



Unearthing Transformational Pilots: Team Topologies in Action

Discover how to apply Team Topologies principles to find improvement opportunities and prioritise pilots. Learn to transform teams and improve organisational flow.



by Himanshu Swaroop

This is for you if you are a...



Transformation Leader

and are familiar with several twists
and turns of a long journey of
change within a business...



Operator / Leader

and want to bring out some
improvement to make a better
business impact...



Individual Contributor

and are part of some improvement
effort or want to be part of one...

The Problem: Stuck Teams

Teams struggle to achieve business outcomes quickly. They want to improve but don't know where to start or which improvements to prioritize.

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Desire to Improve

There's a strong desire for positive change.



A Common Scenario

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**Financial services industry
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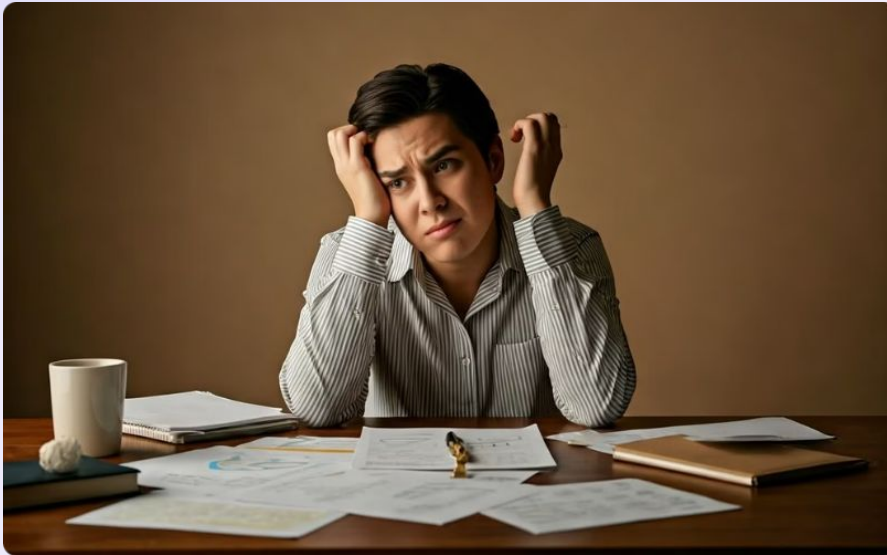


A Common Scenario

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- 3 **Lack of capabilities to identify starting points**
- 4 **Lots of previous failed attempts due to legacy architecture**



Common Root Causes of Being Stuck



Capability Gaps

Not enough team members to support fast flow of work.



Dependencies

Teams rely on other teams for resources, expertise, or approvals, causing delays.

Team Topologies Foundations

Team Topologies provides a framework for organizing teams and software for fast flow.

Key Elements

- Language for flow boundaries, and dynamics
- Focus on fast flow that delivers customer value.

