Chapter Two
Developing a Training Plan

Training plans outline how organisations carry out training activities strategically to provide appropriate and affordable in-service training to employees. A plan will show which employees should receive which type of training. A training plan differs from the training strategy in that it is much more focused and it targets the specific needs of employees. It may not be practical for your organisation to develop a training plan which addresses *all* the training needs of all employees; therefore, the training plan should focus on training activities which are of the highest priority for your organisation. This chapter will focus on steps for creating training plans based on established job descriptions and identified needs. It is designed for use by training officers but it may also be a good resource for supervisors, administrators and trainers.

Good training plans are a challenge to develop and they should be kept simple and realistic in terms of time and resources available. Most importantly, each training plan should be based on the identified, high priority needs of employees within the organisation.

O B J E C T I V E S

THIS CHAPTER WILL ASSIST YOU TO

Identify priority training needs for cadres of employees within your organisation.

Analyse employees' duties in terms of the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Use a combination of appropriate tools to conduct a training needs assessment.

There are four basic steps to developing training plans:

❶ List the duties of the person(s) to be trained
❷ Conduct a task analysis
❸ Carry out a training needs assessment
❹ Analyse and select training options

In this chapter, we will explore each of the above steps. Adjust the planning steps for use in your organisation. As you go through the process, consider what resources are available to you and what information and documentation exists to support your planning. Keep the process simple and remember that, by addressing each of these steps even in a small way, your training approach will be vastly improved.

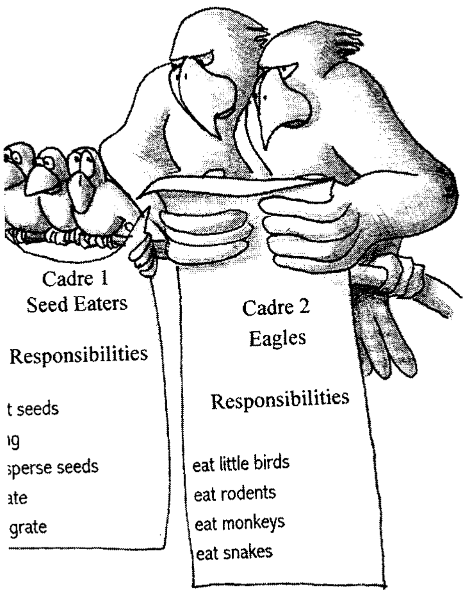
Step ❶: List the Duties of the Person(s) to be Trained

Job descriptions are documents which indicate the job title, duties, performance standards, supervisory relationships, and the qualifications and skills required for each position within your organisation. They are most often used in recruitment, but job descriptions should also play an important role in performance appraisal and in developing a training needs assessment.

You should be aware of the specific duties of prospective trainees. Job descriptions are the starting point for determining what employees *should* be doing. If the job descriptions in question are not up to date, additional work will be required to determine what is currently expected of employees.

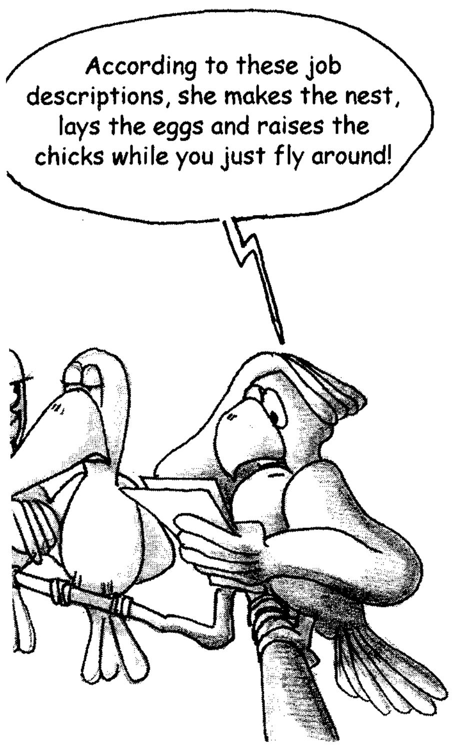
Since responsibilities and duties change over time, job descriptions may require periodic review and updating.

Listing responsibilities is not usually done on an individual basis, but by cadre.



By the end of Step 1, you should have a very clear picture of what is required of the position in question.

You may wish to compare job descriptions from related jobs or jobs which are interrelated to ensure that they link well and support each other.



