Laddering Techniques:
Climb Higher, Dig Deeper

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Agenda

- **Introductions** - 10 min.

- **Overview** – 5 min.

- **Presentation** - 15-20 minutes

- **Discussion/Q&A** - 20 min.

- **Recap** - 5-10 minute

Maslow to Ad Agencies

- Laddering based on Means-End Theory got going in the 50's & 60'S, and became "acceptable" in the 80's) (Gutman & Reynolds)

- Primarily academic use today; less so in commercial pursuits

- I use not just to develop brand personality and user personas, but for new product development & input for sales scripts

Why Talk About Laddering?

- What do clients and & QRCs want to know?
- What can and can't do in 20 min.

So, what is laddering?

Core Value (Ends)

Emotional Consequence

Functional Consequence

Feature (Means)
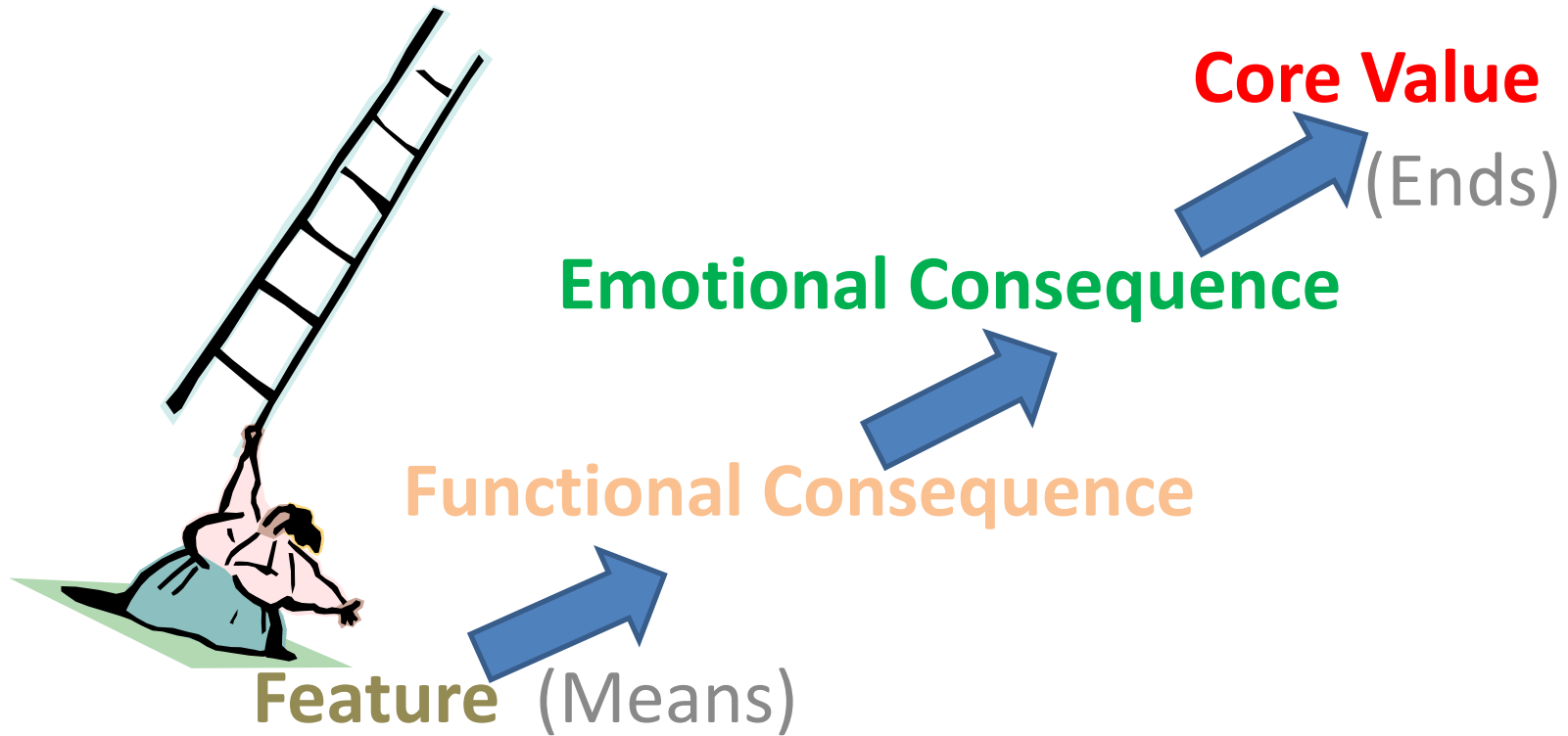
When? Why? Why not?
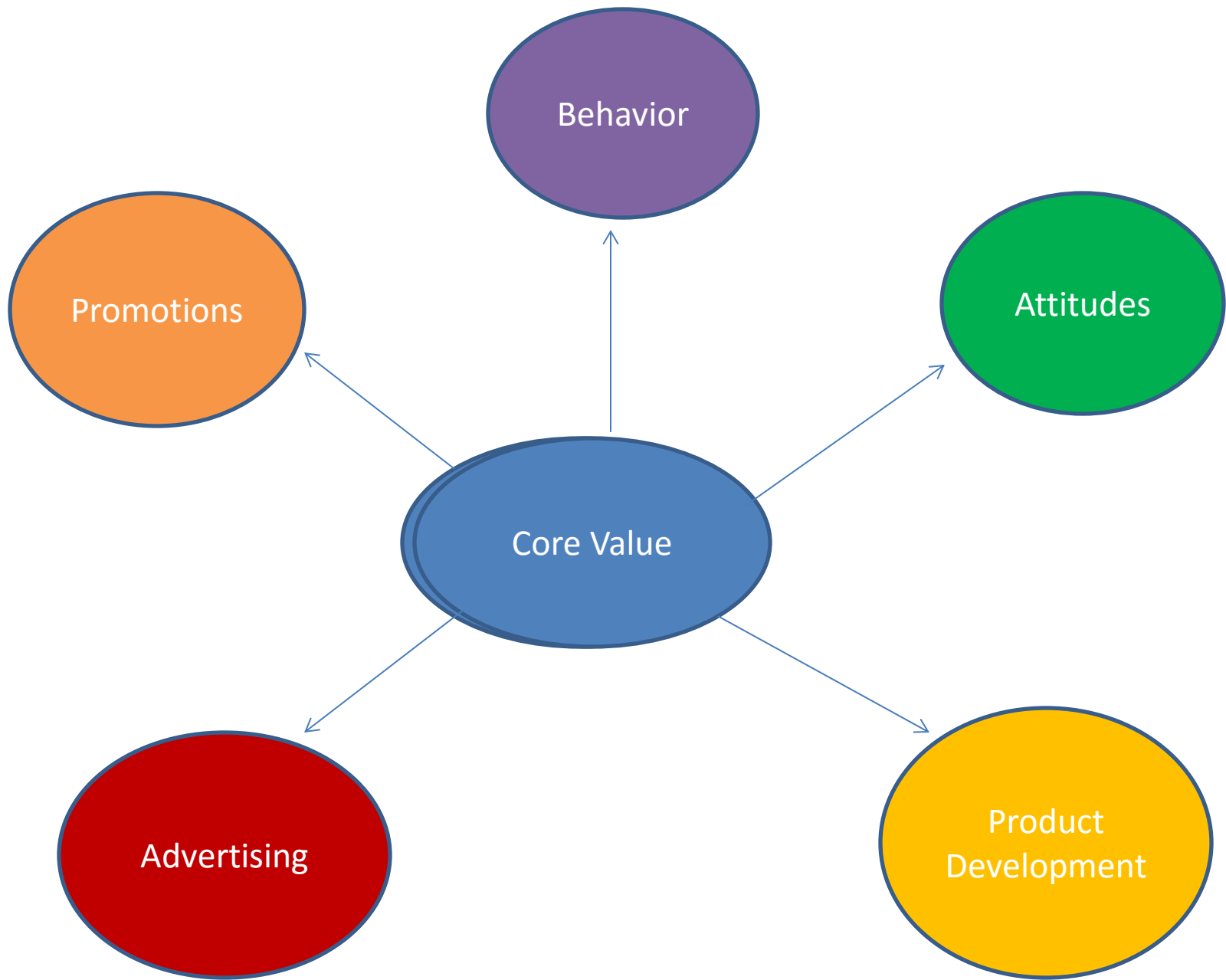## When to ladder; when to argue against it?

Guts & Glory

Relating to Brand Personality

Seeking Key to Marketing a Product/Service

Seeking Key to developing a Product/Service consistent with target consumer core values

Budget Considerations: Time & Money

Types of Laddering

- Hard Laddering: take qualitative data and subject it to rigorous analysis as if the data were quantitative.

  -- Benefit: Easier to prioritize outcome; can do online easily (no probing); easier analysis. "based on the numbers."

  -- Drawback: Coding the data to reduce the number of components of the analysis often obscures real differences in consumer responses.

