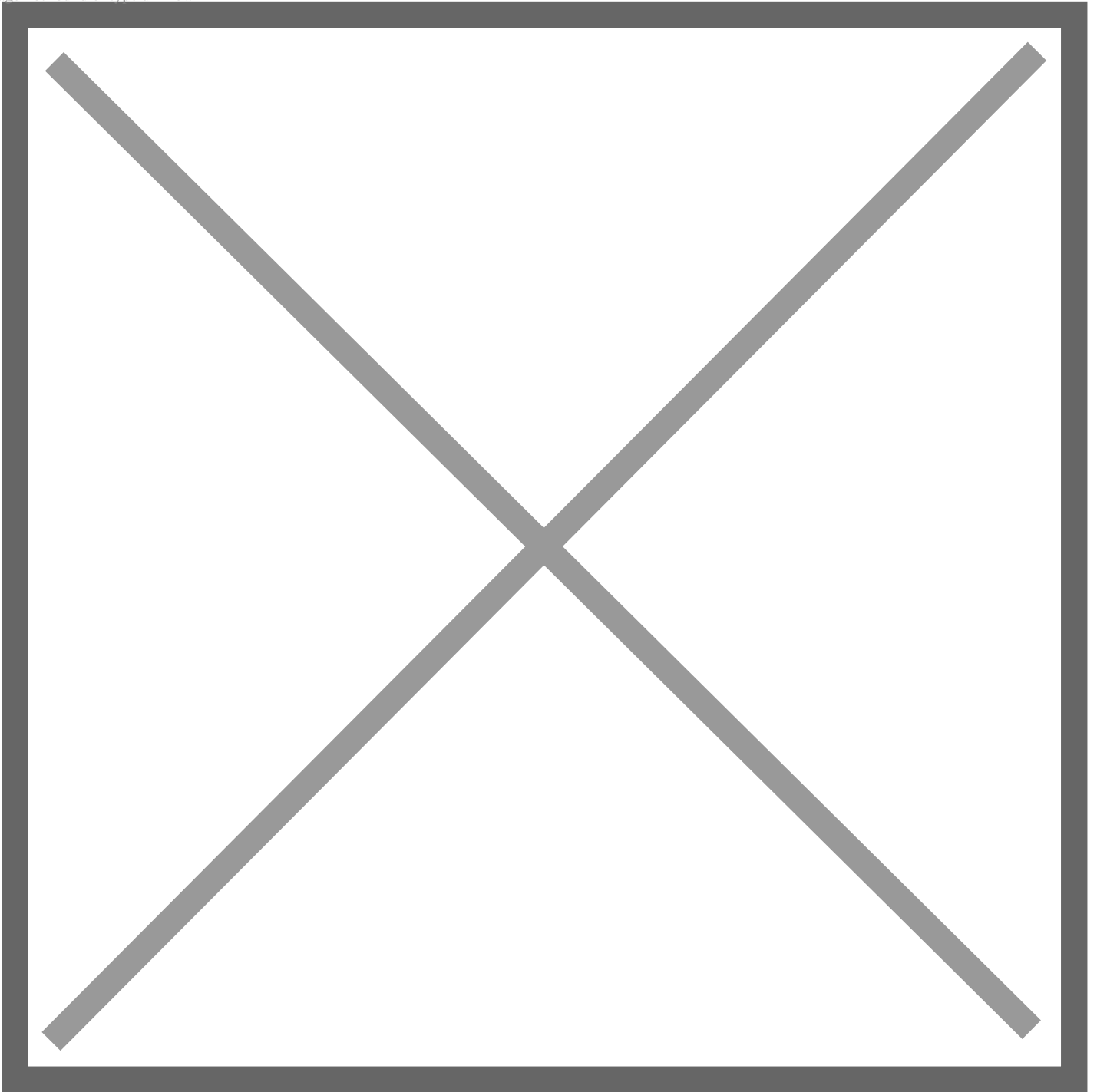


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# Are Assumptions Always Good?

## Description

## Are Assumptions Always Good?

I have written extensively about how groups can test assumptions through prototype projects. This assumes that assumptions are an important starting point and need to be made explicit. It is hard to test something you have not defined. But there is another view.

I work with groups to make their logic visible. What do they assume about what attracts participants to their programs and how they get better? I share that groups who articulate and test their assumptions outperform those who leave them latent. On the other hand, I also like to preach about the value of an open mind and the blessings of serendipity. Avoid preconception!

Which is it to be? Differing advice is not rare, of course. How can one believe in “out of sight, out of mind” and also agree that “absence makes the heart grow fonder?” Many organizations and their consultants caught within the organizational paradox of being loose and tight at the same time speak of simultaneously loosening up and tightening down.

There is a deeper consideration. It may be less about the value of making or not making assumptions than about the kinds of assumptions that are helpful or constraining. I see two categories of assumptions. The first are assumptions based on beliefs— things we are quite certain to be true. When assumptions become givens, they are straitjackets. Constraining us from seeing I have often said, for example that the person matters more than the plan. But is this always the case? My belief, if clutched too tightly is a loadstone. I only look to see it confirmed and do not see the inevitable instances where the approach actually matters most.

The second group of assumptions are working propositions. Some of mine, for example, deal with what I think prompts participants to sustain gains after a program ends. These assumptions are based more on questions than beliefs and I do not feel I know the answers. I am open to seeing what happens. This is helpful.

Please stay loose while you tighten your thinking about assumptions.

### **Date Created**

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