

Instructional Technology & Training Series

Confirmative Evaluation

*Practical Strategies for Valuing
Continuous Improvement*

**JOAN C. DESSINGER
JAMES L. MOSELEY**

CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Contents](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[List of Figures, Tables and Performance Support Tools](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Introduction: Getting the Most from This Resource](#)

[PART 1: The Challenge](#)

[1 Full-Scope Evaluation: Raising the Bar](#)

[Evaluation: The Full Scope](#)

[Comparing the Four Types of Evaluation](#)

[Evaluation: Full-Scope Model](#)

[Challenges to Full-Scope Evaluation](#)

[2 Confirmative Evaluation: A Model Guides the Way](#)

[Confirmative Evaluation Model](#)

[Challenges to Implementing Confirmative Evaluation](#)

[Why Bother?](#)

[PART 2: Meeting the Challenge](#)

[3 Preplan: Assess Training Program Evaluability](#)

[When to Plan Confirmative Evaluation](#)

[How to Plan a Confirmative Evaluation](#)

[Assess Evaluability](#)

[Challenges to Evaluability Assessment](#)

[4 Plan: The Plan's the Thing](#)

What's in a Confirmative Evaluation Plan?
Review, Validate, and Approve the Plan

5 Do: For Goodness' Sake

Jump-Start Data Collection

Focus Data Collection

Collect the Data

Train the Data Collectors

Store the Data

Manage the Data-Collection Process

6 Analyze: Everything Old Is New Again

Get Ready, Get Set

Prepare the Confirmative Evaluation Data

Now Analyze

Interpret Confirmative Evaluation Results

Make Results-Based Recommendations

Report Confirmative Evaluation Results

7 Improve: Now What?

Focus on Utilization

Assume the Role

Accept the Challenge

Alignment: The Last Word

PART 3: Lessons from Oz

8 Case Study: Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

The Case Study

Meta Evaluation

Final Thoughts

9 Conclusion: We're Not in Oz Anymore

Issues That Challenge Confirmative Evaluators

[Evaluation as an Emerging Discipline](#)

[Improving the Process](#)

[Put Yourself in the Picture](#)

[Glossary](#)

[References](#)

[Index](#)

[About the Authors](#)

[About the Series Editors](#)

[About the Advisory Board Members](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1: Full-Scope Evaluation: Raising the Bar

[Figure 1.1. Dessinger-Moseley Full-Scope Evaluation Model.](#)

Chapter 2: Confirmative Evaluation: A Model Guides the Way

[Figure 2.1. Moseley-Dessinger Confirmative Evaluation Model.](#)

[Figure 2.2. Ins and Outs of Confirmative Evaluation.](#)

Chapter 4: Plan: The Plan's the Thing

[Figure 4.1. Seven Steps to Successful Evaluation.](#)

Chapter 9: Conclusion: We're Not in Oz Anymore

[Figure 9.1. Sample Qualities of a Stellar Confirmative Evaluator.](#)

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Full-Scope Evaluation: Raising the Bar

[Table 1.1. Meta Evaluation: Type, Timing, and Purpose.](#)

[Table 1.2. Evaluation Types: Timing, Purpose, and Customers.](#)

Chapter 3: Preplan: Assess Training Program Evaluability

[Table 3.1. Proactive or Reactive Planning for Confirmative Evaluation?](#)

Chapter 4: Plan: The Plan's the Thing

[Table 4.1. Overview of Evaluation Approaches.](#)

[Table 4.2. Types of Data for Judging Confirmative Evaluation Outcomes.](#)

[Table 4.3. Data-Collection Techniques, Tools, and Technology.](#)

Chapter 6: Analyze: Everything Old Is New Againk

[Table 6.1. Options for Analyzing Quantitative Data.](#)

Chapter 7: Improve: Now What?

[Table 7.1. Decision, Decisions, Decisions.](#)

Chapter 8: Case Study: Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

[Table 8.1..Summary of Docent Training Program Confirmative Evaluation.](#)

[Table 8.2. Strengths and Limitations of Docent Training Program Confirmative Evaluation.](#)

Confirmative Evaluation

Practical Strategies for Valuing Continuous Improvement

JOAN CONWAY DESSINGER
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About This Book

Why is this topic important?

