

# Design Staffing Models

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9/30/2021



## TODAY'S DISCUSSION

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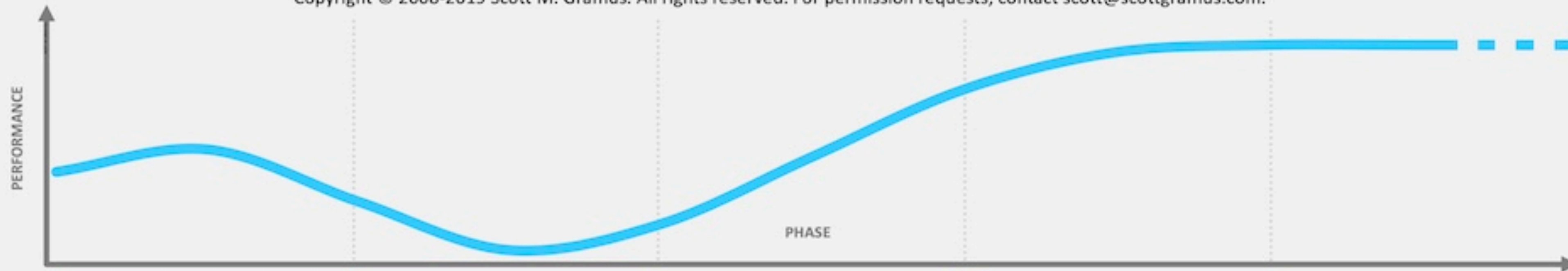
How do you best organize  
your Design team to work  
within a changing  
environment?

### To set some context for our chat today:

- The Adobe Design team is centralized, partnering with multiple Business Units (BUs) across the company
- My team partnered with a BU that owned multiple products and initiatives
- Our Engineering team had recently restructured & moved to a new release cadence
- We had new leadership for both Engineering and Product
- I was tasked with addressing staffing needs for a team that historically operated on a Dedicated staffing model

# Phases of Team Development

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning — based on group development model by Bruce Tuckman  
 All phases are necessary and inevitable for a team to grow, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results  
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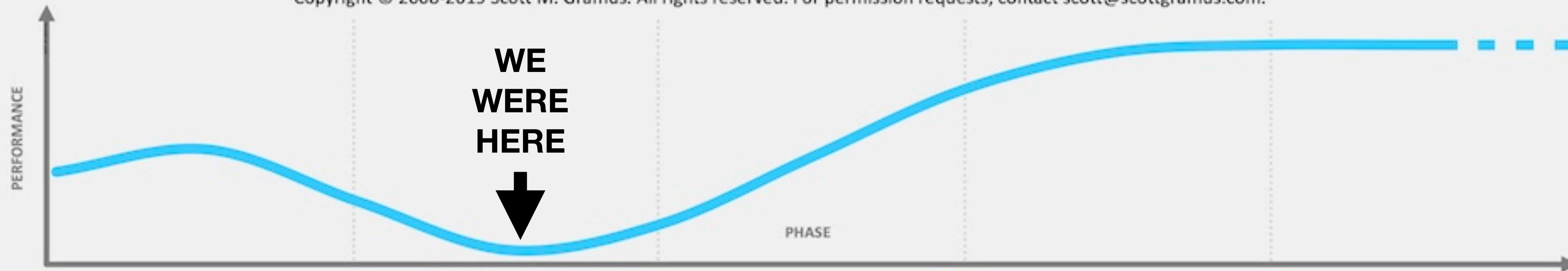


	FORMING	STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING	ADJOURNING
CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Socializing</li> <li>• Displaying eagerness</li> <li>• Focusing on group identity &amp; purpose</li> <li>• Sticking to safe topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance</li> <li>• Lack of participation</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• High emotions</li> <li>• Starting to move towards group norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconciliation</li> <li>• Relief, lowered anxiety</li> <li>• Members are engaged &amp; supportive</li> <li>• Developing cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrations of interdependence</li> <li>• Healthy system</li> <li>• Ability to effectively produce as a team</li> <li>• Balance of task and process orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift to process orientation</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Recognition of team and individual efforts</li> </ul>
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking the 'lead'</li> <li>• Providing clear expectations and consistent instructions</li> <li>• Quick response times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalizing matters</li> <li>• Encouraging leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing individual and group efforts</li> <li>• Providing learning opportunities and feedback</li> <li>• Monitoring the 'energy' of the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrating</li> <li>• 'Guide from the side' (minimal intervention)</li> <li>• Encouraging group decision-making and problem-solving</li> <li>• Providing opportunities to share learning across teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing change</li> <li>• Providing an opportunity for summative team evaluations</li> <li>• Providing an opportunity for acknowledgments</li> </ul>

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## TODAY'S DISCUSSION

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How do you organize your  
Design team to work within  
a changing environment

**without freaking  
everybody out?**

## TWO MODELS

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### DEDICATED

- Staff by singular area, such as a Product or Service team

VS.

### AGENCY

- Staff by arising need, spanning multiple areas (projects)

# Case Study



# CASE STUDY

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PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

# CASE STUDY

---

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

NEW

NEW

NEW

# CASE STUDY

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PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

