



## *A Common Sense Framework For Organizations and Teams*



# An Organization Where BOTH the People and The Organization Can Thrive

**See the bigger picture – identify what’s needed – prioritize where to start.**

People face many challenges and opportunities in organizations and all recognize the potential for improving the current state of things, yet they’re uncertain or unable to agree how and where to start and what to do to move forward.

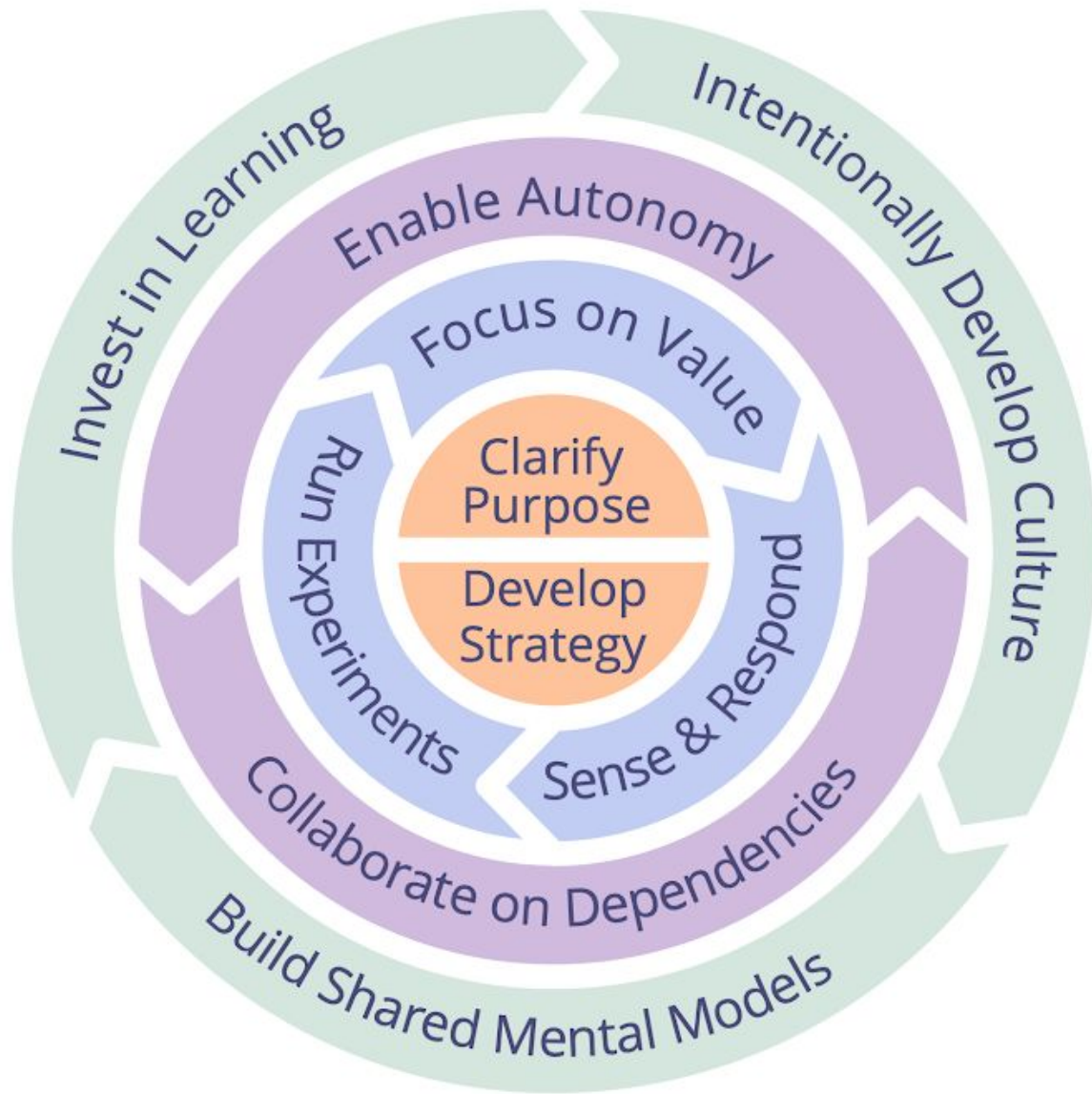
They need a simple way to build shared understanding about what is happening in their organization, and what needs to be done, so that they can effectively and sustainably respond to the impediments and opportunities they face.

The **Common Sense Framework** (CSF) lays out the big picture of what to consider to grow and maintain organizations where BOTH the people and the organization can thrive, and suggests specific practices and tools that can help you to get there.

