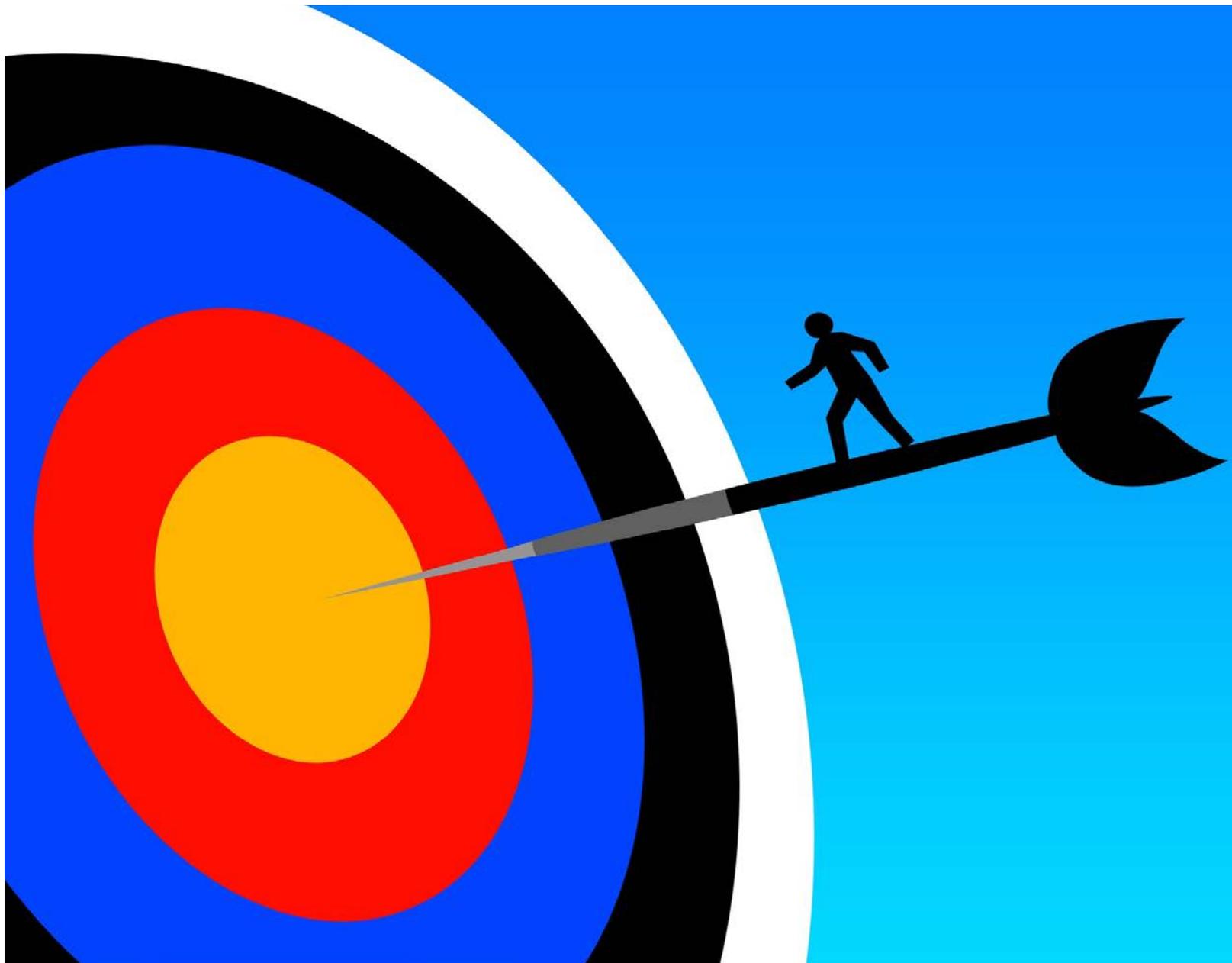


OBJECTIVES



Writing Action Objectives: The Key to Learning In Continuing Education Classes

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A Sad But True Tale of Modern Objective Development



Video Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrECZrUP7Ug>

Bob was amazed, angry and confused when the regulators fail to approve his course and suggested he learn to write action objectives. Bob is now faced with a double dilemma – he doesn't know where to go to learn how to write objectives and he has never seen the word "action" modifying the word "objective."

