

HOW TO CONDUCT A TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

By Ken Drummond



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We hope you find this information useful in evaluating this book.

This 64 page manual sets out a proven method to determine what your business training needs are and complete a skills assessment. This Training Needs Analysis manual provides assessment tools suitable for both large and small companies. Training Needs Assessment is a process to qualify why you need to do the training, what training is required, what business benefits are to be expected, and what the costs, benefits and return on investment (ROI) will be.

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CHAPTER I

This manual provides a practical guide to conducting a training needs analysis for any organisation in any location, and is based on the author's 25 years of experience training for large and small organisations involved in a wide variety of business and corporate activities in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Australia.

“a comprehensive assessment of job aspects for both individuals and groups.”

There are various techniques and data collection methods available that can be used to conduct a training needs analysis. These include OSDAS, Work Preparation Survey System, Job Components Inventory, CODAP, and Delphi. Each of these techniques has merit in particular situations, but in some instances can involve relatively high cost or extensive time, or the requirement for the analyst to be skilled in the use of the method.

It is emphasised that the objective of this manual is to provide a straightforward approach in the business climate of today, given that managers, training co-ordinators, staff development officers and others who may be required to conduct a training needs analysis, are frequently required to complete this task within the commercial constraints of cost and time.

The principles described have been used successfully with staff numbers ranging from six to 2,500, and provide an effective step-by-step method which will result in a comprehensive assessment of job aspects for both individuals and groups.

Most people in organisations that have anything to do with training agree that training for training's sake is a waste of time and money, but, there are many organisations doing just that. They fail to recognise there is no value in carrying out training which:

- is not needed;
- does not help individuals and teams to become more effective at their jobs;
- or does not contribute towards achieving the organisation's objectives.

No doubt many of us can provide examples where individuals were sent on a training course 'because it was their turn', or, 'because it is company policy for every manager to do this course!' These requests - in some cases, instructions - ignore the fact that the training in question may not form part of the person's personal development program, nor would it help to improve performance in his or her job.

Most people are willing to participate in training courses, perhaps if only to break the monotony of the workplace. However, for the organisation and the individual to obtain some work-based, meaningful benefit, there must be a real need for the training. This is where a training needs analysis is essential.

Training is an important resource in any organisation. Implemented in the most effective way it can assist in overcoming work-based problems and help to provide a more skilled and productive workforce, as well as assisting the organisation to achieve its objectives.

WHAT IS A TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS?

A training needs analysis (TNA) is a thorough review of the training which can affect improvement in the knowledge, skills or attitude of individuals or teams in the workplace.

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It forms the basis for structured training and identifies current work-based shortfalls or problems in performance standards that may be able to be resolved through training.

To put it another way, the TNA identifies the difference between the standard of performance being achieved, and the standard of performance required - the 'training gap' - with the aim of raising the quality and productivity of output.

Additionally, a TNA considers future organisational development as well as development for individuals and groups. It is therefore, a valuable planning and management tool.

EFFECTIVE STRUCTURED TRAINING

For structured training programs to be effective they must meet a number of conditions. Three of these conditions are:

1. That skills to be acquired by those attending the training are identified before the training is started.
2. The end results of the training must be identified before the training commences.
3. There must be a work-based benefit as a result of the training, such as reduced wastage or higher productivity.

In summary, there must be a clearly defined need for training before the training begins.

Training is a significant cost to an organisation when the costs of preparation, instructor time, participant time, materials, hire of venue and equipment, catering and other costs are taken into account.

Money expended on 'ad hoc' training where the training needs may not have been clearly identified, and where the training programs are not part of a structured system, represents an expense which may not produce a satisfactory return on investment.

IDENTIFYING TRAINING NEEDS

Identifying training needs is the crucial first action in establishing structured training. It is from clear identification of these needs that training objectives, training plans and training programs are developed.

Conducting a TNA is a positive step towards ensuring the training is both necessary and meets a detected need. It provides the means whereby the organisation can identify performance problems caused by attitudes or lack of skills and knowledge, which can be overcome through training.

When carrying out a TNA some issues will undoubtedly be identified that are outside the area of responsibility of training. The analyst must recognise this, know the cut-off point and not get carried away by the occasion. *A TNA is not a panacea for all ills.*

There are no shortcuts to conducting a training needs analysis. Every job and every situation is unique. Information must be obtained from a variety of work-based sources and it is from these sources that the real training needs of the organisation can be determined.

