TNA Consultancy Skills Course

Distance Learning

INTRODUCING TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The purpose of an organisation is to provide products and services for its customers. For a private organisation these are determined by market forces, with success measured by profitability and comparison with competitors. A public sector organisation also provides products and services, for example:

* To external customers - the public, or specific beneficiaries.

* To internal customers in other departments or agencies within the public service.

For an organisation in the private sector assessment of performance is relatively simple and straightforward and can be based on factors, such as:

1. Profitability

2. Return on invested capital

3. Utilisation of assets

4. Market share

5. Comparison with competitors

6. Contributions to society and the environment, etc.

Success against such standards is rewarded by increased dividends, growth in share price, increased security and a clear sense of achievement. On the other hand, failure to achieve the required standards of performance may lead to changes - to an organisation's management, personnel, systems, market strategy and structure. Ultimately, if performance fails to improve to an acceptable standard, an organisation may be disbanded, its assets sold, or it's declared bankrupt. Generally, private sector organisations are under considerable pressure to succeed - with successful performance being rewarded and failure punished.

Success for a public sector organisation is perhaps more difficult to define. It does not face the same degree of scrutiny or assessment as it would face in the private sector. There are no shareholders, bankers, auditors, or competitors. Assessing the performance of a public sector organisation is a more complex process. Consider some factors involved:

1. There may be no standards against which performance can be assessed.

2. It may be unduly influenced by political pressure.

3. Its products or services are vital to the nation or society it serves.

4. Success may be relative and actually difficult to define in realistic, measurable terms.

5. The organisation might be a monopoly with no competitors against which its performance can be assessed.

6. For a non-governmental organisation (NGO) funding constraints may unduly influence the quality and quantity of services it can offer to beneficiaries.

Because of these factors a public sector organisation may exist, without facing serious pressure to improve performance. Although, following the introduction of economic liberalisation, the trend is to 'privatise' some public sector organisations, most are essential to the process of government. Attempts to improve performance are often thwarted by the need to maintain an organisation's products or services - irrespective of perhaps lower than desirable standards of performance, and at the expense of the tax payer.

So far, we have discussed organisational performance in absolute terms without reference to the essential components of all organisations - whether they are in the public or private sectors. These components include:

1.   Human resources

2.   Plant and equipment

3.   Financial assets

4.   Markets for products and services

5.   Research and development

6.   Systems and procedures

Overall, the management of these components determine the capability and performance of an organisation. The availability of human resources is put first on the list because organisations exist to enable people to provide products and services - using the other components listed above. The performance of people - at whatever level, individually and collectively - determines the success of an organisation.

A.   In your Learning Log, briefly describe the typical client organisation where you are likely to carry out TNA consultancy assignments. Also, consider answers to the following questions:

     A.1   What is your relationship to the client organisation?

     A.2   Is it in the public sector or in the private sector?

     A.3   Who are its customers or beneficiaries?

     A.4   How is the organisation's performance assessed?

     A.5   In your opinion, is it successful?

Reference to performance emphasises that people should be helped to learn how to achieve, maintain or improve their performance: it also implies that, where necessary, they are trained.

TRAINING AS AN INVESTMENT

Imagine you own a business and you have, say Rs10,000,000 available for investment. Here are some options for you to consider:

1.   Exchange the money for commodities such as gold or sugar futures

2.   Put the money on bank deposit

3.   Invest in new equipment

4.   Train your staff

The first option may be a bit risky because it's really a gamble - it could prove very profitable or very costly. The second option is predictable and safe. At the end of a year, depending on interest rates, your money would have increased to, say, Rs10,500,000 with no risk and a guaranteed return on the investment.

The third option depends upon your expertise in identifying an item of equipment which will give you a return more than the 5% interest available from the bank. It's worth noting that many private organisations require a return well greater than 10% before sanctioning capital investment.

The fourth option is to train your staff. This requires you to use the money to provide a training budget to pay for training. The return on your investment may prove difficult to quantify and much will depend on the professional competence of the trainers involved.

However, as you own the business and it's your money, you may have a different attitude to these options - compared to being a trainer keen to spend somebody else's. So how can this last option - that of training, be justified?

BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN TRAINING

The following is a list of possible benefits to be obtained from an investment in training:

1.   Better utilisation of staff. Training helps individuals and working groups become more versatile, flexible and generally able to achieve higher standards of performance.

2.   Better utilisation of plant, equipment and systems. Unless staff are trained, it is unlikely that they can get the best out of the technologies they use. All too frequently organisations invest substantially in capital resources without taking into account the problems faced by people who operate, maintain and manage them.

3.   Improved performance. Production rates, administrative procedures, quality, safety, customer satisfaction, are examples of where training can realise a substantial return on investment.

4.   Lower staff turnover. People usually respond positively to training and development opportunities. It also creates a favourable image for the organisation, attracting higher calibre staff who are less likely to leave.

5.   Greater customer satisfaction. Often it is the customer who is aware of a poorly trained workforce and may take business to a competitor where staff can meet their needs.

These are general indicators of the benefits to be obtained from training. Some organisations do it as an act of faith, without requiring justification or considering the costs or benefits to be obtained from the investment they are making. However, such organisations are now increasingly in the minority. Because of government and institutional initiatives, most organisations are aware that training is essential for improved performance. As a TNA consultant, recommendations you make to a client organisation are likely to be evaluated concerning the costs of implementation - against specific, performance-related benefits. If you are unable to justify your recommendations they are unlikely to be accepted, or gain the commitment of management - which is essential to success.

JUSTIFICATION FOR TRAINING

Learning occurs naturally so people may learn how to do their jobs without necessarily being trained. So why should an organisation bother to train its workforce - expending resources that could be utilised elsewhere? Some organisations do not ask the question and provide training simply to comply with legislation. Others use the following examples to justify their investment in systematic training:

1.   More rapid development to full job performance

2.   Increased output

3.   Improved level of service

4.   Improved quality

5.   Less waste of time, materials, personnel and money

6.   Better utilisation of equipment

7.   Better utilisation of personnel

8.   Fewer accidents

9.   Reduced costs

10.   Reduced need for supervision

11.   Better identification of personnel potential

12.   Improved morale

The benefits of training are therefore to help an organisation and its individual employees to improve performance. This can be directed at existing performance problems, or in anticipation of planned changes.

CHANGE AND PERFORMANCE

A consequence of dealing with performance issues resulting from change, is the need to learn. Change may be the result of the introduction of new technology, revised policies, legislation or working practices - or through general organisational development. Such changes often require people to learn new knowledge and skills, and to accompany this with changes in attitudes. In addition, people often have to unlearn redundant or inappropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes - a situation likely to occur when organisations have existing performance problems. This might be an unnerving experience for people accustomed to established practices learned over a working life. Factors to be taken into consideration, when using words such as *'change'* *'performance'* and *'problems'*, in relation to learning and work, include:

1.   The kind of change(s) being introduced

2.   The demands such changes make on people's performance

3.   The nature of the problem(s)

4.   The underlying causes of the problem(s)

5.   The people involved with the problem(s)

6.   The extent to which training can help the people concerned

7.   The time needed for people to learn

8.   The cost consequences of people failing to learn

A critical factor will be to obtain precise details of the additional knowledge, skills and attitude's people will need to learn to enable them to cope with change(s). This information is unlikely to be readily available and will be a key part of your work as a TNA consultant.

B.   What changes or concerns about performance are likely to influence your client's willingness to invest in training?

HELPING PEOPLE TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Ultimately, performance is the factor that determines an organisation's success or failure. Improvements might be needed where there are actual or anticipated performance problems. Such problems rarely exist in isolation and usually involve both technical, administrative and people 'deviations' from what is desired. In addition, a problem is likely to involve far more people than the symptoms indicate. Training is concerned with everybody contributing to the causes of a problem.

As trainers, it is all too easy to get carried away with the process of helping people to learn, without due regard to the product of the training. Success and effectiveness as a trainer should be determined by the performance of the people being trained. For example, through your work as a TNA consultant, the extent to which you have helped them with their problems. The stronger the links between training and an organisation's improved performance, the stronger and more credible will be your claims for investment in training.

