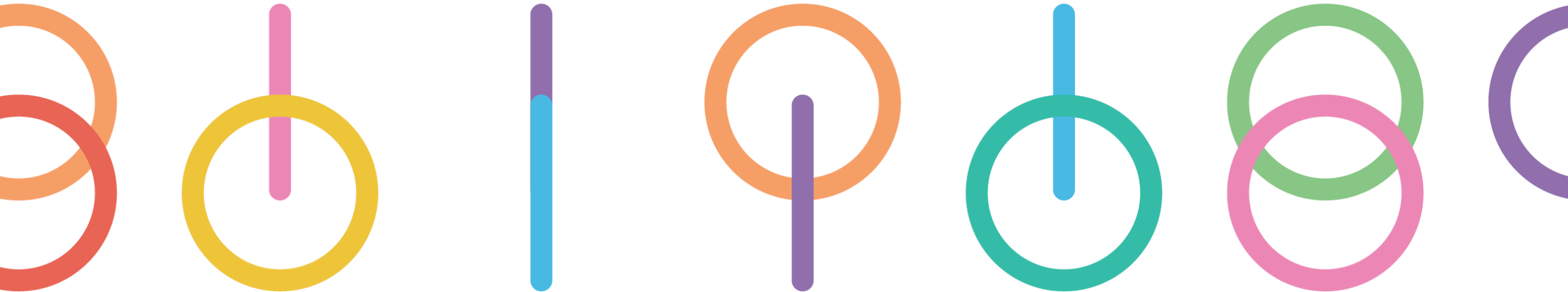


Transforming a company into a Learning Organization: when learning becomes a competitive advantage



LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Intré (AKA i3)

Establishment: 1999

Business: third-party software development

2 Offices: Monza and Bergamo

12 Teams – No hierarchy

65 people:

- 44 developers
- 7 UX designers
- 4 cyber security specialists
- 3 system engineers
- 3 delivery managers
- 2 brand&communication managers
- 2 accountants



Mixed Teams

Software Development Teams:

- Typically 2-5 people from i3 + 2-5 people from the Client
- Product Manager as a Client's representatives
- On-demand Agile coaching from i3, included in the fee
- We work in iterations and sell team-iterations, not man-days or man-hours
- We work in our offices or remotely
- We spend 1 day by our Clients' offices each iteration, on average
- Clients' people come to our offices from time to time as well

FRANK OPPENHEIMER

“

The best way to learn is to teach.

”

INTR3

Beyond software development

We write code 4-hands with the Client.

We help Client's people grow technically and methodologically.

i3 developers:

- Can facilitate Agile events
- Can provide technical training: languages, practices (e.g. TDD, Pair Programming), even to other teams
- Act as mentors for Client's people on the team

Clients like i3 because it can boost quality and speed of software development.

We foster customer involvement, providing value beyond working software, promoting long-term partnerships.

