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## Training Needs Analysis

Many problems or shortcomings which prevent organisations or employees from achieving their objectives can often be overcome, or at least minimised, through training and development activities.

A thorough Training Needs Analysis is conducted by using the following steps:

### 1. Adopt a framework for identifying needs

Training needs can be identified at three levels:

- The **individual**: an employee lacks certain skills, understandings or behaviours that limit performance, eg a discourteous receptionist.
- The **strata**: employees doing the same kind of work lack a certain skill, eg with the introduction of new computerised cash registers, the checkout people need training but drivers do not.
- The **organisation**: throughout the company certain behaviour hinders achievement of a corporate goal, eg poor interpersonal skills are affecting employees and customer retention.

Consider that framework when deliberating on the need for training in your organisation.

### 2. Be aware of the work that may be involved

Just as employee training does not simply happen, nor does its identification. The process of assessing the need for training demands time and energy in planning and analysis. It demands the full involvement of employees in the discussion process, beyond the traditional approach where management decided what was best for employees. It demands co-ordination, allowing managers in all parts of the organisation to integrate common needs and priorities to avoid duplication of effort and cost.

### 3. Be ready to tackle any anticipated problems

Be prepared to initiate training when a need is obvious, eg before or after the installation of new equipment in the workplace.

Keep on the lookout for more difficult problems to identify. For example, you may have accepted for some time that the high turnover of employees in the accounts office was a result of the cramped, stuffy environment in that part of the building. You may argue that it's a budgetary issue, not a training problem. But what if the real cause was poor selection of employees or the accounts manager's poor interpersonal skills? In this case, training may well be required.



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## 4. Use proven techniques to identify needs

There is a strong case for ongoing, systematic monitoring. To identify training needs, or when problems arise, there are several instruments that may be used to locate the actual symptoms. Some of these needs assessment instruments are:

- **Literature research:** Scrutinise budget and quality control documents, goal statements, evaluation reports, staffing and scheduling reports for problems.
- **Interviews:** Talk to supervisors, managers, employees and customers.
- **Appraisal interviews:** Individual training needs will become apparent.
- **Observations:** Watch the job or task being performed.
- **Surveys:** Send out questionnaires.
- **Group discussions:** Involve employees and their supervisors.
- **Online monitoring:** Frequency of employee inquiries to in-house online resources.

## 5. Ask relevant questions

Essential questions that you might need to ask to determine training needs would include:

- What are my employees doing that they shouldn't be doing?
- What specific things would I like to see my employees doing, but they aren't?
- When I visualise my employees performing a job properly, what do I see them doing?
- What prevents them from performing a prescribed task to a set standard?
- Is that standard reasonable? Why not?
- If an employee could change one thing in the way current work is performed, what would it be?
- What skill or behaviour would I like to see my employees trained in? Why?
- What would they like to be trained in?
- What new technology would benefit my employees the most in the performance of their work?
- What new technology would I like to see invented to help them with their work? Why?

## 6. Know the benefits of a systematic approach

There are advantages in embracing an ongoing and systematic approach to identifying training needs. It's an essential requirement for improving performance, and a natural consequence of employee performance appraisals – morale, satisfaction and motivation are enhanced when employees and teams know that their development is a priority. Also, importantly, it allows management to prioritise resources, in accordance with an effective organisational development plan.

## 7. Integrate training needs wherever possible

To avoid duplication of effort and increasing costs, it is sensible for managers to aggregate training needs information and, whenever possible, to work towards integration of organisation-wide training activities.



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## 8. Begin a training program

Having identified needs, training can begin at the individual, strata or organisational level. The bottom line is that no training should be arranged without first establishing that there is a clear need for it.

### Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- On-the-job training
- Performance appraisal
- Staff training