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Bring Strategy to Life – Apply ARL principles

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Ernie Turner enjoys coaching teams and leaders around the world as they build their businesses and organizations. When he is not working he enjoys tennis, golf and the piano. Ernie and his wife/partner, Isabel Rimanoczy, recently wrote *Action Reflection Learning: Solving Real Business Problems by Connecting Learning with Earning* (Davis-Black Publishing, 2008).

LIM and MiL Institute have been strategic partners for a number of years – each contributing to the evolution of ARL (Action Reflection Learning) as an innovative learning methodology. This article is an example of how ARL is currently being applied. It was submitted to ”Make Strategy Happen – The MiL Model in the next decade” on 26-27 March, 2009, the MiL Day conference in honor of the retirement of Lennart Rohlin as Managing Director of the MiL Institute.

ERNIE TURNER

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This article uses a real case – coaching a regional leadership team to illustrate how a business strategy was successfully implemented by applying ARL (Action Reflection Learning) principles, processes and practices. In the process you will discover what the 10 ARL principles are and some of the practical tools and concepts that were used. The author shares what he has discovered are the key reasons why many strategies never see the light of day as well as his own reflections on the side benefits to the team and his own experience working with leadership teams.

Effective strategies are typically well-crafted intellectual products that are critical to an organization's vitality, but they only have value if they are successfully implemented. What is it that makes the implementation so difficult? Take a moment and jot down your own answers to this question. At the end of this paper I'll share my thoughts with you.

In the meantime I will tell the story of a four-day meeting where I applied the ARL principles while coaching the regional leadership team of a large multinational client as they brought a new vision and strategy to life. I will also share other insights that the team discovered along the way. Finally, I will introduce the ARL principles and examples of how I used them to help the team bring this regional strategy to life.

Before diving into this story, I'd like to define some terms so that we are all on the same page. As my Uncle Wilbur used to say, "*Until you define you cannot align!*" Over the years I have found that this poetic bit of advice saves time and frustration.

So let's begin with three simple working definitions:

Strategy: a means of achieving a goal; not to be confused with the detailed plan of actions that any successful strategy requires;

Life: a vital, shaping force;

Bring to life: give birth; revive; animate; realize the strategy.

NOW FOR THE STORY

Getting Ready

A couple of years ago I was asked by the Regional Director of HR of one of our clients to facilitate a meeting of their regional leadership team. A Regional VP had just been appointed to lead the team and he brought with him two colleagues; all three had just been ‘head-hunted’ from a competitor. Several other members of the team were new as well – mostly promotions from within the organization. So in essence, it was a completely new team and they all had similar questions: Who is this new leader? Who are his colleagues? What is his leadership style? What does he expect of us individually? Is my job safe? What kind of team do we need? What impact will he have on our current culture? What is his vision and strategy for the region?

After meeting the new Regional VP by phone and contracting my role he suggested that I work with the HR Director and the Head of Strategy as they had already begun to design the meeting. The agenda for this meeting was ambitious and crucial to it was the need to get buy-in to the VP’s regional vision and strategy. His vision would require that his leadership team and their direct reports think and act in a completely new way. And his mandate for change was very clear as he had been appointed by the CEO.

Outcomes at 5 Dimensions

As the Design Team, I and the heads of HR and Strategy, met virtually several times prior to the meeting to establish meeting outcomes at 5 dimensions – 1) business; 2) organizational; 3) team; 4) professional and 5) personal. Then we put a design together that ensured those outcomes would be achieved. We kept the VP abreast of our work to ensure that he was ‘on board’. By co-designing the meeting together the three of us achieved two objectives:

1) we came up with more relevant outcomes and better design ideas; for example, the draft design they presented to me when I joined the Design Team called for beginning the meeting on Day 1 with a presentation by the VP on his vision and his strategy; I suggested we wait until Day 2 so that we could create a safe and friendly environment and address most of those pressing questions that people had on their minds, on Day 1;

2) we ensured greater ownership and legitimacy for the meeting design. It was no longer the VP’s or my meeting; it was becoming the leadership team’s meeting.

