

INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE CROSS-TEAM PROJECTS

...or practical tips and learnings from a cross-team project



HI, I AM TOBI



Personal

1. Actually I am a 🧑🏃 boy
2. Living in Vienna for 4+ years
3. Spent half my life 🏀ing too little 🎸
4. I watch cooking shows at 🌃
5. I ⚖️ coffee my the milligram

Work

1. Worked at commercetools for 7 years 🦖 - remotely 4 and onsite 3
2. Technical at ❤️🔥 and focusing on Frontend Architecture across teams
3. Focus more and more on organisation wide initiatives

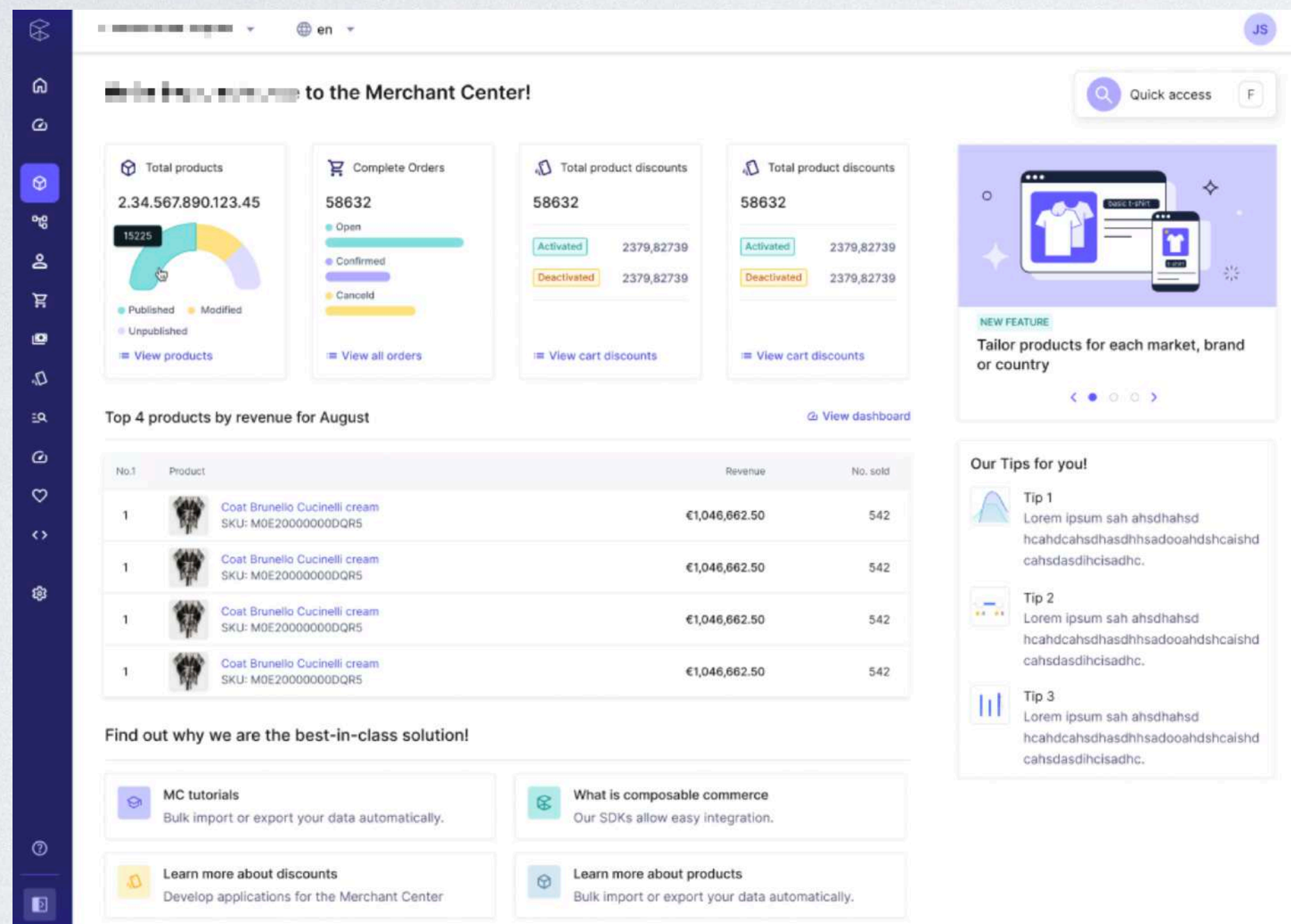
AN INNOCENT DAY AT WORK

“You have to perform a redesign on our main interface in two months!”

Somebody in November 2022

WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY BUILDING

commercetools provides the leading composable commerce platform



The screenshot shows the 'Change history' page for the 'Sunrise demo project'. It features a search bar, a filter icon, and summary statistics: 'Changes made 50,365', 'Entries created 10,040', and 'Entries deleted 600'. The main table lists changes made by users, including details like the user, modified date, change type, item, previous value, and next value. A 'PREMIUM' badge is visible in the top right corner.

User	Modified	Change	Item	Previous value	Next value
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Add attribute definition UPDATE	Product Wegmans mini pretzels	Attribute name: Sed posture	Attribute name: Justo incididunt
Andrew Proft Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:15 PM	Delete item DELETE	Customer Joe Smith	--	--
API-client-name Out of platform (API)	08/19/2022 12:15 PM	Change product count UPDATE	Product selection Fall 2023 featured items open item in new tab	2	10
API-client-name Out of platform (API)	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Add product UPDATE	Product selection Fall 2023 featured items	1 product 678487e1...	10 products added View all
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Create item CREATE	Cart discount Fall friends & family sale, 20% off with code	--	--
ImpEx or Platform	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Change custom type on address UPDATE	Business unit North america west coast address ID [74d8]	Warehouse locations	North America warehouse
API-client-name Out of platform (API)	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Change description UPDATE	Product Special edition SJ blender bottle sportmixer	EN-US "ut dignissim tellus id tortor auctor, in fringilla orci commodo. Duis tempus velit elit, vel mollis varius eu.	
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Change variant availability UPDATE	Product 1.4 oz kind bar Variant: Dark chocolate sea salt and almond (staged)	Channel 689de942... Has on stock: true Available quantity: 24 Restockable in days: --	Channel 689de942... Has on stock: true Available quantity: 5 Restockable in days: 30
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Change custom type UPDATE	Customer Liz Cornell Custom field: Opportunity type	New business	Renewal
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Add external image UPDATE	Product Five star notebook Variant: College ruled		
Sophia Ramirez Merchant center	08/19/2022 12:17 PM	Change geo location UPDATE	Channel Dropshipping	Point coordinates: 37.7749, 500.391	Point coordinates: 40.555, 50.532