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A careful analysis of the data collected from each source is required to clearly show:

- The job;
- The desired standards of performance in each job;
- The performance standards of the individual or group;
- The skills, knowledge and attitudes of individuals or groups carrying out their jobs relative to the work being performed; and
- Whether differences in performance standards or shortfalls in knowledge, skills or attitudes can be overcome through training.

It is through this approach that the 'training gap' is identified.

A method of collecting data for, say, a machine operator's job is:

- To watch the job being done;
- To investigate what is happening;
- To compare what is happening with what those involved with the job think should be happening. (Involve the person doing the job, the supervisor, the safety officer - if appropriate - etc.); and
- To analyse all the data collected and decide if there is any need to improve the knowledge, skills or attitude of the person performing the task. If so, then this is a training need.

Determining some managerial and supervisory training needs is not quite so easy. These needs could include such areas as:

- Market forecasting
- Pricing
- Distribution
- Product knowledge
- Occupational health & safety regulations
- Productivity measurement
- Method / work study
- Budgeting
- Cash flow
- Inventory control
- Planning
- Problem solving
- Controlling
- Leading

This gives an indication of the scope of subject matter which should be considered. In practice it often happens that once the analyst has the confidence of supervisors and managers, they are often willing to discuss any training they know they need.

IDENTIFYING THE REAL NEED

Care has to be taken to ensure that the cause of the training gap - the real need - is identified, and reaction is not just made to a symptom of the need.

For example, it would be easy to assume that a high labour turnover was responsible for a loss in production. While this may be a factor, the real need may be centred around the question, 'What is the cause of the high labour turnover?'

Among other factors it could be any one, or a combination of, the following:

- Poor supervision
- Ineffective recruitment and selection methods.
- Lack of induction training.
- Low staff morale.
- Poor training methods, ...etc.

USING A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

Using a problem-solving approach to a TNA helps to determine the real training need and reduces the temptation to react to symptoms of the need. For example:

- Identify an apparent need.
- Analyse the possible causes of this need.
- Assess and evaluate alternative ways of solving the need.
- Decide if the need can be overcome through training. If so...
 - decide how;
 - develop training objectives;
 - decide the most appropriate training method; and
 - prepare the training plan.

However, it must be kept in mind that a TNA may not produce a training outcome.

The TNA process may identify problems/needs in two areas:

1. Training
2. The organisation

Some schools of thought separate 'attitude' into a third category for consideration. However, as training is concerned with knowledge, skills and attitude, separation of 'attitude' as another category is considered unnecessary.

If any of the needs identified cannot be met through training, then management should be informed accordingly.

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REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TNA

For the analysis to be successful, four basic elements are necessary:

1. Identified training needs must be supported by evidence of the need.
2. There must be commitment, support and participation by senior management towards the analysis and its results.
3. There must be total support, participation and co-operation by department and section supervisors towards obtaining the data necessary for the analysis.
4. There must be support by all levels of management for the training program which results from the analysis.

Conducting a TNA can be time-consuming. The organisation is committing time and effort at all levels and this is a cost which must be borne as part of the analysis. However, the results should assist the organisation to:

Become more productive.

Make more effective use of its resources by improving knowledge, skills or attitudes through training.

The following chapters consider the TNA process in detail.

TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this manual the term 'operative' has been used as a convenient term for any staff member below that of a supervisor. This has been done because of the large number of status titles that exist within organisations today. It is not offered in any demeaning or derogatory manner.





CHAPTER 2

THE TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS PROCESS

A training needs analysis is a vehicle of change. Something will happen as a result of the analysis and, consequently, in some instances may be seen as a threat. As in anything which brings about change, it is essential to:

Involve as many people as possible who are likely to be affected by the change.

Keep everyone informed as progress through the analysis is being made.

To overcome these concerns, a TNA should be conducted in a series of well-defined steps shown in the model on the following page. In this way progress of the analysis can be monitored through each step.

STEP 1: HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT

It is essential that senior management personnel are involved (and are seen to be involved) from the outset. Their 'stamp of approval' provides authority for the analysis and for any discussions which will need to take place with managers, supervisors and other staff.

From the analyst's viewpoint, discussions with senior management:

Determine the level of authority that he or she will have for the analysis.

Provide information on possible changes in the composition of the workforce to meet new markets, new technology, etc.

Assist in obtaining a 'feel' for organisational problems, challenges and opportunities as management see them. (Their concerns may, or may not, be reflected at lower levels in the organisation and this could be a significant issue in the analysis).

Agreement should be made with senior management that they will assume the responsibility for informing the managers who report to them of the impending analysis, with a request that they, in turn, inform their staff. (In practice it helps if a prepared letter is passed to them for their signatures and distribution).

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