

Chapter Six

Working with Trainers

The previous two sections of the handbook addressed the Training Officer's planning, organisational and fundraising responsibilities. In this chapter, we focus on methods for working effectively with trainers and using a variety of specific training techniques.

As a training officer, you must ensure that effective and innovative training is planned and carried out based on the needs of your organisation and its employees. An important part of this responsibility involves working with trainers to conduct training workshops. Although you may not conduct the training yourself, it is important to fully understand the principles of participatory, experience-based training exercises. This chapter should serve as a guide for training officers to help them supervise trainers in the design and implementation of training, and it may be useful as a reference for the trainer as well. The chapter will revisit the Principles of Adult Learning, behavioural objectives, and the Experiential Learning Cycle, introduced in Section 1 of the handbook. It concludes with a focus on good facilitation skills. By the end of Chapter 6, you should be familiar with the principles of working with trainers and you will be better prepared to ensure that effective training is conducted to support your organisation.

This chapter contains useful information for training officers and trainers. Training officers may use the information to guide trainers and ensure that workshops are as effective and innovative as possible. Pages 6-2 through 6-4 and 6-8 through 6-13 are specifically designed to be used by trainers to improve their approaches and effectiveness.

Adult Learning and Training

Chapter 1 introduced the basic Principles of Adult Learning. Now it is time to revisit those principles and see how they can be used to create a good learning environment.

According to adult learning theory, trainees learn best when training:

- is self-directed
- is based on an immediate need
- is participatory
- is experiential
- is reflective
- provides feedback
- shows respect for the learner
- provides a safe atmosphere
- occurs in a comfortable environment

OBJECTIVES

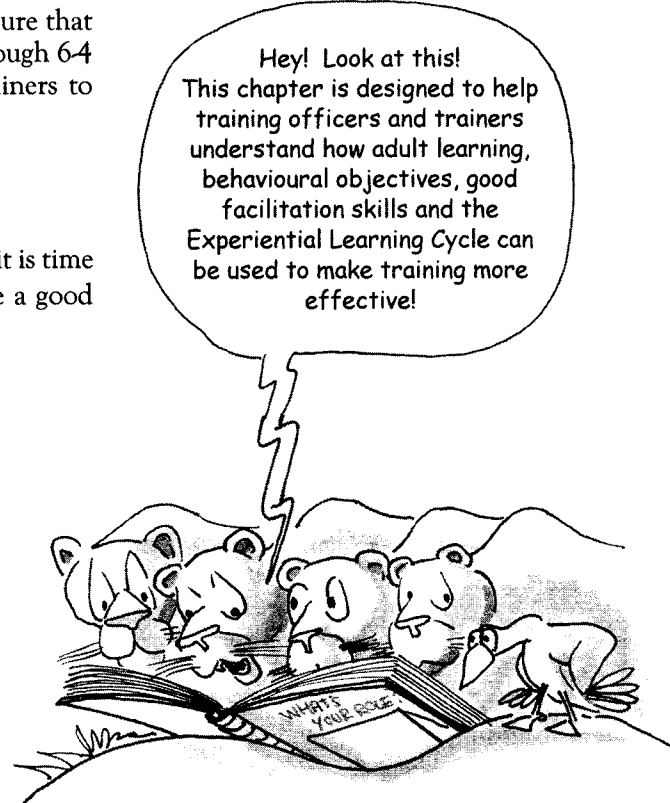
THIS CHAPTER WILL ASSIST YOU TO

Develop behavioural objectives to target behaviour change.

Apply the Experiential Learning Cycle within a training session.

Use facilitation skills in group discussion to ensure mutual understanding.

Assess the effectiveness of training sessions.



Hey! Look at this!
This chapter is designed to help training officers and trainers understand how adult learning, behavioural objectives, good facilitation skills and the Experiential Learning Cycle can be used to make training more effective!



Adult Learning

I developed a community conservation training activity using adult learning principles.

