

DesignMap



**Strategy & Vision** | Design that aligns *and* inspires

# Beyond Spec: A Guide to Visiontypes

It's time to make concrete your  
team's greatest ambitions.

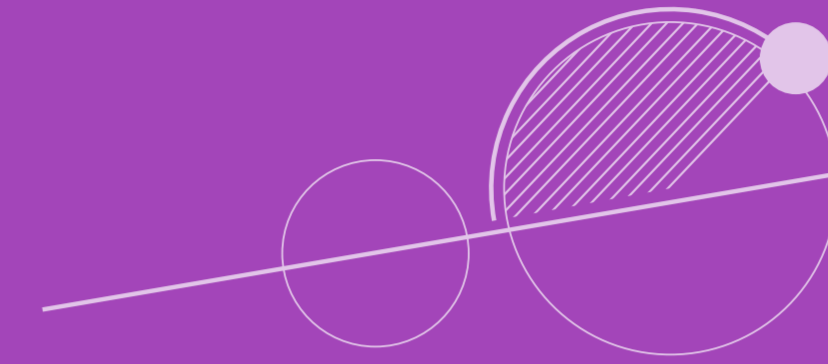
# An inspiration within reach

Visiontypes are prototypes of the future centered on new ideas and goals an organization wishes to achieve. This guide will explore:

- 01** Reflection on inflection points
- 02** Visiontypes defined
- 03** Successful visiontypes in the wild



01

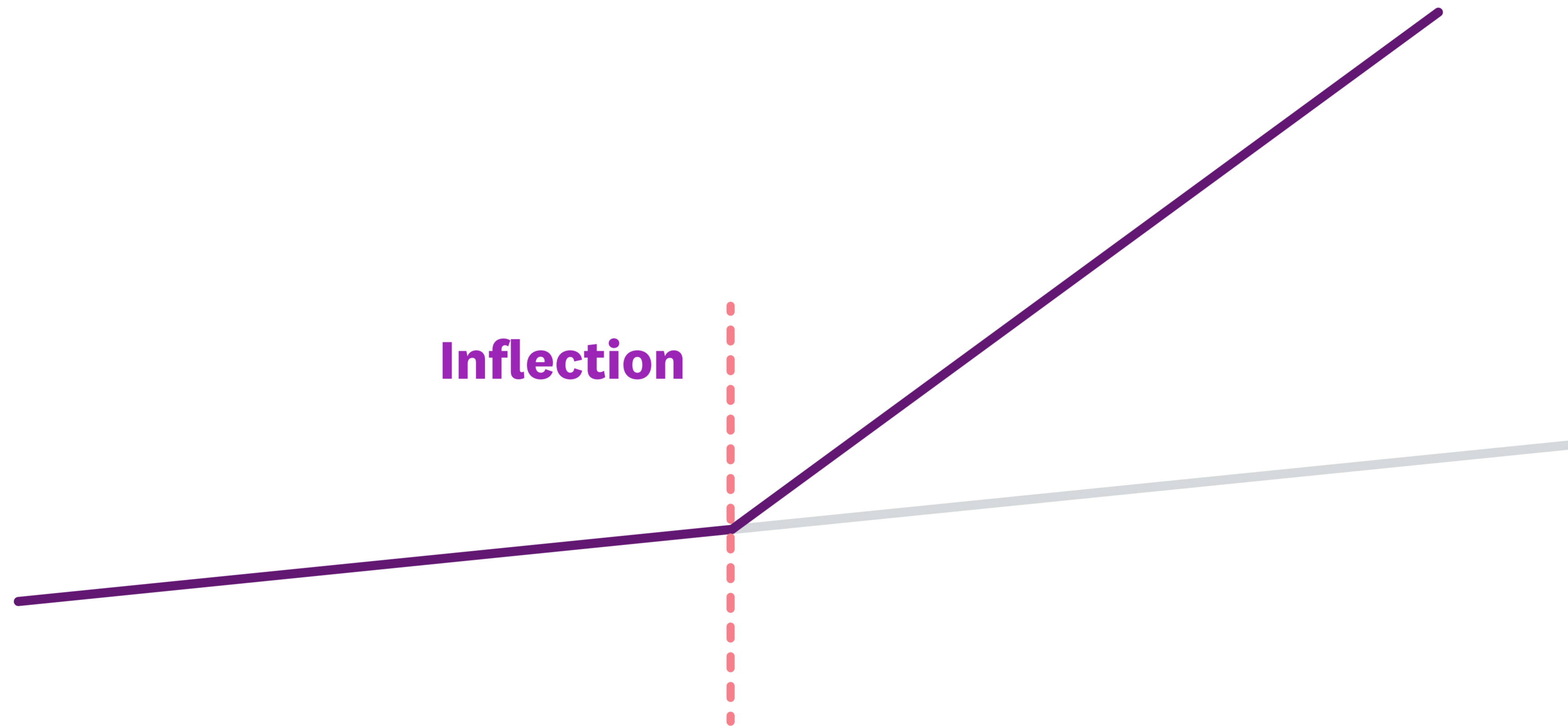


# Reflection on inflection

Dive into milestone moments primed for  
visiontype work.

# Change is inevitable.

Whether that change destabilizes or motivates your team? Well, that's entirely up to you. If you want the latter, then these inflection points become opportunities to set a more purposeful path forward.



