

Alt text is provided on slides that have images or visuals. If a description is inaccurate or could be improved, please let me know [via email](#) or on [Twitter](#).

Prologue

WordCamp US
Milwaukee
2019

*We're going to
revolutionize
the way people
make content.*



Support

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Average Rating



2 out of 5 stars

You must be [logged in](#) to submit a review.

2,820 reviews

5 stars	<div><div></div></div>	498
4 stars	<div><div></div></div>	109
3 stars	<div><div></div></div>	107
2 stars	<div><div></div></div>	189
1 star	<div><div></div></div>	1917



[Gutenberg](#)

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[Gutenberg](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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Alt text: Screenshot of WordPress' Gutenberg plugin page, showing a two of five star rating for the plugin.

*Meet your new
best friends.
Blocks.*

[Support](#) » Plugin: [Gutenberg](#) » A soul destroying experience

A soul destroying experience



[paulychilds](#) (@paulychilds)

1 week, 2 days ago

I've never in my life worked with a wysiwyg editor so horrible to use. Here are just a few of the "highlights"

[Support](#) » Plugin: [Gutenberg](#) » A soul destroying experience

A soul destroying experience



[paulychilds](#) (@paulychilds)

1 week, 2 days ago

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Alt-text: An image of a review from user Pauly Childs, calling Gutenberg a “soul destroying experience.” He says “I’ve never in my life worked with a what-you-see-is-what-you-get editor so horrible to use. Here are just a few of the “highlights.”

*It's a whole
new way to use
WordPress.*



Leisa Reichelt

@leisa



Wordpress rolled out a fundamental change to the mental model of how to create content. Almost no change management. One tiny popup.

My 71yr old 'web master' dad went from feeling like a tech champion to feeling like an idiot overnight.

We web ppl still have a lot to learn...

1:01 PM · Dec 20, 2018 · [Twitter Web Client](#)

97 Retweets **304** Likes



Leisa Reichelt

@leisa



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Alt text: Screenshot from Twitter user @leisa “Wordpress rolled out a fundamental change to the mental model of how to create content. Almost no change management. One tiny popup. My 71 year old ‘web master’ dad went from feeling like a tech champing to feeling like an idiot overnight. We web people still have a lot to learn”

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*Built with
modern
technology?*

WP TAVERN

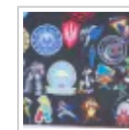
EST  2009

[Home](#) > [News](#) > WPCampus' Gutenberg Accessibility Audit Finds "Significant and Pervasive Accessibility Problems"

WPCampus' Gutenberg Accessibility Audit Finds "Significant and Pervasive Accessibility Problems"

 [Sarah Gooding](#)  May 2, 2019  11

★ CURRENTLY ON TAP



[All-in-One WP Migration
7.0 Patches XSS
Vulnerability](#)



[How To Create A
Dropdown Menu Of
WordPress](#)

WP TAVERN

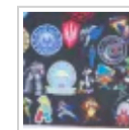
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[Home](#) > [News](#) > WPCampus' Gutenberg Accessibility Audit Finds "Significant and Pervasive Accessibility Problems"

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 [Sarah Gooding](#)  May 2, 2019  11

★ CURRENTLY ON TAP



[All-in-One WP Migration
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Alt text: Screenshot from WP Tavern with the title “WPCampus’ Gutenberg Accessibility Audit Finds ‘Significant and Pervasive Accessibility Problems’”

Rian Rietveld

Web accessibility specialist

[Portfolio](#)

[Meet](#)

[Contact](#)

**I have resigned as the WordPress
accessibility team lead. Here is
why.**



Rian Rietveld

Web accessibility specialist

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[Meet](#)

[Contact](#)

**I have resigned as the WordPress
accessibility team lead. Here is
why.**



Alt text: Screenshot from Rian Rietveld's blog "I have resigned as the WordPress accessibility team lead. Here is why"



~C
@cwodtke



Nobody works this way, [@wordpress](#)! Not normal people... look at every other writing platform: word, IA writer, Medium... this is some fucking unintuitive shit here! Why would you enforce a nonstandard approach on every single user? I can see it as a choice, but not as default.

