



FLIXBUS



Flix Agile Experiments 2018 - 2023

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Presenters



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Agenda

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Main Takeaways

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The big **Why** for the Agile Journey

3

3 Waves of Agile Transformation

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Wave 1: Flix and Meinfernbus merge

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Wave 2: Cross-functional and co-located teams

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Wave 3: Business Domains

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Lessons learnt

Main takeaways

1. Have the gut to flip the company



Main takeaways

2. Sponsor transformation from the C-level.

3. Supervisory board members should understand how IT works in agile way



Company's history - Startup mode

The start

No domestic intercity bus travel in Germany

2012



Idea

To create a platform which allows connecting bus operators and passengers

Scenarium

There were two startups:
Meinfernbus (Berlin based) and Flixbus (Munich based)



Size

Companies were started by only a few people (up to 5 each)

The merge

Meinfernbus and FlixBus merge and become the leading bus travel operator in Germany

2015



Tech becoming not a limiting but enabling factor



Wave 1: FlixBus and Meinfernbus merge context

FlixBus

Strong Business teams and some tech teams,
most of tech development outsourced

Business-driven culture

Small Scrum teams with a PO + outsource
teams

Purchased unscaled product (dropped)

1 Agile Tester (not manual)

Fullstack devs

Meinfernbus

Strong Tech teams in Berlin and Kharkiv (about
40 people)

Tech-driven BE culture

Feature driven BE teams with TLs Product
Managers who randomly added tasks to teams

Monolith that was flexible but scalable to some
point

No manual testers

1 designer and 2 FE devs, others Fullstack devs

Wave 1 in Org Topology scans



Why to transform?



Productivity

Asynchronous delivery
allowed bottlenecks on one
side and idleness on the other



Transparency

'What were techies doing all
day?'



Frequent Delivery

Releases were being delayed
due to bottlenecks



Overcome monolith limitations and support future growth

Having scalable product along with scalable organization

*"Organizations which design systems ... are constrained to
produce designs which are copies of the communication
structures of these organizations." (M. Conway)*

More drivers for change

'Monolith was minimalistic and covered only the essential functionality. A lot had to be rethought in order to integrate the **new markets and grow globally'** Tobias Fiolka, Engineering People Manager, Finance Domain, Munich

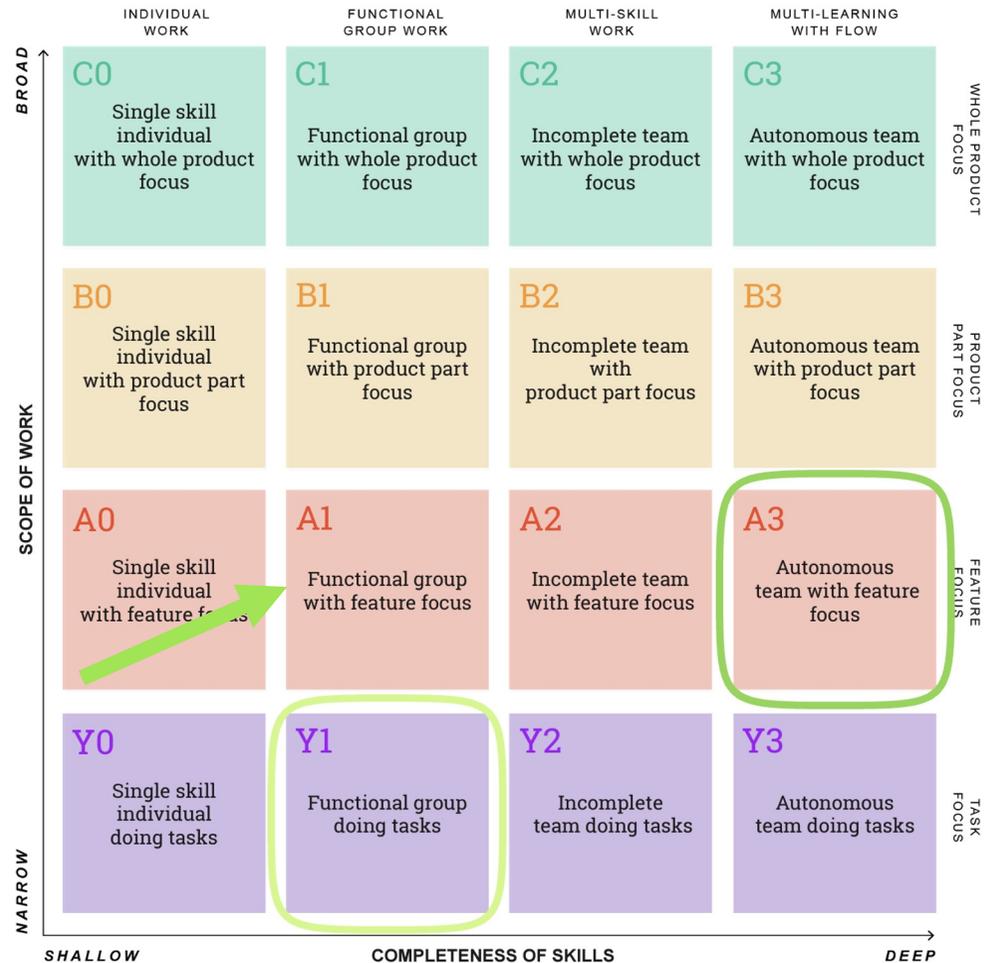
Lars Schumashenko created a **clock** when technically we'll reach the limit and **won't be able to grow any longer** as there was not enough infrastructure available anymore'
Tobias Fiolka, Engineering People Manager, Finance Domain, Munich

