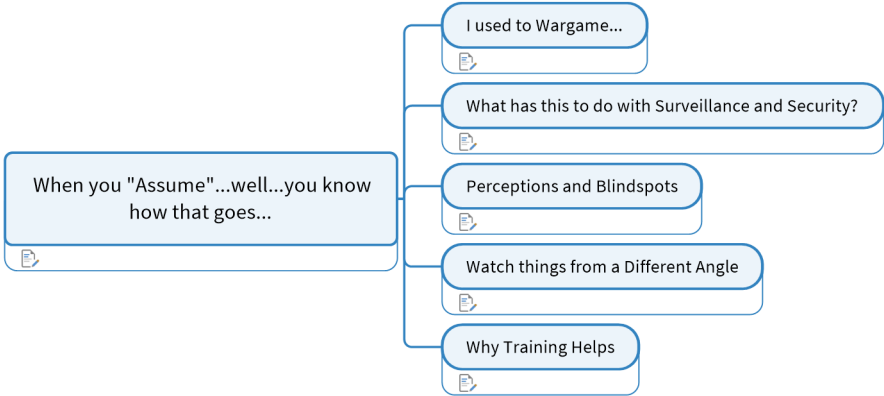# When you "Assume"...well...you know how that goes...

We all know the phrase: When you assume you make an ass of "U" and me.
Which, like many quotes isn't nearly as old as we might think it is, seemingly going back only so far as the 1950's. but one that is satisfying in its pithy accuracy.
So... if this is the beginning where do we go from here?

1.   I used to Wargame...

Back when I was a teen I used to Wargame.
Not play Dungeons and Dragons, which is a role-playing game (and while I did play RPG's I was, at heart, a Rune Quest guy), but actual wargames.
These were the types of games with complex rulesets and, typically, cardboard counters that would tell you information about the units you were looking at, such and Movement values and Offence and Defense values. You usually played them on a paper map, divided into hexagons to facilitate movement and orientation.
I enjoyed wargames, they were a pleasing continuance from Chess, which when you think about it was the first abstracted wargame, but with a wider range of scenarios and potential outcomes.

2. What has this to do with Surveillance and Security?

One of the lessons I learned from Wargaming was never to assume things.
You would look at your position from your side of the hex-map and you would casually assume that there were areas where you were vulnerable and other areas where you were impregnable, and you would plot your strategy to achieve your goals accordingly.
But....
But all you actually had to do was walk around to the other side of the table and view the map from a different angle and suddenly everything changed. Was it just as easy as it being a different viewpoint? Did seeing your position opposite you, as opposed to from behind it, really change how you viewed it that radically? Apparently so. Because everything was suddenly different.
Positions you thought vulnerable were often, suddenly, much more difficult to approach or to assault than you had thought. Worse, positions you casually thought impregnable were suddenly riddled with weaknesses, and areas where an assault could threaten to overrun or roll-up the entire position.
The problem was one of perspective, and blind spots and yes, of course, assumptions based upon the first two.

3. Perceptions and Blind spots

We all have them.
We very rarely see things as they actually are, instead we see them through the filter, all too often, of our own perceptions of how things ought to be.
An example that is a little less abstract:
How many times have you seen a chip-fill go to a Gaming Table that was completely wrong, yet still get signed for by two or even three staff members? The whole point, after all, for having multiple staff members sign for a chip-fill was so that everyone would check the work and the assumptions of everyone else.
But is this true?
Generally, not. It is more like everyone assumes that everyone else is checking and thus "take their word for it".
Now, what was the most common reason why this sort of error was made?

The number of chips was correct, it was the denomination that was wrong. We seem to be more sensitive to a difference in volume than we are to a difference in quality or appearance.

The chip-fill was supposed to be 40x $25 and 60 x $5 and the table received 40 x $25 and 60 x $1, this is far more likely to be accepted than if 40 x $25 and 40 x $5 was received. Because lined up on the layout the bulk volume of chips is correct, colour and denomination be damned.

This is a perception problem and a blind spot issue. People see, most often, what they expect to see. Unless they look.

It is one of the reasons that a lot of cheat moves are successful, especially on the likes of Craps or Roulette.

But errors in Chip-fills are the least of your worries.

What other areas of the Operation might be compromised because everyone assumes that they are secure?

4. Watch things from a Different Angle

Wander the Gaming Floor with a jaundiced eye one day. Or view the activities of the team doing the Count, or the activities of the Cage.

What are they doing? What are they doing that could be exploited, if you were of a mind to exploit them? What holes exist in coverage, or staffing levels, or procedures?

Make a list.

Examine your own thinking. Do you have any blind spots? Have you assumed that the position is impregnable because it looks that way from the inside? What about from the outside? How does it look now?

One of the biggest potential issues at the moment is, to my mind, that of Live-Dealer Electronic Table Games. Everyone just assumes that they are secure because the payouts are correct.

Which they are.

But, as you should know and as anyone who has ever dealt a game will tell you, the payout is the last step in the process, not the first one. So, the last step is secure. But what about the buy-in? Is this secure? Are there checks to ensure that the amount of money handed over (where cash is accepted) is balanced to the number of chips or credits issued?

The payout is secure, but how is the game performing? What is its hold? Who plays it? Who deals it?

The other major issue in the modern Casino Industry is, I am sad to say, Marketing. They have their own blind spots, not least the assumption that how the Operation does financially is nothing to do with them, they just have to get people through the door.

Now, to a degree, this is true. But do they understand enough about how a casino makes money to understand how what they do can affect this? Or is the assumption that a Casino "just makes money..."...by magic one assumes. See what I did there?

Have them come out from behind their side of the table and view the position from the other side. How do some of those Marketing promotions look now? How secure do they seem? What advantages do they give away? Stripped of the assumption that "Casino's just make money" what does actually making money actually look like?

Are there threats that you can now see, that your assumptions and blind spots missed before?

5. Why Training Helps

Training Helps because it brings those other perspectives to the forefront, and it brings a lot of wisdom and experience too.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Reinventing the wheel was tough. Historically I mean, really tough.

We think of the wheel as being ubiquitous and an easy innovation to have made. Right? But the wheel is a relatively new invention, Humanity had boats, woven cloth and agriculture before we had

the wheel. Mesoamerica never really had the wheel at all, despite being technologically advanced enough to do so.

Having a wheel took a different way of looking at things and of thinking about things.

But, once you had the wheel then you could take it anywhere with you.

Similarly, one should choose training programs because of the experience, and different perspective, that they will bring.

I have colleagues who, I sincerely believe, are among the best Point-of-Sale fraud and loss prevention people in the world. How is that? Is it because they are simply much smarter than anyone else?

No, they have just seen far more than all but a small subset of their peers and as a result their assumptions and blind spots are correspondingly much smaller. When they go to train and talk about frauds and scams they have seen they have a wide range of examples from a wide range of operations to choose from.

They have, in effect, seen a "position" from all sides of the table and this tends to give a clear-headed view of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in it.

You can learn a lot on your own, and to a degree everyone does. But just as we believe, collectively, in formal education so that everyone doesn't have to be a Newton, or Einstein and reinvent (or restate rather) the natural laws of the Universe, we can believe in training so that everyone doesn't have to reinvent, and suffer through, the errors of the past.

Never assume you know it all, you can always learn.

Never assume you have covered all of the bases. Come out from behind your side of the table, view your position through the eyes of someone trying to beat it.

You'll be amazed how it looks.

By Malcolm Rutherford, CSP