

# Cynefin A sensemaking framework

Every leader and organisation faces unique problems. They may be strategic, financial, leadership, stakeholder or technical challenges. Irrespective of the circumstances, leaders must sense the type of problem they need to resolve – because it fundamentally influences the path to success.

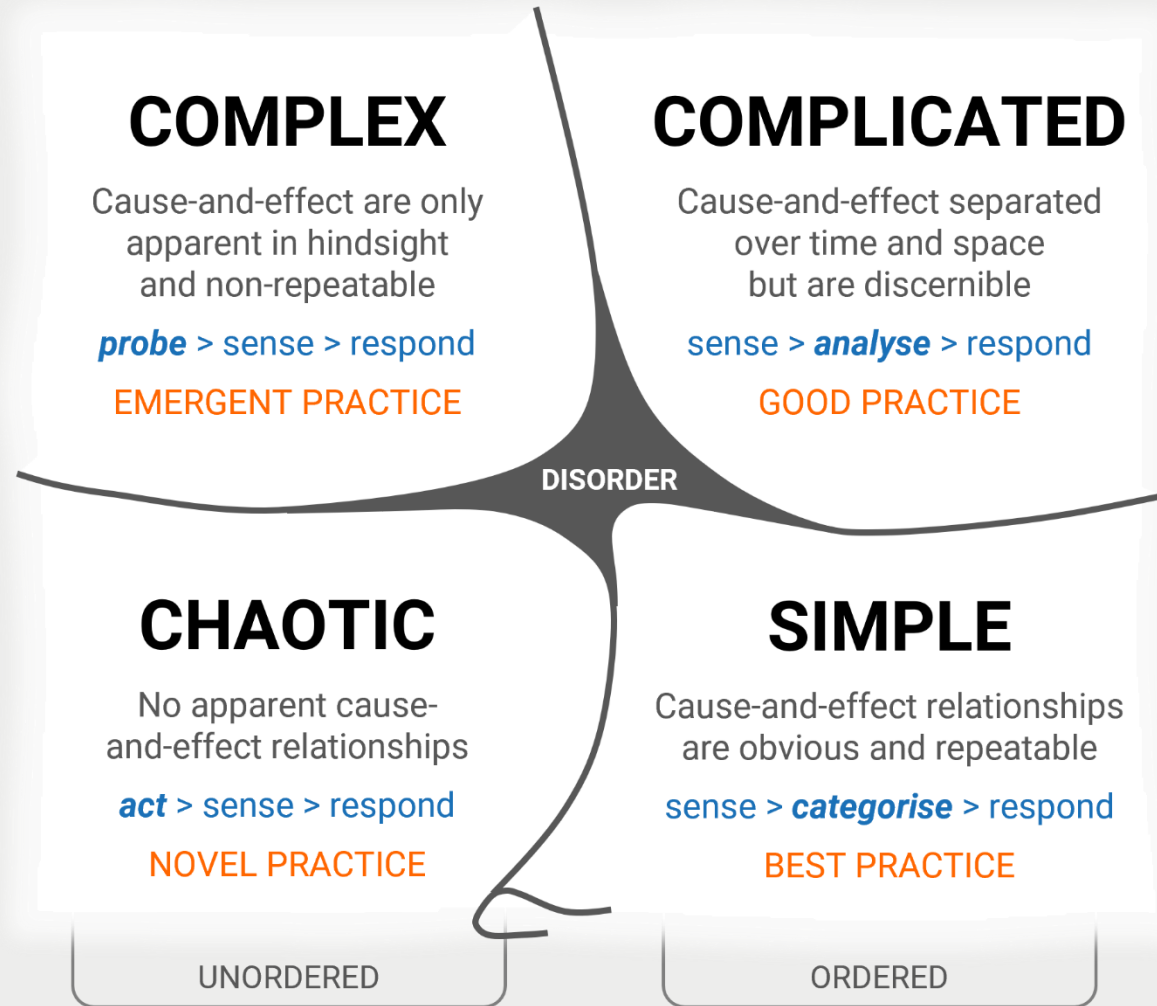
The Cynefin sensemaking framework has been developed and honed by Dave Snowden and his collaborators over many years. It is an essential, foundational component in the toolkit of any dedicated real-world problem-solver.

A fatal error in many problem-solving ventures is jumping to conclusions. A crucial question, which the Cynefin framework helps to answer, is “What type of problem are we facing?” What does the data about the problem suggest about its character? If we sense it is simple and obvious problem, then best practice interventions are likely to be useful. If the problem is complicated, analysis will be required to determine an optimal solution. When it’s a complex problem, ‘probing’ and experiments will be required. And when the situation is chaotic, act first to restore order so the real underlying problems can then be addressed.

A few further questions to pose are:

- What other frames of reference will help to usefully understand the problem and who can provide them?
- How are we over-simplifying our problem?
- What are the dynamics of this problem and how can we safely test our understanding and solutions?

Many more insights and questions relating to the Cynefin framework and supporting tools are outlined in *Smashing the State of Dumb-stuck*.



**Learn more** about this essential way of making sense of reality by following Dave Snowden and engaging with his work at Cognitive Edge (<https://www.cognitive-edge.com/>).

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