

Resource: **Strategic Design**

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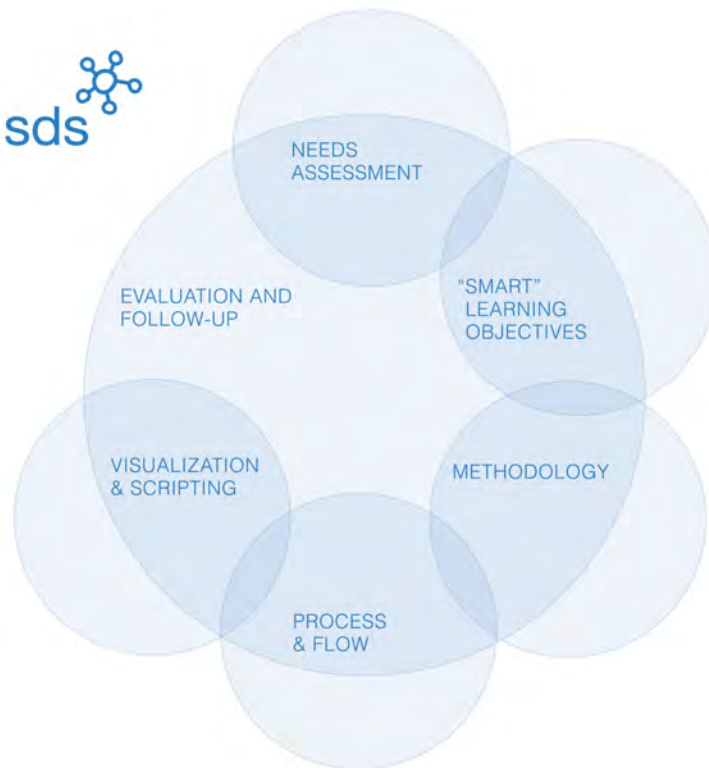
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Craig's Strategic Design System (SDS)

For most of the past 24 years, my professional work has focused on the design and delivery of high-quality, interactive, non-formal education—training. Through my firm, Common Ground Consulting, the majority of this work has focused on assisting social profit organizations in identifying and meeting the needs of their clients, staff, and stakeholders.

Having worked over the years with more than 150 organizations, and students, faculty, and administrators from almost 200 colleges and universities nationwide, I've spent my career developing a philosophy of learning that bridges human potential and social responsibility. The design system that follows represents my approach to training design and is intended to assist new and more experienced trainers in making conscious design and delivery decisions.

In teaching this system to graduate students at the American University in Washington, DC, they have generally found it useful to develop an understanding of the entire system, but to focus on each step in turn, mastering the subtleties of a particular step before moving to the next. Of course, as a teaching or learning tool this may be more practical than for you in your day-to-day work as a trainer. In any case, I believe that the key to effective training is knowing yourself, and that any system will work more effectively once you've modified it to fit your particular design style.

I. Needs Assessment [The Newspaper Questions]

When it comes to designing training, the first step (and arguably the most important) is conducting a thorough needs assessment. As the person responsible for designing an effective program, you should use every means available to you to gather the data that will assist you as you move through the design process. As a journalism student, I was taught to always ask the "Newspaper Questions:" Who, What, When, and Where. As a program consultant, I also learned to ask the most important, "Why?"

Over the years, these questions have generally provided me with most of the information I need about the participants, the program logistics, and most importantly, the context for the training. Of course, some of the best data will only be available at the training, so don't forget to include diagnostic activities early in your training agenda.

- ★ Participants / Audience: Who
- ★ Logistics: What, When & Where
- ★ CONTEXT: Why

II. Develop "SMART" Learning Objectives [Outcomes]

Once I have collected useful data, I develop an overall goal for the training—a general statement of purpose. More than anything else, I use this overall goal as a benchmark during training delivery. More useful during the design process, is the development of "SMARTER" learning objectives—Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic & Relevant, Time Specific, Extending Capabilities and Rewarding. SMARTER objectives are essentially your training outcomes and represent the affective, behavioral, or cognitive changes that you would like participants to achieve. SMART objectives are very difficult to develop, but are integral to any successful training.

