

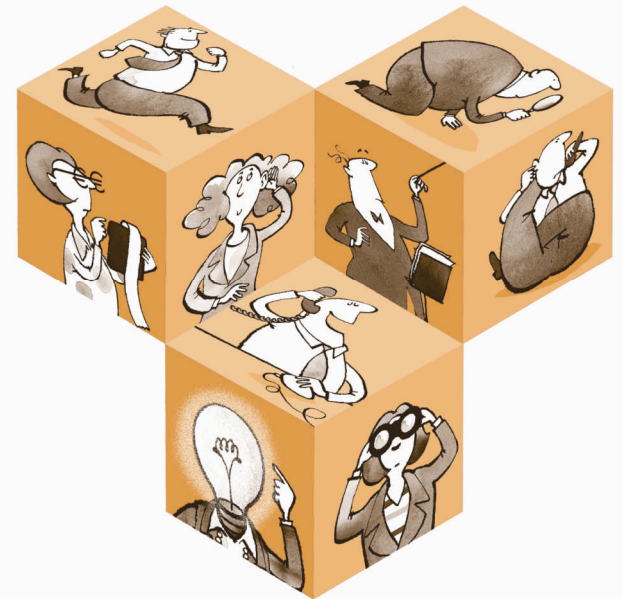
Qualifications of management consultants

What makes management consultants effective in interactions with clients?

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Agenda

- Research question
- Research model
- Overview main results

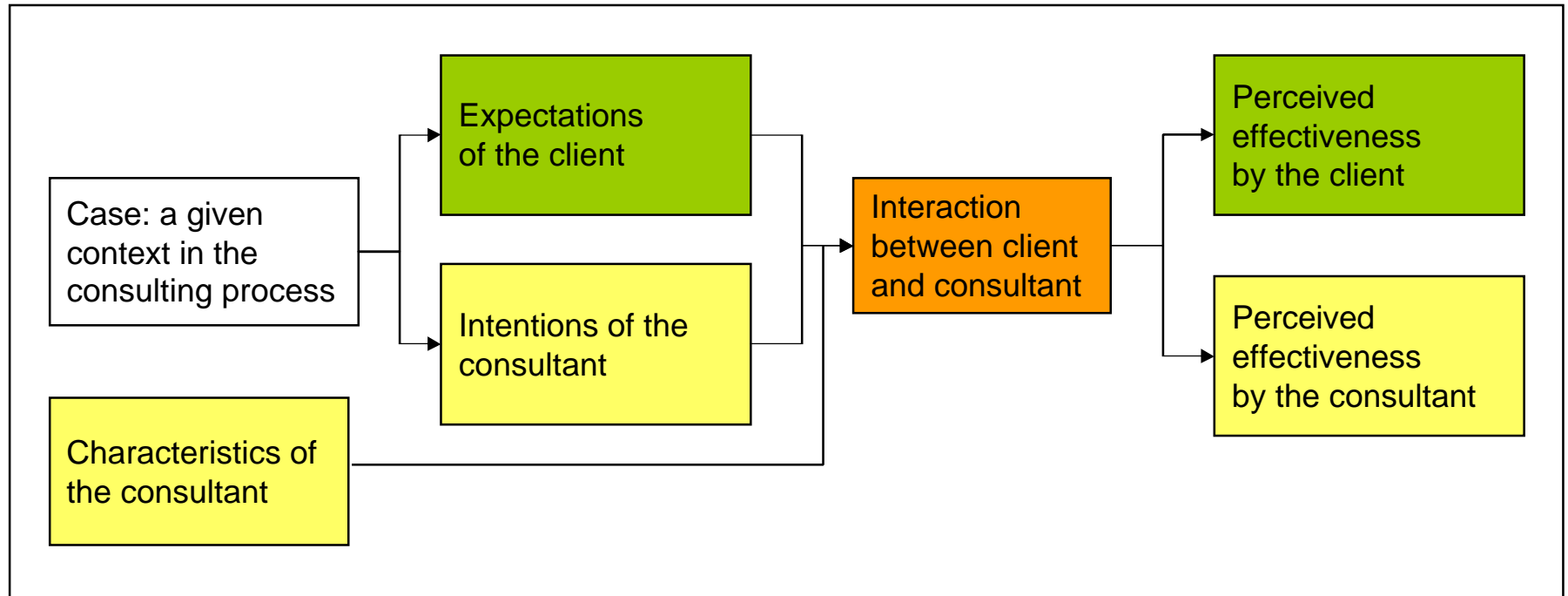
Research Question

- What makes management consultants effective in interaction with their clients?
- Effectiveness: 'The degree of goal realization'
 - Whose goal? Whose 'degree'?
- Seen from the eyes of the client:

The perceived effectiveness is a function of the client's expected and experienced effectiveness.

