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NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

LEADERSHIP AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

LECTURE - 49

Action Learning

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Action Learning

- Action Learning is a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning as individuals, as a team, and as an organization.
- It helps organizations develop creative, flexible and successful strategies to pressing problems.
- Action Learning solves problems and develops leaders simultaneously because its simple rules force participants to think critically and work collaboratively.

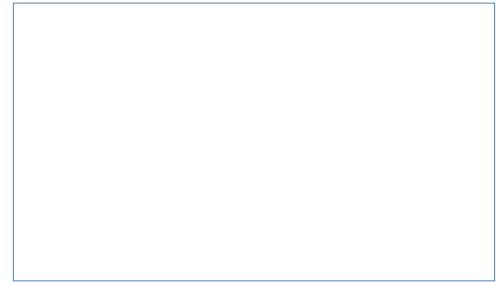


<https://extensionaus.com.au/extension-practice/action-learning/>

Benefits of Action Learning

At an individual level, action learning helps:

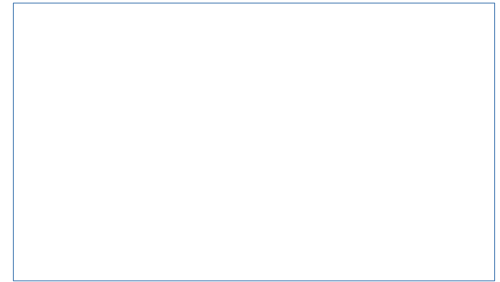
- Enhance personal effectiveness and productivity
- Use reflection to enhance learning from personal experiences
- Enhance personal leadership and soft skills
- Develop self-confidence and assertiveness
- Self-expression as the practice the idea of speaking freely
- Improve awareness of how assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and organizational interests influence thinking, decisions and actions
- Augment self-awareness, awareness of others and the intelligence to adapt to the presented situation.



Benefits of Action Learning(Cont.)

At an organizations Level

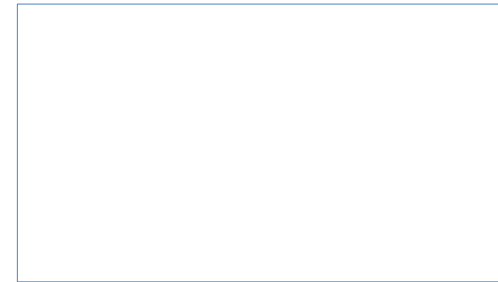
- Enhance business performance at all levels.
- Rapidly solve urgent and important and business challenges to evolve best, collective solutions.
- Develop innovative approaches and solutions that lead to substantial cost savings and increased ROI.
- The Develop a culture of staff engagement, involvement and performance, at all levels.
- Set strategic direction of the company as it approaches collective solutions to many challenges
- Leverage the Action Learning process for effective succession planning by allowing the opportunity for potential members to work in real life problem solving process.



<https://helpcentre.tcglobal.com/hc/en-us/articles/360037218491-What-are-the-major-benefits-of-Action-Learning->

Components of the action learning program

- An action learning program is a well-designed program where proper steps are followed to solve a problem related to its employees.



<https://www.marketing91.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Components-of-action-learning-program-768x432.jpg>

Components of the action learning program(Cont.)

1. A problem

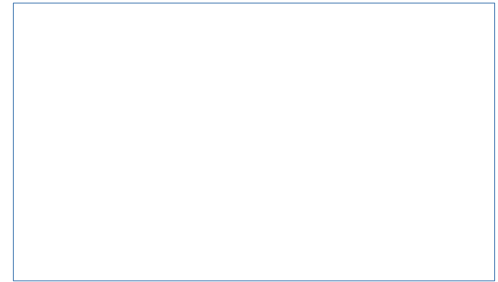
The first and most crucial component of action learning is “a problem.” A problem can be a work project, a challenge faced by the organization, an employee’s issue, an issue with the employee’s behavior in the organization, an opportunity, or a task.

