

# Sociocracy 3.0 Patterns

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**Note:** This document is intended as handout for my workshops, and as a preliminary implementation guide for organizations, until the “official” Sociocracy 3.0 handbook is ready. “Official” pattern descriptions will be added as they are finished.

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This document is also available as a website at <http://s3-patterns.evolvingcollaboration.com>

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evolving collaboration website and blog: <http://evolving-collaboration.com>

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Parts of this document are copied or adapted from “A brief Introduction to Sociocracy 3.0” by Bernhard Bockelbrink and James Priest, and from “The Sociocracy 3.0 Handbook” by Bernhard Bockelbrink and James Priest.

# Part I

## Introduction

# Chapter 1

## What is Sociocracy 3.0?

Sociocracy 3.0 (also known as S3) is a **framework of patterns for collaboration in organizations** that wish to grow more **effective, agile and resilient**.

It can be applied in organizations of **any size**, from small start-ups to large international networks and nationwide, multi-agency collaboration.

S3 contains patterns ready to use for many different aspects of collaboration, including patterns that enable organizations to discover and develop new patterns according to their needs.

The patterns in S3 form a pattern language, i.e. while each pattern can be applied independently, patterns mutually reinforce each other, because they are all based on the same set of principles (see the *Seven Principles* at the end of the introduction).

S3 patterns facilitate positive transformation for individuals, teams and whole organizations by enabling people to...:

- ... **dynamically steer and evolve** their organizations.
- ... commit to agreements and account for the consequences
- ... learn, transform and grow
- ... incrementally process available information into **continuous improvement of products, processes and skills\***.
- ... make the best use of the skills already present
- ... grow flexible organizational structures in support of effective flow of information.
- ... take an **open, iterative approach to adoption** that meets organizations where they are and enables them to move forward at their own pace.
- ... draw on the *collective intelligence* of the group.
- ... develop creative strategies that are “**good enough for now**” and “**safe enough to try**”.

The focus of this handbook is mostly on S3 in the context of organizations. The patterns themselves are valuable to any group of people who wish to collaborate effectively, including communities, municipalities, families, and even one-to-one relationships.

## Chapter 2

# A Brief History of Sociocracy from 1851 to Today

### What's in a word?

- *socio-* from Latin *socius* - companion, friend
- *-cacy* from Ancient Greek krátos - “power, rule”
- different to the rule of the *demos* (i.e. the general mass of people with voting privileges)

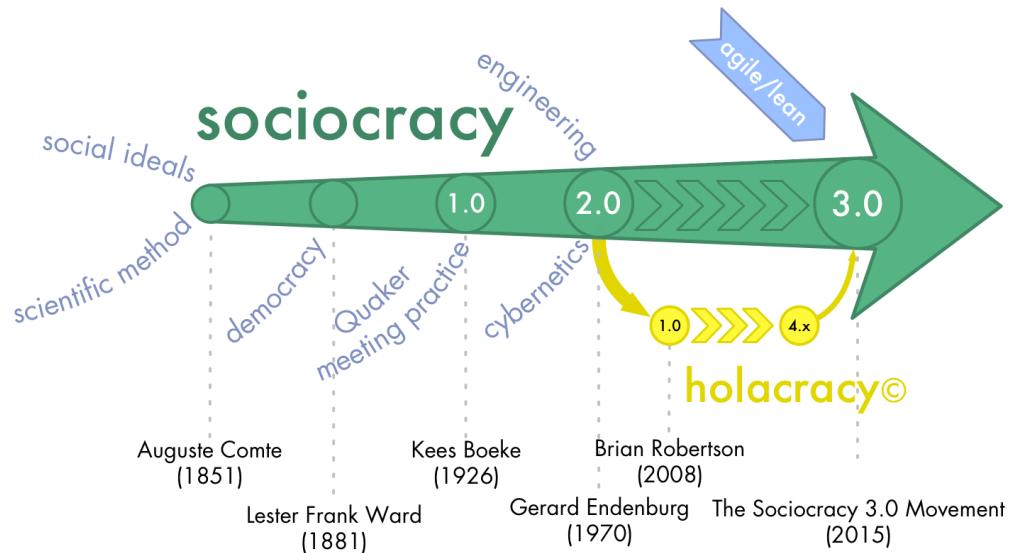


Figure 2.1: A Brief History of Sociocracy from 1851 to Today

- 1851 – Auguste Comte
  - Scientific method applied to society

- Sociocracy is “*the social order of the future*” - not yet achievable but inevitable!
- 1881 – Lester Frank Ward
  - redefined the term Sociocracy to describe the rule of the people with relationships with each other
- 1926 – 1954 - Kees Boeke
  - Established the first sociocracy in his residential school (based on Quaker consensus principles)
  - Book “*Sociocracy: Democracy as it might be*” (1945)
- 1970's - Gerard Endenburg
  - Student in Kees Boeke's school
  - Integrated principles from Engineering and Cybernetics
  - In his company Endenburg Electrotechniek he evolved “*The Sociocratic Circle-Organization Method*” (later becoming “*The Sociocratic Method*”)
- 1978 - Sociocratisch Centrum Utrecht
  - created to promote “*The Sociocratic Method*”
- 1994 - New law in the Netherlands
  - Sociocratic organizations are no longer required to have a worker's council
- 2000 - emergence of a now wide-spread grassroots movement
- 2007 - *We the People*
  - John Buck /Sharon Villines make Sociocracy accessible to the English-speaking world
- 2014 The Sociocracy 3.0 Movement is born

## Chapter 3

# Models of Management

!{A Comparison of Different Models of Management](img/s3-context/models-of-management-plain.png)

## Chapter 4

# The S3 Movement

The S3 Movement is a **distributed network consultants and trainers** from a variety of fields, who...

- ... dedicate their time to developing and evolving S3 to make it **available and applicable to as many organizations as possible**.
- ... provide resources under a **Creative Commons Free Culture License** to learn, practice and teach Sociocracy 3.0.
- ... share a deep appreciation for the transformational potential of S3 to help organizations and their members thrive.

## Chapter 5

# Why “Sociocracy 3.0”

**Respect to the lineage of Sociocracy, and a step forward:**

- an approach towards organizational change that meets organizations where they are
- integrated with lean and agile thinking
- new ways to evolve organizational structure
- patterns for all aspects of collaboration, not just for governance

### 5.1 Design Goals

**Open:** Principle-based and modular patterns make it easy to choose and adapt according to context

- do with it what you want
- take just what you need
- remix, extend and adapt it as you like

**Free:** Un-centralized distribution and a Commons license eliminates barriers to entry:

- free and accessible resources
- no hidden fees
- no certifications
- no small print

**Effective:** Principles and patterns have been tried and tested in many organizations, often for decades.

- need-driven
- value-driven

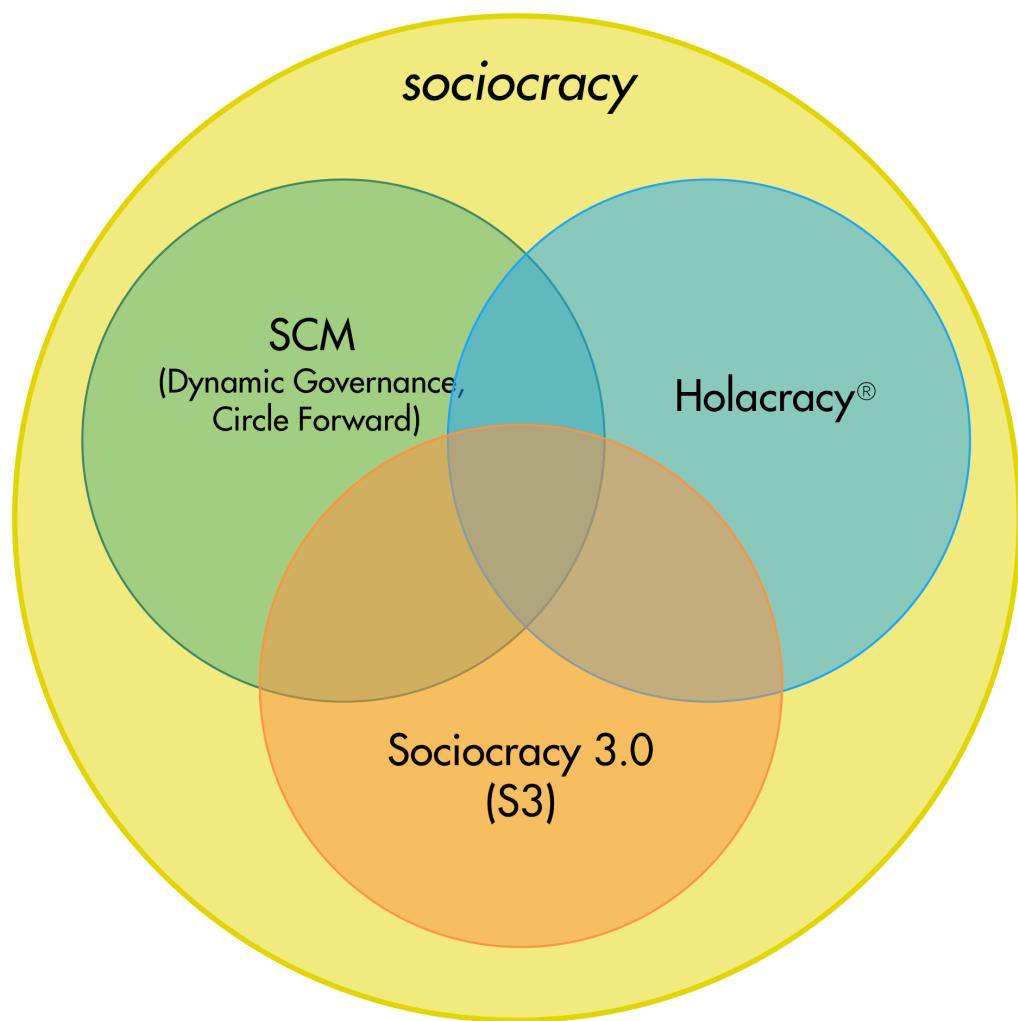


Figure 5.1: Variants of Sociocracy



Figure 5.2: Design Goals Behind S3

- customer/user focus

**Actionable:** There's something any organization can use right now, regardless of their unique context. S3 contains lots of ideas anyone can try out within their area of influence.

- patterns for individuals
- patterns for groups
- patterns for organizations

**Lightweight:** Just the essentials: common-sense practices, bare-bone processes:

- free of stuff that gets in the way
- no busywork or unnecessary bureaucracy

## 5.2 The Seven Principles

S3 is built on seven core principles, which can also be considered as values that shape organizational culture. Understanding these principles is helpful for adopting and paramount to adapting S3 patterns.

Practicing S3 helps people appreciate the essential value of the Seven Principles, both to individuals and organizations

**The Principle of Effectiveness:** *Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your objectives.*

Avoid waste, remove impediments and look for solutions which are *good enough for now, safe enough to try.*

**The Principle of Consent:** *Do things only in the absence of reasons why doing so would stand in the way of (more) effectively meeting shared objectives.*

When dealing with complexity, group wisdom exceeds individual abilities. Deliberately seeking out objections invites collective intelligence to improve an agreement and helps identify misunderstanding early. This fosters support and accountability for agreements made.

**The Principle of Empiricism:** *Test all assumptions about an organization and its interactions through experiments, continuous revision and falsification.*

In any complex adaptive system, such as a group or an organization, all knowledge about the system and its interactions is tentative, and highly dependent on context. Making use of experiences gained from probing and observing the system creates a learning organization which is effective and resilient to change.

Empiricism is the basis of the scientific method and the combined application of S3's patterns provides a direct way to apply the scientific method in an organization.

**The Principle of Continuous Improvement:** *Respond to change in small increments, by building on and transforming what is already there, to reduce risk and resistance, and to accommodate steady empirical learning*

Most of the time evolution is more effective and more sustainable than revolution. Continuous improvement applies to everything, e.g. strategies, guidelines, products, skills, processes, values and tools.

**The Principle of Equivalence:** *People affected by decisions can influence and change them on the basis of reason to do so.*

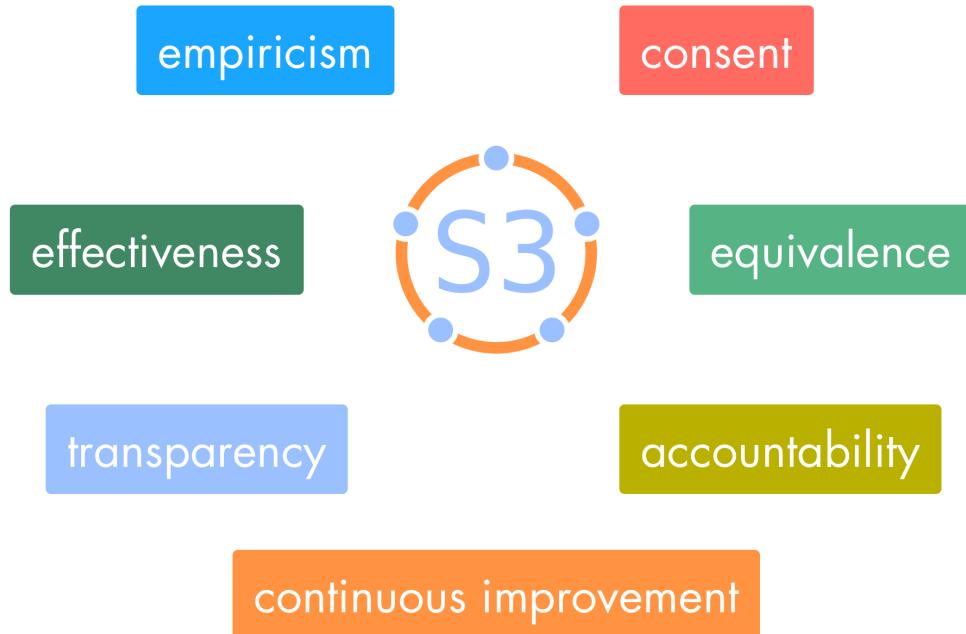


Figure 5.3: The Seven Core Principles of Sociocracy 3.0

Position, rank, function and role have no special influence in decision making.

**Transparency:** *Make all information accessible to anyone in an organization. Confidentiality requires consent.*

All relevant information is kept up-to-date, and historical information is archived for reference.

**The Principle of Accountability:** *Respond when something is needed and be accountable for doing what you agreed to.\**

The principle of accountability applies to groups, organizations and individuals, and promotes a shift from being *held to account*, and towards a culture of *self-accountability*.

It implies both making commitments and managing expectations in any relationship: entering agreements, doing what we agree to and to answer for when we don't.

## Chapter 6

# Patterns

A **pattern** is a template for successfully navigating a specific context.

S3 patterns are discovered through observing many organizations as they solve problems, innovate, and respond to opportunities. Patterns may need to be adapted and evolved to suit differing contexts and needs.



Figure 6.1: S3's 65 patterns are organized in 9 groups.

## Part II

# The Patterns

## Chapter 7

# Making And Evolving Agreements

The way we make, keep and evolve agreements largely determine both the effectiveness of collaboration and the happiness of an organization's members.

S3 contains patterns to cover you from identifying the motive for your actions and agreements (Driver), to co-creation of and commitment to an agreement (Proposal Forming and Consent Decision Making), to evaluating and evolving agreements (e.g. Evaluation Criteria, Intended Outcome, Deliverables).

...

### 7.1 Agreements

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

- agreements are created in order to respond to drivers
- agreements are the **accountability of the circle** that created them
- each agreement includes **evaluation criteria** and is subject to **regular review**

### Template for Agreements

### 7.2 Circle

A circle is a semi-autonomous, self-organizing and self-governing group of people collaborating to respond to a driver.

A circle is the basic unit of collaboration in an organization: a group of people gathered around a driver (permanently or temporarily). A circle brings together different perspectives and skills, has no hierarchy when it comes to decision making, and is accountable for its own development.

- **semi-autonomous:**
  - each circle has a unique driver and can create value independently
- **self-organizing:**

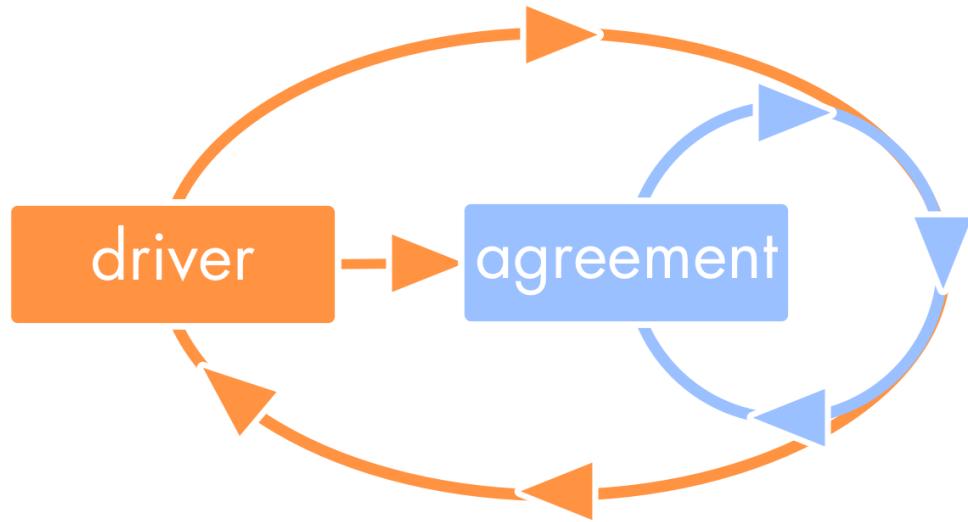


Figure 7.1: Evolution of Agreements and the Drivers they Respond to

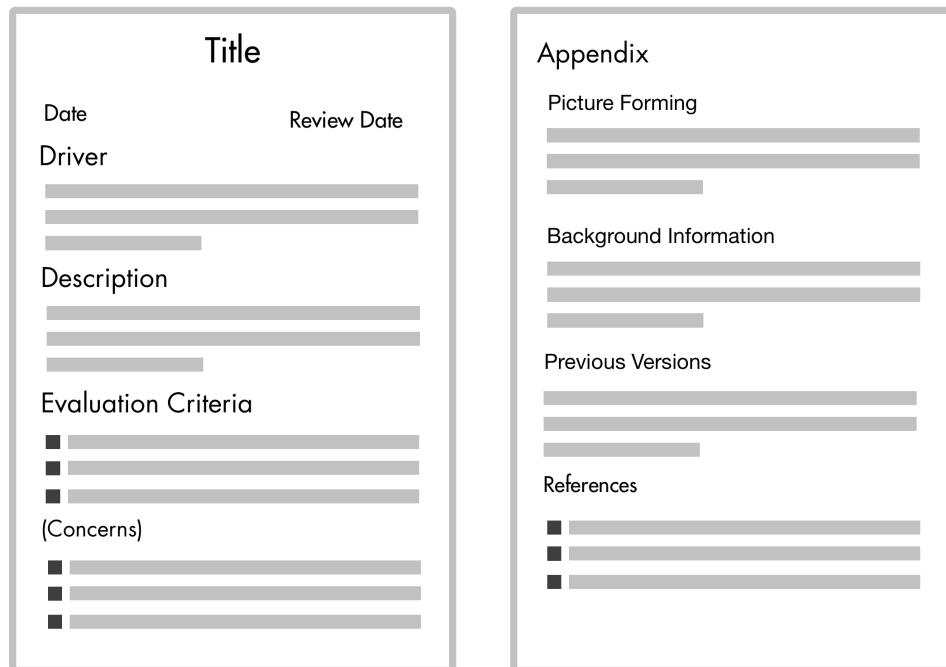


Figure 7.2: A Simple Template for Documenting Agreements

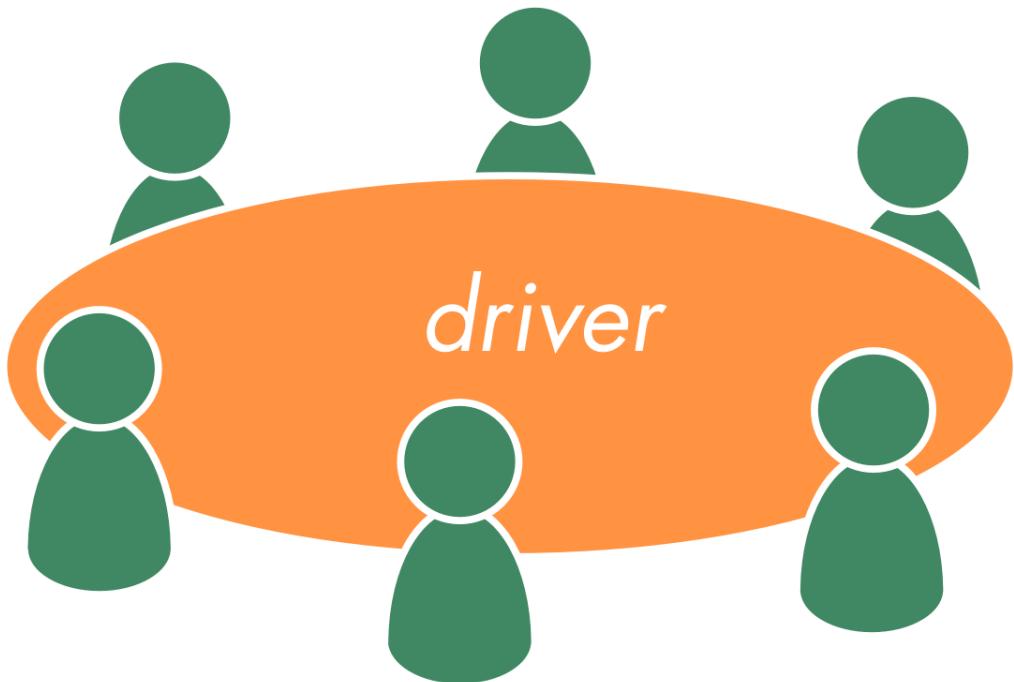


Figure 7.3: A Circle Gathered Around a Driver

- independent in organizing day-to-day-work
- **self-governing:**
  - independent in creating strategy and agreements in response to the circle's driver.

### 7.3 Consent Decision Making

#### At a Glance: Consent and Consent Decision Making

- Consent is the absence of objections
  - everyone affected by a decision can “live with it”
  - consent is not consensus with unanimity
- Consent is used to make and evolve all agreements in a circle
- An objection is an argued and paramount reason why a proposal or agreement should not be implemented
- Objections stop proposals becoming agreements
- Withholding objections could harm the aims of a group or organization

- Being able to raise objections at any time means that proposals only need to be *good enough for now, safe enough to try*
- Every agreement has a review date

Consent Decision Making...

- is a facilitated decision making process
- deliberately harvests reasoned objections in order to integrate the wisdom they contain in proposals or existing agreements
- helps balance equivalence and effectiveness
- experienced groups can move quickly through the stages of Consent Decision Making

## Consent

The minimal definition of consent in this context is the **absence of argued and paramount objections from those affected by a decision**. The aim here is to quickly arrive at decisions that are good enough for now, they don't need to be perfect.

When a group operates on consent, withholding an objection will do great harm to the group, it is a willful act of violence against the group.

The **argument** about an objection needs to be made concerning the aims or shared goals of the group: Why would implementing a proposal prevent us from fulfilling our aims, or prevent somebody in the group from contributing towards those aims?

A **paramount** objection is so important we cannot let it go, something I could live with (at least for a while) is often not important enough to block a proposal, in some cases we could **consent with a concern** and make a note to review our decision at a certain date to see if the concern still stands, we would then amend or even revert the decision.

As a rule of thumb, objections are raised when something is not *good enough for now and safe enough to try*, i.e. when one of the people affected cannot live with a decision.

When new wisdom emerges, consent can be withdrawn at any time, usually by bringing a decision again on the agenda of a Governance Meeting (section 8.2).

## Benefits

Consent is the base for collaboration towards a shared goal. We cannot force people to contribute their best idea, we need to invite their contribution. Therefore consent should be the underlying principle for all our interactions in organizations.

When people share their argued and paramount objections to a proposal, the group harvests the emergent wisdom seeking expression into the consciousness of the group and integrates that wisdom into their decisions.

Through this process, groups are often able to create solutions that are not merely acceptable to everyone<sup>1</sup>, but the expression of a synergy of all the diverse perspectives in the group.

Establishing consent is a fairly quick and painless exercise for a group that is experienced with a good decision making process such as the [Decider and Resolution Protocols] or Consent Decision Making (section 7.3)

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. a compromise

### Considerations

You can only establish working with consent with matters that lie in your circle of influence you organization.

Imagine a team lead, who would be able to delegate some parts of their authorities (or even everything), to the group. For this to work, the team lead themselves would have to be part of the consenting group, so they can raise objections when they feel a decision would be endanger their position in the company, as this would prevent them from contributing to the group or even take away the right for consent decisions from the group.

You need to be very clear<sup>2</sup> what is going to be decided with consent, and what is not, to avoid discussion and discord later, when you should be making decisions.

It is possible to establish consent without a formal process, but a following a facilitated process helps a lot with learning to navigate the challenges of consent. Experienced groups can move quickly through the stages of Consent Decision Making. For consenting to small decisions, teams often use the *decider/resolution protocols* or a simple consent round (Rounds (section 9.8)), for more important decisions, or those with long-lasting effects, Consent Decision Making brings a lot of benefits.

### Other Applications

The principle of consent can be applied with any decision or agreement, including, but not limited to Proposal Forming (section 7.11), processing agenda items in the Governance Meeting (section 8.2), evaluating implemented agreements, the creation of [Roles][], selection of individuals to a role, or effectiveness reviews.

## The Consent Decision Making Format

### What is it?

*Consent Decision Making* (or CDM) is a facilitated decision making format that allows to effectively capture emergent wisdom from the group and integrate it into synergistic solutions.

The aim of CDM is to quickly arrive at a decision that is good enough for everyone in the group, e.g. everyone “can live with” this decision. This is achieved by following a simple facilitated process and mindful participation of the group.