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTEXT

...technical and organisationally

30+ Contributors

- Contributions may vary by person and temporal

Quarterly roadmap

- Never dies

Head of Product

- ...and beyond

10 teams

- EMs and PMs
- UI/UX Designers

Project

Business critical tooling

- Users rely on the functionality

Design System

- Adoption varies
- Released independently

14 applications

- 5-6 repositories
- Many CI pipelines

PROJECT MANAGEMENT



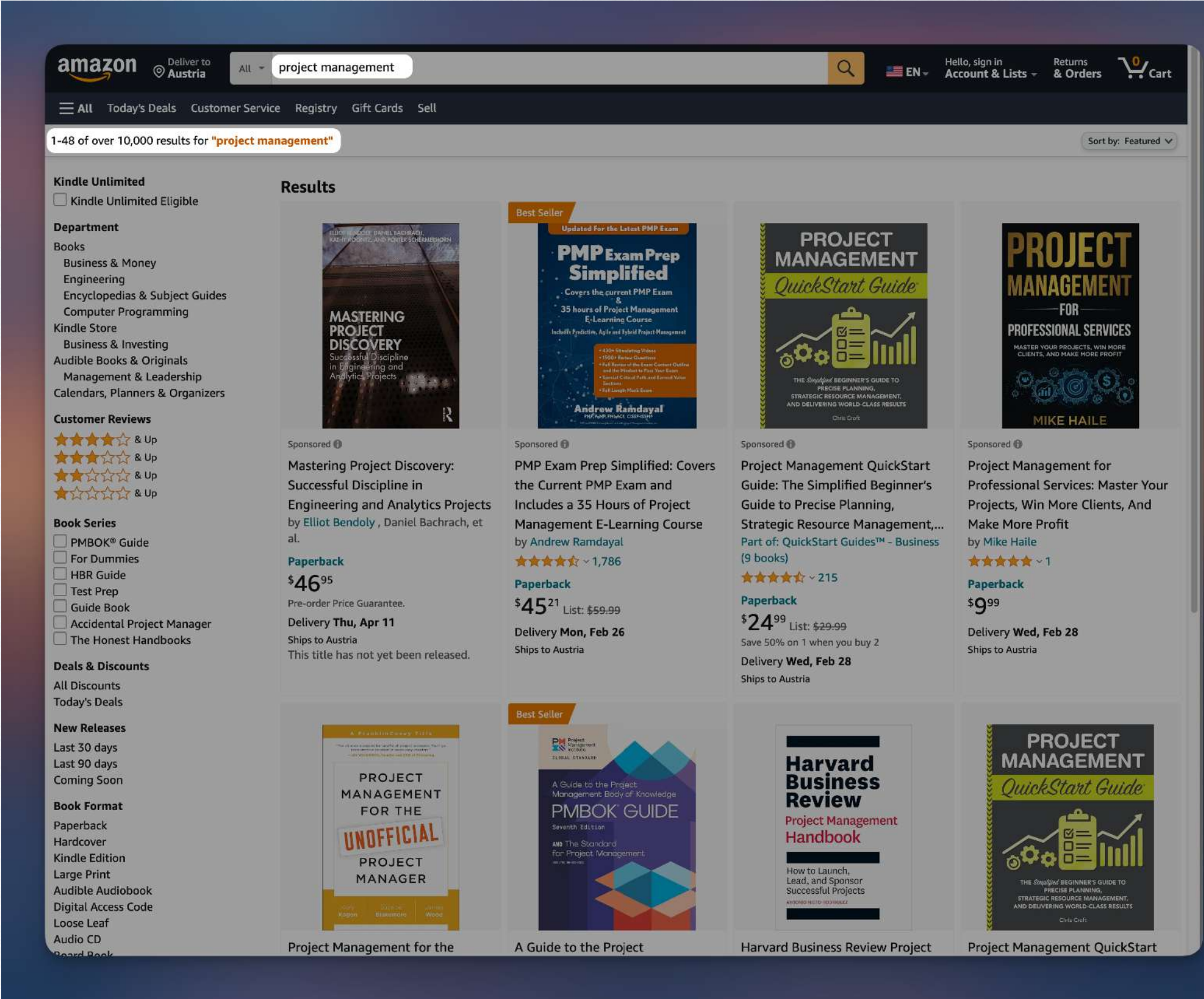
I KNOW A SOLUTION

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

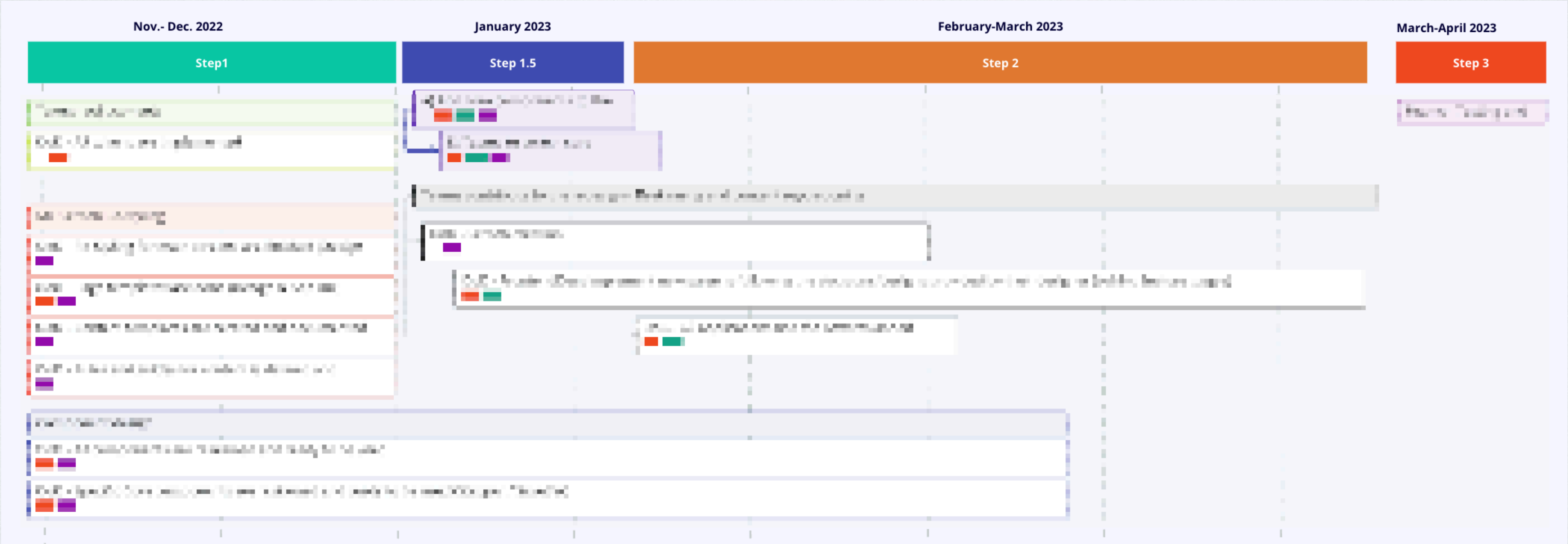
...an art of many books

“Glad my project manager read all that!”

Nobody ever



OK, FINE



GROK YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

...just like product development

Product

- Business value
- Effort and progress

Project

High and mid management

- Employee satisfaction
- Deadline

Contributors

- Guidelines
- Joy and togetherness

Other departments

- Desired results
- Predictable delivery for communication

Casual voyeur

- Peek a boo

PROJECT AXIOMS

...a bit like a manifesto

- Progress over deadlines ——
- Break down team boundaries over silos ——
- Momentum building over small bursts ——
- Negativity is the enemy of progress ——



...without further ado

13 INGREDIENTS FOR PROJECTS

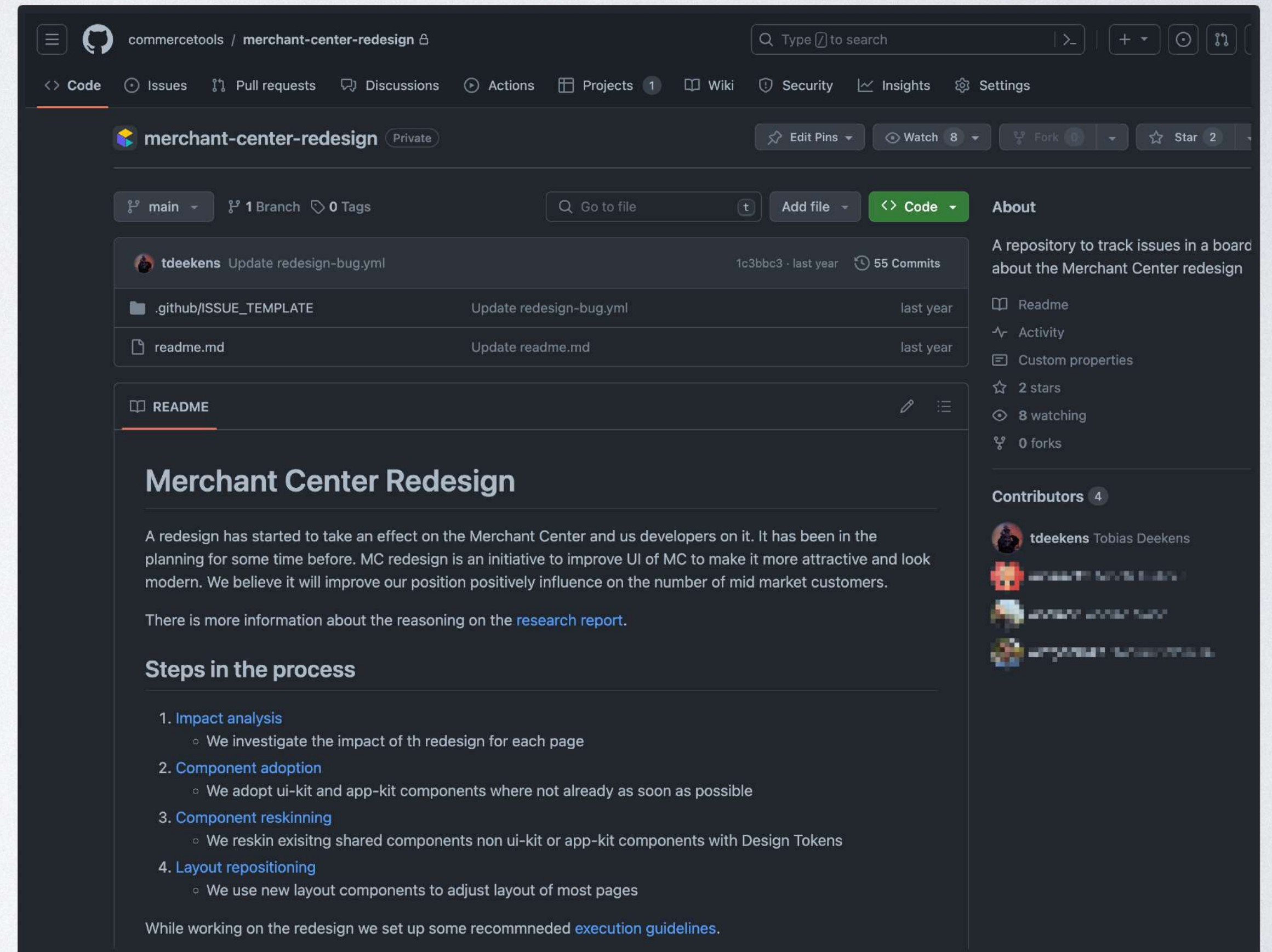
What I like to have known before running this project

