



After Action Reviews

Turning Lessons Into Lessons Learned

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Learning Objectives:

- What are After Action Reviews (AARs)
- Why we need AARs
- Develop a Culture of Continuous Improvement
- Types of AARs
- AAR Process
- Group Work



After Action Review Definition

“A professional discussion of an event that enables the participants in that event to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, how to sustain strengths and how to improve on weaknesses. It is a tool leaders and units can use to get maximum benefit from every mission or task.”

-- Department of the Army definition

Why AAR?

- AARs help make learning conscious within a team
- AARs help to improve future performance
- AARs help build trust amongst team members

Insanity

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results

~ Benjamin Franklin ~

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CQI Culture



CQI Culture

Program Operations

Plan Maintenance
Training
Asset Management
Finance / Budget
Contracting

Performance Evaluation

Vulnerability / Mitigation



Response Operations

Threat Assessment
Incident Notification
ICS Response
Public Information

After-Action Reviews

Overarching AAR Policy

- Clearly lays out the purpose and scope
- States when AARs are to be done
- Identifies who is involved in the process and how
- Show personnel that Senior Management is in support of the process

Buy-In and Support

From Who?

Senior Management

- Identifies risks, vulnerabilities

Organization Wide

- Allows them to be part of the process

Types of AARs

Formal Reviews	Informal Reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are facilitated by an objective outsider• Take more time• Use more complex review techniques and tools• Are scheduled beforehand• Are conducted in meetings or other “formal” settings• Require a more standard and thorough report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are conducted by those closest to the activity• Take less time• Use simple review techniques and tools• Are conducted when needed• Are held at the event’s site• Can be covered by a less comprehensive report

4 Step AAR Process

1. Gather Intelligence
2. Analyze and Report
3. Review and Approvals
4. Implement and Track

Step 1 – Gather Intelligence

Surveys/Feedback Forms

One on One Interviews

Hotwashes

Hotwash

- A structured conversation with staff for the purpose of learning
- Facilitated by a neutral person
- Have a dedicated minute taker





Who to include? How to format?

Everybody?

Senior Management?

“Clients”?

YES

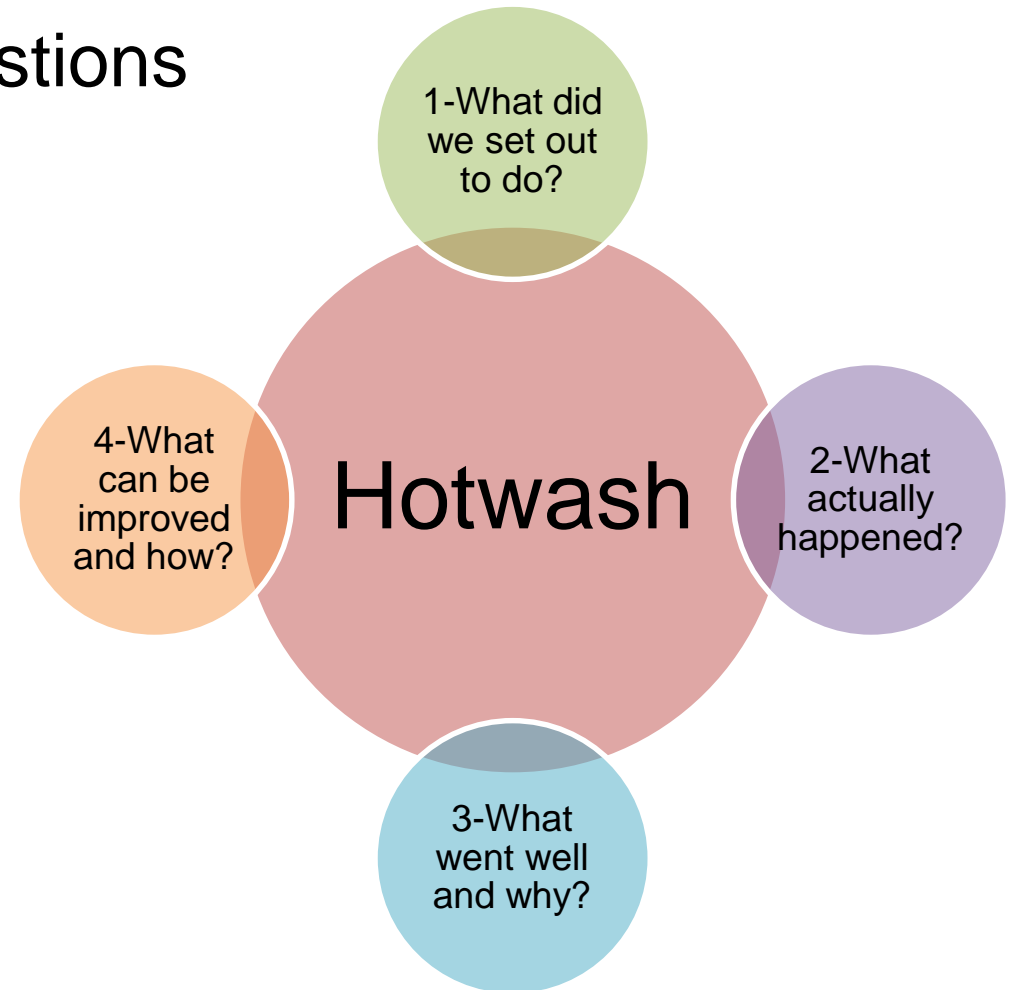
All together?

Individual Units/Functions?

YES

Hotwash

- It focuses on 4 Questions
 - Expect?
 - Actual?
 - Why?
 - Learn?



