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# Working in agile cross-functional teams

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**NOCA**  
The Association of Danish HR Professionals & Executives



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# Agenda

50%

- Presentation of research

25%

- breakouts

25%

- Feedback and discussion

Agile cross-functional team: Characteristics & benefits

Dimensions of agile cross-functional teams

Managing people

Reintegration dilemma – break outs

Exercising leadership in agile cross-functional teams

Impact on HRM practices

Sum up & key take aways

Q&A

## Agile cross functional teams







An agile cross-functional team can be defined as a temporary organization composed of small group of people (4-7) from different functions with different areas of expertise to complete projects in sprints or iterations and to create a unique outcome.

Borrowing resources from the line organization

Percentage of involvement in the project team

Level of functional diversity in the project team

# Agile cross-functional teams | Characteristics

	Functionally aligned teams	Agile cross-functional teams
 Structure	Departmental: based on one functional area	Cross-functional: based on several functional areas
 Organization type	Permanent organization with history	Projects as temporary organizations
 Purpose	Tactical excellence Exploitation	Rapid iteration and experimentation Exploration
 Chain of command	"Owns" resources (staff, funds) Clear and direct delegations Process centric decision making	"Borrows" resources (staff, funds) People centric decision making
 Individual member status	Title /promotion conscious members	More focus on what value and insights each member brings to the team
 Information flow	Information channel constraints (up and down rather than out or across)	Information flows in all directions (circular structure) and in and out of team from all areas and from customers

# Agile cross-functional teams | Benefits



## Support our culture

- Embracing diversity of experience, knowledge and skills (INCLUSION)
- Breaking down hierarchical and functional boundaries and increase trust (TOGETHER)
- Creating opportunities for employees to expand knowledge and learn skills (FREEDOM)

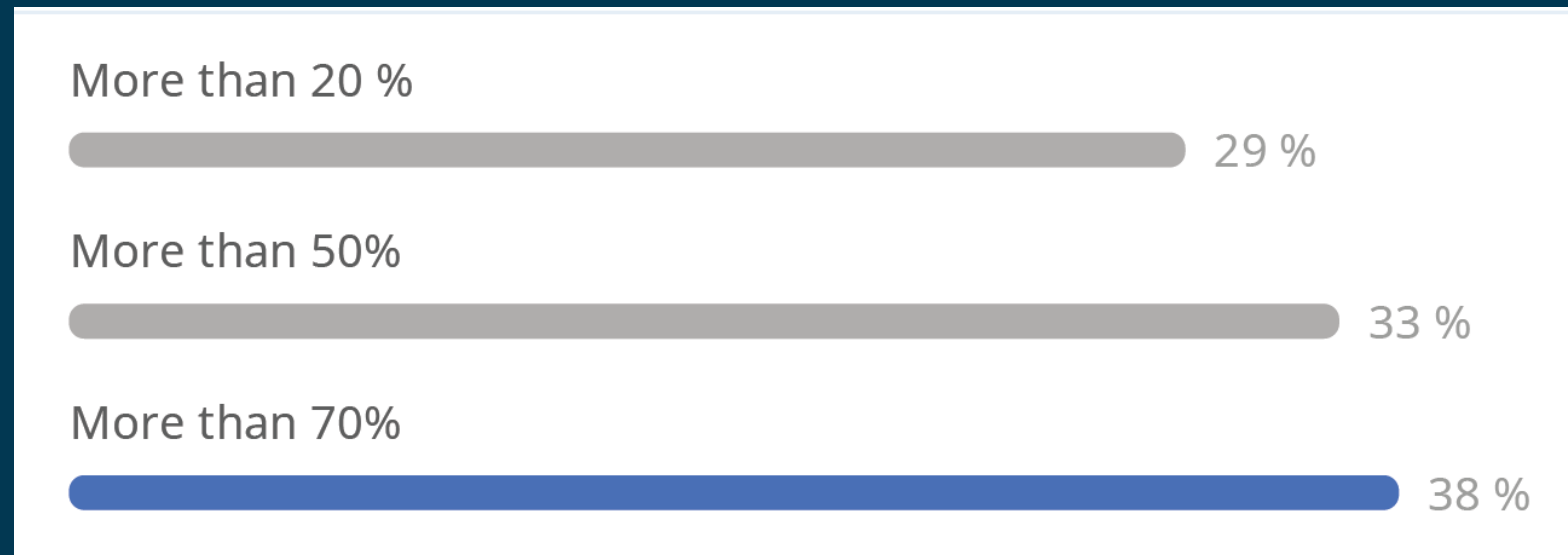
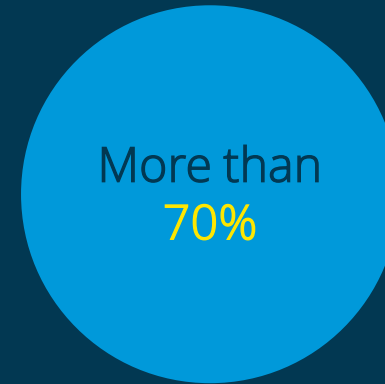
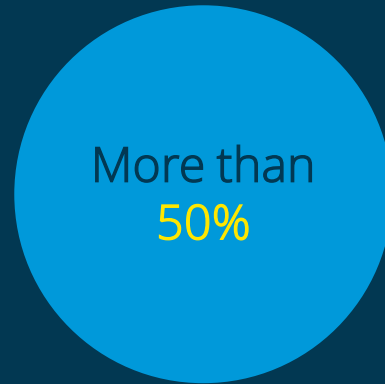
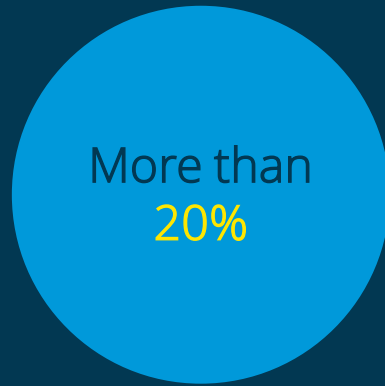
## Business value

