

The 'how' of multiple leader sensegiving and strategic change

Dr Karl Anderson and Professor Robert J. Galavan

For organizational leaders, managing strategic change is a primary management activity (By, 2005). Reflecting its significance as a management function, there is now a substantial body of literature and many dynamic models and 'recipes' advising managers how to lead and implement strategic change. These models present an ordered macro approach to what, in reality, is a highly complex, recursive and messy process. In this chapter we eschew these neatly packaged change management processes and explore the micro level arguments of leaders as they grapple with the uncertainty of strategic change and seek to give primacy to their sense of the change and related issues. Based on the findings of our extensive micro level study, we present a theoretical model which explains the mechanisms that underpin this important activity.

Keywords: Sensegiving, sensemaking, leadership, change, strategy, uncertainty

Introduction

The literature on organizational change is vast and "abounds with complexities, including multiple and conflicting theories and research findings and a good bit of inconclusiveness" (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006: p. 168). It is underdeveloped (Pettigrew et al., 2001 p.697) and "it is difficult to identify any consensus" (By, 2005 p. 370). In a withering critique, Wetzel and Van Gorp (2014) argue that organizational change research is in "a state of helplessness" (p. 132) because it has held on to its rationalistic views and not kept up with developments in organizational theory.

Even with these criticisms, rationalistic models of strategic change are widely used by practitioners as they attempt to put order on the gnarly process of change management, replete with many moving parts, often pulling in opposite directions. Kotter's (1995) eight-step model "remains a key reference in the field of change management" (Appelbaum et al., 2012: p.765) and provides a rationalised comfort to those leading change.

Despite the attraction of these models for practitioners, they offer an extremely limited lens. They focus primarily on change agents (Bartunek et al., 2006) and they inadequately account for factors that influence actor meaning making (Weick, 1995) and sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). They fail to engage with the unpredictability of actor behavior (Plowman et al., 2007), the nature of resistance (Jansson, 2013) and the overall messiness of change (Rowland and Higgs, 2008). They also struggle to take sufficient account of the social, cultural and contextual forces which remain active "despite attempts to produce "top-down" and authoritative renderings of the change management process" (Collins and Rainwater, 2005: p. 19).

To address some of these limitations and provide a richer understanding of the micro aspects of strategic change, we adopt sensemaking as a “concept, approach, lens or theory” (Brown et al., 2015: p 266). We find that sensemaking and in particular its less studied counterpoint, sensegiving, offers a window through which we can examine in fine detail the behavior of leaders engaged in the complexities of strategic change. The sensemaking – sensegiving lens enables us to unpack and reveal the building blocks used by actors when competing to have their sense of a strategic change be the dominant sense. It enables us to move beyond describing the forces at play, such as power and politics, or techniques such as framing, and get at the inner workings of this important competitive leadership behavior.

Using this approach we have developed a model which offers new insights into the complexity of how actors attempt to give sense in a competitive multi leader environment. The model highlights that when leaders are competing to have their sense of a strategic change prevail, this sense is not given as a neat tailored cognition. This sense emerges from an on-going pattern of interconnected meaning giving, sense creation and articulation episodes which have common sensegiving targets as their focal point. While the examples of the meaning giving and sense creation episodes outlined are just a snapshot of the episodes from the complete data set, they support the efficacy of the model presented.

Sensemaking – Sensegiving

Sensemaking, pioneered by Weick (1995), provides a valuable lens through which we can observe the complex, unpredictable and sometimes ambiguous behavior of actors in organizations facing the uncertainty of strategic change. It is “the process through which individuals work to understand novel, unexpected, or confusing events” (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014: p. 53). On the other side of the coin so to speak is sensegiving. This is the process actors use to influence the sensemaking of others. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) define sensegiving as “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (p. 442). Research that is underpinned by sensegiving provides an opportunity to move the field forward from the characterization of the CEO “as formulator and implementer of strategic change” (p. 433) to one which acknowledges the role of the cognitions and learning of social actors.

The sensegiving literature is rich in its discussions on what actors do when they attempt to give sense to change. Most studies concentrate on change (planned or imposed as a consequence of a crisis) within organizations and changes occurring as a result of mergers. These studies adopt a linear hierarchical view of the organizational relationships between actor groups; top management teams, middle managers and frontline staff. Middle management has been an active area of sensegiving scholarship. The subject has been approached from a number of perspectives; middle managers as mediators between top and lower level employees (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Balogun, 2005) shaping change from below through upward issues selling (Dutton et al., 2001); the use of politics by middle managers when sensegiving (Hope, 2010) and middle manager sensegiving to customers (Rouleau, 2005). Studies on the processes that underpin how leaders go about giving sense in a multiple leader context are scarce. Research has to a large degree concentrated on the communicative actions and has not delved into the deep structures and micro processes of sensegiving behaviour. As a result we don't know much about how sensegivers go about attempting to give sense. This chapter addresses these two gaps by

revealing how leaders attempt to give sense to strategic change when multiple organisations and their leaders (e.g. CEOs, union leaders, political leaders and lobby group leaders) are competing to have their sense prevail. Given the significant changes that are occurring across many industries such as telecommunication, air travel, health, education, finance and which involve sensegiving by multiple leaders (e.g. business leaders, government officials, unions, media, consumer and environmental groups) this is a significant gap in our knowledge.

Case Study

We examine sensegiving behaviour in a case involving strategic discontinuous change in a part of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Ireland. The HSE is Ireland's public health service provider, which at the time had an annual budget of €13 billion. Part of the HSE's remit is to manage the national system for subsidised medicines. The system operates through manufacturers, wholesalers and pharmacists with whom the HSE agrees costs and pays substantial subsidies on behalf of the state. Overtime the industry had developed a mode of operation where significant portions of the margins paid to wholesalers were being passed on to pharmacists. The HSE sought to change this arrangement and implement changes designed to save the public health system €100 million per year. These changes would also reduce the power of wholesalers and pharmacists and thus enable the HSE to exercise more control over the costs associated with the subsidised medicine schemes.

