

The UNITE Approach to Collegial Learning

The UNITE Approach to Collegial Learning enables all colleagues of an organization to acquire new skills in a fast and efficient way and to do so on-the-job.

A part of the Digital Leadership Capability Management Reference Content: #DL-MS-OD-COS-CL.
More information on this model is [available here](#).

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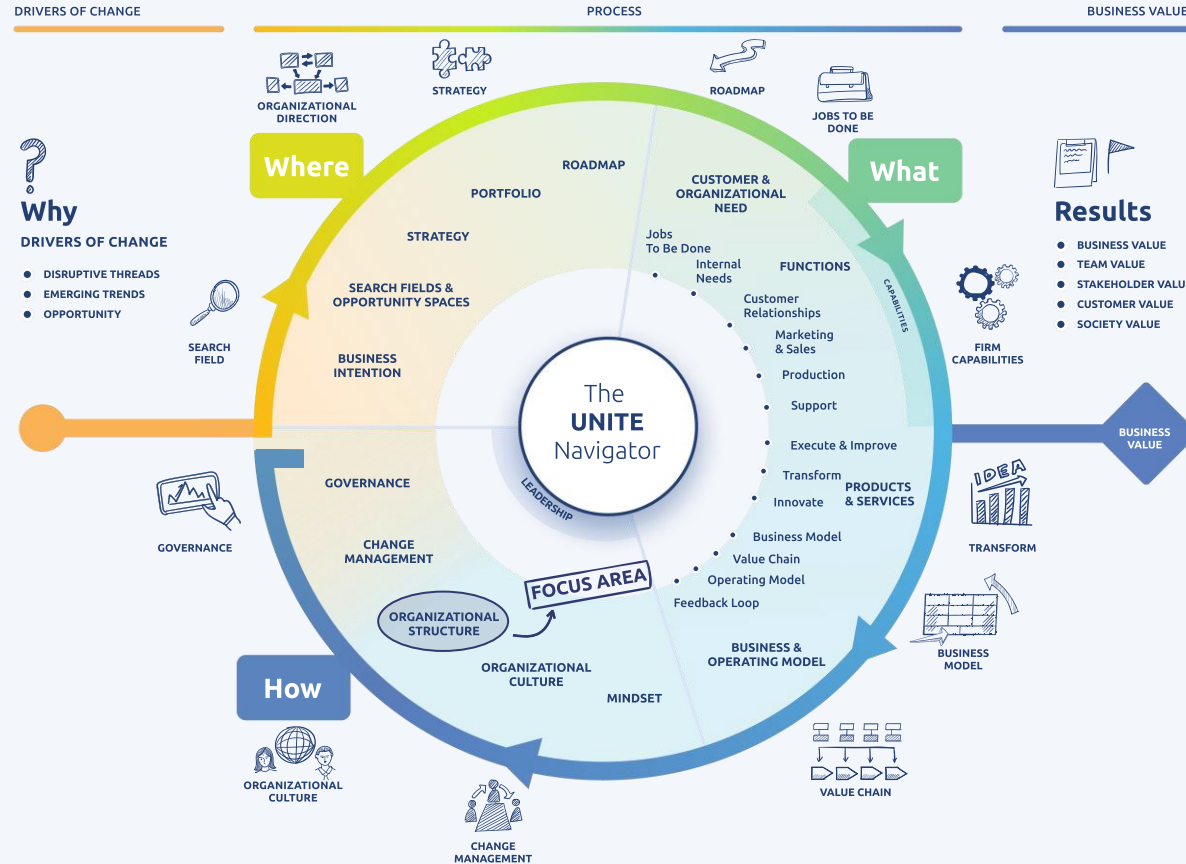
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THE UNITE NAVIGATOR – An overview and introduction to all UNITE models



- > The UNITE models are the by far largest library of innovation and transformation models on the Internet. They cover all areas of digital strategy, innovation, transformation as well as any related field.
- > The UNITE Navigator provides an introduction and overview of all digital-related fields.
- > As part of today's presentation, we will focus on *how circular organizations evolve and more particularly how we can enable collegial learning.*

Background to the UNITE Approach to Collegial Learning

Why we use it

To develop skills, classical learning as pure knowledge transfer, as practiced in most schools today, is not effective and ultimately insufficient.

