

What is The DeftAgile Guide?

DeftAgile is a product and innovation-focused, customer-centric agile framework that bridges insight, intent, and execution. It was born from a simple yet powerful belief: products should start and end with the customer; no exceptions.

At its core, DeftAgile is built to help organizations craft, evolve, and scale products and services of the customer, by the customer, and for the customer. It reimagines agility not just as faster delivery, but as a strategic function of relevance, co-creation, and continuous learning.

Designed to Close the Discovery–Delivery Divide

One of DeftAgile’s central commitments is reshaping how discovery works. Traditional workflows too often isolate product thinking to “the top” which is far from the developers building the experience. This leads to misalignment, wasted cycles, and a blurred understanding of the “why.” DeftAgile integrates product managers, engineers, researchers, and customers early and often meaning, context flows freely, and teams are empowered to make decisions

No more product owners acting as proxies. No more building in the dark. DeftAgile democratizes discovery and aligns everyone behind a shared, validated understanding of value.

Customer-Driven Delivery, without Compromising Speed

Serving the customer isn’t just about being reactive, it is also about architecting ways of working that bring teams and customers together, continuously.

DeftAgile enables fast feedback loops and value-first delivery, balancing quality, time to market, and outcome orientation. It empowers teams to optimize flow, reduce cognitive overload, and deliver meaningful increments that reflect what users truly care about.

Built for Nimbleness and Elimination of Waste

“Deft” means nimble, and the framework lives up to its name. By identifying and eliminating waste in value streams, DeftAgile supports lean, focused delivery pipelines that avoid unnecessary overhead and prioritize what matters.

This includes not only reducing delays and excess handoffs, but also embracing adaptable governance, transparent metrics, and context-rich rituals that evolve with team maturity.

Where Innovation Meets Evidence

Innovation is not an afterthought; it is the engine. DeftAgile centres data-driven insights, experimentation, and AI-enhanced decision-making across the entire product lifecycle. It helps teams synthesize qualitative signals, surface customer truths, and shape hypotheses that drive intentional, validated learning.

The goal? To consistently wow customers with products that feel intuitive, tailored, and timely.

DeftAgile Values

These are the values that are deemed important to both product development and agile engineering teams

- Customer Centricity
- Collaboration and Empathy
- Transparency and Communication
- Innovation and Flexibility
- Accountability and Ownership

Customer Centricity

Build what matters. Obsess over value.

Customer centricity means putting real customer needs and not assumptions at the heart of our work. Product and Agile teams at DeftAgile are expected to deliver not just functionality, but impact. That requires proximity to customers, data-informed decision-making, and relentless validation.

Here's how we embed customer centricity:

Understand the Customer

Define clear personas and segment behaviours. Use research, interviews, and observations to uncover real pain points—building deep customer empathy that informs everything from backlog items to go-to-market strategy.

Test Hypotheses Early

Use techniques like Pretotyping/prototyping, MVPs, and A/B testing to validate ideas quickly and cheaply. Embrace learning loops and measure what moves the needle for the customer and not just vanity metrics.

Align Vision to Customer Outcomes

Roadmaps should flow from customer insights, not internal priorities. Prioritise features that deliver clear, measurable value. Track success through customer satisfaction, adoption, and retention.

Iterate with Purpose

Leverage customer feedback in sprint reviews, and write stories rooted in user experience. Make iteration a vehicle for continuous customer alignment—not just speed.

Make Data a Team Sport

Combine qualitative insights with behavioural data to uncover opportunities, personalize experiences, and predict what customers need next.

Collaboration and Empathy

Work together, not in silos. Lead with respect.

At DeftAgile, we reject the blame game and operate from a core belief: **collaboration is an act of empathy**. Great teams aren't built by accident—they're shaped through shared purpose, psychological safety, and mutual respect. Product managers and engineers are not rival camps; they are one team, solving complex problems together.

Here's how we embody this principle:

- **Shared Power, Shared Purpose** Product and engineering leads have equal influence. Decision-making is collaborative, balancing feasibility and value creation without power imbalances.
- **Trust Is the Default** We assume positive intent. Trust is earned through consistency and openness, where teams can admit risks, ask hard questions, and rely on each other under pressure.
- **Unite Under One Goal** Our shared accountability is simple: build the right thing, in the right way. This means rallying around product outcomes and not functional boundaries.
- **Empathy in Action** We embrace each other's realities. Engineers understand product constraints; PMs understand technical trade-offs. Everyone is curious about the "why" behind the "what."
- **One Team, Always** Cross-functional by design, our teams inspect and adapt as a unit. Win or fail, we own it together. Respect is non-negotiable, and feedback flows in all directions.

Transparency and Communication

Clarity is kindness. Visibility drives trust.

At DeftAgile, we don't believe in closed doors or hidden roadmaps. High-performing teams thrive on open communication within the team, across departments, and throughout the organization. Transparency isn't an optional "nice-to-have"; it's a strategic enabler of speed, alignment, and psychological safety.

This is how we practice it:

- **Open, Daily Dialogue** Communication must be continuous and frictionless. PMs and engineers engage daily in open conversations. Whether in stand-ups, async updates, or strategy syncs.
- **Alignment Across Functions** We extend transparency to every part of the value chain: product marketing, design, data, customer success, and subject matter experts. Collaboration starts at discovery and not after the roadmap drops.
- **Stakeholder Rituals with Purpose** Visioning and planning workshops are more than checkpoints—they're co-creation spaces where teams align on priorities and surface risks early. Reviews are inspection points to adapt with agility.
- **Context > Consensus** We don't aim for endless agreement. Instead, we share the full picture: why a decision was made, what trade-offs were accepted, and how success will be measured.
- **Feedback Is a Signal, Not a Threat** Every comment, whether from a teammate or customer, is data. Teams actively seek feedback and treat it as a gift, feeding it back into iteration cycles with humility.

Innovation and Flexibility

Challenge the norm. Adapt with intent.

Innovation isn't luck, it's built into how we work. At DeftAgile, we don't wait for perfect conditions to try something bold. We make room for creative exploration in the constraints of delivery. We're not just adaptable; we're proactive shapers of change.

Here's how that translates on the ground:

- **Experiment Relentlessly** Prototype, test, tweak, repeat. Whether it's a business model shift or a tiny UI change, small bets drive meaningful discovery.
- **Learn Fast, Evolve Faster** Failure isn't a dead end—it's a feedback signal. We create safe-to-fail environments where teams can run experiments, learn swiftly, and share outcomes transparently.
- **Innovation for the Right Reasons** Not all novelty is progress. We innovate with purpose—tied to unmet customer needs, untapped growth opportunities, or process breakthroughs.
- **Stay Adaptable at the Edges** Flexibility means we're always ready to pivot, reframe a problem, or re-scope a feature when the data tells us to. We shift gears without losing sight of our vision.

Accountability and Ownership

Own the outcome. Act with autonomy.

True accountability means everyone—from product to design to engineering—feels responsible for delivering value. We don't pass the buck or wait to be told. Ownership is how we build trust, scale decisions, and hold the bar high.

Here's how we make that happen:

- **Shared Accountability, Clear Roles** Everyone contributes to outcomes—but we're crystal clear on who's driving what. That clarity empowers speed and focus.
- **Autonomy with Boundaries** Teams make the decisions that are theirs to own. They manage their scope, pace, and trade-offs—guided by shared goals and product vision.
- **Measure What Matters** Teams succeed when they know what success looks like. We define OKRs, KPIs, and customer metrics that align individual and team accountability with business impact.
- **Speak Up, Show Up** Ownership includes raising flags, owning misses, and learning out loud. Leaders model this in public, and teams follow suit.
- **Celebrate the Climb** We recognise both the milestones hit and the tough decisions made along the way. Accountability is culture-building—not compliance tracking.

