



The Greater Rochester Quality Council presents: Planning, Learning, Improving: The Value of After Action Reviews



The magic tool to bring the S of PDSA to life

Facilitated by Dr. JoAnn Sternke

June 26, 2024

Your Facilitator – Dr. JoAnn Sternke



JOANN STERNKE

**Leader & Performance
Excellence Coach**

Proven Leader & Coach – Owner of Leader Excellence

- Passionate to guide leaders to “get better at getting better” and achieve excellence – skilled at making the complex simple and actionable

Senior Director & Leader Coach – Studer Group/Education

- Coached organizations throughout the US on engagement and strategy

Former Superintendent of Pewaukee School District Pewaukee, WI

- Led organization to be a 2013 recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and Wisconsin Forward Award Recipient in 2010

Baldrige Leadership

- Former Member of the Malcolm Baldrige National Panel of Judges
- Current National and State Baldrige Master Examiner - 15 years experience as an examiner & leader of site visit teams
- Recipient of the 2019 Harry Hertz Leadership Award
- National and International Speaker on Performance Excellence
- Former ASQ World Board Member

With Gratitude for This Opportunity



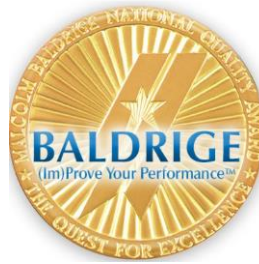
Ice Breaker



*Type an answer
in the Chat please:*
**When and how do you
personally take time and
structure reflection?**

**How does your
organization take time
and structure time to
pause and reflect?**

Our Learning Targets for Today



1. Deepen understanding of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process
2. Learn to use an After Action Review (AAR) process that strengthens the Study phase of PDSA by structuring time to pause and reflect:
 - What it is
 - History
 - Format
 - Tips, Templates and Implementation Strategies



