

STREET
CLOSED

DO NOT

Removing the Road Blocks to Learning

DETOUR



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A bat and ball together
cost a dollar and ten
cents.

The bat costs a dollar
more than the ball.

How much does the
ball cost?

Ball =



10 cents



+ One dollar



10 cents

Ball =



5 cents

Bat =



+ One dollar



5 cents

Why are we talking about this?

You deal with complexity and uncertainty.

How can we help metropolitan regions shape the economic opportunities available to low-income families?



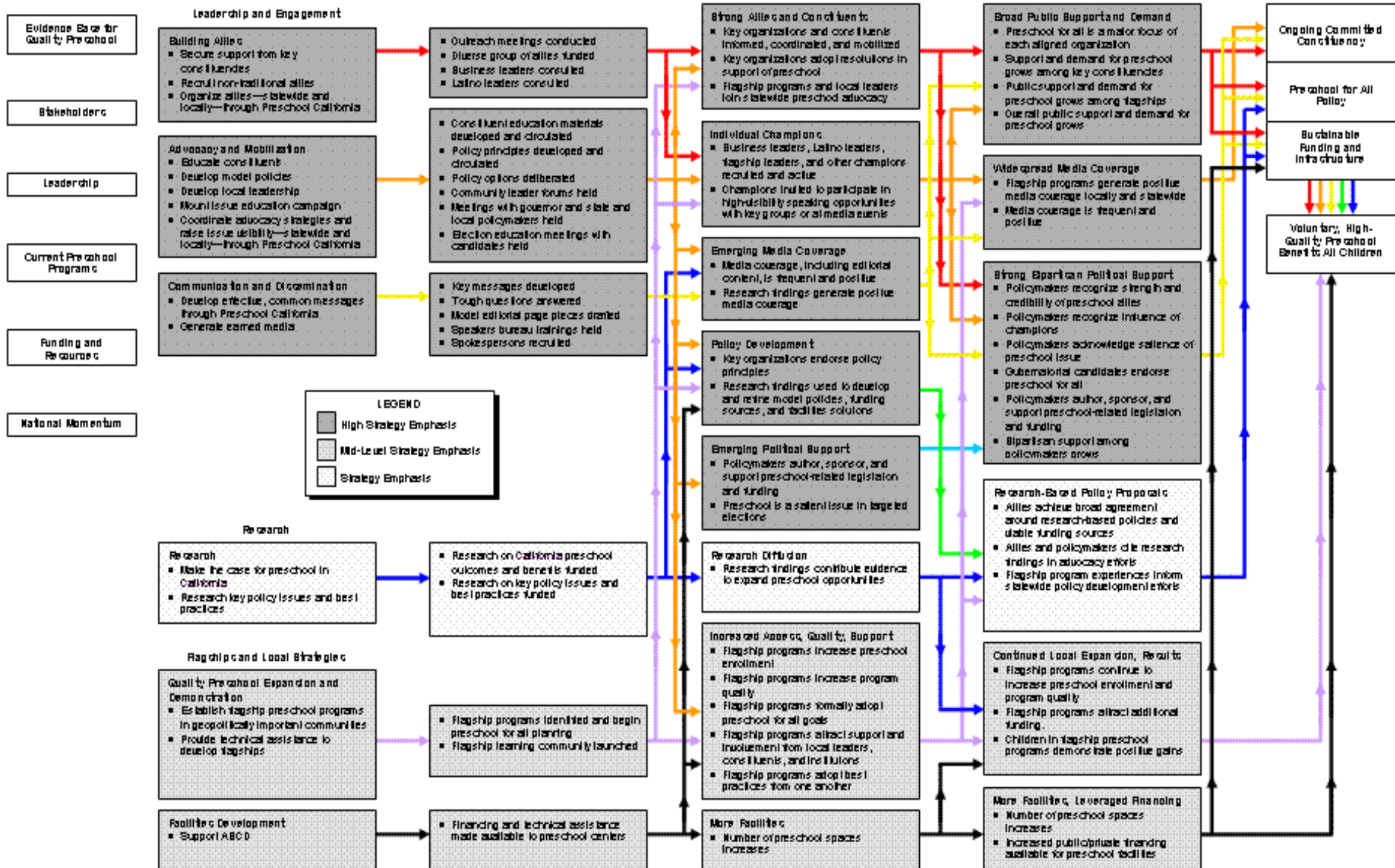
How can we reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015?



