

CO-LAB

Exploring cross-disciplinary collaboration experiences
in Cisco Norway through service design

Title
Co-Lab

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Field
Service design, Autumn 2020

The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway

PERSONAL MOTIVATION

I have always been fascinated by the novelty and convenience that technological breakthroughs bring to my life and work. Made in China 22 years ago, I am curious about the unknown world of different cultures and also enjoy exploring “Aha” moments.

I want to explore a playful way to melt the iceberg of complex cultural differences that divide people. Therefore, I began to explore this topic out of my passion for technology and curiosity about cultural differences. I am also interested in using the power of service design to shape beautiful experiences and create a desired future in the real world from different perspectives.





ABSTRACT

This experimental design diploma takes Cisco Norway as a key example to explore cross-disciplinary collaboration within a large technological organization. With the hope of sparking inspiration in people's daily collaboration with others who speak different technical languages, this project analyses the current relationships across disciplines in Cisco. In addition, the project suggests new ways of collaboration embedded in the existing workplace environment within a framework for cultural change.

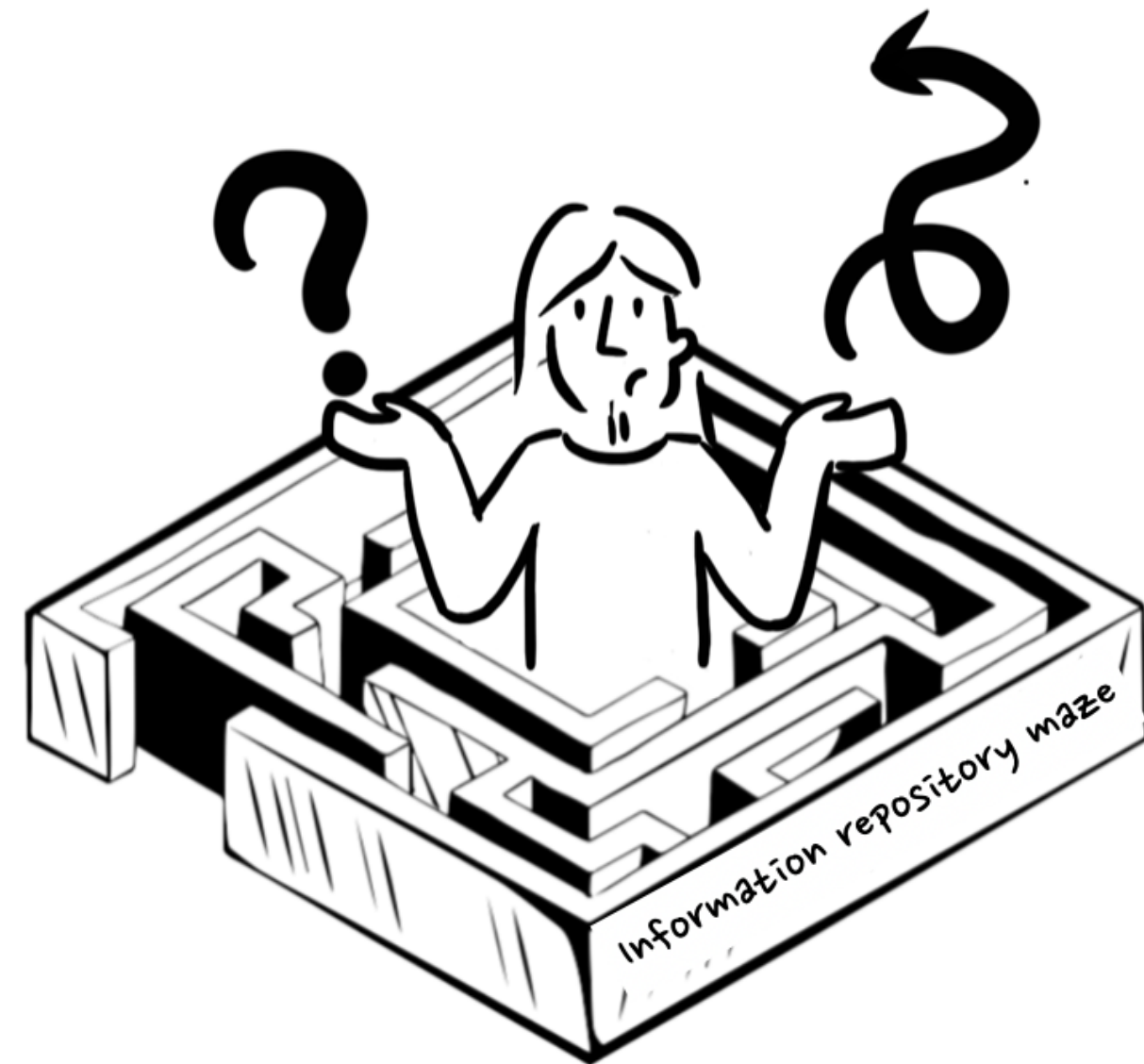
This report is designed to allow you to easily navigate and understand the project. Starting with the background, you will be walked through today's challenges of siloed disciplines; my process of research in this problem space; concept development; and my key learnings and reflections related to cultural change in Cisco's context.

Cisco employees' home offices are equipped with the best technologies to support video meetings with other colleagues all over the world.

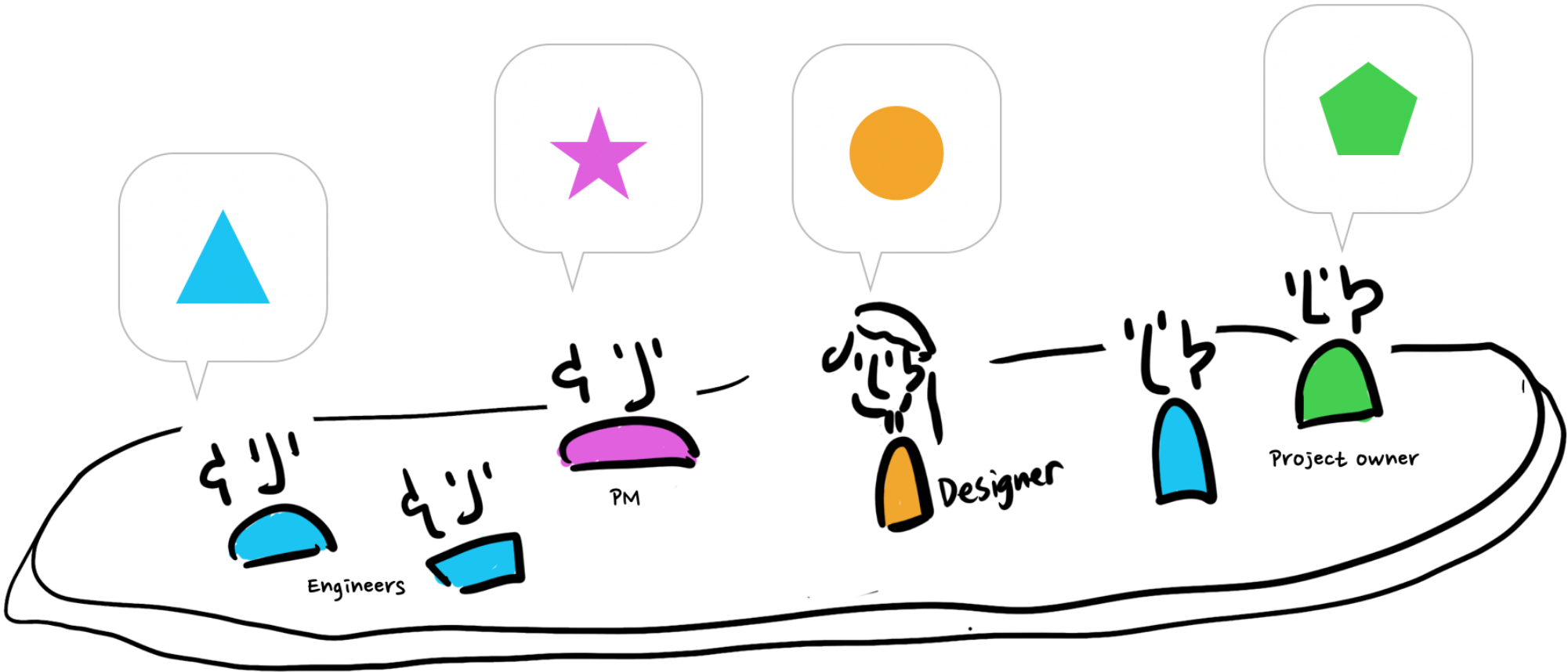


BACKGROUND STORY

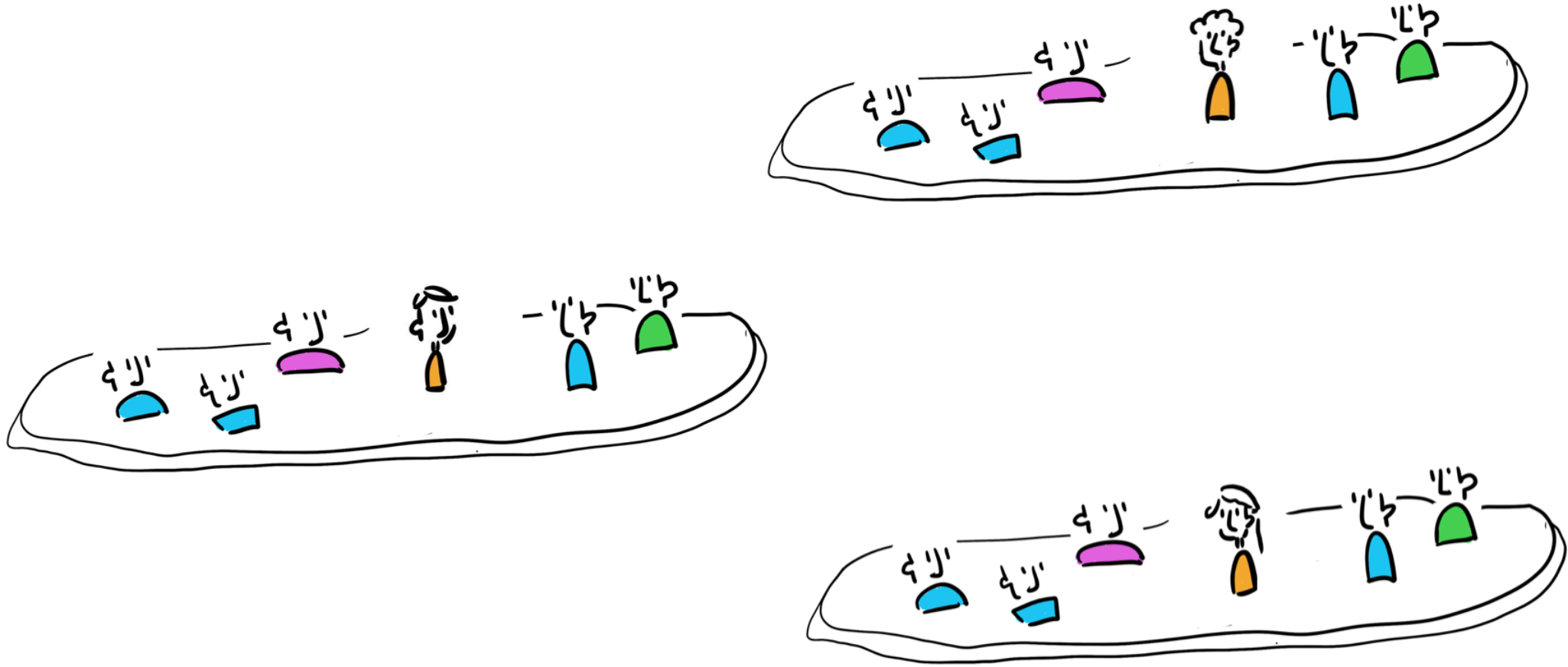
No matter where people work, they still have the same challenge of getting the right information they need within a complex organization.



These people work in diverse teams with different missions and perspectives. They also speak different technical languages.



People from the same discipline are scattered in different project islands which make them feel separated from peers with similar expertise. This also makes it difficult to coordinate across the islands.



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1.

ABOUT CO-LAB

This section outlines the project partner, topic, context and scope — along with background information.

Partnership with Cisco Systems, Norway

Cisco Webex

This diploma is made in partnership with Cisco, Norway, as a key example of a large technology-based organization. The project is scoped in-depth within the context of a collaborative culture in the workplace. The focus is to extract insights, learnings and reflections, as well as to show how this project could be relevant to improve the value of Cisco's processes and deliveries.

Cisco is the worldwide leader in IT, networking, and cybersecurity solutions that transform how people connect, communicate, and collaborate.

The design team at Cisco Norway is working on building a workplace transformation through a unified platform known as Webex. It combines calling, meetings, messages and devices for the next generation workplace. Its aim is to make a better place for teams to perform their best work, no matter where they are in the world.

“

Our end users deserve a holistic experience of Webex – and if we do it right, I think it is what will set us apart and help us win their hearts and minds.

Abhay Kulkarni
VP and General Manager, Webex Meetings



Collaboration in the workplace



Why is collaboration necessary?

Collaboration occurs when two individuals or a group of people work together towards achieving a common goal by sharing their ideas and skills (Schuman, 2006). It can happen in traditional as well as virtual teams. With advancements in technology, using cloud-based programs to share files and communicate has become commonplace.

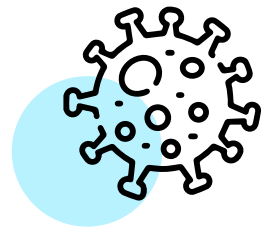
The success of a project depends on cross-team collaboration. Working in another country or with colleagues and clients from other cultures is incredibly rewarding. However, it can also be a challenge, requiring some extra effort to make things run smoothly.

In Cisco, they are aiming to make the meeting experience on their Webex platform 10 times better than in-person interactions. Embracing a collaborative mindset can help improve the quality of integrated product and service solutions, and can also be valuable for workers at all levels.

As a result of good collaboration, the organization can be more financially successful, culturally aligned, and generate higher employee engagement to lead the market within ever-changing complex situations.



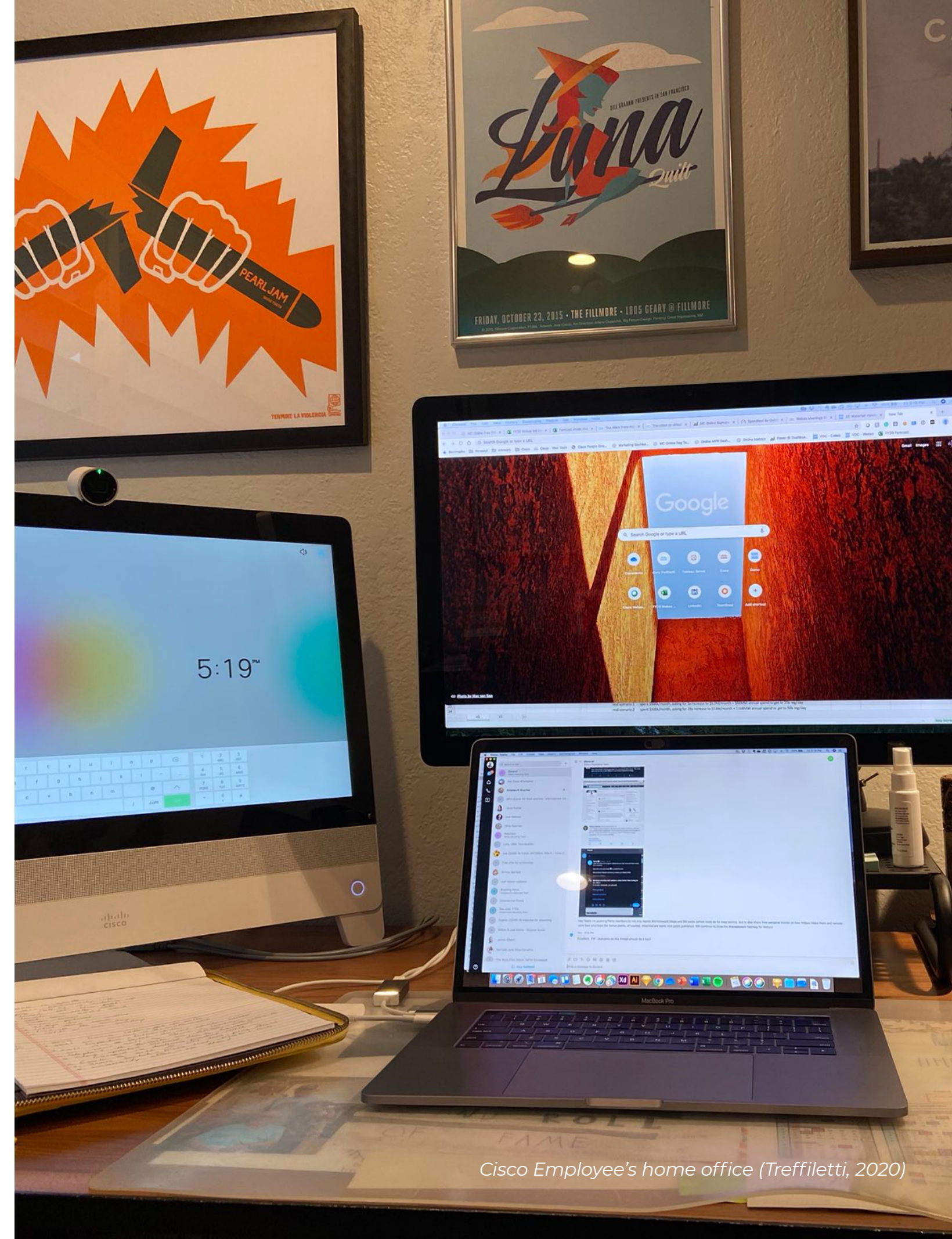
Collaboration in the workplace



New ways of collaborating have been accelerated by COVID

COVID restrictions create an important and urgent opportunity to invest in transforming how collaboration happens in organizations. “Despite the rapid adoption of virtual collaboration technologies, people still clearly value face-to-face interactions over virtual ones, in many cases, and miss the company of their coworkers.” (Gensler Research Institute, 2020)

The workplace has been forever changed. People will not simply return to the former office nor maintain their old ways of working. Instead, they will be moving forward to a new way of collaborating, no matter where they are. It might look similar in many ways, but collaboration needs to be redesigned in strategic ways.



Cisco Employee's home office (Treffeletti, 2020)

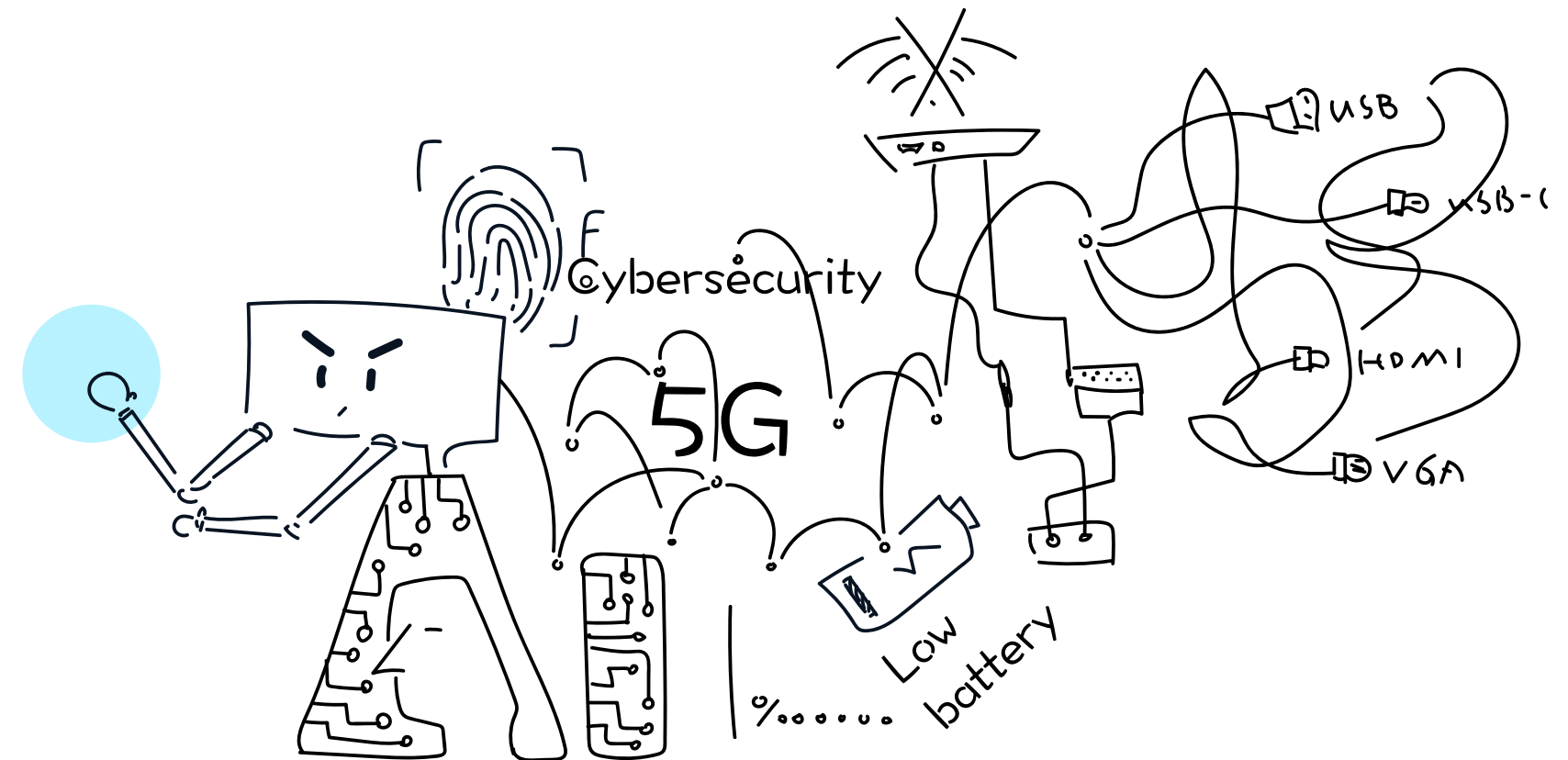
A cultural change from technology-focused to human-focused



Technology takes over

Technology is key to supporting the transition towards the future. Recently there has been a lot of emphasis on technological advances such as cybersecurity, 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML) in the workplace, which is changing the nature of work and living.

Technology has delivered and moved on, with some of the most fundamental social transformations left unsolved. Among these changes, Cisco needs to support its internal collaboration in order to align their high-tech solutions towards a more cohesive human experience.



Humanized IT

In order to create this cohesive customer experience, they need to collaborate internally first. "Culture is the accumulated and shared learning of a given group, covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of its total psychological functioning members (Schein, 2006)." Culture has a direct influence on the level of collaboration that can be achieved within the organization. It affects how different groups perceive themselves and how they interact with others.

In this era of globalization, multi-functional teams within large tech-based companies reach across different business units, geographical regions, and even outside company borders through external partnerships. That means collaboration in the workplace is increasingly occurring beyond the traditional work boundaries. This requires deliberate designing of broader cultural perspectives to catalyze ongoing change.

From siloed disciplines to coherent experience



Siloed disciplines

In a cross-functional project team, each discipline has their own point of view, requirements, and languages. These differences result in people running into barriers, frictions, and feelings of frustration and isolation from the rest of the organization. As a result people struggle to find a way to connect with other disciplines in the company. This makes it harder to co-develop creative solutions that satisfy the specialized needs from these different teams.

Silos are particularly challenging, as legacy systems and new technologies are implemented across the enterprise, further exacerbating divisions. For example, engineers develop cutting-edge sensors into new product systems, but the customer success team is not prepared for how the data is processed, which eventually confuses end-users. You can't disconnect front-end experiences from the people, processes, and technologies that support them.

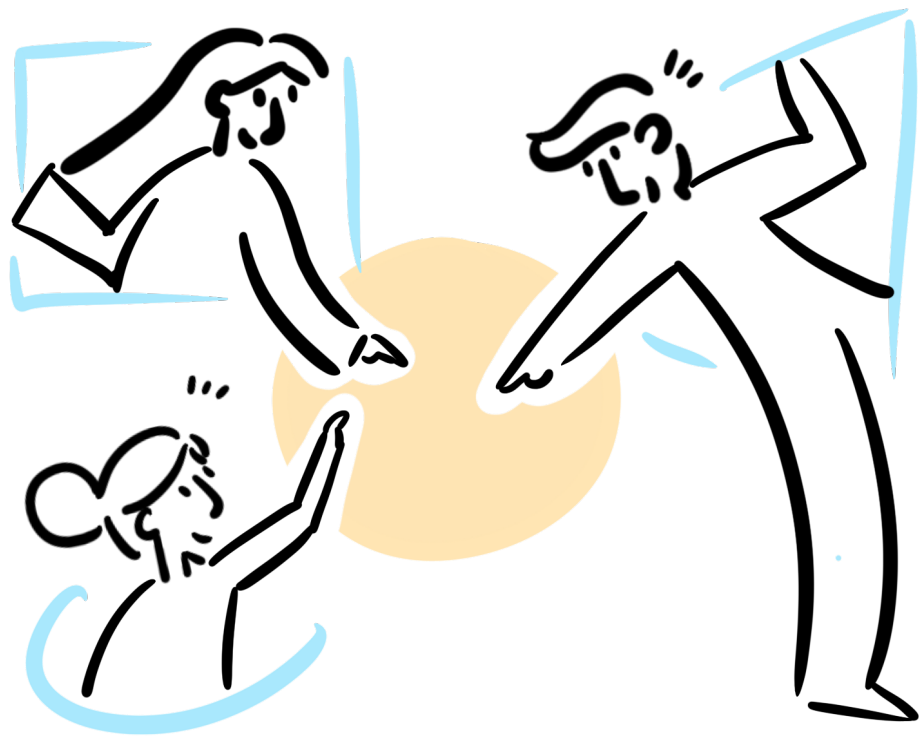


Coherent experience

Long-term success can't just rely on unique product features or one-off interactions at a single touchpoint. In order to combine these elements and not just focus on one thing, collaboration across disciplines is essential, and adds fundamental value to what Cisco wants to offer in the future: a consistent experience on a unified platform.

If this platform is delivered successfully, it will strengthen the overall relation with customers, which could elevate the value of their product and service experiences, and build stronger connections with Cisco.

Initial brief



*How can service design
enable culture change
to enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration
in Cisco Norway?*

2.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses how the project was developed. It explains the approach taken, the design process, and the methods used throughout.

Service design approach

Why service design

In the academic context service design is seen as a powerful force that can drive organizational change (Junginger, 2009). Unfortunately, service designers in Cisco feel that they are stuck making journeys, and aren't able to influence the organization.

As a newcomer to the game, service design can bring new and holistic ways of thinking and working that can be related to culture. Through close involvement and frequent iterations with stakeholders, and through the use of the 'super powers' of visualization and storytelling, service design is well equipped to complement the shaping of cultural transitions. Accordingly, big companies are becoming increasingly interested in service design. They have started to hire service designers and involve them in their business processes (Eberling, 2019).

