

## **Action Learning Set Facilitator Training**

**Venue: Cornwall**

**Trainer: Nick**

**Name: Bob Smith**

Your experience of Action Learning Sets was evident from the insightful questions you used within the sets. In general questions were clear, short and open.

### **As Facilitator:**

You showed considerable skill in including the rest of the set in the process (4: Coaching presence, 3: Establishing trust and intimacy) and were aware of those wishing to make contributions, responding appropriately. You used good welcoming language to begin the process: "Would you like to present your thinking to us?" (4: Coaching presence)

You showed diligence in pursuing the contract (3: Establishing the coaching agreement) with the presenter and ensuring clarity of purpose for the group (11: Managing progress and accountability)

You were very aware of when set members were going off tangent and when questions were leading or closed. You handled this well but I wonder how you might do this in a way that feels comfortable for you. I am aware that this was a far more time limited session than you are accustomed to and that the contracting to ensure an achievable outcome felt pressured (11: Managing progress and accountability; 9: Designing actions and goal planning). You may benefit from exploring different time durations and noticing the differences with groups. Most can be flexible but groups tend to have an optimum presentation length. Groups tend to feel they need a long time to get to an outcome if they allow the presenter to spend too long telling the story. How much do you need to know in order to ask effective questions?

Examples of your questions:

- 1) "Can I just clarify what issue you would like us to explore?"
- 2) "Where would you like to be in 10mins?"
- 3) "And what would that look/feel like?"
- 4) "What have you done so far on this?"
- 5) "And how did this make you feel?"
- 6) "So what are you going to do about that?"

### **As a Presenter:**

You were clear about the thinking you wanted to do. You showed considerable self-reflection and self-coaching and the group functioned mainly to challenge you to justify your thoughts. By doing this they were encouraging you to move throughout the learning cycle, particularly into theory and on from your preferred predominantly activist learning style. You were great at taking control of your own learning needs and on several occasions made requests from the group. As Action Learning sets mature this should be common amongst presenters. I wonder how you could encourage the set members to stretch your

learning even further - perhaps asking each to concentrate on an area on which to challenge you, ie one on any assumptions, one on feelings etc.

### **As a set member:**

You have great skill in enabling the presenter to get clarity on their issue (8: Creating awareness). You have strong confidence to “saying what you see” (7: Direct communication) and this enables the presenter to see a wider perspective. You follow this by using powerful questions, which are short, open and future focussed. Within the group you also take a role in re-contracting to keep on track (2: Establishing the coaching agreement; 11: Managing progress and accountability). You are not one of the most prolific contributors as a set member but the quality of your questions means that your impact on the set is considerable. You may need to alert members of any new set that you join, to your contribution style so that they don’t feel a need to try to encourage you to ask questions when you are not ready.

Examples of your questions:

- 1) “How long are you prepared to wait for Neil to act?”
- 2) “What would your ideal non-procrastinating morning look like?”
- 3) “What benefits do structuring bring?”
- 4) “Are you asking us to help you decide if this is the right time, or whether you want to end the business?”

### **Skills:**

Clear, direct and open questions.

- Strong focus on group involvement.
- Creating awareness through powerful questions

### **Stretches:**

- Finding ways to comfortably control the process-you may find it easier to contract for issues at the onset, such as timing, re-contracting in the group, how to deal with excessive tangential thinking etc
- Experiment with different (shorter) presentation sessions using contracting to get to outcome so you can experience effectiveness.
- Notice feelings around issues as well as pushing towards actions