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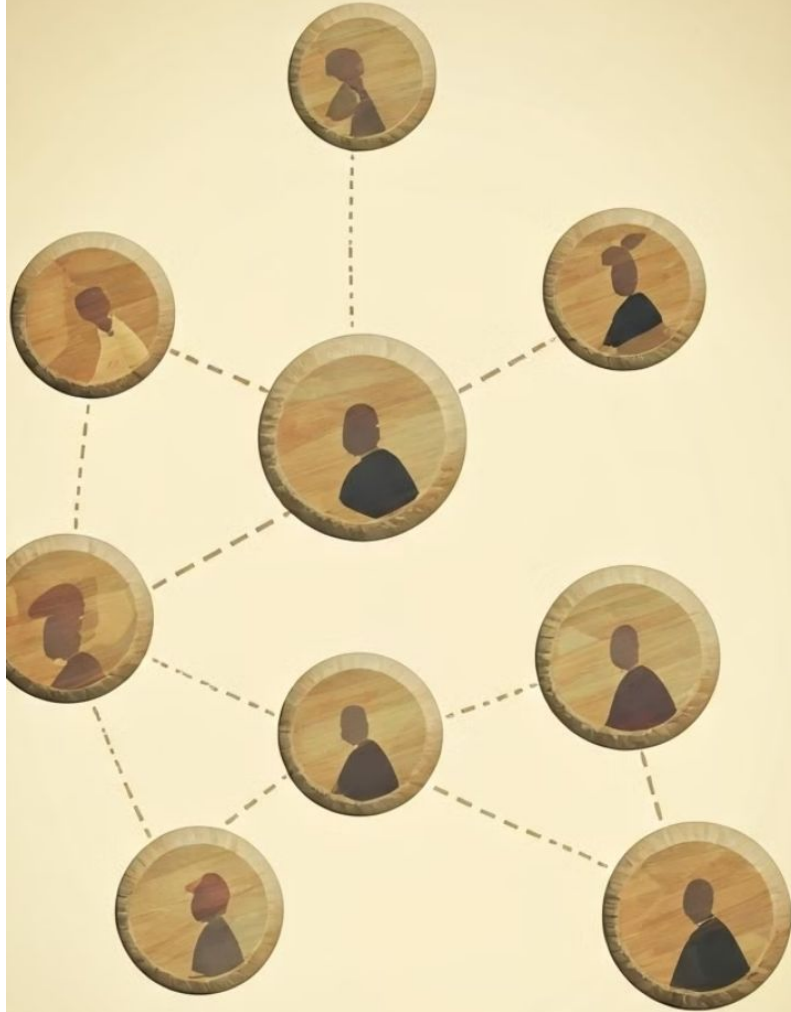
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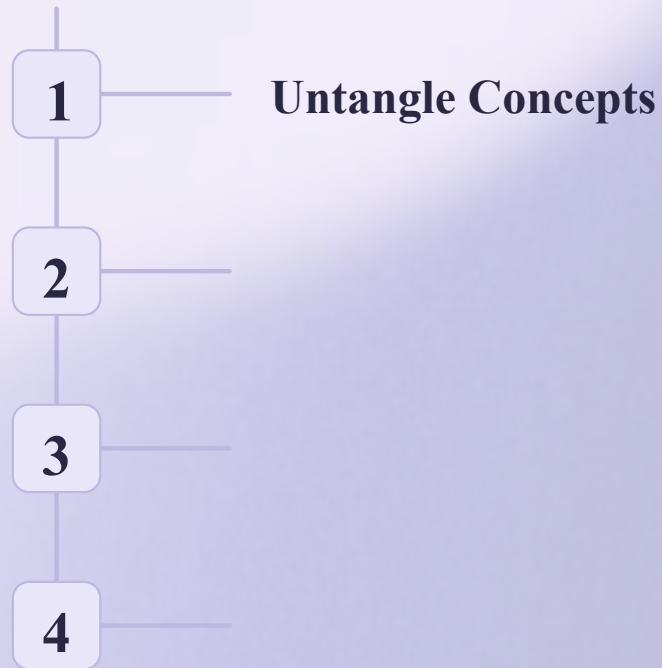
