



# FLiXBUS



## Flix Agile Experiments 2018 - 2023

September 2023

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# Presenters

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# Agenda

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Main Takeaways

2

The big **Why** for the Agile Journey

3

3 Waves of Agile Transformation

4

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

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## 1. Have the gut to flip the company



# Main takeaways

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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

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# Wave 1: FlixBus and Meinfernbus merge context

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## 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

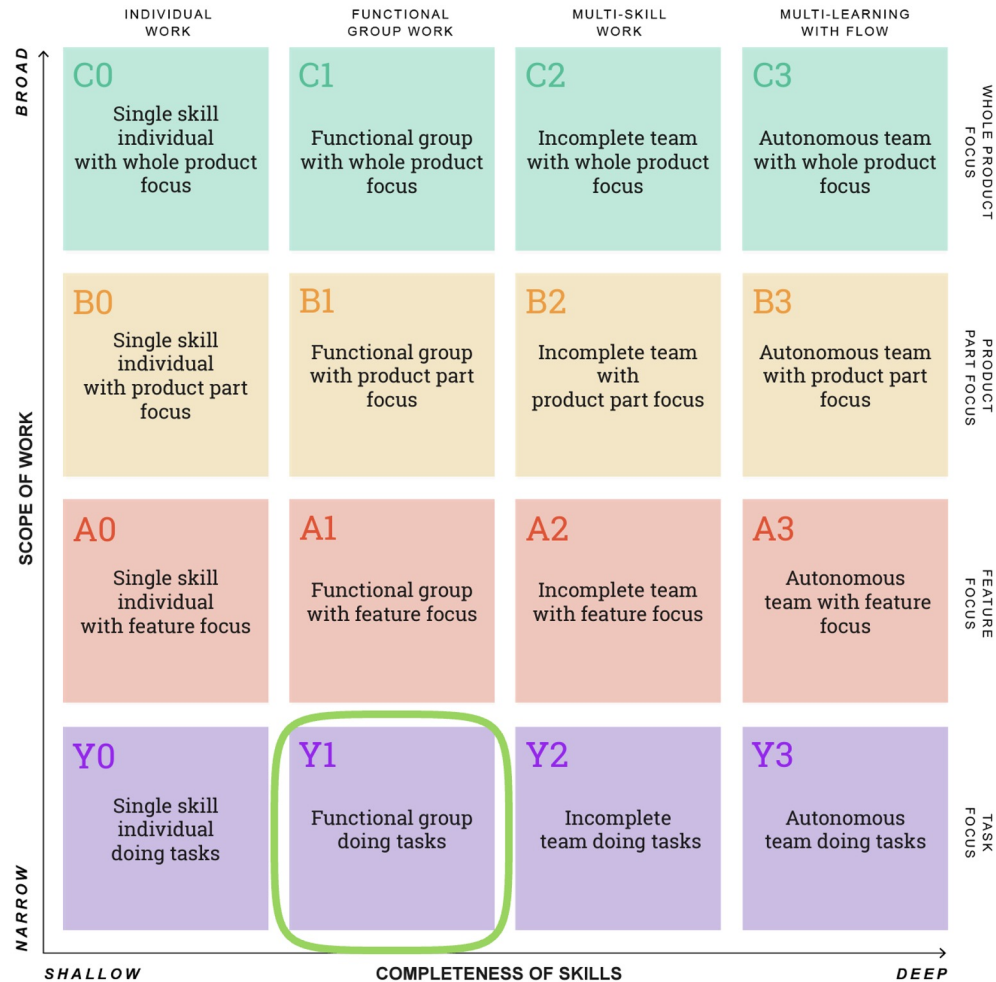
Monolith that was flexible but scalable to some  
point

