

ARLTM News

Issue 4

The Action Reflection LearningTM Newsletter

July 1998

LIM International Conference Cartagena - March 31-April 4, 1998

After our international conference at Cartagena, we asked representatives of different countries who attended the meeting to share their major learnings with the readers of ARL News.

The replies were great. However, when we read the contributions, we were embarrassed at the prospect of publishing all these grateful and happy comments. We feared they were too laudatory; that they didn't sound real!

Our dilemma was that we didn't want to censor the writing nor discount the comments because people had given this gift of their time and thoughts. On the other hand, we didn't want to appear smug. We decided to share the following thoughts with you.

? When you offer people what they need, they are truly satisfied. The secret is not to do what you think is best, but to scout carefully what the others need and want. Beyond this conference, this is something very applicable to designing a learning experience, to coaching and probably for many other situations

? When you prepare a good learning scenario, the participants will be able to build on their own learning experiences.

? Conference attendees enjoy and appreciate creative conference designs.

Learnings are very personal, and we cannot really plan what our guests will experience. This reminds me of the "Just-in-Time" learning principle in our programs. Many times we plan according to our own needs, and desires, only to find we need to change it on the spot, because the team is creating a different scenario, which we have to honor as it indicates where they need support.

We as organizers, probably learned more from organizing and running of this conference than the participants did from attending! They seem to have learned out of enjoyment, while we learned from our mistakes.

There are many debates about whether or not learning has to be painful. Well, this experience seems to demonstrate that although a mistake is a powerful source of learning, joy and fun also offer many lessons. The only requirement is that there be enough reflection.

And here I come back to the beginning. Reflection seems to me to be the key to any learning. Whether it is based on mistakes or on success, whether expected or unexpected: We were counting on different contributions for this edition, however enough reflection time helped me to find also some new lessons out of this "surprise". That makes me think how many learning opportunities we pass everyday, without noticing them. If we would be aware of all them, would we be wiser? To me, wisdom comes with age. Perhaps a worthy challenge for all of us is to get wiser younger.

Isabel Rimanóczy, co-editor

Responses from Participants

Eduardo Castillo Ramirez, Peru

My most meaningful experience in Cartagena? It was the feeling of meeting others, of sharing and experiencing synchronicity. I confirmed once again that as a result of our personal search, we meet others along the way and we appreciate each other and therefore we get to know ourselves a bit better.

My journey over the last 15 years has been a time of encounters, and they have become more and more frequent and meaningful. It has also been a time of intense learning, of uncovering new aspects of my life, of seeing beyond what is "objective" and to feel by being "invaded", listening to what is not heard, and enjoying what I do.

The Conference was a space and a wonderful opportunity to share and experience all this in such an intense way. ARL was a gift, showing new ways of living it and a great learning to enrich not only my work as a consultant but also my family life and my teaching at the university. Thanks. It was beautiful.



Marcial Solis, Honduras

I learned in Cartagena that:

- ? teams always know more than their members individually;
- ? decisions made by consensus ensure greater success in implementation because of the involvement and positive attitude of those who participated in the decision;
- ? there are ways in which large groups can make efficient, effective decisions that are both mature and organized, and in a short period of time;
- ? managing teams will be key to business success in the coming century and that modern executives will not survive as well if they act in isolation rather than as members of a team;
- ? ARL is an excellent management approach to improve the performance of an organization, of groups, of teams, and of individuals.

I am very grateful to LIM for having given me this opportunity to attend, which hopefully, will be very useful not only for me, but also for many people and organizations that struggle to find a better way in this wide global world.

Jerónimo Castro, Colombia

Action, Reflection, Learning....three words that standing alone represent very powerful ideas, and when put together are able to strengthen the work of an individual, of a team and or an organization, becoming the main tool for achievement. Personally I was familiar with these three concepts taken separately, as I believe we all are familiar with them knowing the organizations of these days. However, it was for me an opportunity to discover a methodology, simple but powerful, which brings together the action, the reflection and the learning on the individual, team and organizational level. This experience took place for me in the scenario of the LIM Conference of Cartagena, where the presentations of experts were combined with an "outdoor" experience, also something new for me.

For those interested in brief readings on ARL, check our web page of July.

Pablo Pecora, Argentina

I have learned to pay attention to the planning process and to remain open so as to receive new information. I learned a lot about myself and about the strategic value of reflection, when it happens after taking an action, so that we can understand what happened and why. We all shared a learning experience in a wonderful place, both having fun and being respectful of each other.

Peter Smith, Canada

The meaningful experiences in Cartagena were too many to select just a few, but they all contributed to an extraordinary success. Although I was a consultant and in charge of a presentation, the questions I was struggling with were similar to those of the brochure and those of all the participants.

How can I learn to deal with complexity and contradictions of competing in a global market? How can I learn to work efficiently in multicultural teams? How can I develop my global business strategy respecting cultural and regional differences?

On the first activity I teamed team with four Colombian HR professionals, and while we were struggling to communicate in Spanish and English, the answers to my questions seemed to be pretty simple: through action learning a person integrates easier with his/her international colleagues. I am grateful to my four colleagues who persuaded me that ARL is productive regardless of the culture, language, place or strategy.

Thanks to LIM for achieving such a complete experience. I hope my session was a worthwhile one.

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