



## Short

## Guide To Overcoming Bias

### What is it?

Ultimately, cognitive biases and heuristics lead to inaccurate risk assessments, so they need to be proactively managed. As a consequence, when a risk is assessed as greater than its actual extent, more resources may be assigned to its management than actually required. In contrast, insufficient resources may be allocated to a risk when its severity exceeds its assessment.

### Purpose & Use

The purpose of this guide is provide tips & tricks for overcoming some common biases and heuristics, by:

- ❖ Providing a description of some of the common biases & heuristics
- ❖ Sharing approaches for managing and overcoming each bias

### Rules / Context / Background

The topic of cognitive bias & heuristics is vast, with many great resources available. Readers should understand the wider context of risk attitude, including the Triple Strand of Influence.

### References / Other Useful Links

Understanding and Managing Risk Attitude – David Hillson and Ruth Murrery-Webster

APM PRAM Guide



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## How To

Please see the table below for some examples of common biases/ heuristics; with techniques on how to combat these:

Bias/ Heuristic	Description	Techniques for Combating
<b>Availability Heuristic</b>	The dependence on data/ examples that first come to mind when assessing a decision/ risk, etc. Large influences are born from memorable events and/or the frequency of exposure to significant events or information. Other more topical risks may be downplayed as a result of the ease in which we relate to these memorable risks.	Being aware of this heuristic is vital. Consider the use of 'challenger roles'; assign a couple of group members as challengers whose role is to question information that is offered.
<b>Anchoring</b>	A tendency for individuals to rely too heavily on a single piece of information offered (called an "anchor") when making decisions. Anchoring can inadvertently narrow a group's assessment of a risk to a range which may be inaccurate.	After the initial risk assessment has been conducted, re-do the risk assessment considering the anchor. Use data that supports the new number (and reference the data evidence) to change the anchor. Examine whether the most likely outcomes are accurate. Be aware that you can influence the thoughts of others, creating an anchoring effect, by leading and informing risk activities. Communication of



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Bias/ Heuristic	Description	Techniques for Combating
		risk concepts can also influence perception, i.e. framing.
<b>Hindsight</b>	Knowledge of what actually happened influences recollections of the past. Having an unfounded belief that one could have predicted the outcome based on current information.	Awareness. Consider downward counterfactuals or post-mortems. Consider what happened and how it could have been worse. Try to identify things that could have happened but did not with regard to the same or similar scenario. To avoid being swayed by one outcome, gather and review as much data as possible.
<b>Groupthink</b>	The aspiration to achieve consensus driven by the desire to avoid conflict, within a group setting. Conformity in a group setting often leads to psychological comfort, resulting in an inferior decision-making outcome. Essentially, a flawed outcome which is	Mix groups up and break into sub-groups. Aim for a diverse and balanced group – identify risk types and personalities in the group. Request that the leader of the group desists from expressing their opinion too soon/ first.



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Bias/ Heuristic	Description	Techniques for Combating
	unanimously agreed upon is preferable to a superior outcome not agreed on by everyone.	
<b>Overconfidence</b>	An individual's level of confidence exceeds their actual ability. This transpires when individuals or groups overestimate the likelihood of something occurring or not occurring. This increases the level of overstatement.	Pre-Mortems and downward counterfactuals can be effective to counter this. Ensure that there are no other biases/ heuristics at play which are contributing, for example confirmation bias. Collect more data (e.g. external input) and consider assigning challenger roles.