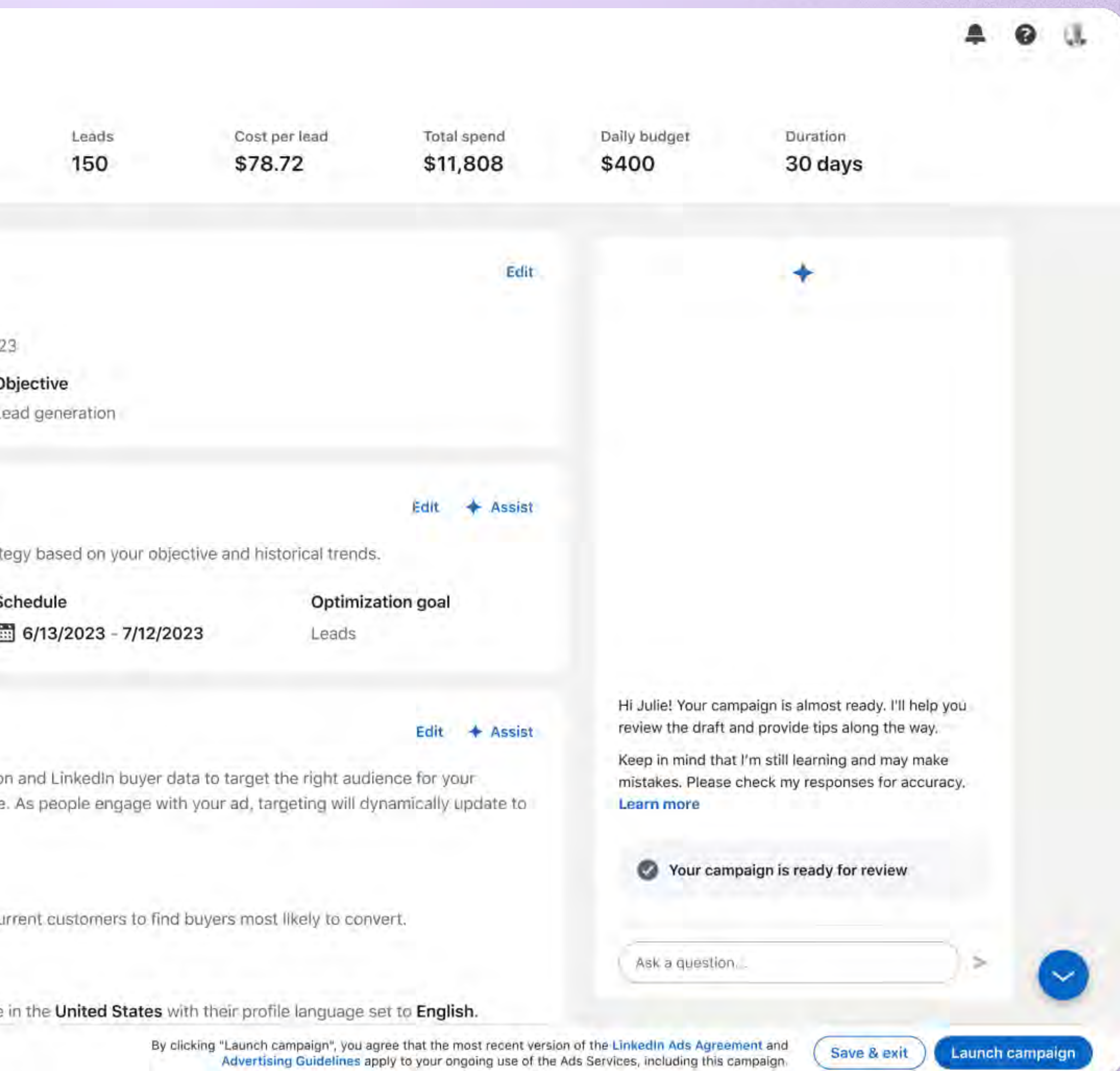


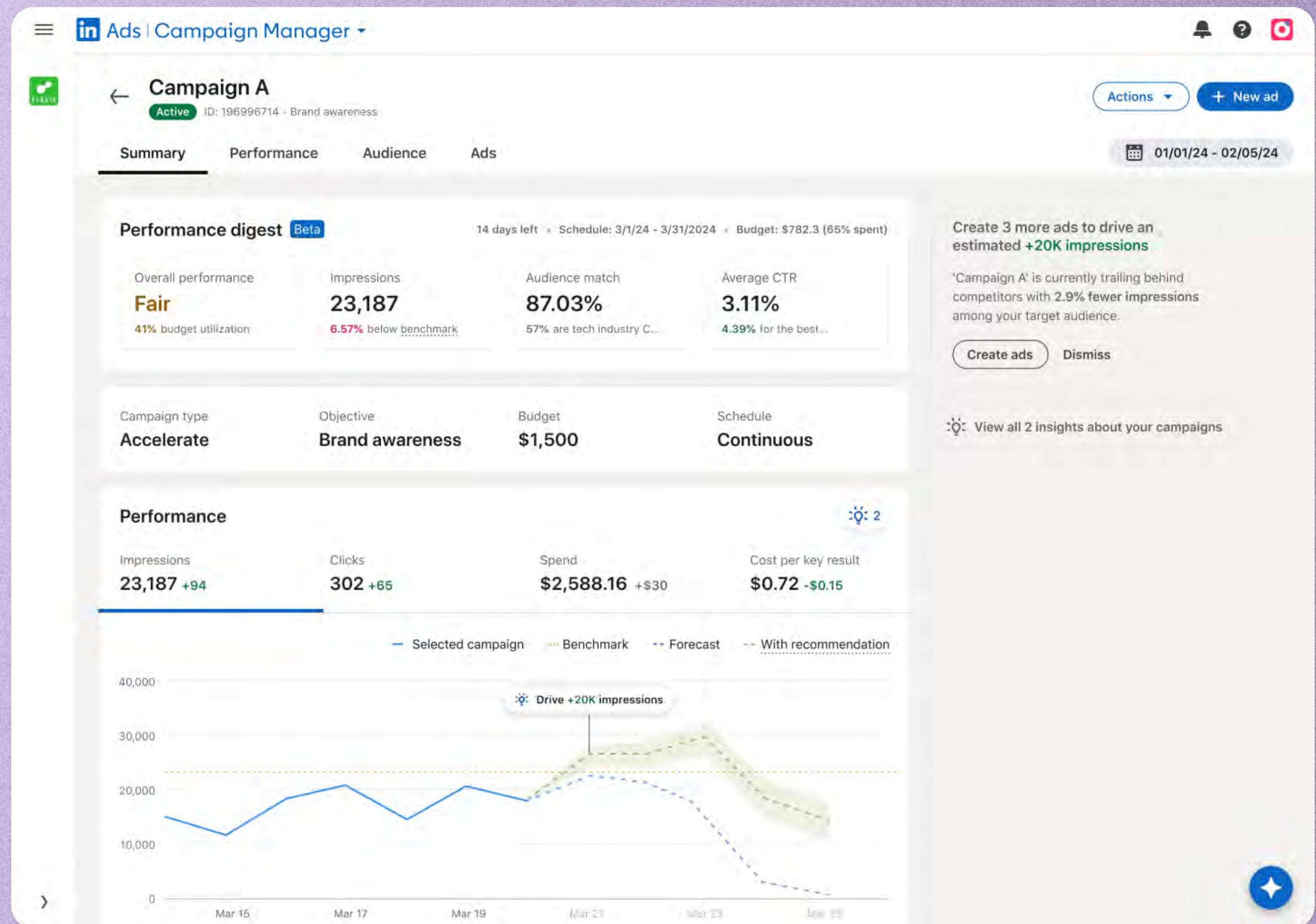
The Changing Face of Design Leadership in the AI Disruption

By Harrison Wheeler

I lead design teams to help them
reach their highest potential.

