

INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE CROSS-TEAM PROJECTS

...or practical tips and learnings from a cross-team project

HI, I AM TOBI



Personal

1. Actually I am a 🧑 boy
2. Living in Vienna for 4+ years
3. Spent half my life 🏀ing too little 🎸
4. I watch cooking shows at 🍲
5. I ⚖ coffee my the milligram

Work

1. Worked at commercetools for 7 years 🦕 - remotely 4 and onsite 3
2. Technical at ❤️ and focusing on Frontend Architecture across teams
3. Focus more and more on organisation wide initiatives

AN INNOCENT DAY AT WORK

*“You have to perform a
redesign on our main interface
in two months!”*

Somebody in November 2022

WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY BUILDING

commercetools provides the leading composable commerce platform

The screenshots illustrate the core features of the commercetools platform:

- Metric Overview:** Total products (2.34.567.890.123.45), Total orders (58632), Total product discounts (58632).
- Dashboard Metrics:** Published (1525), Modified (1525), Unpublished (1525). Options to View products, View all orders, and View cart discounts.
- Product Performance:** Top 4 products by revenue for August (Coat Brunello Cucinelli cream, SKU: M0E2000000DQR5, Revenue: €1,046,662.50, No. sold: 542).
- Composable Commerce:** Tailor products for each market, brand or country.
- Tips for You:** Three tips related to product management and integration.
- Change History:** A log of changes made to entities in the 'Sunrise demo project' by users like Sophia Ramirez and Andrew Proft, showing actions like Add attribute definition, Delete item, Change product count, and Change geo location.

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTEXT

...technical and organisationally

30+ Contributors
- Contributions may vary by person and temporal

10 teams
- EMs and PMs
- UI/UX Designers

Design System

- Adoption varies
- Released independently

Project

Quarterly roadmap
- Never dies

Head of Product
- ...and beyond

Business critical tooling
- Users rely on the functionality

14 applications
- 5-6 repositories
- Many CI pipelines

PROJECT MANAGEMENT



I KNOW A SOLUTION

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

“Glad my project manager read all that!”

Nobody ever

...an art of many books

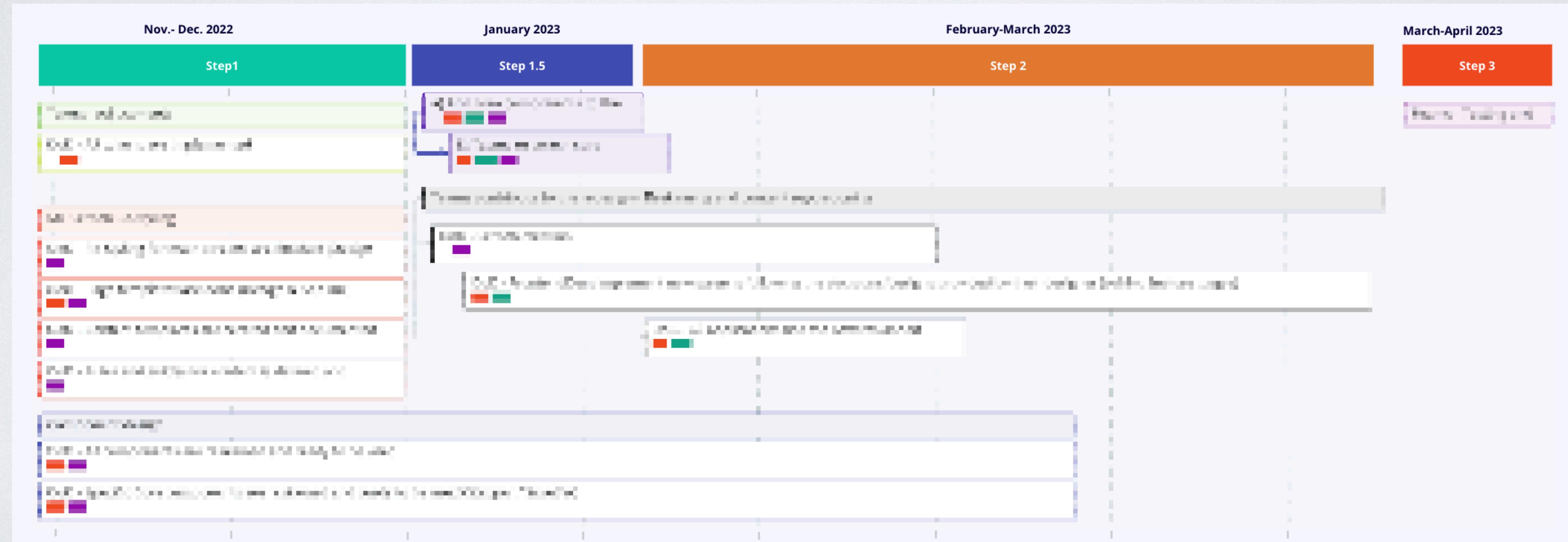
The screenshot shows the Amazon search results page for 'project management'. The search bar at the top has 'project management' typed into it. Below the search bar, there are several filters and categories on the left side, including 'Kindle Unlimited', 'Department' (Books), 'Customer Reviews', 'Book Series', 'Deals & Discounts', 'New Releases', and 'Book Format'. The main area is titled 'Results' and shows a grid of book covers. Some books are labeled as 'Best Seller' or 'Sponsored'. The books visible include:

- MASTERING PROJECT DISCOVERY** by Elliot Bendoly, Daniel Bachrach, et al. (Paperback, \$46.95)
- PMP Exam Prep Simplified** by Andrew Ramdayal (Paperback, \$45.21)
- PROJECT MANAGEMENT QuickStart Guide** by Mike Haile (Paperback, \$9.99)
- PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES** by Mike Haile (Paperback, \$9.99)
- Project Management for the UNOFFICIAL PMBOK GUIDE** (Project Management for the UNOFFICIAL PMBOK GUIDE, Paperback)
- A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)** (A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide), Paperback)
- Harvard Business Review Project Management Handbook** (Harvard Business Review Project Management Handbook, Paperback)
- Project Management QuickStart Guide** (Project Management QuickStart Guide, Paperback)

At the bottom right of the page, there is a note: 'Sort by: Featured'.

OK, FINE

...we'll do a Gantt Chart



GROK YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

...just like product development

Product

- Business value
- Effort and progress

Project

High and mid management

- Employee satisfaction
- Deadline

Contributors

- Guidelines
- Joy and togetherness

Other departments

- Desired results
- Predictable delivery for communication

Casual voyeur
- Peek a boo

PROJECT AXIOMS

...a bit like a manifesto

— Progress over deadlines —

— Break down team boundaries over silos —

— Momentum building over small bursts —

— Negativity is the enemy of progress —



...without further ado

13 INGREDIENTS FOR PROJECTS

What I like to have known before running this project

PROJECT CHARTER

Why

Make everything discoverable

- Central landing page with project statement, the scope, objectives and participants
- Define documentation and communication structure
- Link to anything related

The screenshot shows a GitHub repository page for 'merchant-center-redesign'. The repository is private, has 1 branch, and 0 tags. The README file contains the following content:

```
Merchant Center Redesign

A redesign has started to take an effect on the Merchant Center and us developers on it. It has been in the planning for some time before. MC redesign is an initiative to improve UI of MC to make it more attractive and look modern. We believe it will improve our position positively influence on the number of mid market customers.

There is more information about the reasoning on the research report.
```

Steps in the process

1. Impact analysis
 - We investigate the impact of th redesign for each page
2. Component adoption
 - We adopt ui-kit and app-kit components where not already as soon as possible
3. Component reskinning
 - We reskin exisiting shared components non ui-kit or app-kit components with Design Tokens
4. Layout repositioning
 - We use new layout components to adjust layout of most pages

While working on the redesign we set up some recommended [execution guidelines](#).

About

A repository to track issues in a board about the Merchant Center redesign

Contributors (4)

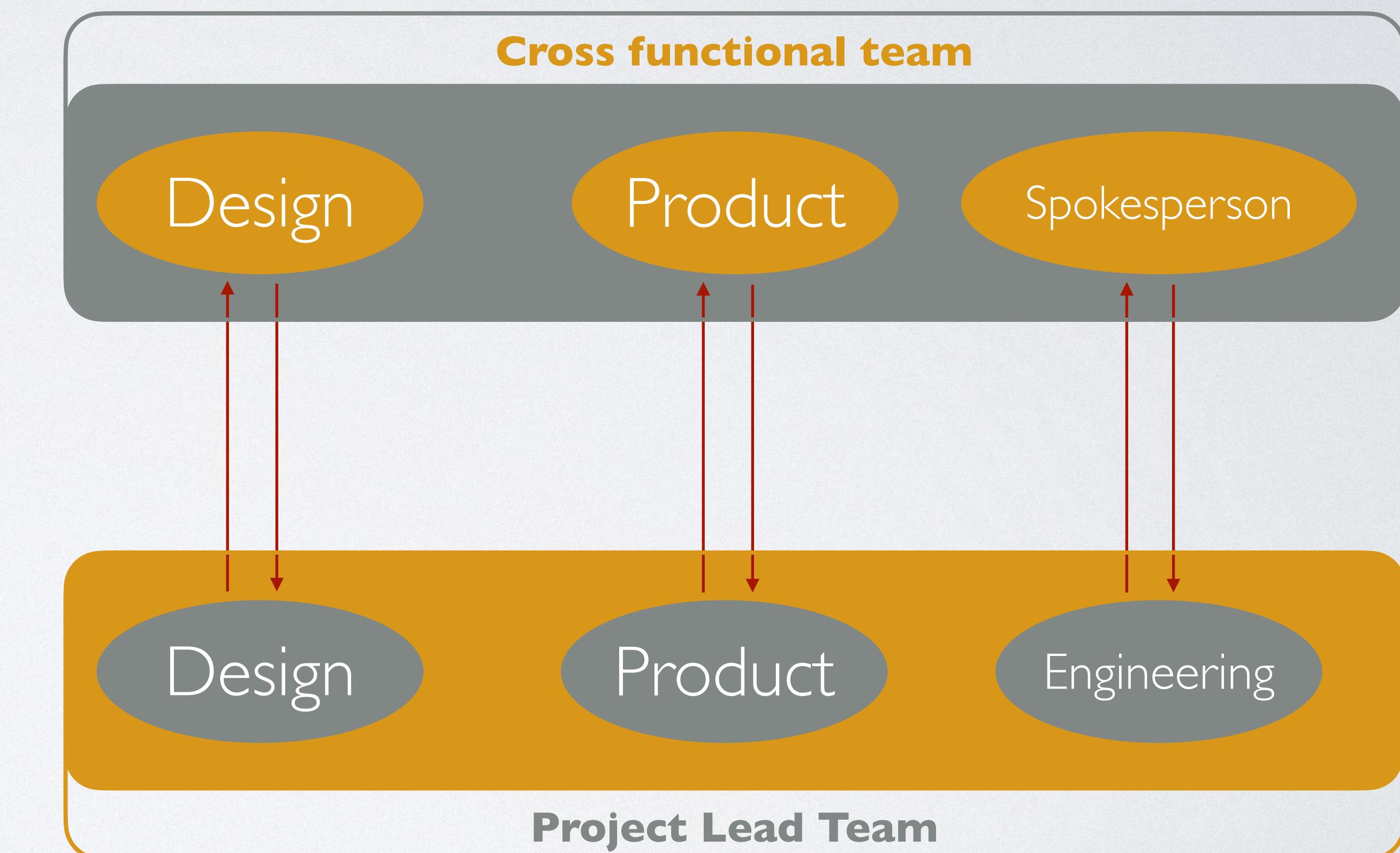
- tdeekens Tobias Deekens
- ... (three other contributors)