These comments may seem suited more to profit oriented businesses, so what about service based, public sector organisations? As part of a consultancy with a government department, a group of trainers were asked to list problems they had to deal with. Here is their list.

1.   Impact of introduction of new technology

2.   Communication and co-operation across departmental boundaries

3.   Lack of, or unclear, objectives

4.   Lack of, or unclear performance standards

5.   Poor management of meetings

6.   Absence of standardised procedures

7.   Poor communication between departments

8.   High turnover of staff (especially Clerical)

9.   Mounting workloads because of staff reductions

10.   Lack of follow-through after staff changes and inadequate staff handovers

11.   Gap between management and staff

12.   Indecision and lack of planning

13.   Slow response to take-up of ideas

14.   Filtering down of decisions from management

15.   Lack of cover during absences.

A general concern was the lack of teamwork and unwillingness of colleagues to co-operate, particularly in areas which they do not see as their responsibility. Heavy workloads also seriously affected the service people could give - paperwork at expense of personal contact.

Although it may be more difficult in service-based organisations to identify, precisely, where performance problems are likely to occur. The above list illustrates typical symptoms of problems, but does not necessarily indicate the probable causes. The difficulty you will face when carrying out TNA consultancy in such organisations is to establish real links between performance problems and proposed training. Note that the trainers who gave the above list work for an organisation that strongly supports training. However, you may face situations where people have a negative reaction to your consultancy activities. Therefore, to ensure you provide credible training, it is essential to base your recommendations around 'performance', rather than training. This can focus on immediate problems where the organisation is feeling some 'pain', or in anticipation of problems likely to occur because of the introduction of new technology, systems or working practices.

In a large public utility, a study was made into the role of trainers. Trainers and some line managers were asked to analyse their perception of the role of the trainer. Trainers saw their role as one of helping people to learn - for example, by developing and running training courses. Line managers saw the role as something quite different. Their perception was that trainers should be involved primarily in helping to solve performance problems. The two perceptions can be considered compatible and yet the difference is significant - one is focused on 'learning', the other on

'performance'. It's worth noting that the trainers were keen to change their role. However, they felt they were hampered by an organisational culture where training was seen in terms of courses, rather than a means to improve performance.

THE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO TRAINING

When we are doing something, either by ourselves or with others, we are usually performing a task. This can happen at home - for example helping a friend to move furniture or joining others to play cricket. It also applies when we are at work - for example writing an office memo, answering the telephone, helping to plan rural development projects, or supervising functionaries. Successfully performing tasks enables us to do our jobs properly and to make an effective contribution to the organisation that employs us. So, taking some work-related examples mentioned above:

1.   The first task mentioned is writing an office memo. You perform the task by writing a memo that is concise, to the approved format, factually and grammatically correct. It's also necessary to consider what ' writing' means. For example, you could perform the task by hand writing a draft script for a PA to type or, an increasingly likely situation, is to write the memo on a PC for transmission by e-mail. Another important factor is the promptness with which you reply to a memo, irrespective of the technology being used.

2.   The second task is to answer the telephone. In some organisations, especially those dealing directly with customers, performance standards may require that the phone is answered within 20 seconds. A question might be whether you have sufficient experience to respond to a caller. Another issue may follow the realisation that your colleagues are delighted to let you perform the task, so they're not being disrupted. The task of answering the phone can therefore become a potent mix of potential performance problems, although not necessarily ones involving training.

Although problems, such as those illustrated above, might be considered 'trivial', the inability of an organisation to communicate effectively could be a major performance deficiency. In this instance, helping a client organisation to improve its communications is likely to involve more than simply offering a training course on communications.

