

8 types of



CORPORATE SILOS

And How to Deal with Them

TYPE OF SILOS 1

Organizational silos



People struggle to collaborate due to being from different teams, departments, or branches.

TYPE OF SILOS 2

Top/down silos



Upper management is too disconnected from operational information, while operational teams are disconnected from larger strategic goals.

TYPE OF SILOS 3

New and old groups silos



People from different waves of arrival in the company struggle to work together due to established social groups.

TYPE OF SILOS 4

Systems or platforms silos



Users of two or more platforms offering similar functions struggle to cooperate due to technical separation.

TYPE OF SILOS 5

Language & cultural silos



Teams, departments or branches struggle to cooperate due to a lack of mutual understanding of culture and language.

TYPE OF SILOS 6

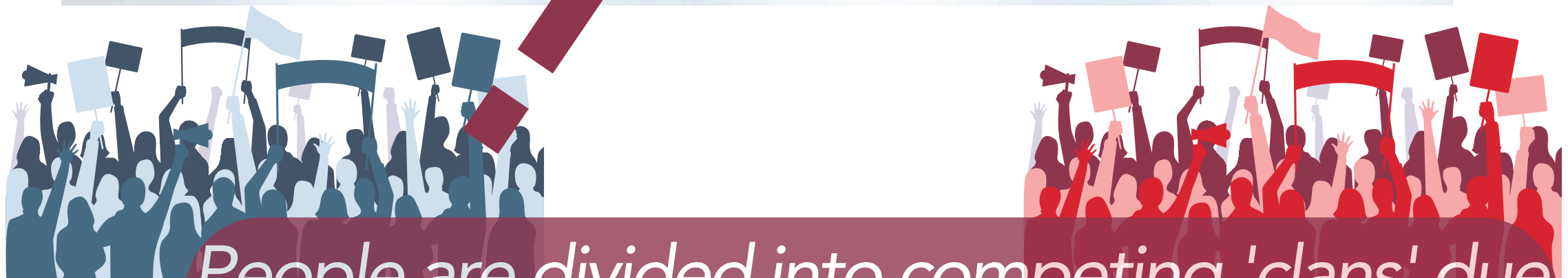
Status silos



People struggling to cooperate due to differences in their administrative status within the company (internal employees, contractors, interns, etc.).

TYPE OF SILOS 7

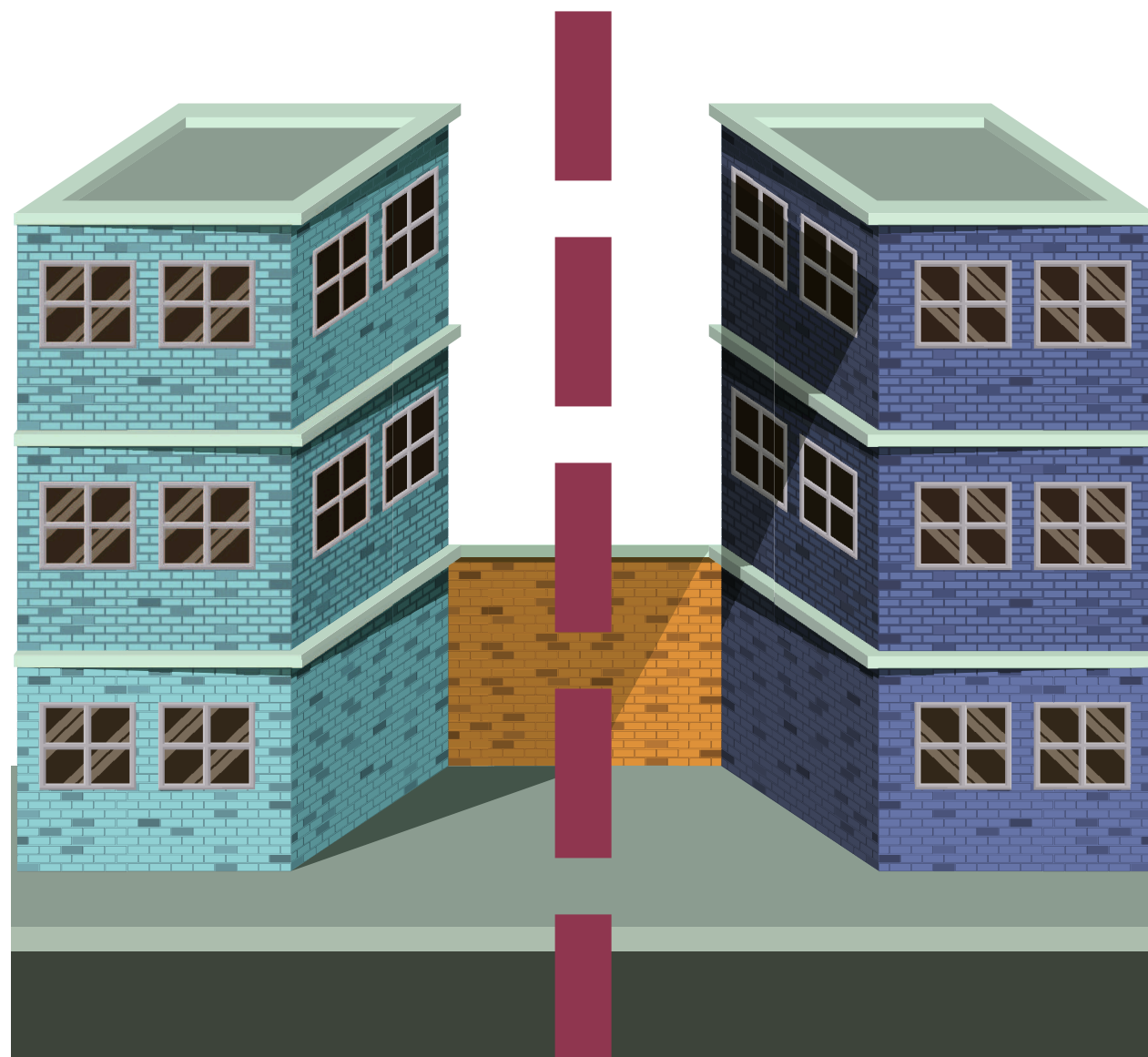
Office politics silos



People are divided into competing 'clans' due to their support for internal office politics leaders, resulting in difficult cooperation.

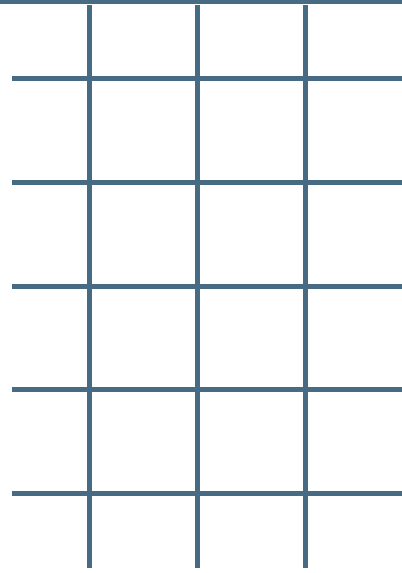
TYPE OF SILO 8

Practical silos



People struggle to work together due to practical factors such as time zones, different locations, etc.

Summary: Types of silos



Office politics silos



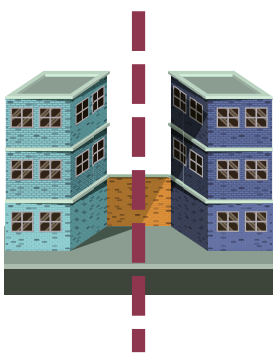
Top-down silos



New and old groups silos



Practical silos



www.komyu.io

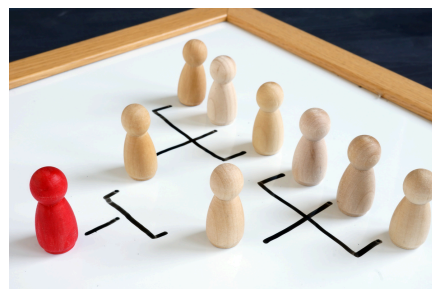
Language or culture silos



Status silos



Platform or system silos



Organizational silos

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

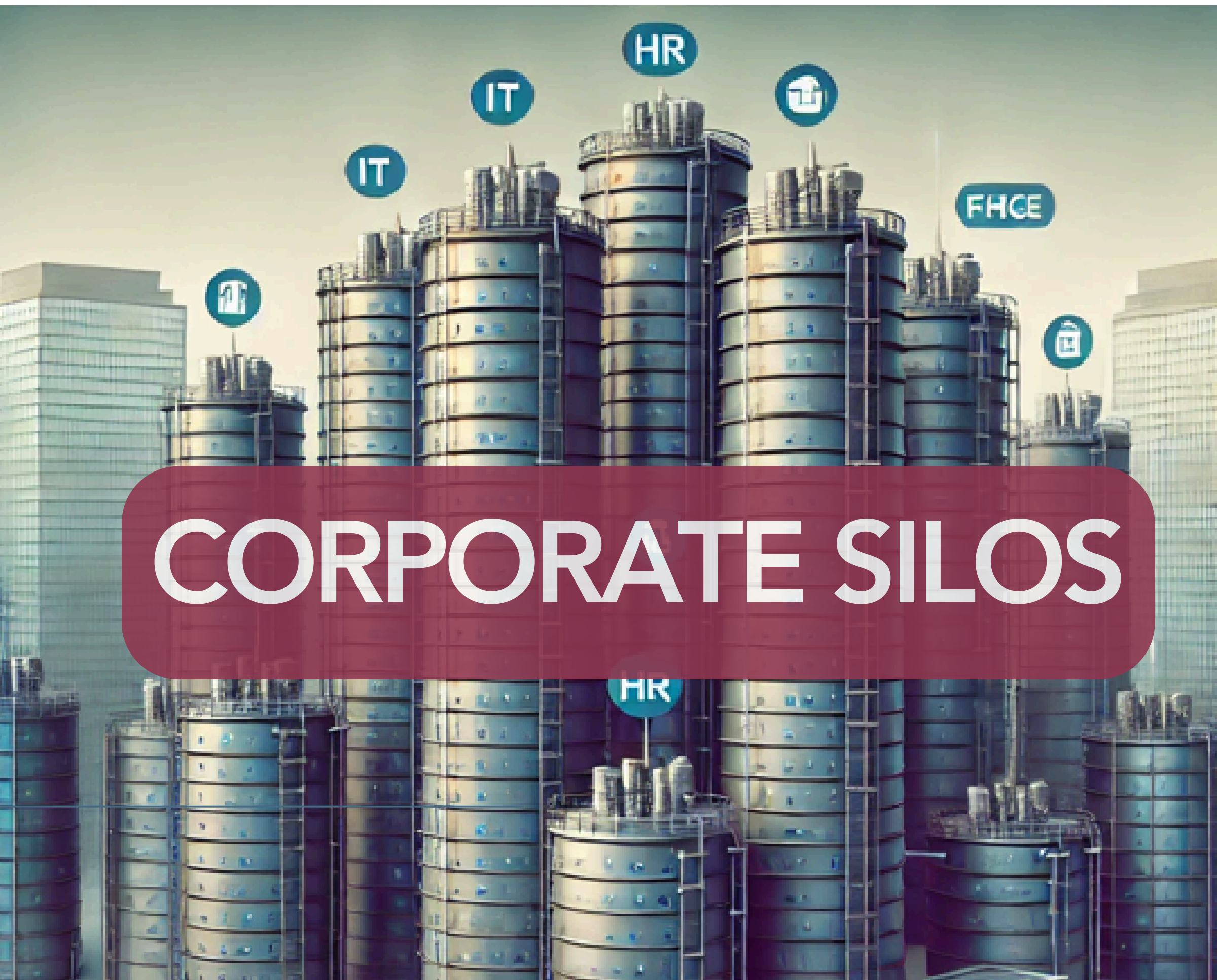
Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