PRODUCT

SERVICE

SERVICE

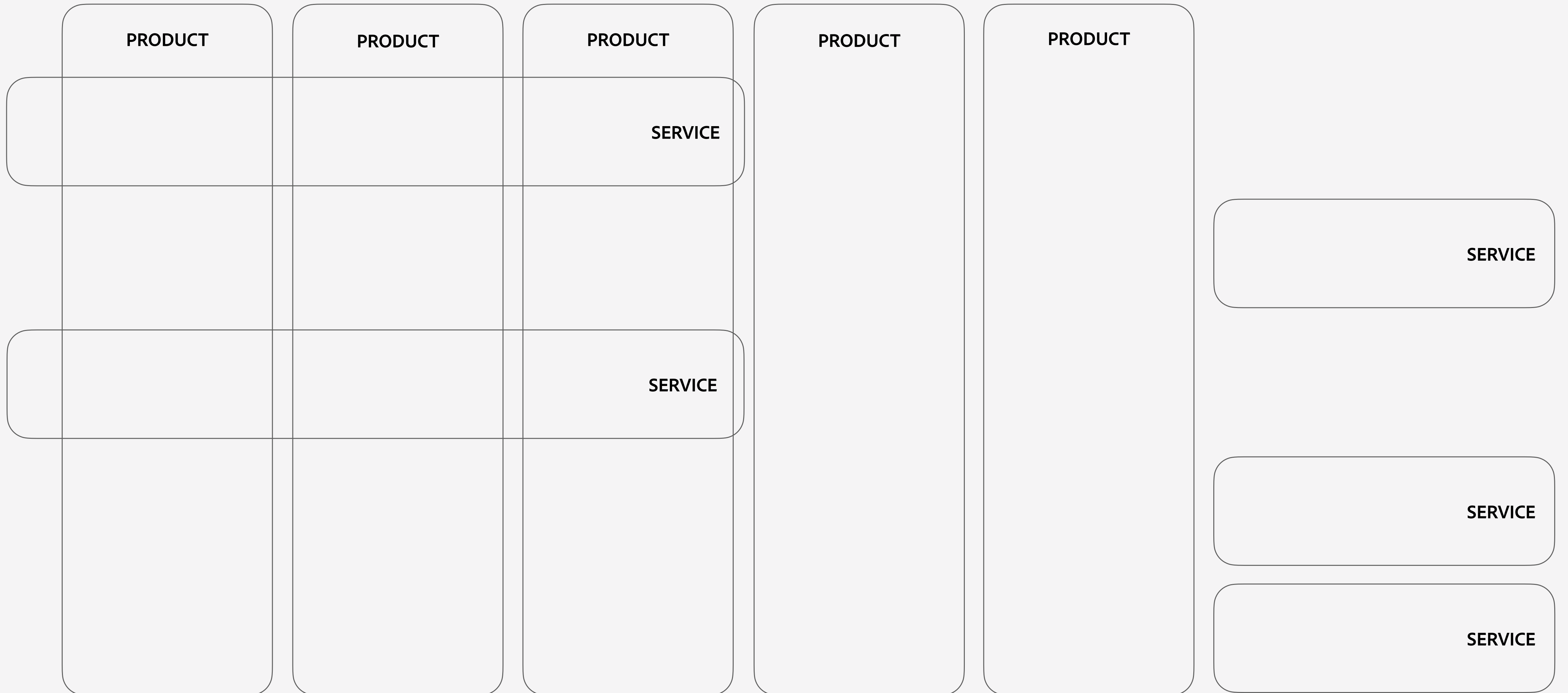
SERVICE

SERVICE

SERVICE

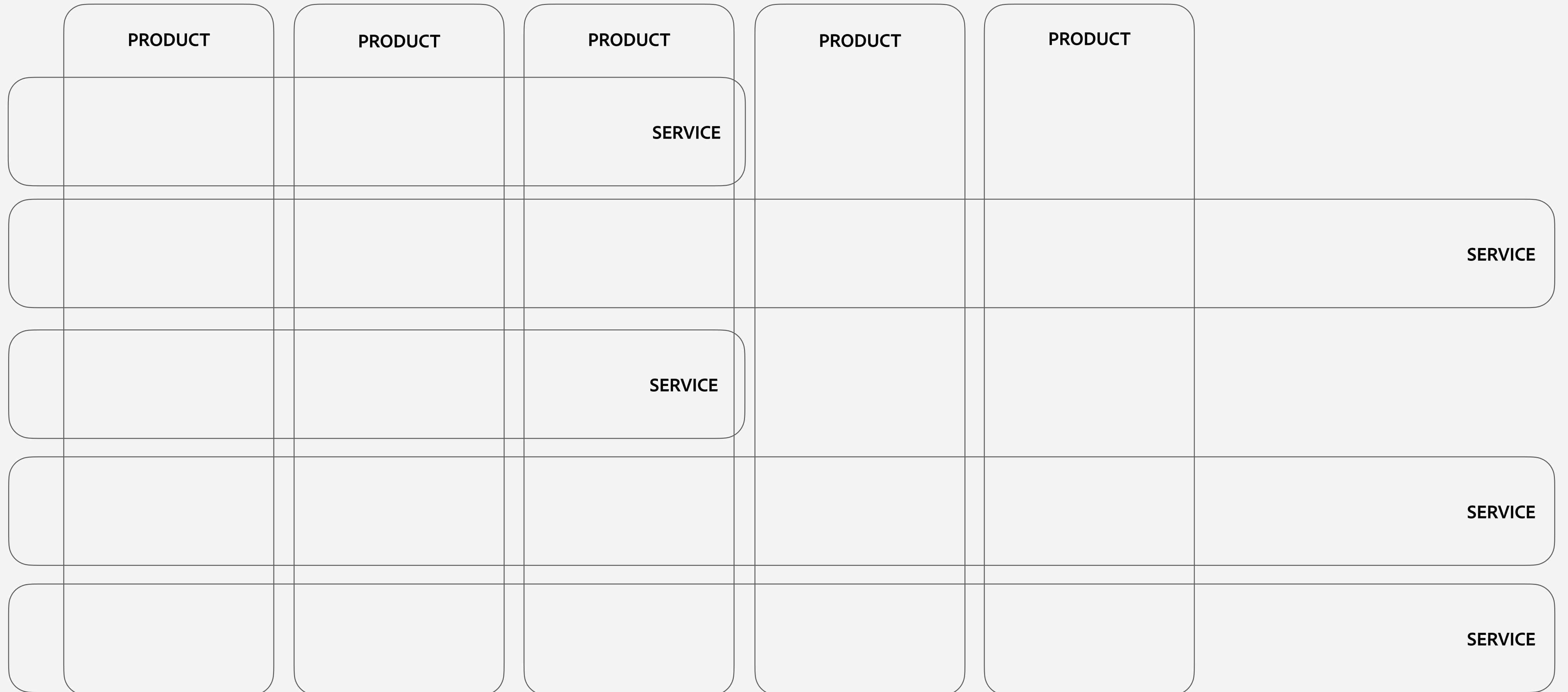
# CASE STUDY

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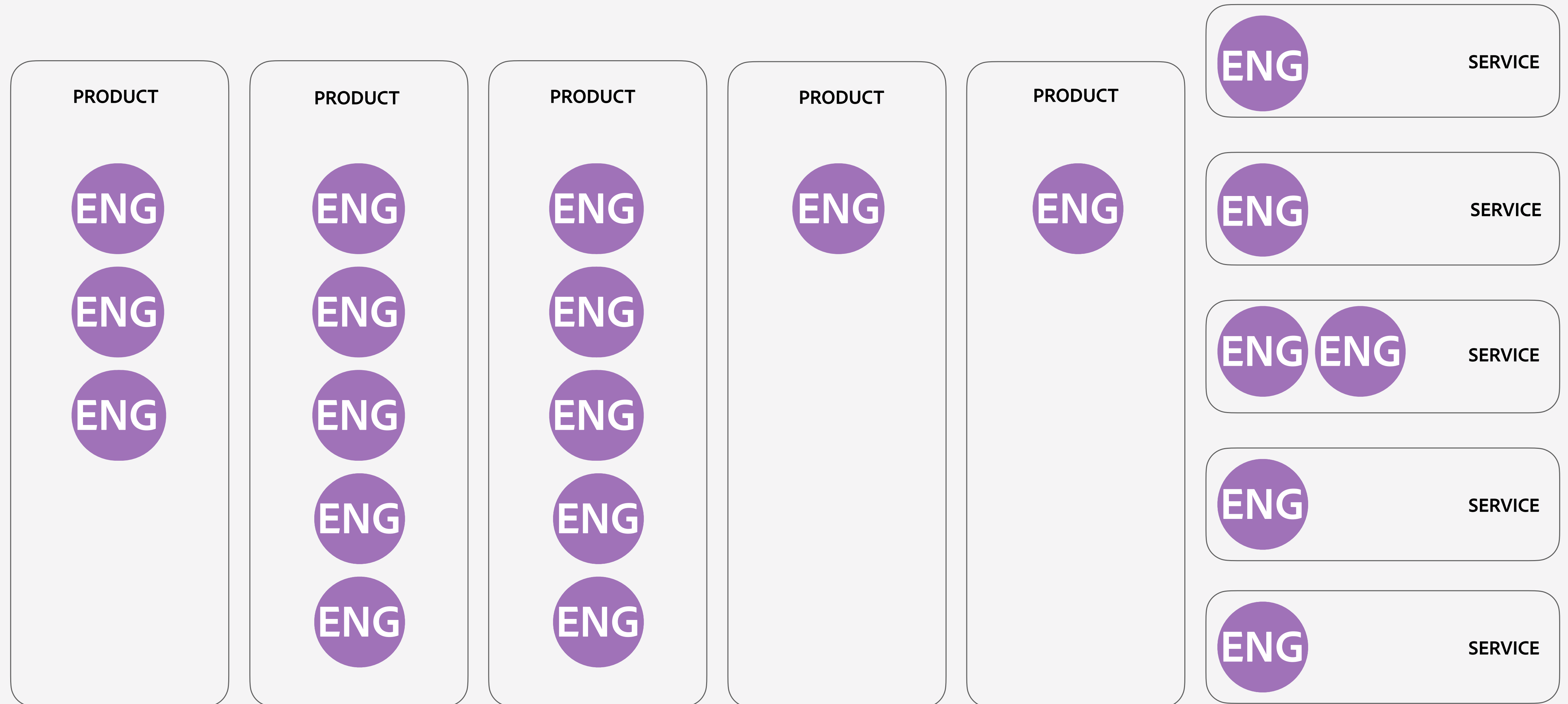