Effective training that helps to improve performance is far more complex than putting people in a classroom and 'teaching' them. Training activities should be based on a 'planned process', called the 'systematic approach to training'- often called SAT. An illustration of SAT process is shown in Figure 1, below. It consists of four principal areas of activity:

1.   Identify Training Needs
2.   Plan, Design and Develop Training
3.   Implement Training
4.   Assess Results and Evaluate Training Outcomes

Notice also that we focus the four stages of the training process around 'Performance'. This is to emphasise that the primary purpose of training is to improve performance - using the four stages of the process. It is also important to recognise that the performance we are concerned with is that of a 'client organisation'. Although your work as a TNA consultant will be primarily concerned with the first stage, it's important to recognise how this links with other stages. Sometimes, if you are a

training professional, you'll be involved with all four stages but there will be occasions when the results of your consultancy will be passed on to others.
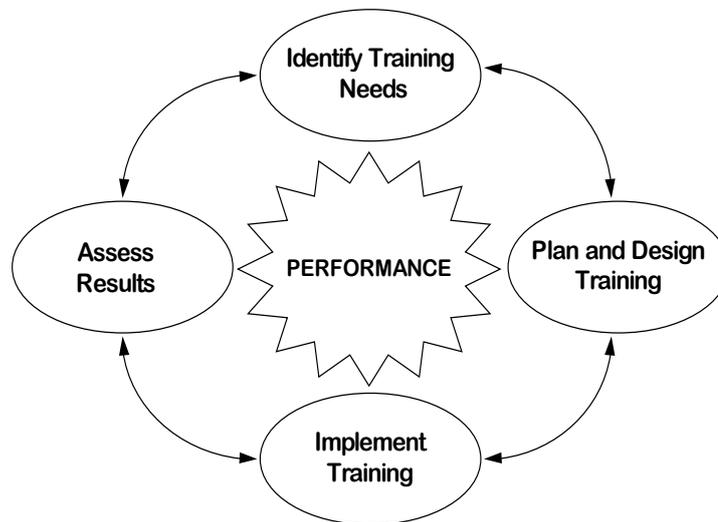

Fig. 1

1. IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDS

Analogy

Imagine you are ill and decide to visit a doctor, a situation analogous to a Head of Department seeking assistance from a trainer. The doctor will examine you, asking questions about the symptoms of your illness, possibly carrying out tests to investigate your illness in more detail and, if necessary, seeking specialist advice. Usually, by means of this systematic approach, the doctor diagnoses the cause of your illness and recommends appropriate treatment.

This approach is thorough and professional, so you have confidence that the recommendations are relevant to your problems. Contrast this with a situation where your doctor, without any examination, offers you a selection of standard treatments - inviting you to decide which one seems the most suitable. Thankfully, in the medical profession an approach such as this does not happen. However, unfortunately, it occurs all too often in training, where a 'menu approach' to training is used to provide training - without first identifying the need.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

Delays, breakdowns, customer complaints are typical instances of performance problems. The introduction of new technologies or working practices are also likely sources of performance deficiencies. Training Needs Analysis can be done for an organisation as a whole, or for a particular section or function. It can include analysis of an organisation's current performance problems, or in

anticipation of changes that are likely to require training. TNA focuses attention on 'performance' to identify training needs, along with other, non-training implications. Once performance problems have been analysed, they can be reviewed according to their importance. Having established priorities, further, more detailed analysis can be done to identify precise training needs. These needs should concern everybody associated with a particular performance problem, irrespective of their status or number.

During your training and development as a TNA Consultant you will learn how to use a variety of analytical techniques. These will enable you to adopt a similar, professional approach to that being used by the doctor in our analogy. By following the TNA consultancy process you can analyse performance-related issues of concern to your client. The result will be clear, detailed information and advice about training and non-training needs associated with improving performance.

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C.   List 5 typical performance problems you have encountered, either within your client organisation or in your work generally.

Training and Non-Training Needs

Performance problems are rarely caused through a lack of training, and rarely can performance be significantly improved by training, alone. When carrying out TNA, it is important to recognise that performance is likely to be influenced by other, non-training related factors. These could be the availability of suitable equipment, materials, systems and procedures necessary for satisfactory performance. Another important factor can be a lack of motivation - for example, due to management failing to reward good performance; inadequate feedback; lack of incentives to improve; or because of inattention to personal, social or cultural concerns.

For performance-related situations, concerning people and their training and development, these factors, in a variety of combinations, are vitally important. Thorough TNA should highlight the significance of each of them, although non-training factors are primarily the concern of an organisation's management. They have the responsibility and authority to implement both training and non-training initiatives leading to improved performance.