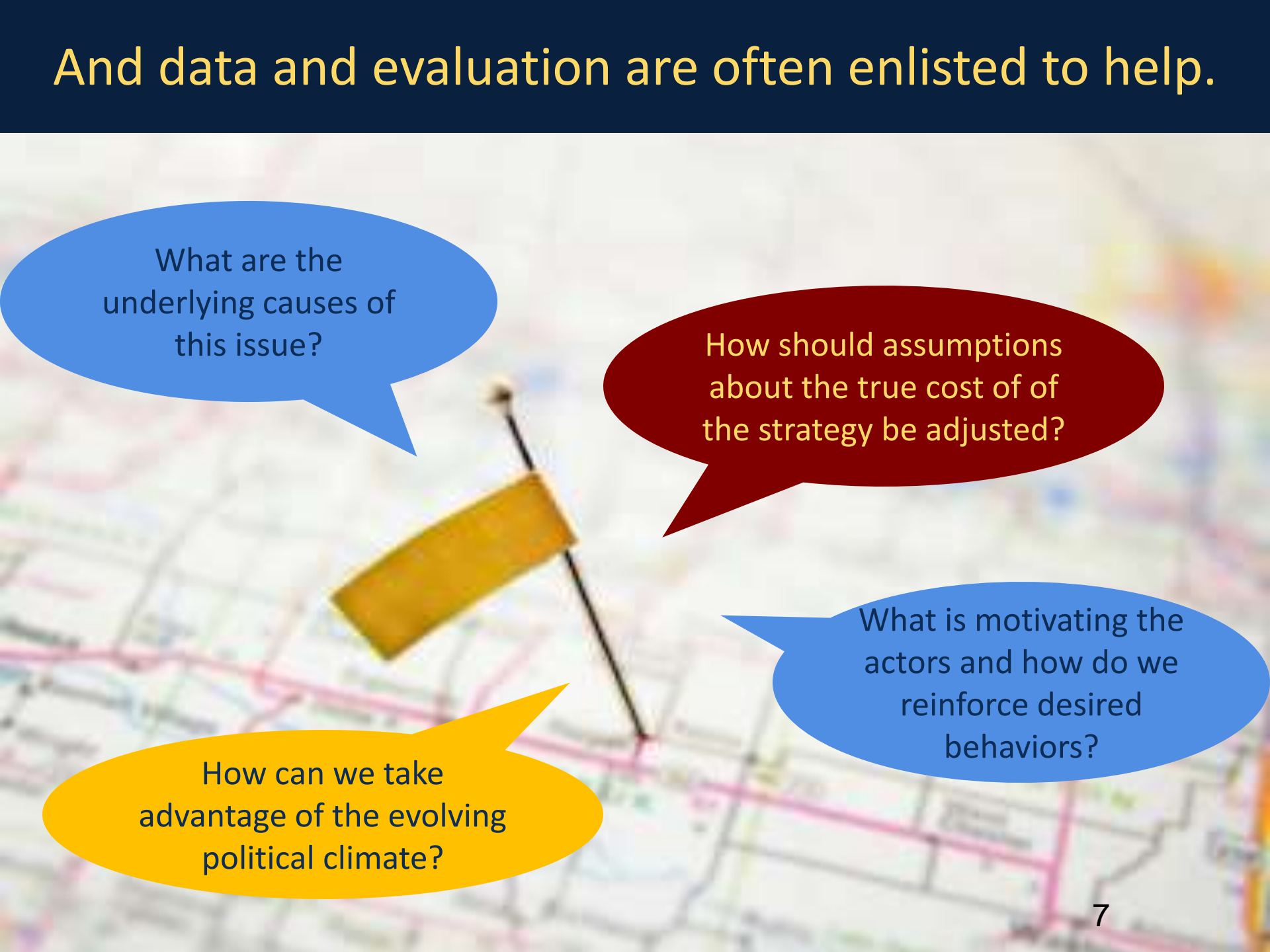
How can we achieve high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds in California?



And you try to reduce or manage it (I said *try*).



And data and evaluation are often enlisted to help.



What are the underlying causes of this issue?

How should assumptions about the true cost of the strategy be adjusted?

What is motivating the actors and how do we reinforce desired behaviors?

How can we take advantage of the evolving political climate?

But unfortunately, we are not always rational.

