



training essentials quick reference

This Quick Reference for Executives and Senior Managers is based on the *CSTD Competencies for Training and Development Professionals*® and summarizes key questions to guide management of the training function. Refer to *Competencies* for more information.

assessing performance needs

Assessing performance needs is your first step in determining whether training is required. You may take a few hours to clarify what learners should be able to do after training, or spend weeks conducting a needs assessment of a complex performance issue that involves many work processes, functions and roles.

Since training primarily addresses the skills and knowledge component of performance, you often need to assess performance needs in response to a request for training. You do this to determine whether a “non-training” intervention is required instead of, or in addition to, training. A non-training intervention is any solution other than training that will help to close a performance gap, such as clarifying expectations, providing timely feedback, improving equipment, improving processes, or providing incentives.

Here are some essential questions to ask when assessing performance needs:

Identify performance gaps

1. What business results do we want to achieve?
2. How will we evaluate those business results? What are the leading indicators? How can we track them?
3. What tasks/activities do we want people to do – or do differently – after training? (desired performance outcome(s))
4. How will we evaluate the desired performance outcomes?
5. What are people doing now? How are they falling short of expectations – or will they fall short in the future? (performance gap(s))

Determine causes of performance gaps

6. At the job level, could any of the following be contributing to the performance gap?
 - Expectations that are unclear or seen as unrealistic
 - Feedback that is too late, too general or not provided
 - Tools and resources that are not timely or efficient
 - Consequences that, on balance, do not support performance
 - Incentives that, on balance, do not support performance
 - Skills and knowledge of the performers, including skills for using technology
 - Ability of the performers
7. At the process level, could any of the following be contributing to the performance gap(s)?
 - Work processes or procedures that are too complicated to follow, inefficient or overlapping with other work areas
 - Technology that does not perform as expected or that users have difficulty using as intended
8. At the organization level, could any of the following be contributing to the performance gap(s)?
 - Organizational structure that does not support job level performance
 - Desired performance outcomes that are not aligned with business strategies
 - Desired performance outcomes that are not aligned with vision and values
9. Based on answers to questions 3, 4 and 5, what is causing or contributing to the performance gap(s)?

Identify requirements for closing gaps

10. Will the skill and knowledge provided through training be sufficient to close the performance gap?
11. What solutions should we consider instead of, or in addition to, training to address causes other than skill and knowledge?
12. What support do we need to implement both training and non-training solutions?

designing training

Designing training can range from creating a 15-minute e-learning self-paced tutorial on using a new software application, to building a multi-year curriculum using many delivery channels for managers across a large organization. Content can range from highly technical skills, to skills like project management or sales, to “softer” skills like communication.

Competent design of training ensures learning objectives support desired performance outcomes and business measures, content is focused on “need to know” versus “nice to know”, tasks are presented clearly and concisely, opportunities for practice are frequent and effective, and training materials support learning.

Here are some essential questions to ask when designing training:

Conduct design analysis

1. What tasks/activities do we want people to do – or do differently – after training? (desired performance outcome(s))
2. How do these desired performance outcomes support business results?
3. Who are the learners? What is their education, job experience, level in the organization, attitude towards this training?
4. What are the design or technology constraints? (such as location of learners, cost, design time, network limitations)
5. What guidelines or steps should people follow when performing each task? (task analysis)
6. What subject matter experts (SMEs) can or should provide input on the task analysis?
7. How can we present the task analysis in a way that’s easy for learners to understand and follow?
8. Does the project plan for designing and developing the training address all contingencies?
(such as training for individual new hires, technical requirements of the learning management system, translation)

Establish learning objectives and evaluation

9. Do the learning objectives support the desired performance outcomes?
10. What are the application-level learning objectives?
(task/activities identified in question #1 above, conditions under which performed, plus standard for acceptable performance)
11. What are the comprehension-level learning objectives required to support the application-level learning objectives?
12. How will we evaluate achievement of each learning objective during training? (such as role play, case study, multiple choice test)

Create detailed design

13. What is the best way to deliver the training? (such as classroom, virtual classroom, e-learning, on-the-job training)
14. What learning activities are required to achieve each learning objective? What is the timing for each activity? (detailed outline)
15. Have we optimized time for practicing each task? How will learners get meaningful coaching and feedback?
16. How will we support transfer of learning from training to the workplace?
(such as opportunities to try new skills, feedback and coaching from the manager, recognition for a change in behaviour)
17. What steps do we need to take to get sign-off on the detailed outline before investing in development of materials?

Develop materials

18. What materials do learners need to support learning during training?
19. What materials do they need for reference back in the workplace?
20. What materials do facilitators need to support delivery of the training and evaluation of learning objectives?
21. How will we validate the learner and facilitator materials?

Support implementation

22. What are the requirements for translation, printing, distribution and maintenance of materials?
23. How will we prepare facilitators to deliver classroom or e-classroom training?
24. What are the maintenance requirements for the training design and materials?

facilitating training

Effective facilitation of training results in a positive, comfortable, learner-centred environment, where learners share responsibility for the success of the training. An effective facilitator (trainer or instructor) maintains learner interest and supports learners in achieving the learning objectives.