- Reducing time to market
- Improving organizational agility
- Implementing product development projects that are driven by customer needs and insights

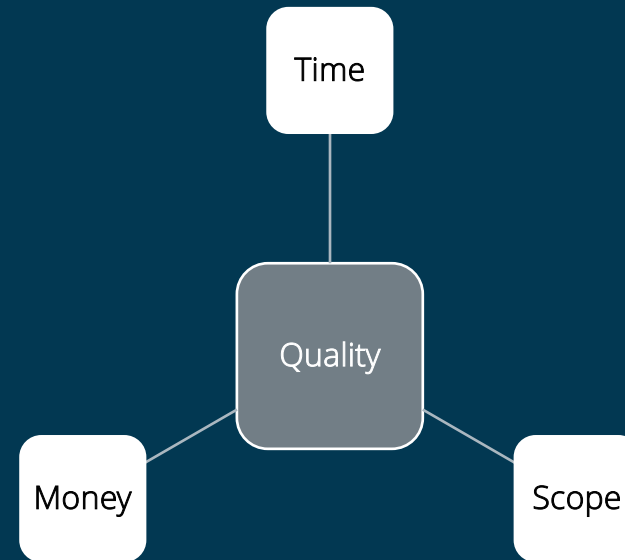
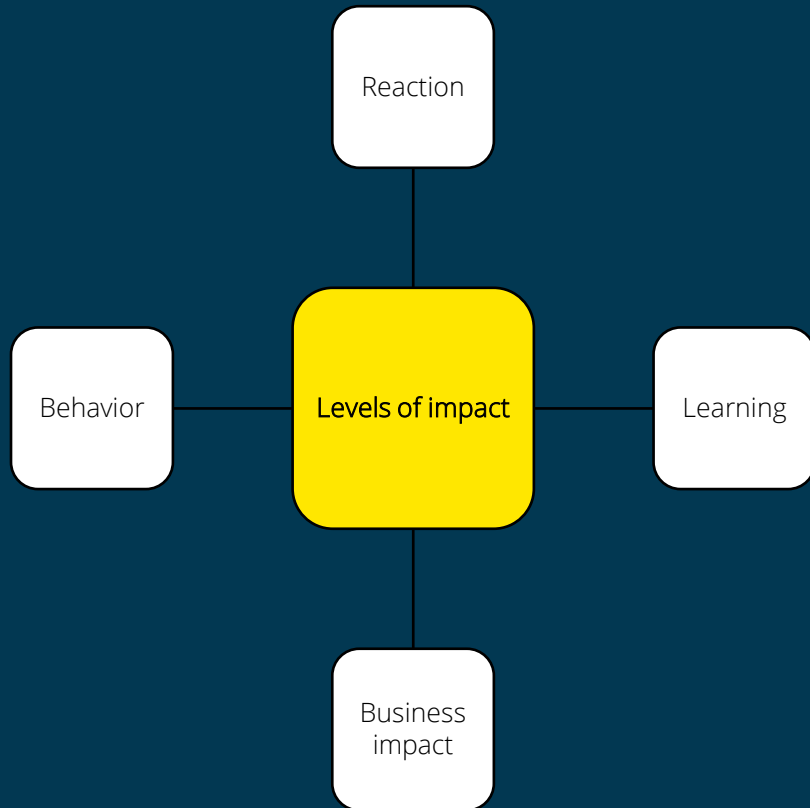
## Innovation

