



Define the Challenge, Then Solve It – the Action Learning Approach

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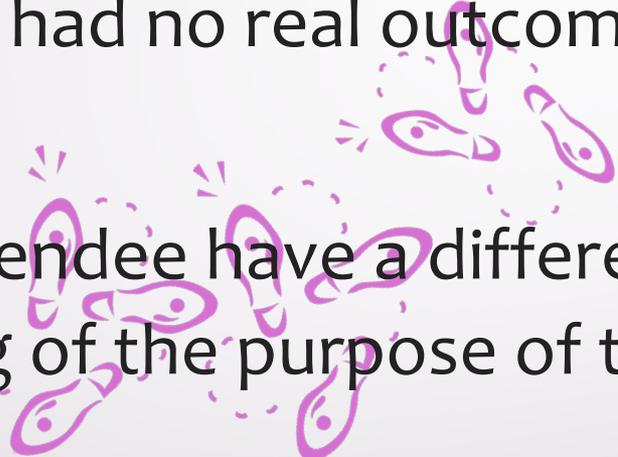
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Many Meetings are not Productive

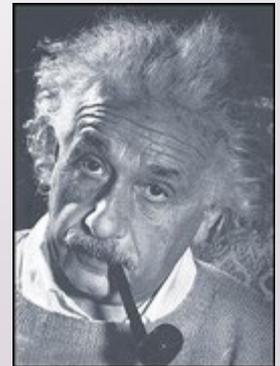
- Have you participated in “problem-solving” meetings that had no real outcome?
 - Did each attendee have a different understanding of the purpose of the meeting?
 - Did one or two people dominate the discussion?
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A Different Approach

- Many of us move too quickly to **solve** the problem
- Instead...
- Invest the time to **define** the problem
- You'll **save time** overall, and...
- Get better **solutions**

“The definition of insanity is to carry on doing the same things and expect a different result”

... Albert Einstein

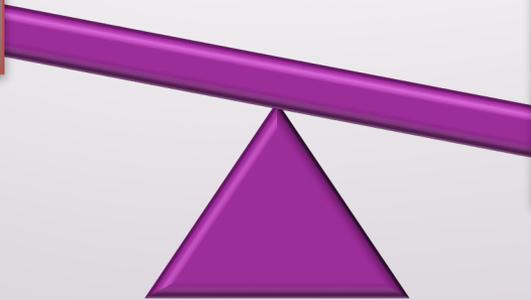




Typical Problem Solving vs Action Learning

- Band-aid Solutions
- Experts Only
- Co-Acting Groups
- Addresses Symptom
- Group Forms, Storms, Norms, Performs

- Powerful Team Development
- Enhanced Leadership
- Breakthrough Solutions
- Diverse Teams
- Addresses Problem
- Group Forms, Storms, Norms, Performs



Questions are Powerful

- Constructive questions
- The best questions show interest and support
 - How do you feel about the project thus far?
 - What have you accomplished so far that you are most pleased with?
 - Which of these objectives do you think will be easier to accomplish? Which will be most difficult?
 - What key things need to happen to achieve the objectives?

Questions are Powerful

- Destructive questions
- Cause defensiveness and disengagement
 - Why are you behind schedule?
 - What's the problem with this project?
 - Who isn't keeping up?
 - Don't you know better than that?

Open and Closed Questions

- Closed questions yield one-word answers
 - YES/NO
 - Are you helping the new employee?
- Closed questions are often statements thinly veiled as questions
 - Why didn't you bring snacks?

Open Questions

- What would be the best results if we took that action?
- Why is this happening?
- Why must it be that way?
- Could explain more about this situation?
- Have you explored/thought of...”
- Why has this happened?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how ready are you for this change?

Mindset Matters!

Learner or Judger?

Learner searches for and creates solutions

Judger's questions are inflexible and negative

Open or Closed mindset?

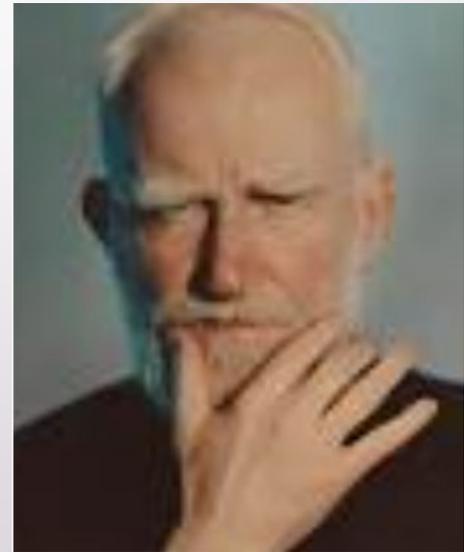
I'm too old to learn!

We tried this before and it didn't work!

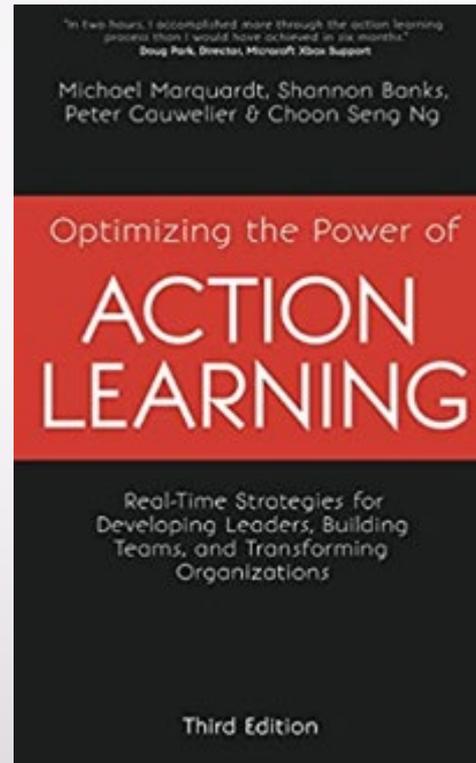
Growth Mindset

*“You look at what’s there and say, Why?
I dream about what isn’t there and ask, Why not?”*

George Bernard Shaw,
Back to Methuselah

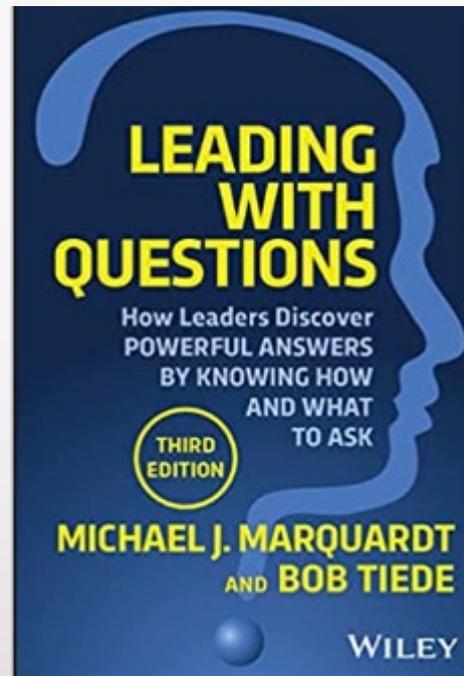


Optimizing the Power of Action Learning



Leading with Questions

New Edition - April 25, 2023



What is Action Learning?

- A process that involves a small team (“set”) working on a real problems, taking action, and learning while doing so
- A powerful management tool that creates dynamic opportunities for individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to successfully adapt, learn and innovate



Examples

- Individual Leadership Challenge
 - I can't seem to motivate my staff
 - The Board is not supporting my new initiative
 - My boss refuses to prioritize our work program
- Corporate Challenge
 - We have relatively few woman and minorities in leadership positions
 - How can I prevent the same incidents/accidents from occurring at our 4 production sites?
 - It takes forever to get people promoted...many are leaving to get promotions

Six Components



Role of the Action Learning Coach

Does

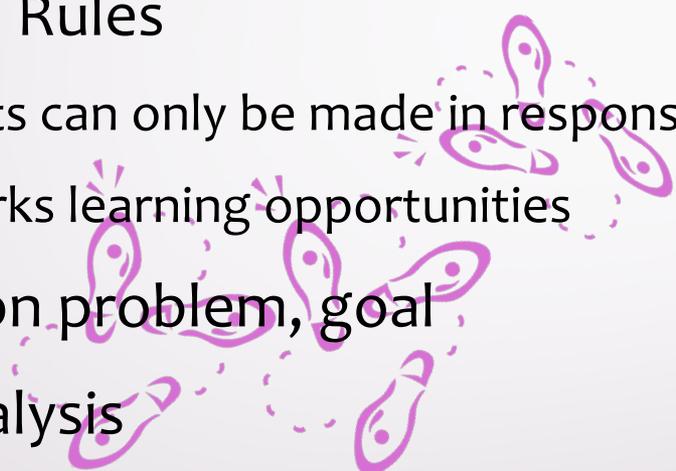
- Ask great questions to encourage inquiry and reflection
- Look for opportunities to ask questions that will help the team learn or improve its performance
- Ensure that the team periodically discusses learnings at the individual, team and organizational level