The *Competencies for Training and Development Professionals* includes many competencies for facilitators. Here is a checklist based on some of the essential competencies.

Prepare to facilitate

- ☐ Arranged logistics and prepares contingency plans as required (such as internet access, materials, plans if equipment fails)
- ☐ Advised learners, supervisors and coaches of prerequisites and any pre-work requirements

Create learning environment

- ☐ Welcomed learners as they enter the physical or virtual learning environment
- ☐ Used learners' names when responding to questions or comments

Engage learners

- ☐ Used a variety of instructional techniques to provide content (such as demonstration or group discussion)
- ☐ Maintained appropriate balance between providing content and allowing learners to practise
- ☐ Used appropriate language, anecdotes and examples to facilitate learning
- ☐ Paced training to meet the needs of the group
- ☐ Used bridges and transitions to orient learners and maintain continuity among concepts and sections
- ☐ Asked questions to facilitate discussions and check understanding
- ☐ Drew upon learner experience, knowledge and skill to enhance learning
- ☐ Encouraged participation from all learners
- ☐ Encouraged questions and comments from learners
- ☐ Paraphrased learner questions and comments to ensure clarity and understanding before responding
- ☐ Adapted content or delivery in response to learner questions and comments

Classroom Only

- ☐ Positioned self, equipment and visual aids to enhance learning and reduce distraction
- ☐ Used media to enhance learning, not as a crutch

e-Classroom Only

- ☐ Demonstrated technical skills in using e-classroom tools (such as chat, polling, whiteboards, breakouts)
- ☐ Optimized use of virtual classroom tools to solicit input, enhance learning and encourage collaboration

Foster learning

- ☐ Demonstrated understanding of the organization and relevant job performance
- ☐ Presented information and concepts clearly
- ☐ Used relevant facts, examples or analogies to respond to questions or illustrate concepts

Assess learning

- ☐ Evaluated achievement of each learning objective before moving on to the next
- ☐ Provided additional opportunities for learning and practice, as required

supporting transfer of learning

Supporting the transfer of learning involves designing and promoting activities and materials that help learners apply what they learned during training back in the workplace. Activities may include reminder emails, feedback and coaching by a manager or mentor, additional learning using web-based tools, additional opportunities for practice, and recognition for changes in behaviour.

Supporting the transfer of learning increases the probability that learners will use the knowledge and skills they acquire through training in the workplace. When designing transfer activities and materials, it is important to consider all the factors that support performance: clear expectations, specific and timely feedback, recognition and rewards, and the necessary information, tools and resources.

Here are key questions you can ask to promote the transfer of learning:

1. What initiatives will we implement to support the transfer of learning?
2. How can we leverage technology to support the transfer of learning? (such as automated reminders, performance tracking)
3. What materials can we develop to support the transfer of learning? (such as reference guides, coaching guides)
4. What can facilitators do during the training session to support the transfer of learning?
(such as providing relevant examples, having learners use reference material, providing time to complete action plans)

evaluating training

Evaluation of training can take many forms, including surveys of learner reaction, knowledge tests, skill demonstrations, comparisons of pre- and post-training performance, and calculations of return-on-investment.

The most commonly used framework for evaluating training, developed by Donald Kirkpatrick, outlines four levels of evaluation as shown below. Note that in planning and implementing training, you start at level 4 and work down. When evaluating training, you start at level 1 and work up. Here are the key questions to ask:

Plan for Evaluation

Conduct Evaluation

Level 4: Business Results

- What are the desired business results? How are they measured?
- What desired performance outcomes support these results?
- What are the leading indicators of results? (e.g., client feedback)
- How will we track and measure results?

Level 4: Business Results

- What do the leading indicators suggest about results?
- What success stories can we quantify?
- What changes in business measures are due to training?
- Do we need to change our training or non-training solutions?

Level 3: Performance in the Workplace

- What are the desired performance outcomes? How will they be measured and reported?
- How does the work environment need to change to support performance?
- How will we support transfer of learning after training?

Level 3: Performance in the Workplace

- What opportunities have learners had to apply their learning?
- To what extent are learners applying their learning?
- What barriers are hindering them from applying their learning?
- How does the training need to change to impact performance in the workplace?

Level 2: Learning

- What learning objectives support desired performance outcomes?
- How will we evaluate achievement of each learning objective?
(performance tests for application-level objectives and cognitive tests for comprehension-level objectives)

Level 2: Learning

- What was the level of skill/knowledge before training?
- What is the aggregate performance on each learning objective by the end of the training?
- How does the training need to change to impact learning?

Level 1: Reaction & Confidence

- What meaningful information will we collect about learner reaction and confidence? (such as anticipated barriers to implementation)
- How will we get feedback from learners?
- How will we determine what needs to change?

Level 1: Reaction & Confidence

- What skill/knowledge do learners say they gained in training?
- What's their level of confidence in applying their learning?
- What specific plans do they have for applying their learning?
- How does the training need to change in response to feedback?