11. Question-Guided Customer Validation and Creation
Through Value Propositions and Sales
(Value Proposition Journey, Customer Journey, Funnelling)

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http://st.inf.tu-dresden.de/teaching/saab

1) Questions guide the customer's journey
2) Time questions
3) Drive questions
4) Value questions
5) Applications of question-guided traveling

Literature

Software as a Business, © Prof. Uwe Aßmann

▶ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fragetechnik

▶ [Thiele] Albert Thiele. Die Kunst zu überzeugen. Faire und unfaire Dialektik. Springer.

▶ [Leicher] R. Leicher. Verkaufen. TaschenGuide. Haufe-Verlag.

▶ [Scherer] Hermann Scherer. 40 Minuten für eine gezielte Fragetechnik. Gabal Verlag

▶ [Rackham96] Neil Rackham. The Spin Selling Fieldbook. McGrawHill, 1996

▶ [Rackham] Neil Rackham. Major Account Selling Strategies. McGrawHill, 1989.

▶ [Bosworth] Michael T. Bosworth. Solution Selling. Creating Buyers in Difficult Selling Markets. McGrawHill, 1995.

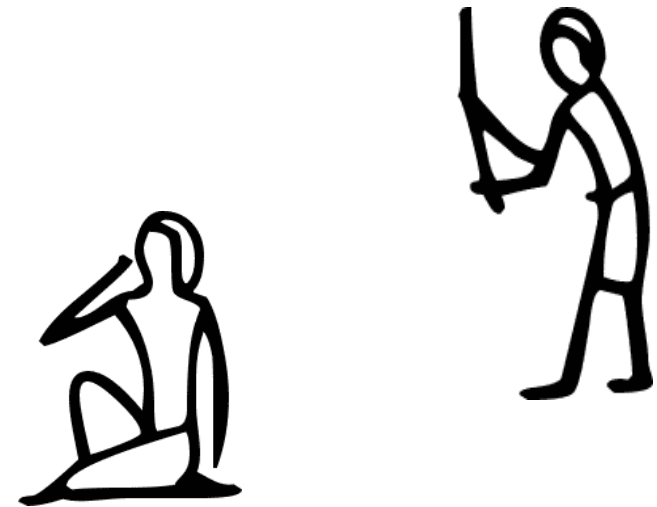▶ [BMG] Alexander Osterwalder. Ives Pigneur. Business Model Generation. Wiley.
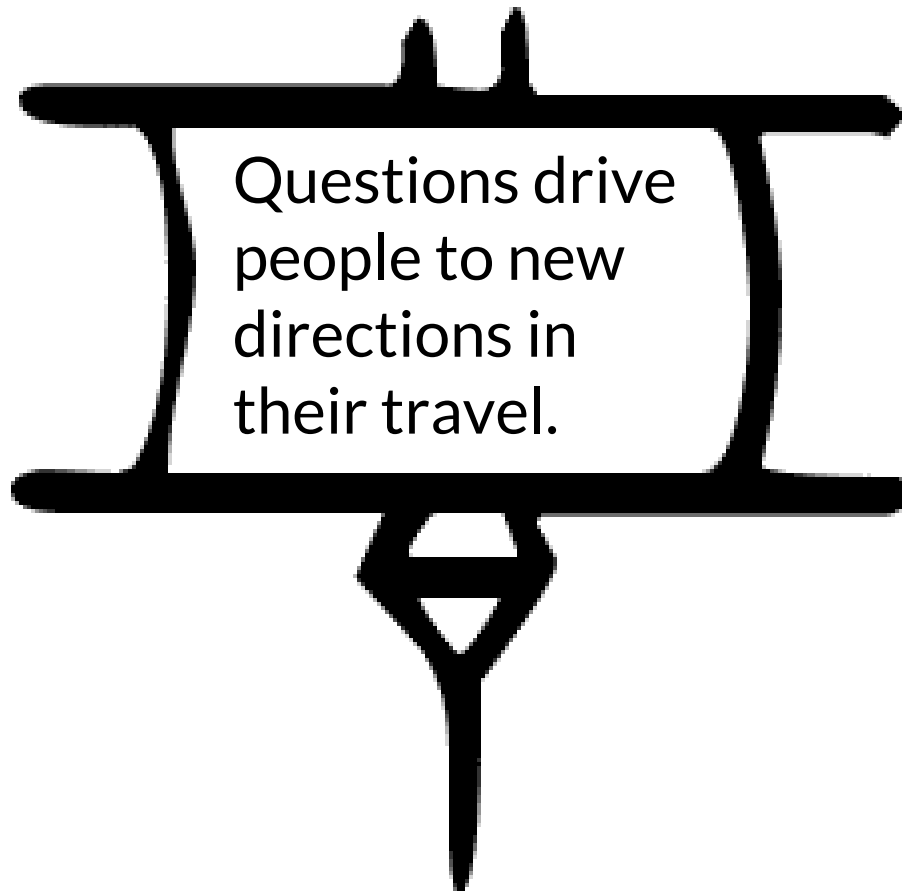
11.1 Questions Guide the Customer's Value Proposition Journey

- Customer Validation means to test hypothesis about the customer
- Customer Creation means to guide the customer into the future and sales
- This is done by Questions guiding the customer (customer journeys)

- Customer's Value Proposition Journey
- Customer's Sales Journey

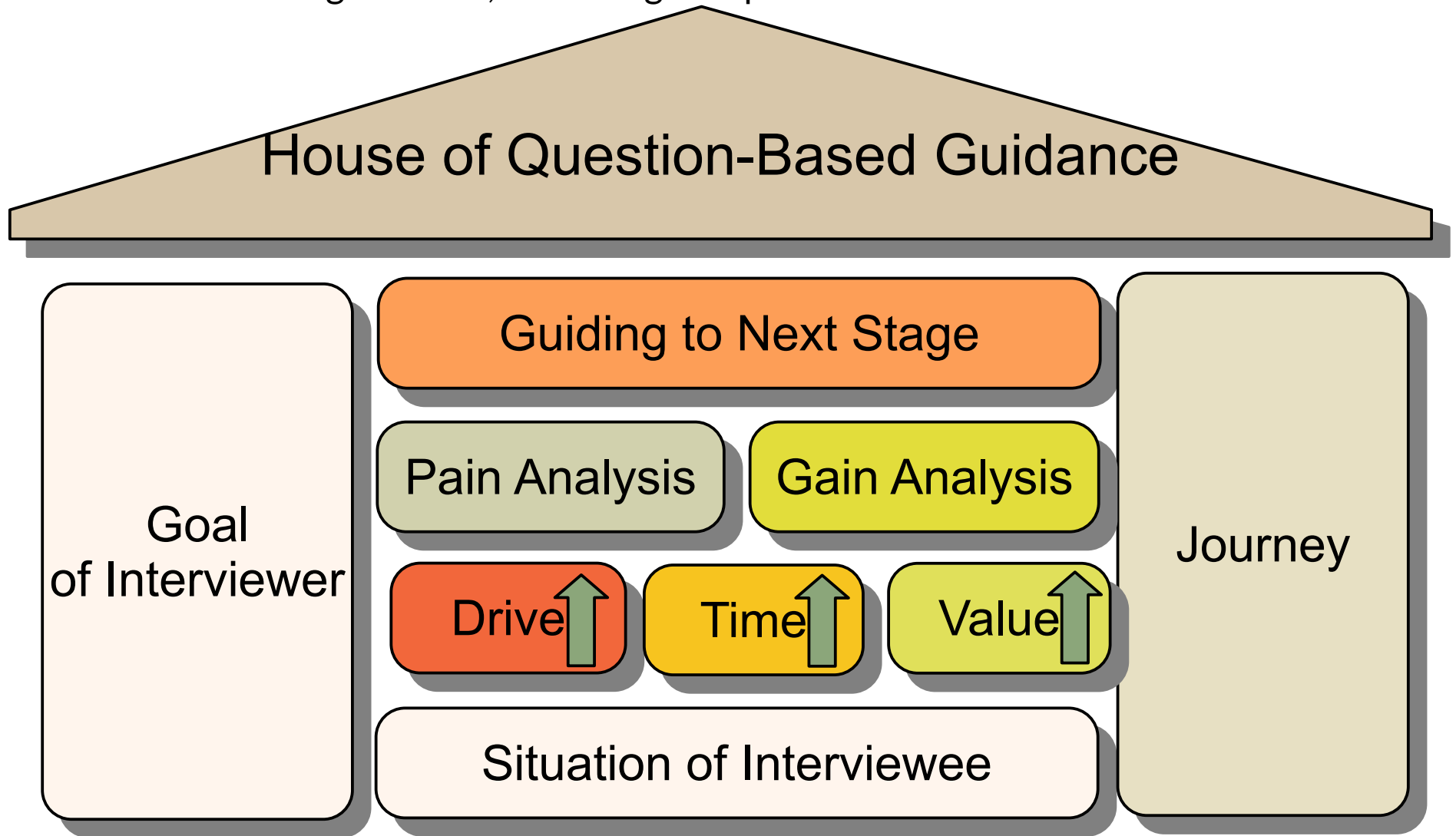# Motivation: Customer Journeys Make People Escape from their Old Ideas

