

Leading when the playbook doesn't fit

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SDinGov Virtual, 2026

Slides shared after

Questions at end

Hi! I'm Tricia

- Software engineer & interaction designer (by training)
- 17+ years in UX
- Specialist in UX research
- Experience: Gov departments (civil servant, consultant, agency)
- Roles: IC & programme lead



Gov bodies I've worked with, in the UK



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

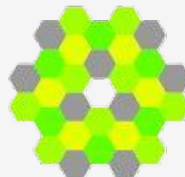


Cabinet Office



Ministry
of Justice

HM Land
Registry



RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL



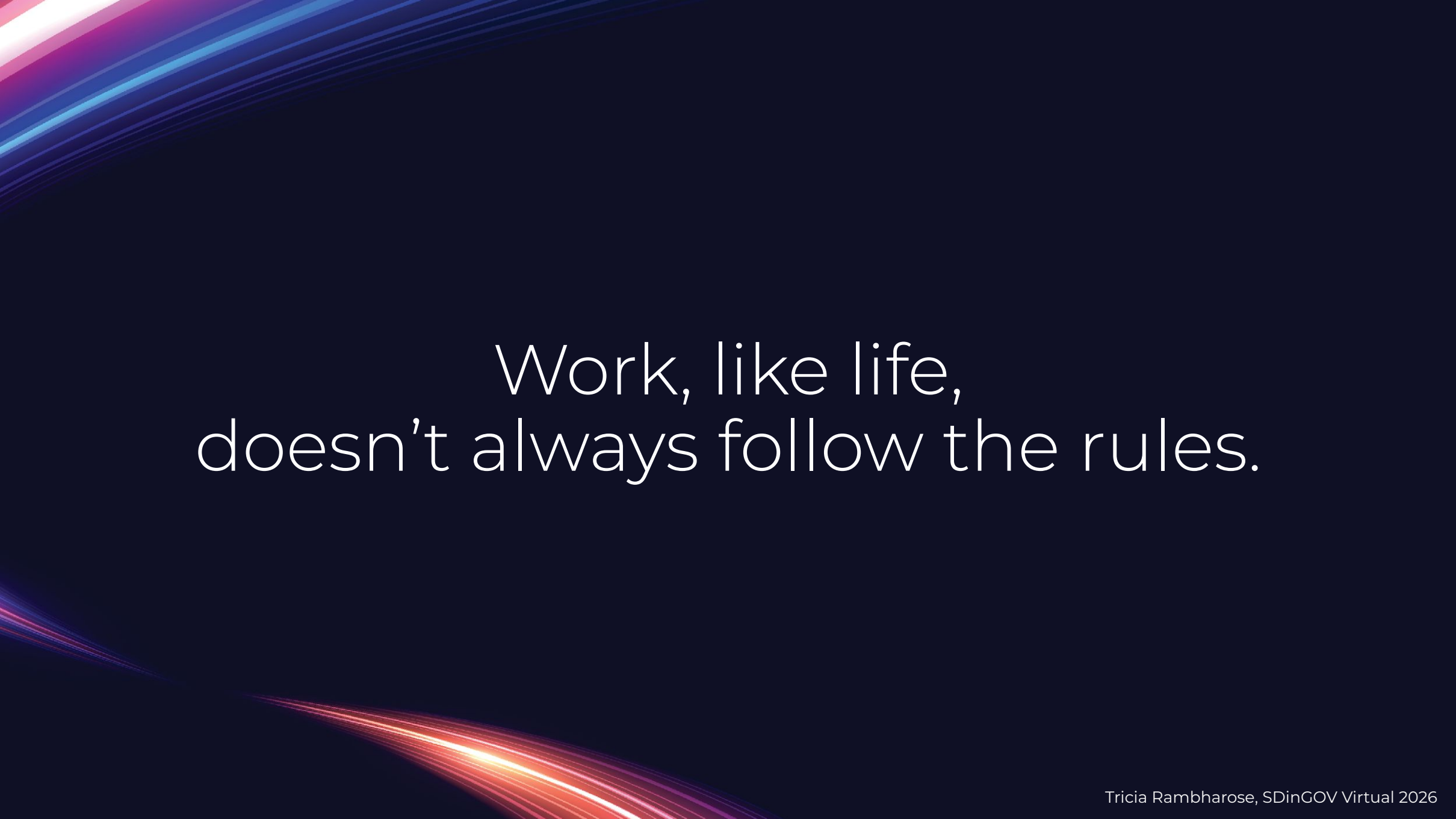
**Sat nav
route**

Main road



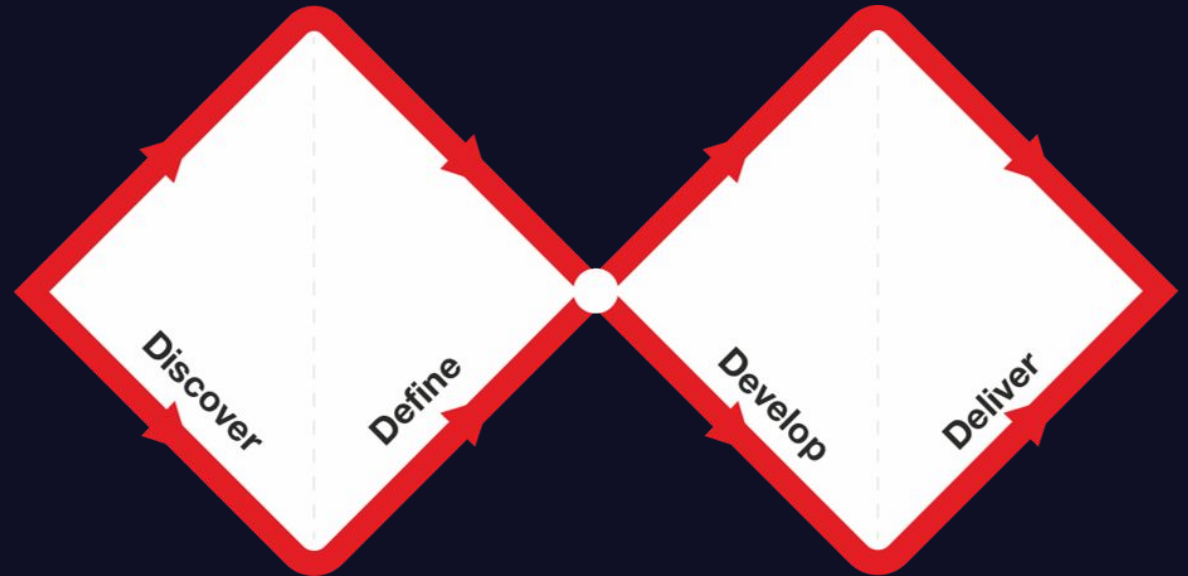
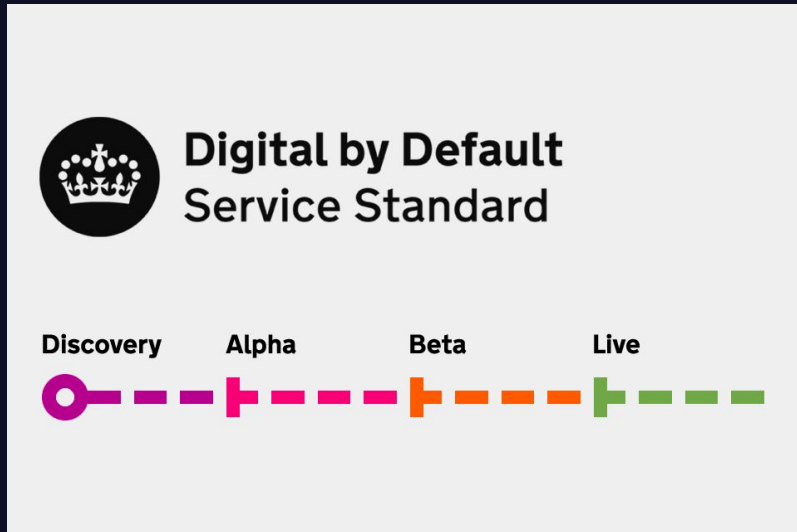




