

Team Topologies: Value Paths for OSPOs & ISPOs

Clare Dillon

Clare.Dillon@curioss.org

linkedin.com/in/claredillon/

My Journey...

1996-2003



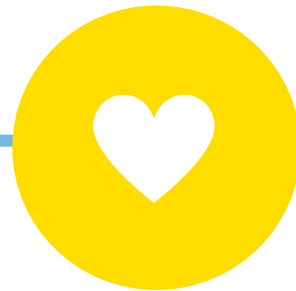
Start ups

2003-2017



Big Tech

2018-2023



InnerSource &
Open Source

2023-



Academia

TODAY



With You



InnerSource
Commons



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



OSPOs and ISPOs

OSPO

An Open Source Program Office (OSPO) is a designated place that acts as the center of competency for an organization's open source operations and structure.

<https://bit.ly/Zotero-OSPO>

ISPO

An InnerSource Program Office (ISPO) is a designated place that acts as the center of competency for an organization's *InnerSource* operations and structure.

<https://github.com/InnerSourceCommons/ispo-working-group>

Goal:

Secure Funding
to Create &
Sustain OSPOs /
ISPOs

Photo by [Anne Nygård](#) on [Unsplash](#)





OSPO / ISPO Value Props & Activities

Photo by [Alexander Grey](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Common OSPO Value Propositions



Risk Management & Compliance

OSPOs establish policies for open source, ensuring legal compliance and managing security within the org's software supply chain.



Innovation & Productivity

By promoting best practices, OSPOs help develop products faster, increase developer engagement, and foster a culture of innovation through strategic contributions to key projects.



Talent & Reputation

OSPOs play a crucial role in attracting and retaining engineering talent, as well as building the company's reputation as a responsible and active participant in the OSS community.



Sustainability

OSPOs work to sustain both internal software projects and external OSS projects, providing the frameworks and governance necessary to ensure their long-term health and stability.



Strategic Engagement

Central point for an org's interaction with the OSS ecosystem, coordinating policies, facilitating community engagement, and aligning open source efforts with business objectives.

Ref:

<https://project.linuxfoundation.org/hubfs/LF%20Research/TODO%20Group%20-%20The%20Business%20Value%20of%20the%20OSPO%20-%20Report.pdf?hsLang=en>

Common OSPO Activities

OSPO Activity Area	What It Covers
Compliance & Risk Management	License compliance, policy setting, legal reviews, security, SBOM, audits
Education & Evangelism	Training engineers, awareness campaigns, community building inside the org
Community & Ecosystem Engagement	External open source project relations, contributing upstream, sponsorship, events
Process & Policy Standardization	Defining/revising processes for consumption, contribution, open-sourcing projects
Tooling & Infrastructure	Automating compliance, contribution pipelines, dependency health dashboards
Metrics & Reporting	Tracking OSS usage, contributions, health of dependencies, business impact reporting

Securing Exec Buy-in



Who's in the room where it happens...?

"No one really knows how
the parties get to "Yes"
The pieces that are sacrificed
in every game of chess
We just assume that it
happens
But no else is in the room
where it happens"

*Aaron Burr in
Hamilton, the musical*



Who's in the room where it happens...?

Different roles, experiences, day-to-day context...

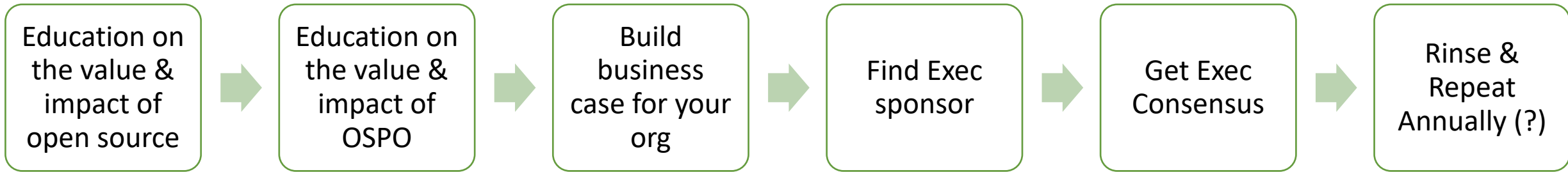
- Some of us speak in terms of open source.
- Some speak in terms of OSPOs and ISPOs.
- Some focus on business cases, funding, and executive priorities.
- Some think in terms of team design, flow, and cognitive load.

