

# Training Needs Analysis: The Basics



## Introduction

The purpose of a training needs analysis is to form the basis for a learning event design as well as a justification for the overall learning event. The needs analysis answers the basic questions of “who,” “what” and “why.” This means the targeted learner (who needs to be trained), the specific learning event (what is needed), and the rationale for the learning event (why the learning event is needed).

A catalyst often initiates a learning event that is part of the needs analysis. This may be a request from another organization, a request from learners or a change in regulations that affect the subject matter.

Questions to ask when developing a comprehensive needs analysis are, but are not limited to, the following:

- What the learning event will cost?
- Who will instruct/facilitate it?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- What equipment will be needed?
- What will be the business impact?

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A needs analysis starts with gathering information from various sources. These sources may include course evaluations from current learner observations by staff and input from subject matter experts and/or trainers. Instructional designers may review current learning events including course materials, observe a facilitated course and make recommendations. A need may also be identified in response to changes in applicable regulations, updates or changes to subject matter literature or requests from other organizations that indicate the

need for developing a learning event. Once a need has been identified, completing the Needs Analysis Resource Form follows that incorporates a list of potential questions you could ask to assist in conducting an organizational needs analysis.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS FORM

### Who will comprise your training audience?

To answer this question, start with a general description of your audience and work toward the specific.

- Example/General Description: Administrative support staff
- Example/Specific Description: Administrative support staff who incorporate photographs in final reports.

*The questions in this sample form can help you develop a quality needs analysis for your learning event!*

### **What type of training do they need?**

To answer this question, describe the needed training.

- Example: Training to utilize the computer program Adobe Photoshop.
- Example: Training to speak conversational Italian.
- Example: Training to ensure fall protection.

### **Why do they need this training (justification for holding the learning event)?**

To answer this question, be specific.

- Example: Support staff participants need to incorporate clean, clear photographs into final reports to managers, i.e., becoming proficient in using Adobe Photoshop.
- Example: Course participants need to speak and read conversational Italian for their trip to Italy.
- Example: Training participants climbing on bridges and tanks several feet above solid ground need to know how to protect themselves, including what protective gear to wear and how it should be properly worn.

### **What qualifications are required for the instructor(s)/facilitator(s)?**

To answer this question, be specific about the related work experience, educational background or any special licensing required in becoming an instructor/facilitator:

- Example: Must have two years of experience as a support person, must have proficiency in Adobe Photoshop and other computer software and must have at least 8 hours of Train-the-Trainer.
- Example: Must have minimum experience of two years teaching languages, a BS or related degree in education and have proficiency in reading and speaking Italian.
- Example: Must be an experienced climber, be a degreed safety professional and be licensed by OSHA to teach fall protection and construction safety.

*A needs analysis  
should incorporate  
appropriate detail.*

### **What type of training facility will be needed to conduct this training effectively?**

To answer this question, describe the minimum facility requirements necessary to train this skill or this curriculum effectively. Sometimes, it is a good idea to draw the seating arrangement if a special configuration is needed.

- Example: A heated/air conditioned classroom that comfortably seats up to 15 adults with a heating/air conditioning system that the instructor can regulate, white board or chalk board that all sighted participants can easily see, tables and chairs that can easily be moved and reconfigured, adequate lighting and easy access to bathroom facilities.
- Example: A heated/air conditioned classroom with a bank of eight computers placed in a semicircle facing a large screen. A 9th teaching computer, linked to a PowerPoint presentation on a projector, should be in the center of the semi-circle facing the same screen. Each computer, including the teaching computer, should be equipped with Adobe Photoshop. The instructor and the student will need comfortable chairs placed behind the computers facing the screen. The instructor can use the screen to teach a step-by-step program to utilize Adobe, while he or she can easily move to the four computers on either side to assist and to check if each student is following the program.

### **What type of equipment will be needed to teach this learning event?**

To answer this question, simply describe every single piece of equipment you will need to teach this learning event from pencil and paper, to computers, to special software, to telescopes, to gages and to handheld calculators. If a gadget is needed to effectively teach this course, write it down.

