Subject: Making Likert click: OL News
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3. How long
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1. MAKING LIKERT CLICK

If you're going to use a Likert scale in your training
evaluations, put yourself in your learners' places.

How would you respond to a statement or question? And
what would your response mean for making training
better?

That's Edward Shaw (edshaw1000@hotmail.com) taking
issue with "More e-course evaluation" (Dec. 26), which
was a response to a reader question about how to evaluate
online courses.

"One of the most egregious and unfortunately pervasive
errors in training evaluation," contends Shaw, is using
"Likert-type scoring scales for zero-sum questions."

Shaw is a West Bloomfield, Mich., trainer and author of
"The Six Pillars of Reality-Based Training: A Practical
Guide to Designing and Delivering Training That Works"

The article to which Shaw responds offered sample
training-evaluation statements and suggested numbered
responses ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 4 for
"mildly agree" to 6 for "strongly agree."

That's a Likert scale, named for researcher Rensis
Likert, who first suggested the concept in 1932.

MISMATCH
In last week's example, however, Shaw says the questions and the response choices are mismatched -- which won't help a trainer make a course better.

His argument is this: A "clear-thinking respondent" will have difficulty applying such a scale to an evaluative statement such as, "The course material was well organized and clearly written."

Shaw says that this statement, suggested by a reader in last week's piece, falls short on two points.

"First, what if the course were well organized but not clearly written, or visa versa?" he asks.

"Second, and more important, how can you strongly, as opposed to mildly, agree or disagree with what is, essentially, a yes-or-no question? Either the course was well organized and clearly written or it was not.

Shaw suggests this language instead:

"On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not very well written and not very well organized at all, and 10 represents extremely well written and well organized -- how well written and well organized did you find this course?"

"A clear-thinking respondent would know exactly what to do with this question," Shaw maintains.

All the evaluators in the Dec. 26 article were "zero-sum in nature," says Shaw. Topics were either in a logical order or they were not. Trainers either covered objectives or they didn't.

Shaw says he sees this kind of mismatch often -- because, he thinks, training developers don't put themselves in respondents' place.

When you prepare such evaluation statements, he advises, ask yourself: "How would I answer this question and, more importantly, what would my various answer-choices mean?"

The other possibility, Shaw claims, is that "most training developers simply don't believe that their trainee-respondents are clear-thinking people and -- if true -- that'd be a shame."

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The following month, these TRAINING 2001 Conference & Expo sessions will cover evaluation during the March 5-7 show in Atlanta: