**Welcome**

**Leading
research projects**

**Introductory course**

Seminar 1

1 June 2023

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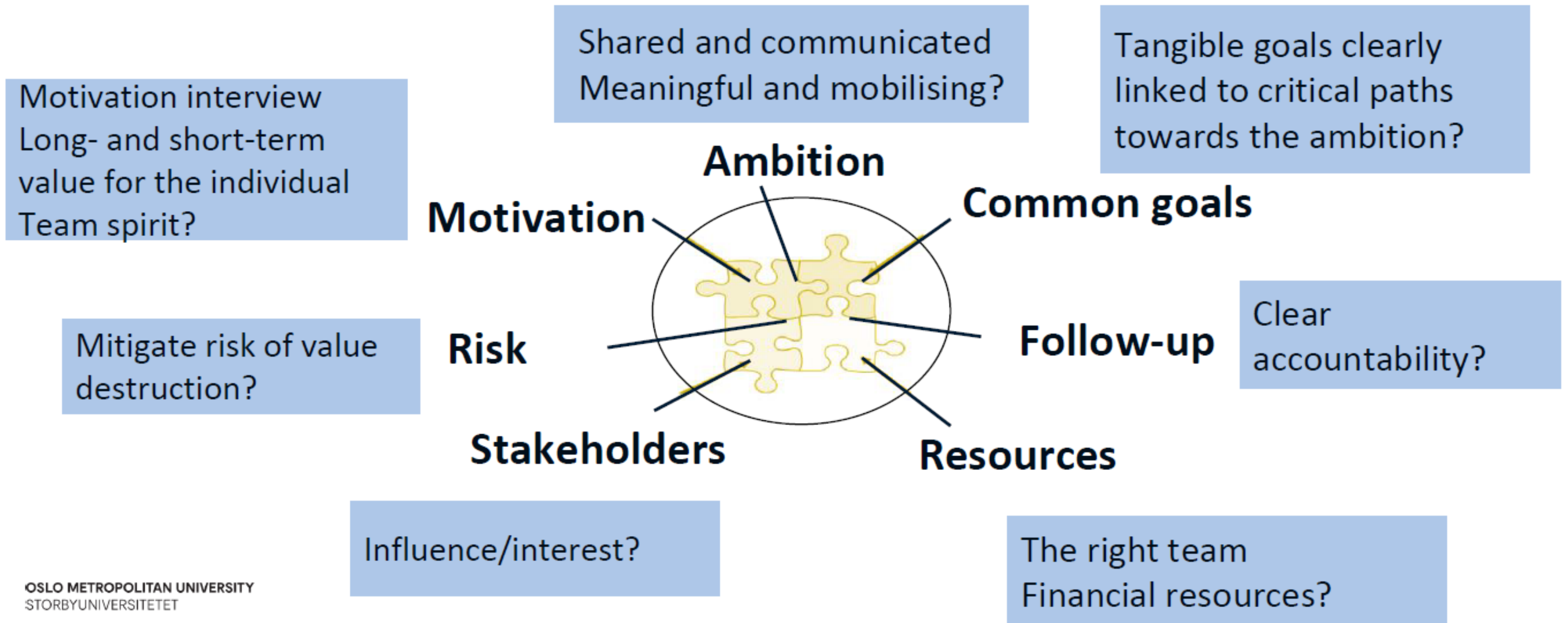  - ANNIKA WETLESEN

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# PROJECT LEADERSHIP – BEST PRACTICE

## *Adapt to new realities, while remembering to see the big picture!*

Shared and communicated
Meaningful and mobilising?

Tangible goals clearly
linked to critical paths
towards the ambition?

Motivation interview
Long- and short-term
value for the individual
Team spirit?

**Ambition**

**Motivation**

**Common goals**

Mitigate risk of value
destruction?

**Risk**

**Follow-up**

Clear
accountability?

**Stakeholders**

**Resources**

Influence/interest?

The right team
Financial resources?

# **Learning objectives**

As a research project leader, you need to balance research activities and the work that needs to be done as a leader. E.g., facilitating shared ambitions and cooperation between the members of the project group, create good processes that prioritizes goals, resources and deliverables in the project.

- In this course you will be introduced to concepts, tools and perspectives to develop your project leadership skill set.

- Sharing experiences, views and wonderings are key for your learning process.

# Game rules

- **Share personal experiences – as important as theoretical perspectives**

- ”Confidentiality”

- Critical and constructive approach

- Processes are critical – participate actively and be on time

- Shared responsibility for the outcome

- Brief, concise input in plenary

- Time constraints – may be necessary to interrupt and move on

- Mobile phones and emails only during breaks

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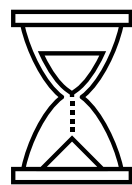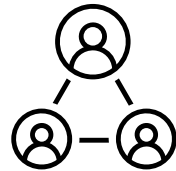
# Leadership understanding in a research project
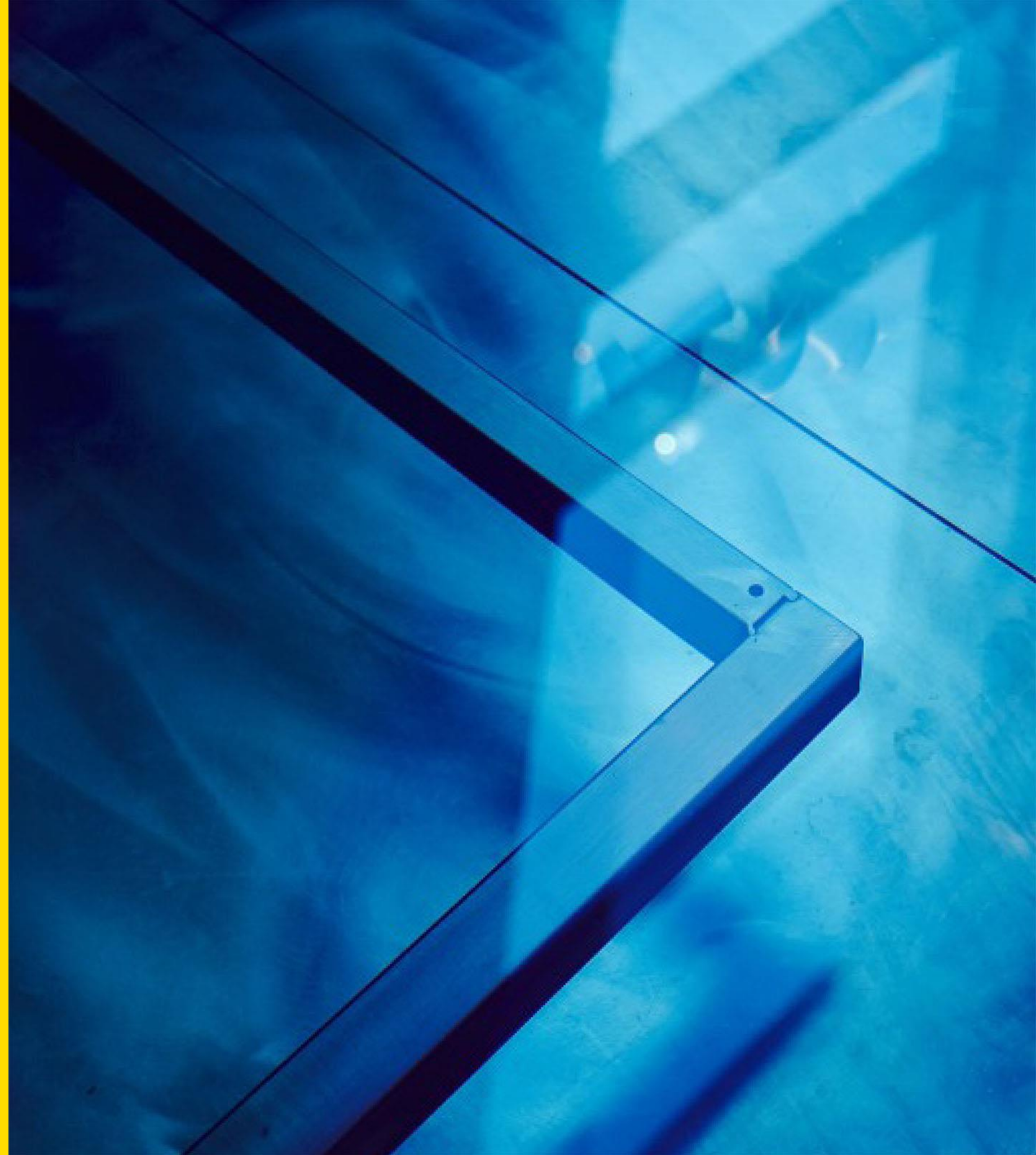
# The roles of the research project leader

**Academic leader**
- clever/skilled and respected

**Academic professional**
- time for own academic production and development

**Communicator of the shared ambition**
- translate/interpret
- direction and framework

**You?**

**Coordinator**
- the engagement and concerns of the various individuals
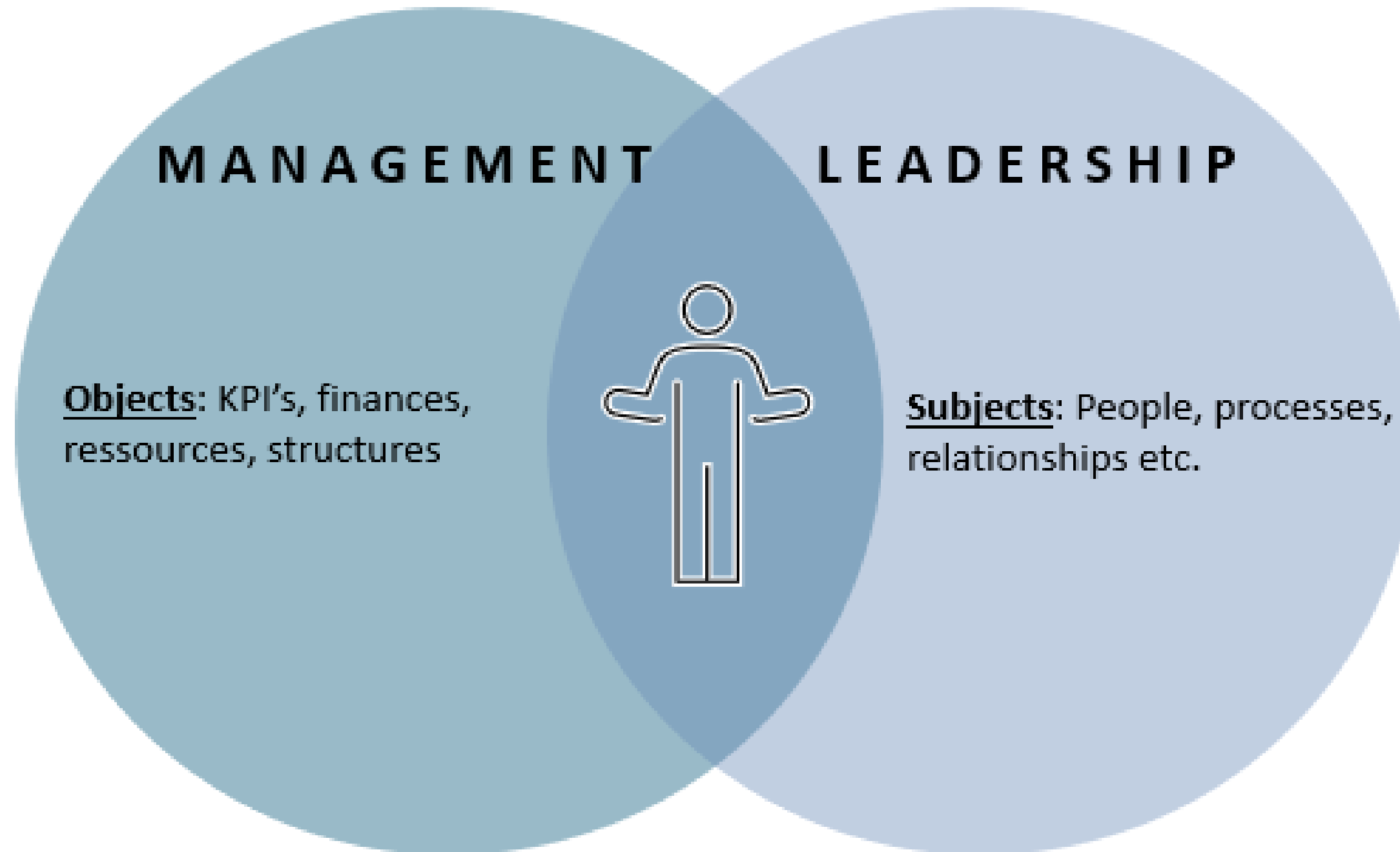- the big picture concerns
- The management team
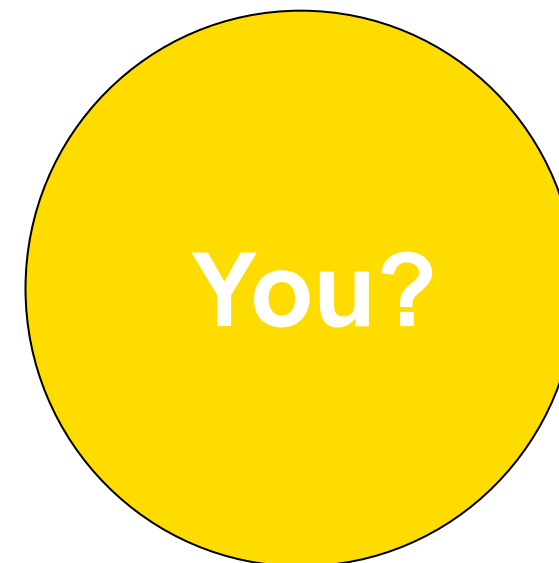
**Facilitator**
- establish the common goals
- good processes in the organisation
- listen to the motivation

**Balance-keeper**
ambitious ↔ realistic
production ↔ development

# Two sides of the same coin

MANAGEMENT    LEADERSHIP

**Objects**: KPI's, finances, ressources, structures

**Subjects**: People, processes, relationships etc.

# Leadership and authority – the basics

## Different levels

### 1st order: The professional´s self-leadership

- Specialists are self-motivating

- Specialists must be allowed to follow their own agendas

### 2nd order: Managing the self-leading specialists

- Cooperation and cross-disciplinarity is necessary to develop the ultimate (synergy effects)

- Common frameworks must be established and accepted

### 3rd order: Two-way trust

# Authority





- Something that is given for different reasons

- Something that a leader can influence by without this being at the expense of self-leadership

- Distinguish between

    - Weber distinguishes between bureaucratic and charismatic authority

    - Personal and role-based authority (Visholm 2004)

    - Authority and authoritarian

# Types and sources of authority

**Community servant**
Based on performance of function (in community)

*People follow you, because of the social function you perform*

**Professional expertise**
Based on knowledge (in knowledge system)

*People follow you, because of the professional competence you hold*

**Charismatic authority**
Based on personality (in community)
*People follow you, because of yourr personal charisma*

**Hierarchical power**
Based on position (in hierarchy)

*People follow you, because of the position you holds in the hierarchy*

*References:*
*Sørhaug (2004)*
*Visholm (2004)*

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# Advantages and challenges of authority types

## Community servant

**Advantages**
- Can lead and still give autonomy
- Works well in processes towards common goals
- Can utilize the potential of the group

**Challenges**
- More "invisible"
- Sensitive to national culture – can be misunderstood
- Not great at handling rush decisions

## Professional expertise

**Advantages**
- Rational
- Neutral
- Legitimacy in an academic setting
- Works well in argumentation

**Challenges**
- Can't be used in emotional or political situation
- Dangerous when you aren't the best expert

## Charismatic authority

**Advantages**
- Personality comes into play
- Creates energy
- Give followership

**Challenges**
- Not rational
- Dependent on tradition
- Biased e.g. on gender

## Hierarchical power

**Advantages**
- Works well with formality
- Transparent
- Easy to understand
- "The last resort"

**Challenges**
- Can work against autonomy and motivation
- Dangerous to use with scientific questions

# Reflect and discuss in pairs

- Which are my sources of authority?