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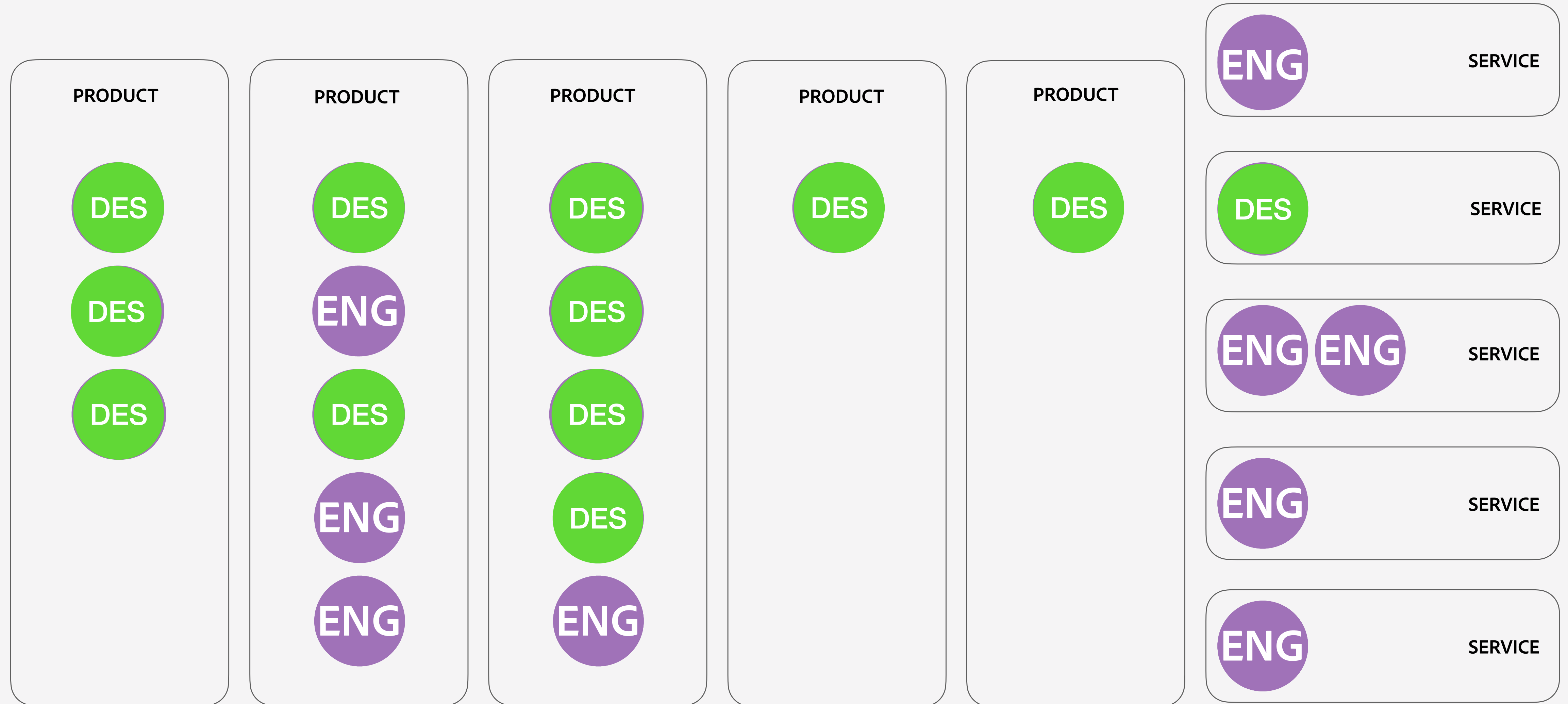
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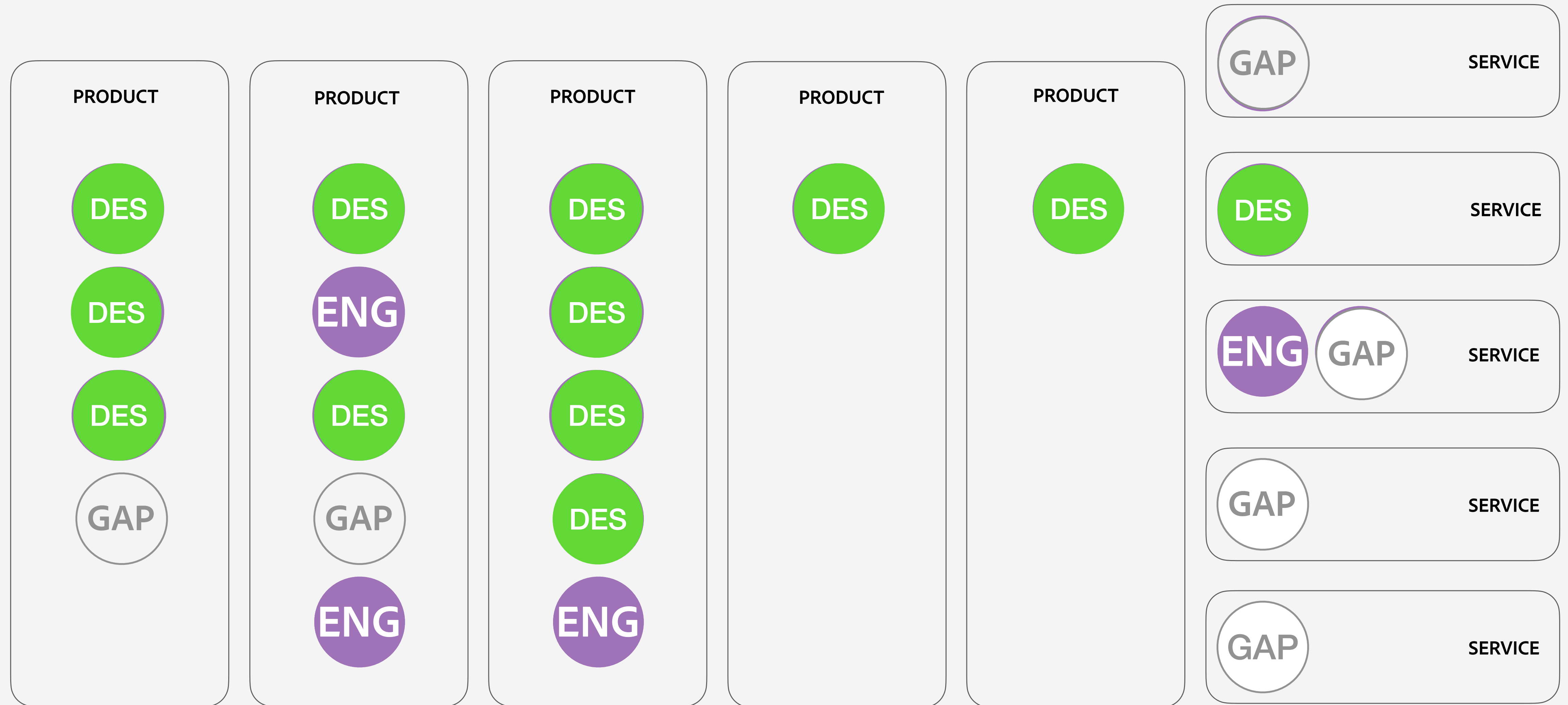
**ENG** = Engineering Team