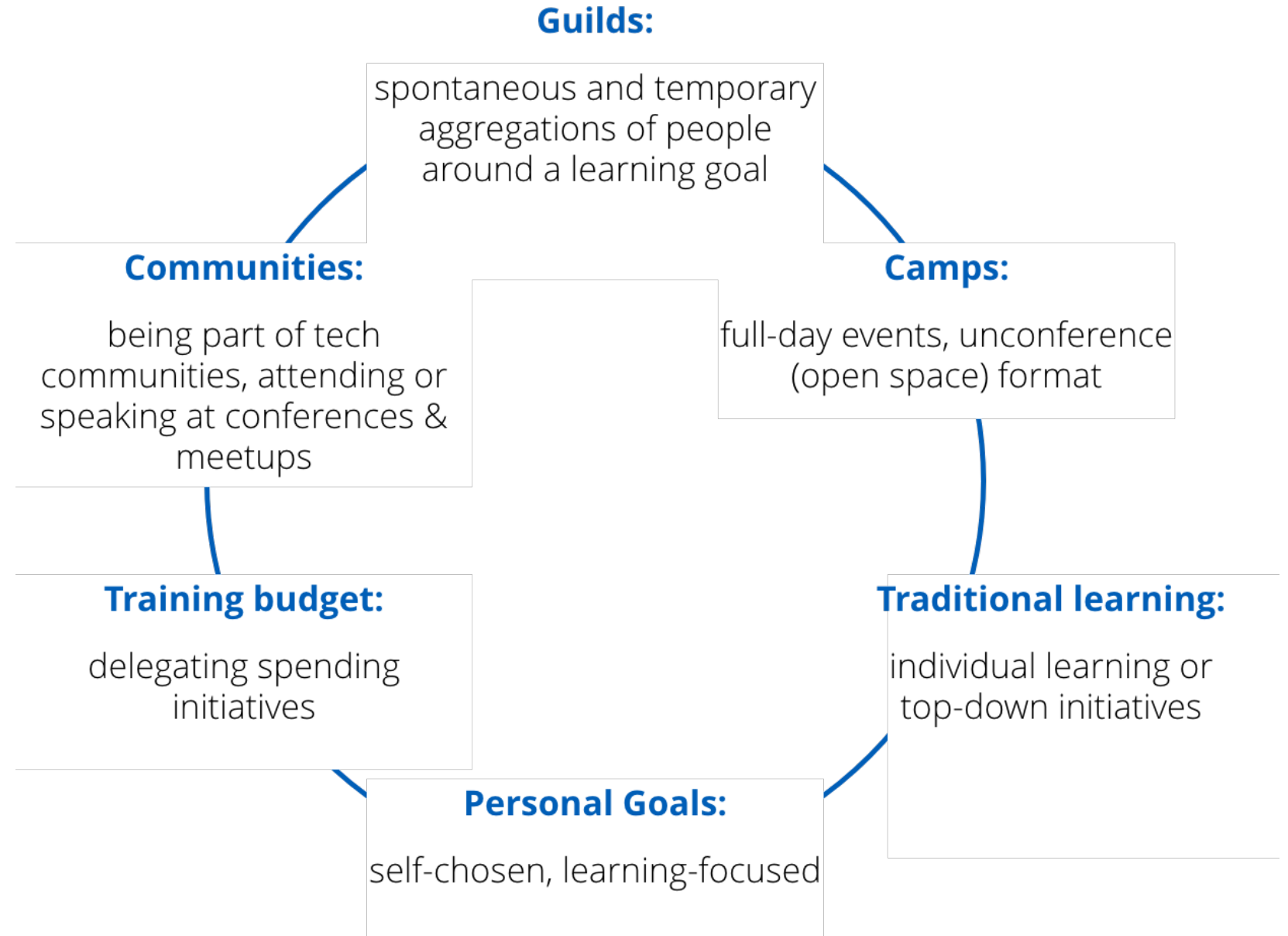
The L&D model

Disclaimer: this is i3's own L&D model, distilled during many years, and strictly intertwined with i3's culture and legacy.

Don't try to apply it top-down in your context. Rather, if you like it, take inspiration from it, and make experiments, one little bite at a time.



The L&D model



DEREK BOK

“

*If you think education is expensive, try
ignorance*

”

INTR3

1) Training Budget

Everyone in the company is provided, every year, with €1.400,00 (+ VAT) to purchase stuff related to learning.

E.g. conference tickets, travel&accomodation, hardware, software licenses, books.

People don't need to ask anyone for authorization to spend their budget, they simply account for it afterwards, using an internal tool.

Only and when an individual runs out of budget, i3 management evaluate the context and, if deemed appropriate, cover the difference.

Some mandatory company-wide training initiatives (safety courses, fire prevention courses), language courses, and certification fees are paid directly by i3 and don't affect individual budgets.

2) Guilds

Guilds are spontaneous and temporary aggregations of people around a learning goal.

Guilds form every 4 months (3 cycles/year).

22-25 Guilds every year.

A Guild must have a minimum of 4, and a maximum of 8 members.



2) Guilds

The Guilds work 4 hours every week, during working hours, on activities like:

- teamwork (such as prototyping with new languages or new frameworks)
- attending training/courses
- training/mentoring/coaching sessions with external teachers, invited by the Guild

3-4 weeks before the beginning of a new Guilds' cycle, individuals can submit their proposal for a new Guild: a name, one or more learning goals, the resources needed, an outcome, and (possibly) an agenda.

2) Guilds

People have complete freedom in submitting whatever theme they want, but usually tech and methodological topics prevail.

1 week before the new cycle beginning, proponents pitch their ideas.

Then people vote: a vote means *"I want to be part of it"*. Guilds receiving < 4 votes are discarded (they might have another chance at the next cycle); Guilds receiving > 8 votes are split, or volunteers relocate.