- Promoting innovation through harnessing the power of diversity
- developing collective creativity via empowerment

# What percentage of agile cross-functional projects fail?

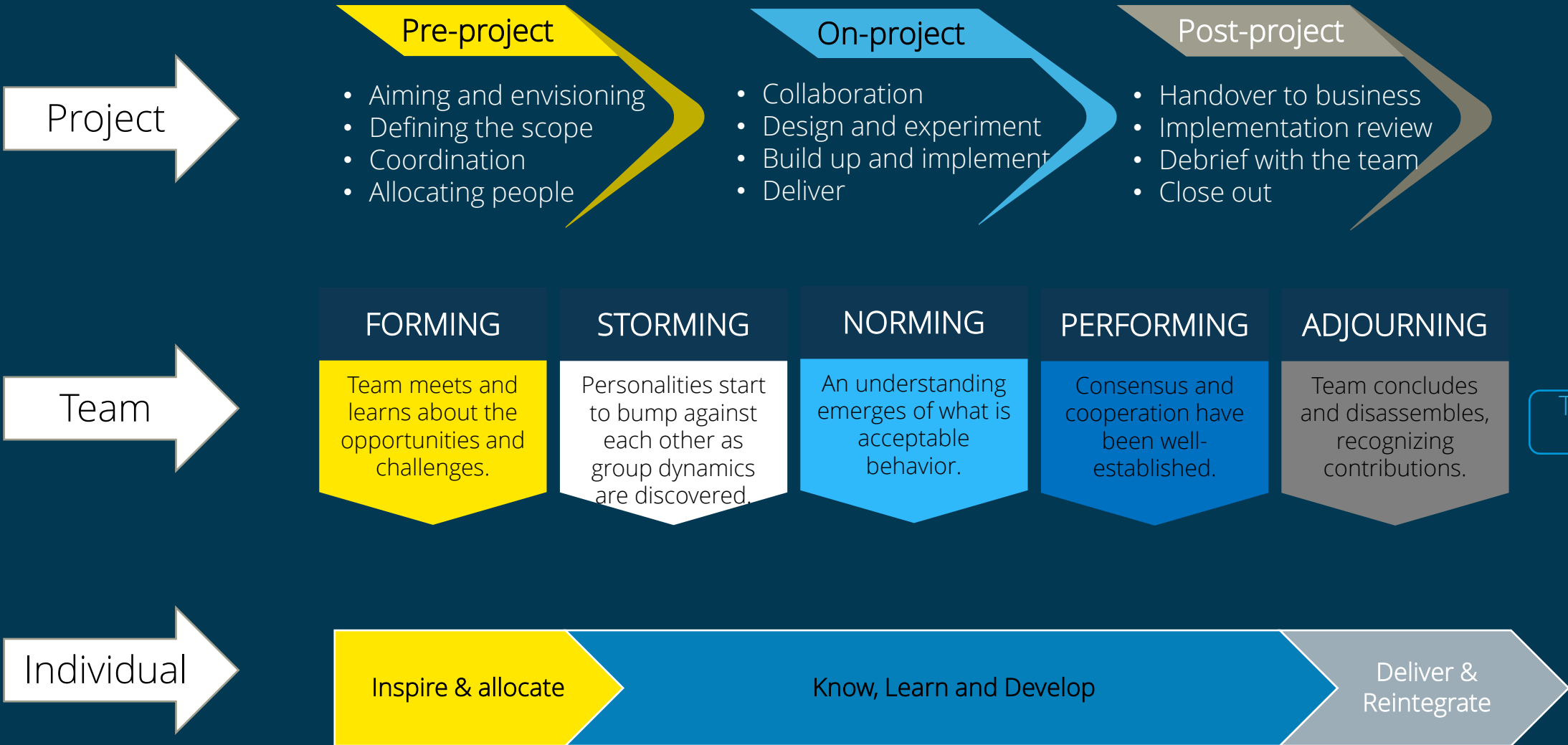


# What percentage of agile cross-functional projects fail?



More than  
70%

# Dimensions of agile cross functional projects





# Leading agile cross-functional project teams



# Managing people | Challenges at the Individual Level

Reintegration dilemma

Role conflicts and confusions

Misaligned demands of different performance control structures

Violation of perceived psychological contract with the line team

Unrealized expectations and unclear career paths

Burnout and stress to fulfill performance expectations



## Reintegration dilemma

Reintegration is a process that allows an employee who worked away from their functional team in a temporary cross-functional team return and re-adjust