'There was one UI/UX person and one PO in Charter team. PLanR had a PO and had a more **clear direction building ugly but functional thing.'** Tobias Fiolka, Engineering People Manager, Finance Domain, Munich

'I was Head of Business Information systems, **we did work Agile but we didn't have strong Product organization.** we still had a little bit more of hierarchy. **After TSDE we started to have strong focus on Product organisation and autonomous teams.'** Philip Vom Dorp, Domain Technology Officer, Finance Domain, Munich

'1 year-long attempt to release a new website UI, failed. Why? Due to the scope creep as Product Managers wanted more and more and there was no centralised priority.'
Lucy Karpova, Agile Coach, Kharkiv

Wave 2 in Org topology scans - FlixTech 1.0



In parallel Daniel was planning Domains already

Many iterations conducted to come up with final **Domains**

Starting Point: Status quo analysis regarding sub-components – results yielded the basis for further discussions



Further iterations to develop domain mapping conducted:

- 1 Development of initial draft by brainstorming conducted by **PD-Board**
- 2 Discussion with **Lead Architects**
- 3 Discussion with **Chapter Representatives**
- 4 Three workshops with former **Team Leads** and selected **Product Owners**
- 5 Discussion with **Product Owner Community**
- 6 Discussion with **Architecture Chapter**
- 7 Further refinement in various **1:1s** with **members of FlixTech**

Specific roles within our organization facilitate self-organization



Purpose



Product Owner

Translating customer needs and business requirements to the team



Mastery



People Manager

A servant disciplinary leader who cares for

- individual development,
- coaching
- and the right team setup.
- reducing conflicts of interest



Autonomy



Agile Coach

Responsible for the autonomy of the individuals and the teams within their given roles and responsibilities.

18 months of changes



Flat hierarchy

Team Self Design Event and FlixIgnition Domains and Self-owned Products

Chapters & Communities

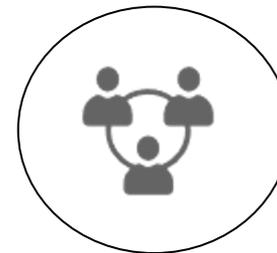
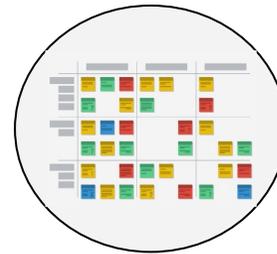
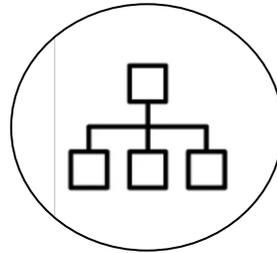
HackrDays >> FlixLabs

