

## ACTION LEARNING: A BONDING AND COLLABORATION PROCESS FOR GROWING BUSINESSES



This is the first time Action Learning was used as a tool for a succession planning project in an organization. One's experience as a senior executive coach with more than 1,000 coaching hours is a good basis for becoming an Action Learning Coach. In addition, having worked in the Human Resource Development Department and Organization Development in a large organization for 20 years, and combining both one-on-one and team coaching with Action Learning in the whole development process are very beneficial for this successor development program.

Customers trusted Action Learning after I demonstrated Action Learning sessions for the HRD team. The follow up done on the outcomes after the AL session which lasted for two weeks showed that the Problem Presenter changed his behavior in team meetings and was now more courageous to express opinions.

### Seeing the entrance

After a couple of months, the HRD team initiated the succession planning project to comply with the principles of the listed company in the Stock Exchange market. This project has many learning interventions; therefore, it is an opportunity to introduce the Action Learning process and One-on-One Coaching as two learning methods in this program. The target group was seven executives from 5 sales departments, one person from the accounting department and the other one from the IT department.



### **Succession Planning Project Kick- Off**

At the opening event, the CEO informed his objectives and his expectations for all successors to achieve business needs. The CEO explained that the business issue is strengthening all distribution channels. The coach delivered the key message that for the 90-minute event, everyone had to attend and give their full attention. They could not do anything else during the session. In addition, all team members should attend every Action Learning session.

### **6-Month Learning Journey in Action Learning**

All team members participated in multiple problem Action Learning sessions on the first day. Usually, the participants would work independently and do not have any meeting together so they rarely talked to each other even though they have been in the organization for at least ten years. When the third activity ended, one Problem Presenter hugged a member from the Accounting Department. The Problem Presenter said she did not dare to talk to her in the past because she looked solemn. However, right now, she had changed her mind. All team members reflected on their learning at the end of the first day. They started to enjoy learning in a new way of Action Learning. They knew colleagues better by listening to each one's stories, especially about personal issues. They were pleased to help each other to find a solution.

After four weeks, all team members joined together for two more Action Learning sessions. They started to share what they had done and learned from their actions. The coach was delighted to see the determination of all the team members and saw the team members' awareness of using open-ended questions to help each other. The meeting atmosphere became increasingly friendly, and people who did not speak at the earlier session asked more questions. At the end, most said they learned leadership competencies from their peers. They intended to practice empathy when communicating with their team members.

The CEO also cooperated very well in the Action Learning session. He provided clarity on the business direction and answered all questions from the team. Members joined twice to find the root cause of the business problem. It was a session where the team had to adjust themselves, not jump to solutions, and tried to identify root causes

instead. They struggled a lot because the problem was complicated. The team found that there was not enough information so they had to gather as much information as they could. Although looking visibly exhausted, they still opted to do a third Action Learning session which led to setting goals and planning.



The team members prepared well for the CEO and Executive HR presentation. They presented a business strategy based on substantial data that had never been done before. There were two parts to this presentation. The first was a presentation of the business strategy, and the second was sharing of what each member had learned from the program. The critical success factors of this project were the incorporation of all stakeholders and the team's high commitment. The coach helped the team find the root cause of the problem and solutions and invited them to reflect on all their learning along the way.

Action Learning makes participants confident in being competent leaders, resulting in their direct reports' quality of work-life and achieving business results. Moreover, the entire team grows together based on good relationship and friendship.

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