

# Conflict of Interest: What can we do about it?

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# Must Pay Attention to COI

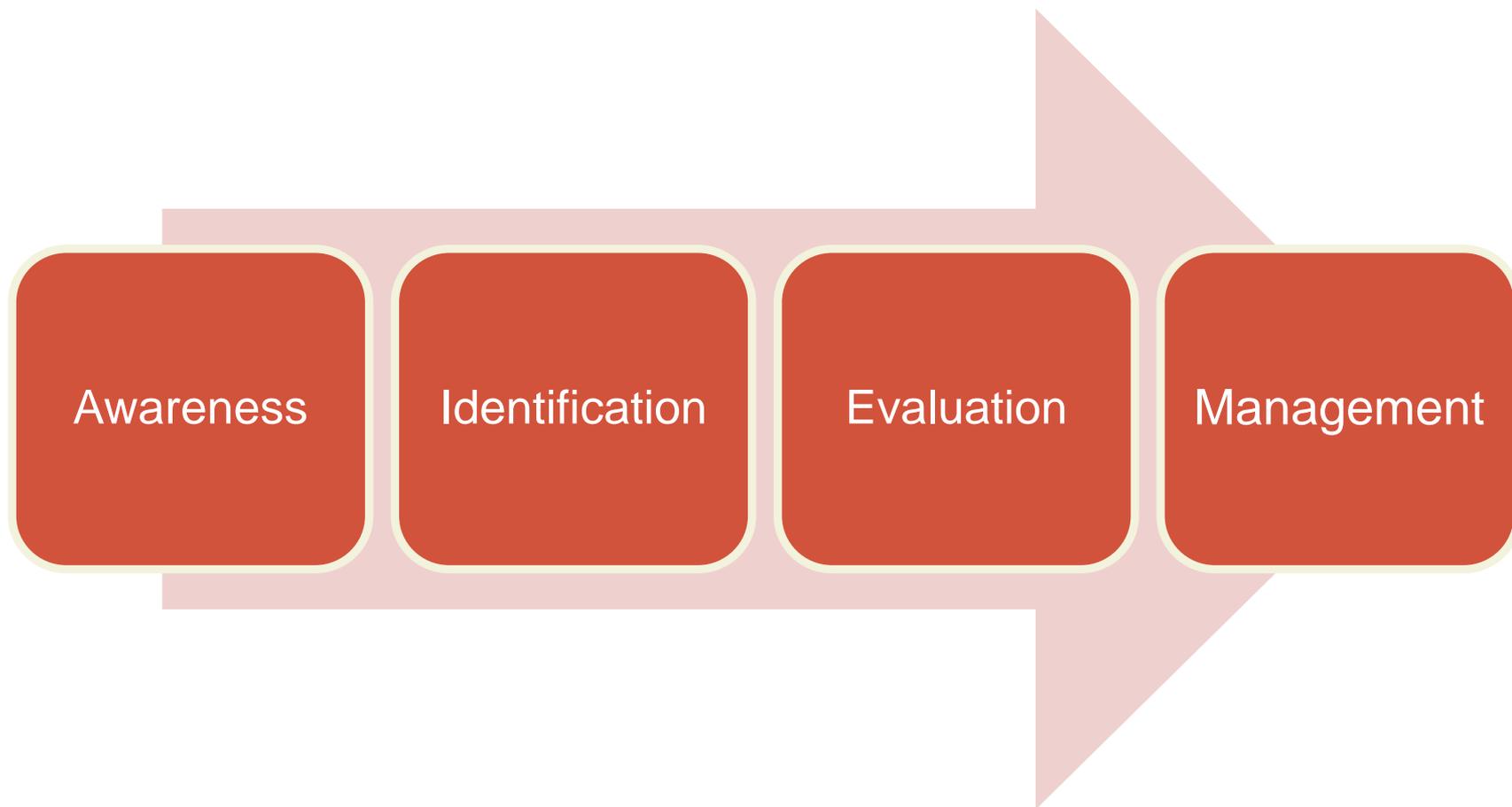


- Financial / non-financial
- Personal / Institutional
- Real / Potential / Apparent



- About maintaining trust in:
  - Professionals
  - Decision-makers
  - Institutions

# In a Nut Shell



# A Model for Ethical COI Management



## Educational PHASE

### Know what a COI is and appropriate policies

- What type? Financial or non-financial; Institutional; Researchers; panel members...
- What policies are you subject to?

## PHASE 1

### Know yourself, the actors and evaluate the risk

- Where in the world are the COI? They're "in the professional" and "in the professional setting"
- Who's involved, what are their/your interests?
- Is there a problematic COI situation (actual/potential; financial/non-financial)?