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

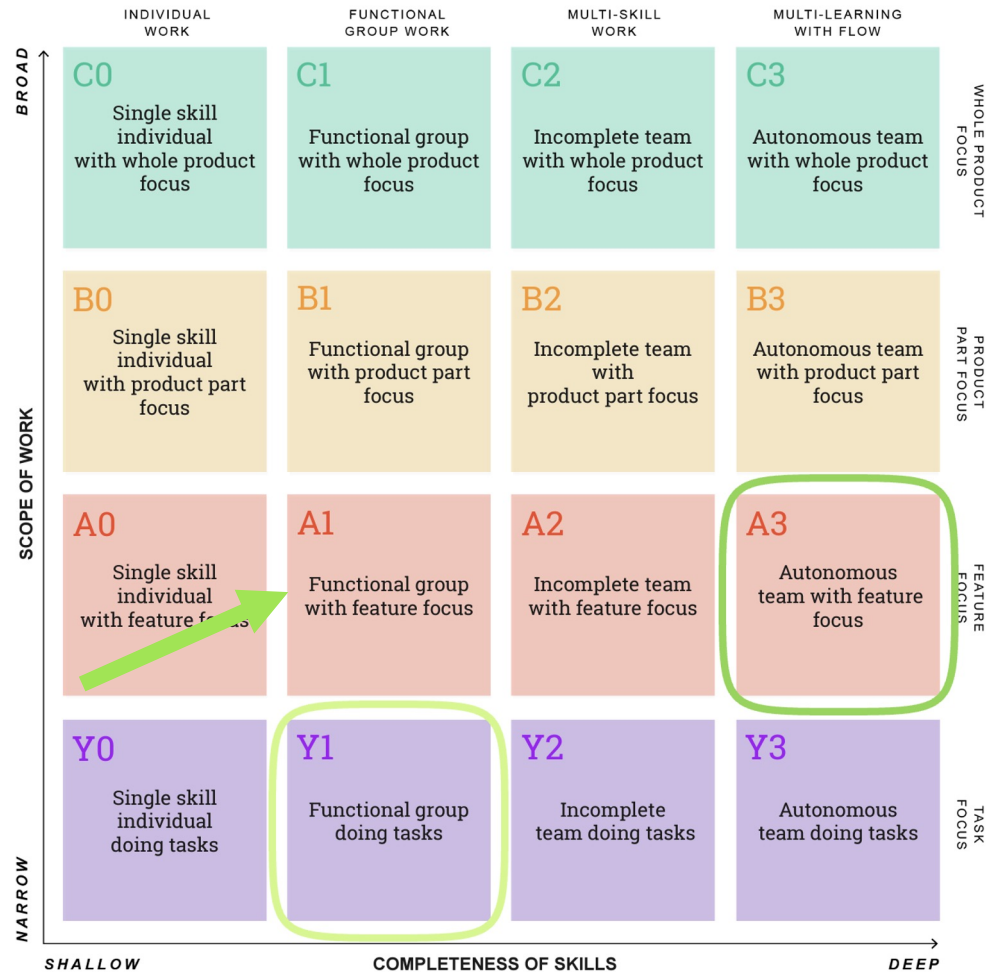
Lars Schumashenko created a **clock** when technically we'll reach the limit and **won't be able to grow any longer** as there was not enough infrastructure available anymore'  
Tobias Fiolka, Engineering People Manager, Finance Domain, Munich

**'There was one UI/UX person and one PO in Charter team. PPlanR 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

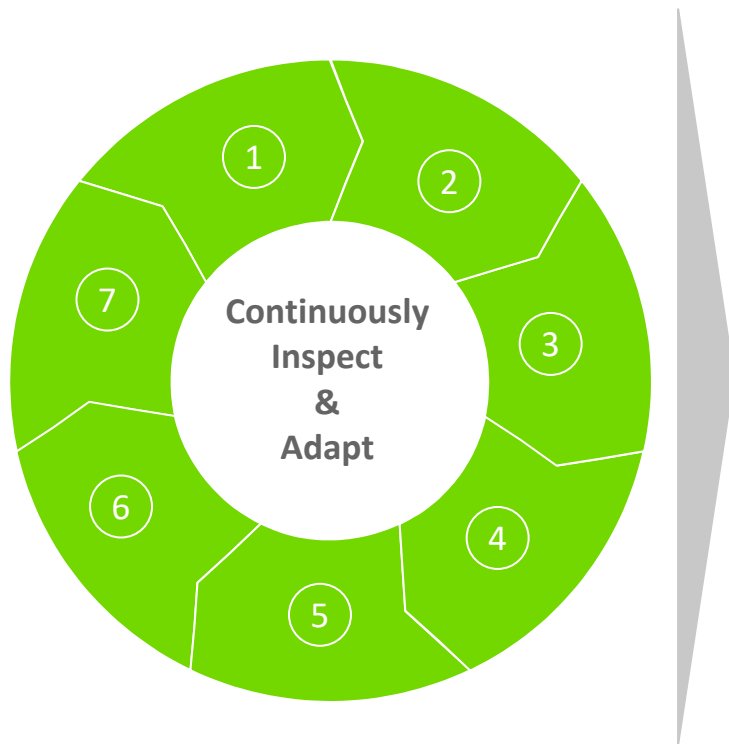


# In parallel Daniel was planning Domains already

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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