Evaluation, training, and human performance technology (HPT) practitioners are faced with an increasing need to confirm the continuing efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and value of training programs and the continuing competence of learners. Yet within the literature related to instructional technology, educational technology, performance technology, and even evaluation itself, there is a lack of reference to *confirmative evaluation* as a distinct type of evaluation that goes beyond formative and summative evaluation to measure ongoing behavior, accomplishments (job outputs), and business results. This book is all about confirmative evaluation, an approach to evaluation that values the continuing merit, worth, and value of instruction over time.

What can you achieve with this book?

The purpose of the book is to ground the practice of confirmative evaluation in the literature on the theory and application of evaluation and research. The authors view evaluation as a technology in itself and suggest how to use hard and soft technology techniques and tools to plan and implement confirmative evaluation of training programs.

How is this book organized?

The book consists of nine chapters divided into three parts. Part One, "The Challenge," contains two chapters, which establish the conceptual framework for the book and present the systems-based procedural framework for confirmative evaluation: the Confirmative Evaluation Model. Part Two, "Meeting the Challenge," provides both theory and practice to help the reader master the art and science of confirmative evaluation. Each of the five chapters in this part focuses on one part of the process: preplanning, planning, doing, analyzing, and improving. Part Three, "Lessons from Oz," examines the "lions and tigers and bears" surrounding confirmative evaluation, presents a case study and looks at trends that are likely to have an impact on evaluation. The book concludes with a glossary of terms and a list of references.

About Pfeiffer

Pfeiffer serves the professional development and hands-on resource needs of training and human resource practitioners and gives them products to do their jobs better. We deliver proven ideas and solutions from experts in HR development and HR management, and we offer effective and customizable tools to improve workplace performance. From novice to seasoned professional, Pfeiffer is the source you can trust to make yourself and your organization more successful.



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Essential Tools Pfeiffer's Essential Tools resources save time and expense by offering proven, ready-to-use materials—including exercises, activities, games, instruments, and assessments—for use during a training or team-learning event. These resources are frequently offered in looseleaf or CD-ROM format to facilitate copying and customization of the material.

Pfeiffer also recognizes the remarkable power of new technologies in expanding the reach and effectiveness of training. While e-hype has often created whizbang solutions

in search of a problem, we are dedicated to bringing convenience and enhancements to proven training solutions. All our e-tools comply with rigorous functionality standards. The most appropriate technology wrapped around essential content yields the perfect solution for today's on-the-go trainers and human resource professionals.



Essential resources for training and HR professionals

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING SERIES



This comprehensive series responds to the rapidly changing training field by focusing on all forms of instructional and training technology—from the well-known to the emerging and state-of-the-art approaches. These books take a broad view of technology, which is viewed as systematized, practical knowledge that improves productivity. For many, such knowledge is typically equated with computer applications; however, we see it as also encompassing other nonmechanical strategies such as systematic design processes or new tactics for working with individuals and groups of learners.

The series is also based upon a recognition that the people working in the training community are a diverse group. They have a wide range of professional experience, expertise, and interests. Consequently, this series is dedicated to two distinct goals: helping those new to technology and training become familiar with basic principles and techniques, and helping those seasoned in the training field become familiar with cutting-edge practices. The books for both groups are rooted in solid research, but are still designed to help readers readily apply what they learn.

The Instructional Technology and Training Series is directed to persons working in many roles, including trainers and training managers, business leaders,

instructional designers, instructional facilitators, and consultants. These books are also geared for practitioners who want to know how to apply technology to training and learning in practical, results-driven ways. Experts and leaders in the field who need to explore the more advanced, high-level practices that respond to the growing pressures and complexities of today’s training environment will find indispensable tools and techniques in this groundbreaking series of books.

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David H. Jonassen

Thank you . . .

