



IPDET

## Module 4: Understanding the Evaluation Context and Program Theory of Change



### Introduction

- Front-End Analysis
- Identifying the Main Client and Key Stakeholders
- Understanding the Context
- Investigating Existing Knowledge
- Constructing, Using, and Assessing a Theory of Change

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## Front-End Analysis

- Client and stakeholders
- Timing
- Time management
- Nature of resources
- Relevance of social science theory
- Findings of similar evaluations
- Role of theory of change
- Existing data

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## Balancing Cost and Benefits: *Benefits*

- Evidence-based decision making that leads to sound decisions about:
  - what to scale up or replicate
  - What to continue
  - what to improve
  - what to decrease or terminate
- Contributions to streams of knowledge
- Building of local capacity

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## Balancing Cost and Benefits: *Costs*

- Cost of the evaluation in relation to the cost of the program
- Burden of the evaluation on those who must supply information
- Reputation and political costs to the organization, the evaluator, and the evaluation community if the evaluation is not done well

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## Dangers or Pitfalls

- Resistance to modifying the original plan
- McDonaldization
- Fixed beliefs (“truisms”)
- “Group think”
- Disproportionate weighting of the views of the powerful

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## Main Client(s)

May be those:

- authorizing or requesting the evaluation
- authorizing or funding the program
- accountable to the public for the intervention
- to whom the evaluators are accountable

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## Stakeholders

- People or organizations other than the client with strong interests in the intervention and its evaluation
  - May stand to gain or lose from the outcomes
  - May represent the interests of such groups
- Important to consider those who would typically not be asked to participate

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## Checklist of Stakeholder Roles

Individuals, groups, or agencies	To make policy	To make operational decisions	To provide input to evaluation	To react	For interest only
Developers of program					
Providers of other resources					
Heads of implementing agencies					
etc.					

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## Involving Stakeholders

- Identify the main stakeholders
- Provide early opportunity for them to raise issues for the evaluation to address
- Consider offering periodic updates or briefings
- Evaluation report should indicate the nature and extent of stakeholder involvement

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## Stakeholder Analysis

- A technique to identify and assess the importance of key people, groups, or institutions
- Assists in anticipating the influence stakeholders may have on
  - mobilizing support or resistance to the evaluation
  - use of evaluation findings and implementation of recommendations
- Evaluator may develop strategies to involve appropriately in the evaluation

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## Program Stages and Evaluation Questions

Program Stage	Examples of evaluation questions
1. Prospective	What can be learned from the experiences of similar programs?
2. Early implementation	Is the program operating as planned? What issues are surfacing?
3. Mid-implementation	To what extent are there cross-site variations in how the program is being implemented?
4. Maturity	To what extent have the outcomes been achieved? Can gains be attributed to the program? Has the program had unanticipated positive or negative effects?
5. Ex-poste	To what extent did the program contribute to the observed impacts?

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## Tapping Existing Knowledge

- Own organization's internal reviews and published evaluations
- Other organizations' websites with evaluation publications
- Repositories, syntheses, or collections of evaluations
- Evaluation journals
- Doctoral dissertations
- Related literature: e.g. economics, statistics

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## Using Knowledge for a "Theory of Change"

- Identify stream of knowledge that explains or predicts an event (a theory)
  - example: evidence from evaluative research that indicates students do better when parents are involved in their studies
- Use this knowledge to develop a "theory" of how the program will achieve intended change
  - example: if parents in rural Zambian primary schools are more involved in their children's studies, the children will do better in their studies

