ATLASSIAN

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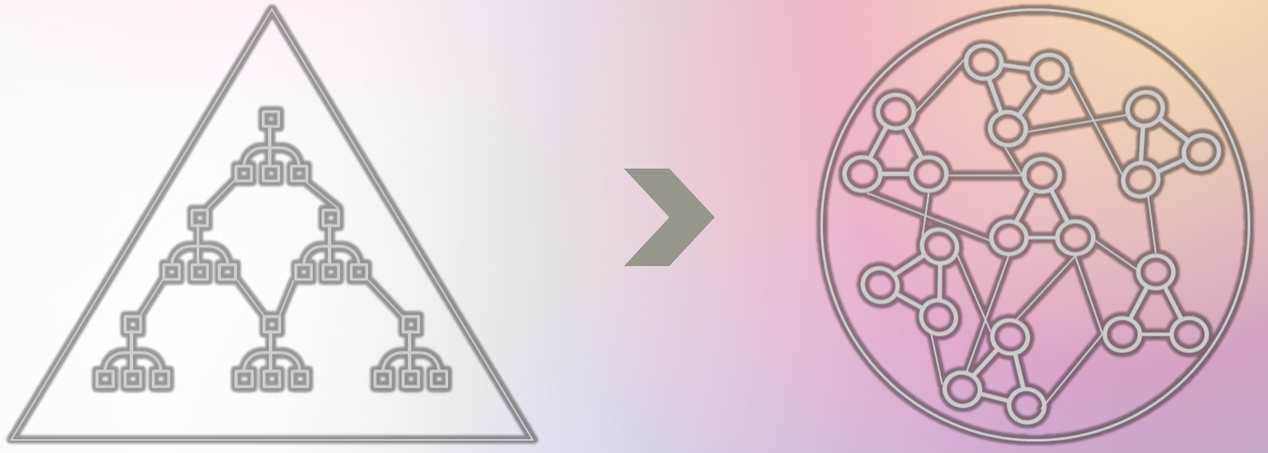
FROM HIERACHIES TO CIRCLES

A change of habits & way of working of 5000 people



Rekha Priyesh & Ulrike Josefa Rasch | Accenture Business Agility | April 2023

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AGENDA

Part 1

2

Start small & experiment

1

Part 2

Spread, grow & lead

2

1

Part 1

Start small & experiment

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Beginning of 2017

Five ambitious agile coaches…

… asked themselves a question:

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Unsuitable Structure

How do we leverage our agile expertise to stay ahead of our competition while being part of a traditional consultancy?

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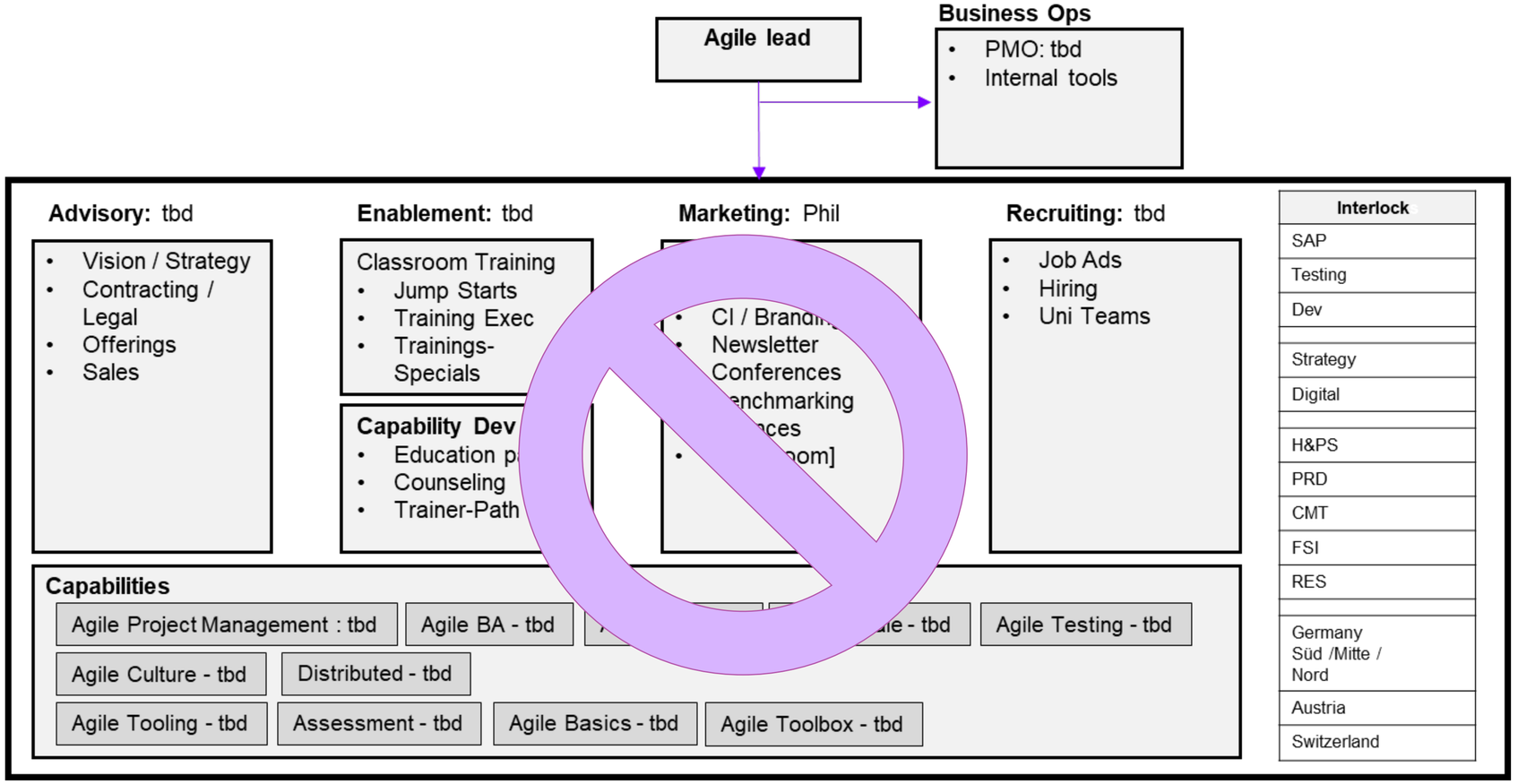
We started to do what we had learned for so long and came up with a classical Org-Chart

First Try!