> **The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones.**
> John Maynard Keynes. The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, 1935, Preface.
> https://de.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Maynard_Keynes

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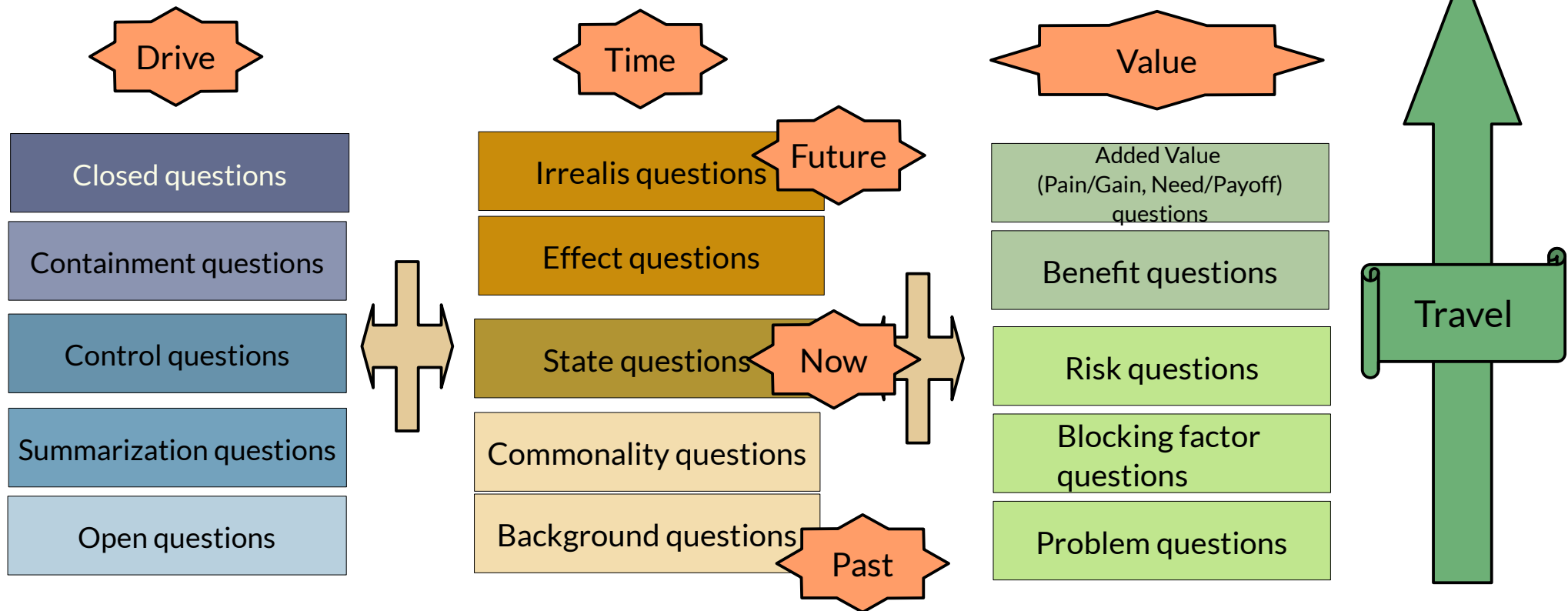Questions drive people to new directions in their travel.

House of Question-Based Guidance

- **The interviewer tries to guide the interviewee on a journey to new land.**
- For maturing a canvas, we need good questions

House of Question-Based Guidance

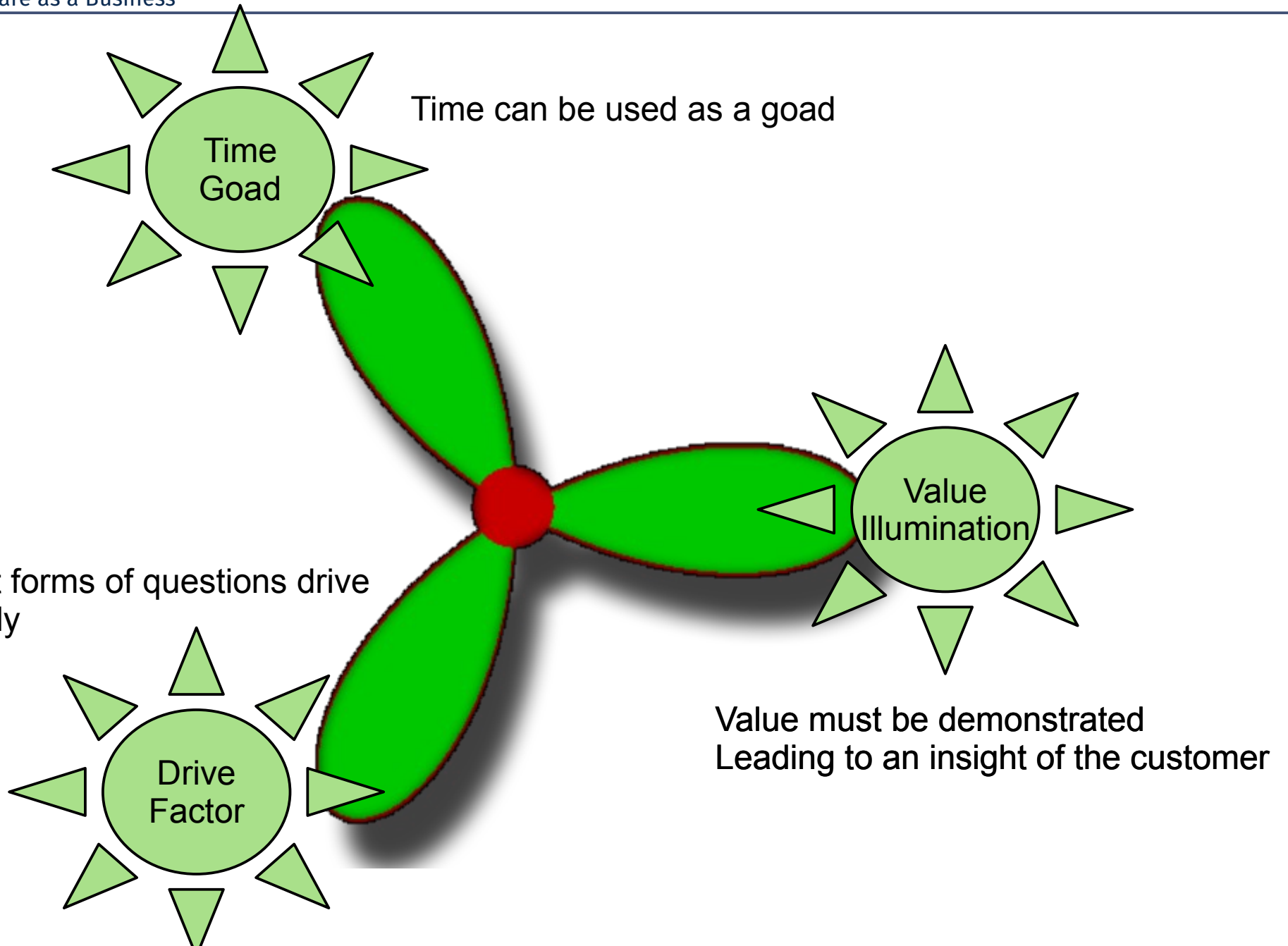| Goal of Interviewer	Guiding to Next Stage			Journey
	Pain Analysis		Gain Analysis	
	Drive	Time	Value	
	Situation of Interviewee			