We are hardwired to use heuristics and biases—**cognitive traps**—when processing information.



They affect:

- ✓ How we access information
- ✓ What we pay attention to
- ✓ What we learn
- ✓ How we apply it

We think a lot about how to gather good data and create learning opportunities.

①

Ask the right questions and get the right data

+

②

Structure the work to enable regular use of data

+

③

Effectively process and use the data

But we need to finish the equation.

What are cognitive traps?

Our minds have two processing systems.

THINKING,
FAST AND SLOW



DANIEL
KAHNEMAN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

System 1: Rapid intuitive decisions based on associative memory, images, and emotional reactions

System 2: Monitors the output of System 1 and overrides it when the result conflicts with logic, probability, or some other decision-making rule

The two systems act differently.



System 1



System 2

System 2 is lazy and trips us up, especially when we are busy.

There are all sorts of cognitive traps.

Decision Making

- Anchoring/adjustment
- Conjunction fallacy
- Focusing effect
- Overconfidence effect
- Curse of knowledge
- Ease of recall
- Planning fallacy

Social

- Actor-observer bias
- False consensus effect
- Fundamental attribution error
- Halo effect
- In-group bias
- Projection bias
- Self-serving bias

Memory

- Primacy effect
- Recency effect
- Serial position effect
- Google effect
- Hindsight bias
- Illusory correlation
- Egocentric bias

We are focusing on a few relevant to philanthropy.

The framing effect causes us to weigh the same data differently or define our choices too narrowly.

600 people suffer from a fatal disease...



Treatment A

Saves 200 lives



Treatment B

vs.

33% chance that no people will die, 66% probability that all 600 will die.

The framing effect causes us to weigh the same data differently and respond differently to risk.

600 people suffer from a fatal disease...



Treatment A

Saves 200 lives

vs.



Treatment B

33% chance that no people will die, 66% probability that all 600 will die.

400 people will die

vs.

33% chance of saving all 600 people, 66% possibility of saving no one.

Bounded awareness prevents us from seeing and seeking relevant, readily available information.



Photo by Daniel Simons at www.smithsonianmag.org

Confirmation bias makes us favor information that confirms our pre-existing beliefs.

State polls showing consistent leads in key battleground states

Late-October national polls showing gains



Nate Silver's "Model" of all presidential polling

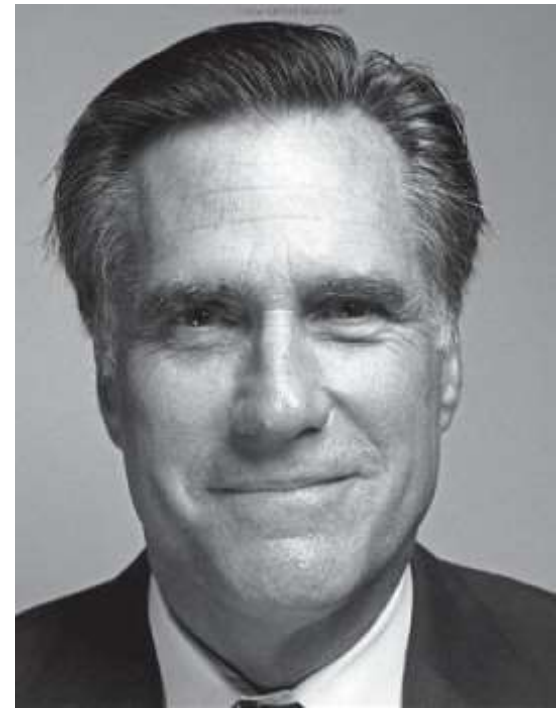
Hurricane Sandy performance

More engaged and motivated voters

Large and enthusiastic crowds in swing states

Beliefs that national polls were skewed.

Internal polls showing leads in key states.



Survivorship bias makes us concentrate on the small number of successes and ignore the large number of failures.



“Those who switch save more.”

Escalation of commitment makes it difficult to revisit previous choices.



Working in groups can make it worse.

We do this.

Right on.

Yes!

Yup!

Particularly susceptible are groups with:

- Strong directive leadership
- Time pressure
- Important complex decisions

Not this.

Hmm...
Nope.

Sure.

Word.

Let's go!





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The MasterCard Foundation



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What can we do to
avoid the traps?

Just being aware is
not enough.

Test alternate frames for problems, data, and choices.

