

Tech Debt As Innovation

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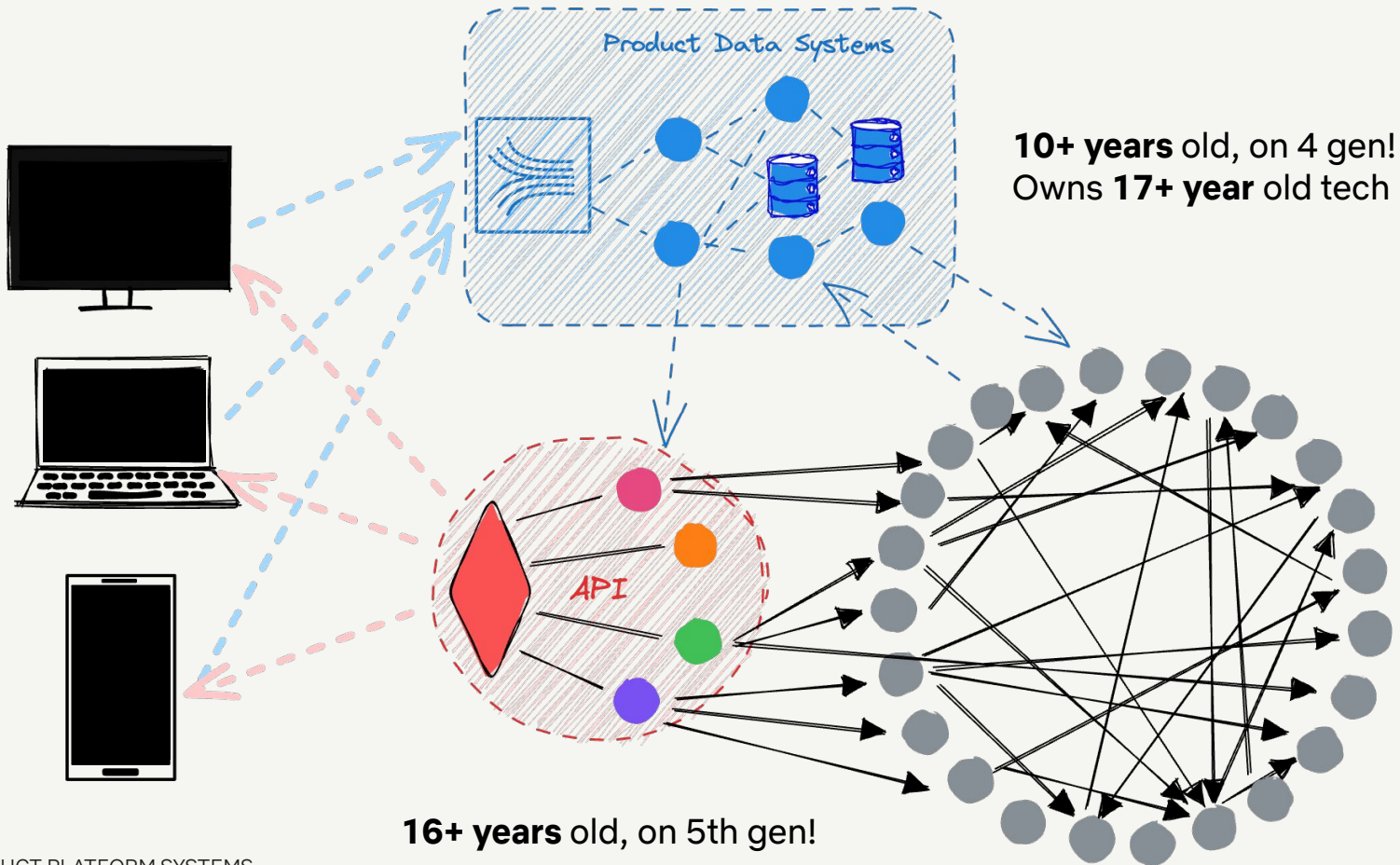
N GAMES

**A little
about me**

Tech Debt is a
***natural* byproduct**
of the software
innovation
lifecycle

**Tech Debt As
Innovation**

**Origin
Story**



10+ years old, on 4 gen!
Owns 17+ year old tech

16+ years old, on 5th gen!