The screenshot displays a dashboard for managing guilds, dated 29/01/2025 to 13/06/2025. It shows a grid of guild cards, each with a title, creator, and a list of participants. The interface includes filters for 'Gilde' (10) and 'Gilde Individuali' (0). Several guilds have a yellow warning banner indicating 'Risultati mancanti' (Missing results).

Guild Name	Creator	Participants	Status
IoT Cloud	Carlo Ballabio	Lorenzo Testa, Veronica Brosio, Carlo Ballabio, Claudio Volpi	9 Partecipanti
Realità o deepfake?	Andrea Caglio	Matteo Balestrini, Fabio Nava, Marco Ranica	8 Partecipanti
Scrum Quest - Parte 3	Andrea Giovane	Simone Recupero, Manuel Bonini, Andrea Giovane, Damiano Salvi, Alberto Maggioni, Davide Stari	8 Partecipanti
App per la Comunicazione...	Veronica D'Angelo	Veronica D'Angelo, Cristina Azzarito, Miriam Civiero, Andrea Sironi, Diego Chierichetti, Andrea Cinchetti	7 Partecipanti
DevOps Heroes	Yordan Asenov	Yordan Asenov, Alessandro Rosa, Giulia Redolfi, Christian Pavan, Giovanni Rigillo	5 Partecipanti
insanely-fast-devs-2	Francesco Sacchi	Andrea Arrighi, Stefano Maffei, Matteo Franchini, Luca Cruciani, Francesco Radu Matias	5 Partecipanti
Axon e derivati	Marco Rotondi	Domenico De Angellis, Nicola Coltelli, Manuel Togni, Gabriel George Silvas, Marco Rotondi	5 Partecipanti
i3Skillz bis	Marco Loregian	Marco Loregian, Roberto Aceti, Tetiana Melnyk, Giacomo Giovenzana	4 Partecipanti
Extreme Public Speaking	Alessandro Giardina		
Blockchain zero 2 hero	Andrea Cinchetti		

2) Guilds

- People are invited to spend their €1.400,00 budget in the context of the Guilds they join during the year, pooling their credit with the other Guild mates. However, people have the freedom to spend their budget on individual initiatives.
- At the end of the 4 months, the Guilds show their outcomes to everyone else in the company, by either:
 - running a live presentation during the Camp (Guildonference)
 - recording a video to be shared and published on the company website and social media
 - writing a blog post/technical article, again to be shared with the world
 - building pieces of working software (with a focus on the learning, rather than on the delivery)
 - ...who knows? We love to be surprised!

2) Guilds

What if someone is not interested in any of the newly formed Guilds?

- once per year, people have the right to run a 4-month individual learning path
- they submit a description of their learning path, so that everybody knows
- they dedicate 4 hours per week to the learning path

At the end of the 4 months they show the learning path's outcome to the whole company, just like the Guilds.