Interview to Engage

We also agreed that it would be important for me to interview each member of the leadership team as well as some members of the larger leadership group (the direct reports of the leadership team) prior to the meeting so I could get different perspectives. The VP, at my suggestion, requested that each member send me one or two questions that s/he felt the team should be thinking about before our meeting. I used these questions with a few of my own as the interview format.

This interview process was the real beginning of the meeting. The entire team was engaged in thinking about the critical questions (their questions) facing the team and the region at that time. Importantly, during the process I was able to establish rapport with each team member. I took pains to tell the members that the interviews were not confidential but they were anonymous, and that I was going to prepare a written Interview Summary report so that everyone could read what everyone else was thinking, but without knowing who said what. The purpose was two-fold: 1) everyone was able to influence the interview process by submitting questions that were relevant to them; 2) it brought some level of transparency ensuring that everyone's voice was heard and valued on the merits of the answers rather than on who said what. I have found that this process is a very simple and effective diagnostic process since their questions indicate where there is pain and opportunity for improvement. And their collective answers begin to identify potential solutions.

Coaching Through Questioning NOT Telling

Another critical pre-meeting task was to help the VP shape his vision and strategy presentation. This was probably going to be the most important session of the four days meeting and he wanted to get it 'right'. His leadership and legacy would both be shaped by the clarity and confidence of this important communication. He sent me his power-point deck as pre-reading for our first face-to-face conversation the day before the meeting began. As I went through the slide deck I was caught up by the excitement of what he wanted to achieve. However, I thought there were too many slides and the presentation lacked crispness and punch. So I spent a couple of hours writing up a critique – what I thought he should change, and what he could say as an introduction to his presentation to his team.

Big mistake! Fortunately, I ran my thoughts by my shadow coach who asked me what I hoped to achieve by doing that. This question brought me to my senses. What I had wanted to achieve was to impress him with my ideas. I quickly realized that telling him what I thought he should do was not going to really help him or me. So instead, I developed some open questions (not suggestions disguised as questions) that I thought might help him refine his presentation – questions like, "What is a 'great' presentation that comes to your mind? What made it 'great'? How does your presentation measure up to those criteria of greatness? Who are the most influential members of your team? What might each of them say about your presentation? What are the solid aspects of your presentation? What could be better?"

When we met I asked him to pretend that he was presenting to his leadership team and to go through the presentation with me the way he intended to on Day 2; then afterwards we could discuss the content and his delivery. He agreed. After his presentation I suggested that we take five minutes and each write down questions and/or suggestions that came to our minds related to the content and the delivery. He went first and came up with some insightful questions and great suggestions. I had little to add. On the basis of this 5 minutes reflection he was able to take our collective input, shorten his presentation and make it crisper and more compelling. We agreed to review it one more time the morning of Day 2.

Informal Dinner Launch

The team meeting began informally that evening over dinner in a private room in the hotel. We had requested a round table to facilitate a meaningful table conversation. After drinks and an informal welcome by the VP, I introduced our evening dinner conversation format. Since this was the first time for them to assemble as a team and for several people this was the first time they had ever met, I suggested that everyone think of one non-work-related question that everyone would answer including the questioner. Once everyone had thought of a question I asked one of the team to voice his question and let everyone answer it. Once we had finished answering the first question, that person selected the next person and we repeated the process at a leisurely rate until the end of the meal.

I wanted everyone to have an equal opportunity to be heard. It put a bit of pressure on the introverts at first but once we got into the story-telling the playing field was leveled. We were only able to answer 4 questions by the time we had finished with coffee. During the course of dinner we had heard about 40 short stories. There was plenty of laughter and we had created an informal and friendly atmosphere. As we didn't have time to hear and answer all the questions we saved the remaining ones for Day 1.