DeftAgile Principles

- Let data be your northern star
- Hypothesis testing & Validation
- Continuous discovery

- Quad track agile
- JTBD & OKRS
- AI augmented decision making
- Cross functional collaboration
- Use Visual Artifacts
- Spot & Solve Early
- Value driven decision making

Let Data be Your Northern Star

Data is the foundation of innovation, guiding product decisions from ideation through to execution. As a product manager or Agile expert, embracing a data-driven approach isn't just a choice—it's a necessity. Data helps you navigate shifting market trends, understand user preferences, and pinpoint opportunities with precision. It's not just about crunching numbers; it's about interpreting those numbers as the stories that shape your product's journey.

We use data to drive every major decision, from discovery to engineering, helping us align product features with business objectives and customer outcomes. This means understanding the lifecycle of data through its stages:

- Raw Data
- Findings
- Insights
- Metrics

Establishing the right metrics tied to business goals and customer outcomes is critical. Data also plays a key role in validating hypotheses, whether through A/B testing, cohort analysis, or prototyping insights. In essence, data helps prioritize features, validate assumptions, and measure the success of iterations.

Hypothesis Testing & Validation

How do we foster a culture of rapid experimentation and learning? Simple: we encourage teams to innovate by taking calculated risks, running small-scale experiments, and iterating swiftly based on feedback. The real value comes in continuously reflecting on processes and outcomes, which empowers teams to improve with each iteration.

A scientific approach to product development offers clear benefits. Teams identify assumptions about user behaviour, feature impact, and business outcomes and transform them into testable hypotheses before diving into product development. Here's how we do it:

1. Hypothesis Formulation: Define clear, testable hypotheses with:
 - The proposed change or action
 - The expected impact or outcome
 - The metrics for success

- A timeline for evaluation
- 2. Minimum Viable Experiments: Design small experiments (A/B tests, prototypes, MVPs) to test each hypothesis, ensuring minimal investment but meaningful data.
- 3. Data Collection & Analysis: Collect and analyse both quantitative data and qualitative feedback to evaluate results comprehensively.
- 4. Rapid Iteration: Quickly decide whether to pivot, persevere, or abandon the idea based on results, with lessons learned fuelling the next round of experiments.
- 5. Knowledge Sharing: Share experiment outcomes, both successes and failures—across the team. This builds collective knowledge and ensures everyone is aligned.
- 6. AI-Enhanced Hypothesis Generation: Use AI to analyse past data, user behaviours, and market trends to generate potential hypotheses. This not only speeds up the testing process but also uncovers non-obvious opportunities.

By embedding hypothesis-driven development into the Agile framework, we:

- Reduce the risk of building features that don't deliver value
- Accelerate learning and innovation
- Make informed, data-backed decisions
- Foster a culture of curiosity and continuous improvement

Use Visual Artifacts

How do we bring our product vision to life? At DeftAgile, visual artifacts are crucial in enhancing communication, collaboration, and overall product development. They're the tools that ensure we're all speaking the same language, whether we're aligning stakeholders, iterating on ideas, or ensuring both business and technical perspectives are incorporated.

From Wireframes and Sketches to Prototypes and UI Flows, visual tools serve distinct purposes:

- Wireframes: Low-fidelity representations outlining structure and layout, used early in discovery for alignment.
- Sketches: Informal, hand-drawn visuals that facilitate brainstorming and rapid ideation.
- Prototypes: Interactive or non-interactive models to test usability and validate design choices before full development.
- Mock-ups: High-fidelity, static visual representations for conveying detailed design elements to stakeholders.
- UI Flows: Diagrams that map out user navigation, ensuring seamless user experience.

Other tools include Flowcharts, Sequence Diagrams, Workflows, and Use-Cases, each supporting specific goals—whether it's mapping complex processes, defining system interactions, or understanding the user's journey. These visualizations help teams optimize workflows, improve user experience, and keep everyone aligned.

But remember, don't go overboard with visuals. Not every product development stage requires a visual artifact—use the ones that truly add value and clarity.

Continuous Discovery

Continuous discovery is essential for staying aligned with user expectations throughout the product lifecycle. It's not about conducting research only at the beginning of a project; it's an ongoing dialogue with customers. Regular, weekly feedback enables product teams to refine ideas, adapt quickly, and deliver better outcomes.

Core areas of focus in discovery include:

- Personas: Who are our users?
- Value Proposition: What do they need?
- Usability: Can they easily access the value we offer?
- Expected Outcomes: Did we meet their needs?

By integrating customer insights into our development cycles, we ensure that both discovery and engineering work toward solving real problems.

Quad Track Agile (4-Way Agile)

Quad Track Agile is a step forward from dual-track agile, adding another layer of rigor to how we manage discovery and development. By splitting both discovery and engineering into distinct tracks, we gain a clearer understanding of the scope and workload involved, while leveraging data and AI to optimize our processes.

This framework doesn't mean creating four separate teams; it's about having a single team working across four parallel tracks:

- Consumer Research: Engaging with customers through surveys, interviews, and case studies.
- Hypothesis Testing & Validation: Using experimental design to validate assumptions.
- Development/Engineering: Building and releasing working software.
- Deployment/Delivery: Managing DevOps, automation, and continuous delivery.

The goal is to reduce time-to-market while maintaining alignment between customer needs and product development. Synchronizing these tracks allows for the efficient flow of validated ideas into development.

JTBD & OKRs

The Jobs to Be Done (JTBD) framework helps us understand the true needs behind customer behaviour. Rather than focusing on the product, we focus on the job the customer is trying to achieve. By uncovering unmet needs, we drive innovation and create value.

OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) are the framework we use to track progress and align efforts with strategic goals. Each quarter, we set clear objectives and measurable key results, ensuring that everything we do is aligned with the overall business strategy and customer value.

Value-Driven Decision Making

Prioritizing features based on their value to customers is key. We align these decisions with both JTBD and OKRs, ensuring that every feature we develop directly contributes to the customer's needs and the business's objectives.

Techniques like WSJF (Weighted Shortest Job First) and the 100 Dollar Test help us evaluate which features provide the highest value, enabling us to allocate resources efficiently and maximize impact.

AI-Augmented Decision Making

AI is transforming the product development process. From analysing customer feedback to automating tasks, AI empowers teams to work smarter and faster. By incorporating AI at various stages. Be it during research, design, development, testing, and DevOps. The aim is to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

AI can help us:

- Identify emerging customer needs
- Generate product ideas during discovery
- Automate repetitive tasks
- Personalize user experiences
- Predict potential bottlenecks

By leveraging AI-driven analytics and machine learning, we make better decisions and create more intelligent, responsive products.

Cross-Functional Collaboration

DeftAgile isn't just about Agile practices; it's about breaking down silos between teams. By fostering cross-functional collaboration, we ensure that discovery, engineering, and design teams are working as one cohesive unit. This eliminates handoffs, reduces dependencies, and accelerates product development.

We aim to integrate user research with technical feasibility, running experiments within iteration cycles to quickly validate or invalidate ideas. This approach makes us agile, responsive, and focused on continuous learning.

Spot & Solve Early

It's critical to identify and address impediments, bottlenecks, handoffs, and dependencies as soon as they arise. If left unchecked, these issues can slow down development and disrupt the flow of work. By fostering clear communication, collaboration, and continuous improvement, we ensure that our workflow remains optimized, and we stay on track to deliver high-value products.

Product managers and stakeholders should support product owners with the synchronisation of product backlogs with other teams.

Artifacts

The main focus of our artifacts is on outcomes for our customers, validation of hypotheses, data insights, experimentation, focusing on value, automation and time to market considerations.

- JTBD Statements
- Hypotheses Statements
- Value Proposition
- OKRs
- Metrics Dashboard
- AI Tools
- MVPs & Increments
- Visual Artifacts
- Test Plans (TDD)
- A Single Product Backlog

The following artifacts are essential for enabling high-performance across discovery and delivery. They enhance cross-functional collaboration, align around shared outcomes, and ensure that product development remains deeply user-centred and insight-driven.

1. Jobs To Be Done (JTBD) Statements

Why they matter: JTBD statements distil what users are really trying to achieve—beyond just interacting with features. They ground the team in outcome-driven thinking.

