

**The consultant, the client, the problem
and requirements elicitation**

A potted journey into IT Consultant's life

Olivier Hayard
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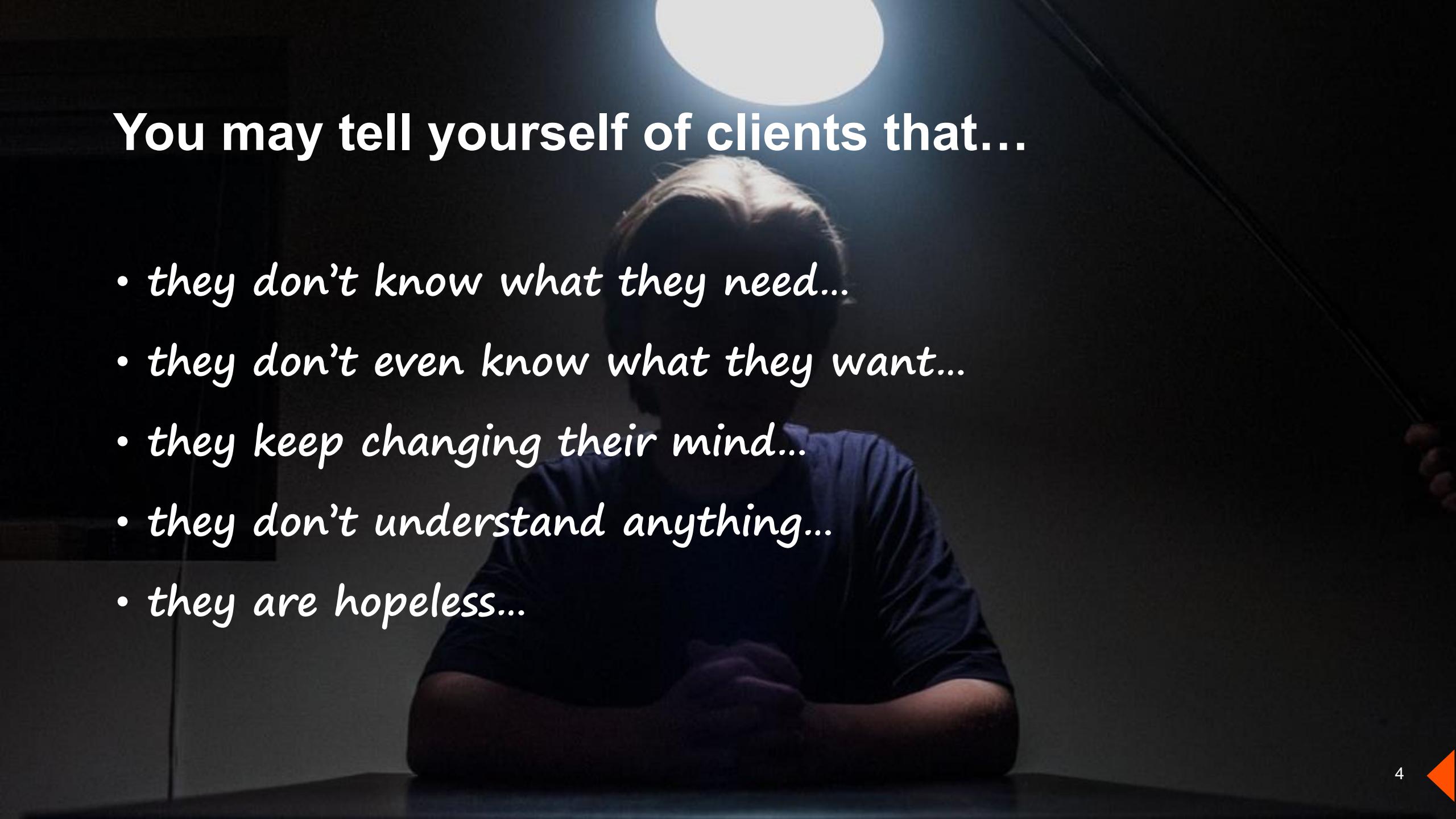
Disclaimer

- Quotes in this document were made in various contexts.
- We are fully aware that most of them were for a wider and more philosophic, psychoanalytic, physics, marketing research purposes.
- But we do think they illustrate our points.