The extent and speed of re-integration is likely to have an influence on

Organizational performance

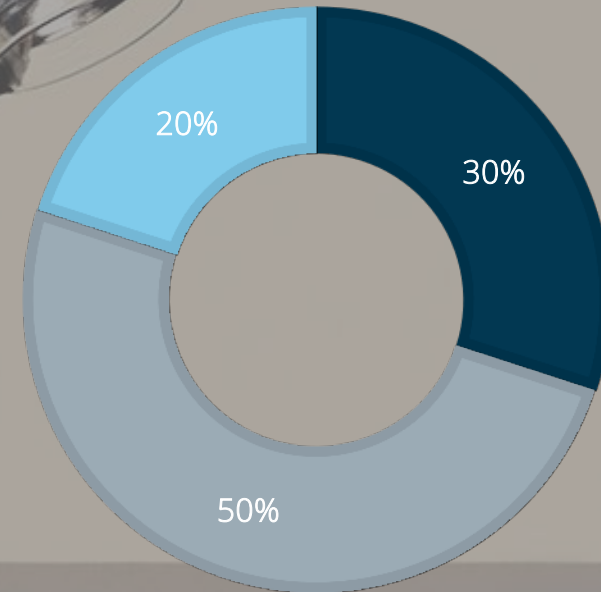
Employee engagement and motivation

Knowledge transfer, tacit and non-tacit

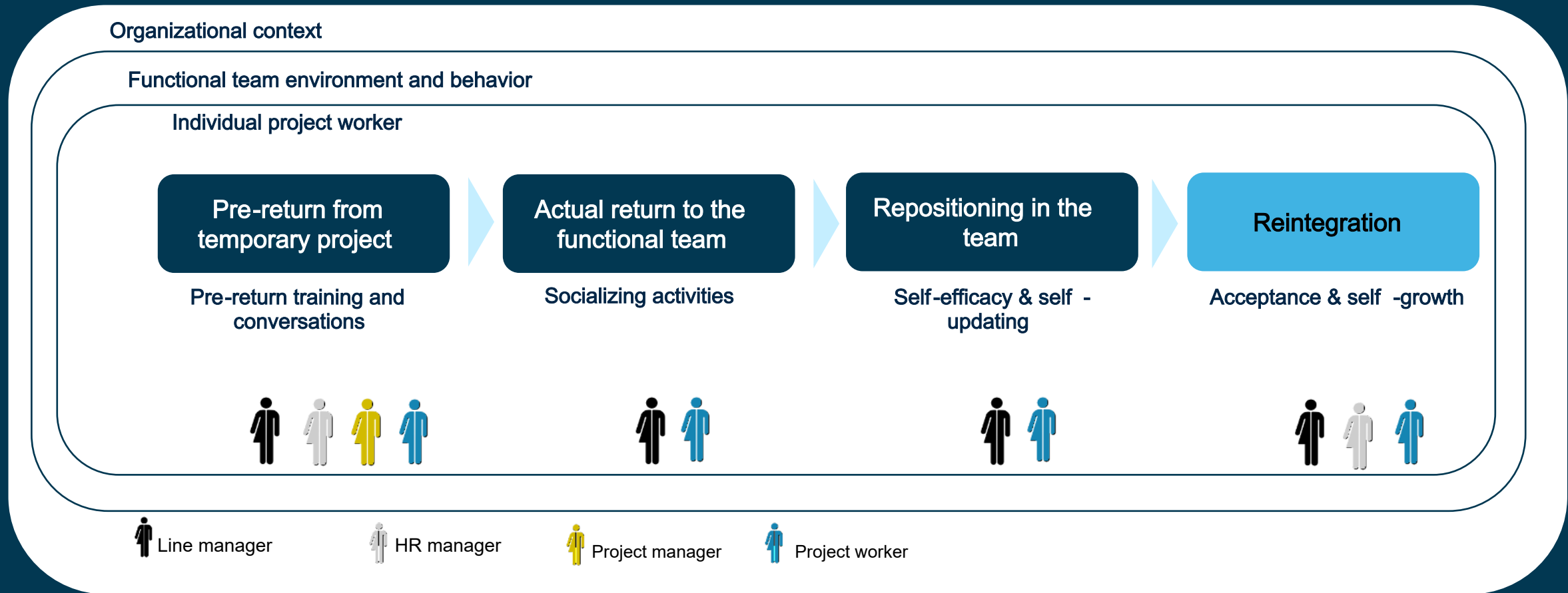
## Reintegration dilemma

- With turnover intention
- Without turnover intention
- Back to a project

Turnover intentions from the permanent line organization due to ineffective reintegration



# Reintegration path




**What is your company doing to mitigate the challenges associated with reintegration experience of employees?**

**15 minutes**

# Takeaways from breakout session

- Journey to find the best balance between how to operate with both 'normal' HR projects, a HR management team, agile initiatives and an agile management team. Takes time to become aligned and find the right setup for all.
- Risk of losing people when returning to 'old' team. Hard to motivate employee after being away on a steep learning curve
- Agile maturity is needed before temporary teams
- How do you secure knowledge of employees learnings/competence development is transferred to line manager?
- Importance of knowledge sharing so some employees do have all knowledge at take with them if they leave
- It's a long journey- takes years. It is possible to make stable agile teams
- we talked about jespers saying that the teams should be splitt up after a time
- Other companies have same issues:-) P&O need it be involved in the process.

- Importance of stable teams vs temporary teams
- Problems with reintegration

