

Product Managing High-Quality Products

The path to sustainable product success

Elizabeth Ayer, Associate Principal, Conflux

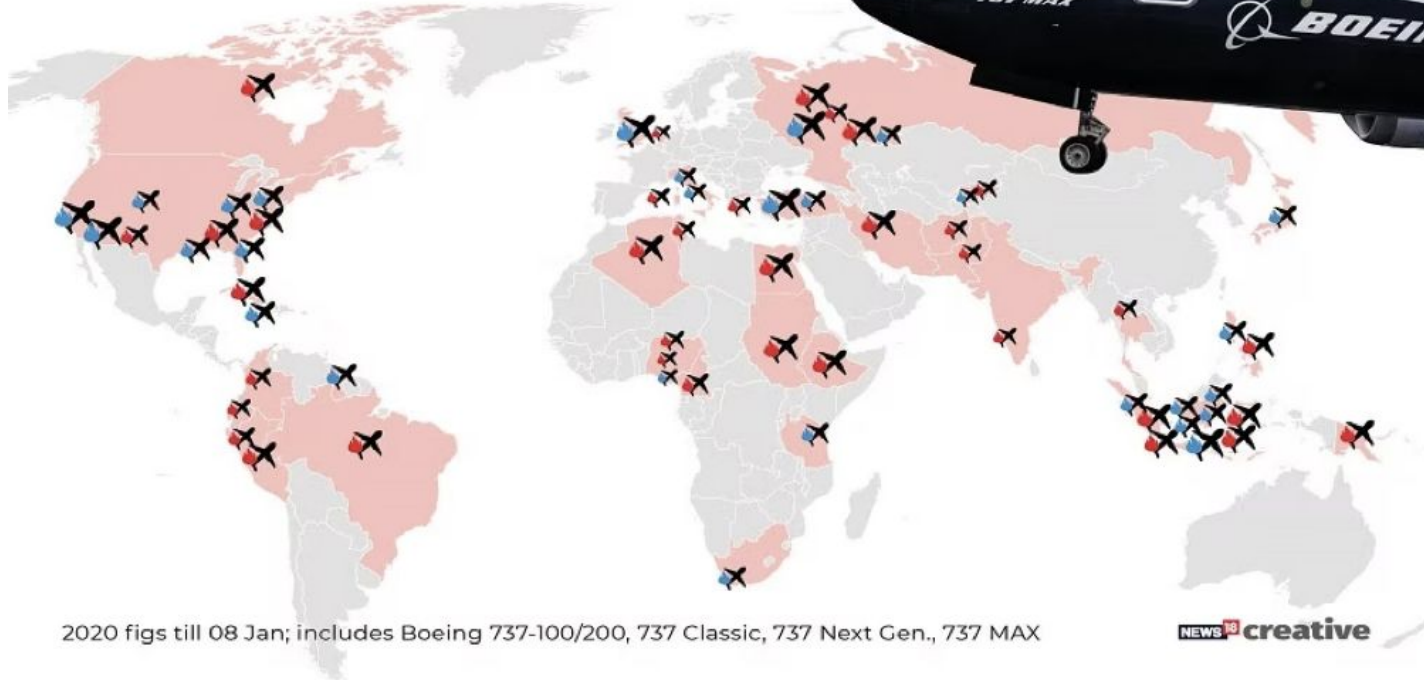
AGENDA

- The state of quality
- Understanding the layers of quality
- Levers product managers can use

Quality is having a tough time in 2024.

A MAP OF BOEING 737 ACCIDENTS

(2000-2020) ✈ Fatal ✈ Non-fatal



2020 figs till 08 Jan; includes Boeing 737-100/200, 737 Classic, 737 Next Gen., 737 MAX

NEWS18 creative

PROJECT to
PRODUCT
SUMMIT 2024

About me

- In product since 2007
- Product, Portfolio, Director, Consultant, Product
- Medium and large companies

... and I have absolutely been responsible for the poor quality of products.