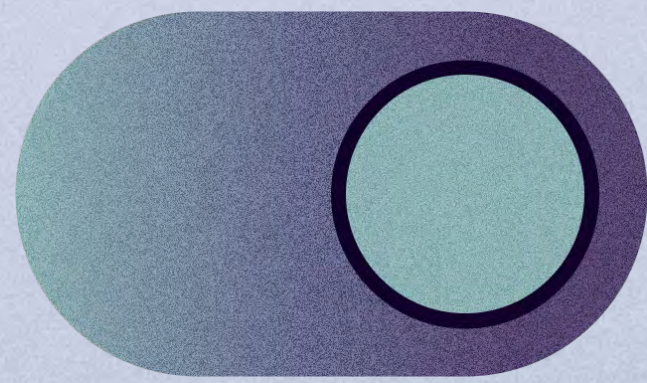


AI-assisted marketing campaign creation

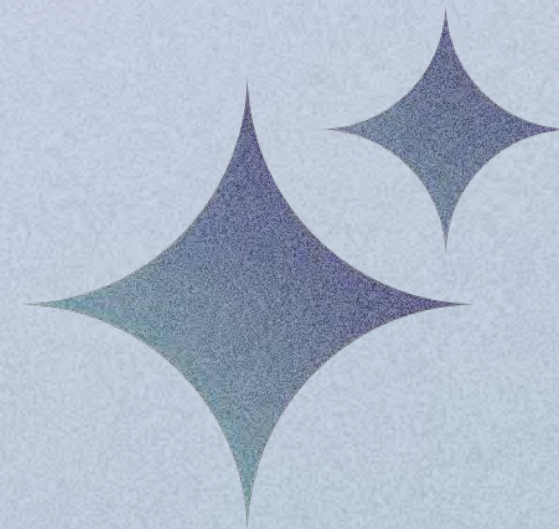


AI performance digest and forecasting

Identifying the nuances between



AI-readiness
Operationalization

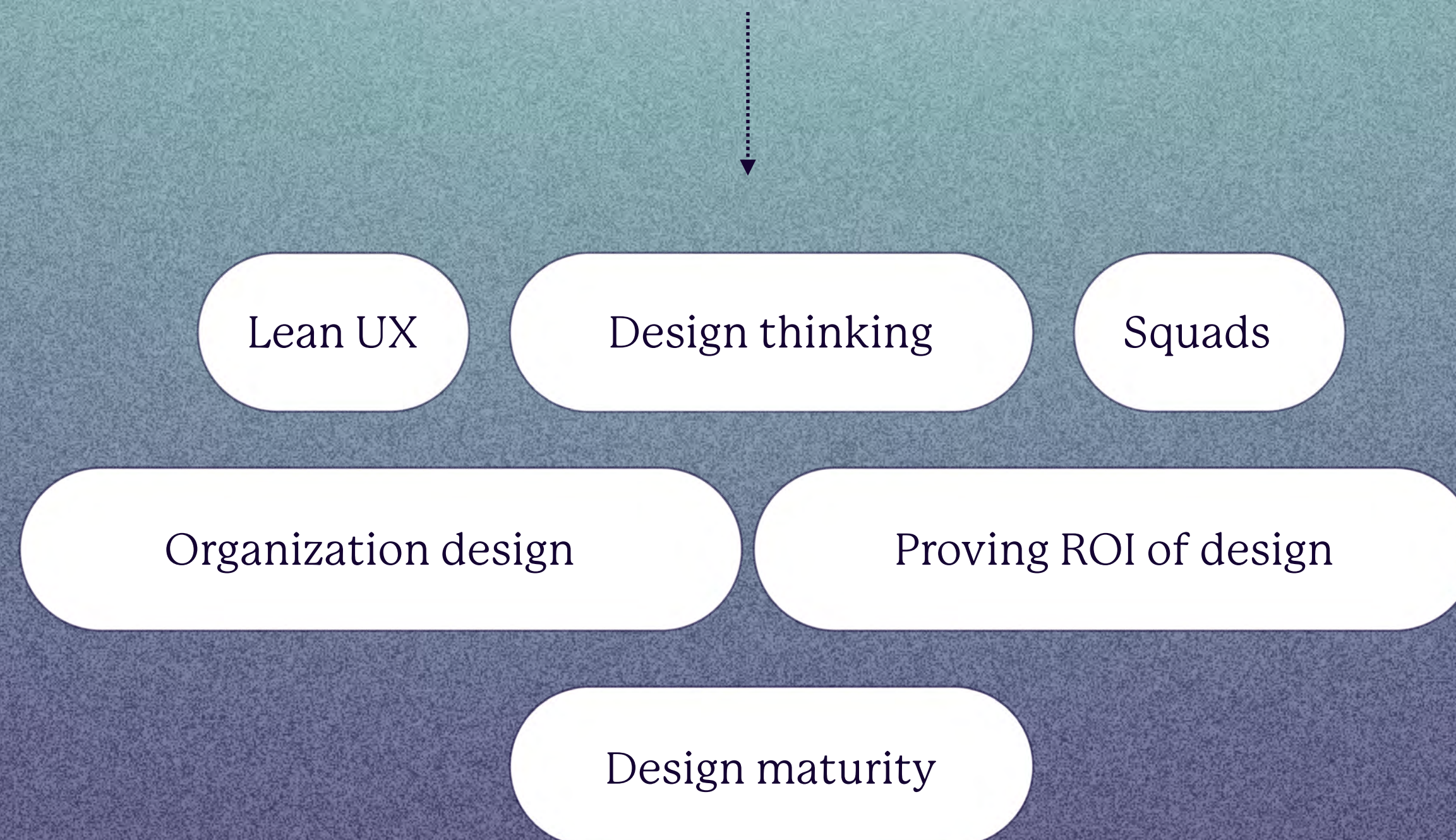


AI-driven
experiences
Strategy



Building with AI
Tooling

I've had to question the playbooks that once defined how we thought high-functioning design orgs should operate.







Challenges today

Tech-first investment drives
speed

Teams need to re-skill

Do more with less

Facing the truth of reality



2023



Doug

now

Sure the work that team has is a priority but my team is a priority. My boss said this has potential.



Outlook

Accelerate brainstorm

now

nin ago



Hey, my eng team is ready and design is a blocker

now



FWD: Do you know about this?

now



Input needed by EOW

now



the work?

itizing

Operational challenges

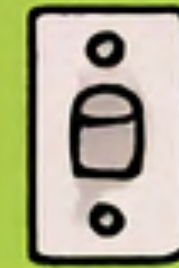
Resource loss from
attrition.

