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Cognitive Bias Aide Memoire

PURPOSE

This aide memoire can be used by teams to identify cognitive biases in the decision-making process. A nominated person should become familiar with the aide memoire and act as the 'devil's advocate' so they can read out the biases to the team and challenge them to identify if they have made any effort to mitigate the effect of these biases. The aide memoire is best used for key decisions and involves two steps.

WHAT IS COGNITIVE BIAS?

A cognitive bias is a mistake in reasoning, evaluating or remembering that often occurs because we hold onto our preferences and beliefs regardless of contrary information or intelligence. The extent to which we hold onto our biases can be influenced by factors such as stress, fatigue or time pressures.

STEP ONE: ASSESS AVAILABLE INFORMATION, INTELLIGENCE AND DECISIONS

- 01 ☐ Are we favouring intelligence that confirms our understanding or preferred options or dismissing or downplaying evidence that doesn't? (confirmation bias)
- 02 ☐ Our decisions can be anchored by early intelligence. Have we assessed credibility of the intelligence to the same standard over time? (anchoring bias)
- 03 ☐ Are we making decisions based on our previous experience of similar incidents and if so, are these incidents really the same? (availability bias)
- 04 ☐ Have our options/decisions been biased by pictures, maps or other visual media? Has this effect discounted other intelligence? (picture superiority effect)
- 05 ☐ Are we committing to a decision or option because we are familiar with it, instead of committing because it is the best option or decision? (mere exposure bias)

STEP TWO: DETERMINE THE MEANING OF THE INFORMATION, INTELLIGENCE AND DECISIONS

- 06 ☐ Have we deferred to or given greater weight to the opinions of people in authority without assessing those opinions rigorously? (authority bias)
- 07 ☐ Have we made efforts to make sure everyone truly understands the decision and reasons for it? (curse of knowledge)
- 08 ☐ We typically underestimate the time needed to perform our own tasks. What are the implications if this is true for these decisions/options? (planning fallacy)
- 09 ☐ Are we just agreeing because others agree? Have we properly considered alternatives or intelligence that does not support the dominant opinion/option? (bandwagon effect)
- 10 ☐ Are we avoiding information to shield ourselves from possible situations by pretending that they do not exist or that particular outcomes could not eventuate? (ostrich effect)

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