The duties of prospective trainees should be clearly defined and listed. These duties are sometimes referred to as tasks, responsibilities or activities and your primary goal should be to determine which main tasks, responsibilities and standards are required of the position in question. Once the tasks and responsibilities have been listed, you are ready to conduct a task analysis.

E JOB DESCRIPTION EXCERPT: MAIN DUTIES OF A PROTECTED AREA MANAGER. PARCS Training Needs and Opportunities Among Protected Area Managers in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa

The Protected Area Manager Should:

1. Ensure the availability of competent and well motivated staff
2. Ensure appropriate infrastructure within budget
3. Ensure financial and accounting integrity of the protected area
4. Ensure development and achievement of tactical plans and budgets and contribute to protected area strategic planning
5. Ensure that all activities within the protected area comply with laws and regulations
6. Ensure optimum levels of visitor satisfaction
7. Ensure agreed intervention programmes (e.g. early burning, problem animal control) are completed to budget and timetables
8. Ensure harmonious relationships with neighbouring communities
9. Be aware of research activities and progress against plan
10. Represent the protected area and its interests in public meetings
11. Ensure an appropriate balance between resource conservation and use in the protected area

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Step ❷: Conduct a Task Analysis

Task analysis is an exercise whereby the main tasks (referred to here as duties) of a cadre of employees are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It answers the following questions: 'To carry out this particular job, what knowledge is required? What skills are needed? What attitudes will enable the person to work effectively?'

Task analysis is used to determine which knowledge, skills and attitudes are required by employees to conduct their duties well. By analysing the tasks, you can obtain the information required to conduct a needs assessment and focus on the specific training requirements of employees.

To conduct the task analysis refer to lists of duties produced in Step 1. Focus on each duty and determine:

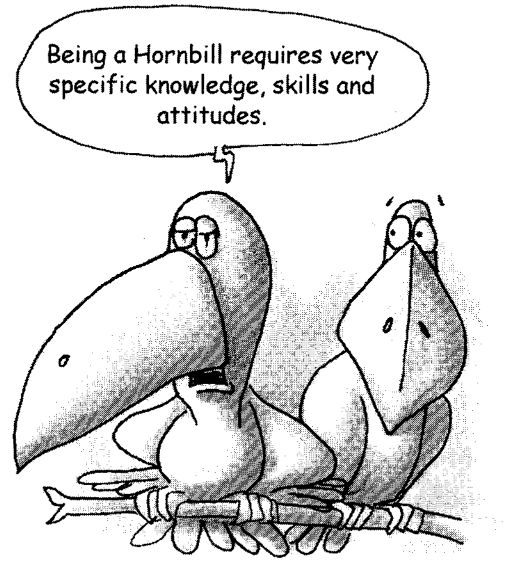
Knowledge	What basic information does the employee need to carry out this duty?
Skills	What does the person have to be able to do to complete the duty to standard?
Attitudes	What demeanour or conduct should the person have in carrying out this duty?

Ranking Skills. One way of making a task analysis more quantifiable is to develop a ranking for the level of skills required. If you record the rank as part of the task analysis, this will help you later on when you develop your training plan.

Example

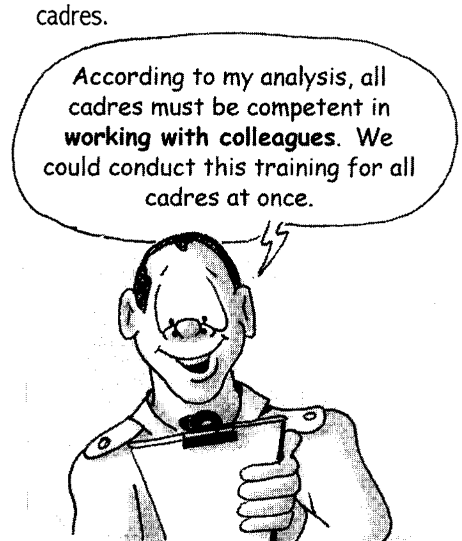
Skills	Ranger	Sergeant	Assist. Warden	Warden	Senior Warden
Working with colleagues	3	3	3	3	3
Communication	2	3	4	4	4
Time management	1	2	3	4	4
Decision making	1	2	3	4	4
Understanding natural systems	3	3	4	4	4
Policy formulation	na	na	1	2	4
Strategic planning	na	1	2	3	4
Budgeting	na	1	2	3	3
Managing people	1	2	2	3	4
Field craft	4	4	2	1	1
Leadership	1	4	3	3	4

	Level of skill required
Key	4= Expert
for	3= Competent
ranks	2= Basic
	1= Aware of
	Na= Not applicable

