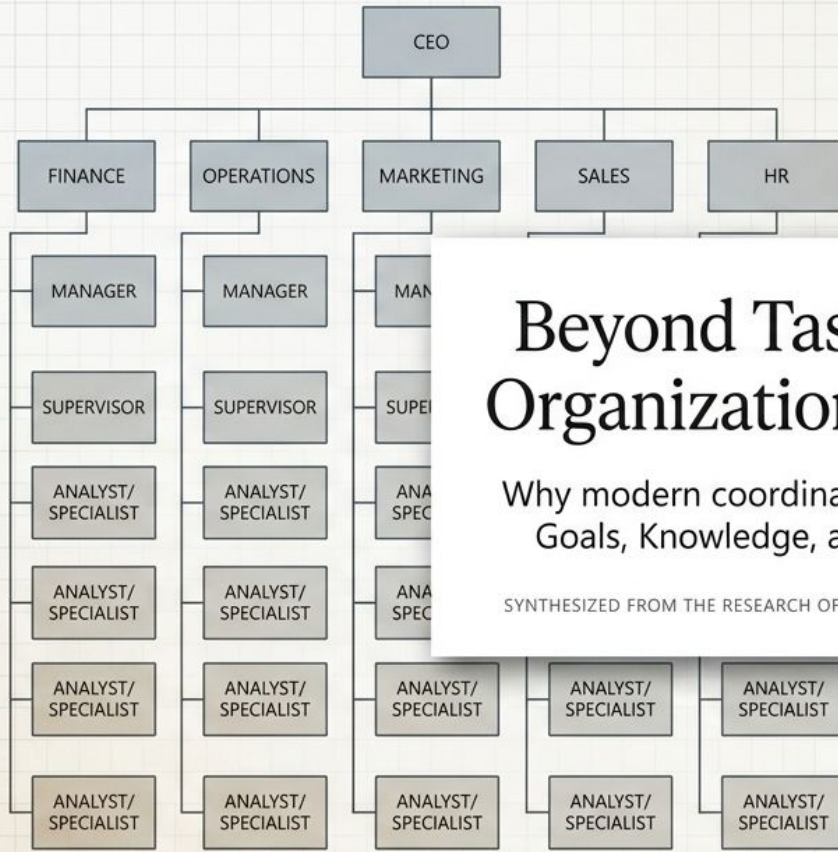




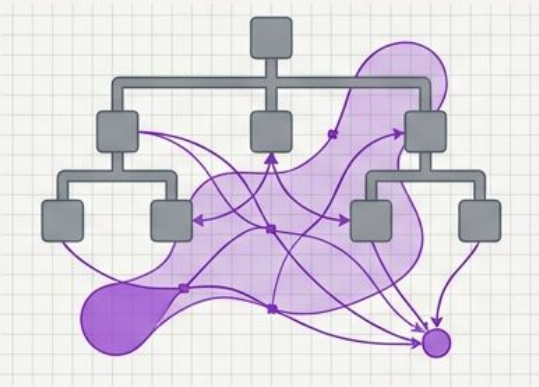
Beyond Tasks: Redesigning Organizations for Complexity

Why modern coordination requires structuring around Goals, Knowledge, and the people who hold both.

SYNTHESIZED FROM THE RESEARCH OF RAVEENDRAN, SILVESTRI, GULATI (2020) AND WESTOVER

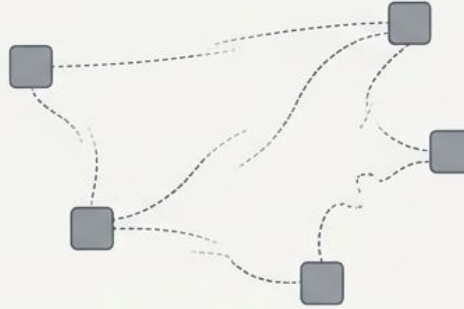
The modern coordination crisis is a dependency problem, not a workflow problem.