Learning must be complemented with practical experience and application. This on-the-job training must be integrated into the organization to enable and support its growth.

How it works

In alternating steps, learning and application in everyday life and reflecting on the experience occur.

Through immediate application and mutual reflection in learning pairs, we manifest the experience and thus enable the long-term and sustainable development of skills.

This approach extends the learning success for the colleagues and leads to a joyful involvement of further skills.

What is the goal

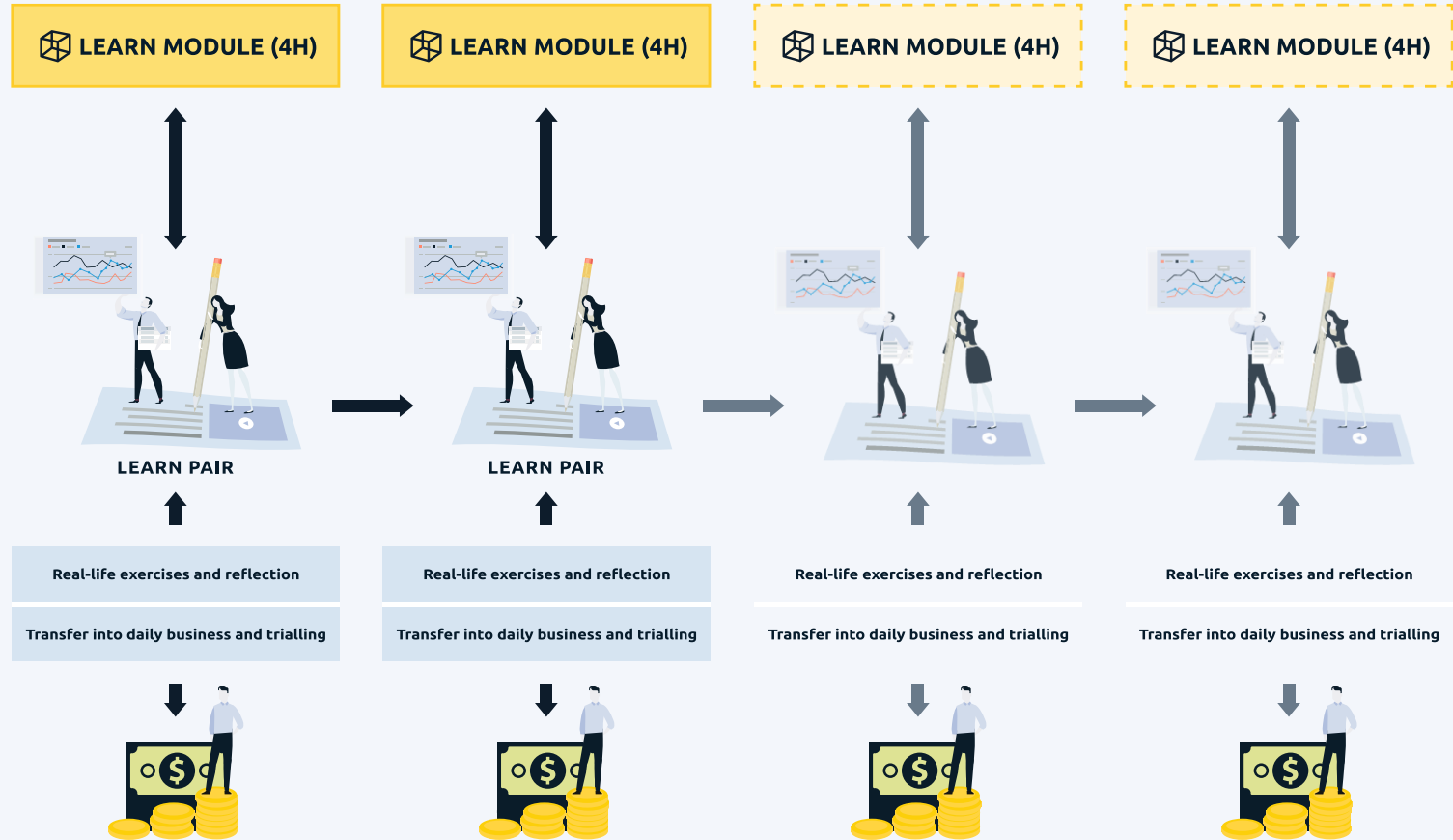
Furthering knowledge and application.