2) Guilds – outcome examples



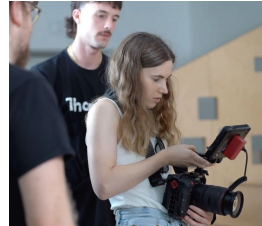
Game Design

A Vdeogame prototype



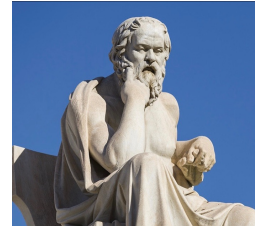
i3Finance

An internal course about personal finance



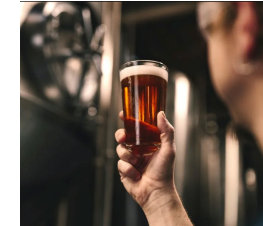
Video Production

Marketing and inspirational videos about i3



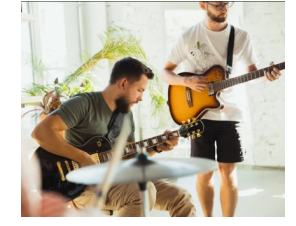
Cogito Ergo Sum

A philosophical debate about Democracy



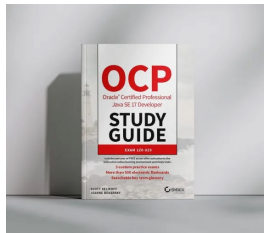
i3Beer

IoT fermentation monitoring system, and beer, of course



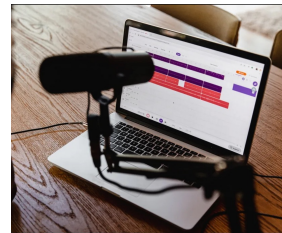
The Rolling Updates

A concert during i3 Camp dinner



Java Developer Bootcamp

Participants got certified



Gildoppiaggio

Several Cartoons dubbed episodes



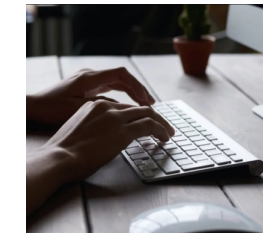
In Tréatro

An improvisational theatre show at i3 Camp



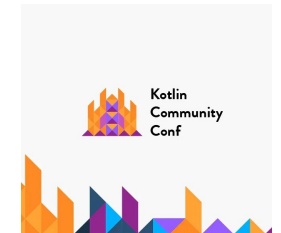
Dermatologia

An AI-driven skin-disease recognizing software



Gildattilografia

A i3 Podcast episode



Kotlin

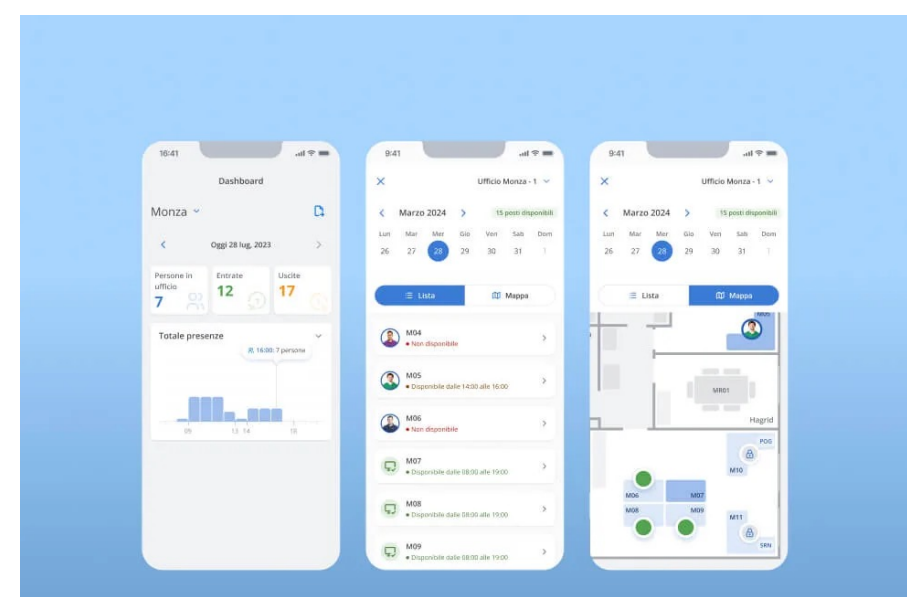
A whole conference, Kotlin Community Conference

2) Guilds - developed tools examples

i3Presence: app for Customer Journeys and UX mapping

i3Guild: app for Guild submission and voting

Retròmaniacs!: app for retrospective planning



A screenshot of the Retròmaniacs! app interface for a retrospective session titled 'New Retrospective (29/9/2025)'. The interface is divided into two main sections: 'Set the stage' and 'Gather data'. Each section contains three activity cards: 'Appreciations', 'Brainstorming / Filtering', and 'Color Code Dots'. A central 'Circle of questions' dialog box is open, displaying a question: 'Decidere cosa fare in base ai dati acquisiti in precedenza'. The dialog includes an 'Esempio' section with a list of questions and instructions for the activity. The bottom of the screen shows a grid of activity cards with 'Duration' and 'Difficulty' indicators.

A screenshot of the i3Guild app interface showing a grid of guilds. The top bar indicates the date range '29/01/2025 -- 13/06/2025' and the number of guilds '10'. The main content area displays a grid of guild cards, each with a title, creator, and a list of participants. The guilds include: 'IoT Cloud' (9 participants), 'Realità o deepfake?' (8 participants), 'Scrum Quest - Parte 3' (8 participants), 'App per la Comunicazione...' (7 participants), 'DevOps Heroes' (5 participants), 'insanely-fast-devs-2' (5 participants), 'Axon e derivati' (5 participants), 'i3Skillz bis' (4 participants), and 'Extreme Public Speaking' (1 participant). Each guild card also features a 'Risultati mancanti' button.

