

The road to the CLM

When I started writing this story, I had no idea if I passed or failed the CLM test I took in Nashville on September 27, 2007.

It all began in January of 2007 when an administrator sent out the e-mail inviting anyone who was interested in taking the CLM test. I was unable to make the first meeting, but sent an e-mail letting her know I was very interested. There were approximately 21 in the group when we started. Several dropped out and only a handful of us continued on.

I had been very skeptical about taking the test, as there was a 50% passing rate. I felt ALA was not very good at providing enough information to you regarding the exam. I had heard the test was very difficult and we had to cover all the areas of management, HR, Technology, Legal Industry, Accounting and Facilities. I was concerned about the lack of ALA members who had passed the test. Currently there are approximately 1000 members who are CLM's. I had attended the CLM roundtable discussion in Las Vegas. There were two ALA Administrators answering questions regarding the exam and their personal experiences on taking the test. They talked about the time they had dedicated to taking the test. One of the Administrators had taken the test three times; she talked about why she was committed to taking the test until she passed. The other ALA member passed on the first try. I spoke to other Administrators who had taken the test. Everyone said do not count on just the study guide. You needed to read the other books ALA recommended too. There was a lot more to the test than I had ever imagined.

In the beginning our group would meet once a week. We scheduled speakers and had practice tests with each study group meeting we had. We all took turns hosting the meetings. Our firms were wonderful for providing desserts and beverages. We had speakers on Real Estate, Leadership, ABA ethics, Facilities, Technology, Insurance, HR and Finance. We joined the Cyber Chapter for additional information. The Orange County, Colorado and New York chapters had great resources for us also. We also took advantage of the SHRM books provided to us by our Chicago Chapter President, Cindy Pavinato. The ALA members who had already taken the test, were extremely supportive, very helpful and wished us all the best in taking the test.

As the deadline approached for submitting the application and test fees, I became more and more nervous. I was not sure I was ready. I looked into taking the test at another time and location. However, I had come so far and it was now or never. I sent in my check and materials waited for ALA to accept my application.

As the time grew closer we met more frequently. As we studied we could not believe the correct answers to some of the questions. Some of us would roll our eyes or moan a lot (that was mostly me) in trying to take in all we were learning. I questioned the fact that I really did not need to know this information in so much detail as I would probably call the expert in that area for the answer.

My family and friends were wonderful all the way through this process. As each day grew closer and closer I remember thinking of my Dad and how proud he would be of me right now knowing how hard I had been studying for the test. Whether I passed or failed at least I tried! The few days before the test we all received so many well wishes from so many of our friends (ALA included in that group), family and colleagues. As I read through them I thought how lucky I was to have such a wonderful group of friends who were so supportive.

I want to thank some individuals personally as they really supported us through this ordeal with each step we took. Bill Donnehoo, Dennis Klein and our Chicago Chapter, (who provided us with a budget to be used for gifts for our speakers) were so helpful, instrumental and encouraging through this process.

The day before the test we were all in Nashville studying very hard. We all reassured each other that we were going to be able to do this. The day of the test we all got together to register and sign in. We were all in the room by 12:30 and ready to go. Rosemary from the ALA headquarters reassured us that she would make this as painless as she could. There were seventeen in Nashville taking the test. ALA provided you the pencils and calculators if you needed one. We had to show them our I.D. as the test was passed out. We were given 4 hours to take the test. The test consisted of 120 questions, with 20 questions not counting. I took approximately 3.5 hours to take the test. After the test we were all so anxious to get our results we were beside ourselves. They tell you not to think about the test or go over the questions in your head, but you can not help it. We all got together afterwards to wind ourselves down and to celebrate just getting through it. I knew then if I did not pass I was going to take the test again.

ALA informs you that it takes approximately 4 to 6 weeks to receive the results of the test. We were told all kinds of things pertaining to how you would receive the results. As each week passed we all grew more and more antsy! At the end of the third week on a Saturday, I came home to find an envelope from ALA in the mail. It was marked confidential. I sat and stared at the envelope for quite a while. My family was dying for me to open the envelope. I am very proud to say I passed the test. As I sit back and think of how I committed myself to studying for this test, I would not have changed anything I went through. I had a great study group and made some wonderful friends along the way!