**Through 10 essential principles** that apply equally to individual teams, and the organization as a whole, evolve organizations that are:

- **focused on value** – people’s efforts are directed toward creating value for the organization, its members, customers, and other stakeholders.
- **productive** – the organization is efficient in identifying, developing and delivering the necessary products and services necessary to achieve its purpose.
- **adaptive** – people are able to effectively identify and respond to organizational needs and changing contexts (both short term and long-term).
- **resilient** – the organization and its members are able to withstand adversity and uncertainty, if needed.
- **reciprocal** – the organization and its members share a relationship of mutual reciprocity where the organization is committed to the development, wellbeing and success of its members, and vice versa.

# The Common Sense Framework



# Ten Principles for Evolving Teams and Organizations

**Principle 1 – Clarify Purpose:** *Ensure that everyone understands who the organization or team is serving, why and to what end, so that people are able to focus and unite their efforts on achieving that purpose.*

**Principle 2 – Develop Strategy:** *Develop a strategy to guide value creation, so that people share a common direction, and strategy is adapted as necessary to achieve the purpose.*

**Principle 3 – Focus on Value:** *Focus your daily work on value delivery, so that the stuff that needs doing to achieve your purpose is done.*

**Principle 4 – Sense & Respond:** *Identify, prioritize and respond to impediments and opportunities, so that you can adapt or pivot as necessary and improve where you can.*

**Principle 5 – Run Experiments:** *Run experiments to address complex challenges, so that you learn how to move closer to where you want to be.*

**Principle 6 – Enable Autonomy:** *Free individuals and teams up to create value as autonomously as possible, so that you can deliver value fast and avoid unnecessary dependencies.*

**Principle 7 – Collaborate on Dependencies:** *Co-create and evolve a coherent system to deal with all dependencies, so that you deliver value fast when dependencies cannot be avoided.*

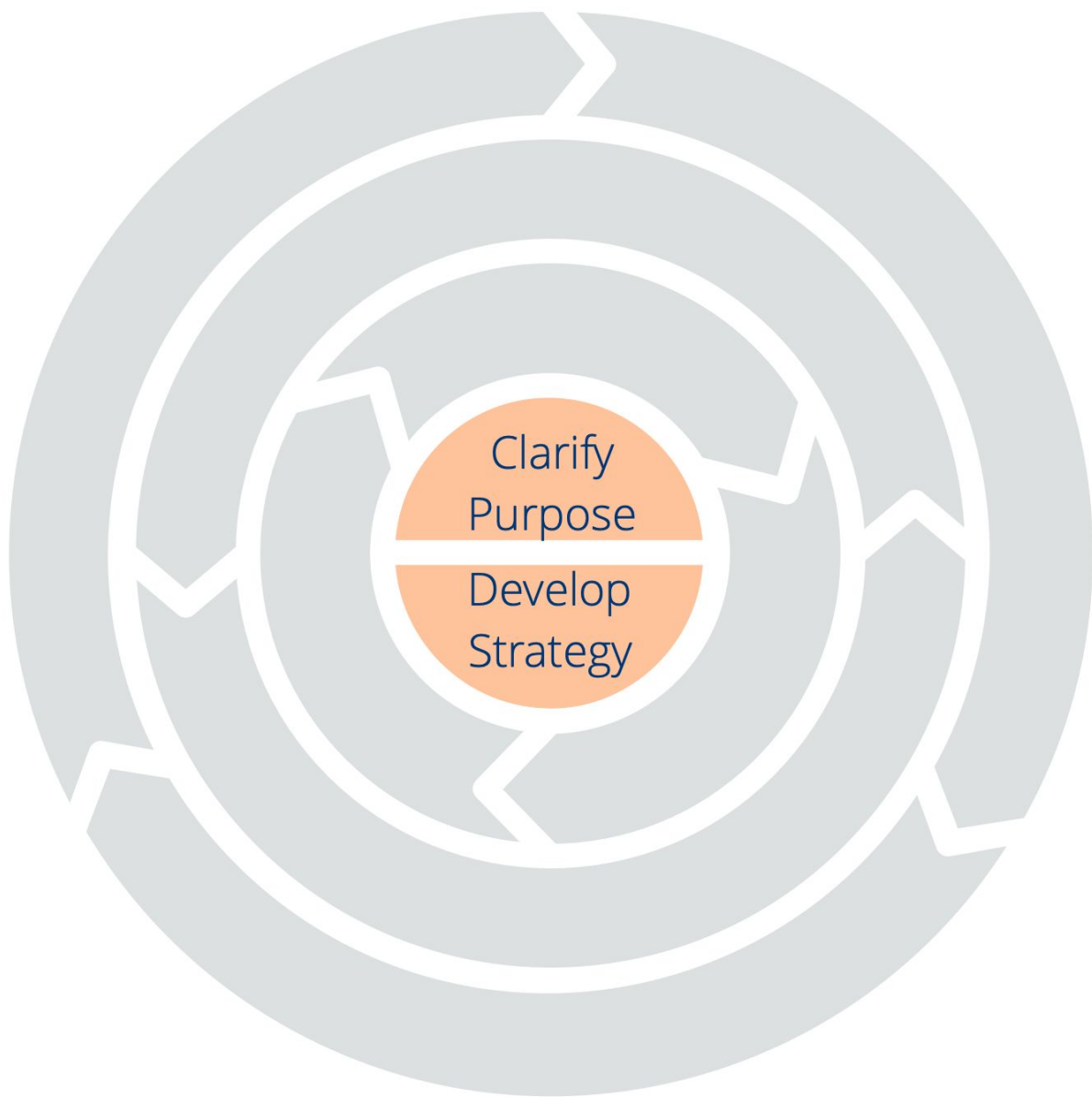
**Principle 8 – Invest in Learning:** *Ensure the people grow competence and skill, so that they develop, their contribution remains valuable and the organization can evolve.*

