LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ACTION LEARNING

Prepared by Geof Cox
(PROJECT CONSULTANT CRANFIELD TRUST)

January 2024

Delivery Framework, Facilitator Guide and Supporting Materials

ALLIANCE OF SPORT in Criminal Justice

Cranfield Trust

NEW DIRECTIONS

© Copyright by Geof Cox 2024.

All rights reserved. All materials in this document are subject to copyright. They may be reproduced for educational or training purposes by Alliance of Sport and their partner organisations without prior permission. They are not to be sold, reproduced in any medium for any other purpose than stated, or included in other publications without prior written permission of the author.

As the volunteer consultant from Cranfield Trust working on the project to design a programme to support leadership development of the partner delivery organisations on the Levelling the Playing Field initiative, I can wholeheartedly recommend the use of Action Learning as it is proven to deliver the peer group support network and learning environment which allows for both the sharing of good practice and the opportunity to deliver real improvements on current work issues.

When conducting the research for the project with leaders from the Levelling the Playing Field specialist delivery organisations as well as Alliance of Sport leaders, we identified that there were pockets of excellence in leadership and delivery throughout the network, but little opportunity for these to be shared due to the lack of any common sharing or support network, and the geographic and size distribution of the organisations. Hence, Action Learning became the obvious choice for the platform to provide for reflective practice, sharing and supportive learning in leadership.

This toolkit provides all of the background and support materials to guide how to set up Action Learning Sets, how to run them, and further materials and models to provide a theoretical and practical back up to the probable themes and leadership / organisation development. It is also a guide to effective participation in an Action Learning Set.

Geof Cox

PROJECT CONSULTANT
CRANFIELD TRUST

Cranfield Trust is the charity that other charities go to for pro bono management advice, training and professional support.

Follow the Trust on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or visit the website for information on its pro bono services and learning opportunities.

THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP

A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion and empathy to listen to the needs of others. They do not set out to be a leader but become one by the quality of their actions and integrity of their intent. In the end leaders are like eagles; they don't flock – you find them one at a time.

In my 18-year career in the sport-for-good sector, I've had the privilege of collaborating with passionate leaders dedicated to making a positive impact in their communities. Utilising sport as a primary tool, we aimed to address issues like crime, poverty, and social challenges. Having faced the hurdles of senior leadership in this sector during my 13-year tenure as Chief Executive, I established a network of community sports projects for StreetGames in London and the East of England.

Recognising the challenges faced by leaders in community sports organisations, we embarked on a journey to understand their needs. Through consultation feedback, 'Action Learning' emerged as the optimal solution. This approach fosters peer support among leaders facing similar challenges, providing a platform for sharing insights and expertise, thus streamlining solutions vital to organisational development.

While passion is essential, 'Action Learning' facilitates peer support to navigate the complexities of leading an organisation. From strategy to marketing, finances to people management, leaders can learn from each other, enhancing their skill sets and sharing best practices. Leaders appreciate the value of stepping away from daily operations during these sessions.

It offers an opportunity to reflect on goals, share challenges, and gain insights from peers. By collaboratively addressing common issues, leaders from diverse backgrounds can share successes, enhancing the skills of all participants.

For leaders striving to sustain their organisations long-term and transition from working in the organisation to working on it, regular reflection with peers is crucial. To deliver meaningful change for their communities, leaders must commit time to reflect and collaborate. We believe that participating in 'Leadership Development through Action Learning' is a key to success. Acquiring skills and sharing them with teams can empower leaders to make a lasting impact.

Taking on the responsibility of community change is challenging, and I wish you the best of luck in achieving your ambitions.

Andrew Anastasiou

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT
ALLIANCE OF SPORT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

For more information connect on either:

andrew.sportingadventures@gmail.com or
linkedin.com/in/andrewanastasiou26

We would like to thank the following leaders for their contribution towards understanding leadership across the Levelling the Playing Field Project

Adam Ballard	Gloves not Gunz
Alison O'Connell	Sport Birmingham
Ant Bayou	Rotherham United Community Trust
Ben Eckett	Urban Yogis
Carole Foster	Rotherham United Community Trust
Chase Hill	Palace for Life
Chris Willetts	Platform Cricket
Craig McManus	Street Soccer London (now Scotland)
Craig White	Sky Blues in the Community
Daryl Chambers	InPower Academy
Dave Hemborough	Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre
Dejan Paunovic	London Thunder Basketball
Des Howlett	Sale Sharks
Diane Rouillon	Centre of Change
Gary Palmer	London Sport
Imran Ali	Saalik Youth Project
James Mapstone	Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice
James Thomas	Novus/parkrun
Jeni Bennett	Sport4Life
Joe Jackson	NPV Football Development
John White	Fight for Change
Justin Coleman	Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice
Kathryn Mudge	Sheffield Council
Lucy Donovan	Newport Live/Positive Futures
Luke Freer	Coventry City Council
Marcus McIntosh	Pat Benson Community Sports Foundation
Marlon Williamson	PKC Academy
Matthew Elliott	Newport Youth Justice Service
Matthew Forsyth	Sport4Life
Molly Adkin	London Sport
Nick Cheese	Sport4Life
Paddy Benson	Pat Benson Community Sports Foundation
Ranjit Singh	Wolverhampton Wrestling Club
Rebecca Donnelly	Fight for Change
Richard White	Ballers Academy
Roxanne Bennett	Palace for Life
Rudro Sen	Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice
Saeed M Barasab	Unity Gym
Safiya Saeed	Reach Up Youth
Sam Bacon	Palace for Life
Sean Daly	Millwall Community Trust
Seb Hamilton	Sporting Elite
Sithule Mguni	Young Minds Together
Tara Foster	Aptitude
Tom Mcintosh	Sport Birmingham
William Lee	Sports Connect
Zanib Rasool	Rotherham United Community Trust

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This project was commissioned to design a leadership skills programme to support the senior management of the network of third sector organisations working in partnership with Alliance of Sport on the Levelling the Playing Field programme. The aim was to develop a leadership programme that can be delivered by the Alliance of Sport team and Levelling the Playing Field partner organisations.

A research and data collection workshop conducted in November 2021 with members of the target community resulted in two key findings:

- That there were pockets of excellence in the network in the majority of the core areas of leadership identified in the initial project brief
- There was little opportunity for reflective practice (which was a known and respected leadership development practice in the community) due to their geographic spread of the organisations and a lack of peer support networks.

It was also recognised that trying to find time for the local management to devote to leadership training is difficult. By their nature, the local organisation leadership is very focused and extremely busy on the priority deliverables of their projects, leaving little time for other activities, such as development. They also lack the time and focus to introduce some of the strategic priorities of the Levelling the Playing Field project, such as promoting the interests of ethnically diverse and marginalised young people.

To address these delivery issues, and build on the desire for more opportunities for reflective practice and sharing, the most successful delivery framework for the leadership development training will be through a series of themed Action Learning Sets rather than a set of more formal training modules

Why Action Learning?

Action Learning provides an opportunity for reflective practice and sharing in a peer group facing similar issues.

By focusing on current real work issues being faced by the leaders, Action Learning provides a real incentive to participate

Action Learning Sets provide a framework to create a strong support network that could continue independently of the Alliance of Sport stimulus.

By bringing together organisations of different sizes and with different focus, Action Learning helps to develop a deeper insight into leadership and management issues and promotes sharing of resources and expertise.

By focusing on current issues, effort and resources are not wasted on training and education that cannot be immediately and practically applied.

By using a facilitation rather than a training model, participants in Action Learning Sets gain confidence and skills in self-development and resilience.

This facilitator manual

This facilitator manual provides support materials to guide the setting up and facilitation of Action Learning Sets, and further materials and models to provide a theoretical and practical back up to the probable themes and leadership / organisation development areas identified in the project.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	Action Learning	8
	A Guide to Action Learning for Set Members	12
	Facilitating Action Learning Sets – including virtual	16
	Other supportive models and materials:	
1	**Collaborative working**	
	70 / 20 / 10 learning model	18
	3 'I' model	19
	Modes for Creating a Shared Vision	20
	Appreciative Inquiry	21
2	**Engagement**	
	Employee engagement	24
	Applying Positive Psychology	23
	Positive to Negative Interaction	27
	Catching people doing things right	27
	Focus on what you want rather than what you don't	28
	Scaling	28
3	**Influencing and Stakeholders**	
	Four Levels of Communication	29
	Stakeholder Mapping	30
	Getting Results Without Authority™	32
5	**Planning / Change**	
	Circles of Control and Circles of Influence	34
	7 Dynamics of Change	36
	Kotter's 8 Steps	38
	SWOT Analysis	39
	SOAR Analysis	40
	Resources / Bibliography	41

ACTION LEARNING

What is Action Learning?[1]

Action learning is a method of collaborative learning where a small group of learners (a 'set') meet regularly to reflect on real work issues. It was first developed in 1948 the UK by Reg Revans working with managers of coal mines in the newly nationalised Coal Board and in the National Health Service, using real work problems as the focus for learning (Action Learning Sets).

