of making an agreement between partners, not adversaries: co-create the contract, tailor it to its specific context, and ensure it is legally robust.

- the contract should include all expectations of the parties involved, each explained with adequate detail
- use clear and simple language that all parties can understand, and be unambiguous about legal consequences
- if you need to use specific technical or legal terms a party might be unfamiliar with, explain them in a glossary that is part of the contract
- consult a lawyer who supports the culture you aspire to and is competent in the field if business you are negotiating

## **When Co-Creating a Contract:**

- ensure all parties have a delegation that includes representation for all affected domains (e.g. not only sales, but also development / production /support, etc)
- explicitly describe the culture you want to develop, with consideration for common ground and any cultural differences between parties
- state the reasons for the proposed collaboration, and transparent about expectations and needs of all parties

- disclose all relevant information (if necessary under an NDA)
- agree first on terms of the relationship and expectations to all parties, and then consider how you can make them legally robust
- compile a list of specific laws and regulation the contract needs to comply to
- negotiate in several iterations, allowing time to consider implications and propose amendments
- keep minutes of each meeting to reduce the potential for misconceptions

## **Support The Full Lifecycle Of The Collaboration:**

Any contract can be changed at any time, provided all signatories agree. However, it greatly reduces the potential for conflict later if you consider the full lifecycle of the collaboration in the contract:

- make provisions for successfully getting started by defining on-boarding procedures
- have a probationary period, where all parties can try out the collaboration, and a clear protocol for how each party can terminate the contract during the probationary period
- define and build into the contract regular review meetings where signatories come together to share learning and decide how the contract might be amended to adapt to changing context
- include procedures for breach of contract
- consider making available alternative means for dispute resolution, e.g. mediation, conciliation or arbitration
- consider limiting the contract to a fixed term after which the contract expires and can be renewed if required

## Culture

Every contract influences the culture of the collaboration it governs, even when it appears to only describe *what* needs to be delivered:

- intentionally create the culture of collaboration you want to see by including expectations on *how* things should be done
- align the contract to the organizational culture (of all parties) and to legal requirements
- build contracts that enable and encourage accountability

If you find that standard contracts in your industry are misaligned with the culture you want to create, build your own repository of templates for contracts and clauses and consider sharing it with others, so that you can leverage past experience when creating new contracts.

## 3.7. Transparent Salary

### Create a fair salary formula and make it transparent.

Transparent salary (also referred to as “open salary”) is the practice of determining each employee’s compensation according to a set of rules — the *salary formula* — instead of making compensation subject to individual negotiation between employer and employee. The salary formula — and often individual compensation as well — is transparent to all members of an organization, and sometimes to the public.

A transparent salary formula needs to suit an organization’s context, and to be perceived as fair enough by all stakeholders.

Perception of fairness varies from person to person and according to context, so creating a salary formula requires developing a shared understanding of what is considered fair.

When deciding (or agreeing) on a salary formula for an organization or department, consider:

- what would be a suitable fixed subsistence guarantee
- how to calculate compensation according to need, investment, productivity, or merit
- how to distribute the organization's profit and cover for losses in line with expectations and needs of the various stakeholders

Decide how to handle remuneration for changing roles and *develop a strategy* for how to transition towards new contracts and compensation agreements.



Figure 3.6.: Two ways of opening salaries

## 3.8. Support Role

**Apply the role pattern to external contractors.**

- clarify and describe the driver for the *role*
- create a *domain description*

- if valuable, implement a selection process
- limit the term of the contract
- build in regular *peer reviews*

External contractors consent to take on their role.

**See also:** *Contract For Successful Collaboration*

## 3.9. Bylaws

Secure S3 principles and patterns in your bylaws as needed to protect **legal integrity** and **organizational culture**

Consider:

- consent and equivalence in decision making
- selection process for leadership roles
- organizational structure, values and principles
- influence of owners or shareholders
- sharing gains and costs

# 4. Building Organizations

## 4.1. Delegate Influence

Distribute the power to influence, to enable people to decide and act for themselves within defined constraints.

A delegator can support delegatees to deliver value by:

- Clearly defining domains of autonomy and responsibility
- Ensuring there are opportunities for learning and development
- Providing support if required

Adjust constraints incrementally, considering capabilities, reliability and outcome.

Decentralize as much as possible, and retain as much influence as necessary.

## 4.2. Circle

A *circle* is a self-governing and semi-autonomous team of equivalent people who collaborate to account for a domain.

A circle:

- may be permanent or temporary
- may be self-organizing
- is responsible for its own development and its body of agreements

- **semi-autonomous:**
  - A circle's members act within the constraints of their domain.
  - Each circle can create value autonomously.
- **self-governing:**
  - A circle's members continuously decide together what to do to account for their domain, and set constraints on how and when things will be done.
- **equivalence of circle members:**
  - All members of a circle are equally accountable for governance of the circle's domain.

## 4.3. Role

### Delegate responsibility for a domain to individuals.

A role is an area of responsibility (a domain) that is delegated to an individual (**the role keeper**), who has autonomy to decide and act within the constraints of the role's domain.

The role keeper leads in creating a strategy for how they will account for their domain. They evolve their strategy in collaboration with the delegator.

A role is a simple way for an organization (or team) to delegate recurring tasks or a specific area of work and decision making to one of its members.

- people can take responsibility for more than one role
- instead of formally setting up a new team, it's sometimes simpler to just share one role between several people
- role keepers are selected by consent and for a limited term
- peers support one another to develop in the roles they keep

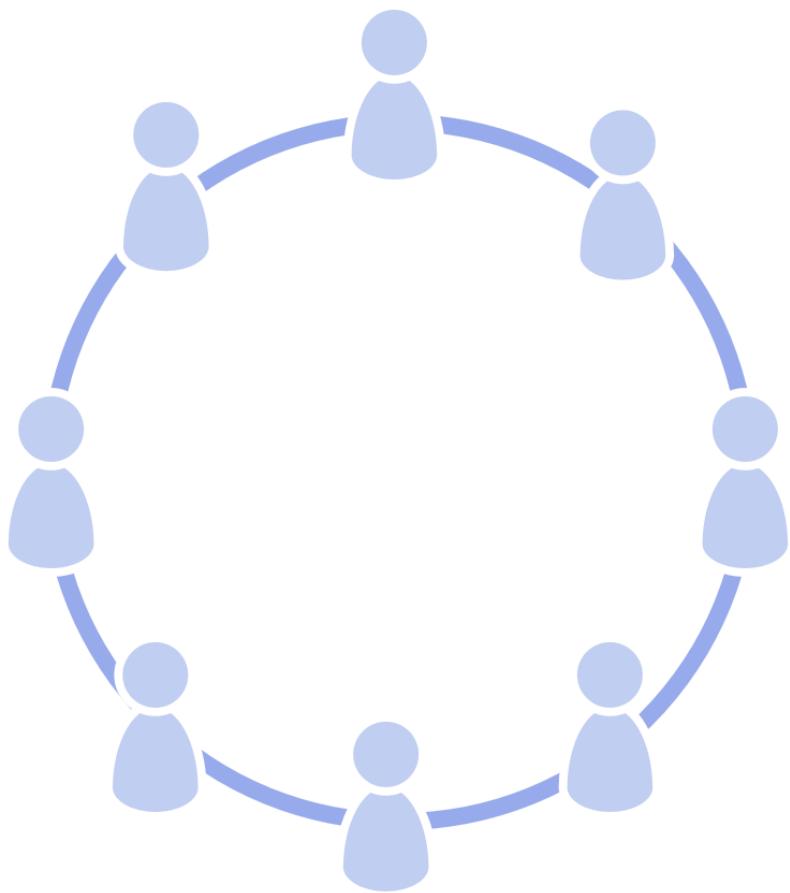


Figure 4.1.: All members of a circle are equally accountable for governance of the circle's domain

A role keeper may maintain a governance backlog, and a logbook to record and help them evolve their approach toward delivering value.

**Note:** In S3, guidelines, processes or protocols created by individuals in roles are treated as agreements.

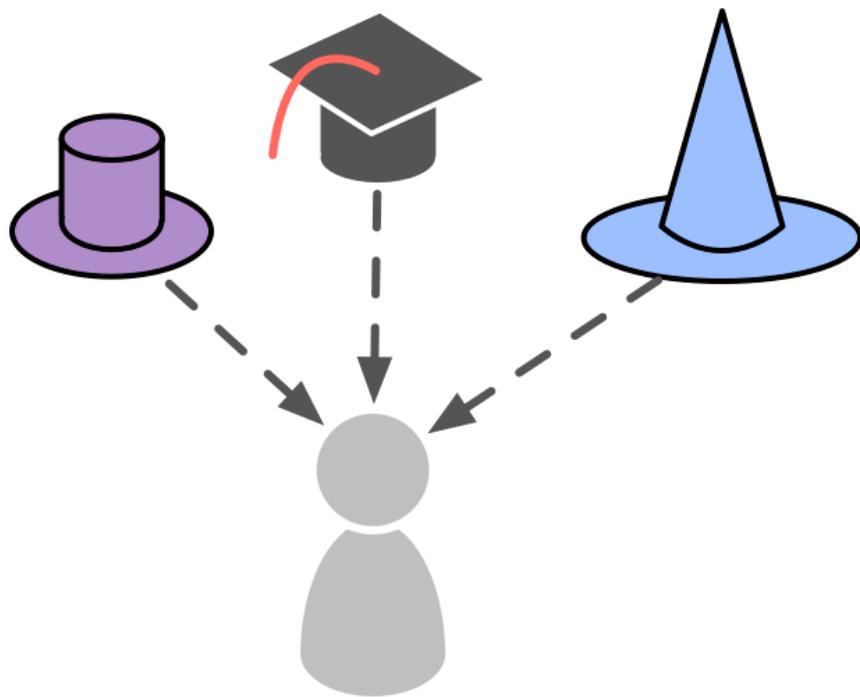


Figure 4.2.: People can take responsibility for more than one role

## 4.4. Linking

**Enable the flow of information and influence between two teams.**

A team selects one of its members to represent their interests in the governance decisions of another team.

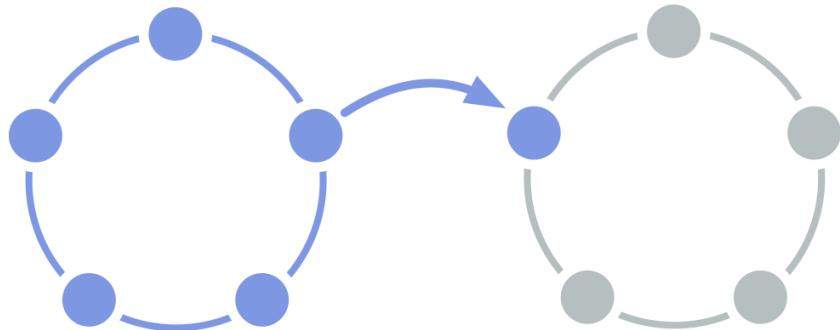


Figure 4.3.: One circle linked to another circle

## 4.5. Double Linking

**Enable the *two-way* flow of information and influence between two teams.**

Two interdependent teams each select one of their members to represent their interests in the governance decisions of the other team.

Double linking enables equivalence between two teams and can be used to draw out valuable information in hierarchical structures.

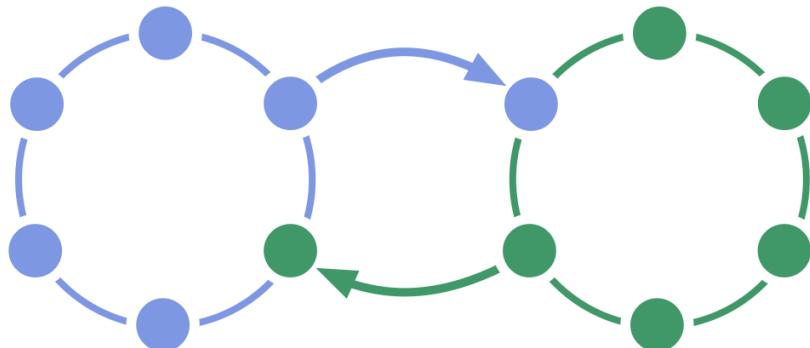


Figure 4.4.: Double linking two circles

## 4.6. Representative

Select a team member to participate in the governance decision making of another team to enable the flow of information and influence.

Representatives (a.k.a. links):

- stand for the interests of one team in another team
- are selected for a limited term
- participate in the **governance decision making** of the team they link with, and can:
  - raise items for the agenda
  - participate in forming proposals
  - raise objections to proposals and existing agreements

## 4.7. Helping Team

**Bring together a team of equivalent people with the mandate to execute on a specific set of requirements defined by a delegator.**

A helping team:

- is a way for a delegator to expand their capacity
- may be self-organizing, or guided by a *coordinator* chosen by the delegator
- is governed by the delegator
- benefits from a clearly defined domain

Members of the helping team:

- can object to the delegator's decisions that affect them
- can add items to the delegator's governance backlog
- may be invited to select a *representative* to participate in the governance decision making of the delegator

## 4.8. Open Team

**Intentionally account for a domain by invitation rather than assignment, and request that those invited contribute when they can.**

An *open team* is a group of people who are invited to contribute to the work and governance done in a domain when they can.

The delegator of the domain creates an invitation that clarifies:

- the primary driver, key responsibilities and constraints of the open team's domain
- who is invited to contribute (the members of the open team)

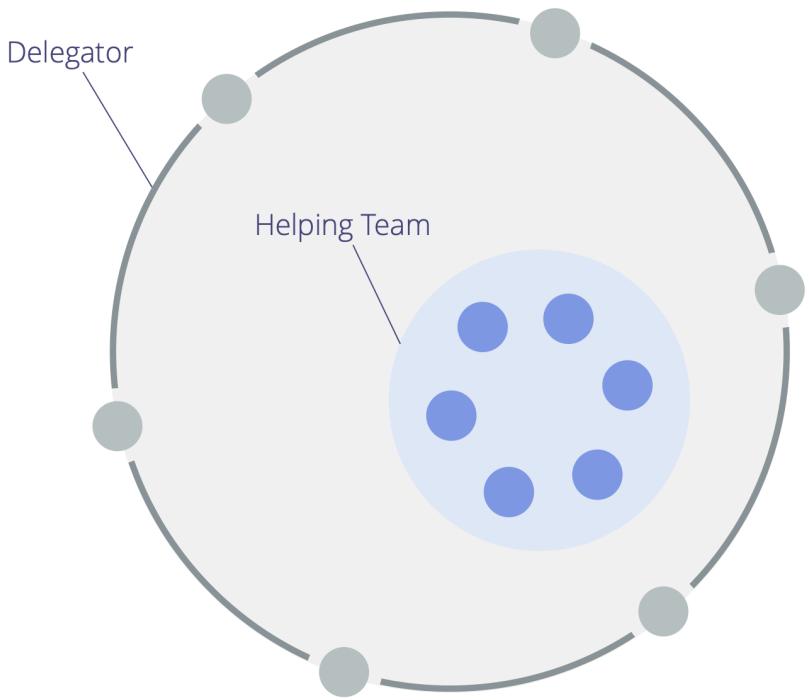


Figure 4.5.: Helping Team

- constraints relating to the delegator's participation in the open team's governance

Depending on the constraints set by the delegator, contributors may only organize and do work, or take part in governance as well.

The delegator is accountable for conducting regular reviews to support effectiveness of work and any decision making in the open team.

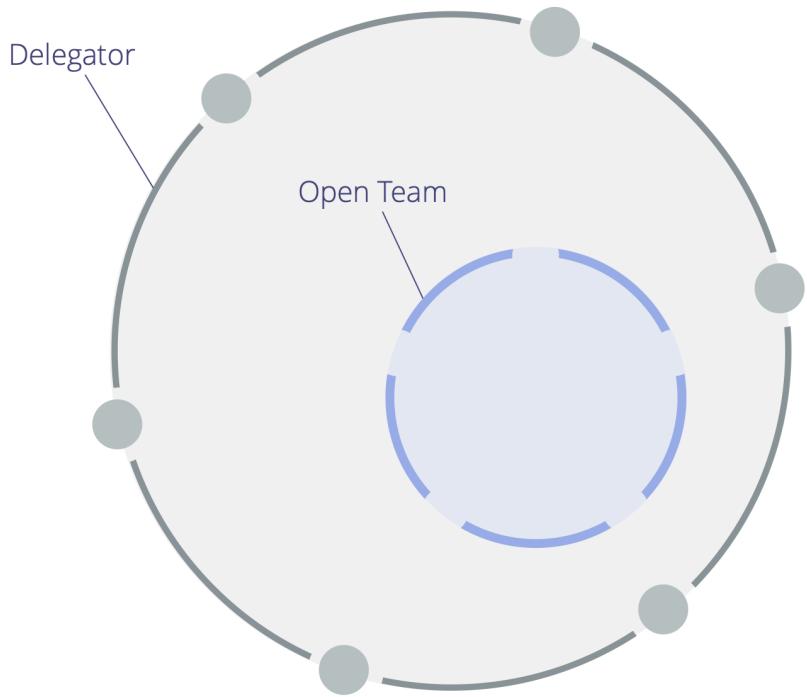


Figure 4.6.: Open Team

## 4.9. Open Systems

**Intentionally communicate with and learn from others outside of your system.**

Individuals, teams and entire organizations can acknowledge interdependence and intentionally invite people from outside their system to bring in **knowledge, experience and influence** to assist with decision making and support collective learning.

- **External experts** can offer an outside perspective and bring knowledge, understanding and skills
- **Representatives of affected parties** can inform and influence decision making in ways that benefit overall objectives (see Involvement Those Affected)

# 5. Bringing in S3

## 5.1. Adapt Patterns To Context

**Adapt and evolve S3 patterns to suit your specific context.**

Ensure that everyone affected:

- understands why changing the pattern is necessary (or helpful)
- is present or represented when deciding how to change it
- uses S3 principles as a guide for adaptation.