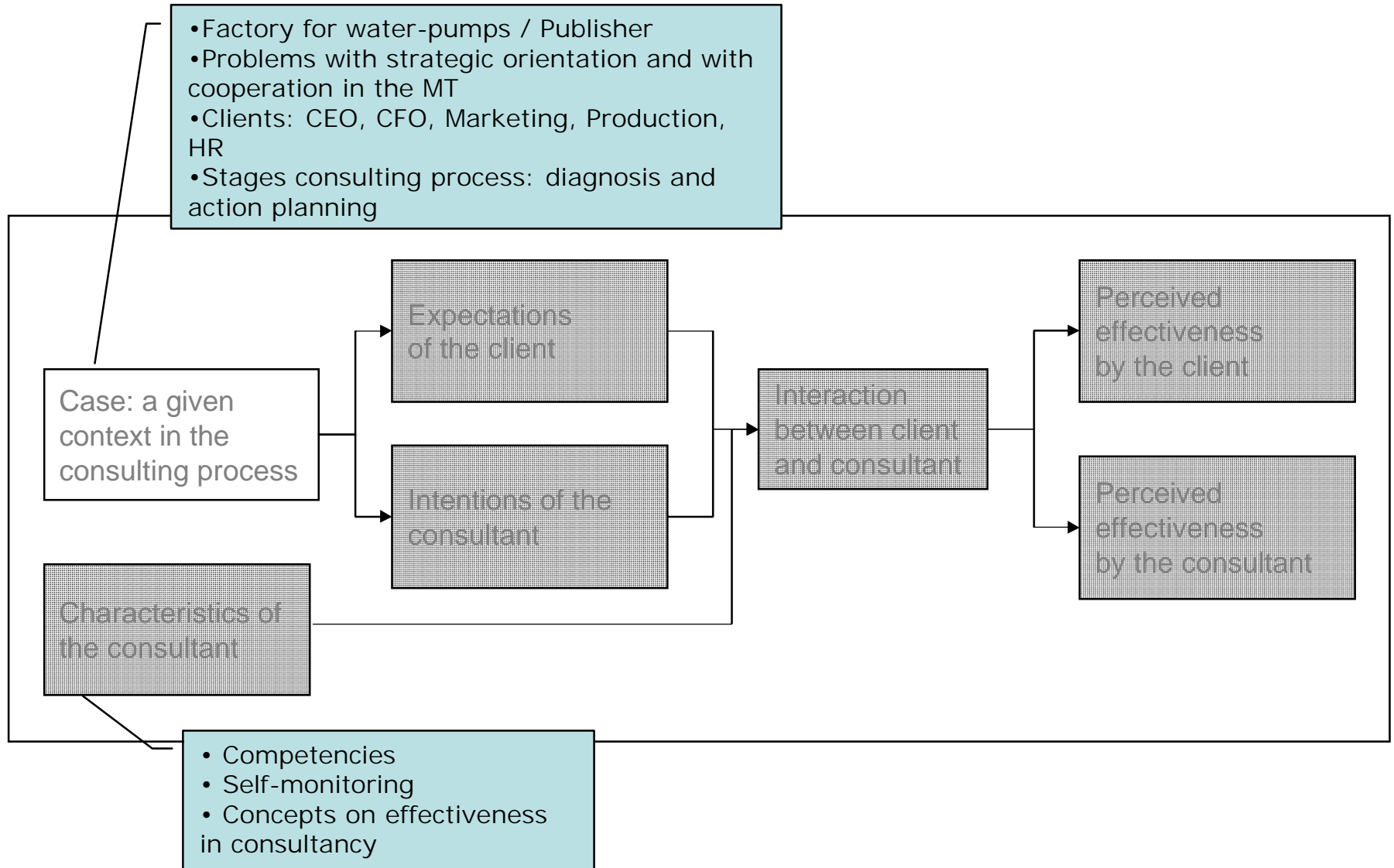
(Grönroos, 1990)

Research model (1)