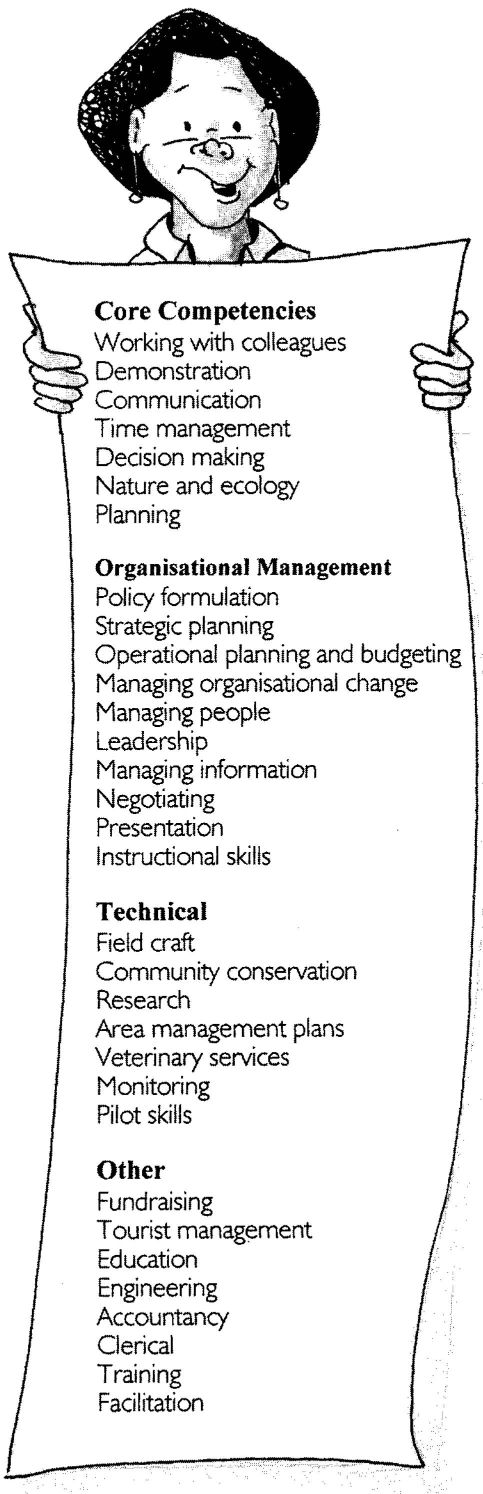


Each cadre values specific skills differently. By ranking skills, you will be able to see which skills are most important to each cadre.

And you will be able to identify which critical skills are common to several cadres.



Consider more than just technical skills. Think about the broad range of skills required for employees to perform well. Here's a sample list of skills to consider.



EXAMPLE OF A TASK ANALYSIS: *College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, Tanzania.*

This example shows what knowledge, skills and attitudes are required of a warden in relation to policies and legislation.

Knowledge (What the warden must know)

- existing wildlife policies and legislation, including the structure of law enforcement and the warden's responsibilities
- process of formulating policies and legislation
- mechanism of bilateral agreements, including how they are initiated
- new and emerging wildlife conservation concepts, including problem identification, programme development
- role of politics in wildlife management
- court procedure and prosecution techniques
- customary /traditional law
- policy implementation procedures
- compatibility of sectoral policies and legislation
- policy review process and policy evaluation
- resource economics

Skills (What the warden must be able to do)

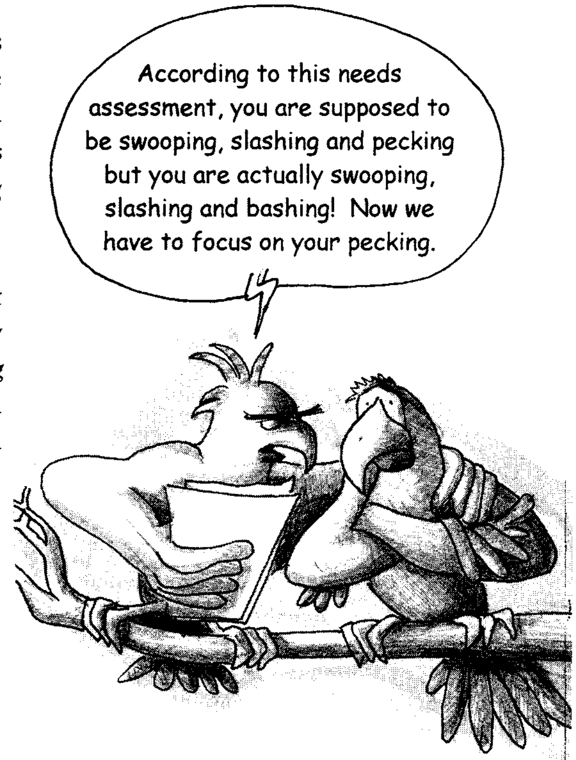
- follow procedures for law enforcement, including apprehending and arresting poachers
- educate and influence policy makers
- problem solving
- manage staff for maximum law enforcement, including delegating responsibilities
- interact effectively with communities, the general public and donor agencies
- assist in the revision of outdated and/or ineffective legislation and policies