Run experiments with adaptations for long enough to learn about the benefits and any potential pitfalls.

Share valuable adaptations with the S3 community.

## 5.2. Create a Pull-System For Organizational Change

**Create an environment that invites and enables members of the organization to drive change.**

Change things when there is value in doing so:

- Bring in patterns that help to solve current and important problems.
- Don't break what's already working!
- Meet everyone where they are...
- ...and let them choose their own pace.

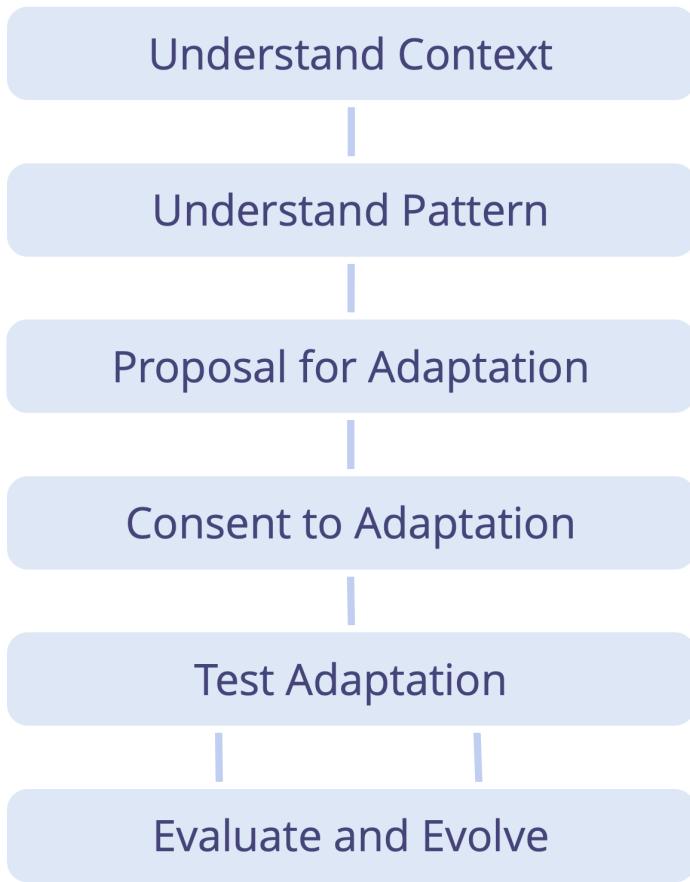


Figure 5.1.: Phases of adapting patterns to a specific context

## 5.3. Be The Change

**Lead by example.**

Behave and act in the ways you would like others to behave and act.

## 5.4. Invite Change

**Clarify the reason for change and invite people to participate.**

Inviting rather than imposing change helps reduce resistance and enables people to choose for themselves.

When making the invitation:

- be transparent about the reason for the change
- clarify expectations and constraints
- avoid coercion or manipulation
- acknowledge any skepticism and doubts

Include the people involved and affected in regular evaluation of outcomes.

## 5.5. Open Space For Change

**Invite everyone to create and run experiments for evolving the organization.**

- clarify the driver for change
- schedule regular open space events:
  - invite all members to create and run experiments
  - define constraints for the experiments that enable development of a sociocratic and agile mindset (e.g. S3 principles)
  - review and learn from experimentation in the next open space

## 5.6. Continuous Improvement Of Work Process

Reveal drivers and establish a metrics-based pull-system for organizational change through continuously improving and refining the work process.

- introduce the principle of consent and *Navigate via Tension* to evolve work process in a team
- consider selecting a facilitator to guide group processes, and choosing values to guide behavior
- initiate a process of continuous improvement, e.g. through Kanban or regular *retrospectives*
- members of the team pull in S3 patterns as required
- if valuable, iteratively expand the scope of the experiment to other teams
- intentionally look out for impediments

### Waste And Continuous Improvement

*Waste is anything unnecessary for — or standing in the way of — a (more) effective response to a driver.*

Waste exists in various forms and on different levels of abstraction (tasks, processes, organizational structure, mental models...)

Establishing a process for the ongoing elimination of waste enables natural evolution of an organization towards greater effectiveness and adaptation to changing context.

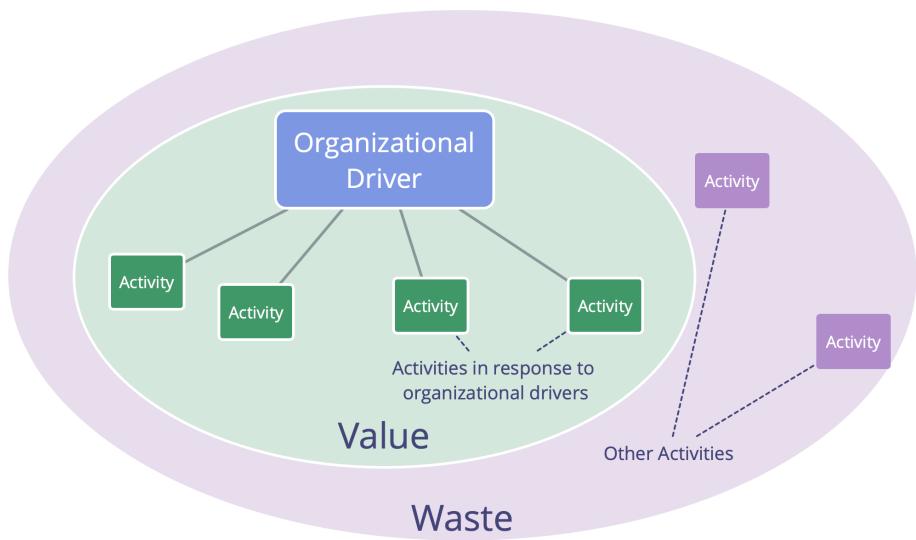


Figure 5.2.: Drivers, Value and Waste

## 6. Defining Agreements

S3 promotes a hypothesis-driven approach to decision making.



Figure 6.1.: Any agreement or decision can be viewed as an experiment.

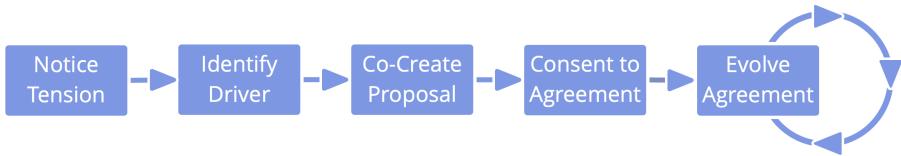


Figure 6.2.: The Life-Cycle of an Agreement

## 6.1. Record Agreements

**Record the details of agreements you make, so you can recall them later, evaluate the outcome and evolve the agreement over time.**

An *agreement* is an agreed upon guideline, process, protocol or policy designed to guide the flow of value.

**Note:** In S3, guidelines, processes or protocols created by individuals in roles are also treated as agreements.

Keep records of agreements up to date, e.g. in a logbook.

### What to record?

Record agreements with adequate detail so that important information can be recalled later.

At the very least include a summary of the driver, a description of what's been agreed, who is responsible for what, evaluation criteria and a review date.

Depending on the scope and significance of the agreement, consider including all of the following:

- A title for the agreement
- *Description of the driver*
- Date of creation (and/or version)

- Date of expiry or due date (if relevant)
- Review date (or frequency)
- Who is responsible for what?
- A description of the agreement, including:
  - Any relevant requirements and expectations
  - Action items
  - Resources
  - Constraints
  - *Intended outcomes*
  - *Deliverables*
  - Rationale
- *Evaluation criteria* (and potentially concerns)
- Appendix (if helpful)
  - Background information
  - Previous versions of the agreements
  - References

## 6.2. Clarify and Develop Strategy

A **strategy** is a high level approach for how people will create value to successfully account for a domain.

It is usually more effective if a team or role keeper lead in developing their own strategy.

A strategy often includes a description of the intended outcome of implementing that strategy.

Title of Agreement	
Date/Version	Review Date
Driver	
Who is responsible for what?	
Description	
Evaluation Criteria	
(Concerns)	
Appendix	
Background Information	
Previous Versions	
References	

Figure 6.3.: Template for agreements

As the delegator shares accountability for domains they delegate, it's valuable they review a delegatee's strategy, to check for potential impediments and suggest ways it could be improved.

A strategy is a shared agreement between delegator(s) and delegatee(s) that is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary (*pivot or persevere*)

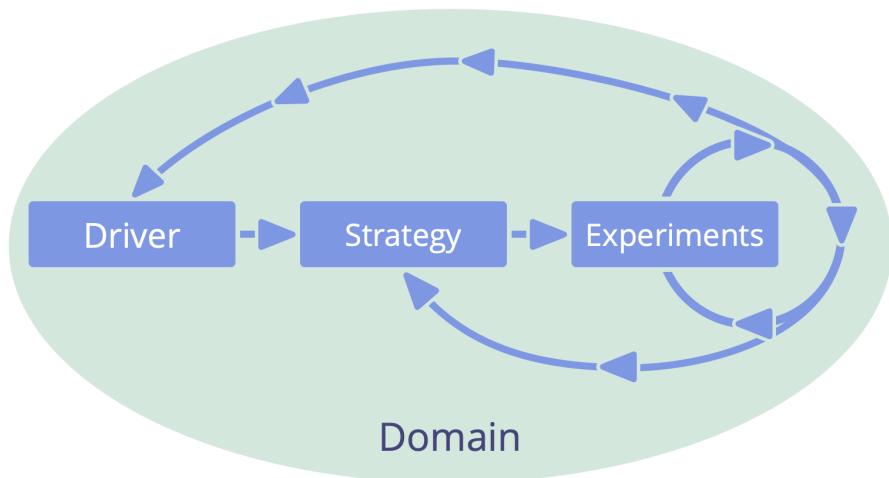


Figure 6.4.: Strategies are validated and refined through experimentation and learning.

Strategies are validated and refined through experimentation and learning.

### 6.3. Clarify and Develop Domains

A clear understanding of people's area of responsibility and autonomy enables greater efficiency, effective collaboration, and agility throughout an organization.

To make better use of their limited time, energy, and resources, people in organizations distribute work between them by creating roles or forming

teams, units, or departments. In the process they are explicitly or implicitly defining domains - distinct areas of responsibility and autonomy.

Any role or team's purpose is to contribute towards the overall purpose of the organization by taking care of a specific organizational need. Inadequately defined domains typically lead to stakeholders having different assumptions about areas of responsibility and autonomy. As a consequence, both collaboration and distribution of work suffers because of missed dependencies, double work, or work not done at all.

Clarifying domains makes the contract between delegator and delegatee(s) explicit, which enables everyone to learn about what works and what doesn't, because everyone understands who is responsible for what. A clear domain description with a reasonable amount of detail is a necessary prerequisite for people to successfully evaluate and continuously improve their work.

A simple way for supporting stakeholders in developing shared understanding about the various aspects of a domain is by creating a **domain description** that contains information about:

- Primary Driver (and/or Purpose)
- Key Responsibilities
- Dependencies
- External Constraints
- Key Challenges
- Key Deliverables
- Competencies, Qualities and Skills
- Key Resources
- Delegator Responsibilities
- Key Metrics
- Evaluation

On the [S3 Canvas microsite] you can find a variety of templates you can use for (co-)creating and documenting domain descriptions.

(<http://s3canvas.sociocracy30.org/s3-delegation-canvas.html>)

Consider designing domains with the minimal constraints necessary and always choose constraints that enable people to maximally create value.

The delegatee(s) may do whatever they think will help them achieve their purpose, unless it is outside the domain of the organization, explicitly forbidden, they violate somebody else's (explicit) domain, or impede other people's contribution to the organization in some other way. Things that are forbidden may include explicit constraints laid out in the domain description, any other agreements the delegatee(s) needs to keep, or legal and regulatory requirements.

## **When to clarify domains**

Consider clarifying domains whenever you identify that stakeholders have differing assumptions about the domain of an existing *role*, position, team, department, or unit, or even about the domain of the organization as a whole.

As a delegator, clarify any new domains that you intend to delegate.

When retrospectively clarifying domains that have already been delegated to people, a delegator can gain valuable insights by inviting the delegatee(s) to describe the domain from their perspective first.

## **Regularly evaluate and evolve domains**

People's understanding of the organization is limited and the environment is always changing. Therefore it is essential that delegator, delegatee(s) and other relevant stakeholders regularly take the time to evaluate and evolve both the design of the domain and how people account for it as their understanding of the domain deepens.

People might do a great job of accounting for a domain in the way it's designed, but the design of the domain might be primitive or flawed. On the other hand, even if the design of a domain is poor in the first iteration, through this process it will improve over time.

## Clarify the domain of the whole organization

All domains in an organization are nested within the overall domain of the organization, which can be designed deliberately in the early stages of the organization, or clarified retrospectively. An organization's domain needs to enable the members of the organization to effectively fulfill its purpose and typically needs to be evolved over time.

Consider explicitly clarifying the organization's overall domain if you discover that key stakeholders have differing understanding about it, or when changes to that domain need to be made. In order to do this it's necessary to identify the overall delegator of the organization.

An organization's domain should be designed with the customer and business model in mind, and needs to factor in environmental constraints (e.g. legal, economic, market, competition, etc.)

Regularly evaluate the organization's domain to support those responsible for the organization to quickly learn and adapt.

One way of clarifying an organization's domain is by filling out an [S3 Organization Canvas<sup>1</sup>](#).

## Useful aspects to clarify in a domain description

All of the following elements are important to consider when clarifying a domain. Depending on your situation and where you are in the lifecycle of the domain, you might be able to describe each of them more or less clearly. Regularly evaluate, test assumptions and make things clearer as you learn.

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<sup>1</sup><http://s3canvas.sociocracy30.org/s3-organization-canvas.html>

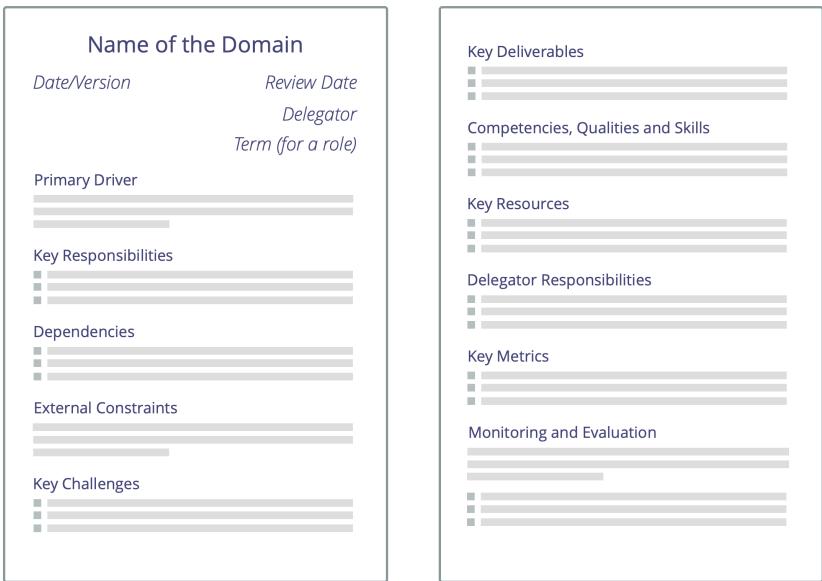


Figure 6.5.: Template for a domain description

## **Primary Driver**

Explain how the delegatee(s) will contribute to the overall purpose of the organization, by clarifying the specific organizational need they (will) take care of.

Describe the main organizational driver the delegatee(s) (will) respond to, for example using the pattern *Describe Organizational Drivers*.

Aim for one or two sentences, so that the information is easy to remember and process.

Besides the summary, more details about the driver may be kept in the *logbook*.

## **Key Responsibilities**

List all essential work and decision making being delegated, in a way that enables measuring success.

Key responsibilities are those responsibilities that stakeholders consider essential to take care of for the delegatee(s) to successfully account for the domain.

Describe explicitly why each of these responsibilities matter for the organization and the value that taking care of them brings to the organization.

Responsibilities should be specific and measurable, so they can be reviewed and developed as required.

## **Dependencies**

Make explicit the essential dependencies between this domain and other parts of the organization, so that the delegatee(s) can collaborate on managing those dependencies with the other stakeholders.

Consider:

- Internal and external customers (those who consume the team's output)

- Providers of products or services essential to the work of the delegatee(s).
- Shared resources

## External Constraints

Describe important constraints to the autonomy and influence of the delegatee(s).

External constraints might be fixed or negotiable. They may refer to customer requirements, to the outside world, to other essential stakeholders in the organization, to overarching responsibilities the delegatee(s) may have, or to the preference of the delegator.

Some examples:

- Specific decisions requiring authorization
- Legal, time, or budget constraints
- Audits and or expected reporting
- Strategy of the delegator and the whole organization
- Organizational values

## Key Challenges

What are the known or anticipated challenges that the delegatee(s) might face when accounting for this domain: relating to the outside world, the rest of the organization and sometimes to a specific delegatee?

- risks and vulnerabilities
- variables (e.g. weather)
- uncertainty and complexity
- lack of skills or resources.

**Note:** there are always some risks that you need to manage. Try to list at least 3!

## **Key Deliverables**

What does the team or role provide to respond to its primary driver, the key responsibilities and the key challenges faced?

As a delegator, consider carefully to what degree you will leave the design of deliverables to the delegatee(s), who can then define deliverables and add them to the domain description later. Letting the delegatee(s) lead on the design of deliverables often frees them up to deliver value according to their strengths and interest.

Describe each deliverable with a reasonable amount of detail and ensure that deliverables are valuable to the stakeholders that receive them. You can start with a sentence or two about each deliverable but eventually you might need to *describe them in more detail*.

## **Competencies, qualities and skills**

What competencies, qualities and skills are required – or at least preferable – to successfully account for this domain?

