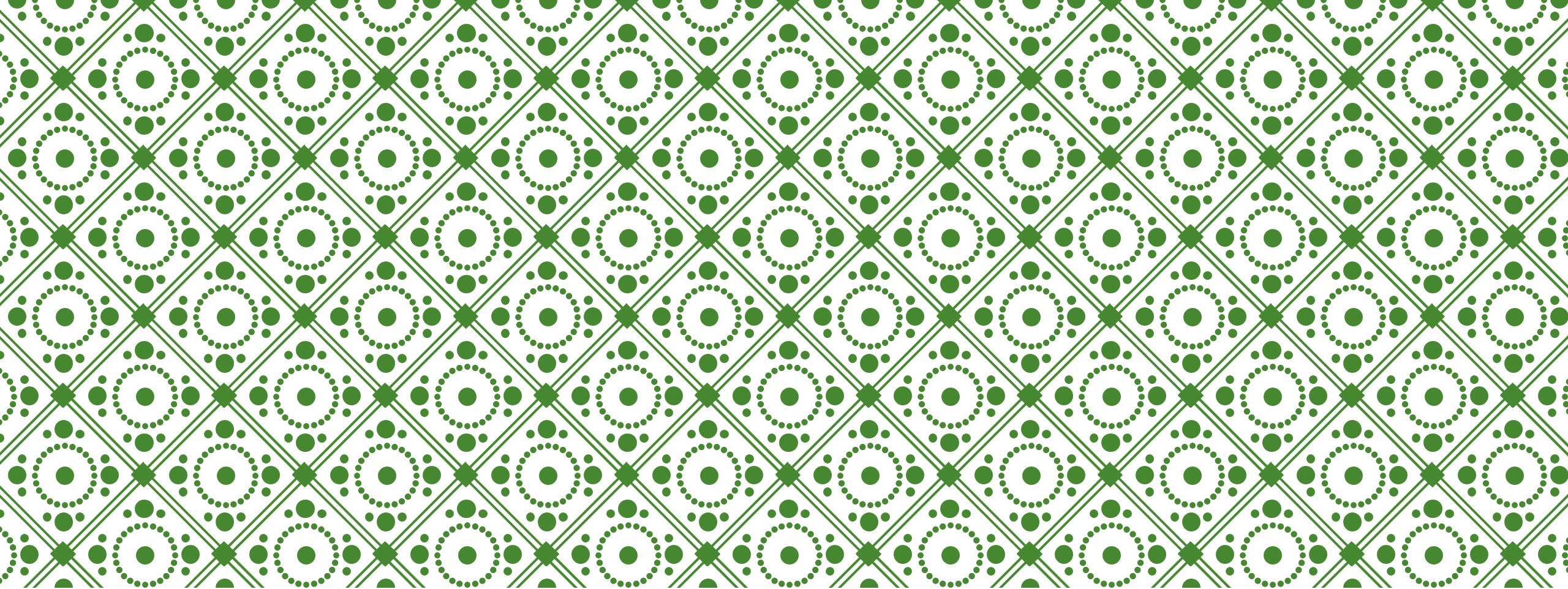# WHAT IS CONTENT OPERATIONS?

Introduction to the principles of ContentOps

Content, Seriously

OVERVIEW

We're going to cover:

- What makes an operational model, in general and for content.

- How content strategy feeds into content operations.

- Why some operational models need modernising.

- Examples of how companies have operationalised content.

- Starting points for your own journey into ContentOps.

OPERATIONAL MODELS

To understand ContentOps, we first need to understand operational models

WHAT ARE OPERATIONAL MODELS

OPERATIONAL MODELS

OPERATIONAL MODELS FOR CONTENT

A DEFINITION FOR CONTENT OPERATIONS

DEFINITION OF AN OPERATIONAL MODEL

Operating model is both an abstract or visual representation (model) of how an organisation delivers value to its customers or beneficiaries as well as *how an organisation actually runs itself*.