Its basic philosophy is that the most effective learning takes place when we are faced with a real problem to solve. Action learning can therefore enhance the way in which people learn, drawing on actual practice, and using the experience of members working together to apply new ideas to each members' role. Its effectiveness can be measured through the changes made to their work and working environment, and the practical results that will be the outcomes of learning.

Set members also report learning about how they learn: they can consider and experiment with alternative styles of learning and doing and receive feedback and new ideas from others, thus increasing their capacity to respond to new situations. Members learn how things are done elsewhere and can develop new ideas and build on current good practice.

The process of action learning presumes that all set members are equals with common aims of working for their own development, to achieve progress on their own and joint issues, offer their experience, prior knowledge and ideas, and act as peer coaches and co-consultants to one another. There is no 'leader' or 'expert': members co-consult and help one another, though they may decide to bring in knowledge or outside expertise to meet specific needs.

All action learning is based on real work. This may be the day-to-day work and issues of the members of the set or it may be a special project (such as Levelling the Playing Field). They may focus on individual issues, helping group members make changes to their current or future functional roles, or tackle wider issues such as organisation strategy development which works across functions.

A Set meeting typically takes 2-3 hours, though some Sets are planned as full day activities which gives more time for discussion of issues, but are more difficult to schedule due to the workloads of the Set members. In general, it is better to run more frequent, shorter Set meetings than less frequent longer ones. As each case discussion takes between 20 and 40 minutes (tending to be shorter in on-line and longer if face-to-face), a Set meeting of 2-3 hours would give more than sufficient time to discuss 4-8 cases.

Themed Action Learning

For this project, a 'Themed' action learning process is planned. In setting up the Sets (or series of Set meetings) a theme for each Action Learning Set meeting is identified. This theme could be introduced by an invited guest (e.g. a representative from police or NHS or other stakeholder sharing their needs, perspectives and measures of success) or a case study of excellence from a participating organisation (e.g. establishing simple and robust governance processes).

Following this initial input and discussion, the Set would then move on to participants volunteering their own practical issues, cases or questions that they are currently experiencing in their own organisations. This would then stimulate a discussion with other participants engaging in constructive questioning and sharing of experiences to generate learnings and insights for the case owner. As the focus of the discussion is to generate learning rather than being focused on expert problem solving, the discussion remains open and constructive – something enabled by the set facilitator.

A summary of the learning and insights generated by the discussion by the case owner and the other set members leads to the process being repeated with another case until time runs out or there are no more cases to discuss.

The Action Learning Sets in this project are likely to be run online due to the geographic spread of the organisations. Experience of Action Learning Sets run virtually suggest that a good number of participants is between 6 and 8 – this allows for sufficient diversity for a good discussion and sufficient opportunity for all voices to be heard – with each case typically taking about 20 minutes. As offering a case is voluntary, and participants gain a lot of learning by participating alone, it is not normal that all set participants offer a case at each meeting – 3-4 cases in a group of 6-8 is a realistic plan.

So, a typical timetable for a 1.5 – 2-hour themed Action Learning Set meeting would be:

- 15 - 20 minutes welcome and introduction of the theme/case study
- 3-4 participant cases lasting about 20 minutes each
- 10 minutes wrap-up and sharing learning / insights.

Three key roles

1. **Case owner:** the set member who volunteers to contribute a question, issue, problem for discussion from their own current work experience
2. **Set member:** listens actively to the case owner, remains open minded, asks questions to deepen the case owner's understanding, and shares personal experiences and insights
3. **Facilitator:** monitors the discussion and process, offers personal experiences and insights if relevant.

Process steps

1. Welcome and set members introductions
2. Introduce theme and invite keynote presentation / case study / discussion (if used)
3. First volunteer case owner contributes a question, issue, problem for discussion from their own current work experience
4. Set members listen actively and ask questions of clarification, then offer / share their insights, experiences, observations, ideas or approach on the case owner's topic. (Set members can offer ideas and different approaches, or support the case owner's thinking, as appropriate.) Facilitator ensures set members avoid giving direct advice or making critical comments which cause defensive reactions. The case owner stays open to suggestions and engages in discussion to deepen insight.
5. Case owner shares their insights, learning and action steps from the discussion.

   Repeat steps 3-5 with a new case until there are no further cases / questions / issues to discuss, or allocated time has elapsed
6. Review the set meeting; all share their personal insights, learning and action steps. Identify improvements for future meetings.

[1] Reference: CIPD Factsheet on Action Learning

Ground rules for successful Action Learning discussion

- **Confidentiality**
  - The discussions remain confidential to the participants to enable open sharing
- **Responsibility**
  - Each member is responsible for acting appropriately and ensuring that they learn, contribute and support others
- **Being non-judgemental**
  - Discussions are not critical of past actions but supportive and solution focused
- **One person speaks – others listen**
  - Active listening focused on the case owner's agenda
- **Support and challenge**
  - Balance support and challenge: too much challenge creates defensive reactions and unwillingness to share; too much support does not allow new insight and learning
- **Shared ownership**
  - Each member has an equal share in the Action Learning Set

Virtual Action Learning Sets

A virtual Action Learning Set operates in a remote environment, using collaborative communication technologies that allow for synchronous communication: e.g. zoom, Skype, Teams… (For best outcomes, use a technology that is common for all participants – if everyone does not have a webcam, then everyone should be on audio only. This ensures that everyone participates on an equal footing and there is no unintended bias or discrimination.) As with any online meeting, discussions can be more formal, but also more focused and time effective. Care needs to be taken (see Facilitator Guide) to ensure that the process steps are met and that the climate remains positive and supportive.

A GUIDE TO ACTION LEARNING FOR SET MEMBERS

An Action Learning Set is a peer group who meet regularly to discuss and learn from real life work issues. Its basic philosophy is that the most effective learning takes place when we are faced with a real problem to solve. Action learning therefore enhances the way in which people learn, drawing on actual practice, and using the experience of set members working together to apply new and existing ideas to real work issues. Action Learning also provides an opportunity for learning through reflective practice and sharing of experiences in a network of peers.

Each Set will follow a specific leadership theme that is relevant to both Levelling the Playing Field goals and organisation leadership development in participating organisations. This theme will be introduced by a short expert presentation or best practice case study, after which set members will be invited to contribute their own real-life cases and issues for discussion and learning. Contributing a case is voluntary – you will learn equally by contributing to the discussion on other members cases.

Usually facilitated, a Set works best when all members follow some process steps and ground rules:

Three key roles

1. **Case owner:** the set member who volunteers to contribute a question, issue, problem for discussion from their own current work experience
2. **Set member:** listens actively to the case owner, remains open minded, asks questions to deepen the case owner's understanding, and shares personal experiences and insights
3. **3. Facilitator:** monitors the discussion and process, offers personal experiences and insights if relevant.

In order to be a successful, each Set member commits to both **ACTION** and **LEARNING:**

- Do what you say you'll do – if you commit to an action, then do it. Don't commit to something that is not realistic.
- Contribute – play an active part in contributing to the Set.
- Commit to addressing personal development goals – this includes volunteering for actions that are outside your comfort zone, where these provide good personal development opportunities.
- Support others in the achievement of their goals, by asking questions to clarify understanding, and to help them develop self-awareness and new insights.
- Support others by giving them undivided attention during their time, listening intently and consciously focusing on their needs.
- Keep discussion open and positive by not criticising or giving advice – it is better to use great questions to help the case owner discover their own answers.

Ground rules for successful Action Learning discussion

- **Confidentiality**
  - The discussions remain confidential to enable open sharing
- **Responsibility**
  - Each member is responsible for acting appropriately and ensuring that they learn, contribute and support others
- **Being non-judgemental**
  - Discussions are not critical of past actions but supportive and solution focused
- **One person speaks – others listen**
  - Active listening focused on the case owner's agenda
- **Support and challenge**
  - Balance support and challenge: too much challenge creates defensive reactions and unwillingness to share; too much support does not allow new insight and learning
- **Shared ownership**
  - Each member has an equal share in the Action Learning Set

Process steps for Themed Action Learning Sets

1. Facilitator welcome and set members introductions
2. Facilitator introduces theme and invites keynote presentation / case study / discussion
3. First volunteer case owner contributes a question, issue, problem for discussion from their own current work experience
4. Set members listen actively and ask questions of clarification, then offer / share their insights, experiences, observations, ideas or approach on the case owner's topic. (Set members can offer ideas and different approaches, or support the case owner's thinking, as appropriate.) Set members avoid giving advice or making critical comments which can cause defensive reactions. The case owner stays open to suggestions and engages in discussion to deepen understanding and insight.
5. Case owner shares their insights, learning and action steps from the discussion.