I designed and improved the workshop plan based on input from trainees.

The trainees hoped that the training would help them to work more effectively with communities.

They said that they found it difficult to communicate with people around protected areas.

I had the trainees conduct a role play to highlight the challenges of communicating with communities. The trainees learned a lot about local people and how they feel.

Improved Training Through Adult Learning

Training can be made more effective by implementing the following adult learning principles:

Make Sure Training is Self-directed: Participants know their own needs and they should share responsibility for their own learning. To ensure that learning is self directed:

- 1 Discuss the content and methodology of the workshop with participants at the outset. Use their recommendations to improve the training.
- 2 Introduce the training schedule to the participants and encourage discussion to decide on any changes or improvements which must be made. The trainer then has responsibility for fine-tuning the workplan during the course of the training event based on feedback from participants.
- 3 Encourage participants to develop their own action plans so that they can apply lessons learned through the training to their own work.

Address Immediate Needs: Motivation to learn is highest when training addresses the needs which are most important to trainees. To focus on immediate needs, give each participant the opportunity to express his or her motivation for learning. Ask why they are participating in the workshop, what they hope to gain and how the workshop will increase their job performance. Then, focus the training on these needs.

Encourage Participation: Participation in the learning process should be active, not passive. Training which is based on experience and action is more effective and more memorable. Active participation should be focused on behaviour change and increased performance. To encourage participation:

- 1 Have participants analyse problems and discuss issues in small groups as much as possible. Trainees may be too intimidated to speak in front of a large group but they may enjoy problem solving with a few other people.
- 2 Discourage direct criticism of workshop participants. Effective feedback techniques may be used to encourage direct and productive dialogue without personalising the issues.
- 3 Have the participants establish working norms (ground rules) which indicate what they expect from each other and how they can best work together during the workshop.



Base Training On Experience: The most effective learning is based on shared experiences. In this way, participants learn from each other and the trainer often learns from the participants. To make your training experience based:

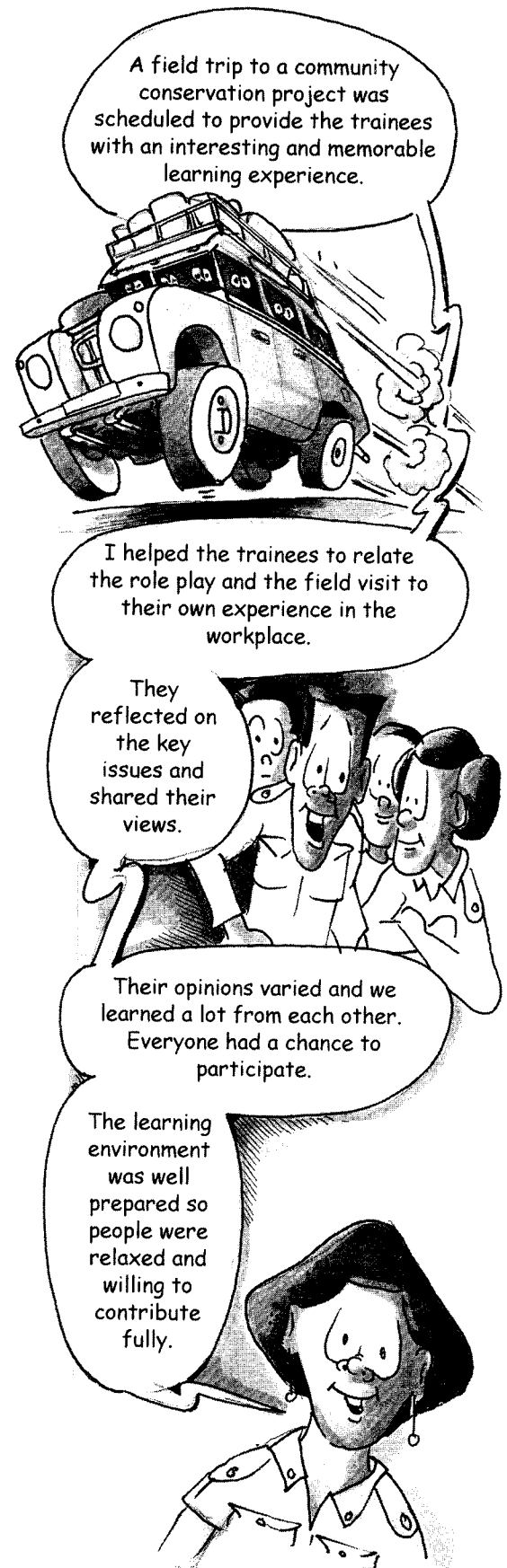
- 1 Encourage participants to use relevant experiences from their lives to serve as examples and case studies during the training.
- 2 Put issues and examples in a familiar context (refer to the section on experiential learning later in this chapter).