11:53 AM · Jul 12, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

4 Likes





~C
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11:53 AM · Jul 12, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

4 Likes



Alt text: A screenshot of a tweet from @cwodtke saying “Nobody works this way, wordpress! Not normal people.. look at every other writing platform: word, IA writer, Medium... this is some fucking unintuitive shit here! Why would you enforce a nonstandard approach on every single user? I can see it as a choice, but not as default.”



Nic Bertino
@nicbertino



Ugh. We tried so hard to make it better, but we were stopped at every turn. Eventually I gave up. I didn't want to be associated with it. I'm sorry.



~c @cwodtke · Jul 12

Nobody works this way, @wordpress! Not normal people... look at every other writing platform: word, IA writer, Medium... this is some fucking unintuitive shit here! Why would you enforce a nonstandard approach on every single user? I can see it as a choice, but not as default.

[Show this thread](#)

9:24 PM · Jul 12, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Alt text: The speaker (@nicbertino) responding to @cwodtke on Twitter “Ugh. We tried so hard to make it better, but we were stopped at every turn. Eventually I gave up. I didn’t want to be associated with it. I’m sorry.”

My Tragic Design

Your Tragic Design

Your Tragic Design

Nic Bertino

Part I: What happened?

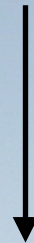
No one wants to
make a bad
product.

Blocks
happened.

Blocks are a
content layout
concept.



The hill in which many people died for blocks



Alt text: A desert hill in the background.

Blocks are not
content.

Traditional Content Editors

October 5, 2019 at 2:06 PM

Literally every text editor ever created

This is a paragraph.

This is also a paragraph. I can select between two paragraphs.

Alt text: A screenshot of a heading and two paragraphs in Apple Notes, with a selection cursor encapsulating parts of both.

Your New Best Friend

Add title

This is a paragraph.

This is also a paragraph. Can I select text between the two without selecting their blocks?

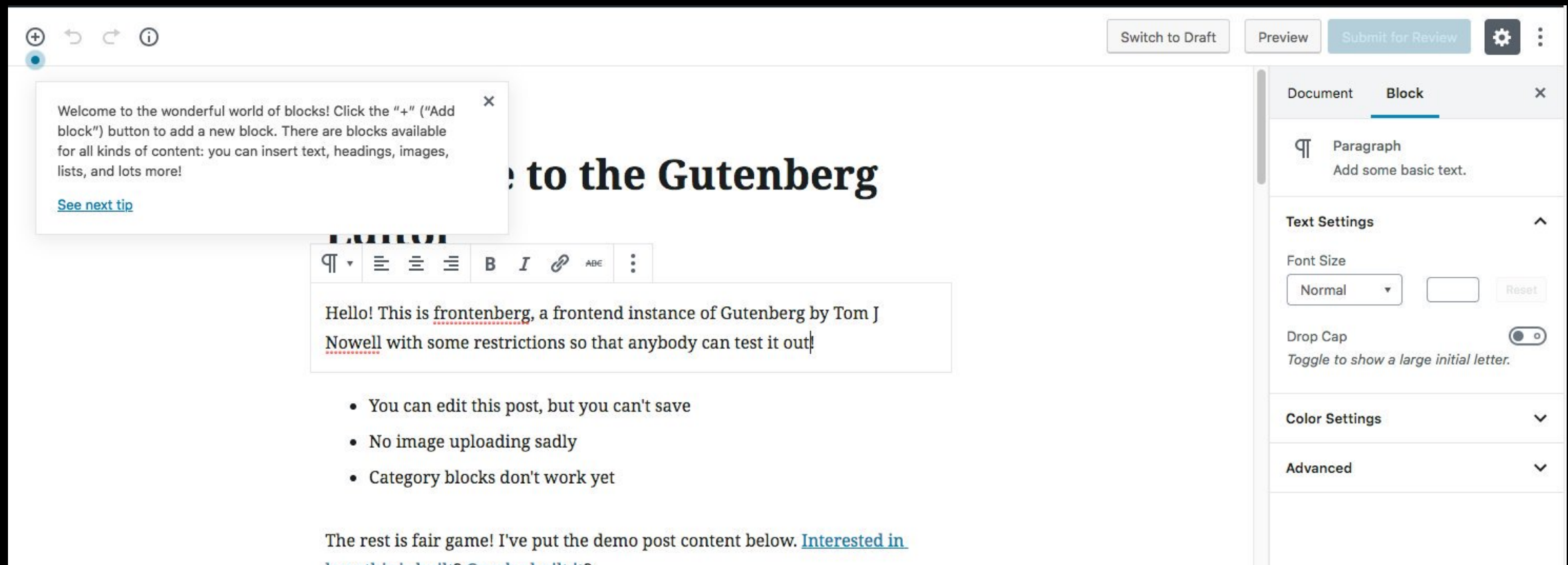
Alt text: A title and two paragraphs in Gutenberg's editor, with two blocks selected (you cannot select mid sentence content between two paragraphs, only their containing blocks).

