

Objectives: A Must for Effective Training

There is a lot of discussion about Training Objectives and their use. I have been involved in some of the discussions as I feel that without objectives your training and delivery of training is ineffective and without purpose, certainly to those on the receiving end. Why? I shall explain.

Purpose of Objectives

Having objectives helps you in a number of ways:

- They help you in the design stage
- They provide a 'map' for your delegates
- They assist in the selling of Training programmes.

Without objectives when you start to design training you have no idea what it is you need to train. Indeed, if you have carried out a Training Needs Analysis the objectives will already be written for you. Once you have the objectives and you have designed your training then they are used to inform the delegates what it is they are going to learn whilst attending or using the training material.

Objectives help you identify if you have achieved your training goal as you can check against them to find out if the delegates can now do what it is you set out to train them in.

Structure of Objectives

In Training, your objectives need to have a particular structure in order for them to be functional and informative. The language you use when writing them provides a level of confidence in you the trainer from your delegates.

The structure we use is SMART. This stands for

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timed/Timely or Time Bound

When you write objectives for the first time it can be difficult to use the structure. Practice and patience are vital when you first start writing objectives.

To start with you need to identify what is your delegates are going to be able to do after the training - the specifics. You need to break down what you are training into sections so that each can fit together in a logical order

so that altogether they make up the whole. As an example we will use 'Making a cup of Tea'.

- Make a cup of tea using a tea bag within 15 minutes
- Demonstrate the safe use of a kettle
- Explain the Health and Safety issues around making a cup of tea
- Dispose of a tea bag appropriately

Another rule of objectives is that you do not want more than 6 objectives for a training session. If there are more than 6 then break the session into sections and deal with some of the objectives and in the next session the remainder.

The objectives above are SMART. They are SPECIFIC because they state exactly what the delegates will be able to do. Verbs (doing words) help us convey this. Understand is not SMART! You cannot measure if someone understands something without testing them. If you ask someone, 'do you understand what a car is?' nine out of ten times the answer you get will be 'yes'. There is no demonstration of their understanding. However, ask someone to explain what a car is and you get an understanding of their knowledge. That is why we use words like, demonstrate, explain, list, make, conduct, deliver etc. They are all MEASURABLE as you can measure the time it takes to make the tea to see if it is done within 15 minutes. You can observe them using a kettle and measure it against set guidelines for using the kettle (these are provided with all new kettles that you buy). You can measure their explanation about Health and Safety issues and measure how they dispose of the tea bag. All are ACHIEVABLE and REALISTIC and we have one TIME element in there as well (within 15 minutes). An easy way to ensure that the TIME element is always included is to include the sentence

By the end of this training session/day/week/hour you will be able to

This is timed as it is an indication to the delegate when they will be able to do the task or tasks that you are training them on. Notice as well the use of 'will' instead of should. Will, gives the delegates confidence in you and makes them feel that they can do it. Should, puts doubt in their minds as to why they might not be able to do it. When you run a Recruitment Interview course they WILL be able to run an interview in the classroom environment but, they might not all be ready to run one in the real world as interviews take practice and require planning and the right tone and questions need to be used. Using 'Should' to cover those that possibly need more coaching before they can run a live interview sows the seeds of doubt in all the delegates and then you would have coach all of them.

How to use Objectives

If you have taken the time to write them - use them! They should form part of the opening of your training session to inform your delegates what it is they are going to learn or be able to do after the training. It forms level 4 of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - Self Esteem. You are telling them that

they will achieve something and then they do. They should be shown to the delegates either on a Flipchart or using PowerPoint. They should also be read out at the same time and then take questions if there are any. At the end of the training you can revisit them to check with the delegates if they have been covered.

Objectives may adapt during the training depending on the knowledge level of your delegates. It is always to go up a level rather than come down a level.

Use your Objectives to sell your courses. Look on any Training Providers, including my own, and you will see Course Objectives on the descriptions of courses and other training material. This all goes to help sell your course as it tells the buyer what it is they are buying and if it is the correct course to fit their training need. Keep your objectives simple and short. Don't over write them or explain too much away otherwise there is no need for the delegates to attend.

Use objectives, use them well and above all don't see them as 'fluff' in a training course. They are vital for trainer and delegate alike because without them we may as well gather in a room and talk about anything we like. Objectives give you purpose and an end result.

*[AiTraining Consultancy](http://www.aitraining.net/Training%20Courses/train_the_trainer.htm) runs a *Train the Trainer* course where writing Objectives is explained and practiced. For more information visit www.aitraining.net/Training%20Courses/train_the_trainer.htm or email andy@aitraining.net or call +44 (0) 20 328 65165.*