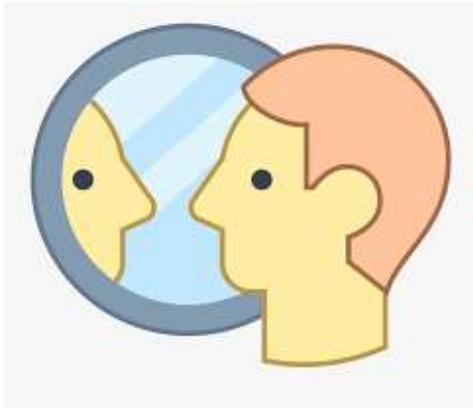


WHAT GREAT INSIGHTS CAN WE GAIN THROUGH REFLECTION ON OUR ACTION LEARNING EXPERIENCE?



Robust reflection is one of the core principles of Action Learning. Deliberate reflection on life's rich experiences allows us to systematically learn from them.

In this article I'll share some hopefully useful learnings I've had as a passionate Action Learning advocate and practitioner over a number of years. My sincere hope is that these learnings, gained from great successes and spectacular failures, might help WIAL affiliates, coaches and of course our clients.

1. In a "high-tech" world Action Learning can help organisations be more "high-touch"

Technology has transformed our world in many ways, some of them hugely positive and some of them rather negative. I will dwell briefly on a few of the negative impacts. High tech has in many ways depersonalised society and the workplace. Despite all the incredible advances in communication technology and platforms, research indicates that people feel more isolated, lonely and depressed. In terms of organisational culture, meaningful human interaction and relationships have been replaced by impersonal, clinical and sterile tech-based communication resulting in large scale disengagement.



Action Learning offers a very powerful "detox" for this phenomenon. Action Learning participants and clients frequently report that the process of Action Learning gives the opportunity to connect with colleagues at a deep and meaningful level, to communicate openly and honestly, to experience being respected and valued, to feel fully engaged in problem solving, to learn, to grow and as one person said "to be human again". In an increasingly estranged and disengaged world of work this must surely be a huge benefit of Action Learning!



2. Action Learning is an exceptionally powerful change management tool.

Leaders frequently report that the process of executing change, once it has been envisioned and planned, is a massive challenge. Numerous change management initiatives fail dismally because change either won't happen or won't stick.

Action Learning has frequently proven a powerful change management tool for the leaders that have the courage to use it. A fundamental behavioural principle is that people will often support constructive change they are actively involved in planning and executing. Exclusion from the process guarantees instant resistance. Action Learning offers individuals and teams the opportunity to directly develop and execute the strategies that will achieve desired change management objectives. The strategies that Action Learning teams develop often differ quite significantly from those that “management” envisaged and are sometimes superior. The key issue is that these strategies are actually executed by the people who developed them since they are motivated to do so. Top-down, imposed strategies invariably fail.

3. Action Learning frequently delivers many unplanned and unexpected benefits.

Clients typically use Action Learning to achieve a specific desired outcome. It is frequently problem solving or leadership development. It is our experience that clients frequently report unexpected benefits like powerful team development, staff engagement, culture change, innovation, open communication and other benefits. This is in no way surprising as the structure of Action Learning ensures it.

Let’s take team development as an example. It’s generally acknowledged that the most powerful way to develop any team is to unite them through working together in a very constructive way manner to achieve a desired goal. This is exactly what the Action Learning process is designed to do and delivers consistently. Another profound observation is that Action Learning generally cuts out the “storming” stage that most teams go through and many don’t survive. How does Action Learning achieve this? By introducing and functioning according to the two “ground rules” that form the essential norms that all teams must have.



4. How do I sell or market Action Learning?

Some WIAL affiliates and coaches are uncertain about how to sell or market a professional service like Action Learning.



Generally coaches are very enthusiastic about Action Learning, how it works, its components and so on. So what do coaches frequently do when they try to sell Action Learning? They tell clients ABOUT Action Learning, what it is, how it’s different, how it’s better than other approaches and many other wonderful stories. But here’s the catch, clients have zero interest in the Action Learning “black box”, absolutely none! So the more we talk about Action Learning, the more we alienate the

potential client and loose the prospective sale.

So what are prospective clients interested in? They're interested in what Action Learning can actually do for them! What problems will it solve, will it improve performance, create delighted customers, make more profit etc? No clients buy processes or "black boxes", they buy the outcomes or results that the process actually deliver. And if you're offering a decent value proposition they will absolutely engage you. All my major sales have been based on the results that Action Learning will deliver. I offer clients a guarantee of a 3 to 1 return on their investment. If we don't deliver it, I don't change or work with them until I do. Admittedly it takes courage and confidence to do this.

I would invite anyone who is committed to enhancing their selling skills to very seriously consider the questions based "SPIN" selling process.

Good luck and God bless – I wish you every success for the future.

Ron McLuckie, MALC, WIAL India

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