Wading through treacle: why bother being a product manager in the public sector?

Kaz Hufton // Simon Manby

Collage: Lisa Talia Moretti

What is product management?

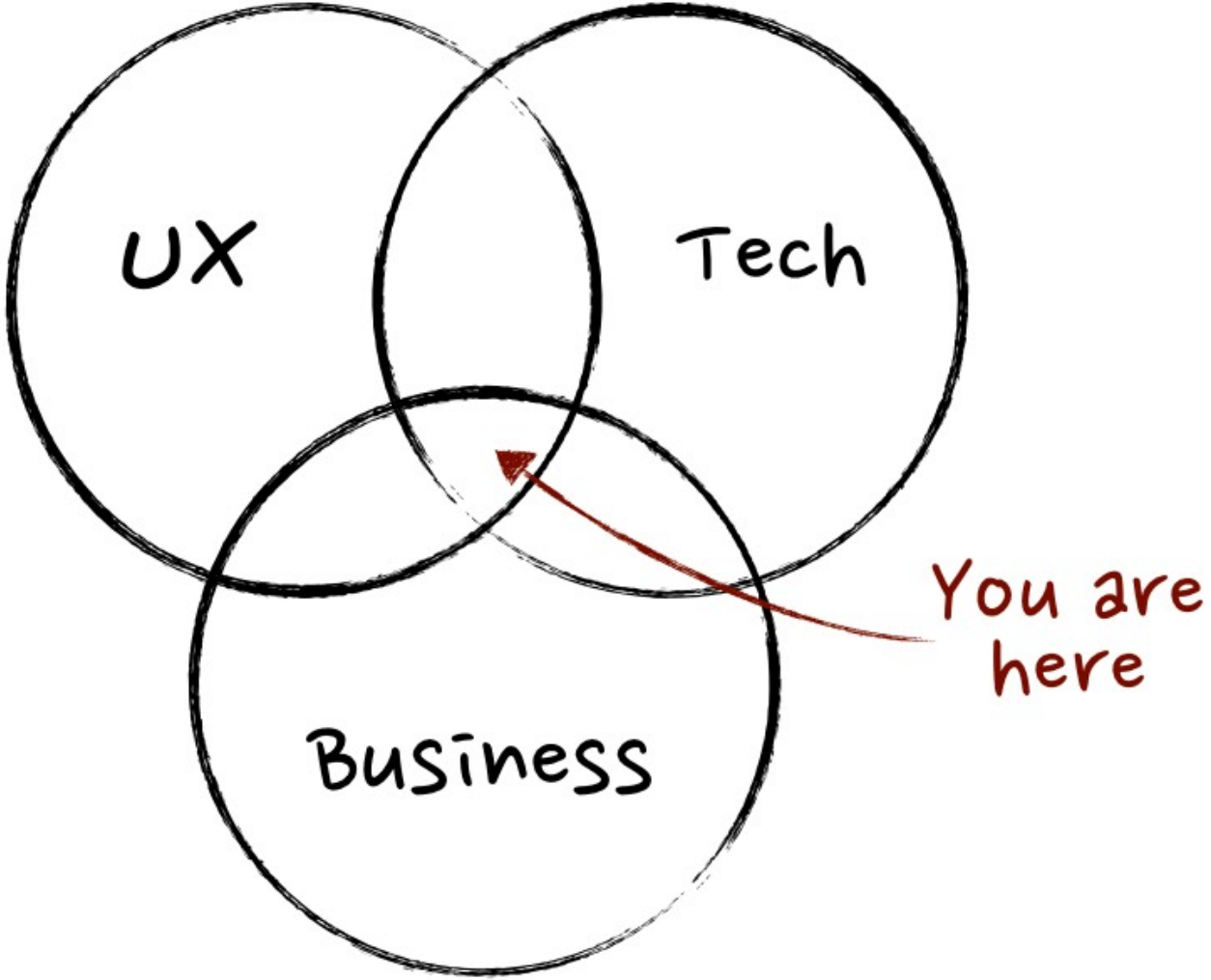
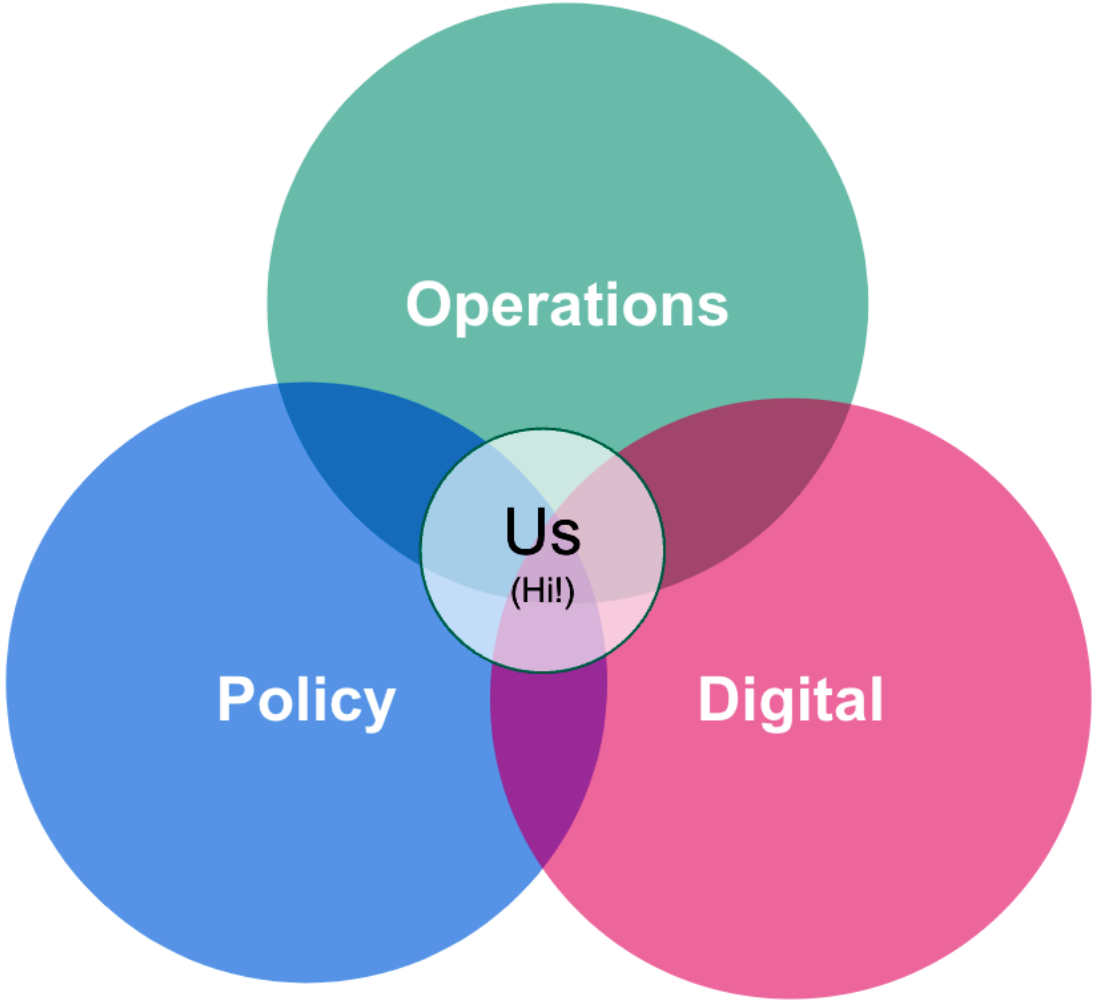
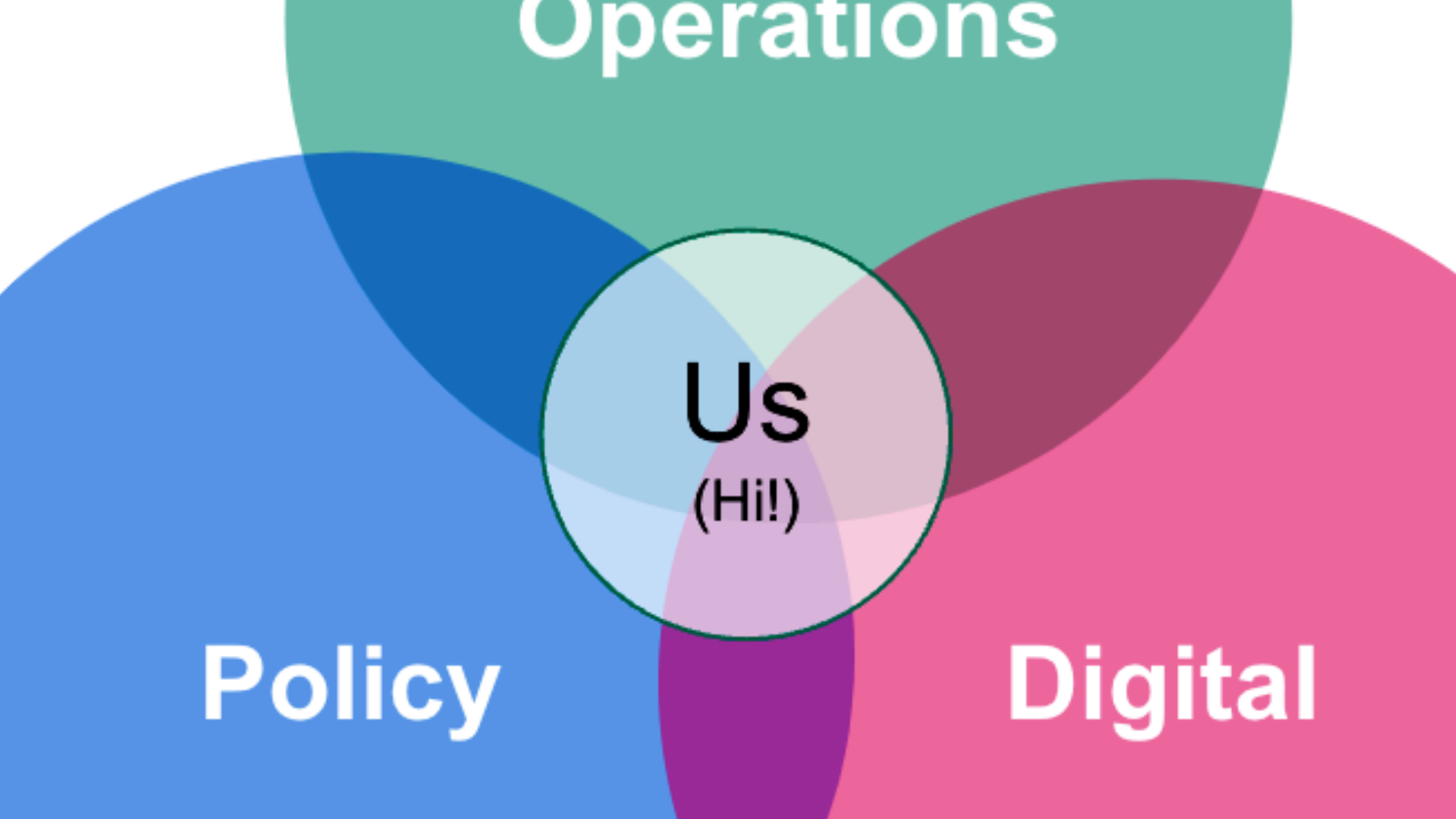