www.komyu.fr



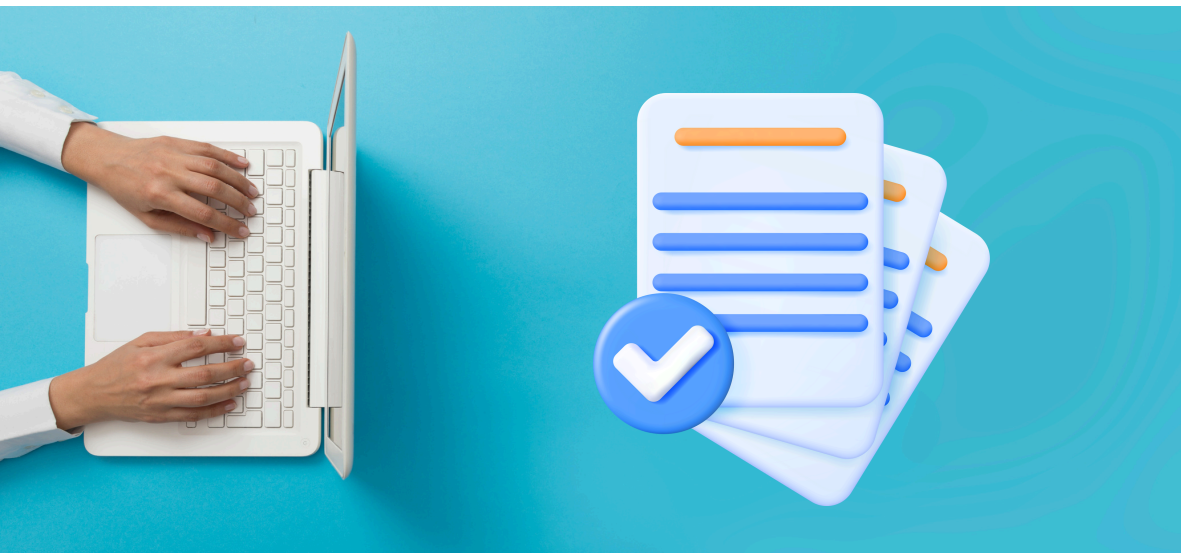
10 ill-effects of



CORPORATE SILOS

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 1

Duplication of Work



Two or several people, teams, or branches doing the same work (code, deliverables,...) in different places, thereby multiplying costs unknowingly.

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 2

Increasing maintenance cost



Nearly identical assets (such as code, knowledge bases, and expertise centers) dispersed across different branches of the company, leading to increased maintenance costs and duplicated efforts to sustain them

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 3

Fragmentation of decisions and organizational inertia



Fragmented decisions across different silos lead to delays and organizational inertia, as alignment and swift action become difficult to achieve

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 4

Avoidance of Responsibilities



Tasks are passed around like a 'hot potato', leading to inefficiencies and a lack of accountability within the organization

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 5

Missed opportunities for continuous improvement



Employees throughout the company repeatedly making the same avoidable mistakes, with no effective knowledge sharing or transfer of experience to future teams, resulting in unnecessary delays and costs

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 6

Slower delivery or issue management



Slower response times and delays in issue management due to topics crossing silos and multiple requests, resulting in prolonged timelines and potential disruptions.

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 7

Difficulty in measuring global performance



Varied standards, tools, and implementation methods across different teams create complexity and make it challenging to measure overall progress effectively

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 8

Missing innovations



Separated silos “thinking in their own logic” miss opportunity to imagine multidisciplinary approaches to solve problems.

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 9

Competing internal standards



Multiple branches independently establish 'company-wide standards' without prior alignment, leading to unnecessary competition and conflicts when they eventually converge.

ILL-EFFECT OF SILOS 10

Miscommunication and Relationship Fallout



Varying minor assumptions across different silos lead to significant errors, resulting in conflicts, strained relationships, and mutual blame

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

www.komyu.fr



9 Generic Answers to



CORPORATE SILOS

Answer to silos 1 Corporate Social events



*Help people meet and identify
solutions by themselves*

Answer to silos 2 Middle persons



*A point of contact, to make the
bridge between silos more
consistent for all*

Answer to silos 3

Shared process



*Clarify rules of cooperation,
workflows, inputs and outputs,
ways to decide*

Answer to silos 4 Corporate Community



*Part-time (often optional)
collective activities to foster
connections around a shared
goal*

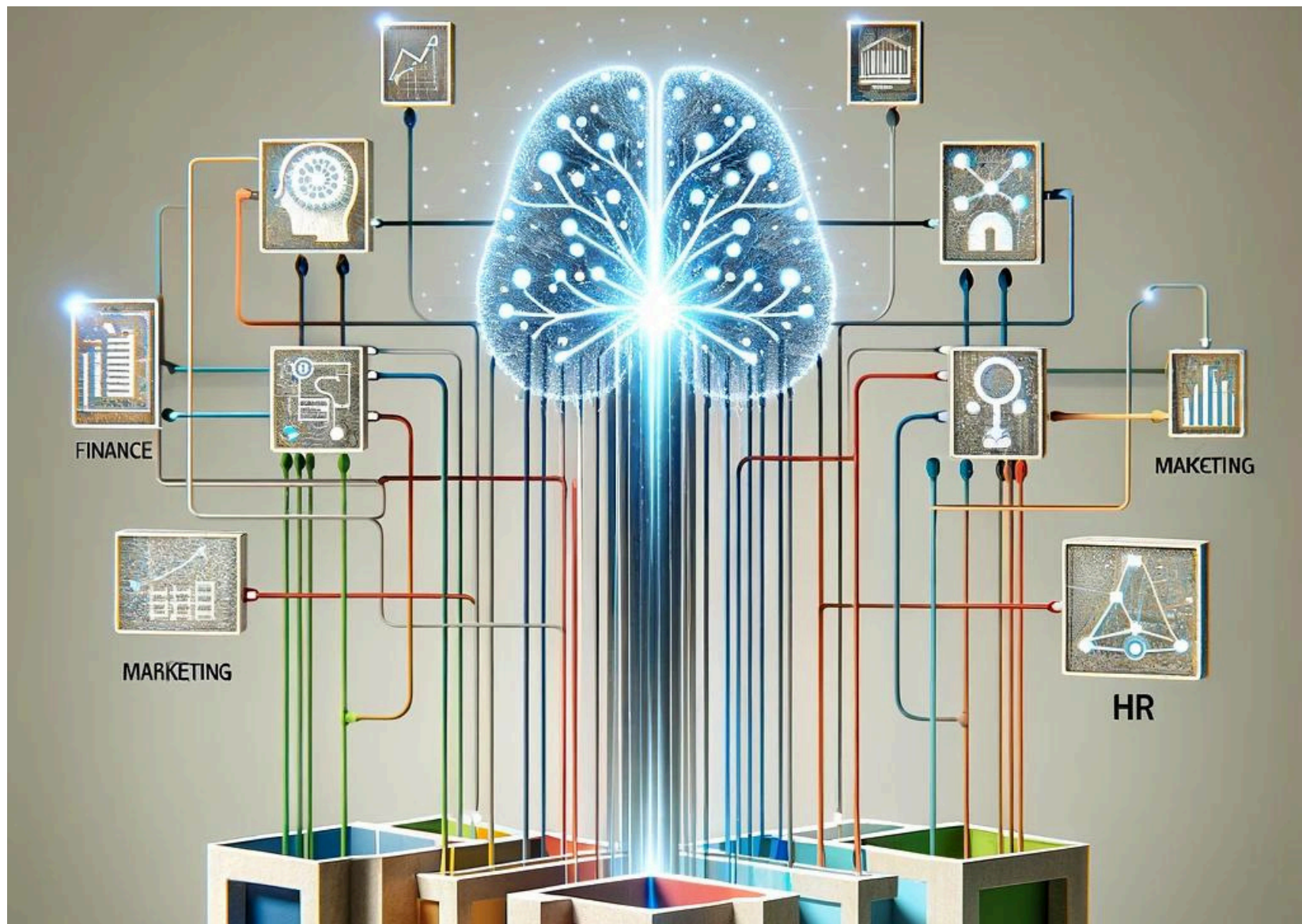
Answer to silos 5

Shared physical space



From simple coffee-machines to whole shared office buildings, organize creative collisions between members of different silos.

Answer to silos 6 Corporate programs



Integrate various initiatives and teams with a centralized governance, budget, and oversight capacity for stronger alignment

Answer to silos 7 Interaction platform



A shared space to digitally facilitate interactions that would have been cumbersome otherwise.