Strategic value:

- Anchor product strategy in real customer needs
- Clarify what “value” means to users and guide prioritization accordingly
- Inspire empathetic design and experimentation
- Reveal whitespace opportunities in the market

2. Hypothesis Statements

Why they matter: Hypotheses convert assumptions into testable predictions. They shift team thinking from certainty to curiosity.

Strategic value:

- Enable structured experimentation and learning
- Prioritise discovery efforts based on expected impact

- Reduce waste by validating ideas before scaling
- Foster a culture of data-informed decision-making

3. Value Proposition

Why it matters: A strong value proposition articulates your product's unique edge and the reason it exists, who it serves, and how it outperforms alternatives.

Strategic value:

- Focuses design and delivery on what differentiates the product
- Aligns product, marketing, and go-to-market strategies
- Helps teams evaluate if new features reinforce the core offering
- Drives messaging clarity and market relevance

4. Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)

Why they matter: OKRs translate vision into measurable outcomes. They create shared accountability across roles.

Strategic value:

- Offer a transparent framework for tracking progress
- Help teams focus on what really moves the needle
- Encourage adaptability and alignment across sprints
- Connect daily execution to long-term goals

5. Metrics Dashboard

Why it matters: Metrics dashboards provide visibility into how the product is performing in real time. More signal, less noise.

Strategic value:

- Empower decision-making based on live data
- Illuminate usage patterns and user satisfaction
- Surface leading indicators of risk or success
- Communicate impact clearly to stakeholders

6. AI Tools

Why they matter: AI capabilities unlock scale, precision, and speed—especially when paired with human judgment.

Strategic value:

- Surface actionable insights from complex datasets
- Enable hyper-personalized experiences
- Automate time-consuming or repetitive tasks
- Enhance test coverage, code quality, and predictive planning

7. MVPs & Increments

Why they matter: Minimum Viable Products validate ideas early. Increments ensure steady progress without overcommitting.

Strategic value:

- Accelerate learning cycles
- Ensure teams ship value continuously
- Avoid overinvestment in unproven solutions
- Provide a clear feedback loop between users and teams

8. Visual Artifacts

Why they matter: Diagrams, flows, and prototypes serve as shared mental models. They make ideas tactile and actionable.

Strategic value:

- Align cross-functional teams on experience and architecture
- Speed up decision-making with tangible references
- Improve communication between product, design, and engineering
- Support usability testing and stakeholder alignment

9. Test Plans (TDD & BDD)

Why they matter: Tests written before code lock in expectations early and provide confidence in every deploy.

Strategic value:

- Embed quality in every step of development
- Catch regressions before users do
- Serve as living documentation of intent and behaviour
- Reinforce modular, maintainable code design
- Strengthen discovery-delivery collaboration

10. One Unified Product Backlog

“All for one and one for all.”

Why it matters: One backlog, shared by discovery and engineering, is the single source of truth. It bridges innovation with execution.

Strategic value:

- Allows validated hypotheses and experiments to flow into development
- Keeps prioritisation aligned across disciplines
- Empowers delivery teams to confidently pull in high-impact work
- Maintains agility while staying focused on customer outcomes

- Purposeful Iteration - focus on a few features that will deliver high value to customers

Conclusion

These artifacts are not just checkboxes, they're conversation starters, alignment anchors, and decision-making accelerators. Together, they empower teams to work in flow: discovering value, validating ideas, and delivering impact at speed. When used intentionally, they make the difference between building features and building the right product.

DeftAgile Episodes (Events) and Seasons (Iterations)

"Every battle is won before it was fought"

(Art of War by Sun Tzu)

Agile	DeftAgile
<i>Iteration or Sprint</i>	Season
<i>Agile Team</i>	Circle
<i>Events, Ceremonies or Meetings</i>	Episodes

What are Seasons and Episodes?

Deft Episodes (Events) are a set of events that supports how Deft product teams to work together in a cohesive and organised way. They are the backbone of Deft's ways of working. It is all about making sure teams are achieving desired results for customers. Episode's main purpose is to coordinate and manage how the business, product and engineering teams plan, collaborate, communicate and deliver products and services. Each season has 4 main (events) episodes which are:

- Innovation Studio Session
- Innovation Planning Workshop
- Daily Check-ins
- Review & Retrospective

We apply both data and the use of AI as the rule rather than the exception throughout our events

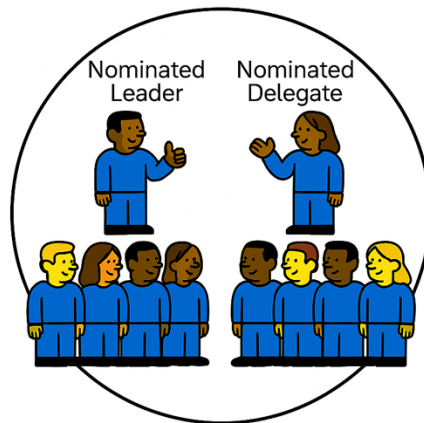
Deft Season (Iteration)

Let us delve a bit more into our iteration. This is where and when we turn validated hypotheses into an increment of value. Just like most agile frameworks, it is a timeboxed period that are anything between 1 week, 2 weeks or 4 weeks depending on the team's ability to get incremental value into the hands of either internal or external customers

We would like to make the case for the importance of availability. This is crucial for the success of Deft ways of working. The biggest challenge is getting the right people in the room especially SMEs and stakeholders who are required for specific (events) episodes that are intended to drive innovation and value forward.

Deft Circle (Team)

Deft Circle



DeftAgile Circle (Team)

Recognising that every organisation has its own operating model, DeftAgile is built around a team structure that seamlessly integrates discovery and delivery into one empowered unit. The goal? A versatile cross-functional circle capable of experimenting, innovating, and consistently delivering product-market fit solutions to bespoke customer needs. So, *what is a circle?* A sociocratic circle is a semi-autonomous, self-organising team within a organisation, responsible for a specific domain of work and linked to other circles by at least two members (a leader and a delegate) to ensure effective information flow and decision-making throughout the whole system

3 Core Roles in a Deft Circle

- Deft Team (Engineers, Designers, Data Scientists, AI Specialists)
- Iteration Manager / Facilitator
- Product Operations / Product Owner / Product Manager (Context-dependent)

1. Deft Team

This is the delivery powerhouse of the DeftAgile model. It's composed of engineers, designers, data scientists, and AI specialists who collaborate closely across the product lifecycle. From ideation to iteration, their focus is on creating meaningful, user-centric value which are powered by rapid feedback loops and a culture of experimentation.

Why it matters:

- Integrates diverse expertise into one delivery rhythm
- Builds features grounded in evidence, not assumption
- Enables fast feedback and continuous learning

2. Iteration Manager / Circle Facilitator

More than a Scrum Master. This role fuels team momentum by facilitating ceremonies, unblocking flow, and fostering a rhythm of sustainable delivery. They blend Agile facilitation with Lean adaptability to ensure every cycle is focused and efficient.

Why it matters:

- Cultivates psychological safety and continuous improvement
- Keeps the team aligned and velocity high
- Ensures delivery cadence doesn't sacrifice discovery

3. Product Operations / Product Owner / Product Manager

This is the strategic integrator. Whether playing a tactical PO role or broader PM role, this person connects business intent with user need and delivery execution. They manage scope, evolve the roadmap, and ensure the team's backlog is always pointed at the highest-value outcomes.

Why it matters:

- Acts as the team's voice of the customer and voice of the business
- Translates learning into roadmap signals
- Drives alignment from strategy to release

A Circle Built on Sociocratic Principles

DeftAgile teams are inspired by sociocratic design: self-managing circles that decentralize authority and elevate participation. Each Circle operates autonomously within its domain, using consent-based decision-making and shared accountability to guide the work.

