

# WHITE PAPER

Developing a digital  
solution.



**5 steps** to plan,  
analyse and  
develop a digital  
platform.

**4 ideas** to onboard  
and understand  
users.

**Tools & Talents**  
as an example  
of what we have  
learned.



PREPARATORY ACTION ON  
**Smart Rural Areas**  
**in the 21st Century**

Funded by:



European  
Commission

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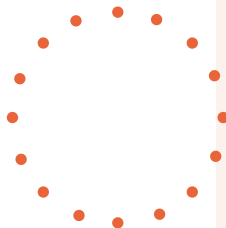
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# INTRO TO WHITE PAPER



## IT'S NOT A WALK IN THE PARK *TO BUILD A PLATFORM OR RUN A PROJECT*

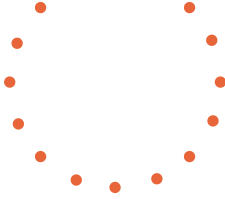
This White Paper is based on knowledge and experience found in the partnership project “Tools & Talents” (T&T), within the Project Smart Rural 21. Tools & Talents (T&T) has been developed as a project in a Danish village Torup. They wanted to develop a digital platform that should support and promote their sustainable way of sharing tools and resources.

TOOLS &  
TALENTS

### TORUP

The small village Torup is situated on a peninsula between the sea and a fjord, 60 km to the North West of Copenhagen. The village is famous for its very high level of activity, and inhabitants are active in organizing a wide range of initiatives and activities, including a parent-initiated school and kindergarten, a music festival, common meeting house, farmers' markets, repair cafés, common village dinners, a commuter-hub with common office space, jazz concerts, alternative transport, a community building, housing a café, bakery and organic shop.

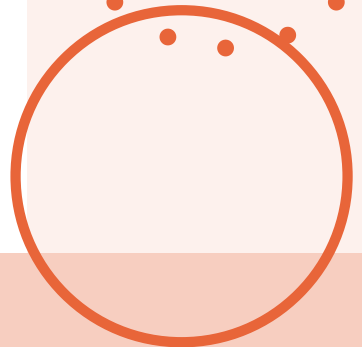
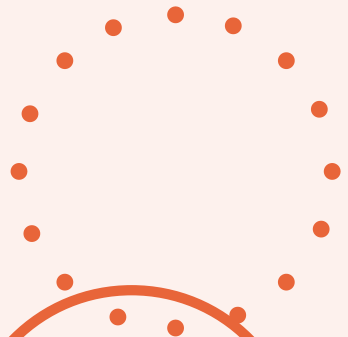




## *DYSSEKILDE & HVIDELAND*

30 years ago, a group of motivated people started to form a community in/near Torup, called Dyssekilde. The community was based on eco-village principles. Over the years, this part of the village has turned into a highly attractive enclave.

The good experiences from this coexistence of Dyssekilde, have paved the way for the desire to expand the village with another sustainable community. The recent plan for this expansion is called Hvideland, with its 5.6 ha of common land, and with the farm building partly used as a community house and a barn to contain shared things and tools. The Hvideland project is an ambitious initiative to add an additional 100 new eco-homes to the village and in addition a smart and sustainable heating system based on ground heating and many other sustainable and shared activities.



## WHAT IS THE TOOLS & TALENTS PLATFORM?

The Tools & Talents platform is a smartphone application enabling villagers to find, book and borrow shared resources, both physical tools and local citizens' competences.

The development of the app goes hand-in-hand with the development of a physical tool bank, where shared tools and equipment is stored in a physical location in the village, in the above-mentioned barn at the Hvideland expansion. The shared equipment includes small hand tools as well as bigger machinery needed, for example, for construction works. Materials such as tables, benches and tents can also be made available.

A professional caretaker or volunteers will manage the tool-bank and ensure that the tools are kept in good condition for ongoing use.

# TOOLS & TALENTS

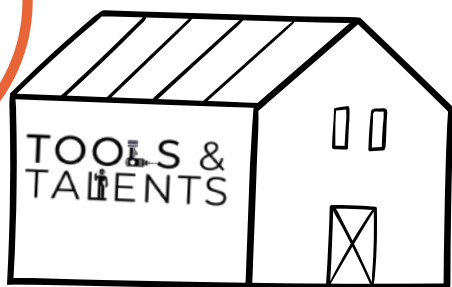


Development of the app also goes hand-in-hand with mapping local skills (talents) available amongst the villagers and presenting these also through the app. This way local people and especially newcomers can find and engage skilled technicians or craftspeople according to their needs.

All the available local resources – tools and talents – are uploaded onto the app so that users can find and borrow what they need. The users have to pay a membership of the Torup Ting Association to borrow the tools / make use of the app. When the user's book through the app, a caretaker will assist making the tools ready, as well as to give the user an instruction in the use of the tool. The caretaker receives the tool back and ensures it's in good condition after use.

In a collaboration between a group of volunteers, employees in Torup and the SR-21 Expert the platform Tools & Talents (T&T) has been developed. Throughout the project, there have been several valuable experiences that others can benefit from if they are to create a digital solution.

Therefore, with this White Paper, we will guide you through some concepts and tools that can be important and can assist you, regardless of whether it is a platform for the sharing economy, other digital platforms or other projects. First, we'll go through the theory and at the end of the paper we will share knowledge and experience we've achieved while building the platform Tools & Talents. The document does not provide information about managing and financing the platform, but it is important though, that this is considered.



# 5 STEPS TO PLAN, ANALYSE AND DEVELOP A DIGITAL PLATFORM.

We provide you here with 5 steps to get started with your project. You don't have to go through them chronologically, but there are some good and instructive elements within all of them.

