Building User Story Maps
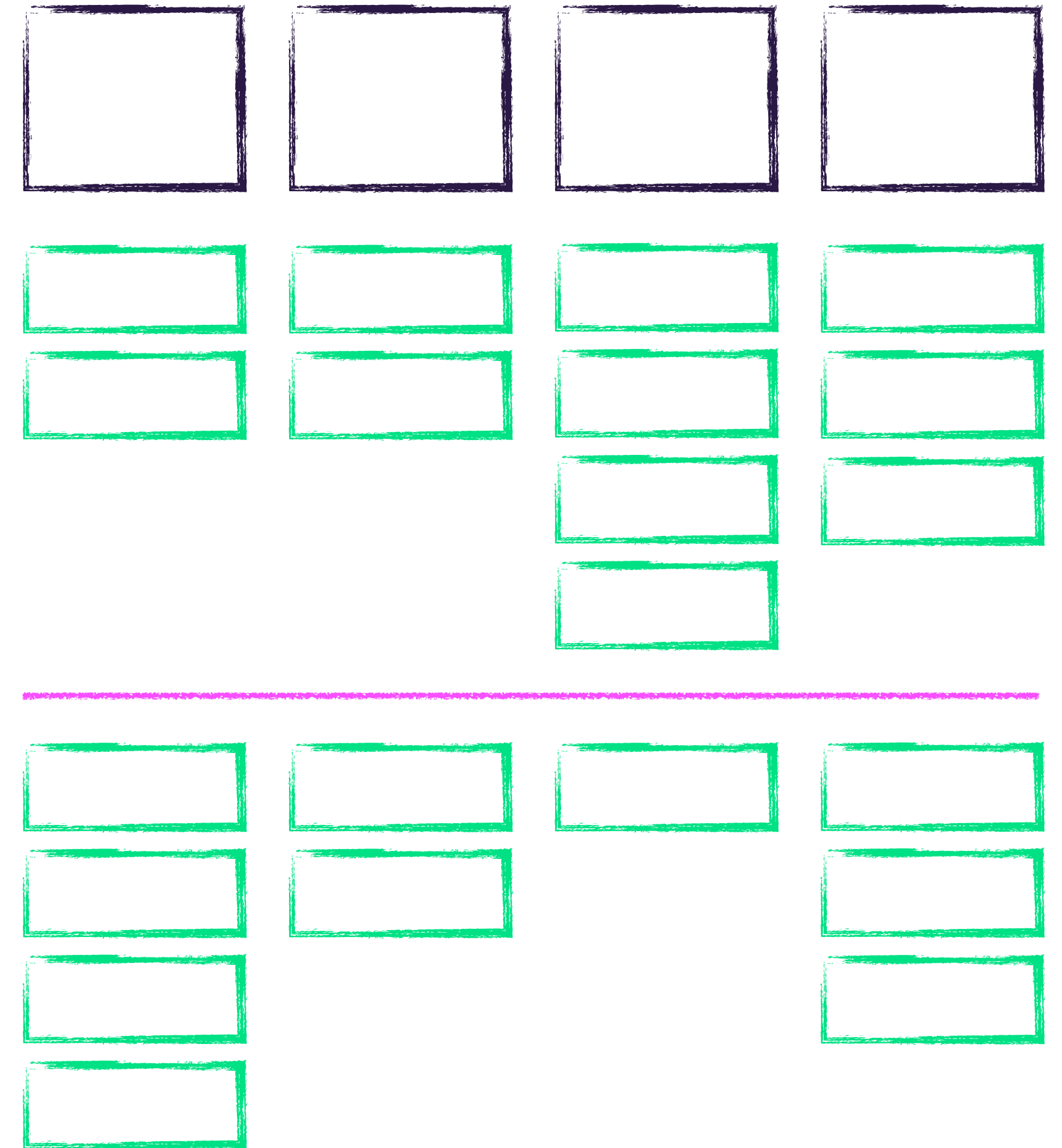
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Deciding Who To Involve In A User Story Mapping Session

who to involve in a user story mapping session?

