

# 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), Complete Orders (58632), Total product discounts (58632).
- Product Performance:** Top 4 products by revenue for August.
- System Information:** Change history showing recent modifications made by users.
- Support and Resources:** MC tutorials, What is composable commerce, Learn more about discounts, Learn more about products.

# 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



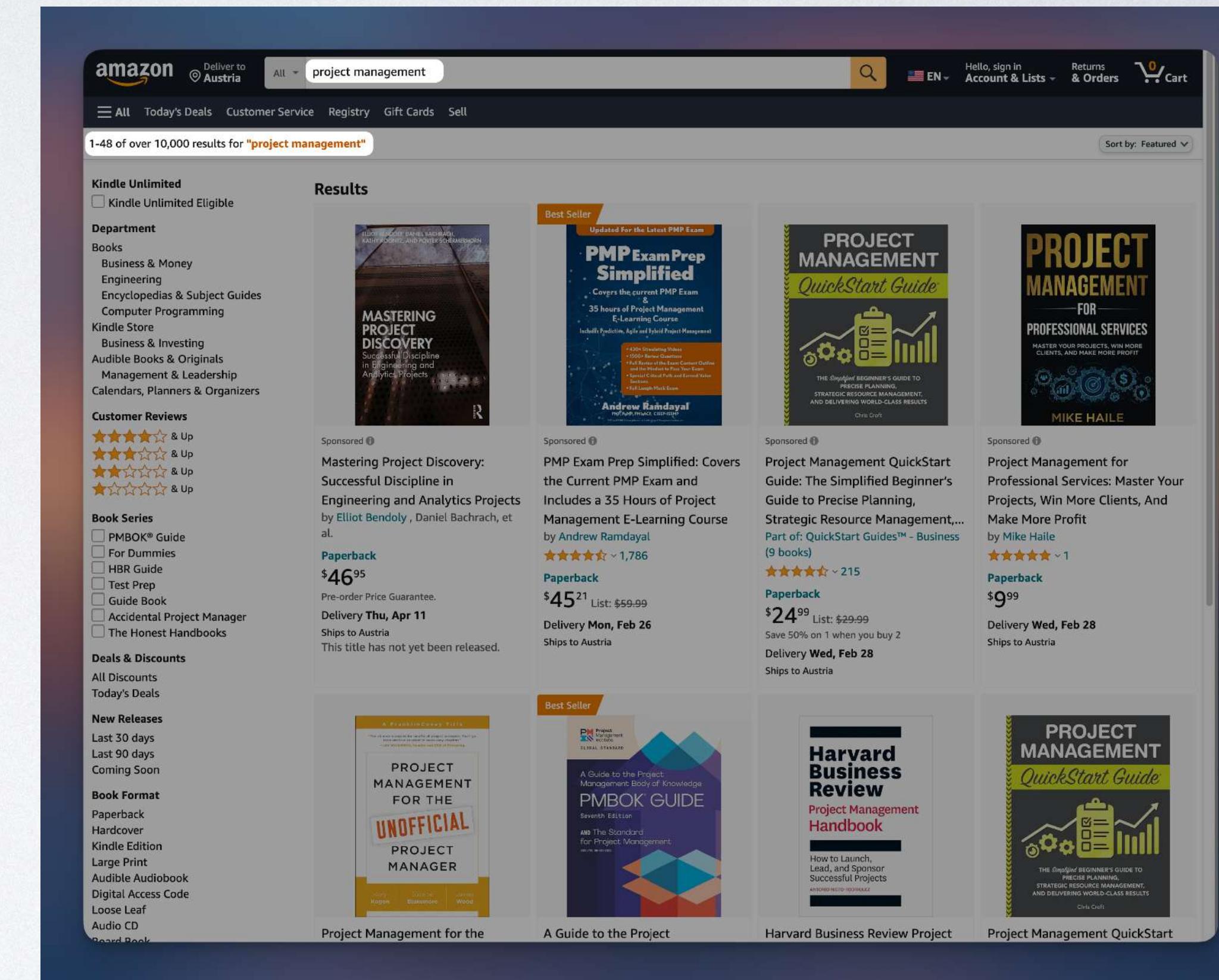
I KNOW A SOLUTION

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

...an art of many books

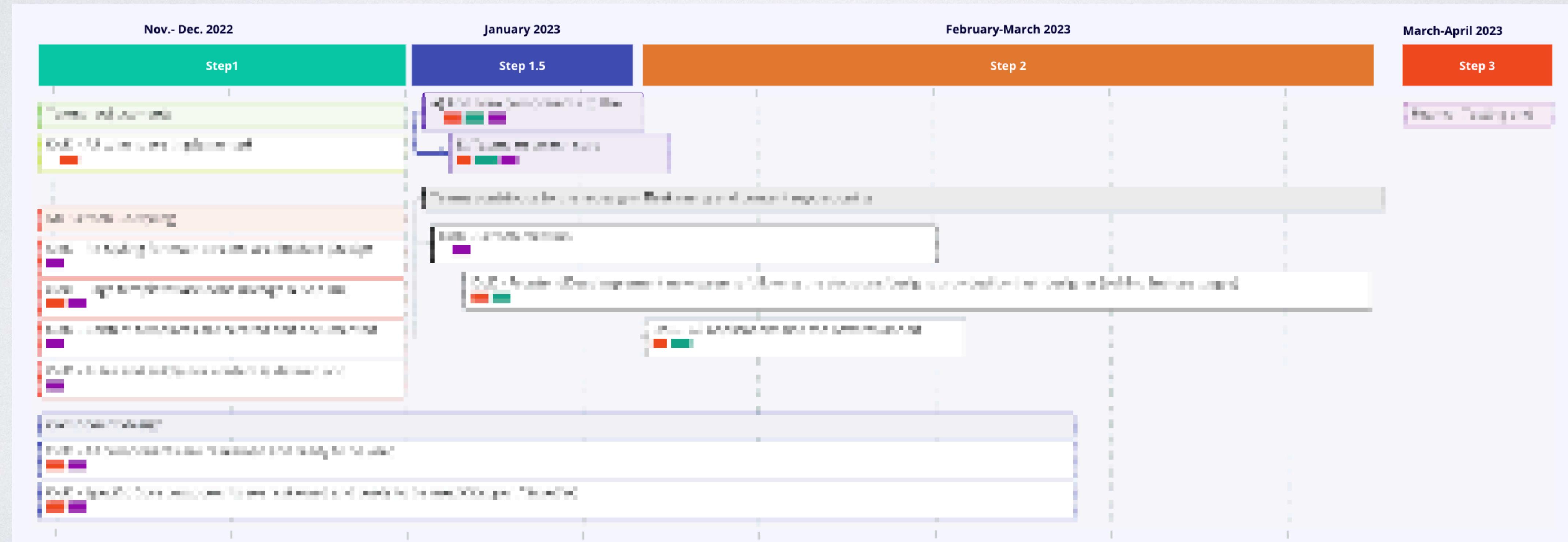
“Glad my project manager read all that!”

Nobody ever



# 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 and has 1 branch and 0 tags. The main file listed is 'readme.md'. The README content includes a section titled 'Merchant Center Redesign' which describes the initiative to improve the Merchant Center's UI to attract mid-market customers. It also mentions a 'research report'. Below this, there is a 'Steps in the process' section with four numbered items: 1. Impact analysis, 2. Component adoption, 3. Component reskinning, and 4. Layout repositioning, each with a corresponding bullet point. On the right side of the page, there is an 'About' section with details like the repository being last updated a year ago, having 55 commits, and 2 stars. It also lists 8 watchers and 0 forks. The 'Contributors' section shows four contributors, with Tobias Deekens being the most active.

