



# The CARLA Concept Blueprint

How to Speak Up, Raise an Issue and  
Prove Your Point in 5 Simple Steps

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## **Chapter Two: The CARLA Concept In Five Simple Steps**

The CARLA Concept helps people improve their communication skills, build confidence and heighten credibility with friends, family, co-workers, customers, managers, donors and anyone else you wish to persuade to your point of view.

This book not only explains the CARLA Concept Model but will also describe opportunities to apply it at work or in your personal life. With a little practice, you will find multiple ways to get or give better information, engage in behavioral interviews, coach others to improve performance, debrief senior leaders, influence partners or prospects and improve self-determination skills. You will become a stronger communicator, increase self-confidence and better achieve your goals!

Each step in the CARLA Concept walks you through the process of how to get the information you need to communicate more clearly, make a better decision, learn from mistakes and analyze objectively. That way, next time, you can do things differently. The CARLA Concept includes the following five steps:

### **The CARLA Concept**

**C** - what's the *challenge* you faced?

**A** - what are the *actions* you took?

**R** - what are the *results* you achieved?

**L** - what are the *lessons* you learned?

**A** - now that you know what you know, what's *another approach*?

While the CARLA Concept itself is quite simple, there are multiple ways to apply it. It's a great way to analyze something that happened in the past. Take any challenge or change you faced and use each of the five steps to decide if you handled it appropriately. You can also use the model to evaluate the present or plan for a more successful future.

Let's go into more depth by analyzing each step of the CARLA model individually.

### **The Challenge You Faced**

The *challenge* is a description of the problem that could have happened in the past, is happening right now or that you plan for the future. State the situation as clearly as you can. Answer the questions, "who, what, when and where" as a guideline to be sure you are as comprehensive as possible.

Clarifying the challenge helps create the best possible solution. Too often we tackle a problem without thoroughly describing it. We may jump to solutions as quickly as possible without knowing if everyone has the same level of understanding. Does everyone agree the situation is exactly as described? Some aren't even aware a problem exists! Others can add to the challenge description and explain in more depth, since they know of details unfamiliar to others.

Use the challenge step to initiate a comprehensive plan of action for the future or to analyze a completed project. Address the scope, depth and breadth of the situation in detail to build a pathway that leads to the next step.

### **The Actions You Took**

The actions you took are the steps you took to address the challenge. Write down each item using brief, bulleted phrases. If necessary talk through each one with someone who was closely involved in the situation. They may be able to help you remember what occurred.

This step will also capture the actions you plan to take in the future.

Now, quantify the action steps by including numbers, percentages, range, scope, depth and breadth. The more specific you can be, the better. Quantifying adds backbone to your argument and helps reinforce why the situation is as important as you've stated.

In the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" with Jimmy Stewart, you may recall the scene where he prepared to jump from the bridge and shouts to the heavens that he wished he'd never been born. His wish is answered when the angel appears and shows him what life would have been like for friends and family had he never been born. He travels through time and watches his brother fall through the ice because he wasn't there to save him. He watches his wife live life as a lonely woman because he wasn't there to marry her.

With this approach, you consider what results would NOT have occurred if you hadn't taken the actions you took. If you hadn't been there, what would have happened, or not? Ask yourself, "If I hadn't done what I did, what would have been the potential fallout?" It's okay to estimate. Since you prevented the worst from happening, it can be difficult to anticipate the losses that never happened. Ask others who were involved if they can come up with some numbers to capture the impact of potential damage.

## **The Results You Achieved**

The results are the quantifiable outcomes achieved from taking the action steps listed above. The quantifiable part is very important. It lends power and credibility to your achievements but quantifying requires some homework. It's not easy to put numbers, dollar signs or percentages, etc. to your results.

One of the beauties of the CARLA Concept is discovering what we learn while going through the process. When quantifying outcomes, it may become clear that it's not worth the effort because the payoff is so insignificant. You may also discover there is more at stake than you originally thought or that you're making a mountain out of that proverbial molehill. Certainly if you are using the CARLA Concept to influence others to see your point of view, you will improve your success rate if you can prove it with specifics, facts and data. You are offering proof.

It's not easy to quantify results. This is the one area people struggle with most, so we will dedicate a little more time to this section. Here are a few methods to help you with the quantification process:

At the end of every bulleted result, ask yourself the question, "So what?" What was the final benefit of the actions you took? You may have to ask yourself that question multiple times in order to get to the bottom line benefit.

If you don't make the effort to dig deeper, you may leave some very powerful outcomes unspoken and end up with a weak result that won't get you to your goal. Here's an example of how this works:

Result: We held an annual celebrity waiter event.