## MILESTONE MOMENTS

Entering a new market

Launching a platform/  
product

Raising funding

Integrating an acquisition

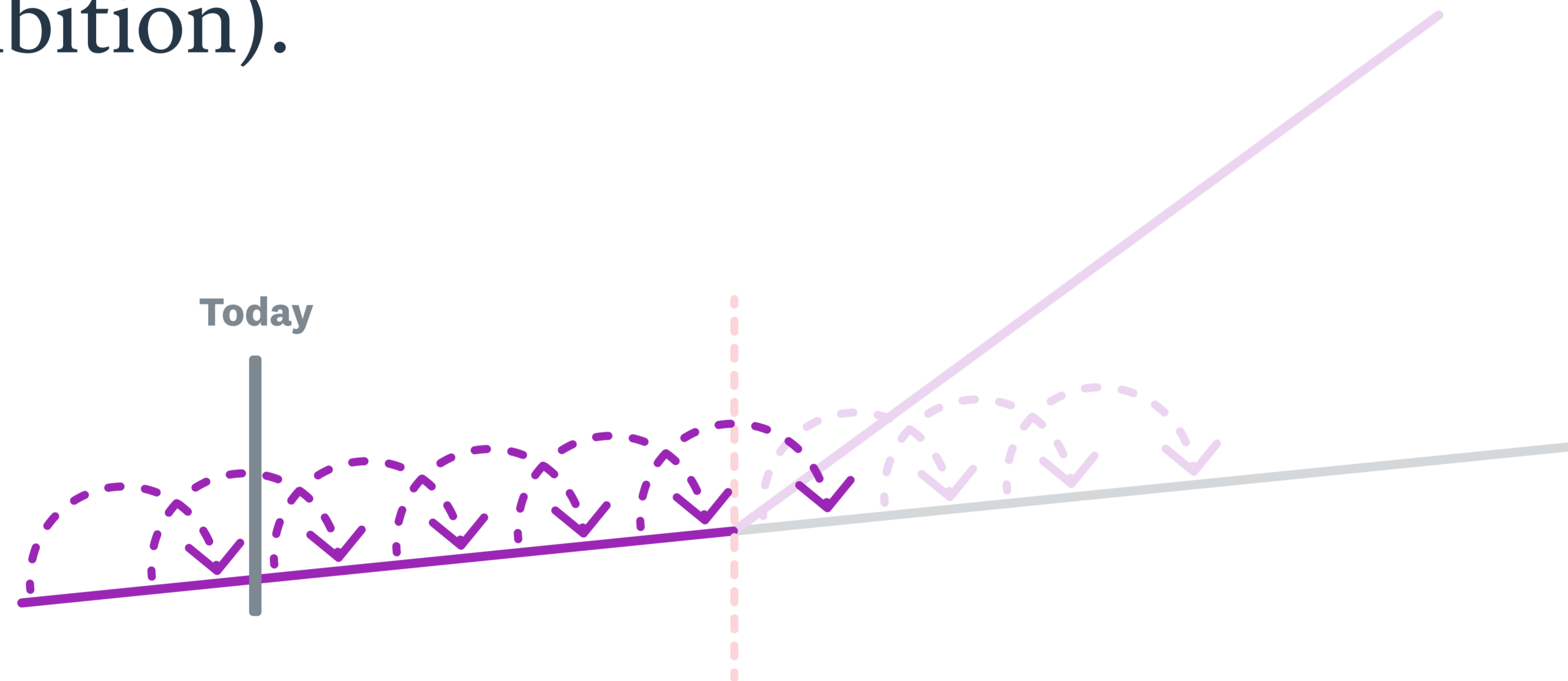
Making an initial public  
offering

Shifting competitive  
landscape

Transformative tech shifts  
(think: AI)

Stuck in perpetual  
“maintenance mode”

Maintaining the status quo can confine innovation possibilities and lead to less expansive horizons (and lower ambition).

