



# A strategic guide to developing successful design teams

Katharina Koberdamm | X4B Conference Prague | 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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# Develop Design Team & Build Design Capability





# Reality in Design Teams



**Workload**

**Deadlines**

**Politics**

# Design Leaders oftentimes struggle

A woman with long blonde hair and glasses is sitting at a desk, looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. Her hand is resting on her chin. In the background, there is a computer monitor and some office equipment. The entire image has a blue tint, and there are three red callout boxes with white text overlaid on it.

**Finding time for  
internal topics**

**Prioritising the right  
initiatives**

**Getting stakeholder  
support**

**My approach**

**Strategic**  
**Structured**  
**Proactive**

# A strategic approach to organizational development

Assess  
Current  
Situation

Define  
Vision &  
Goals

Develop  
Strategy &  
Roadmap

Drive  
Change

Manage  
Program  
Initiatives

Measure  
Practice &  
Performance

Develop Team Strategy

Implement Team Strategy

# Assess Current Situation

Honest look at the state of your team

Pain points, issues and influencing factors

Basis for working on the right challenges later on



# Define Vision & Goals

The future state  
you want to reach  
as a team

A high-level idea  
of what you want  
to achieve

Unifies the team  
and connects  
leadership



# Develop Strategy & Roadmap



The strategy is the plan  
how the vision and goals will be reached  
by your initiatives and resources.

# Develop Strategy & Roadmap

A roadmap  
towards the future  
state

Planned design  
program  
initiatives

A clear direction  
for leadership and  
team

# Drive Change

**People react very sensitive to organizational change.**

**Loosing status**

**Loosing relationships**

**Leaving comfort zone**



# Drive Change

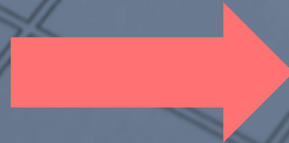
Offer guidance  
through a change  
process

