Counseling

A Performance Multiplier

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Practical Application Essay

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Scenario

Organization

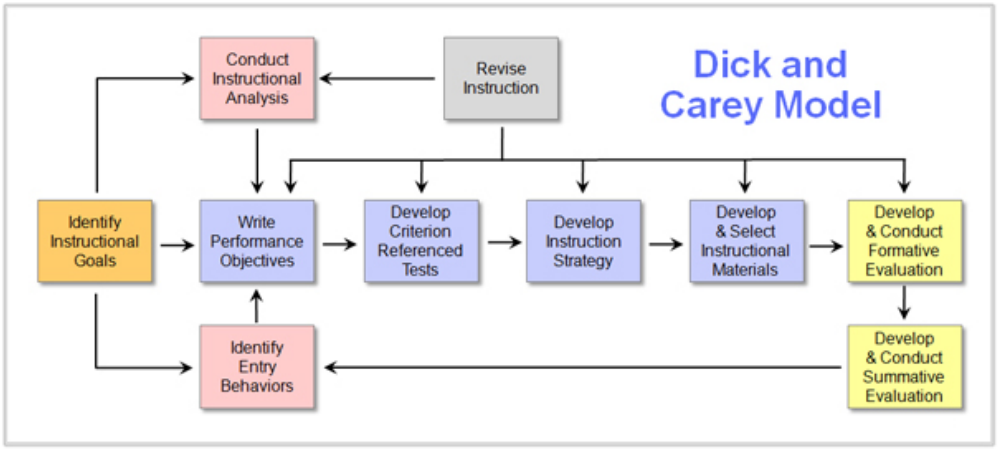
I am currently working as an active duty member in the United States Army and have served in several leadership positions throughout my career (21 years). As a Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) one of my responsibilities is to ensure service members are provided the required developmental counseling as prescribed by Army regulations. Individuals in the pay grade of E1-E4 are required monthly performance/developmental counseling and individuals in the pay grade between E5-E9 are required quarterly performance/developmental counseling. Regardless of an enlisted member's pay grade, performance/developmental counseling is required in order to mentor, coach, and guide (direct) Soldiers through their professional development and career.

Current Project/Performance Problem

The major problem I am trying to resolve is that junior leaders (Sergeants and Staff Sergeants) lack the knowledge and skills for executing and conducting a counseling session properly. Often times individuals do not receive the required counseling, ultimately affecting an individual's progression and performance. It has been discovered that individuals that do not receive counseling (mentoring, coaching and direction from leaders) often fail to progress with individuals that do. Additionally, these individuals are not able to achieve their full potential as they lack mentoring, coaching, and direction from their leaders. Therefore, my role is to design an instructional unit to implement within an organizations NCO Professional Development program to assist with closing this performance gap to ensure all service members receive individual developmental counseling, thus being provided the mentorship, coaching, and direction to progress throughout their professional development and career.

IDD&E Knowledge and Skills

One of the most important skills I have gained throughout the IDD&E program is the ability to select and use various number of Instructional System Development (ISD) models for different circumstances. The ISD model that I will use (my approach) to assist with creating the developmental counseling instructional unit is the Dick and Carey model. Although I have chosen to use this model, it includes all phases of the analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate (ADDIE) model. A graphic representation of the model is shown below in figure 1. Additionally, during my journey in the Instructional Design, Development, and Evaluation (IDD&E) program, I have had an opportunity to develop many of the 22 instructional designer competencies that I lacked (knowledge and skills) in the start of the program. I will discuss the top five most important instructional designer competencies that will apply and how they will assist in successfully completing this project.



Dick and Carey Model

Figure 1 (Kurt, 2016)

Dick and Carey Model

Step one (Identify Instructional Goals). We begin the Instructional Design (ID) process by identifying the instructional goals. The instructional designer must know what he/she is trying to achieve before beginning this process. The instructional goal for this instructional unit is *to provide all Sergeants and Staff Sergeants with the knowledge and skills to mentor, coach, and provide direction for their Soldiers to progress throughout their career by conducting productive and successful counseling sessions.*

Step Two (Conduct Instructional Analysis). Once we have identified the instructional goal, our team will need to ensure we are designing and developing the appropriate solutions for this performance problem. It is critical to spend enough time in this step to ensure the exact problem is identified. To assist with identifying the root cause of this performance problem, a thorough front-end analysis will need to be completed. The Joe Harless 13 smart questions (listed below) will be used to determine the appropriate and effective intervention.

