Retrospect review

A ‘retrospect review’ (RR) is conducted at the end of a phase / project to capture what has been learned and provide it as an input to inform future related activities and projects.

Tool	Time	Resources	Physicality	Interactivity
Retrospect review	★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★★★★★

When?

An RR should be held as soon as possible after the end of a phase or project while lessons learned are fresh in the minds of all team members.

Who?

All members of a project team should be involved. If possible, it can also be beneficial to include relevant stakeholders to present additional or differing insights into the learning.

A facilitator is also required to introduce the task and assist participants.

How?

The overall time required for the session is around three to four hours.

The RR should be facilitated in an open and honest way and give everyone an equal opportunity to contribute.

As a first action it can be useful to revisit the original objectives and aims of the project. If you completed ‘learning before’ or ‘learning after’ activities such as the ‘before action review’, or an ‘after action review’ it is suggested you revisit this. It might also be useful to revisit project plans to help the team identify areas that were successful or unsuccessful. If a ‘lessons learned log’ has been maintained through a project, this can also serve as an input.

It is recommnded to begin the RR on a positive note to engage everyone and encourage ideas to flow. The first set of questions to be asked of the team should therefore focus on ‘what went well within the project.’

Once you have identified the areas that went well you need to understand why they went well and what factors contributed to their success. At this stage the team are asked to suggest themes and write down the reasons why these areas went well on sticky notes to collate on a board or flipchart.

To build on this further, the team are then asked what are the necessary conditions to ensure ‘successes’ can be repeated and built on further. This insight is also captured and shared using sticky notes and a board or flipchart.

Once a full account of the successful factors is reached, this process is repeated to focus now on elements of the project that were unsuccessful and should be avoided / prevented in the future. The team are encouraged in open discussion to identify barriers that stood in the way of success, identify solutions and how things should be done differently next time.

All contributions should be recorded. Learning from a RR is most commonly turned into a 'lessons report' which can be shared. Together with other work documents, they can also form the basis for a shareable 'knowledge asset' for the benefit of the team and organisation

Things you need:

- Facilitator
- Flipchart
- Sticky notes
- Pens

Further reading:

- Heath and Social Care Information Centre - Retrospect postcard
- NHS eLearning - Retrospect