Communicate  
transparently and  
offer support

Let team  
participate to  
increase adoption  
and success

# Manage Program Initiatives

Strategy and  
Roadmap



**Design Program**

Internal Project

Internal Project

Internal Project

# Manage Program Initiatives

Set up and kick-off  
internal project

Conceptualise  
Experiment  
Implement

Effectively execute  
the strategy



# Measure Practice & Performance

Understand the  
impact of changes

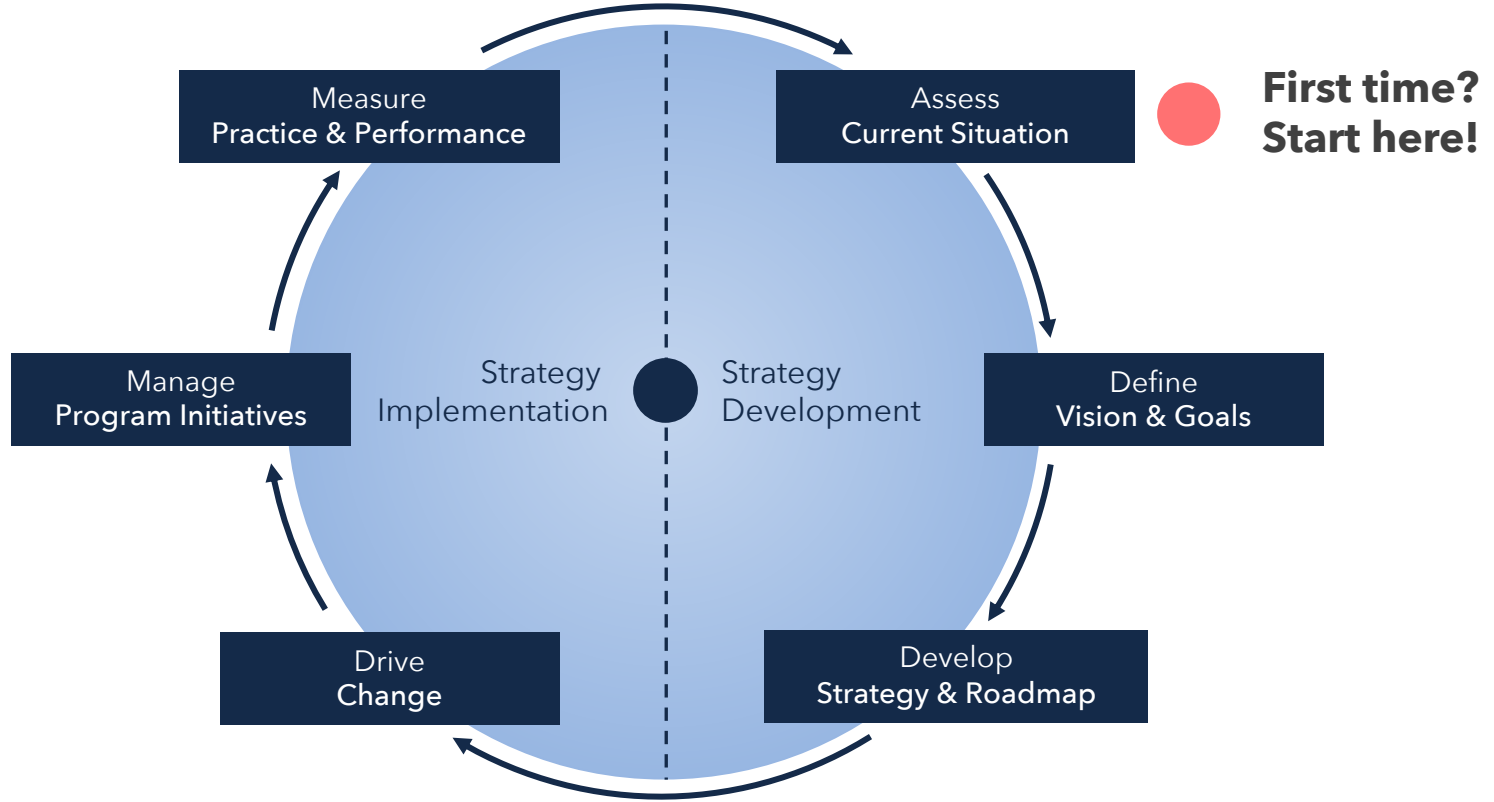
Identify new issues  
and pain points

Regularly check in  
with the team and  
share learnings

# A strategic approach to organizational development

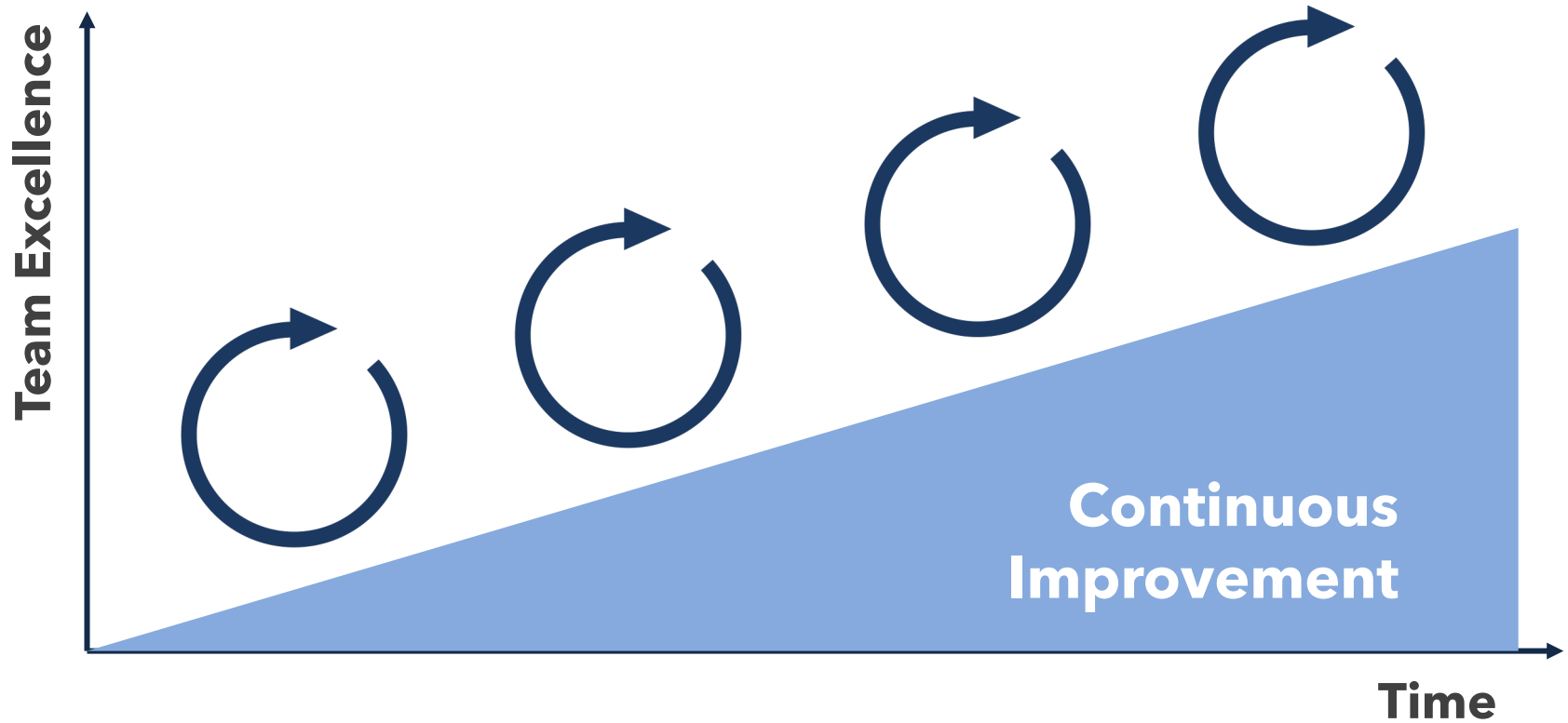


# Strategy Cycle





# Upward Spiral



# CASE STUDY

# Meet Mary and Paul

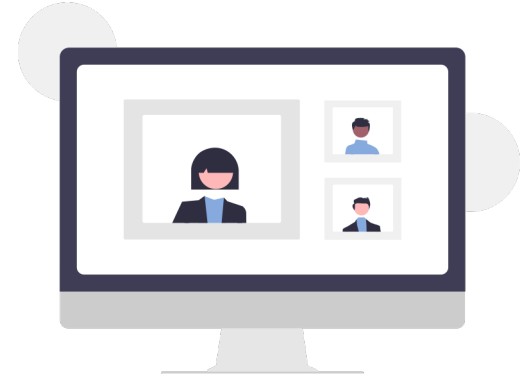




Team Workshop



Team Survey

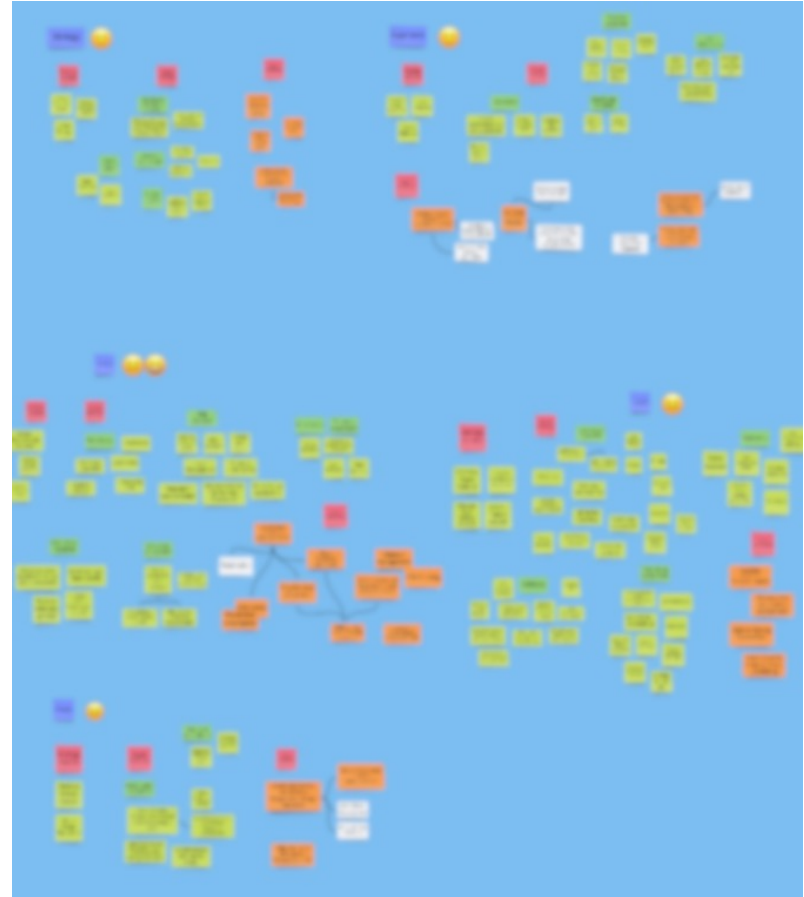


Structured Assessment

