

ADVENTURES
IN THE SEA OF
COMPLEXITY

**INFORM?
SELECT!
CONFIRM:**

STEPHEN WAGENER
illustrated by Patrick Harrington

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SEA OF COMPLEXITY

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CONTENTS

<u>The Journey Starts Here!.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Foreword: Author’s Note/Media Grab.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Executive Summary.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Introduction.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Character List.....</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Where Will This Voyage Go?.....</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Simple Island Treasure Map.....</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>Part One: Chart the Course.....</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>Chapter 1: Why Is It So?.....</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Chapter 2: The Extended Kingdom.....</u>	<u>46</u>
<u>Chapter 3: A New Label.....</u>	<u>55</u>
<u>Part Two: The Waves of Change.....</u>	<u>69</u>
<u>Chapter 4: The Wild Side of the Island.....</u>	<u>71</u>
<u>Chapter 5: Rigid Thinking Rules.....</u>	<u>80</u>
<u>Chapter 6: Flexible and Agile.....</u>	<u>95</u>
<u>Part Three: The Adventure Begins.....</u>	<u>109</u>
<u>Chapter 7: The <i>RIGID</i> Playing Field.....</u>	<u>111</u>
<u>Chapter 8: The <i>fluid</i> Playing Field.....</u>	<u>122</u>

Part Four: The Deep Dive	147
Chapter 9: The Art of (Serious) Myth-busting	149
Chapter 10: Simple Island Seagulls	171
Part Five: Find the Treasure	183
Chapter 11: The Quest to Inform	185
Chapter 12: The Strategy of Select	204
Part Six: Bring Home the Treasure	217
Chapter 13: Strategy in Action	219
Chapter 14: The Safety Net of Confirm	230
Chapter 15: The Adventure Continues	244
Additional Notes and References	257
Author's Note	257
Motivation and Insight	259
The Quest to Inform	261
Where Did the Kingdom of Mismanagement Come From?	262
Inform, Select, Confirm at work	263
Index	265
The Final Word	270

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Kingdom of Mismanagement Disclaimer:

*The quest to **Inform** contained in this book provides wide-ranging, complex insights and may not be a suitable alternative for specialist, traditional advice of an approved specialist.*

*The flexible strategies of **Select** may not be able to replace the strict guidance of certified procedures authorized by competent authorities with specialized technical knowledge.*

*Time spent to pause and reflect on your particular circumstances and specific plans may be required to **Confirm** that maximum value has been gained.*

Inform, Select, Confirm

Adventures in the Sea of Complexity

The Journey
Starts Here!

FOREWORD

Author's Note/Media Grab

Sick of boring business books? Stories live in our DNA and business stories should be compelling and broaden our perspective.

Adventures in the Sea of Complexity offers simple wisdom to create a change for good in this world.

Stephen tells a unique story set in the Kingdom of Mismanagement. An inspirational tale with substance, made accessible through brilliant cartoons and insightful descriptions. A read you can't put down.

Why should kids be the only ones who get lots of pictures with their stories? The time has come for business books to change. The new formula . . . Deep experience, combined with solid content and a lot of fun. Wise Advice, Guidance, and Stories (Wags).

On the surface, a tongue-in-cheek critique on the Kingdom of Mismanagement. The middle layer, a three-step rule of thumb to make effective decisions and ask tough questions (Inform, Select, Confirm). The solid base, a study of complexity science that stands on the shoulders of respected giants in the field.

Executive Summary

The business world often feels like the rugged island of Simple, surrounded by the raging Sea of Complexity, governed by King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency. Their firstborn Son, the Dark Prince of Finance, reigns supreme as the gatekeeper and fierce ruler of the business jungle. Time and money, the only measures of success.

The Process Monkey controls the rat race in Cubicle City. The miserable crew are slaves to procedure and, out of fear, do as they are told. The kingdom even provides fringe benefits; you can swim at the beach of control between the flags of strict regulation.

This book describes a simple decision-making model, grounded in practical sense and presented in an entertaining and provocative way. The insights shared here will enable you to get a better hold of your decisions and even laugh at some of the fickle nonsense in the business world.

The art and science of complexity comes to life with stories and great illustrations from the Kingdom of Mismanagement and the District of Disorganization. You are encouraged to do more than pause and reflect; you are invited to think differently . . . the critical component of success.

In the twenty-first century, we find ourselves tossed by waves of change, from ripples of process amendment to a hurricane-force financial crisis. Mental flexibility and agile tools provide a fresh approach and new perspective to counteract the force of rigid business myths. As the Sea of Complexity continues to rise, more people will need to take swimming lessons. Flexibility, collaboration, and open innovation will soon be the new measures of success.

The best new ideas show us how to achieve the results we want; in the shortest possible time, within a system that can be replicated by others and adapted to any problem. *Inform, Select, Confirm* offers simple wisdom for a life of greater efficiency and better outcomes in our personal and business life. This book will give you insights on how to swim in the Sea of Complexity and make it back to Simple Island in one piece.

Enjoy this voyage of discovery. It has a happy ending. ☺

Introduction

Help . . .

Have you ever made a decision where you were not properly informed or made a bad selection based on good advice? Have you done all the right things only to confirm the right answer to the wrong question?

These tricky decisions stand out, but we have to make decisions all day, every day. Simple choices or complicated analysis, logical options or emotional preferences. With all this complexity, wouldn't it be nice to have a common system?

Yes it would, however, the rules for business decisions and the requirements for personal choices are different. There is little consistency between organizations and, until now, no common decision framework for both home and business.

Business management has a multitude of models to "simplify" the process of decision making so it will be efficient and effective. These methods can be jumbled together in an ad-hoc style based on a manager's personal preference or the standard procedures of the organization they work in. Each tool appears to be good, until disaster strikes and media reports leave us wondering, "What were they thinking? How on earth could clever people do that?"

The Problem

These comprehensive decision methodologies have led to a complicated and often chaotic series of stovepipes (shiny cylinders of excellence) that work in isolation. The information age has brought waves of change to integrate all economic activity into a world system. The bigger it gets, the more we swim in a sea of details.

Dynamic interaction may be the new standard, but rigid management ideas conceived in the industrial age still control the private and public sectors. Tunnel vision, "thinking in boxes," and the pressure of time and

money have combined to ensure that deeper specialization and *more* detail is the only way to go.

In a complex world, standard industrial age solutions applied to every circumstance can be dangerous; a simple process incorrectly applied to a technical problem will struggle. Likewise, a rigid management process applied to a complex (evolving) problem will drift on to the rocks of disaster.



A New Approach

It doesn't have to be this way. In the quest to find a new approach, *Adventures in the Sea of Complexity* will take you on a unique and entertaining journey. This provocative and lighthearted voyage of discovery will reveal how a simple three-step process can be applied at all levels of human endeavor in both business and personal decisions.

Inform, Select, Confirm will be a great companion to other methods you may already use. It has the potential to bridge a gap between management theory and the reality of our complex, fast-paced world. Three concrete words we can agree upon provide a great foundation for a new approach.

The quest to inform—Think deeply
The strategy of select—Choose wisely
The safety net of confirm—Pause and reflect

Inform, Select, Confirm takes a bird's-eye view of a problem, from the tiniest simple choices in life to the governance of multinational corporations and nations. This simple process may spark an “aha” moment or a blinding flash of the obvious.