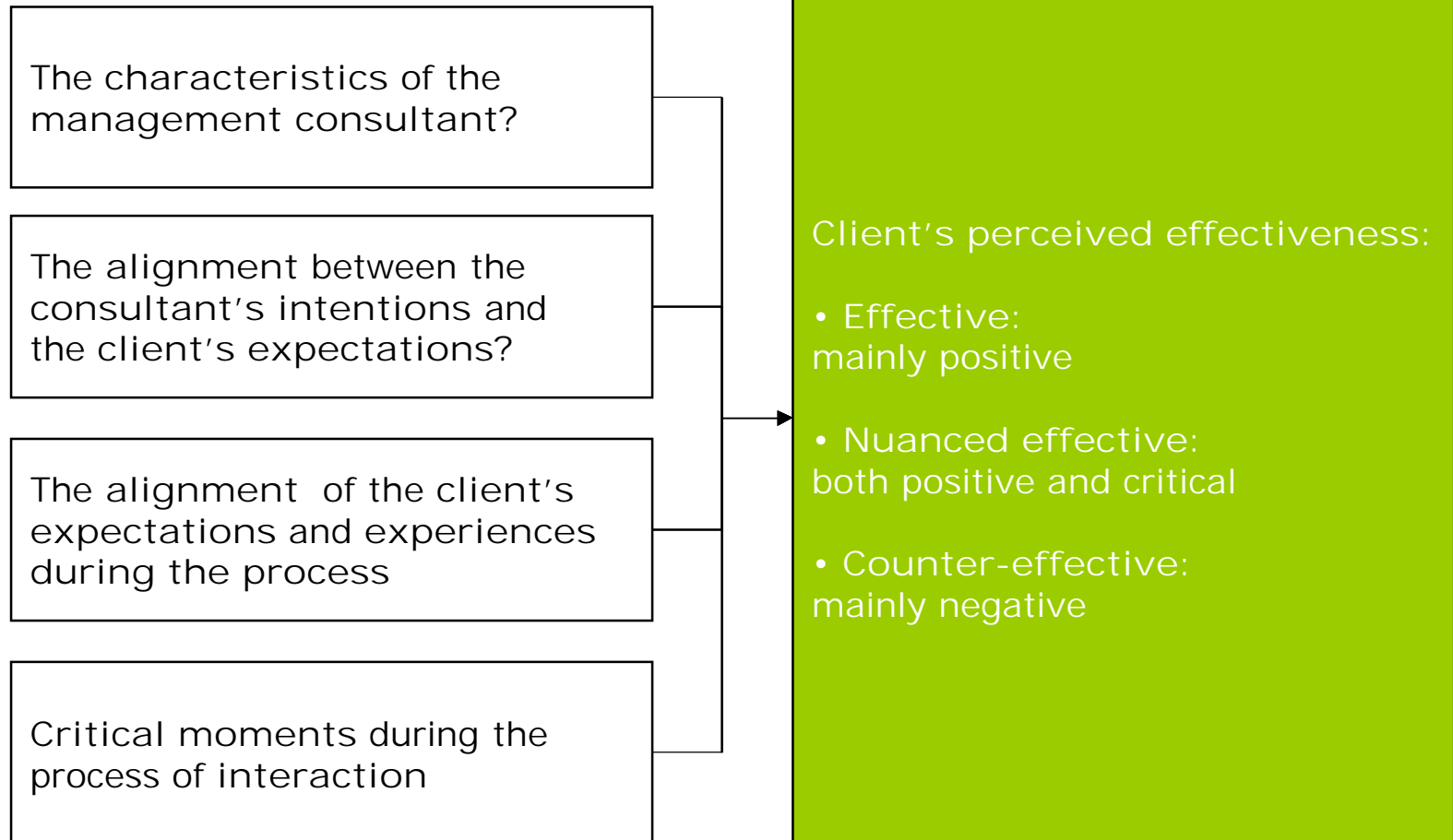


- 18 management consultants (multiple case-design (Yin, 2003))
- Simulation: client – consultant interaction during the stages of diagnosis and action planning of the consulting process (Kubr, 2002)

Research model (2)



How to explain the perceived effectiveness?



Perceived effectiveness by the client

| | Effective | Nuanced effective | Counter-effective |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Yardstick | Process: + Behaviour: + | Process: +/- Behaviour: +/- | Process: - Behaviour: critical |
| Consultants (N=18) | 7 | 5 | 6 |

Perceived effectiveness by the client and the consulting process

| Positive | Negative |
|---|--|
| Solid content with understanding for the situation and the participants | Lack of sensitivity; not being heard |
| Sensitivity and equivalence in interaction | No appreciation, lack of respect, disqualification |
| Structure the process | Less convincing and concrete (e.g. plan; approach) |
| Boldness; to advance | Too difficult; too complicated |
| Consultants work together; complement each other | Consultants who don't support each other |

Clients about the consulting process

- “ The analyses was rather boring but there was a clear formulation of the sense of urgency. They showed us how to solve the problem. Their strength was that they showed us their approach on the spot. The consultants collaborated well.”
- “ The start of the interaction was fun with a lot of compliments but..... that changed. It became didactic and disqualifying. The consultant-team didn't support their colleague. At the end we, as clients, formed one block against the joint enemy.”