3) Camps

Full-day events, whole company, every 4 months, various locations:

- “What’s going on” with CEO and partners
- “Guildonference” (Guilds’ showcases)
- Unconference (Open Space) with topics spacing from technology to methodologies

Customers’ people, friends, and competitors are also invited.

INTR3



4) Communities

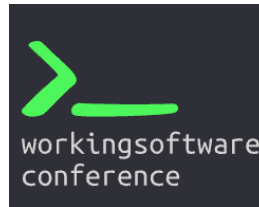
Being members of tech communities:

- as an **event attendee**: to learn new stuff, to be inspired, to meet and mingle with other professionals
- as a **speaker**: to learn through teaching, to give back, to increase one's self-esteem
- as an **hostess** or a **steward** at the company's desk during events: to participate in powering brand awareness, creating hiring opportunities
- as an **event organizer**: to serve the community, to be part of a network

4) Communities



Italian Agile Days



Working Software Conference



SoCraTes IT



eXtreme Programming User Group



Better Software



Product Management Day



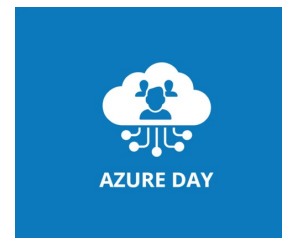
AI Heroes



Play14



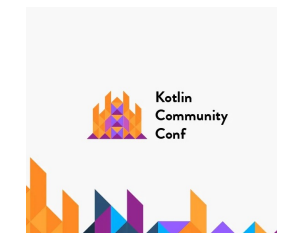
Domain Driven Design Europe



Azure Day



1nno0va



Kotlin Community Conference

4) Communities - IWannaBeASpeaker – Community of Practices

Objectives:

- Develop effective speakers for conferences, meetups, and podcasts - professional growth
- Elevate i3's visibility and recognition in the IT, agile, and design communities

Activities (1 hour every 2 weeks):

- Track Italian & European events on a 12-month horizon; select best fits for i3, make sponsorship decisions, and promote them internally
- Identify new potential speakers within i3 (e.g. standout Intré Camp talks; colleagues who attended public-speaking courses)
- Provide end-to-end mentoring: topic → slides → dry-runs → Call for Speakers
- Communicate talks internally and externally (before and after) via newsletter and corporate social channels

5) Traditional learning

3 days/year in addition to the time spent with the Guilds, for:

Self-chosen individual training, such as:

- attending conferences
- take courses
- attending workshops

Company-wide training initiatives:

- 5-7 per year; conceived through a survey, the Skill Matrix, anticipations of future needs by i3 partners
- Optional enrollment
- Examples: Non-Violent Communication (NVC); Posture and wellbeing; Host Leadership; Conflict Resolution; Problem Solving; Lego Serious Play
- Clients' people are invited too

5) Traditional learning

3 days/year in addition to the time spent with the Guilds, for:

Certifications:

- Take certification exams
- When the exam is passed, it doesn't affect the €1.400 budget
- When the exam is not passed, it affects the budget for 50% of the fee