DAY 1
THE FORMAL LAUNCH

Setting Team Norms

Although this morning was the 'formal' launch of the meeting we were able to retain the informal atmosphere we had created the night before. We sat in a circle in very comfortable armchairs with only a few tables along one wall for supplies and refreshments. After reviewing the outcomes and design that we had sent to everyone as pre-reading, we established some meeting norms that the team later adopted as team norms. Then we took another hour or so to hear the remaining questions. Each of us answered those questions after a few minutes preparation drawing symbols on flip chart paper as our story-telling aids. A few members of the team later admitted that they had been a bit anxious and wanted to jump into the 'meat' of the meeting right away but were glad we took the time to hear and answer everyone's question.

Using R&D to Make Meaning

We ended the morning with an ***R&D*** [1](Reflection and Dialogue) session focused on the Interview Summary which everyone had received prior to the meeting and which contained all responses to their questions. Everyone had a few minutes to review his/her interview summary notes and then we had a dialogue on what stood out for each of us. I introduced the guidelines of dialogue – a) speak from one's heart and head; this was an opportunity to publicly state what they said to me in private if they so desired; b) listen without interruptions; this was a chance to truly hear what each team member thought about what others had to say; c) avoid debates or ping-pong conversations; d) suspend judgments; we were not going to take any decisions; e) build wherever possible on what others said as this was also the time to extract some deeper meaning.

Extract Crucial Questions

The process helped create a reflective conversation. People were truly listening to one another; and everyone was able to complete his/her thought without getting cut off. As a consequence there appeared to be consensus that some of the questions needed to be resolved right away. So after a short break I asked everyone to do a ***SRWR*** (Stop/Reflect/Write/Report) and identify 1 or 2 questions that we needed to tackle before the end of this meeting. Within a few minutes we were able to quickly identify a few questions and agreed to raise them with the larger leadership group on Day 3.

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[1] If you're interested in learning more about Dialogue you can visit this website: http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html

Change the Pace

Right after lunch we had an outdoor team exercise called ***The Rope.*** This is a wonderful, engaging activity, especially after lunch, and addresses characteristics of a high performing team – active listening, communicating clearly, taking decisions, getting input from everyone and having full team participation. The feedback individuals received and the insights exchanged after the exercise raised their collective awareness and reinforced some of the team norms; we also added a couple more team norms that were highlighted by the exercise.

Get Everyone Engaged

Then I introduced ***Peer Coaching*** [2], which we have found to be an effective way of supporting team members who have business or organization challenges and want to receive help from their peers. In a 40 minute period we heard one team member's challenge and were able to generate approximately 60 good questions and 20 offers or suggestions, many of which the individual said he could apply immediately.

The rest of the afternoon was set aside for a few organizational items that required team conversations and decisions. The evening was left open for individual networking. The Design Team along with the VP met for a review of the day and a fresh look at Day 2. We made a few minor adjustments. This usually happens in every meeting of this nature, as the map is always different from the terrain.

DAY 2
DEFINING THE STRATEGY

Get Buy-In

Over breakfast on Day 2, I met with the VP to hear his revised presentation. Given the activities of the previous day and the atmosphere we had created, his introduction was much more personal, warm and captivating. And he had shortened his presentation with fewer slides. It looked good and he was excited and ready.

The morning was devoted to digesting his presentation, getting clarity on ambiguities and finally seeking buy-in. As I facilitated this session my first

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[2] For more details on ***Peer Coaching*** read this LIM News article: http://www.limglobal.net/readings/96.html

goal was to ensure that everyone shared a common understanding of the content. I did this by asking everyone to take a few minutes after the VP's presentation to write down questions related to clarity. Then we simply went around the circle, and gave the VP a chance to answer every question. After we had a common understanding of what the vision and strategy were, I introduced ***The Fist-Five*** [3], a simple alignment or consensual decision-making process, to test for alignment.

Once the team had reached alignment with some modifications of the vision and the strategy, they discussed how they could best communicate it and implement it across the region and ensure alignment among all the key stakeholders. By the end of the afternoon they had agreed upon the framework of an overall implementation strategy and realized that Day 3 would be the first major step – getting their direct reports on board. While the leadership team took decisions the larger leadership group was responsible for implementing those decisions so their buy-in was crucial.

We had planned on informal cocktails and dinner with the larger leadership group so that we could begin to create the same kind of atmosphere we had established in the first two days. The VP made a welcome speech and the rest of the evening was left to informal conversations. The leadership team had purposely agreed to mixed-seating so that the larger leadership group had maximum opportunity to talk with different members of the leadership team and informally become aware of the positive feeling for the culture shift being created by the new VP and his team. One member of the leadership team had organized a ***Who's Who*** activity. During the cocktail everyone had to figure out who in the group had achieved some unusual accomplishment. Everyone had a list with at least one accomplishment for everyone in attendance, of course, without the names. It was simply a matter of discovery. It was lots of fun and everyone connected with everyone else as a signature was required as proof of verification.

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[3] ***Fist-Five*** guidelines: On the count of three everyone shows with his/her fist or fingers the degree of alignment s/he has for the proposed decision using the following scale:

- Fist = I cannot support this at all; I would leave if I could if we took this decision;
- 1 = I can live with it; however, don't count on me for enthusiasm or energy;
- 2 = it's OK; I'm not very enthusiastic but I'll work to make it succeed;
- 3 = it's a good vision, strategy or decision; I'll be fully engaged;
- 4 = it's a great vision, strategy or decision; we need to do this;
- 5 = if we don't take this decision I may leave, I feel so strongly.

DAY 3
ENGAGE THE LARGER GROUP

Use Open Space to Prepare for Implementation

So by the morning of Day 3 the larger leadership group (all the direct reports of the members of the leadership team) had the sense that the leadership team was aligned, enthusiastic and ready to engage the entire organization. The VP presented an abbreviated version of the regional vision and strategy and allowed some time for clarifying questions. After getting general buy-in for the vision and strategy from the larger leadership group, I introduced a flexible meeting format called ***Open Space*** [4]***,*** created by Harrison Owen that was perfect for working on those questions that were vital for implementation.

The ground rules are very simple:

- the agenda is created in the moment by the participants;
- anyone who has a question s/he wants to work on needs to write it down and be prepared to advocate why it is important;
- people who are interested in a topic/question work on it with others who share a common interest;
- those who show up are the right people;
- the meeting is over when it's over;
- individuals can move from one group to another if they are interested in working on more than one topic/question.

So after I introduced the ***Open Space*** process, I invited everyone who had a question related to the topic, *Make this New Vision and Strategy a Reality,* to write it down on paper. Then I got all of those with questions (about half the group) to line up across the front of the room. I asked each person to read his/her question and state why it was important. Then I asked others with similar questions to read out their questions and line up behind that person. Finally, I asked those who were sitting to line up behind the question they were most interested in working on. One of the questions that generated a great deal of interest was "How can we cut out the bureaucracy that is holding us back from doing the real work?" After everyone was standing in columns I quickly introduced the ***Power Planning Process***, an effective problem-solving tool and gave everyone a ***PPP Worksheet***. The PPP Worksheet was a 2-page sheet with a number of sequential steps that

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[4] For more information on ***Open Space*** and the ***Power Planning Process*** read this article: http://www.limglobal.net/readings/LIM_News.html.)

promote effective planning and allow everyone one in the sub-group to work together. For example, the first step is: *"What is the focus question?"* And the second step is: *"What lessons can you learn from work on similar questions in the past?"* They then went to assigned work rooms with the option of joining a different group if and when they had finished or felt the need to work on another question.

Recommendations and Next Steps

All in all there were eight groups of various sizes. They had a couple of hours to work on their questions and come up with recommendations and next steps. Each group had 10 minutes to present the recommendations related to their question followed by a quick ***SRWR*** where everyone had a chance to offer questions, suggestions or offers using post-its. This kept everyone engaged and actively listening. At the conclusion of the presentations everyone voted on the two topic/questions that they felt would have the greatest impact on implementing the strategy across the region. The leadership team promised to review the work of the larger group the next day and report on next steps.