2. An action learning team or group

The second principal component of the action learning process is the group of people or the action learning team. The group members participate in the process either voluntarily or selected based on their experience or problem-solving skills.

3. Action learning process

The third component of the action learning process is the steps involved in the process. In this process, the action learning process members ask the right questions to get deep insights into the situation.



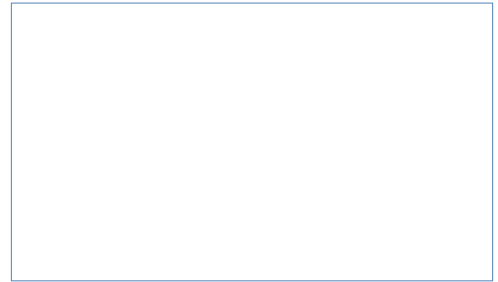
Components of the action learning program(Cont.)

4. Actions are taken

The action learning process is incomplete without the action taken to solve the problem. The purpose of the action learning process is to reach a point to determine the actions to solve the problem. The group members should be given the freedom to decide the actions they want to take and implement those actions.

5. Action learning coach

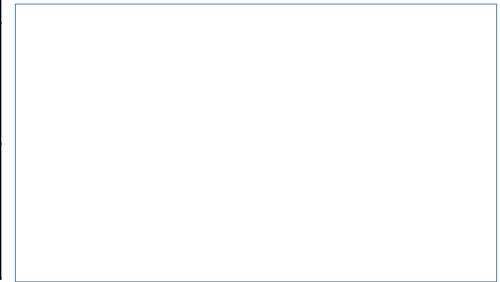
An action learning coach is someone who is designated to control and coach the members of the action learning team. The action learning coach plays a vital role in leading the group in the right direction. He helps the group members reflect on the problem and think about the various solutions to solve the problem.



<https://www.marketing91.com/action-learning/>

Types of Action Learning

Team-Project Action Learning	Individual-Project Action Learning
Entire team works on a single project	Team works on individual projects
Project determined by organization	Projects selected by participants
Participants determined by organization	Participants self-select
Organization take action	Individuals take action
Team recommends and/or implements	Individuals implements solutions



https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283794420_What_is_Action_Learning_Components_Types_Processes_Issues_and_Research_Agendas



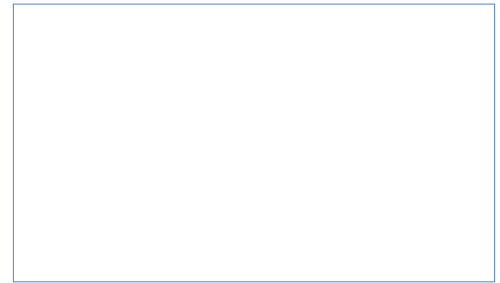
The Action Learning Process

- The most common action learning process can be summarized according to the three stages of the action learning process: preparation, team meetings, and follow-up activities (Cho & Bong, 2013).

Preparation

- As a first step, sponsors (executives and managers) in the organization are secured before launching an action learning project. before setting up meetings building trust and rapport between participants and organizations is the key to success in action learning.

Team Meetings- Action learning projects are work-based and difficult to solve alone. In the team meetings stage, action learning practitioners deal with the project and team selection, roles of a learning coach, problem-solving processes, reflection, and organizational support.



The Action Learning Process(Cont.)

- In the team selection, team members with diverse backgrounds are highly desired because participants of diversity can generate innovative ideas and explore different solutions.

