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INTRODUCTION

Insight is a wonderful thing. There's nothing like that aha-feeling when you're confronted with a complex topic – and then suddenly get it. This book is your ahavenue, a visual rollercoaster ride to current business, technology, (self) leadership, and psychology insights.

What makes this mini encyclopedia of short answers different from existing ones is that it uses a systematic visual approach for clear explanations of complex topics.

This approach is called Visual Variation and can be used by anyone, regardless of your drawing or design abilities. It emphasizes the expansive nature of knowledge and stimulates viewers to go beyond the presented answers and iterate the presented image further. In this way, it encourages readers to apply the gained knowledge to their own situation and thus continue the variation with one's own insights.

This Visipedia (visual mini encyclopedia) covers 100 pertinent questions that most professionals need to address in their work or life. They are structured into four sections:
I. Personal questions that can guide your reflection on your own learning style, your career, your creativity, or your life in general.

II. Interpersonal questions that address issues when interacting with others, including trusting, communicating, leading, motivating, or delegating.

III. Institutional questions that regard organizational issues, such as co-ordination

mechanisms, risk management approaches, sales approaches, or conflict resolution mechanisms.

IV. Technological and societal questions that concern new developments like quantum computing, cybersecurity, blockchain or the vision of a circular economy.

Remember that the answers given are mere invitations for you to go beyond them and reflect on your own experiences and insights. In this vein, each entry concludes with a stimulating question that you can use for reflection. Ideally you can addy our visual iterations to the presented ones and thus enrich the visipedia entry with your own experience or insight. So, when it comes to complex questions don't worry, vary!

Happy discovery and reflection!

SECTION 1

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

HOW DO YOU BEST LEARN?

Do you know your own learning and thinking style?

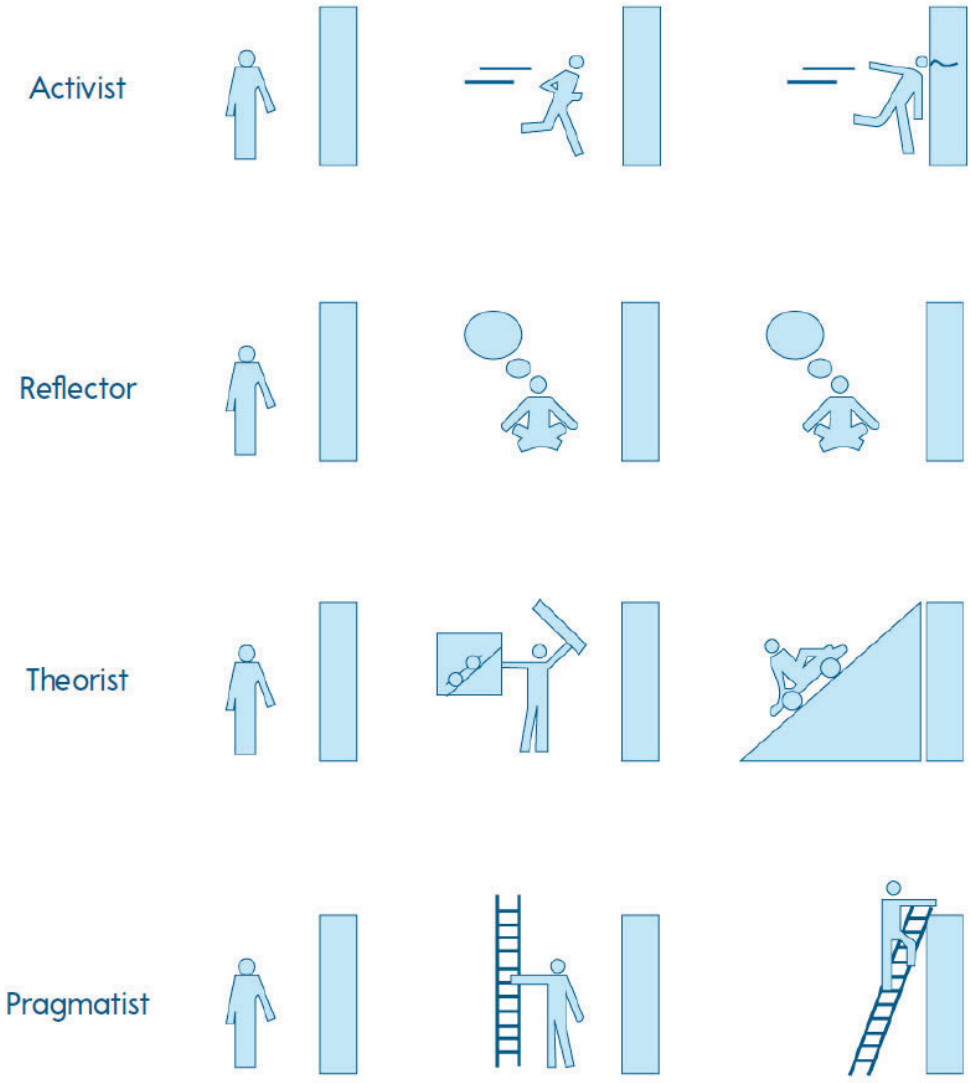
The image to the right shows four typical cognitive styles (based on Kolb and Honey & Mumford) in a memorable way to help us learn better and to tune messages to our target audience. So ask yourself:

1. Do you learn best by trial & error and sometimes rush into things? Then you may be an Activist. Experiences are your way to learn.
2. Do you tend to overthink issues and fall into paralysis by analysis? Do you usually consider risks and other perspectives first? Then you may be a Reflector. Reading is probably your favorite way to learn.
3. Are you very systematic, evidence-based, or keen to learn and work with frameworks? Then you may be a Theorist.
4. Is your curiosity mainly driven by how useful something is for the problems you face? Are you at times reluctant to try out new things and prefer to re-use old solutions? Then you may be a Pragmatist.

So know your own learning preferences (and use them to learn more effectively) and surround yourself with people who can complement and expand your own thinking style.

Under which conditions are you the most effective at learning, and how can you create them?

Four Learning Styles



HOW DO YOU REASON?

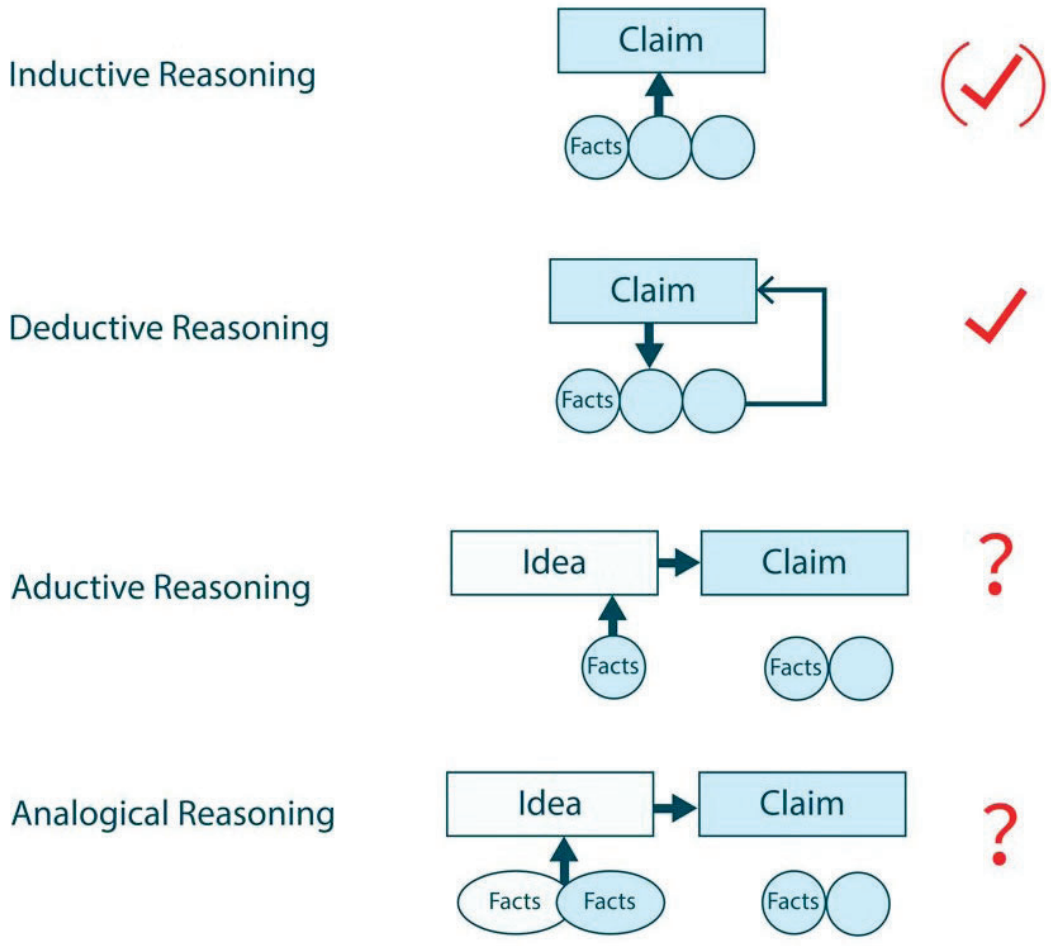
Do you know your favorite way of reasoning, and should you change it?
Here are four fundamentally different ways of thinking and illustrated with start-up examples. Which one do you rely on the most?