# CASE STUDY



DES = Designer

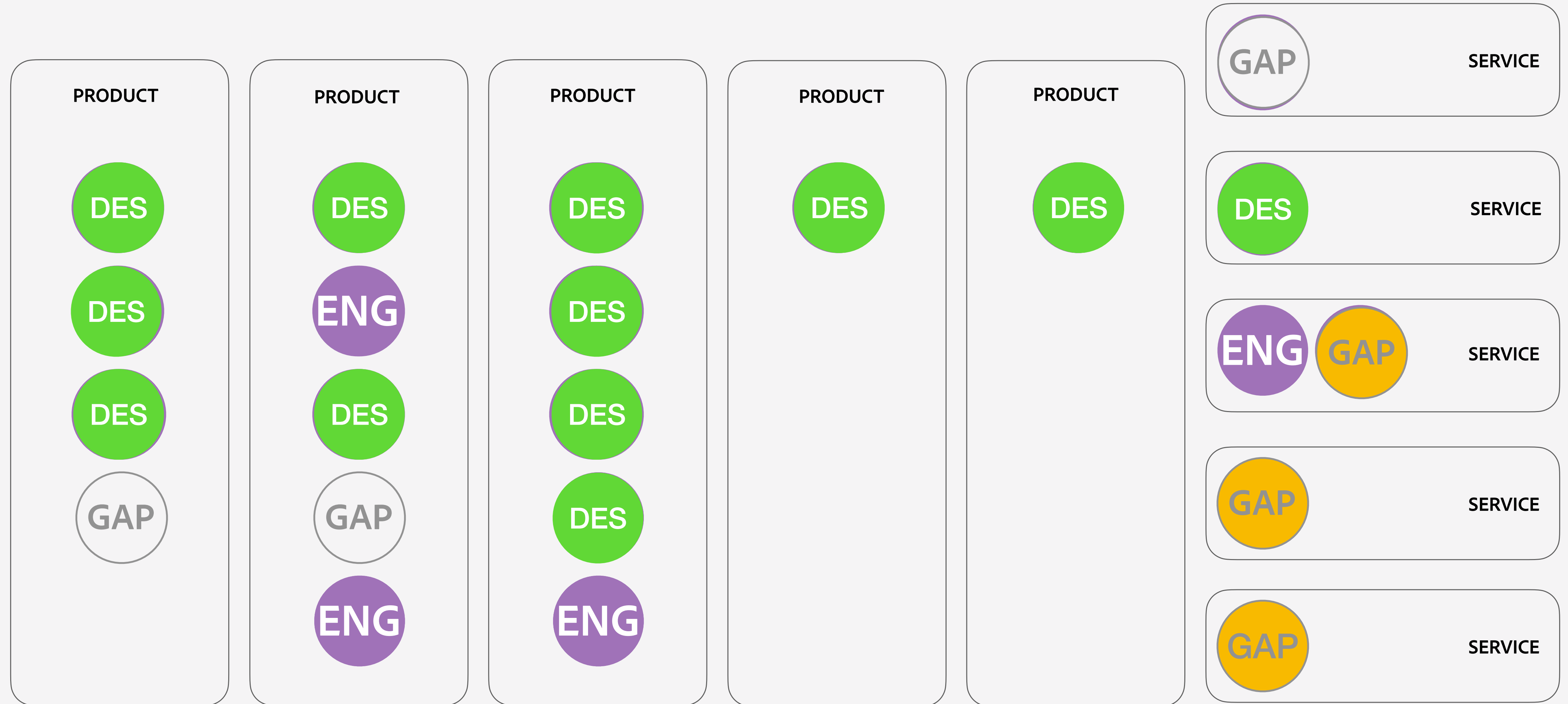
# CASE STUDY



**GAP** = Design Need



# CASE STUDY



 = Critical Design Need

## TWO MODELS

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### DEDICATED

- Staff by singular area, such as a Product (creates deep “vertical” expertise)

VS.

