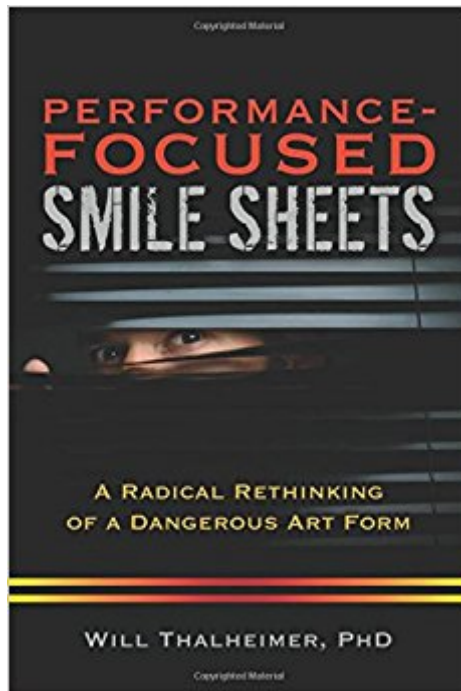


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# Performance-Focused Smile Sheets: A Radical Rethinking Of A Dangerous Art Form



## Synopsis

This book, *Performance-Focused Smile Sheets*, completely reimagines the smile sheet as an essential tool to drive performance improvement. Traditional smile sheets (i.e., learner response forms, student reaction forms) don't work! Decades of practice shows them to have negligible benefits. Scientific studies prove that traditional smile sheets are not correlated with learning results! Yet still we rely on smile sheets to make critical decisions about our learning interventions. In this book, Dr. Will Thalheimer carefully builds the case for a new methodology in smile-sheet design. Based on the learning research, *Performance-Focused Smile Sheets* shows how to write better questions, more focused on performance. The book also shows how to deploy smile sheets to our learners to get valid feedback--feedback that can be used to help us as trainers, instructional designers, teachers, professors, eLearning developers, and chief learning officers build virtuous cycles of continuous improvement.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For years, Will Thalheimer has been writing blog posts and articles that translate complex academic research into easy-to-understand, actionable information. Now, in this 149-page book, he combines research-based ways to measure training efforts (centered around Level 1 "smile sheets") with a slew of examples of post-training evaluation questions that can offer real insights into the effectiveness of your training efforts. There are several things I appreciate about this book (and which, for me, make it well-worth the purchase price):<sup>1</sup>) There are TONS of sample questions that

can be used, today, to replace my own poorly written post-training evaluation questions<sup>2</sup>) He's not wishy-washy in his language or opinions - agree with him or not, you know where he stands when it comes to what works and the sorts of instructional design and evaluation methods you ought to stay away from<sup>3</sup>) It's short and easy to consume over the course of a rainy weekend (I live in Seattle, which offers me many opportunities to curl up by the fireplace and re-read this book over and over again)<sup>4</sup>) Everywhere you turn in the book, he connects his suggestions to relevant research (with tons of footnotes, so if you're interested in learning more about the research and concepts to which he alludes in the book, you can knock yourself out)<sup>5</sup>) Around the middle of the book, it transitions from a text book from which you can read passively, hoping to absorb information, into a workbook in which the reader is challenged to distinguish good examples of evaluation questions from bad. If you're looking to share results from your training efforts that go deeper than "Our learners gave us an average score of 4.2 out of 5" (because honestly, that doesn't really mean anything anyway), then go ahead and give Will Thalheimer's Performance-focused Smile Sheets a whirl.

The training profession has needed a new approach to the infamous "smile sheet" for decades and Thalheimer presents a compelling case for getting meaningful data from student surveys. This book will change the way you do your evaluations and give you many more insights from your post-training student feedback. Should be on the shelf of every learning professional.

If you are in the talent-development field, this book is for you. Will's research-rich book does an exceptional job of exposing the problems and danger of smile sheets while offering a more effective and actionable alternative: performance-based smile sheets. If you are in this field but don't do much with evaluation, you should still read this book. Chapter 3 has a wealth of information that can help anyone improve how they design, manage those that design, and (of course) those who evaluate. In it, he shares the Three Level Taxonomy (of training), the Training Maximizers Model, The Decisive Dozen, and the Four Pillars of Training Effectiveness. His Smile-Sheet Training-Effectiveness Taxonomy is worth keeping nearby as a great job aid. The chapter on delayed smile sheets is extremely helpful in getting designers to critically think about their designs. I particularly appreciate the pivot question model. How do you share the results with stakeholders? Will has answers near the end of the book. If you do this right, you'll convey more than just the results. I look forward to Will's future books that will explain his Learning Landscape Model

This ranks right up there with "Telling Ain't Training" as a must-read for learning and development

professionals. Will has managed to both explain performance-focused evaluation and make it sexy. His writing style is entertaining and easy to read, and this is very practical--definitely not just a theory book. From the beginning, he offers specific "try this" practical advice on what to put into the evals and how to do them better. I am very much a fan of the method. For those who have read Rob Brinkerhoff's evaluation work, this book gives you the survey equivalent of that "Aha!" moment. Highly recommended.

Great book to read for any HR or Trainer that uses feedback sheets after conducting training or a seminar. The author really helps you understand how to design a more effective feedback form that can give you useable data. Highly recommend.

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