


Management presentations

Information Technology in Practice, ETH Zürich

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OBJECTIVES OF THIS LECTURE

- Understanding the importance of audience-specific communication
- Receiving insights into the way managers evaluate information and make decisions
- Learning how to structure presentations for management

A middle-aged man with grey hair and a mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and striped tie, is smiling and holding a black folder. He is standing in an office environment with other people blurred in the background.

**How do you
convince him?**

HOW DO YOU CONVINCE ...



... the CFO that your business case is feasible?

... the head of R&D to continue supporting your overdue, over-budget project?



... the student to join your company for an internship?

TYPICALLY, YOUR AGENDA WILL NOT BE ALIGNED COMPLETELY WITH YOUR AUDIENCE'S

Your agenda

- Receive funding/staff/...
- Provide information (but ask yourself for what purpose)
- Enforce a decision
- ...

Your audience's agenda

- None ("why am I in this meeting?")
- Understand/hear about issues
- Tell you what to do
- Show off
- ...

How do you align these?

The diagram consists of two rectangular boxes at the top, each with a folded bottom-right corner. The left box is titled 'Your agenda' and the right box is titled 'Your audience's agenda'. Both boxes contain a bulleted list of items. From the bottom of each box, a thick grey arrow points downwards and then turns horizontally to point towards a central dark blue oval. The oval contains the text 'How do you align these?'.

Usually, the **worst** reason to give a presentation:

Showing how you came to your solution and how much effort you invested into it



REMEMBER, THE AUDIENCE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU ARE!

- Focus on dealing with the expectations of the audience
- Make sure that your audience takes away something valuable from your presentation



What is the take-away from your presentation?



On average, people can only remember three key messages from one presentation

MAKE SURE YOUR PRESENTATION FITS THE AUDIENCE

- ▶ **Do you present the right content?**
- ▶ **Do you present it the right way?**