Follow-up Activities

- In the follow-up activities stage, organizations (sponsors) make a decision on the implementation of action learning teams' solutions at the final team presentations. Participants share their solutions and lessons learned from their action learning process with other organizational members through annual action learning conferences and knowledge management systems (e.g., intranets) in the organization.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283794420_What_is_Action_Learning_Components_Types_Processes_Issues_and_Research_Agendas

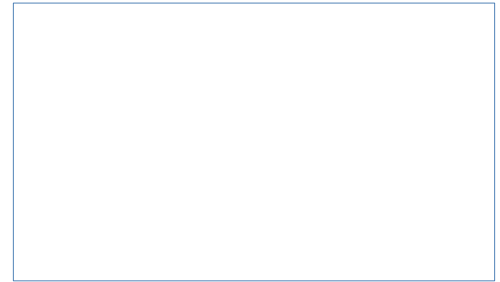


The Principles of Action Learning Model

The principles involved in the Action Learning Model are as follows:

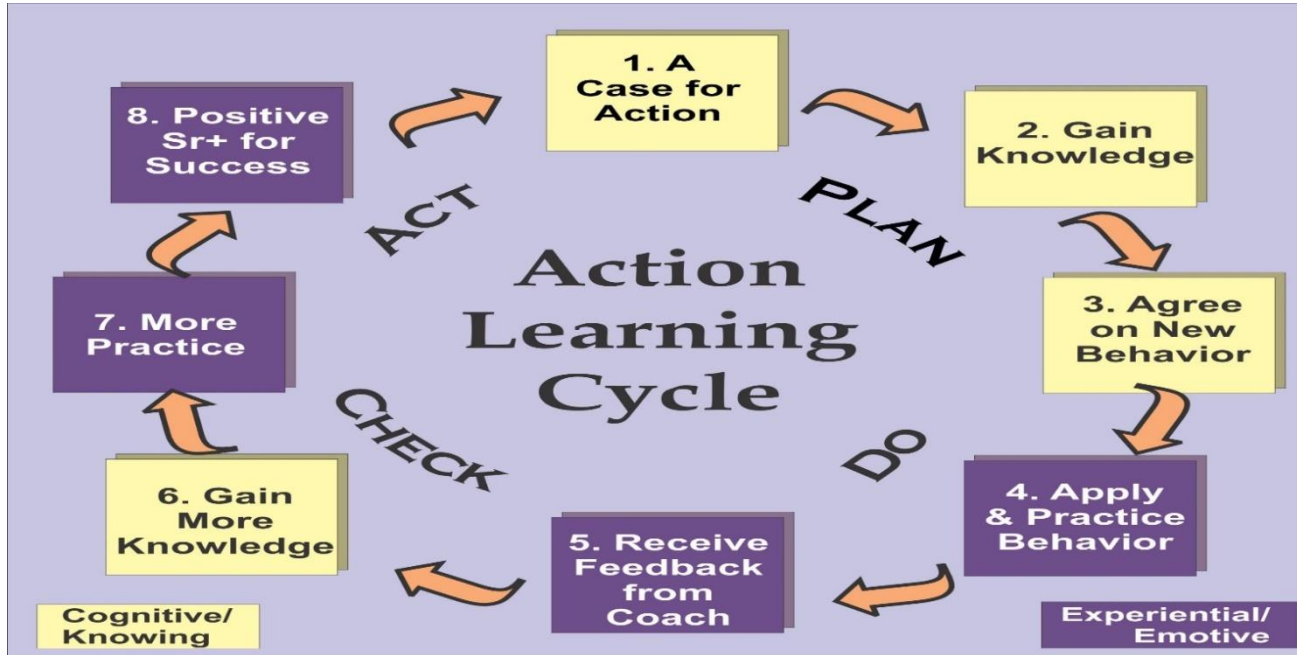
1. The learning experience should be centered around finding an answer or a solution to a problem that exists in the real world.
2. Learning is a voluntary process, and the learner must be willing to learn.
3. Action Learning is a highly social activity and process which takes time to be fully effective. The typical action learning program can last between four to nine months.
4. Developing the individual's knowledge base and skill sets are just as essential as arriving at the solution to the scenario or problem.