Organizations need a structure to acquire additional capabilities quickly and inexpensively.

Applying collegial learning, allows to turn away from the classical and very expensive school model and integrate the organic development into the organization.

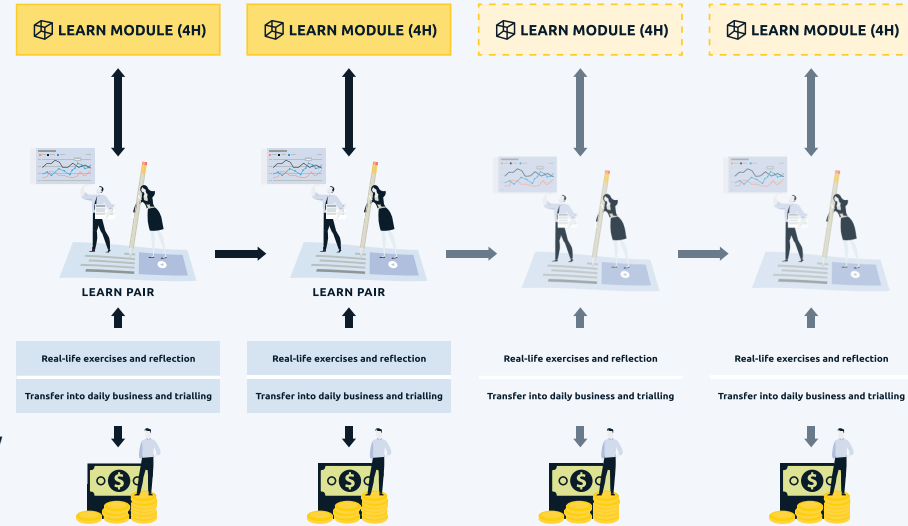
> Please read the [related chapter in the book](#) to fully understand the concept of Approach to Collegial Learning

THE UNITE APPROACH TO COLLEGIAL LEARNING



The challenge of learning and skills development

- > In a training workshop, knowledge can be transferred, and skills can be practiced. However, the most important skills only come about in practical action, in everyday work situations. Collegial learning combines these two aspects with the help of learning pairs and the work cycle of **learning → exercise and → reflection**:
- > **Learning module:** colleagues acquire knowledge either in workshops or independently through books, explanatory films, etc.
- > **Real-Life exercise and Reflection:** afterwards, learning pairs continually test, improve and integrate what they have learned with each other in an everyday work context.
- > This cycle will be **repeated as required**.
- > Colleagues continue to acquire knowledge in short workshops or independently (through books, training videos, online courses, etc.) or jointly (e.g., through traditional classroom training).
- > What has been learned is then **tested, improved and integrated into the everyday working context**.
- > **Colleagues jointly decide what they intend to improve upon** and what they consequently need to learn in order to improve or sustain their skills.



Background to the UNITE Approach to Collegial Learning

Learning module

Here is a typical schedule of a learning module:

- > Arrival and check-in
- > 1–3 theory units of 10–15 minutes each.
- > Practical exercises or demonstrations of a training situation using the roles: *trainees*, *representative* and *observer*.
- > Reflection on the experiences made and additions.
- > Preparing and agreeing how to apply what has been learned from the exercises to everyday work by the participants.

The crucial step is the preparation of the real-life exercise: learning pairs (or possibly small learning groups), meet regularly to apply what they have learned, observing and supporting each other.

Real-life exercise and reflection

The colleagues practice "on-the-job", collegially among themselves at a continuous learning pace. There is no trainer, leadership or supervisory role involved nor typically required.

- > One participant practices what he/she has learned in an everyday work situation while his/her learning partner observes him/her in order to be able to give feedback later.
- > The learning pair reflects together on the application during integration in a normal work context.
- > The learning pair collects the experience and questions in preparation for the next module.