Following very significant public debate around the changes the Irish Government's Committee on Health and Children and its Public Accounts Committee took a keen interest in the changes. The committees invited leaders from the HSE, which was proposing the change, and the pharmacy industry, which was resisting the change, to present their positions in person. These meetings provided a unique opportunity to access the sensegiving approaches adopted by the proponents (HSE), opponents (pharmacists), and politicians, to this impactful and significant change. The meetings provided real time data of multiple leader sensegiving behavior suitable for a case study analysis (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The case study data set consisted of the verbatim transcripts of 11 committee meetings (totalling approximately 80,000 words), that took place between 15th February 2007 and 19th March 2008. Each of the 11 meetings meeting lasted between 2 and 6 hours and involved at least one of the three stakeholder groups; Members of the Committee, who were elected politicians, the leaders of the HSE and the leaders of the Irish Pharmaceutical Union (IPU) which represented pharmacists.

The meetings followed a consistent format. They started with a formal statement of between five and ten minutes from the leaders of the stakeholder groups followed by a series of questions, statements and opinions from the Members of the Committee to the stakeholder groups in attendance. The three stakeholder groups used their responses to attempt to have their sense of the strategic change prevail.

Research Method

In the absence of an accepted method to analyze naturally occurring sensegiving behavior we developed a novel method to code all utterances in the data set in a consistent and rigorous fashion. Traditional approaches to coding in this field suggested that we concentrate on utterances believed to have a sensegiving function, such as frames (Kaplan, 2008). As it does not necessarily follow that utterances that are presumed not to have a

sensegiving function do not actually have a sensegiving function, we were not satisfied that this approach could uncover important sensegiving mechanisms which may exist but have not yet been identified. While coding all utterances is time consuming, it is more thorough and removes the risks associated with limiting the scope of the analysis. In particular this approach enables patterns and relationships between utterances to be considered at a micro level, and the complete corpus of utterances to be considered at a macro level to identify patterns and relationships which may not be visible from micro level analysis. We were ultimately rewarded for taking this approach. An important finding that emerges from this study is the presence and role of sensegiving targets in multi leader sensegiving events. These sensegiving targets could not have been identified if the data analysis method focused only on utterances that were presumed to have a sensegiving function.

The coding method developed drew on key elements of Toulmin's (1958) model of argumentation (Claims, Warrants and Grounds). Claims set out propositions, assertions, arguments, points of information or points of view which are potentially controversial, disputable or likely to be challenged. Grounds is the umbrella term for data and evidence which supports a Claim and is visible in the text. These can come in the form of facts, common knowledge or opinion. Depending on the context of the utterance, Grounds can also be a Claim and a Claim can also be Grounds. Warrants are what link the Grounds to the Claim. Warrants “authorize the logical jump between the Claim and its Grounds” (Fletcher and Huff, 1994: p. 360). They answer the questions “‘What have you got to go on?’ and ‘How do you get there?’” (Toulmin, 1958: p. 91). However by their nature most Warrants are implicit; they are not visible from the text and have to be inferred by the coder. Warrants reflect the complexity of Toulmin’s (1958) model which simultaneously seeks generalized and systemic rationality, and at the same time needs locally and historically contextualized understanding of implicit warrants. Given the difficulties in identifying Warrants and the questionable reliability of identified Warrants we eliminated them from our coding. As we wanted to code all utterances we also extended the coding to include Statement to capture utterances that were not Claims.

In the first instance each utterance was therefore identified as a Claim or a Statement (Figure 1). Claims were further coded depending on whether they were supported by Grounds.

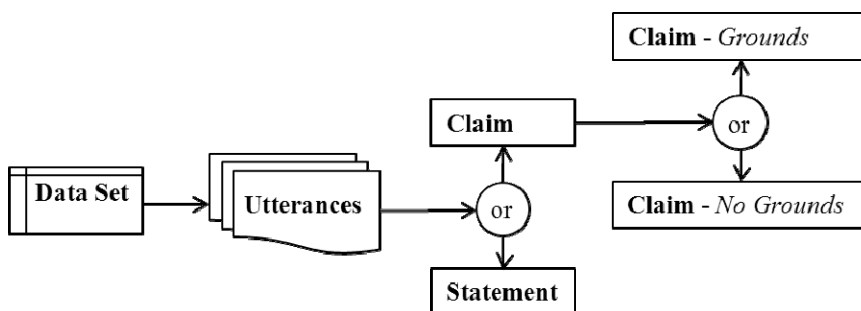


Figure 1: Each utterance was initially identified as a Claim, with or without Grounds, or a Statement.

Having eliminated the coding of Warrants because of their slipperiness, we still believe in their central role in Toulmin's (1958) model as they give claims their persuasive potency. While it is difficult to make explicit the implicit warranted connection between a claim and clause, we used the structure of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos and pathos) to identify the persuasive appeals underpinning Claims which were supported by Grounds. Rhetorical appeals underpinned by ethos rely on the use of the actor's credentials, subject expertise and authority, or those of other sources. Appeals underpinned by logos rely on facts and rational reasoning and pathos appeals rely on fairness, or the lack it, and emotions such as anger, sadness, loss, greed, fear, indignation. Aristotelian rhetorical appeals share common objectives with sensegiving; both use language (although not exclusively) and both seek to create meaning for cues and influence how others incorporate these meaning into their sensemaking behaviours. The literature on rhetoric in sensegiving environments (Green, 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005) supports this commonality; "through rhetoric, speakers shape, justify, rationalize and seek to modify perceptions of what is sensible, right and good (i.e. legitimate) (Green et al., 2009)" (Brown et al., 2012: p. 300).

Using this approach, two trained researchers simultaneously coded the complete 80,000 word data set. Each utterance was given a unique sequential number and assigned to a speaker in one of three stakeholder groups; HSE, IPU or Politicians. An utterance usually consisted of a sentence. If a sentence contained more than one Statement or Claim it was divided accordingly. Each utterance was assigned one of 10 unique codes (see Table 1). There were six claim codes and four statement codes for coders to choose from. Utterances received an additional code if they were directed at one of ten common sensegiving targets identified during initial data analysis. A process of discussion-consensus formation was initiated when coding disagreements arose.

