ABC of Action Learning

Reg Revans

GOWER
Editor’s Note

This edition of the ABC of Action Learning follows several earlier versions. The first was published in Birmingham with the help of the Forward Engineering Group Training Scheme in 1978. A larger version was published by Chartwell-Bratt of Bromley in 1983. This edition keeps closely to the actual text of the latter except for some changes and additions noted below.

The main deletions from the 1983 edition are the five pages (section 2) of Chapter 2 Managerial Levels and Action Learning Exchange Options and the five pages of Chapter 6 Some Illustrations of Action Learning Programmes. The former is an excursion into the four project options (see Chapter 2 here) on the Belgian full-time exchange model whilst the latter covers the ground only until 1983. The main additions to the 1983 text are: (i) a new Chapter 8 The Enterprise as a Learning System (Chapter 26 of The Origins and Growth of Action); (ii) an extra page at the end of Chapter 7 including a 14 item list of design issues which appeared in the 1978 edition but not in the 1983 one; and (iii) an annotated bibliography of works on action learning by Revans and others.

Other changes to Revans’ original text were intended to make it easier to read. I have shortened some sentences and paragraphs, altered and added some headings and titles, added white space to the layout and changed some terms e.g., ‘colleague’ for ‘fellow’; ‘staff’ for ‘subordinates’. All of this is
controversial, but I hope not materially altering the voice of the man proposed by Alistair Mant as one of the very few names of real distinction in management education. The purpose is to encourage the widest possible reading of this enduring wisdom. Those who do so will be doubly rewarded because of the acerbic wit so often on display in Revans’ magisterial text. Nonetheless, his blessing is likely to fall on those who do not just read, but who get on and do something.

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