DAY 4
THE LEADERSHIP TEAM RECONVENES AND REFINES

On the morning of Day 4 the leadership team reviewed at length the 8 recommendations and agreed that the two most popular were the right ones as the place to begin. Two individuals were commissioned to take on the two priorities and build upon the work of the Open Space groups. They then agreed upon a communication strategy to inform the larger leadership group as well as the entire region about the new vision and strategy.

Team/Leader Contract

Right after lunch we had a contracting session between the VP and his leadership team. The purpose was to ensure that they as a leadership team had realistic expectations of one another as they moved forward in bringing this vision and strategy to life. I asked the VP to leave the room and take two sheets of flip chart paper with him – one to write down his Requests – what he needed and wanted from his leadership team if they were to become a high performing team with the ability to deliver on the strategy; on the other flip chart he was to write his Offers – what his team, in return, could expect from him. I then asked his team to do the same thing – write down their Requests to the VP, what they needed and wanted from him so that they could deliver on the strategy; and their Offer – what they, in return, were willing to commit to him.

When his team was ready I invited the VP to join them and begin by sharing his offer followed by their request; then the team's offer, ending with the VP's request. With each step I checked first on clarity and then on alignment using the ***Fist-Five***. At the end of the process we had the revised offers and requests typed up and I later converted them into a Team/Leader Commitment Contract Instrument stating both of their commitments. They periodically use this instrument as a way to gauge how well they're doing.

Self-Solicited Feedback

The last session before the close was a ***Post It Feedback*** session. Each individual was invited to take a minute (SRWR) and write down one feedback question – appreciative or developmental. I gave everyone enough post-its for each team member. When everyone was ready I introduced the process:

- we would go around the circle and each person would read his/her feedback question and the others would have 90 seconds to write as much as they could during that short period, putting the name of the person at the top and their initials at the bottom; the person asking for the feedback would keep track of the time; with such limited time the most important feedback usually surfaces;

- after we had gone around the circle we would exchange post-its and take a few minutes to silently read our gifts.

They were surprised and grateful at the quality of the feedback they received in the limited time given. It was a fast and effective way of giving and receiving feedback.

Review Outcomes and Process

At the conclusion of the meeting we took time to review our stated outcomes and summarize what we had actually achieved. Everyone took a minute to review his/her own expectations. Then I reviewed the list of principles, processes, concepts and tools that we had used throughout the meeting. There was high level of agreement that, indeed, they had taken several important steps that would ***bring their strategy to life***:

- as a leadership team they were highly aligned on the vision and the strategy;

- they had the buy-in of their direct reports;

- they had team norms and a team/leader contract that spelled out the rules and conditions of engagement;

• they had a communication and implementation plan in place;

• they had two members of their team leading two priority initiatives related to implementing the strategy;

• they had some helpful team processes like the ***SRWR***, ***Fist-Five, The Rope, R&D, Peer Coaching, Power Planning Process***, ***Post It Feedback,*** and the simple notion of defining before aligning;

• they experienced the ARL Principles that are fundamental to bringing a strategy to life; (see below)

• and they had a greater respect and appreciation for one another as individuals.

Personal Insights

After completing a written meeting evaluation, we stood in a circle and reflected on what stood out for each of us, and why, as a way of putting some closure to the meeting. Here are a few of their reflections:

If we hadn't taken the time to get to know one another at the beginning of the meeting, I doubt that we would have achieved the alignment and commitment we have today; so addressing personal outcomes and creating an informal atmosphere is important to achieving business outcomes;

I feel that my fingerprints are all over the strategy; it's as much mine as anyone's;

This was our meeting; no one dominated; we all had an equal opportunity to influence – from suggesting the questions for the interview with Ernie, to forming our team norms and forming the questions for our **Open Space** *meeting yesterday, to specifying what feedback we wanted;*

I've discovered a number of very practical concepts and tools that I will apply next week with my own team;

Leadership was continually shared during this meeting; and I have learned that leadership includes a wide range of behaviors including active listening, making clear offers and requests, challenging, facilitating, and asking good questions;

I was engaged throughout this meeting; and I didn't even miss my blackberry and cell phone;

I've discovered the power of reflection; giving us a few minutes to think has enabled us to have better thoughts and become better listeners;

This has been as much of a leadership development program as a team development and business development meeting; bringing all three together makes absolute sense and is very practical, particularly, given our current cost-conscious corporate condition. Excuse the alliteration but it is true!