Design hiring freeze.
Product and eng
headcount up.

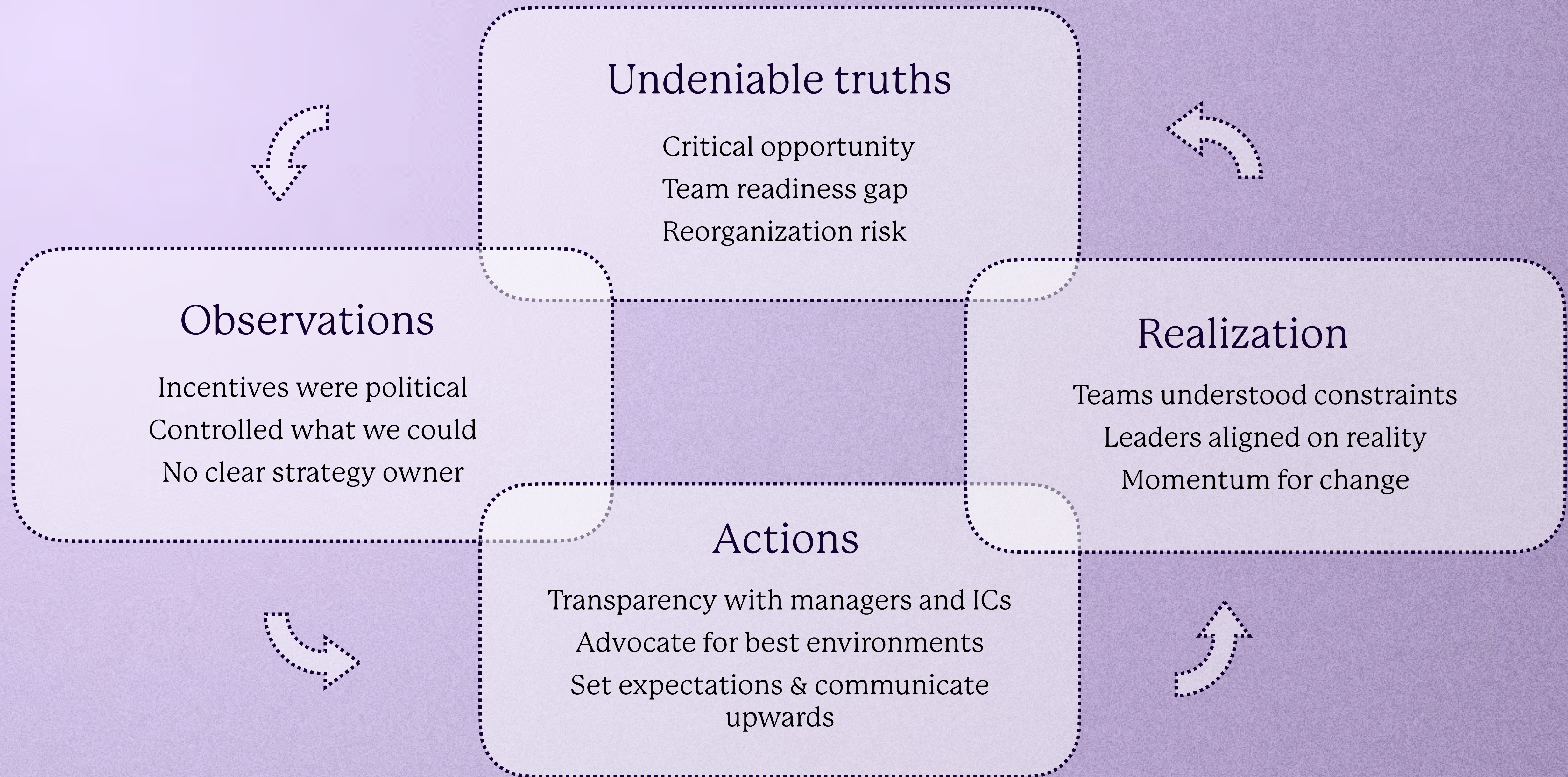
Reactive project
prioritization.

