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10–Step Guide to Determine Your
Reinforcement Objectives
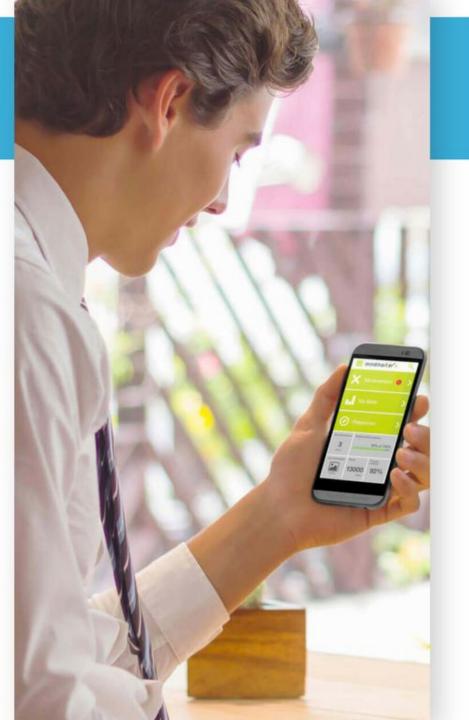
What's in the guide?

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the leader in training reinforcement

Step-by-Step Guide to Determine
Reinforcement Objectives

Before you start building a reinforcement program, you must determine your reinforcement objectives.

Our guide will walk you through each of the crucial steps needed to determine reinforcement objectives that will close the 5 reinforcement gaps and achieve the 3 phases of behavior change.

We will review some common misconceptions about reinforcement and clarify the key differences between training goals and reinforcement objectives.

Whether you are a CLO, trainer, or instructional designer, our guide will help your learners apply their new knowledge and skills learned in your training!

Before We Start...
What is Reinforcement?
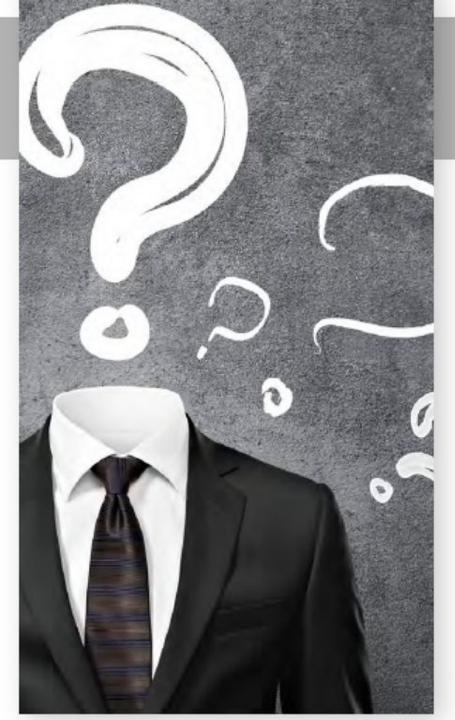
Reinforcement is _**NOT**_ Just Reminding

If your training has been integrated into a learning management system (LMS), then you probably have access to some type of reminder service.

Reminder messages usually contain or link to snippets of training materials that are simply cut up into small, bite-sized messages.

Without specific reinforcement objectives and an adaptive program timeline, the participant struggles to remain engaged or interested.

Read more about the key differences between training reinforcement and reminder services in our blog post: **Reinforcement vs. Reminders**.

Reinforcement is _NOT_
Just Remembering

The concept of The Forgetting Curve dates back to 1885, when the German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus developed his memory retention theory.

The Forgetting Curve is often used to explain reinforcement, but reinforcement is more than The Forgetting Curve.

Remembering is part of reinforcement, but application is more important than memory strength. Knowing _how_ to do something is not the same as actually doing it.

For example, you can train construction workers on the importance of wearing safety helmets on site, but that doesn't mean they will actually wear them.

Download our eBook, [Moving Beyond The Forgetting Curve](), to learn about memory strength and retention.

Reinforcement is <u>*NOT*</u> Just Retention

Your learners may know a lot of information, but if they cannot use that information at the right moment, then their knowledge is worthless.

While increasing knowledge retention is a crucial component of establishing behavior change, reinforcement should not focus solely on retention.

In order to drive lasting behavior change, your learners need to know HOW to apply your training and be able to prove their application on the job.