## **Key Resources**

Essential resources the delegatee(s) can make use of in accounting for their domain, e.g. time allocation, budget, privileges, facilities, hardware, software, etc.

## **Delegator Responsibilities**

When delegating a domain to others, the delegator still retains overall accountability for the domain and often has a valuable contribution to make toward accounting for that domain.

List the exact responsibilities the delegator takes on in support of the delegatee(s) accounting for this domain.

Consider:

- Opportunities for learning and development and support offered to the delegatee(s).
- Things essential for successfully accounting for the domain that only the delegator can do.
- Things that make the delegatees' life easier and are worthwhile including.

Describe the delegator's responsibilities in specific and measurable terms, so that they can be reviewed and developed as required.

## **Key Metrics**

Key Metrics are statistics that serve as critical indicators of progress, project health or performance. They relate to the primary driver (and/or purpose), key responsibilities, challenges, deliverables, and delegator responsibilities defined for this domain.

Key Metrics are monitored and assessed frequently. They are relevant criteria for evaluating outcomes and success in scheduled evaluations (see “Monitoring and Evaluation” below).

For each metric, consider the actual numbers that are monitored, as well as the meaning of those numbers in relation to the domain (targets, acceptable range, or tolerance).

Aim to define simple and specific metrics that you can take regularly (preferably daily).

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Regularly evaluate the outcome resulting from activity in this domain and use what you learn to improve creation of value.

In the evaluation, ensure you consider the following aspects:

- The value the delegatee(s) brought to the organization by accounting for the domain.

- The delegatees' work processes, and their collaboration with each other, with the delegator, and with the rest of the organization.
- How well the delegator takes care of their responsibilities.
- The design of the domain itself (and potentially the design of other related domains).
- The delegatees' competencies and skills in relation to the domain.
- The strategy the delegatee(s) follows to account for this domain.

Define:

- A schedule or frequency for evaluations.
- Other helpful evaluation criteria in addition to the key metrics.
- Any other relevant aspects to consider for the evaluation.
- Who should take part in the evaluation.
- A process for evaluation (e.g. *Peer Review*).
- Consider including a term (for a role).

Make sure to record and monitor when a domain is due review and add these dates to your *logbook*.

## **Additional Information**

Consider also including the following information to the domain description

- Domain Name
- Delegator (name of the circle or role; e.g. R&D, Project Manager, CEO, etc)
- Delegatee(s) (if they are known at the time)
- Date of latest update to the domain description
- Author's Names
- Term (for a role)

## 6.4. Clarify Intended Outcome

**Be explicit about the expected results of agreements, activities, projects and strategies.**

Agree on and record a concise description of the intended outcome.

The intended outcome can be used to define *Evaluation Criteria* and metrics for reviewing actual outcome.

## 6.5. Describe Deliverables

**Clearly describe any deliverables related to an agreement to support shared understanding of expectations.**

A *deliverable* is a product, service, component or material provided in response to an organizational driver.

When describing deliverables:

- include the necessary amount of detail
- reference other documents when helpful or necessary

Explicitly describing deliverables can be useful for improving communication and collaboration within the organization, with customer and with external partners.

**Example:** A popular way to describe deliverables in software-engineering are so-called **user stories**, which focus on the need of users in relation to a software system. User stories are developed in dialogue between a customer (or their representative, the product manager or “product owner”), and the software developer(s). What is written down is usually one sentence to remind the team of the user need, and acceptance criteria, a list of requirements for the new feature, which the customer will then use in a review meeting to decide whether or not they accept the new feature as delivered.



Figure 6.6.: Intended Outcome, and Evaluation Criteria

## 6.6. Evaluation Criteria

Develop well-defined evaluation criteria to determine if acting on an agreement had the desired effect.

- go for **simple and unambiguous** criteria and document them (to avoid discussion or unnecessary dialogue when reviewing your agreements)
- define **actionable metrics** to continuously track effects and spot deviations from intended outcome
- consider adding criteria which make it explicit when the outcome of an agreement would be considered **unsuccessful**
- when reviewing an agreement, consider **evolving the evaluation criteria** based on what you have learned

## 6.7. Logbook

Maintain a coherent and accessible system that stores all information required for collaboration.

A logbook is a (digital) system to store all information relevant for running an organization and its teams. The logbook is accessible to all members of an organization, and information is kept confidential only when there is good reason to do so.

Common platforms for logbooks are Wikis (e.g. [DokuWiki<sup>2</sup>](https://www.dokuwiki.org/), [MediaWiki<sup>3</sup>](https://www.mediawiki.org/), [Confluence<sup>4</sup>](https://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence)), Content Management Systems (e.g. [Wordpress<sup>5</sup>](https://wordpress.org/)), [G Suite<sup>6</sup>](https://gsuite.google.com), [Evernote<sup>7</sup>](https://evernote.com/business) or even [Trello<sup>8</sup>](https://trello.com/).

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.dokuwiki.org/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.mediawiki.org/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.atlassian.com/software/confluence>

<sup>5</sup><https://wordpress.org/>

<sup>6</sup><https://gsuite.google.com>

<sup>7</sup><https://evernote.com/business>

<sup>8</sup><https://trello.com/>

## Logbook Contents

Content relating to the whole organization:

- primary driver, strategy and organizational values
- organizational structure (domains and the connections between them)
- agreements

Content relating to a specific team or role:

- the domain description and strategy
- agreements (including delegatees' domain descriptions, strategies and *development plans*)
- backlogs and other information relating to work and governance

## 6.8. Logbook Keeper

Select a member of your team to be specifically accountable for keeping up to date records of all information the team requires.

The logbook keeper is accountable for maintaining a team's logbook by:

- recording details of agreements, domain descriptions, *selections*, evaluation dates, minutes of meetings etc.
- organizing relevant information and improving the system when valuable
- keeping records up to date
- ensuring accessibility to everyone in the team (and in the wider organization as agreed)
- attending to all technical aspects of logbook keeping

# 7. Focused Interactions

## 7.1. Governance Meeting

Teams meet at regular intervals to decide what to do to achieve objectives, and to set constraints on how and when things will be done.

A governance meeting is usually:

- facilitated
- prepared in advance
- *timeboxed* for a duration of 90–120 minutes
- scheduled every 2–4 weeks

A typical governance meeting includes:

- opening: *check in* with each other and attune to the objective of the meeting
- administrative matters
  - check for consent to the last meeting's minutes
  - agree on a date for the next meeting
  - check for any last-minute agenda items and for consent to the agenda
- agenda items
- *meeting evaluation*: reflect on your interactions, celebrate successes and share suggestions for improvement



Figure 7.1.: Phases of a governance meeting

- closing: check in with each other before you leave the meeting

Typical agenda items include:

- any short reports
- evaluation of existing agreements due review
- selecting people to roles
- new drivers requiring decisions to be made, including:
  - *forming proposals*
  - *making agreements*
  - *designing domains* and deciding how to account for them (e.g. new *roles*, *circles*, teams or *open teams*)

## 7.2. Retrospective

**Dedicate time to reflect on past experience, learn, and decide how to improve work process.**

- output: changes to work process, new tasks, on-the-fly agreements, and drivers requiring an agreement
- facilitated meeting (1hr)
- regular intervals (1–4 weeks)
- adapt to situation and context

### Five Phases of a Retrospective Meeting

1. Set the stage
2. Gather data
3. Generate insights
4. Decide what to do

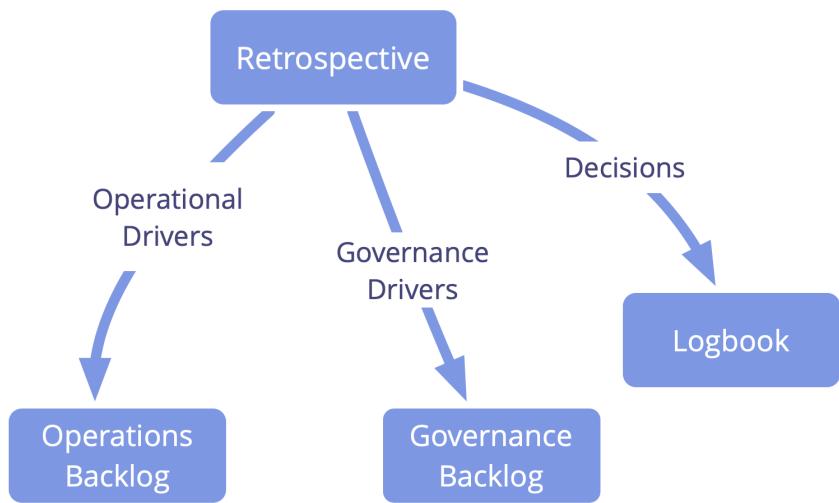


Figure 7.2.: Output of a retrospective

## 5. Close the retrospective

Many different activities for each phase can be found at [plans-for-retrospectives.com](http://www.plans-for-retrospectives.com)<sup>1</sup>

## 7.3. Daily Standup

**Meet daily to organize work, facilitate learning and improve your productivity and effectiveness.**

- timeboxed (usually 15 minutes)
- held daily at the same time
- the team gathers around a visible project management board/tool to:
  - organize daily work
  - address impediments/blocks
  - adapt existing agreements or create new agreements on the spot

## 7.4. Planning And Review Meetings

**People meet at regular intervals (1–4 weeks) in timeboxed meetings to plan and review work.**

**Planning meeting:** select and estimate work items for the next iteration.

**Review meeting:** review completed work items and decide on re-work and changes for the next iteration.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.plans-for-retrospectives.com/>

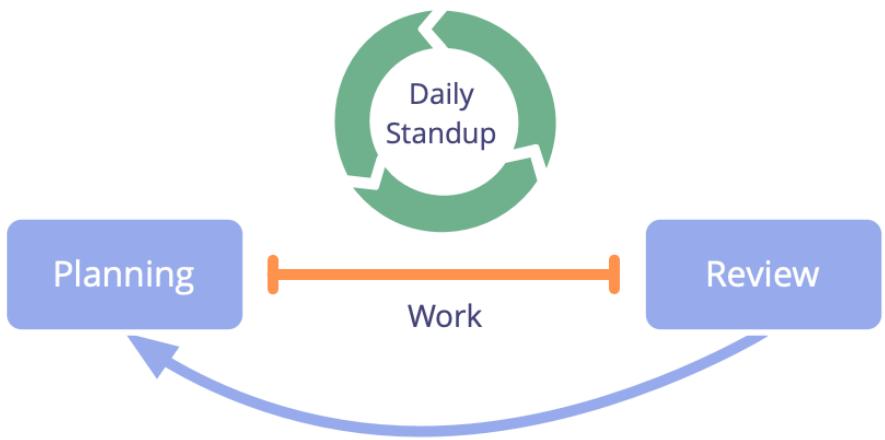


Figure 7.3.: Daily standup is an essential meeting for self-organizing teams.

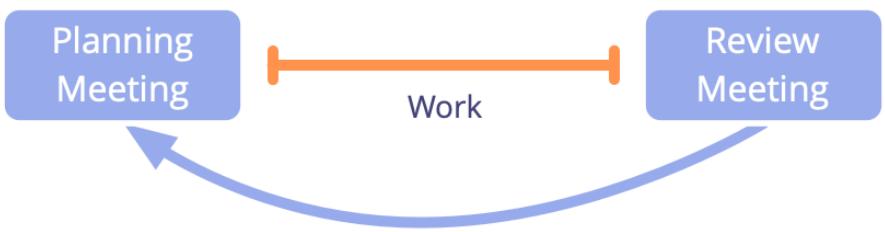


Figure 7.4.: Planning and review meetings

## 7.5. Coordination Meeting

Meet on a regular basis (usually weekly) for reporting on and coordinating work across domains.

- facilitate the meeting (timebox dialogue and use rounds where valuable)
- when useful, compile an agenda before the meeting and share it with attendees in advance
  - include details of any prerequisites that can help attendees to prepare
  - further agenda items may come up when hearing status reports

Agenda items:

- cross domain synchronization and alignment
- prioritization and distribution of work
- responding to impediments



Figure 7.5.: Phases of a coordination meeting

# 8. Meeting Practices

## 8.1. Rounds

**In a group meeting, go around the circle giving everyone the chance to speak in turn.**

Rounds are a group facilitation technique to maintain equivalence and support effective dialogue.

Be clear on the purpose and intended outcome of each round.

Sit in a circle, begin each round with a different person, and change direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) to bring variation to who speaks first and last, and to the order of contributions.

## 8.2. Facilitate Meetings

**Choose someone to facilitate a meeting to help the group maintain focus, keep the meeting on track and draw out the participant's creativity and wisdom.**

Before each meeting, prepare an agenda of topics, and select a facilitator to:

- hold the space, keep the time and navigate the agenda during the meeting
- facilitate a suitable activity for each topic
- facilitate an *evaluation* at the end of the meeting

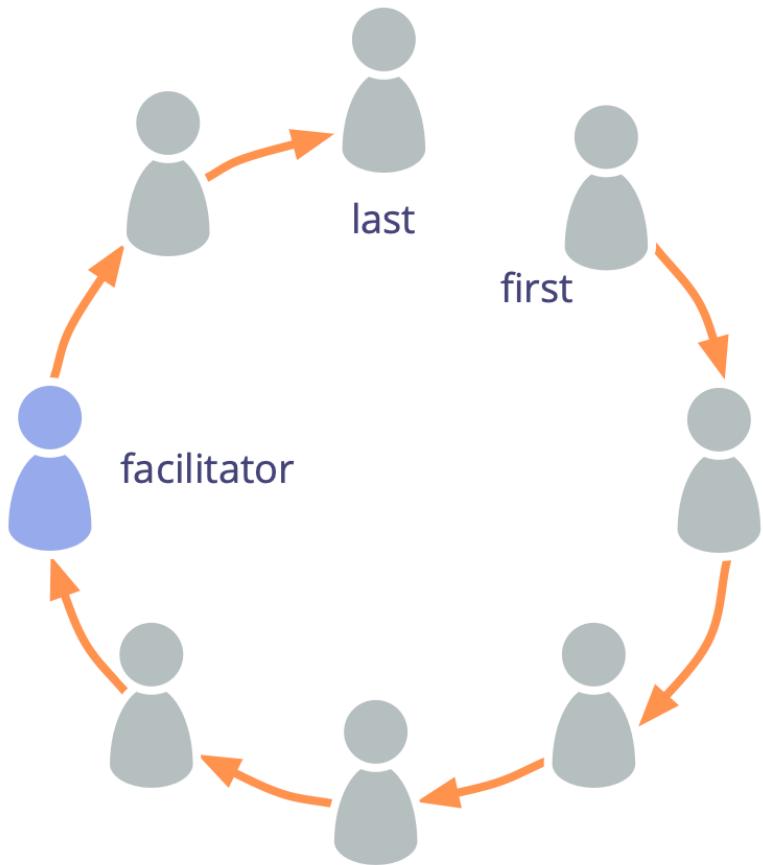


Figure 8.1.: Rounds

Consider selecting a facilitator for a specific term. Even an inexperienced facilitator can make a positive difference.

**See also:** *Prepare For Meetings, Role Selection*

## 8.3. Prepare For Meetings

### Prepare in advance to make meetings more effective.

Some considerations for successfully preparing a meeting:

- clarify and communicate the driver for, and intended outcome of the meeting
- decide who to invite
- create an agenda
- schedule the meeting enough in advance, so people have time to prepare
- choose an appropriate duration for the meeting
- be clear who will *facilitate the meeting*, who will take minutes and who will take care of any follow-up

### Preparing an Agenda

Involve people in preparing and prioritizing an agenda and send it out in advance

For each agenda item agree on:

- the driver
- the intended outcome
- the process
- the time you want to spend on it
- what people need to do to prepare

## Support the Participants' Preparation

- consider what can be done in advance to prepare for the meeting
- notify people about any expectations and prerequisites
- make any resources available that people may need for preparation

## As a participant

- consider the pattern *Artful Participation*
- review the agenda and consider how you can contribute to each item
- bring up objections to an agenda, and if possible resolve them before the meeting
- review improvement suggestions from the last meeting's evaluation and consider how **you** might act on them

## 8.4. Check In

**Help people to become aware of themselves and others, and to focus, be present and engage.**

To check in, briefly disclose something about what's up for you and how you are, revealing thoughts, feelings, distractions or needs.

Checking in may take the form of an opening or closing round in a group meeting, or just a brief exchange in a 1:1 meeting.

You can also call for a group check-in during a meeting, or even choose to individually check in whenever you think this is valuable for the group.

In a group check-in, allow people to pass if they choose.

When checking in, in a new setting, people can also say their name and where they are coming from, as a way to introduce themselves. (Tip: Avoid talking about function, rank etc unless there is a reason to do so.)

## 8.5. Evaluate Meetings

Take time for learning at the end of each meeting or workshop.

Reflect on interactions, celebrate successes and share suggestions for improvement before closing the meeting.

- reserve 5 minutes for 1 hour, and 15 minutes for a full-day workshop
- record learning and review it before the next meeting

Short formats you can use:

- more of/less of/start/stop/keep
- positive/critical/suggested improvements

### Evaluate Meetings: Long Format

Ask everyone in a *round* to reflect on any or all of the following topics in a brief sharing, and report key points you'd like to remember for next time:

- effectiveness and format
- facilitation and participation
- emotional tone
- appreciations and achievements (I liked...)
- growing edges and improvement suggestions (I wish...)
- wild ideas and radical suggestions (What if...)

## 8.6. Meeting Host

Select someone to take responsibility for the preparation and follow-up of meetings, workshops or other events.

A person may take on the role of meeting host for a specific event or for several events over a period of time.