   Repeat steps 3-5 with a new case until there are no further cases / questions / issues to discuss, or allocated time has elapsed
6. Facilitator reviews the set meeting; all share their personal insights, learning and action steps. Identify improvements for future meetings.

Questioning and Listening

Asking great questions to help others to think for themselves is at the heart of being a good Action Learning Set member.

The best questions

- often start with "What…? How…? or Tell me …";
- are designed to help the individual to new insights;
- focus on the present and the future, not on the past; focus on solutions, not problems;
- stay on the case owner's agenda (not the questioner's)

Some examples:

Making sure case owners get the support they need

? How can I/we help you most right now?

? What support do you need to move forward?

? How helpful are we being to you?

? Would it be helpful if I shared some experience …?

Learning from actions

? What did learn from taking that action?

? What surprised you?

? What did you do that helped you to succeed?

? How would you do it differently next time?

Focusing on personal development

? What have you learned about yourself?

? What feedback have you had from others on the way you …?

? How have you already tried tackling this area?

? What else might work…?

Choosing Actions to Take

? What do you need to do next?

? What is the single most important next step for you to take?

? How will that action help to move forward?

? What other alternatives are there?

Questioning Tips

- Avoid questions on details of fact – it is less important to know exactly what someone has done than it is to know what they have learned from the action.
- Summarise rather than ask another question e.g.
  - So, what you're saying is…
  - What I'm hearing is …
  - You seem to be saying …

…This shows that you are listening and leads to clarification and further information.

- Be succinct and specific in your questions – ask simple, short questions.
- Questions that help are focused on the case owner's agenda not your own
- Avoid leading questions e.g. "don't you think that …", "would it be a good idea to…", "how about doing…"? These are coming from your own agenda.
- Ask questions that focus on solutions and positives rather than problems and negatives. Dwelling on problems saps energy. Focusing on the upside (strengths, successes, possibilities) encourages creativity, action and positive emotions. Rather than asking "why did it go wrong?", ask "what would you do differently next time".

FACILITATING ACTION LEARNING SETS

Role of the Facilitator

The main aim is to managing the process of Action Learning. The facilitator supports the set in maintaining a non–directive approach to problem solving, keeping to the ground rules, and giving feedback to set members on behaviour that supports or detracts from the process. The crucial activity is to monitor and manage the process steps and moderate the discussion in order that the Set stays focused and does not become a mere discussion group.

Actions that help include:

- Attending to the administrative details of setting up and organising the set meetings – including advising of the theme and inviting guest speakers as appropriate
- Setting and agreeing ground rules and confidentiality with the set
- Managing the behaviour of the set to ensure that set members stick to asking questions rather than giving advice
- Managing the time and discussion to ensure that all get an opportunity to contribute
- Facilitating the questioning process
  - Intervening if the case owner is being criticised, interrogated, or if any other behaviour is displayed which is unhelpful
  - Ensuring that the focus is on reflection and action planning
  - Role modelling good questioning, listening and interpersonal skills
- Making 'process interventions' if, e.g.
  - the focus of the conversation is straying from the case owner's issue
  - the focus is moving away from the case owner
  - set members are forcing solutions on the case owner or not giving adequate time to digest or consider questions
- Balancing support and challenge to help the case owner address their issue.
- Reviewing progress at the start and end of each set meeting so members can provide an update of their actions since the last meeting and recognise their own development

Having identified all of these actions, the best action that the facilitator can do to help the Set is to do nothing!! A 'light touch' is often the best approach: to not intervene too quickly or too often and allow the set to become self-facilitating. The aim should be to build the set members skills and awareness over time so that the role of the active facilitator becomes redundant and the set manages itself. In this way the role of an Action Learning Set facilitator differs greatly from meeting moderation or chairing.

Managing the theme

Part of your role as facilitator includes deciding on the theme, inviting the keynote speaker or case study presenter, and advising set members so that they can think of their relevant cases.

For some themes, although you will give prior notice, it may be that not all set members will have a current, pressing, real issue on the theme to discuss at the time. So, it would be just as valuable to address case discussions on any current issue that set members have. This will make the set discussion much more valuable for participants, whilst still ensuring that the learning planned for the theme is covered. Many of the best set discussions are on issues that only occurred to the member that morning and have had no preparation! It is likely that many cases and issues stimulated by a theme may emerge at the set meeting after the theme keynote presentation, when the theme has had an opportunity to incubate and thought about locally.

> *Don't just do something, stand (or sit) there!*
>
> Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff

Themes

Potential themes that issues identified in the workshop and from other Levelling the Playing Field priorities include:

- Staff and volunteer engagement: getting the best out of people; enabling people and releasing passion and shared responsibility; building trust and commitment
- Building collaboration: how to enable participative decision making; whole system / community involvement
- Effective management: delegating, building robust and simple governance, staying on track; sharing best practice in dealing with bureaucratic systems
- Reflection and resilience: Building support networks and opportunities for reflection both within and across organisations
- Influencing decision makers: how to get heard and understood by stakeholders and funders; talking their language; understanding and addressing their needs and priorities
- Demonstrating diversity: how to get ethnically diverse representation into leadership; embedding diversity in the organisation; reflecting the community.

Other themes can be developed depending on the requests of the set members and the priorities that emerge from the set meetings and the development of the project.

Facilitating virtual Action Learning Sets

By their nature, virtual meetings are more formal and lack the spontaneity and emotional connection of a physical meeting. Visual clues are less easy to see and read, and set members may need more help to effectively participate in the discussion. Discussion is less relaxed. Facilitating a virtual Set therefore requires a higher level of listening and attention to the climate in order to sense what is happening, more active facilitation to keep to the process steps, and some extra ground rules to ensure that meetings are free from distractions and not interrupted.

The virtual environment is particularly tiring for all concerned, so plan for frequent short breaks – 5 minutes after the completion of every case is ideal, and certainly you should plan to be on screen for no more than 45 minutes without taking a break.

More frequent, shorter sessions are more effective than long sessions.

As a facilitator in the virtual environment, other actions that help include:

- Knowing the technology being used in order to troubleshoot technical issues and use features such as break-out groups, whiteboards and polling which could be beneficial to the discussion
- Allow time for everyone to be 'present'.
- Plan for shorter sessions and take lots of breaks from the screen
- Pay more attention to the process steps and summarise before moving on.
- Allow silence and reflection space.
- Make sure the learning and actions are reviewed.

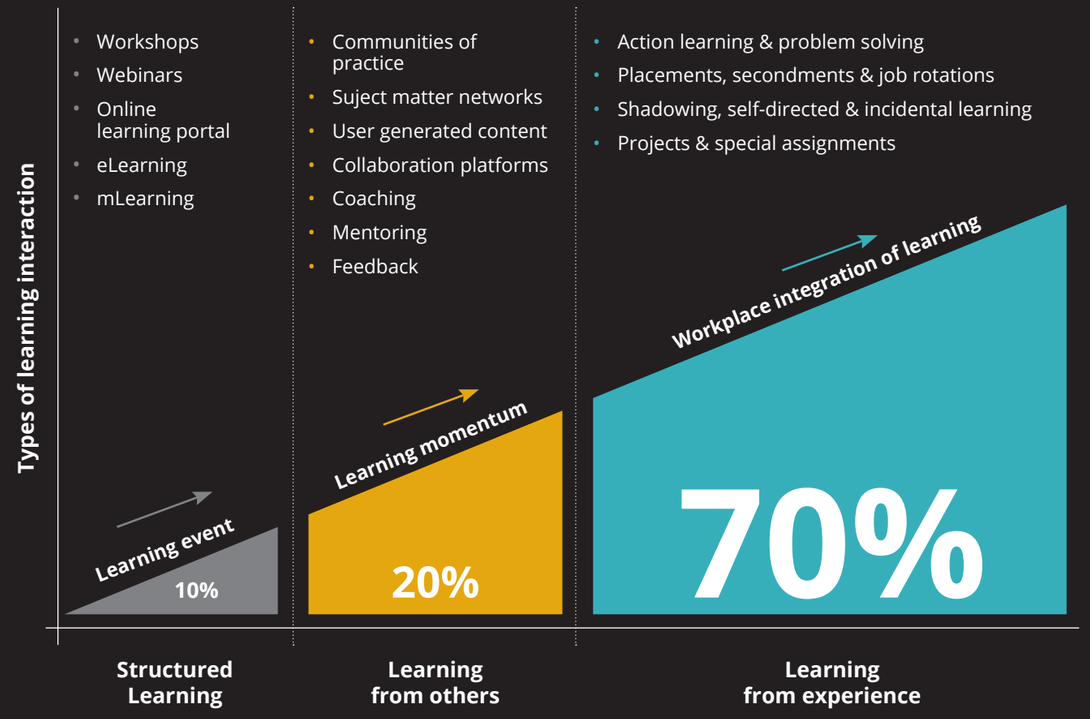
70 / 20 / 10 LEARNING MODEL[2]

Research into learning from the learner's perspective has shown that about 70% of learning takes place in the workplace – implementing ideas and practices and learning from doing.

