MASTER IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT (MPM) PROGRAM

HOW TO WRITE OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

An objective describes a purpose or end goal that contributes to solving a particular problem. This is the starting point to guide the process of creating and planning an entire project.

Types of objectives
In a project, the norm is to have a general objective and several specific or secondary objectives.

General objective
Describes, in general terms, the intention of the project to be done.

Specific objectives
Describe the specific project deliverables. They provide further details about the expected results. They are individual so one must be written for each concrete expected result.

Rules for writing
Guidelines for writing objectives have been created in order to follow a structure that is accepted by many organizations and for many types of documents. The objectives:

- Are written in the third person, in an impersonal mode.
- Are short, concise and clear.
- Do not leave any doubt about what is the action to take and why it is going to be done.
- Are formed by two sentences.
  - On the first sentence, reference is made to "what is to be done?". For this reason, verbs in infinitive are used in order to reflect discrimination, measurable or quantifiable action, or to reflect selection, such as create, build, develop, make, use, manage, resolve, implement, detect, explain, relate, drive, sort, organize, plan, expose, identify, qualify, select, monitor, control, evaluate, demonstrate (see Bloom's taxonomy). On the contrary, verbs which do not allow for measurement are not to be used, even if written in infinitive. For example: promote, sensitize, encourage and the like.
  - On the second sentence, reference is made to "why is the action on the first sentence to be performed?" Here, verbs must also be in infinitive form.
- Do not repeat the same verb within the same objective.

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- Are realistic.

We can summarize the structure of a target as follows:

Verb in infinitive form	¿What?	¿Why?
To plan...	... voters profile surveys on the country...	... to measure their vote intention...

Examples:

To develop a project management plan framed within the standards of the Project Management Institute **to create** a control room to monitor the nitrogen plant located within the premises of the company XYZ located in Dominican Republic.

To evaluate technically and economically the XYZ machine **to determine** its possible use in the ABC process unit.

To measure the biogas production from cow manure at different temperatures **to determine** its behavior at different ranges.

OBJECTIVES IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

One of the key moments where the project manager needs to know and apply principles to write objectives is when the project charter is created.

In this case, besides the above, the following recommendations should be applied when writing objectives:

a. The general objective on the project charter relates directly to the main project deliverable (product or service) as well as to the project name.
b. The specific objectives support the general objective and, therefore, relate to the secondary project deliverables. Secondary objectives must be achieved so that the general objective is achieved.
c. Given the described relationship between the general and the specific objectives, as well as between objectives and deliverables, the deliverables established on the upper levels of the WBS correspond directly to these objectives.
d. In the MPM program we comply, as a quality standard, to the rule that all objectives must have the same formal structure: they are formed by complete and meaningful phrases; they start with an action verb in infinitive form which is measurable ("To create" or "To develop" are good examples, whereas "To promote" or "To encourage" are not); they have a "what" and "why").
e. If deemed convenient, the "why" can be replaced by similar phrases such as "in

order to" or "for the purpose of", although to literally indicate the "why" is preferred.

f. Care should be taken to avoid incurring in writing or conceptual errors as showed in the following example: "To create a management plan for procurements." The error occurs when apparently there is a what and a why in the sentence, however, if we look in depth, only the "what?" ("to create a procurement management plan") has been included, leaving out the "why". In this example, the "why" might be: "to properly organize the purchases of goods and services required for the project."