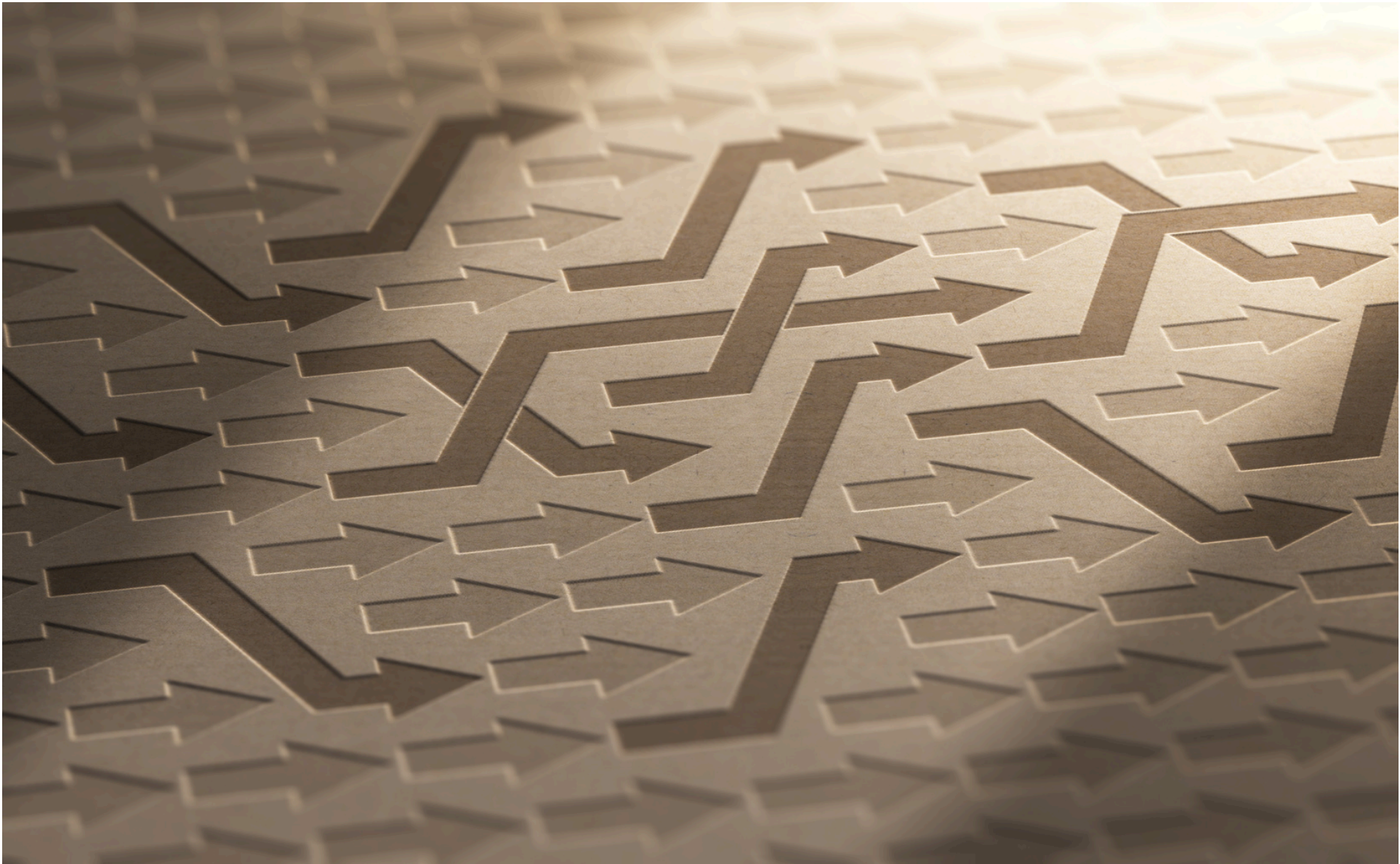
Answer to silos 8

Artifacts for Sense of belonging



Materialize commonalities (vision, values, ...) into artifacts (manifesto, visual identity, mascot...) to make people feel being together and united before they work together.

Answer to silos 9 Reorganization



Major restructuring to establish new teams, departments, or branches (even new silos) to tackle key challenges.

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

www.komyu.fr



7 Obstacles to Breaking

Breaking



CORPORATE SILOS

Obstacle to breaking silos 1

Power preservation



Departments resist silo-breaking to maintain control, protecting their influence and decision-making autonomy

Obstacle to breaking silos 2

Second-player advantage



*Teams hesitate to break silos,
waiting to see benefits or failures
from others' cross-functional
initiatives*

Obstacle to breaking silos 3 Prioritization Challenges



Difficulty in determining which silos to address first, leading to delays or ineffective focus.

Obstacle to breaking silos 4 Budget Allocation Silos



Cross-silo initiatives lack funding, as budgets are tightly controlled within individual departments.

Obstacle to breaking silos 5 Resistance to Change



Employees are reluctant to adopt new practices that challenge established siloed processes and norms.

Obstacle to breaking silos 6 Communication Barriers



Poor interdepartmental communication hampers collaboration, leading to misunderstandings and resistance to cross-functional efforts.

Obstacle to breaking silos 7 Competing Objectives



Conflicting goals between departments create friction, undermining efforts to align and collaborate across silos.

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

www.komyu.fr



8 Ideas to Help Prioritize Which



CORPORATE SILOS

You Should Address First

Idea to prioritize silos 1 Current Value for the Company



Focus on silos that hold critical information or resources essential for the company's current success.

Idea to prioritize silos 2 Potential Size of the Benefits



Prioritize silos whose content can benefit the largest number of employees within the organization.

Idea to prioritize silos 3 Risk and Knowledge Dependency



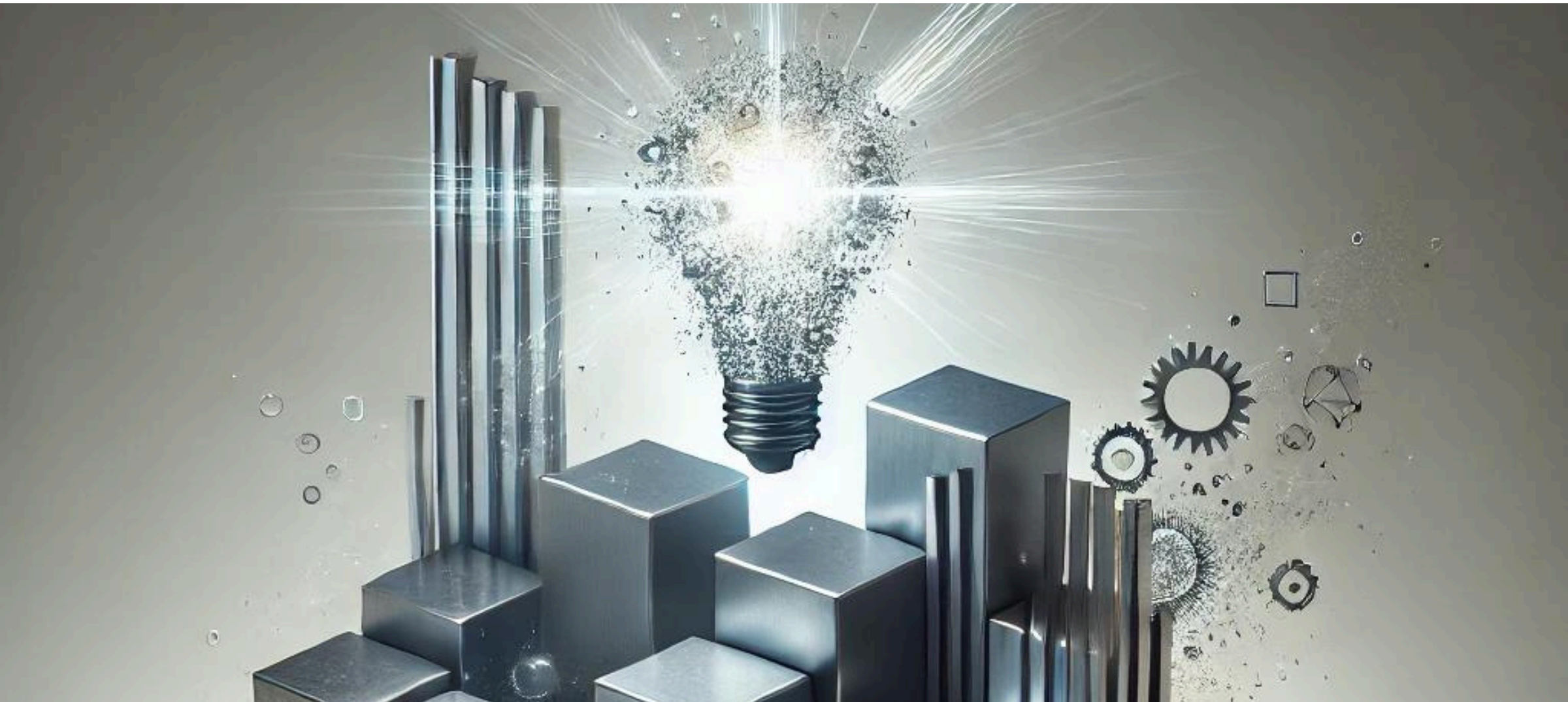
*Address silos at high risk of losing
key knowledge due to staff turnover
or retirement.*

