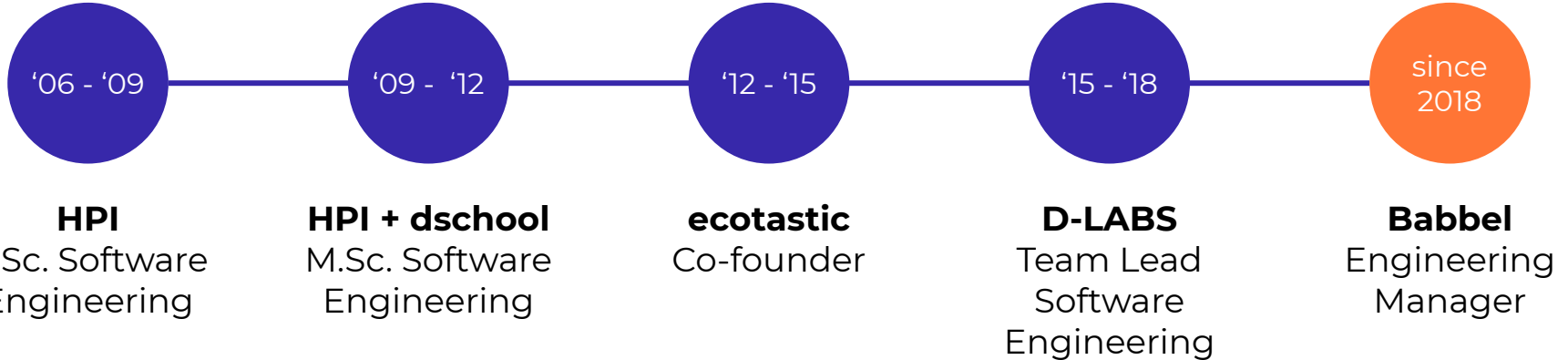


+Babbel

# Building Babbel

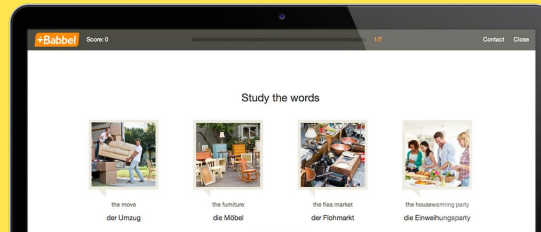
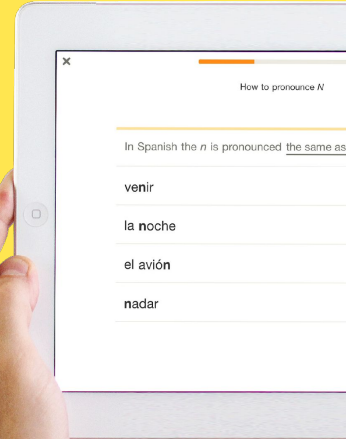
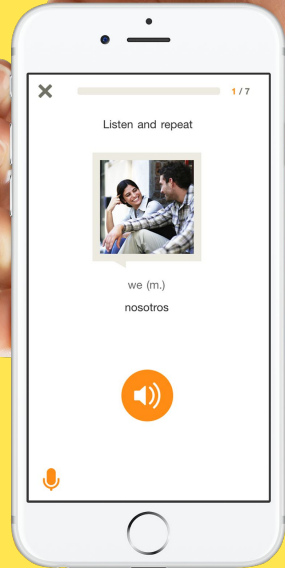
Guest lecture @ Hasso Plattner Institute  
Fabian Lindenberg  
February 2021



# Language learning

15 languages

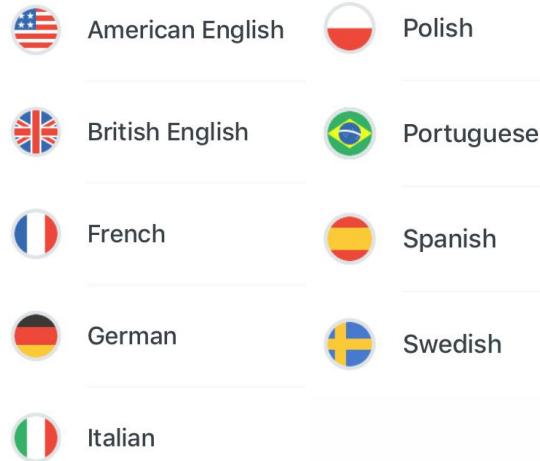
Subscription model



# Our languages

## L1

9 Display languages



## L2

15 Learning languages



# Enable real-life conversations

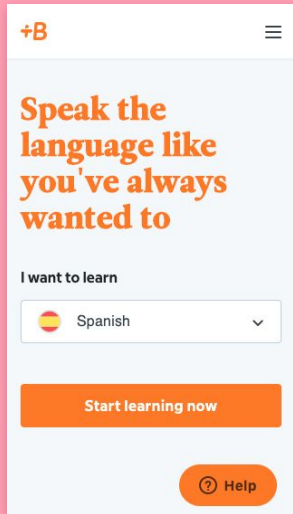
Empower learners for conversations in the real world

**73% of our customers feel set for a real-life conversation after 5 hours with Babbel**

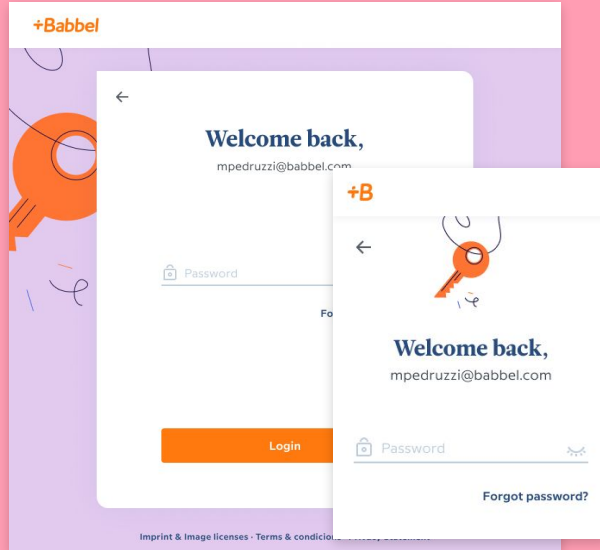


# Product impressions

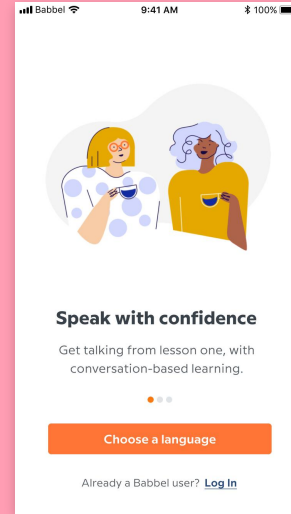
Landing Pages



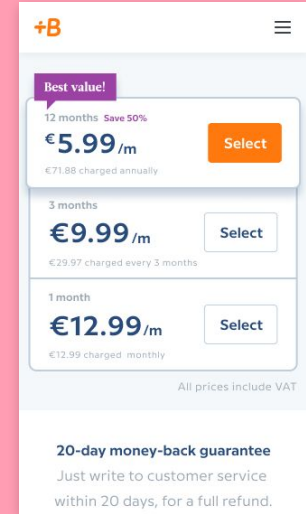
Signup/Login Flow



Product Tour



Price Page



# Product impressions

## Learning Path & Learning Activity

The desktop interface features a top navigation bar with the Babbel logo, 'Home', 'My Level', 'More Courses', 'Review', and 'Help' links. A user profile icon and 'Username' are on the right. The main content area is titled 'Hola, Helga' and includes a sub-header 'Find lessons and reviews, chosen for you'. A vertical list of lessons is shown, with 'Muito Prazer Part 1' highlighted. A yellow callout box with the text 'Make it stick!' and 'Review your words and phrases, new and old.' is overlaid on the lesson. A 'Review now' button is visible. To the right, a 'My progress' section shows 'Pre-intermediate Course 1' with '1/12 lessons completed' and a score of 10234. Below this is a 'My activity' section with a weekly progress bar and a 'Daily challenge' section.

## Recommendations

The mobile app interface shows the 'Hola, Helga' screen. It displays 'Pre-intermediate Course 1' with '0/12 lessons completed'. A notification states 'You reviewed. Memory boost complete!'. A 'RECOMMENDED FOR YOU' section features a 'Recommended lesson' titled 'A ticket, please.' with an illustration of hands holding a ticket. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for Home, Courses, Review (12%), and Profile.

## Goal Setting

The mobile app interface shows the 'Set your goal' screen. The goal is set to 'My goal is challenging' with the description 'Frequent lessons and reviews'. A large number '8' is displayed, representing 'activities per week'. A slider is positioned below the number. A 'Next' button is at the bottom.

## Learning reminders

The mobile app interface shows the 'Build your learning schedule' screen. It prompts the user to 'Turn learning into a habit by linking it to your daily routine.' and asks 'When would you like to learn?'. Two options are shown: 'Around breakfast' and 'On the go'. Below this, it asks 'What time?' with a dropdown set to '04:30 PM' and 'How often?' with a selection of '3 times per week' (F, S, S). A 'Let's do it!' button is at the bottom.

# Product impressions

## Lesson Trainers

The screenshot shows the Babbel app interface for a lesson trainer. At the top left is the Babbel logo. A progress bar is at the top right, showing 7/9. The main heading is "Speak David's part in the conversation". Below it, a short paragraph reads: "David is on holiday in Granada and tries to use his Spanish skills in a small shop...". There are two speech bubbles: the first from a female character says "¡Hola! Hello!" and the second from a male character says "Hola, ¿cuánto cuesta eso? Hello, how much does that cost?".

## Review Vocabulary

The screenshot shows the Babbel app interface for reviewing vocabulary. The title is "How would you like to review?". There are four options: "Flashcards" (with a card icon), "Listen" (with a headphones icon), "Speak" (with a speech bubble icon), and "Write" (with a pencil icon). At the bottom is a navigation bar with icons for Home, Courses, Review (highlighted with a red badge showing 75), and Natalia.

## Podcasts

The screenshot shows the Babbel app interface for a podcast. The title is "E.10 Sam, Ted, and the Zombie Apocalypse". Above the title is a cover image for "SAM & TED'S FAMOUS LAST WORDS". Below the title is a progress bar showing 04:19 / 24:43. At the bottom are playback controls: a play button, a 1x speed selector, and skip back and forward buttons.

## Games

The screenshot shows the Babbel app interface for a word game. It features a maze with a path leading to a goal. At the bottom, there are word tiles: "her", "ma", and a blank space. Below these are buttons for "no", "her", and "ma". At the very bottom are icons for volume, play/pause, hint, and a question mark.