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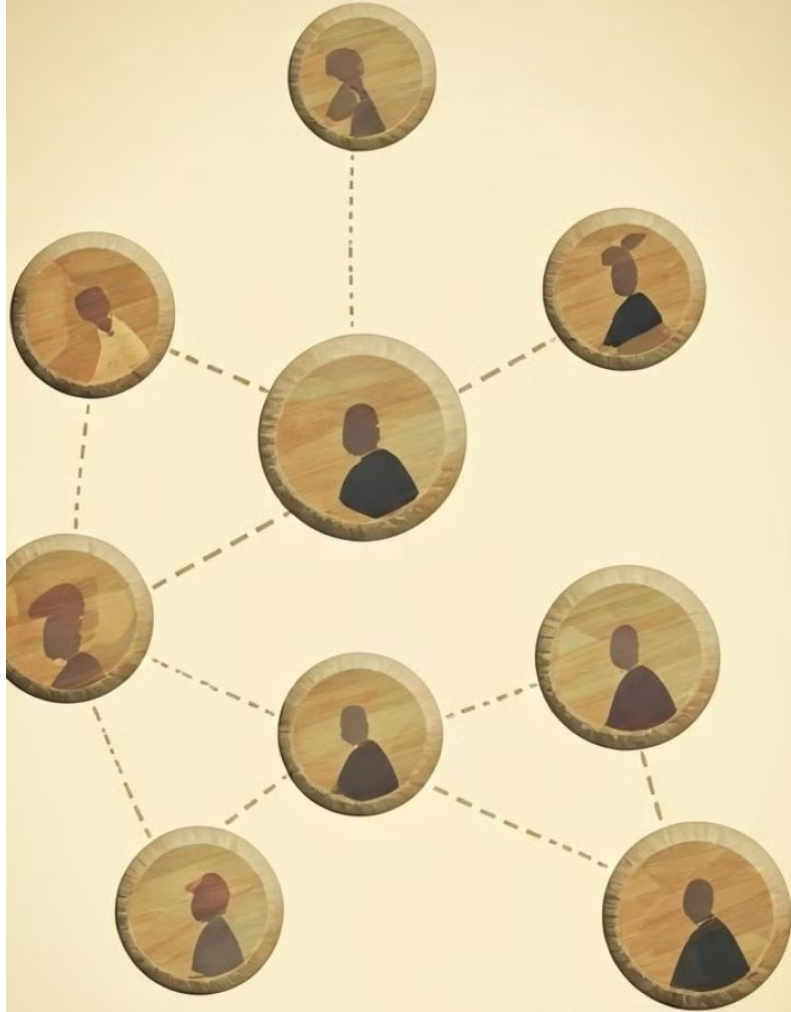
- Collaboration
- X-as-a-Service, and
- Facilitating