State of Quality

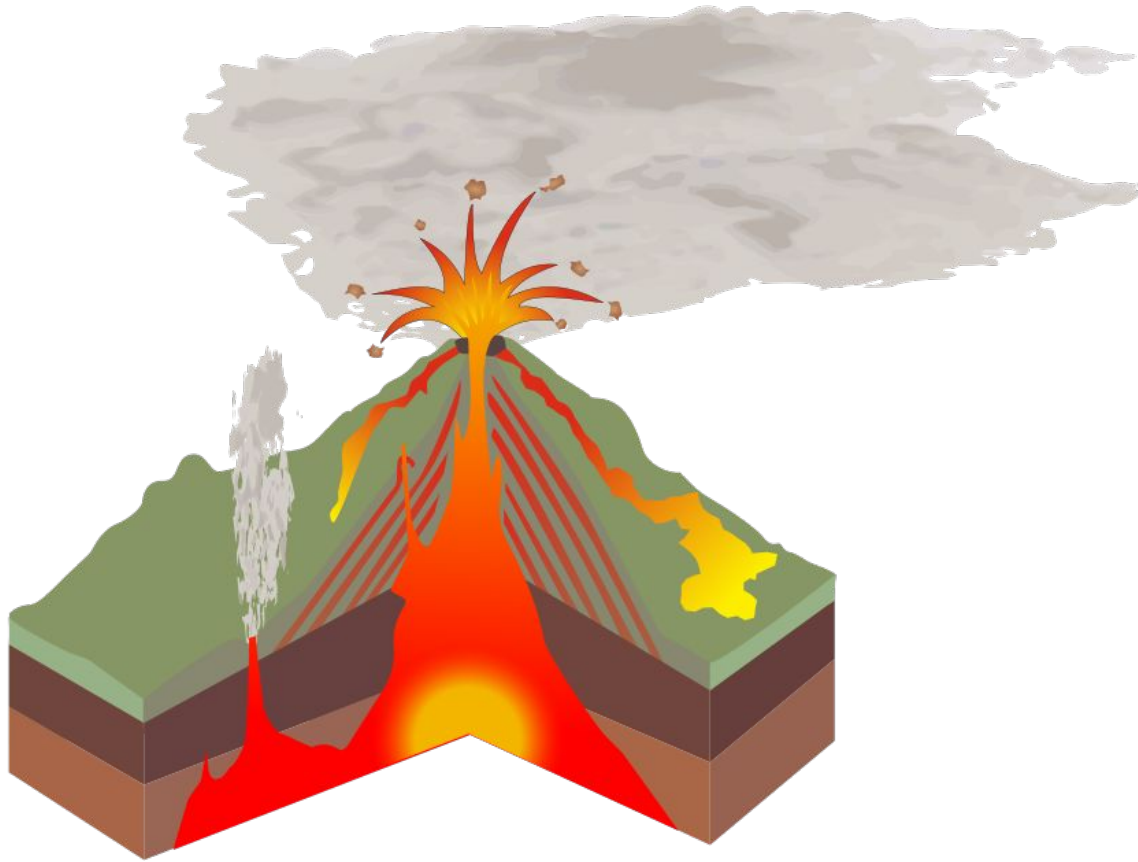
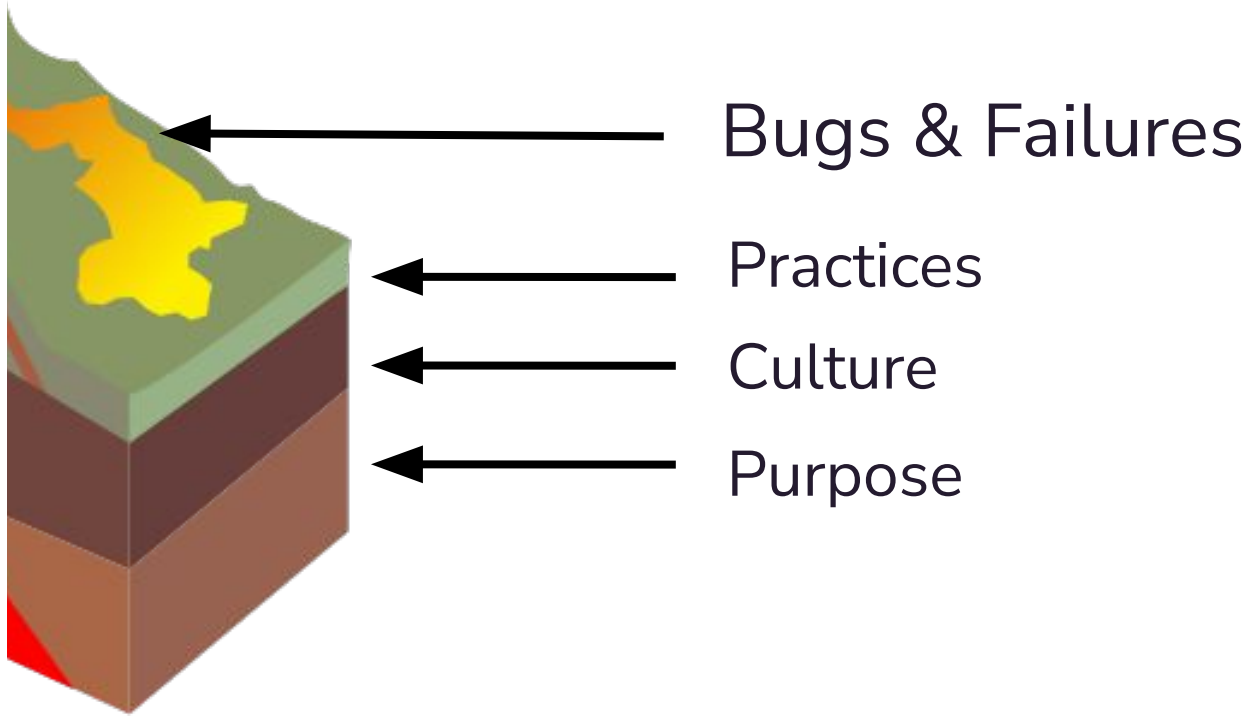


