

Action Plans—How to Set Them Up

Most decisions result in a change that needs to occur. To implement the change, it is necessary to develop an action plan. However, way too often a team fails to develop that plan, and as a result, they experience the body problem.

The body problem is:

A team reaches a decision. *Everyone* thinks that *someone* will implement the decision. *Anybody* could implement the decision, but *nobody* does. As a result, *everybody* is frustrated. This frustration definitely has a negative impact on the team's progress.

This failure to implement is not because of anyone's mal-intent. Instead it is because teams often fail to make action planning a part of the decision and change implementation process. Helping a team learn how to and agree to developing action plans can help them make and sustain forward momentum in changes they want to implement to improve their work.

To develop an action plan, a team:

1. Clarifies the change they are trying to achieve and the decision that has been made relative to that targeted change.
2. They brainstorm the steps they must take to implement the decision.
3. They list the steps on the form, one step per row.
4. They focus on one step at a time. With each step they:
 - a. Determine who will take the lead on that step. They monitor to be sure that the work is equally distributed, because it is not a good idea to have a few people take the lead on all of the steps.
 - b. Schedule when the work should begin. Again, they monitor to be sure that not all the steps are starting at the same time.
 - c. Designate the date by which the work should be completed. These completion dates can be adjusted as needed, but every effort should be made to meet the deadlines. The leader of the team holds team members accountable for the steps they agreed to lead.
 - d. Determine the materials and support needed for the implementation. The leader of the team makes sure this is provided.
 - e. Decide how the results of the step will be evaluated upon completion.
5. Once the plan is developed, all team members receive a copy. It is a good idea to make one copy on a flipchart page that can be posted at the team's meeting.
6. At each meeting, the team checks the progress on the action plan steps underway at that time.
7. They celebrate the completion of each step and evaluate the results. Using a highlighter to color in the completed steps provides a good visual record of the team's accomplishments.

The following form was created using Microsoft Word. Rows can be easily added or deleted as needed.

Action Plan				
Decision:				
What (Steps in the implementation of the decision)	Who (Person with lead responsibility)	When Start/Finish	Materials Needed	Evaluation Criteria

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