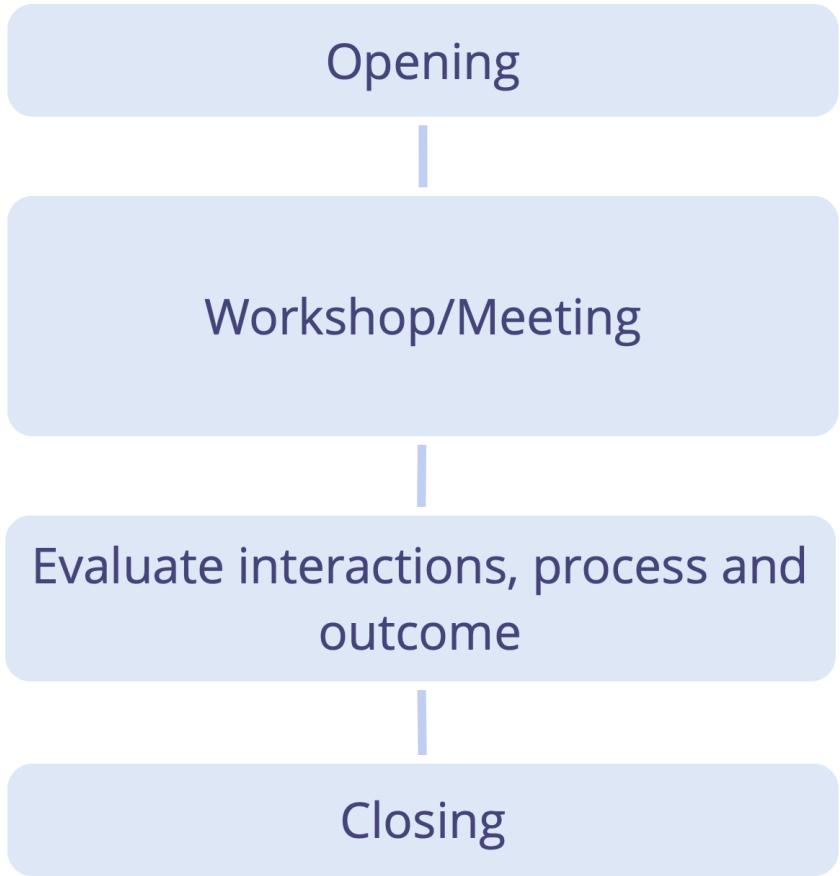


Figure 8.2.: Evaluate meetings right before closing the meeting

## Responsibilities Of A Meeting Host

Preparation:

- identify goals and deliverables
- prepare and distribute agenda
- identify and invite the participants
- estimate the time required and schedule the meeting/workshop
- book the location (and transportation if required)
- set up the space and provide required materials and information
- ensure selection of a facilitator and a notetaker to record minutes, if appropriate

**After the meeting:** clean up location, return keys, tie up all the loose ends, and ensure minutes are distributed.

**See also:** *Facilitate Meetings, Prepare For Meetings*

## 8.7. Governance Backlog

*A governance backlog is a visible, prioritized list of items (drivers) that are related to governing a domain and require attention.*

A governance backlog contains:

- matters requiring a decision
- proposals to create and consider
- selecting people for roles

**Note:** Upcoming reports and agreements due review are usually added directly to the agenda (rather than the backlog).

# 9. Organizing Work

## 9.1. Backlog

A **backlog** (*to-do-list*) is a list of (often prioritized) uncompleted work items (deliverables), or (drivers) that need to be addressed.

Consider making backlogs visible, not only to other members of a team, but also to the wider organization.

Types of backlog include:

- governance backlog
- operations backlog
- *sprint* backlog
- product backlog
- impediments backlog

### Implementation:

- **analog backlog:** sticky notes on a wall, or index cards, magnets and whiteboard
- **digital backlog:** e.g. Google Sheets<sup>1</sup>, Trello<sup>2</sup>, Kanban Flow<sup>3</sup>, Jira<sup>4</sup>, Asana<sup>5</sup>

Each item on a (prioritized) backlog typically contains:

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.google.com/sheets/about/>

<sup>2</sup><https://trello.com/>

<sup>3</sup><https://kanbanflow.com/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira>

<sup>5</sup><https://asana.com/>

- a **short description** of a deliverable or a driver
- a **unique reference number** (or link) for each work item
- (the **order of work items**)
- **dependencies** to other work items or projects
- **due date** (if necessary)
- (optional) a measure for **value**
- (optional) a measure for **investment** (often an estimate of time or complexity)

## 9.2. Prioritize Backlogs

**Order all uncompleted work items with the most important items first, then pull work items from the top whenever there is new capacity.**

No two items can be of equal importance, meaning it is necessary to agree on priorities and make tough choices.

A prioritized backlog helps to **maintain focus** on the most important items.

## 9.3. Visualize Work

**Maintain a system that allows all stakeholders to review the state of all work items currently pending, in progress or complete.**

- valuable for self-organization and pull-systems
- system must be accessible to everyone affected
- **analog:** post-its on a wall, or index cards, magnets and white board

- **digital:** Trello<sup>6</sup>, Kanbanery<sup>7</sup>, Leankit<sup>8</sup>, Jira<sup>9</sup>, Google Sheets<sup>10</sup>, etc.

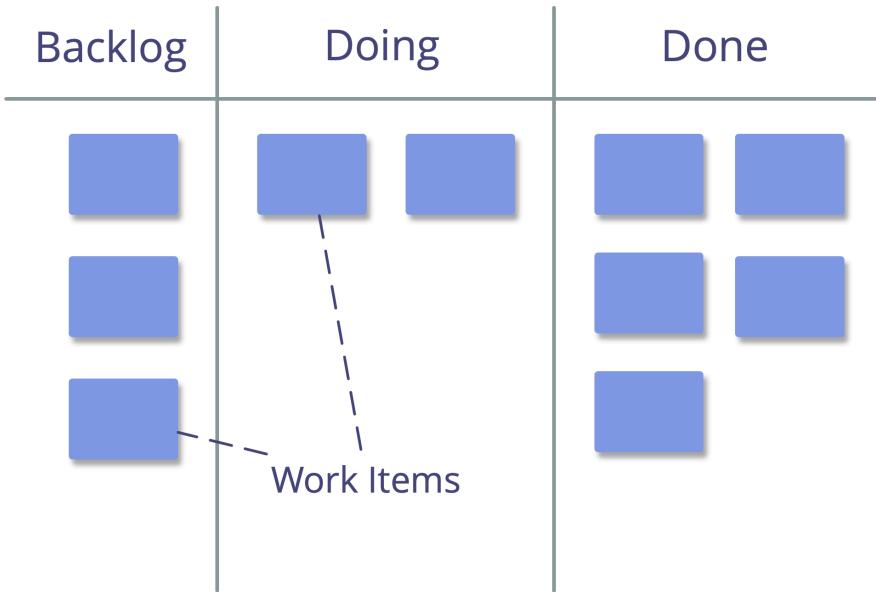


Figure 9.1.: Visualization of a simple work process

### Things to track:

- **types of work items** (e.g. customer request, project tasks, reporting tasks, rework)
- **start date** (and **due date** if necessary)
- **priorities**

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<sup>6</sup><https://trello.com/>

<sup>7</sup><https://kanbanery.com/>

<sup>8</sup><https://leankit.com/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira>

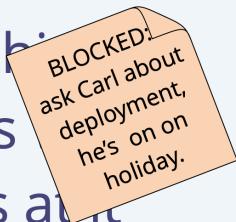
<sup>10</sup><https://www.google.com/sheets/about/>

- stages of work (e.g. “to do”, “in progress”, “review” and “done”)
- impediments/blocks
- who is working on which items
- agreements and expectations guiding workflow (e.g. definition of done, policy, quality standards)
- use colors, symbols, highlights etc.

30.3.2018

Due: 1.4.2019

Update the fiddly thing  
it no longer breaks  
somebody looks at it  
sideways.



#37



Figure 9.2.: A card representing a work item

## 9.4. Pull-System For Work

People pull in new work items when they have capacity (instead of having work pushed or assigned to them).

Prioritize pending work items to ensure that important items are worked on first.

Pulling in work prevents overloading the system, especially when *work in progress (WIP) per person or team is limited*.

## 9.5. Limit Work in Progress

**LIMIT THE NUMBER OF WORK ITEMS IN ANY STAGE OF YOUR WORK PROCESS.**

Work in progress includes:

- the number of items in a backlog
- concurrent projects or tasks for teams or individuals
- products in a portfolio

When an action would exceed an agreed upon limit of work items in progress, this needs to be brought up with the team before continuing.

## 9.6. Timebox Activities

**SET A TIME CONSTRAINT TO STAY FOCUSED, BRING CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE TIME YOU HAVE AND HOW YOU USE IT.**

A *timebox* is a fixed period of time spent focused on a specific activity (which is not necessarily finished by the end of the timebox).

- to get value out of the timebox, be clear what you want to achieve
- agree on the duration of the timebox and visualize time
- negotiate and agree to extend a timebox before the time is up
- break down longer activities into manageable timeboxes
- consider frequent review of progress

- consider choosing someone (the “time keeper”) to help others stay conscious of time

You could timebox:

- meetings, calls, dialogue
- tasks
- experiments
- an attempt to solve a problem
- checking emails
- breaks
- a longer stretch of work (a sprint)

## 9.7. Align Flow

**In support of continuous flow of value, move decision making close to where value is created, and align the flow of information accordingly.**

**Flow of value:** Deliverables traveling through an organization towards customers or other stakeholders.

Achieve and maintain alignment of flow through the continuous evolution of an organization’s body of agreements:

- ensure all decisions affecting the flow of value actually support the flow of value
- enable people with relevant skills and knowledge to influence decisions
- make available any helpful information
- aim for shorter feedback loops to amplify learning.

When decision making is conducted close to where value is created, and the flow of information supports the continuous and steady flow of value, the potential for accumulation of waste is reduced.

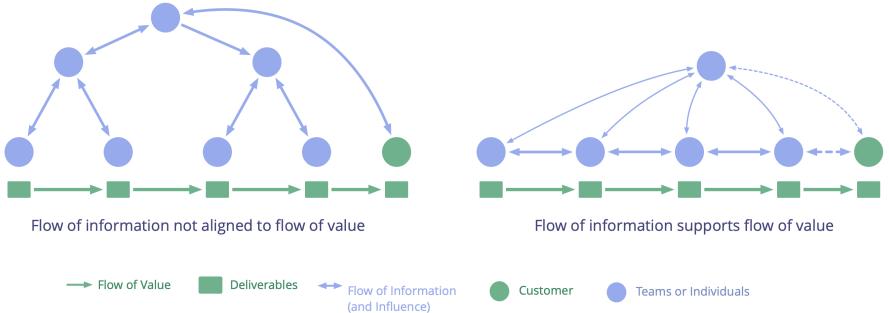


Figure 9.3.: Aligning the flow of information to support the flow of value

## 9.8. Coordinator

A person fulfilling the role of a coordinator is accountable for **coordinating a domain's operations** and is **selected for a limited term**.

The coordinator may be selected by the team itself, or by the delegator. Several coordinators may collaborate to synchronize work across multiple domains.

Instead of selecting a coordinator, a team may choose to self-organize.

# 10. Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is the actual arrangement of domains and their connections. It reflects where power to influence is located, and the channels through which information and influence flow.

Continuously evolve your organization's structure to:

- support the continuous flow of value
- enable effective collaboration around dependencies
- ensure information is available to those who need it
- distribute resources and power to influence as required

The basic building blocks for organizational structure are interdependent, connected domains.

Domains can be linked to form a hierarchy or a **heterarchy** (a.k.a. complex adaptive system, or network, where multiple functional structures can co-exist).

Sociocracy 3.0 describes a variety of **structural patterns** to grow organizational structure.

- S3's structural patterns apply to different layers of abstraction
- different structural patterns serve different drivers
- structural patterns can be adapted and combined as needed
- more patterns are out there and will be discovered

## 10.1. Service Circle

**Outsource services required by two or more domains.**

A service circle can be populated by members of the domains it serves, and/or by other people too.

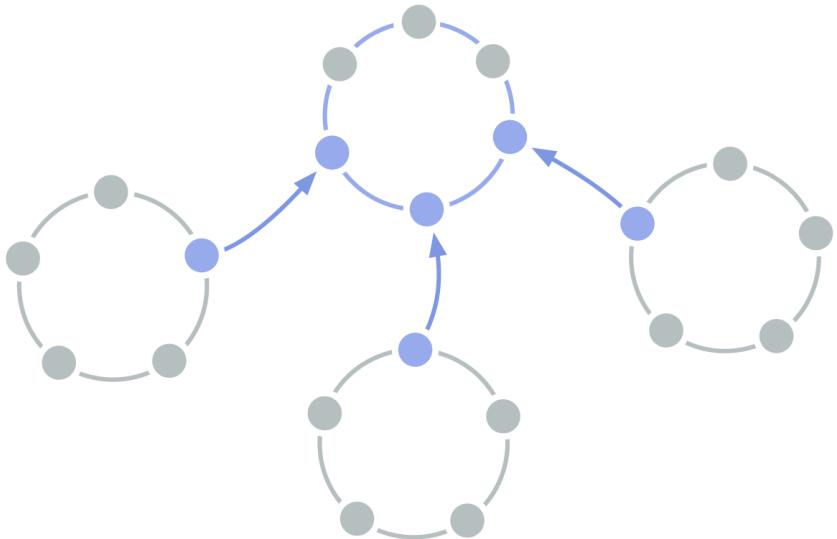


Figure 10.1.: Service Circle

## 10.2. Delegate Circle

**Delegate making governance decisions affecting multiple domains to representatives selected by those domains.**

To make governance decisions on their behalf, stakeholders send *representatives* to form a delegate circle.

Governance decisions made in a delegate circle are acted upon in the various domains it serves.

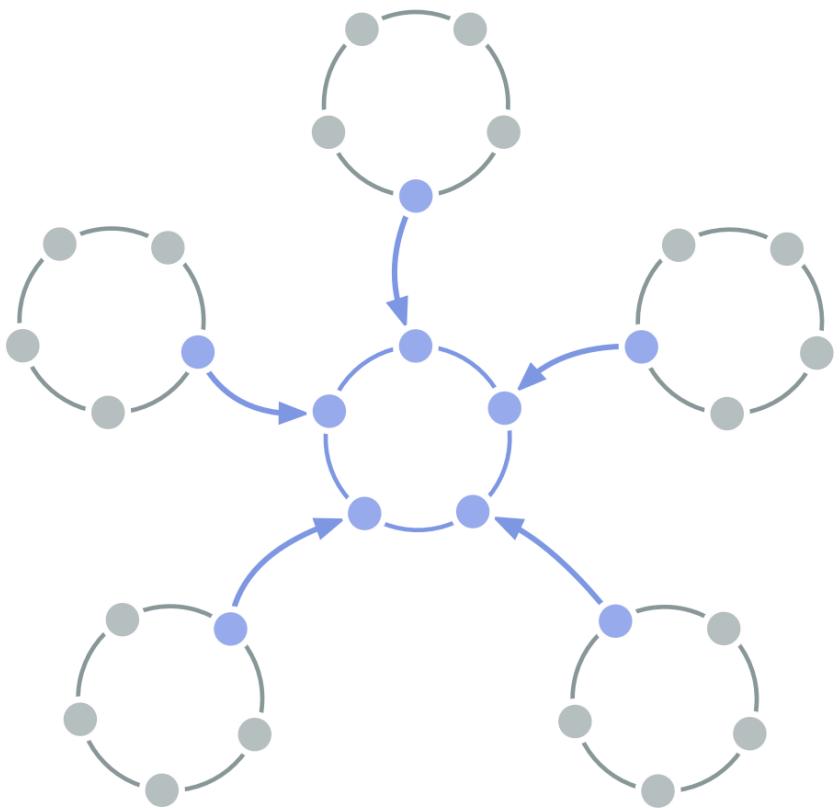


Figure 10.2.: Delegate Circle

Delegate circles provide a way of steering organizations in alignment with the flow of value, and bring a diversity of perspectives to governance decision making.

A delegate circle may bring in other people (e.g. external experts) to help with specific decisions, or even as a member of the circle.

### 10.3. Peach Organization

**Deliver value in complex and competitive environments through *decentralization* (of resources and influence) and *direct interaction* between those creating value and the customers they serve.**

Teams in the periphery:

- deliver value in direct exchange with the outside world (customers, partners, communities, municipalities etc.)
- steward the monetary resources and steer the organization

The center provides internal services to support the organization.

Domains are linked as required to flow information and influence, and to support collaboration around dependencies.

### 10.4. Double-Linked Hierarchy

**Delegate all authority for making governance decisions to self-governing circles, double-linked across all levels of the hierarchy, to transition from an traditional hierarchy towards a structure more suitable for tapping collective intelligence, ensuring equivalence and building engagement.**

1. Shift governance decision making from individuals to teams by forming self-governing circles on all levels of your organization.