PROJECT CHARTER

Why

Make everything discoverable

- Central landing page with project statement, the scope, objectives and participants
- Define documentation and communication structure
- Link to anything related

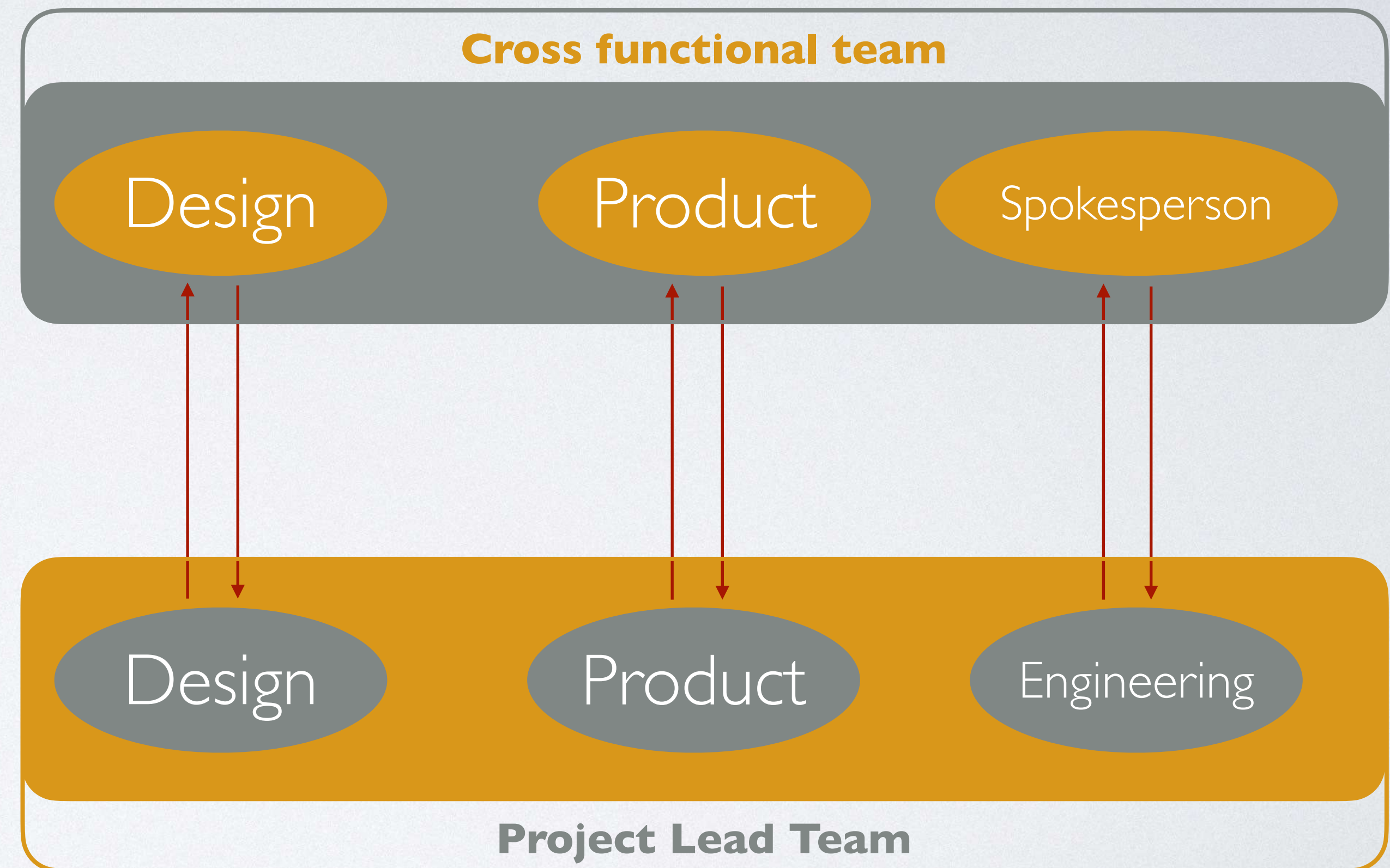


PROJECT LEAD TEAM

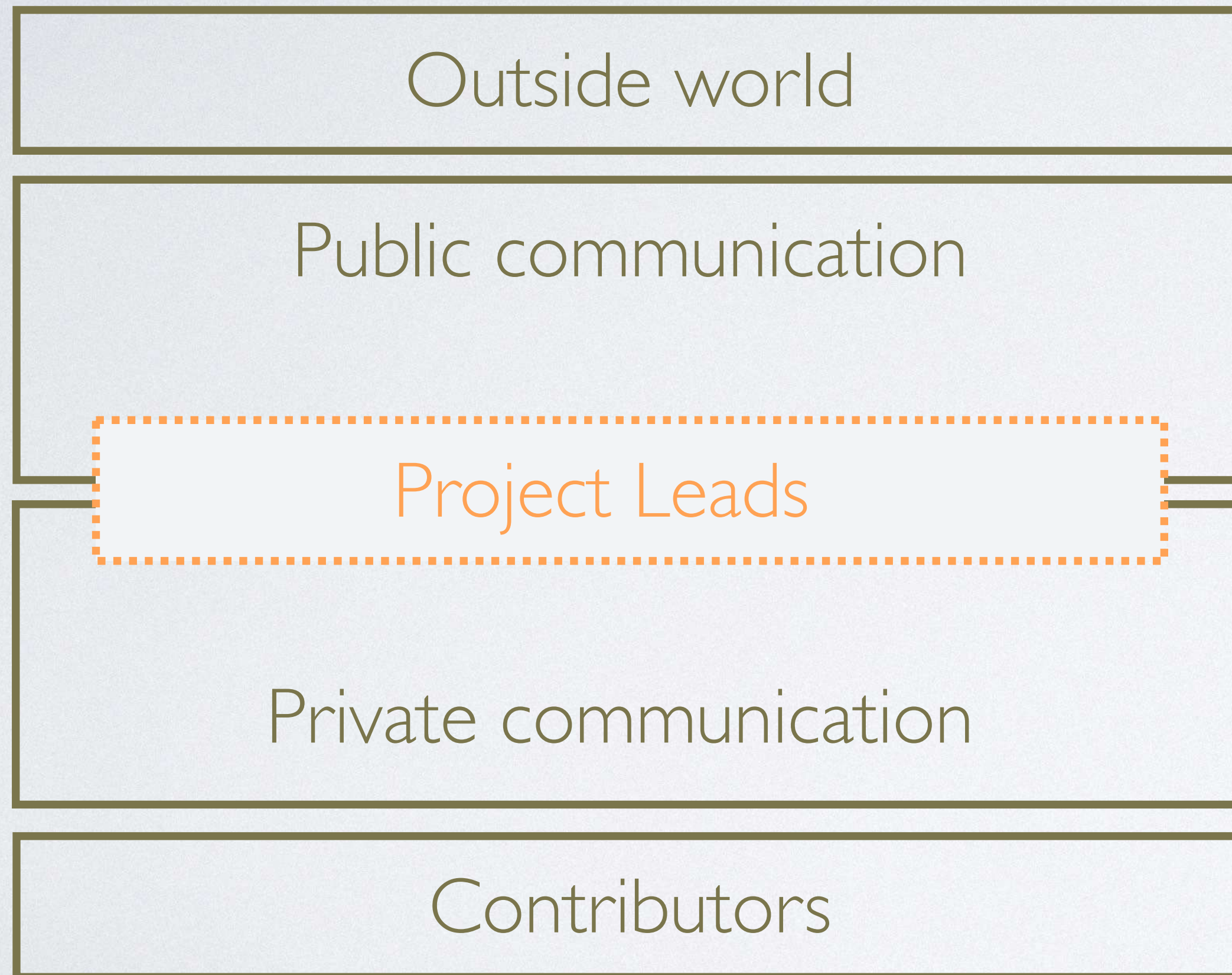
Why

Share responsibility with clear ownership lines

- Work backstage and create alignment with stakeholders
- Remove impediments different roles face
- Build on existing relationships towards teams



DEFINED MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