The client



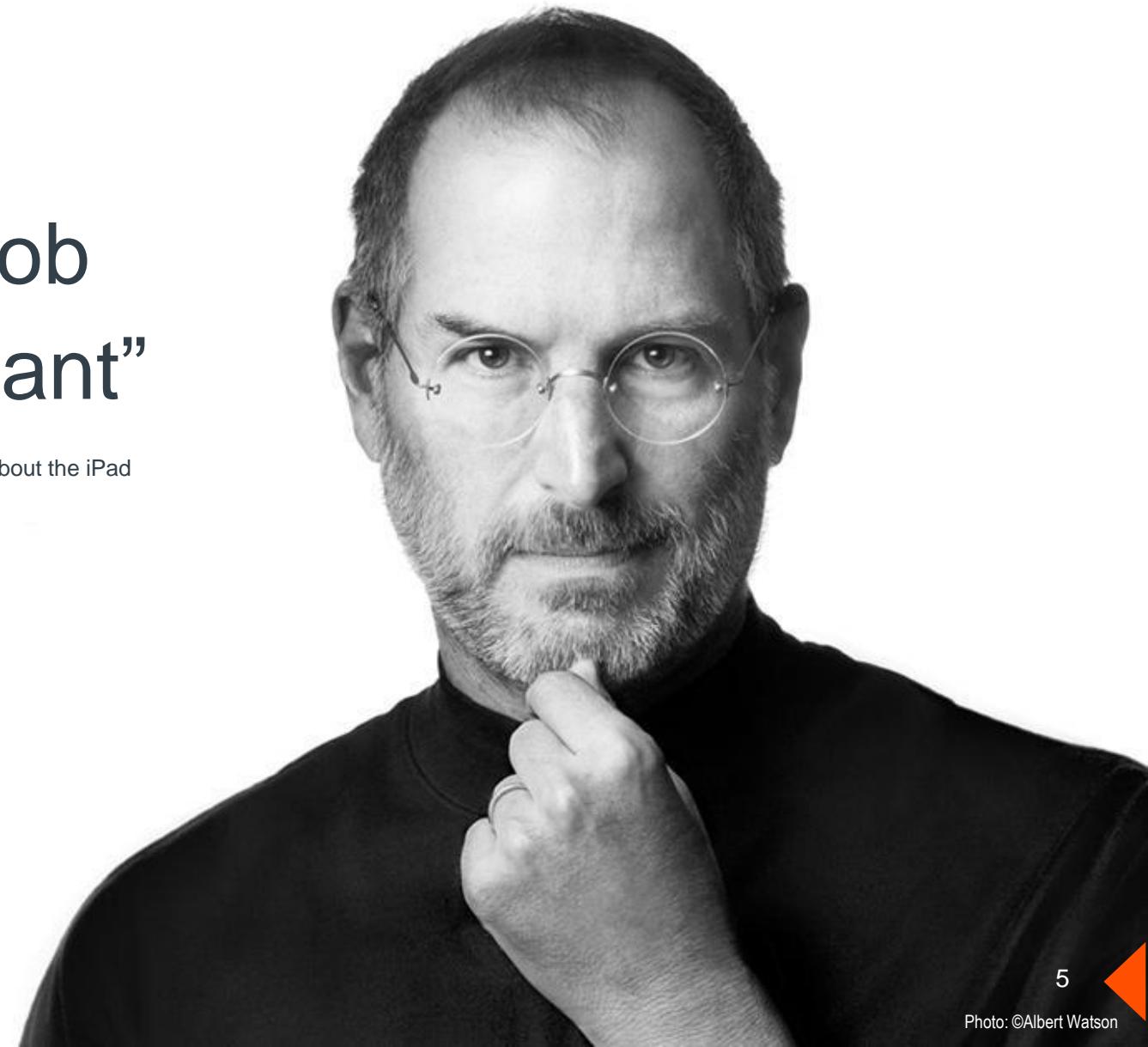
You may tell yourself of clients that...



- they don't know what they need...
- they don't even know what they want...
- they keep changing their mind...
- they don't understand anything...
- they are hopeless...

“It’s not the consumers’ job
to figure out what they want”

Steve Jobs about the iPad



The problem



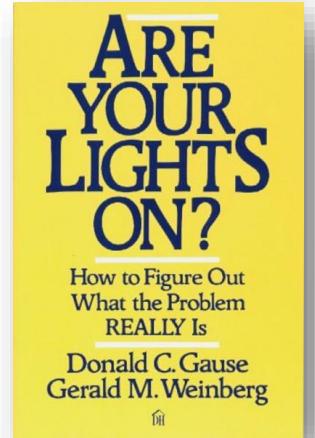
What is a problem?

