

TWO PATHS TO QUALITY

Leading with Authority and Influence



FiSTB Testing Assembly

20.11.2025



What
interests
YOU?





616000

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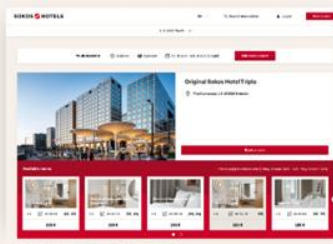
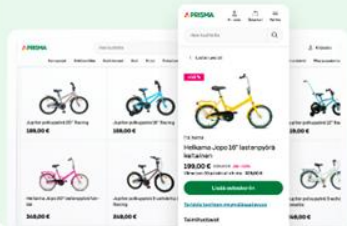
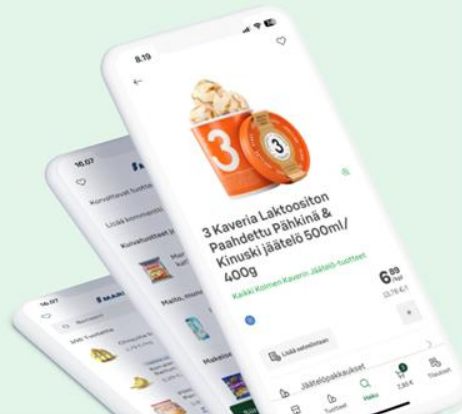
PUSH START

MIKKO VAHA

SAMI SÖDERBLÖM

ROUND 1







Growth!
Growth!
Growth!



1. 2020 started alone as QA support for rapidly growing dev teams
2. First product teams wanted to start hiring QA people in 2021
3. Results made others interested
4. During 2021-2023 from few QA souls to 40+ (at times 5 open positions at once)



The Good Stuff

More positive feedback from product teams and business than we could handle

The highest employee satisfaction score in all of SOK tech functions

Presence on 16 product teams, spanning across almost all business functions

Wide variety of quality-focused competence

Recurring community events (Unconference, QA days, internal QA meets, etc.)

Pooled funding (better team events, controlled tech costs, learning licences, etc.)

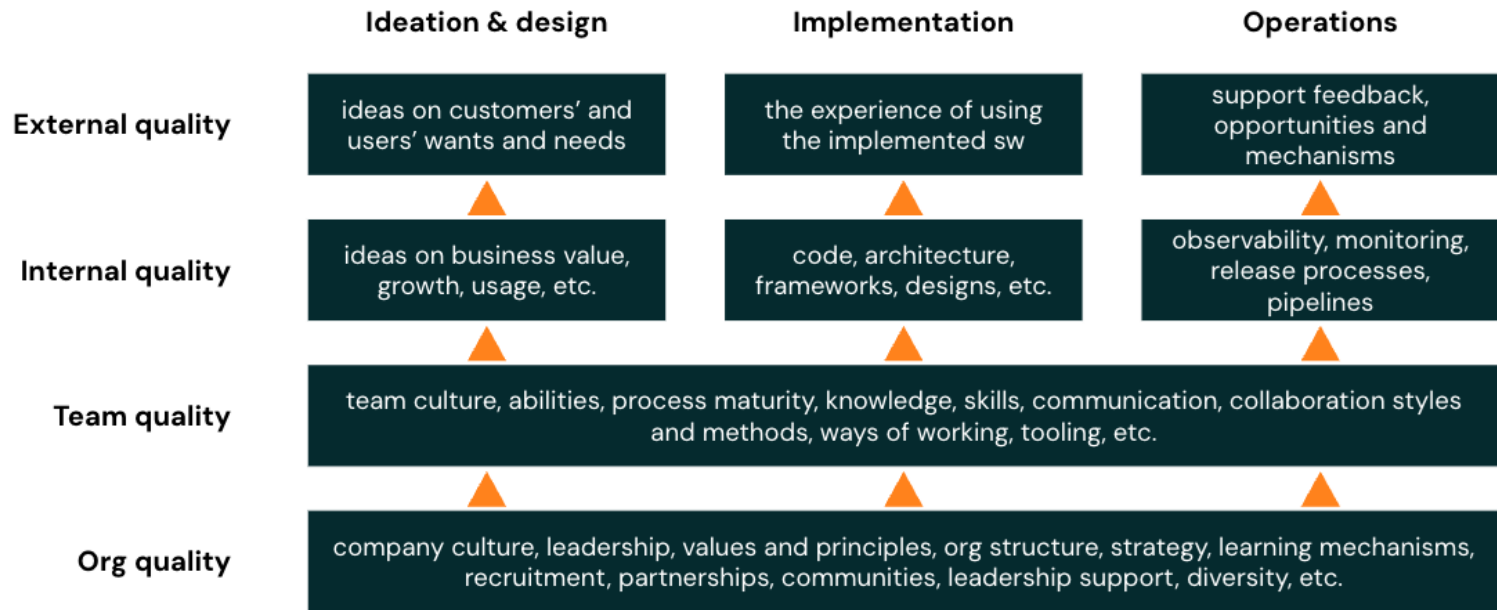
Company-wide visibility (even CEO knew who we were and told good things about us)