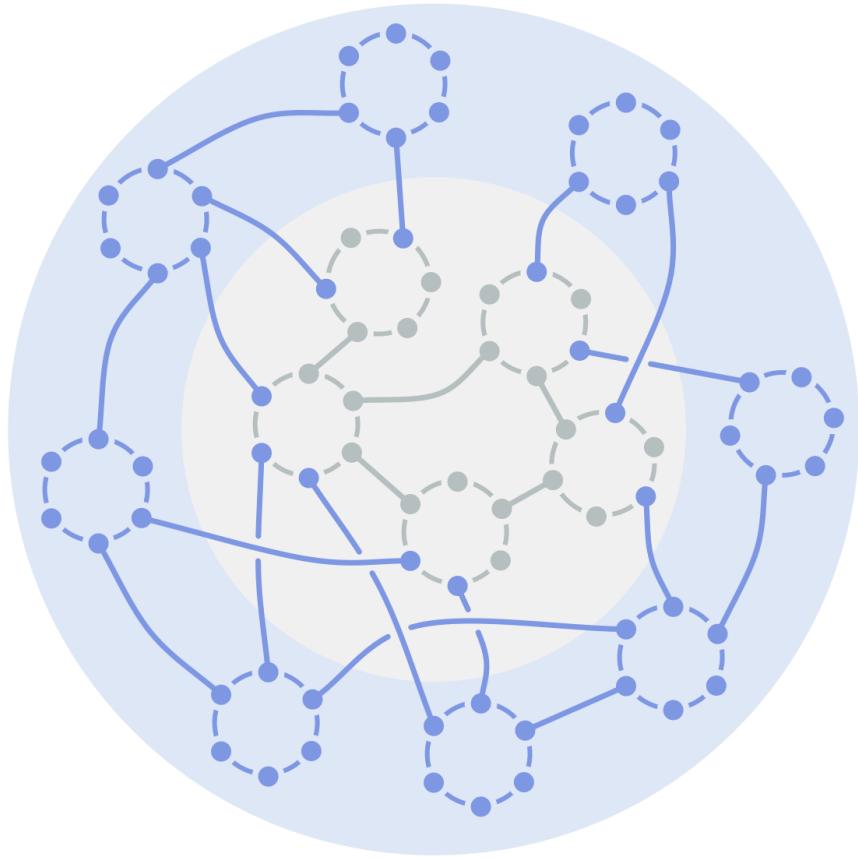


Figure 10.3.: Peach Organization

2. Each circle's members select one of their group to represent their interests and participate in the governance decision making of the next higher circle, and vice versa.

A double-linked hierarchy:

- brings equivalence to governance
- maintains the potential for a functional hierarchy (if it enables the flow of value).

**See also:** *Circle, Double Linking, Representative*

## 10.5. Service Organization

**Multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment towards a shared driver (or objective).**

- improves potential for equivalence between various entities
- increases cross-departmental/organizational alignment
- supports multi-agency collaboration between departments or organizations with different primary motives, or that are in conflict
- suitable for one-off projects, or ongoing collaboration

**Note:** a service organization is sometimes referred to as a **backbone organization**.

## 10.6. Fractal Organization

**Multiple constituents (organizations or projects) with a common (or similar) primary driver and structure can share learning across functional domains, align action and make high level governance decisions (e.g. overall strategy).**

Creating a fractal organization can enable a large network to rapidly respond to changing contexts.

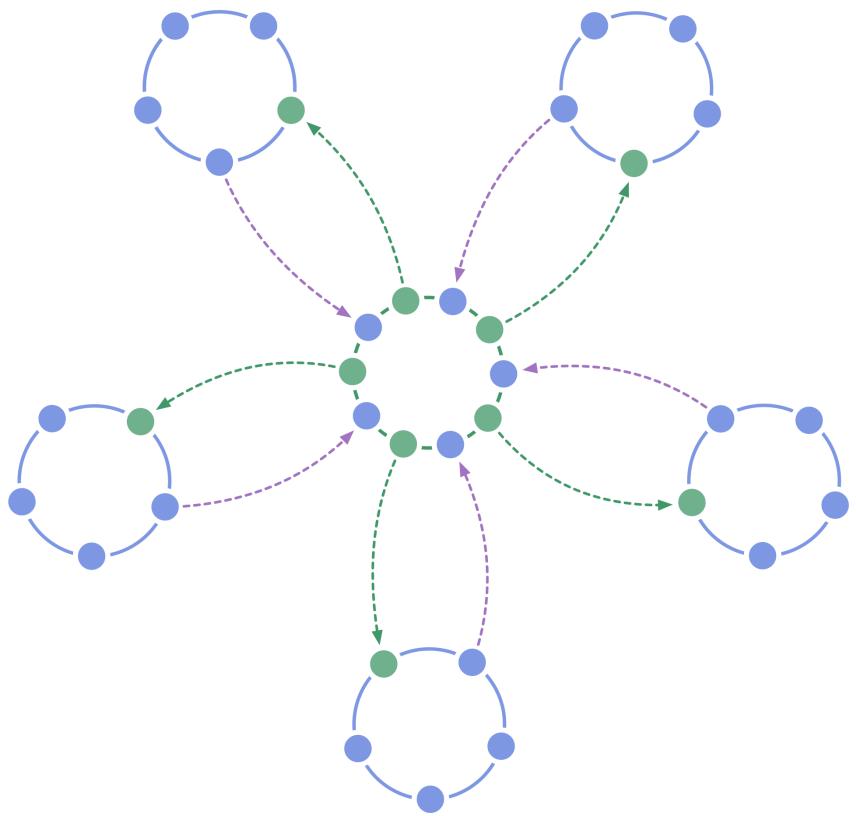


Figure 10.4.: A double-linked hierarchy: not your typical hierarchy

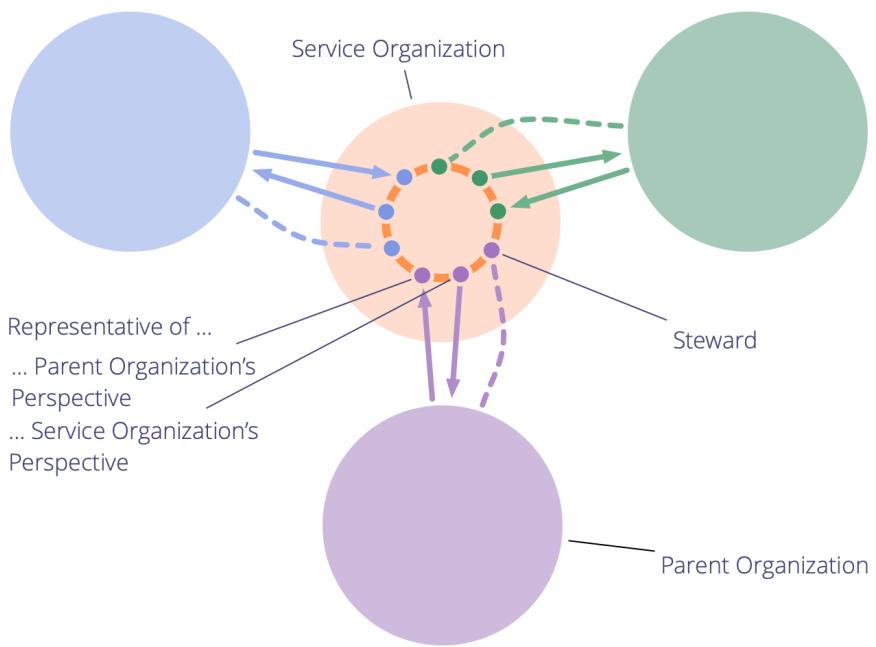


Figure 10.5.: Service Organization

If necessary, the pattern can be repeated to connect multiple fractal organizations into one.

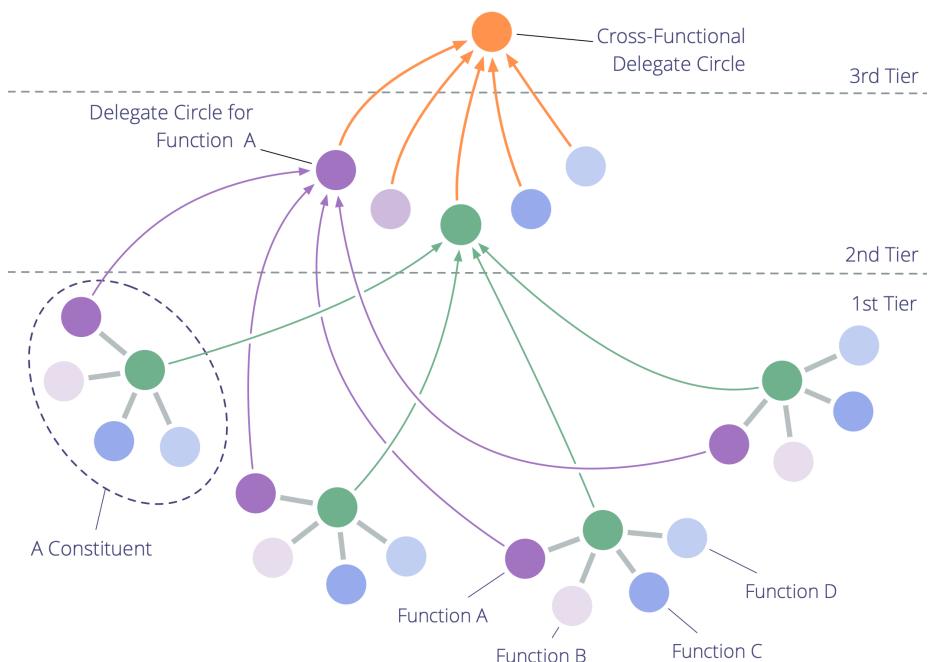


Figure 10.6.: Fractal Organization

## Prerequisites

A fractal organization can be formed either by multiple in(ter-)dependent organizations which share a common (primary) driver, or by multiple branches, departments, or projects within a larger organization.

These constituents (i.e. organizations, branches, departments or projects) need to share at least some — and typically most — functional domains (e.g. accounting, product management, or development).

## Tiers

A fractal organization has at least three tiers:

- first tier: the **constituents** (i.e. organizations, branches, departments or projects)
- second tier: **function-specific delegate circles** to share learning and to make and evolve agreements on behalf of function-specific domains
- third tier: a **cross-functional delegate circle** to make and evolve agreements in response to drivers affecting the overall body of constituents

## Forming a Fractal Organization

1. Forming the **second tier**: In each constituent, the members of each common (and significant) functional domain, decide who of them will represent them in a **function-specific delegate circle**, where they share knowledge and learning, and contribute toward making and evolving agreements. Representatives are selected for a limited term (after which a new selection is made).
2. Forming the **third tier**: second-tier delegate circles each select a delegate to form the **cross-functional delegate circle**.

## Impact on the organization(s)

Each constituent:

- gains access to a wide array of experience, wisdom and skills to increase effectiveness and innovation.
- can share resources, infrastructure and experience with other constituents according to capacity and need

The second and third tier:

- can test decisions simultaneously across multiple instances of a function-specific domain, providing extensive feedback and rapid learning
- organize, align and steer the whole system while preserving autonomy and agency of the individual constituents

## **Part V.**

# **A Common Sense Framework for Organizations and Teams**



Figure 0.1.: The Common Sense Framework

We're observing an emerging common sense that is transforming organizations around the world, inspiring and enabling people to build successful organizations where BOTH the people and the organization thrive.

We have distilled the essence of this *common sense* into a concise framework for teams and organizations: The **Common Sense Framework (CSF)** is a tool for sense-making, designed to help people address the challenges and opportunities they face. It supports building a shared understanding of the bigger picture, identifying and prioritizing areas of need within a team and throughout an organization, and understanding what to focus on next.

We mapped the 10 principles that comprise the framework to the patterns in S3, so that you can use the CSF as a guide for identifying those patterns that help address your specific needs.

The CSF can be applied in the context of developing individual teams and the organization as a whole.

# 1. An Organization Where BOTH the People and the Organization can Thrive

See the bigger picture – identify what's needed – prioritize where to start.

People face many challenges and opportunities in organizations and recognize the potential for improving the current state of things, yet they're uncertain or unable to agree how and where to start and what to do to move forward.

They need a simple way to build shared understanding about what is happening in their organization, and what needs to be done, so that they can effectively and sustainably respond to the impediments and opportunities they face.

The **Common Sense Framework** (CSF) lays out the big picture of what to consider to grow and maintain organizations where BOTH the people and the organization can thrive, and suggests specific practices and tools that can help you to get there.

Through **10 essential principles** that apply equally to individual teams, and the organization as a whole, evolve organizations that are:

- **focused on value** – people's efforts are directed toward creating value for the organization, its members, customers, and other stakeholders.
- **productive** – the organization is efficient in identifying, developing and delivering the necessary products and services necessary to achieve its purpose.

- **adaptive** – people are able to effectively identify and respond to organizational needs and changing contexts (both short term and long-term).
- **resilient** – the organization and its members are able to withstand adversity and uncertainty, if needed.
- **reciprocal** – the organization and its members share a relationship of mutual reciprocity where the organization is committed to the development, wellbeing and success of its members, and vice versa.

## 2. Ten Principles for Evolving Teams and Organizations

**Principle 1 – Clarify Purpose:** *Ensure that everyone understands who the organization or team is serving, why and to what end, so that everyone is able to focus and unite their efforts on achieving that purpose.*

**Principle 2 – Develop Strategy:** *Develop a strategy to guide value creation, so that everyone shares a common direction, and strategy is adapted as necessary to achieve the purpose.*

**Principle 3 – Focus on Value:** *Focus your daily work on value delivery, so that the stuff that needs doing to achieve your purpose is done.*

**Principle 4 – Sense & Respond:** *Identify, prioritize and respond to impediments and opportunities, so that you can adapt or pivot as necessary and improve where you can.*

**Principle 5 – Run Experiments:** *Run experiments to address complex challenges, so that you learn how to move closer to where you want to be.*

**Principle 6 – Enable Autonomy:** *Free individuals and teams up to create value as autonomously as possible, so that you can deliver value fast and avoid unnecessary dependencies.*

**Principle 7 – Collaborate on Dependencies:** *Co-create and evolve a coherent system to deal with all dependencies, so that you deliver value fast when dependencies cannot be avoided.*

**Principle 8 – Invest in Learning:** *Support everyone in developing their competence and skill, so that their contribution remains valuable and the organization can evolve.*

**Principle 9 – Intentionally Develop Culture:** *Collaborate on fostering a cooperative culture where everyone can achieve their fuller potential, so that you build and maintain an engaging and productive work environment.*

**Principle 10 – Build Shared Mental Models:** *Invest in building shared mental models, so that everyone can engage in meaningful dialogue about what's happening and what needs to be done, and in the process deepen their understanding of how the organization works, what it does and why.*

# 3. Two Principles for Orientation

## 3.1. Principle 1 – Clarify Purpose

*Ensure that everyone understands who the organization or team is serving, why and to what end, so that everyone is able to focus and unite their efforts on achieving that purpose.*

Essential Patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Describe Organizational Drivers* – Understanding the motive for acting in response to a specific situation is an essential component for understanding, defining and communicating the purpose of an organization, a team or department.

## 3.2. Principle 2 – Develop Strategy

*Develop a strategy to guide value creation, so that everyone shares a common direction, and strategy is adapted as necessary to achieve the purpose.*

Essential Patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Clarify and Develop Domains* – A clearly defined area of influence, activity and decision making is a prerequisite for defining an effective strategy for an organization, a team or role.
- *Clarify Intended Outcome* - Defining the intended outcome of a strategy is an essential component for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness, and adapting things when necessary.

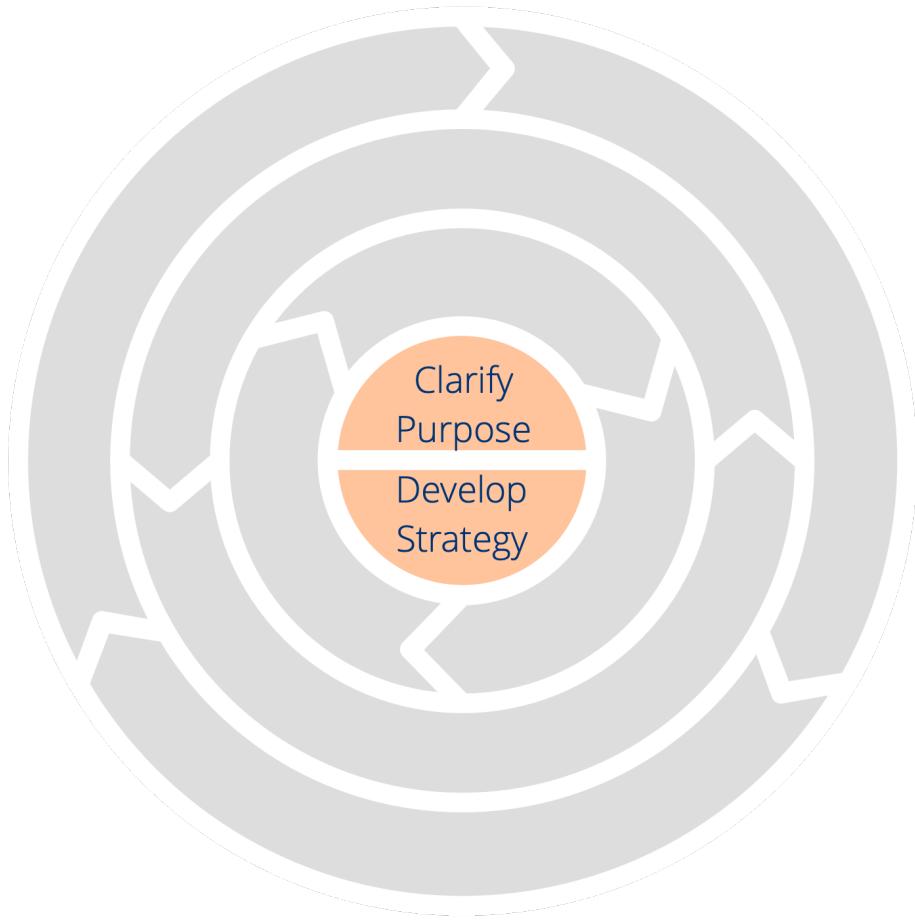


Figure 3.1.: Two Principles for Orientation: Clarify Purpose – Develop Strategy

- *Describe Organizational Drivers* – Understanding the motive for acting in response to a specific situation is an essential component for designing an effective strategy for responding to it
- *Clarify and Develop Strategy* – Stakeholders collaborating on creating and evolving strategy for an organization, team or role, helps to support creation of relevant and effective strategy
- *Evaluate And Evolve Agreements* – Reviewing strategy and evolving it as necessary over time ensures it remains helpful and relevant to the organization, team or role.
- *Evaluation Criteria* – Defining criteria for success or failure is necessary for figuring out whether or not the strategy is effective.

