

Presentation
IIM, Ahmedabad
29th, December, 2017

Questions

Questions I will try to cover:

What has been my professional journey till date as a management consultant?

Is there a specific approach to consulting that I *happen* to practice?

How has this approach developed?

Questions important but will not be directly addressed:

What is the relevance of not-for-profit sector today?

For a student of an IIM, is working in development sector a feasible choice immediately upon graduation?

Two ways of organising

Present different experiences first and then draw reflections from it

Inter-weave experiences and reflections in the rough chronology in which they occurred

Management consulting

Accenture, Mumbai

Monitor Inclusive Markets, Monitor Group, Mumbai (now part of FSG)

Independent management consultant (since July, 2012)

Merger of Air India-Indian Airlines

(2008-09)

A sector with many moving parts, high capital intensity, and a regulatory framework / competitive dynamics complicated by on-set of liberalisation

Post-merger integration — Inter-departmental co-ordination and more in-depth work with HR and Finance

Documenting the performance history and their causes

Business and Financial restructuring

How do you take management decisions in a context where legitimate interests of several stakeholders are involved (including the taxpayer)?

Market-based solutions

(2010-12)

Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid

Affordable Housing — taking a model to the market

Clean drinking water — developing a market-based solution

Writing

Is a market-based lens sufficient to address core developmental concerns? Is there a need to bring in understanding from other disciplines?

Rather than come up with an alternative development paradigm, isn't it more practical, and effective, to build upon the existing one as practised by not-for-profits with years of experience?

If so, how should one visualise one's own role as a management consultant in development sector?

Triggers / Influences

Benjamin Graham and Berkshire Hathaway

- Intrinsic value
- Importance of a long operating history
- The temporal aspect of investing (law of compounding)

*Is it possible to recast the role of a management consultant as being **invested** for the long-run in an organisation? If so, what is one really investing in?*

Notion of capital in an organisational context

1. **Value** capital (*core values, philosophy, purpose*)
2. **Organisational** capital (*culture, deep-rooted structures, legal form, temperament, aesthetics*)
3. **Governance** capital (*what drives decision making, how decisions are really made*)
4. **Financial** capital (*strength of the balance sheet, tangible financial assets*)
5. **Operational** capital (*systems & processes*)
6. **Commercial** capital (*relationships, good-will, commercial acumen, strength of what you are really offering*)

VIKAS CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT, AHMEDABAD

(2013 till date)

1. Trimming the spread – exit from Bhavanagar operations, exit from retail Salt operations, reducing the scope of existing activities
2. Bringing the focus back to historical strength – grass-root centric, multi-stakeholder approach
3. Three operating activities — Bioshield, Glowworm, Asal Fasal
4. Continuing to highlight the importance of investing in people's institution (Jan Shakti Parishad)

