

**HOW CAN
TRAINING
AND
EDUCATION
HAVE AN IMPACT ON YOUR
BUSINESS?
WRITE CLEAR OBJECTIVES**



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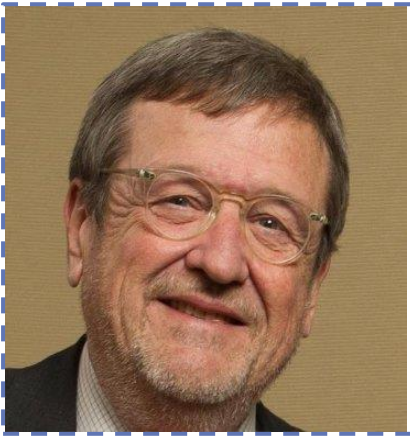
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Foreword

The ultimate objective of any training initiative is to achieve business goals. The way training programs are developed does have an impact on your business. Whether you want to support your sales force achieve their sales targets, equip your employees to use the new ERP system or integrate new employees to the system by training them on mandatory compliance requirements, training plays a significant role.

So, how do you make the training effective? What are the basic factors that need to be considered to ensure effective training program development and roll out? This eBook is part of a series of eBooks that attempts to answer these questions and more. In the current issue, the importance of writing effective learning objectives is discussed with the help of references to actual business situations.

About the Author



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Terry is a highly accomplished learning professional and has more than 35 years of experience in the fields of learning and training. He has over fifteen years of experience in managing, configuring and deploying enterprise-wide learning management systems for several organizations in the financial services, airline, high technology and hospitality industries. He has an excellent understanding of the learning technology needs of the organizations across the world.

Terry is a corporate learning consultant for CommLab India - USA and Canada. He is also the president of The Learning Networks DBA, learning.net, a learning technology solutions company. He earned PhD in Educational Theory and keenly follows the latest developments in learning technologies.

The Issues Around Training and Education- *Scenarios from the Corporate World*

Let me share some of the typical scenarios that one encounters in organizations.

Scenario 1:

You invest millions of dollars in developing a new product. Your sales force **needs to know** the features of this product and the benefits the customers can reap out of it, so that they can sell it.

Your service group **needs to know** how to provide after-sales service in order to ensure customer satisfaction. Your customers **need to know** how to use it.

The need for knowing all these leads to the need for training.



The Issues Around Training and Education- *Scenarios from the Corporate World*

Scenario 2:

You buy a new software system; say an ERP system, to improve your business processes. You pay several millions dollars to license and install this software. Would you not train your entire enterprise on how to effectively use this software? Would you be able to realize a pay back on the system quickly if you didn't do the training?



The Issues Around Training and Education- *Scenarios from the Corporate World*

Scenario 3:

Your company is bound to meet federal and state compliance requirements. What fines and other penalties are you at a risk of paying if you don't do the required training? Does the training communicate and reinforce the content that the government requires?



When organizations face such scenarios, their business gets impacted. How can training be effectively used to address such business challenges? Let's discuss in the following sections.

What Makes Training Effective?

Training and education – both have a bottom line impact on your business. Doubters beware. If you don't support your sales force, service group, and customers, you risk wasting all the other investments you've made.

The question this paper wants to address is how to make this aspect of training and education effective. Corporate training and education is a business by itself worth many billions of dollars a year. Since this training can have a positive impact and is expensive, shouldn't it be made as effective as possible?

My colleagues wanted me to address the question of a training session's impact on a business and what makes training effective. They sent me numerous references to studies that attempt to show the ROI of training. They also referenced the numerous discussions of Kirkpatrick's levels of learning assessment. Undoubtedly they all seem good but I would like to go back to the very basics.

This discussion will be based around Kirkpatrick's Level 2. Has the person who participated in the training learned anything at all? If the trainee or student has not learned something as a result training, then the training wasn't effective and wasn't worth the price paid for it.

State the Problem Clearly

Let me take the general issue of training effectiveness and put it in the context of a fairly specific problem. Among other responsibilities, I manage a group that administers a catalog of continuing professional education (CPE) for certified public accountants (CPAs). To certify the courses for CPE, we are approved as a sponsor by the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA). As a sponsor, we must review courses and verify that they follow established instructional design principles, including clearly stated learning objectives that the participant demonstrates competency in by passing a final examination on the content.



