

Action Learning and Senior Leadership Development

briefing
note



Applying the Action Learning Philosophy to developing talented people for general management roles



Boulden Management Consultants
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The Action Learning Philosophy and Developing Senior People

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. When debating the impact or effectiveness of any given approach or idea happens in a 'Set' of people who are also '**learning by doing**' then the development effects can be transformational.

At the heart of the process are real business problems and the specific individuals who are asked to solve them. By changing the way in which the business problems are selected and by altering the mix of people they are assigned to the Action Learning approach can be used to develop individual potential; bring about culture change and help with restructuring.

Of course there is nothing new about developing skills and changing organisations by involving employees in problem solving and decision making processes. Action Learning, however, provides a clear set of guidelines and disciplines to ensure that the approach actually 'works' in practice.

The format used to develop senior people uses an "**unfamiliar problem in a familiar environment**" project structure. This means that the project is based within the company (so the culture is familiar) but the topic is not one the participant would usually address e.g. a manufacturing specialist tackles an issue in the sales function. This type of project then develops the organisational awareness, relationship building and entrepreneurial flair that are so vital in senior executive positions.

Boulden management consultants are members of the International Foundation for Action Learning (IFAL) and we offer a structured Action Learning based programme for developing senior leaders.

Find out more at: http://www.boulden.net/leadership_development.html

Contact

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