- Clients call you when they have a “problem”, even if they name it
 - a need
 - an objective
 - an ambition
 - an opportunity
 - a concern
 - a challenge
 - a room for improvement
 - a situation
 - ...
- Let's define what we call a **problem**



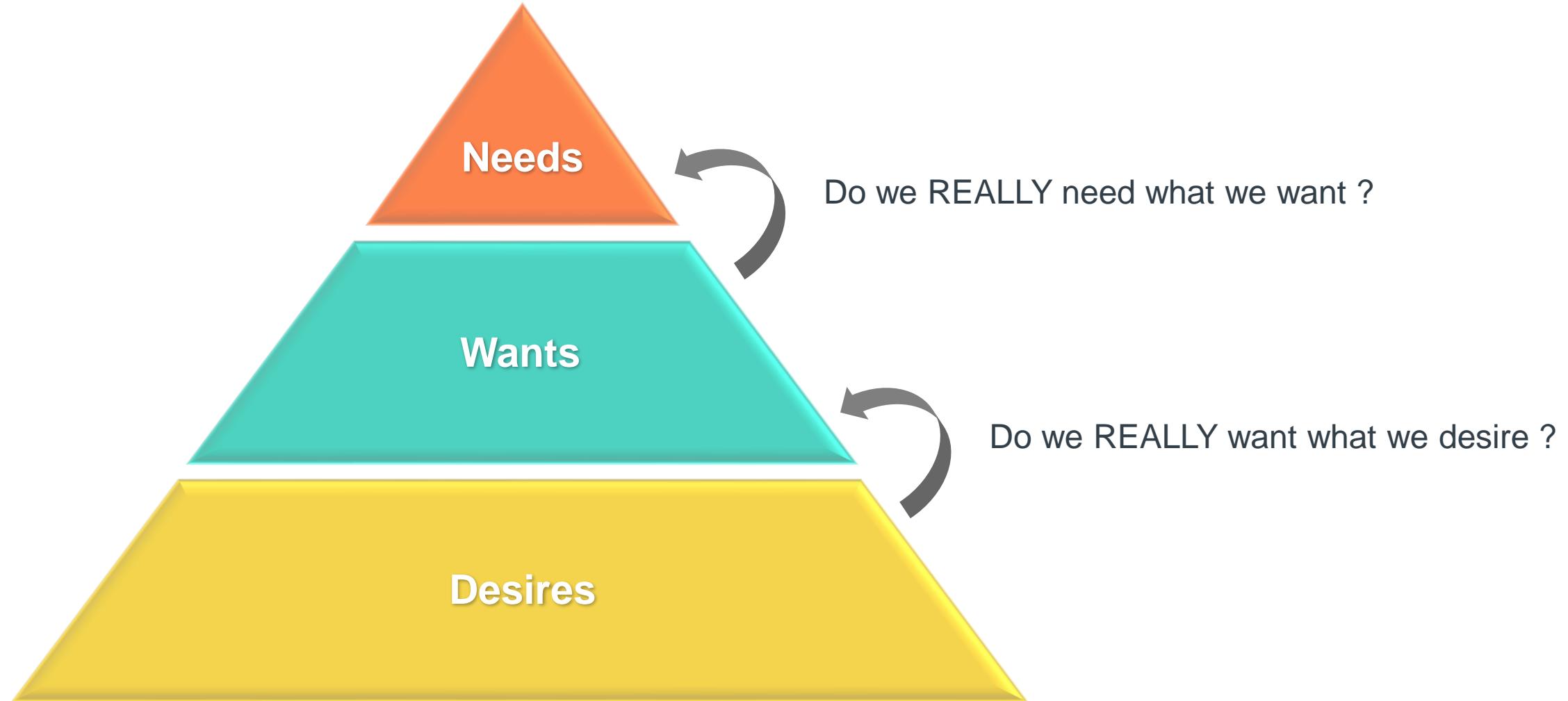
A problem is a discrepancy

“A problem is a difference between things as **desired** and things as **perceived**.”



→ Client's satisfaction: things perceived as desired

Needs, Wants and Desires*



Needs, Wants and Desires

› What we REALLY need

- “First, consider the word “desire”. Some readers would prefer that we say “attempt to discover what is needed”, **but we don't know how to figure out what people need**, as opposed to what they desire.”

