



Working Well Together: Exploring culture, leadership and teamwork under pressure through a purpose-built online escape room

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Not just what we do...but how

- Everyone influences their working culture
- Research not done in isolation
 - Increasing focus on working together
 - Leadership is social not just individual
- Yet, training and coaching is often encouraged as an individual pursuit
- What if we worked together to understand, create and maintain positive cultures?

Working well Together context



Working Well Together (WWT) resource

Working Well Together resource

How do you want to work well together?

Our mission is to provide a self-serve resource that supports research-enabling groups and teams to create and celebrate positive research practices and environments at

www.workingwelltogether.co.uk



Working Well Together Resource

www.workingwelltogether.co.uk

- Co-produced with >460 staff across U of Bristol
- Self-serve resource for groups
- Create and celebrate positive practices within local environments
- 5-step action framework
- Small actions for quick wins
- WWT gauge
- Additional materials



WWT context

WWT resource helps develop and support collective responsibility to look at local behaviours within wider HE context, acknowledging limits of influence

Engaged teams have collective responsibility to develop together (or not)

- Common goals and purposes
- Joint investment & accountability
- Appreciate & celebrate strengths
- Set communication expectations
- Acknowledge research & research adjacent contributions

Barriers to group-based activities

- Time poor
- Making progress without excluding people
- Online easier than in-person or hybrid, but a preference for in-person
- Challenge of setting expectations, getting buy-in and recognising the value of time on these sorts of activities
- Senior leadership buy-in essential
- ECRs and more junior staff feel unable to suggest tools
- Away days an established approach

Why use a game-based approach?

Why?

- Game-based learning promotes learning
- Match everyday behaviour
- More effective than traditional training (85% forgotten after 14 days):
 - Increased confidence
 - Improved conceptual knowledge
 - Increased application of new knowledge
 - Increased retention of information (90%, rather than 5%)
- Much more powerful, but takes time and iteration to get it right!

A virtual Escape Room

How? Through playing a virtual escape room

- Discuss and agree team culture and assign roles
- Agree communication & decision-making
- Play the escape room
 - 5 rooms
 - Pressured, managing failure and uncertainty
- Reflect on the experience
- No gaming skills required
- No advantage if played escape rooms
- Web-based

Factors affecting decision-making under pressure

- Organisational systems
- Workload
- Time pressure
- Teamwork
- Individual factors
- Problem/situation complexity

