

BUILDING INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND REFLECTIVE RESEARCH TEAMS THROUGH A VIRTUAL ESCAPE ROOM

There are clear benefits of building a strong and positive research culture and how this leads to higher quality research. These positive cultures are built by all individuals working within them, and how these individuals work together in groups and teams is an important factor. However, training and development often focusses on the individual, rather than how groups work together. This project used an innovative, game-based approach, using a bespoke virtual escape room, to offer groups the opportunity to stop, take stock and review group culture and values.



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Background

The problem with workplace training

- 75% of workplace training is ineffective
- 85% of workplace training forgotten after 14 days (McKinsey, 2018)

Rethinking workplace training is needed.
Game-based approaches offer potential.

Why game-based training?

More effective than traditional training through:

- Increased confidence
- Improvement in conceptual knowledge
- Increased productivity and application of new knowledge
- Increased retention of information and knowledge (90% rather than 5%)
- Experiential learning replicates everyday behaviour and skills

Aim

Develop an experiential, game-based workshop for groups to understand and reflect upon how culture, leadership and teamwork interact when decision-making under pressure

Development

- Iteratively developed with 16 groups
- Developed and delivered by academic & professional services staff
- Intentionally designed to :**
 - elicit different soft skills in each room
 - require decision-making under pressure
 - ensure failure built into the experience, so groups can examine what they do when things go wrong
 - 'twist' = focus on reflection and learnings

Workshop

An immersive workshop, involving an online escape room and facilitated discussions before and after

- Discuss and agree a hypothetical team culture
- Agree communication & decision-making behaviours
- Assign roles & responsibilities
- Play the escape room: 5 puzzle rooms
- Reflect on the experience
- Identify actions

Impact

- Run with 21 groups at University of Bristol (N=182)
- Research groups, professional services and mixed groups
- 98% would recommend to colleagues
- Groups find it reassuring that facilitators understand the research organisation context, and the complexities and challenges specific to groups working within HEIs

Outcomes:

- Understand and reflect upon culture, leadership and teamworking styles and skills that exist in the team
- Understand the impact of communication and decision making under pressure, considering individual strengths and weaknesses
- Understanding of how their individual behaviours impact others
- Develop awareness of different perspectives and styles within the team
- Develops psychological safety and teambuilding
- Identify key learnings and actions to take forward

"I liked that it allowed you to explore a different way of operating as a team in a safe environment. Loved the post game analysis session."

"It was a fantastic exercise, and I particularly love how much it allowed us to apply consciousness to the different types of structures and roles, and their influence."

"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"

Conclusion

- The escape room workshop is impactful for groups, to reflect on how they work together
- The experiential learning leads to more embodied and memorable learning
- Individuals developed understanding of how their behaviour impacts others
- Groups developed awareness of the varied styles/preferences in their group
- Increased perspective-taking and psychological safety developed
- Game-based approaches offer great potential for professional training

To find out more, or to try the escape room workshop, email:
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