## PHASE 2

### Know the context and how to manage it

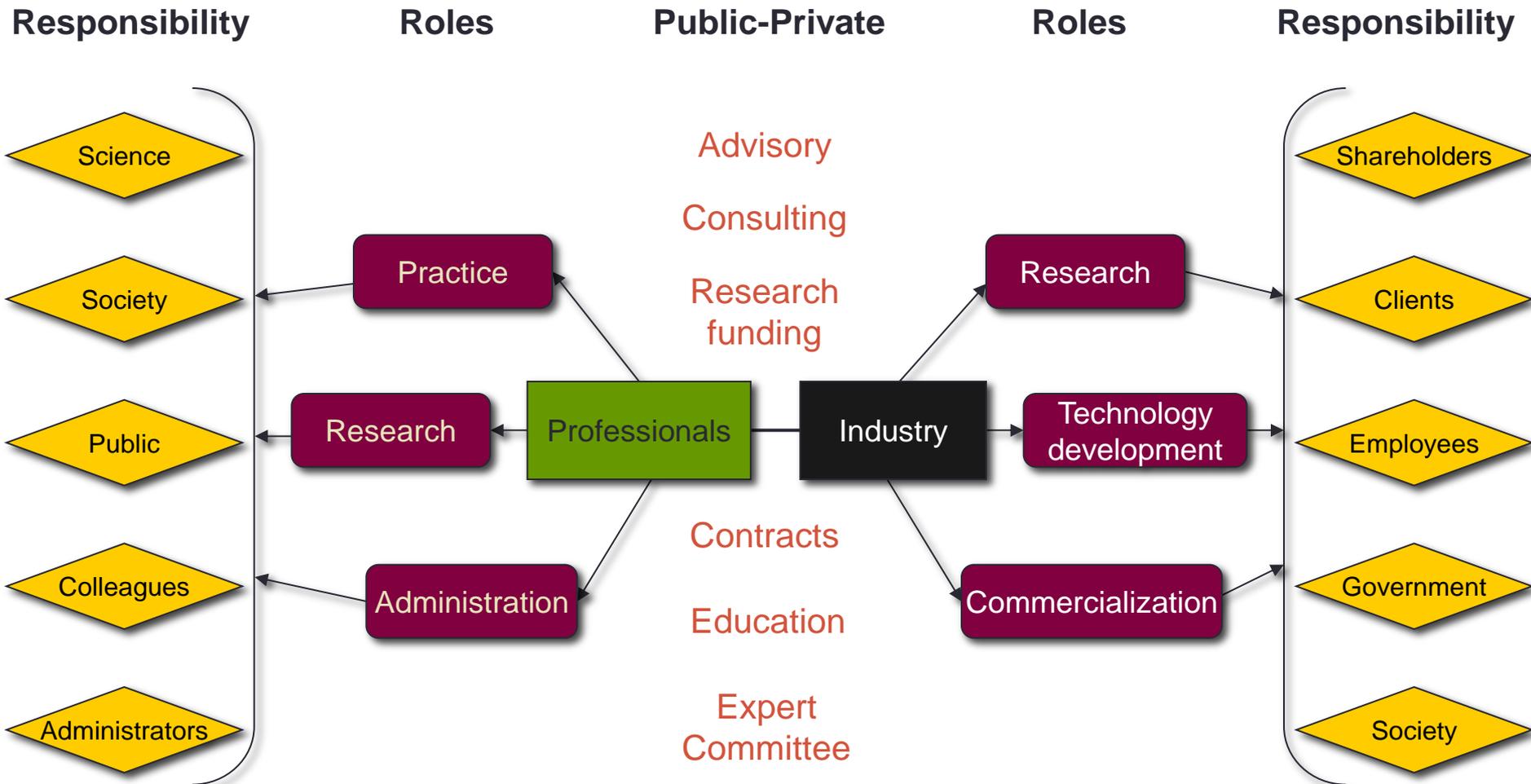
- *What is?* and *What if?*
- What are the benefits/risks of different resolution strategies?