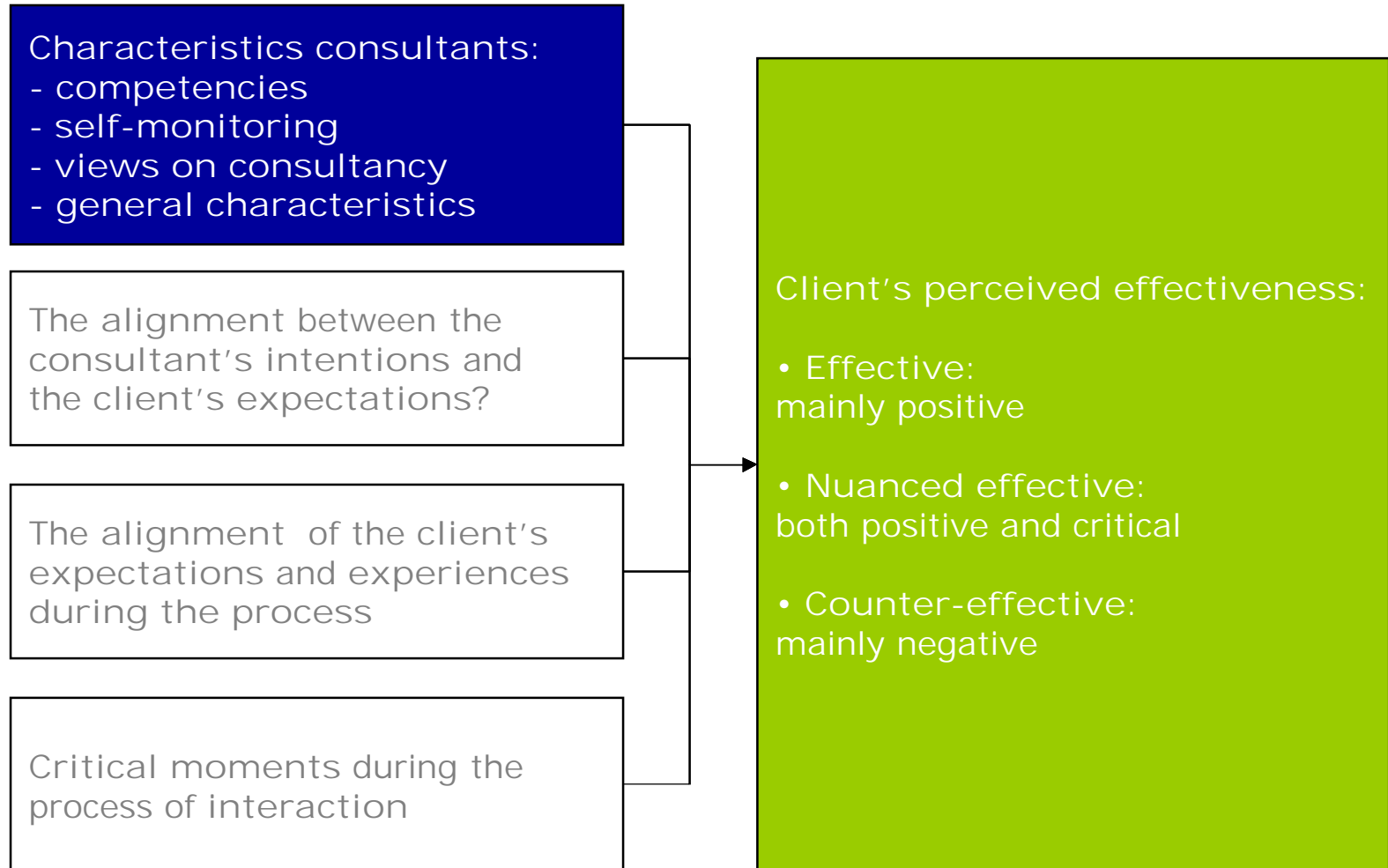
Perceived effectiveness by the client and the consultant's behaviour

| Positive | Negative |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Structuring behaviour | Less guiding the process; invisible |
| Calm, friendly, charming | On thundering |
| Convincing | Angry; offended |
| Concerned | Less empathy |
| | Inflexible; uncompromising |

Clients about the consultant's behaviour

- " At first I thought 'this is a pastor' but that isn't true. He is calm and friendly. Nice to see how he performs his presentation."
- " He is calm and formulates carefully. But he shows less empathy and has no group feeling with the other consultants. He perceived our feedback as an attack and reacted sharp-toned. He took a firm stand and that gave us an image of spasm."

Results



Competencies • effectiveness?

- Competencies: 'something that someone is good at'
(De Caluwé & Reitsma, 2006)
 - Basic competencies
 - Approach specific competencies
 - Intervention specific competencies

- Assumption:

The more basic competencies the consultant possesses, the more effective the consultant is.