State the Problem Clearly

Recently, NASBA reviewed several of the courses in our library and pointed out that the final examination was not testing the objectives. I looked at the courses and had to agree. The objectives as stated were not tested. This motivated me to take a look at all the courses in the library. I found many cases where objectives were poorly formulated and not even capable of being tested by the training mode being used.

For example, if you want someone to operate a high speed laser printer or perform maintenance on a specific motorcycle model, the best training experience is going to be hands-on completion of training and the ultimate assessment will be a hands-on exercise. If you want a sales person to demonstrate the working of a product or make a presentation, the best training will equip them with the needed models and ultimately test them by asking the student to complete a demo or a presentation.

The general problem around training effectiveness is that if you don't begin with clear [learning objectives](#), then the trainee can't possibly know what they will learn. How can they demonstrate competency in the training and how can they apply it on the job? They may be successful but it will be in spite of the training, not because of the training.

Be Specific When Defining Learning Objectives

An important part of the instructional design process is selecting the proper training mode to teach the identified objectives.



However, in many instances, the mode of training is decided by training budgets and the availability of learners for training. The default in many cases currently is to create an online, self-study training program delivered remotely to the learner through a learning management system.

If a self-study mode is used, the evaluation is then limited to the types of testing items that can be developed in the self-study format. Here the default option would be to follow the multiple choice, true/false, and maybe fill-in-the-blank or matching test items patterns.

In a self-study format, it is impossible to test most high-level application objectives, especially if the default testing items predominantly used are indeed used.

Be Specific When Defining Learning Objectives

In the aforementioned accounting courses, learning objectives were stated that could not possibly be tested in the learning mode being used.

Consider the following three learning objectives:

- Describe a typical merger and acquisition (M&A) deal process from beginning to end.
- Describe our company's M&A Transaction Services' approach to due diligence and to add value to our clients.
- Design and conduct procedures that address common accounting and tax due diligence focus areas, working capital, cash flows, including quality of earnings, and tax risks, for a target company.

Let's disregard for the moment that these are not really well-written learning objectives. Let's just look at the action verbs in the objectives: describe, design, and conduct. Can these be tested in a self-study course? Maybe yes, if the correct type of assessment was used, but nearly impossible if a multiple choice test is used.

Be Specific When Defining Learning Objectives

If these objectives are presented to the learner even at the beginning of a course as to what they will learn in the course, how will they know if they achieved these objectives? How will we, as the developer, know if the content presented and reinforced in the course was effectively communicated?

If these three objectives are what we really aspire learners to exhibit on the job, then we need to select a training mode that allows them to be tested. The self-study course can encompass objectives like:

- Identifying the steps in a typical merger and acquisition process
- Listing our company's M&A services
- Recognizing our company's approach to due diligence
- Given a case study example, recognizing the correct procedure for determining the quality of assets.

The online course needs to be supplemented with other learning activities to achieve the original objectives as stated. In short, a blended learning mode can be used here but not a standalone self-study.

Blended Learning Solutions

Blended solutions give you the flexibility to organize the blend according to your tailor-made requirement. The blend can be adjusted depending on the target audience. For instance if you have a compliance training for an audience primarily composed of finance staff, who are used to reading a lot of text-heavy content, you can provide pre-course work in the form of documentation that needs to be read up before the course.

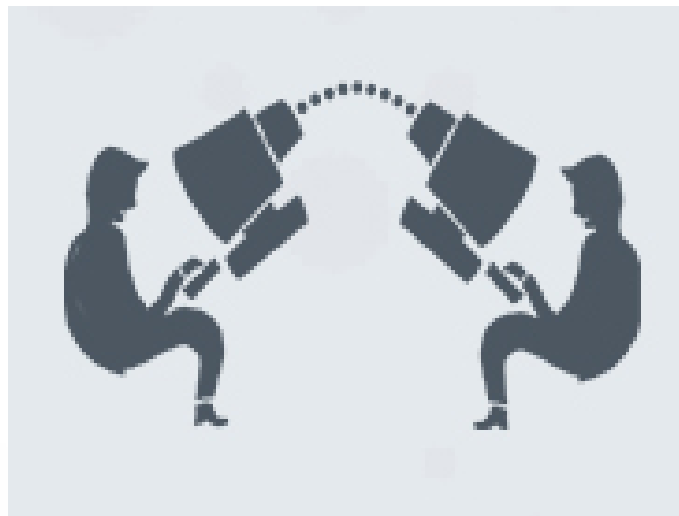
You can also cut down the classroom component to the barest minimum by having most of the material online. By increasing the information being covered in the course, you will be able to cover more, in less time, and could reserve the classroom component to just a Q&A session and discussions of critical content. Think of the savings in time and cost!