## PHASE 3

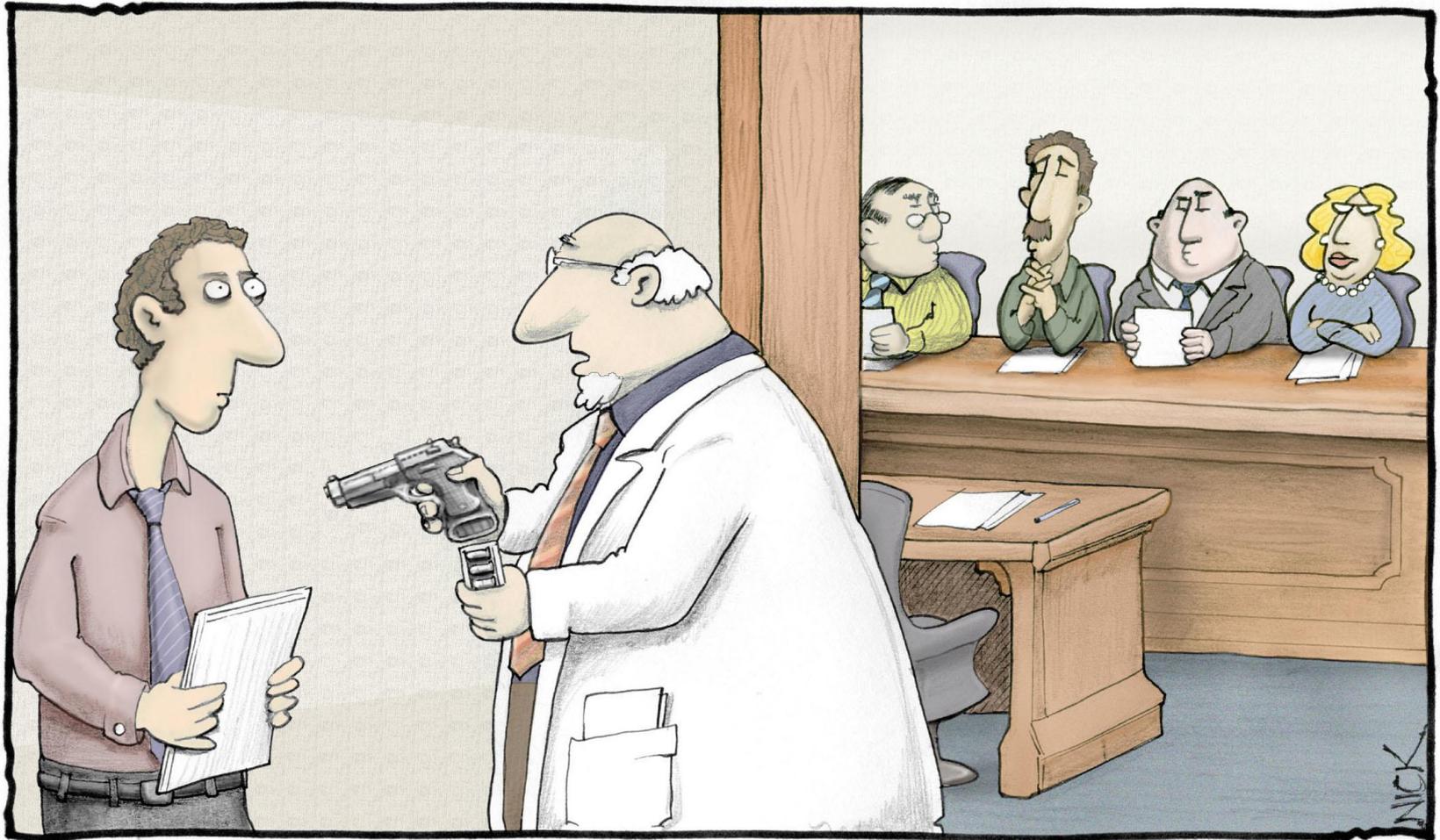
### "Take Home Messages"

- What can we do better in the future:
  - As a professional - for future education and practice
  - In terms of practice - to inform policy makers

# Complex Relationships



# What About Policies?



*“Change of plan. The policymakers say they’re only willing to listen to the science if we can present our ideas in simple bullet-point format.”*

# COI Policies & Codes of Ethics

*Usually get the following guidance:*

1. COI are Bad
2. COI = \$ interests
3. So avoid all COI
4. If can't, then disclose and problem solved!

- Often don't define COI
- Procedural
  - For extreme situations
  - E.g., fraud, misconduct
  - Difficult to read, legalistic
- Bureaucratic
  - Declaration form just more paperwork
- For “bad people” so not relevant
- Rarely positive sources of inspiration for managing COI

## Develop *Good* Policies and Procedures

### Policies

- Sufficiently general to cover most circumstances
- Short, can be read quickly
- Readable, accessible
- For members
- Enforceable, binding
- Inspirational, not legalistic
- Relatively static

### Procedures

- Comprehensive, what to do in particular cases
- Lengthy (detailed)
- Legalistic
- For managers
- Adaptive to changing circumstances
- Regularly updated