... Failed but we continued to dig deeper

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Lack of Offerings

… as one of the biggest tech consultancies in the DACH region, we were not known for agile expertise, nor did we have suitable offerings

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Lack of Collaboration

… Agile expertise was widespread in silos, usually outnumbered and though hindering exchange and joint learning

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Missing Community

… another problem was the lack of an internal “safe space” to experiment and fail, and for that the lack of a joint identity and culture

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So, we took a step back to check what we (actually) wanted to achieve and defined four design principles

1 Flexible and market-oriented structures

2 Objective driven Collaboration

Creating Intrapreneurship at all levels

4 Distributed leadership & decision principles

3 Transparent and defined flow of requests

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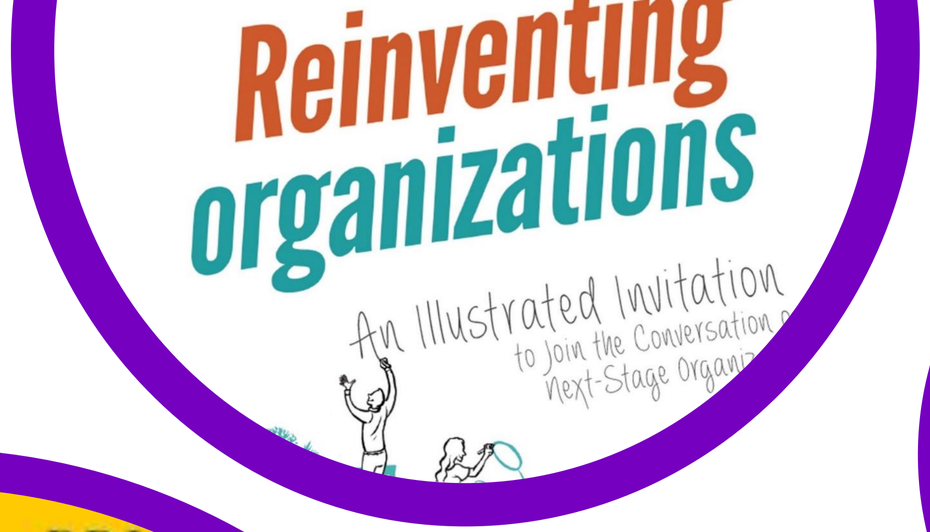
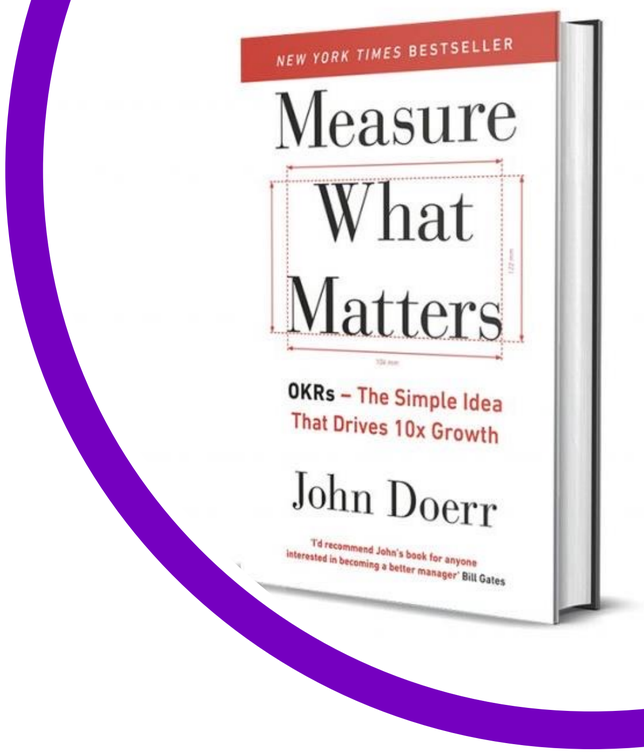
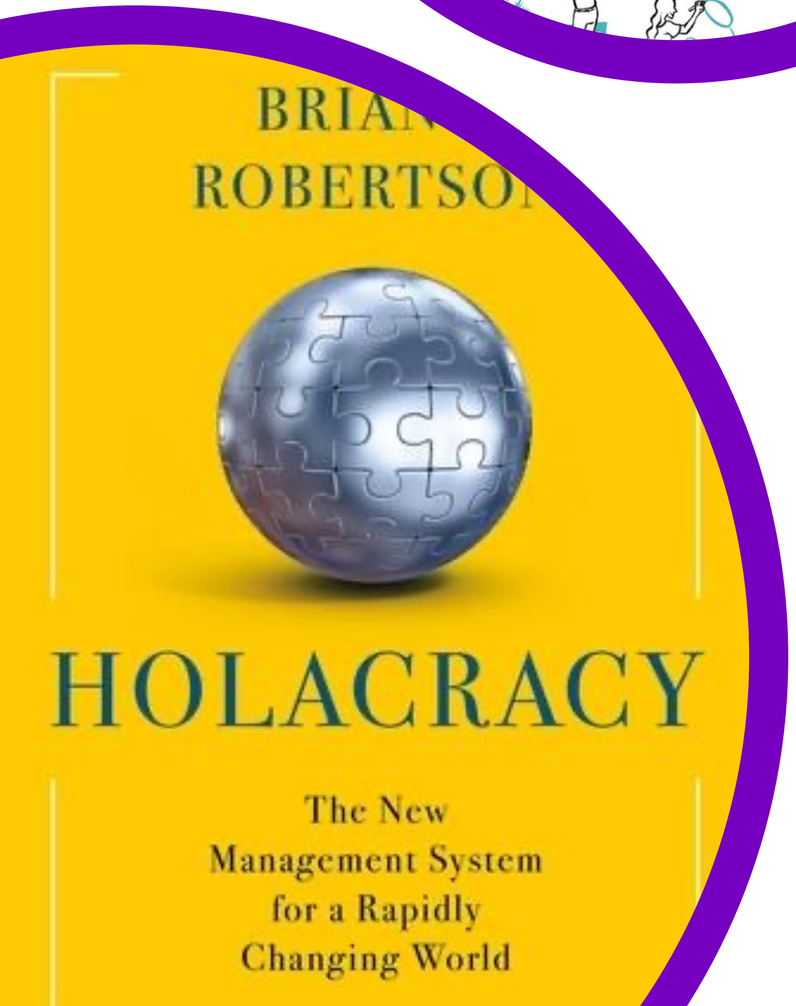
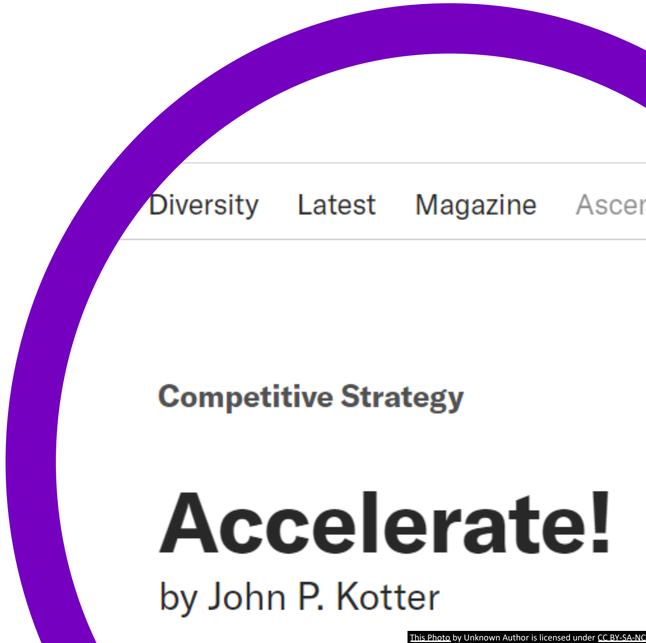






When researching, we faced many excellent (but quite) heavy frameworks...