# We are Babbel

**750 people in  
Berlin & NYC**  
(and counting...)

**60+ nationalities**

+Babbel

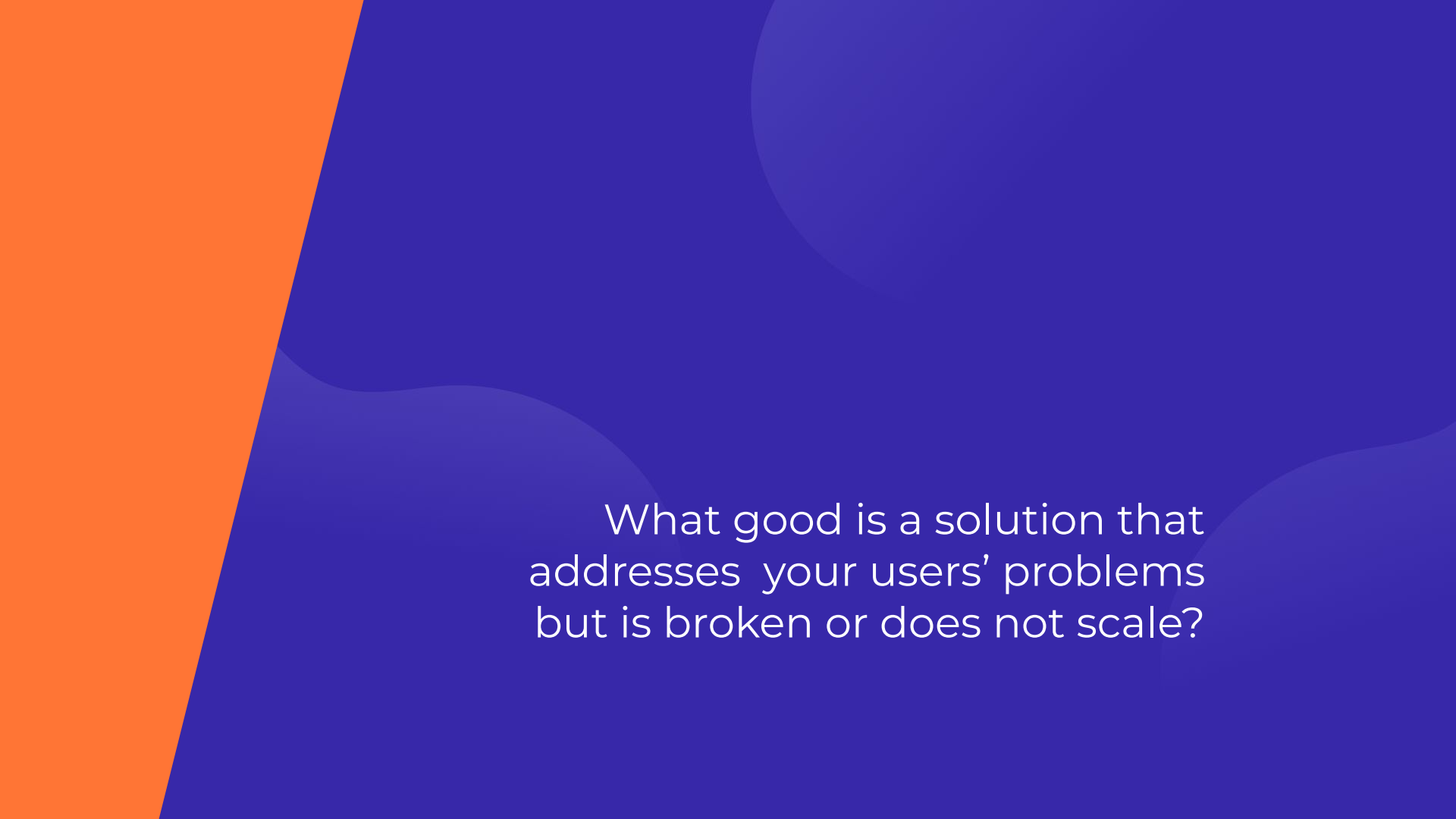


# **Product Development**

**Build the right thing.**

**Build the thing right.**

What good is a well-engineered solution  
to a problem no one has?



What good is a solution that  
addresses your users' problems  
but is broken or does not scale?

**Build the right thing.**

**Build the thing right.**

**This is hard!**



# Product Development at Babbel





What we do to (hopefully)  
build the right thing.

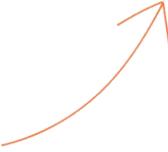


What we do to (hopefully)  
build the thing right.



[1]

Reading material  
on the subject



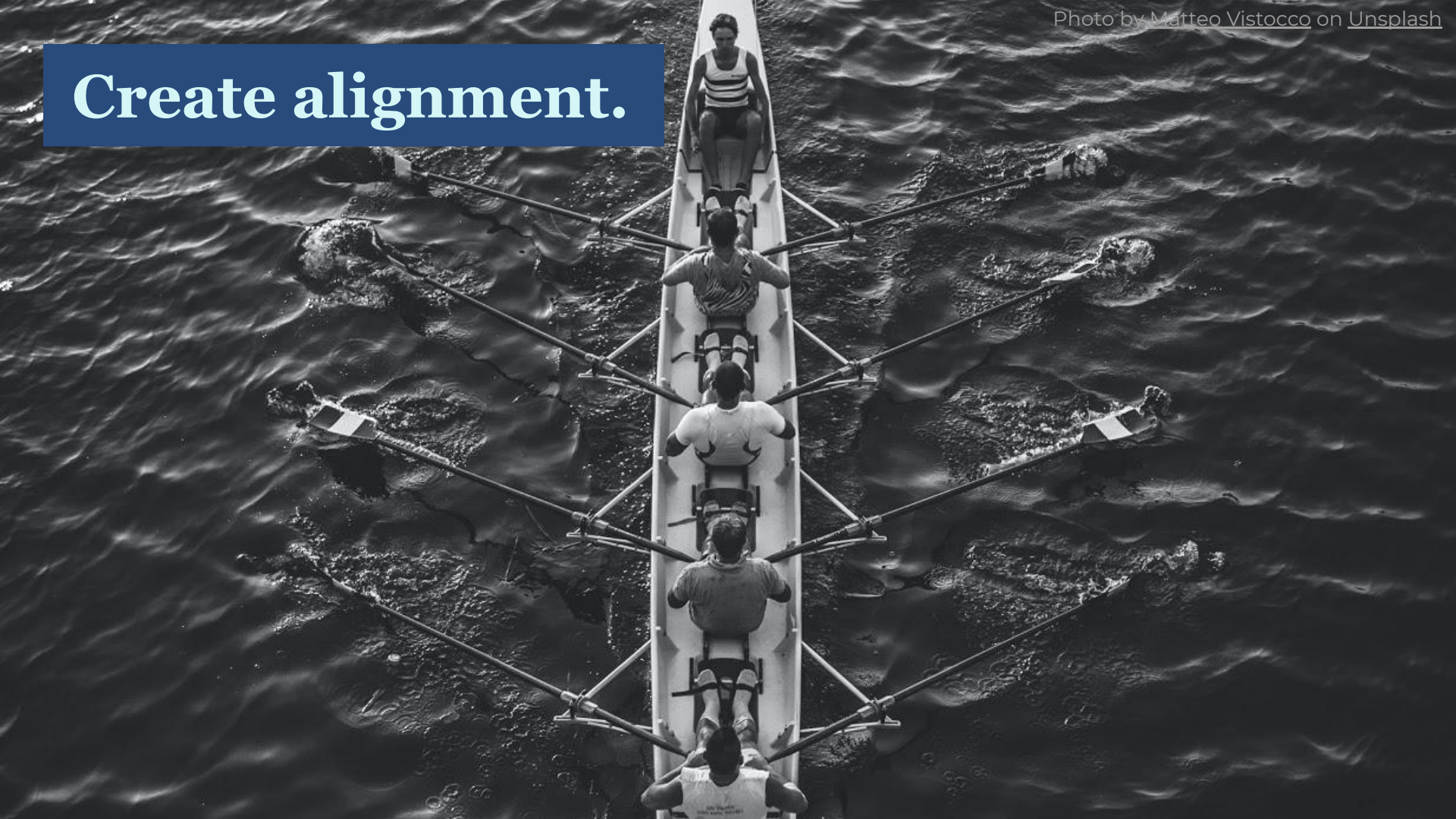


**Define what success looks like.**



**Create alignment.**

Photo by [Matteo Vistocco](#) on [Unsplash](#)



# Objectives and Key Results



The OKR framework was created by **Intel**'s management team in the '70s.



Former Intel employee **John Doerr** brought it to **Google** in early 2000's.



Google and many other companies have been using it successfully since.





# Objective

Where do we  
want to go?

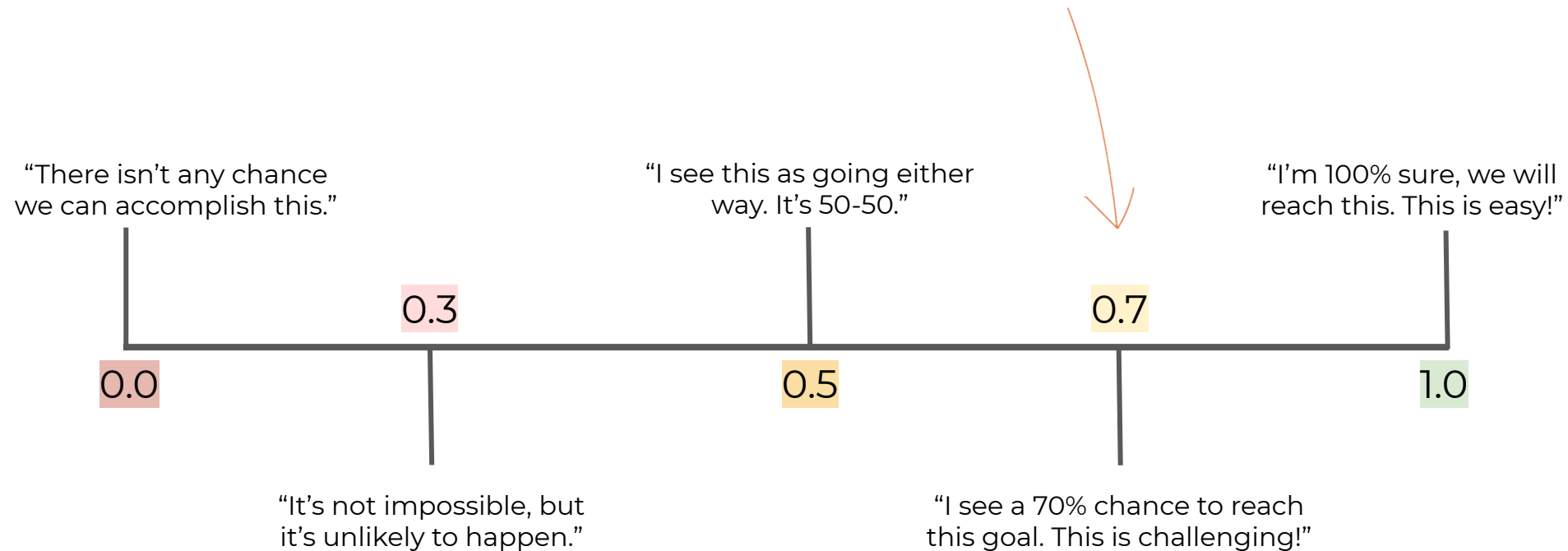


# Key Results

How do we know  
we're getting there?