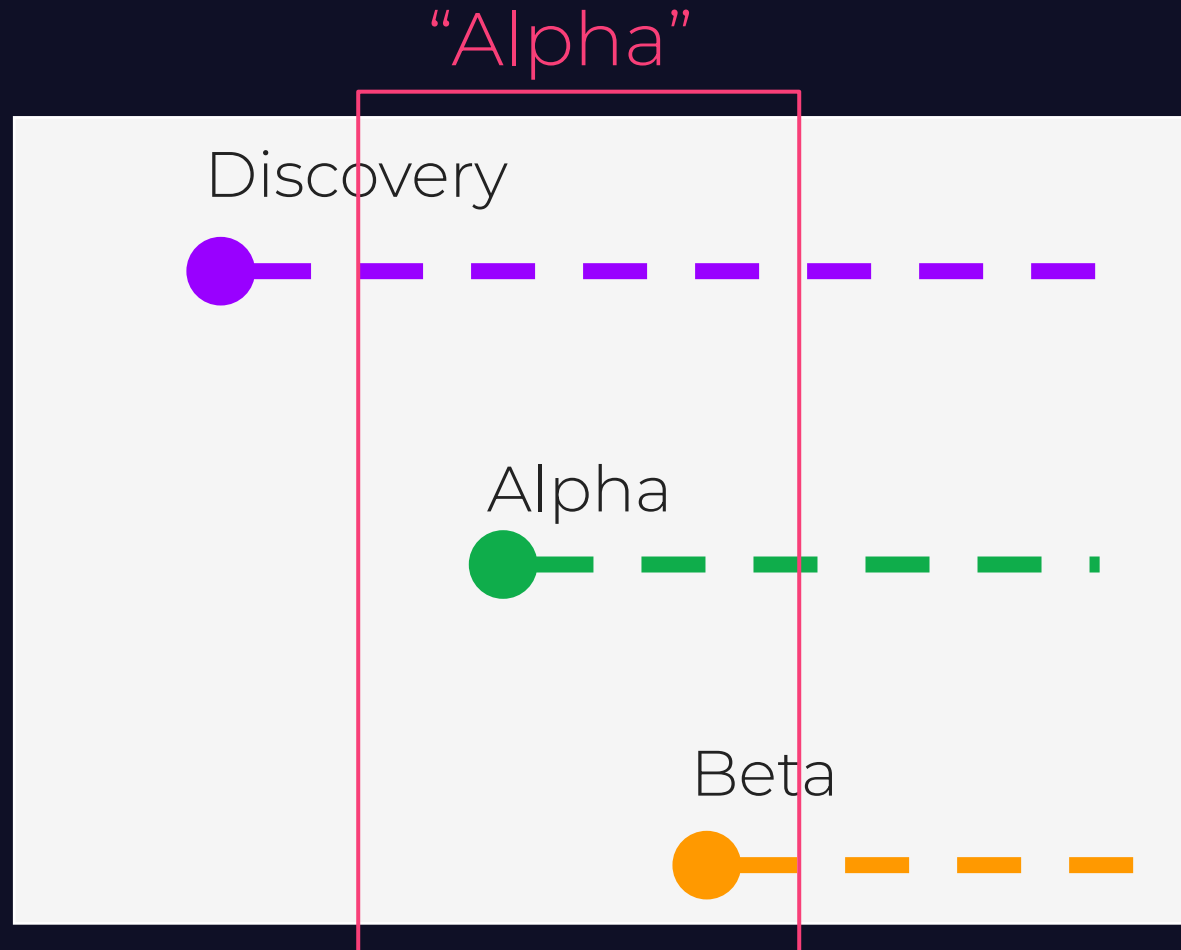
The background is a dark navy blue. It features several curved, glowing light streaks. One set of streaks in shades of blue and purple curves from the top left towards the center. Another set of streaks in shades of orange and red curves from the bottom left towards the center. The text is centered in the middle of the frame.

Work, like life,
doesn't always follow the rules.

What playbook?



What the label says vs what it feels like



Ever arrived with your playbook...
and realised it doesn't fit?



Relationships > Rules

Adapt the playbook, don't abandon it.

Trust. Truth. Service.