Image by William Crohot, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

State of Quality



2/ The Layers of Quality

Layer 1: Is quality just fewer bugs?

Old definition: **Quality** is the match between the software and requirements.

The Layers of Quality

✗ Quality is the match between the software and requirements.

✓ Quality is how well a product delivers on user expectations.

Functionality vs Quality Example

Functionality: Can the user send a text message? Y/N

Quality (primary user):

- How discoverable was the text messaging?
- How easy was it to use?
- How responsive was the system?
- How confident were they that it worked right?

Functionality vs Quality Example

Functionality: Can the user send a text message? Y/N

Quality (secondary users):

- (Administrator) How does the system behave under malicious use?
- (Developer) How maintainable is the code?
- (Text receiver) How are you protecting *my* data?

The Layers of Quality

**High-quality products
are much more than
“bug free”:**

Quality attributes (partial list)

Secure	Privacy-protecting	Consensual
Portable	Commercially trustworthy	Integrable
Usable	Configurable	Stable
Performant	Resource-efficient	Supportable
Reliable	Unobtrusive	Equitable

Source: [Enshittification as Overproduction in Software, Part 2](#)

The Layers of Quality

Quality is how well a product delivers on expectations.

When unmanaged, **poor quality** results in **unplanned work**.

Layer 2: Good quality needs more than a good testing process.

Key quote:

Inspection does not improve the quality, nor guarantee quality. Inspection is too late. The quality, good or bad, is already in the product. As Harold F. Dodge said, “You can not inspect quality into a product.”

- W. Edwards Deming

The Layers of Quality

Fast feedback is key to quality.

**Recommendation:
get confident in
Continuous Delivery
practices!**

Continuous Delivery includes

- Story slicing
- Trunk-based development
- Short-lived branches
- Feature toggles
- Continuous Integration
- Test automation
- Environment automation
- etc

Learn more at

<https://www.continuousdelivery.com/>

The Layers of Quality

Layer 3: A quality product comes out of a culture of quality.

Product managers aren't the producers of software, but they can create a context where quality can flourish.

What do teams get attention and praise for?

What do teams get attention and praise for?

Firefighting? Or time without incidents?

What do teams get attention and praise for?

Shipping new? Or improving existing?

