



# Improving outcomes: Action Learning in practice.....

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# What is action learning?

- As a scientist, Revans explained action learning with a formula:  $L = P + Q$
- **Learning** happens when **Programmed Knowledge** (what we already know; how things are usually done) meets **Questioning Insight** (leading us to challenge our assumptions).
- Revans was a life-long challenger of the status quo: “Unless your ideas are ridiculed by experts, they are worth nothing”.
- Action learning can be simply defined as ‘learning by sharing real problems with others, as opposed to theoretical classroom learning.’



# Personal and Organisational Development



‘A manager's ability to turn meetings into a thinking environment is probably an organisation's greatest asset.’

Nancy Kline

# Principles of Action Learning



Some of the principles of action learning are:

- Learning is a social process
- Learning involves a cycle of reflection, theorising, action, and evaluation
- We are more committed to a solution if we have worked it out for ourselves
- We are a part of any problem we are experiencing
- Listening



The quality of your attention  
determines the quality of other  
people's thinking.

— *Nancy Kline* —

AZ QUOTES

# How does it work?



- The sharing of problems takes place in a small group or 'set', usually of 5-8 people, plus a facilitator.
- The set meets regularly, typically for six half-day meetings every 6-8 weeks.
- Set members help each other to gain insight and take action primarily by asking open questions, rather than giving advice or asking leading questions

# What do you think makes a good facilitator?

- explain the principles and process of action learning...
- timekeeping, signposting throughout the meeting, intervening with rapport when people stray from the process
- keep the focus on the presenter's needs, rather than the group's interest
- model how to ask questions
- empathy, respect, and a non-judgmental attitude
- lead the process review at the end of the meeting and encourage reflection
- be open to feedback from group members

**NOISE TO SIGNAL**  
Rob Cottingham



**Mike, Carmel, you go to the garden store and get five bags of lime. Dana, Gord, Jill, get me a tarp and carpet, then check Google Earth for a secluded stretch of highway. The rest of you, you'll help me bury the facilitator... who, ironically, has apparently just led the most successful team-building exercise in our company's history.**

Over to you...

