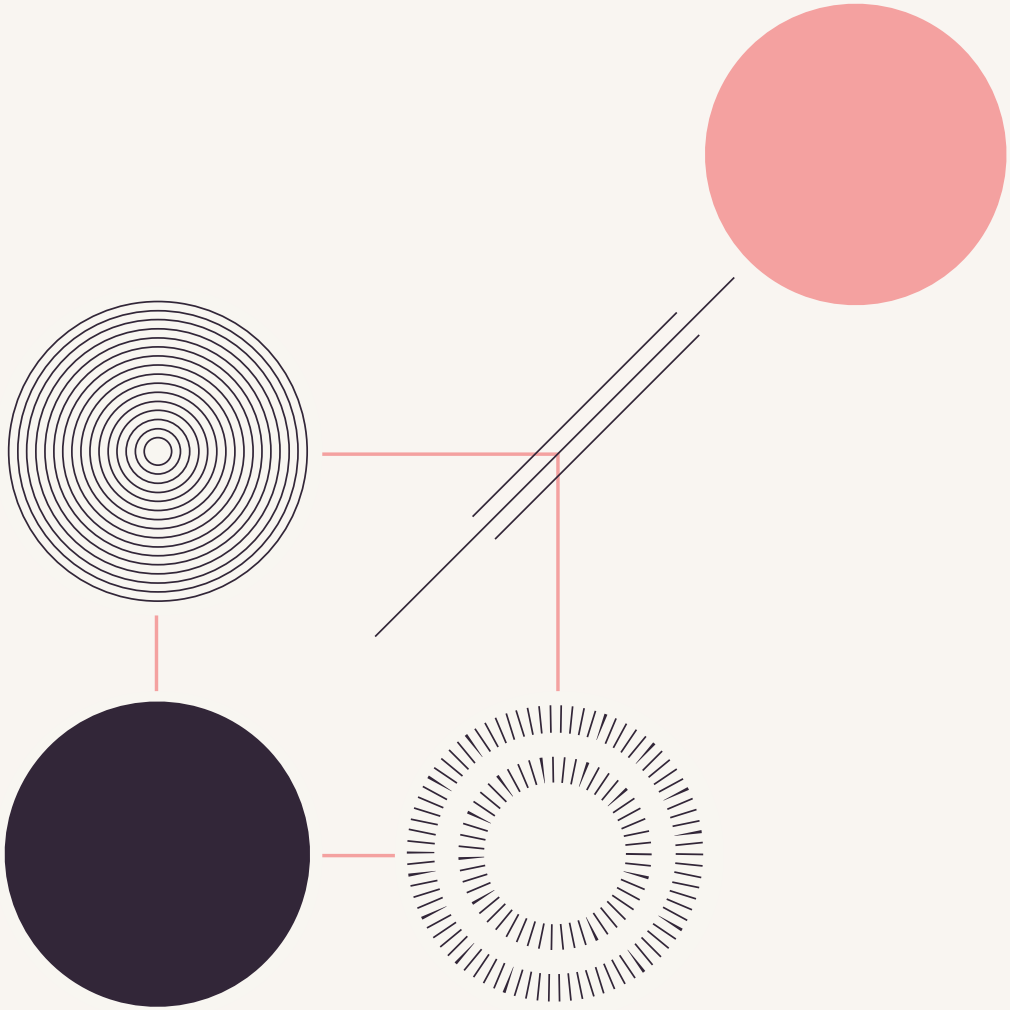
CLIENT STORY

IMPROVING SPEED TO VALUE

Trade Me's Consumer Marketplace (CMP) business wanted to improve the delivery of customer value by reinventing the way they worked. Adam Jordan, Head of Delivery CMP, explains how HYPR helped them on the journey.



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CONTEXT

The challenge

“My mission is about unleashing high-velocity innovation. That requires human-centred team architectures and empowered and engaged teams with high autonomy. We weren’t set up or working in a way that could deliver the speed to value I wanted.”