4:1

YEAR = 4 QUARTERS =
6 SPRINTS (IN 1 QUARTER)
QUARTER = 12 WEEKS =
1 DESIGNER = 12 WEEK
SPRINT = 2 WEEKS

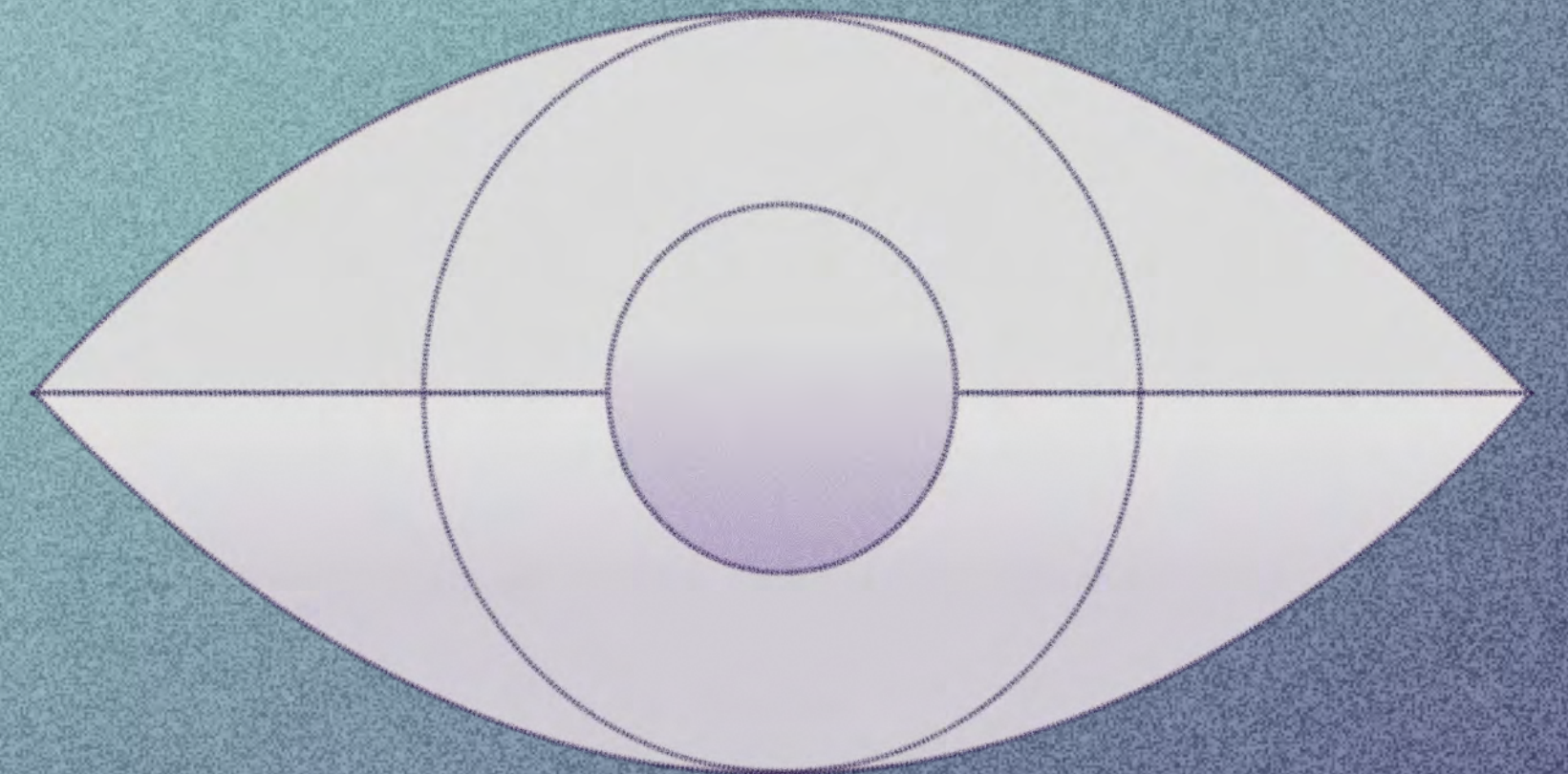


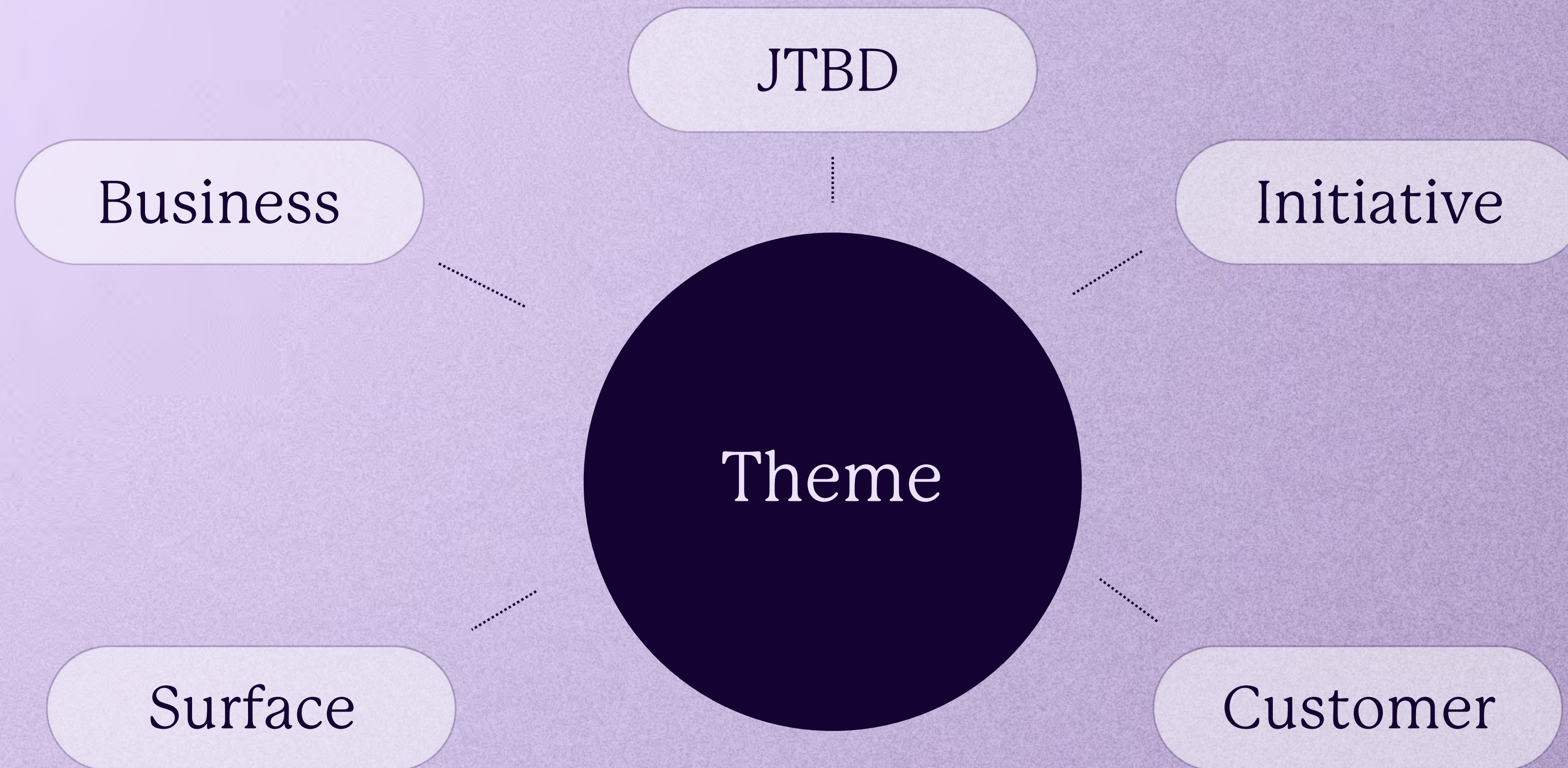
MEAT CANNON



Leading with an informed point of view can help
you have those tough conversations.

