

TRAIN



common
ground
CONSULTING

The
beautiful thing
about learning is
that no one can take it
away from you.

- B.B. King

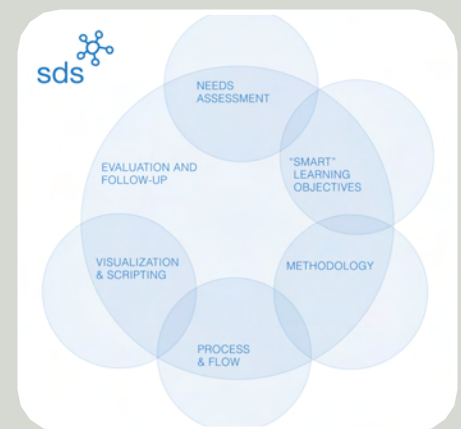


“Learning is finding out what we already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers and teachers.” - Richard Bach, *Illusions*

For most of the past 16 years, much of our professional work has focused on the design and delivery of high-quality, interactive, non-formal education—training. The majority of this work has focused on assisting social profits in identifying and meeting the needs of leaders who want to make a difference in their communities.

We’ve developed a philosophy of learning that bridges human potential and social responsibility. On our website, you’ll find information about our design system which is intended to assist new and more experienced trainers in making conscious design and delivery decisions. Our approach to learning is based on the premise that experience comes before learning and that the process of learning can be as significant as the actual lesson or information to be learned.

Since each of us experiences events and activities in different ways, it is impossible to tell us how to learn or even what is important. As learners, we must make these decisions for ourselves. When training is experiential, learners decide for themselves what is important. Most people learn best when they are actively engaged in their own learning process—when they are able to participate in activities which have been designed to meet their own unique learning goals and objectives. As a trainer, your role is to create an environment that supports each individual's own learning style and which allows your participants the opportunity to grow and challenge themselves and each other. Create an experience for your participants, let them react to it, help them process it, ask them to connect it to the bigger picture, and make sure it is relevant to their world.



Strategic Design System

As a graduate school instructor in the International Training and Education Program (ITEP) at American University, we developed and taught this specialized system for designing high-quality, mission-critical, experiential training and non-formal education.

Start with SMART Objectives

Effective training begins with solid goals and objectives. Carefully defining them up front can make your work easier in the long run and lead to more positive results.

S = Specific. Objectives should be specific and use only one action verb. Objectives with more than one verb are difficult to measure. Avoid verbs that may have vague meanings to describe intended outcomes (e.g., “understand” or “know”) because they are too hard to measure. Instead, use verbs that allow you to document action (e.g., “At the end of the session, the students will list three concerns...”). The greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

M = Measurable. It is impossible to determine whether or not you met your objectives unless you can measure them. A benchmark from which to measure change can help. For example, if you found in your evaluation that 70% of high school students believe that their age protects them from HIV infection, you might write an objective that strives to decrease that percentage to 55%. Thus you will have an objective with a benchmark from which to measure change and one which is specific enough to be evaluated quantitatively.

A = Appropriate. Your objective must be appropriate (e.g., culturally, developmentally, socially, linguistically) for your target population. To insure appropriateness, objectives should originate from the needs of your target audience and not from a preconceived agenda of program planners. Conducting a solid needs assessment (e.g., holding in-depth interviews with members of the target population) helps to ensure that your objectives will be appropriate. For example, an objective focusing on risk factors for an elementary school population would likely be inappropriate for a high school population.

R = Realistic. Objectives must be realistic. Countless factors influence human behavior. If program planners set their sights too high on achieving changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills or behavior, they will likely fall short of reaching their objectives. While a program may have been very successful, it may not appear that way on the surface because the objectives were too ambitious. The following is an unrealistic objective:

After participating in “Project Outreach,” 100% of high school students will be able to list all the ways that HIV is transmitted.

A more realistic objective could be written as follows:

After participating in “Project Outreach,” 85% of high school students will be able to list at least three of four ways that HIV is transmitted, as described in the “Introduction to HIV Session.”



T = Time specific. It is important to provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be measured or a time by which the objective will be met. Including a time frame in your objectives helps in both the planning and the evaluation of a program.

Within two months of beginning “Project Outreach,” 60% of peer educators will demonstrate the capacity to persuade a peer of the importance of practicing safer sex or refraining from it altogether.

SIX QUESTIONS



IN THE MINDS OF ALL AUDIENCES

01. Is This Person Qualified?
02. Do they Know Us?
03. Are They Organized?
04. Will They Be Brief?
05. What Is Their Main Point?
06. Are They Finished?

Confidently answer all of these questions during your talk and you will be successful!

QUICK TIP SERIES

Published monthly by Common Ground Consulting, LLC, this brief is part of a series designed to support and enhance the critical work of social profit organizations.

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