PROJECT LEAD TEAM

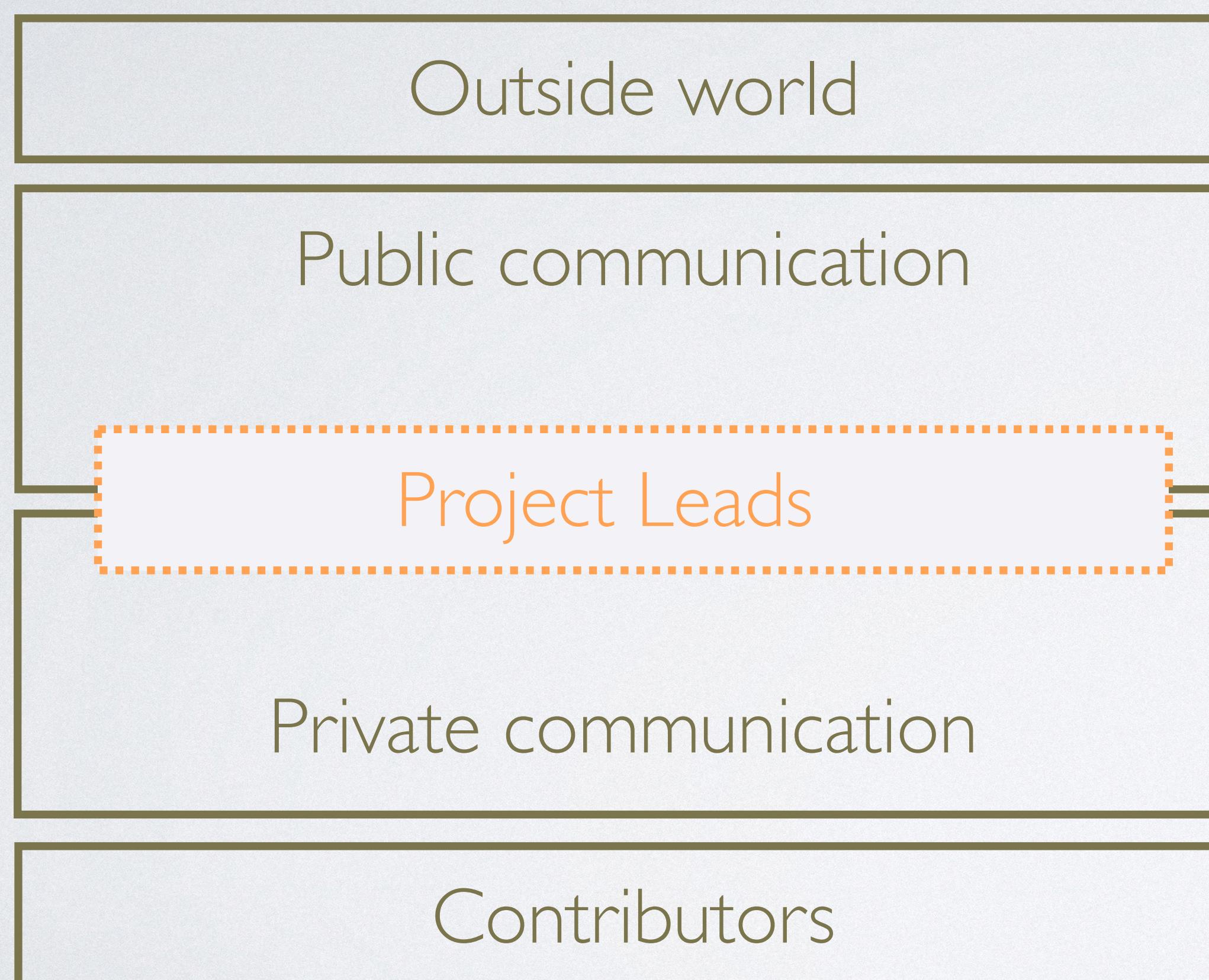
Why

Share responsibility with clear ownership lines

- Work backstage and create alignment with stakeholders
- Remove impediments different roles face
- Build on existing relationships towards teams