Wikipedia

Determining *behaviour, workflow and process design*, IT decisions, and investment decisions, aligned to the business objectives.

Strategy& (PWC)

The configuration of the organisation *to deliver its strategy*.

Deloitte

OPERATIONAL MODEL EXAMPLE: DEV OPS

DevOps is a software engineering methodology that unifies software development (Dev) with information technology operations (Ops) with the goal of shortening systems development lifecycles while delivering features, fixes, and updates frequently in close alignment with business objectives. The main characteristic of the DevOps movement is to strongly advocate automation and monitoring at all steps of software construction, from integration, testing, and releasing to deployment and infrastructure management. - Wikipedia

OPERATIONAL MODEL EXAMPLE: DESIGN OPS

DesignOps is everything that supports high quality crafts, methods, and processes. Operations are the elements that facilitate high-quality instances of those activities with minimal friction. Operations includes the tools and infrastructure required to complete the activity. - DesignOps Handbook, Design Better

OPERATIONAL MODEL EXAMPLE: RESEARCH OPS

ResearchOps is a discipline with the primary goals are to:

- Operationalise customer research function to reduce inefficiencies and scale across projects via repeatable process with reliable timelines, ready-to-apply methods and templates.

- Make research more relatable and encourage cross-functional team participation in understanding customers. – UX Design

DEFINITION OF CONTENT OPERATIONS

McKinsey has an excellent definition of a content model, despite their narrow application of the definition to digital marketing.

Content

Digital marketing operations involves the application of capabilities, processes, structures, and technologies to cost-effectively exploit and scale the interactivity, targeting, personalization, and optimization of digital channels. - McKinsey

COMMONALITIES ACROSS OPERATIONAL MODELS

Explicit

- Reduce inefficiencies.
- Automate whenever possible.
- Develop repeatable processes.
- Scale up outputs.
- Monitor results.
- Create insights.

Implicit

- Improve collaboration across value streams.
- Automate continuous delivery pipelines.
- Improve innovation.
- Reduce risk.

WORKING DEFINITION OF CONTENT OPS

ContentOps is a set of principles that results in methodologies intended to optimise production of content, and allow organisations to scale their operations, while retaining high quality content, in a continuous delivery pipeline, to allow for the leveraging of content as business assets to meet intended goals. – ContentOps Slack Community
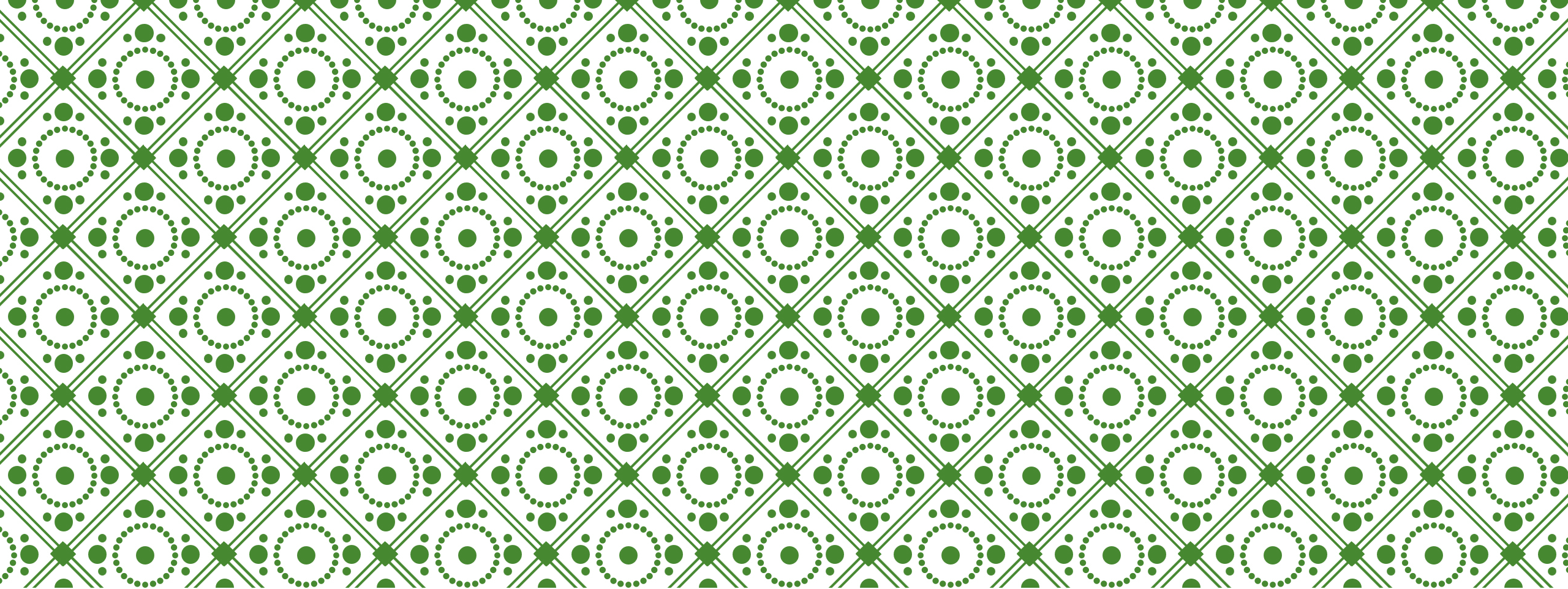
CONTENT STRATEGY TO CONTENT OPS