Objective & context setting

The point is to try something out, no matter how small. Often colleagues take on too large a practice task; learning should not lead to overload.

Employees need permission to learn on the job. A clear message from the employer and the establishment of official small-time blocks in the daily work routine can help.

- > Please read the related chapter in the book to fully understand the concept of Circular Organizational Structure.

Comparison of Collegial Learning to Classical Trainings

Let's briefly go through the key differences between Collegial Learning and classical training as to highlight the benefits of Collegial Learning further:

- > Instead of multi-day events, there is a series of short, typically one- to four-hour highly focused training sessions led by the trainers.
- > Parallel learning groups (6 - 12 persons) are started with a time delay enabling the colleagues to catch-up on missed topics (due to illness, absenteeism, or vacation).
- > A host role is assigned to organize the exercise (setup of groups, scheduling of modules, room preparation, follow-up).
- > All persons involved in the change process take part, regardless of their respective hierarchical level, and learn collegially with each other on eye level.
- > Each of these mini-courses ideally has a single learning objective.
- > Instead of theoretical examinations, the participants discuss among themselves what they have understood, what they have not understood, what questions they still have, what their own thesis is, etc., and thus determine what needs to be repeated or deepened until it is sufficiently understood and internalized.
- > The same applies to the practical application: here, the trainees observe and, if necessary, evaluate each other, repeatedly comparing their own perceptions with those of others. This equally enables the group to get a feeling of how far everybody has evolved their abilities.
- > In the next module, the experiences made are taken up and reflected upon. The trainer has the opportunity to continuously enhance or consolidate topics of that module based on the reflection.

Typical learning content on the topic of communication

Working together in an organization with a high degree of self-organization requires highly mature communication skills.

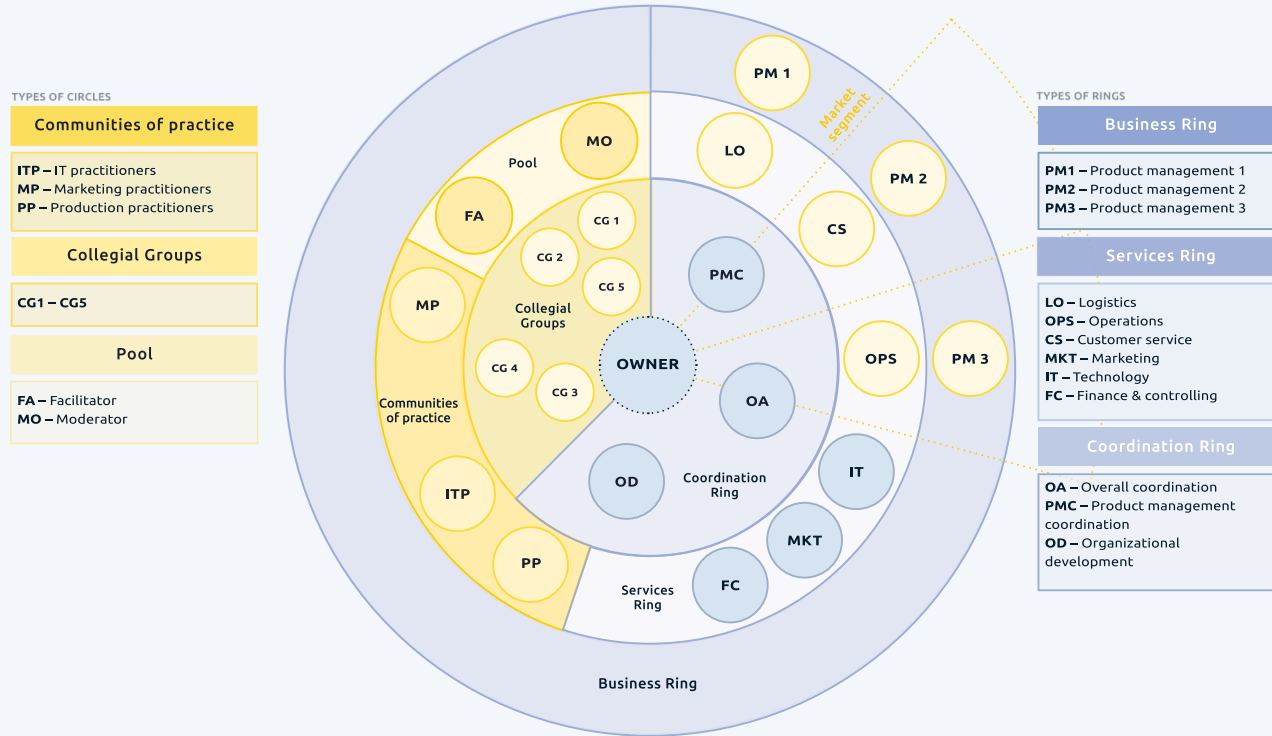
Those communication skills are essential for existing colleagues and those joining the organization in the future.