DEFINED MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

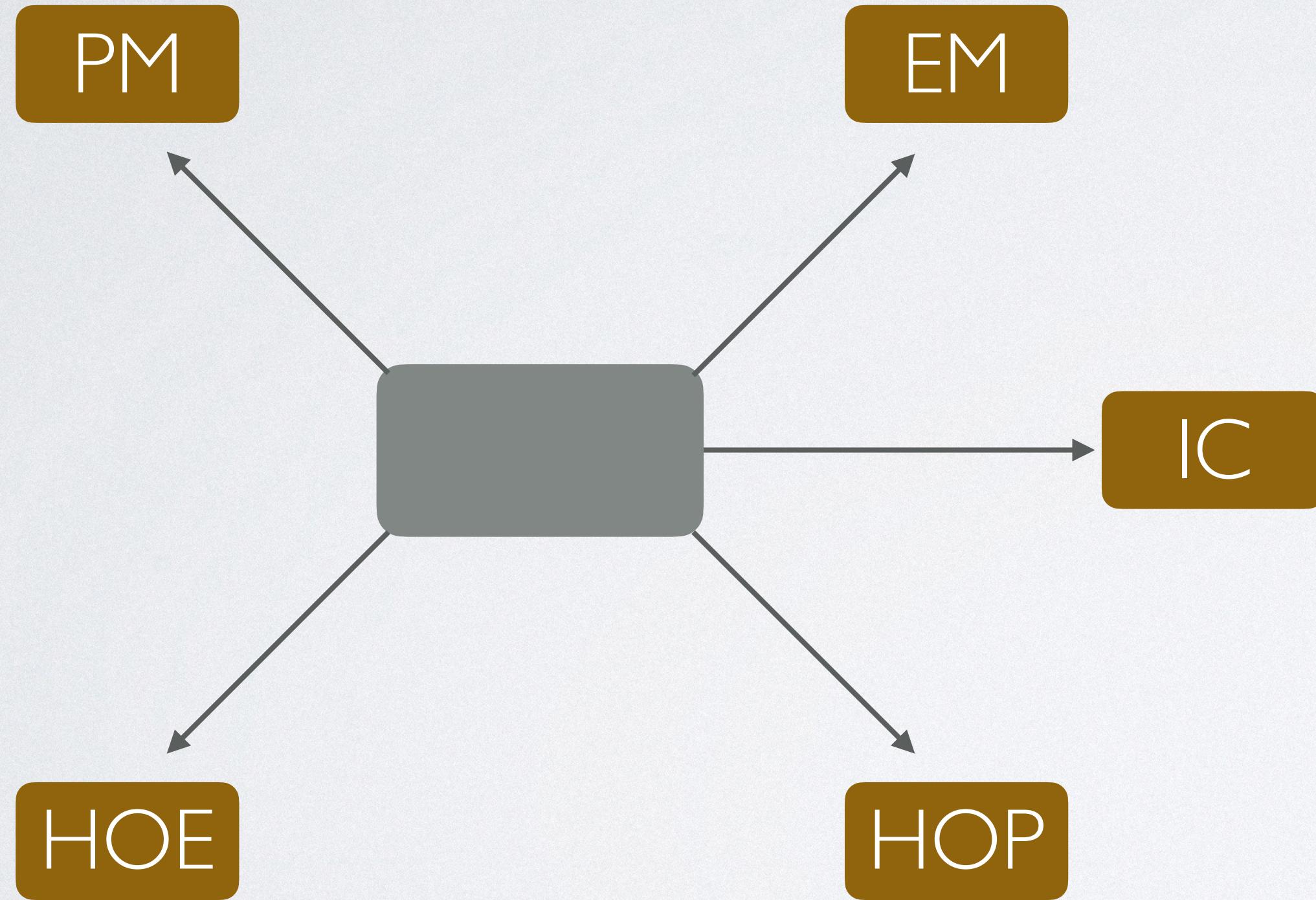


Why

Make project approachable

- E-Mail groups and shared calendars
- Recurring meetings using Google and Remeet
- Slack channels (private and public) and handles
- GitHub teams and labels

KICKOFF MEETING



Why

Prevent information to be missed

- Make stakeholders of the project aware
- Foster alignment between project participants
- Details who is involved and their roles the expected communication lines
- Recorded for people to rewatch

PHASES & MILESTONES

The screenshot shows a GitHub Wiki page titled "Project phases" under the repository "commercetools / merchant-center-redesign". The page is last edited by Tobias Deekens on Dec 14, 2022, with 10 revisions. The "Wiki" tab is selected in the navigation bar.

Project phases
Tobias Deekens edited this page on Dec 14, 2022 · 10 revisions

1. Impact analysis

Goal: identify where the team has to perform work itself and get a rough understanding of its complexity.

To move towards being able to execute the redesign we need to understand its impact to all of our applications first. To do so teams are asked to:

1. Investigate where `ui-kit` components should be used in order to be able to receive design updates through the new theme and its design tokens
2. Get an overview of shared components used in the application which possibly need to be reskinned.
 - We already started an inventory [here](#) but each team should get an understand of where they used components which need to change
 - As other teams might also use those shared components we plan to distribute the workload fairly across teams while Shield can help out and guide teams
3. Create designs for using the new layouts and their column system where needed
 - Even if those components are not implemented yet their design is set
 - As a result teams can already start defining how content should move into those new sections. A rough example of that can be found [here](#)
4. Once the new layout components are made available they can be used
 - For using them the styling of existing content does not have to change yet - it can move into and flow through the new layouts before having the new design. Please always double check this with the designers in your team.
5. Generally keep `ui-kit` and `app-kit` updated in your respective applications(s) and repositories (mono-repo or satellite) to ensure that updates to design tokens are made available through them