But in-house service design in Cisco has not yet been included nor been closely involved in the whole product development process, especially in the early phases. As of now, it has only been involved in pilot projects and its role has been dominated by user journeys and service blueprints as an add-on activity.

“Having been hired as a service designer, what I struggled (with) the most is (that) I have to make journeys because they are expecting me to make those.”

Interviewee No. 1

Journeys and blueprints are communication tools and shouldn't be the only deliverable coming from service designers. This completely defeats the purpose of having them hired in the first place. Service design needs to work with all of the interdependencies and big-picture-contents to enable long-term change in such complex systems.

Service design can help in having a better understanding and serving of customers in an ongoing basis. It can also add long-term value on the future deployment of what Cisco wants to offer: collaborative and cohesive design of services and product experiences. Service design can be an important driver in organizational and cultural transformation to help teams re-imagine the design of their business and processes.



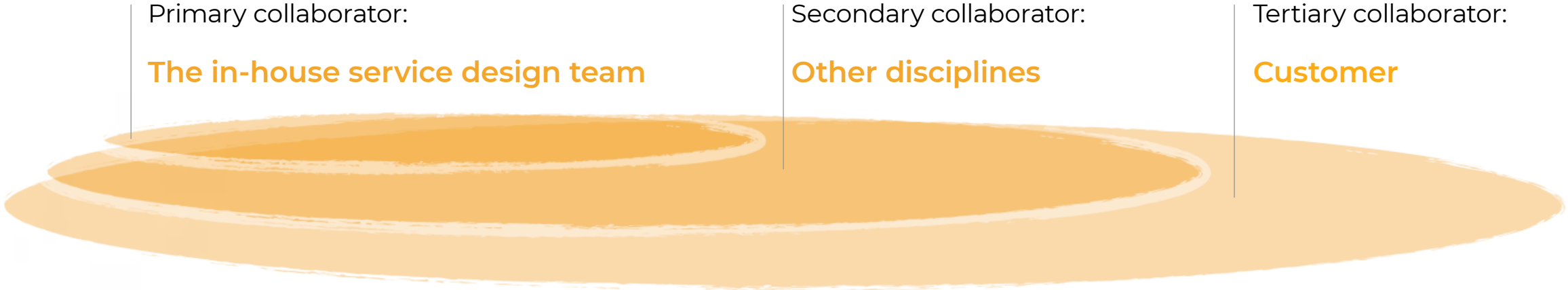
Service design approach

Three levels of collaborators

Starting from the service design approach, in this project the core target collaborator is the in-house service and research design team in Cisco.

My primary aim is to equip their facilitation role with design interventions such as tools and frameworks. My secondary aim is to help the service design team so that they can enable collaborative cultural change across diverse disciplines. This project does not focus on the customer nor Cisco's products or services.

The project framework is focused on the collaborative interactions among internal actors which in turn ripple on to the customer's experiences.

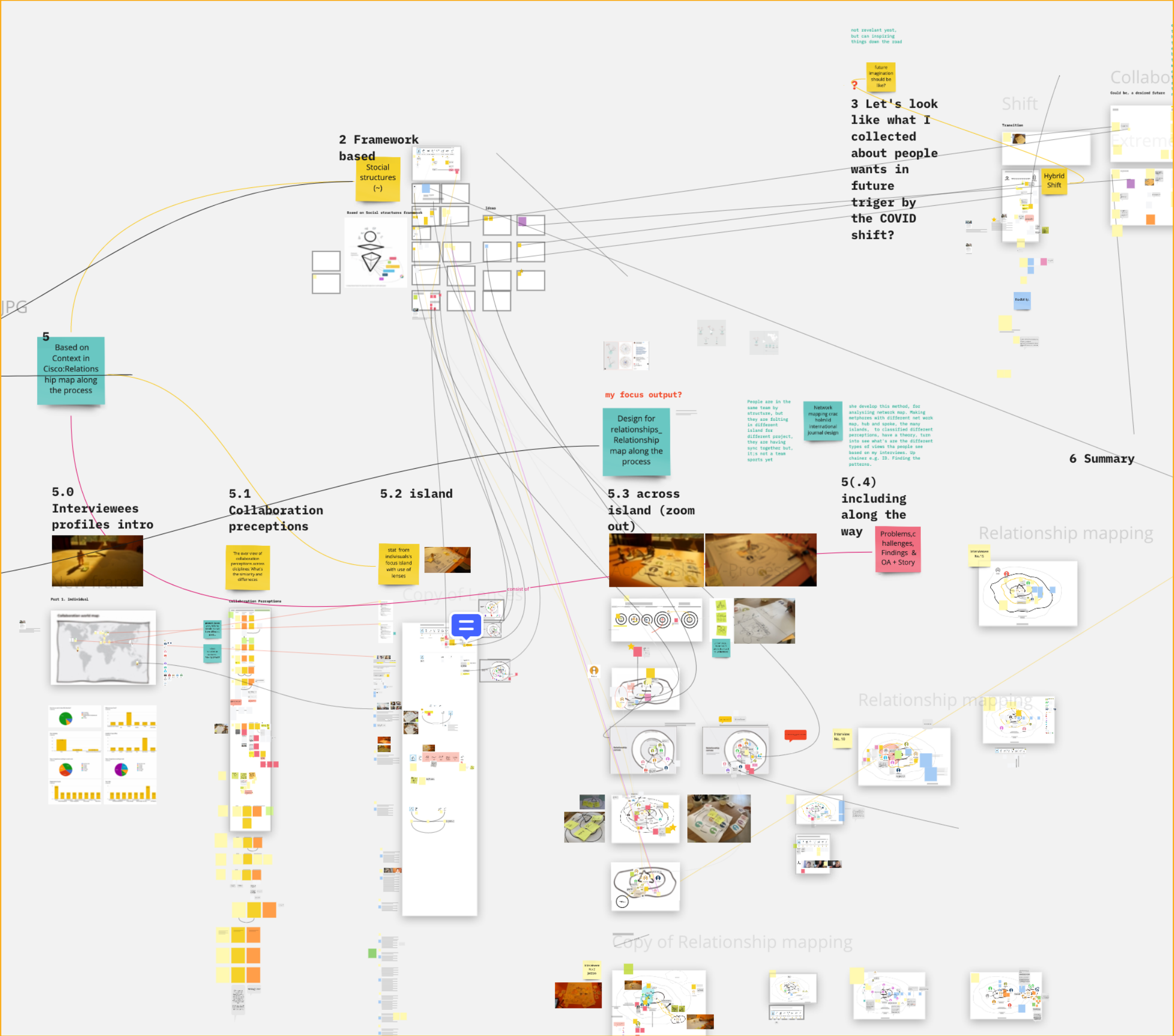


Methodology

Generative explorations through design

As an explorative design project related to cultural change to support collaboration, I have used a generative approach in research, analysis, ideation and iteration stages. In the beginning, I started to design prompts from the research to interact with the people I talked to. Afterwards, I kept collecting feedback and iterating along the way to make the final proposal simple and easy to use in the teams' daily work.

Therefore, this project is not a pure service delivery, but a cultural probe that explores how to promote interdisciplinary collaboration within an organization. It is also a visible and practical example that can inform practitioners who are interested in bring service design into organizational contexts.



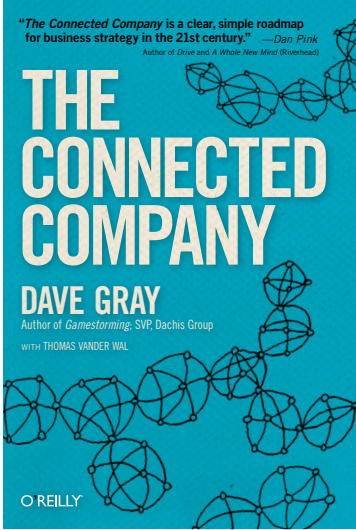
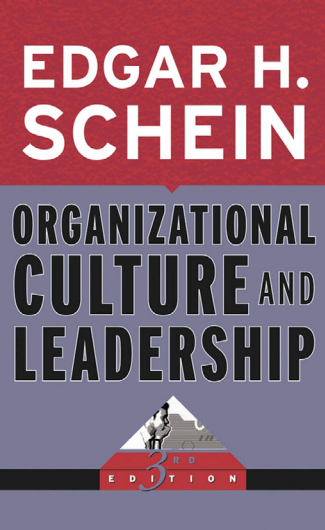
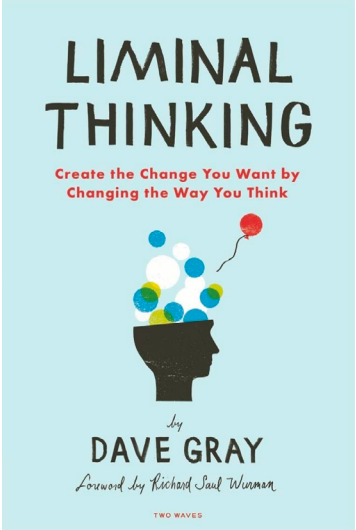
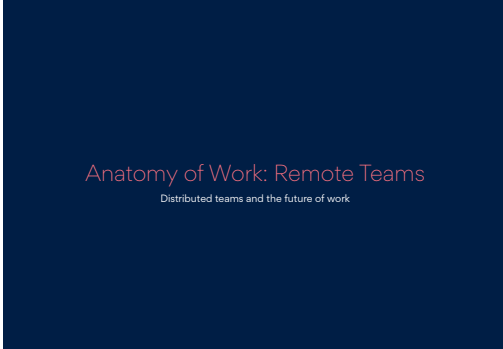
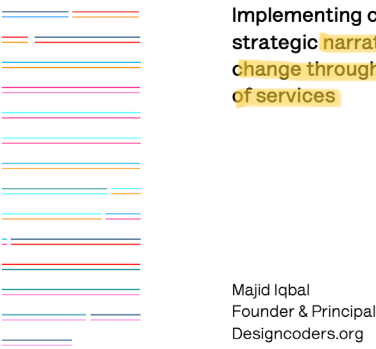
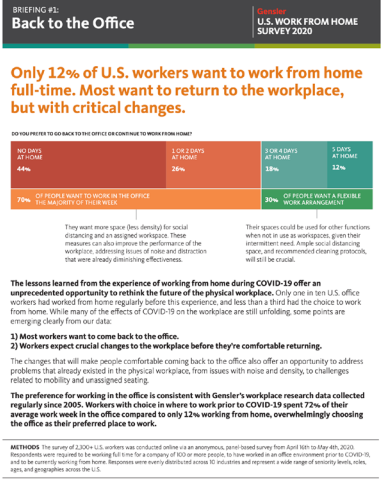
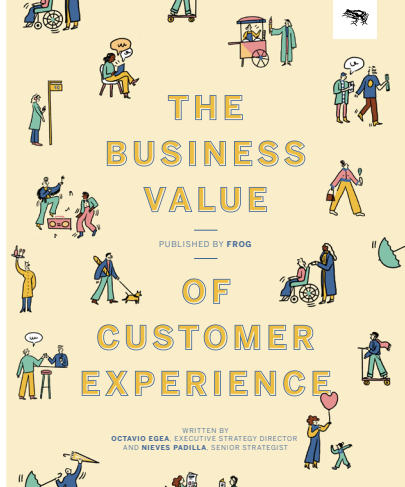
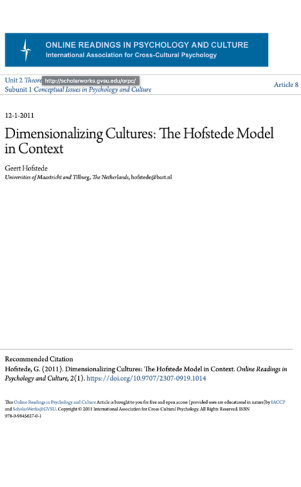
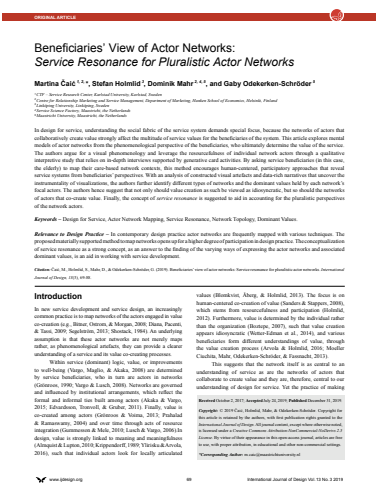
Methodology

Desktop research

It's an essential step to take a deep breath of fresh inspiration before diving into the core activities of the project. I spent the first few days looking at related materials — from technology and organizational culture to service design — to understand the landscape.

I looked through relevant academic articles, market & trend reports, organizational books, design examples, posts on Medium and reviewed Cisco public documents to get an understanding of the theoretical and practical basis I was working on.

In order to complement my knowledge and add timely inputs, I also attended various webinars about service design and virtual facilitation.



ReThinking Uncertainty: Individually, in teams, and in organizations

ReThinking can help us escape uncertainty. Ironically, uncertainty makes ReThinking hard.



By Noam Bernstein

As the world began grappling with the dire effects of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year, we created the ReAct ReSpond ReThink framework to help decision-makers navigate the distinct phases of the crisis by applying an appropriate mindset. You can learn more and [download the framework for free here](#).

Covert DesignOps



How design can transform your organization behind its back

Jeff Neely, Design Partner & Ben Landrum, Design Principal at IBM Services

Going by my LinkedIn feed, you'd think the "business value of design" battle was over, and the designers had won. There's been so much evidence of the positive impact of incorporating human-centric design practices into every aspect of business, that it's hard to believe some organizations still don't get it. It's much easier to believe, however, if you're embedded in one of those orgs and forced to work in more...archaic ways. Executing based on executive whims. Ignoring user research or not bothering to do it at all. Enlisting designers to "make things pretty" instead of leaning on them to solve your most gnarly problems.



Collaboration with the X Factor: How AI is Transforming the Way We Work

By Heidi Griffin, CTO of Intelligence and Analytics, Cisco Collaboration Group



The Most Common Problems Facing Teams Right Now

Even with all the technology currently available in the workplace, there is a fundamental problem that many teams continue to face: collaboration. A recent Cisco survey shows that the three most significant challenges to organizational productivity are:

- Decreasing employee satisfaction (52 percent)
- Lack of time to complete tasks (52 percent)
- Slow decision-making (52 percent)

While these are all valid concerns, they are not the only ones. There are many other challenges that teams face, and it's important to understand them all in order to find effective solutions.

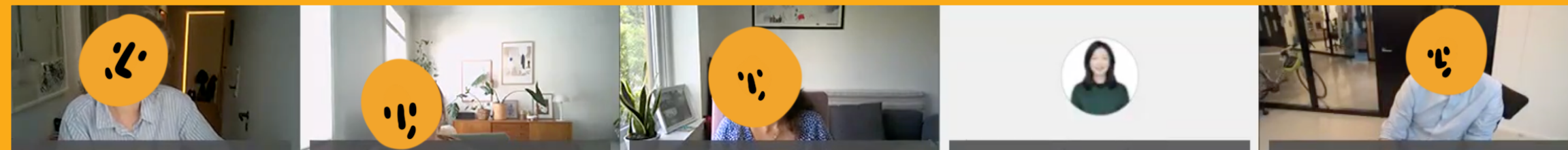


Re-entry to a Hybrid Workplace

By Heidi Griffin, CTO of Intelligence and Analytics, Cisco Collaboration Group



In the very beginning of the project, I took a step back and ran a “Pre-mortem” workshop together with Cisco Norway’s service design and research team to imagine that the project had failed, and then work backwards to determine what could potentially lead to its failure based on their experience. So I can intentionally prepare for the pitfalls such as the project couldn’t get access to the right people, not fully embedded in the current context, and failed to address the real needs.



PRE-MORTEM

Here lies Project Co-Lab

Co-Lab: How service design enable culture change to enhance cross-disciplinary hybrid collaboration experience in Cisco Norway

What
went
wrong?

Paulina

Paulina



■

■

What
block
the way?

Pauline

Andr

Andreas

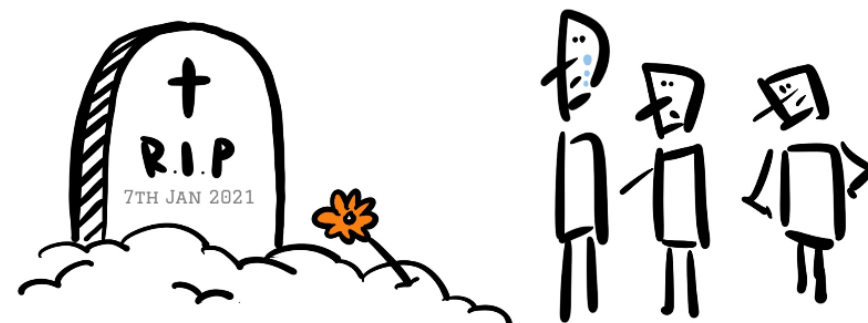
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Methodology

Semi-structured interviews

In parallel, I conducted generative semi-structured interviews with 20 people working in Cisco. This was to gain an understanding of how people work with each other in their day to day across different disciplines, roles, hierarchies, teams, continents and years of experience.

I collected story examples from their experiences and relationships with collaboration to explore how the current experience might be improved and integrated into the new service solutions.

The participants covered:

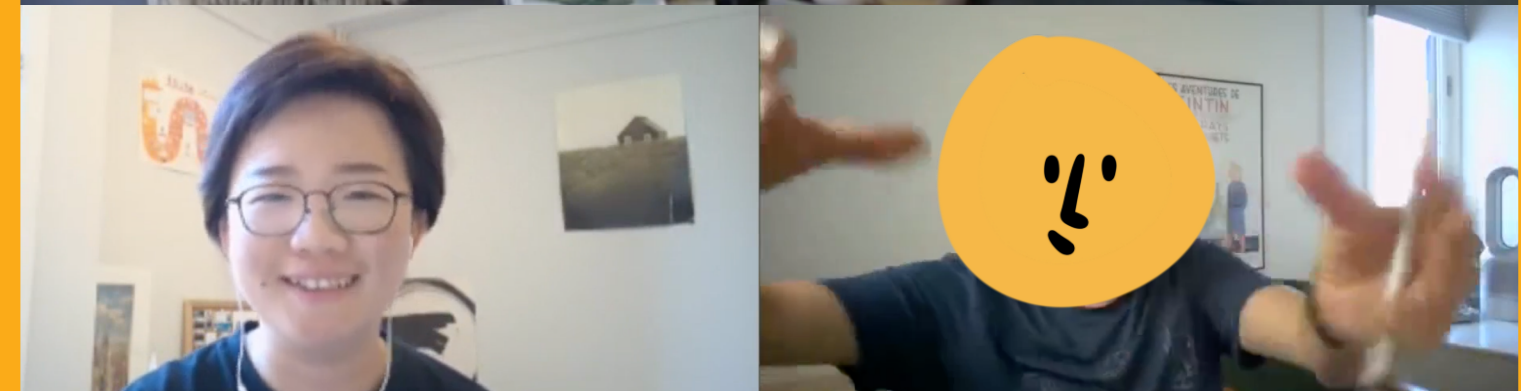
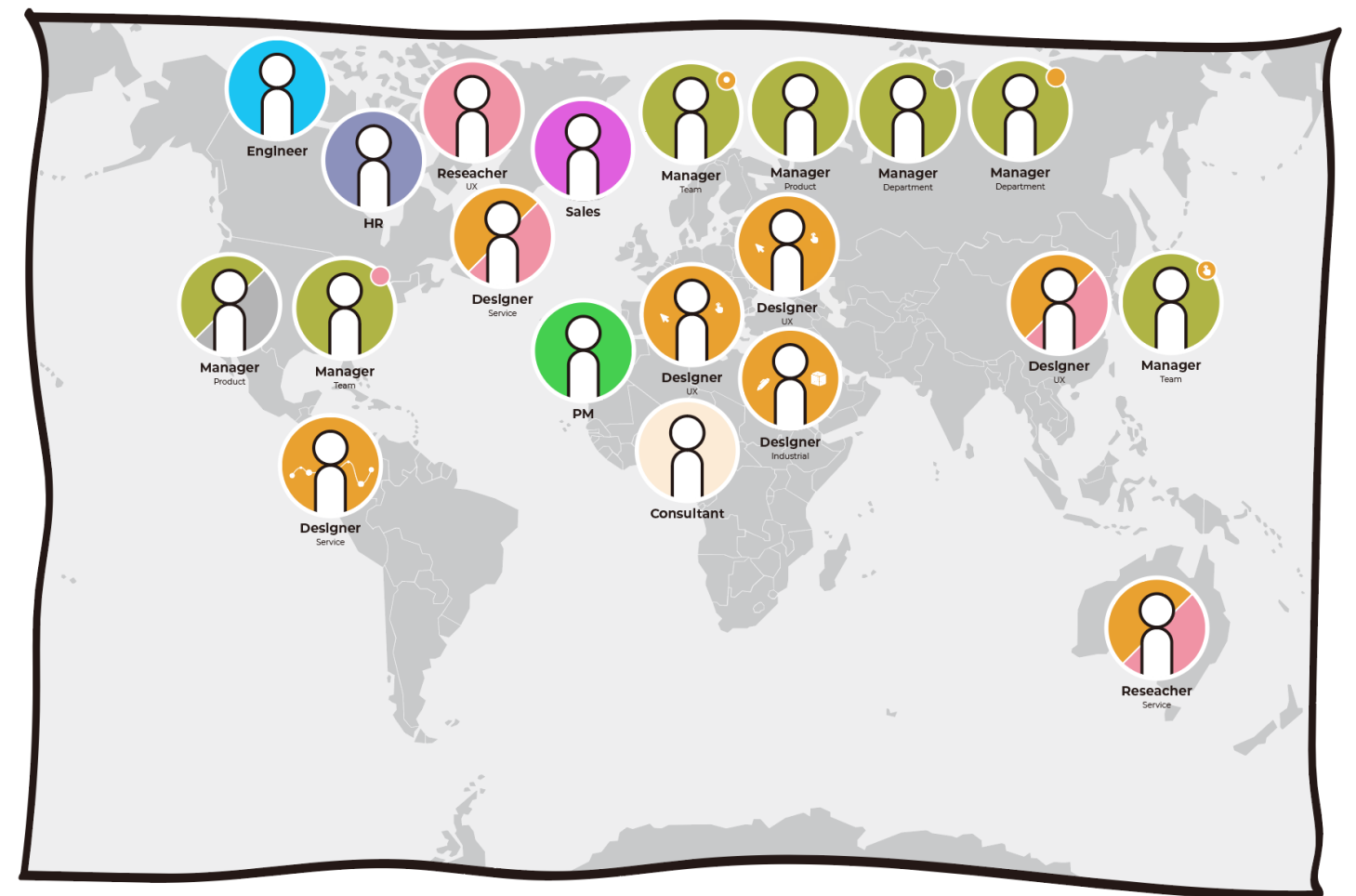
Disciplines: Service, ID & UX design, research, engineering, project management, product management, program management, sales, operations, HR, consultant

Hierarchy: 5 team managers, 1 department manager

Teams: Webex Devices, Teams, Meetings and Duo Security

Continents: Europe, US, Asia

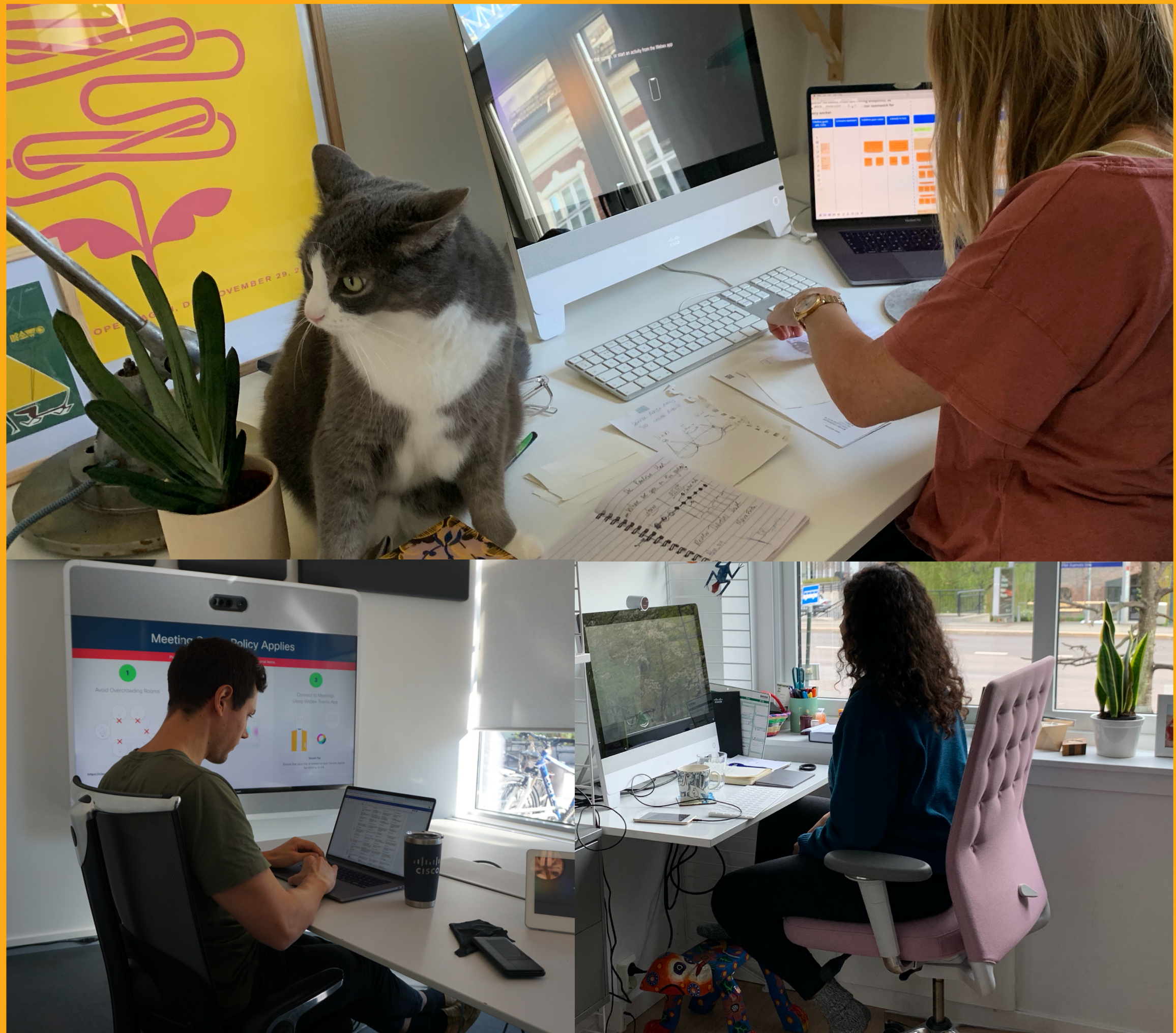
Years in Cisco: 1 month to 20+ Years



Methodology

Observations

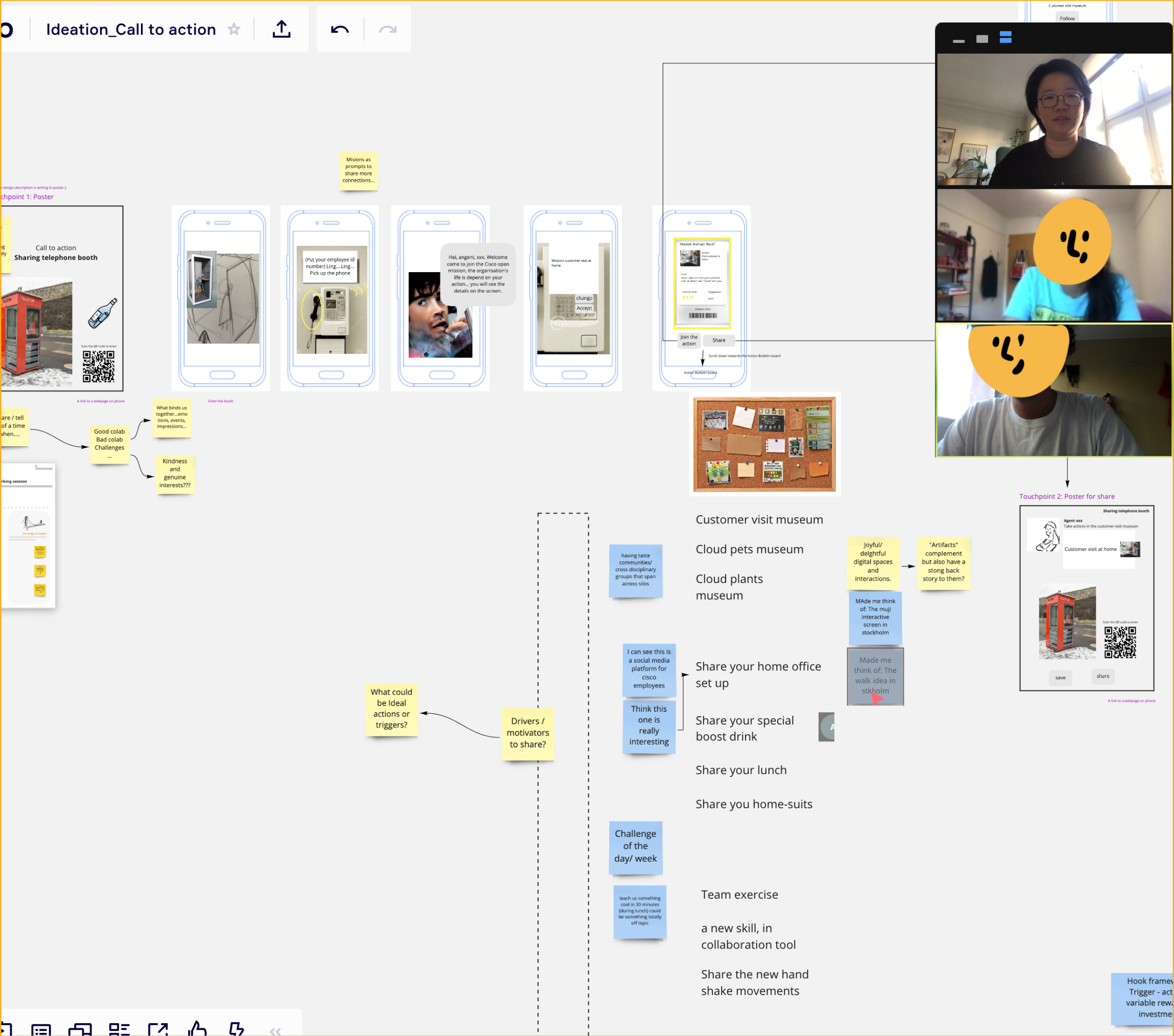
I also conducted observations at home offices to shadow how the environments are set up from the other side of the screen during their meetings with other disciplines - both in detail and in context. This helped in making the conversations more tangible and active, and the interviewees became more open and engaged, as they were in a context that is familiar to them.