Blended Learning Solutions

Now the same approach may not work with a target audience of sales professionals who may not prefer reading up a lot prior to a session. In which case, you can present the bare bones of the content online and follow it up by multiple face-to-face sessions.

Blended solutions give you the flexibility to organize the blend according to your tailor-made requirement. Because learning is spread across various formats, learners spend more time across a longer period taking part in various learning activities. It helps provide ongoing momentum to sustain learning. Remember: The RIGHT MIX of training solutions can be work like a magic blend.



Blended Learning Solutions

Let's consider another example that is completely different. Consider the following objectives for a course in using the UNIX operating system for a sales engineer .

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Complete the procedures, programs, and files involved in the system startup and shutdown of an UNIX System.
- Use the command line tools that are available in UNIX.
- Utilize the standard UNIX system commands to obtain status information on users, files, and processes.
- Identify the UNIX configuration and the device names subordinate to the /dev directory.
- Demonstrate how to use a disk array to help manage and maximize the performance and availability of disks in a UNIX system through the use of virtual disks.
- Configure and manage the system swap space.
- Configure and manage the dump space for the system.
- Explain the Version Migration and Fallback (VM&F) features available on systems running a UNIX RAS.
- Describe the concept of disk arrays and the advantages and disadvantages of the six primary RAID modes.
- Use basic network communication commands and techniques.

Blended Learning Solutions

In a self-study course, the learner may not be able to complete processes, use tools, configure requirements, or describe anything unless the course was a very complex simulation. However, the objectives can be practiced and demonstrated in a classroom hands-on course with computer labs.

We want our learners to be able to do something that can impact business when they complete a training course. If this is our ultimate goal, we need to begin by clearly defining the tasks and behaviors that will have that impact and then test the learner to be sure that the objectives have been achieved. We need to consider what objectives can be addressed by various training modes. We need to select the mode based on the objectives and be realistic about what can be achieved.

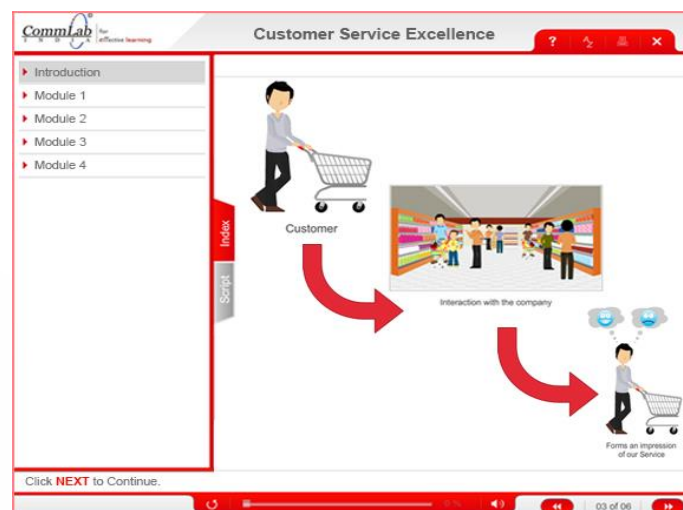


Summary:

It All Goes Back to Instructional Design 101

If a business follows the basic principles of instructional design in the development of training and education programs, the programs are sure to have a positive impact on the operation of the business.

1. You have to start with what a group of employees or customers need to know. Identify the population to be trained and complete a task analysis of what they need to know about the product or process.
2. Construct a [learning objective hierarchy](#) that provides the chained tasks or behaviors to prepare them to complete the tasks.
3. Provide assessment items that measure the achievement of the objectives.



Summary:

It All Goes Back to Instructional Design 101

These steps will ensure that the training or education program has the desired outcome. If you do not have clear objectives, then you cannot have clear outcomes.



Of course, in the development of any program, the affective components of the process have to be considered. Will the program engage learners? Will they be able to identify the relationship between the program and the ultimate on-the-job activity? Well, that is the subject of another white paper.