# 4. Three Principles for Navigation

## 4.1. Principle 3 – Focus on Value

*Focus your daily work on value delivery, so that the stuff that needs doing to achieve your purpose is done.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Clarify and Develop Domains* – Clarifying the area of influence, activity and decision making that a team, or person in a role is responsible for, enables them to understand the value they are expected to deliver.
- *Respond to Organizational Drivers* – Understanding what's necessary to respond to and why, and ensuring those things are taken care of, maximizes potential for creating value.
- *Prioritize Backlogs* – When you prioritize your list of work items by value, it is obvious which ones need to be worked on first.
- *Limit Work In Progress* – Limiting the number of concurrent work items for people and teams, helps to maintain a steady flow of value and encourages collaboration when work is blocked.
- *Daily Standup* – A Daily Standup provides the space for a team to organize how they will create value during the day ahead
- *Test Arguments Qualify as Objections* – When you test each argument brought forward against a decision for whether or not it reveals worthwhile improvements or unwanted consequences, you keep your work focused on value and avoid getting derailed by unfounded opinions and personal preferences.

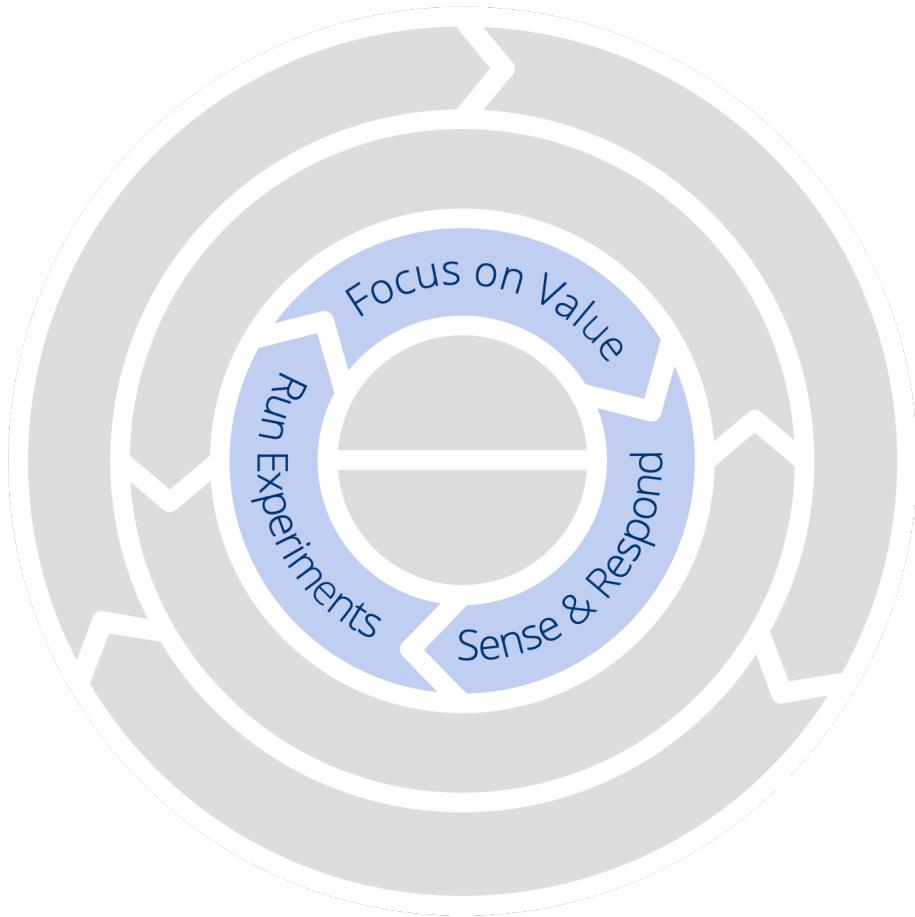


Figure 4.1.: Three Principles for Navigation: Focus on Value – Sense & Respond – Run Experiments

## 4.2. Principle 4 – Sense & Respond

*Identify, prioritize and respond to impediments and opportunities, so that you can adapt or pivot as necessary and improve where you can.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Continuous Improvement of Work Process* – Getting in the habit of continuously seeking to improve the work process supports people's skill in identifying and acting on opportunities to improve.
- *Describe Organizational Drivers* – Before responding to a perceived impediment or opportunity, it is essential to understand the current situation, and why it makes sense for the organization to respond
- *Governance Backlog* – Keeping a prioritized list of all impediments and opportunities that require a governance decision to be made, keeps outstanding issues visible and clarifies what is most important to respond to first.
- *Navigate via Tension* – When everyone in the organization pays attention for situations that appear different to what is expected or desired, and brings that information to the attention of those responsible, you maximize the organization's potential for identifying impediments and opportunities.
- *Respond to Organizational Driver* – Responding only to challenges and opportunities that are valuable for the organization, maximizes return on investment of limited time, energy and resources.

## 4.3. Principle 5 – Run Experiments

*Run experiments to address complex challenges, so that you learn how to move closer to where you want to be.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Describe Organizational Drivers* – Building a shared mental model of the situation you want to address, is essential for successfully designing, running and later on, evaluating experiments.
- *Clarify Intended Outcome* – A clear description of the intended outcome of an experiment is essential for understanding whether or not an experiment produced the intended result.
- *Evaluation Criteria* – Defining clear criteria for determining success before the start of an experiment, helps to reveal flaws in its design and supports effective evaluation of outcomes.
- *Consent Decision Making* – An effective group process for viewing a proposition from a diversity of perspectives and testing whether or not an experiment is good enough and safe enough to run.
- *Evaluate and Evolve Agreements* – An experiment needs to be regularly reviewed to determine what outcomes it achieves, and as a consequence, potentially adapted or even stopped.
- *Limit Work in Progress* – Limit the number of concurrent experiments to avoid overwhelm and maintain a steady flow of value.
- *Create A Pull-System for Organizational Change* – Inviting and enabling people to run experiments when they discover organizational needs allows for effective and decentralized adaption of the organization.

# 5. Two Principles for Structure

## 5.1. Principle 6 – Enable Autonomy

*Free individuals and teams up to create value as autonomously as possible, so that you can deliver value fast and avoid unnecessary dependencies.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Clarify and Develop Domains* – When people understand their own areas of responsibility, and those of others too, they know what is expected of them and where they are dependent on others.
- *Pull-System For Work* – People being able to pull in new work items when they have capacity, eliminates overload and improves productivity.
- *Delegate Influence* – Delegating work, together with authority to make decisions relating to that work, frees people up to create value and removes unnecessary dependencies.
- *Role* – Delegating autonomy to an individual to decide and act within clearly defined constraints, frees individuals up to create value, and enables those who delegate to retain as much influence as necessary.
- *Circle* – Delegating autonomy to a team to organize and govern themselves within clearly defined constraints, frees the team up to create value, and enables those who delegate that authority to retain as much influence as necessary.

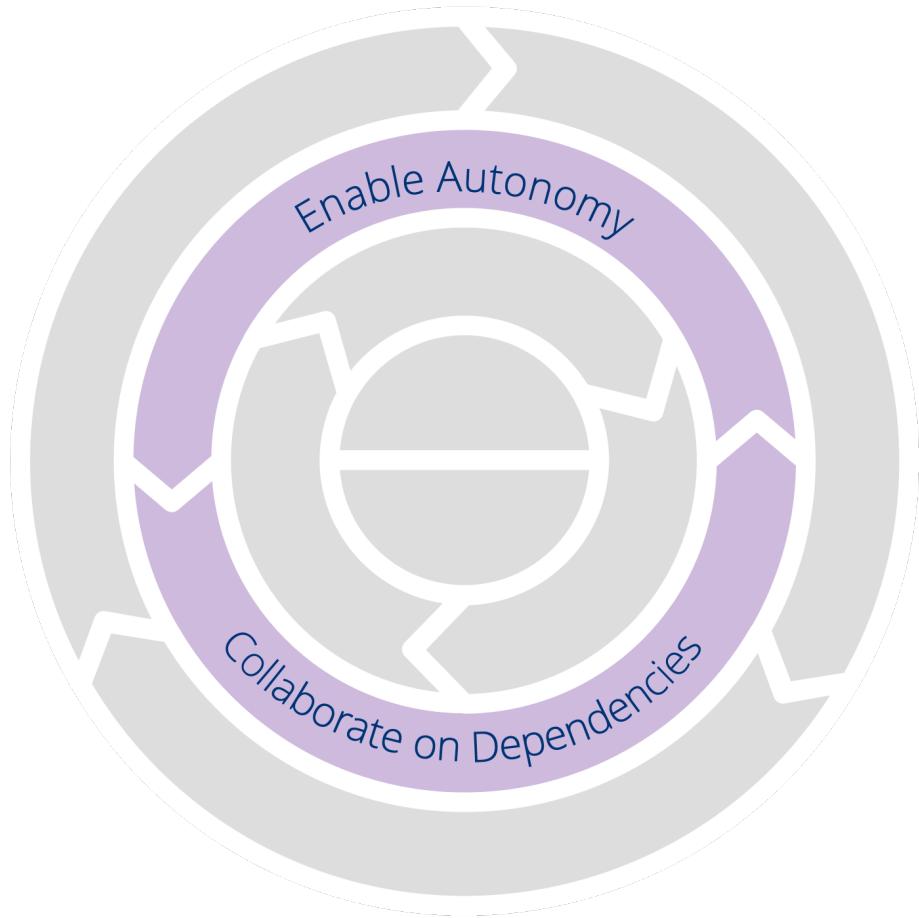


Figure 5.1.: Two Principles for Structure: Enable Autonomy – Collaborate on Dependencies

- *Clarify and Develop Strategy* – When a team or individual in a role develops a strategy for how they will create value, that's agreed upon by relevant stakeholders, it supports autonomy and builds trust.
- *Development Plan*; Collaborating with relevant stakeholders on developing a plan for how to improve, helps a team or individual in a role develop their skill and competence, and builds trust among all concerned.
- *Align Flow* – Moving decision making close to where value is created, while retaining the influence of the relevant stakeholders, supports the flow of value and eliminates unnecessary dependencies and delays.

## 5.2. Principle 7 – Collaborate on Dependencies

*Co-create and evolve a coherent system to deal with all dependencies, so that you deliver value fast when dependencies cannot be avoided.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Navigate via Tension* – Everyone in the organization paying attention to dependencies maximizes the potential for unmanaged dependencies to be identified and responded to.
- *Clarify and Develop Domains* – When people understand their own areas of responsibility, and those of others too, they also understand where collaboration on dependencies will be necessary.
- *Visualize Work* – Visualizing work items and the dependencies between them, makes it easier to manage dependencies in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.
- *Respond to Organizational Drivers* Understanding why a dependency exists in the first place, and ensuring it is taken care of, is essential for collaborating on managing or resolving dependencies.

- *Involve Those Affected* – To address dependencies in an effective way, it often helps to gather the perspectives of all (relevant) stakeholders and involve them in the decision making process.
- *Linking* – Dependencies between two teams can often be addressed effectively by sending a *Representative* to the decision making of the other team, to ensure all relevant perspectives are considered and ownership of decisions is shared.
- *Delegate Circle* – Delegating the power to make and evolve agreements for how to deal with specific dependencies between teams, to a circle of representatives, brings together relevant perspectives and generates ownership among stakeholders.
- *Align Flow* – Moving decision making close to where value is created, brings together the people necessary for making decisions in response to specific dependencies and eliminates unnecessary decision making bottlenecks.
- *Create a Pull-System for Organizational Change* – Inviting and enabling people to make changes to organizational structure, when doing so provides an effective way for dealing with dependencies they share responsibility for, facilitates the ongoing evolution of a coherent and effective organization.

# 6. Three Principles for Transformation

## 6.1. Principle 8 – Invest in Learning

*Support everyone in developing their competence and skill, so that their contribution remains valuable and the organization can evolve.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Navigate via Tension* – Everyone in the organization paying attention for situations where growing competence and skills may be valuable, focuses the learning effort and facilitates continuous improvement.
- *Evaluate Meetings* – A brief evaluation at the end of each meeting or workshop helps people identify their strengths, growing edges and ways to improve their contribution in the future.
- *Peer Review* – A team or person in a role regularly inviting relevant stakeholders for a review of their effectiveness, supports identifying their strengths, growing edges and ways they can improve their contribution in future.
- *Development Plan* – Collaborating with relevant stakeholders on a plan for how to develop necessary skills and competence, is an effective way of focusing the learning efforts of a person in a role, or for a team.
- *Peer Feedback* – Inviting feedback from peers, supports people in understanding their strengths and growing edges, so that they can

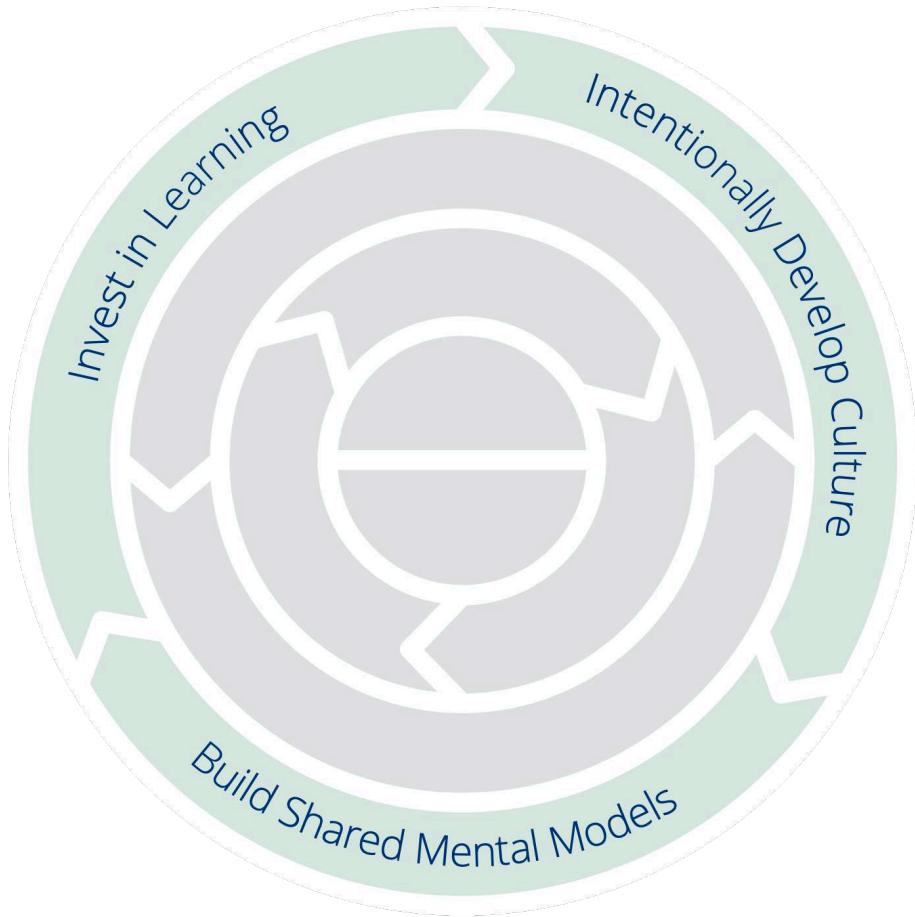


Figure 6.1.: Three Principles for Transformation: Invest in Learning – Intentionally Develop Culture – Build Shared Mental Models

invest in learning where helpful.

## 6.2. Principle 9 – Intentionally Develop Culture

*Collaborate on fostering a cooperative culture where everyone can achieve their fuller potential, so that you build and maintain an engaging and productive work environment.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Artful Participation* – Introducing the concept of Artful Participation to people, invites them to pay conscious attention to how they contribute and to make changes when they realize their current approach can be improved.
- *Adopt the Seven Principles* – The seven principles provide guidelines for behavior that enable a productive, engaging and cooperative culture.
- *Agree on Values* – Agreement on fundamental guidelines for behavior in the organization, define ethical parameters for action and facilitate coherence.
- *Evaluate and Evolve Agreements* – Regular review and intentional evolution of agreements relating to culture, helps keep them alive in the consciousness of the people and identify when and how they can be improved.
- *Contract for Successful Collaboration* – Co-creating mutually beneficial agreements for collaboration from the start, supports building and maintaining an engaging and productive working environment and a culture of trust between parties.
- *Create a Pull-System for Organizational Change* – Distributing the responsibility for developing culture to everybody, invites proactivity in addressing challenges and opportunities as they arise.

## 6.3. Principle 10 – Build Shared Mental Models

*Invest in building shared mental models, so that everyone can engage in meaningful dialogue about what's happening and what needs to be done, and in the process deepen their understanding of how the organization works, what it does and why.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- *Navigate via Tension* – Everyone in the organization paying attention for situations that might benefit from building or refining a shared mental model, gets people on the same page so that they can engage in productive dialogue.
- *Clarify and Develop Domains* – Explicitly clarifying and documenting areas of responsibility ensures a shared mental model regarding expectations and responsibilities.
- *Clarify Intended Outcome* – By first agreeing on the intended outcome of a proposed activity, project or agreement, people develop shared understanding of where things should be headed and can then engage in productive dialog about how to get there.

## 7. Where to Start?

Each principle supports a specific outcome. To determine where to start in your organization or team, **take a look at the outcomes for each principle** (the text after “*so that*”) and reflect on where your greatest need lies at the moment. In any case, **check that you are clear enough on your organization’s or team’s purpose and strategy before you proceed.**

In the illustration below you can see that some of the principles are more closely related than others, which might further inform you of where to start.

For each principle we included a list of suggestions for things you can try. These suggestions are taken from the [menu of patterns contained in Sociocracy 3.0<sup>1</sup>](#). For now we only added the most essential patterns that support each principle, in future versions of this framework we will include even more patterns.

