


A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey sweater, is pointing at a glass wall covered in colorful sticky notes. A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white and red striped shirt, is smiling and looking at the same wall. The background shows a modern office interior with large windows and indoor plants. The image is overlaid with a large blue diagonal graphic element and several thin blue diagonal lines in the bottom right corner.

10 Best practices

for action learning projects

bluepoint



Leaders learn best when they immediately apply newly-learned practices and concepts to important challenges and opportunities facing their organizations. Action learning is a powerful leadership development process in which participants work on specifically designed project teams, receive feedback on their performance, reflect on their experiences and seek to incorporate the lessons learned into their day-to-day leadership activities.

Here are the ten best practices employed by organizations that make action learning the centerpiece of their highly effective leadership development programs.



01 **Select projects that are extraordinarily ambitious and mission-critical.**

To attract and sustain the interest of all involved, action learning projects need to be bold and vital to the organization's *raison d'être*.



02 Form highly diverse, cross-functional teams.

This process provides an excellent environment in which the participants can assess and increase their ability to work effectively with others who differ in some way.

03

Assign participants to projects in which they have little or no expertise.

This stretches participants and requires them to use their leadership skills (such as connecting, influencing, and communicating) to gain resources and support from others.



04 Determine clear, stretch outcomes for the action learning projects (e.g. increase margins by 25%).

While the outcomes should be clear, the best path forward should be unclear, requiring participants to balance complex, competing issues and explore uncharted territory.



05 Set time frames that are clear and tight.

To keep an intense focus on the projects, provide participants with no more than three months for completion.



06

Challenge participants to implement their projects.

Encourage teams not to simply conduct a study and make recommendations but, rather, lead a significant change initiative through to conclusion.



07

Enlist qualified executive team sponsors

Ensure that sponsors have a stake in the project, sufficient availability, useful resources, and strong coaching/mentoring skills.





08 Specify milestones, prototype reviews, and presentation dress rehearsals.

The probability that the projects will result in high-value outcomes is significantly increased when the participants are provided opportunities for feedback and course correction.

A woman with dark hair is seen from the side, looking at a flipchart in a meeting room. The flipchart has some handwritten notes and sticky notes. A large blue diagonal overlay covers the right side of the image, containing white text.

09

Insist on both quantitative and qualitative success measures.

Commission the participants to create a comprehensive measurement system that will include the impact on all relevant financial, customer and organizational improvements.

10 Provide each participant with an experienced leadership coach.

This provides participants with the opportunity to clarify their most important learning, identify their personal development priorities and commit to major shifts in their leadership effectiveness.





About Bluepoint

We work with organizations of all shapes and sizes, at all levels, to develop better leaders—leaders who will have an impact today and build a talent pipeline for the businesses of tomorrow. We educate, train, and coach leaders to use their natural talents to dramatically accelerate their personal and professional development through highly experiential learning solutions.

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