1

*WHICH COMPETENCES DO  
YOU NEED?*

*PRE-MORTEM.  
LET'S FIND THE CAUSE  
OF DEATH!*

2

*WHO ARE YOUR USERS?*

3

*HOW TO PLAN YOUR  
PROJECT?*

4

*HOW TO FAIL FAST?*

5



# 1. THE TEAM

## WHICH COMPETENCES DO YOU NEED?

When working on a project, you need different competences, enabling you to complete the different tasks hence developing and completing the project. A way to ensure the availability of these competences is to think of them as belonging to different roles – and then see if you can have these roles covered by your team. Unclear expectations or lacking decision-making competences can be burdensome for a project. On the other hand, we easily get bored in very fixed roles. In team and project work, the challenge is therefore to create as clear roles as possible without locking the team down and depriving it of the opportunity to develop itself. Sometimes the collaboration is between voluntary and paid roles which can make the reconciliation of expectations even more important.

You can see some different roles, explained more on the following pages. Maybe you can recognize some of the roles from your current or previous teamwork. Take a closer look at the “Qualities” and see which roles you and your team-members have in the team.



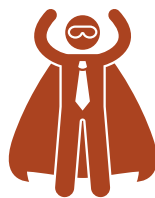
THE VISIONARY:



THE GROWTH  
HACKER:



THE OPERATIONAL  
LEADER



THE HAPPINESS  
HERO



THE PRODUCT  
WIZARD



THE SALES  
MASTER



## THE VISIONARY:

The Visionary is the person who sets the vision for the project. This person is the one who envisions what the project can do for the village. Has an inherent talent for helping team members realize the full potential of the product. Most importantly, this person serves as the project's guiding force.

## THE VISIONARY:



### QUALITIES OF THE VISIONARY:

- **Great Communicator:** *Able to translate complex thoughts into snack-sized information*
- **Charismatic Leader:** *Motivates and empowers employees and volunteers*
- **Imaginative:** *Always thinking about new projects or undertakings*
- **Risk-taker:** *Not afraid to try new things*



## THE PRODUCT WIZARD:

The Product Wizard is responsible for constructing and managing the product. This person is technically focused and understands the inner workings and unique nuances of product development and enhancement.

The Wizard leads the brainstorming around the product's functionality and features. Additionally, this person has a keen understanding of the villager's unique problems and commits to gathering routine feedback. If the product is lacking in a specific area or underserving the users, (s)he is well-equipped to find and put the best solution forward.

## THE PRODUCT WIZARD:



### QUALITIES OF THE PRODUCT WIZARD:

- **Impressive Technical Skills:** *Works and understand multiple coding languages.*
- **Willingness to Learn:** *Showcases an interest in continuing educational opportunities.*
- **Problem Solver:** *Finds solutions to any issues or bugs – also unexpected ones.*
- **Passionate:** *Finds enjoyment in work.*

## THE GROWTH HACKER:

The Growth Hacker is responsible for promoting the product. This person understands best practices of marketing. The Growth Hacker should be data-driven and analytically focused. This person aspires to know exactly how the users (the villagers) think, what they want, and how the team should communicate with them.



## THE GROWTH HACKER:



### QUALITIES OF THE GROWTH HACKER:

- **Competitive:** *Strives for greatness.*
- **Resilient:** *Not afraid to fail.*
- **Good Communicator:** *Able to communicate clearly and showcase the full value of the project.*
- **Charming:** *Creates good first impressions and helps users feel valued insights.*



### *THE OPERATIONAL LEADER:*

The Operational Leader is responsible for running the project like a business. This person translates the vision and makes it a reality.

The Operational Leader is responsible for establishing targets, developing the strategy, outlining roles and responsibilities, managing budget and forecasts, creating internal processes, monitoring timelines, and more.

### *THE OPERATIONAL LEADER:*



#### *QUALITIES OF THE OPERATIONAL LEADER:*

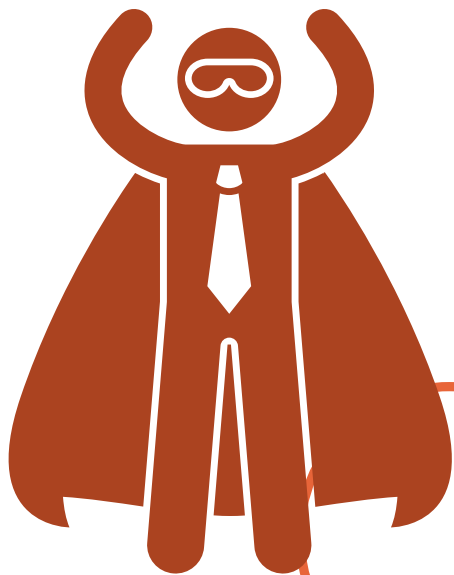
- **Organized:** Able to juggle multiple projects, manage deadlines, etc.
- **Process-driven:** Run a well-documented execution process.
- **Focused on Efficiency:** Has a "get things done" attitude.
- **Quality-driven:** Committed to delivering the best product or service.

## THE HAPPINESS HERO:

The Happiness Hero is responsible for addressing users' questions and concerns. When you're in the building-and-test phase, and the product isn't functioning properly, this person should be able to understand and sympathize with users and work to ease their frustrations.