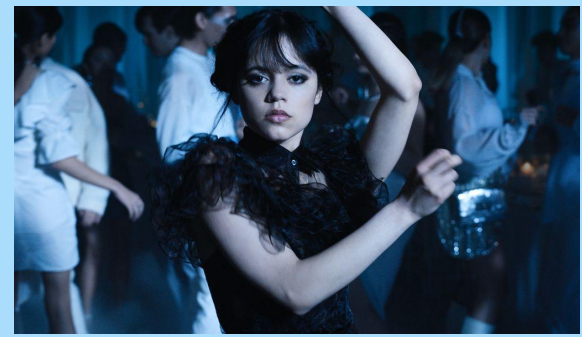
AHA MOMENTS

**Tech Debt as
Innovation**

Learning from Tech Leaders

Learning from Tech Leaders

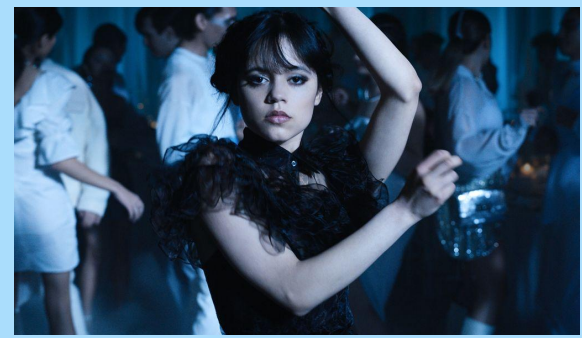
→ Tech Debt has a marketing problem



Learning from Tech Leaders

→ Tech Debt has a marketing problem

→ It's a “suitcase” term

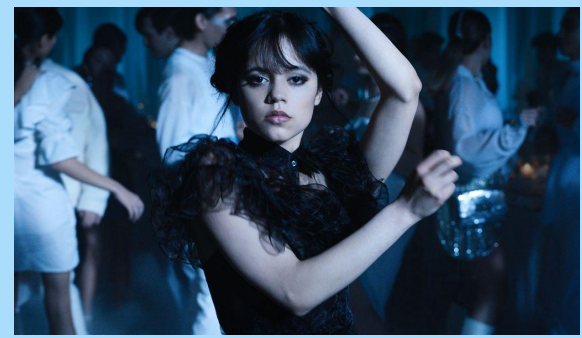


Learning from Tech Leaders

→ Tech Debt has a marketing problem

→ It's a "suitcase" term

→ Engineers aren't helping themselves



WHAT WE CHANGED

**Tech Debt As
Innovation**

Tech Debt Principles and Definitions

—
Create a shared vocabulary

Technical debt is the **delta** between a system's current and ideal state

What is **not** technical debt?

- Business decisions or strategy misalignment
- Lack of resources or tools
- Poor communication or cross-functional collaboration models
- Normal bugs and software errors
- Bad code
- Performance (unless it's not meeting functional requirements)
- Inherited code, systems, tools (*just because you didn't write it doesn't make it TD*)

Definitions

- Architecture
- Maintenance
- Deployability
- Operational
- Security
- Extensibility
- Knowledge
- Compound

Principles

- Be Specific
- Make it visible
- Net Reduce
- Be Proactive
- Value long-term system health over low-impact feature access
- Lean into the Future