Trust

Software

Trust sets the speed

- Pace isn't set by plans → it's set by trust
- Work stalls without it, accelerates with it
- People only cross (try new things) when the *trust* bridge feels safe



Trust is designable: the Trust Equation

$$\frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-orientation}} = \text{Trust}$$

Source: The Trusted Advisor (2000)
by David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford.

The Trust Equation in practice

Credibility

Show you know your stuff

e.g.

- Work in the open
- Share evidence not just outputs

The Trust Equation in practice

Reliability

Do what you said you would

e.g.

- No-surprises rule
- Share little & often

The Trust Equation in practice

Intimacy

Build human connection

e.g.

- Co-create with stakeholders
- Retrospectives
- Team fun times/ ice breakers

The Trust Equation in practice

Shift focus from self to others

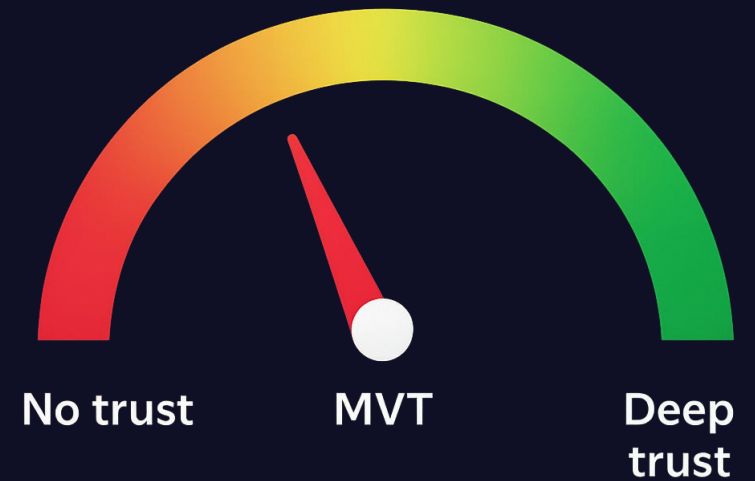
e.g.

Self-orientation

- Put users' needs first
- Focus on collective success
- Adapt methods to context

Minimum Viable Trust (MVT)

- Deep trust takes time
- MVT - enough trust to move forward
- More logistical than relational



Pause & reflect: where's your trust gap?

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1. Rate... 1 = low to 5 = high:

- **Credibility** - *show you know your stuff*
- **Reliability** - *do what you said you would*
- **Intimacy** - *build human connection*
- **Self-orientation** - *self interest*

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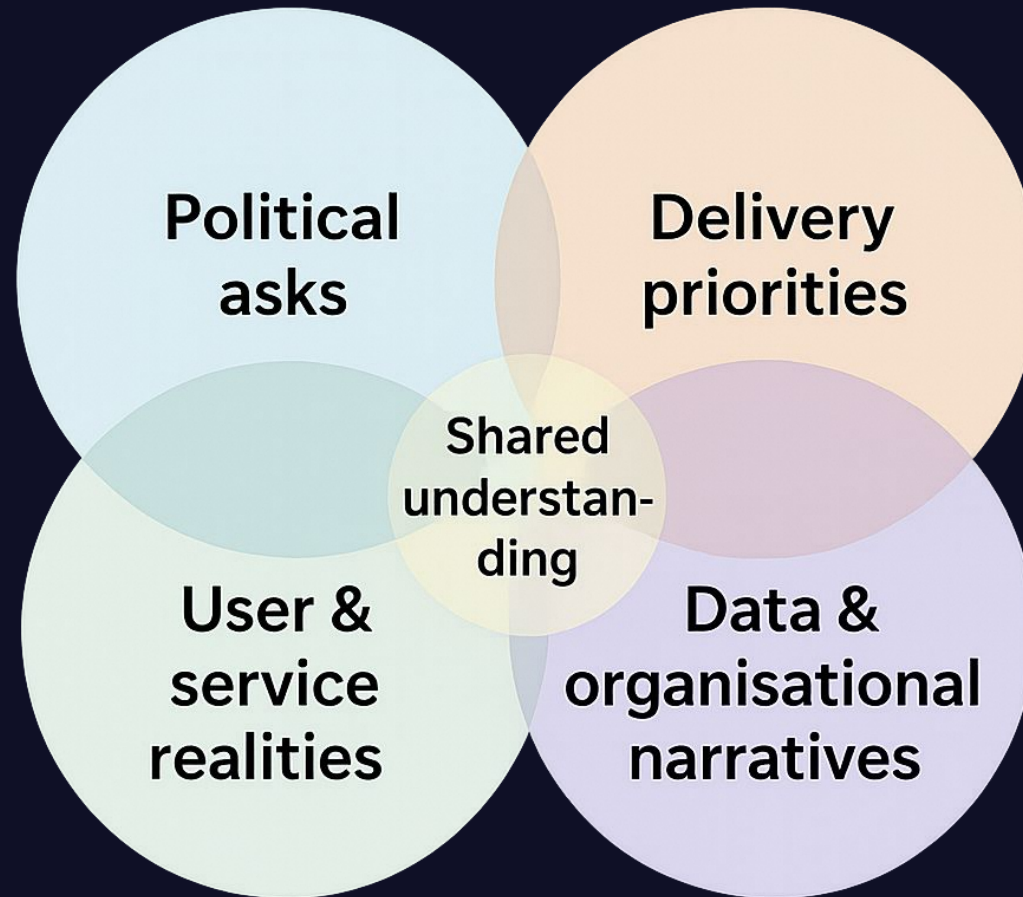
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3. What does this reveal about where trust breaks down?