Operational models need to be planned; that's the strategy part

CONNECTING STRATEGY TO OPERATIONS

DESIGN

BUILD

OPERATE

METAPHOR: CREATING A WORKABLE HOME

ARCHITECT DESIGNS THE HOUSE	CONTRACTORS BUILD THE HOUSE	RESIDENTS "OPERATE" IN THE HOUSE (MOVE IN, GET SET UP, LIVE THERE)

rawpixel on Unsplash

Randy Fath on Unsplash

Naomi Hébert on Unsplash

Kevin McCutcheon on Unsplash

Jens Kreuter on Unsplash

OPERATIONS IS THE MANIFESTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Strategy	Implement	Operations

3-12 months	6-24 months	Many years
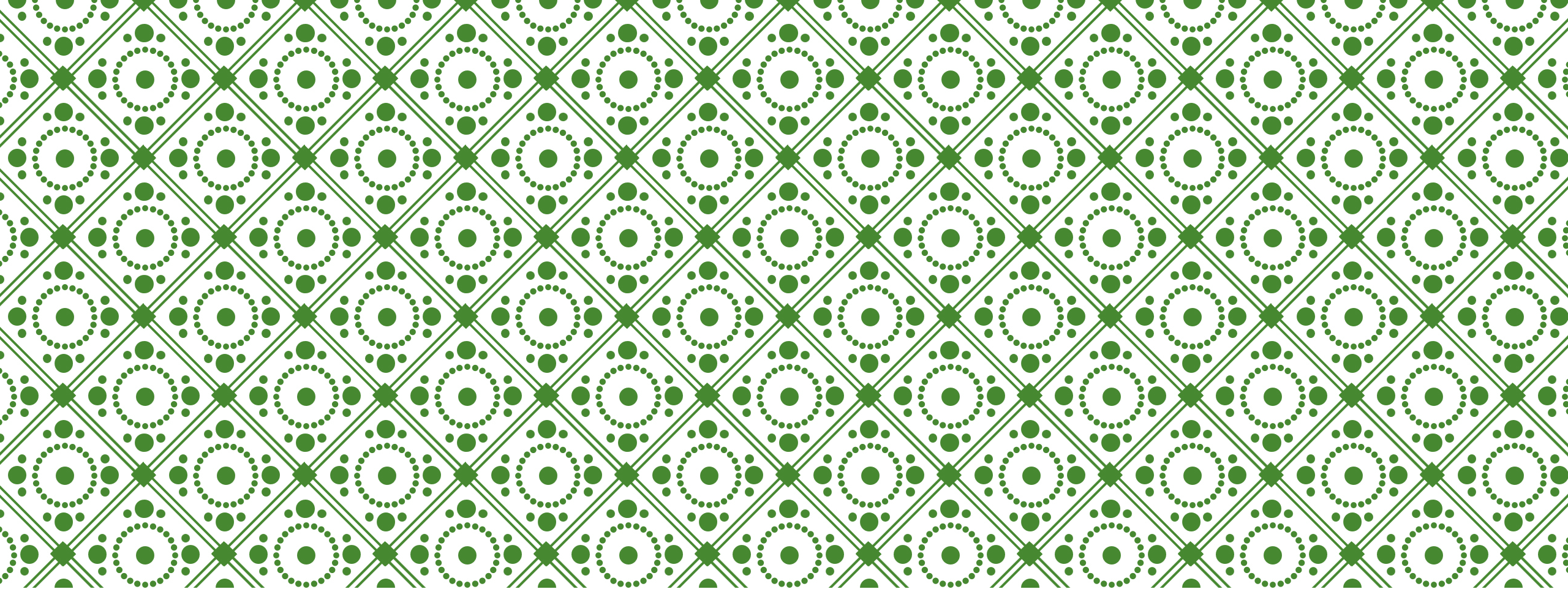
WHY SOME OPERATIONAL MODELS NEED MODERNISATION