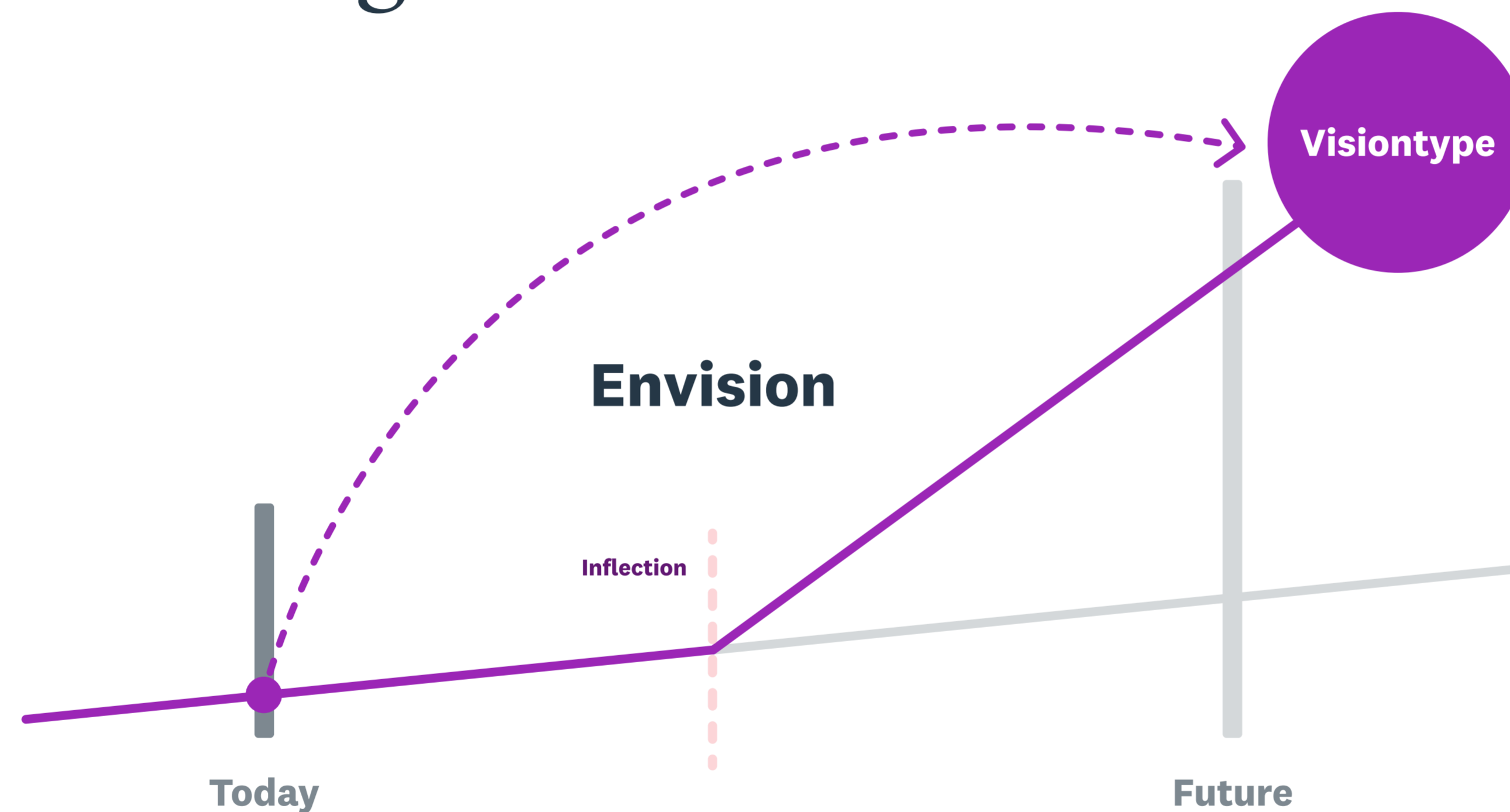


**INCREMENTAL DESIGN APPROACH**

**An agile approach is appropriate for incremental product improvements and optimizing the status quo. It lowers day-to-day risk...how comfortable!**

**But what happens when incrementalism begins to restrict innovation?**

A visionary approach questions the status quo and leverages the full potential of the design investment.



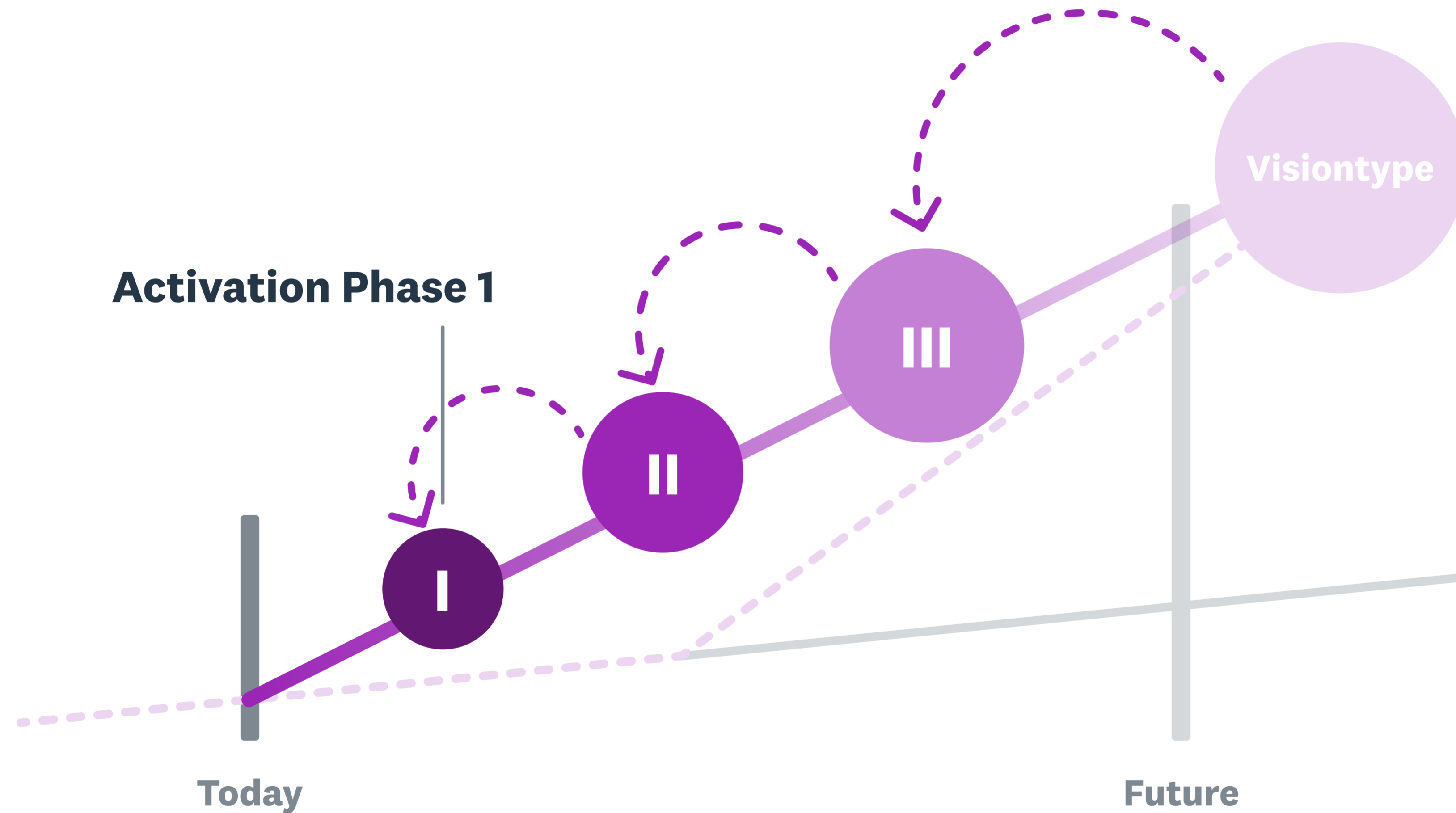
**EXPLORING INNOVATION POSSIBILITIES**

**By placing vision before action you can continue to manage risks while expanding your full innovation potential.**



# Visiontypes scale with your ambition.

With innovation possibilities clearly articulated via a visiontype, teams can translate the future into phases.