2. Component adoption

Why

Define high level work to be done

- Centrally agreed upon phases for project (2-4)
 - Gates between phases with coordinated transitions
1. Impact Analysis
 2. Component adoption & reskinning
 3. Layout adoption
 4. Design adjustments

ONE PROJECT BOARD

Why

Order to chaos and oversight

- Single pane of glass integrating with phases
- Updated collaboratively but also guided by lead team
- Linking everything across 10 teams and six repositories

Merchant Center Redesign						
Title		Milestone	Assignees	Status	Component adoption	
Application Account 12						
1	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications #61	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
2	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Configuration List #62	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
3	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Details #63	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
4	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Installation List #64	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
5	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Installation Details #65	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
6	Redesign Account - Organization Details - Settings #60	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
7	Redesign Account - Profile #53	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
8	Redesign Account - Projects #55	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
9	Redesign Account - Organizations #56	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
10	Redesign Account - Organization Details - Teams #57	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
11	Redesign Account - Organization Details - Team Details - Members #58	Application Account	✓ Done	No		
12	Redesign Account > Organization Details > Team Details > Permissions #59	Application Account	✓ Done	Done		
+ Cannot add items when grouped by milestone						
Application Audit Log 2						
13	Redesign Dashboard - Main Page #120	Application Audit Log	✓ Done	Done		
14	Redesign Audit Log - Main Page #119	Application Audit Log	✓ Done	Done		
+ Cannot add items when grouped by milestone						
Application Authentication 4						
15	Redesign Authentication - Login #125	Application Authentication	✓ Done	No		
16	Redesign Authentication - Sign up #130	Application Authentication	✓ Done	No		
17	Redesign Authentication - Sign up - Choose #128	Application Authentication	✓ Done	No		

ENABLE SELF MANAGEMENT

Why

Avoid overload

- Plan work where it is executed
- Give the building blocks to create similarity
- Keep it lightweight - it's not a purpose in itself

The image shows two GitHub issue pages side-by-side.

Left Side (Merchant Center Redesign):

- The title is "Redesign Categories - Category List #141".
- Status: Closed.
- Owner: commercetools/merchant-center-redesign (Private).
- Phases:
 - Component adoption
 - Component reskinning
- Comments: 12 of 12.
- Activity: Opened on Dec 20, 2022.
- Content: A list of tasks under "label:Type: Page".

Right Side (Order Details):

- The title is "Redesign Orders - Order Details - General #2".
- Status: Closed.
- Owner: commercetools/merchant-center-redesign (Private).
- Phases:
 - Component adoption
 - Component reskinning
- Comments: 12 of 12.
- Activity: Opened on Nov 25, 2022.
- Content: A list of tasks under "label:Type: Page".

ENGINEERING SPOKESPERSON

Role of the Engineering Spokesperson

Tobias Deekens edited this page on Dec 15, 2022 · 9 revisions

Why this role exists

1. Aligning cross-team efforts comes at a high communication cost.
 - This communication can be synchronous or asynchronous depending on what has to be communicated.
2. Successful communication requires context
 - Context is hard to maintain if communication parties change.
3. The redesign is expected to have similar decisions to be made.
 - The linear cost of similar decisions being made multiple times by different people can be avoided.

As a result the Merchant Center Redesign requests each team to elect a spokesperson on the engineering side. This spokesperson should be ideally consistent throughout the redesign work and not change.

Responsibilities of the role

1. Being a singular communication point towards a team for any engineering discussions around the redesign for PM and UX
2. Communicate engineering complexities of the redesign towards the team and to the group of spokespeople
3. Foster aligning in terms of engineering efforts within the team by learning of other teams
4. Attend bi-weekly or weekly sync meetings with other spokespeople of the initiative

What this role is *not*

1. The owner of the successful redesign of a given product domain
2. The only engineer working on the redesign in a given team
3. Somebody asked to make UX or priority decisions in regards to questions around the redesign
4. Always has to be a FE Chapter ambassador

Why

Create community and alignment

- Each team elects a spokesperson
- Act as a communication hub for team
- Clearly defined ins and outs for responsibilities
- Collaborate more closely with them

SPIKE TASKFORCES

Why

Fail early and define path for others

- Practice working together in small groups and share knowledge
- Experiment and establish patterns
- Make things easier for anybody to follow

Engineering Proof of Concepts

Tobias Deekens edited this page on Dec 1, 2022 · 1 revision

Why we do Proof of Concepts (PoCs)

Different areas of the redesign have different ambiguities on the engineering side. We want to discover or [Unknown Unknowns](#) as soon as possible. This allows us to ensure that we discover as little unknowns during a time when more people and teams get involved.

Scope of a PoC

A PoC for engineering in our redesign should be:

1. Focused on an area we feel uneasy about
2. Time-boxed aimed to discover as much as possible in a given time frame
3. Not having the intent to be merged and/or shipped

An ideal PoC should last around 1-3 days and be carried out by one engineer. Ideally engineers of different teams should be involved to start to spread knowledge and familiarity of changes needed for the redesign early.

Examples of possible PoCs

Reskinning a component

During the course of the redesign we have a [Component reskinning](#) phase in which we need to visually change a component behind a feature flag to match the new redesign.