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James L. Moseley

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES, AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT TOOLS

Figures

- [1.1](#) Dessinger-Moseley Full-Scope Evaluation Model
- [2.1](#) Moseley-Dessinger Confirmative Evaluation Model
- [2.2](#) Ins and Outs of Confirmative Evaluation
- [4.1](#) Seven Steps to Successful Evaluation
- [9.1](#) Sample Qualities of a Stellar Confirmative Evaluator

Tables

- [1.1](#) Meta Evaluation: Type, Timing, and Purpose
- [1.2](#) Evaluation Types: Timing, Purpose, and Customers
- [3.1](#) Proactive or Reactive Planning for Confirmative Evaluation?
- [4.1](#) Overview of Evaluation Approaches
- [4.2](#) Types of Data for Judging Confirmative Evaluation Outcomes
- [4.3](#) Data-Collection Techniques, Tools, and Technology
- [6.1](#) Options for Analyzing Quantitative Data
- [7.1](#) Decisions, Decisions, Decisions
- [8.1](#) Summary of Docent Training Program Confirmative Evaluation
- [8.2](#) Strengths and Limitations of Docent Training Program Confirmative Evaluation

Performance Support Tools (PSTs)

[1.1](#) When to Conduct a Confirmative Evaluation

[3.1](#) Confirmative Evaluation Planning Process Flowchart

[3.2](#) Confirmative Evaluation Evaluability Assessment Form for Training Programs

[3.3](#) Steps in Negotiating Stakeholder Information Needs

[3.4](#) Good-Better-Best Dialogue

[3.5](#) From Needs to Outcomes to Questions

[4.1](#) Getting Started on a Confirmative Evaluation Plan

[4.2](#) Confirmative Evaluation Plan Outline

[5.1](#) Matrix to Focus and Plan Data Collection

[5.2](#) Form for Recording Information During Extant Data Analysis

[5.3](#) Checklist for Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Survey or Questionnaire

[6.1](#) Checklist for Interpreting Confirmative Evaluation Results

[6.2](#) Outline for a Formal Confirmative Evaluation Final Report

[7.1](#) Testing Alignment to Build a Foundation for Continuous Improvement

[9.1](#) Self-Assessment: Qualities of a Stellar Confirmative Evaluator

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INTRODUCTION

HAVE YOU EVER . . .

Helped an employee maintain or continue to improve performance long after initial training or learning occurred?

Found that new contexts or new performance standards mandated a change in performance?

Experienced ineffective skill-building programs that had to be discarded, repurposed, or replaced?

Needed to determine how critical a particular performance factor was to organizational success?

Needed to establish that your training program has measurably improved business results?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then read on . . .

This book is all about confirmative evaluation, “a new paradigm for continuous improvement” (Moseley and Solomon, 1997, p. 12). Confirmative evaluation verifies the continuing merit, worth, and value of instruction over time. Evaluation, training, and HPT (human performance technology) practitioners are faced with an increasing need to confirm the continuing efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and value of training programs and the continuing competence of learners. Yet within the literature related to instructional technology, educational technology, performance technology, and even evaluation itself, there is a lack of reference to confirmative evaluation as a distinct type of evaluation that goes beyond formative and summative evaluation to measure ongoing behavior, accomplishments (job outputs), and business results.

Training practitioners themselves, when asked whether they have any experience with confirmative evaluation, tend to respond “Is that one of the four levels?” They are referring to Kirkpatrick’s four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1959, 1994).

Purpose

Confirmative Evaluation: Practical Strategies for Valuing Continuous Improvement sets out to fill the gap and provide a well-referenced and highly practical book for practitioners in training, evaluation, and HPT on why, when, and how to plan and conduct confirmative evaluation of training programs. The purpose of the book is to ground the practice of confirmative evaluation in the literature on the theory and application of evaluation and research. The *Instructional Technology and Training Series* focuses on instructional technology and training, so we view evaluation as a technology in itself and suggest how to use hard and soft technology techniques and tools to plan and implement confirmative evaluation of training programs.

Scope

This book presents an overview of full-scope evaluation (formative, summative, confirmative, and meta) using the Dessinger-Moseley Full-Scope Evaluation Model. The model also illustrates how confirmative evaluation fits within the current typology of evaluation. After a close-up look at full-scope evaluation, we present and discuss the Moseley-Dessinger Confirmative Evaluation Model. The remainder of the book concentrates on how to use hard and soft technologies to plan and conduct an effective and efficient confirmative evaluation. We also suggest future

directions for utilization of confirmative evaluation as an integral part of the technology of training and learning.

The focus of the *Instructional Technology and Training Series* is training. However, the theory and practice of confirmative evaluation applies to the evaluation of all performance improvement interventions, instructional and noninstructional. Therefore, we ask the reader to make a quantum leap whenever necessary to adapt the practical strategies in this book to noninstructional interventions such as incentive and reward programs, suggestion systems, career development initiatives, and so forth.

