

# Action learning

A simple yet powerful tool to instil life-long problem solving skills

Action Learning Associates is the largest company of action learning practitioners in Europe, based in the UK; founded 22 years ago, we have an established reputation for our expertise and breadth of experience. We work internationally with global organisations facilitating action learning sets, and we have an accredited action learning facilitator training programme with the Institute of Leadership and Management so we offer both in-house training and open programmes.



Total number of countries worked in

**80**



## Action Learning Associates and Global Executive Learning



Our work follows the original principles of action learning, as devised by Reg Revans, founder of action learning. These methods set the gold-standard for the application of action learning.

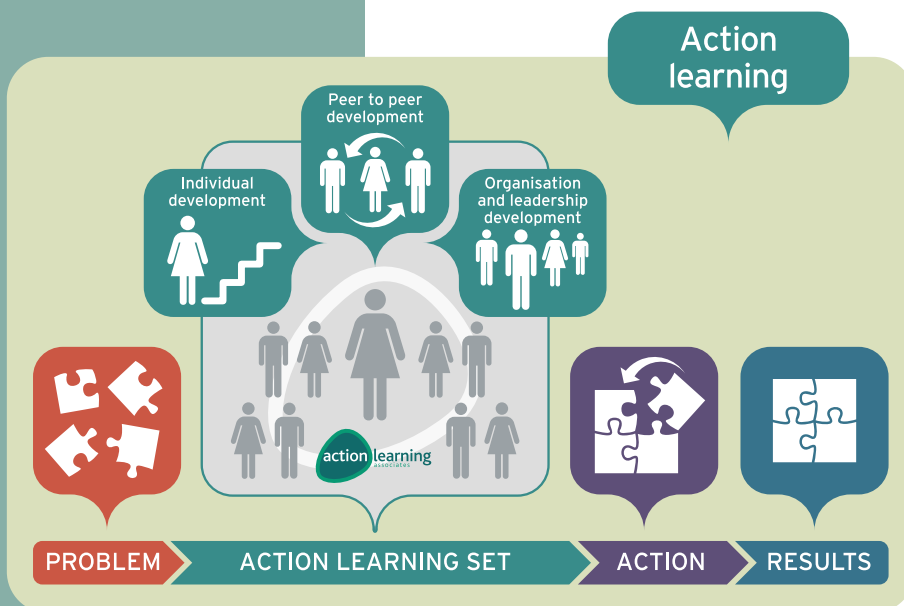
As Reg Revans states: "There can be no action without learning, and there can be no learning without action".

The methodology is used to tackle a huge variety of issues faced in the world today, in commercial businesses, public sector organisations and not for profit bodies. It allows people the time and space to reflect on challenges, to share their thoughts and to arrive at actions to make positive change happen.

*There can be no action without learning, and there can be no learning without action*

## What is action learning?

Action learning is the process of bringing thinking and action into harmony. Working in action learning sets, we bring together people from within the same organisation, and sometimes different organisations, to work through issues, share ideas and challenge perceptions in a trusting, supportive environment.



Through reflection, participants gain a deeper understanding of the issues they face, enabling them to manage change more effectively, and meet the challenges they face in their roles. It's this ethos that creates accountability for taking action and is at the centre of our work.

The original application of action learning is often described as enabling deep

reflection, so our methodology involves taking time to explore one person's challenge; we carefully manage set membership to ensure that there is opportunity for peers to learn from each other's experience.

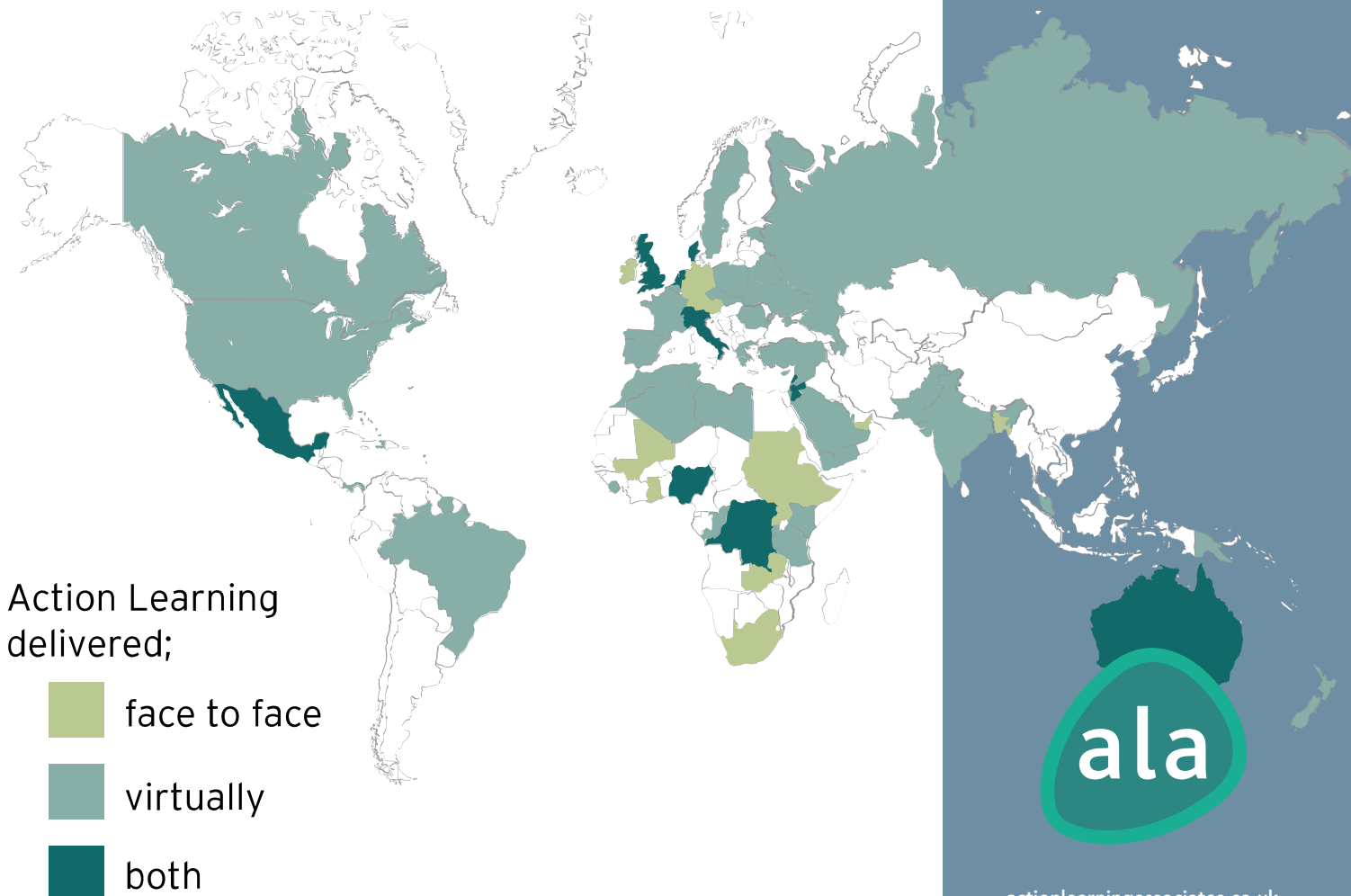
# Action learning meeting global challenges

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We have been working in the virtual environment for the last 8 years so we are able to work with organisations or within a sector across international boundaries; we have experience of working with global charities and multinational organisations.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic we have been in high demand for our virtual facilitation skills working with teams and individuals needing the skills of virtual facilitation or because they are now working with geographically dispersed teams.

From the #MeToo movement to Black Lives Matter and the Climate Emergency, our work has actively supported those that have agency to make large scale change



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## Scaling up to meet global demand

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As an example, In the case of Heineken, we worked with the international brewer to develop a first line management development programme to increase performance and productivity globally. Action learning was used as a development tool, and embedded in the organisation via a programme of facilitator training. This approach gave leaders the ability to better develop and motivate their people, and to manage overall performance.

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*New leadership skills resulted in an overall improvement in performance and better team cohesion across the globe.*

## Train the trainer

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By training leaders in action learning facilitation, Heineken was able to scale up delivery of action learning sets so that 6,000 front line managers could take part over 3 years, reaching all parts of the organisation. All programmes were run virtually without the time and cost of travel.

The independent evaluation of their first line manager programme concluded that action learning with peers had been the most valuable element in building leadership capability.

