

FUNDAMENTALS OF INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Trainer: Stephanie Legatos, slegatos@yahoo.com

Training offered to SkillWorks grantees on June 7, 2006 and July 19, 2006.

This workshop introduces a comprehensive approach to designing or editing training workshops. An instructional design consists of interrelated components that systematically build upon each other. The design is a planned sequence of learning experiences that support the learning objectives, creating opportunities for participants to increase knowledge, build/enhance skills, and/or change attitudes.

The model presented is based on a solid and proven theoretical foundation and includes tools and techniques to streamline the instructional design process. Every decision in the design process is *deliberate*. Each choice you make impacts the structure of the design as a whole.

The instructional design process answers six basic questions:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| WHO? | Who are the learners? |
| WHY? | Why is the training necessary? What situation are the learners in that demands this training? |
| WHEN? and WHERE? | What are the physical and environmental parameters? |
| WHAT? | What content most effectively meets the need? |
| HOW? | How will the workshop be structured? What training methods—activities and materials—will best support the objectives and maximize the learning? |

Program Objectives:

- Identify a course goal that provides a vision and road map.
- Review a learner analysis tool to identify key characteristics that may influence the instructional design process.
- Review a context analysis tool to determine environmental parameters that can impact the instructional design process.
- Distinguish three distinct categories of learning domains.
- Write measurable learning objectives and select the appropriate learning domain for each objective.
- Use a content analysis tool to identify and prioritize topics to align with stated learning objectives.
- Identify training methods to meet stated objectives and appeal to diverse learning styles.

How to Start:

Determine your course goal. A course goal is a broad, yet focused, statement of the desired outcome of your training workshop or program. Basically, in one sentence, it captures what participants will be able to do as a result of their attendance/participation. The course goal communicates to what extent the training workshop or program will meet the identified training need. Remember: you may need more than one workshop or program to satisfy the entire training need. And, there are situations in which training needs can be met – or might best be met – by other interventions (e.g., coaching, shadowing, OJT, cross-training, electronic or print resources, culture change, academic courses).

Conduct a learner analysis. A learner analysis helps you to identify the characteristics, skills, knowledge, and attitudes of participants toward the training topic. This tool aids you in developing learning objectives, selecting content for your workshop, choosing training methods, and choosing specific training activities. A learner analysis can be conducted formally before the start of a workshop or training program, or informally during the workshop. The more you know about the participants prior to the program, the greater your ability to design training that meets their needs and fosters their motivation to learn.

Conduct a context analysis. A context analysis identifies the environmental factors that can impact your training workshop or program. It assesses the physical organization of the room as well as other factors that can affect the utilization of the training site. A context analysis also can help you choose training methods that are compatible with the physical environment in terms of space as well as equipment.

Write learning objectives. The ability to design training that is relevant and effective is dependent on the clarity of your overall course goal as well as on the goals determined for each module (section). *A learning objective is a description of performance (behavior) that you want the learner to be able to exhibit at the completion of the training.* Objectives are important to everyone involved in the training process: instructional designers, trainers, learners, managers, as well as the HR and/or training department. They specifically state the steps by which the course goal will be accomplished. Concrete, observable, behavior-based objectives provide a road map for measuring the ROI (Return on Investment) of the training.

The two key questions that will aid you in writing learning objectives are:

- What do you want to have happen?
- What is expected to change as a result of this training?

Training can impact participants in three distinct ways – these are called learning domains, often referred to as KSA: knowledge, skills, attitude.

Identify content. Choosing content is a challenging and a creative process. To choose wisely, always refer back to your course goal and learning objectives. These will help ensure that your content is appropriate, focused and targeted to meeting the outcomes (objectives) you want to attain. Many instructional designers and trainers identify content that far exceeds the timeframes of the workshop – and many believe that it's all important. The process of content selection can be streamlined by honestly evaluating the importance of the topics you identify – and eliminating the “nice to know” information, or including it in an appendix or resource guide.

Sequence the information. Sequencing is the order in which modules or sections of a workshop are put together. Whether you are considering the content of a single training workshop or an entire training program, learners are better able to follow your lead and stay engaged when the sequencing structure you have designed is cohesive and creates smooth transitions between activities and between topics. This maximizes their ability to absorb, process, and apply new learning. Deciding on a sequence is a conscious and deliberate act – and, you will always be faced with choices in strategy. The impact and value of an activity often depends on its placement in the overall training design. Each activity should be strategically planned, build upon the previous one, and work toward the next one. Two lenses are helpful here: flow and pacing.

Choose training methods. Learning objectives lead the designer to the training methods that are most appropriate to utilize. Remember KSA! Methods are selected based on the type of learning to be achieved (knowledge, skills, attitudes), and can be classified across a spectrum, from trainer-centered to learner-centered, from didactic to experiential. In between these two extremes, a variety of methods are available. Effective instructional design incorporates diverse training methods. Adults learn primarily by doing. If you want learners to use what they are learning, ideally they must be given the opportunity to apply the information, practice the skills, and receive feedback during the training.

Design/select training activities. Once you've chosen the training method(s) you want to use to meet each specific learning objective, you need to create an activity or find one using trainer's resources. Activities vary in type, length and intensity. For example, if you've chosen to use role play as a method, do you want your activity to be a single role play between two participants (with the remainder of the group being observers)? Or, do you want to have all participants work in triads to conduct a role play? Or, do you want to show a video of a poor example of the skills you want to build, have the group identify what they'd do differently, then have each person role play? Your choice will depend on the KSA you've identified, as well as the timeframe you are working within.

Instructional design is both a science and an art. The workshop that was presented at The Boston Foundation in June and July followed the above outline – and included comprehensive hands-on practice with specific tools to help each person build skills by designing a workshop step-by-step.

For more information on bringing this training to your organization – or receiving individual, customized instructional design coaching – contact Stephanie Legatos, Co-owner of Be Well Partners by phone at 978-356-2939 or via e-mail at slegatos@yahoo.com.