... and decided to pull & plug what works best for us!



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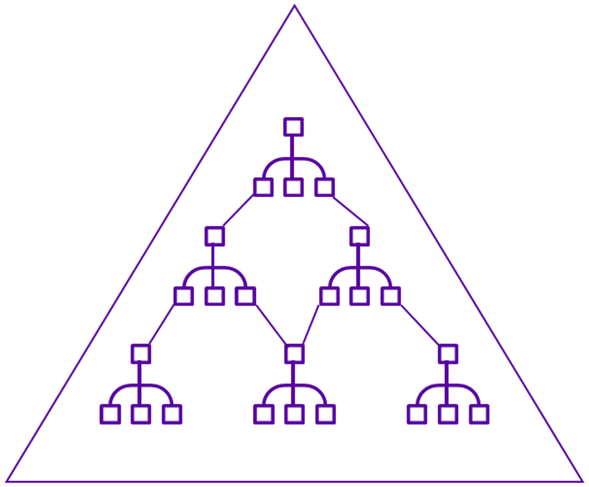
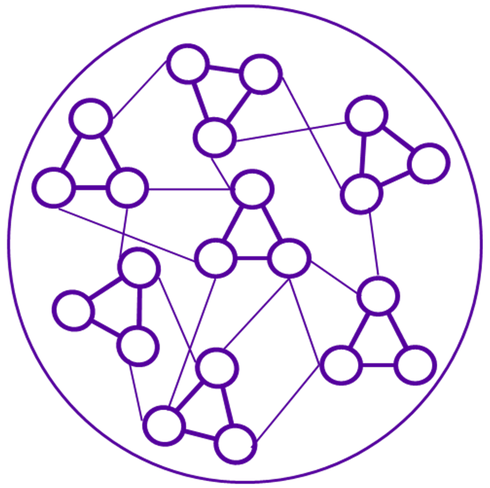
We went for a network structure that would enable us to innovate and adapt as needed

First Step: organize our people into **purpose-driven and self-organized circles**



CURRENT



NEW

Henry Ford “Why is it every time I ask for a pair of hands, they come with a brain attached?”

Our aim was to install a **“Living Network organization”**… which is characterized by distribution of power with an integrative decision-making process.

1. PURPOSE

Every circle needs a business **purpose and goal;** they are free in how to reach it.

2. ROLES

Each circle has defined **accountabilities, specific role definitions, and responsibilities**.

3. DECISION MAKING

Decision-making power is where know-how lies – thus, in each Circle. They **act as their own businesses**.

4. PROCESSES

All **processes are stored centrally** for **maximum transparency and efficiency**.

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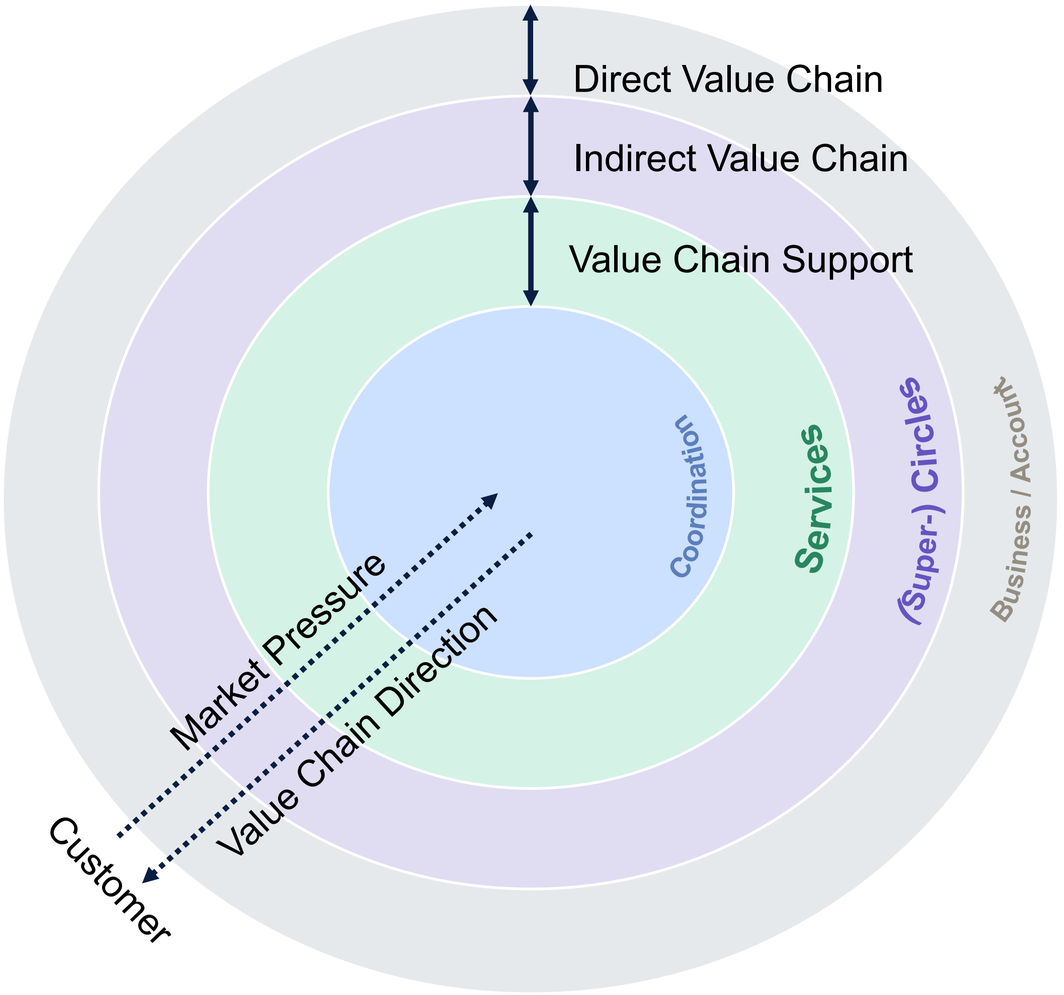
We developed a specific Circle pattern to form our network organization structure

Coordination Circles
Decision-making circles and therefore virtual and non-operative.

