

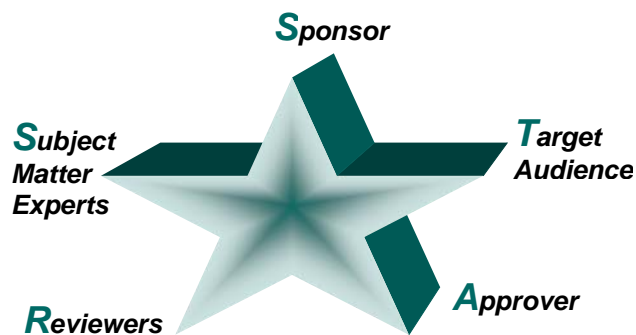


Learning Solutions, January 2009

Welcome to *Learning Solutions*, a periodic e-letter from EnVision Performance Solutions. Our goal is to provide helpful tips and suggestions relating to the world of learning and development, to both L&D practitioners and business partners with training responsibilities.

Align your STARS – the people who make it work

Even the most experienced trainers and instructional designers face challenges in their roles when the people supporting their jobs are not in place. In this first *Learning Solutions* we will highlight the critical people who help make your training project a success, your STARS:



You may work with most or all of these groups of people on any training project. We've defined their roles below, with key questions to ask yourself about the partners in your endeavor and recommended critical actions to help ensure project alignment.

- Your project **sponsor** is usually the person requesting and possibly paying for the training.

Is your sponsor committed? Will your sponsor provide all the resources you'll need to complete the project on time?

At the beginning of the project, meet with your sponsor to review his or her expectations and what support you will need to meet those expectations. This conversation should include the business rationale for the training and set the stage for ongoing communication during the project. Your sponsor may help you identify the rest of your STARS.



Irene Stern Frielich
President

*We want
to hear
from you!*

- What challenges have you faced when aligning your resources?
- What successes have you had?
- What additional suggestions do you have?

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- The **target audience** includes individuals who will receive the training—or their representatives. Keep this group in mind throughout the design and development process—avoid letting subject matter experts (SMEs), the sponsor, or the approver speak solely on their behalf!

Have you scheduled a pilot comprised of your target audience to give you valuable and necessary feedback regarding content appropriateness and training effectiveness?

Remember to keep diversity in mind; involve target audience members from a variety of work sites, departments, and experience levels. Include some of the target audience in the review process.

- The **approver** is usually one of the subject matter experts who is responsible for reviewing all course materials and signing off on final versions. You may ask the approver to assess all reviewer comments and provide you with the final change requests.

Is the approver in a position to decide on conflicting reviewer change requests and to respond to and resolve business questions that impact the training? Will the other resources accept the approver's decisions?

It is best to have one approver. However, if you have multiple approvers, agree in advance on a method to obtain final approval. This may be through an online collaboration and communication or an in-person meeting among all the approvers, for example.

- **Reviewers** are individuals you, your sponsor, and subject matter experts have identified to review and comment on all the training materials at key points during design and development.

Do reviewers represent all stakeholder groups (e.g., line of business the training targets, finance, human resources, and legal)? Have you communicated the expectations to reviewers, and are they on board?

You can use a number of methods to collect reviewer feedback, and you will need to determine which method works best for your team. Ideally, you will end up with one document of reviewer comments from which the approver decides on final change requests.

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- **Subject matter experts** should be very knowledgeable about one or more topics related to the training.

Do you have all content areas covered by one or more SMEs?

Sometimes you will need multiple SMEs to cover all aspects of a project. Agree ahead of time which SME is the “lead” decision-making authority for each topic.

Are the SMEs committed and engaged?

Communicating mutual expectations ahead of time—including project goals and timelines, what you need from the SME and why, estimated time commitment and any planned meetings, and support you will provide—will help SMEs understand their roles. Encouraging the sponsor to deliver this message will go a long way in engaging the SMEs.

One more point: If you are developing instructor-led training, including some of the trainers throughout the design and development phase will help ensure buy-in and a successful delivery. Finding out what works for them will help the instructional designer provide the level of detail needed.

Once you’ve aligned your STARS and have clearly set mutual expectations, you can focus on the design and content of your training.

To comment on this article or suggest future topics, please email us at solutions@envision-performance.com

