

## A short introduction to Action Learning

A simple but powerful approach to personal and professional development, conducted through Action Learning Sets: a group of 6 or 8 people working at comparable levels of responsibility, meeting regularly for a contracted number of meetings.

### Healing the split between ideas and action

Reg Rvans is considered to be the founder of action learning, seeing it as healing the split between ideas and action. The core of action learning is that we learn best when we have a real issue to resolve and when what we are trying to change or resolve is something we are responsible for. Revans emphasised the importance of articulating doubts and questions in order to realise our potential; "swap your difficulties, not your cleverness" (ABC of Action Learning).

### Reflective learning

Action Learning provides a challenging space for reflective learning and creates potential for individual and organisational development. Where organisations or people are seeking to achieve new directions, participating leaders and managers use action learning to review their established practice and develop effective ways of working.

Action Learning sets can be useful in cross sector settings for those in leadership/management positions or as a source of support, learning and challenge for those who are self-employed and thus professionally isolated.

Those joining cross or intra sector sets can also benefit from the new insights that arise from peers who bring different experience and backgrounds.

With thanks to *Action Learning Associates*

## What does Action Learning offer?

- Support and challenge from peers
- The opportunity to learn from others' good practice and develop new ideas and different 'solutions'
- Practice and receipt of feedback from peers on their leadership and management skills
- Problem solving time for personal learning and development & insight into how others achieve different solutions
- Double loop learning, where the individual goes beyond a single loop of identifying a problem and resolving it to the double loop where they challenge the assumptions underlying their practice

## When is Action Learning useful?

- To support internal organisational development and organisational change
- For personal and professional development on an individual level
- Particularly useful in leadership development programmes
- To try out new ways of working or map out a new way of dealing with a situation
- To create reflection time for learning

## Links

Action Learning Associates

<http://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/>

Action Learning Sets (BOND Guidance Notes 5.1) (PDF)

<http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/als.pdf>

CIPD article on Action Learning

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lrnanddev/general/actionlearning.htm>