

## TECHNIQUES FOR IDENTIFYING TRAINING NEEDS

Handout II-A

## 1. TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

These are designed to assess the current level of knowledge or skill that an employee has. A gap between what is desired and what exists will indicate who needs training, what training and how much training. Here one finds difficulty in constructing measurement instruments that are reliable and will measure what is intended.

## 2. AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAMS

Many "canned" training programs are available, and the mail will bring announcements of new programs.

The tendency is to say "That sounds like an interesting program, let's send someone." This approach puts the cart before the horse. Once training needs are assessed and objectives set forth, the training manager may review the available programs.

## 3. AWARENESS OF NEW TECHNOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES

Training to prevent obsolescence or for behavior modification can be generated by these external variables. The question should be asked if the organization can use the new technology, knowledge, attitudes. If so, how and for whom?

## 4. DESIRE TO FOLLOW THE PRACTICES OF OTHER JAIL OPERATIONS

Other organizations have developed sound training programs based on their identified needs. Beware of adopting a program for which you haven't identified needs just for the sake of keeping up with the town of Jonesboro.

## 5. FORMAL AND INFORMAL OBSERVATION OF PERFORMANCE

The supervisor, by observing subordinates perform their jobs, can identify training needs. A deficiency in the performance of a task may mean remedial training. This technique is essential for on-the-job training. Training for supervisors may be necessary so that they know how to evaluate what they see and how to correct

5. FORMAL AND INFORMAL  
OBSERVATION OF  
PERFORMANCE  
(CONTINUED)

the deficiency.

Observation of performance can be used to identify those employees who, if they receive additional training, can advance in the organization
6. IDENTIFICATION OF OPERATING  
PROBLEMS

Much of what we do is a reaction to an event that occurs in the jail. There has been a tendency to conduct training in an effort to correct the crisis. The trainer must first find out why the crisis occurred.

Once operating problems are properly analyzed, it may be found that training is not the answer.
7. INTERVIEW WITH EMPLOYEES  
and GROUP CONFERENCES

When an operating problem occurs or when a performance deficiency appears, the supervisor talks with the employees involved to find out the degree of importance and what steps are necessary to restore the desired results. Involvement of employees is necessary to assess training needs.

Through the interview process, the employee may see the need on his own and suggest methods of correcting the weakness.
- a. LEGAL MANDATE

Some of our training needs have been identified for us. Legislation sometimes mandates certain topics or a certain amount of time for jail staff training. Compliance with the law generates a high priority training need.
9. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

A periodic appraisal gives clues to the strengths and weaknesses of employees. The gap between actual performance and desired performance will be a training need.

Self-appraisal and self-recognition of weakness and the desire to overcome them are the first steps in an effective training process.

10. QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS  
and CHECKLISTS

A list of possible programs or the steps involved in job tasks is circulated among jail staff. The employee indicates the area in which he feels he needs more knowledge or additional skill. The responses will indicate who desires training and of what type.

There is a trend toward asking employees what the needs of their supervisors and subordinates are. Many times we find an "I don't need anything but my subordinates do." attitude.

The instruments used should indicate the degree of urgency in fulfilling each need.

These techniques are relatively inexpensive and can be used to survey large numbers of employees in a short period of time. Beware of the tendency of employees to select something because it sounds nice.

11. REQUESTS FROM MANAGEMENT

Requests from management personnel will often indicate perceived training needs. What the person making the request may see could, in reality, be a problem, not a need. Further examination is always necessary. Beware of vested interests and the tendency to "oil the hinge that squeaks."

12. TASK ANALYSIS

What are the tasks an employee must perform? What are the steps involved in each of the tasks? What knowledge, skill, or attitude is necessary to perform each of the steps? What equipment is used? What is the degree of learning difficulty associated with each of the steps?

Who will need the knowledge, skill, attitude? When will they need it?

13. TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEES

A committee can help identify and analyze problem areas, determine who needs training, decide what training is needed, and evaluate which training program fills the need. The committees can be helpful in determining priorities. If key people are involved, the advantages are numerous.