## THE HAPPINESS HERO:



### QUALITIES OF THE HAPPINESS HERO

- **Patience:** *This person should be able to "hear" users' frustrations and reply calmly and thoughtfully.*
- **Clear Communication Skills:** *This person gets to the problem at hand quickly and efficiently.*
- **Understanding of the Product:** *This person knows the product inside out.*
- **Calming Presence:** *This person uses positive language and exercises compassion when speaking with customers.*

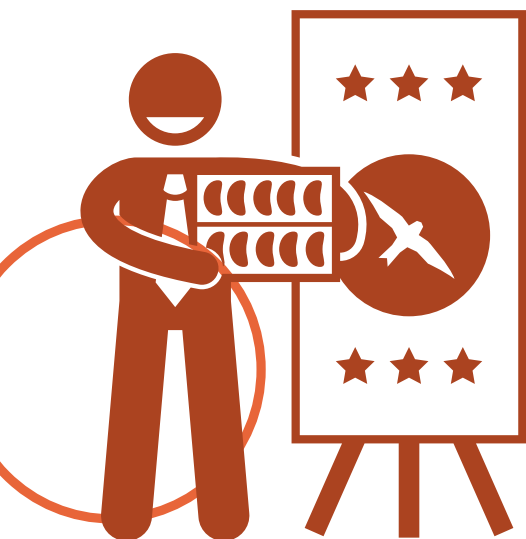
## THE SALES MASTER:

Maybe it sounds strange to have a sales master in a non-profit project, but most projects have users/members to whom the product or the idea must be sold, convincing them to make use of the product.

The Sales Master is responsible for managing leads and creating conversions. The salesperson should have a masterful command of the sales process and good understanding of the latest conversion tactics.

Should the situation arise, this person is comfortable initiating direct contact with calls and emails. When speaking with leads, the salesperson knows all about the project and can deliver its unique value proposition to customers in a compelling way.

## THE SALES MASTER:



### QUALITIES OF THE SALES MASTER:

- **Competitive:** *Strives for greatness.*
- **Resilient:** *Not afraid to fail.*
- **Good Communicator:** *Able to speak clearly and showcase the full value of the project.*
- **Charming:** *Creates good first impressions and helps customers fully understand the product.*

# 2. PRE-MORTEM

## LET'S FIND THE CAUSE OF DEATH

A project is often initiated based on an idea or a need to create a product. We're often focused on what is needed to complete the project, but often we ignore what can go wrong. But when you start at project, it could be a very valuable lesson – to actually begin by declaring the project a failure! With a Pre-Mortem, team members assume that the project they are planning has just failed, what many projects do.

By going forward in time and looking back, you can find the cause of the project's death before it occurs. It is a cheap and quick way to prevent many problems. A few hints:

### PREPARATION

It's ideal to run the pre-mortem analysis immediately after the project plan is done, and milestone identified by the team. At this point the team knows enough about the project for the pre-mortem to work effectively but is not yet too invested in the existing plan.

More practical for the exercise: Ensure you have a wall/board, Post-its and pens.

### SET THE SCENE

Have some fun with the storytelling. You need to bring as much drama as you can into this step. You have to set the scene – tell a story about traveling in a time machine, or something like that. When you come back, the project is dead – why?

### NOTE DOWN

Now we need Post-its and pens. All now must individually note down their reasons for the failure to occur and place it on the wall.

They only have 2 minutes to do this practice

### ORGANIZE AND CATEGORIZE

Everyone must get up and engage in this and together they must organize and categorize the post-its, and together give the categories some headlines. This task is great to emerge a consensus as the ideas of the Pre-mortem are shared.

Start to prioritize – and revisit the project plan.

Prioritize the areas of concern and see if you already now can see something that you'll need to change in the project plan.





# 3. PERSONA



## WHO ARE THE USERS?

Have you thought about who will use the platform you want to build? Is it only you and “the 3 F’s” Friends, Fools and Family that are the users? If that’s the case – then for sure, you should have second thoughts about building the platform.

If you see more potential users, it’s a good idea to make some more “personas” and ask them how the platform can solve their problems.

### *WHAT IS A PERSONA?*

Personas are often used in companies' sales departments but are also very relevant when you need to understand the users of the product you want to make. A persona is a detailed and semi-fictional description of your ideal user of the platform. When complete it will be a description, based on data, research, and interviews with representatives from your actual target group.

Since the purpose of preparing a persona is to understand the actual target group, which in this case are the inhabitants of the village, it is normal to both name the hypothetical person and find a picture, that can visually help to 'put a face' on them. In addition to getting a visual picture of your personas, you'll also profit of getting common terms.

Eg. in our team we have a persona called “Hans Jørgen”. When someone mentions Hans Jørgen, everyone knows who it is and how he will deal with the product being developed.



## CREATE YOUR PERSONAS:

There are many ways to build your personas, you can use a lot of different types of data and do different interviews, survey etc.

With this approach we suggest your team start by describing the following:

### ☐ **Describe the demographic groups**

*What do they do for a living? Job/ work experiences.*

### ☐ **Describe a normal day**

*This can give you an insight into what challenges they might have.*

### ☐ **What are their priorities and goals?**

*These points define the requirements, goals and search methods.*

### ☐ **Where do they search for information?**

*This can give you an insight as to where and how your users are communicating.*

### ☐ **What experience do they want?**

*When they use your product, what experience do they want?*

## CREATE YOUR PERSONAS:

With all that information, you can now start constructing a persona. The work can be made easier by describing some main points and then rewrite it into a coherent text.

A sentence for the point "Demographics and jobs" could be:

*"Søren is 35 years old and works as a marketing manager for a large clothing retailer. He earns more than € 100,000 a year".*

This tells us that he is in an above-average income group, and that he would very likely be more receptive to advertising for luxury products rather than discount ones.



# SØREN

- **35 years**
- **Marketing Manager**

When you have created sentences, like the one above, for all the main points, you will have a clear picture of who your persona is, as well as which challenges you need to focus on solving. In some cases, it can be smart to prepare more personas, eg. a male and a female – different age- and income-groups, especially if you see significant differences between their respective problems and your potential solutions to them.

## DESIGN YOUR PERSONAS:

It is important to put a face to your personas. You can design them from different platforms, where you can use the images for free.

