

Smart teams, same blind spots: Make room for different minds

Adaptive module

~20 min

By hiring similar people again and again, many brilliant teams think in only one way and share the same blind spots. Artificial intelligence raises the stakes: by making standardized thinking commonplace, it makes minds that break the mold all the more valuable. This module goes beyond making the case for cognitive diversity and neurodiversity: it offers three concrete practices, from hiring to running meetings, that anyone can apply, not only managers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Understand why a cognitively identical team, however brilliant, gets stuck on problems that need a different angle.
- 02 See neurodiversity as a source of strengths (pattern recognition, memory for detail, rigor) rather than as a list of deficits.
- 03 Apply the three practices that foster cognitive diversity: hire for cognitive complementarity, adapt meetings, and make the environment more predictable.
- 04 Get into the habit of consulting the person who thinks least like you when a problem is hard to solve.

WHO IT'S FOR

Managers and recruiters who build teams, and team members who want every way of thinking to be heard.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Cognitive diversity, popularized by A. Reynolds & D. Lewis (Harvard Business Review)
- Theory of multiple intelligences, 8 intelligences (Howard Gardner, 1983)
- The Afthonios "3 practices" method: hire for complementary ways of thinking rather than similarity
- The concept of neurodiversity (Judy Singer)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Deloitte Insights: teams that include neurodivergent people can be up to 30% more productive (figure taken from Austin & Pisano, Harvard Business Review, 2017)
- R. Austin & G. Pisano, "Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage," Harvard Business Review, 2017
- SAP, "Autism at Work" program (launched in 2013): more than 240 people in 16 countries, retention rate of about 90%
- Howard Gardner (Harvard), Frames of Mind, 1983: theory of multiple intelligences