<https://elearningindustry.com/action-learning-model>

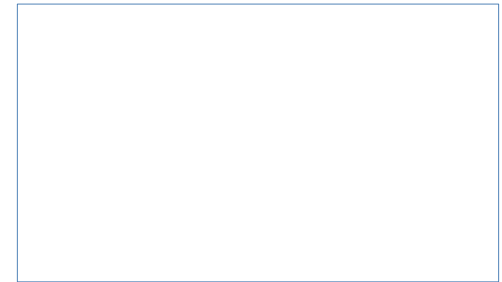


Action Learning Cycle

The eight steps illustrated here constitute a cycle of learning and continuous improvement. In many ways they correspond to the PDCA cycle of improvement.



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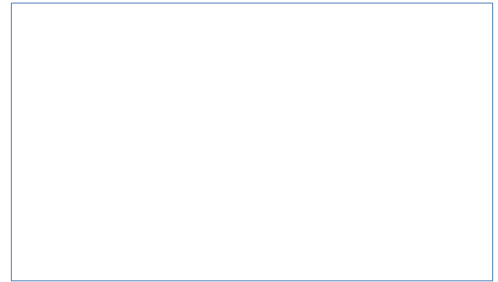
Action Learning Cycle(Cont.)

- The steps illustrated in yellow are primarily knowing/gaining knowledge steps. The steps in purple are more experiential and have more impact on how the learner feels.

1. Build A Case for Action:

- It is essential that team members understand the business case for action.
- As management embarks on a process of continuous improvement they need to point to competitors, best practices, financial benchmarks and the voice of the customers who are telling us that we need to improve.

2. Gain Knowledge: Transferring knowledge is what most corporate trainers do best. It is what classrooms are best designed to accomplish. It is why we have books and websites. However, knowledge very often does not result in behavioral change.



Action Learning Cycle(Cont.)

3. Agree on New Behavior:

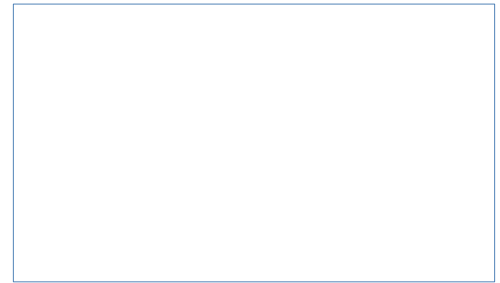
- Intention is the beginning of change. The guitar instructor may teach a chord position or scale on the fret board. By itself, that is useless knowledge. It only becomes useful when practiced.

4. Apply & Practice New Behavior:

- Imagine learning to play a musical instrument. Learning any new skill is much the same way. Teams need to practice problem solving and experiment.

5. Receive Feedback from Coach

- The role of the *sensei* has become understood as an element of Toyota culture. A *sensei* is, essentially, a personal coach and mentor. Someone who can guide, observes, and gives feedback and encouragement.



6. Gain More Knowledge:

- And now, the cycle becomes obvious. After each lesson learned, action or deliverable completed, the team receives feedback from the coach and then goes on to learn the next element of development: how to develop a balanced scorecard; how to map their work process; how to recognize variances of common versus special cause; how to reduce waste and cycle time, etc.

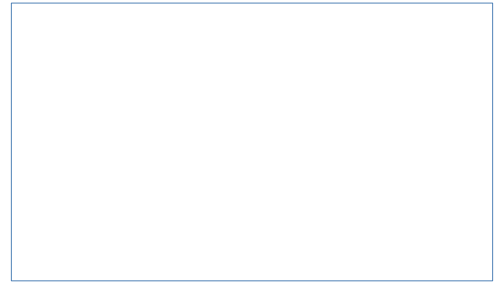
7. More Practice:

- The team and their coach should map out a series of ten to twenty steps that the team or individual will learn then do, then gain feedback and reflection.

8. Positive Reinforcement from Coach and the Natural Environment:

- As teams practice the skills of continuous improvement they begin to have an impact on actual performance.

