
Team Learning

Team Learning creates a forum for an intact team to employ the action learning cycle to achieve their goals. Teams address complex challenges in which they have accountability for the end results. The agenda for a team learning project is to examine the team's progress and lessons toward achieving the team's goal. A focus question serves as the guide for the meetings, and its creation is one of the first tasks of the team.

Here are some examples of focus questions created and addressed by teams:

- How do we increase our strategic impact in the system?
- How can we reach our goals for this calendar year?
- How can we increase innovation in our department?
- How well is our redesign achieving the desired results?

Using the focus question, the group works through a series of questions to go "below the waterline," examining the data and exploring their assumptions about the situation. Through discussing a set of structured questions and exploring a range of perspectives, teams are able to gain new insight on their challenge. The meeting ends with clear action steps, assigned accountabilities and a timeline.

At each successive meeting, team members report back on what they have done and learned and another round of questioning begins. Over time, the team can see patterns, uncover useful or erroneous assumptions and accelerate their ability to implement change.

Examples of Team Learning

- Managers of a small start-up company met quarterly to reflect on significant company changes and challenges. What they learned shaped the next quarter's business strategies and helped achieve their challenging growth and profit goals for the year.
- A team of employees and managers for a newspaper publisher met to address negative employee morale. They discovered an ineffective pattern in their internal communications. Their implementation of new communication practices resulted in a culture of candor and improved morale.
- A global manufacturing organization conducted reviews of their emergency responses to both the World Trade Center tragedy and SARS. By understanding what worked effectively and what was missing from their response to the World Trade Center crisis, they were able to rapidly and effectively respond to the SARS crisis. Their second review on SARS created new guidelines for responding to future global crises.