Digital Transformation



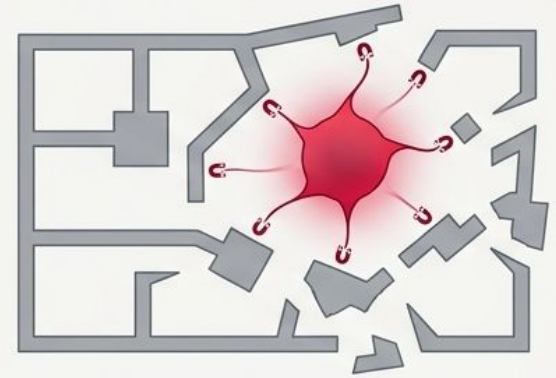
Engineering, product, and commercial units must collaborate instantly across traditional boundaries. The org chart cannot anticipate these required connections.

Hybrid Work



The post-pandemic shift has scrambled the implicit, informal handoffs that used to happen naturally in physical offices.

AI Integration



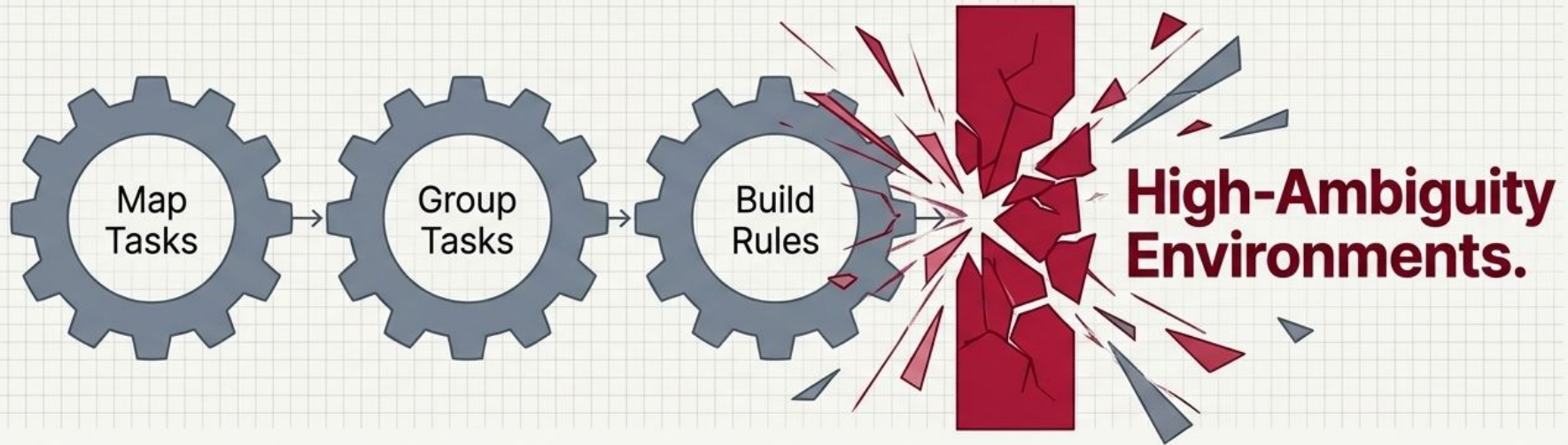
Artificial intelligence is reshaping job boundaries and tasks far faster than human resources can rewrite job descriptions.

The real challenge is not WHAT work needs to happen, but HOW the people doing the work depend on each other.

The classic playbook relies on an assumption that no longer holds true.