When you have found pictures of your personas, it is important to make them visible, e.g. posting them on a board/wall, or through a common communication / project management tool. It can be a good idea to put them where you see them often.



### FIND BELOW DIFFERENT PLATFORMS WHERE YOU CAN FIND PERSONAS:

- Unsplash.com  
(<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/user-persona>)
- Freepik.com  
(<https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/persona>)
- Thispersondoesnotexist.com  
(<https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>)

# 4. HOW TO PLAN YOUR PROJECT

## SET GOALS, IDENTIFY TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Before you start your project ensure that your team agrees on the end goal. When you have this goal, you can define the plan to get there, and it is important the plan includes concrete measurable deliverables. Deliverables can be products or a marketing strategy and in addition you define a number of milestones, which will provide your sign-posts i.e. your proof of development, indicating progression. Remember to make use of roles, pre-mortem, personas, fail fast etc. whenever you have a chance – make it an interactive process.



### IDENTIFY MILESTONES:

When your team has defined the deliverables, with clear descriptions, enabling you to check if you have reached them and continuously evaluate your progress. There will most probably be several levels of planning, and throughout the process it will be necessary to have an overview over the milestones.

The plan with the deliverables and milestones is not meant to be a document left at a shelf in the office, it's supposed to be a work tool for your team. Combined with the roles you have defined in your team, you'll be able to identify the milestones you must achieve at a specific date, and who is responsible.

You can use this example, which is made in a simple spreadsheet. (Write your goal at the top, in the green box. You and your team can identify and describe your milestones and put a date on them.)



PRESS TO OPEN



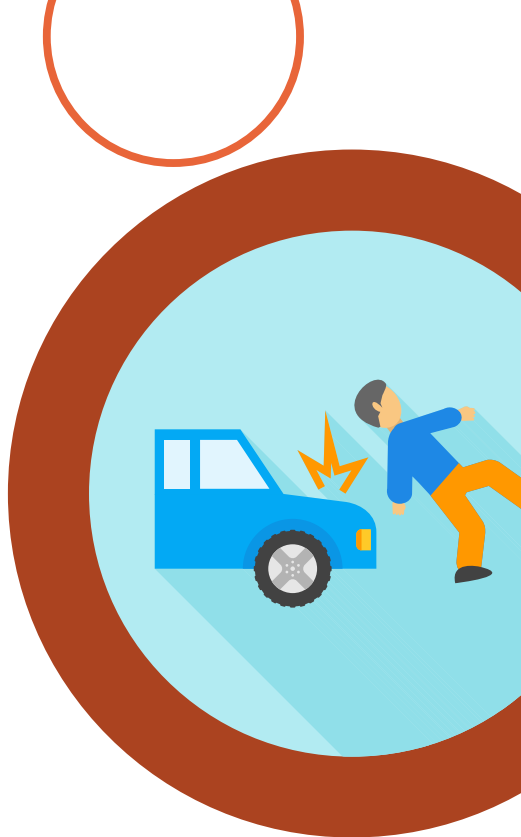
# Prevent your DEVELOPER to be run over by a bus.

When you communicate with an IT-developer, it is an advantage this is done by your Product Wizard. It's often said that an IT-developer does exactly what you ask him/her to do. So, if you ask him/her to go and get a cup of coffee on the other side of the street, they will be run over by a bus.

The task is to get the coffee, but you need to explain the whole process: *Please take care when you cross the street!* It's the same thinking and understanding you need, when you are planning.

So, when we talk about creating a digital platform, it is important to be very precise in describing how the platform should work.

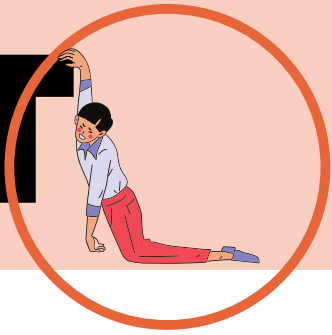
All the information from your work with Persona and Pre-Mortem become handy for your planning.



## WHICH PLATFORMS CAN BE USED FOR PLANNING? IT'S ALL PLATFORMS THAT'S OFTEN USED IN PLANNING OF DIFFERENT PROJECTS

- **Microsoft Excel:** Excel has many options for making a structure of the process.
- **Microsoft Teams:** Teams is of course known for online calls or chats. But Teams, also have some nice add-ons for planning and storing data.
- **Trello:** is the visual tool that empowers your team to manage any type of project, workflow, or task tracking. Add files, checklists, or even automation.
- **Monday:** monday.com is a bit like Trello, but more a CRM system (Customer relationship management) it allows you to improve the way you capture leads, track sales pipelines, and manage contacts.
- **Slack:** Slack is good for communication – you can message anyone inside or outside your team and collaborate just as you would IRL. People can work in dedicated spaces called channels, which bring people and information together.

# 5. FAIL FAST



## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO FAIL - AND WHY DOING IT FAST?

The Danish social scientist Bent Flyvbjerg has done research in project planning and management for many years and collected data from more than 100 countries, and the outcome is consistent: Mega projects fail again and again.

He has, among other things, defined 'The Iron Law of Megaprojects', "Over time, over budget, under benefits, over and over again.

*'If a project can be delivered fast, in a modular manner, enabling experimentation and learning along the way, it is likely to succeed.'* says Bent Flyvbjerg

That's why start-up's often use the term "fail fast".

### USE THE MVP TO FAIL FAST.

MVP means Minimum Viable Product and is a product or website developed with only just enough features to satisfy early users, enabling them to test some basic functions.

- Release a product to the market as quickly as possible.
- Test an idea with real users before committing a large budget to the product's full development.
- Learn about the target market.
- This will minimize the time and resources you might otherwise commit to building a product that won't necessarily succeed.