Methodology

Ideation sessions

Different types of individual and co-creative ideation sessions were conducted throughout the project. For example, I conducted on-line co-creation workshops to generate ideas from multiple perspectives. Some of the topics were related to analyzing existing relations across disciplines, call to action for interacting through activities, and conducting peer to peer consulting processes.

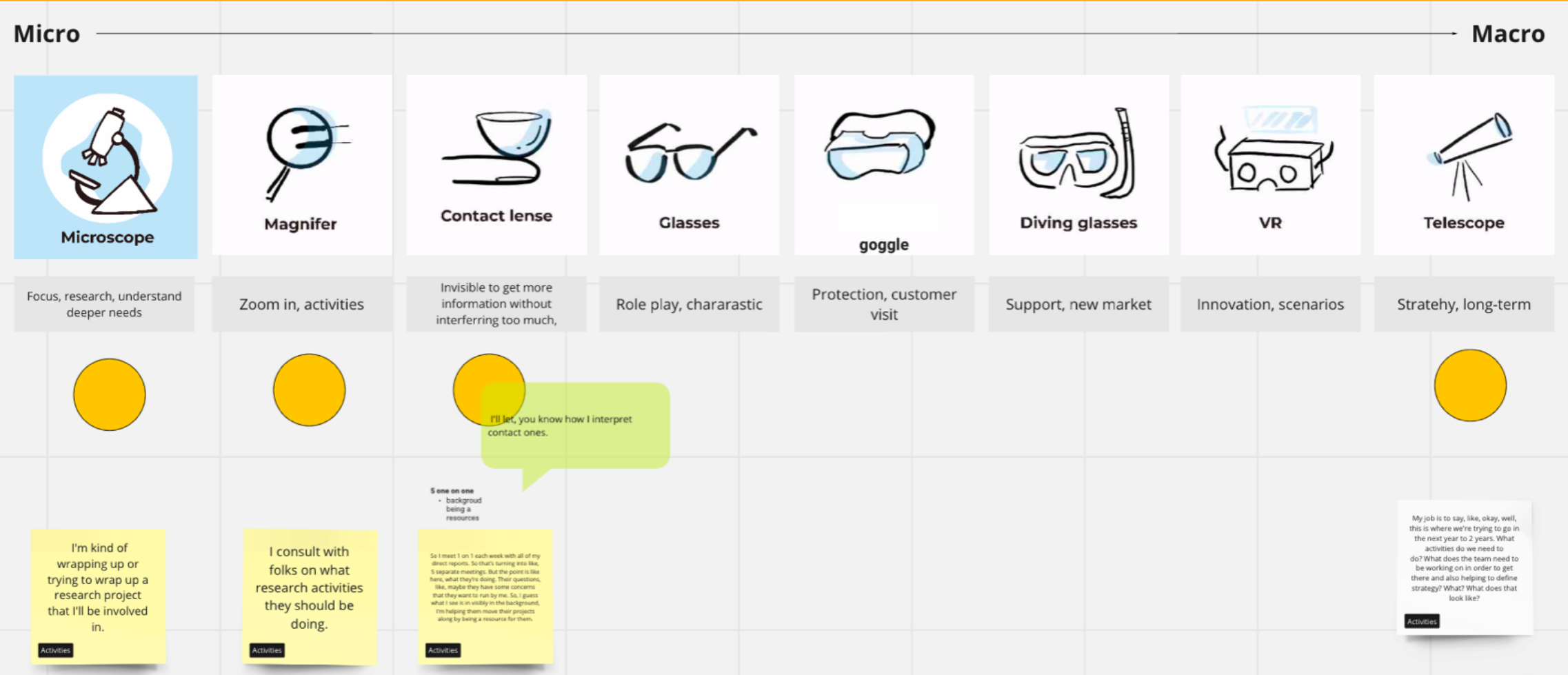


Methodology

Prototypes and Tiny-testing

Prototypes enable teams to take immediate action based on experimentation. It also alters the culture from one that is reactive and resistant to one that continuously embraces transformation.

For example, I asked people to choose the lenses that are relevant to their daily work. One interviewee said “I really wish my team could work on this “VR (Virtual Reality)” level to look in to new scenarios. Because if we’re just trying to fill in a gap, innovation suffers.”



Methodology

Evaluation

Evaluate the key patterns with service designers in Cisco and prioritize the most relevant and interesting opportunity spaces. This helped me shape the directions, narrow and develop interventions that are easy to scale into any stage of the product development process.





EXPLORATION

At this stage, I was interested in exploring how visual probes could impact how people actually connect to their teams and organizational culture, as well as their motivations, struggles and opportunity areas.

Collaboration perceptions

Perception collection

In order to grasp people's understanding of collaboration across disciplines, I asked them to share their perceptions with me by answering the following question from 3 different perspectives.

Write in the blank post: What does **collaboration** means to you?

1 mins
In general

WE HAVE THE SAME GOAL

1 mins
In your workplace in Cisco

IT'S MARKETING JARGON
IT'S IN CULTURE & ORGANIZATION

1 mins
To your professional role as...

WORK TOGETHER ON THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER

Example of activity from interviewee No. 2

A very interesting finding is that people think of collaboration in general as working towards a common goal. However, in a specific work environment, collaboration is seen as a solution for video conferencing. In individual roles, such as researchers and operation departments, collaboration is seen as something crucial to everyday work.



I think this is a really good task. Because for the first general one, I thought of completely different things. But when you asked about Cisco, it's very interesting to show how my thoughts shifted.

Interviewee No. 6



Some people have the same perceptions in general and for their role, but this changes in the workplace. Especially in Cisco in Norway, they use collaboration as a marketing term to sell their solutions.



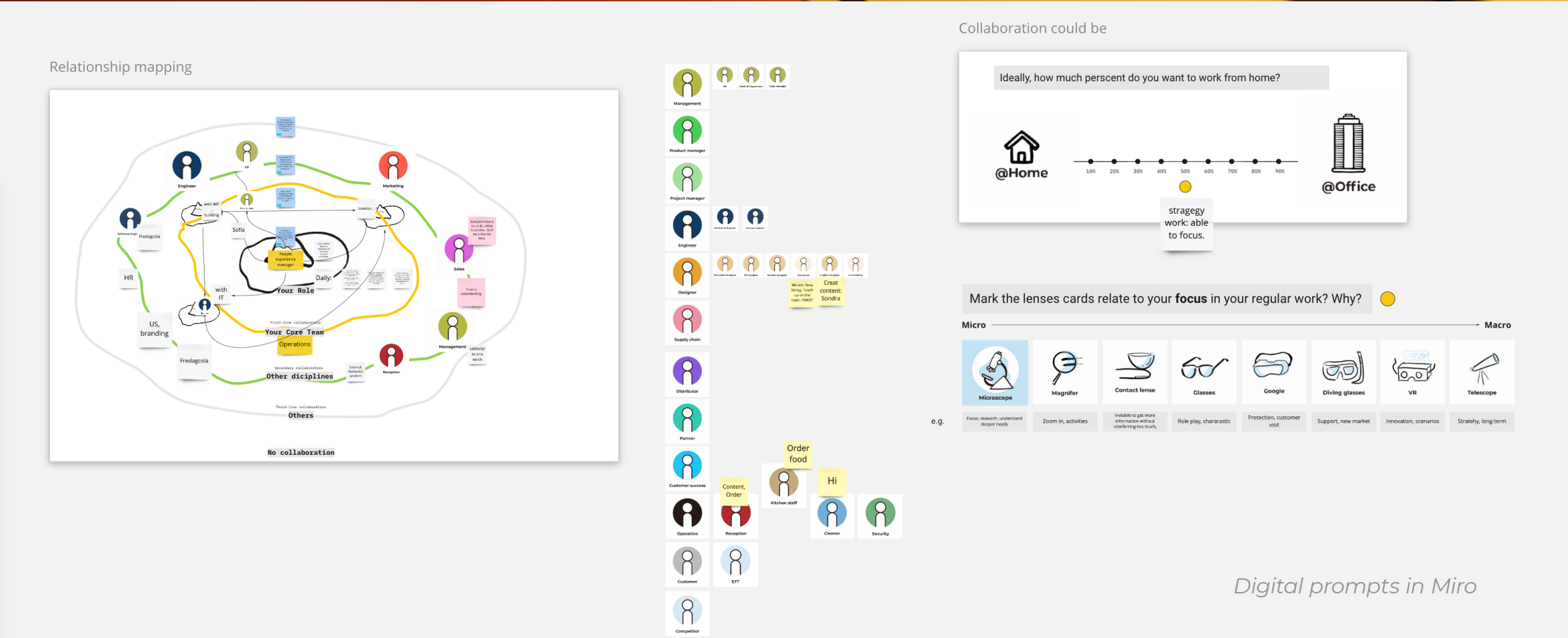
Collaboration perceptions collected from interviews

Relationship mapping

Prompts preparation

I facilitated a relationship mapping activity as a key part to visualize the relations between the actors of the collaboration ecosystem. I designed a set of prompts that included a relationship island canvas, actor cards, and lens cards. These were for people to map out who they are collaborating with by locating them in the center of the island. The radius expands as the connections become less frequent.

To make it easier for people to participate, I designed two different formats to fit physical and digital situations and kept iterating as I conducted more interviews.



Relationship mapping

Show and tell

Even though it can be messier than hierarchy based structures, putting each individual in the center helps generate more rich data, expose norms, and open the door to new ways of collaborating.

The physical artifacts provide greater freedom for people to express themselves, especially with designers. They can create their own interpretation with new metaphors to describe their experience based on the prepared tools. For example, in the picture on the right, the participant drew a fragile bridge to describe the tension between two projects.

Since it was an explorative process, I encouraged people to modify and write directly on the paper cards. The easy and simple prompts helped the participants become engaged during the interviews.

As for people who are not familiar with the new digital platforms like Miro, I helped them map while they were describing their situation. This may have limited their willingness to move things around freely, but it also created an opportunity for them to correct my assumptions.



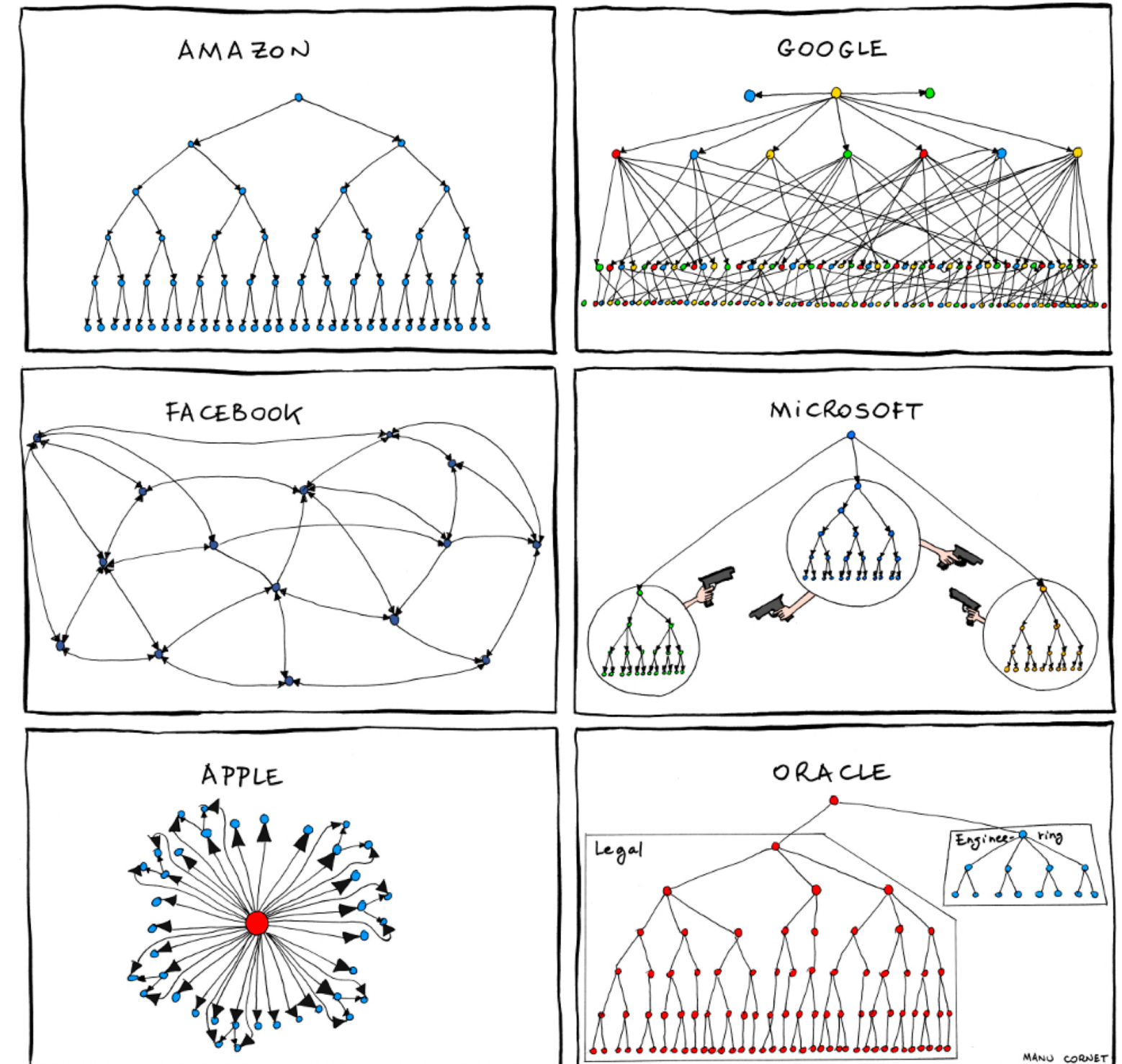
Organizational chart

Visualize organizational culture

In order to change the organizational culture, people need to see the structure by themselves first. Because visualization can help people understand abstract concepts in an intuitive and concrete way, it promotes better and clearer communication to unwrap organizational culture.

During the research, I found the “Org charts” comic by Manu Cornet, a French programmer in Google, that illustrates different tech giants’ cultures. This “Organizational Charts” cartoon was quoted by the CEO of Microsoft Satya Nadella on the first page of his book, *Hit Refresh*, as one of the motivations that made him want to renew Microsoft’s culture (Nadella, 2019).

However, according in my interviews, four people complained that Cisco does not have an organizational chart apart from an internal CEC (Consumer Electronic Protocol) system. People can only trace the hierarchical structure in a non-visual way. There is a need for people to visually see their relationships, know other colleagues, and how other teams are organized outside of their own disciplines within the same organization to support their collaboration.



“Org charts” comic by Manu Cornet

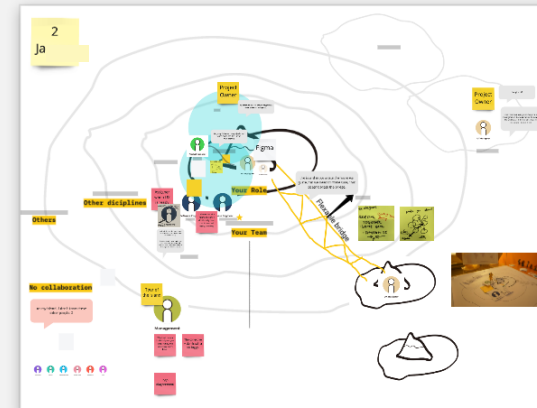
Network patterns

Collaborative relationship analysis

In the analysis stage, I tried to find the relationship patterns with the reference of the Network Mapping Method (Čaić et al., 2019). I created four different networks to classify different perceptions based on the relationship maps generated from previous interviews. These are bundled, focalized, hierarchical, and process network. In this section, I will explain each of them with an example of a challenge mentioned by different roles.

Furthermore, digging into how these patterns might help in exemplifying the pros and cons of existing collaboration experiences.