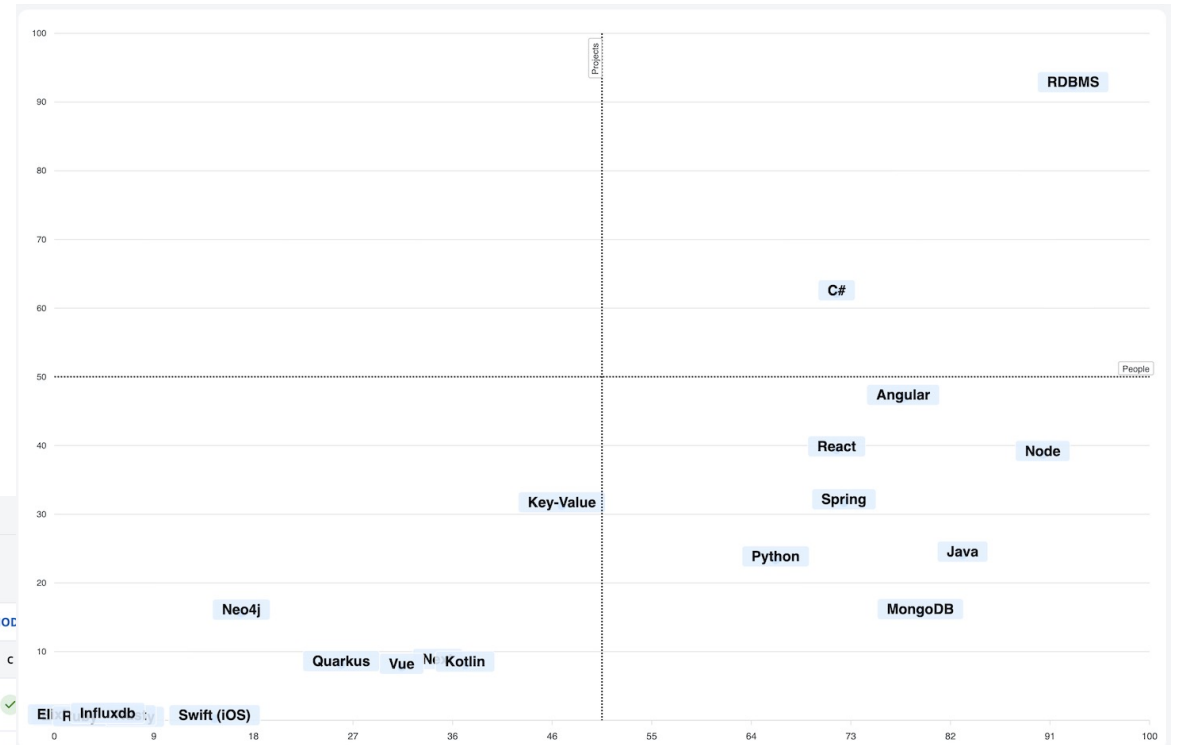
Language courses:

- Besides working hours
- Doesn't affect the €1.400 budget

5) Traditional learning - Skill Matrix

Twice a year the team self-reflect on their skills and track their evolution on i3Skill, an internal tool.

PEOPLE ↑↓		C#			ELIXIR			GO			JAVA			KOTLIN			NODE		
Categories ⓘ		C	I	F	C	I	F	C	I	F	C	I	F	C	I	F	C	I	F
A	abr Siemens Etna	✗	✓	—	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✓	✓	—	✗	✓	—	✓	—	—
AR	Aceti Roberto Safety21	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✓	—	—
AA	Arrighi Andrea Namrial OnePlatform	✓	✓	🏠	✗	✓	🏠	✗	✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠	✗	✓	🏠	✓	✓	—
A	ase NGM - Interstellar	✓	✓	—	✗	✗	—	✗	✓	🏠	✓	✓	🏠	✗	✓	🏠	✓	✓	—
BE	Bassis Emanuele Safety21	✓	✓	—	✗	—	—	✗	—	—	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	—
B	blb KPM	✓	✓	—	✗	✗	—	✗	—	—	✓	✓	—	✗	✓	—	✓	✓	—
BM	Balestrini Matteo Metalcam	✗	✗	—	✗	✗	—	✗	✗	—	—	✗	—	✗	✗	—	—	—	🏠
BM	Bonini Manuel Autosoft	✓	✓	—	✗	—	—	✗	✓	—	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	🏠	✓	✓	—
BV	Brosio Veronica NGM - Interstellar	✓	✗	—	✗	✗	—	✗	✓	—	✓	✓	🏠	✗	✓	—	✓	✓	—



DAVE NICOLETTE

“

I keep getting emails from recruiters suggesting jobs that match my skills. I'd rather find a job that expands my skills

”

INTR3

6) Personal goals

"Performance" review: every 6 months,

with one i3 partner and one delivery manager.

3-4 yearly personal goals, self-chosen, learning-oriented or give-back oriented.

It's straightforward to figure out personal goals.

It's straightforward to recognize whether they're met or not.



A Continuous Evolution

Every change to the model starts as an experiment, and it's continuously refined (or dropped). Some significant practices started as experiments, or ongoing experiments:

- Yearly budget increment: from €500 (individual) to €1.000 and then €1.400 (fostering expenses sharing)
- Having guests at the Camps, as active participants
- Customers' people as Guilds members
- Non-numeric Skill Matrix
- Certification program: exams fees don't affect the €1.400 budget
- Yearly internal survey: "What would you like to learn in the next 12 months?"
- IWannaBeASpeaker CoP

TONY ROBBINS

“

*Engaging people is about meeting
their needs, not yours.*

”

INTR3

People's growth

Horizontal, rather than vertical.

No career ladders, rather professional ladders.