**Principle 9 – Intentionally Develop Culture:** *Collaborate on fostering a cooperative culture where people achieve their fuller potential, so that you build and maintain an engaging and productive work environment.*

**Principle 10 – Build Shared Mental Models:** *Invest in building shared mental models, so that people can engage in meaningful dialogue about what's happening and what needs to be done, and in the process deepen their understanding of how the organization works, what it does and why.*



# Two Principles for Orientation



## Principle 1 – Clarify Purpose

*Ensure that everyone understands who the organization or team is serving, why and to what end, so that people are able to focus and unite their efforts on achieving that purpose.*

### Essential Patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Describe Organizational Drivers](#) – Understanding the motive for acting in response to a specific situation is an essential component for understanding, defining and communicating the purpose of an organization, a team or department.

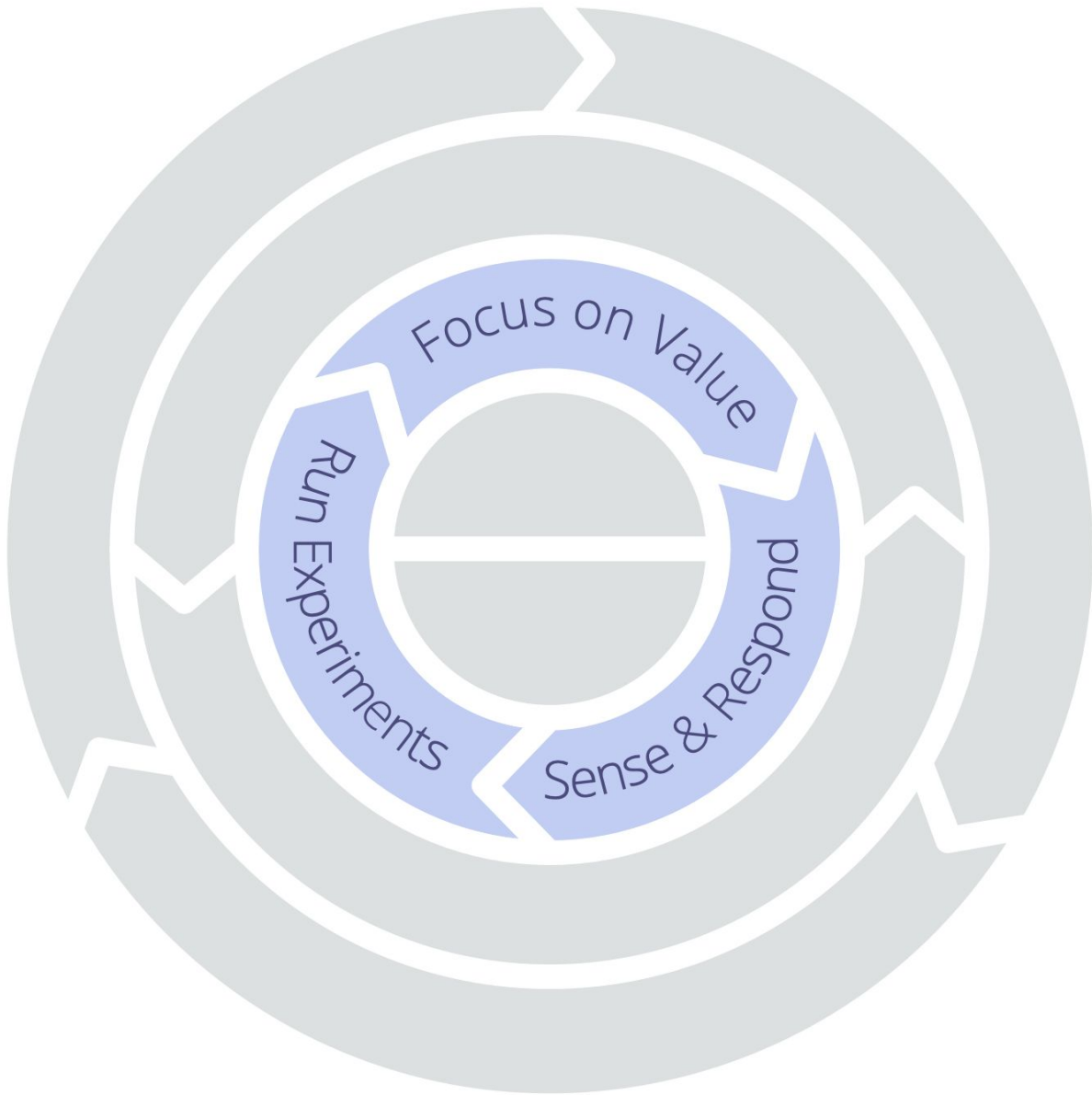
## Principle 2 – Develop Strategy

*Develop a strategy to guide value creation, so that people share a common direction, and strategy is adapted as necessary to achieve the purpose.*

### Essential Patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Clarify Domains](#) – A clearly defined area of influence, activity and decision making is a prerequisite for defining an effective strategy for an organization, a team or role.
- [Clarify Intended Outcome](#) - Defining the intended outcome of a strategy is an essential component for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness, and adapting things when necessary.
- [Describe Organizational Drivers](#) – Understanding the motive for acting in response to a specific situation is an essential component for designing an effective strategy for responding to it
- [Develop Strategy](#) – Stakeholders collaborating on creating and evolving strategy for an organization, team or role, helps to support creation of relevant and effective strategy
- [Evaluate And Evolve Agreements](#) – Reviewing strategy and evolving it as necessary over time ensures it remains helpful and relevant to the organization, team or role.
- [Evaluation Criteria](#) – Defining criteria for success or failure is necessary for figuring out whether or not the strategy is effective.

