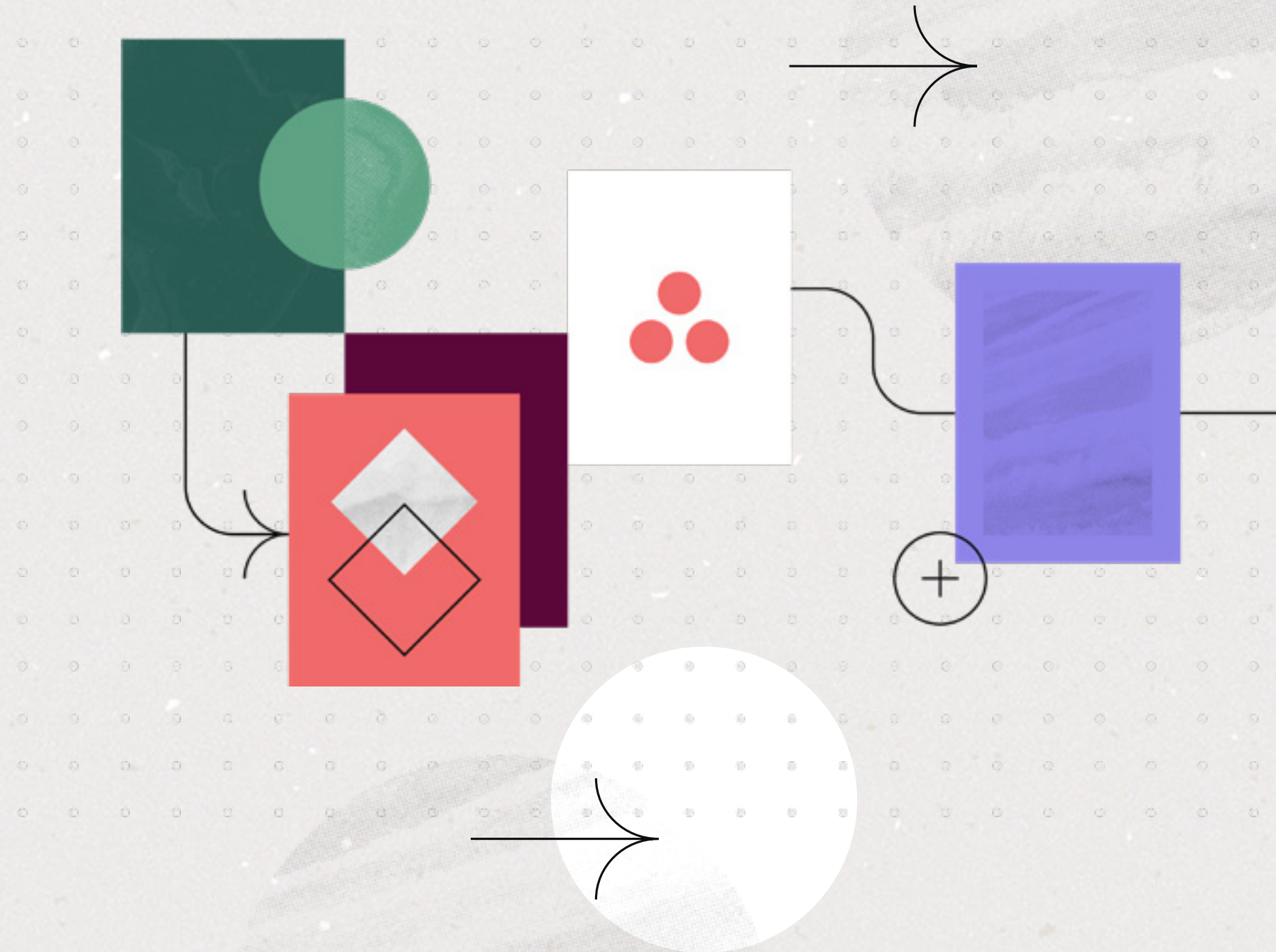




How the most  
effective teams  
in the world  
collaborate



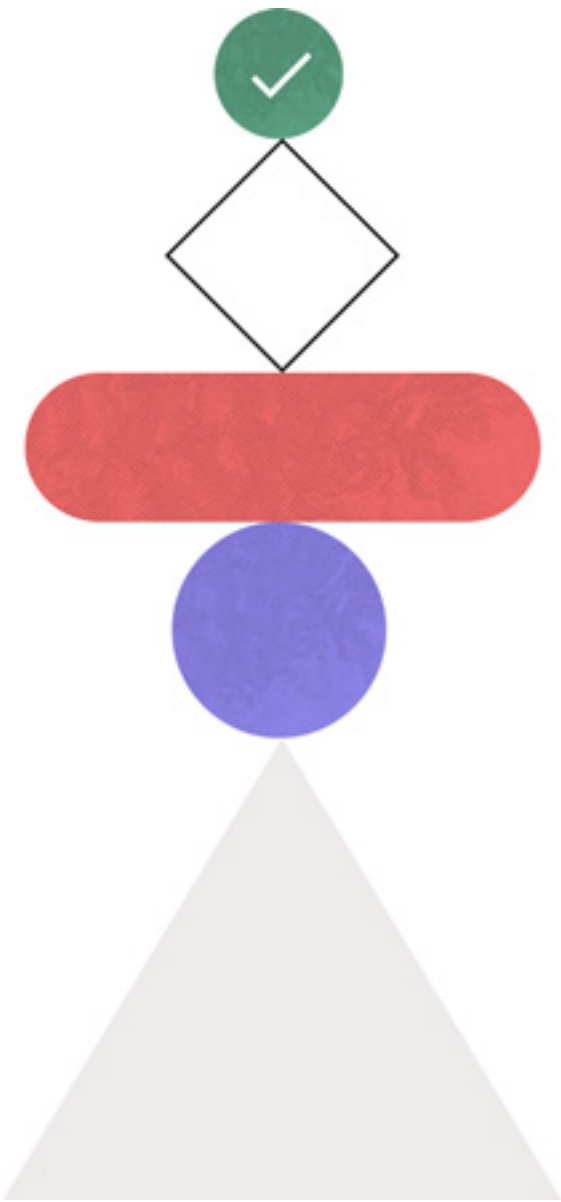
# Table of contents

The state of collaboration ..... 03

How to unite your teams to reach their goals..... 05

What does great cross-team collaboration look like? ..... 18

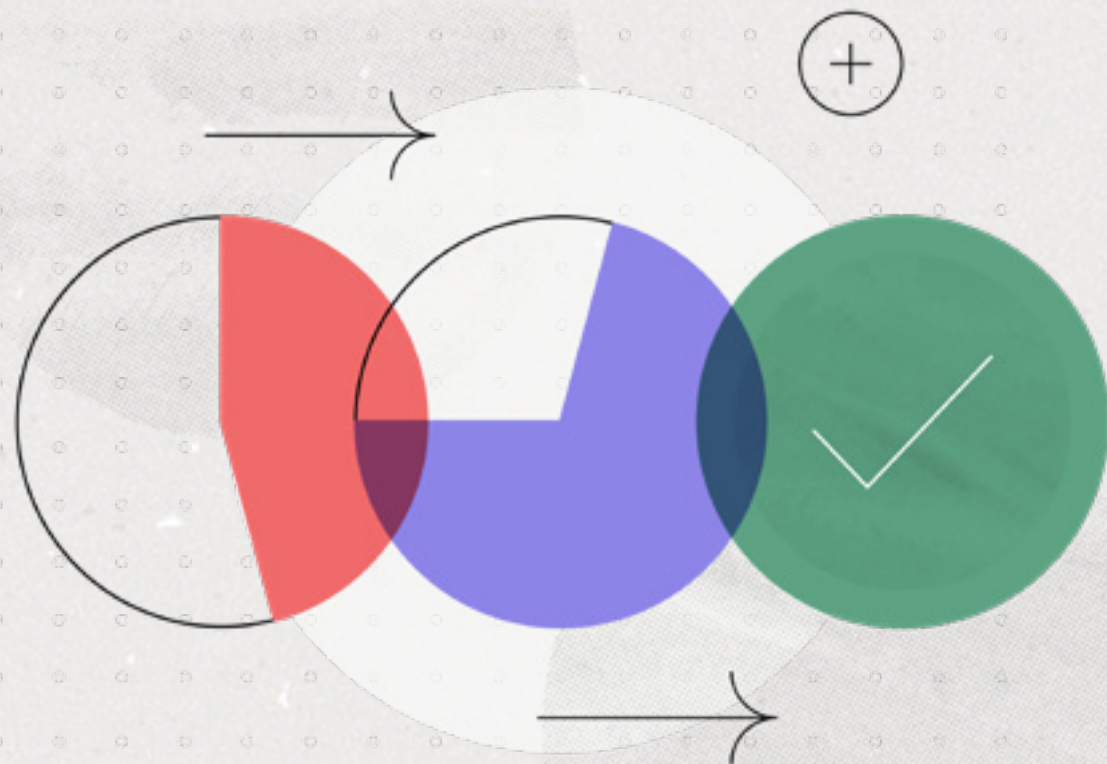
Unlock the power of cross-team collaboration .....25





01

# The state of collaboration



Internal collaboration has been increasing for years. According to Rob Cross, Madden Professor of Global Leadership at Babson College, **collaborative work has risen more than 50% over the past decade** and now consumes 85% of the average knowledge worker's workweek. The pandemic poured fuel on the fire.

50%

Collaborative work has risen more than 50% over the past decade.

85%

Consumes 85% of the average knowledge worker's workweek.

Many companies are organized *functionally*, but modern work requires *cross-functional* collaboration to succeed. That's a problem. All around the world, there are hundreds of thousands of directors, executives, and leaders struggling to coordinate diverse teams and complex work. The challenge isn't solely organizational, either.

