



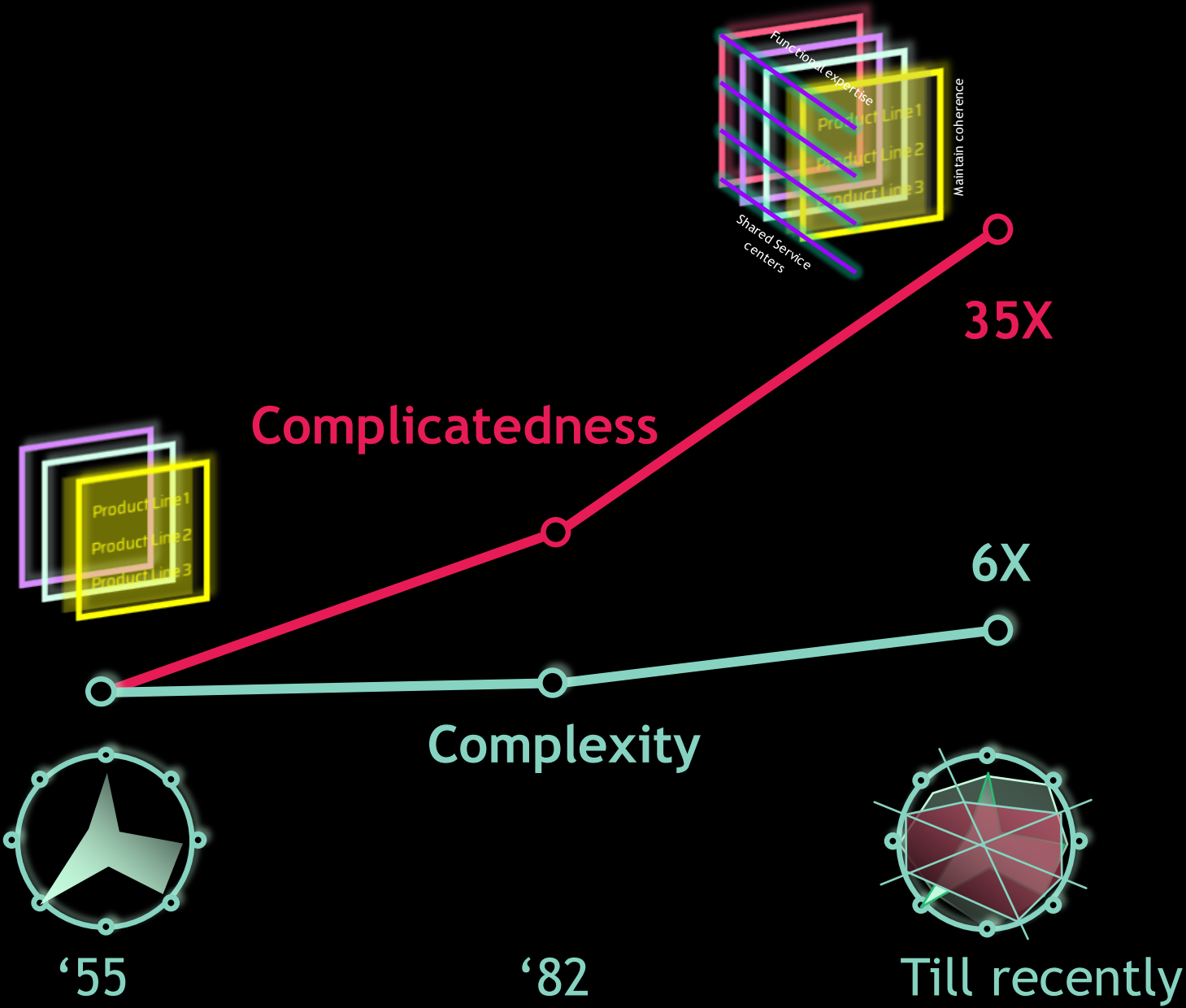
# Office: Container or Content of Work?