The following learning contents support the development of healthy communication and a supportive culture. You could run those when you launch a new organization or when new colleagues join:

- > "I" versus "you" messages
- > Active listening
- > Working feedback
- > Situational feedback
- > Team and conflict dynamics
- > Facilitation
- > Retrospectives

Related models

THE UNITE CIRCULAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Introducing the circular organizational structure

The circular organizational structure is an alternative to a classical pyramid organizational structure. It supports in particular agile organizations who are operating in fast-paced environments and allows to tap into the intelligence of all involved.

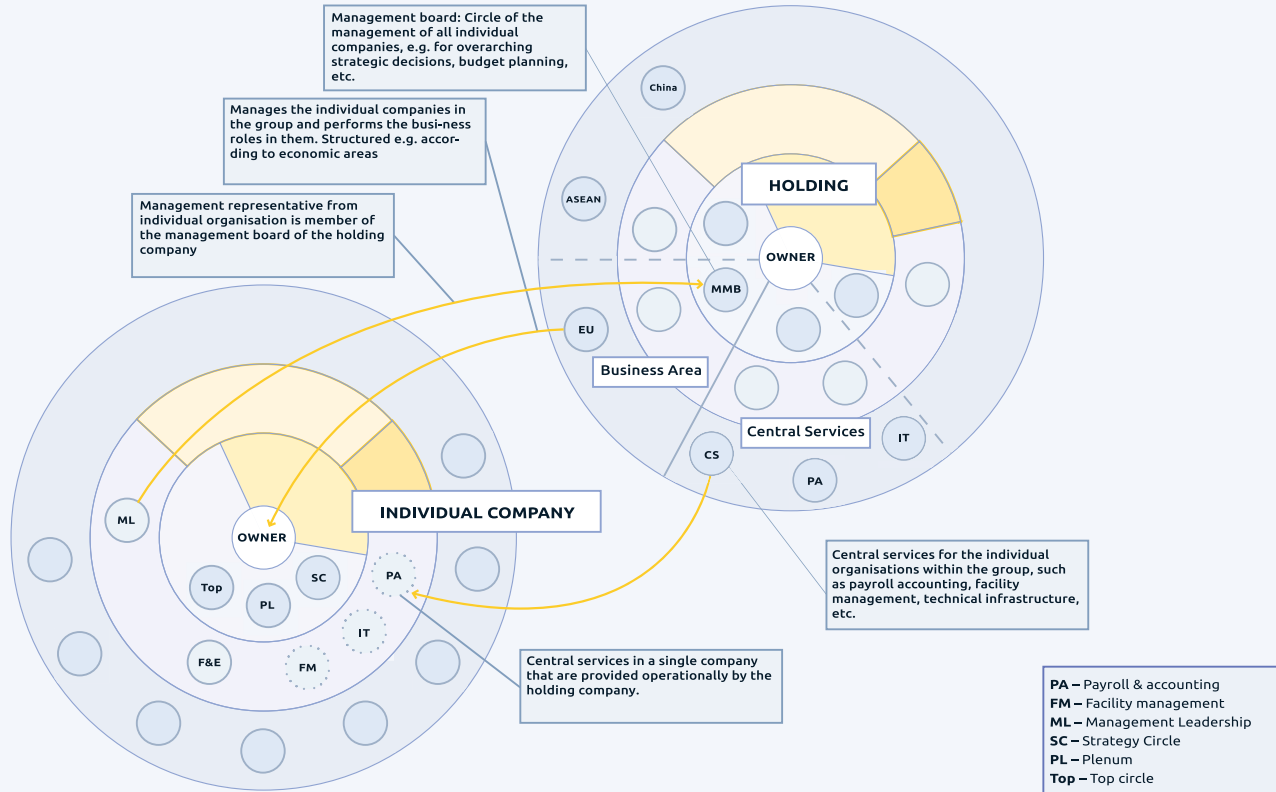


THE UNITE CIRCULAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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THE UNITE APPROACH TO SCALING THE CIRCULAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Scaling the circular organizational structure

Your business idea launched and grows and grows. Where to go from know, how can we scale and still keep the start-up culture, entrepreneurship and mindset alive. Look no further, visit the UNITE model "Scaling the circular organization".

