Sensemaking Under Uncertainty: Applying the AI Capability Framework

1. Purpose of This Scenario

This scenario supports **leadership and strategy contexts where uncertainty is high and clarity is genuinely unavailable**. It focuses on sensemaking — the collective process of interpreting signals, narratives, and partial evidence — rather than prediction or optimisation.

AI is increasingly used in uncertain contexts to synthesise information, detect patterns, or propose explanations. While this can support exploration, it also risks **false coherence, premature closure, or overconfidence** if AI outputs are mistaken for insight rather than interpretation.

The purpose of this scenario is to help leaders **use AI to support shared sensemaking**, while explicitly holding uncertainty, disagreement, and ambiguity as legitimate and necessary.

This scenario is designed to support:

- Senior leadership teams
- Strategy and foresight groups
- Boards and governors
- Facilitators of complex decision-making processes

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2. Situation & Context

A sensemaking session is convened because:

- the environment is changing in unclear ways
- signals are weak, contradictory, or emerging
- past experience offers limited guidance

Examples include:

- responding to technological disruption
- navigating regulatory or political change
- anticipating long-term societal shifts

In these contexts, pressure often exists to:

- reduce ambiguity quickly
- appear confident and decisive
- settle on a single narrative

AI may be proposed to analyse trends, cluster signals, or generate explanations. How it is used will shape **whether uncertainty is explored productively or prematurely resolved**.

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3. Where AI Might Be Used (and Why That Matters)

AI may be used in sensemaking under uncertainty to:

- cluster weak signals or emerging themes
- summarise diverse sources of information
- generate alternative interpretations or narratives
- surface tensions or contradictions in data

These uses matter because:

- clustering can imply coherence where none exists
- summaries may privilege dominant narratives
- generated explanations can feel convincing but unfounded

This scenario treats AI use in sensemaking as **medium-risk but epistemically sensitive**, requiring careful facilitation and humility.

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4. Applying the AI Capability Framework

4.1 Awareness

Before using AI, leaders should clarify:

- what is genuinely unknown
- what assumptions are being held lightly
- what would count as learning rather than certainty

Key awareness questions:

- Are we seeking understanding or reassurance?
- What are we not yet ready to decide?
- Where might AI outputs give a false sense of clarity?

AI should be used to **expand perspectives**, not to manufacture confidence.

4.2 Human–AI Co-Agency

In sensemaking contexts:

- humans remain responsible for interpretation and meaning
- AI may assist with organising or provoking thought

Good co-agency means:

- leaders frame questions to invite multiple interpretations
- AI outputs are treated as hypotheses, not conclusions
- disagreement and divergence are actively welcomed

Avoid:

- converging too quickly around AI-generated narratives
- treating AI pattern detection as truth

4.3 Applied Practice

Appropriate AI uses include:

- generating multiple, contrasting interpretations
- surfacing anomalies or contradictions
- supporting exploration of different frames

Inappropriate uses include:

- selecting a single “best” explanation
- forecasting outcomes without evidence
- closing down discussion through confident synthesis

AI should support **exploration and curiosity**, not resolution.

4.4 Ethics, Equity & Impact

Uncertainty often affects groups differently.

Use the Framework to ask:

- Whose experiences are shaping our sensemaking?
- Which futures are being centred or marginalised?
- Could AI use amplify dominant perspectives?

Ethical sensemaking attends to **plurality and power**, not just patterns.

4.5 Decision-Making & Governance

Good governance under uncertainty includes:

- clarity about what is exploratory versus decided
- documentation of assumptions and open questions
- explicit review points as understanding evolves

If AI is used:

- record its role in shaping interpretations
- avoid embedding provisional narratives into policy prematurely

This maintains flexibility and accountability.

4.6 Reflection, Learning & Renewal

After sensemaking sessions, reflect:

- Did AI use deepen understanding or narrow it?
- Where did uncertainty remain — and should it?
- How will learning be revisited as conditions change?

Reflection supports **adaptive leadership and ongoing learning**.

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5. In-the-Moment Prompts & Checks

Human reflection prompts

- What stories are we telling ourselves?
- What doesn't fit our current narrative?
- Where should we resist closure?

Optional AI prompts

- "Generate multiple interpretations of these signals without prioritising them."
- "Highlight contradictions or tensions across these data sources."

Pause & check

- Are we mistaking coherence for insight?
- Is AI helping us hold uncertainty productively?

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6. After-Action Reflection

Following sensemaking sessions:

- What insights feel robust versus provisional?
- What questions should remain open?
- How will we revisit this sensemaking?

Ensure outputs feed into future strategic reviews, not premature decisions.

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7. What This Scenario Delivers

This scenario helps organisations:

- engage uncertainty without rushing to closure
- use AI to support collective sensemaking responsibly
- avoid false certainty and narrative lock-in
- strengthen strategic humility and adaptability
- build mature AI capability for complex, ambiguous contexts

About CloudPedagogy

CloudPedagogy develops practical, ethical, and future-ready AI capability across education, research, and public service.

This scenario is part of the AI Capability Framework Scenario Library, supporting applied, context-sensitive practice using the CloudPedagogy AI Capability Framework (2026 Edition).

Framework: https://www.cloudpedagogy.com/pages/ai-capability-framework