Chapter 8
Preactive Stage:
Behavioral Objectives and Lesson Planning

ALIGNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT
WITH BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

Once all needs assessment schema have been conducted and analyzed as discussed in the previous chapter, the instructional designer can set the objectives. Even if a course or training is one that has been conducted previously, a needs assessment is necessary to assure that the content is meeting all the stakeholders prescribed needs. Most content is not static and requires a reevaluation to be certain that the information and the methodologies being taught are relevant to current practice and needs of all stakeholders.

To establish objectives for a course or training, the instructional designer first needs to focus the results of the needs assessment, to understand what the online training and/or education should accomplish. In other words what are the final goals or outcomes that need to be achieved by the online program? The instructor and designer should step back and look at the list of needs and then envision what the learner’s performance should look like at the end of the education or training. What knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes should the participants be able to leave the online training being able to do and apply? The designer at this point should create a listing of all that the education should achieve.

With the needs assessment having been completed and the instructional designer understanding and having a vision of the needs of all stakeholders and how they integrate with the specifics of the four course types, the objectives can be established and operationalized. To operationalize the learning objective is to look at the each of the needs lists as established and then to have that listing culminate in a set of well defined the objectives. In the online teaching and learning environment this means to establish the objective that is necessary to meet the needs assessment without consideration to any perceived online pedagogical limitations. The objective is established and then the proper pedagogy to address that objective can be developed. The designer at this point should not consider the online pedagogies or the perceived limitation of teaching online. Many online instructors will develop their objectives based upon perceived
boundaries of the online arena. The instructional designer should not place any perceived restrictions to the online teaching, trying to design an online pedagogy and then writing an objective to fit. The objectives should be established first then the appropriate online pedagogies can be determined to meet those objectives. Don’t allow the use of an online learning platform to drive the objectives. Set the objectives then design the online pedagogies.

There are some educators and trainers who believe that creating a set of objectives or as some define behavioral objectives (as we are defining the behavior that we wish the participant to leave the program having attained) is just semantics and not worthy of their time. Many instructors just design their content from what they think or what is felt to be important. This is false thinking as the objectives are an outgrowth from the needs assessment and serve as the cornerstone for the rest of the preactive phase. If the objectives are properly crafted, the rest of the preactive phase of planning and designing online lessons becomes clear and everything can fall into place.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy**

Once the needs assessment is completed and the designer is satisfied that all information has been gathered, he can begin the process of developing and establishing the objectives for the program. In planning and developing the objectives for each of the four course types, the designer must take into consideration how they will integrate with the different learning realms or as Bloom (1956) and Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia (1964) developed, the three domains of learning. Bloom discusses three domains of learning that are not only applicable in the traditional face to face setting but also in the online environment (Figure 1). The three domains are cognitive, psychomotor and affective. Each of these plays a significant role in establishing the objectives in the four online course types.

*Figure 1.*