Guiding with Three Aspects of Questions (Drive, Time and Value)

▶ Questions are usually linking with three aspects: **Drive, Time,** and **Value**

▶ A good question combines a value with a drive and a time: [inspired by Bosworth]

- The *drive* drives forward the interviewee to a new stage of his travel.
- The interviewee wants to lead in *time* from past to presence to future.
- The interviewee *learns* something about the *value*

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Drive

- Closed questions
- Containment questions
- Control questions
- Summarization questions
- Open questions

Time

- Irrealis questions — **Future**
- Effect questions
- State questions — **Now**
- Commonality questions
- Background questions — **Past**

Value

- Added Value (Pain/Gain, Need/Payoff) questions
- Benefit questions
- Risk questions
- Blocking factor questions
- Problem questions

Travel

Propel your Customer forward

Time can be used as a goad

Different forms of questions drive differently

Value must be demonstrated
Leading to an insight of the customer

Time Goad

Drive Factor

Value Illumination

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11.2 Drive Questions

- Problem analysis is based on questions
- [Thiele, Leicher, Scherer]

Drive in Interviews

▶ The **speed of an interview travel** can be controlled by different classes of **Drive Questions**

- ▪ Open questions for brainstorming
- ▪ Control question for guiding thinking
- ▪ Containment questions for guiding the interviewee through a door
- ▪ Summarization questions for rephrasing the results
- ▪ Closed questions for signaturing
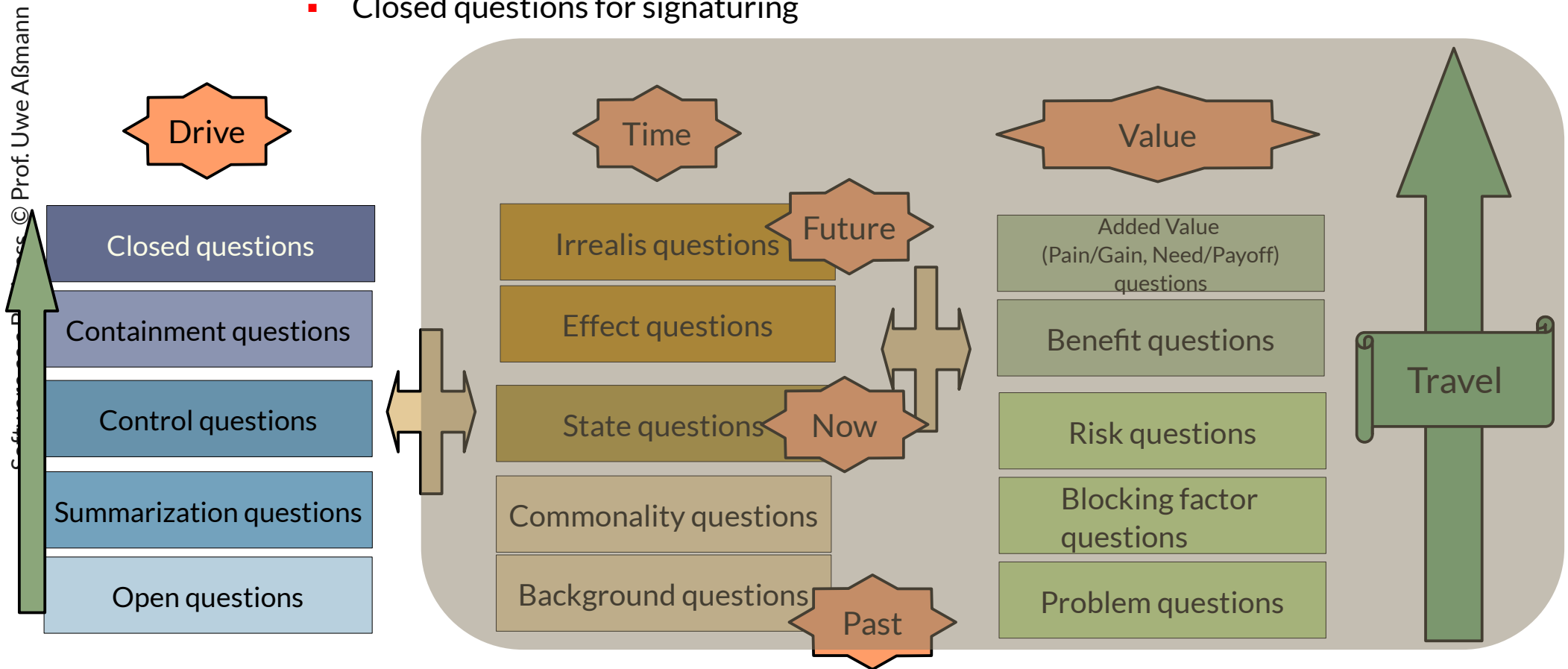
Questions to Open Up a Discussion or a Brainstorming

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- ▶ **Open questions**: basically the "honest serving men". Begin with who, why, when, which, …
  - ▪ Good to motivate: The asked person can talk afterwards… (collect-information phase)
  - ▪ Good for idea generation, problem analysis, solution generation, papers
  - ▪ Good for concept mapping
- ▶ **Positive questions**: try to avoid negative questions, make the dialogue partner answer "Yes". They prepare other, open questions:
  - ▪ "Are there any problems on your side?" --> "What happened?"

> When is it the right time to ask somebody
> „Will you marry me?"

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fragetechnik

... remember... Open Questions with the Honest Serving Men

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I keep six honest serving-men:

(They taught me all I knew)

Their names are What and Where and When

And How and Why and Who.

I send them over land and sea,

I send them east and west;

But after they have worked for me,

I give them all a rest.

I let them rest from nine till five.

For I am busy then,

As well as breakfast, lunch, and tea,

For they are hungry men:

But different folk have different views:

I know a person small--

She keeps ten million serving-men,

Who get no rest at all!

She sends 'em abroad on her own affairs,

From the second she opens her eyes--

One million Hows, two million Wheres,

And seven million Whys!

Rudyard Kipling „Just so stories"
http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2781/pg2781.txt

Questions to Force Decisions

- **Alternative questions** are to be answered by one of two alternatives
    - "Would you prefer alternative A or B?"
    - "is a red or blue car better?"
- **Closed questions:** ask for a boolean value "Do you?" "Don't you?"
    - These questions force decisions and are to be answered by yes/no (commitment or conclusion phase)
    - Use rarely in papers!

Don't ask closed questions too early!

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Control Questions are for "Controlling" ("Nailing Down") a Customer

A (customer-) control question controls the customer and sets him into a containment ("prison", "nailing down").

- It puts the customer into a defensive position, but also tries get a step forward in the discussion:

▶ *Closed* **control question:** Closed questions put up the strongest containment for the customer

- **Control reason question:** "Is this because your company…"

- **Control implication/impact/effect question:** "Is the consequence of this problem that…"

▶ *Open* **containment question ("emprisoning question")** asks the customer about a state of the art to contain his answer and make him think about a specific topic:

- "At the moment, how do you achieve this turn-around?"

- "How do you prepare for the introduction of the new governance rule?"

- "How do you prepare for retaining your value?"

> Do a step together with your interviewee

Summarization Questions (Confirm Questions)

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- ▶ A **summarization (confirm) question** summarizes the results of the analysis - which is to be answered and confirmed by the customer
  - ▪ And attempts to get the agreement with the customer about the analysis
  - ▪ And to move the discussion a step further
  - ▪ "Did I understand you right that your sales have diminished last year?"
  - ▪ "Did you really imply that your customers might hop off next month?"
- ▶ **Mirroring questions** mirror the attitude of the dialogue partner.
  - ▶ "So you think that this solution is not appropriate for your problem?"
  - ▶ "This means that you think that this is not your main problem?"
    - ▪ Mirroring questions transform statements into questions:
    - ▪ "Our competitor is too expensive." --› "Do you also feel that our competitor is too expensive?"