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## Theory of Change

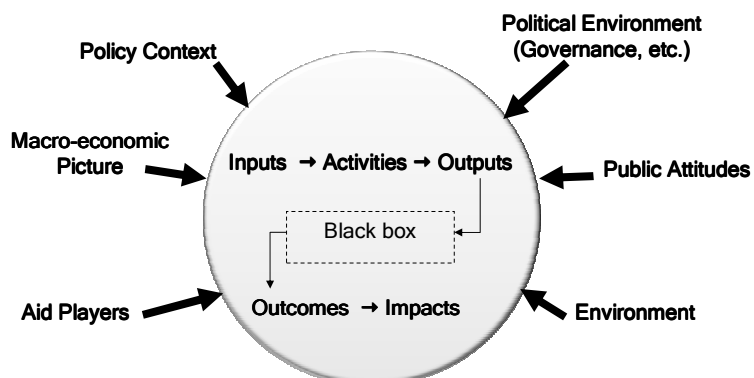
- A knowledge-based diagram of how an intervention intends to achieve results
- T of C should:
  - depict a sequence linking inputs to activities, activities to outputs, and the results--outcomes and impacts- expected from them.
  - identify critical assumptions underlying the intervention
  - Indicate other factors in the context of the intervention that might influence its success

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## Potential Influences on Program Results



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## Why Use a Theory of Change

- Visually shows how the intervention is supposed to work and flaws in logic
- Assumptions and potential influences identified may indicate risks to the achievement of intended results
- Provides questions for an evaluation
- Helps build a common understanding of the intervention and expectations among stakeholders

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## Review or Create

- If the intervention already has a developed theory of change, carefully review it
- May need to refine, rework, or reconstruct
- If there is no theory of change, create one

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## Constructing a Theory of Change

- What knowledge underlies the intervention? [Slide 13]
- What is the logic of the intervention?
- What are the key assumptions being made?
- What are potential influences operating in the context of the intervention?

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## How to Determine the Logic of the Intervention

- Chain of “if-then” statements
  - If *X* happens, then *Y* should follow
- Ask, is this *plausible*? Are the activities and outputs likely to lead to the intended results?
- Ask, is this *feasible*? Are the inputs (capabilities and resources) sufficient for the activities?

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## Mapping or Drawing the Logic

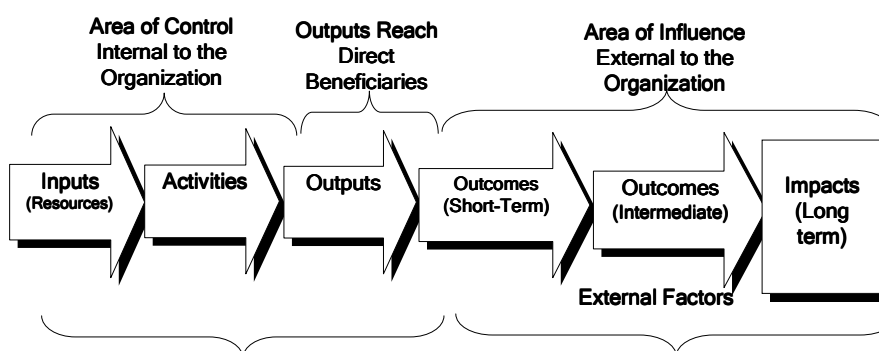
- Can and are done in many different ways
- Usually use forms of flow-charting
- Boxes with arrows show links and relationships