3. Apply an After Action Review process to a project of your choice

The Power of the Plan-Do-Study Act Process

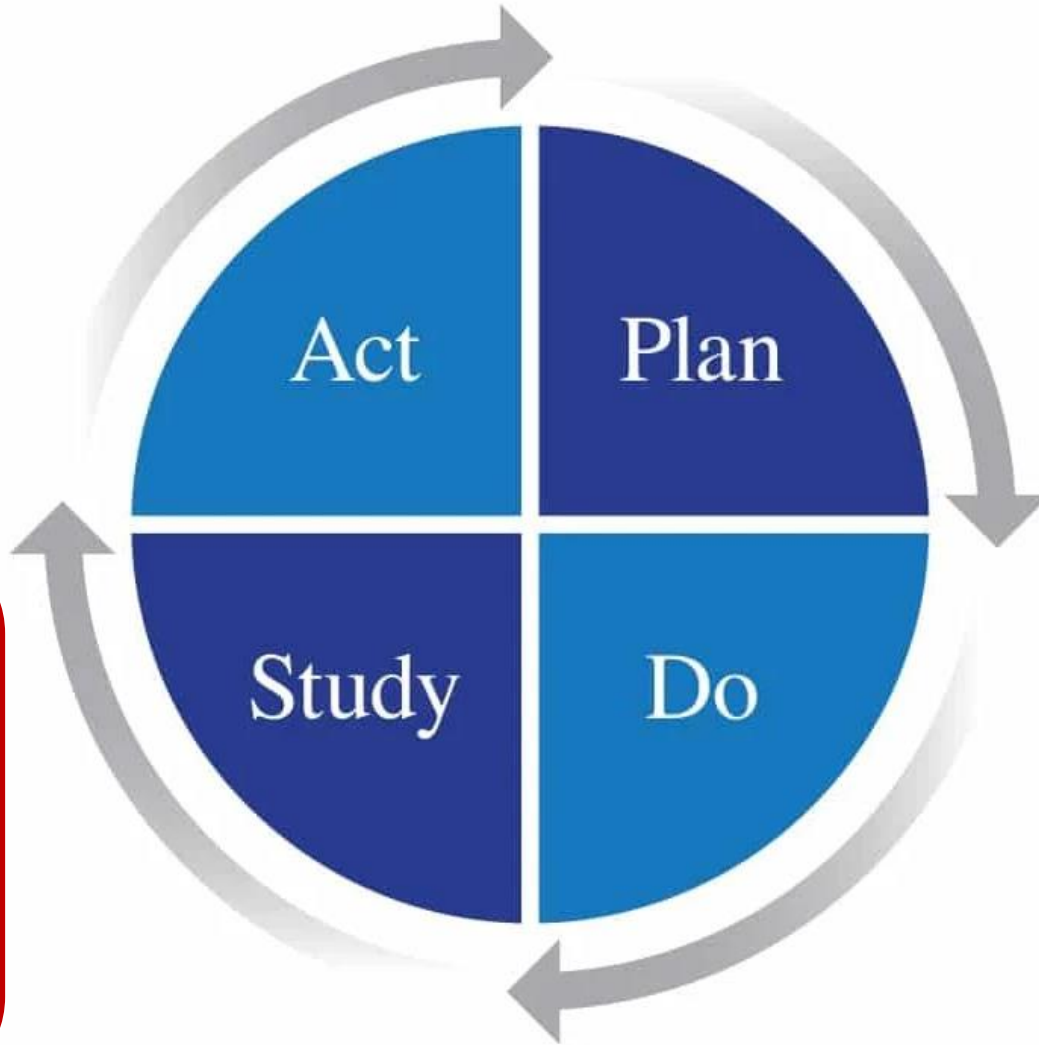


ACT

- Share final reflections
- Conclude whether to Adopt, Adapt, or Abandon change idea

STUDY

- Analyze outcomes, findings, and data
- Compare results to predictions
- Capture learnings



