

# BEFORE ACTION REVIEW

## WHAT IS A BEFORE ACTION REVIEW (BAR)?

A Before Action Review is a method for a team starting a project, activity, or event to assess what knowledge they already have. A BAR helps a team state their intentions just before commencing the project and helps identify potential challenges and risks by drawing on lessons learned from past experiences. The BAR simply means that you deliberately go to your existing knowledge base (Intranet, colleagues or previous AAR reports) and look for lessons learned that might be useful to you.

## WHY USE IT?

Conducting BARs makes sure that your organizational knowledge is being genuinely recycled, that you build on what has been learned in the past rather than cover the same ground again.

## HOW TO USE IT

### 1. *Gather the Team*

A BAR may be conducted with your entire project team or with just the core team members. The key is involve the people who are the best equipped to identify the knowledge assets your project will require. Since knowledge is distributed throughout your organization, different team members will know whether certain knowledge exists or where to locate them.

### 2. *Conduct the BAR (approx.2 hours)*

The group answers the following questions:

- What is our intended result?
- What are our success measures?
- What challenges will we face? (Predictions)
- What did we learn from last time? (Lessons/plans from last AAR, if applicable)
- What do we need to know that we don't?
- What do we think will make us successful this time? (Hypotheses and Experiments)

### 3. *Survey Existing Knowledge*

Go through all components of existing knowledge that will be helpful to your project – documents, methodologies, skills, experience and the knowledge that you will only be able to access through networks and relationships – and ask if each of them exists and if so, how they can be acquired to support the project when it is needed.

### 4. *Make the Knowledge Available*

If the knowledge that is useful for your project already exists in your organization, assign members to go and acquire it or make sure it will be available when it's required.

**Note:** Time commitment is approximately 2 hours for the actual meeting, but some prep work may be required to bring in results of the scanning of existing knowledge.

## WHEN TO USE IT?

Use BAR before a project or event begins, and when you know or believe the relevant knowledge useful to your project already exists somewhere in your organization.

If your project or technical area is completely new to your organization and you have very few precedents to work on, you may not have much relevant knowledge available. It's still useful to conduct a BAR, but it's likely to be very simple and provisional and you will rely more on regular learning and review activities as you proceed through the project.

## RELATED METHODS / TOOLS

- After Action Review

## EXAMPLES

- MSH Business Development Team; BARs conducted at the onset and kick off for each new proposal development team formation to review RFP requirements against prior MSH technical and regional experience and lessons learned in these areas.
- Learning in the Thick of it, Harvard Business Review, <http://hbr.org/2005/07/learning-in-the-thick-of-it/ar/>

## RESOURCES

### EXTERNAL

- Patrick Lambe, Straights Knowledge, Green Chameleon, How To Guides, <http://www.greenchameleon.com/gc/guides/>
- Quality Improvement Hub, Before Action Review, <http://www.qihub.scot.nhs.uk/knowledge-centre/quality-improvement-tools/before-action-review.aspx>