Service Circles
Supporting other Circles to be more effective in their added value.

(Super-) Circles
Purpose-driven capabilities and/or business units.

Business/ Account-Circles
Generating direct customer value and delivering results directly to the client.



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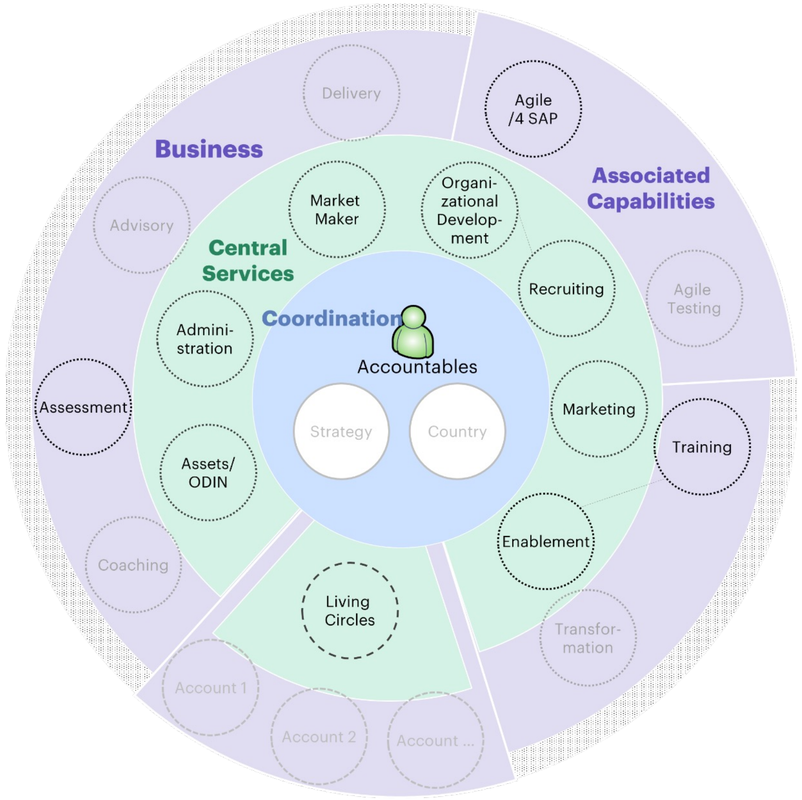
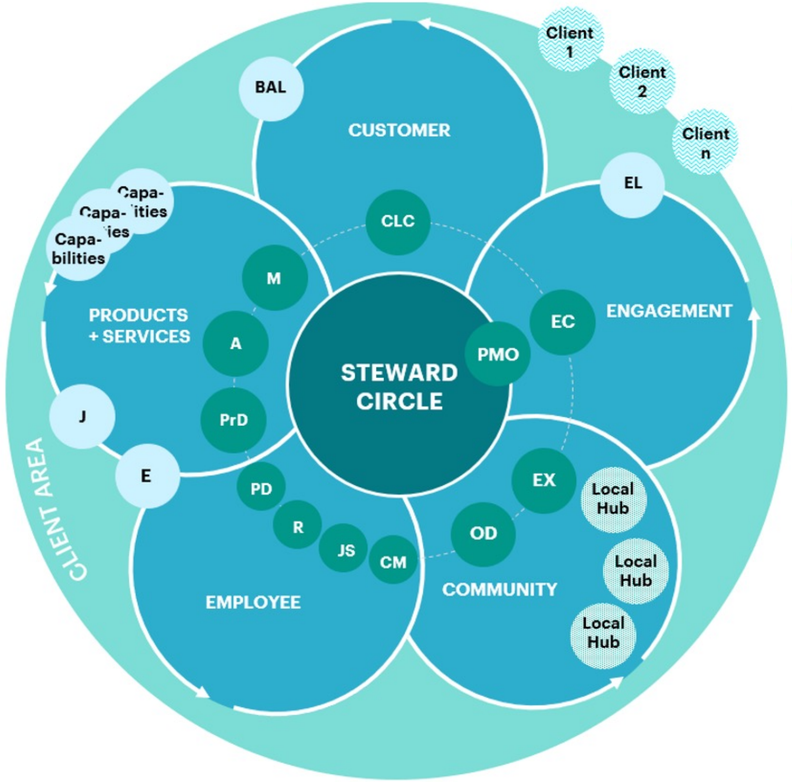
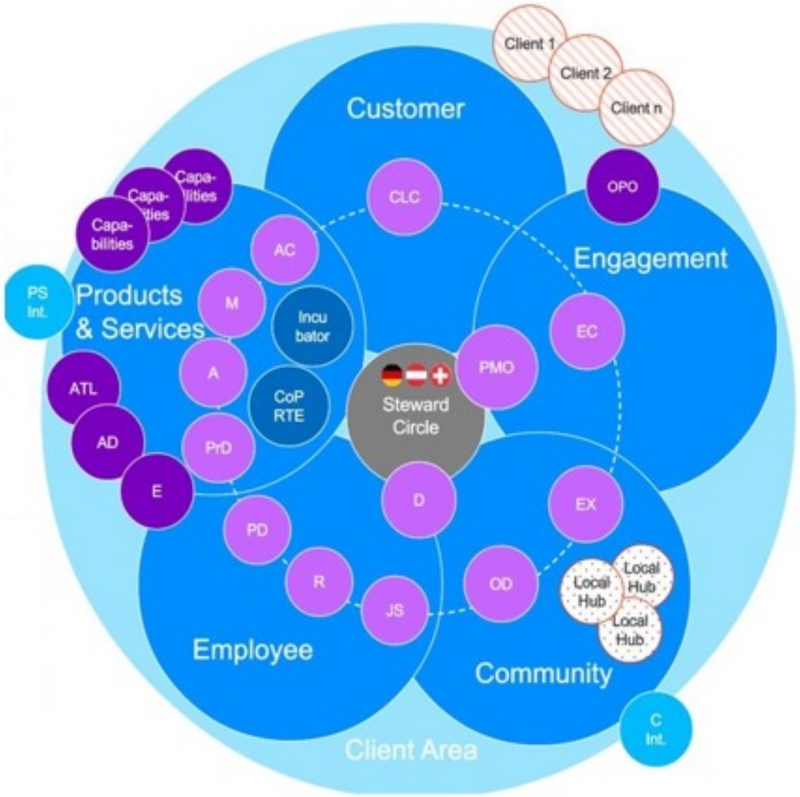
Our first version was embraced well and we did not stop with that, rather continued to evolve







Living Agility › **Solutions IQ** › **Business Agility**

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We developed a Circle Implementation Roadmap to get new circles started

0 **Define Purpose & get buy in**
What do you want to do?
Where do you want to go?
Who would support it from leadership?

