

TIP #21 – August 2007
HELPING PEOPLE IMPLEMENT THEIR ACTION PLANS
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As a facilitator and coach, I have always struggled with the fact that people do not always implement their action plans when they return to the real world. Given that my personal journey is about helping others realize their dreams, this lack of follow-through becomes an issue for me. In my experience, people are more apt to continue their leadership journey if they remain connected to the people with whom they were trained. If they find a safe environment where there is a common language and a shared commitment to change, they are far more likely to stay the course. To this end I do everything I can to make this happen.

Here are some things I have done in the past that have helped get and keep people connected and supporting one another as they work toward their personal leadership development goals:

Tips for Connecting the Group During the Session:

1. Help the group create inside jokes and propagate them.

Add flipcharts to the walls that have words or graphics that relate to something the group has created. For example, a recent group I worked with kept talking about the campfire they had enjoyed the night before. Repeatedly, they said, “What a great fire!” I simply drew a picture of a fire and put those words beside it. It validated for the group that the experiences they have outside the training room are just as important as those inside during the facilitated portion of the program. It also forges a deeper connection within the group.

2. Create peer-coaching relationships.

Link people up so that they can continue to support each other back at work, perhaps with phone calls or occasional meetings to see how the action plan implementation is going. Allowing clients a little time during the session to plan how they will work together typically generates willing participation. For example, I always give clients a chance to practice this new relationship during training with a 10-minute chat about their plans. I follow the activity in the section on “Committing” in the Participant’s Workbook but I also offer teams the option of creating something else if they wish. My goal is to leave this in their control, with the hope that they will be more likely to follow through.

Tips for Sustaining Connections Beyond the Classroom:

1. Make virtual connections.

With permission from the group, a group email goes out after the session that invites participants to share their experiences as they work to bring the learning back home. People generally share their initial thoughts with the group and get some support from the others.

2. Plan a reunion.

Working with an intact team from one organization, I sometimes invite them to plan a reunion—lunch or an after-work get together. This technique also could be suggested for participants in a public workshop as well, if the group was willing.

3. Optimize online networking.

With all of the new online networking options, there is really no limit to how you can connect people prior to or following training. For example, in my own consulting practice, we are planning to have online systems up and running in time for our fall Leadership Challenge public workshops at LeadershipJourney.ca. In this way, groups can stay connected in a forum that allows them to chat, share their experiences, and offer each other help and support. As facilitators we will be able to watch the conversation and add to it if necessary. Stay tuned and we will tell you how it works out!