When he inquired about a course for learning to write (or even *define*) action objectives he was told that his state regulators are not responsible for making competent course developers, only for approving courses for the various types of education credit.

Bob's quest for action objectives led him to the internet where he learned the definition of a learning objective is "the desired learning outcome expressed in terms of the learner's change of state." Well, that's just what he thought he said in the first place, wasn't it? What exactly is wrong with the learning objective Bob wrote and the regulators rejected? Bob decided to ask a professor of adult education at the local university to evaluate his course objective.

Here's what the professor wrote:

First, his objective implies that Bob knows all that it is possible to know about risk management when chances are that he doesn't.

Next, his objective implies that all students who attend his course will leave knowing all that Bob knows about risk management and they almost surely won't.

Finally, even assuming that Bob knows it all and can teach it all to all of his students, the acquisition of knowledge alone does not result in changed behavior.

But the most important thing wrong with Bob’s course objective is that it is involved with Bob’s behavior, not any student behaviors. An action objective is about DOING a task, not simply acquiring knowledge about the task.

The action objective answers the question,
“What should students be able to DO when this class is over?”



Keep in mind that changing incorrect or inappropriate student behaviors is the underlying justification for all job training, and that real estate continuing education classes are about job training.

Bob should know that any training course is about the students and their needs. The bad news is that even if Bob actually did know and could teach everything about risk management his course objective would still be inadequate because the **student** is mentioned in the same tone in which Bob could be saying “My objective for this course is to teach my **houseplants** all about risk management.”

In order for the course objectives to reflect desired student behaviors it is first necessary to sift through the course material until the tasks that comprise competent agent performance in the area of risk management become apparent.

For the sake of this discussion let’s assume that after dredging around the course materials one of the tasks identified with competent agent performance was found to be *accurate and complete record keeping*.

It is well known that good record keeping skills are of great benefit in limiting risk. It is equally well known that most real estate salespersons are not exemplary record keepers.

These two facts are of great value when writing course objectives for a risk management course. The value lies in the ability of the learning experience to encompass both the desired behavior **and** the undesirable behavior that must be overcome in order to limit risk.

In other words, it is essential to changing risk behavior to offer examples of ways in which record keeping can be either instituted or improved as well as lecturing students on the evils of poor (or no) record keeping.

While it is perfectly logical to think that a wonderful course objective might be “My objective for this course is to tell the students why record keeping is important,” in fact close examination of this objective will reveal that the objective is still about the instructor, not the students. Most importantly, there is no action element to indicate how and what the students must do to become adequate record keepers.



So, the first hard-and-fast rule of objective writing is always to make the objective about how and when a behavior results in good record keeping skills.

Let’s explore how the objective can be re-written so that it will be about the student.

1. Instructor Centered Objective: My objective for this course is to tell the students why record keeping is important.

2. Student Centered Objective: Students who participate in this course will learn the proper forms for record keeping and how to complete them.

Are the differences between the two styles of objectives obvious? If they are not, check these points:

- How many times reference is made to the instructor in each style
- In Objective 1 the students are being told; in Objective 2 students are participating
- In Objective 1 there is no student behavioral change; in Objective 2 students are improving record keeping skills by learning specific record-keeping behaviors.

Again, it is not enough to tell them what they’re doing wrong; in order to modify behavior, it is also necessary to give concrete examples of how to do the job right. Action objectives should represent the correct behavior that is the desired outcome of any professional development training.

The bad news is that teaching students to improve record keeping skills requires a lot more of the instructor than simply telling them why record keeping is important.

The even worse news is that the part of the course where the instructor and students collaborate to improve the students’ record keeping skills is the *actual teaching component of the course*.