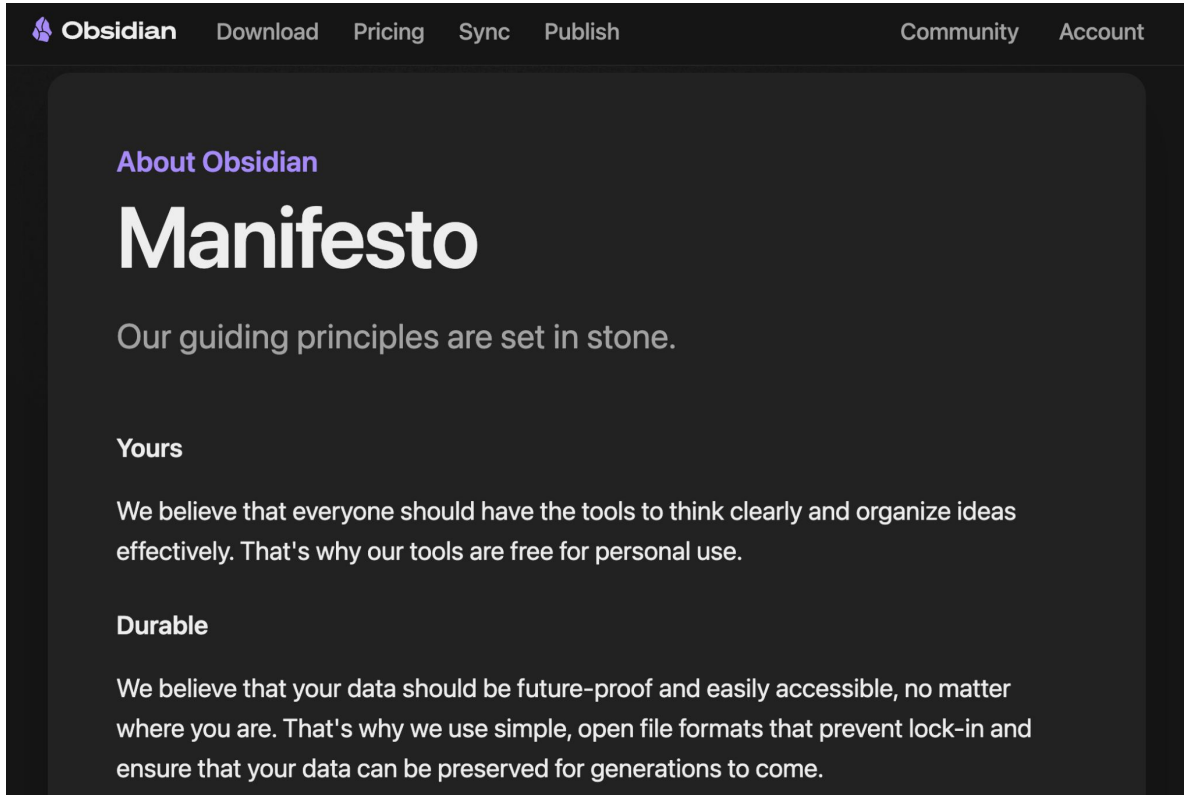
What do teams get attention and praise for?

Proactively fixing things?

Or doing only what *you* prioritize?

Layer 4: To sustain, **quality must be linked to the organization's **purpose**.**

Product Managing for Quality - Obsidian

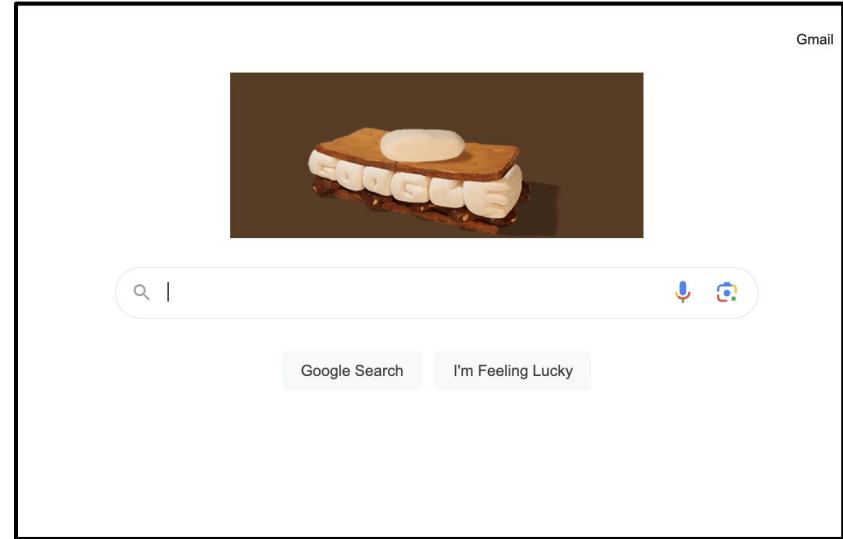
A screenshot of the Obsidian website's 'About Obsidian' page. The page has a dark background with white and purple text. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Obsidian logo and links for 'Download', 'Pricing', 'Sync', 'Publish', 'Community', and 'Account'. Below the navigation bar, the text 'About Obsidian' is written in purple. The main heading 'Manifesto' is in large white font. Below it, the text 'Our guiding principles are set in stone.' is displayed. The word 'Yours' is written in white, followed by a paragraph: 'We believe that everyone should have the tools to think clearly and organize ideas effectively. That's why our tools are free for personal use.' The word 'Durable' is written in white, followed by another paragraph: 'We believe that your data should be future-proof and easily accessible, no matter where you are. That's why we use simple, open file formats that prevent lock-in and ensure that your data can be preserved for generations to come.'

