

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

Introduction

Today's work environment requires employees to be skilled in performing complex tasks in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Training—a performance improvement tool—is needed when there is a perceived gap between the *actual* level vis-à-vis the *expected* level of job performance.

The identification of *training needs*, therefore, is the first step in a uniform method of learning design.

What is a training need?

Training needs hinder employees in fulfilling their job responsibilities, thereby preventing the organisation from achieving its objectives.

Some eLearning providers define a training need as a shortage of skills or abilities—caused by a lack of knowledge or understanding, or arising from a change in the workplace—which can be reduced or eliminated by training.

Why is TNA important?

After more than a decade of successful relationships with a global clientele base, we have realized that effective training depends on knowing what is required—for the individual, the department, and the organisation as a whole.

We have also noticed an increasing consciousness among our clients to ensure that the resources they are investing in training are targeted at areas where training and development is needed and a positive return on the investment is guaranteed. They realise that simply throwing training at individuals may miss priority needs, or even cover areas that are not essential.

As new technologies and flexible working practices are becoming widespread in the workplace, effective TNA becomes crucial in order to channel resources into the areas where they will contribute the most to employee development—enhancing morale and improving organisational performance.

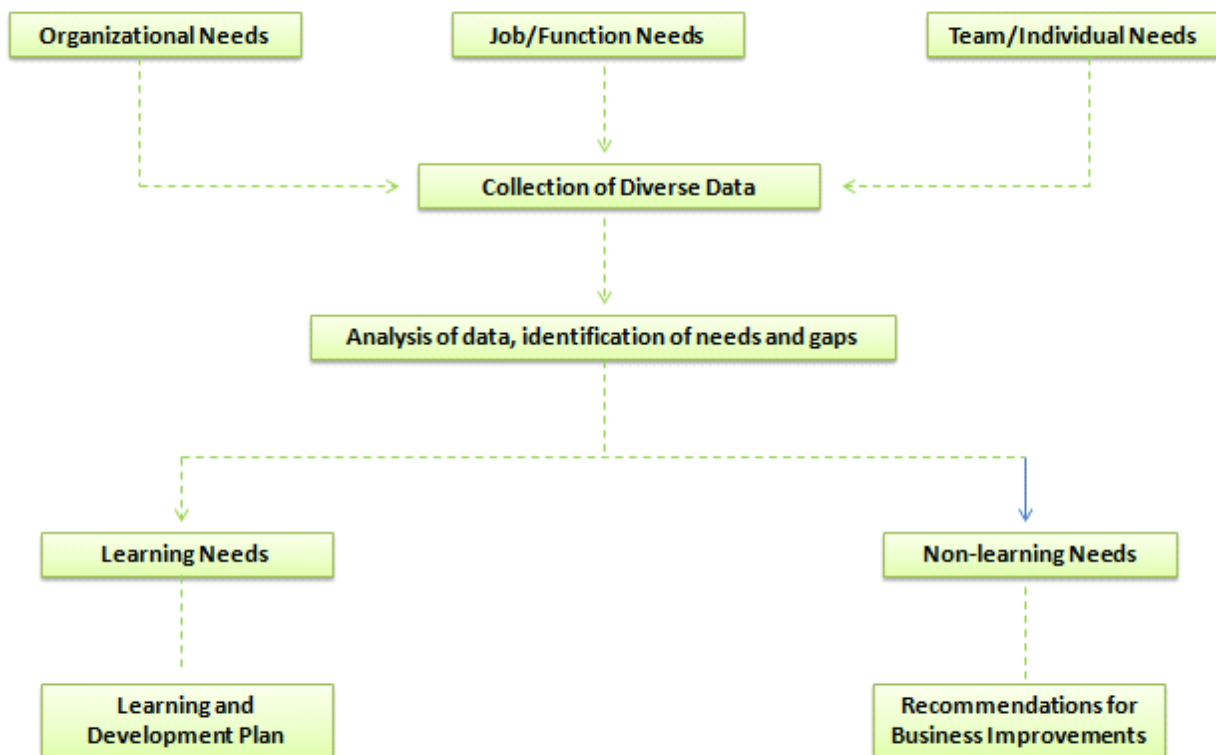
What does TNA involve?