Idea to prioritize silos 4 Ease of Implementation



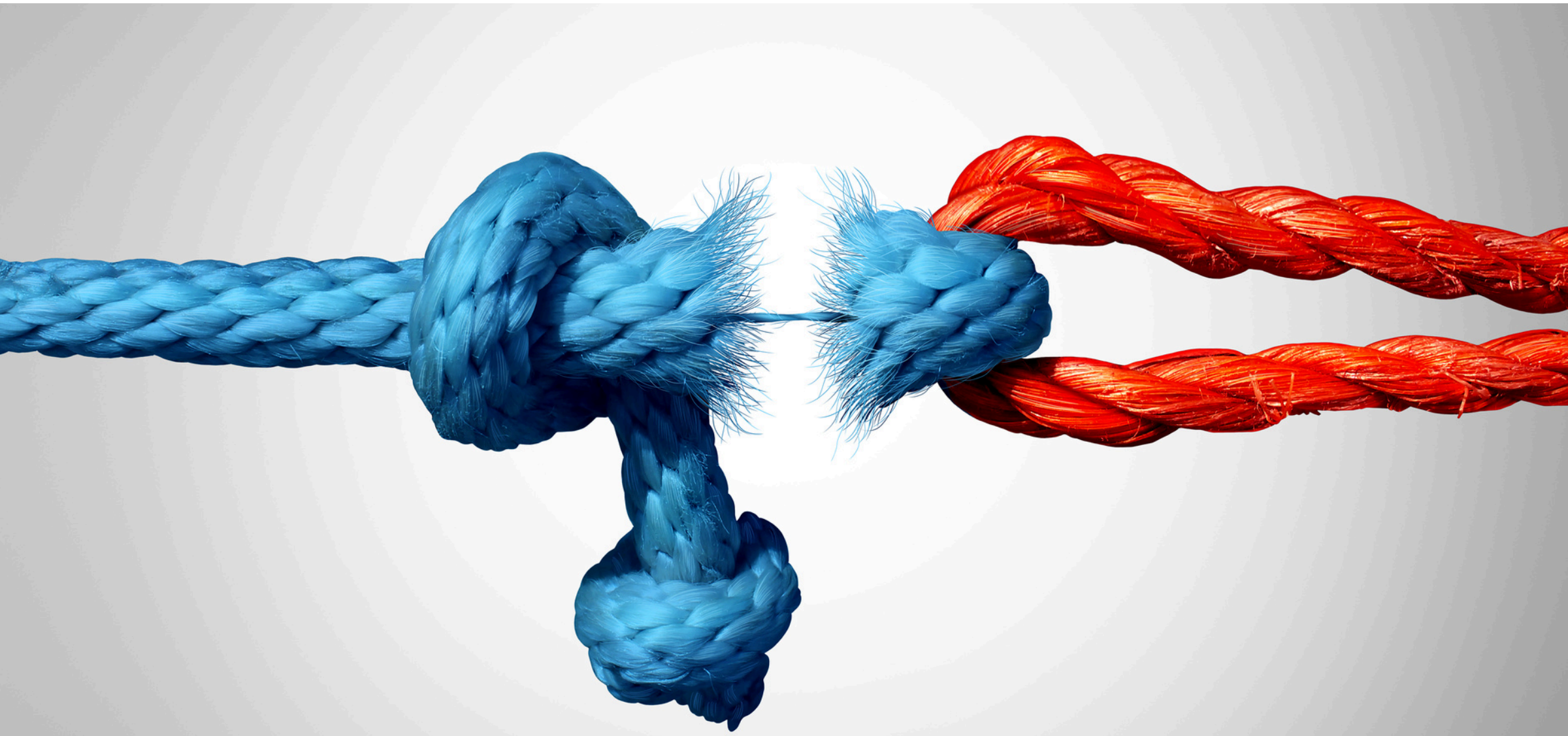
Choose silos where breaking them down can be achieved with minimal effort and resistance.

Idea to prioritize silos 5 Impact on Innovation



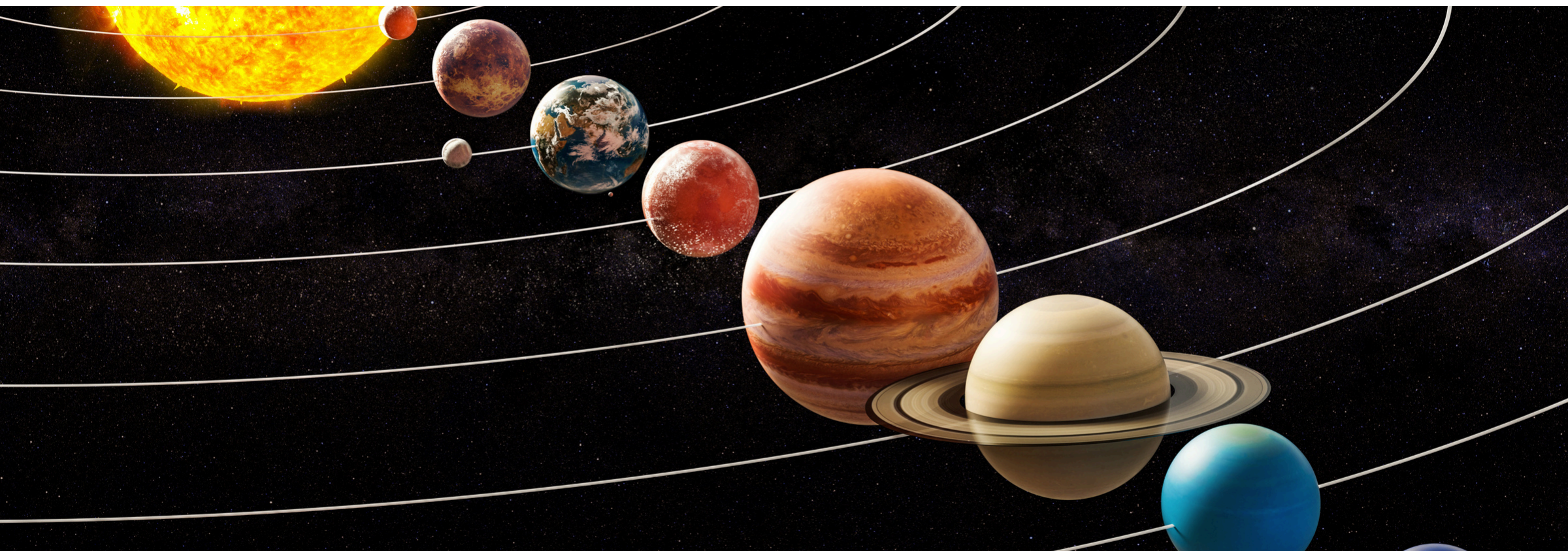
Focus on silos where integration could drive new ideas and foster innovation across the company.

Idea to prioritize silo 6 Cross-Departmental Dependencies



Target silos that are heavily relied upon by multiple departments for critical operations.

Idea to prioritize silos 7 Cultural and Organizational Alignment



Address silos that create cultural or organizational misalignment within the company.

Idea to prioritize silos & Customer Impact



Prioritize silos whose integration would directly enhance customer experience or service quality.

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

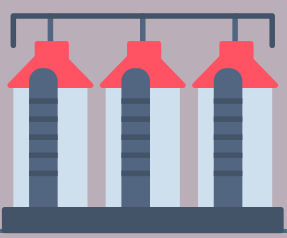
www.komyu.fr



How to Deal with Each Type of



CORPORATE SILOS



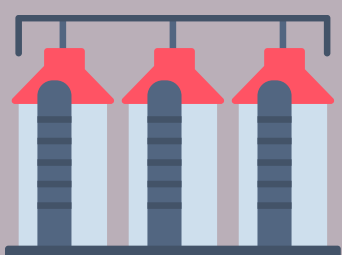
Corporate silos: what it is and why you should care

If you work in a large organization, you've likely encountered corporate silos. These are divisions within a company that operate in isolation from one another, with minimal interaction, decision-making, production, and cooperation across departments.

In a rapidly changing world, crises such as pandemics, disruptive technologies, and significant shifts in the economy, politics, or environment can unfold faster than companies can reorganize. While silos may serve essential functions in managing a company's basic needs and goals, they are no longer sufficient in today's landscape.

As leaders at all levels—not just those in the C-suite—you must consider not only breaking down these silos but doing so dynamically and regularly to remain competitive, relevant, and sustainable. Silos can re-form or adapt over time, making it essential to continuously assess and dismantle barriers to collaboration.

This guide provides an overview of the different types of corporate silos and strategies to address them effectively and consistently.



Addressing type of silos 1

Corporate organizational silos

An organizational silo occurs when two (or more) collaborators, teams, departments, or business units are officially in different parts of the company and do not work together for this reason alone.



They may collaborate with a common third party (a manager for example) but not directly. Simply put, it is people who do not work together because they are not in the same part of the organizational chart.

This is the most official and normal form of corporate silo because division is chosen when designing the organization.

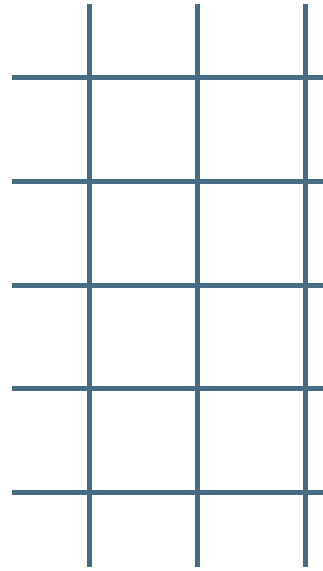
How to connect silos of this type ?

- Identify common goals of the silos and set up cross-silo processes or taskforces to address these silos
- Organize vision events with common hierarchy to these silos.



Addressing type of silos 2

Top/down silos



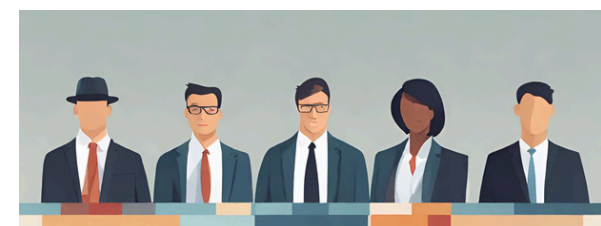
What is it ?

Top/down silos happen when hierarchy is too disconnected from their teams and subordinates. While the former may ignore operational constraints and realities, the latter may not view the big picture and the width of its connections.

This type of silo can lead to internal dissent and subsequent slowdowns or attrition.

How to connect silos of this type ?

- *Gemba-walks of leaders*
- *Vision sharing sessions*
- *Co-construction of vision*
- *Teams & products presentations events*
- *Hierarchy Interviews content*
- *Live Q&A sessions*



Addressing type of silos 3

New and old groups silos

What is it ?

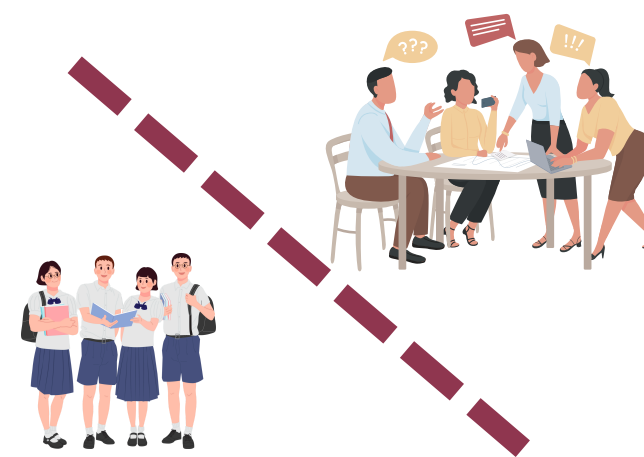
New and old groups silos can form when a team, a department or division grows by waves, and that these waves are too far apart in time for the waves to be together. “Old school” members share a higher mutual acquaintance, history, culture than newcomers.

In turn, newcomers may gather to compensate isolation and feel more legitimate to question historical decisions and habits of the previous group.

Such silos can lead to operational misalignment and difficulties in transformation later on.

How to connect silos of this type ?

- History presentation events during onboarding
- Mentor-mentee process
- “Fresh-eyes” discovery reports events



Addressing type of silos 4

Systems or platforms silos

What is it ?

Systems or platforms silos happen when several groups of users use different platforms *that are meant for the same function* within the company.

