After Action Review

Overview

After-Action Reviews can help teams celebrate their successes and learn from their mistakes. High-performing teams take time at the end of a project or process to reflect on what worked and what didn't – and to catalog their learnings for future use. This tool is a quick way for teams to debrief and close out after finishing their work.

When to Use

As suggested by the tool's name, after a team has completed some action together. It is usually most helpful to conduct an AAR as close as possible to the end of the work.

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Steps

1. On a flip chart page, create the following diagram:

Critical Reflection

Intended	**Actual**
Lessons	**Do +/-**

2. Through a facilitated discussion, invite team members to reflect on their work and consider:
   - What did we intend to do? (Intended)
   - What actually happened? (Actual)
   - What did we learn? (Lessons)
   - What will we do the same or differently to be more effective in the future? (Do +/-)

3. The facilitator captures the ideas that emerge on the flip chart.

Options

- An alternative approach is to ask team members to reflect on these questions privately, and jot their responses on a sticky note – one note for each question.
- The facilitator then talks through what is on the notes and encourages a discussion among group members.
- The notes can be shared with other teams engaged in similar projects to share best practices across the organization.

After Action Reviews originated in the U. S. Army where they are used at every level after every action.

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