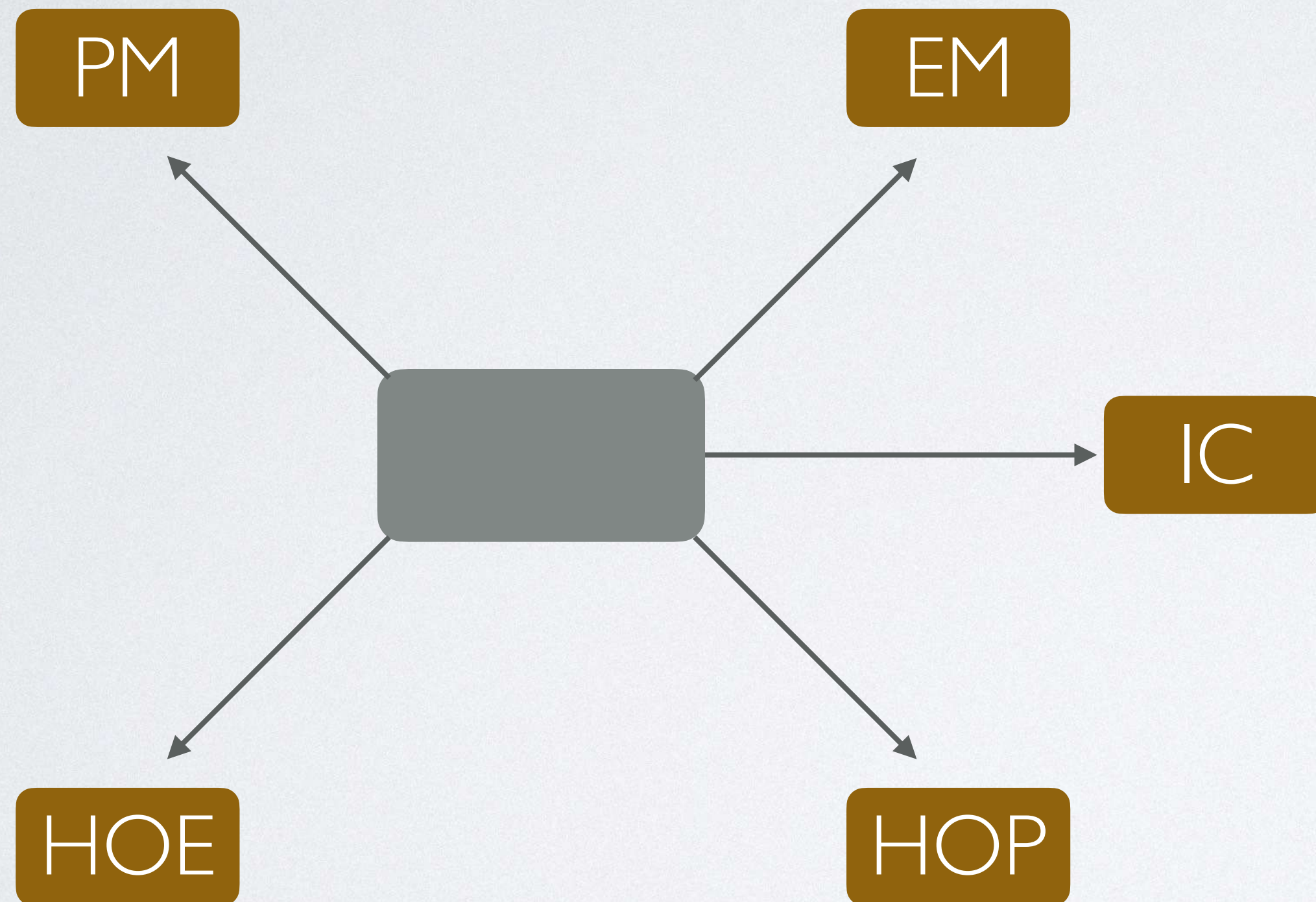


Why

Make project approachable

- E-Mail groups and shared calendars
- Recurring meetings using Google and Remeet
- Slack channels (private and public) and handles
- GitHub teams and labels

KICKOFF MEETING



Why

Prevent information to be missed

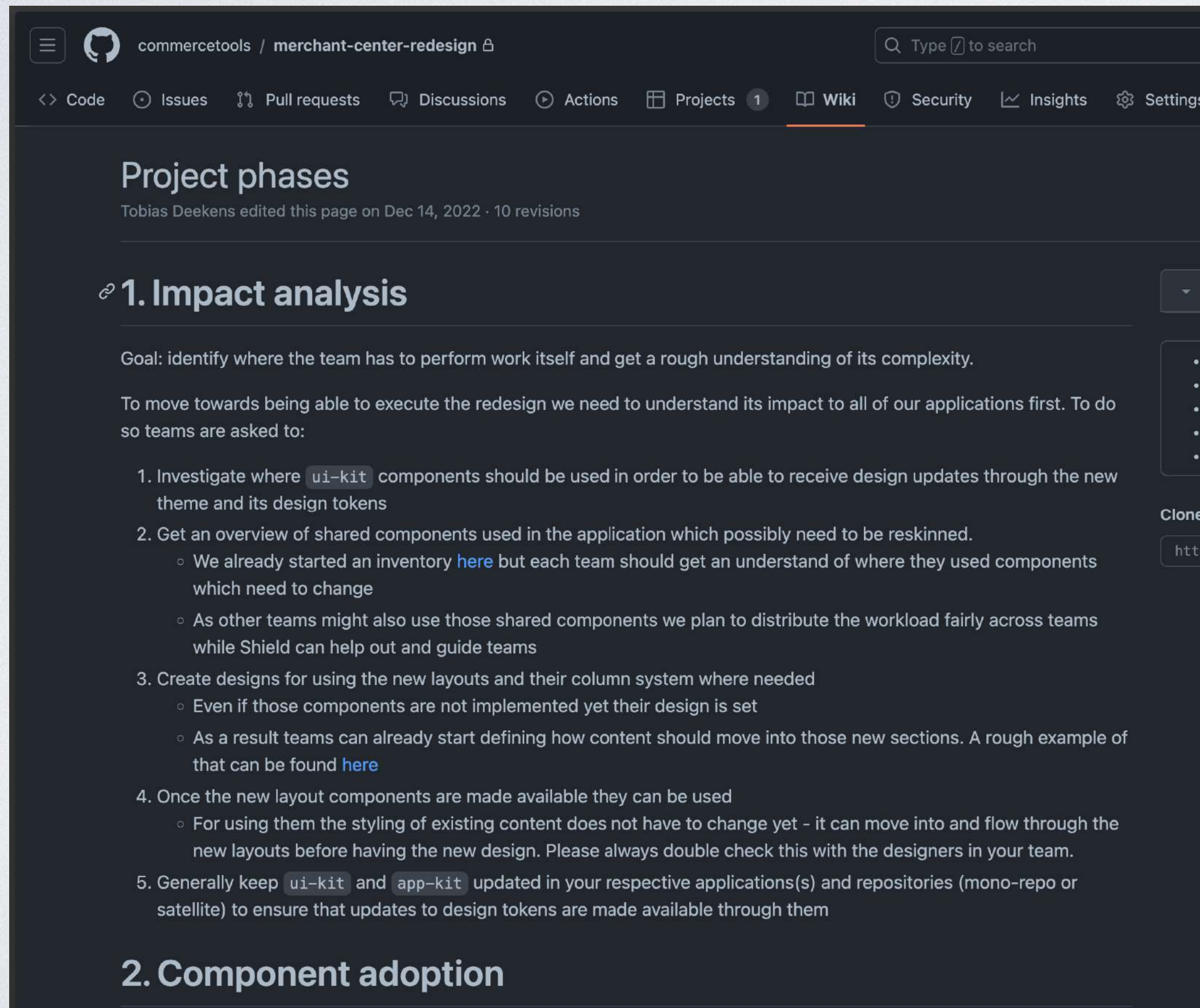
- Make stakeholders of the project aware
- Foster alignment between project participants
- Details who is involved and their roles the expected communication lines
- Recorded for people to rewatch