Reskinning a component and having essentially two visual looks of it is something we have rarely done. For [ui-kit](#) and [app-kit](#) components we have been doing it for e.g. form pages and will for the table and inputs (among more components). However, we also have to reskin our *oldest legacy components*. We want to early identify how we can do this to be quick and easy to clean up.

Component adoption

ENGINEERING COOKBOOKS

The screenshot shows a dark-themed documentation page. At the top, it says "Redesign Engineering Cookbooks" and "António Dias edited this page on Feb 13, 2023 · 25 revisions". Below this is a text block: "A redesign engineering cookbook is meant to provide guidance for similar challenges during implementation we might face across teams. We can collect any number of cookbooks to inform other teams about our learning and share knowledge." A "Quick links" sidebar on the left contains three items: "1. Component Reskinning", "2. Headlines semantical changes", and "3. Layout components". The main content area has a section titled "Component Reskinning" which discusses the goal of keeping UI consistent with new design. It mentions "Reskinning a component is part of our redesign efforts part of our project phases." Below this is a note about Pull Requests and a "Rules of reskinning" section with numbered points. To the right of the main content is a sidebar with navigation links: "Pages 6", "Find a page...", "Home", "Engineering Proof of Concepts", "Execution guidelines", "Project phases", and a expanded "Redesign Engineering Cookbooks" section containing "Quick links", "Component Reskinning", "Rules of reskinning", "Common gotchas", "Annotating a file", "Annotating an issue or Pull Request", "Types of reskinning", "Patterns of reskinning", "CSS only changes", "Recommended approach", "CSS :where() pseudo-class", "CSS custom-properties", "Alternative approaches", "Internal component usage changes", "Recommended approach", "The component overall has to change", "Recommended approach", "Headlines semantical changes", and "Recommended approach".

Why

Shorten time to contribution

- Outcome of Spike Taskforce's
- Centrally defined and working patterns
- Stepwise and engineering focussed
- Open for improvements and collectively iterated upon

WEEKLY DIGEST

Why

Positivity and momentum building

- Every Friday at 3PM CET
- Celebrating progress visually
- Show progress like product releases
- Radiate outwards - publish almost obnoxiously

A screenshot of a GitHub repository page for a pull request titled "Weekly Digest of Week 51 (🎄 edition)". The pull request was created by [tdeekens](#) on Dec 22, 2022, and has been merged. It includes a list of 7 items detailing various accomplishments and updates related to the redesign of the Merchant Center App Kit and UI Kit.

Weekly Digest of Week 51 (🎄 edition)

1. We managed to collect [135 page](#) issues in our GitHub Board and are about 90% ✅ with Impact Analysis
 - Massive 🎉 to anybody who contributed. We are close to 2 0 0 issues in total. This helps us to align, understand and share work on the redesign
 - In doing so we managed to link many shared components to page knowing where they are used like [here](#) for our Toolbar
2. We released the Merchant Center App Kit and UI Kit
 - 🎉 Through UI Kit the inputs and data table manager and soon the stamps are now available in the new design
 - 💪 In App Kit the user menu and nav bar have been made available in the new theme
3. We discussed on an [RFC](#) on our to be implemented Page content layout components
 - There even was a PoC in a Codesandbox you can toy around with [here](#)
4. We added a [new view](#) to our GitHub Board for shared work
 - Issues are grouped by "Visual Importance" and their "Usage frequency" aiming to guide us which components to reskin or remove first when working through them starting January
5. 🚀 We finished the rollout of a redesigned welcome page (inside the `application-fallback`) while adding a more clear "Home" button for access
 - The welcome page is sensitive to your role in the project your view (if you're an admin or not)
6. The Merchant Center is only tables we hear? Our table is now also available in a new design through our theme switcher
7. Last but not least we have an open [#mc-redesign-engineering-spokespeople](#) Slack channel and started to enjoy collaborating

With all of that: Merry x-mas and a happy new year (🎄, 🎄, 🎄). In January we will transition into our second and third phase in Component Adoption and Component reskinning.