Triggers / Influences

THERAVADA BUDDHISM

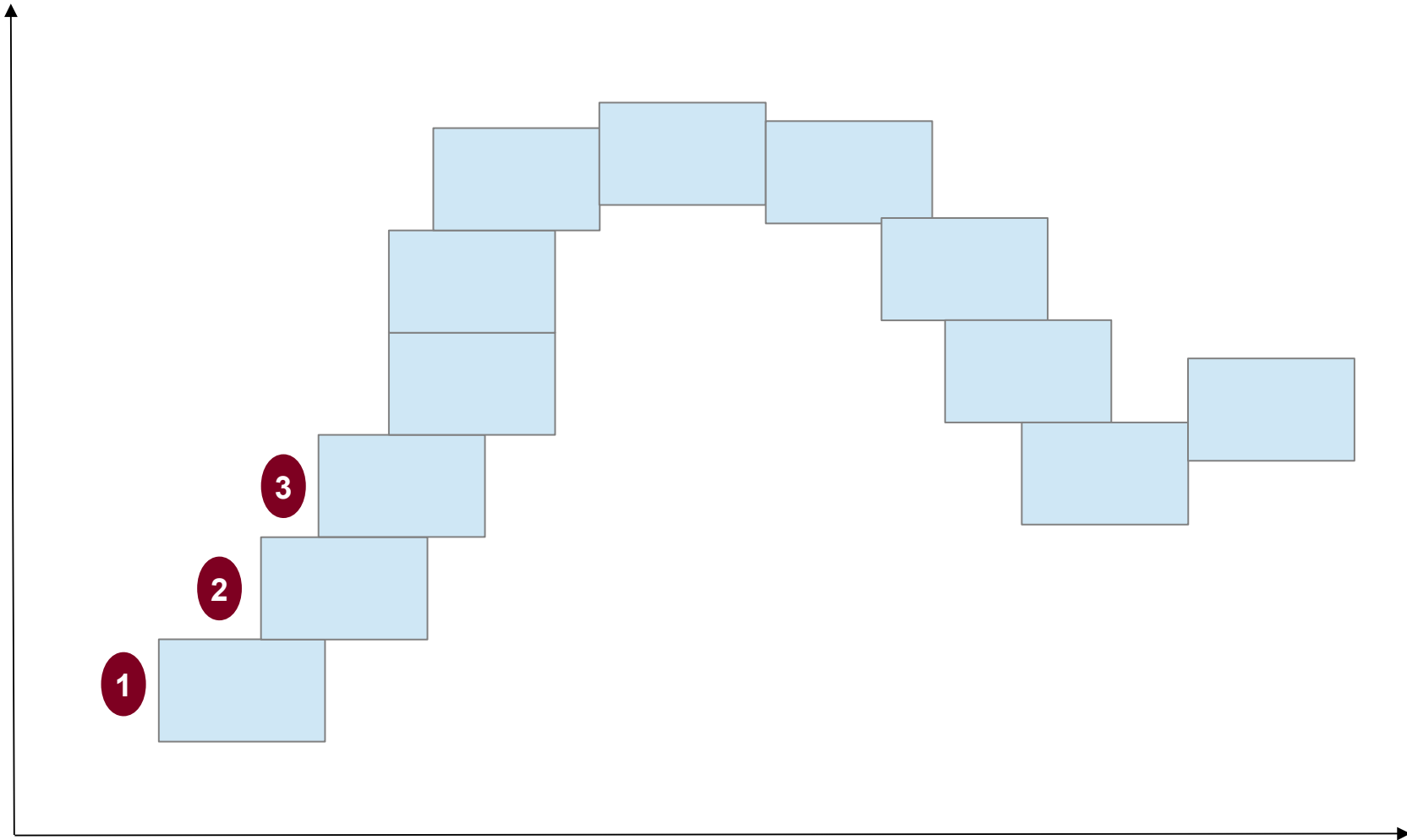
Small actions can have large effects

- 1 Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas? (Butterfly effect)
- 2 It takes years to build a reputation, and a moment to destroy it.
- 3 Imagine a single off-beat note in an otherwise harmonious piece of music and think of the irritation it will create in your ears and your mind.
- 4 “*Now then monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion by being heedful.*”

These were the last documented words of the Buddha to the people who had gathered around his deathbed. Heedfulness in Buddhist philosophy implies paying close attention to the smallest of your actions and the intentions & reasons lying behind those actions. Rigorous practice of this, in Buddha's own words, was what led him to his own self-awakening and he cited heedfulness as the single-most critical faculty of the mind to develop.