### Why use it?

A good decision making process is essential for effective collaboration and continuous improvement of a group.

Consent Decision Making is a streamlined process that includes all the necessary steps for the group to attune to a proposal and quickly arrive at a decision that is good enough for the now and save enough to try.

The process is designed in a way that both the facilitator and the group will quickly become experts in Consent Decision Making, being able to balance equivalence of individuals and the effectiveness of the group so they can effortlessly navigate a Governance Meeting (section 8.2) with a large agenda in a short amount of time.

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<sup>2</sup>as in “write it down for all to see”

### How to implement it?

To use Consent Decision Making with a group you need

- one proposal
- one owner for that proposal who can answer questions about the proposal
- one facilitator

It is helpful to have a driver for the circle (or team) to validate objections against, without a driver you need to resort the products to create, services to provide or any other aims, goals or objectives the teams might have.

With a new group, the facilitator first explains the process to the group. The CDM cheat sheet in the appendix may come in handy the first few times you do this.

It is important for the group to know that there will be no discussion and the facilitator will invite everyone to speak when it is their turn. The facilitator reminds the group that goal is a good-enough decision everyone can live with, not a perfect solution .

**Phase 1: Present the Proposal** The facilitator has the group gather in a circle and asks the owner of the proposal to briefly **present the proposal**.

For the following steps the facilitator uses Rounds (section 9.8), i.e. they pick a random member of the group to speak first and then go around the circle clockwise or counterclockwise until everyone has spoken. If the speaker is interrupted or the group starts a discussion, the facilitator gently reminds them of the process.

**Phase 2: Clarifying Questions** Next is a **round of clarifying questions**, everyone may ask the owner of the proposal questions to understand the proposal. If the facilitator detects a question that is aimed to question the proposal, they remind the group of the purpose of this round: understanding the proposal.

**Phase 3: Brief Response** When the group has no more questions, the facilitator invites everyone to **share a quick reaction** about the proposal, usually only a few words or one sentence.

**Phase 4: Harvest Objections** In the following round the facilitator asks everyone for objections, participants may answer with “No objection”, “I have a concern” or “I have an objection”. In order to maintain equivalence in the group, the objections themselves shared in the next round.

**Phase 5: Integrate Wisdom** If there’s objections, now is the time to hear them. The facilitator makes sure each objection is argued and paramount before summarizing it on a whiteboard or flip chart.

After all the objections have been heard, the facilitator helps processing them to integrate the emergent wisdom into the decision. (see [Resolve Objection])

If the proposal has been amended on the spot, the facilitator determines at which step to continue with the Consent Decision Making Process: presentation of the proposal, clarifying questions, quick reactions, or consent round.

If the proposal has been deferred, the group moves on to the next item on the agenda.



Figure 7.4: The Phases of Consent Decicision Making

**Phase 6: Review Date and Celebrate** If there's no (more) objections, the group agrees on a review date for the decision, taking into account the concerns, and then records the decision, review date and concerns so they can later refer to it.

Now is the time to celebrate the decision and then move on to the next item on the agenda.

### Related Patterns

[Governance Meetings]] helps a group with being more relaxed with decisions, because the participants know they can refine and adapt a decision in the next iteration.

Evaluate Agreements (section 7.6) also helps with faster decisions, because any decision will automatically appear on the agenda of the Governance Meeting. For controversial topics setting a review date in the near future allows participants with concerns about the decision to view it as a short experiment that is contained safely in a time-box.

## 7.4 Deliverables

A **deliverable** is something which is provided as a result of an agreement, usually framed as a product or a service. Deliverables can be defined for organizational strategy, circle strategy, *development plans*, *role descriptions*, or any other *agreement*.

Since a deliverable is part of an agreement, make sure the amount of detail is reasonable - sufficient to allow for shared understanding, but not too much. Consider the context in which and by whom this description will be referred to. Think about the significance of the deliverable, and how long this description needs to be referred to.

For example simple task which will be implemented in the next week needs less written detail than continuously reviewing updates for a large product for compliance with several complicated national standards.

Reference other documents when helpful or necessary, e.g. contracts, previous projects, specifications, drafts, or other agreements.

## 7.5 Driver

The **driver** is the reason and the motivation for action in a specific situation: the needs a team or organization identifies and chooses to address, and the conditions relevant to understanding these needs.

A driver can apply to an individual, or describe **collective motivation for a group**. Developing shared understanding of drivers fosters **alignment towards the motive** instead of towards our assumptions about the future. The response to a driver always involves the **adaptation of an existing agreement, or creation of a new one**, including:

- changing the plan: adding a task or project
- adaptation or creation of a role
- creation of a new circle

However, sometimes we may decide against responding to a driver, because there is more important things to tend to.

## Needs and Conditions

A **need** is the lack of something that is necessary (required?) or important

Needs are identified when analyzing situations, and may relate to the organization itself, its members, stakeholders, customers or the environment. Needs can be objective (physical) or subjective (psychological), and may be controversial on a social level. An organization's values may help resolving controversies

Some examples for needs, from more abstract needs to personal needs:

- revenue, profit, shareholder value, capital
- customer value
- autonomy, mastery, purpose
- connection, collaboration, recognition
- sustenance, happiness

Each need emerges through one or several conditions. In order to understand a driver, we need to identify relevant and important conditions for each need, and describe them, usually as facts or observations.

Over time, we will develop better understanding of a driver, and, as the needs and conditions change, update the driver's description.

We review a review whenever we review a strategies or agreements which respond to that driver. In a driver review we discover new or changed needs and conditions, sometimes the driver no longer falls into our domain, or is no longer relevant.

## Drivers and Lean Thinking

### Value and Waste

Lean Thinking is centered around the ideas of value and waste, both can easily be defined in relation to a driver:

- **value** is the importance, worth or usefulness of something for responding to a driver.
- **waste** is anything not necessary (or essential) for - or standing in the way of - effective response to a driver.

In this context, value is **not** an inherent property as it only exists in relation to a driver. This is why value is not necessarily expressed in currency or time, but it often can be quantified by identifying metrics related to the needs or conditions contained in a driver.

Adopting the concept of value and waste makes many tools and ideas from **lean production** and **lean software development** available to support organizations running on Sociocracy 3.0:

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

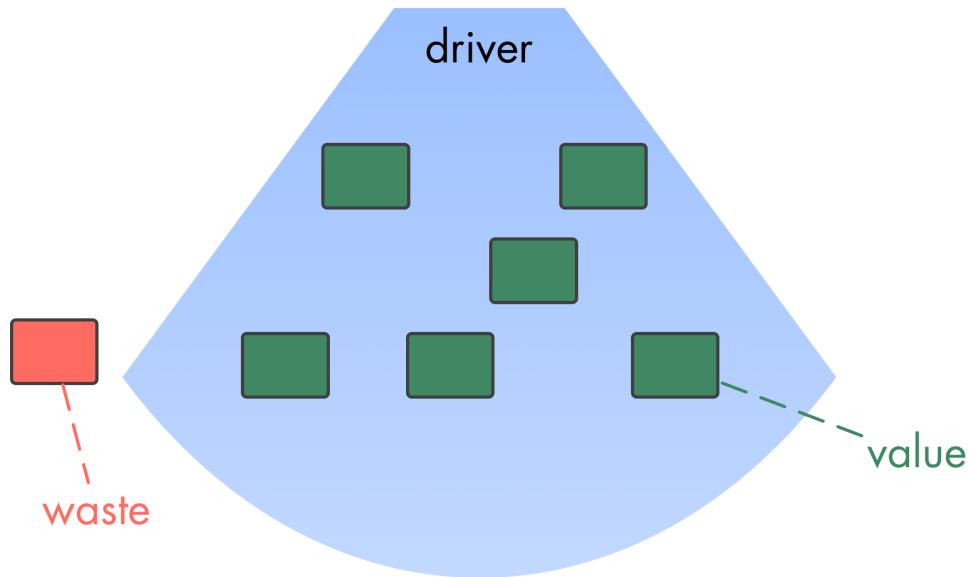


Figure 7.5: Identifying Waste

### Waste and Continuous Improvement

Waste exist in many different forms and on different levels of abstraction, e.g. in tasks, agreements, work processes, organizational structure or mental models. Waste makes itself known as tensions, learning learning to identify waste is a long journey, but along the way we also discover wisdom that helps us evolve our understanding of our drivers.

Establishing a process for ongoing elimination of waste enables the natural evolution of an organization towards greater effectiveness, optimizing the flow of value through an organization. As a side effect, the organization will so naturally adapt to changes in the environment.

## 7.6 Evaluate Agreements

A pattern for ensuring agreements remain effective.

**Motivation for this pattern:** To keep an organization's or team's body of agreements effective in the face of emerging knowledge and changes in context, each agreement needs to be periodically reviewed and updated.

**Agreements<sup>3</sup>** guide action and behavior. They are created as a response to a specific situation that affects an organization or team.

Team and organization wide agreements are kept up-to-date with what is happening, what is learned, and how expectations compare to actual outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup>in some organizations these agreements are referred to as a “policy”).

## Indicators for this pattern

### Conditions:

- existing agreements don't make sense any more (out of date, slow, rigid, ineffective)
- lack of clarity about why things are done in certain ways and what outcomes an agreement is meant to have
- lack of opportunities taken to integrate new learning and improve

### Needs:

- adapting to changes in the inner and outer environment of the organization
- improve and evolve agreements previously made
- integrate learning from new experiences

## The Details

Changes in context can make an agreement less effective or even obsolete. Putting an agreement into action often reveals new ways an agreement can be improved.

Organizations or teams periodically evaluate their agreements, usually in periodical meetings, or even a dedicated workshop to review a complex agreement (e.g. an organization's values or strategy).

Evaluating agreements has **four basic steps**:

1. preparation
2. hear reports (optional)
3. the actual review
4. addressing any consequences

### Step 1 - Preparation

Preparing for the review helps to keep it brief and effective.

Inform everyone affected of the upcoming review and make sure they have access to documents describing the agreement and its iterations, and if applicable, data relating to evaluation criteria and metrics.

Ensure all documents related to the agreement are up to date, and reports are prepared (see next step).

### Step 2 - Hear Reports

For more complex agreements it's useful to have a temporary "owner" who is familiar with the agreement and its effects. They review the evaluation criteria and other data and prepare a short report.

In some cases it may require several people to prepare and present a report.

The report is presented immediately before the actual review.

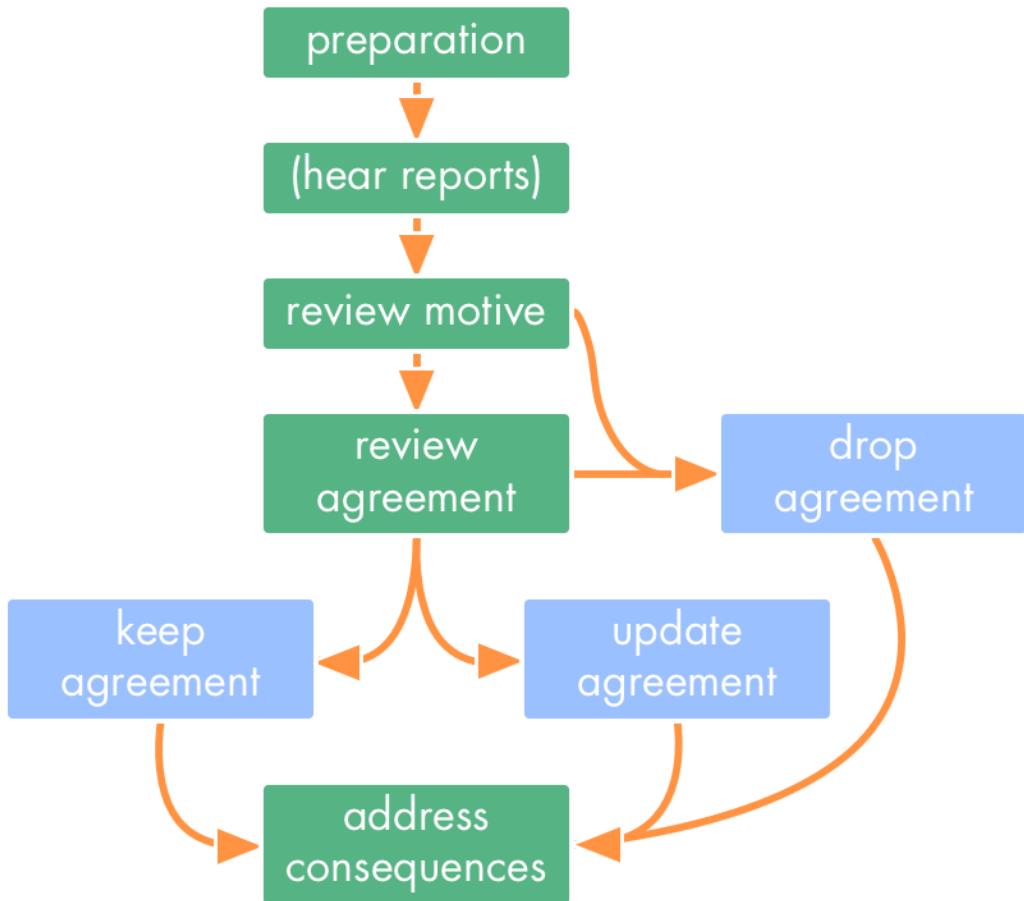


Figure 7.6: Evaluating an Agreement

### Step 3 - The Review

The review itself is often split in two parts:

- review of the motive for the agreement
- review of the agreement itself

**Review the motive** In order to prime the group about the context, it's a good idea to first review the motive for creating the agreement, i.e. needs or requirements the agreement should address, and the conditions or context in which the needs or requirements were identified.

If an agreement does not contain a description of the motive, this may be a good time to collaborate on describing it.

Helpful questions to review the motive include:

- *Is the description of the motive still accurate, or does it need to change?* (e.g. because we changed the conditions, learned something, or discovered something else is needed)
- *Is this situation still relevant for the organization or this team?*

**Sometimes the review ends here**, because:

- the authority to respond to the situation falls to someone else: Pass it to relevant team or individual
- the motive for agreement no longer exists or ceased to be relevant: Close the agreement

In both cases, address any consequences (Step 4).

**Review the agreement** Review the agreement itself in its latest form by asking these questions:

*Considering any reports heard, the updated understanding of conditions and needs and what is known today:*

- *Is the agreement still good enough for now and safe enough to try?*
- *Do you see any reason why NOT to continue with this agreement in its current form?*
- *Are there any concerns about this agreement?*

Depending on the answers to these questions there are several possible outcomes:

1. keep the agreement without change
2. use what's learned to update the agreement on the spot, or, for more substantial changes, schedule a separate session for the update
3. drop the agreement

In all cases, consider recording answers and concerns for future evaluations, and **agree on a next review date**.

#### **Step 4 - Addressing any consequences**

After the review, ensure consequences of any decisions are dealt with.

This may include:

- assigning tasks
- recording the latest version of the agreement
- updating other agreements affected by decisions made
- sharing results with those affected by the decision
- scheduling further pending decisions if required

### Considerations for an effective review process

Use the idea of **falsification** instead of merely focusing on what would make an agreement a success. Describe what would need to happen to consider that it failed. This information can be used to describe the intended outcome, and to define criteria for evaluation.

Adjust the review cadence according to the stability of the agreement.

Consider having an early review when people affected by the agreement raise concerns or explain reasons why continuing without change may not be effective, or how changing the agreement could improve effectiveness.

### Related patterns

Agreements are evaluated in *Governance Meetings* by the *Circle* that created them.

The description of an agreement can include the *Driver* it responds to, the *Agreement* itself, any *Intended Outcomes* and *Evaluation Criteria*.

In Step 2 people review the *Driver* of an agreement.

In Step 4 *Consent Decision Making* can be used to test the agreement.

If the circle decides a new agreement is needed, its members might use *Proposal Forming* to come up with one.

## 7.7 Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria help you understand whether or not an agreement has the desired effect.

Make them simple and unambiguous so you avoid discussing opinions when reviewing your agreements: Go for “the number of items sent back from the customer for re-work should have dropped from 10 per week to 5 or less by January 10th” instead of “Quality is improved..”

One very effective way of defining Evaluation Criteria is as *actionable metrics*, i.e. a set of measurements which you can continuously refer to to see whether you’re on the right track. Actionable metrics make it easy to spot deviations from your intended outcome, and to take action accordingly. Consider this example: you have a steady trickle of new users for your website, and you want to increase popularity of your site. If you track number of website users per day, the graph will rise even without your new agreements being effective. However, tracking new users per day will give you a much clearer picture, if this metric is increasing, you know you’re on the right track, and if it’s shrinking, you know that you need to get together and take action.

## 7.8 Intended Outcome

The *Intended Outcome* is a brief description of what we expect to happen as the result of an agreement or strategy. It’s a good idea to also include specific *Evaluation Criteria* to enable an effective review of the strategy or agreement.

## 7.9 Objections

An **objection** is a reason why doing what is proposed stands in the way of (more) effective response to an existing driver.

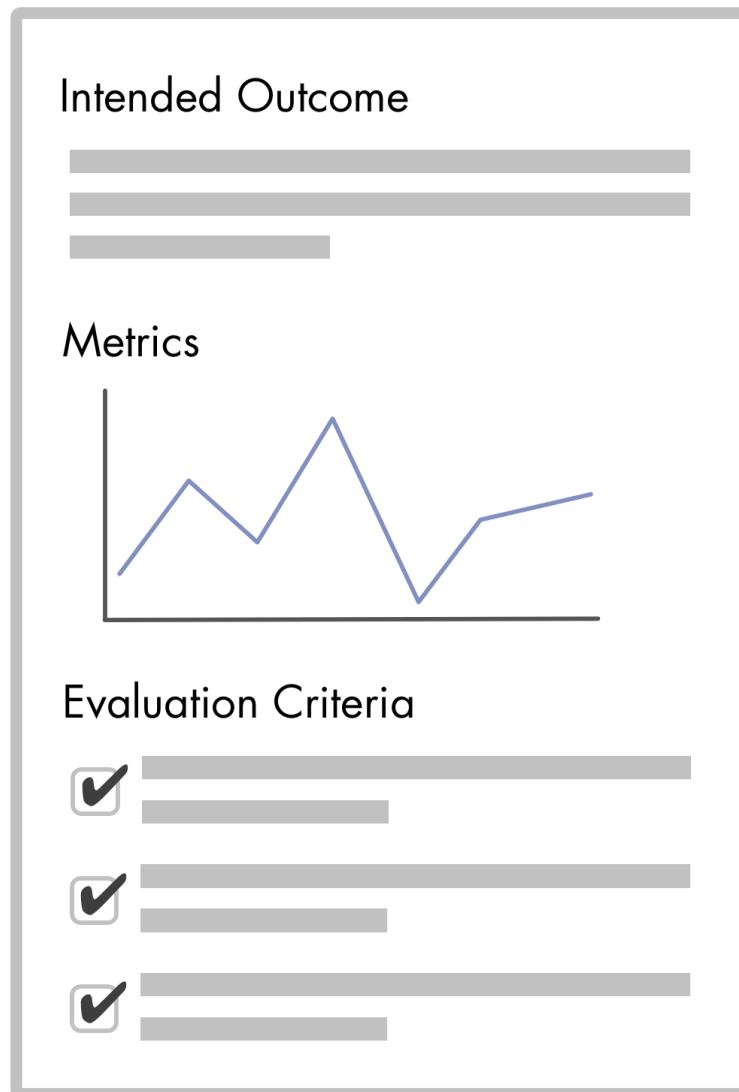


Figure 7.7: Intended Outcome and Evaluation Criteria

In sociocracy we deliberately seek objections as they reveal wisdom that can be used to improve proposals and agreements.

Objections...

- ... are gifts
- ... reveal wisdom seeking expression into the consciousness of a circle
- ... reveal opportunities or impediments
- ... emerge through individuals and belong to the whole circle
- we love objections in sociocracy

### Questions That Help to Validate Objections

- Does the objection relate to this specific proposal or agreement?
- Does this objection reveal how a (proposed or existing) **agreement**...
  - ...jeopardizes response to a driver?
  - ...is in conflict with the organization's values?
  - ...prevents or diminishes someone's contribution to responding to a driver?
  - ...can be improved significantly?

### 7.10 Concerns...

- ...are not objections
- ...don't stop us from making agreements
- ...often contain wisdom
- ...can be recorded in the logbook
  - ...to further evolve agreements
  - ...to set evaluation criteria (including review date)

### 7.11 Proposal Forming

Proposal Forming is a facilitated meeting format designed to tap the collective intelligence of a group. It fosters accountability and a sense of ownership by involving participants in co-creating a proposal for an agreement.

This proposal creation process is similar to the Design Thinking Process, with divergent phases to first bring clarity about the problem domain and then explore the solution domain, followed by a converging phase where the several individual pieces of solutions are integrated into a workable proposal that can be consented to by the group. It's suited for issues of small to medium-sized complexity. For a big issue, proposal forming can be used to co-create a strategy for approaching them, e.g. designing a special workshop, or breaking it down into smaller parts, and process them individually.

Proposal Forming happens in two stages: *picture forming* and *proposal creation*.

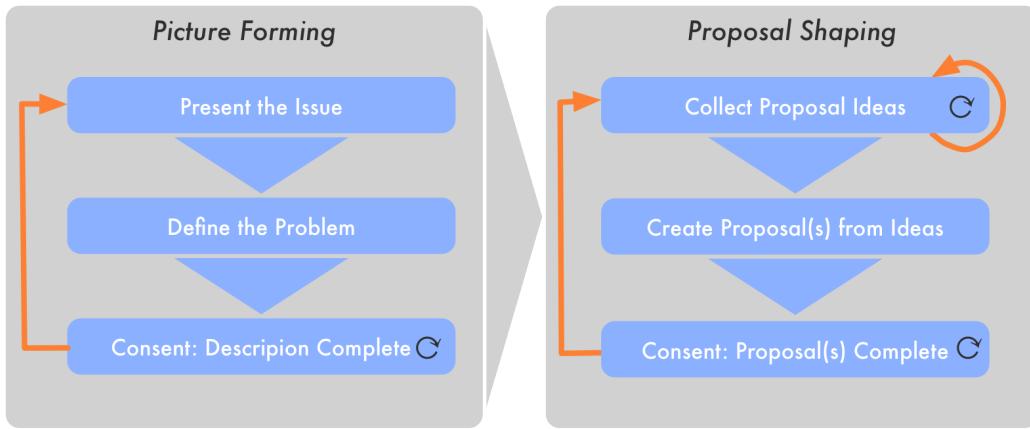


Figure 7.8: Picture Forming and Proposal Shaping

## Picture Forming

Picture forming is done with the whole group and requires a facilitator.

### Present the Issue

**Define the Problem** Collect all considerations for a possible solution: all elements and dimensions of the problem, questions that would need to be answered, and any criteria a successful solution would need to fulfill.

Remain in the problem space to see the issue from all angles, do not propose solutions yet, as they would not only be incomplete at this stage, but also limit your abilities to arrive at a shared understanding of the complete picture.

An elegant way of collecting considerations is in the form of generative questions, e.g. “how can we make sure we stay within budget?” instead of “budget (!)”.

**Consent to the description as being complete** The facilitator leads a consent round, any objections are integrated into the list of considerations.

## Proposal Shaping

**Collect Proposal Ideas** With all considerations visible to the group the facilitator leads several rounds to generate proposal ideas (“*How might we resolve that issue?*”). Instead of judging or evaluating ideas expressed by others, participants simply add new suggestions that build on previous ones.

For more complex issues it’s good practice for participants to write their ideas on sticky notes, so that the facilitator can already organize and group ideas.

The facilitator needs to take into account that often it may take a few rounds for ideas to flow freely.

When the group runs dry of ideas, the facilitator may point out the individual considerations in turn and ask the group if they think there’s enough ideas around each one.

**Create Proposal(s) From Ideas** This is most effectively completed by a small group of *tuners* (2–4 participants), who mostly maintain a neutral attitude when integrating ideas into manageable and complete proposals, creatively bridging any gaps they might encounter.

To prepare this phase, the facilitator asks the group who will tune the proposal, and helps the tuners schedule their tuning session.

The finished proposal(s) are then shared with all members of the group.

**Consent to Completeness of Proposals** The whole group consents to the completeness of the proposal, either synchronously in a consent round or individually (e.g. via email). If the proposals are incomplete, the group gathers again to generate new ideas for proposals.

If the proposals are complete, the whole group needs to consent to it, for that they usually go on the agenda in the Governance Meeting (section 8.2) and is processed using Consent Decision Making (section 7.3).

## 7.12 Qualifying Drivers

**Motive:** *Consider why, how and when to respond to a stimulus, instead of defaulting to action.*

Only act on **important** drivers, and take drivers to the **appropriate domain** (role or circle). Both the individual sensing tension and the domain is accountable for making a conscious choice whether or not to act on the driver.

- depending on sensitivity, individuals might discover many different drivers
- some of the drivers we identify are not in our domain
- some drivers are more important than others
- discussing every driver with the circle may be not effective
- we need to make a conscious choice which drivers respond to, where to respond to them, and whether to discuss in the circle in the first place

*Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. (Viktor E. Frankl)*

The individual sensing a tension is accountable for understanding the driver and making a decision on how to proceed, whether to drop it or refer the driver to a domain (a circle or a role). In that domain, we again make a decision whether or not to act on the driver.