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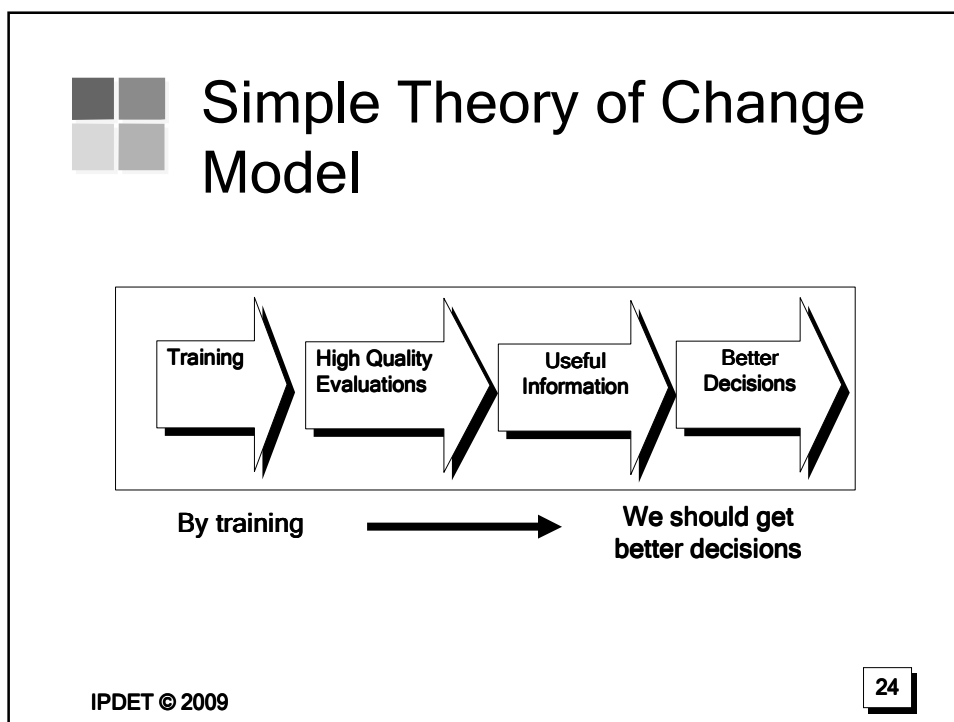
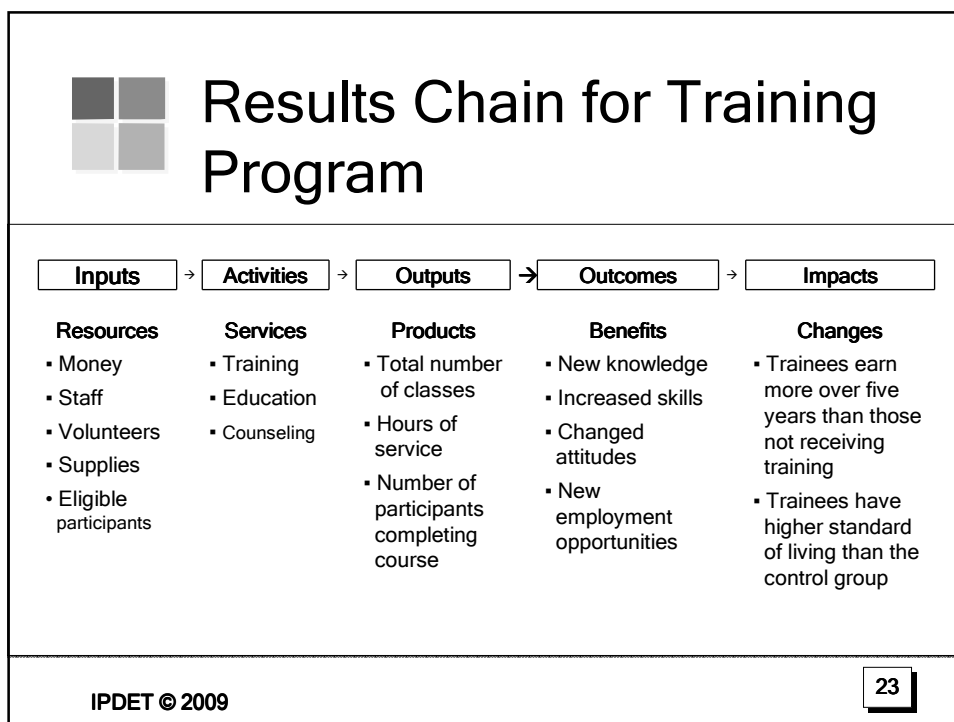