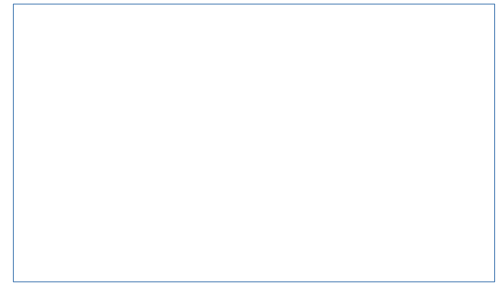
<https://www.lmmiller.com/action-learning-cycles-of-learning-are-the-key-to-developing-a-culture-of-continuous-improvement/>



The Action Learning Sets

The groups that are formed in Action Learning are known as “action learning sets”. In action learning sets, the learners are encouraged to meet on a regular basis, explore answers to the problems, and to collectively decide upon the most appropriate solution. Usually, the steps involved in the process are:

- Describing the problem as it is perceived by the action learning set.
- Discussing the problem by allowing each member of the action learning set to ask questions.
- Assessing what has been discovered during the process so far, and determining which action should be taken.
- Evaluating the outcome that was produced by the solution.
- Re-evaluating the problem solving method and determining if it is effective



<https://elearningindustry.com/action-learning-model>

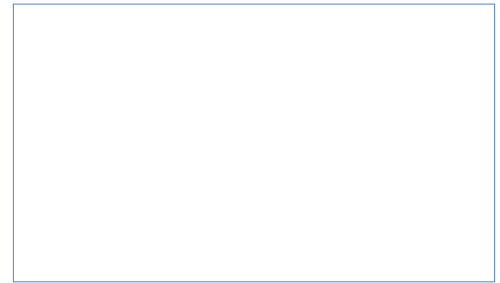
The 4 Key Components of Action Learning Theory

There are four other key components that may be applied in an action learning sets:

- 1. A Problem** This is typically a non-technical problem, and must pertain to either strategic or tactical-based scenarios or issues.
- 2. A Client** This is the entity who set forth the problem. This may be a member of the group, an instructor, or an outside organization.
- 3. A Set Adviser** This is the individual who facilitates the set and presents the guidelines for the problem solving process.

4. The Process

This involves an assessment and analysis of the problem, reflection, the formulation of a possible solution or hypothesis.



<https://elearningindustry.com/action-learning-model>



5 tips for Running Action Learning Groups

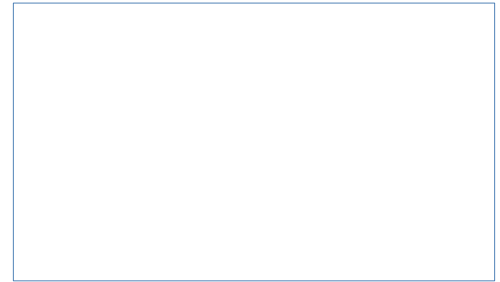
The following 5 tips are aimed at helping you to run successful Action Learning Groups.

1. Individuals should choose to 'sign up' for Action Learning

Successful Action Learning groups stay together because they choose to and not because they have to. It is a good idea that the process for joining an Action Learning group be a voluntary one.

2. Pay attention to the environment

Often we don't pay too much attention to where we have meetings. This is not an option when you are running Action Learning



5 tips for Running Action Learning Groups(Cont.)

3. Work with a skilled Facilitator

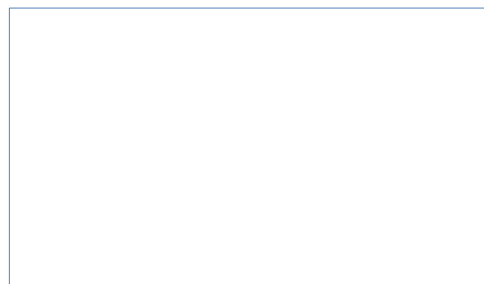
In Action Learning the facilitator will role model the skills that others are expected to learn and use in the session.

