

LEARNING HANDBOOK

Guidance and tools to support systematic learning before, during and after project activity in health and care

Blame vs Gain

'Blame vs. Gain' is a useful tool that can help managers and leaders understand what promotes, and stands as a barrier to, sharing learning within their teams and / or organisations.

Tool	Time	Resources	Physicality	Interactivity
Blame vs Gain	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

When?

'Blame vs. Gain' can be used at any time. It may be particularly relevant when a manager or leader recognises that learning is not happening within their team or organisation. It can also be useful as a response to a staff culture survey or audit for example, which finds that the staff are feeling defensive.

Who?

All members of a team should be involved and have an equal opportunity to participate.

How?

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the task, it is often best for an independent facilitator (someone not part of the team) to run the activity. This will also allow managers / leaders to take part equally in the task and encourage a culture of equality and openness. It may also be useful for the facilitator to ask team members to anonymise their contributions during the task.

Using a projector, present the 'Blame vs. Gain' behaviours (table below) to the group.

The facilitator reads out the first set of 'Blame vs. Gain' behaviours and then ask participants to volunteer any examples of when they have experienced either of the behaviours in their workplace. The facilitator should ensure that everyone participating is clear as to what the behaviour looks or sounds like to ensure they can contribute fairly.

The facilitator should then ask those who volunteered to give examples, and outline why they believe these events occurred. The facilitator notes the inputs on a flipchart.

This should then be repeated for each of the 'Blame vs. Gain' behaviours.

Once all behaviours have been discussed through this process, the activity is repeated however this time the facilitator asks those taking part to focus on whether they believe they personally have demonstrated these behaviours within the workplace.

The activity will close with the facilitator asking the group to reflect collectively, to consider whether blame behaviours are always unjustified, or if gain behaviours are always appropriate.

The role of the facilitator is to try and reach a shared understanding of the appropriate balance between 'blame' and 'gain' behaviours.

Blame vs Gain behaviours:

Blame behaviours	Gain behaviours
Judging "You were wrong"	Exploring "What happened?"
Showing emotion "I'm furious with you"	Remaining calm "Try not to worry about it"
Reacting to what you think has happened "You should have ..."	Finding out exactly what happened "Let's take this one step at a time"
Blaming people for getting it wrong "You should never have let this happen"	Focusing on the process that allowed the mistake "What could have been done differently?"
Finding fault "You only have yourself to blame"	Providing support "This must be difficult for you but don't forget this has happened to us all"
Focusing on efforts "This is going to cause enormous problems for me"	Focusing on causes "What I want to focus on is all the things that enabled this to happen"
Assuming the person should feel guilty "You really only have yourself to blame"	Assuming the person wants to learn "What are the main lessons for us?"
Seeing mistakes as something that must be avoided "This must never happen again"	Seeing mistakes as part of a learning process "We can learn a lot from this"

Things you need:

- Projector / laptop / computer / other presenting materials
- Flipchart and pens to record input
- A safe, confidential space

Further reading:

- Overseas Development Institute – [Blame Vs Gain](#)