Sense-making Models

Before we apply decision-making tools, wisdom suggests we step back and figure out what part of the problem might be simple or complex. In the Sea of Complexity, a flexible decision-making framework will make sense of the playing field and clarify the best approach to use.

Several models are available to understand the business environment and I believe Dave Snowden's Cynefin framework (shown here) describes what we see in the real world. (Cynefin is a Welsh word pronounced kuh-nev-in.)

"Sense-making" frameworks arrange problems into separate domains and then explain how each domain works.



"Simple" and "Complicated" are the rigid domains of control and have become the exclusive focus of business today. That's good; linear, production-line techniques work well in a narrow field but ignore complexity at your peril. A wave of complexity can blindside the best-laid plans. With a better understanding of problems in the "fluid" domains of Complex and Chaotic, better solutions can be applied.

The new idea of *Inform, Select, Confirm* integrates with the Cynefin framework and provides a new perspective to rise above the pressure of time and money. The metaphors in this book take the edge off a deep academic subject and lighten it up. Agile management techniques add a practical insight that can help us achieve better results.

The Need for Change

My personal quest to Inform has found that many people want a new way to look at complex decision-making in business. They believe the time has come to gather the latest tools and tackle business complexity with a fresh new perspective. One of those groups, the Management

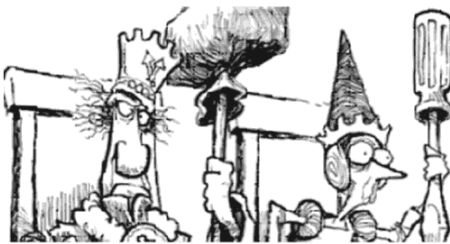
Innovation Exchange (MIX), presents a positive solution to the madness in the kingdom of (dare I say) mismanagement. The members of MIX resonate with the need for change.

Why is a new outlook important? Once upon a time, engineering and the hard sciences had all the answers. Not anymore. The world has changed. The old ways that once provided all the answers now struggle. Traditional methods now create more problems than they solve.

Our Western culture has become bipolar, a weird combination of self-centered and rigid on one hand, interconnected and complex on the other. How we respond depends on our training, work experience, and personal bias. Agile methods and the study of complexity can offer flexible solutions to our problems.

Stories from the Kingdom

The big idea behind this book takes Dave Snowden's model to the next level with metaphors, blends it with agile techniques, and then consolidates it with the new approach of *Inform, Select, Confirm*. The framework comes alive with characters and stories. You will recognize the characters; they are based on every-day work experience.



The story is set on "Simple Island" in the "Sea of Complexity." As you will soon find out, Simple Island doesn't stay simple at all. Decision making in the Kingdom of Mismanagement can be a tough game.

This parallel universe explains what we see in the real world. As the characters are revealed (see character list), you will begin to make sense of this crazy kingdom. King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency govern with the force of hierarchy and rule businesses everywhere.

The influence of their firstborn son, the "Dark Prince of Finance," is never far away. The dark secrets of their Simple Kingdom in the Sea of Complexity may surprise you or at least confirm your suspicions about the madness (idealistic schedules and unachievable budgets).

Long-term problems in the Kingdom of Mismanagement are familiar. Complexity sea-level rise is now an urgent issue and business myths have hindered the Royal Family's capacity to deal with complex challenges.

Voyage of Discovery

On this voyage of discovery, be prepared to think deeply and use your imagination. Wise sayings and generalizations are included, not to offend or trivialize complex issues but to demonstrate the polar opposites of "black" at one end and "white" at the other. This makes the real world "gray" in the middle more understandable.

Be warned; these ideas will challenge the status quo.

A quest to inform, guided by a strategy, followed by time to reflect, creates a flexible, multipurpose tool to give you confidence. A model to refocus decisions at a higher level to add simplicity and clarity. A different view to escape the confines of conventional thinking for a few minutes before we dive back down into the details of a proposal or a plan.

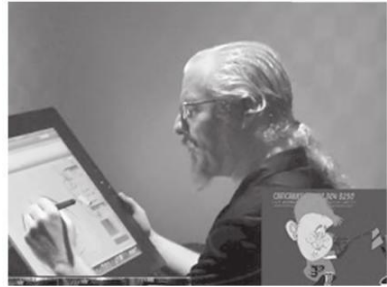


This journey presents new ideas borne out of experience and finds a way forward. A framework to strike a balance between fast thinking (emotion/intuition) and slow thinking (reason/logic). It's not a matter of right or wrong; we are all different and see the world from our own point of view.

I have a dream that one day the current stranglehold of rigid, legalistic thinking will be released. The time has come to be more flexible, and open to new ideas, as we tackle complex problems. And oh, by the way, don't forget to team up with like-minded souls. With my good friend Tom

Basan, we accepted our differences and discovered the seeds of *Inform, Select, Confirm* over a lunchtime cup of coffee.

As you embark on this adventure in the Sea of Complexity, please enjoy the illustrations by Patrick Harrington (pictured here). The majority of cartoons are his creation. They are excellent and are included to prove the theory that “a picture is worth a thousand words.”



To encourage the mood for stories, I have included a character list and a chapter summary so you know what to expect. Wrapped up in stories, great images, and a Simple Island Treasure Map, *Inform, Select, Confirm* is now yours.

Sound decisions and realistic plans are possible with *Inform, Select, Confirm*. Once these simple steps are embedded in the subconscious mind of team members and the culture of an organization, the force of simplicity can be harnessed to produce a change for good.

In the age of the Web, connections are the new currency of life. Pass on this newfound knowledge to friends and colleagues. Great things happen when you share the same insights.

With a passion for complexity and kind regards.

Stephen Wagener
Wags—Wise Advice, Guidance and Stories

CHARACTER LIST



King Schedule (the Elephant). An insistent lad in his younger days who worked by the motto that luck favors the bold. His big chance to snatch power on Simple Island came one icy winter's night as he led a revolution in the name of command and control. With one decisive blow, he deposed the Emperor of Quality in a swift takeover. After that well-researched coup, the dust settled. Rat race participants on Simple Island adapted to their new king and forgot the past. The dynasty of rules created in the name of schedule remains a permanent legacy.



The Queen of Urgency (the Rhinoceros). As a young princess, the Queen of Urgency was destined for greatness. Her math was simple. Schedule time to precision, and achieve an efficient eight-day week. The application of strict deadlines and additional pressure was her strategy. Of course, "she who must be obeyed" progressed through the ranks of disorganization with her own special brand of simplicity. Those who wished for better treatment smiled at the Queen but, out of fear, did what they were told.



The Dark Prince of Finance (the Lion). The King and Queen's firstborn son is number one. A complicated revolution began the day he graduated. He became the fierce ruler of the business jungle and built the first piers and wharves attached to Simple Island. The fractional reserve banking system and complicated financial instruments are the bright creation of the Dark Prince of Finance. He now controls the entire kingdom with strict economic imperialism: dollars, numbers, and statistics.



The Crown Prince of Engineering and Project Management (the Buffalo). The Crown Prince of Engineering and Project Management lives in the shadow of his twin brother. The crown prince loved jigsaw puzzles, with every piece the same shape and size. From the moment he crossed the drawbridge of qualifications, there was no equal in the land of rigid plans and weighty documentation. The whole kingdom can be deconstructed, measured, analyzed, and recorded in dozens of spreadsheets, flowcharts, checklists, and strict procedures.