Applying Team Topologies

Team Topologies principles help identify friction points within and between teams.

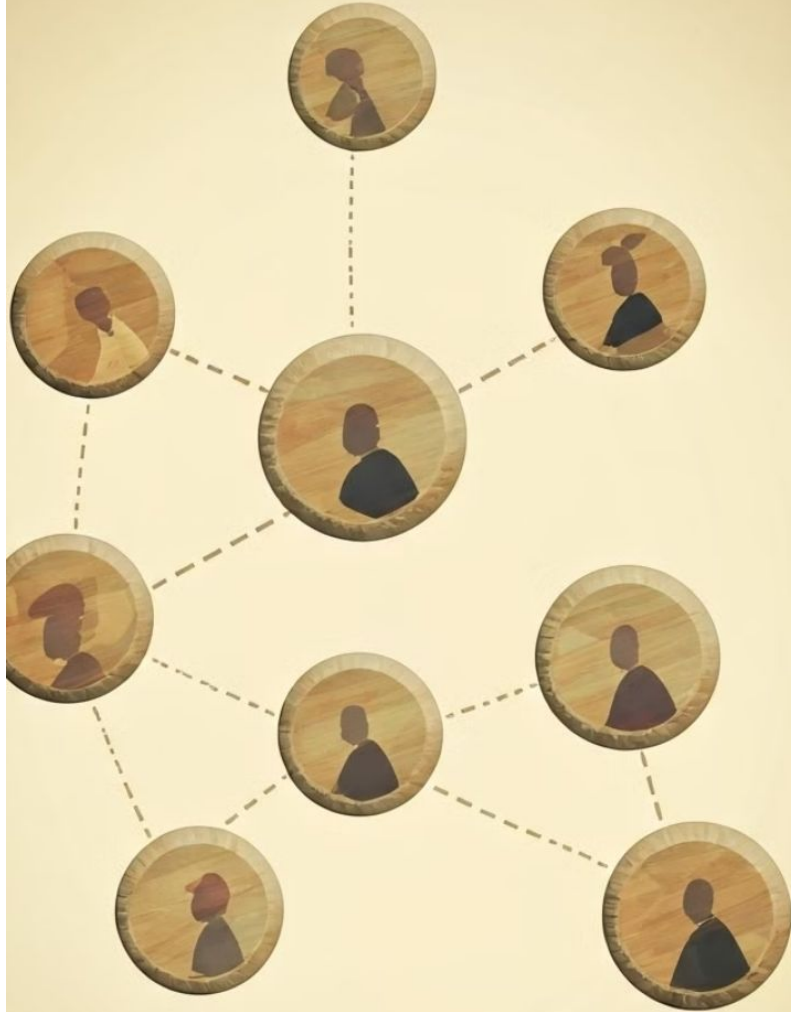




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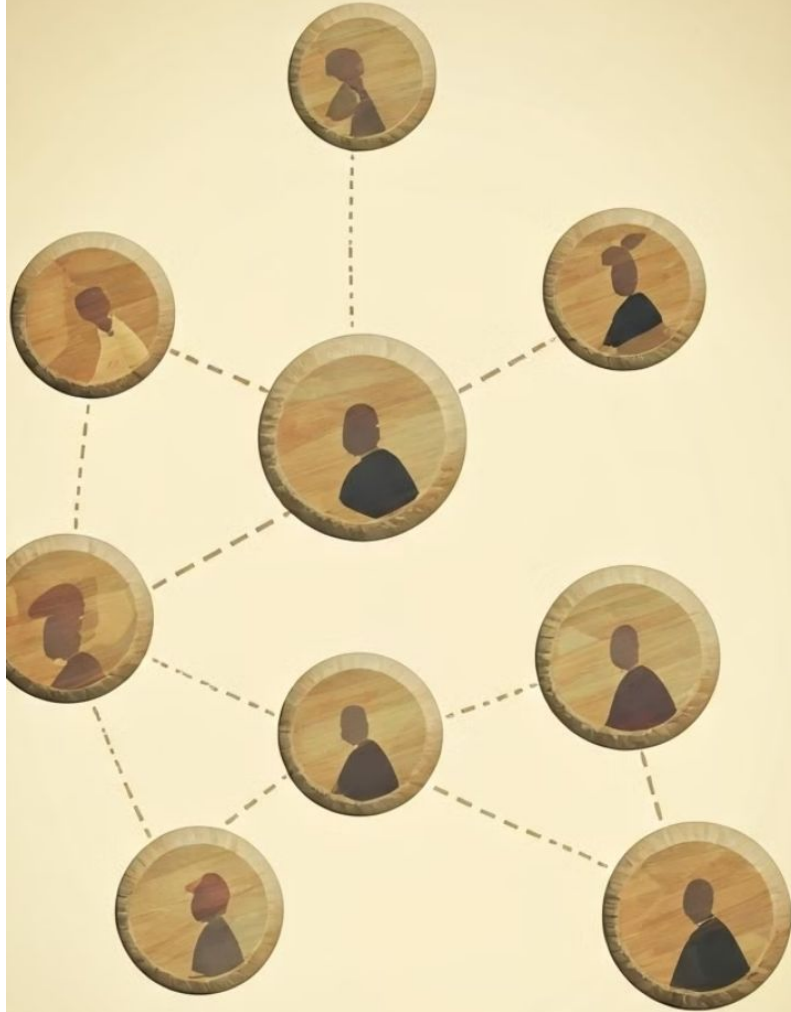
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- 2 — **Identify Hand-offs**
- 3 —
- 4 —



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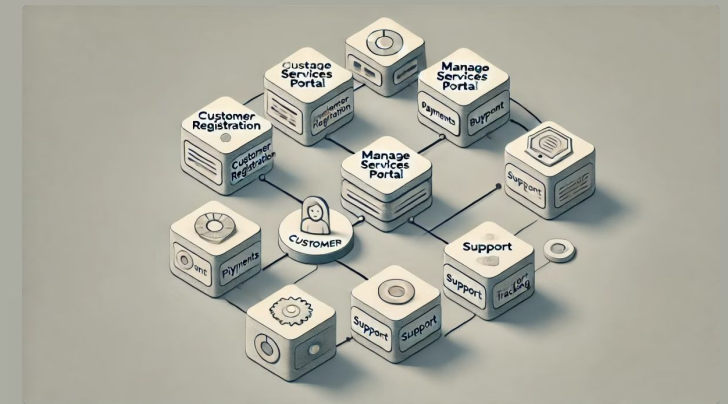
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- 4 — **Remove Dependencies**

1. Untangle Concepts

A customer journey map usually can **highlight different problems and solutions the team is exposed to**

In our example we came across part of journey that might required separate boundaries - e.g. "customer registration" and "manage services portal".

The decision was driven by separation of customer experiences as well as how different the solutions might be for these experiences.