- ★ Affective: Attitudes, Feelings, Beliefs
- ★ Behavioral: Skills, Competencies
- ★ Cognitive: Knowledge, Concepts, Ideas

III. Methodology [How]

Probably the most creative and exciting step of the design process is the development of methodology. It is here that a trainer is charged with designing exercises and activities that will stimulate the participants in ways that will lead to the achievement of the training objectives. As you make methodology decisions, you should review your needs assessment data and spend some time thinking about what we know about how people learn. Most folks (adults and children), for example, learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Create an

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experience for your participants (a shared experience, if possible), let them react to it, help them to process it together, connect it to the bigger picture, and make sure it can be applied to their real world.

- ★ Audience: Demographics, Experience, History
- ★ Learning Styles: R/L Brain, Medicine Wheel, Meyers-Briggs
- ★ Risk / Level Of Threat: Time, Trust, Safety
- ★ Timing: Biorhythms, Fatigue, Pace
- ★ Setting: Room Set-Up, Physical Environment, Space
- ★ Preparation: Materials, Pre-Work, Readings, Assignments, Homework

IV. Process & Flow [Format]

Once you've selected the methods that you believe are best suited to your participants, their goals and objectives, and any limitations that you may have concerning time or space, review your design again in terms of its "flow." It helps me to think about a design in terms of its opening, body, and closing. If this is a multi-day or multi-session training, you should think about it on two levels— the opening, body, and closing of the macro or overall training, and the same things with the micro of each individual session or day.

In the opening, I am concerned about things like establishing my relationship to the participants (and building credibility), articulating the goals and objectives of the training, and setting the tone for the experience. I like to think of the body of the training in terms of blocks. These blocks may be tied to particular outcomes or a particular method, or even time (breaks, meals, etc.). The most important thing to remember here, however, is that people learn in different ways, and your job is to create an experience that provides learning stimuli to as many people as possible. Finally, in the closing, I want to reinforce the outcomes and provide another opportunity for participants to anchor their training experience to their real worlds. I'm also very interested in bringing appropriate closure to the training and talking about "next steps."

- ★ Opening / Introduction: Credibility, Tone, Pace, Energy
- ★ Body: Experience, Share, Analyze, Generalize, Apply (SAGA)
- ★ Methods / Techniques: Lecture, Fishbowl, Dyads, Role Play, Brainstorm, Etc.
- ★ Closing: Review Epiphanies, Next Steps, Closure

V. Visualization / Scripting [Practice]

When I was growing up and learning to play sports, every coach that I ever had encouraged me to visualize success. Whether it was shooting a foul shot, driving a golf ball, or running the hurdles, believing that you are going to be successful is half the challenge. As a trainer, I apply this concept a little differently, of course, but imagining the questions, the discussions, and the issues is a very useful design activity. Where do you imagine participants will challenge one another or you, when will they begin to get tired, what will happen if a new method you've designed fails to stimulate the participant's learning? Put yourself in their shoes and review the design again!

- ★ Imagine The Questions!

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VI. **Evaluation & Follow-Up [Measurement]**

Finally, of course, is evaluation. In my book, a training is not a training if there is not evaluation. You must develop as a part of your design a means for measuring the participant's progress, though useful evaluative data is not easy to collect or validate. The classic model of training evaluation occurs on four levels: 1) Participant Reaction; 2) Learning; 3) New or Changed Behavior; and 4) Measurable Impact of the Training on the Organization. As we move from level one to level four, the data becomes much more objective and more useful. Of course, the resources necessary to conduct those evaluations also becomes much greater. At a minimum, you should solicit participant feedback so as to improve your future designs. But remember, a favorable reaction to a design does not necessarily assure new learning.

★ Always! Always!! Always!!!

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL TRAINING IS KNOWING YOURSELF!

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