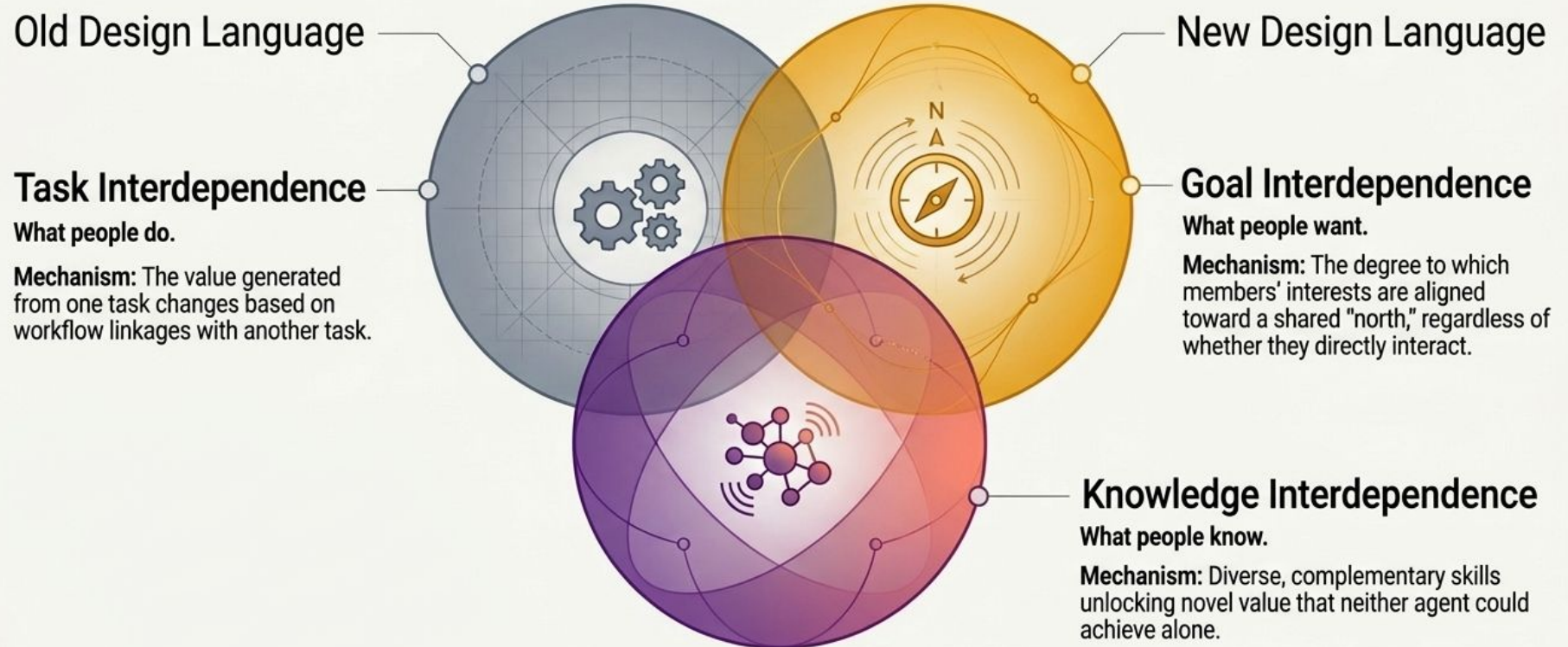
20th-Century Playbook

For nearly a century (from March & Simon to Thompson), organizational design relied on a single, critical premise: Managers understand the work well enough to specify the task structure before anyone opens a laptop.



In digitally mediated, knowledge-intensive settings, task-centric design pulls the wrong lever.
You cannot map the tasks of tomorrow using the organizational chart of yesterday.

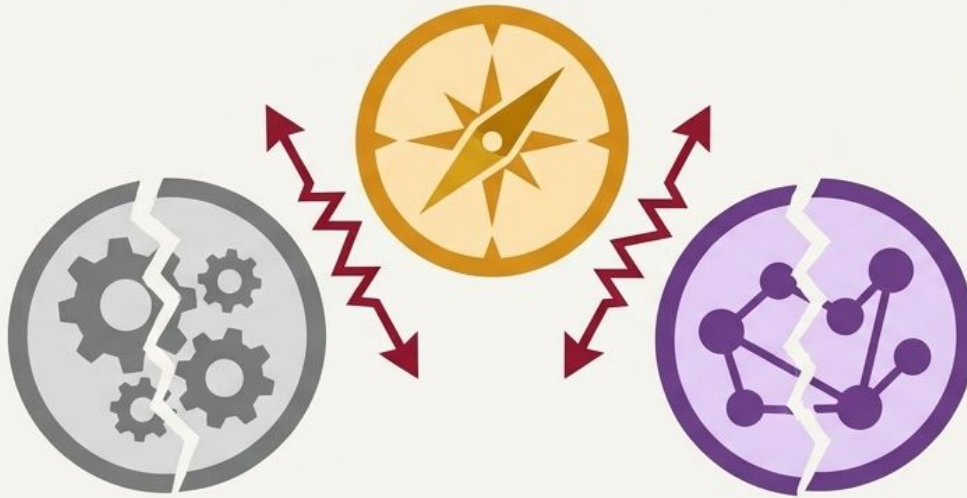
Organizations are bound together by three distinct forces of interdependence.



Diagnosing the environment dictates which design levers to pull.