NEGLECT IS
NOT A
STRATEGY






Name It, Fund It

-
**Invest with focus and resources
like any other innovation area**

Increase Confidence & Frequency of Deployments

O1: Create a healthy software hygiene culture

O2: Enable centralized fleet-wide change management

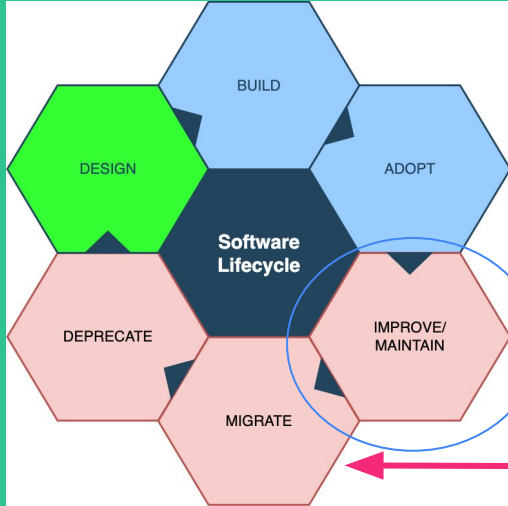
-  One of our most senior engineers is leading it
-  Netflix Tech wide impact
-  20+ ICs spanning multiple tracks / virtual teams / PME
-  Surfacing debt blockers, #1 is Knowledge Debt
-  Innovation required - “Confidence Chimp”, Service-tagging

-
You get what you pay for

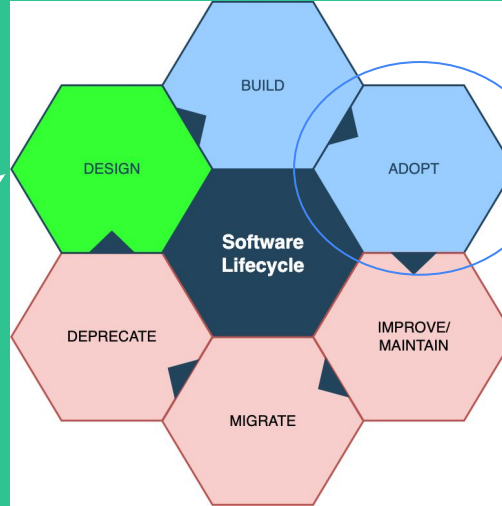
Talk About It

— Celebrate the wins, learn from the struggles

Ver X, The Workhorse



Ver X+1, Will solve all the problems



💡 the idea

Hardest part

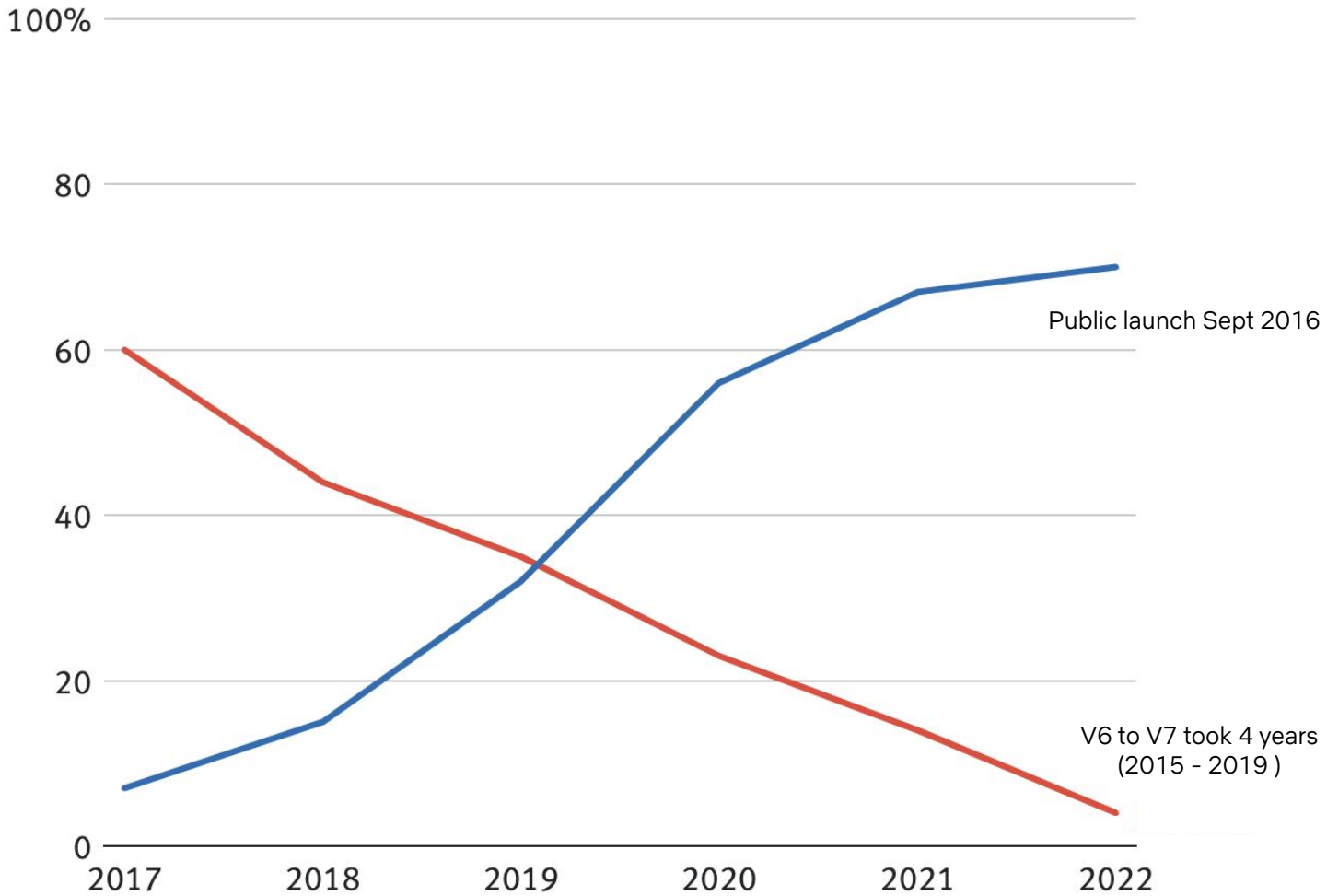
Stalls...