Possible ways of structuring your presentation

- Tell a story
- Use a top-down approach
- Align with examples

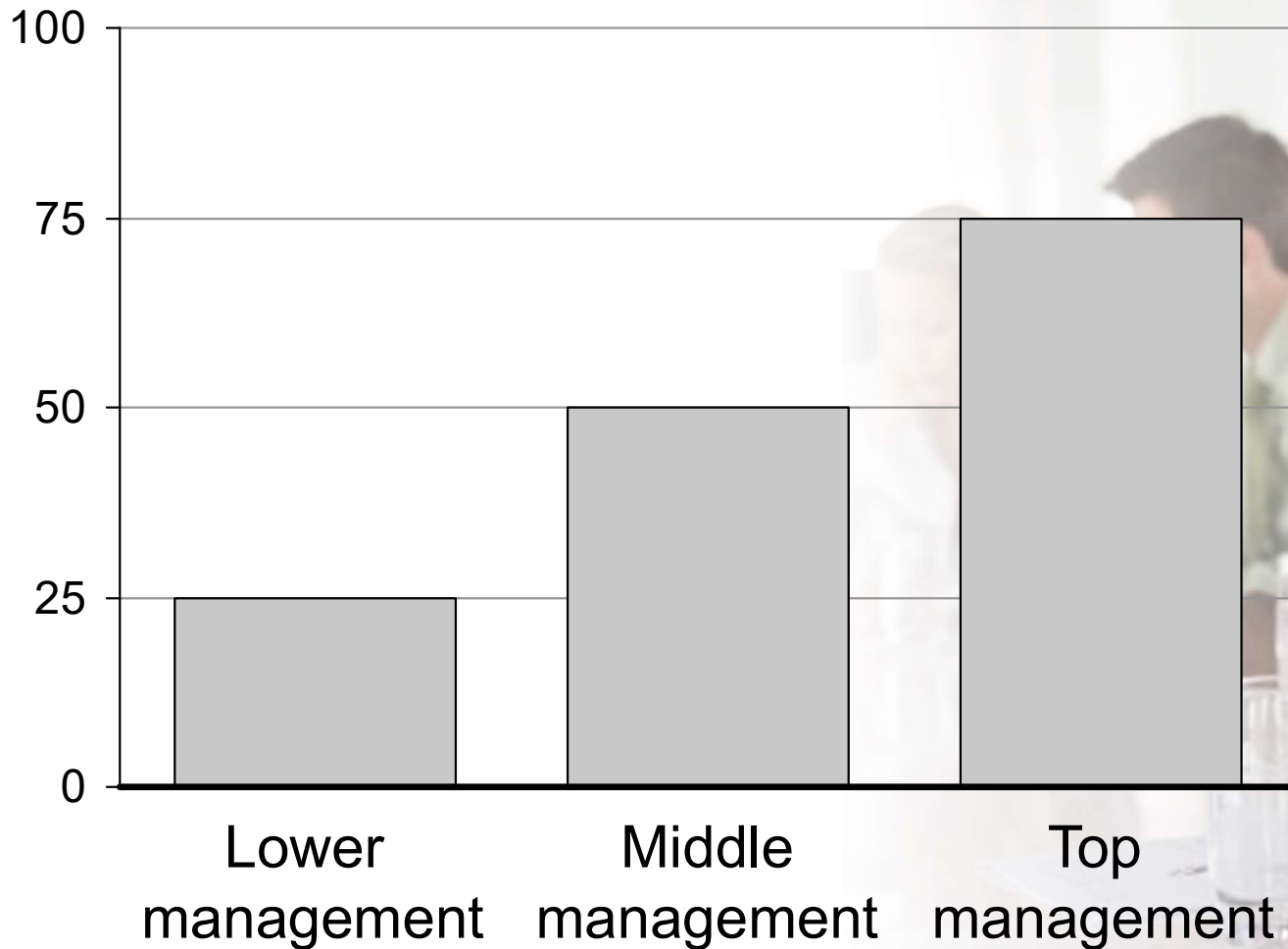


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How do **YOU
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IS THIS TIME SPENT EFFECTIVELY?

Percentage of working time spent in meetings



Source: Handelsblatt, 23.11.2000: "Meetings sind für Führungskräfte Zeitfresser Nummer 1"


**TYPICALLY, A MANAGER WANTS TO DECIDE ABOUT SOMETHING
(EVEN IF IT IS ONLY “CONTINUE AS PLANNED”)**

How do you enable her to
make an informed decision?



TO ENABLE A MANAGER TO MAKE A DECISION, YOU MUST ...

- Provide her/him with a basis/the context to make the decision
- Make the decision and available options transparent
- If possible, provide her/him with a recommendation and a rationale why this is the best possible option
- Clearly state the implications of selecting the different options



A good manager will not decide about something she/he does not understand*

* Except if she/he trusts you – a lot

DO'S AND DONT'S OF MANAGEMENT PRESENTATIONS

Many mistakes when delivering management presentations are based on a lack of understanding of the interests of the audience

Do's

- Provide **one** recommendation, with a very short list of possible options
- State clearly what the stakeholders have to decide about
- Remove all information which is not directly relevant (you can always place it in an appendix)