PHASES & MILESTONES

Why

Define high level work to be done

- Centrally agreed upon phases for project (2-4)
- Gates between phases with coordinated transitions
 1. Impact Analysis
 2. Component adoption & reskinning
 3. Layout adoption
 4. Design adjustments

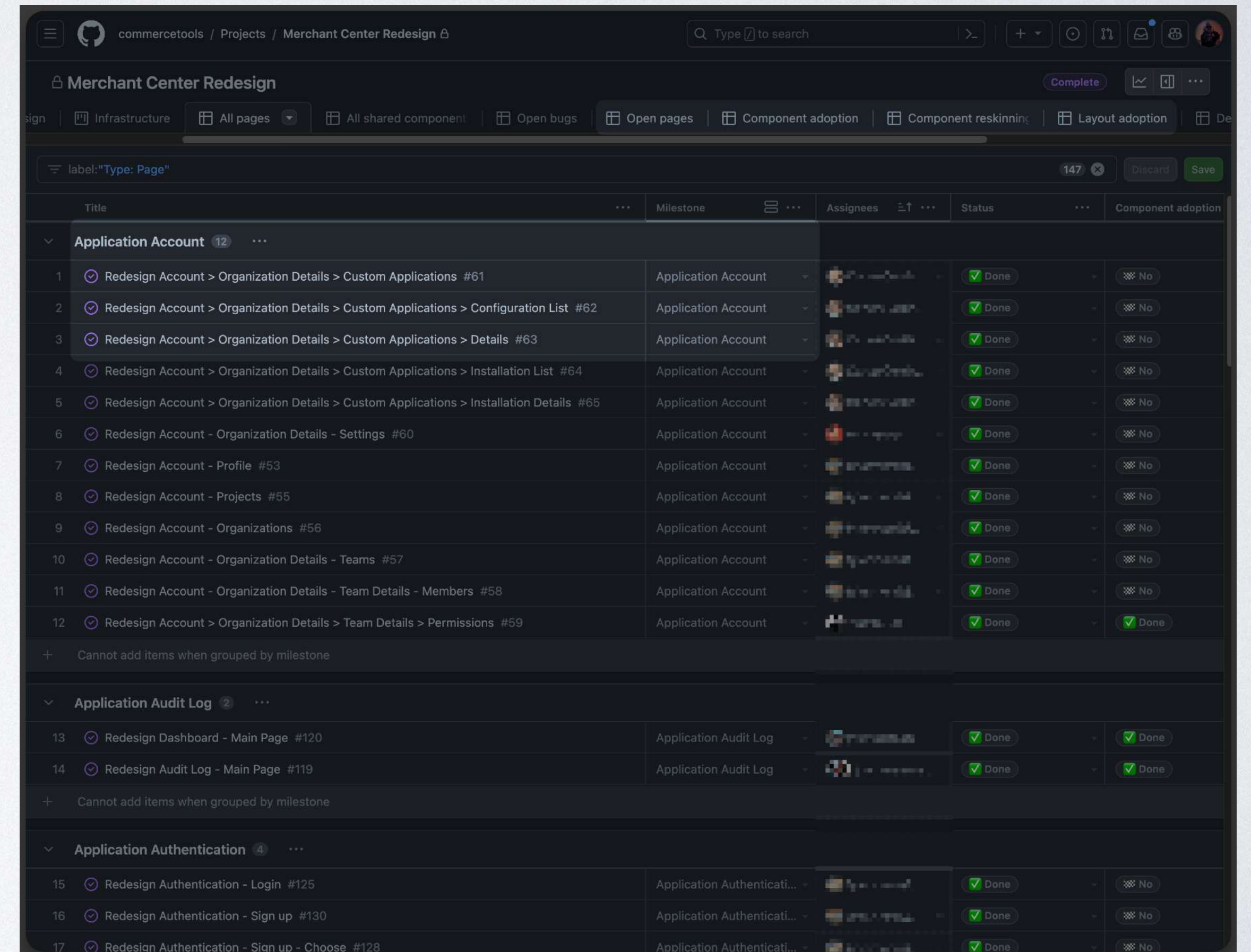


ONE PROJECT BOARD

Why

Order to chaos and oversight

- Single pane of glass integrating with phases
- Updated collaboratively but also guided by lead team
- Linking everything across 10 teams and six repositories



The screenshot shows a Jira project board for "Merchant Center Redesign". The board is organized into columns for different milestones: "Application Account", "Application Audit Log", and "Application Authentication". Each milestone contains a list of tasks, each with a status (e.g., "Done") and a "Component adoption" status (e.g., "No"). The board is filtered by "label: 'Type: Page'" and shows 147 items. The interface includes a search bar, a filter menu, and a "Save" button.