The Countess of Change (the Leopard). Beautiful and shy, the Countess of Change has always been the center of attention. A permanent place on the "A-list" ensures there are plenty of invites to the best business meetings. There's more to her than meets the eye. If anyone resists her sales and marketing plan, the inner tiger will leap out. She loves to make a regal appearance at the start of a grand plan but will be hard to find at the bitter end. Her favorite cosmetic: new lipstick to match the latest management trend.



The Process Monkey (number six of five). There can only be five big hitters, and that was a bitter blow for the Process Monkey. “Why doesn’t King Schedule appreciate what I do? Why am I excluded from the inner sanctum? We all know efficient process underpins the cornerstone of control. Maybe I should work harder.” Approved process became the Process Monkey’s lifelong pursuit. Rigid, legalistic procedures became the answer to everything.



Continuous Degradation. High office in the boardroom has its downside. The Countess of Change has a rogue secret admirer (Murphy’s Law), a serial pest. He follows her, and stalks her, wherever she goes. Her random acts of improvement are followed by his random acts of disaster. No wonder she never looks back to pause and reflect.



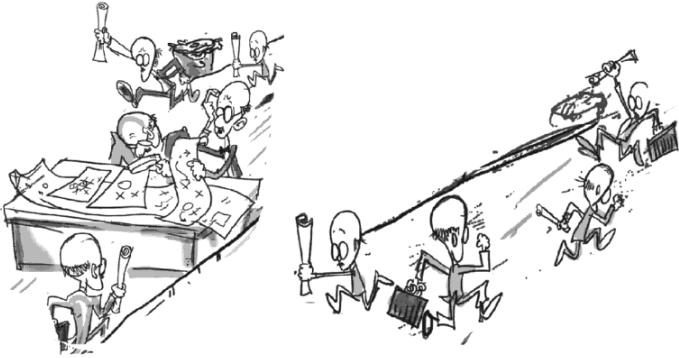
The Drivers. A small percentage of the population with a big influence. Drivers seek status, and hierarchy provides them an opportunity to shine. Aggressive change drivers push the boundaries in search of leverage and efficiency. Living on the edge doesn’t take up much room, and these troublemakers cause others to fall off the cliff. Some love them, others hide.



The Bowers of Influence. Young high achievers who rush in with a lot of noise, squabble with those around them, consume everything, make the place dirty with Project Officer Over Optimism (POOO) and then fly off. The Seagulls of Simple Island.



The Grumpy Old Men of Influence. These guys start out as young high achievers and twenty-five years later they transform into stale, pale males with influence. These old guys dream up a vague strategy, have no real plan, yet still want to look good and enforce their authority. They use jargon as a power play and specialize in efficiency, advantage, value, superiority, focus, and market share.



The Rat Race. The kingdom can't work without these characters. Busy, busy slaves of the process. What the boss finds interesting fascinates them. "So it should be," that's how the rat race works. They are paid for their trouble, so they accept a dictatorship at work.

The Dark Prince of Finance loves these little guys. If an exotic financial instrument requires bailout, the king introduces austerity measures, and they work to pay off the debt.



The Emperor of Quality. Years ago, the Emperor of Quality ruled the kingdom. Time and money faithfully devoted to the task of excellence and the delivery of products that lasted. A fond memory, and a quaint concept, from the distant past.



Elephants in the room. Complexity has more influence on our lives than management theory and rigid procedures are prepared to admit. Elephants in the room are in plague proportions



Where Will This Voyage Go?

PART ONE: Chart the Course

Chapter 1: Why Is It So? A quick review of the silly things that go on. You will see how Simple Island became the center of the business universe. Simple is the best place to be, that's why we strive for simplicity, but watch out for pesky human frailty. Sometimes it turns Simple Island into a madhouse. Elephants in the room are in plague proportions.

Chapter 2: The Extended Kingdom will continue the metaphors on Simple Island. We will see how King Schedule's kingdom grew and how the twin princes extended the kingdom and built those Piers of Complicated.

Chapter 3: A New Label. Off to the factory of *Inform, Select, Confirm* for a quick tour to show you how three simple decision steps can be used anywhere. You will see that *Inform Select, Confirm* simplifies and clarifies decisions. It can help you ask tough questions as well.

PART TWO: The Waves of Change

Chapter 4: The Wild Side of the Island. The management of complexity can be a tough business. Rigid disorganization and urgency struggle with complexity. We take a quick look at the tools available . . . a life jacket and distress flare. A health warning has been included for those curious enough to explore a different view.

Chapter 5. Rigid Thinking Rules. Competitive economics dominate the world. We look at some ridiculous business jargon and the story of self-centered greed and how it deposed the Emperor of Quality. Personal bias plays a part in decision making; it gets attention as well. Cognitive

Block Deodorant and Anti-suggestion Cream are the cosmetics of choice in the Kingdom of Mismanagement.

Chapter 6: Flexible and Agile. The gymnasium of mental flexibility will be the next stop. Mental fitness is essential when we swim in the Sea of Complexity. There are show-off’s strutting around, our dear friend the Dark Prince of Finance has mastered the power of control with numbers. Therefore your first visit to the gymnasium of mental flexibility will be a freebie; make the most of it.

PART THREE: The Adventure Begins

The Cynefin (kuh-nev-in) framework can be used to make sense of everyday circumstances so a grand tour of the business playing field follows. In the past, you may have used “Complicated” and “Complex” as synonyms and interchanged one for the other. Not anymore; a new piece of the puzzle will be revealed:



“Complicated” (rigid), behaves like a machine, and specialization provides the power.

“Complex” (fluid), interacts like a natural ecosystem and human emotions.

Chapter 7: The RIGID playing field summarizes the key points of Simple and Complicated—the rigid (closed) domains of order and control. The power of hierarchy and micromanagement rules this world. A grand plan in Cubicle City will struggle when the real problem resides in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: The *fluid* playing field summarizes the key points of complex and chaotic situations. Difficult problems in command and control land drift into failure in the Sea of Complexity. Bouncing between Simple and Chaos tends to be a common experience for those committed to inflexible attitudes.

PART FOUR: The Deep Dive

Chapter 9: The Art of Serious Myth-busting. During our cruise around the Sea of Complexity, we will look at how *Inform, Select, Confirm* helps those drowning in confusion. By this time, you will be ready for a couple of mental flexibility exercises. A quick workout on some modern business myths should do the trick. This is where you will be encouraged to take a fresh point of view.

Chapter 10: Simple Island Seagulls. There are no rulers of complexity; the royal family live in the Kingdom of Order and Control. There are, however, tricky characters who fly in and make a mess. The young Bowers of Influence and the Grumpy Old Men of Influence will strut their stuff. You will see how “broad generalist” can be a useful skill in a complex world.

PART FIVE: Find the Treasure

Chapter 11: The Quest to Inform, provides several techniques to dig below the surface of our problems and find the answers we seek.

Chapter 12: The Strategy of Select, helps us climb or flow towards our goals. As we learn to grow, the best guide will be “start with why.”

PART SIX: Bring Home the Treasure

Chapter 13: Strategy in Action recounts practical examples of strategy from the world of myth-busting.