Adam Jordan, Head of Delivery CMP, Trade Me

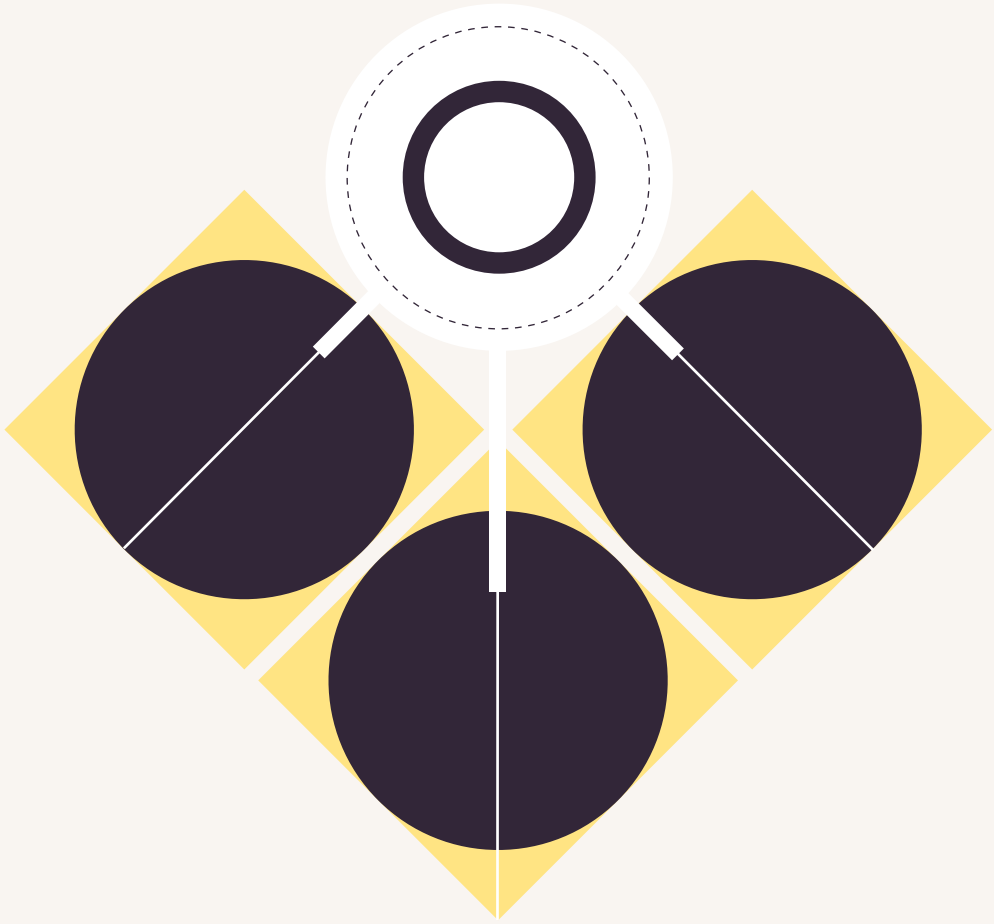
Prescripted work

“For example, our existing portfolio approach put decisions about work priorities in the hands of senior executives. We felt that the squads responsible for delivery were really just pulling down work that had been decided for them. That approach could hinder the responsiveness and agility we needed. I wanted to free the squads and give them more autonomy.”

Risk aversion

“Our delivery leads were also stretched. Their role was a mix of product ownership, accountability, Scrum Master, release management, analytics and more – a blend that made the job too difficult to do well.

“I also saw that leads were quite risk averse in their approach to delivery and believed this was because their individual performance reviews were linked to OKRs. You have to be careful with that because personal remuneration can be impacted by a failure to meet key results. And, of course, it didn’t encourage the experimentation we needed to improve customer value.”



Defining the solution

“So our goal was to improve speed to value for customers. To achieve that, we needed to reinvent the way we worked and build our squads around a much stronger and clearer delivery model.

“Any new model had to be aligned to business strategy outcomes and also create a foundation for supporting rapid, experiment-driven product development.”

> **“We had ideas about what the new model might be, but we wanted to have greater confidence about designing and implementing it”**
>
> Adam Jordan, Head of Delivery CMP, Trade Me

Bringing clarity to roles

“It was clear that team architectures and roles needed to change to bring clarity to role expectations across the delivery lifecycle.

“In addition, across Trade Me’s three business verticals, there was no standardisation in team structure or practices. There was a lot of duplication of effort, different ways of working, complex dependency management and so on. So we thought the delivery model would work for us but also point the way for the other verticals.”