Analogy

Continuing the analogy of your imaginary illness, the reason you went to see your doctor was due to having dysentery. Usually, this illness is easily treated by medication, ORT and a suitable diet. The doctor, having diagnosed the problem and prescribed appropriate treatment, may consider the consultancy completed successfully with the patient's problem sorted out.

However, imagine that you were one of several people the doctor had treated for dysentery. Like you, each person was given appropriate medication and advice. The doctor, however, concerned about the high rate of dysentery cases, decided to carry out further investigation. The result was the discovery of a damaged water pipeline that contaminated drinking water in the area. Further analysis of the

situation highlighted the fact that workers at the water treatment centre were not properly trained to carry out routine test procedures.

You may consider this another illustration of identifying training needs. However, the analogy also draws attention to the need to not only have sufficient information about the problem, but also to be able to plan a suitable response. Here, if the doctor simply treated patients, individually, without recognising or dealing with the wider implications, people would continue to suffer from dysentery. For trainers, it is also relatively simple, for example, to confine one's activities to running courses. These may provide useful 'treatment', but are unlikely to solve performance problems. Therefore, during this stage of the systematic approach to training, attention should be given to planning training so that, for example:

1.   The training being planned tackles the whole of the problem, not what might be superficial symptoms. It would be easy for the doctor to continue to treat patients for dysentery, but far more effective to ensure that planning considered the whole of the problem.

2.   Training is designed for all those who need it. Treating some dysentery patients, but failing to do so for others is not acceptable. The same ethos should be applied to training. Usually, following TNA, the actual number of people involved is known and all can be considered when planning training.

3.   Treating patients but not improving performance of the workers at the water treatment centre would fail to solve the problem. However, it may be unfair to blame these workers for causing the problem. Perhaps management at the centre also needs training to ensure the availability of competent workers.

4.   The result of the training should be a solution to the problem. Everybody in the area should be free from dysentery, and have a supply of potable water of consistent quality. If this is not the outcome, the problem probably remains and further action is needed.

Planning Training

Planning training should be based on a clear and specific requirement, which has been discussed and agreed with the client. This involves:

1.   Deciding who needs to be trained.
2.   Establishing the number of people for whom training is needed.
3.   Specifying the aim of the training they will undertake.
4.   Utilising available resources.
5.   Recognising important constraints which may limit what can be achieved.

Once these factors have been taken into account an appropriate mix of training strategies can be decided and a *Training Plan* can be agreed with your client. This can include the use of training institutions, on the job training, distance learning, etc. As the TNA Consultant you will be responsible for identifying training needs for all those concerned, and providing additional information that will influence planning and design decisions.

Designing Training

Having established an overall training plan, detailed training requirements can be developed using '*design briefs'*. These provide a specification of the actual training that needs to be designed and developed. A design brief also takes into account such factors as:

1.　　　　Number of people who need to be trained.

2.　　　　Grouping of these people into areas of common training need.

3.　　　　Their location.

4.　　　　Their availability for training, taking into account operation requirements

5.　　　　Timescale within which training should be implemented.

6.　　　　Budget or funding support available for both development and implementation.

7.　　　　Availability of suitable trainers.

8.　　　　Institutional resources available.

The design brief establishes a professional link between you, as a TNA consultant, your *'client'* - usually a Head of Department, and *'stakeholders'*. These are key members of staff closely involved with improving performance - and a direct link to the people who need training. A properly negotiated design brief helps to define the training required, taking into account relevant constraints. The implication being that trainers should not promise more than they can realistically deliver, and heads of departments should not expect all their training needs to be met by training institutions.

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D.　　　　Select one important performance problem from your list where training is needed. Identify stakeholders who should be involved when seeking a solution to the problem. Note that this problem should include both training and non-training implications.

Developing Training

The development of training is concerned with acquiring or preparing resource materials, such as handouts, visual aids, exercises, case studies, videos and computer based training software. There are three basic sources for such material:

1.　　　　Commercial resources are usually of a high quality, but may lack direct relevance to training needs and may also present cultural or language difficulties. Some commercial material is expensive but it can save a considerable amount of development time.

2.　　　　Internally developed resources. These can be done by training institutions, which should have the subject matter and technical expertise needed for development.

3.　　　　Networked resources. Although copyright regulations have to be taken into account, access to training materials can be done by means of a central or regional 'learning resource centre'.