Read more about increasing knowledge retention through reinforcement in our blog post: **Reinforcement ≠ Knowledge Retention**.

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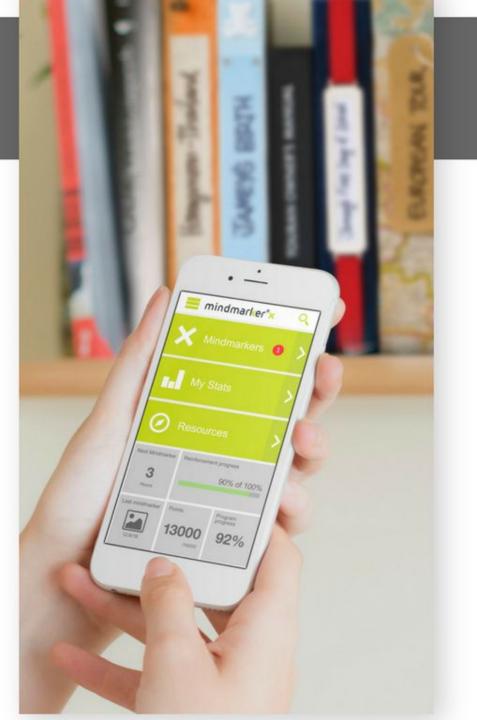
Reinforcement is _NOT_ Just Retraining

Reinforcement is more than cutting up your training materials into smaller pieces and pushing them out to your learners.

To deliver effective reinforcement, think about what information you need to send and when to send it. Both timing and content contribute to creating lasting impact and behavior change.

Because reinforcement focuses on application, reinforcement starts where your training stops. After training ends, your learners should not only understand and remember what they just learned, but also apply their new knowledge and skills.

Looking for more clarification? Read our blog post: **10 Common Misconceptions About Reinforcement**.
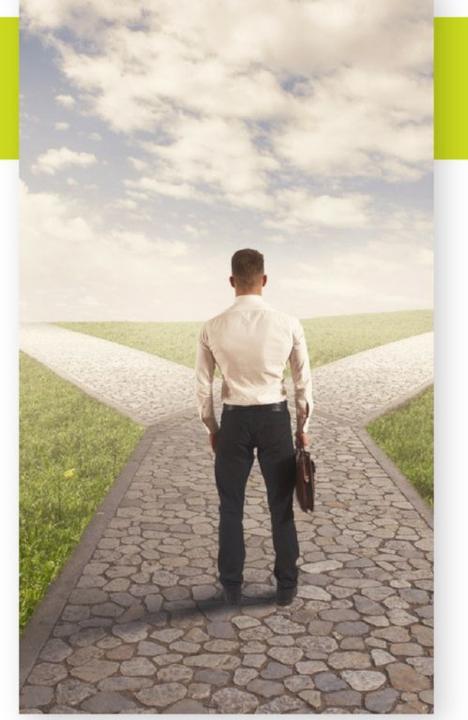
What is Reinforcement?

Reinforcement is a series of well balanced **push** and **pull** communication moments strategically **designed, delivered** and **timed** to drive business impact and lasting behavior change.

Our proven methodology combines a variety of studies, theories, and data from scientists and psychologists to address the various aspects that are essential to achieving behavior change.

Download our eBook, **The Science Behind Mindmarker,** to learn more about our methodology.

Mindmarker's award-winning technology empowers our proven methodology to reinforce training and help organizations bridge the gap between training results and business impact.
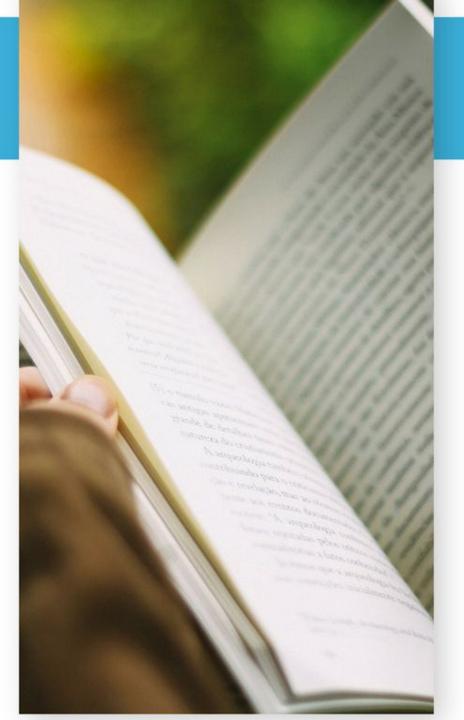
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3 Phases of Behavior Change

Before we begin the 10 steps to determine your reinforcement objectives, it is important to review the 3 phases of behavior change listed below. To effectively change behavior, you cannot skip a phase!