- What are my experiences with drawing upon these sources?

# Casework: Tore – A successful researcher!

## Case: Tore – a successful researcher

"What do I do? I must do something - this cannot continue. Otherwise I will lose all my authority". Tore Ottersen lay awake and could not fall asleep. He thought again of his colleague - Marthe Odderdal. She continued to challenge his leadership - professionally and project-wise. "Something must happen - it cannot continue like this. Should I go to the head of the department and talk to him about the problem?"
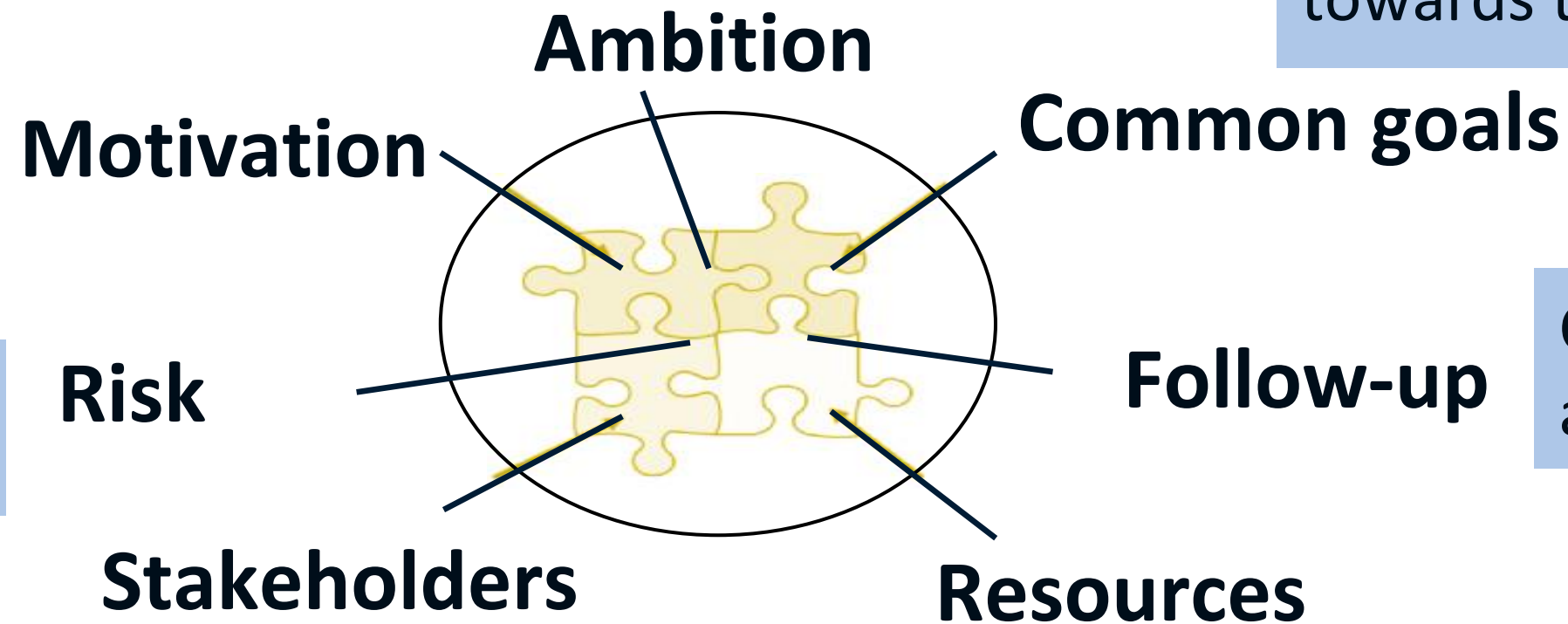
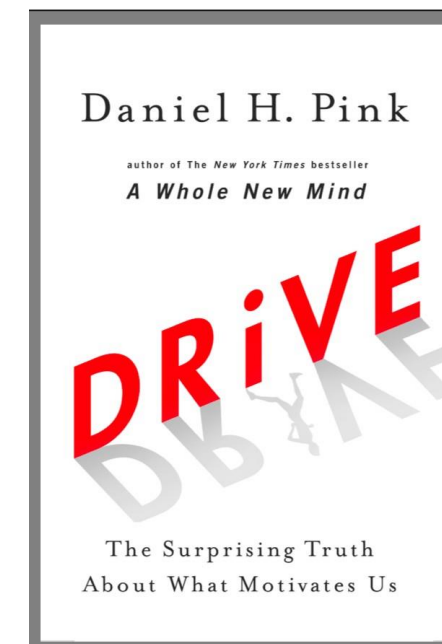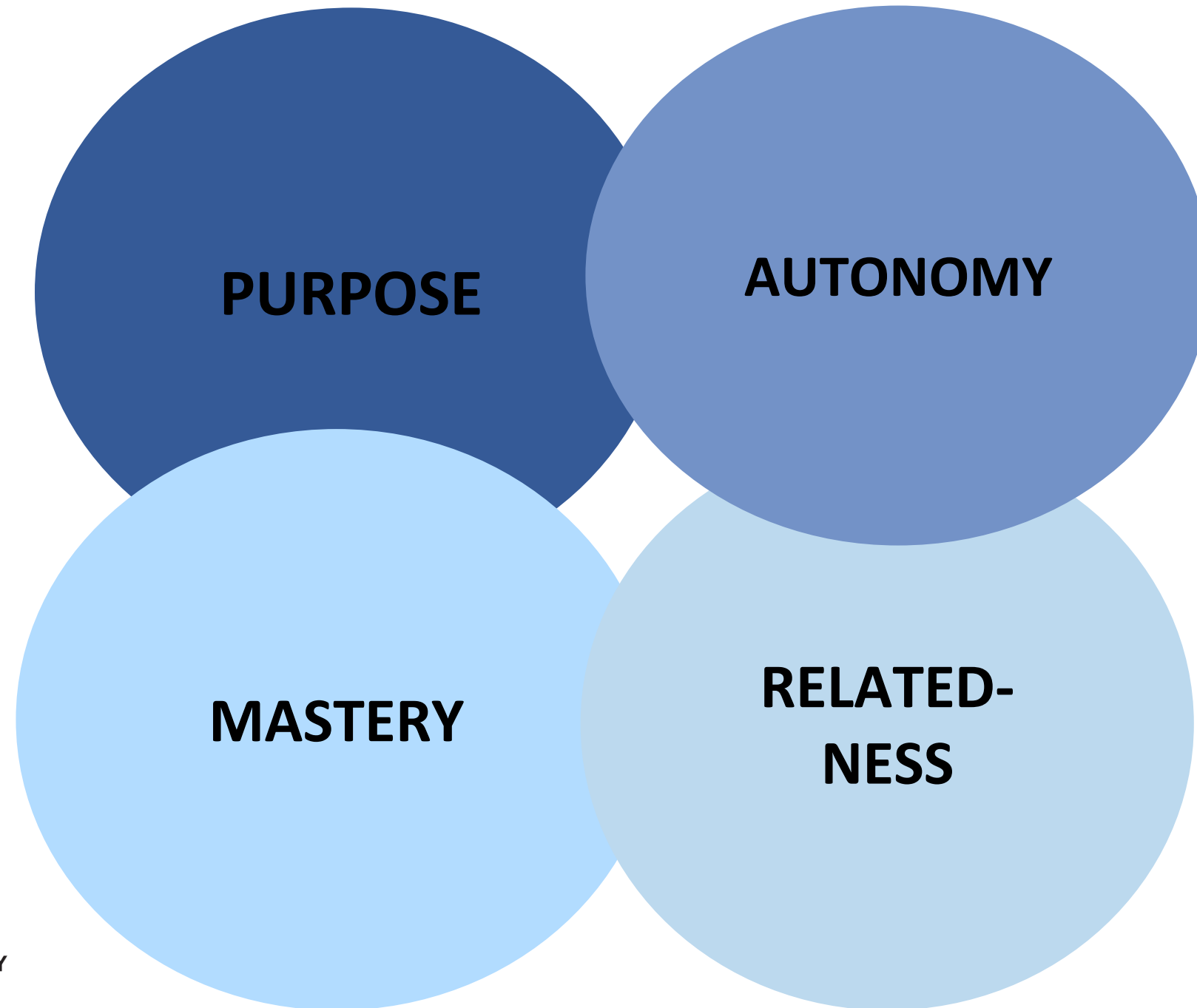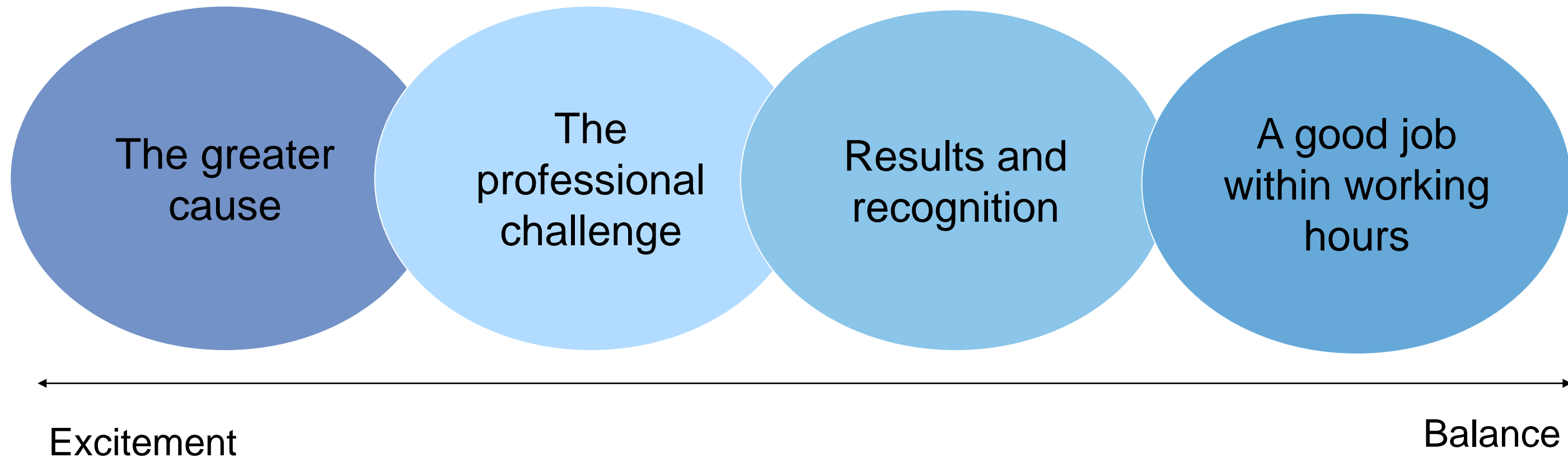# Inner motivation and shared ambition
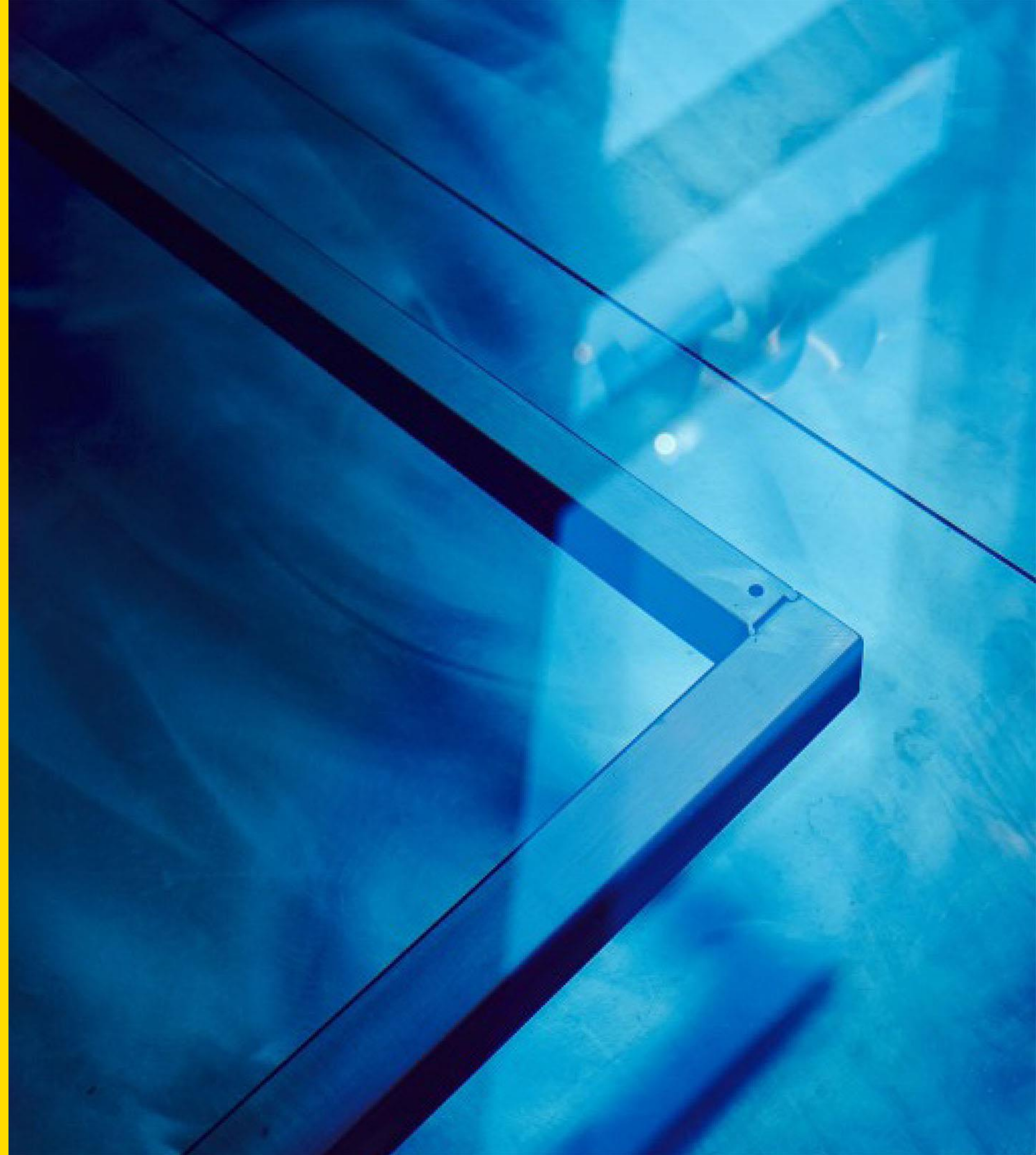
# Motivation