**Now, you can start building and move everyone toward the future. A dedicated Activation Phase combines the desired future with the current realities on the ground to set things in motion.**

## ACTIVITIES & ARTIFACTS

### Identify & Audit

the biggest barriers or opportunities: stakeholders, customers, new technology or a shifting market

### Prioritize & Select

insights and opportunities to illustrate

### Write & Storyboard

key journeys based on the above

### Workshop & Concept

identify key concepts or organizing principles

### Design & Prototype

workflows and screens

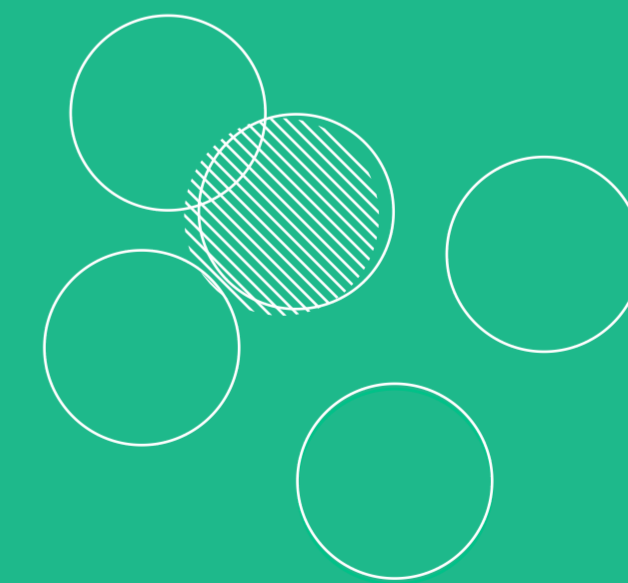
### Review & Revise

throughout to craft a tangible visiontype that can serve as a North Star

02

# Visiontypes defined

Understand the essential elements of a visiontype and, conversely, how they are *not* meant to be used.





## WHAT IS A VISIONTYPE

# Don't just predict the future.

### Create it with visiontypes.

No one can perfectly predict the future, but a visiontype can align a company around a shared understanding of their goals.

Serving as a powerful, inspiring communication tool, a visiontype brings people together and excites them about the future. They typically focus on three- to ten-year aspirations, but can also be developed to support near-term visionary work (think: a year out).

Visiontypes are more than static storyboards. They are experiential, immersive, and interactive—usually delivered via a high-fidelity, clickable prototype or video.

### THE YEAR WAS 1987...

#### Apple unveiled a vision looking beyond the Mac II: The Knowledge Navigator.

While the exact origins of the term “visiontype” are difficult to trace, The Knowledge Navigator is undoubtedly one of the most famous examples of a visiontype in action.

Apple shared their vision via an [inspiring video](#) that imagined how a personal device called The Knowledge Navigator—complete with a touchscreen, front-facing camera, AI assistant, and NLP—might transform a space like higher ed. Oh, and also make sure Professor Michael remembers to get the cake for his father’s surprise party.

The Knowledge Navigator, while set twenty years into the future from the video’s creation, exemplifies the essential elements of a visiontype:

**Made the vision tangible.**

**Brought the organization together.**

**Moved people to act.**

As noted in [a recent \*Fast Co.\* article](#) reflecting on its impact:

“[Apple] didn’t nail everything, but they provided a striking road map of what computing would offer—and continue to anticipate breakthroughs yet to come.”

Imagine that?

# Make the vision tangible.

A visiontype is a concrete and succinct articulation of an organization's future offering in a future world. It's meant to be built, just not as-is. It creates a believable future that excites your organization by drawing what the organization will become in the years to come.

## DELIVERABLES

### Compelling, not exhaustive

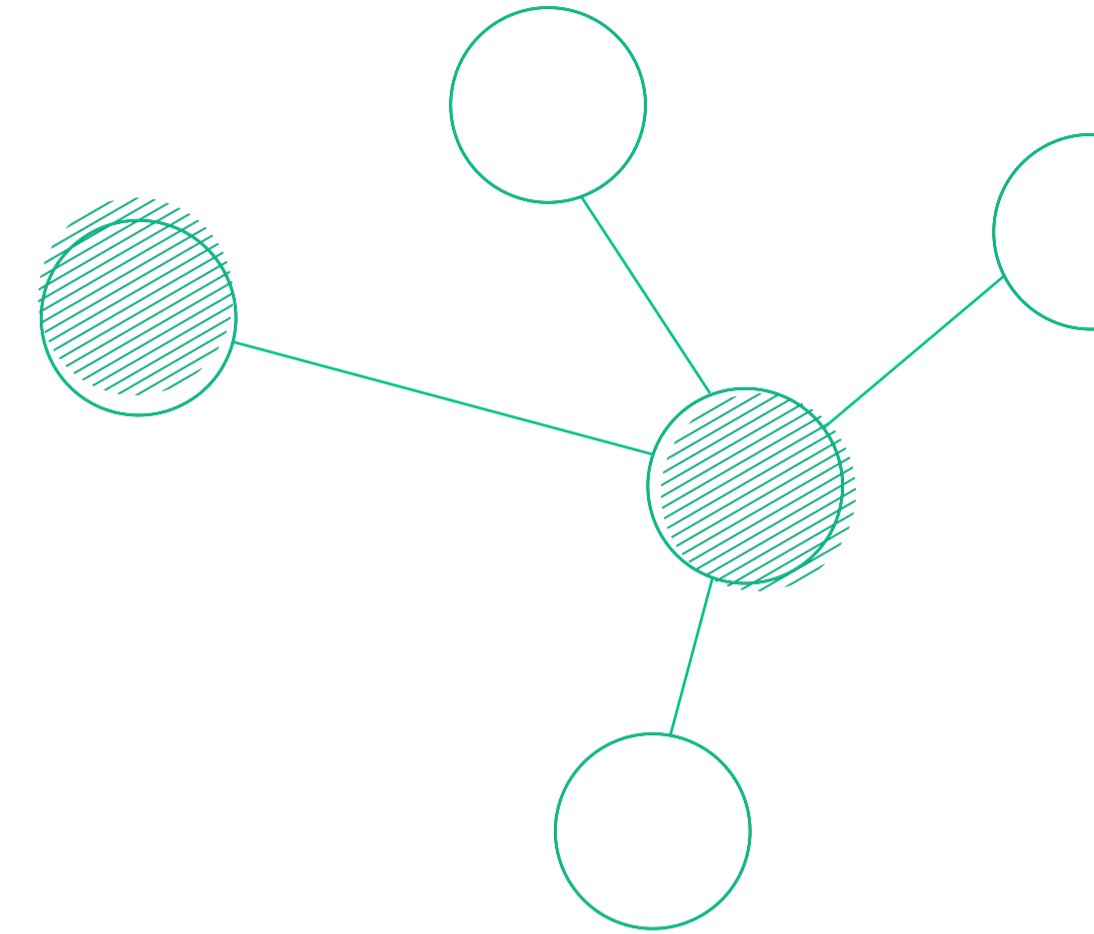
Articulates a succinct, inspiring, and compelling story that hits on the key ideas a future offering will solve for future customers.