Code No	Code	Description
	Claims	
1	CL – NG	A claim but no grounds provided.
2	CL – NG Question*	A claim in the form of a question but no grounds provided.
3	CL – NG Report*	A claim which makes a reference to a view, position, opinion, report of another or an existing arrangement or procedure but no grounds provided.
4	CL – P (Pathos)	A claim which is supported by grounds and the relationship between the grounds and the claim is underpinned by an appeal to emotion.
5	CL – L (Logos)	A claim which is supported by grounds and the relationship between the grounds and the claim is underpinned by an appeal to logic.
6	CL – E (Ethos)	A claim which is supported by grounds and the relationship between the grounds and the claim is underpinned by appeals to the credibility/authority of the speaker or that of another source.
	Statements	
7	St – Fact	A statement which an audience is likely to accept as valid and unlikely to be considered controversial or argued against.
8	St – Opinion	A statement which represents the speakers view, opinion, wish or desire and which is unlikely to be considered controversial or argued against.
9	St – Report	A statement which makes a reference to a view, position, opinion, report of another or an existing arrangement or procedure which is unlikely to be controversial and/or argued against.

10	St Question	A statement which is made in the form of a question which is unlikely to be controversial or argued against.
	Sensegiving Targets	Utterances
	HSE	Directed at the HSE.
	IPU	Directed at the IPU
	Change	Directed at the change being discussed
	Solution	Directed at a solution to the disagreement
	Impact	Directed at the impact of the change
	Interim Contract	Directed at the interim contract with pharmacists
	Post Change Costs	Directed at the cost of the change on stakeholders
	Motion	Directed at a Committee motion against the change
	The Shipsey Process	Directed at a process chaired by Mr Shipsey
	The Indecon Report	Directed at the independent report by Indecon

Table 1: Coding guide.

Analysis and findings

Analysis of the coded data was carried out in three steps with each step adopting a progressively more abstract approach in a fashion similar to moving up Carney's (1990) "ladder of abstraction" (in Miles and Huberman, 1994: p. 91).

Step 1

The first approach to data analysis involved numerical and visual representations of the coded data (tables and graphs). Through reflection and reference back to the data set, a number of variations in the argument and rhetorical strategies used by proponents and opponents emerged.

We found that:

- Proponents of the strategic change made proportionately less claims and more statements than opponents.
- Proponents made proportionately more statements supported by facts and less statements based on opinion than opponents.
- Although proponents made proportionately less claims than opponents, a larger proportion of the claims they made were supported by grounds.
- Most of the claims made by proponents which were supported by grounds, used ethos as a rhetorical appeal. Opponents used pathos (IPU 29% and Politicians 28%) as a rhetorical appeal significantly more than proponents (4%).
- Just 8% of all utterances made were claims were supported by grounds.

These findings provide insights into the idiosyncratic approaches adopted by the different stakeholder groups in their efforts to give sense to the same strategic change. They identify sensegiving behaviour as a deeply contextualized activity in the domain of the empirical (Bhaskar, 1978). While these findings extend our

understanding of sensegiving, our intent was to uncover the mechanisms underpinning these observed behaviors and further analysis was required.

Step 2

During Step 1 of the data coding it was confirmed that most of the utterances made by speakers were directed at identifiable targets: actions, conditions, entities and concepts (Fletcher and Huff,1994). Collectively we labelled these targets ‘sensegiving targets’. Step 2 focused on a numerical analysis of the utterances directed at the 10 most common sensegiving targets. It found that 75% of all of the utterances made by all actors were directed at these 10 targets (Figure 2). 80% of these utterances were directed at five sensegiving targets; two related to participating stakeholders (HSE and IPU) and three related to issues directly associated with the change (the Change, the Solution and the Impact).

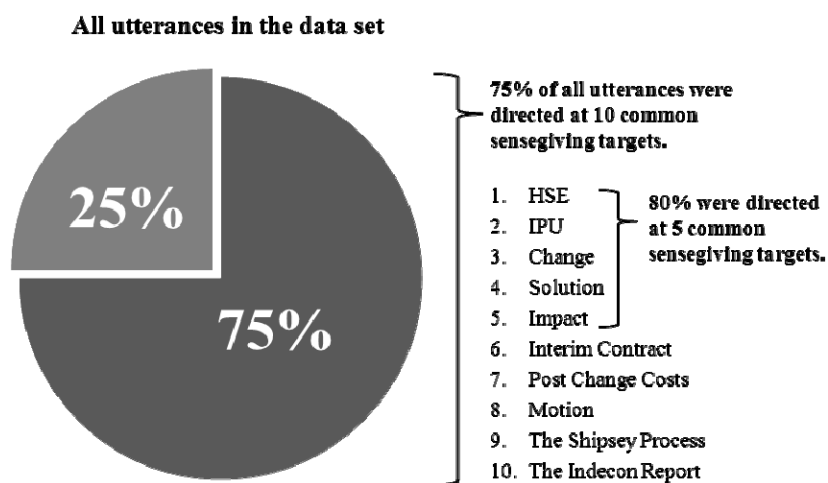


Figure 2: 75% of the utterances were directed at 10 common Sensegiving Targets and 80% of this 75% were directed at five common sensegiving targets.

We found that there were significant differences in the proportion of utterances that each stakeholder group directed at these five targets. Figure 3 shows the proportion of each stakeholder group’s utterances that were directed at each target.

