



# **Four Lenses for Building Resilient System of Work**

A practical way for growing organisations to understand how Value, Flow, Quality, and Experience are really shaped.

Prepared by: **INCEPTI**

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Why do capable organisations struggle to grow, scale, and adapt? And how can you create a system that evolves faster than its environment changes?

As organisations grow past the point where founders and senior leaders can personally connect every decision, the challenge is no longer only to work harder or move faster. It is to build a system of work that keeps clarity, speed, quality, and engagement intact as the company scales.

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## Organisational challenges can be misread very easily

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You may see missed targets and assume the problem is execution. You may see teams moving slowly and assume the problem is delivery. You may see low engagement and assume the problem is motivation. Sometimes that is true. Often, the visible symptom is only where the problem appears, not where it starts.

In this situation, the structure itself may be the problem. The way work moves, the way decisions are made, the way priorities are set, the way quality is built in, and the way people experience the system may all be part of the same story.

To go beyond local or short-lived optimisation and fixes, we need a way to understand how the whole system of work behaves. We need a way to structure and facilitate conversations, surface the underlying causes, and find the right entry points for change.

At INCEPTI, we use four lenses to structure that exploration and facilitate both the definition and the delivery of the changes that follow: Value, Flow, Quality, and Experience.

They are simple enough to use in a leadership discussion, but broad enough to reveal how strategy, delivery, reliability, clients, and teams influence one another.

## Why Another Perspective on Transformation?

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Many growth and scale efforts miss the mark because they introduce new tools and practices into existing systems of work, without changing the conditions that shape priorities, decisions, collaboration, and learning.

In the world of agility, where Agile is mistaken for the solution, teams may run sprints, hold stand-ups, use backlogs, and report velocity. Yet the business may still struggle to see real impact.

[BCG's 2024 research on agile transformations](#) makes this point clearly: many organisations that claim high agile maturity have not actually achieved their transformation goals or created lasting business impact. They have adopted practices, but not necessarily improved outcomes. That is the core risk: appearing transformed in form without changing how the system performs.

The Four Lenses help you avoid that trap. They shift the conversation from “Are we using the right method?” to “What is really happening in our system of work?” From there, the conversation can move to where to focus and why.

For a growing organisation, this does not need to start as a large transformation programme. It can start with a sharper way to read the organisation: where value is unclear, where work slows down, where quality is created or lost, and where people experience friction.

## Value: Are You Solving the Right Problems?

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The **Value** lens asks whether your organisation is clear on the outcomes that matter most:

- Are we solving the right problems?
- Which outcomes matter most for our clients and our business?
- Can teams explain how their work contributes to those outcomes?
- What should we stop, defer, or reshape?

Picture a growing organisation where the roadmap keeps expanding, senior leaders keep adding priorities, and teams are busy delivering, but customer satisfaction and commercial impact remain flat. Every initiative has a sponsor and a rationale. Yet when the work is finally mapped against the outcomes clients care about most, the connection is weak.

The **Value** lens does not start by asking whether the team is productive. It asks whether the work still points to the right outcomes. What problem are we solving? For whom? What would change if we solved it well? And what should stop if it no longer contributes enough?

A useful first move is to map active initiatives against a small set of explicit client and business outcomes, then force a prioritisation conversation around contribution, evidence, and trade-offs. The expected benefit is not simply a shorter roadmap. It is a clearer one: fewer initiatives competing for attention, faster decisions, and a stronger line of sight between work and impact.

This is the difference between “we shipped the product” or “we delivered the service” and “it changed something that matters for our clients.”

This idea appears in Objectives and Key Results practices: the point is not to list work, but to create measurable focus. [The well-known Google Chrome OKR story](#) is useful here: the key result was not a list of browser features, but user adoption. That “simple” framing shift forced the team to connect product choices to impact.