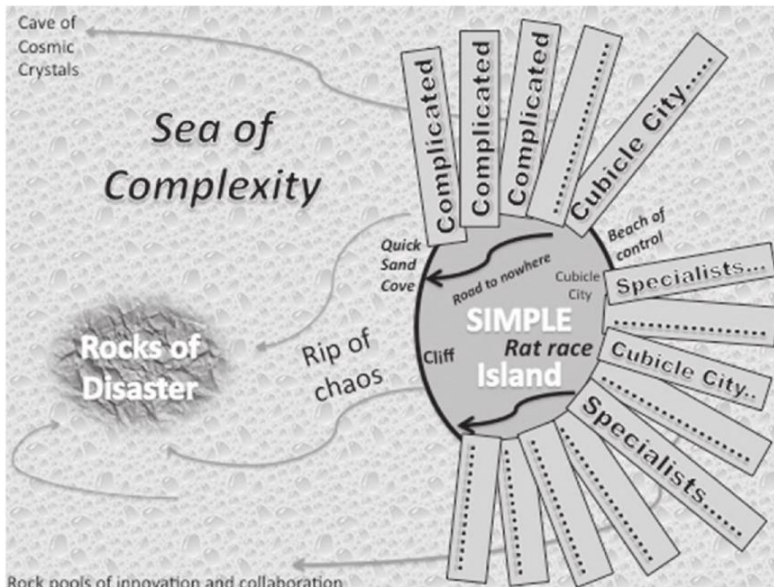
Chapter 14: The Safety Net of Confirm. The critical component of every decision . . . confirm. Therefore, pause and reflect to confirm, especially when you fear the consequences of your decision.

Chapter 15: The Voyage Continues. It’s time to sum up and wish you well on your next voyage of discovery. *Inform, Select, Confirm* provides a fresh new approach to take on your next adventure in the sea of business complexity.

\$imple Island

Treasure Map

Simplicity combined with great leadership can be a worthy goal. If you don't have simplicity, that's OK; do the best you can.



Simple Island can be a madhouse when things go wrong. Watch out for the dangerous side of the island; it has a massive cliff. The roads to nowhere end suddenly, which makes it easy to drive off the edge. After the Rip of Chaos takes control, it's just a matter of time before disaster strikes.

For those who need pressure to perform at their best, the Rip of Chaos can inspire a heroic best effort. The old proverb "Necessity is the mother of invention" must have originated here.

At the extremes of "normal," complexity science gets a bad name from the "wild side" of human intuition, spiritual universality, New Age mystic life energy, cosmic crystal healing rays, and stuff like that.

The cave of cosmic crystals has stopped many voyages of discovery and hindered a deep dive in the Sea of Complexity. The royal family insists that anything connected to emotion must be bad. They skip around the reality of human feelings and the central role they play in workplace relationships.

A magic solution does not exist, but rigid (closed) procedures can be softened in the calm rock pools of collaboration and innovation.

Rigid thinking and jargon have also released excess hot air into the business environment. In this superconnected world, the polar ice caps of confusion are melting. The Sea of Complexity is on the rise. For the sake of future generations, we must act now!

Enjoy the Journey

Television programs, internet surfing and social media has conditioned our mind to hop around like a nervous bunny. The craving for a quick sound bite can spoil an inspirational story.

Relax into the rhythm and flow. Enjoy your voyage of discovery, stay focused through all the twists and turns of complexity; the effort will be rewarded. You will have new knowledge and skills at the end. A pinch of imagination and a gentle pace should be enough to get you through.



PART ONE

Chart the Course

CHAPTER 1

Why Is It \$0?

Ahead of the Action

Success in life requires good decisions made at the right time and blended with good fortune. These choices can be guided by clever strategies or deep emotional responses anchored to past events. In business, drifting along can be risky. Without a goal or a well-organized system of thought, unaware people will have decisions made on their behalf by someone else who knows exactly what they want.

The best place to be . . . Well prepared and ahead of the action . . . Could it be that simple?

As a manager of projects, I watched a continuous stream of management theories come along with the latest answer to an age-old problem. How do we best guide people, and manage things, to produce the results we strive for?

After battling with complexity for a few years, it has become clearer. Everybody sees life from a different angle. We all need the opportunity to explore new knowledge in order to find an elusive piece of the puzzle that makes sense and works for us personally. There are no silver bullets or a single right choice, but one thing's for sure, we can all do with a little extra help.



If that's the requirement, how do we get ahead of the pack? Some people believe *education* has the answer. Standard information delivered in a production-line system. Constant lectures followed by an all-night typing frenzy to reach the assignment word count. Traditional education may be a common method to learn, but does that make it the best way?

With millions of qualified economists, engineers and “masters” of business administration out there in Cubicle City, why does the world of decisions go off the rails? Consider an alternative view proposed by my grandmother. “Believe nothing of what you hear, half of what you see, but experience will be your best teacher.” Can real-world experience make the difference?

Habits Rule

If we absorb those academic theories, mix them with fast-paced experience, and make it a habit, will that succeed? It might, but habits are not always positive and vary from person to person.

An excellent book by Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, has great advice. However, the real-life experience for the majority of folk demonstrates their habits are a double-edged sword. On one hand, good habits serve as a shortcut to speed up decisions. These good habits can make us feel skillful and strong. As for those other habits, well, maybe they’re not so good.

If humans are creatures of habit, how come lazy habits avoid center stage when blame gets handed out for poor performance? Well, excuses abound: “It wasn’t me,” “It was an accident,” “I did what the procedure said.”

In times of uncertainty, old habits from years ago may not serve us forever. To be effective, it takes hard work to get past the excuses, drop bad habits, and replace them with good ones.

To develop an effective habit, it must be easy to remember, simple to apply, and continually practiced. That’s why management theories use simple diagrams and familiar colors to describe their models. For example, personality types, behavior modes, and Edward De Bono’s hats use colors. In the end, management theories and habits have one thing in common: repetition. The more you do it, the better you get . . . and the better you get, the more you do it.

Miraculous intervention in a crisis might work; however, the Seven Ps will save you trouble—“*Prior preparation and planning prevents persistent poor performance*” (an old Army motto).

Why do I struggle with problems by myself? Lessons gained from others' mistakes can be more enjoyable and less messy. The harsh experience of mistakes does not have to be the only way to learn. A problem one person struggles with now may have already been faced and overcome by someone else.

The Journey

Whether decisions are lighthearted or hard work, other people's experience can be used as a guide. Remember how you learned to ride a bicycle? In the early stages, someone was there to demonstrate how and provide encouragement along the way.



We start out with a willingness to learn. A trusted person holds on to guide us, and we develop through conscious practice, competency, and mastery. In the long term, the basic skills are easy to maintain; however, higher-level skills degrade over time and need constant practice.

The universe follows a common pattern; we cannot escape the laws of physics. In science and in life, "all things tend to disorder" (entropy). Without a well-placed injection of energy, human behavior sinks to the lowest common level. At this low level, the education system has taught us to think in boxes. In the real world, when a problem gets out of the box, and out of control, it can spiral into chaos.

Right now *Inform, Select, Confirm* provides new energy to raise the bar. This new tool in a complex world will inspire agile decisions and help us take a bird's-eye view of management kingdom. It will introduce a new technique to frame decisions in your personal and business life.

New knowledge would be ideal if we had the time to take it in. Aggressive schedules and tough executives refuse to take no for an answer. Unrealistic budgets and rigid procedures dreamt up by distant experts demand immediate action. The boss or the client wants the job completed today. No correspondence will be entered into; the quarterly financial result depends on it. And oh, by the way, don't forget the basics:

"If you don't plan, you plan to fail!"
and
"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."

