

Standard+Case and Cynefin

Rob England

An extract from the book

Plus! The Standard+Case Approach

ISBN-13: 978-1482061741

V1

© Copyright 2013 Two Hills Ltd

www.twohills.co.nz

The moral rights of the author, Robin D. England, publishing as Rob England, are asserted.
All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author.

The IT Skeptic is a trademark of Two Hills Ltd.

ITIL® is a Registered Trade Mark and a Registered Community Trade Mark of the UK Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom and other countries.

COBIT® is a Registered Trade Mark of the Information Systems Audit and Control Association and the IT Governance Institute.

USMBOK™ is a trademark of the SM101.

CMM® and CMMI® are Registered Trade Marks of Carnegie Mellon University.

ISO® is a Registered Trade Mark of the International Organisation for Standardisation.

KCS was developed by the Consortium for Service Innovation, www.serviceinnovation.org

KCSsm and Adaptive Organizationsm are service marks of the [Consortium for Service Innovation](http://www.serviceinnovation.org)™.

A new paradigm

Standard+Case, or “S+C” for short, is a universal approach to responding to situations. Although Standard+Case applies to any response situation anywhere, this paper is written primarily from the perspective of IT Service Management (ITSM). Standard+Case is an exciting new paradigm for categorising and resolving any sort of response "tickets", such as service desk requests (including incidents), problems, or operational changes. The phrase “a new paradigm” gets much over-used but this time it applies.

Despite decades of growing sophistication in ITSM, customer and user satisfaction with IT support remain generally low. Standard+Case seeks to increase flexibility of response and better handle complex and unusual situations, in order to better serve customers. Our traditional ITSM approaches

...struggle when it comes to addressing lower volume, unpredictable and sometimes highly complex requests. This is however the current customer service pain point and is where customer service champions excel ... through the empowerment of their employees.¹

Standard+Case is a step-change in our thinking about IT Service Management². It is about applying a body of knowledge called Case Management to ITSM, synthesising it with our existing process-centric approach.

It addresses criticisms of ITSM approaches like ITIL³ for being too process-centric and not allowing customers and knowledge workers to be empowered to get the job done. Many IT professionals see ITSM as the imposition of constraints - stifling creativity and innovation.

Standard+Case does not seek to replace or change ITIL or other theory: it expands and clarifies that theory to provide a more complete description of managing responses. The Case side of Standard+Case provides a space for people to demonstrate expertise, initiative and originality.

Standard+Case applies to anything that requires a human response: there's either a standard response or there isn't.

¹ *Using Case Management to Empower Employees and transform Customer Service*, Kofax, www.kofax.com

² The definitive description of service management, IT or otherwise, is the *USMBOK, Guide to the Universal Service Management Body of Knowledge*, I Clayton. See bibliography

³ ITIL® is a Registered Trade Mark and a Registered Community Trade Mark of the UK Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom and other countries. The IT Infrastructure Library is a publication suite produced by the British Government over the last 20 years, now owned by the UK Cabinet Office <http://www.best-management-practice.com/IT-Service-Management-ITIL/>. There are no good online introductions to ITIL, in the author's opinion. Wikipedia is awful, bordering on wrong. See the bibliography.

The Standard+Case Approach

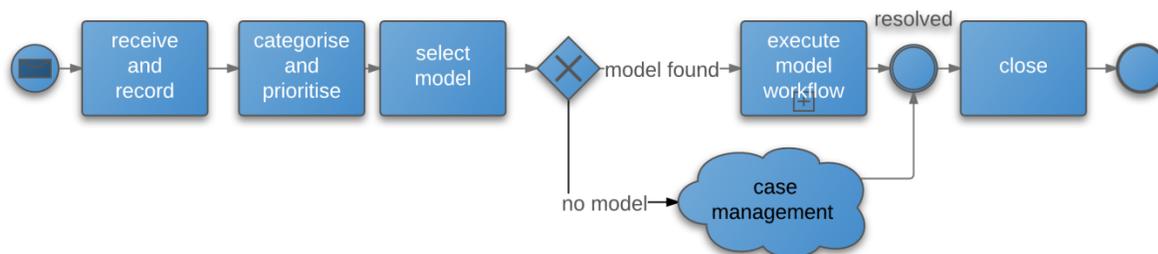
The combination of Standard and Case concepts gives a complete description of response handling, for any sort of activity that requires a human response.

- **Standard responses** are predefined because they deal with a known situation. They use a standardised process (and procedures) to deal with that situation. They can be modelled by BPM, controlled by workflow, and improved by the likes of Six Sigma, Lean IT and ITIL.
- **Case responses** present an unknown or unfamiliar situation where there is no predefined process. Cases demand knowledge, skills and professionalism of the person dealing with them. They are best dealt with by Case Management, being knowledge-driven and empowering the operator to decide on suitable approaches, tools, procedures and process fragments.