Provide clarity in
the middle of chaos





Theme

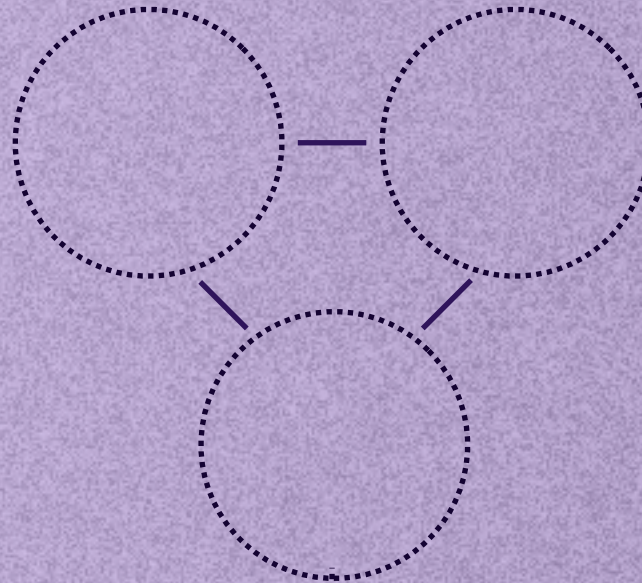
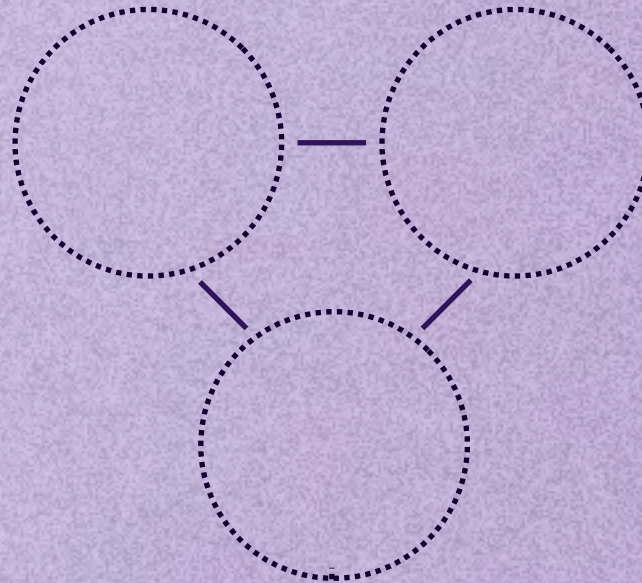
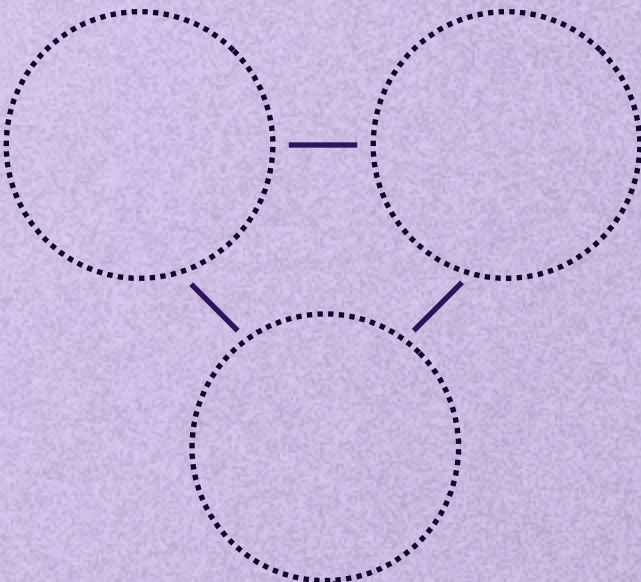
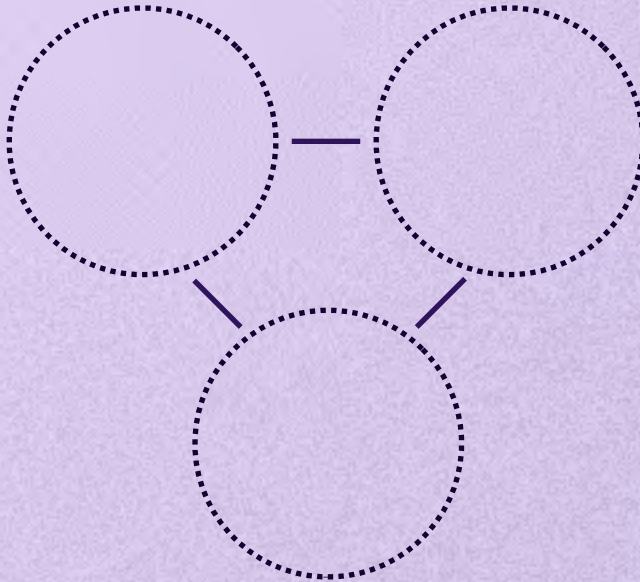
Initiative

JTBD

Surface

Customer

Working group



Foundational enablers

KPI

Research

Prioritization

Narrative



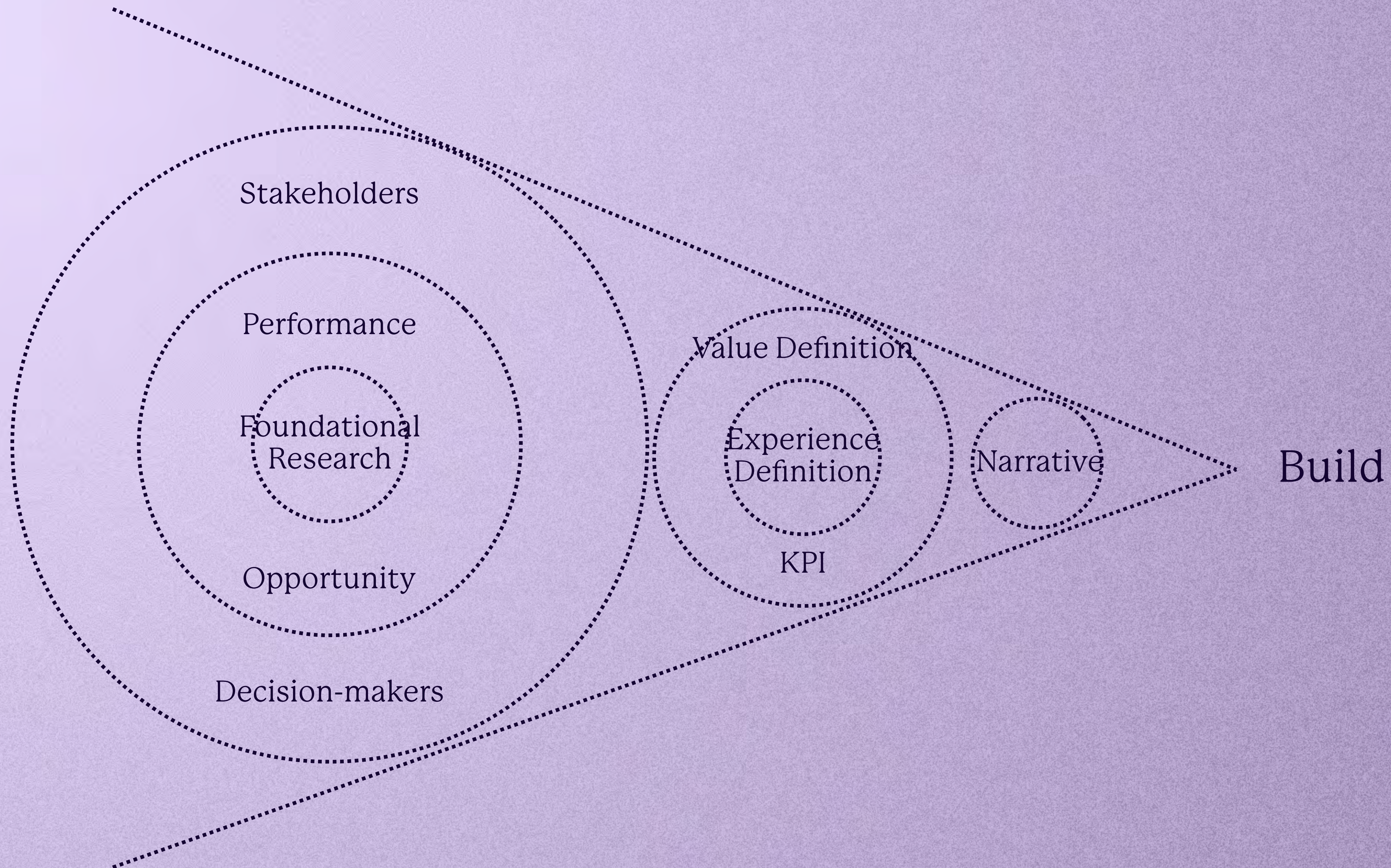
Recipe for Pilot Success

- ★ Started with willing pioneers
- ★ Found a team genuinely excited about trying something new

- ★ Prioritized adaptable talent
- ★ Selected high-performing designers comfortable with ambiguity and change

