

2000: 'Aprendo'-Mi Panama

Title: **Aprendo - Mi Panama**

Produced by: *La Prensa*

Country: Panama

Language: Spanish

Category: Literacy



• **The Idea** : The Panamanian daily La Prensa has won the 2000 World Young Reader Prize for a scrapbook that became required reading in many schools and helped offset a lack of quality textbooks about the country and its heritage, the World Association of Newspapers announced Tuesday.

"The six-week programme required children to access the youth section of the newspaper to create their own quality 'textbooks' for better understanding of the country," said the judges of the annual WAN World Young Reader Prize. "In the process, the project increased Sunday circulation and generated extra advertising revenue while promoting important educational objectives."

Wendy Tribaldos, the General Coordinator of La Prensa's Newspapers in Education Programme, said textbooks in Panama tend to be out of date and there is a widespread lack of information, a situation that is typical in a developing nation. Among other things, the scrapbook and stickers provided an updated political map of the country, which was unavailable from other sources.

• General information about

La Prensa:

- Daily newspaper.
- Average daily readership:





230,000 adults.

- La Prensa circulates in the entire Republic of Panama (national distribution).

- Average paid daily circulation: 37,500 newspapers.

- La Prensa was created in 1980.

- La Prensa is the only Panamanian newspaper that has a N.I.E. program. It was created in 1995 with the name of APRENDO.

• Why La Prensa selected the project "Mi Panamá"?

One of the most blatant problems of Panama's school system is its textbooks lack of quality.

Although most textbooks have design flaws, the biggest problem is the outdated content they possess.

The problem is particularly bad in the case of Social Studies books for the primary and secondary grades.

Just to give an example: Panama's political division changed in 1998, when the government added three new Indian reservations, which have administrative autonomy.

Not one textbook as of today reflects this change. To make matters worse, our NIE department found out that even Panamá's National Geographic Institute does not have the money to print an updated political map of the country. There is also a widespread lack of information about Panama, a situation rather typical in a developing nation. People might have a general knowledge of the history of the country, but know little about its provinces and what each one offers.

• Description of the project

La Prensa's NIE program decided to create a sticker album to help ameliorate the lack of knowledge described above, and also help complement school instruction. Sticker albums are very popular in Panama, but most albums have very superficial contents based on the latest fashion.

For example, a couple of months ago a Pokemon album was sold in stores. As with most commercial albums, parents had to buy the album and the stickers separately. Stickers were sold in packets which usually have repeated stickers, which means parents have keep buying packets to complete the album.

Many do not finish, because of lack of resources to keep financing it or because it is awfully hard to get the complete set of stickers. La Prensa's album project was thought out to be fun, educational, easy to complete and relatively inexpensive for the reader.



• **This is how we did it:**

Our NIE department gathered information for the sticker album from January until April. We relied primarily on the seldom visited main archives of the National Tourism Bureau, the Census Office and the National Geographic Institute.

Meanwhile, we selected the name Mi Panamá for the album, which translates into My Panama.

We decided to use real photographs about Panama to illustrate the album. This was to counteract most textbooks, which tend to use illustrations, instead of real images of the country. These photos came from our own newspaper archive and the National Tourism Bureau. The photographs would become the stickers for the album.

Our own team of NIE designers (two people) designed the album in May.

The album was printed a week before its due insertion date. This was done so La Prensa could send a sample of the album and the first edition of stickers to around 140 schools that work with our NIE program. The idea was to give teachers and administrators the opportunity to study its contents and judge its educational value. This way they could ask children to obtain the album if they deemed it valuable.

An extensive marketing campaign on TV and in La Prensa preceded the publication of the album a week before it was inserted into the newspaper.

The album was published on Sunday, May 28th. The first stickers were published the same day inside our weekly publication for kids, called APRENDO. These stickers were printed in La Prensa using a special satin paper in the new printing press we obtained, an Universal 70. The kids had to cut the stickers (which appeared in the center of APRENDO) and paste them to the album with glue or tape.



The stickers were published in APRENDO for six consecutive Sundays. Parents were sure to complete

the album if they got APRENDO every Sunday. We also did not repeat stickers. The final installment of stickers was published on July 2nd. The final cost for readers of the album and the entire set of stickers was \$3.00 (50 cents per edition). We did not charge extra for the album or the stickers: they were part of the Sunday paper.

La Prensa made sure that we printed extra stickers. This was necessary, because the album was so highly sought that some people could not get Sunday paper or missed it, so we had extras that we sold at 50 cents a piece in La Prensa's offices.



Every edition of the stickers included a piece of a puzzle. After collecting APRENDO for the six Sundays the project lasted, readers completed the puzzle, which was a political map of the country. Then they were able to fill in a coupon on the back of the puzzle, tear out this puzzle while keeping the album and deposit both the coupon and the puzzle in boxes placed strategically around the country. This enabled them to participate in a raffle, where the first prize was a trip for four people with all expenses paid, to the Disney Cruise. Second and third prizes were offered, which were gift certificates from an electronics store.

For those people that could not get the stickers, we will make them available in our web site after July 15 (www.aprendoweb.com).

• Measuring the success of the album

Our average paid Sunday circulation went from 35,000 newspapers to 42,600 during the six weeks the promotion lasted.

We know from the many calls we received and the visits we make to our NIE schools that many made the album required reading for their students, and added it to its curriculum.

This project reached not only our NIE schools, but extended its outreach to all readers of the newspaper.

The album was a self-sustaining project. Our sales team sold enough ad spaces in the album to bring in \$14,480, which paid all our production expenses, which were set at \$12,200.

We are still waiting for the final raffle to know how many coupons we will get from readers. Last year, when we did a similar project, we received around 3,000 completed coupons. Of course, this year we expect to get much more since this album was far more successful.

We also made a substantial educational contribution to schools and parents, providing them with information they lacked and sorely needed. We are confident that many Panamanians now know a bit more about our country, and learned it in a fun way.



This project was so successful that La Prensa intends to make it a yearly occurrence. We believe a sticker album is a fairly easy project to emulate in other countries. We in La Prensa find it an innovative way to bolster circulation, increase brand recognition and contribute to our mission to educate readers and help foster knowledge in our schools.

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