For example, if two different groups use two different ticketing tools to follow-up their issues, and that these two different groups end-up being one group (officially in the company), there are still two workflows to maintain, legacy data in both places, two user groups and habits.

How to connect silos of this type ?

- *Functionally separate the scope of the two platforms, onboard **all** users to use platform A for a given purpose and platform B for the other*
- *Create a common front system that uses both platforms*
- *Start a migration plan to move all to one of the platforms*
- *Replicate data automatically (sync). Warning: can be expensive and energy-consuming*



Addressing type of silos 5

Language & cultural silos

What is it ?

Language and cultural silos happen when two groups in your company speak different languages and do not have a common language to communicate easily (for example French-only speakers and Spanish-only speakers).

It can also happen when groups from several domains (for example, a supplier logistics team and advertisement team) do not share enough vocabulary or concepts for workflows to run smoothly. Such situation can happen for example between two very specialized groups, who end up not communicating due to the cost of “learning the other language”.

How to connect silos of this type ?

- Offer training programs for one language or another
- Use translators (machine-based, or people)
- Define a common language to use, teach it and use it



Addressing type of silos 6

Status silos

What is it ?

Status silos can happen when groups with different status have difficulties working together because of their current status in the company.

For example, contractors may not have same access to information as actual members of the company, while still working in the same teams on a day-to-day basis. Interns and apprentices may not have access to some privileges that more senior members.

While rules establishing these silos may be justified in many cases, there are some cases where these rules can be a limit to a global goal and counterproductive, creating slowdowns for example.

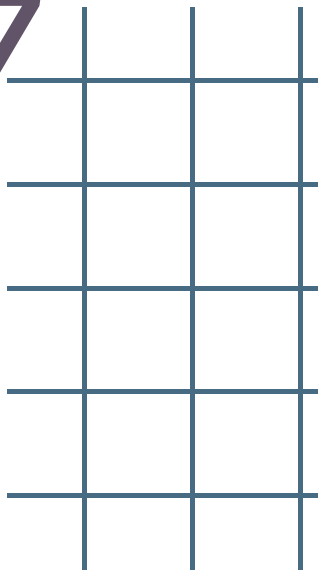
How to connect silos of this type ?

- Clarify rules and update with exceptions if needed
- Find workarounds using the “most open” platforms instead of the separating ones.



Addressing type of silos 7

Office politics silos



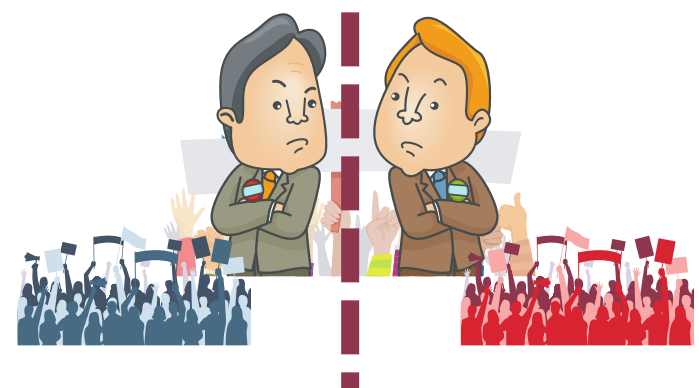
What is it ?

Office politics silo can happen when two or more informal groups within the company grow opposed to each other, forming parties from which members cannot move for relationship loyalty reasons (even if they think that moving could be better for the company overall or for themselves). Such division brings out tribal opposition inside the corporate system, and in other words, members care more about “who to side with” than “what is best for the company”.

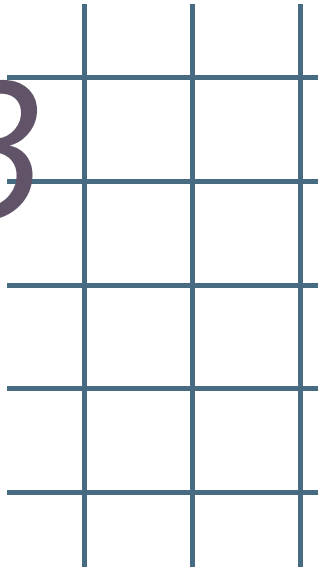
This type of silo can create decisional stalemates, disengagement and fatigue due to atmosphere of chronic interpersonal conflicts.

How to connect silos of this type ?

- *Build new cross-silos groups that can work independently from the belligerent parties*
- *Use conciliation agents*



Addressing type of silos & Practical silos



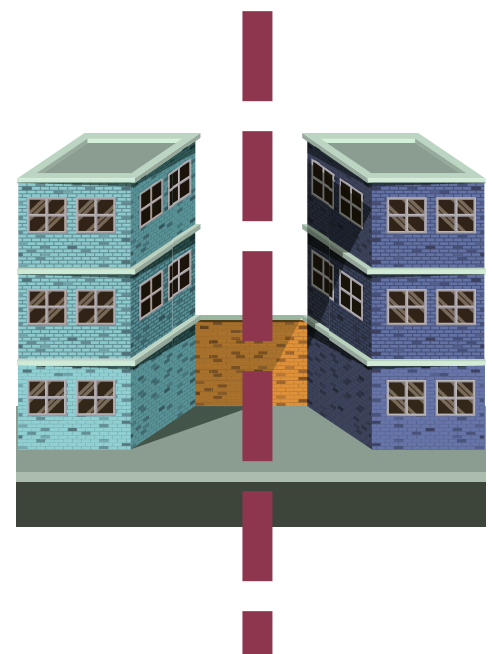
What is it ?

Practical silos are justified by reasons of impossible logistics, general operational difficulty to meet or to cooperate.

For example, it can stem from being in different locations, different timezones, different floors or lack of common timeslot in the schedule, not having the opportunity to work together previously or not being introduced before...

How to deal with it ?

- *Find asynchronous ways of working together*
- *Establish the role of coordinators, whether it is run by a person, a group or a system*



Other types of corporate silos that could not make it to this paper

There are of course plenty of other types of corporate silos that could not make it to this Komyu paper.

Here is a short list of other types you might want to explore for further understanding:

- **Confidentiality level silos** (groups with different levels of security approvals having trouble sharing information)
- **Demographic silos** (different demographic groups not succeeding in cooperating with each other)
- **Topic disagreement silos** (groups not agreeing on a topic and subsequently unable to work together)
- **Method silos** (groups working with different frameworks and synchronization rituals, not being able to work together)
- ...

Criteria to prioritize the silos to break or to connect

Here are multiple criteria to estimate “the importance of a silo” and help you compare one silo with another. These criteria are to be taken all together as no silos are “equal on everything except one criterion”.

In each following explanation of criterion, comparison is made “all other criteria considered equal” which is theoretical only. In practical use, check the next section with the multicriteria scoring table for silo prioritization.



Criteria to prioritize the silos 1 Current value or importance for the company



Prioritize breaking or connecting silos that hold information or resources critical to the company's current operations. If a silo's content is more vital to the company's success today than that of another, it should be addressed first.

Example: Silo A contributes to 20% of the company's sales and revenue in a growing market, while Silo B contributes only 5% in a shrinking market. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo A.

Criteria to prioritize the silos 2

Potential size of the benefits



Focus on silos whose content or work can benefit the largest number of people within the organization. If a silo's practices or knowledge can positively impact more employees, it should be prioritized

Example: Silo C has valuable practices that could benefit 100 other practitioners within the company, while Silo D's practices are relevant to only 10. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo C.

Criteria to prioritize the silos 3

Level of risk and dependency



Prioritize silos with a high risk of knowledge loss due to staff turnover or retirement. If the members of a silo are more likely to leave the company without transferring their knowledge, this silo should be addressed first.

Example: Silo E contains members who are close to retirement and hold critical information that would be difficult to recreate, while Silo F has lower turnover risks. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo E.

Criteria to prioritize the silos 4

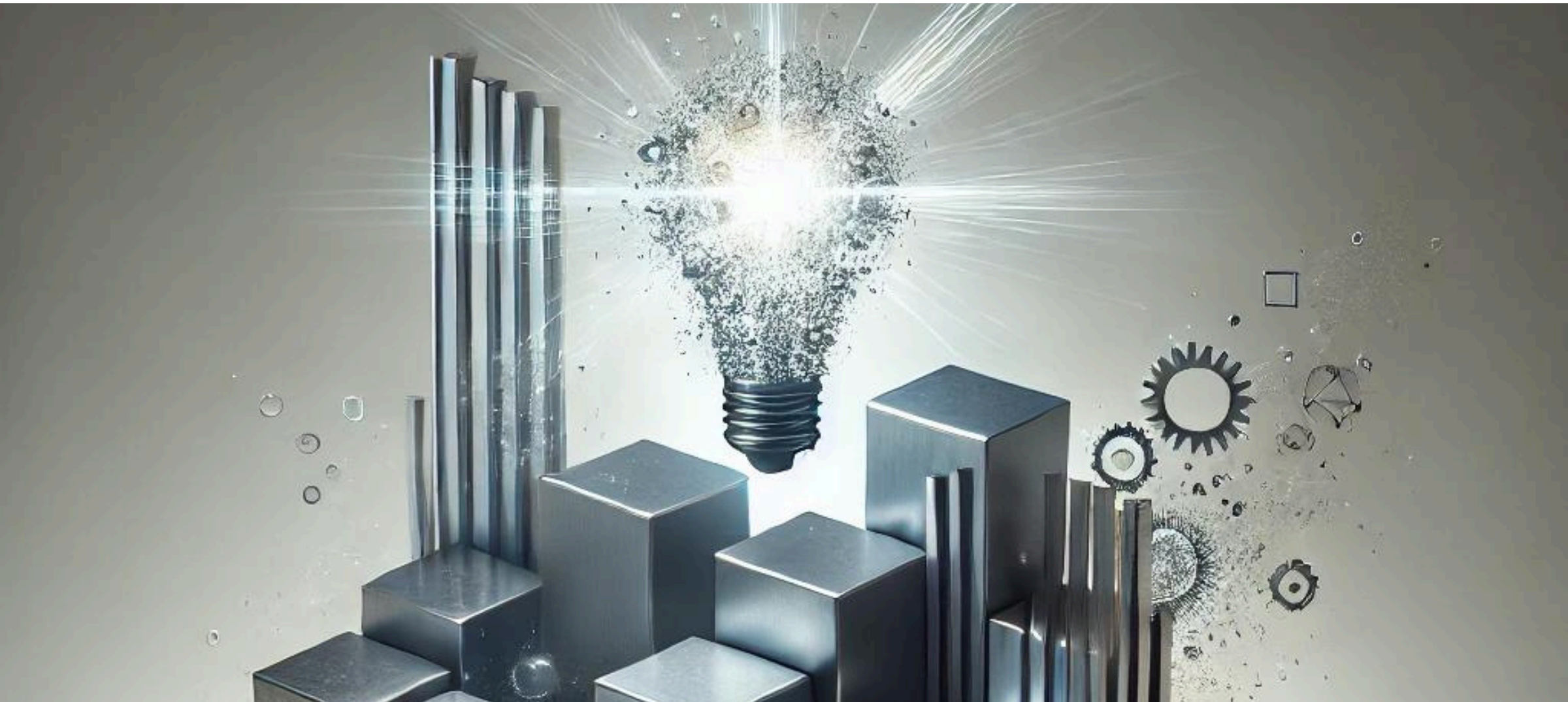
Easiness of implementation



Prioritize silos where silo-breaking actions are easier to implement. Consider the effort, time, and complexity required to break the silo, and choose the one that can be addressed with the least resistance and the greatest chance of success.