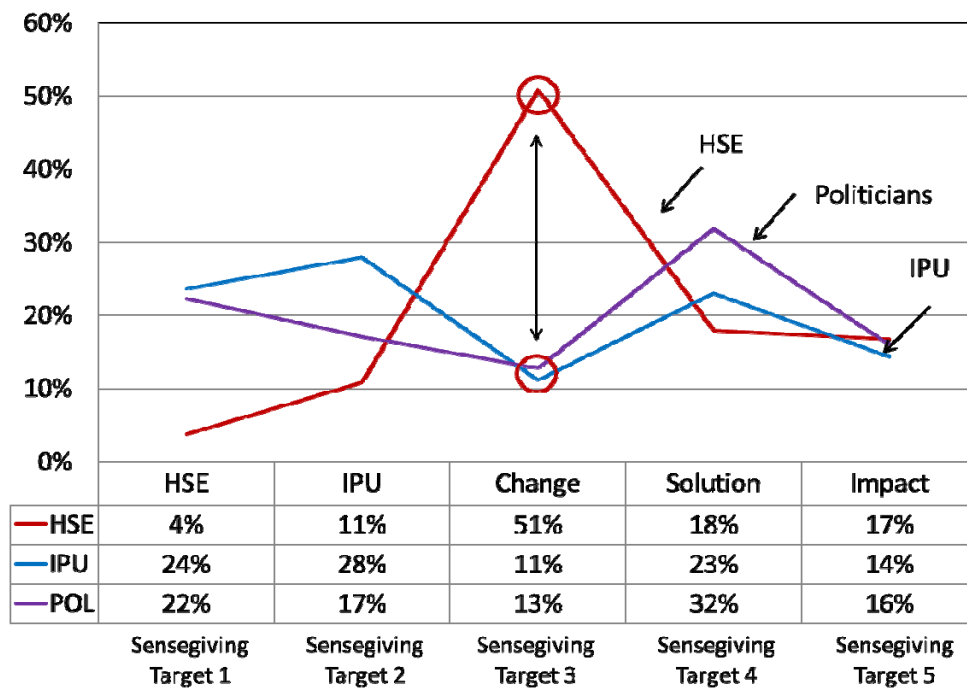


Figure 3: Proportion of utterances that each stakeholder group directed at the five most common sensegiving targets.

Speakers from the HSE group directed over half of their utterances directly at the Change (51%) being proposed, and significantly less to the Solution (18%) and the Impact (17%). In stark contrast, the efforts of the IPU and Politicians to give sense directly to the Change being proposed were relatively low at 11% and 13% respectively.

Most of the utterances from speakers from the IPU group were directed at creating sense for the IPU itself (28%), the HSE (24%) next, and then its preferred Solution (23%). The IPU's preferred solution was to have the Change paused and for what speakers referred to as 'real' negotiation to be initiated.

Speakers from the Politicians group did not attempt to create sense for the Change directly; their utterances focused on the way the Change was being implemented and not its content. Most of their utterances were directed at their proposed Solution (32%), followed by the HSE (22%) and IPU (17%).

These findings show that different stakeholder groups had different relationships with the same sensegiving targets.

Step 3

To explore these relationships and extend our understanding beyond quantification of utterances directed at the sensegiving targets, we analyzed in detail how each stakeholder group approached and treated each of the five

most common targets. This analysis revealed three mechanisms underpinning their behaviour, and represent the study's key findings

1. The creation of sense for sensegiving targets was frequently preceded by meaning giving to past behaviors, events, outcomes, laws, anecdotes, reports and future predictions. The meaning given frequently acted as a platform for sense creation for the sensegiving targets.
2. Meaning giving and sense creation episodes were interconnected.
3. Proponents and opponents were observed to create different meanings for the same environmental cues (stimuli in an actor's external environment which triggers a meaning and/or sensegiving episode) and different senses for the same targets.

Below we outline examples which reflect the presence of these three mechanisms.

Mechanism 1 & 2: Meaning giving and sense creation, and their interconnection

Figure 4 highlights some of the environmental cues that speakers from the HSE group gave meaning to. These meanings acted as a platform for the sense they created for the five common sensegiving targets. These episodes were connected vertically and horizontally.

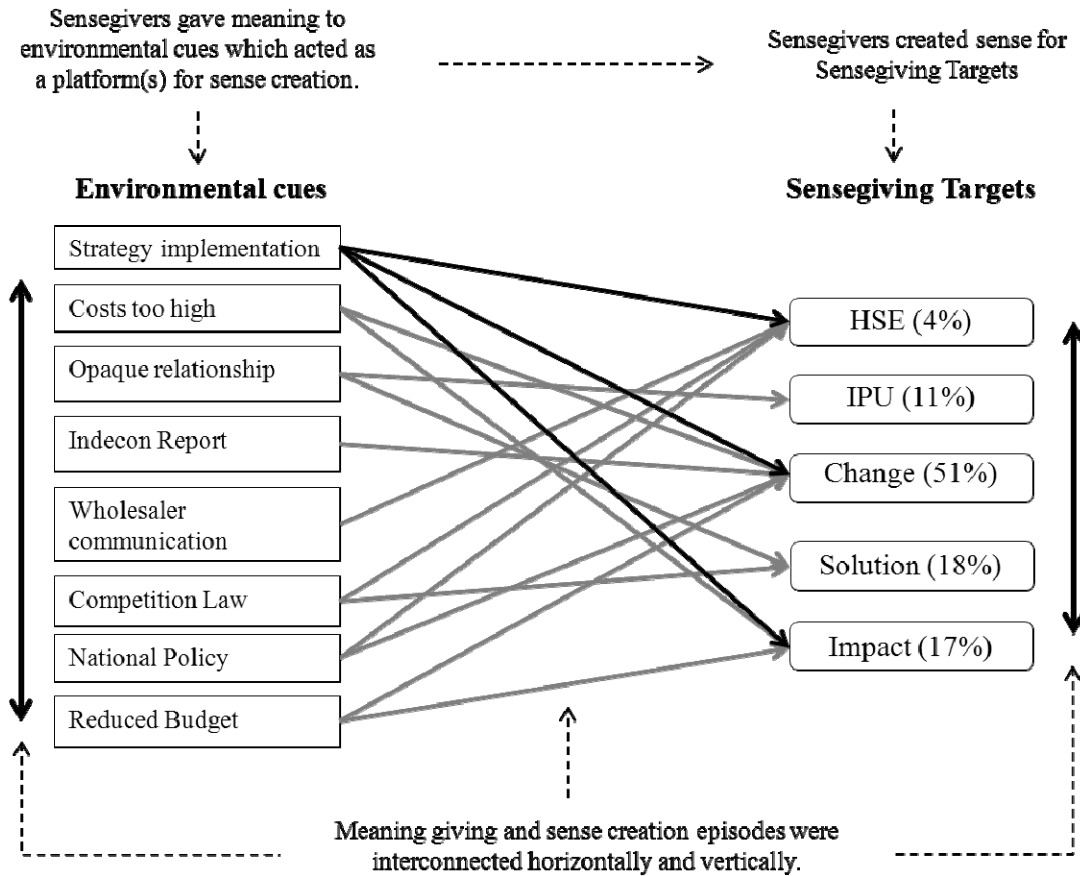


Figure 4: Examples of connections between meaning giving and sense creation episodes by speakers from the HSE group.