A stack of five smooth, grey stones is balanced on a beach. The stones are arranged in a vertical column, with the top stone being the smallest and the bottom stone being the largest. The background is a soft-focus view of a beach with many other smooth stones. A blue text box is located in the upper left corner of the image.

Exercising  
leadership in  
agile cross-  
functional  
teams

It is all about having authentic “presence”.



# Blended leadership

Blended leadership is **an equal use of both power and attractiveness**

POWER

Confidence

Influence

Abrasiveness

Arrogance

ATTRACTIVENESS

Agreeableness

Approachability

Diffidence

Submissiveness



**What three things would you do differently to prepare a leader for a cross-functional temporary project?**

# Your input

- That empowering the team to invest and come up with the solutions and be focused on exploring and testing is key to succeed.
  - Clear expectations with employee (time-line, tasks, 1:1 during project (learnings/development) - Focus of re-entering
  - If possible, introducing the different social and behavioral styles of the group members.
  - Be very explicit on the need for showing authentic trust.
- Train the behavior that is cure of trust
- 1. Encourage them to be humble 😊
  - 2. be ready to learn 3. expect things not to go smoothly
  - More coaching, tool box on group dynamix and network
  - Active listening
  - Some Education - course
  - Be curious, spend time listening
  - Provide coaching training and training in intent based leadership
  - Focus on goal and not deliverable

