

Action Learning Sets – What are they?

Action learning is the term used to describe a learning intervention used in many businesses today. Instead of learning being a formulated set of training it is a facilitated event with the members of the group (the set), anything from 3 people upwards providing support to others in the group.

The way an action learning set works is that each person comes along with a **real problem, issue or challenge they are facing**. The others in the **group actively listen to that person and coach** them through it with **agreed actions** for that person at the end. Once that person has finished then you move onto the next person. The beauty of the action learning set is that you get the support and wisdom of other people in your group. Other people see things that you might not see and can help you self reflect.

The group agrees when they will meet again – probably in a month or so time – long enough for the person to go away and carry out the action they agreed to do. At the next action learning group session each person is able to **report back** on their given situation and either continue to work on it or bring a new challenge, problem or issue they want to work on. And so the process continues.

Usually strong bonds are formed in these groups as members start to open up to one another.

It is very important that **confidentiality** is maintained and that **ground rules** for behaviour our set. There is normally one person who acts as facilitator and keeps an eye on the time. But the group can share facilitation.

Action learning theory came out of work done by **Reg Revans** (1982) at the University of Cambridge where he worked with fellow physicists. He wrote in his book on the subject a formula $L = P + Q$. L being Learning, P is programming and Q is questions. He found that by having fellow workers question and challenge each other he was able to see an increased benefit in the productivity and working methods of individuals. Later an + R was added by **Michael Marquardt** which refers to reflection.

If you are interested in joining or starting an Action Learning set then do get in touch.