

Identifying Development Needs

Process	Appropriate for all or part of an overall organisation TNA?	Commentary	Applies to:		
			Organisation	Group	Individual
Appraisal and one-to-ones	Needs can be 'rolled up' to produce organisational training plans	Perhaps the most 'intimate' process for identifying individual needs which can be task related (ideally reflecting specific goals) and also recognising personal aspirations. It is also possible to carry out team appraisals, although these are less common.	No	Could be for teams	Yes
360° appraisal	Usually applied to leaders	Requires specific 'competences' and is best done only in robust organisations	No	No	Yes
Observation	Could be	Very effective especially for behaviours and task related processes	No	Could be for teams	Yes
Testing	Could be	Controlled and 'safe'	No	No	Yes
Discussion	Could be	Simple two-way discussion can be very effective and usually forms part of appraisal and other performance review processes. However, basing discussion around specific goals and performance criteria should maximise its effectiveness.	No	Could be for teams	Yes
Psychometric testing	Usually for leaders or generally at recruitment. Also for developing potential	Should be administered only by qualified personnel, these provide information on personality traits, personal drivers intelligence and values.	No	Yes	Yes

Skills analysis	Yes	Usually an audit of people (or a sample) against job needs identified from job specification or competences in the case of managers.	Yes	Yes	No
Skills Audit	Yes	Usually structured, a skills audit simply establishes what skills are in place in the organisation and teams. If set against skills needs, it becomes a training needs analysis – see below.	Yes	Yes	No
Training Needs Analysis (and click here to see a template)	Yes	Systematic collection data about gaps in the existing skills, knowledge and attitudes of employees. It involves collecting information about existing employees' capabilities and comparing these to organisational needs for skills. It then analyses the implications for existing, new and changed roles against likely changes in capability.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Skills Matrix	Yes	A skills/training matrix can be a useful to aid development planning at team level and is particularly useful when addressing multi-skilling needs. A template can be seen here.	Yes	Yes	No
Interviews	Yes	As part of an overall Training Needs Analysis project one to one interviews can collect detailed information. Selection interviewing (both of internal and external candidates can also be effective in identifying development needs.	Yes	Yes	Would be 'Discussion'
Questionnaires	Yes	Although needing careful design, questionnaires can collect information from large numbers of people. If they are used with free form questions, good information can be collected, but this will take longer to analyse.	Yes	Yes – if big	No

Team profiling	Could be	Tools for this include Belbin and Myers Briggs and need to be delivered by accredited people. They are very effective for developing an understanding of team dynamics around relationships, decision making and conflict as part of team building work. As well as helping to develop the team, individual; needs will also be likely to emerge.	No	Yes	Could be used for individual development
Development centres	More likely to be applied to individuals where needs are required competences have been identified	A very comprehensive and above all structured way off assessing people against specific criteria, usually a competence framework. Often used for selection, they are also useful development tools, but require specialist input. They are also time consuming and expensive.	No	Yes	No
Critical incident analysis	No	When something goes wrong, perhaps with quality or safety, there will often be processes of review to ensure that the problem does not recur; development needs may often come from this.	No	Could be	Yes
Focus groups	Could be	Works well at group level where a number of people in similar roles (6 – 8) are brought together to discuss needs. It is good for managed discussion around specific issues.	Could be	Yes	No
Risk Assessments	Yes	Risk assessments should be carried out as part of the organisation's Health and Safety activities. Issues which emerge, particularly if they indicate common failures in good practice should be recognised as potential development needs.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Via structured vocational training	No	Some development activities, such as NVQ's will both identify capability and also further needs which will be picked up as part of the assessment process.	No	No	Yes

Away days	Could be	Away days are usually group workshops held away from the work place where some specific issues are discussed with a wide range of people. Often they are aimed at team building or for seeking innovative solutions to shared problems.	Could be	Yes	No
Bench marking	Yes	Activities, usually at a strategic level, to compare internal processes with best practice outside the organisation, but usually in the same sector. Good for overcoming set attitudes and established fixed views.	Yes	Could be	No
Succession planning	Could be	A process where suitable people are developed via training, experience, mentoring etc. to replace more senior staff who move, leave or retire. Such grooming is developmental and will also impact upon retention.	No	No	Yes
Specific developmental initiatives	No	Initiative such as graduate programmes and apprenticeships will often be aimed at providing specific experiential development. The overarching needs for these will require identification and review. Also peoples' progress will need to be measured and extra development provided where required.	No	Could be	Yes
Coaching and mentoring	No	Developmental in themselves, both of these activities will often lead to the identification of development needs.	No	No	Yes