# Agile cross-functional teams | HR practices

## Employee journeys

- Survival Guide for employees
- Modular offering & flexible journeys
- Training

## Talent review

- Match jobs in cross functional teams and home teams with employees in good time
- Build relevant development plans
- 121 to ensure follow-through and effect

## Performance management

- No link between performance review and pay / bonus
- Focus on clear goals and potential - not performance
- Mandatory regular team review (retrospectives) and 121's

## Leadership Development

- Facilitation Team to help – not advise
- Community to share learnings and network
- Training on leading x-functional teams
- Survival Guide for managers

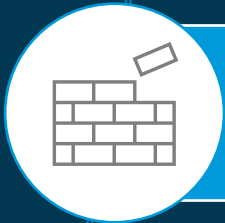
# Devolution of HR responsibilities to the line and beyond



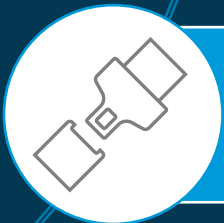
Leadership motivation and support is not the issue – leaders of cross-functional teams are **overwhelmed** and require practical help



Make sure the people you **deploy** to deliver help are **real practitioners** that can teach people how to fish



Build **new** leadership capabilities and ways of working - but use **old delivery mechanisms** like org review, talent review and development planning



**Safeguard critical talent** – sometimes assigning your best talent to agile cross functional teams is the most effective way of losing them!



## HR practices in a project- based organization

Adopting a project-based organization influences the configuration of the HRM function and the devolution of HRM responsibilities to line managers and project managers

How do HRM practices need to take shape?

To what extent do HRM practices need to be devolved to project managers and line managers?

Are line managers or project managers sufficiently trained and/or motivated to carry our HR practices?

# Agile cross-functional teams |

## Sum up & Key take a ways

### Sum up

- ✓ Managing people is the most challenging part;
- ✓ Moving people in and out of the projects is easier to said than done;
- ✓ An improved understanding of reintegration has the potential to not only contribute to the personal development and satisfaction of employees, but also to knowledge transfer in the organization;
- ✓ Leadership is the ability to connect authentically with the thoughts and feelings of others;
- ✓ Many HR practices need to be devolved to the line and project managers, but we need to make sure they are motivated and capable of doing them.

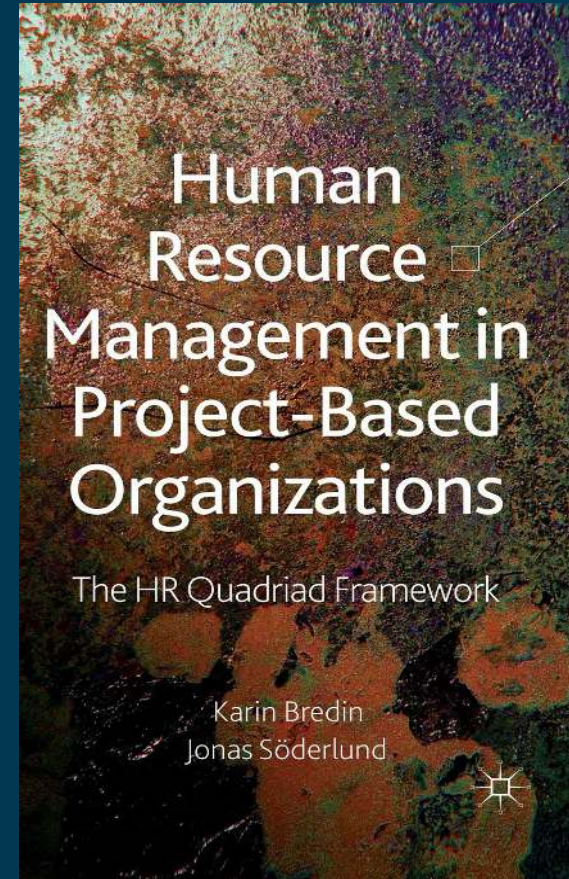
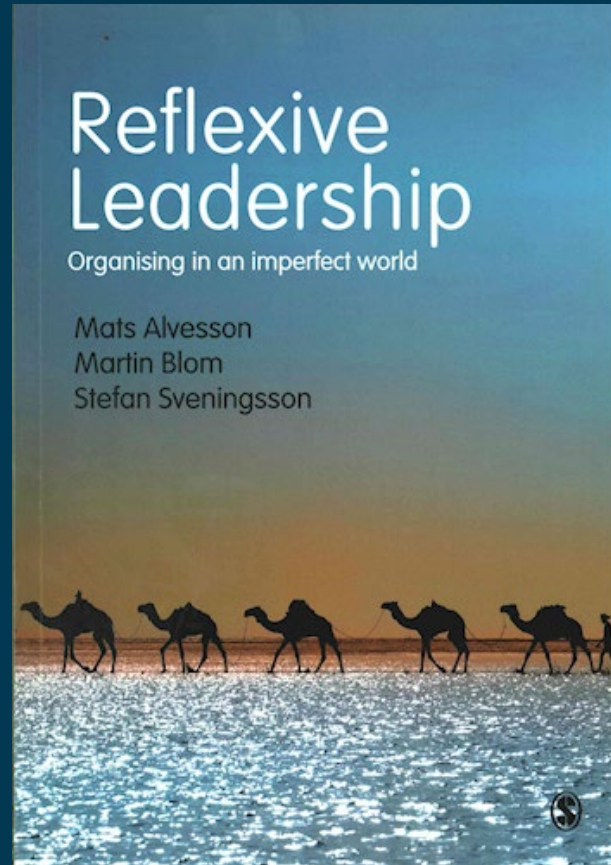
### Key take a ways