Visiontypes evoke a visceral experience for teams because they focus on the essential aspects of the future state.

### Clarity more than usability

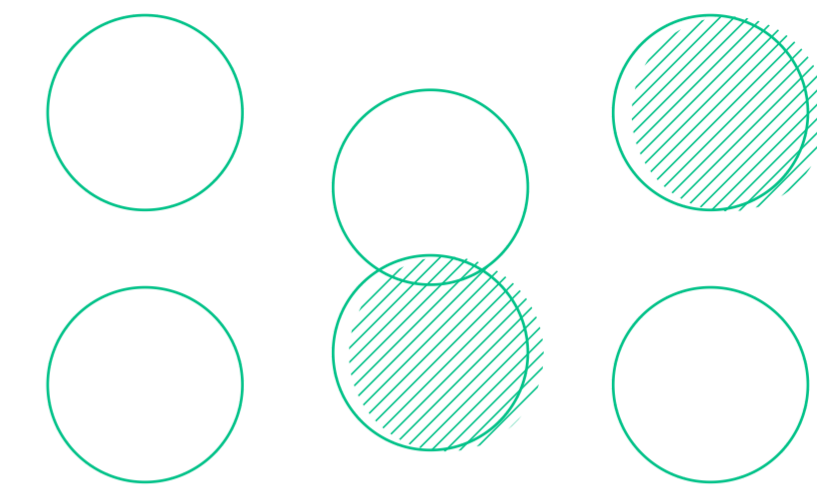
A visiontype represents the big ideas behind an organization's vision, **not** optimized Interface Design to be built as-is.

While teams may express different interfaces, interactions, and scenarios to communicate big ideas, they shouldn't be concerned with *how* the interface will eventually be built.



# Bring the organization together.

While Product and Design should lead the way, it's key that cross-functional stakeholders contribute throughout, so everyone has a shared sense of ownership.



## PROCESS

### Design as the “how” not the what

Often, partners in the visiontype process are not themselves designers. They are business leaders who want to harness designers as strategic partners who can make their vision come to life.

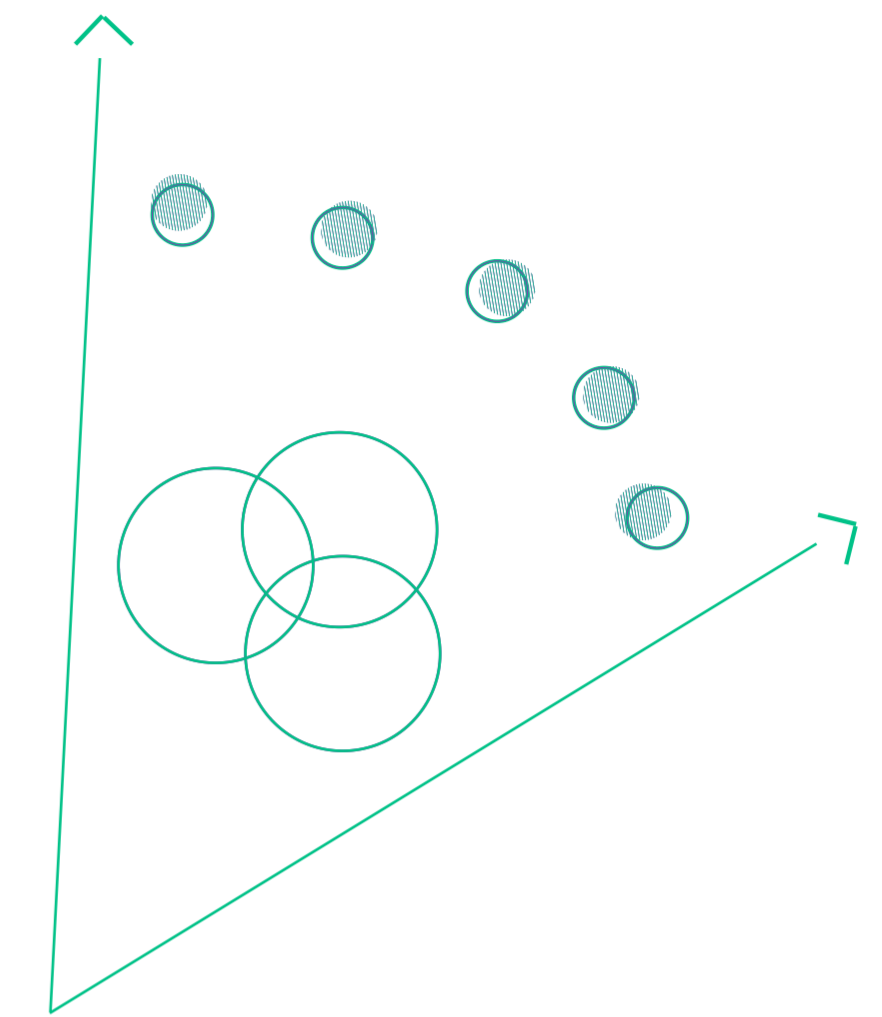
Designers apply their unique skills to organize and embody the ambitions and desires of the entire organization.

### Strategic partners vs. facilitators

Whether using in-house or consulting design expertise, teams can expect designers to move beyond idea facilitation and into playing an active role in sparking meaningful change via the visiontype process.

# Move people to act.

The true value of a visiontype is its impact on the organization after it has been delivered. It compels the organization to take action and start building toward the shared vision of tomorrow.



## IMPACT

### Shared language more than publicly shareable

A visiontype serves as a single source of information that everyone across the organization can reference.

It makes it easier to collaborate by establishing shared language and a mutual reference point to ensure concepts live on.

Pssst, while the primary aim shouldn't necessarily be public consumption, visiontypes can be used in this way to inspire customers, partners, and people outside the organization (like The Knowledge Navigator).