Legally secured mandate to succeed as a QA team/unit → closer to decision-making





The Grand Vision



<https://danashby.co.uk/2022/07/22/8-perspectives-of-quality-a-model/>



The Challenges/Learnings

Rapid growth made it hard to lead the team/unit, its people and SOK QA

Sami grew distance to hands-on work → lost credibility among key stakeholders

Albeit unintentional, QA community became exclusive

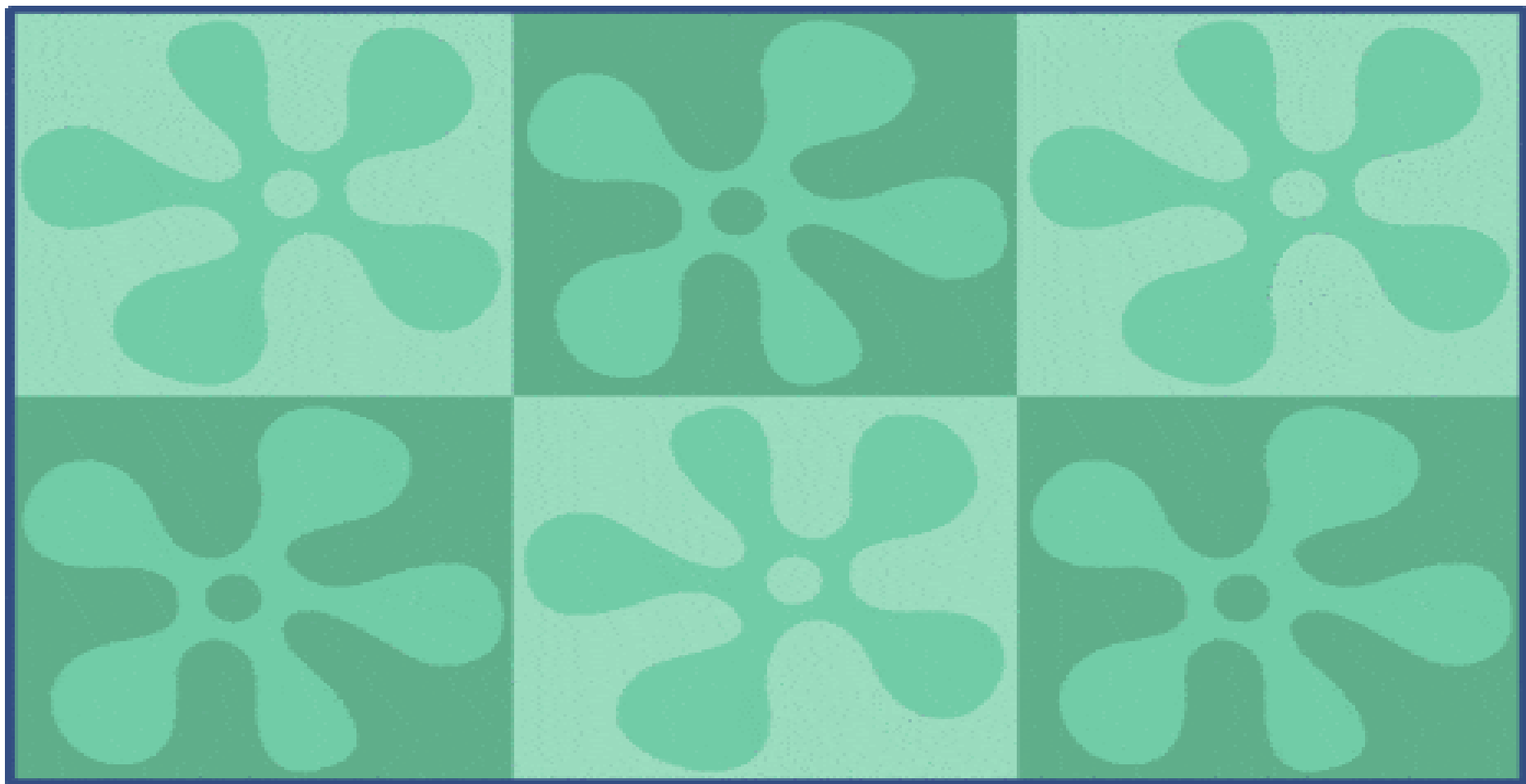
Unresolved personal conflicts

Main focus on the team and its wellbeing, not enough focus towards management

Leadership personification

Too much (administrative) load on one person → personal issues

At the threshold of next evolutionary step new boss → Sami's exit





2025 The good stuff

There are QA, in various roles

SOK is releasing stuff, continuously

Digital development leadership and culture

Quality responsibility is not only on QAs

QA is considered in recruitment, benefit is clear

QA competence community resurrected



Identified challenges without QA org

QA leadership

Quality relies on individuals

QA ownership

Competence development for testing is missing

Org growth relies on autonomous teams

QA togetherness is missing



Planned activities for 2026

C-level push towards product mindset

QA competence guild - open for everyone

Career framework improvements

Peer coaching and mentoring



credibility
and seat at
the table

me vs us
(vs them)