Most teaching and instruction in traditional workshops and classrooms only accounts for about 10% of learning. However, this stimulus to do things differently or try something different is critical otherwise stagnation sets in and no learning takes place. So, for workplace learning to be successful, there needs to be some input or stimulus.

The other 20% of learning comes from supportive networks and systems such as coaching and support groups that help to provide the confidence and competence to translate new ideas into workplace action

Action Learning is learning from workplace application, so fits directly into the 70% area of effectiveness of learning implementation. Themed Action Learning can also provide a stimulus of new ideas (10%) and provide a community network for reflective practice and coaching and mentoring (20%).



[2] The model was created in the 1980s at the Center for Creative Leadership by Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo and Robert A. Eichinger when researching the key developmental experiences of successful managers

[3] Model developed by Innotiimi Oy, Finland

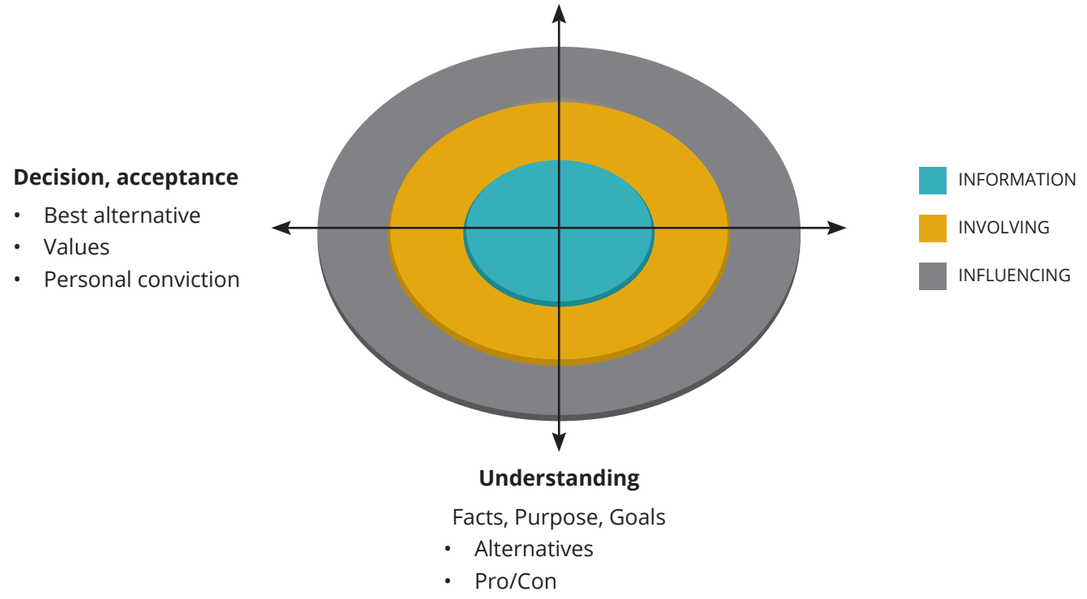
"3 'I' MODEL": INFORM, INVOLVE, INFLUENCE[3]

Implementing change or new ideas in an organisation requires the commitment and motivation of those affected by the change and will be implementing it.

But, you do not get commitment by just informing people of the decision. The most you can expect is that people understand the facts, the purpose and the arguments for and against the proposal. They may not agree, and they will not necessarily be inspired or motivated to action.

By involving people in the decision making – e.g. consulting them before a decision is made, discussing alternatives, etc. – then you are more likely to find acceptance of the decision. People will be able to see that the decision might be the best alternative and based on good values and personal conviction of the leader, but there is still no personal commitment.

In order to get commitment, people need to be able to feel that they have an opportunity to influence the final decision so that it becomes their decision – then they will feel responsibility to implement and motivated and committed to the actions needed.



MODEL DESIGNED BY INNOTIIMI

MODES FOR CREATING A SHARED VISION[4]

The greater the level of involvement, the greater the level of commitment to action, and therefore the greater the level of success. In large organizations, even if the overall vision may be set, local visions and plans can be co-created that are in line with the general direction of the corporate strategy. There is then a greater sense of ownership and commitment to local plans than to those cascaded from above.

The technologies of involvement represent far more than useful techniques for restructuring meetings and events. They represent a completely new way of working, a way to create self-managing organisations without the need for close supervision or control.

5 MODES FOR CREATING A SHARED VISION	TELL	SELL	TEST	CONSULT	CO-CREATE
	Demand compliance	Seek buy-in	Invite response	Request input	Collaborate
Does vision, strategy or plan already exist?	Yes (final form)	Yes (final form)	Yes (draft form)	No	No
Who decides on the final vision, strategy or plan?	Boss	Boss	Boss	Boss	Everyone
Communication flow	One way	One way	Two way	Two way	360°
Level of engagement	Low ←				→ High

A blinding flash of the obvious —

> ***It suddenly seemed so simple and clear, that if we wanted people to work together to change things, we need to get them working from a common appreciation of how things are... If we want them to cooperate in planning and action, we have to find common ground between them on how they would like things to be different in the future, and we have to give each of them a stake in a shared vision of that future.***

[4] The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook, P Senge, R Ross, B Smyth, C Roberts, A Kleiner, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, pp 312-327
[5] Consultants Journey, Roger Harrison, McGraw-Hill
[6] See also the Annotated Workshop Report on the Alliance of Sport Leadership Workshop held on 9 November Report by Geof Cox 12 November 2021 for further guidance on designing and running an AI workshop/event.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY[6]

Appreciative Inquiry was developed at Case Western University in the US, as an action research methodology. It is a strengths-based process, which, in contrast with the traditional problem-solving approach that looks to analyse what is going wrong, seeks to identify what works in organisations, and to construct a future based on the best of what we do. By grounding the propositions of the future in their own concrete experience, people find it easier to relate to and to commit their energies.

The theoretical underpinning of AI, draws on research in a number of different fields, especially positive psychology. We know that if we think positively, then positive things happen. e.g. the Pygmalion Effect, where the belief of the classroom teacher regarding the ability if the pupil is reflected in practice; and the placebo phenomenon where between one-third and two-thirds of all patients will show marked signs of physiological and emotional improvement through the belief in the treatment, even if that is only a sugar pill. We also know that a double negative does not have the same effect as a clear positive image. For example, in golf telling yourself to 'not hit it into the woods' actually focuses the mind on 'the woods' and the ball travels there with unnerving accuracy.

1 COLLABORATIVE WORKING

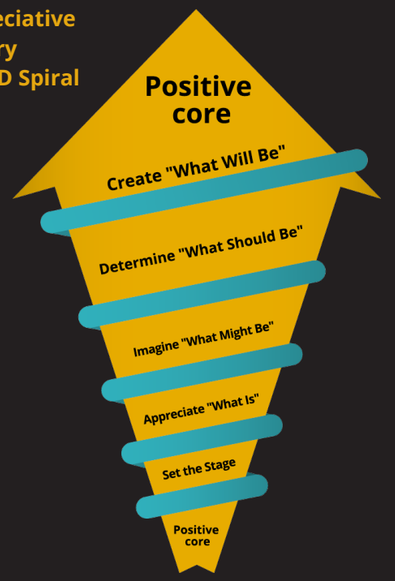
Appreciative Inquiry is not just ‘positive thinking’. It is an inquiry process that is grounded in reality by focusing on successful examples in the past and present. This approach is a definite shift from our traditions of education and training where the concentration is on what is wrong. It closely links to a lot of sports coaching and sports psychology, and Appreciative Inquiry itself underpins approaches such as Solutions Focused Coaching. Whilst problem solving may ‘fix’ the problem, it does not deliver success – what it delivers is ‘no problem’, a neutral state. To deliver success, we need to identify the root causes of success, not the root causes of failure which are discovered through problem solving analysis.

Appreciative Inquiry is based on dialogue, but a different dialogue. A dialogue that collects opinions and observations of everyone involved – the whole system. As human systems - people, teams, organisations and communities - grow and change in the direction of what they study, AI seeks to focus attention of an organisation on its most positive potential - its positive core - the collective wisdom about the organisation’s tangible and intangible strengths, capabilities, resources, potentials and assets. This process is generally known as the 5-D Cycle.

Define: The 5-D Cycle begins with the careful identification of what is to be studied. This is both essential and strategic – the act of asking a question influences the person, group or community. If you inquire into problems, people will focus on what is wrong. If you inquire into what is going well, you will discover best practices. The topics that are selected provide a framework for collecting stories, discovering and sharing best practices, and creating a knowledge-rich work environment. They become the organization’s agenda for learning and innovation.