2. Identify Hand-offs



The same customer journey map can **highlight dependencies with other teams - expertise, approval or architectural dependencies**

Long wait times for customers to register and developers to make a change due to no adoption of APIs that were available from data systems to complete the customer journey. *Multiple business services relied on these data API services.*



3. Adjust Boundaries

Functional based teams, e.g. Testing, leading to long wait times for teams reliant on them frequently

It might be a good experiment to merge 2-3 functional expertise in 1 team that can independently own a service either for an internal team or end customer

One account software team became a blocker to release new features

Customer account *software had grown too large for one team* and had a strong change coupling with this new product team; It would benefit from making available documentation and/or APIs so that in the future both teams could release independently



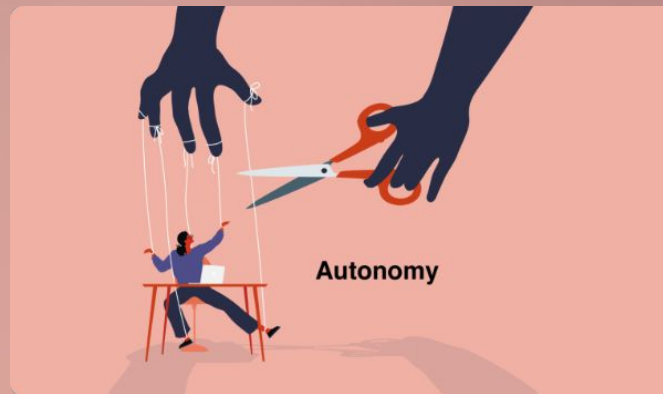
4. Remove Dependencies - Tech Maturity

A number of manual services with no APIs

There were no APIs available for developers from risk calculation engines (owned by a different team) that the digital product could use to deliver the flow independently

Delivery pipelines had a number of manual steps

The delivery pipeline was reliant on big integration work with minimal automated testing and deployment across teams before a release could be made available in production. Security and compliance requirements were manual. *The delivery cadence was very slow.*



4. Remove Dependencies - Decision Making

Partial decision making autonomy and maturity

There were **too many unknowns on customer desirability** of features and the team couldn't learn and make the decisions on what to build

A large amount of time was devoted to **roadmap planning for 12 months without alignment on the biggest risk for business and customer success**. This risk is that the team might work on features that may or may not lead to customer adoption

Time for Reflection...

Identifying Pilot Opportunities



Customer Adoption

Removing tech dependencies will help us improve online services adoption and improve retention



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Long-term Capability

Create capability in teams and systems for faster releases.



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Business Goals

Reduce cost to serve customer





Pilot Learnings

Pilot 1

New cross-functional team to deliver online journey

Worked with multiple people to form a new team responsible to develop the new online journey

Pilot 2

Customer Discovery Capability

Practiced with the team to learn about customer problems and what solutions work for them.

Result

Customer Adoption

A customer portal that eventually improved customer adoption, although there were 6 months of failures.

Time for Reflection...

**The team was
courageous and
resilient despite:**

Functional Silos



The team was courageous and resilient despite:

Functional Silos

Underestimating architectural complexity



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Technology onboarding was time consuming

CI/CD pipelines across all platforms were manual and required strategic technology choices

Teams Learning Journey



Dependencies on Tech Skills

Although the teams learnt a lot in the first 2 months they hardly made progress due to the low maturity of services from platform teams they were dependent on e.g. risk calculation engine team.



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Pivot to prioritise based on long term capability

The teams learnt in the first 2 months that the 2nd criterion was more important to select pilots i.e. create a long-term capability in teams and systems to release faster





Rolling Back Pilots

Make rolling back inexpensive. Not all learnings are throw-away. Document insights for future use.

Challenge

Team fatigue

Benefit

Recovered and documented legacy knowledge



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Time investment

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Recovered and documented legacy knowledge

Validated customer insights



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Stakeholder expectations

Benefit

Recovered and documented legacy knowledge

Validated customer insights

Improved trust with new team by sharing customer insights

Key Takeaways

Use Team Topologies to sense opportunities. Long term capability improvement for teams can be a high leverage transformation opportunity for businesses.



Sense Opportunities

Team Topologies helps identify flow improvements.



Prioritise For Your Context

Choose improvements with multiplier effects.



Be Open to Pivoting

New information can help you change direction quickly, don't be afraid to do so if feeling confident.