



AFTER ACTION REVIEW



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HOW TO GET BETTER RESULTS FROM YOUR LESSONS LEARNED

To get the best results from our lessons learned, we need to ensure we are asking the right questions; questions that provide context. Then we need to have a plan to implement what we've learned.

In the steps below, the "lessons learned" questions are all covered, but the additional questions in bold provide critical context—while the fifth step guides the team to action.

You can use this PowerPlay™ for any improvement opportunities: meetings, a project's performance, and your personal performance.

1. What did we expect to happen?
By asking this question, we remove the hindsight bias and proclivity to blame each other, and instead focus objectively on "the plan" vs. what actually happened.
2. What actually happened?
We acknowledge our collective assumptions (even if they differ from one another) and put them on the table to be examined against what actually occurred. Were our assumptions mistaken? Or did our actions not meet otherwise realistic expectations? There's a difference, and it matters for organizational learning.
3. Why was or wasn't there a difference?
Similar to question 2, the addition of this question pushes us into constructive analysis.
4. What can you do next time to improve or ensure these results?
To ensure you don't dwell on only the negative, insist on Identifying what went well and should be repeated in the future as well as what should be changed.
5. Identify, assign and implement corrective actions for things that should be changed.
Once you identify those changes, make sure they don't just die on a flipchart or in someone's lessons learned report. Assign them to a specific person with a plan and a decision owner to ensure they get addressed.

HOW TO CONDUCT AN AAR WITH YOUR TEAM

1. Schedule a one-hour meeting with your team around a project/effort/initiative they have been working on (e.g. how we communicate, last month's performance actuals vs. forecast).
2. Facilitate them through the questions.
3. For Steps 1 and 2, create a visual and draw a center-line from top to bottom. On the left side, capture what was expected; on the right side, capture what actually happened.
4. On a separate page, capture the items to be repeated, using sticky notes-ask the team to write down their items, one per sticky note. Once they have written their ideas on the sticky notes, review the items with the team and group together similar items on the chart.
5. Do the same for the items that didn't go as planned. After reviewing and grouping them, have the team prioritize the items that should be addressed (you can discuss or vote).
6. Implement the corrective actions.
7. Schedule another AAR to validate corrective actions were addressed and that the items from Step 4 above were sustained.

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HOW TO GET BETTER RESULTS FROM YOUR LESSONS LEARNED

1. WHAT DID WE EXPECT TO HAPPEN?

2. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

3. WHY WAS OR WASN'T THERE A DIFFERENCE?

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE OR ENSURE THESE RESULTS?

Corrective Actions	Owner Assigned To	Decision Date Needed By	FYI who needs to know