



Needs Analysis

Asking the Right Questions to Ensure On-Target Training Solutions

Introduction

- Objectives** Using a Data Collection Worksheet and a description of a training need, you will:
- List at least one question to ask about:
 - business needs,
 - performance needs,
 - learning needs, and
 - learner needs.
 - Identify at least one data source and one data collection method for each question.
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Overview Needs analysis or training needs assessment is the process of identifying how training can help your organization reach its goals.

What's in it for me? Without needs assessment, we run the risk of developing and delivering training that does not support organizational needs, and therefore, does not deliver value to the company or the target audience.

Purpose Needs analysis places the training need or request in the context of the organization's needs. Training only adds value when it ultimately serves a business needs.

Needs analysis also validates and augments the initial issues presented by the client. It can reveal additional information, such as causes of the problem, and offer different perspectives on the client's initial impressions.

Needs analysis ensures that the ultimate training design supports employee performance and thereby helps the organization meet its needs. It can result in non-training recommendations for issues that affecting achievement of the desired organization and employee performance goals.

Steps for Conducting Needs Analysis

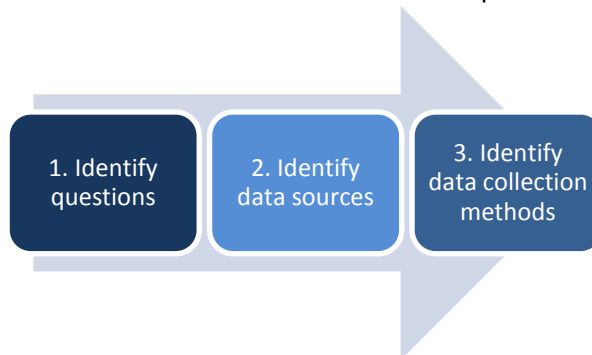
Overview

Conducting needs analysis involves three main tasks or steps. Today, we will focus on the first one:



Data Collection Process

Data collection involves three tasks or steps:



Identify Questions

When you identify questions to ask, determine what you want to know about:

1. Business Needs
2. Performance Needs
3. Learning Needs
4. Learner Needs

Business Needs

Business needs focus on:

- what problems must be resolved (e.g., customer complaints),
- what opportunity must be capitalized upon (e.g., a new product), and/or
- what business strategy must be supported (e.g., a marketing and product approach).

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Steps for Conducting Needs Analysis, Continued

Business Needs

(continued)

Examples of questions to ask are:

- To what measurable extent must the problem be resolved?
 - What current business needs or strategies are being affected or caused by the problem?
 - What is going on in the external environment that may be related to this problem such as competition, government regulations.
 - What other data exists that may provide information regarding this business (e.g., sales, benchmarking)
 - What changes(s) in business indicators are you seeking to achieve with this training intervention? What measures will tell you that you have been successful?
 - What business strategy(ies) are you seeking to support with this requested training intervention?
 - What's happening in your business that should / should not be happening?
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Performance Needs

Performance needs focus on what learners will ultimately have to do back on the job. Examples of questions to ask are:

- What is *desired* on-the-job performance?
 - What is *current* on-the-job performance?
 - What are the specific gaps between desired and current on-the-job performance?
 - What should people stop/start/keep doing?
 - How is on-the-job performance measured?
 - How is on-the-job performance managed and rewarded?
 - What tools and resources do the employees need to achieve the desired performance?
 - What is the work environment in which the performance is expected?
 - What are post-training expectations for manager support for job application?
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Learning Needs

Learning needs focus on what the learners must learn in the classroom in order to perform as required on the job. **These findings will drive the learning objective.**

Examples of questions to ask are:

- What do learners know now?
 - What can learners do now?
 - What is the current and desired skill / knowledge level? What is the gap?
 - What do the learners need to be able to *do* (skills) differently? How well?
 - What do learners need to *know* to be able to perform the skills?
 - What are implications in the work environment for transfer of learning back to the job?
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Steps for Conducting Needs Analysis, Continued

- Learner Needs** **Learner needs** focus on how to make the learning environment conducive to learning for a specific group of learners. Examples of questions to ask are:
- What training have the learners already had in this area?
 - What were the outcomes of the previous training?
 - What are their learning styles?
 - What is their attitude about the job performance that is being targeted?
 - What is their attitude toward the planned training program?
 - What will be the context in which they attend training (on-the-job vs. off-the-job; before or after shift; with their managers' support or not; arrangements made to be away from work, or expected to catch up on work during breaks?)

Identify Data Sources After determining the data collection questions, you will identify at least one data source for each question. A data source is anything or anyone that can help you answer the questions you previously identified.

Examples of data sources include extant data, (such as reports, HR data, job descriptions), upper management, client, learners' managers, subject matter experts.

Identify Data Collection Methods There are two types of data collection methods that result in different types of data:

1. **Quantitative Method:** result in *hard* data; data are objective and measurable.

Examples: extant data, surveys, job task analysis

2. **Qualitative Method:** result in *soft* data; data are subjective, intangible, anecdotal, and personal, such as opinions, attitudes, feelings, values, and desires.

Examples: focus groups, interviews, observation

Data Collection Plan

Project Name: _____

Date: _____

Type of Information	Questions to be Answered	Data Sources ¹	Data Collection Method ²
Business Needs			
Performance Needs			
Learning Needs			
Learner Needs			

¹ Extant data (e.g., reports, HR data, job descriptions), upper management/client, learners' managers, subject matter experts

² Extant data, surveys, assessments/tests, job task analysis, interviews, focus groups, observation