1 Set-up **collaboration space** (e.g. Confluence) & team

2 Define Sub-Circles and roles with **clear accountabilities** to be effective

3 **Identify your community & circle members** by e.g. Self-Selection workshops

4 Use Jira to **illustrate work transparently** (Kanban)

5 Define **regular meetings** for operational & coordination of work and communication.

6 Setup **governance structure** & meetings and regularly **assess the maturity**

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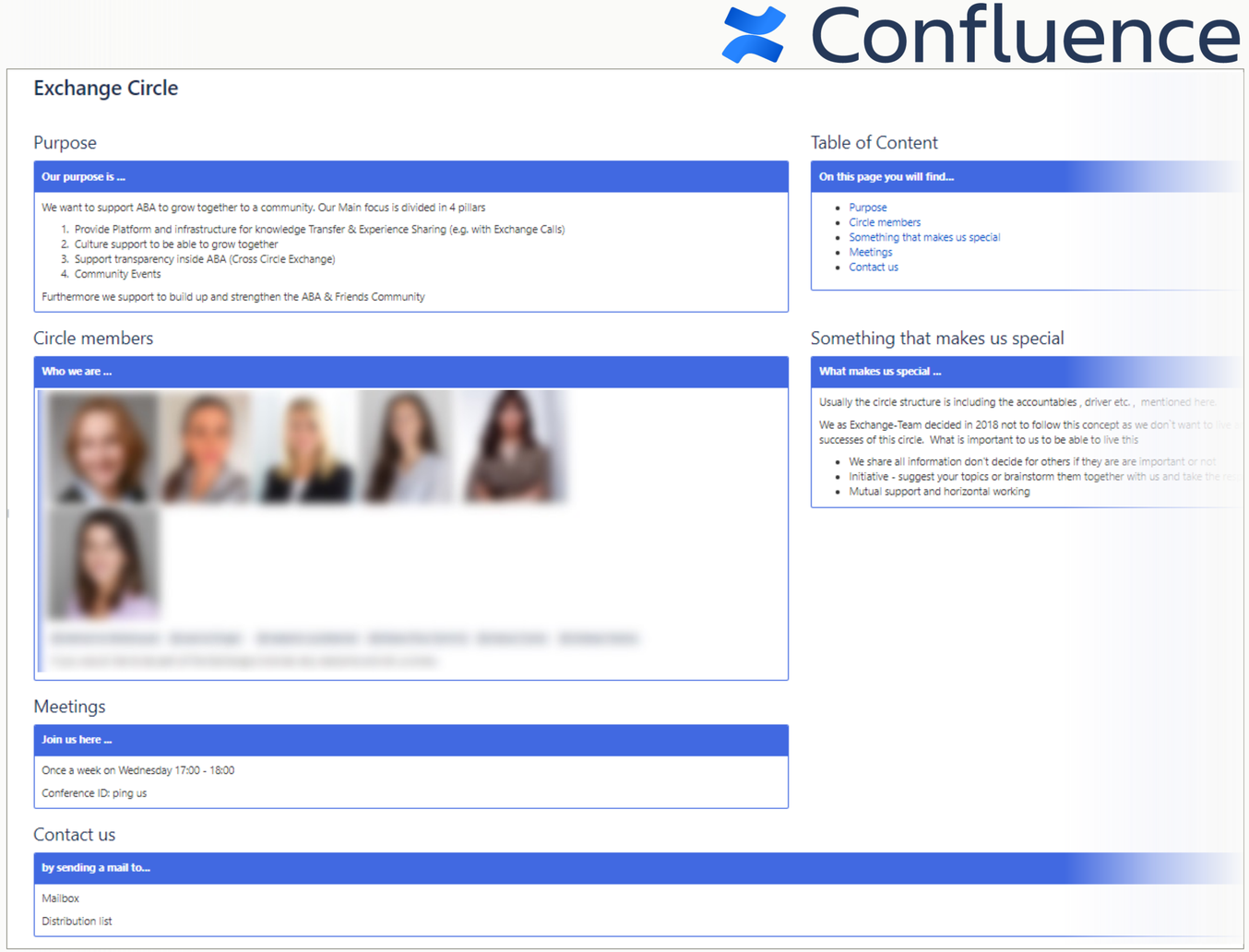
Step One is common collaboration space

We use Confluence to visualize our circle structure, their purpose, process & roles



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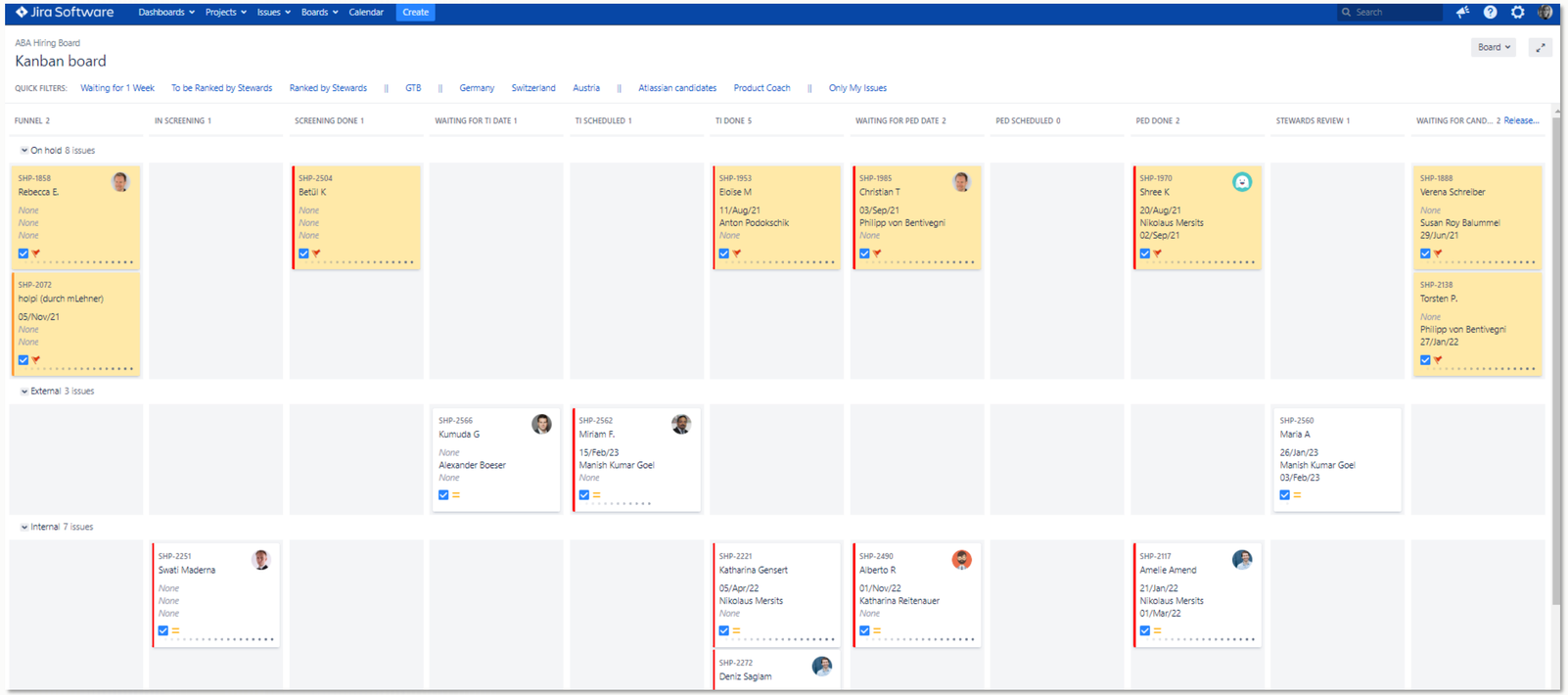
Making work transparent