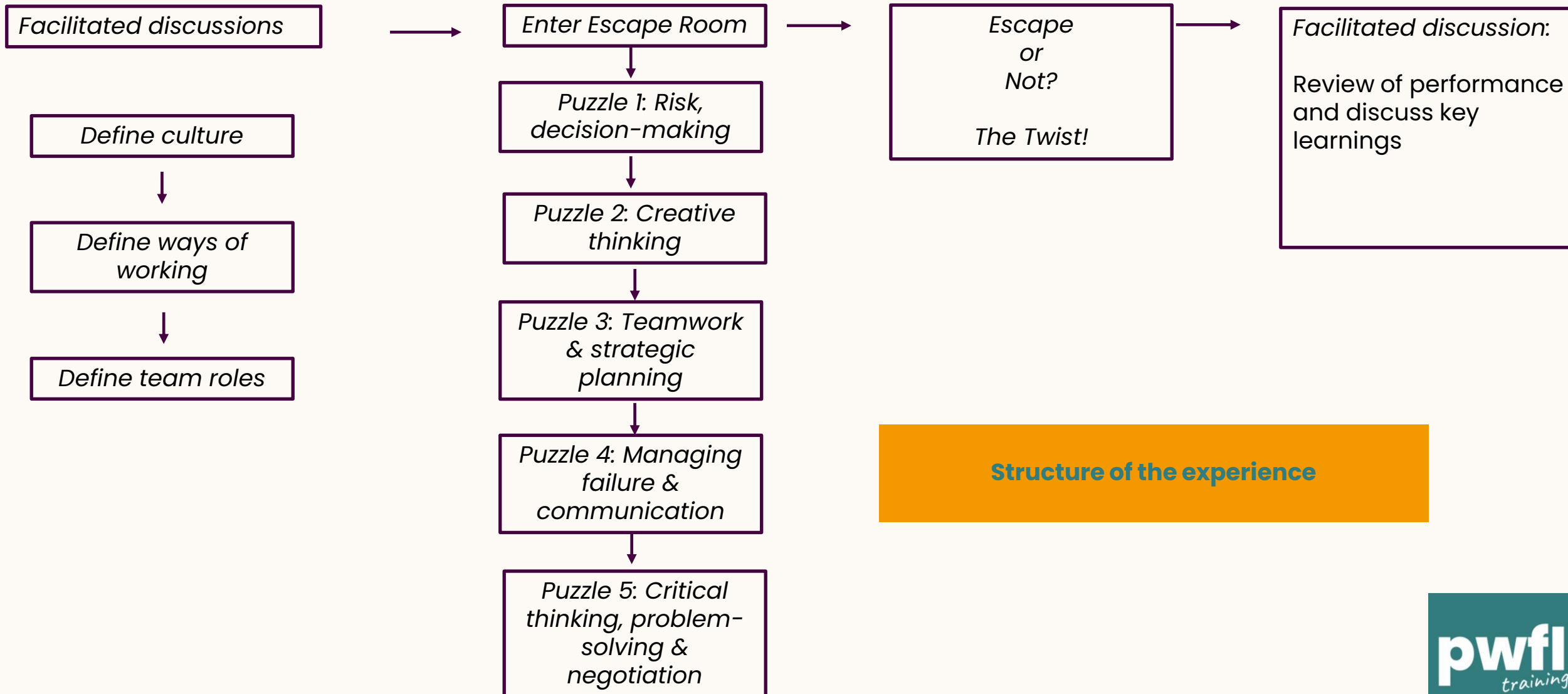
Session Aim

Session Aim: To reflect on leadership and teamwork within wider culture

Outcomes:

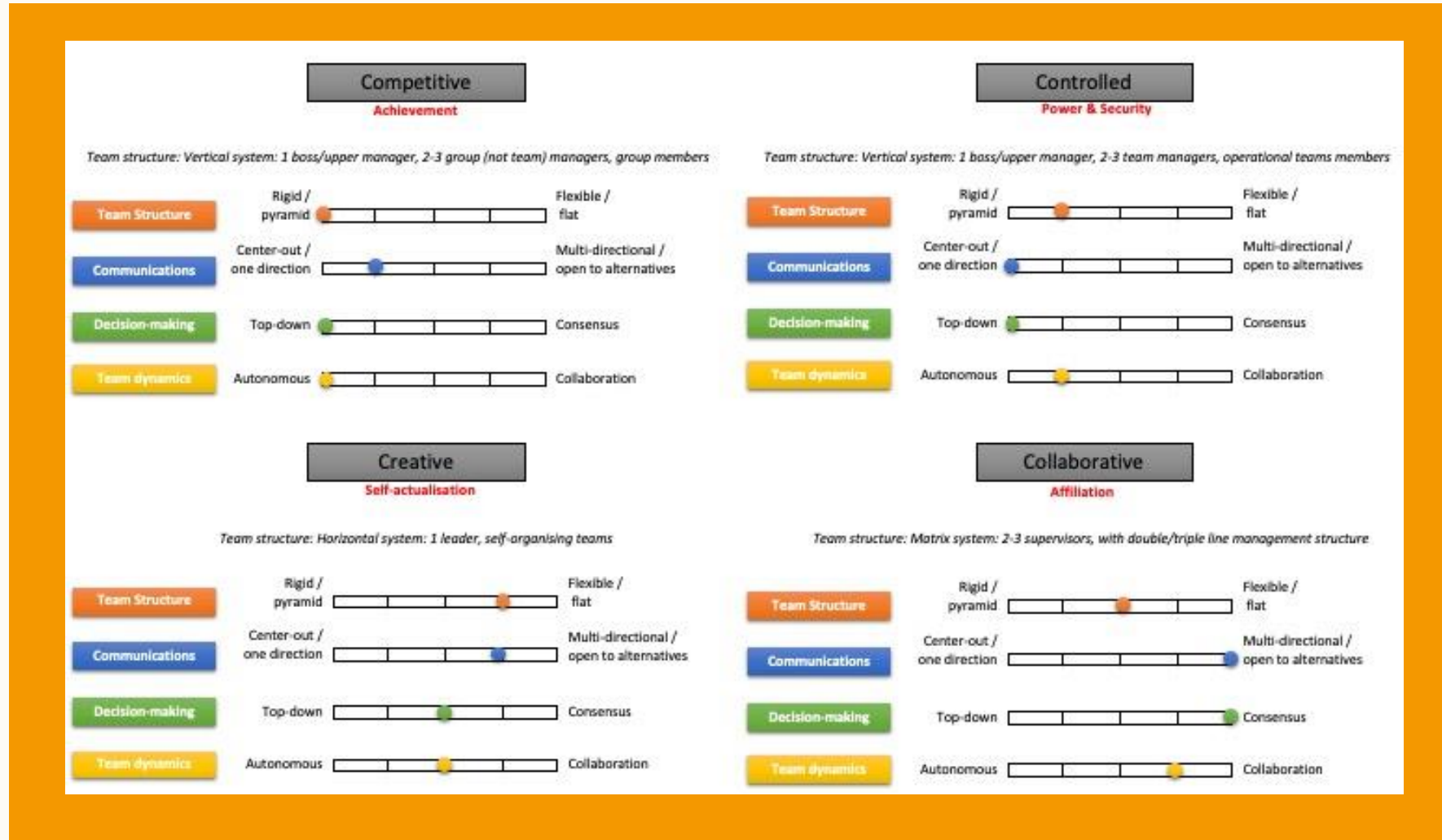
- Teambuilding
- Understanding of behaviour and decision-making under pressure, when working with others
- Understanding about communication style
- Key learnings to take away about how you work with others, how you manage pressure, failure and ambiguity, and how to make better decisions under pressure