✓ The Product Manager facilitates the user story mapping session with their agile team

✓ Keep participant numbers below 10 (a smaller group = more engagement and easier to facilitate)

✓ Involve agile team members + a few stakeholders

✓ Having a mix of people will help increase understanding of the software throughout the team

Anatomy of an Agile User Story Map

backbone

A backbone provides structure and is **"the essential capabilities the system needs to have".**

The backbone of the user story map captures the high level activities a user will accomplish while using the product. Let's look at the following example and the activities it may have;

Example: buying and watching movie on an Apple TV

- select movie
- purchase movie
- watch movie
- review/recommend movie

| selection | purchase | watch | social |

For a user to watch a movie on the Apple TV they would have to complete three of these activities. And there may be follow up activities such as writing a review or recommending the movie to a friend which we want to encourage.

ordering the backbone - chronologically

Once we've got the activities of the backbone identified we will order them in chronological **order of how a user will interact with the product.**

Following on with the Apple TV example, we will make sure the order is correct:

selection	purchase	watch	social
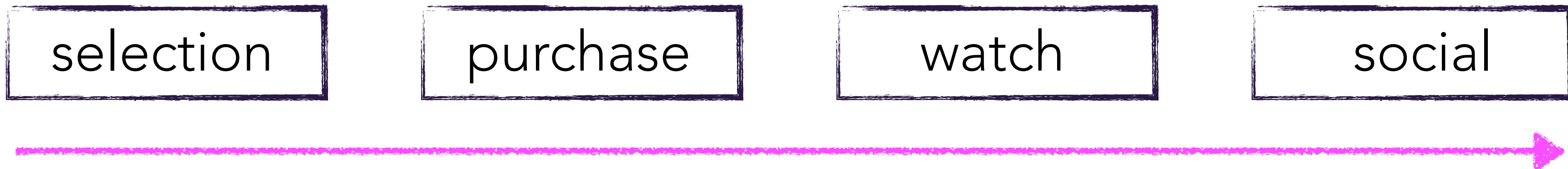
It is common to rearrange existing activities or add new activities as the discussion unfolds. This is a key benefit of the collaborative approach to building the product backlog as we have shared the wisdom of an entire team involved in the discussion.

user stories

Below each activity on the backbone we create **user stories which flesh out the customer journey.**

For example: below the 'select movie' activity, we may see stories for:

- free text search
- Browse by genre
- Browse by recent addition
- Browse by most popular
- Browse by most popular by genre
- Browse by recent addition by genre

These stories are ordered by value to the user.

Value may be identified through conversations with users, analytics on usage patterns, or another form of insight appropriate for your product.