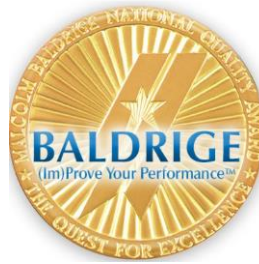
PLAN

- Propose change idea and how it will be tested
- Predict what will happen

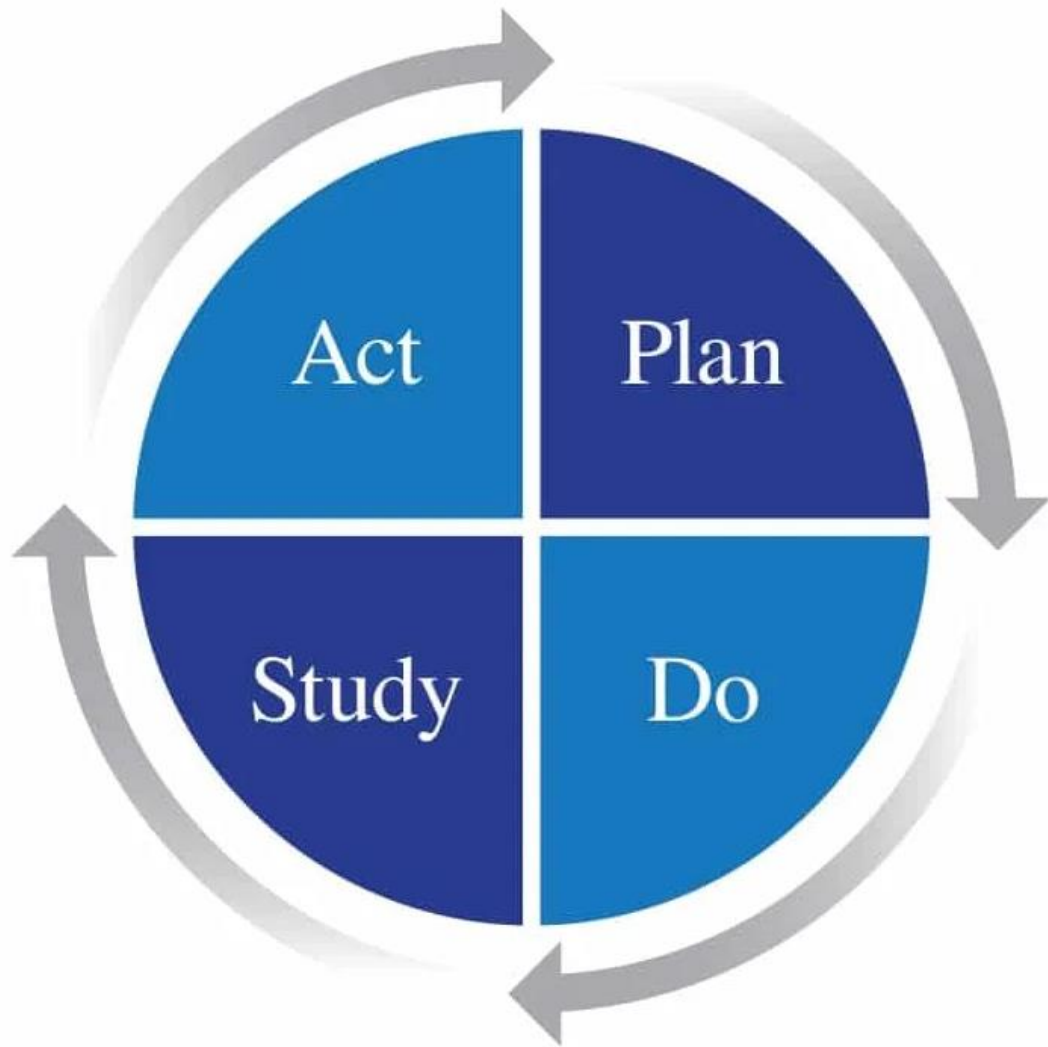
DO

- Implement the change idea
- Collect data
- Reflect on how well the plan was followed

Pewaukee's Use of Plan-Do-Study Act

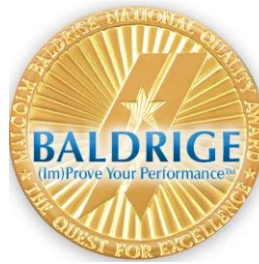


Excerpt from the Pewaukee School District Baldrige Feedback Report



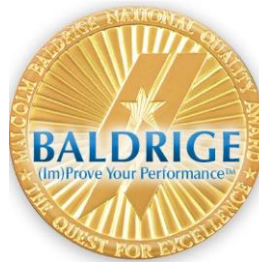
“The Pewaukee School District describes an effective, systematic, and well-deployed approach to improving work processes to maximize student success that is **based on PDSA** (Figure 6.1-2), shows evidence of cycles of learning, and aligns with the SPP, CCs, and organizational needs.”