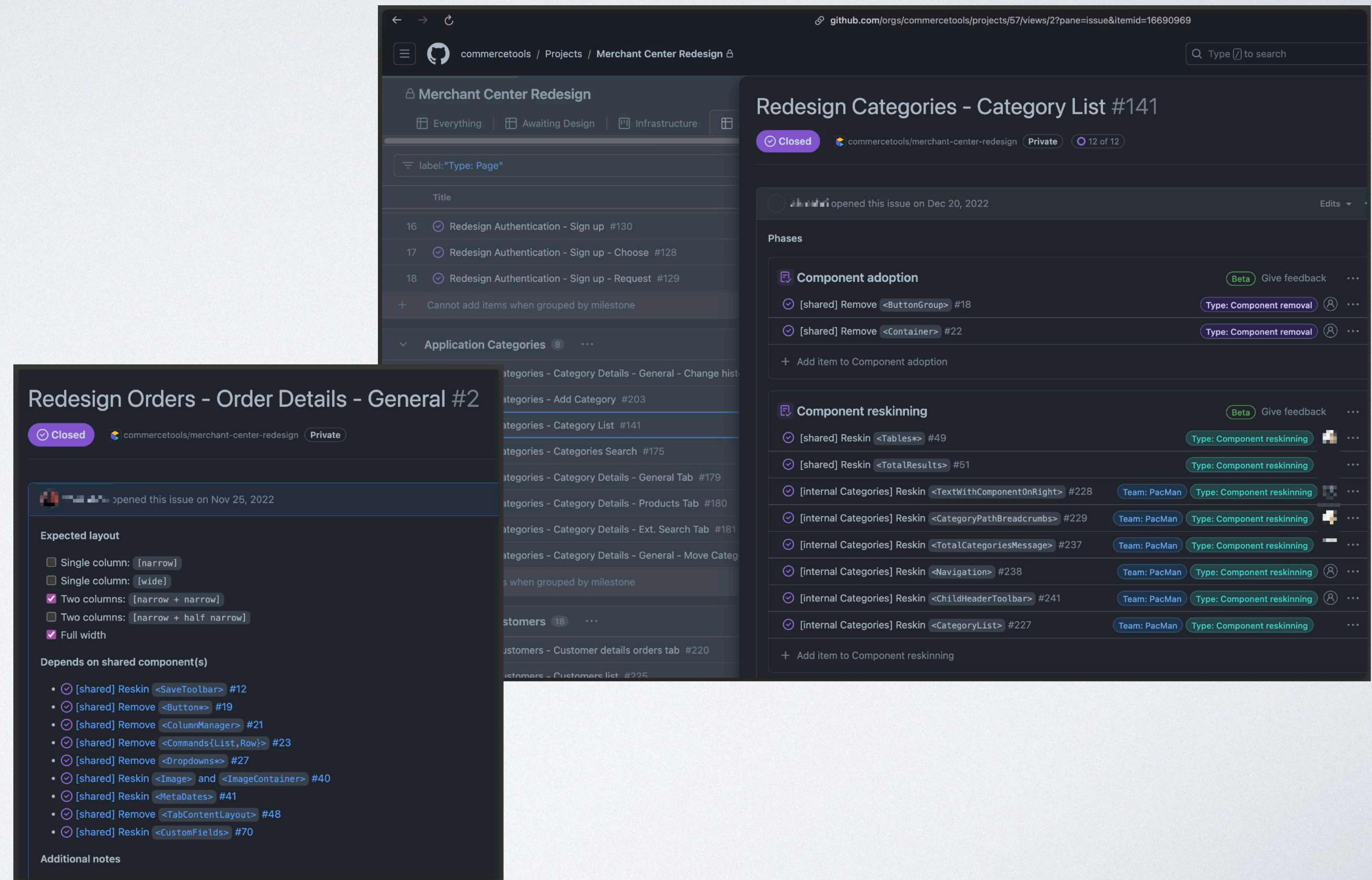
Title	Milestone	Assignees	Status	Component adoption
Application Account 12				
1 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications #61	Application Account		Done	No
2 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Configuration List #62	Application Account		Done	No
3 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Details #63	Application Account		Done	No
4 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Installation List #64	Application Account		Done	No
5 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Custom Applications > Installation Details #65	Application Account		Done	No
6 Redesign Account - Organization Details - Settings #60	Application Account		Done	No
7 Redesign Account - Profile #53	Application Account		Done	No
8 Redesign Account - Projects #55	Application Account		Done	No
9 Redesign Account - Organizations #56	Application Account		Done	No
10 Redesign Account - Organization Details - Teams #57	Application Account		Done	No
11 Redesign Account - Organization Details - Team Details - Members #58	Application Account		Done	No
12 Redesign Account > Organization Details > Team Details > Permissions #59	Application Account		Done	Done
Cannot add items when grouped by milestone				
Application Audit Log 2				
13 Redesign Dashboard - Main Page #120	Application Audit Log		Done	Done
14 Redesign Audit Log - Main Page #119	Application Audit Log		Done	Done
Cannot add items when grouped by milestone				
Application Authentication 4				
15 Redesign Authentication - Login #125	Application Authenticati...		Done	No
16 Redesign Authentication - Sign up #130	Application Authenticati...		Done	No
17 Redesign Authentication - Sign up - Choose #128	Application Authenticati...		Done	No

ENABLE SELF MANAGEMENT

Why

Avoid overload

- Plan work where it is executed
- Give the building blocks to create similarity
- Keep it lightweight
 - it's not a purpose in itself



ENGINEERING SPOKESPERSON

Role of the Engineering Spokesperson

Tobias Deekens edited this page on Dec 15, 2022 · 9 revisions

Edit

Why this role exists

1. Aligning cross-team efforts comes at a high communication cost.
 - This communication can be synchronous or asynchronous depending on what has to be communicated.
2. Successful communication requires context
 - Context is hard to maintain if communication parties change.
3. The redesign is expected to have similar decisions to be made.
 - The linear cost of similar decisions being made multiple times by different people can be avoided.

As a result the Merchant Center Redesign requests each team to elect a spokesperson on the engineering side. This spokesperson should be ideally consistent throughout the redesign work and not change.

Responsibilities of the role

1. Being a singular communication point towards a team for any engineering discussions around the redesign for PM and UX
2. Communicate engineering complexities of the redesign towards the team and to the group of spokespeople
3. Foster aligning in terms of engineering efforts within the team by learning of other teams
4. Attend bi-weekly or weekly sync meetings with other spokespeople of the initiative

What this role is *not*

1. The owner of the successful redesign of a given product domain
2. The only engineer working on the redesign in a given team
3. Somebody asked to make UX or priority decisions in regards to questions around the redesign
4. Always has to be a FE Chapter ambassador

Pages 6

- Research report
- GitHub Board
- Roadmap
- Final screens
- Guides and rules

Clone this wiki locally

<https://github.com/commercet>

Why

Create community and alignment

- Each team elects a spokesperson
- Act as a communication hub for team
- Clearly defined ins and outs for responsibilities
- Collaborate more closely with them

SPIKE TASKFORCES

Why

Fail early and define path for others

- Practice working together in small groups and share knowledge
- Experiment and establish patterns
- Make things easier for anybody to follow

Engineering Proof of Concepts

Tobias Deekens edited this page on Dec 1, 2022 · 1 revision

Why we do Proof of Concepts (PoCs)

Different areas of the redesign have different ambiguities on the engineering side. We want to discover or [Unknown Unknowns](#) as soon as possible. This allows us to ensure that we discover as little unknowns during a time when more people and teams get involved.

Scope of a PoC

A PoC for engineering in our redesign should be:

1. Focused on an area we feel uneasy about
2. Time-boxed aimed to discover as much as possible in a given time frame
3. Not having the intend to be merged and/or shipped

An ideal PoC should last around 1-3 days and be carried out by one engineer. Ideally engineers of different teams should be involved to start to spread knowledge and familiarity of changes needed for the redesign early.

Examples of possible PoCs

Reskinning a component

During the course of the redesign we have a [Component reskinning](#) phase in which we need to visually change a component behind a feature flag to match the new redesign.

Reskinning a component and having essentially two visual looks of it is something we have rarely done. For `ui-kit` and `app-kit` components we have been doing it for e.g. form pages and will for the table and inputs (among more components). However, we also have to reskin our *oldest legacy components*. We want to early identify how we can do this to be quick and easy to clean up.