Due to government training policy - especially the intention to provide *'training for all'*, there is likely to be an increasing demand for resource materials. The introduction of distance learning and computer-based training requires effective resource support. Failure to meet this demand may result in trainers resorting to the use of out of date, ineffective, 'chalk and talk' lectures and attempting to help only a limited number of people.

Without doubt, the availability of training resources - or the potential to develop them - will influence the outcome of your TNA consultancy. This will especially influence organisations operating in rural areas, where access to training institutions is difficult.

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E.   Consider the potential availability of training resources in your client organisation. How will this influence your work as a TNA consultant?

3. IMPLEMENT TRAINING

Analogy

Within the context of the analogy, the doctor, having analysed the situation, plans action to treat your illness and others suffering similarly. The doctor also carried out further analysis to trace the cause of the problem to certain training needs. For example, having planned, designed and developed training that is appropriate to the needs of staff at the water treatment centre, implementing the training is likely to include:

1.   Short courses to cover essential 'underpinning knowledge' required by the workers. This can be delivered off the job, or by short sessions on the job, or by using distance learning.

2.   Skills-based, on-job-training to ensure that workers are competent to carry out their assigned tasks to an acceptable standard.

3.   The use of performance aids to help workers follow correct procedures.

Although attention here has been focused on implementing training for the workers at the water treatment centre, a key factor will also be to implement training for supervisory and management staff. The approach recommended for this type of training is to implement a problem-centred workshop where supervisors and managers can tackle problems arising from the incident of contamination. These highly experienced staff do not need to be 'taught'. Rather, they need an opportunity to learn from each other.

Effective Implementation

On the assumption that training needs have been clearly identified and appropriate training developed, then implementation is concerned with ensuring that the desired results are achieved. Effectiveness of depends on such factors as:

1.   Well-designed training, with clearly defined objectives.

2.   Availability of essential training resources.

3.   Emphasis on active, performance-related learning, not passive knowledge input.

4.   Use of a variety of training methods, suited to the needs of adult learners.

5.   Availability of competent trainers.

6.   Adequate feedback given to each trainee to help them achieve the objectives.

Effective training should lead to improved performance. Effective training should result in greater credibility for trainers, and the realisation by heads of department that training is a beneficial activity, worthy of their support.

Efficient Implementation

Training one person effectively is a worthwhile achievement, but not necessarily efficient. Training a large number may be efficient, but is it also effective?

The two earlier stages of the systematic approach to training should prepare circumstances in which effective training can be given. Planning the training should also have taken into account the number of people who need to be trained to ensure that training:

1.   Is provided to all who need it.

2.   Is implemented at a convenient time and place.

3.   Is carried out as quickly as possible.

4.   Is implemented at the minimum possible cost.

5.   Utilises, where possible, existing resources.

6.   Resources can be used by a network of providers.

Effective and efficient training requires the use of a variety of training methods, especially on-job-training, distance learning, performance aids and computer-based training. Generally, in the Indian public sector, the number of people who need training is likely to be large - especially for subordinate staff and beneficiaries, a key feature of the government's training policy. Therefore, for the government to obtain value for the funds invested, training should be both effective and efficient.

4. ASSESS RESULTS AND EVALUATE TRAINING OUTCOMES

Analogy

When you went to your doctor with dysentery, you expected to be given treatment that would result in your return to a normal, healthy condition. Anything less than this would leave you dissatisfied with your treatment - and therefore the help given by the doctor. However, as discussed earlier, successfully treating you might not produce a satisfactory solution to the problem - either for you or for other people in the area. If no further action is taken, the contaminated drinking water could result in more cases of dysentery - including, again, you!

To carry out an overall evaluation of the 'intervention', or actions taken to solve the problem, we need to consider the outcomes from three points of view:

1.   Were you, an individual patient, cured? In training terms, the equivalent to this is called '*Internal Validation*'.

2.   Is the supply of drinking water now free from contamination, and likely to remain so? This is equivalent to *'External Validation*'.

3.   What were the costs of solving the problem - and the benefits the solution provided to the people in your area? This is called '*Evaluation'*.

