

## **ACTION LEARNING IN AIR ASIA: MAKING BEST PRACTICES BETTER**

How do people normally solve problems in a fast-moving environment where focus is on on-time performance? Standard operation procedures would be the key reference material. Team leaders would normally be subject-matter experts with extensive experience in operations. Team members would escalate problems and team leaders would tell them what to do. Then off they go, fixing the problems with the advice from the team leaders.

And then the 21<sup>st</sup> century happened. Problems become more complex, with inter-connecting layers, multiple interdependencies and stakeholders from cross-functional units across regions within an organization. Best practices suddenly are not the best choices.

Recognizing the need to improve how we solve problems, we started introducing Action Learning to the organization. What started as Action Learning clinics in several departments to help identify urgent key issues grew into *Action Learning in Action* workshops focusing on the process experience. Problems presented ran the gamut from challenges faced at work to issues at home. Recurrent themes in these one-day sessions include employee engagement, clarity of goals, interpersonal communications, finding work-life balance, improving business unit performance and managing relationships at home.



If there is anything more interesting than helping participants discover the power of the Action Learning process, it would be helping them to unlock the magic of questions. Following the Action Learning ground rules meant they had to set their judgements aside, practice reflective listening and experimenting in order to find the right questions to ask. So far, management has been tentative in embracing Action Learning. However, 2016 is starting to be the year of exploring Action Learning on a larger scale as AirAsia prepares to work closely with the Asian School of Business, in collaboration with MIT Sloan School of Management, in hosting MBA students on-site as they work on real challenges faced by the business via Action Learning projects deployed throughout the curriculum. Setting the stage for Single Problem Action Learning projects, this is certainly deep learning by design.

Exciting? You bet.

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