- **Intrinsic motivation** is decisive, when it comes to cognitive demanding and creative tasks

- As individuals we have the intrinsic motivation for such tasks at the onset, but it can be enhanced our impaired

- Central points about intrinsic motivation include:
  - We need **autonomy** (hence, reward and punishment may both demotivate)
  - Working for a greater **purpose** may enhance or maintain the motivation
  - The feeling of being part of a greater **community** is important in the long run
  - It is decisive to be in the zone of **mastery** (or the development zone that you can cope with)

# Intrinsic motivation

PURPOSE

AUTONOMY

MASTERY

RELATED-NESS

Daniel H. Pink

author of The New York Times bestseller
A Whole New Mind

DRIVE

The Surprising Truth
About What Motivates Us

Pink (2010)
Deci & Ryan (2000)

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# Everyone is driven by purpose

The greater cause

The professional challenge

Results and recognition

A good job within working hours

Excitement ← → Balance

Hein (2013)

# Different motivation archetypes

*Seeking exitement*                                                    *Seeking balance*

## Archetype I:

- Motivated by a greater cause (often societal)

- Seeking to reach and raise a higher standard – achieving the sublime level of work

- Very verbal and expressive – on behalf of the greater cause

- Motivational "kick"  seldom achieved (perhaps once a year)

## Archetype II:

- Motivated by a really hard professional challenge

- Finds a "nut" and works performance-oriented on "cracking" it

- The silent "nerd" needing non-disturbance and concentration

- Motivational "kick" very seldom (perhaps every second year). Silent party
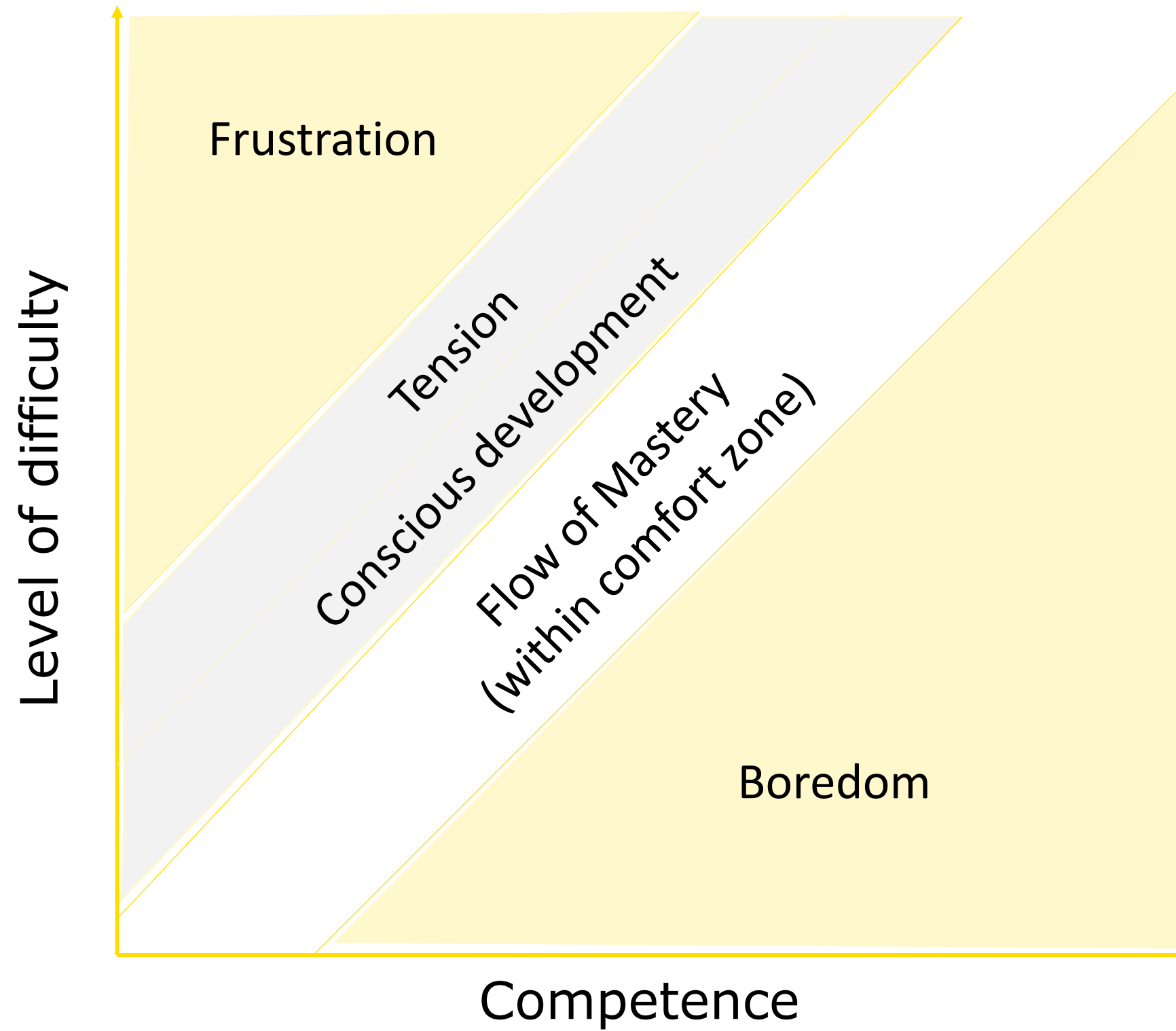
## Archetype III:

- Motivated by social recognition

- Working target oriented to reach the goals that give success

- Likes clear goals with clear criteria

- "Kicks" should preferably be achieved frequently. Visible and big party

## Archetype IV:

- Motivated by doing a good and proper job

- Would like to live up to a good and reasonable standard on the job, while also having a balance with life besides the job

- Not a "kick", but a continuous good feeling of balance

Hein (2013)

# Flow model



Frustration

Tension

Conscious development

Flow of Mastery (within comfort zone)

Boredom

Level of difficulty

Competence

Hein & Davidsen (2017)

# Same ambition – different motivation

Even if you are motivated by the same shared ambition, you may become so **in different** ways. You may – for example – be motivated primarily by:

- The higher societal purpose

- The difficult professional challenges

- The visible results providing social acknowledgement

- Doing a good job and living up to the expectations

- Regardless of what the motivation is about, it is important for a leader to **know the motivation of the individual  -** how the individual is motivated by the shared ambition
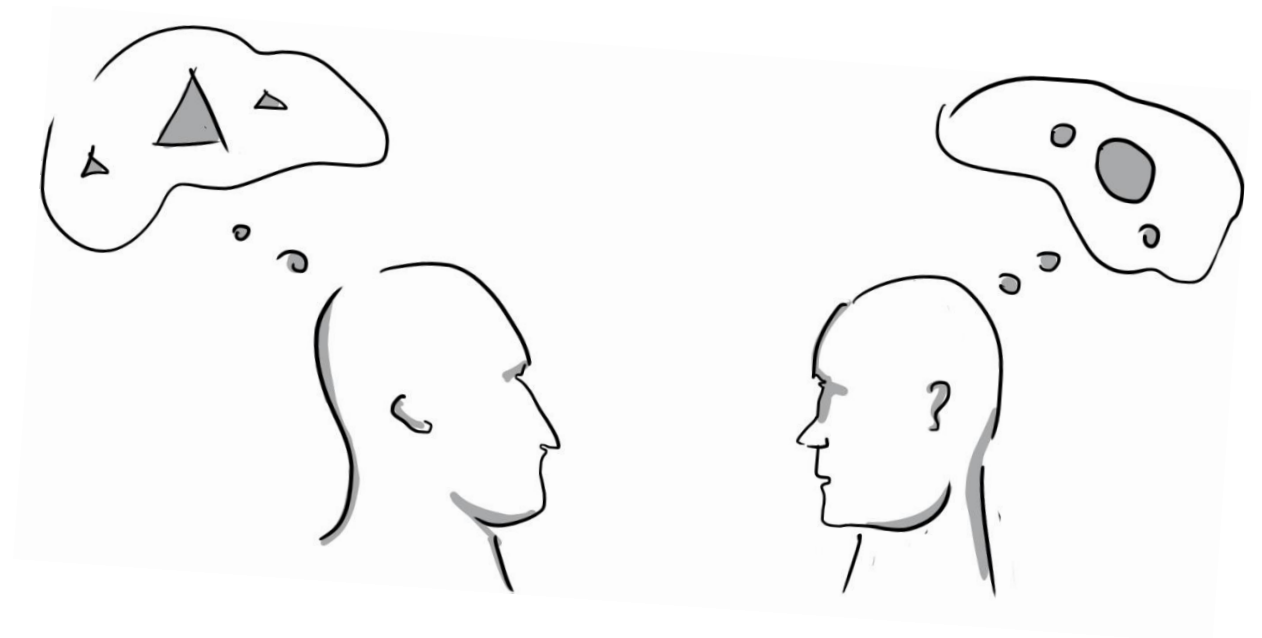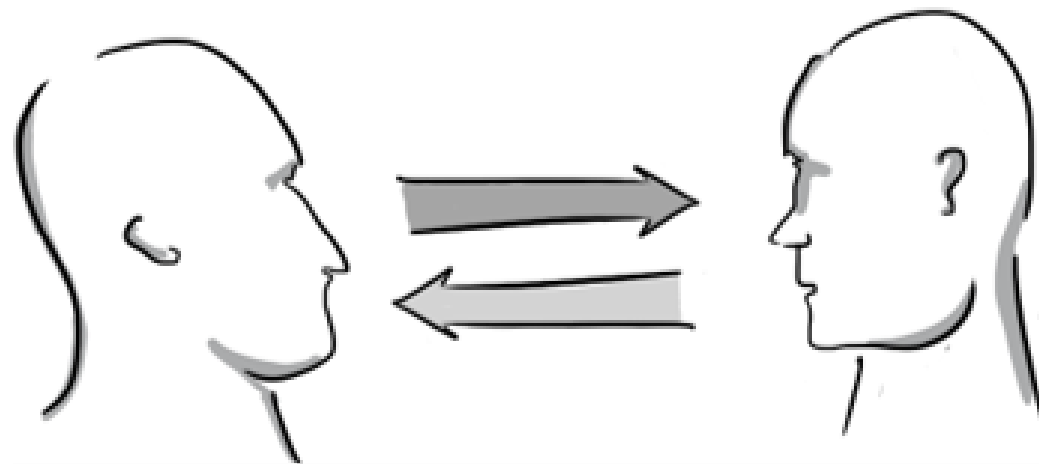
# Dialogue at three levels

To get a sense of the individual's motivation through an open dialogue, you should distinguish between three levels of dialogue:

- At **level 0** there is actually really no dialogue, but a situation where the leader delivers a message to the individual. Perhaps you pretend that it is a dialogue, where you are interested in the individual's view. But you are primarily focused on delivering the message. You are not really listening, but rather considering what to say next.

*Gordon (1980)*
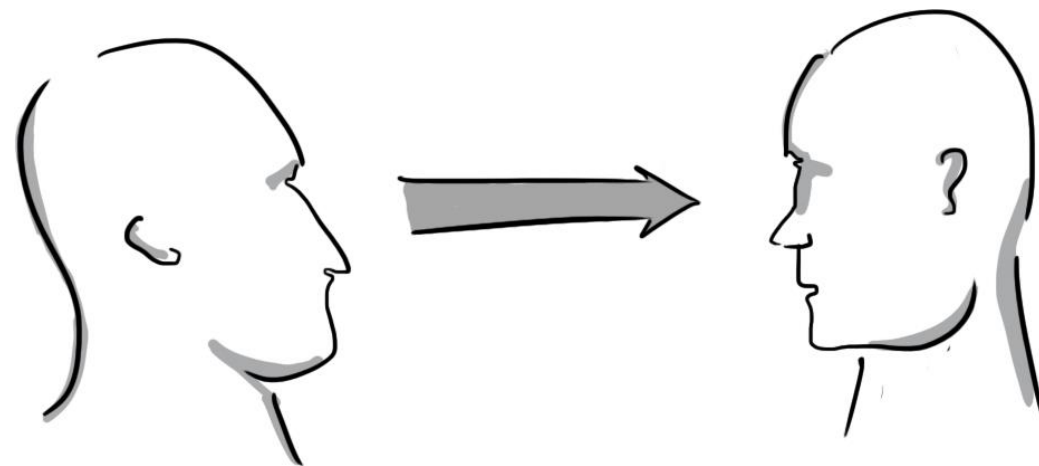
# Dialogue at three levels

At **level 1** there is a dialogue. You are interested in hearing what the individual is saying. You are listening and focused, but shortly because you are getting your own associations from what the individual says. Hence, you become more focused on your own thoughts and only get to the surface of the individual's motivation profile rather than reaching a deeper understanding.



*Gordon (1980)*

# Dialogue at three levels

At **level 2** you keep the focus on the individual and what she/he is saying. You are listening interestedly to be able to ask questions for elaboration. You work consciously to stay away from your personal associations. You focus on enabling the individual to dive deeper in her/his own understanding of her/his motivation. You ask facilitating questions.

