

Training Needs Analysis: The Basics

The purpose of a Training Needs Analysis is to justify the development of a learning event before it is designed. A basic needs analysis will answer the basic questions of “who”, “what”, and “why” - the targeted learner (who needs to be trained), the learning event (what is needed), and the reasons for the learning event (why the learning event is needed). Questions to ask when developing a good needs analysis are the following, but are not limited to: what the learning event will cost, who will teach it, what teaching methods will be used, where the learning event will take place, what equipment will be needed, and what will be the business impact. On the form below, there are questions you can ask on a training needs analysis for your own organization’s learning events. After each question, there are examples that demonstrate how the questions could be answered.

1. Who will make up your training audience?

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

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

2. What type of training do they need?

To answer this question, describe the training that is needed:

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

3. 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 in the final reports of the managers they support, i.e., they need to become proficient in the use of “Adobe® Photoshop”.
- Example: Course participants need to speak and read conversational Italian for their trip to Italy.
- Example: Training participants climb on bridges and tanks several feet above solid ground and need to know how to protect themselves, including what protective gear to wear and how it is properly worn.

4. What qualifications are required for the instructors?

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

- 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 a minimum experience of two years of teaching languages, a BS or related degree in Education any 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.

5. What type of training facility will be needed to do this training effectively?

To answer this question, describe the minimum requirements of the facility 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 fifteen adults with a heating/air conditioning system that can be regulated by the instructor, white board or chalk board that can be easily seen by all sighted participants, 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 (8) computers placed in a semi-circle facing a large screen. A 9th teaching computer, linked to a Power Point® 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 and see if each student is following the program.

6. 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 to hand-held calculators. If there's a gadget you need, to effectively teach this course, write it down.

7. What type of training methods will be utilized (estimate the percentage of time that you will be using each method)?

To answer this question, describe the teaching methods that will be used over the course of the learning event, this will help you make certain you incorporate different teaching methods in your learning event. The information below is just a reminder of the teaching/training methods available to you. Note: Adults

have a strong preference for hands-on training, so whenever hands-on training 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 - like role plays, field trips or interactive computer courses

8. What is the time frame necessary to complete this training?

To answer this question, get into detail. Let the participants know the exact time and dates of the learning event. Give the number of hours, the days of the week, the times, the beginning of the learning event and the end.

- Example: This course (name it) will begin September 20, 2010, and end on 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 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 5:00pm 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.

9. 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 has to go to an advisory committee or to other managers for the learning event to get the green light, give them the details they need to make a decision. If you are the person controlling the purse strings, you will still need to know what this course is going to take out of your budget.

10. Who should be involved in the curriculum design?

To answer this question, divide it into two parts. First answer the 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 know teaching methods, they understand learning styles, they know how to format and teach information, and how to train skills. This person will be your project manager.

11. 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 a single time (whether it is a course that lasts six months or a one day event), then add your profit margin.

12. 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 there is a hands-on portion to the learning, 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 the learners can examine what they have learned in the Inner Harbor.

13. What will be the business impact?

To answer this question, consider the behaviors or competencies associated with desired business outcomes for employees, such as: 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 the positive behavioral traits to carry out the work (organizational skills, time management, motivation, etc.).

- List competencies that are critical 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 are. 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 proofreaders 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 current amount of proofreading that is currently achieved, and then measure the impact of the faster proofreading after the training, to determine the business impact.