Example: Silo G has a team that speaks your language, is already using cooperative practices, and has fewer political barriers, whereas Silo H has more of these challenges. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo G

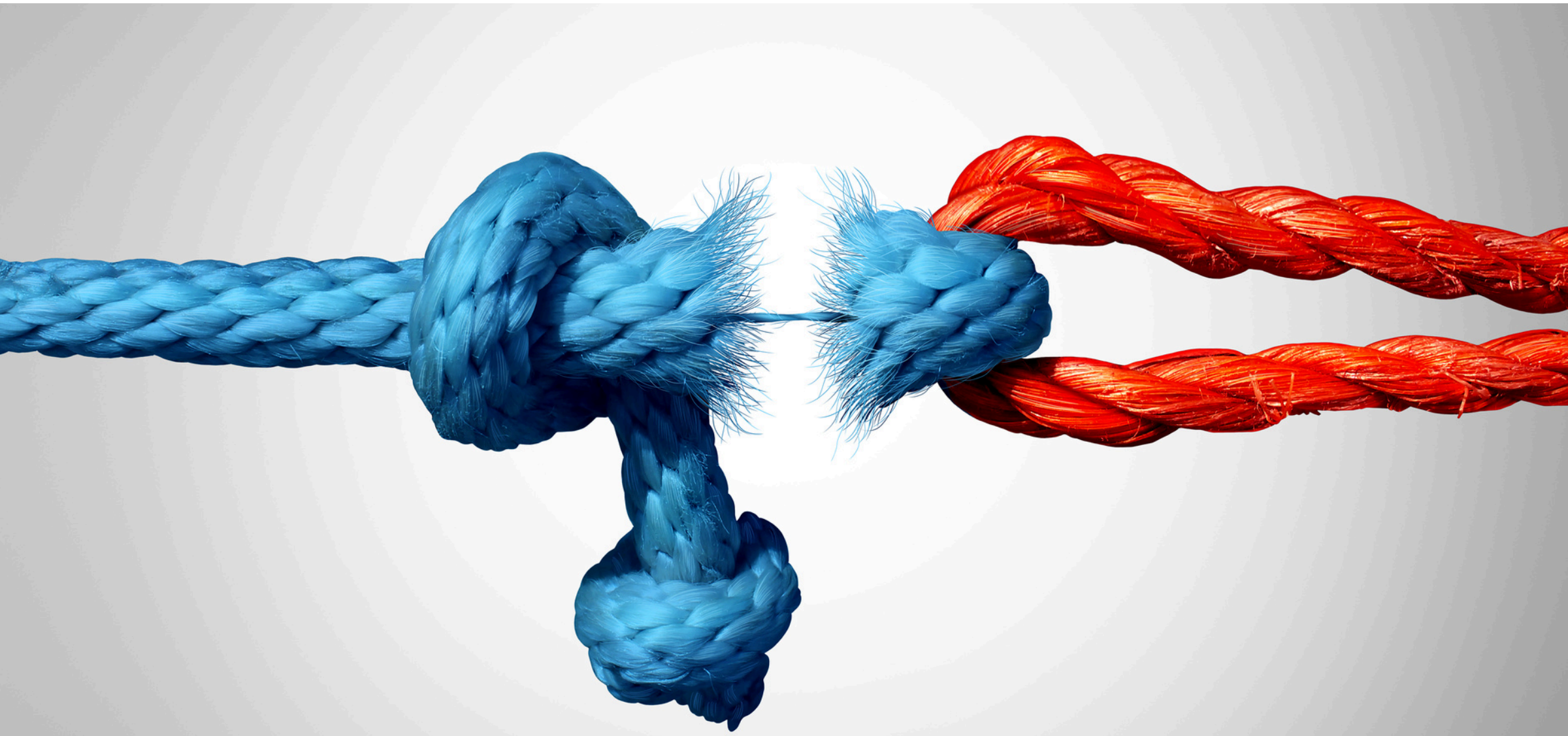
Criteria to prioritize the silos 5 Impact on Innovation



Focus on silos that, if broken, could spur innovation across the company. If connecting or breaking a silo could lead to new ideas, products, or processes, it should be prioritized.

Example: Silo I contains a team working on cutting-edge technology with the potential to revolutionize the company's offerings, while Silo J's work is more routine and less innovative. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo I

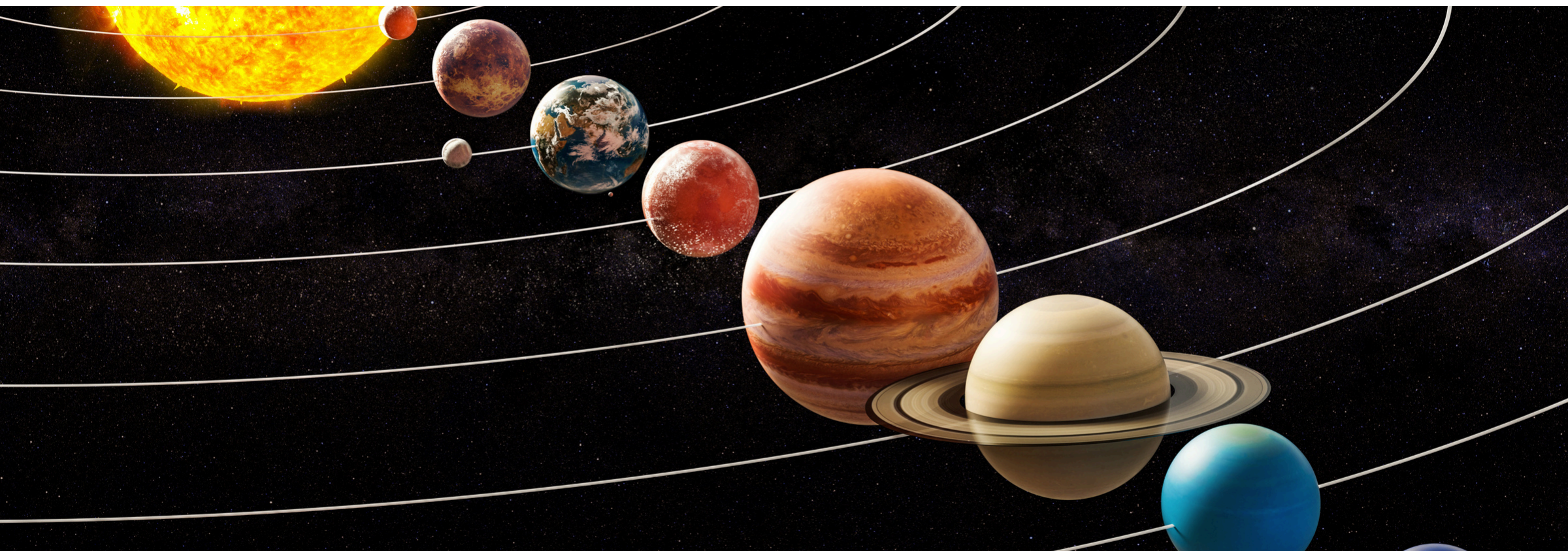
Criteria to prioritize the silos 6 Cross-Departmental Dependencies



Prioritize silos with high cross-departmental dependencies. If a silo's work is heavily relied upon by multiple other departments, connecting or breaking it can enhance overall organizational efficiency.

Example: Silo K provides critical data that several departments rely on to make decisions, while Silo L's output is only used by a single department. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo K.

Criteria to prioritize the silos 7 Cultural and Organizational Alignment



Address silos where breaking them would promote a more unified company culture and align organizational goals. If a silo is creating cultural or organizational misalignment, it should be a priority

Example: Silo M is creating a divisive culture due to differing objectives and values from the rest of the company, while Silo N is more aligned. All other factors being equal, prioritize breaking Silo M.

Criteria to prioritize the silos 8

Customer Impact



Prioritize silos whose integration or alignment would directly improve customer experience or satisfaction. If breaking a silo could lead to better customer service or product quality, it should be prioritized.

Example: Silo O handles customer support and frequently faces delays due to its isolation from the product development team, while Silo P manages internal processes with less direct customer impact. All other factors being equal, prioritize Silo O.

Make prioritization of silos real with a scoring board

The multicriteria silo prioritization table requires a good understanding of business, teams, silos and capacities. It can only be filled with “estimated” information or rating, and cannot be absolutely certain or precisely quantified.

However, this table gives a framework to help clarify which silo to prioritize.

1. Start with a scoring scale from 1 to 5. If needed give precisions of what these figures mean in your own context
2. Create the table
3. Assess teams / departments / divisions that you consider being silos, along with ideas of silo-breaking actions
4. Evaluate total score to help you prioritize, if total score of two silos are the same, you can choose one of the criteria as more important for prioritization than others.



Generic Answers to



CORPORATE SILOS

Answer to silos 1

Corporate Social events



Corporate social events that let people meet and identify opportunities by themselves : Events can be used to help trigger interaction and informal connections between people. One difficulty of this type of solution is to design the event well-enough for people to interact beyond their own silo even in presence of others.

Answer to silos 2

Middle persons



Middle persons acting as point of contacts, information dispatch and work matchmaker : Points of contacts put a face on a silo, at least one person makes the contacting more consistent, easier to remember and who can matchmake later one. One difficulty of this type of solution is to find the right persons and not to overwhelm them, on the long run, these point of contacts could be AI based.