# 4 IDEAS TO UNDERSTAND AND ONBOARD USERS.

It is just as important to have a structured plan for onboarding users and launching as it is to build the platform. And equally important: You don't have to wait until the platform is complete. In fact, you should get started before or at the same time as you start developing the platform. We will guide you through:

“  
1. Launching - different types of launching.  
”

“  
2. Viral Loop - what's that?  
”

“  
3. “Think out loud”, a way to test your platform.  
”

“  
4. Feedback from interviews, what to have in mind when you ask.  
”



# 1. LAUNCH - AGAIN AND AGAIN



## 1. DO NOT WAIT FOR PERFECT. LAUNCH - AGAIN AND AGAIN

Launching is something you should do again and again. And there are several techniques to try out. Here are 3 ways to launch:

### *SILENT LAUNCH:*



You don't need to have developed anything, you just need a domain name and a landing page. A landing page is a simple web page that a person "lands" on after clicking through from an email, ad, or other digital location. A few lines of pitch, and a form for interested users to sign up for a newsletter, to ensure they will be kept informed when there is news about the product.

### *FRIENDS AND FAMILY LAUNCH:*



When you have your early MVP ready, letting your friends and family test the product is a good and safe place to start. You should not use them in this phase for too long, they might not be the right user group and therefore it might not be valid data.

### *LAUNCH TO AN ONLINE COMMUNITY:*



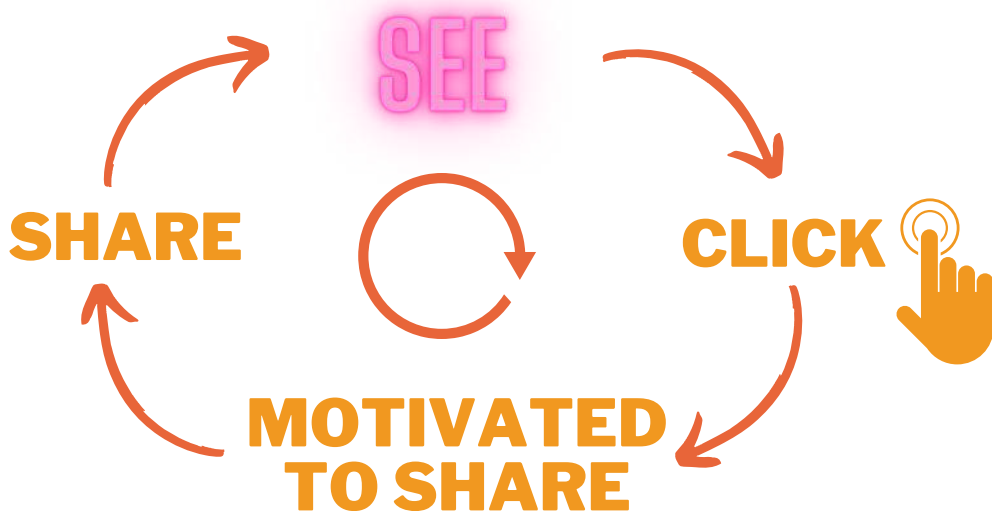
Use some of your small social communities, like Facebook groups, LinkedIn groups, etc. to launch. If you are new to a group, it is a good idea to look for the rules in the group or ask the moderators if it will be OK to share your platform to have feedback.

## 2. VIRAL LOOP

### VIRAL LOOP - HOW CAN A PLATFORM FOR BLIND PEOPLE HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO ONBOARD USERS?

“Be my eyes” is an app to connect people needing sighted support with volunteers and companies through live video via their mobile phones around the world. The app has spread to nearly 6 million Volunteers in +150 countries. But how? The idea has high social likeability, but besides that, their team has used “the viral loop mechanism” in the app:

Every time a volunteer has helped a blind person the app asks if they would like to share on social media. Who would not like to share that they have helped a blind person? The volunteers' friends see it and download the app, because they also would like to help a blind person. And that's how you create a viral loop, which could be a good idea to use, when you want to onboard users.

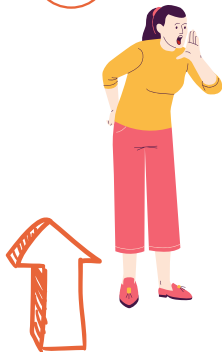


# 3. "THINK OUT LOUD"

## A FAST AND EASY WAY TO ANALYSE THE USER EXPERIENCE

A fast and easy way to analyse the user experience of a digital platform is to use video-recordings of different users. They test the platform as they would in real life, but they think out loud, hence you'll see where they do not find it easy – hesitate or go wrong.

### 1 Find a user



### 2 Ask the user to "Think out loud"

While the user is using the platform. Ask her/him to be as detailed as possible. You record the session with your mobile or camera.

..and now I'm trying to find home button.."



### 4 Change the "bugs"

Improve and let a user try the session again.



### 3 List the "bugs"

While watching the recordings of the session, make a list of the things that the user has difficulty understanding. Inform the designer and developer about the findings.



# 4. FEEDBACK FROM INTERVIEWS

## THE GOAL IS TO EXTRACT DATA SO YOU UNDERSTAND THE USERS.

The goal is to extract data, and understand the users, enabling you to improve the product. Here's some ideas to make a good interview, and what you should think about:

### HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS?

To get the answers you need, friends and family might not be the best group to ask for feedback, simply because they might be too kind – try to ensure you'll have non-biased answers.

Find here 3 hints to avoid the errors we often do in interviews :

1. Do not talk about your idea - Talk about the user's life! It's important to understand that an interview is not about pitching your idea. It is about, extracting data to understand your user.
2. Do not talk hypothetical - Be specific! We are talking hypothetically. Eg. if we built this feature, would you be interested in using it? Talk instead about the problem, and the interviewees experience in finding solutions.
3. Do not talk – Listen! Take notes, maybe record the interview (remember to ask permission) and extract all the data available.