People create
content. Not
blocks.

Simple elements,
such as paragraphs,
lists, and headings
are blocks.

This breaks digital
content publishing
conventions and is
generally considered
a *poor decision*.

Each block has a massive amount of UI



Alt text: A screenshot of Gutenberg's UI with a number of controls around content and a styling drawer on the right side.

The amount of UI is
then compounded by
the amount of
blocks.

Block 1

Block 2

Block 3

Block 4

Block 5

Block 6

Block 7

Block 8

Block 9

Block 10

Block 11

2.6

My Gutenberg Post

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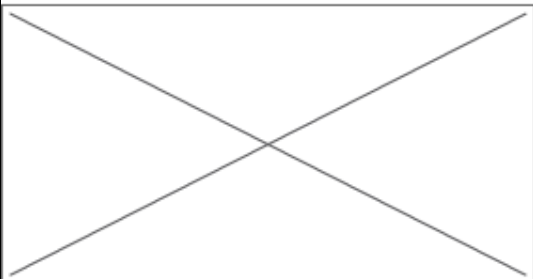
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Proposal

My Gutenberg Post

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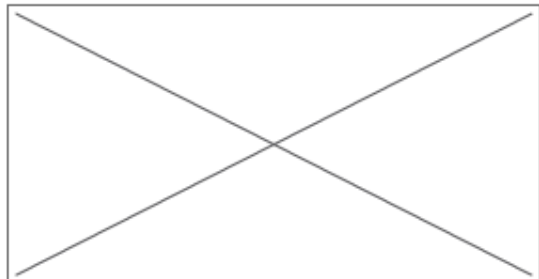
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Block 1