In response to this pressure, time-poor managers have a favorite habit. They go straight for Microsoft Project or Excel and hammer out the promise of a grand plan on a page with a long list of tasks that assumes they can predict the future with pinpoint accuracy. Others latch on to 'schedule' as the sole source of management wisdom and make life miserable for everybody around them. They become fixated on schedule and efficiency. Sometimes it works. At other times, it creates the problems.

Universal Measures—Time and Money

Despite the various approaches, two universal measures reign supreme: time and money. Every other measure fades into the background. There may be a long list of compliance rules, but time and money drive business decisions. The less important factors are consumed by these universal measures. The Prince of Finance can even put a dollar value on blood, sweat, and tears. ☹

Pressure to achieve budget will bring out
our best and a sense of urgency
keeps us focused but . . .

short-term profits drive the world insane.
(Stephen Wagener)

The Kingdom of Mismanagement

I met a man, once upon a time, who said, "Schedule was King!" and I lamented how sad it was the Emperor of Quality had been deposed.

In King Schedule's palace, any document called a "*Plan*" becomes a source of ultimate wisdom. The king leads the charge and demands everybody must follow the plan until the bitter end.

I also met a fine lady addicted to urgency; all she did was demand tight schedules. We used to joke how this hard-line senior executive must

be in the final stages of addiction to urgency. She might ask, "What's your birth date?" With trepidation comes a reply. "The . . . fourteenth of September . . . ?"



"Not good enough! Make it the fourth!"

The schedule was not met to her satisfaction, so, "Off with their heads!" she cried. The Queen of Hearts, from Alice in Wonderland, and the Queen of Urgency on Simple Island are close friends. Both of them lead the blame game and crush those under their control.

She smiles at your face and stabs you in the back. "My way or the highway," the Queen said. "Completed no later than yesterday." This type of behavior costs the organization dearly. The innocent players in Cubicle City suffer for the guilty, especially when good results are achieved

through bad behavior at the top of the organization. More mirrors in the workplace would be good.

Neither the havoc these managers wreak on their own blood pressure nor the faint pleas of their subordinates will convince the Queen of Urgency or King Schedule to stop.

Life on Simple Island

In the domain of simple, King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency rule with an iron fist. For them, the world of simple feels like an island refuge in the wild Sea of Complexity. The royal family promises their followers in Cubicle City a life of order and certainty; therefore, a bit of harsh treatment is a small price to pay.



A combination of scarcity and self-interest guides the kingdom. The manager's toolbox has two basic weapons:

A hammer, because every problem is a nail, and a screwdriver, because when a driver uses it, that's how we feel (screwed).

The dangerous inhabitants of Simple Island are the drivers. These opportunists become the source of internally generated risk, the ogres inside the palace.

Who needs external enemies when these guys take charge? Opportunists behave like wild animals, immune to sensible suggestions, happy to "shoot first and ask questions later." They focus on scarcity; no time or money to do the job properly the first time.



They complain about the lack of resources, but apparently, there's enough time and money to do it twice, the second time around fixing the mistakes from the first. No teamwork; everyone struggles on their own.

The final result: budget blowouts at the end caused by budget cuts at the start. The classic rush to failure.

When the quarterly results came in, no one was any the wiser. “How could that be, we followed the plan? We hired the best and paid them well. We need to ramp it up and headhunt some better leadership talent.”

In this world, the size of executive salaries may be hard to swallow, but for board members behind the scenes, outrageous executive salary packages make sense. What gets measured gets done well, and what gets rewarded or has incentives attached gets done even better.

Board members understand that it costs money to maintain control, and they pay a high price to retain power. The next question: Who trains the board members? Well, they take it in turn to help one another.

Lots of P000

Project Officer Over-Optimism (P000) on Simple Island has become common. After years of experience, senior managers along with their younger counterparts try to impress their Board of Directors and set aspirational goals way too high.

Addicted to the trends of the '90s, the royal family “push the envelope” with stretch goals. Content to play with their mental blocks, they overpromise with economic hope. The conspiracy of optimism matures into a plan.

These Seagulls gamble on the chance those made-up numbers are right and then go into battle with everyone and everything as the plan takes them on a rough ride in the real world. Proof positive that *“thought without action leads to day dreaming, but action without thought becomes a nightmare”* (Japanese proverb).

On Simple Island, the nightmare focus remains fixed on micromanagement and rigid structures to make the system go faster and be cheaper. Everyone’s emotional energy has been consumed by urgency; no capacity left to tackle the big picture. For the drivers, a close relationship with King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency provides a cover for their handiwork.

A small but important problem might be overlooked until it becomes the latest “urgent issue” in a string of disasters. Asking them what went wrong reminds me of how Dad asks the kids, “Who broke this?”

“Not me . . .” of course.

Elephants in the Room



Everyone makes mistakes and things break. How often does human frailty get factored into a plan? Senior executives are human too. The pressure to protect my job and pay the bills allows flawed plans to go unquestioned. “Elephants in the room” are in plague proportions.

Why? Because a difficult subject may be uncomfortable to discuss. The immediate reaction seeks to avoid the obvious problem. People don’t want to appear vulnerable or weak, so they become defensive and hide their feelings. The real issues become harder to address because everyone swirls around in debate on who has the best idea. Conflict reinforces the differences, and each generation goes through the same cycle.



There are no personal benefits for the players inside the room to confront the big gray thing; it must be tolerated or ignored to achieve the goal. An alternative view uncovers the problem. Those who look in through the window can see the elephants.

In this parallel universe, “organizations” transform into “disorganizations” by doing the exact opposite of what they claim. We churn over an awkward issue as a group; it makes us tense, but no one dares speak. This unspoken rule makes a subject undiscussable and tolerates elephants in the room.



A family secret or workplace gossip can be an elephant in the room because the issue might be on everyone’s mind but no one addresses it. King Schedule has an affinity for these elephants. Every day he faces a tough decision: confront the elephants in the room or follow the plan. Any guess how it ends?

Mismanagement

On Simple Island, the aim of the game is to stay the same and blame sets a trap for new players. Referring back to old processes from the past can be a slippery slide. Future events are not 100 percent predictable and may not follow the patterns or schedules from years ago.

- The first lesson of history says, “*We don’t learn from history.*” (Over the past thousand years, how many invaders have “won” in Afghanistan?)
- The second lesson from history: change is inevitable. The countess always achieves her goal.

Prof. Julius Sumner Miller said, “Why is it so?” Why do we feel this much pain in some disorganizations? In a democracy, we enjoy freedom, rights, and expect good governance. Why then walk out the front door, commute somewhere, and accept a dictatorship at work? In the information age, this contradiction does not make sense.

Add to this less-than-ideal situation the knowledge that “practice makes permanent” (not perfect), and inflexible habits turn workplaces into a schedule and budget rat race that suck the life out of their participants.



Yes, participants get paid for their trouble, but what do you think? Should the world be like this? Management structures are supposed to be part of the solution, not the problem. Deeper insight will help us make sense of it all.

An Elegant Solution

The promise of a simple solution to complex problems may be attractive, but in reality, simple solutions require effort. I believe a new angle makes a difference because “*insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result*” (Albert Einstein).