We use Kanban boards in Jira to manage our circle flows as e.g. sales & hiring pipelines

Jira Software



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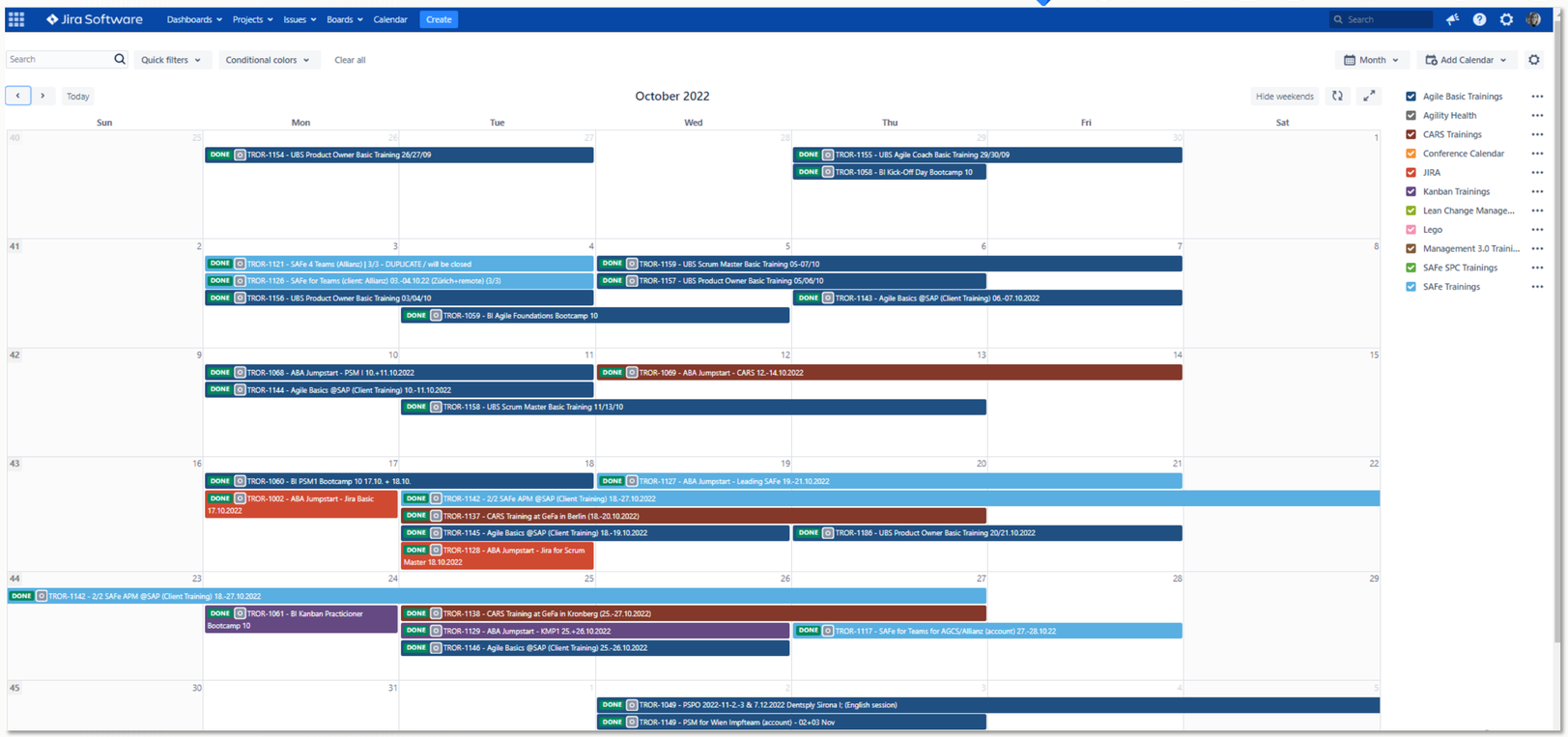
Making Events calendar accessible to everyone

We use the calendars in Jira to plan and organize, e.g. common events and client trainings we offer