Attitudes (What the warden must show in his/her approach to work)

- diplomacy and tact
- self-confidence
- participatory management
- participatory community decision making

In Step 1 of your training plan development, you made a list of duties required of a specific job in your organisation. In Step 2, you assessed the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to accomplish those duties and you classified them with a simple ranking system. Now you are prepared for *needs assessment*, a process which identifies performance gaps and focuses training on the specific needs of employees.

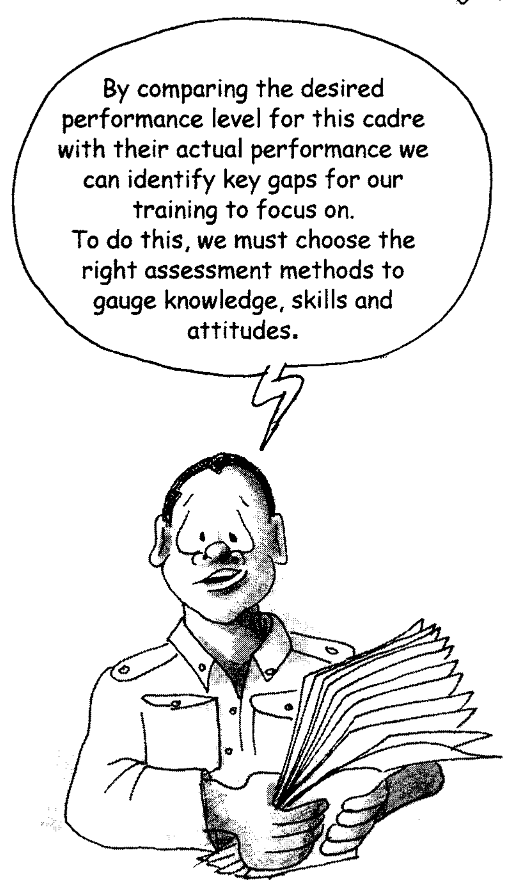
For example, a needs assessment might show that rangers know quite a lot about a community's impact on a protected area, but at the same time they lack the required skill level for working with the communities. The Training Officer can use this information to design training activities which focus on practical communication skills and approaches for working with communities.



Step ❸: Carry Out a Training Needs Assessment

Through a training needs assessment, the information gathered on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of cadres of employees is used to determine the difference between what people are *doing* and what people are *supposed to be doing*. When employees work at a performance level below what is expected and required, there is a performance gap. Training can help to narrow the gap ~ it can help people perform at the highest standard possible.

To determine what employees should *ideally* be doing , one can refer to job descriptions and task analysis. Every employee has areas where he or she should be able to improve performance if provided with the right training. The needs assessment process helps you to determine what kind of training is required by each group or level of employees.



To conduct a needs assessment, you must address two key questions:

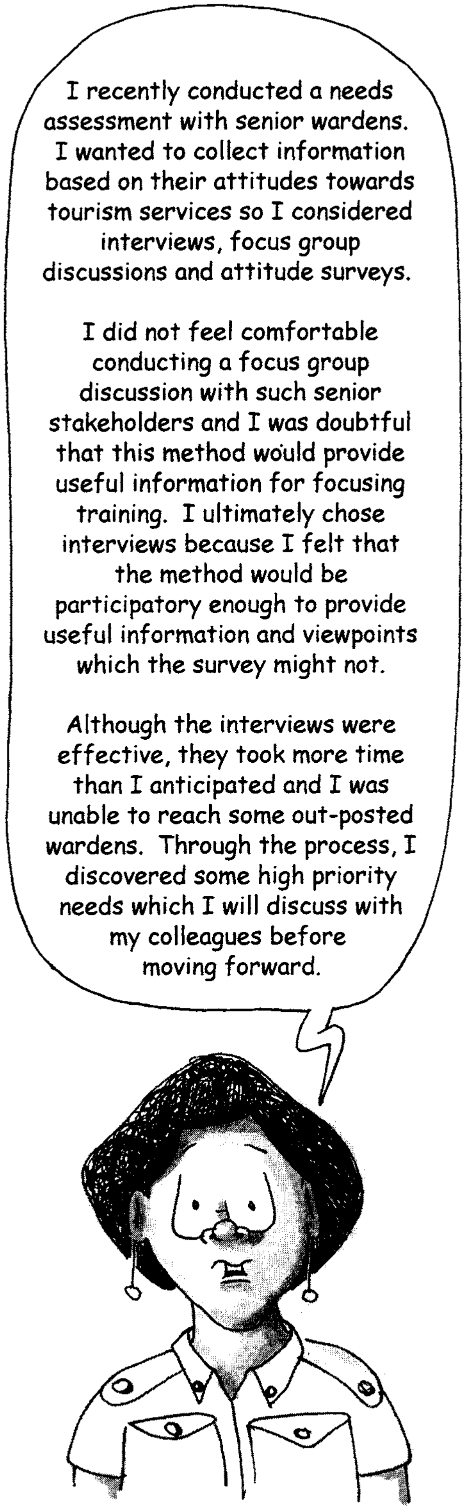
- What level of performance is desired to meet performance standards?

  and

- What is the actual level of performance?

Job descriptions and task analysis help to describe desired performance. Now it is necessary to collect information on the way people are actually performing.

It is important to choose techniques which you and your target group will feel comfortable with and methods which you will feel confident in using.



How to Select Needs Assessment Methods

A number of methods and sources are available as means for collecting information on training needs, including attitude surveys, questionnaire performance appraisals, interviews, focus group discussions, training committees, training records and feedback from management. You shou consider which methods are most practical and appropriate for use in your situation. To select an appropriate method, use the 'PUP' criteri According to the PUP criteria the methods you select should be:

Practical **U**seful & **P**articipatory

Practicality: When considering needs assessment options, ask: are the methods **practical** for you to use? Consider:

> Time: Most likely, you will need the results of your assessment as soon as possible and some methods are more time consuming than others. When you select your method(s) consider how long it will take you to develop your approac.., collect the data, analyse it, and put it into a form which is presentable to others. How much time out of your busy work schedule can you (and others) allow? W the respondents/information sources have time for you?
>
> Costs: Each method has a different cost but, with careful planning, you should be able to conduct an effective assessment with very little money. Determine whic options you can afford.
>
> Access to information: To conduct a needs assessment, you must have good access to your target audience. Employees who live far away may only be reache by letter, or possibly by telephone. In this case, your choice of options may be limited. Alternatively, you may plan your needs assessment at times when peopl are most accessible.

Usefulness: When considering needs assessment options, ask: will th information collected be useful?

Think about the people to whom you will present your findings, once the needs assessment is completed. What kind of information do you think wil be most convincing to them? It is often useful to combine qualitative (opinions, attitudes, perceptions) and quantitative (statistics, percentages information for balance. Senior level managers may be more receptive to the most objective information on performance you can provide ~ emotional pleas for more training might not be as effective.

Participation: When considering needs assessment options, ask: will others *participate* in the needs assessment process?

The impact of training will be greater if the participants agree that the training is a priority need. Contributing to the training process (or course content) will improve course quality and foster a feeling of 'ownership' in the training process.

Effective Needs Assessment Methods and Information Sources

Consider the following methods and information sources for your needs assessment.

Attitude Surveys. Attitude surveys may be used to measure the level of satisfaction among employees. They can be conducted in written or verbal form and they focus on the perceptions and opinions people have about their work. These opinions may be used as indicators of training needs. By using this method, management shows its concern for employees' opinions and interests. Attitude surveys may help to raise morale and increase two-way communication between employees and management.

During attitude surveys, avoid raising false expectations among the target audience. Be very clear about the purpose of the survey and who will see the results.

