

Session 6: Action

GOAL: During this session, your goal is to work on how you agree on and hold yourselves accountable for ACTIONS.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Pick a leader.

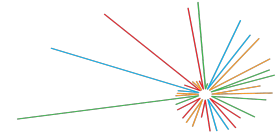
- Pick a team member to lead the session. You can select the same person who led an earlier session or rotate to give different people a chance.
- The leader should prepare the agenda. A standard agenda is with the course materials on the Culture in Action website. You can use the standard as is or adapt it to your needs.
- The leader should read the “Leader Tips,” which are available on the Culture in Action website.

2. Get ready.

- The leader should schedule a 90-minute session, distribute this pdf (or a link to the website’s “Course Materials” page) to all participants, and let participants know whether they should submit their session prep before the meeting.
- All participants should spend 30 minutes or so prepping for the session.
 - First, they should do the pre-reading (below), which discusses ACTIONS.
 - Second, they should do the “Session Prep” (below), focusing on ACTION, STORY, and TENSIONS.
 - Review the ACTION(S) you agreed on at the last session. Are people doing what they committed to do? If not, how might you address that?
 - Think about a STORY that illustrates the best of how you come together as a team to get things done.
 - Think about one TENSION you’d like the team to discuss at the upcoming session.

3. Go.

- Hold the session. Go through each of the practices in order. As always, if you get stuck, the leader can refer to the Leader Tips for help.
- If you’d like, set aside a few minutes to discuss the role of ACTION.
- Briefly review ACTIONS from the last meeting. Use this session’s focus on ACTIONS to address how well you are (or aren’t) following thru on ACTIONS and what you may choose to change as a result.
- Name TENSIONS, select the one you’d like to focus on, and agree on any other actions you want to take on other TENSIONS.
- Continue to pay attention to making sure every person has a chance to be heard.



Session 6: Pre-Reading

Most people operate with high levels of integrity. We do what we say we are going to do.

Most people are also very smart about limiting their promises to act. If we promise action, we are on the hook to do it. If we don't promise action, we are off the hook.

As a result, sometimes we hesitate to commit. Our language can get sloppy and the culture of action and accountability can slip.

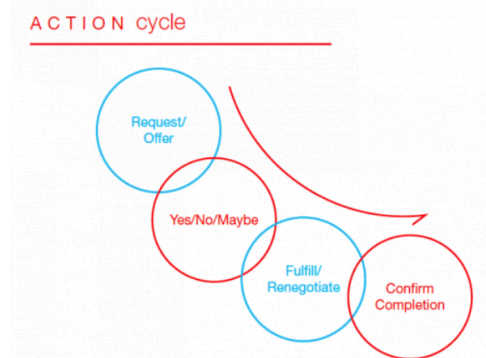
A similar dynamic can occur in the opposite direction. Sometimes, we don't feel comfortable asking another person to do something, or we fear that if we are explicit they will tell us no. As a result, we may hesitate to ask, or ask in indirect ways.

If my partner says to me, "The garbage is full," I have a choice. I can clarify whether they are making a request (of course they are) and thereby commit myself to action. Or I can act like this was just a general comment and fool myself into rationalizing that they never asked me, and I never promised, to take the garbage out. How often do commitments (or non-commitments) at work look as messy as this example with my partner?

Vague agreements and uncertain commitments ensure inaction and often lead to disappointment, betrayal, and a loss of trust. That's why we end every CONVERSATION with specific agreements on ACTIONS.

Here is a simple tool for building a culture of ACTION and accountability.

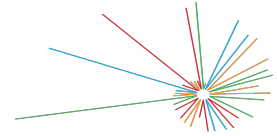
- **Step One: Request or Offer.** Everybody is responsible for the clarity of the request or offer. If you want something from me and you haven't been very clear in your request, either of us can clarify the request.
- **Step Two: Yes, No, or Terms.** "Yes" is always a possible answer. But it's also OK to say "no". It may be uncomfortable, and politeness can get in the way. But if the answer is "no", it's important to say so. And if the answer is "maybe," "yes, if" or something in between "yes" and "no", it's important to clarify the terms. For example: How much? By when? With what assistance? How well? With what tradeoffs?
- **Step Three: Fulfill or, if Necessary, Recalibrate.** To maintain trust, it's important to delivery on your commitments. Sometimes, however, unforeseen circumstances can get in the way. If that happens, or if for any other reason you realize that you really, truly, cannot do what you promised, move back to step two. Tell people what you can do, and what you can't. Talk to them about what's possible. Make a new agreement with them. While you may lose some trust by failing to keep your original commitment, at least you'll avoid your counterpart making false assumptions by failing to communicate and recalibrate.
- **Step Four: Confirm Completion.** Come back together to confirm that all parties see the ACTION as complete, to review the quality, and to acknowledge the effort and the result.



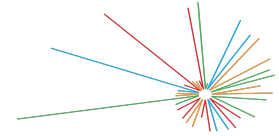
INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

- Inventory your current commitments at work and at home.

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- Renegotiate unfulfilled commitments you have made.
- Inventory your muddy agreements and convert them to a clear commitment.
- Inventory commitments recently fulfilled by others and close the cycle with a conversation of completion.
- Inventory commitments recently fulfilled by you and close the cycle with a conversation of completion.



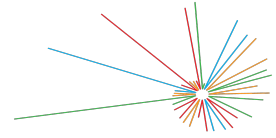
Session 6: Session Prep

Before every session, each participant should read the background materials for the session and think: about the last session, about what’s happening and what it means to them, and about the session to come.

The following chart will help you prepare. You can use this written form if it’s helpful.

If you like, your group can collect submissions in advance and share them. Doing so can help make **STORIES** more visible and streamline the identification of **TENSIONS**.

<p>PRESENCE: What are your current practices and how do you feel you’re doing with them?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SKIP FOR SESSION</p>	<p>The goal of this pre-work is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Think about PRESENCE, ACTION, STORIES and TENSIONS before the session. ➤ Collect TENSIONS in advance in order to make the session as efficient as possible. ➤ Make the STORIES, TENSIONS and ACTIONS public and a normal part of work. <p>Even though you won’t have time to address all TENSIONS during the session, it’s still valuable to spend some time naming them.</p> <p>At a minimum, it helps the group see things more clearly.</p> <p>Sometimes, simply naming TENSIONS is enough to make slight shifts to the system over time.</p> <p>If you want, you can agree to get together to talk about them in another setting.</p>
<p>ACTION: What actions did you agreed to at your last session? What progress have you made?</p>	
<p>STORY: Jot down a positive culture story – a real, recent example of something that you believe demonstrates the best of your culture in action.</p>	
<p>TENSION(S): What TENSION(s) do you want to FOCUS on/raise with the group? Remember to phrase them as questions: “How might I/we?”</p>	



Session 6: Additional Resources

For more on ACTION, see the Additional Resources page on the Culture in Action website.