**Choose stretch goals!**





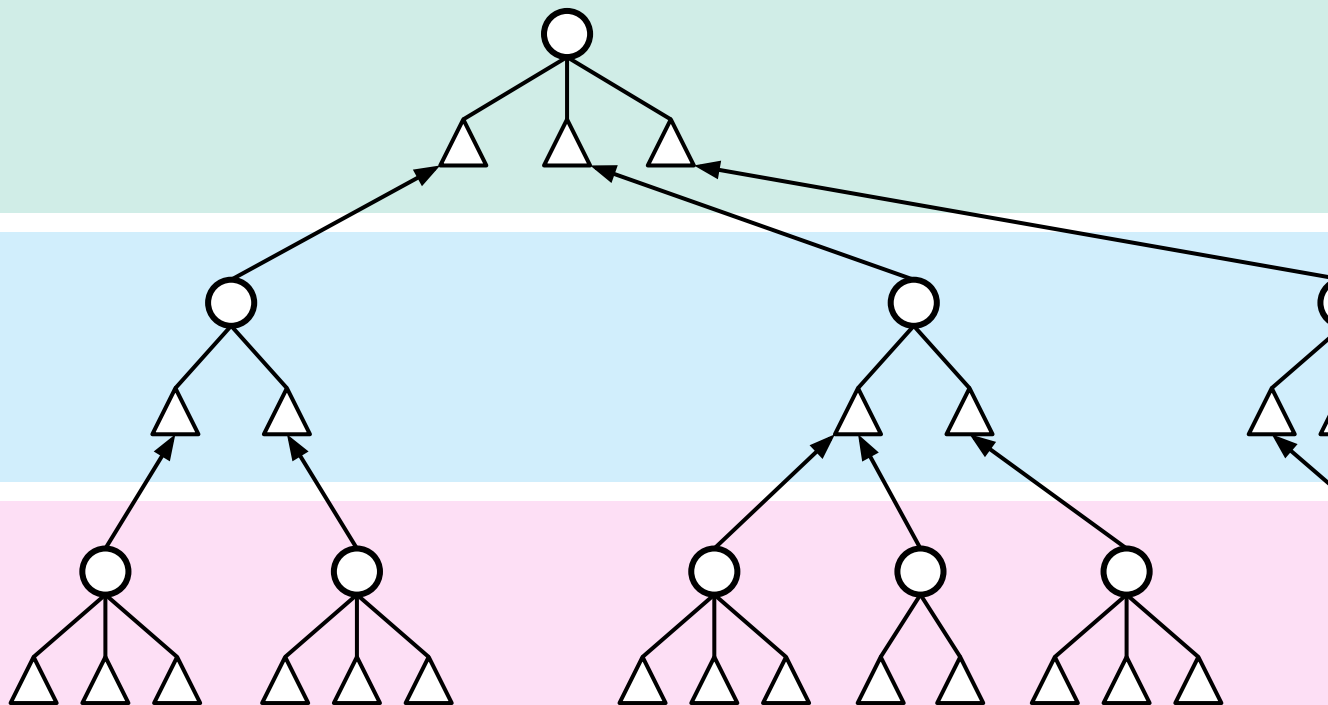
○ Objective

△ Key Result

Company  
OKR(s)

Department  
OKR(s)

Team  
OKR(s)



# Examples from Babel

---

Company  
OKR

**O1: Babel inspires me to spend more of my time learning.**

KR1:  $x\%$  increase in learning minutes per subscriber

KR2:  $y\%$  increase in free learning minutes per lead

KR3:  $z\%$  of learners using 3+ learning experiences

Product  
Group  
OKR

**O1: Learners recognize their progress early in their journey**

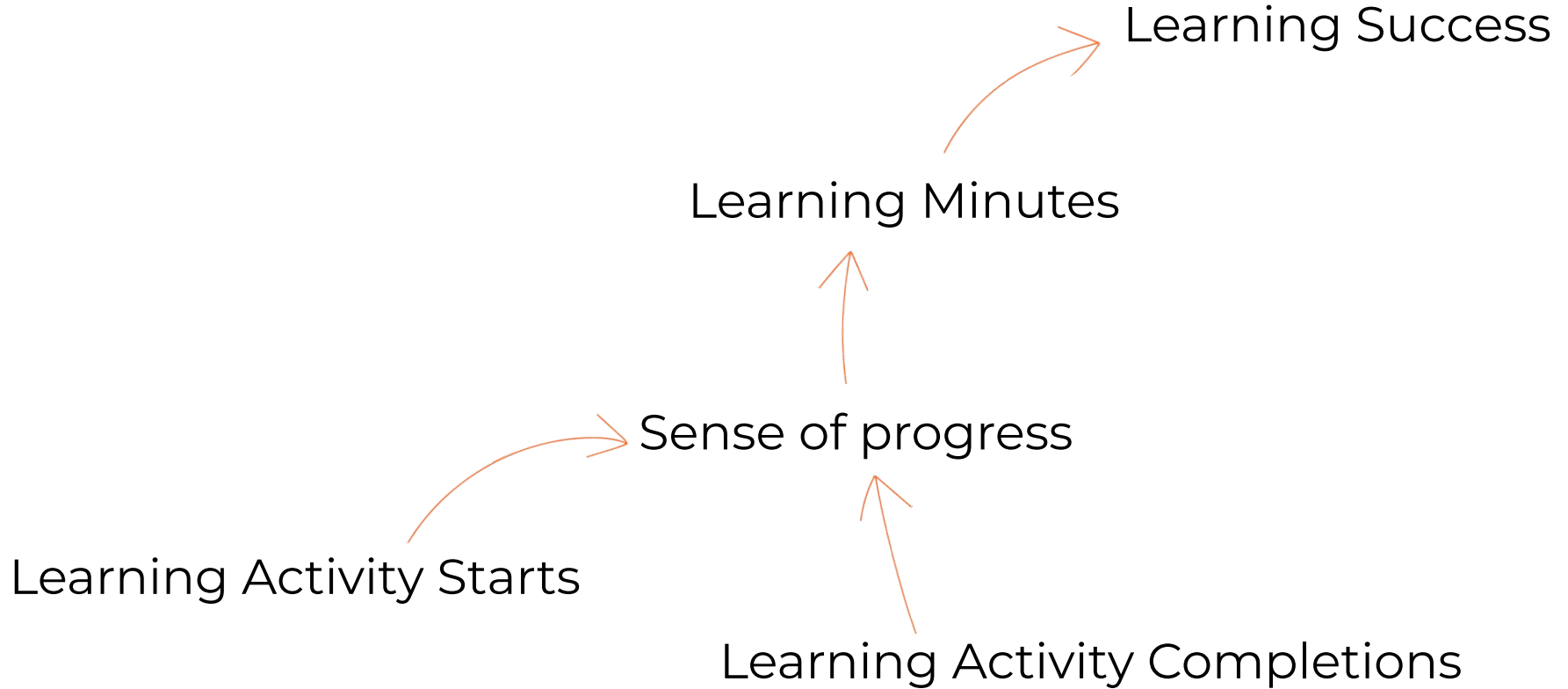
KR1: Increase average lesson completion rate in Week 1 by 20%

KR2: Increase the share of users who start at least 2 activities in Week 1 by 20%

Wait a minute!



There are a lot of hidden hypotheses.



# Dual-track agile



customer  
feedback

domain  
expertise

We **generate** hypotheses from:

...

user  
interviews

competitor  
analysis

market  
research

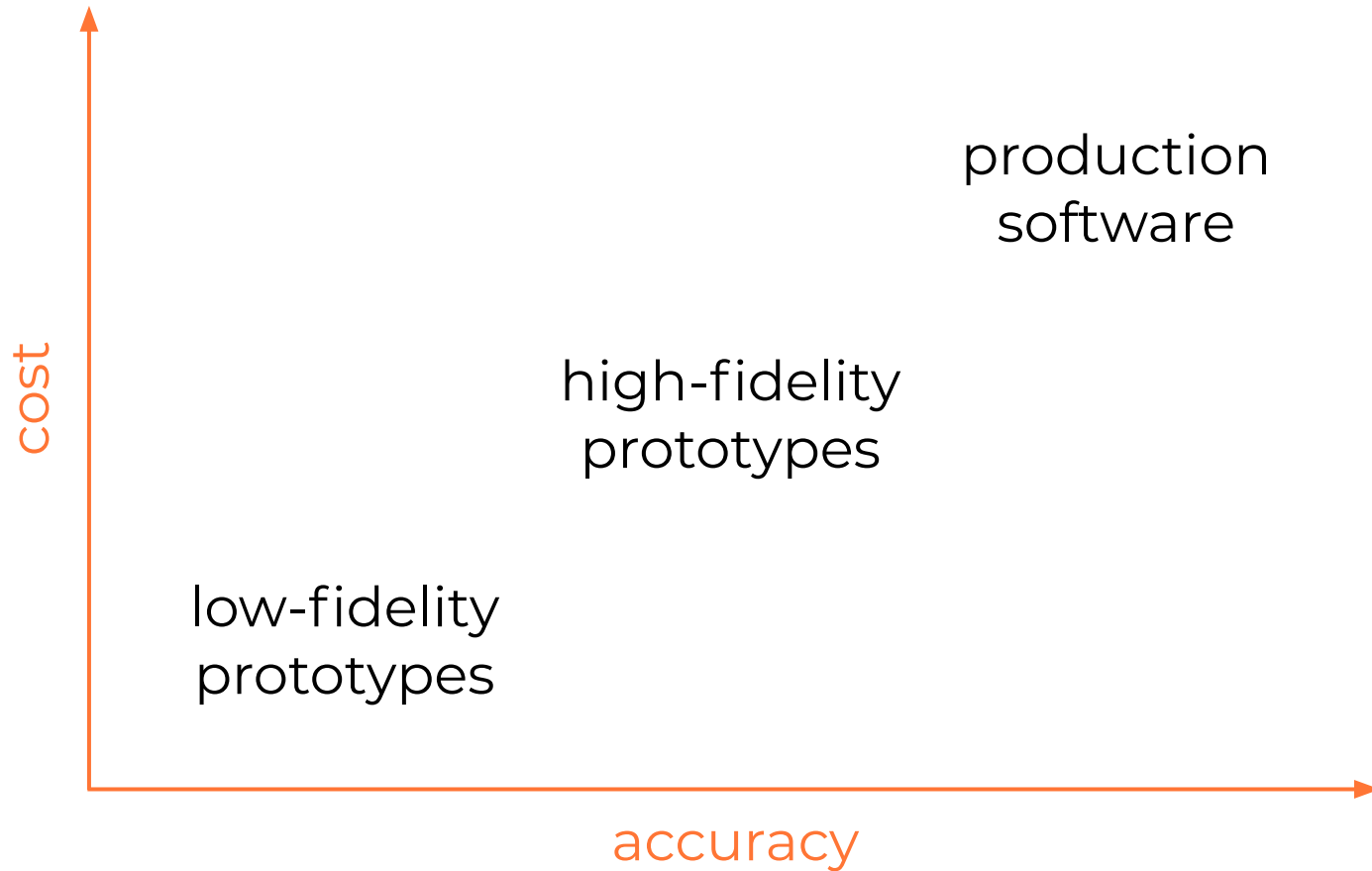
We **validate** hypotheses through:

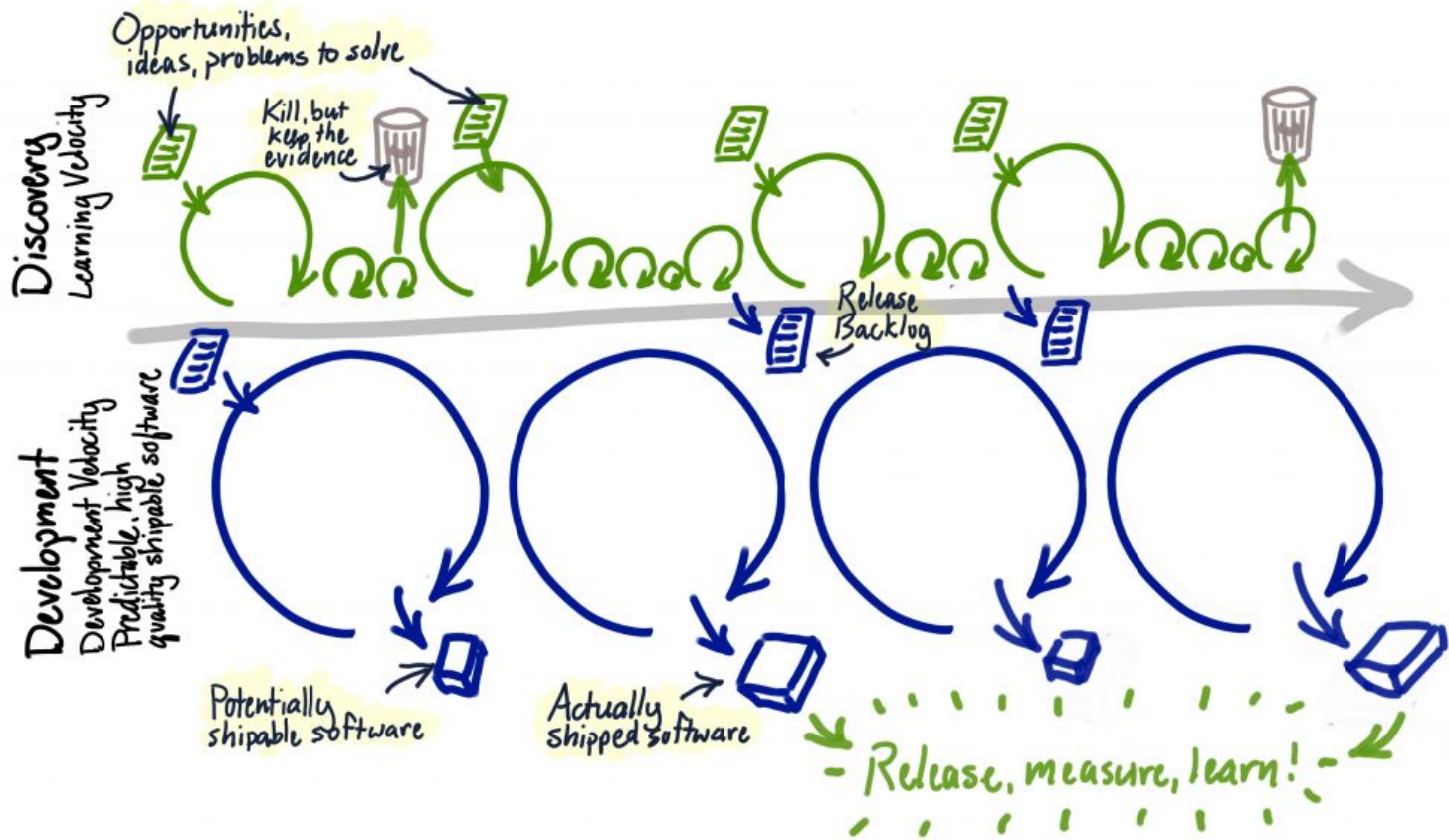


qualitative  
interviews



quantitative  
testing

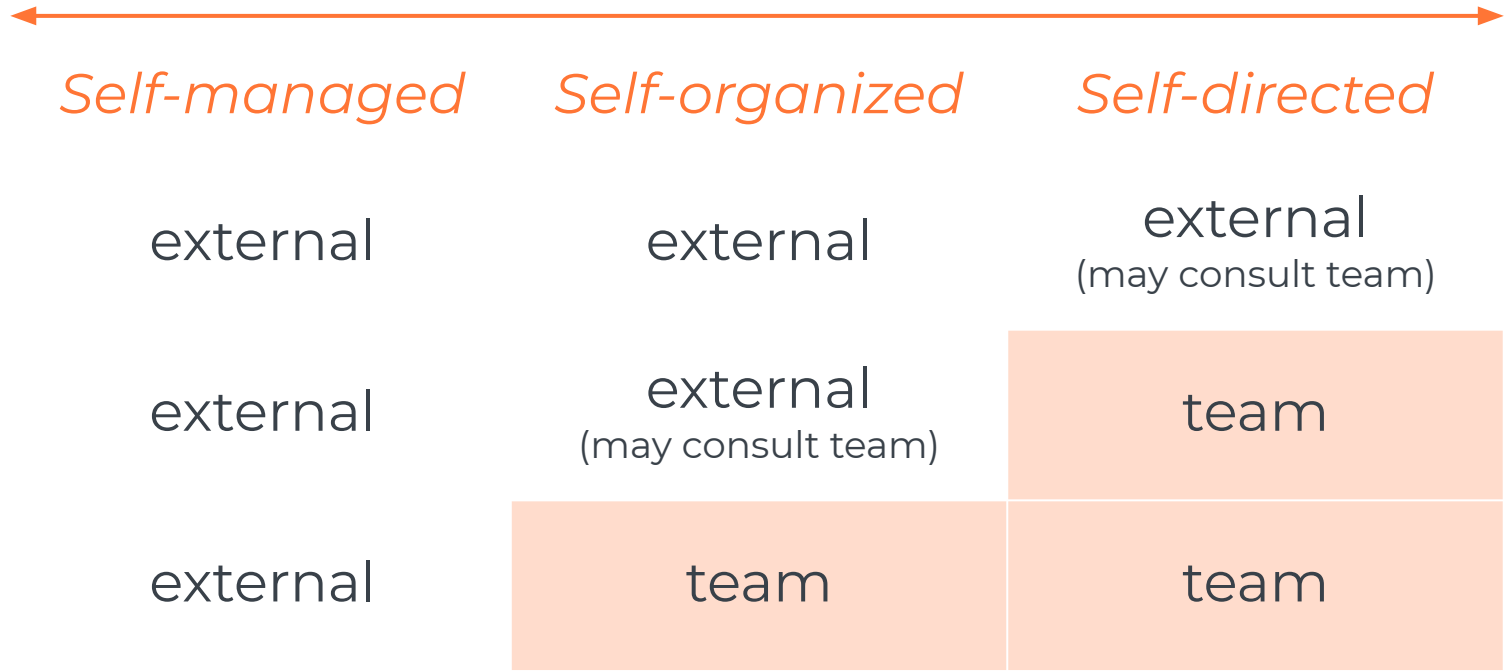




# Self-organized teams

A self-organized team has the **autonomy** to choose **how to** accomplish their work, rather than being instructed by others external to the team.

## Autonomy in decision-making



## Why?

C-level

Time spent learning correlates with learning success.

We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

## What?

Product  
Group

**User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early.

We aim to increase their activity in their first week.

## How?

Team

**Hypothesis:** Acknowledging & celebrating small wins early in the learning journey will motivate learners to be more active in their first week.

