



PREMIUM PROFESSIONAL GUIDE

The Complete Guide to Training Needs Analysis

Diagnose Performance and Learning Gaps

A practical handbook for trainers, L&D professionals, HR teams, consultants and business leaders who need to identify the right performance problem, determine whether learning is the right response, and build evidence-informed development solutions.

INSIDE

Core concepts, an eight-part method, data-collection and analysis tools, 12 fillable field templates, a worked example, a quality checklist and a 30-day implementation plan.

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INTRODUCTION

A note to the reader

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is not simply a survey asking employees what training they want. It is a disciplined process for understanding the difference between required and current performance, investigating why the gap exists, and deciding what intervention is most likely to improve results. Sometimes the answer is training. Sometimes it is a clearer process, better tools, stronger management support, improved capacity or a combination of changes.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What needs to change in work performance, and what evidence tells us that learning is the right or necessary part of the solution?

How to use this guide

- 01 Read the core concepts to establish a common language for performance and learning needs.
- 02 Use the step-by-step TNA process to scope and investigate a real business challenge.
- 03 Select data-collection methods that fit the question, context, time and risk.
- 04 Use the worksheets and decision tools to record evidence, assumptions, root causes and priorities.
- 05 Translate validated needs into measurable outcomes, interventions and evaluation plans.
- 06 Review the worked example and quality checklist before presenting recommendations.

Publication details

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Version	Editable working edition
Use	Reference guide, diagnostic method and practical field workbook

PART



Foundations

Build a clear distinction between business problems, performance gaps and learning needs.

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CHAPTER 1

What Training Needs Analysis Means

Training Needs Analysis is a structured investigation used to identify the capabilities people need, compare those requirements with current evidence of performance or proficiency, understand the causes of any gap, and recommend a proportionate response. It connects organisational priorities to the work people must perform and the support they need to perform it.

A useful TNA moves through five questions:

- 01 What result or standard matters?
- 02 What is happening now, and what evidence supports that conclusion?
- 03 What explains the difference between current and required performance?
- 04 Which causes can learning address, and which require other actions?
- 05 How will the organisation know whether the chosen response helped?

CHAPTER 2

What TNA Is and Is Not

TNA is...	TNA is not...
An evidence-informed diagnosis of a performance or capability need.	A list of popular course requests.
A link between business outcomes, job tasks, behaviours and capability.	A content catalogue built before the problem is understood.
A process that tests training and non-training explanations.	An assumption that every gap can be solved with a workshop.
A basis for prioritising scarce time and budget.	A promise that training alone will improve a business metric.
A collaborative investigation with transparent limitations.	A performance appraisal disguised as a training survey.

CHAPTER 3

Why TNA Matters

Improves relevance	programs address verified work requirements rather than generic topics.
Protects investment	resources are directed to meaningful gaps and appropriate interventions.
Strengthens business alignment	capability work is connected to operational priorities.

Reduces misdiagnosis

process, technology, workload and leadership issues are not automatically labelled as skill problems.

Improves measurement

baselines and success criteria are considered before delivery.

Builds stakeholder confidence

recommendations can be traced to evidence, assumptions and decisions.

CHAPTER 4

Key Terms

Term	Meaning
Business outcome	A result the organisation seeks, such as quality, speed, safety, revenue, customer experience or retention.
Performance standard	The required result or behaviour against which current performance is compared.
Performance gap	The difference between the required standard and current demonstrated performance.
Capability	The knowledge, skill, judgement, behaviour and supporting conditions needed to perform work.
Learning need	A gap in knowledge or skill, or a learning-related requirement, that can be addressed through learning and practice.
Root cause	A factor that materially contributes to the observed gap.
Baseline	A documented starting point used for comparison.
Intervention	An action intended to address a cause or improve performance; it may be training or non-training.
Triangulation	Using multiple evidence sources or methods to test whether a finding is credible.

CHAPTER 5

Levels of Analysis

Level	Primary question	Examples of evidence	Typical output
Organisation	Which strategic or operating priorities require capability change?	Strategy, KPIs, risk reviews, customer trends, audit findings	Priority capability themes
Function / team	Where is performance inconsistent, weak or at risk?	Team dashboards, quality trends, manager input, process data	Team-level needs and priority groups
Role / task	What must a role holder do to meet the standard?	Job analysis, task observation, SOPs, work samples	Role competency and task requirements
Individual	What does this person need to develop for the role or goal?	Demonstrated work, structured feedback, assessments	Individual development actions

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

A strategic capability priority does not automatically prove that every employee has a skill gap. Validate the need at the relevant team, role or individual level.

PART



The TNA Process

A repeatable sequence makes the investigation transparent and easier to review.

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CHAPTER 6

The End-to-End TNA Workflow

Step	Activity	Key question	Output
1. Clarify	Confirm the request and sponsor	What decision must this analysis support?	TNA brief
2. Align	Connect the request to business priorities	Why does this matter now?	Business rationale
3. Define	Specify expected performance	What should people do or achieve?	Performance standard
4. Diagnose	Describe current performance and gap	What is happening, and how do we know?	Validated gap statement
5. Investigate	Test causes and constraints	Why is the gap occurring?	Root-cause hypotheses
6. Validate	Triangulate evidence with stakeholders	Which explanations are supported?	Validated findings
7. Prioritise	Rank needs using transparent criteria	What should be addressed first?	Priority needs register
8. Recommend	Select learning and non-learning responses	What action best addresses the cause?	Solution recommendation
9. Measure	Define success evidence and review points	How will we evaluate progress?	Measurement plan
10. Report	Present decisions, actions and limitations	What needs approval or further investigation?	TNA report and action plan

CHAPTER 7

Step 1: Clarify the Request

Requests often arrive as solutions: “We need leadership training,” “Our sales team needs negotiation skills,” or “Please conduct communication training.” Treat these as starting hypotheses, not confirmed diagnoses.

Questions to ask the sponsor

- What prompted the request? Is there a specific event, target or recurring issue?
- What is happening that should not be happening, or what is not happening that should be?
- Who is affected, in which situations and with what consequences?
- What evidence exists, and what evidence is missing?
- What decision will the analysis inform: program design, budget, role readiness, process improvement or something else?
- What is the deadline, scope, confidentiality requirement and available resource?