Competencies • effectiveness?

Yes, for a part of the basic competencies.

- Effective consultants are good at:
 - Facilitating: listening and sensitivity
 - Inspiring confidence: integrity, reliability, loyalty, creating a favourable atmosphere.
- Counter-effective consultants are good at:
 - Influencing: communication, presentation and persuasion
 - Analyzing: analytical skills, conceptual thinking and learning orientation.

Self-monitoring • effectiveness?

- Self-monitoring:
 - The social psychological construct concerned with the differences in degree to which people can, and do, observe and control their expressive behaviour and self-presentation.
(Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986).
- Assumption:

Consultants with the rating 'high self-monitor' are more effective than consultants with the rating 'low self-monitor'.

Self-monitoring • effectiveness?

- Effective consultants are high self-monitors.
- Nuanced effective consultants are low self-monitors.
- Counter-effective consultants are high or low self-monitors.

Consultants about self-monitoring

- Low self-monitor:

'It's difficult to get a picture about myself.'

'I'm not so hyper sensitive. I like to have a story in mind. Sometimes I appear as arrogant. I have learned that I can be right but I need an agreement at that point as well.'

- High self-monitor:

'I am 'in my own head' and miss the conversation.'

'There also is a drawback to self-monitoring. You're always thinking on several levels. When I'm busy it turns in puzzling my head off.'

When do consultants reflect?

Self-monitoring and the moment of reflection:

| | Before | During | Behind | With others |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| Low (N=7) | 2 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| High (N=11) | 7 | 11 | 10 | 5 |

Concepts about consultancy • effectiveness?

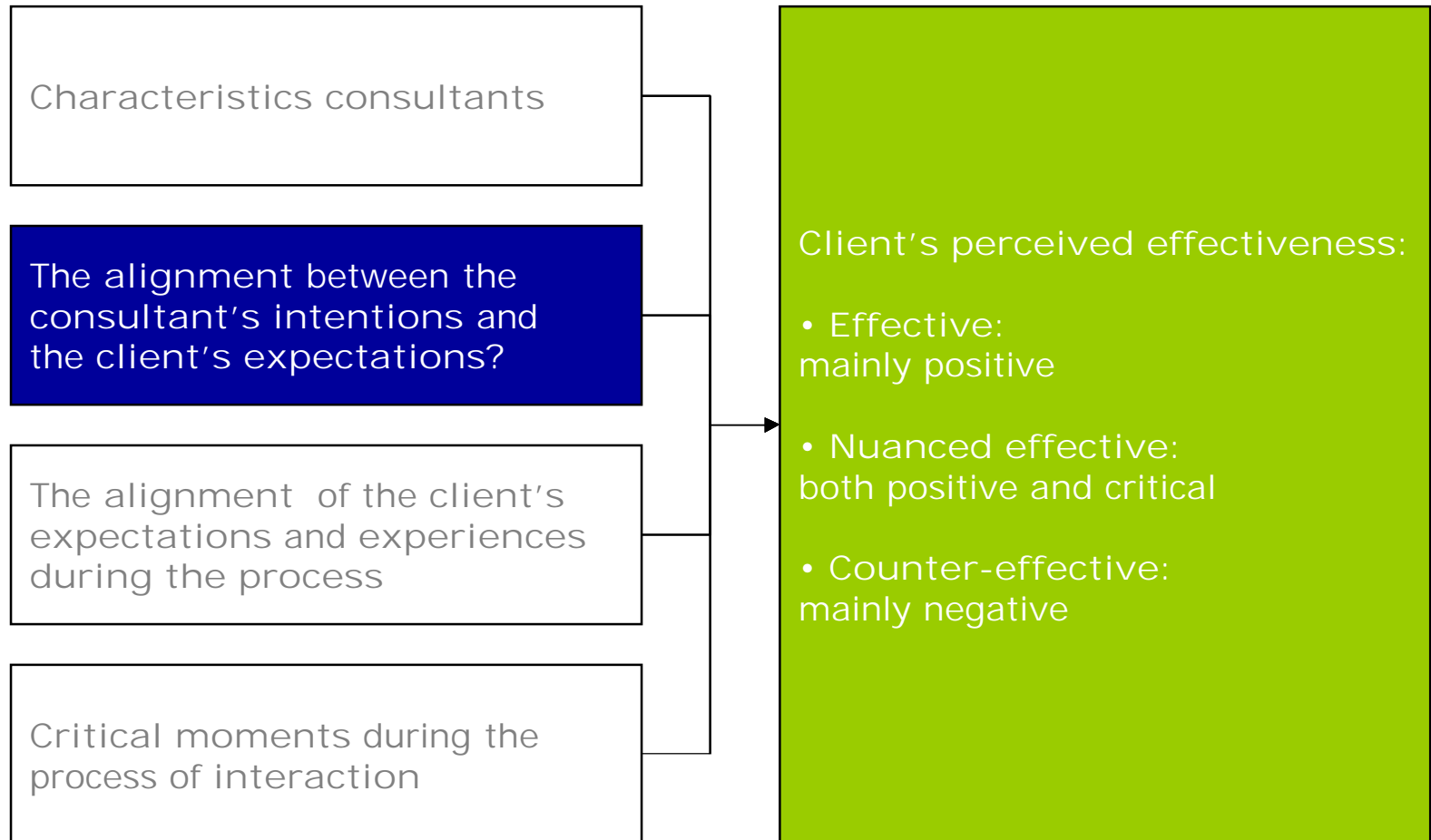
- Effectiveness criteria provide what is important in consultancy: (Sonne 1999, Philips 2000, De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg 2002)
 - Formal criteria: appointments and design consultancy assignment
 - Content criteria: what will one achieve
 - Process criteria: how will one act
- Question:

Can the concepts on the effectiveness of consultancy explain success (the perceived effectiveness)?

Results: effectiveness criteria

- Nuanced effective consultants value to formal criteria:
 - Perform set tasks
 - Use of required resources
 - Follow a given schedule.
- Uncertainty reduction
- Effective consultants:
 - Develop an approach gradually.

Results



Consultant's intentions = client's expectations • effectiveness?

- Asked before interaction:
 - Consultant: (Ajzen, 1988, 1991, 2005)
 - Which purposes will you achieve?
 - Which intentions, actions will you perform?
 - Client: (Grönroos, 1990)
 - What do you expect from the consultant?
 - In any case what must the consultant prevent to do?
 - When are you satisfied?

- Question

Is the fact that intentions of the consultant and the expectations of the client are aligned a factor that can explain the perceived effectiveness?

Consultant's intentions = client's expectations • effectiveness?

- No, this alignment is not an explanation: variety in results
For instance:
 - intentions consultant = expectations client • counter-effective
 - intentions consultant • expectations client • effective
- What do clients expect
 - Get perspective: approach, image of the future, suggestions
 - Connection with the consultant: sincerely, 'together with us'
 - Skilled & reliable consultant.
- What consultants intend to do
 - Present & persuade: analysis, approach, image of the situation
 - Get contact
 - Get commitment
 - Enlarge own comprehension

