

## Designing a Training Needs Analysis

A training needs analysis will enable managers to anticipate and meet training needs in a timely and cost-effective manner. The following ideas can help ensure that the process is effective and professional:

- A comprehensive training needs survey will contribute to the effectiveness of a training strategy by:
  - Establishing training priorities
  - Developing training-budget guidelines
  - Setting training-delivery deadlines
  
- To encourage participation in the survey and to solicit useful information, the survey should be:
  - Anonymous and confidential
  - Easy to read, with clear instructions and questions
  - Relevant to the organization's unique operating challenges and conditions
  
- Use the following guidelines for designing a formal survey:
  - Use multiple-choice and yes/no questions as often as possible to make it easier and quicker for employees to respond and to collate information.
  - Ask very specific open questions-for example, about the person's most recent course, most useful course, and most urgent training need.
  - Leave room for short comments after each major category of questions.
  - Collect background information about employees, including:
    - Level of education
    - Training history in previous organizations
    - Length of service with the organization
    - Geographic location
    - Major organization division
    - Employee level within the organization (such as executive, manager, or team member)
  - Determine whether an employee is familiar with key training policies and practices, including:
    - Training catalogs and curriculum
    - Training application forms and course registration procedures
    - Educational assistance programs
    - Performance appraisal system
    - Training library or self-study facility
  - Use scales for describing a course's usefulness rather than narrative comments.
  - Limit scales from one or three, to elicit a specific opinion from survey participants.

- Differentiate between training needs for proficiency on the job and professional development needs for future positions.
  - Solicit information about the need for both refresher and new courses.
  - Do not repeat questions already addressed through post-course evaluations.
  - Have participants identify specific barriers to training, as well barriers to practicing skills gained through training.
  - Use a 360-degree approach to find out what suggestions participants have about their managers' and coworkers' training needs. Include questions about employees' interest in and availability for after-hours training.
  - Do not assume that all employees are interested in promotion. Ask if, and when, an employee hopes to be promoted.
  - Rate the effectiveness of other forms of training needs surveys (for example, annual evaluations, managerial coaching, or mentoring).
  - Ask if employees are willing to contribute to or share the cost of certain kinds of training.
  - Get information about ideal conditions for training delivery (for example, on-site versus off-site, internal versus external facilitators).
  - Limit the number of questions. Research demonstrates that the interest and energy level to provide accurate information decrease dramatically after twenty-five questions.
  - You may interview a cross-section of managers, particularly the most influential. Ask them the following questions:
    - What are the key performance gaps?
    - Which areas or levels of the organization should be focused on?
    - For ongoing training courses already identified, ask:
      - Who needs the training?
      - How many people need to be trained?
      - What issues should the training resolve?
      - When should the training be complete?
      - How large is the budget?
- Once you have collected your information and formulated your plan, meet with key decision makers and present your findings. Your report, oral or in writing, should cover the following topics:
    - The problem
    - The cause
    - Recommended solution
    - Your action plan
    - The cost and benefit
    - Approvals required