Does not

- Get involved in the solution itself – only the process
- Tell the team what to do or how to do it
- Make recommendations or provide direct coaching to the team or individuals
- Take on responsibilities for activities, roles or knowledge that the team can manage or obtain for itself



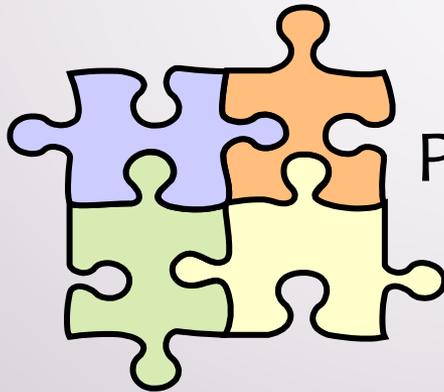
Action Learning Process

- Problem / Challenge presentation (1-3 minutes)
 - Two Ground Rules
 - Statements can only be made in response to questions
 - Coach works learning opportunities
 - Consensus on problem, goal
 - Problem analysis
 - Strategies
 - Action plans
- 

Demonstration

Challenge Presenter, Rosalyn

Compelling challenge (work,
community, personal, ...)



Problem... not a puzzle

You **own** it and are **committed** to take action

Active Team Members

Problem Presenter

Present the problem in 3-5 minutes

Team Members

Ask questions, reflect to gain clarity

Learning Coach

Identify learning opportunities

Demonstration Observers

- When did you hear a great question?
 - What made it a great question?
- When did you notice a shift in the team?
 - What was the impact on the team?
- What did you notice about the process?
 - When did you notice a shift in the understanding of the process?
- What did you notice about the coach?
 - How did this impact the team?



Action Learning Demo



Action Learning Debrief

Demonstration Observers

- When did you hear a great question?
 - What made it a great question?
- When did you notice a shift in the team?
 - What was the impact on the team?
- What did you notice about the process?
 - When did you notice a shift in the understanding of the process?
- What did you notice about the coach?
 - How did this impact the team?

Action Learning = Great Preparation

“Success depends on previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure.”

Confucius

The Analects

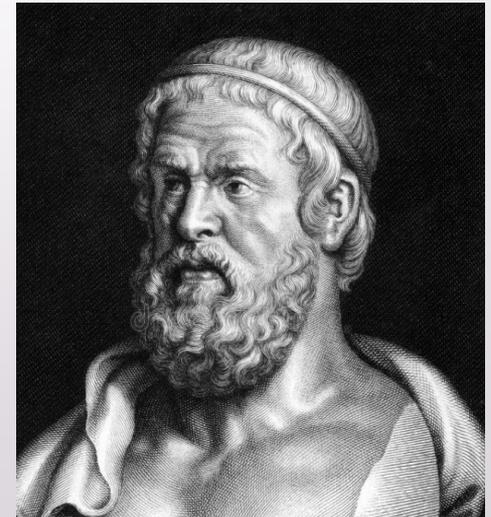


Taking Action

“One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.”

Sophocles

The Trachine





Thank you

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More from great thinkers about questions

“I wanted to ask, 'Why did you let this happen?' but that was blasphemy. You never ask why. It was not a question for you to ask.”

Nnedi Okorafor

[Binti](#)



More from great thinkers about questions

“Questions are never foolish. Stupider are those who never ask anything.”

Tamuna Tsertsvadze
Galaxy Pirates



More questions from great thinkers

I was born the day

I thought:

What is?

What was?

And

What if?

“COMING FORTH INTO THE LIGHT

I was born the day
I thought:
What is?
What was?
And
What if?



- First stanza of “Coming Forth into the Light”
- Suzy Kassem “Rise up and Salute the Sun”

Open mindset



“I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.”

– Galileo Galilei, Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina

More about questions

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”

Albert Einstein