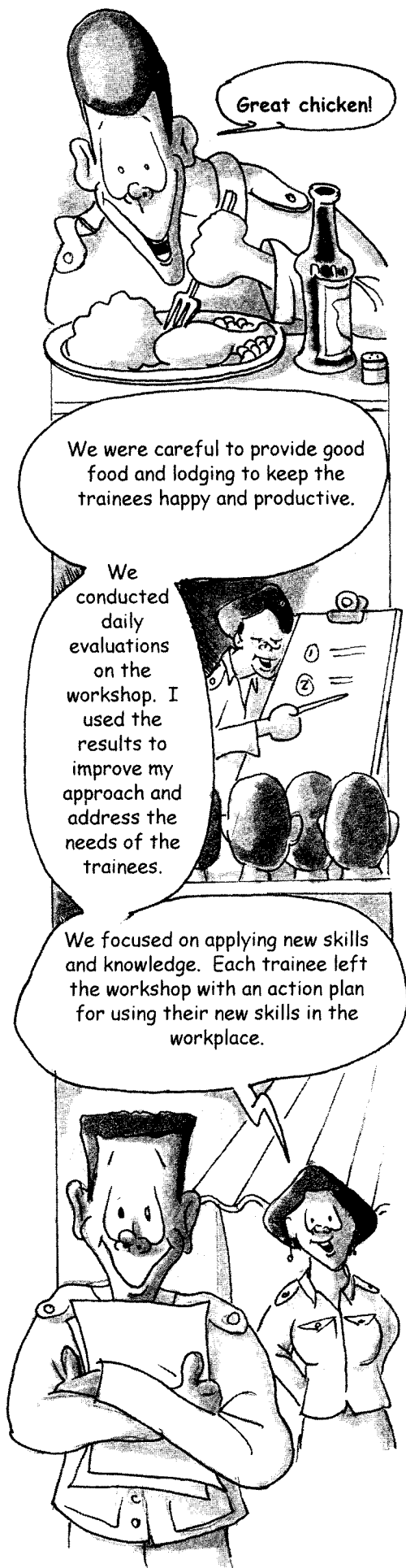
Allow for Reflection: Maximum learning occurs when participants are provided with the opportunity to reflect back upon their learning experience, draw conclusions and derive principles for application in their jobs.

- 1 Encourage participants to discuss the issues which are important to them—those things which are giving them the greatest difficulty in their work. It is always comforting for participants to know that others are facing many of the same problems.
- 2 Participants should be assisted in identifying strategies for dealing with key issues. Many of these may be addressed through the development of action plans.
- 3 Plan follow-up activities which enable participants to periodically review their action plans and adjust them accordingly. As a trainer, plan to be involved in the follow-up to review progress and offer advice.

Show Respect for Trainees: Mutual respect and trust between trainer and trainee strengthens the learning process.