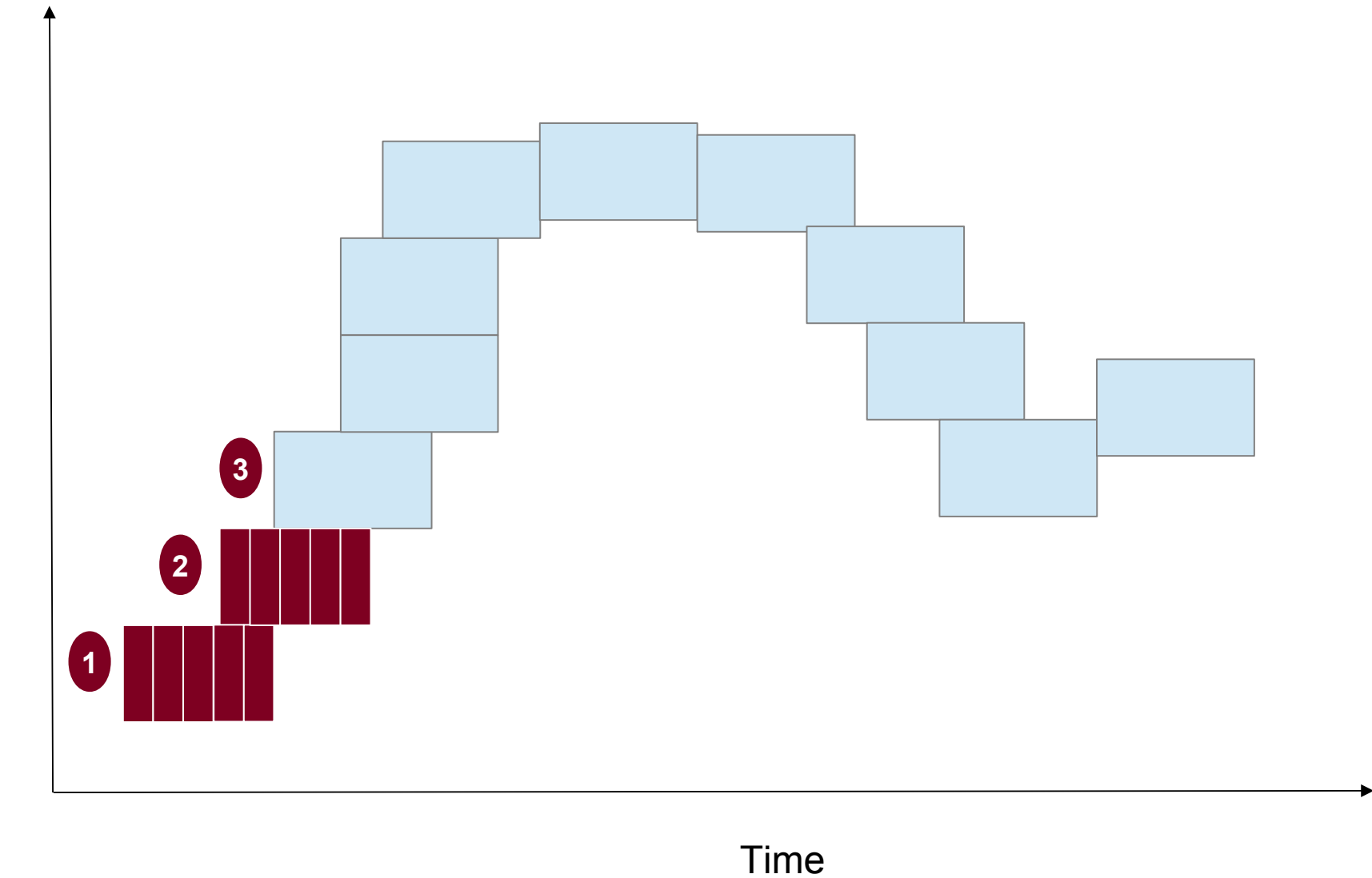
An organisation's journey

Progress



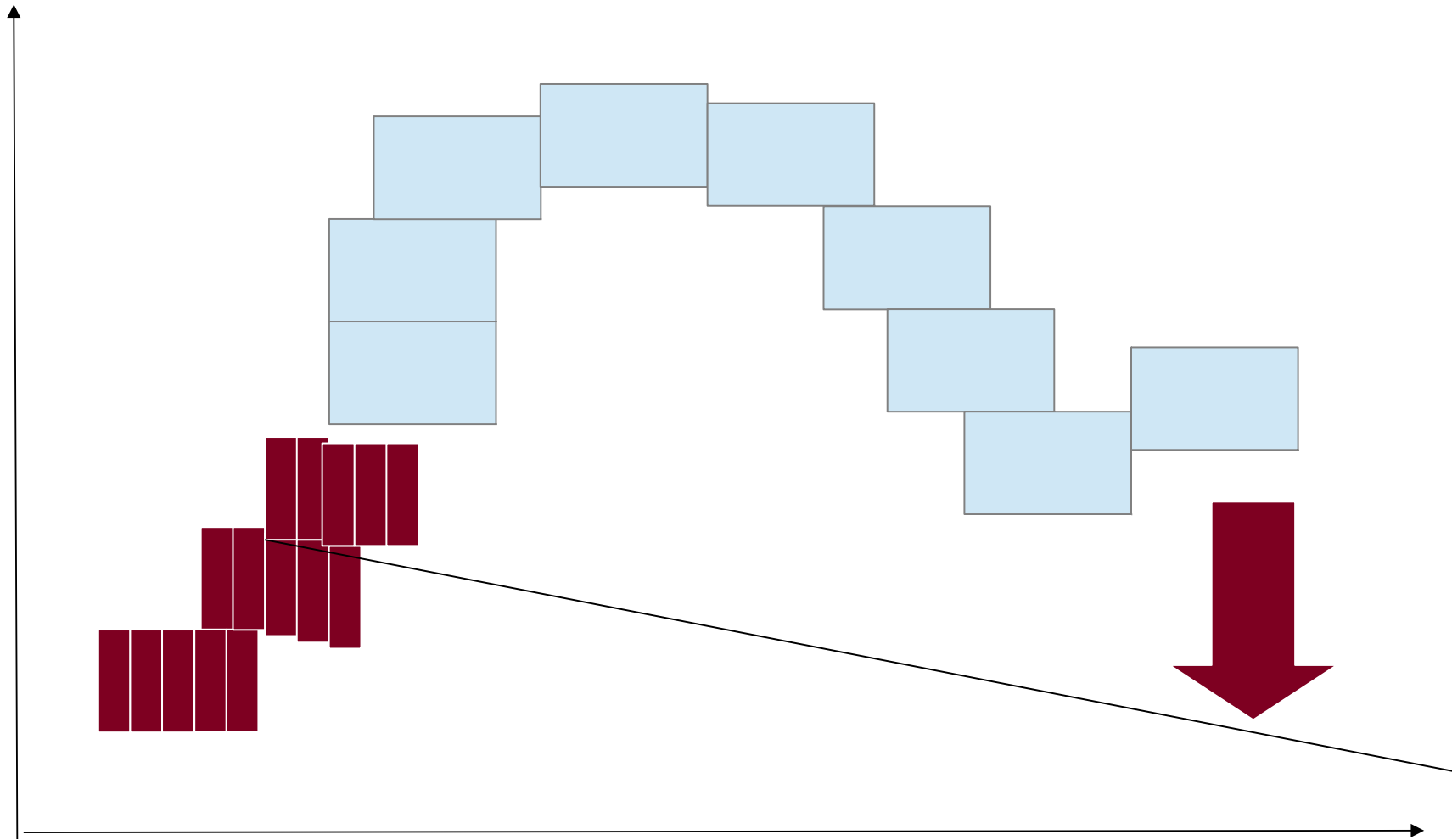
Time

An organisation's journey... is made up of many incremental decisions



A small mis-step

Progress



Time

For a management consultant/decision-maker, it means a certain mind-set which sees strategic importance / effect on the end goal in every decision that is made.

- *Need for a sound mental conception / model / skeletal framework of the organisation*
- *Deepening level of commitment to the organisation.*
- *Placing greater emphasis on the process ('how' over the 'what') of making decisions.*

MAHILA HOUSING SEWA TRUST, AHMEDABAD

(2016 till date)

1. Shift in the strategic narrative — *A city within a city*
2. Deeper involvement in financial decision-making & defining and operationalising relationships between the not-for-profit, credit co-operatives and social enterprise
3. Building / strengthening micro-ending capacity — *risk management system, credit committee, portfolio & product management*
4. Locating the source of scalability and institutionalising it — *grass-root cadre*

A different interpretation of operating leverage

1. Why are the women leaders from community so critical to MHT?
2. What is their nature? — Are they to be seen only as means to an end (instrumental) OR an important end in themselves OR both?
3. What should be the relationship between the women leaders from the community and MHT? — they are 'mine' versus they work alongside us
4. How should MHT build their capacity?
5. To what extent should they be collectivised? Does collectivisation always help or continuing to build their independent agency would prove more fruitful?

IN CLOSING

What is common across these experiences?

Not knowledge-centric

