From learning objective to design

Create a rough learning design with the seven principles

You know what participants need to learn, but there's nothing on paper yet? Use the seven principles as a guide and sketch a first design that is built on evidence-based choices from the start.

S M A R T E R

Overview

Who it's for	Goal	Time	Format
Anyone who has learning objectives for a training, but no design yet.	Build a first, rough design with the seven principles as a guide.	60–90 min	Individually or as a team.

In short

You start from your learning objectives. For each objective, you choose the principles that make the most difference, and look for building blocks in the HOW cards to apply them. Place those building blocks on a timeline of your training.

You end up with a rough sketch of your training, in which some or perhaps even all of the principles get enough attention.

Good to know

A rough design is a sketch, not a top notch session plan. It's allowed to be messy. You'll work it out in more detail later.

What you need

- 1 SMARTER deck (see step 2)
- Your learning objectives (see step 1)
- The SMARTER design worksheet [DOWNLOAD LINK] or a large sheet of paper, with sticky notes and a marker (see step 5)

How it works

1 List your learning objectives

Write down no more than three learning objectives. What should participants be able to do by the end of the training?

Tip

Phrase your learning objective as behaviour you can observe. Not "participants understand feedback", but "participants can hold a feedback conversation following a set step-by-step plan".

2 Lay out the principles

Lay out the letter cards in a row so they spell the word SMARTER. Under each letter, place the WHAT card, the WHY card and the stack of HOW cards for that principle.

3 Choose your principles for each objective

Read the WHAT cards. Optionally, read the WHY card if you need more explanation. For each learning objective, choose two or three of the seven principles that make the biggest difference.

Watch out

You don't need to fit all seven principles into every learning objective. Better three principles applied well than seven applied half-heartedly.

4 Find your building blocks

For each principle you chose, browse the HOW cards. Choose one or two that suit your learning objective and your target group. Nothing suitable? Come up with your own application.

Example

Your learning objective is "participants can hold a feedback conversation following a set step-by-step plan". If you choose the principle 'Attention', the HOW card "Open with a hook" could be your building block: in the first minute, you open with the question "When did you last get feedback that was really useful to you?" If you choose the principle 'Emotional Safety', the HOW card "Share your own failures" fits: you tell them about a feedback conversation you messed up and what you learned from it. That way, participants also dare to make mistakes themselves when they practise.

5 Sketch your design

Use the worksheet or draw a timeline of your training on a large sheet: beginning, middle and end, or several moments if your training consists of different parts. Write your building blocks on sticky notes and stick them at the moment where they fit best.

6 Check your design

Go along the row of letter cards once more. Which principle is completely missing from your sketch? Is that a conscious choice, or do you see another opportunity?

Follow-up and next steps

- Develop your rough design into a session plan or slides.
- Show your sketch to a colleague: what stands out, what's missing?
- Delivered your training for the first time? Then use activity 01 "Evaluate and improve your existing design" to improve it further.

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