- 1 Never diminish the participant's status - be a role model by showing respect for everyone.
- 2 Understand and acknowledge each participant's cultural values (e.g., age, mode of addressing people).
- 3 Provide opportunities for trainees to share their skills, knowledge and expertise.
- 4 Be positive to everyone who contributes to discussions. Allow differing opinions even if you may disagree with them.
- 5 Encourage the trainees to comment on the content, pace and effectiveness of the training. Conduct regular evaluations and act on the recommendations.





Create a Safe Atmosphere: Cheerful, relaxed trainees learn more effectively than those who are fearful, embarrassed or angry. Make the atmosphere favourable to learning and participation.

- ❶ Participants must have the support of their supervisors when they attend the training activity, especially if the activity will keep them from their work for a significant amount of time.
- ❷ Provide accurate information about the workshop well in advance. Provide the information to trainees and their supervisors and make sure to include details regarding their participation and logistical arrangements.
- ❸ Begin training with a culturally appropriate ice-breaking exercise (joke, story, game).
- ❹ Be sensitive to current interpersonal relationships among participants (i.e., factions, cultural differences).

Provide a Comfortable Environment: Make your participants comfortable. Participants who are well fed, well rested, healthy and comfortable are ready to learn with maximum effectiveness.

- ❶ Select a site for the training that is pleasant, comfortable and conducive to learning through active participation.
- ❷ Schedule training well in advance so that participants can adjust their calendars and avoid scheduling conflicts.
- ❸ Respect customary meal times, or provide snacks and drinks during breaks.
- ❹ Address complaints which arise regarding accommodation and other comfort-related issues.

Provide Feedback: Corrective and supportive feedback makes training more effective.

- ❶ Trainers should not be the only source of feedback. Actively encourage participants to express their views on the issues and comments made by others. Encourage feedback from everyone, including the quiet participants, and acknowledge all responses.
- ❷ The trainer should acknowledge the value of different opinions. Avoid negative reactions to comments made by participants.
- ❸ Paraphrase statements to acknowledge individual contributions and reach consensus on the issues.
- ❹ Include interesting follow-up visits to the field or places of work to promote dialogue and feedback.

Using Behavioural Objectives

Behavioural objectives are statements which describe how trainees should demonstrate enhanced knowledge, skills and/or attitudes once they have learned something new. Behavioural objectives are more specific than the kinds of activities indicated on a job description or a performance appraisal. In the context of training, behavioural objectives are focussed on what participants should learn and what behaviour change should take place as the result of a training session. Remember, job competence is measured not only by what a person *knows*, but also by what a person is capable of *doing*.

To Use Behavioural Objectives:

- 1 *Define what you want the trainees to be able to do as a result of the training. Decide on what action you want them to be able to take.*

Think in general terms about the task on which the training session is focussed. If necessary, refer back to your training needs assessment. Consider what area of work requires the most improvement and then think specifically about what exactly should be expected of the trainees.

- 2 *Determine the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the trainees to accomplish behaviour change.*

If you have conducted a task analysis, then you are already aware of the general knowledge, skills and attitudes expected for effective performance. You may need to consult job descriptions to confirm the skills you want to develop during the training. Focus on tasks directly related to the training topic.

- 3 *Specify how the behavioural objective can be used to show that training has been successful.*

The trainee's performance following the training event should help us to determine the degree of behaviour change, i.e. improvement in knowledge and skills, and change in attitudes. Behavioural objectives must always be based on an *action verb*. Using an action verb indicates that the trainee must do something to demonstrate learning success. This is different from using words which do not require any demonstrable action (such as to understand, to know, to feel) ~ they don't require the learner to do anything that we can observe.

Combine the Elements: The guidelines listed above will help you to draft a set of specific and clearly expressed behavioural objectives. Ask a colleague to review your objectives with you to ensure that they meet the above criteria. See the next few pages for ideas on how to perfect the wording of behavioural objectives.

