



Using Observation to Evaluate Skills

Can you provide an alternative to collecting data through a survey?

An excellent but under-used technique for evaluation is observation. Observation can be an excellent method for evaluating skills such as leadership roles in youth groups, community coalitions, and extension committees.

To design the evaluation, take these five easy steps:

1. Delineate the skills you want to evaluate in very specific terms to enhance the validity and reliability of your evaluation data. For example, list team roles so specifically they are easy to recognize and differentiate from one another:

TEAM ROLES

Task Roles

Initiator
Information Seeker
Opinion Seeker
Informer
Clarifier
Summarizer
Reality Tester
Orienter
Follower

Maintenance Roles

Harmonizer
Gatekeeper
Consensus Taker
Encourager
Compromiser
Standard Setter

2. Have a program objective about the skills so you have a standard for making a judgment about the results. For example:

Objective: Committee members who participate in the leadership training for extension board members will demonstrate each task and maintenance role at least once within three extension board meetings.

3. Decide with the consensus of the participants at the leadership workshop, who should do the observation. It could be another participant who went to the workshop, or, other members of the committee. Either way, having others involved in observation has several benefits over a self-assessment by the participant: it brings others into a discussion of team roles, reinforcing education about leadership, and it allows the participant to concentrate on using the new skills instead of having to concentrate on evaluating themselves.
4. Create a data collection tool for the observer. The easiest and perhaps the most reliable measure is to have the observer note when the role was done and what the participant said, or did in that role such as an "Initiator." See examples below. The team roles observation tool could be xeroxed on hard stock for easy use and durability. One very important social benefit of this measure is that it is not a perception of how well the person performed which could be embarrassing for everyone, but rather, it is a measure of whether the skill was performed or not.
5. Provide a time for discussion of the results among the workshop participants. They will agree that this quiet, unobtrusive evaluation technique is richly reinforcing and educational for everyone involved.



Team Roles Observation Tool

Task Roles	Date observed	What was done/said that showed evidence of role?
Initiator	_____	_____
Information Seeker	_____	_____
Opinion Seeker	<u>6/19</u>	<i>Randy stated that the group had not heard from 3 people: Joyce, John and Martin, and suggested they voice their opinions.</i>
Informer	_____	_____
Clarifier	_____	_____
Summarizer	_____	_____
Reality Tester	_____	_____
Orienter	_____	_____
Follower	_____	_____
Maintenance Roles		
Harmonizer	_____	_____
Gatekeeper	_____	_____
Consensus Taker	_____	_____
Encourager	<u>6/19</u>	<i>Randy remarked that Shawn had a good idea and that the Board should explore that solution.</i>
Compromiser	_____	_____
Standard Setter	_____	_____
		Meeting _____
		Participant _____
		Observer _____

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