4. Run an introductory session on Dialogue

Running a session on Dialogue will help a group to start as you mean them to go on. The principles will actively help the group not to fall into the trap of developing an inbuilt compulsion to fix other people's problems.

5. Be rigorous with time

Time and how you use it is critical for the success of an Action Learning session. Everyone must have an equal slot of it and don't be afraid of being up front about it



https://cdn.ymaws.com/associationforcoaching.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Articles_&_Handy_Guides/Organisations/Handy_Guides/Top_5_tips_Running_Action_LG.pdf

Case Study : Leadership Development in the Private Sector: 3M

3M is a science and product company that generates approximately \$30 billion in annual revenues and consists of 85,000 employees located in more than 70 countries. Headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota, the 65,000 products in 3M's portfolio include adhesives, abrasives, nanotechnology, electronics and software, lighting management, microreplication, and nonwoven materials and some 40 other technological platforms. Many of these products, such as Post-It notes, are highly recognizable. 3M has always put a premium on innovation, and to date its 8,000 research scientists have generated over 3,100 U.S. patents. Because of the success of its products, 3M has consistently been ranked as a top 10 Most Admired Company by Fortune magazine.

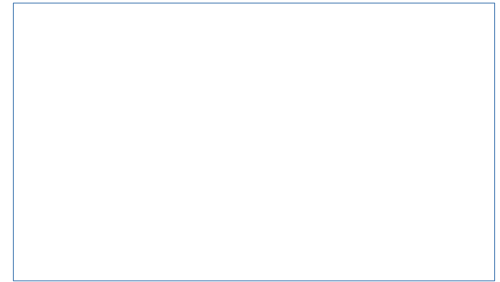


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Case Study : (Cont.)

- In 2006 the company noticed that the costs for getting new products to the market were rising at an alarming rate. 3M did not want to focus exclusively on reducing costs, however, as this could negatively impact the development of new products. Company managers believed that the key to improving both efficiency and innovation was employee engagement, which it defined as, “An individual’s sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, effort, and persistence directed towards organizational goals.” 3M management felt that the more people who were engaged with their work, the more likely they would be to offer and execute ideas to improve innovation and reduce costs.
- 3M had been measuring employee satisfaction and attitudes toward work since the early 1950s and redesigned these companywide surveys as part of the focus on employee engagement.



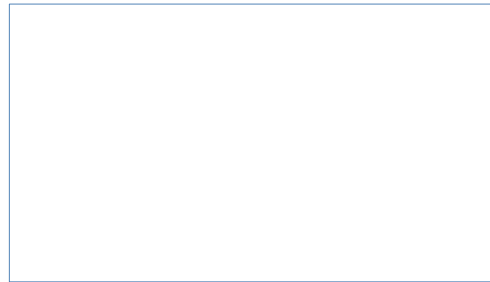
Case Study : (Cont.)

- The data were collected in such a way that individual first-line supervisors, mid-level managers, country managers, regional executives, and functional managers could see the average engagement levels of their respective employees. At the same time, the Leadership Development function at 3M supplemented its offerings in order to educate leaders on what employee engagement is, how it can be a competitive advantage, and what they can do to improve it.
- 3M's Leadership Development function has been recognized as one of the best in the world and makes extensive use of leaders teaching leaders (i.e., the CEO and executive leadership team all spend time teaching leadership courses to fellow 3M leaders). The function's action learning programs are offered to some of the best and brightest in the company and consist of temporary teams that are tasked with developing ideas and business plans to generate an additional \$25 million in sales or significant revenue.



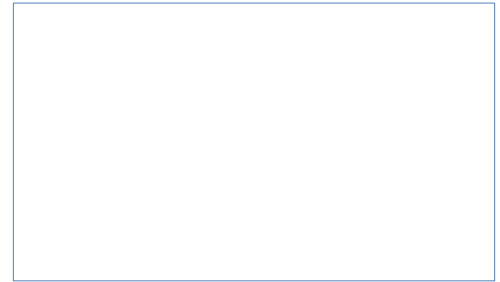
Case Study : (Cont.)