Component adoption

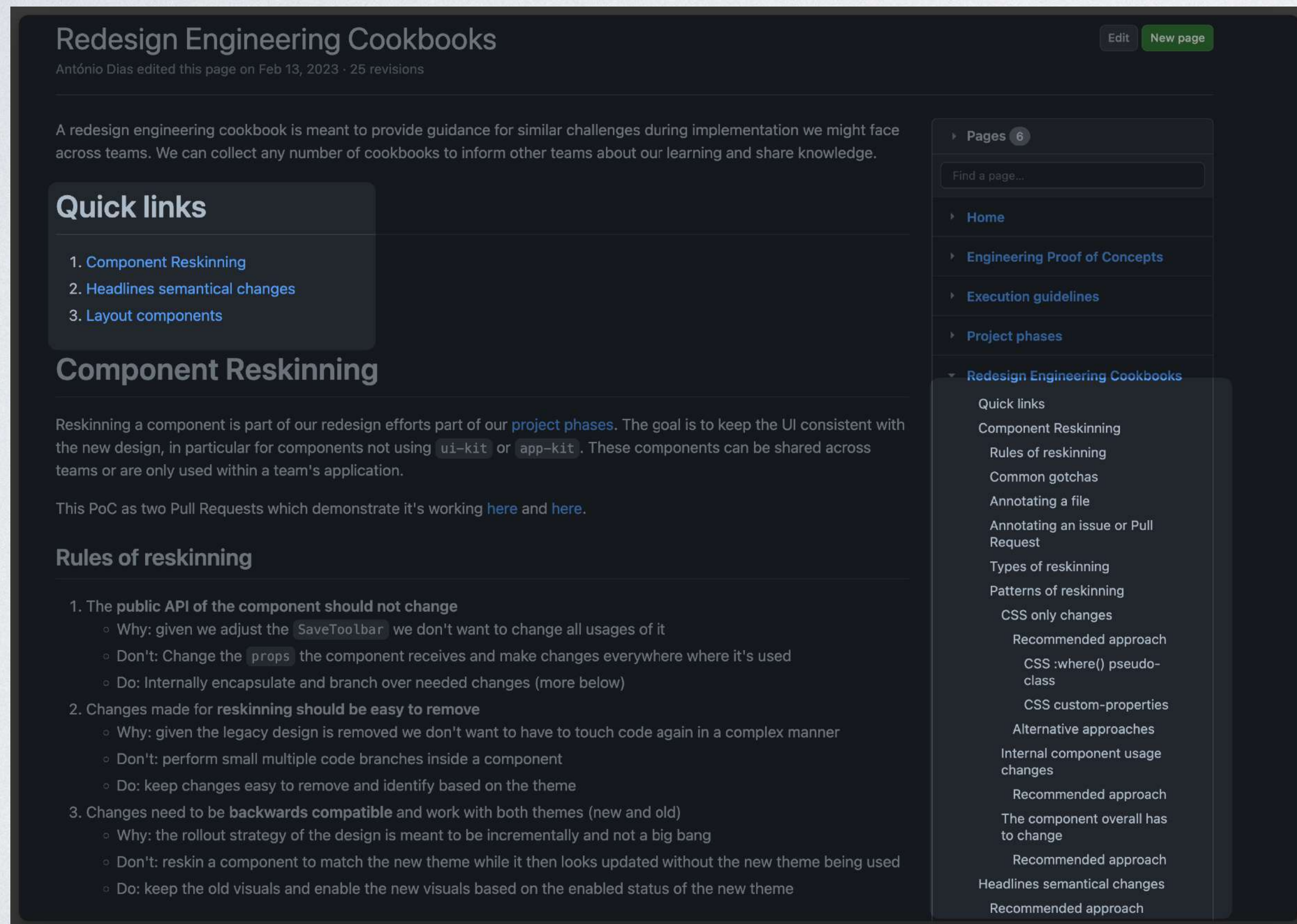
Pages 6

- [Research](#)
- [GitHub Bc](#)
- [Roadmap](#)
- [Final scre](#)
- [Guides ar](#)

Clone this wiki

<https://gitl>

ENGINEERING COOKBOOKS



Why

Shorten time to contribution


- Outcome of Spike Taskforce's
- Centrally defined and working patterns
- Stepwise and engineering focussed
- Open for improvements and collectively iterated upon

WEEKLY DIGEST


Why

Positivity and momentum building

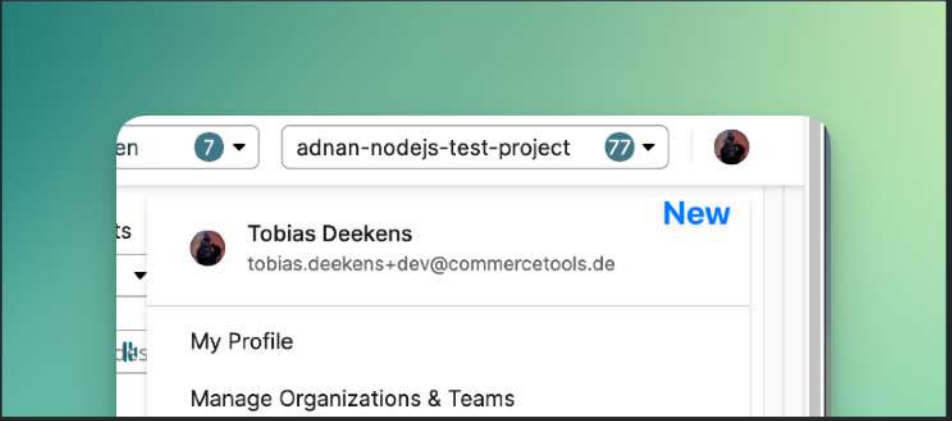
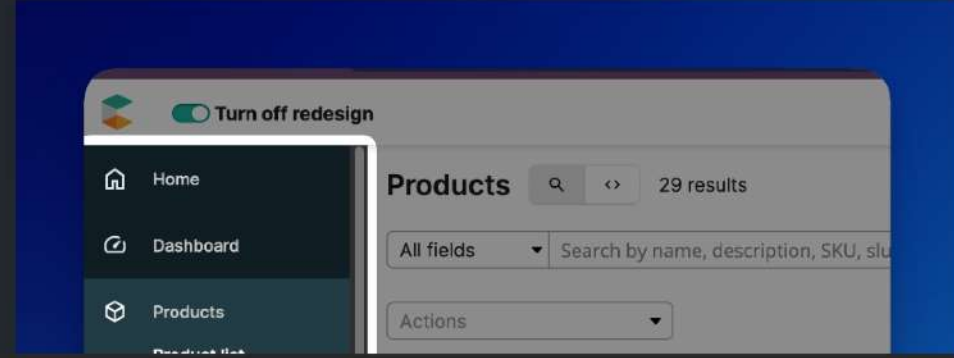
- Every Friday at 3PM CET
- Celebrating progress visually
- Show progress like product releases
- Radiate outwards - publish almost obnoxiously

 **tdeekens** on Dec 22, 2022 Maintainer Author

Weekly Digest of Week 51 (🎄 edition)

1. We managed to collect **135 page** issues in our GitHub Board and are about 90%  with [Impact Analysis](#)
 - Massive 🙌 to anybody who contributed. We are close to **200** issues in total. This helps us to align, understand and share work on the redesign
 - In doing so we managed to link many shared components to page knowing where they are used like [here for our Toolbar](#)
2. We released the Merchant Center App Kit and UI Kit
 - 🍷 Through UI Kit the inputs and data table manager and soon the stamps are now available in the new design
 - 🍷 In App Kit the user menu and nav bar have been made available in the new theme
3. We discussed on an [RFC](#) on our to be implemented Page content layout components
 - There even was a PoC in a Codesandbox you can toy around with [here](#)
4. We added a [new view](#) to our GitHub Board for shared work
 - Issues are grouped by "Visual Importance" and their "Usage frequency" aiming to guide us which components to reskin or remove first when working through them starting January
5. 🛠️ We finished the rollout of a redesigned welcome page (inside the `application-fallback`) while adding a more clear "Home" button for access
 - The welcome page is sensitive to your role in the project your view (if you're an admin or not)
6. The Merchant Center is only tables we hear? Our table is now also available in a new design through our theme switcher
7. Last but not least we have an [open](#) `#mc-redesign-engineering-spokespeople` Slack channel and started to enjoy collaborating