<https://obsidian.md/about>

Product Managing for Quality - Google

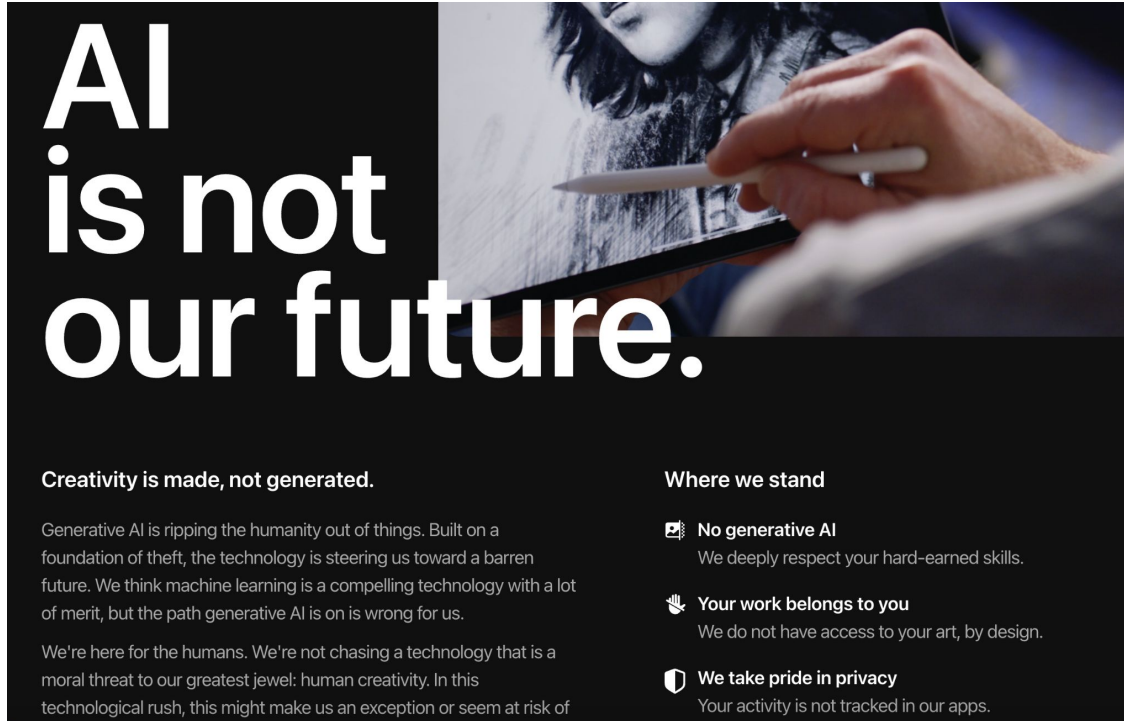
Google mission: “organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.”

Home page principles: “simple, uncluttered, colorful, friendly”



<https://www.google.com/> on 9/9

Product Managing for Quality - Procreate






AI is not our future.

Creativity is made, not generated.

Generative AI is ripping the humanity out of things. Built on a foundation of theft, the technology is steering us toward a barren future. We think machine learning is a compelling technology with a lot of merit, but the path generative AI is on is wrong for us.

We're here for the humans. We're not chasing a technology that is a moral threat to our greatest jewel: human creativity. In this technological rush, this might make us an exception or seem at risk of

Where we stand

-  **No generative AI**
We deeply respect your hard-earned skills.
-  **Your work belongs to you**
We do not have access to your art, by design.
-  **We take pride in privacy**
Your activity is not tracked in our apps.