Hit the Pause Button and STUDY

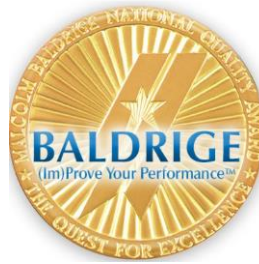


Avoid the Replication Trap
Don't Get Stuck Doing, Doing, Doing, Doing

Study = Hit “Pause” and Ask Reflective Questions

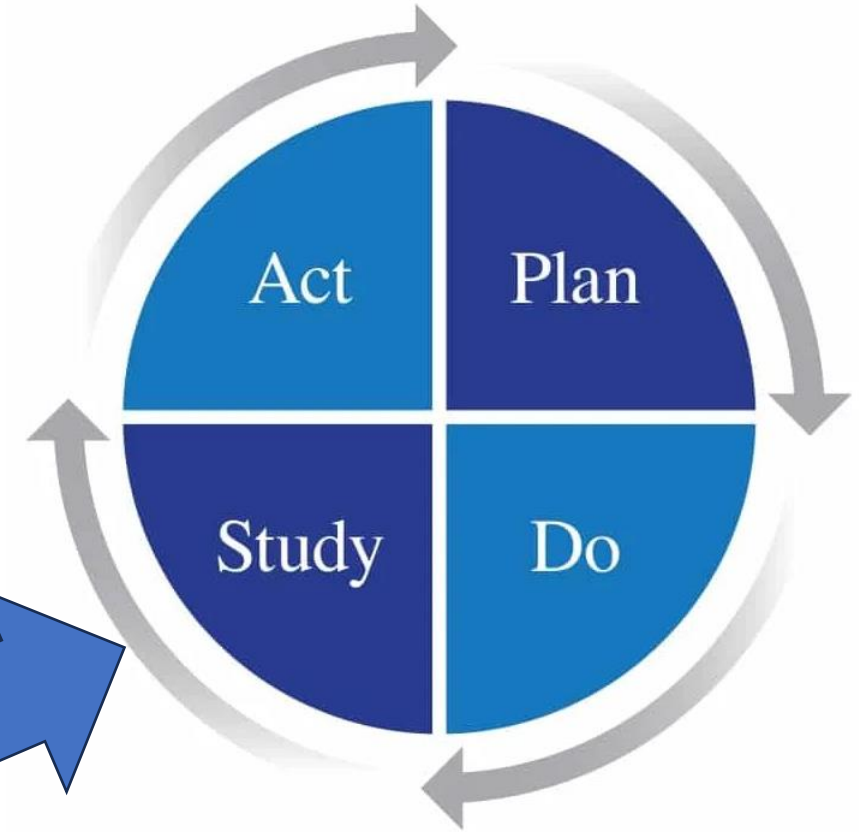


After Action Review Defined



An **After Action Review (AAR)** is a technique for enhancing organizational learning with the goal of improving process and execution by systematically analyzing the intended outcome and actual outcome of an action/event and identifying practices to sustain, and practices to improve or initiate.

Simply, it's a tool to give structure to the STUDY phase of PDSA.





History of the After Action Review Process

- Developed by the United States Army in the 1970s to help soldiers learn from both their mistakes and achievements before moving forward; goal of extracting lessons from one event or project and applying them to others
- Shell Oil, Colgate Palmolive, Harley Davidson
- Boeing
- Microsoft
- Jump Associates
- J. M. Huber