Not all operational models are created equal

POOR, BETTER, BEST: RAISING THE BAR

NO OR SUBPAR OPERATIONAL MODELS

SUBOPTIMAL OR ADEQUATE MODELS
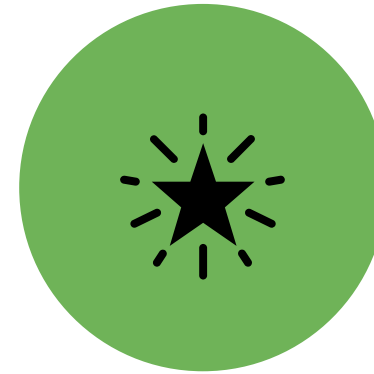
HIGH-FUNCTIONING OPERATIONAL MODELS

CONTENT IS ONE OF
THE OLDEST DISCIPLINES
YET HAS THE
LEAST MATURE
OPERATIONAL CONTROLS.

OPERATIONAL MODEL 1: TOOLS HACK

Operational assessment: sub-par.

- No governance model enforcement.

- Uses a hodge-podge of tools meant for casual business use.

- Lots of manual intervention – slow and error-prone.

- Builds up content debt over time.

Brief in Google doc → Write in Word → Approvals in Outlook → Zip files up → Store in Sharepoint

OPERATIONAL MODEL 2: THE PRETZEL

Operational assessment: sub-adequate.

- Lots of systems, built to compensate previous inadequacies.
- Hard to follow the path and consequences.
- Clunky for internal users to actually use.
- Builds up operational debt over time.

produer (creates an ABC)

Old Behemoth Commercial Tool
(for small task)

categories, etc.

MNOP

Flow for 'Go Live' products

QRST

Output Report

Behemoth commercial tool
Further enrichment of product data.
- YAIS2 helps with enrichment.
- When all product attributes are ready, product shown as ready to go live.

Interface to YAIS
(Yet Another In-house System)

Output
- Country A

ABC: Spreadsheet template with information used to upload into XYZ; first step toward creating accurate product data on internal systems.

YAIS2

JKL

Output
- Country B

OPERATIONAL MODEL 2: THE PRETZEL

Operational a~~dequate.~~
~~l~~ot of systems, built to compensate previous inadequacies.
~~d~~ to follow the p~~roduct~~ consequences.
~~C~~~~ternal u~~~~ctually use.

