Al-Mustaqbal university college

Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

1

Prepared by
Ezzulddin Hasan Kadhim

PREVIEW OF CHAPTER 2

Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

Conceptual Framework	First Level: Basic Objective	Second Level: Fundamental Concepts	Third Level: Recognition and Measurement Concepts
• Need • Development • Overview		• Qualitative characteristics • Basic elements	• Basic assumptions • Basic principles • Cost constraint • Summary of the structure

CHAPTER 2

Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the usefulness of a conceptual framework.
2. Describe the FASB's efforts to construct a conceptual framework.
3. Understand the objective of financial reporting.
4. Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.
5. Define the basic elements of financial statements.
6. Describe the basic assumptions of accounting.
7. Explain the application of the basic principles of accounting.
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Conceptual Framework

The Need for a Conceptual Framework

- To develop a coherent set of standards and rules.
- To solve new and emerging practical problems.

LO 1 Describe the usefulness of a conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Question (true or false):

A conceptual framework underlying financial accounting is important because it can lead to consistent standards and it prescribes the nature, function, and limits of financial accounting and financial statements.

True

Conceptual Framework

Question (true or false):

A conceptual framework underlying financial accounting is necessary because future accounting practice problems can be solved by reference to the conceptual framework and a formal standard-setting body will not be necessary.

False

What do the numbers mean? *WHAT'S YOUR PRINCIPLE*

The need for a conceptual framework is highlighted by accounting scandals such as those at **Enron** and **Lehman Brothers**. To restore public confidence in the financial reporting process, many have argued that regulators should move toward principles-based rules. They believe that companies exploited the detailed provisions in rules-based pronouncements to manage accounting reports, rather than report the economic substance of transactions. For example, many of the off–balance-sheet arrangements of Enron avoided transparent reporting by barely achieving 3 percent outside equity ownership, a requirement in an obscure accounting rule interpretation. Enron's financial engineers were able to structure transactions to achieve a desired accounting treatment, even if that accounting treatment did not reflect the transaction's true nature. Under principles-based rules, hopefully top management's financial reporting focus will shift from demonstrating compliance with rules to demonstrating that a company has attained the objective of financial reporting.

LO 1 Describe the usefulness of a conceptual framework.

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Development of Conceptual Framework

The **FASB** has issued seven **Statements of Financial Accounting Concepts** (SFAC) for business enterprises.

SFAC No.1 - Objectives of Financial Reporting (superseded by SFAC No. 8)

SFAC No.2 - Qualitative Characteristics of Accounting Information. (superseded by SFAC No. 8)

SFAC No.3 - Elements of Financial Statements. (superseded by SFAC No. 6)

SFAC No.5 - Recognition and Measurement in Financial Statements.

SFAC No.6 - Elements of Financial Statements (replaces SFAC No. 3).

SFAC No.7 - Using Cash Flow Information and Present Value in Accounting Measurements.

SFAC No.8 - The Objective of General Purpose Financial Reporting and Qualitative Characteristics of Useful Financial Information (replaces SFAC No. 1 and No. 2)

Conceptual Framework

Overview of the Conceptual Framework

- **First Level** = Basic Objectives
- **Second Level** = Qualitative Characteristics and Elements
- **Third Level** = Recognition, Measurement, and Disclosure Concepts.

International Perspective

The IASB has also issued a conceptual framework. The FASB and the IASB have agreed on a joint project to develop a common and improved conceptual framework. The project is being conducted in phases. Phase A on objectives and qualitative characteristics was issued in 2010.

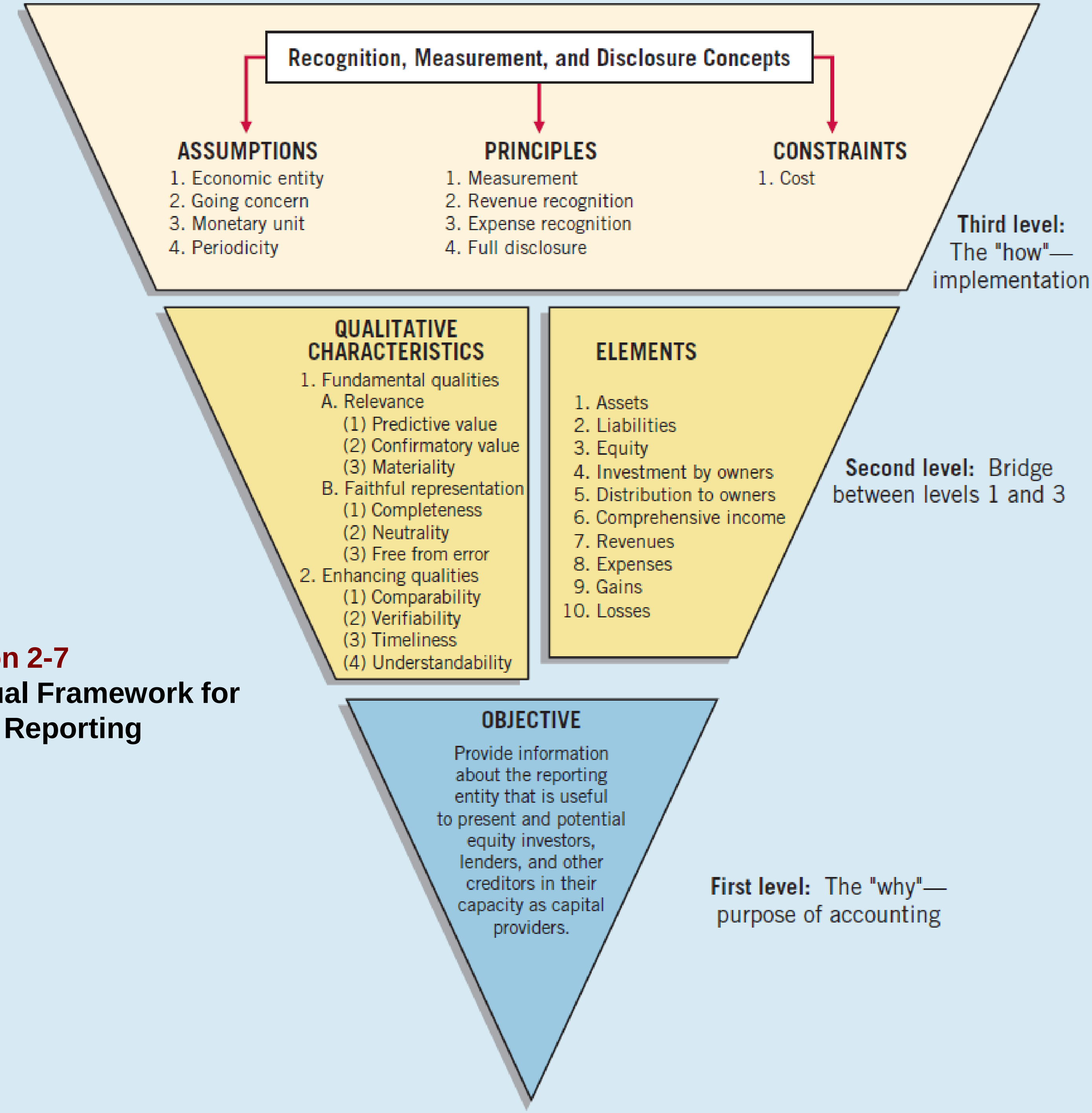

Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

LO 4

Conceptual Framework

Question

What are the Statements of Financial Accounting Concepts intended to establish?

a. Generally accepted accounting principles in financial reporting by business enterprises.

b. The meaning of “Present fairly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.”

c. The objectives and concepts for use in developing standards of financial accounting and reporting.

d. The hierarchy of sources of generally accepted accounting principles.

LO 2 Describe the FASB’s efforts to construct a conceptual framework.

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First Level: Basic Objectives

Objective of financial reporting:

To provide financial information about the reporting entity that is **useful to present and potential equity investors, lenders, and other creditors in making decisions about providing resources to the entity**.

First Level: Basic Objectives

Question

According to the FASB conceptual framework, the objectives of financial reporting for business enterprises are based on?

a. Generally accepted accounting principles

b. Reporting on management's stewardship.

c. The need for conservatism.

d. $\boxed{\text{The needs of the users of the information.}}$

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Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Qualitative Characteristics of Accounting Information

“The **FASB** identified the **qualitative characteristics** of accounting information that distinguish better (more useful) information from inferior (less useful) information for decision-making purposes.”

