

Why Cru¹ Uses Action Learning

I have a question for you:

If I did not know how to swim and I wanted to become a swimmer is there a book you could recommend - that if I read the book I could then call myself a swimmer? Or maybe you could recommend a video that if I just watched I could then call myself a swimmer?

Might your answer be "Sorry - there is no such book or video!"

What would I have to do if I wanted to become a swimmer?

Might your answer be: "If you want to become a swimmer you have to get into the water!"?

I have another question for you:

If you want to develop leaders can you do that by just giving them great leadership books to read and bringing in great Leaders to speak?

Might your answer be "Sorry - if you really want to develop leaders you have to provide them with hands on opportunities to lead"?



So what's my point? Too many Leadership Development efforts and too many Personal Development Plans "Check the Box" that once they have read the book or watched the video or attended the seminar they now possess the new leadership skills. Of course the "Educational Element" is valuable - but you don't "Check the Box" until you can actually do the new leadership skill you are wanting to acquire.

Action Learning provides that opportunity!

In 2004 one of my colleagues was introduced to Action Learning at a conference. This was the same time that we were in the planning stages for launching our new "Emerging Leader Initiative." At our very next meeting he shared about "Action Learning."

¹ Cru is the new name (since 2011) for Campus Crusade for Christ

We frequently share that our "Emerging Leader Initiative" has been built on two foundational pillars. The first is Coaching - we have recruited an outstanding leader from outside of Cru to coach each one of our emerging leaders every other week via Skype. The second is Action Learning.

As a "Follower of Jesus" I share that Action Learning was invented by Jesus when he sent his 12 disciples out two by two and later he sent out 72 others two by two giving them brief instructions. This was not just some kind of drill or exercise - they were going out to do real ministry - they had a real Action Learning experience.

Our Emerging Leader Initiative is a two-year program - Our Emerging Leaders continue their role as local directors but commit 20% of their time to this Initiative. The first was launched in 2005. In 2015 we graduated our 5th group and launched our 6th group. With over 20 emerging leaders in each initiative we have been able to form four groups of 5 or more emerging leaders. To date our Emerging Leaders have tackled 20 critical challenges facing Cru our 6th group is now tackling 4 more.



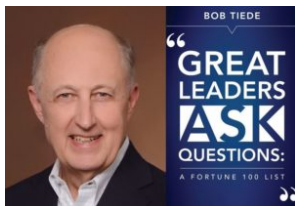
Action Learning has so many bounces for our "Emerging Leader Initiative":

- On their local teams our emerging leaders are at the head of the table with their teams even if it is a round table. Their local team members most often defer to them. On their Action Learning Team they are surrounded by other very capable emerging leaders who do not automatically defer to them. It gives each of them the wonderful opportunity to lead relationally.
- It gives our current leaders an opportunity to work with and get to know our emerging leaders who are many times 2 - 3 layers below them organizationally.
- It gives our emerging leaders an opportunity to meet with and to learn from our current leaders.
- Our emerging leaders get to solve a challenge sitting on the desk of one of our National Leaders - i.e. they get to think like a President.
- One of the biggest benefits for our emerging leaders is that they develop "Alignment Skills." At the end of the day in any organization it is not always the most brilliant solution that gets implemented but the solution for which alignment has been built.
- Our emerging leaders get very stretched. Many times they have taken on projects that they could accomplish by just working harder. That strategy always fails them during

Action Learning. The extra demands force them to begin to work differently - which is another huge benefit of Action Learning.

- Cru gets a solution to a critical challenge facing our organization.
- Our Graduates consistently refer back to Action Learning as the experience that most prepared them to lead at a higher level.

Cru is incredibly grateful that we bumped into Action Learning at the genesis of our Emerging Leadership Initiative! It has been a game changer! We could not more highly recommend Action Learning to anyone seeking to develop leaders!



Bob Tiede has been on the staff of Cru for 45 years. He currently serves on the U.S. Leadership Development Team and is passionate about seeing leaders grow and multiply their effectiveness. He also serves on the Fundraising, Scholarship and Grant Committee for WIAL. Bob is also an Author and Blogger. His eBook ["Great Leaders ASK Questions - A Fortune 100 List"](#) is available for free download on his Blog: LeadingWithQuestions.com