We often care about the same outcomes, but we use different language to get there.

Effective collaboration is not just about shared goals.

It is about translating ideas so they make sense in different contexts.

Securing Exec Investment



Volatility
Uncertainty
Complexity
Ambiguity

The Current
Landscape...

Fierce
Competition
for Exec
Mind-Space &
Wallets....

➤ OSPOs and ISPOs

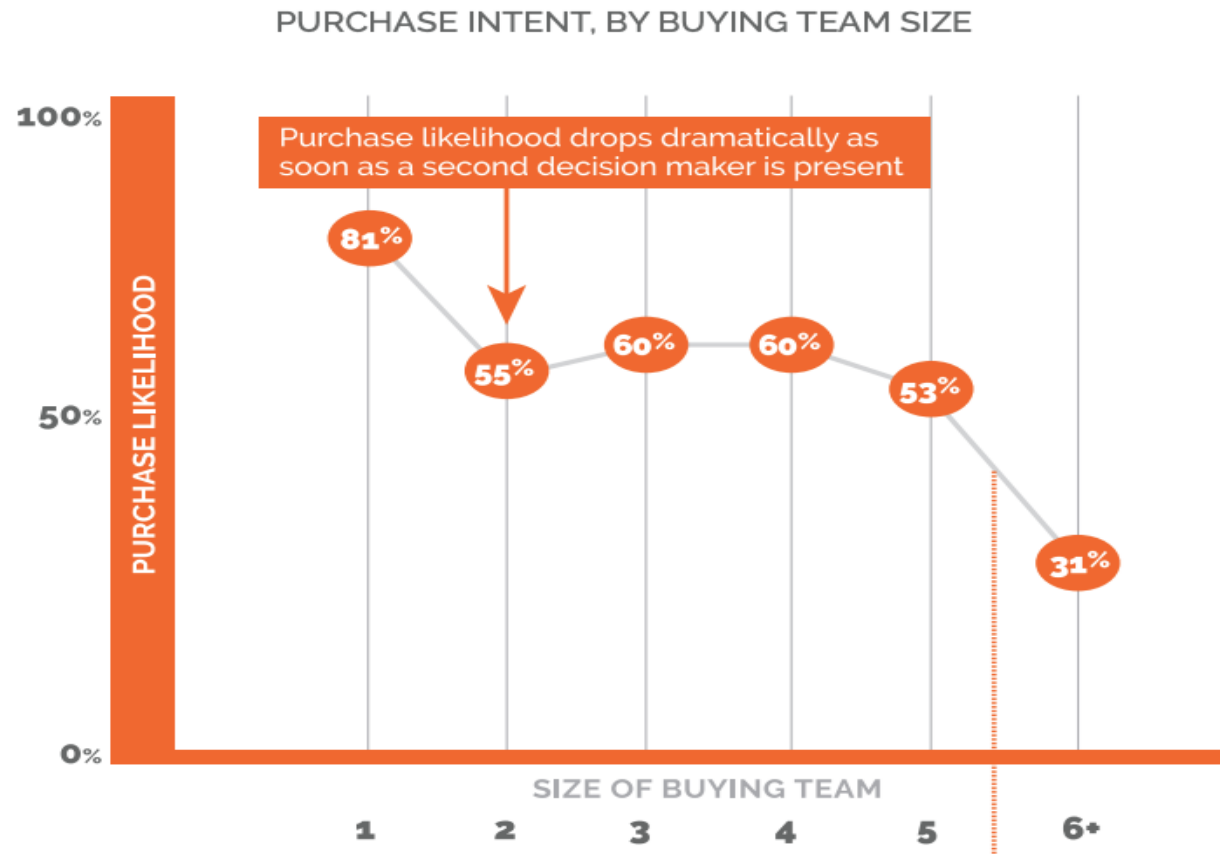
Fierce
Competition
for Exec
Mind-Space &
Wallets....

- OSPOs and ISPOs
- AI Transformation
- Cybersecurity / Compliance
- Dev Productivity / Platform Engineering
- Digital Transformation

Group
decision =>
may stick with
status quo....