Truth

Software

Truth is never singular

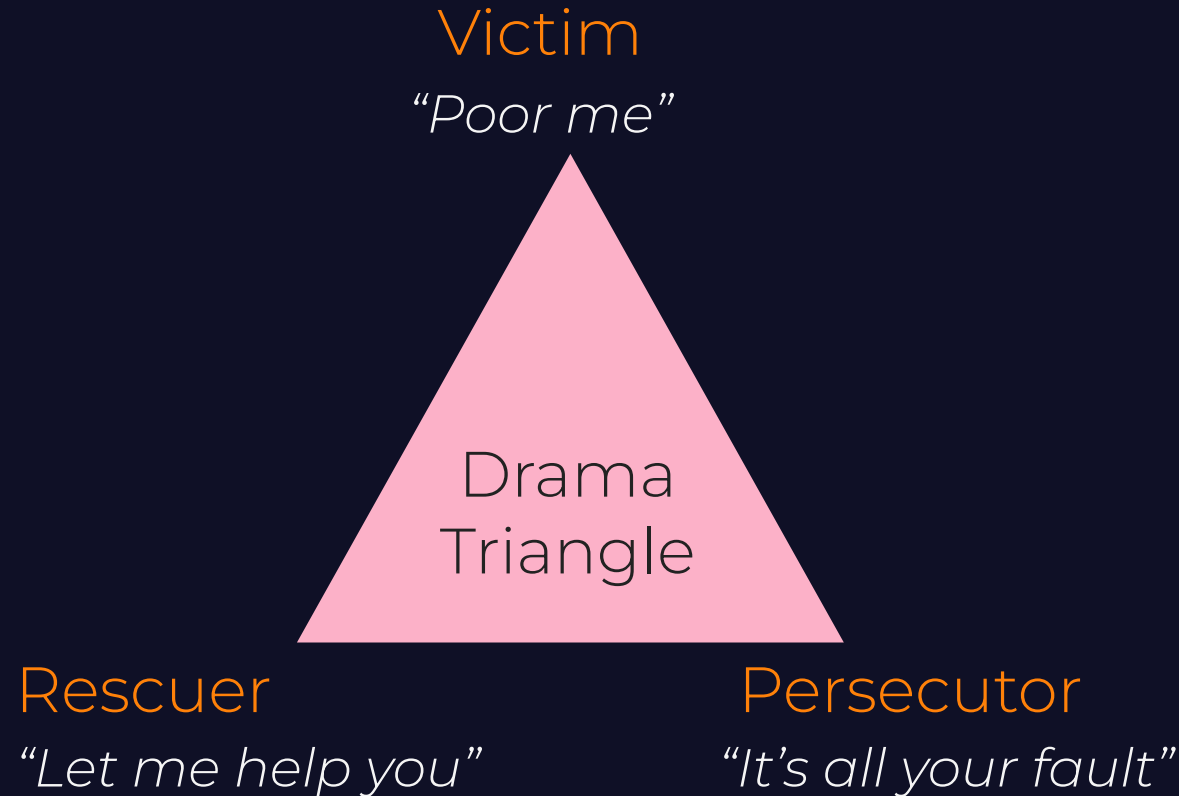


Reality > Ideal

Shared understanding > Absolute truth

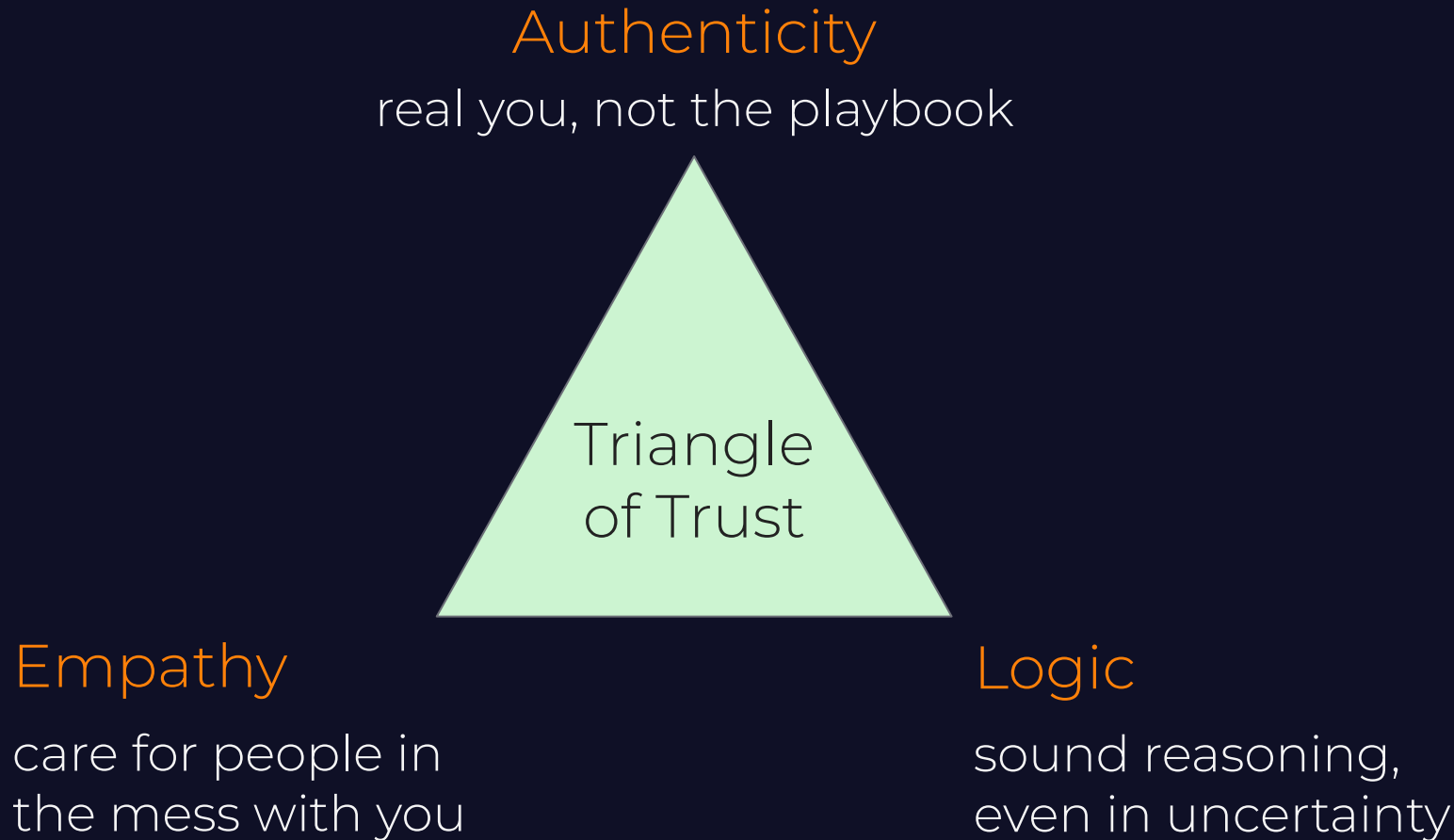
Progress > Perfection

Resisting reality → drama roles emerge



Source: Karpman, 1968

Working with reality builds trust



Source: Frei & Morriss, 2020

Truth is designable: putting it into practice

- **Shared synthesis** → build one version of truth
- **Prototypes** → make truths tangible
- **Retrospectives** → safe space for uncomfortable truths
- **Collaborative workshops** → align team and stakeholder truths
- **Observing research** → surface truths outside blind spots

