Scaling Design in Maersk

Kevin McCarthy
Design Community Lead

About A.P. Moller-Maersk

A.P. Moller - Maersk is an integrated container logistics company and member of the A.P. Moller Group.

Connecting and simplifying trade to help our customers grow and thrive. With a dedicated team of over 80.000, operating in 130 countries; we go all the way to enable global trade for a growing world.

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Kevin McCarthy

Originally from Ireland

Studied Computer Science, Linguistics and French in Trinity College, Dublin

Worked as a librarian, before moving to Denmark in 1998

13 years in Nokia in various design roles

Moved to Maersk in 2012

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Scaling Design in Maersk

Different phases of the design capability in Maersk – and also about what I believe could be next

- Team of One
- A-Team
- Long Lost Friends
- Agency
- Community
- The Future?

What I did (or what I should have done…) and some reflections on each phase

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Some context

- Enterprise size company
- Global reach
- Not traditionally thought of as a tech company
- Transformation
- From waterfall projects to agile products

So some of the things I share here will translate well – others perhaps not so much

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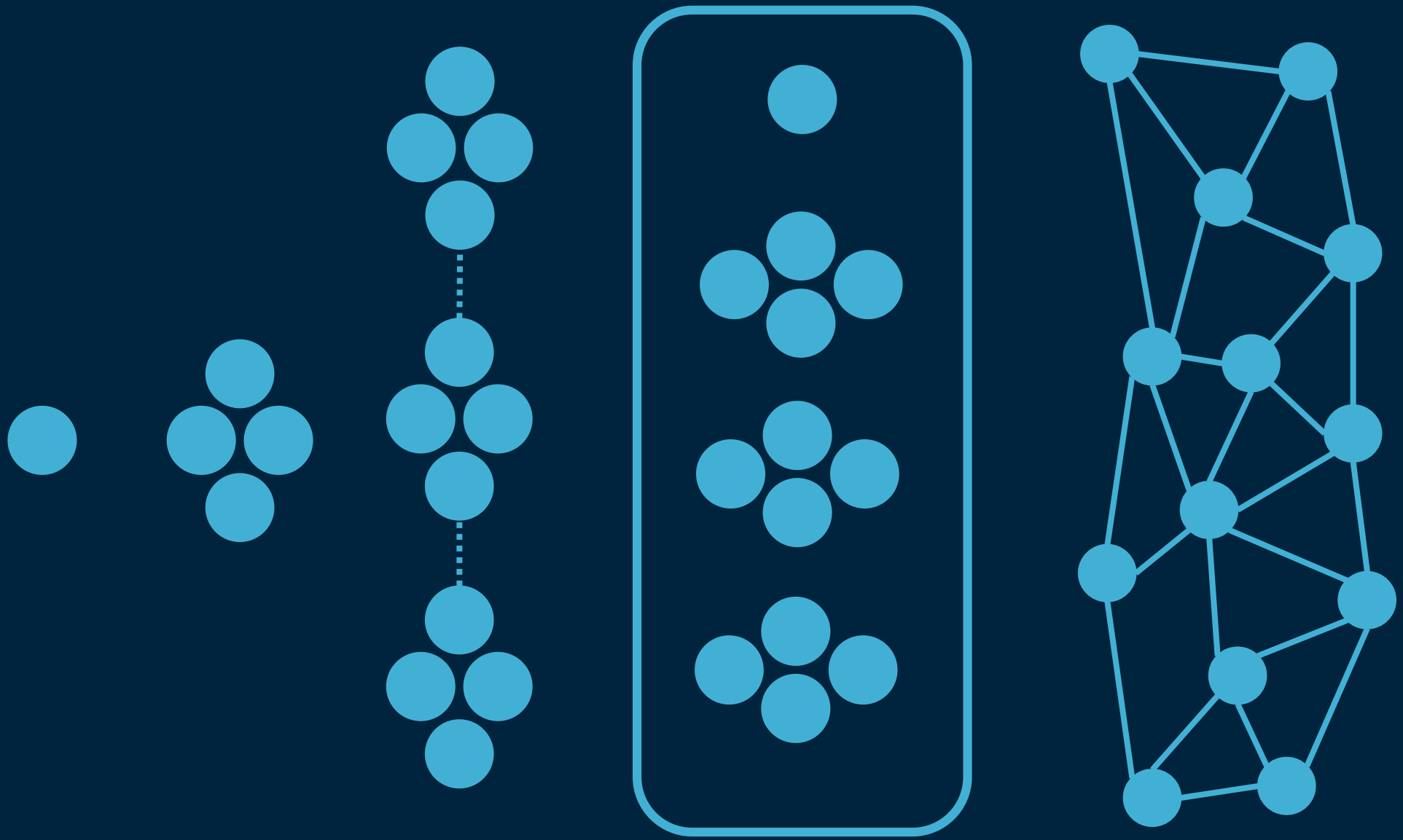