# Three Principles for Navigation





## Principle 3 – Focus on Value

*Focus your daily work on value delivery, so that the stuff that needs doing to achieve your purpose is done.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Clarify Domains](#) – Clarifying the area of influence, activity and decision making that a team, or person in a role is responsible for, enables them to understand the value they are expected to deliver.
- [Respond To Organizational Drivers](#) – Understanding what’s necessary to respond to and why, and ensuring those things are taken care of, maximises potential for creating value.
- [Prioritize Backlogs](#) – When you prioritize your list of work items by value, it is obvious which ones need to be worked on first.
- [Limit Work In Progress](#) – Limiting the number of concurrent work items for people and teams, helps to maintain a steady flow of value and encourages collaboration when work is blocked.
- [Daily Standup](#) – A Daily Standup provides the space for a team to organize how they will create value during the day ahead
- [Test arguments qualify as objections](#) – When you test each argument brought forward against a decision for whether or not it reveals worthwhile improvements or unwanted consequences, you keep your work focused on value and avoid getting derailed by unfounded opinions and personal preferences.

## Principle 4 – Sense & Respond

*Identify, prioritize and respond to impediments and opportunities, so that you can adapt or pivot as necessary and improve where you can.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Continuous Improvement Of Work Process](#) – Getting in the habit of continuously seeking to improve the work process supports people's skill in identifying and acting on opportunities to improve.
- [Describe Organizational Drivers](#) – Before responding to a perceived impediment or opportunity, it is essential to understand the current situation, and why it makes sense for the organization to respond
- [Governance Backlog](#) – Keeping a prioritized list of all impediments and opportunities that require a governance decision to be made, keeps outstanding issues visible and clarifies what is most important to respond to first.
- [Navigate Via Tension](#) – When everyone in the organization pays attention for situations that appear different to what is expected or desired, and brings that information to the attention of those responsible, you maximise the organization's potential for identifying impediments and opportunities.
- [Respond To Organizational Drivers](#) – Responding only to challenges and opportunities that are valuable for the organization, maximises return on investment of limited time, energy and resources.

