

Sensemaking

is the new
bottleneck

And yes—it's a people problem .

The uncomfortable truth

We're not short on
information—we're drowning
in it.

**We're short on people
doing the work to ingest it.**

The failure isn't "we don't
know."

 It's we can't make coherent
meaning fast enough to act.

Define it



Sensemaking = investigating
and then **doing the hard
part:**

“What’s true?”

“What matters?”

“What are we trading off?”

“What are we going to do?”

This isn’t “alignment.”
It’s accountability.

What it looks like when it breaks



You'll recognize this instantly:

- **Meetings** become live document reading
- **Debate** is about opinions, not evidence
- **People** “flag” issues but don’t frame options
- **No one** states a recommendation + tradeoffs
- **Decisions** get pushed upward because no one wants to be wrong

That's not collaboration.

That's accountability & decision avoidance.

Why it's getting worse

Three things are feeding it:

- **Signal overload** (too many inputs – docs, dashboards, stakeholders)
- **Context loss** (turnover + distributed work)
- **Low accountability norms** (“I skimmed it” is treated as good enough, each function carries its own “truth”)

The result: People default to the safest move—delay.

Leaders get updates, but not judgment. Progress stalls.

Call it plainly

A lot of orgs have normalized:
“Someone else will synthesize it.”

But when nobody owns synthesis, you get:

- Slower decisions
- Weaker decisions
- Louder opinions
- More rework

--- Sensemaking isn't optional.

It's part of the job. If you're in the meeting, you own a point of view.

Leaders contribute too

Leaders unintentionally **train teams into passivity** when they:

- **Reward** “status reporting” over thinking
- **Punish** early framing that isn’t perfect
- **Ask** for more analysis instead of a recommendation
- **Keep** decision rights fuzzy

Require rigor, space for discussion, and make it safe to reason out loud.

The fix is standards + infrastructure



Sensemaking needs structure, not more meetings.

Introduce a simple discipline:

- **Pre-read** = required
- **Show up** with a point of view
- **Bring evidence** + tradeoffs
- **Propose** a decision

Raise the standard. Then build the system that supports it.

Introduce the mechanism

Think of it as a **Knowledge Supply Chain** that powers sensemaking:



- **Create** (capture what was learned)
- **Validate** (what's true vs assumed)
- **Store** (one centralized home)
- **Retrieve** (fast + searchable + current)
- **Apply** (decision-ready, not FYI)

No supply chain → no reliable sensemaking.



Make it operational

Three practical moves that **force better thinking**:

- **Decision packets:** context → options → tradeoffs → recommendation
- **Centralized sources:** one place to trust (versioned + current)
- **Named owners:** who maintains “what’s true” and “what’s current”

Start with one workflow for 30 days. This is how you turn information into action without heroics.

Your advantage is people who can make sense and take a stand

The fix is **people standards + knowledge infrastructure.**

- ☐ Require a POV
- ☐ Reward framing
- ☐ Build the system that makes it possible