



Action Learning - for practicing managers

An increasingly recognized and popular method of learning for practicing managers, **action learning** consists of a structured set of meetings of manager peers facilitated by a skilled group leader. During the course of these meetings each manager will bring a managerial “problem” or situation to the group, presenting the question at hand, the background and her or his approach to the problem. Through discussion with their peers the manager is able to formulate a new response and commits to implementing that solution in the workplace.

At a subsequent meeting that individual is able to present an account of the action taken and the response and result; the group can then discuss that account and learning is facilitated for the presenting manager and also for the rest of the group.

Action Learning was first developed by Reg Revans in his work in the British Coal Industry during the middle of last century. Realising that academic theories of organization were of limited use with managers in the industry Revans proposed the use of “action learning” sets whereby a group of manager peers would meet in a structured way to explore problems and questions arising from their day to day work.

Revans ideas were far from mainstream management thinking for many years but began to be adopted more recently with the increasing popularity of organizational learning and the concept of the learning organization.

In the UK today the foremost advocate of the concepts is Mike Pedler and there are now numerous postgraduate management courses structured around action learning.

The concept is seen to be particularly relevant for managers in the voluntary and community sectors as it seems to offer:

- learning focused on the workplace
- applied learning to “real” problems
- limited time commitment
- opportunities for networking
- peer support
- respect for the idiosyncrasies of voluntary organizations

Ladder4Learning promotes Action Learning sets as part of its commitment to new modes of learning, offering choice and flexibility as part of a new culture of learning for the voluntary and community sector.

If you are interested in joining an Action Learning Set contact ladder4learning on enquiries@ladder4learning.org.uk