Block 2

Block 3

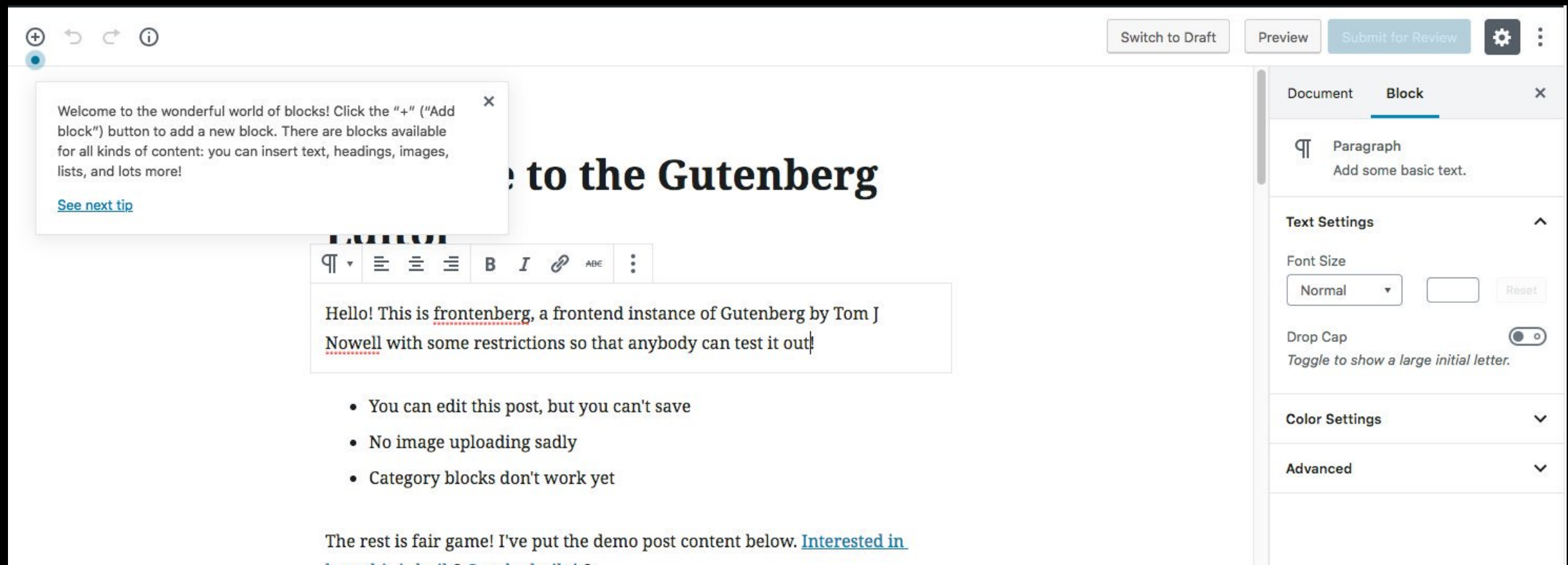
Alt text: Two blog posts are shown, one with 11 blocks under the Gutenberg model, and one with 3 blocks under a more traditional authoring model.

... all of which needs to
be conveyed to
assistive technologies.

SPOILER ALERT

It is near impossible to
make this design
accessible

The messy UI creates a lot of cognitive noise, but can mostly be ignored by sighted users.



When sighted users
can make beautiful
content but anyone
using a screenreader
can't...

When you create
better outcomes for
people with certain
abilities...

It's
Tragic
Design

Tragic design is the product of *solving the wrong problems* and *learning the wrong things*.

How to Avoid Tragic Design

- Research
- Strategy
- Inclusive Design
- Launch Planning

Part II:

Research

Given two solutions to a user problem:

Solution A (MVP)

- Creates a user outcome
- Is performant
- Not “pleasurable”
- Can be launched quickly

Solution B

- Creates a user outcome
- Performs exceptionally
- Easy to use and pleasurable
- Takes significantly longer to launch