Training needs analysis involves:

- Monitoring current performance using techniques such as observation, interviews and questionnaires.

- Anticipating future shortfalls or problems.
- Identifying the type and level of training required and analysing how this can best be provided.

Represented visually, TNA can take the form of the following diagram:



What are the goals of TNA?

From conversations with customers and experience with conducting TNA, eLearning experts and instructional designers understands that the goals of TNA include:

- Identifying what skills and abilities employees already have.
- Identifying what skills and abilities are required but not available.

- Identifying what current training opportunities are available.
- Identifying gaps in the current training and development options.
- Identifying what new training is required to address the gaps.
- Raising the profile of the training department.
- Increasing the attractiveness of the organisation to higher quality new recruits.
- Increasing retention of qualified, motivated people.
- Increasing the sense of ownership and involvement of employees in their own learning and development.
- Building a firm foundation for the evaluation of learning activities.
- Maximizing the effectiveness of the training budget.

What is the first step for a TNA?

Instructional Designers first task in a TNA is to define the scope of the analysis—this clarifies what is to be included and what is to be left out.

Typical questions we ask at this stage include:

- What is the main purpose of the analysis?
- What are the main areas to be covered?
- What information will be needed?
- Who are the main people to be directly involved?
- What divisions, departments, and locations will need to be visited?
- How much time can the organisation devoted to this?

Having clarified what resources and capabilities are available, what the needs of the stakeholder group are, and scoped out the breadth and depth of the analysis, the eLearning team is ready to begin.

What are the instruments involved in TNA?

As part of a TNA, the eLearning team looks not only at the tasks being performed but also at the other parts of the system and processes that might influence performance. As such, it is a proactive approach that aims to make the system more efficient and to prevent future

problems from occurring. There are several instruments that eLearning providers use to conduct a TNA:

- **Document research:** Analysis of budget documents, business plans, appraisals, quality control documents, goal statements, evaluation reports, personal development plans, work reviews, critical incident reports, scheduling and staff reports, customer complaints, or other business documents.
- **Interviews:** Discussions with supervisors, subject matter experts and other employees.
- **Observations:** Observation of the job or task being performed.
- **Surveys:** Design and circulation of questionnaires.
- **Group discussions:** Group discussions composed of employees and their supervisors.

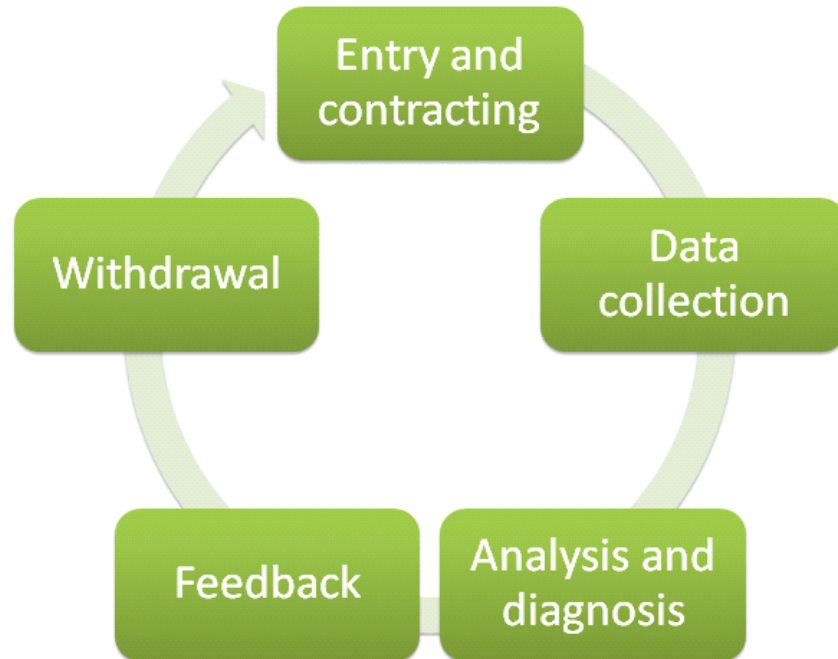
The sort of questions the eLearning consultant asks in interviews and group discussions include:

- What are your employees doing that they shouldn't be doing?
- What specific things would you like to see your employees doing that they are not doing?
- When people perform this job correctly, what do they actually do?
- What do you think your employees' learning needs and why?
- Do you have all the resources needed to do the job effectively?
- Are job aids available, are they accurate and are they being used?
- Are the standards reasonable? If not, why not?

The answers to these provide information on a wide range of needs, some of which emerge as learning needs.

What is the process of TNA?

An eLearning provider's TNA consultancy process may follow five phases:



Let's now look at the TNA activities, purpose, features, and intended outcomes associated with each phase.

Phase I: Entry and Contracting	
TNA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting initial research. • Planning the first meeting. • Meeting the client. • Explaining purpose of TNA. Identify stakeholders. Identify constraints. • Agreeing with Terms of Reference (ToR).
Purpose	In this phase, the provider prepares both themselves as well as the client organisation for the consultancy. This is a useful phase because it provides an opportunity to know more about the organisation and the business environment in which it operates.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying key stakeholders, especially those who have a direct influence on performance issues. • Negotiate the Terms of Reference for the TNA consultancy to take account of the expressed wishes of the client and the provider's ability to meet them.
Outcomes Intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying 'stakeholders' in and associated with the organisation. • Identifying constraints which may limit the extent of the TNA consultancy. • Obtaining approval on ToR from client.

Phase II: Data Collection	
TNA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the organisation. • Collecting information. • Interviewing employees. • Establishing performance standards. • Analysing performance issues.
Purpose	<p>This phase is important because the amount and quality of data obtained about the organisation and its activities will determine the effectiveness of the consultancy. Sometimes, 'soft information', based on subjective opinions and suggestions will also emerge, especially from individual interviews.</p>
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating on SWOT, SPIO, and Environmental, Motivational and Behavioral Factors, and Responsibility Mapping. • Linking this to hard data that highlights features of the organisation's performance. • Selecting problem areas where there is evidence of significant performance problems that can be attributed to a lack of knowledge and skill. • Examining environmental and motivational factors that may influence the success of any training that might be proposed. • Noting any that will seriously impede the success of training. • Keeping detailed notes of interviews for reference purposes in later phases.
Outcomes Intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of performance problems attributed to a lack of knowledge and skill. • Evidence of performance problems influenced by environmental or motivational factors. • Verification of the data by stakeholders and others who have contributed to its collection.

Phase III: Analysis and Diagnosis	
TNA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing both hard data and soft information. • Establishing priorities. • Identifying training needs. • Identifying non- training implications.
Purpose	<p>The data collected in the second phase now needs to be analyzed taking into account the organisation's priorities. The analysis and diagnosis phase focuses attention on performance-related issues, either directly concerned with the training needs of employees or, alternatively, other issues indirectly influencing their performance.</p>

Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using an appropriate Functional Analysis to define roles and work areas of people associated with the performance problem. • Tracing flaws in procedures, contributory incidents and the people involved. • Examining job descriptions and their current validity. If they do not exist, helping key people to write them as a means of clarifying role, responsibilities, relationships and authority.
Outcomes Intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined roles and responsibilities. • Identified training needs for individual employees or working groups. • Supporting evidence of the performance problem these training needs will address. • Identified non-training needs that may significantly influence performance.