- ✓ It is time to give more attention to human aspects of project management;
- ✓ Capability building to ensure that the right skills and mind-sets are embedded in the right people is not a topic to defer to another day;
- ✓ We need to think, rethink, test, question, and accept imperfection rather than adopt a standardized elegant solution or leadership style to overcome challenges of adopting projects.





# Food for thought





# Appendix

**A sample of tools developed to support cross-functional project workers and leaders at Milestone**

# How to manage the different phases of team development?

A tool for leaders of cross-functional teams at Milestone

	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing	Adjourning
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displaying eagerness</li> <li>• Socializing</li> <li>• Generally polite tone</li> <li>• Sticking to safe topics</li> <li>• Some anxiety and questioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings like defensiveness and competitiveness</li> <li>• Emergence of conflicts due to differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and goals are well-understood</li> <li>• More confident</li> <li>• Improved commitment</li> <li>• Relief (lowered anxiety) and trust</li> <li>• Establishing cohesion, a problem-solving process and a code of conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High motivation, trust, and empathy, a sense of harmony and synergy</li> <li>• Quick and effective decision making and problem solving</li> <li>• Producing deliverables</li> <li>• Consistent performance</li> <li>• Demonstrations of interdependence and self-management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential sadness, satisfaction and uncertainty</li> <li>• Recognition of team and individual efforts</li> <li>• Disbanding</li> </ul>
Team leader actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking the 'lead,'</li> <li>• Being highly visible</li> <li>• Providing the 'big picture'</li> <li>• Giving the team a platform to know each other</li> <li>• Give clear goals and directions</li> <li>• Establishing clear expectations</li> <li>• Communicating success criteria</li> <li>• Present Tuckman's model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requesting and encouraging feedback</li> <li>• Identifying issues and facilitating their resolution</li> <li>• Normalizing matters</li> <li>• Building trust by honoring commitments</li> <li>• Staying focused on the tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing individual and team efforts</li> <li>• Providing learning opportunities and feedback,</li> <li>• Monitoring the 'energy' of the team (reinforce the team spirit)</li> <li>• Delegate some tasks</li> <li>• Staying involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Guiding from the side' (minimal intervention)</li> <li>• Celebrating milestone achievements</li> <li>• Be a gateway</li> <li>• Encouraging collective decision-making and problem solving</li> <li>• Let the team members co-lead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing change</li> <li>• Providing an opportunity for summative team evaluations ('lessons learned')</li> <li>• Providing an opportunity for individual acknowledgments</li> <li>• Helping team members reintegrate into their functional teams</li> <li>• Celebrating the team's accomplishments</li> </ul>

# Principles of cross functional teams' leadership at Milestone

## Principle 1:

*Leadership is a collective phenomenon shared among all team members.*

Under the shared leadership, we can identify emerging leaders and our people can exercise their leadership skills.