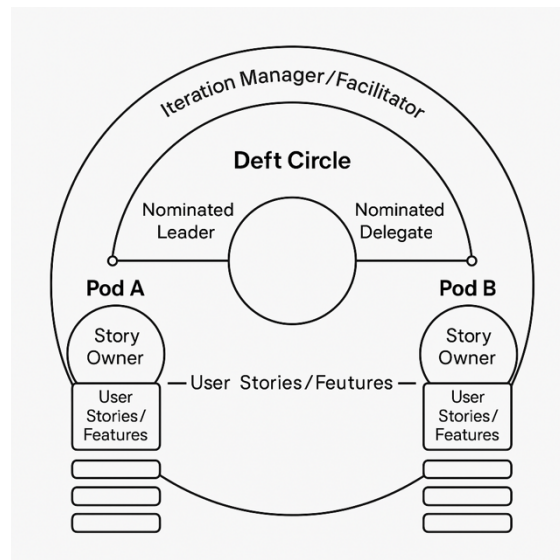
Key characteristics:

- **Cross-functional by default:** Skills are shaped around outcomes, not job titles
- **Double-linking:** Circles are connected via elected leaders and delegates to ensure two-way flow of context and intent
- **Inclusive governance:** All voices are heard, and policies are shaped collaboratively

Circle Roles in Sociocracy DeftAgile

- **Nominated Leader:** Oversees operations in the circle. He/she brings in strategic direction from the wider org; typically aligns with the Product Owner/Product Operation Manager (depending on your context) he is also the impediment buster.
- **Nominated Delegate:** Carries the team's perspective into broader forums. They are also expected to represent the circle in product operation meetings.
- **Story Owners(optional):** responsible for embedded micro-teams within the Circle, each focused on specific outcomes. They are often called upon to be involved in discovery activities. Their services are often required during Innovation Studio Sessions if the Circle (team) are too busy to attend.

Pods: Agility at Scale



Pods are autonomous sub-teams composed of developers, testers, designers, and a dedicated Story/Feature Owner. Each pod operates like a focused mini-squad, driving a discrete stream of work from end to end.

Pod Structure:

- 2–4 developers
- 1 QA or tester
- 1 designer or UX partner
- 1 Story/Feature Owner (acts as pod lead)

Strategic benefits:

- **Focus:** Tighter ownership over features or domains
- **Speed:** Lower coordination overhead, faster decision-making
- **Quality:** Deep domain expertise and clearer accountability
- **Ownership:** Story Owners champion outcomes, not just delivery

Story Owners: Distributed Accountability

A Story Owner takes end-to-end responsibility for a user story. They don't do all the work, but they ensure it moves forward—cleared, delivered, and validated.

Responsibilities:

1. **Clarification:** Ensure understanding and alignment with acceptance criteria
2. **Leadership:** Coordinate teammates in the pod for cohesive delivery
3. **Tracking:** Maintain story status and progress in the delivery tool
4. **Communication:** Surface blockers and align with stakeholders early

Impact:

Promotes individual accountability, accelerates throughput, and ensures user stories don't drift or stall. By embedding ownership into the pods, teams maintain clarity even in high-complexity environments.

Visualising a Deft Circle in Action:

Deft Circle

Pod A

└─ Story Owner → Set of User Stories/Features

Pod B

└─ Story Owner → Set of User Stories/Features

Each pod operates within the circle with shared purpose, supported by decentralised leadership and unified by product vision.

The DeftAgile Circle is more than a team, it is also a dynamic, self-managed unit designed to thrive in complexity. By blending sociocratic structure with Agile execution, it enables organisations to scale with autonomy, move with clarity, and innovate with integrity.

Circle team's full participation is expected during Innovation Studio Sessions, however due to deadlines or work spillovers. It might make sense for a pod within the team to attend those sessions whilst the other pod continues with iteration objectives. This practice should be kept to the minimum, as we expect the entire team to be present for both Innovation sessions and innovation planning workshops

The 3 Vs of Innovation

At DeftAgile, innovation isn't a buzzword—it's a working principle. It powers how we design, deliver, and adapt. Whether we're refining product features, imagining the next frontier, or exploring new ventures, innovation underpins our every move.

We define innovation as the intentional, experimental implementation of ideas—fuelling both incremental improvements and transformative shifts. It's about delivering greater value in an ever-evolving market, and enhancing user experiences by thinking one step ahead.

Our early flagship formats—Innovation Studio Sessions and Product Experiments in Practice—are built on this philosophy. And in the words of Kevin Dame (UX Director at YouTube), innovation breaks down into three distinct but interwoven modes: Versioning, Visioning, and Venturing.

Versioning: Evolving the Now

Versioning is the discipline of deliberate, incremental change—building on what works. It's iterative by nature, rooted in user feedback, and tuned for continuous value delivery. From agile retrospectives to incremental release cycles, this mode is core to managing brownfield products.

Think bug fixes, UX enhancements, feature rollouts. It's not about disrupting markets—it's about making your product indispensably better with every sprint.

Visioning: Envisioning the Next

Visioning is strategic foresight made real. It asks, where are we going—and what might the world look like when we get there? This mode challenges assumptions, reframes possibilities, and fuels paradigm-shifting innovations.

It's where strategy meets imagination. Apple's focus on experience design or Google's pursuit of ambient computing are visioning in action—shaping futures we didn't know we needed, but now can't live without.

Venturing: Exploring the Unknown

Venturing extends beyond the core business to explore adjacent or brand-new opportunities. It's about experimentation at the edges—partnering, prototyping, and investing in unproven but high-potential ideas.

Picture Google's Project Loon—helium balloons delivering internet to remote regions. Born from Google X, it's a classic venture move: high risk, potentially world-changing reward.

Venturing thrives on cross-pollination and external collaboration. It's how mature orgs stay agile, and how startups punch above their weight.

By integrating all three Vs into our approach, DeftAgile empowers teams to innovate with purpose—balancing short-term improvements with long-term bets. It's not just about doing things differently; it's about doing the right things, differently.

Connecting The 3 Vs of Innovation to DeftAgile's Product Strategy

Let's connect the 3 Vs of Innovation directly to DeftAgile's product strategy, focusing on how they inform decision-making, delivery rhythms, and experimentation across the portfolio. Think of this as an innovation operating model that flexes between sustaining improvements and bold transformation.

Versioning → Operational Excellence in Product Delivery

Strategy Fit: Anchors our commitment to continuous improvement, Agile delivery, and customer-centric iteration.

How DeftAgile Applies It:

- Embedding regular retrospectives and feedback loops in all teams.
- Prioritising backlog refinement and technical debt reduction to ensure sustainable velocity.
- Leveraging A/B testing and usage analytics to fine-tune product-market fit.

Example Tactics:

- Introduce rolling-release roadmaps.
- Use low-risk MVP updates to validate small improvements.
- Evolve team topologies using sociocratic sensing and consent-based feedback.

Visioning → Strategic Design for Future Value

Strategy Fit: Informs north-star planning, innovation studio sessions, and long-term differentiation.

How DeftAgile Applies It:

- Facilitating quarterly “Visioning Labs” where teams co-create future scenarios and product concepts.
- Mapping opportunity spaces using systems thinking and horizon planning.
- Aligning vision work with organizational OKRs to anchor ambition in outcomes.

Example Tactics:

- Apply speculative design to imagine new value networks.
- Create visual futures maps to align stakeholders.
- Develop foresight-informed innovation themes that guide upcoming cycles.

Venturing → Accelerated Exploration & Growth Beyond the Core

Strategy Fit: Supports growth, resilience, and ecosystem expansion through partnerships and sandboxing.

How DeftAgile Applies It:

- Launching “Discovery Pods” to test adjacent opportunities or new value propositions.
- Engaging with external innovators through incubator programs or venture partnerships.
- Championing bold bets with dedicated investment and time-boxed exploration.

Example Tactics:

- Run lean canvases for experimental ventures.
- Define a venture playbook with governance guidelines.
- Pilot solutions with targeted user groups in low-risk environments.

DeftAgile Episodes (Events) & Seasons (Iterations)

"Every battle is won before it was fought"

(Art of War by Sun Tzu)

What are Deft Seasons and Episodes?

A **Deft season** is a timeboxed period that serves as a container for all Deft episodes, providing structure and focus throughout the product development cycle.