Phase IV: Feedback	
TNA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing a draft report and presentation. • Presenting findings and recommendations. • Agreeing on priorities.
Purpose	The purpose of the feedback phase is to present a draft report to the client, outlining findings and recommendations.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing attention on performance issues that directly influence business and the success of the organisation. • Using words and suggestions made by the client and stakeholders to enable them to feel a sense of ownership of both the problems you have analyzed and the provider's recommended solutions. • Using a priority list to help the client decide priorities.
Outcomes Intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed TNA report with priorities agreed upon. • An agreement to tackle non- training factors affecting performance. • Commitment by the client and stakeholders to implement proposals. • Targets agreed for both training and non training activities.

Phase V: Withdrawal	
TNA Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing training plan with client. • Preparing design briefs. • Briefing stakeholders. • Clarifying responsibilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting targets. • Agreeing on follow-ups.
Purpose	The primary purpose of a TNA consultancy is to help a client organisation identify its training needs, and to agree plans to meet those needs.
Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design briefs and TNA report.
Outcomes Intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is being designed and developed based on the design briefs. • Other, non- training actions are being taken to improve performance. • Targets have been set with stakeholders. • There is evidence that the organisation is improving its performance.

The eLearning provider performs the following types of analysis:

Analysis	Description
Context Analysis	Business needs and training function's integration into the organization's talent management efforts.
User Analysis	Identifying potential participants and instructors involved in the learning process.
Work Analysis	Analysis of job roles and performance criteria. Identify skill and knowledge gaps.
Training Suitability Analysis	Analysis of whether learning is the desired solution to identified performance gaps.
Learning Inventory Analysis	Analysis of what already exists in the organization and can be leveraged in learning interventions.

About Sify eLearning

As innovative leaders in new technology and interactive eLearning, we create highly immersive, and engaging learning experiences. With over a decade of experience in generating customized learning solutions for Fortune 500 and Small and Medium-sized companies, sify eLearning is the choice for industry-relevant training projects. Our solutions align with your organization's business and learning goals, to affect change and improve employee performance. Our extensive experiences across industries have allowed us the benefit of acquiring unique perspectives and interpretations, while thinking outside-the-box to create highly customized projects.

What are the benefits of a TNA with Sify?

The benefits of Sify's TNA consultancy can be grouped into both **Generic** and **Comparative** advantages:

Generic Advantages

- Learning can be directly related to organizational objectives
- Learning can be targeted at specific requirements
- Learning needs can be identified and prioritized
- The time of trainers can be spent on more productive activities
- The time of participants can be spent on programmes which are appropriate for them
- Training of limited value can be avoided
- Financial resources can be allocated more effectively and efficiently
- Learning can be carefully tailored to requirements

Competitive Advantages

- Conducting a learning needs analysis helps an organization to be more competitive.
 - Learning faster than your competitors may be the only form of sustainable competitive advantage.
 - Scarce resources can be more accurately focused on critical success areas.
 - Investing in people can lead to an increase in their value compared to capital investment which depreciates over time.
 - Successful organizations of the future are those which can tap into people's ability to learn.
 - Probably the best long-term strategy for achieving organizational achievement is through learning.
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About the Author



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Reshma has fourteen years of experience in the publishing and eLearning industries, encompassing roles as varied as Features Writer, Web journalist, Sub-editor, and Instructional Designer. As a Sify eLearning Instructional Design manager she has handled the instructional design, SME coordination, and customer communication for over 200 hours of elearning content. She has overseen custom training and eLearning projects for development agencies of the United Nations, providing her with considerable onsite exposure and experience to UN agency culture and working styles across the globe

Furthermore, she has developed trainings for BFSI customers, including Allianz Insurance, Franklin Templeton Investments, WellPoint Insurance, MassMutual Insurance, Standard Chartered Bank.

She is also a certified online course facilitator from the Arts Institute Online (AIO), conducted by the Socrates Distance Learning Technologies Group, a division of Education Management Corporation (EDMC).

We are here to help. Contact us for a demo or consultation.

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