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

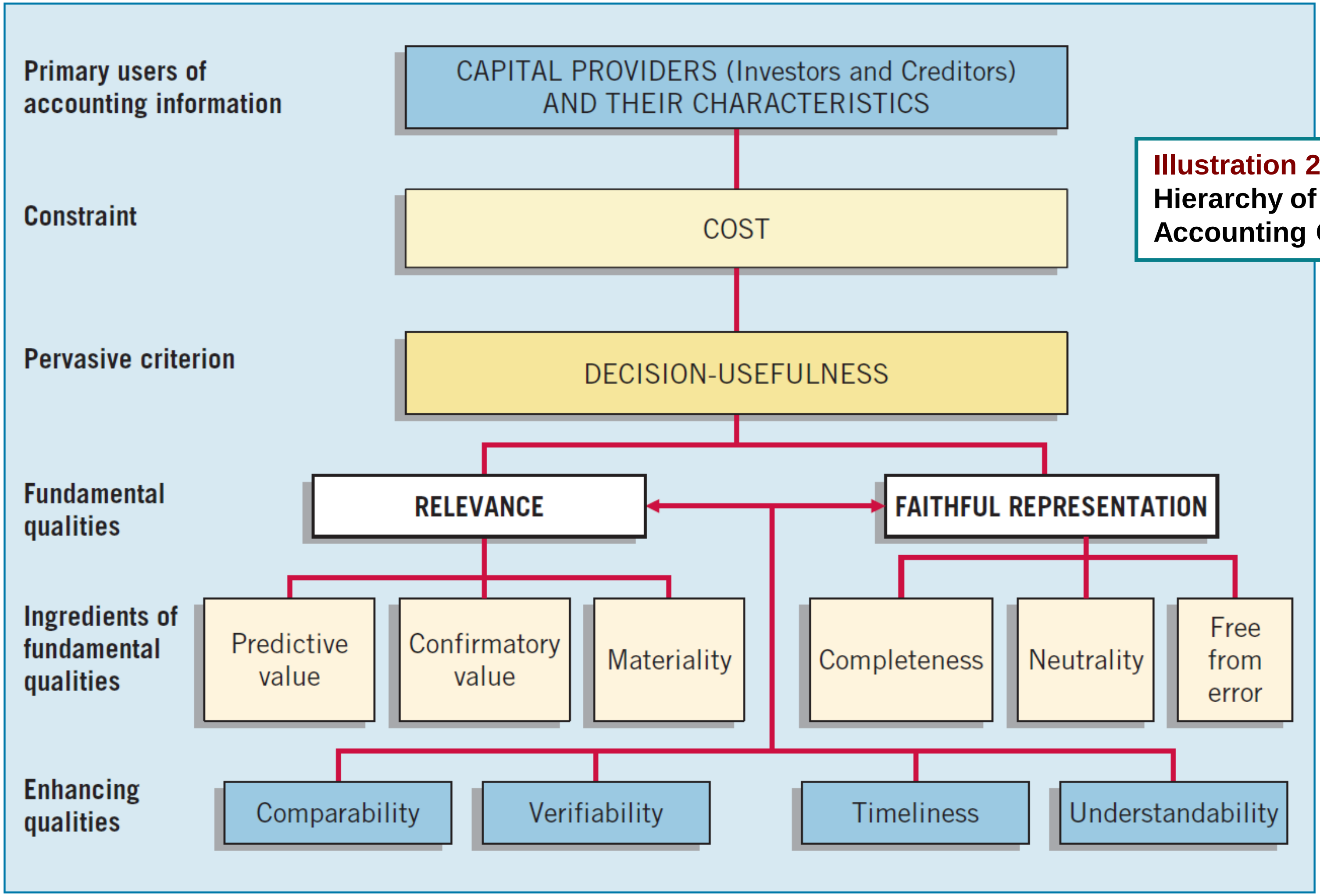


Illustration 2-2
Hierarchy of Accounting Qualities

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

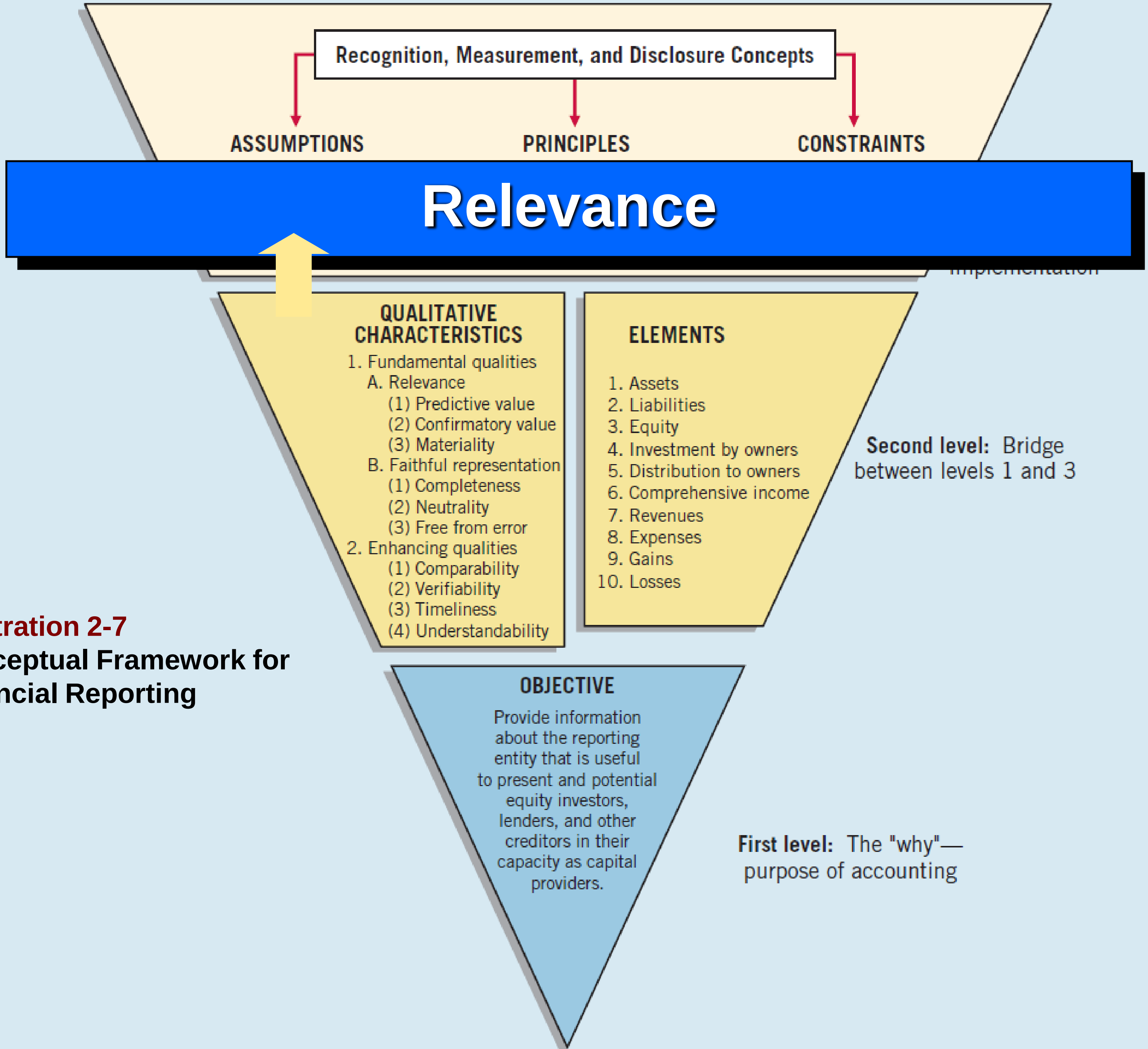
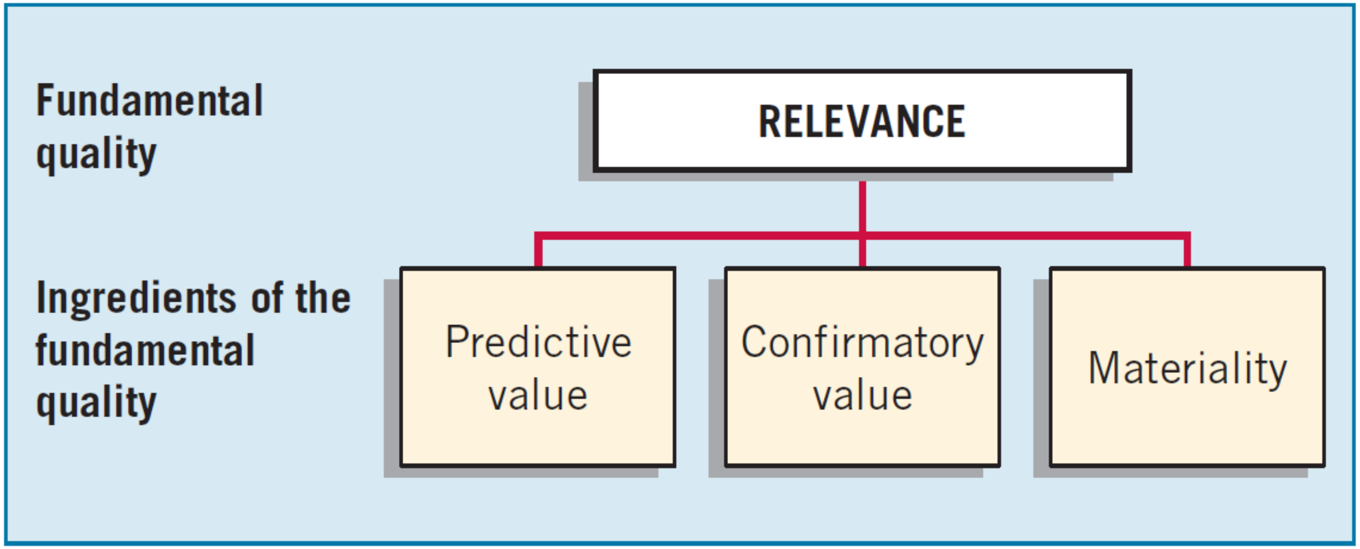


Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

LO 4

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Relevance

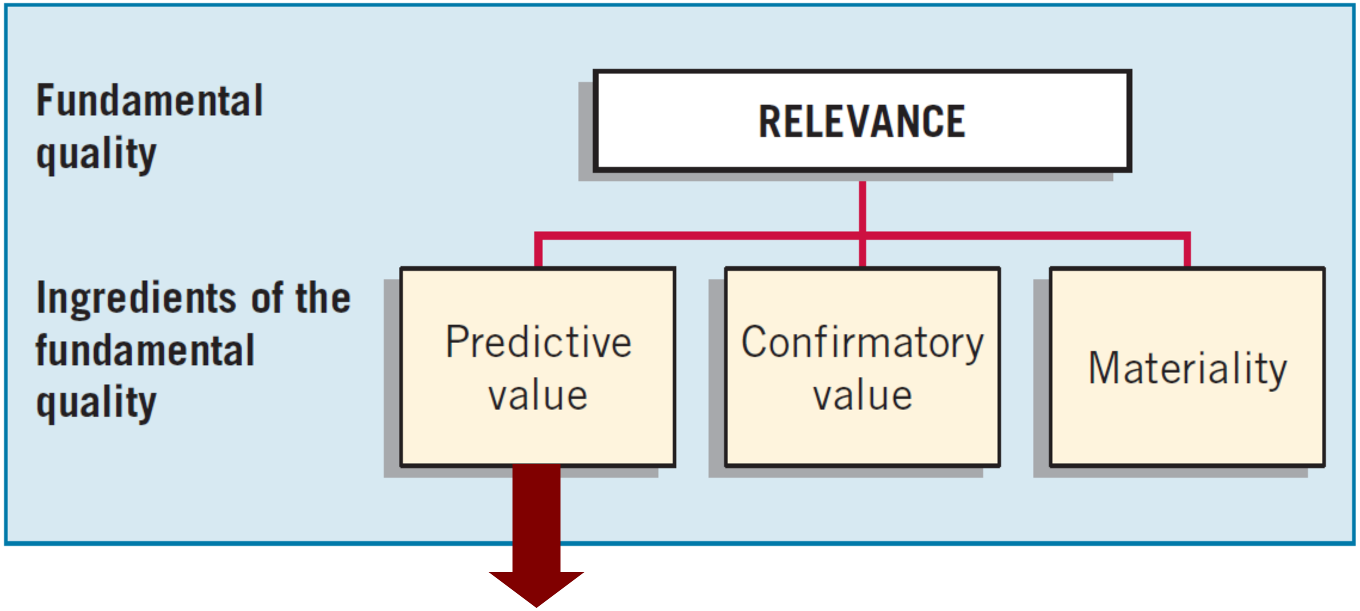


To be **relevant**, accounting information must be capable of **making a difference in a decision**.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