### AGENCY

- Staff by arising need, like a time-boxed project (creates “horizontal” mastery)

## TWO MODELS

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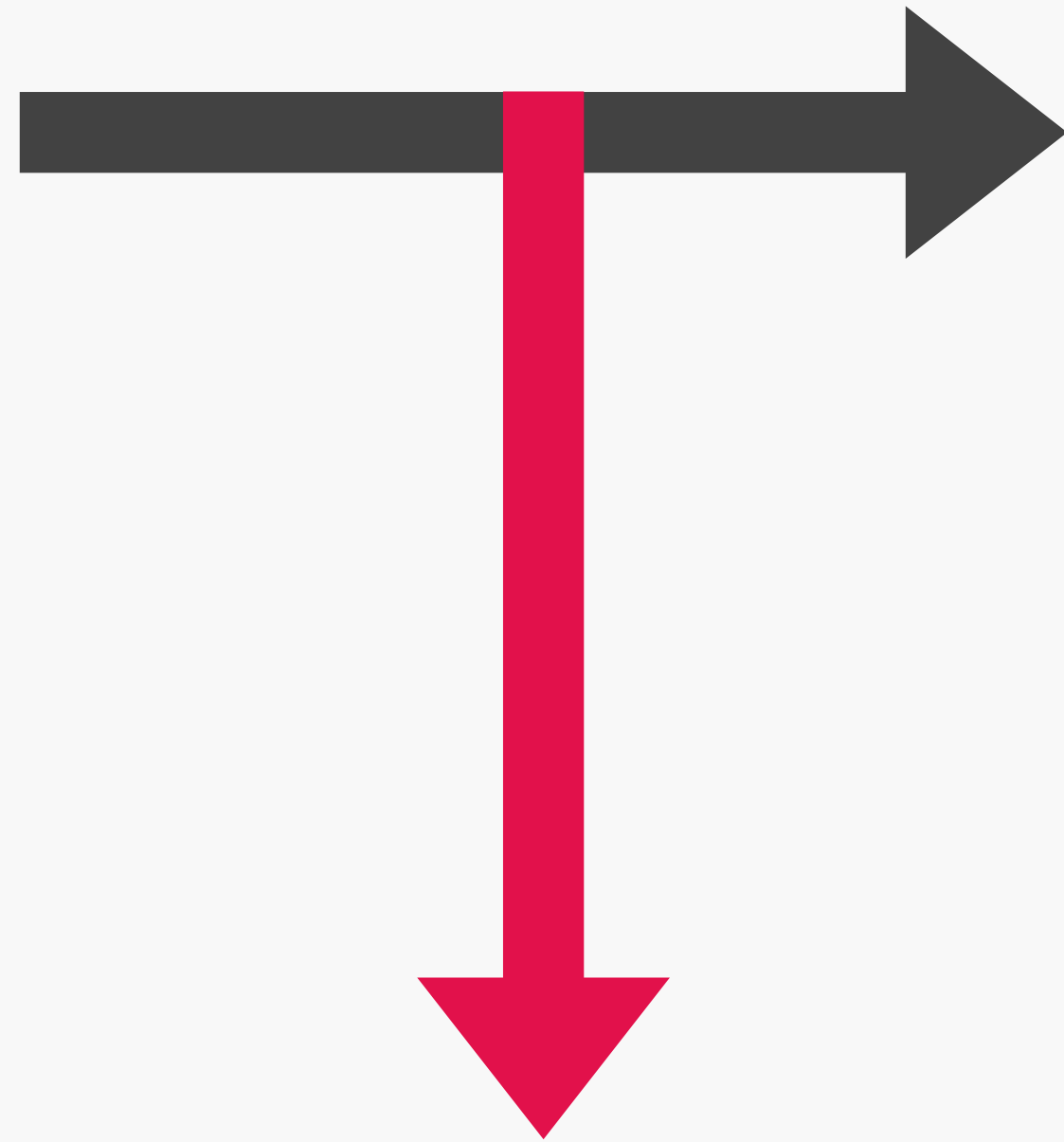
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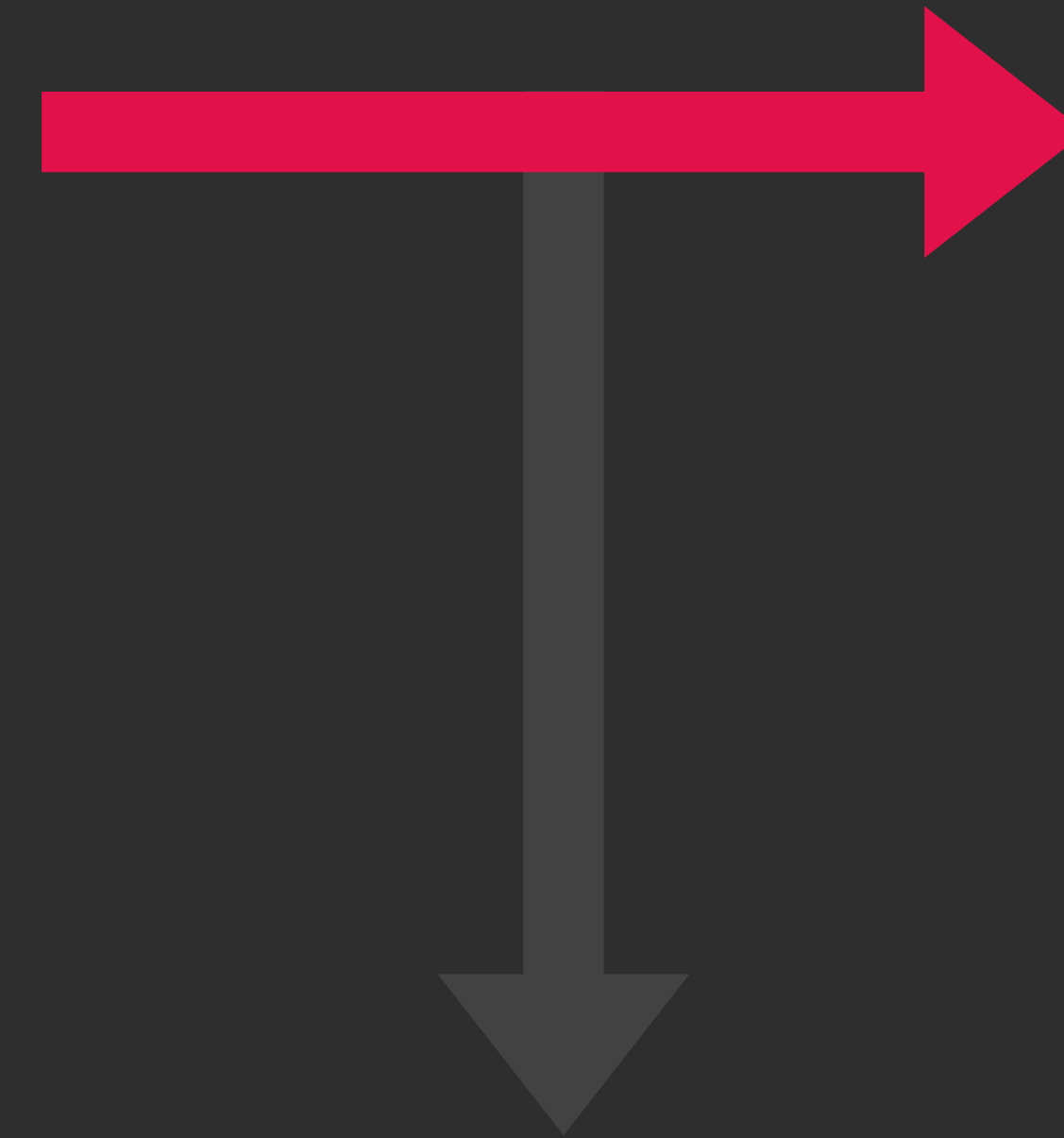
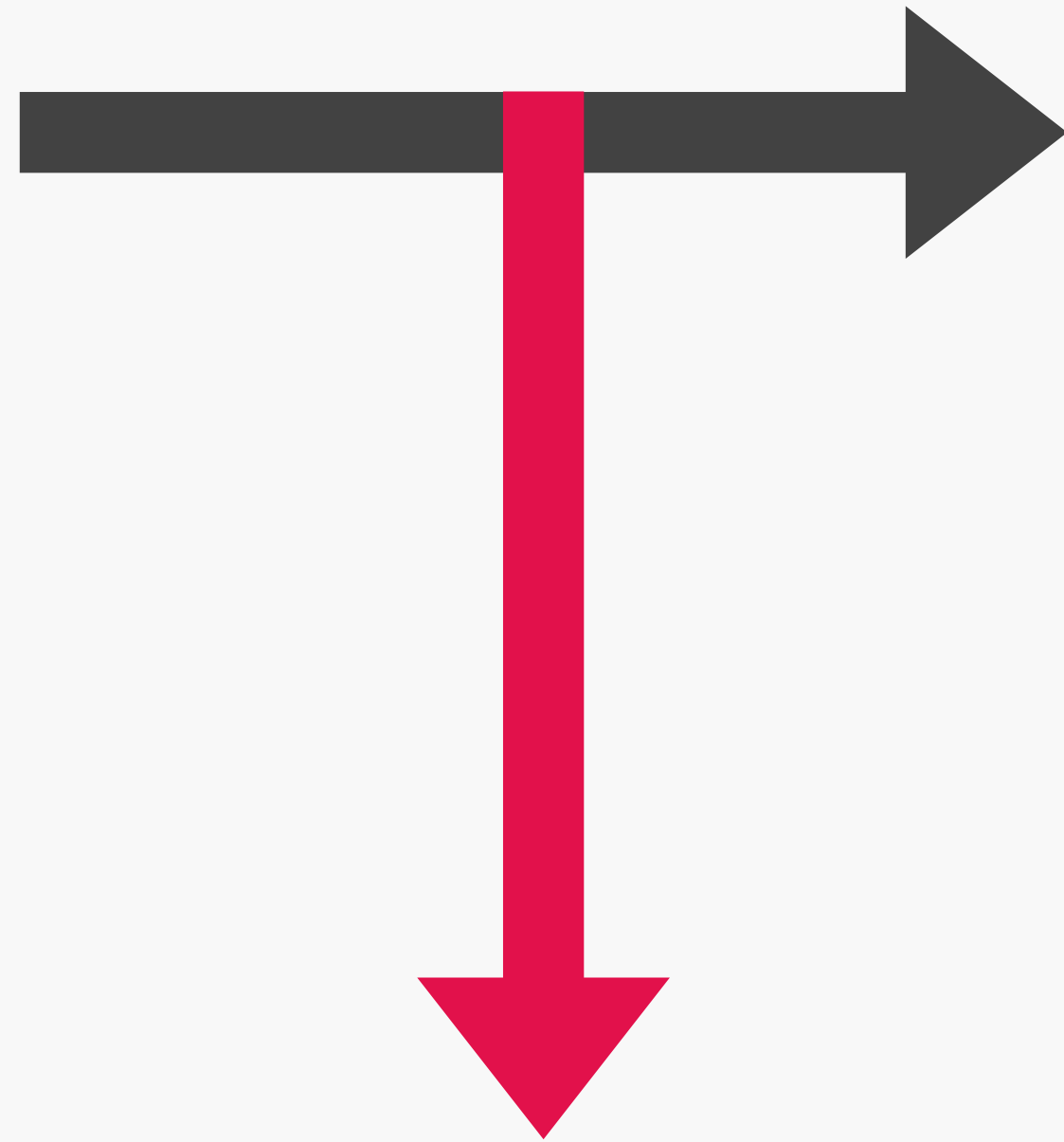
### DEDICATED