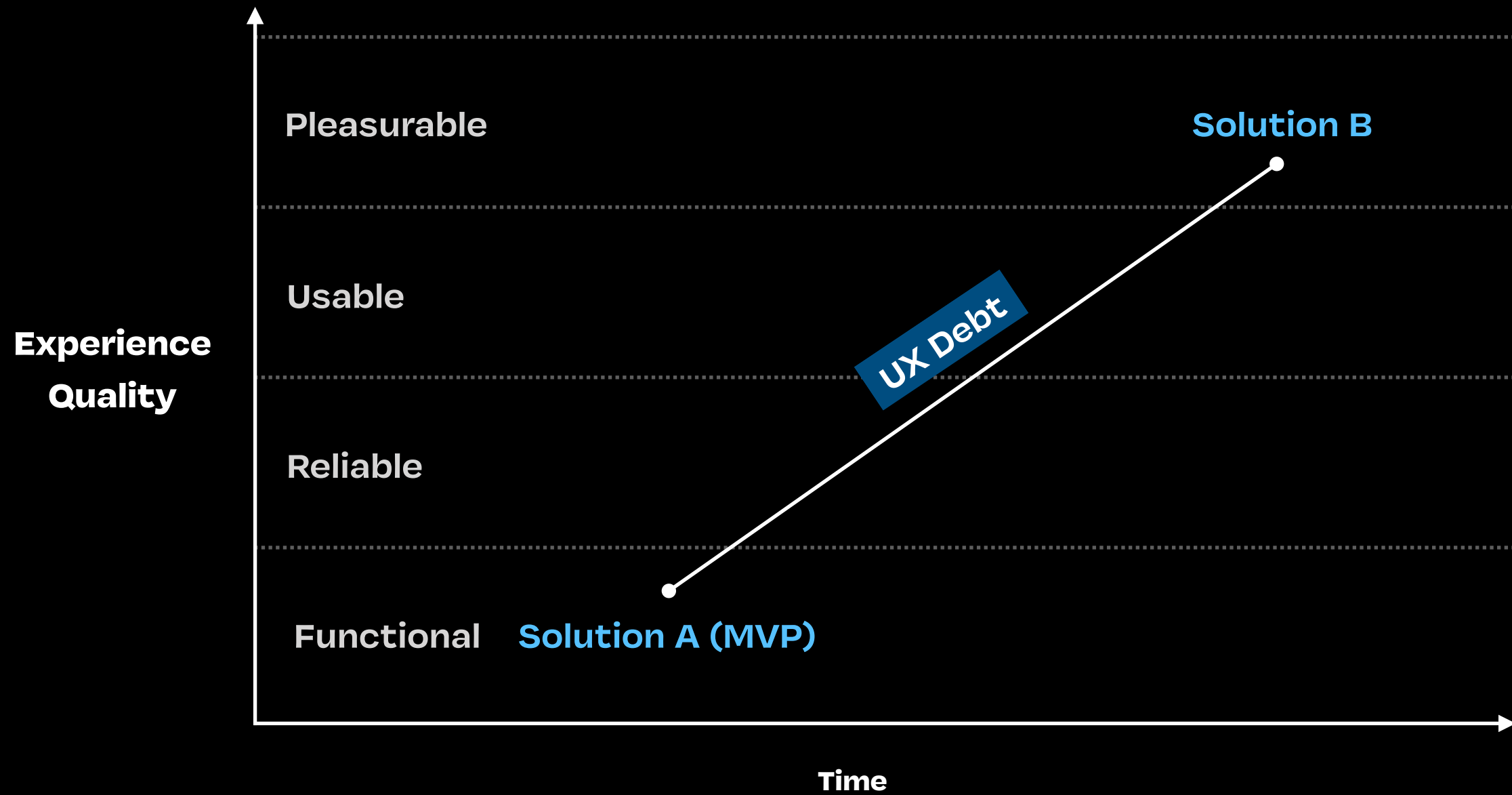
Optimistic Experience Quality



Alt text: A graph shows two solutions plotted. The x-axis is Time, and the y-axis is Experience Quality. Solution A (MVP) is in the lane of “Functional” (bottom left of graph) while Solution B is in the top right of the graph in the “Pleasurable” lane.

The distance between
A and **B** is UX debt.

Optimistic Experience Quality



Alt text: A graph shows the same two solutions plotted with a line between Solution A (MVP) and Solution B, with the line being labeled “UX Debt.”

This assumes that
functional is the floor.

Meet *UX Hell*, where
your product is
functional but it
sucks.

Realistic Experience Quality

Experience
Quality

Pleasurable

Usable

Reliable

Functional

Confusing

Unusable

Tragic

Solution A (MVP)

Time

Solution B



Alt text: A graph titled “Realistic Experience Quality” shows Time on the X axis and Experience Quality on the Y axis. Lanes on the Y axis include Pleasurable, Usable, Reliable, Functional, Confusing, Unusable, Tragic. Solution A (MVP) is in the Functional lane (middle left) and Solution B is in the Tragic lane (middle bottom).

UX Rot is what happens when you don't address UX debt.

Experience
Quality

Realistic Experience Quality

Pleasurable

Usable

Reliable

Functional

Confusing

Unusable

Tragic

Solution A (MVP)

Time

UX Rot

Solution B





Alt text: A line is added to the Realistic Experience Quality graph between Solution A (MVP) and Solution B with a label of UX Rot.

The area on the graph under Functional is labeled “UX Hell.”

Or, you're actually
solving the wrong
problems and learning
the wrong things.

