ABSTRACT

Action learning teams create opportunities to learn from work on real-life challenges. Use of mobile learning can promote higher-order learning while bringing teams together around new ideas where their thinking may be challenged. In this way, action learning teams use mobile devices as tools of convenience to facilitate their learning. Mobile learning for action learning teams extends beyond simple content delivery and provides a platform that can introduce flow states and make space for critical reflection. The integration of mobile learning into action learning teams allows for the cultivation of individual creativity and maximization of group, virtual or face-to-face meetings. This chapter will discuss the integration of mobile devices and detail multiple mobile learning exercises that action learning teams may use to promote creativity and critical reflection.

INTRODUCTION

In Lewis Carroll’s (1871) classic tale, Through the Looking Glass the Queen offers Alice jam as an employment benefit, and soon after refers to a rule restricting her access to said jam. “The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday— but never jam to-day.” (Carroll, 2013, Kindle Location 524). Alice is seemingly the only one to see the obvious flaws in the Queen’s interpretation of having access to jam. This
caricature of company policy, seen through the eyes of Alice, is not to far off from how many employees feel about their own working situation. Unfortunately, it remains much more difficult to see the second and third order of consequences in our everyday norms, customs, or laws than it does to see the error in the Queen’s jam policy. However, as Alice sees Wonderland through fresh eyes, there are ways to recognize contradictions within one’s own organization, and thinking. With others, as a part of an action learning team, one may go through the looking glass and begin to deconstruct challenges, construct questions, and present solutions that address organizational challenges.

The formation of an action learning team may create the space for learners to come together and participate in a process to uncover their own untested assumptions and create new ways of thinking. In order to uncover the untested assumptions in our own thinking, one may participate in an individual or group critical reflection. Critical reflection serves as a tool to recognize one’s own thinking, the assumptions of others, and those of the institution. The team may then endeavor to remedy much of the institutional contradictions (Voronov & Yorks, 2015; Seo & Creed, 2002), which brought about unintended outcomes that possibly originated from unchallenged norms. Mobile learning, when purposefully introduced to an action learning team’s process and practice, affords a virtual extension of working space. This provides an additional space to support group development (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), encourage flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), and provides asynchronous, as well as near synchronous communication (Mentor, 2011 dissertation) while working around a problem.

Participating in a group reflection can feel cumbersome, akin to reading the minutes of the previous meeting. The difference in reflection, however, is the space it creates for the individual (first-person space) and the group (second-person space) to make meaning of the shared experience. Adding a critical lens to this process allows the group to go deeper, uncovering institutional contradictions (Seo & Creed, 2002). It may also help the group see the taken-for-granted customs and norms that they may have automatically conformed to while onboarding or adjusting to the institution (Seo & Creed, 2002). Critical reflection opens space to review and revise the previously invisible institutional contradictions by helping learners to examine assumptions and beliefs that influence interpretations, decisions, and actions.

This chapter considers how action learning teams can leverage higher-order mLearning—high level learning supported by use of handheld mobile devices with smart capabilities and Internet access—to enhance performance. After introducing this argument, the chapter discusses how critically reflective action learning teams’ function and contribute to higher-order mLearning.
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