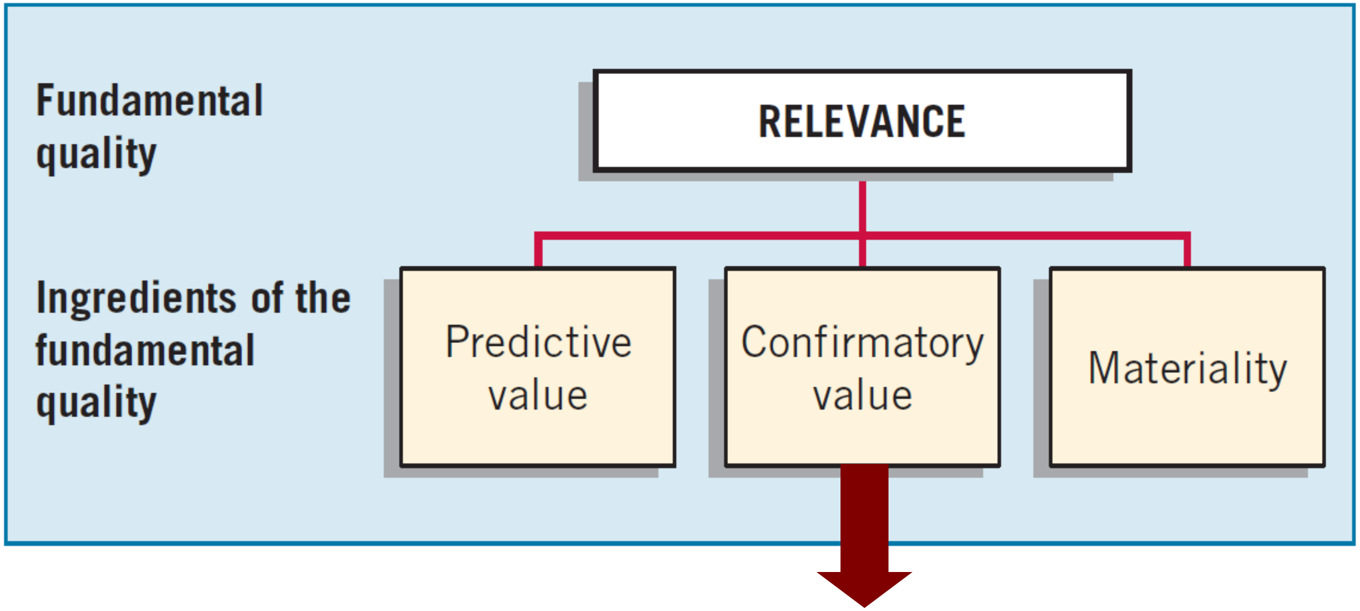
Fundamental Quality—Relevance



Financial information has **predictive value** if it has value as an input to predictive processes used by investors to form their own expectations about the future.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Relevance

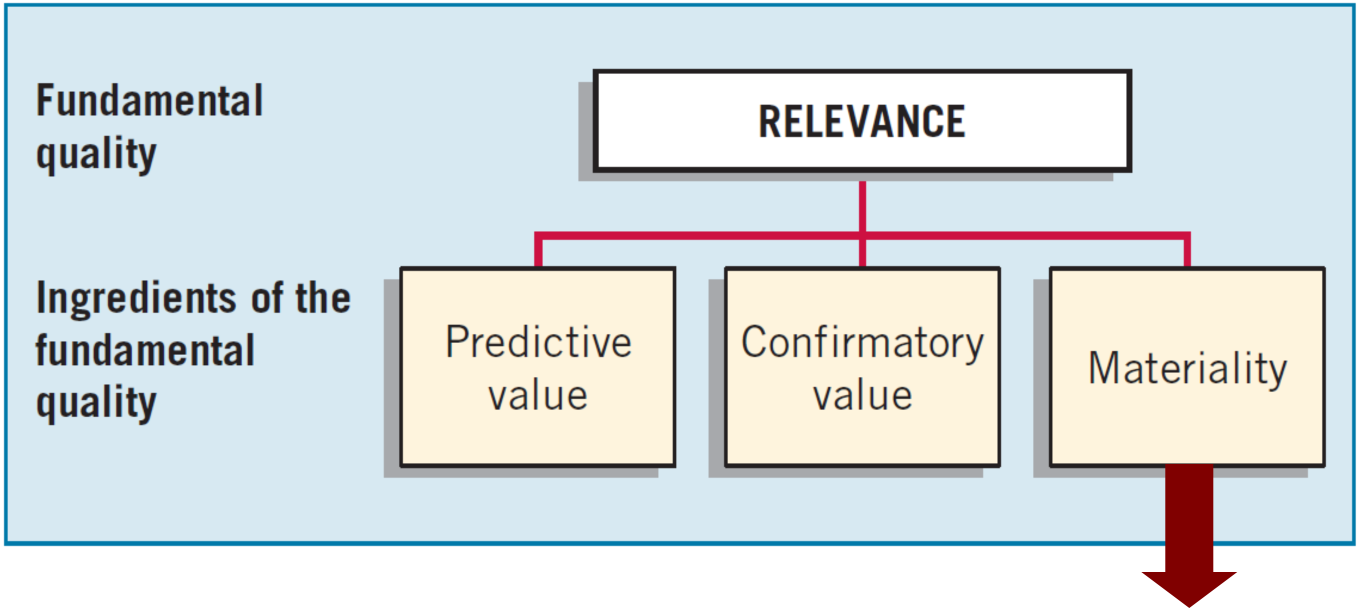


Relevant information also helps users **confirm** or correct prior expectations.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Relevance



Information is **material** if omitting it or misstating it could influence decisions that users make on the basis of the reported financial information.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

What do the numbers mean? LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

The first line of defense for many companies caught "cooking the books" had been to argue that a questionable accounting item is immaterial. That defense did not work so well in the wake of accounting meltdowns at Enron and Global Crossing and the tougher rules on materiality issued by the SEC (SAB 99). For example, the SEC alleged in a case against Sunbeam that the company's many immaterial adjustments added up to a material misstatement that misled investors about the company's financial position. More recently, the SEC called for a number of companies, such as Jack in the Box, McDonald's, and AIG, to restate prior financial statements for the effects of incorrect accounting. In some cases, the restatements did not meet traditional materiality thresholds. Don Nicholaisen, then SEC Chief Accountant, observed that whether the amount is material or not-material, some transactions appear to be "flat out intended to mislead investors." In essence he is saying that any wrong accounting for a transaction can represent important information to the users of financial statements. Responding to new concerns about materiality, blue-chip companies such as IBM and General Electric are providing expanded disclosures of transactions that used to fall below the materiality radar.

