



Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

10. Analyze the results of a training needs analysis (TNA) to determine the content, methods, and instructional media necessary for a given training requirement.
 - 10.1 Discuss the difference between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.
 - 10.2 Explain the training design process and how it relates to instructional systems design (ISD).
 - 10.3 Explain the issues that affect workplace and learning.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 3:
Needs Assessment

Unit Lesson

As stated in Unit I, the forces affecting the workplace make training a key ingredient to further enhance organizational effectiveness and value. The constantly changing environment causes organizations to continuously adapt and must include the creation of a strategy to meet their training needs. As discussed in Chapter 1 of your textbook, this strategy involves the use of a training design process beginning with understanding the training needs.

As our organizational environment changes, training needs can change based on business growth, technology changes, and globalization. Once these needs have emerged, the next step in the process is to recognize the training requirement that has been created due to the need. A structured needs assessment can be key to successful training effort and design. Typically, training professionals must be firm in the necessity of this step of training, as organizations want a training program quickly once a decision has been made that training is desired and may not want to take the time for a needs assessment.

There are various methods and tools that can be used to distinguish between the needs and wants when it comes to training. Remember, one product can give you everything you want, but if it does not take care of the needs, then it can become quite costly for your organization. For example, training may not be a solution to a problem, or the training program you develop may have the wrong objectives or methods. To accomplish an effective needs assessment, observations, interviews, surveys, and questionnaires should be conducted with subject-matter experts and focus groups. Since most organizations put considerable emphasis on Total Quality Management (TQM), benchmarking is an excellent method to determine training needs.

The three steps involved with needs assessment include organizational analysis, learner analysis (your textbook refers to this as person analysis), and task analysis. Organizational analysis is focusing on feasibility and appraisal to determine whether the training is aligned with the business strategy of the organization and determining if the organization has the resources necessary. In some cases, outsourcing by choosing a vendor or consultant may be the best course of action for the organization. Another critical issue is determining the likelihood of stakeholder support. Even the best planned and conducted training program can be undermined by the attitudes of peers and supervisors alike, causing the trainee not to apply the training they received to their job.

Learner analysis (or person analysis) focuses on identifying if training is the solution, who needs the training, and if the employees to be trained have the skills, attitudes, and beliefs needed to master the training. The key focus and whole idea of training is to increase the performance of the workforce to make it competitive. One can always improve in his or her performance. To effectively do this, ability, motivation, and maturity has to be the organization's primary concern as they determine if performance problems can be resolved by training.

Task analysis involves identifying the task and training that the employees will require in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Job analysis is key in determining the competencies necessary to perform each task in the analysis. Existing job descriptions can be a big help in this aspect of analysis. Needs assessment does not always require "starting from scratch." Using existing resources like job descriptions, previous training programs, and results of their effectiveness can save some time in this area of needs assessment. This is a big plus, especially when an organization wants to get the training implemented quickly.

Does all of this seem complex? It is, and as discussed in the previous unit, one can use models such as the competency models outlined in the textbook to help simplify the process. Just remember the design process starts here at needs assessment. A well-conducted needs assessment allows for better informed decisions during the rest of the training design process. If the appropriate time and effort are not spent during the needs assessment step, then results can go downhill from this point on. Therefore, doing the needs assessment correctly the first time provides a better chance for training success!