TEST OTHER STAKEHOLDERS'

FRAMES



Ask for the bad news (and mean it).

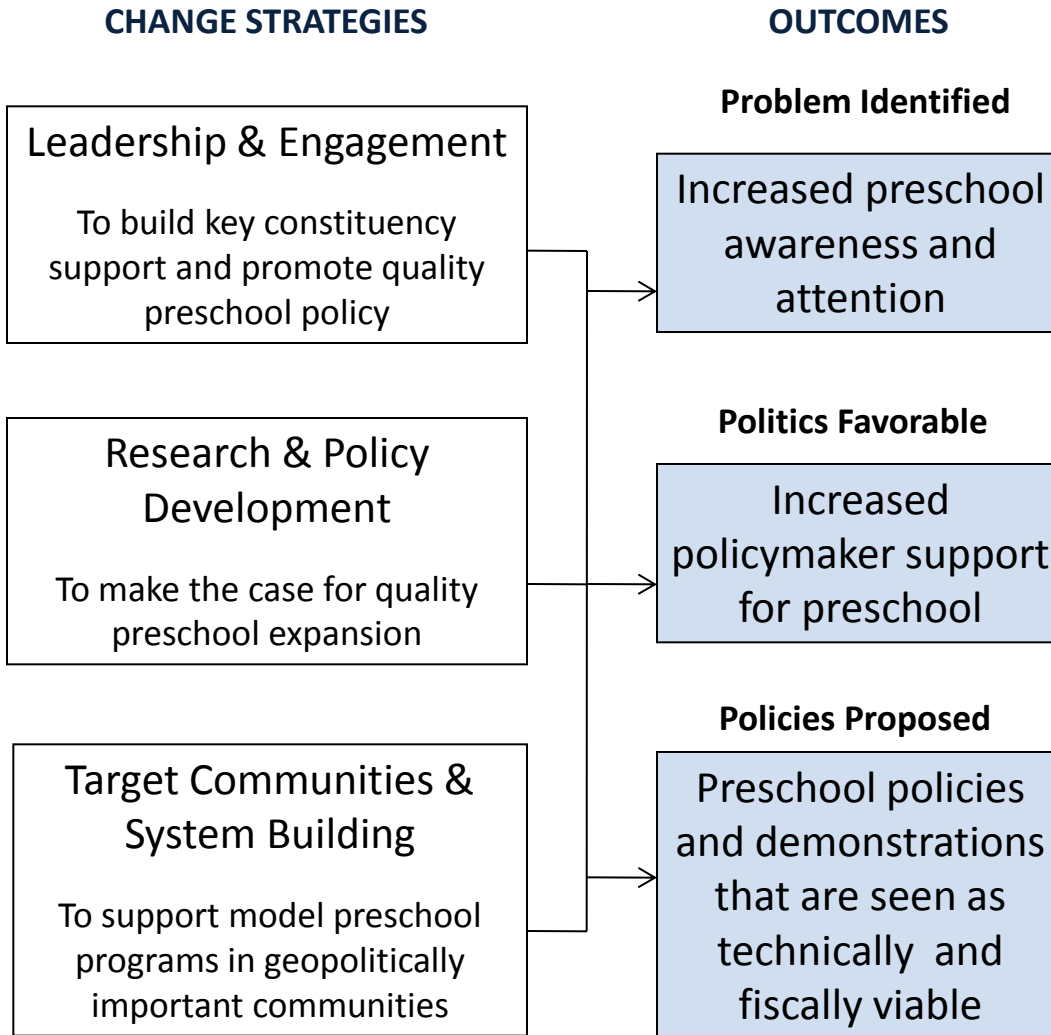


Bad emotions,
bad parents, and bad
feedback have more
impact than good ones.



Bad information is
processed more
thoroughly than good.

Look for disconfirming evidence.



Typically we look for evidence that it's working.

Try looking for evidence that it's not.

Use devil's advocacy.

All your ideas are great!



Yes Man

Here are 10 reasons you shouldn't do that.



Devil's Advocate

Which consulting firm is better?

Remind yourself what you don't know.



1. Tell me what you know.
2. Tell me what you don't know.
3. Only then can you tell me what you think.

--Colin Powell

Reason analogically.



Health



Education

Compare
and
contrast
across
silos.



Environment

Get an outsider's view.

The **outsider** is more capable of generalizing across situations, and makes better estimates and decisions than the insider.