**3-4 Weeks**



# Many Insights



# How might we

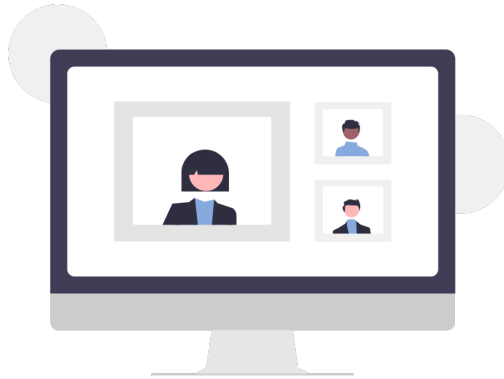
**Design Culture**

**Collaboration**

**Creative Guidance**

**Design Consistency**

**Design Innovation**



Leadership Workshop

Creative Writing

**1 Week**

# Team Vision

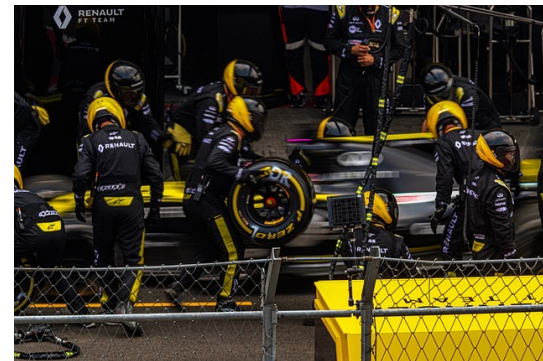
We stand together as a team with a strong design culture and team spirit

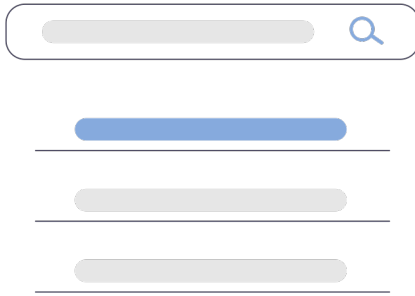
We are renowned for our design excellence