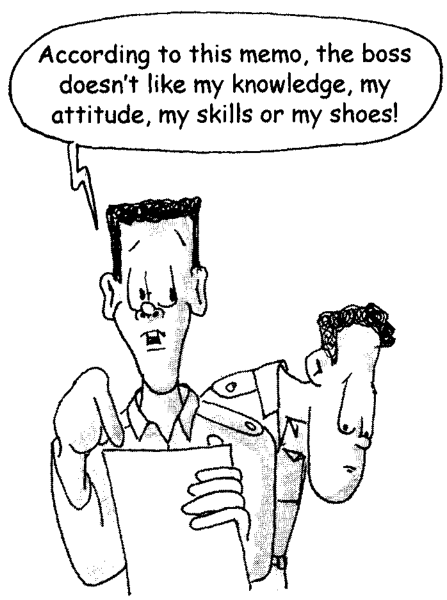
Questionnaires. Questionnaires are documents containing a series of questions which require written answers. The questions may be short-answer (yes/no), rating scale, multiple choice, or open-ended (for recording opinions). Questionnaires can be administered to the prospective trainee (for self-assessment) or to their supervisors (for supervisor's assessment). For the purposes of needs assessment, questionnaires are typically used to rate performance levels in knowledge, skills and attitudes for all job responsibilities. Questionnaires may ask how important each duty is or how frequently each is carried out and this information may be useful later when prioritizing training needs. Questionnaires are particularly useful methods for reaching individuals who live far away and are not readily accessible.

Interviews. Interviews are similar to questionnaires but they are based on dialogue rather than written answers. Because they are verbal, they are more flexible and open-ended and they provide more opportunity for recording opinions and perceptions. The interviewer prepares a written list of questions which are the same for each interview. The questions are read out to each employee, and the interviewer can take notes or record the answers directly. Interviews provide more in-depth information than questionnaires, because the interviewer is able to clarify the answers provided. They are also advantageous in the sense that interviewees feel directly involved in the needs assessment process and the design of their own training. Keep in mind that interviews are time consuming and they may not be practical in instances where prospective trainees are posted far away.

Interviews are flexible and good for gauging attitudes. Unlike less participatory methods, they allow you to clarify and explore difficult issues.

Performance Appraisals. If performance appraisals are commonly used in your organisation, they will provide a good source of information on the needs of prospective trainees. Performance appraisals are evaluations of employee performance, carried out by supervisors or colleagues. The appraisal typically gauges the performance of the employee against his or her job responsibilities. Some appraisals include supervisors' recommendations for future training needs. Appraisals may also include a ranking system for judging how well duties are carried out or how well performance objectives have been met. This method is particularly effective when it is carried out with a number of employees who work at the same or similar levels. It will not be practical to select this method if performance appraisal systems are not well established in your organisation.

It is advantageous to include supervisors in the needs assessment process. Involve them and listen to their opinions. If they are involved, they will be more likely to support training activities and follow-up activities.



Feedback from management may offer a fresh perspective but it may not be entirely objective. It is recommended that feedback be augmented by other, more objective methods.

Records Relating to Training. While performance appraisals may be very useful to the Training Officer, a study of other documents will provide additional or alternative information about how employees are doing on the job and what training they have already undertaken. These include training records, supervisors' reports, trip reports, workshop reports, feedback from tourists (registers, complaints, letters), and statistics from protected area manager reports (number of tourists, community based conservation activities, extent of poaching). This method is relatively inexpensive because the data already exist and such information can be quantified easily.

Training Committees. Training committees are panels which review the task analysis and provide advice on targeting and prioritizing training. The committee should be composed of representatives from different levels within the organisation who are generally aware of the needs of the prospective trainees. Their goal is to assess the requirements of positions within the organisation and the training needed to fill performance gaps. Training committees function best when they have tangible quantifiable data to review as the basis for decisions.

Feedback from Management Managers often voice their feelings about employee performance, whether such information is solicited or unsolicited. It is useful to document this information and consider it during the needs assessment process. Feedback, however, may be subjective and lack the involvement of the prospective trainees. Special care should be taken to validate recommendations made through feedback.

Focus Group Discussions. This highly participatory method may be useful for addressing difficult issues. It may also be an ideal method to introduce new ideas and to involve a wide variety of stakeholders in the design of training. Focus groups may also be used to confirm needs assessment results produced through other methods such as surveys or questionnaires. Focus group discussions involve approximately 5-12 people who are invited to express opinions on a selected topic. The group gathers to discuss a key issue presented by the facilitator. Once the discussion is underway, the facilitator keeps the discussion active and productive by asking questions which explore the topic, posing probing questions for greater clarification and providing added information when required. The facilitator should not otherwise participate in the discussion or influence what people say. Focus groups may not always be practical but they offer a dynamic way to identify and discuss training needs.

Try not to focus on just one method for your needs assessments. Use a variety of methods based on the level of practicality, usefulness and participation required.

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