*Gordon (1980)*
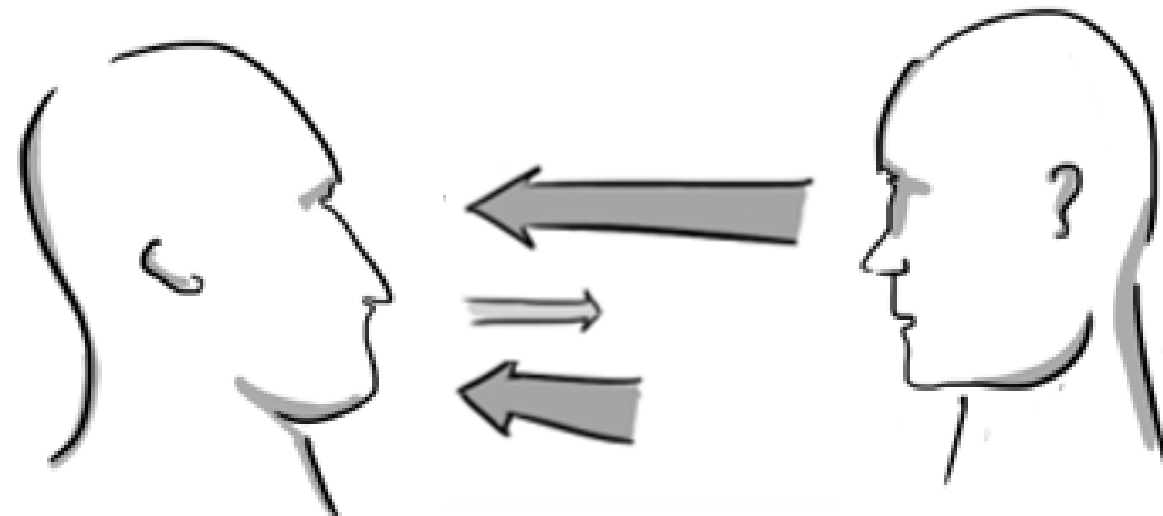
# Your motivation – reflection and dialogue

- Reflect on what really motivates you professionally

- Dialogue in pairs

Person A:

- Tell person B about what really motivates you professionally
- Active listening (level 2) from person B

Person B:

- Tell person A about what really motivates you professionally
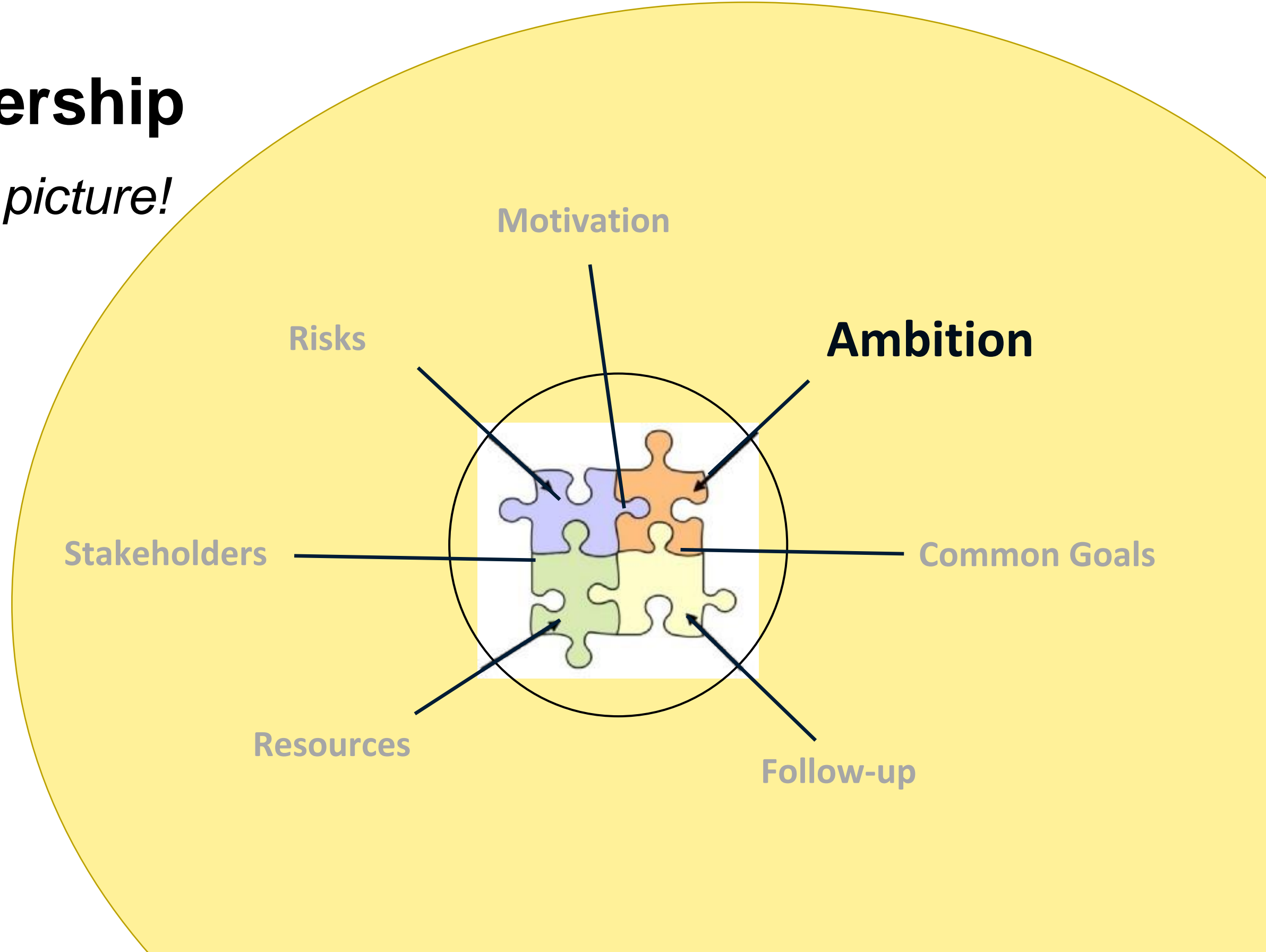- Active listening (level 2) from person A

# Motivation interview – dialogue level 2

## Examples of possible questions

- When did you last feel motivated at work? What/who was present?

- What ambition are you passionate about?

- What is the most meaningful moment you have experienced at work?

  - Do you sometimes feel "a kick" ? – when and why?

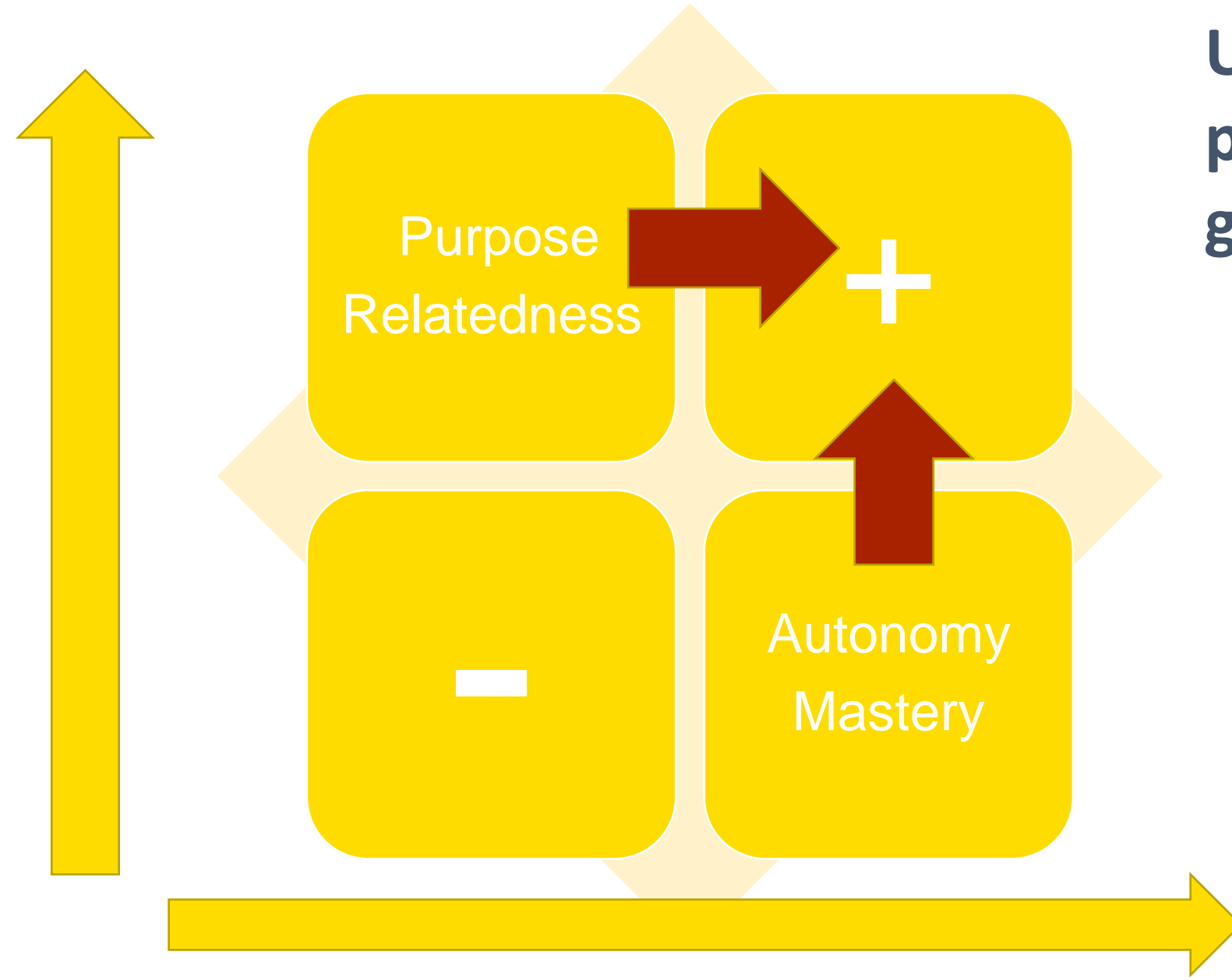- How do you take care of your motivation? – Maintain it?

# Project leadership

- *Remember to see the big picture!*

Motivation

Risks

Ambition

Stakeholders

Common Goals

Resources

Follow-up

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# The ambition – why is it so important?

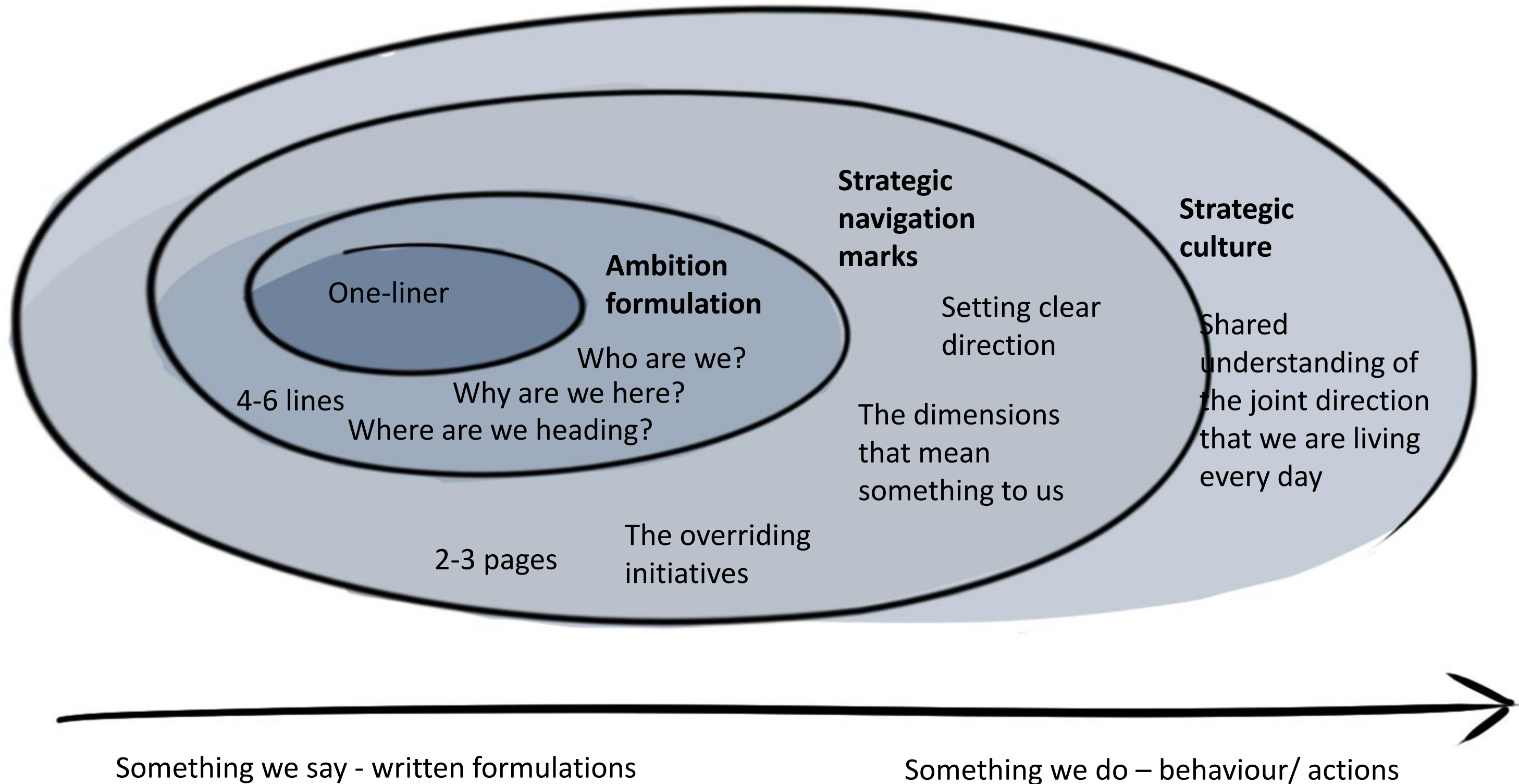## A group of self-managing individuals and units must know