Our stakeholders are impressed with the value design brings

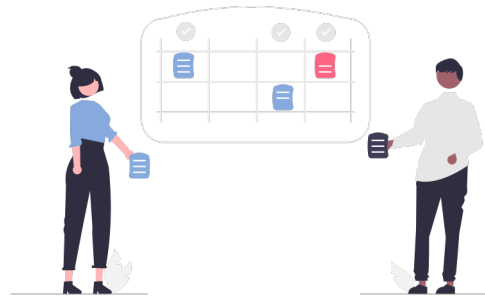


# Vision Board

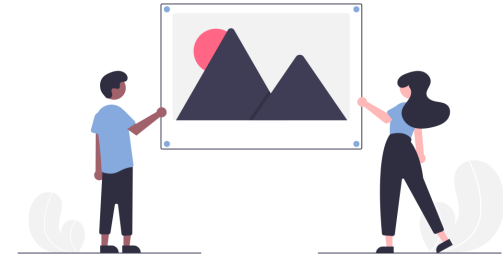




Best Practice Research



Leadership Workshops



Stakeholder Presentation

4 Weeks

## Research Best Practices

Books

Articles

Videos

# Solution Ideas

Develop Design System

Set up career program

File Naming Conventions

Design + Agile Workflow

Mentoring Program

Redesign workspace

Foster Collaboration

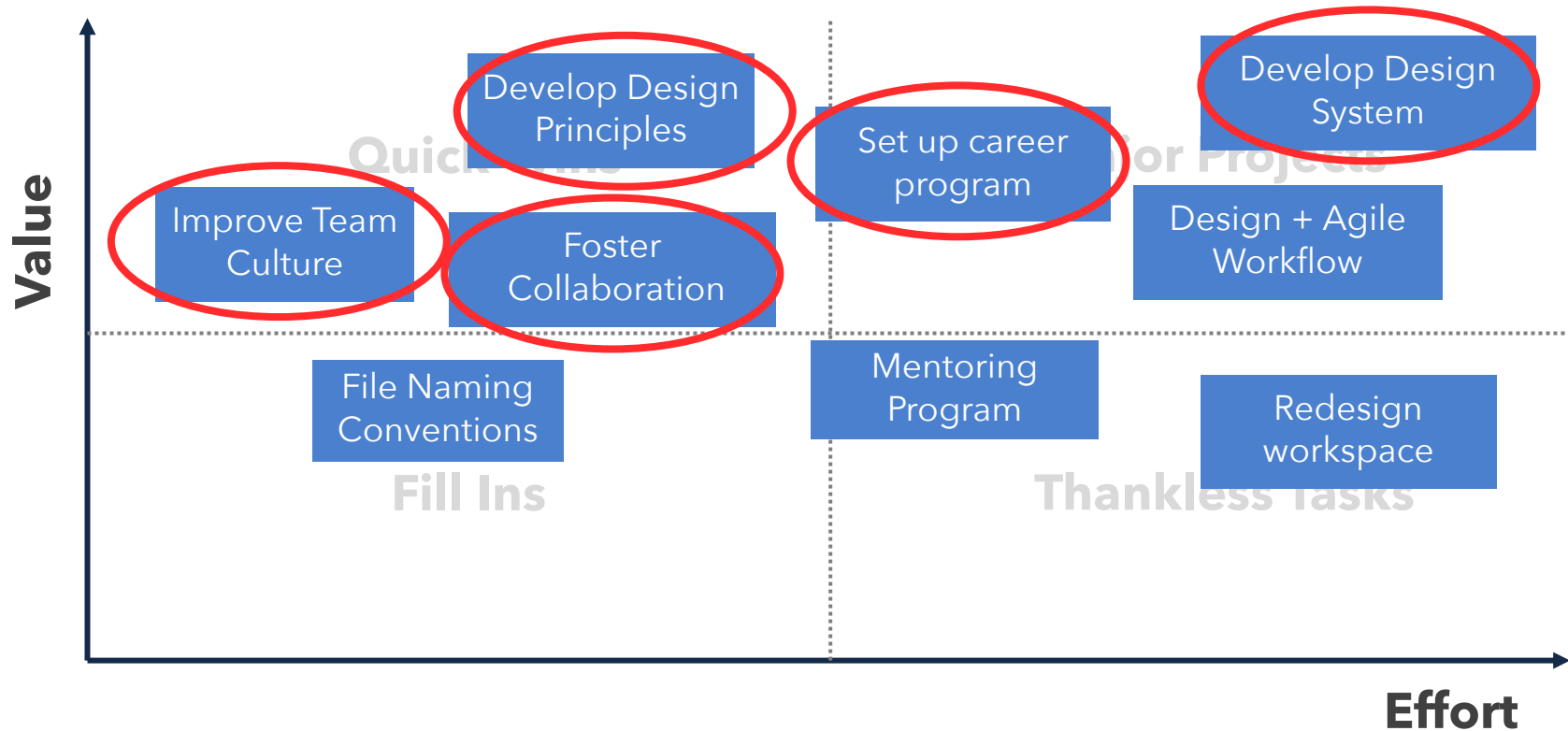
Improve Team Culture

Develop Design Principles

...







Improve Team  
Culture

Develop Design  
Principles

Foster  
Collaboration

Set up career  
program

Develop Design  
System

## Strategy Template

### What we want to achieve

Build a  
team  
identity

Increased  
motivation

Better  
quality  
through  
feedback

Less  
isolation in  
product  
teams

Strong  
design  
team  
culture

Better  
relationships  
in the team

### First Ideas

Communities  
of Practice

Organise  
Team  
Events

Optimise  
meeting  
schedule

Set up  
team  
rituals

Define  
team  
values

Introduce  
Design Crit  
Sessions

Re-define  
leadership  
style

### First Steps

Team  
Workshop  
"Values"