### Believable more than science fiction

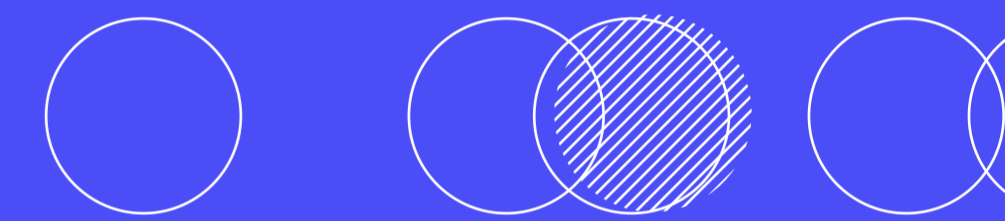
Taking place in the future, a visiontype orients people around the same purpose. They balance boldness and reality by focusing on a three- to ten-year future scope.

It immerses, excites, and instills confidence in a team's ability to build for the future because the team can imagine getting there.

03

# Visiontypes in the wild

Explore visiontype success stories from category leaders and emerging disruptors.





The only thing I trust when communicating with company executives (and customers) is a high-fidelity prototype...a prototype eliminates a tremendous amount of the inherent ambiguity. The very act of creating the prototype forces you to think about the problem at a much deeper level, uncovering important issues that are otherwise obscured.

MARTY CAGAN

# Nex-Gen Networking with Cisco Meraki

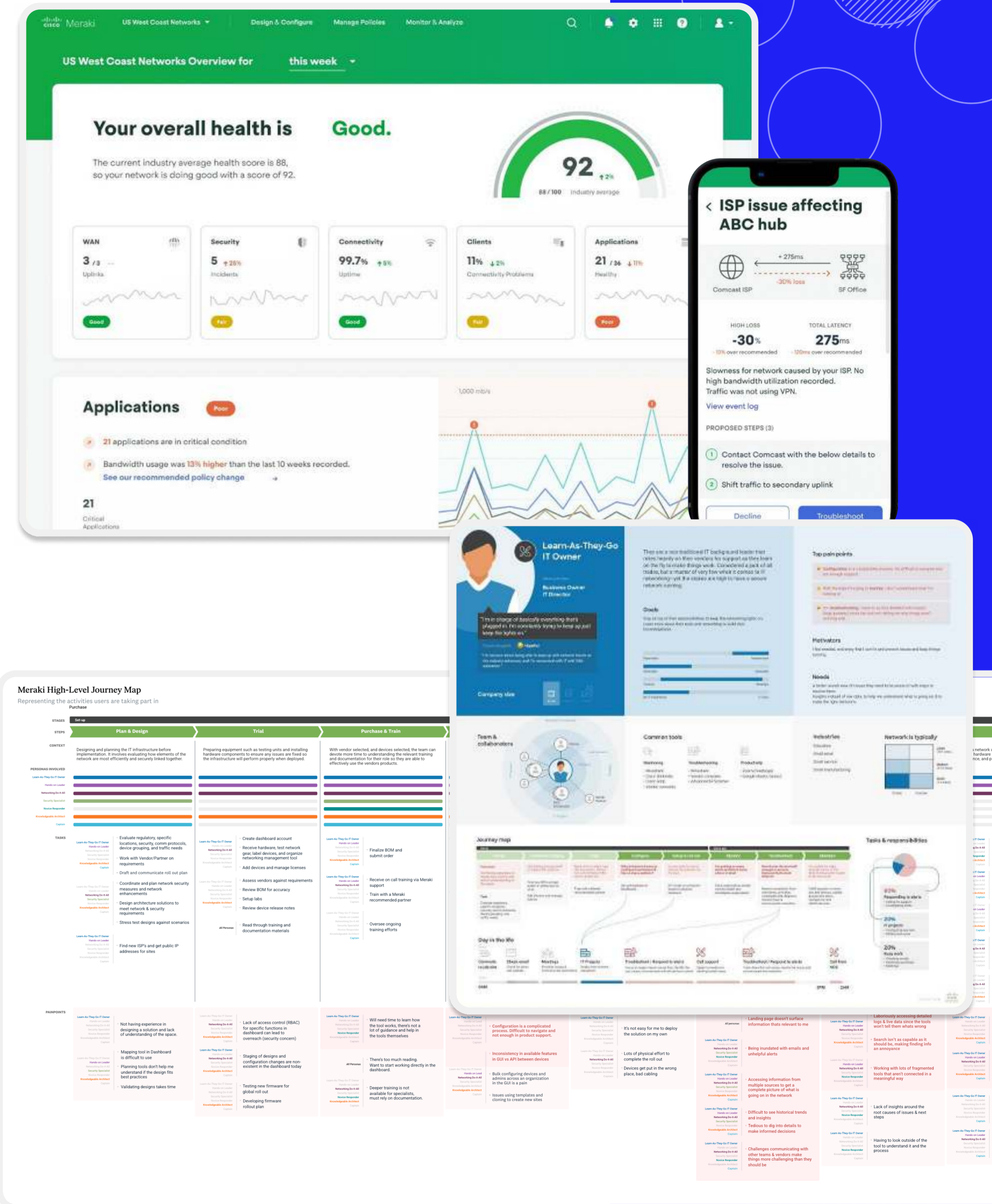
**Cisco Meraki is leading cloud networking. Its dashboard is known for its simplicity and has paved the way for industry-wide innovation. But, as new features emerged over time, the interface became more cumbersome.**

## Approach

DesignMap partnered with the Meraki UX and PM teams to explore industry and competitor trends and conduct user/stakeholder interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the space. Armed with these insights, we crafted a reimaged experience via a visiontype.

## Impact

The high-fidelity prototype energized and aligned 50+ stakeholders and subject matter experts from five different departments around a unified vision. Already in activation, it is helping the team differentiate in a competitive market.