Maneuvering Questions to Win Time in a Discussion – But Also Somewhat Critical

► **Maneuvering questions (Rangierfragen):** change the "playground", I.e, the field of discussion – do avoid further discussion on a certain subject

- "What do you think, shouldn't we first talk about the background/side condition/cause/effects of this problem?"

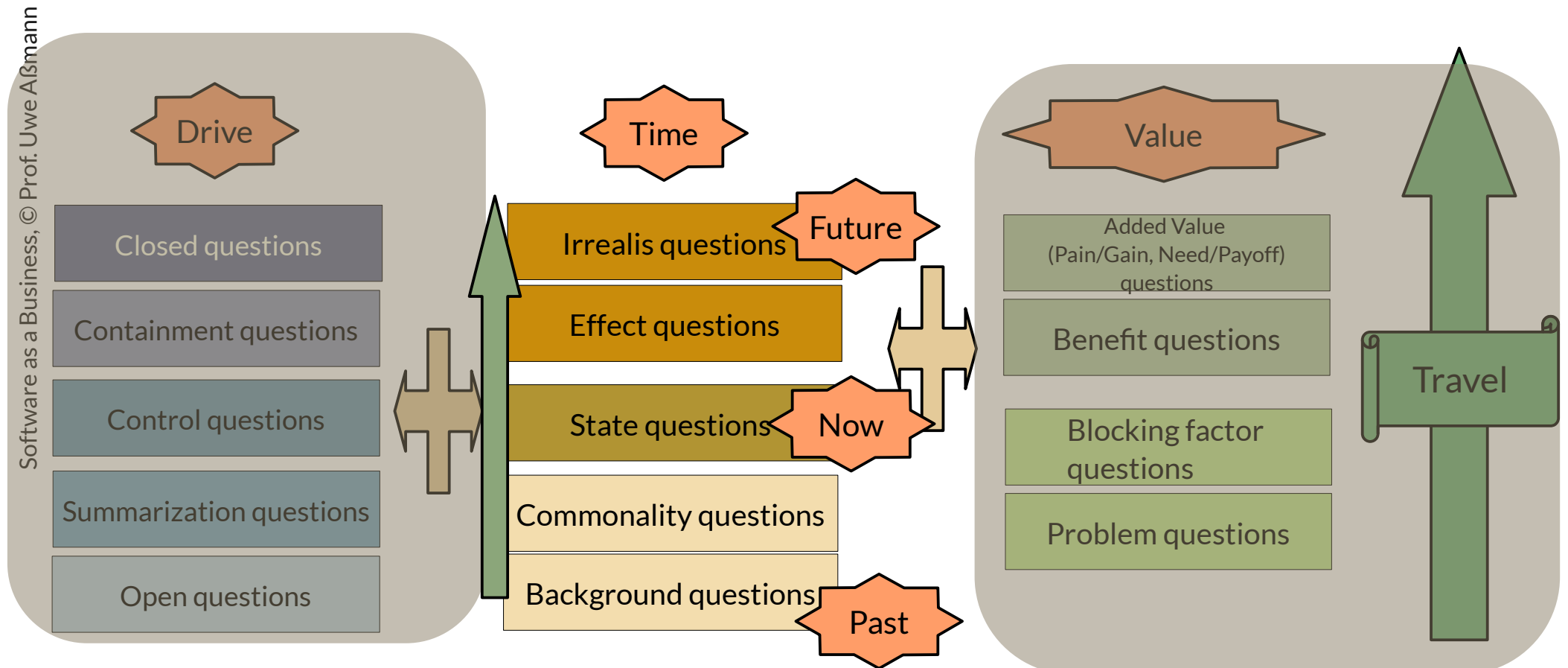- "What do you think, how is problem X related with your problem?"

► **Suggestive questions** are rhetoric, that is, not real questions, but pseudo questions

- "Is it true that you are interested to simplify your production?"

- Handle them with care, because they can create anger

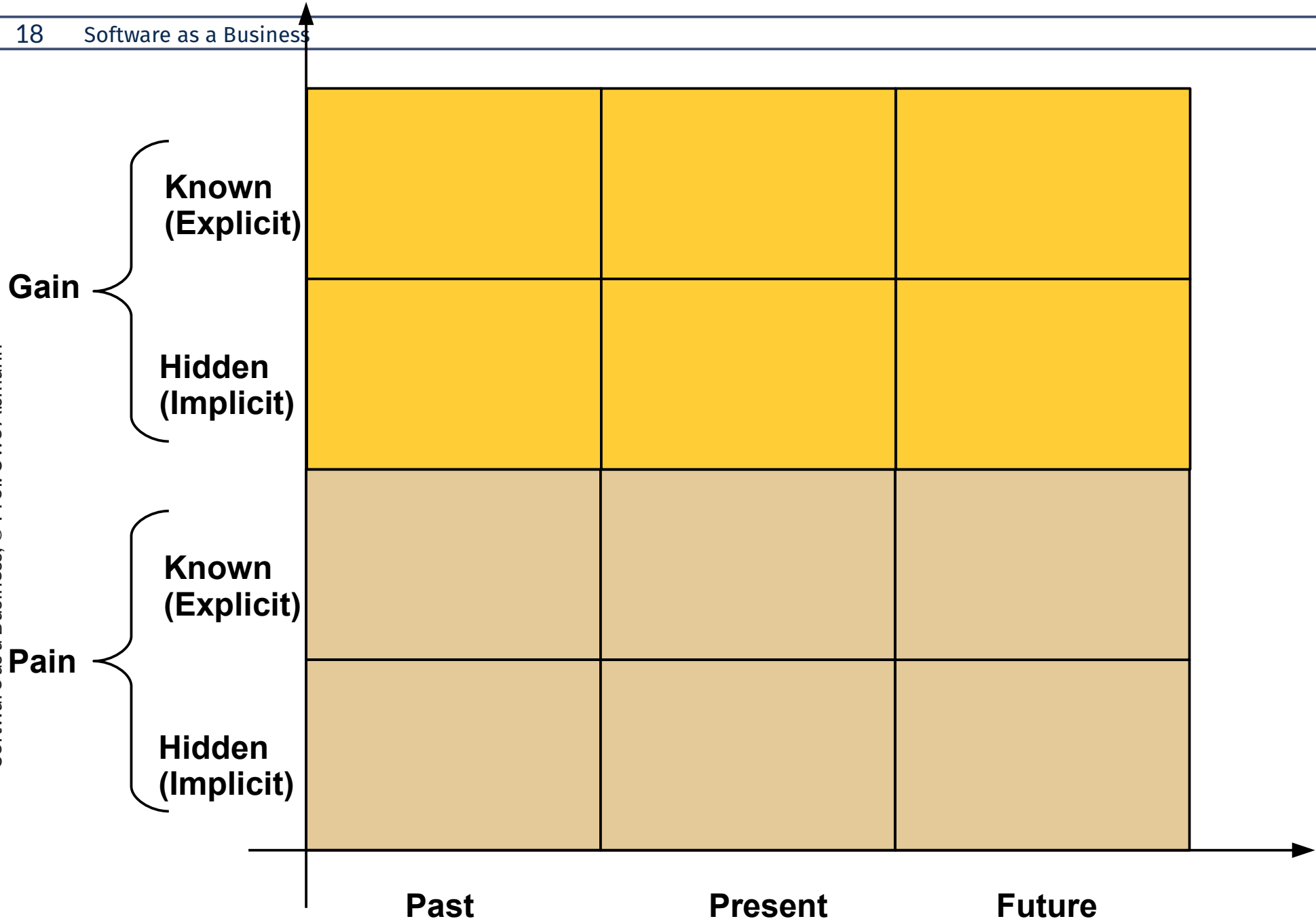- Suggestive questions are dangerous, because they can make the reader angry

11.11. Questions for Past, Presence and Future

Time in Interviews

▶ The **Time aspect of a question travel** can be used both on the Drive and the Value aspect

   ▪ Yesterday questions, Today Questions, Tomorrow questions

Portfolio of Time Dimension (Time x Value x Hidden)

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Gain
- **Known (Explicit)**
- **Hidden (Implicit)**

Pain
- **Known (Explicit)**
- **Hidden (Implicit)**

Past   **Present**   **Future**

PAST: Background, Commonality, and State Questions

► Background, commonality and state questions are asked first, to enter the discussion

► A **Background question** asks about the background of the customer

- What happened in the past of the customer? (..JTBD)

- Which problems did he encounter yesterday?

