

FLOW SYSTEM

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

Complexity Thinking

Workbook: Sensemaking Systems



getflowtrained.com/playbook/sensemaking/

Sensemaking

Sensemaking aids our understanding of the changing conditions in our environment. Sensemaking can be identified by seven conditions using the SIR COPE acronym:



- Sensemaking is **social** and interactive.
- Sensemaking develops from a frame of reference or **identity**.
- Sensemaking requires **retrospective** evaluations before moving forward.
- In real time, **cues** and information must continually be updated.
- Stay in the action to keep the context and **ongoing** information current.
- **Plausible** stories need to be continually updated to address changing conditions.
- Sensemaking is actionable. **Enactment** must be adaptable to combat changing conditions and threats.

Apply the SIR COPE conditions for sensemaking using a known issue that you are experiencing:

SENSEMAKING	
How do others currently make sense of what is happening?	
What may be problematic about that current approach?	
Briefly describe an issue or problem they are trying to make sense of.	
Social: Identify the stakeholders impacted by this issue and develop a plan to get the stakeholders together to begin dialogue about the issue.	

SENSEMAKING (CONT.)

Identity: What is the starting point or frame of reference, your shared identity?

Retrospect: What conditions have led to the changes currently being realized? What past experiences are related to the issue?

Cues: What information describes the issue, its antecedents, outcomes (positive and negative), stakeholders, and details in the environment?

Ongoing: Continue to update the cues identified 'Cues' condition. Provide updates to all cues along with any new items found.

Plausibility: Identify potential explanations and stories about the issue. The point is to identify multiple alternative explanations and stories rather than just one.

Enactment: Identify a course of action based on the plausibility conditions. Action should be designed around small iterative changes that can be monitored and evaluated rather than large systemic changes.

Anecdote Circles and More

Anecdote circles is a good technique for conducting sensemaking activities with stakeholders. Anecdote circles use anecdotes and stories to get to the hidden meaning behind specific experiences shared by the participants. This exercise should be facilitated by a trained professional to prevent the session from getting personal and destructive.

The general steps for conducting an anecdote circle includes

- Selecting a theme
- Capture and codify the anecdotes
- Find a quiet room
- Use a passive facilitator

Self-Coaching

For the following self-coaching session, you will go through the basic exercises found in an anecdote circle. As a reminder, this is an individual exercise and not a group activity as specified for anecdote circles. However, the general processes will be followed. Identify an issue or problem in your workplace for the following exercises.

The objective of this exercise is two-fold. First, it is to familiarize yourself with the process of conducting an anecdote circle. Second, it is to help you identify some hidden meanings behind a problem that is being experienced by you. This problem description will, in the end, be rewritten to help you present a clearer and less biased description of the problem.

ANECDOTE CIRCLE EXERCISE	
Summarize anecdote circle in your own words.	
Identify an issue or problem in your place of work that is close to you. Describe briefly here. Share your experience.	
Develop an anecdote (one short paragraph) that makes a reference to the experience you just described.	

ANECDOTE CIRCLE EXERCISE (CONT.)

Identify the value portrayed in your anecdote.

Identify the purpose of your anecdote.

Identify the strategy from your anecdote.

Identify cultural components from your anecdote.

What is the hidden meaning from your anecdote?

Using the value, purpose, strategy, cultural components, and hidden meaning just identified, rewrite the issue or problem again.

Compare the initial description of the issue with the revised description. Identify the differences between the two and highlight the hidden biases in the initial description.

Is this second, revised, description more relatable with less bias, more objective? Why do you think this is?

Connect the Three Helixes

Flow can only be achieved when the three helixes are interconnected. To identify how this could occur, the next exercise requires the reader to identify examples of different methods from each of the other two helixes (distributed leadership, team science) that might work well with sensemaking. Knowledge of all three helixes will be required to make these connections.



CONNECT THE HELIXES	
Select a scenario or problem that would benefit from sensemaking.	
Identify three methods from distributed leadership that could work with sensemaking and give a brief description about how they complement one another.	
DL Method 1:	
DL Method 2:	

CONNECT THE HELIXES	
DL Method 3:	
Identify three methods from the team science helix that could work with sensemaking and give a brief description about how they complement one another.	
TS Method 1:	
TS Method 2:	
TS Method 3:	
Provide a description explaining which methods from each of the three helixes (with sensemaking being the CT method) work best for the scenario/problem identified earlier.	