	Classic Contexts	Contemporary Contexts
Predictability	High.	Dynamic / Ambiguous.
Task Clarity	Well-defined.	Emergent and shifting.
Design Timing	Designed by management BEFORE work starts.	Co-designed by agents DURING the work.
Dominant Design Lever	Task Interdependence 	Goal & Knowledge Interdependence 
Real-World Examples	Assembly lines, transaction processing, standard audits.	Software development, R&D, strategic consulting.

The severe consequences of structural misalignment.



Organizational Impact

- **Siloed Behavior:** Functional structures fail to collaborate because local incentives reinforce old boundaries (Gulati).
- **The Mirroring Violation:** When organizational architecture and product architecture diverge, development costs and defect rates soar.



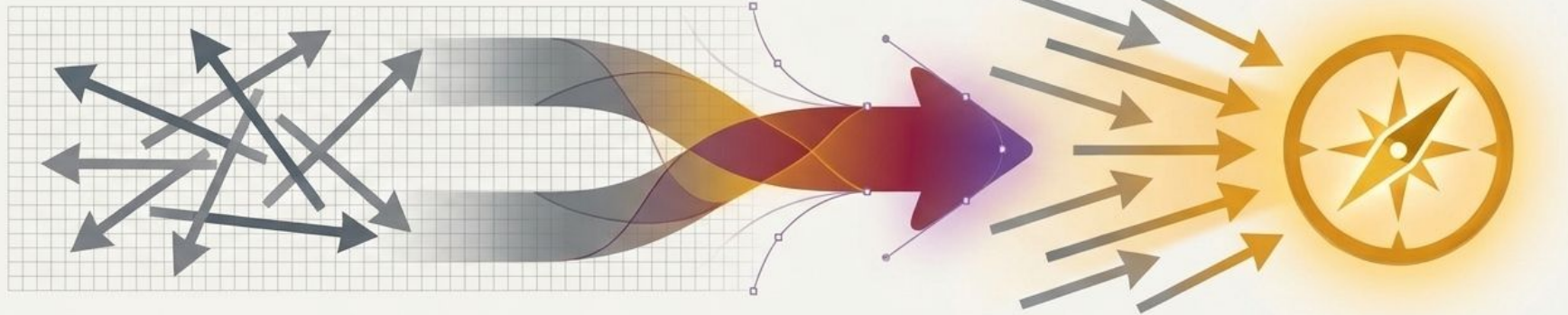
Individual Impact

- **Demotivation:** High 'received' interdependence (waiting on others) reduces experienced autonomy.
- **Meaning Void:** Lack of line-of-sight to broader organizational purpose destroys engagement.
- **Job Crafting Frustration:** Possessing knowledge beyond the formal job description without structural permission to apply it.

Lever 1: When tasks are unknown, goals act as the organizational compass.

Goal interdependence provides the motivational glue that binds agents together when workflows cannot be mapped.

Task Ambiguity



Actionable Interventions

Shift Incentive Breadth

Move from narrow, individual task metrics to broad mission-level metrics.

Layer Intentionality

Weight collective goals heavily when collaboration is required; avoid pure "hybrid" signals that confuse teams.

Purpose as a Substitute for Rules

Use compelling shared narratives (Simons' "beliefs systems") to orient agents toward complementary actions without prescriptive task specification.

Engineering Goal Interdependence at Scale: Haier Group

Case Study Card



Context: A 70,000-person global appliance manufacturer seeking rapid innovation without bureaucratic stagnation.

The Lever:

- Dismantled the traditional hierarchy entirely, reorganizing into thousands of autonomous micro-enterprises (MEs).
- Implemented the philosophy of Rendanheyi—tying frontline employee pay directly to created user value.

The Outcome: Replaced top-down task management with radical Goal Interdependence. MEs self-organized around market opportunities, driving massive revenue growth and innovation. Goals dictated the structure, not managers.

Lever 2: Configuring Knowledge Interdependence to spark novel value.

Designing for WHO works with whom when the work itself is ill-defined. The goal is complementarity—where diverse skills produce outcomes neither could achieve alone.