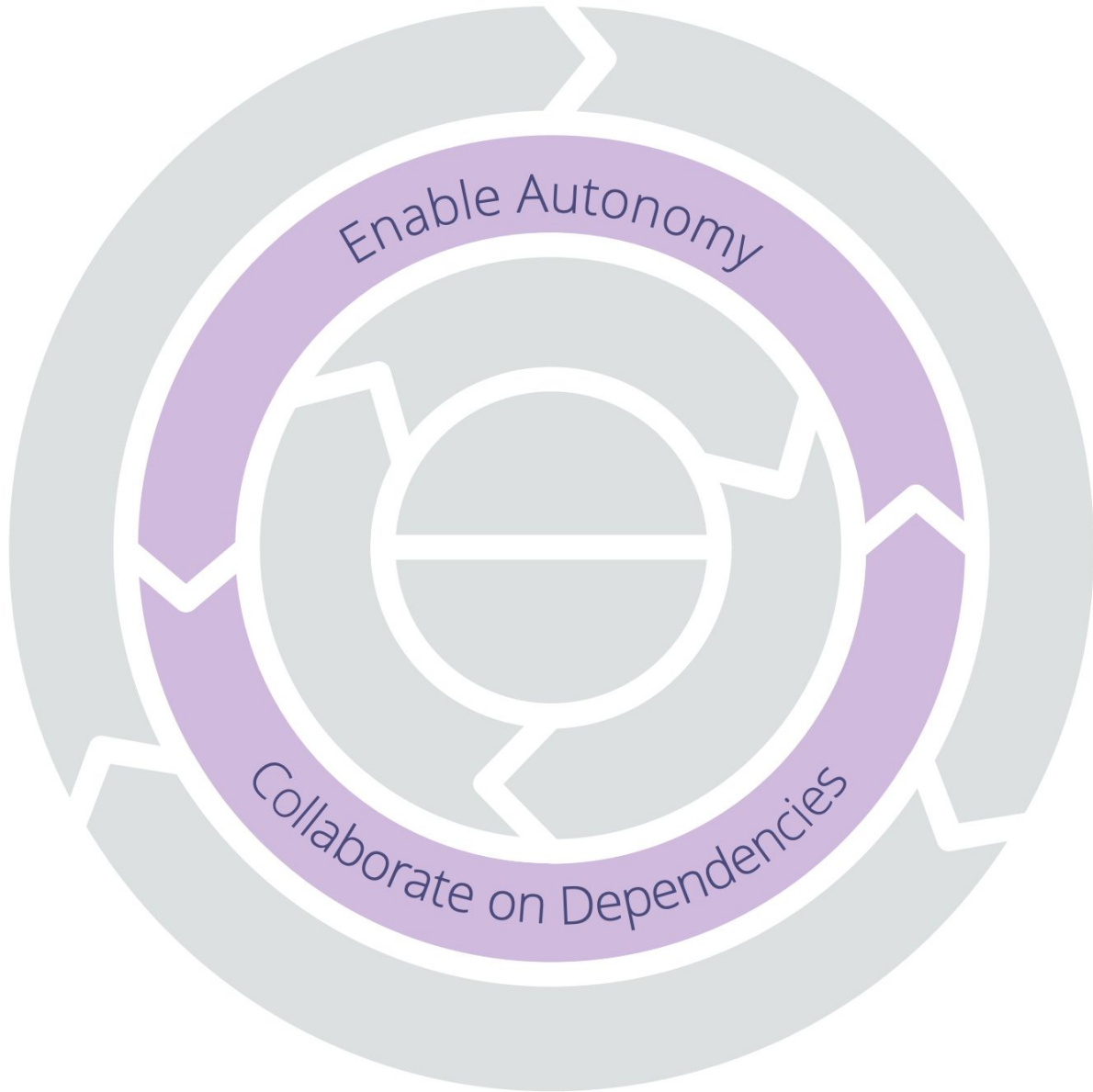
## Principle 5 – Run Experiments

*Run experiments to address complex challenges, so that you learn how to move closer to where you want to be.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Describe Organizational Drivers](#) – Building a shared mental model of the situation you want to address, is essential for successfully designing, running and later on, evaluating experiments.
- [Clarify Intended Outcome](#) – A clear description of the intended outcome of an experiment is essential for understanding whether or not an experiment produced the intended result.
- [Evaluation Criteria](#) – Defining clear criteria for determining success before the start of an experiment, helps to reveal flaws in its design and supports effective evaluation of outcomes.
- [Consent Decision Making](#) – An effective group process for viewing a proposition from a diversity of perspectives and testing whether or not an experiment is good enough and safe enough to run.
- [Evaluate And Evolve Agreements](#) – An experiment needs to be regularly reviewed to determine what outcomes it achieves, and as a consequence, potentially adapted or even stopped.
- [Limit Work In Progress](#) – Limit the number of concurrent experiments to avoid overwhelm and maintain a steady flow of value.
- [Create A Pull-System For Organizational Change](#) – Inviting and enabling people to run experiments when they discover organizational needs allows for effective and decentralized adaption of the organization.

