
Handout 2-2. Needs Assessment and Analysis Basics

Don't let the terms *needs assessment* or *analysis* scare you. You conduct needs assessments and analyze the data every day. Are you missing an ingredient for vegetable soup? You will need to make a decision about whether to go to the grocery store to purchase the item, substitute another ingredient and hope no one notices, cook something else, or go out to dinner. Are you thinking about reseeding your lawn? You will need to learn about the cost and kind of seeds, what time of year is best, whether to do it yourself or hire someone, what equipment you will need, or whether to consider sod instead. In both cases, you conduct a needs assessment and analyze the data you have gathered.

Going on a vacation? Adopting a pet? Planning a party? Returning to college? Buying new appliances? Refinancing your house? Changing jobs? Taking tennis lessons? Each requires assessment and analysis, and you will complete five steps before you make a decision. Let's use taking a trip to a foreign country as an example:

1. Identify a need or problem. (You want to take a trip to a foreign country.)
2. Determine a plan for gathering data. (Determine who you will contact, what information you will need, and how soon you have to decide.)
3. Gather the data. (Talk to people who have traveled to this country, contact a travel agent, research the country on the computer, and keep notes about the information you learn.)
4. Analyze the data you collected. (How safe is the trip? Can you afford the trip? What time of year is best?)
5. Make a decision. (Decide whether or not to go on the trip. If yes, use the data you gathered to plan your trip.)

WHY CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

As you did to prepare for your trip, a trainer needs to gather data to make wise decisions. Here are the steps trainers need to take:

- Clearly define the problem.
- Determine whether training can solve the problem.
- Identify the performance that is desired.
- Determine the root cause of the problem.
- Establish a baseline.
- Identify the scope of the training.

WHY ELSE MIGHT YOU CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?