Dont's

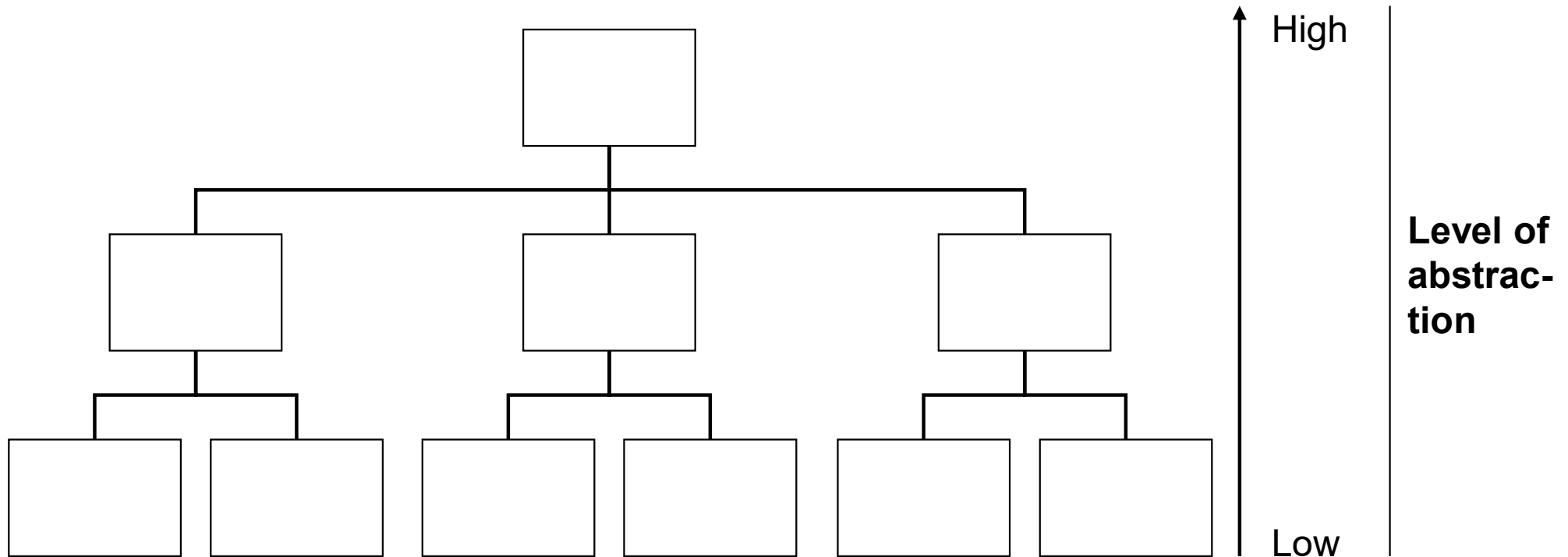
- Present your recommendations without having assured buy-in in one-to-one meetings beforehand
- Describe your analysis approach
- Provide a long list of possible alternatives
- Provide a large amount of non-aggregated data
- ...

THE PYRAMID PRINCIPLE (1/2)

- The pyramid principle is a powerful approach to structure your presentation
- It is particularly suited for management presentations
- But it is not a one-size-fits-all solution!