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Flat hierarchy

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

Chapters & Communities

HackrDays >> FlixLabs

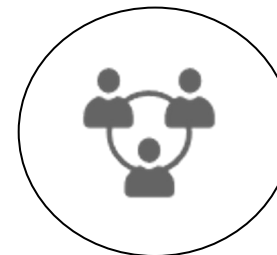
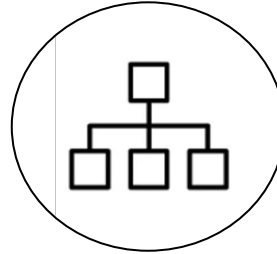
OKRs linking Roadmaps

Living Styleguide

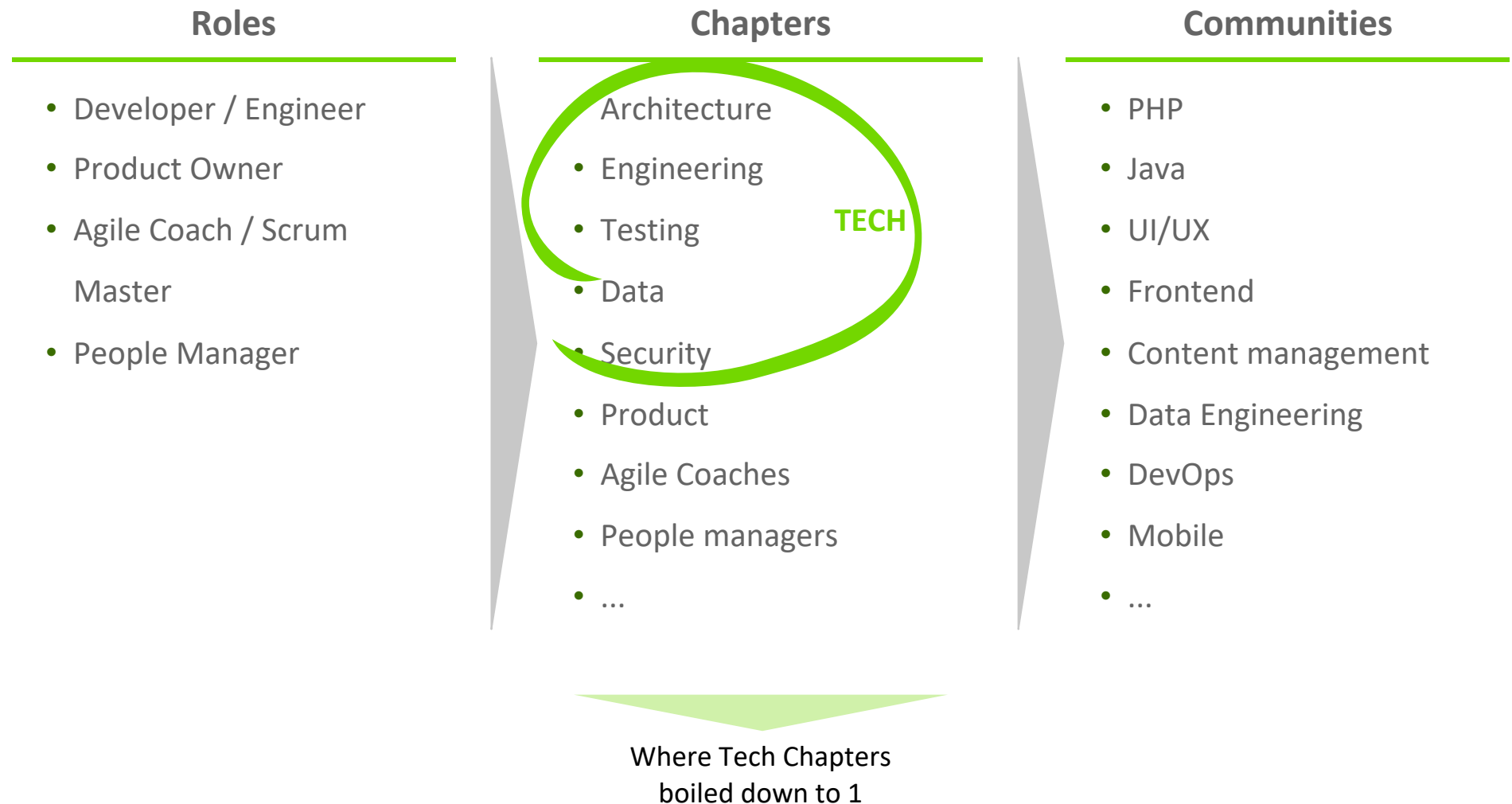
FlixTech Summit

# 18 months of changes

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# Building customized scaled agile process



# Team Self Design: Three main reasons for doing this

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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**.

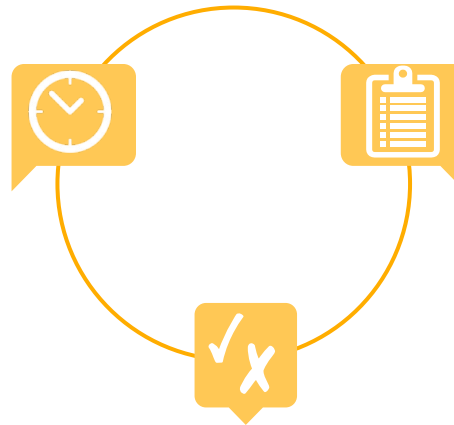
## ... fostering self-organization

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

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**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