THE ARL PRINCIPLES

The learning methodology that made this meeting work is based upon ARL (Action Reflection Learning) principles – an experiential learning approach that is the foundation of all of the MiL Institute's and LIM's services. Five years ago Isabel Rimanoczy, a LIM partner, with the support of Boris Drizin conducted a research study on the principles underlying ARL. Now we have a book, ***Action Reflection Learning: Solving Real Business Problems by Connecting Learning with Earning***, co-authored by Isabel Rimanoczy and Ernie Turner and published in 2008 by Davies-Black Publishing, that fully describes these principles and how they have been applied in a number of learning interventions. This learning methodology is based upon the simple yet profound concept that individuals learn best when they reflect upon relevant actions or experiences.

ARL learning principles are not new; they have evolved over time and are based upon the work of a number of well-known educators and psychologists including Argyris, Dewey, Freire, Freud, Jung, Kolb, Lewin, Maslow, Piaget, Revans, Senge, Socrates and many others. Here are the 10 ARL principles and a few references from my story on how I applied them:

1. The learning content is Relevant; the questions of the learner are acknowledged and addressed;

- The interview questions came from the team members;

- The outcomes were suggested by the VP and the Design Team;

- Peer Coaching focused on the current challenge of one of the team members;

- The ***Open Space*** agenda was totally driven by questions from the larger leadership group.

2. There is time for Reflection to allow for understanding, analysis, and extracting insights and meaning;

- The R&D session; we took a few minutes for reflection before we began the dialogue;

- The pre-meeting conversation I had with the VP; we took a few minutes to write down our questions and suggestions;

SRWRs; we had numerous opportunities to stop, reflect and write down our thoughts before reporting them.

3. Facilitated Learning; my role as a facilitator and coach was to create optimal conditions and introduce just in time processes, concepts and tools to maximize engagement and stimulate learning;

- The Rope;

- Open Space;

- Power Planning Process;

- Team/Leader Contracting.

4. Social Learning; individuals also learn with and from others; structured and informal social learning environments are both used to promote intentional as well as accidental and incidental learning; i.e. coffee breaks and meals are wonderful learning environments;

- Question-Driven dinner conversation;

- Open evening;

- Frequently after coffee breaks I took a few minutes to give anyone who wanted an opportunity to share the headline of a conversation that might be of interest to others.

5. Reinforcement promotes learning that lasts; having more than one face-to-face meeting; coaching; engaging supervisors in the learning experience are all little ways of reinforcing participant learning;

- Establishing next steps; we continually clarified who would do what and by when;

- Team/Leader Contract Commitment Instrument; the team was able to refer to this instrument at a later time to see how they were doing;

- I've met with this team twice since our first meeting; I've discovered that it takes 3-4 such meetings to master the various team processes, concepts and tools;

6. Challenging Mental Models forces individuals to identify and examine their own assumptions about learning, leadership, teamwork, gender, culture, etc.; to do this we encourage individuals to meet and work with those who are different;

- The Rope;

- R&D;

- Open Space.

7. Integral Learning; we encourage individuals to bring their whole self to a learning experience; we are brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, etc. with a variety of interests outside of work; we learn best when all of us (head, heart and hands) are engaged;

- Our question-driven dinner conversation;

- The drawing and story-telling exercise on the morning of Day 1;

- R&D.

8. A Systems Perspective; likewise we need to look at learning from many points of view – HQ, regional, local, functional, teams, organizational, etc.; we need to understand how these different parts all 'fit';

- Setting outcomes at 5 dimensions;

- Open Space;

- Power Planning Process.