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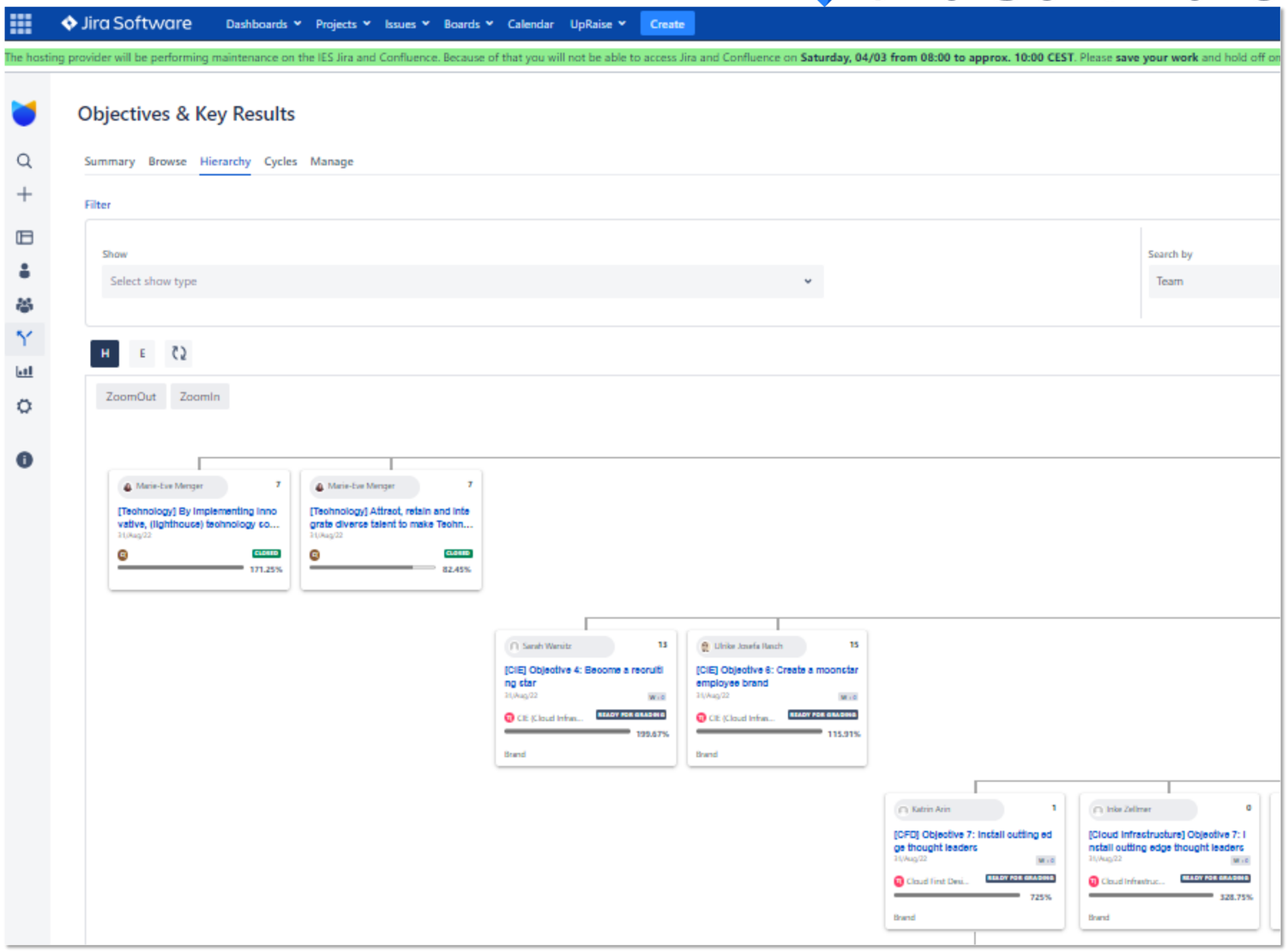
Visualizing our common goals

We use a plugin in Jira to visualize, manage and align our goals (Objectives & Key Results)



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… and our outcomes after embracing the new structure

Community: „ABA“

Innovation: New Assets

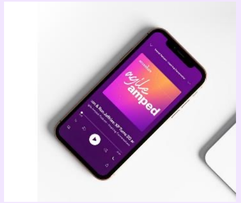
Designed to help RTEs, Teams & Business Owners

Implementing Lean Change through Coaching

Virtual PI Plannings will make companies fall or soar

Mastery of Agile Contracting can avoid losing money

Coms & Thought Leadership



Find the latest of our community news and shared experience on our website and Agile Amped Podcast

Unlock Business Agility

Business Agility Report

Five Common Hurdles

New Revenue Streams

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Part 2

Spread, grow & lead

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We defined a Change Acceleration Compass to scale our agile circle approach from 150 to 5000 people

1. PLANNING
Change Management Plan:

We defined 100-day plans **iteratively with specific change activities for the upcoming three sprints**

2. COMMUNICATING
Our Sprint Approach:

We followed a sprint-like routine **to regularly provide the community with hot topics every 4-6 weeks**

3. CO-CREATING
Change Network:

We built a network of Change SPOCs across our Circles **to spread and amplify key messages**

4. MEASURING
Change Tracking:

We measured various OKRs **to continuously improve our change efforts**

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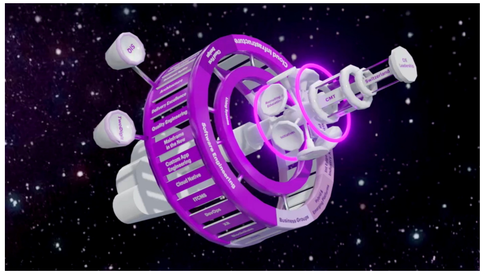
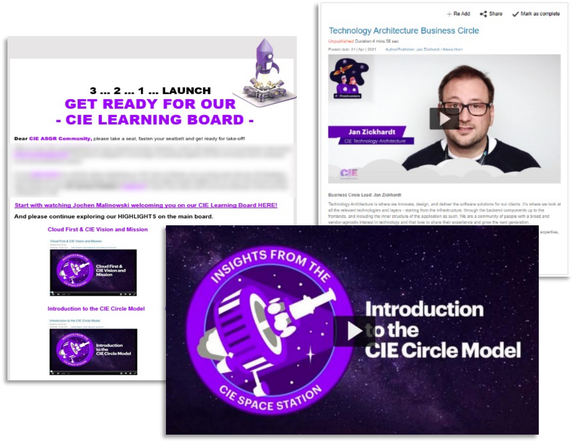
However, the key design principles were the ones that created identity and intrinsic motivation among our people

1 **Content-driven:** To carry our change into all circles, every of our internal communication pieces was related to our Manifesto



2 **Relentless Storytelling:** We run a unique and engaging internal brand & design and stick to it with everything we do



3 **Make it stick:** With the help of self-paced learning boards, we ensured no employee was lost during the change

4 **Beyond Expectation:** We do the unexpected and inspire our people by being unconventional (organizing exceptional community events & speakers)

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Business Circles own their Businesses, create a Home for their People