Before leaving the analogy, and discussing the three terms mentioned above, it's worth reflecting on reactions to the outcomes achieved (note that these points apply equally to assessing the results of training):

1.   You were satisfied with the outcome, because the treatment resulted in a return to full health.

2.   Because training was provided to staff at the water treatment centre, other people in the area avoided dysentery.

3.   Staff at the water treatment centre are now competent to provide a consistent, long-term supply of potable water.

4.   Local society has benefited from the intervention, as dysentery can lead to mortality and other diseases.

5.   Local government authorities can show that the money spent on solving the problem was a worthwhile investment.

Internal Validation

As part of the design process, objectives are set which people are expected to achieve at the end of their training. Assessing whether they have achieved these objectives is a key feature of internal validation and includes:

1.   Where necessary, a formal assessment of trainees against the stated objectives.

2.   Remedial training for those who fail to achieve the objectives.

3.   Obtaining from trainees their views about the quality of training they received.

4.   Reviewing the content, methodologies, allocation of time, trainers and resources to improve the quality of training being provided.

5.   Contacting trainees later to ascertain whether they have consolidated or developed their learning under operational circumstances.

The purpose of internal validation is to assess trainees, and their training, against criteria set by trainers. The results of using this validation process will be to report on the achievements of trainees, during training. Internal validation also indicates where training provision can be improved. Essentially, internal validation is done by trainers to enable them to improve the quality of training being provided.

External Validation

The Design Brief established a link between specific needs of client organisations, their staff and the training to be provided. External Validation is concerned with assessing whether the outcomes of training activities achieved the desired results - for example by answering the following questions:

1.   Is the performance of the people trained now satisfactory?

2.   What evidence is there to support this?

3.   Can improved performance be attributed to training?

4.   Are non-training implications preventing these people achieving satisfactory performance?

5.   Are there further performance problems to be analysed?

External validation should be done by heads of department, in collaboration with stakeholders and trainers. The effectiveness of the process is dependent on TNA. If this has been done thoroughly, it will have highlighted performance issues concerning training, and provided the evidence against which post-training performance can be assessed.

A final thought, before turning to evaluation, is to consider the consequences of not doing external validation. If asked to provide evidence to support continued investment in training, what performance-related proof can you provide? Returning to the analogy, if you're ill, would you go to a doctor who could not provide evidence of being able to successfully treat patients?

Evaluation

The government invests considerable sums of money on behalf of the taxpayer. As a result roads, schools and hospitals are built, slums are improved, the poor are fed and, generally, society is nurtured and improved. Funding is usually finite, if one cause is supported it may be at the expense of another one, equally worthy. Training costs money, and utilises resources that might be diverted elsewhere. It is therefore one option that government and other funding agencies have to consider when allocating funds. Sometimes people are pleased to know that their money has been invested in

training. If training is to be seen as a worthwhile, justifiable investment then it can sustain evaluation of its products and services. For example:

1.   Government funding agencies may scrutinise applications for funding, while evaluating the results obtained from previous investments. Why should a funding agency continue to provide funds when there's no evidence of any benefit?

2.   Heads of Department may evaluate the contribution training is making to their department's operations. Why lose key members of staff for several weeks training, if there's no real improvement in performance?

3.   Passengers are wondering why their bus has broken down, could it be due to poorly trained maintenance staff?

4.   Customers fail to get the information they requested and blame the 'attitude' of the clerk. Could it be that the clerk has never been trained, either to be able to provide information, or to deal with customers?

5.   Beneficiaries, in a rural community, fail to receive the advice they need to grow a new crop. They need to be trained, but perhaps also the local E&V officer also needs to be trained. Where should the money for training be invested?

6.   Why train 20 functionaries during the year, when 200 need to be trained? Does this mean that we have to wait 10 years to have a competent functionary in our district?

Evaluation can be a highly subjective process, using a variety of criteria. It will be done by people who either pay for training, or who suffer or benefit from its outcomes. Departmental management should have a legitimate right to evaluate training provided by training institutions. However, evaluation is likely to be carried out by clients, customers, stakeholders, trainees and beneficiaries - all having differing opinions about the value and benefits of training. Probably the most important contribution trainers can make to evaluation is to:

*   Carry out TNA to enable training to be focused on real performance problems.

