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Six Elements

Action learning (AL) describes learning to take effective action to solve real work-based problems. The learning occurs with a group of colleagues who share the problem, and who are able to offer mutual support, advice and criticism. The action-learning group develops a united approach to solving problems.

AL is more than 'learning by doing,' as it aims to develop a fresh perspective on existing knowledge and experience. The need for review, reflection, rethinking and reinterpretation of this knowledge and experience is integral to the AL process.

Action learning is a process underpinned by a belief in the potential of individual employees; it is a way of learning from his/her actions by taking time to question, understand and reflect, to gain insights, and to consider how to act in the future.

The six main elements of the AL program are:

1. **The Group.** The Group typically meets one day a month for employees to work together in a supportive yet challenging way. Each employee is allocated time to focus on his/her own project during the set meeting.
2. **Work-based, real time projects or tasks.** Each employee (or the Group as a whole) concentrates on a work issue or quandary that needs to be resolved or implemented, and uses it as his/her learning vehicle. Projects can focus on something new to be tackled, something that is of concern, or something that needs to be attended to.
3. **The processes.** The AL Group adopts particular processes as it works. For example, each employee has his/her own period of airspace, during which time the others adopt a helpful questioning approach. Employees are discouraged from giving advice or having general discussions.
4. **The Group advisor.** The Group advisor (facilitator) guides the session, models helpful behaviors and, when appropriate, asks the Group to become aware of how it is behaving and working.
5. **The duration of the program.**
6. **The emphasis on learning.** The focus on both action and learning is a distinguishing feature of action learning. The Group will be asked to express their insights and learning at the end of each individual employee's airspace and at the conclusion of each Group meeting.