- What do we want to achieve together

- Why are we together in this organisation

- What is the purpose of what we are doing

- What value in the society do want to create together

- What is it that we are enthusiastic about together
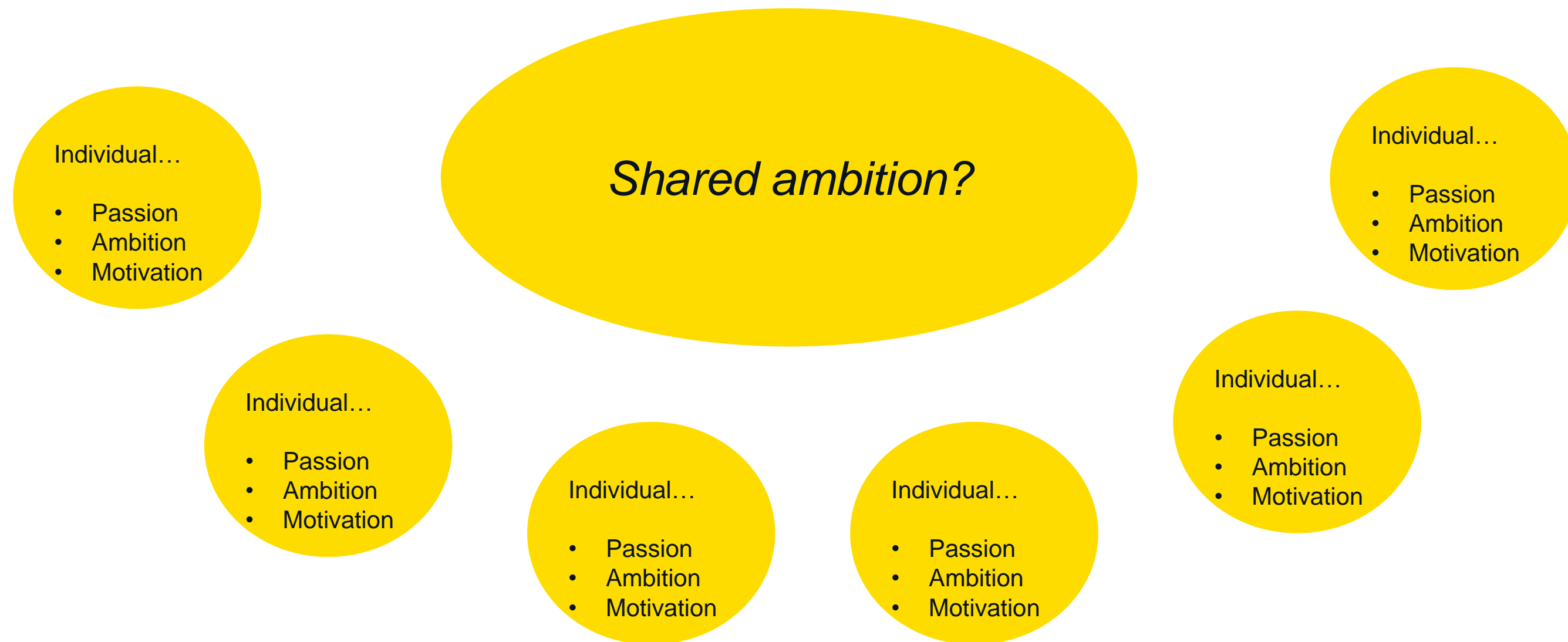
# The ambition – why is it so important?

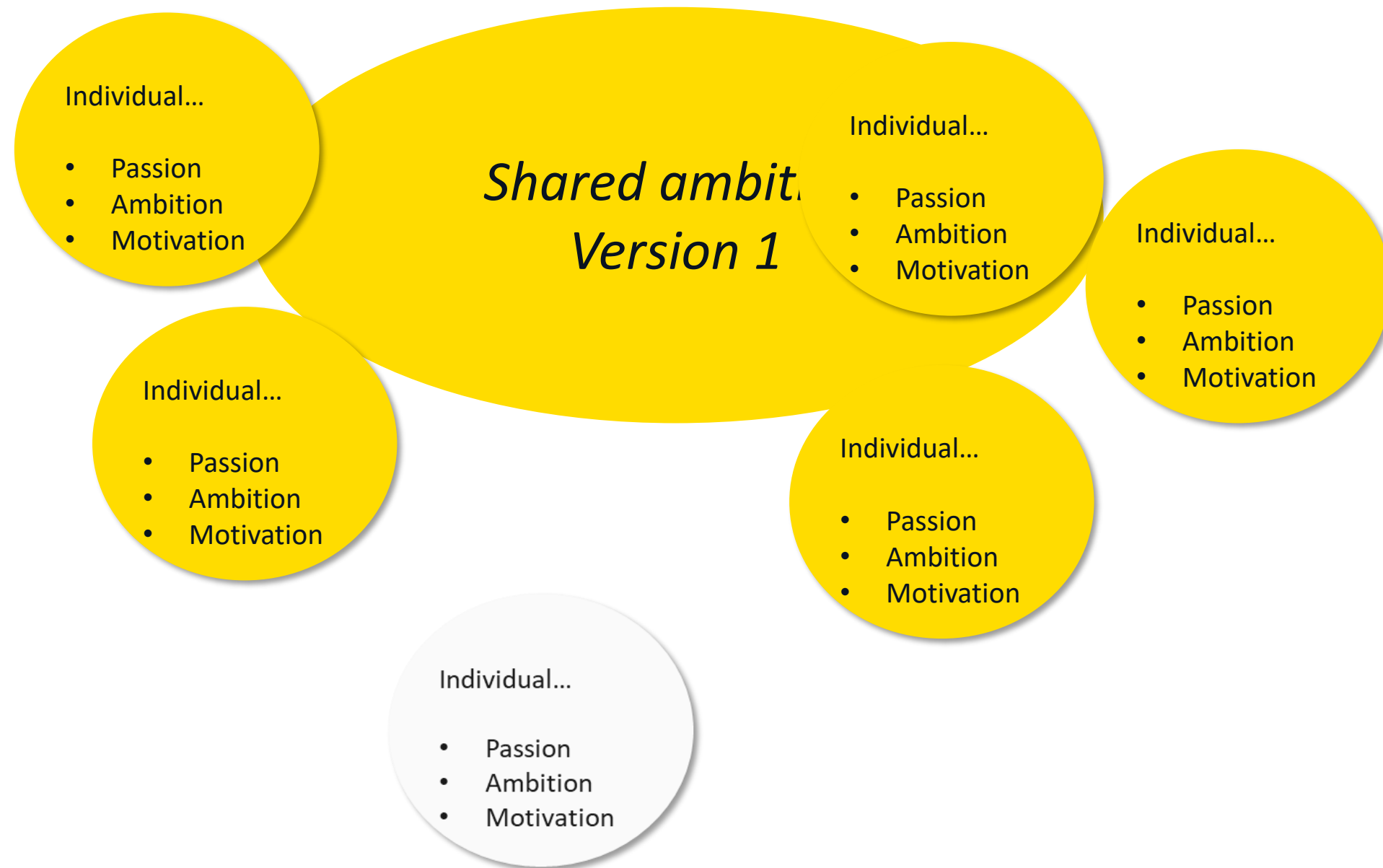**A strong shared ambition that we are enthusiastic about**

- Motivates us to do our utmost and unleash our potential

- Sets the shared vision that we want to achieve together

- Provides guidance for setting our common goals

- Provides guidance for handling dilemmas

# Elements of the ambition



One-liner

4-6 lines

**Ambition formulation**

Who are we?
Why are we here?
Where are we heading?

2-3 pages

The overriding initiatives

**Strategic navigation marks**

Setting clear direction

The dimensions that mean something to us

**Strategic culture**

Shared understanding of the joint direction that we are living every day

Something we say - written formulations

Something we do – behaviour/ actions
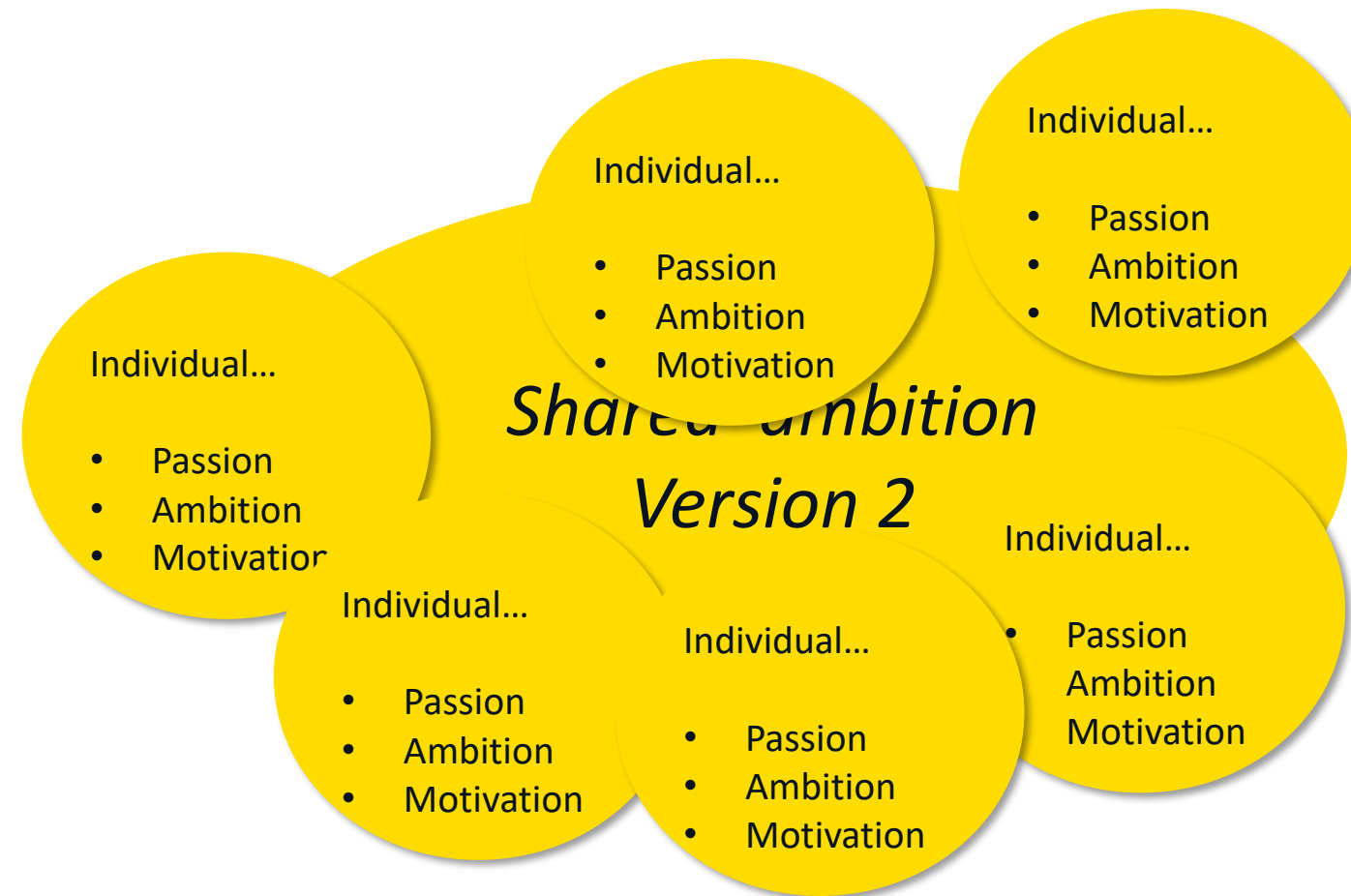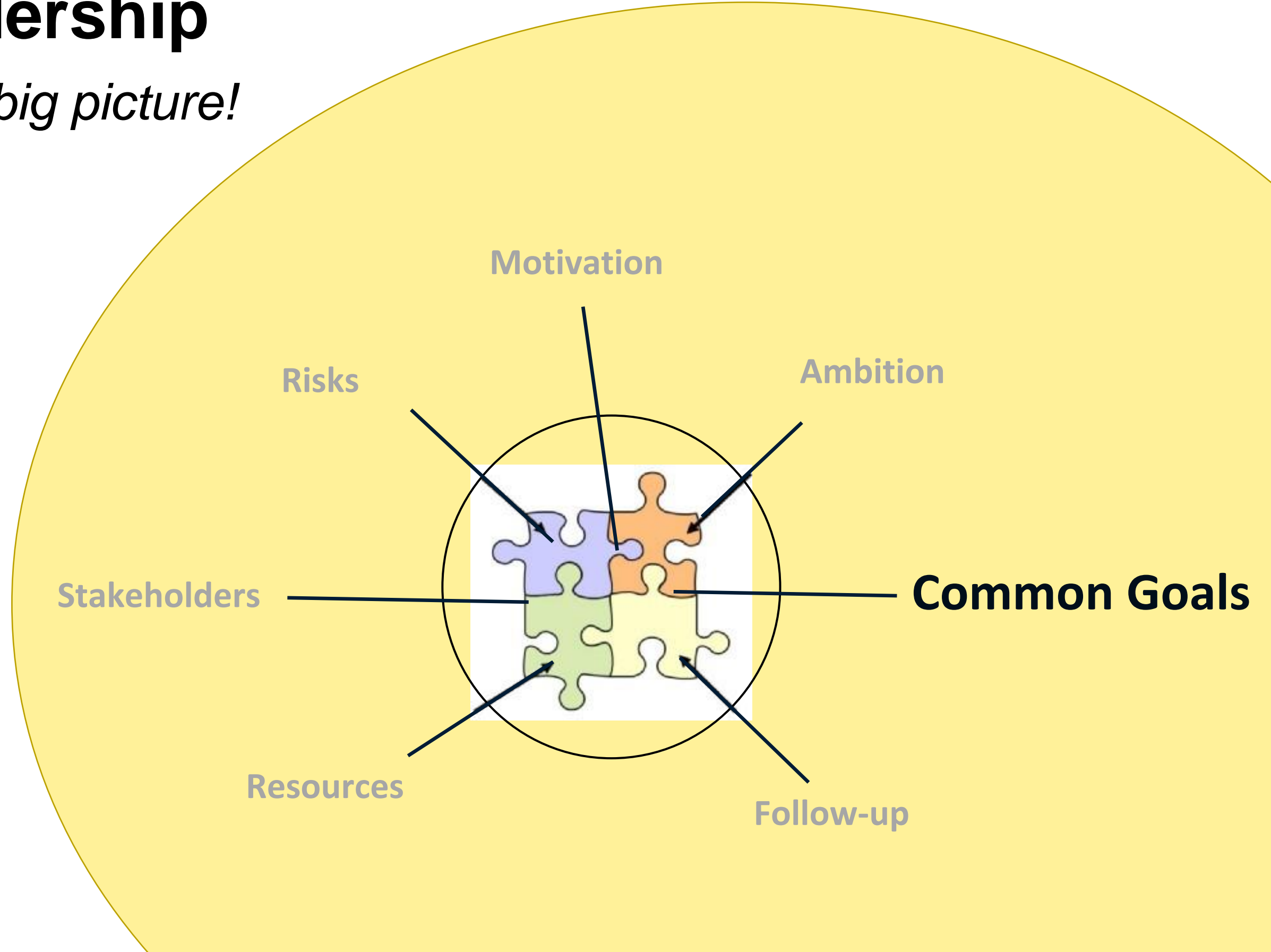
# Reflect and discuss

- What is the ambition of your project?

