

C. A. R. L.

Context: Briefly describe the context of your experience

Action: Explain what actions you took

Results: Explain what happened as a result of your actions

Learning: Identify what you have learned

Workshop Toolkit

CARL is a framework of reflection that takes you through Context, Action, Results, and Learning.

The CARL method is adapted from a job interview technique where you structure each of your answers according to the different aspects. This model can easily be used in general to guide you through your reflective process on experiences.

While there can be benefits from solely describing it, as it can make you aware of the consequences of your actions, describing is not the same as being critically reflective. To ensure that you remain reflective throughout, keep asking yourself the question why –

'why did I do what I did?' etc.

1. C - Context

Helpful questions:

- What was the background/circumstances of the situation?
- What was the situation?
- Where was it?
- Who was there?
- What am I hoping to accomplish?

Depending on whether you are presenting a reflection, for example as an interview answer, or using the model as a helpful framework for your own reflective process, you may wish to tailor how detailed you were. If doing it for yourself, it can be very helpful to understand a full comprehensive context.

Examples of Context

The examples below show how the reflective process can happen at an overarching process level and a specific experience level. Both will tackle the same scenario, but their conclusions can be different. When reflecting both levels can be helpful.

Developing public speaking as a skill over time - Public speaking individual experience

I am currently working on improving my public speaking as a part of my ongoing professional development. I could specifically take opportunities within my role as class representative, where I will have to stand in front of an entire course.

Public speaking individual experience

I was given the opportunity to give a presentation about my subject to students who might be interested in applying for the course. I had 20 minutes and could use the time as I wished. There were 30 students present in the college where I gave my talk.

2. A- Action

Here you can describe what your actions were in relation to the circumstances specified above. To analyse your actions, it is important not only to describe your actions, but think about **why you chose these actions and not something else.**

Helpful questions:

- What did I do?
- What else happened (other actions)?
- Why did I choose this action?
- What other actions could I have chosen? (not necessarily giving you the same result)

Examples of Action

Developing public speaking as a skill over time

As class representative I was given an opportunity to go and present our course to other students who might be interested in taking the course. I signed up despite being nervous, as I wanted to give myself the chance to practise. I prepared the presentation and the public speaking part went well; however, I feel that I might have structured my presentation poorly for the students to gain the most from it.

Public speaking individual experience

I chose to do a PowerPoint presentation with a lot of practical information on it. It wasn't a particularly nice PowerPoint, I generally don't like them with a lot of text, so I didn't pay enough attention to the preparation, as I needed to create something quickly. I could have spent more time making a nicer PowerPoint but I wanted to communicate the value of my course more than the practical aspects.

3. R - Results

Here you can discuss the results that came from your actions and what those results were.

Helpful questions to help you reflect on your work.

- Did I accomplish what I wanted?
- Did my actions accomplish what I wanted in the way I expected?
- What are the implications of my actions on myself and others, for similar situations in the future?
- Could different actions have given me the same result?
- Is there a way I could improve my results or actions?

Examples of Results

Developing public speaking as a skill over time

I gave myself a chance to practice my public speaking and I am feeling more comfortable standing in front of a group of people now, just because I have practised. As mentioned above, I could have structured the presentation differently. Having a well-structured presentation would have given me the same feeling of success in terms of public speaking and had a better impact on the students. However, from this experience I now know I can spend less time stressing about the public speaking element of it and spend more time on the actual presentation.

Public speaking individual experience

I could see that the students were desperately trying to write down everything I said and what was on the slides. However, I felt confident in my delivery of the content, I didn't feel a loss of breath or anything, which suggests I'm feeling more confident with public speaking itself. That said, I didn't feel like they were getting any value from the presentation. They didn't seem excited, and no one asked questions or anything. I think they would have gotten more from why they should study this course, rather than how to apply. I think equally if I had allowed time for their questions, they would have gotten more benefit from the presentation.

4. L - Learning

Here you have a chance for you to evaluate what you have gained from the three sections above.

Helpful questions:

- What did I learn from the experience?
- Would I do the same thing again or would I change something?
- What should I do next time I'm in a similar experience?
- Should I change anything about the way I do things?
- What and Why?

Examples of Learning

Developing public speaking as a skill over time

I have learned that I get better at public speaking when I give myself the opportunity to practise in front of people. I will continue to seek out further challenges to do this. I have also realised that I gain more confidence through standing in front of others, I can practise the most effective way of delivering the content. In the future I must give myself more time to prepare.

Public speaking individual experience

I have realised if I had spent more time thinking about what information the students needed and how to present it, it would have been a more impactful experience. The way I presented the presentation was an example of passive learning (people just sitting and receiving information) which has been shown to be less effective than active learning.

Therefore, I think using group participation and allowing them to guide the discussion by asking questions and following their interests would have been better. I will ensure I incorporate interactive activities in my future presentations.