- **Agile → DeftAgile**
- **Iteration or Sprint → Season**
- **Agile Team → Circle**
- **Events, Ceremonies, or Meetings → Episodes**

Deft episodes are a collection of meetings designed to facilitate teamwork and alignment, ensuring that teams collaborate cohesively and efficiently. These episodes form the backbone of Deft’s ways of working, ensuring teams stay focused on delivering the right value to customers. Each episode plays a crucial role in coordinating how business, product, and engineering teams plan, collaborate, communicate, and deliver products and services. Seasons, or iterations, hold these episodes together, helping teams break down large tasks into manageable, timebound goals.

Deft Season (Iteration)

A Deft season, or iteration, is where validated hypotheses are transformed into product increments that provide measurable value. Our iterations can vary in length from 1 to 4 weeks, depending on the team's capability to deliver incremental value to either internal or external customers.

Each season includes 4 key episodes:

1. **Innovation Studio Session**
2. **Innovation Planning Workshop**
3. **Daily Check-ins**
4. **Review & Retrospective**

The success of DeftAgile hinges on the availability of the right stakeholders, including subject matter experts (SMEs). Having the right people in the room for these episodes is critical to driving innovation and delivering value. A defining feature of DeftAgile is the integration of AI and data throughout the product lifecycle, which supports innovation and decision-making across all episodes.

Innovation (Experimentation) Studio Sessions

Bridging Discovery & Delivery Together (*Divergence & Convergence*)

Innovation Studio Sessions are highly structured, timeboxed events aimed at sparking creativity and accelerating collaboration. These sessions bring together discovery and delivery teams in a focused environment where they can explore innovative ideas, rapidly prototype solutions, and validate high-potential opportunities.

The sessions emphasize lean innovation practices, incorporating insights from users, technical feasibility, and business viability. Teams engage in divergent thinking, prototype development, and iterative testing to reduce uncertainty and speed up the learning process.

Key Advantages

- **No Handoffs:** Discovery and delivery teams collaborate directly, ensuring alignment and seamless communication.
- **Continuous Collaboration:** Both discovery and delivery activities overlap, allowing teams to work in parallel and make faster decisions.
- **Short Feedback Loops:** Prototypes are quickly tested and refined, reducing the risk of missteps.

This episode sets the tone for the entire iteration cycle by energizing the team, fostering collaboration, and focusing on value-driven outcomes.

Key Activities

- Define the problem space or strategic opportunity.
- Use tools like **How Might We** questions or **Opportunity Solution Trees** to guide exploration.
- Engage in structured ideation techniques (e.g., **Crazy 8s**, **Brainwriting**, **Lightning Decision Jams**).
- Align on the most promising ideas to move forward.

- Translate ideas into actionable backlog items.

Innovation Planning Workshop

"If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions"

(Albert Einstein)

Unlike traditional iteration planning meetings, DeftAgile's Innovation Planning Workshop is a collaborative, creative session that brings together product operations, engineering teams, and SMEs. Rather than focusing solely on the "why", "what", and "how", DeftAgile takes it a step further. This workshop allows teams to bring validated ideas into visual form, including wireframes, prototypes, and data-driven plans. AI plays a significant role in this process, helping teams to experiment, innovate, and visualise iteration goals more effectively. This workshop is outcome focused, meaning, by the end there must be an evolving end to end solution. The idea is to create an early prototype of a potentially shippable product that can be reviewed before the end of the iteration.

Iteration Types

- **3/7 Iteration:** A 2-week iteration comprising a 3-day Innovation Planning Workshop and a 7-day development cycle.
- **5/15 Iteration:** A 4-week iteration comprising a 5-day Innovation Planning Workshop and a 15-day development cycle.

Advantages

- **Two Feedback Loops:** In a 2-week iteration, stakeholders have two opportunities to review progress: once during the planning workshop and again after the development cycle. *Why two?* **(1)** a quick showcase of an end-to-end evolving solution and **(2)** during the review
- **Three Feedback Loops:** In a 4-week iteration, stakeholders have three opportunities to review progress, enabling continuous alignment with the product vision. *Why three?* **(1)** is reviewing the outcome of the innovation planning workshop **(2)** and at the end of the iteration which is the Iteration review. **(3)** this is usually at the end of the second week at of the iteration. This is to make sure that there would be no surprises that might derail the delivery of the iteration goal. The shorter the feedback loop for a 4-week sprint, the better.

Remember: This is for the sole purpose of notifying stakeholders of the work in progress or done. This is usually done during the daily check-ins.

AI accelerates development by automating tasks such as code generation, testing, and debugging. This allows teams to focus more on creative work rather than repetitive tasks.

Innovation Iteration Planning Example (Ecommerce)

The goal of an **Innovation Iteration Planning** session is to develop a functional MVP or prototype within a few days. Teams use AI tools to accelerate prototyping, and the final output can evolve into a shippable product increment.

During the session, cross-functional teams collaborate to prototype core e-commerce features, using AI tools to speed up tasks like content generation, image optimization, and even basic UI/UX design. This ensures that stakeholders can review the evolving solution, providing valuable feedback before full development begins.

Target Features for MVP

- Product browsing
- Product details
- Basic shopping cart functionality
- Checkout process (simplified)

Daily Check-ins

"The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation"

(Agile Manifesto, Principle 6)

Daily Check-ins focus on progress toward the iteration goal, addressing any obstacles or impediments. A key practice is **walking the board**, where teams review work items and collectively discuss how to overcome blockers. This approach promotes transparency, collaboration, and accountability.

Key Benefits of Walking the Board

- **Focus on Team Progress:** Shifts the attention from individual updates to the team's collective goal.
- **Visual Management:** Using a task board ensures nothing is overlooked, fostering a culture of accountability.
- **Improved Collaboration:** Team members can help each other by addressing blockers collaboratively.

Iteration Review & Retrospective

Iteration Review

Purpose: Evaluate the team's work, celebrate wins, and ensure the value delivered aligns with stakeholder needs.

- **Kick-off:** A quick round of "What went well" to set a positive tone.
- **Showcase:** Present the completed work and invite feedback.
- **Honest Reflection:** Discuss any missed goals or obstacles faced during the iteration.
- **Feedback Loop:** Gather feedback from stakeholders, using it to update the product backlog.

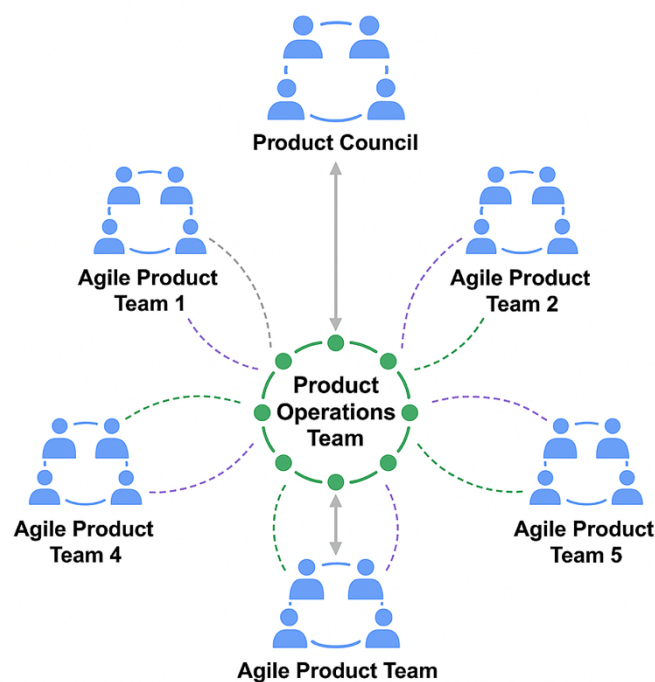
Retrospective

Purpose: Reflect on the team's processes and interactions, pinpointing areas for improvement.

- **Set the Stage:** Establish a safe environment for honest feedback.
- **Gather Insights:** Use engaging exercises like **Start, Stop, Continue** to reflect on the iteration.
- **Actionable Steps:** Identify key improvements for the next iteration.
- **Wrap-up:** Summarize the discussion and appreciate everyone's input.