Companies run on increasingly-complex networks of technologies. New challenges need new tools. However, teams rarely implement these technologies identically or with compatibility in mind. Departments, teams, and informal clusters of employees develop their own processes, making their work unintelligible to those on the outside.

Without a systems thinker (someone who knows how to construct a cohesive process from ambiguity) to oversee everything, dismantling these procedural silos and setting up a cohesive system are both difficult tasks.

Because teams can't collaborate effectively, their work slows down and deadlines slip. Team members get frustrated. Clients and customers do, too. However, there's no rule book for how to do the work that so many knowledge workers perform.

But there are teams out there achieving outstanding collaboration. They have used impactful processes and workflows to unite cross-functional teams, helping them achieve more together than they could independently.

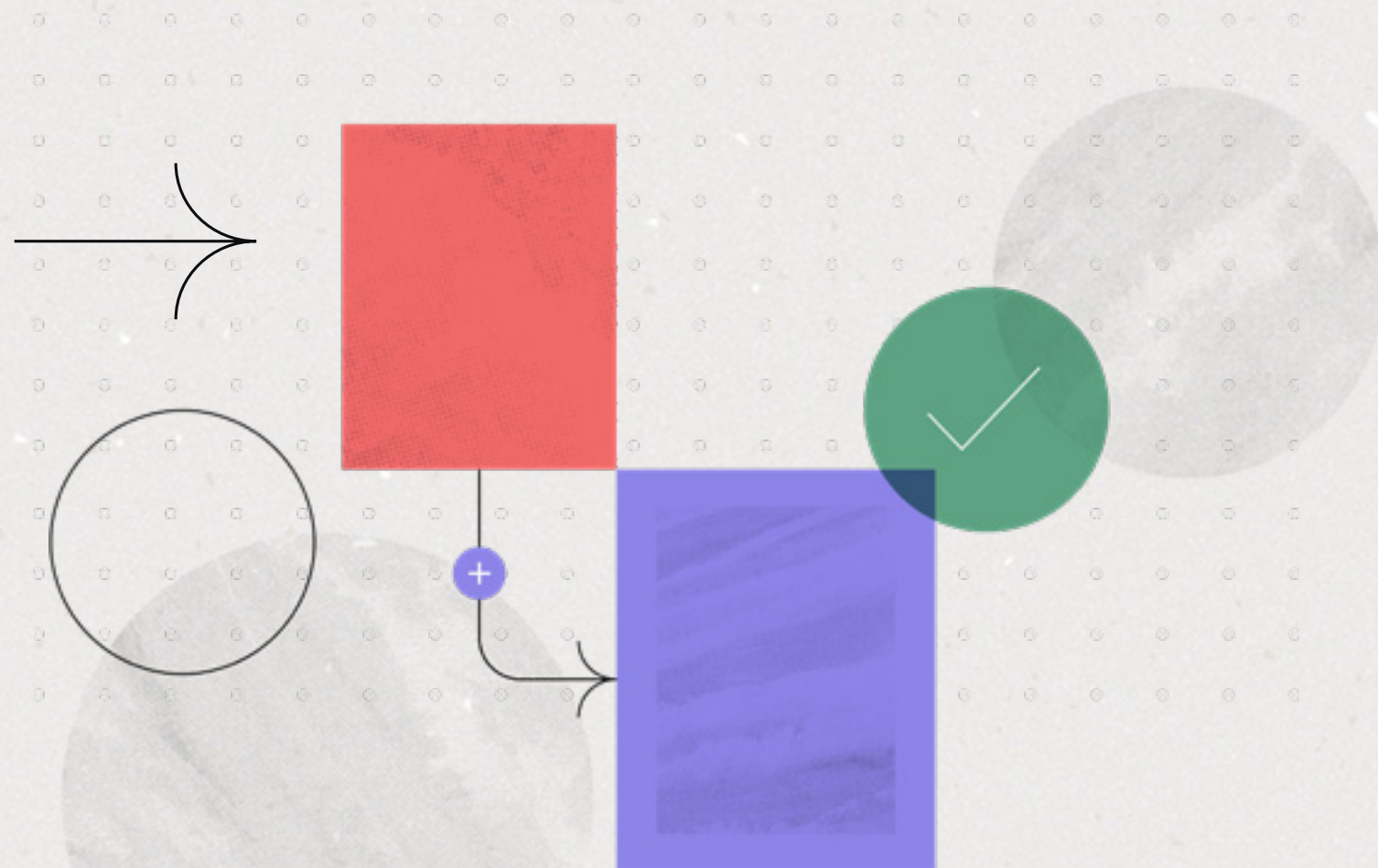
We've been lucky enough to partner with the brightest and best among them. We've studied their successes and learned from their missteps. We've condensed their experience into this eBook—a guide to cross-team collaboration.