Product categories and attributes

Small-vendor built kludge

Product report

Introduction of a new product

In-house workflow tool with online forms to gather data required to create a new product (creates an ABC)

ABC

XYZ In-house system holds master product register; content and data enrichment including assignment of product number and lifecycle status

Web

YAIS4

Product CMS PIM holds product info (content, images, attributes, categories, etc

Translation

YAIS3

Old Behemoth Commercial Tool (for small task)

MNOP

QRST

Flow for 'Go Live' products

Output Report

ABC: Spreadsheet template with information used to upload into XYZ; first step toward creating accurate product data on internal systems.

Interface to YAIS (Yet Another In-house System)

YAIS2

Behemoth commercial tool Further enrichment of product data.
• YAIS2 helps with enrichment.
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JKL

Output • Country A

Output • Country B
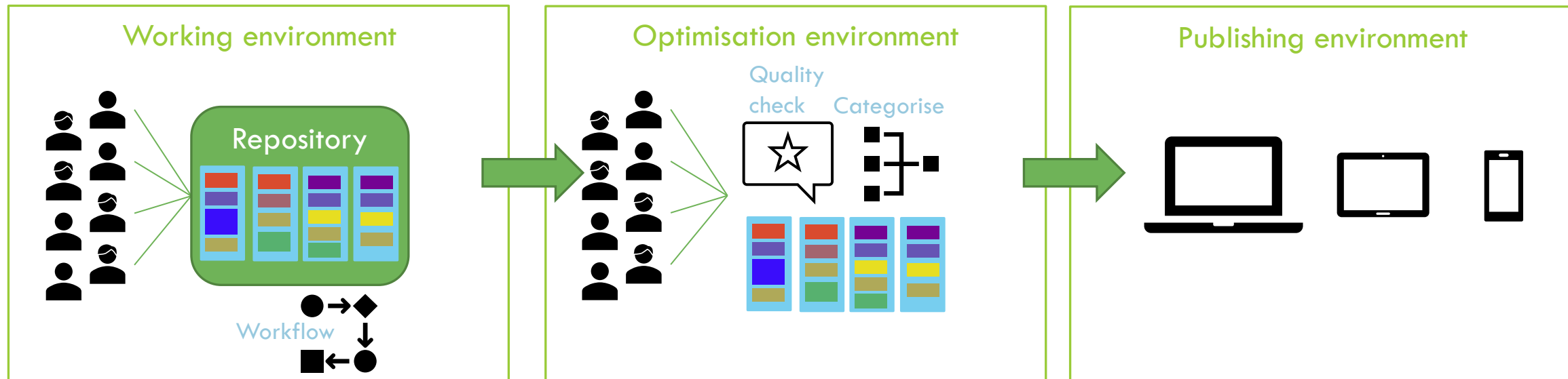
OPERATIONAL MODEL 3: ADEQUATE

Operational assessment: average productivity.

- Content produced and stored in central repository.
- Manual optimisation (quality check, categorisation).
- Multichannel publishing, some personalisation, adaptive qualities.

OPERATIONAL MODEL 4: OPTIMISED PRODUCTIVITY

Operational assessment: high-functioning.