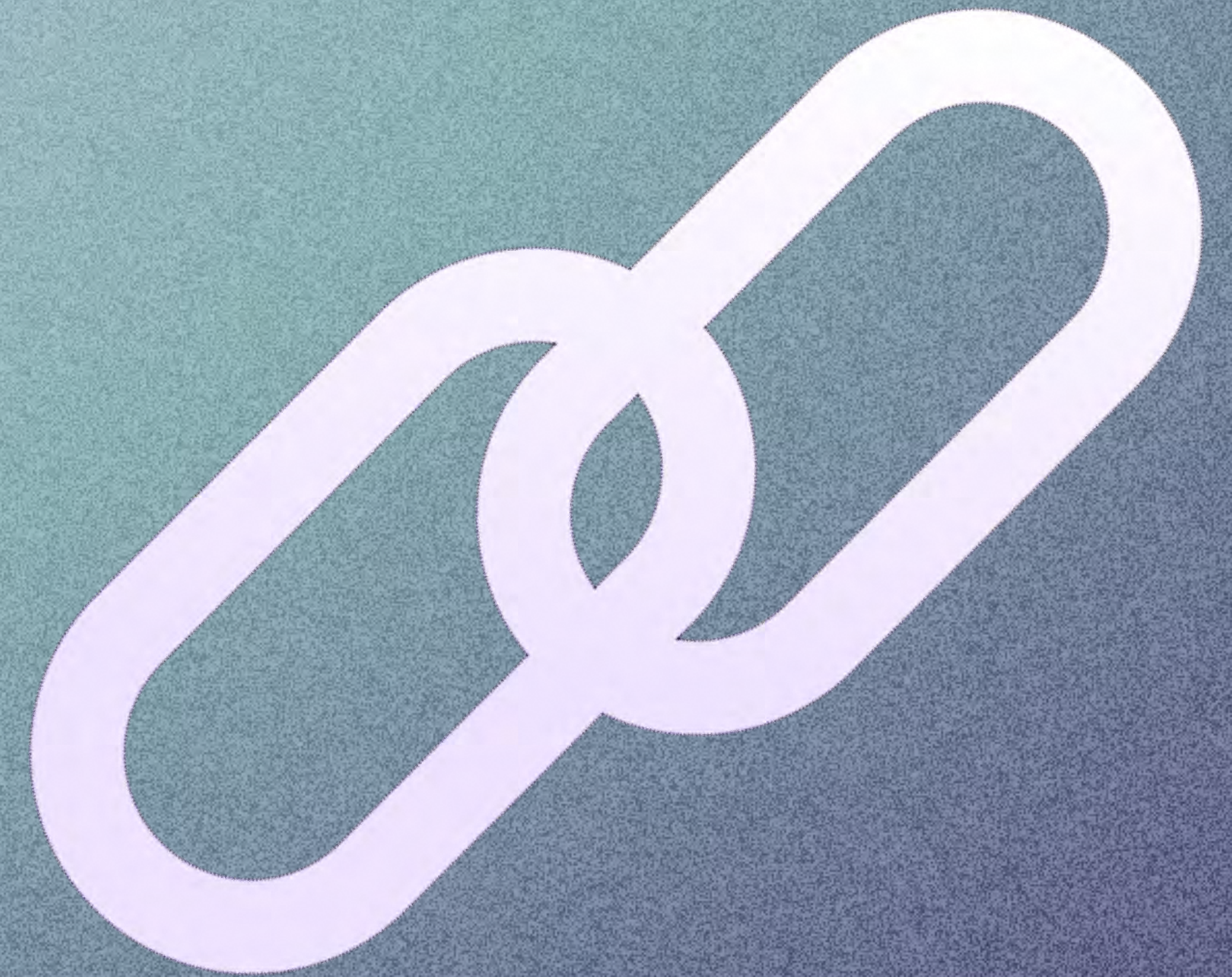
- ★ Highly engaged cross-functional collaborators
- ★ Had a shared incentive for success.

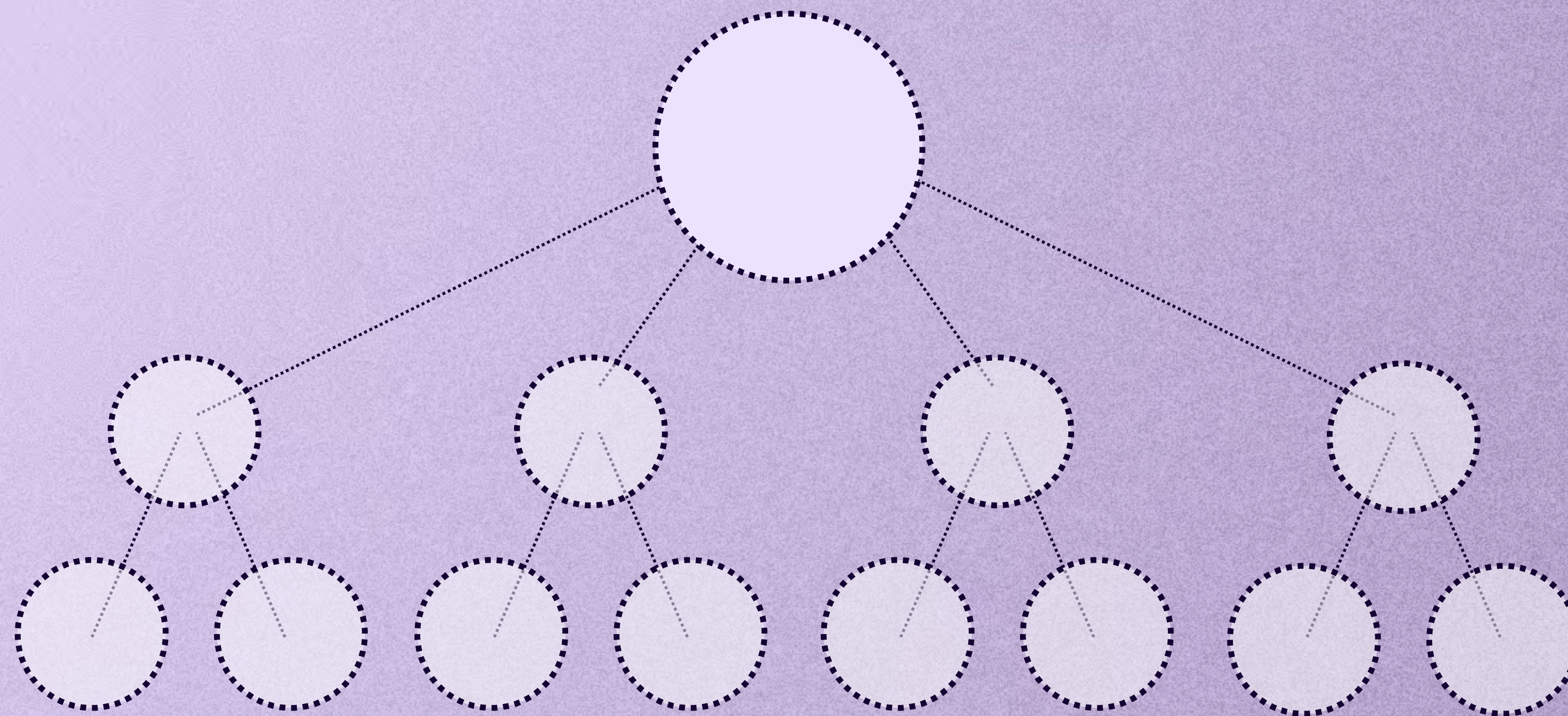
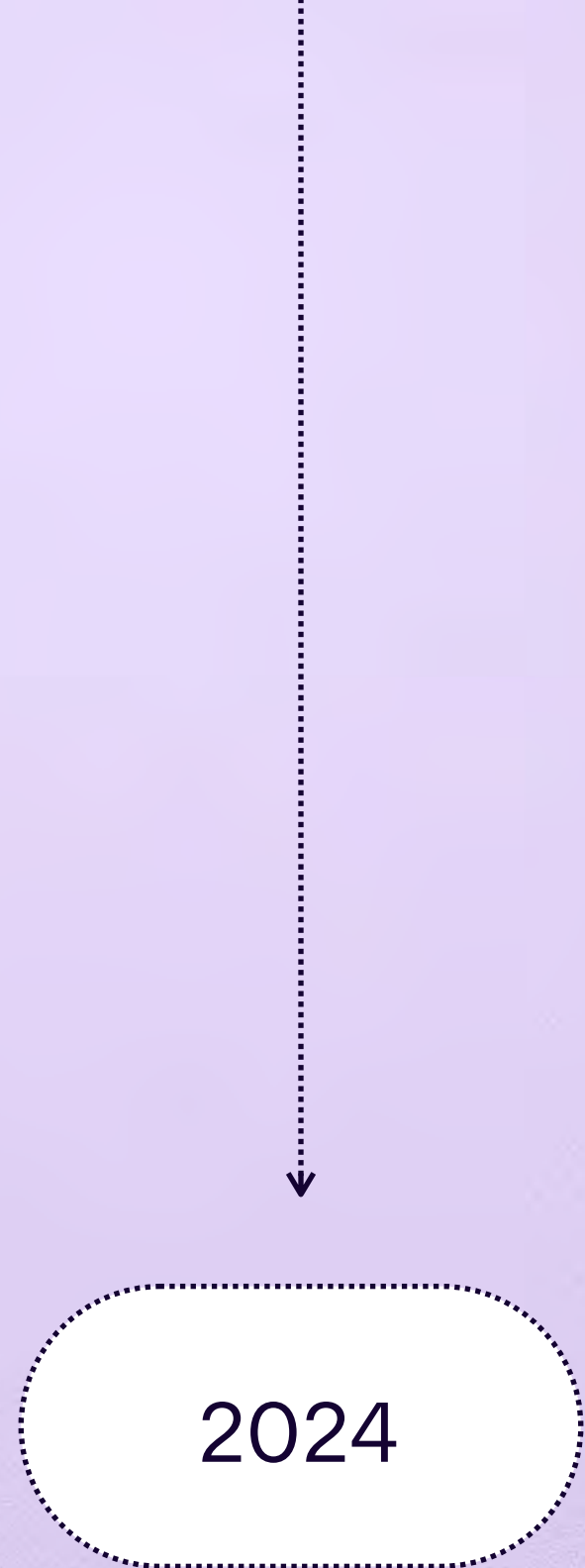
- ★ Sought systems thinkers
- ★ Chose team members who experiment across AI modalities while considering the broader ecosystem