We will share everything that's made them successful: their strategies, techniques, and insights for working well together. You will learn how to translate North Stars into team goals and goals into projects. You will uncover the impact of a centralized platform for content, communication, and coordination. You will discover how impactful workflows drive project success. And finally you will see all of this in action with three exceptional examples of cross-functional collaboration.



02

## How to unite your teams to reach your goals



All leaders are concerned about collaboration, but few think about the processes that allow teams to do it well. Without effective processes, work slows down, deadlines slip, and quality declines.

As **Zoom** developed into a global video communications powerhouse, its leaders faced just this challenge: How can they scale effortlessly and efficiently?

“We wanted a standard view of everything going on so we could prioritize work and make business decisions,” said Ariel Chavan, Head of Security Product and Program Management. “We needed visibility, accountability, and consistency in how work gets done, and knowledge sharing across teams.”

---

All teams, no matter the company, need to cut away roundabout work, tear down silos, and free their workforce to focus on the things that matter most. In short, teams need a way to streamline and codify processes so there isn't any doubt about what the next step is.

We've condensed the best strategies into four simple steps that'll take you from organizational chaos to calm workflow-driven serenity.

- 1 SET TEAM-WIDE GOALS
- 2 IDENTIFY PROJECTS THAT LADDER INTO EACH GOAL
- 3 CONSOLIDATE YOUR CONTENT, COMMUNICATION, AND COORDINATION INTO ONE PLACE
- 4 BUILD OUT CROSS-FUNCTIONAL WORKFLOWS

# 1 Set team-wide goals

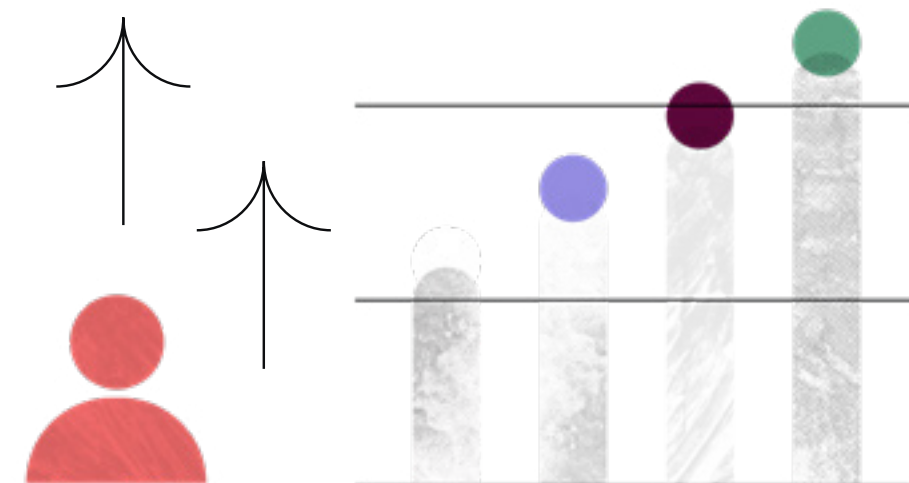
Impactful work starts with one to three North Stars. They cover the big goal (or goals) that your entire organization strives towards.

For guidance on setting company strategy, read our eBooks:

CREATING CLARITY →

HOW TO BUILD AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY →

High-performing organizations translate those sweeping North Stars into narrower team-specific goals. And for good reason: **If a leader gives a team a handful of specific, ambitious goals, their performance jumps into the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile.**



That improvement holds true across most **goal-setting methodologies**: SMART or FAST goals, **OKRs**, KPIs, KRAs, and others.

But narrowing down a high-level, company-wide North Star into a team-level goal can be difficult. There are a myriad of ways you *could* do so and, with many options, leaders sometimes face decision paralysis. To narrow down your focus, ask these three questions:

- 
- 1 What are your priorities as a team?
  - 2 What are three big initiatives that your team will focus on this fiscal year?
  - 3 What are you NOT going to focus on as a team?
- 

Although goal-setting works best when it cascades down from the top, we recommend you ask these questions to team members at all levels. For example, within a sales org, the Chief Revenue Officer, sales director, business development manager, and SDRs should all ask, “What three initiatives are we focusing on this year?”

Tapping into diverse perspectives helps you surface new ideas, approaches, and ways of tackling challenges.

Once each team has collected and collated responses, it’s up to leaders to select the most important priorities and cut the distractions.