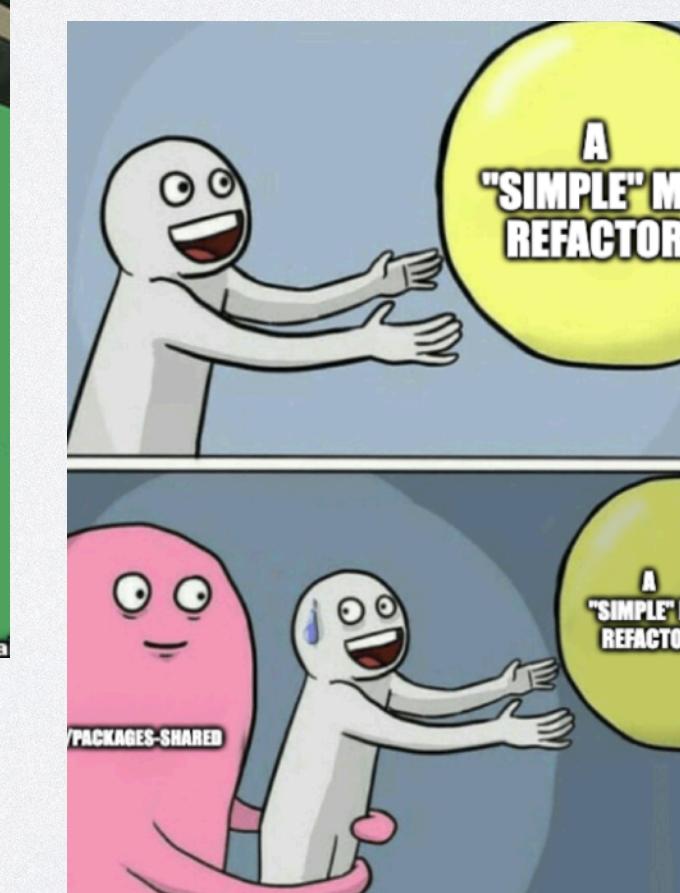
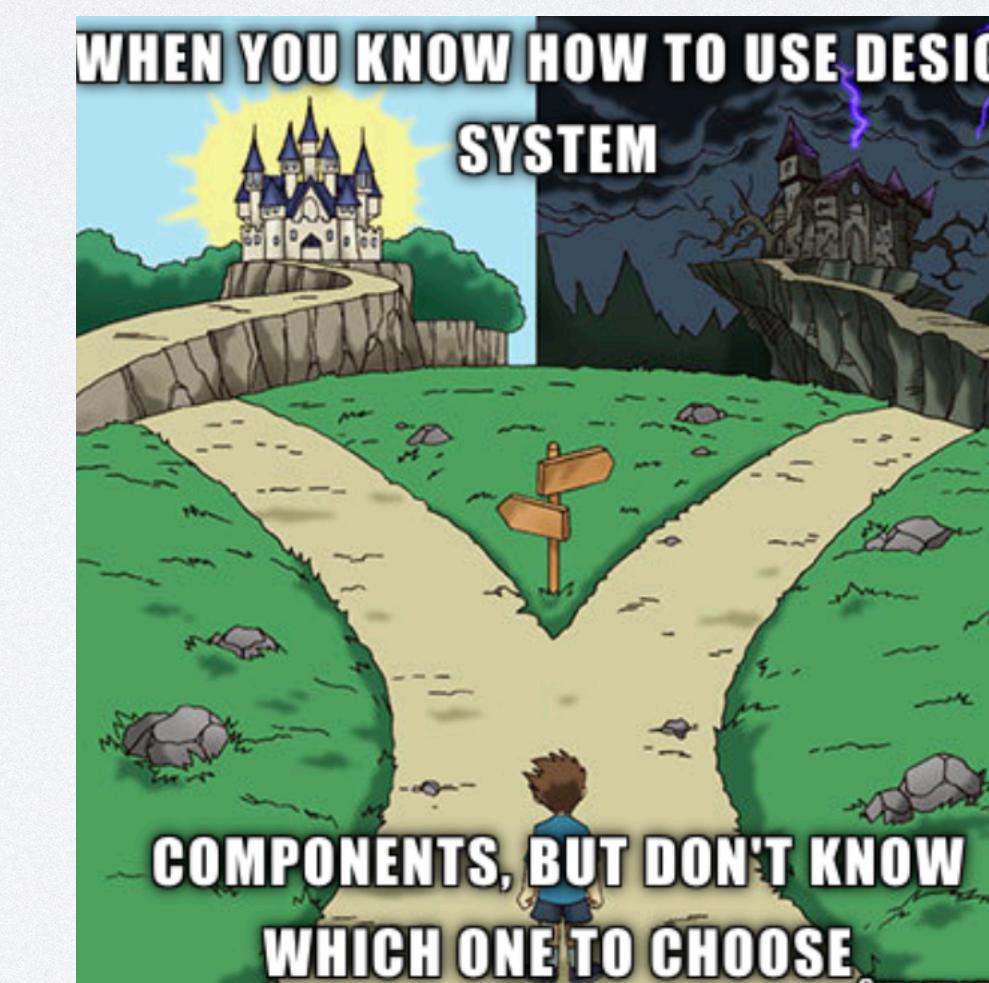
The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of the Merchant Center interface. The left screenshot displays a dark-themed dashboard with a sidebar containing 'Turn off redesign' and navigation links for Home, Dashboard, and Products. The right screenshot shows a light-themed version of the same interface, with a header showing the repository name 'adnan-nodejs-test-project' and a sidebar with 'My Profile' and 'Manage Organizations & Teams'.