Bringing HYPR on board

“We had ideas about what the new model might be, but we wanted to have greater confidence about designing and implementing it. We saw value in looking for external help and that’s when we decided to engage HYPR and bring their Principal Consultant, Megan Barnes, onto our team.”

THE SOLUTION

Designing the new delivery model

"Megan was instrumental in helping us design the new model which we called 'SAM' – 'Strong Accountability Model'."

> **"Megan was key in helping us craft the make-up of those squads and determining their agendas and activities"**
>
> Adam Jordan, Head of Delivery CMP, Trade Me

Defining roles and new squads

"We began by mapping roles around the software delivery cycle to help us rethink ownership, responsibilities, role boundaries and decision-making authority.

"We created two new roles – Agile Practice Lead and Product Owner. Then all other roles were clarified around those to provide responsibilities and authority within a properly self-managing team. The Delivery Lead role was scrapped.

"The model also created five new Value Stream Squads aligned with the company's strategy. Again, Megan was key in helping us craft the make-up of those squads and determining their agendas and activities."

Implementing the new model

"The first step was to hire for the new Agile and PO roles. Megan's experience allowed us to test each other's thinking about the kind of people we wanted. She interviewed all the candidates to ensure fit and we've been able to build an incredibly strong team as a result."

Agile Practice Lead role

"The Agile Practice Lead role was aimed at improving product and Agile practices, especially in areas of experimentation, product discovery and 'thin slicing'.[1] Megan was a mentor to my Agile Practice Lead working with him for almost a year to build up his skill set.

"She also worked directly with each of the squads in building their Agile practices, helped with assessments and reviews, and was able to introduce a lot of new thinking around ways of working and driving continuous improvement."

Product Owner role

"For the PO role, Megan helped us build a capabilities framework which we now use to assess skills, identify gaps and how we might strengthen capabilities over time.

"We also introduced new value metrics – primarily based on cycle time – to help manage expectations around delivery between the PO and their sponsor. This was important because – while sponsors need POs to do certain things to accelerate speed to value – the POs need certain things from sponsors such as support, direction and clarity so that they're focusing on the right things.

"Across all of SAM – the governance of the model, the new roles within the model, understanding capabilities etc. – Megan was a key part of that journey, contributing strongly every step of the way."

[1] *'Thin slicing' is building a minimal strand of end-to-end functionality in a product to prove something can work. You then iteratively add to it in pursuit of a measurable goal.*

THE OUTCOMES

We're getting there!

"The new delivery model has had a terrific impact in CMP's world. We're still developing our quantitative data to analyse the change, but we have positive evidence in other ways – from surveys and the business results that we're achieving.

"We can see speed to value picking up and there's a new vitality in the teams. People are more engaged now. That's a big win because people were initially cautious about having to give up some of their responsibilities when we clarified and redrew the roles."

