The Action Learning Handbook
Powerful Techniques for Education, Professional Development and Training

By Ian McGill and Anne Brockbank

'No matter how familiar you are with action learning, this book will challenge your understanding and leave you feeling good about your need to learn even more.'

- Professor Brendan McCormack,
University of Ulster

Action learning is a continued process of learning and reflection with the support of a group of colleagues, working on real issues. The action learning method is increasingly used to bring innovation to many different fields of work. The principles of action learning can achieve improvement and transformation in a wide range of applications and disciplines, including professional training and educational contexts.

This book is a comprehensive guide to action learning which maintains an accessible, practical focus throughout. It is packed with useful resources, including case studies and ideas for workshop sessions.

Key topics covered include: action learning in professional and educational settings; setting up, facilitating and evaluating an action learning programme; the roles and skills required to practice successfully; its use in relation to the individual, the group and the organization; the role of reflection; and action learning theory.

Newcomers to the area of action learning will find this an essential introduction which can be put to use straight away, while more experienced practitioners seeking a deeper understanding will value the thorough analysis of action learning theory.


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Action learning is a continued process of learning and reflection with the support of a group of colleagues, working on real issues. The action learning method is increasingly used to bring innovation to many different fields of work. Canadian Tire, one of Canada’s most shopped retailers, used Action Learning to create culture change in its IT organization. Ninety-one percent of participants said it increased cross-functional teamwork and broke down silos. The IT organization became more performance-oriented and aligned to business priorities. Historical Context: The Quakers have used a similar method (Clearness Committee) for more than 400 years.


Lindsay Stark, Director, Care and Protection of Children Learning Network (CPC) Howard Taylor, Director, Global Partnership to End Violence against Children (End Violence) Anselm Hennis, Director Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health