Inform, Select, Confirm aims to plant new seeds of change, with enough fertilizer to help it germinate into action. An investment of time to think, reflect, and practice will make a difference because new ideas need TLC (tender loving care).

Don't get too excited; open-minded people love simplicity, but the royal family objects to new ideas, which disturb the universe and challenge the status quo.

As you explore this book, be encouraged. You are a great person, and all the great people in history looked at the world differently and used energetic new ideas to guide them. A fresh approach was needed then, and our world today still needs new ideas. *Inform, Select, Confirm* has been released into the wild to become a new, flexible tool for decision making in a wide range of circumstances.

So how do these seeds of *Inform, Select, Confirm* take root? For the logical person and the creative alike, it works the same way. Prepare the ground, cultivate personal brain space, and then imagine a successful project where quality, smooth schedule and a healthy budget emerge as the by-products of good management skills, not the harsh focus we accept as normal.

Go on a quest to inform. Discover your values and your strengths. Select a desirable personal skill or resource and move toward your goal. Take the time to pause and reflect. Confirm your objectives in a continuous three-step process.

To stay agile, revisit (iterate) the three steps to great decisions in a continuous pattern. Use the example of life on this planet. An organic

system filled with cycles: minutes, hours, tides, days, weeks, seasons, and years. Each cycle repeats in a natural rhythm.

Three concrete words we can agree upon provide a great foundation for a new approach. Small cycles embedded in bigger cycles nested in larger cycles. Rapid feedback in a continuous loop. A way to move forward with confidence.

Be a Nike, “just do it.” Have a go, make adjustments, and repeat the three simple steps of *Inform, Select, Confirm* with as much or as little detail as you like until the entire process becomes as habitual and effortless as driving a car. Don’t get too concerned if at first you crawl; walking follows and then you run.

Standard Procedures

Now back to the Kingdom of Mismanagement. Long live, King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency. They have a stable empire. Millions of loyal subjects toil at break-neck speed, because time is money, and without mind-numbing bureaucracy or central control, those micromanaged subjects in the rat race would have no one to lead them.

The king and queen resist change and control their kingdom with streamlined rules and rigid plans. By royal edict, best practice guides and standard procedures shall be the only decision resources available. What else do you need when the “right” process to achieve results has already been published? “Just get on with it!”

The subtle art of shaping decisions has been simplified: “Do it my way or the highway!” With a glint in their eye, which suggests intolerance, they wait for the slightest mistake and berate the unfortunate worker who made the error.

Control is simple. “Listen closely, read my lips. All communication comes from the top down. Thou shalt not talk between cubicles or compare notes with colleagues. If a communication problem exists I will identify it and tell you how to fix it.”

The force of a rigid, closed process may be unfair, but here’s the thing that makes a difference: knowing the rules of Simple Island helps ease

the pain. Harsh control and urgency are the norm. A standard day sounds like this:



“Hurry up and do it all wrong to meet a ridiculous deadline. Now after a huge mess has been created, it has to be reworked on the second time around, well over the original budget.”

The entire kingdom burst into spontaneous song. “And so say all of us, and so say all of us!” How can great decisions be achieved by the simple application of urgency? Oh well, that’s the way it is.

If that’s not enough, dissenters with radical suggestions are evicted from the island. Following the traditions of treasure ships and Pirates of the Caribbean, forced to walk the plank.

Control Everything

With the riffraff evicted, the Process Monkey imposes order and control in the rat race. This smelly character wears Cognitive Block Deodorant and has become an efficient taskmaster who uses concrete procedures and templates as a tool.



His business recipe standardizes the process to make work easier and faster. Rat race participants in Cubicle City become slaves of the process.

The process takes on a life of its own. The Process Monkey becomes a tool of harsh management. No other options exist. Templates and check boxes are the only method to plan and the only approach to problems. The monkey on our back has been put there by design. ☹

The good news: King Schedule has granted an exemption to the Process Monkey. He is not required to use *Inform, Select, Confirm*, a well-established decision cycle already exists.



Plan with templates and checklists.

Do as fast as you can.

Check the tasks have been completed on time.

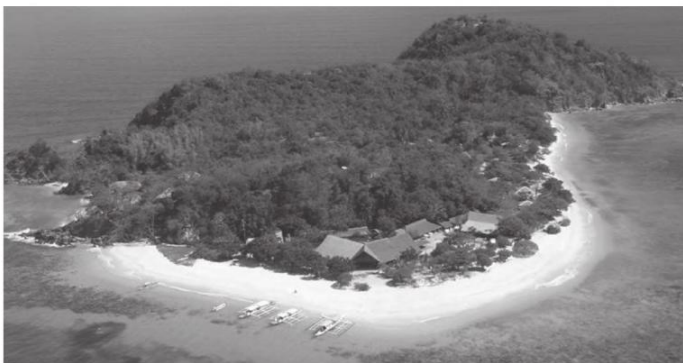
Act to correct anyone who steps out of line.

The Deming quality cycle (plan-do-check-act) has survived the test of time, but over-engineering and a rigid Process Monkey are the silly additions to the procedure.

Best practice guides do not guarantee foolproof results; sometimes things go wrong and stuff happens. Have you ever seen crisis management in action? A crisis pops up and we manage to deal with it. That's OK; do your best in a crisis. Stay positive and keep it simple.

The Stable Kingdom

In spite of the madness, the king and queen rule a well-structured kingdom. It survives and flourishes with repeatable best practice. In the early days, the kingdom offered fringe benefits. Golden sandy beaches on the protected side of the island provided a popular training ground for common sense and reason.



The king's subjects appreciated the freedom to swim at the golden beaches of connection. They learned and respected long-term patterns

as they swam in the Sea of Complexity. This natural, organic method of complexity management made life enjoyable for those in the rat race.

Little did they know, the Countess of Change grew weary of her daily visit to the beach. Simple Island was in for a surprise. A revolution to transform their world forever was ready to be unleashed. Massive economic earthquakes and regular fiscal after-shocks continued to be a reminder of the danger.

Chapter 1—Summary
(www.wordle.net Thanks, Jonathan)



CHAPTER 2

The Extended Kingdom

The Second Generation

Much to the disgust of the island hierarchy, nothing stays the same in this (supposedly) simple world. After years of simplicity, King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency celebrated the arrival of twins.



The twin princes were born ahead of schedule, and their names had not yet been decided. For a few days, the king called them Prince 1 and Prince 2.

It wasn't long before the royal court announced the arrival of:

The Dark Prince of Finance (the firstborn), and his younger brother, The Crown Prince of Engineering and Project Management.

These two clever lads became the smartest guys in the room and, supported by well-meaning diplomats in the king's service, managed to extend their parent's island kingdom.

The well-ordered mind of these twin princes gave them a distinct advantage. Discoveries abounded as the Dark Prince of Finance and his Project Manager brother created multiple tribes of specialists to streamline the empire with the *force* of strict, mechanical structure.

These specialist princes claimed to be the chosen ones; they understood how business works. In their new



world order, a plan can be separated into its component parts. No one can defy their engineering and financial logic.

The First Pier

Early in his career, the Dark Prince of Finance spent time with the Countess of Change. They came up with a clever idea to monetize the kingdom with complicated algorithms, which required years of specialist training to understand. The fractional reserve banking system had potential to rule the world.

King Schedule and the Queen of Urgency suspected this bright idea might cause trouble and distanced themselves from the plan. They whipped up the residents of the rat race into a rage and voted the Dark Prince off the island.