14. UNIVERSITY or OTHER  
CONSULTANTS

You can contract out the training function, including the assessment of training needs. Remember that it will take an outsider time to learn the ins-and-outs of the jail operation. Consultants are also available to conduct pilot studies.

An elaborate study of the organization matched against organization goals will indicate what is necessary in the way of human resources, what skill, knowledge and attitudes will be needed. This technique is very expensive.

15. ECLECTIC APPROACH

This combines a multitude of techniques to assess training needs but is time-consuming and sometimes expensive. Still, this is probably the best approach for assessing training needs.

---

Adapted from "Assessment of Training Needs," Edwin C. Leonard, Midwest Intergovernmental Training Committee, The U.S. Civil Service Commission, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1974.

**TRAINING JAIL TRAINERS  
BOULDER, COLORADO, 1978**

---

---

Analyzing Performance Problems

There are two guiding principles for the jail trainer:  
"Nothing is as easy as it looks;" and "everything takes longer than you think." To identify real training needs, the astute trainer will first clearly identify the problem and then look at all the possible alternative courses of action, including training, that might provide the desired solution and results.

1. Read the sample case 'studies provided and think of similar situations that might exist in your organization.
2. After you complete the sample case studies, you will be given a problem that exists in the Cucumber County Jail. Working with other workshop participants you are to analyze the problem and determine a possible solution.
3. To help you analyze the sample problem, you will be provided a performance analysis worksheet. You may use the worksheet as is or you may add additional questions or steps that seem appropriate.

Supervisors on a certain process plant look after, as part of their duties, the operation of the boiler which provides the steam used in the process. The water which the boiler converts is drawn from a nearby river, and the chemical composition of the water intake changes from time to time, in fact from shift to shift. Dissolved oxygen, acidity/alkalinity, dissolved solids, etc., all vary depending on level of pollution, time of year, whether the wind blows waste gases into the river, and so on. Obviously the water cannot be allowed into the boiler without purification, or it would cause corrosion and eventual explosion of the boiler. New boilers can cost up to \$200,000, and shut-down time could be even more expensive. The intake water is therefore put through a treatment plant where, e.g., if the water is acid, alkali is added and vice versa, various measures being taken to compensate for impurities in the water. Since the nature and concentration of impurities is changing, the water is sampled and analyzed every shift, and a report given to the supervisor who decides on the basis of that report how the treatment process should be adjusted to produce water of acceptable purity.

The plant management was concerned that supervisors were not giving adequate attention to the water treatment plant, and asked the training department to arrange some training to improve the supervisors' attitudes by giving them a better understanding of the details and theory of water treatment; a common and, on the face of it, reasonable request. The training department soon established that a course to give the supervisors sufficient knowledge of water chemistry would need four to six weeks full-time instruction; and not being entirely happy that the problem was as simple as it looked, and being short-staffed, they passed the problem over to consultants. The consultants applied a questionnaire in order to analyze the operating problem.

1.1 What is the existing situation as seen by management?

This has already been described.

1.2 What is the existing situation as seen by the men on the job?

Each supervisor has a very expensive and complex plant to control, frequently demanding full attention. The boiler water treatment plant is only a small part of his responsibility and so must come fairly low down on his list of priorities. Each shift he receives a report, giving the analysis of the intake water and boiler water in terms of chemical symbols which he does not fully understand. He knows there are some complicated rules which dictate how the treatment should be adjusted and what corrective chemicals should be fed into the treatment plant but finds that all he can really do is to tell his assistant to "add a pound of alkali" and hope that that will be about right. The supervisor has no means of checking whether his corrective action produces the result intended. The next analysis is done on the following shift and given to the next shift supervisor who has no way of knowing whether unacceptable impurities are caused by his predecessor's faulty action or by natural causes. There is thus no effective "learning by experience" because there is no feedback to the learner.