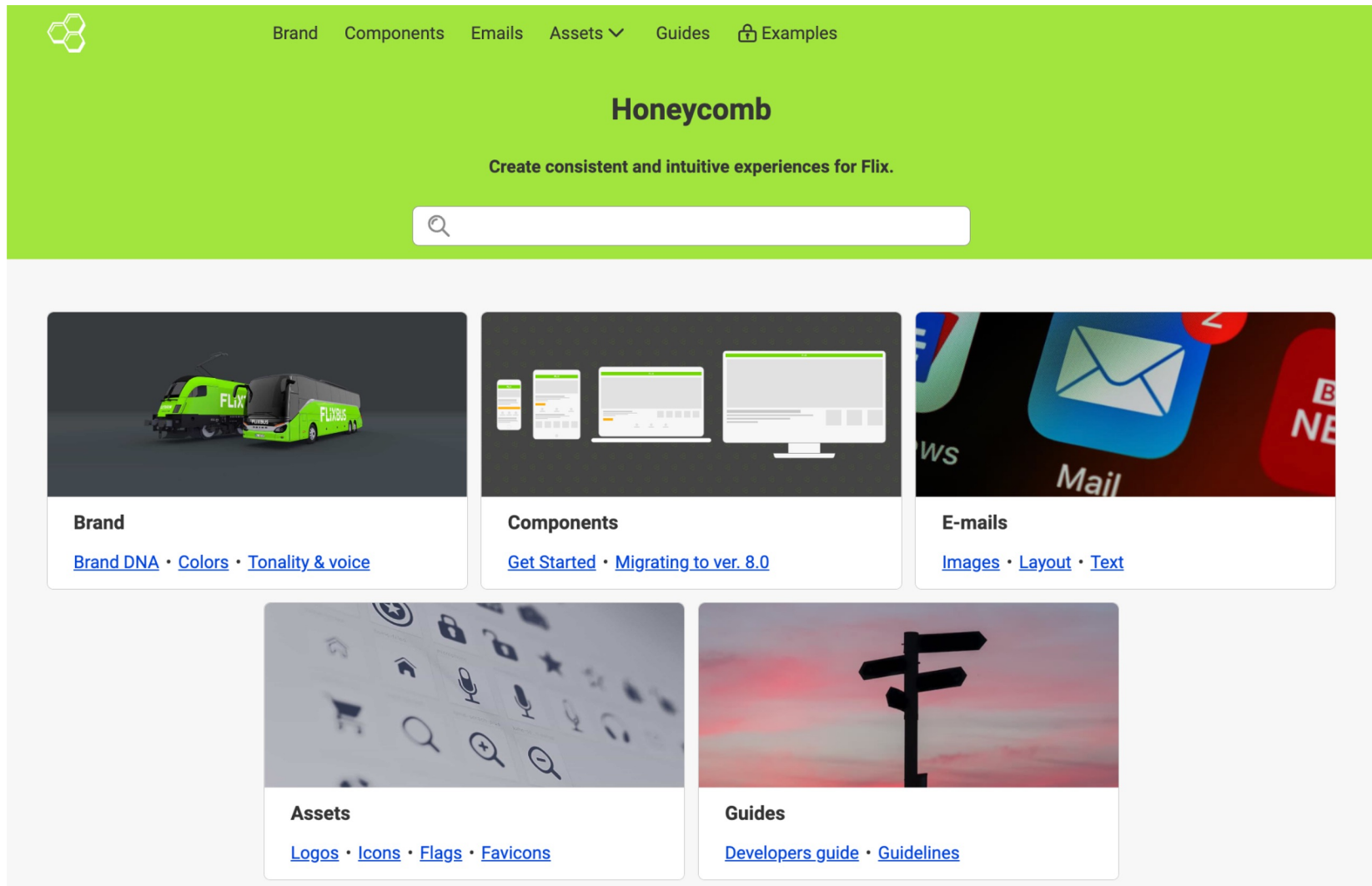
4 volunteering teams

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

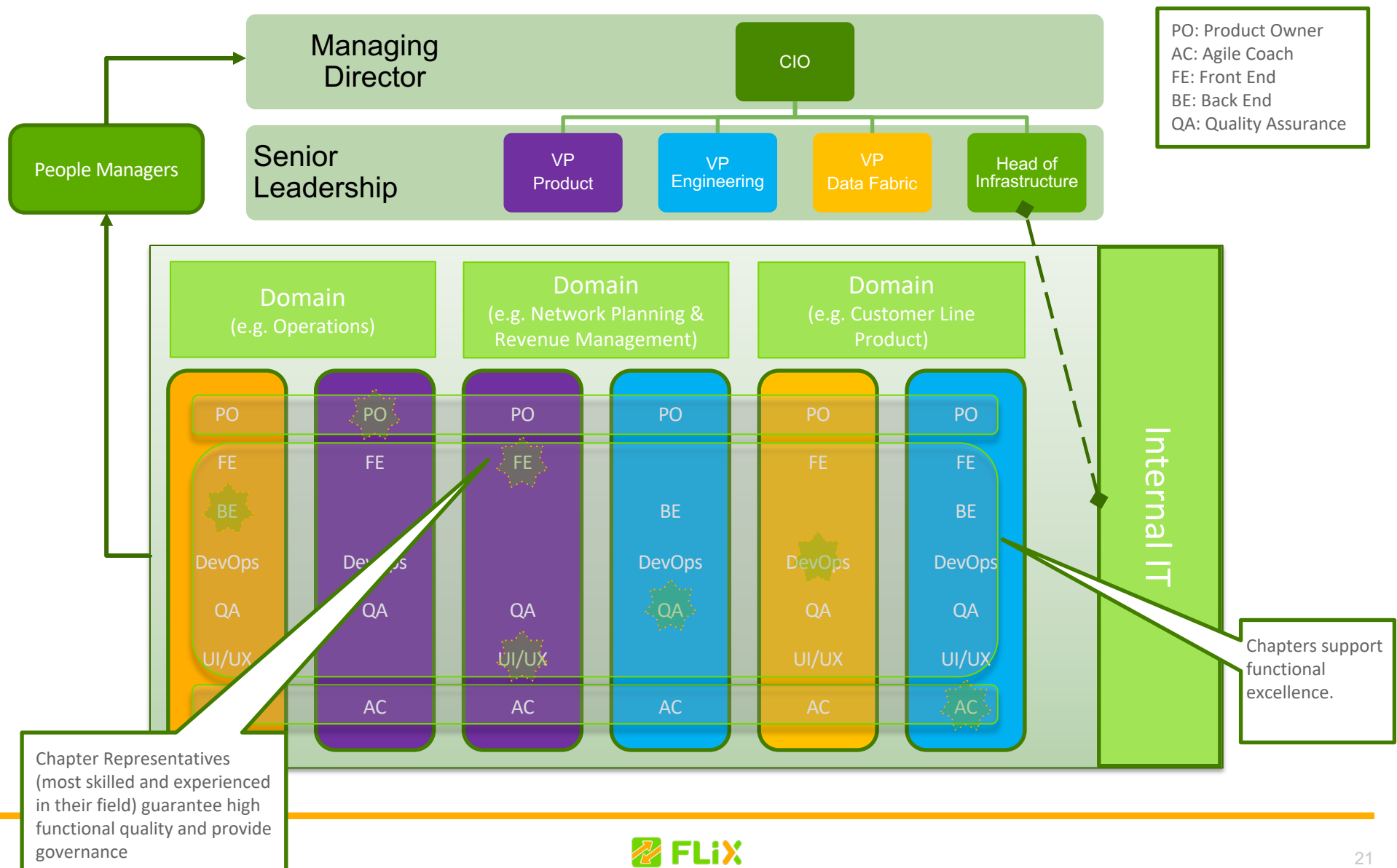
- Stable staging and production environments based on AWS and Kubernetes based on AWS Organizations.
- New environments for communication & documentation.
- Mitigation of possible conflicts from the team self design event (TSDE), making the transition to the new teams as easy as possible and creating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



