

Action Learning Case Studies

1. Lucent Technology Program

Ron Passfield was engaged as an external consultant to work with colleagues to conduct an action learning program for Lucent Technology. This approach to action learning involved three concurrent programs aimed at three different levels of management—Executive Management, Middle Management and the “Young Turks”. The action learning projects were matched to the level of management involved. The Program increased collaboration and innovation in the organisation.

2. Queensland University Action Learning Program (UQ Program)

Ron Passfield was engaged as an external consultant to work with an internal Program Team in the design, conduct and evaluation of an action learning based Leadership Development Program. Executive management made it very clear from the outset that they expected concrete outcomes in terms of both leadership development and organisation innovation in line with strategic goals.

The UQ Program became the major source of innovation in the University with up to 10 project teams per year working on strategic projects as action learning sets. They, in turn, conducted action research projects which began with the submission of a project research proposal for funding and concluded with public presentation in the form of a written report and oral presentation to a wider range of stakeholders.

Ron Passfield was directly involved in the UQ Program for 9 years in total and involved 90 projects. The Program was the subject of Ron's PhD thesis, *Action Learning for Professional and Organisational Development: A Case Study in Higher Education* (Passfield, 1996).

One of the factors that contributed to the cessation of the UQ Program was innovation overload.

3. Conrad Jupiter, Gold Coast

Ron Passfield was engaged as an external consultant to work with colleagues to conduct an accredited, in-house, action learning MBA program for Conrad Jupiter, Gold Coast. What was distinctive about this Program, besides the accreditation aspect, was that all MBA assignments had to be focused on some aspect of the business, e.g. developing a marketing plan for the fine dining restaurant, creating a career path for Chefs, improving front-of-office processes or increasing occupancy rates.

4. Practical People Management Program (now Confidential People Management – CPM)

This program, first developed in 2004 by Julie Cork and Mike Nelson, has been conducted in the Queensland Public Services since the first pilot that commenced in 2004.

Merit Solutions first joined Julie Cork and Associates in 2007 and have been involved ever since. In this period (2007-2012) Ron Passfield, Angela Bryan and Jane Woodland, have facilitated the People Management Program for eight separate State Government Departments in locations from Roma (475 kilometres west of Brisbane) to Cairns (1,700 kilometres north of Brisbane), including ten major cities in between. This covered more than 1,000 public sector managers across 50+ programs. The People Management Program runs over 5-7 days and covers 4-6 months.

The focus of the Practical People Management Program is the development and practise of people management skills. The program incorporates elements of experiential learning, action learning and action research. Participant managers practise skills within the safe learning environment during monthly workshops (experiential learning), share their experiences and experiences with fellow managers (action learning), explore new ways of acting in the workplace between workshops (action learning) and undertake a project designed to improve some aspect of their operations (action learning/action research). Projects are undertaken as individuals or in groups and results are presented orally to their fellow participants, their managers and representatives of the hierarchy. PPM is described here: http://www.juliecorkandassociates.com/practical_people_management/

The program resource book for PPM has been completely re-written in 2013 by Ron and Julie and the program is now marketed as Confidential People Management (CPM):

5. Flexible Learning Capacity Building (Flexible Learning Program) - National Vocational Education Sector

Ron Passfield was engaged as an external consultant in the role of National Change Management Facilitator for a project designed to build the flexible learning/online learning capacity of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector throughout Australia. While the primary focus of the project was the government-owned Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Colleges, the project did involve some industry participants in the latter stages.

Ron's primary role was to act as a coach for senior managers in TAFE colleges who were chosen each year as Change Managers. This involved working with these managers from around Australia who were recharged with their own organisation, change management plan for their own organisation. These individual action research projects commenced with a proposal for funding of their research and concluded with presentation at a National Conference and preparation of a significant report for online publishing.

The group of Change Managers from around Australia operated as action learning groups and Ron's facilitation involved one-on-one meetings, face-to-face workshops, webconferencing, teleconferencing (using telebridges), telephone support and email discussions.

The history, processes and outcomes of this project (a program within the Flexible Learning Leaders Program) are documented in the following online resource:
<http://leaders.flexiblelearning.net.au/>