### Individual Process

- understand and describe driver
  - what's happening and what's needed. relate each need to the conditions relevant for its existence
- Can you identify the domain (circle or role) to address this driver?
  - No: decide where to refer the driver to, or drop it.
  - Yes: refer driver to circle or role (e.g. add it to Governance Backlog)

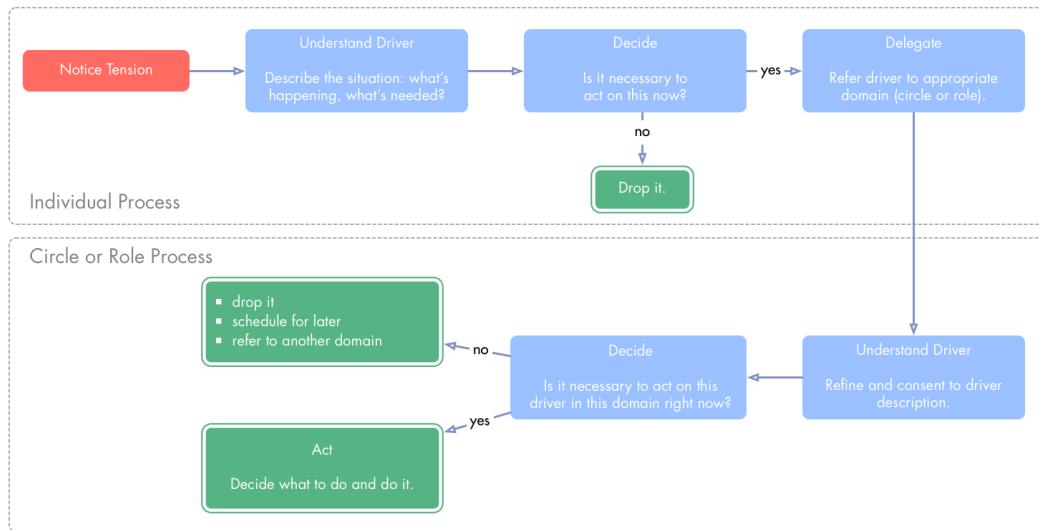


Figure 7.9: Qualifying Drivers: Individual Process and Domain Process

### Circle or Role Process

- understand the driver
  - refine and consent to driver description
  - Would responding to driver improve flow of value in this domain?
    - \* Yes: Is it important to act on this now?
      - Yes: decide what to do, and do it.
      - No: Drop it, put it in backlog, or schedule it for review?
    - \* No: Might responding to driver improve flow of value in another domain?
      - Yes: refer driver to that domain
      - No: Drop it

## 7.13 Resolve Objections

### What is it?

Objections in a consent round indicate emergent wisdom that seeks expression into the consciousness of the group.

There's a range of options how to address these objections by either processing them into amendments of a proposal or identifying the context where the decision in question can be made effectively.

### Why use it?

It is important a group sees objections as a potential for growth and improvement. To that end the group needs ways to quickly harvest the value in objections and then move on.

**How to implement it?**

There's various options for procession objections, usually the facilitator will select the one that looks most promising in the situation at hand.

**Facilitator amends the Proposal**

The facilitator amends the proposal and leads another consent round.

**Those with objections suggest amendments**

The participant(s) who had objections make suggestions how to amend the proposal.

**Suggestion-Round**

The facilitator leads a round on the question "*How might we you resolve this objection?*"

**Proposal Owner amends the Proposal**

The owner of the proposal will revise the proposal. They can attempt to do that on the spot, with the facilitator leading another consent round, or later, and bring the revised proposal to the next Governance Meeting.

**Revise in a small group**

The group consents to a smaller group to revise the proposal.

**Delegate to another group**

The decision will be delegated to another group in the organization that is more qualified to make that decision, maybe there's even a conflict resolution group for these matters.

**Delegate to an individual**

The group elects one person to take that decision on behalf of the group.

**Free discussion**

Successful implementation largely depends on the level to Artful Participation (section 9.2) in the group.

**Other options**

If the group or the facilitator see any other way to move forward, they should take it<sup>4</sup>.

**Related Patterns**

[Facilitation][], [Elections][], Consent Decision Making (section 7.3), Development Plan (section 12.3), Proposal Forming (section 7.11)

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<sup>4</sup>and contact me so I may add it here

## 7.14 Strategy

A **strategy** is the generic approach we choose to address a problem or a driver.

When facing a complex problem or driver, we usually don't know what will be the best way of responding to it. In order to reduce uncertainty, we first decide which general approach - our *strategy* - sounds most convincing.

A strategy is implemented through breaking it down into a series of decisions (or agreements) supporting the strategy. Along the way we need to discover both how to effectively execute on the strategy and the strategy's overall effectiveness.

In this context, all decisions we make are experiments, and how we slice our experiments, and in which order we run them affects how fast we learn - generally we would favor small experiments over large ones, and start with those which promise to reduce uncertainty or risk the most.

We can specifically design experiments so they support learning about creating a better experiment next time, and help us decide whether or not to persevere with the strategy.

As soon as we discover that the strategy is not effective or successful, we need to "pivot", i.e. use what we learned from our experiments to adjust the strategy or create a new one.

## 7.15 Those Affected Decide

To make decisions with the maximum amount of information on the subject, involve everyone who is affected by the decision.

For large groups, facilitate a process in several stages and create smaller groups who select delegates.

This also applies to review and evolution of decisions.

# Chapter 8

## Governance

Governance is the process of creating and evolving agreements, expectations and domains in response to drivers.

### 8.1 Governance Backlog

The Governance Backlog is the place where agenda items for the Navigation meeting are collected and prioritized. It is accessible for everyone in the circle, and members can highlight items to be included in the next Navigation Meeting. The final agenda is agreed upon at the beginning of the meeting.

The backlog can easily be maintained on a wall with sticky notes, or in digital tools like Google Sheets<sup>1</sup>, Trello<sup>2</sup>, task managers for teams or agile backlog apps.

### 8.2 Governance Meeting

#### What Is It?

A governance meeting is a (usually **weekly or bi-weekly**) meeting where the whole team gathers to make and review policy decisions that guide their operations.

A governance meeting happens in **regular intervals** or on demand, and usually is structured in a way that allows for effective processing of administrative concerns and agenda items.

A good governance meeting is time-boxed to 60 minutes, contains little or no discussion and ends with an evaluation of the meeting itself. A group should aim for processing an agenda item in 5 minutes or less, which can be achieved through a combination of good preparation, artful facilitation and Artful Participation (section 9.2).

#### Why use it?

Having a regular cadence of making and evolving agreements supports a circle in effective collaboration, continuous improvement, and adapting to change.

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<sup>1</sup><http://sheets.google.com>

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

### How to implement it?

The following structure has proven to be effective for governance meetings.

1. **Opening round:** any “ritual” that allows the group to attune to each other and become present, e.g. a round of check-ins
2. **Administrative Concerns:** announcements, consent to minutes of the last governance meeting, accepting the agenda
3. **Agenda Items:** each agenda item should have an “owner” who can present the item and answer questions about it
4. **Closing:** review of meeting Meeting Evaluation (section 9.5) and results, future agenda items

### 8.3 Navigating via tension

- individuals act as sensors for the organization
- tensions arise whenever our perception of what is happening is in conflict with our **expectations** or our **values** (and principles)
- problems, challenges, and feelings of unease are all tensions
- investigating tension leads to the discovery of drivers
- to identify a possible driver behind a tension we:
  - **describe** the situation
  - **identify** the needs we associate with it
- in the process, a tensions may be resolved as **misperceptions**

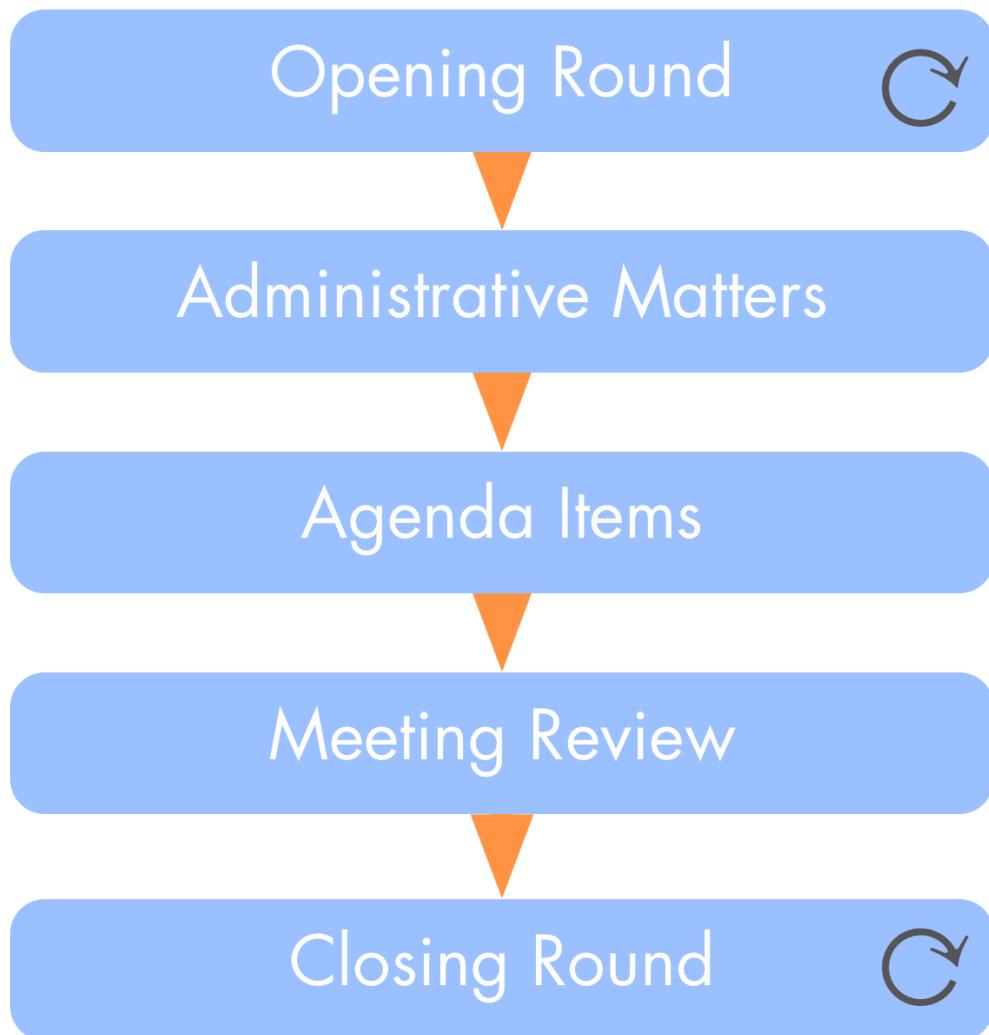


Figure 8.1: Format of a Governance Meeting

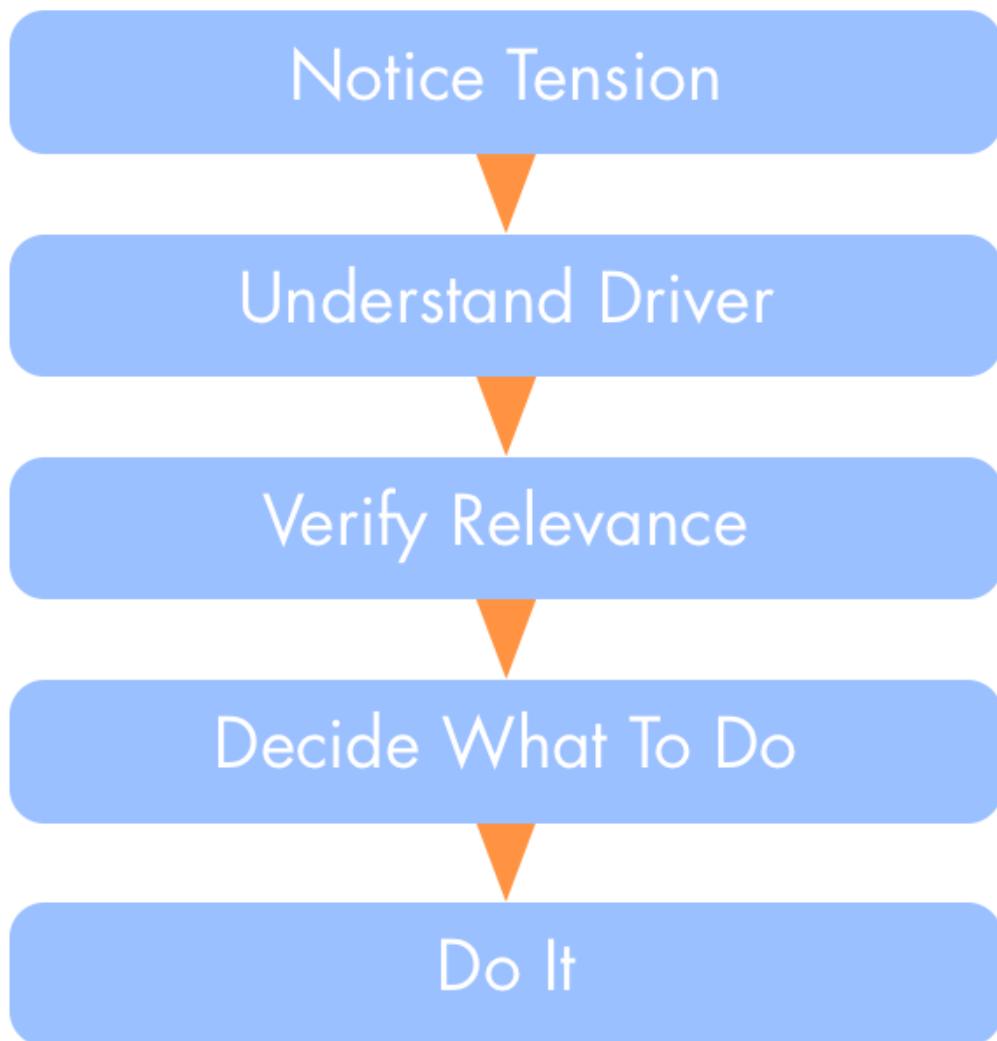


Figure 8.2: How to Navigate via Tension

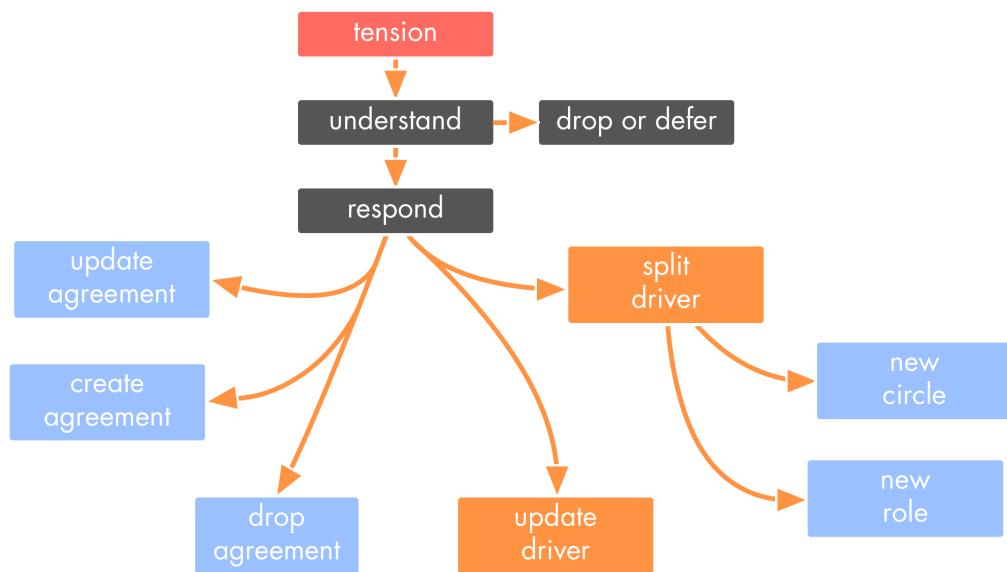


Figure 8.3: Navigating Via Tension

## Chapter 9

# Effective Meetings

Effective meetings are a cornerstone of effective collaboration and continuous improvement. S3 contains patterns to support you with different aspects of meetings, from preparation (Logbook, Meeting Host) to the meeting itself (S3 Facilitator, Meeting Facilitation, Rounds, Evaluate Meetings) and beyond (Logbook Keeper and Logbook).

### 9.1 S3 Facilitator

The facilitator supports the circle in developing their interactions and is responsible for making sure all meetings and workshops are facilitated and evaluated, e.g.

- governance meeting
- retrospectives
- daily standups
- planning and review or coordination meeting

Often the actual facilitation is shared between several circle members.

The facilitator should make themselves familiar with the following formats:

- rounds
- proposal forming
- consent decision making
- selections to roles
- meeting evaluation
- resolving objections

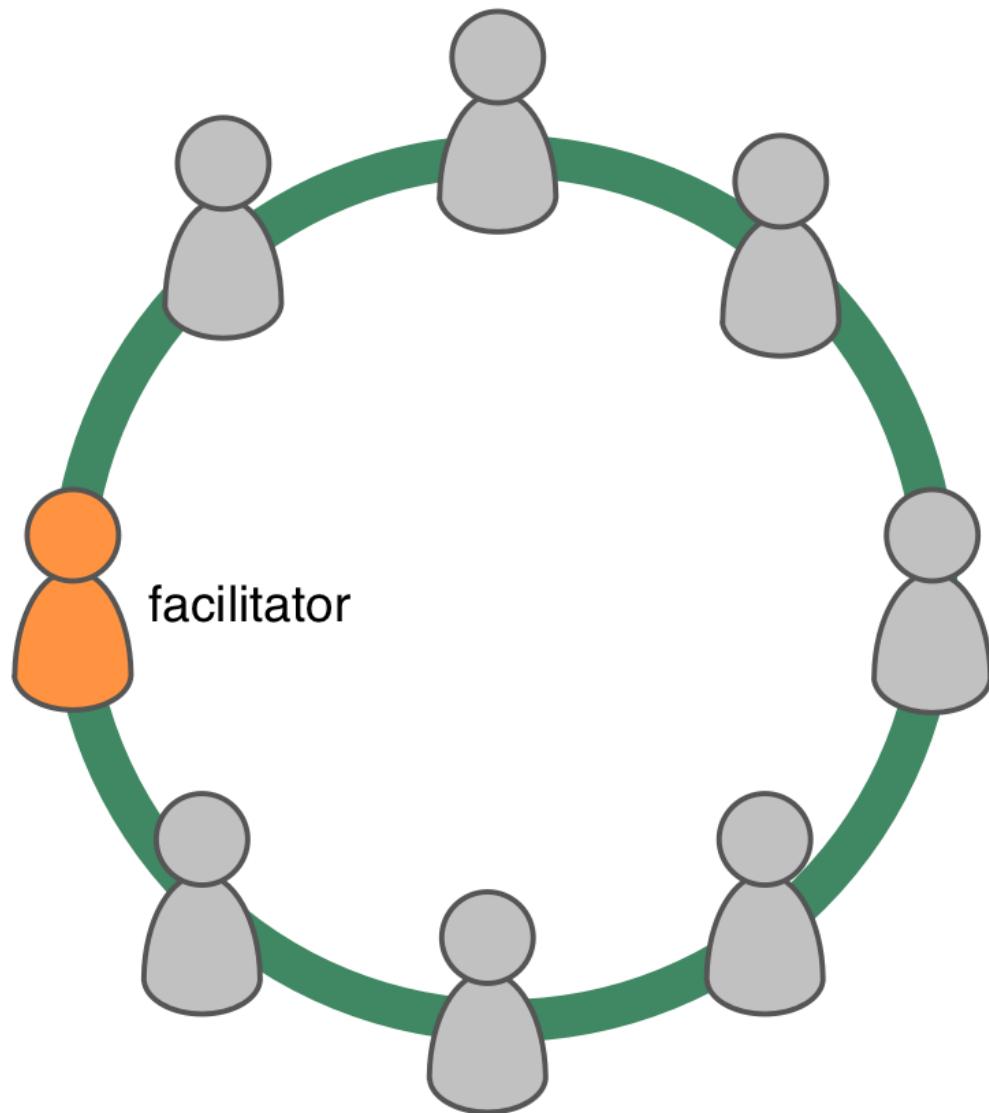


Figure 9.1: The Facilitator is often Part of the Circle They Facilitate

## 9.2 Artful Participation

A commitment to developing helpful interactions and effective collaboration.

**Motivation for this pattern:** People wishing to collaborate effectively benefit from identifying, understanding and developing the necessary skills to engage with each other, and with their chosen practices, processes and all agreements they make.

**Artful participation** is the commitment of an individual to participate in a proactive, coherent and elegant way in all aspects of collaboration in teams and organizations they are a part of.

### Indicators for using this pattern

#### Conditions:

- People disengaged or not fully engaged
- People unsure how to contribute
- Ineffective participation, despite explicit agreements \* Dysfunctional communication

#### Needs:

- Effective collaboration
- Engagement
- People accountable for their agreements and actions
- Helpful interactions

### The Details

Being accountable is a learned skill and while making an agreement may be (relatively) easy, keeping up with the implications is hard: many agreements require discovering necessary skills and developing them.

Intentional commitment to agreements amplifies learning, and the more participants learn about how to support agreements, the more they learn about the agreements themselves.

Intentional effort of participants to support each other makes stronger teams and full engagement makes happy people, better agreements, and closer collaboration.

### Elements of Artful Participation

A brief guide for what makes collaboration effective, and how to develop accountability for agreements:

Artful participation is a individual commitment to...

- actively keeping and following-up on all agreements made, in the best way possible, given the circumstances
- consciously balancing personal needs with those of a team and the organization as a whole
- developing the necessary skills to do so

- supporting others in doing the same

Whenever the individual discovers impediments or obstacles to their contribution or to existing agreements, which they can't resolve on their own, they bring them to the attention of everyone involved in the agreement to resolve the problem together.

Although anyone can commit to artful participation on their own, the effect is much greater when a full team or even an entire organization embraces artful participation together.

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

- How will I support myself and others in participating more artfully?
- Where are my interactions with others not particularly helpful or effective?
- Which are the agreements I find hard to keep or contribute to? What can I do to change that?
- What are skills that would support me in artful participation?
- What would artful participation mean in relation to...
  - ... my daily activities
  - ... collaboration and interaction with others?
  - ... the organization? ... our clients?
  - ... the wider environment?

### **Related Patterns**

- *Adopt the Seven Principles* provides a powerful guiding framework around artful participation
- *Agree on Values* supports a team align on their chosen values, which provides both focus and guide for artful participation
- *Be the Change* is another pattern to support an individual in bringing S3 to their team or organization
- *Effectiveness Review* provides feedback on one's participation in a role
- *Meeting Evaluation* supports learning about a group's participation after a meeting
- Understanding the concept of *Objections* helps to decide when the team needs to evolve an agreement
- *Qualifying Drivers* is a proactive way of understanding things before bringing them to the team

### 9.3 Logbook

A logbook is a (digital) system to store all information relevant for the running an organizations or circle. The logbook is accessible to all members of an organization, information is hidden only when there is a good reason to do so.

Suitable platforms for logbooks are Wikis, Web CMS Systems, and other web- or multi-platform applications.

Essential requirements for a logbook system:

- writing and organizing content is simple and effortless (otherwise the logbook will soon be out of date)
- it allows for linking between documents and to external services like task managers, backlogs, task boards etc. (otherwise relevant information will not be accessible)
- a simple and powerful search function
- embedding and display of common file formats is possible, e.g. Images (png/jpg), pdf, Word, Excel

Some common platforms for logbooks:

- Wikis:
  - Dokuwiki<sup>1</sup>: open source, hierarchical structure makes it easier to get content organized, extensible via plugins, doesn't need a database
  - MediaWiki<sup>2</sup>: open source, extensible via plugins
  - trac<sup>3</sup>, an open source wiki and issue tracking system for software development projects
- Web Content Management Systems
  - Mezzanine<sup>4</sup>: open source, extensible via plugins
  - WordPress<sup>5</sup>: open source, extensible via plugins
- Other Applications:
  - Google Drive<sup>6</sup>: file storage, Google Docs and Google Sheets, available as a free service and as Google Apps for Work<sup>7</sup>, which unites several other services, for \$5 or \$10 per month and user
  - Trello<sup>8</sup>, an platform for “organizing anything”, with lots of integrations which can be also used as a logbook. A free version is available, the paid plan is \$5 per month and user
  - Evernote for Business<sup>9</sup>, a notebook-based platform with chat, and integration with many other services. \$12 per month and user.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.dokuwiki.org>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.mediawiki.org>

<sup>3</sup><http://trac.edgewall.org/>

<sup>4</sup><http://mezzanine.jupo.org/>

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

<sup>6</sup><http://drive.google.com>

<sup>7</sup><http://apps.google.com/>

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

<sup>9</sup><https://evernote.com/business/>

### Contents and Structure of a Logbook

- Organization:
  - driver, strategy
  - organizational values
  - organizational structure
  - agreements
- Circles:
  - driver, strategy
  - agreements
  - role definitions and role improvement plans
- Personal logbooks
  - role descriptions
  - tasks
  - personal strategy and personal policy

### 9.4 Logbook Keeper

The logbook keeper is responsible for maintaining a circle's logbook:

- recording all relevant information and adding it to the logbook
  - all agreements, role descriptions, selections etc.
  - making sure minutes of meetings are recorded and approved by participants
- keeping the logbook up to date
- continuously improve organization of the logbook
- making the logbook accessible to everyone in the circle (and in the wide organization as agreed)
- tending to all technical aspects of logbook keeping

### 9.5 Meeting Evaluation

At the end of each meeting or workshop, take the time to evaluate your interactions and learn what can be improved.