Set up  
responsibilities  
for team  
topics

Set up  
team  
building  
events

### Possible Barriers

Conflicts with  
Scrum  
Organisation

Not  
enough  
time

Conflicts of  
Interest  
(Dev. vs.  
Design)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Improve team culture	Teambuilding and Design Culture			
Develop Design Principles	Team Workshop and Website			
Foster collaboration		Team Events and Meetings		
Set up career program		Define Career Paths	Set up trainee program	Talent Development
Develop Design System	Analyse Requirements, Research Tools, Define Design Language, Set up Design System			







Design Team Meeting

**1 Week**

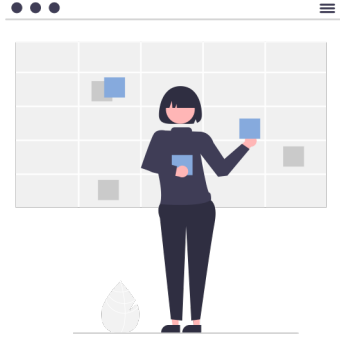
"We did not have any time at all to work on our strategic team topics..."



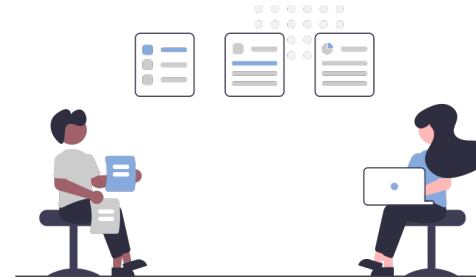
