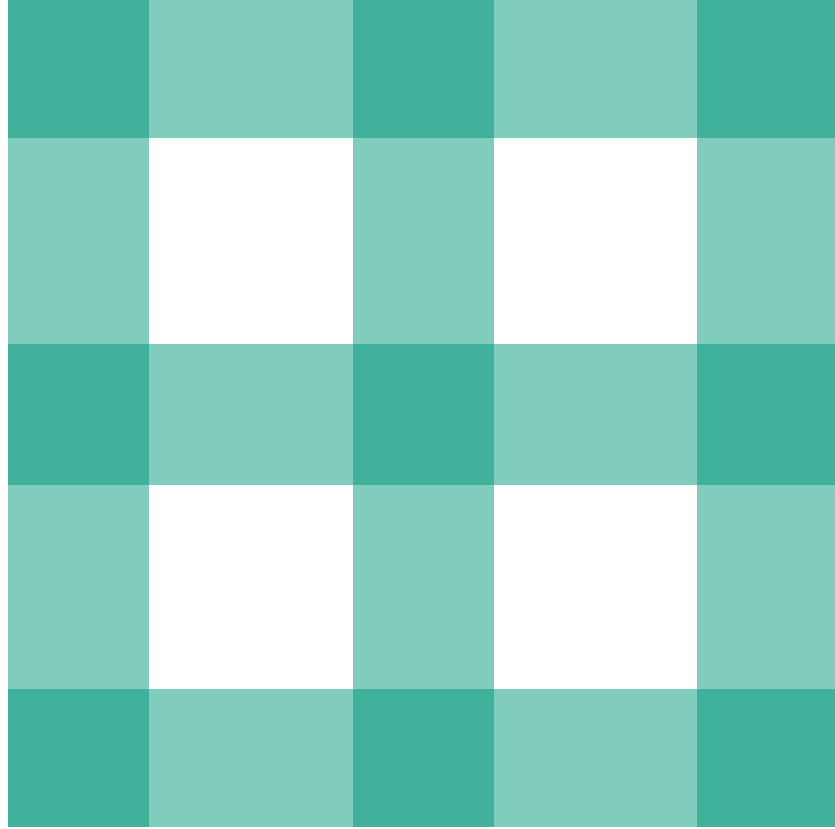




The Agreement/ Certainty Matrix





In other words, given that we do not know with any certainty what is happening, we certainly know about what we are doing to enable us to live in uncertainty.

STACEY, 2010: 2

What's it all about?

The idea was originated by Ralph Stacey as a result of his ongoing concern with complexity and how organisations change over time. The model, sometimes referred to as the Stacey Matrix, considers organisational management from the perspectives of levels of agreement and levels of certainty.

Certainty is driven by the quality of available information that supports management and decision making. Agreement recognises that enterprises are socially-based and dependent on negotiation for their activities.

What's it for?

The matrix encourages you to reflect on the relative levels of certainty and agreement in your enterprise, activities or in a particular project. Using the matrix can support:

- Decision making
- Stakeholder management
- Communicating why particular approaches are being used
- Encouraging creativity and considering different perspectives

Using the tool

The approach involves plotting your projects, decisions or activities on the certainty/agreement axes (Figure 1). Depending on where the projects or activities are placed, a different response is needed in terms of management and decision making.

To assess your business' levels of complexity and agreement, work through the following steps:

1. Map your projects, activities or ideas onto the matrix (Figure 1)
2. Consider the following questions in relation to each of the management/decision-making dimensions.

Telling

- a. How do you know things are this certain?
- a. How do you know what you know?
- a. Have you considered all the necessary variables?
- a. What have you done to ensure that everyone shares a common perspective?
- a. Are you sure there is a common perspective?
- a. What have you done to ensure that you are not blinded by your own vision?
- a. What approaches have you used to assess different perspectives?

Selling

- a. Are you ready to change the people involved if they don't all agree? Would this even be feasible?
- a. How good are you at managing disagreement?
- a. How will you go about selling the project or approach?
- a. How good are your powers of persuasion?

- a. Have you got the time and resources to invest in selling the idea?

Consulting

- a. How will your field or sector evolve?
- b. How can you best respond?
- c. How are you forming your judgements about the future?
- d. Which political decisions will influence your future?
- e. What other environmental factors might be an issue?
- f. Are you open to the levels of research needed?