St. Gallen New Work Forum

Yves Morieux

JANUARY 13, 2021

Companies have historically responded to the complexity of their environment by becoming more complicated



Source: Y. Morieux (2011), "Smart Rules: Six Ways to Get People to Solve Problems Without You", *Harvard Business Review*, volume 89, n°9, September: pp78-86

# Complicatedness stifles productivity and engagement

7

Number of approvals managers need to make a decision

40

% time managers spend writing reports

30-60

% time managers spend in meetings with peers

40-80

% time teams spend on non-value-adding activities

Note: In the top quintile of complicated organizations

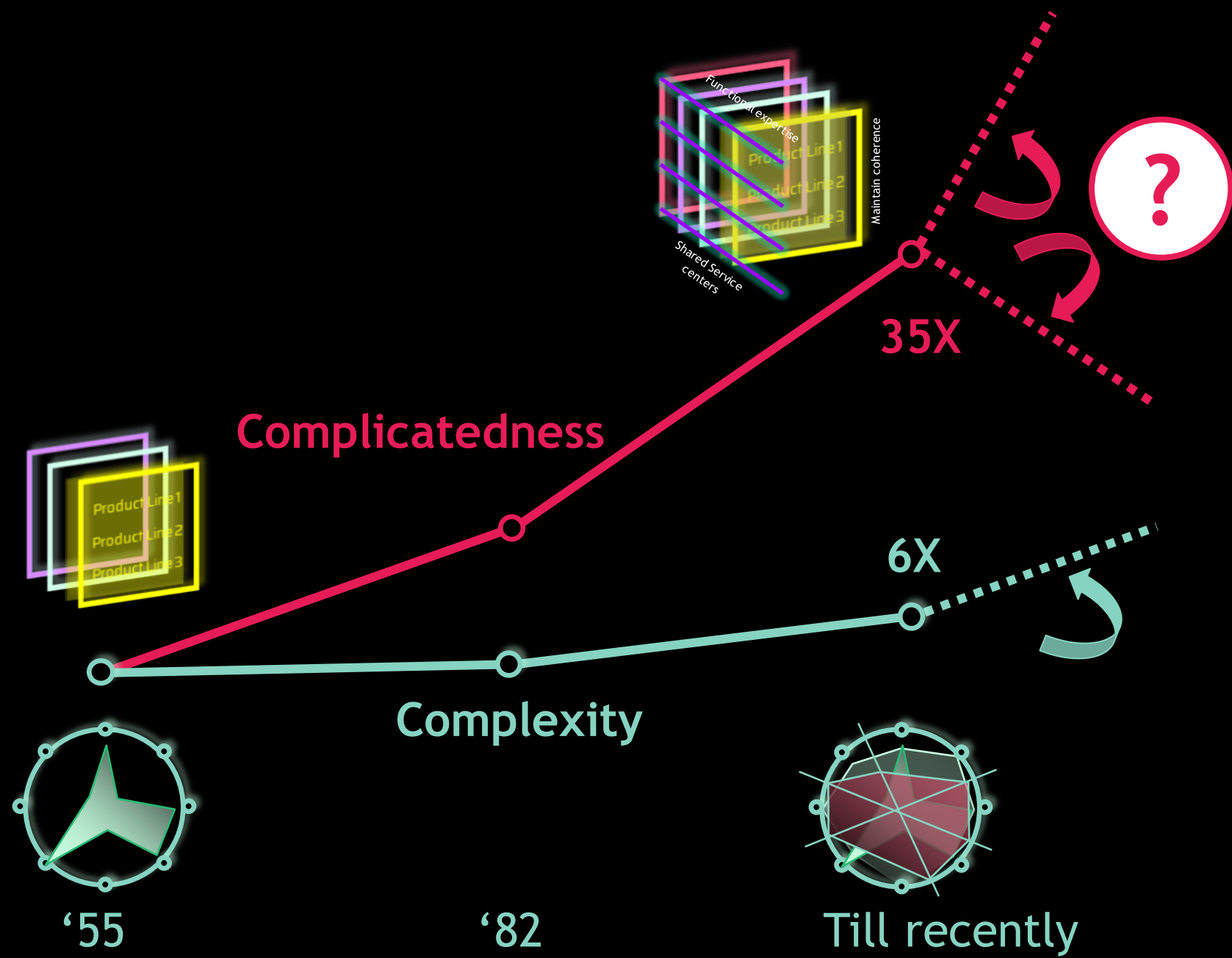
Source: Y. Morieux (2018), "Bringing Managers Back to Work," *The Boston Consulting Group Essays*, October. <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/bringing-managers-back-to-work.aspx>

A new wave of complexity now

Is the future of work another quadratic increase in complicatedness?

Or an opportunity to pivot?

Source: Yves Morieux and Peter Tollman (2020), "How the Lockdown Unlocked Real Work", *BCG Henderson Institute Perspectives*, October 2020  
<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/how-lockdown-unlocked-real-work>



# CEOs reflections on key lessons from the crisis



Great...

"This is an unprecedented time to lead *culture change*. Before we would have had to convince, and now *it's happening naturally*

We had the courage to do things we couldn't have done otherwise. We embraced *faster, leaner, thinking of tomorrow with more enthusiasm*. We've proved *people can do things they didn't believe they could*

We make *40-50 decisions a day* that normally take a quarter. Not all decisions 100% right, but overwhelming volume of changes and challenges are *motivating the org to change*"



...but...

