

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING AARS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Schedule as soon after the incident as possible.- Keep it short and focused.- Focus on WHAT not WHO.- Establish clear ground rules: encourage candor and openness, this is dialog – not lecture or debate, focus on items that can be fixed, keep all discussions confidential.- The leader’s role is to ensure there is skilled facilitation of the AAR.	
1. What did we set out to do? Establish the facts. Purpose of the mission and definition of success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Key tasks involved.- Conditions under which each task may need to be performed (weather, topography, time restrictions, etc.).- Define acceptable standards for success (explain what “Right” looks like).	
2. What actually happened? Continue to establish the facts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participants should come to agreement on what actually happened.- Pool multiple perspectives to build a shared picture of what happened.	
3. Why did it happen? Analysis of cause and effect: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Focus on WHAT not WHO.- Provide progressive refinement for drawing out explanations of what occurred. This will lead into developing possible solutions.	
4. What are we going to do better next time? Solutions will arise naturally once problems are identified and understood. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Focus on items you can fix, rather than external forces outside of your control.- Identify areas where groups are performing well and should sustain. This will help repeat success and create a balanced approach to the AAR. <u>Sustain/Maintain Strengths:</u> <u>Improve Weaknesses:</u>	
5. Are there lessons learned that should be shared immediately? Identify the process for sharing lessons learned.	
There are several formats that you might use. Two possibilities are suggested below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Issue, Discussion, Recommendation- Concept of the Operation, Results, Trends, Recommendation- What was the most notable success at the incident <u>that others may learn from</u>? Please explain.- What were some of the most difficult challenges faced and how were they overcome? Please explain.	
6. What Followup is Needed? Be specific about actions, timelines, and responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What changes, additions or deletions are recommended to SOPs, plans, or training?- What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review?	

AAR FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

Setting Up AAR Discussion:

"This is not a critique, not meant to assign blame. It's an open, honest and professional discussion."

Restating a Point:

This is used to summarize a point that a participant made that may have not been clear to everyone. "So you're saying you think the check-in function should have been established earlier and that would have prevented....."

Handling the Upward Delegation of Blame:

Participants will often blame the "system" for being broken, and that causes failures at their level. "OK, I agree, but that's out of our hands. We still have to live with the fact that this issue places us at increased risk. So what can we work on at our level to improve?"

Bringing Out the Opinion of the "Quiet Ones":

Some people just don't process through discussion, but they usually are listening closely and when asked have good insights. Wait until a little later in the AAR and then ask them by name open-ended questions. "Well Ken, you were assigned to that function, what was your perspective on this?"

Interrupting a Dominant Member of the Group:

Some people just naturally like to talk. There is also a tendency for a leader to give all the answers. Interrupt them tactfully with a comment like: "I'm concerned we're going too deep into this issue without getting any additional input. Let's hear from...."

When the Group is in Denial:

One or more people think it went fine and are not discussing the issues. For example, let's use "communications." In order:

1. Act somewhat surprised. "Really? Interesting. Are there any other thoughts on how communications went today?"
2. Spur discussion with one of your own observations: "OK, I saw a couple messages that didn't get passed to the folks on the perimeter/in the EOC/at the Command Post. What was the plan there?"
3. Press a bit firmer: "OK, what I'm hearing is that you would do this exactly the same way again?"
4. Finally, do one of two things. If the issue is minor, let it pass. If the issue is important, then you may have to make the point blank observation yourself: "OK. You're saying communications went fine. I saw two specific instances where we had people penetrate the outer perimeter and that information did not get to either Mike or Susan. You're telling me that is not a problem? What would have happened if we didn't stop them before they got to the hot zone?"

Pursuing an Issue to its Root Cause:

The Japanese say always ask "why" five times. It's a good technique to make sure that you're really getting to the root cause of an issue. "So...the buses weren't ready because they didn't get fueled. And we've heard they couldn't get fuel because they didn't have the fueling station cards. How did that happen?"

Using "Negative Polling" to Ask Questions:

This is an effective way to get quick agreement/consensus. It is faster than making sure everyone agrees. "Is anyone opposed to moving on to question #3 now?" or "Does anyone disagree that that was the plan, yet this is what really happened?"

Building Up or Eliminating Ideas:

This technique merges complimentary pieces from different ideas or highlights agreement on pieces of an idea when total idea is not agreed upon. "So is there anything you could add to that suggestion to make it work for you?" or "What could we delete from the idea to make it work better?"

Avoiding Win/Lose Decisions:

Look for a win-win situation with the group. "Does it have to be one way or the other? Could we agree to both?"

Asking Open-Ended Questions:

This allows for a variety of possible responses while inviting involvement and participation. “Why do you think that happened?” or “What could we do differently next time?”

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