# Design System as Key Enabler

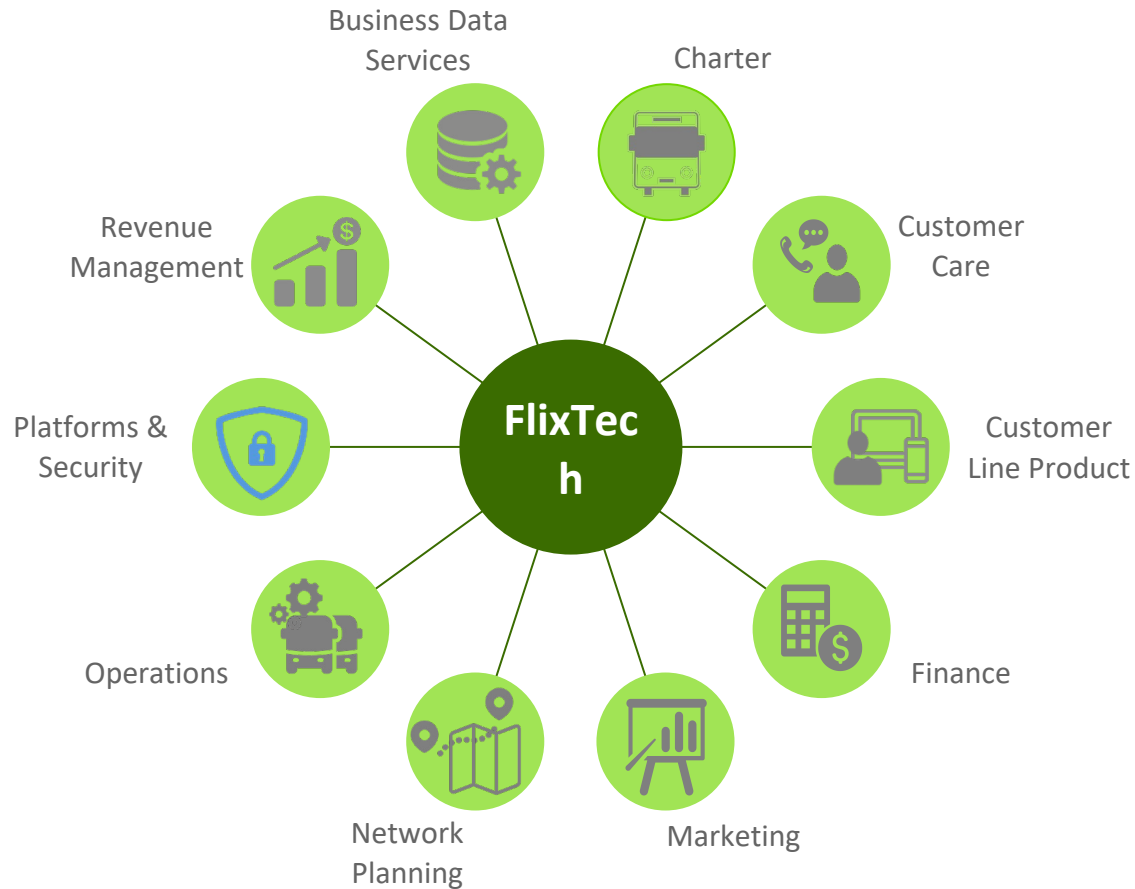


# Wave 3: Business domains - FlixTech 2.0 (2019 structure)

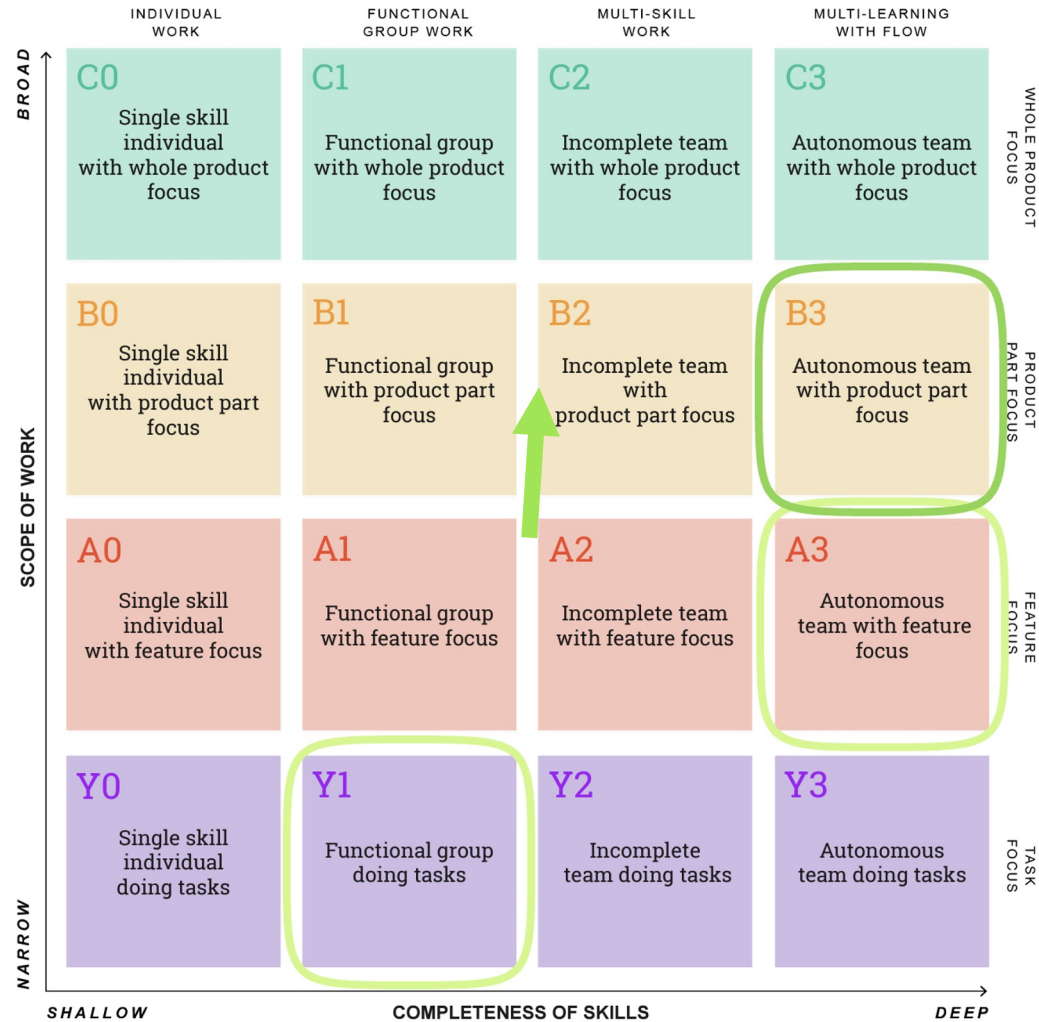