Design for Complementarity

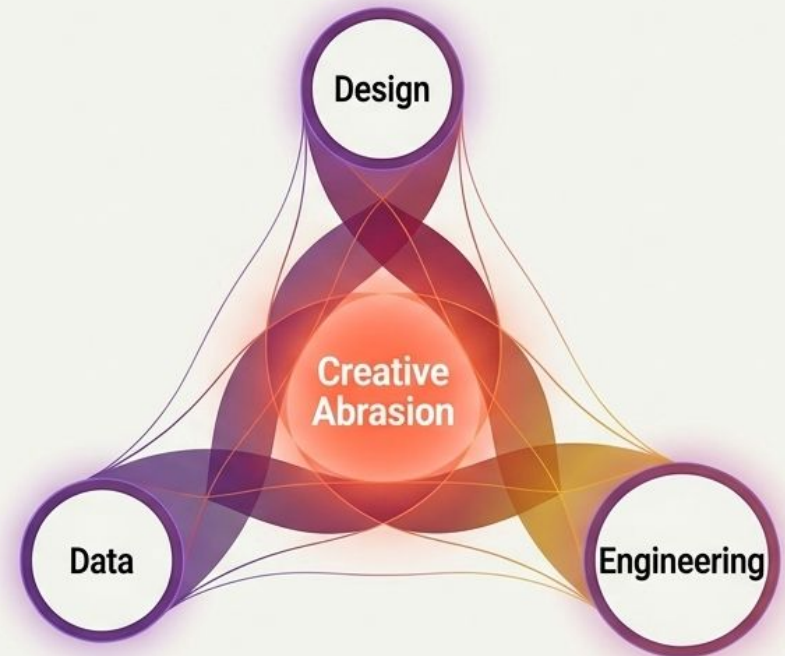
Compose teams for maximum knowledge cross-pollination, not mere task coverage.

Collocate to Reduce Friction

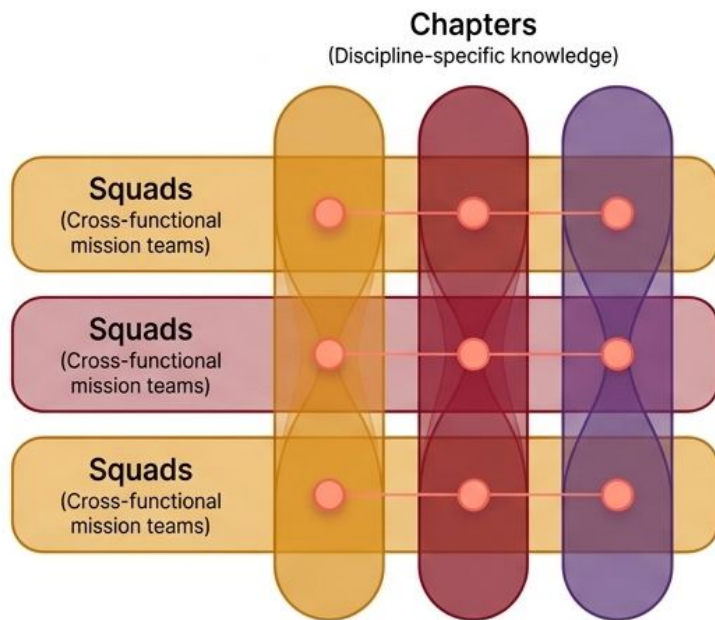
Place interdependent agents in physical or digital proximity to accelerate the exchange of tacit knowledge.

Invest in Transactive Memory

Build systems where groups have a shared awareness of “who knows what,” allowing them to coordinate dynamically.



Configuring Knowledge Flow: Spotify's Squads and Chapters.