Sometimes the focus is clear – ‘inspiring leadership’, the ‘future vision for the community’, ‘structures that enhance collaboration’, ‘engaging with the community and hard to reach groups’... Sometimes you may need to ‘flip’ the issue at hand to ensure a positive focus, e.g. ‘dealing with discrimination’ might be flipped to ‘treating everyone with respect’, ‘dealing with lost luggage’ might be flipped to ‘creating a great arrival experience’ (a real-life example from British Airways!)

Appreciative Inquiry The 5D Spiral



Discovery: The Discovery phase is a to understand the "best of what is" and "what has been." It begins with asking questions in the community to generate stories which map the collective experience of when individuals and the organisation have experienced excellence and success in the focus area, and to identify the factors and behaviours that underpin those examples.

Dream: The Dream phase is an energising exploration of "what might be:" a time for people to explore their hopes and dreams for their work, their working relationships, their organisation... It is a time for groups of people to think big, think outside of the boundaries of what has been in the past, think about what it could be like if they enhanced the factors that they identified as creating success and replicated them all of the time. Often this phase is a chance to focus as well on what stakeholders are seeking and for visualising the potential and the aspirations of the organisation

Design: The Design phase involves making choices about "what should be" by thinking through the systems, structures, strategies, processes and images will align the organisation’s positive past (Discovery) with the potential it has (Dream). What needs to be put in place to deliver the potential – often through a series of propositions or principles that help to guide action.

Delivery: The Delivery phase initiates a series of personal and organisational commitments and paths forward; action plans to implement systems, work processes, measurements, personal actions that deliver the Design and provide the ‘quick wins’ en-route to the Dream.

Why Does Appreciative Inquiry Work?

The whole process is based on reality –grounding the future in what we know to be successful and to be strengths means the potential is far easier to imagine than if a ‘blue sky’ scenario was envisaged. And, as those affected by the plans are fully involved in the decision making, there is a greater commitment to them, and a much more rapid transfer into action as there is no need for further cascade and consultation. Planning and implementation is simultaneous. And AI treats people with respect – it assumes that everyone in the organisation wants to do the best that they can, that they want to learn and to contribute, and gives them the forum and opportunity for engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Research suggests that staff who are 'fully engaged' with the organisation are more productive, take less time off work, are sick less, are less likely to leave, and have fewer safety incidents. Engagement is an alignment of a feeling of maximum job satisfaction ("I like my work and do it well") with maximum job contribution ("I help achieve the goals of my organisation"). Engaged staff are committed, they are passionate and proud, they see an alignment of their values and future with the organisation's mission and goals. Falling short of this means that employees are not giving as much as they can, they are not as passionate as they can be, they are less productive than they could be – and at worst, they do positive harm to the organisation.

But research from several sources shows that in the UK (as with most other countries), less than 30% of employees are fully engaged, and about 20% are disengaged. That means there is a very big loss of potential performance and job satisfaction, and therefore poor results.

Engaged employees

- High job contribution and high job satisfaction
- Focus on what they can give

Not engaged

- Work hard but contribute little
- Disillusioned and unhappy

Disengaged

- Disconnected from the organization
- Focus on what they can get

How to drive employee engagement

The key factors that drive higher levels of employee engagement are:

- Relationship with my manager (recognition, asks for my input, regular feedback about how I'm doing, builds a sense of belonging...)
- Clarity about what the organisation needs me to do - and why
- Communication among my co-workers
- Clarity about my own work preferences and career goals
- Challenging work
- Flexible job conditions (control over how my work gets done, work time, work location...)
- Opportunities to do what I do best
- Development opportunities and training

[7] 75% of workers who voluntarily leave their jobs do so because of their bosses and not the position, the role itself, the pay level or the company. 2019 The Gallup Organisation

[8] These conditions are taken from the Q12 survey © The Gallup Organisation

It is the relationship with their manager that is by far the most important factor in measuring engagement. The line manager or supervisor is handling the day to day conversations and feedback to the employee that are crucial for the employee/employer relationship.[7]

As Marcus Buckingham puts it:

> ***People don't leave companies, they leave managers***

Conditions for employee engagement[8]

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

MODES FOR CREATING A SHARED VISION[4]

Comparison of High and Low Engaged organisations[9]

Survey results from The Gallup Organisation show the impact of each of the Q12 conditions on engagement and gives an indication of where there is the biggest potential gain. The biggest gaps are often in areas that are in the direct influence of the line manager and not subject to budget or policy constraints – e.g. giving feedback, encouraging, demonstrating care; whereas the least gaps are more related to the work itself – e.g. having the right equipment, knowing what to do, etc.

HIGHLY ENGAGED

% experiencing this		% experiencing this
92	Someone has talked about their progress	13
97	Someone encourages their development	10
88	They have been praised recently	13
98	They have opportunities to learn and grow	13
74	They have a best friend at work	19
98	Their manager cares about them	20
98	They view their job as important to the company	22
91	Their opinions count at work	19
93	Their colleagues are committed to quality work	44
99	They are able to do their best every day	53
98	They have the equipment needed to do their job	70
99	They know what is expected of them at work	89

LOW OR NO ENGAGEMENT

[9] Q12 survey © The Gallup Organisation

APPLYING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The principles of Appreciative Inquiry and engagement are influenced and informed by positive psychology – the science of looking at what makes people happy and well rather than what makes people ill and unhappy. Positive psychology underpins a number of other models and approaches which can be applied in Action Learning Sets to help with the discussion and questioning, and also used as input stimuli to generate new insights and action. Many of these ideas will be well known in their application as they are used a great deal in sports coaching and sports psychology.

POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE INTERACTION

Scientists exploring the impact of positive-to-negative interaction ratios (PNR) in work and personal lives have found that this ratio can be used to predict -- with remarkable accuracy -- everything from workplace performance to divorce. Psychologist John Gottman and his team manage to predict the potential for divorce in newlywed couples with 94% accuracy by studying the positive and negative interactions in a conversation between husband and wife. Their 'magic ratio' was 5:1 positive to negative.

In a different study, psychologist Barbara Fredrickson and mathematician Marcel Losada found that work teams with a PNR greater than 3:1 were significantly more productive than workgroups that did not reach this ratio. Equally, too much positivity could be counter-productive: anything above 12:1 was seen as unreal and just blind optimism. But managers shouldn't worry about an upper limit: the PNRs in most organisations are more like 1:3 or at best 1:1.

BUILDING THE PNR

The PNR covers every interaction made – a positive emotion is engendered by acknowledging the other person, greeting them, thanking them for a piece of work... Negative emotions are caused by ignoring people, walking past them in the office, texting when someone is speaking, not giving recognition. In fact, not taking the opportunity to give a positive interaction is often identified as negative. So, it is the balance of the total interactions over time, not whether some have higher 'value' than others.

CATCHING PEOPLE DOING THINGS RIGHT

Positive leaders don't sit back and wait for things to get better on their own. Instead, as they walk around the office, make calls, or write e-mails, they are always trying to catch excellence in action. When they spot an opportunity, they call attention to what is right. If they can't find an opportunity, they make one. By reinforcing what is good, especially the behaviours you want to see, there is less of a need to correct mistakes.

In another study on sport coaching, a 10-pin bowling team was given intensive coaching over a season. Half of the team were shown their mistakes and given coaching to overcome them. The other half of the team were only shown the things they did well, and given coaching to enhance these skills. At the end of the season, both parts of the team had improved performance, but the team given positive coaching had improved 100% more than their colleagues.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU DO WANT RATHER THAN WHAT YOU DON'T WANT

Even when people are not performing well, they tend to be doing some of the things you want to see, but not just well enough or frequently enough. So instead of pointing out the mistakes they make – ask them to do more of the things they are already doing right.

If you say to someone 'don't do that', the brain does not know what else to, so will automatically focus on the 'that' and continue to do it. Giving feedback in terms of what you do want people to do will give their brains an image to look towards. E.g. if you are teaching someone to drive, saying 'drive closer to the centre of the road' rather than 'don't hit that parked car' will save a lot of repair bills! Getting a footballer to focus on the goal rather than the goalkeeper will help more penalty kicks and shots go into the net rather than directly into the goalkeeper's hands!

SCALING

Borrowed from Solution Focused Coaching, scaling questions are a way of getting individuals and groups to focus on taking steps towards a solution rather than getting fixated on how big the task is – you eat an elephant one bite at a time, so if you break down change into achievable, bite sized chunks, people get success feedback and can move forward positively.