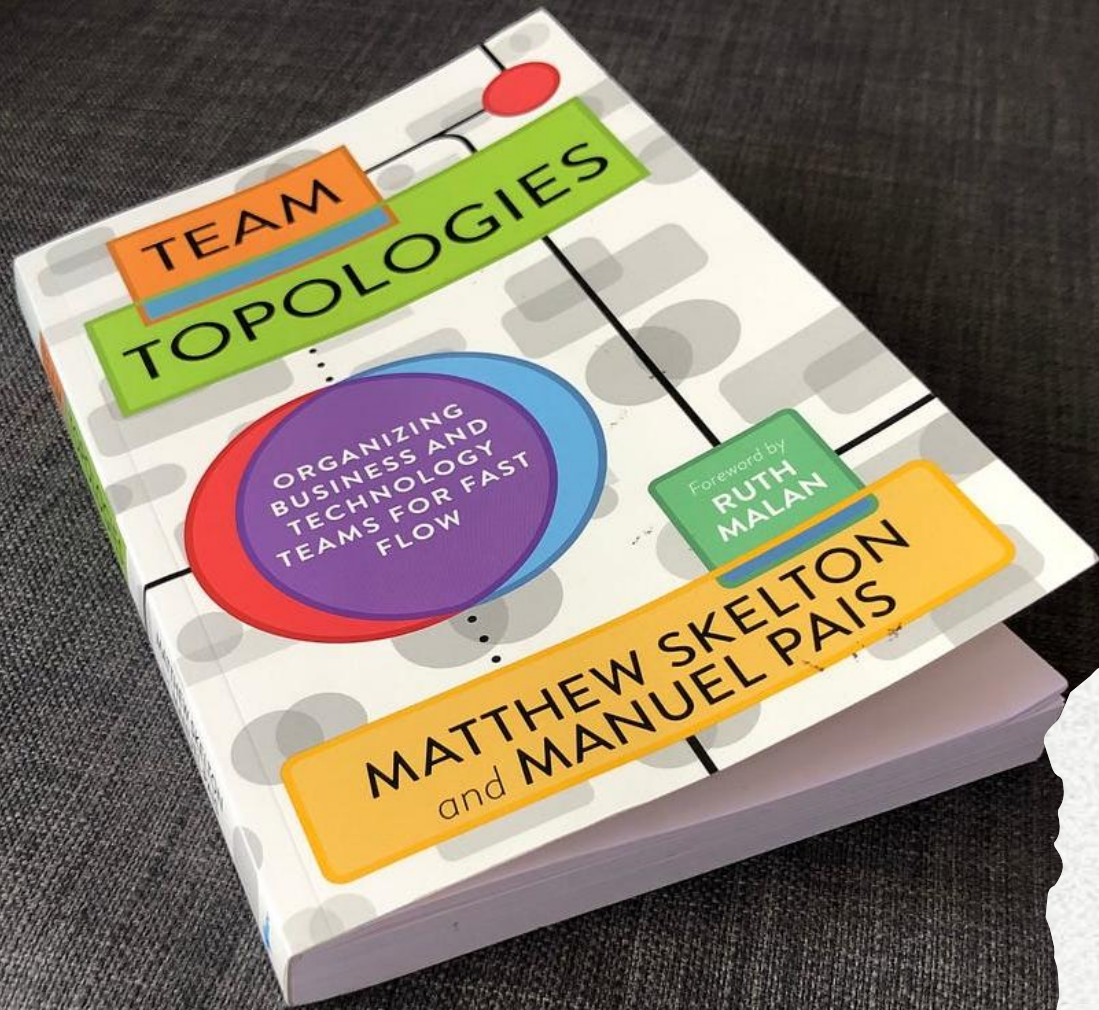
Insights from world of Sales:

- Increased number of decision makers. Up to an average of **6.8** in the last 2 years
- More than 6 stakeholders involved in the decision making process decreases the likely of a buying decision less than **30%**