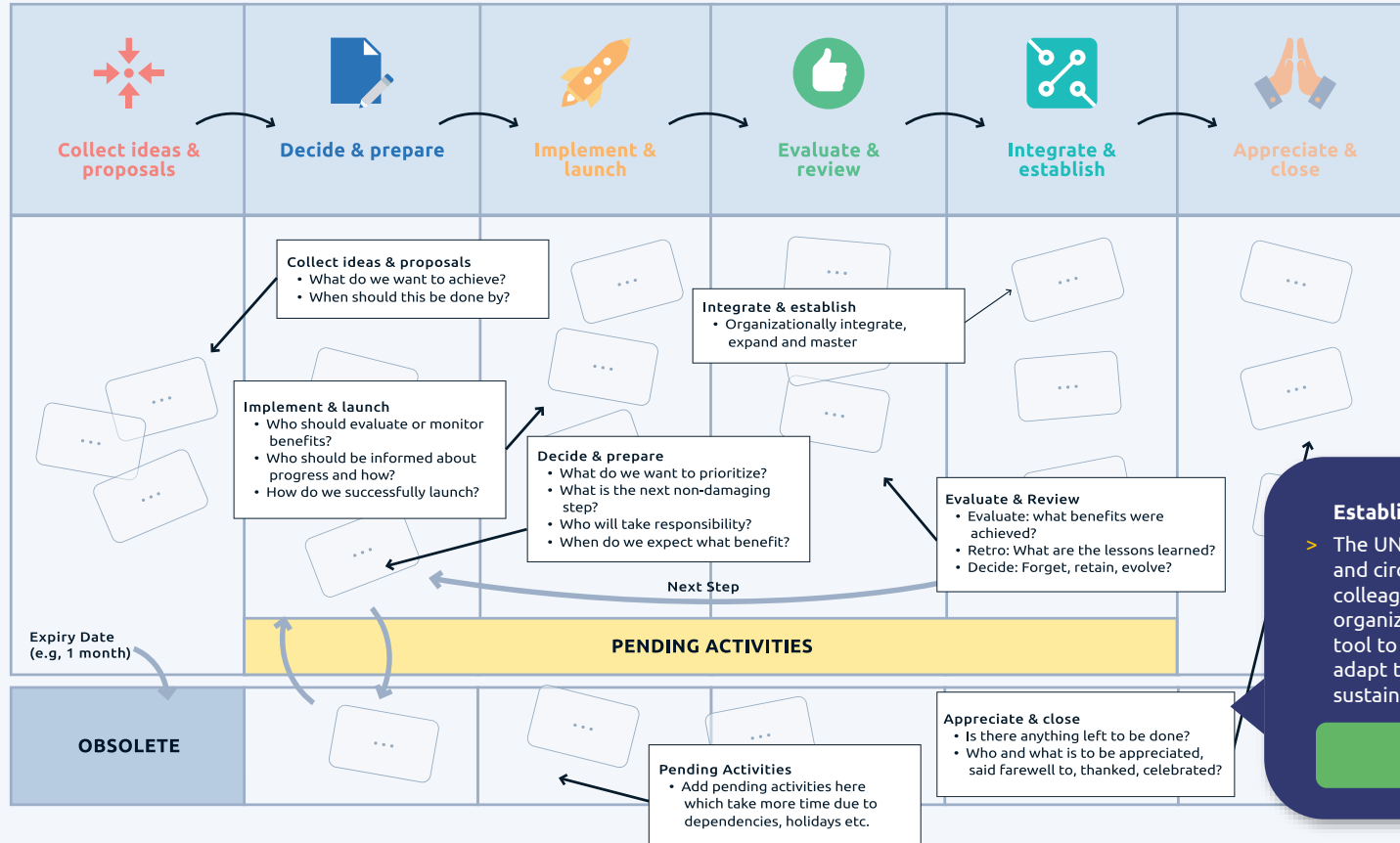


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THE UNITE COMPANY BOARD

**Establish collaboration between circles**

- > The UNITE Company Board is the way an agile and circular organization evolves. It allows all colleagues to step back and work "on the organization". The company board is a critical tool to help the organization to continuously adapt to the market as quickly and sustainably as possible.

**UNITE COMPANY BOARD**

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I have coached and advised over one hundred owners of traditional, family-owned businesses, international corporations, NGO's, C-level members and Boards of Directors. My mission is to empower people and activate their intrinsic motivation to radically simplify the complicated and uncertain path of change towards a living, thriving, self-learning and future-proof organization. My mandates includes coaching and advising of strategy development, leadership- and team development, and organizational transformation from classic hierarchical to self-governing, agile companies.

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Over 20 multi-million Euro & Dollar projects, 14 years abroad living in 11 countries, research and lectures at numerous European universities, 18 startups either co-founded or invested in, setup of over 20 companies, led over 1.000 workshops, numerous awards and always new impulses – this is Stefan F. Dieffenbacher. Led large scale projects & programs with multi-million-\$ impact for: BMW, BNP Paribas, Deutsche Telekom, Epson, Etihad Etisalat, Hubert Burda Media, IBM, Jaguar, Linde, Mobily, o2, Pfizer, Sapient, Sky, VNG, Vodafone, and others.