# Objectives and outcomes

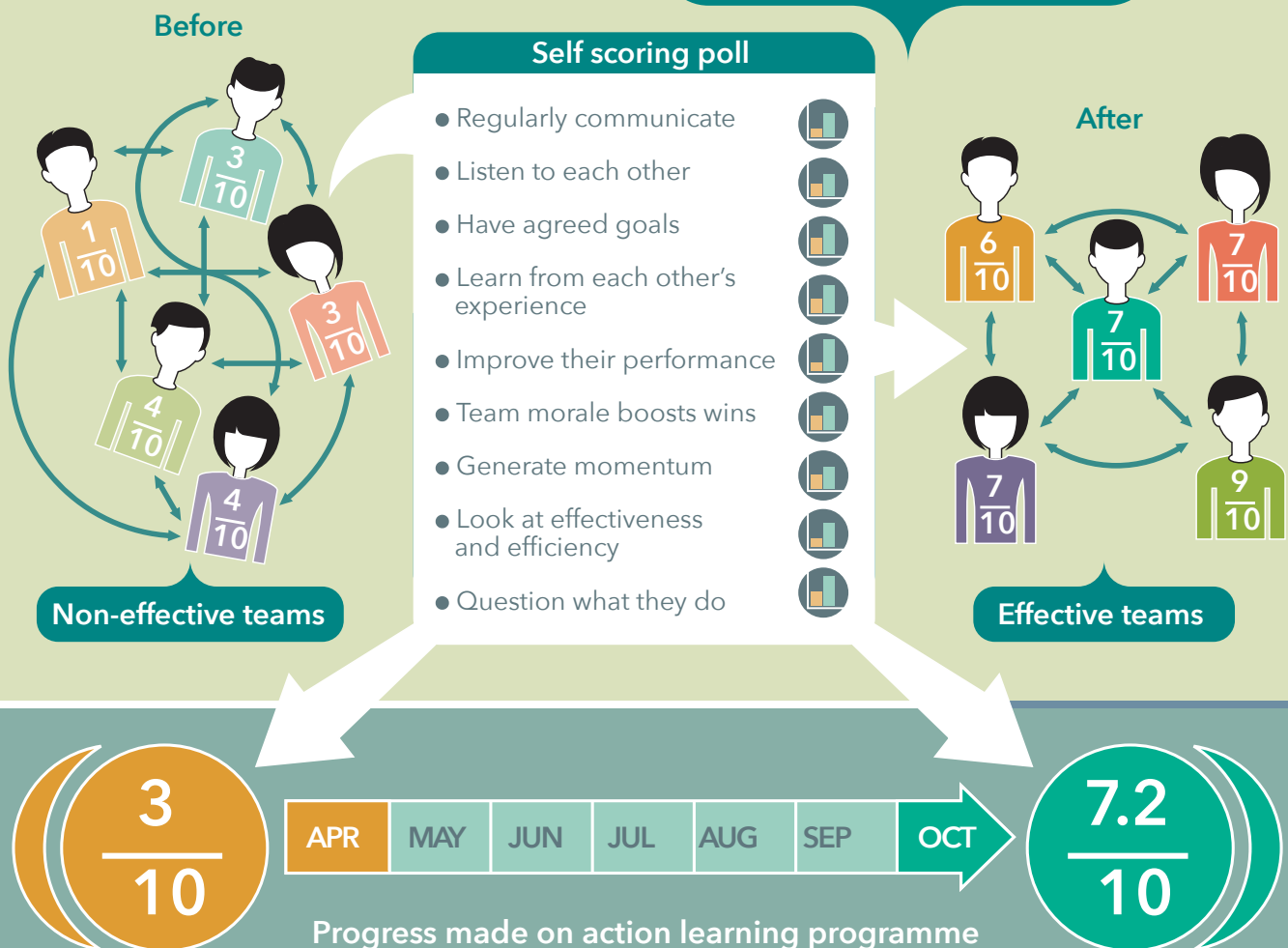
Measuring the efficacy of our work to acknowledge outcomes and how well they meet set objectives is an important part of the original action learning process. In our article [Objectives Vs Outcomes – how far can action learning take your people?](#) we demonstrate how one organisation stipulated an objective of improved teamwork and go on to show the results.

Not only were the set objectives met, but additional benefits were noted, particularly those of renewed team spirit and motivation, gained through their shared learning experience

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*A great understanding of the power of open discussion rather than simply grasping for a read-made answer*

## Effective team work as an objective





## Publications

**Exploring the challenges in scaling up the delivery of action learning facilitator training within a global organisation**

*Sonja Antell & John Heywood*  
ACTION LEARNING: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE, MARCH 2015

**Using Action Learning to Tackle Food Poverty in Scotland**

*Chelsea Marshall and Ruth Cook*  
OCTOBER 2019

**Action Learning for Social Action**

*Mike Pedlar and Sonja Antell*  
JANUARY 2019

**From Theatre Skills to Youth Circus – Action Learning**

**Making an Impact on Australian Cultural Sector**

*Katie Venner*  
OCTOBER 2012

**Leadership and Learning in the Arts**

*Di Bligh*  
OCTOBER 2015

# Our applications of action learning

We have experience of providing action learning for a range of purposes including:

leadership development, talent management, skills development such as coaching, feedback, reflective learning, critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

Our work often involves facilitating programmes within a company for organisational development purposes including change management, culture change, building cross departmental or cross professional understanding; project management or creating structured space for reflective learning.

Frequently, we work with Foundations to support leadership programmes such as The Atlantic Fellows at the London School of Economics, working with global change agents and the Fellows of the Clore Social Leadership programme in the UK.

We are often commissioned to work with peers at senior level; an example is work funded by the WTO to bring together women Directors across UN agencies based in Geneva. We supported them with quarterly meetings over 2 years and left a legacy of a self-sustaining network of very senior women who trusted each other and could offer support and learn from one another's challenges at a time when each of their agencies were facing huge pressures.

For further details of our approach to action learning and our international work please take a look at the [website](#) and in particular our [client case studies](#).



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