**Solution:** Rewarding users with badges that acknowledge critical first steps in their journey.



**Empower the team!**



**Prune dependencies.**

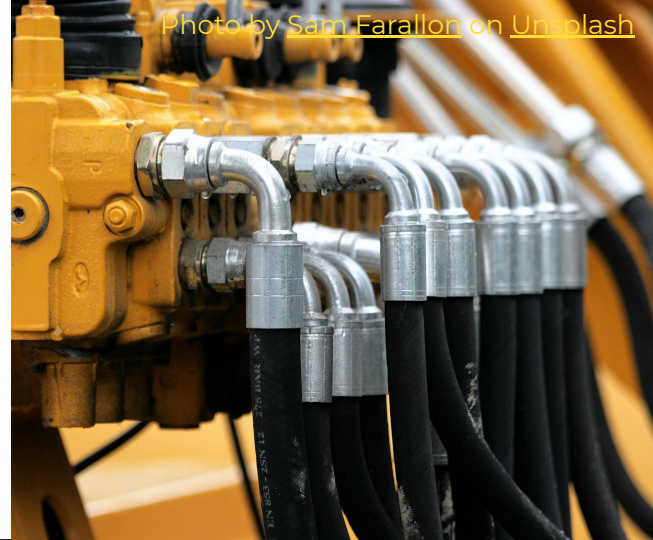


Photo by [v2osk](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Knowledge

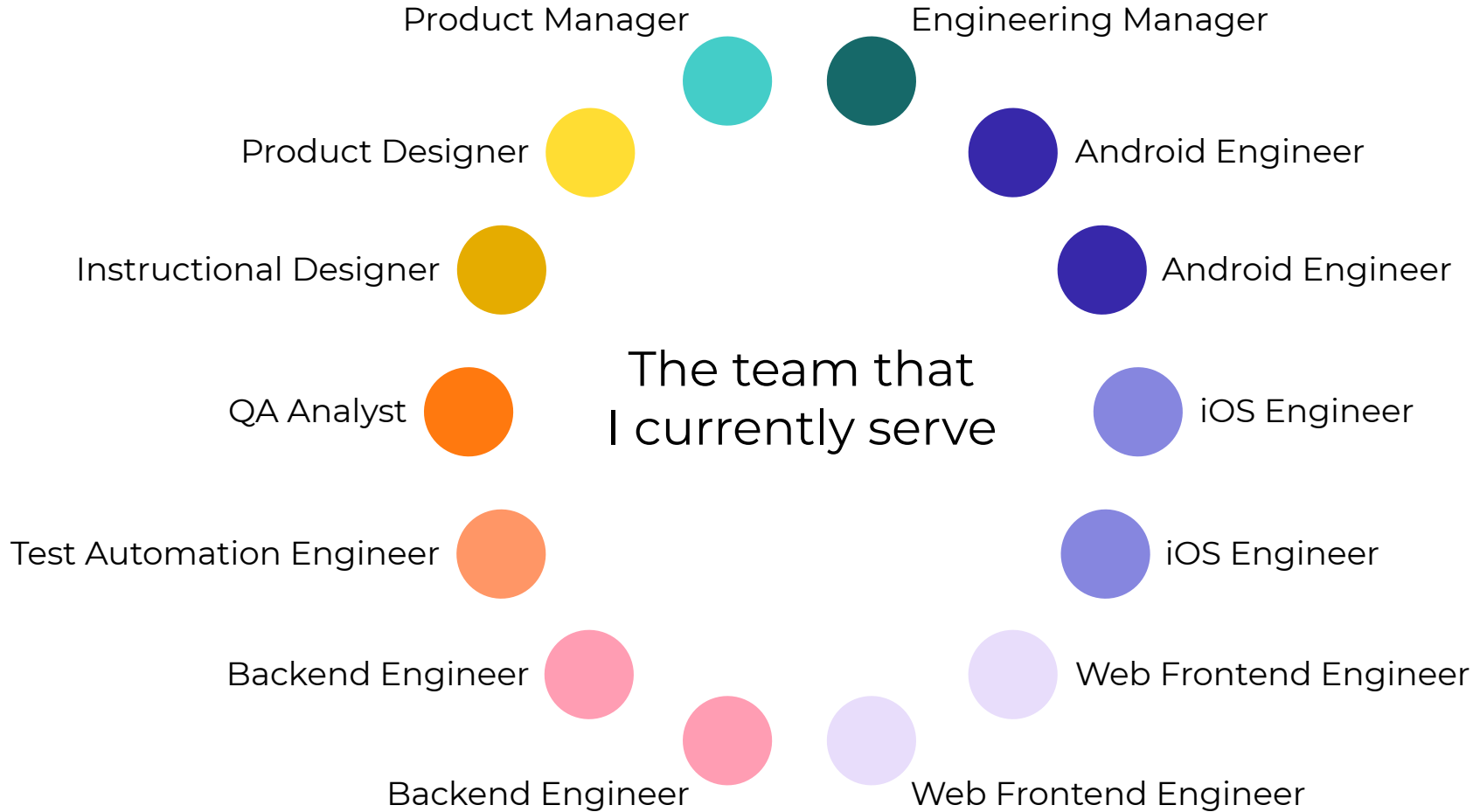
Photo by [Sam Farallon](#) on [Unsplash](#)

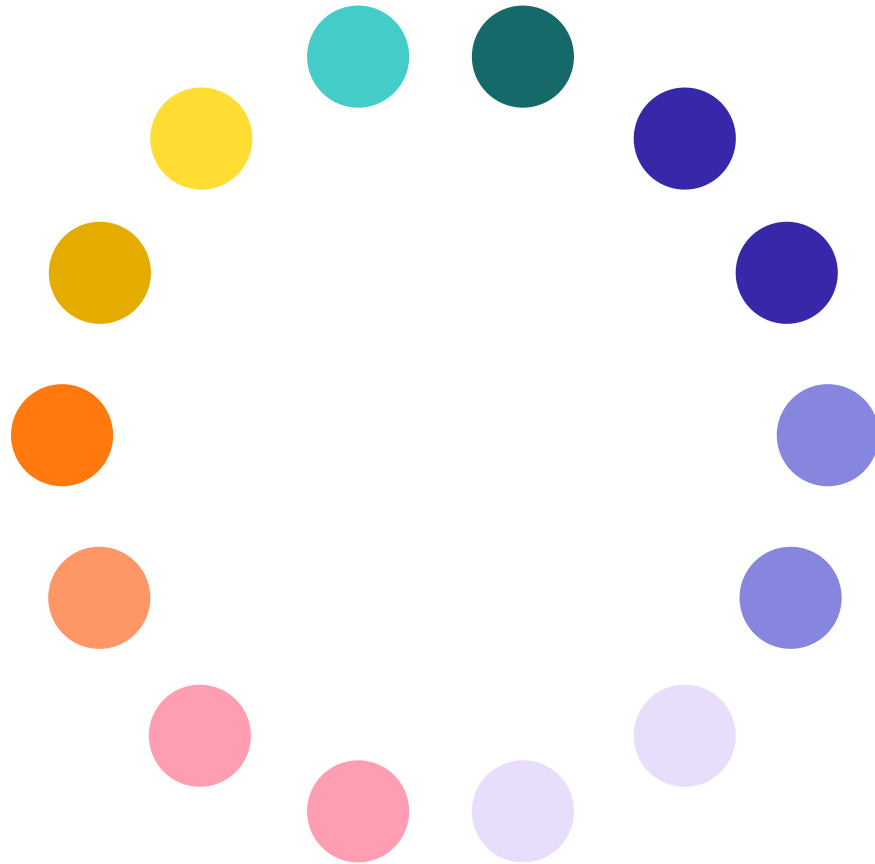


Skills



Tech

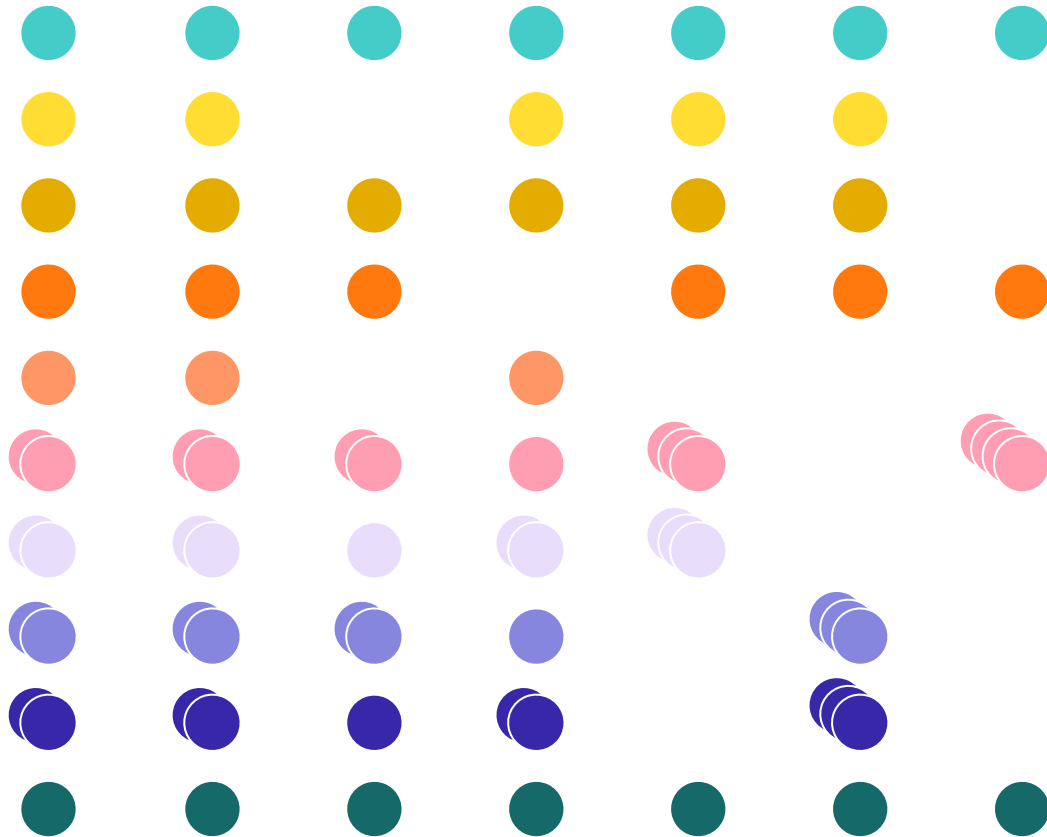




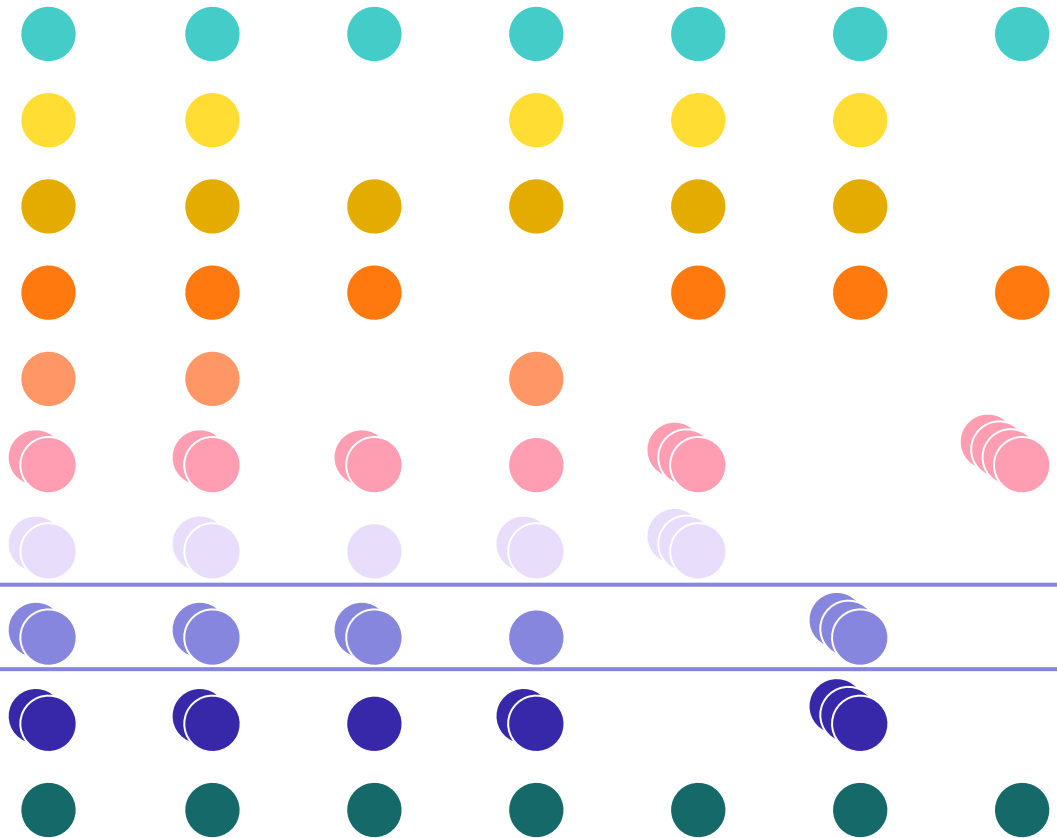
Being the only iOS  
engineer on a team  
can be lonely...