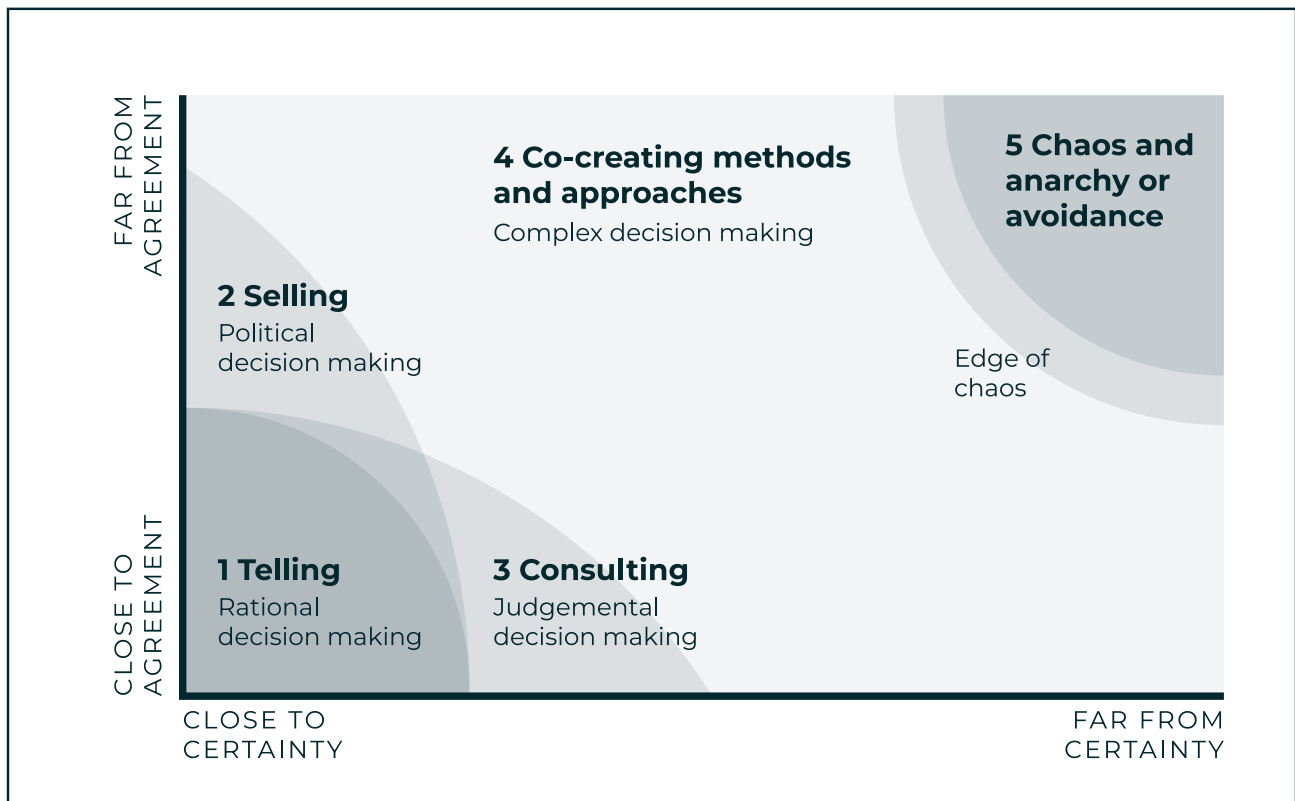
Co-creating

- a. How well are you connected with your stakeholders?
- b. How comfortable are you with change being the norm?
- c. How open and flexible is your business model?
- d. What opportunities do you provide for co-creation?
- e. Are your management practices as creative and innovative as your work?
- f. Are you confident to work intuitively?

Chaos

- a. Are you ready for the collapse of what you have created?
- b. Are you avoiding the very real challenges your business is facing?
- c. Are you ready to let go of any form of certainty?

Figure 1: Stacey's agreement and certainty matrix



What Next?

Think about a project you have recently completed. Looking back, did you have a strong sense of certainty about what was needed? What management approaches did you use? What might you do differently next time, thinking about the levels of uncertainty and agreement?