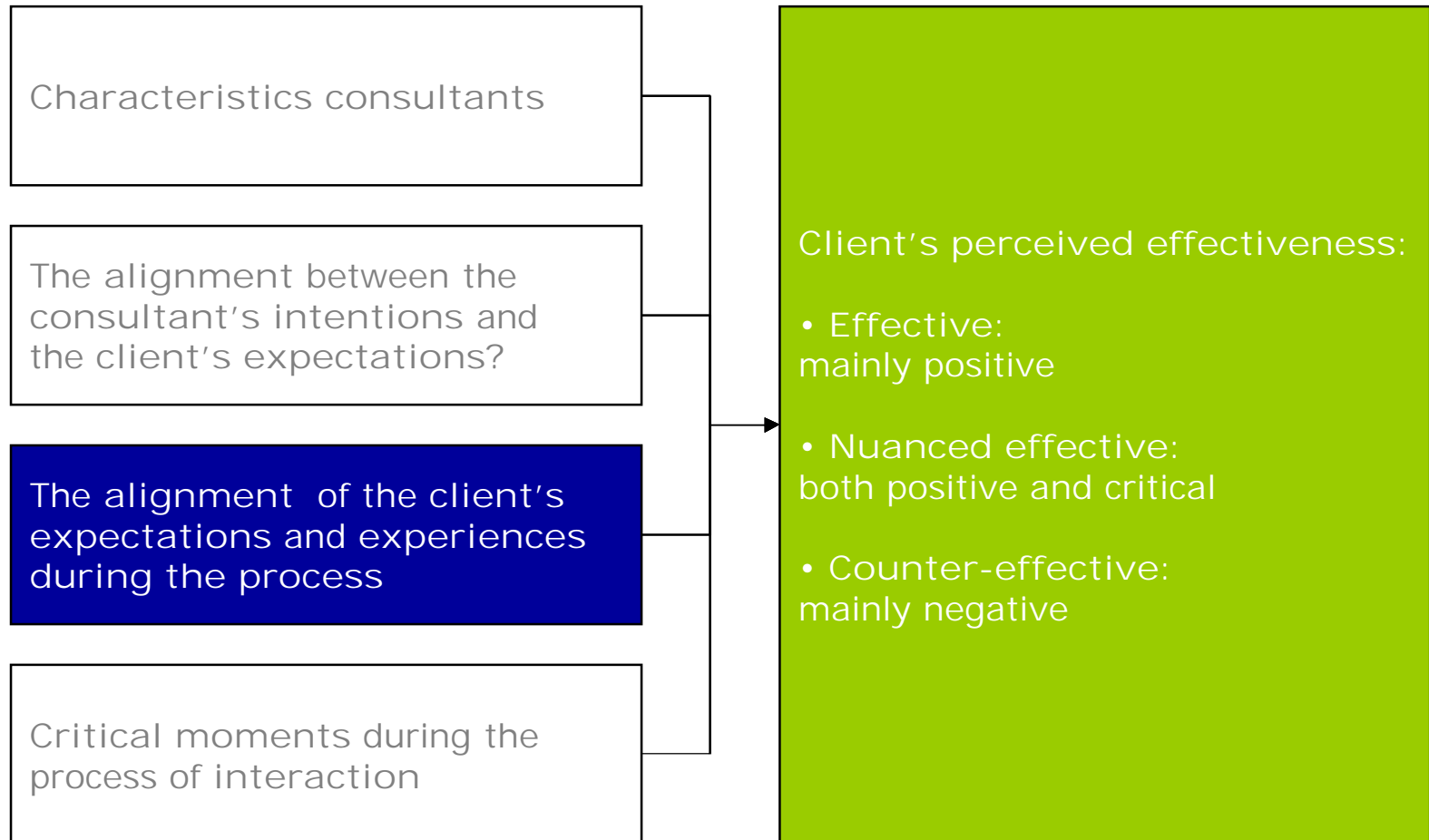
The strength of consultant's intentions

- Intention strength:
Less forceful intention • more effective.
- (In this research: young and less experienced consultants have a less forceful intention)
- (Compare with: clients value the competency 'flexibility'.)
- Example of mismatch during the interaction:
intention = expectation plus forceful intention

Consultant:

'The assumption that they both would take their own position, wasn't true. The assumption that they both would formulate a total-solution, wasn't accorded as well. I didn't perform well: judging, lecturing and not listening.'

Results



Client's expectation = client's experience • effectiveness?

- Expectation
 - What do you expect from the consultant?
 - In any case what must the consultant prevent to do?
 - When are you satisfied?
- Experience:
 - How did you experience the interaction with the consultant(s)
 - Feedback on the consultant's individual behaviour
- Question:

Is the fact that expectations and experiences during the process by the client are aligned, a factor that can explain the perceived effectiveness?

Client's expectation = client's experience • effectiveness?

