Workplace Needs Assessment

What is Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA)?

1. A systematic way of identifying workplace learning needs and issues
2. A tool to understand an organization’s culture and essential skills needed
Workplace Needs Assessment

What is the Purpose of WNA?

1. To identify organization’s educational needs focusing on essential skills
2. To identify workplace needs resulting from organizational changes
3. To specify a range of activities to fulfil identified needs of individuals and organizations

Why is WNA necessary?

1. To provide information for employee education
2. To gain support and commitment
3. To get a sense of programs people want
4. To identify workplace attitudes and perceptions on issues and skills
5. To help identify readiness for change
6. To enhance and support such activities as quality control, gain-sharing, etc.
Workplace Needs Assessment

Why is Training Necessary?

Actual Performance → Desired Performance

Training and Non-training Needs

Activities to determine Needs

Possible Activities to Determine Needs

- Tour of worksite
- Tour with selected employees
- Individual interviews with management and unions
- Individual interviews with employees
- Focus group discussion with management, union and employees
- Collection and review of workplace materials, e.g., safety information, operating policies, manuals, time sheets, etc.
Needs Analysis

Types of Needs Analyses

Context Analysis - Analysis of business needs and reasons training is desired to answer:

- Why is training considered solution to a business problem
- History of company re. employee training
- Who decided training is needed
- Management interventions, if any

User Analysis - Analysis dealing with participants and instructors:

- Who will receive training?
- Their level of current knowledge
- Their learning style
- Who will conduct the training
Needs Analysis

Types of Needs Analyses

Work Analysis - Analysis of job and competencies required for doing the job:

- Specifies main duties and skills required
- Ensures training developed includes relevant links to job content

Content - Analysis of documents, laws, procedures used on the job

- What knowledge or information is used on the job. This comes from manuals, regulations, etc.
  It is important the content of training does not contradict/conflict job requirements
Needs Analysis

Types of Needs Analyses

**Training Suitability Analysis** - Analysis of whether training is the desired solution
- Training is one of several solutions but it may not be the best solution
- To determine if training will be effective

**Cost-Benefit Analysis** - Analysis on Return on Investment (ROI) of training
- Effective training gives value greater than investment to produce or administer training
Needs Analysis

Techniques of Needs Assessment

• Direct observation
• Questionnaires
• Consultation with mgmt or those with special knowledge
• Review of relevant literature
• Interviews
• Focus groups
• Tests
• Records and report studies
• Work samples

Needs Analysis

Checklist for Training Assessment Needs

• Is test valid for intended purpose?
• Is it reliable and fair?
• Is it cost-effective?
• Will the test-takers think it is valid and fair?
• Is the test easy/difficult to administer, score and interpret given available resources?
Needs Analysis

Traps to avoid

1. Training isn’t always the answer

   Needs assessment presupposes that training is a solution to a performance issue. But sometimes it is not. E.g. Time management training may not solve problem of managers not getting things done on time.

   Solution

   Ensure problem isn’t a result of a cause other than lack of skill/knowledge, e.g., unclear or lack of expectation; improper incentives; inadequate tools, materials or workspace, lack of feedback, etc.

2. People don’t know what they don’t know

   Job performers may not always give accurate descriptions of skills/knowledge required because they just don’t know or cannot articulate them.

   Solution

   Ensure you interview the correct people to maximize quality of information, e.g., interview supervisors, experts, model workers,
Needs Analysis

Traps to avoid

3. Performance versus Competencies

Competencies-based lists tend to be imprecise and vague, e.g., “a supportive coach or mentor”, “good facilitator”, etc. and not behaviorally based; hence difficult to teach these skills that will result in a positive behavioral change.

Solution

Focus on competencies, on what people are (or are not) doing to identify performance level and pinpoint relevant solutions. Ask what should the person be doing or what he needs to know to be able to meet organizations results; what is getting in the way of his performance, etc.

Needs Analysis

Summary Steps in a Needs Analysis

1. Perform a ‘gap’ analysis to identify current skills, knowledge, and abilities of your people and the organizational and personal needs.

2. Identify your priorities and importance of possible activities.

3. Identify causes of your performance problems and/or opportunities. Identify possible solutions.

4. Compare the consequences if the program is or is not implemented.

5. Generate and communicate your recommendations for training and development, organization development, career development, and/or other interventions.
Needs Analysis

Finally: Some Helpful Tips

1. Access the right people
   Be specific with people you wish to interview, and don’t settle for less

2. Align all vested parties
   Tactfully ensure all parties agree for a needs analysis taking into account sensitivities and office politics

3. Explain why you are gathering data
   Explain clearly goals of assessment and why you are interviewing or gathering data. Be sensitive, factual and diplomatic in your explanation

4. Sort fact from fiction
   Collect mostly facts rather than opinion or perception (Ask: “Pl give examples of what makes you say that?”

5. Don’t jump to conclusions
   Complete a cause analysis to uncover real causes for gaps

6. Don’t gather too much or too little data
   Prioritize your questions to get the essential information first. Focus on performance gap and its causes