In the first example speakers from the HSE group, on a number of occasions, gave meaning to the strategy being implemented by saying that it was part of the Government's policy. This was used to support the sense they were giving to the Change, which was that it reflected this policy and the sense they were creating for the HSE which was that it was acting responsibly because it was implementing a policy determined by national Government. Implicit in this was the sense that because the Change was national policy it would have a positive Impact.

The HSE was asked, as approved by our board and the Department under Government policy, to find a fair, reasonable and transparent price for each of these sectors' components [manufacturing, wholesale and dispensing]. This process began in 2005 when the Cabinet sub – committee on health decided that work should be done on this area. (Seán Hurley, HSE, 12th February 2008, utterances 234 – 235)

Speakers from the IPU adopted a similar structural approach to their sensegiving. However, they focused almost exclusively on different environmental cues (Figure 5) to support the sense they created, even though this was for the same five most common sensegiving targets. The Indecon Report was the only common environmental cue.

For example the meaning speakers gave to the environmental cue, *membership of the IPU*, supported the sense that they created for members of the IPU as credible, responsible, reasonable and knowledgeable and the sense it was creating for the Solution was well founded.

The Irish Pharmaceutical Union is the representative body for community pharmacists and has more than 1,600 members who are committed to delivering a quality, accessible, personal and professional pharmacy service that puts the patient first and has, as its primary goal, the optimization of the health and well – being of society. (Michael Guckian, IPU, 14th November 2007, utterances 8 – 9)

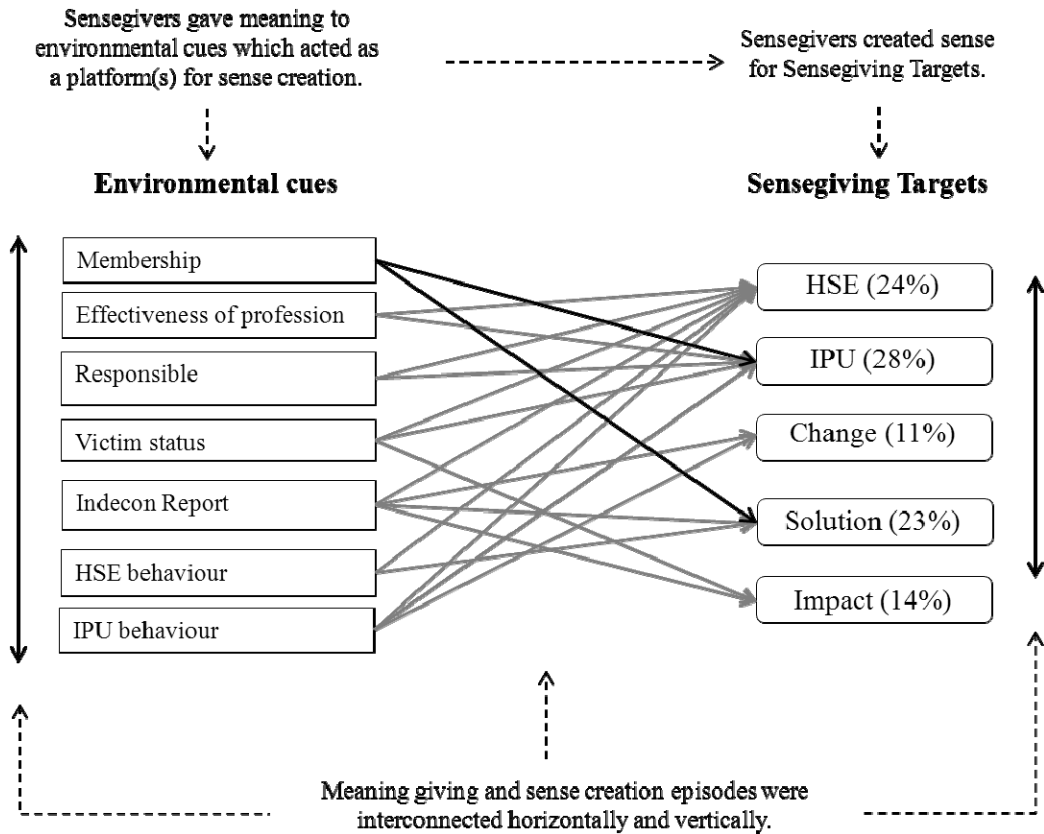


Figure 5: Examples of connections between meaning giving and sense creation episodes by speakers from the IPU group.

Speakers from the Politicians group added some new environmental cues. Two environmental cues were common to speakers from the IPU group and from the Politicians group; they are the behaviour of the HSE and the behaviour of the IPU (Figure 6). Speakers from this group gave meaning to the situation as a dispute and a crisis, and from this created sense for the Change as causing a crisis. It also supported the sense that it was creating for its preferred Solution which was that the Change must be paused because of the Impact it was having on patients.