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**THE BOOK ABOUT HOW
TO CREATE INNOVATION**

HOW TO CREATE INNOVATION is a practical, comprehensive, OpenSource guide for successful innovation and digital transformation. The UNITE initiative and movement, supported by a global team of industry leaders and innovation researchers, aims to spark a revolution in global innovation and transformation.

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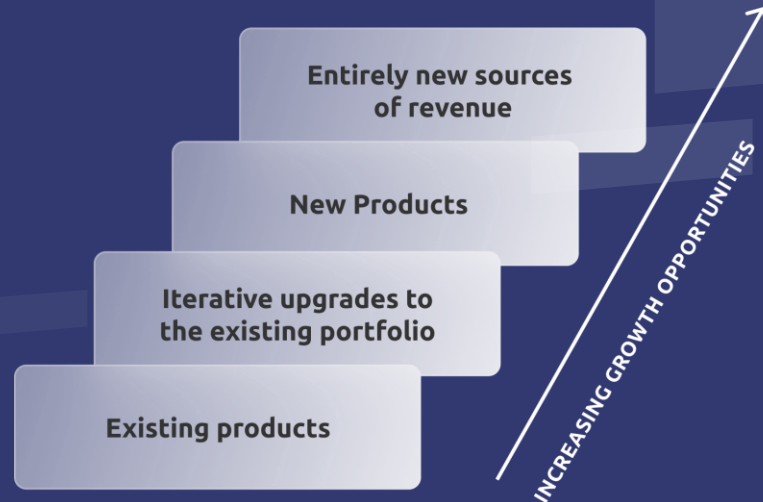
Digital Leadership has successfully helped corporate start-ups find their footing and Top-Five players in all sectors around the world identify and create new opportunities.

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Schedule your free business
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Discover our Culture & Organizational Change Practice



Don't let a decoupled culture and structure hold your business back

Do you know why most innovation and transformation projects fail?

Organizations are pumping plenty of cash into innovation and transformation initiatives. The problem is that the expected results often fail to materialize.

The primary issue is not one of ideas or directions – initiatives get stuck in strategy-execution. Let's thus turn the number one innovation obstructor in the best business enablers ever.

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Share my knowledge with the world!