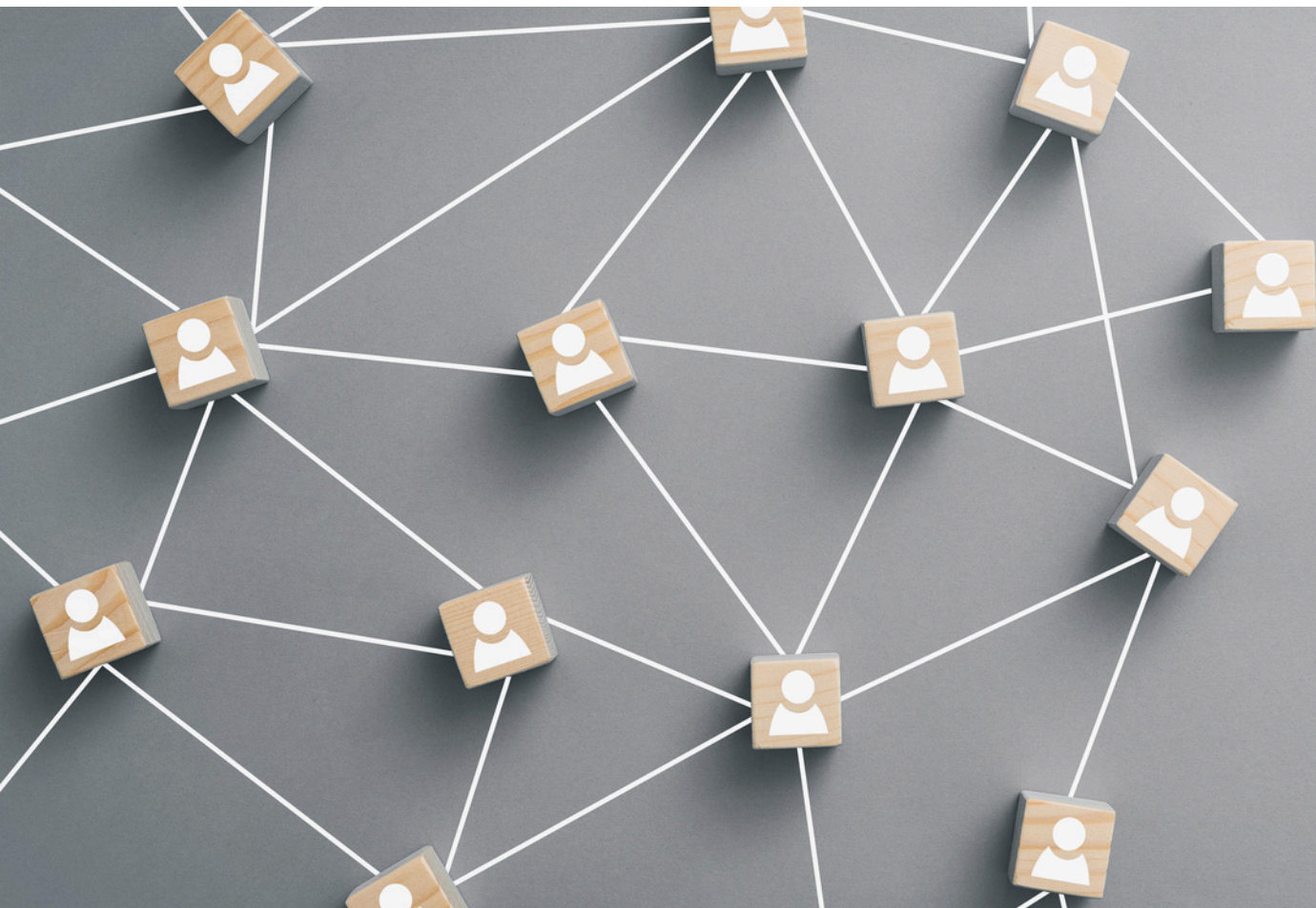
Answer to silos 3

Shared process



Shared processes that clarify cooperation rules, inputs and outputs: Shared processes and workflows force interaction between members of two silos. One difficulty of this type of solution is to find a useful process and not invent a soon-abandoned workflow out-of-blue and without clear value for both parties.

Answer to silos 4 Corporate Community



Cross-silos corporate Communities that activate collective work and awareness: Running communities allow several members from silos to interact with each other, on a part-time (and often optional) basis. One difficulty of this type of solution is to ensure the community is valuable enough both for the company, the leaders and the members, and still connect people (and not just push content on a unused platform).

Answer to silos 5

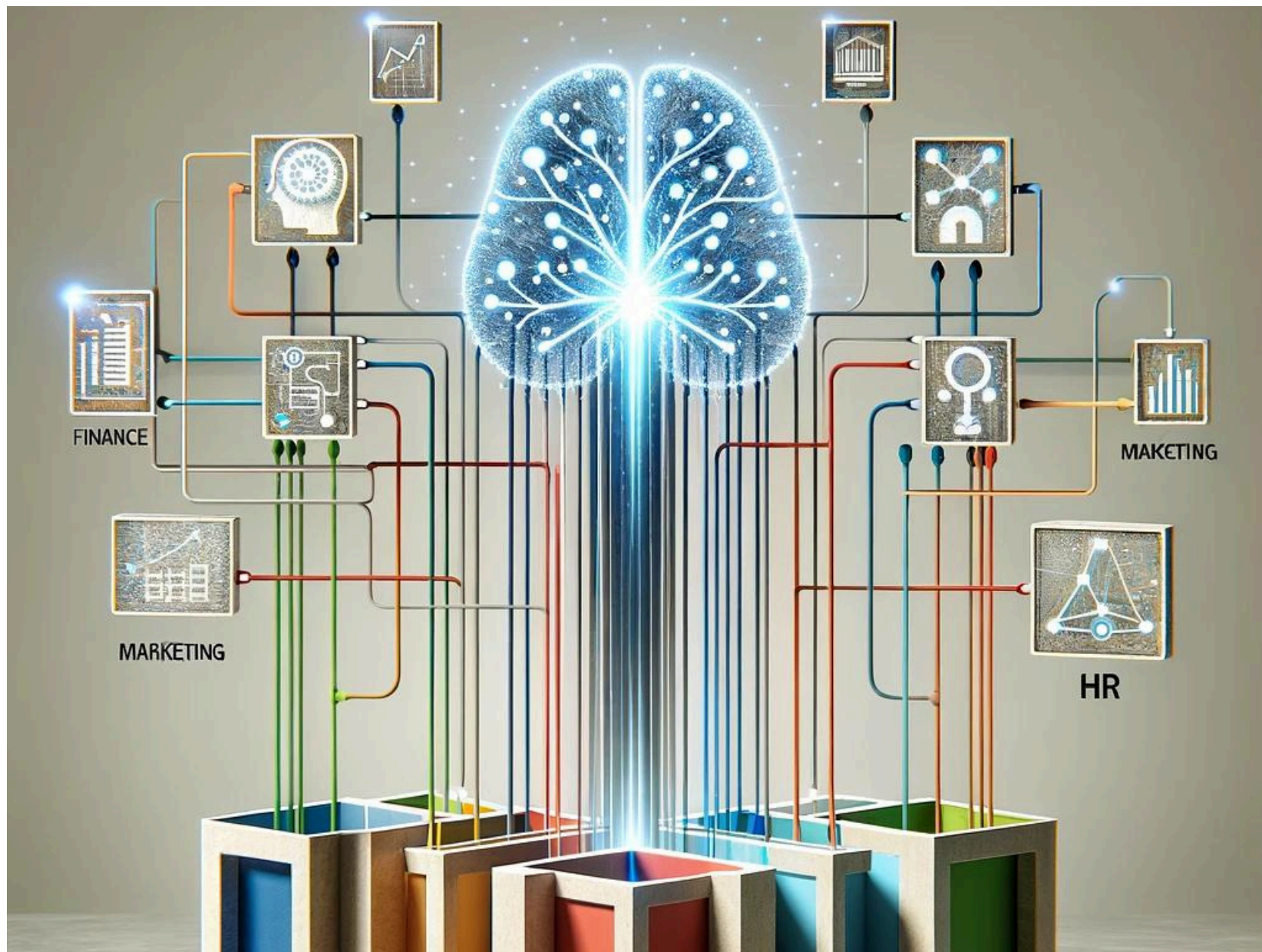
Shared physical space



Locating people of different silos in the same space, or letting them share the same space (ex: coffee room)

It is no secret that common break rooms (coffee rooms), well designed offices, or that even smoking together (we do not recommend it because of health consequences) can help connecting people from different silos, at least informally.

Answer to silos 6 Corporate programs



Integration of several initiatives and teams into a larger program with centralized governance

Teams, initiatives and even corporate communities can be integrated into larger programs with specific governance, budget, and dedicated support, facilitating oversight and alignment.

Answer to silos 7 Interaction platform



A platform or a system to facilitate interaction which would have been difficult otherwise

Silos may be the consequences of difficult, unclear, scattered communication between people sharing same interest, goal or needs. A common technical platform for all can help these people in interacting, storing information to share and even in directly cooperating on the platform