► A **Commonality question** is a background question asking about a potential commonality (common background) between seller and customer

- If answered positively, this creates a positive atmosphere

- "You went to school in Niagara. Actually – I stem from Detroit, and my family used to do little trips over the weekend to there, so that I know the region quite well"

- "You are civil engineer, as I know. While I am a software engineer, engineers of different branches have a lot in common. Do you know the definitions of engineering of Horton from 1920? It includes civil engineering, but I found out that is equally valid for software engineering."

PRESENT: State Questions for Setting the Scene in Introductions

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▶ A **state question** asks the dialogue partner (customer) about his/her state of affairs

- „How can I help you?"

- „Which functions are you interested in?"

- „With which supplier do you work these days?"

- „How large is your budget?"

- „How is the decision process?"

▶ State questions are asked after background questions, to enter the discussion

▶ State paragraphs (setting-the-scene paragraphs) discuss a state question in the introduction, for setting the scene

FUTURE: Effect Questions (Auswirkungsfragen) Do Cause-Effect Analysis

- An **effect question** analyzes together with the dialogue partner the effect of his problems and the consequences of his decisions.
    - It opens a cause-effect analysis (CEA), part of problem analysis
- Effect questions are extremely important for **opening the customer**
    - Visualize the effects of the current situation to the customer
    - Look into the future, Highlight trends and developments
    - Bring the customer the insight that he must solve his problem
- Examples for **positive effects (future gains):**
    - „What is the significance of this problem with your supplier?"
    - "Which other problems would this cure?"
    - "What should be changed to increase the effectivity of this tool?"
    - "What does a solution mean to the win/balance of your company?"
- Examples for **negative effects (future pains):**
    - „What is the significance if this problem is not solved?"
    - Which other problems would result if this is not solved?
    - Supposed you leave it like it is, what would result?

FUTURE: Hidden-Effect (Implication) Questions (Auswirkungsfragen)

▶ An **hidden-effect question (implication question, impact question)** analyzes together with the customer the hidden, implicit effect of his problems **about which he is unaware.**

▶ Hidden-effect questions visualize the effects of the current situation to the customer

  ▪ Look into the future

  ▪ Highlight trends and developments

  ▪ Bring the customer the insight that he must solve his problem

▶ Examples for implications/impacts

  ▪ "Which other problems would this cure?"

  ▪ "What should be changed to increase the effectivity of this tool?"

  ▪ "What does your problem do to the win/balance of your company?"

FUTURE: Hidden Risk Questions (Risk Implication)

- **Hidden Risk questions** make hidden risks explicit. A **risk question** analyzes risks of customer decisions.

- Risks can be

    - Future pain

    - Future force

    - Future catastrophy

- Examples for negative effects (risks)

    - „What if you loose this customer?"

    - "Supposed you leave it like it is, what risk would result?"

FUTURE: REALIS Finalis Questions ("what will happen if?")

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▶ An **what-will-happen question (realis finalis)** [BMG] is a specific effect question which analyzes what *will* happen, if some important factor of today's situation will vanish

- **Negative-effect finalis question**
- **Positive-effect finalis question**

▶ What-will-happen questions are extremely important to visualize effects

▶ Examples (negative effect)

- „What will happen if we loose our supplier?"
- "What will happen in case of an earth quake?"
- "What will happen in case of a stock market crash?"

▶ Examples (positive effect)

- "What will result if you solved your supplier problem"

FUTURE: IRREALIS Finalis Questions ("what would happen if?")

- ▶ An **what-if question (irrealis finalis)** [BMG] is a specific effect question which analyzes what would happen, if some important factor of today's situation would vanish
  - Can be provocative
  - **Negative-effect question**
  - **Positive-effect question (vision question)**
- ▶ What-If questions are extremely important for finding business models
  - Visualize the effects of the current situation to the customer
  - Look into the future, highlight trends and developments
  - Bring the customer the insight that he must solve his problem
- ▶ Examples (negative effect)
  - „What would happen if we loose our supplier?"
  - "What would happen in case of an earth quake?"
  - "What would happen in case of a stock market crash?"
- ▶ Examples (negative effect)
  - "What would result if you solved your supplier problem"

11.4 Value Illumination with Pain-Gain Questions for Problem Analysis, Gain Analysis, Idea Generation and Sales

[Rackham-SPIN, Bosworth]

The central task in a discussion with a customer are her **pains** and **gains.**

A good interviewer leads the customer through a customer journey and makes him understand his pains and gains (explicit knowledge)

Value in Interviews

▶ The **Value aspect of a question travel** is the central aspect which leads the customer forward from not understanding pains and gains to full knowledge about the value
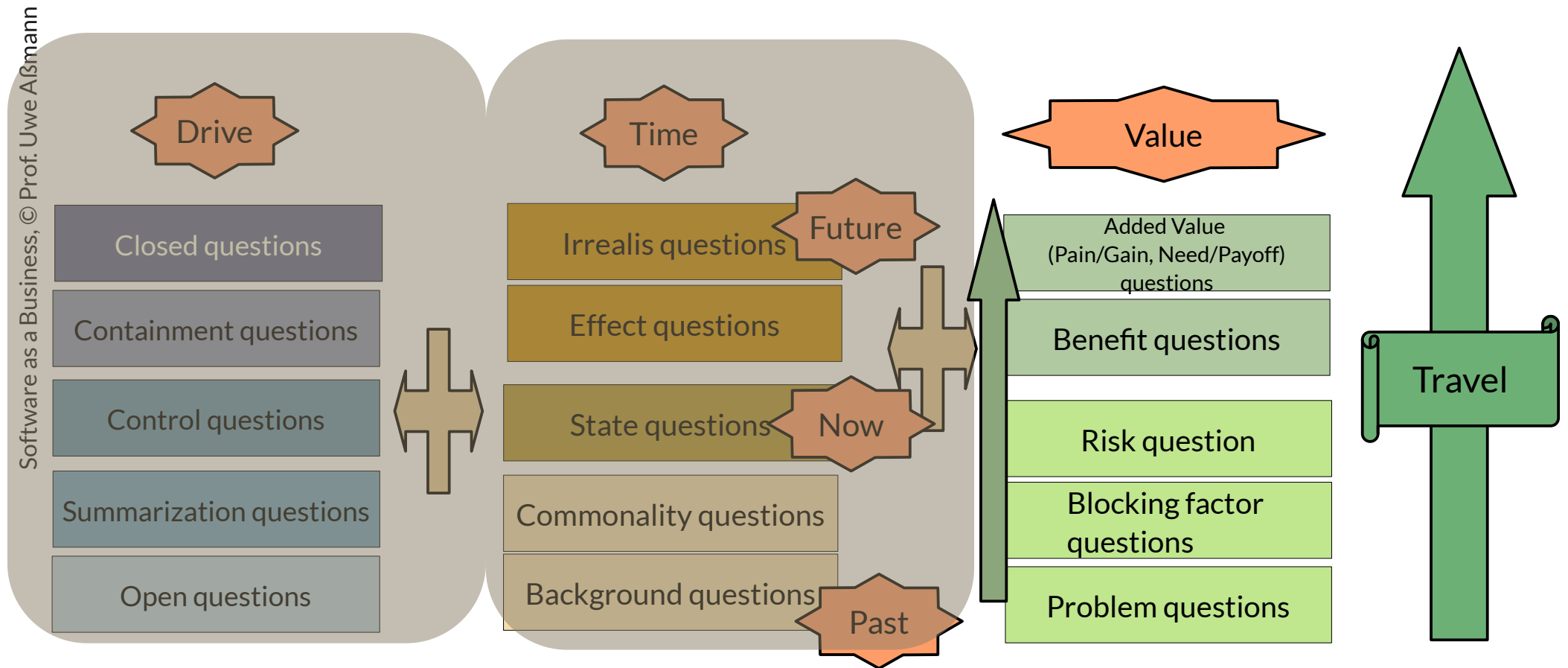
11.11.1 Questions for Problem Analysis

Problem Questions are Good for Problem Analysis

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▶ A **problem question** analyzes together with the dialogue partner (reader, listener, customer, etc.) his problems.