Embedded in context — operating history, geography, community, purpose

Public vs. Private

An approach to making decisions

Finding a precedence

Sir Roger Scruton, English Philosopher — Tradition of conservatism in English politics

A Conservative Approach

Understand, respect & build upon the past

Non-disruptive - Do not change the settled ways of working unless you have a very sound & fair reason to.

Non-intrusive – You aid and do not impose, you inquire / interrogate and not assert

Reasonable – Consistency, sequencing and triangulated with the end goal

Culture of dialogue

Synthesis — *drawing on learnings from humanities including religion, aesthetics, philosophy, history, psychology, social sciences*

Transcribing Organisations into Institutions

1. Project

2. Many projects

3. Coming together of projects into a programme

4. An organisation starts to take root

5. Intervention of time (maybe 15 years and more)

6. Development of organisational assets (and/or liabilities) – tangible and intangible

7. Where have we reached? Why did we reach here? Is there a deeper underlying framework that is simple but which ties it all together?

8. Is this frame consistent with the values and mission we claim to espouse?

9. How do we make decisions aligned to this frame?

Zubaan, Delhi

What does it mean for you?

1. Charity begins at home but need not be confined only to the home.
2. Maintaining the distinction between means and ends (e.g. scale, entrepreneurship).
3. Let one experience add upon the other ('reflective practise').
4. Broad-base your sources reading and influence / role models.
5. Keep enriching your vocabulary — your dictionary influences your thinking in penetrating ways

Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans
~ John Lennon

ALL THE BEST