Answer to silos 8

Artifacts for Sense of belonging

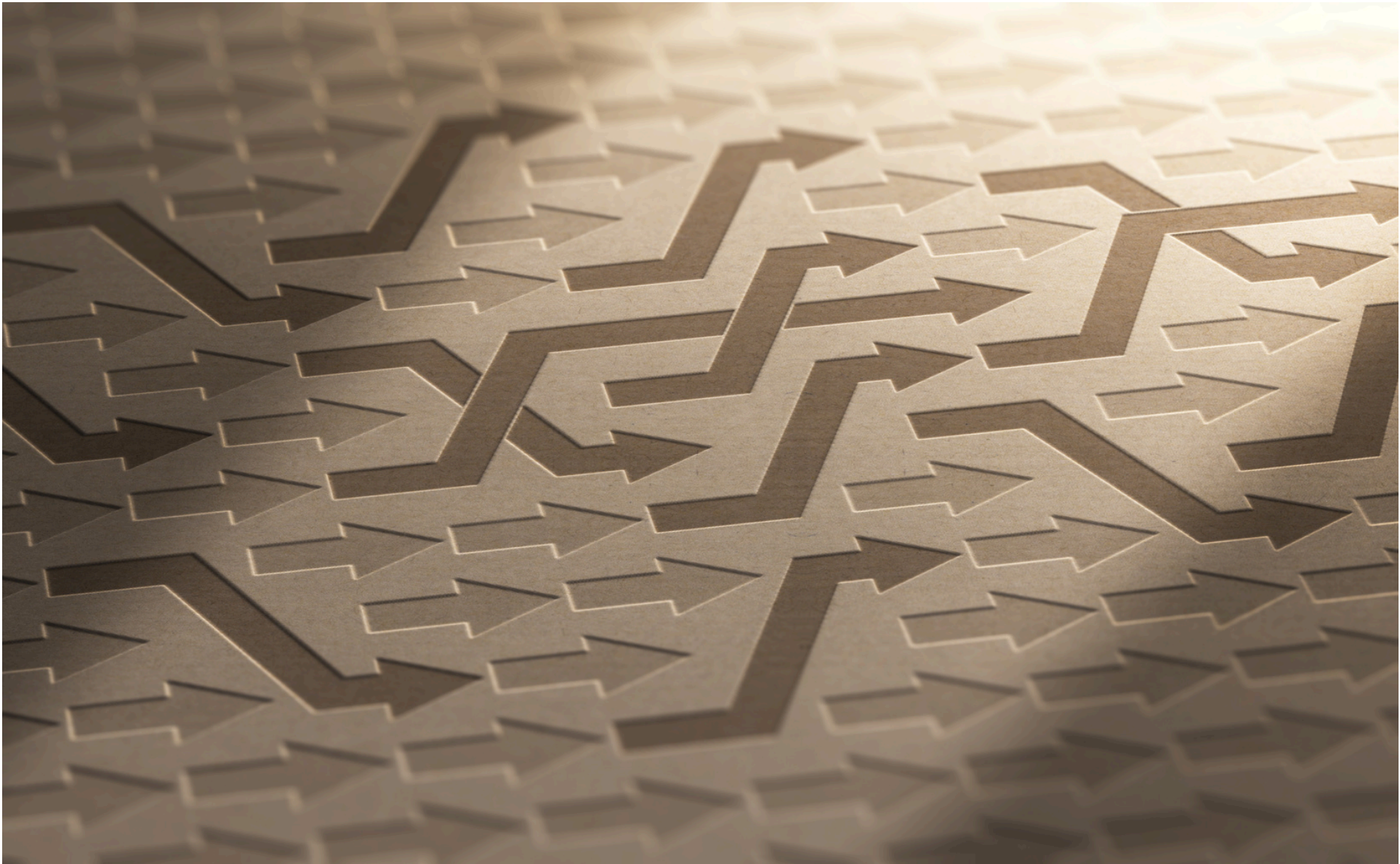


Elements that make people feel they are together and united even before they develop means to work together

Silos can sometimes be the fruits of internal perceptions of others and not a functional problem of lacking means or tools. Common vision, list of values, common cause, common name for group members, visual identity, goodies, corporate clothing, ... can reduce the psychological barrier between people and facilitate deployment of other types of answer to silos

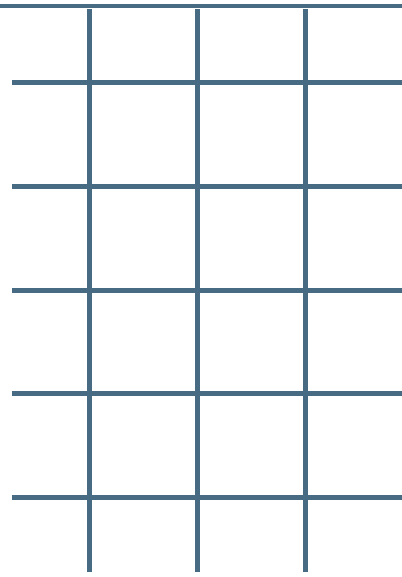
Answer to silos 9

Reorganization



Reorganizing teams and departments is heavy and will create new silos, but at least it can solve current problems
Engaging in an official reorganization can be a massive effort on many aspects, from negotiation with employees, unions, stakeholders, to various questions of logistics, processes and systems. Reorganizations sometimes can rely on various frameworks and principles (SaFe, Team topologies, Lean, ...) and benefit from external help, yet it is a heavy move you cannot play at every cross-silos topic you have to address.

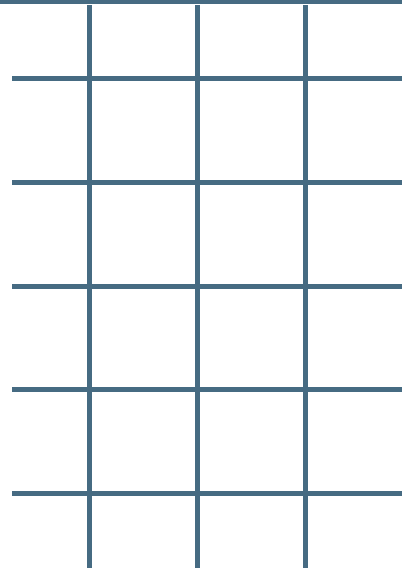
General tips



- 1. Theory mostly works in theoretical world only, yet practice can use theory to enrich its possibilities:**
The content of this document is to help you with additional experience about silos
- 2. Types provide you a reading grid, but not the entire situation:** You will probably have more overall information that this document can provide. Make sure to get your questions out on the field, not only on this book.
- 3. A silo is not a problem by itself:** Understand the problem behind "being in silos", understand the opportunity, but do not break or connect silos for the sake of connecting them. The more you understand the problem and its connections to being in silos, the closer to the solution you can get.



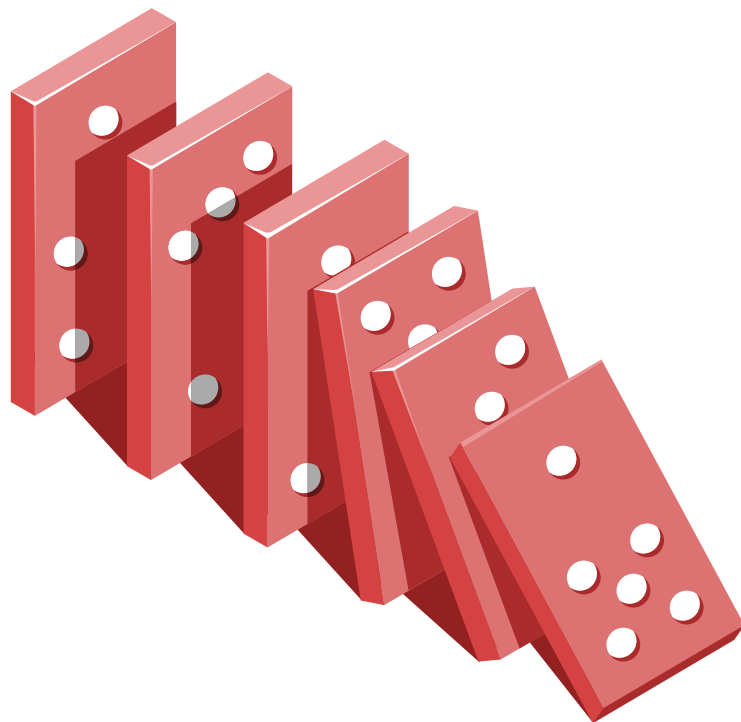
Silos are intertwined



Paradoxically enough, “silos are intertwined”, meaning that silos can be the result of other silos, and sometimes connecting one type of silo connecting other types as well.

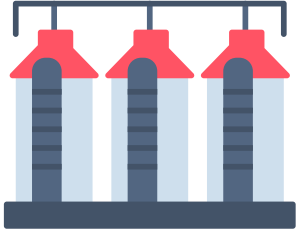
One type of corporate silo can lead to another, for example, an organizational silo can lead to the use several platforms by subdivisions, leading then to a system silo, which can cause office politics tensions.

Learn to identify what could be the “source silos” and understand how legacy silos can increase division over time.



General guidelines about corporate silos.

ACCEPT THAT SILOS DO EXIST



Corporate silos can happen for various reasons, the first one being that not everyone can work on a daily basis with all the other employees in a large company. Silos can be a logical consequence of growth or size.

FILTER THE MOST IMPORTANT “MISSED OPPORTUNITIES” ONLY



Some parts of your organization do not work with each other directly and it is totally fine. Others are missing opportunities by not working together, while they could cooperate to save time, costs, to innovate or fortify themselves and the company. You should focus on the latter, therefore develop the ability to assess the importance of a silo vs another.

General guidelines about corporate silos.

IDENTIFY HOW TO BREAK THE SILOS...



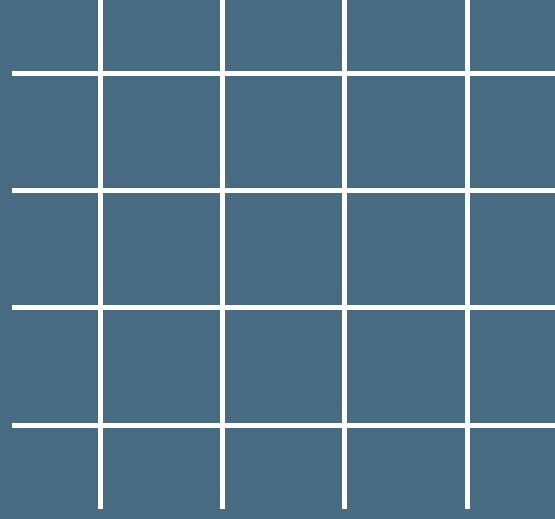
You can set up a certain number of actions to "break the silos", meaning to set up cooperation opportunities or even systems between parts of the company that would otherwise be isolated from each other. These actions can be of various types, from setting up governance and tools to organizing events and cross-functional groups...

...BUT SOMETIMES, JUST CONNECT THEM OR LEAVE THEM BE



Not all the silos are to be totally broken down. In some cases, minor cooperation with small events and minimum involvement will be the best solution, in other cases a deep organizational transformation can be necessary. Use finesse to act at the right dose at the right moment.

Practice makes perfect



Now it is your turn to apply what you have learnt in this paper, invent new ones, and share wisdom with your colleagues, friends, and community members !



About the authors



MAIN AUTHOR : Alexandre QUACH

Organization and transformation consultant and methodologist, with experience in transformation programs, organisational coaching of leaders and corporate communities building.



REVIEWER : Tiffany LO PICCOLO

Former internal Community Manager for a Competence Center, specialized in Corporate personal branding and internal Communication to strengthen employees' internal presence and foster effective communication within the organization.

Looking for support in managing corporate programs?

Get in touch with us!

We are Komyu, a consulting and coaching firm dedicated to supporting cross-functional leaders and managers.

We assist you in transformation programs, corporate communities of practice, cross-functional taskforces, and establishing large-scale collaboration.

Strengthen belonging, engagement, and performance in your collective today.

contact@komyu.fr

www.komyu.fr