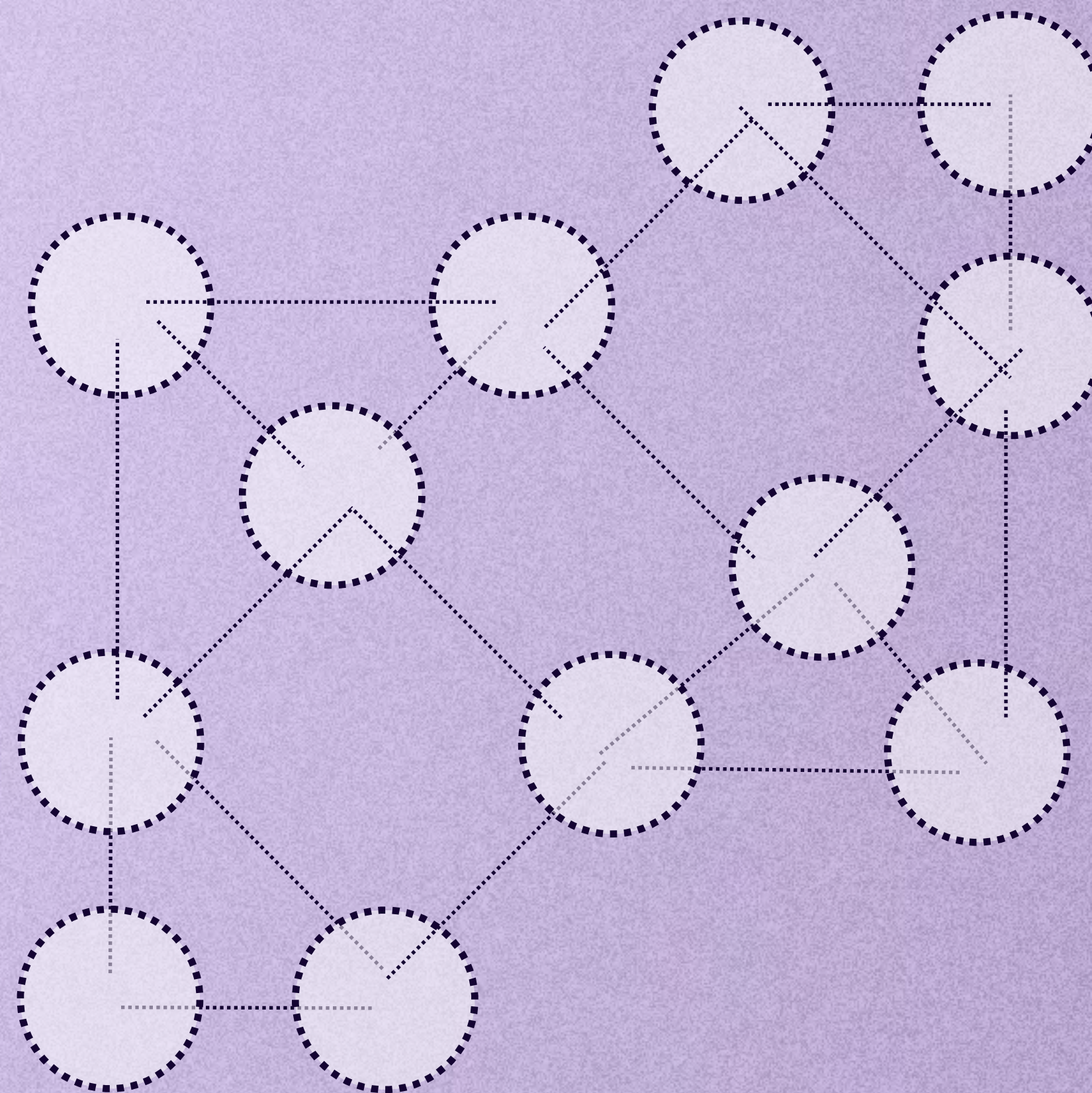
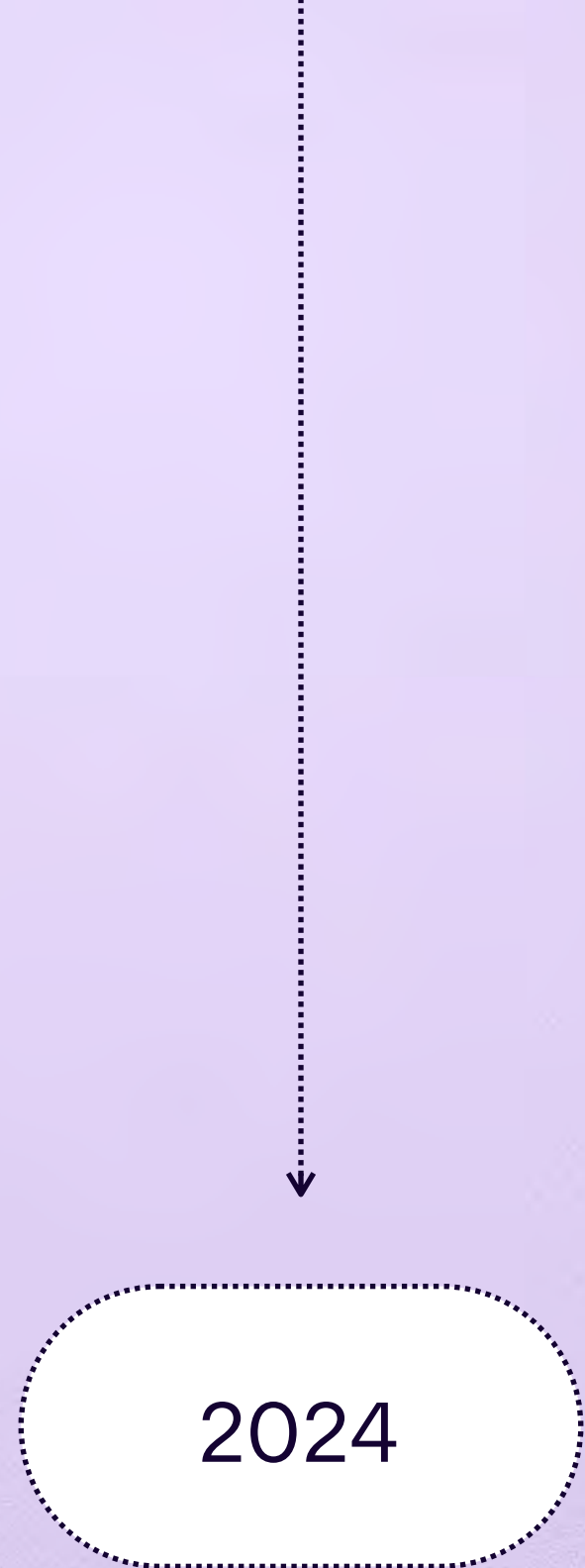
Clarity can help build confidence on new
ideas and ways to work.