**Prioritising client or product work**

**No dedicated time slots**

**Too much focus on ad-hoc tasks**

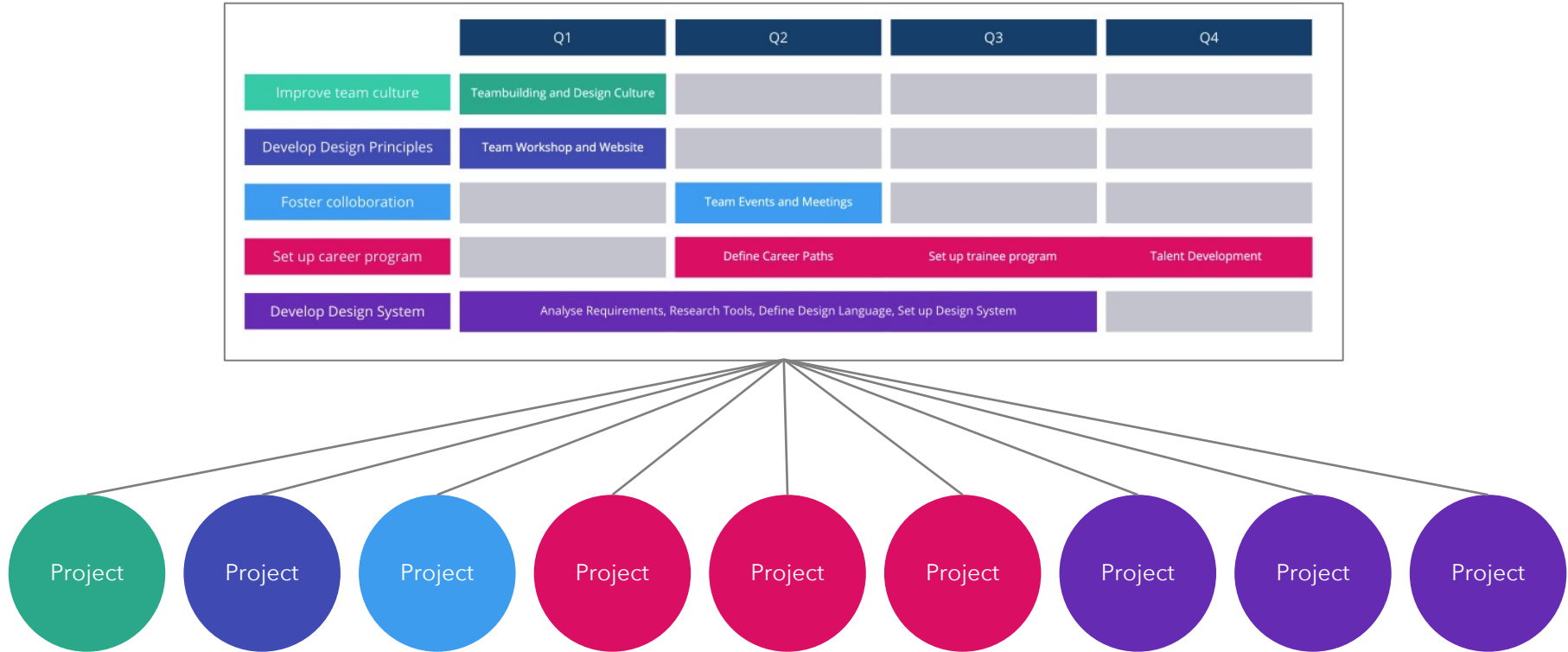


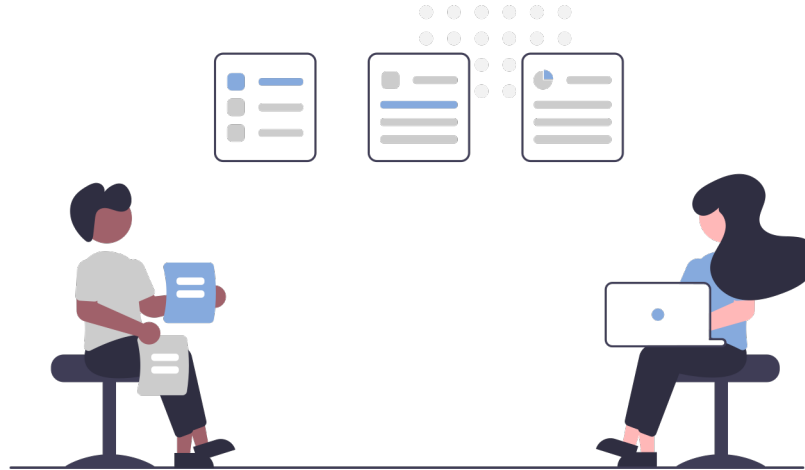
Set up Internal Projects



Regular Timeblocks

**Several work streams**





**Leadership blocked a 4h time slot per week  
dedicated to organisational topics**





Team Survey

Design Team Offsite

**Every six months**

**Every year**

# Outlook Case Study



**First goals reached**

**Clear path ahead**

**Guided by structured  
approach**

# Wrap up

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Current  
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Define  
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Drive  
Change

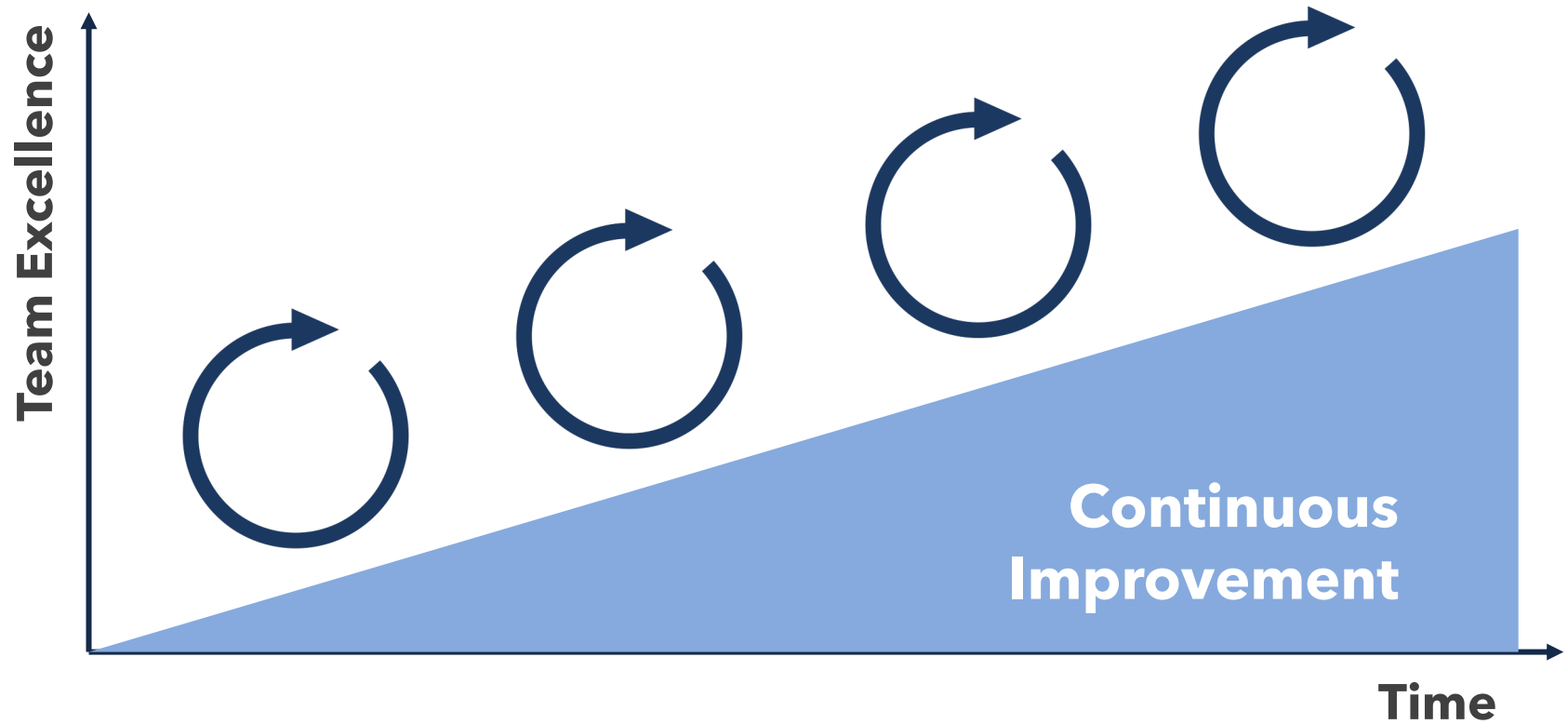
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## Wrap up