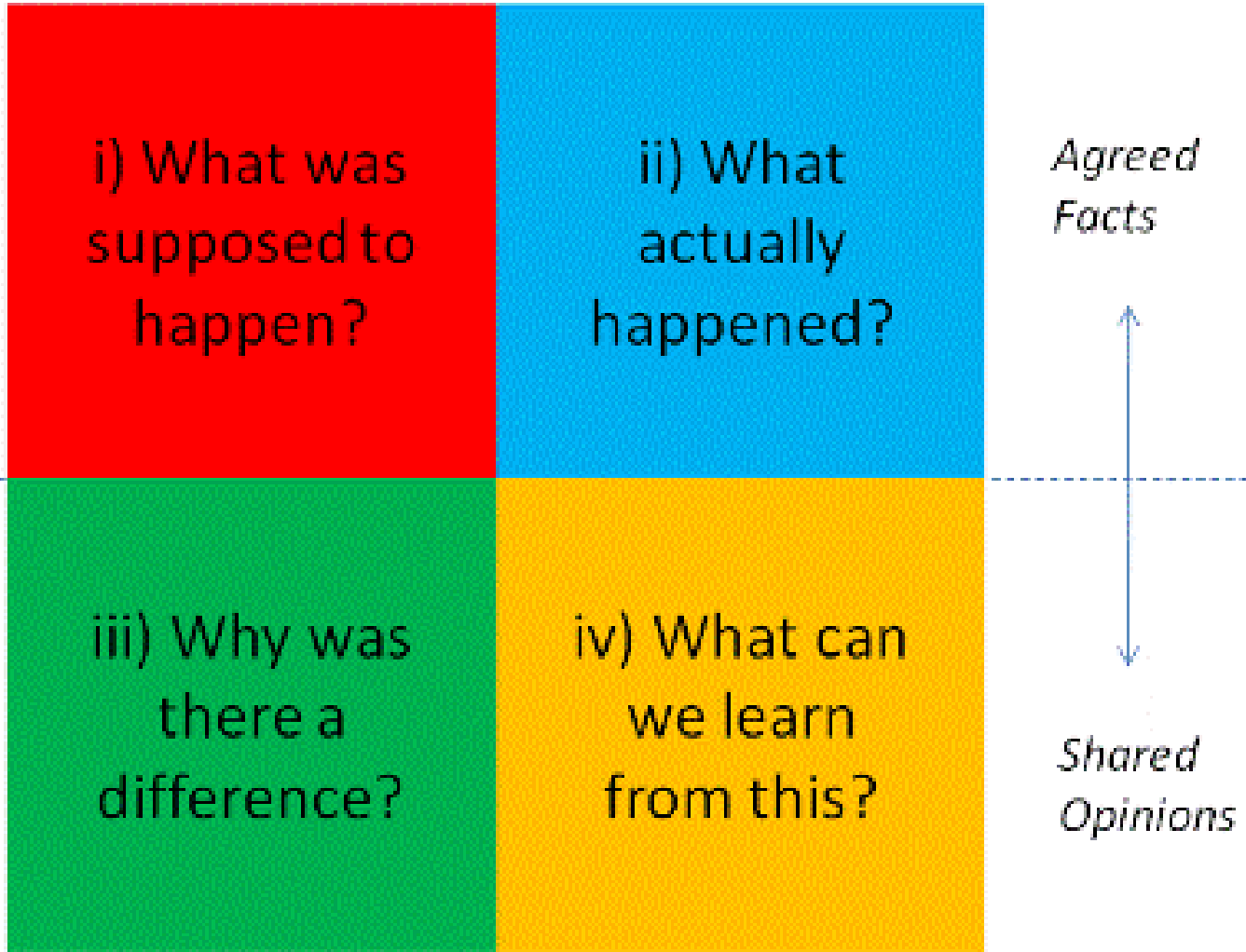
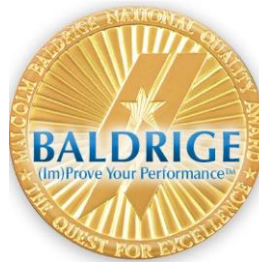
Put a number in the chat please:

1 = My organization routinely uses AARs

2 = I'm familiar but AARs are not routine for me

3 = What is an AAR?

Steps in the After Action Review Process



Let's discuss:
When might you use an After Action Review?

In other words, when would it be beneficial?

Let's Dig In



I'm going to show you some templates and opportunities to use AARs. Please think about:

What is an AAR question you think is particularly valuable?

How might you get started using After Action Reviews?

LET'S GET
STARTED



Sample After Action Review Template #1



PROJECT Positive Charge social media campaign	SCOPE Social media campaign budget review	OBJECTIVES Determine if we stayed on budget. Identify where we can save money.	STAKEHOLDERS Positive Charge marketing team and executives
WHAT DID WE EXPECT TO HAPPEN? We expected to stay within a \$9000 per month budget for our social media campaign.	WHAT HAPPENED? We stayed within budget during the first month of the quarter. We were \$1000 over budget in the second month and \$2000 over in the last month.	WHAT WENT WELL AND WHY? We stayed within budget for the first month because our market estimates were correct.	WHAT AND HOW CAN WE IMPROVE? We need to factor in the rising costs of advertising on social media platforms due to inflation and other factors. We will anticipate cost increases by increasing our budget.
CONCLUSION We need to be more flexible with our budget and anticipate rising costs.		ACTION PLAN Propose budgets for different social media campaign cost estimates each quarter.	