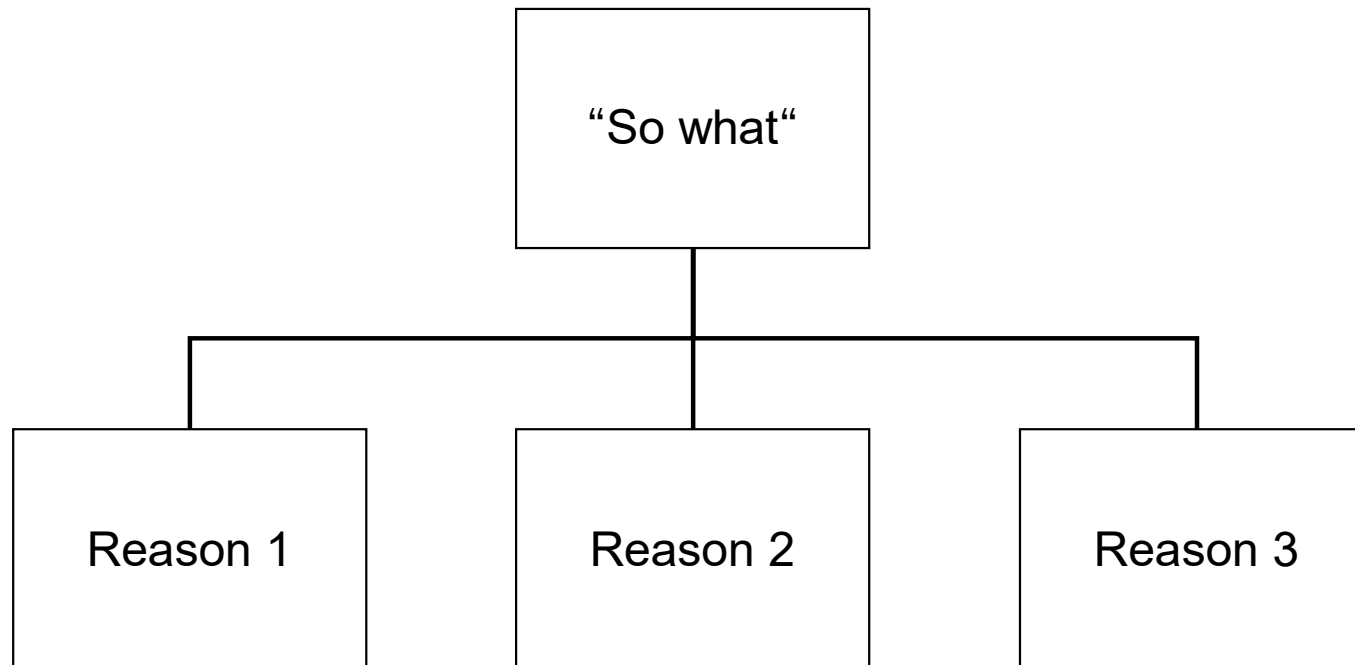


THE PYRAMID PRINCIPLE (2/2)



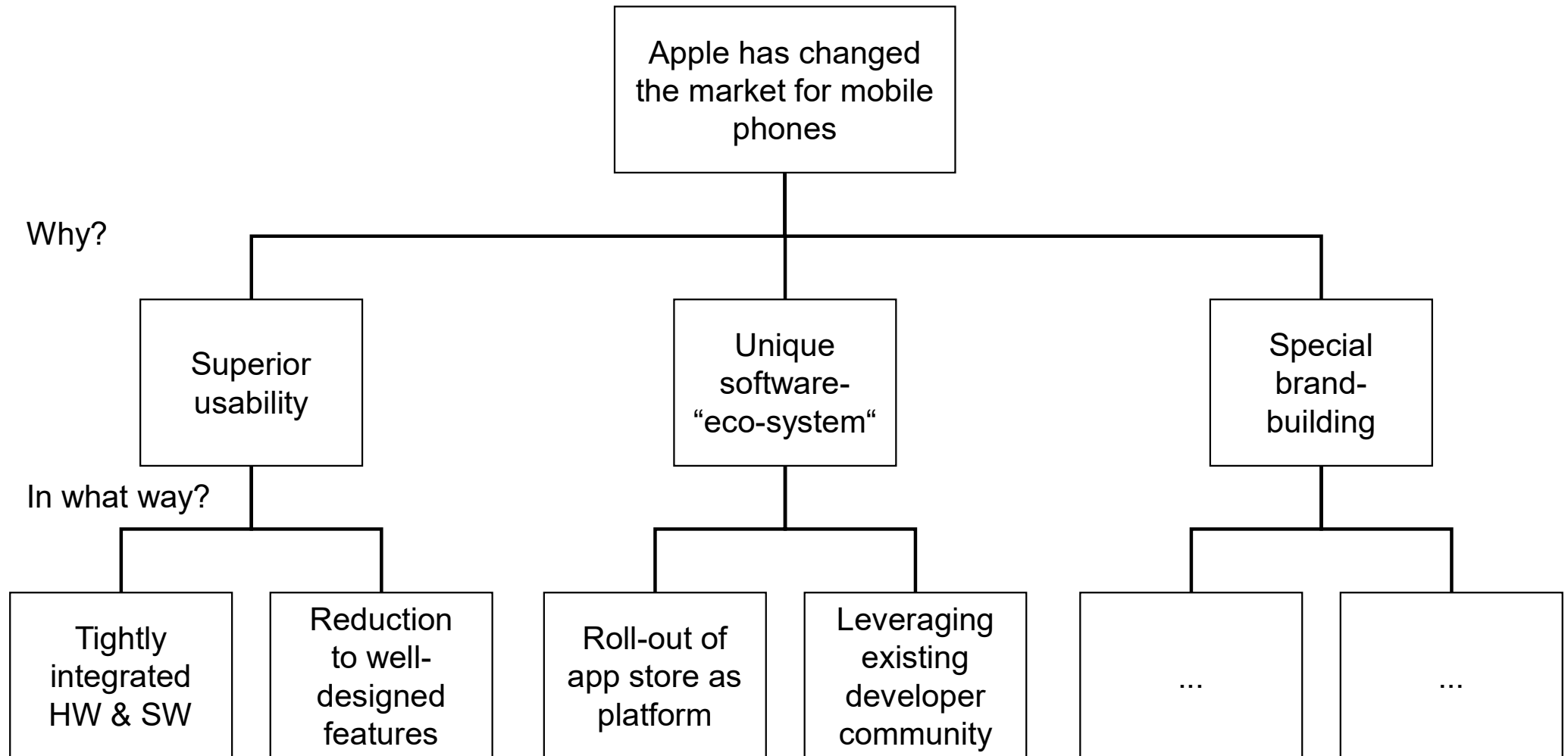
- The pyramid principle helps you to deliver your argument based on a top-down approach
- It supports your synthesis by structuring arguments and facts in a logical, straightforward fashion