Team of One

Fra "Palle Alene i Verden", 1949

Team of One

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Team of One

- Started in Maersk in 2012
- First permanent in-house UX designer in the company (?)
- Small team of consultants
- Came from Nokia – where design was “everywhere”…
- Compromise on approach to design
- Working on design of internal workflows
- Understanding the “landscape”

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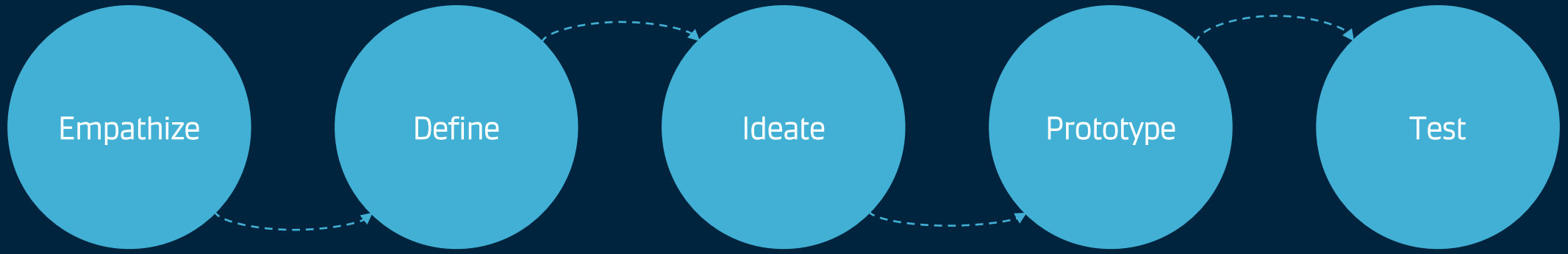
Team of One

- Accept compromise… but not at *any* cost
- Define your North Star – what would good look like?
- For example – the Design Thinking process…



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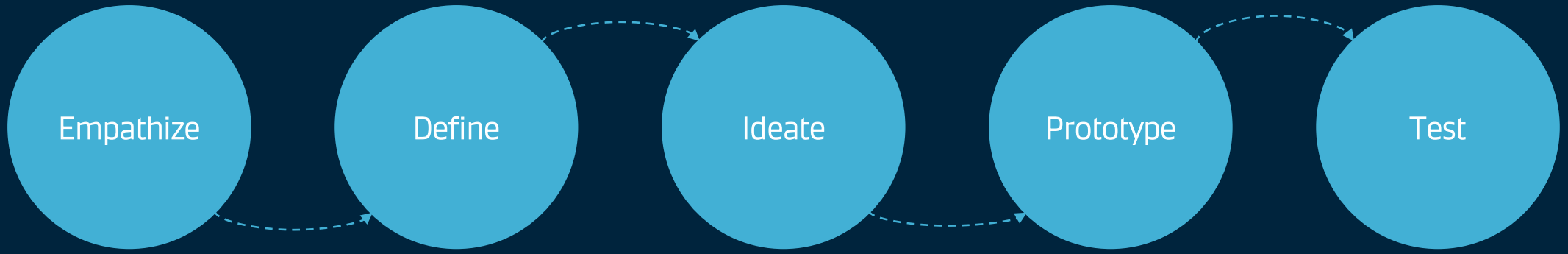
Team of One

- Find the gaps – and drive small initiatives to fill them
- Customer interviews, ideation sessions, usability tests…
- Find your allies – prove the worth of design with practical examples



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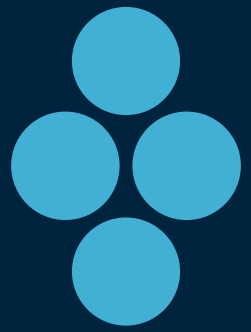
The A-Team

The A-Team



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The A-Team

- Moved to Enterprise Architecture in late 2013
- Large companies often find it hard to “place” design – PMO, Test/QA, EA…
- Tasked with building a design team
- Small team of specialists with complementary skills
- Focussed on one area – but evangelising widely

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The A-Team

Increased capacity - Output or Process?