Image: Martin Eriksson


Operations
Us
(Hi!)
Policy
Digital


Operations
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Home

Architecture roles

Business architect

Data architect

Enterprise architect

Network architect

Security architect

Solution architect

Technical architect

Data roles

Data analyst

Data engineer

Data ethicist

Data governance manager

Data scientist

Performance analyst

Product manager

Find out what a product manager in government does and the skills you need to do the job at each level.

Last updated 1 December 2023 — See all updates

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— Product manager role levels
— 1. Associate product manager
— 2. Product manager
— 3. Senior product manager
— 4. Lead product manager
— 5. Head of product
— Roles that share product manager skills

What a product manager does

A product manager is responsible for the quality of their products. In this role, you will be expected to use your knowledge of user needs and business goals to frame problems and set priorities for your delivery teams.

2. Product manager
— 3. Senior product manager
— 4. Lead product manager
— 5. Head of product
— Roles that share product manager skills

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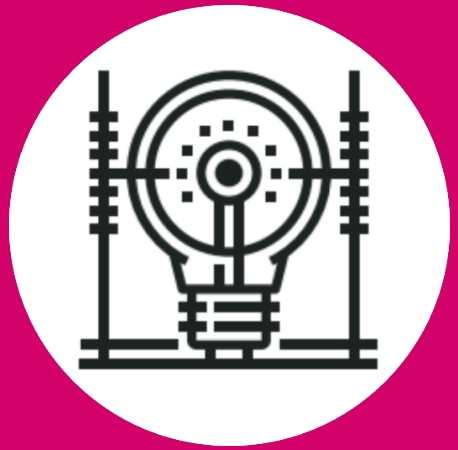
The product is the outcome to society