Whoever walked away from the table, whether it was the HSE or the IPU — I am not here to debate that question — it is time the two groups, which are mighty players in this game, came together around the table to make decisions and alleviate the concern that exists. (Deputy Catherine Byrne, Politicians, 14th November 2007, utterances 503 – 504)

At the heart of this dispute is the lack of an independent arbitrator to resolve the issue in a fair – minded manner. I call on the Health Service Executive and the Minister to take this option because the problem will not be resolved by edict, the approach they have taken. (Deputy James Reilly, Politicians, 14th November 2007, utterances 614 – 615)

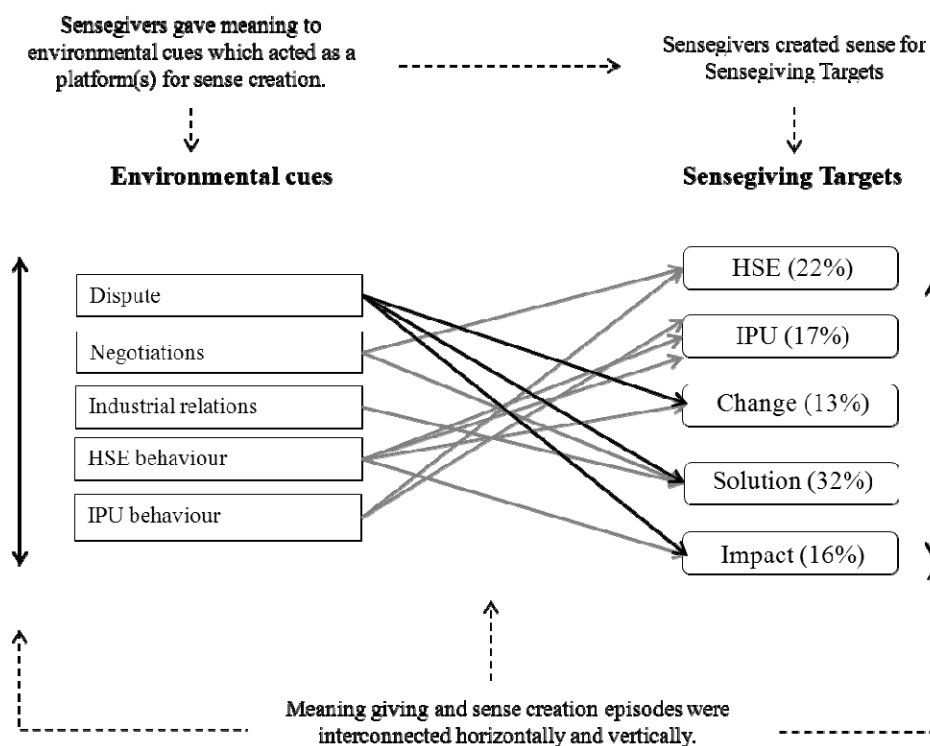


Figure 6: Examples of connections between meaning giving and sense creation episodes by speakers from the Politicians group.

Mechanism 3: Different meanings and different senses for the same targets.

The third mechanism identified involved speakers creating different meanings for the same environmental cues, as they attempt to create different sense for the same sensegiving targets.

It was observed that speakers from the HSE group gave meaning to its reduced budget to give sense to the urgency of proceeding with the Change.

The Vote [the budget] allocated to the HSE by Dáil Éireann is Government and national policy and the HSE must introduce this measure on 1 March. There can be no further delay in its introduction because it will cost the HSE money. (Seán Hurley, HSE, 12th February 2008, utterances 215 – 216)

Some opponents gave alternative meaning to this environmental cue (the HSE’s reduced budget) to support the sense they were creating for the HSE as a bully and mishandling the Change.

I want to make a point as regards the HSE budget and the reasons it gives the committee for introducing this measure. Again, I can only describe this as a bullying tactic. (Deputy Jan O’ Sullivan, Politicians, 12th February 2008, utterances 534 – 535)

To say it [the Change] has to be imposed on pharmacists because of budgetary constraints seems to be entirely the wrong way to go about achieving a result. (Deputy Jan O' Sullivan, Politicians, 12th February 2008, utterance 539)

To remove €100 million from the budget and then tell pharmacies to provide the service for less than one third of the original budget is an appalling way to do business. (Deputy Kathleen Lynch, Politicians, 12th February 2008, utterance 964)

These examples illustrate how proponents and opponents gave different meaning to the same environmental cues to support an alternative sense for the same sensegiving targets. Another example is in relation to The Indecon Report. This was a report commissioned by the HSE to review the processes and costs associated with providing medicines under the various Government subsidised medicine schemes. Speakers from the HSE group gave meaning to The Indecon Report to create sense for the Change being necessary and should proceed.

The Indecon and other reports clearly showed the impact that structured overcharging for wholesale services has had on the State drug budget. The cost is an extra, and unnecessary, €100 million per year. (Seán Hurley, HSE, 12th February 2008, utterances 240 – 241)

The new wholesale market will be introduced by March 2009 if Indecon's recommendations are taken on board. (Kamal Sabra, HSE, 12th February 2008, utterance 445).

Speakers from the IPU and the Politicians groups gave alternative meaning to The Indecon Report which created sense that the Change should not proceed. These related to the Report's warnings that the impact of any changes to the existing arrangements should be carefully managed.

Indecon, the HSE's own consultants, warned in a report published on 13 November last that: "The timing of significant changes in payment terms is crucial. We believe the changes should be evaluated in advance in conjunction with key stakeholders and this needs to be carefully managed to avoid unnecessary market disruption". Market disruption is not the only result of these proposals. (Michael Guckian, IPU, 12th February 2008, utterances 91 – 94)

Why does it [HSE] continue to ignore the Indecon report which it commissioned? The report stated clearly that no precipitative action should be taken. It also argued that the complexities of this country's pharmacy arrangements meant they should not be compared with those in other European countries. I emphasise that the report was commissioned by the HSE. (Deputy James Reilly, Politician, 12th February 2008, utterances 397 – 400)

In relation to giving alternative sense to the same sensegiving targets, speakers from the HSE group attempted to give sense to itself as acting in the interests of taxpayers and patients and implementing national policy. The opponents attempted to create a sense that the HSE was untrustworthy, lacked credibility and was mishandling

the issue. The pattern in relation to the Impact of the Change was similar. The proponents attempted to create a sense that the Impact would be positive for taxpayers and patients as supplies of medicines and services would not have to be curtailed. The proponents attempted to give sense to the Impact as being catastrophic for pharmacies and their employees and patients who would have a reduced service.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that leader sensegiving in a multi-leader context is underpinned by a number of events. (i) As leaders attempt to give sense to the same strategic change they give meaning to environmental cues and use this meaning as a platform to create sense for common sensegiving targets. (ii) The meaning given to the same cues and the sense created for the same targets can vary between stakeholder groups. (iii) These meaning giving and sense creation episodes are interconnected. (iv) Leaders allocate different levels of attention to sensegiving targets depending on whether their stance as proponents or opponents. From these events, the sense that actors attempt to give to the strategic change emerges.