By incorporating these practices into DeftAgile's iterative cycles, Cycle teams ensure continuous learning and improvement, while maintaining alignment with the broader product vision.

Scaling DeftAgile



DeftAgile Scaled Product Framework (Sociocratic Model)

Deft has adopted a sociocratic, double-linking hierarchy model which is the fundamental practice for connecting different levels of an organisation. It's how adjacent circles (the equivalent of teams or departments) are linked, ensuring smooth communication and effective decision-making. Our scaling product model are centred around product category groupings that shares common characteristics (attributes), functions or target audiences

This linking is achieved through two key roles:

- **Leader (or it could be the Facilitator):** This individual is a full member of both their own circle and the circle directly above or below it. They typically guide the discussions and processes within their own circle while also bringing information and decisions to the linked circle.

- Delegate: The delegate is also a full member of both their own circle and the linked circle. Their primary role is to represent the voice and concerns of their circle to the linked circle, ensuring that information flows upwards and downwards effectively.

This dual connection creates a powerful feedback loop, preventing circles from operating in isolation. It fosters transparency, promotes shared understanding, and helps maintain the organization's overall coherence.

Core Principles

- Sociocracy: Semi-autonomous but interconnected circles (teams) joined through roles and double linking to ensure joint ownership and alignment.
- Customer Centricity: Delivery of customer value is given top priority at all levels with fast and reliable delivery.
- Product Thinking at Scale: Outcome-based teams are responsible for outcomes, not outputs, across working layers.

1. Agile Product Teams (Delivery Circles)

- Structure: Deft Team members (Engineers, Designers, Data Scientists, AI Specialists), Iteration Manager, and local Product Owner or Manager.
- Focus: Deliver product increments in continuous cycles tied to OKRs and customer feedback.
- Autonomy: Each team owns a domain or product vertical, with full-stack capabilities and decision-making authority on backlog items.
- Double Linking: Each team nominates a representative (most often the Product Owner or a rotating team representative) to the Product Operations circle.

2. Product Operations Team (Coordination Circle)

- Role: A connective, enabling circle facilitating cross-team alignment, strategic prioritization, metrics synthesis, and experimentation enablement.
- Membership: Representatives from Agile Product Teams + Platform, DataOps, Researches, and Business Ops specialists.
- Functions:
 - a) product operations teams help addressing issues like dependencies, impediments, bottlenecks and handoffs as well as removing obstacles that might otherwise stand in the way of progress.
 - b) Align team-level roadmaps to company-level OKRs.
 - c) Share discovery insights across teams.
 - d) Ensure tooling, metrics, governance, and experimentation frameworks are reusable and standardised.
 - e) Steward customer journey continuity across products.

3. Product Council (Strategic Circle)

- Role: Strategy-setting, vision-alignment, and governance circle.
- Membership: Heads of Product, Senior Designers, Marketing, CX leaders, and elected representatives from the Product Operations Team, Engineering (Circle Representatives), Sales and relevant stakeholders.
- Responsibilities:
 - a) Strategic Direction: The Product Council is responsible for the strategic direction, value proposition and the vision of the product portfolio. This involves making decisions on product prioritisation, development, and enhancement while ensuring alignment with the company's broader business goals.
 - b) Resource Allocation: The council is responsible for allocating necessary resources and investments to various product initiatives. This ensures that the most critical projects receive adequate support to succeed.
 - c) Oversight and Review: Regular meetings allow the council to review ongoing product strategies, assess performance, and make adjustments as necessary. This oversight helps streamline decision-making processes, making them more efficient and less burdensome
 - d) Cascade context and adjust constraints—not dictating solutions.
 - e) Empower Product Operations and Agile Teams with autonomy within the strategic frame.

Decision-Making Flow

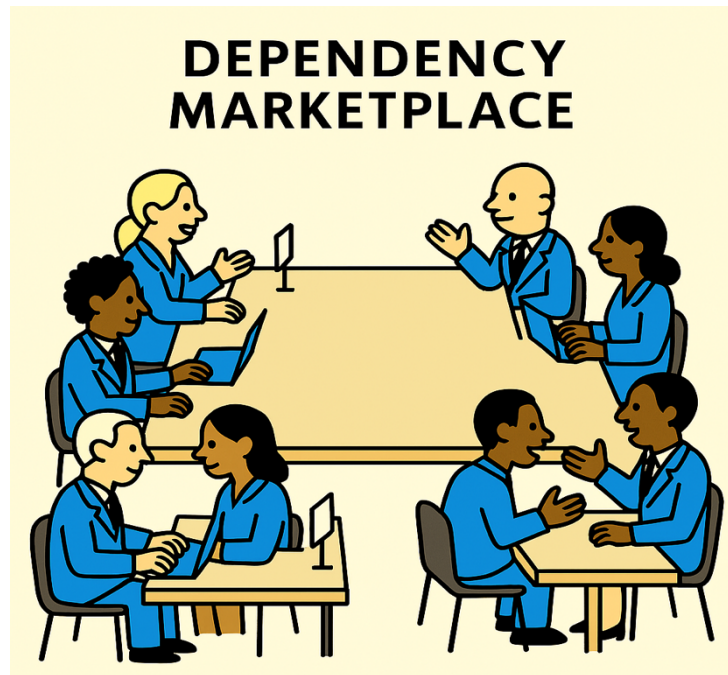
- Consent-based Decisions: All levels operate on sociocratic consent, not consensus. Objections are valued as learning opportunities.
- Double-Linking Structure:
 - a) Representatives link each circle upward and downward to maintain flow of context, needs, and feedback.
- Cadence:
 - a. Agile Teams: Bi-weekly sprints or flow-based iterations.
 - b. Product Operations: Monthly syncs and weekly touchpoints.
 - c. Product Council: Quarterly strategy reviews and OKR reviews.

Example Use Cases

Scenario	Agile Product Team	Product Operations	Product Council
<i>Launch new AI recommendation feature</i>	<i>Prototype, test with users</i>	<i>Enable shared algorithm access and compliance reviews</i>	<i>Align with personalisation vision and customer strategy</i>
<i>Customer churn insights across teams</i>	<i>Analyse and experiment on retention patterns</i>	<i>Coordinate cohort analysis and intervention patterns</i>	<i>Decide on strategic retention levers</i>

Scenario	Agile Product Team	Product Operations	Product Council
Scaling design system usage	Implement components in-app	Maintain shared Figma libraries and usage guidelines	Invest in DesignOps capacity and cohesion strategy

The Dependency Marketplace (Speed Dating)



The Dependency Marketplace is an agile practice designed to proactively manage and resolve dependencies between teams, especially in complex, cross-functional environments. It provides a structured forum where teams can identify, communicate, and collaboratively resolve interdependencies. This practice fosters transparency and reduces bottlenecks that could hinder delivery.

Key Features of a Dependency Marketplace:

1. **Structured Meeting or Event:** The Dependency Marketplace is typically scheduled periodically (e.g., bi-weekly or monthly) or during key planning phases, such as PI Planning in SAFe or Sprint Planning in Scrum.
2. **Participating Teams:** Cross-functional teams, including product, engineering, DevOps, QA, and other stakeholders, come together to identify and resolve dependencies.
3. **Marketplace Concept:**
 - Teams offer services, expertise, or resources that can help unblock others.
 - Teams also request support, resources, or deliverables they need to progress their work.
4. **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Teams work together to negotiate timelines, responsibilities, and solutions for identified dependencies.

How it Works:

1. Dependency Identification:

- Each team prepares a list of dependencies before the marketplace event. These could be technical, resource-based, or process-related.
- Dependencies are categorized (e.g., blockers, critical, non-critical) for prioritisation.

2. Presentation and Discussion:

- Teams present their dependencies in a shared forum.
- Other teams assess if they can help resolve these dependencies or negotiate timelines for delivery.

3. Prioritisation and Agreement:

- Dependencies are prioritised based on their impact on the product's delivery or customer outcomes.
- Teams align on action items, owners, and deadlines for resolving each dependency.