Rather than walk the plank, the Dark Prince planned to extend his parent's kingdom with a monument to specialist knowledge. He built a massive pier over the golden beach of connection and walked off Simple Island. A new world of order and financial control had begun.

The cunning plan was to build on the bedrock of the “known and the simple” to create a new world of the “complicated.” This world crafted a mystery and built on the ideas of Simple Island. The exact details can only be deciphered by deep analysis. Order and (technical) simplicity will be apparent to the experts but not to everyone. The drawbridge of qualification and certification keeps the rat race out.

Me Too

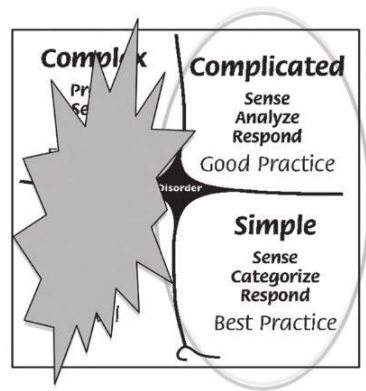
The Crown Prince of Project Management watched his brother's success and wanted to build his own special piers where technical processes ruled in isolation. The crown prince wanted to be the master of a private domain with dozens of scientific piers, project management, and a long list of industrial disciplines.



These piers transformed the kingdom and became remarkable places where reason, logic, and structured information solved all our problems. With enough analysis and research, science fiction became science fact.

The twin princes master-minded an industrial revolution. Deep component-level knowledge and deconstructing the universe into tiny pieces convinced this new breed of expert they had the power to control any process. (Well, most of the time.)

Strict financial analysis and systematic engineering invaded the kingdom and subdivided the management structure into Simple Island and Complicated World. From that moment on, linear, mechanized process became the accepted norm.



Checklists ruled. Robotic process control became a modern art form fueled by our self-centered Western culture. The Process Monkey will be out of a job if micromanagers continue to subsume his work.

Piers of Complicated Everywhere

Today we can still see the profound effects of the industrial revolution on Simple Island. The Dark Prince rules the mother wharf of finance with an iron fist. The whole process stays focused on numbers, the specialization of control. The golden beaches on Simple Island are gone, replaced by complicated piers.



Regardless of the work the princes did together to create order and control, the competitive tension between them remained strong. The

Prince of Finance (Prince 1) controls the money. No matter how much effort the Crown Prince puts in, or how much his project results impress, he will always be Prince 2.

Blood, however, is thicker than water. The twin princes share one idea in common: the universal measure of time. Faster, faster, faster!

The new jetties and piers changed the balance of power in the kingdom. King Schedule and the urgency-addicted queen worked hard to maintain central control of their extended kingdom. The royal family demonstrates a bold, united front. The queen's favorite son, the Prince of Finance, and a gaggle of opportunists, crisis managers, and diplomats enjoy life in the royal court.

Complicated World pulls the process apart rather than gathering people together with an inspiring goal. On the Simple Island treasure map, hundreds of piers surround the island and now cover the golden beaches of connection. One of them looks like this: a grand pier of excellence that rules in splendid isolation, a place to break the master plan down into tiny pieces to gain control.



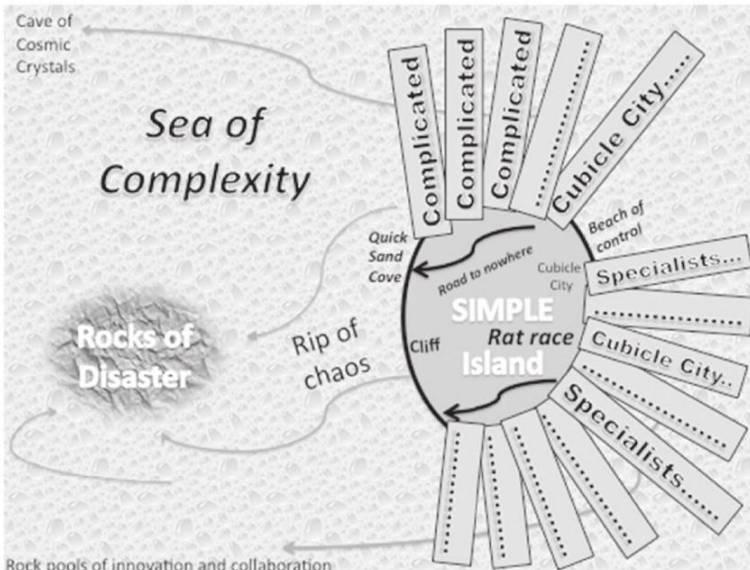
In this story, credit must be given to the diplomats who surround the king and queen. They helped the twin princes construct those complicated piers of control. The diplomats spread propaganda on behalf of the royal family and a new breed of manager was promoted out of the masses.

The “experts” (38 percent of the entire kingdom) lined up to fill their respective piers with great pomp and ceremony. After years of study, experts receive a special code to enter their kingdom. The most powerful experts occupy a throne at the far end of the pier. To maintain control, the drawbridge of qualifications keeps the riffraff out.



A universal opinion soon arose that the physical world and the treacherous Sea of Complexity had at last been conquered by technology and procedures.

Complicated World grew in stature. Dozens of piers popped up in rapid succession, doctors, lawyers, and engineers of all persuasions. Professional groups of every shape and size, an endless list made their mark. Except for the dangerous cliff on the wild side of the island and the beach of control, specialist piers of complicated dominated the island.



The Golden Rules of Complicated

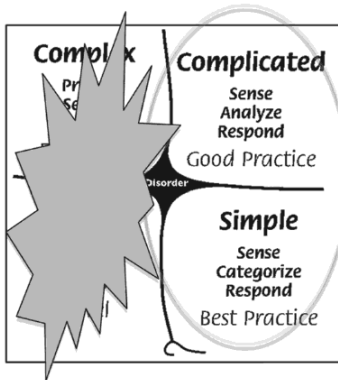
Regardless of the specialist revolution, King Schedule still influenced this new Complicated World. The rules had to be changed. *Tyranny of the expert* on the piers superseded mind-numbing bureaucracy on the island. To celebrate success, a special charter was developed for those piers and jetties. Deep technical knowledge can be gained when a system is pulled apart (deconstructed) into tiny chunks of cause-and-effect in a pyramid of reason.

1. ***Thou shalt not eat the forbidden fruit of complexity.*** Even touch it and you will die.
2. ***Standards shall become universal.*** New control methods may be added at any time, within financial constraints of course.
3. ***Numbers are more important than people.*** If it cannot be measured, it must be classified as emotional, subjective, and irrelevant. Measure everything first, understand later. Math errors are forgivable, but keep them to a minimum.
4. ***Analysis finds and solves problems.*** Deep investigation and analysis ensures success. More analysis will find the best (optimum) solution. With expert experience, problems can be simple to solve. To everyone else the problem and the solution are a complicated mystery.
5. ***No debate.*** Certified experts may agree to disagree. No one else shall dispute the expert facts.
6. ***Enjoy the formal qualification.*** Formal qualifications shall be an expert's guide. Choose carefully, Simple Island is a backward step. Where else can you go?
7. ***Experts rule.*** The more specialized the expert, the more valuable and honored their advice becomes. Rat race participants can visit the entrance foyer of the pier, not one step farther. The drawbridge of certification and qualification keeps the riffraff out. Suggestions by outsiders may be overlooked or dismissed as the expert sees fit.
8. ***Expand the piers of specialization.*** The natural world has been subdued. Specialist methods shall be universal. Expand the influence of specialist ideas at every opportunity.
9. ***Defend the system.*** The mystique of specialist information and the language to describe it must not be revealed to outsiders. Insist others use specialist methods whether they understand them or not. Each silo of knowledge must be defended.