Audience

The audience for this series is a broad one. It goes beyond training to encompass all human performance improvement (HPI), evaluation, human resource development (HRD), management, and quality practitioners who are on the cutting edge of continuous improvement efforts. The audience also includes researchers and university professors or instructors in evaluation, instructional technology (IT), human performance technology (HPT), HRD, management, and related fields.

How This Book Is Organized

The book consists of nine chapters divided into three parts: “The Challenge,” “Meeting the Challenge,” and “Lessons from Oz.” Each chapter is enhanced with figures, tables, and performance support tools. Real-world examples of confirmative evaluation are difficult to find; however, we use examples whenever possible to clarify concepts and offer on-the-job guidance for planning and conducting confirmative evaluation of training programs. We also include a glossary of terms and a list of references at the end of the book.

Part One: The Challenge

The first part contains two chapters. These opening chapters challenge the reader to take a risk and commit to full-scope evaluation. We encourage evaluators, training and HPT practitioners, and others to go beyond traditional formative and summative evaluation and add confirmative evaluation to their repertoire of knowledge and skills.

Chapter One: Full-Scope Evaluation: Raising the Bar

This chapter establishes the conceptual framework for the book and challenges evaluators and other professionals to raise the evaluation bar to include full-scope evaluation—formative, summative, confirmative, and meta.

Chapter Two: Confirmative Evaluation: A Model Guides the Way

The second chapter presents the systems-based procedural framework for confirmative evaluation, the Confirmative Evaluation Model. We walk the reader through the model using the inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes of confirmative evaluation as a guide, and we also look into the heart of the model: meta evaluation. We end Part One with a discussion of the purpose and challenge of confirmative evaluation and how to justify using time, money, and human resources to plan and implement confirmative evaluation.

Part Two: Meeting the Challenge

The second part of this book lays out both theory and practice to help the reader master the art and science of confirmative evaluation. This part contains five chapters on the process components of the Confirmative Evaluation Model. [Chapters Three](#) and [Four](#) present *plan* as a two-step process: preplanning or evaluability assessment, and developing a confirmative evaluation plan. [Chapters Five](#) through [Seven](#) focus on the other process components of the Confirmative Evaluation Model: *do*, *analyze*, and *improve*. [Chapters Three](#) through [Seven](#) each contain a toolbox of additional references to help the evaluation, training, or HPT practitioner gain additional knowledge and skills related to the chapter topic.

Chapter Three: Preplan: Assess Training Program Evaluability

The first chapter in Part Two looks at the preplanning step in the confirmative evaluation planning process and stresses the importance of assessing the evaluability of the training program. We introduce a confirmative evaluation planning process flowchart and discuss the difference between proactive and reactive planning. Then we help the reader learn how to use the process flowchart plus a rating form and other performance support techniques and tools to assess the evaluability of a training program on the basis of criteria such as program life cycle, organization-specific requirements, stakeholder information needs, and intended evaluation outcomes.

Chapter Four: Plan: The Plan's the Thing

Chapter Four continues the discussion of the confirmative evaluation planning process by focusing on how to develop a confirmative evaluation plan and how to monitor the training program and maintain the plan if planning is proactive. We present two performance support tools: “Getting Started on a Confirmative Evaluation Plan” and a confirmative evaluation plan outline to help readers develop a complete, accurate, and useful confirmative evaluation plan. The chapter also discusses what happens after the plan is approved: reactive planners begin the confirmative evaluation, whereas proactive planners must maintain the plan for several months or more until it is time to conduct the confirmative evaluation. Planning a confirmative evaluation and preparing the confirmative evaluation plan require general project management skills, evaluation skills, analysis skills, and knowledge of how to evaluate learning and instruction technologies. So we give you a toolbox at the end of the chapter, a list of resources to help you increase your knowledge and skills in these areas.

Chapter Five: Do: For Goodness' Sake

Goodness is a term used by the military and others to indicate the degree to which people, places, situations, or things meet stated or implicit standards for excellence and integrity. In this chapter, we discuss how to use selected hard and soft technologies to conduct an efficient and effective confirmative evaluation. The topics include developing data-collection instruments, collecting the data, and documenting the process and the findings. Of course, there are challenges to face at every step, but we give you another toolbox of resources to meet those challenges.