Workshop structure

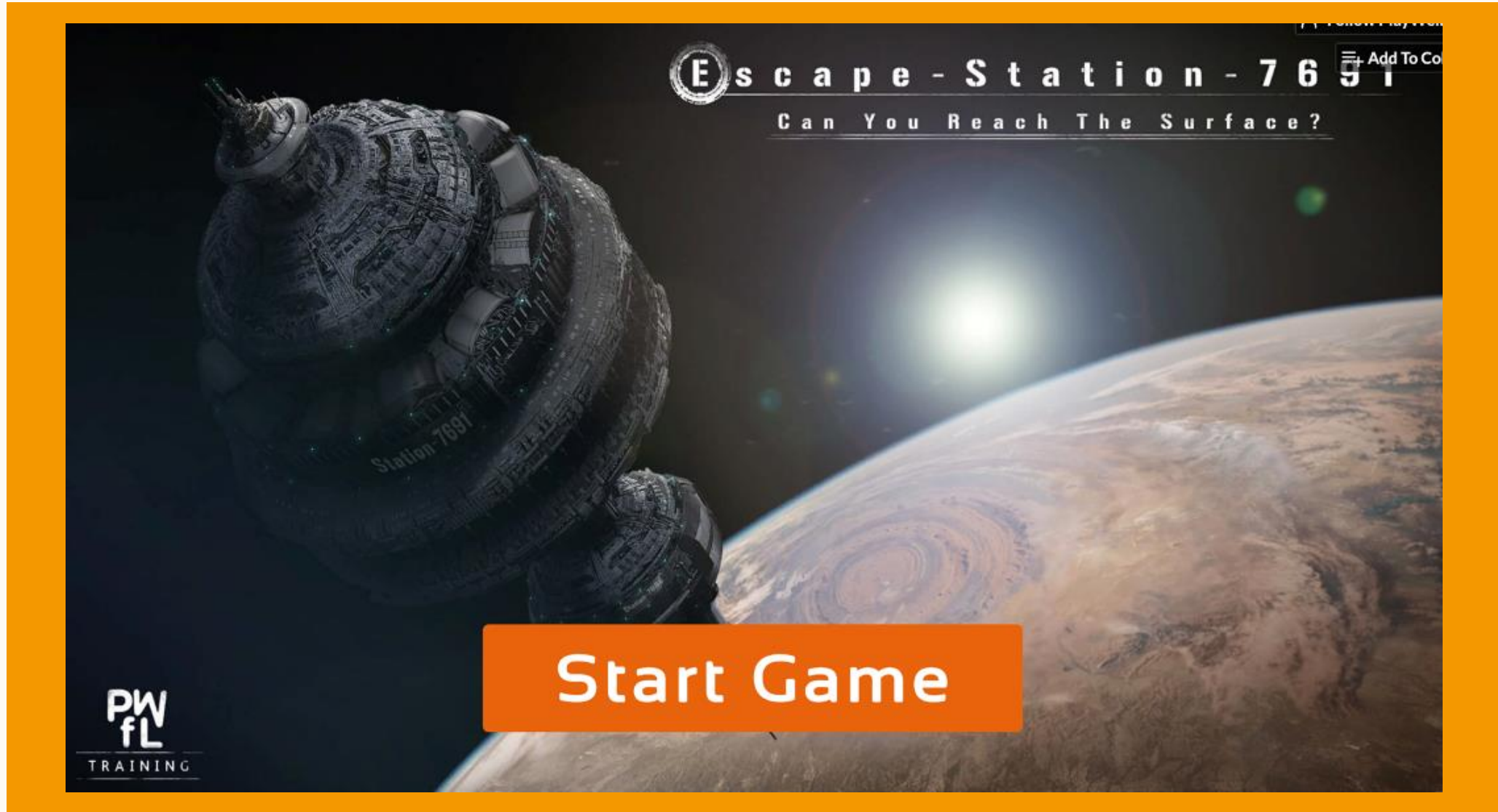


Organisational Systems

4 organisational cultures



Escape Room



Escape Room

An innovative approach to leadership development & teambuilding

The year is 2041. You and your team awake in a building controlled by AI system, Indira. Using leadership skills, teamwork & soft skills, can you **Escape Station 7691?**

clideo.com

Who has used it?

- Groups ranging from 5 – 70 people, across five universities
- 21 groups at Bristol, from a range of disciplines
- Professional services, academic and mixed
- Different behaviours each time
- Groups that engage, stay calm, considered and respectful always come top
- Iteratively developed across 2 years

Feedback: 97% would recommend

It was fun!! Made it more memorable.
It was a safe space.
Really made me think about how I approach things, how I communicate with my team when it's busy / there's too much going on.
Made me think about how to show up when I know things and not hide / get nervous....

Really immersive and brought out natural styles. Great to have an interactive leadership activity where you learn about working with people outside your immediate area

Whole session, shined a light on us as a team. Good mix of time, challenges, challenging us in the right ways.
Confronting failure was difficult, it was a good thing to have to do, but hard in the moment

That it allowed you to explore a different way of operating as a team in a safe environment. The opportunity to review (even if we didn't always) outside of the timed element, made it less a game and more a learning experience. Loved the post game analysis session.

Learnings: Taking risks

- Value of experiential, game-based activity to create sufficient psychological safety to explore, play and take risks
- Supports staff and groups to step out of comfort zones
- Can empower more junior staff, or research adjacent staff, to take the lead
- Opportunity to uncover group dynamics a key learning opportunity: who gets missed? (PGRs)

"I knew I dominated discussions, but I didn't understand the impact on others until we did this"

Learnings: Design & behaviours

- Intentionally building soft skill requirements into the game, as well as constructing an experience that draw on these is important
- The power of competition – and no-one escaping!
- Resistance to failure and how it impacts behaviour afterwards
- Every team is different, but clear patterns make scalability possible
- Importance of the framing and pre/post discussions
- Really important facilitated by researchers and professional service staff

Learnings

- Opportunity to build relationships with colleagues hugely valuable
- Creating separate spaces to have these sorts of conversations valuable
- The value of different types of conversations and connections
- The value of positive challenge, alongside celebrating what is working
- Improvement in overall inclusion and understanding of differences
- The importance of acknowledging the complexities of team working and structures in HEI environments
- How to measure impact over the long term?

If interested:

Get in touch: sarah@pwflhealth.com

- One-off sessions / away days
- Bulk buy for organisation, centre, school, division etc.
- Evidence longer term impact
- Longer culture change programme we are looking to evidence
- Encourage costing into projects, to spend on activities like these

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