*   Use other stages of SAT to provide effective and efficient training.

*   Use internal validation to ensure the quality of training being provided.

*   Work with departmental staff to carry out external validation.

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F.   Generally, in respect to your client organisation, how can validation and evaluation of training and non-training initiatives be used to assess performance?

PERFORMANCE

Although we have discussed the four stages of the Systematic Approach to Training, the model shown earlier in Figure 1 has 'Performance' at the centre of the process. This provides a focal point

for most training and development activities, and applies to the performance of individuals, working groups and, ultimately, that of an organisation. Performance is influenced by several inter-related factors, each of which can affect what can be achieved:

Standards

Performance can only be assessed if there is some point of reference against which it can be measured. Unless realistic, relevant and above all, achievable standards are set it becomes extremely difficult to improve performance. Probably the most important and perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of the systematic approach to training is to establish standards of performance. These can be considered under two broad categories:

*   ***Training standards*** - what a person will be competent to do on completion of training.

*   ***Performance standards*** - what a person can do under normal working conditions.

Two other factors are likely to influence performance - neither of them caused through a lack of training, but both capable of negating the results that can be achieved. These have been referred to earlier when discussing the identification of training needs, but are also worth noting in respect to performance.

Motivational Factors

These can seriously affect performance and are likely to occur when people, who have the necessary knowledge and skills, are unwilling to use them. Typical reasons for lack of motivation can be that there is no reward for performance improvement or, due to poor management, people are unwilling to use their expertise. Do you remember our reference earlier to answering the telephone? How would you feel, if you were the person in the office responding to telephone calls? Would you retain your willingness to perform the task, when others apparently don't bother?

Environmental Factors

Irrespective of the level of knowledge and skill people may have, and however willing, they may be unable to improve their performance due to negative factors in their working environment. These can include poor systems and procedures, inadequate equipment and resources, or the failure of other people or organisations to provide the products or services required for satisfactory performance. Remember our earlier reference to writing office memo's? What happens to your performance if you are assigned to an office with a computer, but no link to the Internet? You have the knowledge and skills to communicate by e-mail; you are also keen to do so. However, an environmental factor prevents you from effective communication - you have a performance problem, but not a training need!

Performance Problems

The words 'performance' and 'problem' have featured prominently, both in the text and as the centre point of the model used to illustrate SAT. As trainers, we have to recognise that both words feature even more prominently in the working environment of our clients and beneficiaries - the people we

wish to help. They are expected to achieve an ever-increasing standard of performance and to cope with the problems - often without the benefit of effective, systematic training.

It's important to recognise the use of the word 'performance', because it is all too easy to use 'training' instead. Robert Mager in his excellent book *'Analysing Performance Problems'*, writes: 'When someone says, "I've got a training problem," he's like the fellow who goes to his doctor and says, "I've got an aspirin problem." It's possible that aspirin will solve his problem; but aspirin is the solution, not the problem.'

The performance problems you are addressing may be vague and ill-defined, or very specific. However, performance is the responsibility of management and the people 'owning' the problem. Your responsibility is to help them, bearing in mind that training is probably only part of the solution.

The concept of a systematic approach to training therefore starts with the premise that we are helping people with current or anticipated performance problems. Performance can be associated with a current situation, where people have performance problems or discrepancies between the desired standard of performance and what they are capable of doing. It may also be considered in relation to what is anticipated following the introduction of changes to the working environment - new systems, technologies, policies etc. Performance, especially for an individual, may also be linked to development activities to help them realise their full potential. In this instance there may already be a satisfactory level of performance but the person is motivated to achieve a higher standard.

As a cautionary note, it is virtually impossible to help an organisation where nobody chooses to recognise the existence of performance problems. It's inevitable that you'll come across stakeholders and other members of staff who, for a variety of reasons, are reluctant to become involved. However, for a successful TNA consultancy, it's essential to have a client who wants your help, and is willing support and give authority to your consultancy activities.

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G   Although your TNA consultancy will identify training needs and enable you to make recommendations, what constraints are likely to influence your client organisation's ability to obtain value from their investment in training?