## Results Chain



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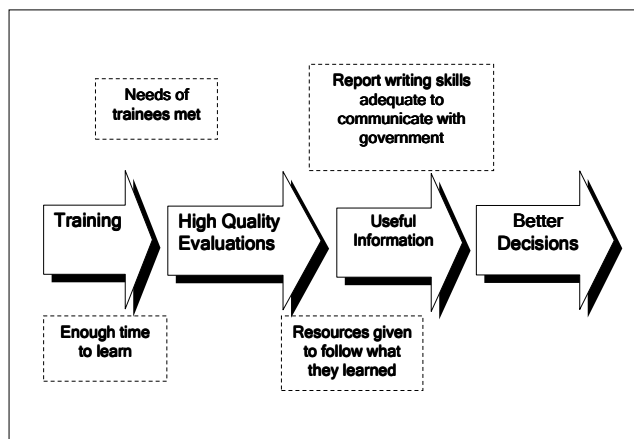


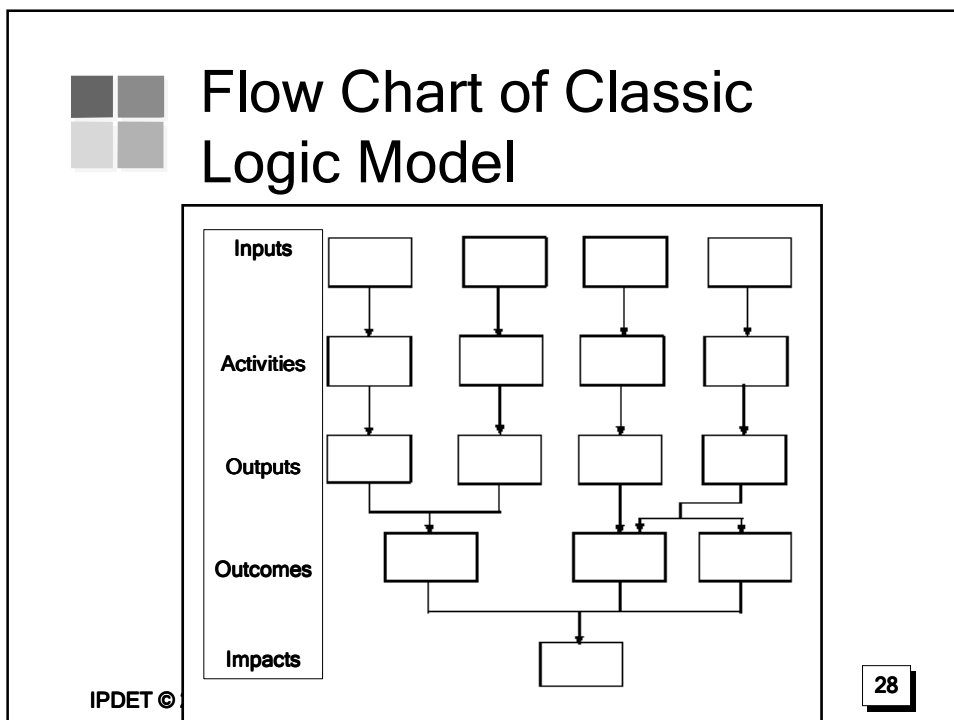
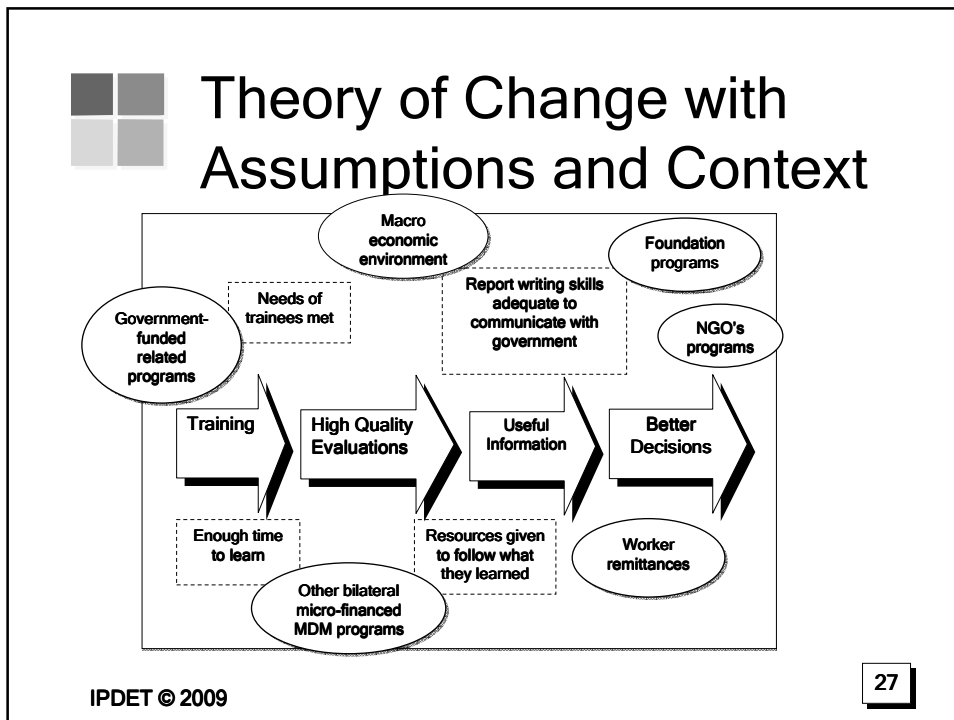
## Identifying Key Assumptions