The Trap

- Leaders Change
- Teams Change
- Business / Priorities change
- Technologies Change
- **It doesn't work**

The race against time





**WHY
CALL IT
INNOVATION**

**Tech Debt As
Innovation**

Innovation Vehicle

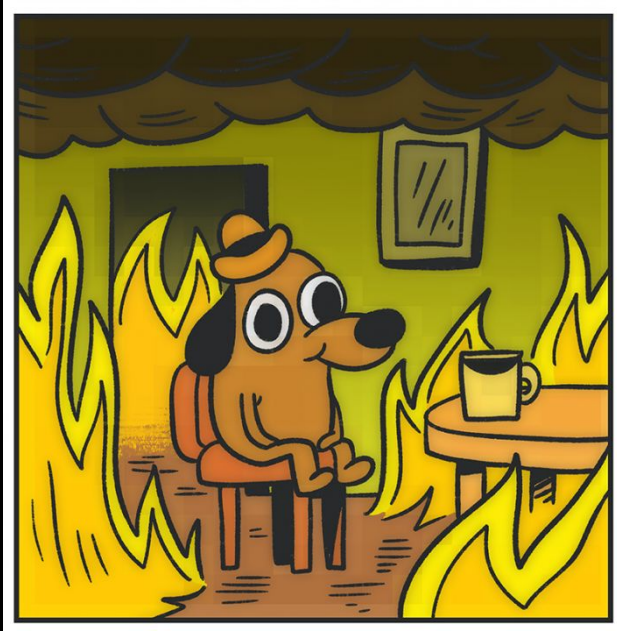
Product Innovation



Debt Innovation

Better management
Better innovation

MEME BUSTING



- Legacy == Debt
- Debt Zero as a goal
- Debt work is for junior folks or onboarding only
- Won't happen on a green field project
- If only we adopted this other tech...
- There's nothing we can do...

What you can do?



Founding
Survive

PMF
Automate

Scaling
Do Both

Steady
Unlock

Mega Corp
Hard over easy

So we can say
yes to the
business
more

Why call it
innovation

Thanks