From these key findings we developed a theoretical model (Figure 7) which explains how leaders, in a multi-leader context, give sense to the same strategic change. Fundamental to this model is the conceptualization of sense not as a cognition that is given as the name suggests, but a cognition that emerges from a series of meaning giving and sense creation episodes which are vertically and horizontally interconnected and have common sensegiving targets as their focal point.

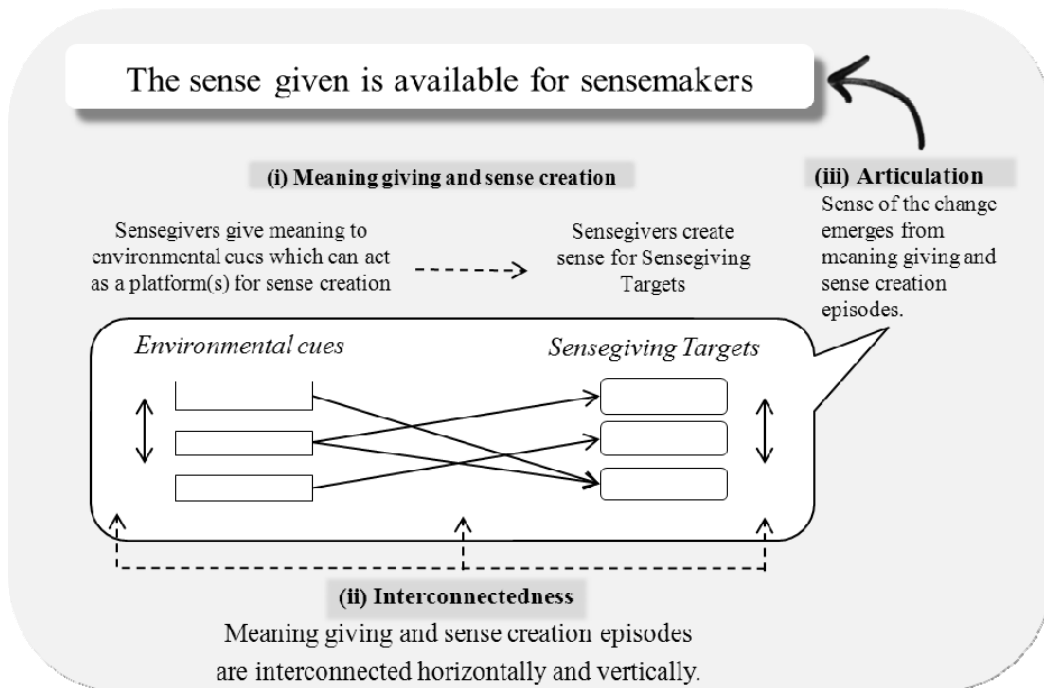


Figure 7: A model of how leaders, in a multi-leader context, give sense to the same discontinuous change.

This model conceptualizes multiple leader sensegiving as actors engaged in (i) giving meaning to environmental cues and creating sense for common sensegiving targets. These processes are (ii) interconnected. As the meaning and sense is (iii) articulated (oral or visual) sense for the change emerges and is offered and available to sensemakers.

(i) Meaning giving and sense creation

We provided examples above of how speaker gave meaning to environmental cues and how these meanings acted as a platform for the sense they created for the sensegiving targets (Figures 4-6).

(ii) Interconnectedness

Examples were identified from the data set that illustrate that meaning giving and sense creation can be vertically and horizontally interconnected. For example the HSE gave meaning to the absence of visibility on the financial arrangements between wholesalers and pharmacists to give meaning to this arrangement as supporting alleged overcharging. The vertical interconnections between the sense creation episodes was exemplified by the way the HSE created sense for its Solution and the sense it created for the Impact if the Solution was not implemented.

(iii) Articulation

Before it can be given, sense must be offered and before it can be offered it must be created. The evidence presented here shows that this sense creation is messy and non-linear. It is “gradual and cumulative rather than immediate and final” (Weber and Glynn, 2006: p. 1648). It involves a series of on-going processes and causal relationships; meaning giving to environmental cues and sense creation for common sensegiving targets. Until meanings and sense are articulated they are available only to the sensegiver as cognitions. Through articulation the meaning given and sense created during these episodes are “talked into existence” (Weick et al., 2005: p. 409). From this articulation the sense that speakers offer to sensemakers emerges and is made available for sensemakers to consider. The sense that emerges from the meaning giving and sense creation episodes is not a neat singular and finite cognition but an amorphous cognition which is transitory. As meaning is “intangible and slippery” (Foldy et al., 2008: p. 525) and “one never makes finite sense of a situation because things are always changing” (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010: p. 565), sense emerges in an on-going basis as more meaning is given and more sense is created within a shifting social context.

When articulated, sense is available for sensemakers to accept, reject, ignore or modify (outright or selectively) as they attempt to answer the central sensemaking question *What's the story here?* (Weick et al., 2005: p. 410). For example, speakers from the IPU group accepted the meaning given to the HSE as bullies by speakers from the Politicians group; speakers from both groups repeated this meaning. Speakers from the IPU group rejected the sense that the Change was about wholesalers margins. They created a sense that it was taking money out of the pockets of pharmacists which was supported by the meaning they gave to the results of their survey of

pharmacists. Speakers from the HSE group ignored the sense the IPU created for the Impact of the Change on their incomes and speakers from the IPU ignored the meaning given to The Indecon Report which pointed out that the wholesale margins in Ireland were twice the European average. Speakers from the Politicians group modified the meaning given to the IPU's survey of pharmacists to create a sense that the Impact could result in the closing of pharmacies in rural areas.