"Some *deep psychological impact* of being isolated from others

*Remote working* is great for some areas of the business, but harder in others—the efficiency of our supply chain has never been better

In *areas of the business* that require *imagination and thought partnership*, it's been much *harder to adapt*"



...then

"When we get out of this crisis we *must not forget what we learned*

We've got to think innovatively so people continue to *work with great motivation*"




Many traps  
were  
removed  
during the  
crisis

Our ability to complicate has been  
outpaced by the **outburst of  
complexity**

Caught off guard, without dedicated  
'Covid process' or 'Chief Covid  
Officer', we have had to **rely on  
leadership and cooperation** instead  
of bureaucracy

All in all, we have experienced new  
ways to **better leverage intelligence**



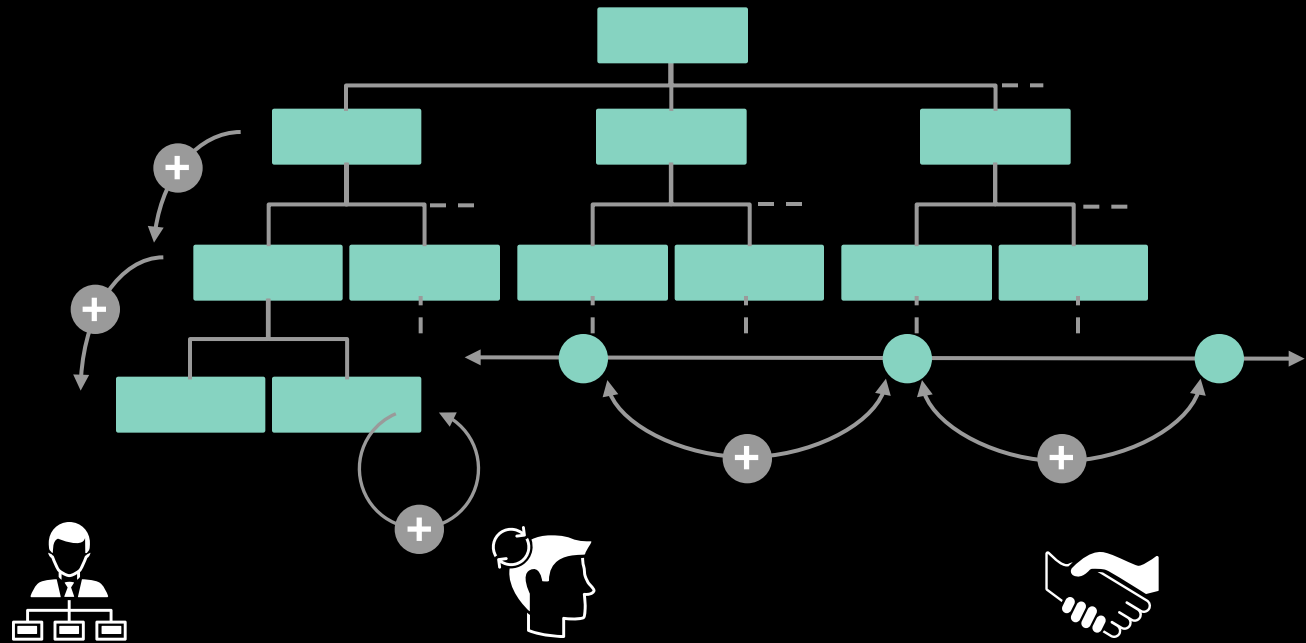
The lockdown  
has unlocked  
real work

We have experienced new ways to better leverage intelligence:

## Relational productivity

How to institutionalize these learnings whether work is remote, hybrid or whatever?

Source: Yves Morieux and Peter Tollman (2020), "How the Lockdown Unlocked Real Work", *BCG Henderson Institute Perspectives*, October 2020  
<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/how-lockdown-unlocked-real-work>



### Leadership

- Managerial value added vs. formal authority
- Focus, clarity vs. random repetition
- Knowledge of what people really do vs. supervision by contiguity

### Engagement

- Value-adding execution vs. formal compliance with rules
- Purpose vs. lavish artefacts
- Compulsive force of work vs. assiduity

### Cooperation

- Cross-functional value added vs. convivial/conflictual avoidance or bureaucracy
- Context for collective creativity vs. illusory co-location
- Focus on moments of truth vs. processes

Why should we work in the office in the future?

Facilitate onboarding of new members?

Control assiduity?

Foster creativity?

Close feedback loops?

...