- The function also offers traditional classroom training and hundreds of e-learning modules for leaders in first-line, midlevel, and executive-level leadership positions. Social media, do-it-yourself YouTube-type videos, blogs, wikis, and the like are also used extensively to teach leaders how to promote employee engagement. As a result of these leadership development efforts, overall employee engagement has improved dramatically to 4.8/5.0, new products are being released, revenues are growing, and costs are being managed more effectively.
- 3M's new CEO Inge Thulin, himself a product of this well-established company widely known for its innovation and leadership development, is also now bringing an even greater focus on people development. Within a week of his appointment as CEO, he announced a new vision for the company and six major business strategies, one of which was aimed directly at raising the bar even higher for “building high-performing and diverse global talent” at 3M.



Case Study : (Cont.)

- Certainly, many companies think leadership effectiveness at all levels is critical to driving an aggressive growth strategy: Thulin, however, has operationalized this, making development of all talent, including leaders, a core business strategy



Research Paper



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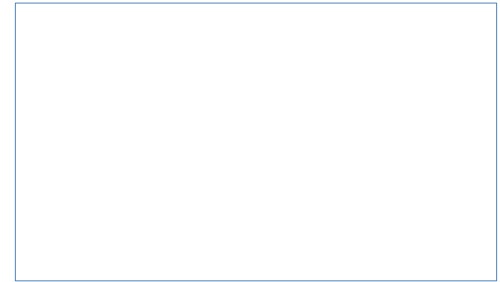
Authentic leadership and mindfulness development through action learning

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Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, Canada*

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate a three-year training program based on action learning principles with regard to its effectiveness in fostering authentic leadership (AL) and mindfulness among the participants.



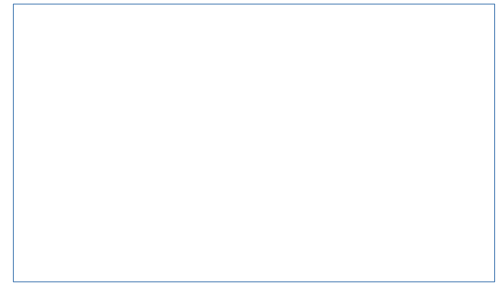
Research Paper

Design/methodology/approach

Data were obtained using a mixed-method design. Quantitative data were collected using a quasi-experimental sequential cohort design with comparison group, in which 143 participants responded to a self-evaluation questionnaire up to six times over a three-year period. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 24 managers.

Findings

The results indicate that, as participants evolved through the leadership development program, self-reports of AL and mindfulness increased significantly and linearly as determined using repeated measures ANOVA, paired t-tests, and content analysis of interviews.

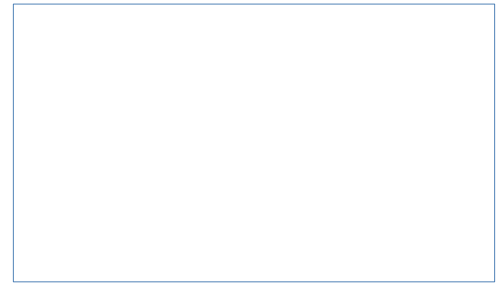


Practical implications

The results suggest that a leadership development program based on action learning principles can foster the development of AL and mindfulness. The core elements of action learning (i.e. working on real problems, gaining new insights in a supportive and confrontational environment of one's peer) appear to be key to bringing about real changes in the behavior of participating managers and maximizing the chances of generating lasting effects.

Originality/value

This is the first longitudinal study to demonstrate that the development of mindfulness and AL – which calls for internalization of attitudes and behaviors – can be fostered by a leadership development program. The question of whether AL can be developed through planned interventions is paramount for advancing theory and research on AL.