OKRs linking Roadmaps

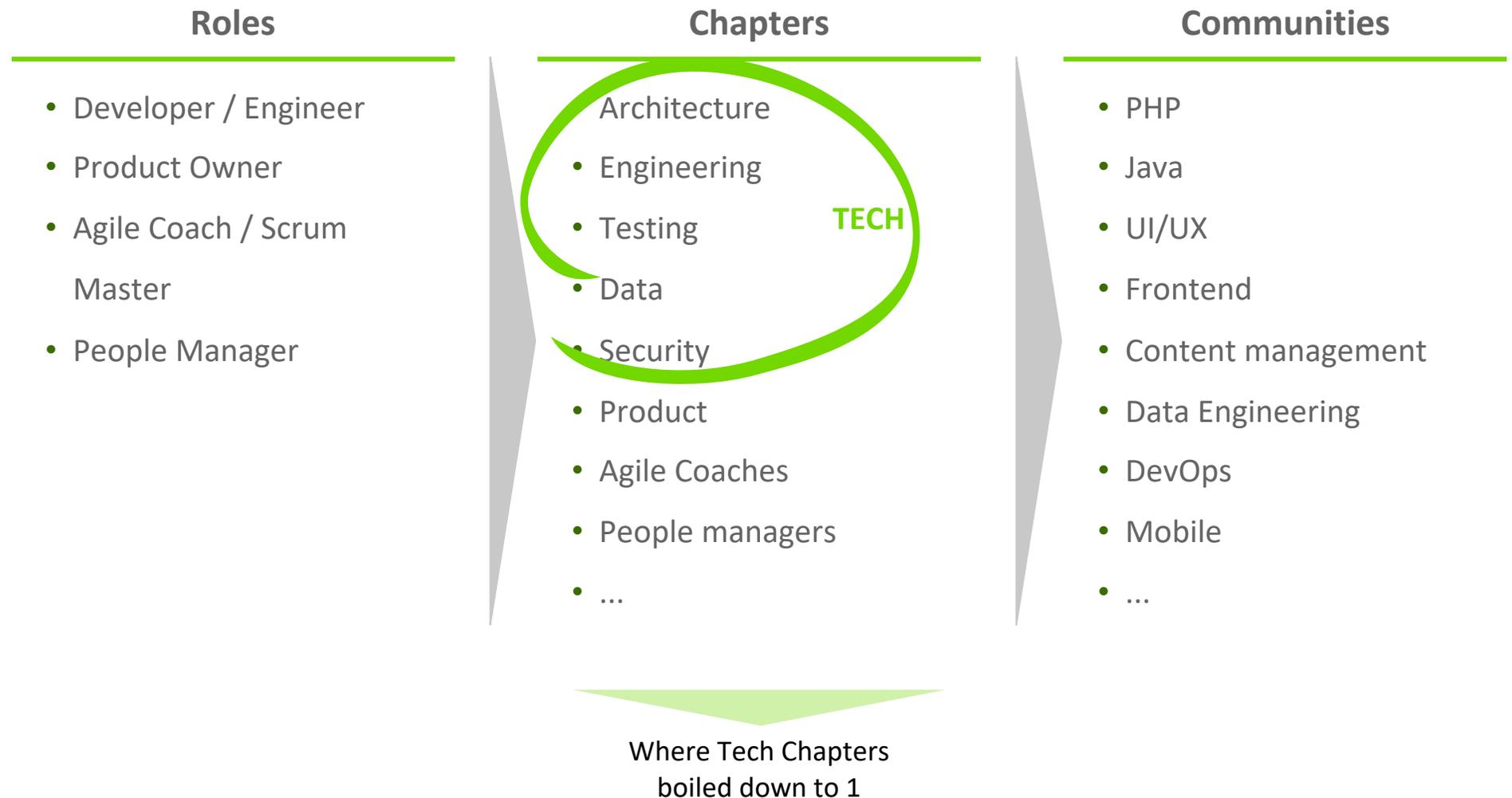
Living Styleguide

FlixTech Summit

18 months of changes



Building customized scaled agile process



Team Self Design: Three main reasons for doing this

We need to create an organization that is ...

... business value focused

FlixTech must be **easy to interact** with for each business owner and stakeholder. Therefore, we are organizing into **business domains** and teams that serve the domains.

... creating great technology

Each domain team will focus primarily on a part of the overall FlixTech system. Using **independent components**, **refactoring** and **improving code** they will pave the way towards **internal open source**.