Opportunity:
Piggyback on
other trends





Team Topologies

Team Topologies

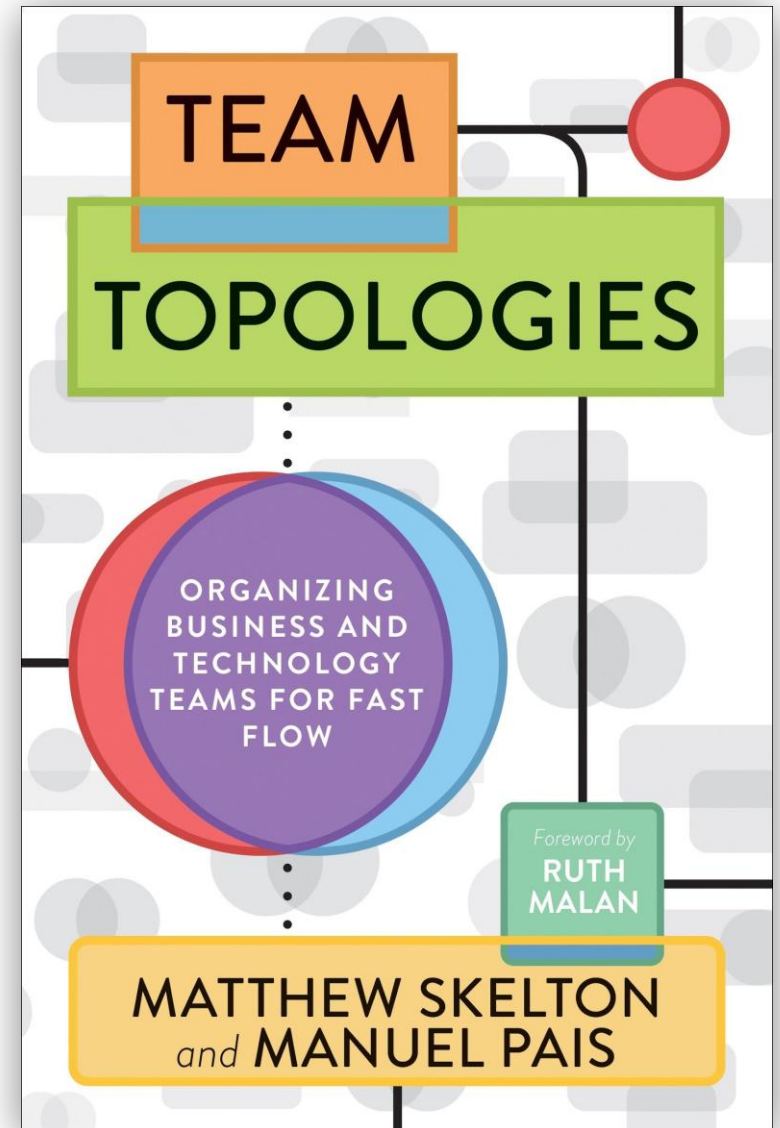
Organizing business and technology teams for fast flow

Matthew Skelton & Manuel Pais

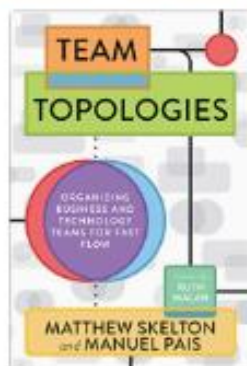
IT Revolution Press, 2019

Second Edition Launch: 25th September 2025

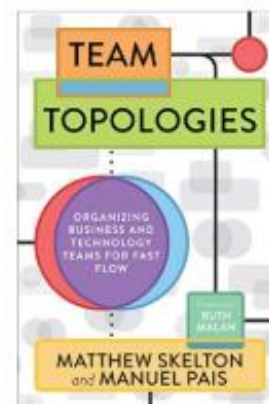
teamtopologies.com/book



Team Topologies
By Matthew Skelton, Manuel Pais, Ruth Malan



Team Topologies ranks #3 on “100 Best Product Management Books of all time” by Book Authority.



Team Topologies ranks #3 on “Best new management books to read in 2020” by Book Authority.

For software dev orgs...

- 1 | Optimize for **fast flow**
- 2 | Reduce **cognitive load**
- 3 | Enable **evolutionary teams**

Team-first
Thinking

Optimize...

- 1 | Team Size
- 2 | Team Cognition
- 3 | Team Interactions
- 4 | Team Lifespan

4 fundamental topologies

 **Stream-aligned team**


 **Enabling team**

 **Complicated Subsystem team**


 **Platform team**

Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.