Book Recommendation

Optimizing the Power of Action Learning: Real-Time Strategies for Developing Leaders, Building Teams and Transforming Organizations

Authors: Michael J. Marquardt, Peter Cauwelier, Shannon Banks, & Choon Seng Ng

Publisher: Nicholas Brealey International; 2nd edition (16 February 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1904838332

ISBN-13: 978-1904838333

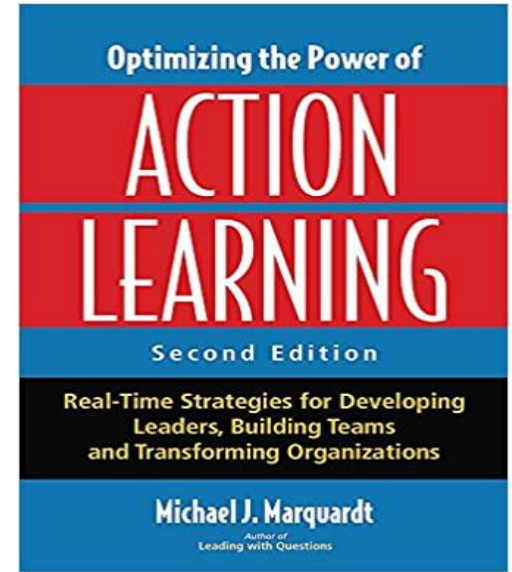
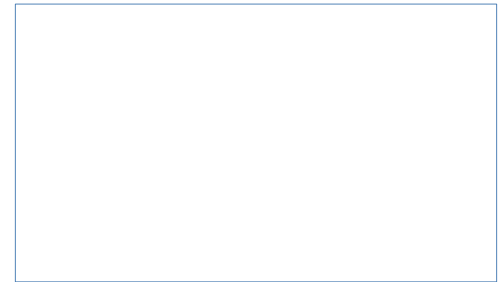


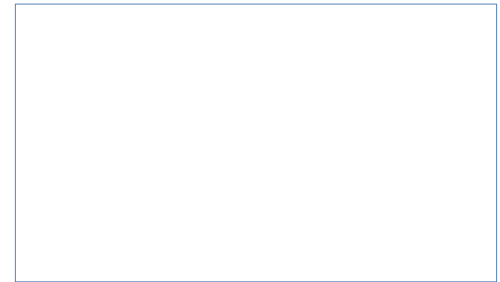
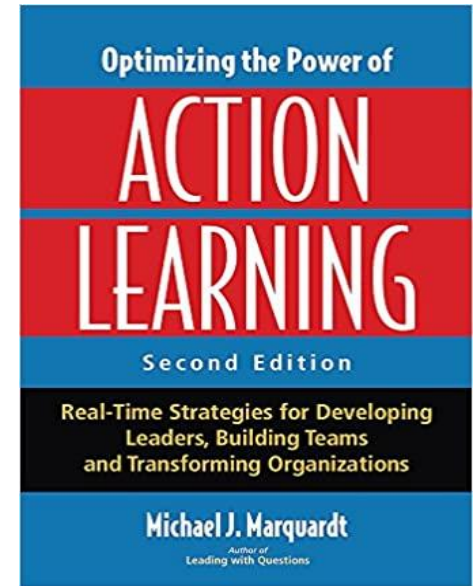
Image Source: <https://www.amazon.in/Optimizing-Power-Action-Learning-Organizations/dp/1904838332>



Book Recommendation

This newly revised edition demonstrates how action learning can be used to address today's increasingly complex organizational challenges. Profiling such global leaders as LG, Sony, and Boeing, Marquardt shows how these and other organizations have flourished by discovering how to optimize the power of action learning. Packed with extensive enhancements, including new international case studies, and more strategies to introduce and maintain action learning programs within an organization, *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning* delivers an innovative and fresh perspective - making it a must-have for any organization looking to heighten competitive advantage and sustain success.

Image Source: <https://www.amazon.in/Optimizing-Power-Action-Learning-Organizations/dp/1904838332>



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Thank You