# Putting Marketers at the Center of Cheetah Digital's Product

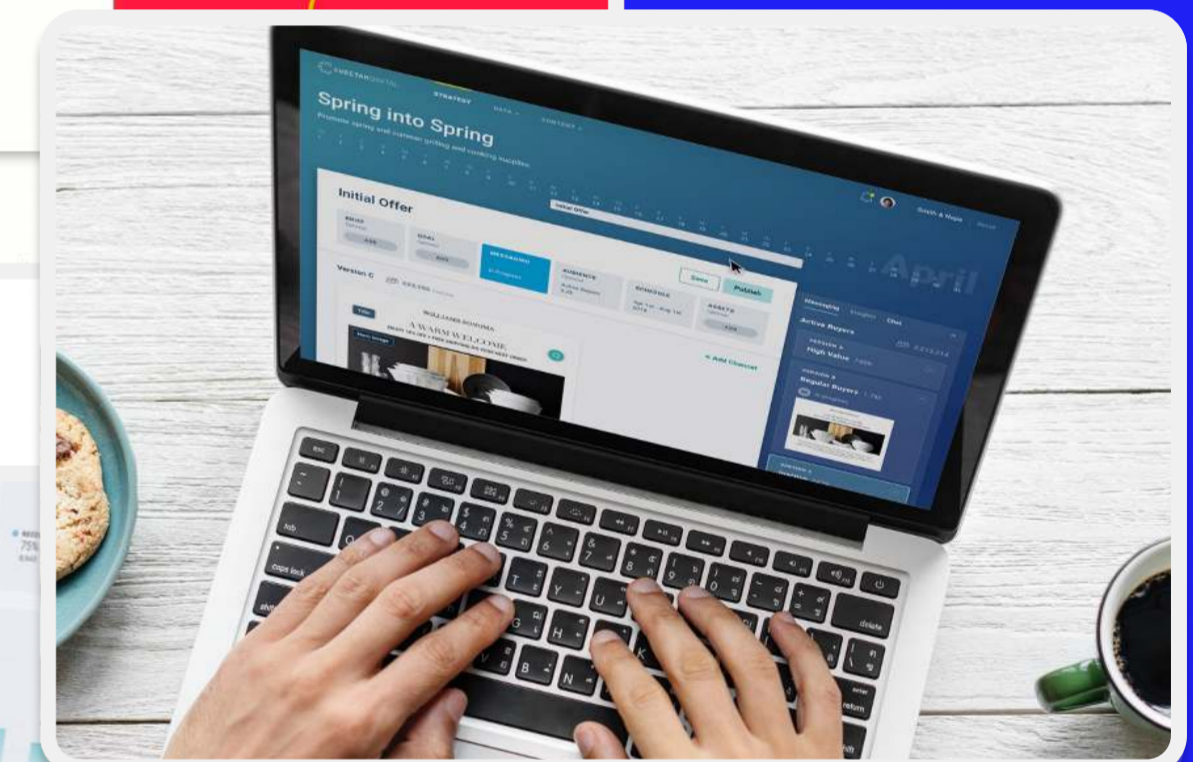
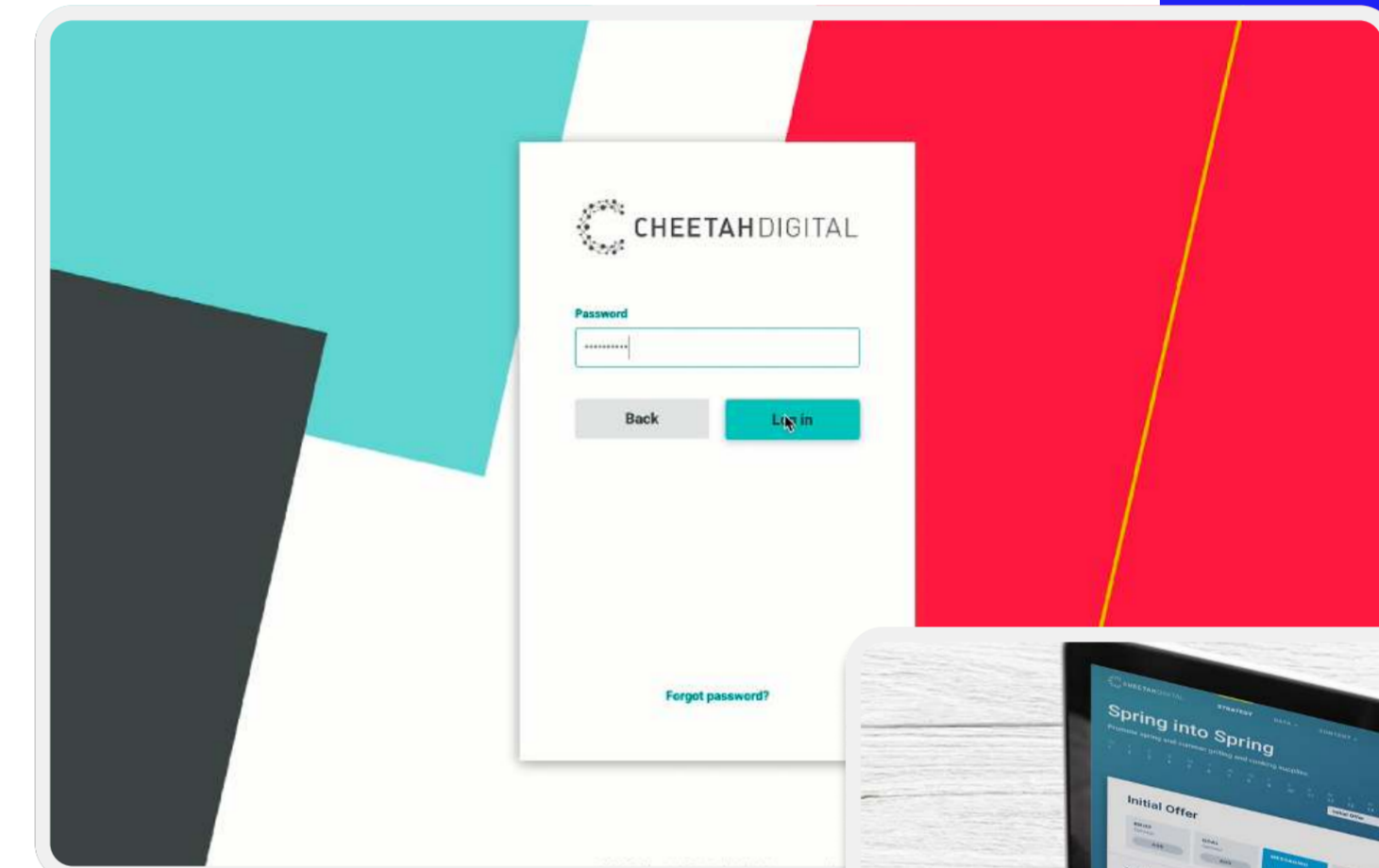
**Cheetah Digital wanted to regain its leadership position in the Digital Marketing space and was looking for a vision to propel them forward and lead the way.**

## Approach

DesignMap worked with Cheetah's leadership team to develop a visiontype to serve as the North Star—a tangible artifact to guide Cheetah's future-looking investments. We leveraged ongoing CMO studies and worked with the leadership team to activate the visiontype.