REASONING IN STORY LINE PYRAMIDS

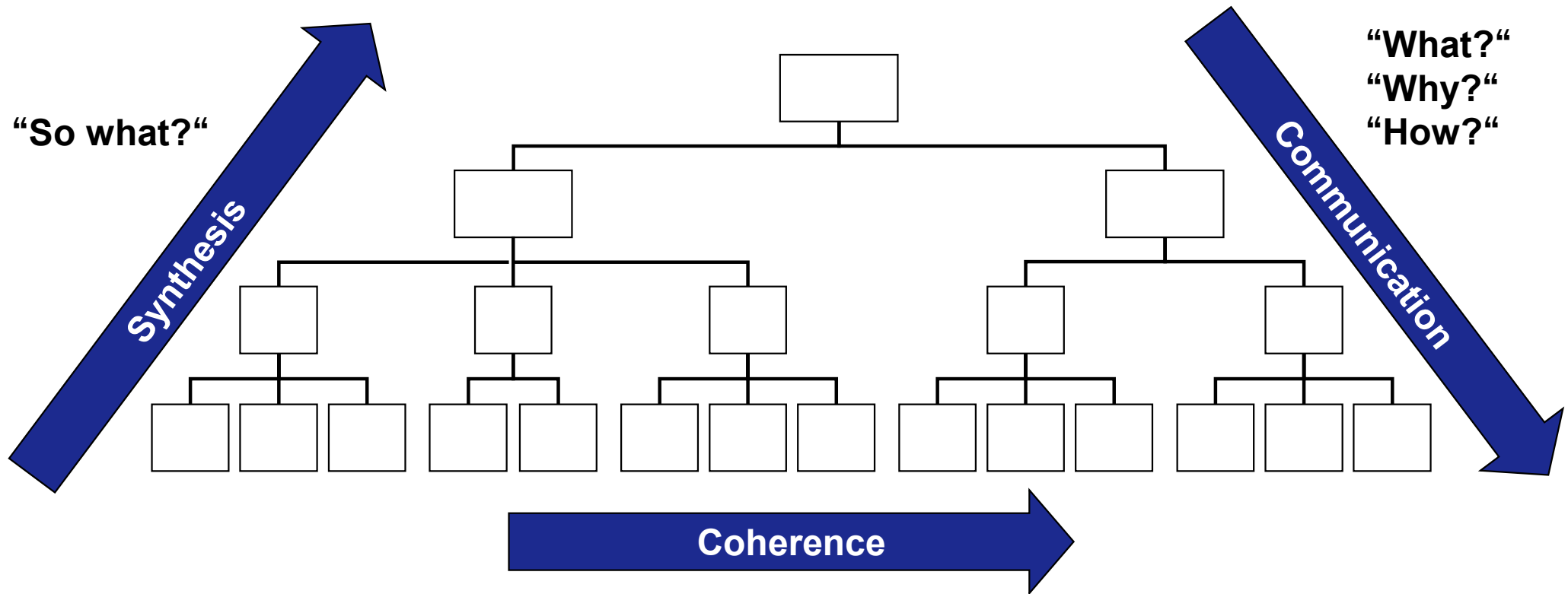


Governing thought supported by separate ideas (e.g., reasons, action steps)