People can ask to switch team, they can take on a leadership role (tech leader, Scrum Master) but our business model does not allow traditional career evolutions. It does allow professional growth.

CORPORATE DILEMMA

WHAT IF WE TRAIN THEM AND THEY LEAVE?

WHAT IF WE DON'T... AND THEY STAY?



INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES

What if they leave?

We wish them best luck for their next adventure, and we keep in touch.
They will be our best ambassadors.

Wrap up: Pros & *Cons*

- Collective activities: the joy to be together
- Peer learning creates healthy pressure, limiting “bits and pieces” / “when I have time” / “not in the mood” attitudes
- Knowing colleagues from different teams better: in the mid-long term, everybody has the chance to work in guilds with everybody else in the company (company cohesiveness)
- Knowledge is shared among everybody else, not only among your own team mates. Everyone knows what are the strengths (competences, soft skills) of everyone else, therefore, they always know who to ask for help or advice, even outside of their own team

Wrap up: Pros & *Cons*

- Guilds and Camps mean taking a weekly break from long running projects (they can be boring from time to time)
- People have the opportunity to experiment different team dynamics every 4 months (every Guild has its own); those dynamics can be later brought to the working teams.
- We expose ourselves to more new business opportunities because every individual is a touchpoint with the outside world, and we always have more knowledge than that we just need today
- Talent retention: our L&D model is the primary appealing trait of the company when it comes to hiring

Wrap up: *Pros* & Cons

- Guilds: risk of dispersed/sloppy learning (are 4 months always enough?)
- Remote is sometimes less effective
- Sometimes it's hard to schedule the weekly 4-hour time slot among people from 4-6 different teams
- The group energy level can be low from time to time (depending on the people mix, the leader's ability to keep the right level of energy)
- Someone complains when they cannot apply what they learn in the day-to-day team activities (however, they're actually preparing for the next client or the next project that will require what they've just learnt)
- Continuously finding something new to learn can be challenging

References:

- i3 Handbook: <https://www.intre.it/handbook>
- i3 Guilds archive: <https://www.intre.it/gilde/>
- i3 Camps archive: <https://www.intre.it/camp-2/>
- i3 Community activities: <https://www.intre.it/community/>
- i3 Blog: <https://www.intre.it/blog/>
- The Fifth Discipline – Peter Senge: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fifth_Discipline
- Open Space Technology: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology
- Non-violent Communication: <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/>
- Host Leadership: <https://www.intre.it/2020/10/13/host-leadership-levoluzione-della-figura-del-leader/>
- Smart Goals: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria

ABOUT ME

Alessandro Giardina

- Degree in Computer Engineering: 2002
- Developer: 1999-2008
- Product Owner: 2008-2018
- Agile Coach, Delivery Manager, Agile L&D: > 2018
- Currently @Intré
- Italian Agile Movement: founding member, past treasurer



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INTRÉ



LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Thank you for your attention

INTR3

LEARN / CODE / DEPLOY VALUE

Lagging vs Leading indicators

Lagging

Easy to manage and to understand, mostly quantitative, they measure effectiveness by assessing the quantity/quality of provided training, or they measure how well people perform at tests and exams. But they don't tell much about the impact that the training will have on software quality or customer satisfaction.

Leading

Often blurred, hard to grasp, mostly qualitative. We can evaluate the quality of the outcome of the training, either collective (Guilds) or individual (personal goals) through showcases and working artifacts. We evaluate the customer involvement and satisfaction (in the Guilds, Camps, courses we deliver, as well as during demos and reviews), and the professional growth of the customers' people we work with in the teams. All these indicators help predicting the success of our people, and the success of the relationship with the customers, and, therefore, the growth of the business.

Engagement

We are uncovering better ways of delivering corporate training by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

experiential learning over notionism

group training over individual training

proactive training over top-down training

showcases and working artifacts over exams and tests

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

People engage themselves...

Scenarios

Product/service company (B2B, B2C)

- People cohesiveness (sharing the same space, culture, knowledge)
- Hands on one real product
- Attention to details and (hopefully) quality.
- Usually a few technologies; tech stack evolves in the long term

3rd-party software development companies

- Chances to use many different technologies
- Hands on many real products
- Loose people cohesiveness (scattered across different spaces, cultures, knowledge bases)
- Poor focus on learning&development
- (Usually) poor attention to details and quality

Coaching/training company

- No real hands on products
- Chances to use many different technologies
- Strong focus on learning&development

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