VS.

### AGENCY

- Staff by singular area, such as a Product (creates deep “vertical” expertise)

- Staff by arising need, like a time-boxed project (creates “horizontal” mastery)



## TWO MODELS

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### DEDICATED

VS.

### AGENCY

- ✓ Designer gains **expertise or mastery** in their area, creating vertical depth of knowledge
- ✓ Designer maintains **consistent relationships** across teams and partners
- ✗ Designer is not always exposed to **horizontal mastery** across products
- ✗ Designer may not receive **leadership or growth** opportunities

- ✓ Designer gains **horizontal experience**, bringing knowledge across areas
- ✓ Designer gains **growth opportunities** through changing projects and teams
- ✓ Allows for **shifted staffing** on highest priority projects
- ✗ Requires more **ramp up time** for both project and relationships
- ✗ Designer does not acquire **deep vertical mastery** in one area

## TWO MODELS

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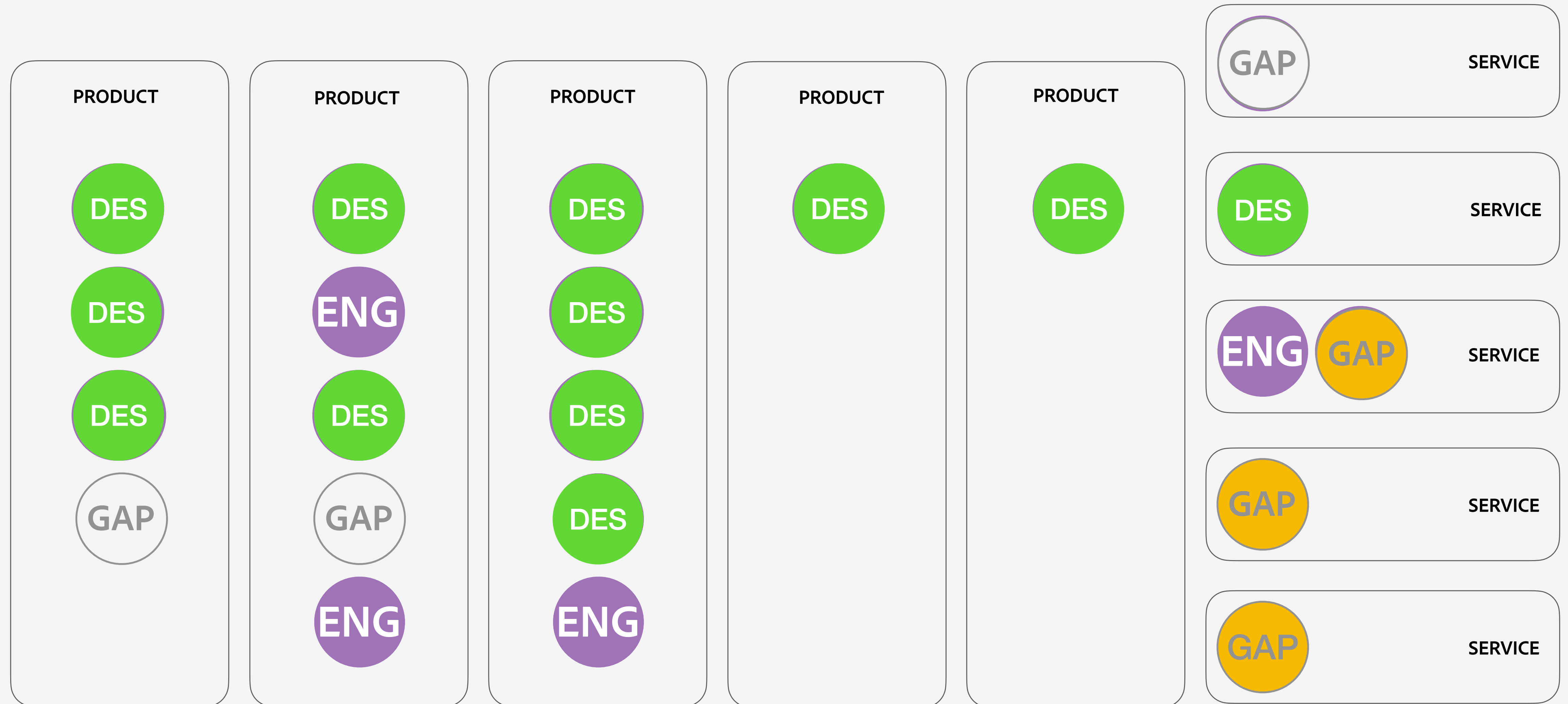
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### Staffing short-term needs Agency-style:

1. Who has the bandwidth?
2. Who is looking for new opportunities?
3. Who will be most able to quickly ramp up in:
  1. The area of expertise?
  2. The necessary relationship-building?
4. Who are the partners that we need to negotiate with to establish a new staffing pattern?

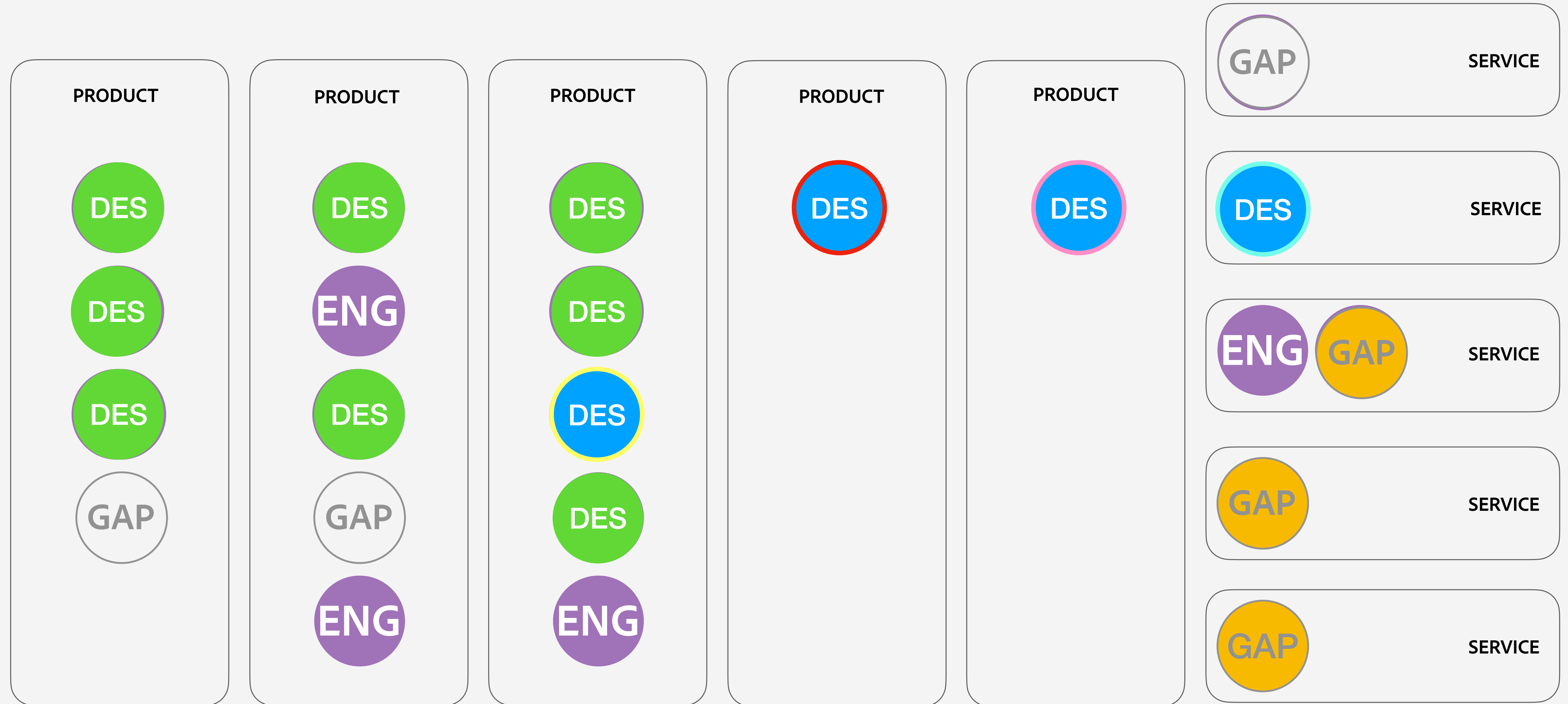
# CASE STUDY

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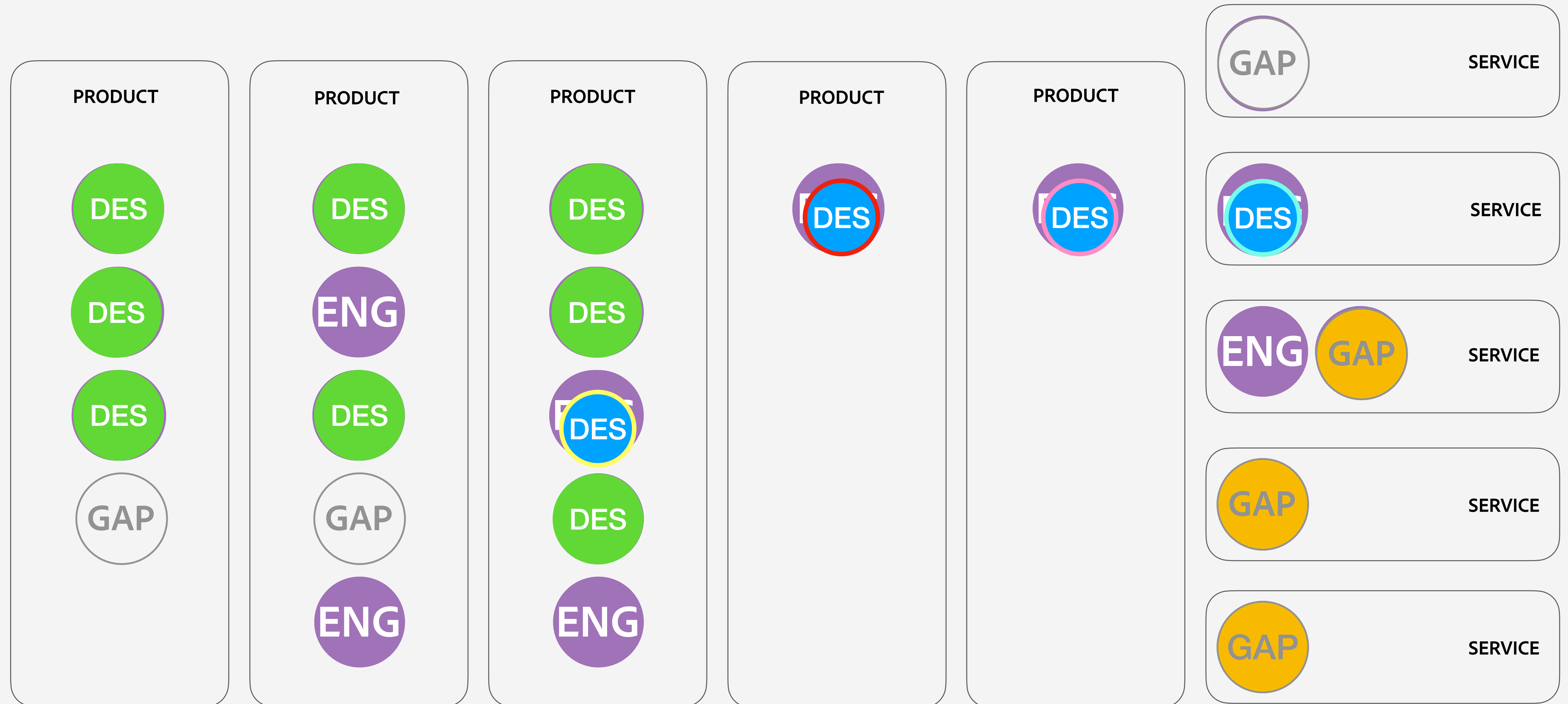
# CASE STUDY



DES

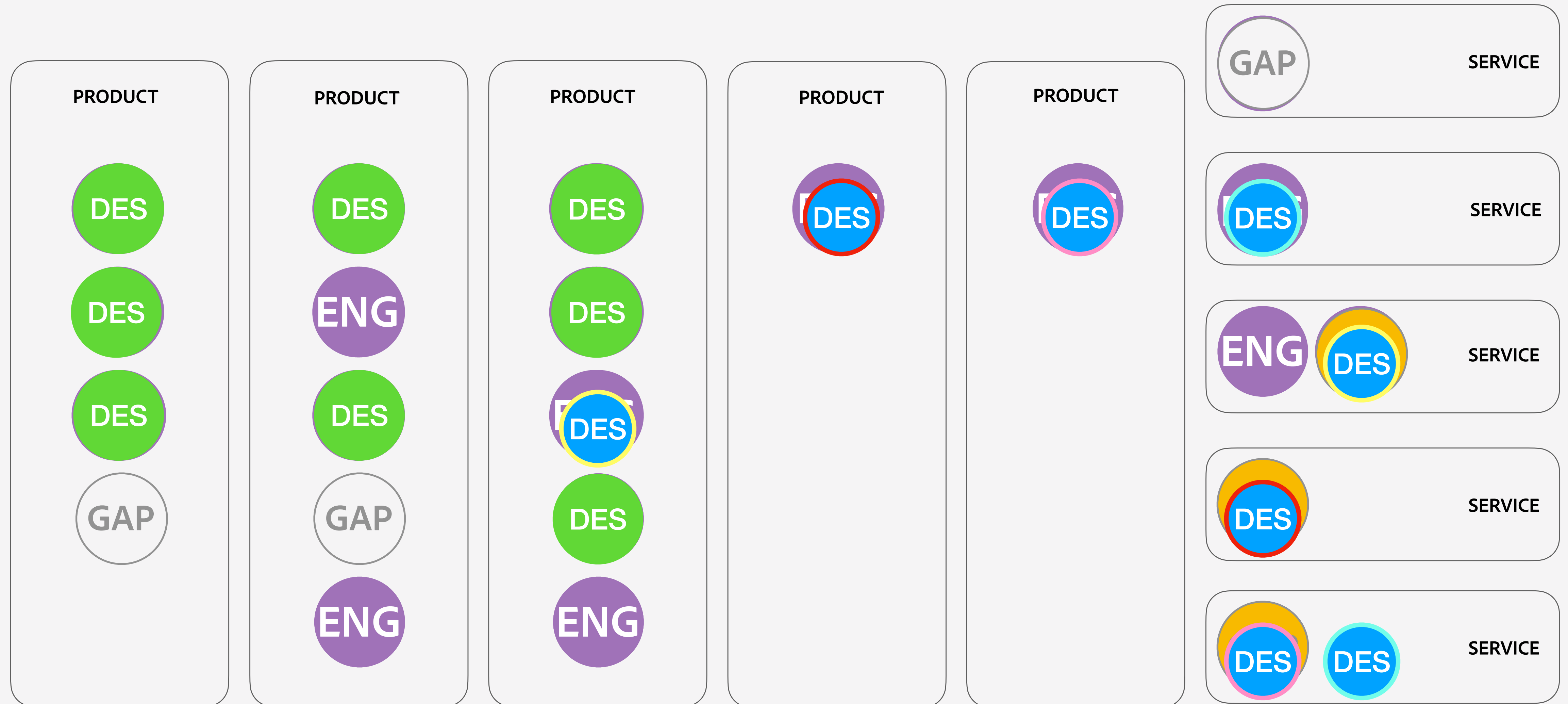
= Identified Bandwidth

# CASE STUDY



**DES** = Identified Bandwidth

# CASE STUDY



**DES** = Identified Bandwidth

## KEY LEARNINGS

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### WHAT WENT WELL

VS.

### WHAT DIDN'T

- We were able to **cover critical gaps** without waiting for headcount allocation and hiring delays
- Designers liked the **increased scope** and associated expansion of skill, relationships, and exposure
- Initial **stakeholder meetings** created trust and small-group alignment
- Follow-up **agreement emails** ensured all stakeholders were on the same page

- We created **design debt** by lowering Design staffing on teams that still had full Engineering and Product support
- Scope increases created **work/life balance challenges** and required more oversight
- Priority and staffing required **constant communication** after agreement interpretations
- Some needs proved **full-time**, so our fix was short term



What are your best  
methods for  
staffing projects &  
Design teams?

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