You can use this approach with any subject where there is a need to move towards a desired future state. Taking a question like 'do we do enough to encourage diversity?' the process would look like this:

1. Set up a 0-10 scale with the group, where 10 is where the organisation is encompassing all of the diversity goals and targets you have, and 0 is where there is no recognition of diversity interests. Get people to draw this as a continuum and to mark where they see themselves – now – on the scale…
2. The likelihood is that no-one will put zero. They might be low scores 1 or 2, but not zero. This is an opportunity for positive feedback and reinforcement – 'great, we are not at zero, we are making progress!).
3. Get people to write down what they are actually doing now that means they are at their score. 'what are you doing which means you are not at zero but at 2?'
4. Then get people to visualise the organisation working at a one-point increase. Do not focus on the 10 – this is too big a step. Focus on the smallest increase that people can conceive making (usually 1 step). Then ask people to 'look at the list of what you are doing now - and identify what you need to do more of in order to get to a 3?'. Often to make a one-step improvement, you are already doing what is needed, you just need to do it more frequently or do it better. You can also ask 'what else do you need to do to be a 3?' to identify any new actions that the group can see that are realistic and would help. Again, don't focus on anything more than taking a one-step change.
5. Create an action plan to start to do these things and set an expectation about when you would be likely to see a 3-performance level.
6. When you get to level 3, you repeat the process again.

This approach can be used in – probably – every one of the improvement areas you would like to see: safety incidents / ownership of the change / commitment to the goals / working as a team / gaining commitment / delivering results….

FOUR LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

Most of the time, our communication is focused on the topic – the problem or issue being discussed. But sometimes this discussion does not get anywhere – you don't seem to be 'getting through' to others, the discussion is disorganised, you find yourself getting irritated with others… All of these are signals that the communication is not working well – as a group you are not being effective in addressing the topic.

These conditions may emerge in the case owner's situation, or in the Set discussion itself. Either way, this model may help in understanding the dynamics of what is happening in the here and now, and offer possibilities for improvement strategies.

THERE ARE FOUR 'LEVELS' OF COMMUNICATION:

Content/Task: The topic or issue being addressed; all statements, questions, ideas, proposals, arguments etc. which deal with the subject at hand.

Procedure: The manner in which the issue is being discussed: sequence, timing, physical circumstances, agreements around responsibility and authority, and decision-making processes.

Interaction: The manner in which people deal with each other and respond to each other, for example: defensively, aggressively, considerately, cooperatively; whether the interaction is characterized by authoritarian tone-setting, a readiness to make mutual concessions, or submissiveness. This is frequently expressed non-verbally as well as in words: facial expression, body posture, distance, gestures, intonation, voice volume etc.

Climate/Feelings: The mood which people are in during a discussion, the feelings creating a high-energy atmosphere or a sombre, perhaps even tense climate. Even when they are not at the level of conscious awareness it's safe to say that everyone experiences certain feelings during a discussion. These feelings may be expressed directly with appropriate words, but they frequently find nonverbal expression.

When you are faced with a situation that the discussion is not going well – the answer is often to looking at – and intervening/influencing at – a lower level of communication:

- Task discussion works better if there is an agreed procedure or process or agenda – this is the first thing to check if the content discussion is 'stuck' or not going anywhere. By intervening and suggesting that the group adopt a procedure or keep to the process they had previously agreed, you can more the discussion forward in an organised manner.
- If there is a procedure but that is not working, it is probably because the interaction between the parties is not productive – people are not listening; ignoring each other; withdrawing; talking over each other… Now you can help the group by moving down to the interaction level and pointing this out and influencing people to interact more effectively.
- If none of these work at improving the discussion, then the feelings/climate may be 'getting in the way' – e.g. if people are confused; if someone is angry or frustrated, they are not able contribute effectively. If you therefore intervene at this level to address with the climate in the room or the feelings of the individual.

When dealing with an unproductive discussion – the approach is to move from a higher level (Task/ content) to the lower level necessary to resolve the situation.

3 INFLUENCING AND STAKEHOLDERS

In order to set up a discussion for success (like an Action Learning Set), then it is good practice to start at the lowest level of communication (Climate/Feelings) by firstly checking the 'climate in the room' and that everyone is feeling OK, everyone knows each other and feel comfortable and able to continue (…are we all OK? …are there any issues we need to deal with before we start?). Then remind the group and get commitment to the (Interaction) ground rules which permit a free and open discussion. Then check the agenda/ procedure for the current Set – theme / opportunity for case discussion / who has a case to discuss / what is the timetable… Then, when everyone is happy and engaged with the meeting at the lower three levels, start the Content/Task discussion at agenda item 1.

Many times when you are starting a meeting, you can move from Climate/Feelings to Task/Content quite quickly, especially when a set is used to the process and people know each other. But even then, it may be that you need to spend a longer time at any one of the levels in order to get everyone onboard. E.g. If someone has just received some bad news that morning of a crucial funding bid application, or a member of staff has had an accident – you may need to spend longer at the Climate/Feelings level in order to allow that person to process their feelings before they are able to commit their energy to the meeting. This may upset the agenda and the timing – but it would be counterproductive to just ignore the issue. That person would not be able to contribute effectively, as their mind will be elsewhere – and this will also affect others in the meeting.

The simple rule for effective meetings is:

If it is not going well – start at the higher level and move down

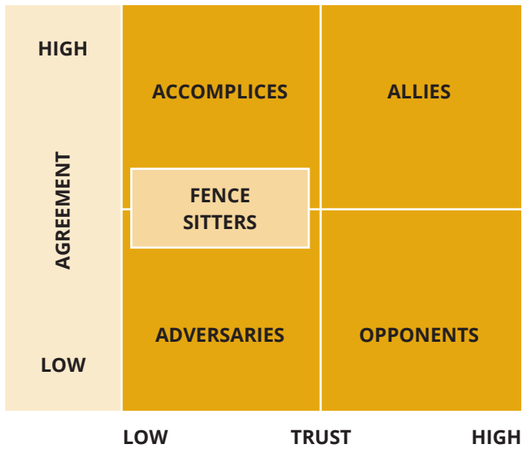
To ensure success – start at the lowest level and move up

Stakeholder Mapping[10]

Stakeholder mapping enables you to:

- identifying stakeholders;
- understanding your relationship with your stakeholders;
- developing an influence strategy for each stakeholder;
- reflecting on which approach works best with whom;
- identifying who would be the best influencer besides yourself;

So, it is a useful tool to help analyse what actions to take and where to start when planning a project or strategy.



This stakeholder analysis tool, initially devised by Peter Block, plots your stakeholders' relationship to you in terms of their agreement with your intent, and in terms of how much you trust them (how good is the relationship).

Allies are those who agree with your intent or project direction, and those you can trust, so you know that they will support and advocate for you. You can develop strategies to use your allies to help you to influence others.

Opponents are those who you know are against your proposal or project, but as you trust them, you know what their arguments are and that they will "fight fair". You can put together logical arguments to deal with their objections and hope to win them round. Or, you can enter into an open discussion to understand their concerns and build possible consensus and convert them to Allies.

Accomplices are those who appear to agree with you, but as you have low trust with them, you cannot be 100% sure that when it comes to the final reckoning that they will support you. You need to build the relationship and therefore trust with them, so that you can identify whether or not they are truly in favour. You may find that your questioning that your mistrust was wrong, and that they move directly into the Allies box. But even if you build trust and find that they are actually against your idea, it is better to have them as a trusted Opponent than as an untrusted Accomplice.

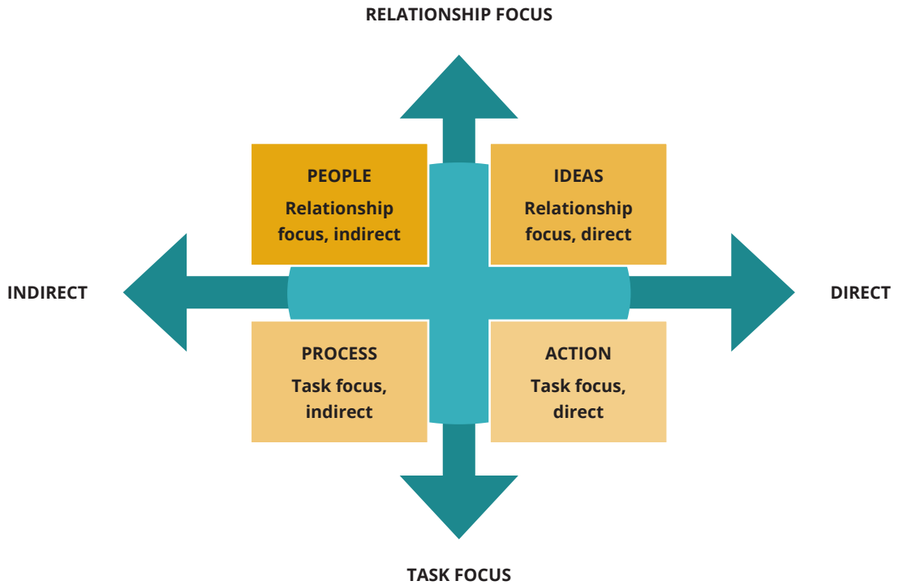
Adversaries are those with whom you are not in agreement and whom you do not trust. Again, you could try to build the relationship with them to make them into Opponents, and thus reduce the uncertainty over tactics. If they are particularly powerful, then this could be the best strategy. If there are few, not powerful adversaries, a less difficult strategy would be to find ways to isolate their impact, possibly by using your Allies to build protection. If there are a large number of people who fall into the Adversary camp, you may need to follow a very different influence strategy – abort the project and influence the sponsor that success is too difficult or not achievable.