After Action Review Template #2



USDA Forest Service
AFTER ACTION REVIEW WORKSHEET

AAR Guide (Approx. time %)	AAR Notes
1. What did you intend? (20%) ▼ What were your objectives? Why did you take this action? What were you trying to achieve? ▼ What were the key assignments?	
2. What happened? (<10%) ▼ Get multiple perspectives: There is no <u>single best</u> story about what happened. ▼ Focus on "facts" (e.g., costs, number of people involved, figures, etc) <u>and</u> "opinions" (e.g., what worked and why, what happened). ▼ No blaming!: Focus on <u>events</u> and what <u>events</u> preceded or followed, <u>not</u> why someone did something or what you thought about it. ▼ Allow very specific comments as well as abstract and conceptual ones	
3. What can we learn about it? (25%) ▼ What are some plausible explanations for why, when, and where events happened? ▼ A key question is, "what did we do well that we need to discuss or else it will be forgotten?" ▼ Don't look for blame; look for lessons, including lessons about 'mistakes'. ▼ Be honest about what questions you still have about what happened and why.	

4. What should we do next time? (40%)

▼ What worked that may not work again? What worked that you want to repeat? What do you want to do differently?

▼ Spend ~50% of the discussion here to keep from falling into bad habits and failing to start good new ones.

5. What should we do now? (<10%)

▼ How will you share these lessons?

▼ Don't just wait until next time if you can make a difference now.

▼ Be clear about assignments and responsibilities: who will do what by when?

After Action Review Template #3



Brief Project/Activity Description:		AAR Date:	
		dd-mmm-yyyy	
Names of Participants (Project Team & Questionnaire Recipients):		Site/Function Name:	
Main Positives – 'What went well'			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">			
Main Negatives – 'What could we have done better'			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">			
What are the 'Key Lessons Learnt' & 'Critical Success Factors' to share with others?	Who are the key people/groups to share these learnings with?	How are these learnings going to be shared?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">			
Key Actions Planned to Make Improvements & Sustain Success			
Key Activity	Planned Actions	Timing	Who



How Pewaukee Used the AAR Process

- We began learning about the process as part of our National Incident Management certification process and then level-ed up our use of the process.
 - Level 1: AAR Following **Crisis**
 - Level 2: AAR Following **Significant Public Events** and **Projects**
 - Level 3: AAR Annually on **Routine Processes**

Pewaukee's Strategic Plan AAR: Step One: Looking Back



Looking Back		
1	Thinking of 2024, what assumptions did we make?	
2	What did we set out to achieve in this year?	
3	What key actions did we take this year?	
4	What challenges did we face this year?	

Step Two: Reflecting & Analyzing



Reflecting and Analyzing

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 5 | Looking back on our list of key actions above, what worked well this year? How do we know? | |
| 6 | What didn't work well this year? How do we know? | |
| 7 | Knowing what we know now, what might we have done differently this year? | |
| 8 | How have we grown and changed this year? What have we learned? | |
| 9 | What advice would you have given yourself based on what you learned this year? | |

Step Three: Looking Ahead



Looking Ahead

10 What new challenges and opportunities may we face in 2025?

11 Look back on our list of actions taken from Step One. What did we do well in 2024 that we think will serve us well as we begin 2025?

12 What new things might we need to do in 2025?

13 Are there things that we're doing that we can stop doing in 2025?

14 Bottom line: What do we need to do in 2025 to be even more successful?

Let's Talk



Please share an idea:

What is an AAR question
you think is particularly
valuable?

How might you get started
using After Action
Reviews?

