



Transforming Uncertainty into Opportunity: The Science of Serendipity as a Tool for Innovation and Impact in a Fast- Changing World

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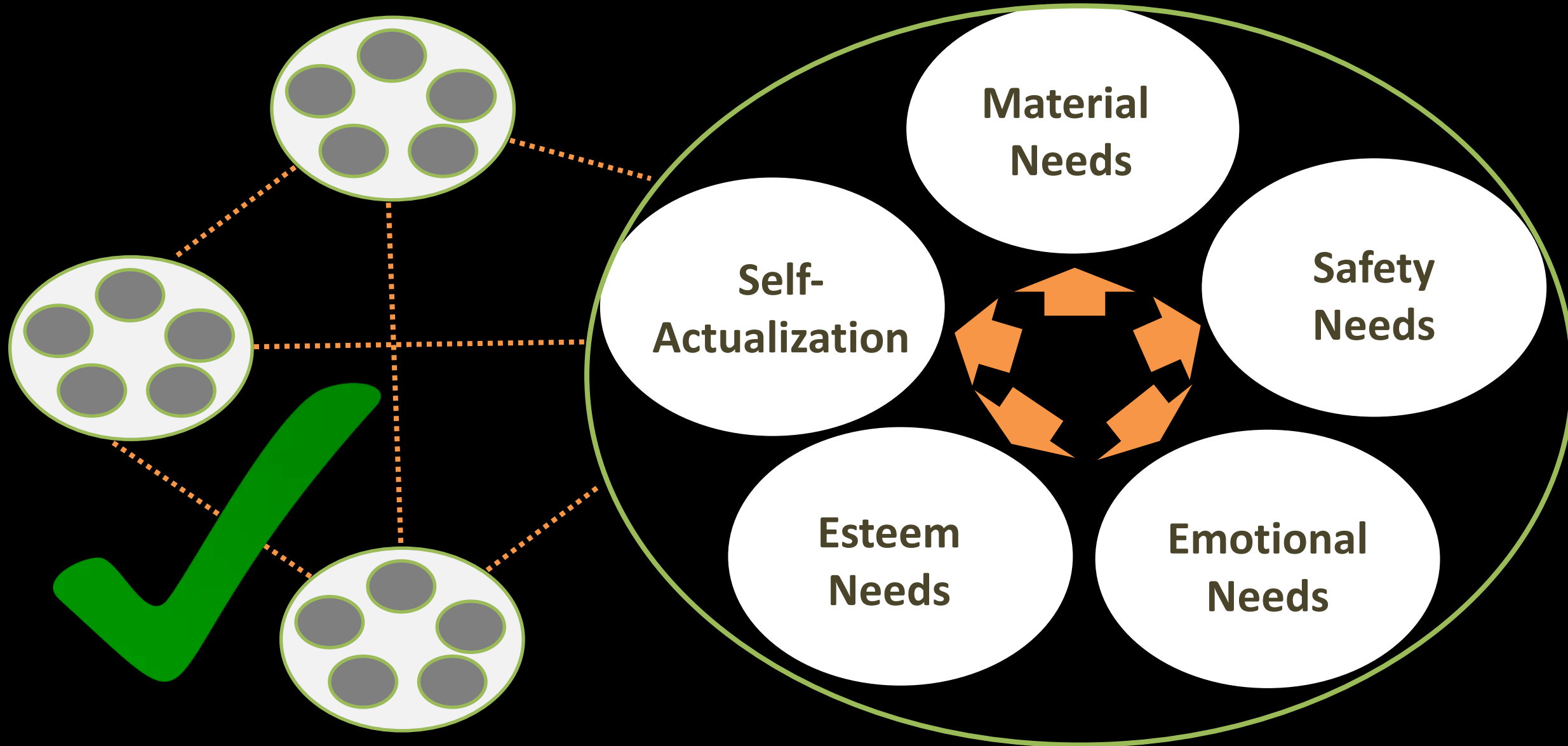
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Content

- Context
- Serendipity in theory & practice
- Overcoming biases
- Ways to cultivate serendipity
- Closing thoughts

Enlightened circle of needs



Unprecedented use of the word 'Unprecedented'



Google Trends, Monthly Search Volume, January 2010 to April 2020, Worldwide. Values represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular.