1. Induction: Our natural way to come up with insights is to use our experience. Example: We see many start-ups fail because their customer base doesn't grow quickly enough, hence we infer that scalability must be a key trait of successful start-ups. Induction is prone to error though, as we tend to overgeneralize.
2. Deduction: A more rigorous way is to setup a claim as a hypothesis and then search for evidence that contradicts or confirms this view. Example: I posit that all successful (=next funding round) B2C start-ups from the last two years have grown their customer base by at least 10 percent each quarter.
3. Abduction: Relying more on our creative intuition and on serendipitous observations allows us to come up with new (unvalidated) claims. Example: It would be neat if there was a start-up growth formula that would tell you on which potential customers to focus at what stage.
4. Analogy: Comparing seemingly unrelated phenomena and applying traits from one to the other allows us to generate new claims. Example: A startup should act like a rebel army trying to conquer a palace: create alliances, infiltrate the palace, and then attack it from all sides.

While other forms of thinking may be more creative, deductive reasoning is the only one that can give us relative certainty that our claim has merit.

What's your favorite mode of reasoning?

Types of Reasoning



HOW CAN YOU USE SYNERGIES?

What are synergies and can they enable you to achieve more with less?

A synergy is the net positive effect of cleverly combining previously separate things, such as activities, goals, organizations, resources, people, or technologies. Think 1+1>2 or recall the idiom „killing two birds with one stone“ (friendlier: free two birds with one key).

There are at least five types of synergies that anyone can use to be more productive, impactful and effective at work; the first three can be used on your own, while the last two require cooperating with others.

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1. Leveraging one thing for another (e.g., using clients as investors).

2. Aligning one thing so that it now also supports others (like using your commute for learning or for fitness) .

3. Consolidating one thing into another to save time and effort (e.g., integrating training elements into meetings).

4. Pooling a resource for multiple people, activities, or goals (try pooling contacts, lessons learned, or books with friends).

5. Combining things or people so that respective weaknesses cancel out or strengths align (i.e., an entrepreneur teaming up with a designer).

On the next page, these five types of synergies are shown as visually.

To reap these synergies in your own work, ask yourself these questions regularly:

1. Leverage: What could I reuse so that it helps me with another thing? What goal of mine can support another one?

2. Alignment: How can I modify something so that it supports other things as well? How can I tweak an activity so that my other goals also benefit from it?

3. Consolidation: What could I stop doing by integrating it into something else?

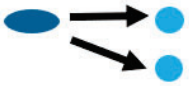
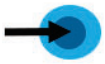
4. Resource Pool: With whom can I share a resource to make better use of it?

5. Complementarity: With whom can I partner up so that their strength will compensate for my weakness and vice versa?

You can also combine these synergies: think of carpooling with a language buddy (alignment + pooling + complementarity).

Are you giving synergies a chance at work and in your life?

Five Types of Synergies

Leveraging		Use A for B.
Aligning		Tweak A so that it helps B and C.
Consolidating		Integrate A into B.
Pooling		Use a resource for both A and B.
Complementing		Combine A and B to eliminate weak points.

HOW CAN YOU HAVE BETTER IDEAS?

You will have heard the expression “thinking outside the box.”

Taking this saying as a starting point for a visual variation, we can mutate this notion and not just think outside the box but also explore the box (work with existing solutions), exploit it (work with your existing resources), shake it up (question our assumptions about the problem), reframe it (use your tools in a different way to solve it), take it to another place (to get inspiration), combine it with other boxes (learn from other contexts), think in new boxes (radically different solutions on another level), put the box (= constraint) in another box (= additional constraints), or give chance a chance by ‘shuffling’ it.

This image not only gives you ten different strategies for creative problem solving; it is in itself a generative mechanism to come up with other ways to solve a problem. It invites you to develop other ways to think outside the box or ‘unbox’ ideas further.

How would you visualize YOUR way to unbox ideas?