

SenseMaker background

Methods and applications

What is SenseMaker

SenseMaker is a way of understanding how people behave, their attitudes and the possibilities for change - to fuel innovation, instigate behaviour change and explore the effects of interventions. A SenseMaker project is built on a combination of facilitation workshops, story gathering and a software system that together produce actionable insights into culture, metrics with which to monitor change and examples to fuel cross-cultural communications, training, leaders and knowledge-sharing.

Projects in recent years include:

- Designing and monitoring corporate transformation in multinational technology corporates
- Understanding the day-to-day life of citizens living in a conflict zone to inform NGO interventions to support building a sustainable livelihood ecosystem
- Comparing the internal and external perceptions of an organisation investing in climate innovation projects.

The principles of how we work with you

There are three guiding principles in the work:

- Co-create the questions, the approach and the insights
 - We will work with your team and people you choose from your organisation to draw on your specific expertise and questions to produce a tool that is valuable and actionable for you in your specific context
 - We will guide, mentor or manage the collection process as needed - supporting your knowledge of your context and opportunities with our past experience
 - We will support your decision-makers and your stakeholders in making sense of the results on their terms and in ways that support their priorities
- Base data on examples of what actually happens
 - We will collect people's experiences, rather than detached answers and opinions in response to standard polling and survey tools
 - Participants will illuminate and add meaning to their experiences using a framework co-created to illuminate and challenge the key questions, assumptions and aspirations of you and your team
 - We will use this meaning-full data to help stakeholders understand behaviour, attitudes and perceptions in the target audiences, then explore the actual stories to illuminate pathways forward
- Stimulate actions to improve and shape the organisation
 - The data and research is only valuable if it helps to shape decisions in the organisation. We run insights workshops to engage you and your team in testing your assumptions, testing your hypotheses and exploring new understandings
 - We expect the workshop to develop multiple projects and safe-to-fail experiments in line with the results and your strategic direction

The Narrate approach

The Narrate approach is to collect examples and experiences of the stories that people share in the organisation. When a respondent enters a micro-narrative, they also answer a series of “signifying questions” – this illuminates the meaning that the respondent puts on it, but within an already-established framework of values that is useful for you and your team.

There are three key elements to this approach: designing the signifiers, collecting the stories and exploring the data.

Designing the signifiers

As we collect stories, participants “signify” their stories to illuminate and add meaning to them - but using a method that allows for analysis through specialist software. The first task is therefore to develop project-specific signifiers.

The signifiers for a project can be developed through:

- Workshops to explore the main issues arising
- Adapting question elements from Narrate’s library of previous signifiers
- Literature review (including values and strategy documents, internal communications, etc)

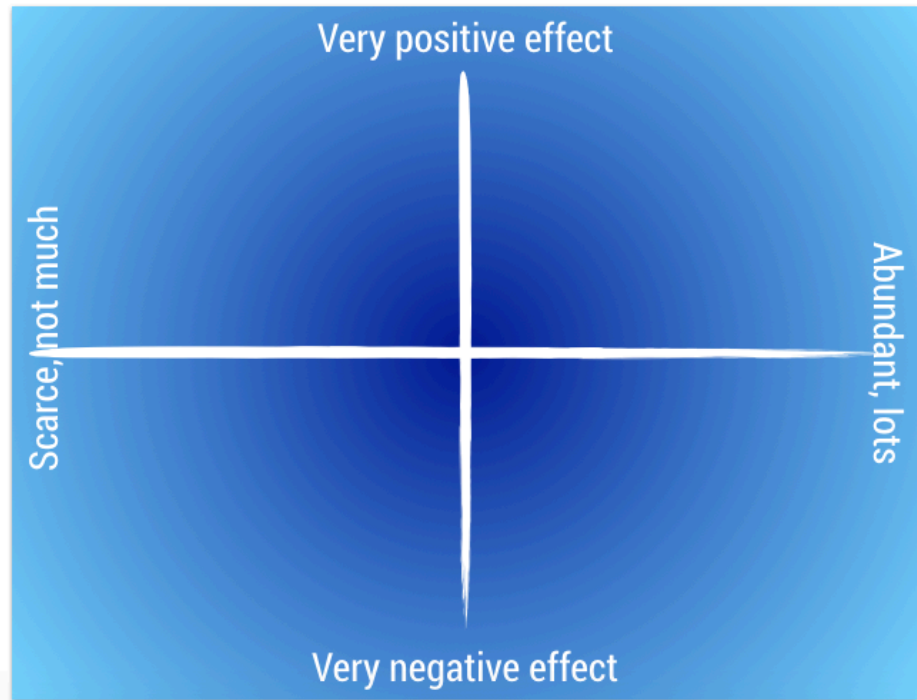
We finalise the framework with your team who would be using them in the final analysis phases.