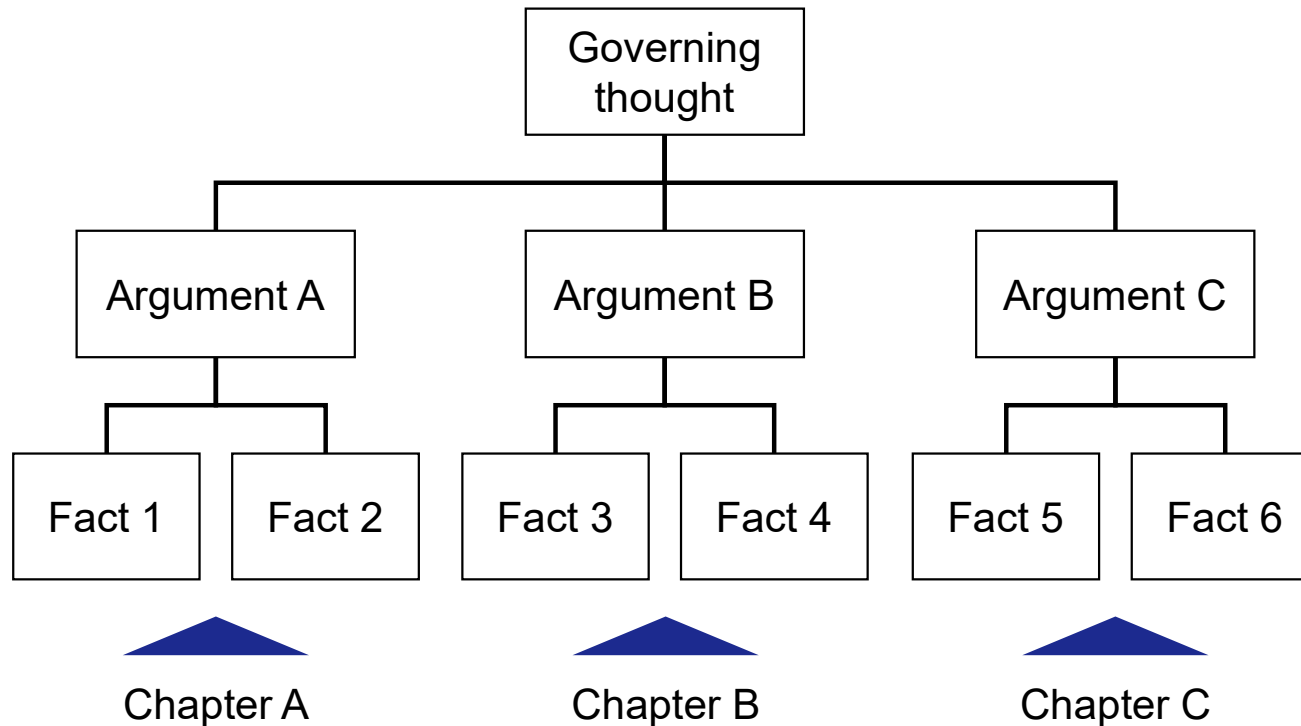
BUILDING A PYRAMID: EXAMPLE



ATTRIBUTES OF THE PYRAMID



BUILDING YOUR PRESENTATION BASED ON A PYRAMID



- Your pyramid serves as the basis for your presentation or report
- By leveraging the structure of the pyramid, chapters/slides are already defined

CREATING GREAT SLIDES

- Slides exist to support your speech, not to replace it – never create a “Slidumentary”
- Focus on content, not on fancy designs
- If you use graphics, simplify them as much as possible
- Start building your slides by drawing them by hand and switch to Powerpoint in a second step
- Proofread on printouts, not on the screen

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

 Cut out and take with you

Find out about audience

- Understand who your clients/stakeholders are and what is important to them
- Think about questions or issues that have been brought up before (e.g. in earlier presentations or interviews)
- Consider conflicting interests between members of the audience

Define objectives

- Write down what you expect from the meeting
- Think about what is the information the audience should know about
- Provide all information required for the audience to receive your message

Develop structure

- Create the storyline based on your synthesis pyramid – **never** build your storyline based on already existing slides!

Create presentation

- Develop the presentation based on the storyline
- Each slide should represent one core statement
- Go through the presentation and ask yourself whether you would be satisfied if you were a stakeholder

CHALLENGES WHEN DELIVERING PRESENTATIONS

During the course of your presentation, you may encounter difficult responses from your audience

- You can prepare for this situation by asking yourself the “hard questions” beforehand

While most questions will be specific about your presentation, some questions can be generalized

“Why didn’t you talk to XYZ before coming here?”

“I do not feel I have enough information to decide about this.”

“I cannot decide about this.”

“I think there are options which have not been considered yet.”