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Faithful Representation

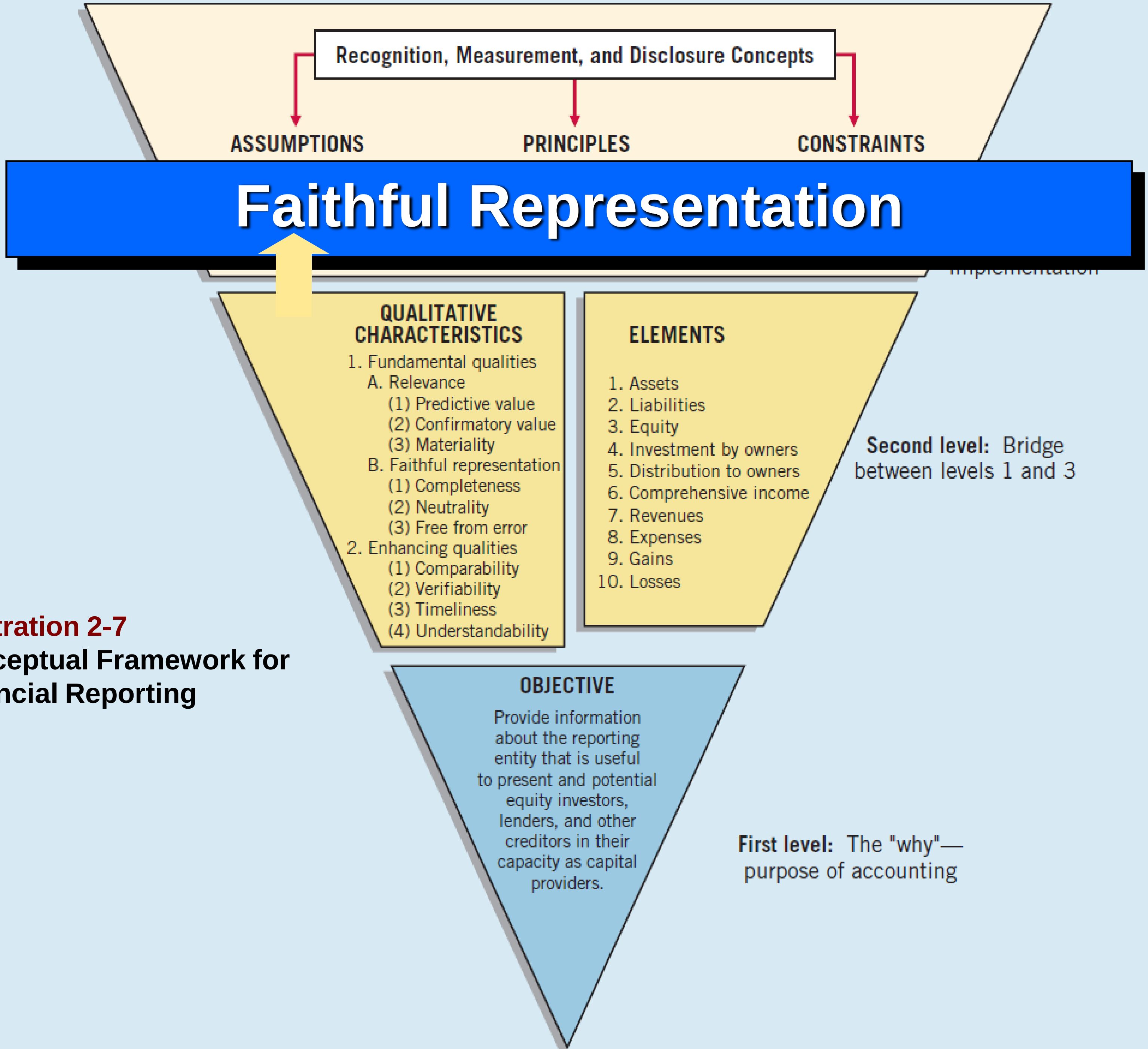
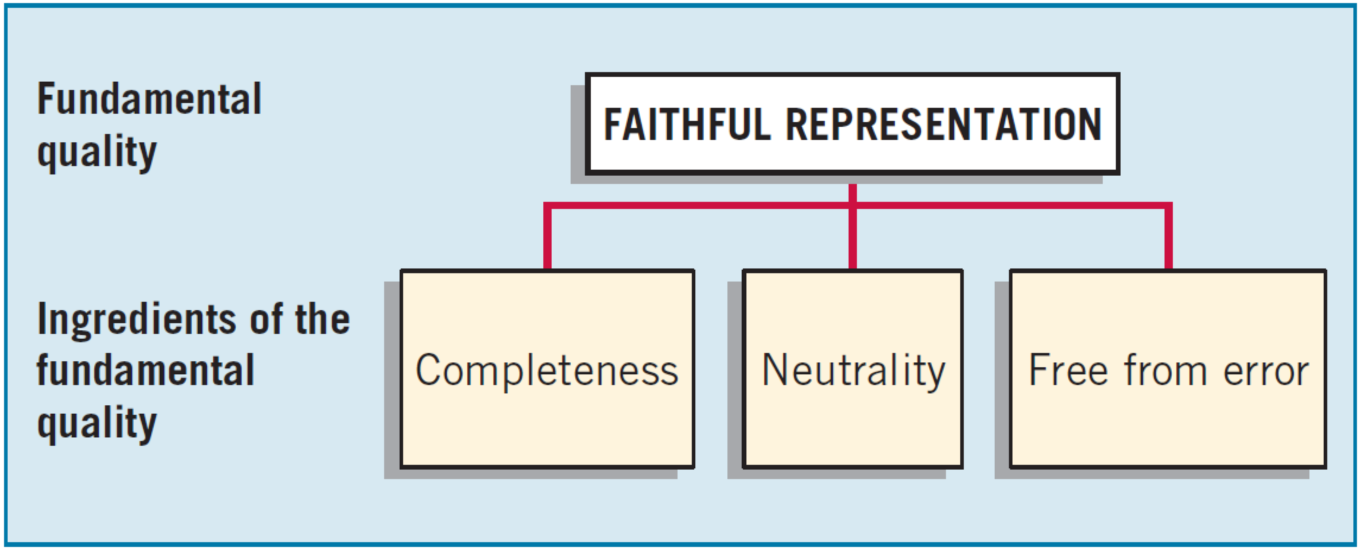


Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

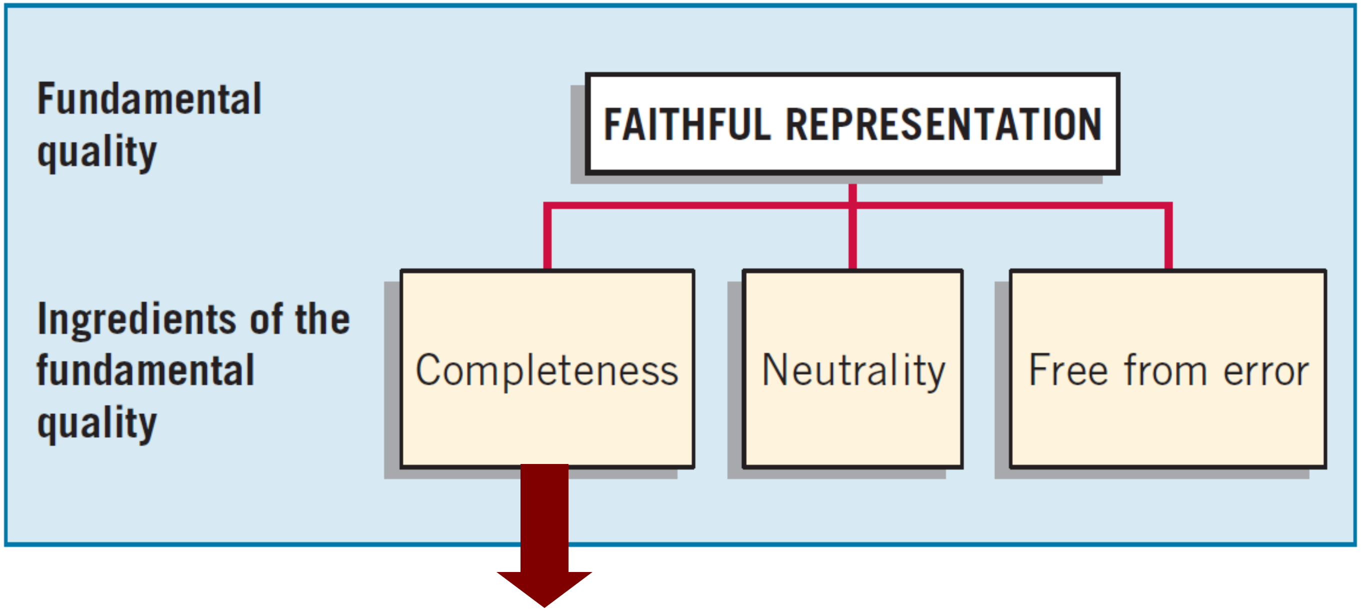
Fundamental Quality—Faithful Representation



Faithful representation means that the numbers and descriptions match what really existed or happened.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Faithful Representation

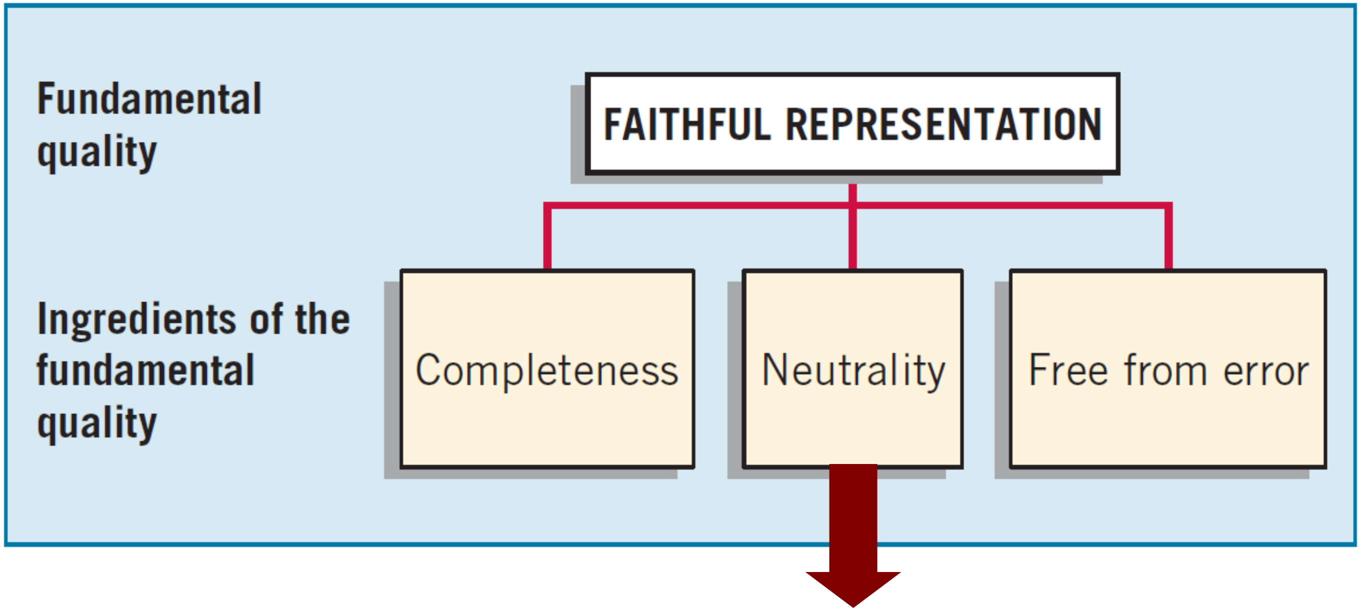


Completeness means that all the information that is necessary for faithful representation is provided.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Faithful Representation