We look for a standard model of how to deal with a situation. If we can't find one, then we switch to dealing with it as a case. That's Standard+Case.

That gives us two complementary approaches to dealing with any situation that requires response: one or other approach will be suitable. A computer operator monitoring a console knows how to deal with a failed SAN disk so they take the standard action, but an unfamiliar message from a server causes them to pass it to an expert.

For the visual amongst us, when we combine the generic Standard process we talked about in "Standard Models" with Case Management, the process will now look like this:



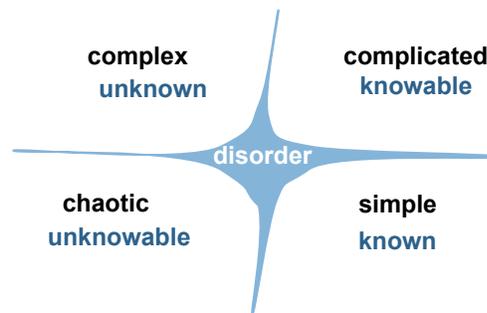
Cynefin

The Cynefin model gives us a generic description of the world and how we deal with it¹. It applies to systems (in the broadest sense), situations, and our responses. According to Wikipedia²

The Cynefin framework has five domains. The first four domains are:

- **Simple**, in which the relationship between cause and effect is obvious to all, the approach is to Sense - Categorise - Respond and we can apply best practice.
- **Complicated**, in which the relationship between cause and effect requires analysis or some other form of investigation and/or the application of expert knowledge, the approach is to Sense - Analyse - Respond and we can apply good practice.
- **Complex**, in which the relationship between cause and effect can only be perceived in retrospect, but not in advance, the approach is to Probe - Sense - Respond and we can sense emergent practice.
- **Chaotic**, in which there is no relationship between cause and effect at systems level, the approach is to Act - Sense - Respond and we can discover novel practice.

The fifth domain is **Disorder**, which is the state of not knowing what type of causality exists, in which state people will revert to their own comfort zone in making a decision.



We would use the Standard approach to deal with Simple situations and many Complicated ones, and Case Management to deal with all the other domains, especially the Complex and Chaotic conditions.

¹ There are many other similar models. As well as the ones in this book, see also:

- Tom Graves' SCAN framework <http://weblog.tetradian.com/tag/scan/>
Everyday Enterprise-Architecture: sensemaking, strategy, structures and solutions, T. Graves, Tetradian 2010, 978-1906681241
- Ralph Stacey's Agreement and Certainty Matrix <http://business-survival-toolkit.co.uk/stage-three/change-management/the-agreement-certainty-matrix>
- Jurgen Appelo's Simplicity model <http://www.noop.nl/2010/09/simplicity-a-new-model.html>
- Dee Hock's Chaordic model <http://www.chaordic.org/definitions.html>

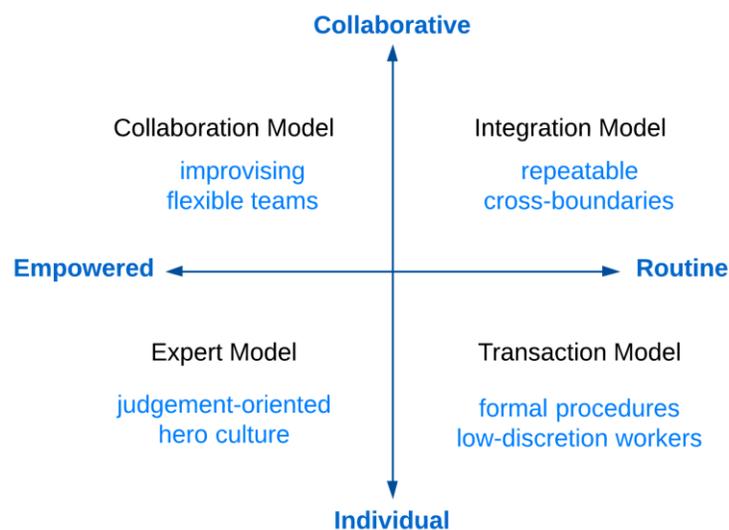
² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynefin>

A booking for a training course is Simple. A request for a whole new course to be designed is Complicated. A request to invent a new way of delivering courses is Complex. A writ to shut the company down for copyright violations is Chaotic. Disorder is when their lawyers lock the doors and seize all the computers.

In the Complex situation we find ourselves in an unknown state so we have no techniques or knowledge to use as resources. We need to explore and learn how to deal with it.

In the Complicated situation, the state is knowable. I also call this “unfamiliar”. We need to use existing resources to determine enough information to make the situation known, and possibly transform it into a Simple situation.

Another similar model is Davenport’s classification of knowledge processes¹, which I reshape here to show the comparison with the Cynefin model:



S+C challenges our desire to make life simple and defined. It just isn't. You can't standardise everything, no matter how you try. Does that make it harder to forecast, plan, manage, and budget? Sure. Welcome to real life.