# Two Principles for Structure



## Principle 6 – Enable Autonomy

*Free individuals and teams up to create value as autonomously as possible, so that you can deliver value fast and avoid unnecessary dependencies.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Clarify Domains](#) – When people understand their own areas of responsibility, and those of others too, they know what is expected of them and where they are dependent on others.
- [Pull-System For Work](#) – People being able to pull in new work items when they have capacity, eliminates overload and improves productivity.
- [Delegate Influence](#) – Delegating work, together with authority to make decisions relating to that work, frees people up to create value and removes unnecessary dependencies.
- [Role](#) – Delegating autonomy to an individual to decide and act within clearly defined constraints, frees individuals up to create value, and enables those who delegate to retain as much influence as necessary.
- [Circle](#) – Delegating autonomy to a team to organize and govern themselves within clearly defined constraints, frees the team up to create value, and enables those who delegate that authority to retain as much influence as necessary.
- [Develop Strategy](#) – When a team or individual in a role develops a strategy for how they will create value, that’s agreed upon by relevant stakeholders, it supports autonomy and builds trust.
- [Development Plan](#); Collaborating with relevant stakeholders on developing a plan for how to improve, helps a team or individual in a role develop their skill and competence, and builds trust among all concerned.
- [Align Flow](#) – Moving decision making close to where value is created, while retaining the influence of the relevant stakeholders, supports the flow of value and eliminates unnecessary dependencies and delays.

## Principle 7 – Collaborate on Dependencies

*Co-create and evolve a coherent system to deal with all dependencies, so that you deliver value fast when dependencies cannot be avoided.*

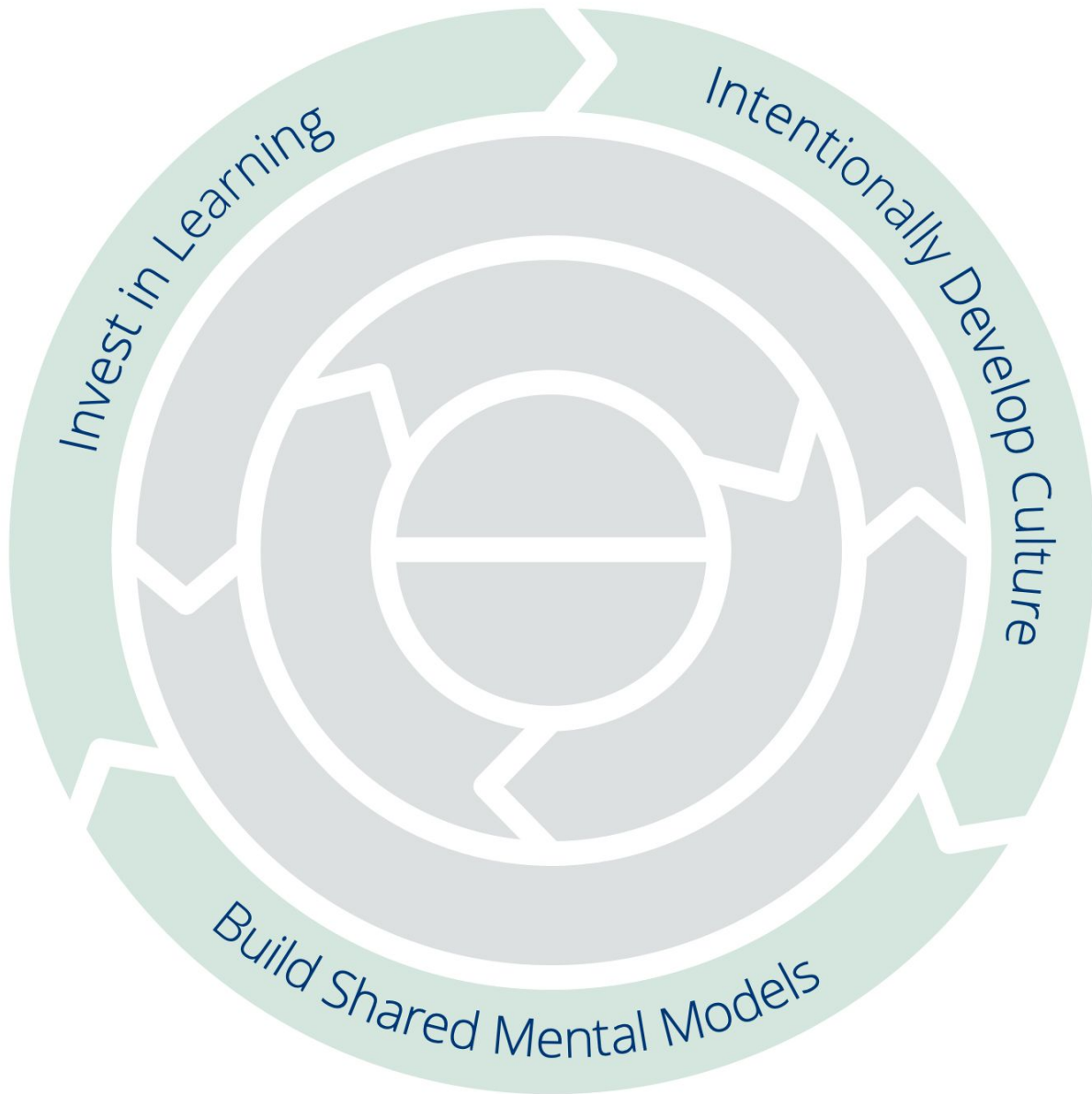
Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Navigate Via Tension](#) – Everyone in the organization paying attention to dependencies maximises the potential for unmanaged dependencies to be identified and responded to.
- [Clarify Domains](#) – When people understand their own areas of responsibility, and those of others too, they also understand where collaboration on dependencies will be necessary.
- [Visualize Work](#) – Visualizing work items and the dependencies between them, makes it easier to manage dependencies in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.
- [Respond To Organizational Drivers](#) Understanding why a dependency exists in the first place, and ensuring it is taken care of, is essential for collaborating on managing or resolving dependencies.
- [Those Affected Decide](#) – To address dependencies in an effective way, it often helps to gather the perspectives of all (relevant) stakeholders and involve them in the decision making process.
- [Linking](#) – Dependencies between two teams can often be addressed effectively by sending a [Representative](#) to the decision making of the other team, to ensure all relevant perspectives are considered and ownership of decisions is shared.
- [Delegate Circle](#) – Delegating the power to make and evolve agreements for how to deal with specific dependencies between teams, to a circle of representatives, brings together relevant perspectives and generates ownership among stakeholders.
- [Align Flow](#) – Moving decision making close to where value is created, brings together the people necessary for making decisions in response to specific dependencies and eliminates unnecessary decision making bottlenecks.
- [Create A Pull-System For Organizational Change](#) – Inviting and enabling people to make changes to organizational structure, when doing so provides an effective way for dealing

