Counter Intelligence

Using Counter Intelligence to Refine Critical Thinking Skills in a Team Context

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'Counter Intelligence' is a problem-based task that requires a small group to work together, using communication and critical thinking skills, to achieve a single correct answer to a task.

It uses a range of thinking and decision-making skills and requires a logical and systematic approach.

One additional element in Counter Intelligence is that it operates within a strict set of 'rules' that should be applied throughout the task. The extent to which the participants follow or reject these rules opens up an interesting discussion about attitudes to discipline, control, rule-breaking and challenging or crossing real or perceived boundaries.

Follow the instructions and run the activity exactly as described in the accompanying notes for adult use.

You need to make no changes to the activity process, although you may need to consider the length of time you ask the to work for before intervening. Judge this upon their levels of concentration and focus and build in breaks / progress reviews as required.

Counter Intelligence is an ideal exercise to focus on logical and critical thinking skills. It requires learners to:

1. Share knowledge and assess the relevance of each individual piece of information provided

2. Follow a set of operating rules

3. Prioritise and categorise information

4. Set up a hypothesis and test it, using evidence to prove any statement

5. Check the final solution before submitting it

These are the key learning points to draw out from the exercise. These can be used when supporting students to strengthen their critical thinking skills.

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REVIEW

Suggested questions to use when reviewing Counter Intelligence.

1. What system did you put in place for sharing and remembering information?

2. How did you decide which information was important? What did you do with information that did not seem to be important or that did not seem to make sense when you read it?

3. Was there any leadership demonstrated in the task? Did this help the process? If so, what was particularly useful?

4. How willing were people to follow the rules as they were written? Did anyone make reference to these rules (eg. calling each other by name) during the task? How do you feel about the decision to follow these rule or ignore them?

5. How well were the conclusions the team came to explained or checked? Did everyone understand the logic that you used to reach your conclusions?

6. If you tested something and it proved not to be true, how willing were people to explore other options? Did they remain motivated? If so, what helped?

7. In what situations do you think it is important to be able to use these logical and critical thinking skills? Can you think of any 'real-life' examples?

8. What could you do in your studying and daily life to continue to develop your own critical thinking skills?

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The original clasic learning activity from RSVP Design Ltd, now validated by ILM

LEARNING SUMMARY

When summarising the learning from the exercise, reinforce the following learning points.

1. Make use of all the information that is available to you.

2. Do not assume that something is irrelevant just because you cannot see any immediate use for it.

3. Decide on a starting point and a step-by-step approach to follow.

4. Follow your plan unless there is a convincing (and agreed) reason to change it.

5. Do not dismiss rules or guidelines unless you understand the implications of doing so and calculate the risks and benefits.

6. Check your logic before you take something as evidence or proof – are there any circumstances in which something that appears to be fact might not be?

7. In a group situation, make sure that everyone understands the logic so that people know if the contribution of their information is relevant and timely

8. In a situation in which accuracy is important, double-check any solutions before you submit your answers.