- before the closing round
- reserve 5 minutes for 1 hour, and 15 minutes for a full-day workshop
- record the results in the logbook

- proposals for improvements are implemented by facilitator and meeting host, or added to the governance backlog
- short formats:
  - more of/less of/start/stop/keep
  - positive/negative/suggested improvements

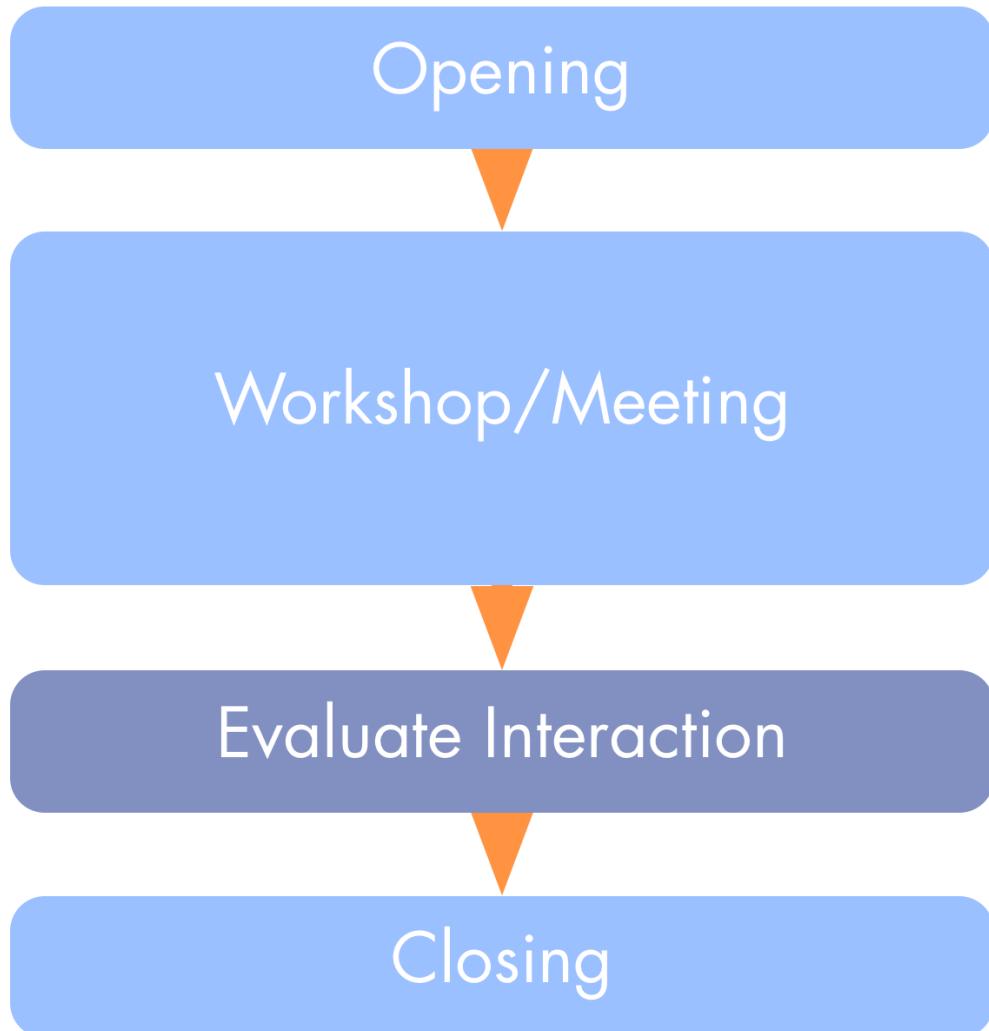


Figure 9.2: Evaluate the Meeting Before the Closing Round

### Meeting Evaluation: Long Format

Ask everyone in a round to briefly contribute to any or all of the following topics:

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

## 9.6 Meeting Facilitation

When we meet, we want to develop shared understanding, exchange information, learn, and co-create responses to the driver of the meeting. Facilitation keeps meetings and workshops crisp, joyful and effective by

- giving everyone a voice and thus enabling different perspectives
- selecting activities to support the development of shared understanding, learning, and solutions
- supporting the group by mirroring and visualizing what is happening
- helping the group navigate the agenda in the time available

As a facilitator, you would:

- prepare for the meeting
  - prepare room and materials
  - design the workshop, select activities and interactions for the different phases of the workshop:
    - \* opening the workshop, ground rules
    - \* understand driver/intended outcome
    - \* activities to generate insight and develop shared understanding
    - \* selecting what topics to work on
    - \* make decisions /action planning
    - \* evaluate the outcome and learn for the next workshop
    - \* closing
- during the workshop
  - time-box workshop and each activity
  - document process and results in real time
  - navigate the workshop
- after the workshop
  - take photographs of all the artifacts created and share with the group

## 9.7 Meeting Host

The meeting host is accountable for proper preparation and follow-up of meetings, workshops or other events.

The role may be assigned temporarily (i.e. for one specific event) or permanently. e.g. for all events of one circle.

### Meeting Host: Responsibilities

- preparation
  - identify goals and deliverables
  - select facilitator and keeper of the minutes
  - prepare and distribute agenda and schedule
  - estimate required time
  - identify and invite participants
  - schedule the meeting/workshop
  - book location (and transportation if required)
  - set up the space, provide required materials and information
- follow-up
  - clean up location, return keys etc.
  - make sure minutes are distributed and approved

## 9.8 Rounds

A group facilitation technique to maintain equivalence.

1. Pick a random person to start
  - begin with a different person each time to maintain equivalence
2. Go around the circle, give everyone the chance to speak

There's a number of ways that experienced groups can fast track certain rounds.

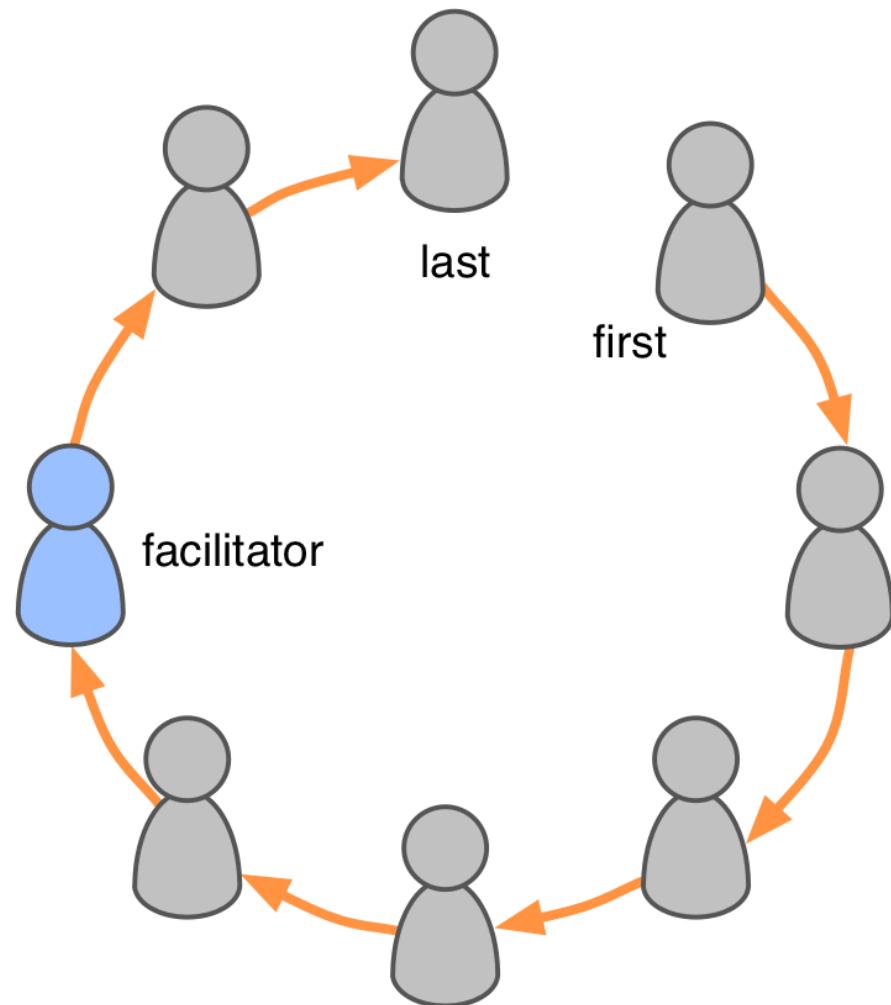


Figure 9.3: Facilitation of a Round

# Chapter 10

## Coordinating Work

S3 specifically addresses self-organization through a collection of patterns for coordinating work that go beyond the role of a coordinator or a simple operations meeting.

### 10.1 Coordination Meeting

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

- facilitate the meeting, use rounds instead of discussions
- Status Reports:
  - circle metrics (if any)
  - projects and tasks
- Agenda Items:
  - sharing of information
  - add or update tasks or projects
  - propose new or updated agreements
- if possible agenda items are compiled before the meeting (some items will come up during the status reports)

### 10.2 Coordinator Role

The coordinator is accountable for **coordinating a circle's collaboration**, and is **selected by the circle for a limited term**.

Responsibilities:

- project management
- task assignment
- stewarding development of the circle

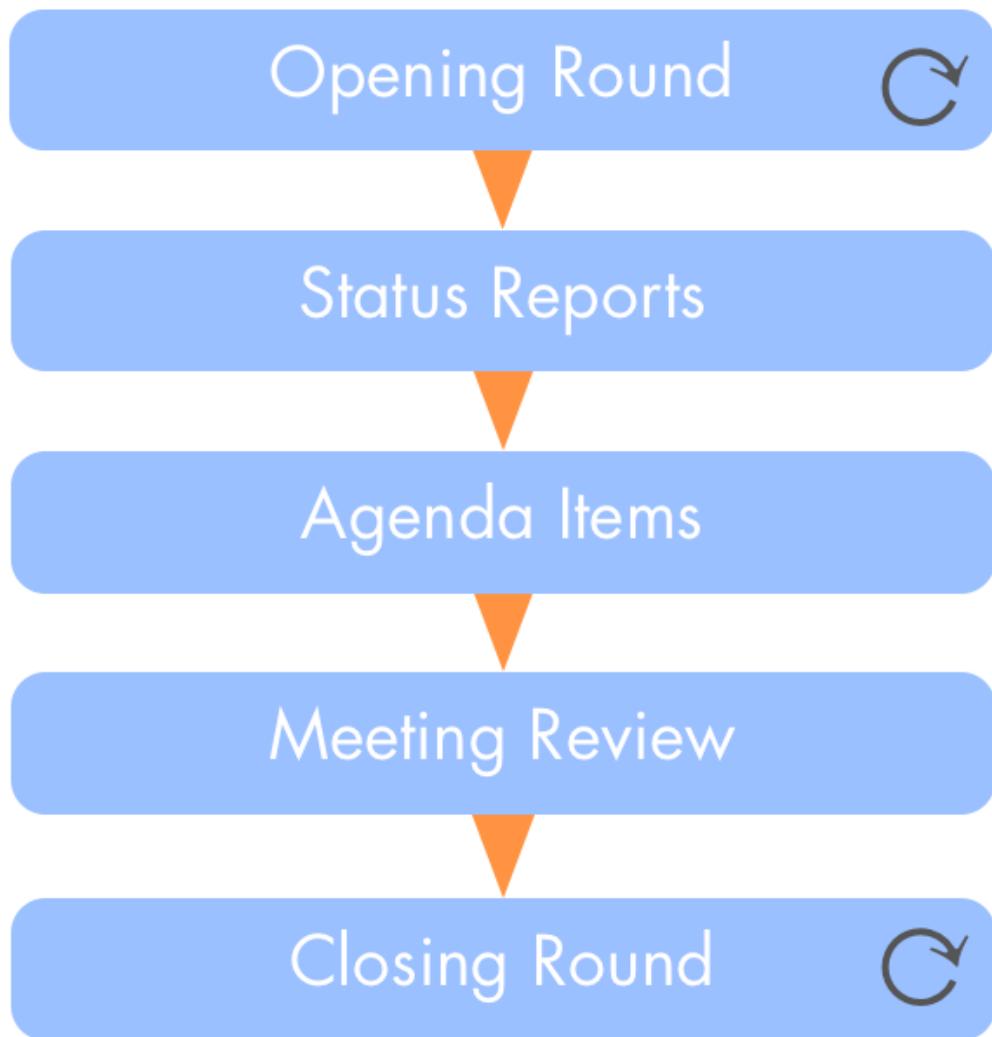


Figure 10.1: Format of the Coordination Meeting

- supporting circle members in
  - keeping agreements
  - personal development
  - developing artful participation
  - understanding S3 principles and patterns

### 10.3 Daily Standup

A pattern for enabling self-organization.

**Motivation for this pattern:** Teams need to coordinate work, identify impediments and opportunities, and adapt processes according to changing context.

The **daily standup** is a short, daily meeting where a team coordinates daily work and identifies impediments and opportunities to improve their work process.

#### The details

For the daily standup, the team gathers around a task board every day at the same time, and makes decisions about how to move forward with their work items.

It's helpful to appoint a facilitator to keep the meeting on task and within time (if possible under 15 minutes).

The facilitator facilitates quick decisions on the spot and identifies discussions and decisions requiring more time, to be scheduled after the standup, or added to a backlog to process later.

Daily standups enable teams to

- make quick decisions about work using the knowledge of the whole team
- rapidly identify impediments and respond as needed
- accelerate learning
- improve their work processes as required

There are two common patterns for daily standups, one is **value focussed**, the other one is **people-focused**.

#### Value-focused standup

The *value-focused standup* helps a team focus on effectively collaborating on the most valuable work items.

In this approach, the facilitator points out the most valuable work item on the board (often the one closest to the upper right corner of the board), and asks the team members: **"How can we move this item forward?"**

Team members can volunteer to contribute to that work item, and then the facilitator moves to the next item, and so on, until the circle members cannot pull in more work for the day.

Impediments or blocked items can be discussed during or after the standup.

### People-focused standup

Team members answer three questions in a round:

- What did you do yesterday?
- What are you going to do today?
- What stands in your way?

The facilitator supports people to be brief and to the point, making a note of all impediments mentioned in order to make sure they are addressed - either by scheduling brief discussions after the standup, or by adding them to a backlog.

The *people focused standup* is helpful when each team member mostly works in their own silo and tasks are not commonly shared.

Team members are constantly up to date with the state of the team's work and get the opportunity for contributing to other people's tasks when there's a bottleneck.

Over time this approach might translate into improvements for closer collaboration, with a team finally adopting the *value-focused standup* (above).

### Iterations or Continuous Flow

Teams working on products often use an iterative approach, planning work in regular intervals lasting for a certain period of time (the iteration). Other teams work from a prioritized backlog and hold planning sessions as needed. Teams delivering ongoing services often work without explicit planning.

The daily standup can be combined with any of these approaches and can benefit all types of work process.

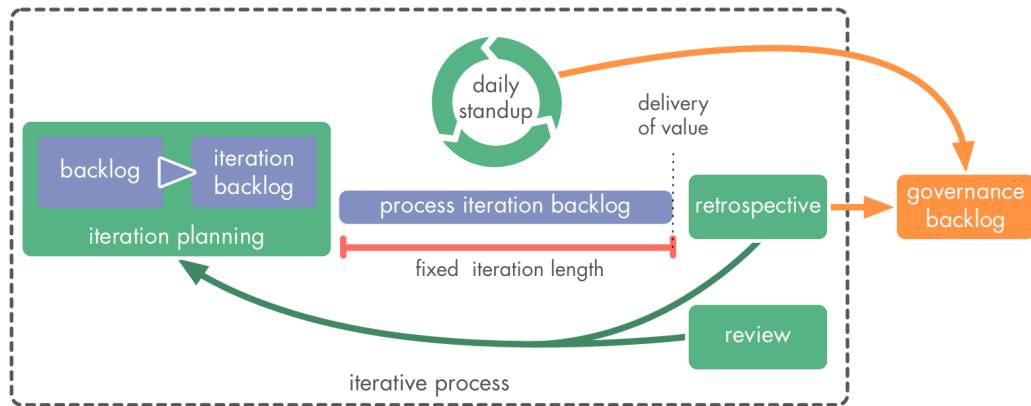


Figure 10.2: Daily Standup and Continuous Flow

### Related Patterns

*Coordinating work* - Another way to coordinate daily activity is through assigning the function of coordination to the *Coordinator Role*, *Coordination Circle*.

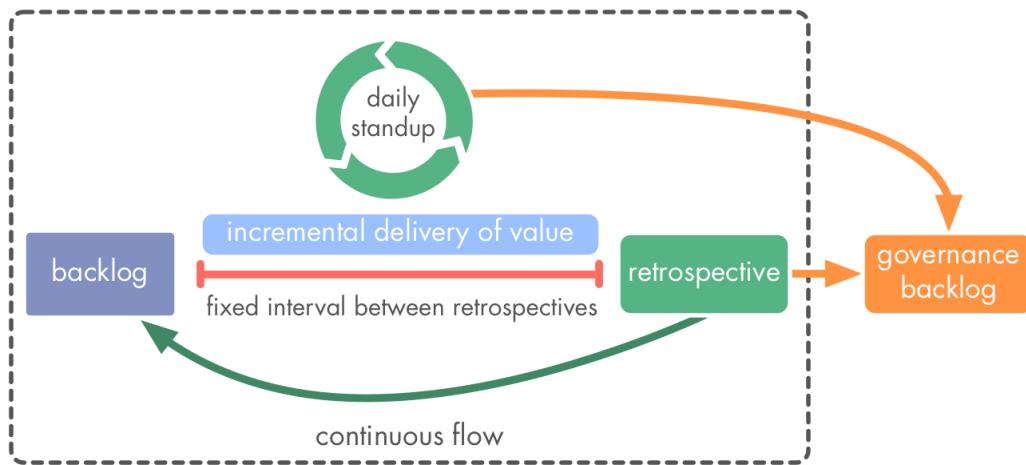


Figure 10.3: Daily Standup and Iterations

*Coordination meeting* for synchronizing, organizing and aligning daily workflow within and across teams.

*Organizing in Circles* of semi-autonomous teams

Some content from daily standups inform the *Planning and review meetings*

Work items can be visualized (*Visualize Work*) in a *Prioritized Backlog*, and can be dealt with through a *Pull System for Work*.

## 10.4 Planning And Review Meetings

When working on products or larger projects that will take weeks or even months to finish, it's often helpful to break them down into smaller parts in order to effectively manage both work itself and expectations of stakeholders.

These parts are commonly called *milestones*, which usually take more than a month to achieve, and whose duration usually extends until work is finished, or *iterations*, which are fixed in duration (usually 1–4 weeks), unfinished items are handed over to the next iteration.

At the beginning of the milestone or iteration there is a *planning meeting* where the circle decides on the timeframe and on how much work to pull in for that period. It's helpful to timebox the meeting to just a few hours, and prepare a prioritized product or project backlog with the topmost items already estimated by the circle.

During the planning session, value, risk and dependencies between work items are discussed, work items are estimated, and, if time allows, broken down into small tasks that can be executed independently. For a successful milestone or iteration, circles often identify a theme, topic or goal, and select work items accordingly.

In the *review meeting* at the end of the iteration or milestone, the circle inspect the results, sometimes bringing in external stakeholders, the output of the review meeting is fed back into the next planning meeting.

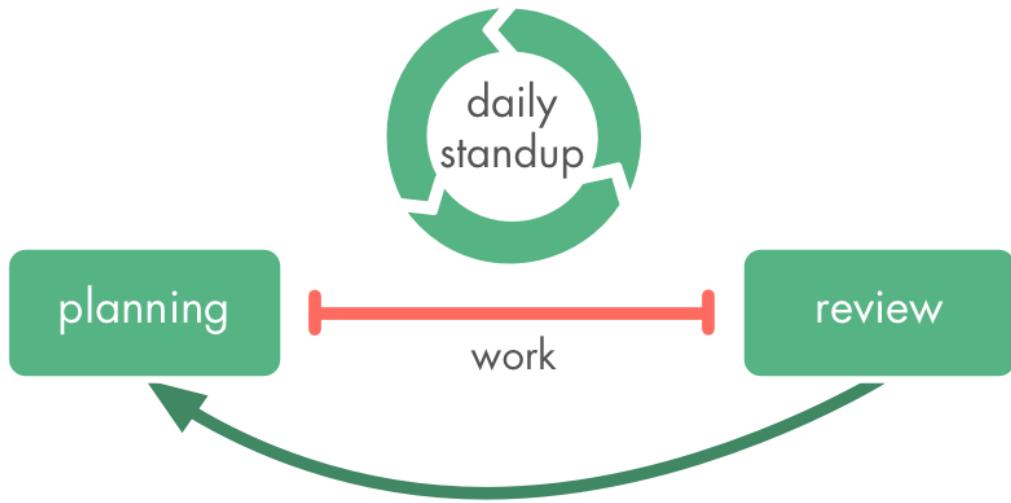


Figure 10.4: Planning and Review Meeting

## 10.5 Prioritized Backlog

When work extends a certain complexity, we need way of identifying what to focus on now, and what can be dealt with later, and at the same time being sure nothing slips to the cracks.

One way to do this is through maintaining a *Prioritized Backlog*, a list of all the uncompleted work and other matters needing to be dealt with, the most important bits on top. It's easy to pull in new work when there's capacity: simply take the topmost item you're confident you can work on.

### Benefits

There's multiple benefits to a prioritized backlog:

- when pulling in work, we know that we need to pull from the top of the backlog, so the choice is easy and frictionless
- when we see that we are repeatedly unable to pull from the top, this is a strong indicator of a need to reorganize work processes, development of new skills, and maybe even a new mindset
- agreeing on work items and prioritization is helpful for developing shared understanding about what needs to be done and how to best approach it
- prioritization enables us to optimize the value we create by working on the most important things first
- also, prioritization helps reduce the cost of change by enabling just-in-time specification, we only talk about the details of what needs to be done when we're close to actually

starting work, so we can avoid discussing detail of less important or less urgent work items which might change again before we can even begin working on it.

## Implementation

For collocated circles a backlog can be created with sticky notes on a wall, or with index cards (A5 or A5 recommended) and magnets on a whiteboard. There's also many ways of implementing a digital backlog, from Excel or Google Spreadsheets, to generic tools like digital whiteboards or task planning systems, to dedicated backlog tools. It's a good idea to use the simplest tool that does the job for you. Often the minute details about work items do not need to be tracked in the backlog, if necessary we can use a reference number or a link to point us to another location, e.g. a Google Document, a Trello card, or in page in a Wiki.

Things you need to track in the backlog:

- a **unique reference number** for each work item, so you can reference the item in other documents or systems
- a **title or short description** of the work item
- the **order of work items**
- **dependencies**: other work items this item is dependent on or related to
- a **due date**, e.g. delivery date agreed on with an external party, or a date where the work item will begin to lose value rapidly (e.g. two weeks before Christmas for a Christmas special). Many items do not have a due date.
- (optional) a measure for **value**
- (optional) a measure for **investment** (often an estimate of time or complexity)

## Limitations

Prioritization requires making tough choices, and some teams are not yet ready to make them: if a team repeatedly considers two or more items as being “of equal importance”, and can not agree on a default order for these cases, the backlog will fall short on helping the team deliver the most valuable items first.

## 10.6 Pull-System For Work

In a pull-system, people or circles pull in new work when they find they have capacity. The opposite would be a push-system, where work items are assigned from a third party.

A pull-system will shift from optimization of capacity - which makes an organization vulnerable to the effects of unforeseen circumstances - towards optimization for throughput, building resilience and organizational agility.

A pull system fosters self-organization, because those who do the work make the call when to build the fence and when to chase the cattle. Since the system is no longer optimized for running on full capacity, people are free to use the now available “slack time” for investments in infrastructure, evolution of work processes, and building new skills.

## Creating a Pull-System

In order to create a pull-system, both trust and transparency are necessary to empower everyone to be able to contribute effectively. This does not only affect those doing the actual work, who now need access to all information they need to make the right choices when pulling in work, but also “external” stakeholders or customers, who now, instead of pushing work items, need to learn a different way of communicating their requirements, and who might also need transparency about the state of work items and projects.

S3 contains many patterns to help with that, here’s a selection:

- *Those Affected Decide* to hand over responsibility for work process to the ones doing the work
- *Consent Decision Making* and *Proposal Forming*: to use all information available for effectively creating and evolving the agreements which guide pulling in work, such as priorities, plans, contracts etc.
- *Visualize Work* makes available the information what needs to be done and what is the current state of work
- in the *Daily Standup*, a team or circle can collaborate on pulling in work
- a *Prioritized Backlog* makes the choice about which work items to pull in much easier, as do *Planning and Review Meetings*

## Limitations

In a low-trust environment, it will be difficult to establish a pull system, as a pull-system requires trust, first in the ability of people to pull in work items appropriate to the context at hand, and second in the ability and willingness of people to use slack time productively, to the benefit of the organization. What is often overlooked is that also the people need to build trust that a pull-system is not merely a new way for setting up competition.

In these circumstances, trust can be built through first implementing the patterns *Those Affected Decide*, which brings those who used to push work together with those who now will pull, and learn to understand each other’s perspective while creating agreements as peers. This is best done in combination with *Proposal Forming* and *Consent Decision Making*.

## 10.7 Retrospective

### What is it?

A retrospective is a facilitated, short and effective meeting that allows a group to collectively reflect on its effectiveness at regular intervals. Various retrospective patterns can be used to generate insights and identify improvements, usually either operational tasks or agenda items for a Governance Meeting (section 8.2).

### Why use it?

Retrospectives support a team in seeing the bigger picture, in identifying more complex types of waste, and in discovering what is important beyond what is merely urgent.

