MODULE OVERVIEW

When ideas clash: Cooperating constructively in the AI era

Adaptive module | ~20 min

As AI takes over the technical side of work, what makes the difference shifts to the human side: the quality of cooperation (the best teams dare to suggest ideas, voice doubts, and contradict each other without fear). This module's approach is to treat communication not as a "soft skill" but as the strategic skill of the moment: three barriers to remove (including AI sycophancy), four concrete levers, and an attitude that also applies to our AI assistants.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Identify the three barriers that undermine cooperation: criticism, confirmation, and justification.

02 Use four levers of a constructive attitude: rephrasing the "ifs," proposing, looking to the future, and building on the obstacle.

03 Understand why cooperation becomes the key skill when AI takes over the technical work.

04 Turn AI into a critical mirror, not a tool that simply agrees, by asking it to challenge your blind spots.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants their first reactions—to an unexpected idea, something unplanned, or an AI answer—to move the team forward.

- **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

- "Constructive attitude" grid: 3 barriers, 4 levers (Afthonios method)
- Psychological safety – Amy Edmondson (1999); Google's Project Aristotle study
- Nonviolent Communication (Marshall Rosenberg); solution-focused approach (Steve de Shazer)
- Confirmation bias – Peter Wason (1960)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Tech Policy Press, 2025 (Rathje et al., NYU): brief interactions with a sycophantic AI lead to more extreme attitudes and greater certainty
- Google – Project Aristotle (re:Work): psychological safety is the top factor in high-performing teams
- Amy Edmondson (Harvard), 1999 – psychological safety
- Sharma et al. (Anthropic), 2023 – definition of sycophancy in large language models

Module created by Afthonios.com.

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