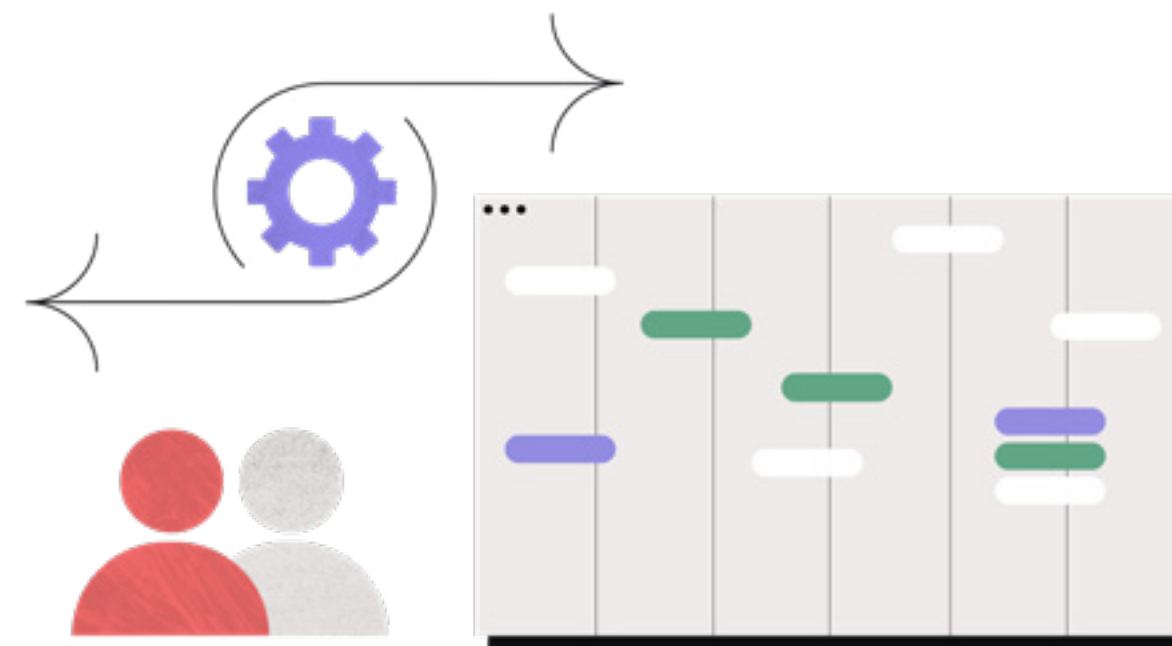
When you have selected team goals, communicate your decisions relentlessly—via internal memos, meetings, and all-hands. By the end of this step, every single employee should understand their team’s goals and how they contribute to larger company-wide objectives.



2

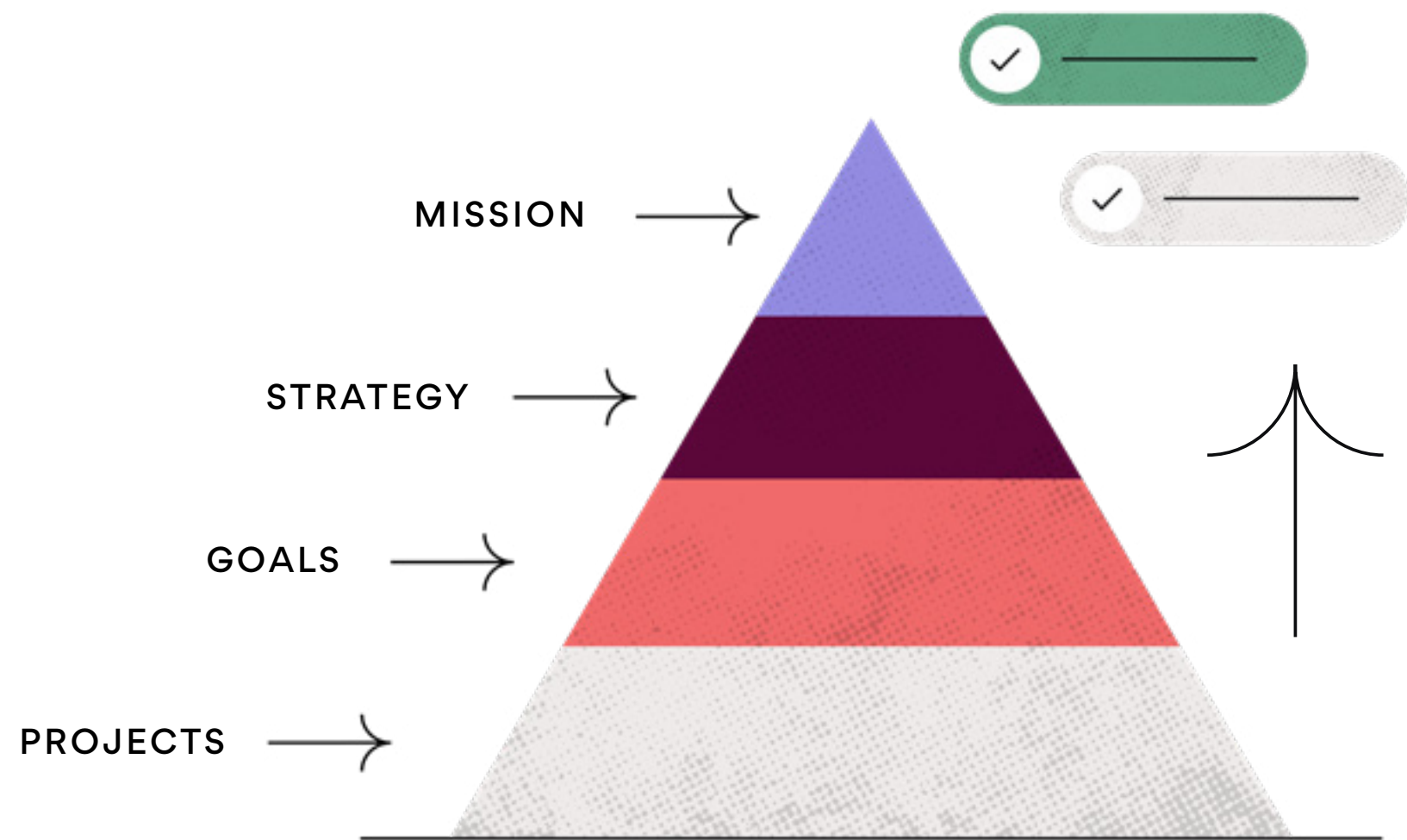
## Identify projects that ladder into each goal

Your teams can't achieve broad, ambitious goals in one leap. Instead, you need to break down their objectives into smaller chunks. This makes work less daunting and more manageable, all the while affording you the opportunity to identify all stakeholders needed for the project.



