

# Gathering Requirements

Successful training programs don't just happen. They come from knowing exactly what the training must accomplish for the business, the department, and the individual. Here are 10 tips for creating meaningful training programs. **BY KENDRA LEE**



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## **1. CONSERVE TIME**

Before entering a requirements gathering meeting, know exactly what you want to accomplish. To do so, create a template of the type of information you need to gather from executive sponsors and spend 10 to 30 minutes gathering the key information you need.

## **2. UTILIZE INTERVIEWS**

Before you begin the interview process, determine the critical contacts you need to speak to. While many people will have an interest in the training—including the sponsor, stakeholders (such as the participants themselves and their managers), and subject matter experts—you may only need to interview a few to gather a complete set of requirements.

## **3. IMPLEMENT QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES**

Begin by gathering the strategic information while the contact is fresh and alert in the meeting. Ask open-ended questions that require a person to offer an expository response. End the meeting with the tactical, easy-to-answer questions, such as delivery details. You'll know your questioning technique is working when your head is full of ideas for the program design.

## **4. GATHER BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS**

Be sure to gather your sponsor's and any executive stakeholder's expectations. Even the best training won't be praised if it does not meet management expectations and business objectives, so it's important to ask what they want the training to accomplish.

## **5. UNDERSTAND THE VISION**

This must happen before you get started. For example, the sponsor may have certain expectations (such as who will be involved in the training, the method to use, and the duration) that you're not planning for. By understanding the vision, you'll stand a better chance of hitting the target.

## **6. GET TO THE HIDDEN ISSUES**

The person you are interviewing won't hold back information on purpose, but may not realize there is important information that can help you build a program that will better address the business objectives. To get the complete information you need, question fully and listen carefully for answers that will help you prioritize the training content and your program.

## **7. IDENTIFY THE EXPECTED BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

Different from business expectations, you want to know exactly what change in participants' on-the-job behavior is expected as a result of the training program. Use this information to determine what activities and reinforcement will be required to ensure behavior change occurs.

## **8. VALIDATE YOUR FINDINGS**

Validate your findings from interviews with the executive sponsor to ensure your strategy and plan are in line with his or her expectations.

## **9. DETERMINE THE ROI**

Determine the business return the sponsor is expecting from this training—both financial results (productivity increases) and soft benefits (employee morale increases). If you can identify the ROI the sponsor is looking for, you can craft more effective learning objectives, and ultimately will know the topics to train and design to use.

## **10. CONSULT FROM EXPERIENCE**

Always remember that you, as a trainer, bring a wealth of experience from your training expertise. Speak from the experience you have and offer training recommendations based on that expertise. Clarify that training is the right solution to address the business need and validate that training the target audience will drive the desired return on investment. **T**