4. Follow-Up and Tracking:

- Action items from the marketplace are tracked in a shared tool (e.g., Jira, Azure DevOps).
- Progress is reviewed during regular stand-ups or retrospectives.

Value of the Dependency Marketplace:

1. **Transparency:** Teams gain visibility into cross-functional needs, reducing surprises during development.
2. **Efficiency:** Proactively managing dependencies minimises delays caused by misalignment or bottlenecks.
3. **Collaboration:** Encourages open communication and teamwork across product discovery and engineering teams.
4. **Accountability:** Clear ownership and deadlines ensure dependencies are resolved promptly.

Example:

- Team A needs API access from Team B to develop a new feature.
- Team B offers a delivery timeline but also highlights that they need infrastructure support from Team C.
- All three teams collaborate in the marketplace to adjust timelines and align dependencies, ensuring smooth progress.

In essence, the Dependency Marketplace turns dependency management into a collaborative and transparent process, fostering alignment across teams while minimizing risks and delays.

Other Meeting & Workshops

Our meeting and workshops are designed with the purpose of facilitating collaboration between product, business and delivery teams, but mainly focusing on discovery and development. We believe that it is the responsibility of strategic teams to meet frequently so that they can provide guidance to tactical teams, which in turn allow focus mainly on the creation of product and services without being distracted by counterproductive meetings. It is important to stress on the point that meetings and workshops are largely dependent on organisational needs. DeftAgile are not in the business of prescribing any type of meetings. However, we implore tailoring them according to organisational structure, culture and skills available. Below are some examples of meetings that will help organisations to move from ideas down the value streams into finished products

1. Circle (*Discovery-Delivery Teams*)

These are feature or solution-focused pods responsible for day-to-day product discovery and delivery.

Meeting	Purpose
Discovery–Development Sync	Ensure alignment between discovery insights and development planning.
Hypothesis Validation Workshop	Cross-functional testing of hypotheses, integrating product, design, data.
Jobs-To-Be-Done Alignment	Clarify target customer needs and ensure JTBD understanding is shared.
AI Experimentation Lab	Conduct rapid prototyping/testing using AI tools (e.g. predictive models).

Focus: tactical alignment, validation, lean execution

2. Product Operations Team

The coordination and enablement hub that ensures data, insights, processes, and tools flow efficiently between teams and the council.

Meeting	Purpose
Metrics Alignment Meeting (MAM)	Review current metrics across teams and align them with initiative goals.
Hypothesis Review and Planning (HRP)	Assess and prioritise hypotheses for experimentation across circles.
AI-Driven Insights Session	Aggregate learnings from AI models and experiments for strategic alignment.

Meeting	Purpose
Metrics Alignment & OKR/KPI Meeting	Connect individual circle performance to broader strategic OKRs and KPIs.

Dependency Marketplace

Focus: operational insight, orchestration, cross-team synergy

3. Product Council

Strategic circle composed of leads and double-linked representatives. They ensure vision alignment and guardrails for product-market fit and organizational outcomes.

Meeting	Purpose
Product–Market Fit Review	Validate whether solutions align with user needs and business outcomes.
Value Mapping Product–Market Meeting	Strategic mapping of feature value to user and market segments.

Focus: strategic fit, organisational prioritisation, value assurance

In this stage, you will formulate hypotheses about your product and its potential impact on users. These hypotheses are then tested through experiments and user feedback. There are many ways of validating hypothesis. It could involve creating a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), A/B testing, or a prototype and then, measuring its performance, and learning from the results to refine the product.

Hypothesis Statements and Validation Examples

Persona Hypothesis

“We believe that our primary persona, ‘Busy Professionals,’ aged 25-45, who value convenience and efficiency, will prefer a streamlined checkout process with minimal steps and multiple payment options.”

Validation Steps:

1. User Interviews and Surveys: Conduct interviews and surveys with your target demographic to understand their preferences and pain points regarding the checkout process.
2. A/B Testing: Implement different versions of the checkout process (streamlined vs. traditional) and measure the conversion rates and user satisfaction.
3. Analytics: Use website analytics to track the behaviour of users in the target age group during the checkout process. Look for drop-off rates and completion times.

JTBD/Problem Hypothesis

"We believe that our users hire our e-commerce platform to quickly find and purchase high-quality products at competitive prices, solving their need for a reliable and efficient shopping experience."

Validation Steps:

1. Customer Feedback: Collect feedback through reviews, surveys, and customer support interactions to understand if users find the platform reliable and efficient.
2. Usage Data: Analyse usage data to see how quickly users are finding and purchasing products. Track metrics like time spent on site and number of clicks to purchase.
3. Competitive Analysis: Compare your platform's performance and user satisfaction with competitors to ensure you are meeting user expectations for quality and price.

Usability Hypothesis

"We believe that by simplifying our website's navigation and improving the search functionality, users will be able to find products 30% faster, leading to a 20% increase in conversion rates."

Validation Steps:

1. Usability Testing: Conduct usability tests with real users to observe how they navigate the site and use the search functionality. Measure the time taken to find products.
2. Heatmaps and Click Tracking: Use tools like heatmaps and click tracking to see where users are clicking and how they navigate through the site.
3. A/B Testing: Test different versions of the navigation and search functionality to see which one leads to faster product discovery and higher conversion rates.

Demand/Value Hypothesis

"We believe that offering a subscription service with exclusive discounts and early access to new products will increase customer retention by 25% and generate a 15% increase in monthly revenue."

Validation Steps:

1. Pilot Program: Launch a pilot subscription service to a small segment of your user base and track retention rates and revenue.
2. Surveys and Feedback: Collect feedback from subscribers to understand the perceived value of the service and any areas for improvement.
3. Cohort Analysis: Perform cohort analysis to compare the retention and revenue metrics of subscribers vs. non-subscribers over time.

DevOps Hypothesis

"We believe that implementing a continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD) pipeline will reduce our deployment time by 50% and decrease the number of post-release bugs by 40%, leading to a more stable and reliable e-commerce platform."

Validation Steps:

1. Baseline Metrics: Establish baseline metrics for deployment time and post-release bugs before implementing CI/CD.

2. **CI/CD Implementation:** Implement the CI/CD pipeline and track the same metrics over time to measure improvements.
3. **Post-Deployment Monitoring:** Use monitoring tools to track the stability and performance of the platform after deployments. Look for reductions in downtime and bug reports.

Maximising AI to Supercharge DeftAgile's Product Pipeline/Lifecycle for E-commerce & SaaS

At DeftAgile, we understand that the key to delivering exceptional products lies in the ability to innovate quickly, validate ideas with precision, and adapt seamlessly to customer needs. That's why we leverage AI across every stage of our product pipeline, ensuring that our teams make data-driven decisions that drive real results. Here's how AI transforms each phase of the lifecycle for e-commerce and SaaS platforms:

1. Innovation Studio Session (Ideation & Concept Generation)

AI Tools: Sentiment Analysis, Predictive Analytics, Trend Forecasting

Why It Matters:

The first step in creating great products is identifying opportunities that truly matter to customers. With AI, you can go beyond traditional brainstorming. Tools like Monkey Learn enable sentiment analysis to pinpoint customer emotions from reviews and social media, allowing your team to discover unmet needs and emerging trends. By leveraging predictive analytics, you're not just reacting to the market; you're anticipating where it's heading, ensuring you're always a step ahead.

2. Innovation Iteration Planning (Strategic Alignment & Roadmapping)

AI Tools: Natural Language Processing (NLP), AI-Powered Roadmapping, Feature Prioritisation Models

Why It Matters:

Aligning your team's efforts with business goals is essential to delivering value. AI tools like ClearBrain analyse customer data to highlight the most pressing needs, allowing your team to prioritize features that will truly make an impact. By using NLP to mine customer feedback, your roadmap becomes more than just a set of goals—it becomes a precise action plan driven by actual user demands, ensuring your efforts are perfectly aligned with market needs.