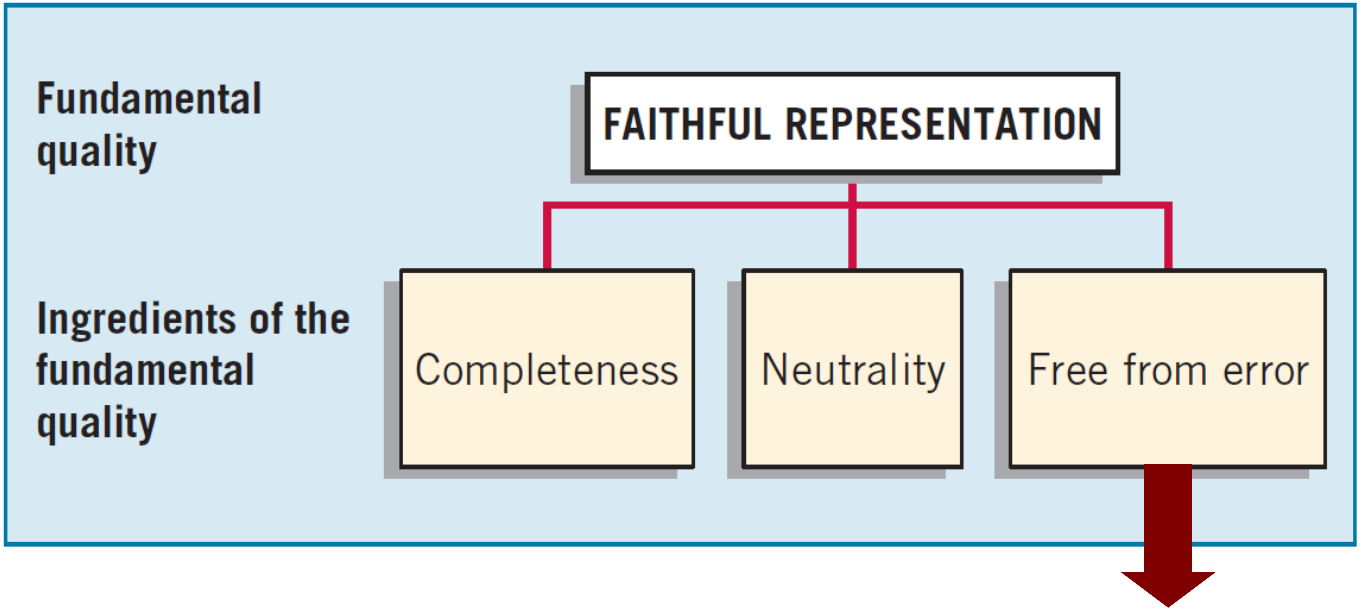


Neutrality means that a company cannot select information to favor one set of interested parties over another.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Quality—Faithful Representation

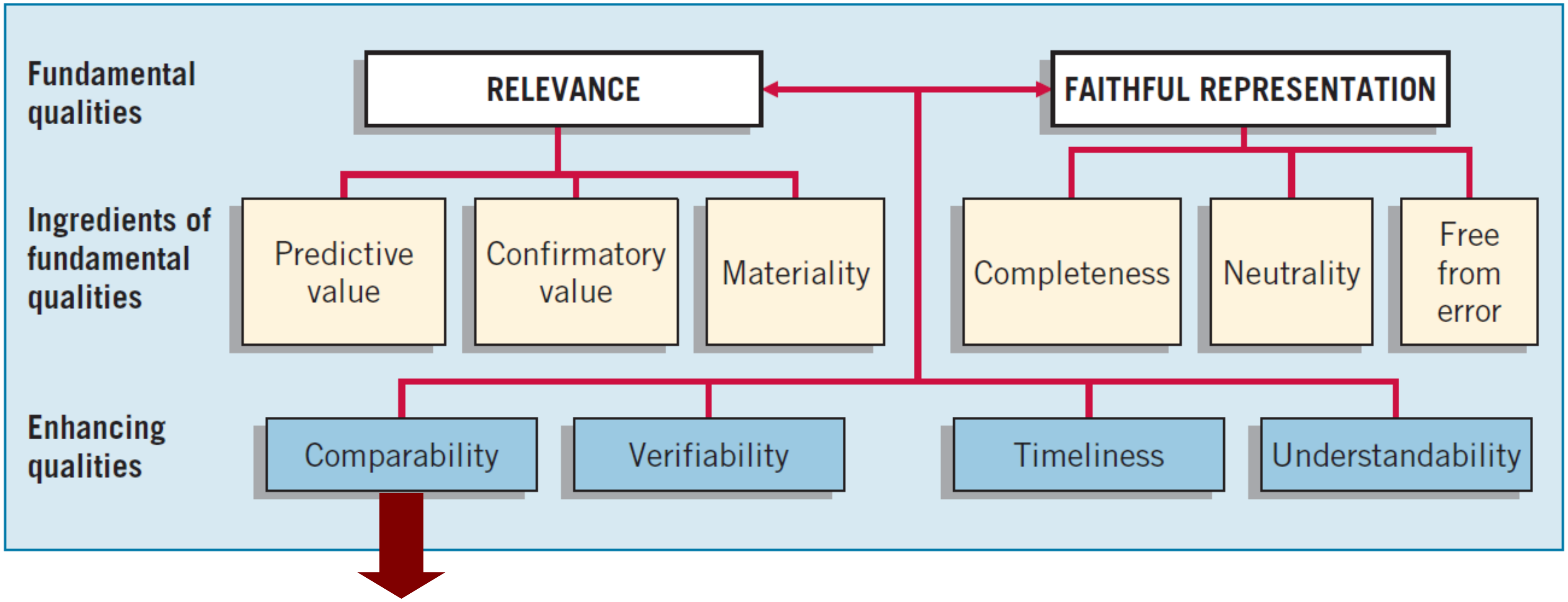


An information item that is **free from error** will be a more accurate (faithful) representation of a financial item.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Enhancing Qualities

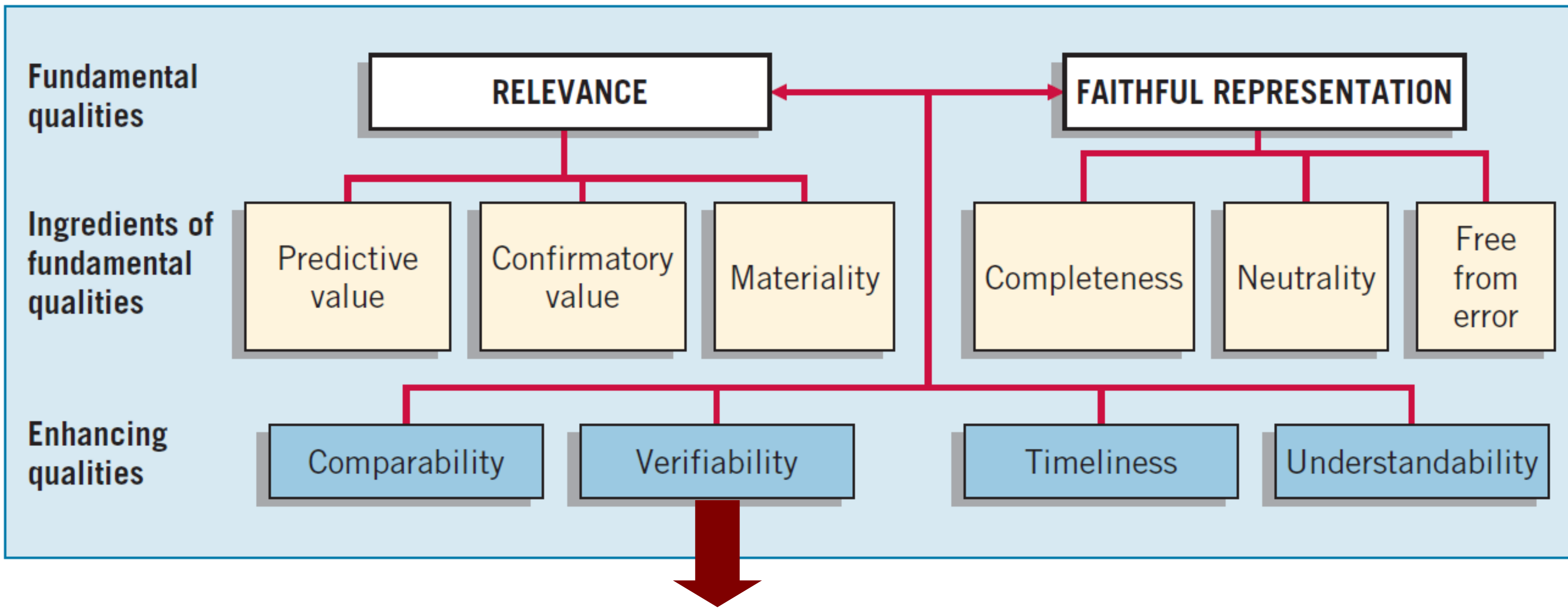


Information that is measured and reported in a similar manner for different companies is considered **comparable**.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Enhancing Qualities

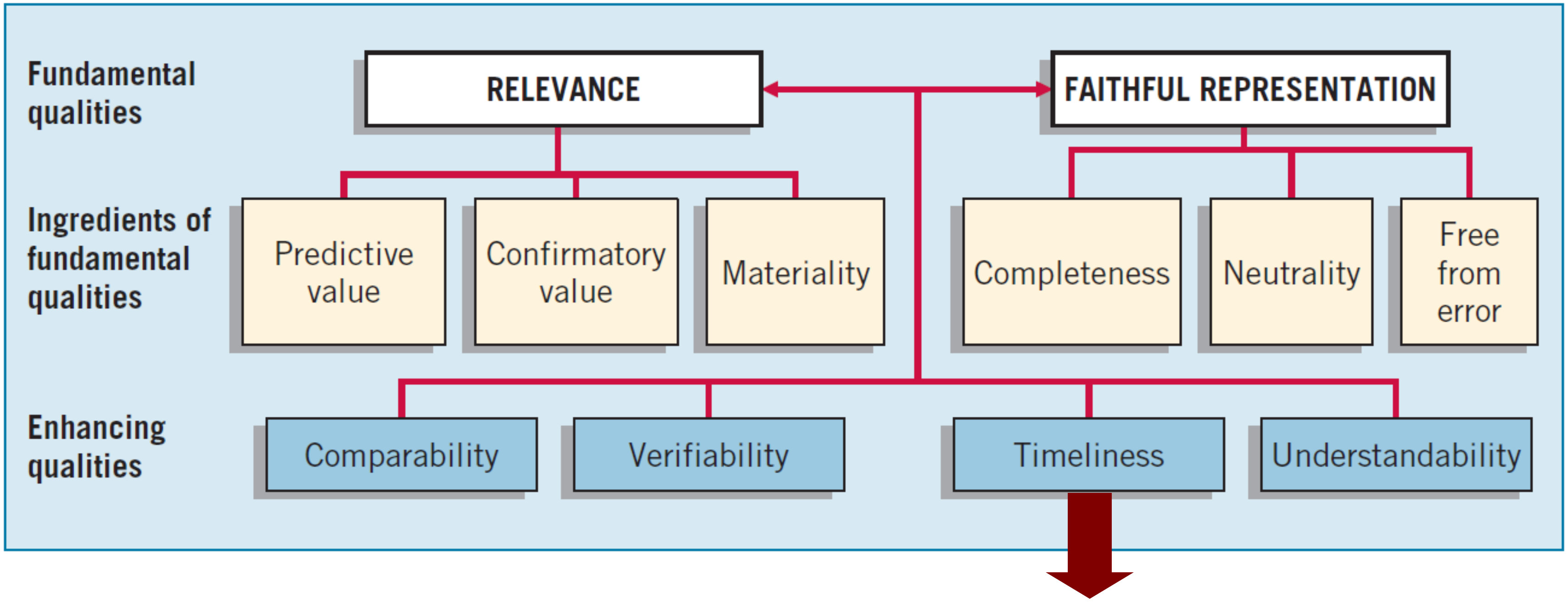


Verifiability occurs when independent measurers, using the same methods, obtain similar results.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Enhancing Qualities