# Implementation = Collective Action



- COI are difficult to manage alone; need assistance
- Management strategies should be developed with the individuals involved to ensure that all interests are taken into account
- Policy and procedures developed in *Top-Down* and *Bottom-Up* process to ensure by-in and credibility

# Transparency

- COI policies and procedures used by the institution/organization should be transparent and publicly accessible
- The presence of COI and how to manage them should not be hidden or denied
- Disclosure of a COI to a colleague or superior is a demonstration of transparency and the beginning of a process of COI management



# Demystify

- Education for all members of the institution or organization
- All members should be able to identify COI
- Managers must understand institutional policies and procedures for the identification, evaluation and management of COI
- Training tools for different member of the institution:
  - Presentations
  - Website web (video clips, case studies)
  - Awareness-raising campaign, etc.



# Awareness Building: University of Montreal

- Collaboration with VP Human Resources and Planning
- Build awareness amongst the university community
  - Training modules, website with definitions & resources, video clips



## Comprendre les conflits d'intérêts

Tous les membres du corps enseignant et du personnel administratif et de soutien, de même que plusieurs groupes d'étudiants, ont l'obligation de déclarer annuellement les activités susceptibles de les placer dans des situations de conflits d'intérêts.

### Une question de confiance

L'Université de Montréal étant un établissement public, il est primordial pour elle de maintenir sa confiance à son endroit. Le conflit d'intérêts, ou la simple apparence de conflit d'intérêts, peut nuire à la confiance de tierces parties et, par voie de conséquence, à la réputation de l'Université de Montréal.

Tant qu'il est déclaré, le conflit d'intérêts peut être géré, ce qui constitue une mesure de préjudice à l'endroit des parties concernées et un gage de la confiance de la société envers l'Université de Montréal et les membres de la communauté universitaire.



# Responsibility



Members of the institution/organization should:

- Know their professional responsibilities
- Recognize the risks and influences that could enter into conflict with their responsibilities

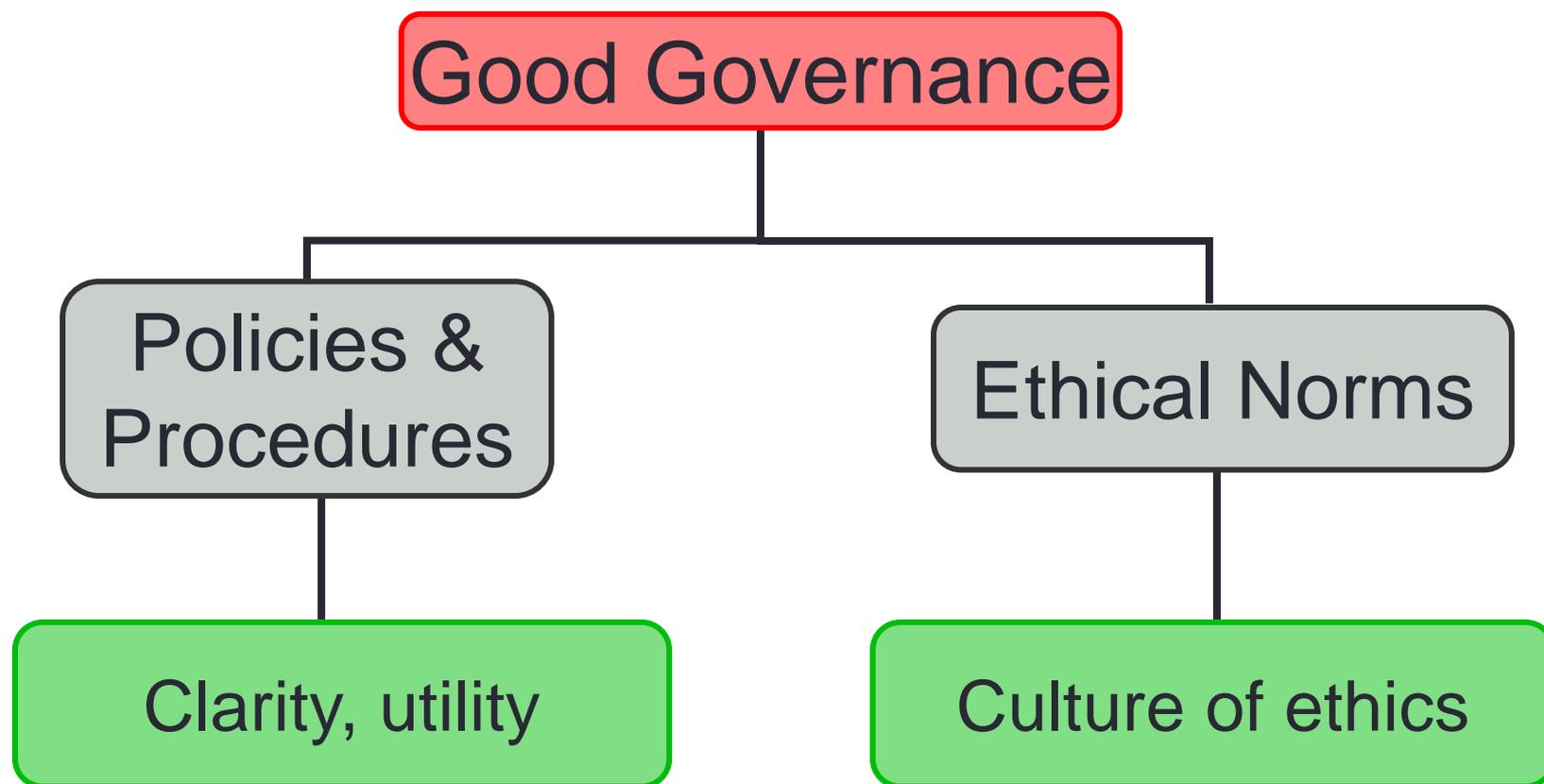
Managers/Leadership should:

- Train and accompany their members

The institution/organization must:

- Create a trusting environment
- Support professionals and managers in demonstrating excellence and integrity

# A Way Forward

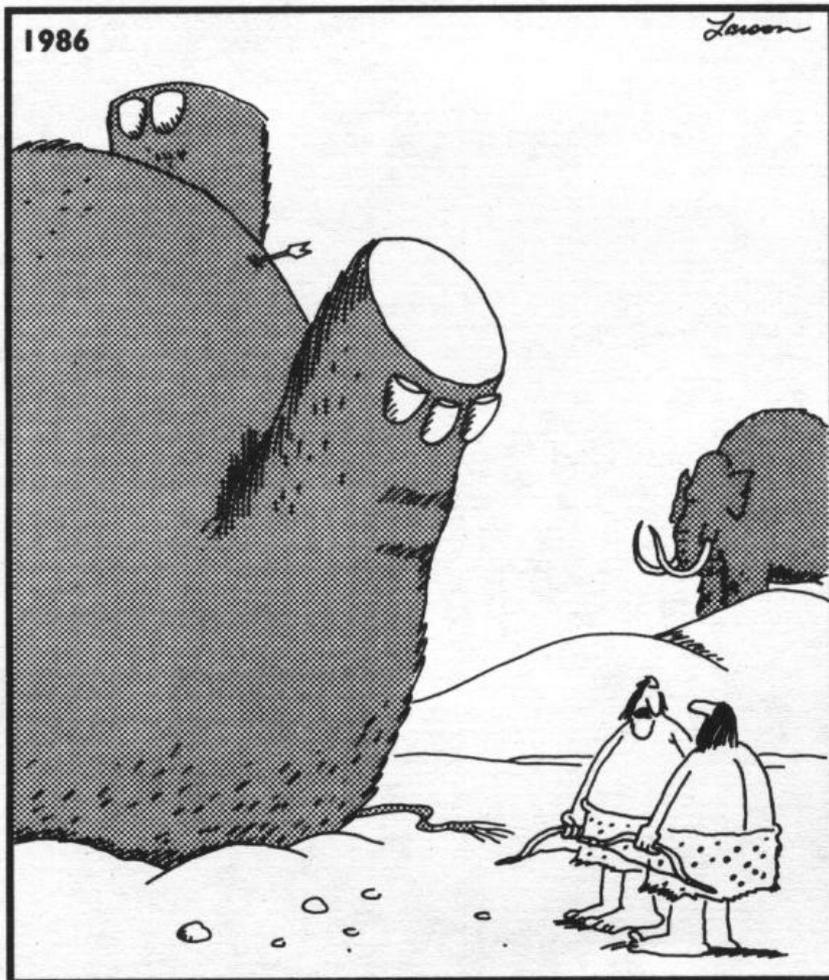


# Summary

1. Beyond a pejorative view of “conflict of interest”
2. Attention to non-financial and institutional COI
3. Recognise some COI are endemic, unavoidable
4. Be proactive and systematic: “Better prevent than cure”
5. Use & limits of policies, procedures, guidelines
6. Self-awareness, humility
7. **Discuss integrity & ethical conduct**



# Discussion



“Maybe we should write that spot down.”

- What are ***your*** experiences?
- What ***tools*** could help?