- Is the ambition shared and communicated?

# Project leadership

- *Remember to see the big picture!*

Motivation

Ambition

Risks

Stakeholders

**Common Goals**

Resources

Follow-up

# Inspirational and common goals – and onboarding…

Four days ago (literally) a new post-doc has started to work in my project. It is the first time I am directly supervising a post-doc. I have told her already that I would need her help for the "big project" and then she can be more involved and leading a smaller project related to it.

The problem is that I have so much preparation work for the big project that has stared just few months ago, that I have not had time yet to plan her project. I have some ideas but not fully developed. I do not know her yet, but from our few conversations, I can see that she is very capable and can manage different tasks at the same time. This worries me a bit as I do not want her to get bored helping me with the preparations of the big project, that is more project management related, as I will not be able to give her a very clear project for herself in the next couple of months…

**What would do you think the project leader should do?**

# AMBITION BASED DEVELOPMENT OF *COMMON* GOALS

Project today

Project at the finish line
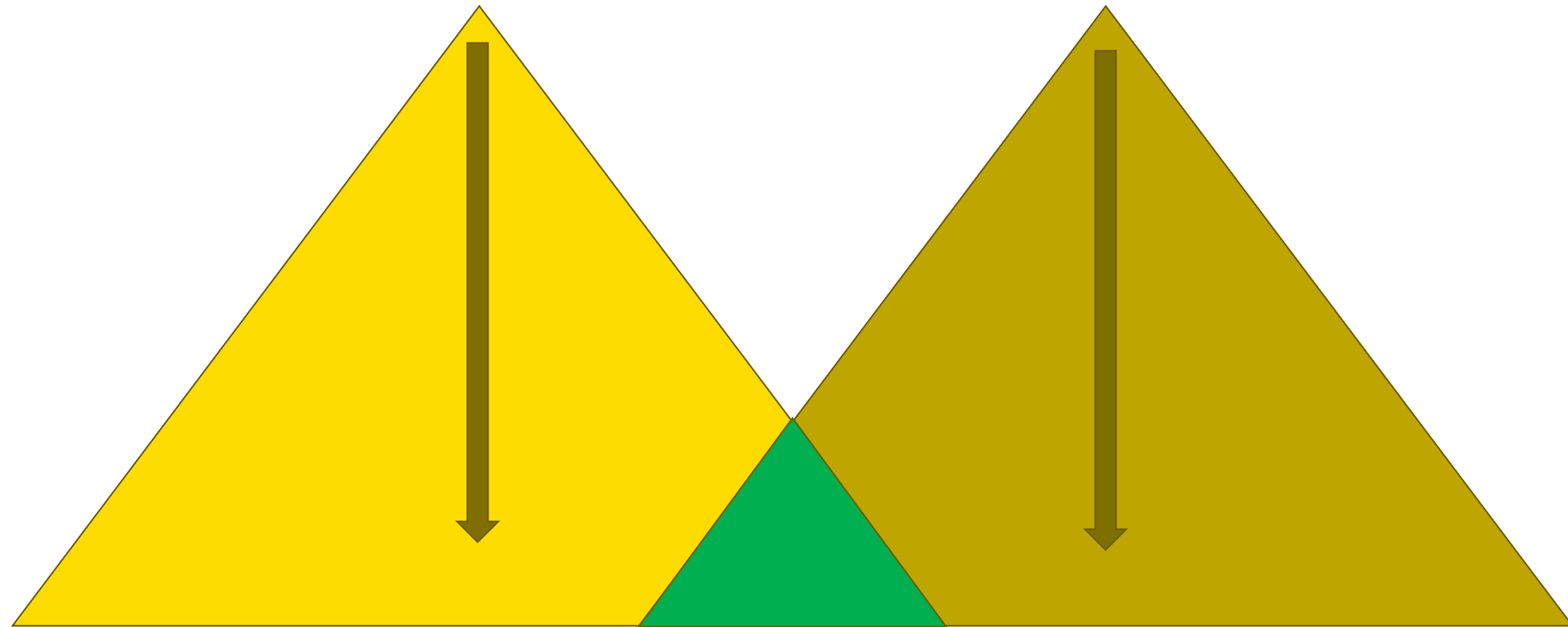
Ambition

Ambition-based goal-setting:

1. Where do we want to be in the long term?
2. Where should we then be in the medium term?
3. Where should we then be in the short term?
4. Awareness on dilemmas
5. Focus and prioritisation
6. Action -> learning -> adapting
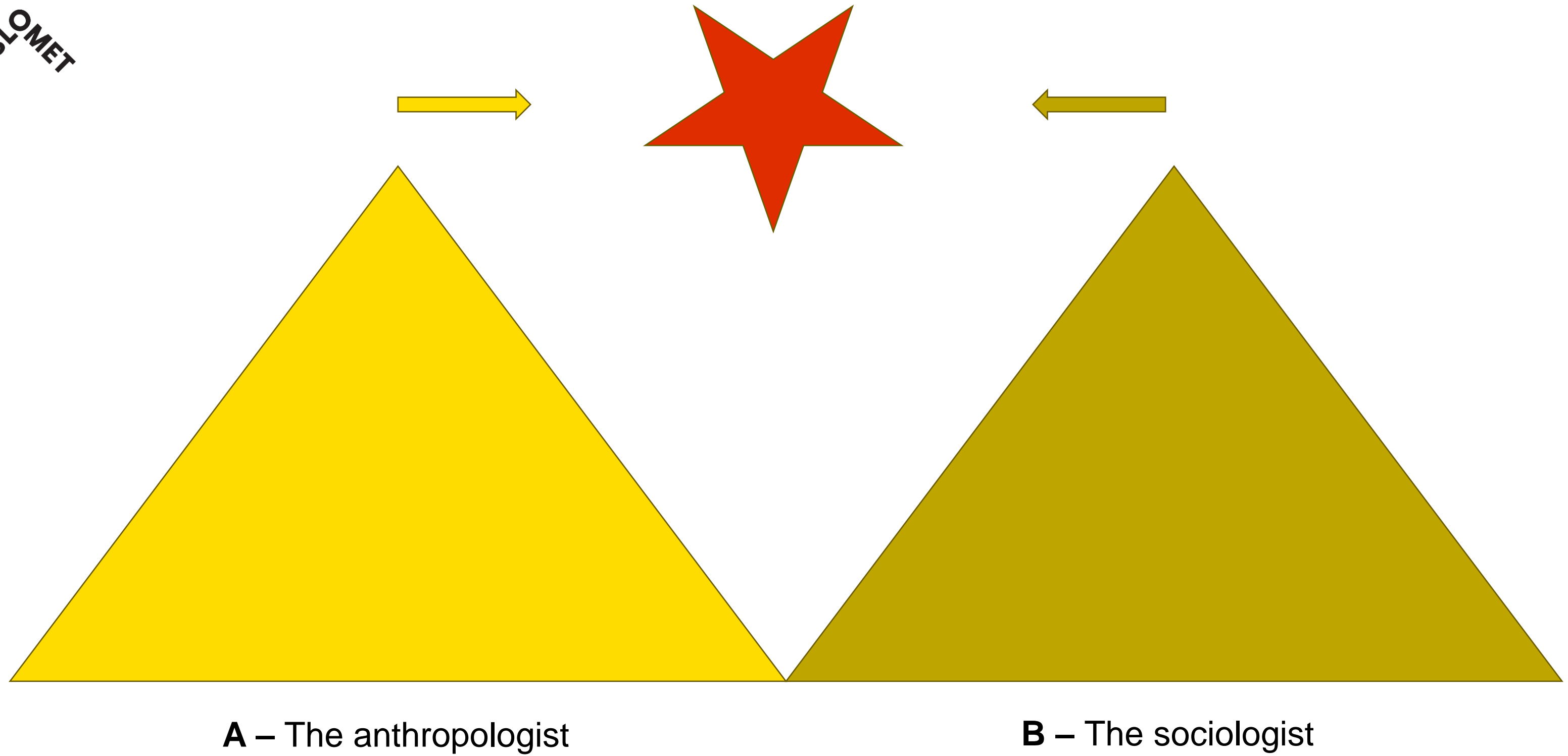
A – The anthropologist

B – The sociologist

# Setting goals and creating the right culture

## Performance goals and development goals

### Performance goals

- Focus on results

- Goals for operation/value

- Often goals concerning external parameters (what should our operation create?)

- Concrete – quality standard, economic fundamentals and reputation

- Are important to know when we succeed

### Development goal

- Focus on process and learning

- Goal for development

- Prioritize and focus

- Are important to reach the performance goals

- With development goals we *coach* – how can we become better?

- Focus on what supports the work to reach the performance goals

- "Training goals"

# Examples of performance goals

- Data collection

- Developing course material

- Teaching courses

- Producing posters

- Writing articles

- Conferences presentations
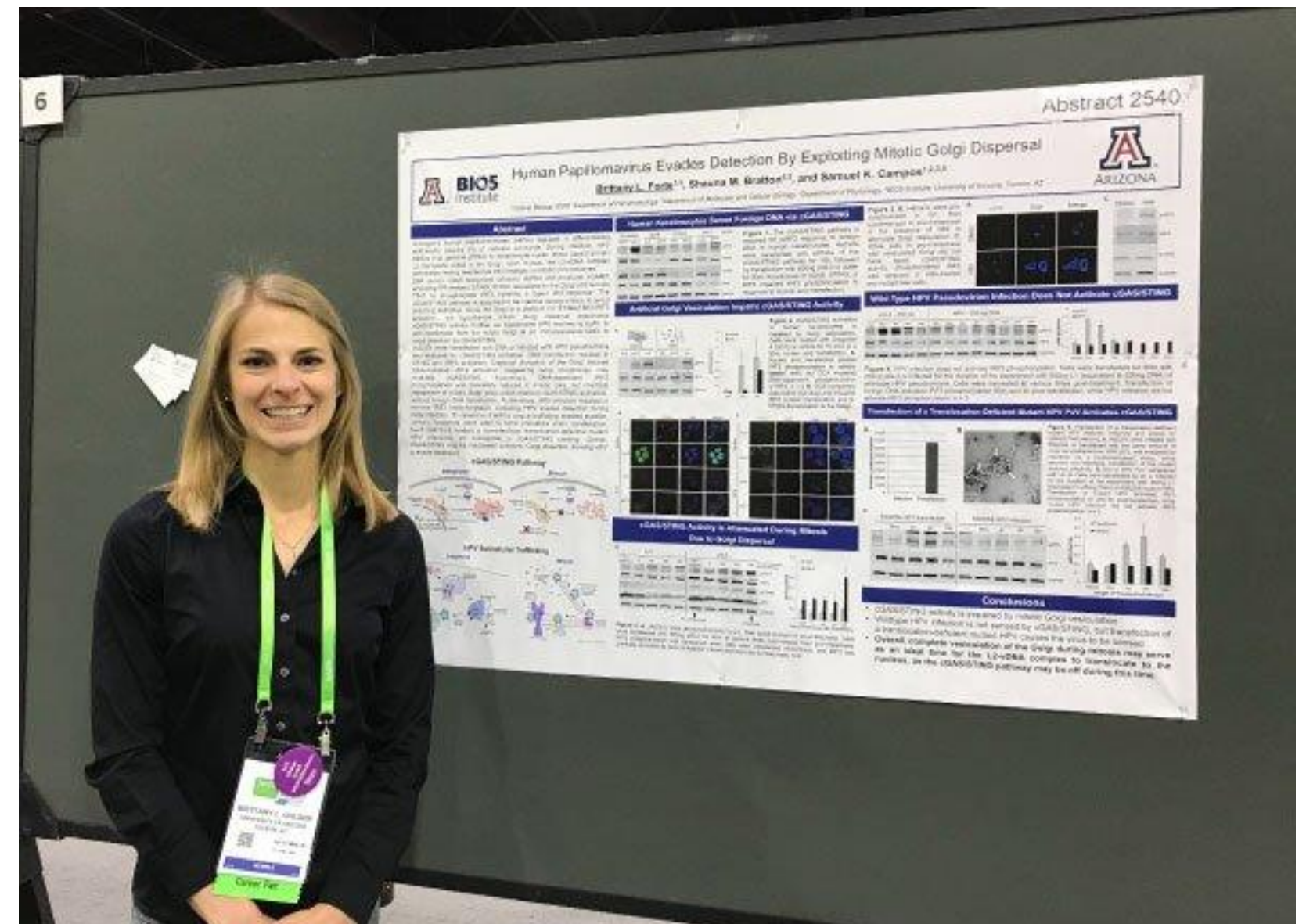
# Examples of development goals

- Recruiting and onboarding of group members

- Defining shared ambition and prioritizing activities at e.g. biannual frequences