LET'S GET
STARTED



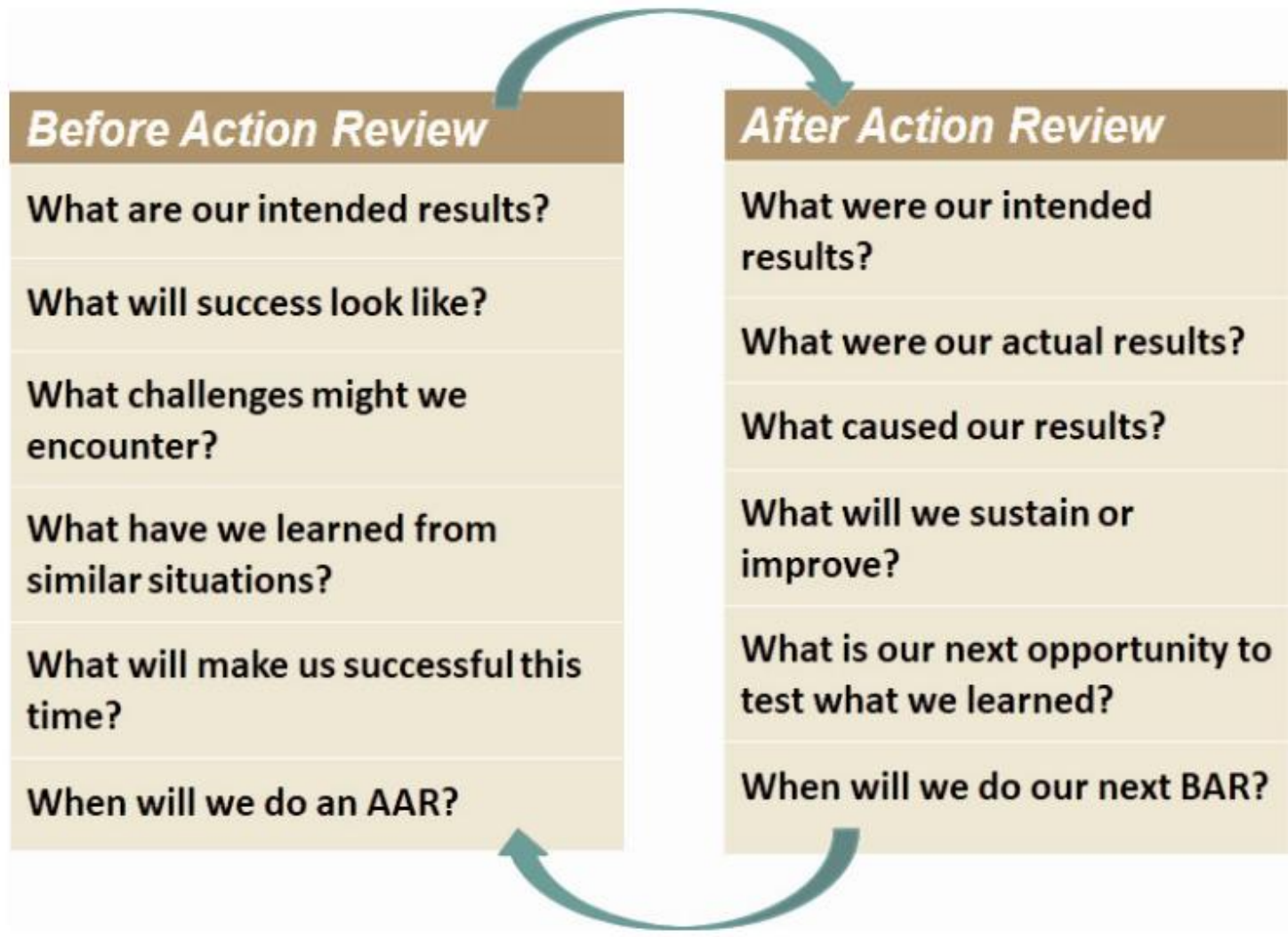
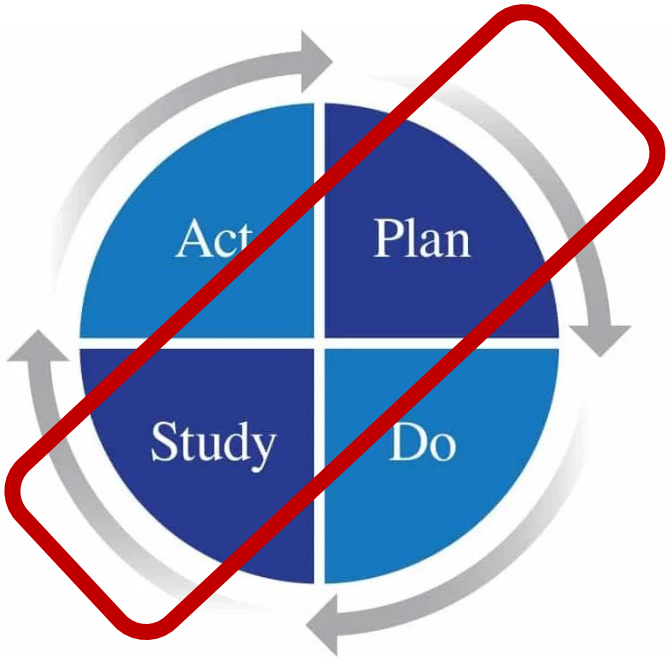
Tips