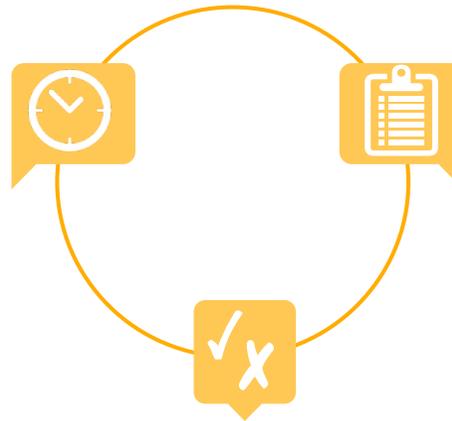
... fostering self-organization

Self-designing teams increase the **level of freedom** of FlixTech: people choose who they work with and on which domain. Going forward, teams will also have a **stronger voice** in determining together who belongs to their team.

Team Self-Design Event – this is how did it

Cycles

- 3 cycles of 35minutes each
- While forming, the Board, POs, and PMs as well as Stakeholders **leave the room**



Review

- 15 min review after each cycle
- Board members, Product Owners, Stakeholders, Agile Coaches and People Managers give **improvement points**
- Teams try to **address and fix** all improvement points in the next iteration



Decision Point

- Decision point by the Board, after the 3rd iteration:
 - ✓ FlixTech is happy with the outcome, **work is done**
 - ✓ FlixTech is happy with the outcome, but some **improvement points** have to be addressed
 - ✗ FlixTech is not satisfied, and the Board will make some **changes to the teams structure**



FlixIgnition

FlixIgnition is aimed to help our teams starting to work in the new team setup, and in order to start the parallel decoupling of the monolith.



1 month



3 locations aligned with
FlixIgnition Bridge



4 volunteering teams

The objective of **FlixIgnition** is to provide teams with...

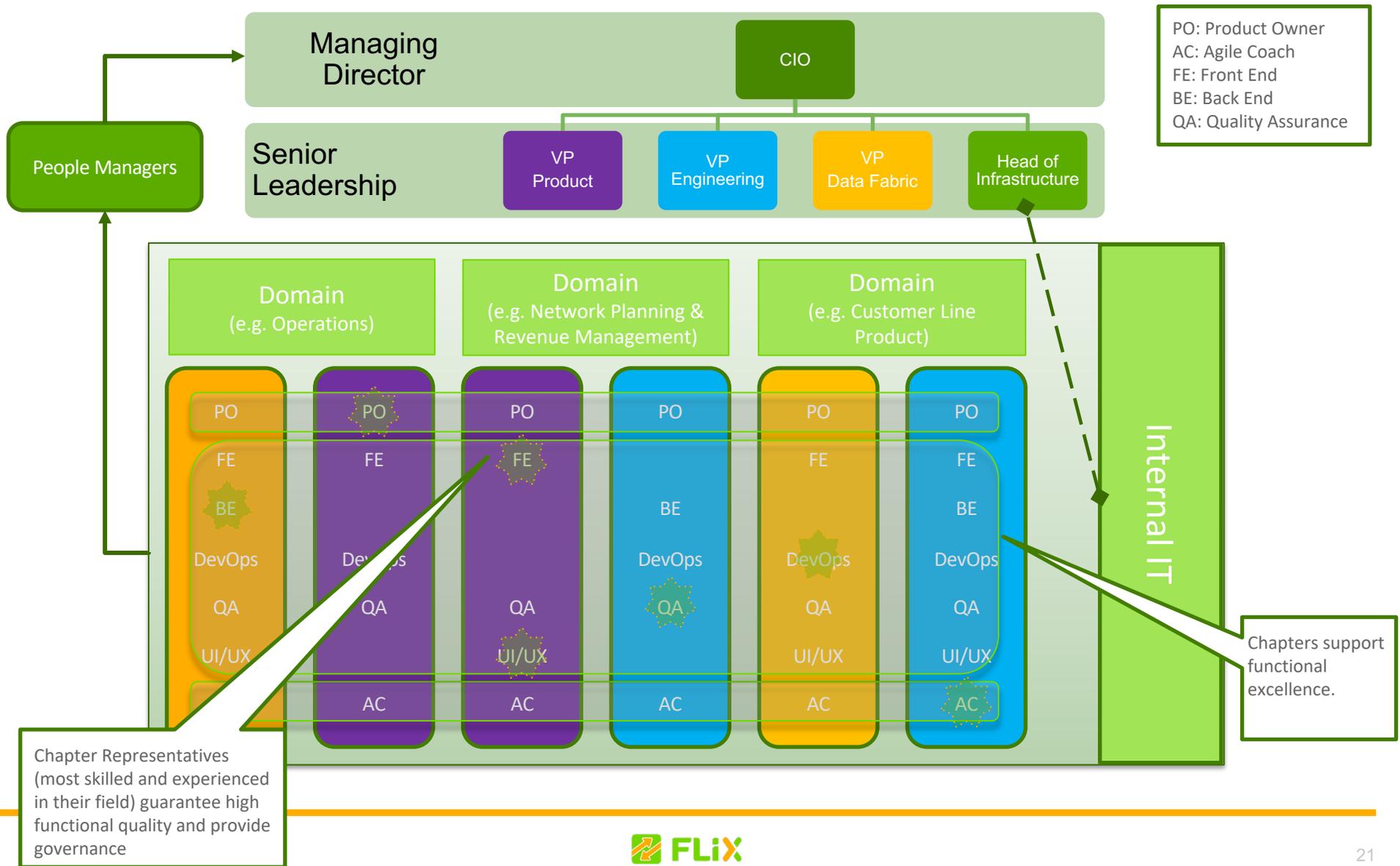
- Stable staging and production environments based on AWS and Kubernetes based on AWS Organizations.
- New environments for communication & documentation.
- Mitigation of possible conflicts from the team self design event (TSDE), making the transition to the new teams as easy as possible and creating the hiring backlog.