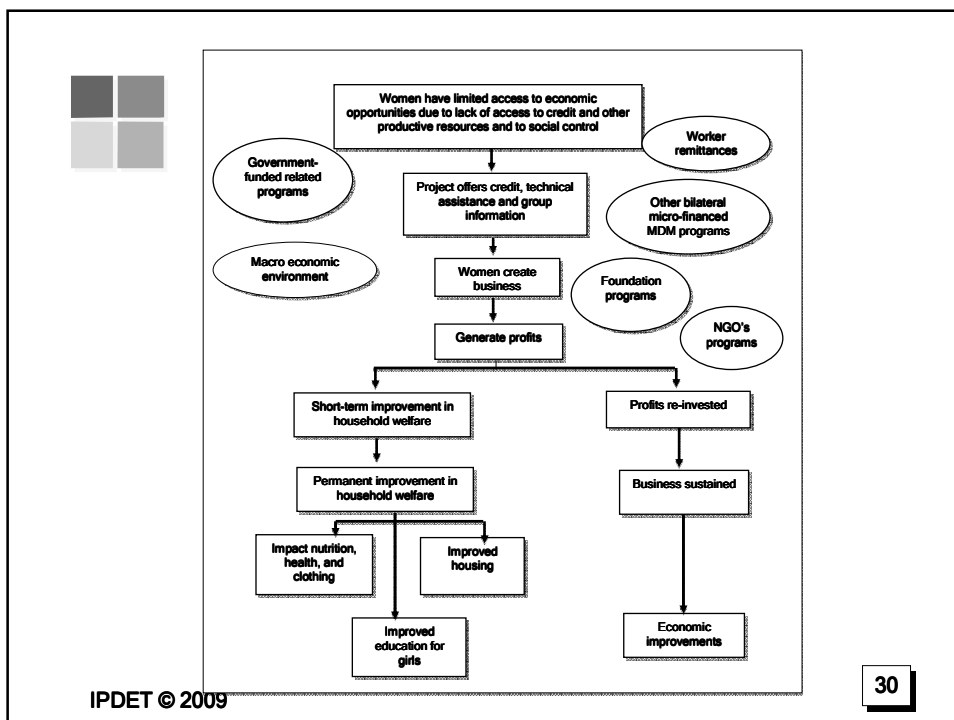
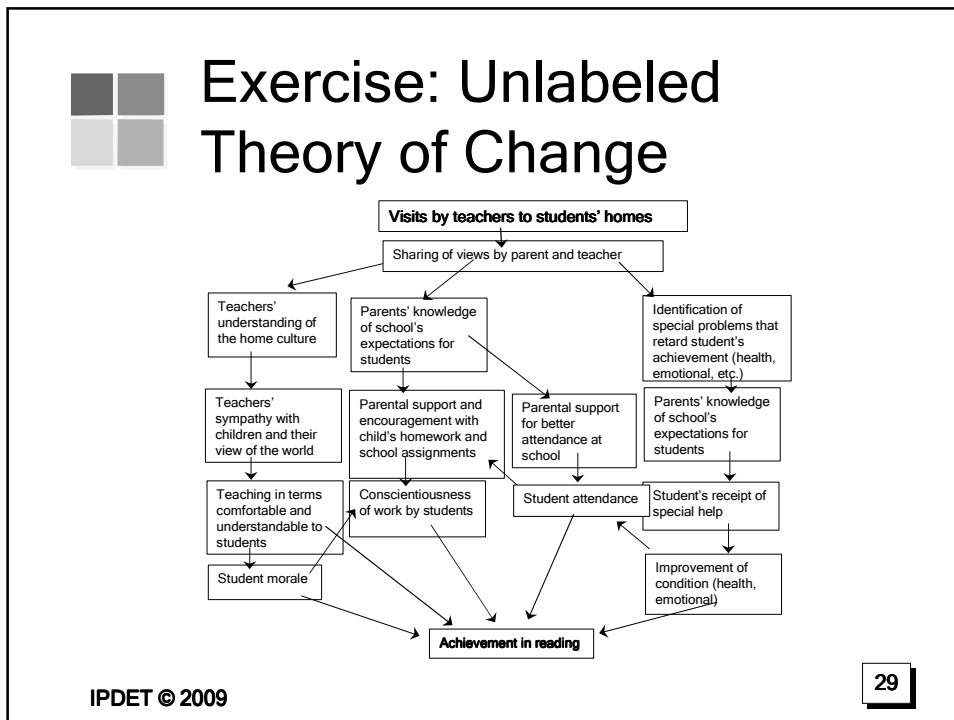
Make *explicit* the implicit assertions about how the intervention will work in its context to produce the results