- Soft Laddering: record unobstructed flow of speech (questions & probes, OK). The researcher then constructs associations between attributes, consequences and values based on the interviewee's responses."

  – Benefit: Incorporates VOC in analysis; gestalt of all responses taken into consideration

  – Drawback: very subjective analysis based on a connection between the interviewer & respondent. Not necessarily replicable.

STEPS

Report

Visual output

Analysis

Data collection

Guide

Screener/Recruit

Proposal

Bid

Discussion with client

Laddering Hints: Recruiting

Online screener + Telephone screener if hard to recruit.

Telephone only (in-person + phone)

Online only (for online, but be careful)

Key target; very knowledgeable users

Nothing specific for laddering other than articulation question

Laddering Hints: Data Collection

Hybrid Qual vs. Pure Laddering

In-Person (using visual cues)

By phone (saving money)

Online Web Cam (compromise)

Laddering Hints: The Interview

How to prepare respondent for laddering

How to ask repetitive questions?

When is enough enough?

Preparing the Respondent in the Interview

- The rest of today's interview may be a little different from what you might expect in a research interview. This is a **more personal interview.** Our goal is to see how having this particular type of _____ **affects you personally.** We are less interested in hearing about your experiences with the _____ or the _____ agent/salesperson; and **more interested in learning how you feel about things connected to owning** the _____. I'm looking for **language and the images and the sensations words can evoke.** Just respond with the first thing that comes to you and don't edit yourself.

- I've heard that this way of interviewing **might make some people uncomfortable**, that it can get **frustrating, and maybe even make you angry** because it may seem like I am asking the **same question over and over again**, or trying to make you say something about something that you're not sure about. This is just a research technique that many companies have found useful in really **understanding people who buy their products and services**. So, let me know if you **are having any problems**.

- **Especially, ask me to repeat the question** if you don't understand; go with your **gut,** give me the first response that pops into your head; please, be willing to be **introspective**. If I try to summarize what you are saying and **don't get it "right**," please stop me and explain. I want to understand accurately what you are telling me.

- Remember, there are no right or wrong answers...everyone has their own way of looking at these things and deciding what is and what is not important to them.

- As we go through the process, you'll find that it's pretty easy. **You may even have fun!**
  Are you ready? Let's start…

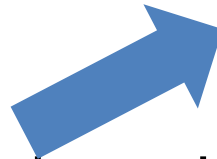# Sample Interview

CORE VALUE

Emotional Consequences/Benefits?

Physical/Actual Consequences/Benefits?

Interest?

Describe Automotive **Features**?

Laddering Hints: Data Analysis

- Can start with putting interview responses directly into Excel – if comfortable

- Or, Code responses at end of each interview and transfer relevant data into Excel

- Frequency Matricies: levels and/or links between levels (e.g., attributes/features; functional benefits/consequences; psycho-social/emotional benefits/consequences; and core value.)

Laddering Hints: Output

- Digital audio and/or video files vs. Transcripts...or both

- Excel spreadsheets

- Frequency Matrices

- Examples of Maps

- Combining traditional qual with Laddering output in a report

Samples of Laddering Maps

"Typical" HVM

HVM with Frequencies of links

Qualitative approach

Bibliography

- **Journal of Advertising Research Feb/March, 1988, LADDERING THEORY, METHOD, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION by Thomas J. Reynolds and Jonathan Gutman.**
- **Laddering: A "How to Do It" Manual – with a Note of Caution, Abrafi Saaka & Chris Sidon, and Brian F. Blake, Ph.D, Methodology Series, February 2004, Cleveland State University**
- **Want to read more? Ask me!**

Q & A
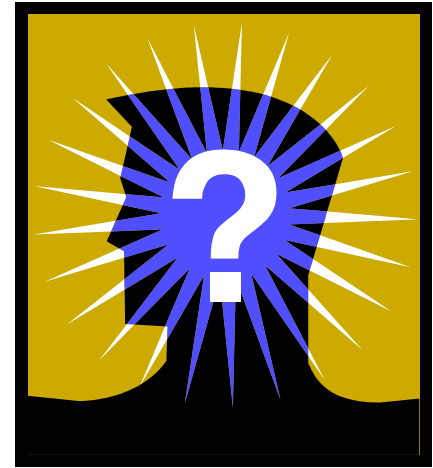
What was missing? What else want to know?

Housekeeping

- **How could Roundtables be improved for next year's conference?**

- **Which prefer: expert presentation or open discussion**

- **Interested in a laddering presentation with case study next year?**

Want more laddering info **Now**?

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