If you stay idle, you
can also fall into UX
Rot as user behaviors
evolve.

Before Solution A (MVP):

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Behavioral data
- Contextual inquiries
- Mental model mapping
- Competitive analysis

Which should yield:

- User outcomes
- Health and performance indicators
- Contextual information
- Where the landmines are

That you can share with:

- Your project team
- Stakeholders and leadership
- Users

So you can accomplish:

- Shared understanding
- Inclusion
- A path toward strategy

Part III:

Strategy

Destroy all
visionaries and
idols.

Big problems and projects are not successful because of one person.

One visionary can
completely derail a
project.

Take your learnings
from research and
duke it the heck out
with your project
team.

Good Strategy/Bad Strategy (Rumelt) is an incredible resource for creating a product strategy.

Most importantly, it
will allow your team to
say **no.**

Defining strong
boundaries keeps
teams from
sabotaging the project.

Before Solution A (MVP):

- A strong problem statement
- Guiding policies
- Coherent actions

Which should yield:

- A guiding strategy document

That you can share with:

- Your project team
- Stakeholders and leadership
- Users

Part IV:
Inclusive
Design



Léonie
@LeonieWatson



Replying to [@cswordpress](#) [@afercia](#) and [@HugoGiraudel](#)

This is certainly true. Gutenberg is so inaccessible to screen reader users that neither [@SinaBarham](#) nor I could use it, so goodness knows how awful it must be for people who spend less of their time debugging screen reader related things.

1:36 PM · Apr 3, 2018 · [Chicken Nugget](#)

4 Retweets **5** Likes

Alt text: Tweet from @LeonieWatson “This is certainly true. Gutenberg is so inaccessible to screen reader users that neither @SinaBarham nor I could use it, so goodness knows how awful it must be for people who spend less of their time debugging screen reader related things.”

SPOILER ALERT

It is near impossible to
make this design
accessible

You cannot, under any
circumstances, bolt
on accessibility.

SPOILER ALERT

Making something
WCAG 2.x/AA doesn't
mean it's *accessible*.

“The editor will endeavour to
create a new page and post
building experience that
makes writing rich posts
effortless”

–Matt Mullenweg
January 4, 2017

The editor will create a new page and post building experience that makes writing rich posts effortless **regardless of ability.**

Using a vendor? Ask them how they've made a product accessible. Then ask their reference clients.

Bring users with
assistive devices onto
your project team.

Partner with
Disabilities Resources
or your digital a11y
team early on.

Build in budget for an
accessibility
consultant.

Before Solution A (MVP):

- Include assistive technologies in strategy and design
- Test user outcomes in a number of different contexts
- Hire external accessibility consultants

Part V: Launch Plan

You have as much
information as you
need to deploy
Solution A.