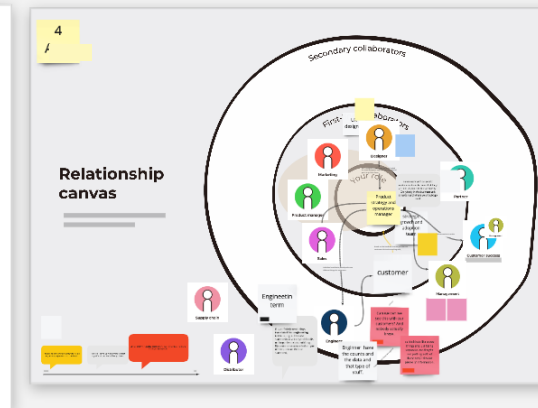
2_Relationship mapping



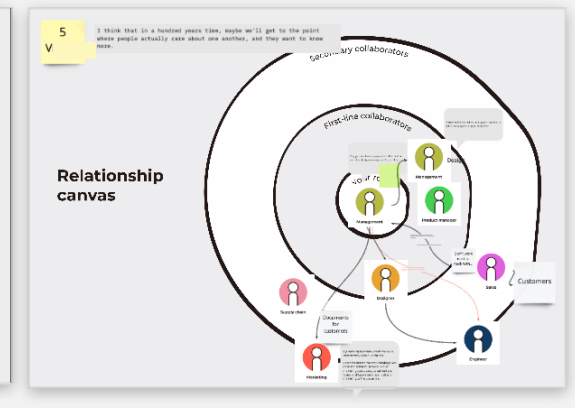
3_Relationship mapping



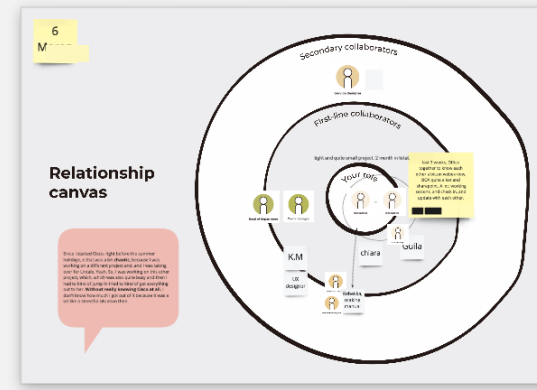
4_Relationship mapping



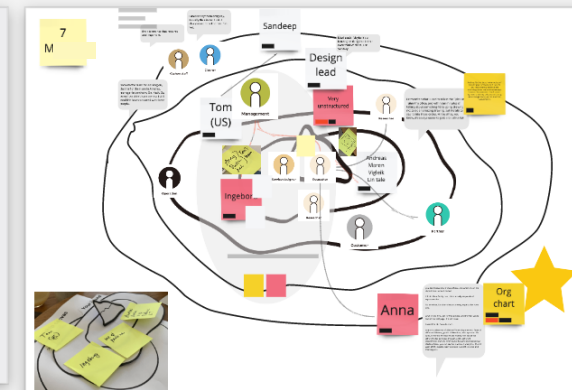
5_Relationship mapping



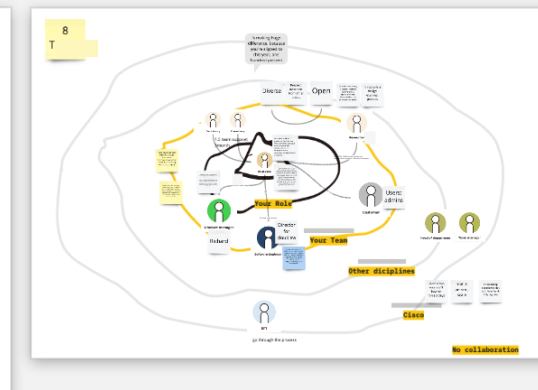
6_Relationship mapping



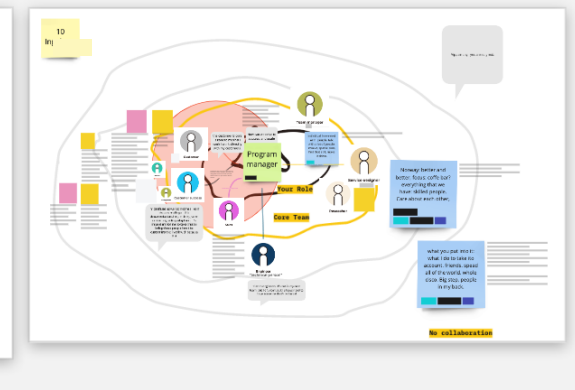
7_Researcher & Service designer



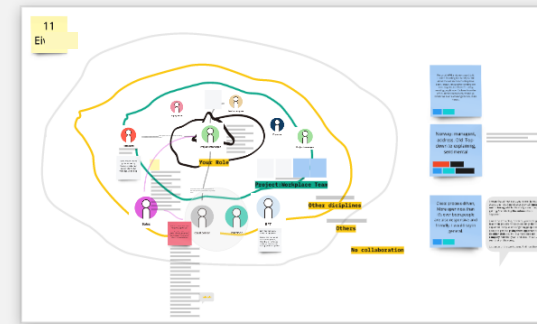
8_Relationship mapping



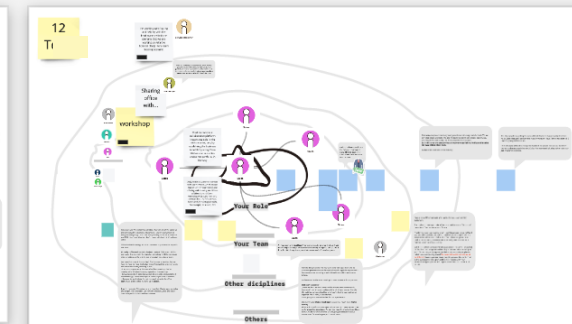
10_Relationship mapping



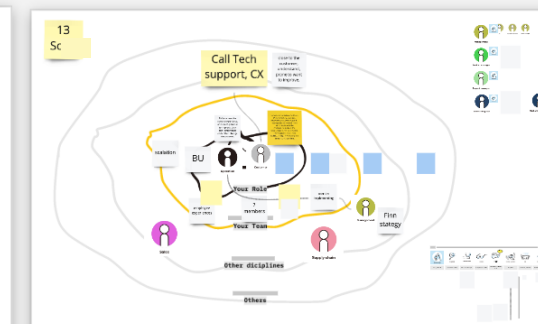
11_Relationship mapping



12_Relationship mapping



13_Relationship mapping



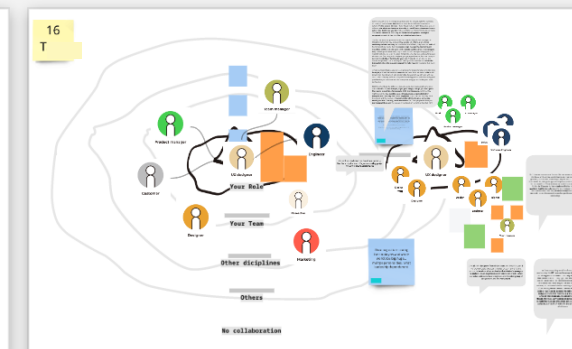
14_Relationship mapping



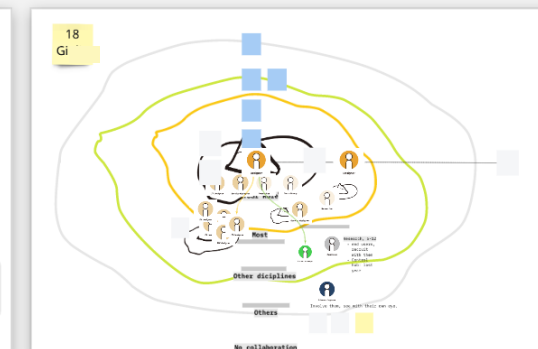
15_Relationship mapping



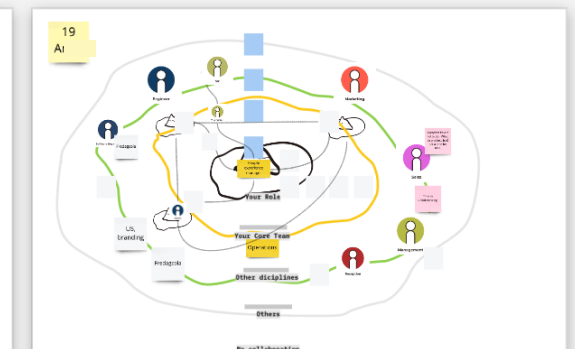
16_Relationship mapping



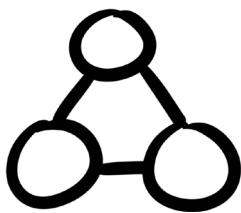
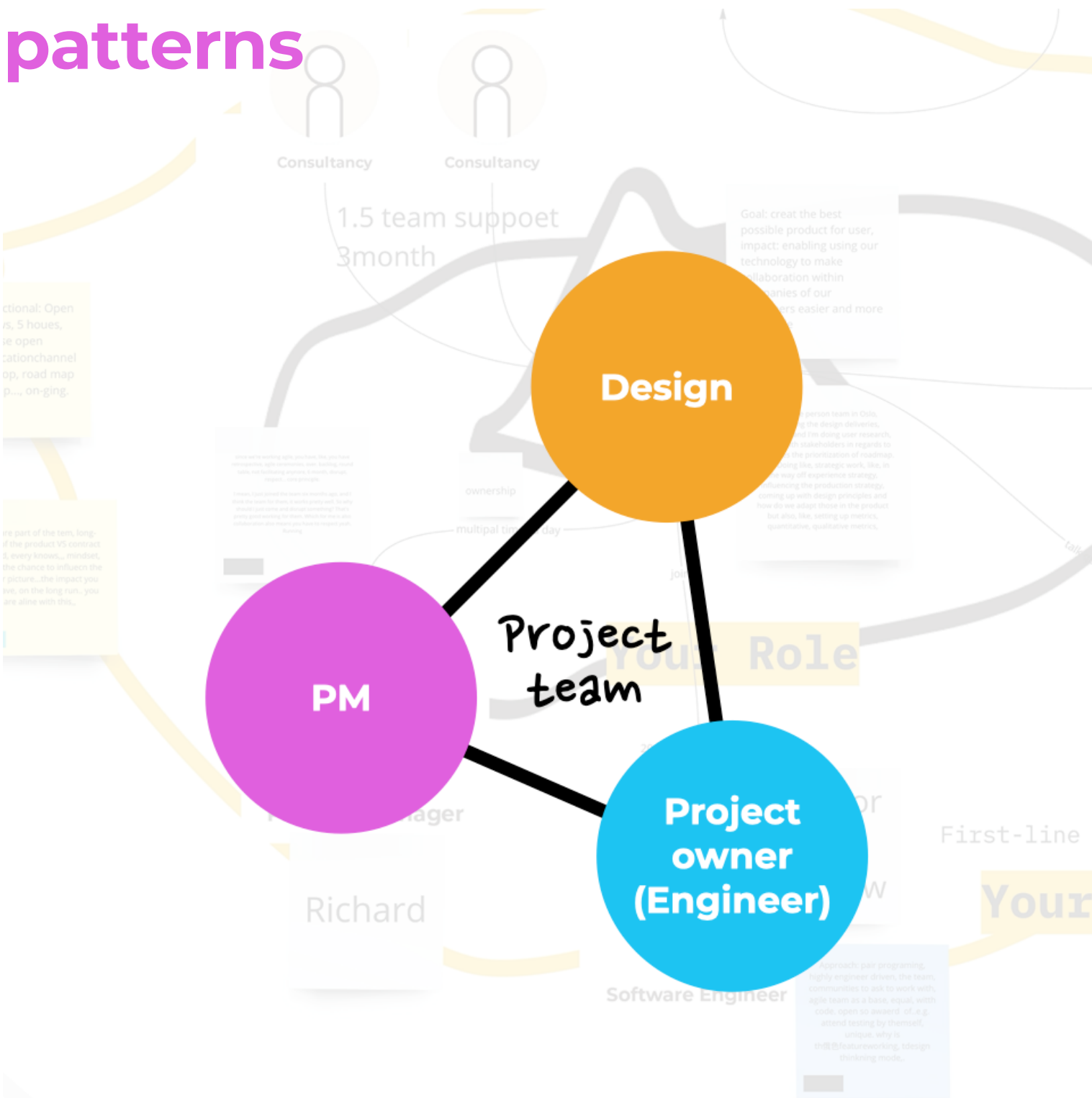
18_Relationship mapping



19_Relationship mapping



Network patterns



Bundled network

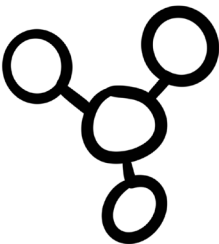
There is a close bundle with designers, product managers, and engineers (mainly represented by project owners).

We protect each other. Fight against the American style of we need this now. I feel like we have each other's back. We protect as long as we could.

Interviewee No. 2

People within this setup are really focused on the feature they are developing. This bundled way of collaborating helps the teams improve their output quality. However, collaborating with other disciplines such as sales does not happen that much. Software team members do not know any people from the hardware world. Even worse, each individual from their discipline becomes lonely and disconnected from their community, which causes a less cohesive culture.

Network patterns

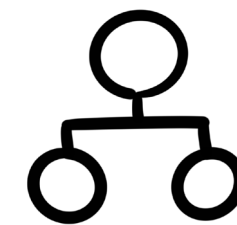


Focalized network

The focalized pattern has the operation and research team in the center. They are the ones directly in contact with customers on a broader level. They are the bridge builders that connect siloed disciplines. They usually bring insights or troubleshooting problems back to the internal teams. However, it is tough for them to squeeze teams' availability to fix the problem since they are not deeply involved within the front line of the development stage.

“...Everyone has a lot to do. They would love to join more projects, but they are very cautious about their own time. And for me, that is a concern when it comes to cross-foundational teamwork.

Interviewee #19



The third pattern is the hierarchical network. The hierarchical, command-and-control organizational model that served business so well in the 19th and 20th centuries proves ill-suited to the concerns of a connected-software-and-services economy (Merholz, 2016). There are many layers and shifts in the management level, making it harder to maintain coherent user experiences.

In order to make a logo smaller, this took weeks with many different presentations and went all the way up to upper management of SVP (Senior Vice President). It is the most costly decision that involves so many high-level people.

36

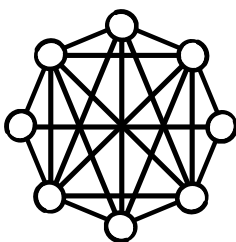


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Interviewee No. 15

37

Network patterns

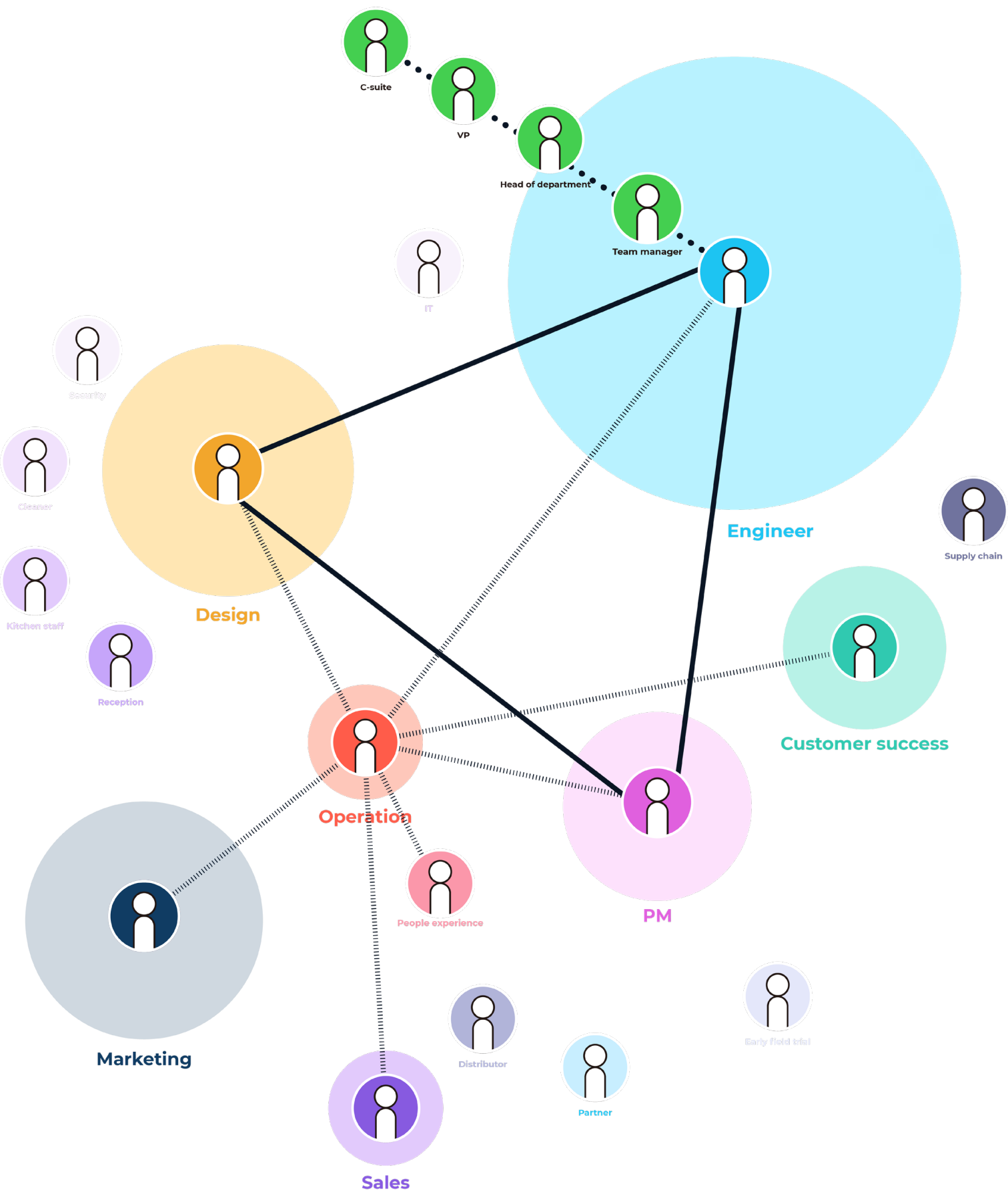


Future ecosystem network

These patterns have not helped in crafting the coherent experience that Cisco wants to achieve. They all fall short and create silos in different ways.

In the desired future, Cisco gradually needs to establish a new Ecosystem network where everyone is connected to each other with a holistic view. This network connects disciplines more naturally and aids in optimizing flows of information, resources, and value exchange. This means people are not as reliant on the Bundle, Focalized, Hierarchy, or Process networks.

The Ecosystem network could establish alternative ways of collaboration to address the problems of employees who are not fully aware of others' existence, knowledges or resources within Cisco. Having this future network approach could help in aligning strategies to collaboratively engage in realizing more integrated products, services and experiences on a single platform.



Theory of culture change

Why change?

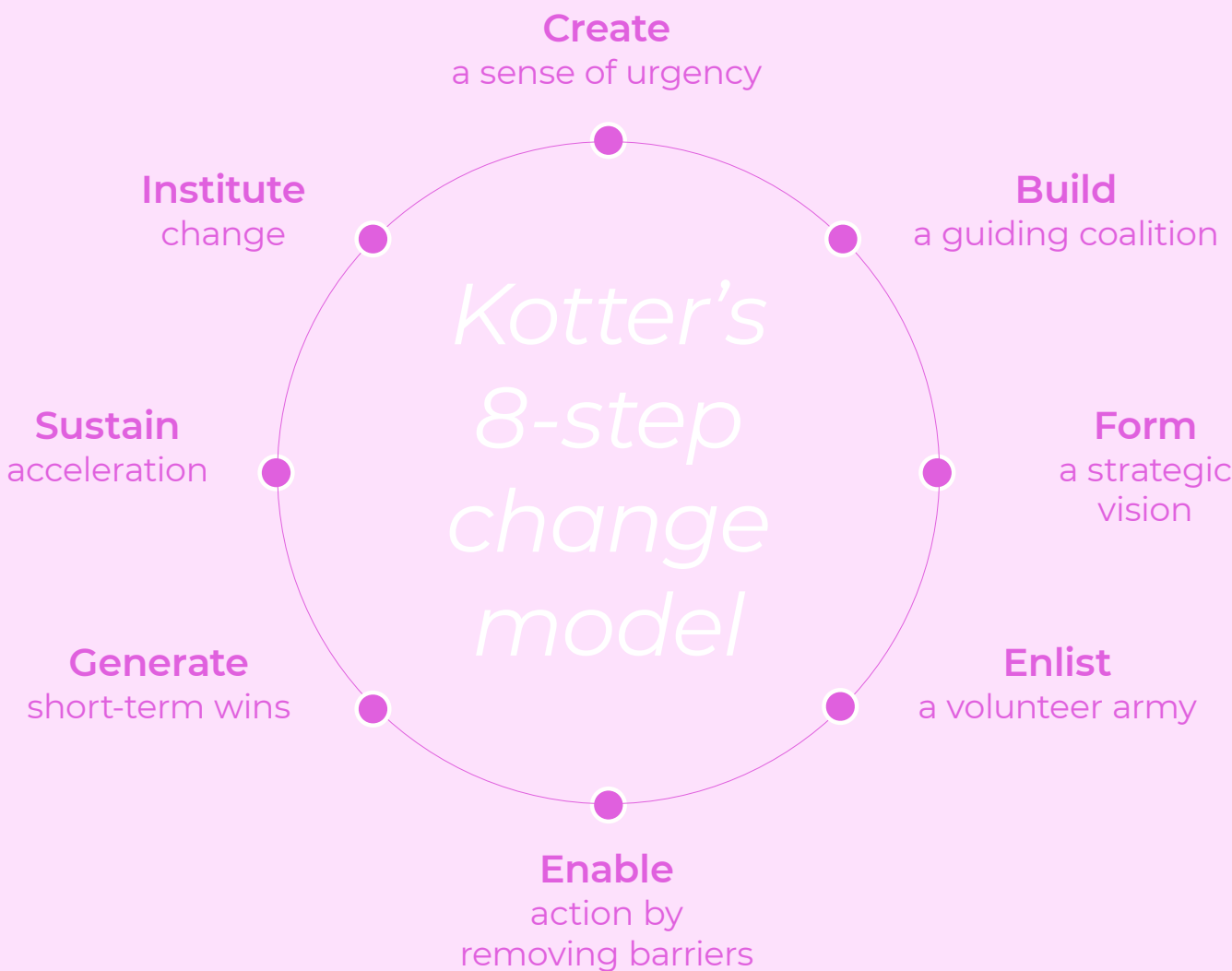
This future direction leads me to ask: how do we transform the culture of the organization to meet this need for cultural change?

Change is about the challenge of moving from one state to another. In a natural ecosystem, operating change seems to be effortless. Water constantly changes from liquid to gas and solid as a result of environmental temperature functions. Constant flux is the natural state of the physical world surrounding us. Human organizations, in contrast, once created, have a strong preference for preserving the status quo. Of course, these human organizations are entangled with many more complex phenomena consisting of people's own needs and anxieties, among other things.

Organizational change model

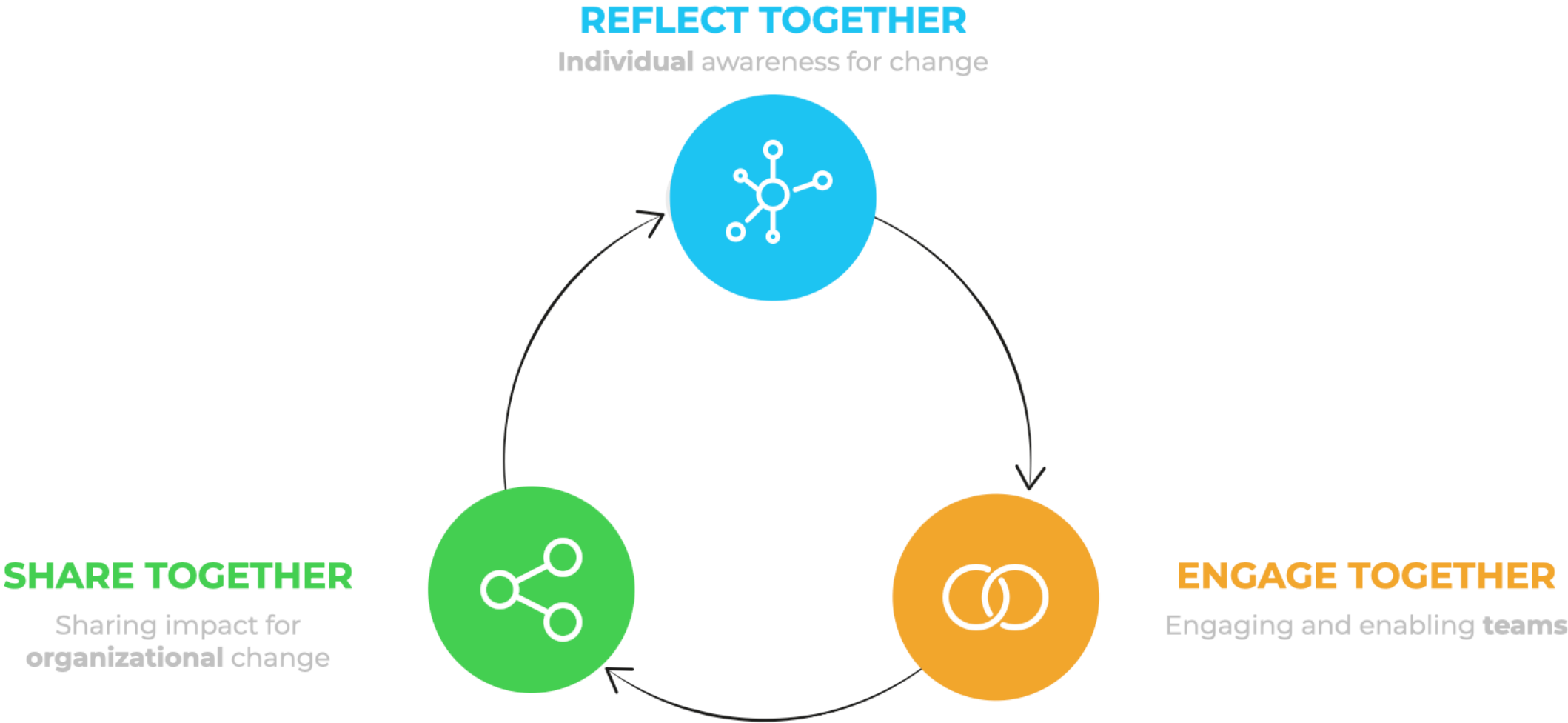
Culture change is not about developing a solution to fix a problem. It is about experimenting with many interventions to unleash broader change towards a common goal.

Kotter's 8-step change model seems to be an effective approach that helps organizations create a sense of urgency, build a vision, effectively communicate it, and create quick wins (Kotter, 1995). The intervention strategies suggested by this model inspired me to develop the design of the change framework.



Kotter's 8-step change model

Theory of culture change



I combined Kotter’s 8 step model with my insights and developed a simpler model that is adapted to the Cisco context. This helped me guide the collaborative transformation in an easy and feasible way.

The developed model guides the collaborative culture change with 3 phases: reflect together, engage together, and share together.

Step 1: Reflect together

If individuals aren’t first aware of what is currently happening from all different perspectives, it is difficult to make changes. The first step: Reflective together aims to activate change by prompting them to reflect on their current needs.

Step 2: Engage together

After the awareness is established, cross-disciplinary teams need to engage together. It is about establishing trust, open communication, and feedback in order to support a collaborative working environment and get the team prepared.

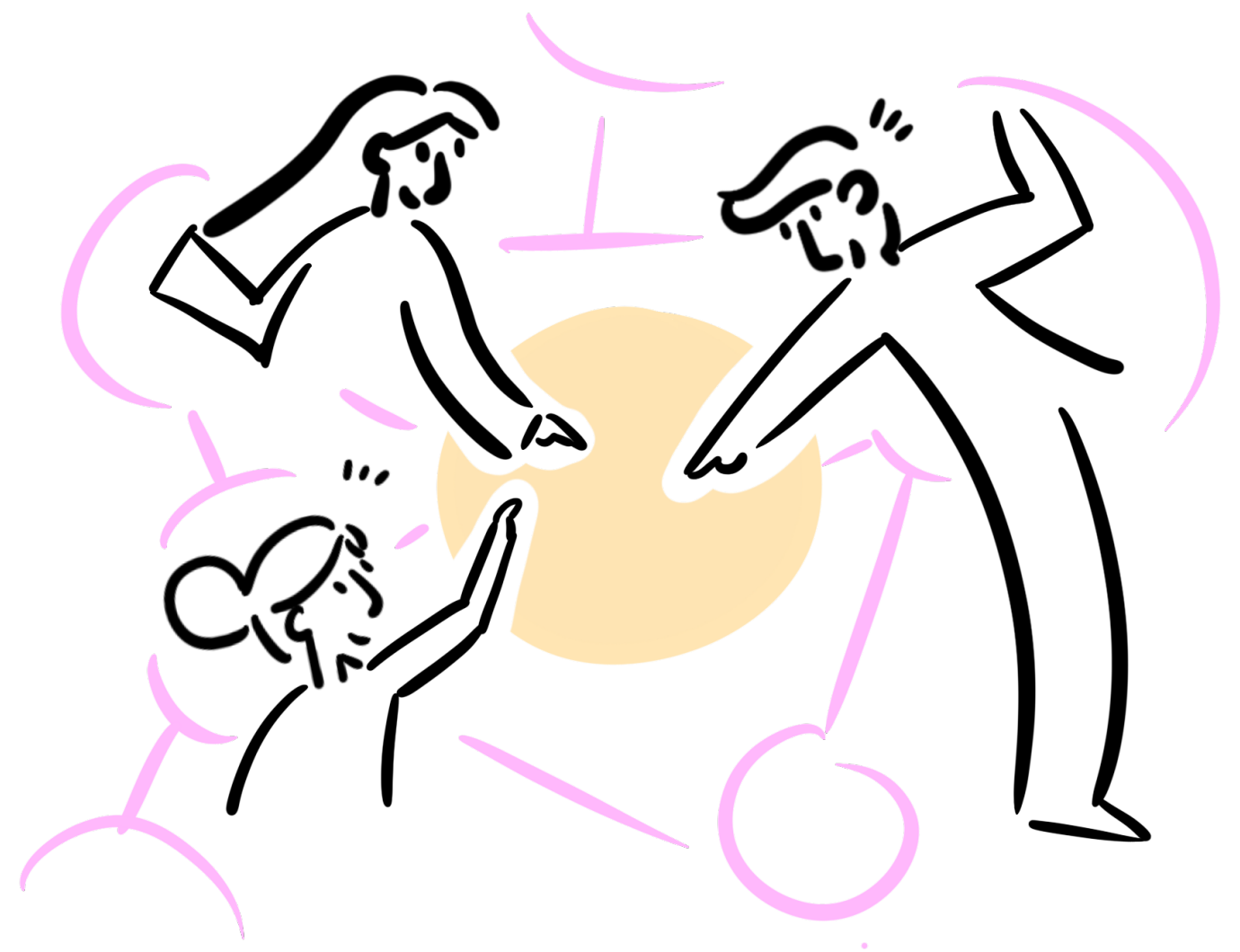
Step 3: Share together

The purpose of collaboration is to bring together two or more people that complement each other’s needs and wants to achieve a specific goal. Sharing together encourages creative and diverse contributions from all members.

Redefined brief

Based on the key findings of collaborative relationship patterns, and to achieve the goal of delivering a coherent experience to Cisco customers, the first step is to foster cultural change practices to build the desired ecosystem. Therefore, my redefined brief is:

***How might we connect people
across disciplines to
build an ecosystem network
using service design interventions?***

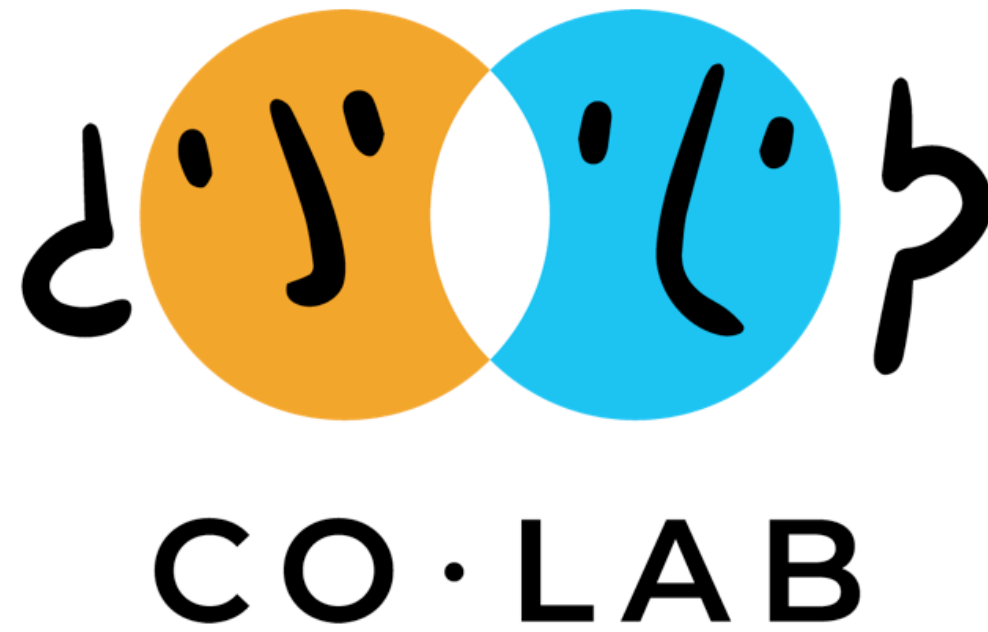




DESIGN INTERVENTION

This chapter elaborates on my design proposal. It explains the overall concept, relevant stakeholders, and design of the service ecosystem with details of interventions.

Concept introduction



Teamwork makes the dream work

Co-lab is an internal knowledge-sharing platform for remote cross-disciplinary teams that enables an open and cohesive collaboration experience.