1. Schedule AARs immediately after an event; Calendarizing in advance is key!
2. Participation of people who are a part of the event/process is not optional as all perspectives are needed
3. Consider using a facilitator so all people can participate; identify a notetaker
4. Set the tone – it's all about learning and improvement, not fault finding
5. Set up norms so people feel comfortable being honest in offering real feedback
6. Ask all to come to the meeting prepared with a plus-delta and concrete data
7. Think of the performance of team members, the leader, and the team as a whole
8. Make sure the “actionable” learning becomes actionable!
9. Plan to share the celebrations and information across the organization.



AAR Strategy: Link PLAN and STUDY Questions



A Fun AAR Variation



A **Retrospect** is a variation on the after action review and follows the same format, but involves asking the following more detailed questions:

- What did you set out to achieve?
- What was your plan to achieve this?
- How did this change as you progressed?
- What went well and why?
- What could have gone better?
- What advice would you give yourself if you were to go back to where you were at the start of the project?
- What were the two or three key lessons you would share with others?
- What next for you in terms of this project?
- Can you think of a story that summarizes your experience of work on this project?
- What should we have learned from this project a year from now?
- Are there any lessons for you personally?



The Sad Truth



Make After Action Reviews an integral part of your organization's DNA.

Get them on the calendar and make them a routine!

***Reflect:* What would you need to do in your organization to make AARs a “living” process?**

Our Learning Targets for Today

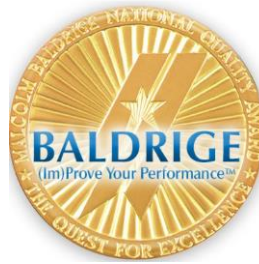


1. Deepen understanding of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process
2. Learn to use an After Action Review (AAR) process that strengthens the Study phase of PDSA by structuring time to pause and reflect:
 - What it is
 - History
 - Format
 - Tips, Templates and Implementation Strategies



3. Apply an After Action Review process to a project of your choice

Let's Synthesize

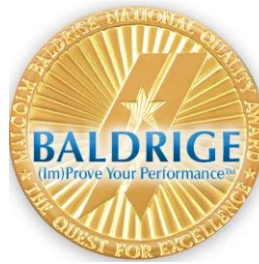


Let's connect some dots from today:

1. What is your key learning from today?
2. What do you need to do to make something from this webinar actionable?



Questions



Dr. JoAnn Sternke



Phone or Text: 262.424.0014

Email: jasternke@gmail.com

Reach Out If I Can Help You on Your Journey



Thank You

for your engagement today!

For more information:

Dr. JoAnn Sternke



Phone or Text: 262.424.0014

Email: jasternke@gmail.com