*“Value is where ambition becomes practical. If we are not clear on what the outcomes are and which ones matter most, everything starts to look important. And when everything is important, execution cannot be effective.” – Stefaan Van Royen, Co-Founder, INCEPTI*

## Flow: Can Work Move Through the System?

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The **Flow** lens asks how work moves from idea, request, or opportunity to delivered value:

- Where does work wait?
- What dependencies slow it down?
- How much work is in progress?
- Are teams managing work to finish it, or just starting more?
- Can leaders see the end-to-end flow and steer it effectively?

Picture an organisation that has grown quickly and now has capable teams, but work moves slowly across functions. Sales waits for product, product waits for leadership decisions, delivery

waits for clarification, and everyone feels busy. No single delay looks dramatic, but together they turn days of work into weeks of elapsed time.

The Flow lens does not start by asking people to work more or faster. It asks where work waits, where context is lost, and where too much work is open at the same time. Often, the constraint is not people's effort or teams' capability. It is the design of the system around them.

A useful first move is to visualise the end-to-end path of work, from inception to client delivery, including queues, decisions, handovers, and waiting time, then reduce work in progress around the largest constraints. The expected benefit is a system that delivers more predictably without asking people to push harder: less waiting, fewer handovers, shorter feedback cycles, and clearer ownership.

[Bosch Power Tools](#) offers a useful example. As described by Corporate Rebels, the division moved away from functional silos and reorganised much of its work around permanent cross-functional business teams with more end-to-end responsibility and autonomy. Bosch made bottlenecks more visible, brought work closer to users, and created a clearer rhythm for teams to surface where they needed help. It is also a great illustration of how these principles apply beyond tech companies.

[DORA's software delivery research](#) reinforces the same principle in technology environments. High-performing teams look at lead time, deployment frequency, recovery time, and failure rates together. In other words: Flow is not just speed. It is the ability to move work quickly, safely, and sustainably.

## Quality: Is Reliability Built into the Work?

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The **Quality** lens asks whether expectations are clear early enough, and whether validation is built into the way work is delivered:

- What does good look like before work begins?
- Are expectations explicit and shared by everyone who we deliver, review or use the work?
- What is being validated too late?
- Where do defects, rework, incidents, or last-minute fixes repeat?
- Are we learning from quality issues, or just correcting them?

Picture a growing organisation where quality still depends on late checks, senior experts, and heroic fixes. Problems are solved, but often after they have already reached another team, a client, or the market. Outcomes may be clear enough to start, but not explicit enough to guide the work as it evolves. Different people may interpret success differently, and those differences often appear late, when changes are more expensive and pressure is much higher.

The Quality lens does not start by asking for more inspection. It asks what “good” should mean before work begins. Which expectations were implicit? What feedback arrived too late? What could be built into the workflow so that problems are surfaced while they are still small?

A useful first move is to define shared quality expectations before work starts, then empower teams and clients to validate, learn, and adjust more iteratively as the work evolves. The expected benefit is not bureaucracy. It is less rework, fewer late surprises, more stable delivery, and higher confidence that what is delivered will hold in real use.

[Toyota’s principles of Kaizen and Jidoka](#) offer a useful non-software example. To continuously improve, stop when a defect appears, understand the cause, and prevent the defect from flowing downstream. In short, quality is not inspected at the end; it is built into the process.

In software, [DORA’s continuous delivery research](#) makes a similar point. Teams that release safely and sustainably rely on fast feedback, test automation, deployable software, and the ability to correct problems quickly. [Etsy’s engineering writing on continuous integration for mobile apps](#) shows the practical customer impact: defects that escape into app stores can damage user experience and reviews, so teams need earlier validation before release constraints make fixes slow.

## Experience: What Does the System Feel Like?

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The **Experience** lens asks how products, services, interactions, and ways of working are lived by the people who depend on them:

**Experience** asks:

- Where do clients or colleagues experience friction?
- What creates or erodes trust?
- Where is context missing?
- Do people understand how decisions are made?
- Does the system help people do good work, or make it harder?

Picture an organisation that delivers what it promised, but the experience becomes harder as it grows. Clients get less consistency, employees spend more time navigating internal complexity, and leaders hear about problems only once frustration has built up. Updates are regular, but not meaningful. Processes are followed, but clients feel like they must chase context.