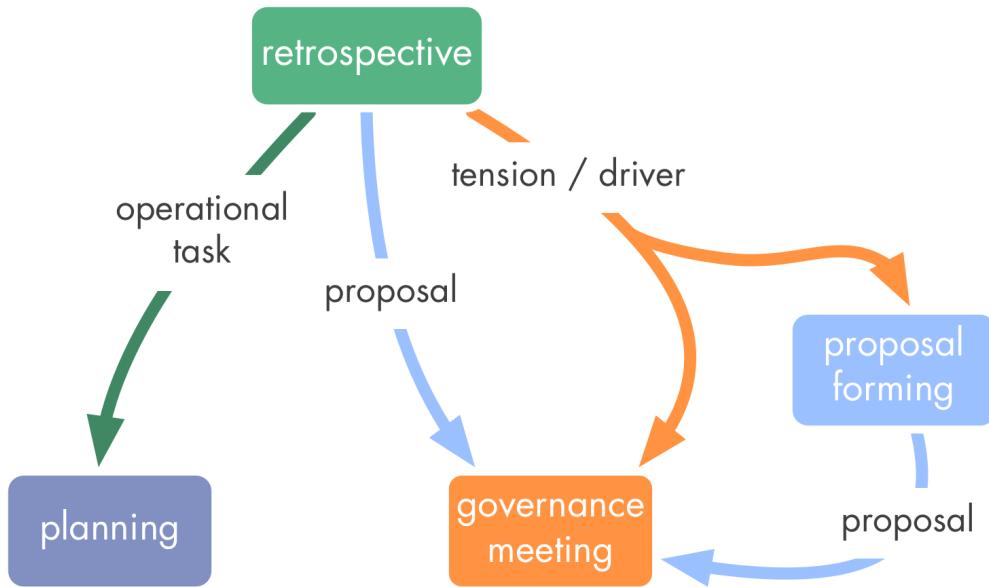


Figure 10.5: Output of a Retrospective

The facilitator creates and maintains a safe space for reflection, and selects patterns for the retrospective dependent on context and guides the team through all phases of the retrospective.

Short intervals between retrospectives allow for learning while the memory is still fresh, and for the implementation of a constant stream of small changes which can be implemented quickly and without fear.

When a group gets into the habit to reflecting on its effectiveness together they build stronger relationships and amplify learning through exploring and integrating different views on the past. Without an opportunity for collective reflection a group must rely on suggestions for improvements from individual (and thus incomplete) perspectives.

### How to implement it?

A retrospective is time-boxed, usually to 60 minutes, and happens in a regular cadence (between 1–4 weeks).

The **goal** of a retrospective is reflection on the past to discover opportunities for improvement.

The **output** of a retrospective are proposals for agreements, tensions, drivers or tasks  
Questions answered in a retrospective include:

- What can we learn from the last iteration of work?
- Are our tools still sharp enough?
- Are we still going in the right direction?

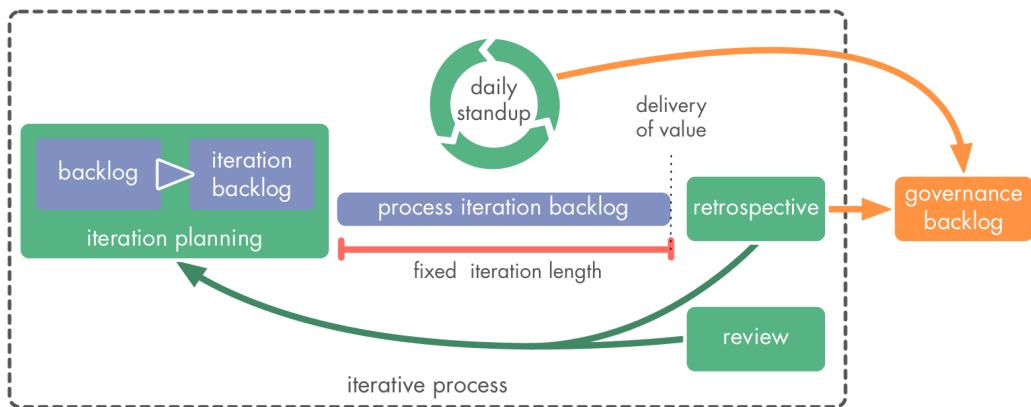


Figure 10.6: Retrospective and Continuous Flow

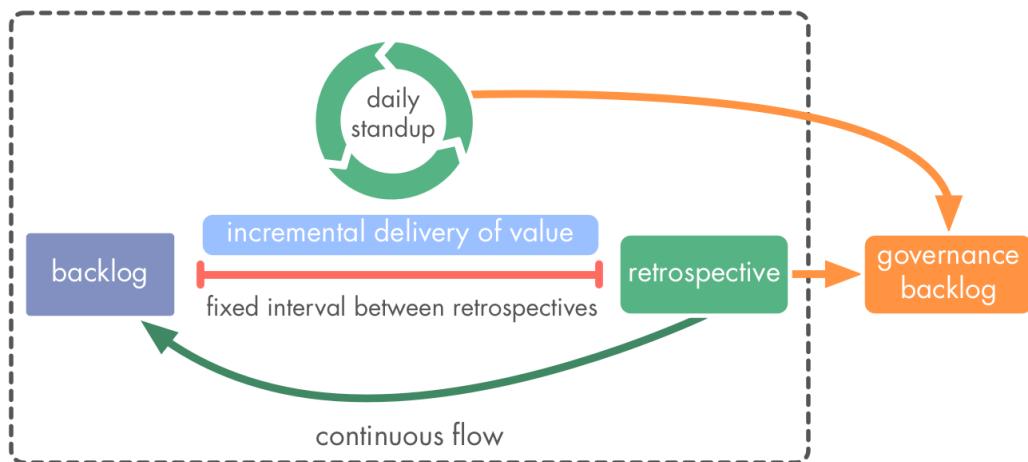


Figure 10.7: Retrospective and Iterations

### Phases of a Retrospective Meeting

A retrospective has five distinct phases, with many different activities available for each phase:

1. Set the Stage
2. Gather Data
3. Generate Insights
4. Decide What to Do
5. Close the Retrospective

The facilitator picks activities that support the team in collaborating on moving forward, taking into account the situation the team is in, the challenges they're facing, the system around the team and the personalities of the team members.

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

## 10.8 Visualize Work

In order to empower a circle for self-organization, we need to make transparent both the agreed upon work process and the state of all work items currently in planning, in progress or completed. Only if all work items are visible to all circle members, people can pull in work when they have capacity, instead of work being pushed by a coordinator.

Collocated teams can do this with post-its on a wall, or with index cards and magnets on a white board. Distributed teams can use an ever increasing number of apps available for this use case , from generic tools like Google Sheets<sup>2</sup> or digital whiteboards, to task management systems for teams (e.g. Asana<sup>3</sup>, Todoist<sup>4</sup>) or dedicated apps for task boards or kanban boards (Trello<sup>5</sup>, Kanbanery<sup>6</sup>, Leankit<sup>7</sup>). Many teams use both a digital system and a card wall, and synchronize them once a day, commonly around the daily standup.

When visualizing work, first try to identify what different types of work items you have, e.g. customer request, project tasks, reporting tasks, rework. Decide whether or not it is necessary to distinguish between these types of work items, and how you are going to make that visible on your board, will you use colors, or symbols, or highlights? Are there different priorities, expedite items that take priority, and if so, how do you express ?

Then figure out what stages these work items go through, like “to do”, “in progress”, “review” and “done”. At this stage, simply visualize what you’re doing already, don’t make any changes to your process. You might end up with a very simple layout, or something rather complicated. Implement the layout in the system you thinks makes the most sense for you now, on a wall, or with software.

If you have any agreements guiding your workflow, e.g. which items have priority over others, or what is necessary for an item to move forward, quality standards and the like, it’s a good idea to make them visible next to your board, so you can get together and review, discuss and update these agreements to improve the flow of items through your board.

### Things to Track in Your System

- **types of work items** (e.g. customer request, project tasks, reporting tasks, rework)
- **start date** and optionally **due date**
- **priorities**
- **stages** of work (e.g. “to do”, “in progress”, “review” and “done”)
- **blocks**

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

<sup>2</sup><http://sheets.google.com>

<sup>3</sup><http://asana.com>

<sup>4</sup><http://todoist.com>

<sup>5</sup><http://trello.com>

<sup>6</sup><http://kanbanery.com>

<sup>7</sup><http://leankit.com>

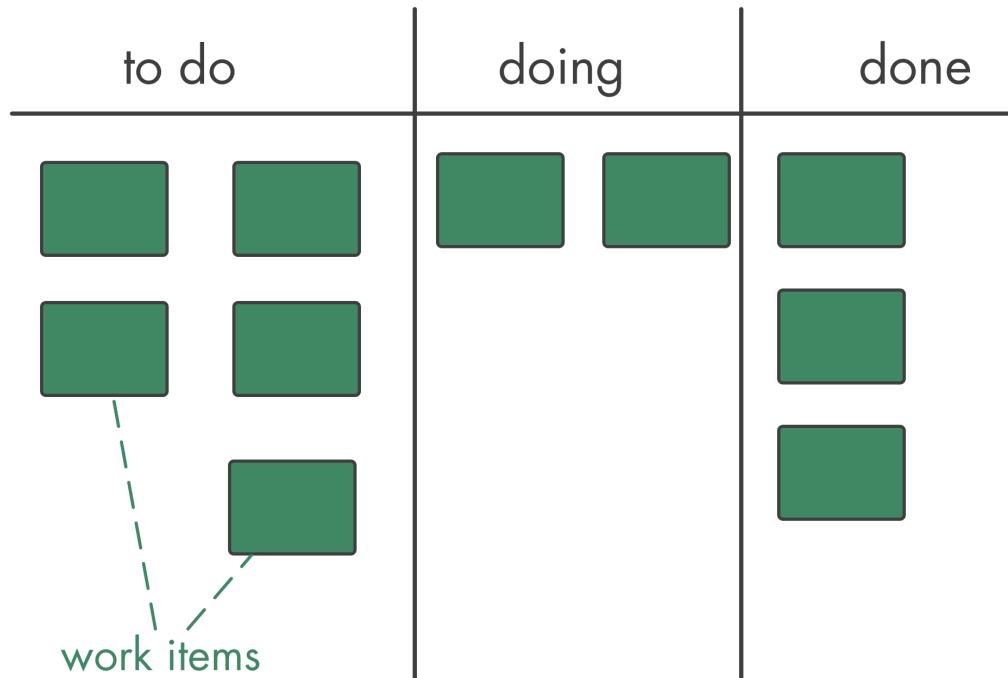


Figure 10.8: Visualize Work: a Simple Process

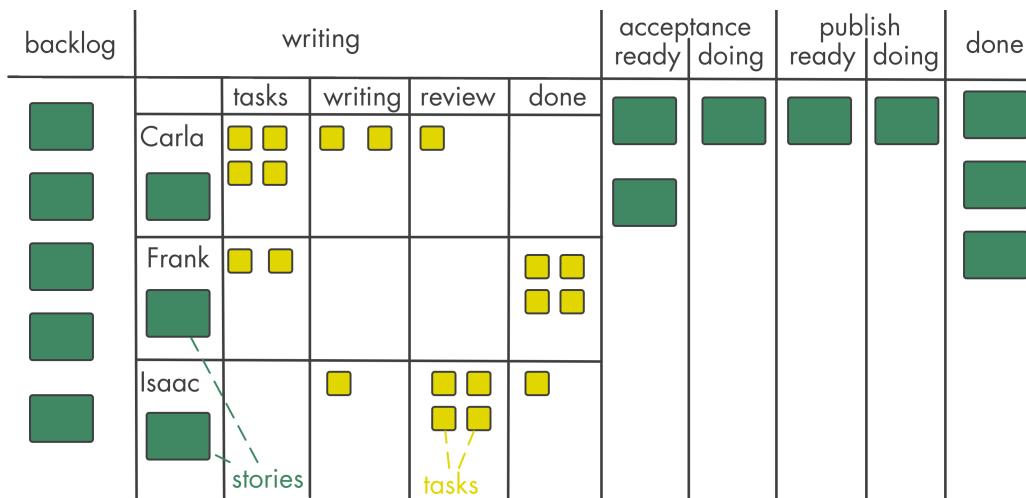


Figure 10.9: Visualize Work: A More Complicated Process With “Swim Lanes”

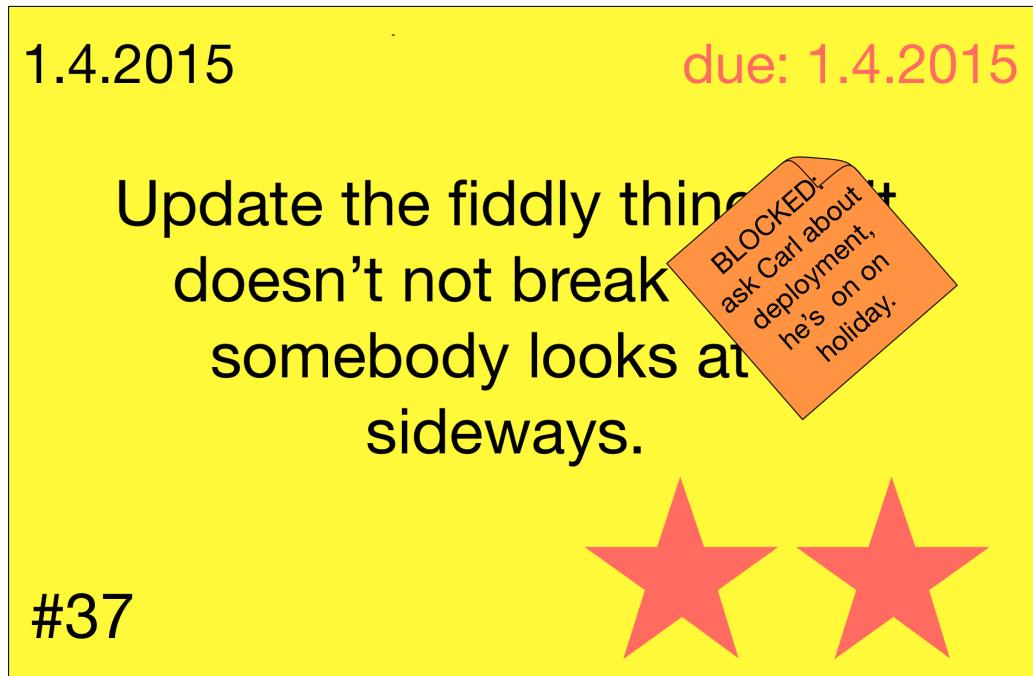


Figure 10.10: Example for a Task Card

- who is working on which items
- agreements and expectations guiding workflow (e.g. definition of done, policy, quality standards)
- use colors, symbols, highlights etc.

## Chapter 11

# Building Organizations

Patterns for growing an organization along the principles behind S3. In the addition to the patterns in this sections there's also two subsections: Patterns for People and Roles, and patterns for Organizational Structure.

### 11.1 Align Flow

#### Flow of Value

- flow of value is guided by agreements (explicit and implicit), and assumptions
- work in progress is considered waste as it ties up resources
- continuous flow of value prevents accumulation of waste
  - it also makes for shorter feedback loops and amplifies learning

#### Flow of Value and Flow of Information

- in an effective organization, the **flow of information and influence supports the continuous flow of value**
- alignment is achieved and maintained through continuous improvement of agreements

### 11.2 Open Systems

An organization is not a closed system, it is an open network with many connections to the “outside”.

Keep the system open by adding connections as temporary or permanent members in decision making and experiments:

- external experts: benefit from outside perspective and knowledge
- representatives of affected parties: integrate existing relationships ( [U+27A4] Those Affected Decide)

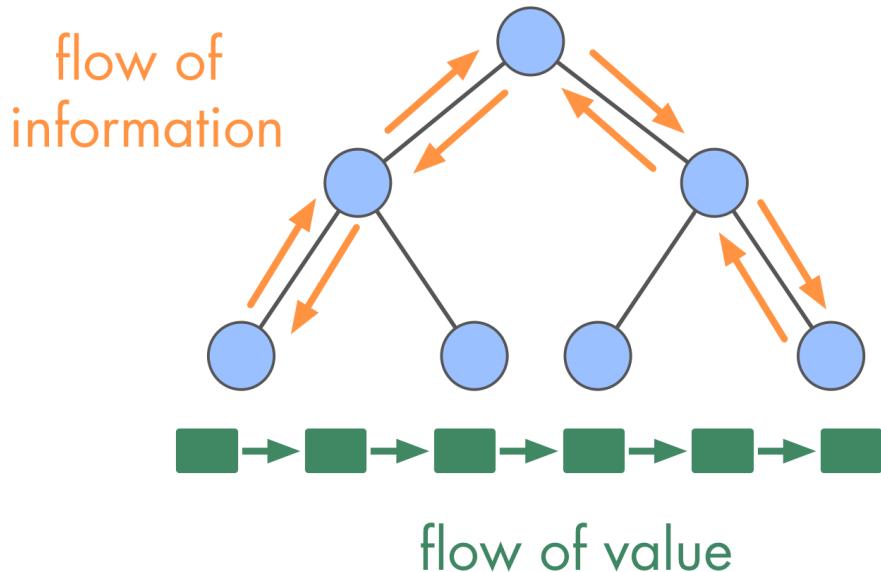


Figure 11.1: Flow of Value and Flow of Information in a Hierarchical Organization

### 11.3 Organize In Nested Domains

*A domain is an area of influence, autonomy and accountability.*

Building an organization from domains defined along organizational drivers facilitates effective collaboration by creating enabling constraints and clear and logical boundaries for accountability.

#### Drivers Define Domains of Accountability

- accountability applies to all agreements, including the organization itself, circles, and roles
- everyone's primary accountability is for effective collaboration in response to drivers
- circles are accountable for their work, their body of agreements and for their own development
- everyone in an organization is accountable for upholding organizational values and principles

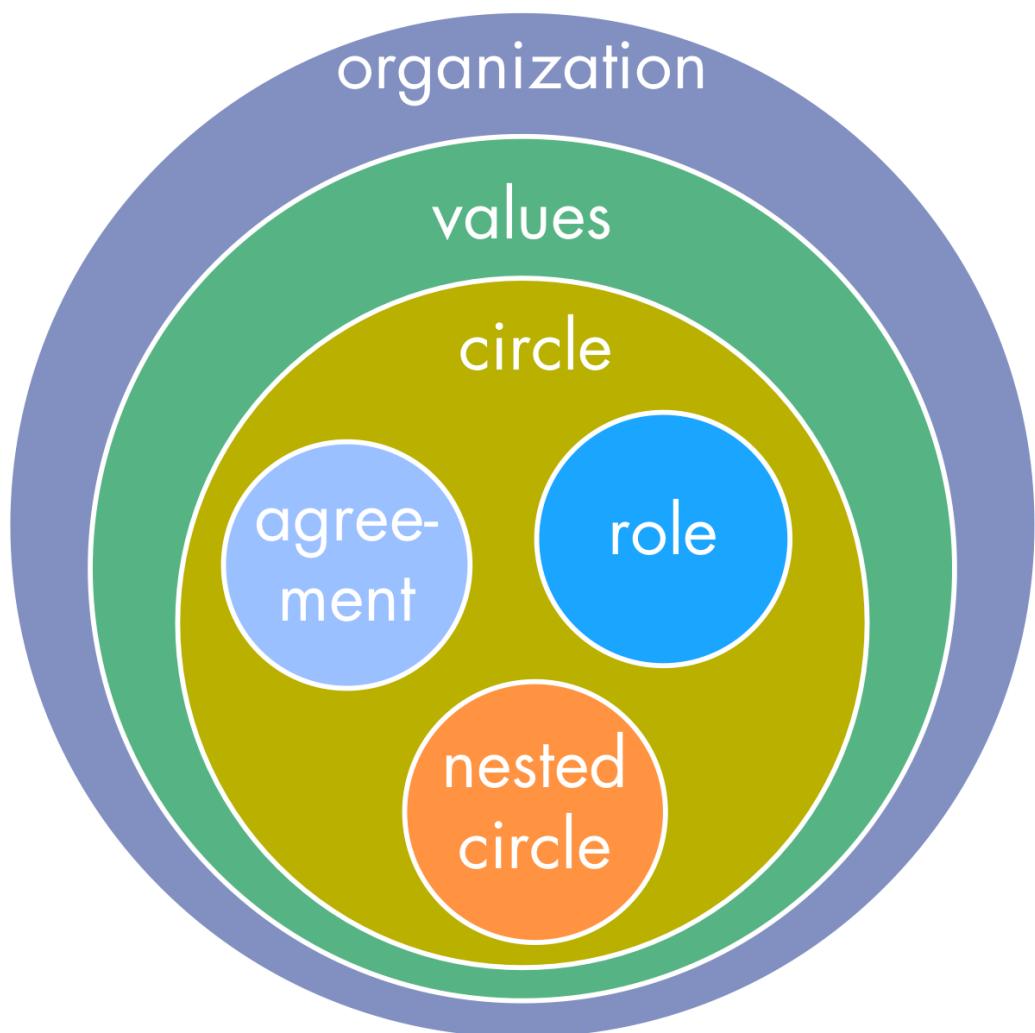


Figure 11.2: Nested Domains

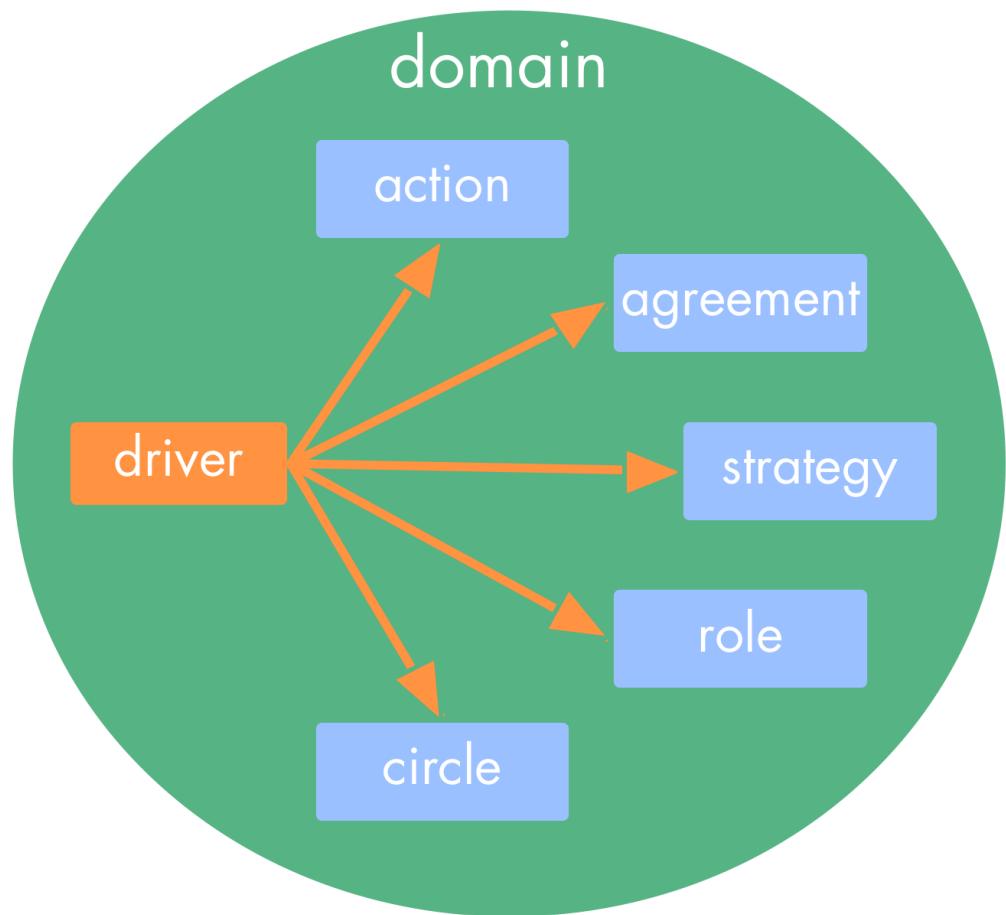


Figure 11.3: Different Forms of Response to a Driver Within a Domain

## Chapter 12

### People and Roles

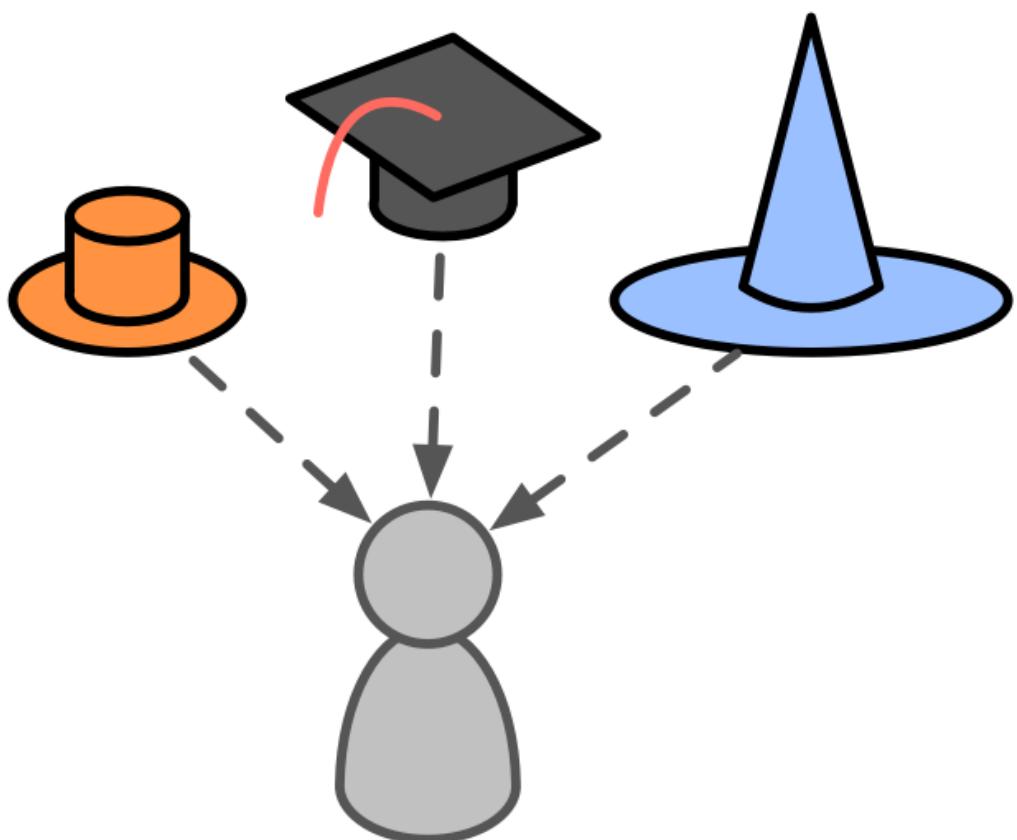


Figure 12.1: Through Roles, People can Wear Many Hats

## 12.1 People, Functions and Roles

- identify functions required to respond to a driver
- if a function is best addressed by a role:
  - define the role
  - select people for the role
  - support development of people in the role

## 12.2 Role Life-Cycle and Development

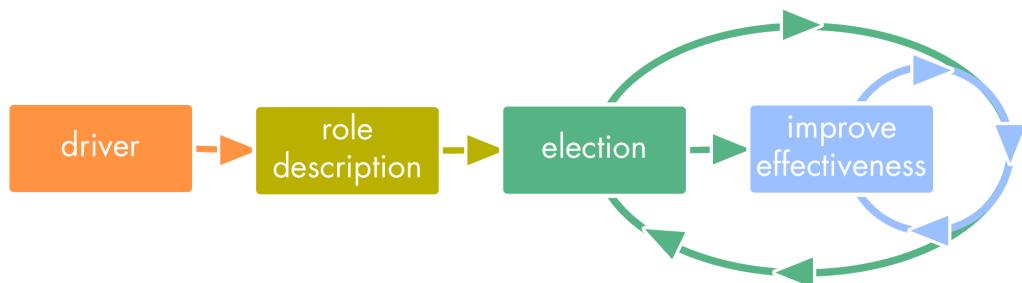


Figure 12.2: The Life-Cycle of a Role

Continuous improvement of the effectiveness of people in roles:

1. Conduct effectiveness review
2. Create development plan
3. Full circle consents to development plan
4. Act on the plan

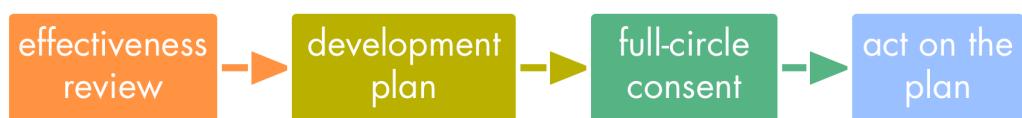


Figure 12.3: Development of Individuals in Roles

### 12.3 Development Plan

A development plan is an agreement for developing greater effectiveness in a role. It is usually created in or after an effectiveness review, and then taken to the full circle for consent.