# Chapters

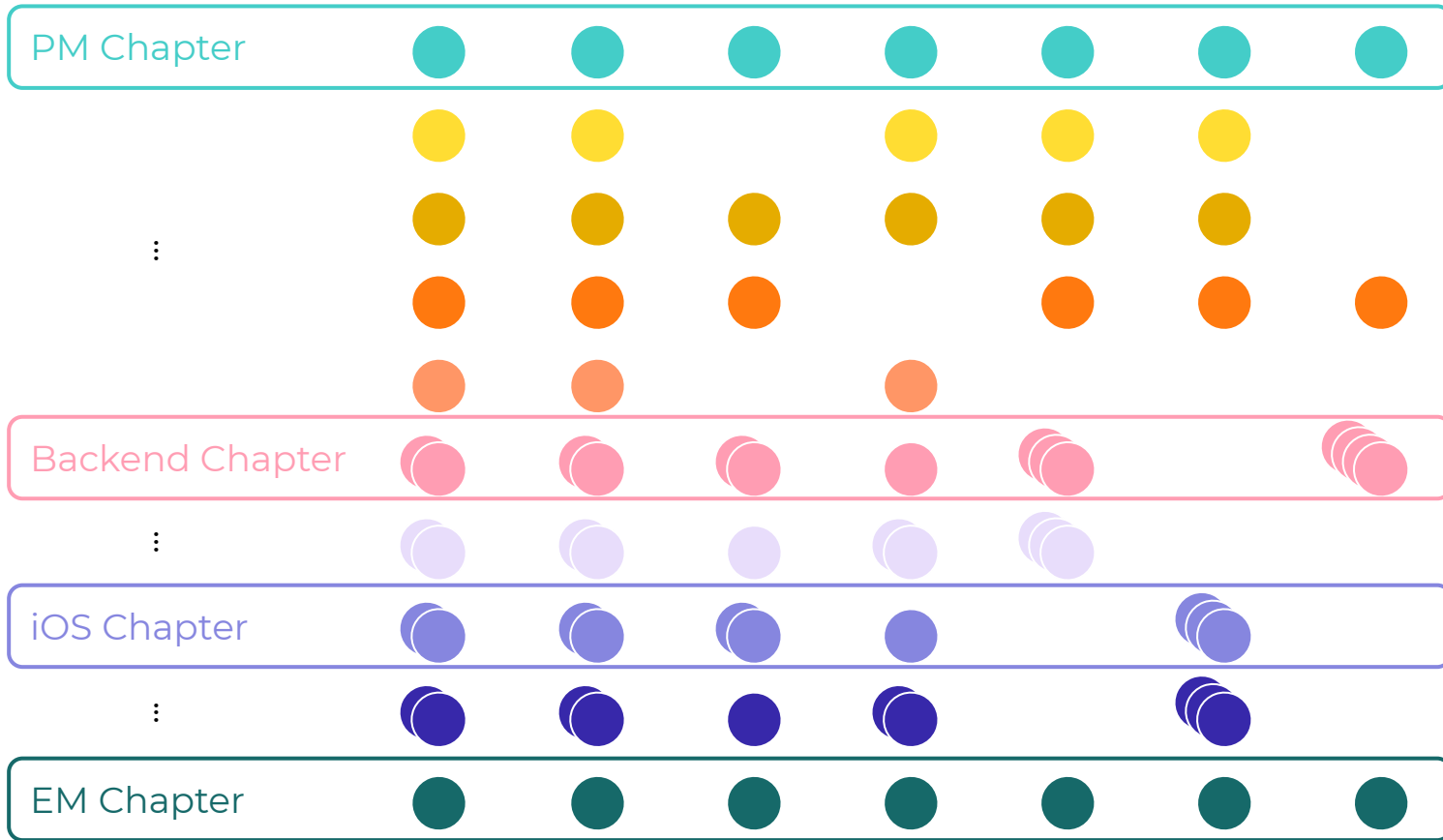






iOS Chapter

code review,  
pair programming,  
x-team decisions,  
mentoring, ...



# One Single Page Application ...

**Hello, Fabian Lindenberg**

Nur noch 12 Lektionen in  
**Einsteiger - Kurs 1**

**Hi! Teil 1**

Hallo!

Hier lernst du, jemanden zu begrüßen und zu verabschieden. Begrüßungsformen

[Starten](#)

Einsteiger - Kurs 1, Lektion 2

**Hi! Teil 2**

Hier lernst du, zu fragen, wie es anderen geht, zu sagen, dass es dir gut geht, die Verbindung von you und I

[Starten](#)

Einsteiger - Kurs 1, Lektion 3

**Hi! Quiz**

Am was erinnerst du dich aus den letzten beiden Lektionen? Teste dein Wissen

[Starten](#)

[Zum aktuellen Kurs](#)

**Teste das neue Babbel Live**

Erhalte Online-Unterrichtsstunden – in Kleingruppen und mit echten Lehrern!

[Babbel Live testen](#)

**Meine Lernaktivität**

Wochenziel: Auf den Wochenplan fertig sein

[Ziel setzen](#)

JANUAR 2021

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**Willkommen zurück!**

Wiederhole deinen Wortschatz, um dich an alle Vokabeln zu erinnern.

[Wortschatz](#)

**Fortschritt** Alle +

**Mein Unterricht**

Essen und Getränke

**Podcasts**

**Kurzgeschichten**

**Kulturwissen**

**Spiele**

**Wörterzug**

**Buchstabenbrett**

**Sitzespiele**

**Prämie sichern**

Lade deine Freunde zu einem Gratis-Monat Babbel ein und hol dir eine Prämie!

[Freunde einladen](#)

# One Single Page Application ...

**Hello, Fabian Lindenberg**

Nur noch 12 Lektionen in  
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Hallo!

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Jemanden zu begrüßen und zu verabschieden  
Begrüßungsformen

**Starten**

Einsteiger - Kurs 1, Lektion 2 **Starten**

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die Verbindung von you und I

**Starten**

Einsteiger - Kurs 1, Lektion 3 **Starten**

**Hi! Quiz**  
An was erinnerst du dich aus den letzten beiden Lektionen? Teste dein Wissen.

[Zum aktuellen Kurs](#)

**Teste das neue Babbel Live**  
Erhalte Online-Unterrichtsstunden – in Kleingruppen und mit echten Lehrern! Teste!

**Babbel Live testen**

**Team B**

**Meine Lernaktivität**

Wochenziel  
Auf den Wochenplan fertig, gut

Ziel setzen

JANUAR 2021

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
29	30	31				

**Willkommen zurück!**  
Wiederhole deinen Wortschatz, um dich an alle Vokabeln zu erinnern.

**Fortschritt** **Alle +**

**Mein Unterricht**  
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**Kulturwissen**

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Wörterquiz  
Buchstabenbrot  
Sitzungsprint

**Prämie sichern**  
Lade deine Freunde zu einem Gratis-Monat Babbel ein und hol dir eine Prämie!

**Freunde einladen**

**Team C**

**Team C**

**Team D**

**Team E**

... but many features built and maintained by different teams.

# **Code stewardship & Inner-sourcing**

We nominate one of the teams to be the  
**steward** for the codebase.

The steward team has the **responsibility** to

establish service-level  
agreements (SLAs) with  
consumers

&

ensure SLAs are met and  
component is healthy

set the component  
up for inner-sourcing

&

review other team's  
pull requests to this  
component

serve on-call (24x7 where necessary)

The steward team has the **authority** to

veto changes that go  
against their responsibilities

set and enforce  
coding standards

choose tooling that  
enables them to fulfill  
their responsibilities



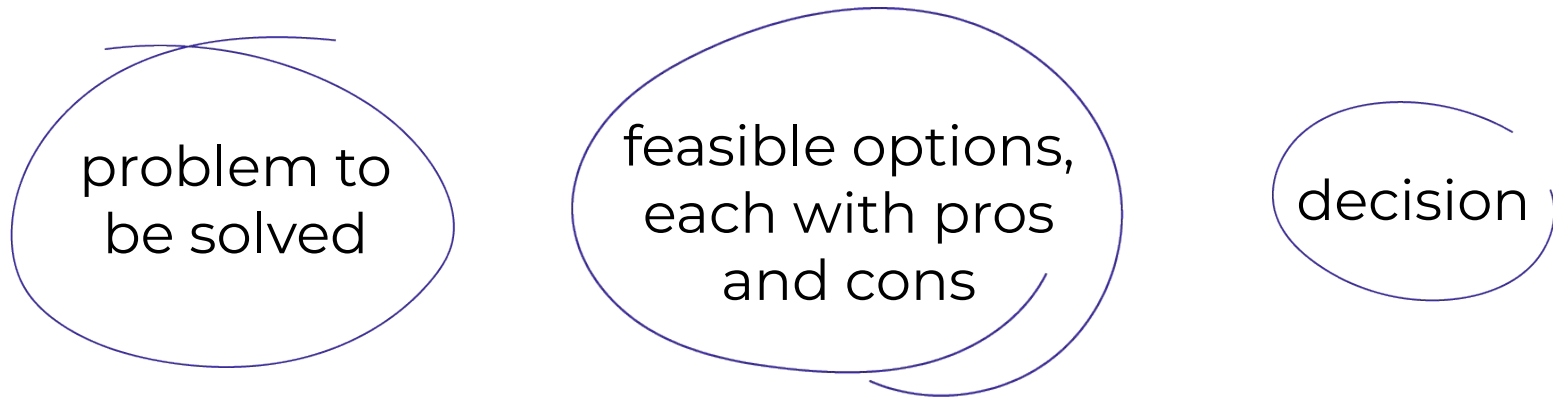
**Inner-sourcing** applies best practices from open-source development within an organization.



# **Architectural Decision Records**

Some decisions have **far-reaching** or **long-lasting** impact (or both).

For such decisions, we compile  
**Architectural Decision Records**,  
which are reviewed by all affected teams.

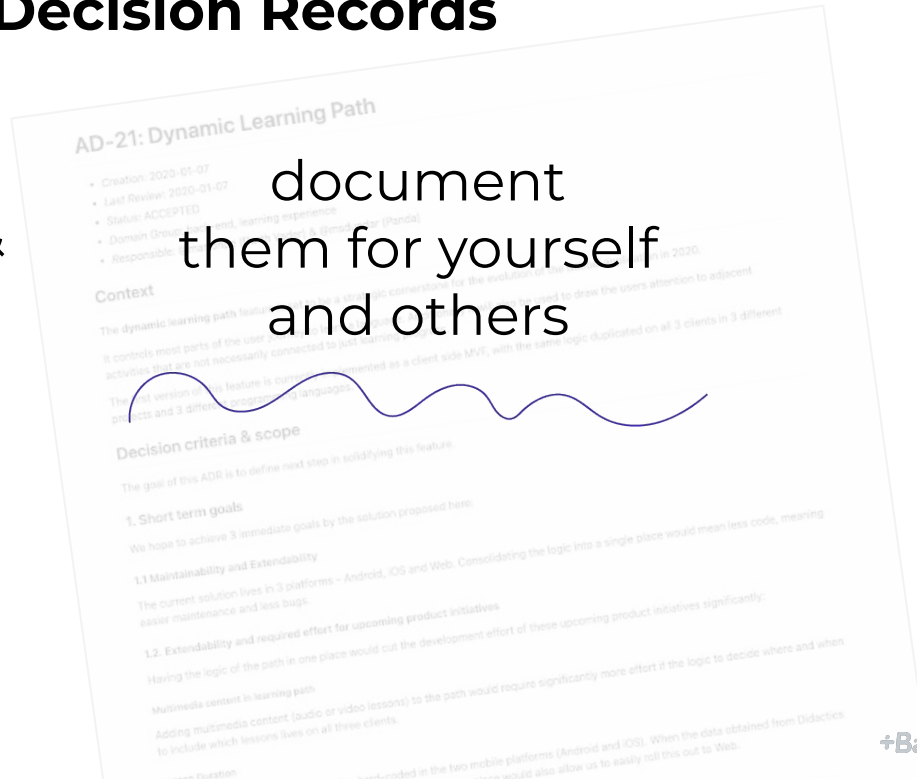


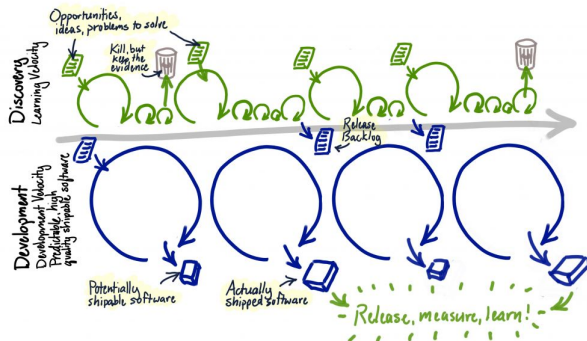
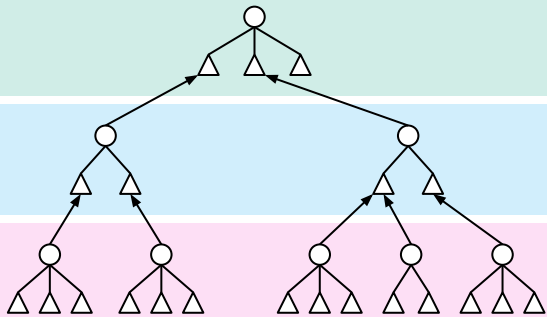
# Architectural Decision Records

