**Need-to-Know vs Nice-to-Know**

Training might be one of the most rewarding jobs we’ll ever have. Unfortunately, our eagerness to share our knowledge with others can lead to an easy mistake: mixing information that employees *need to know* with information that is *nice to know*.

First, let’s think about what sets these two kinds of information apart. Consider Steve, who just started work at a local pizza restaurant. As part of his training, Steve will learn about operating pizza ovens: how to control the temperature, set the timers, and adjust the baking racks. The restaurant owner, Janet, is an expert on the origins of pizza and wood-fired brick ovens. Janet likes to include historical information in her training because she thinks it’s good knowledge for employees to have.

Janet is concerned that her training might be too lengthy. So she decides to focus her content on the most important aspects of the job. She goes through each section of her course, asking herself the following questions:

*Q. Is this information important?*

*Q. Is this information valuable to employees?*

A bit frustrated, Janet concludes that nothing in her training should change. She gives a resounding “yes” to both questions on all accounts.

Of course, Janet’s error is in the questions themselves. The *subjective* words “important” and “valuable” simply ask for Janet’s assumptions, not facts. Janet needs *objective* questions to reveal which information is critical for employees to be successful, and which is not:

*Q. In what way will employees use this information to perform their work?*

*Q. If employees don’t have this information, will it affect the quality of their work?*

This time Janet’s answers are much different. She quickly realizes that the history of pizza might be *nice to know*, but employees don’t really *need to know* this information to do their job well. Janet moves this content to the appendix of her training and removes the related questions from the quiz.

Trainees don’t want to be burdened to memorize and recall information that’s not directly related to their job duties. Evaluating the content of a training course with objective-based questions can help trainers determine the difference between information that employees *need to know* and information that is simply *nice to know*. Remember, if you’ve ever wondered if some parts of your training are really needed, you can be sure that your trainees are thinking the same thing.