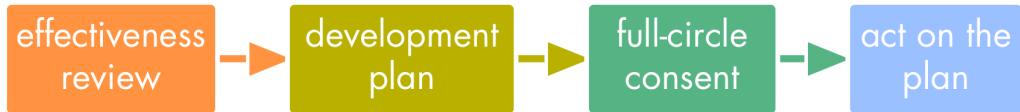


Figure 12.4: The Process of Development in a Role

Contents of a development plan:

- current role description
- appreciations
- areas for improvement
- action items to improve effectiveness
- evaluation criteria
- suggested amendments to role description

### 12.4 Effectiveness Review

The *Effectiveness Review* is a process to harvest appreciations, identify opportunities for improvement and evolve a role.

The individual holding the role initiates the process and begins each step.

The development plan is usually drafted during the effectiveness review, but can be finalized afterwards. In that case, the plan will be circulated to and participants of effectiveness review for consent before the plan is brought to the full circle.

#### Steps

1. Invite people with complementing perspectives to contribute to the review, and a facilitator
2. Collect appreciations
3. Identify areas for improvement
  - personal development
  - updates to role description, function or driver

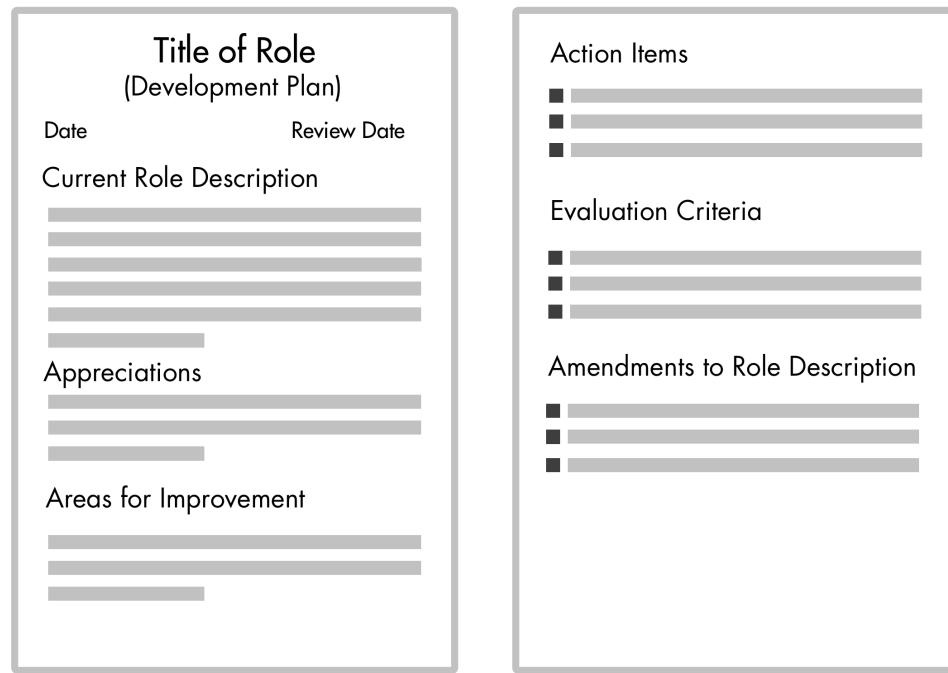


Figure 12.5: Template for Development Plans

4. Co-create and consent to a development plan

## 12.5 Role

- roles are more flexible than positions
- people can wear many hats, i.e. fill several different roles, often in several circles at the same time
- (s)election by consent...
- ...and for a limited term
- peers support development in roles

## 12.6 Role Description

- role descriptions can be created using proposal forming
- a minimal role description contains:
  - driver

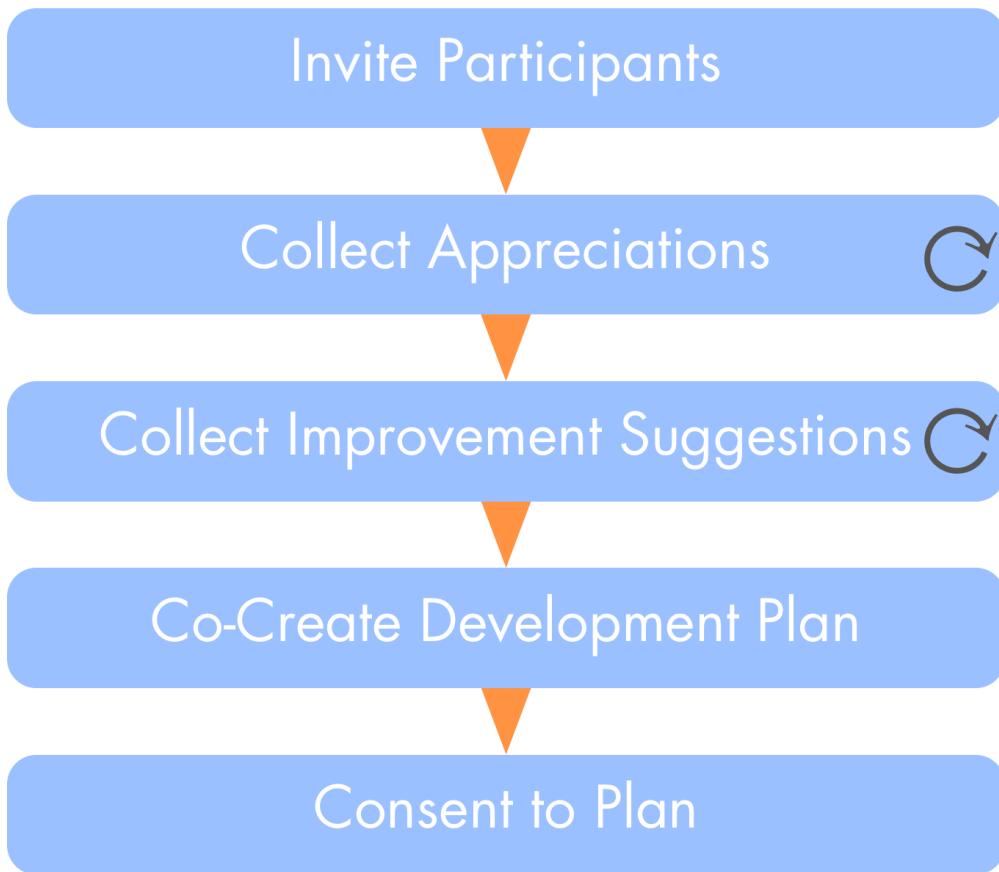


Figure 12.6: The Steps of an Effectiveness Review

- term
- key responsibilities
- preferable skills, experience and qualities
- cadence of effectiveness reviews

## 12.7 Role Selection

### What is it?

Instead of people being assigned to or volunteering for functions in an organization, we can select them on the basis of their qualifications for that function.

Following the facilitated process for sociocratic elections (as laid out in the implementation section below) the group suggests candidates, presents arguments for their qualifications, and then consents to one candidate fulfilling the required function **for a limited term**.

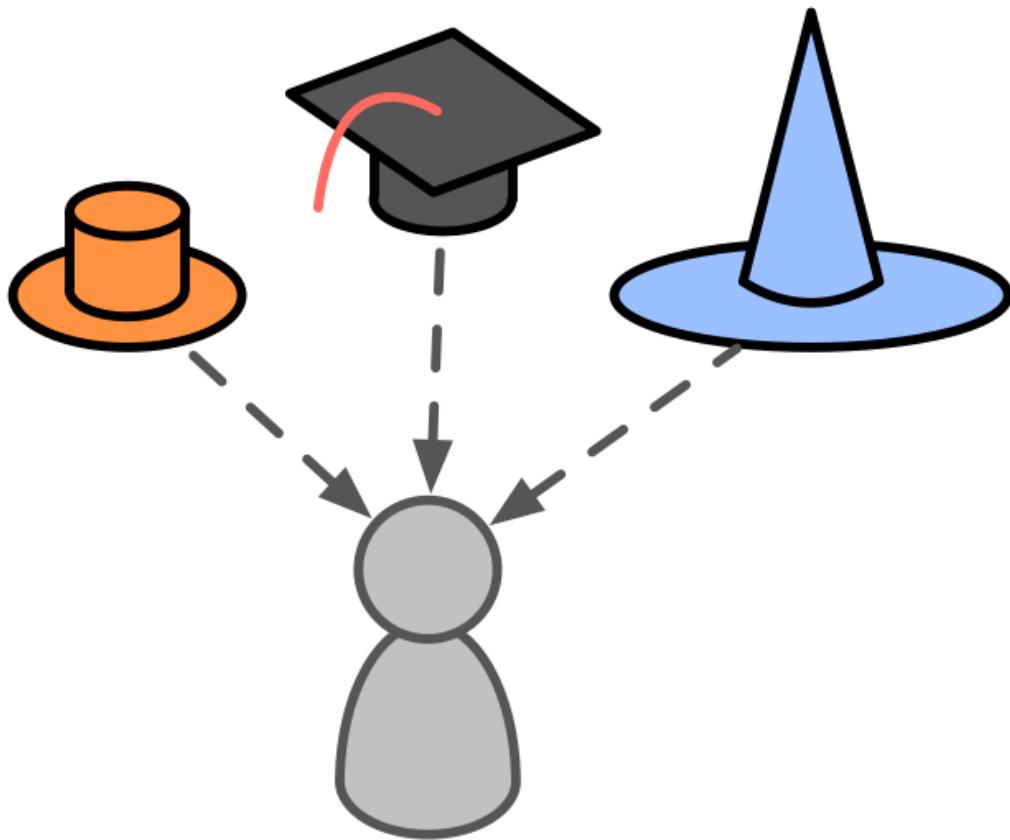


Figure 12.7: With Roles, It's Easy for People to Wear Many Hats

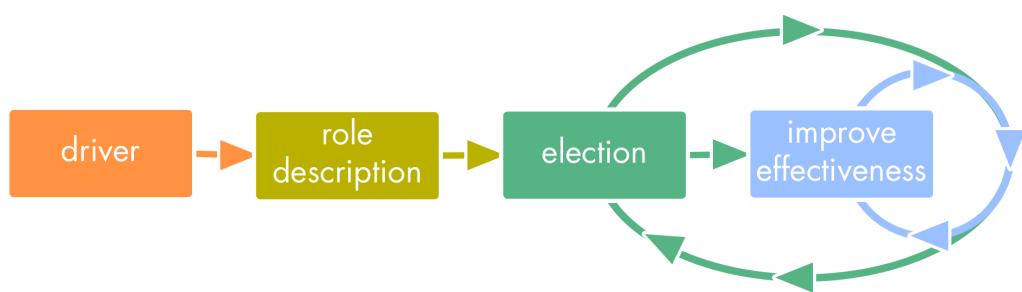


Figure 12.8: Life-Cycle of a Role

<b>Name of the Role</b>	
Date	Term (date of next selection)
<b>Driver</b>	
	
<b>Responsibilities, Resources</b>	
	
<b>Skills, Experience, Qualities, Time</b>	
	
<b>Schedule for Effectiveness Reviews</b>	
	

Figure 12.9: A Simple Template for Role Descriptions

### Why use it?

There is no emergent group wisdom in volunteering or assignment, both methods have a strong bias towards certain traits of personalities that are not necessarily correlated to good performance in a role or function.

### How to implement it?

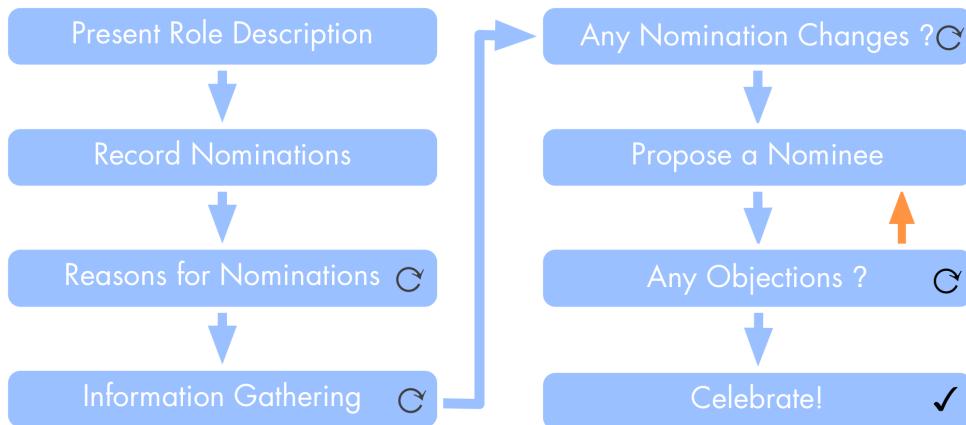


Figure 12.10: Selection process

The facilitator guides the group through the stages of the election process, and actively prevents discussion or dialog.

It helps to remind the group that asking for volunteers or who would be interested (or not interested) would anchor the decision and move it away from the arguments presented.

#### Present Role Description

The facilitator presents the (previously consented to) description of the role or function, usually a combination of :

- term
- responsibilities
- resources
- desired experience, skills and qualities
- criteria, procedure and intervals of evaluation

It's important to never elect for unlimited terms, a new election after a term has expired allows for an natural expression of the emergent wisdom of the group around who should hold that role.

### Record Nominations

Each member of the group writes down their name and the name of their desired candidate (or “no nomination” or “hire from the outside”) hands in their nomination to the facilitator.

You can use sticky notes with the following format: name of the candidate large and in the center, your name on the bottom in smaller print.

That way the facilitator can easily work with the nominations in the following rounds.

### Reasons for Nominations

*“What are the reasons for selecting your candidate?”*

The facilitator invites each member of the group to share the arguments why they selected their candidate. If the nominations are on sticky notes the facilitator can stick them to a wall one by one as the nominations are explained.

### Information Gathering

*“Is there anything else you would like to share?”*

In another round, the circle then shares comments, questions and other important information while the facilitator helps to avoid discussion or dialog.

### Change Nominations

*“Do you want to change your nomination? If so, please share the reason why.”*

This round gives participants the chance to change their nominations on the basis of what they have learned in the previous round. Participants need to share the reasons for changing their nominations, and may ask questions to a potential candidate for clarifying information about themselves.

On changing a nomination, participants fill in a new election slip for the facilitator.

### Facilitator Proposes Nominee

Now the facilitator summarises the nominations and the arguments and proposes the candidate with the strongest arguments as a nominee for selection.

At this point, a discussion of the presented candidate is not necessary, the facilitator may remind the group that there is value in moving forward quickly and they can raise concerns or objections in the consent round that follows.

### Hear Objections

*“Do you have any objections to selecting . . . for this role ?”*

The facilitator begins the consent round next to the candidate so the candidate is asked last. Participants answer the question with either “yes” or “no”, the objection itself is shared in the next stage.

### Resolving Objections

Those with objections share the reasons for their objections, but there’s no discussion before the round has finished.

The facilitator has several options to resolve objections (see Resolving Objections (section 12.7)), in many cases an amendment to the role description (e.g. a shorter term) followed by another consent round will be enough.

If an amendment of the role description is not possible, the facilitator would select another candidate from the nominations and start a new consent round.

If the role cannot be filled, the group might decide to use Proposal Forming (section 7.11) to deal with the issue.

### Goes well with...

Elections benefit from a good Role Description (section 12.6) and regular [Performance Review][]. Both the facilitator and the group need to understand the pattern of Rounds (section 9.8).

### Other comments

- People avoid expressing interest before elections
- Nominations are made on the strength of the reason
  - not according to the majority
- You can nominate yourself or pass
- When harvesting objections, ask the candidate last
- Objections may be resolved by amending the role description or by nominating someone else

## 12.8 Support Roles

Apply the idea of roles to external contractors:

- identify function
- create a role description
- implement a selection process
- limit term of the contract
- initiate development process

Support roles may be operational only, external contractors opt-in to role descriptions.

## Chapter 13

# Organizational Structure

The primary function of organizational structure is **to enable effective collaboration** by aligning the flow of information to support the flow of value..

**Organizational structure needs to evolve continuously** in order to adapt to a changing environment.

**Semi-autonomous, self-organizing and self-governing circles** are the basic building blocks for organizational structure.

### 13.1 Structural Patterns

- Sociocracy 3.0 describes a variety of patterns to grow organizational structure
- patterns apply to different layers of abstraction (basic, micro, macro and meta)
- different patterns serve different drivers
- patterns can be combined as needed
- more patterns are out there and will be discovered

### 13.2 Backbone Organization

A pattern for multi-stakeholder projects or services.

A backbone organization is usually formed for joint projects or a shared service organization of several stakeholder organizations.

In the inception phase of a backbone organization, each stakeholder organization sends a delegate to build the backbone organization. When up and running, the backbone organization is double-linked to each stakeholder organization.

### 13.3 Coordination Circle

A coordination circle coordinates decision making and collaboration of several circles.

Coordination circles may be accountable for all aspects of collaboration, or just for a specific subset (or subdomain).

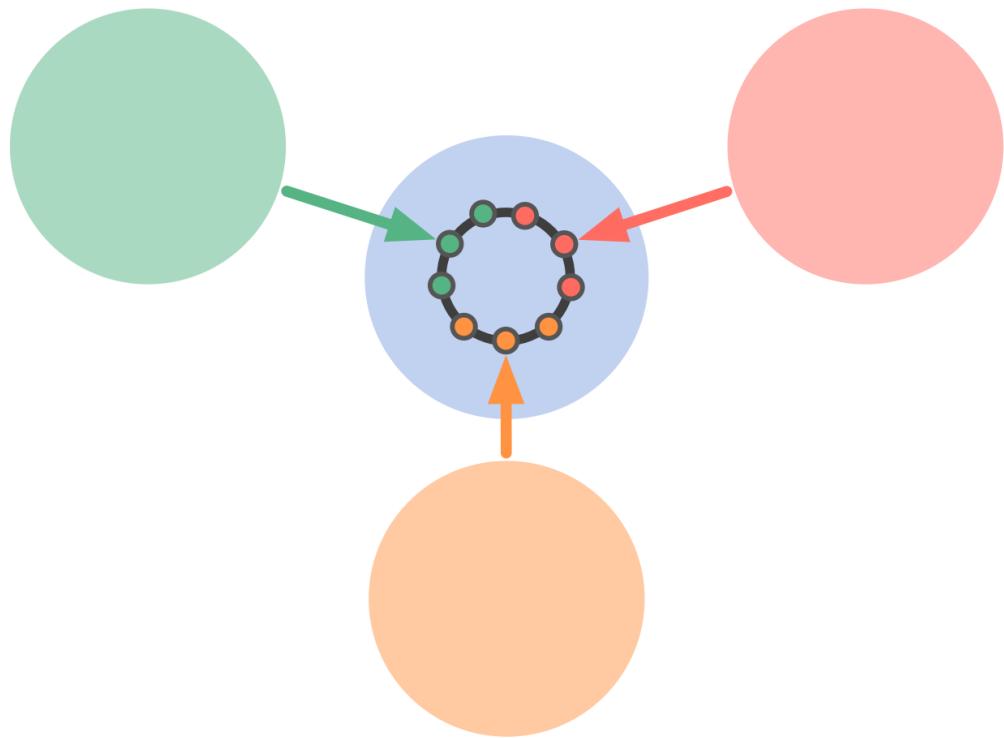


Figure 13.1: The Inception Phase of a Backbone Organization

### 13.4 Delegate Circle

A pattern for coordination between several teams or circles

#### Motivation for using this pattern

- several teams have overlapping domains or dependencies
- there's a need to exchange learning about these domains
- there's a need for coordination and decision making

#### Overview

1. several teams identify a shared domain where they can't make decisions autonomously
2. each team selects a delegate (e.g. through *Role Selection*)
3. delegates form a functional team which coordinates exchange and decisions about the shared domain
4. delegates inform their team mates of pending decisions and outcome of delegate circle activities, and bring feedback to the delegate circle

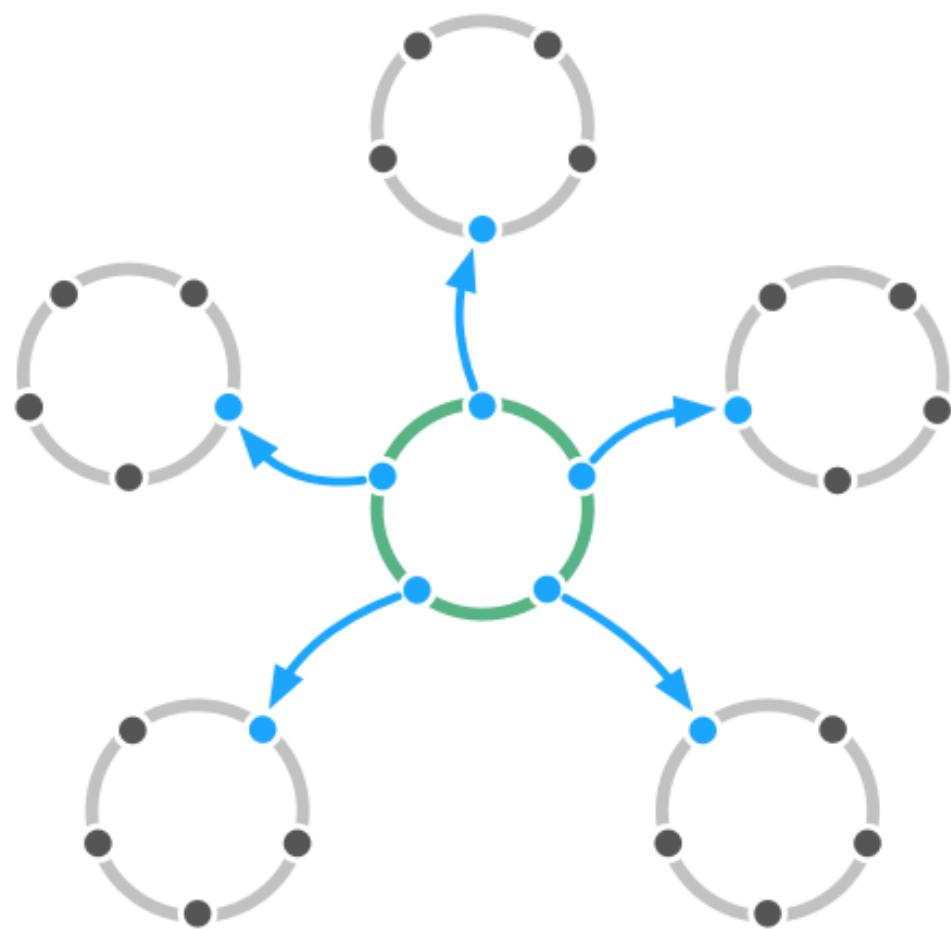


Figure 13.2: Influence of a Coordination Circle

Delegates will be re-elected after their term expires. If a team does not feel represented well, they can recall the delegate and send a new one.