commercetools / merchant-center-redesign

Code Issues Pull requests Discussions Actions Projects Wiki Security Insights Settings

merchant-center-redesign Private

main 1 Branch 0 Tags Go to file Add file Code

tdeekens Update redesign-bug.yml 1c3bbc3 · last year 55 Commits

.github/ISSUE\_TEMPLATE Update redesign-bug.yml last year

readme.md Update readme.md last year

README

## 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

Readme

Activity

Custom properties

2 stars

8 watching

0 forks

Contributors 4

tdeekens Tobias Deekens

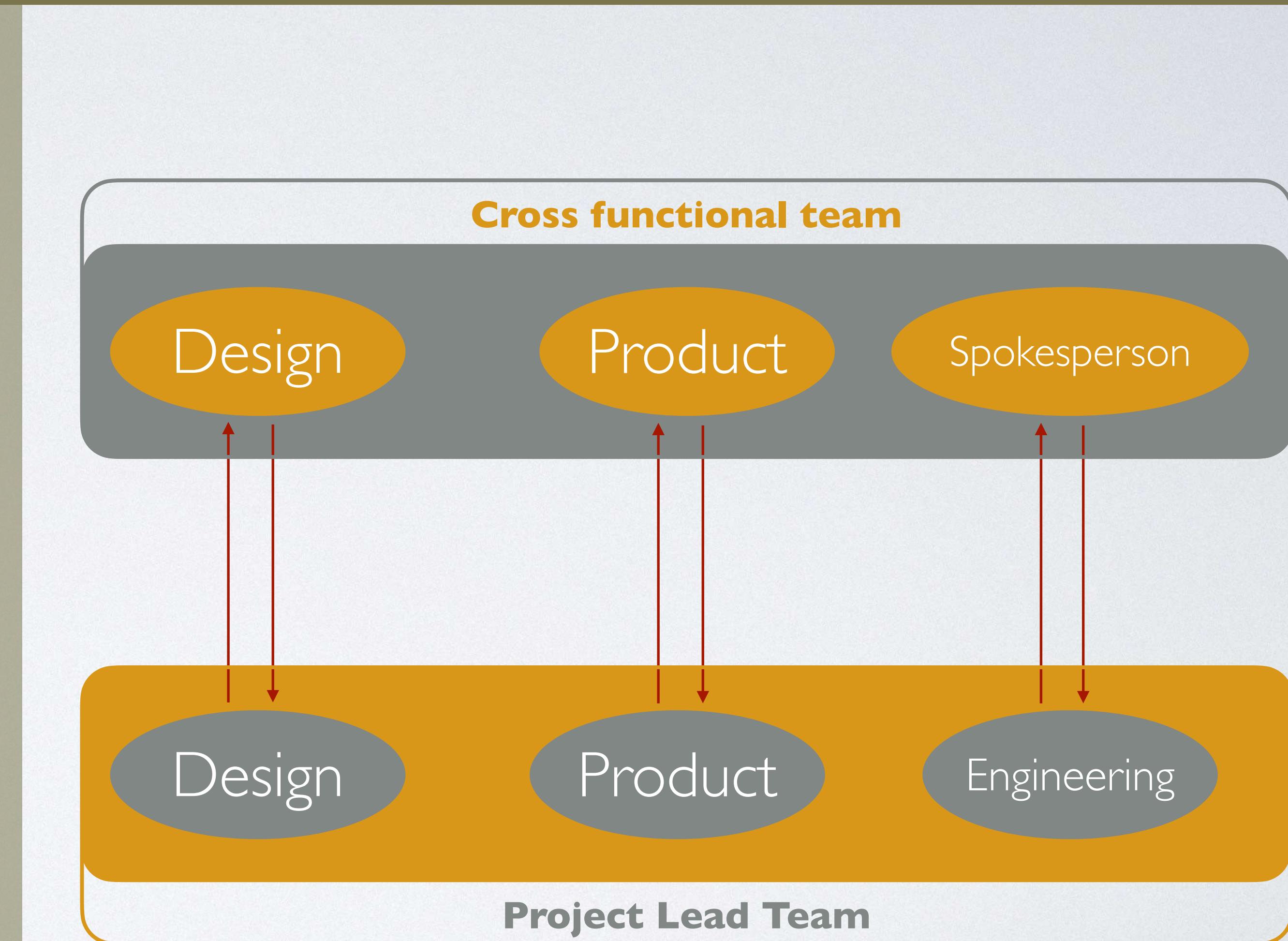
... 3 others

# PROJECT LEAD TEAM

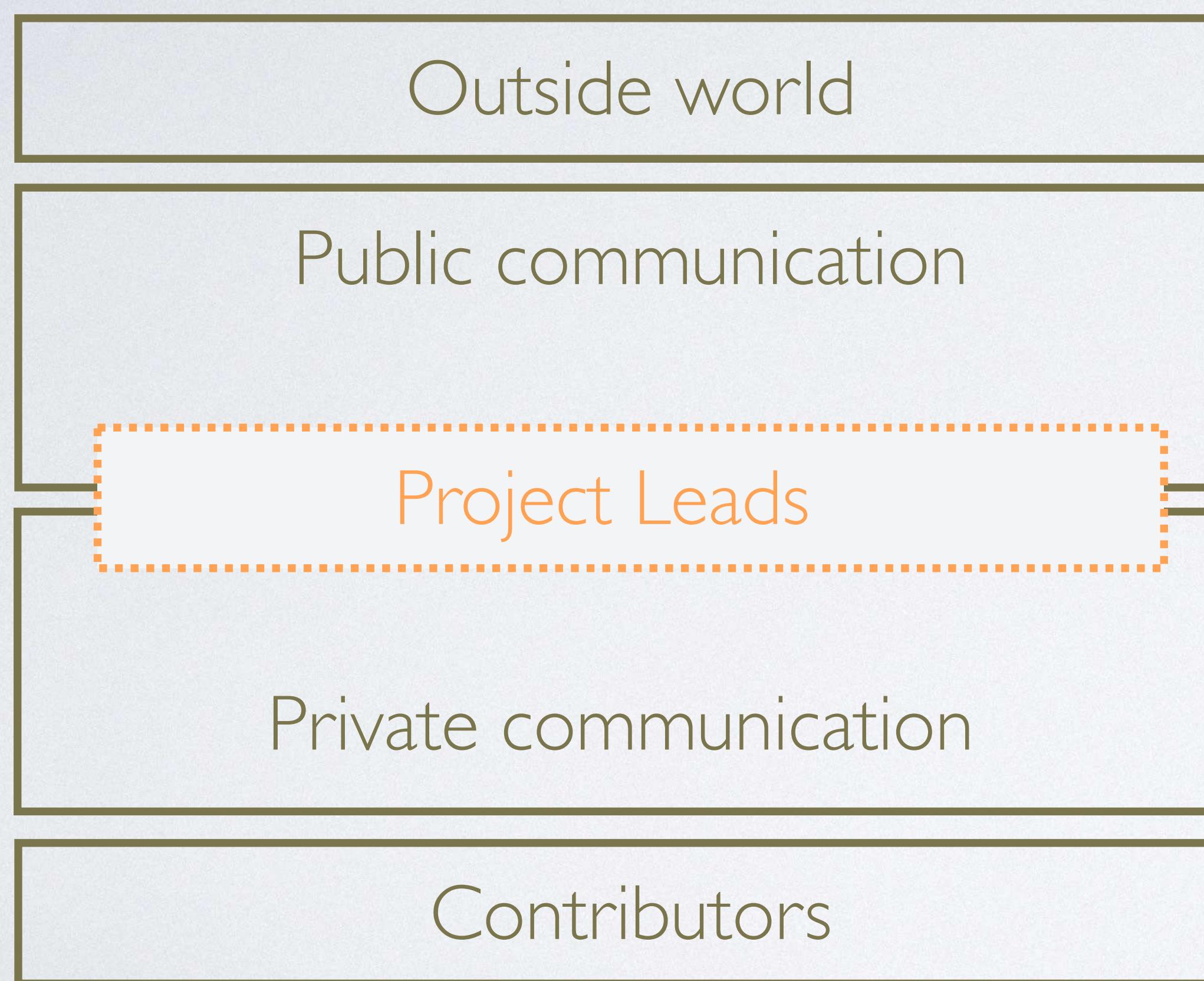