Case Study Card



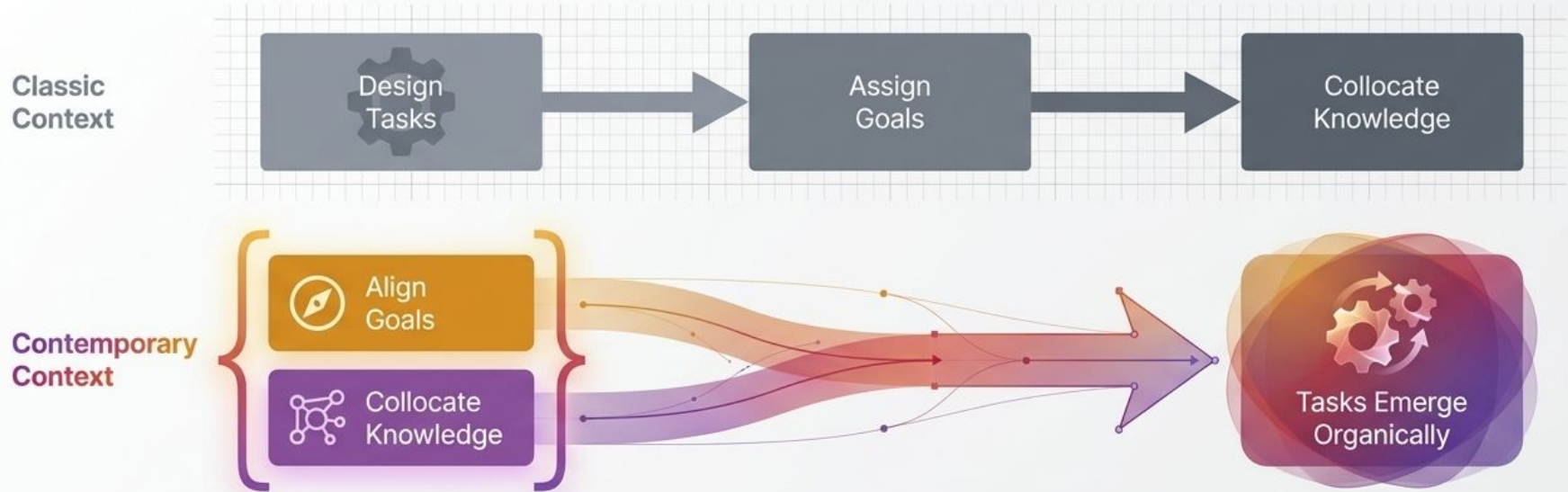
Context: Scaling rapid product innovation in a highly dynamic software development environment.

The Lever: Created SQUADS (cross-functional teams collocating complementary knowledge like design and engineering for specific missions) intersected by CHAPTERS (sustaining discipline-specific knowledge flow across the company).

The Catch: Where Spotify struggled was in cross-squad coordination. By granting vast autonomy (Knowledge collocation) without installing equally robust shared goals across units, fragmentation occurred.

Rule: *Autonomy without shared Goal Interdependence leads to silos.*

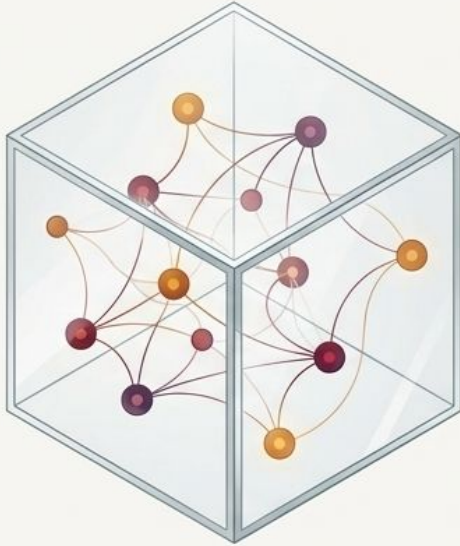
The Emergent Result: Do not design tasks. Create conditions for them to emerge.



Case Snippet: Cleveland Clinic

Shifted from task-based departments (Surgery) to knowledge-based institutes (Heart Center). By aligning goals (patient outcomes) and collocating diverse knowledge (specialists), completely new, highly efficient clinical task pathways organically emerged that management could never have mapped in advance.

Advanced Levers: Epistemic predictability and role fluidity.



Epistemic Interdependence (Bridgewater)

The degree to which your actions depend on predicting a colleague's behavior. Radical transparency, recorded meetings, and open feedback create rich "predictive knowledge." When you know how colleagues think, you coordinate effortlessly without endless meetings.