Unfortunately, the connection between objectives and projects is often lacking. **Less than half of all employees understand how their day-to-day work contributed to broader goals.**

After setting goals, the best-performing teams identify the projects and initiatives that will drive progress toward them. This creates a cascading plan of action, flowing from your company mission at the top of the pyramid to the work at the base.



#### MISSION:

Your organization's fundamental reason for being. Everyone should know this by heart and feel connected to it.

#### STRATEGY:

This is the high-level roadmap showing how you're going to continually pursue your mission.

#### GOALS:

Medium-term measurable objectives.

#### PROJECTS:

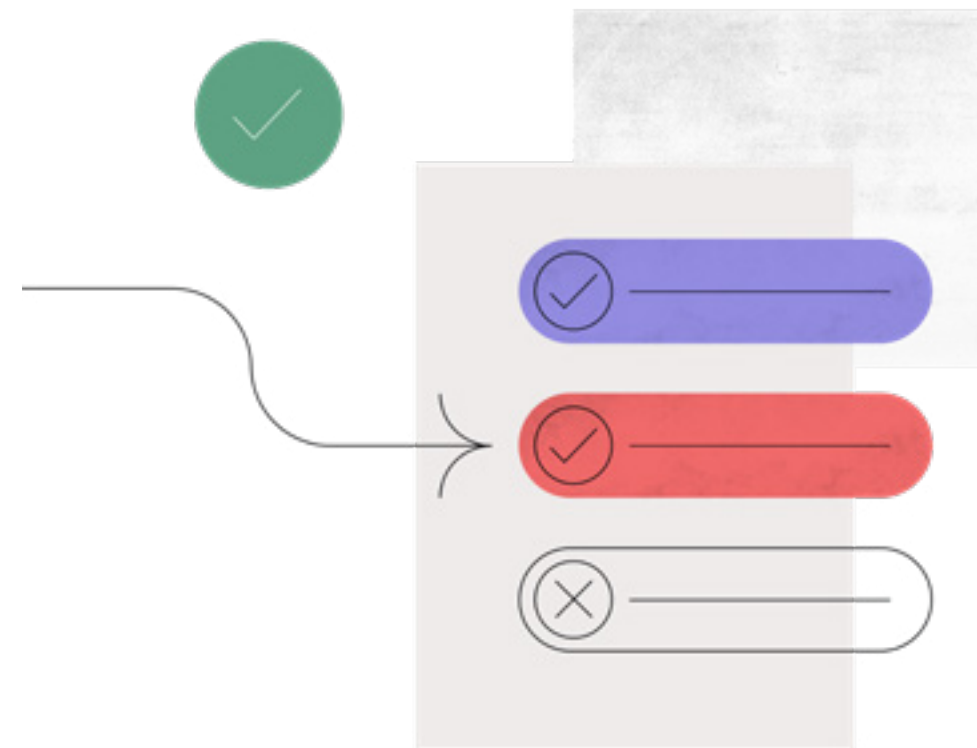
Discrete campaigns, initiatives, and projects. They're usually short chunks of cross-functional work that directly drive progress towards your goals.

Considering that projects tend to be cross-functional, it's important they're not identified, planned, and resourced in a silo. Instead, create cross-functional planning groups with input from all committed teams. With diverse perspectives, you can unlock new ideas and fresh approaches, while also reducing the risk of oversight, misinterpretation, and mismanagement.

But there's one level below projects—tasks.

---

They're the individual steps your team members and their cross-functional colleagues need to take in order to complete a project. We'll dive into those next.





3

## Consolidate your content, communication, and coordination into one place

---

To efficiently execute their tasks, cross-functional teams need a shared space to plan, communicate, and work. Unfortunately, they usually don't have one. **The average company uses 110 separate SaaS tools and services**—up from just *eight* in 2015. That proliferation of technology has turned our workspaces into fractured landscapes where content, communication, and coordination get siloed in competing tools.

## Think about a cross-functional product team working on a new user interface.

The interface designer does their work in Figma and sends it to their colleagues—content managers, data scientists, front-end developers, product marketers, and brand managers—for review. But few members of the wider team are trained on Figma. The content managers work on Drive and the company's CMS. The data scientists work on Snowflake. The front-end developers work on Jira. And so on. Without integrations between each piece of technology, or an understanding of how to navigate the design team's software, collaboration breaks down.

That's the fallout from just *one* tool. Imagine what happens when you have a technology stack of over one hundred, as most companies do.

Without a single source of truth for planning, tracking, and executing work, teams can't align their efforts. What modern—and increasingly distributed—organizations need is a way to consolidate their tools on one platform. They need a way to tie everything together so content, communication, and collaboration flow seamlessly.

## That's where work management comes in.

Work management is a systematic approach to orchestrating an organization's work—be it a project, an ongoing process, or routine tasks—to provide the clarity teams need in order to hit their goals faster. It's about coordinating people and work across all levels of an organization to ensure that everyone has the information they need to accomplish the work that matters most.

A work management platform doesn't replace your complex technology stack. Instead, it acts as a centralized hub. Your other tools integrate with it, consolidating the three C's necessary for work: content, communication, and collaboration. Instead of working across dozens of different silos, cross-functional teams can work together on one platform.

With a single source of truth for the three C's, everything becomes clearer and calmer. Your team can switch from a reactive mindset to a proactive mindset by looking at the entire system in which you operate. You no longer worry about who is doing what and by when. Instead, you can see responsibilities and accountability across your organization. The days of scrolling through reams of emails and searching for long-lost documents are gone, too. Work management organizes everything.

With a solid foundation to work from, teams can turn to process—the workflows that underpin what we do and how we do it.



4

## Build out cross-functional workflows

“Build the plane while flying it.”

For years now, that’s been the mantra of new businesses. Increasingly, however, leaders are moving away from the ad hoc mantra. Instead, they’re thinking through things *before* they start—sharing ideas, designing processes, and working out any bugs.

---

That’s where workflows come in.

A workflow is an end-to-end process that helps teams meet their goals by connecting the right people to the right data at the right time, every time. Workflows are like a map with step by step instructions for navigating *someplace new*.

Think of the process behind creating quarterly objectives. A head of strategy must collect ideas for upcoming goals and review past performance. They need to draft new objectives and plan their scope. After approval from their line manager, the objectives move to socialization, and execution. As cross-functional teams begin to work, the head of strategy turns to tracking, finalization, and reporting.