- Content produced and stored as a single source of truth.
- Automation wherever possible (workflow, taxonomy, optimisation).
- Easier to scale, pivot, keep pace with production.
- Maximum efficiencies, omnichannel delivery, personalisation.
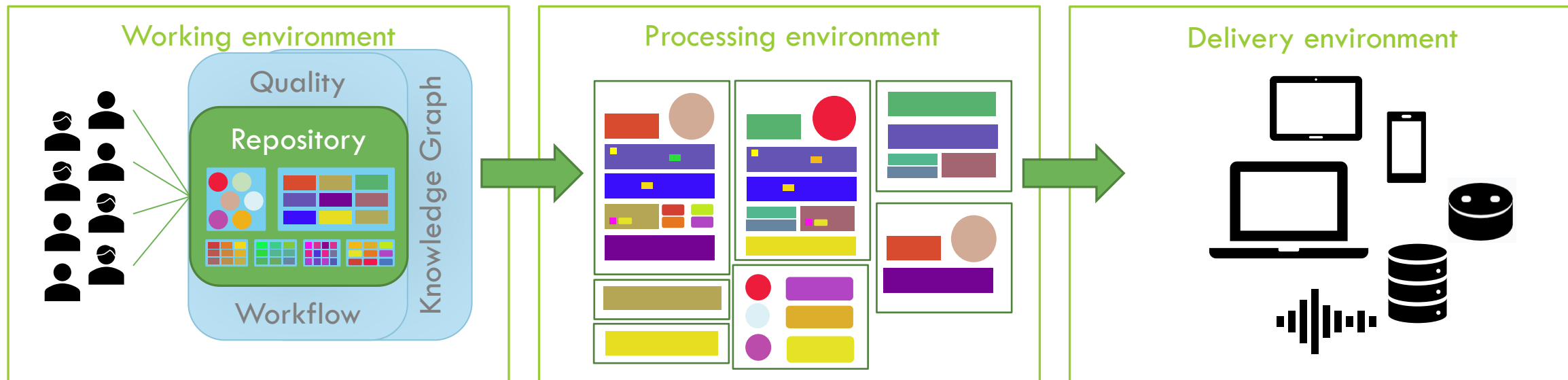
OPERATIONAL MODELS ALLOW FOR MEASUREMENT

Can you measure production costs or outcome effectiveness?

- How long does it take to product a piece of content?

- What is the cost of producing a piece of content?

- Does content production keep pace with the organisation's needs?

- Is there waste (muda, mura, muri from Lean services) in your production processes?

- Is each piece of content meeting its purpose (not supporting goals such as "page views" or "lack of typos" but end goals such as converts users or allows for self-service)?
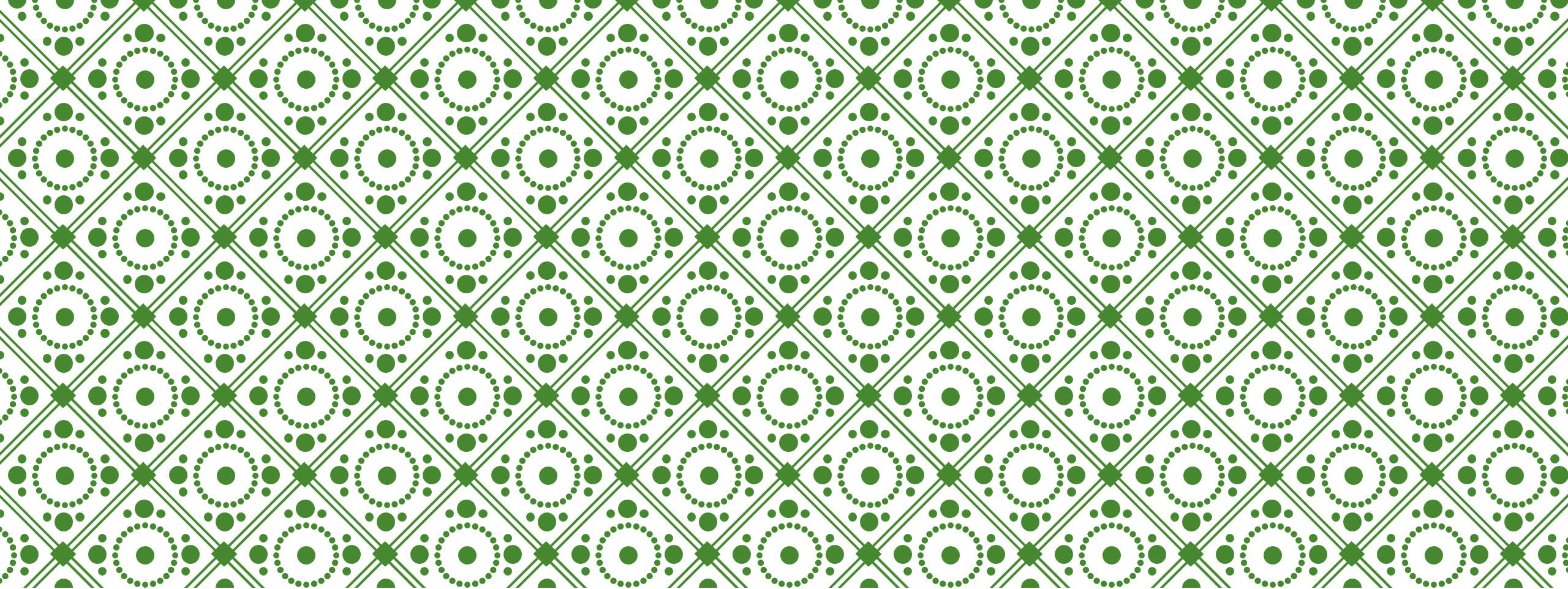
EXAMPLES OF OPERATIONS