3. Daily Check-In & Review (Progress Monitoring & Issue Detection)

AI Tools: Real-Time Analytics Dashboards, Anomaly Detection, Predictive Models

Why It Matters:

In today's fast-paced environment, staying on top of progress is crucial. AI-driven tools like Google Analytics or Amplitude provide real-time insights into how your product is performing, alerting you to issues like a sudden drop in conversions or engagement. These AI models not only detect anomalies but predict potential roadblocks before they happen, allowing your team to act quickly and keep projects on track.

4. Customer Research & Hypothesis Testing (Data-Driven Validation)

AI Tools: A/B Testing, Cohort Analysis, Personalization Algorithms

Why It Matters:

Effective product development requires constant validation. AI tools like Optimizely help you test hypotheses and make data-backed decisions on what really drives value for your customers. Whether it's testing a new feature on your e-commerce site or experimenting with a SaaS onboarding process, AI helps you quickly understand what works and what doesn't. Cohort analysis tools like CleverTap segment users by behaviour, enabling more targeted testing and faster iteration, so you can validate assumptions and get to market faster.

5. Retrospective (Continuous Improvement & Learning)

AI Tools: Sentiment Analysis, Performance Analytics, Workflow Automation

Why It Matters:

In Agile, improvement is a continuous journey. AI empowers your retrospectives by providing actionable insights from customer feedback and team performance data. Tools like Zendesk can analyse support tickets, identifying recurring issues that need attention, while sentiment analysis tools like SurveyMonkey gauge overall customer satisfaction. By tapping into these insights, your team can continuously optimize both the product and the processes that drive it, ensuring each iteration is better than the last.

The DeftAgile Advantage: Why AI is a Game Changer

AI isn't just a buzzword at DeftAgile; it's a core part of how we enable our teams to create customer-centric, high-impact products with speed and precision. By integrating AI at every stage of the product lifecycle—whether it's generating innovative ideas, testing assumptions, or refining processes—we ensure that our teams make smarter, faster decisions. This AI-driven approach empowers product managers and Agile experts to stay ahead of the curve, deliver on customer expectations, and continually enhance product performance.

If you want to take your product pipeline to the next level, leveraging AI isn't optional. It's essential. At DeftAgile, we make it simple, actionable, and incredibly powerful.

Applying Customer Data to DeftAgile Episodes (Events) for Data-Driven Decisions

To make data-driven decisions in Agile iterations, customer data (e.g., behaviour analytics, feedback, A/B tests) should directly influence Innovation Iteration Planning, Daily Check Ins, Iteration Review, and Retrospective. Below is an example using our fictitious e-commerce site.

1. Innovation Iteration Planning (Using Historical & Real-Time Data)

Data Used:

- Conversion rates: Only 30% of users who add items to cart complete checkout.
- Heatmaps: Users abandon carts at the shipping options page.
- Customer surveys: Complaints about unclear delivery costs.

Iteration Goal:

"Reduce cart abandonment by streamlining the checkout process, starting with shipping cost transparency."

Iteration Backlog:

- Redesign checkout to show shipping costs upfront (A/B test two versions).
- Add a progress bar to indicate checkout steps.
- Fix a bug causing slow loading on the payment page (from past iteration's performance data).

2. Daily Check-ins (Tracking Iteration Metrics)

Data Discussed:

- A/B Test Progress: Version A (shipping costs upfront) has a 12% lower abandonment rate than Version B (costs at the end).
- Performance Metrics: Payment page load time improved from 4s → 1.5s after bug fix.
- Customer Support Tickets: 20% decrease in "unexpected shipping cost" complaints since the change.

Adjustments Made:

- Pivot fully to Version A of checkout.
- Dev team allocates time to further optimise mobile checkout.

3. Iteration Review (Validating Outcomes with Data)

Results Presented:

- Cart abandonment dropped from 70% → 58% after shipping cost transparency.
- Conversion rate increased by 8% for users seeing Version A.
- Negative Feedback: Some users want more payment options (from post-checkout surveys).

Next Steps:

- Prioritise adding PayPal & Apple Pay in the next iteration.
- Investigate why mobile conversions lag behind desktop.

4. Retrospective (Improving Based on Data)

Important Bits:

- Cycle Time: Checkout redesign took 20% longer than estimated due to unexpected UI conflicts.
- Customer Sentiment: Net Promoter Score (NPS) improved from +32 → +41.
- Missed Opportunity: Didn't analyse returning vs. new user behaviour differences.

Actionable Improvements:

- Break UI tasks into smaller stories next iteration.
- Segment data by user type (new vs. returning) in future tests.

Example of Iteration (Season) Data of our fictitious e commerce website

Metrics	Before Iteration	After Iteration	Change
Cart Abandonment Rate	70%	58%	▼ 12%
Avg Checkout Time	4.2 min	3.1min	▼ 26%
Mobile Conversion	1.8%	2.1%	▲ 16%
NPS Score	+32	+41	▲ 9 pts

Innovation Iteration Data Checklist Template

A structured guide to embed customer data into every Iteration event for e-commerce teams

Iteration Phase	Data-Driven Actions	Tools/Metrics
Innovation Iteration Planning	a) Review GA4 funnel drop-offs to prioritise backlog. b) Set iteration goals based on A/B test results (e.g., "Reduce cart abandonment by 10%")	Google Analytics, Hotjar, Amplitude
Daily Check Ins	a) Share real-time metrics (e.g., "Checkout load time increased to 3s—investigate!"). b) Adjust tasks based on experiment progress (e.g., "Variant B improves conversions by 8%").	Slack alerts, Looker Studio dashboards
Iteration Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present statistically significant results (e.g., "New shipping calculator reduced support tickets by 20%"). • Segment data by user type (new vs. returning). 	A/B testing tools (Optimizely), SQL queries
Retrospective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse cycle time vs. estimates (e.g., "UI tasks took 30% longer due to unplanned dependencies"). • Review qualitative feedback (e.g., NPS changes) 	Jira, Zendesk tickets

Airbnb's Data-Driven Iteration Approach Case Study

How Airbnb embedded data into Agile workflows to scale decision-making:

1. Cross-Functional Data Teams

- a. Tactic: Embedded data scientists in Iteration teams (e.g., pricing algorithm engineer paired with product managers).
- b. Impact: Improved host acceptance rates by 4% through real-time A/B tests on ranking algorithms.

2. Hypothesis-Driven Experiments

Example: Tested "hearts vs. stars" for Wishlist's—simple UI change increased engagement by 30%.

Process:

- a. Define metrics upfront (e.g., "Increase guest bookings by 15%").
- b. Run small-scale tests before full rollout.

3. Balancing Data with Creativity

Philosophy: "Data-informed, not data-driven".

Used qualitative insights (e.g., host interviews) to compliment A/B tests (e.g., professional photography program doubled bookings).

4. Scaling Trust with Data

- a. Trust Signals: Verified IDs and reviews increased bookings by 12%.
- b. Tool: Built internal dashboards to monitor host/guest behaviour trends.

5. Outcomes

- a. Growth: 4M hosts, 1.4B guests by 2023.
- b. Diversity: Blind hiring experiments doubled female hires.

Conclusion

By embedding customer data into each Iteration event in our e commerce website, decisions are grounded in real user behaviour—not assumptions. The next Iteration could focus on mobile optimisation and payment options, continuing the cycle of data-driven improvement.

Integrating customer data into DeftAgile Episodes is more than just about improving products—it's about making every decision more informed, more relevant, and more aligned with real customer needs. By grounding each stage of the lifecycle in data-driven hypotheses, we ensure that our product teams are working with the best possible insights at every moment.

This approach doesn't just give product managers and Agile teams confidence in their decisions—it accelerates the product development process, improves user satisfaction, and drives measurable business outcomes. Whether you're refining a feature or validating a new idea, applying customer data ensures you're always on the right path.

At DeftAgile, we don't just innovate; we innovate with purpose—using customer data to guide every decision and deliver true value.

Further Readings

Airbnb's Data Culture (<https://d3.harvard.edu/platform-digit/submission/airbnb-data-informed-decision-making/>)

Iteration Planning Tools (<https://asana.com/templates/sprint-planning>)

<https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/double-linked-hierarchy.html>