

Set member

A set member is a member of the ALS who is not acting in the role of facilitator or presenter. The set member's role is to: listen carefully to the presenter's issue; clarify their understanding of the issue; ask open and helpful questions to help the presenter identify and be clear about the crux of the matter and help the presenter identify possible actions which may address the issue being explored.

Commitment required of a set member

Action Learning works well when set members are prepared to commit their time to meet regularly with the ALS members for the duration of the ALS process. The set member's role is to maintain equal focus on actions whilst remaining open to experiencing: the ALS process as a learning vehicle; learning from the presenter's reflections; learning from their own reflective processes. In summary, an effective set member is prepared to discover something new about themselves which could include obtaining new knowledge, becoming more self-aware or challenging/changing inner values and beliefs. A set member also respects and adheres to the ground rules, including maintaining confidentiality.

Responsibilities of a set member

Set members also have an important role to play in the success of the action learning set. Their responsibilities include:

- Being willing to focus on others when it is their turn to present their issue
- Actively listen and respect others, i.e. not talking over each other and listening to and respecting different perspectives
- Allowing time for others to reflect
- Avoiding passing judgement or offering solutions
- Being prepared to commit to being an active member of the set for the duration of the agreed programme time span
- Not disengaging after their issue has been dealt with
- Maintaining confidentiality of other people's issues between meetings
- Following up on own actions from the set meetings and reporting back progress at next meeting
- Reflecting on progress and learning from the experience
- Trusting the process and acting in good faith
- Collaborating with and supporting others in the set to make it work as well as possible for all set members
- Supporting and challenging other set members by asking effective questions

Being present and Actively Listening

An effective set member has a genuine interest in supporting the ALS, especially when listening to and understanding the presenter's issue. They are also attentive to the feelings and words used by the

presenter; do not intervene when the presenter is telling their story; and display support and encouraging of the presenter.

Clarifying Understanding

Useful questions to clarify understanding could include:

- What exactly happened?
- How do you see the situation?
- Why do you say that?
- Can you provide an example?
- How do you feel about the situation?
- What assumptions are you making?
- Are you saying that ?

Asking useful questions

A set member should be prepared to ask helpful questions that help clarify and deepen understanding of the problem for all ALS members. Questions which challenge assumptions and perspectives of the presenter can also be helpful at the exploratory stage of the process.

Set members must restrain themselves from giving advice and/or providing solutions to the presenter as they must be enabled to come up with their own solution.

The cycle of Reflecting, Learning, Planning and Action can be useful for framing questions for example:

- Reflecting: Upon reflection, why do you think that happened?
- Learning: What have you learnt from the challenges experienced so far?
- Planning: How do you think you could plan more effectively going forward?
- Action: If all the decisions were in your control, what would you do now?

A set of useful questions that can help set members challenge assumptions and perspectives are available here.

Following the agreed approach

A set member should be willing to adopt the agreed approach to the action learning process, such as The Post-It™ Method

Skills required by set members

The skills required by set members are broadly similar to those needed by an effective facilitator and include:

- Active and empathic listening
- Effective questioning
- Not giving advice
- Developing trust and rapport within the set
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Commitment to the set
- Effective communication
- Motivation to carry out actions between the set meetings
- Time management and prioritisation to ensure that set meetings are a priority.