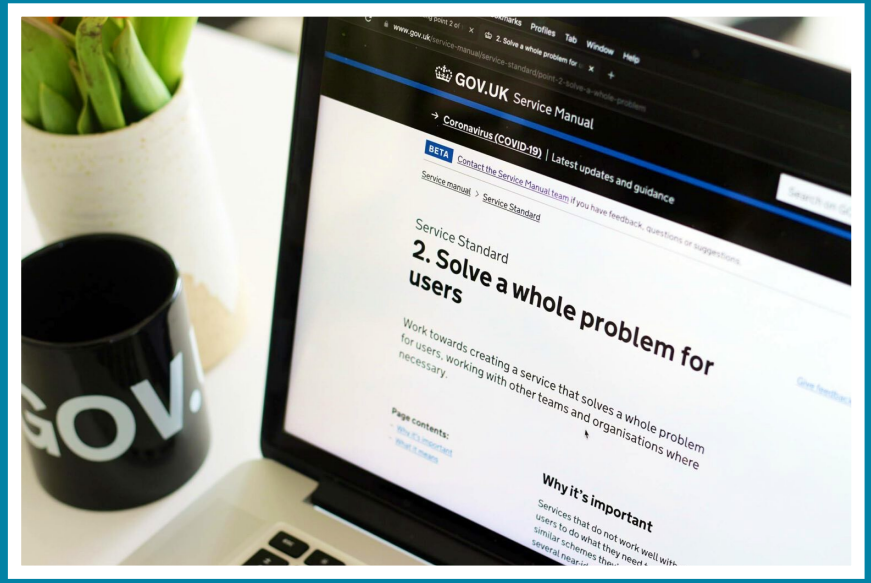
Understand the problem

Understand the users

Understand how to test value

Understand the problem

Solve whole problems, don't just build software



Be aware of unintended consequences

Work with your constraints

Build a team around the problem

Doodle: Paul Downey / Slogan: Jamie Arnold

Understand the users

Don’t build for the 80%

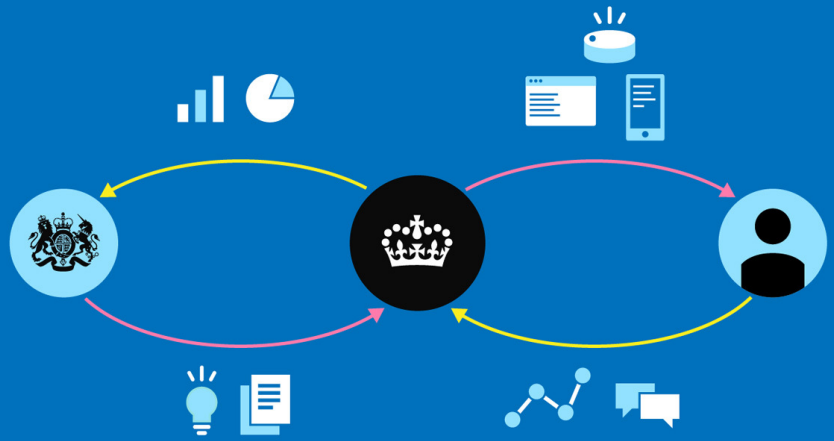
Service Standard

Meeting users’ needs	1	Understand users and their needs
	2	Solve a whole problem for users
	3	Provide a joined up experience across all channels
	4	Make the service simple to use
	5	Make sure everyone can use the service
Providing a good service	6	Have a multidisciplinary team
	7	Use agile ways of working
	8	Iterate and improve frequently
	9	Create a secure service which protects users’ privacy
	10	Define what success looks like and publish performance data
Using the right technology	11	Choose the right tools and technology
	12	Make new source code open
	13	Use and contribute to open standards, common components and patterns
	14	Operate a reliable service

