

What is a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) and when do you need one?

There are a few terms in our business that lend mystery and specialness to what is in effect the very simple business of developing people. Conducting a Learning Needs Analysis is an example of this and it's the start point to any effective learning and development strategy.

Put simply, a LNA is a way of

- a) identifying the skills and knowledge needed to meet your business goals and
- b) identifying any gaps in that knowledge or skill set that the people in your business might have. A LNA aims to answer three questions:

1. What does your business need?
2. What can your people do?
3. Where are the gaps?

Training needs are created where there is a gap between the knowledge, skills and attributes required and those already possessed by employees. Once the gap is identified you can either train to fill the current or future needs of the business, or recruit and buy in specific skills and knowledge. A LNA is not undertaken very often, but it should be, because it is the precursor for creating and developing a learning and development strategy that will deliver real and measurable results. Taking time out to conduct a LNA to ensure that your training is targeted exactly where it's needed and can demonstrate a return on investment (ROI) is well worth the trouble. If your training provision needs a thorough overhaul, or if your organisation is going through a big change, we would argue that it's vital! You can also link your LNA to any succession planning to ensure you are growing leaders for the future. A LNA will ensure that the right people have the right development, saving time and money.

We can approach this TNA from a couple of angles:

- **Context Analysis** - An analysis of training/learning against the business needs. This will help us think about what kind of learning opportunities will offer the best solutions for the organisation. This approach also captures the history of the organization with regard to employee training and other management interventions and helps us think about how to move forward
- **User Analysis** - Analysis dealing with potential participants involved in the process. The important questions being answered by this analysis focus on who will receive the training and their level of existing knowledge on the subject, their learning style, and the best method of delivering the training.

There are a number of ways to collect data for a TNA:

- direct observation
- questionnaires
- consultation with people in key positions, and/or with specific knowledge
- review of relevant literature
- interviews
- focus groups
- tests
- work samples

The first step in a TNA is to perform a gap analysis. To do this, the actual performance of the organization is checked against existing standards or current situation: This includes the current state of skills, knowledge, and abilities of the current and/or future employees. The next step is to look at the goals of the organisation and to identify where there are any gaps. It is worth remembering that actual needs are not always the same as perceived needs, or "wants". Internal clients may not know what they need, but may have strong opinions about what they want. A clearly articulated gap analysis will help the organisation understand the steps they need to take to achieve their goals. This phase also allows the company to understand the training activity and its purpose.

The starting point is to secure interview time with heads of departments to gauge their requirements and attitudes to training, understand the challenges that their part of the organization is facing and identify broadly the type of training likely to suit the needs of their organization. The three main questions to ask these stakeholders are:

- *What are the main challenges facing your department in the next twelve to eighteen months?*
- *How ready are your people to meet these challenges?*

- *What skills do you see as vital to meeting these challenges?*
- *What skills do they currently have? Do you have any records?*
- *How would you prioritise the training your people receive?*

These questions are deliberately open and quite general in order to initiate a discussion. Based on these initial interviews further questionnaires can be developed to conduct research and analysis at a more detailed level.

Alternatively, we can identify a question bank with you and use an online survey tool to gather data on training undertaken so far and current skills gaps. We can then provide you with a report to help you identify which training needs have priority. This can be done very quickly if needed, usually with a couple of weeks at most, provided your participants respond promptly. We provide the joining instructions and guidance on how to complete the questionnaires which are always designed as simply and pragmatically as possible.

Too busy or unsure to do it by yourself?

Let us help you put your LNA plan together. We can assist you with templates and questionnaires, training business plans and reports to ensure your LNA process builds credibility in your business and leads you closer to achieving your goals. The great thing about working with our team is that you can have as little or as much as you need. Some clients just need the gap analysis and a heads up with their senior team or stakeholders, other need a more detailed project. We can help you define the scope and deliver the LNA to your specifications to ensure that you get your people aligned with your business goals as quickly as possible.

Call now on **01753373063** or email us at info@ceruleanblu.co.uk to find out how to conduct a quick and easy learning needs analysis to make sure your people get the training they really need.



Learning Needs Analysis

Get the training
you really need