Stakeholder universe

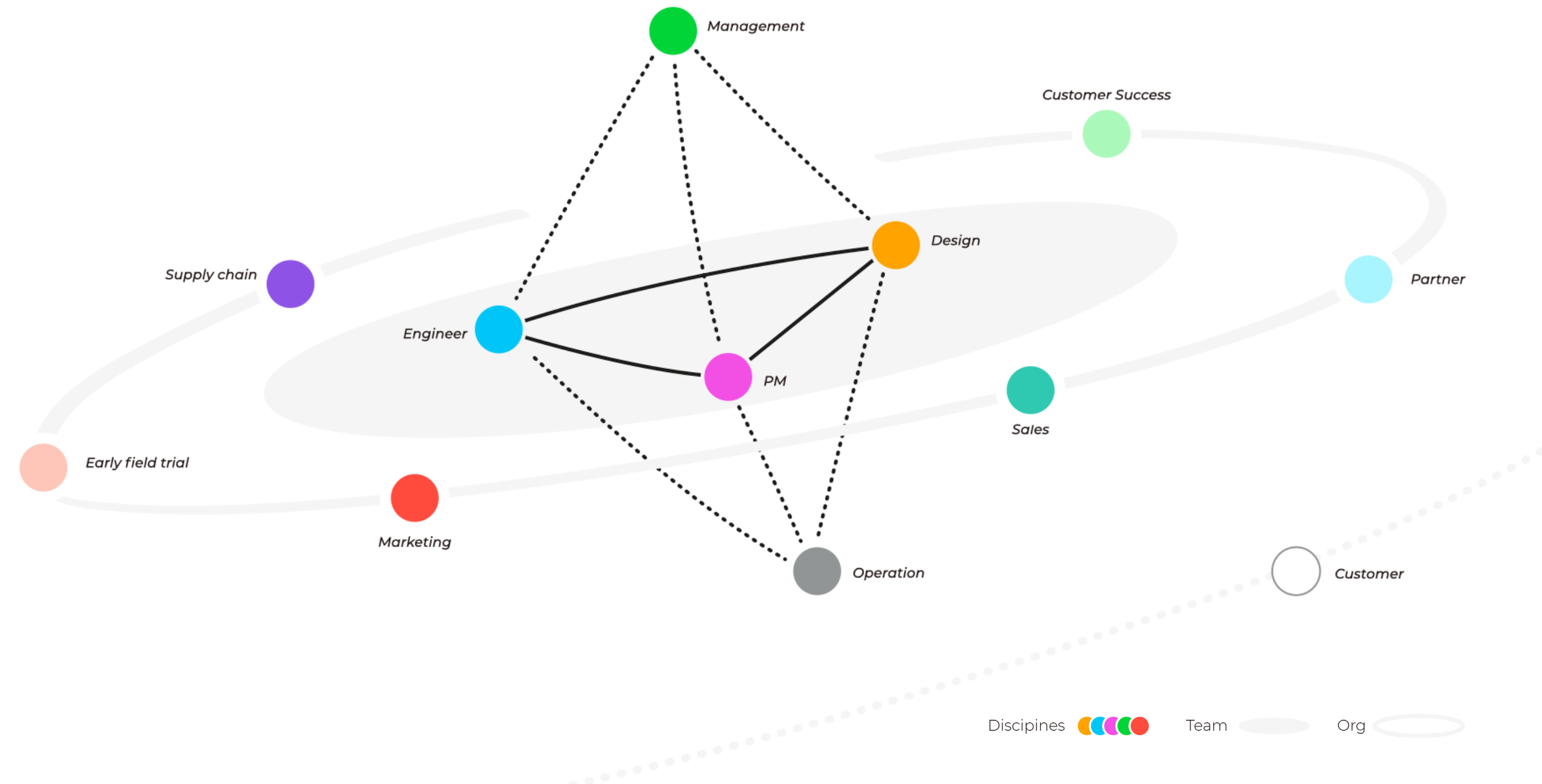
This is the stakeholder universe that includes different disciplines across 3 levels of involvement: individual level, team level, and organization level

The core target user group is the Research & Development project team located in the 'universe center', it includes the project manager, engineer, and designer.

Secondly, the leading service provider 'support prism' includes managers (from a top-down perspective) and operation & research employees (from a bottom-up perspective). These two roles are currently sharing this coordinator responsibility. They work on guidance and infrastructure processes across the organization.

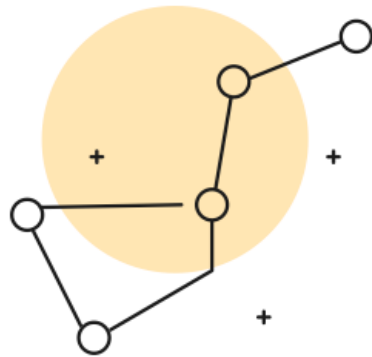
The other stakeholders include other disciplines along the customer life-cycle, such as marketing, sales, partners, and customer success teams.

The Co-Lab platform is dedicated to equipping internal employees with micro design interventions to shape the desired open culture for collaboration.



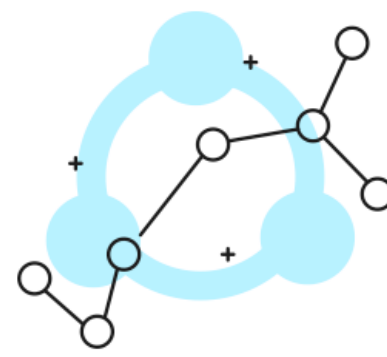
Principle constellation

The following principle constellations were created to support the development of the proposal:



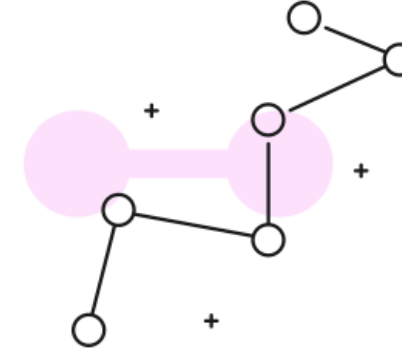
COHESIVE: aligned autonomy

The ultimate goal of people working together is to provide a cohesive experience for the end-users. First and foremost, it's essential that people have a shared goal to help make effective decisions so that the solution is on the right track. At the same time, autonomy is critical in terms of maintaining the employee's motivation. By giving people more choice and control, this principle allows employees to shape their collaboration environment so they can perform to the best of their ability.



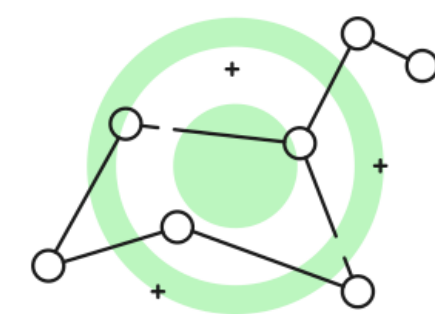
OPEN: flexibly diverse

No two people are the same. When several people from different backgrounds work together, they need to stay open-minded, know how to leverage those differences, and identify how they can complement each other. Workplace flexibility refers to a situation where employees have a choice as to how, when, and where they work and accomplish their tasks. On the other hand, diversity refers to the presence of a diverse range of people with different circumstances and backgrounds within the team.



INCLUSIVE: equally included

The ultimate goal of people working together is to provide a cohesive experience for the end-users. First and foremost, it's essential that people have a shared goal to help make effective decisions so that the solution is on the right track. At the same time, autonomy is critical in terms of maintaining the employee's motivation. By giving people more choice and control, this principle allows employees to shape their collaboration environment so they can perform to the best of their ability.



INSPIRING: experimental creativity

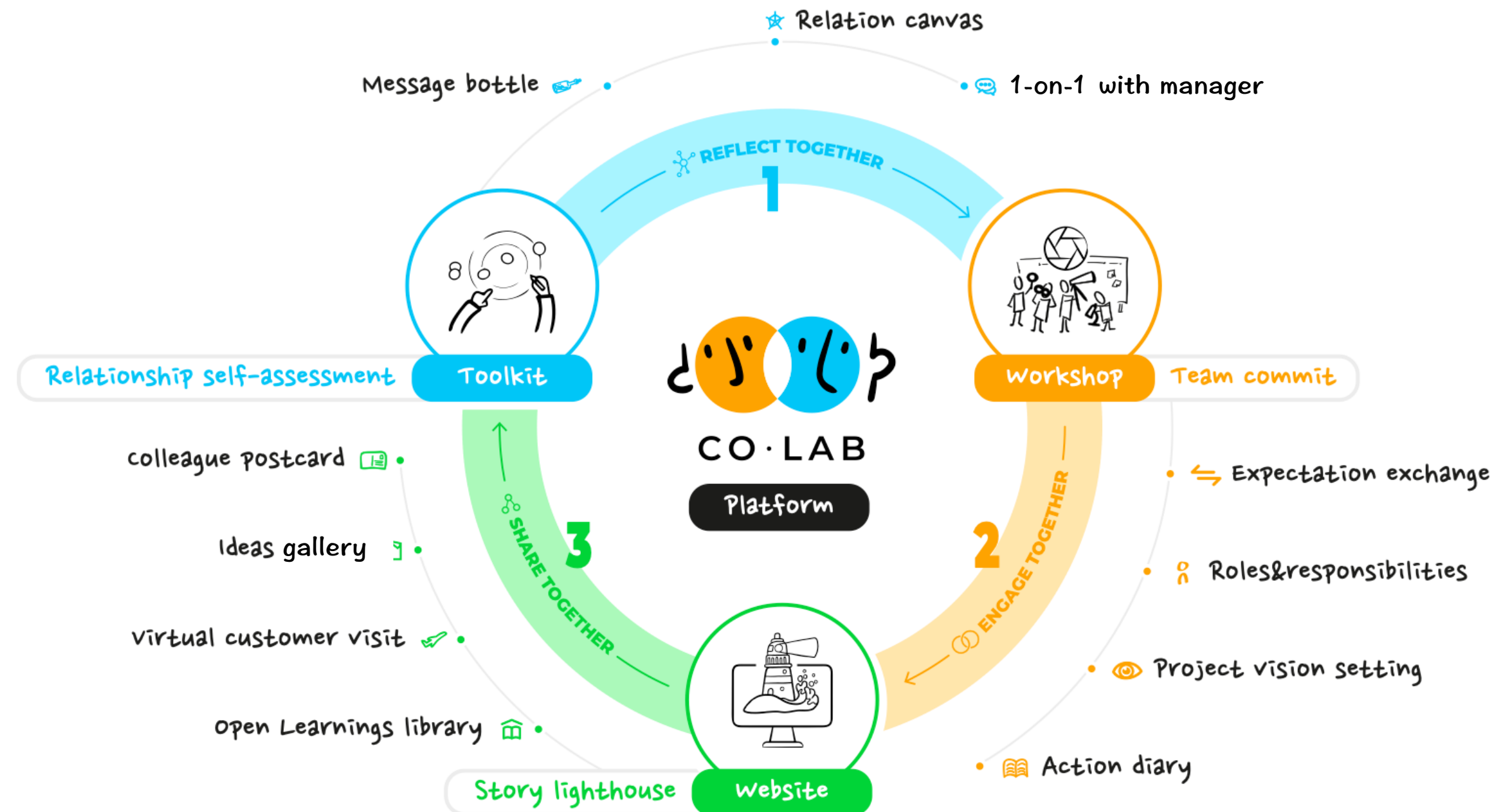
No two people are the same. When several people from different backgrounds work together, they need to stay open-minded, know how to leverage those differences, and identify how they can complement each other. Workplace flexibility refers to a situation where employees have a choice as to how, when, and where they work and accomplish their tasks. On the other hand, diversity refers to the presence of a diverse range of people with different circumstances and backgrounds within the team.

Shaping the service ecosystem

The Co-Lab ecosystem platform includes a digital website, team-commit workshops, and a tool kit embedded within my proposed change framework. The platform aims to share a cross disciplinary power through service design to support the transition towards a more open way of collaborating.

The tool kit and workshops are for individuals across disciplines and teams in their daily practices. The digital website is the main portal for internal employees to interact with the service at the organizational level, beyond their current work.

To ease the adaptation towards cultural change, Co-Lab's structure and activities are designed in a way that can allow everyone within Cisco to reflect, engage, and share together. Each sub-intervention can be used modularly, and the activities are easy to implement on different circumstances - such as physical and digital formats. This gives space for different people across the stages of the Co-lab framework to share with, and learn from, each other's expertise and experience.



The first phase is 'reflect together'. It contains a message bottle, relationship self-assessment and 1-on-1 with managers - all in sequence.

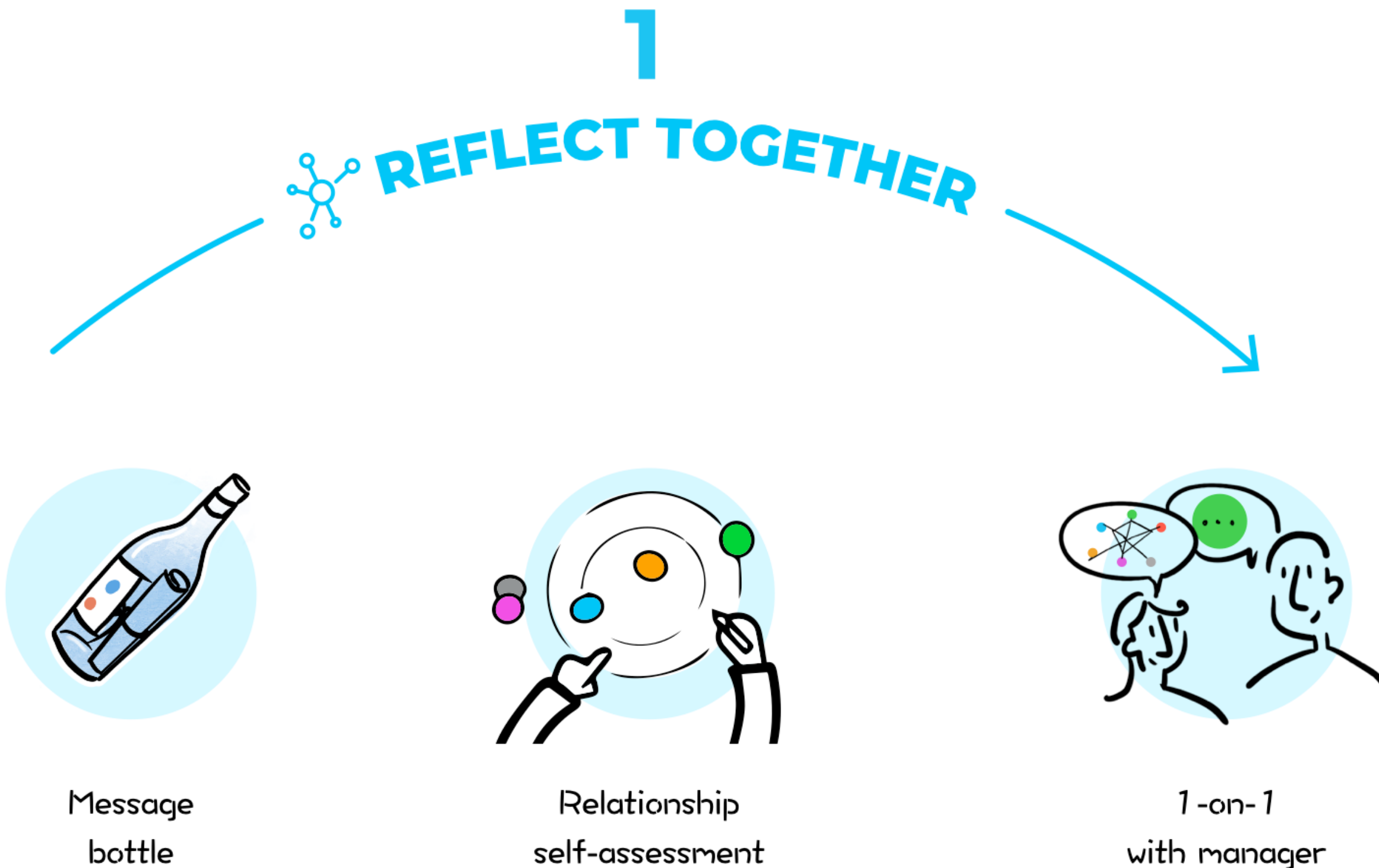
What

Collaborative self-assessment tools and processes that guide individuals to reflect on their existing collaborative relationships, facilitating people to take the first step toward collaborative transformation.

Why

Working at a giant organization means that it takes a long time to become familiar with the super-complex system. Beyond that, it's hard to think outside the box as people get used to the existing organizational culture. At the same time, their busy schedules keep people focused on their own project 'world', running from one delivery deadline to the next; there is barely time for them to pause and reflect.

In the long run, this is a major hindrance for both the business and personal development. Therefore, these interventions need to be integrated with their existing work routines, guiding them to actively think about their existing collaborative relationships.



Co-lab message bottle



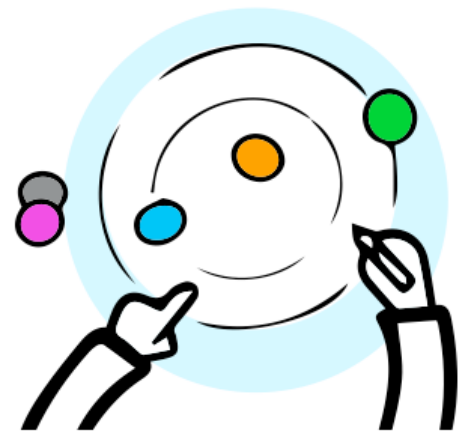
Cisco employees will receive a 'message bottle' email as the entry point to learn about the Co-Lab platform and get engaged with the Relationship Self-Assessment canvas. This message is sent by their people-experience manager from the internal operations team, who is in charge of building a balanced and inclusive workplace for everyone.

The 'message bottle' metaphor is designed to encourage communication among siloed islands in a playful way. The message bottle will appear again at the third phase - Share together - as a look-back for people to share their learnings and reflections with new people within the organization.

This future reflection and sharing is intended to generate a ripple effect by having the capacity to forward more messages to other employees or peers in Cisco.



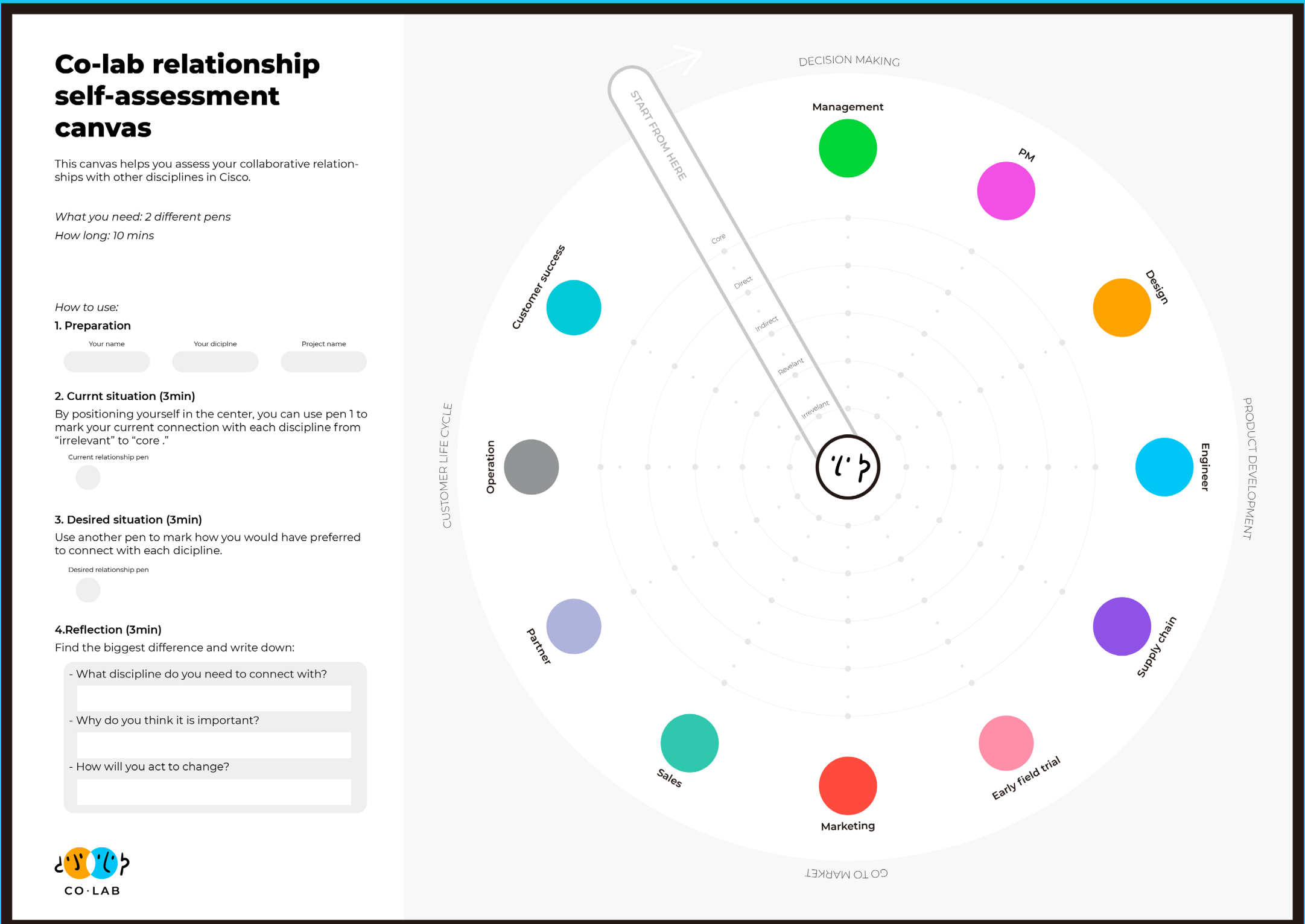
Relationship self-assessment canvas



The relationship self-assessment canvas is a template where people will be asked to draw their connections with different disciplines within their current project team. This canvas helps people assess their collaborative relationships with other disciplines in Cisco. It only takes 10 minutes, so it's easy to fit into people's busy schedules.

People can do this activity anytime, anywhere. The canvas can be printed in A3 paper, or used digitally on white-board-ing tools such as Miro. It's also possible for them to annotate the document.

To make it more effective and valuable, it's recommended to use this canvas before a project starts, but it can also be done during or after the project.



How to use

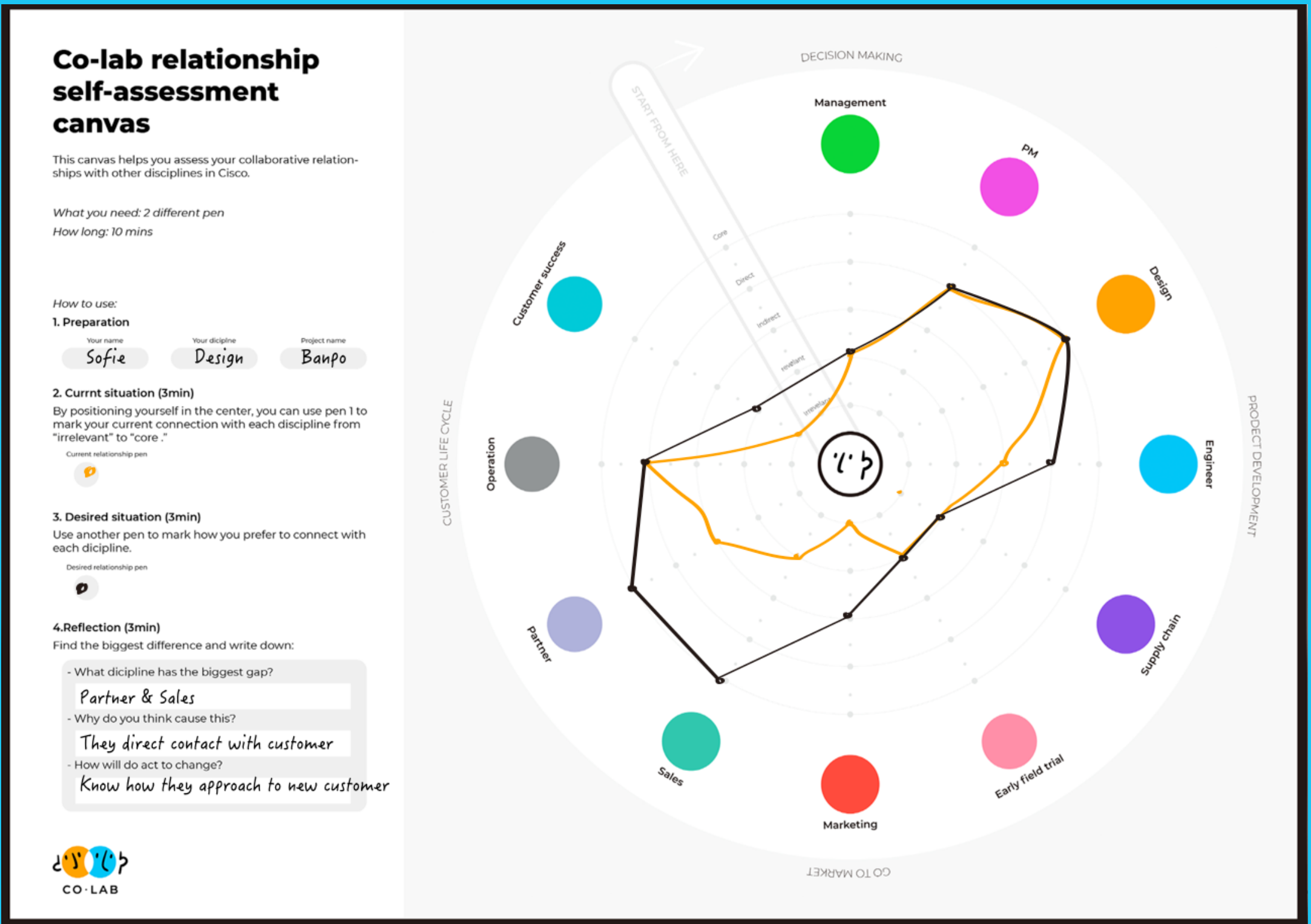
There are 4 steps within the session:

1. Specify project to make it accurate;
2. Draw the current collaboration relation situation;
3. Draw the desired level of engagement with other disciplines;
4. Compare the differences between 2 radar maps and reflect the biggest gap, why it happened, and how to change it.



“That’s really good and simple. As soon as I started doing it, I saw the value in it very quickly. Once I started making that shape, and then I realized what’s going to happen...I could come to the meeting next Monday with people in other countries and say I’ve got this great thing. Let’s do it together, generate the discussion, learn from it in 15mins. And I think that’s really important.