Rural Ireland has already been denuded of banks and post offices. We cannot allow the rural pharmacy to go also. (Deputy James Reilly, Politicians, 12th February 2008, utterances 359-360)

Conclusion

This chapter presents a model of leader sensegiving in a multiple leader context. While the examples of the meaning giving and sense creation episodes outlined are just a snapshot of the episodes from the complete data set, they support the efficacy of the model presented.

The findings also highlight that limiting sensegiving research on organizational change to viewing sensegiving as a linear process of leaders giving sense to others in a neatly packaged, and analyzing only known sensegiving behaviour, fails to capture the complexity of how actors go about giving sense. By viewing sensegiving through this model, which presents sensegiving as a series of interconnected relationships (meaning giving, sense creation and articulation), new insights into the 'how' of multiple leader sensegiving surface. We hope that our journey and insights will encourage other scholars to explore the boundaries of our understanding of sensegiving as a key insight in strategic change in conditions of uncertainty.

References

- Appelbaum, S. H., Habashy, S., Malo, J.L., & Shafiq, H. (2012). Back to the future: revisiting Kotter's 1996 change model. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(8), 764–782.
- Bartunek, J. M., Rousseau, D., Rundolph, J. W., & DePalma, J. A. (2006). On the Receiving End: Sensemaking, Emotion, and Assessments of an Organizational Change Initiated by Others. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42(2), 182–206.
- Berente, N., Hansen, S., Pike, J. C., & Bateman, P. J. (2011). Arguing the value of virtual worlds: Patterns of discursive sensemaking of an innovative technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 35(3), 685–709.
- Bhaskar, R. (1978). *A realist theory of science*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press Ltd.
- Brown, A. D., Ainsworth, S., & Grant, D. (2012). The Rhetoric of Institutional Change. *Organization Studies*, 33(3), 297–321.
- Burnes, B. (1996). No such thing as ... a "one best way" to manage organizational change. *Management Decision*, 34(10), 11–18.
- By, R. T. (2005). Organizational change management: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(4), 369–380.
- Collins, D., & Rainwater, K. (2005). Managing change at Sears: a sideways look at a tale of corporate transformation. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 18(1), 16–30.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 25–32.
- Fernandez, S., & Rainey, H. G. (2006). Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector. *Public Administration Review*, 66(2), 168–176.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Strategic Change Initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6), 433–448.
- Berente, N., Hansen, S., Pike, J. C., & Bateman, P. J. (2011). Arguing the value of virtual worlds: Patterns of discursive sensemaking of an innovative technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 35(3), 685–709.
- Brown, A. D., Ainsworth, S., & Grant, D. (2012). The Rhetoric of Institutional Change. *Organization Studies*, 33(3), 297–321.
- Fletcher, K. E., & Huff, A. S. (1994). Argument mapping. In A. S. Huff (Ed.), *Mapping Strategic Thought* (pp. 354–375). John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Green, S. (2004). A Rhetorical Theory of Diffusion. *The Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 653.
- Green, S., Li, Y., & Nohria, N. (2009). Suspended in self-spun webs of significance: A rhetorical model of institutionalization and institutionality embedded agency. *Academy of Management Review*, 52(1), 11–36.
- Kotter, J. (1995). Leading Change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(2), 59–67.
- Maitlis, S. (2005). The social processes of organisational sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 21–49.
- Suddaby, R., & Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical Strategies of Legitimacy. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50, 35–67.
- Symon, G. (2005). Exploring Resistance from a Rhetorical Perspective. *Organization Studies*, 26(11), 1641–1663.
- Toulmin, S. E. (1958). *The Uses Of Argument* (Updated ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Vaara, E., & Monin, P. (2010). A Recursive Perspective on Discursive Legitimation and Organizational Action in Mergers and Acquisitions. *Organization Science*, 21(1), 3–22.
- Jansen, K. J. (2004). From Persistence to Pursuit: A Longitudinal Examination of Momentum During the Early Stages of Strategic Change. *Organization Science*, 15(3), 276–294.
- Jansson, N. (2013). Organizational change as practice: a critical analysis. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 26(6), 1003–1019.

- Kaplan, S. (2008). Framing Contests: Strategy Making Under Uncertainty. *Organization Science*, 19(5), 729–752.
- Kotter, J. (1995). Leading Change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(2), 59–67.
- Maitlis, S. (2005). The social processes of organisational sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 21–49.
- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in Organizations: Taking Stock and Moving Forward. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 1–98.
- Maitlis, S., & Sonenshein, S. (2010). Sensemaking in Crisis and Change: Inspiration and Insights From Weick (1988). *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(3), 551–580.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California 91320: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Pettigrew, A. M., Woodman, R. W., & Cameron, K. S. (2001). Studying Organizational change and development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4), 697–713.
- Plowman, D. A., Solansky, S., Beck, T. E., Baker, L., Kulkarni, M., & Travis, D. V. (2007). The role of leadership in emergent, self-organization. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 341–356.
- Rowland, D., & Higgs, M. (2008). *Sustaining Change: Leadership That Works*. Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Suddaby, R., & Greenwood, R. (2005). Rhetorical Strategies of Legitimacy. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50, 35–67.
- Symon, G. (2005). Exploring Resistance from a Rhetorical Perspective. *Organization Studies*, 26(11), 1641–1663.
- Toulmin, S. E. (1958). *The Uses Of Argument* (Updated ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Vaara, E., & Monin, P. (2010). A Recursive Perspective on Discursive Legitimation and Organizational Action in Mergers and Acquisitions. *Organization Science*, 21(1), 3–22.
- Weber, K., & Glynn, M. A. (2006). Making Sense with Institutions: Context, Thought and Action in Karl Weick's Theory. *Organization Studies*, 27(11), 1639–1660.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organisations*. Thousand Oaks, California 91320: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Wetzel, R., & Van Gorp, L. (2014). Eighteen shades of grey? *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 27(1), 115–146.