1. **Awareness:** Learners must understand WHY the behavior change is important to them.

2. **Knowledge/Skills:** Learners must know HOW to master their new knowledge and skills.

3. **Application:** Learners must focus on HOW to apply your training back on the job. In this final phase, learners should focus on using their newly mastered skills in daily work.

5 Reinforcement Gaps

When defining your reinforcement objectives, you must address the 5 reinforcement gaps. Closing each gap is key to achieving your desired behavior change.

Knowledge Gap: Is the information sufficient?

Skill Gap: Do your learners know how to implement and apply their new knowledge?

Motivation Gap: Are learners motivated by internal or external forces to achieve the desired change?

Environment Gap: Do your learners have enough support and time to be successful?

Communication Gap: Do your learners receive enough directions, procedures, process, etc.?

Training Goals　　　　v.s.　　## Reinforcement Objectives

Training goals are often defined by what the learner can do after the training.

However, knowing HOW to do an action does not mean DOING the action.

Training goals should focus on defining WHAT action you want your learners to DO after the training ends.

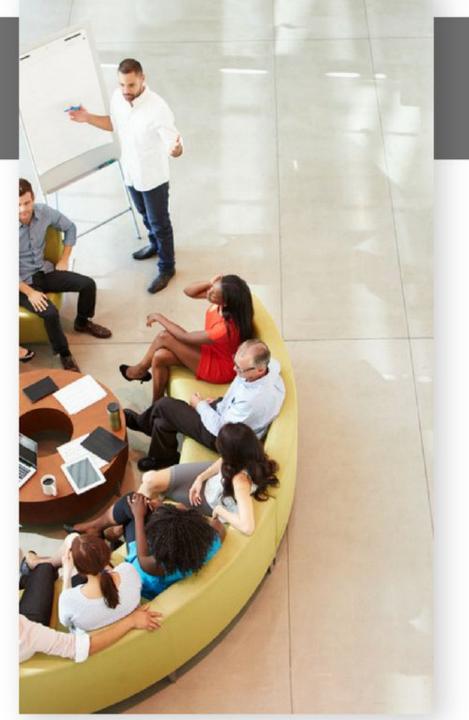HOW will you measure whether or not your learners are able to apply training?

After your training is finished, learners should be able to implement a new skill.

During the reinforcement program, the focus should be on applying that skill.

Reinforcement objectives are not a replacement for training goals, but are a continuation of the learning process.

Reinforcement objectives should build on training goals to ensure application.

Step #1

Identify Your Top 3 Training Goals

The prior page reviews the main differences between training goals and reinforcement objectives.

Before you begin identifying your reinforcement objectives, you must determine your training goals.

To define your training goals, fill in the blank... "After training ends, learners should be able to do _____."

Now list your training goals in order of priority and be specific about each goal.

Step #2

Determine Desired Training Impact

Review your training goals to determine the desired impact. What problem are you trying to solve?

Based on your training goals, what impact would you like to see in your organization if each of your training goals were achieved?

What behavior change do you want to see from each of your learners? How will your learners apply this behavior change back on the job?

Next to each of your training goals outline the desired behavior change, the desired impact on your organization. Be as specific as possible.

Step #3

Measure Your Training Goals

Now that you have established your training goals, determined the desired impact, and explained how achieving each goal will benefit your organization, you must outline your measurement plan.
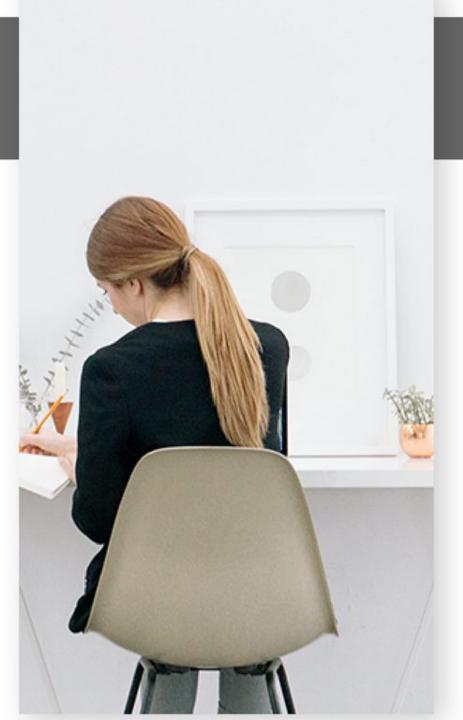
How will you determine whether or not training goals are achieved?