Researcher, Cisco



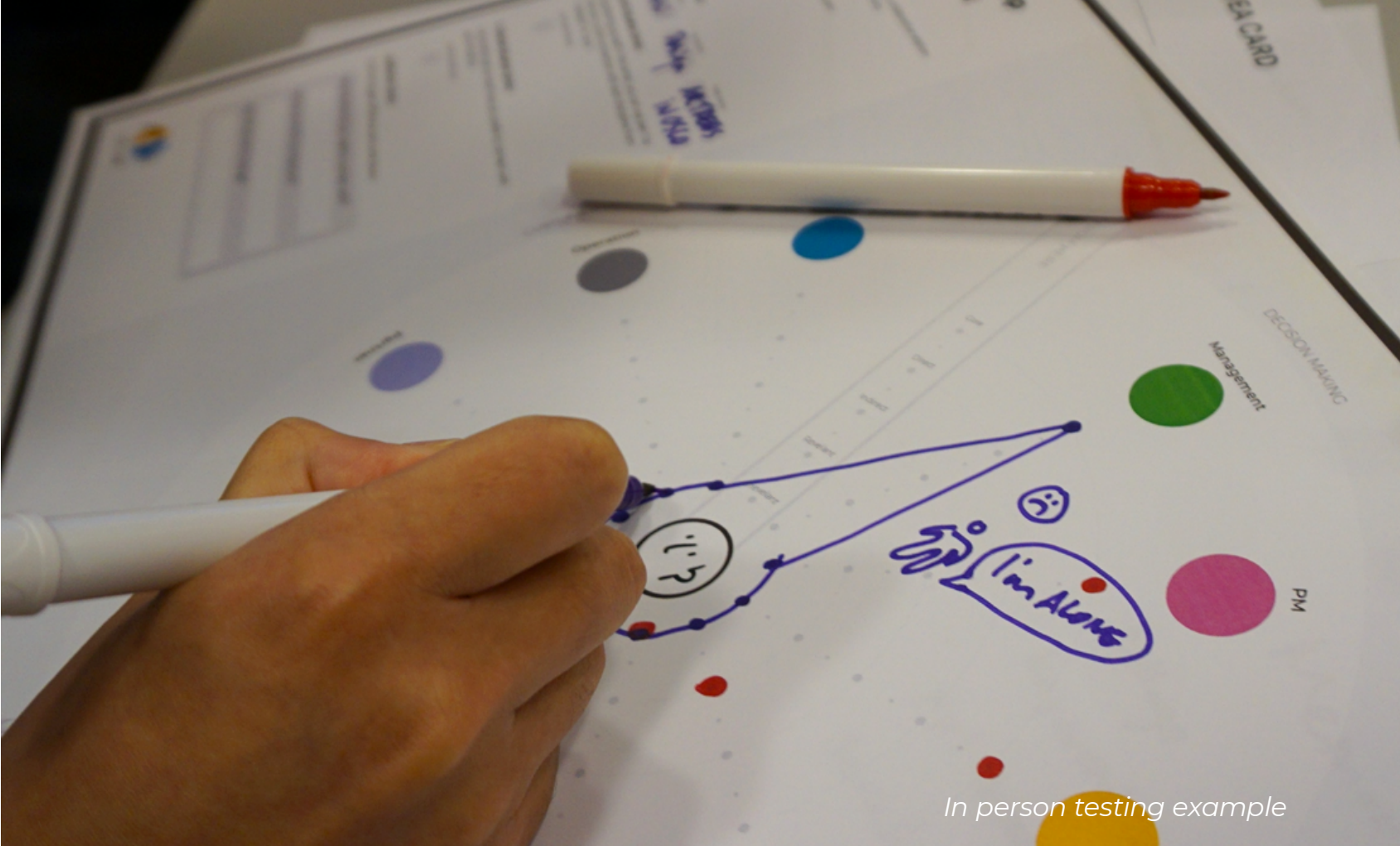
Example of filled canvas

One-on-one meetings with manager



The next step is for people to bring the canvas into one-on-one meetings with their direct manager to discuss their needs. This is also a process of self-evaluation and sharing personal perceptions. Managers can provide suggestions with their years of knowledge learned in the organization. Furthermore, the manager can also coordinate with managers from other teams to improve the upcoming project's collaboration experience.

In order to scale the process, the operation team can also be involved to help other managers engage in their own one-on-one meetings with their teams.



In person testing example



User testing

I tested this canvas with one service designer digitally, one researcher in person, and four people in a group session to test whether the canvas works in different situations.

At the end of each test, I asked the participants to role-play how they would share their mapping result, with who, and why.

Here is one example from testing where people drew a sharp point since she is alone in her current project and wishes to have at least one partner



Reflection

People start to grasp the meaning of the canvas as they move on with the instructions. It's self-explanatory, and people can do it by themselves without needing me to facilitate the conversation.

The canvas is only a facilitation tool, hence, I left the open space for each discipline to write down the people they connect with within their specific situation and improvise based on their interpretations. This, however, seemed to cause confusion in terms of the disciplines they're related to in their own contexts.

The main activity in the second phase - engage together - is the 'team commit workshop'.

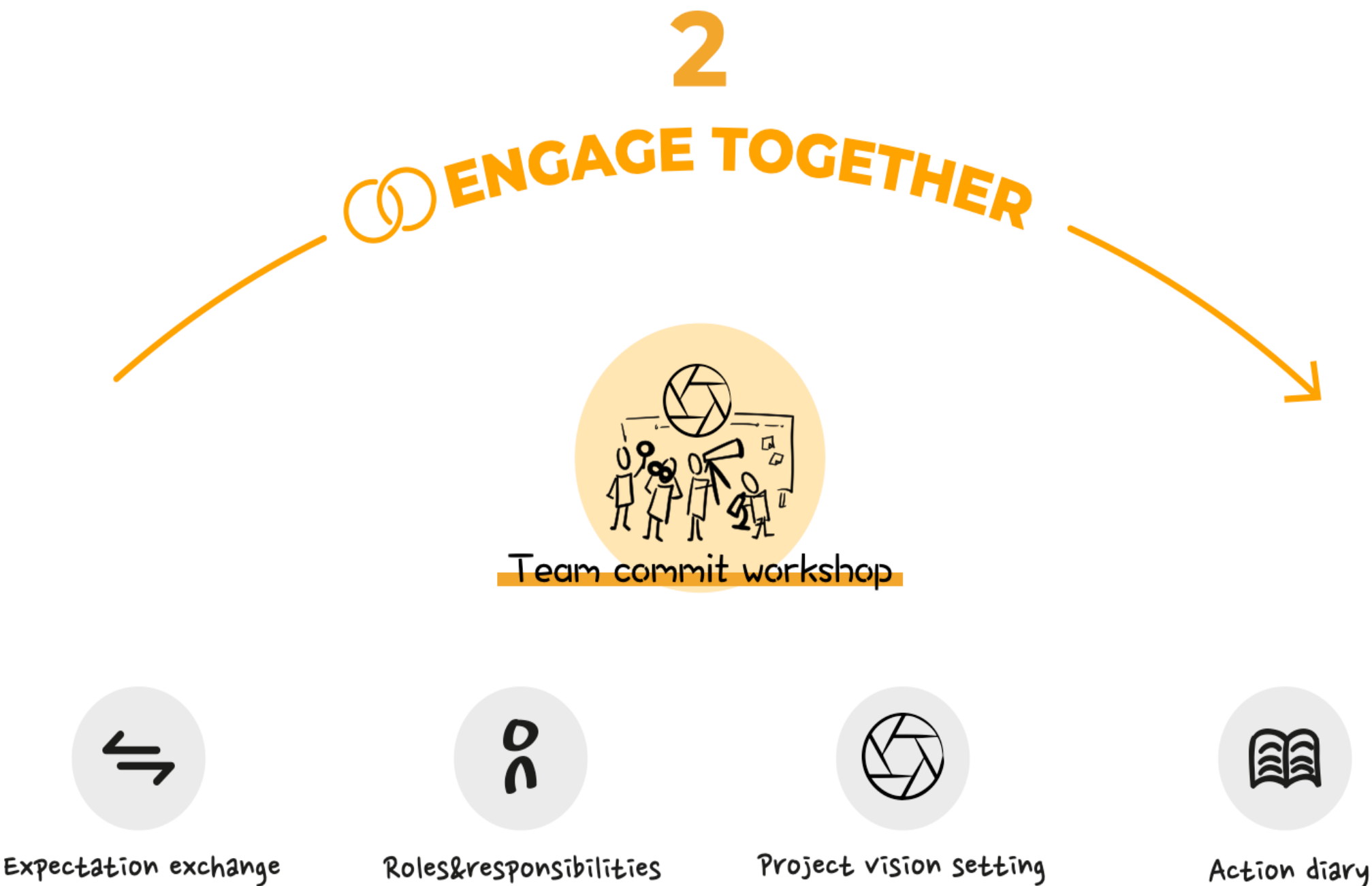
What

It's a new process intervention that can be added to the beginning of the commits process in Cisco. Commits are high-level decision making meetings; these include: business, concept, and develop commit. The team commit is made to introduce team members so they can know each other better and prepare them with the shared goals in the early phases of the project.

Why

Usually, people are only on-boarded to the project when the previous job is done. This results in front line employees not having a good understanding of how others perform the work, nor the reason behind the decisions, which could be a huge fall back for the whole project, since their perspective could be very valuable at the beginning stages.

Therefore, it's necessary to kick start the project not only from the top-down decision-makers, but to also engage the whole team to clarify who they are, what they do, and agree on the same direction together.



Team commit workshop

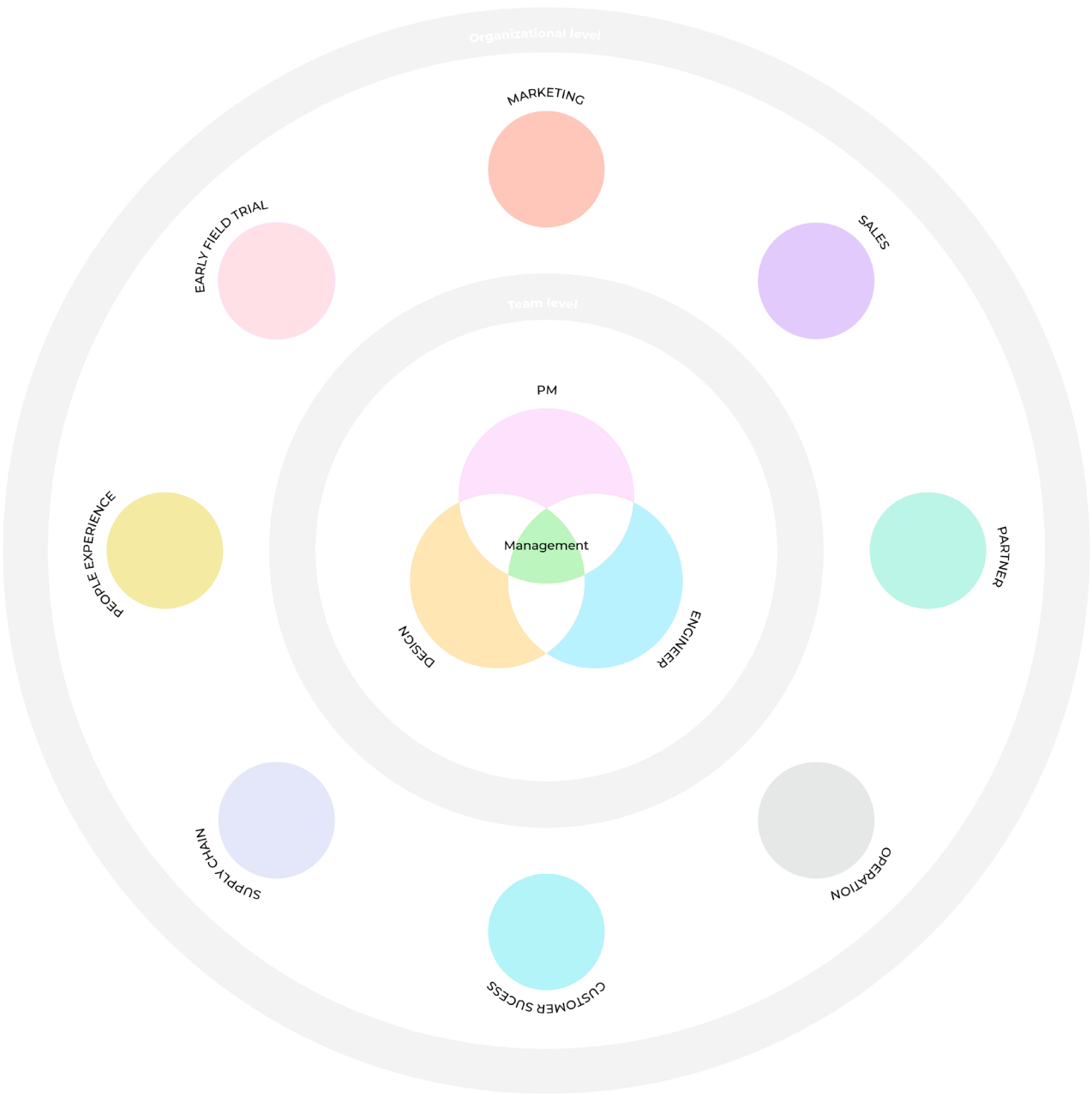


Co-lab team commit workshops help ensure that a cross-disciplinary team is aligned and minimizing overlapping work. People hesitate to exercise their roles and responsibilities if there is some ambiguity. Team members might lose focus or be unproductive if goals are not clearly defined. This exhibits poor working qualities and weakens the collaboration among the members. All of this results in poor communication among team members effecting the productivity of a project. Therefore, it is crucial to establish absolute clarity at each level.

➡ 1. Expectation exchange

In the beginning of the workshop, there is an ice-breaking activity for participants to share their wishes and needs created in the ‘reflect together’ stage for the new project. This connects people who don’t know each other before, with their shared needs.

From observing one week of team sync sessions, I further developed the disciplines map into a warm-up activity for people to annotate who they are when joining the workshop. Everyone can have an overview of the workshop dynamic. It also could be used in on-boarding new hires.



Feedback

“...The upcoming workshop is focusing on packaging, and this can help remind us about the different roles and perspectives.

Team manager, Cisco


2. Roles & responsibilities

Job titles exist to make company operations easier. Instead of accepting the messiness of individual people, companies operate at a level of abstraction and treat everyone with the same title the same. In reality, just because two people have the same title doesn't mean they are interchangeable. Nor does any title describe the totality of what any person does. A simple activity to help people clarify their roles and responsibilities can help eliminate the biases that people take for granted.

Clarifying the roles and responsibilities is the central part of the collaboration. It helps the team work together effectively by defining individual responsibilities and finding gaps that need to be addressed. As the project proceeds, or when people encounter problems, they can directly reach out to someone who can provide the right information and increase communication efficiency.

When they have a clear understanding of their position, each team member will work more effectively and without accidentally stepping on another person's toes, creating unforeseen conflicts.

When members of a team collaborate, they are able to utilize the knowledge, experience and skills of everyone involved. Effective collaboration will allow all the members to share their talent and find the optimal solution to every problem. A role statement clearly defines each team member's authority, responsibility and tasks that need to be aligned in order to support the defined goal.



Roles _____

Responsibilities

What others think

What I think

👁️ 3. Project vision setting

The third part is project vision setting, to establish a team vision to set the context for what the overall team aims for - from a telescope level to a microscope level. They are organizational long-term missions within the next 10 years (telescope); 4 years strategy (binocular); 1 year goal (magnifier); and short term, quarterly objectives (microscope).

When they are given a clear and gripping cause to be involved with, team members become as passionate about the goals and objectives as their leaders. If team members do not care or are unclear about the goals and objectives presented to them, they will find all kinds of reasons to not work together. For collaboration to work, the vision and purpose must be clear.

“Collaboration works because there is nothing more meaningful, bonding or growth promoting than a shared win.

Sherrie Campbell



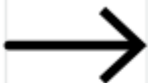
Mission



Strategy



Goal



Objectives



After the workshop, there is a monthly action diary for team members to talk about the blockers and enablers they experienced during their collaboration.

Here is an example I tested with two people who were working in pairs on a research project. They made a new rule to keep the feeling of socializing by giving each other instant feedback.



Working partner reflect on your existing way of collaboration and generate constructive feedback on improving at the end of your meeting.



Time suggestion: 10 min



What do you see, hear, do and think?
What are the rules constrain the way you work with each other?
What are the problem or things that hold you back from achieve the goal?

"yeah..yeah.." "Where
e was ", "where is
it?" When writing in
the mid of flow,
need seconds to
thinks.



What 's particular you did help you accomplish your goal?
Strength or things that help you to be efficient, effective and happy
The value your exchange

Instant feedback:
Intentionally say
"give me 5
seconds" to finish
current work

Share
inspirational
input example
with fantastic
story

Feeling of socialize:
replicate energy at
office to focus work
that easy to follow
at home

The main interaction on the third phase - share together - is the 'story lighthouse website'. This contains four modules: Open learnings library, virtual customer visit museum, ideas gallery, and colleague postcard.

What

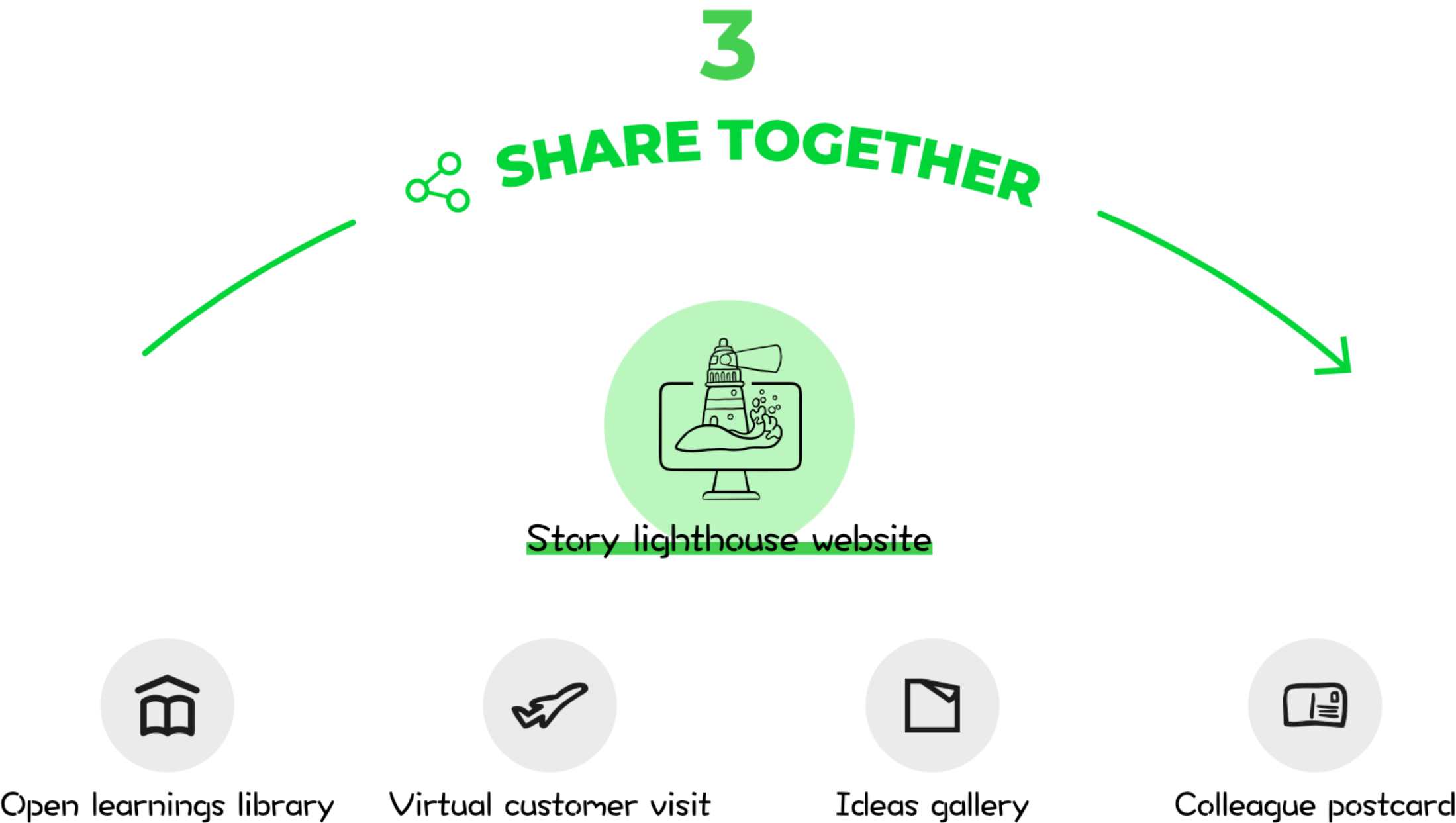
It's an internal knowledge-sharing platform for people to connect with others through work-related learnings and stories.

Why

“Everything feels private...You have to find the right people to look for the right information, and it takes a lot of effort.

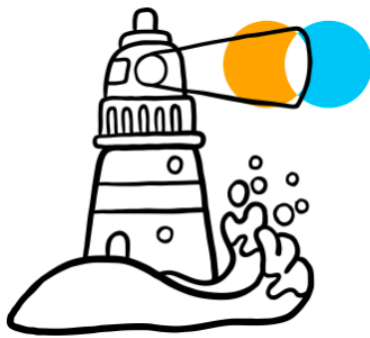
Interviewee No.7

There is a lot of internal sharing activity within Cisco, but people still need a knowledge base over time to easily access it whenever they want. The Story Lighthouse website lets the stories shine with the insight learning and practical actions so that people can understand and take into their respective work context.





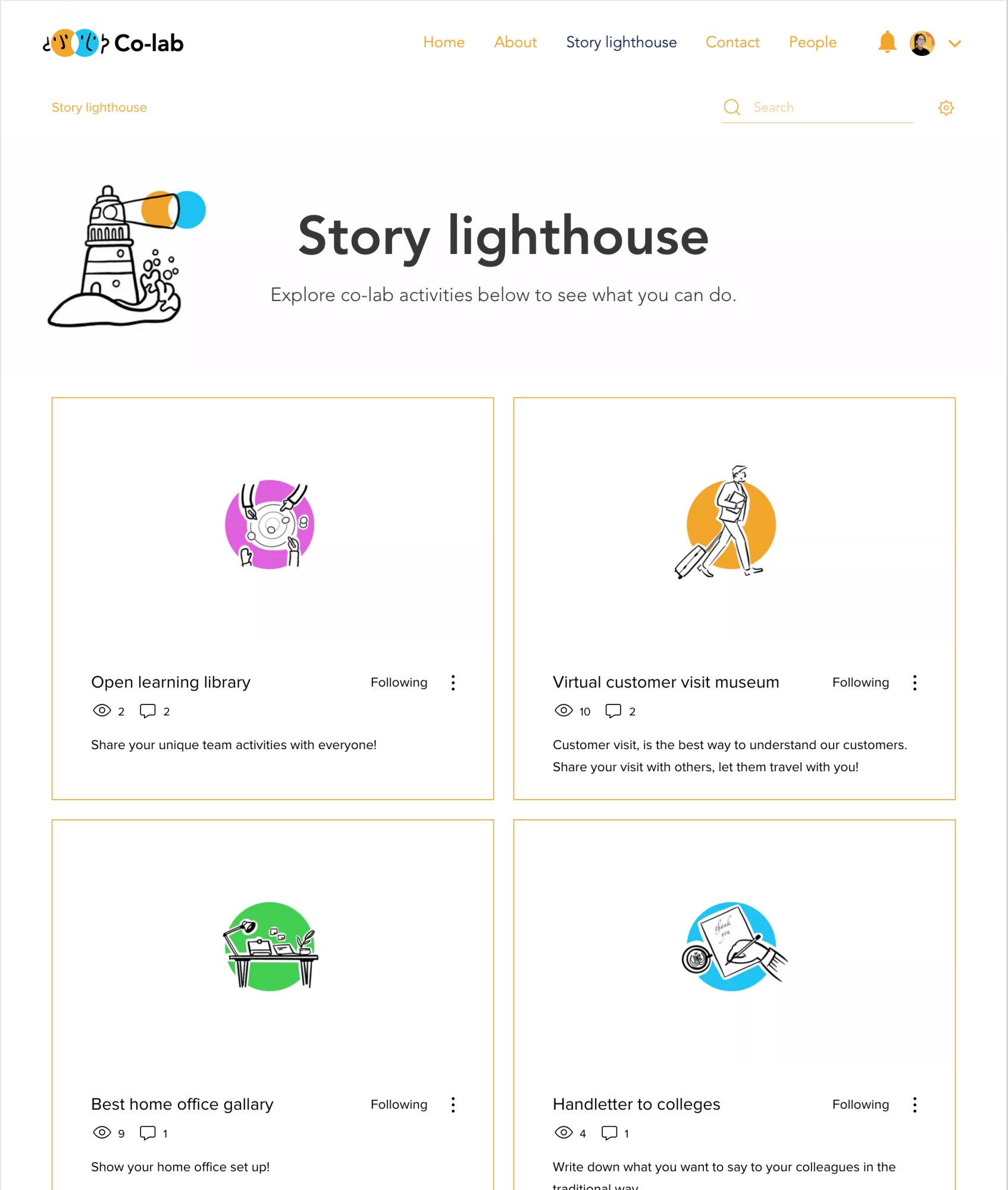
● ● ● Share together



The story lighthouse is an on-line platform concept that offers content including:

1. Virtual customer visit museum
2. Open learning library
3. Best home office gallery
4. Hand letter to colleges

These are the initial key themes and campaigns. There can be more activities created on the platform to support further sharing, learning and exchanges.



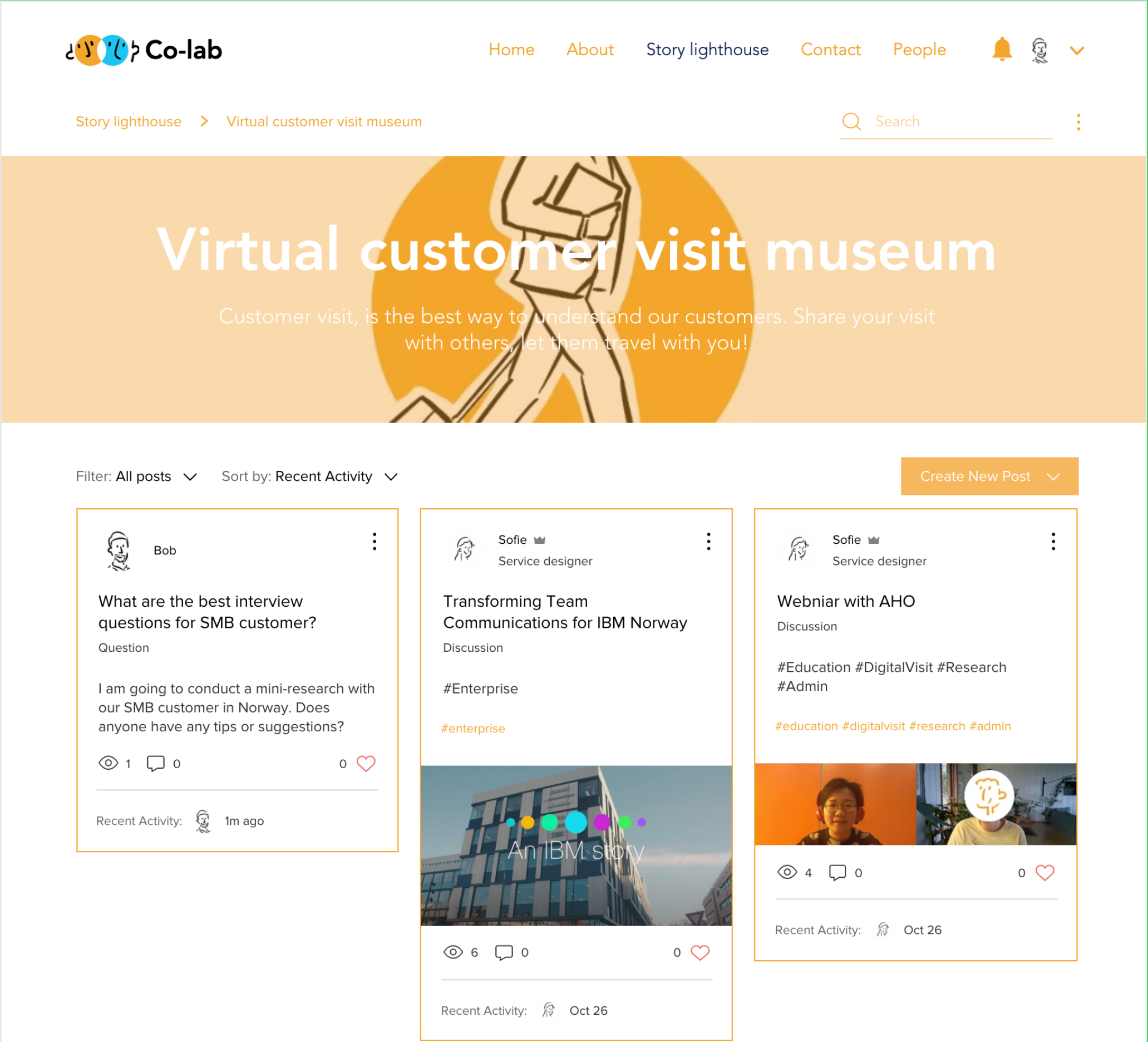


Virtual customer visit museum

One of the most vital things for teams to create a cohesive experience is to actually experience how customers are using Cisco's products and their practices.