— Donald C. Gause and Gerald M. Weinberg

› What we REALLY want

- “the subject [...] is called to be reborn in order to know **if (s)he wants what (s)he desires.**”

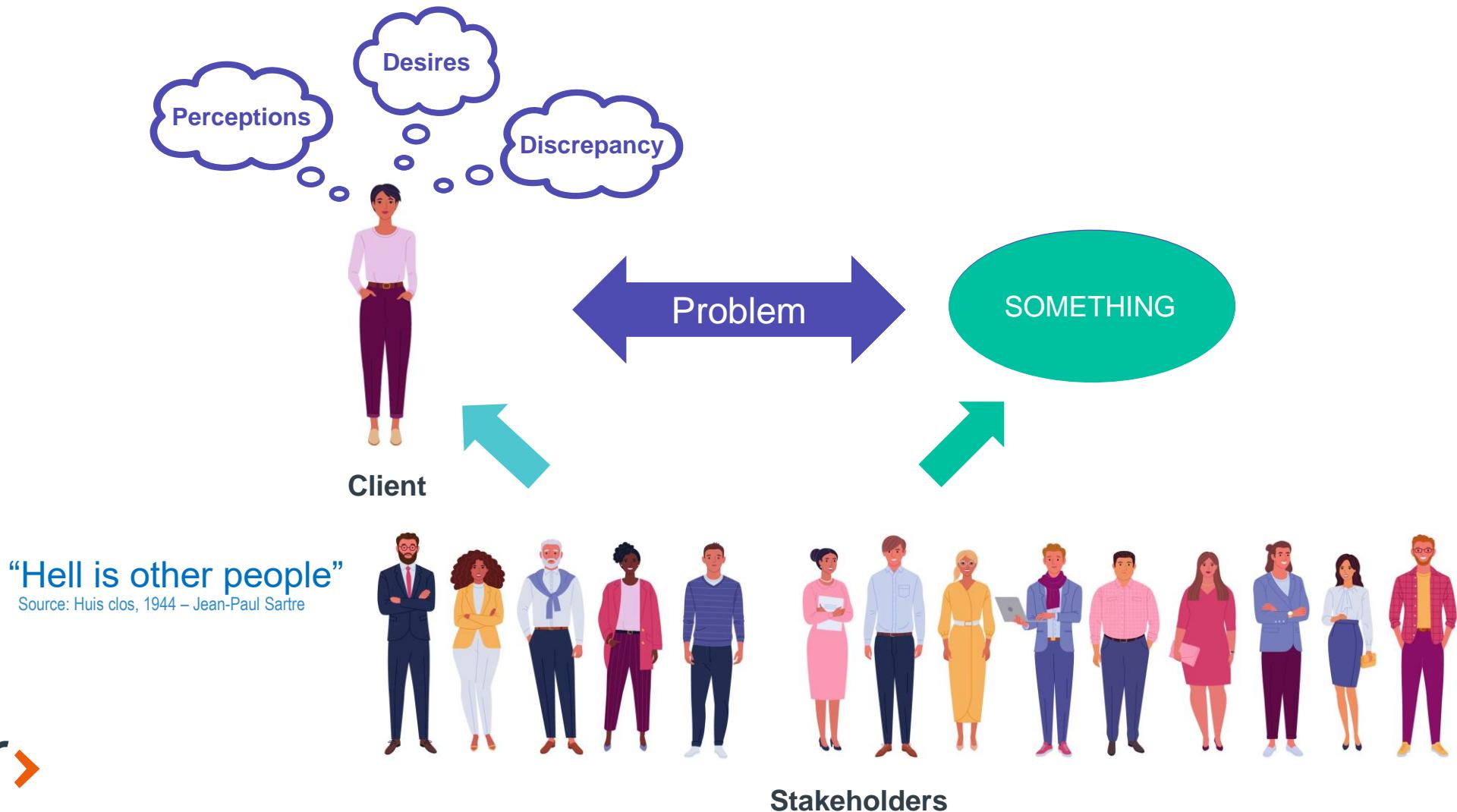
— Jacques Lacan

› What we desire

- **“people don't always buy what they need, but they always desire what they buy**, even if the desire is only transitory. By clarifying their desires, people sometimes clarify what they really need and don't need.”