Quick tips

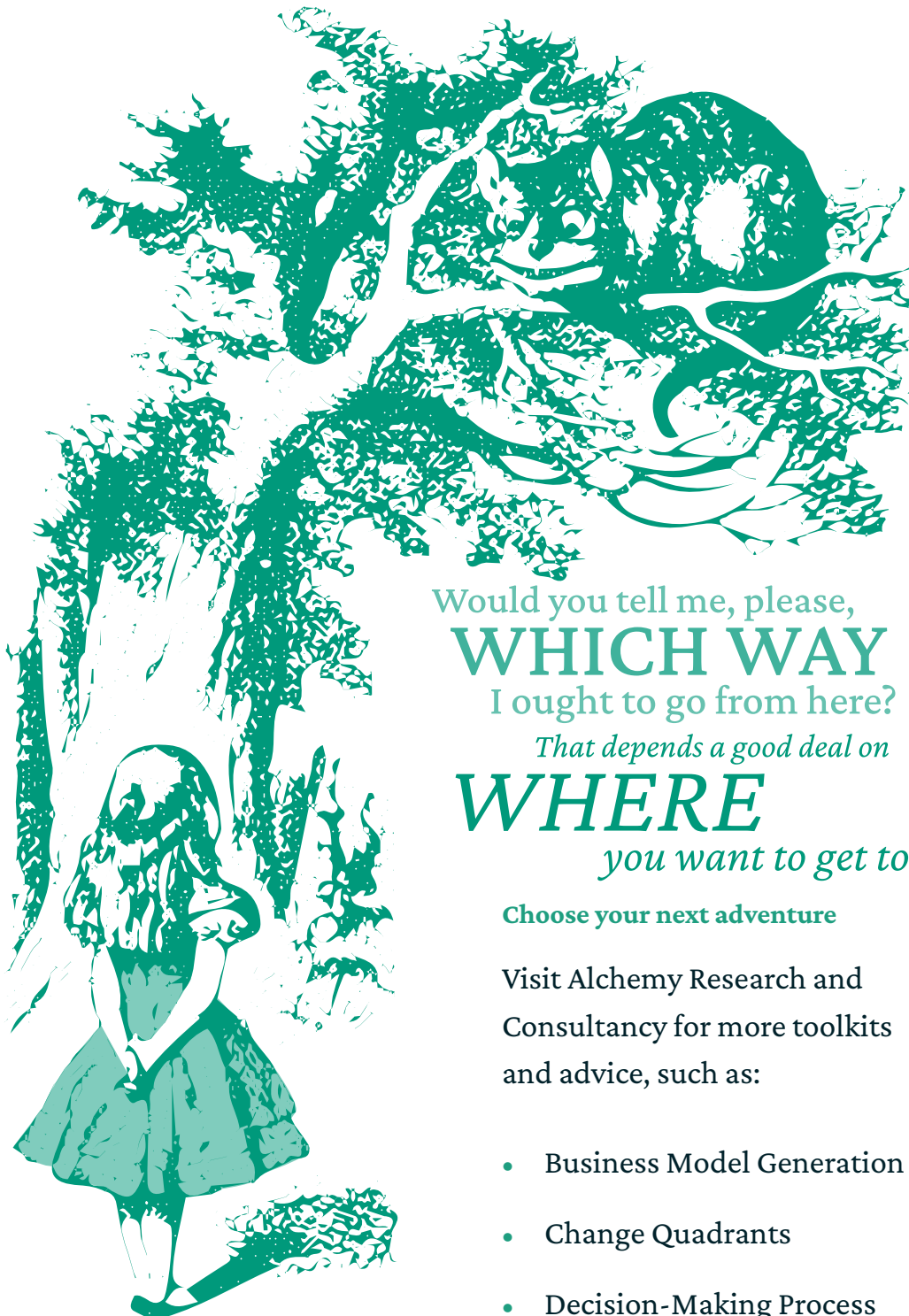
- Don't be put off by uncertainty; try and find different ways of working with it
- Be aware of when you are managing from a rational, decision-making perspective
- There are a range of additional techniques to support each level of decision making. Experiment with different approaches – participatory risk analysis, real time strategic change, future search and so on

References

Stacey, R. (2010). Complexity and Organizational Reality: The Need to Rethink Management after the Collapse of Investment Capitalism. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.



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I ought to go from here?
That depends a good deal on
WHERE
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