CELEBRATION

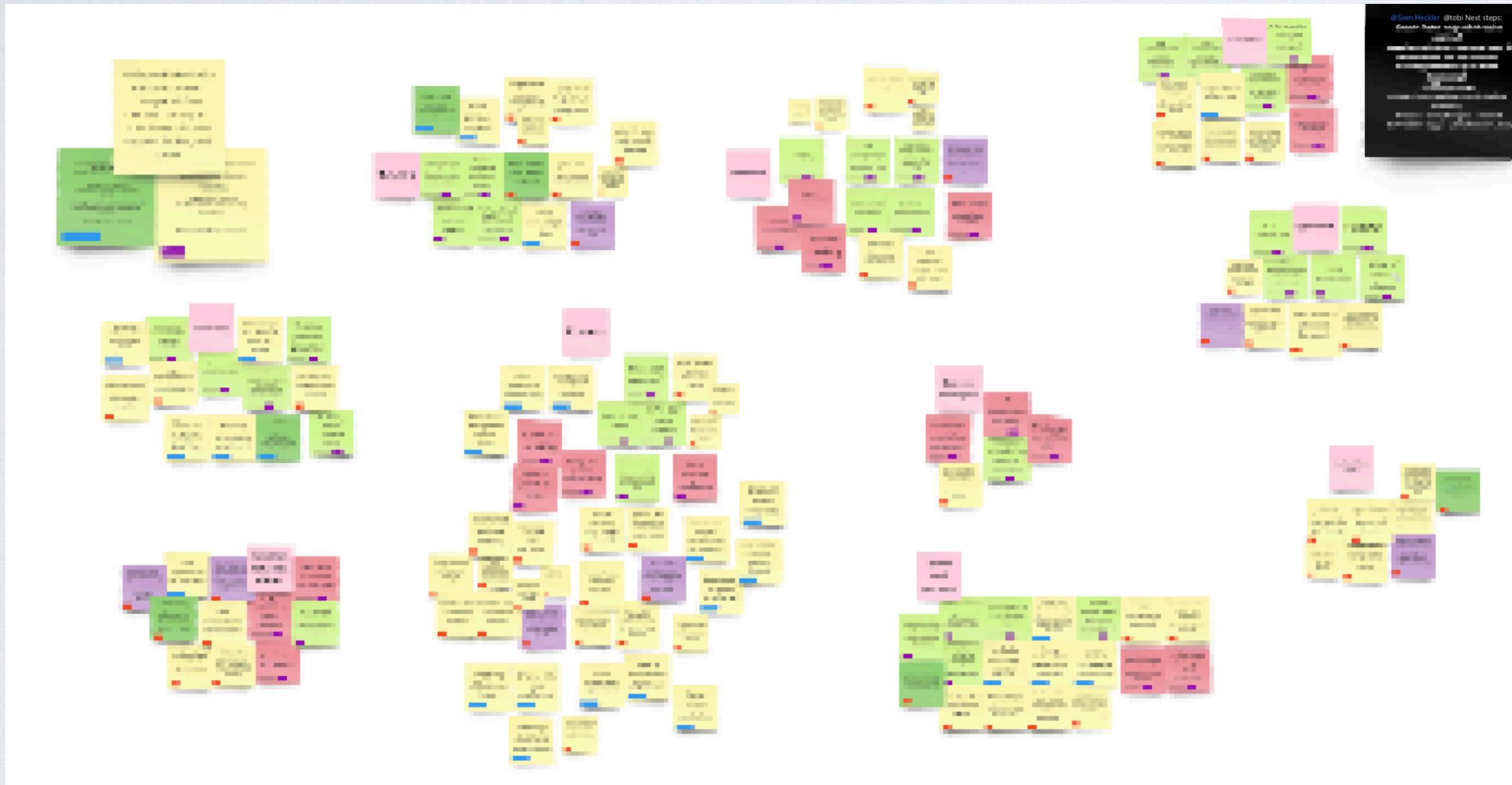
Why

Laugh about the past

- Open to all contributors no matter the role
- Remote event including quiz and gifts
- Session on designing Memes reflecting the project



RETROSPECTIVE



Why

Learn for the future

- Dedicated retrospective with each group
 - Spokespeople, Design & Leads
- Aggregation all all retrospectives into one with help of Agile Coach
- Public and vulnerable blog post of what we learned

RESUMING PROJECT IN NUMBERS

35 committers

Engineering Managers joined the fun

~450 PRs

all linked

353 tickets

not in JIRA

Public announcement

Blog posts

2142 theme altercations

Gradual release with a feature flag

Automate, automate,
automate
across 587 files

PERSONAL LEARNINGS

- Anticipate emotional tax —
- Project Management is a people business —
- Momentum positivity reinforces progress —
- Give structure and trust in execution —

A SIDESHOW ALWAYS EXIST

- Global and local priorities can contradict —
- Piggyback project to reduce technical debt —
- Sometimes, somebody has to do somebody else's work —
- Frequent status updates cost time and slow down —

HAPPY ENDING

We released - just by a week late
Using a few ingredients to make the project successful

We defined how we run cross-team projects



THANK FOR LISTENING



Q&A

Hello Tobias, welcome to Test Project With Sample Data

i Press "F" to open Quick Access

[View product list](#)

[View order list](#)

Merchant Center releases

February 26, 2024
Improved Projects and Locales menus
[Read more](#)

[View all](#)

API releases

February 7, 2024
Added support for key and Messages for Discount Codes
[Read more](#)

[View all](#)

Merchant Center Guides

Get started with the Merchant Center. This section contains information to help you launch and manage your project quickly and easily.

[Get Started](#) [User documentation](#)

commercetools API documentation

Use our API to create integrations and custom apps for your projects.

[View API docs](#)

ImpEx

Use ImpEx for more advanced control over your project's data. Bulk import or export project data automatically.

mc.europe-west1.gcp.escemo.com/test-project-with-sample-data/welcome

Test Project With Sample Data en Welcome page today

Hello Tobias, welcome to Test Project With Sample Data

Quick access F

Total products
2,703

Published	2,697
Modified	6
Unpublished	0

[View products](#)

Total orders
399

Open	399
Confirmed	0
Complete	0
Canceled	0

[View all orders](#)

Total product discounts
1

Activated Deactivated

[View product discounts](#)

Total cart discounts
5

Activated Deactivated

[View cart discounts](#)

Find out why we are the best-in-class solution!

Explore Merchant Center documentation
Let us guide you through your exploration of the Merchant Center.

Discover composable commerce
What is composable commerce and what makes it great?

NEW FEATURE
You can now assign cart discounts to a specific store.