So what? This event drew 500 attendees.

So what? Each attendee donated \$100.

So what? We raised \$50,000 with this event.

So what? With that \$50,000 we were able to build ten homes for underprivileged families.

So what? Ten families who are now off the streets and out of a shelter will save taxpayers \$500,000/year and they will live happier, healthier, safer lives.

This process disciplines you to work towards a stronger benefits statement and at the same time, raises awareness of the importance of the achievement. You are better able to see the connection between results and consequences and decide, was this outcome worth the effort?

In this circumstance, donors would quickly see the benefit of attending future celebrity waiter events, sponsors would see the potential for attracting attendees, which will broaden their advertising reach. Celebrities would clearly see the good that will come from lending their presence and their names to the event.

### **The Lessons You Learned**

A huge plus in the CARLA Concept model is the built-in learning step. If you use the model for strategic planning, decision making, debriefing projects, etc. it is perhaps the most valuable step of all. If you use the model as a behavioral interview tool, it allows you to take a “horror story” and turn it into a positive example.

No one is perfect and everyone wins if we can learn from our mistakes. Those who use CARLA to coach others to performance improvement will find this section invaluable. It is the

lesson learned or “moral of the story” that gives people a reason to change and all the better if they discover it for themselves.

### **Another Approach**

Notice that this section is not titled, a “Better Approach” — that would be highly presumptive. You may go through the entire model and discover your original action steps were just fine. Others might give you suggestions of different steps to take in the future, but who’s to say they would be better? There is tremendous value going through the process without judgment to give you an objective look at all the possibilities that exist in the future. It would also put more pressure on you to strive for a “better” alternative, which can put a damper on any brainstorming effort.

It’s been said that when Walt Disney asked his creative team to come up with some innovative new story ideas, they worked non-stop throughout the day and into the night. The next morning when Walt arrived, they were prepared to show him the best of the best. Instead, he asked to see what was in the trash can. They were shocked at his request. It was told he said that too often the best ideas get trashed because people thought they knew what he wanted and they eliminated the rest. He didn’t want them filtering out creative ideas just to give him what they thought he’d like. He had asked for innovative new ideas and that’s what he wanted.

Too often, we allow filters to screen out valid solutions. Using the term “best” means we have already done some filtering, which could discount very tangible possibilities for the future. It also prevents us from falling victim to “groupthink,” which is the tendency to go along with

the crowd based on peer pressure or simply a lack of effort to think creatively. The more alternatives we have to consider, the more likely we will make a wiser decision in the future!

Best regards, Laura

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### **What People Say...**

“I was first introduced to the CARLA Concept in the year 2000. Since then I have taken the CARLA framework and used it in interviewing. It far surpasses the capability of the STAR method (situation, task, actions, results). The L and the A gets you into the mindset of the individual.

I also used it in my role in HR doing Investigations and in coaching. One individual I coached was a leader who had several concerns brought forward about her. She had a very strong leadership style. As I was talking to her about her team and her relationship with her team, I went through CARLA. I asked her, “What did you learn from that circumstance?” She said, “I learned that my employees are a bunch of babies.” That told me what her perspective was. I determined she was a leader who was unaware of the role she played in the situation. She had no accountability. She said her employees were too sensitive. When I asked, “What would you do differently?” She said, “I need to pick my employees better.” There was no effort on her part to understand her own contribution to the situation.

CARLA tells me what someone’s motivation is to improve the situation. There’s a spectrum: it’s either everybody else’s fault vs it’s all my fault. In her case I went back to her manager and said she’s not coachable. Let’s see if we can find an exit strategy. When people take all the blame it’s more of a coaching situation vs when they don’t take any responsibility for having a part to play.

The Lessons Learned and Alternative Approaches are so insightful; those steps help you to get inside someone’s head.”

—Liz Killen, OD Consultant, Gallup Certified Strengths Coach

“The CARLA Concept gave us a common language to discuss things. It kept us on track. We could identify a problem, reach a solution, test the solution and keep the wheels turning. There are lots of business models, but with the CARLA Concept, we could apply a streamlined language you could just implement. Once the concepts were in you they stayed with you.”

—Netty Eastlake, Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare, Recreation, Fort Carson, Colorado

**About the Author and CARLA Concept Creator:**



Laura Lollar is a creative entrepreneur, author, international speaker and communication consultant near Colorado Springs, Colorado. She has taught the CARLA Concept Communication Model to thousands of audience members, teams and individuals who wished to become better communicators.

Laura's website, [LauraLollar.com](https://LauraLollar.com), helps people build leadership skills, realize personal success and enhance communication through her books, articles and speaking.

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