## Why

### Share responsibility with clear ownership lines

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



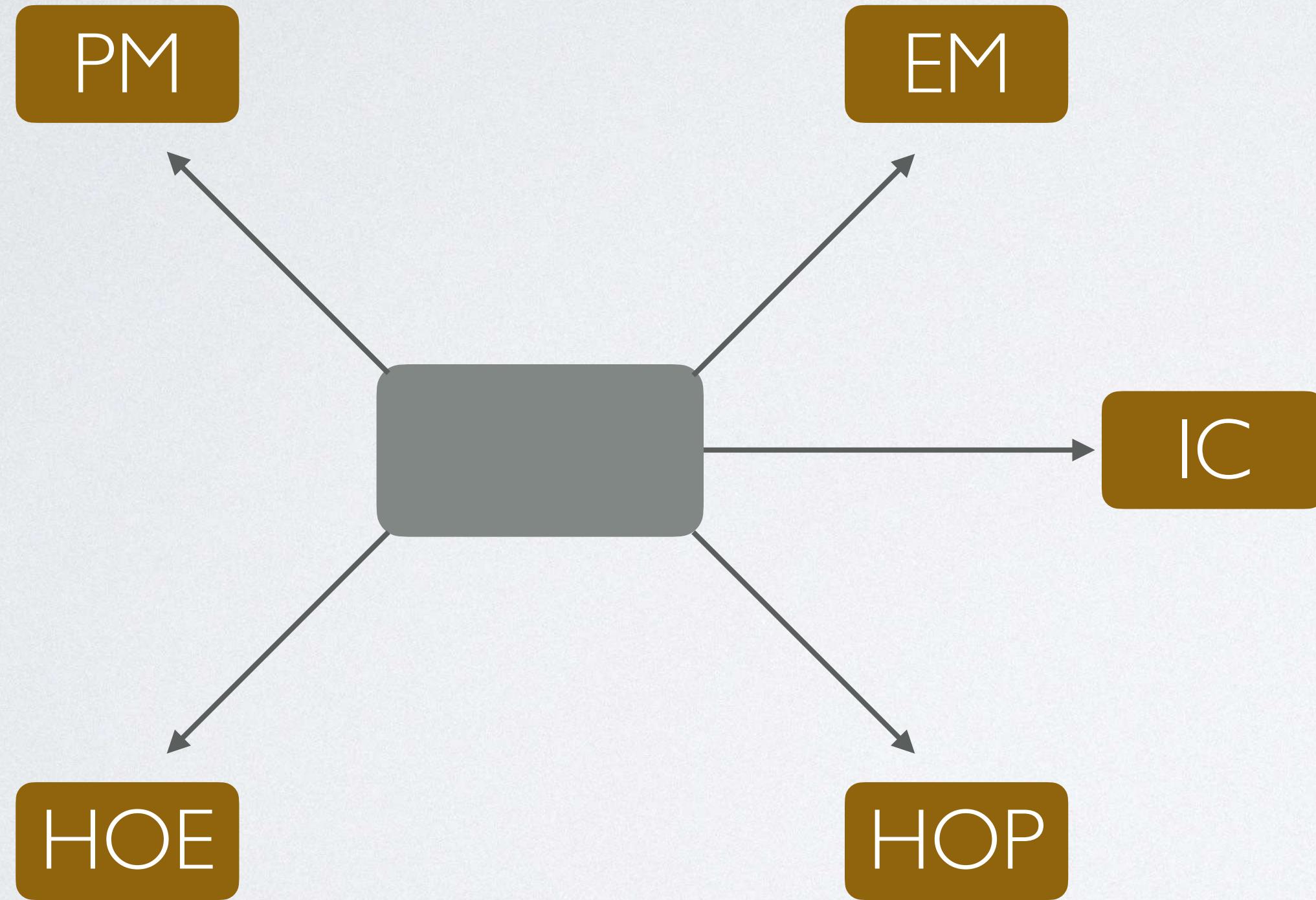
# DEFINED MEANS OF COMMUNICATION



## 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	
<b>Application Account</b> 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						
<b>Application Audit Log</b> 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						
<b>Application Authentication</b> 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 screenshot shows two GitHub issue pages side-by-side.

**Merchant Center Redesign:** This page displays a list of issues under the "Merchant Center Redesign" project. One issue is visible, labeled "Redesign Authentication - Sign up". Another issue, "Cannot add items when grouped by milestone", is listed under the "Application Categories" section.

**Redesign Categories - Category List #141:** This page shows a detailed view of issue #141, titled "Redesign Categories - Category List #141". It includes sections for "Phases" (Component adoption, Component reskinning), a list of tasks (e.g., "[shared] Remove <ButtonGroup> #18", "[internal Categories] Reskin <TextWithComponentOnRight> #228"), and a sidebar with navigation links like "Categories - Category Details - General - Change hist" and "Customers - Customer details orders tab #220".