*YOU COULD ASK THESE 5 QUESTIONS IN A USER INTERVIEW. (WE'LL EXPLAIN ON NEXT PAGE WHY)*

1

What was the hardest about doing this?

2

When was the last time you encountered this problem?

3

Why was this hard?

4

What, if anything, have you done to try to solve this problem?

5

What don't you like about the solutions you already tried?



## YOU COULD ASK THESE 5 QUESTIONS IN A USER INTERVIEW:

### What was the hardest about doing this?

- If we take T&T as an example – You could ask: *What is the most difficult about sharing things with each other?* When you ask this, you open up a discussion about how to share tool and talents with each other. You will hopefully get a lot of answers like: *It's hard to communicate about the sharing! What if they destroy my tool? etc.*
- You need to find out if your product solves a real problem for the user or if it is just something you imagine.

### When was the last time you encountered this problem?

- The goal is to extract the context around the circumstances of how the user encountered the problem. Here it's important that you ask about the situation. Eg. last time the user had to borrow a tool or helped a neighbour. Ask about the context, so that when you develop the platform, you know exactly what the challenge is.

### Why was this hard?

- Ask the user to describe exactly what was difficult. The reason you are asking this is that you will get different answers from different users. It's not just to find out what is difficult, but it can also help to understand the users, so when you have to explain the platform to new users, it's easier to explain which problem your platform solves and how.

### What, if anything, have you done to try to solve this problem?

- If your user has not tried to solve the problem in different ways, then it's not certain that the problem you want to solve is big enough for them to be interested in your "better solution". So, ask them how they have tried to solve the problem, have they tested different platforms, etc.

### What didn't you like about the solutions you already tried?

- This is where you are tactical, because this is where you begin to understand which features are needed in your platform. You are not asking which functions your user is needing (it is a hypothetical question) but what they didn't like in the other try-outs.

# THE TOOLS & TALENTS PLATFORM, AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED.

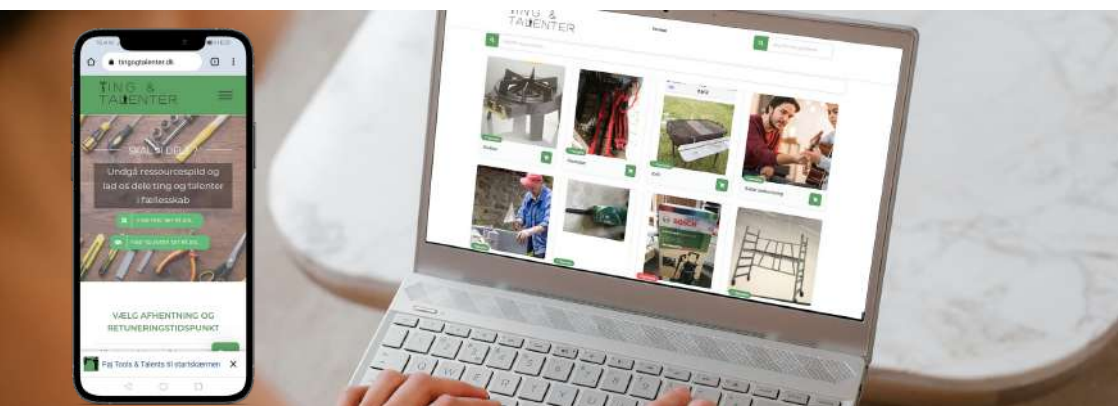
To provide examples of the different phases, we will go through the development of the platform Tools & Talents, which has been built together with local volunteers in the Danish village Torup.

We will short describe the background for the platform, go through the development and highlight what could be done differently, if we were to start again.

## *WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN RESULTS SO FAR – AND WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?*

A platform has been developed which is being rolled out to users in Torup.

Torup inhabitants can search for many different tools from saws to trailers. It is also possible to find local talents that you can contact - book and get help from, for example for cleaning windows or help with applying for funding. It has taken some time to get talents onboarded onto the platform.



# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

*WE DESCRIBE  
IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES:*

How could we have used the Pre-mortem approach?

What did we learn about building a Team?

What did we learn about Timelines and Milestones?

What did we learn about understanding the users?

What did we learn about onboarding?

Did we Fail fast?

**PROJECT  
MANAGING**

What did we learn about sharing economy as a catalyst for cohesion in the village?

**SHARING  
ECONOMY**

What did we learn about Tax and VAT?

What did we learn about Insurance?

What did we learn about GDPR?

What did we learn about Using Google Analytics as a tool for understanding the users?

**GDPR, TAX AND  
LEGISLATION**



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT BUILDING A TEAM?

We did not use time in the beginning to discuss the different necessary competences – hence roles. It was a very small team, and was not found relevant, but had we gone through this exercise, we would have better known who were responsible for the different milestones.

We would also know that we were missing some core roles (competences) in the team to ensure the output. For example, we needed a “Sales Master”. We had a lot of focus on perfecting the platform but neglected the sale part. It is also here The Growth Hacker could be relevant, as it might have been faster to get Talents on board.

**Learning:** Remember the whole process and remember that all roles are important. It can be difficult to understand why a “Sales master” is important in the beginning, but the sale starts from “day one”, long before the project has finished.



## HOW COULD WE HAVE USED THE PRE-MORTEM APPROACH?

The Torup project arose from an idea to connect the sharing economy in Torup with a digital platform. There has been a lot of focus on the platform itself and how to pay, and not that much on the process, the providers nor the users of the platform.

If we have had a Pre-mortem session, we maybe would have found that the team was not aligned with the roles or the outcome needed to develop and run the project.