make  
well-informed  
decisions

&

document  
them for yourself  
and others

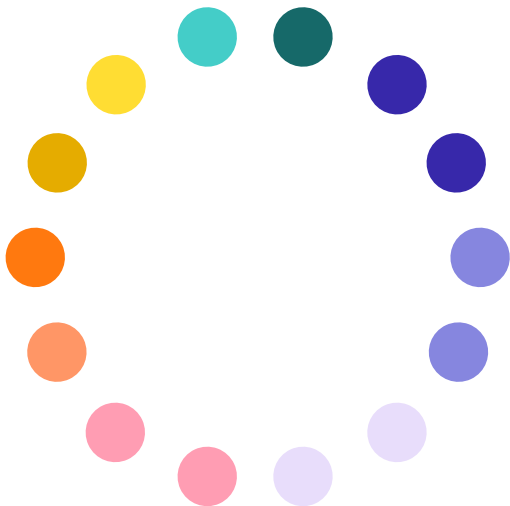




**Why?** Time spent learning correlates with learning success.  
C-level  
We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

**What?** **User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early.  
Product Group  
We aim to increase their activity in their first week.

**How?** **Hypothesis:** Acknowledging & celebrating small wins early in the learning journey will motivate learners to be more active in their first week.  
Team  
**Solution:** Rewarding users with badges that acknowledge critical first steps in their journey.



Hello, Fabian Lindenberg

Team A

Team B

Team C

Team C

Team D

Team E

## AD-21: Dynamic Learning Path

- Creation: 2020-01-07
- Last Revision: 2020-01-07
- Status: ACCEPTED
- Domain (Group): back-ent, learning experience
- Responsible: @mamsnpe (Darin Voder) & @msdunlar (Panda)

### Context

The dynamic learning path feature is set to be a strategic cornerstone for the evolution of the Babbel application in 2020. It controls most parts of the user journey to learn a language. Additionally, it will also be used to draw the users attention to adjacent activities that are not necessarily connected to just learning progress.

The first version of this feature is currently implemented as a client side MVF, with the same logic duplicated on all 3 clients in 3 different projects and 3 different programming languages.

### Decision criteria & scope

The goal of this ADR is to define next step in solidifying this feature.

#### 1. Short term goals

We hope to achieve 3 immediate goals by the solution proposed here:

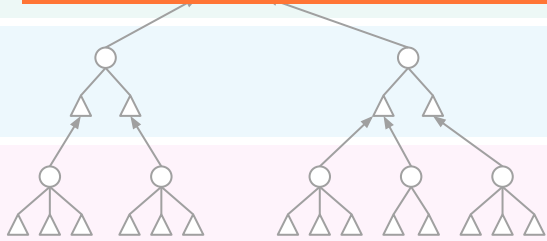
##### 1.1 Maintainability and Extensibility

The current solution lives in 3 platforms - Android, iOS and Web. Consolidating the logic into a single place would mean less code, meaning easier maintenance and less bugs.

##### 1.2. Extensibility and required effort for upcoming product initiatives

Making the logic of the path in one place would cut the development effort of these upcoming product initiatives significantly. Making the logic of the path in one place would cut the development effort of these upcoming product initiatives significantly.

# None of this is trivial ...

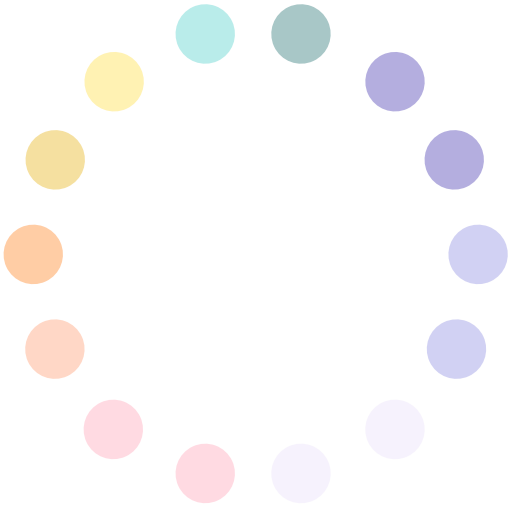


**Why?** C-level  
Time spent learning correlates with learning success. We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

**What?** Product Group  
**User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early. We aim to increase their activity in their first week.

**How?** Team  
**Hypothesis:** Acknowledging & celebrating small wins early in the learning journey will motivate learners to be more active in their first week.

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Hello, Fabian Lindenberg

**Team A**

**Team B**

**Team C**

**Team C**

**Team D**

**Team E**

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**1. Short term goals**

We hope to achieve 3 intermediate goals by the solution proposed here:

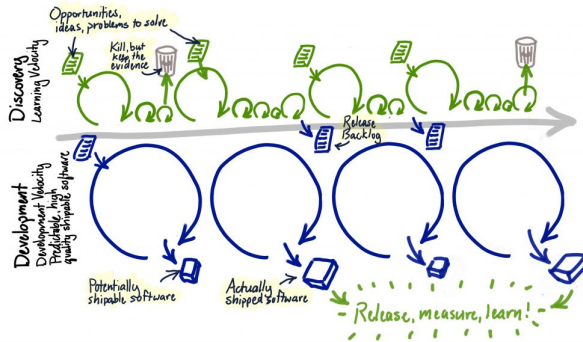
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**1.2. Extensibility and required effort for upcoming product initiatives**

Moving the logic of the path in one place would cut the development effort of these upcoming product initiatives significantly. It would also mean less effort if the logic to decide where and when

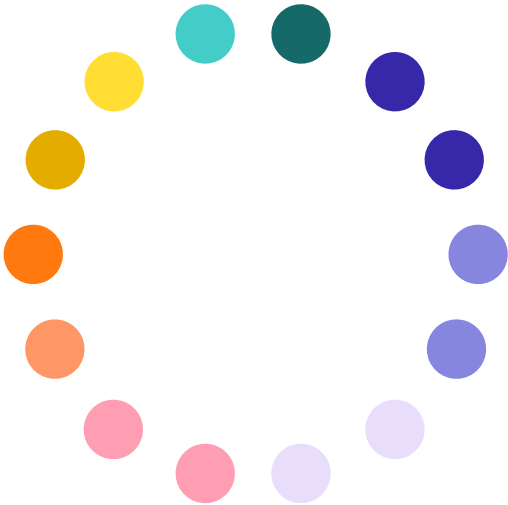
Internal teams (e.g., Infrastructure team, Office management) can contribute to Company OKRs only indirectly.



**Why?** C-level  
Time spent learning correlates with learning success. We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

**What?** Product Group  
**User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early. We aim to increase their activity in their first week.

**How?** Team  
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Hello, Fabian Lindenberg

Team A

Team B

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Team C

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**1. Short term goals**

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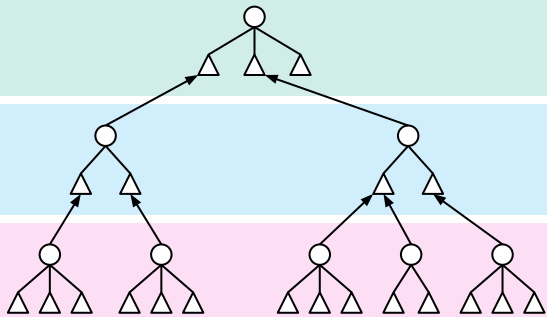
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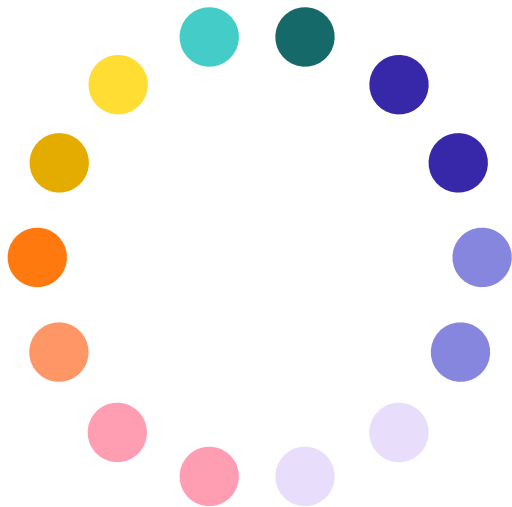


Discovery work is difficult to synchronize with delivery cycles (e.g., Scrum sprints).

**Why?** C-level  
Time spent learning correlates with learning success. We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

**What?** Product Group  
**User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early. We aim to increase their activity in their first week.

**How?** Team  
**Hypothesis:** Acknowledging & celebrating small wins early in the learning journey will motivate learners to be more active in their first week.  
**Solution:** Rewarding users with badges that acknowledge crucial first steps in their journey.



### AD-21: Dynamic Learning Path

- Creation: 2020-01-07
- Last Revision: 2020-01-07
- Status: ACCEPTED
- Domain (Group): back-ent, learning experience
- Responsible: @mamsnpe (Darin Voder) & @mrsundar (Panda)

#### Context

The **dynamic learning path** feature is set to be a strategic cornerstone for the evolution of the Babbel application in 2020. It controls most parts of the user journey to learn a language. Additionally it will also be used to draw the users attention to adjacent activities that are not necessarily connected to just learning progress. The first version of this feature is currently implemented as a client side MVF, with the same logic duplicated on all 3 clients in 3 different projects and 3 different programming languages.

#### Decision criteria & scope

The goal of this ADR is to define next step in solidifying this feature.