1. Do we have a problem?
2. Do we have a performance problem?
3. How will we know when the problem is solved?
4. What is the performance problem?
5. Should we allocate resources to solve it?
6. What are the possible causes of the problem?
7. What evidence bears on each possibility?
8. What is the probable cause?
9. What general solution type is indicated?
10. What are the alternative subclasses of solutions?
11. What are the costs, effects, and development times of each solution?
12. What are the constraints?
13. What are the overall goals?

The results of these questions will ensure the instructional designer conducts a thorough investigation of the performance problem and is able to determine the most cost-effective solutions to achieve the desired outcome and the instructional goal.

Step Three (Identify Entry Behaviors). Step three will be conducted simultaneously with step two, as both focus on conducting a thorough analysis. As stated by Koszalka et al., 2013, one of the instructional designers' competencies is to determine the characteristics of the target population, which may impact the design and development of the instruction. Our team will need to analyze the learners current state (knowledge, skills, and attitude). The methods that will be used to collect this data are questionnaire, interviews, document reviews (extant data analysis), and observations. The results of these data collection tools can also provide additional information in step two.

Step Four (Write Performance Objectives). In step four we will write the performance objectives which will describe what the learner will need to achieve. Each objective will be developed to ensure it is measurable and observable. When creating the learning objectives, we will use the ABCD method as listed in the table below (Table 1).

ABCD Method	
Audience	Target audience (The who?)
Behavior	Expected outcomes, levels of learning (Cognitive/psychomotor/affective)
Conditions	Conditions of the actions performed
Degree	Acceptable standard/performance

Table 1

Step Five (Develop Criterion Reference Tests). In step five we will create the needed assessments to ensure we can validate the learners are able to apply the newly gained knowledge and skills from the instruction. This will also provide valuable data/feedback to the facilitator/instructor to ensure the learner is meeting the criteria for each learning objective and throughout the instruction.

Step Six (Develop Instructional Strategy). In step six, we will storyboard the instructional strategies by developing a blueprint of the proposed activities. During this step, we will incorporate Merrill's first principle to ensure a learning environment is created. We will incorporate real-world problems (videos/scenarios), techniques/activities to activate prior knowledge (pre-quiz/pre-discussions), demonstrate proper performance (role play), give an opportunity for the learner to practice, and give an opportunity for learners to integrate these skills (reflection on how they will incorporate).

Step Seven (Develop and Select Instructional Materials). In step seven we will select or develop the appropriate instructional materials based off the blueprint from the previous step. To save time, effort, and other resources, we will first use developed materials (videos) and only develop what is needed for each activity (script for role play, etc.).

Step Eight (Develop and Conduct Formative Evaluation). In step eight we will develop a plan to observe the instruction, conduct interviews, and questionnaires during a scheduled pilot test. This will allow for an opportunity to revise, modify, and improve the proposed instructional materials and instructional strategies.

Step Nine (Develop and Conduct Summative Evaluation). In step nine we will develop a plan to conduct a survey at the conclusion of the instruction and another survey will be requested six months after the completion of the instruction. This will serve two parts, one is if the instructions were adequate in closing the performance gap and the other is to evaluate the entire process and revise, modify, and improve as needed.

Competencies

The instructional designer competencies used throughout this project are pulled directly from the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction. The most important instructional designer competencies that I have developed throughout the IDD&E program and play a critical role in this scenario are:

Competency Two. Apply research and theory to the discipline of instructional design (Koszalka et al., 2013). This competency is probably the foundation for instructional designers, as we have to know and understand the key concepts, principles, and practices within the IDD&E field. Without this expertise, it will be difficult to select the appropriate learning strategies/activities/materials and we will not be able to conduct a needs assessment/front-end analysis to develop an instructional solution to close a current performance gap. This competency is critical in each step of the Dick and Carey Model and for the success of this project. Prior to the IDD&E program, I had no knowledge of the concepts, principles, and practices that exist in this field, now I am able to explain and articulate several concepts, principles, and practices, which play a critical role in solving this performance problem.