Output – "do more"	**Process – "do better"**
+ broader reach	+ better quality E2E
+ increased demand	+ moving towards North Star faster
- remain as "lipstick on a pig"	- perception that ROI for new team is low

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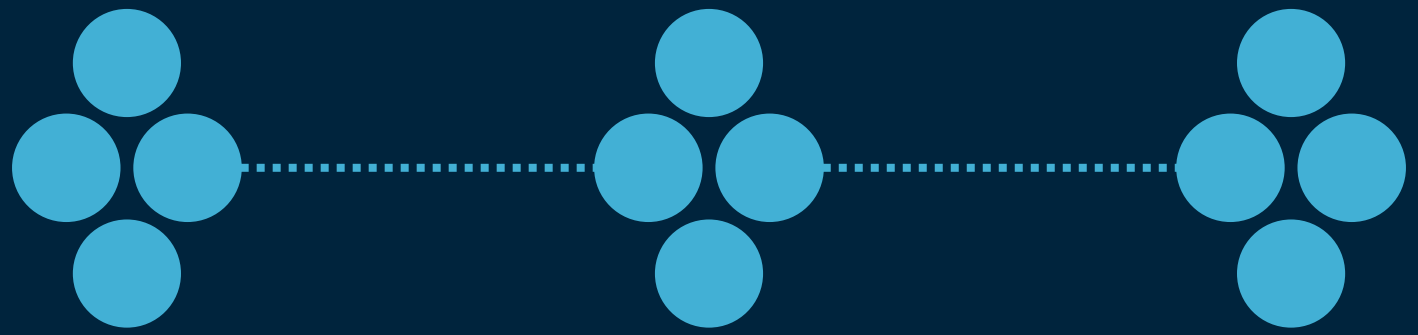
Long Lost Friends

Long Lost Friends



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Long Lost Friends

- Joined the “New Ventures” team
- Small team tasked with internal disruption
- Value of design is better understood now
- Other areas had been developing their own design competencies
- Consolidating design efforts – looking beyond the core areas

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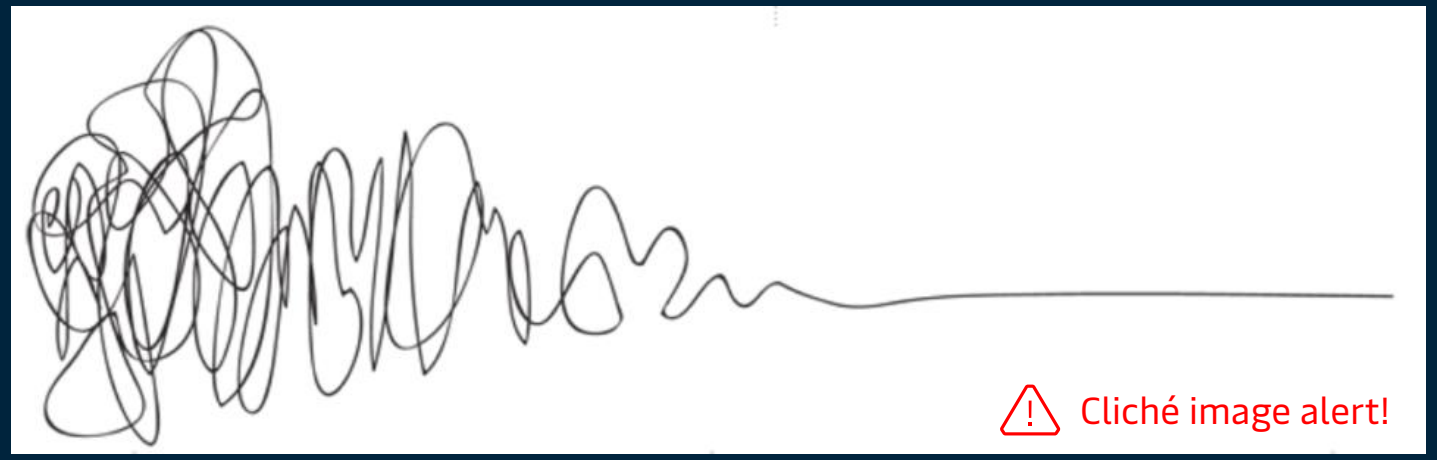
Long Lost Friends