Examples from a signifier framework

<p>T5: In your example, people induced change through ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Individual effort</p> </div>	<p>T6: In your example, what helped was ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Understanding</p> </div>			
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>D1 In your example, people’s attitudes were ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Always chasing the newest ideas Closed to new ideas and influence</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>D2 The situation in your example arises from ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Organisational inertia, lack of change Too much incessant change</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <p>D3 The events in your example stem from ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too much individual work/ isolation Too many people involved</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>D1 In your example, people’s attitudes were ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Always chasing the newest ideas Closed to new ideas and influence</p>	<p>D2 The situation in your example arises from ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Organisational inertia, lack of change Too much incessant change</p>	<p>D3 The events in your example stem from ... N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too much individual work/ isolation Too many people involved</p>
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Please place up to five of the topics listed onto the space to show how much each was present in the example and how important it was.

1	A shared goal
2	Rules and process
3	Advice and support
4	Funding
5	Innovation
6	Stability
7	Community of fellow practitioners
8	Policy influence



Q1 How do you feel now about the example you shared?

strongly negative

negative

neutral

positive

strongly positive

Q3 How common is this sort of story?

Never before/since

Very rare

Happens sometimes

Quite common

All the time

Q5 Your story includes... (pick up to 3)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration | <input type="checkbox"/> Calls for change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Politics | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambitions for the future | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bureacracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Competition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Failure |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us) |

Collecting the stories

Stories are collected via specifically-configured apps and website that we commission and test before sharing with you and your team.

We work to understand the most natural and effective ways of gathering data in your organisation. This might include including data collection as part of some ongoing organisational process; specific workshops to collect experiences; or codes and links to the website in high-traffic areas of your work environment.

We can mentor your team in collecting material or collect in directly ourselves, depending on the need and access available.

Exploring the data

Research is only useful if it shapes decisions and actions for you and your organisation. We therefore work with you and your team to make the results understandable, relevant and actionable for decision-makers and stakeholders.

We perform a foundation level of analysis and use this to run an interactive workshop with you, your team and other relevant groups in your organisation. With you, we then explore assumptions, test hypotheses, look for opportunities and threats. Where data patterns (see below) show unexpected or controversial results, together we explore the underlying stories to understand what is happening.

Facilitating both understanding and action, we can together come up with a portfolio of projects, safe-to-fail experiments and actions for your organisation.

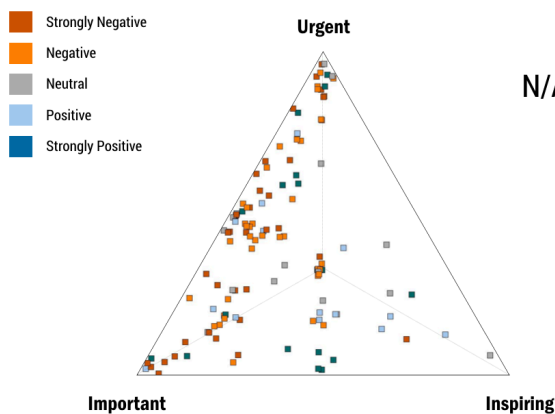
Appendix II: Example results from previous SenseMaker projects¹

The signifiers (points on the triangles) are different for each project, designed with the client project team to be relevant, useful and understandable by their staff. Each respondent has marked the triangle where they think the story sits.

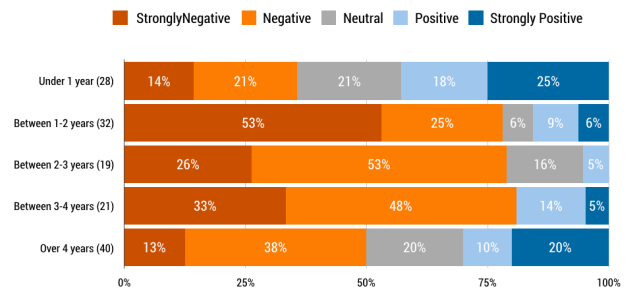
There are a number of ways to analyse the data, some examples are:

Looking at the basic patterns of data:

T4: In the example, the work was ...



N/A 19



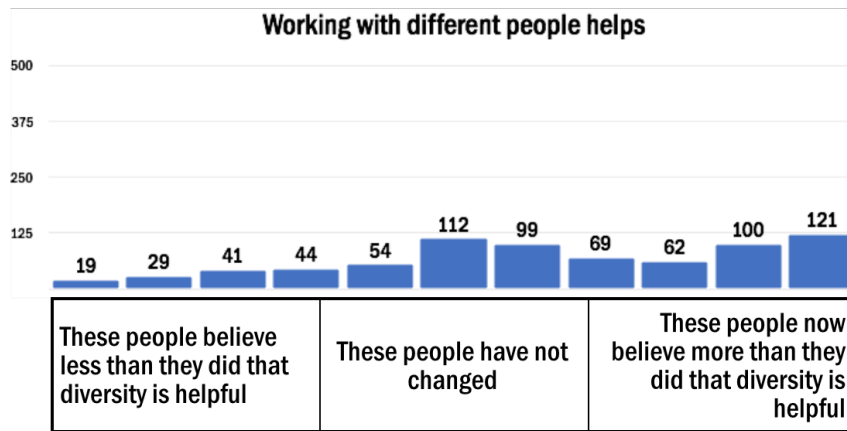
These two examples are taken from a much larger set of images. The triangle on the left shows that in this organisation, there is much Urgent and Important work being done, but it is rarely Inspiring. Urgent work is never Inspiring, but there are a few examples of work that is both Inspiring and Important. By exploring the stories in this small subset, we can begin to understand how to amplify this and create more inspiring, important work.