www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard

Find a solution that suits all users

Understand user need, not want

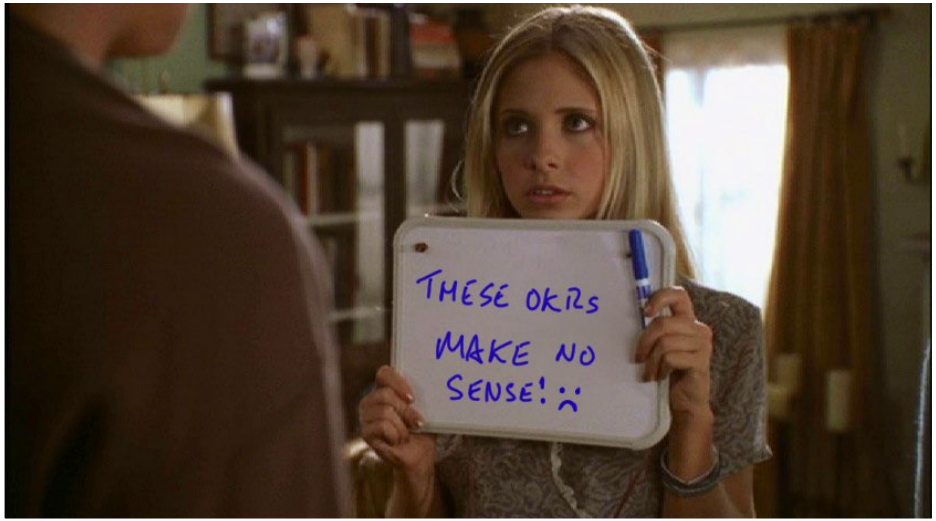


Understand how to test value