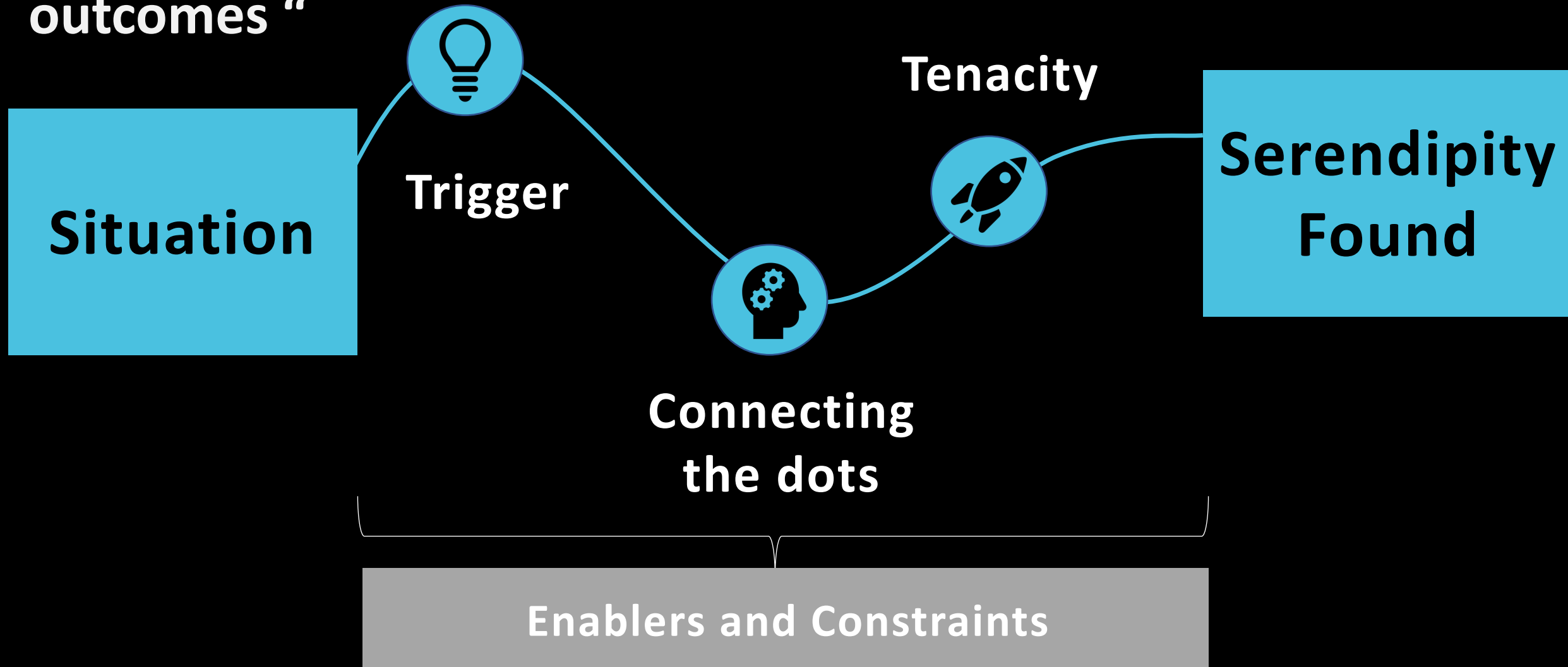
Throughout history, civilization has depended on humans' ability to make the best out of the unknown

- Covid-19: Breweries > alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Ride share programs for senior citizens > emergency services
- Insurance's employees > "heroes against loneliness"
- Individuals reinventing themselves / re-orienting ("what really matters in 10 yrs. from now?")
- Leaders showing their real colors (e.g., Best Buy after hurricane Maria)
- What becomes important: Developing a muscle for the unexpected