How will you decide whether or not learners are applying their new knowledge and skills on the job?

How will determine whether or not your learners have achieved the desired behavior change?

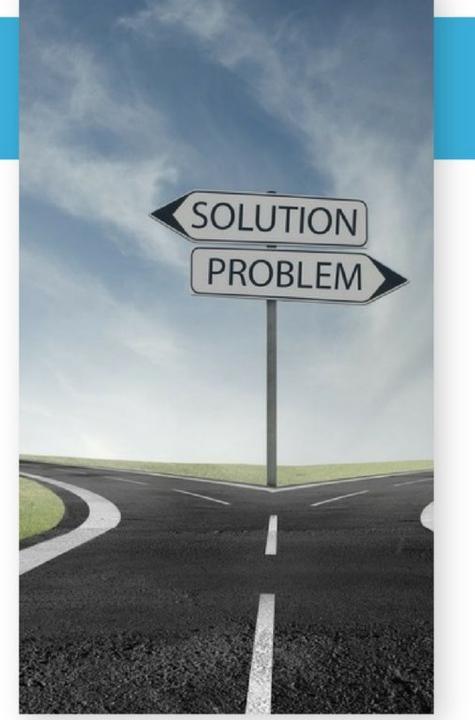How will you measure training success? How will you determine failure?

Step #4

Outline Reinforcement Objectives

As highlighted in previous pages, reinforcement objectives should build upon training goals to **ensure application**. Utilize the first 3 steps to build on your training goals and outline reinforcement objectives.

Typical training goals fit the pattern of: "learners will be able to do _____ after the training ends." Training goals are focus on the ability to do something, not whether or not the action is actually executed.

Reinforcement objectives should differ from training goals because the focus should be on application. Your learner needs **to do an action** or **use a skill** to prove that they are changing their behaviors over time. The desired behavior change should be clearly defined and measured by learners moving from points A to B.

Step #5

Include Measurable Action Verbs

With reinforcement, the focus shifts away from the model of knowing how to do something and towards a more sophisticated model of evaluation, application, and mastery.

Verbs accompanying the reinforcement model should include: DO, USE, MASTER, EVALUATE, or ANALYZE.

Review your reinforcement objectives again to check the verbs used in each objective. Are the verbs you used measurable ACTIONS?

You may need to tweak the wording of your reinforcement objectives.

Step #6

Determine Key Takeaways

What do you want learners to take away from your training? Do you want your learners to leave your training with a new model of behavior or a new set of skills?

Review each of your reinforcement objectives to ensure that they build upon your training goals.

Are your objectives focusing on achieving the desired behavior change?

Is each reinforcement objective measurable? Will each reinforcement objective drive the desired impact in the organization?
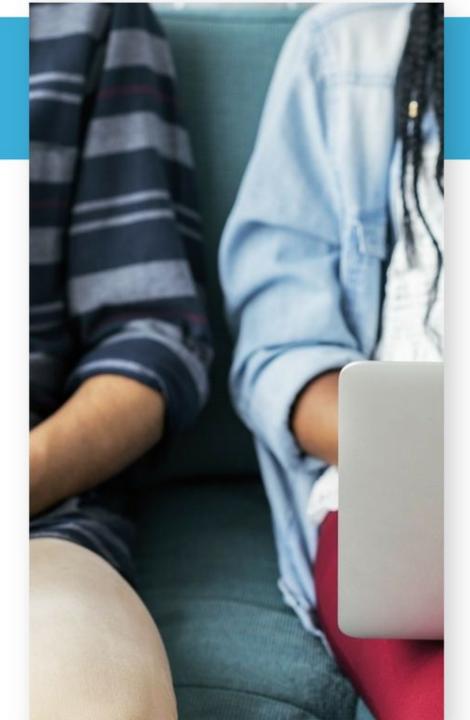
Step #7

Outline Measurement Plan

What behavior change is needed to create the desired impact on your organization?

