

Accelerating Team Psychological Safety through Action Learning

ABOUT THE TEAM

The team for this case study is an intact team of 8 members in the field of Human Resources and L&D within the tech industry. The team includes the team leader and their direct and indirect reports (N-1 and N-2). Overall, the team functions well; members have known each other for several years and have a strong foundation in coaching and communication frameworks.

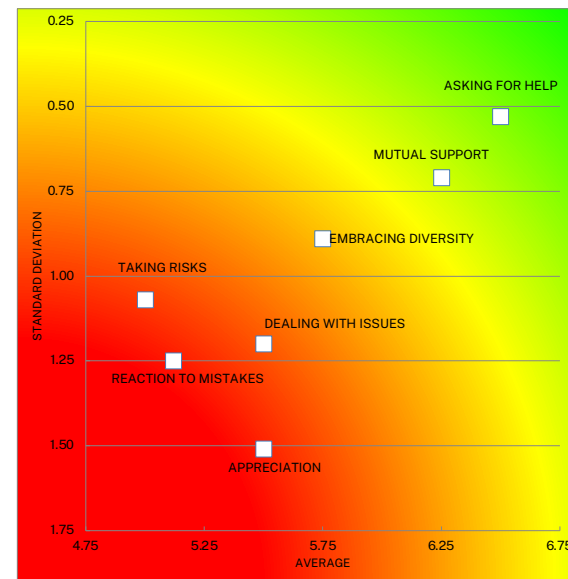
For confidentiality reasons, both the team and the organization have chosen to remain anonymous.

EXPLORING THE POWER OF ACTION LEARNING

The team was introduced to the WIAL Action Learning methodology (www.wial.org) through a demo session. Impressed by the approach, they decided to deepen their engagement by pursuing WIAL Action Learning Coach Certification. The certification program consists of five days of intensive face-to-face training and

practice, split into two sessions: two days in October and three days in November 2024.

THE ASSESSMENT



The program instructor decided to assess the impact of the certification program on the level of team psychological safety in this intact team.

For the first assessment in October, after the first day of the certification program, the overall level of team psychological safety according to the TEAM.AS.ONE

assessment was 5.66 (on a 7-point scale) with a standard deviation of 1.13.

The traffic light chart shows the relative position of each of the seven elements of Team Psychological Safety: the red zone (low rating and high disagreement), the orange zone (moderate ratings) or the green zone (high ratings and strong alignment).

Additionally, the answers to the open-ended questions illustrated how team members perceived the team dynamics. A few comments highlighted the need to fully involve everybody in the team:

We should more actively listen to each team member and ensure balance in speaking time.

The priority to improve the team is ensuring that everyone has the freedom to express themselves.

CASE STUDY

TEAM.AS.ONE TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY CERTIFIED PRACTITIONER

THE PROGRAM

The WIAL Action Learning coach certification equips participants with the skills to lead Action Learning session as a competent WIAL Action Learning coach.

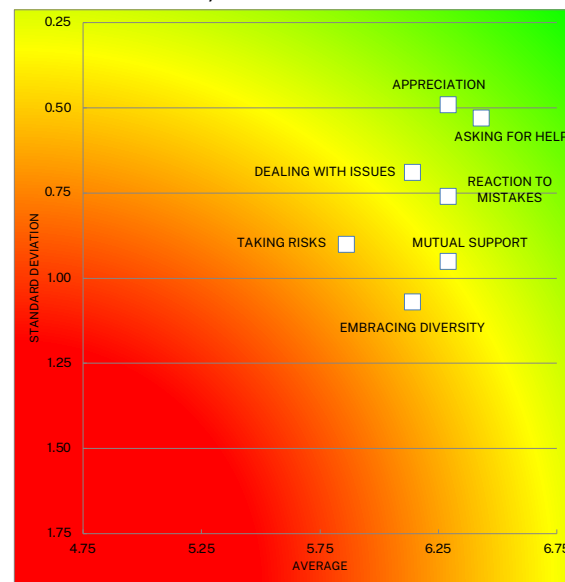
The ground rule in WIAL Action Learning says that statements can only be made in response to questions and the coach ensures that this rule is followed. In addition, the coach intervenes whenever a learning opportunity arises to improve team dynamics.

Over the five-day program, the team participated in approximately ten Action Learning sessions, each focusing on a different challenge. Some problems were brought by individuals, while others were shared team challenges. Each participant has the opportunity to play the role of the coach in two sessions.

As is common with the WIAL Action Learning certification program, participants highlighted the value of working together, exchanging ideas, and engaging in discussions, which strengthened their collaboration. Measuring team psychological safety once again allows to quantify this qualitative feedback.

CLEAR PROGRESS

At the end of the five-day program, participants completed the same anonymous assessment. The overall level of team psychological safety according to the TEAM.AS.ONE assessment report moved up from 5.66 to 6.2 while the standard deviation improved from 1.13 to 0.76 (indicating stronger alignment between team members).



The results in the traffic light chart show a clear improvement both in terms of rating (more members rate the survey elements as “agree” and “fully agree”) and standard deviation (higher level of alignment).

One of the most striking improvements was in the element of appreciation. While the team initially expressed “strong knowledge of each other’s competencies and expertise”, the element of appreciation was in the red zone mainly due to high variation in ratings. By the end of the program, appreciation scores had skyrocketed to near the highest possible level with the lowest standard deviation, reflecting genuine mutual appreciation.

One participant shared: “we discovered each other’s strengths”.

STRONG IMPACT IN LITTLE TIME

The five-day Action Learning Certification

Working together, exchanging ideas, and engaging in discussions were very valuable and allowed us to get to know each other better.

Program had a remarkable impact on the level of team psychological safety. Participants reported a noticeable shift in their team dynamics, reinforcing the power of Action Learning to foster genuine collaboration.