The Cynefin Framework was created by Dave Snowden as a "sense-making device", a conceptual framework that provides people with a "sense of place" (the Welsh word cynefin means "habitat") that helps selecting the appropriate methodology for decision-making and responding to a situation. The Cynefin framework distinguishes between four different types of situations (called "domains" or "realms"): Obvious (simple), complicated, complex and chaotic.

Different Situations Require Different Ways of Navigation

**Ordered:**
- Stable and clear relationship between cause and effect.
- Known unknowns.
- Several correct answers.
- Decisions can be reached rationally (i.e. through reasoning).
- Requires refined judgment and expertise.

**Unordered:**
- Relationship between cause and effect can only be established in hindsight ("dependent origination").
- Unknown unknowns.
- Confusing situation.
- Immediate containment is essential, there is often no time to look for the root cause or to get detailed input.

**Tightly constrained:**
- Cause and effect can be discovered through analysis.
- Known unknowns.
- Single correct answer.
- Problem is well known.

**Loosely coupled:**
- Lacking constraints, de-coupled.
- Relationship between cause and effect is unclear.
- Confusing situation.
- Immediate containment is essential, there is often no time to look for the root cause or to get detailed input.
- Requires direct communication (top-down or broadcast).

**Best Practice**
- sense: assess the facts
- analyze
- respond: apply the appropriate good operating practice

**Good Practice**
- sense: establish the facts
- analyze
- respond: follow the rule or apply best practice

**Emergent Practice**
- probe: explore
- sense (inspect)
- respond (adapt)

**Novel Practice**
- act: take charge, triage, contain
- sense where stability lies
- respond to turn the chaotic into the complex

**Complex**
- Domain of experts: lawyers, engineers, surgeons, intelligence analysts
- Organizations, communities, ecosystems, battlefields, markets
- Legal structures, standard operating procedures

**Complicated**
- Domain of experts: experts in particular fields, markets, and ecosystems
- Complex legal structures, standard operating procedures
- Complex organizations, communities, ecosystems, battlefields, markets

**Chaotic**
- Domain of experts: people who perform in a 'normal' mode
- Crises, disasters

**Obvious**
- Domain of experts: people who perform in a 'normal' mode
- Legal structures, standard operating procedures
- Complex organizations, communities, ecosystems, battlefields, markets

The Cynefin framework is a tool for decision-making and response to situations. It helps in selecting the appropriate methodology for decision-making and responding to a situation. The Cynefin framework distinguishes between four different types of situations (called “domains” or “realms”): Obvious (simple), complicated, complex and chaotic.

ordered: cause and effect can be discovered through analysis
known unknowns
several correct answers
decisions can be reached rationally (i.e. through reasoning)
requires refined judgment and expertise

unordered: (left side) cause and effect can be deduced only with hindsight or not at all

sense–categorize–respond
1. sense: establish the facts
2. categorize: which rule or practice applies?
3. respond: follow the rule or apply best practice

sense–analyze–respond
1. sense: assess the facts
2. analyze
3. respond: apply the appropriate good operating practice

act–sense–respond
1. act to establish order: take charge, triage, contain
2. sense where stability lies
3. respond to turn the chaotic into the complex

probe–sense–respond
create a safe environment for experimentation
1. probe (explore)
2. sense (inspect)
3. respond (adapt)

Complacency, "entrained thinking", or attempts to force a situation into the obvious domain through a reductionist approach might result in a catastrophic clockwise shift into the chaotic domain.

In disorder people are in constant firefighting mode, they do not agree what needs to be done, work with bad processes and act according to personal preferences.

To escape disorder, break down the situation into smaller parts which can be assigned to one of the four "domains".

 Disorder