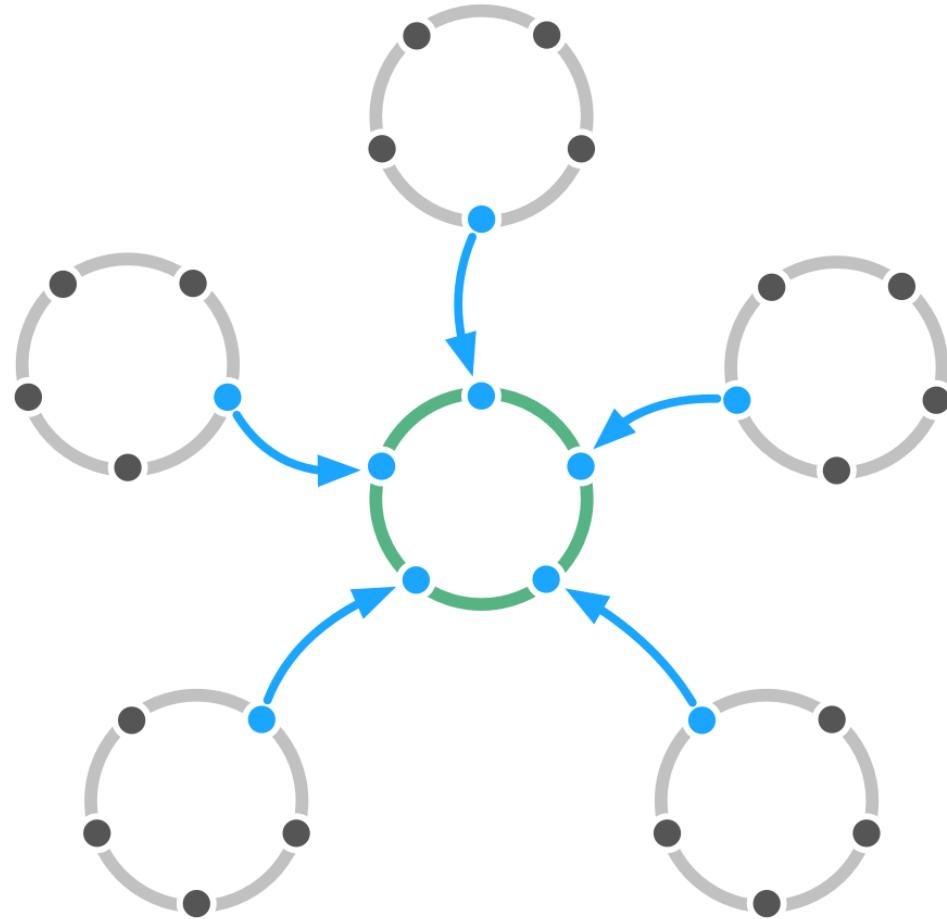


Figure 13.3: A Delegate Circle Consists of Delegates from other Circles

### Related Patterns

- Representative (section 13.11)
- Consent Decision Making (section 7.3) for decision making in the delegate circle
- Governance Meeting (section 8.2)
- Governance Backlog (section 8.1)
- Role Selection (section 12.7)

### 13.5 Double Linking

**Motive:** *Facilitate two-way flow of information and influence*

- Two interdependent circles each elect a representative to participate as full members in both circles' governance meetings
- can be used to prevent tensions in hierarchical structures

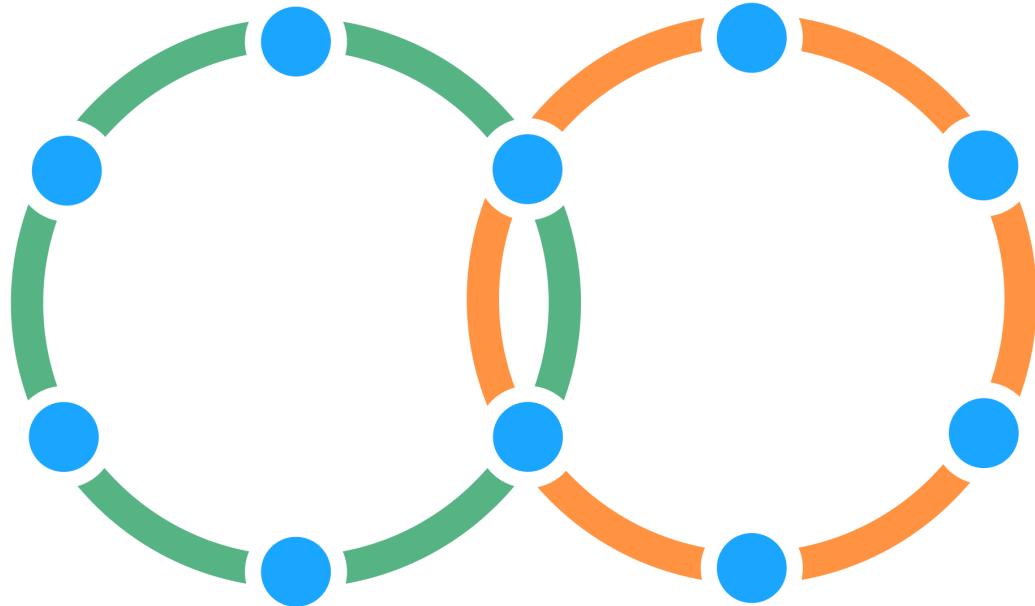


Figure 13.4: Two Double-Linked Circles

### 13.6 Double-Linked Hierarchy

A pattern for the early phase of a transformation.

In a double-linked hierarchy, the flow of information and influence between adjacent levels of the hierarchy is balanced through sending delegates upwards and downwards.

Each level of the hierarchy is made up of a team (instead of individuals).

Each team on a lower level selects one delegate to represent them in the team on the next higher level. Each team on a higher level sends selects one delegate to each team on the lower levels. This way, there's always two people familiar with the perspective of each team present in decision making on the next higher level. Also, when making decisions on the lower levels, there's always two people present who can bring in the perspective of the next higher level.

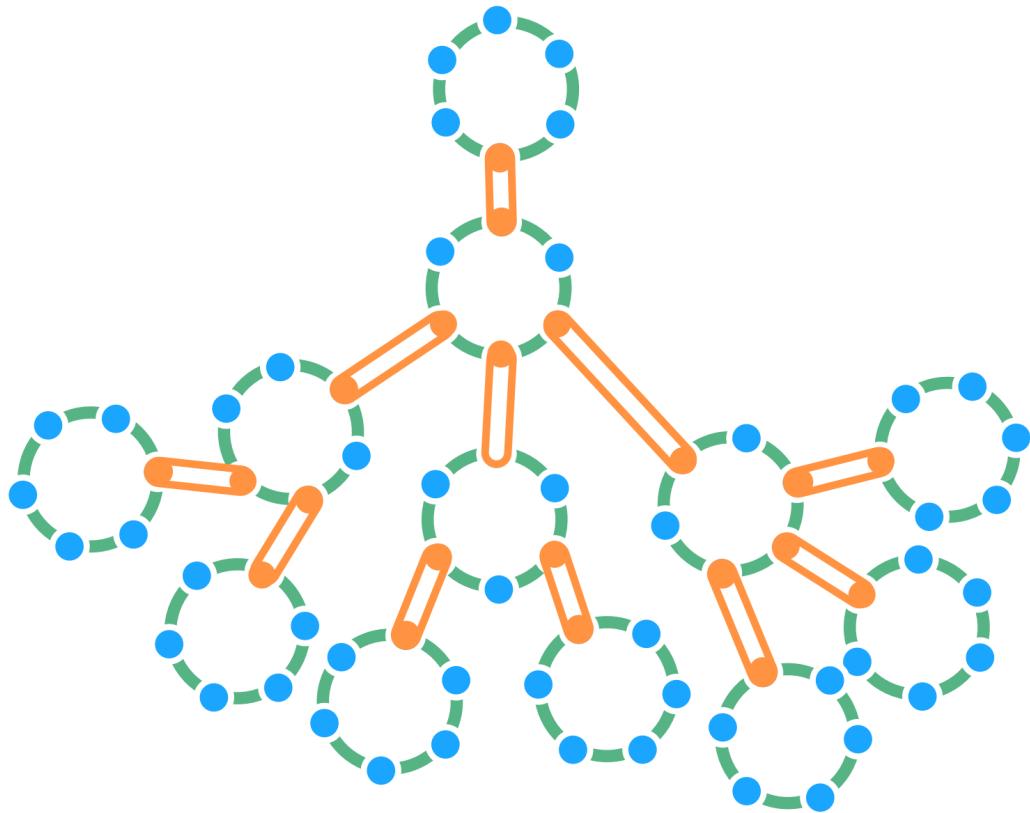


Figure 13.5: A Double-Linked Hierarchy

### 13.7 Fractal Organization

A Pattern for learning, coordination and alignment across organizational boundaries.

### 13.8 Helping Circle

*\*Motive:* a circle requires a clearly defined service, but has not enough capacity.

A group of people with the mandate to execute on rules and guidelines set by the circle that encloses or “owns” the helping circle.

Within the boundaries defined by the rules and guidelines the helping circle might self-organize, or work with a coordinator or leader. A helping circle usually has no navigation meeting, but may raise objections to rules and guidelines to the parent circle.

### 13.9 Nested Circle

A pattern for expanding the capacity of a function.

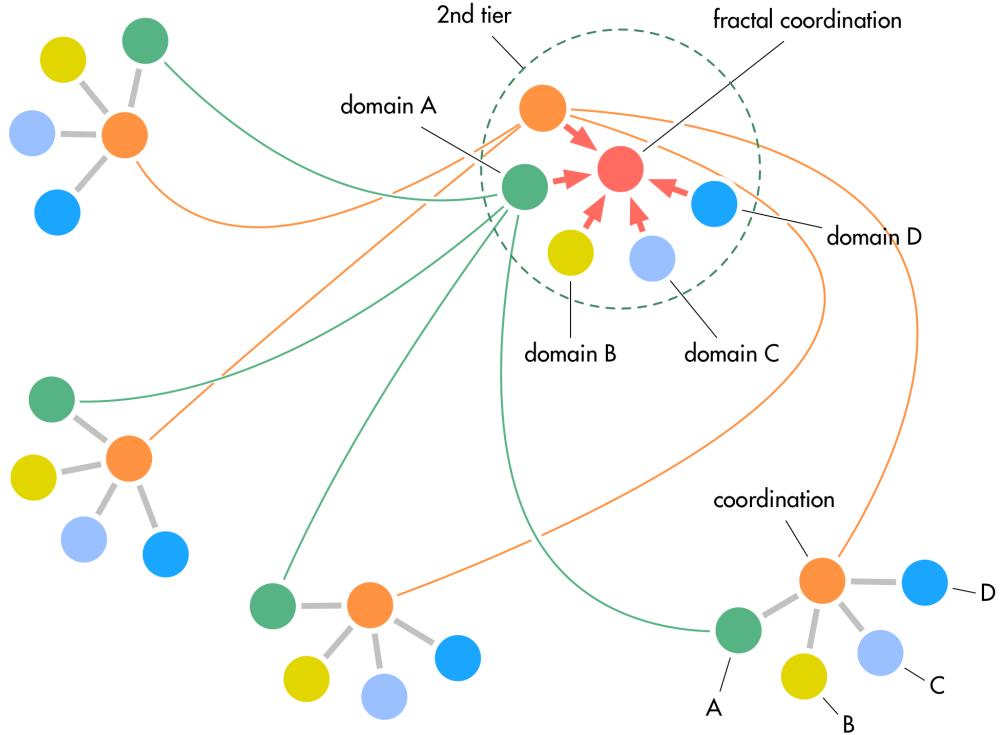


Figure 13.6: Fractal Organization

When a team finds that a function required for them to deliver value needs more capacity, but the team wants to avoid the side-effects of adding more people to the team, it can form a nested circle to add more people for that function.

Coordination between the outer circle and the nested circle happens through one or several members of the outer team, who are also members of the nested circle. Often nested circles grow out of a role, so initially those who held that role are usually best suited for coordination. As with all other roles, it's a good idea to assign them for a limited term, and use Role Selection (section 12.7).

### 13.10 Peach Organization

Periphery drives the organization, the center provides services.

All teams on the periphery of the organization are in exchange with the outside world, e.g. with customers, users, partner organizations or affiliates. Services required for the periphery are grown in the center, e.g. administration, coordination, finance, HR, IT services,.

### 13.11 Representative

Representatives (a.k.a Links)...:

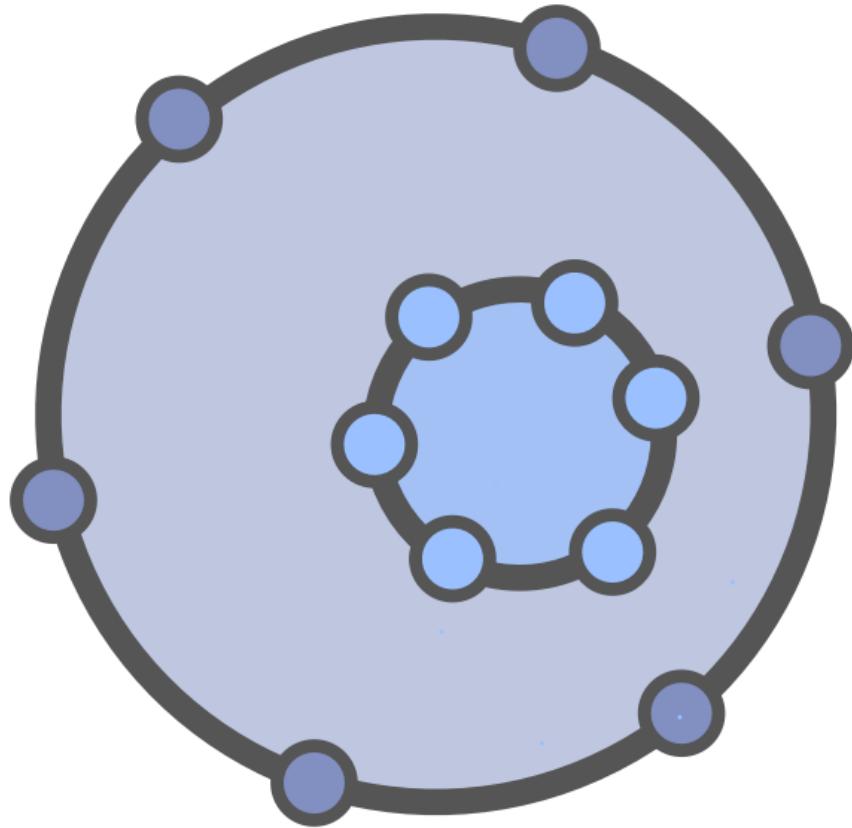


Figure 13.7: A Helping Circle

- ... stand for the interests of one circle in another circle
- ... are elected for a limited term
- ... participate as full members in governance meetings of the other circle and can:
  - raise items for the agenda
  - object to agreements and proposals

### 13.12 Service Circle

A pattern for outsourcing shared services

When several teams identify a service they can share, each team selects a delegate to a service circle. The service circle can then increase its capacity by bringing in more people. The delegates remain in the service circle to ensure development of the circle is in line with the needs of the founding circles.

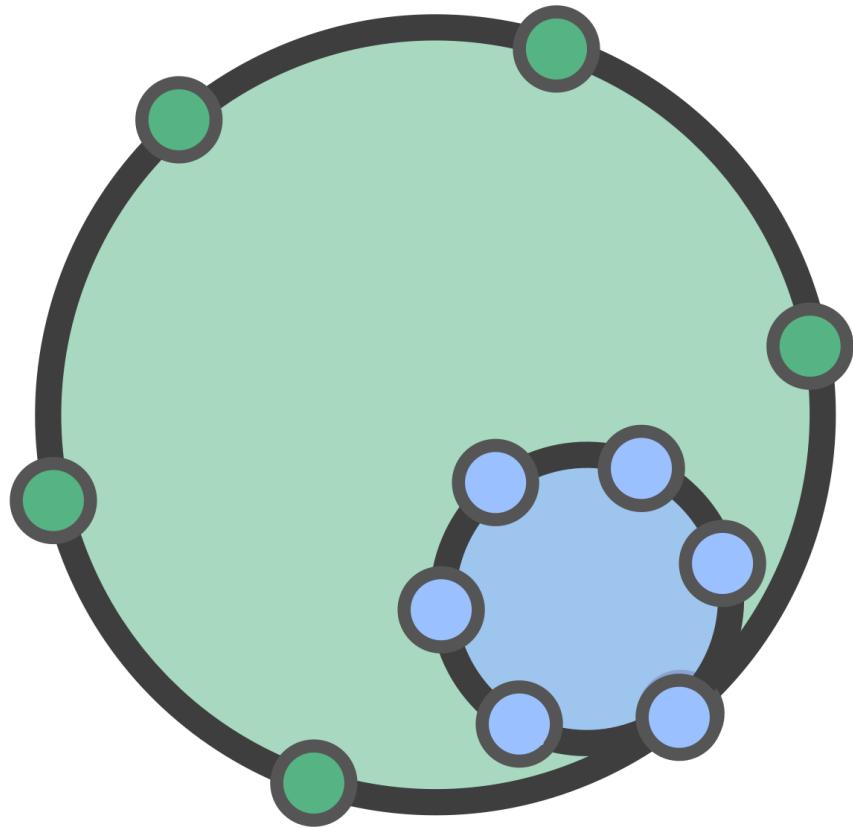


Figure 13.8: A Nested Circle is Linked to the Parent Circle

Delegates are selected for a limited term, and can be recalled if the team feels the delegate does not represent them well.

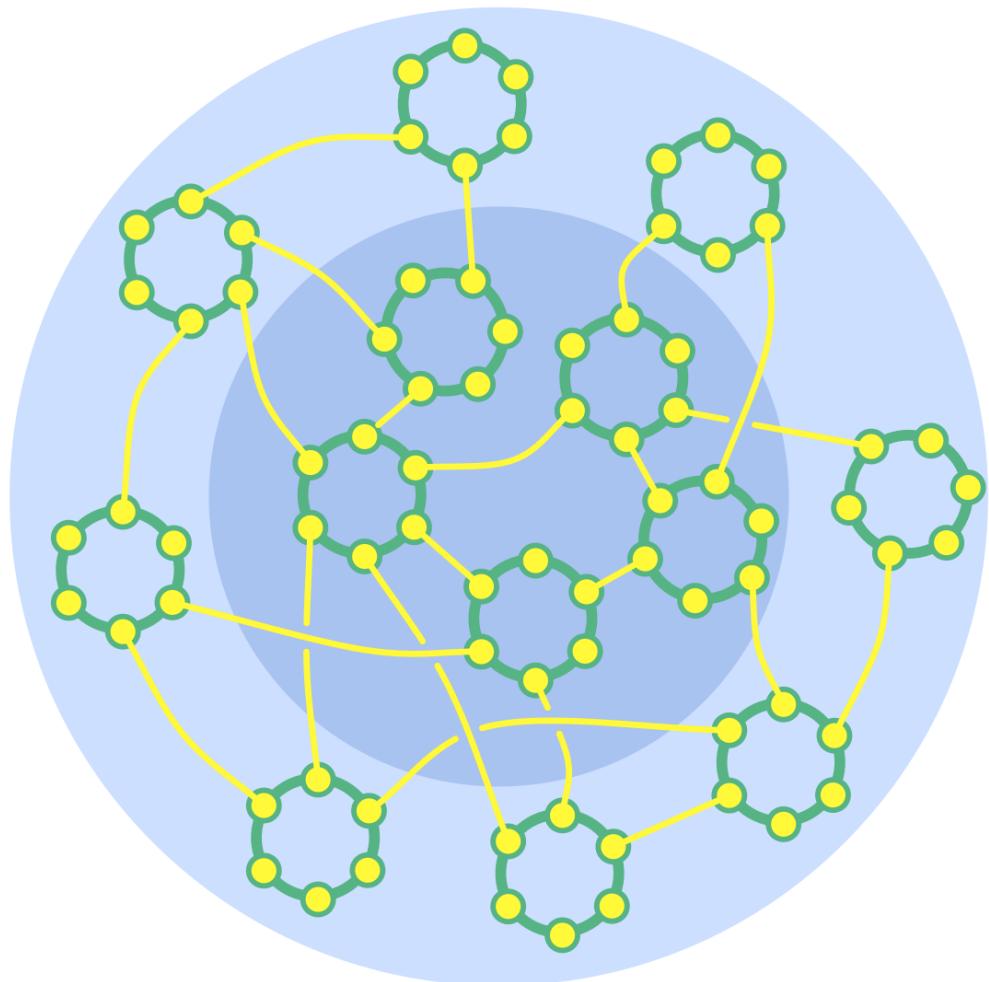


Figure 13.9: A Peach Organization

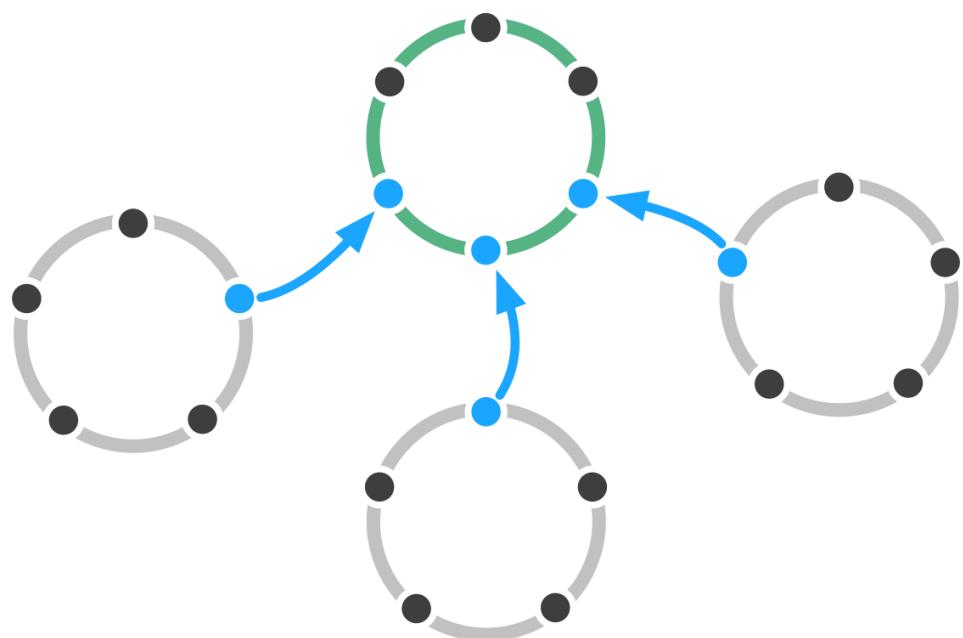


Figure 13.10: A Service Circle

## Chapter 14

# Alignment

The patterns in this section help an organization align on many different levels.

Adopt S3 Principles and Agree on Values help establish general guidelines we can all agree on, and thus reduce the number of explicit agreements we need to make, Contracting and Accountability brings clarity around the relationship of the individual to the organization, Transparent Salary offers a perspective of aligning agreements on compensation with the principles of S3.

### 14.1 Adopt S3 Principles

**Driver:**

- principles are reflected in all patterns
- chosen values (or implicit assumption) guide behaviour
- need: align chosen values and S3 principles to reduce tension with S3 patterns
- need: understand principles for correct application of patterns

All patterns contained in S3 are built on seven core principles: consent, empiricism, equivalence, accountability, effectiveness, transparency and continuous improvement.

When we **Agree On Values**, we need to check how our chosen values relate to S3's principles, if there's a conflict, this will most likely result tensions with at least some of S3's patterns .

Our chosen values should be unique for our organization, they're how we define our specific culture.

However, we can also agree on adopting S3's principles as an additional set of general principles to guide our actions and interactions.

This agreement would include three different aspects:

- how can we make sure everyone knows and understands the 7 principles?
- what can we do to help each other apply the 7 principles?
- what do we do when we suspect one or more principles are violated in a certain situation?

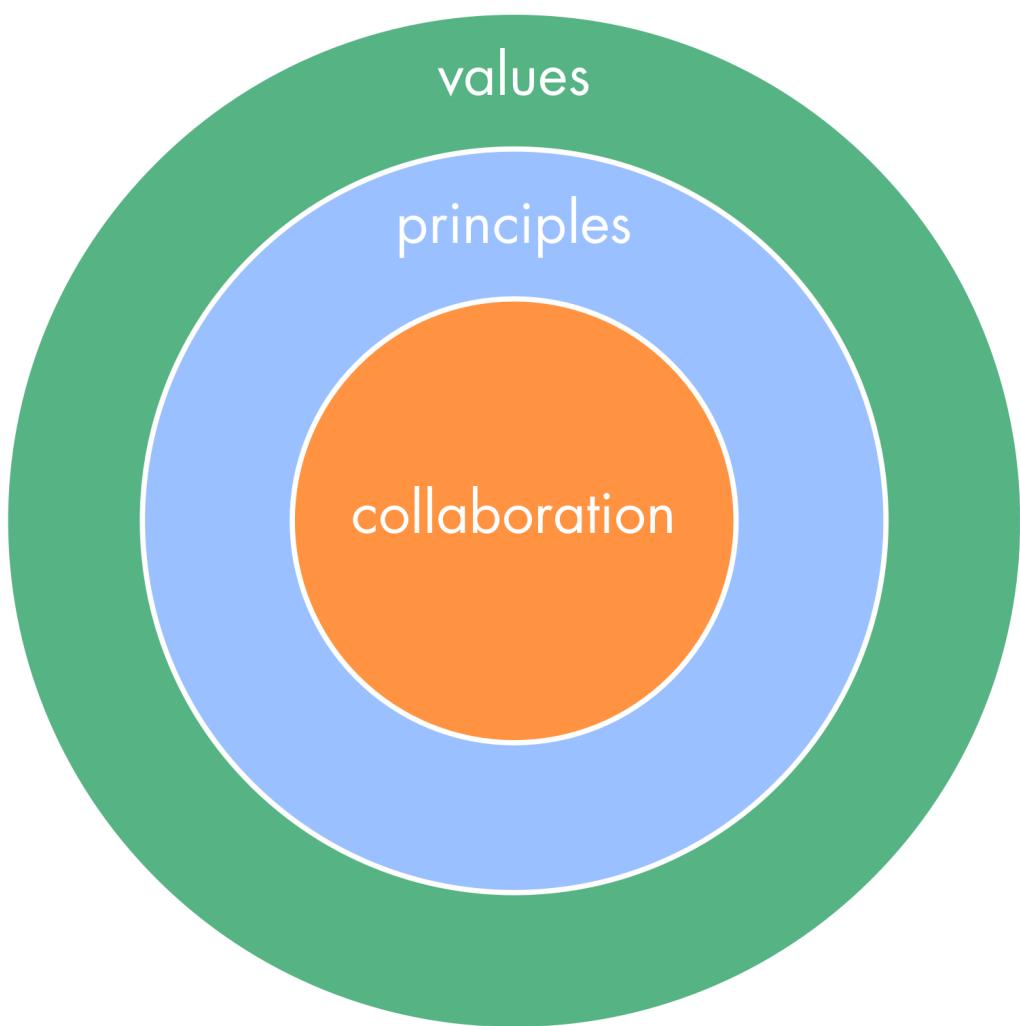


Figure 14.1: Organisational Values and the Seven Principles Guide Collaboration

Each organization or group needs to find their own answers for these questions, e.g. through *Proposal Forming*, here's a few examples:

- learn and understand: print the descriptions of the principles from this handbook for everyone, then get together, pick a pattern from the handbook (at the beginning stick to those you already use), and discuss how this pattern relates to each of the principles
- support each other in application: have a poster with the agreements in your meeting room, so when making an agreements, you are reminded to check how a proposal relates to each of the principles
- suspected conflict with principles: agree on a protocol for raising concerns or asking about the intended outcome of a proposal or somebody's actions in relation to the 7 principles.