Fence-Sitters are by definition ones who will not commit. They are automatically low trust, as if you had high trust; you would know where they sit. The strategy here mirrors that for Adversaries and Accomplices – you need to build trust so that you can discover in which of the four boxes they sit, and then take further action from there.

Plotting each stakeholder in the matrix helps to identify an influencing strategy depending on where the different stakeholders are placed. If your project is important, you cannot afford to have any "question marks" around what might happen. You need to take positive steps to ensure the maximum chance of success. You need to be able to isolate or convert Accomplices, Adversaries and Fence-Sitters. Your approach will vary in terms of content as well as intent – do you want to build a more trusting relationship or to influence towards agreement. Generally speaking, the best strategy is to move people from left to right, increasing trust, before trying to gain agreement (it is better to have an Opponent who you trust than an Accomplice who you do not). You could also identify that it be useful to seek help from a colleague, or another stakeholder to influence someone due to their better position or relationship.

[10] From Getting Results Without Authority by Geof Cox, 2010, based on a model devised by Peter Block in The Empowered Manager, 1988

GETTING RESULTS WITHOUT AUTHORITY™ [11]



Developed by Geof Cox, the 'Getting Results Without Authority™' influencing behaviour model describes the impact you might have by using a behaviour.

You can influence by focusing on the task or on building the relationship. And you can do this in a direct way, or in a more indirect way.

Each gives a different approach or style of influence – Action style where the focus is on doing quick task deals to move forward, Process style which is about logical persuasion, People style where the focus is on understanding other perspectives and people, and Ideas style which builds cooperation through common interests.

Each of us has a personal style preference when it comes to influencing another. Equally the target of our influence will have their own preferences. The strategic style choice lies in knowing and choosing to use the preferred style of the other party and choosing the style which gives you the outcome you need. In the end, all perspectives are needed and all are equal to each other. It is the ability to identify the most appropriate style for the situation, being able to adapt to 'speak the language' of the other party, and then being able to move effectively and flexibly between the behaviours that provides the key to success. E.g. the best way to influence someone who loves facts and detail is to use Process style and have a problem-solving discussion. The best way to understand what is the motivation and energy behind a proposal is to use People style and really listen to the other party.

[11] Getting Results Without Authority by Geof Cox, Bookshaker/Rethink Press, Second Edition 2010

Linking influence styles to the Stakeholder Mapping model, you would use the relationship building styles of People and Ideas to influence stakeholders who are in Accomplice, Fence-sitter or Adversary positions to build trust. You would use Process and Action styles to try to influence Opponents to become Allies, or at least understand their opposition better.

ACTION STYLE

DESCRIPTION	PEOPLE TALK ABOUT:	PEOPLE ARE:
Action style aims to change things, improve situations, put ideas into actions, be efficient and effective, get things done, move forward and achieve good results. Outcome: *Deal.* Conversation style: *Bargaining.*	• Results • Objectives • Performance • Efficiency • Challenges • Moving on • Responsibility • Achievements • Change • Decisions	• Pragmatic • Direct • Impatient • Decisive • Quick • Energetic • Challenging

PROCESS STYLE

DESCRIPTION	PEOPLE TALK ABOUT:	PEOPLE ARE:
Process style is characterised by the need for proof, reasoned argument, the need to know, facts and data, the need to understand, be organised and structured, build strategies and tactics, establish rules, and regulations, establish systems and manage. Outcome: *Solution.* Conversation style: *Debating.*	• Facts • Details • Observations • Procedures • Planning • Proof • Organising • Testing • Analysis	• Systematic • Logical • Factual • Wordy • Unemotional • Cautious • Patient

PEOPLE STYLE

DESCRIPTION	PEOPLE TALK ABOUT:	PEOPLE ARE:
People style is characterised by men and women who have a strong drive towards people's needs, rights, communication, a need to understanding each other and motivations, ethics, synergy, feelings and emotions. *Outcome: Understanding.* *Conversation style: Empathetic.*	• People • Needs • Sensitivity • Relationships • Motivations • Values • Beliefs • Awareness • Feeings • Understanding	• Sensitive • Empathetic • Warm • Subjective • Emotional • Perceptive • Aware

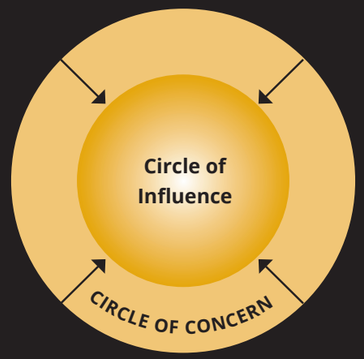
IDEAS STYLE

DESCRIPTION	PEOPLE TALK ABOUT:	PEOPLE ARE:
Ideas style deals in the field of concepts, big pictures, abstractions, theories and models. Future oriented and value imagination, innovation and creativity Ideas style is concerned with moving forward and getting things done. *Outcome: Cooperation.* *Conversation style: Inspiring.*	• Concepts • Innovation • Creativity • Potential • Opportunities • Possibilities • Improving • Interdependence • What's new • Projects	• Energetic • Imaginative • Charismatic • Future focused • Unrealistic • Creative • Full of ideas • Provocative

CIRCLE OF CONCERN AND CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE[12]

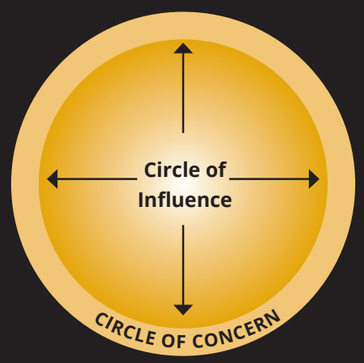
A helpful model to set priorities and strategic focus and to avoid the feeling of helplessness or loss of control.

Developed by the author and leadership guru Stephen Covey, it tells us to only focus on concerns that we have control over. The "circle of concerns" is all of the stuff that worries us – a smaller "circle of influence" (within the larger "circle of concerns") contains only stuff that we can actually control. His point is that we should only spend our energy on stuff that we can do something about. Focus only on problems that lie within your "circle of influence."



The circle of concern: represents the degree of focus we spend dealing with our concerns such as our health, family and work-related problems.

The more time and energy people spend brooding or worrying about pressures over which they have no control, or complaining about barriers that they perceive they cannot overcome, then the more stressed and reactive they become.



The circle of influence: represents the degree of focus we place on doing things to influence some of our concerns.

The more people focus on the things they can do something about and work on them, the more 'pro-active' and less stressed they become. As they do this, they increase their circle of influence.

Easy to say, HARD TO DO! Our passion for our work makes it more difficult to worry selectively. Why? The more passionate you are, the more protective and perfection-driven you become. Any concern becomes exaggerated just based on your beautiful vision being obstructed. Regardless of whether or not you have influence, you will want to tackle every problem as it emerges. This tendency is dangerous. Your energy becomes fractured as you start to obsess over details and situations that are beyond your control. Ultimately, your ideas and projects suffer.

[12] The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey, Simon & Shuster. Habit 1: Be Proactive
[13] The Power of Now, Eckart Tolle

When faced with a problem, here are a few questions that all leaders should ask themselves:

Is this REALLY in your circle of influence?

Many managers would like to put their problems and projects inside your circle of influence. You may be interested, it may be a concern, you may have the skill and ability – but it is not necessarily in your circle of interest if it is not part of your job role. Yes, helping out is important, and attaining your perfect vision is nice, but not at the expense of maintaining equilibrium in your work/life balance. Be prepared to take control and say 'NO' on occasions.

Is this even WORTH your influence?

If you can focus on just the "circle of influence," then you're in good shape! But this doesn't necessarily mean solving every problem. You have limited energy. Challenge your judgments on whether or not these concerns are really worthy of your time. Perhaps it is a concern about someone else's project or responsibility. While you could spend time and energy to quell your anxiety, perhaps the right answer is to focus on your own projects instead? Just because you can fix something doesn't necessarily mean you should.

If you can't delineate your "circle of influence," get help.

Often times you'll find yourself unsure of whether or not an item is under your control. Take some time out to do some planning and thinking about what you want in your circle of influence and work out how to get there, and how to influence to not take things into your circle which should not be there. If you find you're too immersed in a problem to be objective, get some perspective from those around you!

> ***"Ultimately there are no problems, only situations – to be dealt with now, or to be left alone and accepted as part of the present moment until they change or can be dealt with."[13]***

Great leaders are passionate about their work without allowing their perfectionism and/or anxiety to compromise their judgment. Challenge yourself to only worry about problems that you can solve.

