

The role of the presenter

As the name suggests, the presenter presents their issue, opportunity, challenge or project, together with the success criteria, to the set members. The issue being presented to set members should be open-ended, in other words, it should be something that can be openly explored to identify the crux of the problem.

Preparing for the meeting

The issue to be presented must be something that is real, urgent and important as this will stimulate creative and exploratory thinking. Presenters should aim to identify a sponsor or champion, who is able to remove barriers or influence change, ideally someone who is a more senior member of the team or department. The presenter may want to prepare for the Action Learning by answering the following questions:

- What is happening?
- What should be happening?
- What is getting in the way of what should be happening?
- What attempts have been made to put into practice what should be happening?
- What isn't within the scope of the issue being presented?

Tell your story as openly as you can

The issue should be presented openly and honestly, providing appropriate and realistic contextual information. Sufficient, focused information should be presented to allow exploration through set member questioning.

Be open to the questions asked

The presenter should remain open minded when set members are questioning, as the crux of the problem identified may be different from the initial issue presented.

Commit to action

A number of approaches and actions are likely to be generated from the discussions around the issue being presented and crux of the problem. The presenter must commit to putting into practice an action or try out a number of actions to see if they are effective. The rationale for not selecting an action to try out should also be made explicit to the group.

Reflection

Reflection is an important part of the experience gained from the Action Learning process; reflection in and on learning can facilitate development in role and personal growth. Learning therefore takes place during the set as questions are posed and answered. Reflection on learning takes place following the set, allowing members to revisit their experience, challenge their assumptions and explore it in greater depth so engaging in a process of more meaningful continuous learning.

Using the Post-it™ method enables set members to review the questions posed following the set meeting and reflect upon them further.

Taking action

The outcome of the actions the presenter committed to will be brought back to the next Action Learning Set for further discussion and analysis. A daily log of events, learning and reflection is helpful when trying out new actions. This will help with the process of feeding back to the members at subsequent meetings and keep the learning experience in the foreground.

Be prepared to feed back

It is important to capture the learning from the experiences of trying out new actions and not just to share successes or failures. This learning can be shared with other set members for future reference. The presenter should also be prepared to share their own reflections on what they could have refined or done slightly differently.