But workflows are more than just *passive* maps. They automate large parts of the process like reporting, information sharing, and tracking. They free both team leaders and individual contributors from “work about work,” the low-value tasks keeping them away from their real jobs. With more time and energy to spend on high-value work, their productivity skyrockets.

Although specific workflows feel very different, they all pull from the same collection of building blocks. These basic components are flexible enough to fit any application and work very well when built into a work management platform.

Here is a breakdown of the high-level components.

#### **PLANNING:**

The project team gathers unstructured information and begins brainstorming for the project. The project leader receives requests for cross-functional collaboration and assigns work to their teammates based on capacity, efficiency, and skill sets.

---

#### **EXECUTION:**

The team begins to execute their work, creating, proofing, and refining deliverables through a feedback loop. Along the way, the project leader tracks the project’s progress and reports to other stakeholders.

---

#### **REVIEW:**

Leaders and executive stakeholders review and approve work. If a deliverable doesn’t meet the required standard, the workflow can circle back to an earlier step. At the end, the team lead assesses their team’s performance and highlights any areas for improvement.

While many organizations use the Plan-Execute-Review cycle, they do so informally. Workflows give rigidity to the process by spelling out who is doing what and by when. They turn the Plan-Execute-Review cycle into a collaboration engine, uniting teams and driving exceptional work.

Crucially, workflows grant cross-functional teams a common language. Instead of constantly translating between different department-specific processes, terminology, and jargon, everyone sees the same thing, which creates clarity around how people will handle work.

Workflows are malleable by design. They can bend and bow to fit your organizational intricacies and nuances. Complex processes may well include many building blocks, diligently following the project flow from one step to the next. Simpler workflows, however, may require only a handful of steps.

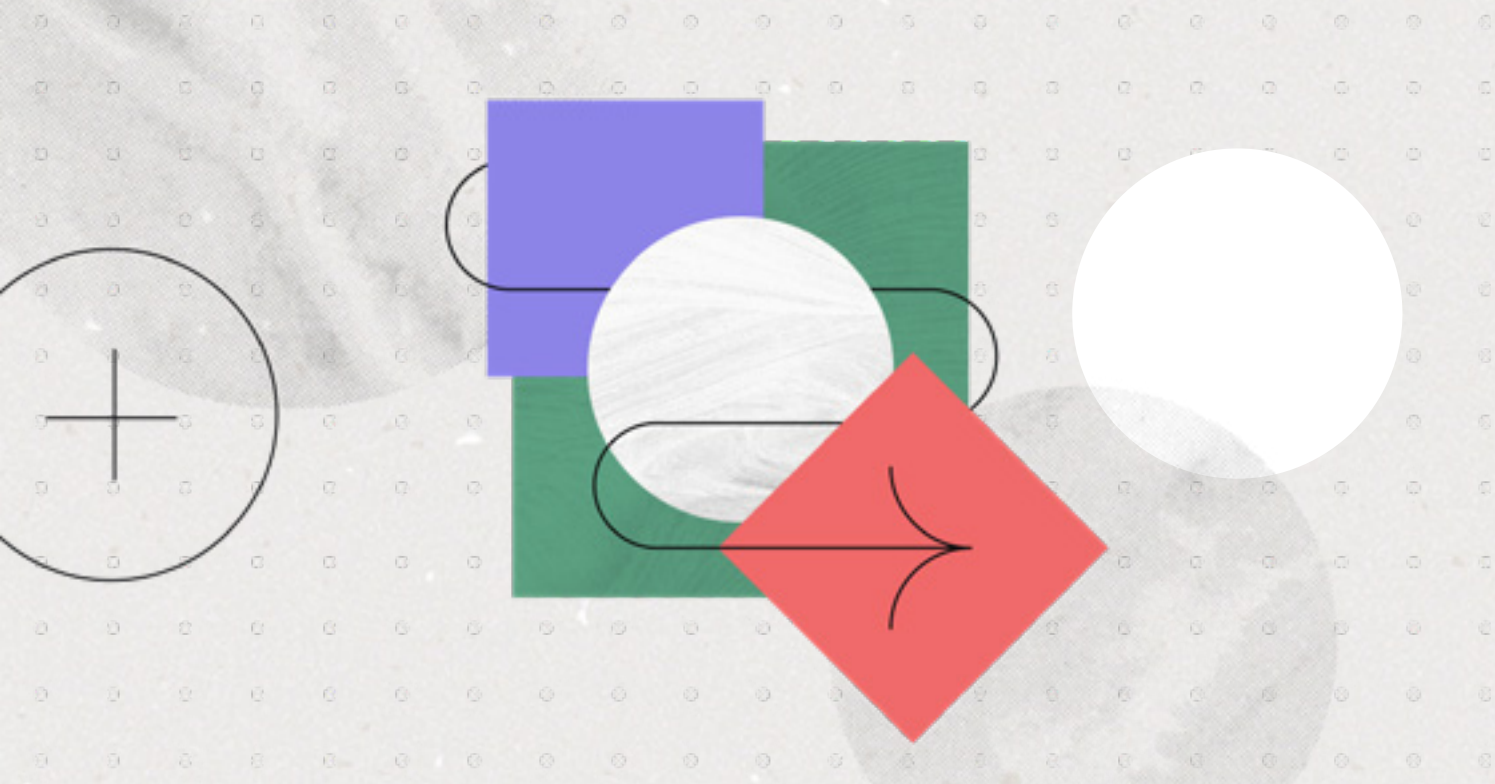
Implementing workflows—or building the airplane *before* taking off—can transform your team. They can calm the chaos and disorganization that undermines your organization’s work. With an organized single source of truth, you can effortlessly coordinate cross-functional work and drive teams towards their goals.

Workflows create clarity, too. By tearing down operational and informational silos, everyone sees the same thing. There’s no more ad hoc processes and tribal knowledge available only to a select few. Instead, workflows democratize the ability for any user to set up cohesive processes, report on progress, and share impactful approaches between teams. But your teammates might need a little encouragement to contribute. That’s where system thinking comes in.



03

## What does great cross-team collaboration look like?



“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.”

Michael Jordan’s famous quote encapsulates the power of workflows. Organizations can’t rely on individual brilliance to design products, land sales, and execute marketing campaigns. That might work for a little while, but it’s neither sustainable nor scalable. Eventually, team members will burn out and their results will disappear.

