

Action Learning, More Than Brain Storming

Are your teams constantly rehashing the same issues and getting stuck in the same discussions?

Do you find your business teams unable to innovate and bring new ideas to the table?

Beware of Complacency! It is easy to assume that what we are doing is the best possible. Just because it brings results doesn't mean that it is the best result.

Action Learning will infuse your organization with a renewed ability to create, innovate, problem-solve and thrive under conditions of change.

Action learning is a process used to help leverage team learning, with the goal of creating action plans that relate to real work issues. The Action Learning group meets to reflect, discuss and question each other. This allows teams to tap into members' different skill sets, experience and expertise, which facilitates learning from experience.

The fact that action learning groups take place in the work environment, allows for:

- Transfer of knowledge that is more immediate
- Insightful questioning
- Learning in the moment
- Reflection on best practices
- Real-time problem-solving

Make Sure Everyone Participates

To get the most out of Action Learning, the goal or objective must be clearly understood by all participants. Therefore it is key to have a facilitator, and although an outside facilitator is preferable, someone in the team who has the understanding of facilitating, could do this function.

The facilitator must:

- be mindful of the process
- make sure the right questions are asked
- keep the process on track
- assure that all participants are engaged in the process

It is very important that the participants have a desire to be there and understand the need to create a solution.

How to Know When the Solution is Found

The number of meetings may have been predetermined, but as the process of meetings and real life environment progress over time, fewer or more meetings may be required. Also, if the objective was very clear and understood from the outset the team will progress toward the objective.

By tapping into the knowledge and expertise held within the group, efficient problem solving can evolve and an environment of "thinking outside the box" is fostered.

This process in most cases is cyclical, in that when a presumed solution is implemented, after reflection, the use of the solution may lead to a modified and better solution.

Because the team lives the environment first hand and are in the process of evaluation, they are the ones who will know when the best solution is reached.

Be Aware of Repetitive Mistakes

Be aware of repetitive conversations, this prevents the team from seeing the forest for the trees.

Avoid always using the same method or approach to solving problems, this tends to lead to similar solutions. (One size does not fit all).

Try to use different words in the discussions, this will help generate different approaches and ideas probably never considered.

Action learning is not a new idea, it has developed in the 1940's right after the Titanic sank. Maybe it's time to implement Action Learning in your teams before. . . well... it's too late.

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