Focus on the organisational outcome

Image: Alxey Pnferov

Choose what you measure carefully



Impact is measured over decades

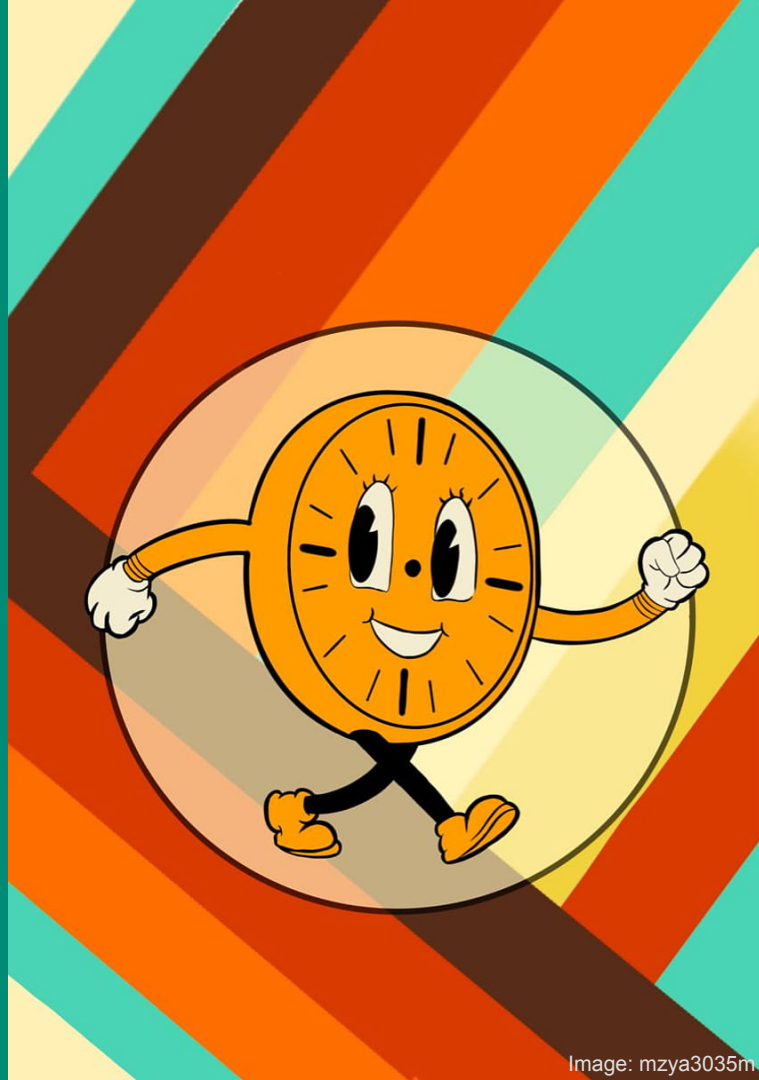
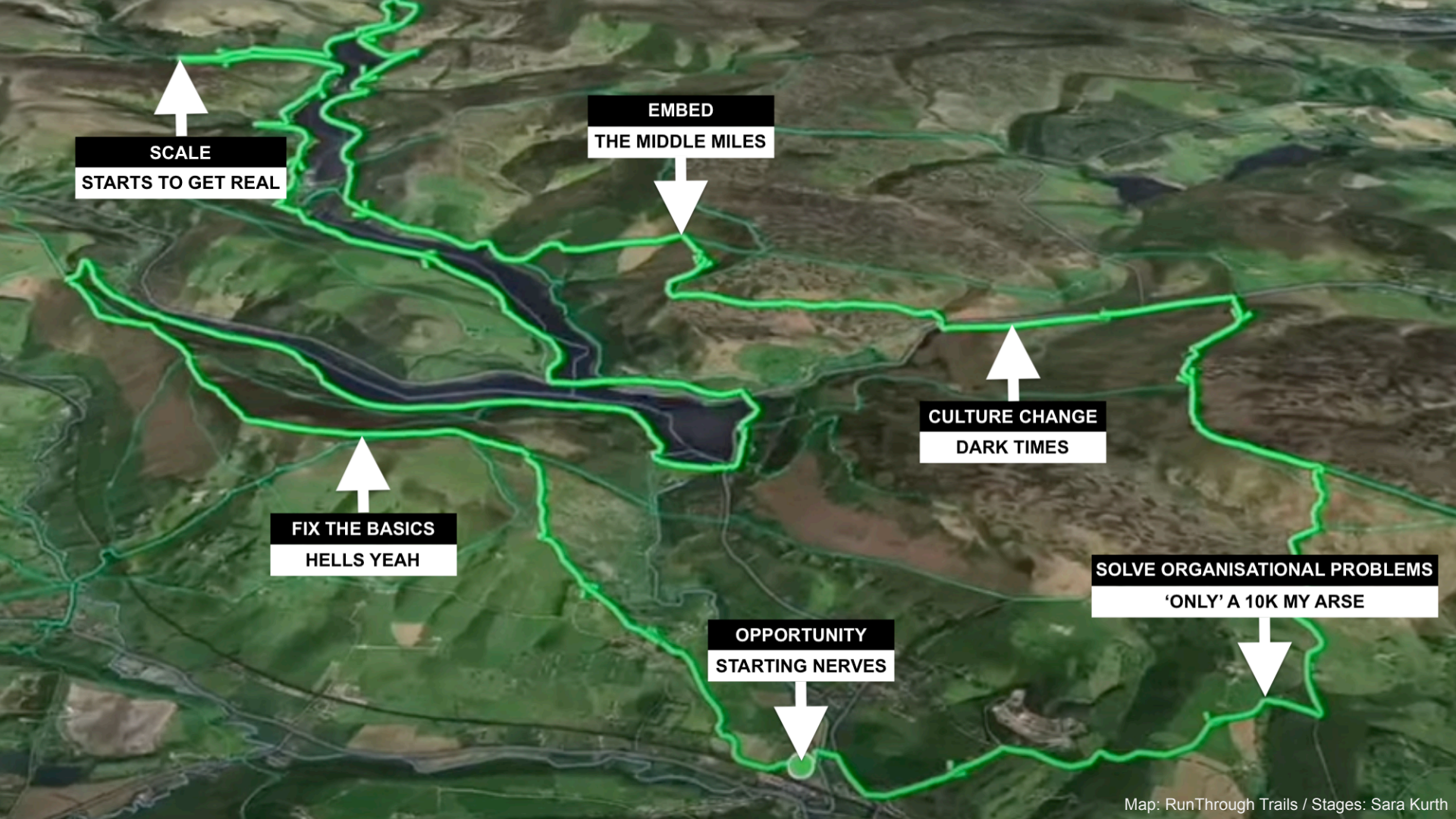