- ▪ Problem questions clear the mind of the dialogue partner
- ▪ Illuminate the situation, create interest
- ▪ Uncover loose feelings, depression, frustration, dissatisfaction, difficulties
- ▪ Problem questions lead to problem analysis schemes

▶ Examples

- ▪ "Which functionality is your product lacking?"
- ▪ "What is disturbing with your supplier?"
- ▪ "Which problems do you have with the tool you use these days?"

▶ A *problem-cause question* asks why a problem exists and discovers *cause effect relationships* and *root causes*

- ▪ "Why does this problem exist? When did it start to exist?"
- ▪ "What changed to create this problem?"

Blocking Factor Questions

▶ A **blocking-factor (hindrance) question** analyzes why an objective of the dialogue partner cannot be reached

- „What is disturbing with your supplier?"
- "What are the obstacles to automate this function?"
- "Why doesn't this effect go away?"

▶ Examples

- "Which functionality is your product lacking to aquire new customers?"
- "How long do your customers have to wait?"
- "How much does this cost you?"

Combining Question Facts for
Problem Analysis in Interviews

▶ Combine a question from a **drive,** a **time**, and a **problem aspect**

▶ <closed>Is it true</closed> that <state>last year</state> <pain>you lost 1 Mio because your supplier did not deliver in time</pain>?
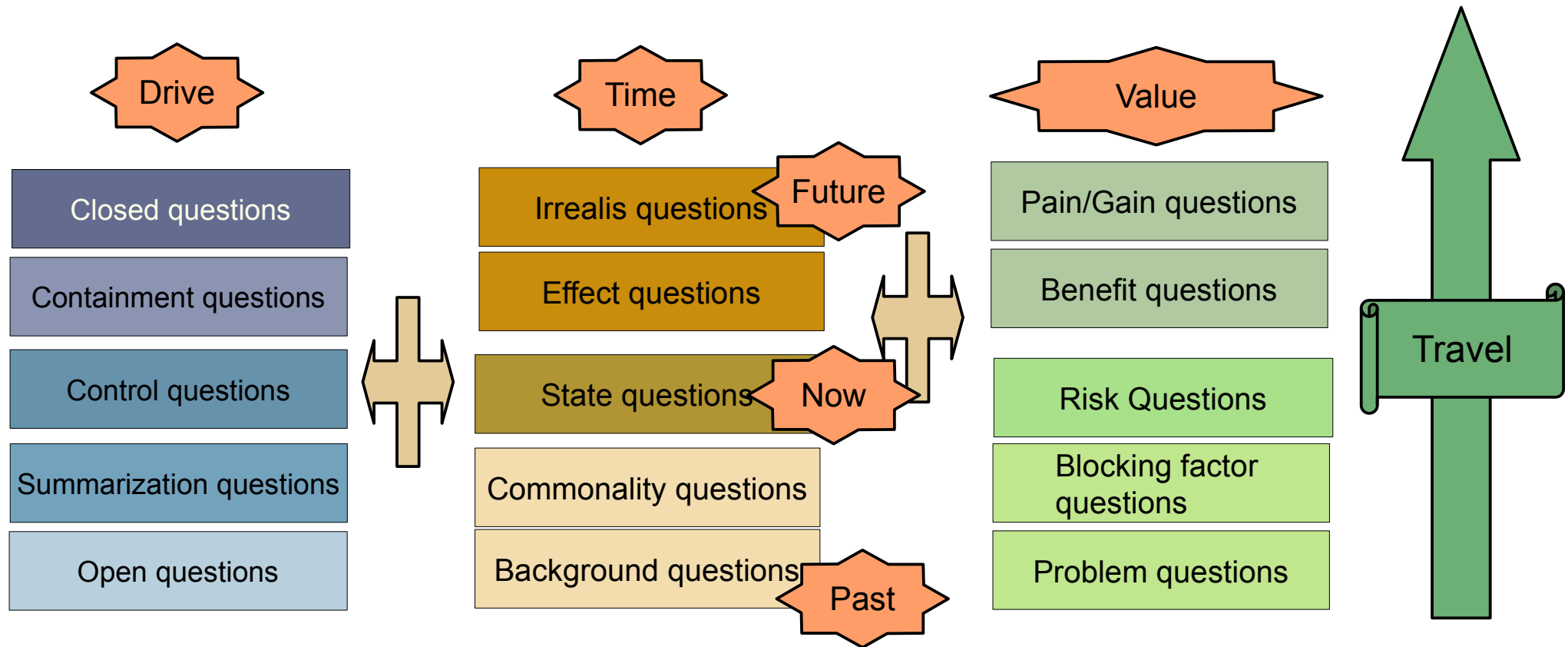
Example: *Problem Analysis* in Interviews: Lead from Open to Containment Questions

▶ "Didn't your company last year won the PULITZER price?" (open background q.)

▶ "Why didn't your company last year win the PULITZER price?" (open, background/state, problem-cause)

▶ "Which problems did that prize not help you to cure?" (open problem q.)

▶ "What would you say to the presumption that your suppliers do not deliver in time is due to that you do not have a CRM system so that you can monitor their actions?" (open blocking factor q., control problem q.)

▶ "So you are sure that you cannot monitor the timely delivery of your suppliers because you do not have an IT system for that?" (summarization q., control blocking factor q.)

11.11.2 Questions for Gain Analysis

Benefit Questions

▶ A **benefit question (value question, usefulness question, gained value question)** is a special type of *what-if* question, highlighting a benefit to the interviewee

- A **benefit question** analysis the gained value of the customer.
- „Which additional space could you win buying this new machine?"
- "Which advantages will you get from introducing this new technology?"
- "Which group of people will benefit from this new technology?" (Who)
- "What would you save next year if you had a solution for this problem?"

▶ Benefit questions are very important to find a selling argument, USP, or technical science hypothesis. Use benefit questions in nABC, elevator pitches, ..

▶ **Olympic benefit questions**: ask for "faster, higher, farer"

- "What do you gain with this method?" "How far do you come with this?" "How much faster are you?"
- „How would the win of your company rise, given you buy this machine?"

▶ **Efficiency questions**: How much better will it be?

- "When will you be able to achieve turnaround with this method"
- "What do you think about this simplification?"

Effect and Benefit questions are very important because they lead to interesting insights for value propositions and selling.

Added Value (Pain-Gain) Questions Link Pain and Gain

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- ▶ A **(realis) added-value question (pain-gain, need-payoff question)** links in one question a pain and a gain
    - ▪ "Your sales have diminished – how can a solution help you to improve them again?" (open pain-gain question)
- ▶ An **What-if (irrealis) added-value (need-payoff) question** using What-if questions:
    - ▪ "If you had a magic wand, what would you do?"
    - ▪ "If there was a technique helping you out of this mess, what would improve for you and your customers?" (control pain-gain)
    - ▪ "Would your problem that suppliers don't deliver in time be solved if you could remind them a week earlier on their deadline?" (closed need-payoff)
- ▶ Very powerful question to provoke a step in the interviewee

Added-value (Pain-gain) questions are very important
because they directly uncover a value proposition.