<https://procreate.com/ai>

Security, privacy and accessibility. These things are in STATUTE.

The practices aren't always up to it, as mentioned before

Quality is how well a product delivers on expectations.

When unmanaged, **poor quality** results in **unplanned work**.

When well-managed, **high quality** can be a **strategic differentiator**.

State of Quality

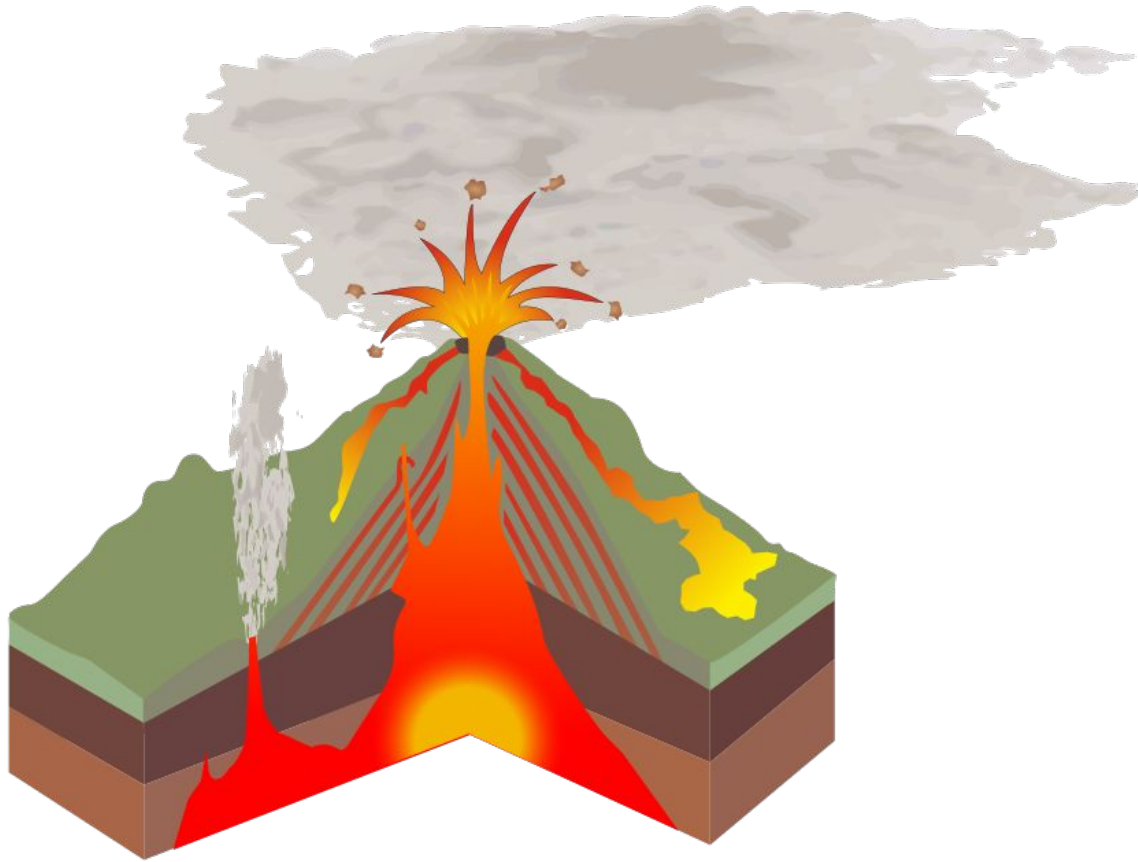


Image by William Crohot, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Product Managing for Quality

1. **Quality is about much more than bugs. It has a wide range of factors.**
2. **Quality practices need to go beyond testing to Continuous Delivery and beyond.**
3. **Culture is created in every interaction. Notice what you reward.**
4. **Quality culture is difficult to sustain without a business reason, usually a link to organizational purpose.**

Resources

Videos

Anne-Marie Charrett - [Is your quality on the road to nowhere?](#)

Elisabeth Hendrickson - [On the care and feeding of feedback cycles](#)

Maaret Pyhäjärvi- [Agile as if you meant it](#)

Foundational Books

W. Edwards Deming - *Out of the Crisis*

J. Humble and D. Farley - *Continuous Delivery*

... and Cory Doctorow on [Enshittification](#)

THANK YOU!

Continue the conversation

   @ElizAyer