

Action Learning and Leadership Development

briefing
note



Applying the Action Learning philosophy to developing great leaders



Boulden Management Consultants
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The Action Learning Philosophy and Developing Leaders

Action Learning, as developed by Prof. Reg. Revans, is based on the concept of:

$$L = P+Q$$

This means that Learning [**L**] is based on Programmed Knowledge [**P**] (the things that can be taught) plus Questioning Skills [**Q**] (the ability to apply what has been taught to 'messy' real life problems) across a wide range of situations. So advocates of Action Learning believe that people learn best from:

- ▷ Trying things out in practice and reflecting on what happens as a result of their actions and why
- ▷ Structured counselling in real work situations
- ▷ Regularly sharing the experience with those who are also learning by doing

There are a variety of formats for Action Learning and the one that we at BMC typically select for leadership development is the "**Own Job**" version. This involves participants focusing on developing their skills and capabilities based on their current role within the organisation. So projects are based on a "**familiar task and a familiar environment**". This format is used to build a bridge between a training course, development opportunity, or business challenge and the 'real world'.

The process is that participants (called 'fellows') are placed in a self help group (or 'Set') of six to nine people and asked to carry out a six month long project. The Action Learning projects for this style of programme are based on participants developing their leadership skills. As each participant works to develop their skills he/she meets his/her fellow course participants, every two weeks, over a six-month period. The Set members provide each other with advice and guidance and in doing so they **learn with and from each other**. To further strengthen this 'learning by doing' process, a BMC consultant facilitates six of these monthly sessions and provides additional coaching and support to the Set Members. The learning and development that takes place in an Action Learning Set is (by its very nature) tailor made to the needs of each individual person and to the requirements of the organisation. In addition, by emphasising individual initiative, plus group support, it greatly enhances the self-confidence and self-reliance of the participants.

Boulden management consultants are members of the International Foundation for Action Learning (IFAL) and we offer a structured Action Learning based programme for developing leaders find out more at:

http://www.boulden.net/leadership_development.html

Contact

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