10. Stay within boundaries. Each pier and jetty must have a gap to separate it from the others. Experts may need to jump between piers and jetties to visit other experts. Excuses and cover-ups occur when a problem “falls between the cracks” into the Sea of Complexity below.

The struggle for power and status unfolds from the top down. The key actors include the following:

1. Operational/service delivery (the King and Queen),
2. Executive/finance (Prince 1),
3. Engineering (Prince 2), and
4. Sales and marketing (the Countess).



The Sea of Complexity can now be bypassed. The natural world and human complexity, subdued at last. A triumph for the brute force of technology. Management knowledge can now be defined as simple or complicated. A brave new world of order and control has begun.

The new complicated techniques developed by the Dark Prince of Finance and the Crown Prince of Project Management may have lacked balance, but

they achieved good results.

“Let’s not focus on the problem. Be positive, set goals, build confidence, grow, and expand. Take charge, move forward. Nothing shall be withheld from us. We are the experts!” How can ordinary people manage the detail? Let professionals take charge of your life.

This complicated revolution shattered the intimate connection between Simple Island and the Sea of Complexity. The new piers and jetties disrupted the natural balance. The golden beaches of connection paid the price of progress, closed forever. No one shall walk under the piers, far too dangerous with all those pylons. Swimming was restricted:

1. Near the wild side of Simple Island, fall off the cliff into the Rip of Chaos;

2. On those specialist piers, “fall between the cracks” into the turbulence below;
3. At the beach of control, swim between the flags of strict regulation.

Rigid controls and financial protocols subdued the danger of complexity on Simple Island. Double standards emerged. Cubicle City residents may enjoy limited access to the Beach of Connection, but experts from the piers of complicated shall not, under any circumstances, swim in the Sea of Complexity (refer to golden rules above).

The basic tools to manage complexity include a life jacket and a distress flare. What more do you need? The calm rock pools of innovation and collaboration stayed on the prohibited list. Only the adventurous have the courage to go there.



The fantastic results of complicated may be a continuous celebration, but a deeper problem exists. In spite of the heroic efforts to create certainty, the turbulent Sea of Complexity continues to be a powerful force.

No matter how clever they become, the entire royal family of mismanagement struggle in the Sea of Complexity. The Rip of Chaos and the Rocks of Disaster on the dangerous side of the island continue to be an ever-present danger. This harsh reality becomes an undiscussable awkwardness. "Less said, the better."

The Countess of Change regretted her earlier decision to sacrifice the beaches of connection. She decided swimming in the Sea of Complexity should be reintroduced into the kingdom. The traditional life jacket and distress flare must be retained, however, new complexity management tools can be added to the inventory.

OK, let's do that. What can we do to bring a change for good?

CHAPTER 3

A New Label

Age-old Patterns

Coming back to the here and now, a new skill will be easy to learn if it can be linked to a familiar experience. The tricks and tips to remember names at a business meeting or a dinner party work like that. It feels good when someone remembers your name. The results of rapport benefit everyone.

An exercise to join the familiar with the new allows *Inform*, *Select*, *Confirm* to be established. A natural process applied as a simple rule of thumb can help us understand familiar events in a new light.

For example, let's observe a potential couple who meet for the first time at a social event. In this encounter, multiple cycles coexist, but let's focus on the longer-term cycle to begin with.

That night: "I like what I see." Talk, talk, talk. (Inform.)

Weeks later: "Hey, guess what, met someone, a perfect match." (Select)

Months later: "You sound happy?"

"Yeah, we got engaged last month." (Confirm)

Years later: And they lived happily ever after.

The collective wisdom of generations didn't set up this dating ritual by accident. "Engaged to be married" is a cultural inform-select-and-confirm activity, which adds time-delay to relationships. As a result, emotions and logic have time to align.

Other examples abound; a legally enforced *confirm* stage applies to certain real estate transactions, called the "cooling-off period." If we put a new label on age-old human processes, it can help make clear connections.

Now for a different encounter between potential love birds. In this alternate version of events, the steps are compressed and swiftly executed. This exchange ends differently as well . . .

“Hi there?”

“Get lost, loser!”

“Huh, snob. Whatever!”

Let’s replay those events in “mind cam,” super slow-motion to see *inform*, *select*, *confirm* at work. The *select* stage was predetermined before the night out, and one glance of “inform” triggered the “preselected” action. After this prickly incident, conversation with respective friends rationalized and “confirmed” their assumptions.

One good person meets a loser.

The other nice person meets a snob.

(And both miss the opportunity for discovery.)

Apart from slow motion, what can we do to make sense of our world? Different perspectives make all the difference. Imagine walking along a path, and off to the side a well-cared-for garden of colorful flowers takes your eye. A classic technique to change our outlook can be to stop and “*smell the roses.*”

Let’s move inside, imagine being in the audience at a magic show. Cosentino and Dynamo are two of the finest. The front row provides the best opportunity for a sense of wonder and entertainment. Now imagine someone in the audience wanted to discover how it works. Sneaking backstage past the security team might be tricky, but that’s the magic of imagination.

From a backstage view, the slight-of-hand might still be hidden; however, a new perspective reveals the action behind the scenes. Likewise, the view from an airplane window or peering into a microscope can change your perspective on the ordinary. Even the Process Monkey takes a moment to look at life from a new angle.



Examples Everywhere

The pressure of time and money forces us to look down and focus on the details of a problem. Thinking in boxes forces us to believe that more detail is the only way to go. The minimum requirement: assess the problem, gather information, analyze and compare options, evaluate courses of action, decide on a strategy, allocate resources, implement a plan, and progressively review the outcome.

Inform, Select, Confirm provides a natural alternative, a simple framework for the CEO or the new recruit. A flexible framework, not a rigid formula to be applied with absolute precision. It takes a bird's-eye view to summarize the factors, a tool to rise above the pressure, a way to refocus our decisions at a higher level to add simplicity and clarity. A different perspective allows us to escape the confines of conventional limitations for a few minutes before we dive back down into the details. The details may change, yet the big picture remains consistent.

For those who need it, *Inform, Select, Confirm* supplies an antidote for analysis paralysis. "Select" provides a gentle nudge to move forward and counters the dominant mind-set of specialization that demands more and more analysis.

At the other extreme, “confirm” can add caution to a hasty decision. *Inform, Select, Confirm* applies a handbrake for impetuous, time-constricted decisions. Remember Confirm, and slow down if you have to.

Inform, Select, Confirm takes a new perspective on the ordinary events of life and business. The more you do it, the better you get . . . and the better you get, the more you do it. A powerful, simple tool to create a good habit. If everyone in the organization uses it, a new quality will flow into corporate culture. On this voyage of discovery, the language of decisions has been expanded.

Inform, Select, Confirm provides a firm base for contract management. Stand back with a bird’s-eye view, gather the team and focus the effort:

- Business need, statement of work and expression of interest (*inform*)
- Tender evaluation and signature (*select*)
- Manage performance and resolve disputes (*confirm*)