Connect role and
purpose to outcome





Centralized



Decentralized

Before

- ❗ Product and business teams prioritized revenue and opportunities over user experience
- ❗ Designers struggled to join high-level strategic discussions, delayed by organizational culture
- ❗ Designers took reactive approach, often submitting post-launch tickets
- ❗ Items considered as nice-to-haves were put on backlogs or fast-follows to rarely be prioritized

After

- ✅ Design leadership now co-led strategy alongside product leadership, shipping toward core metrics and value-driven goals.
- ✅ Design's unique strength is illustrating experiences systemically, backed by business and growth insights.
- ✅ Designers have greater authority in defining quality and ensuring products meet high standards throughout.
- ✅ Early adoption of generative AI enable rapid concept validation in real-time speeding up product development and market entry

Visualize how role and purpose ladders up to larger vision

Top asks prioritized at executive level

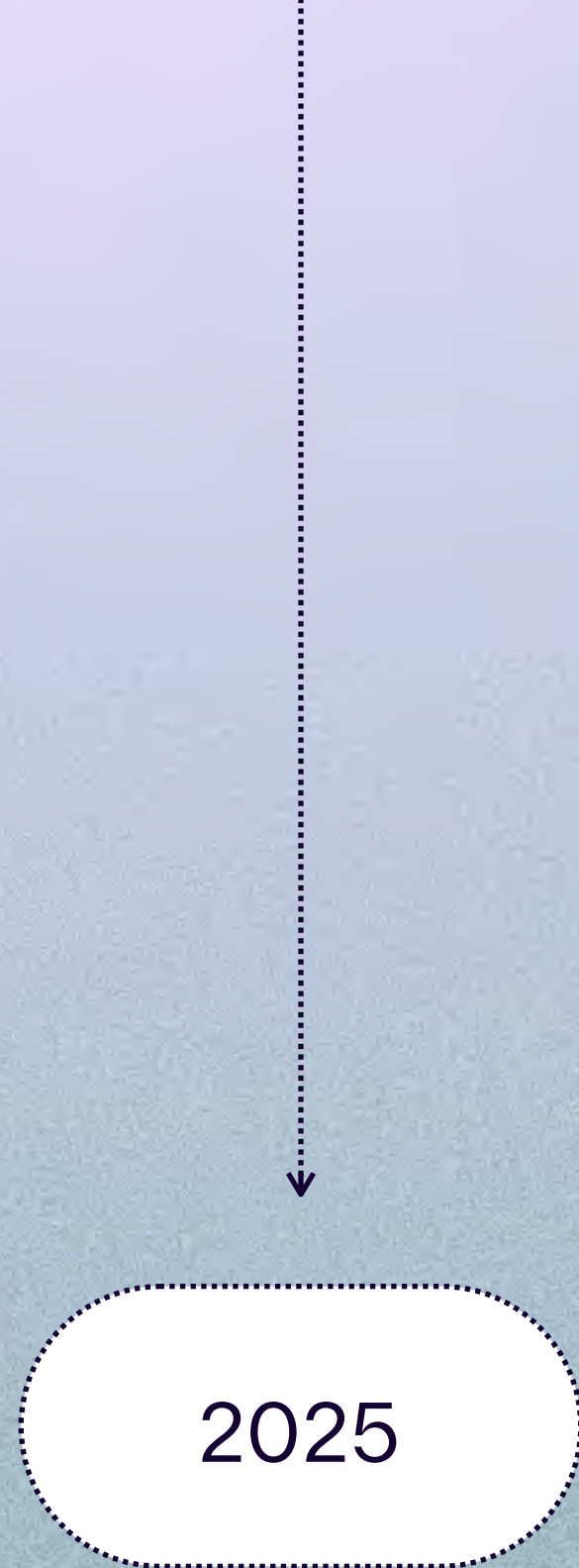
Managers drove prioritization conversations

Teams consolidated requests into themes

High-priority work scoped earlier

Narratives built before investment decisions

Connecting role and purpose to outcome
can put you and your team into influence
that shapes culture.



Team

31%

Morale increase*

+7

New hires

Organization

2x

Release schedule**

47%

Project reduction

Product

4

Shipped AI-powered experiences

34%

Adoption increase

The changing face of design leadership is about...

Shaping systems, not just screens.

Shaping culture, not just products.

Shaping tomorrow, starting today.

Failure to do this...

And others will define the future for us.



Harrison Wheeler

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conversations like this.

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Thank you