

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

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EXAMPLE OUTCOMES:

In a follow-up survey three months after directors of child care centers graduate from the Extension Management Academy:

- 60 child care center directors will report they now have more confidence training their employees.
- 50 child care directors will report they now have a business plan and are following a budget for their center.
- 40 centers will improve their environmental scores by at least 5%.
- 75 centers will report that they are now sending at least bi-weekly newsletters to parents.

EVALUATION PLAN:

All child care center directors will be take a pre-test questionnaire as they begin the program and then a post-test questionnaire three months after the conclusion of the program.

PRE AND POST-TEST SCALE:

DON'T KNOW/ UNSURE	DEFINITELY NO	PROBABLY NO	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
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EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Let's look at survey questions to help determine if the outcomes were achieved.

POOR: I train new employees.
PROBLEM: Too vague.
BETTER: I feel confident training new employees.

POOR: I am a good business manager.
PROBLEM: Too vague. Qualify good.
BETTER: I now have a business plan for my child care center.
BETTER: I now have a budget for my child care center.

POOR: I know more about environmental scores.
PROBLEM: Ask a question that shows action and achievement.
BETTER: My child care center's environmental scores improved at least five points this year.

BETTER: Will you please circle the letter to tell us how your environmental scores changed this year?

- A. DECREASED**
- B. NO CHANGE**
- B. INCREASED LESS THAN 5 POINTS**
- C. INCREASED 6-10 POINTS**
- D. INCREASED 11 POINTS OR MORE**

- POOR:** I develop good relations with parents.
- PROBLEM:** “Good relations” could mean a great number of things.
- BETTER:** I hold at least monthly meetings with parents.
- BETTER:** I send a weekly newsletter to parents.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE:

Child Care Directors Management Academy					
Please answer these questions to help us improve our program:					
	DON'T KNOW/ UNSURE	DEFINITELY NO	PROBABLY NO	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
1. I feel confident training new employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I now have a business plan for my child care center.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I now have a budget for my child care center.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My child care center's environmental scores improved at least five points this year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I hold at least monthly meetings with parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I send a weekly newsletter to parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXAMPLE FOR UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO CHANGE

1. In your opinion, why do more child care center directors not have a business plan, including a budget?

2. What could be done here in Example County to make it easier for child care center directors to have a business plan and budget?

ANOTHER EXAMPLE FOR UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Child Care Directors Management Academy

Please answer these questions to help us improve our program:

This year Extension has focused on your needs as a Child Care Center Director. The objective of our program was to help you develop skills in your management role. Our training focused on budgets, parent communication, business plans, employee training and environmental issues. Some people have had time to make changes, or did not need to make changes. Others have not made changes since the program ended. If you have not made changes, please indicate the most important reasons by checking one or more boxes below:

- NOT INTERESTED IN DOING ANYTHING
- PROGRAM DID NOT MOTIVATE ME TO GET STARTED
- HAVE NOT HAD ENOUGH TIME TO GET STARTED
- HAVE NOT HAD THE MONEY TO PURCHASE THE SUPPLIES NEEDED TO DO THE JOB
- FOUND THE DIRECTIONS CONFUSING
- AM NOT A "BUSINESS" PERSON AND CANNOT DO THOSE TASKS WITHOUT HELP
- DON'T BELIEVE THE CHANGES HAVE ANY EFFECT
- OTHER REASON (PLEASE LIST: _____)

Thank You!

HOWEVER...DON'T FORGET OTHER METHODS

This example uses a questionnaire for program evaluation. Observation and focus group interviews are two methods that could be well-suited to this program. Observation works best when you have some sort of checklist or scorecard. You do not have to complete it in front of your clients, instead, you can remember what you observed and complete it in your vehicle. You do not have to be the one who completes the observation because trained volunteers could be observers. It is best not to have too many things to observe at any one time. A focus group interview would involve no more than eight questions and five to seven randomly selected participants. You would ask open-ended questions plus follow-up questions, such as "Have your management skills changed or remained the same since our program ended? Do any examples come to mind?"

REFERENCES

Kiernan, N.E. (2001). Measuring Barriers to Change: Tipsheet 27. University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension. Available: http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/tipsheets/measuring_barrierstochange.pdf

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