Design System as Key Enabler

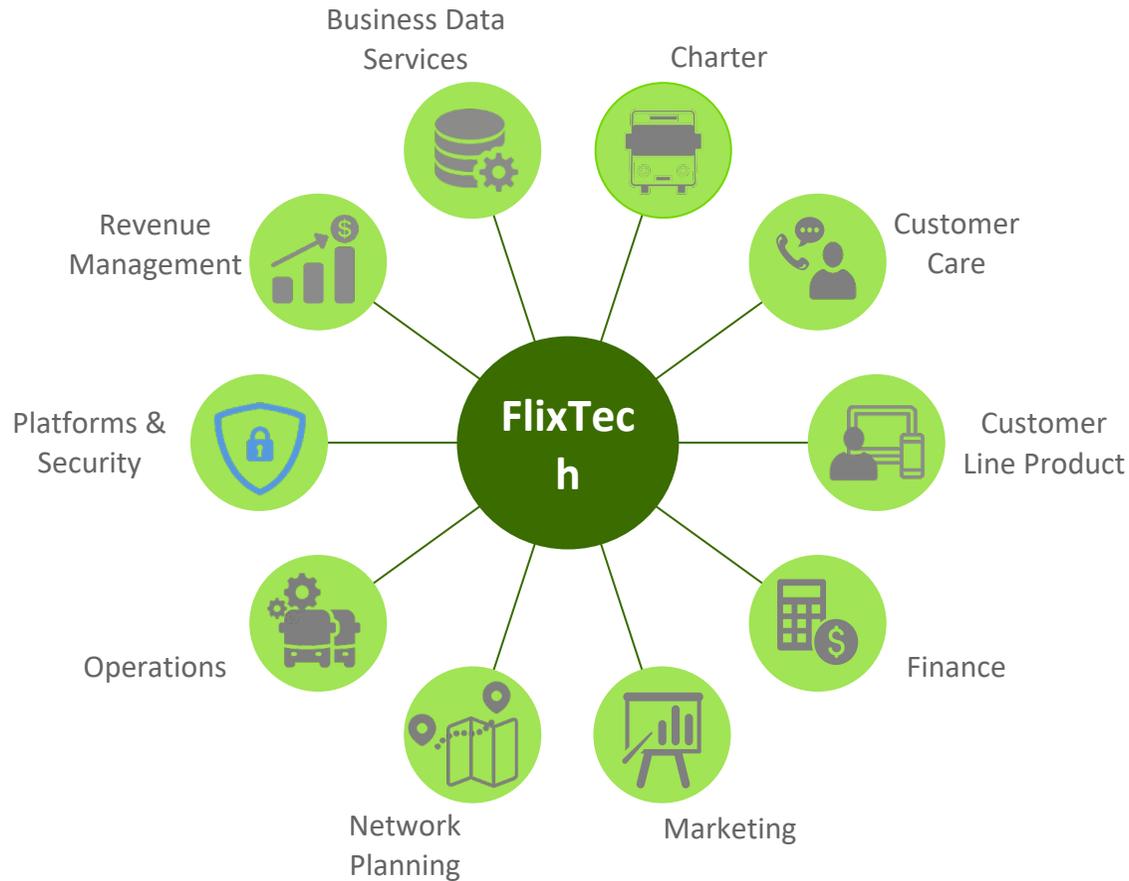
The screenshot shows the Honeycomb design system website for FlixBus. The header is green and contains a logo on the left and navigation links: Brand, Components, Emails, Assets (with a dropdown arrow), Guides, and Examples (with a lock icon). The main heading is "Honeycomb" in bold black text, followed by the tagline "Create consistent and intuitive experiences for Flix." Below this is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. The content area features five category cards, each with a representative image and a list of links:

- Brand**: Image of two green FlixBus vehicles. Links: [Brand DNA](#) • [Colors](#) • [Tonality & voice](#)
- Components**: Image of various digital devices (phone, laptop, monitor) displaying the design system. Links: [Get Started](#) • [Migrating to ver. 8.0](#)
- E-mails**: Image of email icons and a "Mail" label. Links: [Images](#) • [Layout](#) • [Text](#)
- Assets**: Image of a grid of various icons. Links: [Logos](#) • [Icons](#) • [Flags](#) • [Favicons](#)
- Guides**: Image of a black signpost against a sunset background. Links: [Developers guide](#) • [Guidelines](#)

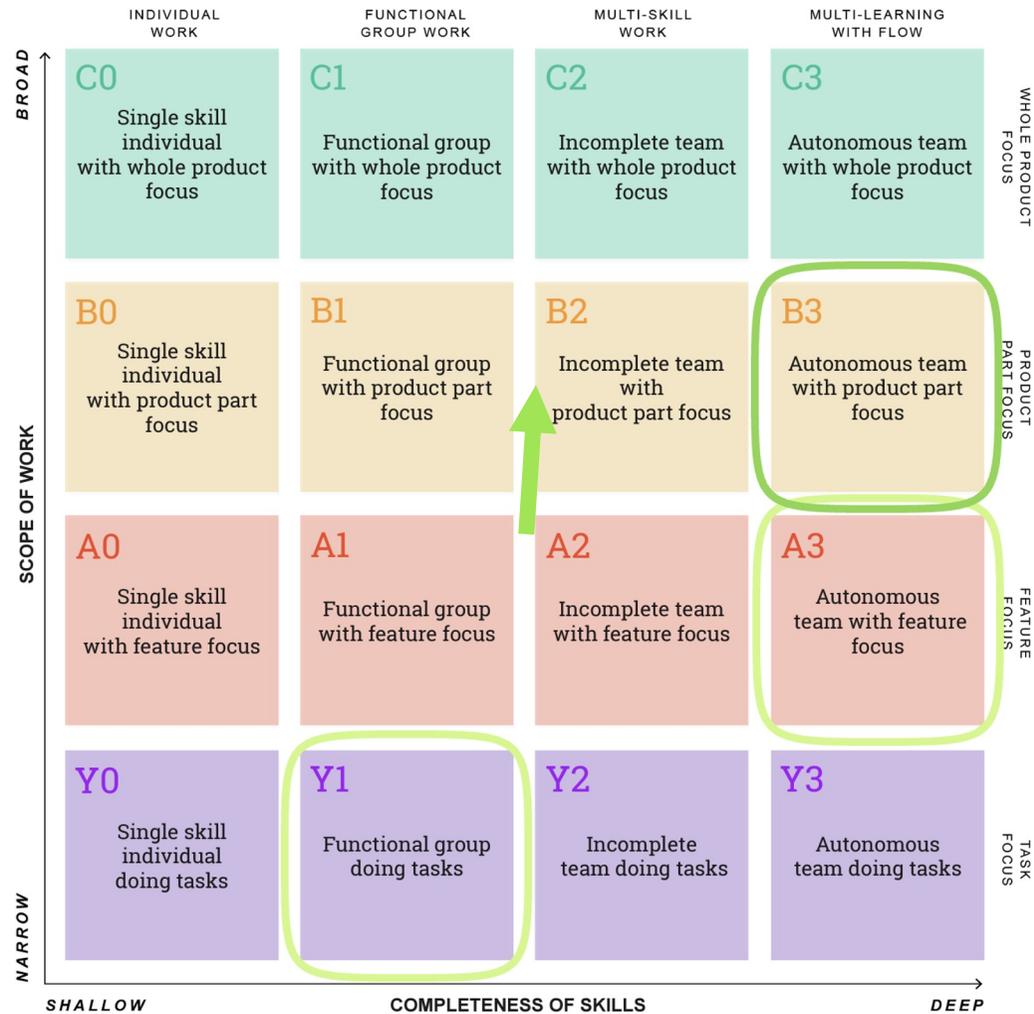
Wave 3: Business domains - FlixTech 2.0 (2019 structure)