### 1.3 What is the existing situation as seen by the analyst?

The basis of water treatment is very complex and not fully understood even by the plant manager. The supervisors do not take into account all the information on the analysis form because they do not know how to, and work on simple measures such as pH (measure of acidity/alkalinity) which they understand. If the pH is lower than the permitted limits (given on the analysis sheet) denoting excessive acidity, the supervisor instructs his assistant to add a pound of alkali to the treatment plant. The assistant leaves the control room and goes outside to the water treatment plant where three identical (though labelled) drums of chemicals are taken. He opens the alkali drum and weighs out an amount using a pair of scales and a small shovel. He loads the chemical into the treatment plant and returns. If it is dark or raining he may take short cuts, and guess the amount involved or even use the wrong drum altogether.

### 2. How does management state the problem? Is it in objective terms?

"The supervisors have poor attitudes towards water treatment, and don't give it the importance it deserves because they don't appreciate the importance of it and don't understand the theory behind it."

As we have seen, this is a subjective statement, in the sense that it is not in observable measurable terms.

### 3. What would observably be different if the problem were solved? (In other words, transform the subjective problem statement into an objective problem statement.)

The quick answer is "the supervisors would know more about water chemistry." This is not, strictly speaking an objective statement, since the knowledge would be inside the supervisors' heads and only observable by their performance. More than that, the most basic thing that would be different is that the impurities in the water entering the boiler would stay within acceptable limits, so avoiding boiler corrosion.

If the problem is stated like that, then a whole range of possible alternatives can be considered. Automatic analysis and control equipment could be installed (probably expensive and unreliable). The specialist water chemist in the analysis laboratory could write the action to be taken on the analysis sheet. This usurps the supervisors' authority a bit more, and anyway the chemist won't work nights. Working back up the chain and assuming no basic changes are made, the following is stated: "The supervisor will make the correct decision and his assistant will carry out his instructions correctly."

### 4. If nothing were observably different, what are the indications that there really is a problem? This question does not apply in this case but is put in because if a subjectively stated problem really cannot be transformed into an objectively stated one, i.e., if the problem were solved, then nothing would be observably different: in all probability the problem only exists in the problem starter's head. This sometimes happens when a manager is losing control of a

situation or is overpromoted. His own performance is the real problem, but because he cannot accept this, he locates the problem elsewhere, often with another manager's subordinates. "If only they'd produce a decent widget, maybe we'd have a chance of making some sales" could be an example.

5. Who cares about the problem and why?

Obviously management cares, since the penalty for poor performance is certainly the premature replacement of an expensive boiler and possibly a dangerous explosion. The supervisors, on the other hand, do not care very much and really cannot be expected to. (Supervisors would care about a dangerous explosion on their shift.)

They have many more urgent things to attend to and to do not carry sole responsibility but merely passing the problem over to the next shift. If any one supervisor fails to perform correctly, he will never know since nothing will ever happen to him personally.

6. What are people doing incorrectly, and how should it be done?

As we have seen, the supervisors are using rules of thumb to reach their decisions when they should really be taking many more factors into account. The assistants are sometimes carrying out the supervisors' instructions inaccurately, tipping in 1.35 pounds of chemical when they should tip in 1.50 exactly, and so on. A full answer to how the job should be done requires a prescriptive task and performance analysis.

7. Are there notably high and low performers?

In this case there are not. Anyhow the question does not need to be asked, because an answer can be given in question 6.

8. In analyzing the problem, is there a danger that men will feel the mystique of their skill is being exposed?

The task under consideration is not central to the supervisors' job, and the men in question are not insecure because they have too much to do. However, it was possible to note a slight resentment on the part of supervisors toward the lab technician who spoke of "NaOH" when the supervisors had always called it "caustic." Thus, a case could be made for building up the supervisors' mystique by familiarizing them with common chemical symbols.

9. If the problem remains unsolved what will happen to the men, to their superiors, to their juniors?

This is a similar question to question 5, asking who cares about the problem. If the problem remains unsolved, nothing will happen to the men or their juniors; this is why they find it difficult to care about the problem. As has been said, in time their superiors will face a bill for boiler replacement or an accident inquiry. It was noted from the comments on the questionnaire, that in a situation like this training alone is not likely to be much use.