user stories

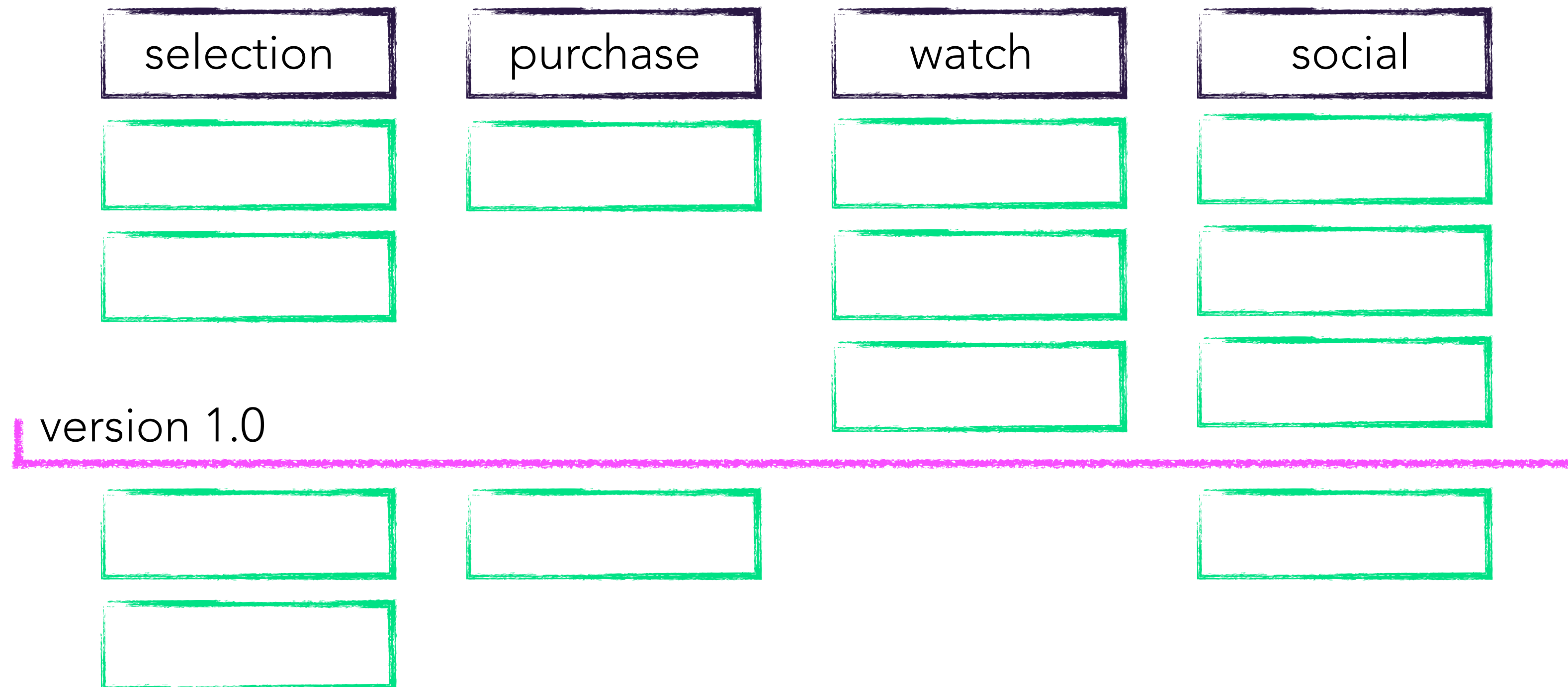| selection	purchase	watch	social
search			
by genre			
popular			
recent			
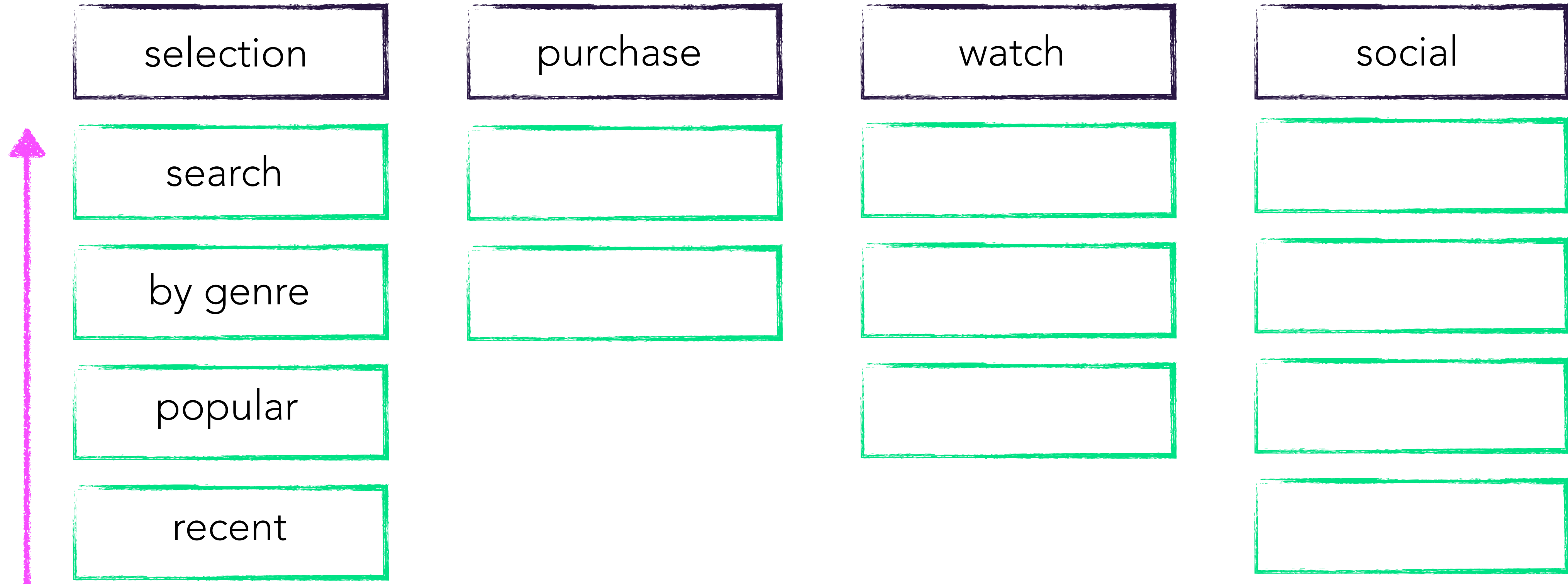
sequencing

Once the team has the backbone and stories ordered it is time to sequence the work.

What do we want to deliver in our MVP, our 1.0, 2.0 etc.

We split the story map horizontally to show what is in and out of each release.

selection	purchase	watch	social

version 1.0

sequencing

We can then begin delivery, and as we deliver releases we can track our progress against the story map.

Product Managers will often start a sprint planning session by reviewing the story map to ensure that all team members are *still* on the same page.

User story maps turn a flat backlog into a visual representation of the customer journey. A few tips:

✅ Keep the story map up to date as work progresses so stakeholders can visualise progress in real time

✅ Use the story map to communicate the roadmap with customers and share the product vision

Walking Through The User Story Map - The Result

the results

because you …	you now …
arranged features in sequential order	understand what features depend on one another
arranged features by criticality	emphasise important features at the top of your story map
divided features into business processes	have a better idea of the functionality that supports each major business process in your software