Companies already doing ContentOps

DIFFERENT WAYS TO OPERATIONALISE

OPERATIONS FOR
MARKETING
CONTENT

OPERATIONS FOR
PRODUCT
CONTENT

OPERATIONS FOR
NON-PROFIT
PERSONISATION

OPERATIONS FOR MARKETING CONTENT

GOAL

Reduce cost of marketing content by 50% while increasing marketing generated revenue significantly.

Build a content planning system that gives all content marketers a common view of what's available and in plan, tagged for topic, audience, buy cycle state, type, and format.

OPERATIONS

Use AI to discover, audit, and tag content in various repositories for use by marketers in their campaigns.

Use AI insights to build smarter briefs to help agency writers and media planners fill gaps.

Use AI to deliver the right content to users in their buyer journeys across multiple channels.

OPERATIONS FOR PRODUCT CONTENT

GOAL

To create personalised customer material for each new car coming off the assembly line.

Plan for most flexible content re-use and scalability.

Componentised content created in a common standard.

Automate the aggregation and delivery.

OPERATIONS

Content aggregated through bar code info.

Customised user guides created on demand.

Content subsets are delivered within minutes to paper and online user guides, head console, AR app, service apps for mechanics.

Can produce upward of 2 million guides annually.

# OPERATIONS FOR NON-PROFIT PERSONALISATION

GOAL

Establish a means of rapid test-and-learn deployment—including a unified approach to content profiling and presentation—growing team expertise across implementations and building user trust.

Components are serving live, dynamic content experiences

OPERATIONS

Define a commonly held library of personalized components for multiple internal customers and customisable use cases, shoring up the rationale for a personalisation centre of excellence.

