Tool: After-Action Review (AAR)

Assessment conducted at the end of a project, major activity, or step that yields lessons about them. The participants respond to questions to discover what happened and to determine what went well and what could be improved.

**Uses**
- Documents a project and makes it possible to draw lessons from it that can be made available to any other similar project or person concerned. AARs can be applied to any activity requiring review, from a meeting to implementation of a new managerial approach.
- Makes it possible to learn from the experience of others.

**OHS Use**
- During or after implementation of new projects, such as insertion of new machines or policies, a production change, or any other OHS-related project.
- Promotes safe behaviors. The lessons drawn from AARs can enable employees to anticipate certain situations that place OHS in jeopardy.
- Can be used to analyze and investigate accidents.

**Practical OHS Example**
Air France implemented AARs in order to identify and analyze events occurring on aircraft in good condition. After problems have occurred, crew members were invited to share their experiences and write a report along the lines of an AAR. The reports are submitted to a board for overall analysis. Preventive measures are then taken. The most meaningful events and their analyses are subsequently communicated to all crews two or three times a year via publications, training, and in reference documents used by personnel. The ultimate goal is to reduce the probability of accidents by continuously improving training programs as well as documents, operating procedures, and staff awareness of risk. (source: De Courville, B. (2000), Prévention et retour d'expérience à Air France. Congrès SFIMAR, Lille, France, October 06-07.)

**Benefits**
- Makes it possible to review major project steps, draw lessons from projects, and foster team learning.
- Facilitates the task of subsequent teams by avoiding the repetition of previous errors.
- Encourages frankness, feedback, the contribution of ideas, and communication.
- Fairly simple to organize.

**Limitations**
- Can be difficult to capture the context in which the project took place.
- Of limited scope if the AARs are not supported, communicated, or consulted.

**References and Resources**
Directions for use: After-Action Review (AAR)

**Conditions**
- Management support in a climate of trust and collaboration are essential to success.
- The meetings must be concise, standardized, and regular; the points of view of all the participants must be heard.

**How It Works**

**Preparation**
- Determine who will take part.
- Prepare the logistics (room, materials, date, allotted time, etc.).
- Prepare note sheets with the traditional questions.
- Identify a facilitator, if applicable.

**Meeting**
- Introduce and review the ground rules and goals.
- Review the various project events. If necessary, break the AAR down into major activities or according to event chronological order.
- Each person takes a turn at responding to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Intentions</th>
<th>What was our goal? What was supposed to happen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Reality</td>
<td>What happened exactly? How did people react?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Why did certain actions occur? What accounts for the differences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnings</td>
<td>What should we do the next time? What worked well that we should keep? What didn't work well that we should improve? What can we learn from this experience? What advice can we give to future teams?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>Who should do what and when?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Adapted from Buckman Laboratories International, Inc. 2006

**Follow-Up**
- Identify the tasks that need to be revised and correct the problems.
- Communicate the results and the learnings to the organization’s other members.
- Integrate the learnings into future projects.

**Advice**
- Avoid blaming one person for the errors. Instead, emphasize learnings and solutions.
- Document the processes as well as the results.
- Allow time for discussion and maintain an open dialogue by asking everyone to give their opinion.
- Ensure that everyone present takes part and that respect and a positive atmosphere are maintained throughout.