## Wrap up

**Structured Process is helpful**

**Organizational Change takes time**

**Design Leaders need to make the effort**



# Design Leadership Framework



STRATEGY	EXPERIENCE	OPERATIONS	ENTERPRISE	TEAM
Assess Current Situation	Develop Design Principles	Define Organizational Structure	Align with Business Strategy	Build and Scale Design Team
Define Vision & Goals	Define Design Language	Define Design Workflow	Build Stakeholder Alliances	Develop Team Culture
Develop Strategy & Roadmap	Advocate User Perspective	Manage Work Streams	Develop Design Culture	Provide Feedback & Guidance
Drive Change	Promote End-to-End Experience	Facilitate Collaborative Design	Promote Design Capabilities	Manage Recruiting & Onboarding
Manage Program Initiatives	Drive Innovation	Ensure Coherence & Quality	Support Enterprise Challenges	Foster Talent Growth
Measure Practice & Performance	Provide Creative Direction	Define Work Environment	Build Design Reputation	Develop Leadership Skills
		Enable Knowledge Exchange		Manage External Partners

# Further information

## DESIGN LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Katharina Koberdamm

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### Overview

A framework for leading design teams and building the design capability.

The Design Leadership Framework offers a concise overview of the most important aspects to look into when leading and managing a design team.

It serves as a practical compass for design leaders in a digital era when design needs to be both a driver of innovation as well as efficient support for product development.

THE DESIGN LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

**REFERENCE**

Influence and support the innovation of products, services and experiences with a human centered design and a design driven approach. Develop and define strategic design means for the enterprise and all its teams. Use creative problem finding and solving for relevant design decisions.

**OPERATIONS**

Define the organizational structure, processes, tools and roles continuously to support and manage the delivery of the design work. Build capability and culture for teams and establish the team by setting design goals and clear roles.

**STRATEGY**

Develop a vision and strategy for the design team and the design work. Engage and manage the necessary resources to execute your strategy. Measure and improve continuously.

**ENTERPRISE**

Align the design team with other business functions and stakeholders and establish a design led culture. Formulate the responsibilities of the design team and establish strategic design goals. Represent the design team both internally and externally.

**TEAM**

Manage and build the design team so that everyone feels included and engaged. Foster an inspiring team culture and be a supportive leader that gives team members a chance to shine and define clear career paths.

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The areas of design leadership (click to enlarge)

Coming  
Soon

## DESIGN LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LEADING  
DESIGN TEAMS AND BUILDING THE  
DESIGN CAPABILITY.

KATHARINA KOBERDAMM

# Thank you!

**Katharina Koberdamm**

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