- Setting and developing ground rules for interaction in the group

- Developing supervision skills among group members

- Developing project leader skills

# Project leadership

- *Remember to see the big picture!*

Motivation

Risks

Ambition

Stakeholders

Common Goals

Resources

**Follow-up**
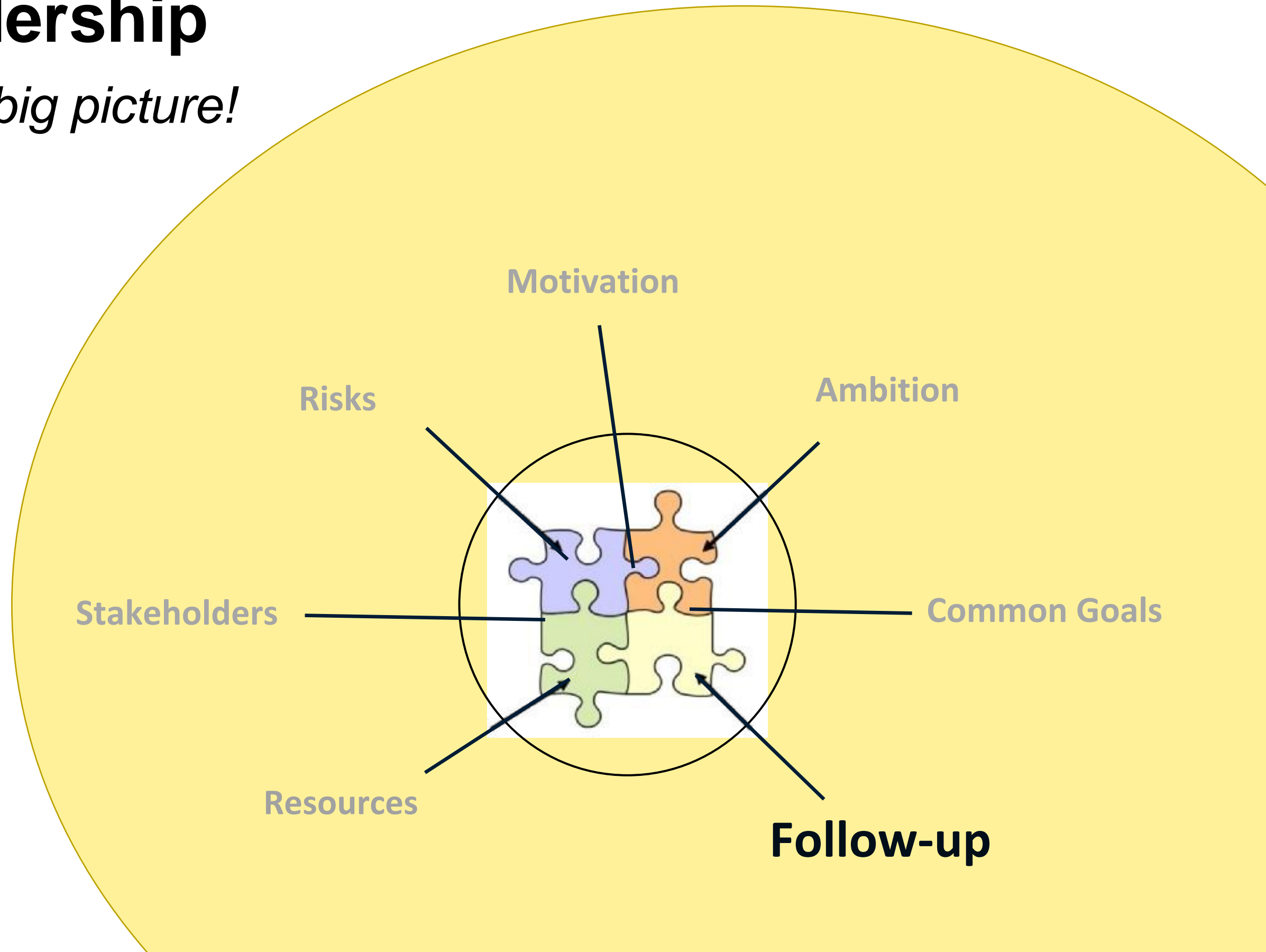
# The delayed project

The data collection in your project is delayed due to a number of factors primarily it has been more difficult than anticipated to find and engage respondents. Some of you group members have also been very busy doing other activities – teaching for one – and have not been able to recontact and 'kindly push' the reluctant respondents.

Due to this, your project is about two months delayed and the group will have to speed up the time spend on analyzing the data and producing the planned articles. You are on a thight schedule and suddenly your expert on statistics needs to take an urgent 3 weeks leave due to family issues.

**What do you do now?**

# Follow up system

Identify key factors to follow up and control:
- Cost
- Time
- Quality
- Scope

Time

Scope

Quality          Cost
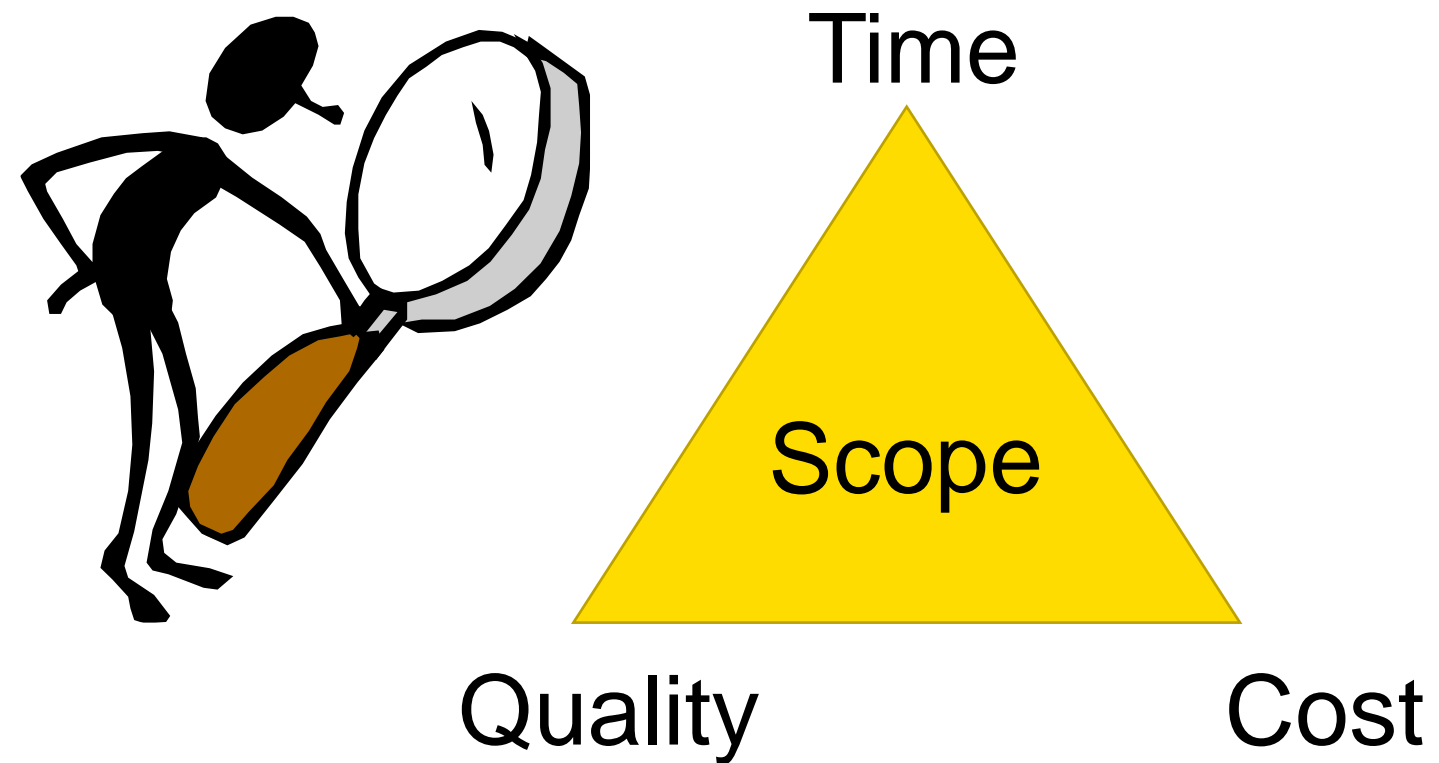
Must decide what is important enough to follow up on

# **Critical success factor - definitions**

- A critical success factor (CSF) is an element that is necessary for a research project to achieve its ambition.

- Those inputs that lead directly or indirectly to the success of the project

- Those few things that must go well to ensure success

# Follow up – clear accountability

- **Clarity - not to prepare for casting blame,** but to make sure that all potential mitigations are made as early as possible

- **Assigning ownership of each goal encouraging forward-looking reporting**
  - Including communicating difficulties and asking for help
  - Delegate deliverables/work packages with clear accountability
  - Forward looking progress reporting on prioritised key deliverables

- **Agree on the follow-up process when agreeing on the goal**

# Responsibility chart/matrix

| Activities ↓ | Person A | Person B | Person C | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Activity1 | 🔴 | 🟡 | 🟡 | |
| Activity 2 | 🔴 | 🟡 | | |
| Activity 3 | | 🟡 | 🔴 | |

Persons →

🔴 Primary responsibility

🟡 Some involvement

# The project control process

- Control
  - The process of comparing actual performance against plan to identify deviations, evaluate courses of action, and take appropriate corrective action

- Project control steps:

  1. **Setting a baseline plan**
  2. **Measuring progress and quality**
  3. **Comparing plan against actual progress**
  4. **Taking actions**

- Purpose is to correct errors, not punish the guilty

# **Possible actions – negative deviations**

1.  Continue as before – accept a delay and cost overrun - change the completion date/budget

2.  Reduce the scope

3.  Weaken the quality

4.  Add more resources (larger budget)

5.  Work more efficient

Time

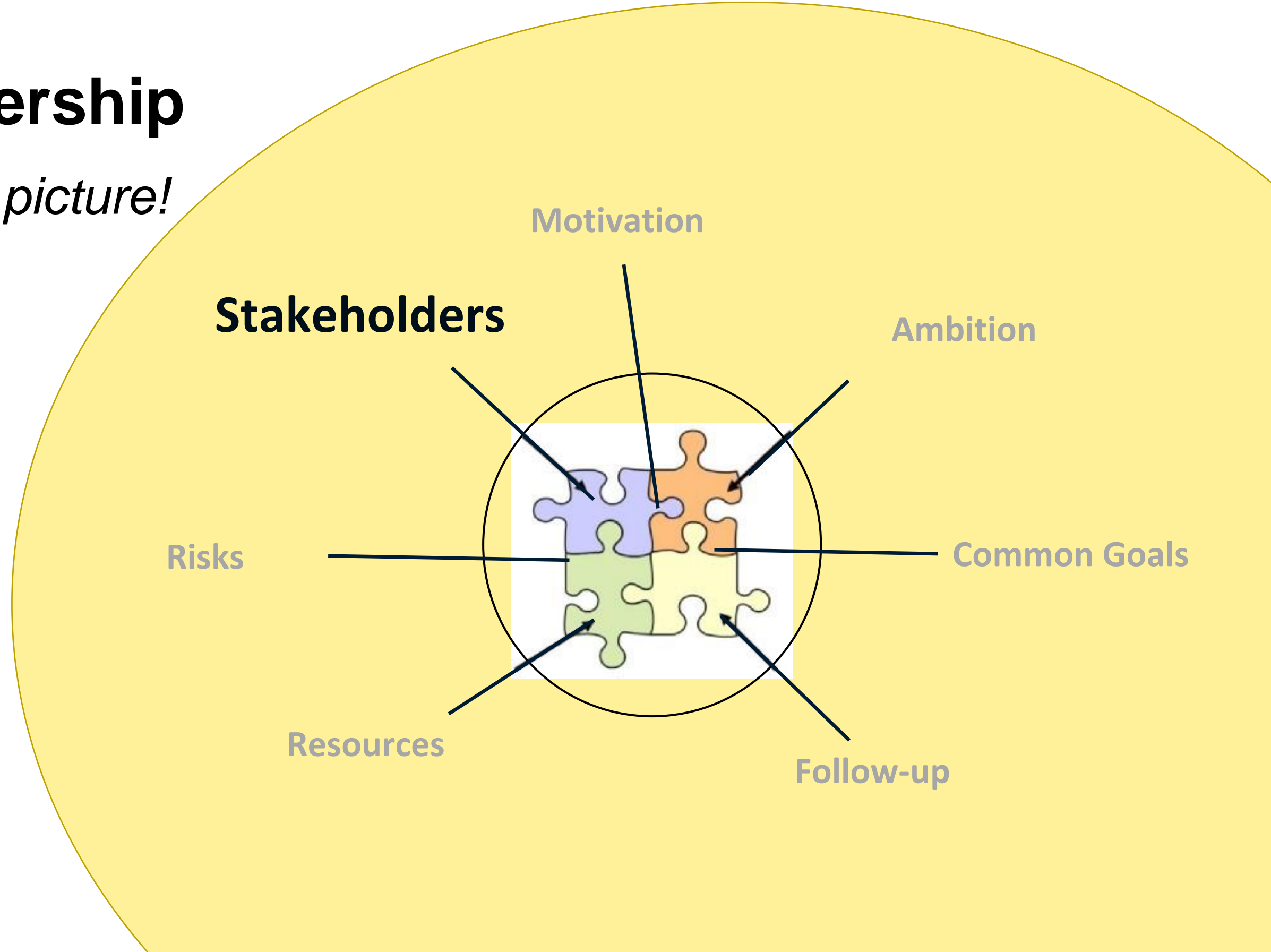Scope

Quality                    Cost
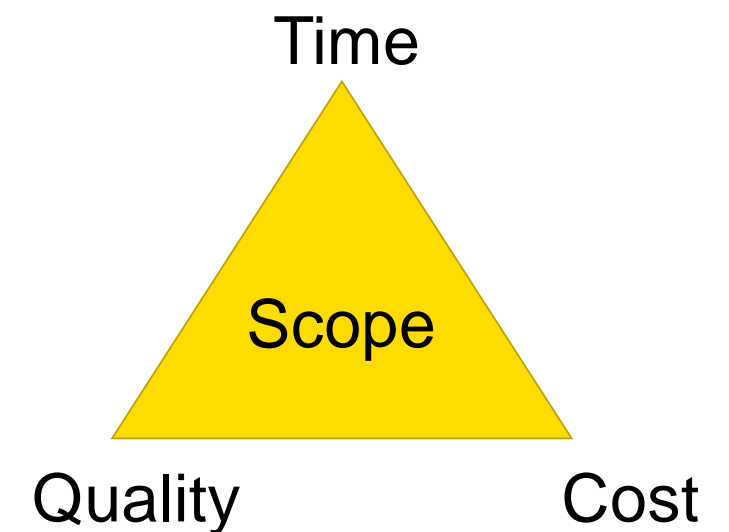
# Reflect and discuss

- Chose one of your most important projects:

  - How do you work with ensuring a clear accountability in your projects?

  - How do you follow up?

  - What are the challenges you face when following up on your project?