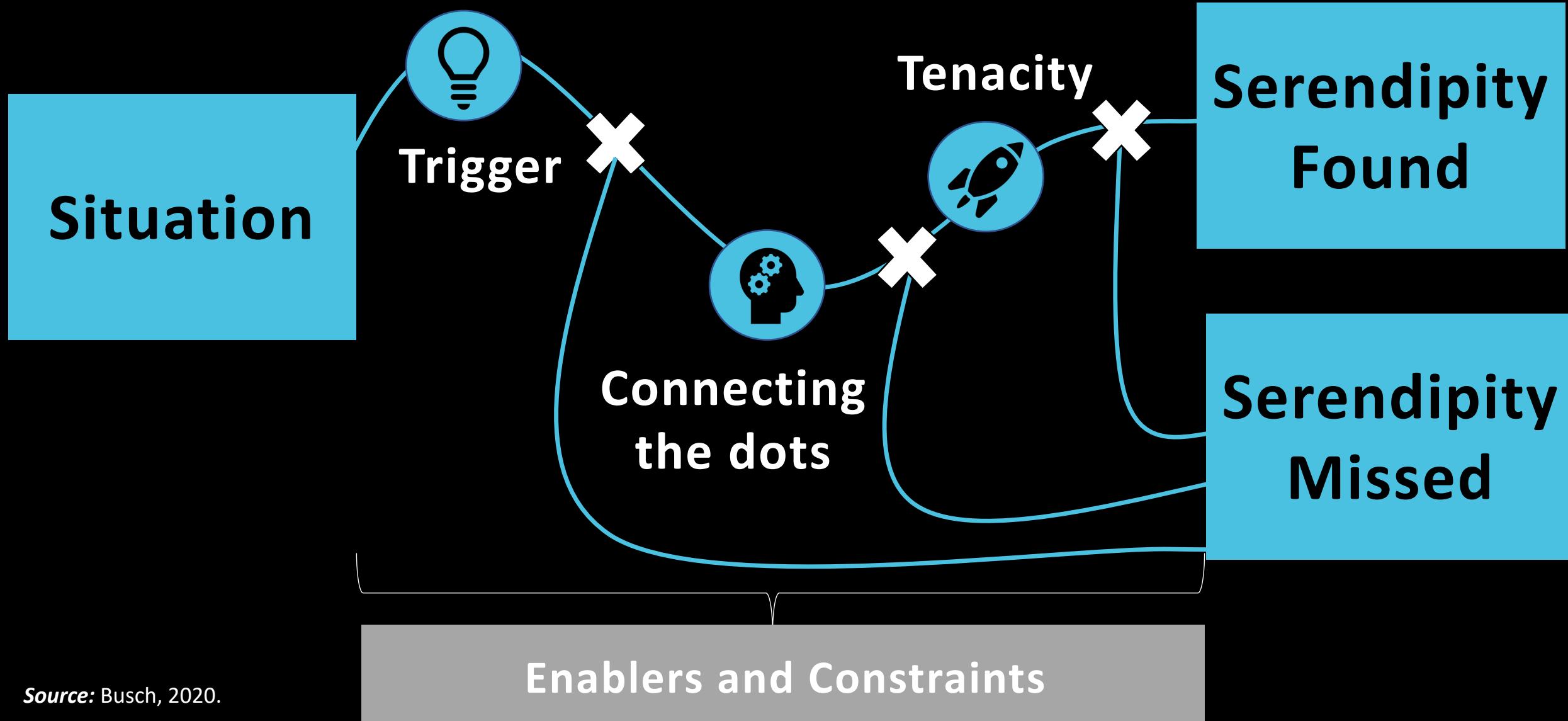


Source: Busch, 2020; Haier, 2019; Unsplash, 2020.

Serendipity: “Unexpected good luck resulting from unplanned moments, in which proactive decisions lead to positive outcomes “