To win championships, cross-functional teams have to work together. Collaboration is the grease that makes teamwork *work*. It helps teams accomplish more together than any individual could on their own.

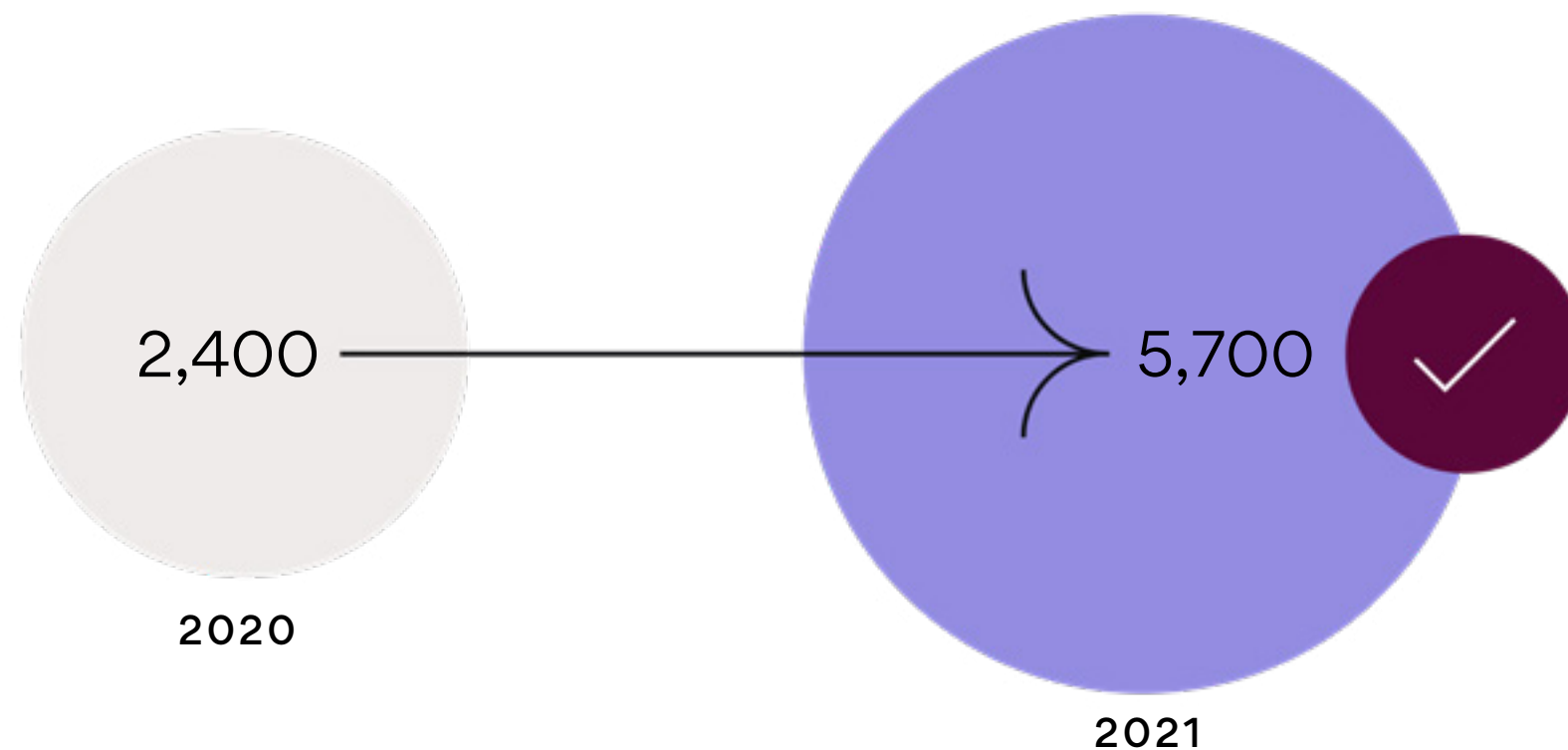
Although collaboration means different things to different organizations, there are common threads. Below, we have profiled three high-performing teams, unpacking how their teams work together so effectively.



# Align your teams

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Zoom's** headcount spiked from 2,400 in January 2020 to more than 5,700 in June 2021.

Such rapid growth made cross-functional collaboration more difficult than it had been when they were smaller. Zoom's leadership knew they needed a better way to cultivate and support cross-functional collaboration.



They needed a platform that could bridge the functional divide, uniting sales, engineering, marketing, customer success, and all other departments. Enter their work management platform. They rolled it out across five departments initially, creating a single source of truth and facilitating cross-functional collaboration. Suddenly, technical and non-technical employees could collaborate in one place. Everyone knew what their colleagues were doing, creating trust and clarity across the organization. But the change also went deeper than that.

“[Our work management platform] is our classroom to help people learn a new way to manage projects,” said Gregory Daniels, Project Manager for Business Services and IT at Zoom. “We use it to teach fundamental project management skills and how to work in a repeatable, scalable way to achieve results.”





# Supercharge your productivity

**Awin** is the largest affiliate marketing technology platform in the world. While the Berlin-based company was no stranger to work management tools, they lacked consistency across the organization. Different departments used different tools to manage their work, creating silos and preventing cross-functional collaboration.

---

What they needed was a centralized platform, one that could simplify organization and integrate with systems that already worked for the company.

After trailing a range of different options, Asana, which was already being used by the company's 30-person strong marketing team, emerged as the preferred choice. They decided the best way to introduce the platform to the whole company would be to show concrete examples of its efficiency. Because they like a challenge, they decided to test their new system during the Black Friday period.

“During the Black Friday period, it was common for 600 tasks to be processed at one time,” said Felix Witte, Director Corporate Development & Strategy, AWIN AG. “Being able to communicate inside tasks and view their progress at the same time was a huge advantage for us.”

The sales team used Asana to manage campaigns leading up to the mass shopping event, processing hundreds of individual tasks. With this win under their belt, Awin introduced Asana company-wide.

“The usual confusing email ping-pong is no longer necessary,” explained Felix. “Those involved in the project can keep track of things with Asana and complicated mapping in spreadsheets is no longer necessary.”

Since introducing a work management platform and designing impactful processes, they’ve learned to work faster and smarter. In fact, they’ve improved efficiency so much that they’ve managed to introduce a four-day workweek.



# Clear the confusion

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, what about launching a new perfume?