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<sup>1</sup><http://patterns.sociocracy30.org>

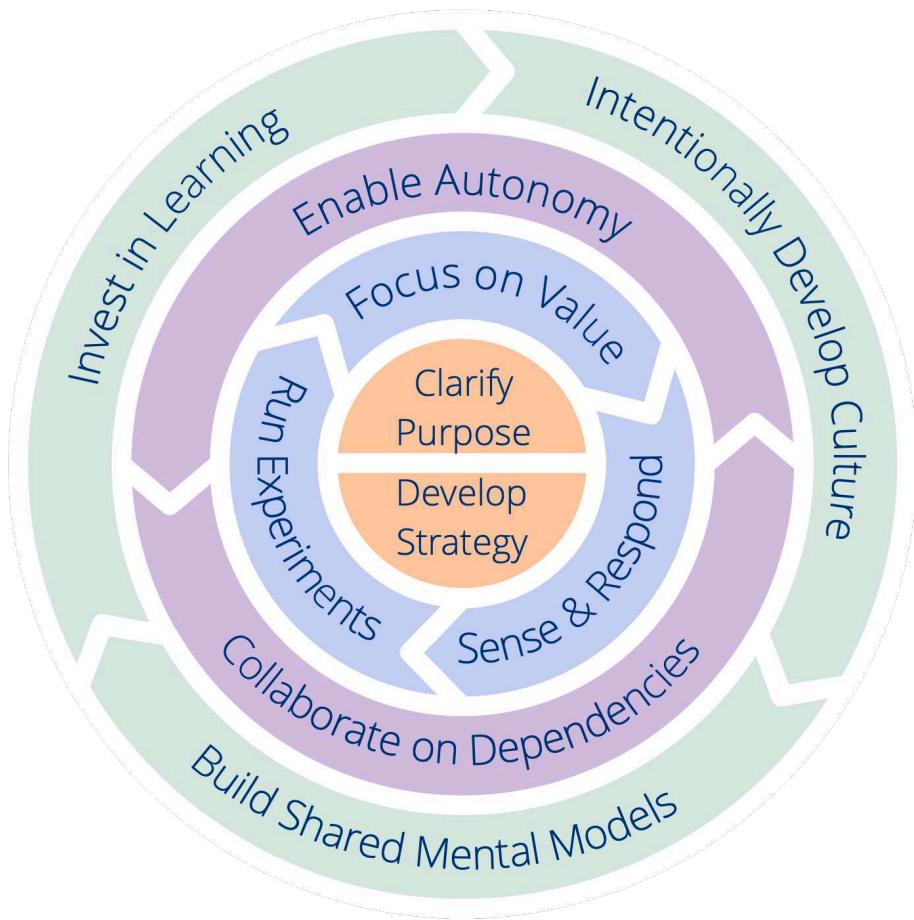


Figure 7.1.: Ten Principles for Evolving Teams and Organizations

# **Part VI.**

# **Appendix**

# 1. Changelog

## 1.1. Changes 2021-08-15

- renamed *Open Domain* to *Open Team*

## 1.2. Changes 2021-06-18

- added a dedicated chapter for each of the Seven Principles
- revised the ten principles of the Common Sense Framework
- updated section about governance in the introduction
  - added more text to explain how governance can be distributed throughout the organization
  - more examples for governance decisions
- corrected a few typos
- several small revisions

## 1.3. Changes 2021-05-15

- *Navigate via Tension*: added more explanation about passing on drivers to another domain
- *Clarify and Develop Domains*: more explanation about refining the elements of a domain description, more information about metrics, monitoring and evaluation, added template illustration,

## 1.4. Changes 2021-03-15

- updated the Seven Principles

## 1.5. Changes 2021-02-19

- fixed several broken links on the online version
- corrected a few typos

## 1.6. Changes 2021-02-11

- *Driver Mapping*: added explanation about applications of the pattern, and detailed instructions for each step of the format

## 1.7. Changes 2021-02-06

- Revised glossary definitions for Semi-Autonomy, Self-Organization and Sociocracy
- Renamed Pattern: *Those Affected Decide* to *Involve Those Affected*
- Several small corrections and revisions

## 1.8. Changes 2021-02-03

- Added the ***Common Sense Framework*** to the Practical Guide
- A new structure of the Practical Guide that makes that the relevant parts easier to find:
  - *What is Sociocracy 3.0*
  - *The Seven Principles*

- *Key Concepts for Making Sense of Organizations*
  - *The Patterns*
  - *The Common Sense Framework*
  - *Appendix*
- Redesigned the website for better usability:
    - A new responsive menu that provides direct access to all patterns and other sections of the guide
    - A new homepage that explains what is where
    - A new layout for a cleaner experience on desktop and mobile devices

## 1.9. Changes 2021-01-12

- **Renamed Patterns:**
  - renamed *Clarify Domains* to *Clarify and Develop Domains*
  - renamed *Develop Strategy* to *Clarify and Develop Strategy*
- *Clarify and Develop Domains*: revised text, added more details and explanations about domain descriptions
- *Peer Review*: added more details about what should be reviewed
- *Peer Feedback*: revised the text and added more details
- *Breaking Agreements*: added summary
- added glossary entry for “metric”
- revised glossary entry for “governance”
- *Describe Organizational Drivers*: revised text
- **Introduction:**
  - added more details to the section about Domains and delegation

- removed illustration in the section about patterns and listed the pattern groups in the text
- Appendix:
  - added a disclaimer
  - added more information about the authors

## 1.10. Changes 2020-05-08

- revised all illustrations for a more consistent style and increased readability
- revised introduction: more explanation about patterns and core concepts
- updated glossary: revised explanation of Delegator, Delegatee, Role and Pattern, added Role Keeper

## 1.11. Changes 2020-04-29

- Introduction: Added *Objection* and *Agreement* to concepts
- renamed pattern *Objection* to *Test Arguments Qualify as Objections*
- renamed pattern *Agreement* to *Record Agreements*
- *Test Arguments Qualify as Objections*: revised text and updated illustration
- *Record Agreements*: revised text, added more details of agreements that might be recorded, updated illustration

## 1.12. Changes 2019-12-22

- added new introduction text

- added “social technology” to glossary
- website now has separate pages for “Introduction” and “Concepts and Principles”
- ePub now looks much better

## 1.13. Changes 2019-11-29

- Principle of Transparency: revised description to clarify that valuable information needs to be recorded, and then shared with everyone in the organization
- Principle of Empiricism: clarified that only those assumptions one relies on need to be tested

## 1.14. Changes 2019-06-27

- *Objection*: further refined definition of objection, and updated the glossary term for objection accordingly
- replaced “action” with activity in a few places where it made more sense
- fixed a few typos

## 1.15. Changes 2019-05-03

- refined glossary terms for agreement, organization and team, added glossary term for objective
- Principle of Accountability: clarified individual accountability for work as well as for collaboration
- *Contract For Successful Collaboration*: revised text

- *Describe Deliverables*: added User Stories as an example for describing deliverables
- *Double-Linked Hierarchy*: revised summary
- *Delegate Circle*: refined summary
- *Objection*: refined definition of objection and concern, added illustration for a process to qualify an objection
- *Proposal Forming*: added missing process illustration
- *Role Selection*: small amendment to illustration
- *Transparent Salary*: explained what a salary formula is

## 1.16. Changes 2019-03-08

### General Changes

- expanded the introduction with more information about S3 and the history of sociocracy that was previously only available on the main S3 website
- updated section about governance in the introduction
- added captions to all illustrations
- renamed pattern group “Enablers of Co-Creation” to “Enablers of Collaboration”
- removed slide deck version and improved layout and formatting of pdf and ePUB version
- website version: added clickable pattern map for simpler navigation, added glossary overlays to many patterns

### Glossary:

- added team to glossary (and replaced group with team throughout the practical guide where applicable)
- updated definition for deliverable

- removed **driver statement** from text and glossary
- updated definitions for governance, operations, and self-organization

### **Illustrations:**

- updated templates for domain description and role description
- updated illustrations for *Linking* and *Double-Linking*

### **Changes to Patterns:**

- *Agreement*: description now mentions that any expectations should be recorded
- *Describe Deliverables*: updated summary
- *Describe Organizational Drivers*: more information on summarizing drivers
- *Resolve Objections*: added summary and description

## **1.17. Changes 2018-08-17**

### **General Changes**

- added and revised the brief summary for many of the patterns
- removed bullet points in favor of full sentences in many patterns
- lots of small improvements to grammar and language
- included the URL to the web version of the practical guide

### **Glossary:**

- **updated**: account for (v.), concern, deliverable, governance, objection, operations, primary driver, principle, role, self-organization, semi-autonomy, subdriver, values
- **added**: constituent, coordination, delegation, driver statement, evolve (v.), flow of value, helping team and open domain
- **removed**: peer driver

## Changes to Introduction

- added the driver for creating Sociocracy 3.0
- The Seven Principles:
  - *The Principle of Empiricism*: removed reference to “falsification”
  - *The Principle of Consent* is now explained more clearly as “Raise, seek-out and resolve objections to decisions and actions”
- *Governance, Semi-Autonomy and Self-Organization*: we refined the definitions of Governance, Operations, and Self-Organization, removed any reference to “coordination”, and clarified the distinction between governance and operations
- *Drivers and Domains* - we clarified how domains can be understood in relation to organizational drivers

## Changes to Patterns:

- *Agree on Values*: improved description
- *Align Flow*: improved description and illustration
- *Adapt Patterns To Context*: improved description
- *Agreement*: improved description, updated template
- *Artful Participation*: improved summary
- *Clarify Intended Outcome* (renamed from *Intended Outcome*): improved description
- *Consent Decision Making*: improved description, updated illustration
- *Continuous Improvement Of Work Process*: improved description
- *Contract For Successful Collaboration*: renamed the pattern to a more descriptive name, and explained process of creating contracts, and what needs to be in them

- *Coordination Meeting*: clarified agenda items, updated illustration
- *Delegate Circle*: improved description
- *Delegate Influence*: improved description
- *Describe Deliverables*: improved description
- *Describe Organizational Drivers*: made explicit that a driver statement is typically only 1–2 sentences, revised section about explaining the need, moved the section about reviewing driver statements from *Respond to Organizational Drivers* to this pattern, and added a new illustration that explains *how* to describe organizational drivers
- *Double Linking*: aligned description to *Link*
- *Double-Linked Hierarchy*: explained in more detail what a double-linked hierarchy is, and how it is created
- *Evaluate and Evolve Agreements*: rearranged the text so it's clear there is a long and a short format
- *Evaluation Criteria*: suggested clarifying a threshold for success, and we explained about also evolving evaluation criteria when evolving agreements
- *Facilitate Meetings*: improved description
- *Fractal Organization*: extended and improved description
- *Governance Backlog*: improved description
- *Governance Meeting*: improved description, clarified agenda items
- *Invite Change*: description now focuses on *how* to invite change
- *Linking*: aligned description to *Double Linking*
- *Logbook*: clarified that there is no difference between logbooks for groups and logbooks for roles
- *Navigate via Tension*: improved description, added a new illustration to clarify the distinction between *Navigate via Tension*, *Describe Organizational Drivers* and *Respond to Organizational Drivers*

- *Objection*: clarified the difference between objection and concern, clarified what qualifies as an objection, and how to qualify objections in a group context
- *Open Domain*: improved description and updated illustration
- *Open Systems*: improved description
- *Open Space for Change*: renamed from *Open S3 Adoption*, improved description
- *Peach Organization*: clarified relationship between periphery and center
- *Proposal Forming*: revised text and illustration to make process of choosing tuners more clear, updated template for proposal to align with template for agreement
- *Representative*: improved description
- *Resolve Objections*: updated both illustrations
- *Respond to Organizational Drivers*: improved description, simplified qualification of organizational drivers
- *Role*: improved description
- *Role Selection*: improved description, added description of each step
- *Rounds*: improved description
- *Transparent Salary*: added more details about fairness, and on how to develop a salary formula

## **Renamed Patterns:**

- *Evaluate Agreements* to *Evaluate and Evolve Agreements*
- *Intended Outcome* to *Clarify Intended Outcome*
- *Open S3 Adoption* to *Open Space for Change*
- *Contracting and Accountability* to *Contract For Successful Collaboration*

## **Added Patterns:**

- *Check In*
- *Co-create Proposals*
- *Prepare for Meetings*
- *Timebox Activities*

## **1.18. Changes 2018-03-21**

- renamed pattern *Describe Drivers* to *Describe Organizational Drivers*
- *Describe Organizational Drivers*: explained four aspects of a driver: current situation, effect of the situation on the organization, need of the organization in relation to this situation, and impact of attending to need
- added *need* to glossary

## **1.19. Changes 2017-11-16**

- small corrections
- aligned glossary entries for *Circle* and *Role* to pattern text
- *Development Plan*: clarification of responsibilities
- *Role*: clarified evolution of strategy

## **1.20. Changes 2017-11-10**

- various small clarifications and corrections
- *Circle*: clarified relationship between circle and domain
- *Role*: improved description

- *Rounds*: improved description
- moved *Open Domain*, *Helping Team* and *Open Systems* to category “Building Organizations”
- added several terms to the glossary

## 1.21. Changes 2017-10-21

- added Liliana David to authors
- dropped the term “framework” (replaced with “practical guide”)
- updated order of patterns
- added an index of all the patterns
- added a glossary
- added acknowledgments
- various small clarifications and corrections to text and illustrations
- updated templates for agreement and development plan

### Changes to Introduction

- added “what’s in it for me?”
- added definitions for governance, self-organization, semi-autonomy, operations to introduction
- clarified domains and their relationship to drivers
- fleshed out core concepts
- made all principles actionable

### Changes to Patterns:

- *Artful Participation*: improved description
- *Agreement*: clarified that the concept of agreements is applicable to people in roles

- *Clarify Domains*: improved description
- *Circle*: updated definition of “circle”, improved description
- *Driver*: updated definition of “driver”
- *Development Plan*: improved description, updated template
- *Develop Strategy*: updated definition of “strategy”, improved description
- *Double-Linked Hierarchy*: new illustration
- *Evaluate Agreements*: aligned questions to peer review
- *Governance Backlog*: improved description
- *Logbook*: added details about governance to personal logbook
- *Objections*: clarified qualifying objections
- *Peer Review*: improved description
- *Respond to Organizational Driver*: integrated information about qualifying drivers
- *Role*: clarified role keeper may maintain a governance backlog, introduced the term “role keeper” for a person in a role
- *Proposal Forming*: added criteria for selecting tuners, added step for prioritizing considerations, small clarifications
- *Resolve Objections*: updated illustration to better reflect the process

### **Renamed Patterns:**

- *Backbone Organization to Service Organization*
- *Effectiveness Review to Peer Review*
- *Strategy to Develop Strategy*
- *Domain Description to Clarify Domains*
- *Describing Deliverables to Describe Deliverables*

### **Added Patterns:**

- *Delegate Influence*
- *Describe Drivers*
- *Open Domain*

## Removed Patterns

- *Coordination Circle*
- *Nested Domains*
- *Qualify Driver*

## 2. Alphabetical List Of All Patterns

**Adapt Patterns To Context:** Adapt and evolve S3 patterns to suit your specific context.

**Adopt The Seven Principles:** Align collaboration with the Seven Principles.

**Agree On Values:** Intentionally evolve the culture in your organization.

**Align Flow:** In support of continuous flow of value, move decision making close to where value is created, and align the flow of information accordingly.

**Artful Participation:** Commit to doing your best to act and interact in ways that enable effective collaboration.

**Ask For Help:** A simple protocol for learning, skill sharing, and building connections, with respect for people's agency.

**Backlog:** *A backlog (to-do-list) is a list of (often prioritized) uncompleted work items (deliverables), or (drivers) that need to be addressed.*

**Be The Change:** Lead by example.

**Breaking Agreements:** Break agreements when you are certain the benefit for the organization outweighs the cost of waiting to amend that agreement first, and take responsibility for any consequences.

**Bylaws:** Secure S3 principles and patterns in your bylaws as needed to protect **legal integrity** and **organizational culture**

**Check In:** Help people to become aware of themselves and others, and to focus, be present and engage.

**Circle:** *A circle is a self-governing and semi-autonomous team of equivalent people who collaborate to account for a domain.*

**Clarify Intended Outcome:** Be explicit about the expected results of agreements, activities, projects and strategies.

**Clarify and Develop Domains:** A clear understanding of people's area of responsibility and autonomy enables greater efficiency, effective collaboration, and agility throughout an organization.

**Clarify and Develop Strategy:** *A strategy is a high level approach for how people will create value to successfully account for a domain.*

**Co-CREATE Proposals:** Bring people together to co-create proposals in response to organizational drivers: tap collective intelligence, build sense of ownership and increase engagement and accountability.

**Consent Decision Making:** A (facilitated) group process for decision making: invite objections, and consider information and knowledge revealed to further evolve proposals or existing agreements.

**Continuous Improvement Of Work Process:** Reveal drivers and establish a metrics-based pull-system for organizational change through continuously improving and refining the work process.

**Contract For Successful Collaboration:** Support successful collaboration from the start and build trust between parties by co-creating mutually beneficial and legally robust contracts.

**Coordination Meeting:** Meet on a regular basis (usually weekly) for reporting on and coordinating work across domains.

**Coordinator:** A person fulfilling the role of a coordinator is accountable for **coordinating a domain's operations** and is **selected for a limited term**.

**Create a Pull-System For Organizational Change:** Create an environment that invites and enables members of the organization to drive change.

**Daily Standup:** Meet daily to organize work, facilitate learning and improve your productivity and effectiveness.

**Delegate Circle:** Delegate making governance decisions affecting multiple domains to representatives selected by those domains.

**Delegate Influence:** Distribute the power to influence, to enable people to decide and act for themselves within defined constraints.

**Describe Deliverables:** Clearly describe any deliverables related to an agreement to support shared understanding of expectations.

**Describe Organizational Drivers:** Describe organizational drivers to understand, communicate and remember them.

**Development Plan:** A plan for how to develop more effective ways of accounting for a domain, agreed between delegator and delegatee.