Competency Four. Apply data collection and analysis skills in instructional design projects (Koszalka et al., 2013). This competency plays a critical role for instructional designers in step two, three, eight, and nine in the Dick and Carey model. Without data, it will be difficult to make the right and best decisions for this project. Therefore, using data collection tools like experience, observations, questionnaires, and document reviews (extant data analysis) in both step two and three (during needs analysis) in this scenario, is an important part for determining the root cause of the problem and developing the appropriate solutions. Additionally, data collection tools are critical in the evaluation phase to ensure the performance gap was closed (developed solutions work) and the desired learning outcome was achieved.

Competency Six. Conduct a needs assessment in order to recommend appropriate design solutions and strategies (Koszalka et al., 2013). To ensure the performance problem is clearly identified and to ensure the best and appropriate instructional solutions are designed and developed, an instructional designer must execute a thorough front-end analysis/needs assessment. This will give the instructional designer the ability to explain and articulate the performance problem that exist within the current situation/environment. In steps two and three of the Dick and Carey model we focus on the need's assessment. At the conclusion of these steps for this project, an instructional designer will know the current performance (Where we are?), desired performance (Where we are going?), and how we can reach the desired outcome (How will we get there?). Furthermore, the instructional designer will be able differentiate for an instructional intervention or a noninstructional intervention at the completion of the front-end analysis, which sets the stage for designing and developing instruction.

Competency twelve. Design instructional interventions (Koszalka et al., 2013). As an instructional designer, this competency is critical as designing instruction is one of our primary responsibilities. Step six of the Dick and Carey model focus on selecting the appropriate instructional strategies, thus designing our instructional unit. In this project, we will ensure the instructional activities and educational technology we select (using Merrill's First Principle) align with the instructional goal, available resources (environment), and with the learner's characteristics. Additionally, we will develop concept maps/graphic organizers to provide to the learners to promote learning and enhance retainability.

Competency Seventeen. Evaluate instructional and non-instructional interventions (Koszalka et al., 2013). Prior to making any type of change or recommendation on a current system, process, education, instruction, etc., you must be able to evaluate and collect the appropriate evidence/data to make these recommendations/changes. Without this information, an instructional designer will have a difficult time convincing management of a needed change. My development in this competency has prepared me to be able to conduct future organizational evaluations and an evaluation for this scenario. Additionally, with this competency, I will be able to complete steps eight and nine of the Dick and Carey model for this scenario. Which includes conducting a pilot test to observe the instruction and using several data collection tools throughout the evaluation process.

Knowledge Gains from IDD&E Program

The knowledge, skills, and experience I have gained throughout the entire IDD&E program has been a tremendous gift and has changed the way I view and think of education and learning. Each course focused on developing certain instructional design competencies and the artifacts that I have developed show my progression/development this past year. Although every course provided me with the knowledge and skills to resolve this performance problem, there were a few concepts/tools/techniques that were more helpful than others. Learning about the principles, concepts, and current practices gave me the knowledge and skills in my development in competency two. Without this knowledge, I would not have been able to select the instructional strategies needed to resolve this performance problem (step six of Dick and Carey model). Learning about each phase of the ADDIE model and being introduced to the numerous ISD models, allowed me to select a model for this project and using it to resolve this performance problem. Learning about the importance of a need's assessment/front-end analysis gave me the skills and knowledge to be able to identify the current state, the desired state, and how we plan to get to the desired outcome (step two and three of the Dick and Carey model). This allowed me to identify the performance gap and the root cause of the problem, ultimately helping in resolving the performance problem in the scenario.

Reflection and Professional Identity

The IDD&E program has provided me the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to become a future instructional designer. This is evident in my work that I have presented in this scenario and the work I have showcased in my professional portfolio. As a future IDD&E graduate, I feel I have developed in each instructional designer competency through the projects

and activities I have completed in the IDD&E program. Although I have gained a lot through the program, I still require additional, real-world practice, to truly become an expert in this field. My current weakness is that I am new to the field and require some additional experience to enhance my skills. My strengths are I have over 15 years of experience with working on projects (team player) and management experience, which can benefit me tremendously on future instructional designer projects and as an instructional designer.

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