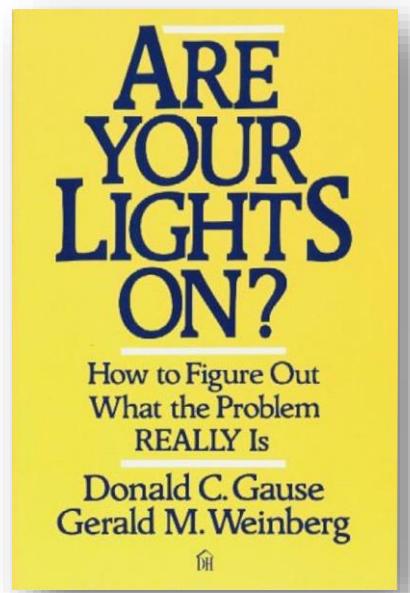
— Donald C. Gause and Gerald M. Weinberg

Problem positioning



Is there a **REAL** problem ?

Be careful with utterances such as “the **REAL** problem is...”



The observer

- “**Observations** not only disturb what is to be measured, they **produce it**. We compel [the electron] to assume a definite position. **We ourselves produce the results of measurement.**”

— Pascual Jordan

Source: Marin, J. M. (2009). ‘Mysticism’ in quantum mechanics: The forgotten controversy. European Journal of Physics

- “[...] since the **measuring device** has been constructed by the **observer**, [...] we have to remember that **what we observe** is not nature itself but **nature exposed to our method of questioning.**”

— Werner Heisenberg

Source: Heisenberg, W., Physics and Philosophy, (1958)

- “Perhaps I did use such a philosophy earlier, perhaps I even wrote it, but it is nonsense all the same. ... It is the **theory** which **decides what we can observe.**”

— Werner Heisenberg quoting Albert Einstein

Source: Heisenberg, W., Physics and Beyond, Harper & Row, Publishers, (1971)

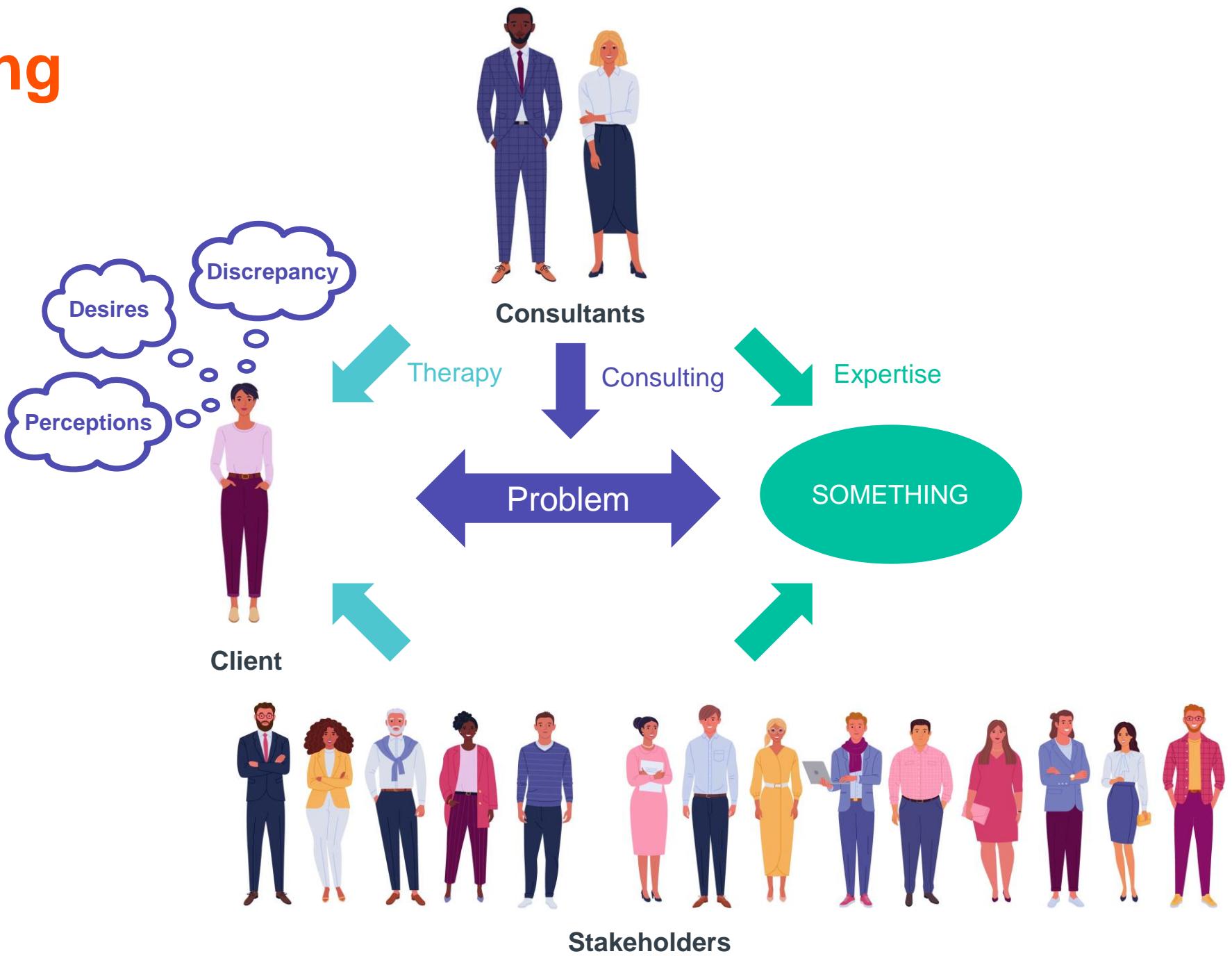




The consultant



Consulting



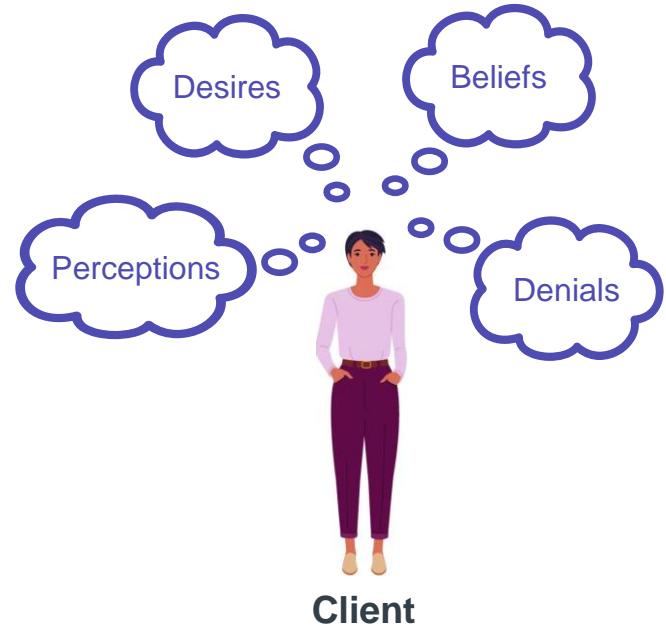
IT consultant role

- Maieutics [μαιευτική τέχνη]: “the art of delivering”
 - the art of assisting minds in giving birth to the truth, by asking questions

The Socratic Dialogues, 4th century BC – Plato

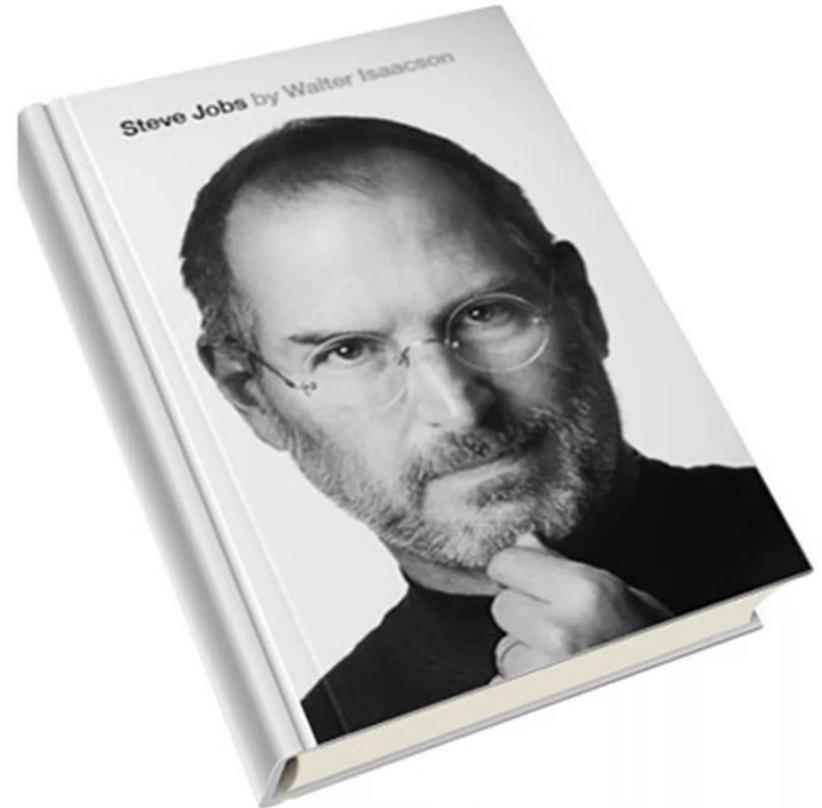
- The IT consultant's job is to « give birth » to the client's needs and not to take the client's role

To be or not to be empathical



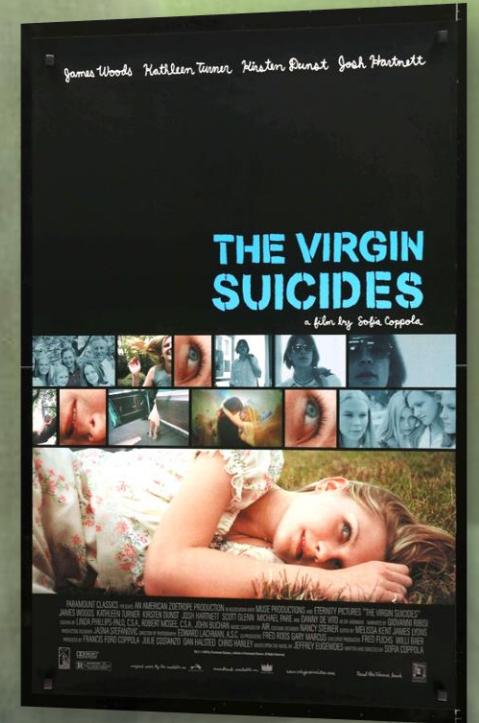
Apple's publicist to Steve Jobs trying to pacify him:
“Look, I know you're angry, and I know how you feel,” she said.

“You have no fucking idea how I feel,” he shot back,
“no fucking idea what it's like to be me.”





*Obviously, Doctor,
you've never been a 13-year-old girl.*



The Virgin Suicides - 1999
Directed by Sofia Coppola



Requirements 

Requirements elicitation

- › Requirements are the **formalisation** of a need
- › Needs are not given
- › Emerge needs from desires

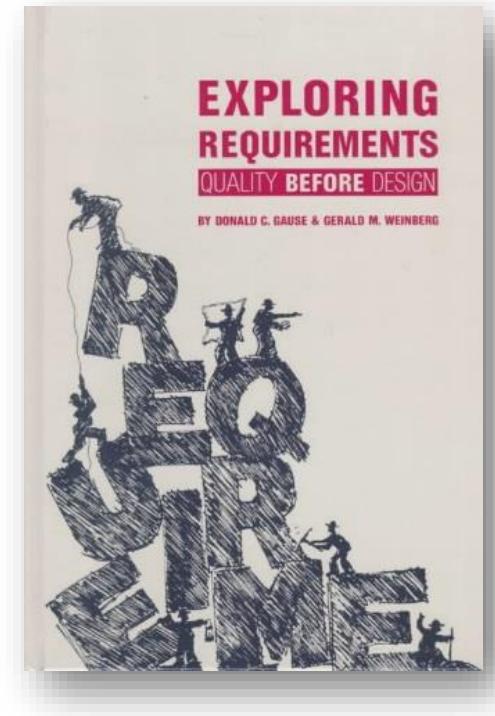


Exploring Requirements

- “If people don't know what they want, no development process – no matter how exact, how clever, or how efficient – will satisfy them.

And **that's why we do requirements work** – so we don't design systems people don't want.”

- “Anything not worth doing is not worth doing right.”



IEEE Requirement definition



- (A) A **condition** or **capability** **needed** by a **user** to **solve a problem** or **achieve an objective**.
- (B) A **condition** or **capability** that must be met or possessed by a system or system component to satisfy a contract, standard, specification, or other **formally** imposed documents.
- (C) A **documented representation** of a **condition** or **capability** as in (A) or (B).