SEVEN DYNAMICS OF CHANGE [14]

Whatever the kinds of change that people encounter, there are certain patterns of response that occur and re-occur. It is important that change leaders understand some of these patterns, since they are normal outcomes of the change process. Understanding them allows leaders to avoid over-reacting to the behaviours of people who, at times, seem to be reacting in mysterious, non-adaptive ways.

The seven dynamics of change:

People will feel awkward, ill-at-ease and self-conscious

Whenever you ask people to do things differently, you disrupt their habitual ways of doing things. This tends to make people feel awkward or uncomfortable as they struggle to eliminate the old responses and learn the new. Think back to your own experience and you will discover this theme. Whether it be learning to use a computer, the first time picking up your infant, or dealing with a new reporting relationship, recall the self-consciousness that you probably felt. People want to get it right, and fear that they will appear inadequate.

People initially focus on what they have to give up

Even for positive changes such as promotions, or those that result in more autonomy or authority, people will concentrate on what they will be losing. As a change leader you need to acknowledge the loss of the old ways, and not get frustrated at what may seem to be an irrational or tentative response to change.

People will feel alone even if everyone else is going through the same change

Everyone feels (or wants to feel) that their situation is unique and special. Unfortunately, this tends to increase the sense of isolation for people undergoing change. It is important for the change leader to be proactive and gentle in showing that the employee's situation is understood. If employees see YOU as emotionally and practically supportive during the tough times your position will be enhanced and the change will be easier.

People can handle only so much change

On a personal level, people who undergo too much change within too short a time will become dysfunctional, and in some cases may become physically sick. While some changes are beyond our control, it is important not to pile change upon change upon change. While changes such as downsizing bring opportunity to do other positive things, the timing of additional changes is important. If you are contemplating introducing changes (that are under your control), it may be a good idea to bounce your ideas off employees. A good question to ask is "How would you feel if....."

People are at different levels of readiness for change

Some people thrive and change. It's exciting to them. Others don't. It's threatening to them. Understand that any change will have supporters and people who have difficulty adapting. In time many people who resist initially will come onside. Consider that those people who are more ready for change can influence others who are less ready. Open discussion allows this influence process to occur.

People will be concerned that they don't have enough resources

People perceive that change takes time and effort, even if it has the long term effect of reducing workload. They are correct that there is a learning time for most change, and that this may affect their work. It is important for change leaders to acknowledge that this may occur, and to offer practical support if possible. In a downsizing scenario this will be even more crucial, since resources themselves are cut.

If you take the pressure off, people will revert to their old behaviour

If people perceive that you are not serious about doing things the new way, they will go back to the old way. Sometimes this will be in the open, and sometimes this will be covert. While Blanchard uses the word pressure, I prefer to think of it in terms of leadership role. The leader must remind people that there is a new course, and that the new course will remain. Coaching towards the new ways is also important.

Conclusion

It is important for leaders to anticipate and respond to employee concerns and feelings, whether they are expressed in terms of practical issues, or emotional responses. When planning for, and anticipating change, include a detailed reaction analysis. Try to identify the kinds of reactions and questions that employees will have, and prepare your responses. Remember that the success of any change rests with the ability of the leaders to address both the emotional and practical issues, in that order.

[14] From an article by Ken Blanchard published in The Inside Guide

KOTTER'S 8 STEPS[15]

Professor John Kotter of Harvard Business School analysed hundreds of change initiatives and identified that over 70% failed to meet their objectives – not because the goals were wrong or ill-conceived, but because of a failure to implement effectively. He devised an 8-step process that helps to plan for successful change and also analyse existing change efforts to identify where they are off track and need some leadership intervention.

	Step	*Definition*	*Action*
SET THE STAGE	1	**Create a sense of urgency**	Help others see need for change and importance for acting immediately
	2	**Build the guiding team**	Create a group with sufficient power and skills to lead the change
DECIDE WHAT TO DO	3	**Develop change vision and strategy**	Create a group with sufficient power and skills to lead the change
MAKE IT HAPPEN	4	**Communicate for understanding / buy-in**	Make sure as many people as possible understand and accept vision & strategy
	5	**Empower others to act**	Remove barriers and enable people willing to change and do their best
	6	**Produce short-term wins**	Create visible, unambiguous success as soon as possible
	7	**Don't let up**	Consolidate gains and keep pressing for more change
MAKE IT STICK	8	**Create a new culture**	Anchor the new ways of behaving in the culture so that they replace old traditions

[15] Our Iceberg is Melting, John Kotter, Holger Rathgeber, Macmillan

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis is a very effective way to develop strategies that have a good chance of success. Carrying out a SWOT analysis will help you to focus your activities into areas where you are strong, and where the greatest opportunities lie. It is a process – which can be conducted in a group – that seeks to identify your Strengths and Weaknesses, and of examining the Opportunities and Threats you face.

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**

Firstly, think about the internal environment: your own organisation. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Consider from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with.

Strengths:

- What are your advantages?
- What do you do well?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Weaknesses:

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What do other people complain about?

Next think about your external environment. What are the threats from outside and what are the opportunities.

Opportunities:

- Where are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?
- Where can you exploit your strengths?

Threats:

- What obstacles do you face?
- Where is your competition coming from?
- Are the specifications for your products or services changing?
- Is changing technology threatening your position?
- Do you have finance or cash-flow problems?

SOAR ANALYSIS[16]

Linking influence styles to the Stakeholder Mapping model, you would use the relationship building styles of People and Ideas to influence stakeholders who are in Accomplice, Fence-sitter or Adversary positions to build trust. You would use Process and Action styles to try to influence Opponents to become Allies, or at least understand their opposition better.

ASSUMPTIONS IN TRADITIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING	ASSUMPTIONS IN APPRECIATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING
Who Does It? Strategic planning is the job of senior leadership or board of directors. They set the direction, provide the plan and then "roll it out" to be executed by the rest of the organization.	**Who Does It?** Strategic planning is an invitation to bring the best forward in the service of building something important. Every voice participates and influences the agreements we make about the future.
Approach: • SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Avoiding threats and solving problems to overcome weaknesses is the focus. • The implementation "cascades" through the organization from top to bottom in the form of goals & objectives. • A "Plan" is the starting focus	**Approach:** • SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results). Aligning strengths with opportunities is the focus. • The whole system can be brought together to move from inquiry to vision to inspired action very quickly. The inquiry itself creates change, and people are more likely to commit to goals and objectives they helped to create. • "Commitment to Implementation" is the starting focus
Results: • Resistance to top down change reduces goal achievement • Through each cascade, clarity and meaning are lost • The 'plan' is more static--when the external or internal environment changes, the plan becomes obsolete.	**Results:** • Direct participation increases quality and speed of goal achievement. • Resistance is minimal. People feel clear and empowered about what they can individually do to move toward the best future. • The 'plan' is dynamic—the organization is more resilient and adaptive because the strengths, resources, skills and assets are clear.

STRATEGIC INQUIRY	**Strengths** • What are we doing well? • What are our greatest assets? • What are our strengths	**Opportunities** • What do our stakeholders want? • What are the best possible opportunities? • How are we to best partner with others?
APPRECIATIVE INTENT	**Aspirations** • To what do we aspire? • What do we care deeply about? • Where do our Strengths and Opportunities point us? • What is our preferred future?	**Results:** • What is our plan? • What are our measurable results? • How will we know we are on track? • What do we want to be known for?

[16] Adapted by Geof Cox from an article by Innovation Partners International: Joanne Daykin, Catherine McKenna, Bernard Mohr and Tony Silbert

RESOURCES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

Action Learning / facilitating

McGill, I. and Brockbank, A. The action learning handbook, RoutledgeFalmer.
Revans, R.W. ABC of action learning. Lemos and Crane.
Pedler, M. Facilitating Action Learning: A Practitioner's Guide, Open University Press
Weisbord, M & Janoff, J. Don't just do something, stand there!" Berrett-Koehler

Collaborative working

Lewis, S., Passmore, J. & Cantore, S., Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management, Kogan Page
Watkins, J. M., & Mohr B.J., Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
Whitney, D.& Trosten-Bloom, A., The Power of Appreciative Inquiry, Berrett-Koehler

Engagement

Lewis, S. Positive Psychology at Work, Wiley-Blackwell
Bird, E. Employee Engagement: A Practical Introduction, CIPD
Pink, D. H. Drive. Riverhead/Penguin Books
McKergow, M & and Jackson, P. Z. The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE. Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Influencing and Stakeholders

Cox, G.M. Getting Results Without Authority, Rethink Press (www.newdirections.uk.com)
Cox, G.M. Ready-Aim-Fire Problem Solving. Oak Tree (www.newdirections.uk.com)
Cialdini, R. B. The Psychology of Influence. Collins

Planning / Change

Covey, S. The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People. Simon & Schuster
Kotter, J. & Rathgeber, H. Our Iceberg is Melting. Macmillan

levellingtheplayingfield.org

#TogetherWeDid