Image: mzya3035m

How's our ~~sprint~~ ultra-marathon going?

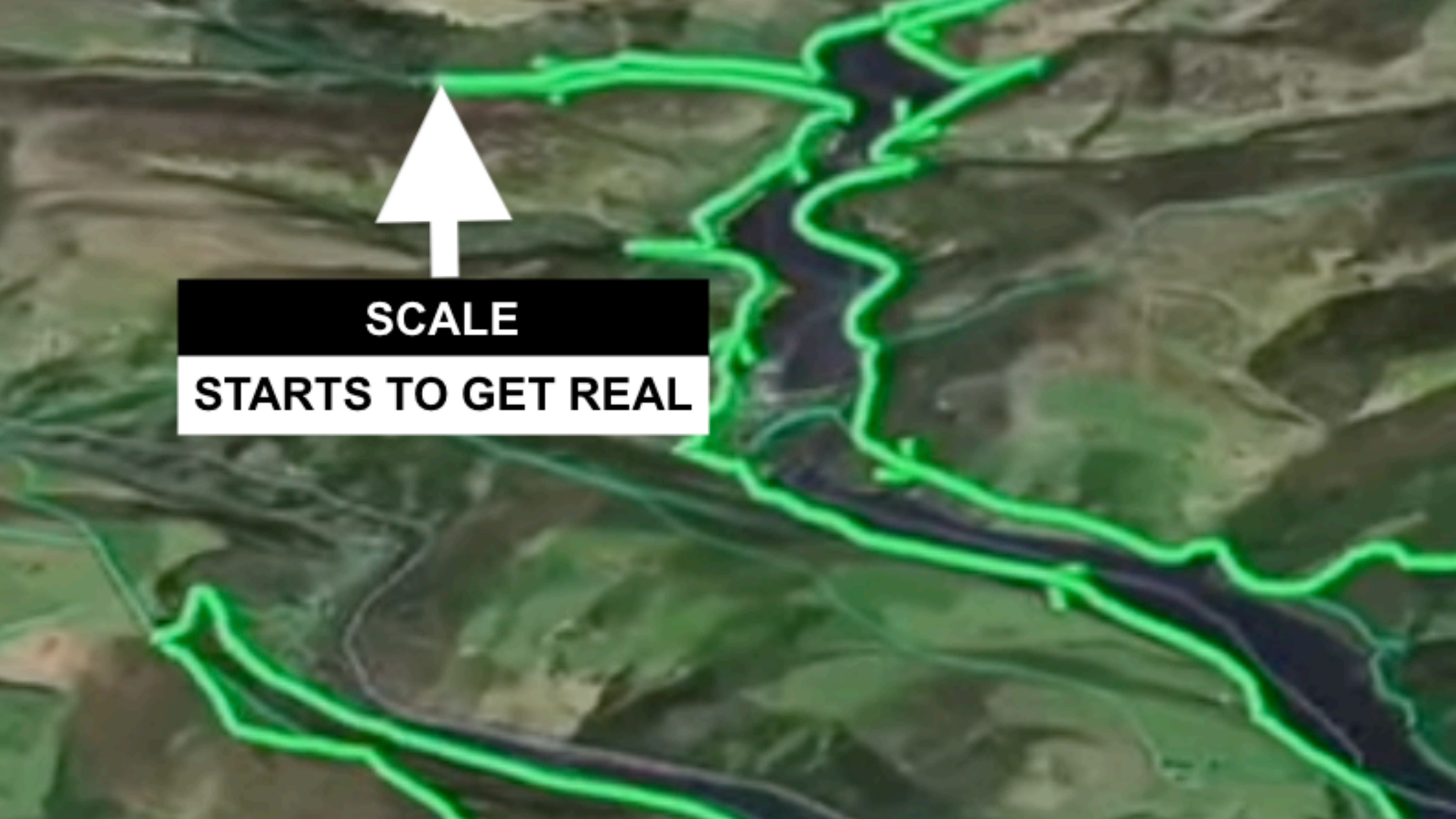

SCALE
STARTS TO GET REAL
EMBED
THE MIDDLE MILES
CULTURE CHANGE
DARK TIMES
FIX THE BASICS
HELLS YEAH
SOLVE ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEMS
'ONLY' A 10K MY ARSE
OPPORTUNITY
STARTING NERVES
Map: RunThrough Trails / Stages: Sara Kurth