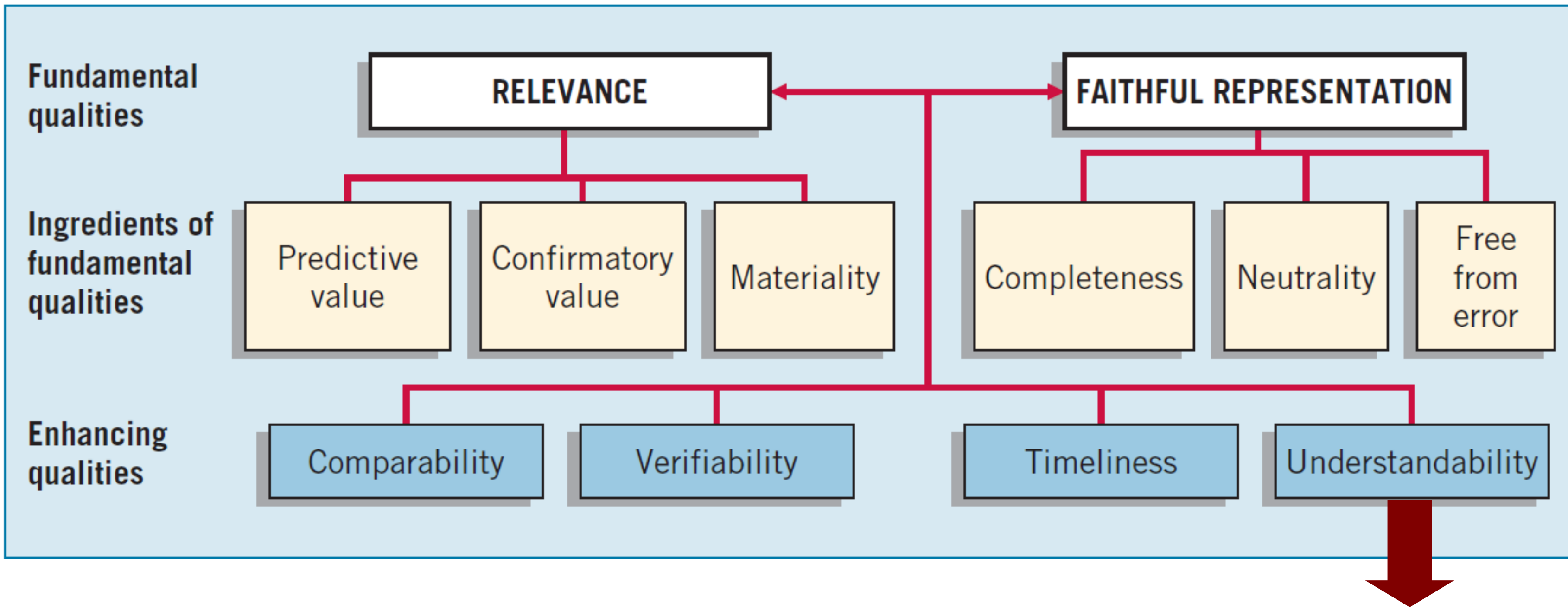


Timeliness means having information available to decision-makers before it loses its capacity to influence decisions.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

Second Level: Fundamental Concepts

Enhancing Qualities



Understandability is the quality of information that lets reasonably informed users see its significance.

LO 4 Identify the qualitative characteristics of accounting information.

What do the numbers mean? SHOW ME THE EARNINGS!

The emergence of new-economy businesses on the Internet has led to the development of new measures of performance. When Priceline.com splashed on the dot-com scene, it touted steady growth in a measure called “unique offers by users” to explain its heady stock price. To draw investors to its stock, Drugstore.com focused on the number of “unique customers” at its website. After all, new businesses call for new performance measures, right? Not necessarily. In fact, these indicators failed to show any consistent relationship between profits and website visits. Eventually, as the graphs on page xxx show, the profits never materialized, stock prices fell, and the dot-com bubble burst. Some have not learned a lesson from this experience. Facebook, one of the hottest IPOs of the recent social media craze, gave investors a big jolt when it reported its first earnings after going public. While its revenues from online advertisers were up 32 percent compared to the prior year’s quarter, its marketing and sales expenses increased dramatically and the company failed to exceed analysts’ expectations for its earnings. The result? The stock dropped to an all-time low.

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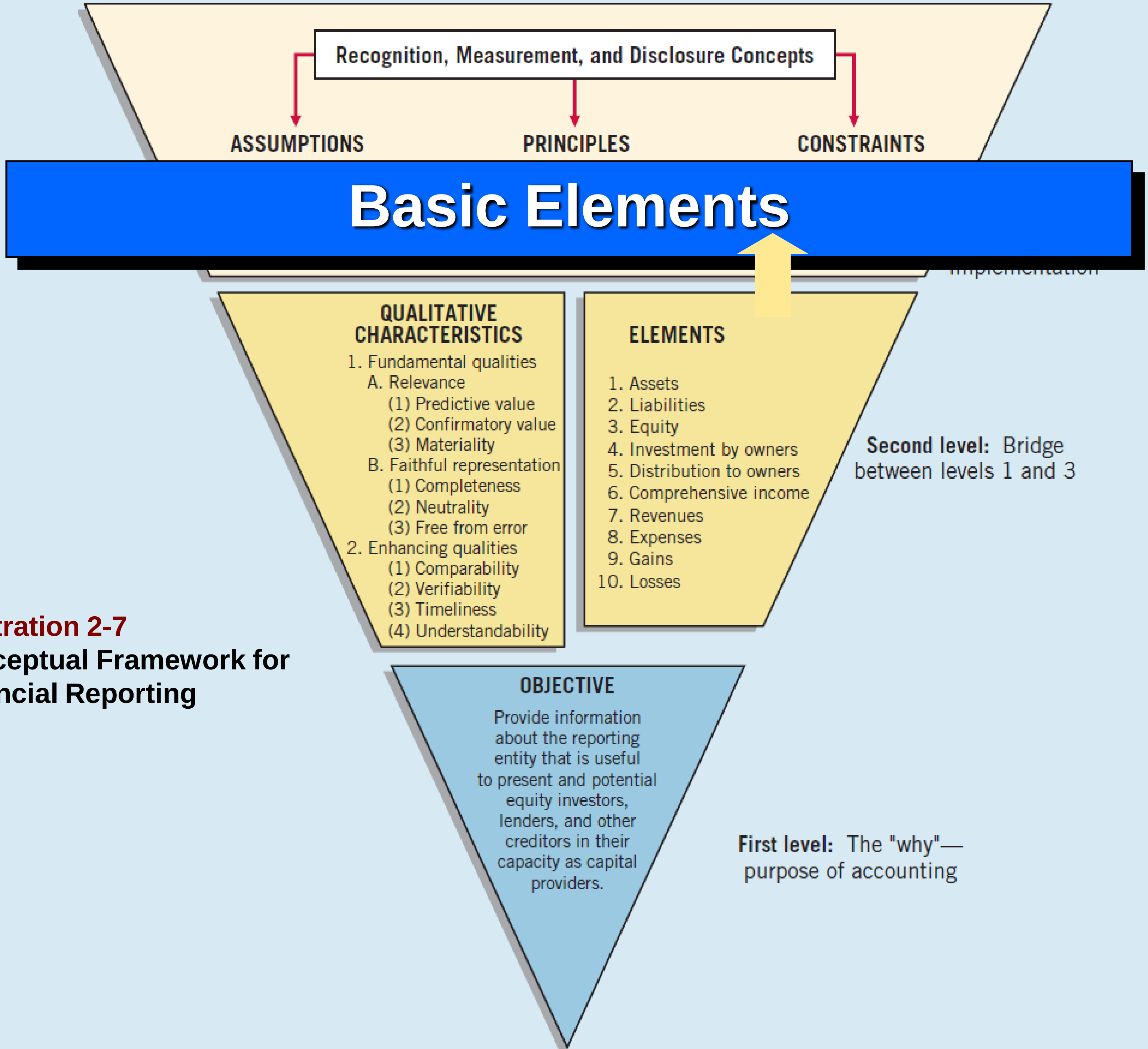

Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

LO 5

Second Level: Basic Elements

Concepts Statement No. 6 defines ten interrelated elements that relate to measuring the performance and financial status of a business enterprise.

"Moment in Time"

- Assets
- Liabilities
- Equity

"Period of Time"

- Investment by owners
- Distribution to owners
- Comprehensive income
- Revenue
- Expenses
- Gains
- Losses

LO 5 Define the basic elements of financial statements.

Second Level: Basic Elements

Question

According to the FASB conceptual framework, an entity's revenue may result from

a. A decrease in an asset from primary operations.

b. An increase in an asset from incidental transactions.

c. An increase in a liability from incidental transactions.

d. A decrease in a liability from primary operations.

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Third Level: Recognition and Measurement

The FASB sets forth most of these concepts in its **Statement of Financial Accounting Concepts No. 5**, "Recognition and Measurement in Financial Statements of Business Enterprises."

