MAKING SENSE...
...even when things don’t make sense!
A Mysterious Exercise...

Follow the instructions on the screen.

There are no other instructions...
Step 1

Please arrange yourselves in order by HEIGHT.
Please arrange yourselves by MONTH OF BIRTH
Step 3

Please arrange yourselves by PLACE OF ORIGIN
Step 4

Please arrange yourselves as if YOU ARE 5-YEAR OLDS AT A PARTY... ...you’ve just drunk a Red Bull!
Step 5

Please arrange yourself by NUMBER OF BACTERIA IN YOUR GUT
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
Situational Assessment

Know what you’re dealing with... before dealing with it.
Disorder

Complex

Complicated

Chaotic

Obvious
Complex
probe-sense-respond

Complicated
sense-analyze-respond

Chaotic
act-sense-respond

Obvious
sense-categorize-respond
Complex
probesense-respond
Emergent Practice
Enabling constraints

Complicated
sense-analyze-respond
Good Practice
Governing constraints

Chaotic
actsense-respond
Novel Practice
no effective constraints

Obvious
sense-categorize-respond
Best Practice
Fixed constraints
Complex

prob-探
Emergent Practice

Enabling constraints

Complicated

sense-审
Governing constraints

Good Practice

Chaotic

act-动
Novel Practice

no effective constraints

Obvious

sense-审
Best Practice

Known

Known

Known

Known

no effective constraints

Fixed constraints
Obvious

Complicated

Complex

Gain Control

Chaotic

Lose control

Complacency!

Ordered

Un-ordered

Understand

Standardize

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**Un-Ordered**

**Complex**
- probe-sense-respond
- Emergent Practice
- Enabling constraints

**Chaotic**
- act-sense-respond
- Novel Practice
- no effective constraints

**Ordered**

**Complicated**
- sense-analyze-respond
- Good Practice
- Governing constraints

**Obvious**
- sense-categorize-respond
- Best Practice
- Fixed constraints
Unordered

Ordered
Cynefin
Sense-making
Framework
Situational Assessment
Know what you’re dealing with... before dealing with it.

Complex Adaptive Systems
How can you tell if you’re dealing with one?

What to do?
Getting started on applying Cynefin

A recent, local example
“What how can you use this...?”

Questions?
What questions do you have... that I can answer in the time we’ve got?

Let’s wrap it up
Recap and reminder

Cynefin Dynamics
Moving between the domains

Complex Facilitation Techniques
Emergence can be your friend!

Sense-Maker®
Revealing deep institutional knowledge

Cynefin Training
Paying it forward
Complex Adaptive Systems

How can you tell if you’re dealing with one?
Complex
- probe-sense-respond
- Emergent Practice
- Enabling constraints

Complicated
- sense-analyze-respond
- Good Practice
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Chaotic
- act-sense-respond
- Novel Practice
- no effective constraints

Obvious
- sense-categorize-respond
- Best Practice
- Fixed constraints
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

• Unintended Consequences
• Highly sensitive to small changes
• Not causal
• Propensities
• Not a sum of its parts
• Serendipity
• Perpetual novelty
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

- Unintended Consequences
- Highly sensitive to small changes
- Dispositional, not causal
- Propensities
- Not a sum of its parts
- Serendipity
- Perpetual novelty
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

- Unintended Consequences
- Highly sensitive to small changes
- Not causal
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- Not a sum of its parts
- Serendipity
- Perpetual novelty
Dispositional

c || d || e :: a + b

f || ··· || n :: a + b

Why?
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

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- Highly sensitive to small changes
- Not causal
- Propensities
- Not a sum of its parts
- Serendipity
- Perpetual novelty
“...you can say that propensities are currently stable aspects of the system about which statements as to their future state, or more properly their capacity to generate future states, can be made with high degrees of confidence”

7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

• Unintended Consequences
• Highly sensitive to small changes
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• Not a sum of its parts
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• Perpetual novelty
...is not the same as this.
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

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7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

• Unintended Consequences
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Pay close attention...
7 Characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System

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- Perpetual novelty
For instance…
What to do?
Getting started on applying Cynefin
Ordered: tight constraints

http://www.thedrive.com/sheetmetal/16516/electric-cars-are-about-to-get-a-lot-faster-and-go-a-lot-further-on-a-charge
Complex: enabling constraints & parts modify the system

https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/01/using-mob-programming-to-solve-a-problem/
Constraints & Complexity – the moving parts

1. ORDERED - system constrains the parts

2. CHAOTIC - system has no effective constraints

3. COMPLEX - system lightly constrains parts but as parts interact within the system they modify the system.
Complex Adaptive Systems
A survival guide
1. Experiments
Complex

Complicated

Chaotic

Obvious
What is a “safe-to-fail” experiment?

1. What can we change?
2. Of the things we can change, where can we monitor the impact of change?
3. Where we can monitor the impact, can we rapidly amplify success or recover from failure?
Most essential...

• Real time feedback loops

We are uncovering better ways...
Complex Adaptive Systems
A survival guide
2. Tools
Lists

1. Prioritize tab in Board settings: Durable prior...
2. TBD: Search by Teams and No Project...
3. Test Plan Run Card on Board
4. Live chat icon
5. TBD: Search by Teams and No Project
6. Test Plan Run Card on Board
7. Performance: it takes 2-3 seconds to display ca...
8. Live chat icon
9. Board does not updated correctly after resett...
10. Help: Teams flow
11. JG error on adding team iteration from general...
Tools for CAS’s

1. Granularity
2. Distributed cognition
3. Disintermediation
3. Cautions
BRAKE Lights

ON

OFF

https://www.complex.com/sports/2013/08/absurd-duct-tape-car-repairs/
A trap

Beware “wisdom of hindsight” a.k.a. “Someone should have done something to avoid this...”
Retroactive coherence
“Pilots training to take-off, but not to land…”

“Sir, should the F-111's engage? Sir…?”

Beware...

1. Premature convergence
2. Retroactive coherence
3. Pattern entrainment
Complex Adaptive Systems
A survival guide
4. Paying close attention
The hard part

1. SEE the data
2. ATTEND (pay attention) to the data and
3. ACT on the data

...as three separate, conscious, deliberate processes.
Cheat sheet
I know... I know...!
Say that again...!
A recent, local example

“But how can you use this...?”
Please Write This Big

Problem: How to handle session notes

- Complex
- Complicated
- Chaos
- Order

Cynefin: DAVID STANDEN

1. How fast to make public to others?
2. Staffing
3. Logistics/Location PCs

COMPLICATED

ORDERED

UN-ORDERED

PROCEDURE

PEAK

SENSE

RESPOND

FIRST

LAST
Questions?
What questions do you have... that I can answer in the time we’ve got?
Now... any questions?
Let’s wrap it up
Recap and reminder
Chief cook and bottle washer at WCS, LLC “Wisdom at Work”

Know what to do - when you don’t know what to do!

Contact:
• andrew@wisdomat.work

Available for:
• Training
• Coaching
• Speaking
• Bar mitzvahs, weddings, funerals
References

• HBR article “A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making” (from HBR or ResearchGate).
• Cognitive Edge website: In particular “Resources”, “Dispatches”, and “Blog”
• Wikipedia – Cynefin Framework
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