When the **House of Parfums Christian Dior** decides to create a new fragrance, it's a complex, cross-functional endeavor with teammates from packaging and purchasing, to legal and R&D.

---

In the past, the cross-functional team relied on complicated spreadsheets to track information and task statuses. At each new milestone, they'd manually enter data. When a stakeholder needed an update, they'd copy content out of the spreadsheet. The entire process was unreliable and opaque. But things are different now. Today, Parfums Christian Dior uses a work management platform.

“Email and spreadsheets turn off Gen Z employees, but [our work management platform] is playful,” said Thibault Delavault, Marketing Planning & Process Manager at Parfums Christian Dior. “For young people, it will help Dior become more attractive as an employer. They want a digital environment with the tools they need to do their best work.”

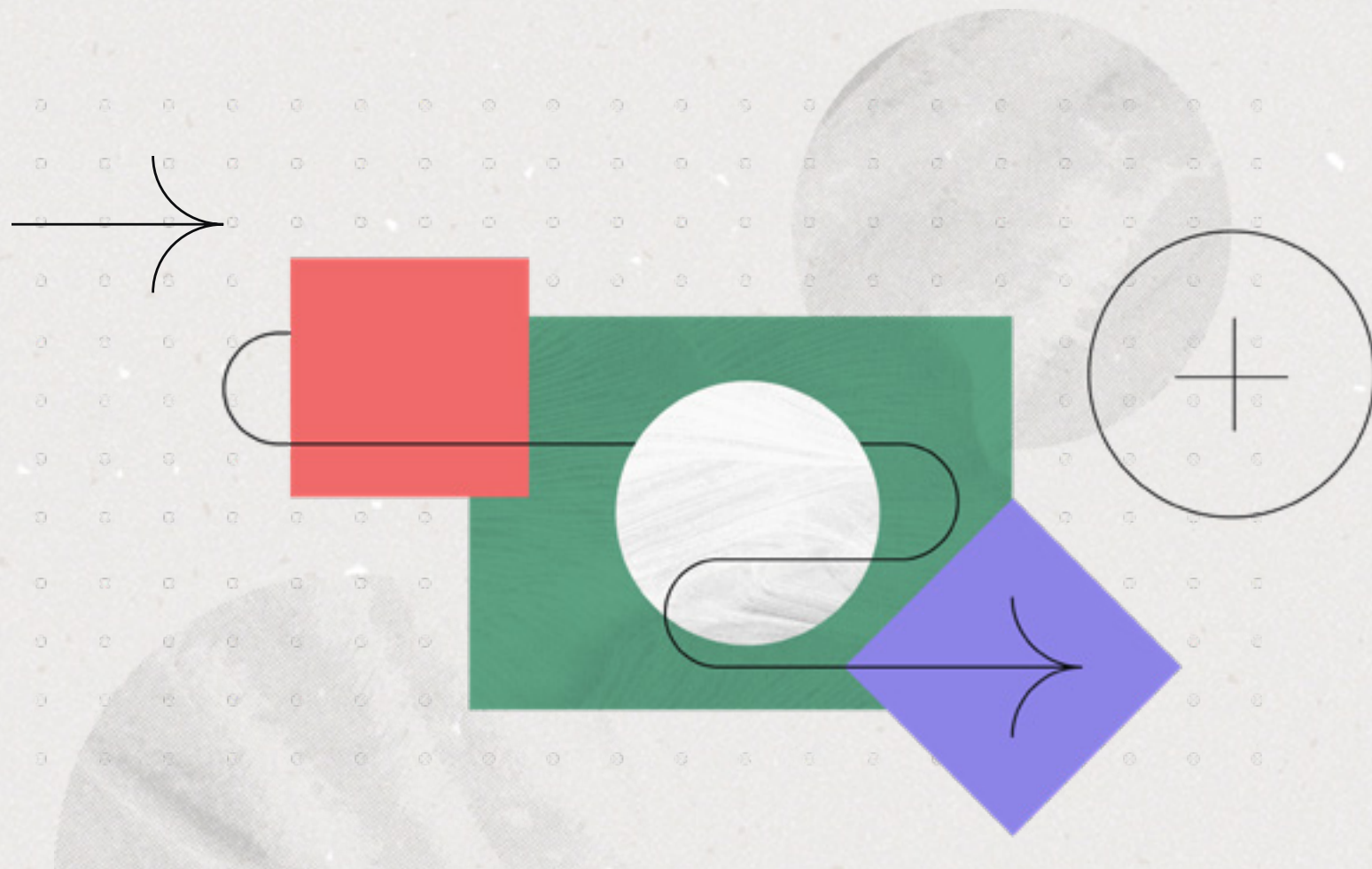
But it’s more than just playfulness. With a work management platform, every last byte of data is transparent, accessible, and reliable. Instead of hiding content within a spreadsheet, it’s shared with everyone by default.

---



04

## Unlock the power of cross-team collaboration



Work hasn't always been as cross-functional as it is today. Decades ago, roles were more siloed. People worked on their thing, rarely collaborating with those outside their niche. But times have changed.

Today, cross-functional work *is* work.

Rossa Shanks, former Chief Marketing Officer for B2B at Dow Jones, likens modern leadership roles to that of an orchestra conductor. “There are a lot of teams that need to play different parts and come in at different times, eventually crescendoing in a launch,” he said. Marketing is the strings section, sales is brass, and product is percussion. Their roles, while individually valuable, are part of a more important whole.

---

Without a conductor orchestrating their work, teams will fall into a discordant mess. In the workplace, that means missed deadlines, frustrated employees, and slow-moving projects.

But you can be a great conductor. You can unite your *functional* teams and help them produce exceptional *cross-functional* work.

Following this guide and harnessing both workflows and work management will unite your teams and promote cross-team partnerships. When you do so, your teams will achieve great things, deliver fantastic work, and drive progress toward your goals.

## ABOUT ASANA

Asana helps  
teams orchestrate  
their work, from  
small projects to  
strategic initiatives.

Asana helps teams orchestrate their work, from small projects to strategic initiatives. Headquartered in San Francisco, CA, Asana has more than 107,000 paying customers and millions of free organizations across 190 countries. Global customers such as Amazon, Japan Airlines, Sky, and Under Armour rely on Asana to manage everything from company objectives to digital transformation to product launches and marketing campaigns.

For more information, visit [www.asana.com](https://www.asana.com).

---





Discover how Asana can help  
your teams collaborate.

Talk to us today.