Role of the Facilitator



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Hotwash Format

2 SECTIONS

1st Section – Positives

What went well?

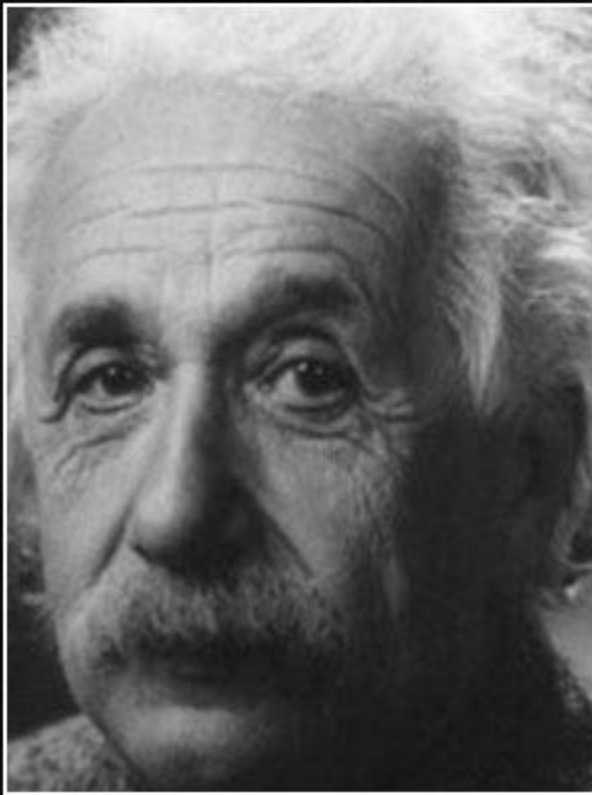
Likes? Successes?

2nd Section – Areas for improvement

What can we improve on?

Dislikes? Challenges?

Not Mistakes – Areas for Improvement



The only mistake in life is the lesson
not learned.

— *Albert Einstein* —

AZ QUOTES

Whine and Cheese





Step 2 – Analyze and Report





Step 2 – Analyze and Report

After Action Review Report Outline

Executive Summary – background, goals, observations

Introduction

Overview – Name/Type of Operation, Location, Duration, Participants

Evaluation – Strengths, Weaknesses

Conclusions

Approval

Appendix 1 - Improvement Plan Matrix

Other Appendices – MSEL (if exercise); evaluation comments/minutes; actual costs; other related docs

Step 2 – Analyze and Report

IMPROVEMENT PLAN MATRIX

AAR Appendix A: Improvement Plan Matrix

The following recommendations have been put forward due to direct observations from the hotwash discussions. The suggested actions in this report should be viewed as recommendations only. In some cases, agencies may determine that the benefits of implementation are insufficient to outweigh the costs or may identify alternative solutions that are more effective or efficient. Each recommendation will be entered into the Information Management System and tracked by our Quality Office.

TOPIC - GOVERNANCE				
ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY/INDIVIDUAL	SENIOR MANAGEMENT APPROVAL	SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMENTS
Release of Communication. There can at times be quite the delay before Management responds.	<p>1 – Incident Commander should have the authority to release internal and external communications if/when Senior Management do not respond in a designated timeframe. The delegation of the Responsible Building Authority should include that aspect.</p> <p>2 – Create pre-approved canned messages to be used in times of emergency. These should be saved on all Information Officer's, Incident Commander's blackberries that can quickly be tweaked and released.</p>	<p>1a – Executive Director to approve.</p> <p>1b – RBA to update Incident Response Manual (IRM).</p> <p>2a – Corp Comms – to create canned msgs. RBA & ED to approve.</p>	<p>1a – Yes or No Initials _____</p> <p>1b – Yes or No Initials _____</p> <p>2a – Yes or No Initials _____</p>	
TOPIC - COMMAND & CONTROL				
TOPIC – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES				
TOPIC - COMMUNICATION				
TOPIC – NOTIFICATIONS				

Step 3 – Review & Approvals



Review

- ❑ Allow Key/Involved Leaders to review content to be submitted

Approval

- ❑ 1st Level – Key/Involved Leaders
- ❑ 2nd Level – Executive Management

Step 4 – Implement and Track

Authority
Distribution
Assignment
Track
Follow Up



Step 4 – Implement and Track

A lesson is “learned” when.....

It results in a:

Change of Behaviour

Change of Policy

Change of Process

Change of Culture



AAR Tips - DO

- CREATE A CULTURE
 - Organizational Support/Buy-In (AAR Policy)
 - Make reviews routine
- Identify experienced, objective and SKILLED facilitator
- Schedule Hotwashes shortly after the event
- Collect objective supporting data
- Establish clear groundrules
- Proceed systematically (4 questions)
- Invite and involve all participants
- Probe for underlying cause/effect relationships
- Identify activities to be sustained (strengths) as well as errors to be avoided (weaknesses)

AAR Tips – DON'T

- Conduct AARs/Hotwashes without planning
- Conduct reviews infrequently, irregularly
- Allow debates to bog down fact establishment
- Allow dominating leaders, mgrs. to facilitate hotwashes
- Base individual performance evaluations or promotions on mistakes admitted in hotwashes
- Permit unstructured, meandering, disorganized discussions
- Use the B or F words (Blame, Fault)
- Conclude without a list of observations to be applied to future events (lessons learned)

Conclusion

- Management of a significant event/exercise is not complete until an AAR is conducted
- AARs should be regular, routine and “automatic”
- Seize the opportunity to learn and apply the results in your ongoing program activities