Team Interaction Modes

 **Collaboration: 2 teams working together**

 **X-as-a-Service: 1 provides, 1 consumes**

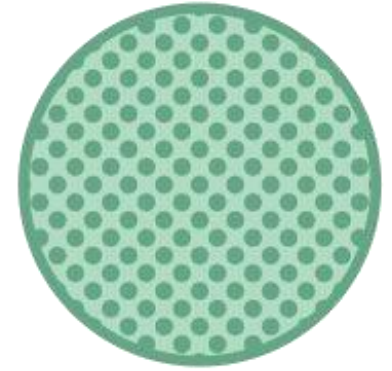
 **Facilitating: 1 team helps another**



Collaboration

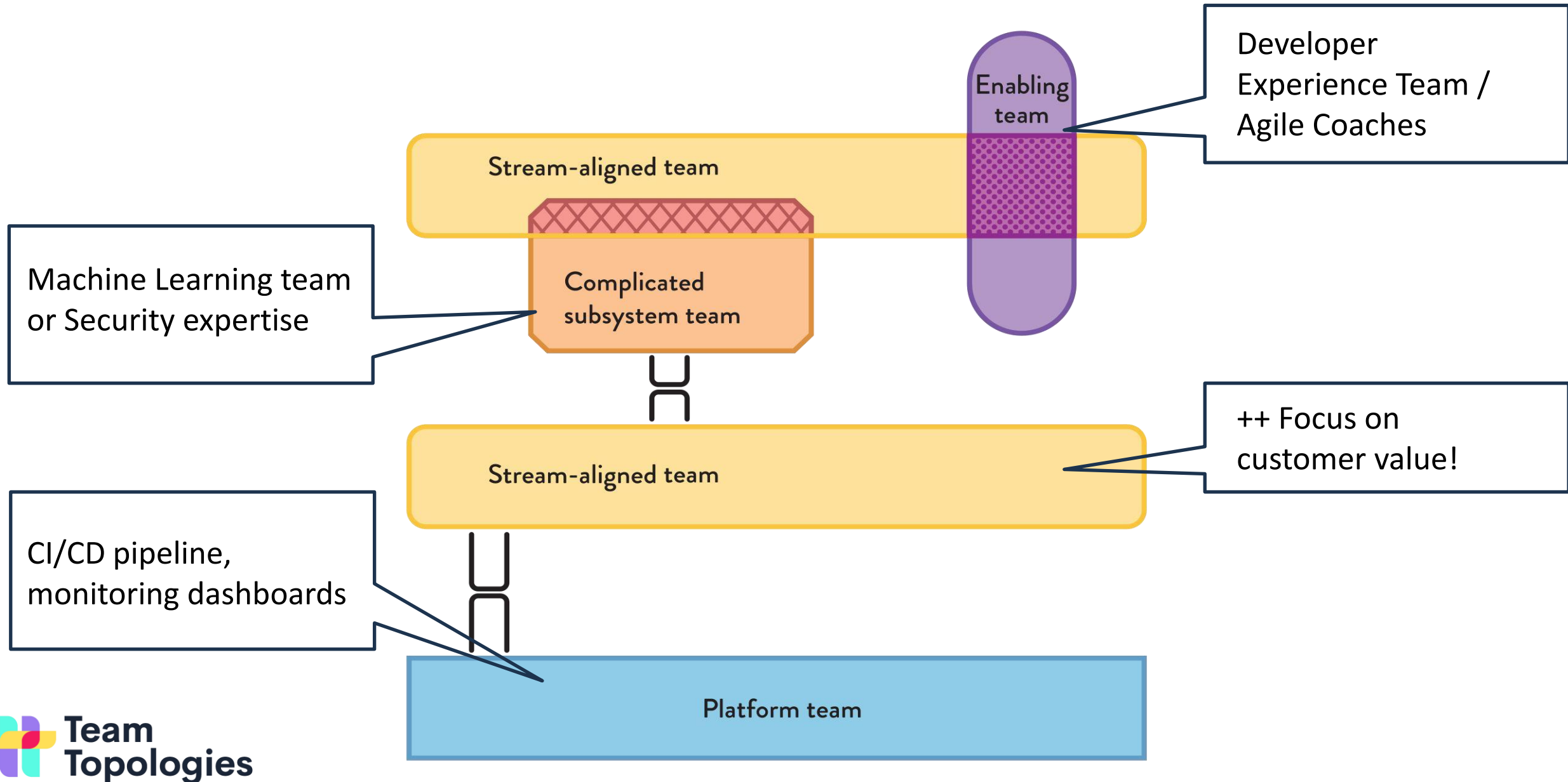


X-as-a-Service



Facilitating

Team Topology Examples



Looking
through a
new lens..



