

Examples of Volatile Indicators

If you are new to *Volatile Indicators* (VI), then read the important definition and rationale first; it can be found here:

<http://www.cqi.org.uk/good-practice-resources/volatile-indicators-2>

Below are a few of the examples we've collected at the ends of our workshops. Remember, the criteria: they must:

1. be very easy and quick to measure
2. be 'measured' every week
3. not feel 'contrived'
4. have clearly and fully understood expectations by staff and learners, and
5. trigger **positive, motivational** action by both staff and learners when expectations are not met.

Hopefully, by reading the following examples you'll see that VIs are not just about identifying the very first signs of underperformance, they're also about brewing a deeper interest and passion for the subject.

[Numbers in brackets refer to the numbers above.]

Cake decorating

Learners keep a scrapbook (1). The weekly ritual is to add an image of a cake or icing detail that they admire (3). Learners then add a note about why they chose it, what they might learn from it and when/on what they might use it (4).

To measure the VIs (2), the tutor can use a range of strategies, including looking at individual scrapbooks throughout the course of the lessons, or beginning the lesson with a peer-sharing activity. The tutor may also finish off the lesson by publicly celebrating his/her favourite cutting of the week. This could then be added to the group's Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment) page or the tutor's blog.

The teacher also keeps a beautifully compiled scrapbook of stunning craftsmanship and cake design. If a learner does not complete the weekly task, the teacher will find an appropriate point in the lesson to take the learner through this exemplar scrapbook, particularly focusing on what the teacher has discovered and learnt that week. The aim of this is to inspire and motivate the learner, and to help them enjoy the subject even more (5).

Vocational glossary – any subject

Each week, learners find and add a new vocationally relevant term to their individual vocational glossary notebook (1, 4). This builds into a revision resource (3).

To measure the VIs (2), the tutor can use a range of strategies, including looking at individual notebooks throughout the course of the lessons, or beginning the lesson with a peer-sharing activity. The tutor may also finish off the lesson by publicly celebrating his/her favourite term of the week. This could then be added to the group's Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment) page or the tutor's blog. This knowledge may also be formally assessed from time to time.

The teacher also keeps a notebook. If a learner does not complete the weekly task, the teacher will find an appropriate opportunity to give the learner a term to research, and also ask him/her to return the favour – to find a vocationally relevant term that the teacher needs to research (5).

Have I Got News for You – Politics, General Studies, Sociology, etc.

Each week, learners scour the press for an interesting story and add it to their news notebook (1, 4). The tutor chooses a different theme each week (3), such as:

- political hypocrisy
- the underdog triumphs
- Emperor's new clothes.

Lessons could open with a learner/s feeding back their news (2). Periodically, the tutor could stage a Have I Got News for You quiz.

The teacher also keeps a notebook of quirky news items. If a learner does not complete the weekly task, the teacher will find an appropriate opportunity to show the learner an article s/he has collected and how to read it for meaning, learning and enjoyment. The learner could then be asked what articles most interest them, and the various platforms/publications they might find them in. The tutor may add additional interesting places to look for articles. The tutor may sign off the conversation with how much s/he is looking forward to seeing what they discover for next week (5).

Bibliography – any subject

Each week, learners add a new book to their bibliography with a short paragraph explaining:

- why they chose it
- what they've learnt from it, and
- how this learning may influence their development/work (3, 4).

The amount of the book the learner has read is of no consequence. Depending on the subject area, the learning may have come from a photograph, a single paragraph, and example, etc.. It's the short paragraph that's important. To extend this learning for everyone, learners could add their contribution to an on-line wiki (a facility available on virtually all intranets that allows multiple authors to contribute to one document). Wikis are extremely powerful, as the tutor can look online just before a lesson to see who hasn't contributed that week (1, 2).

The teacher also keeps a similar bibliographical resource, with a particular emphasis on lots of relevant and enjoyable learning from little reading. If a learner does not complete the weekly task, the tutor can use his/her own resource to inspire the learner to the rewards available from a little research (5).

Construction notebook

Each week, learners draw the three joints they have been attempting to master (3). Alongside the drawings are reflective notes on what they found difficult and how they overcame these difficulties (4).

When a learner fails to complete all of the drawings, staff will coach the learner to identify the specific issues they experienced (1, 2, 5). Where appropriate, the learner will be helped to develop his/her technique on subsequent joints, before revisiting the ones previously missed for a successful conclusion.

Early years scrap book

Each week, learners will add something to their Early Years placement scrapbook that helps them to reflect on something they have learnt (3). This could be a photo of a child performing an activity*, a child's painting, a drawing by the learner or simply observation notes (4). The learner will briefly outline:

- what the activity was
- what they learnt from it, and
- any hindsight comments.

The tutor will look at these each week, and learners will periodically share these learning points with the rest of their group. Alternatively, learners could add their contributions to a cohort blog or wiki*. This reduces the time it takes the tutor to measure, and broadens the learning for the whole group (1, 2).

If a learner has not completed the activity, the tutor could find an appropriate few minutes to ask about the highlights and lowlights of his/her week. A simple coaching interview could reveal the answer to each of the above bullets, and help the learner to capture this on paper. The tutor may sign off the conversation with how much s/he is looking forward to hearing about his/her experiences next week (5).

* Taking care not to break any safeguarding regulations.

Don't forget to send us your own Volatile Indicators to help others in our sector.