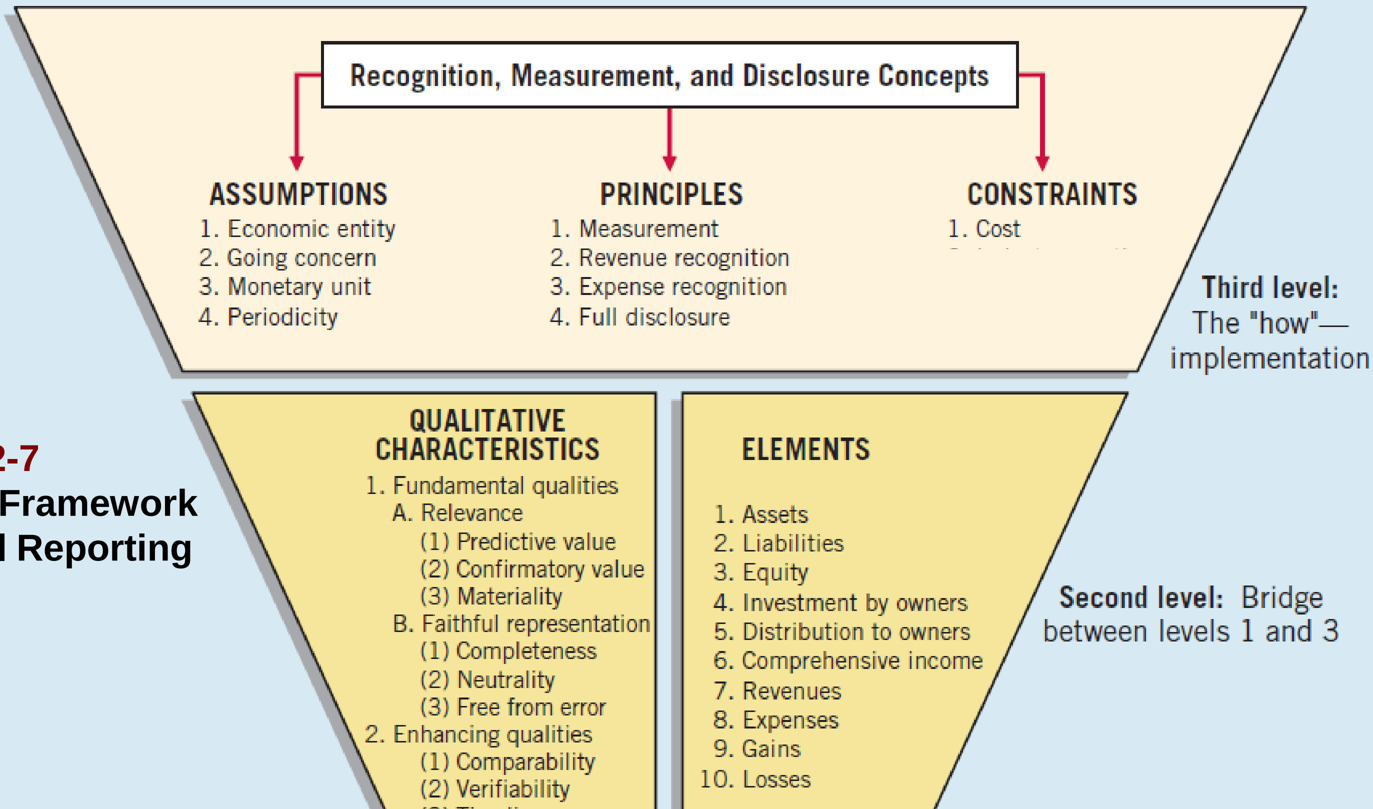

Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

LO 6

Third Level: Basic Assumptions

Economic Entity – company keeps its activity separate from its owners and other businesses.

Going Concern - company to last long enough to fulfill objectives and commitments.

Monetary Unit - money is the common denominator.

Periodicity - company can divide its economic activities into time periods.

Third Level: Basic Assumptions

Illustration: Identify which basic assumption of accounting is best described in each item below.

(a) The economic activities of KC Corporation are divided into 12-month periods for the purpose of issuing annual reports.

Periodicity

(b) Solectron Corporation, Inc. does not adjust amounts in its financial statements for the effects of inflation.

Monetary Unit

(c) Walgreen Co. reports current and noncurrent classifications in its balance sheet.

Going Concern

(d) The economic activities of General Electric and its subsidiaries are merged for accounting and reporting purposes.

Economic Entity

What do the numbers mean? WHOSE COMPANY IS IT!

The importance of the entity assumption is illustrated by scandals involving W. R. Grace and, more recently, Adelphia. In both cases, senior company employees entered into transactions that blurred the line between the employee’s financial interests and those of the company. At Adelphia, among many other self-dealings, the company guaranteed over $2 billion of loans to the founding family. W. R. Grace used company funds to pay for an apartment and chef for the company chairman. As a result of these transactions, these insiders benefitted at the expense of shareholders. Additionally, the financial statements failed to disclose the transactions. Such disclosure would have allowed shareholders to sort out the impact of the employee transactions on company results.

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Third Level: Basic Principles

Measurement Principle – The most commonly used measurements are based on **historical cost** and **fair value**.

Issues:

- **Historical cost** provides a reliable benchmark for measuring historical trends.
- **Fair value** information may be more useful.
- Recently the FASB has taken the step of giving companies the option to use fair value as the basis for measurement of financial assets and financial liabilities.
- Reporting of fair value information is increasing.

Third Level: Basic Principles

Revenue Recognition - requires that companies recognize revenue in the accounting period in which the performance obligation is satisfied.

Expense Recognition - "Let the expense follow the revenues."

Illustration 2-6
Expense Recognition

Type of Cost	Relationship	Recognition
Product costs: • Material • Labor • Overhead	Direct relationship between cost and revenue.	Recognize in period of revenue (matching).
Period costs: • Salaries • Administrative costs	No direct relationship between cost and revenue.	Expense as incurred.

LO 7 Explain the application of the basic principles of accounting.

Third Level: Basic Principles

Illustration: Assume the **Boeing Corporation** signs a contract to sell airplanes to **Delta Air Lines** for $100 million. To determine when to **recognize revenue**, use the five steps for revenue recognition shown at right.

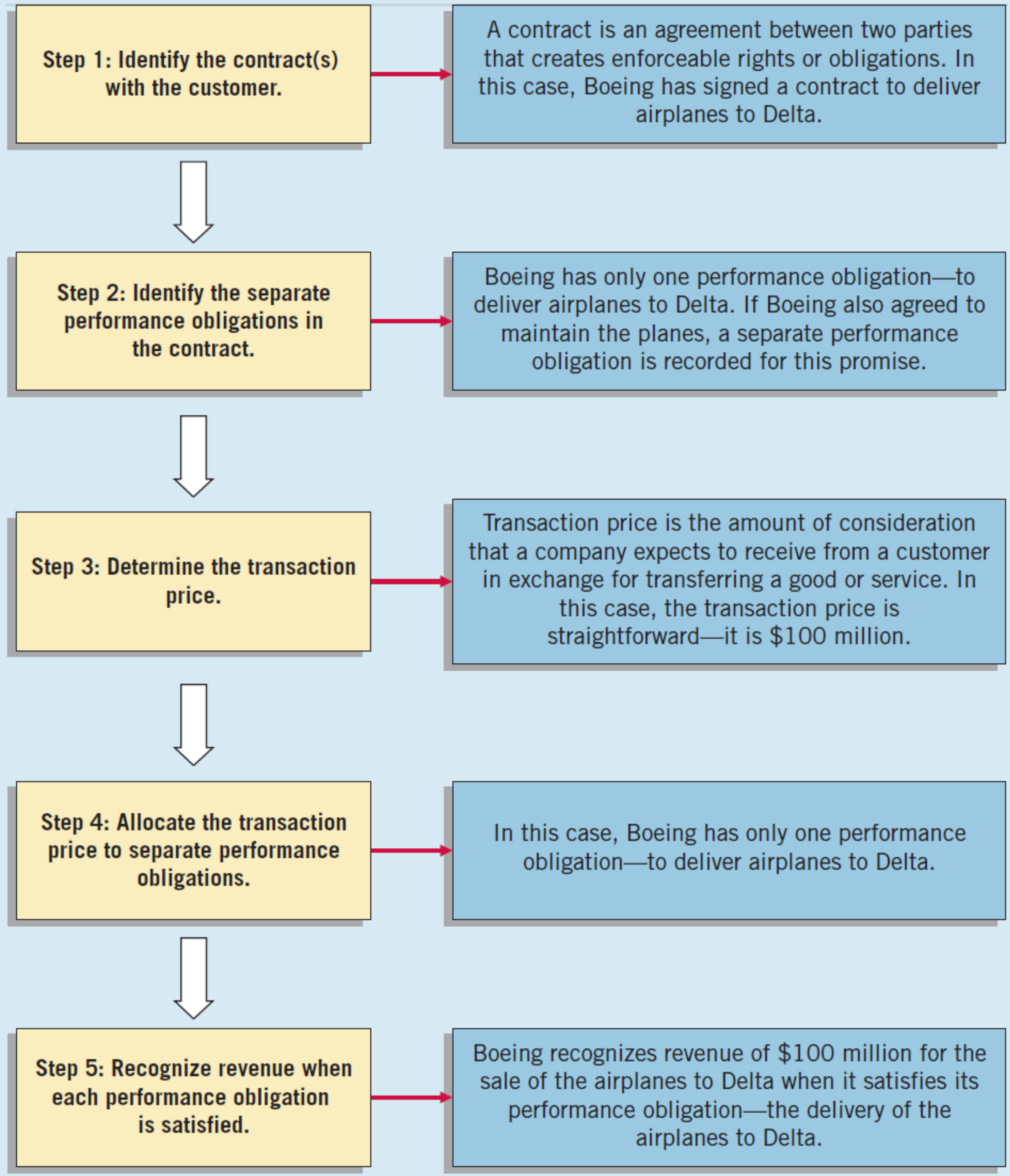

Illustration 2-5

Third Level: Basic Principles

Full Disclosure – providing information that is of sufficient importance to influence the judgment and decisions of an informed user.

Provided through:

- Financial Statements
- Notes to the Financial Statements
- Supplementary information

Third Level: Basic Principles

Illustration: Identify which basic principle of accounting is best described in each item below.

(a) KC Corporation reports revenue in its income statement when it is earned instead of when the cash is collected.

Revenue Recognition

(b) Yahoo, Inc. recognizes depreciation expense for a machine over the 2-year period during which that machine helps the company earn revenue.

Expense Recognition

(c) Oracle Corporation reports information about pending lawsuits in the notes to its financial statements.