In this page, people can openly share their resources from previous customer visits. It allows other employees to travel and learn virtually and alongside the customers. This also addresses the current bottleneck of employees (PMs and Researchers) not having access to the right information they need that has already been produced, as well as the difficulty of grasping the context where customers experience Cisco's products and services.

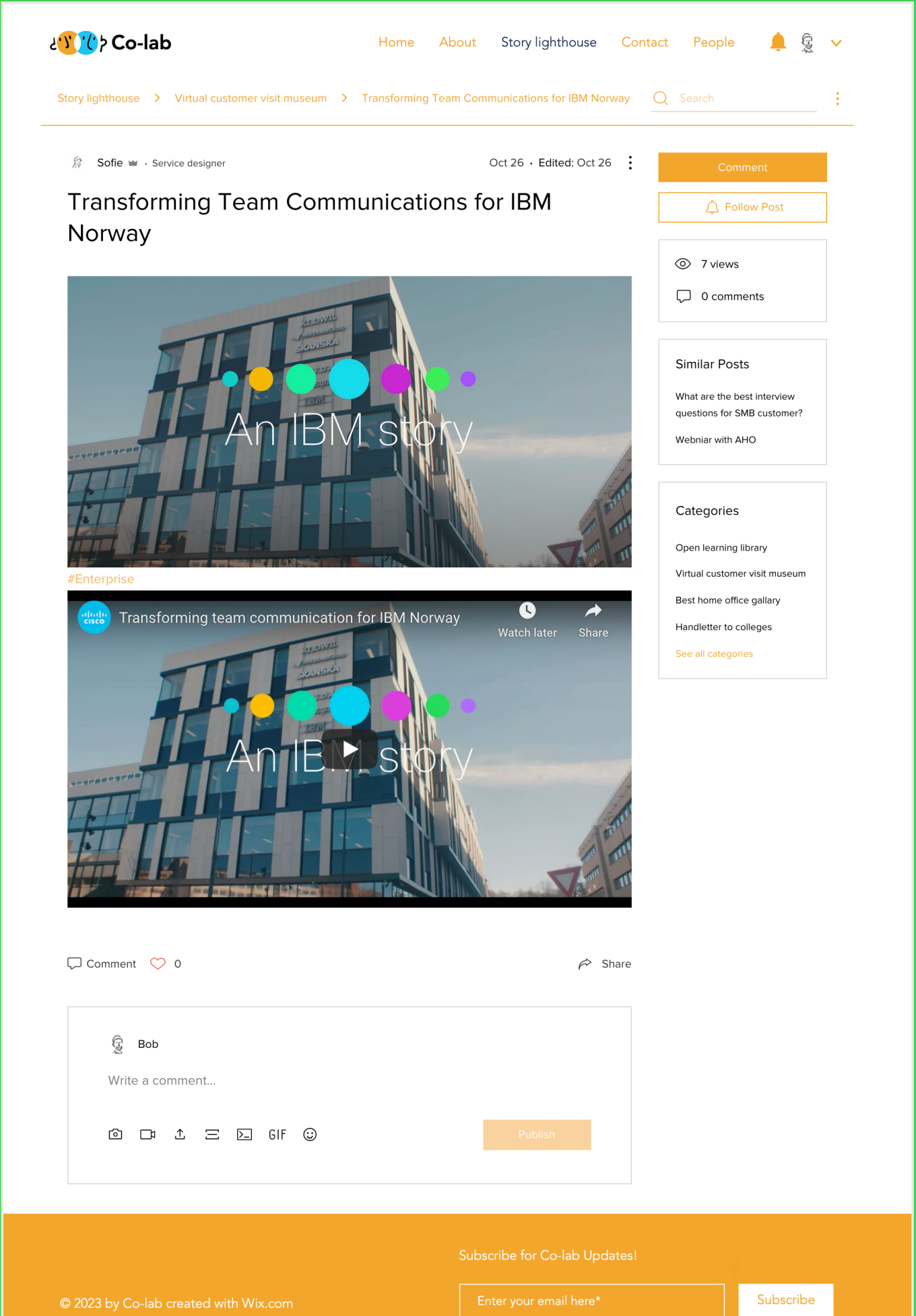
Over time, this will build into a holistic customer database that can help people if they need any input for their current work.



Share posts


This page allows people to openly share the research, learnings, and reflections of their concrete work with the rest of the organization. For example, the successful case related to IBM as an enterprise customer can be a useful input resource for other projects to learn from what has already been done.

The “comment area” and “similar posts” are also designed to allow people to share their feedback, establish new connections, and link to more relevant resources.



Ask a question

The story lighthouse also allows people to ask questions to people they have met in their current work. This helps them complete projects faster when they have peers with valuable answers and experiences to be shared.






Home

About


Story lighthouse


Contact


People




Story lighthouse > Virtual customer visit museum > Ask a Question

 Search










 Bob

What are the best interview questions for SMB customer?



I am going to conduct a mini-research with our SMB customer in Norway. Does anyone have any tips or suggestions?

 GIF 



Cancel

Publish

People profile

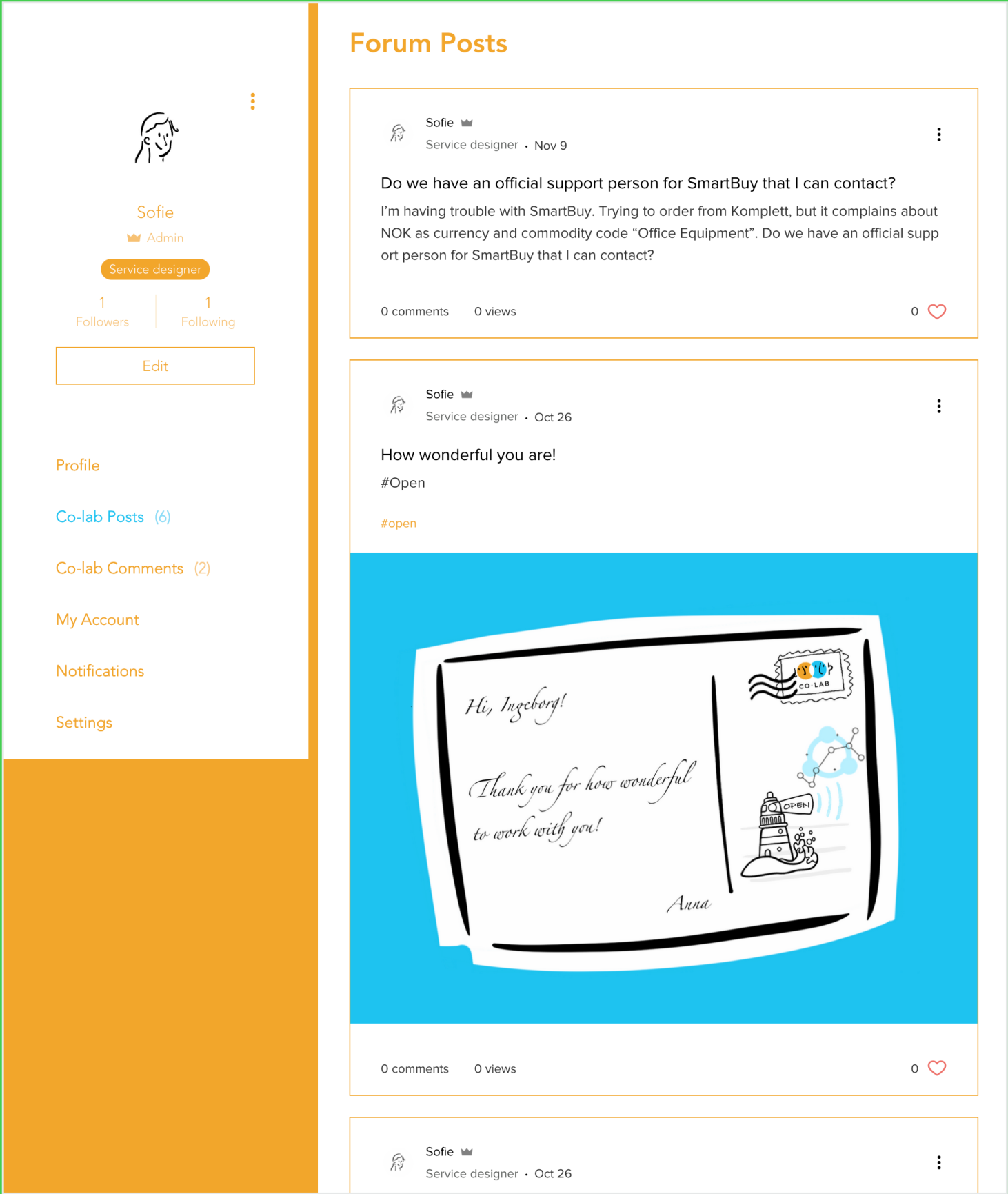
Every employee can automatically sign in to the website with their Cisco credentials. People can view other’s posts and directly chat with the ones they want to connect with. This helps internal employees have more opportunities to share their work and interest topics with others, and build an internal sharing community to improve their job satisfaction.



Feedback

“This is brilliant because this is the problem that we keep having. We just don’t really have anywhere to put it...So this can be a way to share your knowledge, which is good for people to conduct their own research with some reference or with some existing learning.

Researcher, Cisco



Feedback

I collected a lot of constructive feedback along the whole process of developing Co-lab. From the feedback sessions with a service designer, researcher, manager, and operation staff, the feedback so far has been positive. The examples of design interventions and reflections from an outside perspective on the current collaborative situation and the cultural aspect were appreciated by those who have followed my whole journey from research stage.

The design interventions are integrated well together with their modularity, and are easy to adopt in people's work since they only take around 10 minutes. However, it does need the support to showcase successful examples for people to use it among all the other internal announcement emails and messages. The internal service design and research team would definitely be ideal for peo-

ple to reach out and ask for supporting resources, as well as the design team for a broader perspective.

Furthermore, top-down level support would be an effective force to develop this further. There are already initiatives about developing some of the ideas into internal projects, such as a research project sharing blog and an org chart for the Cisco Norway branch. There is no doubt that Cisco has the resources to get the website further adjusted and developed, and this project is a good starting point to move forward. Front line workers such as engineers also express great interest in the method and would bring it back to their own practices and test it with their team.



"I think this project could be taken further to set up as a consulting business to help big complex corporations collaborate cross-functionally around the globe.

Service designer, Cisco

"I like this because I see how all the interventions relate to each other, but they also stand alone... It's a lovely analogy to have stakeholders as planets, and how you form the prism is really interesting and very cool.

Researcher, Cisco

"This is really useful to develop further for on-boarding the new hires across disciplines.

People experience manager, Cisco

5.

SUMMING UP

Conclusion, planning for moving forward, and final reflections on the topic, project.

Conclusion

To summarize, the co-lab platform is a simple framework for new coming project to facilitate teams' success in Cisco. It should be incorporated while developing a new team and when planning the first steps, or revisiting the content if a team starts to struggle. Co-lab can be initiated in any phase of a project, but for optimal use it should be deployed in the starting phase of a new one. Furthermore, it can be modified and updated as needed while the projects progress.

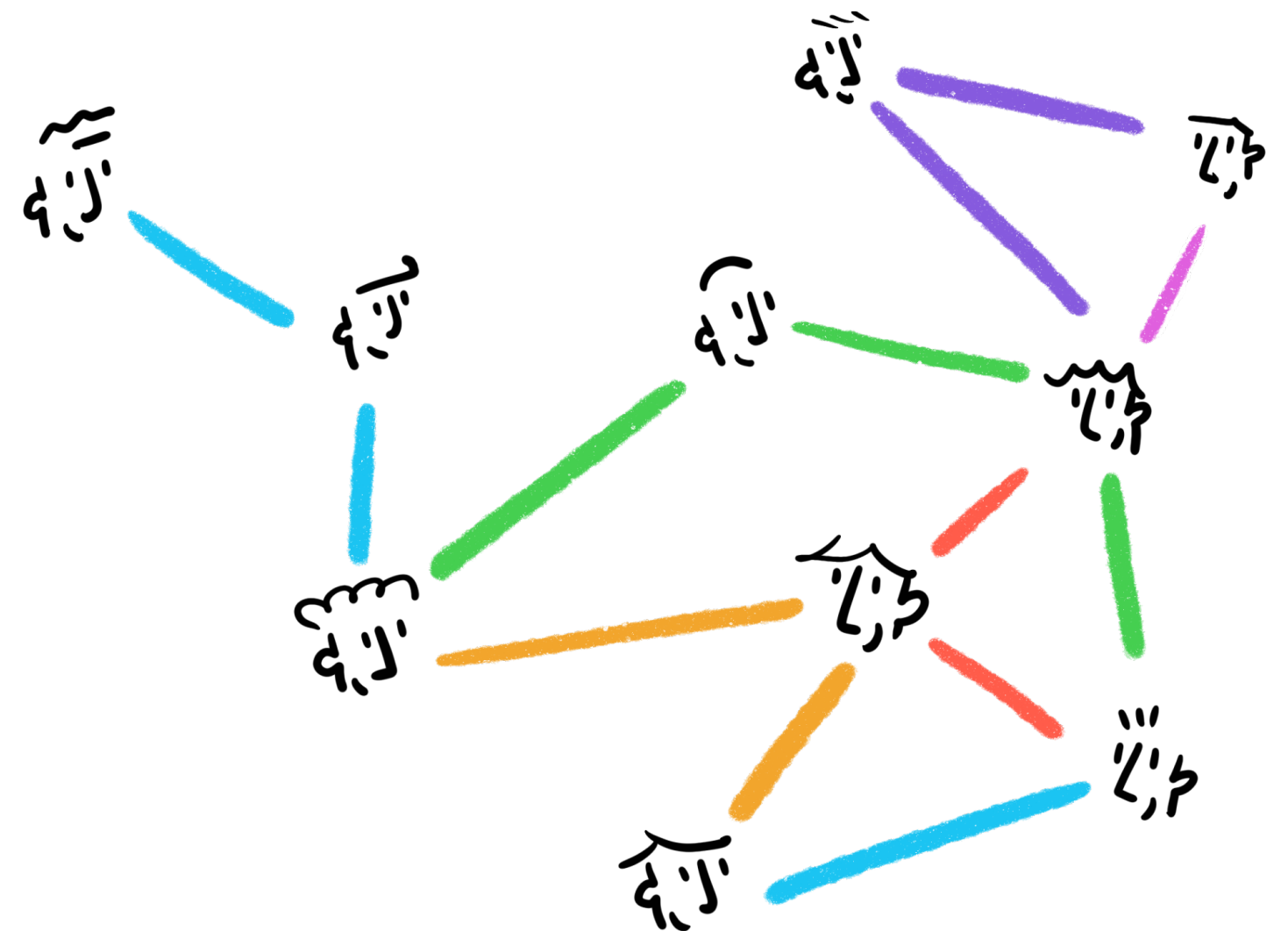
Co-lab is not the end of the journey. It is more like a concept as the basis for exploring how future service design can support collaborative practices within organizations. People from different perspectives can come together to use and play with the tools Co-Lab has to offer.

People need to jump out of the current structures and rethink how to create the best products and services for their customers to compete and lead the market. Through this project, the need for diversity, openness, and humanity

in the workplace was visualized.

Co-lab is an example of integrating with the existing ecosystem and exploring cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural collaboration in the Norwegian context to inspire people to participate in long-term value co-creation.

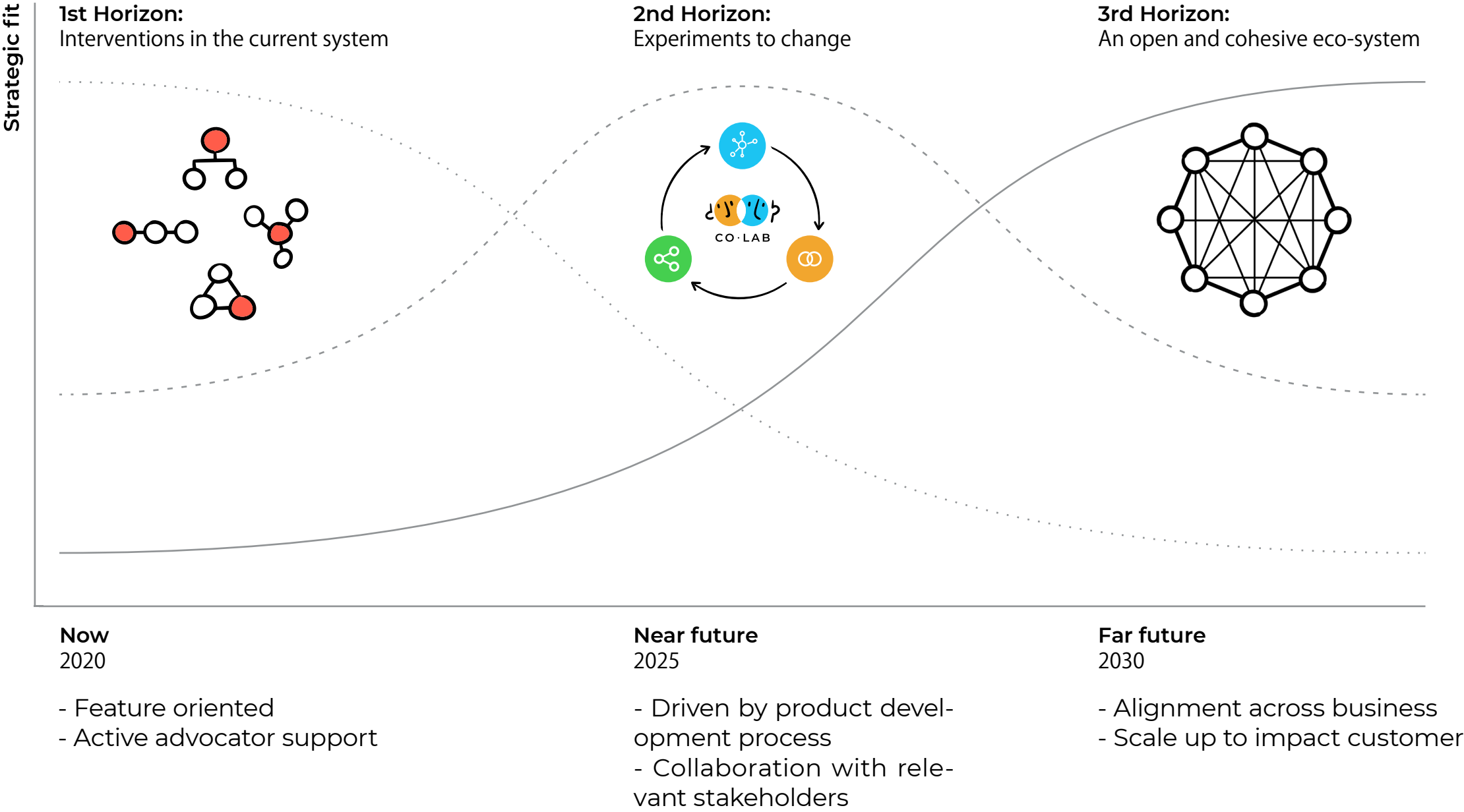
To sum up, Co-lab wishes to shed light and encourage people to reflect, engage, and share with others to make a change to a better future with trust and openness. The ultimate vision is for complex technological-based organizations like Cisco to be able to transform while coming into an open and collaborative future, and co-lab is one way of getting there.



Moving forward

The framework and tools designed in this proposal can not stand on their own. They need to be embedded in people’s daily work and be aligned with their core needs to shape the desired open culture. This project’s ultimate goal is to showcase the possibility of collaborative activities related to the workplace that help people work better together to reach the goal of delivering a coherent experience.

In order to make the culture change sustainable, the project needs support from both top-down and bottom-up levels with greater width so that the ideas behind it can affect the system on a broader level. The further distribution of the materials created within the co-lab ecosystem relies on its spreading through the people who have been involved so far. They will be a powerful asset to further their interactions with the people they want to build connections with. This report and the website will be sent to more people as more key actors are identified. Moreover, I will start my new journey to work in Cisco as an in-house service designer, with more chances to bring this forward by designing how people across the system could easily adopt the ideas in their own context and scale up the eventual impact.



Co-lab future planning in the three horizons model (Hodgson & Curry, 2008)

Personal reflections

A collective effort

This diploma moves between theory, research and experimental practices for in-house service designers to move beyond isolated roles, and to prompt reactions in order to trigger cultural change for how we enhance collaboration experience.

In the process of exploration, I realized that, especially as an individual service designer, I was not capable of solving everything all by myself within such a complex system. So, I focused more on using service design approaches to trigger people's reactions as a co-created joint force to realize a fundamental culture change that impacts the organization with successful evidence from the micro-level.

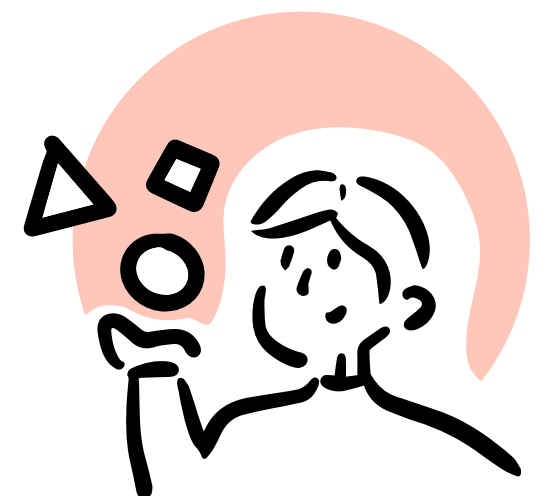
Physical prompts empowering digital transformation

The corona virus outbreak has resulted in high demand for transforming the physical, in-person activities into remote, digital services. This transformation pushes forward the boundary of design interventions to be more adaptable, no matter where people are. But the unique benefit of physical interactions is still extremely important and valuable. It helps us create memories and forge connections. It contains characters and vivid sensory settings. Physical prompts combined with digital solutions allow creative teams to work their magic with more freedom and high-level engagement.

Design for long-term organizational value

Nowadays, a lot of businesses and organizations have been trying to compete with all kinds of competitors in a rapidly expanding and developing market. However, these short-term and scattered features produced internally under pressure are not good enough for the end-users to have a coherent experience and achieve long-term value.

There are many talks on management practices available, but few about how design can shape not only your product and services but also shape your organization for the better. For designers, our skills can be applied at a strategic level to support a company to better handle future change. I am looking forward to leveraging this experience to continue working on service design within organizational interventions.



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To my family in China, for your spiritual support and love over the past two years.

Finally to you, for taking the time to read this report, I hope it has given you something to bring forward.

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6.

APPENDIX

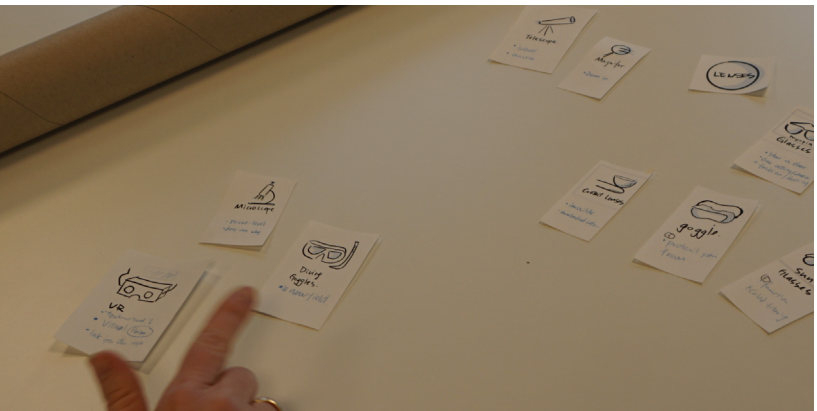
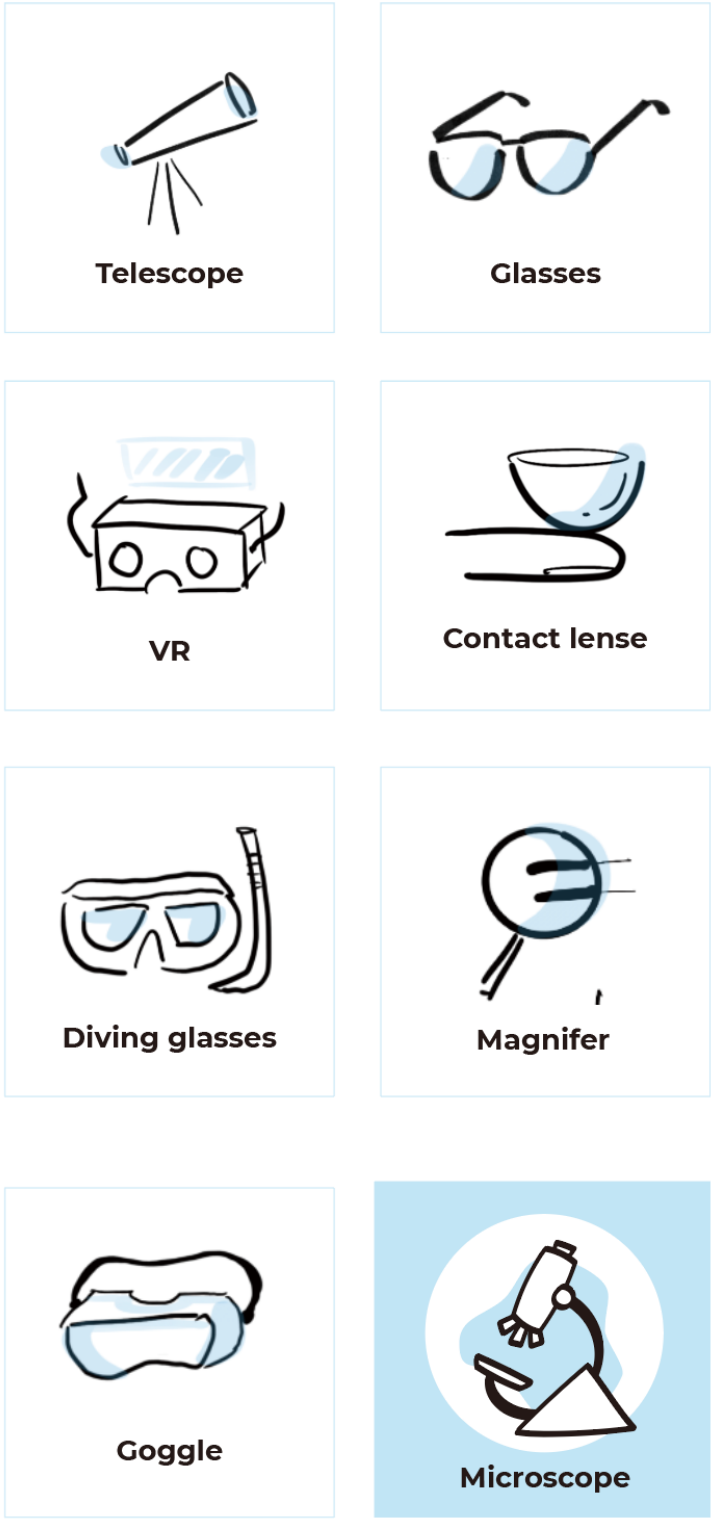
Interview guide

10 mins	Individual-level
Background	To kick start, could you tell me a little bit about yourself . Like your background, what experience do you have before as a ____? How did you become interested in Cisco?
Collaboration perceptions	Let's move forward to the next part about your experience with collaboration. Write in one sentence on the sticky notes. What does collaboration mean to you?
	In general ?
	In your workplace ?
	To your professional role as a...?
Background	Let's talk about your role in Cisco. What's the goal of your work? What do you do on daily basis ?
{Lenses card}	Can you choose the cards that relate to your focus in your regular work?