## Principle 3:

*Diversity and inclusion is a business priority.*

We are disciplined about diversity of thinking and committed to cultivate an inclusive mindset and to demonstrate inclusive behaviors.

## Principle 5:

*No one holds a critical opinion without speaking up about it.*

By virtue of candore, people don't feel silenced. The interpersonal fear is minimized with a sense of social connectedness and group membership.

## Principle 7:

*Intelligent failures must be considered good news because of the value they bring.*

Leaders give productive responses that include expressions of appreciation and destigmatization of failure to reinforce a learning organization.

## Principle 2:

*People grow and organization improves through constructive feedback.*

By demonstrating willingness to receive and act upon feedback, you show to the team what a leader would expect from others.

## Principle 4:

*Leaders take a balance of head and heart.*

Effective leadership is a practice of toggling back and forth between analytic network and the empathic network in the brain.

## Principle 6:

*Leaders connect collaborative commitments into individual motivations.*

A relationships of trust, respect and open communication is built on a clear understanding of the individual objectives.

## Principle 8:

*Leaders balance autonomy and accountability by setting transparent boundaries expectations.*

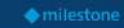
A relationships of trust, respect and open communication is built on a clear understanding of the individual objectives.

# Survival guide

## 5 TIPS for employees who join cross-functional project teams

### Working in cross-functional temporary teams

5 TIPS for employees who join cross-functional project teams



#### 1. Keep the dialogue alive

Make sure you have the right conversations, formally or informally, with your functional manager in order to:

- Talk about your worries, challenges and fears while you are participating in the project team
- Discuss and clarify your motivation and expectations of joining the project
- Discuss prioritization and personal development plans
- Ask for feedback and advice on how to communicate and transfer your learnings and knowledge during and after the project



#### 2. Maintain rapport with your home functional team

During your participation in the project team, you may limit your social interactions and knowledge exchange with your colleagues in the functional team. This can make your return to the team after completing the project more challenging. Turn your relationships back to your home team into an opportunity by maintaining and strengthening your social ties to your functional team.

- Spend time into your busy schedule to re-engage relationships
- Use informal encounters and spontaneous conversations with your colleagues to spark collaboration, deepen trust and energize yourself



#### 3. Use & improve your emotional intelligence

The opportunities to succeed professionally and personally lie within the chamber of emotional intelligence (EI). EI is not a fixed ability and you can improve it. Some ways are:

- Develop greater self-awareness
- Practice empathy by putting yourself in other people's shoes
- Recognize appropriate ways and times to express feelings rather than just reacting
- Knowledge and listening to understand their points of view and look for ways to minimize tensions when conflicts arise
- Focus on reading emotional cues such as voice tone, word choice and body language
- Show a willingness to be more approachable by asking teammates for feedback



#### 4. Co-lead with project team members and the lead

In cross-functional teams, leadership is a collective phenomenon that is shared or distributed among all team members and is potentially fluid and contextual in interactions. Take your participation in the project as an opportunity to strengthen your leadership capabilities:

- Understand and appreciate collective goal of the team project
- Establish work environment in the team built on mutual trust and emotional support
- Talk in your team how shared leadership works and how it doesn't, make adjustments as needed
- Ask for feedback on how to better improve shared leadership and incorporate suggestions
- Understand the diversity in the project team in terms of personalities and competencies



#### 5. Hold yourself accountable

You need to learn and practice certain accountability strategies to maximize your opportunities for success:

- Take ownership and accountability toward developing new skills and knowledge
- Understand your development needs and define your development plans and keep motivation and commitment to them
- Invest time and efforts to transfer your newly learned knowledge to the rest of the organization
- Schedule a time each week in your calendar and reflect on your experience and self conduct and consider what you want more and why
- Review yourself and seek feedback



Cross-functional teams and temporary project teams composed of small groups of people with different functions and different areas of expertise to create a unique outcome.  
Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage both our own emotions and the emotions of others.  
This guideline is developed and designed by Global Organization Development, Inc.