with dependencies they share responsibility for, facilitates the ongoing evolution of a coherent and effective organization.



# Three Principles for Transformation





## Principle 8 – Invest in Learning

*Ensure the people grow competence and skill, so that they develop, their contribution remains valuable and the organization can evolve.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Navigate Via Tension](#) – Everyone in the organization paying attention for situations where growing competence and skills may be valuable, focuses the learning effort and facilitates continuous improvement.
- [Evaluate Meetings](#) – A brief evaluation at the end of each meeting or workshop helps people identify their strengths, growing edges and ways to improve their contribution in the future.
- [Peer Review](#) – A team or person in a role regularly inviting relevant stakeholders for a review of their effectiveness, supports identifying their strengths, growing edges and ways they can improve their contribution in future.
- [Development Plan](#) – Collaborating with relevant stakeholders on a plan for how to develop necessary skills and competence, is an effective way of focusing the learning efforts of a person in a role, or for a team.
- [Peer Feedback](#) – Inviting feedback from peers, supports people in understanding their strengths and growing edges, so that they can invest in learning where helpful.

## Principle 9 – Intentionally Develop Culture

*Collaborate on fostering a cooperative culture where people achieve their fuller potential, so that you build and maintain an engaging and productive work environment.*

Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Artful Participation](#) – Introducing the concept of Artful Participation to people, invites them to pay conscious attention to how they contribute and to make changes when they realize their current approach can be improved.
- [Adopt The Seven Principles](#) – The seven principles provide guidelines for behavior that enable a productive, engaging and cooperative culture.
- [Agree On Values](#) – Agreement on fundamental guidelines for behavior in the organization, define ethical parameters for action and facilitate coherence.
- [Evaluate And Evolve Agreements](#) – Regular review and intentional evolution of agreements relating to culture, helps keep them alive in the consciousness of the people and identify when and how they can be improved.
- [Contract For Successful Collaboration](#) – Co-creating mutually beneficial agreements for collaboration from the start, supports building and maintaining an engaging and productive working environment and a culture of trust between parties.
- [Create A Pull-System For Organizational Change](#) – Distributing the responsibility for developing culture to everybody, invites proactivity in addressing challenges and opportunities as they arise.