We would also understand that the team was too small, and the team members were participating on a voluntary basis, and they sometimes had difficulty participating.

**Learning:** We often have a too optimistic approach to reach milestones and timelines in a project, like the Tool & Talents project. A good lesson is to look at the project with pessimistic eyes and analyse what can go wrong – and from there take a new start. It will make you better able to handle unforeseen actions.



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE USERS?

In the Tools & Talents project, we had a clear idea who the users were. At least we thought we had. But we did not create personas, so the users were just “users”. If we’d done the persona task, we might have seen it differently: *“What about the older person, who might not be used to Apps?”* Or *“Is there another way that persona-types would like to share?”*.

**Learning:** Don’t be afraid of discussing personas, use the time to do it. When you’ve found your personas, then go out and find the real users and get them involved. Do this prior to spending money on development, because that money can be wasted if you don’t understand your potential users.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT ONBOARDING?

It was difficult to implement the onboarding strategy. Maybe due to the strategy should have been more clear and detailed from the beginning. The role as “Growth Hacker” should have been appointed. The difficulties with onboarding Talents to the platform, might be due to lack of involvement in / knowledge of the T&T project, or maybe it just takes time. Anyways: we should have started much earlier.

**Learning:** Make sure you appoint your Growth Hacker and ensure (s)he is aware of the task. Get her/him to work from day one, and not wait until the platform is completed.



## DID WE FAIL FAST?

It was a lengthy process to develop the platform, and unfortunately there were a lack of test, fail and rebuild processes. The focal point was to build the platform as perfect as possible prior to launching, instead of using the Fail Fast approach with MVP.

A lot of time was used on discussions about membership and payment and finding different possible options which took away focus from the importance of the functions of the platform itself and we did not use the Fail Fast approach.

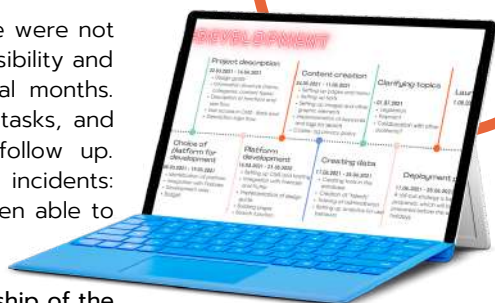
**Learning:** Don’t be afraid to fail – be afraid not to fail!

It was actually first when the platform was almost completed that the involvement with the inhabitants of the village started. This combined with the general lack of local involvement in the T&T project meant, that hardly anybody knew about the project when it was eventually launched. Had the test, fail and rebuild process been used, it could also have ensured that the involvement had been initiated earlier, most probably leading to a faster onboarding and a stronger sense of ownership of the platform in the village.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT TIMELINES AND MILESTONES?

We did a very visual plan and timeline. There were not many words but focus on milestones, responsibility and deadlines. The timeline was covering several months. The members of the team were appointed tasks, and we continuously had virtual meetings to follow up. Often there had been various unexpected incidents: **Black Swan Event**, and members had not been able to attend to their tasks.

Learning: Ensure team members have ownership of the timeline, that they see their role and tasks and understand the importance of their contribution to the flow of the development of the project. It is a good idea to make a visualisation plan, preferably with colours. It is a good idea to divide the timeline into as short bites as possible. The longer the plan runs, the more likely it is that Black Swan Events will occur.



## BLACK SWAN EVENTS

Earlier in Europe it was believed that all swans were white because nobody had ever seen other than white swans. Therefore, based on the empirical evidence, all swans were white and black swans couldn't possibly exist. This perception was shattered in 1697 when the expedition of Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh to the west coast of Australia sighted many black swans on what they called the Swarte Swaane Drift or Black Swan River. Reports of the existence of black swans made it back to the Netherlands and England, but it took another century for its mythical status to disappear completely (Haworth, 2021). The metaphor is built upon the idea that white swans are more commonly found in nature, but unexpectedly there's a black swan.

Failed projects are often blamed on Black Swan events, although it is more likely that risk management was not practiced properly or that rare but predictable risks were missed during the risk identification step. Unfortunately failed projects inevitably result in the usual mutual accusations or hunt for a scapegoat. These kind of activities will most probably drain positive energy from the village, hence one more reason to be careful with the steps mentioned.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT SHARING ECONOMY AS A CATALYST FOR COHESION IN THE VILLAGE?

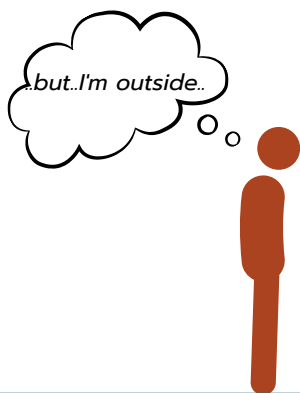
In Torup they generally have a sustainable approach, they share private and association owned bikes, cars and tools and have the option to share talents, and there are also many things they own together - "in common". In addition to this we've already described how they have a high level of local activity and participation, and it is all done in a trusting and respectful manner. And such an environment provides fertile ground for sustainable development.

In 2009, Elinor Ostrom (American political economist) received the Nobel Prize for her analyses of how local cooperation can solve common challenges in connection with the management of common resources.

Elinor Ostrom researched how societies around the world manage their common resources. She often used the term "common" (Danish: fælled) The common was a piece of grassland that was owned jointly by the village. She described how the system worked if it was not overgrazed. As soon as a farmer became selfish and put an extra cow on the grass, with the argument "one extra cow doesn't make a difference", the outcome was what Ostrom called: "the tragedy of the commons". It refers to the situation in which individuals with access to the common act in their own interest and thus ultimately destroy the resource.

