

MTD Quick Tips

Action Learning Sets

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What is Action Learning?

The concept of Action Learning was introduced during the late 1920s to the Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, by a group of research scientists, including EB Rutherford and JJ Thompson. They felt that questioning their own actions – both successes and failures - in a deliberate, precise way and reflecting on them, allowed them to gain insight into how to proceed and act more appropriately. One of the members, Professor Reg Revans, developed these reflective practices into a powerful learning process for practitioners and academics: Action Learning.

Action Learning is based on the relationship between reflection and action, where the focus is on the issues and problems that individuals bring to the group, and planning future action with the structured attention and support of that group. Put simply, it is about 'solving problems and getting things done' while also learning and developing. It is therefore neatly underpinned by the 'Kolb Learning Cycle' of experiential learning where the stages of reflection and generalisation are worked through within the Set.

A major advantage of Action Learning is that participants are able to look at the real problems which concern them, rather than considering hypothetical ones, and they are responsible for the selection of the topic(s) or problem(s) discussed.

An action learning programme involves the following key elements:

The Set: a group of usually 5 - 8 people who meet regularly

The Projects: each participant works on a project or task over the life of the set

The Set Facilitator: who helps the group to work and learn together

What are the benefits?

Action Learning gives participants the opportunity to:

- Learn from each other and engage in shared learning;
- Enhance the opportunities given to learn more about each other's' institutions and institutional practices;
- Support innovation;
- Allow time for reflection on current practice but encourage action, in confidence and outside the normal workplace;
- Allow participants to highlight problems / areas where they have special interest, strength or weakness, without risk;
- Enable participants to deal with the kind of management problems which cannot easily be resolved in-house or through external lectures / seminars;
- Give enough time to build up strong relationships and networks outside seminar or lecture based sessions;
- Enable participants to write an action plan of at least three points to put into practice after each module, if this is what they agree;
- Develop both their personal and professional skills and competencies.

The 'learning' is a function of:

- Programmed knowledge, whether provided by the Set or others as agreed;
- Questioning, which is fundamental to Action Learning; action; reflection;
- Time (Action Learning is not a 'quick fix', although learning often gathers momentum over time as the Set learns to question in many different ways, explore, trust, reflect and discuss openly).

MTD's range of subjects for Action Learning Sets include:

- Time management
- Project management
- Communication skills
- Presentation skills
- Influencing skills
- Negotiating skills
- Networking skills
- Management skills
- Leadership skills
- Coaching skills
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Dealing with difficult people

- Continuous improvement
- Change management
- Sales skills
- Personal development
- Customer service
- Quality
- Personal development
- Managing effective meetings
- Train the trainer
- Personal confidence building
- Motivating yourself and others
- Team building
- Conflict management
- Assertiveness skills
- Complaint handling

If you would like us to run some Action Learning Set in your organisation please do not hesitate to give us a call or drop us an email.

God bless and take care

Sean

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About Sean McPheat



Sean McPheat

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Founder and MD of international management development firm MTD Training, Sean McPheat is widely regarded as a leading authority on modern day management and leadership.

Sean is a bestselling author, and has been recognised for his own business building skills through the **British Business Awards** and has been featured in the **Who's Who Of Britain's Business Elite**.

He has been a regular judge for the UK's Young Enterprise Programme but was not as horrible as Simon Cowell (well almost!)



Sean has been featured on **CNN International, the BBC, SKY, ITV, The Guardian, Forbes, Arena Magazine, Marketing Weekly, Business Zone, Winning Edge** and radio stations such as BBC WM and LBC (London's Big Conversation).

Sean has over **250 media credits** to his name and his weekly email tips go out to over **60,000 people** interested in management and development strategies.

Sean is also a **much sought after media figure and motivational speaker** on all topics related to management, HR, business improvement and entrepreneurialism.