## Principle 10 – Build Shared Mental Models

*Invest in building shared mental models, so that people can engage in meaningful dialogue about what's happening and what needs to be done, and in the process deepen their understanding of how the organization works, what it does and why.*

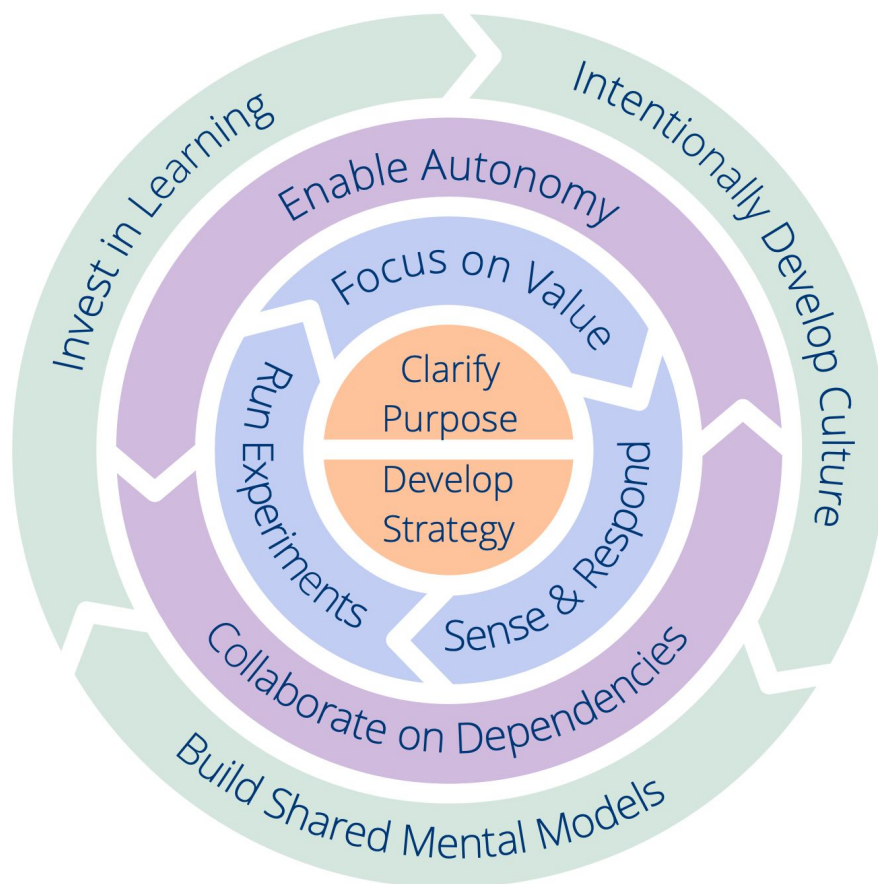
Essential patterns to help you achieve this:

- [Navigate Via Tension](#) – Everyone in the organization paying attention for situations that might benefit from building or refining a shared mental model, gets people on the same page so that they can engage in productive dialogue.
- [Clarify Domains](#) – Explicitly clarifying and documenting areas of responsibility ensures a shared mental model regarding expectations and responsibilities.
- [Clarify Intended Outcome](#) – By first agreeing on the intended outcome of a proposed activity, project or agreement, people develop shared understanding of where things should be headed and can then engage in productive dialog about how to get there.

# Where to Start?

Each principle supports a specific outcome. To determine where to start in your organization or team, **take a look at the outcomes for each principle** (the text after “*so that*”) and reflect on where your greatest need lies at the moment. In any case, **check that you are clear enough on your organization’s or team’s purpose and strategy before you proceed.**

In the illustration below you can see that some of the principles are more closely related than others, which might further inform you of where to start.



For each principle we included a list of suggestions for things you can try. These suggestions are taken from the [menu of patterns contained in Sociocracy 3.0](#). For now we only added the most essential patterns that support each principle, in future versions of this framework we will include even more patterns.

## If You Are Familiar with Sociocracy 3.0 (S3)

Through our work describing, explaining and helping people apply S3 patterns to solve problems and respond to opportunities in teams and organizations, we gained a deeper understanding of the underlying common sense that guides people toward building more successful organizations.

The more people become aware of this common sense, the more they can use it to develop ways together that help both them, and the organization, to thrive.

**The Common Sense Framework helps to make S3 more accessible to people:** The 10 principles are easy to grasp and remember, and provide a simple navigation system through the 74 patterns that guides people on where to start, and which patterns to use.



# All Principles on One Page

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