Team of specialist practitioners pool their learnings, tune the practices for better results, feed insights back into the system for continuous improvement.
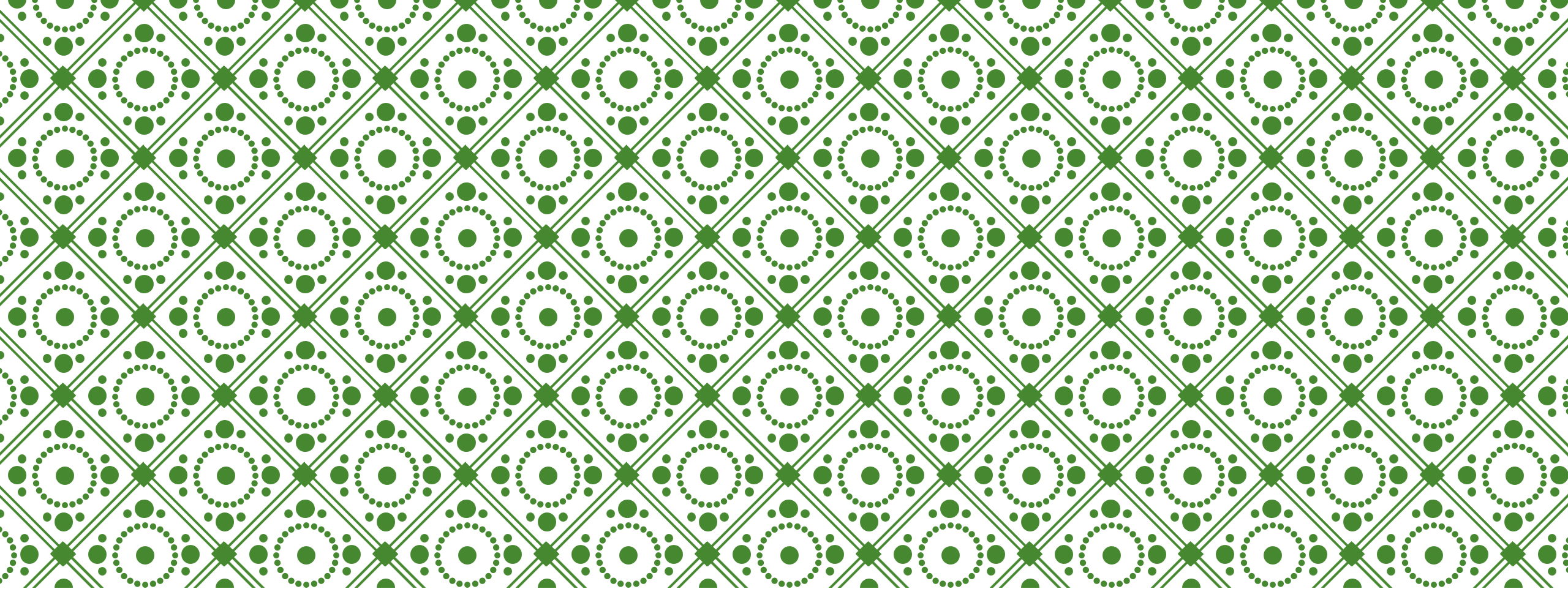
HOW TO GET STARTED

Begin with a strategy before implementation

THREE STAGES TO GET TO CONTENT OPERATIONS

STRATEGISE

IMPLEMENT

OPERATE

STRATEGY

- Have you worked out your strategy?
- Do you know what goals you want to accomplish?
- Do you understand your current state?
- Do you know what is getting in the way of your future state?
- Can you assemble a set of prioritised recommendations?
- Can you sketch out a roadmap that you can use to work with a tech team to implement?

IMPLEMENT

- Do you have a trusted technology partner with the right skill sets to do the implementation?

- Will you and the technology partner be able to create a blueprint that won't be over-engineered or outgrown too soon?

- Are you able to do a cost-benefit analysis before investing in anything new?

- Will your technology partner listen to new ideas? Or are they the "you can have anything you want, so long as it's using the platform that we specialise in" types?

OPERATE

- Do you have a plan for training up staff to follow new processes, use new tools, or adhere to a new governance model?

- How will you tweak your model to ensure that it works for your staff and meets your goals?

- Can you map out how you'll do BAU (Busines As Usual) work while making the transition from current to future state?

- How do you ensure that your operational model stays relevant to your goals?

- Will you have a budget for ongoing upkeep of the model, such as software updates, training, and related maintenance costs?

FINAL THOUGHTS

ContentOps will free up capacity to be channelled to do higher-value work.

If you are not a cookie-cutter company, you can't adopt a cookie-cutter solution.

Think of climbing the maturity ladder, which may not happen in a single step.

#ContentOps

Content is handled on an ad-hoc basis ("create and fling"); little thought to the consequences or management

Organisation has multiple processes, often in silos, without thoughtful connection points

Some planning has resulted in publishing-side integration but no integration earlier in the process

Content is treated as a corporate asset, with the appropriate checks and balances, editorially, technically, and in governance.

Content is recognised as a key asset of a business strategy and recognised for its impact on customer experience and complexity of management

Content, Seriously

QUESTIONS?

Rahel Anne Bailie; Content, Seriously
Designing robust content ecosystems
London, UK
ContentSeriously.co.uk