



EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING

DESIGN

CASE STUDY

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

USE OF MINEFIELD™ PRODUCT

## **MINEFIELD™ – An experiential capstone learning activity to provide opportunities to use the competences required of good managers**

Outlined below is a description of how to use an experiential learning activity to provide the kind of complex challenge that will provide a group with the opportunity to rehearse, practise or try to manage their contribution to a task. The task is consistent with earlier theoretical input and asks them to apply management competences in a realistic environment. They are under pressure from the task itself but also from working with others in an unfamiliar context.

This case study is provided by Derek Fox from DF Leap in Ireland and describes his work with two different clients.

*Mostly I use Minefield™ at the end of a 2-day session to reinforce the learning from the sessions. It always works really well, participants really get the learning out of it and the debrief usually lasts 60-90 minutes.*



## Case 1: Newly Appointed Managers in a Financial Institution (BANK)

I run a 6 day 'Stepping into Management' course broken down into three 2-day sessions (over 3 months). Module 1 is 'Personal Effectiveness – Managing Self' it covers:

- Understanding your role and context
- Planning
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Time Management
- Prioritisation
- Managing Personal Change
- Personal Brand

In the afternoon of day 2 we run Minefield™ as it 'tests' most of the competences above.

For example, during the course we help them understand they need to know 'What Matters Most' to the organisation (*Top Priorities*). Then what is the business criteria and weighting for *Decision Making and Prioritising*. They cover *Planning and Problem Solving*. In *Time Management* we help them understand they can NOT manage time (it is fixed) but they can manage where they SPEND their time, so actually it is about budgeting your time (making sure you are focusing on the most important things).

### So Minefield™ works well here as:

1. At the start I set up a company called 'Minefield Inc' I am the CEO and I tell them my Top Priority is MONEY! Make me profits! (this should link back to the 'What Matters Most' part of the course and focus them on solutions that maximise profits)
2. I assign an overall Co-ordinator and 4 team leaders (one for each sub team A,B,C,D). The role of the Co-ordinator is to look at the big picture and co-ordinate communications across the 4 teams. The role of the team leader is to manage their team's activities, plan, and deliver results
3. Ideally if they do it right they should work out the following:
  - a. The goal is to FIND the mines (this is around *Planning* and *What Matters Most*)
  - b. They need to do this in the most profitable way (*What Matters Most*)
  - c. So if the goal is find the mines, than applying STEP 1 of *Problem Solving* (What is the problem) they should identify they need to lift the buttons to find the mines
  - d. Now there are several strategies for this, if they are applying all the learning they should work together as one large team (this does not always happen due to the competitive nature)
  - e. They should then PLAN out options, for example
    1. Option 1 – One team just lifts ALL the buttons
    2. Option 2 - Each team lifts buttons in their area of the mine and shares info with other teams
    3. Option 3 - Play strategically as Minesweeper and only lift the buttons they plan/pick to try to maximise profits

- f. Now selecting the strategy falls under *Decision Making* and *Prioritising*, so they have options, they need to pick one based on the criteria (Money, Time, Risk). Working across this criteria they SHOULD (but do not always) pick Strategy 1 or 3 (if they even decide to work together)
  - g. If they are clever they realise:
    - 1. We have MORE money than needed to lift all buttons
    - 2. We have MORE people than needed (in *Time Management* we talk about resources being Time, People, Money) but we are limited in TIME, so Time is an important factor.
  - h. If they go with Option 1 this is ZERO risk and VERY quick, but they do not make the MOST money
  - i. If they go with option 3 this maximises the Money but there is a risk they get it wrong (this related to Risk Appetite , which is important in banking)
  - j. Teams that do not work together typically run out of time and/or get it wrong (do not correctly identify all the mines)
4. After the exercise I get the team leaders to debrief in their teams (what worked, did not work, do differently next time), then the Co-ordinator hosts a group debrief and they then need to report back to me as CEO.

**Case 2: Claims Handlers in an Insurance business.** Here the course looks at key skills of:

- 1. Observation
- 2. Awareness
- 3. Problem solving
- 4. Identifying key information
- 5. Big picture v details
- 6. Asking Questions

Again I run the exercise (but not as a large organisation) to test out their ability to look at the big picture, decide on a strategy and be aware of all the information/details to work out what is the key information.