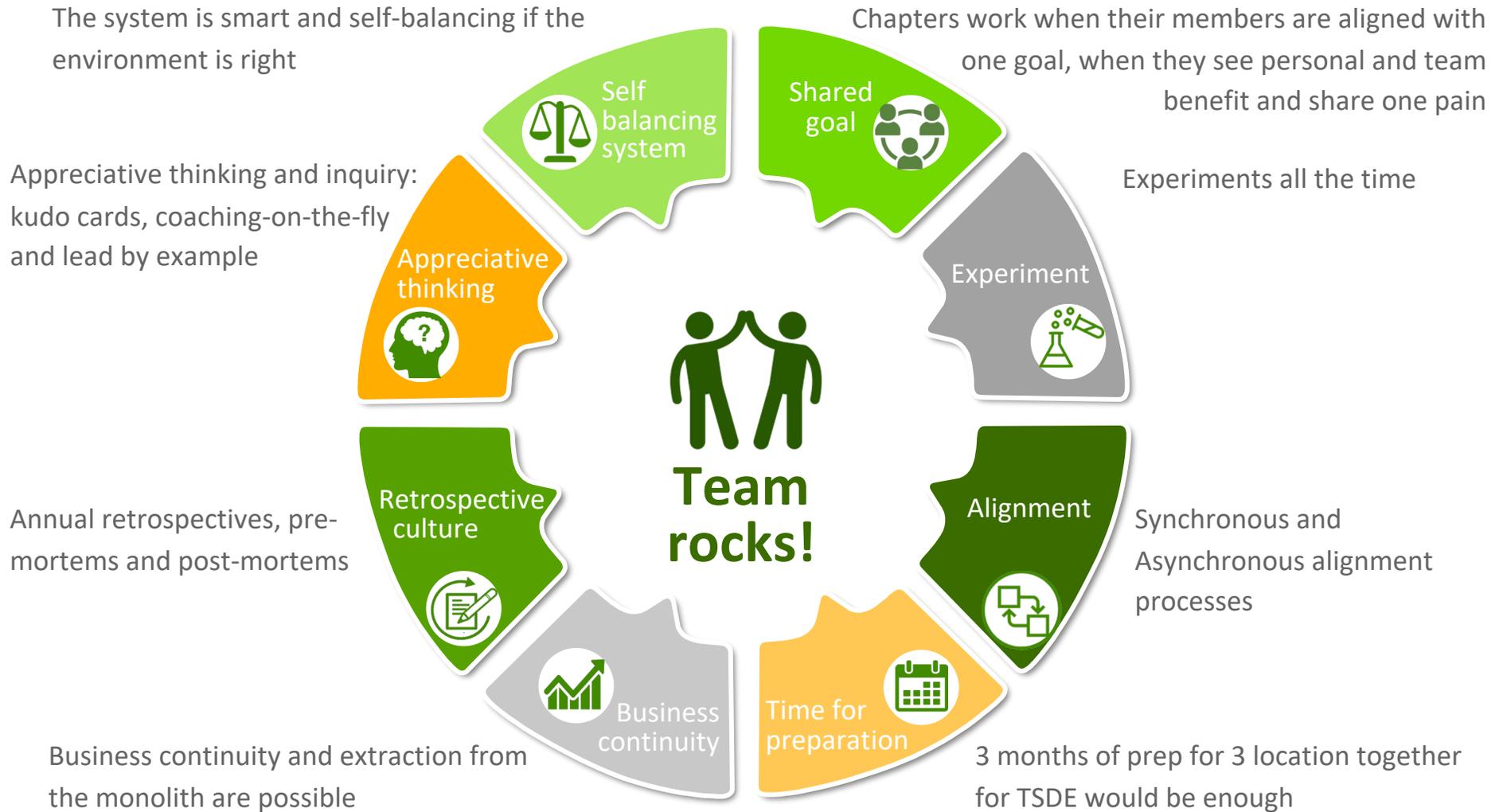
FlixTech domains formed to support all areas of the business



Wave 3 in Org Topology scans - FlixTech 2.0



Lessons learnt - nothing is for granted



Questions?



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