# 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 Confluence page with the following structure:

- Page Title:** Redesign Engineering Cookbooks
- Page Editor:** António Dias edited this page on Feb 13, 2023 · 25 revisions
- Content Area:**
  - 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.
  - Quick links:**
    1. Component Reskinning
    2. Headlines semantical changes
    3. Layout components
  - Component Reskinning:**

Reskinning a component is part of our redesign efforts part of our [project phases](#). The goal is to keep the UI consistent with the new design, in particular for components not using `ui-kit` or `app-kit`. These components can be shared across teams or are only used within a team's application.

This PoC as two Pull Requests which demonstrate it's working [here](#) and [here](#).
  - Rules of reskinning:**
    1. The public API of the component should not change
      - Why: given we adjust the `SaveToolbar` we don't want to change all usages of it
      - Don't: Change the `props` the component receives and make changes everywhere where it's used
      - Do: Internally encapsulate and branch over needed changes (more below)
    2. Changes made for reskinning should be easy to remove
      - Why: given the legacy design is removed we don't want to have to touch code again in a complex manner
      - Don't: perform small multiple code branches inside a component
      - Do: keep changes easy to remove and identify based on the theme.
    3. Changes need to be **backwards compatible** and work with both themes (new and old)
      - Why: the rollout strategy of the design is meant to be incrementally and not a big bang
      - Don't: reskin a component to match the new theme while it then looks updated without the new theme being used
      - Do: keep the old visuals and enable the new visuals based on the enabled status of the new theme
- Sidebar Navigation:**
  - Pages (6)
  - Find a page...
  - Home
  - Engineering Proof of Concepts
  - Execution guidelines
  - Project phases
  - Redesign Engineering Cookbooks
    - 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
    - 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

tdeekens on Dec 22, 2022 · Maintainer · Author · ...