Seeing the future

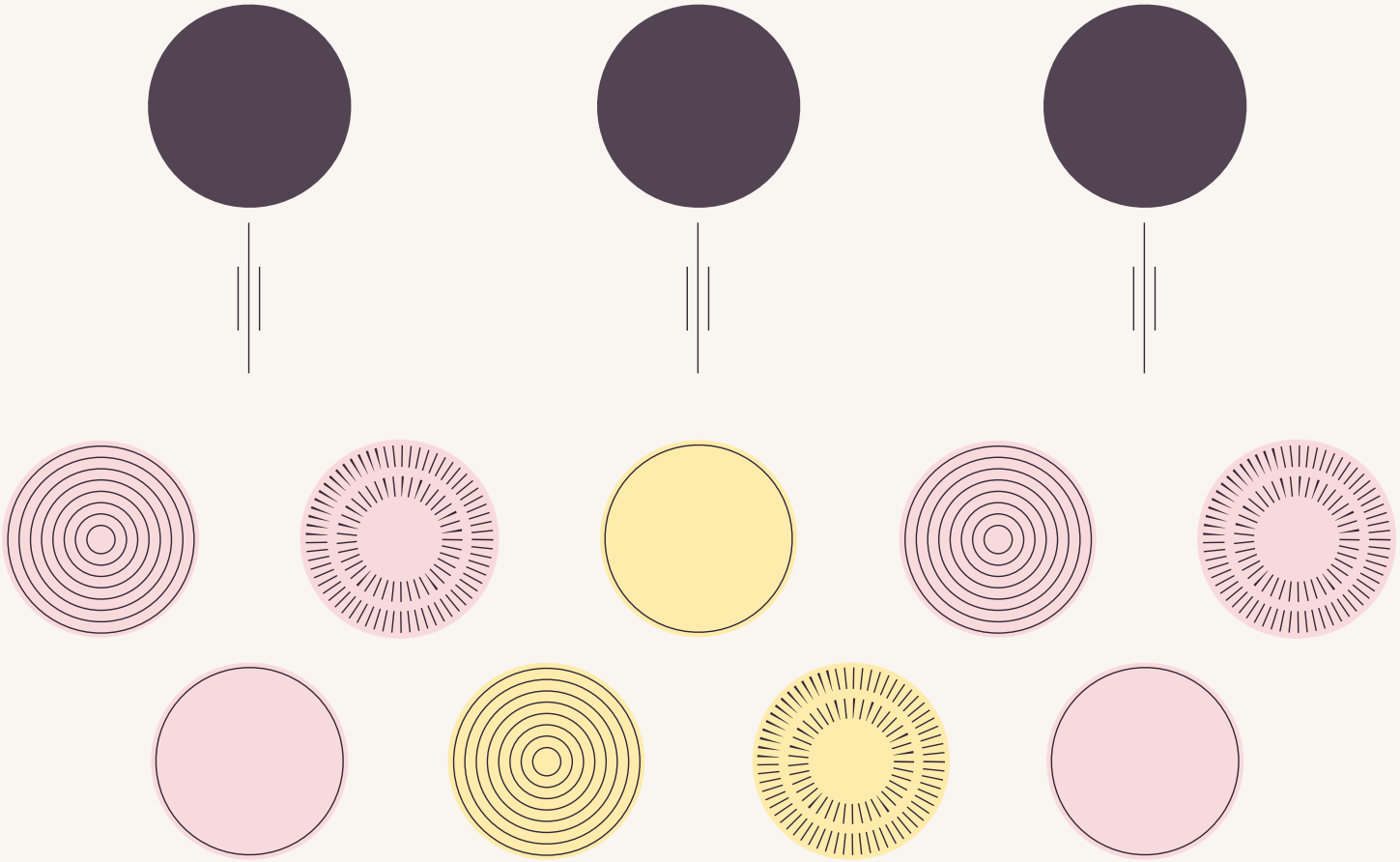
"There'll always be some organisational drag and we still have work to do to fit the model in across all the value streams. When we have alignment across teams, I know that the impacts will be bigger and better understood. That will give more confidence to executive decision-makers which in turn will help squads work more autonomously. And that will mean they can focus on improving the lives and experience of our customers."

Final thoughts

"Achieving the change we wanted is incredibly hard because it's a cultural shift and at the organisational level. It doesn't happen overnight, so you need constant support from the business and exceptional people to help you along the journey.

"HYPR's Megan was one of them. She helped make it possible and gave us confidence to keep holding a strong line on the critical things that we didn't want to compromise on. She was essential in helping us craft the outcomes we wanted and how we would get there. She is extraordinarily good – the most effective Agile coach I've ever worked with and I would recommend her to anyone."

After completing her engagement with Adam, Megan was engaged by Jaime Conley, Head of Trade Me Classifieds business, to help with capability uplift. You can read more about that work here.



WHY HYPR?

We'd love to help you on your journey to build a world-class product engineering practice. We're obsessed about delivering the outcomes you need and confident that we will deliver. Here are the things that make HYPR different...

Systems thinking – We take a systems-thinking approach to avoid local optimisations that contribute little to the whole. Implementation of a reference technology ecosystem requires this approach (and it's why Progressive Delivery alone won't be enough).

Transition not transformation – Your enterprise operates in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world. It needs to keep flying while making changes. We know from experience that transition is the only way you can do both.

Focus on your people – Technology and people are one system and two sides of the same coin. We focus as much on the team topologies, social constructs and human networks as we do on the tech.

Focus on flow – Progressive enterprises focus on finding and removing delays from their system through the practice of Value Stream Management (VSM). It's the lens we use to look at your business.

Our people – We're a diverse team with shared purpose and values. We have extensive skills across our consulting lines, from the very best software engineers to strategic experts able to engage at board level. They have lived at the coalface of change.

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CONTACT US NOW – WE'RE READY TO HELP

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