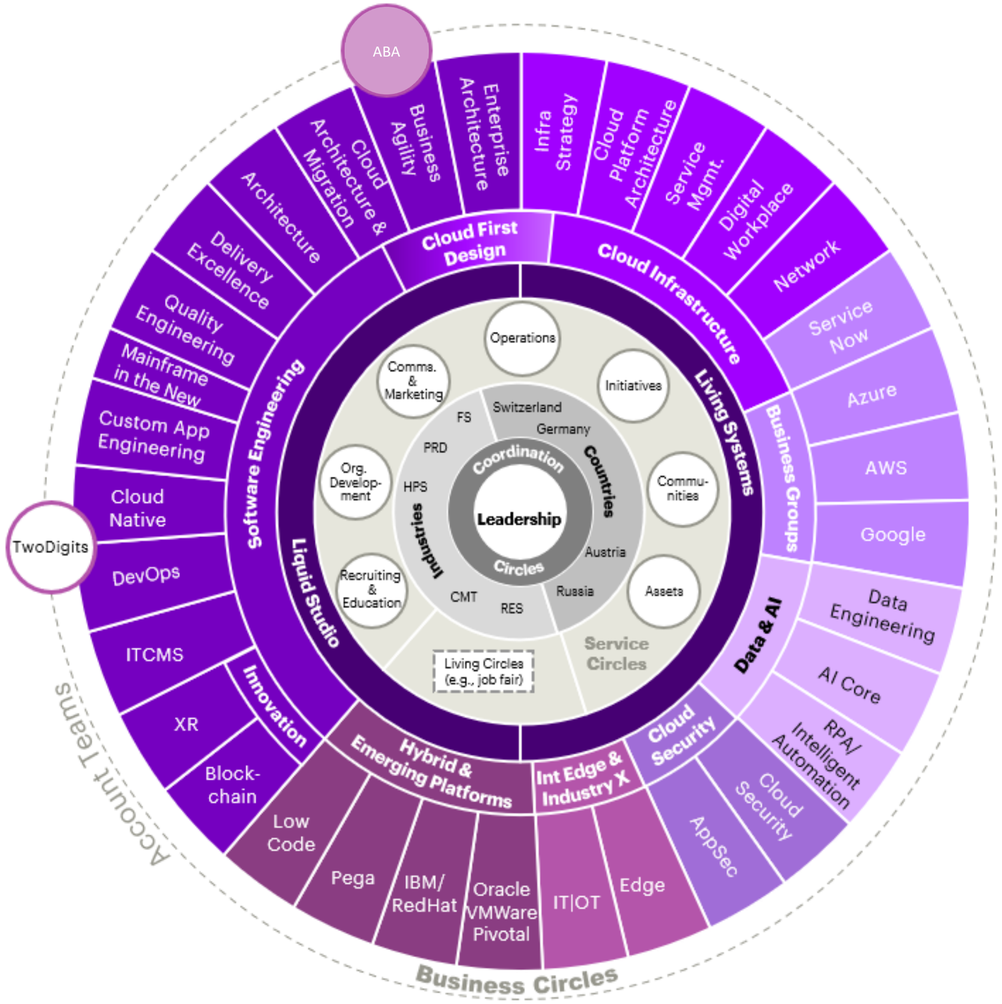
More agility, higher speed to market, greater customer value

We created a **flexible structure** **organized around internal service packages** and not people's profiles to be **more responsive** to **new business demands** and disruptive change.

We empower everyone to **take the "Driver's Seat."**

Every circle **owns its business E2E** and creates its own community and **culture** and, eventually, **brand**

› **Every Circle provides E2E services from strategy and advisory to engineering and operations**



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Outcomes you achieve when you implement a living network organization at this scale is astonishing

Freedom to Act: Connectedness with purpose over full Alignment #1

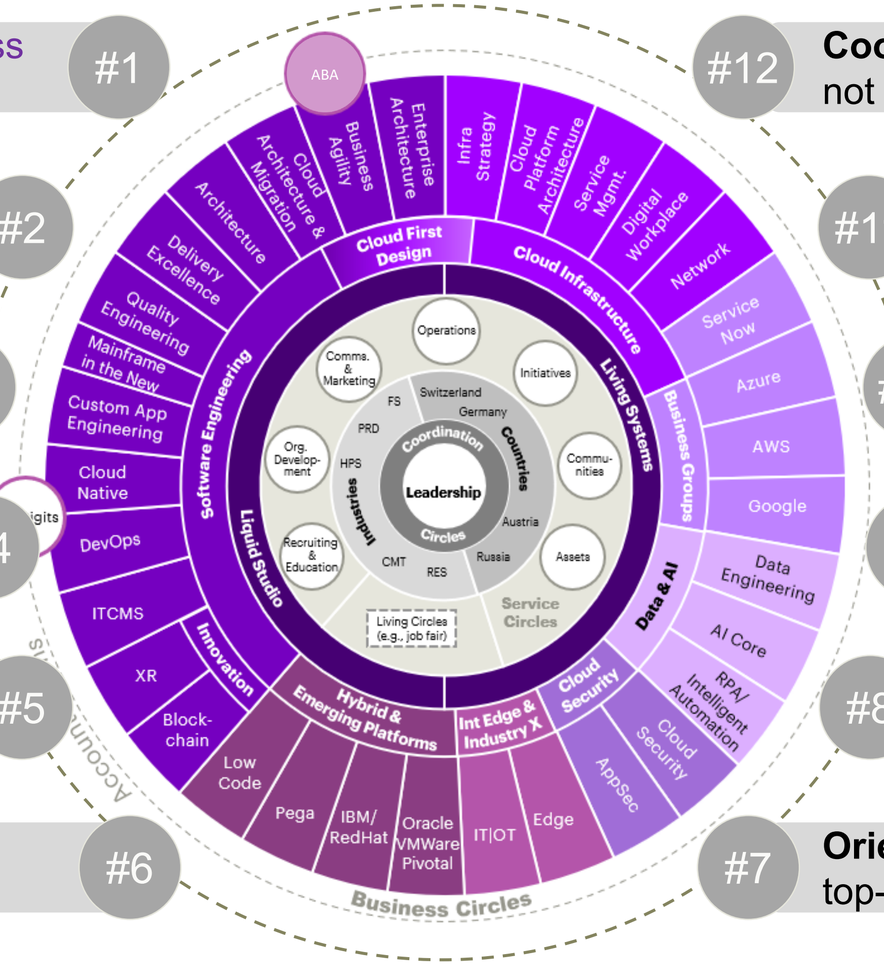
Mental Presence: Preparedness over Planning #2

Performance: Humanization over Duty Fulfillment #3

Responsibility: Circles, not Departments #4

Transparency: Information Flow over Power Accumulation #5

Success: Fit over Maximization #6



Coordination: Market Dynamics, not Commands #12

Decision-making: Fit-for-Purpose over Bureaucracy #11

Resource Usage: Purpose-driven, not Status Orientation #10

Governance: Leadership over Management #9

Recognition: Sharing, not Self-centricity #8

Orientation: Relative Targets over top-down Specification #7

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HUMAN RESOURCES
EXCELLENCE
AWARDS
2020
WINNER

GREATER THAN
AWARDS
Together. Greater Than Ever.
Winner 2020

This is **our journey!** In keeping with the nature of a journey,
we have not reached the end, and we don't want to.

Living agility network founding members:

Marcel Spillmann

Alex Birke

Philipp von Bentivegni

Jan Engelberg

Dominik Elsbroek

Thank you!

Rekha Priyesh & Ulrike Josefa Rasch | Accenture Business Agility | April 2023

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