What is relevant about Ostrom's research is that she identifies many different cases where the locals succeeded in managing their "community". But only if all the inhabitants work for the community and no one acts selfish.

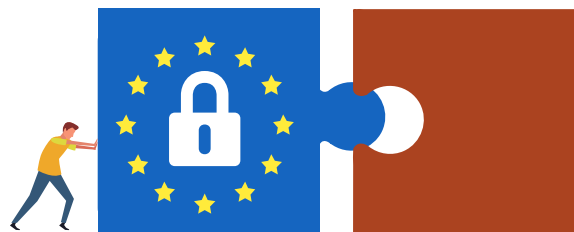
**Learning:** If you with a platform like the T&T think the sharing economy should play a role in development of your village being more sustainable then you must think Ostrom's research into the implementation: It requires a high level of trust, cooperation, respect and involvement among the inhabitants of a village to succeed in implementing a Tools & Talents platform.



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT GDPR?

The GDPR (Data Protection Regulation) applies to the processing of information about individuals by public authorities, private companies, associations, etc.

GDPR defines the rights we as citizens have in relation to protection of our personal data. It's important that GDPR is adhered to, as it can have a major impact on the user's personal data. That is why it's important to know the rules and legislation. It's a huge issue, and it can be very confusing to understand hence difficult to ensure full compliance. Seek help if you are in doubt. We have received and used good instructions from the Danish state authority for data security. (Datatilsynet)



### What we have focused on in T&T:

The GDPR applies when the T&T platform processes information about "natural persons".

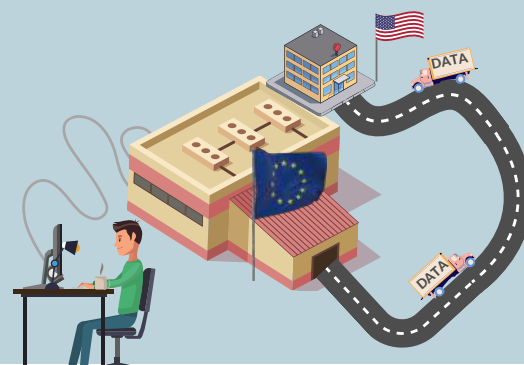
In T&T, data is processed when a user registers and is stored as a user, but also when a Talent is registered on the platform. Therefore it has been very important that the users and talents express consent while signing in.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT USING GOOGLE ANALYTICS AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE USERS?

The T&T team discussed using the Google Analytics tool to spot patterns, hence better understand the users, but we decided not to make use of it for the following reason:

During 2022, decisions have been made in several cases about Google Analytics in Austria, France and Italy. The cases were prompted by complaints lodged by the organization None of Your Business "NOYB" to a number of European data protection authorities. The complaints related to the use of the tool Google Analytics, which in NOYB's opinion involves the transfer of personal data about website visitors to Google in the USA in violation of data protection regulations.

In the cases, Google indicated that the company had taken additional contractual, organizational and technical measures. However, the authorities considered that these measures could not ensure an effective level of protection for the transferred information, as the measures were not suitable to counter access to the personal data by US law enforcement authorities. The transfer of personal data to the USA via Google Analytics is therefore considered illegal.



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT TAX AND VAT?

During development there has been a lot of discussions about how to make a transaction-based income model to ensure finances for the day-to-day operations. The phenomenon is well-known and used on a grand scale by many companies, including e.g., GoMore, which charges 10% of the income from a motorist's online bookings: a so-called service fee. However, this would include different legal aspects with respect to Tax and VAT and maybe more important: the Torup attitude was that they preferred to borrow – not to rent. For the talent part Tax and VAT will still have to be dealt with. Talents can be a part of a local Temp agency, which they have already initiated in Torup with the purpose of managing the Tax- and VAT-payment. Some of the talents have their own company.

In Torup they're avoiding these problems, with a membership approach, when it comes to borrowing tools: You pay an annual fee to be member of the village association Torup Ting, and then you can borrow tools.



## WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT INSURANCE?

The T&T platform involves sharing physical object by facilitating the communication for a person who wants to book and borrow. The insurance-related aspect was a central topic since it's critical for all involved parties. No one should be left with a problem, having to pay compensation for the other party's loss due to accidents and so on. In this context, it's very important to establish clear terms that account for the various risks, and as far as possible avoid any uncertain situations and unpleasant episodes.

In the T&T platform a simple statement informs, what the borrower is responsible for when borrowing tools. There have been thoughts of expanding the platform functions so people can borrow directly from each other. In this case, an insurance company as an addon could be a good idea. That's often seen in other sharing platforms.

When someone books a talent, it will be an individual agreement whether insurance is needed.



DAD ! Have you seen the plates I borrowed in the common house?

## ABOUT THIS WHITE PAPER

This White Paper is prepared as an additional outcome of the Smart Rural 21 (SR-21) project running from December 2019 to November 2022. The objective of the project was to enable and inspire villages to develop and implement smart solutions, and a wide range of smart solutions were initiated among the 21 participating villages from across Europe. In the Danish Village Torup the inhabitants wanted to develop a digital platform to support and promote their sustainable way of sharing tools and resources. The result was the Tools & Talents platform, and this White Paper is a short description of the knowledge and experience found during this development. The development was done in a cooperation between Torup inhabitants and SR-21 experts. The learning can be an inspiration in relation to development of similar og other digital solutions and maybe even to projects in general.

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## LINKS

- <https://tingogtalenter.dk/>
- <https://www.torupting.dk/>
- <https://www.dyssekilde.dk/>
- <https://hvideland.com/>
- [https://instagram.com/hvideland\\_torup](https://instagram.com/hvideland_torup)
- <https://www.smartrural21.eu/>



PREPARATORY ACTION ON  
**Smart Rural Areas  
in the 21st Century**



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