## Theory of Change with Assumptions

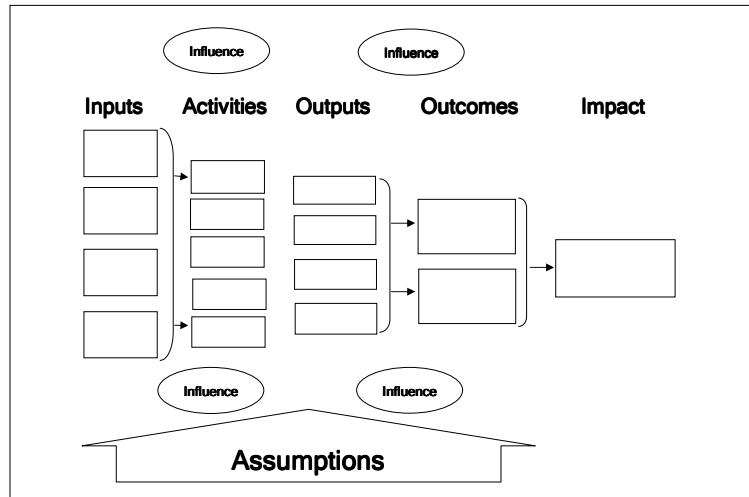








## Model with Assumptions & Influences



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## Theories of Change should Address these Questions:

- Is the intervention built on a knowledge base?
- Are there gaps in the logic chain?
- Are interrelationships clear and plausible?
- Is it realistic to assume that the intervention will result in the attainment of stated goals?
- On what critical assumptions is the intervention based?
- What else is operating in the context of the intervention that might affect results?

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## A Final Note....

*“One does not discover new lands without  
consenting to lose site of the shore for a long time.”*

*-- Unknown*



*Questions?*

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