



USUAL SUSPECTS

Author: Marc Ratcliffe

Description: The “Usual Suspects” is an analytical game that highlights the importance of having sufficient evidence to support a decision or judgment. It is also a useful activity for exploring (and exposing) myths and stereotypes. It presents the scenario of a jewelry heist with five possible suspects. The participants have to determine who they think is most likely to be involved based on information provided by the trainer. However, the information is released to participants in three stages thus blurring the edges of who may be involved.

Objective: Build awareness of stereotypes

Audience: Those with intermediate or advanced knowledge of the information being presented

Time: 30-45 minutes

Group Size: 8-30 people

Materials: The Usual Suspects information cards

- Process:**
1. Start by explaining to the participants that there has been a jewelry heist in a local shopping center. Before the lights went out, the following five people were in the store:
 - Security Guard
 - Former Sales Assistant
 - Retired Police Officer
 - 16-year-old Girl
 - David Hasselhoff
 2. Inform the participants that they have to make a decision on who they think is most likely to be involved with the jewelry heist. Explain that there will be three rounds of information provided on each of the suspects. At the end of each round, the group has to confer and come up with their number one suspect. (The three rounds are denoted by the numbers 1, 2 and 3 on the Information cards.)
 3. Once the final round has been completed, ask the participants to nominate who they think is responsible for the jewelry heist.

Debrief: The fact is that the evidence is only circumstantial and doesn't really lead to any of the suspects conclusively. Discuss with the participants why they made some of their decisions and extend by posing the question, “How did stereotypes affect our decision-making?” Finally, ask the participants to conclude with a discussion on how focusing on stereotypes could affect them in their job roles.



- Variations:**
1. As an extension, you could invite five of the audience members to act out the roles from the Usual Suspects Information Cards. Additionally, the audience could be allowed to ask additional questions of the suspects before coming up with a final decision.
 2. Make everyone in the class a suspect with a different role and ask them to arrange themselves in a continuum from most likely to least likely. In the debrief, ask how they made their decisions.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Security Guard</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. No criminal history2. Volunteers for Red Cross3. Recently engaged | <p>Former Sales Assistant</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Still visits staff regularly2. Boss accused this person of stealing while employed3. Has a pocket full of diamonds |
| <p>Retired Police Officer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Internal investigation on him for theft of seized items.2. Has a gambling problem3. Video surveillance places him in the store when items went missing | <p>16-year-old Girl</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is skipping school2. Has a drug problem3. Video surveillance in shopping centre has evidence of shoplifting in Surfwear Shop next door |
| <p>David Hasselhoff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Researching role in new TV show “Knight Watch” – episode “Jewelry Heist”2. Lost money on the launch of latest CD – “Drop it like it’s Hoff”3. In-store CCTV has him holding the missing items 5 minutes prior to the heist | |