## 14.2 Agree On Values

A pattern for setting boundaries for behavior, decisions and actions by adopting a set of values that is shared throughout an organization.

**Motivation for this pattern:** Culture in an organization is formed through implicit assumptions or explicit agreements about acceptable behavior. Agreements and assumptions can vary throughout an organization.

Making an explicit commitment to aligning behavior, decisions and actions along shared values improves effectiveness. A **value** is a principle of some significance that guides behavior. **Chosen values** are an intentional and collaborative effort to create the culture people want to see in an organization.

### Indicators for using this pattern

#### Conditions:

- lack of shared understanding of the ethical boundaries of decisions and actions across an organization
- more or less radically different cultures in different parts of an organization
- culture in an organization appears to impede greater effectiveness

#### Needs:

- bring members of an organization closer together and align teams
- develop norms that compliment objectives
- reduce investment required for making effective decisions

#### The details

When discussing shared values, it can be challenging for the members of an organization to identify and articulate their shared intrinsic values, because their personal values meet with **explicit and implicit assumptions about expected and appropriate behavior** in the organization. Additionally these assumptions may depend on context, e.g. people

behave differently when a CEO is present in a meeting, and there's often different cultures in different parts of the organizations, e.g. in engineering, sales and management.

Therefore it's usually easier for people to focus on what behavior they consider as supportive of effective collaboration.

These are their **chosen values** - the set of values members agree on and commit to in an intentional and collaborative effort of aligning towards both achieving organizational objectives and growing the kind of culture they want to see.

Chosen values support effectiveness of an organization by:

- offering **guidance** to determine appropriate action or behavior, often reducing the need for more specific agreements.
- reducing potential for **misunderstanding**
- **aligning** decision making and action
- **inviting contribution** of all its members
- **attracting new members, partners and customers** in natural alignment with the organization

### Putting it into practice

Since commitment to a set of chosen values is an experiment, an organization benefits from developing strategies for:

- supporting each other in developing shared understanding of the values and for applying them consistently
- learning when values might be updated, refined, or even dropped
- responding to situations where individuals suspect a value may have been compromised or overlooked
- discovering and changing existing practices or agreements that stand in the way of adopting a shared value

As an organization grows structure it is natural that different flavors of culture evolve in different domains. Alignment with chosen values across an entire organization allows for diversity without compromising the wellbeing of the organization.

### Articulating values

In order to make chosen values as helpful as possible, consider these guidelines:

1. Agree on the motivation for each value first and imagine the culture that's desired.
2. Limit chosen values to 5–7 if possible.
3. Express values in concrete terms that people can act on, rather than as abstract concepts.
4. Create a visual representation of each value.

5. Make chosen values visible everywhere in the organization so it's easy to remember and refer to them.
6. Make culture a priority, and get together on a regular basis to understand, develop and evolve values, e.g. twice a year in an open space (see *Open S3 Adoption*).

### Related patterns

- *Open S3 Adoption* helps with regular review of chosen values
- a *Retrospective* offers a space to observe the effect of adhering to or ignoring values
- *Adopt S3 Principles* may help with reducing the number of chosen values necessary by providing a set of principles beneficial to all organizations
- *Driver* helps understand and articulate motivation for chosen values

### 14.3 Bylaws

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

- consent decision making
- selection process for leadership roles
- governance structure
- influence of owners or shareholders

### 14.4 Contracting And Accountability

To protect organizational culture, help new members have a smooth start, and provide for painless development of organizational structure, an organization needs to:

- develop a consent-based process for entering the organization that tests for both cultural fit and the skills required
- align contracts with both organizational culture and legal requirements
- define a default role for a new member
- define a process for leaving an organization
- provide a way for entering and leaving a circle

### 14.5 Linking

Linking is the practice of one circle selecting a delegate who takes part in all important decisions of another circle to make sure their needs are being met.

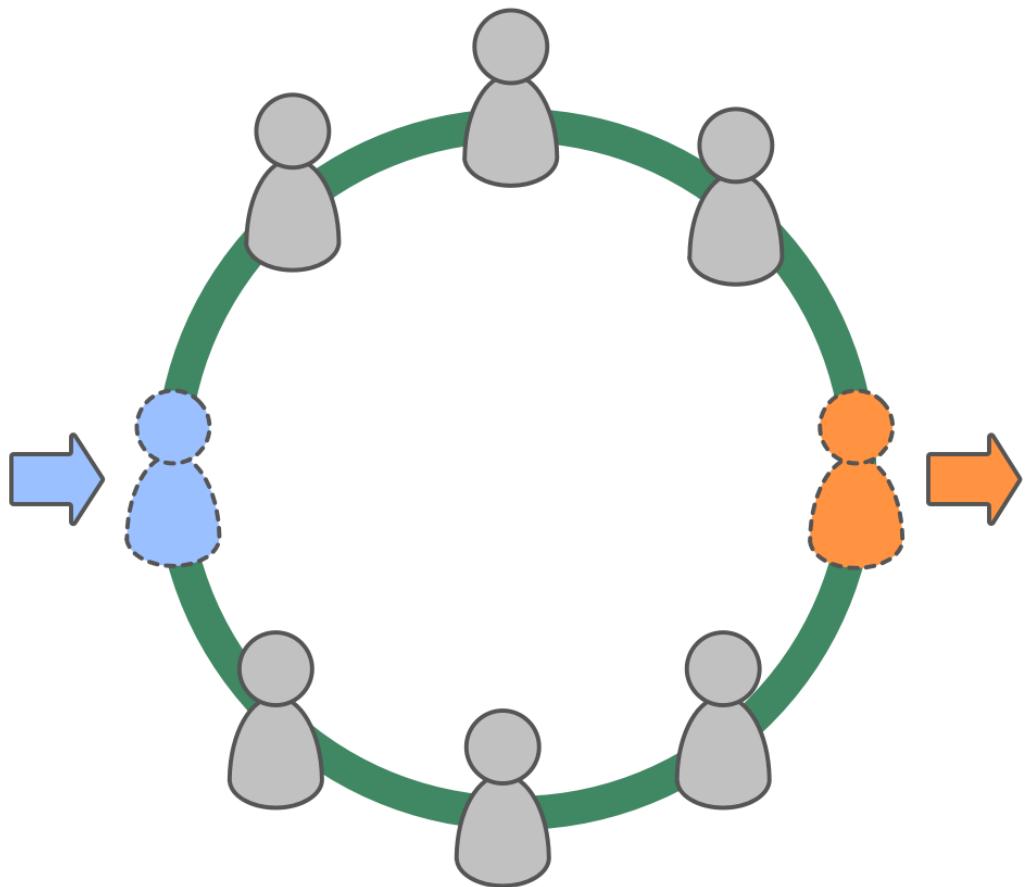


Figure 14.2: Entering and Leaving a Circle

### Related patterns

- Double Linking (section 13.5)
- Delegate Circle (section 13.4)
- Service Circle (section 13.12)

### 14.6 Transparent Salary

- transparent salaries need to be fair
- perception of fairness is specific to organization
- consider members and relevant stakeholders (e.g. investors)
- classic sociocracy: everyone feels gains and losses

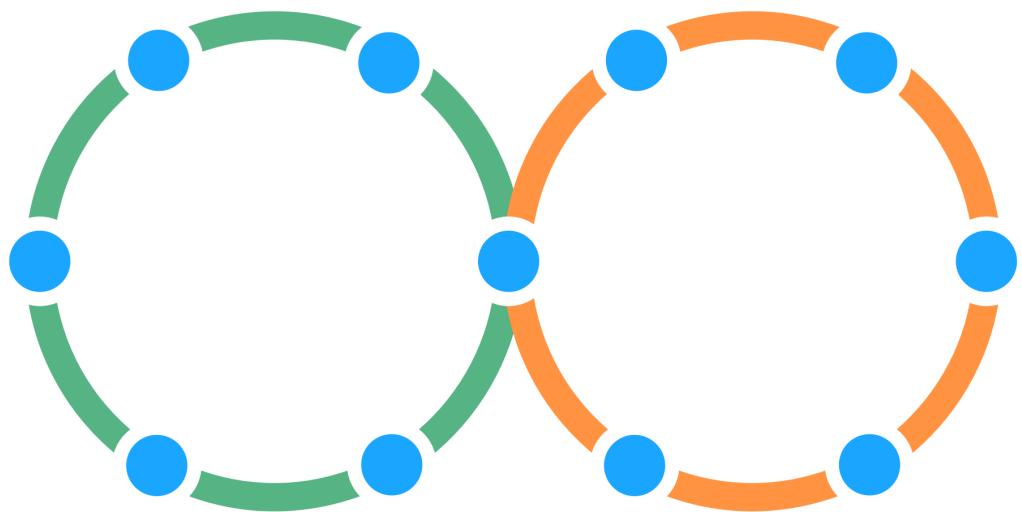


Figure 14.3: Linking two circles

- consider remuneration for changing roles
- create strategy for transitioning towards new contracts and compensation agreements

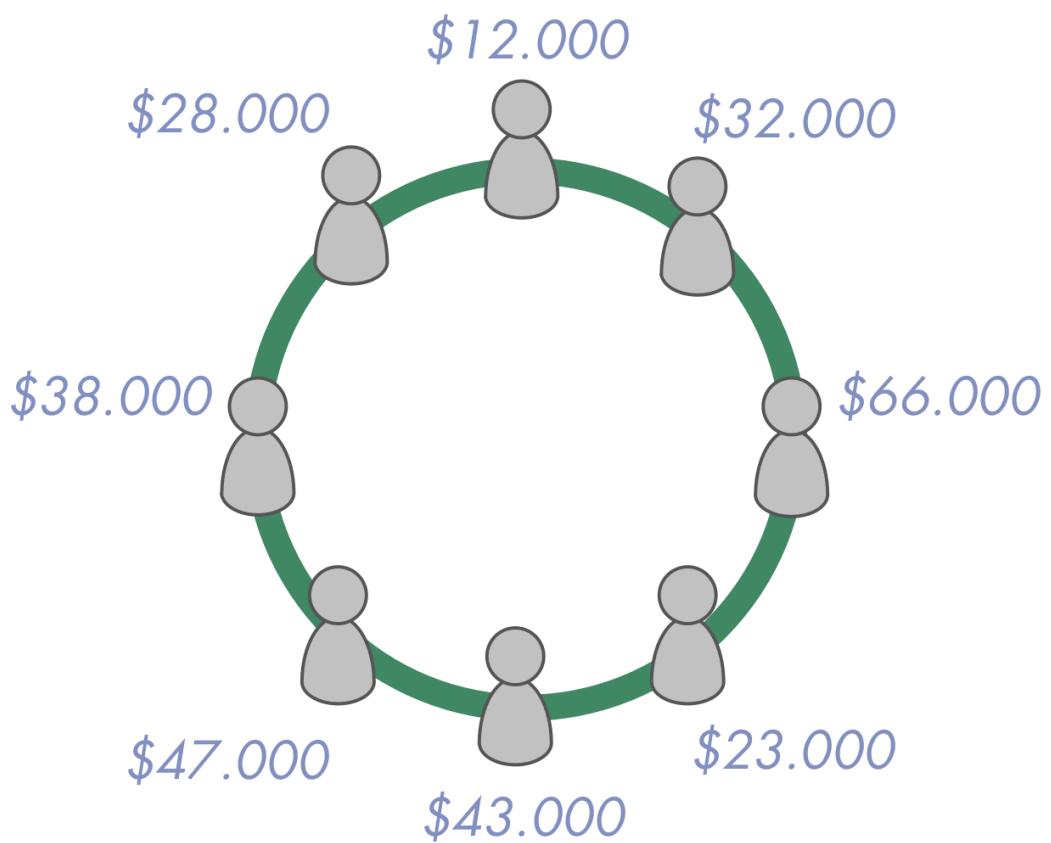


Figure 14.4: Transparent Salary

## Chapter 15

# Bringing In S3 Patterns

The patterns for introducing an organization to S3 are all based on the paradigm of inviting change, rather than mandating it.

### 15.1 Adapt Patterns To Context

Patterns are merely ideas that worked for somebody somewhere, in their culture, their perception of the world, their strengths and growing edges. Your context is certainly different, so if you simply copy and paste a pattern, it might not work for you. This is why you sometimes need to adapt a pattern to your context.

#### Context for Successful Application:

In order to successfully adapt a pattern, a circle needs to develop shared understanding of both the pattern and their specific context. In almost every case it makes sense to gather the circle for this, to ensure both buy-in of all circle members and availability of all the knowledge and experience present in the circle. Often it's a good idea for everyone to review the pattern before the workshop.

#### Application

The basic steps of the process of adapting a pattern are very simple, and can be implemented in various levels of detail:

- develop shared understanding of the pattern and your context
- co-create an adaptation of the pattern
- evaluate effectiveness and evolve your adaptation
- share your experience with others, and consider feeding back successful adaptations to the S3 handbook

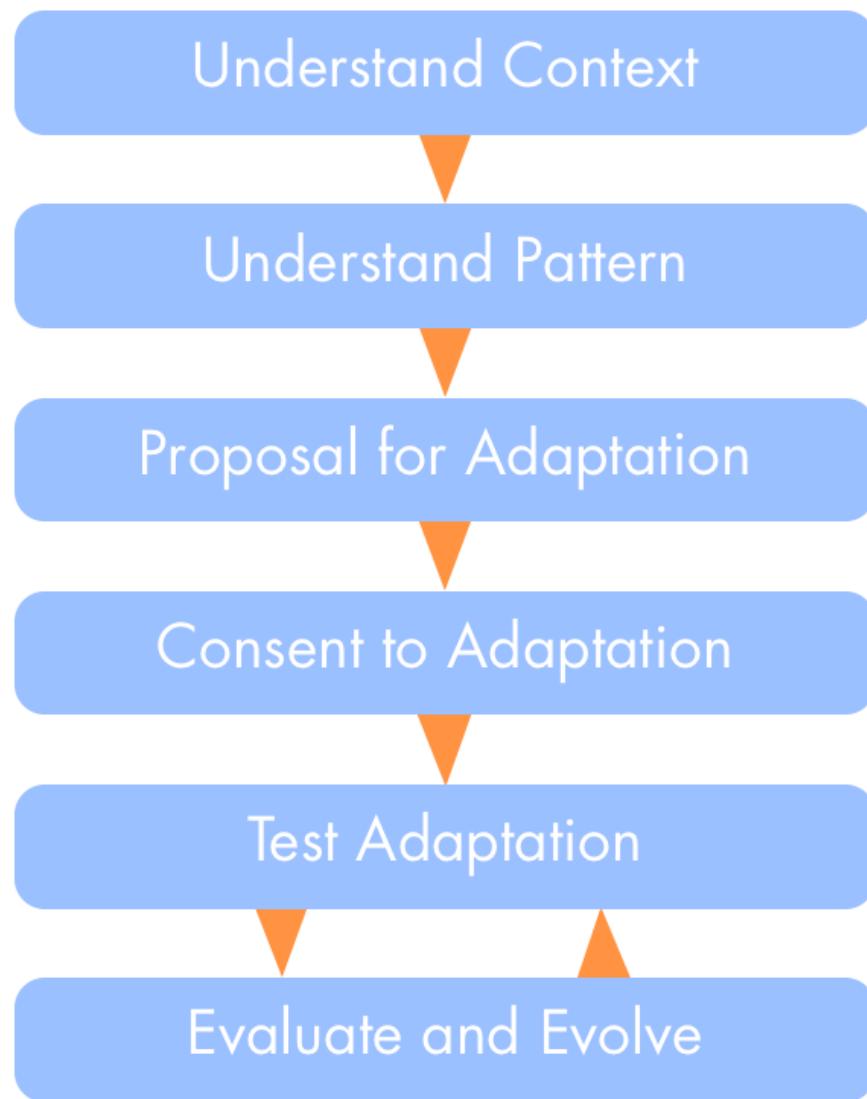


Figure 15.1: Adapting a pattern to context

### Understand the Pattern and Your Context

Here's a set of activities to guide you, pick those you find valuable for you. It's up to the facilitator to facilitate them in rounds or as a brainstorming, and to visualize all the results in a way they can be seen by all participants. Give space for questions, so at the end everyone feels they understand the outcome.

- What is the **problem the pattern aims to solve**? How does this match to your driver for seeking out this pattern? Note similarities and differences.
- What is the **context for successful application** of the pattern? List both the common ground and the differences to your context?
- If the pattern describes **variants**, determine which variant might be the best fit for you. It is this variant you would attempt to adapt first.
- Does your context match one or several of the **known limitations** or disadvantages of a pattern? Make a note which ones.
- If the pattern description lists **advantages**, mark the ones you would want to preserve.
- If the patterns contains **references** to other patterns, go and see if they contain something to help you.
- How does the pattern relate to each of the **seven principles behind S3**? Note what is important and should be preserved.

### Co-CREATE an Adaptation of the Pattern

A simple and effective way for creating an adaptation of a pattern is Proposal Forming<sup>1</sup>, where you can use the output of the first phase as considerations or ingredients for your adaptation.

Considering Intended Outcome<sup>2</sup> and Evaluation Criteria<sup>3</sup> of your proposed adaptation will help you evaluate and evolve the patterns later.

The proposal needs to be agreed upon by the circle, e.g. by using Consent Decision Making<sup>4</sup>

### Variants

If you feel that everyone has a solid understanding of the context and the pattern anyway, e.g. because you are already using it for a while and experience limitations, you might skip the first part and go right into *Proposal Forming*.

A circle might also appoint one or several members to create a proposal for an adaptation in any way they see fit, e.g. by using the activities for understanding pattern and context suggested above, and then present the proposal to the circle, e.g. in the Navigation Meeting<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>proposal-forming.md

<sup>2</sup>intended-outcome.md

<sup>3</sup>evaluation-criteria.md

<sup>4</sup>consent-decision-making.md

<sup>5</sup>navigation-meeting.md

### Known Limitations

Adapting patterns works best when everyone involved is invested in understanding S3 principles, the pattern in question and the context of the circle. Some circles have a culture of high resistance to things they did not develop themselves, or they have pain points or blind spots which make it difficult to approach some patterns with an open mind.

### 15.2 Be The Change

Become the change you want to create, tell the story how you discovered S3. Invite others for experiments, invite them to share their stories, then learn and grow together.

### 15.3 Continuous Improvement Of Work Process

Continuous improvement of work process reveal tensions and helps establish a metrics-based pull-system for organizational change:

- start with consent in one circle, elect a facilitator, define values, and go
- trigger continuous improvement (e.g through Kanban)
- let them pull in patterns
- then expand the scope of the experiment

#### Waste and Continuous Improvement

**Waste** is anything not necessary for - or standing in the way of - effective response to a driver.

- waste exists in many different forms and on different levels of abstraction (tasks, processes, organizational structure, mental models...)
- establishing a process for ongoing elimination of waste enables natural evolution of an organization towards greater effectiveness
- adaptation to changing environment is built into the process

### 15.4 Open S3 Adoption

Instead of mandating S3, the formal authorities make the call for members of the organization to get together in an Open Space and invite them to co-create experiments they'd like to conduct around S3 patterns. This usually happens after some small experiments in an organization demonstrated the potential of S3.

Conducting the first Open Space:

- explain boundaries for experiments: S3 principles and patterns
- explain Open Space rules and principle
- co-create agenda

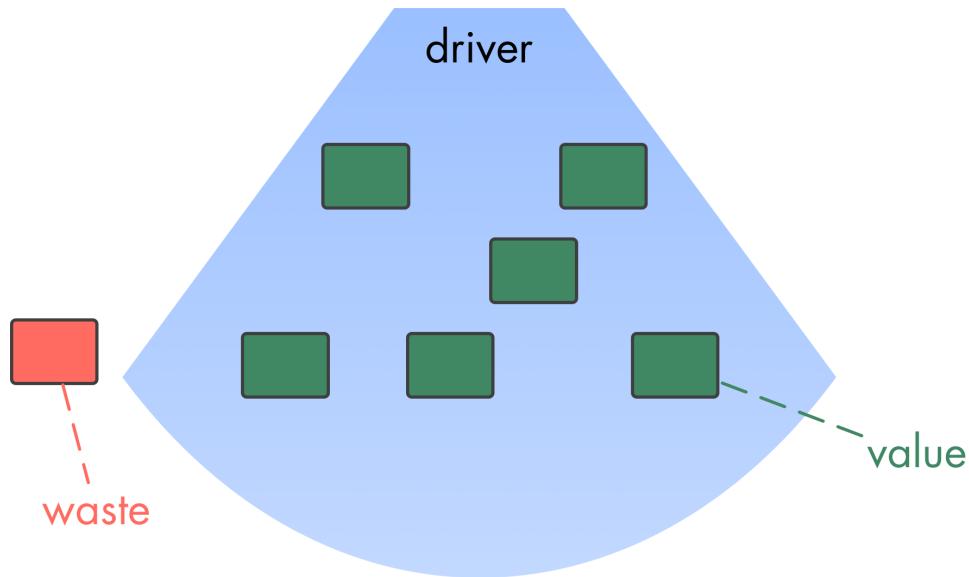


Figure 15.2: Identifying Waste

- provide space to share experiences and ideas between sessions
- provide a platform for announcing initiatives and experiments
- announce next Open Space

In regular intervals, usually twice a year, the whole organization will get together again in an Open Spaces to evaluate experiment and design new ones. In between Open Spaces formal authorities support the experiments and collect stories.

This pattern is based on OpenSpace agility (formerly Open Agile Adoption) by Dan Mezick.

## 15.5 Pull-System For Organizational Change

Change in organization (e.g. reorganizations), is commonly designed by a small group of people, often without even consulting many those affected by that change. This is not only a sure way of creating resistance to change in people, it also does not take into account the actual capacity for change, often overloading the system and therefore reducing the overall capacity of the system - the exact opposite of the intended outcome of the change. This often leads to the even more change in search of increased effectiveness.

When instead of mandating change, we create a pull-system for change by giving the people decision making power over all agreements which affect them, they will be able to navigate both scope and speed of organizational changes themselves, growing a learning organization with a much greater chance of recovering from overload and usually preventing it altogether.

Over time, this will allow for the transition from organizational change as a mere reaction to changes in the environment (e.g. the market) towards intentional change.

In context to S3, organizational change is creating and evolving agreements about how we organize and collaborate, sometimes in the form of agreeing to experiment with new patterns from S3.

S3 contains various patterns which are helpful for empowering people to pull in organizational change, here's a shortlist of where to look first:

- At the very beginning, you need to invite people to learn more about S3, e.g. through the pattern *Be The Change*
- when the group understands and *Adopts S3 Principles*, the principles can serve as an anchor for discussing potential solutions
- *Consent Decision Making* helps people to make decisions without becoming overwhelmed
- even if you don't go for decisions by consent right away, e.g. because you operate in a low trust environment, *Proposal Forming* can be used to tap creativity and wisdom of the group when preparing organizational change
- developing shared understanding of *Drivers* enables groups to find more effective solutions to problems
- *Navigate via Tensions* helps identify and tackle the most relevant challenges

Of course, taking responsibility for all decisions that affect them is tough to swallow for many groups, and different members will have a different understanding of what makes a good decision making process. To reduce resistance, simply invite the group to try *Proposal Forming* and *Consent Decision Making* as an experiment for a month. In the absence of objections, schedule a review session with everyone one month in the future. This will create a safe space for each participant to develop an understanding of their contribution in this new way of making decisions a being accountable. They will learn to trust in the circle to make decisions every can live with, and to bring about change in a pace the circle can sustain. Depending on an organization's culture or a circle's history, mentoring and coaching is helpful to support the circle in moving out of their comfort zone and discovering their true capacity for change.

# Part III

# Appendix

# Chapter 16

## Changelog

**2016–08–24**

- integrated 8 new and several updated images
- new content from slide deck “All Patterns Explained”. Each pattern now has content.
- lots of small fixes, typos, etc.

**2016–06–20**

- added Bernhard’s drafts and pattern descriptions
- new format for pdf and epub
- many small fixes and corrections

**2016–02–29**

- cleaned up image folder

**2016–01–28**

- Conversion of the material contained in the “Introduction to Sociocracy 3.0” slide deck

**2016–01–27**

- Initial setup of the patterns repository.

## Chapter 17

### About the Author



Bernhard Bockelbrink is co-founder of The Sociocracy 3.0 Movement. As an agile coach, consultant and trainer he is supporting organizations in agile transformations and helps them on their way towards an evolved culture of leadership and close collaboration that allows them to sustainably grow great products and services with happy people.

He has 18 years of experience in as an agile coach, CTO, scrum master, product owner, project manager, technology consultant and developer in Startups, small-/medium-sized businesses and enterprises, and a passion for agile and lean software development that goes back to the late 1990s.



evolving collaboration <http://evolving-collaboration.com>

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