Determine the desired behavior change for each of your reinforcement objectives and define an allotted amount of time to achieve each desired change.

How will you determine reinforcement program success? Look at each objective to decide what progress you need to see and when you need to see it.

What progress do you need to see from your learners and over what time period? What would you like to see after each month? What improvement would you like to see and when? How will you measure this?

Step #8

Close the Knowledge Gap

Review each of your reinforcement objectives to confirm they address and close the Knowledge Gap.

What information or knowledge is needed to achieve each of your objectives? And at what point in time? How did you provide your learners with this new knowledge? Do they understand all the information?

Did your learner receive the necessary information during your training?

Is the information given to your learners sufficient enough to achieve your desired impact and begin to change their behaviors?

Step #9

Close the Skill Gap

Review each of your reinforcement objectives to determine if each objective addresses the Skill Gap.

What skills are needed to achieve the desired behavior change? Do your learners have the skills need to meet each of your reinforcement objectives?

Did your learners receive training on HOW to master the skill and apply the skill back on the job?

Do your learners know how to apply each of the skills?
Are your reinforcement objectives focused on the skills taught during training?
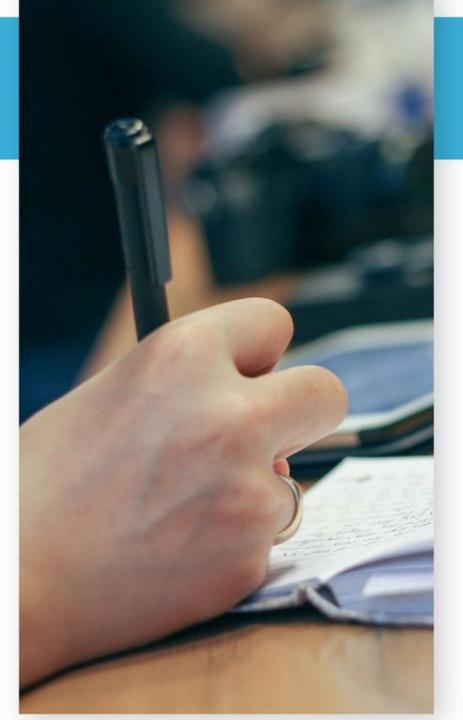
Step #10

Motivate Your Learners

Do your reinforcement objectives address and close the Motivation Gap? Review your objectives to ensure your learners are motivated to achieve each of them.

There are many different training motivation factors to consider such as timing or number of objectives.

Has there been enough time for the learner to apply what they learned? Expecting your learners to change behavior within a few weeks is not realistic.

Also the number of reinforcement objectives could overwhelm the learner. Expecting several changes at once could prohibit results. We recommend 1 reinforcement objective per 5 - 6 weeks.

Review Objectives

Finalize Reinforcement Objectives

Do your reinforcement objectives close all the 5 Reinforcement Gaps? Review the last 2 gaps to ensure all the gaps are addressed.

Communication Gap
Does the learner fully understand all the information needed to be successful? Have you communicated instructions or procedures clearly?

Environmental Gap
Does the learner feel encouraged by managers or peers? Is the environment conducive to learning? Is feedback addressed and communicated regularly?

Take the Next Steps

If you've successfully completed all 10 steps, finalized your reinforcement objectives and confirmed that each of your objectives addresses and closes the 5 reinforcement gaps, then you are ready to move forward with building your reinforcement program.

Next steps include determining the structure of the reinforcement program, length, timeline and number of Mindmarker reinforcement messages needed to achieve each of your reinforcement objectives.

Looking for help? Mindmarker is happy to assist you. Click here to get started with a free 30-day trial or speak to a reinforcement expert for a consultation.

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Ready Explore Mindmarker
Reinforcement?

Start Free 30-Day Trial
Create a reinforcement program, invite test participants, measure impact and pull detailed reports.

Schedule a Quick Demo
Request a quick tutorial of the Mindmarker platform and demo our training reinforcement tool.

Explore the Mindmarker App
Download our app to experience Mindmarker as a participant and receive reinforcement messages.