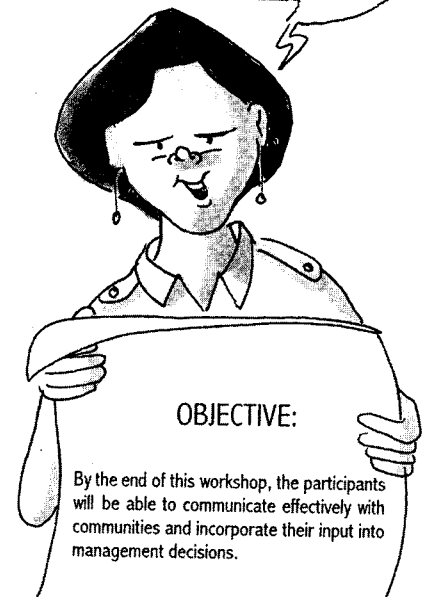
I BASED MY WORKSHOP ON
**BEHAVIOURAL
OBJECTIVES**

I wanted my trainees to be **able** to communicate effectively with community representatives.

I knew that for the trainees to do this, they would have to **understand** why communication is important.

They would require good communication **skills** and a positive **attitude** towards communities.

I planned to **test** the workshop's success by observing whether the communication skills are used and the communities' inputs listened to.



Perfecting Behavioural Objectives

Good behavioural objectives allow for measurable performance change. Keep objectives simple and focussed.

When drafting objectives, consider the following criteria:

- ✓ verbs should be used to describe what action the trainee needs to take. The wording should suggest an observable action
- ✓ the objective should be presented using the phrase: 'by the end of the session, the participant will be able to...'
- ✓ the action described by the objective should be very specific
- ✓ the action should take place within the context of the training situation
- ✓ the objectives should focus on the trainee

The following suggests key words to use when formulating your objectives. Select word choices based on whether the your objective emphasises ❶ knowledge, ❷ skills or ❸ attitudes.

❶ Emphasising knowledge acquisition:

Objectives focussed on knowledge/information/facts should incorporate verbs such as

list	explain
name	describe
tell	recount

❷ Emphasising skills development:

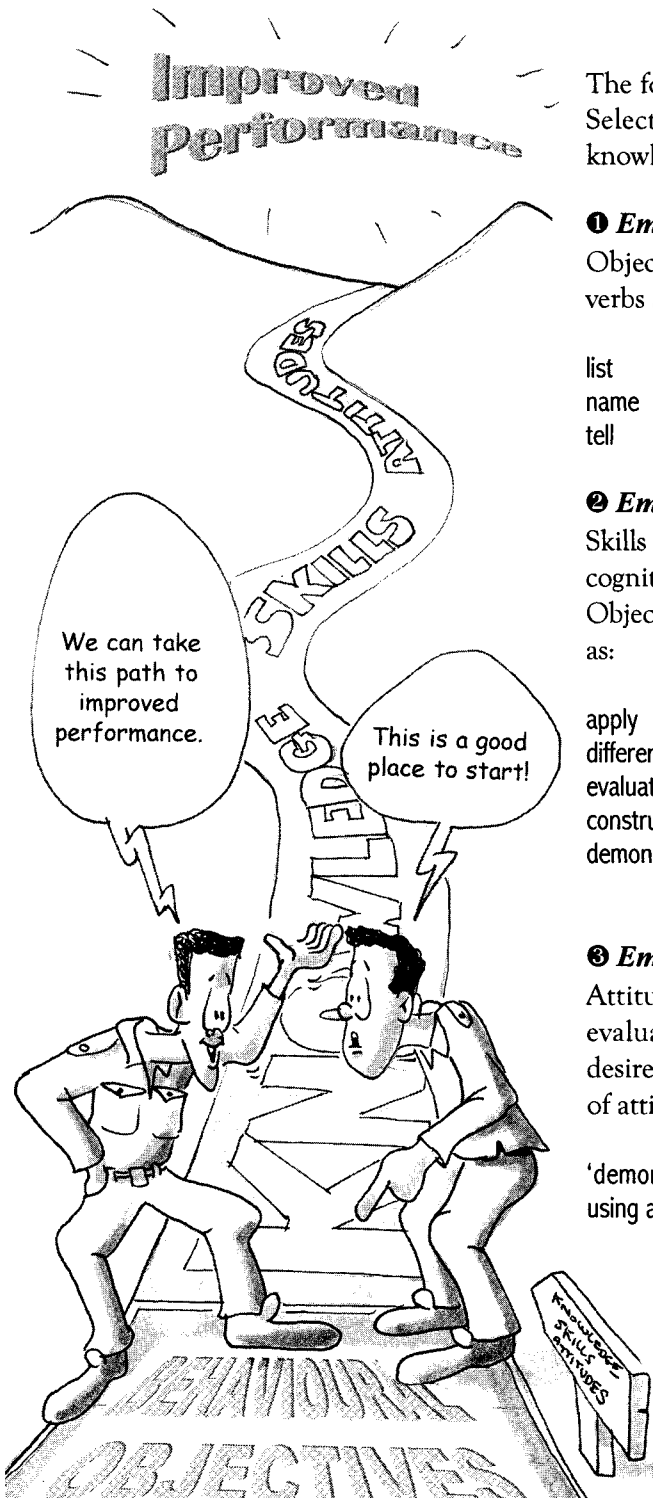
Skills may take many forms including manual skills, communication skills, cognitive skills, problem solving/decision making skills and leadership skills. Objectives which focus on development of new skills incorporate verbs such as:

apply	use	plan
differentiate	compare	examine
evaluate	analyse	implement
construct	develop	generate
demonstrate	create	decide

❸ Emphasising attitudinal change:

Attitude changes are the hardest to promote and the most difficult to evaluate. Observations of a trainee's behaviour will indicate whether the desired changes in attitude have taken place. Objectives focussed on change of attitudes should use phrases such as:

'demonstrates _____ by _____' (e.g. 'demonstrates respect for staff subordinates by using active listening skills, open-ended questions, and paraphrase during a conflict')



Training which is based on attitude change often focuses on building the trainee's confidence to apply new knowledge and skills. The training may also focus on respect and understanding for other colleagues.

Action verbs which may be used to promote attitude change include the following:

volunteer	agree	choose
recommend	defend	endorse

Exercise: REVISING OBJECTIVES

Below are three sample objectives, comments regarding their wording and suggested revisions. Use these examples to see how your objectives may be improved.

Objective 1: *To increase the participation of women in community based anti-poaching activities.*

Comment: Given the limitations of a single training workshop, the objective may not be realistic. Most likely, trainees would need more time to attain this objective. The objective should be more focussed

Revised Objective: *By the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to develop a plan of action for increasing the participation of women in community based anti-poaching activities.*

Objective 2: *To do a job description.*

Comment: The objective is too general, and the verb 'to do' isn't clear in its meaning. It implies that the participant could develop any job description to attain the training objective. Be specific.

Revised Objective: *By the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to draft a job description for a guide in Highlands Game Reserve following the format established within the Ministry of Wildlife.*

Objective 3: *To understand what a protected area manager is supposed to do.*

Comment: The verb 'to understand' is not an action verb. It would be difficult to gauge the success of the training. Be more specific about what the learner should be able to do to demonstrate understanding.

Revised Objective: *By the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to describe the six primary functions of a protected area manager.*

Sample Objectives

from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Prosecutor's Course, Malawi.

By the end of the training, the participants should be able to:

Describe the criminal procedure for making arrests and treatment of suspects.

Describe the requirements of the new Parks and Wildlife Act stipulated in the new constitution.

Distinguish admissible and inadmissible evidence according to the Law of Evidence in Malawi.

Explain statutory law requirement in Malawi.

Explain conditions of service of staff in Department of Parks and Wildlife as outlined in the Malawi Public service regulation and the Civil Service Commission regulations.

Write letters, memorandums, and summonses effectively.