

## Talent Development 46 Outcome Statements

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Section 2.2 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Instructional Design. Section B states, “Skill in developing learning and behavioral outcome statements.”

An outcome statement is intended to identify how the participants will be changed as a result of the training. They will have a different perspective from before the event and have a

new life skill they can use in the future.

This section is rather straight forward. You must be able to articulate what participants in the training will be able to do following the training. The challenge here seems simple enough, but there are a few precautions and opportunities we need to address here.

For this article, I will use a live example of a training program I once did on how to improve the creativity level for a professional group. A similar analysis could be done for any proposed training program. In this specific case, I was doing a training event for a team of 12 technically-oriented trainers.

### Starting From Different Backgrounds

Each person was starting from a different perspective relative to creativity. A couple of individuals had specific training on creativity in their post-college courses. There was one person who was a professional artist on the side. Another individual worked in a “think tank” environment for over 12 years. Two people had patents to their name. Three of the individuals had no formal background in creativity at all.

For this class, I advertised that an outcome statement was to make participants familiar with how to use brainstorming techniques to improve the creativity of their solutions. There was also a second outcome statement that I did not reveal until later in the day.

### Creative Methods

As a group, this team liked to use what I call “busy hand” toys as a way to enhance their learning and have some creative fun. We used about 10 different toys from small puzzles to pipe cleaners and “Lego® Bricks.” The idea was to augment the intellectual learning with physical manipulative activities as a way to increase enjoyment and allow the creativity to blossom.

At one point, I split the group up into two teams. I gave each team an identical set of Tinker Toys®. The challenge I set out for the teams was to “build the highest freestanding structure they could with the materials given.” As the teams began to brainstorm how they would approach the challenge they gained significant enthusiasm. They became excited as they discussed different ways to construct a tower. They started building their towers; one group worked from the floor and the other from a table top.

Once they had reached the maximum height, I measured each tower with a tape measure. One group beat out the other by over six inches. I then asked the group if they had accomplished the objective of the exercise.

They looked puzzled, so I pointed to the chart where I had written the instructions for all to read during the exercise: “build the highest freestanding structure you can with the materials given.”

They thought that they had accomplished the task well until I revealed the second outcome. Nowhere in the instructions was it stated that the teams could not pool their materials together and work as a larger team. They just assumed that they were confined to the teams as originally selected.

### **Outcome Statement**

Before the exercise, I had created two **outcome statements**. The second one was that I wanted everyone in the room to learn to attack a particular challenge with fresh eyes, and not be constrained by conventional thinking. Once they were able to let go of their self-imposed constraint and pool the materials, the entire group was able to assemble a structure nearly two feet higher than either of the teams originally did.

This exercise served to illustrate how creativity is often stifled by self-imposed limitations, and if those limitations can be exposed it leads to much better outcomes. The entire class learned some valuable lessons that day. First, they learned how to get creative with Tinker Toys and build some towers. Second, and much more important, they learned that sometimes silo thinking makes groups work in competition when there is an alternative to get a better result by working together.

Sometimes you can generate more enthusiasm if the entire Outcome Statement is not revealed in advance. As was the case in this example, when the group discovered and stumbled on the most important message, it led to some significant learning that will be long remembered by the group.

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