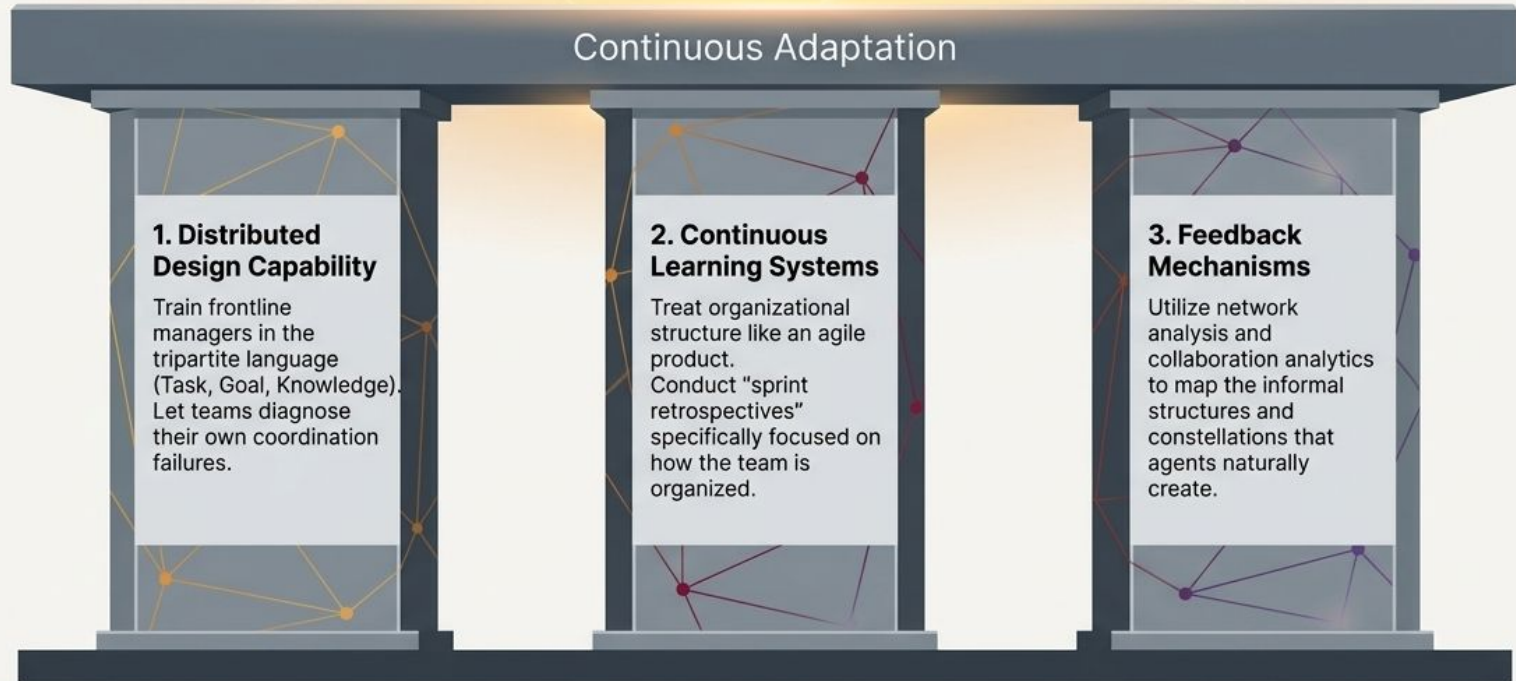


Role Interdependence (Mayo Clinic)

Roles are starting points, not ceilings. At Mayo Clinic, deeply embedded patient goals create a culture where physicians fluidly consult across specialties. Collaboration happens through role expectations, not strict task-based coordination mechanisms.

Building long-term adaptive capacity across the enterprise

Organization design is no longer a static exercise for the C-Suite; it is a continuous capability.



Recalibrating the psychological contract.



The Classic Contract (Passive Recipient)

- ✓ Execute clearly specified, predefined tasks.
- ✓ Exchange labor for defined, predictable rewards.
- ✓ Wait for management to map the workflow.



The Contemporary Contract (Active Co-Designer)

- ✓ Rewarded for initiative, knowledge development, and collaborative sensemaking.
- ✓ Expected to actively shape and craft roles over time.
- ✓ Evaluated on contributions to shared goals and knowledge creation, not just rigid task execution.

The Executive Mandates for Modern Organizational Design

1 Diagnose before designing.
Identify the true binding constraint. Misaligned incentives (Goals) cannot be fixed by redrawing reporting lines (Tasks).

2 Lead with Goals & Knowledge.  
In high ambiguity, do not map workflows. Set the compass and gather the complementary experts first.

3 Treat tasks as endogenous. 
Allow workflows and task division to emerge organically from agent collaboration.

4 Build predictive knowledge.
Invest heavily in transparency, role clarity, and transactive memory so teams can anticipate actions effortlessly.

5 Design for evolution.
Today's optimal structure is tomorrow's constraint. Treat your organization design as a continuous, revisable experiment.