The Experience lens does not start by asking whether the process was followed. It asks how the system is lived by the people who depend on it. Where does friction appear? What creates or erodes trust? What would make the experience clearer, more coherent, and more useful for clients and teams?

A useful first move is to map the journey from the perspective of the people experiencing it, not only from the process owner’s view. The expected benefit is a clearer view of where trust, clarity,

and momentum are created or lost. That makes it easier to redesign interactions, reduce friction, and create an experience that supports the outcome rather than merely documenting the process.

[McKinsey's work on customer-experience transformations](#) highlights the importance of end-to-end journeys rather than isolated touchpoints. One example describes organisations redesigning customer journeys, empowering front-line teams, and building test-and-learn systems, with measurable reductions in call volumes and escalations.

[HBR's writing on customer journey mapping](#) makes the same point in a practical way: mapping the journey helps reveal what people are trying to do, what barriers they face, and how they feel across interactions.

*“Experience is the lens I return to most often because it is where everything becomes real for people and clients. Their voice surfaces many of the systemic issues worth addressing. And the quality of their experience shapes engagement, which in turn affects Quality, Flow, and Value.” – Paulina Kotowska, Co-Founder, INCEPTI*

## The Lenses Work Together

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The Value, Flow, Experience and Quality lenses are distinct, but they are not independent.

They especially matter in organisations that are no longer small enough to rely on informal coordination, but not large enough to absorb the friction of heavier structure. At that stage, leadership is about designing the conditions in which good decisions, good collaboration, and good execution can happen repeatedly.

- When **Value** is unclear, everything feels important. Priorities become harder to arbitrate, work fragments, and teams start more than they can finish. Flow suffers before anyone has even looked at the delivery process itself.
- When **Flow** is constrained, pressure rises. Work gets rushed, feedback arrives late, and teams spend more energy managing dependencies than improving outcomes. Quality becomes harder to sustain.
- When **Quality** is unstable, rework increases, delivery becomes less predictable, and confidence erodes. Clients and teams experience the system as unreliable, which damages trust and weakens Experience.
- When **Experience** degrades, people disengage from the system. Clients lose confidence, teams lose context, leaders add controls, and alignment weakens. Eventually, Value suffers too.

This is why isolated fixes often disappoint. You can accelerate teams while making quality worse. You can improve customer touchpoints while leaving internal flow broken, ultimately undermining the experience you were trying to improve. You can define strong objectives while

teams remain trapped in dependencies and see little of that intent delivered. You can introduce more controls to improve quality and accidentally damage experience.

The point of the four lenses is not to choose one and ignore the others. It is to understand where to start, how each improvement affects the whole system, and which actions will create the greatest system-level benefit.

*“Creating a context for success is what leadership and management are ultimately about. It means taking a holistic, systemic, and multi-perspective view of how a department or organisation works. Only then can we identify the right behaviours, the right initiatives, and make informed decisions.” – Bertrand Potier, Co-Founder, INCEPTI*

## A Simple Leadership Diagnostic

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You can use the four lenses as a simple leadership diagnostic at any time and especially when progress on your growth, scaling or adaptation ambition does not feel proportional to the effort.

### Value

- What outcomes matter most right now?
- Which work directly contributes to those outcomes?
- What would we stop if we were serious about focus?

### Flow

- Where does work wait?
- What dependencies create the most delay?
- How much work is currently in progress?

### Quality

- What does good look like before work begins?
- What is validated too late?
- Where does rework keep appearing?

### Experience

- Where do clients or colleagues experience friction?
- What creates or erodes trust?
- What does the system feel like for the people doing or receiving the work?

You do not need to launch a major transformation programme to start. You need better, more structured conversations about what is really happening and how to address it, supported by pragmatic guidance and facilitation on the behaviours and practices that fit your specific context.

## Closing Thought

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Scaling, growing or adapting well is not about moving faster in every direction. It is about improving the system's ability to create the right outcomes, move work effectively, build in reliability, and create experiences that people can trust. That is what the Four Lenses are for.