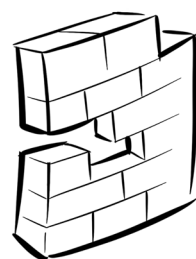
30min	Collaboration as is
	The island of your team
	Who is on your team ?
	How would you describe the approach your team has towards collaboration?
	How you would describe the culture in your team ?
	The Bridge_Relationship mapping
{Actor cards}	Can you tell me Who else do you usually collaborate with? and why you put them there, and the point here is that the position and how they are related to you.
	How do you currently collaborate with ____? Tell me about the last time you tried to collaborate with them
	(Based on your experience, what do you think is the biggest difference between in-house and consultancy in terms of collaboration?)
	Culture
	Inmagine Cisco as a person , How you would describe the culture in the organization?
	Why do you think this way within the company?
	How are these work culture influencing how much you are involved in collaboration work?
	Tell me a story of how this has happened for you.
	Oh! how does that feel for you?
	How do you think your cultural background has affected the way you're working in the workplace?
	Are there any cultural limitations ? The political company, team, personal level
	Any collaborative experience can be improved ? What have you tried that has/hasn't worked? What went wrong in that case?
	How come you don't collaborate with... other people?

10 mins	Collaboration could be
	Cultural Transition
	Let's look at this spectrum , from completely stay at home to go to the office, Ideally, How much percent do you want to work from home?
	What are you and your team currently doing to make it easier ?
	What're your new needs ?
	Future imagination
	Who do you want to work with the most, a fancy example? Why?
	What do you think future collaboration experience should be like? What results would you achieve that you can't get today?

Lenses card prompt

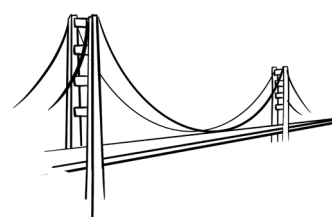


Blocker & enabler



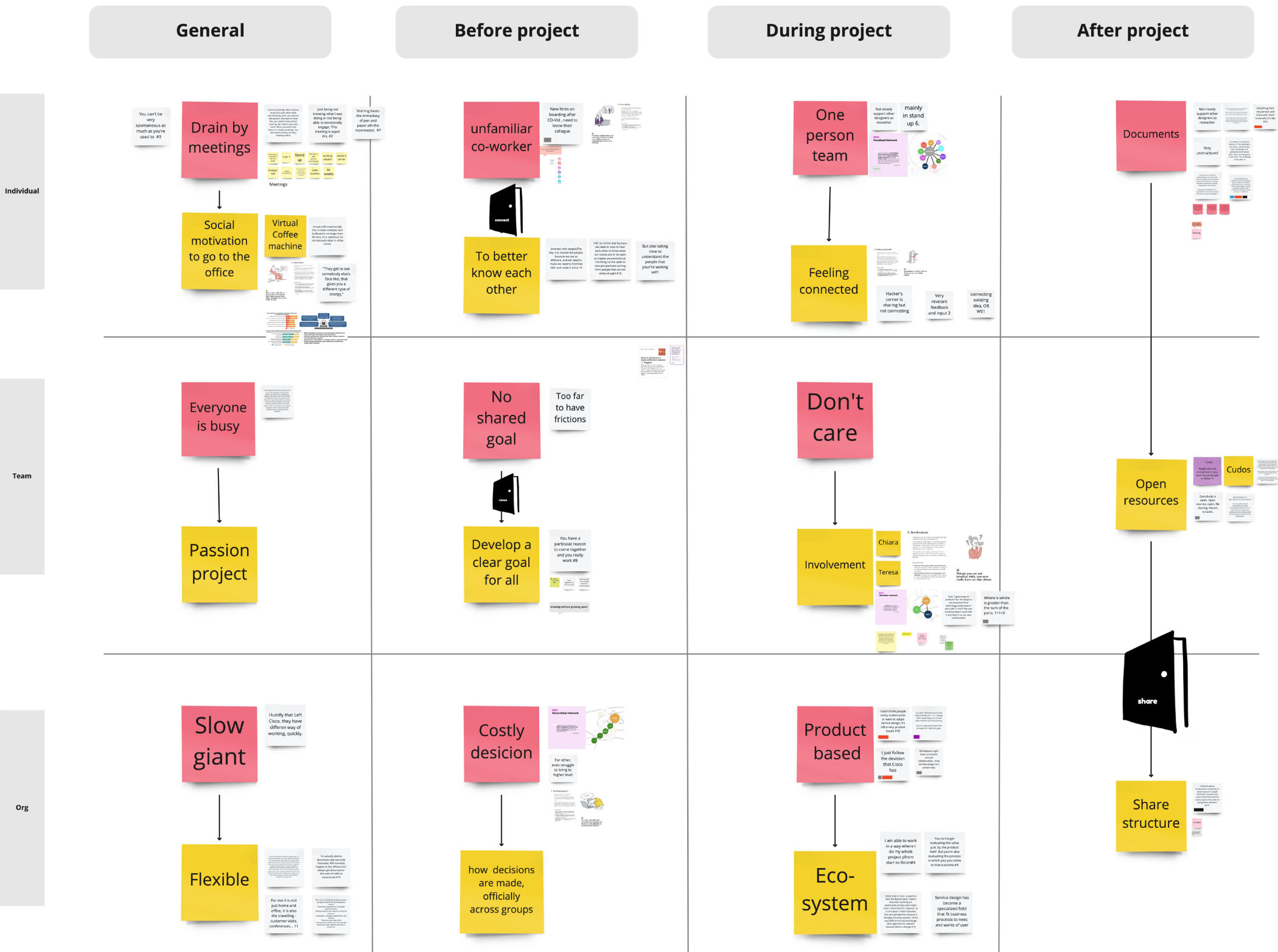
The wall of blocker

- What do you see, hear, do, and think?
- What are the rules that constrain the way you work with each other?
- What are the problem or things that hold you back from achieving the goal?



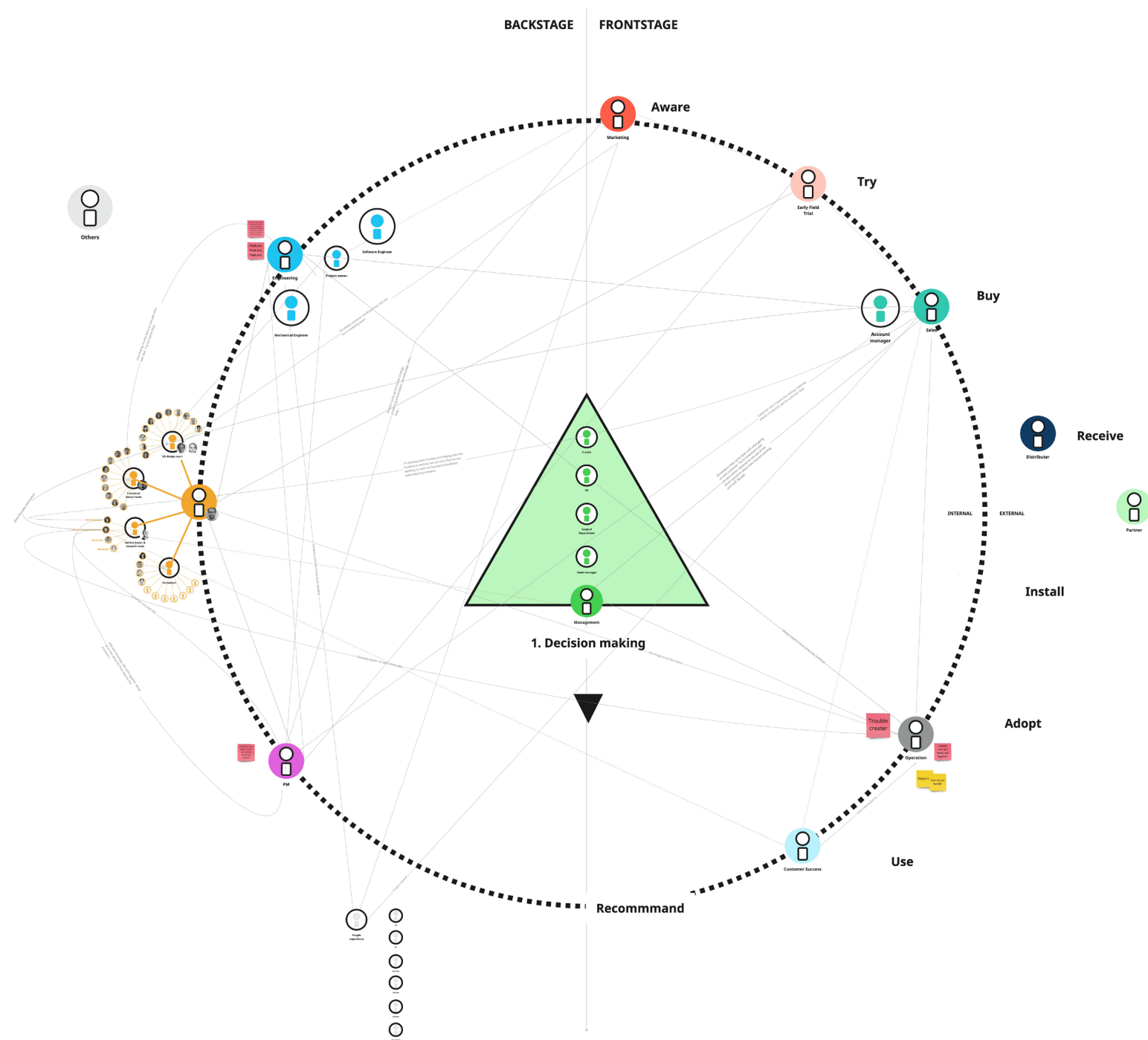
The bridge of enabler

- What's particular you did help you accomplish your goal?
- Strength or things that help you to be efficient, effective.
- The value of your exchange.

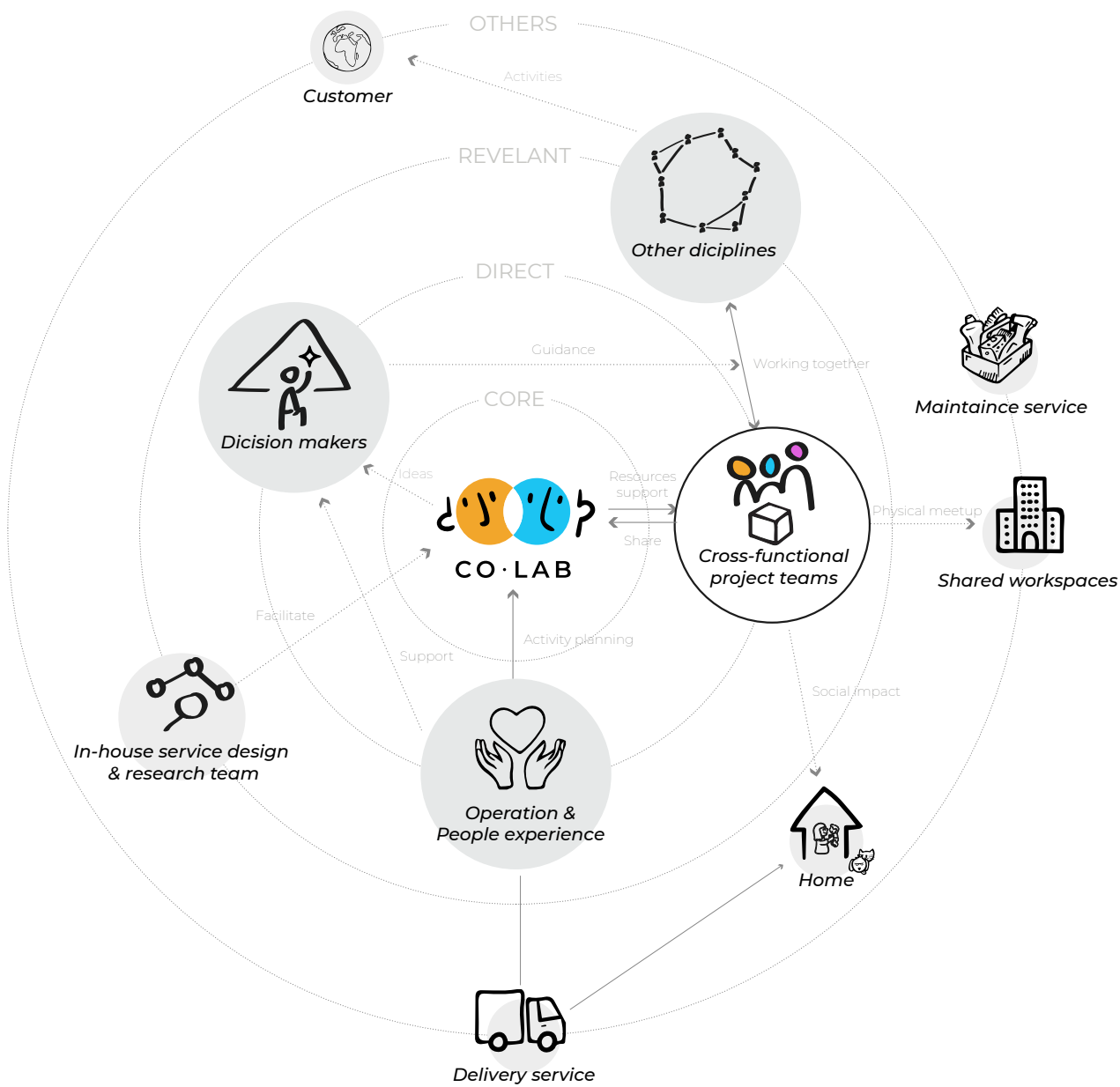


Relationship mapping

Collaborative connection mapping



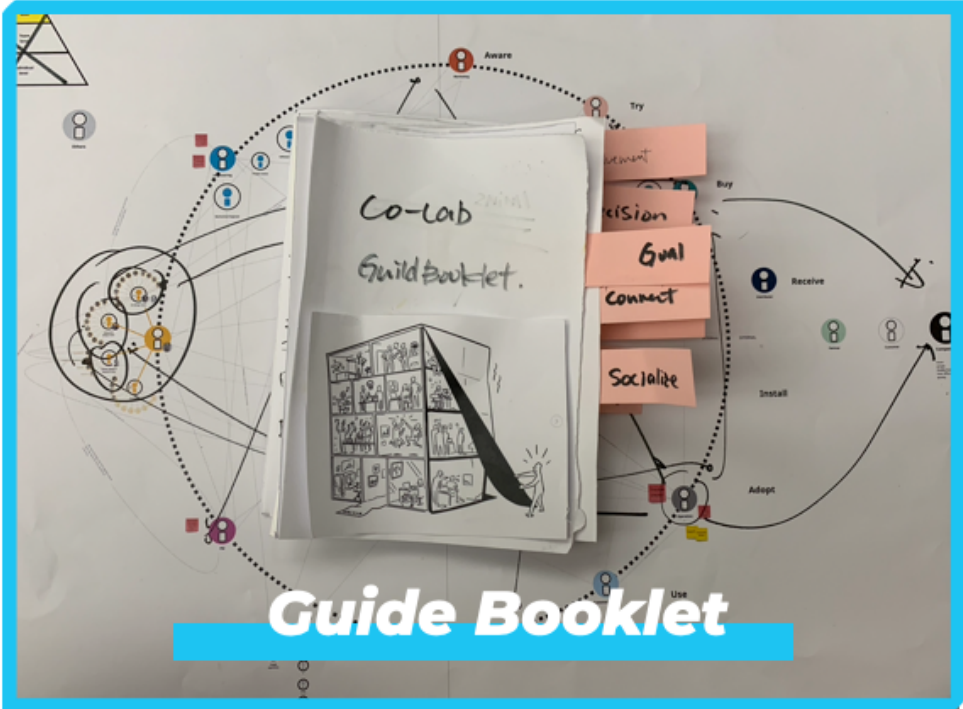
Stakeholder mapping



Iterations



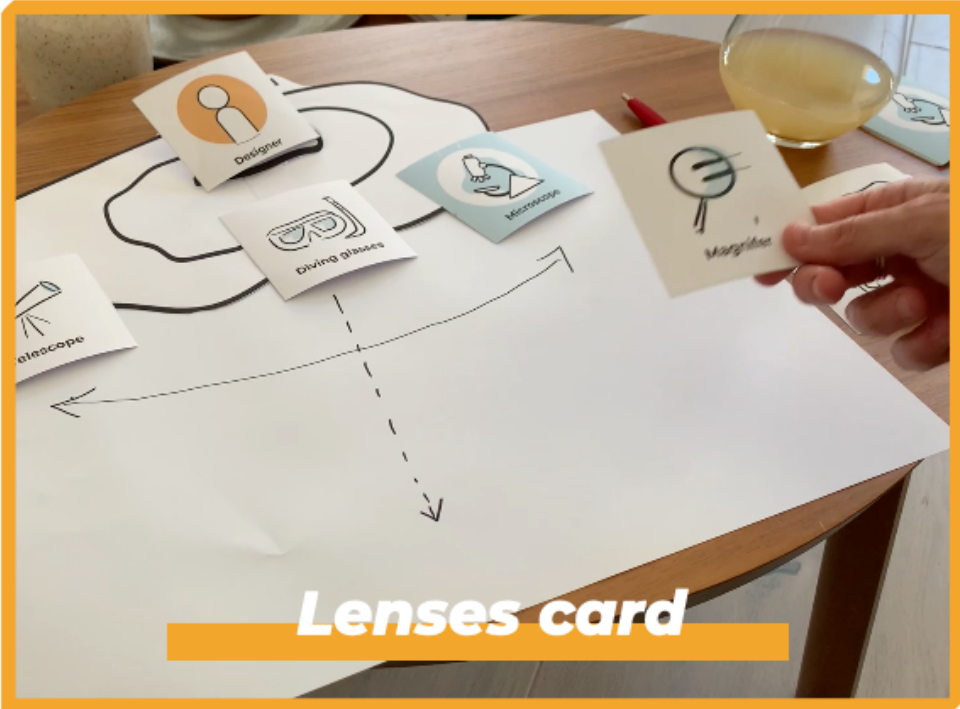
REFLECT TOGETHER



Guide Booklet



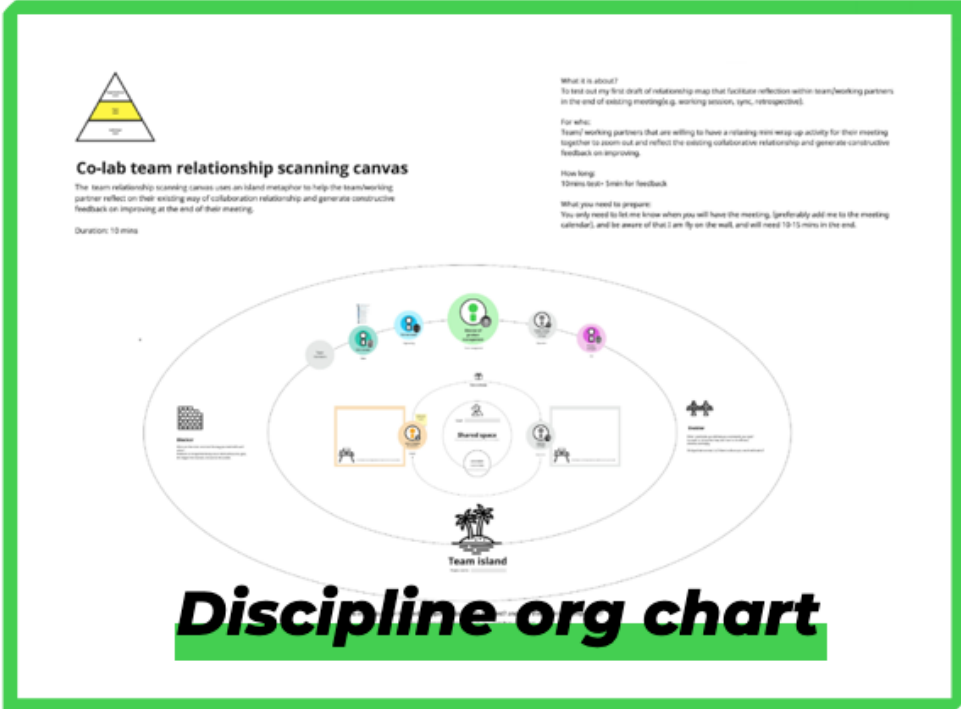
ENGAGE TOGETHER



Lenses card



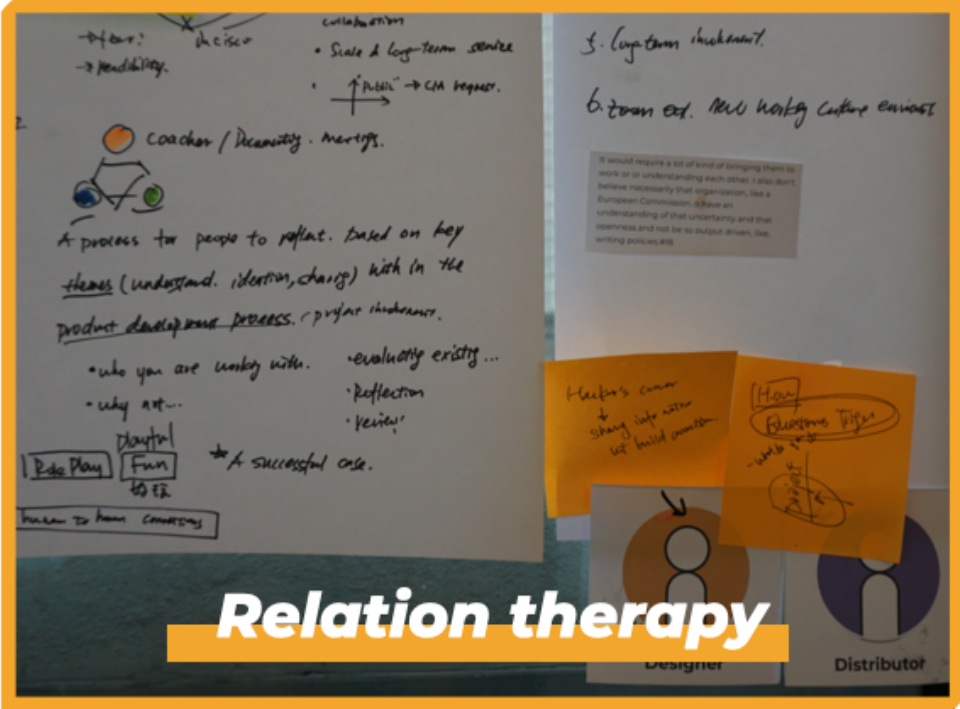
SHARE TOGETHER



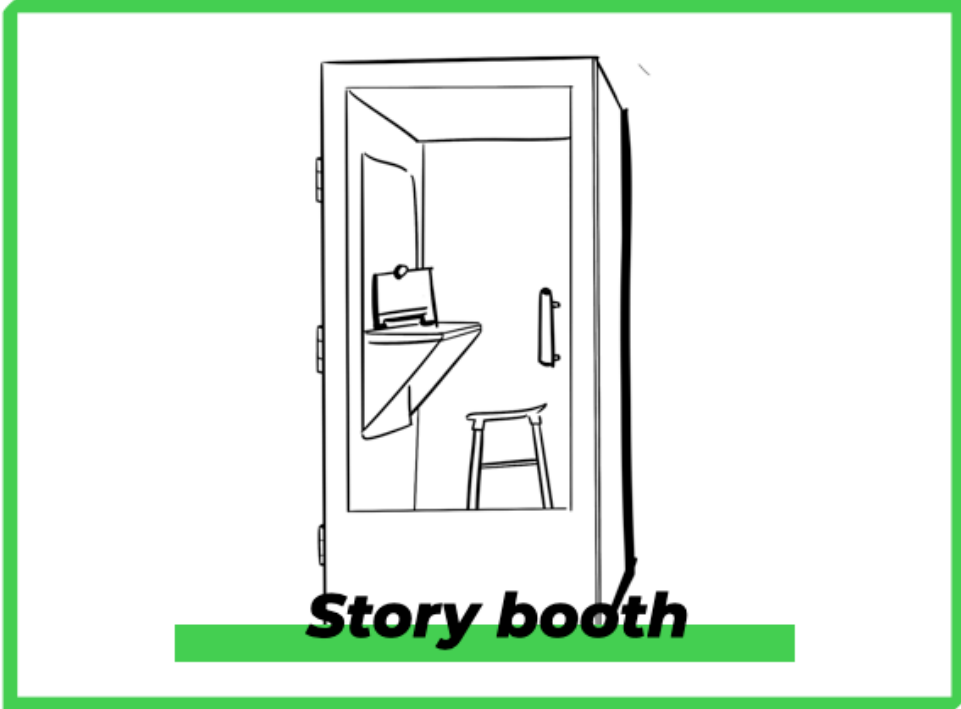
Discipline org chart



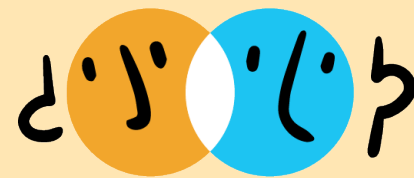
Collaboration astrology



Relation therapy



Story booth



Teamwork makes the dream work.