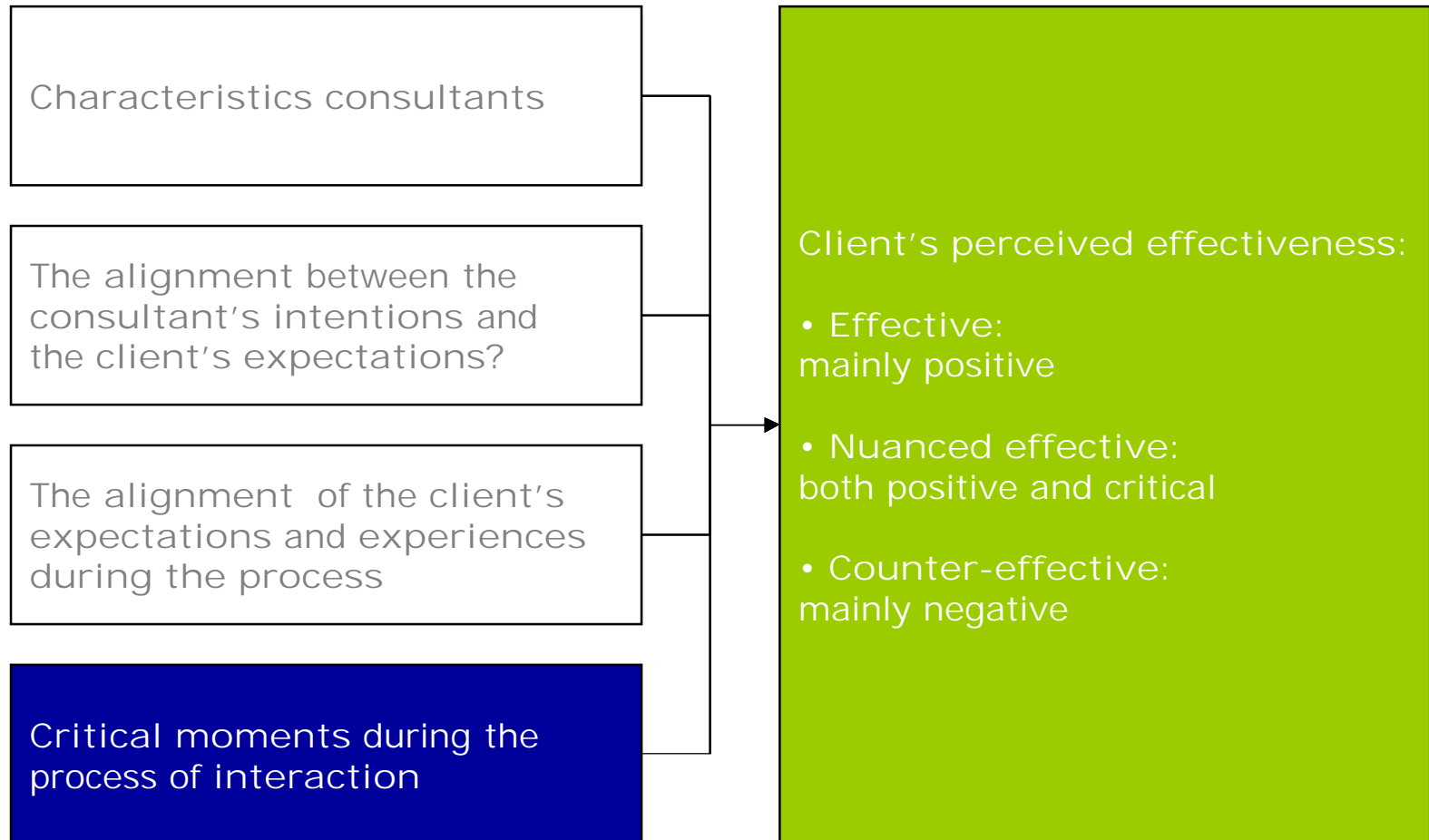
- Effective: 'beyond expectation'
 - client's expectation = client's experience and a positive surplus
- Nuanced effective:
 - client's expectation • client's experience
 - client's expectation • client's experience and a positive surplus
- Counter-effective:
 - client's expectation • or • client's experience and a negative surplus

Surplus: positive or negative experience

- On top of expectations: an extra experience

| Positive | Negative |
|---|---|
| • Pleasant, positive performance: charming, calm, dedicated, energizing | • No connection: bluffing, 'as a tornado', sharp toned, uncompromising. |
| • Don't give up the content easily | |
| • Give structure in interaction | |
| • Balance in the consultancy team | • Malfunction of the consultancy team; consultant invisible |

Results



Critical moments during interaction • effectiveness?

- Question:

Are there critical moments during the process that can explain the perceived effectiveness and what is the nature of those critical moments?

- 'Critical moments' = patterns in the process of mutual accommodation.

Types of critical moments

1. Sensemaking by the consultant or client
 - positive or negative connotation

Example:

CEO: We are complete. The floor is yours.

Consultant X: Thank you for the interviews this morning and for your time you will spend with us.... It is good to sit here together. The title of our presentation is: To pump or to drown.

Clients: (Laughter amongst the clients)

Consultant Y: It's good to have a laugh. That is not often the case.

Consultant X: But of course it isn't meant as a joke only; there is a sense of urgency to take steps forward.

Types of critical moments

2. Connection of the consultant to the client

- present or absent

Example

Consultant: We will work it out together. We and you.

Client A: But what's the matter? That it doesn't happen now? (refers to something happened before)

Consultant: As I stated before: I don't want the discussion now.

Client A: That question is more important than the presentation, I think.

Consultant: Yes, but I first want the finish that presentation.

Client B: For me that question is more important than the presentation as well.

Client A: Yes. You say that there are differences in our norms and values. What kind of people are sitting around this table?

Types of critical moments

Interplay between consultants • intensifying or weakening

Example

Client X: Do you want to be present in the management team meetings?
Consultant A: Not I don't want to be present in them, but I do want to optimize your meeting.
Client Y: Consultant B is nodding forcefully.
Consultant B: Perhaps we will join a MT-meeting.
Client Y: I'm lost. (he doesn't understand what is going on)

Critical moments • effectiveness?

| | Sensemaking | | Connection | | Interplay consultants | |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Positive connotation | Negative connotation | Present | Absent | Intensifying | Weakens |
| Effective | X | | X | | X | |
| Nuanced effective | X, no understanding | | X, but... | X | X | |
| Counter-effective | | X | | X | X, negative flow | |

Conclusion:

How to explain the client's perceived effectiveness of the consultant in the stages of diagnosis and action planning?