##### 1. Short term goals

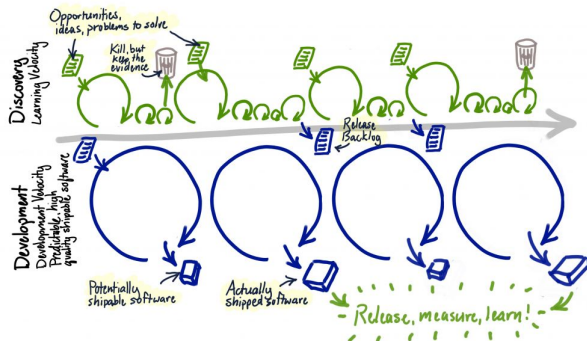
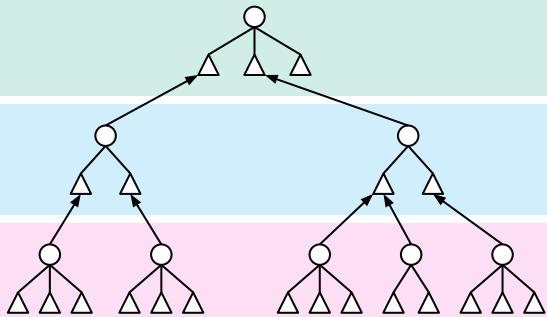
We hope to achieve 3 immediate goals by the solution proposed here:

##### 1.1 Maintainability and Extensibility

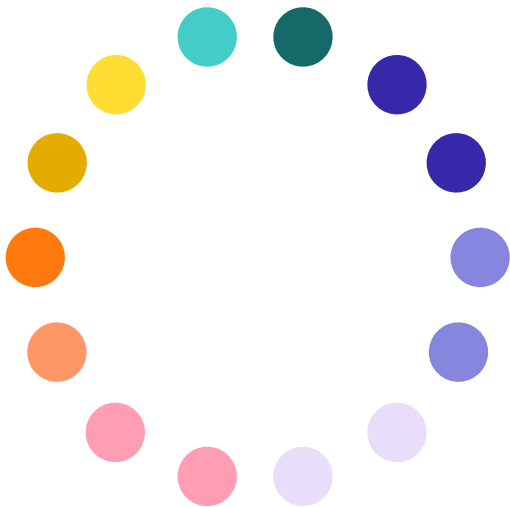
The current solution lives in 3 platforms - Android, iOS and Web. Consolidating the logic into a single place would mean less code, meaning easier maintenance and less bugs.

##### 1.2. Extensibility and required effort for upcoming product initiatives

Making the logic of the path in one place would cut the development effort of these upcoming product initiatives significantly: significantly more effort if the logic to decide where and when



The term "Autonomy" is under defined and overused. It's a spectrum and difficult to calibrate on an organizational scale.



Hello, Fabian Lindenberg

Team A

Team B

Team C

Team C

Team D

Team E

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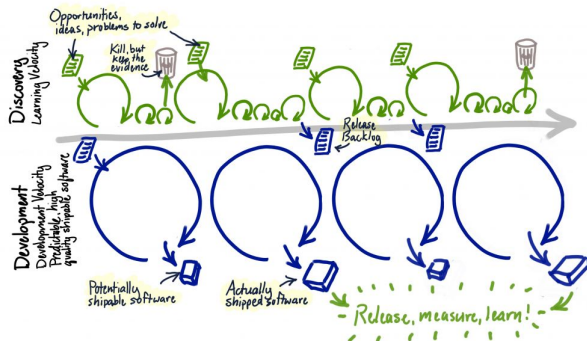
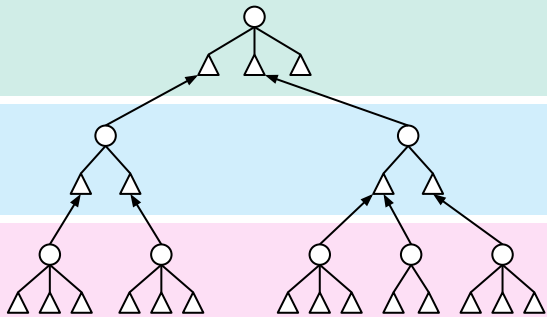
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**Why?** Time spent learning correlates with learning success.  
C-level  
We aim to increase the learning minutes per user.

**What?** **User problem:** Users don't recognize they are making progress. They quit using Babbel early.  
Product Group  
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Variance in capacity or tech debt on the different platforms can lead to parallel working streams within a single team.

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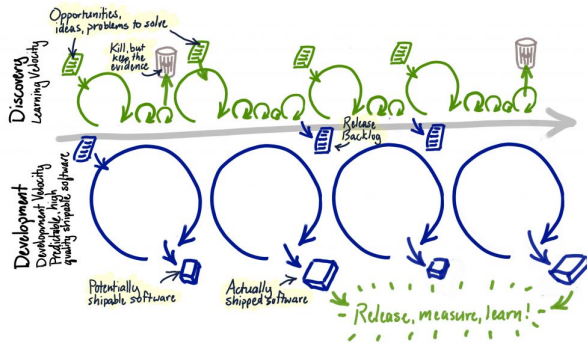
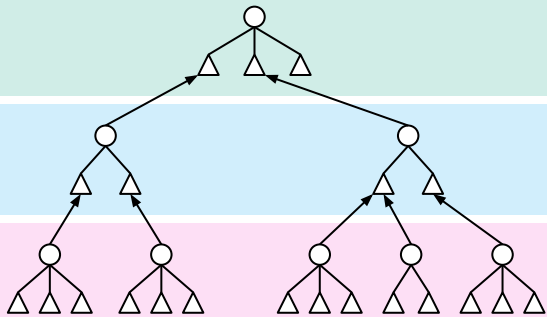
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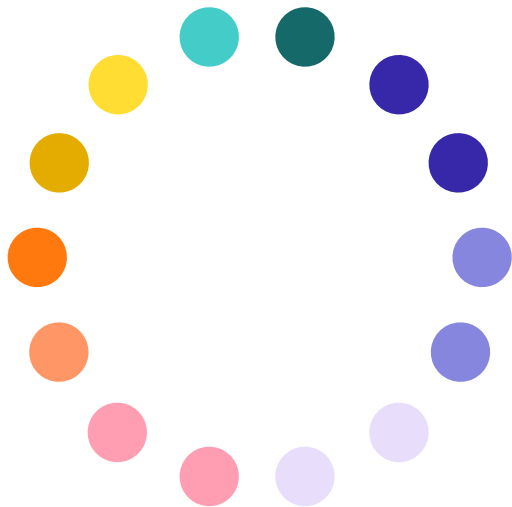
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Stewardship can be perceived as a burden, especially when the work is difficult to align with the team's OKRs.

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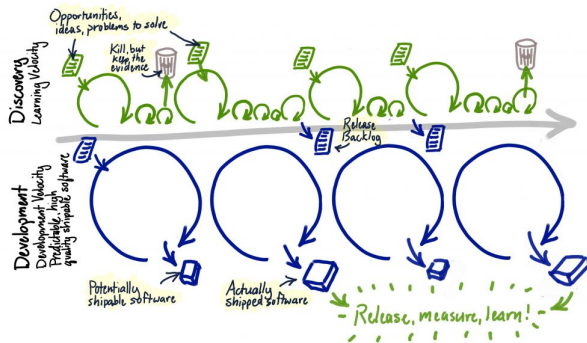
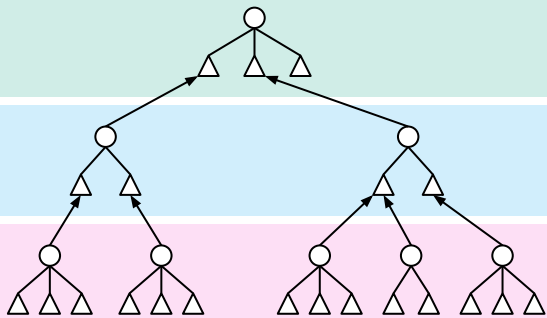
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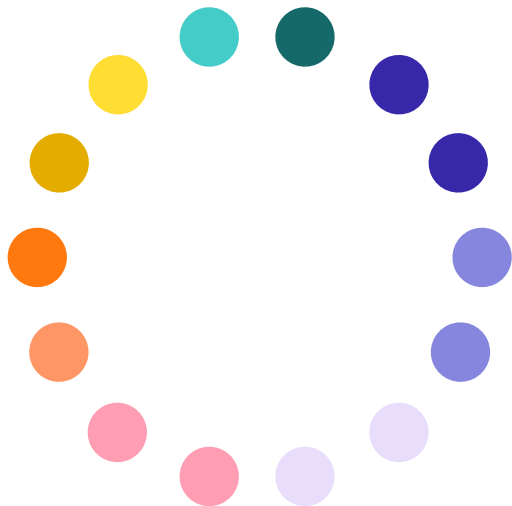
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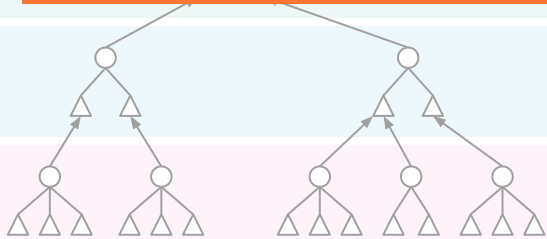
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Sometimes it's not straightforward if a decision is "worth" the effort to collaboratively compile an ADR.

# None of this is trivial ...



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# ... but we're learning!

## Babbel Bytes



**Six Takeaways From Droidcon EMEA**  
Our mobile engineers recently attended the droidcon EMEA conference and here is what they learned

BY MICHAEL MÖNZER



**Poor Acceptance Criteria Can Ruin Any Great User Story**

A drawing activity for your team.

BY FABIAN LINDENBERG



**Babbel's hybrid lesson player**

BY MATTHIAS BUCHHOLZ



**Integrating React Native with Babbel's native mobile apps**

BY ALVARO CASTANEDA



**Challenge your initial ideas**

BY ALEXANDER SULIM



**Tech Stack of Babbel**

BY M. SERHAT DÜNDAR



**How to do more with fewer servers**

BY LESZEK ZALEWSKI



**Juniors' Guide to Pull Requests**

BY AIMEE NORTJE



**Becoming a Femgeineer at Babbel and relocating to Germany**

BY RACHEL TONER



**A Look Back at Hack Day #9**

BY EWA CABAJ



**AWS Fargate for Data Engineering**

BY RICCARDO BASSETTO



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- [2] [Anthony Murphy - Alignment through OKR's and Hypotheses](#)
- [3] [Jeff Patton - Dual Track Development is not Duel Track](#)
- [4] [Yvette Francino - Are Self-organizing Agile Teams Realistic?](#)
- [5] [Dave Nicolette - Limits of a Self-organizing Team](#)
- [6] [GitHub - An Introduction to Innersource](#)
- [7] [Christian Requena - From Documentation to Empowerment](#)
- [8] [Gregor Hohpe - Your Most Important Architecture Decisions Might Be The Ones You Didn't Know You Made](#)



Obrigado

Thanks

Teşekkürler

Tack

Danke

Merci

Gracias

Grazie