S+C is about formalising the limits of what we can standardise, and ring-fencing the remaining non-standard stuff to minimise its impact and improve our handling of it.

¹ *Thinking for a Living*. See Bibliography

Beyond S+C

A spectrum

Standard+Case is a simplistic two-sided model. Organisations that use S+C will evolve to a more graduated approach, where Standard and Case are seen as the two ends of a spectrum of possible approaches to a response.

As the approach to responding becomes more sophisticated over time, the rules can allow limited degrees of freedom somewhere between Standard and Case. Workers following Standard models can have a degree of discretion and flexibility around how to respond depending on the situation and the needs of the user. Some standardisation of case work can be introduced to manage the amount of variation and improve quality.

Unknown and unfamiliar

Case Management is being used in this book as an umbrella description for dealing with responses to what Cynefin would classify as Complicated, Complex, Chaotic and Disordered situations – all the situations except Simple ones.

Most of the time when we are managing a response it will be Simple, Complicated or Complex. Chaotic and Disordered are special cases we will deal with later.

In some situations we do not have enough information to know if we can deal with the situation in a Standard way - it is Complex and Unknown. We must use our knowledge and skills to find out more, to better define the situation, to develop new discoveries and methods so that we can make it knowable. After we have enough information, we can determine whether it is a Complicated Knowable situation, or a Known Simple One. That would be a new state for the case.

Note that the Standard+Case model is that we don't switch to Case Management until the Resolve step of the response-handling process. This means the diagnostic step is not using Case Management, even though we may be in an unknown state during the diagnosis. It is only if we progress through diagnosis and decide we cannot categorise the response, that the resolve step then starts out in Unknown state and moves into Case Management as the approach to resolving the situation.

In other situations we have enough information to know what we are dealing with, and to realise that we haven't dealt with this exact situation before. It is Complicated and Knowable - or as we say in this book, Unfamiliar. We need to apply our existing skills and techniques to work out how to resolve this particular situation. After we have enough information, we can fully define how to deal with it, to make it Known and Simple to deal with next time.

So with increasing sophistication in the application of Case Management, the Case approach can be split into two related approaches depending on whether the situation is Unknown or Unfamiliar, with different templates, techniques, and even different case workers.

Chaos and disorder

Chaotic situations are about all hell breaking loose: in other words the early stages of a Major Incident or a Discontinuity (i.e. a situation that Business Continuity plan for). These will be managed outside the realms of normal managed response: they will be managed by specialists and likely draw in resources from all teams in the organisation.

Major Incidents and Discontinuities go through a lifecycle from initial Disorder to increasingly more controlled situations (hopefully). They won't be Simple; they will all be a case. All the Case expertise, resources and techniques can be applied to them.

This would be a useful growth of Case Management capability over time: to contribute to Major Incident Management and Business Continuity Management.

Collaboration

Case Management is inherently more of a collaborative practice than Standard models are. This is part of the broader evolution towards the knowledge-worker organisation. Case requires support for collaboration within teams that cross the organisational boundary. The support must facilitate collaboration as well as recording all the resulting communications for later review and audit.

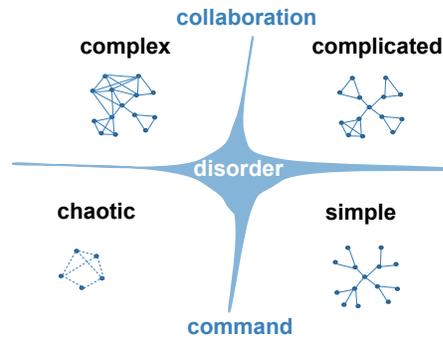
We can look again at the Cynefin model, from the perspective of the social networks within each situation type¹.

We tend to find decentralised networks in all states but Simple. The Simple situation tends to suit a hierarchal "star" network: central management of workers working on assigned tasks.

The Complicated situations tend to have central orchestration as well as local networks, whereas the Complex is typified by multiple networks of workers coming together to explore and develop ideas.

In the Chaotic situation such as an emergency, networks are loosely coupled trying to gain control and move it into another state.

¹ *Managing Structured and Unstructured Processes Under the Same Umbrella*, A.Manuel, in *How Knowledge Workers Get Things Done*, p88



So in situations that are unfamiliar or unknown we need to reduce the central command and control, and allow workers to decentralise and collaborate locally using Case Management. In situations that are known we can take central control and use Standard responses, and in situations that are chaotic we try to find control.

The Confluence Sense-making Framework

The Confluence Sense-making Framework (CSF)¹ is a tool that a team uses to make sense of any situation in order to make decisions about it.

CSF uses a series of questions and a collaborative workshop approach to answering them in order to structure and analyse what we know about a situation.

It is a special way of thinking: it builds and then maps a landscape, looking for structures and states that are similar to the Cynefin model.

¹ <http://www.storycoloredglasses.com/p/confluence-sensemaking-framework.html>