We are truth facilitators



Make it safe to speak truth

- **Model it** → name small truths early
- **Invite it** → surface what feels unsaid
- **Protect it** → credit people who speak up
- **Act on it** → follow through when truth is spoken

Pause & reflect: where's your truth gap?

**Whose truth is
loudest?**

(user, delivery,
data, political,
etc.)

Pause & reflect: where's your truth gap?

Whose truth is loudest?

(user, delivery, data, political, etc.)

What truth is being resisted?

(user, delivery, data, political, etc.)

Pause & reflect: where's your truth gap?

Whose truth is loudest?

(user, delivery, data, political, etc.)

What truth is being resisted?

(user, delivery, data, political, etc.)

What could make truth safer or more visible?

(e.g. retros, team workshops, invite it)

(Being of) Service

Software

What does it mean to be of service?

“The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.”

- Robert K. Greenleaf, Servant Leadership, 1970

Who are we serving?

The
public

Who are we serving?

The
public

Stakeholder/
client

Who are we serving?

The
public

Stakeholder/
client

Team &
organisation

Who are we serving?

The
public

Stakeholder/
client

Team &
organisation

The
discipline

Who are we serving?

| The
public

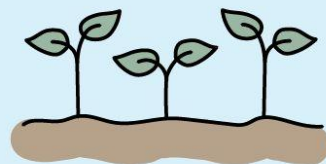
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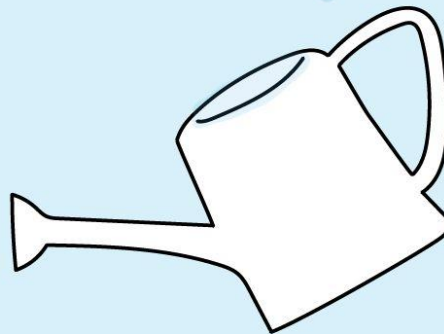
| The
discipline

| Ourselves

TO BE ABLE TO
CARE FOR OTHERS

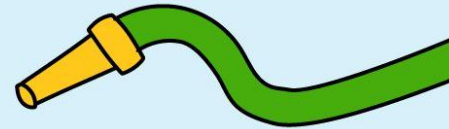


EMPATHY
GUIDANCE
KINDNESS



REST
SLEEP
ALONE TIME

YOU HAVE TO CARE
FOR YOURSELF



LIZ FOSSLIN

Who are we serving?

| The
public

| Stakeholder/
client

| Team &
organisation

| The
discipline

| Ourselves

Being of service, in practice

- **Public** → link user needs to strategy
- **Stakeholders** → support policy/service decisions in uncertainty
- **Teams** → enable others to succeed
- **Organisations** → shape better decisions and reputation
- **Discipline** → share learnings
- **Ourselves** → manage our own energy

Mindset shifts

“How do I win?” → “How can I be of service?”

“Am I right?” → “Are we moving forward?”

“Notice me” → “I notice you”

Pause & reflect: who are you in service to?

Right now... in your project, team, or career:

- Who are you being of service to?

public – stakeholders – team/organisation – discipline - yourself

- Who might you be overlooking?

In closing...

Software

Leading service design when the playbook doesn't fit

**Trust →
Speed**

we only move
as fast as trust
allows

**Truth →
Direction**

reality gives us
clarity on where
to go

**Service →
Momentum**

small actions
that help
people keep
moving





Tricia Radica Rambharose

User Experience (UX) Leadership | Career
coach serving people in minority groups ...



Thank you!

DM me on LinkedIn for
these slides and a chat
about all things UX in
Gov.

Questions?