Combining Question Facets for *Gain Analysis* in Interviews

- ▶ Combine a question from a **drive**, a **time**, and a **gain aspect**

- ▶ <closed>Is it true</closed> that <state>last year you won</state> <benefit>1 Mio because you had this innovation with the web portal?</benefit>?
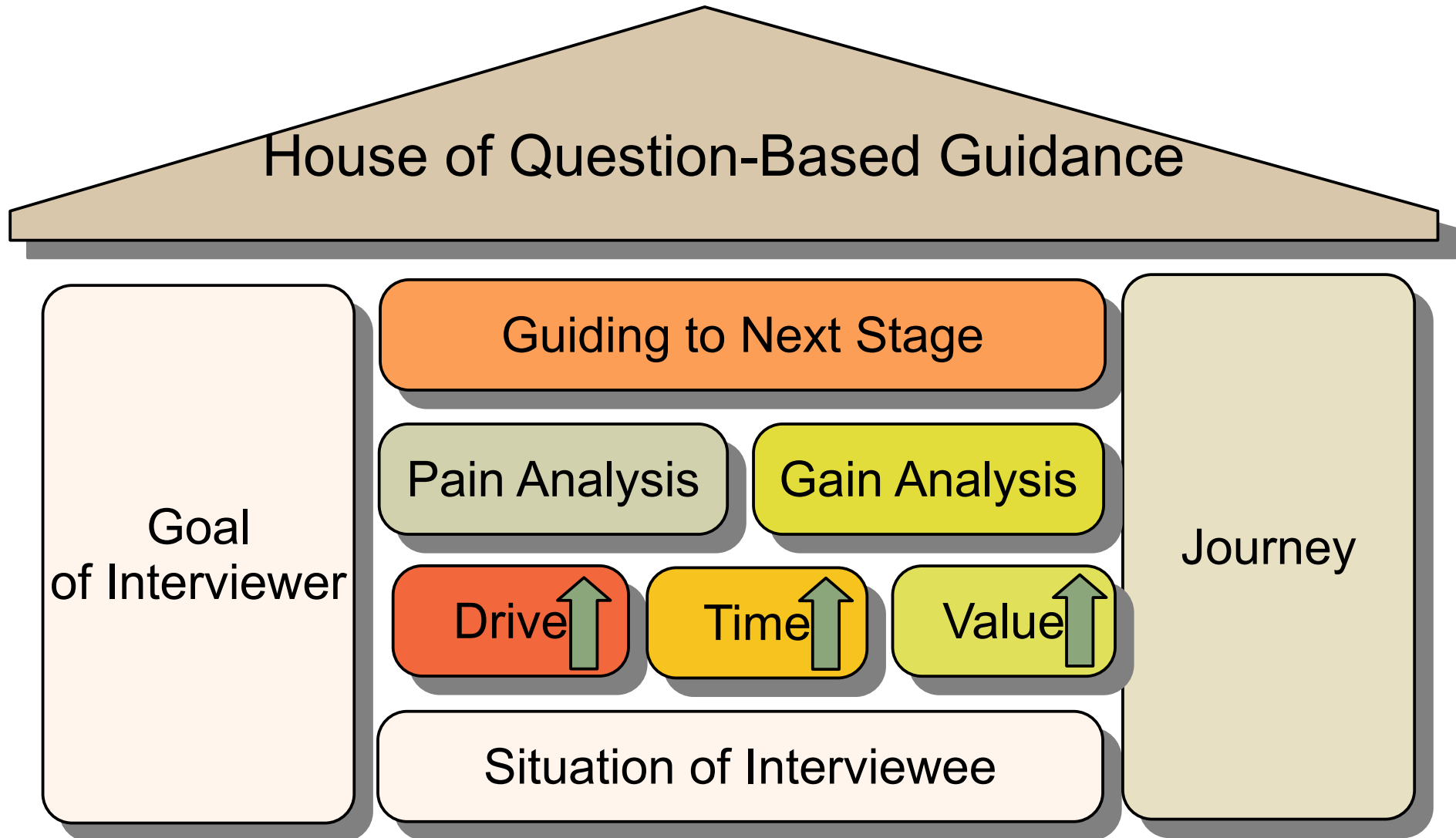
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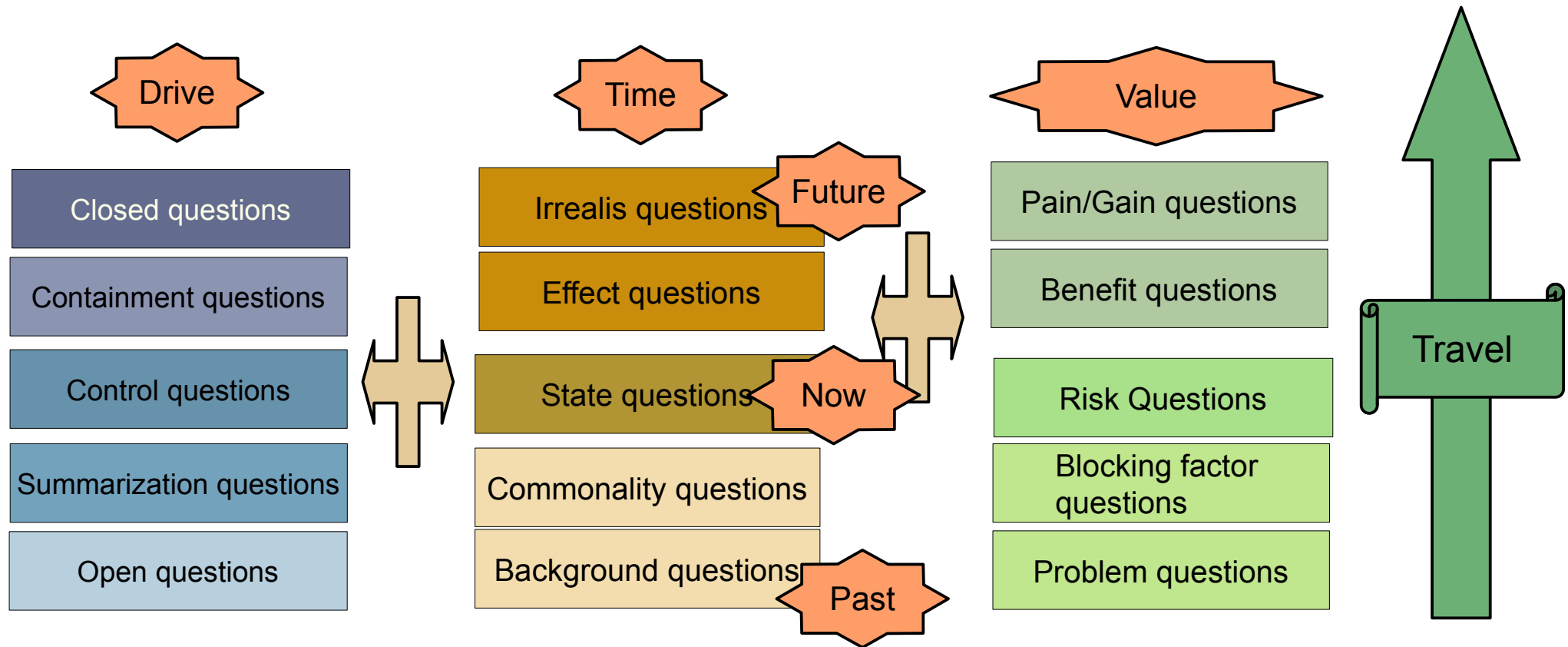
Example: *Benefit Analysis* in Interviews: Lead from Open to Containment Questions

▶ "Which effects result from the late delivery of your suppliers?" (open effect q.)

▶ "If you had an IT system tracking the deliveries of your supplier – how would the satisfaction of your customers increase?" (open benefit question)

▶ "Which risks follow if you do not get an IT system for tracking?" (open risk question)

▶ "Do I understand it right that you mean that your win would be lost next year if you cannot get this problem solved?" (Control risk question)