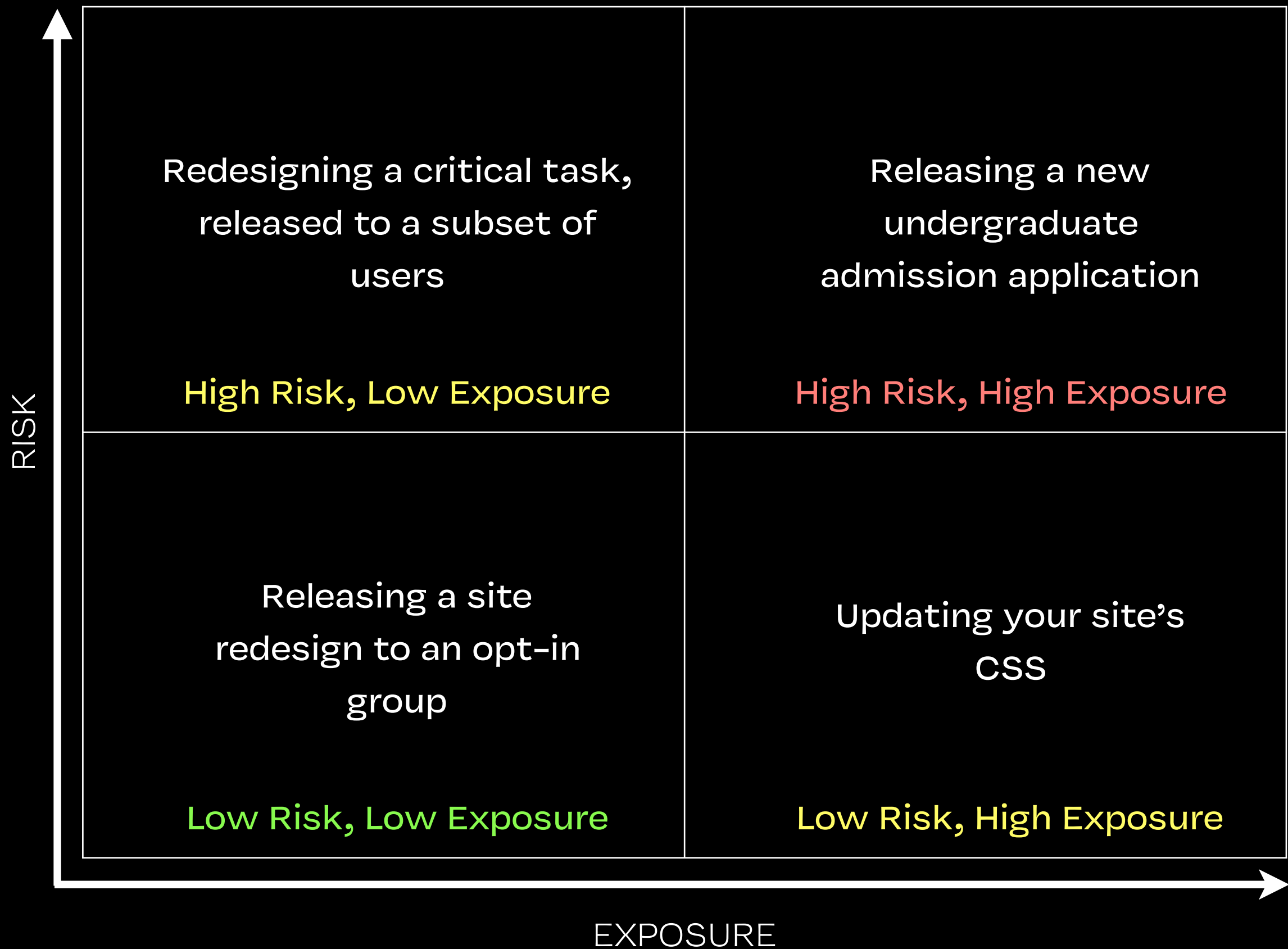
It's time to create a
Launch Plan.