10-11. How long can the situation continue?

Can action be split into urgent short-term help, or must long-term foundations for action be laid?

This is not an urgent problem, though it is important. Though corrosion is going on all the time, action may quite reasonably be taken in three or six months' time if resources are scarce.

12. What attempts to solve the problem have already been tried?

It has been left to the supervisors to pick up from experience. Why did this fail? It failed because they didn't get any feedback on which to correct their actions and so learn.

Having worked through the questionnaire, one now has a very shrewd idea of the nature of the problem. One is faced with both a problem in changing the supervisors' possible behavior (by enabling them to make the correct decisions) and in removing the obstacles to this probable behavior (time pressure, bad weather, etc.).

In fact the solution to this' problem is multiple:

1. Develop an algorithmic flow chart which sets out all the complicated rules in a form which the supervisor can quickly work through 'to reach the correct decision.
2. Make this algorithmic performance aid always available when needed by printing it on the back of the analysis report form.
3. Give supervisors a short (half-day) course on the reasons why poor water treatment is so destructive, familiarize them with basic chemical symbols and give them practice in using the algorithm to make decisions about specimen analyses.
4. Put a corrugated iron roof over the water treatment plant.
5. Pre-package the treatment chemicals into bags of different shapes for different chemicals in the unit of weight used, so that all the assistant supervisor has to do is open a given number of particular shaped bags.

In this way, the supposed need for a four to six-week course in water chemistry becomes a half-day course supported by a performance aid, an environment improvement and a method change.

Case Study  
Cucumber County Jail

The Grand Jury is meeting to hear evidence that a serious drug problem exists in the jail and that a number of officers have been lax in supervision, especially of trusties.

The sheriff has notified the jail administrator that something must be done about the situation. 'The following message was sent to the administrator by the sheriff:

---

---

Memo

To: Cucumber County Jail Administrator  
From: Cucumber County Sheriff  
Subject: Possible drug problem in the jail  
Date: Friday, 10

We must clear up this situation immediately. It is your responsibility to keep the jail operations running smoothly. Get something going on this drug business before it gets blown out of proportion in the courts and newspaper.

If your men don't know what they are supposed to do, then tell them. Don't you have a training program over there? What are we paying that training officer for, if not to prevent this sort of thing?

I want some sort of action started before the Grand Jury finishes its hearings. Get back to me by the end of next week with a plan.

Sheriff \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

In response to the message from the sheriff, the jail administrator issues the following memo to the training officer:

---

---

Memo

To: Training Officer  
From: Administrator  
Subject: Training Program on Drugs  
Date: Monday, 13

The sheriff is concerned about the drug situation, if we really do have one. He wants a plan by Thursday. I want you to do two things. First, compile all the information on the training we have given the C.O.'s concerning cell search and contraband. Second, put together a plan for a special training workshop on supervising trusties and have the plan and other information to me by 10:00 a.m. Thursday 16.

Administrator

---

---

The Situation:

The Cucumber County Jail did not have, until recently, what the administrator thought was a drug problem. The C.O.'s knew some soft drugs were getting into the jail but it had not caused any serious problems until the recent suicides brought on an investigation.

Jail operations for admitting new inmates and supervising week-enders and trusties are typical of most jails.

An arrestee is brought into the jail by the arresting officer. A pat-down search is performed and property taken. Any baggage or parcels are taken and held at the booking desk until the arrestee is booked and then all property is taken up-stairs along with the inmate. At this point, the inmate is strip searched, showers and is given jail clothes. The property is supposed to be searched and then placed in the property room. The inmate is taken to a cell and locked up. The property room is next to the shower/search room. Cleaning of this area is assigned to a trusty(s) who is supervised by the shift supervisor. The shift supervisor is responsible for all operations in his block during his assigned shift.