### 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](#).

Turn off redesign

Products

Home

Dashboard

Products

29 results

All fields

Search by name, description, SKU, slug

Actions

7 adnan-nodejs-test-project Tobias Deekens tobias.deekens+dev@commercetools.de

New

My Profile

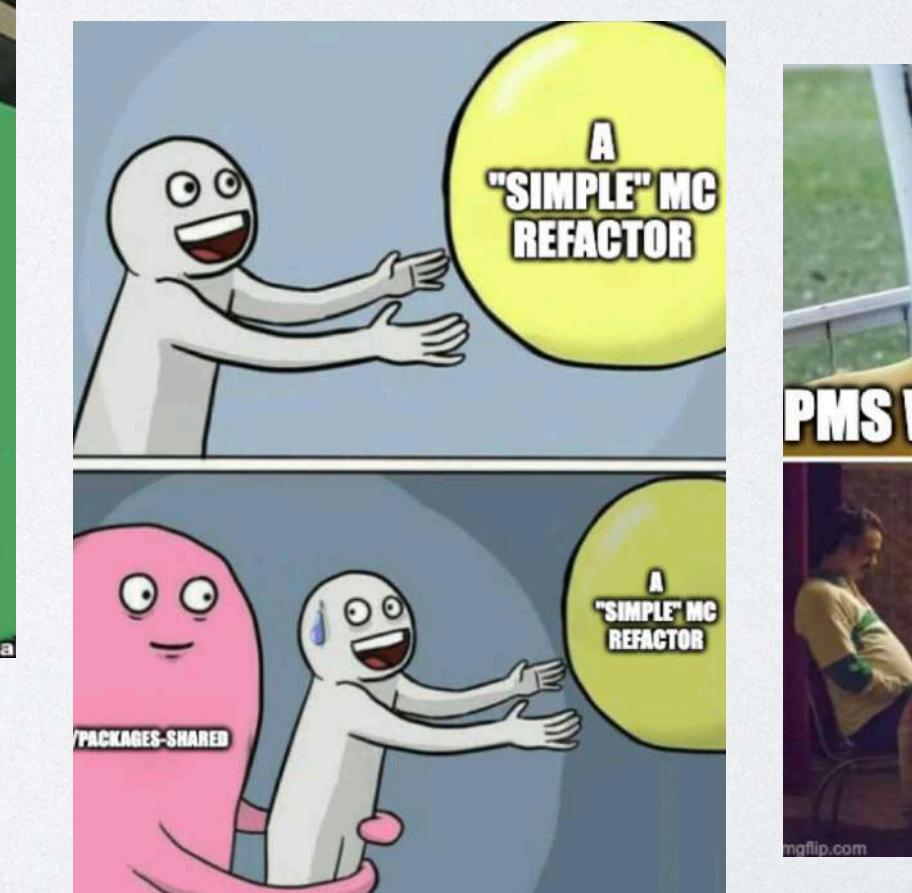
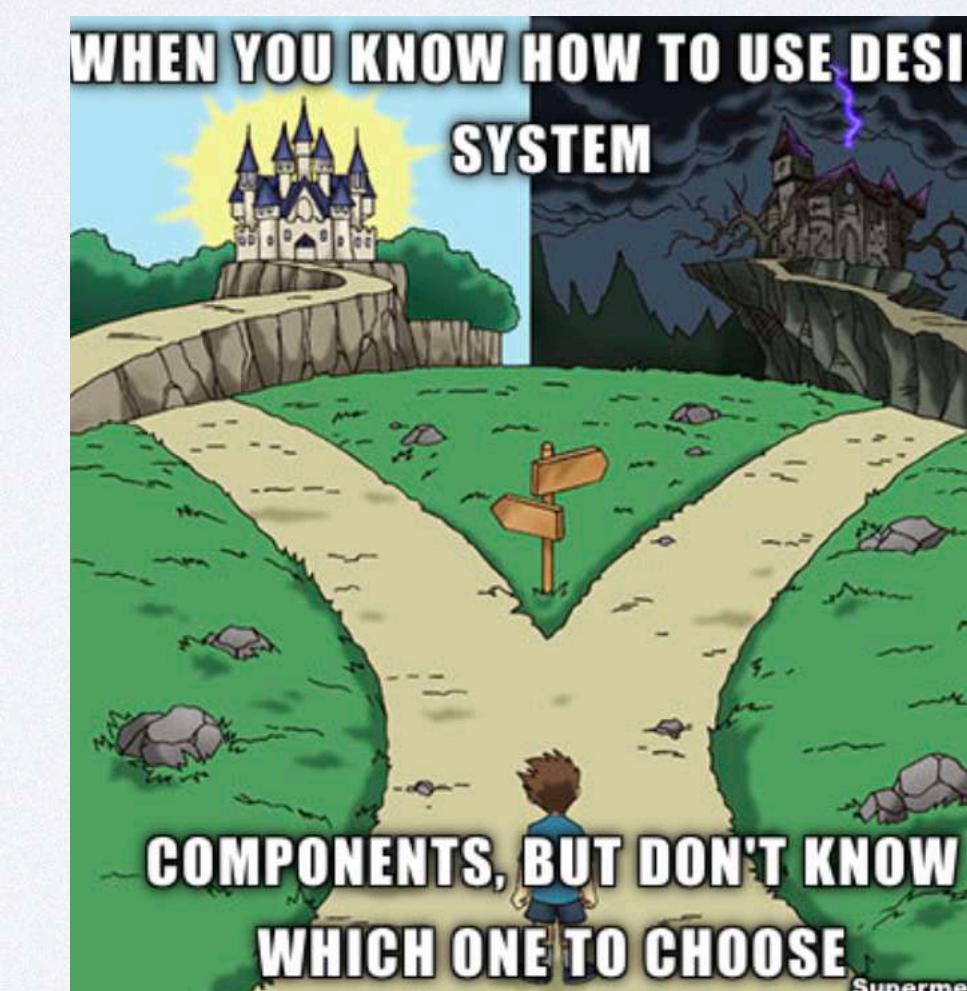
Manage Organizations & Teams

# 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  
Cancelled: 0  
[View all orders](#)

**Total product discounts**  
1  
Activated: 1  
Deactivated: 0  
[View product discounts](#)

**Total cart discounts**  
5  
Activated: 5  
Deactivated: 0  
[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.