

BUSINESS NEEDS AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES: WHAT'S THE RELATIONSHIP?

Excerpt from materials for InSync Training program on learning evaluation

Business Needs and Performance Objectives: The Connection

After completing a needs analysis, you'll be able to identify areas that your learning program can help strengthen. The program you develop should focus on the competencies employees need to improve and ultimately contribute positively to business success.

You'll start by crafting performance objectives that align with business needs. Be prepared to be very specific, as you will precisely detail what learners will need to do on the job in order to satisfy what the business expects to achieve annually and in the future.

This article, the fourth in our Learning Effectiveness Evaluation Program, delves into this alignment, building on what you learned about the importance of the learning/business needs connection in Topic 1.

Defining and Describing Performance Objectives and Business Needs

Performance objectives describe what good performance looks like and must be able to do the following:

- Describe what skills, knowledge, and behaviors learners need to acquire or hone to achieve on-the-job excellence and business outcomes.
- Provide a framework for learning journeys and set up signposts to guide learners along the way.
- Inform the methods used to measure the learning program's success.
- Align content, assessments, and tasks to round out the learning experience.

It takes some thought to design an effective and relevant performance objective. It needs to be learner-centered, focus on a single concept or principle, and use an action verb that is measurable or observable.

A tool that the learning industry relies on for the creation of quality objectives is Bloom's Taxonomy, a six-level classification system that defines and distinguishes different levels of human cognition (i.e., thinking, learning, and understanding). Each level provides a set of action verbs that are typically used for performance objectives.

So, what does a good performance objective look like? Here's one for this course (and what you will hopefully do once you've completed it!): Align the instructional strategy with the stated business need, anticipated outcomes, and performance metrics.

Before setting performance objectives, you have to take into account what the business needs are because, as you recall, what the business needs and hopes to achieve is at the core of your learning program. As such, these two types of objectives go hand-in-hand.

Business needs are measurable targets of how to achieve business needs. They define a company's direction. What does a business need look like? Here's an example: Implement process improvements to improve uptime of core services. It's an actionable item that will lead to measurable outcomes.

Remember: Thoroughly analyze the needs assessment before creating performance objectives. It reveals performance gaps and areas in need of improvement. The data that emerge highlight how these challenges affect business operations — sales, manufacturing, customer service, etc. — pointing out where a business might not achieve its objectives and outcomes. In this case, the ideal is to create a learning experience with performance objectives tied to the gaps that might impede projected financial and production outcomes.

What Alignment Looks Like

What is the flow of the connected objectives and outcomes? The chart below lays out how this interdependence looks. As you review it, know that there is no one ideal set of objectives as they are based on a company's unique needs, desired outcomes, and business strategies and operations.

BUSINESS POSITION	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE	BUSINESS NEED	MEASURABLE OUTCOMES
IT Operations Manager	Assess IT teams' capability to address operational challenges that reduce the uptime of services or systems	Implement process improvements to improve uptime of core services review on demand, recordings available for review on demand	Availability of 99.99 percent for customer portal, Mean Time to Repair (MTTR) of less than three hours
Sales Agent	Use a five-part sales process to secure and retain business relationships to raise sales quotas	Close sales to achieve sales quota	Monthly recurring revenue of \$130,000
Customer Service Supervisor	Model effective customer service interactions to demonstrate technique and impact	Deliver timely, helpful, and accurate service to customers	First contact resolution percentage; average customer satisfaction rating

Here are six steps you can take to set the ideal performance objective /business need alignment for your learning program:

1. Identify strategic business needs.
2. Define the performance results necessary for achieving them.
3. Identify the roles, tasks, and competency areas where this performance will be measured.
4. Evaluate the gaps and set related learning goals.
5. Communicate these goals (and their relevance) to employees.
6. Design and develop training for achieving performance objectives.

You're well on your way to developing a solid learning program that will grow employee competencies and work confidence. You'll be able to set measurable performance objectives, strategically aligned with business needs, that will help the business achieve the outcomes it desires.

In the next article, you'll explore how to ensure that the performance objectives you've thoughtfully created are in sync with the diverse learning methods and tools that exist in the modern workplace.

References

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LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION PROGRAM

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SCORECARD

The InSync Training Learning Effectiveness Evaluation Effective Scorecard provides you with a means to explore and manage the way you develop and implement an evaluation strategy and process to measure the impact of your learning program.

The scorecard consists of three tools:

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SCORING TOOL

This score sheet lists the effective practices and provides general guidance on your score.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE SCORING MATRIX

This tool provides guidance on how to numerically score each effective practice.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE DESCRIPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This resource further describes each effective practice and provides recommendations on how to model exemplary practice in the design, development, and implementation of a learning program evaluation.