**Double Linking:** Enable the *two-way* flow of information and influence between two teams.

**Double-Linked Hierarchy:** Delegate all authority for making governance decisions to self-governing circles, double-linked across all levels of the hierarchy, to transition from an traditional hierarchy towards a structure more suitable for tapping collective intelligence, ensuring equivalence and building engagement.

**Driver Mapping:** A workshop format for large groups to co-create and organize themselves in response to a complex situation of significant scope and scale.

**Evaluate And Evolve Agreements:** Continuously evolve the body of agreements, and eliminate waste.

**Evaluate Meetings:** Take time for learning at the end of each meeting or workshop.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Develop well-defined evaluation criteria to determine if acting on an agreement had the desired effect.

**Facilitate Meetings:** Choose someone to facilitate a meeting to help the group maintain focus, keep the meeting on track and draw out the participant's creativity and wisdom.

**Fractal Organization:** Multiple constituents (organizations or projects) with a common (or similar) primary driver and structure can share learning across functional domains, align action and make high level governance decisions (e.g. overall strategy).

**Governance Backlog:** A *governance backlog* is a visible, prioritized list of items (drivers) that are related to governing a domain and require attention.

**Governance Facilitator:** Select someone to facilitate governance meetings.

**Governance Meeting:** Teams meet at regular intervals to decide what to do to achieve objectives, and to set constraints on how and when things will be done.

**Helping Team:** Bring together a team of equivalent people with the mandate to execute on a specific set of requirements defined by a delegator.

**Invite Change:** Clarify the reason for change and invite people to participate.

**Involve Those Affected:** Involve people in making decisions that affect them, to maintain equivalence and accountability, and to increase the amount of information available on the subject.

**Limit Work in Progress:** Limit the number of work items in any stage of your work process.

**Linking:** Enable the flow of information and influence between two teams.

**Logbook:** Maintain a coherent and accessible system that stores all information required for collaboration.

**Logbook Keeper:** Select a member of your team to be specifically accountable for keeping up to date records of all information the team requires.

**Meeting Host:** Select someone to take responsibility for the preparation and follow-up of meetings, workshops or other events.

**Navigate via Tension:** Pay attention to tension you experience in relation to the organization, investigate the cause and pass on any organizational drivers you discover to the people accountable for the appropriate domain.

**Open Space For Change:** Invite everyone to create and run experiments for evolving the organization.

**Open Systems:** Intentionally communicate with and learn from others outside of your system.

**Open Team:** Intentionally account for a domain by invitation rather than assignment, and request that those invited contribute when they can.

**Peach Organization:** Deliver value in complex and competitive environments through *decentralization* (of resources and influence) and *direct interaction* between those creating value and the customers they serve.

**Peer Feedback:** Invite any member of your organization to give you some constructive feedback on your performance in a role or in a team, about your general participation and contribution, or about any other area you wish to develop.

**Peer Review:** Support each other to learn and grow in the roles and teams you serve in.

**Planning And Review Meetings:** People meet at regular intervals (1–4 weeks) in timeboxed meetings to plan and review work.

**Prepare For Meetings:** Prepare in advance to make meetings more effective.

**Prioritize Backlogs:** Order all uncompleted work items with the most important items first, then pull work items from the top whenever there is new capacity.

**Proposal Forming:** A (facilitated) group process for co-creating a response to a driver.

**Pull-System For Work:** People pull in new work items when they have capacity (instead of having work pushed or assigned to them).

**Record Agreements:** Record the details of agreements you make, so you can recall them later, evaluate the outcome and evolve the agreement over time.

**Representative:** Select a team member to participate in the governance decision making of another team to enable the flow of information and influence.

**Resolve Objections:** Resolve objections one at a time by using the information they contain to make and evolve amendments.

**Respond to Organizational Drivers:** Clarify organizational drivers (i.e. what's happening and what's needed in relation to the organization), and respond as required.

**Retrospective:** Dedicate time to reflect on past experience, learn, and decide how to improve work process.

**Role:** Delegate responsibility for a domain to individuals.

**Role Selection:** A group process for selecting a person for a role on the strength of the reason.

**Rounds:** In a group meeting, go around the circle giving everyone the chance to speak in turn.

**Service Circle:** Outsource services required by two or more domains.

**Service Organization:** Multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment towards a shared driver (or objective).

**Support Role:** Apply the role pattern to external contractors.

**Test Arguments Qualify as Objections:** Utilize your limited time and resources wisely by testing if arguments qualify as objections and only acting on those that do.

**Timebox Activities:** Set a time constraint to stay focused, bring consciousness to the time you have and how you use it.

**Transparent Salary:** Create a fair salary formula and make it transparent.

**Visualize Work:** Maintain a system that allows all stakeholders to review the state of all work items currently pending, in progress or complete.

## 3. Links

The **latest online version** of the Practical Guide at <http://patterns.sociocracy30.org/> can be annotated via [hypothes.is](#) and comes with an alphabetical index and a pattern map for easy navigation.

Various other formats and languages of the practical guide can be found at <http://sociocracy30.org/guide/>

**More S3 Resources:** <http://sociocracy30.org/resources/>

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# **6. The Intentional Commitment for Practitioners and Teachers of Sociocracy 3.0 (ICPT)**

This commitment supports:

**Practitioners and teachers** with clear guidance on how to continually develop their experience and skills in sharing about and applying S3 patterns, and improve their knowledge and understanding of S3 as it evolves.

**Clients and students** in selecting the people they wish to work with and learn from, according to their level of experience and the quality and integrity of their work.

If you follow the voluntary Commitment you can add our banners to your website, or to other materials that promote you as a practitioner or teacher of Sociocracy 3.0. Please consider signing the commitment so that we can notify you of proposed changes to the ICPT and seek any objections or concerns you may have. Thank you.

You can find out more about the ICPT at <https://sociocracy30.org/s3-intentional-commitment/>

## **6.1. Full Text of the ICPT**

**Intentional Commitment for Practitioners and Teachers of Sociocracy 3.0**

I commit to developing a sociocratic and agile mindset, and I hold myself accountable to practice and teach Sociocracy 3.0 with integrity, by following these guidelines:

I strive to follow the seven principles in my daily life. I commit to participating artfully in my collaboration with others.

I practice and facilitate S3 patterns.

I maintain appropriate confidentiality about issues relating to my clients.

I will work in accordance with my level of competence and the client's needs, and disclose when I am out of my depth.

I stay up to date with the ongoing developments of the S3 and the way it's presented. (e.g. by following the changelog in the latest version of the practical guide)

I will continue learning about S3, deepen my understanding and explore related topics.

I am transparent about my level of experience, my understanding of S3, the feedback I receive and my development plan.

I conduct regular peer reviews, and I integrate feedback from clients and peers into evolving what I'm doing.

I will give all clients/peers the chance to publicly share feedback.

I am part of an organized intervision group (of at least 3 people, e.g. a triad or a circle) for collaborative learning to support my development, where I share about my practice and offer and receive help from peers, including relating to resources any one of us creates.

I dedicate some time to actively support others from the S3 community to learn and grow.

I will make any S3 resources I adapt or create available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license.

I will discuss possible objections relating to S3 patterns in my intervision group, and pass to S3 developers if I believe they qualify.

## 7. Acknowledgments

The content of Sociocracy 3.0 reflects the accumulated experience and wisdom of contributors across generations. These people have shared a common quest: to evolve more effective, harmonious and conscious ways of collaborating together.

Particular recognition goes to Gerard Endenburg and others over the years who have committed significant time towards evolving and documenting the Sociocratic Circle Organization Method, which has contributed towards and inspired the evolution of Sociocracy 3.0.

We'd also like to recognize all those who have worked extensively to facilitate the emergence of a more agile and lean mindset, and those who have developed and shared various practices with the world.

Finally to acknowledge our numerous colleagues, customers, clients and attendees of Sociocracy 3.0 courses who have chosen to experiment with Sociocracy 3.0. Thank you for contributing your ongoing feedback to help evolve the patterns and enable us all to learn and grow.

By no means an exhaustive list, we'd like to offer our appreciation to the following people who directly contributed toward developing Sociocracy 3.0, or whose work influenced what it is today:

Gojko Adzic, Lyssa Adkins, Christopher Alexander, David J. Anderson, Ruth Andrade, Jurgen Appelo, Kent Beck, Sue Bell, Sonja Blignaut, Angelina Bockelbrink, Jesper Boeg, Kees Boeke, Mary Boone, John Buck, Betty Cadbury, Diana Leafe Christian, Mike Cohn, Stephen Covey, Gigi Coyle, Jef Cumps, David Deida, Esther Derby, Kourosh Dini, Jutta Eckstein, Frands Frydendal, Gerard Endenburg, Andreas Hertel, Andrei Iuoraiia, François Knuchel, Diana Larsen, Helmut Leitner, Jim and Michele McCarthy, Pieter van der Meche, Daniel Mezick, Susanne Mühlbauer,

Niels Pfläging, Mary and Tom Poppendieck, Karl Popper, Brian Robertson, Marshall Rosenberg, Dave Snowden, Hal and Sidra Stone, Ken Schwaber, Jeff Sutherland, Sharon Villines, Nathaniel Whitestone, Ken Wilber, Jack Zimmerman.

## 8. Authors

We sell consulting, learning facilitation, coaching and mentoring, including but not limited to *Sociocracy 3.0*. We dedicate a part of our time and money to create free resources about *Sociocracy 3.0* as part of our ongoing commitment to make sociocracy and related ideas more accessible to the wider world.



Figure 8.1.: James Priest, Liliana David, Bernhard Bockelbrink

**James Priest** serves internationally, providing organizational development consultancy, learning facilitation, and mentoring for people wishing to evolve collaborative, adaptive organizations at scale.

<https://thriveincollaboration.com>

james@thriveincollaboration.com

**Bernhard Bockelbrink** is an agile coach, trainer and consultant supporting individuals, teams and organizations in navigating complex challenges and developing a culture of effective, conscious and joyful collaboration.

<https://evolvingcollaboration.com>

[bernhard.bockelbrink@evolvingcollaboration.com](mailto:bernhard.bockelbrink@evolvingcollaboration.com)

**Liliana David** serves internationally, providing training, facilitation and mentoring to teams and organizations wishing to develop greater effectiveness and equivalence in collaboration.

<https://thriveincollaboration.com>

[lili@thriveincollaboration.com](mailto:lili@thriveincollaboration.com)

## 8.1. Our Commitment to You

We dedicate a part of our time and money to create free resources about Sociocracy 3.0 as part of our ongoing commitment to make sociocracy and related ideas more accessible to the wider world.

There's an overlap between what we give away for free and how we make a living. Besides our work co-developing Sociocracy 3.0, we also sell consulting, facilitation, coaching and mentoring services, and design and delivery courses and events about, but not limited to Sociocracy 3.0.

You can always rely on the the Practical Guide as being the current and authoritative description of Sociocracy 3.0, which will always be available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

On top of that, we make all the content of this website and all the materials on the Resources page available under the same license.

We share new documentation we create, describing and explaining about S3 patterns and how they can be applied, in the Practical Guide and on the Sociocracy 3.0 website, when those documents are in a state of readiness that we are happy with.

To find out how you can contribute to the development of S3, go to <https://sociocracy30.org/contribute/>

# 9. Glossary

**Account for (v.):** to take the responsibility for something.

**Accountability (principle):** Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to do, and accept your share of responsibility for the course of the organization, so that what needs doing gets done, nothing is overlooked and everyone does what they can to contribute toward the effectiveness and integrity of the organization.

**Agreement:** An agreed upon guideline, process, protocol or policy designed to guide the flow of value.

**Alignment:** The process of bringing the actions of all parts of an organization in line with the organization's objectives.

**Backlog:** A list of (often prioritized) uncompleted work items (deliverables), or drivers that need to be addressed.

**Check-In:** A brief disclosure where you share something about what's up for you and how you are, revealing thoughts, feelings, distractions or needs.

**Chosen Values:** A set of principles a team (or an organization) has chosen to collectively adopt to guide their behavior in the context of their collaboration.

**Circle:** A self-governing and semi-autonomous team of equivalent people who collaborate to account for a domain.

**Complexity:** An environment where unknowns are unknown, cause and effect can only be understood in retrospect, and actions lead to unpredictable changes. [Snowden and Boone]

**Concern:** An assumption – or opinion – that doing something (even in the absence of objections) might stand in the way of (more) effective response to an organizational driver.

**Consent (principle):** **Raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions**, so that you can reduce the potential for undesirable consequences and discover worthwhile ways to improve.

**Constituent:** A team (e.g. a circle, team, department, branch, project or organization) who delegate authority to a representative to act on their behalf in other team or organizations.

**Continuous Improvement (principle):** Regularly review the outcome of what you are doing, and then make incremental improvements to what you do and how you do it based on what you learn, so that you can adapt to changes when necessary, and maintain or improve effectiveness over time.

**Coordination:** The process of enabling individuals or teams to collaborate effectively across different domains to achieve shared objectives.

**Delegatee:** An individual or group accepting responsibility for a domain delegated to them, becoming a role keeper or a team.

**Delegation:** The grant of authority by one party (the delegator) to another (the delegatee) to account for a domain (i.e. to do certain things and/or to make certain decisions), for which the delegator maintains overall accountability.

**Delegator:** An individual or group delegating responsibility for a domain to other(s).

**Deliverable:** A product, service, component or material provided in response to an organizational driver.

**Domain:** A distinct area of influence, activity and decision making within an organization.

**Driver:** A person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation.

**Effectiveness (principle):** Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your organization's overall objectives, so that you can make the best use of your limited time, energy and resources.

**Empiricism (principle):** Test all assumptions you rely on through experiments and continuous revision, so that you learn fast, make sense of things and navigate complexity as effectively as you can.

**Equivalence (principle):** Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them, so that you increase engagement and accountability, and make use of the distributed intelligence toward achieving and evolving your objectives.

**Evolve (v.):** to develop gradually.

**Flow of Value:** Deliverables traveling through an organization towards customers or other stakeholders.

**Governance:** The process of setting objectives and making and evolving decisions that guide people towards achieving those objectives.

**Governance Backlog:** A visible, prioritized list of items (drivers) that are related to governing a domain and require attention.

**Helping Team:** A team of equivalent people with the mandate to execute on a specific set of requirements.

**Intended Outcome:** The expected result of an agreement, action, project or strategy.

**Key responsibilities:** Essential work and decision making required in the context of a domain.

**Logbook:** A (digital) system to store all information relevant for running an organization.

**Metric:** A quantifiable measure used to track and assess progress, evaluate outcomes and determine success

**Need:** The lack of something wanted or deemed necessary (a requirement).

**Objection:** An argument relating to a (proposed) agreement or activity that reveals unintended consequences you'd rather avoid, or that demonstrates worthwhile ways to improve.

**Objective:** A (specific) result that a person or team or organization wants to achieve; an aim or a goal.

**Open Team:** A group of people who are invited to contribute to the work and governance done in a domain when they can.

**Operations:** Doing the work and organizing day-to-day activities within the constraints defined through governance.

**Operations Backlog:** A visible list of (typically prioritized) uncompleted work items (deliverables).

**Organization:** A group of people collaborating toward a shared driver (or objective). Often an organization subdivides into several teams.

**Organizational Driver:** A driver is a person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation. A driver is considered an **organizational driver** if responding to it would help the organization generate value, eliminate waste or avoid unintended consequences.

**Pattern:** A process, practice or guideline that serves as a template for successfully responding to a specific kind of challenge or opportunity.

**Peer Domain:** Two peer domains are contained within the same immediate superdomain, and may be overlapping.

**Primary Driver:** The primary driver for a domain is the main driver that people who account for that domain respond to.

**Principle:** A basic idea or rule that guides behavior, or explains or controls how something happens or works.

**Role:** A domain that is delegated to an individual, who then becomes the role keeper.

**Role Keeper:** An individual taking responsibility for a role.

**Self-Governance:** People governing themselves within the constraints of a domain.

**Self-Organization:** Any activity or process through which people organize work. Self-organization happens within the constraints of a domain, but without the direct influence of external agents. In any organization or team, self-organization co-exists with external influence (e.g. external objections or governance decisions that affect the domain).

**Semi-Autonomy:** The autonomy of people to decide for themselves how to create value, limited by the constraints of their domain, and by objections brought by the delegator, representatives, or others.

**Social Technology:** Social technology is any process, technique, method, skill or any other approach that people can use to influence social systems — organizations, societies, communities etc. — to support achieving shared objectives and guide meaningful interaction and exchange.

**Sociocracy:** An approach for organizing together where people affected by decisions can influence them on the basis of reasons to do so.

**Sociocratic Circle-Organisation Method (SCM):** An egalitarian governance method for organizations based on a sociocratic mindset, developed in the Netherlands by Gerard Endenburg.

**Strategy:** A high level approach for how people will create value to successfully account for a domain.

**Subdomain:** A domain that is fully contained within another domain.

**Subdriver:** A subdriver arises as a consequence of responding to another driver (the superdriver) and is essential for effectively responding to the superdriver.

**Superdomain:** A domain that fully contains another domain.

**Superdriver:** see subdriver.

**Team:** A group of people collaborating toward a shared driver (or objective). Typically a team is part of an organization, or it is formed as a collaboration of several organizations.

**Tension:** A personal experience, a symptom of dissonance between an

individual's perception of a situation, and their expectations or preferences.

**Timebox:** A fixed period of time spent focused on a specific activity (which is not necessarily finished by the end of the timebox).

**Transparency (principle):** Record all information that is valuable for the organization and make it accessible to everyone in the organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality, so that everyone has the information they need to understand how to do their work in a way that contributes most effectively to the whole.

**Value:** The importance, worth or usefulness of something in relation to a driver. Also “a principle of some significance that guides behavior” (mostly used as plural, “values”, or “organizational values”).

**Values:** Valued principles that guide behavior. Not to be confused with “value” (singular) in the context of a driver.

**Waste:** Anything unnecessary for — or standing in the way of — a (more) effective response to a driver.

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