## Impact

Working with Cheetah Digital to make aspects of the visiontype a reality helped to improve their Forrester Rating to one of the highest, especially on Analytics.





# Revolutionizing Marketing with ExactTarget's \$2.5B Vision

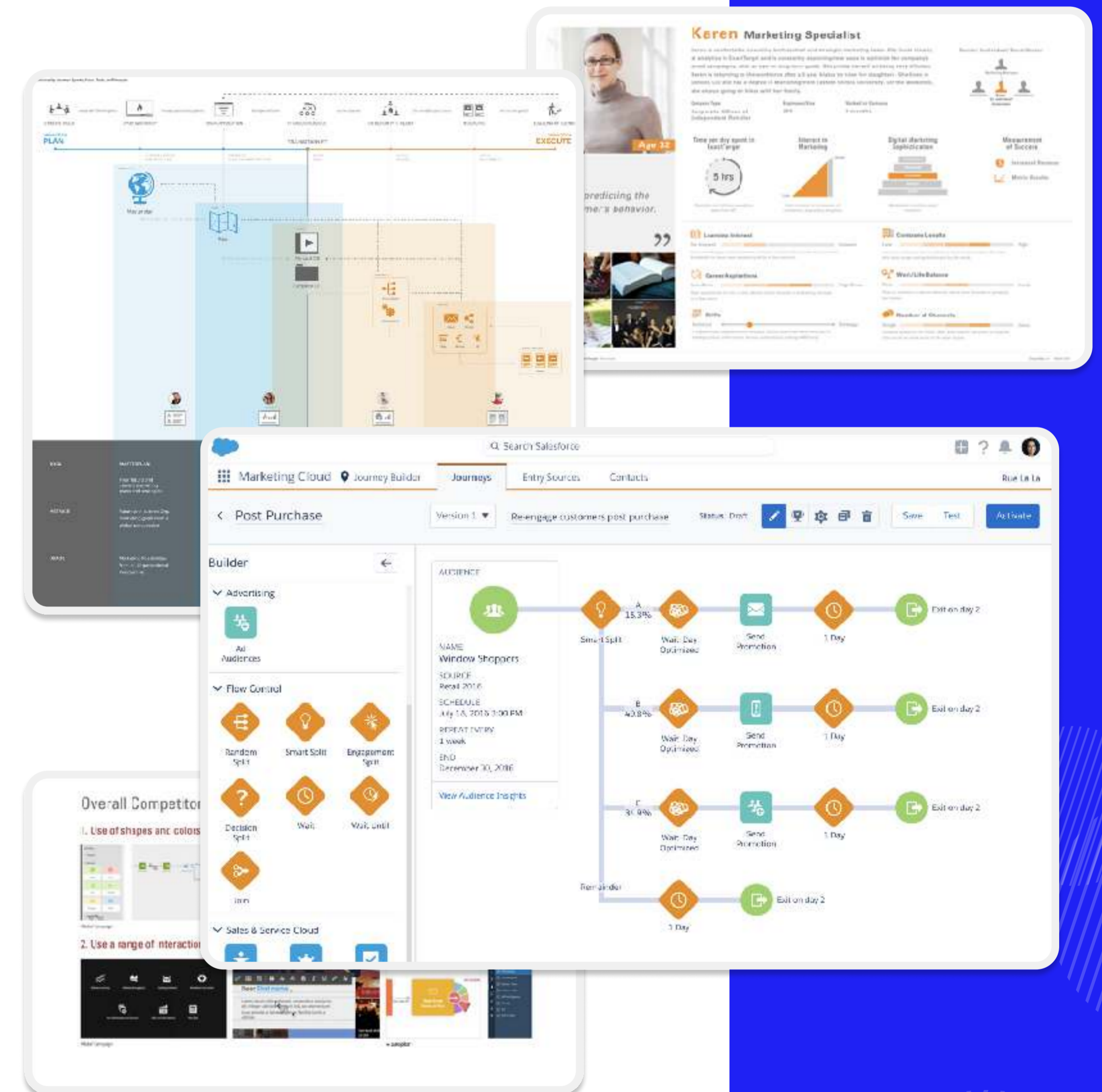
**In a pivotal moment post-funding, ExactTarget faced the challenge of aligning its teams behind a groundbreaking product vision.**

## Approach

DesignMap, partnering with COO Scott McCorkle, navigated the complexities. Extensive product discovery (interviews, audits, and trend analysis), collaborative ideation workshops, persona-based sessions, storyboarding, and scenario development informed a high-fidelity visiontype of the Journey Builder.

## Impact

Once in market, the platform's popularity surged, culminating in ExactTarget's acquisition by Salesforce for \$2.5B. The disruptive vision served as a roadmap for success in the competitive marketing automation arena.



# Take your team from mess to meaning.

DesignMap is a product strategy and experience design consultancy. We help B2B and B2B2C teams use design to elevate design and align people around a shared purpose.

We love to dig in, to understand complicated things and illuminate them—especially through models, maps, and prototypes. Our flexible engagements align teams around **purpose, product, and people.**

Visit [our services page](#) to learn more about our bespoke engagements that can be rightsized to meet your needs.



## Strategy & Vision

Using visiontypes and other proven design methodologies, take a step back from incremental demands to draw the future state of your organization/product, make better decisions, realize new value, and align teams.

## Product-Service Design

Make more informed, insightful product and service decisions that create intuitive experiences and unified platforms—all centered around the people who use them.

## Skill Development, Workshops & Org Design

Breakdown silos, upskill your design team, or complement your staff to foster a growth-minded culture that harnesses the full potential of your people.

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