# **Strategic Complexity Framework**

Who you are, where you are, and what scale you are at governs your strategic potential **for Dummies** 

#### All risks are not equal

Understanding the risks your organisation faces and the strategies for dealing with them depends upon your ability to recognise the kind of problems you face, then applying the right kind of response to the right kind of problem.

All organisations and environments go through cycles of slow growth and rapid change. Each part of the cycle demands different types of knowledge and response.

Scientists have identified remarkably similar patterns of change in a wide variety of complex systems; ranging from ecosystems (Gunderson & Holling, 2001) to technology markets (Christensen, 1997) and firm performance (Hurst, 2002).

These patterns were best summarised in Gunderson & Holling's landmark theory of adaptive change, *Panarchy* (grey background image to the right).

#### Complex

Problems and solutions evolving No right answers Experimental practice Lightly bounded action Probe – Sense - Respond Skills: 10,000 hrs (5 years)

FICKLE

## Complicated

Problems open ended A range of possible answers Requires analysis and investigation Bounded action Sense – Analyse – Respond Skills: 1,000 hrs (6 months)

HARD

Snowden (2009) was then among the first to translate these ideas into knowledge management principles, through his related but distinct *Cynefin Framework*.

Combining lessons from both provides a new framework for understanding what class of risks you face and what kinds of strategies are most effective at dealing with them.

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### **Simple**

Problems and answers well known One or a few right answers Bureaucratic practice (SOP) Constrained action Sense – Categorise - Respond Skills: 10 hrs

SIMPLE

Chaotic

Unclear what are data No answers Novel practice, crisis management Creative action Act – Sense - Respond Skills: Instinctual

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