

EVERY AAR HAS A FACILITATOR

Appoint a facilitator for the AAR.

The facilitator serves the team by leading the discussion and does not participate directly.

AS A FACILITATOR,

- Begin by reviewing the ground-rules.
- Enter into the discussion only when necessary.
- Reinforce *“what is said here, stays here.”*
- Allow robust conversations, but keep focused on facts, not personalities.
- Use open-ended questions to guide the discussion.
- Ensure everyone talks and no one dominates.
- Write down key events ahead of time.
- Discuss events chronologically (if there are a lot of them).
- Be flexible but stay focused.
- Stay within the time-limits.
- Drive toward a few concrete actions.
- Make sure someone is responsible for each action.
- Share the results.

KNOWLEDGE STEWARDSHIP INTERNATIONAL

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Do More Of	Do Less Of
Start Doing	Stop Doing

The Action Wheel



training • coaching • assessments • planning



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HOW TO DO: AFTER ACTION REVIEWS

WHAT IS AN AAR?

The After Action Review is a tool to help a team learn from their experiences in order to gain immediate, concrete improvements in performance.

An "action" is any major or routine activity or event that a team of people undertakes, especially those events that they or other similar teams will likely repeat in the future.

AARs are easy to do.

The benefit comes when you do them *consistently*, you *implement* changes, and you *review* lessons learned before doing the job again.

Hold the AAR soon after the event, while details are still fresh in your mind.

AAR GROUND-RULES

The ground rules for an AAR are simple:

- Hold the AAR every time
- Keep it short (30 minutes)
- Establish a *blame-free* environment
 - Critique the *process*: How did our process allow this to happen?
 - Be honest about who did what
 - What is said here, *stays* here
- Processes are made to serve *us*
 - We own our processes
 - No process is perfect
 - Processes evolve with time
- Everyone participates
 - Everyone has some insight to share
 - Everyone is on equal footing

MEETING MECHANICS

1. INTRODUCTION

- Review ground-rules and agenda
- Set an atmosphere of participation

2. WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?

- What were the objectives?
- What were the intentions of the Team Leader and the Program / Event leader
- What constraints were we under?
- Did we plan to use any specific techniques or lessons learned?

3. WHAT DID HAPPEN?

- Summarize the order of events.
- What went *well*?
- What went *less well*?
- What was unclear or confusing?
- Did anything really unusual happen?
- Be honest and don't critique people.
- Ask the *Five Whys*

4. WHY WERE THERE DIFFERENCES? WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THAT?

- Based on what happened, how do we
 - *Strengthen* our processes to keep doing the right stuff?
 - *Improve* our processes to prevent errors and weaknesses?
- What leadership and team member skills contributed to the event? What skills were most beneficial? Can training improve skills that are needed?

5. PICK THE VITAL FEW

- From this list of improvements, gain group consensus on what we will do.
 - What are the simple "no brain-ers" that we should certainly do now?
 - Of the more complex improvements, what are the vital few (1-3) that we want to implement before next time?
 - What training needs to be created?
- Who will track these improvements?
 - How will we know we are done implementing them? Be specific.
- Are there any impediments to making improvements?
 - Can we remove them on our own?
 - Do we need outside help? Who?
 - Who is responsible for tracking our progress in removing them?

6. SHARE WITH OTHERS

- Who else (inside and outside the organization) should hear about this?
- How can we share our successes?

Expect	What happened? WELL	Sustain, Improve

Layout of an AAR Board