Outsiders



Insiders

Let's put it all together and think about...



...the team meeting.



What information is being considered?



Disconfirming
Evidence

The Bad News



Who is at the table?

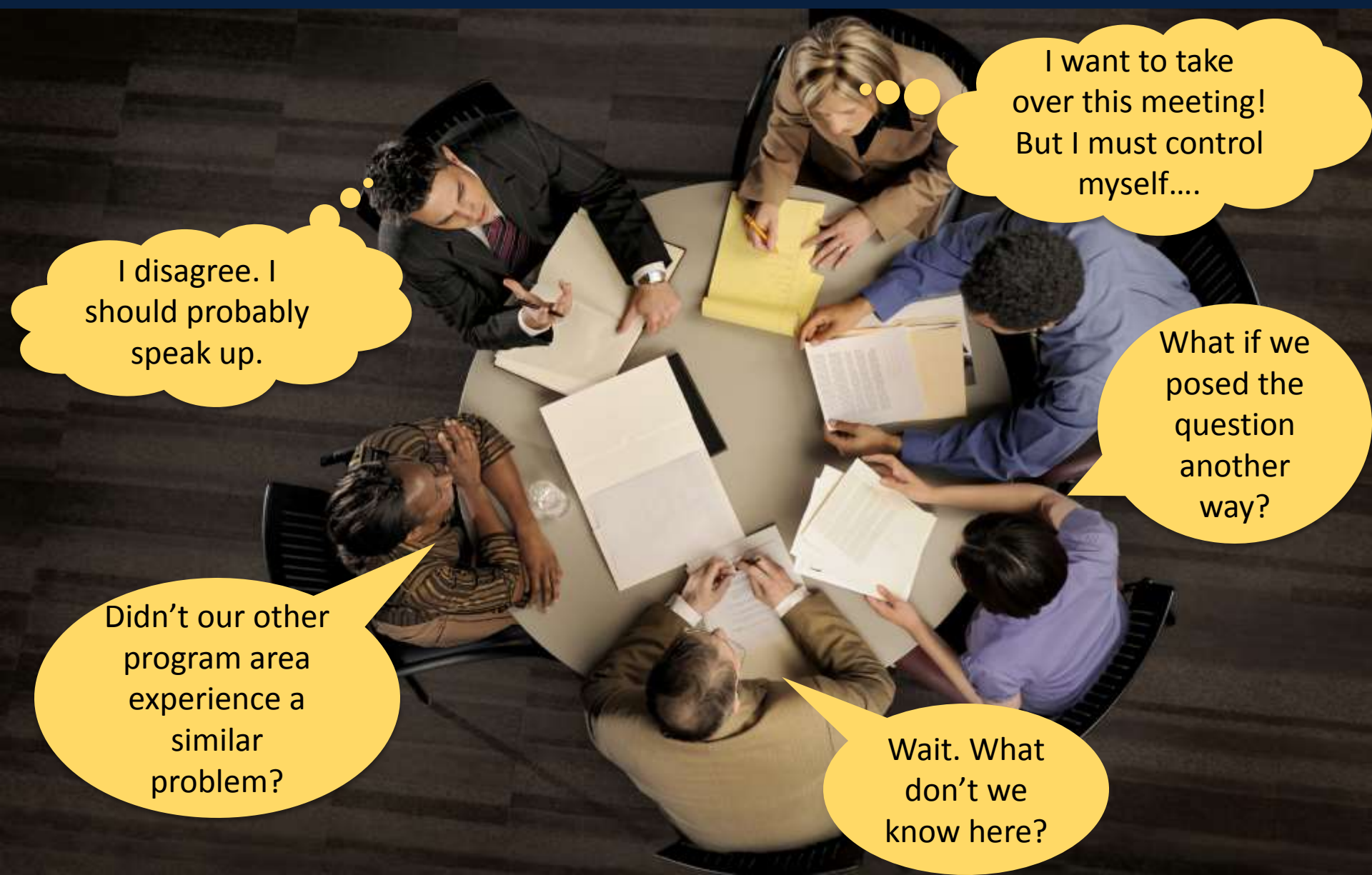
Devil's
Advocate



Outsider



What are you talking and thinking about?



I disagree. I should probably speak up.

I want to take over this meeting! But I must control myself....

What if we posed the question another way?

Didn't our other program area experience a similar problem?

Wait. What don't we know here?



Now you.