The unexpected as opportunity rather than threat in a fast-changing world

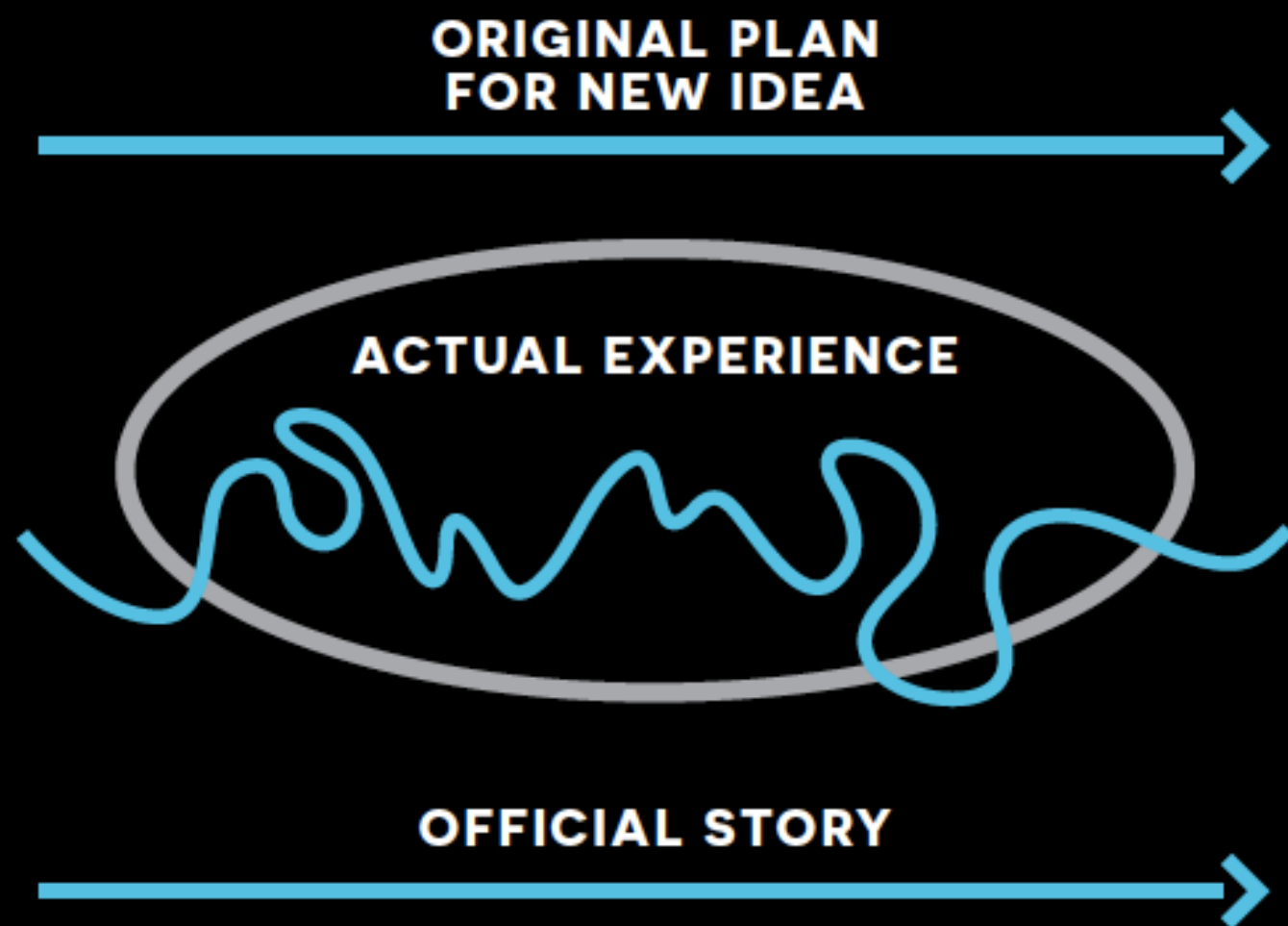


“Lucky” vs “unlucky” people/spotting the unexpected

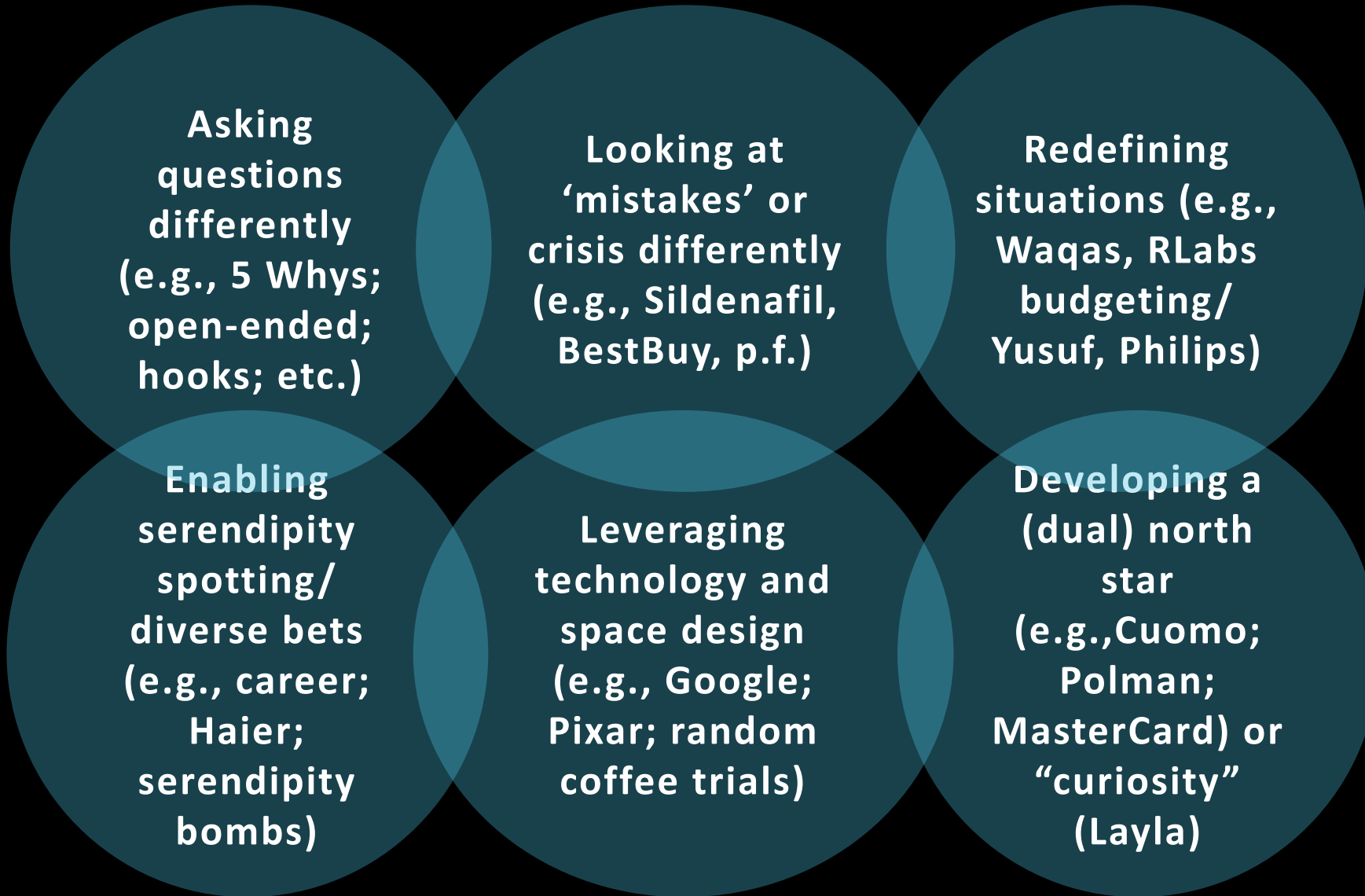
- Imagine the counter-factual> helps us to understand our role (e.g. papain/floppy ears Nobel prize)
- Social experiments: Lucky vs unlucky people
- Experiments: Reading through newspaper; missing vs spotting the unexpected
- Different “serendipity base levels” but applies across contexts (e.g., R Labs)

Biases

- Underestimating the unexpected (up to 50% “unexplained variance”; birthday paradox)
- Self-censoring
- Finding meaning in random patterns (Man in the Moon; Virgin Mary; Skinner’s pigeons) > longing for predictability
- Functional fixedness
- Post-rationalization (CV, CEOs) > pressure & perceived lack of control



Cultivating serendipity



Final thoughts/ideas (related to your questions)

- Smart luck vs blind luck; societal inequality > different serendipity base levels
- Synchronicity vs serendipity
- "Normalizing" imperfection (e.g., role-modelling at Pixar; iHub; classroom)
- Importance of "energetic" elements: Meditation, entropy
- Personality traits: Meeting more people; attracting more people; keeping in touch with more people; BUT: introspection etc. important
- Identifying hidden social capital + mapping multipliers
- Joining interest-based communities (e.g., MeetUp.com) + collective journeys

Final thoughts (2)

- Happy ending depends on when we look at it / from whose perspective / how we define “positive outcome” and “success” (e.g., Sophie)
- Changing language (Dweck, 2006): “Haven’t mastered this *yet*”
- Personal approaches: Self-distancing (White et al.); focusing on what can control
- Intuition + informed gut feeling > “filtering” via north star, brain trust, reflection time, “complementors”
- Education system is failing >> needs to convey that we cannot predict the future, but can develop a muscle to make best out of whatever might happen + develop a north star
- >> We don’t have to have it all figured out (but good to have north star/guiding principle)

In the end...



“

If you take someone as they are, you make them worse, but if you take them as what they could be, you make them capable of becoming what they can be.

”

Goethe (& Frankl!) - adjusted

Thank you!

Questions etc.? Please keep in touch!

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Upcoming book: The Serendipity Mindset (Penguin Random House, 2020): www.theserendipitymindset.com