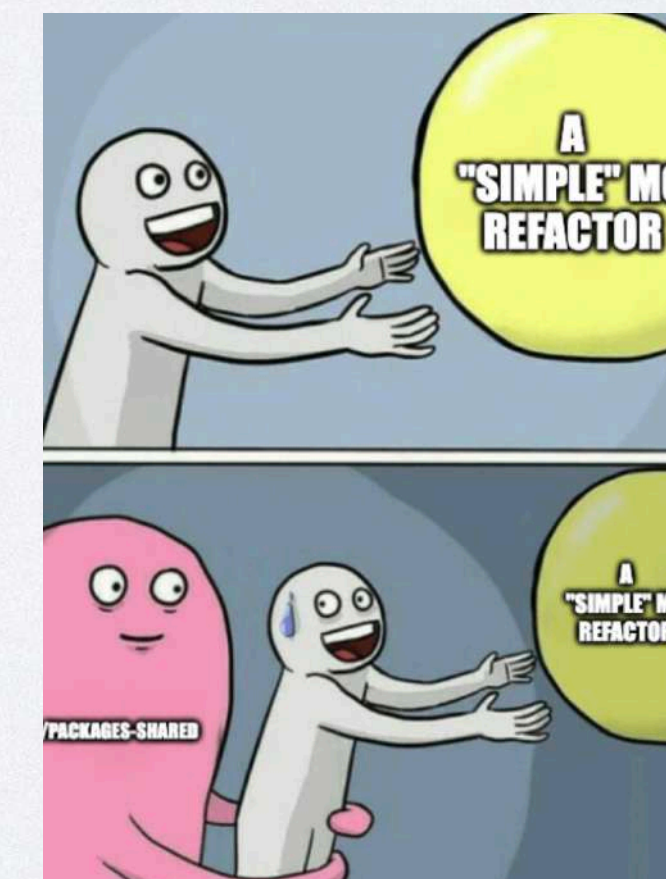
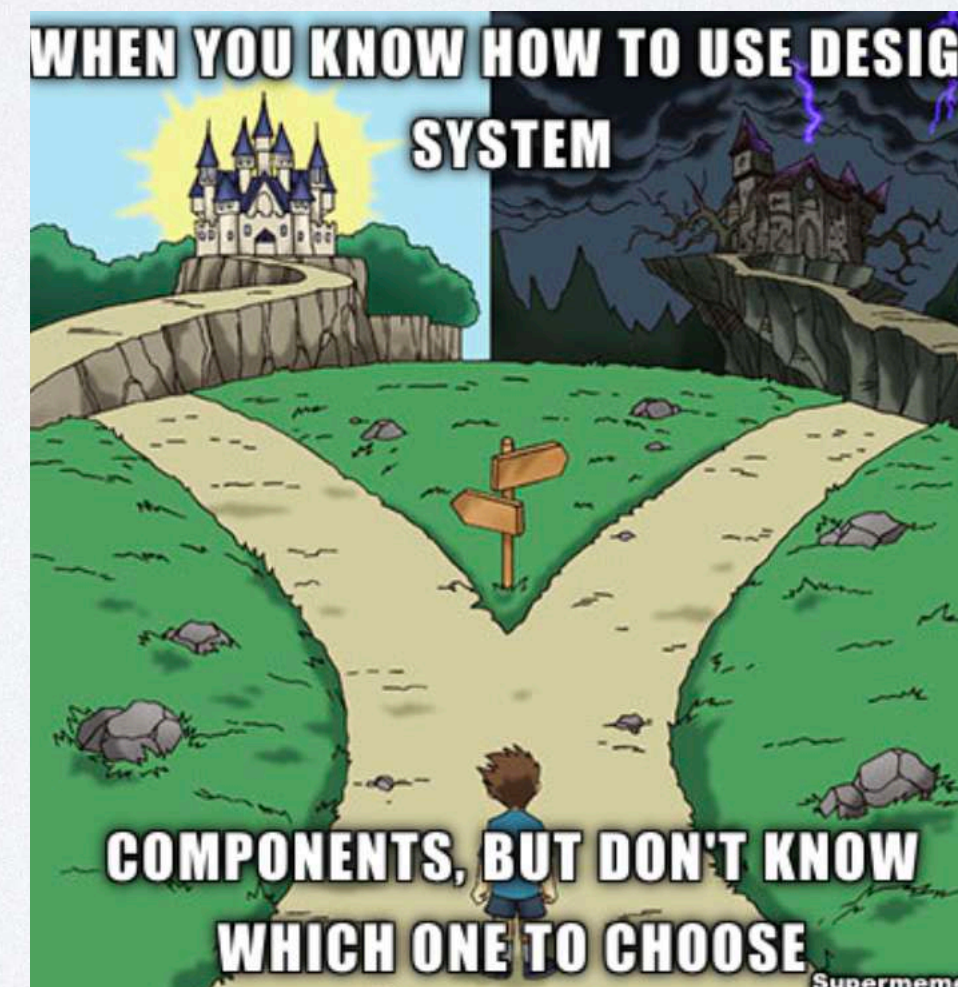
With all of that: Merry x-mas and a happy new year (🎄, 🍷, 🎁). In January we will transition into our second and third phase in [Component Adoption](#) and [Component reskinning](#).



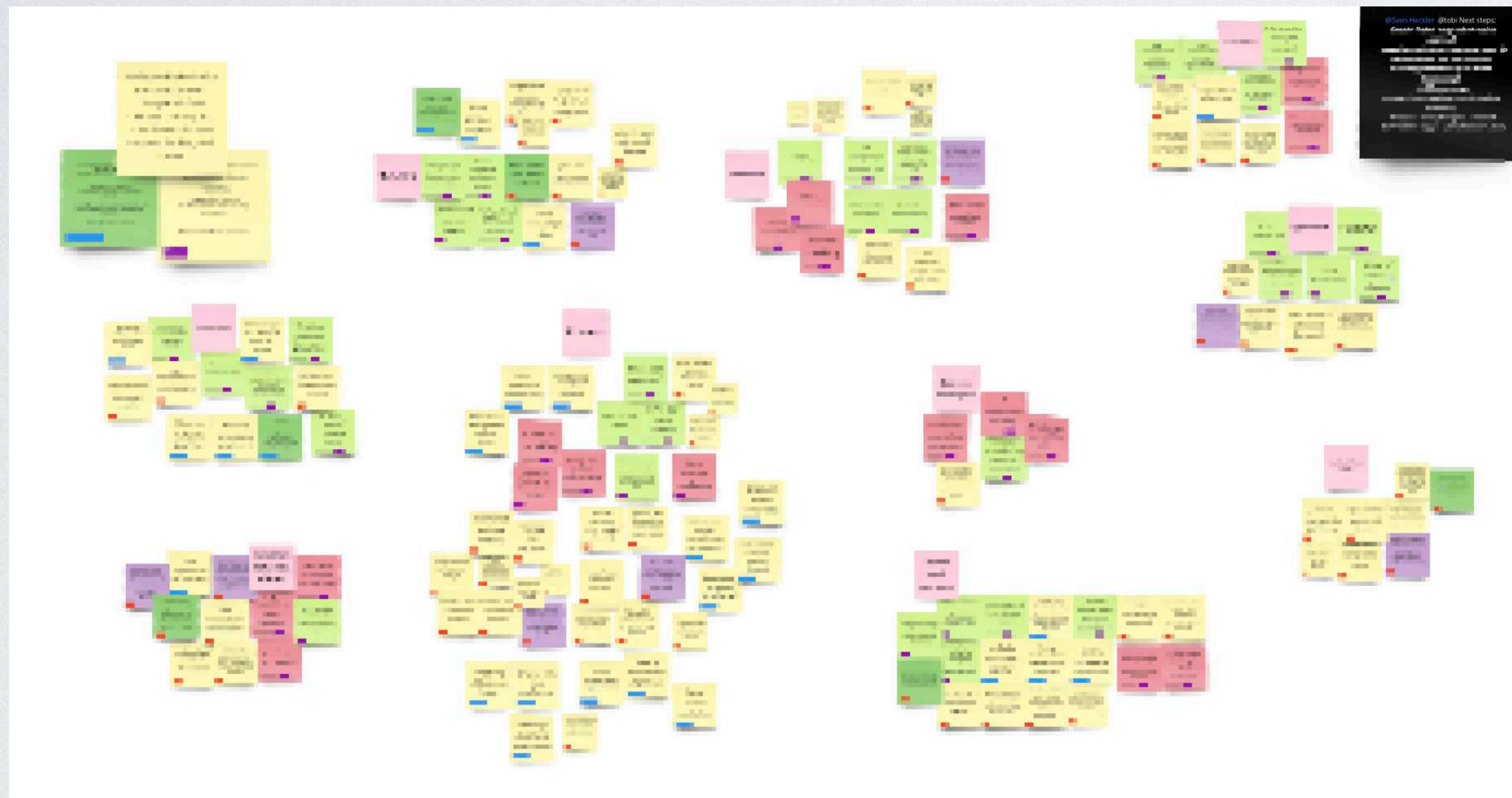
CELEBRATION

Why Laugh about the past

- Open to all contributors no matter the role
- Remote event including quiz and gifts
- Session on designing Memes reflecting the project



RETROSPECTIVE



Why

Learn for the future

- Dedicated retrospective with each group
 - Spokespeople, Design & Leads
- Aggregation all all retrospectives into one with help of Agile Coach
- Public and vulnerable blog post of what we learned

RESUMING PROJECT IN NUMBERS

35 committers

Engineering Managers joined the fun

~450 PRs

all linked

353 tickets

not in JIRA

Public announcement

Blog posts

2142 theme altercations

Gradual release with a feature flag

Automate, automate,

automate

across 587 files

PERSONAL LEARNINGS

- Anticipate emotional tax —
- Project Management is a people business —
- Momentum positivity reinforces progress —
- Give structure and trust in execution —

A SIDESHOW ALWAYS EXIST

- Global and local priorities can contradict ——
- Piggyback project to reduce technical debt ——
- Sometimes, somebody has to do somebody else's work ——
- Frequent status updates cost time and slow down ——

HAPPY ENDING

We released - just by a week late

Using a few ingredients to make the project successful

We defined how we run cross-team projects



Q&A