9. Tacit Learning; this is based upon the belief that for most non-technical things, individuals have some knowledge and experience that we as leader coaches need to help them uncover and extract the wisdom from within; then we can build upon the gaps and their questions using one another as a learning community;

- My first conversation with the VP in helping him with his presentation;

- Open Space; inviting everyone to identify the questions that drove that agenda and then work on those questions in interest groups.

10. The Self-awareness is the foundation for learning; the more individuals are aware of who they are and what they know and don't know the more they can be stimulated to learn;

- The interview process and the interview summary;

- Question-driven story telling over dinner and the morning of Day 1;

- Post-It Feedback session.

CONCLUSIONS: WHY STRATEGIES DON'T GET IMPLEMENTED

So why are strategies sometimes difficult to implement? Here's what I've discovered:

▪ they lack relevance; they are too remote from the real world of those responsible for 'implementing';

▪ they are poorly defined; they are filled with metaphors and ambiguities; they lack simplicity and clarity;

▪ they are too ambitious; they do not take into consideration the time and effort required;

▪ they do not achieve alignment and ownership; because they are poorly defined and not enough time was given to ensure understanding and true engagement;

▪ they are not adequately resourced; time, people and budgets are often inadequate;

▪ they do not have a detailed plan; without good tactics good strategies get stranded;

▪ they are not measurable or measured; good measuring criteria and a good measurement process are vital to implementation;

▪ they are inadequately rewarded; intrinsic and extrinsic rewards fuel successful implementations.

My guess is that your list is similar to mine. So since we know why strategies are so difficult to bring to life why do we still have difficulties? Because we don't take the time to (a) engage **all** the right people – both the decision-makers **and** the implementers; (b) create an open learning environment; and (c) provide adequate support (time and resources) for them to apply their wisdom so that they can bring their strategies to life.

As you have seen, I applied all of the 10 ARL principles to help this team bring its strategy to life. And I have used these same principles in other settings as well – one-on-one coaching, team coaching, helping groups resolve a crisis, designing and running leadership development programs, teaching students and presenting at conferences. I now use these principles as a checklist for any kind of consulting assignment.

SIDE BENEFITS TO THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

While the team was focused on defining its strategy and getting the necessary buy-in to ensure implementation they realized a number of important side benefits. Here are five:

- They came to understand and appreciate one another, especially those new team members; over time (I've worked with this team on 4 separate occasions) they have begun to respect and trust one another as persons as well as professionals;

- They created practical team norms or terms of engagement that shaped their leadership team culture and ultimately influenced the regional culture;

- They empowered the team leader and he empowered them through the 'team/leader' contracting session;

- They demonstrated team alignment to the larger regional leadership group that was critical in gaining the larger groups 'buy-in' to the strategy; this alignment also erased many unhealthy rumors running around the region;

- They have been able to transfer their insights and newly acquired concepts and skills to their own teams thus cascading new leadership behavior throughout the region; this, in itself, is a tremendous organizational development outcome.

REFLECTIONS ON COACHING LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Over the years I've discovered how much can be achieved while working with leadership teams – functional, country, regional and corporate – by simply making explicit offers. When given the opportunity to work with a leadership team I always offer tangible outcomes at 5 dimensions – business; organization; team; professional and personal. Without exception my offer is accepted. The benefits are amazing. These meetings (usually 2-3 days repeated two to three times over a 12 month period) become transformational events. They are truly leadership development meetings.

And in this time of reduced budgets bringing leadership development into leadership team meetings is not only cost-effective; it makes good sense. For working with one's peers and direct reports is where leadership comes to life. I have found no better arena in which to do leadership development, team development and organization development – simultaneously. As a consequence, this has become very rewarding work for me and my clients. And the ARL principles coupled with practical process and tools makes this work relatively easy and fun as the work is shared by everyone. As my grandmother used to say…"Many hands make light work!"