They already know that keeping comprehensive records is good business; they take the class to learn specific ways to do it. If we don't teach them HOW, the why doesn't matter to them or anyone else.



A course developer who incorporates into a course learning activities that have real life value encourages adult students to learn more than they ever will from a sermon that encourages them to keep good records.

Without illustrations of how an objective can be achieved the lecture is ineffective. The illustrations should reflect the levels of students' record keeping skills the learners can achieve.

The teaching should represent several record-keeping skill levels because your students will be at varying levels. The course is about students' needs or everyone would be better off staying home.

Some really high producing real estate licensees have such a low level of record keeping skills that any discussion of improvement should probably begin with the Cardboard Box method.

In this method a series of cardboard boxes are placed where they can accumulate potentially valuable (and other) paper records. Those places are usually under their desk in the offices, the back floorboards of their cars and somewhere near their home workplaces.

When full they can be emptied into a larger box in the trunk of the car. When that box is full it is sealed, dated and put into storage. It is then replaced with another, empty cardboard box. When a panic situation involving documents arises, all boxes must be frantically searched.

The Cardboard Box method is primitive, but if it replaces the Stuff Into any Available Crevice method it's an enormous step; now the papers can be found in a limited number of locations as opposed to an infinite number.

Don't judge these folks. They have other skills. You're just not working with those other skills in record keeping courses. Can you see how individuals at this level of record keeping would **not** benefit from a course whose stated objective is to tell them why record keeping is important?

Their CPAs tell them every quarter and charge lots of money for doing it. The CPAs don't give them gut level instruction on how to get the job done, and that's OK because it isn't their job. Guess whose job it is?



If you guessed the risk management course instructor give yourself a gold star!

Now let's see how many gold stars you can earn. Answer the following questions by selecting the best example of an action objective in each following scenario:

1. Your class topic is "Measuring Structures." As a result of participating in this class students will:
 - a. Understand how to draw the exterior outline of a structure.
 - b. Use graph paper when drawing the exterior outline of a structure.
2. Your class topic is "Writing Contracts." As a result of this class students will:
 - a. Understand the requirement for recording day, date and time on contracts.
 - b. Record day, date and time on all offers and counter offers in the correct place on the contracts.
3. Your class topic is "Fair Housing." As a result of participating in this class students will:
 - a. Know the fair housing laws.
 - b. Refuse to discuss any individual's membership in a protected class.
4. Your class topic is "Real Estate Finance." As a result of participating in this class students will:
 - a. Understand why lenders sometimes charge discount points on loans.
 - b. Calculate the money value of discount points charged on loans.
5. Your class topic is "Risk Management." As a result of participating in this class students will:
 - a. Understand the value of keeping good records.
 - b. Develop a personal methodology for keeping track of listing contracts, sale contracts and counter offers.

Any objectives that include any form of the words "know" or "understand" are **NOT** action objectives. Those and similar words are indicators of passive objectives.

Passive objectives are not wrong. They are the basis for all learning. The problem lies in failing to move beyond this basic level into the behavioral area of learning. The behavioral level will not be achieved by most students unless they are led by instructors into specific behavior descriptions.

Example:

- Important documents related to a transaction should be placed into a folder
- The folder should be labeled with the property address and/or sellers' and buyers' names
- The folder should be stored inside a file cabinet
- The file cabinet should be locked in ensure confidentiality
- Back-up copies of important documents can be scanned into a computer
- Electronic files of confidential documents should be encrypted to ensure confidentiality

So yes, we do want students to KNOW and we do want them to UNDERSTAND, but most of them will arrive in our continuing education classrooms both knowing and understanding. They just can't figure out how to take the big leap from knowing and understanding to correctly DOING.



Helping students to make that leap is called teaching and teaching is our job.

One of the objectives of this learning exercise is that participants/students will write action objectives. Please take one of the courses that you will be resubmitting to your real estate commission for approval and, using what you have learned in this mini-course, write action objectives for each topic and subtopic included in your course.

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