



Program Objectives and the Adoption Process

Summer is here and with it, writing program objectives for next year. A few tips:

The principal reason for objectives is to tailor a program to your target audience to make the program more effective. Researchers have identified five stages in the learning-adoption process: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. You can design a far more effective program if you *narrow the stage* of the learning-adoption process in your objectives (Marshall, 1990).

- When starting a new program you might have this objective:

As a result of the program, homeowners will be aware of five techniques to conserve household water that they did not know about previously.

The design of this program might rely heavily on video, newsletter, radio, or newspaper.

- On the other hand, if you have already been doing newspaper columns and other media work on this issue, the objective for this year's program should reflect the target audience's presumed awareness of this issue:

As a result of the program, homeowners will believe that at least one alternative technique to conserve household water will be effective for use. Or,

As a result of the program, homeowners will evaluate alternatives for conserving household water i.e., discuss the PROs and CONs of each of them.

The design of this program might incorporate a forum for participants to exchange ideas in person, in your column, or in the local newsletter.

- If you have worked with the target audience for a long period of time on this issue, you are now in the position to write an objective that reflects an advanced stage in the adoption process:

Over the next year, homeowners will incorporate at least one of five alternative techniques to conserve water introduced through the program.

The design of this program might incorporate target audience members you know who have *already* adopted a technique to discuss at a workshop panel or in your newsletter, the benefits of the conservation techniques from their point of view. This design draws on extension's old and very successful demonstration method.

In summary, if you *narrow the stage* in the learning-adoption process in your program objectives, you are *more precise* in *designing your program* and thus *more effective* with your target audience.

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