Challenges in the new consolidated world:

- **Standardisation**



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Long Lost Friends

Challenges in the new consolidated world:

- Standardisation
- **Land-grabbing & Empire Building**

Long Lost Friends

Challenges in the new consolidated world:

- Standardisation
- Land-grabbing & Empire Building
- **The Quest for a Seat at the Table**

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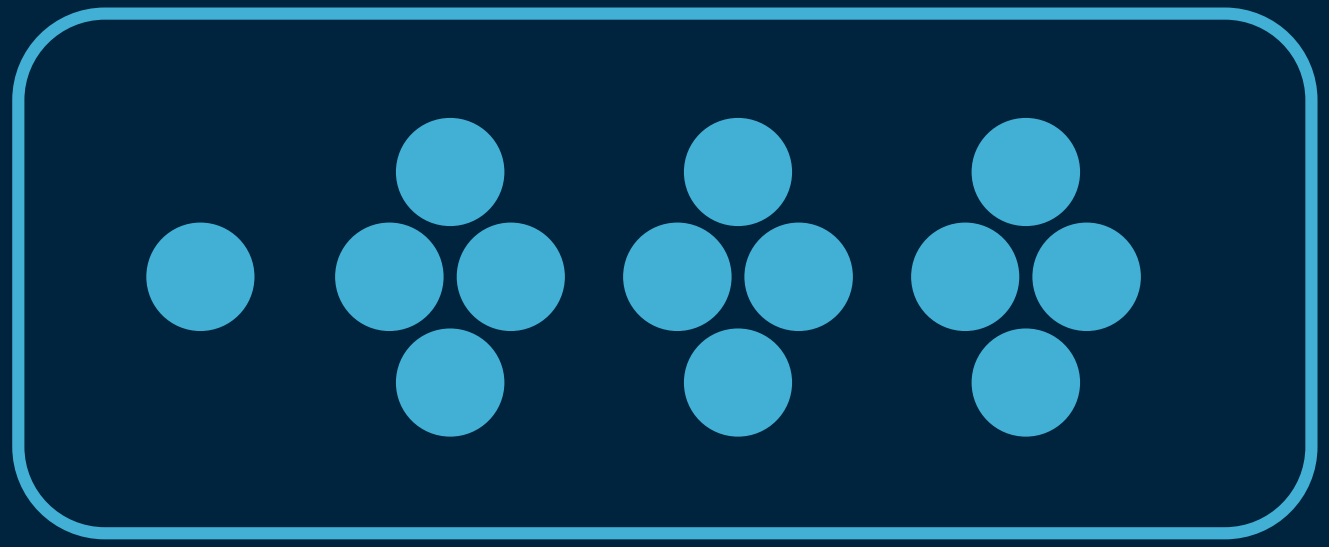
The Agency

The Agency



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The Agency

- In 2017 moved to Maersk Digital
- Small product centric organisation (ca 120)
- Full support from management
- Scaled rapidly from 4 to around 18
- Strength of identity – inwards and outwards
- Focus on Design disciplines – visual, product, research

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The Agency

- Growing a Design team in parallel
- Playing catch-up
- Matching supply with demand
- Can suit cross-product disciplines well e.g. explorative research
- Risk that design is seen as optional

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The Agency

- The Design Team *Manager*
- Needs to be Design Leader – design skills, communicator, relationship builder
- Growth and engagement of the team
- Managing upwards and sideways
- And then there's all the other crap...

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Community

Community

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Community

- Maersk Digital merged with IT in 2019
- Fully product focussed organisation – later organised around platforms
- Wanted to have design as part of the DNA of this organisation
- Designers as a member of long-standing product teams
- Community of Practice supporting design

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Community

- Design leadership is democratised
- Management tasks (“stupid stuff”) is transferred
- Open to non-designers
- Community increases the influence of design
- How to ensure quality?
- How do you strengthen identity?

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So what's next?

- The Inverted Pyramid
- Rise of the Individual Contributor
- Mature community – many design leaders
- Collaboration & facilitation: Design on its own is nothing
- Think of design beyond designers
- Seat at the Table revisited?

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Thank you!
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