int vs ext

org maturity and QA

stigma

being valuable

ivory tower

QA identity
& continuity

product operating model

AI

product engineer
workload and
cognitive load

QA role

quality responsibility
vs. accountability

holistic quality

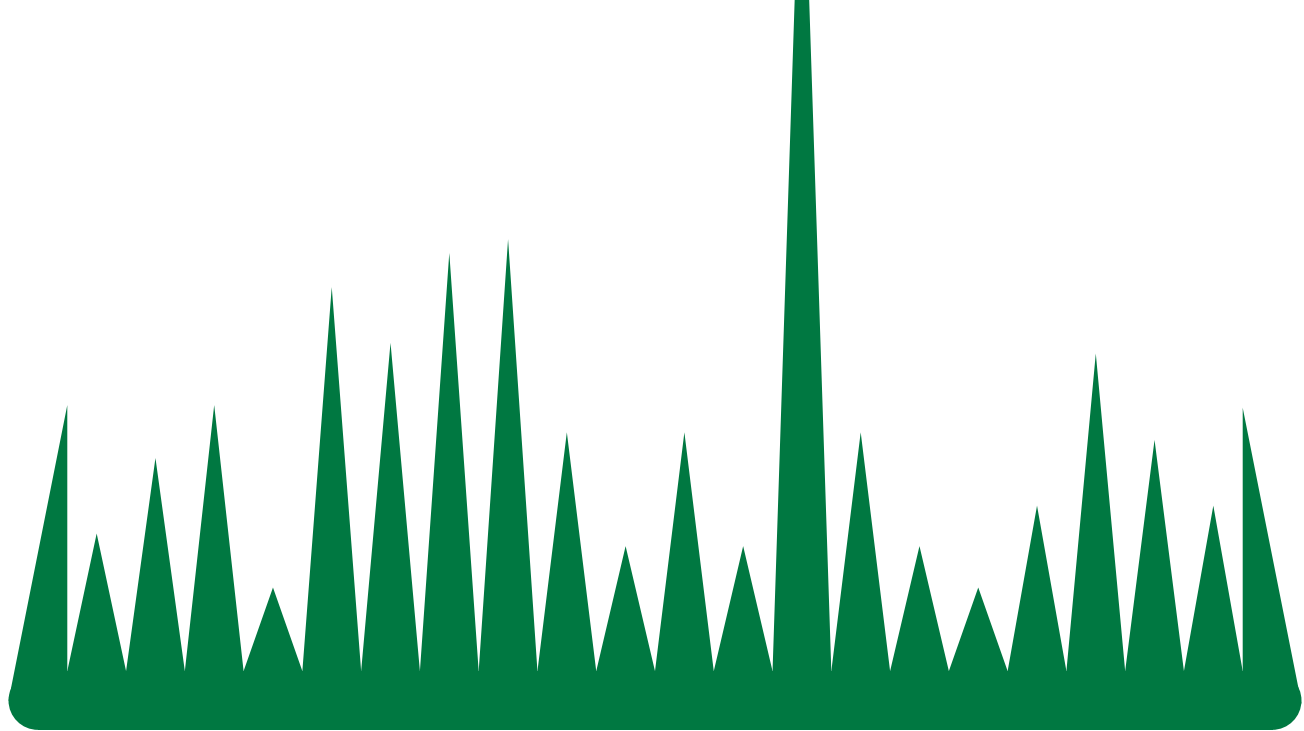
quality is for and from
everyone

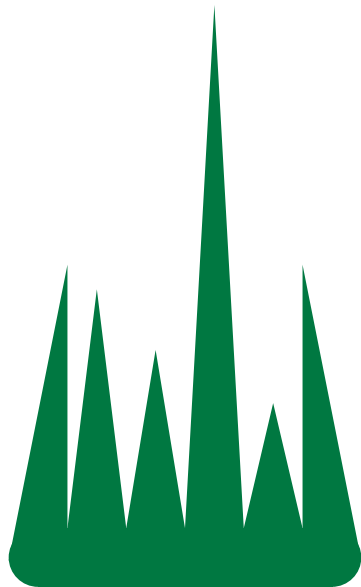
feedback loops

leading from
where you are

how to impact quality
mindset?

testing vs. QA vs. QE









Product engineer - Core competences

Career Development Matrix

STEP 1: Color code the post-its below, representing competencies relevant in engineering work

- where do you feel your strengths are at the moment? Use **green**.
- where do you feel there's demand in your role, and room for growth? Use **blue**.

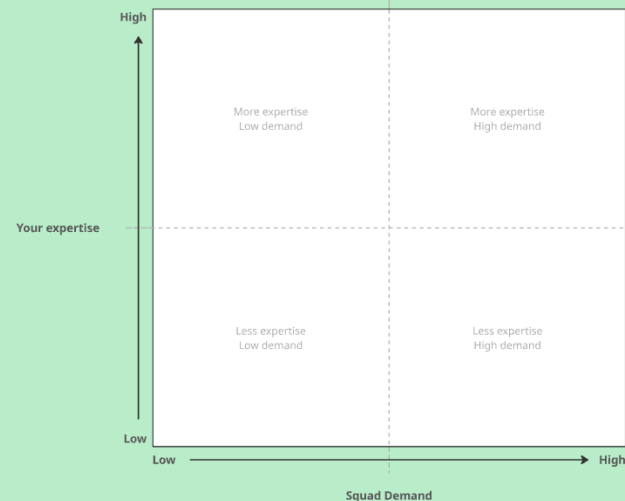
Example
strength

Example
room for
growth

Teamwork	Leadership	Continuous improvement	Product Engineering	Software Engineering Basics	Software Development	Software Operations	Software Testing	Application Security
Communication	Self-leadership	Growth mindset	Product mindset	Analytical thinking Problem solving	Building web frontends	Building and maintaining application and deployment infrastructure	Test Strategy, test design and methodology	Web application security
Collaboration	Taking initiative	Building feedback loops & incorporating feedback	Sustainable delivery	Programming	Building mobile applications	Building app observability	Exploratory & Human-centric Testing	Secure architecture design
Accountability	Strategic thinking & the big picture	Learning at work	Cross-Functional Collaboration & Leadership	Development toolchains	Building backends	Ensuring high availability & continuity	Test automation and tooling	Data security policies
Adaptability	Prioritising & Decision making	Mentoring & coaching	Product discovery		Designing software architectures	Production support & maintenance	Non-functional testing	Secure software engineering processes
Empathy & Inclusion	Influencing & Advocating	Giving and receiving feedback					Quality Advocacy and test enablement	Penetration testing

STEP 2: Squad perspective - what competences are needed

1. Reflect on the needs in your role and in your current squad
2. Place any skills for which you feel there is a high or low demand in the matrix below.





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QUALITY...
FINDS A WAY

**(If you don't know Dr. Malcolm,
watch Jurassic Park. :)**

THANK YOU!



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