    - Individual reflection for 3min

    - Share with others at your table

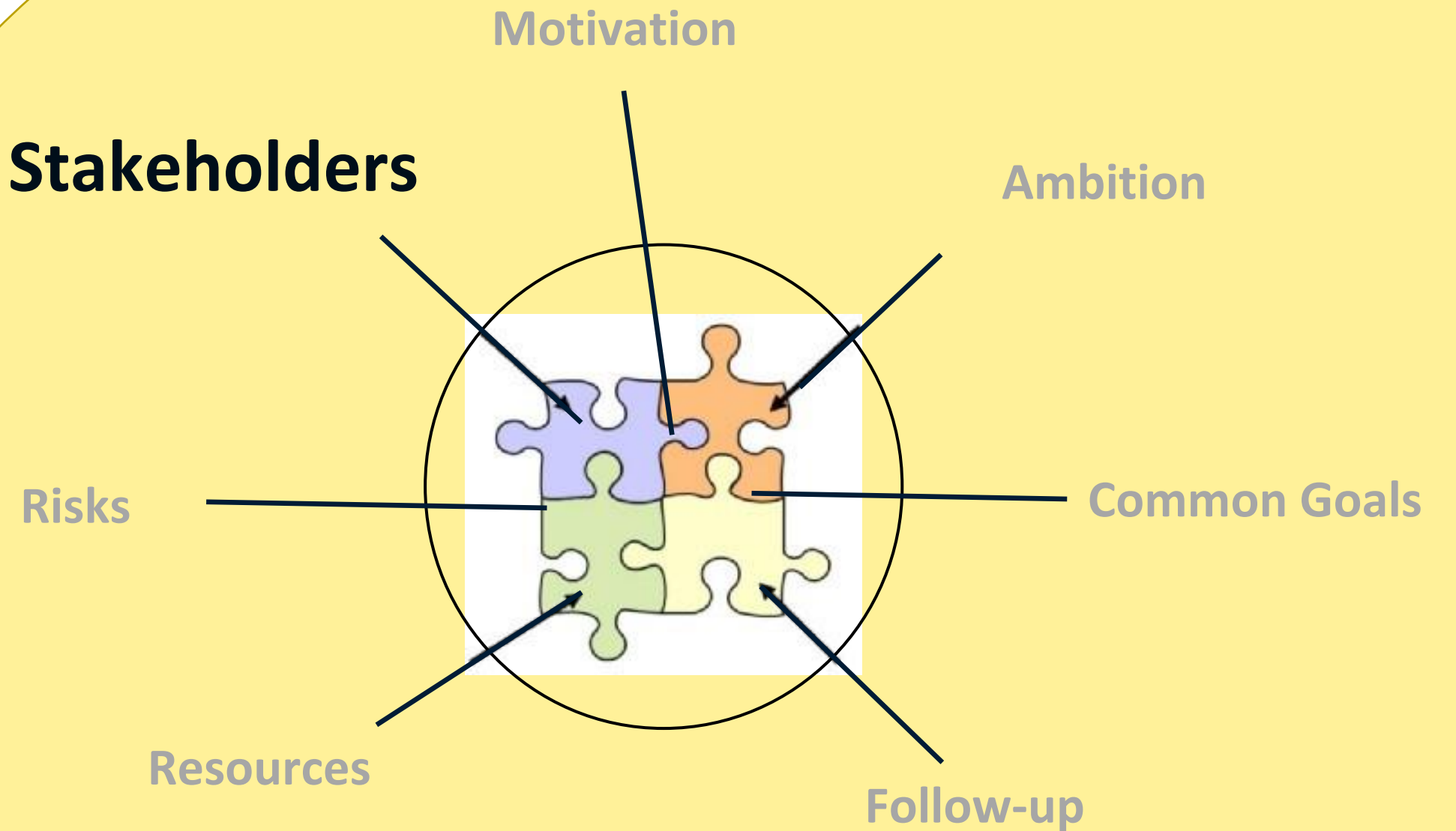# Project leadership

- *Remember to see the big picture!*

Stakeholders

Motivation

Ambition

Risks

Common Goals

Resources

Follow-up

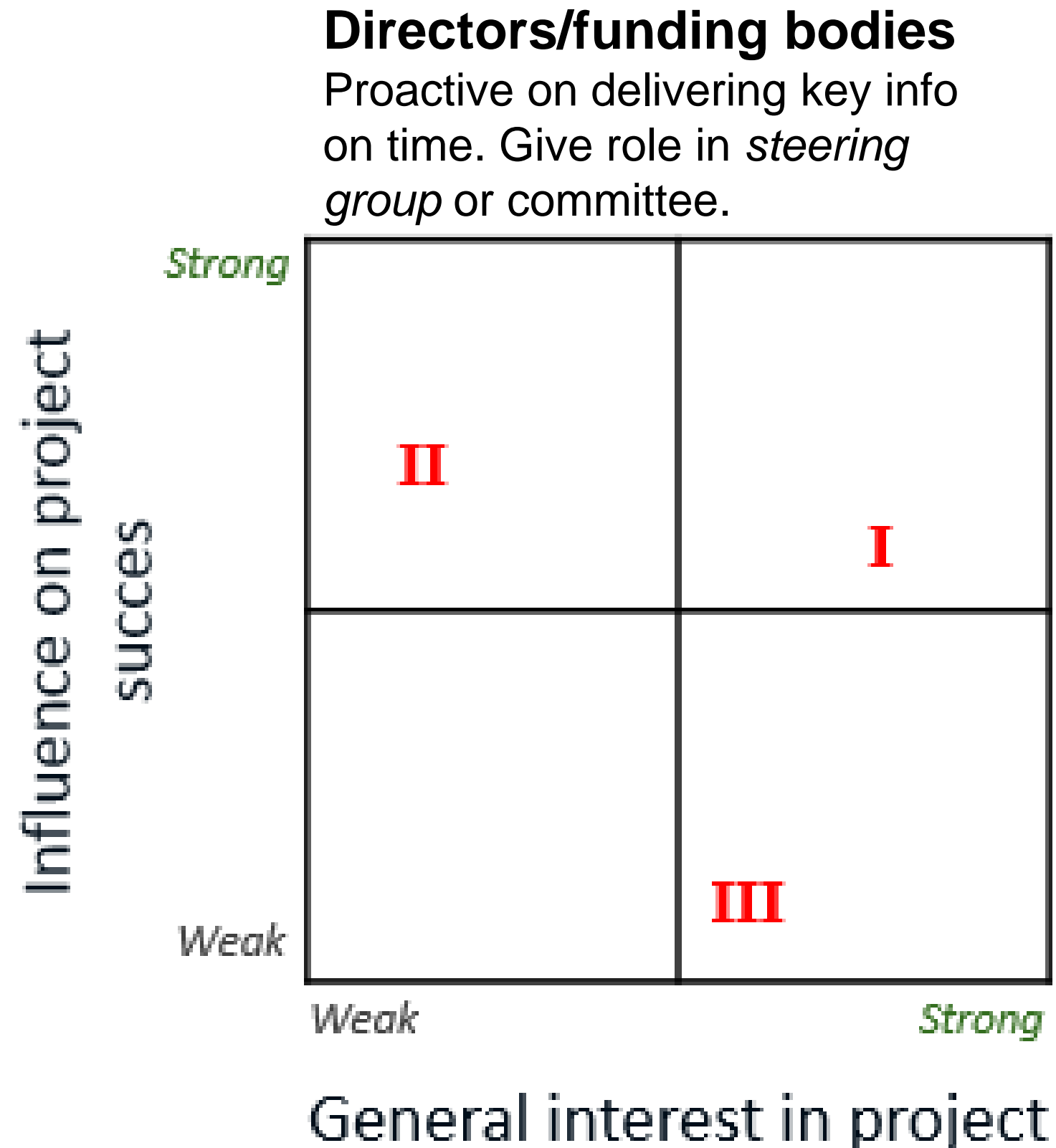OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
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# Stakeholders

A stakeholder has a vested interest in a research project and can either affect or be affected by it's operations and performance.

Typical **internal** stakeholders for researchers at OsloMet are other departments, management and support functions. Typical **external** stakeholders are collaborators from other universities, public sector institutions,
e.g. government ministries, directorates and agencies, municipalities, nursing homes and schools.

**Stakeholders**

Motivation

Ambition

Common Goals

Follow-up

Resources

Risks

# Stakeholders

**Directors/funding bodies**
Proactive on delivering key info on time. Give role in *steering group* or committee.

**Key collaborators**
Transparent and continuous communication and coordination.
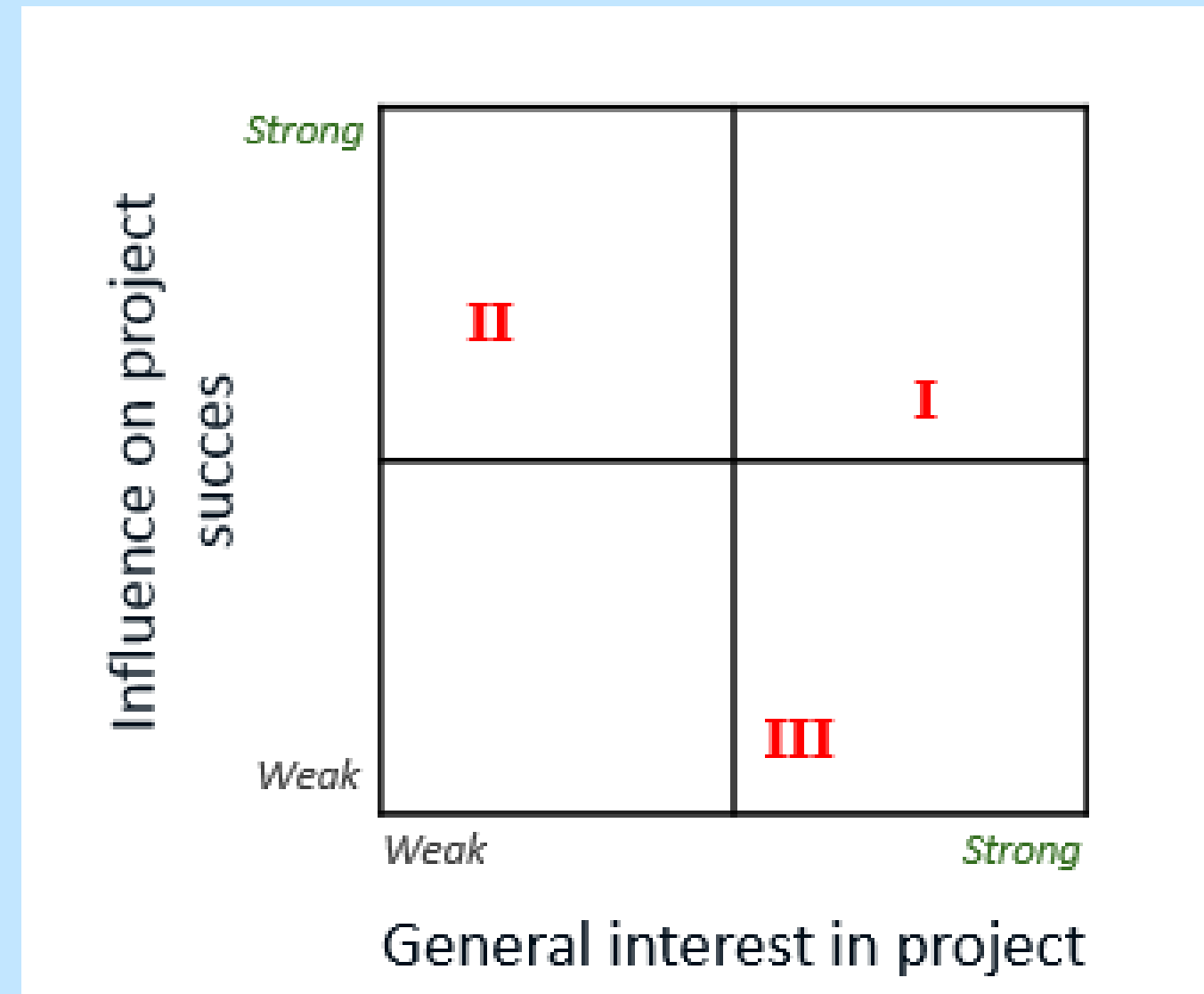
**Target group(s) or potential collaborators**
Focused dissemination and involvement. Align expectations from start. Role in user or *expert panel*.

Strong

Weak

Influence on project succes

Weak                    Strong

II        I

III

General interest in project

# Your key stakeholders

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- Consider your most important research project:

Map the key stakeholders for the

research project with respect to influence on and interest in the project's operations and performance
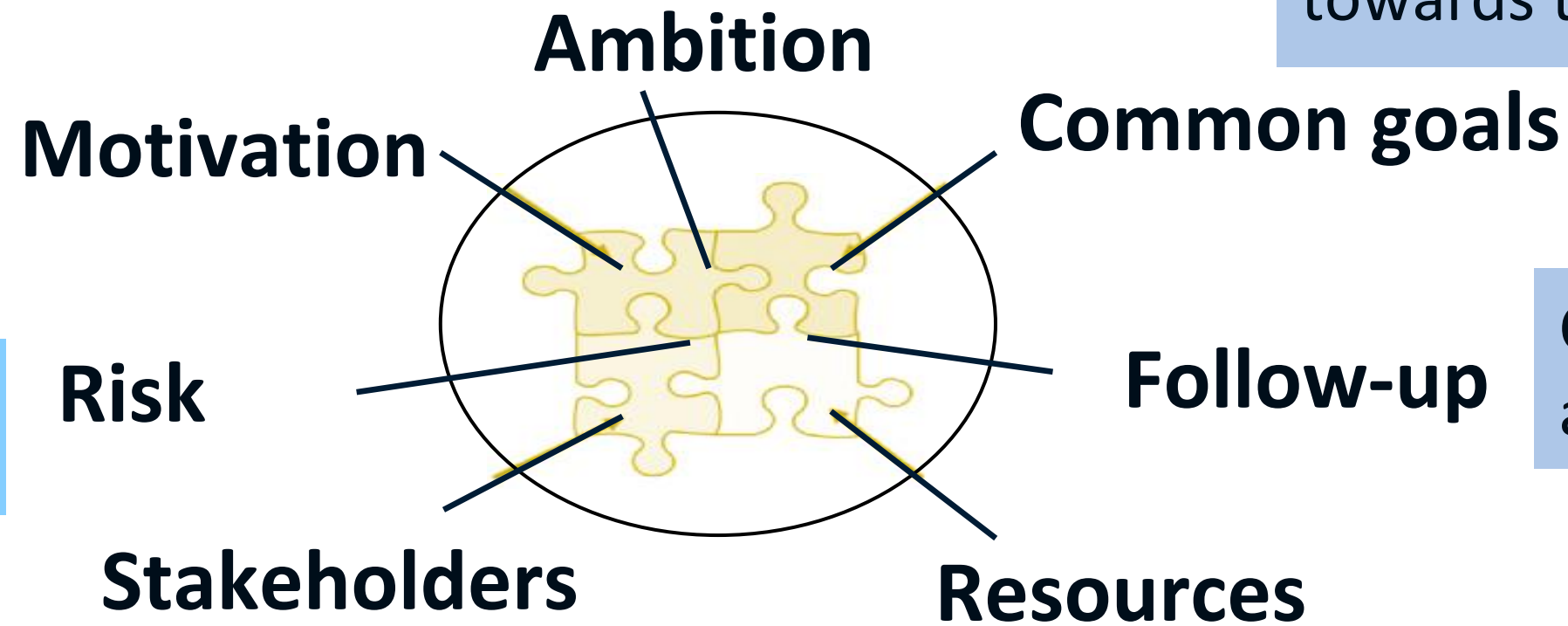
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*Adapt to new realities, while remembering to see the big picture!*

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Shared and communicated
Meaningful and mobilising?

Tangible goals clearly linked to critical paths towards the ambition?

Motivation interview
Long- and short-term value for the individual
Team spirit?

**Ambition**

**Motivation**

**Common goals**

Mitigate risk of value destruction?

**Risk**

**Follow-up**

Clear accountability?

**Stakeholders**

**Resources**

Influence/interest?

The right team
Financial resources?

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