In the chart on the right, people's length of service in the organisation seems to be related to how they feel about the work they're doing: both new joiners and people with long

¹ The examples here are taken from a variety of projects for clients who have agreed that images can be shared, but not attributed.

service have more positive experiences at work. Staff with between one and four years experience are frustrated.

Looking at the change of patterns over time



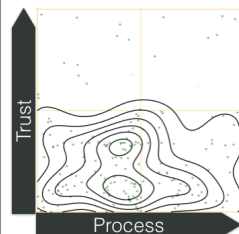
By comparing data from the start of a change programme and the end, this chart shows how attitudes have changed over the course of time. It is clear that many people, but not all, now believe that having multiple perspectives and expertise is helpful to address their work situations.

Asking deeper questions

Customer relies on individuals to get results, rather than Client itself.

Customer examples show Trust and confidence relate to Client people, but not to Client processes.

Examples from customers only, excluding Client account team responses

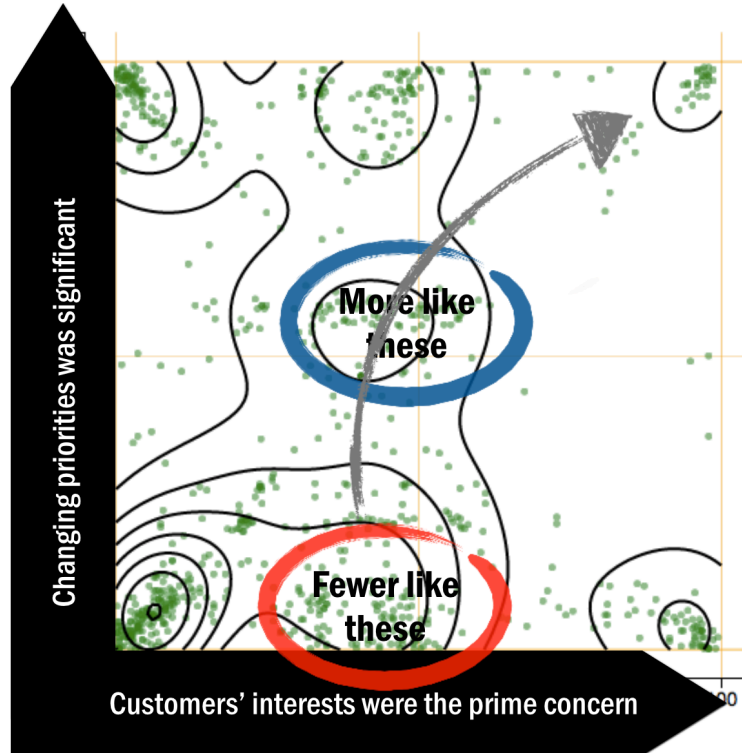


After exploring the basic patterns of data, we work with you and your team to explore your new hypotheses. In this example, there was a question about what elements of the organisation did customers put their trust in - a crucial question as there was a planned reorganisation of customer-facing teams. Stories from the customers showed that their trust was in individual people and relationship, not in organisational processes. This forced a re-think of how to better support customers.

Developing action plans and setting direction using example stories

Once your team have an understanding of both where the organisation is today and the desirable and possible direction to take next, we return to the stories behind the data.

By using a simple heuristic of “more examples like these” and “fewer stories like those” we work with your team and stakeholders to build a portfolio of experiments and actions to shape the organisation’s progress.



Typically, this approach produces a large number of small, easily-undertaken safe-to-fail individual actions, along with a smaller number of substantial experiments like the one below.

<p>Name Don't just listen...Do!! (1 Sales) <small>something meaningful</small> Owner: _____</p> <p>Action description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Experiment - segment the high value customer •Identify group customers and choose three groups - want to deliver an enhanced level of service with customers • To respond to high value customers who want personal service and listened to. [service sales] •SPOC <p>Why is it coherent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why right direction – •Learn more •Retention rates •More revenue streams •Satisfaction rates •X- sell opps •X – BU support •Internal alignment 	<p>Expected signs of success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Retention •Revenue •Higher Satisfaction •Segment and Survey •Before and After •Set a control group (high value) 	<p>Amplification actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Widen the scope of segment •Selling additional: xxxxxxx •Products and services
	<p>Possible signs of failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cancellations Failure •Lower market share •Profitability reduces •Negative survey results 	<p>Dampening actions</p>
	<p>oblique?</p>	<p>Naive?</p>
	<p><small>leave blank if not</small></p>	<p><small>leave blank if not</small></p>