Photo by [Zachary Keimig](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used	OSPO / ISPOs
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.	
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.	
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.	
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.	

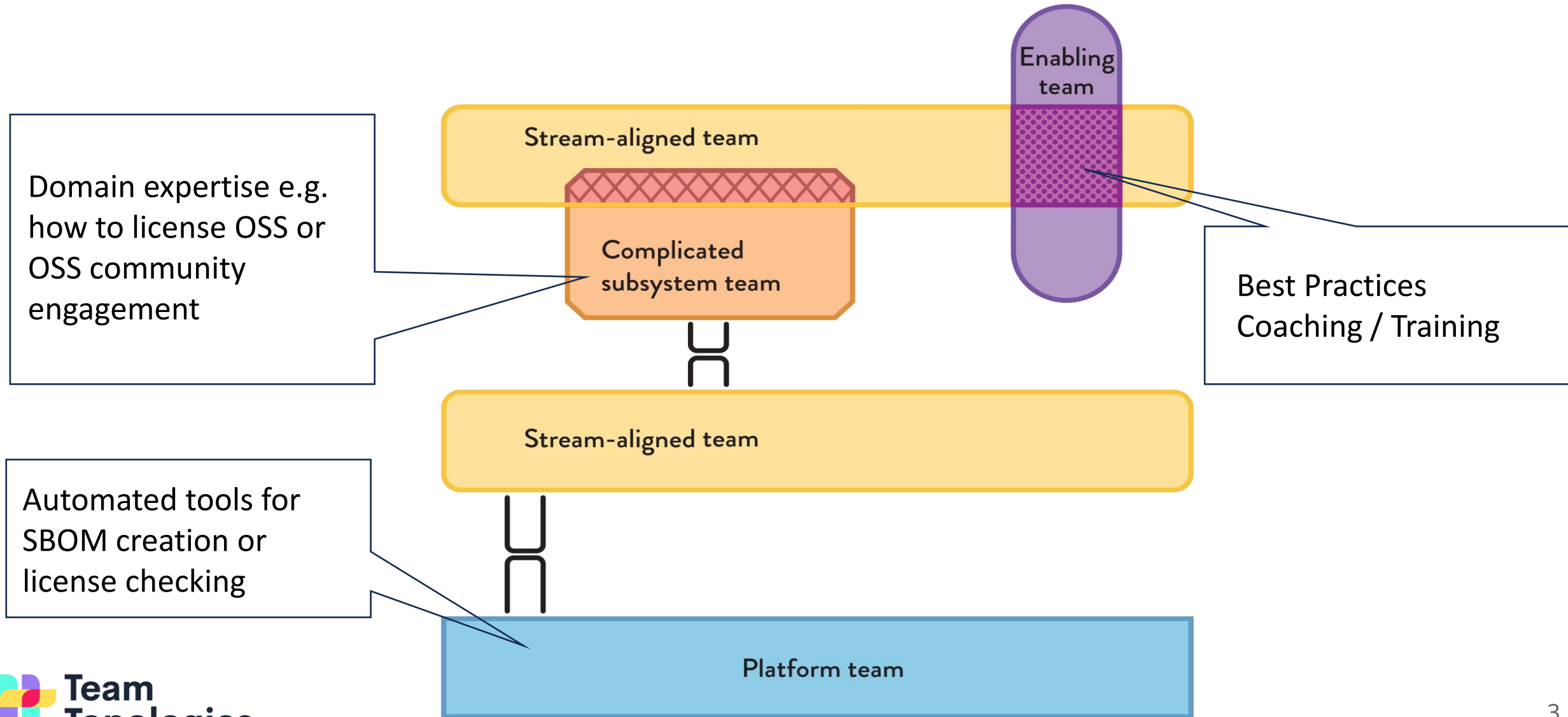
Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used	OSPO / ISPOs
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.	
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.	Common framing: OSPO/ISPO as Enabling Teams — coaching, training, and supporting devs with OSS/InnerSource practices.
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.	
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.	

Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used	OSPO / ISPOs
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.	
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.	Common framing: OSPO/ISPO as Enabling Teams — coaching, training, and supporting devs with OSS/InnerSource practices.
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.	Sometimes fits: OSPO/ISPO as deep experts in licensing, security, and OSS community navigation.
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.	

Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used	OSPO / ISPOs
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.	
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.	Common framing: OSPO/ISPO as Enabling Teams — coaching, training, and supporting devs with OSS/InnerSource practices.
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.	Sometimes fits: OSPO/ISPO as deep experts in licensing, security, and OSS community navigation.
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.	Increasingly relevant: OSPO/ISPO as Platform Teams — providing self-service compliance pipelines, curated OSS catalogs, contribution workflows.

Team Type	Purpose	Focus	When Used	OSPO / ISPOs
Stream-aligned	Deliver end-to-end value aligned to a business domain or customer journey.	Features, products, services	Default team type for continuous flow of value.	Rarely considered stream-aligned — OSPO/ISPOs don't directly deliver customer-facing features.
Enabling	Help stream-aligned teams overcome obstacles and acquire missing skills.	Coaching, guidance, knowledge transfer	Short-term; when new practices/tech need adoption.	Common framing: OSPO/ISPO as Enabling Teams — coaching, training, and supporting devs with OSS/InnerSource practices.
Complicated Subsystem	Own and maintain a subsystem requiring deep expertise.	Algorithms, specialized tech, niche knowledge	Where cognitive load is too high for stream-aligned teams.	Sometimes fits: OSPO/ISPO as deep experts in licensing, security, and OSS community navigation.
Platform	Provide self-service capabilities to accelerate delivery.	Internal platforms, tooling, APIs	To reduce duplication and lower cognitive load for multiple teams.	Increasingly relevant: OSPO/ISPO as Platform Teams — providing self-service compliance pipelines, curated OSS catalogs, contribution workflows.




OSPO Team Topology Examples



OSPO Team Topology Examples

OSPO as...	OSPO/ISPO Roles	Funding Risk / Exec Perception	Funding Security	Notes on Demonstrating OSPO Value

OSPO Team Topology Examples

OSPO as...	OSPO/ISPO Roles	Funding Risk / Exec Perception	Funding Security	Notes on Demonstrating OSPO Value
Enabling	Coaching, training, evangelism, cultural change; help teams adopt OSS/InnerSource practices	Seen as finite?? → “we’ve adopted OSS, why do we still need this team?”	 Low (short-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # new projects engaged • # of high profile / priority stream-aligned teams impacted • On-going / long-term engagements can be perceived less positively?? • Perhaps tie to updates in ecosystem??
Complicated Subsystem	Deep expertise in OSS licensing, IP, governance, SBOM, security, community navigation	Harder to cut? → risk exposure is too high if removed	 Medium–High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to highlight the need for on-going updating of expertise in fast-paced industry?
Platform	Self-service compliance pipelines, project catalogs, contribution workflows, dashboards	Seen as infrastructure investment, hardest to cut? → built in dependency; persists long-term like DevOps platforms?	 High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage metrics (pipeline runs, catalog entries, automated approvals, reports created) • What is the expertise required for roadmap / enhancements? • What can / should be maintained by other teams?

Final Thoughts..

Photo by [Riccardo Annandale](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Final Thoughts...

If building OSPO/ISPO business case, look for opportunities to align with prevailing trends / investment areas.

In orgs invested in Team Topologies, consider...

- **OSPO as Enabling Team is good entry point**
 - ...but may be seen as a finite investment
- **Anchor OSPO Value in expert knowledge** (complicated subsystem)
 - ...that needs constant refresh
- **Build repeatable services with efficient APIs** (platform)
 - Focus on roadmap
 - Consider hand offs to ops
- **Frame engagements with external OSS communities**
 - Not explicitly covered by Team Topologies.
 - Boundary-spanning engagements could be seen as complicated subsystems (if stream-aligned teams have dependency); perhaps need to consider the optimal interaction mode.
- **...How can you show direct impact to stream-aligned teams?**

Team Topologies: Value Paths for OSPOs & ISPOs

Clare Dillon

Clare.Dillon@curioss.org
[linkedin.com/in/claredillon/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/claredillon/)
Connect with me...