▶ "Are you sure that an IT system for deliverance tracking would be beneficial to avoid losses?" (Containment pain-gain question)
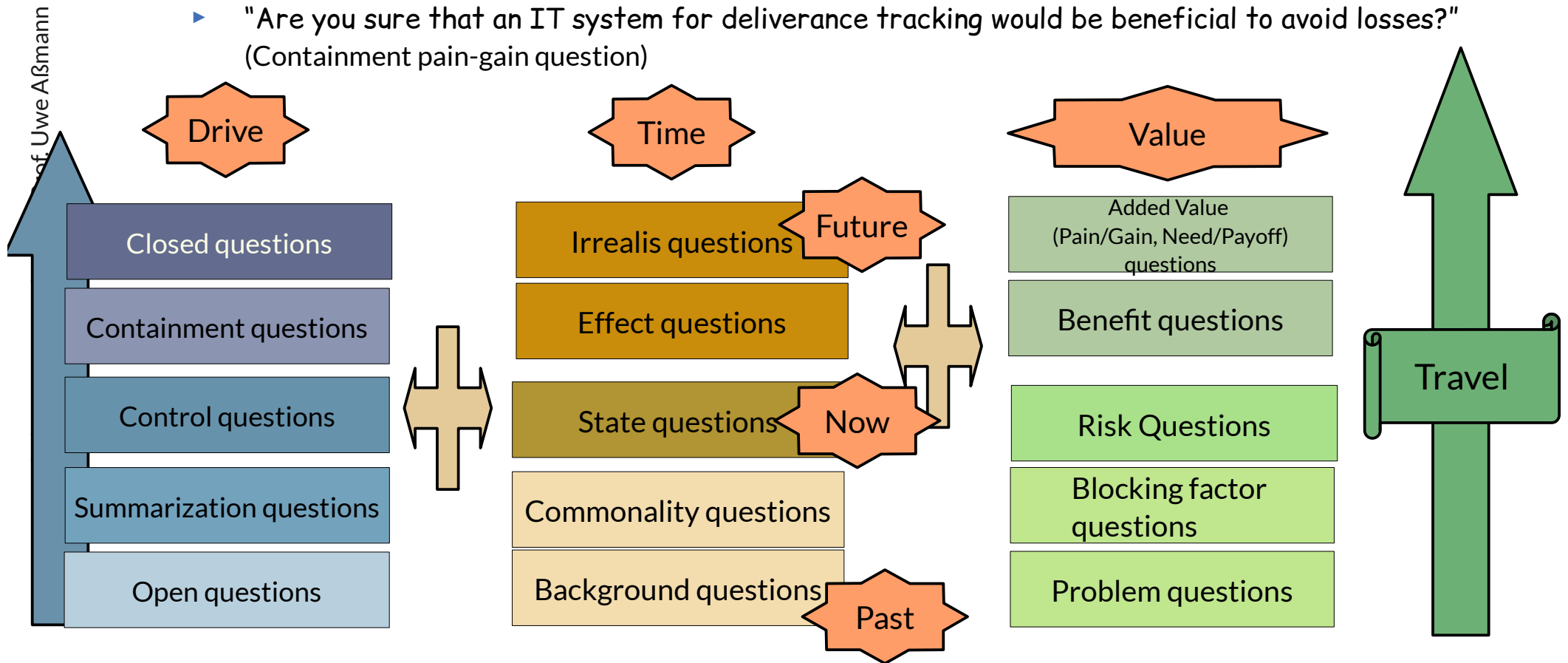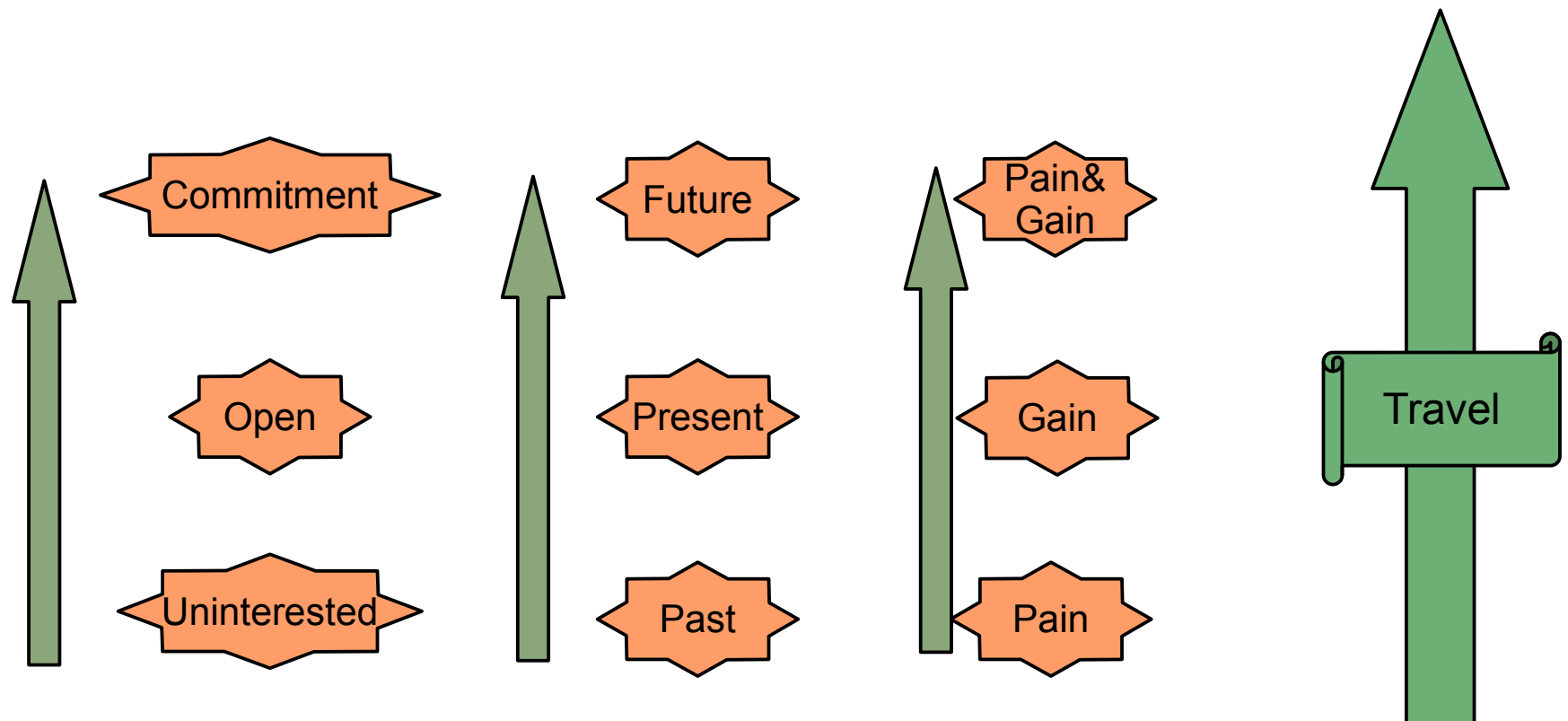
House of Questions

▶ The Interviewer tries to guide the interviewee on a journey to new land.

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House of Question-Based Guidance

Goal of Interviewer	Guiding to Next Stage		Journey
	Pain Analysis	Gain Analysis	
	Drive	Time	Value	
	Situation of Interviewee		

Rpt.: Classes of Questions

► Questions are usually linking with three aspects: **Drive, Time** and **Pain/Gain**

► A good question combines a topic with a drive: [inspired by Bosworth]

- ▪ The drive drives forward the interviewee to a new stage of his travel.
- ▪ The interviewee learns something about the value

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Commitment

Open

Uninterested

Future

Present

Past

Pain&
Gain

Gain

Pain

Travel

Combination Table to Form Your Own Questions

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Drive Facet	Time Facet	Value Facet
Why is it the case that? (open)	.. You had a problem/need/catastrophy yesterday?	Why do you like to change this problem (pain-gain)
Am I right that it is the case that? (control)	.. You hav a problem/need/catastrophy today?	Since when did you encounter this problem X? (problem question)
		Have you ever tried to solve problem X? (blocking factor question)

11.4 Applications of Question-Guided Travels

▶ Many situations in life need **question-guided travels.**

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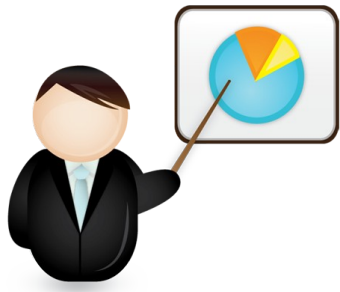
Talking	Writing Papers	Personal communication	Management
Smoke Videos	Brochures	Landing Page	Career development Development contracts

The End

▶ Why is the notion of a **customer journey** so important for a valid sale, value proposition and business model?

▶ How can you make your customer understand her gains and pains?

▶ Explain the difference between Value and Drive aspects of questions in question-guided journeys.

▶ How can you reveal a problem of the audience of your talk by talking about the past *or* the future?

▶ How can you reveal a gain of the audience of your talk by talking about the past *or* the future?

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