

## FINAL EXAM

1. Write a summary of the following article.
2. Relate this article to your internship.
3. What is your opinion of this article? Are there any additional techniques you would suggest to make a needs assessment?

# Training Needs Assessment Techniques

## Choosing a Method to Assess Professional Development Needs of Staff

Oct 28, 2009 Joni Rose

When designing a new training initiative or program it is important to assess the needs of the learners in order to match the goal of the training with learner needs.

◆ A training needs assessment is a process of discovery for the training manager. Gathering data to support a certain direction with training design or delivery demonstrates a strategic approach to training program design. Understanding degrees of training barriers such as computer literacy, computer access, scheduling constraints, English language proficiency, huge variances with prior learning and/or experience or training venue location can influence the design of the training program framework. There are many techniques available to training managers to assess training needs. Choosing a technique to use depends mostly on time, energy and financial constraints.

### Use a Survey to Process Training Data

Surveys are typically used when assessing the needs of large groups. Online surveys can be a great tool to capture and process a large amount of data. If budget allows, hire a survey company with experience conducting training needs assessments as they can often provide professional advice around the wording of the questions to answer the desired research questions.

Surveys can be used to gather qualitative or quantitative data. Qualitative data is verbatim comments that survey participants provide to open ended questions. Quantitative data is numerical data collected by asking questions with a fixed set of options. Quantitative questions can be formatted as: yes or no, true or false or multiple choice questions.

Analyzing the data collected can be very time consuming especially if there are a number of qualitative questions that need to be coded. Coding is a process where key words, phrases or

themes are established by reviewing the responses to qualitative questions in order to quantify the number of responses on the same theme or that contain the key words or phrases. For example, a qualitative question on a training needs assessment for a retail company may be:

“What training topics are important to someone who is new to your role?”

From the responses to this question, some of the coding phrases could be:

- Sales techniques
- Customer service skills
- Store opening and closing processes
- Merchandising

Analyzing the answers to determine the top suggested topics will help prioritize what training development is required first and what can be developed at a later date.

### **Hold Interviews With Staff**

One-on-one interviews with staff, their supervisors and upper management can often provide a more immediate idea of what the training needs are. However, it is important to balance the views of upper management with those that are working on the front line and their supervisor if the goal is to improve the performance of frontline staff.

### **Reviewing Evaluations Gives Insight Into Training Needs**

Reviewing training evaluations, test results and/or performance reviews can provide insights into training needs including suggestions for:

- topics for new workshops or courses
- ways to improve the delivery of courses or workshops
- topics that require a more in-depth approach or a more advanced level
- curriculum that needs a revision to bring it up-to-date

Using training needs assessment techniques to assess the professional development needs of staff ensures that the training provided is relevant, current and excellent. Capturing data that supports training initiatives and framework development will provide the business case for further investment in staff training and development