OPPORTUNITY
STARTING NERVES

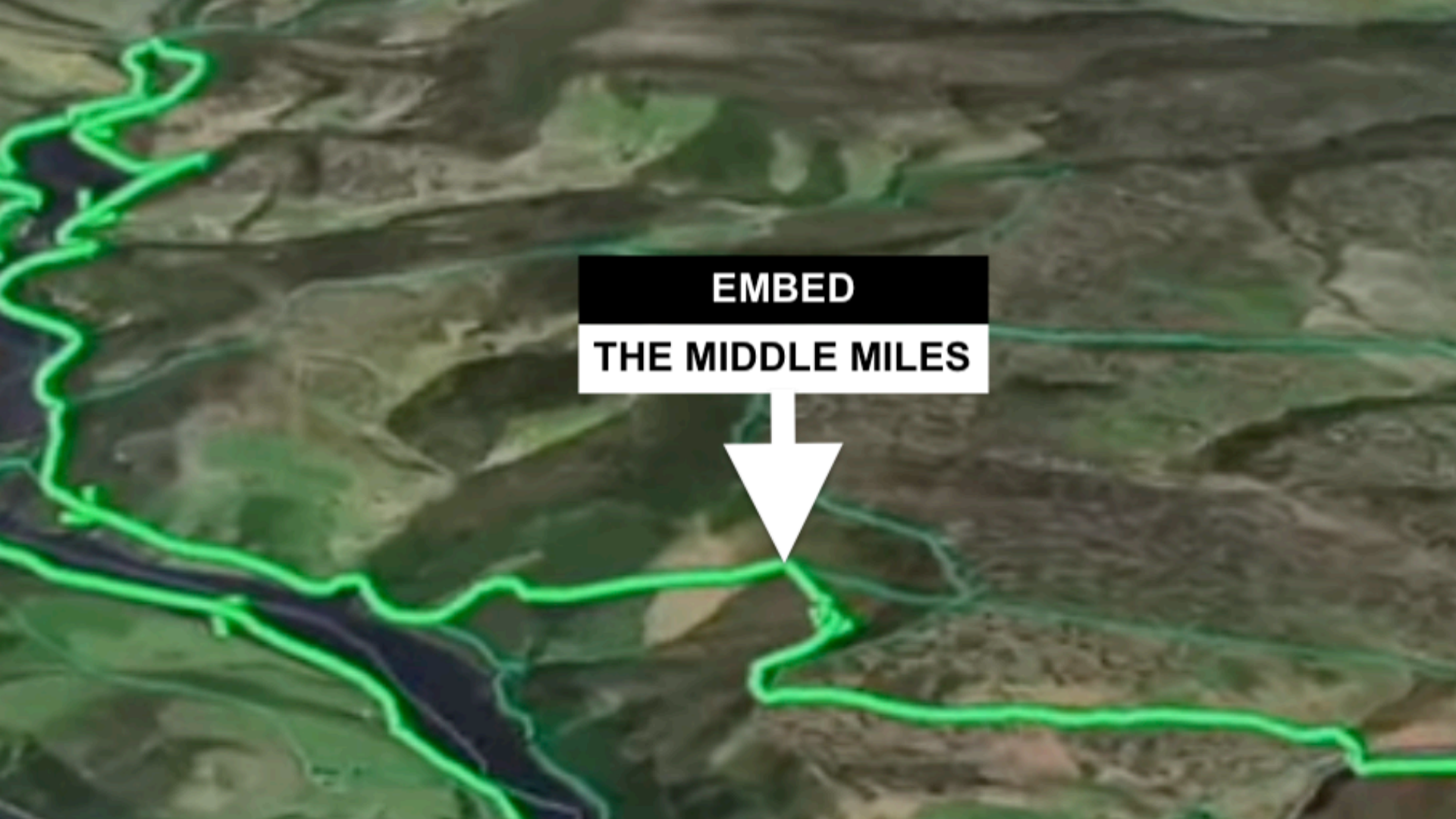
Start small and steady to earn trust

FIX THE BASICS
HELLS YEAH

Make sure you have the building blocks for both tech and culture change


SCALE
STARTS TO GET REAL

When you have trust plan to sustain it


EMBED
THE MIDDLE MILES

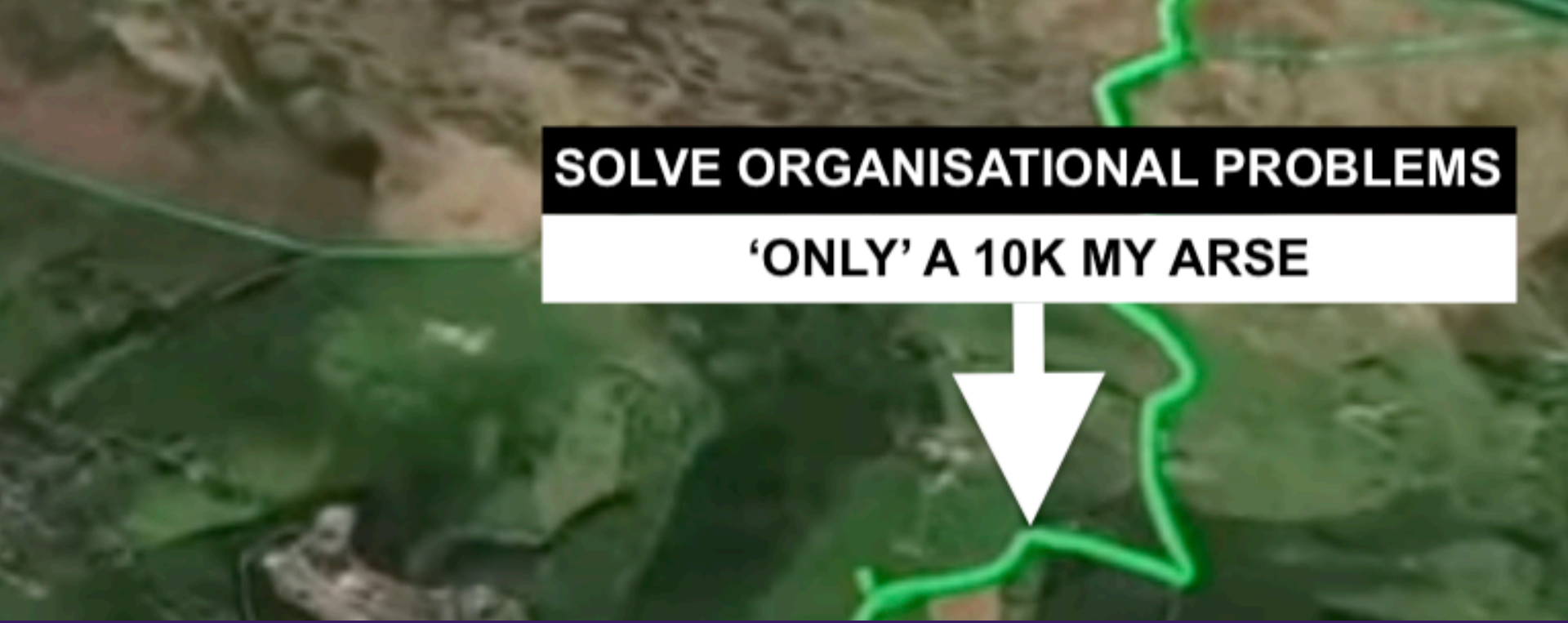
Find ways to keep momentum

Because it won’t always be new and shiny

CULTURE CHANGE
DARK TIMES

Find your moment to turn the tide

SOLVE ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEMS
‘ONLY’ A 10K MY ARSE



Stay focused.
Say no.

2.0
OPPORTUNITY
STARTING NERVES

So is it worth it?

Public sector problem spaces are both challenging and rewarding

There is scope to define and change the role

Embedded product thinking can drive public services and innovation

Even if value isn't immediately realised, you can positively contribute to affecting change in the long term

It depends.
Thanks!
@Kaz_H_666 // caroline.hufton@digital.justice.gov.uk
@ManbySi // simon.manby@digital.justice.gov.uk
Image: Sam Villis