Any contraband/drugs that are found on inmates or in the cell block are reported to the shift supervisor. The supervisor fills out an incident report and attaches it to the shift log which is passed on to the next shift supervisor. At the end of a 24 hour shift, the day shift supervisor compiles all incident reports and completes a day report which goes to the jail administrator for review. The administrator generally tries to review the daily report every other day or at least by the end of the week.

There are currently five trustees who work outside of the jail and return each day. Among them are two students from the regional campus who are serving weekend sentences for drug possession and fighting convictions. They report in at 7:00 p.m. on Friday and leave at 6:00 p.m. the following Sunday. While in the jail, they serve as trustees and are housed in the minimum security dorm.

Because of the recent investigation and publicity, cell searches have been increased and more weapons and drugs have been found. The type of items found are listed below:

Weapons:

Pocket knife	4
4" hunting knife	1
homemade knife	3
steel wire (10")	1
sharpened rods	2
7" piece of steel pipe -	1
gun barrel	1
razor	4

Drugs:

Pills (sedatives)	87
marijuana	7 oz. (total)

The jail trainer has compiled the requested information for the jail administrator and sent it along with a memo. His report and memo are presented below:

---

**Report**

---

Currently our training on cell search and contraband consists of the following:

During the initial 80 hour program given at the academy, ten hours are related to the operation of a detention facility. Of the ten hours, a-one hour lesson is given on searches. This lesson covers the reasons and procedures for searching a cell and a 15 min. slide show on search techniques is shown. During the first month or two in the jail, each new C.O. is supposed to assist in a cell search and be instructed by the shift supervisor or an experienced C.O. To date, all but eight new men have taken the academy course. Of the current 79 C.O.'s working in the

detention center, 36 have been involved in at least two or three regular cell searches. The remaining fourteen men are working the night shift, during which no cell searches have been performed. The recent increase in searches during the day has been conducted by a team of four officers selected by the day shift supervisor. So far, D. Smith, R. Jones, T. Cole and F. Richards have served on that team. They are our most experienced officers. Usually Smith, Jones, and Cole are on the night or early morning shift but have been rescheduled to days during the current crisis.

During the past 4 - 6 months, each shift supervisor has held a briefing session on contraband and has emphasized the need to be alert for signs of drugs. We have provided literature on drug abuse to the officers for them to read. This material is usually available in the officer lounge and at the shift supervisor's desk.

---

---

Memo

To: Jail Administrator  
From: Training Coordinator  
Subject: Drug Problem  
Date: Tuesday, 14

Regarding the-current drug problem, we are constantly understaffed and have suffered from a high turnover of staff. I have been attempting to keep track of the current training needs but each time I plan a training class, we lose several men and the day shift supervisors won't release men to attend the class. This has happened 5 out of the last 6 times that I have scheduled a class.

What we need is more men and an increase in salaries so we don't lose so many men. I found out that 14 of our current officers are working at extra jobs. I think we should approach the sheriff on getting more money for salaries. If we could pay more, we could get better staff and that would solve half our problems.

I have started the plan for a special class on supervising trusties. I think about 2 hours should cover it. I want to cover the rules and regulations and then come down hard on the issue of keeping the trusties busy during the daytime. I will have the complete outline to you by Thursday.

Training Coordinator

---

That is the current situation at the Cucumber County Jail. It is an incomplete picture at best and was intended to be so. However, you have been given some clues as to what the current problem might be and what alternative solutions might work.

In your group activity, you are to do several-things. Read the foilowing instructions before starting to work. You will have 15 minutes to complete this exercise.

1. Discuss the information given in the case study with your group to sharpen the focus on the current situation in the jail. Identify the main problem and any related problems.
2. Write a clear description of what your group decides is the central problem and the related problems.

3. Use the performance analysis worksheet to analyze the situation. If you have questions about the jail situation, ask the workshop staff. Some but not all other information will be given.
4. List the possible alternative courses of action that might be taken by the jail staff.
5. Select the best course of action based on the information given to you and be prepared to defend your selection. You may make necessary assumptions about the jail situation in order to come to a decision on the problem and solution.