

Challenging Assumptions

Breaking Patterns to build Innovation Skills



This simple activity lasts between 10 and 20 minutes and is an ideal way of raising the awareness of a group of learners about the pre-conceptions and assumptions we bring into new situations. This is very valuable in problem-solving or innovative thinking processes as it highlights how we can limit our thinking and reject new possibilities if they do not fit with our existing patterns.

Learners working with this activity, aware that it is being used on programmes with an element of creative thinking or innovation, often say things such as, "I'm going into this with a really open mind" or "I'm not going to make any assumptions about this". However, these words are often uttered as they are making those very assumptions! As they realise this, the response is often laughter, surprise and a genuine recognition of the strength of some of our personal mental models.

Since we introduced these puzzles into our popular 'Breakthrough Thinking' workshops they've been flying off our shelves. Everyone who sees one wants them - because they are so simple but have such a powerful message. Use them at the start of any creative thinking or problem-solving process or to illustrate the need to make a significant change in strategy!

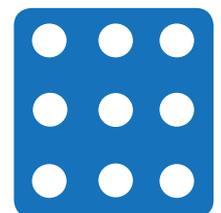
This activity works particularly well in small groups (3 or 4 people) with a number of observers. If the players are asked to 'think aloud' and describe what they are doing and thinking, observers can note the patterns that either limit or progress their problem-solving.

It is illuminating to see how often people will identify new approaches and then reject them as being stupid, or hold on to past experiences, such as looking for corners amongst the pieces. With little facilitation, they soon recognise the need to be confident, bold and creative when tackling an unknown task!



Do you know the old 9 dots puzzle? The one where you have to join the dots using one continuous line? If not, give it a go! Join all 9 dots with one continuous line that passes through each dot once.

This puzzle takes the same ideas - of thinking out of the box - and uses them to demonstrate to learners just how deep-rooted some of our assumptions are.



To add CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS to your resource library:

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