### **What type of training methods will be utilized (estimate the percentage of time using during each method)?**

To answer, this question, describe the teaching methods that will be used during the learning event. This will help ensure you incorporate different teaching methods in your learning environment. The information provided

*A needs analysis is the process of identifying how and/or if a training intervention can help your organization reach its goals.*

below serves as a reminder of the teaching/training methods available to you.

Note: Below is a list of several different learning styles. Adults have a strong preference for hands-on training, so whenever this method is appropriate, incorporate it.

- Kinesthetic training—hands-on teaching that incorporates touch.
- Visual training—books, microscopes, telescopes, photographs, models, slides, films.
- Auditory training—lectures, question and answer, discussions, debates, panel discussions.
- Combination of kinesthetic, visual, and auditory training—role plays, field trips or interactive computer courses.

### **What is the time frame necessary to complete this training?**

To answer this question, provide the necessary details by letting participants know the exact learning event time and dates. For example, identify the number of hours, the days of the week, the times and the learning event's beginning and end.

- Example: This course (name it) will begin September 20, 2010, and end November 12, 2010. It will be taught for two hours on Monday and Friday evenings from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm each week.
- Example: This course will take place over 3 ½ consecutive days, beginning 8:00 am on Monday, September 13, 2010, and ending at noon on Thursday, September 16, 2010. The course begins promptly at 8:00 am each day and ends at 5:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday, September 16th, is a half day. Participants will be dismissed as soon as they complete the final exam.
- Example: This learning event is a one-time only event and will take place on Tuesday, September 14, 2010, from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm. No one will be admitted after 7:00 am.

### **What is the estimated cost of developing this learning event?**

To answer this question, be as detailed as necessary. If the information on this form must go to an advisory committee or to other managers for the learning event to receive approval, provide the details needed to make a

*Conducting a quality needs analysis may result in not recommending training as an intervention.*

decision. If you are the person controlling the budget, you will still need to know the total allotted course costs.

### **Who should be involved in the curriculum design?**

To answer this question, divide it into two parts. First answer the following question: Who in your company has the best grasp on the content of the learning event? Perhaps they could write text or become one of your technical editors. Next, answer the second question: Who in your company can develop curriculum? This person is typically an educator. They should know teaching methods, learning styles, how to format and teach information, and how to train skills. This person will be your project manager.

### **What will you charge per participant to attend and complete this learning event?**

To answer this question, you have to divide the costs of presenting a learning event into a single time (whether it is a course that lasts six months or a one-day event), and then add your profit margin.

### **Where will the training take place?**

Where are the learners who need the specific training? Will the training also be conducted through the web for people who need the training but are not near the physical location? Will travel be accommodated so students can get to the training? If a hands-on portion to the learning exists, what location is best suited for this?

- Example: A course on Marine Engineering will be taking place in the Baltimore, Maryland, office where the majority of the marine engineers are located. The location is also selected because learners can examine what they have learned in the Inner Harbor.

### **What will be the business impact?**

To answer this question, consider the behaviors or competencies associated with desired business outcomes for employees, such as the following: knowing what to do (core competencies of one's job); having the capability to do it (having the skills and abilities to perform the job); and having the

*Consider multiple sources when collecting data for a needs analysis.*

positive behavioral traits to carry out the work (organizational skills, time management, motivation, etc.).

List critical competencies to business goals and find a method to measure the business impact of those competencies. Assign a weight to each competency and then through obtaining data on current attained competencies, determine where the performance gaps exist. Also, determine what training is needed to fill the gaps, and then assess the business impact of filling the gaps.

- Example: A critical core competency for a proofreader is to read quickly at a speed of approximately 3,000 words per hour. If a specific training's learning outcomes include increasing proofreader speeds to this amount, then it would translate into proofreading more material in a shorter period of time (if they currently read slower than this amount). Take the amount of proofreading that is currently achieved, and then measure the impact of the faster proofreading post training to determine business impact.