Hierarchy of Requirements

(Requirements scope in a business context)



External Environment

market trends
laws & regulations
legal liabilities
social responsibilities
technology base
labor pool
competing products
standards & specifications
public culture
physical/natural environment

External Requirement
(not in IEEE standard)

Organization Environment

policies & procedures
standards & specifications
guidelines
domain technologies
local culture

Stakeholder Requirement
(business management level)

Business Operation

business operational processes
constraints
policies & rules
modes
quality
business structure

Users

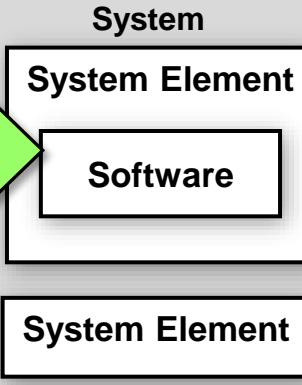
Stakeholder Requirement
(business operational level)

Operators

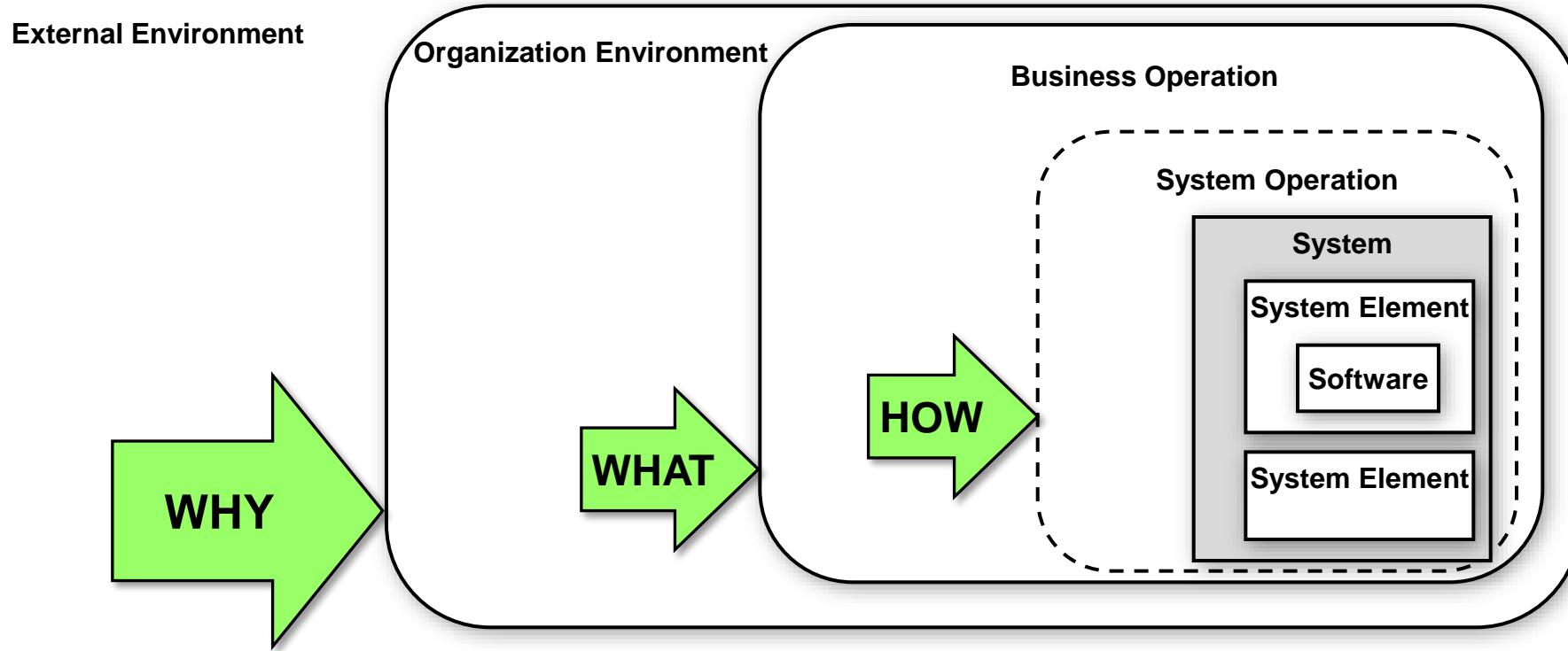
Software Requirement

System Requirement

System Operation



Why? What? How?



Accommodation of ends and means

- At each level, choices are made (design / architecture) to satisfy requirements from upper level
- These choices are in turn generating requirements for lower levels
- **Objectives** from one level are the **means** to achieve **objectives** from upper level



Mind the request and the whys

I need a drill



REAL need ?

I want to make a hole



REAL want ?

I desire to hang a frame



Desire







➤ Olivier Hayard
o.hayard@itecor.com

➤ more info on itecor.com