# FlixTech domains formed to support all areas of the business

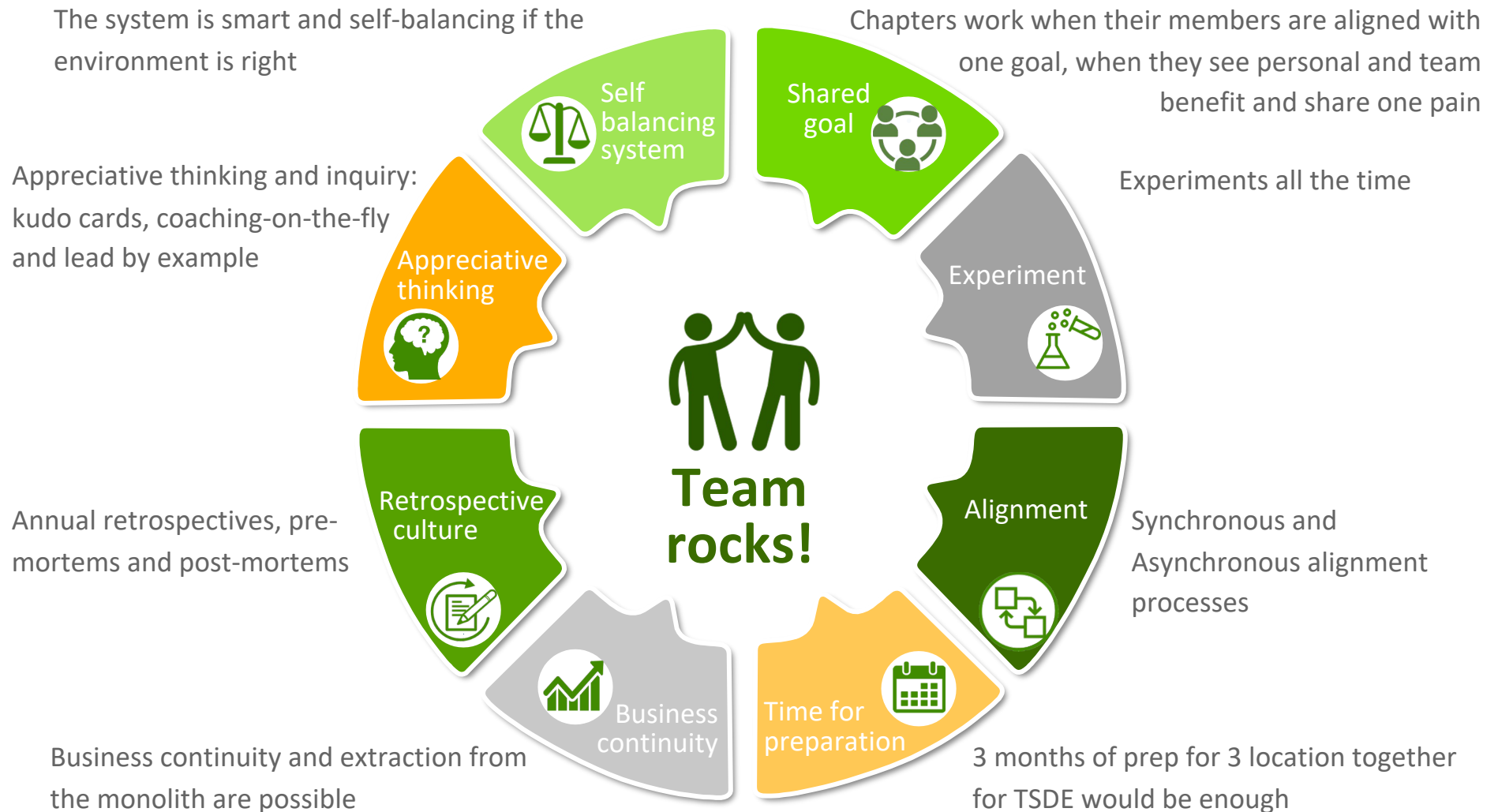
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# Wave 3 in Org Topology scans - FlixTech 2.0



# Lessons learnt - nothing is for granted



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# Questions?





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