They help you look at your organisation, your department, your teams from four angles: **Value, Flow, Quality, and Experience**. Used together, they make it easier to see where the real constraint is, where to focus first, and how to take actions that will benefit your system of work as a whole.

## The People Behind the Lenses

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Meet the three INCEPTI founders and their respective areas of focus, shaped by more than 20 years of practical experience across multiple sectors and countries:

- **Paulina Kotowska**, who connects strategy, technology, leadership, and people into coherent operating systems – [paulina.kotowska@incepti.eu](mailto:paulina.kotowska@incepti.eu)
- **Stefaan Van Royen**, who turns ambition into structured execution and operating models that scale – [stefaan.vanroyen@incepti.eu](mailto:stefaan.vanroyen@incepti.eu)
- **Bertrand Potier**, who creates the context for successful change by enabling people and looking at the system of work as a whole – [bertrand.potier@incepti.eu](mailto:bertrand.potier@incepti.eu)

Together, their complementary experience and perspectives shape how INCEPTI helps organisations grow, scale and adapt.

## Further reading

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### SME and Midmarket Scaling

- [Unleashing the power of midcap companies](#) - McKinsey & Company
- [From Pain to Performance at Midmarket Companies](#) - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)
- [Founder's Mentality](#) - Bain & Company
- [Scaling up: How founder CEOs and teams can go beyond aspiration to ascent](#) - McKinsey & Company
- [Seizing the \\$3 Trillion Midmarket Opportunity](#) - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)

### Cases and Practices

- [Why Companies Get Agile Right and Wrong](#) - Boston Consulting Group (BCG)
- [Agile at Scale](#) - Harvard Business Review - Darrell K. Rigby, Jeff Sutherland, and Andy Noble
- [Reinventing Bosch: A Radically New Way Of Working](#) - Corporate Rebels
- [2024 Accelerate State of DevOps Report](#) - DORA / Google Cloud
- [Continuous delivery](#) - DORA / Google Cloud
- [How Etsy Ships Apps](#) - Etsy Engineering / Code as Craft

- [Toyota Production System](#) - Toyota Motor Corporation
- [Digitizing customer journeys and processes: Stories from the front lines](#) - McKinsey & Company
- [Avoiding the seven deadly sins of customer-experience transformations](#) - McKinsey & Company
- [Competing on Customer Journeys](#) - Harvard Business Review - David C. Edelman and Marc Singer
- [OKRs Explained, with John Doerr](#) - What Matters / John Doerr

# INCEPTI

We work with leadership teams to **make the limits of existing ways of working visible, remove key structural constraints, and improve outcomes** while creating better customer and people experiences. Our services form a connected journey:  
Discovery, the Tailored Bootcamp, and Change Delivery.

## Discovery

### Quick Discovery

A structured starting point for when you sense something is off but the problem is not yet clear — a targeted survey and concise synthesis that surfaces key signals and shapes the next conversation.

### Discovery

A structured, multi-stakeholder diagnostic that uncovers the structural drivers shaping how an organisation works, creates shared understanding of current ways of working, and defines a clear set of focus areas for what to address next.

## Tailored Leadership Bootcamp

### Leadership Bootcamp

A facilitated programme that helps your leadership team build shared direction and turn insight into a practical Change, grounded in your real organisational context.

### Thematic Working Sessions

Focused interventions for teams that need to work deeply on a specific topic (delivery flow, priorities, or decision-making) and leave with clearer, practical next steps.

## Change Delivery

### Leadership Coaching

Targeted one-to-one support for senior leaders navigating organisational change helping them reflect on real leadership challenges and act with more clarity in the context of their system of work.

### Leadership Team Facilitation

Structured facilitation that helps leadership teams keep the change rhythm alive: supporting day-to-day operations, improvement activities, and agreed priorities.

### Change Delivery Lead

Embedded change leadership that takes active responsibility for coordinating improvement efforts and sustaining progress toward the intended outcomes.

<https://www.incepti.eu> – [startyourjourney@incepti.eu](mailto:startyourjourney@incepti.eu)

[Book a free consultation](#)