LAUNCH

’N

LEARN

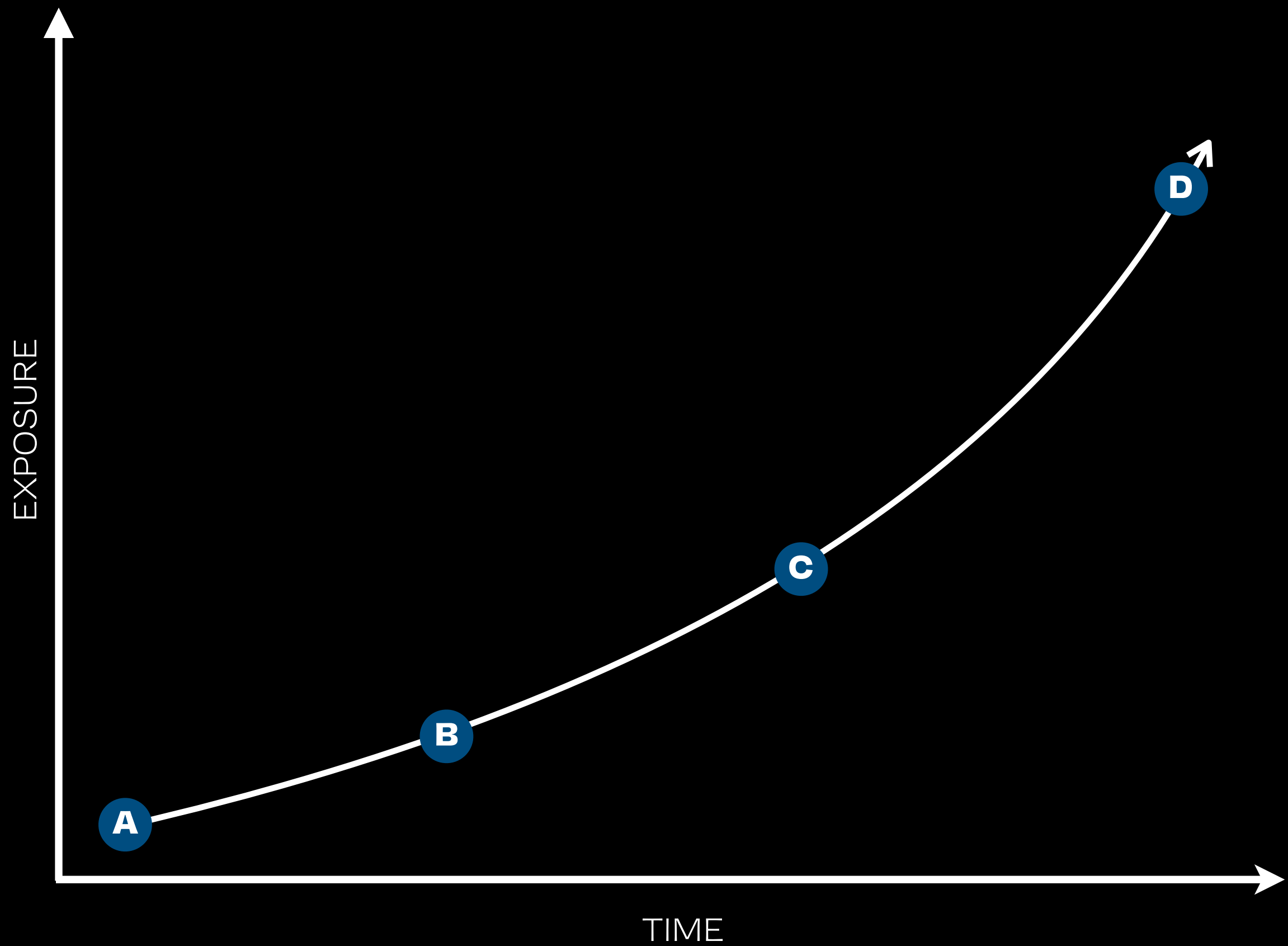
Control risk so you are
able to learn quickly
and safely.



Alt text: A Johari's window shows escalating risk and exposure. Each window is labeled with an example:

- Low Risk, Low Exposure (Releasing a site redesign to an opt-in group)
- Low Risk, High Exposure (Updating your site's CSS)
- High Risk, Low Exposure (Redesigning a critical task, released to a subset of users)
- High Risk, High Exposure (Releasing a new undergraduate admission application)

Cut a release plan
with clear learning
objectives for each
risk increase.



Alt text: A graph shows exposure over time with releases titled A/B/C/D along the plotline.

Create dead simple
feedback channels
and agree on a triage
plan.

AKA: Don't make it
difficult for people to
talk to you.

Acknowledge
feedback (but don't be
afraid to say no).

Everyone remembers
a bad launch. Don't
guess the readiness.

Epilogue: Your Good Design

Next time you launch:

- Do all of the research
- Have a strong strategy document
- Design for all contexts
- Launch to learn

Expect these things.

If you don't get them,
run.

Acknowledgements

The entire community A11y team, with special thanks to:

Rachel Cherry, Rian Rietveld, Andrea Fercia, Joe Dolson, Morten Rand-Hendriksen

For their help with UX Debt/Rot Visualizations:

Kevin Hsieh, Julien Pierret

Amanda Rush and **Adrian Roselli** for constantly challenging inaccessible products in open source.

Cynthia Savard Saucier and **Jonathan Shariat** who wrote the book on *Tragic Design* (2017).