Full Disclosure

(d) Eastman Kodak Company reports land on its balance sheet at the amount paid to acquire it, even though the estimated fair market value is greater.

Measurement

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Third Level: Constraints

Cost Constraint – cost of providing information must be weighed against the benefits that can be derived from using it.

Illustration: The following two situations represent applications of the cost constraint.

(a) Rafael Corporation discloses fair value information on its loans because it already gathers this information internally.

(b) Willis Company does not disclose any information in the notes to the financial statements unless the value of the information to users exceeds the expense of gathering it.

LO 8 Describe the impact that the cost constraint has on reporting accounting information.

What do the numbers mean? YOU MAY NEED A MAP

Beyond touting nonfinancial measures to investors many companies increasingly promote the performance of their companies through the reporting of various "pro-forma" earnings measures. A recent survey of newswire reports found 36 instances of the reporting of pro-forma measures in just a three-day period. Pro-forma measures are standard measures (such as earnings) that companies adjust, usually for one-time or nonrecurring items. For example, companies usually adjust earnings for the effects of an extraordinary item. Such adjustments make the numbers more comparable to numbers reported in periods without the unusual item. However, rather than increasing comparability, it appears that some companies use pro-forma reporting to accentuate the positive in their results. Examples include Yahoo Inc. and Cisco, which define pro-forma income after adding back payroll tax expense. Level 8 Systems transformed an operating loss into a pro-forma profit by adding back expenses for depreciation and amortization of intangible assets. Lynn Turner, former Chief Accountant at the SEC, calls such earnings measures EBS—"Everything but Bad Stuff." To provide investors a more complete picture of company profitability, not the story preferred by management, the SEC issued Regulation G (REG G). REG G requires companies to reconcile non-GAAP financial measures to GAAP, thereby giving investors a roadmap to analyze adjustments companies make to their GAAP numbers to arrive at pro-forma results.

Summary of the Structure

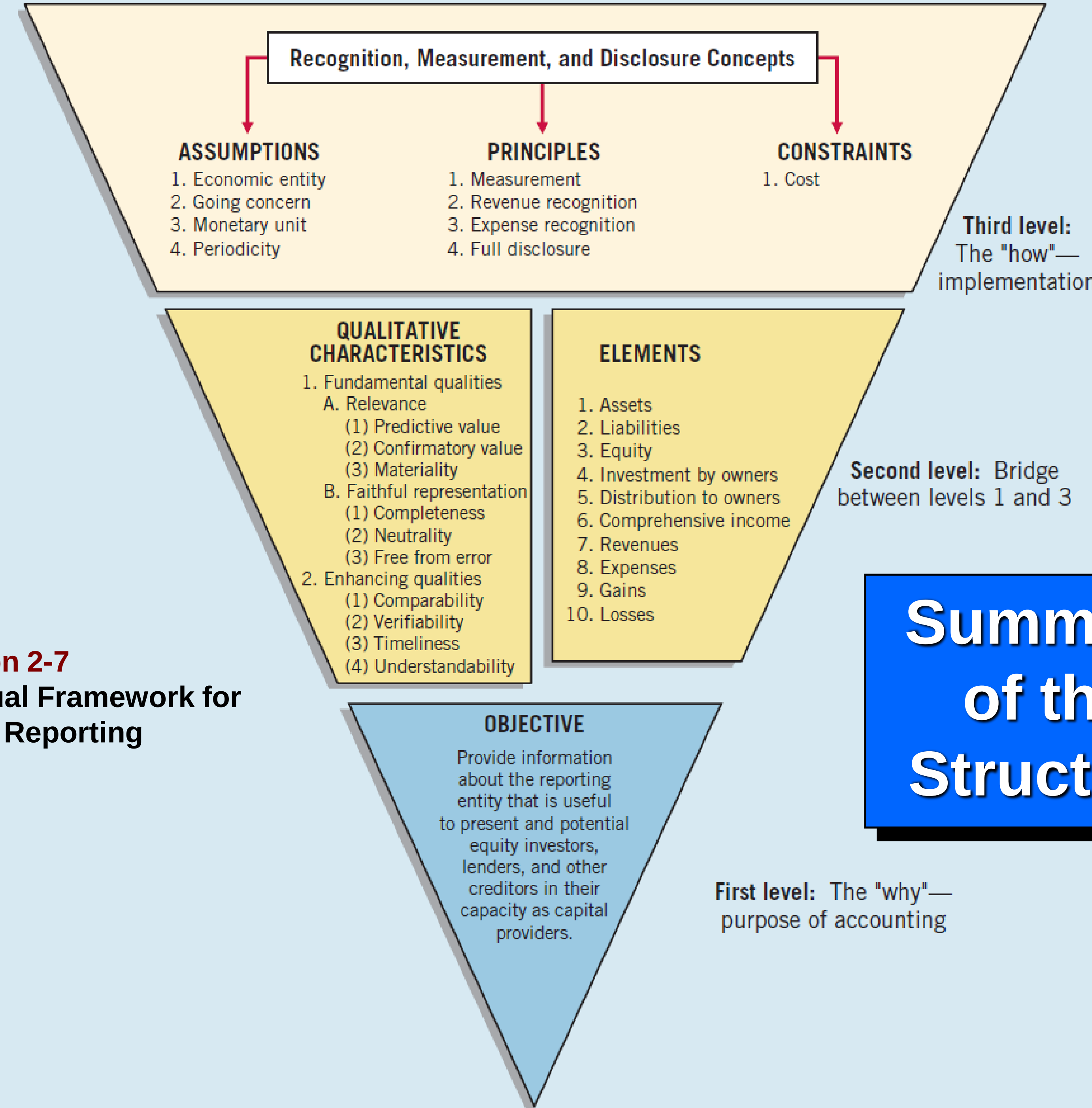

Illustration 2-7
Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting

RELEVANT FACTS

Similarities

- In 2010, the IASB and FASB completed the first phase of a jointly created conceptual framework. In this first phase, they agreed on the objective of financial reporting and a common set of desired qualitative characteristics.
- The existing conceptual frameworks underlying GAAP and IFRS are very similar.
- The converged framework should be a single document, unlike the two conceptual frameworks that presently exist; it is unlikely that the basic structure related to the concepts will change.

RELEVANT FACTS

- Both the IASB and FASB have similar measurement principles, based on historical cost and fair value. In 2011, the Boards issued a converged standard fair value measurement so that the definition of fair value, measurement techniques, and disclosures are the same between GAAP and IFRS when fair value is used in financial statements.

Differences

- Although both GAAP and IFRS are increasing the use of fair value to report assets, at this point IFRS has adopted it more broadly. As examples, under IFRS companies can apply fair value to property, plant, and equipment; natural resources; and in some cases intangible assets.

RELEVANT FACTS

- GAAP has a concept statement to guide estimation of fair values when market-related data is not available (Statement of Financial Accounting Concepts No. 7, “Using Cash Flow Information and Present Value in Accounting”). The IASB is considering a proposal to provide expanded guidance on estimating fair values.
- The monetary unit assumption is part of each framework. However, the unit of measure will vary depending on the currency used in the country in which the company is incorporated.
- The economic entity assumption is also part of each framework although some cultural differences result in differences in its application. For example, in Japan many companies have formed alliances that are so strong that they act similar to related corporate divisions although they are not actually part of the same company.

ABOUT THE NUMBERS

Financial Statement Elements

While the conceptual framework that underlies IFRS is very similar to that used to develop GAAP, the elements identified and their definitions under IFRS are different. The IASB elements and their definitions are as follows.

Assets. A resource controlled by the entity as a result of past events and from which future economic benefits are expected to flow to the entity.

Liabilities. A present obligation of the entity arising from past events, the settlement of which is expected to result in an outflow from the entity of resources embodying economic benefits. Liabilities may be legally enforceable via a contract or law, but need not be, i.e., they can arise due to normal business practice or customs.

LO 9 Compare the conceptual frameworks underlying GAAP and IFRS.

IFRS INSIGHTS

ABOUT THE NUMBERS

Financial Statement Elements

While the conceptual framework that underlies IFRS is very similar to that used to develop GAAP, the elements identified and their definitions under IFRS are different. The IASB elements and their definitions are as follows.

Equity. A residual interest in the assets of the entity after deducting all its liabilities.

Income. Increases in economic benefits that result in increases in equity (other than those related to contributions from shareholders). Income includes both revenues (resulting from ordinary activities) and gains.

Expenses. Decreases in economic benefits that result in decreases in equity (other than those related to distributions to shareholders). Expenses includes losses that are not the result of ordinary activities.

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IFRS INSIGHTS

ON THE HORIZON

The IASB and the FASB face a difficult task in attempting to update, modify, and complete a converged conceptual framework. There are many difficult issues. For example: How do we trade off characteristics such as highly relevant information that is difficult to verify? How do we define control when we are developing a definition of an asset? Is a liability the future sacrifice itself or the obligation to make the sacrifice? Should a single measurement method, such as historical cost or fair value, be used, or does it depend on whether it is an asset or liability that is being measured? We are optimistic that the new document will be a significant improvement over its predecessors and will lead to principles-based standards that help users of the financial statements make better decisions.

IFRS INSIGHTS

IFRS SELF-TEST QUESTION

Which of the following statements about the IASB and FASB conceptual frameworks is not correct?

a. The IASB conceptual framework does not identify the element comprehensive income.

b. The existing IASB and FASB conceptual frameworks are organized in similar ways.

c. The FASB and IASB agree that the objective of financial reporting is to provide useful information to investors and creditors.

d. IFRS does not allow use of fair value as a measurement basis.

IFRS SELF-TEST QUESTION

Which of the following statements is false?

a. The monetary unit assumption is used under IFRS.

b. Under IFRS, companies may use fair value for property, plant, and equipment.

c. The FASB and IASB are working on a joint conceptual framework project.

d. Under IFRS, there are the same number of financial statement elements as in GAAP.

IFRS SELF-TEST QUESTION

The issues that the FASB and IASB must address in developing a common conceptual framework include all of the following except:

a. Should the characteristic of relevance be traded-off in favor of information that is verifiable?

b. Should a single measurement method be used?

c. Should the common framework lead to standards that are principles-based or rules-based?

d. Should the role of financial reporting focus on stewardship as well as providing information to assist users in decision-making?

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